

*"I honestly don't know where I'd be right now if Yamauchi hadn't made that phone call. The Nintendo/Sony deal, the deal that shaped...practically the last 20 years of video gaming, I can't even envision a world where that deal didn't go down. Certainly not a world where I'd still be playing video games."- Dan "Shoe" Hsu, managing editor of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, June 2011*

*"Working with Victor and working with everyone in that industry for six great years absolutely prepared me for everything that's happened to me down the road. I can't call myself a gamer, but video games definitely opened the door for me. So I still have kind of a soft spot for them."- Jennifer Stigile, season 1 American Idol winner, in the June 20, 2005 issue of *People* magazine*

*"You know, I almost thought of suing to break them up, like what happened to us in 1999. They were so huge at that time. But I was never one to back down from a challenge. There was a niche for us. A small niche but a niche nonetheless. But it was always going to be an uphill battle."- Bill Gates, in a 2005 *Forbes* interview*

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## **June 24, 1991**

Howard Lincoln and Minoru Arakawa, two high-ranking Nintendo representatives, were eating a quick breakfast in Amsterdam before their meeting with representatives from Philips in Eindhoven later that day. The meeting would solidify Nintendo's new business partnership with one of the top electronics companies in the world, a partnership to design a new add-on for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System. The console had yet to debut in North America or Europe, but the future already looked bright for the system, which had been selling well in Japan. The new CD add-on would help to futureproof the console against efforts by competitors, especially their growing rival Sega, to outmuscle their SNES with new technology.

The men were nervous. They knew the company was reneging on a deal it had already made to produce a CD add-on with Sony. Still, the stakes were too high and Sony's demands were too much. Philips, they were told, would give much better terms and would allow Nintendo more control over its properties, especially the highly lucrative Mario franchise, which had become one of the most recognizable in the world. It was far too risky to allow a company like Sony that much control over an icon like Mario. While the men, especially Arakawa, had their trepidations, both of them preferring a partnership with Sony over the unfamiliar company Philips, it was a deal that had to be made if the SNES-CD was going to happen the way that Nintendo wanted it.

Half a world away, Nintendo's president Hiroshi Yamauchi sat in the company's Kyoto headquarters, reading and re-reading his company's contract with Sony. The contract, which Nintendo had made back in 1988, gave Sony complete control over all games created for the SNES-CD add-on, including games featuring the company's flagship characters such as Mario, Link, and Donkey Kong. Nintendo, which had built a dominating market presence by maintaining complete control over its games and properties, was ceding an unacceptable amount of control to Sony through the contract. Sony would be allowed to publish anything it wanted for the add-on. Intellectual property concerns aside, this opened the floodgates to the kind of shovelware and porno games that had nearly destroyed the entire industry in

1983.

But the idea of partnering with Sony, the company that had developed the Super Nintendo's cutting-edge soundchip, was an intriguing one indeed. The company's knowledge of hardware and advanced computer tech was nearly unparalleled and their add-on could give the SNES an incredible amount of muscle. Then there was the question of honor...breaking the agreement by going behind Sony's back would almost certainly be met with anger, perhaps even lawsuits. Yamauchi read the contract again, his eyes scanning over the most troubling clauses. He was in a no-win situation and he knew it. The best solution he saw was partnering with Philips and he'd sent two of his best men to their HQ in the Netherlands to hash out a deal with them, one that would allow Nintendo far more control over its properties.

But as much as the idea of giving up so much control troubled Yamauchi... every time he closed his eyes he saw the potential that Sony brought to the table. He could see the games that could be made for the system, the possibilities that abounded. He was far more unsure of what Phillips brought to the table. Their CD-I technology was impressive, but Sony had already proven itself. Ken Kutaragi had risked his CAREER because he saw the potential of the SNES. If Nintendo made this deal, it would always have a champion in Kutaragi, a brilliant and gifted man, a visionary...

Yamauchi put his head in his hands and took a deep breath. With shaking palm, he reached for the phone.

"This is Yamauchi. I want to speak with Mr. Ohga right away. I need to see him as soon as possible."

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Howard Lincoln: We spent about an hour with the Philips reps in Eindhoven. The meeting had gone pretty well. We go back to Amsterdam, enjoy the city for the rest of the day, we go to bed. As soon as we get up the next morning we've got a note saying to come down and get a call from the lobby. Mr. Yamauchi was in a meeting with Norio Ohga, from Sony. And of course we were told before going to Europe that the Sony deal was off and that we were going with Philips. They asked us how the talk had gone, we said it had gone well and they tell us that Yamauchi wanted to use that as leverage to get Sony to negotiate. So here we are, in a hotel in Amsterdam wondering what the hell's going on back in Japan.

(You had no idea that this was going to happen?)

No, none. Minoru and I went to Holland knowing, or thinking that we knew, that the Sony deal was out the window and we were going with Philips. We hadn't put pen to paper yet with them, which of course was good, but we didn't have a clue that entire time that Mr. Yamauchi wanted to go back to the table with Sony. And by the time we got that call they'd finished talking, it was.... well it was in Japan so it must've gone down while we were sleeping.

(They signed the deal while you guys were sleeping in Amsterdam?)

Mr. Yamauchi wanted us both to come back to Kyoto immediately. He hadn't signed

anything else with Sony but it was pretty much going to happen.

-Taken from a June 2007 interview in Game Informer magazine

Mr. Ohga was furious. He didn't show it during the conversation he had with Yamauchi but you could tell that the two were just about as mad as you could be in a civil conversation. Both of them were fuming. I was there watching the whole thing, just sitting there like....like you know how when two parents are fighting and the child just sits there and watches, trying not to make either of them any angrier? That's how I was during that conversation, just wearing a stone-faced expression and trying my best not to make either of them notice me. Later on, Mr. Ohga told me that Yamauchi had called him a scoundrel. I hadn't heard it but Ohga kept saying that he'd implied it. I remember, in a roundabout way I think Yamauchi did call him that. He did say that the contract as he saw it was unfair and it gave Sony far too much control over Nintendo's properties. Then Mr. Ohga asked him if he'd even read what he signed three years ago. They kept talking and then Yamauchi brought up that two of his men were negotiating with Philips in Amsterdam. I thought I saw Mr. Ohga turn red at that point, I thought he might come across the table and there would be a fight, but it never happened. It was clear what Nintendo was doing, using the prospect of that deal as leverage to get us to alter our contract with them. I guess Mr. Ohga thought that 50 percent of billions was better than 100 percent of nothing, because he agreed to work on a new deal pretty soon after that. Things were so tense in that room but I'm glad the way it worked out how it did because I'm pretty sure my career would've been over if Yamauchi had walked out of that room without us agreeing to make a new deal.

-Excerpted from a translated Ken Kutaragi interview in Japan Tech News on December 8, 2001, shortly after Norio Ohga's death from a cerebral hemorrhage

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## **June 27, 1991**

Nintendo's new deal with Sony was hashed out rather quickly, with both companies wanting to finalize negotiations over the SNES-CD before CES 1991 began in less than two weeks. Representatives from Nintendo, including Hiroshi Yamauchi and Minoru Arakawa, met with Sony reps including Norio Ohga and Ken Kutaragi in Kyoto. Representatives from Sony and Nintendo's American divisions were patched in via conference call. The new terms were far more favorable to Nintendo than before. Nintendo would retain complete control of all first party games developed for the SNES-CD, which included its Mario, Zelda, Metroid, and other franchises, along with any developed by Nintendo first or second parties in the future. Sony would be given complete control over any games it developed for the SNES-CD via its own game development division or any subsidiary second parties, allowing the company to begin developing its own stable of characters for the system. Control of third party games would be split 50/50, with Nintendo and Sony consulting regularly on what games to include on the new CD software. As it pertained to quality and content control, Nintendo would retain a "right of first refusal" of sorts, but would have to show cause that any games it did not wish to release on the system would cause serious detriment to the company's brand or its profits.

A point of contention between Sony and Nintendo was the latter company's censorship policies, particularly with games it released in North America and Europe. Certain third parties, most notably Squaresoft and Konami, had expressed to Sony their desire to create

more mature-themed games, without the at times heavy-handed censorship guidelines given to them by Nintendo. While Howard Lincoln pointed out that changes between Japanese and American versions of games were small at best, Squaresoft's Hironobu Sakaguchi, one of the third party representatives who had been patched into the conference call, noted that Squaresoft at times had to self-censor its own games before releasing them in Japan, to keep changes between the Japanese and North American versions to a minimum. He said that while he had no interest in creating overly violent or sexualized content, he wanted to be able to have more creative freedom when it came to his games, with the inclusion of more mature storytelling themes. The discussions over the inclusion of more mature content lasted for nearly an hour before Howard Lincoln and Hiroshi Yamauchi decided on a compromise: First and second party Nintendo SNES-CD and regular SNES games would remain subject to Nintendo of America's censorship guidelines in the West, while third party SNES-CD games and Sony-produced games would be exempt, subject to a few restrictions on violent and sexual content. Also, such games would include a rating descriptor that would advise would-be purchasers of any potentially objectionable content. Sony and the third party representatives thought this was agreeable and it became part of the contract.

The negotiations, which began early in the morning and paused only a few times for meal breaks, went very late into the night, but when the meeting ended, there was a new contract in place. There would be an SNES-CD add-on, along with a combo system which contained both the SNES and the CD add-on built in. Ken Kutaragi and Howard Lincoln would appear together at CES to show off the add-on and console, while third parties and Nintendo itself could begin to plan out the first generation of games.

Though the deal had been made, Norio Ohga was still fuming, already unhappy about all the concessions he'd made. Kutaragi reassured him.

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*"I remember what I told him right after we closed the deal with Nintendo. 'Our new soundchip was already a resounding success. This deal will put CD players in millions of homes around the world. This will be the best business deal we have ever made.' I forget how many times I told him that same thing over the next 10 months. It would have to be the sales figures that convinced him, because I really couldn't!"- Ken Kutaragi, Japan Tech News, December 8, 2001*

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*"The 1991 Summer CES was dominated by video games, demonstrating the increasing strength of the electronic entertainment industry. The industry has swollen to the point that it's nearly as large as the film and television industries, something that would've been regarded as unthinkable seven years ago during the darkest point of the industry crash. This year's CES featured a number of surprise announcements, but the most important was certainly the public announcement of the alliance of the home electronics titan Sony Corporation with the very powerful video game company Nintendo Co., Ltd. for work on a brand-new peripheral for the Super Nintendo Entertainment console, set to be released in North America in just two short months. The peripheral in question is a CD-ROM attachment, and while much is yet unknown about the device, it will be able to play both CD-ROM based video games and audio CDs, greatly enhancing the new console's multimedia*

capabilities. In other news, Sega announced the production of a similar peripheral, already announced in Japan but now confirmed for a 1992 release here in the States, after a holiday 1991 release in Japan. Along with the NEC TurboGrafx CD, this means that all three of the major Japanese video game consoles will be able to utilize the burgeoning CD format, a massive boon for the format which is already growing rapidly in popularity. Computer Chronicles can only wonder what this means for the future of both the music and electronic entertainment industries, but at the moment that future seems bright indeed."

-Closing words of Computer Chronicles' 1991 Summer CES Special

"The news of Sony and Nintendo's alliance at CES made big waves among my colleagues and I. I remember that some NEC people were wary of the implications, back in Japan, since NEC had a de facto monopoly of the CD-ROM tech us before us but they were still getting dominated in sales by Nintendo. They feared that the CD add-on would be the coup de grace, so to speak, and of course we know what happened at the end. It spooked us over here at Sega too, but there was a silver lining. The add-on will take time to enter the market, we'd have about a nine month head start, so we would have the chance to gain market share and endear ourselves to consumers pretty early. Were we intimidated? Of course not, even if the Mega-Drive, as it was called in Japan, was taking a beating against the SNES, here in America thanks to Sonic the Hedgehog we were having our biggest holiday sales ever. I was waiting for Nintendo to make its move, whatever happened, it was definitely gonna be interesting."

-Tom Kalinske, Former President of Sega of America, in a 2002 interview with Sega Retro

"Even if the negotiation in Japan were... rough, to say the least, here in the States the whole deal went a lot smoother, mostly thanks to both Mr. Arakawa and Mr. Lincoln being more easygoing and stable than Mr. Yamauchi back in Japan. Of course, Nintendo had to have its own way in the deal, particularly concerning their own interests, and that was about our new role as co-publisher for the peripheral and how we should be in line with Nintendo of America's 'Content Guidelines'. I mentioned the new 'Videogame Board of Content Control' proposed in Japan, with warning labels and age designations for certain games. Nintendo was planning to suggest to its retail partners not to sell certain games to anyone under 17, which we hoped would avoid any problems or controversy. Then, of course, was our contract to produce content for Sega. It was expiring in 1992, and since Sony was partnering with Nintendo, we made the decision, pretty easy at the time, that we would cease support for Sega and decline to re-up the contract when it expired. We'd be making games for Nintendo now and that was fine with us."

-Excerpted from an interview with Ólafur Jóhann Ólafsson, President and CEO of Sony Interactive Entertainment, Inc., in the July 1995 issue of Electronic Gaming Monthly

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## **August 23, 1991**

The Super Nintendo launched in North America with relatively little fanfare. It wasn't due to the 1992 release of the CD peripheral. Instead, it was largely consumer apathy that kept SNES sales unspectacular. Indeed, Nintendo was still primarily focusing on their NES console, which was still dominating hardware sales and even beating the much more

powerful Sega Genesis. The Super Nintendo came packaged with two controllers and the newest Mario title, Super Mario World, all for the price of \$200. The other launch games, F-Zero and Pilotwings, weren't exactly system movers, though both were well-reviewed.

As for worries that the announcement of Nintendo's CD peripheral would slow sales, these worries turned out to be largely unfounded. For every person who claimed that the CD-ROM drive made them skeptical of the SNES's staying power, there was another gamer who claimed that the peripheral made them want to buy the system all the more, anticipating the possibility of playing CD-ROM based games and music CDs once it was released. Most consumers, however, didn't even know of the CD-ROM drive's existence, as the average consumer and even the average gamer didn't follow the big trade shows, and even the popular gaming magazines of the time mentioned the peripheral in passing, perhaps in a small article that people skimmed over for other sections of the magazine such as the game previews.

For the most part, Nintendo shrugged off news of the Super Nintendo's mediocre North American launch, anticipating much larger sales as Christmas drew near.

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*"By December 1991, the Super Nintendo's sales had picked up enough in both Japan and North America that we could begin to focus our attention on developing our launch window games for the SNES-CD add-on. Yamauchi-san was pushing Miyamoto-san very hard to have a Super Mario game available at launch, which in Japan was just eight months away. Miyamoto-san had just finished the work on Zelda 3, which he was VERY happy with, and his mind was flooded with ideas for the new Mario game, he knew he wanted to do a sequel to Super Mario World, which had been very well received, but it became clear from the start that this was going to be a much larger game than the original. Every day, he had a new idea for a level, or an enemy, or a power-up, and the game just got bigger and bigger and bigger. At the same time, we were working on a two-player kart racing game, and we had decided that we were going to incorporate Mario characters into that. So I was working on the maps for the new Mario World game at the same time that I was directing this kart game, which we ended up calling Super Mario Kart. Originally we had planned to make it an SNES cartridge."*

-Hideki Konno, N-Sider interview, September 2007

*"The thing about Shigeru Miyamoto is that he always wanted to make his games as good as they could possibly be, and of course that sometimes takes time. What was it he said once, 'a delayed game will eventually be good but a bad game is bad forever'? Either way, it became a huge point of contention between Miyamoto and Yamauchi over not having Super Mario World 2 ready for the SNES-CD launch, since Nintendo had ALWAYS launched with a Mario game. You had Super Mario Bros. on the NES and Super Mario World on the SNES, and so it was becoming a sort of tradition to have that strong Mario platformer packed in. But with all the stuff Miyamoto wanted to do with Super Mario World 2, that wasn't going to happen. So that's when, I think, the proposal was made to have Super Mario Kart as the pack-in game."*

-Nintendo historian Jeff Ryan, interview with Kotaku.com, October 13, 2011

*"And then came the issue of the two extra ports on the CD-ROM attachment. Could Super Mario Kart work as a four-player game? Was the co-processor strong enough to enable four*

*players at once? The big selling point of the game was that it would allow two players to play, unlike F-Zero which had only allowed one. Once we learned that it was possible to have the four players, I was all for it but Miyamoto-san didn't like the idea of not being able to have all the stages and levels available, since the more complex stages would slow down the game. He didn't want to have the four player mode at all, but once we showed him how fun it would be he gave us the task of designing specific four-player stages for the game, ones that would be fun but that would not slow down the game. And so that was a fun challenge and that's why Super Mario Kart ended up having four-player support."*

-Hideki Konno, N-Sider interview, September 2007

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Chihiro Fujioka (director of "Final Fantasy: New Generation" and "Super Mario RPG"): Late 1991, that was a hectic time at Square. We'd gotten word that the SNES-CD deal had been done, so development went full-steam ahead on Secret of Mana. Final Fantasy IV had been wrapped and work on Final Fantasy V was in progress for the 1992 release.

RPGamer: When did the word come down that Square wanted something done for the North American market?

Fujioka: That came to me probably around the time work on Final Fantasy V began. We had all intentions of bringing that game to the West as Final Fantasy III, and we were hoping to have it ready for the launch of the SNES-CD in both territories, but that wasn't going to be possible, development on V was more of a challenge than we'd thought it would be. Also, RPGs weren't an easy sell in North America and it was widely believed that they were too hard for American gamers, there had been complaints about the original Final Fantasy and sales hadn't been strong enough to bring over the other NES games.

RPGamer: I know the original idea behind what became Final Fantasy: New Generation was to create a beginner-level Final Fantasy. What was your opinion on the matter?

Fujioka: Well, Sakaguchi-san always believed that the challenge was part of the game, but he also had an eye on the business side of things and he wanted stronger sales in North America. But the SNES-CD, I think that was a game changer. We had gotten the go-ahead to bring some more mature games to the system, and Sakaguchi-san felt that that included more challenging games, that if the console was going to be played by more mature gamers that they would appreciate the challenge. So we retooled our intended game entirely.

RPGamer: What inspired the "New Generation" part of the title?

Fujioka: It was intended that this would be a Final Fantasy for a new generation of players, so to speak. We took some of the things we'd included in IV...the new Active Time Battle system, and we included it in the game, along with a fully CD audio soundtrack. (Ryuji) Sasai-san, he'd already started work on the soundtrack and had done some great work, so it was easy to transfer that over and produce a richer sound with the new technology. And then (Yasuhiro) Kawakami, he had been working on it with Sasai and expressed how pleased he was with the enhanced audio capabilities, he was so pleased that he was able to come up with two more songs right before the deadline!

RPGamer: And that was one of the things that got the biggest praise with the game, was that soundtrack.

Fujioka: Absolutely. We also tweaked some of the other aspects of the game, we made it a three-character party, we made it so the characters all stayed with you instead of leaving, tweaked the boss difficulty, added spells, added bosses and towns and dungeons, made it a more complex game for a more complex audience, and those changes we hoped would get the response we wanted and also we hoped this game would tide Americans over for Final Fantasy V which we'd release in 1993 contingent on how well this game did. 1993, with Final Fantasy V and with Mana, we hoped would be a big, big year for Square and would change the way RPGs were perceived in North America.

RPGamer: But it all started with New Generation.

Fujioka: That it did! \*laughs\*

-Excerpted from an RPGamer.com interview with Chihiro Fujioka, December 2003

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This holiday season was one of the most robust in recent memory, partially thanks to the surge in sales for the new electronic gaming consoles, the Super Nintendo and the Sega Genesis. While the Super Nintendo was able to build its install base via the release of new games and through a fierce promotional blitz for the new system with its "Now You're Playing With Power" campaign, the Sega Genesis used the popularity of its exciting new mascot Sonic the Hedgehog to drive sales and gain a large chunk of market share, cutting into market leader Nintendo's sales in a significant way for the first time since the launch of the NES in 1985. With 1992 comes new games and the North American launches of the CD-ROM peripherals for both the SNES and the Genesis. Will 1992 be remembered as the dawn of the optical age? Only time will tell.

-Computer Chronicles, December 27, 1991

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### **Contra III Won't Come To SNES-CD, Snatcher Coming Instead?**

The highly anticipated Contra III, SNES successor to the original two Contra games for the NES, will not be getting a version for the upcoming SNES CD-ROM peripheral, according to Konami's Nobuya Nakazato. Nakazato stated his desire to create a new Contra game, presumably Contra IV or perhaps a spin-off title, for the SNES CD-ROM when it is released. Contra III: The Alien Wars, is set to be released in North America for the SNES in April.

In other Konami related news, Hideo Kojima, designer of the Metal Gear games, is said to be in talks with Nintendo to port his cult classic PC-8801 game Snatcher to the SNES CD-ROM. There is a rumor that the game is to be ported with the assistance of HAL Laboratory, which is also set to release Kirby's Dream Land for the Gameboy later this year, after young designer Masahiro Sakurai and Nintendo executive Satoru Iwata showed interest in a potential port. The port is still in the early development stages and will likely receive a 1993 release.

-Article in Electronic Gaming Monthly, February 1992

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Another test of Street Fighter II on SNES CD-ROM today, game showed excellent frame rate even with arcade-level character detail. Processor very fast, special cartridge handles all co-processing enabling the SNES to run this game flawlessly with the CD-ROM. Will keep running tests but this was definitely the best one yet.

-Internal Capcom memo from February 18, 1992, translated from original Japanese

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### **SNES-CD UPDATE!**

While Nintendo is still keeping most details of the upcoming CD-ROM peripheral for the Super Nintendo close to its chest, they did share some very promising morsels of info with Nintendo Power so that we can keep our readers informed!

Work on the peripheral is nearing completion in preparation for its unveiling at this June's CES and its anticipated August release in Japan, but one of the things Nintendo's designers are still hashing out concerns the video resolution of the new hardware. As some of you know, the Sega CD was recently released in Japan, and one of the major criticisms is that its video resolution just isn't up to snuff! The limited resolution of the Sega Genesis keeps full-motion video cutscenes confined to a small portion of the average television screen. This is a hurdle that the SNES CD's designers are dealing with as well, but we're assured that the peripheral will increase the progressive resolution of the SNES, enabling it to display full motion video that will fill your whole TV screen! We can't spill too much info on the CD-ROM's revolutionary co-processing until the big reveal at CES, but rest assured that Nintendo and its partner Sony are hard at work to make the SNES CD-ROM the next step in Nintendo's excellent gaming history.

-Article in Nintendo Power, April 1992

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*"Back in Japan, the launch of the Mega-CD had been pretty rocky. We had to use mostly internal tech and that drove the cost way up, all the way up to 49,800 yen, which at the time was \$380 in US dollars. \$380! More than twice the cost of the Genesis! I knew we up-marketed toward business types and high-profile consumers who demand the latest technology, but you compare that to the price tag of the PC-Engine CD or the rumored price of Nintendo's machine, both of those were launching at around 25,000 yen, 30,000 at the most. And our launch window games, shooters mostly, we didn't have a single killer app to move this thing, so there was nothing to justify paying top dollar for something when you could just wait for a price cut. Nothing to show off the capabilities of the new format to justify the price. Heavy Nova was the best we had and the Super Nintendo had better games than that. We'd lost our contract with Sony Imagsoft when Sony agreed to the deal with Nintendo, so that put us behind in a big way when it came to getting good games on the Sega CD. We started signing deals with movie studios, hoping we could snag a big licensed game... I remember signing with Virgin and doing the Aladdin game, that ended up being huge for us, but that was way down the road. At the time, we were getting killed and*

*a huge part of that was Sony pulling out."*- Tom Kalinske

"In retrospect, the PC-Engine was a console stuck between a rock and a hard place. First in innovation, but now trapped between two big players in Sega and Nintendo. Without proper developer support, stuck with trying endless hardware revisions in a vain attempt to catch up, the PC-Engine was doomed from the start in a lot of ways. The PC-EngineDuo was, in a lot of ways, what the system should have been from the first place. First out with the HuCard technology and the first major console to use CD-ROM, there was plenty of power behind the console... but NEC found itself squeezed out by the growing monster that was Sega and the rampaging beast that was Nintendo, soon to be the mighty Nintendo-Sony alliance. Despite ranking second internationally at the time, behind only Nintendo, NEC was falling rapidly behind and would be overtaken by Sega later in 1992. It's hard to believe it today, but at one time, the partnership of NEC and Hudson could well have shaped console gaming as it is today instead of falling into irrelevancy almost as quickly as it had risen to prominence."

*-PC-Engine/TurboGrafx-16, A Retrospective, IGN.com*

### **Philips Lawsuit Likely To Be Thrown Out, Deal With Sega Not Happening**

There's a bit of interesting news concerning the ongoing legal battle between Nintendo and the European electronics titan Philips. Sources claim that Nintendo, which is currently working on the SNES-CD with the help of Sony, was looking to negotiate more favorable terms which would allow them to retain more control of games made for the new system. To gain leverage, Nintendo entered negotiations with Philips, which then claimed, after Nintendo changed its terms with Sony and re-entered into a deal with them, that Nintendo acted in bad faith and filed a lawsuit for damages related to expenses incurred during the negotiations with Philips. A judge in the Netherlands is now expected to throw out Philips' suit, agreeing to Nintendo's claim that it could have entered into a deal with Philips at any time and that Philips should have done its due diligence before taking the time to meet with Nintendo reps.

Philips was also rumored to be meeting with Sega earlier this year but those rumors turned out to be false.

*-Electronic Gaming Monthly, May 1992*

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### **Summer CES - June 15, 1992**

*"The best CES that I've ever been to, I have to say, was in 1992. You had what was ultimately the beginning of the big CD boom in video games being unleashed on the public that year, with Phillips, Sega, and Nintendo all showing off their shiny new CD-ROM machines. By then Phillips' machine had already been out for a year but this was the first time they were really pushing it hard, probably in response to the CD-ROM add-ons for the big game companies. Speaking of which, you had Sega showing off the Sega CD that year and it looked fantastic, definitely something I knew a lot of Genesis owners would want to have. And then there was Nintendo and Sony's machine. Holy shit, that was some serious tech. Right away I knew it would be the one to have, the graphics were unbelievable and everything was moving so smoothly on the machine, I mean, it was more powerful than the Neo Geo for the cost of what, a Neo Geo GAME? The TurboGrafx guys didn't even show up,*

*they knew they were done. If you're asking me when the 16-bit war was won, it was that day at CES 1992."*

-Ed Semrad, former editor-in-chief of Electronic Gaming Monthly, January 2008

*"Oh, I had tons of fun at CES that year! Broderbund and Nintendo invited me up to Chicago after we'd finished all the work on Carmen Sandiego and they asked me to spend the day at the Carmen Sandiego booth. I know nowadays at the trade shows they have these "booth babes" or whatever they call them, but it was much classier then, it helped that I was in my full costume and not some silly bathing suit or something! I mean, with the trenchcoat and the fedora I still looked pretty nice and I got a lot of looks. Everyone was really nice and it was a lot of fun, people did double takes when they were playing the game and they saw me standing there watching them. And teaching high school drama, of course I'll still have students on occasion come up to me and ask me if that's me in the game, even though none of them now were even alive when the game was released, I'll still get people asking!"*

-Jasmine Herrera, excerpted from "20 Years Later: Catching Up With Carmen" on IGN.com, February 23, 2013

*"I think we need to go back to the drawing board."*

-overheard near the Sega booth at the Summer 1992 CES

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## **Video Games At The Summer 1992 CES!**

Everyone's been looking forward to the big Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago, eagerly anticipating the latest offerings from Sega, Nintendo, NEC, Phillips, Atari, SNK, and all the other major hardware and software producers. In the spotlight this year are the CD-ROM peripherals for the Sega Genesis and the Super Nintendo, so let's give you the skinny on those right now!

First off, the Sega CD is bringing some major power to the table, but it'll cost you some major coin. It was unveiled at this summer's show and will be appearing on store shelves in October with a \$299 price tag. That's a big investment, but you'll be getting the latest tech for your buck. The Sega CD, renamed from the Mega CD (its Japanese name), is packing a 12.5 Mhz processor under its hood, and that will be on top of the Genesis' 7.67 Mhz processor, taking "Blast Processing" to a whole new level! It will display full-motion video at 15 frames per second, which, while not quite cinematic quality, is still good enough to display beautiful animated cutscenes and real-life video footage. Tom Kalinske, Sega's president, mentioned some very intriguing titles for the new system, including Night Trap, a full-motion video game where you'll be able to take control of the action, using tricks and traps to save a group of beautiful girls from some deadly killers! There's also an arcade-quality Final Fight game, a massive new installment of the popular RPG series Ultima, and, perhaps most intriguing of all, a game based on this year's hit movie Batman Returns, integrating real scenes from the movie into the gameplay. Kalinske has also promised a brand new Sonic game exclusive to the add-on. While the Sega CD itself was not on display at the show, prototypes of the system along with a few of the games were available to play and what we saw was definitely impressive.

Next up was Nintendo's unveiling of the Super Nintendo CD, the official name for its CD-

ROM peripheral. The peripheral will hit store shelves in December, and with a surprisingly economic \$199 price tag. Hitting store shelves at the same time, for those who don't yet have a Super Nintendo, is something called the Nintendo Playstation Combo Pack, featuring a Super Nintendo with an integrated SNES CD built right in! That will retail for \$349. Now, early adopters who bought the Super Nintendo for \$199 may feel ripped off that they're paying \$50 extra for the added peripheral over people who buy the Playstation combo, but Nintendo has them covered, announcing that a \$50 coupon that can be used toward the purchase of any SNES CD game is included in all \$199 add-on packages. In addition, Super Mario Kart, which Nintendo had on demonstration at the show, will be included with both the stand alone peripheral and the combo pack. The SNES CD is a technical marvel, and Sony has clearly done some impressive work. It clocks in at 21.477 Mhz, making it by far the most powerful video game device ever released. Nintendo has also addressed the problem of the SNES' limited memory, which would not allow it to utilize the full power of the SNES CD on its own. A special cartridge, which Nintendo calls "H.A.N.D.S." (Hyper Active Nintendo Data-transfer System), is plugged into the Super Nintendo's cartridge slot while the SNES CD is in use. This cartridge allows the peripheral to do most of the heavy lifting, giving the SNES console enough memory to take advantage of the SNES CD's power. The SNES CD also adds two extra controller slots to the system, allowing for four controllers to be plugged in at once (similar to the NES "Four Score" device). One of the games taking advantage of this is the aforementioned Super Mario Kart, which had its special 4-player mode available for demonstration at the show. Other games on display included Super Mario World 2, the sequel to the SNES' launch hit Super Mario World. While this game won't quite be ready for the SNES CD's launch, it is expected to be released sometime in the spring of 1993. Also appearing at the show: Final Fantasy: New Generation. The game is in a lot of ways similar to Final Fantasy II, only with three playable characters at a time instead of five, and with the ATB time bar appearing on screen instead of being hidden as it was in Final Fantasy II. Squaresoft had the game on display at CES, where we were able to play through one of the game's dungeons with the characters Benjamin, Kaeli, and Tristam. It was fun and fast-paced, with a more upbeat and rock-inspired soundtrack than Final Fantasy II, and should be more than enough to tide people over until Final Fantasy V (which will likely be renamed Final Fantasy III in the West) makes it to our shores. Dragon's Lair, said to be a launch title, was also demonstrated at the show, and is a very faithful reproduction of the arcade classic. Also appearing was a version of the popular "Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?" computer game with full-motion video cutscenes (in fact, the actress who portrays Carmen in the game was demonstrating the game at the booth!) and Capcom's Ghouls 'n Ghosts CD, a sequel to the ultra-challenging Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts. Capcom also had Street Fighter II available for demonstration, but it was the version for the normal SNES, with the SNES-CD version only present via a video showing how smoothly the game would run on the CD peripheral.

Ultimately, we felt that the Super Nintendo CD had the most impressive showing, and the game of the show would have to be Super Mario World 2. Even from the few levels available to play, it's clear that Nintendo's gone the extra mile to make this a worthy sequel to the SNES classic, with excellent music, very colorful and smooth graphics, and level design that rivals or exceeds its SNES predecessor. We wish Sega had had more to display, particularly from its Sega-CD Sonic game, but though we were more impressed with what Nintendo and Sony brought to the table, it's clear that both CD-ROM add-ons are going to be a tempting (if expensive) purchase for owners of their respective consoles.

-Excerpted from the debut issue of GameFan, September 1992

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"Hello, everyone, and welcome to the Summer 1992 CES. I have just a few words from everyone here at Nintendo of America as we eagerly look forward to our company's latest offerings. Our booth at CES 1992 was heavily geared toward promoting our new Super Nintendo CD add-on, and I just want to say that we have never been more excited to release a product. Our partners at Sony have exceeded expectations in creating a peripheral that works in tandem with the excellent Super Nintendo to bring gaming into the next generation. I know that you'll all be as impressed with their work as I have, and I hope that this device will not only create new opportunities for Nintendo developers and fans, but that it will also bring the exciting new medium of compact discs to the public at large, making the Super Nintendo your one stop shop for gaming, interactive multimedia experiences, and high-fidelity music.

We at Nintendo are proud of our reputation as a family-friendly company, and our partner companies are breaking new ground in interactive content. Some of the games for the Super Nintendo CD may not be for all of our players, and as fans grow and mature, some of their games are growing and maturing with them. We've created a brand new system for rating video game content that we'll be revealing in more detail in the coming months and working with our retail partners to ensure that our games are played by the appropriate people. We also want to address the worries of fans who just purchased a Super Nintendo last year and earlier this year, and who might be thinking of buying one in the months to come. The Super Nintendo CD will present unique gaming opportunities, but it is meant to compliment the Super Nintendo, not supplant it. Games will be released for both the regular SNES and the CD-ROM add-on for years to come, and indeed, though we have many CD-ROM games scheduled, we have more games scheduled for the Super Nintendo than we do for the CD-ROM add-on, and we will also continue to support the NES with exciting new games like Kirby's Adventure. The Super Nintendo is still the primary focus of our creative endeavors, while the SNES CD will allow us to expand our horizons and provide gaming experiences that would not be possible on a cartridge based system. Developers, both first-party and third-party, will have unparalleled freedom to create the games that you, the consumer, will want to play. At Nintendo, we have always been and will always be about the games, and with the Super Nintendo and our new CD-ROM add-on, the possibilities are, and will always be, endless.

Thank you all for coming.

-Keynote speech by Howard Lincoln at the 1992 Summer CES

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*"It has been two years since the release of our Super Famicom, the natural evolution of our old and venerable Family Computer. A decade ago, we had a vision for the Famicom, that it would be a tool in every family's home for the amusement of people both old and young, and we have succeeded in those aims beyond our wildest dreams. Today as I speak, we are about to release not one, but two new Nintendo products, which were made possible thanks to the support and technical skill of our new business partner, Sony Corporation. These two products will continue the evolution of the market of electronic entertainment.*

*The Super Famicom Computer Disk System, much like its predecessor the Famicom Computer Disk System which we released after the original Famicom, will allow our Super*

*Famicom to play bigger and better games, as technically advanced as those currently available in the computer market. As I speak, these games are nearing completion. We have just finished work on our first Mario game for the new Computer Disk System, Super Mario Kart, which will allow four people to experience fast-paced racing action simultaneously. We are also previewing at Spaceworld the sequel to our Super Famicom hit Super Mario World, on which Shigeru Miyamoto has been hard at work. These two games will demonstrate how our new amusement machine will be at the cutting edge of entertainment and bring Nintendo games to an entirely new scope for consumers and developers.*

*I believe that the CD-ROM is the future of the market, but Nintendo will continue to develop for and push the limits of our cartridge format for years to come. I believe Nintendo's consumers will be excited as they discover what the future has in store."*

-Translated transcript of Nintendo president Hiroshi Yamauchi's keynote speech at Nintendo Spaceworld, August 10, 1992

*"Hello everyone. It's a pleasure being here today, speaking to the press, video game retailers, and fans here at Spaceworld 1992. For those who don't know me, my name is Ken Kutaragi. I'm an electronics engineer, some of you probably know me better as "Crazy Kutaragi", you said I was crazy when I decided to make the SPC sound chip for Nintendo, but had I not done that we wouldn't be here today so I think I don't look quite so crazy now!*

*Many of you here have seen the new CD-ROM add on for the Super Famicom, you've gotten to play with it and look at some of the games. The colors are improved, the graphics move much more smoothly but I think the most important aspect of this add-on is the improvements to the sound of the Super Famicom. Don't get me wrong, I'm very proud of my work on the SPC sound chip but here, with the Audio CD Redbook capabilities, you can have the sound of a real orchestra in a game, or even full voice acting which was not possible on the Super Famicom. We have 4-player games available right out of the box, similarly to some hit arcade titles. Speaking of arcade hits, you've also seen our version of Capcom's Street Fighter II which I believe moves much more smoothly and realistically. We also have the capability to provide a full cinematic experience as demonstrated in Dragon's Lair, which Sony is publishing, this classic arcade game has been compared to an interactive movie and I think you'll agree when I say that this is the most arcade accurate version of the game to date, in fact with the Super Famicom CD's improved color palette, it looks even better than it does in the arcade.*

*There are other advantages to this system, utilizing the Super Famicom's cartridge port we will be able to create additional functionality for the consumer. We've explored karaoke as an option, very popular here in Japan but we may expand its popularity throughout the globe by enabling any family to have a karaoke device in their own home, perhaps utilizing a Sony music player as well. Having had a long relationship with Nintendo since 1988, when my own audio chip was accepted as the device that would power the Super Famicom's sound, and continuing through the meeting that created this alliance between Nintendo and Sony that will bring not only the Super Famicom Compact Disk System but the dual combination console known as the Play Station, I am glad to see our alliance opening up the potential of new markets via the proliferation of audio and photo CD technology. These new technologies, combined with the Disk System's incredible video game capabilities, are only the first step into this new potential market, which I call 'interactive entertainment'."*

-Translation and transcript of a speech by Ken Kutaragi at Nintendo Spaceworld 1992

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### **Space World 1992 - Super Nintendo CD Unveiled!**

Here in Japan at Nintendo's annual Shoshinkai Software Exhibition, also known as Space World, the main focus of the show has been the new gadgets in town, born out of the partnership between Nintendo and Sony. The Super Nintendo CD, an add-on for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System, and the Nintendo Playstation, which combines the SNES and the new add-on into one super-console. The Super Nintendo CD will cost 29,980 yen, which translates to around \$210 here in the States. As for the Playstation, it will cost 49,800 yen, or around \$350. That's MUCH less than the price of purchasing both the Genesis and the Sega CD together, which in American dollars would currently run you about \$500 when the add-on drops in October. That's before the recently announced price cut from Sega, which has cut the price of a Mega CD in Japan to 46,000 yen. That's a significant price cut, but it has yet to be seen whether they'll slash the price in the States. Just how will the company of the blue hedgehog fare? Much of that will depend on the games for both systems.

As for Nintendo, their early offering for the new CD-ROM is Super Mario Kart. Western gamers will see the game offered as a pack-in when the Super Nintendo CD drops in December, but Japanese gamers will have to buy it separately. Nevertheless, it's an exciting product, with a full range of 256 colors and fast-paced action with a high frame rate. The game's cast of characters is strong, featuring Mario, Luigi, Princess Toadstool, Toad, Yoshi, Donkey Kong, and even a Koopa Troopa and King Bowser will be playable. The game will be the first to take advantage of the added controller ports on the add-on with 4-player capabilities! While only a few tracks will offer the 4-player option, as opposed to the 2-player modes which will allow grand prix play and full selection of all tracks, the game offers some serious multiplayer madness and there were long lines at Nintendo's booth for this game.

Also demonstrated here in Japan, playable for the first time, is the CD-ROM version of the ultra-popular Capcom fighting game Street Fighter II. Based on the new arcade release "Street Fighter II: Champion Edition", the game is simply amazing, running as smoothly as and in some spots even better than the arcade version. The four boss characters from the original are now playable, and all characters have new moves. The game is full of new graphical detail, with hundreds of voice samples included. Another advantage is that in Japan, the price will be lower than the SNES cartridge, owing to the cheaper price of CDs as opposed to ROM cartridges. This may end up being a general rule, allowing perhaps for the CD-ROM add-on to pay for itself over time via cheaper game purchases. Also announced for next year is a new version of the game, Street Fighter II: Hyper Fighting, which will bring some of the Champion Edition enhancements to the normal SNES and may see a release for the SNES CD as well.

Aside from Nintendo, Squaresoft had a decent presence at Space World as well, with a Japanese version of their American launch title Final Fantasy: New Generation. The Japanese version is expected to be released in 1993. Another prospective 1993 title is something called "Project Mana", no footage was shown but Square staff did briefly discuss the game which has been in the works for nearly two years now. Whatever Square comes up with for this game will surely be a surprise and likely a pleasant one at that.

-Excerpted from an article in the October 1992 issue of Electronic Gaming Monthly, written by Peter Molyneux

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### **August 24, 1992**

The Super Famicom Computer Disk System, along with its Play Station combination console, launched in Japan with great fanfare. 500,000 units of the add-on and 150,000 units of the combination set were shipped, and most would sell out in the first few days, owing to the Japanese fervor over new technology and the extensive marketing campaign Nintendo had launched in Japan for the console. There were three games available at launch: Super Mario Kart, Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition, and Dragon's Lair, with most purchasers of the add-on and console buying Super Mario Kart and Street Fighter II at the same time. The early sellouts bode well for Nintendo's plans to launch the system in the West later that year and in Europe early in 1993, and with profits from early sales, Nintendo began the marketing and promotion campaigns for the West in earnest.

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*"I remember, last year I was going to put my foot down and say no to the Super Nintendo, I explained how it was just a marketing tool to make you spend more money, but I relented and I ended up buying it for him for his birthday, and now they're coming out with this new thing? I'm pretty ticked off but it just proves that I was right, they just keep squeezing more and more money out of you and this is the trick they use, they sucker you in and make you spend more and more. Well fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice... I won't get fooled again."*

-a concerned mother, quoted from a news report on the Super Nintendo CD, December 2, 1992

*"Parents are in a fury, as expected, on the eve of the release of Nintendo's hot new CD-ROM peripheral, fresh on the heels of Sega's CD peripheral release earlier this year. Those who already spent \$200 on Nintendo's shiny new toy are feeling ripped off at the news of a \$200 upgrade barely more than a year after the Super Nintendo's release, and the Super Nintendo CD as it's called is not expected to be a hot seller this holiday season."*

-Phillip Elmer-DeWitt, Time magazine, December 7, 1992

*"Am I excited, yeah I'm excited, this thing is gonna be awesome. You get to play CDs, there's Street Fighter, you can play with four people and I heard that maybe you could watch movies on it some day? I'll definitely be gaming on it as much as I can, I've got a lot of stuff going on right now but whenever I get some downtime I know what I'm gonna be doing."*

-Leonardo DiCaprio, Entertainment Tonight, December 1, 1992

*"...have I heard about the new Nintendo what? ...no, I'm sure it'll be a big boost to the economy. Kids love the games."*

-President-elect Bill Clinton, MTV News, December 3, 1992

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*Over the past decade, Nintendo has brought you high quality interactive family entertainment. Now, as we prepare to launch our Super Nintendo CD peripheral, we see that our fanbase has grown exponentially, and that many of our fans who started out playing games such as Donkey Kong in arcades or Super Mario Bros. on the NES are growing and maturing. These fans have made it known that they want some of their games to mature with them. In addition, several of Nintendo's software partners have expressed their desire to produce more mature, story-driven games for our new CD peripheral, with content similar to what you would see in highly acclaimed movies such as the recent Silence of the Lambs or Terminator 2. While Nintendo will always be family company first, we have decided to allow our software partners to pursue new creative avenues on the Super Nintendo CD, and as a result, some of the games that we will be approving for the system may not be suitable for all of our players.*

*Nintendo strives to remain a family-friendly company supporting entertainment that all ages can enjoy. We have created a new ratings system for our CD-ROM games, that will be clearly displayed on all games approved for sale, letting you the consumer know the appropriate audience for a certain game. The ratings symbols are as follows:*

*A green symbol will be marked with **GA - General Audiences/Appropriate For All Ages**, letting you know that this game adheres to Nintendo's standards for family-suitable entertainment. All first-party Nintendo games will conform to the standards for this rating.*

*A yellow symbol will be marked with **13 - Parental Advisory/13 And Up** with additional ratings descriptors. These games may contain mild or moderate violence, mild language, and/or thematic elements that may be objectionable to certain audiences.*

*A red symbol will be marked with **17 - Mature Players Only/17 And Up** with additional ratings descriptors. These games may contain strong, realistic violence, strong language, and/or some sexual themes. We strongly encourage all of our retail partners not to sell any 17 rated games to anyone under 17 without the presence of a parent or guardian.*

*Please also note that Nintendo will never approve games that contain highly graphic violence or strong sexual elements regardless of our ratings system. We encourage parents of children who plan on purchasing the new Super Nintendo CD peripheral to educate themselves on the ratings descriptors with our convenient pamphlets at retail locations wherever Nintendo games are sold, or by watching our brief videos at Nintendo kiosks. We will also be rolling out a television ad campaign alongside our promotional campaign to further educate parents and other concerned individuals about Nintendo's new ratings system.*

*With the new Nintendo ratings system in place, our talented software producers will have far more creative freedom to make the games that all Nintendo fans will want to play. We hope that the Super Nintendo CD ushers in a new age of interactive entertainment, where gamers of all generations can come together and enjoy the best of what Nintendo has to offer.*

-Nintendo president Howard Lincoln, from the opening segment of a Super Nintendo CD informational video played at retail kiosks starting in October 1992

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### **Super Mario Kart**

Steve: 8

Ed: 9 (quote: "The 4-player action is this game's biggest attraction, even with only 6 of the tracks and 2 of the battle stages available in 4-player mode, you'll want to race them over and over again with three of your buddies, though all the shells and bananas lying about in the game might test some friendships!")

Martin: 9

Sushi-X: 8

### **Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition**

Steve: 9

Ed: 9

Martin: 9

Sushi-X: 10 (quote: "The greatest fighting game ever released on any home console, bar none. Save your quarters and buy an SNES CD with this game, the action is just as fast and fierce and the character animations are as smooth as anything you'll see at the arcade. Plus, you can finally take M. Bison and his super-powerful moves for a spin.")

### **Final Fantasy: New Generation**

Steve: 9

Ed: 8

Martin: 9 (quote: "Better than Final Fantasy II? It's awfully close, but the fact that you get to choose your characters puts this over the top for me. Take your party of three for a spin and restore the crystals as you traverse a colorful new world. The game's rock-inspired soundtrack really shines on the SNES CD's high-fidelity audio.")

Sushi-X: 7

### **Sewer Shark**

Steve: 7

Ed: 6

Martin: 8

Sushi-X: 7 (quote: "It's like playing a Hollywood blockbuster. The only problem is that it's too short, but it's a good show of what the peripheral is capable of. The video plays in a lot more of the screen than on the Sega CD's movie games.")

### **Dragon's Lair**

Steve: 5

Ed: 4

Martin: 7 (quote: "It's the same as back in the day but a lot more colorful. There are a couple of added scenes but nothing too special, it's still an arcade classic and it's the perfect game for younger players.")

Sushi-X: 5

-Electronic Gaming Monthly reviews the SNES CD launch titles, February 1993

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\*Several kids are shown running into the room and turning on a Super Nintendo, having fun with Super Mario World and Zelda: Link To The Past before one of the kid's dads comes into the room with a new box.\*

Kid: Hey dad, the Super Nintendo's great!

Dad: Don't you wish it could be even better?

\*Some of the kids laugh.\*

Kid 2: There's no WAY you could make the Super Nintendo any better.

\*The dad opens the box and takes out the Super Nintendo CD, connecting it to the Super Nintendo as the kids watch curiously.\*

Dad: You wanna bet? \*pops in a CD\*

\*Suddenly, the screen is filled with the high-speed action of Super Mario Kart as the kids look on in awe. Dad brings out two more controllers and suddenly him and three of the kids are playing Super Mario Kart, having the time of their lives.\*

Narrator: The hottest thing in video games just got even hotter!

\*Now scenes of all sorts of games are shown, from Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition to Sewer Shark and Final Fantasy: New Generation, along with Super Turrican, Double Switch, and even a couple of quick scenes of Super Mario World 2, interspersed with scenes of the dad and the kids having a great time.\*

Narrator: Ten times the speed, four times the colors, with hi-fi CD audio for maximum immersion! The Super Nintendo CD-ROM peripheral connects to your Super Nintendo Entertainment System, creating richer, fuller, LOUDER experiences that you've never seen or heard before. Play all new games like Super Mario Kart and Super Mario World 2, play your favorite music CDs, play all new interactive movies that bring your favorite games closer to reality than ever before. It's the Super Nintendo CD.

\*Shows both the add-on console and the SNES/SNES-CD combo\*

Narrator: Available as an add-on for your existing Super Nintendo or as the Playstation Combo Set. Comes with Super Mario Kart, an additional controller, and accessory kit.

***The Super Nintendo CD. Take it to the next level.***

-Super Nintendo CD's initial American launch commercial, first shown during the Cowboys/Giants NFL game on Thanksgiving Day 1992 and played throughout the holiday season. Commercial also displayed a release date of December 4, 1992, after that day it displayed an "Available Now" message.

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## **December 4, 1992**

The Super Nintendo CD launched in North America. 600,000 add-on units were shipped with an MSRP of \$199, while 150,000 Playstation Combo Sets (SNES/CD-add on combined) were shipped with an MSRP of \$349. Included with the add-on was Super Mario Kart, an SNES controller, a set of connecting cables, and a coupon for \$50 off any Super Nintendo CD game. The Playstation Combo Set shipped with Super Mario Kart, two SNES controllers, and connecting cables. The launch, though covered by many news outlets, was not nearly as successful as the Japanese launch, with few sell-outs reported in the first week of sales. With the economy still flagging and North American buyers reluctant to purchase an expensive new peripheral so soon after the launch of the Super Nintendo, Nintendo expected the low sales, though sales were a bit lower even than their projections. The CD add-on launched with five games: Super Mario Kart (the pack-in title), Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition, Final Fantasy: New Generation, Sewer Shark, and Dragon's Lair. Among the launch games, Street Fighter II was the highest seller, with a very high purchase rate among add-on buyers (particularly ones who shelled out the full \$349 for the SNES/CD combo). As the launch week wore on, Nintendo hoped that the upcoming Christmas season would pick up sales.

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*"We had a lot of units shipped. Sega only shipped 50,000 of their Sega CD back in October and they sold through very quickly, while we were hoping that we could provide an SNES CD for everyone who wanted one. And sales in Japan were good, so we shipped far more of them. said we should have shipped around 250,000. Shipping 600,000 units and only selling about 100,000 or so in the first couple of weeks, that looked bad at the time. But we were outselling the Sega CD and our sales were constant. They weren't dropping, we weren't having 100,000 sell one week and only 20,000 the next. People were saving money. They were thinking about the new big game. So that was a good sign. It was still the Super Nintendo generating the big Christmas numbers, but the SNES CD was doing well even with all the unsold units on shelves."*

-excerpt from an interview with Nintendo of America president Howard Lincoln, Forbes magazine, March 24, 1997

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## **IT'S HERE!**

The Super Nintendo CD hits store shelves this month, and you've never seen anything like it. It's 32 bits of power-packed visuals and incredible sound that will take your SNES to the next level. We've got 56 pages of coverage on every single launch game, giving you the tips and tricks you'll need to power your way through these tough new adventures. We'll also take you under the hood of the SNES' newest peripheral to find out just what makes this baby tick. While not every Nintendo fan will be able to purchase the SNES CD right away, we here at Nintendo Power absolutely recommend making the leap at some point in the future. From everything we've seen so far, the possibilities of this thing are absolutely endless!

-Introduction to Nintendo Power's coverage of the SNES CD launch, December 1992

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## **SUPER NINTENDO CD-ROM**

### **Nintendo Co. Ltd./Sony Corporation**

The Super Nintendo CD-ROM peripheral connects to the Super Nintendo Entertainment System to provide arcade-quality gameplay and high-fidelity sound for your favorite video games. Of note: Super Mario Kart, a fast-paced go-kart racer that can support four players simultaneously.

-Popular Mechanics, "Design and Engineering Awards 1993", January 1993

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*The Super Nintendo CD is undoubtedly an impressive piece of technology. The processor and storage capacity of the games not only rivals the hyper-expensive Neo Geo, it surpasses it. Street Fighter II plays just like it does in the arcade, maybe even a little bit better. The Mode 7 action of Super Mario Kart zips by just as fast as anything in Sonic the Hedgehog, and there's no slowdown in 4-player mode, even if only a limited selection of tracks are available. The FMVs of Sewer Shark fill MUCH more of the screen than Sega CD's version and the visuals are significantly clearer, making the Sega CD seem outdated by comparison. Make no mistake, Nintendo is going all out in supporting this thing and if it catches on, it's likely this will end up being a successor console to the Super Nintendo rather than a mere add-on. While Nintendo promises to continue supporting the Super Nintendo and while their policy requiring publishers who put out a game for the CD to also produce an SNES cartridge game, either a dual-release of the same game or a cartridge-specific title should keep the SNES alive and ticking as long as the NES has been in the post-SNES release world, the fact that Super Mario World 2 will be a CD-ROM game and not a cartridge game is telling. Normally I'd be worried about such a thing but I'm so impressed with the Super Nintendo CD that I for one welcome our new optical overlords. Let's hope that Sega learns from what Nintendo is doing and puts more support toward its new CD peripheral. Sonic CD is looking excellent and there are some other promising titles on the horizon. 1993 is looking quite promising indeed.*

-Dave Halverson, GameFan Magazine, February 1993

*In conclusion, we didn't get quite enough time with the Super Nintendo CD to provide a numerical rating in time for this year's buyer's guide, but my initial impressions were all positive. The SNES CD seems like much more of a natural progression than Sega's peripheral, with an increased focus on the gameplay rather than just showing off the tech. At \$199, the price is surprisingly low for what you actually get, and indeed, for new SNES buyers I'd recommend springing for the \$349 combo set. If you're unsure (or on a tight budget), reviews for Super Mario World 2, the system's first truly major game, will show up in EGM sometime around May or June. Again, despite the lack of a numerical score, my two word summation of the SNES CD thus far is this: "Highly recommended."*

-Ed Semrad, 1993 Electronic Gaming Monthly Video Game Buyer's Guide

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**December 25, 1992**

In Petaluma, California, an 11-year-old girl opened her last Christmas present. It's a big box and even her mother doesn't have a clue what's inside.

"Oh my God, dad!" shouted the girl as she looked at the large box sitting in front of her, a brand new Playstation Combo Set. "This is so cool!"

The girl's mother looked incredulously at her husband, glad that her daughter liked the gift but unsure if a \$350 video game system was the best thing to be buying for her.

"We needed a CD player too," said her father. "Her birthday's coming up next week, figured this could count for both. The guy at the store showed me one of the games, it looked really fun."

The girl's mother still wasn't quite sure but the smile on her daughter's face as she looked at the back of the box removed some of her doubts... plus, she did want to hear some of her favorite songs on CD if she could find them in the stores.

"Okay... but she can only play it an hour a day. On weekends."

"Sure," said the girl, still looking at the pictures on the back of the box. "This Carmen Sandiego game looks kind of fun. Is it...around here somewhere?"

"The guy at the store said they only had four games for it but it comes with a game," said the girl's father, pointing out the Super Mario Kart logo on the box. "I asked about other games and he said they'd be coming later on."

"Here, you should open up your last present now, Marc," said the girl's mother, handing her husband a much smaller box. The girl pushed the Playstation Combo Set gently aside to watch her father open the gift. Unlike many of the other lucky kids who'd gotten the expensive new toy that year, she wasn't an avid gamer and could contain her excitement enough to wait until the Christmas festivities were concluded before tearing open the box and playing the SNES CD.

But make no mistake, when she got back to school, Polly Klaas would be the envy of her friends when she told them about what she got for Christmas.

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*"I remember when the call came in from Square in January 1993. The early sales figures from New Generation were out and they were going to make a really quick decision on whether or not to bring Final Fantasy V over. I know it was really close. The game had sold well, but it wasn't a major hit like Street Fighter II was. I got the call at work in the afternoon. Final Fantasy V, which would be called Final Fantasy III in the States, was a go. They wanted a summer 1993 release which gave us about three months. I told them I could do it in two."*

-Ted Woolsey, excerpted from an interview with RPGamer.com in 2002

*"If you're asking about the moment when my sister and me decided that we wanted to make video games for a living, it had to be when we first got Pickton Lake. Ariel and I got it*

*with the Super Nintendo CD for our 8th birthdays and it was the best birthday ever. That game was amazing, I know it's more of a cult classic now but for us it was just awesome, those two kids were just like us and we loved the spooky atmosphere and fun dialogue. We couldn't stop playing it, we'd take turns beating it over and over trying to get through it the fastest or get all the secret items. It was so much fun. It was a big inspiration for our first game, Terror Trip. The idea of the brother/sister protagonists? So Pickton Lake."*

-Alex Hirsch, co-founder of Pyramid Games, excerpted from the Kotaku.com article "Meet The Twins Who Are Taking The Indie Gaming World By Storm", January 14, 2013

*"The definitive version of 'Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?' appeared on the Super Nintendo CD in February 1993. Considered the first major post-release title for the add-on, it featured challenging new geography puzzles, a variety of memorable suspects and characters, and it was one of the first games to use both live-action and animated FMV sequences. Yes, some of the acting seems cheesy now, but it helped set the mood of the game and kept things fun and interesting."*

-Quoted from "The Top 10 Educational Video Games Of All Time: #2- Where in The World Is Carmen Sandiego? (SNES CD)" on Screw Attack

*"The new CD-ROM peripheral for the Super Nintendo video game system may have its first controversy. Mad Dog McCree is a new western-based video game where you use a realistic-looking play gun to shoot characters, played by real life actors, on screen. While there's no blood or guts in the game, some say that gunning down real people is beyond the pale. It's the first game to earn a rating of 17 from Nintendo's in-house ratings board, but parents say that retail stores often ignore the ratings to sell this game to kids. Tonight at 11, we'll talk to some local parents who think that the fun's gone too far."*

-reporter at WKRC-TV, Cincinnati, from the March 25, 1993 newscast

*"You let go of my sister you bug-eyed vampire creep!"*

-Cody, Level 16, Pickton Lake

*"I would've loved to stay in Paris, but they ran out of crepes. It seems you just missed me. Better luck next time, kids."*

-Carmen Sandiego (Jasmine Herrera), *Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?* (SNES-CD version)

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*And at the end of January, the Super Nintendo CD finally gets some post-launch love with a pair of new games sure to tickle the fancy of anyone who's starting to get bored of Super Mario Kart. On the 18th, it's Atlus' Run Saber. Also releasing for the Super Nintendo, the CD-ROM version features enhanced audio, two additional levels, and a higher level of graphical detail. Then we've got Double Switch, launching on the 25th. While we wait to hear any word about the controversial but sexy Night Trap on Nintendo's peripheral, Double Switch is a much more family-friendly trap 'em up game sure to appeal to older kids and their parents alike. You have to work to free the game's protagonist, Eddie, from a basement before criminals and mobsters get to him. With a little bit of Universal-style horror thrown in, the game is actually considered somewhat better than Night Trap and*

*should be a welcome addition to the SNES-CD's growing FMV library.*

-Excerpted from the February 1993 issue of GamePro

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### **Nintendo Working With The Jim Henson Company?**

Nintendo recently announced a partnership that they've been keeping secret for the last year, but that we can finally announce here in Nintendo Power. Nintendo creative staff have been in talks with the Jim Henson company on a number of still-secret projects, one of which is an upcoming video game for the SNES CD peripheral. In fact, Shigeru Miyamoto and puppeteering legend Frank Oz recently appeared together at the Jim Henson Company Lot, where a Nintendo creative team has been working for several months. More details are soon to come and we can't wait to announce them in a future issue!

-Excerpted from the January 1993 issue of Nintendo Power

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### **February 15, 1993**

"Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?" was released for the Super Nintendo CD. Based on the classic educational PC game, the Super Nintendo CD version featured a brand new set of crimes and clues and an interface optimized for the Super Nintendo CD. While keyboard support, utilizing the optional keyboard peripheral that had been quietly released a few weeks after the SNES CD's release, was available, the game also offered a non-keyboard mode that allowed for multiple-choice guessing for most of the game's inputs. The game was influenced heavily by the successful PBS game show released a couple of years earlier, and Lynne Thigpen played The Chief in some of the game's live-action segments, while relatively unknown actress Jasmine Herrera played the tricky thief Carmen Sandiego. The game also featured about 30 minutes worth of animated segments, notably the intro video (utilizing Rockapella's theme song from the game show, with the line "Monday thru Friday at 5!" changed to "Super Nintendo CD!") and some animated travelogues of the various geographic locations in the game.

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### **Pickton Lake**

*Take brother and sister Cody and Cassie through 16 levels of platforming horror action in this exciting new game for the SNES CD as they try to rescue their abducted friends from spooky ghosts and zombies. While comparable to the NES horror game Friday the 13th, this is a FAR better made game and you'll actually have quite a bit of fun. With the ability to detour off the beaten path for hidden items and with about 300 different voice acted lines, the game utilizes the SNES CD's capabilities well while remaining a super-fun platformer at its core.*

Graphics: 4.5

Sound: 4.0

Control: 4.0

FunFactor: 5.0

Challenge: Intermediate

### **Super Turrican**

*An incredibly fun run-and-gun game in the vein of Contra, it's comparable to Contra III in terms of play-style and with the SNES CD's enhanced graphics it's in some ways the superior game, offering a lot in terms of smooth animation and graphical detail. We're glad Seika decided to create this game for the CD peripheral in lieu of the planned SNES version, though a dual release might have been nice for those who have yet to hop on board with the peripheral yet. Make no mistake, this might just be the best game for the SNES CD to date.*

Graphics: 5.0  
Sound: 5.0  
Control: 5.0  
FunFactor: 5.0  
Challenge: Advanced

### **Mad Dog McCree:**

*This light-gun game, the SNES CD's first, is a fun diversion despite its cheesy dialog and at times spotty controls. The option to use the SuperScope for those who have it from the SNES is nice, but you'll do a lot better with the Justifier gun (though it's sold separately). It's definitely fun, but a little bit on the short side, making it a difficult sell if you're buying at full price. It's a nice demonstration of the SNES CD's abilities but hopefully we get a meatier light-gun game in the future.*

Graphics: 4.5  
Sound: 3.0  
Control: 3.5  
FunFactor: 3.5  
Challenge: Intermediate

-Excerpted from GamePro's reviews of March 1993's SNES CD releases, from their May 1993 issue

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List of Nintendo Power cover subjects from October 1992-March 1993 (*italics signify OTL cover*):

October 1992- The Simpsons: Bart's Nightmare  
November 1992- *Super Star Wars*  
December 1992- Super Mario Kart  
January 1993- *The Magical Quest: Starring Mickey Mouse*  
February 1993- Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?  
March 1993- *Tiny Toon Adventures: Buster Busts Loose*

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**April 1, 1993**

Hiroshi Yamauchi reviewed the sales numbers from the first four months of Super Nintendo CD sales in North America. Nearly 350,000 units had been sold, more than half of them before Christmas 1992. Sales had been progressing at a slow but steady pace after the sharp drop-off from the holiday season. There'd been a brief spike in sales from the Carmen Sandiego game, but it was a very small spike and sales were beginning to dip slightly. The true test, of course, would come once Super Mario World 2 was released later that week. It had already been released in Japan in February and had done extremely well, pushing total sales of the SNES CD in Japan past the one million mark, while reviews had been excellent, including the first ever perfect 40 from Famitsu.

Yamauchi couldn't be blamed for his trepidation. The Sega CD was outselling the Super Nintendo CD in North America, though it was by a very small margin. Big games could only do so much, if sales didn't pick up soon, more than a few people would start to consider the peripheral a failure. Only Ken Kutaragi's words of encouragement over the last few days calmed his fears, though Kutaragi had been doing that for Norio Ohga as well. He thought about calling up Howard Lincoln and telling him to think up ways to boost sales, but he didn't want to cause friction with his North American branch the way that Sega had begun to do. The continued robust sales of the Super Nintendo were another comfort to him. The company hadn't placed all of its eggs in one basket...indeed, with the continued success of the Gameboy and even the old NES, the company had four. There would be time to worry about the future of the SNES CD later. For now, Hiroshi Yamauchi would be content to wait and see.

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*"Super Mario World 2 is the best Mario game I've ever played and quite possibly the best video game I've ever played. The world is enormous, the music and graphics are quantum leaps from the original game...indeed, it makes the original Super Mario World look like a tech demo. You wanted a reason to buy the Super Nintendo CD? Here it is."*

-Ed Semrad, from his 10/10 review of Super Mario World 2 in the May 1993 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"So you finally get to the final boss, which of course is Bowser, and he's in this big tank thing, which looks awesome and has so many moving parts, way more than anything seen in a Nintendo game before. The background is this hellish firescape of burning parapets, it's like Toadstool's castle but in an Ozzy Osbourne video or something, and then Toadstool (she's Peach now of course) is lowered on a rope and she's tied up and gagged, and you see her eyes go wide when she sees Mario and then she kind of moves around a bit (great animation here too by the way), and the gag comes down and she lets out this loud "MAAAAAARRRIIOOOOO!!!!" before she gets lifted back up and the fight starts. We've never even HEARD her talk before but that yell for Mario gets you so hyped up for the fight. I mean you knew this was going to be awesome."*

-Ravi Arkanian, from the article "Mario Memories: Super Mario World 2" on IGN.com, published February 17, 2009

*"I must confess, the big reason for the delay of Super Mario World 2 from the SNES CD launch to the following spring was mostly on me. Miyamoto-san asked if I would create*

*some extra music for the game, of course we remembered the last Super Mario World only had a few basic themes for the level music but he wanted about 15 different tracks to be played, instead of just the three or four from the original game, so it took a few months longer to compose those. Miyamoto-san and I both wanted them to be perfect, it was pretty much the last thing we nailed down was the score for the game."*

-Koji Kondo, Game Informer interview, January 2007

*"You collected all eight parts of my time machine! Thank you so much! It's time for me to take you to the Mushroom Kingdom of the future!"*

-Professor Toadstein, preparing to take Mario to the first of two secret worlds once all eight time machine parts are gathered in *Super Mario World 2*

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## **SUPER MARIO WORLD 2: The Basics**

Super Mario World 2 is a direct sequel to the SNES cartridge game Super Mario World. The game takes place almost immediately after the original. Upon returning from Dinosaur Land, Mario, Luigi, and Princess Toadstool throw a massive party at Toadstool's castle, celebrating their return and also honoring Yoshi for his help. The party, however, is crashed by an angry Bowser and his Koopalings, who kidnap Toadstool and Yoshi and send the brothers flying to the other end of the Mushroom Kingdom. Bowser's Koopa Troop has taken over the entire kingdom and the two Mario brothers must fight their way back to Toadstool's castle to save her.

The game has eight main worlds, unlike the original which had only seven. Also unlike the original, each level has a name, so instead of something like "Yoshi's Island 1", you'd have "1-1: Koopas On The Beach". There are 120 total "goals", with around 75 total levels spread out over the eight main worlds and two secret worlds. Once the second secret world is clear, you can elect to play as Luigi in a single-player game (otherwise he's only available for multiplayer). The eight worlds are as follows:

World 1: Mushroom Beach (A beach-themed world similar to Yoshi's Island in the original, with a few more swimming parts added in.)

World 2: Steamy Jungle (A jungle-themed world)

World 3: The Crystal Sea (An entirely aquatic based world except for a large undersea dome at the end where a couple of levels take place)

World 4: Creepy Caverns (A world of caves and mysterious passages, somewhat similar to Vanilla Dome)

World 5: Heroic Heights (A sky-themed world with a mountain level or two)

World 6: Toad City (A big city with towering crystal buildings)

World 7: Barrel Volcano (Fire-themed worlds)

World 8: Bowser's Factory (Bowser's stronghold, a massive factory complex he's built around Toadstool's castle)

Secret World 1: Mushroom Kingdom 3000 (A group of futuristic levels)

Secret World 2: Rainbow Road (Based on the Rainbow Road from Super Mario Kart, features

eight ultra-challenging levels, equivalent to SMW's Special Zone)

The game can be regarded as sort of the Super Mario Bros. 3 to Super Mario World's Super Mario Bros., more of an incremental update than a total gameplay overhaul. Graphics and sound are vastly improved, the SNES CD allows for improved animation on the characters and very detailed and animated backgrounds, with a well-defined soundtrack. Gameplay-wise, a double jump has been added to Mario's repertoire, if he's running he can jump once and once he lands he can jump again to reach new heights. The Fire Flower and Cape return, along with the Frog and Tanooki Suits from Super Mario Bros. 3. In addition, there's a Mini Mario "power-up" that allows Mario to get smaller to reach secret passages, and finally there's a Jet Mario powerup that enables him to travel incredibly fast (some critics pointed out that this seemed to be deliberately aimed at Sonic's speedy reputation), when Mario is running fast he can blast right through enemies and leap long distances but it takes a while to slow down so pitfalls become a major hazard. The Koopa Kids return as bosses, one per world, with Iggy first as usual, then followed by Larry, Roy, Morton, Wendy, Lemmy, and finally Ludwig. The Koopa Kids don't fight Mario directly, however. Instead they either mount huge machines or summon large creatures to battle Mario, always related somehow to the world's main theme. Secret exits are of course still present, with one secret exit even present in the initial beach world. The game is a BIT more difficult than Super Mario World overall but still a fairly easy game for platforming veterans, however, the level design is much more intuitive and creative. Branching paths in some levels give players more choices about what sorts of challenges they want to tackle (and add to the replay value of the game), other levels (particularly ghost houses, fortresses, and castles) feature a variety of hidden doors and traps to keep players guessing.

The game also notably featured the debut of Charles Martinet as the voice of Mario and Luigi. Mario's voice could be heard mostly in the form of shouts or a few words as he made his way around levels. The game introduced the idea of a more mild-mannered, friendly Mario, as opposed to the gruff Brooklyn voice from previous adaptations of the game. The game featured a few cutscenes (not animated, but shown in a series of images and on-screen narration) between worlds, showing Mario and Luigi adventuring, or Toadstool in Bowser's castle (sometimes trying to escape, sometimes showing kindness to the Koopa Kids or once even to Bowser). It gave the main characters of the series some personality and the game received praise for its limited but amusing narrative which added a bit of flavor and plot to the action of the game.

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### **April 5, 1993**

Super Mario World 2 is launched in North America for the Super Nintendo CD (the PAL release would come on April 26). The game is launched to rave reviews from a variety of gaming publications, including two of a possible four perfect 10s in Electronic Gaming Monthly, a perfect 40 in Famitsu (the first ever), perfect 5s from Gamepro, and many many more. The game sells over 200,000 copies on launch day in North America, making it thus far the biggest opening day for an SNES CD game. The game gets a 24-page cover story in Nintendo Power, which covers the first five worlds of the game (the magazine teases the

remaining three worlds and mentions the existence of at least one secret world, then advises readers to buy the 204 page Official Player's Guide for more tips). It also becomes the second SNES CD software release to get coverage on mainstream news stations (the first being the controversial light gun game Mad Dog McCree) and the first to be mentioned in a positive light. It drives sales of the peripheral and combo set in both North America and Japan, the former to its largest sales week to date (in Japan the launch week was slightly better). Nintendo executives, particularly Hiroshi Yamauchi, are pleased with the game's success. There are two other games released for the Super Nintendo CD on that day: Classics Of Great Literature, more of an educational tool than a game, which featured the texts of ten great classic novels and offered quiz games based on them, and an adaptation of SimEarth: The Living Planet, which would later that year make its way to the Super Nintendo cartridge system in a slightly less detailed version. Due to being overshadowed by the juggernaut release of Super Mario World 2, the game becomes an instant cult classic, though it's not as well loved as the SNES' 1991 release of SimCity. Super Mario World 2's release signals to the gaming world that the SNES CD is here to stay, and signals to Sega that Sonic CD will need to be an all-time great to top it.

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"Super Mario World 2 was THE killer game of April 1993 for the Super Nintendo CD, but hey, what about all the other games that got released that month? Yes, there were other games that got released that month and I played them all. Here are some mini-reviews. You're welcome.

Classics Of Great Literature (released April 5): Wait, this isn't a game! And I'm not about to read all ten of these books. I've read two of them, Moby Dick and Tom Sawyer. They were okay, I guess. This was the first game in a line of educational software that all the optical-based systems seemed to have in spades. Nobody bought this. 1/5

SimEarth: The Living Planet (released April 5): Hell yeah, it's SimEarth! I had fun with this game back in the day. Actually this was the only game from this month besides SMW2 I played back in the day. It was pretty killer on SNES CD. They gave you a lot more options and the graphics were much better. 4/5

Dragon's Destiny (released April 12): This was a kind of 3-D graphics game they tried out but the graphics were pretty lousy. Basically you fly around on a dragon and there's another guy on a dragon and you're trying to kill each other. Remember Firebreather on Action 52? It's like that but not god awful. But still pretty bad. 2/5

Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective (released April 19): An FMV game, this puts you in the shoes of Sherlock Holmes. There are three different mysteries to solve and you can look for clues. The acting's pretty lousy but I still had some fun with this. As far as FMV games go, it's okay. 3/5

P.T.O.: Pacific Theater Of Operations (released April 19): This was actually a really neat

little war game and Koei put some nice graphical touches on it for the SNES-CD. The maps look a LOT less awkward. There are some pretty cool in-battle animations and several more battles to play. One of the system's best turn-based strategy games and probably the month's best game besides Super Mario World 2. I had trouble putting this down to finish the article. 4/5

Katie Corner (released April 19): I wasn't expecting much from this at ALL. Basically there's a little girl named Katie, who is actually played in some cutscenes by a real child actress, and she helps you solve puzzles and play mini-games and stuff. It's supposed to be an educational game but I had actual fun with parts of this. I'm astonished. This game is rare as balls today, by the way. Like \$150 on Ebay rare. 3/5"

-article from Captain Retro at Games Of The Past, June 8, 2011

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### **No SNES-CD? No Problem!**

While Super Nintendo players who don't have the CD peripheral may feel left out in the cold in the wake of the release of killer app Super Mario World 2, there's little to be bummed out about this month, with nearly a dozen new releases set to land on the SNES in April alone. Headlining them is the first game to use the SNES' heralded Super FX Chip, "Super Squadron X". Featuring out-of-this-world polygonal graphics, Super Squadron X is the sequel of sorts to the cult Gameboy classic X, a Japan-only release. Created by Argonaut Software, the game is a space shooter that centers around an effort by an elite team of starfighters to liberate a besieged planet. Originally, Star Fox was planned to be the first Super FX chip release, but that game is headed to the SNES CD this summer. Also scheduled to be released is Battletoads and Double Dragon, which hits the SNES in June. Perhaps the biggest SNES release of all, at least over the next 12 months, is Super Metroid, the third game in the Metroid series, which will feature the legendary bounty hunter Samus Aran once again battling space pirates on Zebes. We'll have more information about Super Metroid in the coming months, but it's clear that Nintendo is keeping its promise to support both the cartridge and CD incarnations of the Super Nintendo, and it doesn't look like that will be changing any time soon.

-excerpted from GameFan Magazine, May 1993

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### **BREAKING NEWS: Nintendo Teams Up With The Jim Henson Company For "Star Fox"**

We've been sitting on this bit of juicy info for quite some time, and now we can finally give

you the first scoop! We've reported that Nintendo has been teaming up with the Jim Henson Company, famous for its work on "The Muppets", "Sesame Street", and many other hit properties across the film and television worlds, but now we can reveal that the company has also provided resources for the in-game cutscenes that will appear in Star Fox, coming to the SNES CD in June. During your flights through the game's levels, you will be occasionally hailed by your wingmen, commanding officer, or even some of the dastardly villains, and all of these animations, including the voice acting, were done by the Jim Henson Company, very closely partnered with Nintendo. The company's staff of writers, camera crews, and "Muppeteers" were all on hand to provide the game's nearly one hour of FMV footage, which Nintendo's talented programmers have seamlessly integrated into the fast-paced action of the game. We'll be able to give you more looks at Star Fox in next month's issue, but for now we're all eager to start playing and be the first to let you know what an awesome game this is shaping up to be!

-Article in Nintendo Power, May 1993

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#### **SNES-CD Power Charts - March 1993** (debut of the SNES-CD section of the Power Charts)

1. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition - 19,713
2. Super Mario Kart - 17,055
3. Final Fantasy: New Generation - 15,604
4. Super Mario World 2 - 11,883
5. Sewer Shark - 10,274
6. Final Fantasy III - 7,840
7. Super Turrican - 6,443
8. Dragon's Lair - 6,371
9. Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego? - 5,844
10. Run Saber - 4,905
11. Lethal Enforcers - 4,881
12. Star Fox - 4,560
13. Alien 3 - 4,186
14. Mad Dog McCree - 3,755
15. Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts CD - 3,747
16. Shadowrun - 3,051
17. Dragon's Destiny - 2,348
18. Double Switch - 1,950
19. MechWarrior - 1,752
20. The Simpsons - 1,711

#### **SNES-CD Power Charts - April 1993**

1. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition - 16,844
2. Super Mario Kart - 16,350
3. Final Fantasy: New Generation - 13,863
4. Super Mario World 2 - 13,500
5. Run Saber - 9,884
6. Final Fantasy III - 9,500

7. Star Fox - 7,417
8. Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego? - 7,154
9. Sewer Shark - 6,608
10. Super Turrican - 6,542
11. Lethal Enforcers - 5,201
12. Double Switch - 4,473
13. Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts CD - 4,100
14. Dragon's Lair - 4,072
15. Alien 3 - 3,651
16. Mad Dog McCree - 3,052
17. Shadowrun - 2,980
18. Snatcher - 2,457
19. MechWarrior - 2,124
20. Battletoads II - 2,056

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*"If April 1993 was all about Super Mario World 2, the following month was about diversity. May 1993 was when the SNES-CD's lineup really started to fill out with quality games. You had Super Bomberman CD, which was an excellent four-player game, you had the arcade hit Lethal Enforcers which was by far the best lightgun game to date, there was Alien 3, an outstanding adaptation of the hit movie, there was MechWarrior, one of the best PC games to be adapted to the system, and finally you had the great cult classic Shadowrun. Even that Scatterbeans game was a fairly addicting puzzler. By the end of that month you had no less than a dozen games that were at least decent, with Star Fox AND Final Fantasy III coming out that summer. I think a lot of us were starting to realize that SNES owners on the fence about buying the CD add-on were running out of excuses. Nintendo was doing everything right and sales were increasing every week. It was around that time that Sega began to get somewhat desperate."*

-Former GameFan staffer Tim Lindquist, quoted in "The 90s: A Decade Of Gaming – 1993", on Gamespot.com, July 21, 2001

*"The game that convinced ME to get the SNES CD add-on was Shadowrun. Really great graphics, really fun gameplay, and such a mature narrative, I had to remind myself I was playing this thing on a Nintendo system. The SNES CD is still probably my favorite console of all time and Shadowrun was one of my favorite games for it. A shame it didn't sell very many copies."*

-Adam Sessler, from the X-Play SNES-CD 20th Anniversary Retrospective, December 7, 2012

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*And "Fallout: The Boneyard" Week continues with our interview of actor/comedian Ray Combs, who voices a sadistic gameshow host who forces your character into a fight for their life (and the lives of several innocent wastelanders). Combs is probably best known for his hosting of Family Feud in the early 90s and his stint on the late 90s sitcom "Fair Play".*

(...)

UGO.com: This isn't the first video game you've worked on.

Combs: Right, I did the Family Feud video game back in.... 1993 I believe?

UGO.com: For the Super Nintendo CD, yeah. That looked like a lot of work that you did, you had to read over 1000 questions and film quite a bit of footage for the FMV scenes.

Combs: The game was pretty involved from what I could tell, I don't play games myself but the footage I saw was pretty cool, it looked a lot like the real show and I got paid pretty well for the sessions, so it wasn't bad. I enjoyed it for the most part. It was kind of a rough time for me though, it was just before I got fired from the show and I was pretty depressed for a while afterward.

UGO.com: We did read about that, I don't know how much you want to talk about it but-

Combs: No, no, it's okay, I've given some motivational talks where I relate my experiences with depression. I think I was just about at my lowest point when I nearly got into a car accident one day, the guy just barely missed me but it was a close and scary call and I started to really re-evaluate my life, I realized even with everything that was going on I had a lot to live for and that's when I started getting help.

UGO.com: We talked to Mary Kay Bergman yesterday, she voices a lot of the female characters in the game and she told us about her own struggles with depression and anxiety.

Combs: Oh, I did a guest voice on South Park a few years back and I got a chance to talk to her, she's a wonderful person and she's made such a good recovery. People don't understand how bad it can be, mental health struggles should be getting a lot more attention. With the shooting at North Carolina State last year, I think it's been getting more coverage in the news but it's still not enough.

UGO.com: People are blaming the games!

Combs: Yeah, they don't want to confront these issues. But I got the help I needed so I'm doing better now. If you're struggling with it, depression or anger or whatever it is, there's help out there.

UGO.com: One more question, would you ever go back to hosting Family Feud?

Combs: I don't think so, Bernie Mac is doing such a good job. He's hilarious isn't he?

UGO.com: He is!

-Excerpted from an interview on UGO.com, November 18, 2008

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## **Super Bomberman CD**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 10 (quote: "The most fun I've ever had with a multi-player game. With a huge slate of options, eighteen different arenas, and tons of items and power-ups, grab three friends and bomb the night away with this amazing game! The single-player mode is a ton

of fun as well.”)

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9

### **Scatterbeans**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7

Al: 8 (quote: “Really reminded me of Bust-A-Move, but shinier, more colorful, and it moved a lot faster. Probably the best puzzle game available on the SNES-CD, it provides addicting gameplay and some serious challenge.”)

Sushi-X: 5

### **Lethal Enforcers**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 6

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9 (quote: “A pitch-perfect adaptation of the arcade game and the number one reason to buy a Justifier gun, the arcade hit shines here with thrilling action, tricky stages and lots of ways to rack up points and rescue hostages.”)

### **Alien 3**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9

Al: 8 (quote: “It's not faithful to the film but it doesn't need to be, it's a great work all its own, with its dark environments and intuitive action, the SNES-CD version of the game is the best looking and best playing and if you're a fan of the film, you're missing out if you don't pick this up.”)

Sushi-X: 8

### **Family Feud**

Ed: 5

Danyon: 5

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 6 (quote: “I'm not a gameshow fan but this is about as close to being on the show as it gets. The FMV is smooth and there are lots of questions to keep you from having to play through repeats for quite some time.”)

### **VideoMash**

Ed: 2

Danyon: 1

Al: 4

Sushi-X: 2 (quote: “When are companies going to learn that we don't want to use our CD add-ons for remixing crappy music videos? This is worse than Make My Video and that's really saying something. They actually went out and filmed original music videos just for this game. A huge waste of time and money for both the makers of the game and anyone who buys it.”)

## **MechWarrior**

Ed: 8 (quote: "A fun adaptation of the PC hit, MechWarrior puts you in the cockpit of a giant robot and sends you to battle other robots across a huge battlefield. The graphics are updated from the PC version, with colorful backgrounds that put you right in the thick of battle.")

Danyon: 8

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 8

## **Shadowrun**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9 (quote: "The best RPG available for the SNES-CD, this makes Final Fantasy: New Generation look positively old-hat. This game is the future of the RPG genre.")

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9

-reviews of May 1993's SNES-CD releases in the June and July 1993 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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## **New Software Bundle And An Exciting New Peripheral For Music Lovers!**

With two of the most anticipated SNES-CD releases, "Star Fox" and "Final Fantasy III", set to debut this summer, Nintendo is giving people more reasons than ever to purchase the SNES-CD! Starting in May, which means that these bundles are already in stores as you're reading this, Nintendo will be including the critically-acclaimed hit "Super Mario World 2" with every SNES-CD add-on and Playstation Combo Set! For those who pine for the four-player racing action of Super Mario Kart, don't fret, as the game is still available for separate purchase on store shelves everywhere. In addition, music lovers will want to buy the Nintendo CD Companion. The CD Companion is a control deck which includes a set of stereo speakers and an LED display, so that you can use the Super Nintendo CD as a stand-alone CD player without the use of a television. The CD Companion will retail for \$49.99 and will be available for purchase starting in late May.

-Excerpt from the June 1993 issue of *Nintendo Power*

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## **SNES-CD Power Charts – May 1993**

(*italics* signifies an unreleased game without sales figures included, **bold** signifies a newly released game with sales figures included for the first time)

1. Super Mario Kart – 16,418

2. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 16,370

3. *Super Mario World 2* – 14,389

**4. Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego? - 11,105**

5. Final Fantasy: New Generation – 10,884

6. *Star Fox* – 8,705

7. *Final Fantasy III* – 8,364

8. *Super Turrigan* – 7,906
9. *Run Saber* – 5,606
10. *Lethal Enforcers* – 4,851
11. *Alien 3* – 4,700
12. *Sewer Shark* – 4,158
13. *Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts CD* – 3,712
14. *Battletoads II* – 3,155
15. *Mad Dog McCree* – 2,840
16. *Double Switch* – 2,750
17. *Shadowrun* – 2,667
18. *Dragon's Lair* – 2,253
19. *Super Bomberman CD* – 1,886
20. *Final Fight II* – 1,824

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*"Frank Oz and Mr. Miyamoto bonded right away. I mean they were really inseparable during the months they spent working on Star Fox. Sure, there was the language barrier, but I think the language of creativity sort of bridged the gap. I have never seen Mr. Miyamoto so happy as when he was working on that game with the people at the Jim Henson Company, but especially Frank Oz. I think if it was up to Mr. Miyamoto, he'd have worked on all his games with him. It was just a really close connection, and I think that's why the original Star Fox was as good as it was. I think it kind of got lost in the fold a bit among some of the other great games that came out in '93, but that game was Mr. Miyamoto's favorite, I think, out of all the games he did for the SNES-CD."*

-Howard Lincoln, interview with TIME Magazine, July 1, 2002

*"Final Fantasy V brought me out of my rut in a lot of ways. I had done New Generation of course, but this game was much more fulfilling. It was the first time that Squaresoft really let me do a translation without so many restrictions, of course back in the early SNES days there had been a lot of restrictions because of Nintendo's content policies, but here, I could do a bit more of a mature script. I mean, I wasn't going to go overboard, I think I ended up using 'damn' twice and 'hell' once, but it was a big step for a game series that had previously been so squeaky clean in terms of language in the US. I guess the censorship policies brought us 'you spoony bard', but that was about it in terms of the good that they did. I self-censored for the most part, but having the extra freedom was nice."*

-Ted Woolsey, excerpted from an interview with RPGamer.com in 2002

*"A lot of people don't know this, but the first character to swear in an American Final Fantasy game was Faris, a woman. I actually remember the first time I saw the words on screen: 'Damn it, Syltra!' as her beloved sea dragon was sinking into the whirlpool. Of course at that point the game was still trying to make you think Faris was a man, but the fact that the first swear word in a game that Nintendo promoted heavily in the United States came out of a woman's mouth was a groundbreaking moment for gender in video games. Yes, the series and the medium had a LONG way to go for gender equality, but Faris and her potty mouth were an oasis in a desert of male domination."*

-Anita Sarkeesian, "Tropes vs. Women In Video Games Part 2", Youtube.com, May 17, 2013

*"Do a barrel roll! To barrel roll, press L or R twice!"*

-Peppy Hare, *Star Fox*

*"By CES 1993, it was clear to me that Nintendo wasn't interested in what we could do for them, they were happy with the direction that Sony was taking them. With the success they'd been having with their CD add-on we couldn't really blame them, but there was another intriguing offer that I knew was worth a second look."*

-Ed McCracken, CEO of Silicon Graphics, interview with Wired Magazine in October 1999

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\*Sergeant Pepper, in animated form, is shown seated at his desk.\*

Pepper: Star Fox, we need your help! Andross has invaded the Lylat System and only you can stop him!

\*A variety of quick scenes from the game are shown, showing off the graphics and the fast-flying action.\*

Pepper: You must hurry! Soon, Lylat will be- \*the screen goes static and soon Pepper's face is replaced by that of Andross, laughing loudly\*

Andross: Don't even try to do battle with me! I control the galaxy and I will not be stopped! \*laughs again\*

\*More scenes of the game are shown as the narrator speaks.\*

Narrator (Don LaFontaine): It's Nintendo's most epic adventure yet, an interplanetary war with you at the controls of the Arwing, the fastest, most heavily armed fighter ship in the galaxy! Join up with your wingmen and take the fight to Andross as you fly across more worlds than you can imagine. Will good prevail or will Andross conquer all? Only you can save the Lylat System in Star Fox, the newest game for the Super Nintendo CD. Take it to the next level!

-Nintendo's commercial for Star Fox, which began running in May 1993

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## **Star Fox: The Basics**

Nintendo's Star Fox, released in North America on June 7, 1993, stood as its second biggest first-party release for the SNES-CD in 1993, and the game was groundbreaking at the time in terms of FMV production values. The Jim Henson Company directed and created the game's full-motion video, which appeared during between-mission cutscenes, pre-mission briefings, and most ubiquitously, during missions in brief clips that would play as various characters conversed with Fox McCloud, whether they be Fox's wingmen, Falco, Peppy, and Slippy, or the various enemy characters who populated the stages, including the game's main antagonist, the planetary conqueror Andross. The game itself was a fairly standard space shooter, though the SNES-CD's fast processing and memory capacity allowed for polygonal graphics at a fast framerate, providing arcade-quality visuals as your Arwing zipped through the game's stages. At the start of the game, you would choose one of three routes to take on the planet Corneria, an easy route, a medium route, or a hard route. Depending on the route taken, you would advance to a different second stage, with a total of seven stages in all. On the easy and medium routes, hidden objectives in the second and

fourth routes would allow you to advance up a stage, so for example, if you were on the easy route for stage two, you could complete the hidden objective and advance to the medium route for stage three and onward. These hidden objectives were added late in production to allow a variety of routes through the game's stages so that there were more than three possible runs the player could take, the route changes enabled the potential for eight different runs through the game, with a total of fourteen worlds and eighteen stages (three different Cornerias and three different Venoms). The cutscenes themselves were integrated fairly seamlessly into the gameplay, they were criticized among some game journalists for being cheesy or silly, but compared to other FMV efforts on the SNES or Sega CD, they were downright excellent, especially with veteran Muppeteers like Frank Oz, Jerry Nelson, and Fran Brill, among others, providing the voices.

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### **Star Fox**

*There's a new star in town and it's Star Fox, the exciting new space shooter from Nintendo. Take your team of hot-shot space pilots through more than a dozen worlds as you seek to take down the galactic conqueror Andross! Some of the FMV is a bit silly at times but it adds atmosphere and character to this already excellently produced game.*

Graphics: 5.0  
Sound: 5.0  
Control: 5.0  
FunFactor: 5.0  
Challenge: Adjustable

### **The Lost Vikings**

*Blizzard's Amiga hit comes to the SNES-CD and out of all three console versions it's the best of the bunch, with graphics far outstripping its SNES and Genesis cousins. The gameplay hasn't changed though, and taking Erik, Baleog, and Olaf through the game's challenging levels has never been more fun!*

Graphics: 5.0  
Sound: 4.0  
Control: 5.0  
FunFactor: 4.5  
Challenge: Intermediate

### **ClayFighter**

*This irreverant fighting game looks great on the SNES-CD, but while we got lots of laughs while playing it, it's still no Street Fighter II, and with Mortal Kombat coming to home consoles in a few months, we don't think we'll be spending much time with this one. If you're looking for something sillier than your usual fighting fare, this is great, but if you're looking for something more robust, look elsewhere.*

Graphics: 4.5  
Sound: 3.0  
Control: 3.5  
FunFactor: 3.5

Challenge: Advanced

--Excerpted from GamePro's reviews of June 1993's SNES CD releases, from their August 1993 issue

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\*Several people are sitting outside an office. There's a voice from inside the room.\*

Voice: Next!

\*A young man sits down across from the person behind the desk.\*

Employer: What makes you think you can handle saving the world? What are your skills?

Applicant: Well...

\*A succession of applicants are shown seated in the chair, each one names one of their "skills" which happens to be a skill in the game. There are five in all, some are shown more than once.\*

Applicant: I can wield a sword...

Applicant 2: I'm the world's greatest thief!

Applicant 3: I can rain fire down on enemies!

Applicant 4: I can summon powerful magical creatures to do my bidding!

Applicant 5: I can make the earth open up beneath the battlefield!

Applicant: I can wield TWO swords at once!

Applicant 3: I can strike over and over in the blink of an eye!

Applicant 2: I can do whatever the last guy does.

Applicant 5: I can mix any two things together and cook up something awesome!

Applicant: I got a huge cannon!

Applicant 4: I can take flight on the wings of a dragon!

Applicant 3: I use my enemy's own attacks against them!

Applicant: I can freeze time!

Applicant 2: I can toss money to destroy my enemies!

Employer: \*has a stone-faced expression and then he smiles\* Great! When can you start?

Applicant 1: Right away! So...what job did I get?

Employer: All of them!

\*Scenes from the game begin to play.\*

Narrator: Use the brand new Job system to defeat your enemies and save the world in the brand-new Final Fantasy III, the biggest adventure ever to hit the Super Nintendo CD. Create any team you want and explore the world, but watch out because the evil Exdeath doesn't mess around. It's Final Fantasy III and it's only on the Super Nintendo CD. Take it to the next level!

-North American advertisement for Final Fantasy III, which began playing in June 1993

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### **Final Fantasy III: The Basics**

Final Fantasy III, originally released in Japan as Final Fantasy V on the SNES, is virtually unchanged in gameplay terms from its SNES cousin, save for the addition of two new jobs, the Pirate and the Gladiator. The graphics, however, were given a bit of an overhaul, particularly the character sprites. Squaresoft had been working on advanced character sprites for Final Fantasy VI, but they got their first test drive on the SNES-CD Final Fantasy V, allowing for significantly more character animation and expression. The monsters also got a bit more detail, and the music was enhanced for CD audio, though it too remained largely unchanged from the original score by Nobuo Uematsu, with only the addition of more instrumental clarity enhancing the game's songs. The game, released on July 12, 1993 in North America, saw a release in September 1993 in Japan as "Final Fantasy V: Special CD Edition".

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### **The Shores Of Whitespace**

*A fairly bad FMV game, this fantasy-based adventure tries to spice things up by playing like an old-school RPG dungeon crawler in the vein of Dungeons and Dragons, but hopelessly difficult gameplay and terrible acting don't make this game worth the trouble. Get Final Fantasy III instead.*

Graphics: 3.5  
Sound: 2.5  
Control: 2.5  
FunFactor: 2.0  
Challenge: Advanced

### **Time Gal**

*A quirky but rather fun FMV-based anime adventure, Time Gal has some show-stopping moments if you can navigate your way through its tricks and traps. It's not quite Dragon's Lair but anime fans should love it and it's heroine is fairly endearing.*

Graphics: 4.0  
Sound: 3.5

Control: 3.0  
FunFactor: 3.5  
Challenge: Intermediate

### **Final Fantasy III**

*Squaresoft's epic adventure is the best Final Fantasy game yet. It's tough as nails, but the Job system lets you customize your party to meet a variety of challenges. Believe me, you'll need to get VERY familiar with it to make it to the end of this game.*

Graphics: 5.0  
Sound: 5.0  
Control: 4.5  
FunFactor: 4.5  
Challenge: Advanced

### **Dark City**

*This FMV detective game takes after the old film noir serials, where you're a detective in a grungy place called Dark City and you have to take down a gang of nasty thugs who have kidnapped the husband of your beautiful client. While there are a few redeeming moments, the game can be rather frustrating at times and the clues it gives you to solve the mysteries are really vague. Only the most hardcore FMV or detective game fans need apply.*

Graphics: 3.5  
Sound: 4.0  
Control: 3.0  
FunFactor: 2.5  
Challenge: Advanced

### **Clue**

*Based on the classic board game and somewhat on the movie, this fun FMV game is perhaps the best detective game to hit the SNES CD. In a sea of FMV games this month, this is the only game that potentially rivals Final Fantasy III as being the best game of the month. All your favorite characters are here and you never know who's the killer until you solve the clues. A really good execution on the SNES CD.*

Graphics: 4.5  
Sound: 4.0  
Control: 4.0  
FunFactor: 4.5  
Challenge: Intermediate

--Excerpted from GamePro's reviews of July 1993's SNES CD releases, from their September 1993 issue

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*"This is really, I think, a game that just wouldn't have been possible without the SNES-CD, and that's the first game we've done at Squaresoft that we can honestly say that about. I designed this game with that extra memory capacity in mind, this world and this quest is*

*just so huge that this game could only have happened on the CD-ROM. The complexity of the music and all the things going on on the screen at once, this is the reason why we pushed so hard for this unity between Nintendo and Sony."*

-Koichi Ishii, designer of *Secret of Mana*, translated from comments in Famitsu magazine, August 1993

*"So I'm hearing all the praise for Final Fantasy III, which is a well-designed game from a production aspect, but in terms of the gameplay it can hardly be called a role-playing game. There's a scene in there where a main character dies and there's nothing you can do about it. No choice, no freedom, you just have to watch him die. But in Ultima, a game where you have limitless freedom, you could save a character like that. Your actions determine everything that happens in the game, for better or for worse. The Ultima series has always been about the freedom to determine what kind of hero you're going to be, and that's why I think that ultimately, players enjoy the Ultima series more than any other role-playing game. Including non role-playing games like Final Fantasy."*

-Richard Garriott, excerpted from an interview at the Summer 1993 CES promoting Sega-CD's version of *Ultima Underworld II: Labyrinth of Worlds*

### **Summer 1993 CES Special**

Summer 1992's CES was all about the new optical CD add-ons on the video game front, but this year it's all about the games, and all the major players in the industry had something to show at this year's event.

The Nintendo booth was a fun place to be, with a variety of games on display for the Super Nintendo and its CD add-on, as well as the Gameboy. Super Mario All-Stars was the headlining game at the Super Nintendo display, with a massive banner promoting the game and a large number of demo kiosks. This game is an updated re-release compilation of the NES Mario Bros. titles and even includes the original Super Mario Bros. 2, which has been re-branded as the Lost Levels. Street Fighter II Turbo, which brings most of the gameplay enhancements of the SNES-CD's Arcade Edition, along with a new Hyper Fighting Mode, was also prominently displayed here. We got a glimpse of Super Metroid, which wasn't yet playable, as well as Star Tropics II, which was originally announced for the NES, but is now making its way to the Super Nintendo sometime next spring. One more title that we were really intrigued by was "Earthbound", a remake of a very quirky NES RPG called "Mother". The game has had a lot of work done on it, including graphical enhancements and re-balanced difficulty, along with a re-scored soundtrack that should make it a big hit among RPG lovers.

The SNES-CD had plenty to show off as well. We got a quick preview of Hideo Kojima's PC hit "Snatcher", which looks to make its way to the SNES-CD sometime early next year. We also got glimpses of movie-based games "The Terminator" and "Jurassic Park", and a playable demo of Battletoads II, which looks really nice and should be out this December. The SNES-CD's most intriguing title for this year, however, appears to be a game that's more than two years in the making. It's the long-awaited Project Mana, known in Japan as "Seiken Densetsu 2" and has been revealed as Secret Of Mana in the West. The game looks extremely promising, Nintendo and Squaresoft are saying that the main quest has over 60 hours worth of gameplay and the graphics and sound are among the best we've ever seen in a video game. The game also takes advantage of the SNES-CD's multiplayer capabilities, allowing three people to play at once, a first for an RPG such as this. A nearly-completed version was available for demonstration at the SNES-CD booth and it was one of the most crowded booths at the show.

Sega also had an impressive CES, something they needed in the wake of Nintendo's rising sales. They showed off the Sega Genesis and Sega CD versions of Disney's Aladdin and the game looked quite good, especially the Sega CD version of the game, with very fluid animation and lively music. Gunstar Heroes was one of the more surprising hits of the Sega booth, rivaling Secret of Mana's display as one of the most crowded of the whole show. The very fun run-and-gun shooter game from Treasure looks to be one of the best Genesis exclusives of the year and it's one we can't wait to review. There were two huge Sega CD games on display, the first being Sega's answer to the hit Super Mario World 2... Sonic CD was fully playable and looked amazing, the gameplay involves time travel as Sonic travels between past and future versions of worlds to make changes that effect one or the other. The graphics looked as good as anything we've seen on a console and the music is typical Sonic awesomeness, perfectly fitting the stages and levels it accompanies. For our money, Sonic CD is in a dead heat with Secret of Mana as our Summer 1993 CES "Best Of Show", with our editors unable to decide who comes out on top. Sega was also keen to show off its newly acquired property, the Ultima series, just purchased by the company to provide an RPG rival of sorts to Nintendo and Squaresoft's Final Fantasy. The Sega CD's Ultima Underworld II looks like a perfect port of the PC version and Sega is really hyping it up as one of their biggest games of the year, it's a classic dungeon crawler where you explore a dark labyrinth while fighting countless hordes of enemies, and Richard Garriott was present at Sega's booth to answer every question that reporters could throw at him. The SNES-CD has had an outstanding year but if Sega's CES was any indication, this company is poised to strike back in a big way, and this Christmas could go down as the holiday that Sega finally knocks Nintendo off its throne.

-Electronic Gaming Monthly's Summer 1993 CES recap, from their September 1993 issue

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts – June 1993**

(*italics* signifies an unreleased game without sales figures included, **bold** signifies a newly released game with sales figures included for the first time)

1. Super Mario Kart – 16,982
2. *Super Mario World 2* – 15,774
3. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 15,081
4. Final Fantasy: New Generation – 11,486
5. **Super Turrigan** – 11,374
6. *Star Fox* – 9,648
7. Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego? - 8,845
8. **Mad Dog McCree** – 8,742
9. *Final Fantasy III* – 8,405
10. **Pickton Lake** – 6,075
11. *Lethal Enforcers* – 5,629
12. *Alien 3* – 5,051
13. Run Saber – 4,645
14. *Battletoads II* – 4,113
15. *Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts CD* – 3,611
16. Sewer Shark – 3,218
17. *Super Bomberman CD* – 2,842
18. *Shadowrun* – 2,804
19. *Final Fight II* – 2,114

20. Double Switch – 1,995

### **SNES-CD Power Charts – July 1993**

1. **Super Mario World 2** – 37,186
2. Super Mario Kart – 14,382
3. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 13,906
4. Final Fantasy: New Generation – 10,766
5. *Star Fox* – 9,841
6. *Final Fantasy III* – 8,641
7. Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego? - 6,642
8. Super Turrican – 6,124
9. *Lethal Enforcers* – 6,066
10. **SimEarth: The Living Planet** – 4,865
11. Mad Dog McCree – 4,772
12. *Battletoads II* – 4,305
13. **Dragon's Destiny** – 3,862
14. Pickton Lake – 3,730
15. *Alien 3* – 3,641
16. **P.T.O.: Pacific Theater of Operations** – 3,179
17. **Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective** – 2,840
18. *Super Bomberman CD* – 2,826
19. *Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts CD* – 2,617
20. Run Saber – 2,446

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### **July 23, 1993**

James Jordan slept in his car just off Interstate 95 in Lumberton, North Carolina. He was heading back home from attending a funeral, and he'd pulled off the road after he felt himself getting sleepy behind the wheel. No sense in risking another hour on the road, not when he had so much going well for him. His son Michael was the greatest basketball player in the world, having just won his third straight NBA championship. He loved seeing his son succeed. Michael had talked to him just recently about having become bored with the game and intimated to him an idea about taking up baseball, the sport James loved to play. How had Michael put it? He had "no more mountains to climb"? But James knew of plenty more accomplishments for his son to go after. He still had seven fingers without rings, after all. Or currently, nine fingers, as James was holding onto two of his son's championship rings as he slept in that car that warm summer night.

The sound of sirens stirred the man from his slumber. He sat up just in time to see a car speeding past with three police patrol vehicles in hot pursuit. The two 18-year-olds inside the speeding car had just shot a truck driver to death, just to steal a few of the video game consoles he'd been hauling.

James didn't care about video games and he had no idea why that car had been going so fast. All he knew was that he'd been having a good dream about his son winning a fourth NBA championship and the police chase had roused him from sleep.

"Damn fools," James muttered to himself, rolling over in an attempt to get back to sleep. He needed his rest. He still had quite a drive tomorrow.

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## August 2, 1993

Ken Kutaragi couldn't help but smile as he read the latest sales reports from North America. The Super Nintendo CD had had another outstanding month, posting its biggest sales month yet in fact. Star Fox had been a major hit, and Final Fantasy III was currently the fourth fastest selling SNES-CD game in North America, behind only Super Mario World 2, Star Fox, and Super Mario Kart. It was even outselling Street Fighter II, though that would likely change as the game's initial sales rush died down. The SNES CD was rapidly catching up to the Sega CD in total sales and it would only be a matter of time at the current pace before Sega's peripheral was overtaken. Though the future of Nintendo and Sony's joint venture had seemed in doubt just three months before, things were looking brighter every day.

At the same time, Kutaragi had something else to be overjoyed about. The promise he'd made to his boss Norio Ohga about music CD sales was coming true. CD sales were soaring around the world, the highest they'd ever been, and business and music news sources were all in agreement: The Super Nintendo CD was a major factor. Indeed, the peripheral was the world's best-selling CD player of 1993, with tens of thousands flying off the shelves daily. Every CD sold was money in Sony's pocket and the money they'd put into production and development of the SNES-CD was rapidly being replenished. Even Norio Ohga was cracking a smile from time to time. As humble as Kutaragi tried to be, he couldn't help but feel that the gratification he got from Mr. Ohga made all of the risks he'd taken worthwhile.

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Across the world in Redwood City, California, Tom Kalinske had been expecting a call for the last few days. While his bosses at Sega of Japan had told him that his latest endeavor was not something he should be pursuing, he had promised that if this venture paid off, it would be Sega's ace in the hole, the one thing they had that could counter the powerhouse combination of Nintendo and Sony. If this venture failed, Kalinske knew that Sega would be playing catch-up for years...indeed, that they might never recover.

Kalinske's phone rang. He picked it up and when he heard the voice on the other end of the line, a smile crossed his face. He even let out a small chuckle.

"Mr. Kalinske, this is Ed McCracken with Silicon Graphics. How are you doing today?"

"I'm quite good, thank you," Kalinske replied. "I was actually waiting for your call."

"Ahhh, that's a good sign I think," said McCracken with a chuckle of his own. "So that means it's a go?"

"Yeah," said Kalinske with a nod. "If your company's willing to help us with Project Saturn then it's absolutely a go. My bosses are gonna need some convincing, how soon can you start work on a tech demo?"

"We've got one ready to go. We can fly to Japan this week. We're really looking forward to working with you."

"So am I, Ed, so am I."

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*"I did my best not to look it, but I was so nervous during that meeting. The future of Sega hinged on what the guys in Japan thought of Ed's presentation. In order for them to give the go-ahead to working with Silicon Graphics, we'd have to convince them that this technology was the right way to go for Project Saturn. I wasn't used to letting someone else do most of the talking for me, but Ed and the Silicon Graphics people really blew them away. I had to keep myself from cracking a smile every time I saw one of those stoic Japanese businessmen raise an eyebrow at what they were seeing on the screen. It was like the World Series of Poker in that room, everyone trying not to show what they were really thinking. Of course, like in poker, the only thing that mattered was having the best hand, and Silicon Graphics was holding a royal flush that day."*

-Tom Kalinske, "The Sega Saturn Story (Part 1 of 3)", IGN.com, September 16, 2005

*"When we first got the Project Saturn dev kit, which at that time was super top-secret because Sega did NOT want Nintendo to know what they were up to, I was pretty blown away at the kind of things this new game system was capable of, way more than anything on the Super Famicom or even their new CD system. Aladdin for the Super Famicom had just come out and it had been a big hit, so I was pretty confident that I could do something with this new hardware. I had an idea for a game, it was kind of like that old Sweet Home game for the Famicom, something that would involve horror, and it was really the kind of thing you couldn't do yet on any of the Nintendo devices. The Super Famicom CD was doing some nice stuff with point and click, but this game I wanted to be in real time and Sega's new console would be the first home gaming device capable of that."*

-Shinji Mikami, interview in Famitsu magazine, February 1998

*"We're not too worried about what Sega's doing with their new partner. We have a big year ahead at Sony and we're looking forward to putting out the best games on the market for the Super Nintendo CD."*

-Ólafur Jóhann Ólafsson, interview at the 1994 Winter CES

*"Sega CD: A whole new world of entertainment."*

-*"Whole New World"* marketing campaign for Sega CD, which began airing a new series of commercials in October 1993

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## **August 10, 1993**

Tom Kalinske couldn't have been more pleased with how the meeting between Sega's top brass in Japan and the team from Silicon Graphics had gone. They'd put together a demo package of gameplay that utilized one of their newest graphics chips, a chip that could be put into Sega's next console to provide PC-quality visuals on a home gaming device. They'd shown how their chip could make Sega's console capable of real-time 3D graphics that far outstripped anything the Sega CD was capable of, with four times the processing power and speed that made Sega's "Blast Processing" look archaic. Hayao Nakayama had personally given his approval to Tom Kalinske to make Silicon Graphics' new chip a critical component of Project Saturn. While most of Sega's creative energy would continue to be put into the Sega Genesis and its CD add-on, development on Project Saturn, Sega's next generation

console, would now begin in earnest, with a target release date sometime in 1995.

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*Once I had Silicon Graphics behind me, and Japan's support, I knew the real work was about to begin. I had to get third-party support for this thing, which I was having trouble securing for the Sega-CD. However, once we started sending out feelers toward potential partners, the responses we got were extremely encouraging. Capcom was behind us from the start, which was fantastic and was something I couldn't help but do some celebratory fist pumps over. I knew there was no way we'd be able to poach them from Nintendo but they'd been playing both sides of the console wars for quite some time and they were happy to continue doing so in the future. We learned that one of their development teams had been given the go-ahead to start working on this horror game for the new hardware, and what they were able to produce after a few months was really promising. We also heard from a team of British developers, Core Design, about this idea for an action-adventure game starring a woman protagonist, and as a guy with daughters at home, it was nice that there was going to be a hero that girls could possibly identify with. I mean, Nintendo did have Samus, but she was kept hidden in a suit for all of her games, and the other major female characters at Nintendo were all damsels-in-distress! Then there was Crystal Dynamics, who were working on games for 3DO at the time. They were EASY to convince to start working on Project Saturn games, because they were struggling with the 3DO's limitations. It was rumored that the 3DO wasn't even as powerful as the Super Nintendo CD, and Trip Hawkins wanted to charge \$700 for it? When the 3DO became one of the biggest flops in gaming history, I think it more than justified their decision to hop on board with us. Then there was Silicon Knights, who'd been so impressed by our Project Saturn specs that they not only offered to make games for it, but also agreed to port their Fantasy Empires and Dark Legions games to the Sega CD in 1994, which boosted that system's library at a time that we sorely needed it.*

*It's hard to express how happy I was to have picked up Silicon Graphics after Nintendo snubbed them for development of their own next generation console. It was funny, because they'd told us that they'd sought out Nintendo before us BECAUSE of their alliance with Sony, and then Nintendo's alliance with Sony was the reason they'd turned Silicon Graphics down! Nintendo had been stealing our thunder for quite some time. I remember one of the moments when I was quite annoyed with them, we were all set for the Sega CD launch in 1992 and we'd gotten a really good slogan, "Welcome To The Next Level" to use in our advertising. We go to trademark it and lo and behold, Nintendo had trademarked "Take It To The Next Level" for their Nintendo CD just three weeks before we came up with our slogan. We had to launch the Sega CD with some other silly phrase, I don't even remember it off the top of my head, and I know it hurt our sales once the Super Nintendo CD was out. We eventually borrowed "A Whole New World" from Disney around the time they helped us with our Sega CD Aladdin game, we used "A Whole New World Of Entertainment" for our big Sega CD promotional push in late 1993 and I think that moved some CD add-ons for us, so it came out all right in the end. But I knew that picking up Silicon Graphics after Nintendo turned them down would be a huge coup for us.*

*And, for a time at least, I was right.*

-Tom Kalinske, "The Chase: Sega's 20 Year Struggle To Take Down A Giant", released in May 2014

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*"Going into the winter of 1993, we had damn good reason to be confident. Super Nintendo CD sales had passed those of the Sega CD, but we were still selling more Genesis consoles than Nintendo was selling Super Nintendo systems. In addition to that, the SNES CD's holiday lineup looked pretty lousy. Their big three games of the holiday season were looking to be The Terminator, Secret Of Mana, and Battletoads II, while on the Sega CD, we had Aladdin, Ultima Underworld II, and Sonic CD. The Sega CD's Aladdin was set to be THE definitive version of the game. There were versions coming out for the Super Nintendo and our own Genesis, but the Sega CD version had smoother animation, better music, more levels, and it was the only one that was going to have cutscenes from the movie itself. We were working with Disney on putting together a big marketing push and it was going to be a big system seller. Then we had Ultima Underworld II, which was going to include the original Ultima Underworld as a pack-in. That was two games in one, and we were going up against a totally new franchise in Secret of Mana. At that time Ultima was THE premiere name in video game role-playing, and on name recognition alone we felt confident that we could outsell Secret of Mana no problem. Finally was Sonic CD, that was the big one and we thought it would put CD units in homes the same way Super Mario World 2 had done for Nintendo. Tom was going to slash the Sega CD's price to \$149.99, and on top of that, if you bought a \$99.99 Genesis that holiday season, you'd get a \$20 mail-in rebate on the Sega CD! That meant you could get both for \$229.99. Even though we knew Nintendo was about to cut the Super Nintendo's price down to \$149.99 and the price of their Playstation CD combo set to \$299.99, we'd still be coming in at \$70 less. With all those games AND Sonic 3 set to come out for the Genesis, buying Sega consoles would be a no-brainer that year and we were going to launch an aggressive marketing blitz to that effect. We knew that the biggest battle of the console wars would be waged over Christmas 1993, and we were going to throw everything into it."*

*-Excerpted from an interview with Al Nilsen, "1993: The Year That Changed Gaming Forever (10 Years On)", Gamespot.com, January 18, 2003*

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## **RPG Update!**

Nintendo is set to release big RPGs for the Super Nintendo this winter, both here and in Japan! First is an update on "Earthbound", which is still set for release for the Super Nintendo this December. From the mind of Shigesato Itoi, Earthbound is a remake of the 1989 NES RPG "Mother", about a young boy who sets out on an incredible adventure to battle a mysterious alien menace! It's a bit stranger than some of the role-playing games you might be used to, but we think that players will be pleasantly surprised at how quickly the story will pull players in!

Meanwhile in Japan, the third installment of Nintendo's Fire Emblem series is set for release for the Super Famicom. It's the console's first ever 24-bit cartridge and we have to say it looks absolutely fantastic, putting every one of those 24 bits to work! So far, there aren't any plans to release the game in the United States, but with the success of the Super Nintendo CD add-on, the fourth installment of the series could well find its way to Western shores! Stay tuned!

*-From the August 1993 issue of Nintendo Power*

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## **SNES-CD Power Charts – August 1993**

1. Super Mario World 2 – 32,065
2. Super Mario Kart – 17,045
3. Super Bomberman CD – 14,071
4. Star Fox – 12,686
5. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 12,285
6. Lethal Enforcers – 11,726
7. Alien 3 – 9,227
8. Final Fantasy: New Generation – 8,341
9. Final Fantasy III – 7,886
10. MechWarrior – 7,501
11. Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego? - 5,806
12. Shadowrun – 5,564
13. Super Turrigan – 5,206
14. Battletoads II – 4,701
15. Mad Dog McCree – 4,161
16. SimEarth: The Living Planet – 3,819
17. Pickton Lake – 3,548
18. Final Fight II – 2,981
19. P.T.O.: Pacific Theater of Operations – 2,504
20. Family Feud – 2,014

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*"So on the Super Famicom CD, we have this new technology that allows for full-motion video. And my philosophy has always been and probably always will be that it's unnecessary. If the game is fun to play, it doesn't need the full-motion video. But it can be nice....to have it, in a game, a little bit of it. I see it like, it's ketchup. And a good game is like a delicious hamburger. And if you put a little bit of ketchup on the hamburger it can make it taste better. But you wouldn't want to eat an entire bowl full of ketchup and nothing else, right? \*laughs\* So these games that are just full-motion video and nothing else, if it was up to me we wouldn't have them on here at all. I know the Sega CD system has lots of them, and we're seeing more and more of them on the Super Famicom CD, but I don't want them. There's a terrible game, a game that was on the Sega CD, with these girls in a house, and it showed video of the girls and you clicked buttons to set off traps and trap the girls or something like that. And some people wanted to put it on the Super Nintendo CD and I was absolutely against it, I rarely get mad but when I thought about the possibility of a game like that on there I was furious. That's not a game. That's just a movie that you push buttons to. It wasn't up to me but I made my opinion known. I think....I think the idea behind some of the full-motion video is that companies are trying to fill the whole disc. You have these compact discs, and they have so much memory and you can put so much on them, but you don't have to fill up the whole disc! It's like, when we were making Super Mario World 2. We had all that space and that let us put more music on there, rich music, and that took up most of the memory of the game if I recall. We had better animations for the characters, and some voice clips, and it let us put more levels in the game, more secret levels which are nice, but we had...I think it was a little more than half the disc was just empty space! And that was fine. There might have been the temptation to put animated scenes on there but we told our story with the still shots and the on-screen narration and we did it very effectively. We didn't need to fill up the disc. I don't see why there's this big need among all these game makers to fill up the whole disc. We could put 10,000 Super*

*Mario Bros. games on one of these discs. As long as the game is fun, it doesn't matter."*  
-Shigeru Miyamoto, translated from an interview in the October 1993 issue of Famitsu magazine

*"One of my favorite Super Nintendo CD moments is at the end of Deadman Sam, the underworld wedding scene! That scene was adorable, you have Sam and Nellie and all their little friends in the afterlife, and it doesn't matter that it's a skeleton marrying a ghost, it's just the cutest thing! That was one of my favorite games."*  
-Comment from a "Talk Amongst Yourselves: SNES-CD 20th Anniversary Memories" post on Kotaku.com, December 5, 2012

*"And he's off! And we're off on the 1993 Super Toy Run! And he's going right for the Super Nintendo CD! He's going right for it first thing and he's grabbing it and all the games he can carry! Holy cow look at all those games!"*  
-Mike O'Malley, announcing the 1993 Nickelodeon Super Toy Run

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Though the Super Nintendo CD featured many installments of long-running video game franchises, the add-on launched a number of franchises of its own. By 1993, when it was entering its full swing, the SNES-CD played host to a growing number of original franchise games. People remember games like the kiddie horror classic Pickton Lake, but it was Deadman Sam, which was released in North America in August of 1993, that was perhaps the system's biggest early franchise launch. Created by Tecmo, Deadman Sam is a horror platformer somewhat comparable to Ghouls 'n Ghosts, though it's considerably easier and more forgiving. You can pick up a variety of weapons and powers to help defeat the myriad of enemies standing in your path. The game's graphics were considered quite good for a 1993 Super Nintendo CD game, featuring excellent animation on the character of Deadman Sam and a great variety of colorful and spooky levels to venture through, eighteen in all over the course of the game. The music is both upbeat and haunting, with the game using the SNES' CD capabilities to full effect, providing one of the most audibly deep soundtracks on the system. There's also voice acting, not much but in certain scenes, Sam, Nellie, Scagwell, and a few other characters have some spoken lines. It PROBABLY could have been done on the SNES (and was done on the Gameboy in 1995 in Deadman Sam's Spooky Quest, a scaled down sort-of remake of the original featuring only seven levels), but the Super Nintendo CD really brings Sam's world to life, allowing for the kinds of animation and auditory detail that wouldn't have been possible on the vanilla SNES. You could tell that the SNES CD's capabilities inspired the creators of this game and that without it, Deadman Sam the game and franchise (with nine main series games and seven portable and side games) probably wouldn't exist.

The game's storyline is a bit macabre but in its own sweetly fun little way. You're put into the role of Samuel, a young nobleman engaged to be wed to the beautiful Nellie. But on the eve of Samuel's wedding night he is the victim of murder most foul at the hands of Baron Scagwell, a rival for Nellie's hand. Samuel is sent to the underworld, where he becomes a skeletal hero now known as Deadman Sam. As Deadman Sam ventures through the underworld in order to liberate its denizens so that they might afford him a chance to see Nellie once more, Scagwell, who has gotten away with the crime, woos Nellie and eventually arranges a wedding between the two of them (though it is Nellie's cruel parents and not Nellie, who is suspicious of Scagwell and investigates the crime while Sam is venturing through the underworld, who insist upon Nellie marrying him). Eventually, Deadman Sam defeats the cruel demonic tyrant who is making the lives of his new underworld friends a

living, well, hell, and he is afforded a chance to return to the world of the living (though still in his skeletal form which he has gradually taken a liking to). Meanwhile, Nellie has solved the mystery of Sam's death and confronts Scagwell...which turns out to be a fatal mistake. Just as Sam arrives, Scagwell murders Nellie, who whispers her last words of love to Sam just as she passes away. Sam and Scagwell engage in single combat, but as Sam seemingly defeats the murderous baron, he invokes a dark spell to transform into a hideous monster. Just as all seems lost, Nellie returns as a ghost of pure light, taking the form of a magical sword that Sam uses to defeat Scagwell once and for all. The skeletal Sam and the ghostly Nellie then descend to the underworld where they have a glorious wedding surrounded by all of Sam's new friends.

While Deadman Sam was overshadowed both in sales and critical reception by some of the other great games to come out for the Super Nintendo CD that year, it's an enduring reminder of what great technology can inspire in the minds of game creators, and it still holds up to this day.

-Excerpted from "Early Gems Of The Super Nintendo CD", an article posted on Gamesovermatter.com, December 17, 2013

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### **Super Caesars Palace CD**

Steve: 6

Ed: 5 (quote: "This slightly upgraded version of the SNES game features unnecessary FMVs and little else to distinguish it from its cartridge cousin. If you want Vegas on your home console, stick to Vegas Stakes.")

Martin: 8

Sushi-X: 6

### **Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys**

Steve: 5 (quote: "The classic characters don't really make this stand out from the other point-and-click mystery games for the SNES-CD, and the lousy acting from the actors playing the titular characters made me pine for the books instead.")

Ed: 6

Martin: 7

Sushi-X: 3

### **Final Fight II**

Steve: 8

Ed: 7

Martin: 8 (quote: "This virtually arcade perfect brawler is better than the original! Mike Haggar returns in this fast-paced and really fun beat 'em up, and while not much has changed from the first game, the smooth graphics and realistic sounds offered up by the SNES-CD make this game refreshingly fun.")

Sushi-X: 7

### **Dune**

Steve: 7

Ed: 9 (quote: "An incredible adaptation of the classic Frank Herbert science fiction novel,

blending adventure and strategy elements into a fantastic quest. The music is probably the best part of this game and it shines on the Super Nintendo CD. Now you no longer need a computer to experience this instant classic.”)

Martin: 8

Sushi-X: 8

### **Syndicate**

Steve: 8

Ed: 7 (quote: “A brutally fun strategy game offering up a variety of weapons to eradicate your foes. Between this and Dune it's been a really good month for sci-fi strategy games on the SNES-CD.”)

Martin: 8

Sushi-X: 8

### **Flashback: The Quest For Identity**

Steve: 9

Ed: 9

Martin: 9 (quote: “This sequel to Out Of This World features the best graphics I've ever seen on a home console game. It looks like a cartoon come to life and the full-motion video sequences take up the entire screen. A beautiful showcase for the SNES-CD's abilities.”)

Sushi-X: 8

### **Deadman Sam**

Steve: 9 (quote: “This spooky action game from Tecmo is a breath of fresh air. Great music and lovable characters make this one of my favorite platform games of the year!”)

Ed: 8

Martin: 9

Sushi-X: 8

### **The Swarm**

Steve: 7

Ed: 7

Martin: 7

Sushi-X: 7 (quote: “This game puts you in the shoes of a hotshot pilot who's trying to take down an alien invasion. I'm not a big fan of flying games but as far as those go, it's decent enough. The play controls are nice and if Starfox is a bit too corny for you, give The Swarm a shot.”)

-reviews of August 1993's SNES-CD releases in the September and October 1993 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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*“Yeah, I remember when Syndicate came out, in August 1993 I believe, we had some problems with that. There'd already been a bit of controversy over Mad Dog McCree, but that had blown over fairly quickly. We put out Syndicate, completely uncensored with a 17 rating and we still saw some complaints about the level of violence, with all the blood and the fact that you could kill lots of people. Mad Dog McCree, it was realistic but there was no*

*blood and all the people you killed were criminals. Here, in Syndicate, the graphics weren't very detailed, but, you know, the number of people you could kill in the game, it was a lot more and there were parents who got the game who wrote us some angry correspondences. We'd made the decision to allow pretty much any game on the Super Nintendo CD though, so we were ready for all of that.*

*And, of course, compared to the shitstorm that we were about to face, well...let's just say people forgot about Syndicate very quickly."*

-Peter Main, excerpted from an *Electronic Gaming Monthly* interview, June 2006

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### **Nintendo and Telenet Japan Team Up For Future SNES-CD Projects**

It's been announced today that Nintendo has signed on software producer Telenet Japan for a series of Nintendo exclusive games, particularly focusing on the Super Nintendo CD! What's more, they're planning to have these games available for both Japanese and American consumers, with Telenet Japan particularly citing North America as a great new source of potential sales. Telenet Japan recently released the FMV game "Time Gal" for both the Super Nintendo CD and Sega-CD systems, though this new deal covers games in many different genres.

First up is "Soulqueen", set for a release next spring. It's a space shooter in the style of *Gradius* and *Axelay*, but in addition to its fast-paced space shooting action, the game's story will be told through animated full-motion video sequences between levels and through voiced lines during the levels themselves. Said a Telenet Japan representative, "The presentation capabilities of the Super Nintendo CD will open up new opportunities to create memorable characters and worlds." Space shooters are frequently cited as a way to test the capabilities of a game system, and with an SNES-CD version of *Axelay* coming out next month, Telenet Japan's "Soulqueen" may well be striking while the iron is hot!

As for other future projects, no information has been officially stated, but the rumor mill is buzzing that the action series "Valis" may receive an SNES-CD installment sometime in the future. There's also some news that Telenet's development division Wolfteam has caught the eye of Nintendo and that a possible fantasy-based project could be in the early stages of development. Watch this space for further details!

-excerpted from an article in *Gamepro*, August 1993

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Interviewer: Tell us about *Night Trap*, because... looking back, I cannot believe that Sony was prepared to fight so hard to get it onto the Super Nintendo CD. Of all the games that they could have invoked their "show cause" clause over...

Tom Zito: Oh, I know. I mean, here's the thing. *Night Trap* had been released for the Sega-CD, like almost a year before. At launch. And it WAS going to be a launch game for the Super Nintendo CD, but Nintendo kept stonewalling Sony, who had our backs and wanted it on there. Howard Lincoln kept saying it was never gonna happen. We heard Shigeru Miyamoto had thrown a fit when the idea of this game being released on the SNES-CD had been floated over there in Japan. Miyamoto! A fit! Can you believe it? But we thought, at the time, that it'd be a huge hit. It had sold well enough to turn a profit, they loved it over in England, we thought if we released it in like October 1993 it would fly off the shelves that

holiday season.

Interviewer: But Nintendo kept saying no.

Tom Zito: They kept saying that they absolutely weren't going to allow it, and of course they had right of first refusal on any potential SNES-CD games...but Sony had a clause that would force them to show cause for that. They'd have to go up in front of an arbitrator and explain why Night Trap would hurt Nintendo. And, of course this was before all the Congressional hearings and all the Joe Lieberman stuff, this was in like summer of 1993. So they had no reason, besides, you know, it being a bad game...

Interviewer: Yeah, I think we had it ranked like...third worst game of all time in our recent list? One slot behind "Who Kidnapped Santa Claus?"

Tom Zito: Yeah, that's another thing, they approved Who Kidnapped Santa Claus the very next year, but not Night Trap? Are you kidding me? But Nintendo had put their foot down and they were prepared to fight to keep the game off their system. But at the same time, Sony also wanted Nintendo to allow them to put an uncensored version of Mortal Kombat on the Super Nintendo CD, with all the blood and gore and everything. And Nintendo relented on that to keep Sony from pushing the Night Trap issue.

Interviewer: Are you still bitter? I know at the time you thought Sony had sold you out.

Tom Zito: Well, now, I mean, it's the best thing that could've happened probably. I was mad about not getting our game on there, sure, but looking back...Night Trap really wasn't that good. I defended the hell out of it in front of Congress, but even among the games we did, Corpse Killer, Maximum Surge, those games were a lot better. And those made it to the SNES-CD. And in the meantime, Nintendo had to face the full front of all the backlash from putting uncensored Mortal Kombat on their system. When I wasn't up there sweating it out in front of those Congressmen, I was laughing, because they took a beating up there.

-interview with Tom Zito, CEO of Digital Pictures, from *GameInformer* magazine, March 2004

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts – September 1993**

1. Star Fox – 27,158
2. Super Mario World 2 – 26,883
3. Super Mario Kart – 16,481
4. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 13,744
5. Final Fantasy III – 11,052
6. Super Bomberman CD – 10,741
7. Lethal Enforcers – 8,166
8. Final Fantasy: New Generation – 7,701
9. ClayFighter – 7,528
10. The Lost Vikings – 6,580
11. Alien 3 – 6,422
12. MechWarrior – 4,705
13. Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego? - 4,686
14. Shadowrun – 4,621

15. Battletoads II – 4,517
16. Super Turrican – 3,554
17. Final Fight II – 2,755
18. Mad Dog McCree – 2,504
19. SimEarth: The Living Planet – 2,322
20. Pickton Lake – 2,208

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### **September 13, 1993**

On what was known throughout the gaming world as “Mortal Monday”, the home console version of Mortal Kombat was released on the Super Nintendo, the Sega Genesis, the Gameboy, the Sega Game Gear, and the Super Nintendo CD. Though the Super Nintendo, Gameboy, and Game Gear versions were all censored, with all the blood, gore, and the worst of the game's brutal “Fatality” moves cut out, the Sega Genesis and Super Nintendo CD versions had the blood and gore completely intact...the Genesis version required the entry of a code to unlock the uncensored game, while the Super Nintendo CD version, which came with a larger than normal, red, 17 and up label that took up nearly a quarter of the space on the front of the CD case, did not. The Super Nintendo CD version was also the only version to feature arcade quality graphics that easily surpassed those available on the Sega Genesis.

Though the Genesis version was the top seller from the start, easily dwarfing sales of the censored Super Nintendo version, the Super Nintendo CD version was close behind...and like Super Mario World 2 had done five months earlier, Mortal Kombat was moving add-on consoles and combo sets at a significant pace. Needless to say, both Nintendo of Japan and Nintendo of America had incredible trepidation over allowing this bloody and brutally violent game on any of their home consoles, even with a big red warning label on the cover and explicit and repeated instructions to all their retailers not to sell the game to anyone who even looked like they were younger than 17.

“I regretted it as soon as I gave my approval,” Nintendo president Hiroshi Yamauchi would later be quoted as saying. Over the next few weeks, the decision to port the uncensored version of Mortal Kombat to the Super Nintendo CD would be both the dumbest...and the most brilliant decision Nintendo had ever made.

*“Since 1985, Nintendo has been committed to providing a family-friendly entertainment experience. Our company chose to put limits on the kind of content that we would allow on our systems. The Nintendo Entertainment System and the Super Nintendo Entertainment System both have restrictions on the kinds of games that are allowed to be produced for those consoles. When we decided to allow less restrictions for our CD-ROM accessory, we knew we were making a conscious decision that more violent and more potentially controversial games would be allowed and that those games might end up in the hands of younger players, IF we did not do our due diligence to inform our retail partners that those games were not to be played by anyone under the age of 17. Nintendo has gone above and beyond to inform retailers, advertisers, and most importantly, parents about the kinds of content in certain games released for the device. Nintendo has spent millions and millions of dollars in advertisements and retail kiosks to allow parents to make informed decisions about the kinds of games that their children will be allowed to play. We are proud to be an industry leader in establishing a ratings system for those games, a rating system which, I must remind the committee, Sega did not have until June of this year.”*

-Howard Lincoln, testifying before a Senate committee on the effects of violent video games, September 30, 1993

*“The problem, Mr. Lincoln, that I have with your games, is that when you go to buy a video*

*game in the store, the violent games, the sexually explicit games, are right next to the games intended for children. You've got Mortal Kombat right next to the uh, the Carmen Sandiego game, and when a kid looks up at those games, which one is he going to want to buy? A parent might be trying to buy a game to encourage their child to learn but when they see the Mortal Kombat game, you think they're going to want to get something educational? I mean...you wouldn't see a store putting the vibrators and the fuzzy handcuffs next to the Barbie dolls would you?"*

-Senator Joseph Lieberman, Senate committee on the effects of violent video games, September 30, 1993

*"This gun, this automatic machine gun that Nintendo puts out for their games... \*holds up the Super Scope 6\* this can be used for Yoshi's Safari. This is for a game they've got rated for general audiences. This game came out three days ago. For a kids' game with a green dinosaur and fun, colorful graphics, this gun is used. Oh, and this is the newest issue of Nintendo Power, their official magazine that they put out every month. \*holds up the October 1993 issue of Nintendo Power\* They have The Terminator on the cover, this is their big game this month. This is based on a rated-R movie."*

-Bill White, testifying before a Senate committee on the effects of violent video games, September 30, 1993

*"And that was like the kill shot, right there. Once Bill pulled out that gun and that magazine, I could just see the look on Howard Lincoln's face. He'd been so composed for that whole time but once that took place he kind of lost his cool a bit and I could see that Bill was getting a lot more comfortable. And you see Lieberman and Kohl, they're kind of looking at each other and sort of nodding their heads, I mean, Nintendo had totally lost the moral high ground and for the first time that day it was Sega starting to look like the good guys. I knew we were all sort of in the doghouse with the Senate but if Nintendo got the worst of it it'd be a lot better for us."*

-Tom Kalinske, "The Chase: Sega's 20 Year Struggle To Take Down A Giant"

*"Well, I know that my movie The Terminator came up, and I looked at the game, and it's not as violent as the movie, there's no blood or anything like that. I'm not a big fan of the video games anyway, I think that America's youths need to be out exercising, I think that the games are putting a lot of kids on the couch, and they don't realize how fun physical activity can be. I don't know if the government should step in and censor games but I know they should be doing more to encourage physical activity in schools."*

-Arnold Schwarzenegger, from an Entertainment Tonight interview on October 2, 1993

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### **September 17, 1993**

Bill Andresen could hear some very loud noises coming from the TV in the living room. His son Chris was having some friends over, and one of his friends had brought the newest sensation for the Super Nintendo CD: Mortal Kombat. Bill had never seen the game in person before, and he decided to take a look at just what was making his son and his son's friends so excited.

He entered the room and watched the action on the screen. The vivid colors and lifelike animation showed a fairly realistic looking fight between two characters, Sub-Zero and Raiden. His son Chris was using Sub-Zero and was winning quite handily, delivering a flurry of fierce blows before freezing his opponent solid.

"Well that's pretty neat..." Bill thought, before Raiden went into a daze and the words 'FINISH HIM!' appeared on screen in bright red letters.

"Oooh, yeah yeah yeah, rip his head off, rip his head off!" shouted one of the boys, prompting Chris to input a series of button presses on the controller that triggered Sub-Zero's fatality. Sub-Zero walked over to Raiden, yanking Raiden's head right off his neck with a shower of blood. Raiden's spine dangled limply from his severed skull. Bill's eyes went wide with horror as Chris and his friends cheered and laughed at the gruesome sight.

"What in God's name...?" said Bill, walking over to the television. "Chris, turn that game off, that's the worst thing I've ever seen in my life!"

"Awww, dad.... it's just a game, it's not even real."

"I don't care, you need to turn that game off right now," said Bill, looking around the room at Chris' friends. "Which one of you boys brought this kind of filth into my house?"

"Uh...sorry Mr. Andresen, I mean, Kevin and Rick's parents are cool with it..." said one of the boys with a sigh, going over to the SNES-CD and ejecting the disc before turning off the console.

"Sorry Mike," said Chris apologetically, embarrassed that his dad had caused such an abrupt end to the fun. "Dad....!"

"I don't ever want you playing that game again." Bill said, wondering just how these games could have gotten so violent. He hadn't had any problem letting his son play games like Super Mario World 2 or Star Fox, heck, he thought the Muppet characters in that game were really funny. But this was completely over the top, especially on a Nintendo system! He knew Sega had violent video games but he thought Nintendo knew better than that.

The next day, Bill's boss would be hearing all about what he'd seen his son and his friends having so much fun playing together.

Bill's boss? Senator Joseph Lieberman.

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*Tonight on Nightline... there's a new video game that's sweeping the nation, but parents everywhere are mortified that the graphic violence featured in the game might be causing the nation's children to become more violent themselves. We'll talk to Senator Joseph Lieberman, who's calling for a Senate hearing into the increasingly violent and graphic content of today's most popular games.*

-Ted Koppel, ABC's Nightline, September 20, 1993

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### **Nintendo Brings The Action Of The Big Screen To The SNES-CD!**

Two of the hottest Super Nintendo releases of the year are set to come out over the coming weeks, and we've got the scoop on both of them! First up is Jurassic Park, based on the hit

Steven Spielberg film that took the box office by storm this summer. Ocean is releasing a different version of the game for each of Nintendo's four big systems, the NES, the Game Boy, the Super Nintendo, and the Super Nintendo CD, and the CD-ROM version of the game looks outstanding! It's a mixture of real-time action and a point and click adventure game that involves hunting for mysteries and clues as you try to escape the mysterious island where a pack of dinosaurs have broken loose! Once you've completed your search, you're dropped into various action scenes that involve running and gunning your way through hordes of dinosaurs. The game is Super Scope compatible for extra accuracy when hunting down dinos.

Then there's *The Terminator*, released for the Super Nintendo CD by Virgin Games. It's similar to the version released earlier this year for the Sega CD, which was renowned for its acclaimed musical score. The Super Nintendo version adds a few minutes of FMV cutscenes to the mix, depicting the horror that the Terminators have wreaked on Kyle Reese's desperate future and adding some pathos to the game's quest to take the Terminators down. Nintendo's actually pushing this game fairly hard and they expect it to be a top seller this fall. With Sega CD starting to push their big movie-based game in *Aladdin*, it's clear that cinematic games will have a huge bearing on how this holiday season goes in the world of video game sales!

-From *Gamepro* magazine, October 1993

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### **Axelay:**

Steve: 9

Ed: 8

Martin: 10 (quote: "A downright flawless upgrade of the SNES original. This challenging but oh-so-addictive shooter looks and sounds beautiful on the CD-ROM. An instant classic.")

Sushi-X: 9

### **Battle Chess:**

Steve: 8

Ed: 8

Martin: 8 (quote: "Chess has never been more fun than in Battle Chess! Play against the computer with over 20 difficulty levels, or play against your friends and watch your pieces whale on each other.")

Sushi-X: 6

### **Mortal Kombat:**

Steve: 9

Ed: 8

Martin: 9

Sushi-X: 8 (quote: "This is the best home console version of Mortal Kombat for sure. The fighting is a bit clunkier than Street Fighter, but the game's realistic graphics make it fun to play nonetheless.")

### **Red Line: F-1 Racer**

Steve: 7

Ed: 5 (quote: "This ho-hum racing game moves just a bit more quickly on the SNES-CD, but there are much better racing games out there. Wish it could have made better use of the CD-ROM's capabilities.")

Martin: 7

Sushi-X: 5

### **Jurassic Park:**

Steve: 7

Ed: 8

Martin: 8 (quote: "This hybrid action-shooter-point-and-click sometimes tries to be too much at once but is still a great adaptation of the film.")

Sushi-X: 8

### **Axes Of Avenglia:**

Steve: 8 (quote: "This Taito RPG features some of the best graphics I've seen in any SNES-CD game and a very good soundtrack as well. The story isn't quite as good as the SNES' Lufia, but it's a really nice glimpse at what the system is capable of putting out.")

Ed: 6

Martin: 8

Sushi-X: 7

### **Art of Fighting:**

Steve: 8

Ed: 7

Martin: 7

Sushi-X: 9 (quote: "Just as good as on Neo-Geo, Art of Fighting brings one of the best fighting games in the arcade home to your SNES-CD. There's even more character detail and animation than Street Fighter! Mortal Kombat might get more sales and more press but this is the month's best fighting game.")

### **Yoshi's Safari:**

Steve: 8 (quote: "This rail-shooter makes great use of the Super Scope 6 and looks absolutely great on the SNES-CD. It's not quite as pretty as Star Fox but the cutesy graphics are appropriate and this game's a bit easier for younger players.")

Ed: 8

Martin: 6

Sushi-X: 6

### **Ghouls 'n Ghosts CD:**

Steve: 7

Ed: 9

Martin: 8 (quote: "The staggeringly difficult series gets a brand new edition for CD-ROM in this sequel to Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts. The difficulty is definitely intact in this one but the great character animation and CD soundtrack are a huge plus.")

Sushi-X: 8

### **Frantic Flight:**

Steve: 9

Ed: 9 (quote: "Frantic Flight is a fantastic airplane combat game, featuring a huge amount of ship customization and procedurally generated wingmen that make every mission feel brand new. Koei did a great job capturing the feel of a PC dogfight game in this SNES-CD original.")

Martin: 9

Sushi-X: 8

### **Ys Collection:**

Steve: 7

Ed: 6 (quote: "Nihon Falcom's classic Ys series arrives on the SNES-CD in the form of a collection of the first three games. It's a faithful collection but maybe a bit too faithful, the graphics and gameplay are just too dated when compared with other RPGs on the system.")

Martin: 7

Sushi-X: 4

### **The Adventures of Willy Beamish:**

Steve: 5

Ed: 5

Martin: 4

Sushi-X: 3 (quote: "Another example of a crap point and click that bored me to tears. I hated this brat and I hated this game.")

### **The Terminator:**

Steve: 8 (quote: "This was a really fun run-and-gun shooter in the style of Contra. It featured some of the best music on the system to date, and while it wasn't a straight-up movie adaptation, it still felt like it could be a part of the Terminator universe.")

Ed: 8

Martin: 8

Sushi-X: 8

### **True Golf: Wicked 18:**

Steve: 4

Ed: 5

Martin: 4

Sushi-X: 1 (quote: "Even if I LIKED golf I would have hated this game. It barely looks like an SNES game, let alone an SNES-CD game, and the play controls were god awful. True golf? I doubt it.")

### **Super Detective Club:**

Steve: 7

Ed: 9 (quote: "Even with all the other point and click detective games available for the SNES-CD, this one stands out. I'm really glad Nintendo decided to bring this game (actually two games, it's both Famicom games in one!) to our shores. You'll be gripped by the mystery and won't want to stop playing until it's solved.")

Martin: 7  
Sushi-X: 7

-From *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of September and October 1993's SNES-CD games in their October, November, and December 1993 issues

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*Super Detective Club is the first American release of the Famicom Tantei Club series originally released in Japan for the Famicom system. This remake of the first two games combines all the cases of the Famicom titles into a graphically enhanced detective adventure for the Super Nintendo CD! With three fun cases to solve, you'll spend hours delving into the incredible mysteries within.*

-from a *Nintendo Power* "Pak Watch" article in the October 1993 issue

*"Super Detective Club, of course known as Tantei Club here, was one of those games that I did not think would be a success with Western players. We had a long discussion about releasing it there, but Yamauchi-san thought that the more older players of the Super Nintendo CD would appreciate the game. If I recall properly, it did very modest sales, but sold just enough to justify the decision to localize it. I know there is a devoted fanbase in America to this game who appreciates the fact that we did release it there. I am looking forward to seeing their reaction to the sequel, as it has sold extremely well here in Japan."*

-Gunpei Yokoi, translated from the September 1997 issue of *Famitsu* magazine

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### **September 30, 1993**

A three-and-a-half hour long Senate hearing into the effects of violent video games took place in Washington, DC. It was chaired by Senators Joe Lieberman of Connecticut and Herb Kohl of Wisconsin. Of particular concern to the senators' was Nintendo's decision to allow violent and graphic games, particularly the uncensored version of *Mortal Kombat*, on their Super Nintendo CD-ROM device. Of additional concern was Sega's strange advertising campaigns involving the use of seemingly 'subliminal' messages and their reliance on marketing games such as *Mortal Kombat* to court older players. Both Howard Lincoln of Nintendo and Bill White of Sega testified extensively at the hearing, along with Parker Page from the Children's Television Resource and Education Center, Marilyn Droz from the National Coalition on Television Violence, and several other experts from the fields of juvenile justice and child psychology.

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Howard Lincoln: These games are very clearly marked with ratings symbols that show that these games are not appropriate for children. Here, on the *Mortal Kombat* case, we have a huge red box that takes up about a fourth of the cover, with a big "17" on it as plain as day. No parent who buys this game for their child will be able to do so without seeing that 17 and the big letters saying "MATURE PLAYERS ONLY", and an additional ratings descriptor that says "GRAPHIC VIOLENCE".

Joseph Lieberman: But parents are buying these games for their kids anyway. My chief of

staff, his son's friend brought the game over just a couple weeks ago.

Howard Lincoln: It's not up to us what parents decide to purchase for their children, that choice is up to the parents and the ratings boxes-

Joseph Lieberman: But my friend's son was exposed to this when his friend brought it over. Kids are being exposed to this content without their parents even knowing about it. Are parents going to have to ask about these games every time they let one of their children sleep over? This game gets out there and eventually all the kids are going to hear about it and see it. It's all they talk about at school.

Herbert Kohl: Mr. Lincoln, I understand that you don't like being put in a position to censor your own games. But you've got to take a position of responsibility here. Parents can't be looking over their kids' shoulder all the time. There's got to be some limitations because sooner or later, every child is going to see something from these games whether the parents like it or not.

Howard Lincoln: I feel that the parents of America are responsible enough to keep these games out of their homes if they don't want their children exposed to them. Time and time again, I've gotten letters from parents thanking me for implementing this rating system. I understand that there's still a possibility that these games are going to be played in situations that parents haven't given their consent for, but I feel that part of the job of being a parent is being there and making sure that if you don't want your child to play one of these games, that you're there to say no to it.

Joseph Lieberman: I know a lot of single mothers, they have to work 60, 70 hours a week to support their children. They don't have the money to hire a sitter, so their kid has to be home alone two, three hours a day. Two hours of Mortal Kombat a day, that's going to damage a kid beyond repair.

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Bill White: So Nintendo has been pushing their bazooka and their Terminator game, and they've got Mortal Kombat and they say that this CD-ROM device is for adults but then they release all kinds of little kid games for it and push it for families.

Herbert Kohl: But they don't advertise those games in the same way that your company does. You're advertising Mortal Kombat and you're pushing the Sega Genesis in the same commercial. We've talked about Nintendo having these violent games but at least they don't advertise them for little kids.

Bill White: We don't either. The average age of the Sega Genesis player is nineteen.

Herbert Kohl: But you show a teenage boy in the commercial.

Joseph Lieberman: I mean, it's clear that the video game companies are trying to push these games onto our children. Nintendo just takes a more passive approach about it.

Bill White: We absolutely, unequivocally do not try to push violent video games onto young players. We have a ratings system just like Nintendo does and our Mortal Kombat game is rated for 13 and up.

Joseph Lieberman: But you have just as much violence as Nintendo's game does. It's hidden behind a code but every schoolboy in America knows that code by now.

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*"I remember that we were both getting burned pretty badly by the senators during that hearing. Howard was doing the best that he could up there and he did make some of the senators understand that Nintendo's rating system was effective in keeping violent video games mostly out of the hands of children. It was just that damn Mortal Kombat game that got everyone in such an uproar...but of course while all of this was going on, it was just driving sales of the game up more and more. I think there was even a rumor that we were going to recall Mortal Kombat for the SNES-CD, and once that rumor was floated, sales spiked even more! People were so scared that we'd recall it and censor it that they rushed to buy the game because they were worried it was the only chance they'd have to play it!*

*As I recall, Mr. Yamauchi did think seriously about recalling it, but he decided not to pull the trigger at pretty much the last moment. I don't think we'll ever know for sure if he really considered it or not, but I'm sure glad that rumor got out there. It went a LONG way toward putting the SNES-CD into people's homes at the end of 1993 and for that, I've even got to thank Vice President Lieberman."*

-Peter Main, excerpted from an *Electronic Gaming Monthly* interview, June 2006

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Howard Lincoln: The reason we even decided to relax our censorship policies in the first place is because our third parties wanted to make certain games that would appeal to older players. We had spent a long time, and I mean a LONG time censoring our games, but our partnership with Sony over these last couple of years has been very constructive and even I've started to see that Nintendo has had to change with the times. The vast majority of Nintendo games are still appropriate for families and for the select few that are only appropriate for mature players, we have the ratings system.

Joseph Lieberman: I feel like this was a move to make money. You wanted to appeal to older players with more money to spend on games and you allowed these violent, graphic games to attract more sales.

Howard Lincoln: We were doing just fine before the SNES-CD was released. We controlled 90 percent of the gaming market. We didn't need these games to make money. We did it to protect creative freedom. I want to show you some footage from a video game called Final Fantasy III, released by one of our third party partners, Squaresoft, who was one of the biggest advocates for relaxing our censorship policies. This is a game that's rated 13 on our rating system, it explores some mature themes but doesn't contain any graphic violent or sexual content, but it wouldn't have been possible without the relaxation of our rating system.

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*"I was fudging the truth a bit there, I'll admit. We'd censored Final Fantasy IV for Western audiences and we could have done the same with Final Fantasy V. But I wanted to show the committee the possibilities that you had when you released games with more mature content. We showed the senators the scene where Galuf is killed by Exdeath. It's a very emotionally charged scene. I think it moved a couple of the older senators, the ones with*

grandchildren. I know Marilyn Droz was interested in the game because it featured three female protagonists. I think we won her over a bit with Final Fantasy V.

*In the beginning, I was one of the biggest advocates for Nintendo's censorship policies. I'd mentioned before that if it wasn't for Nintendo, the industry would be full of pornography. But when I went in front of that Senate hearing I was put in the position of defending the right of video game producers to make any kinds of games they wished to make. I hated Mortal Kombat, I never would have let my kids play such a game. But I was defending Nintendo and I had to hitch myself to that wagon. That was part of my job, being an attorney before I joined up with Nintendo meant that sometimes I had to defend people and practices that I disagreed with.*

*But ultimately, I don't regret the direction Nintendo went. I knew that kids were always going to be able to get their hands on these games no matter what ratings we put on the box. But part of our job at Nintendo was making sure that those games stayed out of the hands of as many of those kids as possible, and I think we did a fine job of that. I never set out to profit off of kids playing violent video games. But if I could profit off of transforming the industry and expanding the creative horizons of game creators everywhere, I was just fine with that."*

-Howard Lincoln, from an interview with *GameInformer*, September 2008

*"I think on that day, that was the start of the Super Nintendo CD becoming something that would replace the Super Nintendo intend of merely supplementing it. With the opening of the gates for more mature games, which is something Sony had pushed for from the very beginning, it made the transition to the Super Nintendo CD a true evolutionary leap in the production of video games. Nobody knew it at the time of course, and it wouldn't happen for at least a couple more years, but when the news from those Congressional hearings got back to Japan, everyone here at Sony was extremely pleased. I wish I could have been there."*

-Ken Kutaragi, from an interview on IGN.com, October 17, 2010

*"I was very dismayed at all of the controversy these games had created. I had merely set out to create toys, not so much create something that would be regarded as violent or graphic or bad for children. I was very troubled by all of this, and so I asked my friend Mr. Frank Oz what he thought of the whole situation. He told me about Jim Henson and that though Mr. Henson had set out to create something children could enjoy as well, he always believed that children were very smart and could handle many things that adults did not believe they could. He told me of their very lovely film The Dark Crystal and how it had been controversial at the time as well, and that I should not worry so much about children being harmed or scared by these games. It was this conversation that encouraged me to ask Yamauchi-san to allow our friends at Argonaut to go ahead with their follow up game to Star Fox. Squad Four, I believe they called it, was said to be just a bit too mature for the audiences Nintendo wanted to appeal to, and at first I had agreed, but after talking to my friend I encouraged Yamauchi-san to reconsider. I was very pleased when he told me he would."*

-Shigeru Miyamoto, translated from an interview with Famitsu, March 1995

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**October 1, 1993**

Senator Lieberman had not been entirely pleased with the responses from either Nintendo or Sega at the Senate hearing. If it had been entirely up to him, he'd have likely moved forward with his plan to push a bill through Congress requiring federal oversight of video game content, or at the very least, a mandatory, government-controlled game ratings system.

But...Howard Lincoln had held his own at the hearing, and the senator knew that any government bill regulating the sale of video games would mean a tough fight against an increasingly powerful industry. He also knew that the representatives from the game industry, particularly Lincoln, had won over a few of his colleagues with their call to allow creative freedom in video games, and his promises that Nintendo would do even more than they were already doing to raise awareness of their (admittedly very effective) ratings system, including threatening to withhold shipments of certain video games from stores that did not comply with Nintendo's ratings policies and using secret shoppers to enforce that compliance. The fact that Howard Lincoln said that he'd even promised to pull games from Walmart, the growing retail giant, if it didn't do a better job of avoiding selling violent video games to children, impressed some on the committee even more.

In the end, Lieberman and Kohl decided that they'd give the game industry a chance to regulate itself, though another hearing would be called in February 1994 to assess its progress in fulfilling its promises. Those promises would lead to something called the Entertainment Software Ratings Board, or ESRB for short, that would introduce the ratings of EC (Early Childhood, 3 and up), E (for Everyone), T (for Teen, 13 and up), M (Mature, 17 and up), and AO (Adults Only, 18 and up), utilizing Nintendo's green (for EC and E), yellow (for T), and red (for M and AO) color coding scheme in their ratings symbols. The first games to be rated by the ESRB would begin to roll out in March 1994, with Konami's Snatcher being the first M-rated game for the Super Nintendo CD.

The congressional hearings of 1993 wouldn't be the last time that video games faced the threat of censorship and regulation from the government, but the game industry had weathered its first major storm of controversy, and Nintendo's decision to agree to Sony's terms when it came to video game content censorship had been justified at last, despite those tenuous weeks when Hiroshi Yamauchi and Howard Lincoln believed they'd made a fatal mistake.

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts – October 1993**

1. Super Mario World 2 – 25,780
2. Star Fox – 22,164
3. Final Fantasy III – 18,056
4. Super Mario Kart – 14,988
5. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 12,750
6. Super Bomberman CD – 9,641
7. Clue – 7,540
8. Final Fantasy: New Generation – 7,316
9. Lethal Enforcers – 6,252
10. The Lost Vikings – 6,148
11. Alien 3 – 5,992
12. ClayFighter – 5,651
13. The Terminator – 4,372

14. Battletoads II – 4,052
15. Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego? - 3,951
16. MechWarrior – 3,544
17. Dark City – 2,988
18. Shadowrun – 2,957
19. Time Gal – 2,544
20. Secret Of Mana – 2,206

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*“Over the last couple of weeks, video games have been in the news for all the wrong reasons and last Thursday, there was a Congressional hearing into the detrimental effects of video game violence on today's youth. But a few nights ago in Petaluma, California, a video game device is being credited with possibly saving lives in a most unlikely fashion. Richard Allen Davis is being charged with burglary, criminal confinement, assault with a deadly weapon, and a host of other charges after he attempted to abduct a young girl from her home. He'd broken into the house during a slumber party, brandishing a knife at a girl and her friends before ordering the girl to leave the house with him. But as he was dragging the girl away, he tripped over a Super Nintendo CD-ROM console that the girls had been listening to music on. Davis fell into a dresser, sustaining a head injury that knocked him out long enough for the would-be victim to free her friends before summoning her parents for help. While her father kept the injured Davis at gunpoint, police were called and Davis was arrested.*

*When asked about the incident, the relieved father told reporters that he'd told his daughter several times not to keep the game device on the floor in the middle of her room because people might trip on it, but that he was glad that she hadn't listened to him this time. He was then asked about the ongoing video game violence controversy, and he replied that he didn't let his daughter play any of those violent games and that she enjoyed playing Carmen Sandiego. It seems that the Super Nintendo CD is catching criminals in both the virtual world and in the real world. This has been the NBC Nightly News. I'm Tom Brokaw, goodnight.”*

-from the NBC Nightly News, October 4, 1993

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*“This is, without a doubt, the greatest video game I've ever played. It far surpasses Final Fantasy II and III, and even A Link To The Past. It's a perfectly polished, truly epic, and all-around brilliant video game that absolutely justifies the purchase of a Super Nintendo CD. It touched my heart on a level that a video game has never done before, and I'm telling you right now, go out and buy this game. It is a flawless video game and one hell of an adventure.”*

-from Martin Alessi's 10/10 review of Secret Of Mana in the December 1993 issue of Electronic Gaming Monthly

*“I can't say all video games are bad. I got the opportunity, thanks to some of my younger interns, to play a game that I thought was really fun and really well made. I had an hour or so to kill and some of my interns invited me to play this game, it was called, I think, Secret of Mana. And it wasn't a really violent game, you had a sword but you were fighting*

*monsters, it was a lot like the Lord of the Rings books I read as a kid and I really loved those. And you could play with two other people, and they let me play it for about an hour and it was a lot of fun. It had....it had the kind of music you wouldn't expect to hear in a game. I mean, not bleeps and bloops like in the old games but real music, like in a movie. And everything was so colorful and I had a lot of fun playing it. You could tell the people who made it put a lot of heart and work into it. So I do think that there is a redeeming value to video games. I mean, if all of them were more like that Secret of Mana game, I don't think there would've been a problem."*

-Al Gore, Larry King Live, November 22, 1993

*"Oh yeah, one of my very first acting gigs was in this video game called 'Nightfall'. It was like this fantasy game, I think, like a medieval slasher type game, REALLY cheesy and campy but it was a lot of fun to work on. I played this witch who helped the main character, and I wore all these outfits that kept showing off my boobs. I mean this was around the time that Nintendo was in trouble with the government, so one of the games that got a lot of press was this Nightfall game because it was all violent and sexy. Of course compared to some of the games now it was REALLY tame, but I have good memories of working on it."*

-Kelly Hu, from the September 2010 issue of Maxim

*"Sheex, no matter what happens to me I am not letting you go, not again, do you hear me? Dammit...the Empire's closing in....stay with me, I'm sorry I pulled you back into this but stay with me!!"*

-Jerrica, boss of the "Scorpion Army", Secret of Mana

*"This was, without a doubt, the work I'm most proud of in my entire career. This was the translation I'd waited my whole career to do. I poured my heart and soul into it, but the game deserved nothing less and I'm glad Squaresoft gave me the time I needed to see it through to completion. I still get praise for it to this day and it warms my heart to know how much people appreciated the work I did."*

-Ted Woolsey, recalling his work on Secret of Mana in an RPGamer.com interview, March 3, 1999

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## **November 8, 1993**

Secret of Mana is released in North America for the Super Nintendo CD, three months after a blockbuster release in Japan. In Japan, the game was critically lauded, receiving only the second 40/40 ever from *Famitsu* magazine (with Super Mario World 2 receiving the first earlier that year). The game was three years in the making, an enormous undertaking of time and energy from Squaresoft, the collaboration of dozens of talented game makers. Simply put, this game was the reason that Squaresoft lobbied so hard for Nintendo and Sony to come to an agreement, with a large chunk of its development already completed before pen was put to paper. Its North American release was accompanied by a large promotional push by Nintendo, who was somewhat determined to make the public forget about the Mortal Kombat controversy. Secret of Mana was as critically praised in North America as it was in Japan, perhaps even more so. It scored a 37/40 from Electronic Gaming Monthly, 5s across the board from Gamepro, a perfect score from Gamefan, and was awarded Game of the Month in nearly every magazine where such an award existed, even over Sega's massive November release Sonic CD. The reviews used words such as "epic", "brilliant", and even "masterpiece" to describe the game. The game sold 46,000 units on the day of its release in North America, which paled in comparison to smash hits

like Super Mario World 2 and Mortal Kombat, but for the genre it was an unprecedented number. It would top 100,000 North American sales by the end of the week, and the coming holiday season and glowing reviews kept its legs strong. Eventually, after several years of sales and "greatest hits" reprintings, it would become the first JRPG to achieve one million sales in North America, an absolutely incredible milestone. But more importantly, it, like Super Mario World 2 and Mortal Kombat had done before it, would sell SNES-CD systems. Lots of them.

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## **Secret of Mana – The Basics**

Secret of Mana's status as a CD-ROM game provided it with graphics that mildly exceeded those of its OTL counterpart (mostly in backgrounds and animation quality). What the CD medium truly allowed was that it made Secret of Mana a much bigger, longer, more epic game. The Empire and the Republic were fleshed out massively, with several large areas added to each. The game didn't have any voices or animated cutscenes, instead, the majority of data on the CD was actually taken up by its sprawling, epic musical score, now in full CD glory without any of the audio glitches that plagued the OTL game. It could also have much more text, especially in the North American version, which did away with the fixed width font that Squaresoft had used for previous English translations. This gave Ted Woolsey incredible flexibility with the translation quality, making it much more accurate to the original intent of the script. He was also given three months time to complete the translation, unlike the one month afforded to him IOTL.

The game's battle system, involving active attacking and defending by the player, was the same as IOTL. However, because of the additional boss battles, the player was given enough weapon orbs that weapons, including the Mana Sword, reached level 9 as a matter of just playing through the game instead of hunting down secret orbs for the final level (with enemy difficulty in the final dungeons rebalanced to keep pace). The item and equipment ring system was kept the same as OTL. You were limited to five of any one item at a time, but you have a reserve that you can access outside of a battle at any time by pressing Start to switch items/equipment into your active inventory (a system introduced IOTL by Seiken Densetsu 3).

The game also fleshed out and expanded upon a number of minor characters, particularly those of Emperor Vandole's lieutenants, Sheex, Fanha, and Geshtar. It also greatly expanded on the "Scorpion Army", particularly its boss, now given the name of Jerrica and a much nobler purpose revealed late in the game. Dyluck was given more of a personality and the player was given more time to get to know him and the nature of Thanatos' dealings with the underworld were revealed. In brief, here's how some of the characters were expanded in game.

Dyluck- Remains the true love of Purim (the girl), though the prophecy surrounding him ("one born in darkness and raised in the light of Mana") gets explained in game: The god of the underworld created him with the express purpose of serving as a body for Thanatos, but Thanatos was attacked by knights of the Republic before completing the ritual and was raised as Jema's son with Luka serving as a surrogate mother to him.

Geshtar- Trained since birth to be the Empire's perfect fighter, though we later find out that he seeks a destiny other than being the Empire's lap dog. We also eventually learn that he and Fanha are lovers.

Fanha- Born a sorceress in a Republic village that rejected her because of her strange powers, she joined the Empire for the purpose of getting revenge.

Sheex- Originally born in the Underground City as one of the last members of Silvira, the ancient futuristic civilization that once dominated the planet, he rejected a life in hiding and used the cybernetic implants given to him to serve the Emperor. However, he still holds lost feelings for Jerrica, leader of the Scorpion Army (aka the Keepers of Silvira)

Jerrica- "Boss" of the Scorpion Army, ostensibly seeking out Mana energy for their own nefarious purposes but in truth her group is attempting to keep the Underground City of Silvira going, since without Mana energy their technology will fail and the lives of her people depend on her group's work.

Krissy- Still the leader of the Resistance but we see a bit more of her as the Empire part of the game is expanded. She develops a very close friendship with Purim's friend Phanna.

Phanna- Purim's best friend, though the two are currently fighting because Purim stole Dyluck from her. Phanna later restores her friendship with Purim and is also deeply close with Krissy, to the point where fans suspect that the two of them may be a couple (indeed, it's confirmed by the game's creator in 2013 that Krissy and Phanna indeed do become a couple, with Phanna being revealed to be bisexual, of course it couldn't be confirmed in the actual game itself, only very VERY vaguely alluded to)

The plot of the game itself is greatly expanded from the OTL game, with the possibility for three different endings. The game is essentially divided into three main parts, which are...

### **Part I: The Early Quest**

This is the part of the game most similar to the game IOTL, with only a few minor differences. It essentially consists of the hero Randi's journey beginning with him pulling out the sword, being banished from Potos, teaming up with the sprite Popoi and the girl Purim and gathering up the powers of Undine, Gnome, Sylphid, and Salamando. Again, it's very similar to how this part of the game was IOTL with a few minor differences (the first visit to Pandora is somewhat longer, you meet Dyluck and Purim first there, see the tension between Purim and Phanna, and even spar with Dyluck). Another part that gets expanded a bit is when the heroes pass out in Kakkara Desert and are taken aboard Morie and Meria's ship, you get some more background on the war between the Republic and the Empire, and Fanha tags along with Geshtar, you also see him actually getting into his motorcycle armor to fight you for the first Mech Rider fight. Morie also acts like a bit less of a jerk and we see that he genuinely has feelings for Purim, this will come into play later on.

### **Part II: The Empire Wars**

Here's where things start to change significantly from OTL's Secret of Mana. The Southtown/Norhtown segment is largely the same, though there's a boss to challenge you in the sewers instead of you just emerging into the Resistance's headquarters. Instead of the Emperor's palace being in Northtown, it's just a fort, Fort Vandole (named after the Emperor), and Geshtar doesn't burn it down because he's crazy, he burns it down because he legitimately considers the minor fort expendable. After Flammie rescues you, King Truffle points you to Tasnica instead of to Sage Joch, and in Tasnica, you're given the task of liberating three villages from the Empire. One of them is controlled by Sheex whom you

fight in his Dark Stalker form after a brief quest, the second is controlled by Fanha (it's her childhood village and we get some sympathetic background on here), and the third is controlled by Thanatos. It's during this third quest that you actually free Dyluck from Thanatos and he joins the Republic Army here. Once the villages are liberated though, this is when you notice the King acting strangely. Indeed, the power of Lumina has taken a hold of him, and he and the Republic become hostile for a time, causing the party to seek out help from the Resistance. You're pointed to the Lofty Mountains, which are also greatly expanded, as an old Silviran city used to be on the mountain (those mysterious radios from the OTL game, this expands on those). You run into the Scorpion Army, who has kidnapped Sage Joch and wants Shade's power in trade for him, but instead of giving them what they want, the party fights them and they run. Joch points you to Shade as the only power that can contain Lumina, but that the party must be strong enough to contend with the darkness within their souls, leading to the maze from the first game where you fight your doppelgangers. After getting Shade's power, the party then visits a lighthouse (this was also a location expanded on from the OTL game, it's now a dungeon) to sever the King from Lumina's power. After doing that, the party returns to Tasnica, where Lumina tests you by sending out a boss monster (that's weak against Shade's magic) before also joining your group. With the King restored to normal, the final assault on the Empire can begin. There's a big battlefield that the party must traverse to reach the Empire's City of Gold (no longer a random island as IOTL but instead it's the Empire's capital city), as the party crosses it, fighting the empire's troops along the way, you can actually see the Empire's and Republic's troops fighting one another, it's a pretty epic scene. Finally, the party reaches the capitol and climbs up the Emperor's palace, a huge tower of gold to face the Emperor (another boss monster). Defeating the Emperor seems to take out the Empire for good, but in fact it's just a diversion, the Emperor was a fake and the huge battle a farce to divert attention away from the Moon Palace, where Thanatos is once again trying to collect more Mana energy (you learn the Empire's true goal here, to break the seals and raise the ancient Mana Fortress). Dyluck has already gone out ahead in an advance team to try and head off the Emperor. The party returns to the desert only to see Admiral Meria's ship under attack, there's a brief quest where the party helps him, then it's off to the Moon Palace. After a fight at the palace gates with the party vs. Sheex, Fanha, and Geshtar (all in their normal human forms but still a very tough fight with Sheex using speed, Geshtar straight up brute force, and Fanha powerful magic), the party manages to reach the Moon Palace staging room where Thanatos is waiting, the party stops him from breaking the seal but he manages to re-capture Dyluck. Next it's off to the Forgotten Continent where the Tree Palace awaits, here the party battles a transformed Sheex (as a giant plant monster, as IOTL), but in this game defeating him here doesn't kill him, it just opens up the rest of the palace (which is an actual dungeon), the party can't stop Thanatos and the Emperor from breaking all the seals and as IOTL, the continent and the Grand Palace are raised, thus ending part two of the game.

### **Part III- The Hero's Decision**

After the events in the Tree Palace, Geshtar and Fanha confront the heroes outside, demanding to know what happened to Sheex. It seems that some masked people have abducted him and the two lieutenants blame the heroes, who decide to flee. During the course of their fleeing, they fall down a trap door to the Underground City. Unlike the game IOTL, the Underground City is not just one quest or dungeon but a series of them, during which you learn the full truth behind the Scorpion Army and its leader, Jerrica, and also the truth behind Sheex, whom Jerrica is trying to convince to return to helping them. You also learn the truth about the Mana Tribe...it's not entirely as benevolent as it seems, it in fact was somewhat of a quasi-religious organization, keeping technology down all in the name of

preserving the power of Mana, and they heavily persecuted the Silviran civilization, leading it to ruin. Eventually, the Empire's troops invade the Underground City, though Jema and the forces of the Republic bravely clash against them. The party is presented with a choice...help Sheex and Jerrica defend themselves from Thanatos, or help save Jema's army from being routed.

Saving the Republic Army (Ending 1- "Harmony"): Saving the Republic Army immediately locks you into the first ending path. Sheex sacrifices his life to save Jerrica while the Republic army is saved from destruction after the party wins a boss fight. This leads to the ending most like the original game. You go on to the Grand Palace, where Fanha meets her end transformed into Hexus and Geshtar meets his transformed into the final Mech Rider (though in this version of the game, their deaths are tragic and noble, Fanha dies confronting Thanatos and Geshtar dies trying to avenge her). You move on to the Mana Holyland (the Pure Land IOTL), fighting five of Thanatos' monsters along the way, Thanatos wipes out the Mana Tree, you then go to the Mana Fortress and battle two more of his monsters before the final confrontation. Here, however, things once again divert from OTL's game. Instead of fighting Thanatos as the Dark Lich, you fight Jerrica as a huge scorpion monster (in her grief over Sheex's death, she hunts down Thanatos but is transformed by him and you have to fight and kill her), and then Thanatos in Dyluck's body. Despite being in a normal human body, this is probably the toughest final boss, with an incredible array of powerful magic and physical attacks. Once you defeat Thanatos, the hero, Popoi, and Purim manage to heal Dyluck, saving his life. The game ends with humanity free to choose its own destiny, with Dyluck and Purim as king and queen of a free and victorious Republic, and Randi as their loyal knight. It's considered the "canon" ending and probably the best ending as well. Though Mana is depleted, it's not entirely gone, and humanity is free to progress its technology, embrace the light of Mana, or both. Popoi's fate is left somewhat ambiguous but it's implied he'll eventually return as well.

However, if you go to save Sheex and Jerrica instead, you're locked out of Ending 1 and instead fight another boss before progressing to the Grand Palace. Here things progress as somewhat normal, but in the room where the Snapdragon would normally be, you're confronted by Jema instead. His entire army was killed by the Empire's troops and he barely made it out alive. He demands to know why Randi seems to have rejected his destiny. It's then that Jerrica shows up and says that Randi should fight Jema, that Jema is just like those self-righteous Mana Tribe people who decimated her civilization.

Defeating Jema (Ending 2: "Silvira"): Defeating and killing Jema locks you into this ending. After Jema's defeat, you confront Thanatos on the roof of the Grand Palace, and he decides to initiate the ritual to send himself into Dyluck's body. Dyluck fights him off but Thanatos is able to transform him into a monster before fleeing. Defeating Dyluck breaks Purim's heart but she steels herself and it's off to the Mana Holyland where the hero is to confront the Mana Tribe. After battling through six bosses sent by the holy power of Mana (the same bosses as IOTL's game), the hero finds the Mana Tree and learns the truth about Mana from his mother, that the women of the tribe are forced to become the tree, that they didn't volunteer to do so as Randi was once told. She says that the power of Mana is worth protecting and preserving but that the Mana Tribe has become corrupt and that is what led to the rise of the Mana Fortress and the world's downfall. Before she can say anything more, however, she is struck down by Thanatos' magic. The heroes, along with Sheex, Geshtar, Fanha, and Jerrica, journey to the Mana Fortress to liberate it from Thanatos. In this ending path, the final bosses are the same as in IOTL's game, you fight Dark Lich Thanatos, followed by the Mana Beast (this time a vengeful being sent by the Mana Tribe to destroy the fortress and human civilization). Defeating the Mana Beast leads to the second

ending...the return of Silviran civilization will mean a great flourishing of human technology, and you have successfully redeemed Sheex, Geshtar, Fanha (who forgives the people of her old village), and Jerrica, but Mana is dying out and without it the world faces an uncertain future. In addition, Dyluck and Popoi are dead and gone for good.

Sparing Jema (Ending 3: "Mana Knight"): If you spare Jema's life, Jerrica angrily lashes out at the heroes, piloting a large mech in an attempt to kill them. After a boss fight, a dying Jerrica forgives the party and apologizes to them, but it's too late, her wounds from the battle prove fatal. The party goes on to confront Thanatos on the roof of the tower. This time, Dyluck sacrifices his life, and Thanatos confronts the party in human form (but still wielding formidable magic). After Thanatos' defeat, the party goes to the Mana Holyland, but after they leave the palace, the underworld forces decide to take advantage of an enraged and grief-stricken Geshtar, along with Sheex and Fanha, corrupting their souls for good and compelling them to make war on Mana itself. As the party ventures through the Mana Holyland it comes face to face with dangerous mechanical creatures attacking them, culminating in the Mana Fortress, controlled by the trio, opening fire on and destroying the Mana Tree. The Mana Tree still tells of corruption within the Mana Tribe, but her tone is more forgiving and it's revealed that there were many good people in the Mana Tribe as well, including the hero's brave father, and that without the Mana Tribe's measures, the Silviri would have taken over and destroyed the entire world. The party then goes to the Mana Fortress. After fighting a boss powered by stolen Mana energy (that takes the form of each of the eight elements in turn after one is defeated), the final boss is an enormous mecha controlled by Sheex, Fanha, and Geshtar. After the mecha is defeated, the ending takes place. Mana flourishes in a world ruled by the hero, influenced by the Mana Tribe, who even may be able to restore his mother to life in human form. However, though the natural world flourishes, human innovation and freedom are somewhat suppressed and even Jema questions the hero's choice.

The three endings are presented with their own pros and cons. Though there is one ending considered by fans to be the "good" ending, all three can be considered happy endings with their own caveats, letting the player truly choose their own path according to their own actions.

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*"Thank you, thank you from the bottom of my heart for letting me make this game the way I wanted to make it. Secret of Mana wouldn't have been possible without you. Thank you, thank you, thank you."*- Koichi Ishii, while bowing repeatedly to Ken Kutaragi during a private meeting in Kutaragi's office shortly after the Japanese release of *Secret of Mana*. Kutaragi would later recall this as one of the three moments that most justified his work on creating the Super Nintendo CD in a 2004 interview.

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## **Actraiser 2:**

Steve: 9 (quote: "The SNES-CD really shows off its ability to create great music in this game. It's incredibly tough, but the atmosphere tops pretty much any other game on the system.")

Ed: 9

Martin: 9

Sushi-X: 9

**Nightfall:**

Steve: 8

Ed: 6

Martin: 6

Sushi-X: 7 (quote: "This is an FMV game actually worth playing. It's gritty, though cheesy at times, and you'll find yourself actually wanting to play things through to the end and find all of the hidden scenes.")

**Secret Of Mana:**

Steve: 9

Ed: 9 (quote: "Three years of hard work from Squaresoft is worth the wait. This is the best RPG on the system, hands down, and one of my favorite games of the year. It features one of the best soundtracks ever and it's a long and rewarding journey. You won't want this game to end.")

Martin: 10

Sushi-X: 9

**Ninja Warriors:**

Steve: 5 (quote: "This silly beat-em-up by Taito features some nice character detail, but as far as actions goes it's pretty repetitive and the music can be annoying at times.")

Ed: 4

Martin: 5

Sushi-X: 3

**The Simpsons:**

Steve: 7

Ed: 8

Martin: 9

Sushi-X: 9 (quote: "I love seeing faithful arcade translations and this game is as faithful as they come. It's right up there with TMNT IV as one of my favorite beat-em-ups on a home console. Forget Bart's Nightmare, this is THE definitive Simpsons game and you can take the whole family for a spin with three of your friends.")

**Cliffhanger:**

Steve: 3 (quote: "It's a shame that this game couldn't be as good as the movie was, and the movie itself was pretty bad. I guess The Terminator spoiled me on movie-to-game adaptations because this is just awful.")

Ed: 6

Martin: 6

Sushi-X: 5

**Neighborhood Wars:**

Steve: 5

Ed: 7 (quote: "A pretty fun game that puts you in the role of a kid trying to hit other kids with water balloons and various other implements of mischief. I know the humor's pretty

juvenile and the sound bites are dumb, but the gameplay was still pretty solid.")

Martin: 4

Sushi-X: 2

-From *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of November 1993's SNES-CD games in their December 1993 and January 1994 issues

### **Sonic CD:**

Steve: 9

Ed: 9

Martin: 9 (quote: "The best Sonic game yet is on the Sega CD! With a great CD soundtrack and lots of fun levels, expanded greatly by the game's excellent use of time travel, Sega really shows what this franchise is capable of and it rivals Super Mario World 2 as my favorite action platformer of the year.")

Sushi-X: 8

### **Ultima Underworld II:**

Steve: 7

Ed: 8

Martin: 8

Sushi-X: 7 (quote: "This is a really good dungeon crawler, offering tons of ways to create your character as you explore one of the spookiest dungeons to ever appear in an RPG. Giving us two games in one is a nice deal too, but I did take some issue with how repetitive the dungeon crawling got to be after a while.")

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of Sega-CD games in their December 1993 issue

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\*The familiar blue sky with white clouds appears on the screen, followed by a chorus singing that iconic title... "The Simpsons...."\*

\*Various scenes are shown of Homer, Lisa, Marge, and Bart fighting off enemies with various silly weapons.\*

Narrator: America's favorite family arrives on the Super Nintendo CD, and they're fightin' mad!

\*Homer is shown fighting off a variety of enemies, only to get hit a couple times and shout "D'oh!"\*

Narrator: Now you can play the hit arcade smash at home with three of your friends any time you want! Use Homer, Bart, Marge, or Lisa to do battle against a variety of Springfield's nastiest foes!

\*More scenes of the game are shown, featuring Bart and Lisa, we hear Bart shout "Ay carumba!"\*

Narrator: It's "The Simpsons", for your Super Nintendo CD! Take it to the next level of power!

-Advertisement for The Simpsons for Super Nintendo CD, which began airing in November 1993. Along with Secret of Mana, it was one of the first commercials to combine Nintendo's "Take it to the next level" slogan for the SNES-CD with the SNES' classic "Now you're playing with power", to form a new slogan, Nintendo's subtle marketing attempt to get people who hadn't yet bought an SNES at all to buy the combo pack.

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### **Out of the games Enix America published during the SNES and SNES-CD era, which were the most successful?**

Well, our collaborations with Quintet were fantastic, I mean, you had Illusion of Gaia sold a lot of copies on both, and of course there was the original ActRaiser. That was probably the most popular game. I mean, then we had Terranigma, and that was an SNES-CD exclusive. It was definitely the most complete and probably the best game that Enix ever released on a Nintendo system. It came out toward the end of the SNES-CD's life, of course, but I think it did pretty well and the review scores reflect that. I believe it even outsold Dragon Quest VI, which was pretty amazing.

### **And which didn't perform as well as you'd hoped?**

Well, there was ActRaiser 2, which we decided to do SNES and SNES-CD versions of. The SNES-CD version flopped, despite it being the more complete version. Obviously coming out right before Secret of Mana really hurt us, but that was Enix of Japan's decision, not mine.

### **I remember that Dragon Quest V was localized around that time and it almost didn't get localized.**

Well you can thank Squaresoft for that one. With them focusing a lot on the SNES-CD, and kind of neglecting the regular SNES at that time, Enix saw an opportunity to kind of slide a game in there and we got the go-ahead to localize Dragon Quest V for Spring 1994 despite the expense. It made a profit, if I recall correctly. We did a lot of dual-releases at that time, ActRaiser 2, E.V.O., and Illusion of Gaia were all released for both the cartridge based and the CD-ROM, but Enix kept Dragon Quest V as a cartridge and it did really well in both territories.

-excerpted from a Gaming.moe interview with Robert Jerauld, former Enix USA producer, November 24, 2014 (OOC: inspired by this OTL interview from November 15!  
<http://gaming.moe/?p=331> )

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### **November 16, 1993**

Sonic CD is released for the Sega CD in North America. The game was heavily promoted by Sega in the months leading to its release, and Tom Kalinske wanted it to be the game that put Sega CDs in every household in America. A huge amount of Sega's creative efforts went into the creation of the game and it even went a month beyond its expected release of October, but as long as it was ready for the holiday season, Kalinske would be satisfied.

But despite glowing reviews, many of which called Sonic CD the best Sonic game ever and a

sure-fire Game of the Year contender, Sonic CD wasn't doing the one thing Sega needed it to do...sell Sega CDs. Sure, it was selling plenty of copies among Sega CD owners, and would eventually become the best selling Sega CD game of all time. But most Genesis owners were content with waiting for Sonic 3, which was just three short months away. A new Sonic game just wasn't enough to get them to put down 150 bucks. Ultima Underworld II had been similarly disappointing on a sales front, and though it was good on its own, nearly every game critic who compared it to Secret of Mana said it paled in comparison.

Aladdin was coming next month, but even Tom Kalinske had his doubts about the game being able to get people to buy a Sega CD. Sonic CD had been the game that was going to do that, and Sega CD sales were barely showing a minor blip, certainly not the massive spike he'd anticipated. The Super Nintendo CD was crushing the Sega CD in America and humiliating it in Japan. The one tiny consolation Kalinske had was that the Sega Genesis was still beating the original Super Nintendo in sales...though when sales of the Playstation Combo Set were added to the figures, it became a dead heat.

It was going to be a long holiday season. And it was about to get even longer.

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts – November 1993**

1. Super Mario World 2 – 23,669
2. Star Fox – 19,184
3. Final Fantasy III – 17,753
4. Super Mario Kart – 14,041
5. Final Fight II – 12,571
6. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 12,281
7. Super Bomberman CD – 7,571
8. Deadman Sam – 7,215
9. Final Fantasy: New Generation – 6,806
10. The Terminator – 6,664
11. Syndicate – 6,155
12. Lethal Enforcers – 5,445
13. Dune – 4,931
14. ClayFighter – 4,705
15. The Lost Vikings – 4,319
16. Alien 3 – 4,115
17. Clue – 4,090
18. Battletoads II – 3,957
19. Secret Of Mana – 3,224
20. Flashback: The Quest For Identity – 3,155

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-from a fax sent out to all Nintendo retail partners on November 22, 1993

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"*FUCK!*" -Tom Kalinske, throwing a crumpled-up sheet of fax paper across his office, November 22, 1993

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*"What a lot of people don't know is that we needed to use a lot of tricks to get the Super Famicom CD to do exactly what we wanted a lot of the time. A lot of the games that used CD-based audio, we couldn't put the whole soundtrack on the CD for some of the games, especially some of the big ones like Secret of Mana or Final Fantasy VI. We could have, if we'd done multiple discs, but we didn't start doing that until a little while into the system's lifespan, so we had to make do with only having, maybe half of the soundtrack, the best songs, on the CD and then using the soundchip for the others. It let us do some neat things later on, like dynamic soundtracks, and the CD system had a more advanced soundchip than the Super Famicom itself, so the music quality, a lot of times you couldn't tell unless you listened really hard that it wasn't coming from the CD. I get a lot of people asking, was it hard to program for? And there were certainly things that were challenging, but in actuality the H.A.N.D.S. cartridge that Sony and Nintendo came up with to use really mitigated a lot of those issues. It kept the load times to a minimum. There were obviously still loading issues with some games but for things like entering a menu, or entering a building, those load times were cut down to a bare minimum or eliminated entirely for most games. The ones that were programmed well, anyway."*

-Akihiko Matsui, Squaresoft video game developer, translated from a March 2003 Famitsu interview

*"That big price cut for the US in the holiday season of 1993, I remember that being an issue of contention at first. When Nintendo asked if we could get the price down, I remember that we were going to lose money on each CD add-on we sold, so there was some internal friction when it came to that. I was in favor of it because I knew we could sell more CDs and more games, and we were making lots of money on the games, especially on Mortal Kombat and later on Secret of Mana. That was the reason we were able to do the price cut, because of that extra money we'd gotten. And Nintendo agreed to give us a few percent more of a cut on third-party game sales and that helped convince the brass at Sony to let them cut the price!"*

-Ken Kutaragi, speaking about the 1993 SNES-CD price cut in a January 2005 *Electronic Gaming Monthly* interview

*"The reasons for the big 1993 price cut were two-fold. One, and this was an increasingly pressing issue with all the developmental effort we were putting into the SNES-CD and its games: we had to get it into more households. At that time, only about, maybe 15 percent of SNES buyers had the SNES-CD. And with some of our best games coming out for it, we had to get that number up. Our goal was 50 percent, I was hoping for 60, but I would've been happy with 40. That \$350 price point, \$300 with occasional sales and promotions but essentially \$350, was a tall order even if we had the games to back it up. At \$250 though, I*

*knew that would be the magic number for people to start buying it. Secondly, at that point, Sega was reeling, and an animal is most dangerous when it's wounded. I knew the Sega CD was coming down to \$150, I knew it was at that \$250 price point and I didn't want them to get their foot in the door at all, so that was the other big reason for the price cut was to cut off any chance of the Sega CD getting a leg up on us that year. We were already beating them in sales but now we had to put the nail in the coffin."*

-Howard Lincoln, speaking in a Comic-Con 2014 panel promoting the book "The Chase"

*"Well, what about the Sega CD? You can get a Sega CD and a Genesis for Christmas."*

*"I don't want the Sega CD, I want the Super Nintendo CD! The Sega CD doesn't have any good games!"*

*"You heard what the worker said, they might not have any more in until after Christmas, you'd be okay with waiting until after Christmas?"*

*"Yeah, yeah, I'm okay with it, I can wait! I want a Nintendo CD, it has all the Mario games!"*

-overheard at a Walmart electronics display, December 20, 1993

*"You Battletoads have annoyed me the for last time! I've had enough of this, I'm going to tear you all limb from limb!"*

-the Dark Queen, just before the final boss battle of *Battletoads II*

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"This season's hottest toy is flying off the shelves, and stores are struggling to keep it in stock. It's the Super Nintendo CD, a CD-ROM based attachment for the popular Super Nintendo game console. The attachment was actually released for last year's holiday season, but a sparse game selection and high price tag kept skeptical parents at bay. Nintendo's slashed the price of the add-on to just \$149, and if you don't already have a Super Nintendo, you can get them both along with a collection of their popular Mario games for \$249. The most popular games? Super Mario, of course, along with The Simpsons, Secret Of Mana, and the controversial Mortal Kombat. We asked parents who were out looking for the Super Nintendo CD just why they couldn't resist the allure.

We took a trip to an area Target store, where a new shipment of the Super Nintendo CD has just arrived. Already, we've seen three area parents pick up the item, and we asked them about this season's latest craze."

Woman: Oh yeah, this was all they asked for, this and the new Simpsons game. I think it's a lot to spend, since we just got them a new system two years ago, but they've been asking for this for a year now and I finally, you know, caved in.

Interviewer: Are you worried that in a couple more years there will be another new thing that you'll have to buy?

Woman: Well, there's always something new. I mean, it's Christmas and they kept their grades up so, you know, they earned it I guess.

"We also talked to a father who was in buying a Super Nintendo CD, including this year's most controversial game, Mortal Kombat."

Man: Well, my two boys are 13 and 11.

Interviewer: And it says right there on the case, 17 and up. Are you worried about your

sons playing such a violent game?

Man: I mean, it's just fantasy. It's not real and they know it's not real. It's no more violent than the movies I let them watch. And it's the only game they want.

Interviewer: They're not interested in Super Mario Kart?

Man: Oh no, they don't like Mario games. They play the Street Fighter, and uh, the wrestling game. They watch a lot of wrestling.

"We also talked to a grandmother who was here with her grandson to purchase the device. She says that she doesn't understand these games, but her son couldn't stop talking about the games he was planning to play."

Grandma: He's not getting it until Christmas, I just brought him here so he could pick out the games he wants.

\*A tall skinny boy wearing glasses who looks to be about twelve holds up *Secret Of Mana* and *Final Fantasy III* to the camera.\*

Boy: These are the best games, right here. Secret of Mana, this one is supposed to be awesome. You can fly a dragon and you have a sword.

Grandma: I'm not getting him that violent game I saw on the news, that Mortal Kombat game. That game is vile.

Boy: I don't want Mortal Kombat, it looks stupid.

Grandma: Good, it is stupid.

"Of course, judging from sales figures, many people would disagree. Mortal Kombat is thus far the second best selling game of the holiday season, behind only Super Mario All-Stars on the Super Nintendo. We got a chance to speak with Nintendo of America president Howard Lincoln about the company's recent success."

Howard Lincoln: We feel like the Super Nintendo and the CD-ROM peripheral are perfectly positioned to sell very well this Christmas. We feel like there's a lot to offer on both the Super Nintendo and the CD-ROM.

Interviewer: You recently cut the price, do you think that's going to move a lot of game systems this year?

Howard Lincoln: Oh, absolutely. We believe that, for those families that might have waited to buy in to the Super Nintendo, that now is the perfect time. If you're in the market for a CD player, that \$250 price tag is comparable to most CD players currently on the market, and you're getting the capability to play both cartridge-based and CD-ROM games as a bonus. And with the combo set, we have both Super Mario All-Stars, which in this case is a special edition packaged with Super Mario World, AND the new Super Mario World 2 game, those games are free and you don't have to worry about anything else, you can just buy the set and you'll already have six Mario games to play, all six of our main series Mario games, because we feel that Nintendo's built its legacy on the back of Super Mario and so those games are perfect to represent what Nintendo's all about, so that anyone who buys any

Nintendo product this year will hopefully be a Nintendo fan for life.

-from a WISN-TV evening news report on December 14, 1993

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\*A man parodying pitchman Ron Popeil stands in front of a crowd, showing off his latest item\*

Pitchman: It's time for the next item on "Incredible Innovations", and let me tell you, this is the best thing we've ever seen! It's the Super Nintendo CD Playstation Combo Set!

Crowd: What does it do?

\*The pitchman speaks while footage from various SNES and SNES-CD games plays on the screen.\*

Pitchman: It plays Super Nintendo game carts like Street Fighter II Turbo, Super Squadron X, and the brand new adventure game Earthbound! It plays the hottest new Super Nintendo CD games, like Secret Of Mana, Battletoads II, and The Simpsons! It even plays your favorite music CDs!

\*Shows the pitchman and some attractive ladies jamming out to some music\*

Pitchman: But that's not all! It also comes with Super Mario All-Stars AND Super Mario World 2! That's six of Mario's greatest adventures! See Mario jump, see Mario throw fireballs, see Mario race into the air, see Mario race on the ground, see Mario shrink down to miniature size, see Mario visit dozens of worlds, hundreds of levels, hours upon hours of endless Mario fun!

\*The crowd cheers wildly\*

Pitchman: With all of that, what do you think this incredible innovation costs?

Crowd Member: \$1500!

Pitchman: No way!

Crowd Member: \$1000!

Pitchman: Are you kidding me?

Crowd Member: \$700!

Pitchman: Not even close!

Crowd member: \$500!

Pitchman: \*just laughing\*

Crowd Member: \$349.99!

Pitchman: That's what it USED to cost, before I went completely insane! Because I'm now offering the Super Nintendo CD Playstation Combo Set, that plays game carts, game discs, music CDs, AND comes with six awesome Mario games for the brand new low price of \$249.99!

\*The crowd goes wild\*

Pitchman: The Super Nintendo CD Playstation Combo Set! Take it to the next level of power!

\*Another strange item is brought out.\*

Pitchman: \*points at it\* I have NO idea what that thing is!

-from a commercial for the SNES-CD combo set that aired in December 1993

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### **Battletoads II:**

Steve: 9

Martin: 9

Ed: 9 (quote: "A great game that takes full advantage of the CD-ROM format to provide excellent graphics and sound, while also featuring seven more levels than the NES classic. It's not quite as punishingly difficult as the original game but it's pretty tough.")

Sushi-X: 9

### **E.V.O.: The Search For Eden:**

Steve: 8

Martin: 8 (quote: "This game is great on both the SNES and the CD, though this CD-ROM version provides improved graphics and enhanced music, along with a few extra nifty evolutions.")

Ed: 7

Sushi-X: 7

### **Utopia: The Creation Of A Nation:**

Steve: 8 (quote: "It's not instantly fun like SimCity, but Utopia is still a really fun god-sim for the SNES-CD. It's a bit confusing with all the different variables involved, but once you learn everything it offers a level of customization that surpasses even SimEarth.")

Martin: 7

Ed: 8

Sushi-X: 5

### **Mansion Of Hidden Souls:**

Steve: 7

Martin: 9

Ed: 8

Sushi-X: 8 (quote: "This was a really enthralling horror game, relying on atmosphere instead of blood and guts to scare players. It might not be as action packed as some other

games on the system, but it makes up for that in providing a suspenseful adventure that you won't be able to easily put down.”)

### **Super Carnival:**

Steve: 4 (quote: “Like a real carnival midway, you should stay far away from this game if you don't want to waste your money. I wanted to punch the guy playing the carnival barker in the face, he was THAT annoying and the games are just as boring and impossible to win.”)

Martin: 5

Ed: 5

Sushi-X: 3

### **Novastorm:**

Steve: 6

Martin: 6 (quote: “It does nice things with full-motion video, but so did Starfox and that game had the gameplay to boot. This one doesn't, it's just some occasionally pretty FMV sequences interspersed with unimaginative and repetitive gameplay.”)

Ed: 8

Sushi-X: 4

-reviews for December 1993's SNES-CD games in the January and February 1994 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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### **December 6, 1993**

*Battletoads II* is released on the Super Nintendo CD. It had replaced Rare's original plan to make a Super Nintendo Battletoads game, “Battletoads in Battlemaniacs”, though the Battletoads/Double Dragon crossover game had been released on the Super Nintendo in June with some level of success. The game was a fairly basic sequel, returning the popular Battletoads to a brand new adventure. The game featured 20 levels that took the Battletoads across a variety of environs and saw them facing a number of bosses, some of them quite large and graphically impressive. The game took a few aspects from the scrapped “Battlemaniacs” game, but for the most part was an entirely new creation, dropping Silas Volkmire and focusing on the Dark Queen as the sole major villain, the game spent some time fleshing out her personality and showing some of her origins, adding a somewhat sympathetic aspect to her character, though she remained a wicked villainess for the most part, committing a variety of evil deeds throughout the game. The game allowed for three players at once, featuring Rash, Pimple, and Zitz as playable characters (in the original Battlemaniacs, Zitz was intended to be held hostage by the villains). The game features some voiced lines by the Battletoads, some of the villains, and the Dark Queen, but cutscenes take the form of still pictures and sprite animations, forgoing animated FMV sequences to tell its story in the form of in-game animation. After the Dark Queen is defeated, she vows revenge as she did in the previous Battletoads game, living to fight another day. The game sells decently well in its position as a major holiday release and is considered a success for Rareware.

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## December 10, 1993

The first-person shooter *Doom* is released as shareware for the PC. While barely a blip on the radar to those embroiled in the Nintendo vs. Sega console wars, for PC gamers it's a revelation and a soon-to-be sensation that would eventually sell millions of copies and become one of the most beloved and controversial video games of all time.

Even before the game's release, however, both Nintendo and Sega had been paying attention to the game's development. Nintendo, which had begun to woo PC game developers and had plans to port such PC games as *Secret of Monkey Island* and *Cannon Fodder* to their Super Nintendo CD, began to explore what it might take to make a game like *Doom* run on their CD-ROM peripheral as smoothly as possible. They knew they might be courting even more controversy than they had with *Mortal Kombat*, but they hoped that by the time any prospective *Doom* port was completed, such issues would die down. For the moment, the game would remain a computer phenomenon.

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*"The news about that holiday price drop for the Super Nintendo CD was a big shock. We'd known they were going to drop the Super Nintendo to \$129 and maybe to \$99, but hearing that the CD was coming down too, well... that and the fact that Aladdin failed to push any Sega CDs for Christmas '93...I mean, the writing was pretty much on the wall. Once 1994 rolled around, we knew that the Sega CD wasn't going to be able to beat Nintendo's CD add-on no matter how hard we pushed it. We decided that we were going to redouble our efforts to push the Genesis, which was still beating the Super Nintendo in America in head-to-head sales. We had Sonic 3 coming down the pipeline and that was a damn good thing. Hell, the Genesis port of Aladdin, the one without the animated cutscenes, barely half the levels, and good but not great music, it was selling like hotcakes, we probably sold ten times more of those than we sold on the Sega CD! So we knew that while the Sega CD was pretty much a non-starter, we still had a winner in the Genesis and I was damned if I was going to let it fall below the Super Nintendo. The going was getting tougher and we'd just have to get tougher with it.*

*I remember though, one moment that Christmas that hurt more than anything else. I was on my couch, about a week before Christmas, and my oldest daughter walks in. And she's kind of got a look on her face like 'oh, I'm in trouble', so I thought, you know, she'd gotten a D on her report card or something, which would've been pretty surprising because she's always been a great student. So I ask her what's wrong and she says that she played a game at a friend's house, and it was a really amazing game and that she wanted it for Christmas. And I was thinking 'oh no, it's Mortal Kombat, you're not getting that', but no, she had been playing Secret of Mana on her friend's Super Nintendo CD. And she loved it. And she wanted us to get a Super Nintendo with the CD attachment so she could play Secret of Mana. And of course, I told her no, that daddy can't get you a Nintendo system because that's our competitor and if anyone saw me buying it....but she was really REALLY begging for this thing. And I wasn't mad at her, I mean...Nintendo had some amazing games, that's why they were such a damn tough competitor. But for my own daughter, my own flesh and blood to be begging for a NINTENDO system? I felt...betrayed! Just...how could she do that to me? \*he laughs, obviously he's joking and being overdramatic\* I told her I couldn't get her the game. I told her she could play it all she wanted at her friend's house but that for the time being we couldn't have anything Nintendo. And she said she understood, and then I promised her that I would make sure that Sega would have a game like Secret of Mana someday. That it would be like Secret of Mana, but better."*

-Tom Kalinske, in a 2002 interview with Sega Retro

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### **Enix Looks Toward 1994**

Enix has had a big last couple of months with a pair of cross-platform game releases! Both the SNES and its CD add-on saw versions of ActRaiser 2 and E.V.O.: The Search For Eden, and that cross-platform strategy will continue into next year as they release Illusion of Gaia, their follow up to the SNES cult classic Soul Blazer. Made in collaboration with the game studio Quintet, this action-RPG is slated for release sometime late next year, and the company is said to be pushing it hard, hoping it will join Secret of Mana from rival company Squaresoft as a big action-RPG hit for Nintendo.

While Enix continues to release versions of most of its games across both the SNES and the SNES-CD, it will have two big exclusive games early next year, one for each of Nintendo's big consoles. First up, it's February's Phaedra's Heart, exclusive to the Super Nintendo CD. It tells the story of a goddess seeking to regain her power by finding human companions, in a somewhat similar story to the previously mentioned Soul Blazer, though unlike Soul Blazer, this game is a more traditional RPG in the vein of Final Fantasy. It did big business in Japan when it was released there in September and Enix is hoping it will repeat that success in the West! Coming exclusively to SNES carts in April is Dragon Warrior V, a game that was not expected to make it to our shores. It's a tale of a young warrior who must overcome a difficult struggle, including becoming a slave and even being turned into stone, in order to reunite with his family and save the world from a terrible evil!

It's clear that Enix is making plans for a big 1994, but can they find the same success that Squaresoft has found in 1993? Only time will tell...

-from an article in *GameFan* magazine's 1994 preview in their January 1994 issue

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*"I was very pleased to have the opportunity to see Mother released in the West. It took more than four years and a complete remake of the game, but I feel that my original vision remained intact and the translation was, I was told, handled very well. The game was received well in the West. Sales were decent, reviews were great, and I enjoyed seeing the reaction to the game from a different set of players, whose culture was quite different from mine."*

-Shigesato Itoi, commenting on the Western release of the first Mother game, known in the West as "Earthbound", in a 1996 Japanese TV interview translated by Earthbound Central

### **December 13, 1993**

Earthbound, the remake/localization of the Famicom's *Mother*, is released for the Super Nintendo in North America. The game received significant changes from its Japanese counterpart, including a reduction in difficulty to reduce the need for grinding present in the original game, a major graphics overhaul, and an enhanced soundtrack. Unlike Nintendo's OTL marketing for Mother 2/Earthbound, which missed the mark by centering on some rather juvenile aspects of the game (scratch 'n sniff ads, etc.), TTL's Earthbound marketing was more subtle, with Nintendo playing up the game's similarities to the real world and positioning its protagonist Ninten as a sort of "everyboy" hero in a marketing campaign that enabled Earthbound to carve out just enough sales to justify the game's translation and

release (the fact that it had few other quality SNES RPGs to compete with at the time certainly helped). The game had been released in Japan for the Super Famicom in October and had performed excellently there, outselling the Famicom original by about 50,000 copies. Work would soon begin on Mother 2 for the Super Nintendo CD and Nintendo planned to release it as Earthbound 2 in the West, sometime in 1995.

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts – December 1993**

1. Mortal Kombat - 38,440
2. Super Mario World 2 - 24,817
3. Star Fox – 17,165
4. Final Fantasy III – 13,468
5. Jurassic Park – 12,907
6. Super Mario Kart – 12,568
7. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 12,421
8. Final Fight II – 9,868
9. Deadman Sam – 9,407
10. Yoshi's Safari – 8,060
11. The Terminator – 6,851
12. Super Bomberman CD – 6,244
13. Secret Of Mana – 5,794
14. Final Fantasy: New Generation – 5,506
15. Axelay – 5,287
16. Lethal Enforcers – 4,763
17. Art Of Fighting – 4,154
18. Syndicate – 4,086
19. ClayFighter – 3,850
20. Battletoads II – 3,749

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*"So we'd been working on Donkey Kong Country for a few months, that was of course our next big Super Nintendo game, and the next game we were doing after Battletoads II, which had sold pretty well for the Super Nintendo CD. I get a call, it's from the big man himself, Hiroshi Yamauchi. And he wanted to know.... if we could make Donkey Kong Country for the CD instead. An exclusive CD game. This was the game we'd been making to push the limits of the Super Nintendo, to show off the capability of that system, and he wanted us to do it for CD instead. In some ways of course it'd be easier, but we knew it would be a challenge too because now we'd be pushing the CD system's limits and those were a lot higher."*

-Dan Owsen, project manager for *Donkey Kong Country*

*"We had acquired a large portion of Rare in 1993, and we had given them permission to make a Donkey Kong Country game. At the time, we were looking at that as a big Super Famicom title for holiday season 1994. But the more and more popular the Super Famicom CD-ROM had gotten, the more that people within Nintendo, myself included, were looking at the possibility of making this game for the CD-ROM system instead."*

-Hiroshi Yamauchi, president of Nintendo

*"And of course, there were many within Nintendo who were adamantly opposed to this*

*move, because...all of us knew that if Donkey Kong Country became a Super Nintendo CD game, it would mean...it would mean the end of the cartridge-based Super Famicom. Not right away, of course, we were planning on supporting the Super Famicom well into 1995 and 1996, but... the writing on the wall would be pretty clear that the CD had supplanted the cartridge. Miyamoto-san, he was very much opposed to it. Kutaragi, from Sony, of course was heavily in favor and he had Ohga-san pushing very hard for this as well. Myself and Howard Lincoln, we were both very neutral on the situation but we understood the gravity of moving Donkey Kong Country to be on the CD exclusively. It was an enormous decision, and it was Yamauchi-san's to make."*

-Minoru Arakawa

*"Yamauchi-san asked to see two people before he made his decision on Donkey Kong Country. He asked for Arakawa-san of course, and then... well, if he had asked Miyamoto-san to speak with him, I knew that it might have gone the other way. But once I'd heard that he was calling on me to speak with him, I knew the decision had already been made."*

-Ken Kutaragi

*"For those who could read between the lines, the real announcement that Nintendo made at the end of 1993 wasn't that Donkey Kong Country was going to be released on the Super Nintendo CD... but that the Super Nintendo CD was now the successor console to the Super Nintendo and not just an add-on peripheral. Sooner or later, the CD-ROM drive was going to supplant the cartridge games entirely. There would be Super Nintendo cartridges released for a few years afterwards... but the Super Nintendo would pretty much peak with Super Metroid a few months later. For the Super Nintendo and for cartridge-based games in general, it was all downhill from there."*

-Blake Harris, "The Chase: Sega's 20 Year Struggle To Take Down A Giant"

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*"When 1993 ended, we all kind of took a step back and saw how much things had changed in just one year. We'd gone from the SNES-CD kind of just being something neat to add on to the Super Nintendo to being the focal point of our creative endeavors. We hadn't gone in intending for this CD peripheral to consume so much of our time and attention, but the consumer response really did justify that shifting of our effort. We ended that holiday season with more than 30 percent of SNES owners owning the SNES-CD as well, either as the add-on or as part of the combo set. We were still splitting our consumer base quite a bit, but that rift was closing rapidly."*

-Howard Lincoln in a 2011 interview with Forbes magazine

*"I knew the Genesis was good enough to compete for those lower-middle class families if Nintendo abandoned them. I knew that the more Nintendo shifted their development to the CD, the more of an advantage our console would have on theirs. It didn't matter how good their games were if the majority of consumers couldn't afford to play them. This was where we were going to make our stand. At least until the Saturn came out."*

-Tom Kalinske, "The Chase: Sega's 20 Year Struggle To Take Down A Giant"

*"One of the questions people asked me is, 'why put all your good Neo-Geo games on the Super Nintendo CD? You're shooting yourself in the foot if you offer the same product on a much cheaper console, why not have your best games be Neo-Geo exclusives?' At SNK, we were in the games business. That was it. I didn't care how we sold our games as long as we*

*were selling them. The only reason we even offered the Neo-Geo for home console sales is that people were willing to pay \$600 for it. For us, it was just a means to an end of selling our games, and if the Super Nintendo CD was a better means to that end, why not? The thing could run our games just as well as our arcade machines did. Kids all over the world would play our games at the arcade or at the mall or at the pizza place and then go to the store and buy our games for their home console. We made a ton of money off Super Nintendo CD software. A ton."*

-Eikichi Kawasaki, excerpted from a June 13, 2009 Kotaku.com interview in the article "The Legacy Of Neo Geo"

*"The Game of the Year award for 1993 was the biggest rout in the history of this publication. No game this year came close to Secret of Mana. Not Mortal Kombat, not Super Mario World 2, nothing else could even contend. Gamefan's Game of the Year award by unanimous decision: Secret Of Mana."*

-Dave Halverson, in the March 1994 issue of GameFan Magazine

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**Top Selling Super Nintendo CD Games Of 1993** (pack-in sales included, only sales during the 1993 calendar year are counted):

1. Super Mario World 2
2. Super Mario Kart
3. Mortal Kombat
4. Star Fox
5. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition
6. Where In The World is Carmen Sandiego?
7. Secret Of Mana
8. Final Fantasy III
9. Super Bomberman CD
10. The Simpsons

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### **1993 Nintendo Power Editors' Choice Top Ten SNES-CD Games**

1. Super Mario World 2

*It was a close one between this and Secret Of Mana, but we couldn't get enough of Mario's latest adventure! With dozens of amazing levels to explore and colorful graphics, this is the best Mario game yet!*

2. Secret Of Mana

*This epic quest spans over 40 hours and features one of the most beautiful soundtracks of any video game we've ever played. With three different endings, we had to play through this game over and over again.*

3. Star Fox

*This high-flying space adventure brought cinema-style gameplay to our home consoles! Thanks to all the work from Jim Henson's great studio, Fox, Peppy, Slippy, and Falco blasted*

*their way into our hearts!*

#### 4. Battletoads II

*Rip across 20 fun and challenging levels with Rash, Pimple, and Zitz as the struggle to take down the Dark Queen is more fun than ever. The three-player action comes highly recommended!*

#### 5. Final Fantasy III

*While Squaresoft's latest wasn't quite as exciting as Secret Of Mana, this quest traversing three worlds gave us an unforgettable feeling as we gutted through this challenging game.*

#### 6. Mortal Kombat

*The at-times controversial Mortal Kombat was one of our favorites to play in the office, featuring some of the best fighting action we've ever seen on a console game!*

#### 7. Deadman Sam

*This tale of a murdered nobleman out to reunite with his lost love took us through many spooky levels on our way to win true love once again!*

#### 8. The Lost Vikings

*Erik, Baleog, and Olaf fight their way through many dangers in this outstanding action puzzler featuring a surprising amount of challenge and lots of addictive fun.*

#### 9. Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?

*We never thought we'd have so much fun learning geography, but the hilarious cutscenes and excellent play controls made this game hard to put down.*

#### 10. The Simpsons

*The Super Nintendo CD showed off its arcade chops in this port of one of our favorite brawler games based on America's favorite family!*

-featured in the January 1994 issue of Nintendo Power as part of their Super Power Club bonus insert

**1993 Nintendo Power Awards ("The Nesters")**- compiled from fan voting, not a complete list of awards

Best Graphics and Sound (SNES-CD)

1. Secret Of Mana
2. Star Fox
3. Super Mario World 2

Best Challenge (SNES-CD)

1. Final Fantasy III
2. Star Fox
3. Battletoads II

#### Best Play Control (SNES-CD)

1. Super Mario World 2
2. Star Fox
3. Mortal Kombat

#### Best Theme and Fun (SNES-CD)

1. Secret Of Mana
2. Super Mario World 2
3. Star Fox

#### Best Hero

1. Mario
2. Randi
3. Kirby

#### Best Villain

1. Thanatos
2. Goro
3. Dr. Wily

#### Most Innovative

1. Super Bomberman CD
2. Secret Of Mana
3. Shadowrun

#### Best Overall (Super Nintendo)

1. Super Mario All-Stars
2. Mortal Kombat
3. Super Squadron X

#### Best Overall (SNES-CD)

1. Secret Of Mana
2. Super Mario World 2
3. Mortal Kombat

-featured in the May 1994 issue of Nintendo Power

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*"What you're holding in your hand is Issue 0 of Nintendo Power CD, a new treat for all of our Super Power Club members! These two discs can be played in your Super Nintendo CD,*

*and will bring you the latest in news, tips, tricks, and even special game demos! Every three months, a new issue of Nintendo Power CD will arrive with your monthly magazine. We'll be charging a little extra for new subscribers, but current subscribers will continue to receive issues of Nintendo Power CD for free until their current subscription runs out. Nintendo Power CD comes jam-packed with all the cool stuff you're used to seeing in your Nintendo Power magazine, but now in video form! You'll get to watch some of the Nintendo game counselors play through some of the trickiest sections of SNES-CD games. You'll get to see special video previews of games we've got coming up. And much more! Also included is a disc just for demos of upcoming games. We've partnered with companies producing new games to provide exclusive demos that you'll only find on Nintendo Power CD, so you can try out games before you buy them at the store! Nintendo Power CD will help take your Super Power Club membership to the next level of power!"*

-quoted from the insert included with Issue 0 of Nintendo Power CD, which came with subscribers' issues of Nintendo Power in January 1994. Nintendo Power CD was also regularly sent to Nintendo's retail partners, for the purposes of playing preview videos at kiosks or having the demo disc available for play

## **Nintendo Power CD (Issue 0)- Winter 1994**

### *Disc One Contents-*

Classified Information- secret codes for 27 SNES-CD games, including Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition, The Terminator, The Simpsons, and others

### Counselors' Corner-

Video 1: "How do I beat the Tree Segments in Final Fantasy III?"

Video 2: "How do I access Rainbow Road in Super Mario World 2?"

Video 3: "How do I reach the Central Computer in time in Flashback: The Quest For Identity?"

Video 4: "How do I access the Black Hole in Star Fox?"

Power Charts- A countdown of Nintendo editors' current top 10 SNES-CD games. In subsequent issues, readers would help vote for these charts.

Pak Watch- Preview videos for NBA Jam, Secret Of Monkey Island, Kid Icarus CD, Ren and Stimpy, Daywalkers, Icebiter, Soulqueen, and Phaedra's Heart

### *Disc Two Contents-*

Demos for the following games:

Secret Of Mana

The Simpsons

Battletoads II

Icebiter

Utopia: The Creation Of A Nation

Eskrima Warriors

Secret Of Monkey Island

Cannondale CD

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## **Electronic Gaming Monthly 1993 Editors' Choice Awards** (selected)

Game Of The Year: Secret of Mana (Super Nintendo CD)  
Runner-up: Samurai Shodown (Neo-Geo)

Super Nintendo Game Of The Year: Street Fighter II Turbo  
Runner-up: Super Mario All-Stars

Sega Genesis Game Of The Year: NHL '94  
Runner-up: Gunstar Heroes

Super Nintendo CD Game Of The Year: Secret Of Mana  
Runner-up: Super Mario World 2

Sega CD Game Of The Year: Sonic the Hedgehog CD  
Runner-up: Aladdin

Best RPG: Secret Of Mana (Super Nintendo CD)  
Runner-up: Final Fantasy III (Super Nintendo CD)

Best Fighting Game: Samurai Shodown (Neo-Geo)  
Runner-up: Street Fighter II Turbo (Super Nintendo)

Best Action Game: Super Mario World 2 (Super Nintendo CD)  
Runner-up: Gunstar Heroes (Sega Genesis)

Best Music: Secret Of Mana (Super Nintendo CD)  
Runner-up: Actraiser 2 (Super Nintendo CD)

### **System Reviews:**

Super Nintendo CD:

Ed: 10 (quote: "Last year I said it was highly recommended. This year I'm glad to have been vindicated. Even if you have to shell out an extra \$150, it's the best value in gaming, with a ton of great games and more still to come.")

Danyon: 9 (quote: "While it could do with a few more sports games, and there are a few FMV stinkers in the lineup, there aren't too many gripes to be had with the Super Nintendo CD. It's already the best peripheral ever made.")

Martin: 10 (quote: "Did I think at the beginning of the year that the Super Nintendo CD would have a better year than the Super Nintendo? This is an absolute must-buy now. For Secret of Mana alone, this is worth the price.")

Sushi-X: 10 (quote: "The best system for fighting games there is. You've already got the definitive versions of Street Fighter II and Mortal Kombat, and Samurai Shodown is coming next year. What the hell are you waiting for?")

Super Nintendo:

Ed: 8 (quote: "I'm really pleased with all the games that are coming out for this and the Super FX chip shows a lot of potential, and that you don't need to shell out the extra cash for an SNES-CD to have great 3-D visuals on a home Nintendo console.")

Danyon: 8 (quote: "What worries me is that more of the good games seem to be coming

out for the Super Nintendo CD. Will Nintendo keep pushing more good games to it to get people to spend the extra cash? But in the meantime, there's plenty to love about the good old SNES.")

Martin: 9 (quote: "You can't go wrong with the Super Nintendo, not with great games like Zombies Ate my Neighbors, Super Squadron X, and Mega Man X, along with stuff like Super Metroid and Dragon Warrior V coming down the bend.")

Sushi-X: 8 (quote: "For 100 bucks, if you don't have a Super Nintendo yet you should seriously consider buying one. The fighting games aren't quite arcade quality but in most cases they're damn close.")

Sega CD:

Ed: 7 (quote: "The Sega CD made a nice little push at the end of the year with great games like Aladdin and of course, Sonic CD. The problem is that I'm worried about this system's future prospects, it definitely doesn't look as bright as the Super Nintendo CD.")

Danyon: 7 (quote: "A console/CD combo might be just the thing to get the Sega CD sales going again. \$199, \$50 below the Super Nintendo CD combo, would be a great price point and there's a lot of value there with games like Sonic CD and Lunar.")

Martin: 6 (quote: "The Sega CD got its butt kicked this year by the Super Nintendo CD and deservedly so. There just isn't a good base of games to justify the purchase of this thing.")

Sushi-X: 7 (quote: "I've been having a lot of fun with Ultima Underworld II, but RPG fans have better options (AKA the Super Nintendo CD), and so do fighting game fans. It just might not be worth the purchase right now.")

-excerpted from the 1994 Electronic Gaming Monthly Video Game Buyer's Guide

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### **Gamepro 1993 Editors' Choice Awards** (selected)

Super Nintendo Game Of The Year: Super Empire Strikes Back

Runners-up: Street Fighter II Turbo, Super Squadron X

Sega Genesis Game Of The Year: Gunstar Heroes

Runners-up: Aladdin, Street Fighter II Special Champion Edition

Super Nintendo CD Game Of The Year: Secret Of Mana

Runners-up: Mortal Kombat, Super Mario World 2

Sega CD Game Of The Year: Sonic the Hedgehog CD

Runners-up: Ultima Underworld II, Aladdin

Fighting Game Of The Year: Samurai Shodown (Neo-Geo)

Runners-up: Mortal Kombat (Multiplatform), Street Fighter II Turbo (SNES/Genesis)

Action/Adventure Game Of The Year: Super Mario World 2 (Super Nintendo CD)

Runners-up: Flashback: The Quest For Identity (Super Nintendo CD), Deadman Sam (Super Nintendo CD)

Role-Playing Game Of The Year: Secret Of Mana (Super Nintendo CD)

Runners-up: Earthbound (Super Nintendo), Ultima Underworld II (Sega CD)

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*"1993 was a tale of two experiments: Nintendo and Sega's experiments with optical gaming. For Nintendo, the Super Nintendo CD was a revelation, a way to expand their fanbase into older gamers with more disposable income, who would play challenging and edgy games such as Secret Of Mana, Final Fantasy V, The Terminator, and of course, Mortal Kombat. Nintendo's efforts paid off, striking a chord they never expected to strike and unwittingly but gratefully laying the groundwork for the true course of their fourth-generation console. The company ended 1993 at a crossroads, but it was becoming increasingly apparent that their optical experiment was becoming the wave of the future. For Sega, the Sega CD's shortcomings were amplified by the Super Nintendo CD's success, and being outsold 2-to-1 over the course of the year was a sign that they were going down the wrong road. Though Sega's future still lay in the CD medium, it was clear that they would need something with a lot more power to challenge Nintendo and Sony's technological might. Sega ended 1993 with a renewed commitment to the Genesis, hoping to win over those gamers who might not be able to afford a CD upgrade, and hoping to take advantage of Nintendo's increasing shift away from their cartridge-based console. The year ahead would see the Genesis in an interesting position, fighting a battle similar to the one the NES had faced in the months before the Super Nintendo's release. There were still far more Genesis consoles out there than there were Super Nintendo CDs, and if Sega was going to keep their market share up until relief arrived in the form of the Saturn, they'd have to take full advantage of that fact. Because with every hit game that came out on the Super Nintendo CD, Sega was running out of time."*

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-"The History Of Console Gaming: Year-By-Year (Part 5)", Wired.com, June 12, 2012

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This isn't an actual update, just a bit of an aside to give a bit more information on 1993's "original" franchise SNES-CD games. Most of the SNES-CD games scheduled for 1993 were either OTL games or part of existing OTL franchises. As the butterflies flap and the timeline advances, there will be more and more franchises original to TTL that will appear (over 40 original franchise games are planned for the SNES-CD in 1994). Here is a list of all the original franchise games that appeared and a brief description of them:

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Scatterbeans: A colorful puzzle game that involves lining up colored spheres to form combos, somewhat like Bust-A-Move but the spheres shatter and disperse when combos are formed, it's a very fast-paced game.

Dark City: Another mystery game, more of a detective noir game taking place in a grungy town called Dark City.

Dragon's Destiny: A pseudo 3-D game where knights battle on flying dragons. A promising concept but the execution is poor and the game gets mostly bad reviews.

The Shores Of Whitesea: An FMV based fantasy game with some RPG elements, the game is a cult classic in some circles but is thrashed by critics and is later bashed memorably in an Angry Video Game Nerd video.

Super Carnival: An FMV carnival game simulator. Known mostly for its VERY cheesy acting which puts this game firmly in the "so bad it's good" category.

Classics Of Great Literature: An educational game with the text of ten classic novels included and quizzes on those novels. Strictly an educational game, somewhat rare and valuable in 2013.

Axes Of Avenglia: A fairly standard JRPG by Taito with CD enhanced music and some pretty good graphics for the time. A decent game but not really a standout.

Nightfall: A horror FMV game that becomes one of the more controversial games of the time due to its violent content. Regarded as one of the better FMV games on the system. Notable for featuring a young Kelly Hu as a beautiful witch.

Katie Corner: Another educational game, this one featuring puzzles and some live-action cutscenes. Gets decent reviews (especially for an educational game) but sells horribly, also somewhat rare and valuable today.

Deadman Sam: A platformer starring a skeleton named Deadman Sam. Regarded as a pretty good game (especially the animation on Deadman Sam), and it gets sequels and the franchise survives to this day.

The Swarm: A pretty standard shooter involving a hotshot pilot who takes down an alien invasion. Average reviews, average sales.

Frantic Flight: Another shooter game, much more complex than The Swarm as you're able to customize your ships and it even randomizes your wingmen. A very well reviewed game that gets terrible sales, becomes one of the system's hidden gems.

VideoMash: Though Nintendo kept the "Make My Video" series off the SNES CD, this game, similar to the Make My Video series but with original music videos specifically designed for the game, was published and released. Another game with horrible reviews but with a "so bad its good" following in the modern era of Youtube mash-ups.

Neighborhood Wars: A somewhat silly strategy game featuring rival gangs of kids battling it out with water balloons and other humorous weapons. Somewhat below average reviews, the humor is rather juvenile.

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*"It's about making Sonic 3 the best Sonic game ever. We just need a little more time to get everything ready, but I absolutely promise that Sonic 3 will be worth the wait, and when April 18th rolls around, you won't be able to stop playing."*

-Tom Kalinske, announcing the delay of Sonic the Hedgehog 3 from February 2 to April 18, 1994 at the Winter 1994 Consumer Electronics Show

*"It's archaic. It's a totally underpowered piece of garbage. And video gamers are going to be able to do the math and see that we have the most powerful piece of video game hardware ever created, and that we're going to have the best games too. That's just a fact."*

-Atari CEO Sam Tramiel, discussing the Super Nintendo CD in an interview with Newsweek

magazine hyping the Atari Jaguar, February 21, 1994

*"We knew that the Atari Jaguar was a more powerful system than the Super Nintendo CD. It had two processors and both of them by themselves were faster, they were around 26 Mhz and we were 21. But, and this was why we weren't worried, or at least I wasn't... Atari did not take software publishers' needs into consideration. They put out a very powerful, very nice piece of hardware that was very difficult to develop for, while we at Sony cultivated relationships with software publishers and used their input the entire time we were making the Super Nintendo CD. Square, Konami, Capcom, Tecmo, we listened to them and we created a platform that they enjoyed making games for. The Jaguar had all of that power but no one was ever able to take advantage of its full potential."*

-Ken Kutaragi, in an interview with *Popular Mechanics*, January 1998

*"We've got a pair of big games coming out this month for the Super Nintendo CD that I think a lot of people are going to love. It's been such a pleasure working with Nintendo, and I'm looking forward to us putting out a lot of games for the SNES CD in the future."*

-Olaf Olafsson, from an interview with *Computer Chronicles* at the 1994 Winter CES

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### **January 7, 1994 – Winter 1994 CES**

*It's that time again, time for all the big electronics companies to show off their latest gadgets and gizmos in Las Vegas, and this season's Consumer Electronics Show is proving to be the most exciting one yet. We're going to be taking a look at the latest video games today, and all the major players are putting their best foot forward. We're even seeing the legendary Atari on the comeback trail with their new 64-bit Jaguar system that promises 3-D graphics and interactivity on a level not yet seen on a home console device. The Atari Jaguar has already launched in select cities and will be rolling out across the country in the coming weeks. Atari CEO Sam Tramiel has promised a big slate of games for consumers to purchase as the system is made available. At the Winter CES, Atari showed off *Cybermorph*, a 3-D shooter game that hopes to compete with games like the hit *Star Fox* on the Super Nintendo's CD peripheral. Tramiel has promised a networked link-up accessory for the Jaguar so that players can connect and play multiplayer games with one another from across the country, a device that could give it a leg up on its established competitors. With two powerful co-processors, the Jaguar is perhaps the most powerful video game system ever launched, but only time will tell if Atari can reclaim the throne it held so strongly in the 1980s.*

*We've also seen new games promoted for the Panasonic 3DO, a powerful but expensive gaming console that was promoted very heavily at the time of its release last fall, though a high price tag and the rise of CD peripherals for Nintendo and Sega's systems have kept sales slow.*

*The biggest splashes at the Winter CES, as always, have been made by arch-rivals Nintendo and Sega, who showed off games for both their cartridge and CD systems at the show. Nintendo has been heavily promoting their home console versions of the arcade hit *NBA Jam*, while their partner Sony has begun rolling out its own stable of games for the CD peripheral, with *Icebiter* and *Skyblazer* both set for release this month. Nintendo is also promoting a version of the CD-ROM adventure hit *Secret of Monkey Island* that looks to be a major hit with some of the system's younger players in the same way that *Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?* was last year. Nintendo has been making headlines by*

*purchasing the MLB's Seattle Mariners, and the company's baseball game, featuring baseball superstar Ken Griffey Jr., will release in cartridge form for the Super Nintendo just in time for the upcoming baseball season.*

*On the Sega front, the company showed off the latest game in the Sonic the Hedgehog series, which has been pushed back from its scheduled Groundhog Day release date to later in the spring, giving the game's creators time to add even more levels and an all new character named Knuckles. Sega is also promoting a pair of sports games, including its own baseball game and a new version of John Madden Football for the 1994 NFL season. There wasn't as much focus on Sega's CD peripheral this year, though a version of Mortal Kombat was shown off at Sega's booth. The company has stated its renewed commitment to the Genesis system, though competition from the Super Nintendo CD may also be a factor, the company's CD peripheral outsold Sega's by a 4-to-1 margin during the holiday season and consumer analysts say that the Nintendo CD is at this time the better buy.*

*Whether it's Atari, Panasonic, Nintendo, or Sega, video games put on an impressive show at this year's Winter CES, and we'll keep you posted on all the exciting news ahead.*

-from the *Computer Chronicles* report on the Winter 1994 CES, January 9, 1994

## **Winter CES Update!**

There's a ton of games headed your way in 1994, and we got the first scoop on the biggest games of the year at the Winter 1994 CES! Both Nintendo and Sega's booths were jam-packed with their latest offerings, and though we had to fight serious crowds to play some of the biggest games, we came away with all the juicy details on every single game at the show.

Nintendo's booth was split between their cartridge and CD games, but the biggest game of all was undoubtedly Super Metroid, coming to the SNES this April. It's the third installment of the popular Metroid series and it'll see bounty hunter Samus returning to Planet Zebes to fight the vicious Space Pirates. We were treated to a sneak peek at an incredible battle with Kraid that's sure to blow players' minds, as the huge green baddie now takes up two whole screens! We also got a look at Nintendo's new baseball game, Ken Griffey Jr. Presents Major League Baseball. Featuring all the real MLB teams, the game lets players experience a full season in the big leagues or kick back with a Home Run Derby. The graphics look great and the sound effects make you feel like you're really at the ballpark. We also got to spend some time with Mega Man X, which should be available in stores by the time you read this. There was also the really fun Star Tropics II: Zoda's Revenge, and we got to play Dragon Warrior V as well. From what it sounds like, Dragon Warrior V is the series' best game to date and it's the first game to appear on the Super Nintendo, which means it's bringing enhanced graphics and sound to the table. We also got to check out Kid Icarus CD on the Super Nintendo CD, and it's a LOT better than the NES original. It's a whole new adventure for the hero Pit, and it plays a bit like Metroid but with a Zelda II twist to it, you can explore a huge series of worlds and gather experience points and new equipment as you try to battle the evil Medusa and her wicked minions in a quest to save Greece. It's a really fun action game and we look forward to playing the full game when it gets released in April. A game we're REALLY excited about is Castlevania: Rondo of Blood, a new Castlevania game for the Super Nintendo CD that emphasizes exploration more than the NES or SNES Castlevania games did. Then there's Soulqueen, a really fun looking space shooter from Telenet Japan. It plays a lot like Axelay, but with great cinematic elements and a fun (and really hot!) heroine named Cleopatra, we're ready to blast off with this one when it comes

out this spring.

On the Sega front, we REALLY liked what we saw from Sonic the Hedgehog 3, though we're not happy it's been delayed to April. We trust Sega though, and we know that it's going to be worth it when we finally get to play, the parts of the game that were playable here at CES looked amazing. Sega had their own Castlevania game to show off as well. Called Castlevania: Bloodlines, it was even more action packed than Rondo of Blood, and might indeed be a more exciting game than its slower paced CD cousin. Sega also showed off a great version of Super Street Fighter II for the Genesis. While we're looking forward to seeing what the Super Nintendo CD version of the game is capable of, Sega's version looked arcade fast and jam-packed with characters and features. It's clear that Capcom isn't leaving its loyal Sega fans out in the cold.

-from the Winter 1994 CES article in the March 1994 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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Interviewer: I'd like to thank you for taking the time to talk to us about *Snatcher*, if only briefly. We've been hearing about this game even since before the Super Nintendo CD was released, and it's taken quite some time to get it to market.

Masahiro Sakurai: Kojima-san and I have taken a lot of time working together to optimize *Snatcher* for the Super Nintendo CD. We think it's absolutely going to be worth the wait!

Interviewer: I played some of *Snatcher* and it's a really impressive game, though it's not like anything that's come to market before. Do you think such an unorthodox game can be a hit with Western audiences?

Masahiro Sakurai: I'm very confident that Western audiences will love *Snatcher*. It takes a lot of influence from the classic sci-fi films *Blade Runner* and *Terminator*, both of which were very successful here in the States. Nintendo is planning to promote this game to older players who will really get into the cinematic elements of it. Kojima-san really created something special here and I'm glad I get to help share it with Nintendo players!

Interviewer: I can see there's a big crowd around the booth, I'm going to let you get back to promoting the game but thank you very much for this interview.

Masahiro Sakurai: Thank you for enjoying *Snatcher*!

-from an interview with Masahiro Sakurai for the Life and Times section of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer

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## **January 8, 1994**

At the Alexis Park Hotel in Las Vegas, Tom Kalinske sat with some of his partners at Sega of America, discussing the company's latest strategy with Sega president Hayao Nakayama. Nakayama, along with some of the executives at Sega of Japan, were convinced that the company needed some sort of stop-gap measure before the release of the Sega Saturn. Nintendo's CD peripheral had dealt a seemingly mortal blow to the Sega CD, and now they were looking for anything they could throw up against it to compete. Nakayama had

managed to convince his fellow executives not to go through with pushing Project Mars, a 32-bit successor console to the Genesis, but it hadn't been easy, and he'd needed help from Tom Kalinske to demonstrate the folly of such a move. Ultimately, it had been two factors that prevented them from forcing through Project Mars.

The first factor was the system's proposed technical specifications. It would be more powerful than the Super Nintendo CD, with a faster processor and better 3-D graphics capabilities... but it wouldn't be significantly more powerful. Not enough to provide a budget-priced alternative to the Saturn when it was barely more powerful than its competition to begin with. The second factor was that Sega of America, which had seemed so powerful in 1992, had had its success wane during 1993 due to the rise of the Super Nintendo CD. With the sense that SoA and SoJ were "struggling together", so to speak, Nakayama was able to convince his fellow executives in Japan that Kalinske was still the "man with the plan", that there was no need for Japan's branch to exert its authority over SoA. Not yet, anyway.

"I bought you time," said Nakayama, as the conversation finally drifted to the subject of a Genesis stop-gap. "But the suits in Japan, they want something to bridge the gap between the Genesis and the Saturn, and if not Project Mars, then what...?"

"Well, that's the thing," said Tom Kalinske, a smile crossing his face. "Silicon Graphics has been working hard on the Saturn, but we've had them working on a couple other projects as well, and with the delay of Sonic 3..."

"Something else they're not happy about in Japan," Nakayama replied sternly.

"We need to do something with that lock-on technology. Originally, we were going to use it to connect Sonic 3 to its companion game which would be coming out later this year. But now that we're going ahead and releasing Sonic 3 complete, that lock-on tech is a solution in search of a problem. I think we've found our problem."

"Project Phobos," said Shinobu Toyoda, reaching into a briefcase and pulling out a manila folder. He placed it on the table for Nakayama and his fellow SoJ executives to peruse.

"It's a lock-on cart packed with several co-processor chips," said Kalinske. "as many as we can pack into a \$50 accessory. You hook it up to a game, it'll pump up the processing power, a lot like the Super FX chip did for that Super Squadron X game on the Super Nintendo. We can use it to add 3-D elements to Genesis games, make them run faster, store more in internal memory....games enhanced with this will run faster and look better than anything the Super Nintendo can produce. It's not quite the level of enhancement we'd have gotten with Project Mars, but it'll be enough to bridge the gap until the Saturn's ready."

Nakayama looked over the contents of the folder. He seemed intrigued, but some of the other executives looked skeptical.

"You say that they would not have bought Project Mars, what makes you think they will purchase this?" asked one of them.

"We'll pack it in with certain games. We can pack it in with Sonic 3, not at the game's launch but as a 'special edition' later in the year. Or that Virtua Racing game that's coming out. I think we can port some of the Sega CD games with this too." Kalinske's mind was

racing with ideas, he got so inspired when he had a good idea that he knew would help Sega take Nintendo down, and he was convinced that Project Phobos would give the Genesis the winning edge. He just hoped the SoJ brass would be convinced.

"We'll...go back to Japan and discuss this," said Nakayama. "In the meantime, you need to make sure that it wasn't a mistake to delay Sonic 3. We're losing ground to Nintendo with every passing day."

Kalinske already knew that, and he was already working his tail off to make sure Sonic 3 would be a success. It would take a LOT of effort for the team to have the game ready with all the Knuckles content by April 18th, but he had allocated every possible resource he could to make it happen. The April 18th date was deliberate...it was the date Nintendo was planning to release Super Metroid. He was going head-to-head with the Super Nintendo's biggest cartridge game of the year and he was planning to blow it right out of the water.

CES had been, by all accounts, a success for Tom Kalinske. And he hoped that meant it would be a success for Sega as well.

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### **Cannondale CD:**

Ed: 6 (quote: "Knocking people off their bikes is fun, but this cycling game's graphics are pedestrian at best, and the racing gets rather old after a while.")

Danyon: 7

Al: 5

Sushi-X: 5

### **Fatal Fury 2:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 7

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 9 (quote: "This exciting fighting game is one of SNK's best, featuring a huge cast of characters and some really fast-paced action.")

### **King Of Dragons:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7 (quote: "A really fun hack-and-slash game somewhat reminiscent of Zelda II with its leveling-up system. This CD version features a ton of spoken dialogue as you make your way through the levels.")

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 7

### **Lester The Unlikely:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 3

Al: 2 (quote: "It's unlikely that I'm ever going to play this game again. This platformer is a horrendous mess.")

Sushi-X: 2

### **Magician Lord:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 8

Al: 5 (quote: "The graphics are nice but other than that this is just a really mediocre game. It's too hard and the slow-paced platforming makes this one a slog.")

Sushi-X: 6

### **Skyblazer:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 9

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 8 (quote: "A terrifically fun side-scroller featuring great pacing, combat, and a HUGE variety of power-ups.")

### **Icebiter:**

Ed: 7 (quote: "This game's not perfect, but its rapid-fire weapon combat and great music make it one of the SNES-CD's best platformers.")

Danyon: 9

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 7

-from reviews of January 1994's SNES-CD games in the February 1994 and March 1994 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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*"January 1994 was a big month for us, because that was the month that the first game we had an actual creative hand in was released. That game would be Icebiter. It was...sort of comparable to Treasure's Gunstar Heroes game for the Sega Genesis. You had a guy whose village was sort of frozen by this huge ice monster, and there was a legend about this monster, he was the Icebiter who came from the depths of winter to get vengeance on humanity. The story was really silly but it was the gameplay that I thought stood out, the developers did a great job on the combat in particular. Basically, Icebiter kept sending all these different monsters at you throughout the levels, and as you made your way through them you picked up stronger and stronger weapons to use until you got to the Icebiter himself. The game got decent reviews and we sold a pretty good amount, nothing like Deadman Sam did or anything like that but we definitely turned a profit. Ultimately it was a sign that we could go out and actually get these developers together and not just publish games, but create our own studio and make games, and Icebiter was a big part of that success.*

*I remember we ended up competing with ourselves in that month because we also had Skyblazer come out, it wasn't one we made but it was one that we published, and it was similar in a lot of ways and it got better reviews. Not quite as good sales, but better reviews. It was an excellent game. Now, around that time we also got approached by this company called Gamefreak who had an idea for a platformer game. Now that's another story, and we all know what Gamefreak did later on, but not a lot of people know that they really kind of got their start working with us."*

-Olaf Olafsson, "The Sony Imagesoft Story (Part 1 of 3)", excerpted from an article on IGN.com, October 24, 2010

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts – January 1994**

1. Mortal Kombat – 26,917
2. Super Mario World 2 – 23,360
3. The Terminator – 16,775
4. Star Fox – 15,182
5. Final Fantasy III – 13,884
6. Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts CD – 12,761
7. Super Mario Kart – 12,408
8. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 11,587
9. Jurassic Park – 9,152
10. Secret Of Mana – 8,457
11. Yoshi's Safari – 7,800
12. Deadman Sam – 7,551
13. Final Fight II – 6,604
14. Frantic Flight – 4,887
15. Super Bomberman CD – 4,615
16. Battletoads II – 4,417
17. Final Fantasy: New Generation – 4,122
18. Secret Of Monkey Island – 3,581
19. Super Detective Club – 3,227
20. Lethal Enforcers – 2,911

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\*Cover of the insert shows a cloaked and masked spy, rappelling down next to a window and peeking in with binoculars on what looks like a board meeting between Nintendo characters like Mario, Luigi, and Link. The caption reads "There's A Spy In Our Midst..."\*

*Here at Nintendo, we've got more games coming out than ever before. That's why you need the inside scoop, and that's what you'll get when you join the Nintendo Super Power Club. For just \$59.99, you'll get three years worth of information on all the latest games. You'll get 36 issues of Nintendo Power, our monthly magazine featuring tips, tricks, and the exclusive Nintendo news you can't get anywhere else. You'll get also 12 issues of Nintendo Power CD. Every three months, a two-disc issue will arrive with your monthly Nintendo Power magazine. Nintendo Power CD contains hours of exclusive video, featuring interviews with developers and fans on the latest Nintendo games. You'll also be able to see the expert game counselors at Nintendo playing through the trickiest parts of some of the toughest games around. Plus, every issue of Nintendo Power CD contains a special demo disc that'll let you play upcoming games before anyone else. And, if you subscribe now, you'll get a special gift: your choice of one of three strategy guides. Choose between Super Mario World 2 or Secret of Mana, our most jam-packed guides to date, each with over 200 pages of information on one of the Super Nintendo CD's biggest games. Or you can choose our new Super Nintendo CD Player's Guide, with tips and hints on over 40 Super Nintendo CD games that will give you a leg up on the enemies. When you're in the Nintendo Super Power Club,*

*it's like having your very own spy at Nintendo HQ.*

-from an insert included with Super Nintendo CD software during the first few months of 1994

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*"Am I bitter about my time at Sony? I think, the way that the gaming market was going at the time, it was hard for anyone to predict what would happen with the games Sony and Nintendo were localizing. I said Secret of Mana would be a commercial failure, it ended up selling half a million copies in its first three months of release in the West. I could have done without Ken Kutaragi coming to my office personally and showing me the sales figures. Contrary to popular belief, I don't hate RPGs. I never did. But when I got into the industry, they weren't big sellers."*

-Bernie Stolar, former executive vice president of Sony Computer Entertainment America, in an interview with Kotaku.com in July 2013.

*(Note: ITTL, Stolar is the current president of Mattel, where he's infamously known for rejecting an idea for a doll line featuring the daughters of famous fictional monsters. Now known as Monster High, the doll line became a huge hit for Hasbro and along with its sister series Ever After High, the two shows are enormous hits for the Hub network and were a huge part of the Hub becoming part of most basic cable packages starting in 2014.)*

*"Secret of Monkey Island had to be my favorite Super Nintendo CD game of all time. It was really challenging but a lot of fun and one of the funniest games I've ever played. If I ever do a personal top 5 list of best Super Nintendo CD games, you're definitely seeing Monkey Island on there. By the way, that movie they made of it in 2005? I kinda like to think I had a hand in that since I did suggest it to the powers that be at Nickelodeon while I was working on All That."*

-Lisa Foiles, in a February 2011 interview with The Nerdist

*"This fleet's the biggest one yet! I see four capital ships....you'll need to assemble the Crusher Ray to have a shot at taking them down. Just collect the parts that come off the Xerus fighters and your ship's mechanic-bot will do the rest. Good luck soldier, you'll need it!"*

-Colonel Caster in level 13 of *Meteora*

*"Here's a picture of me when I was 11, reading the strategy guide for Phaedra's Heart. Is that enough 'gamer cred' for you?"*

-Anita Sarkeesian, in a Twitter post from August 23, 2014

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## **February 7, 1994**

*The Secret Of Monkey Island* is released for the Super Nintendo CD. It's largely the same as the 1990 PC original, though a few new puzzles, areas, and songs are added for this version. The release comes after a major advertising campaign for the game, possibly the biggest for an SNES-CD game since *Star Fox*, on networks such as Nickelodeon and Fox Kids. The campaign is a major success, sales are excellent for the game, despite some skepticism from the gaming media that kids with short attention spans may not want to

play a tricky point-and-click puzzle game. It's the first exposure that a lot of gamers have to the *Monkey Island* franchise, which has had yet to be released on any home console, and the Super Nintendo CD version becomes the most well known version of the game. Critical reviews are excellent as well, the game even beats out highly regarded games such as *Meteora* and *Phaedra's Heart* for Game of the Month in most publications. It's the first successful PC game to come to the Super Nintendo CD and see similar success, and its success will encourage other software companies to consider SNES-CD ports of their own.

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*"Phaedra's Heart is probably my favorite video game of all time, and I have a lot of fond memories of playing it as a young girl. I got it, along with The Secret Of Monkey Island and the Super Nintendo CD itself, for my 11th birthday, and both games had a major effect on me and what I understood strong female characters to be. The main character of Phaedra's Heart is the goddess Phaedra, who is stricken of her powers by a mysterious evil force and cast down into the world of the mortals. From there, she begins a journey to reclaim her powers while simultaneously befriendng and aiding a group of humans to overthrow their corrupt ruler. While the game is full of tropes, being a 90s RPG, it's refreshingly absent of nearly all of the harmful tropes associated with female characters in games. Despite losing her powers, Phaedra is never portrayed as being weak or in distress. She's a fully fleshed-out character with a variety of emotions that are expressed in very natural ways throughout the game. She DOES get a love interest, sort of, but she's never defined by her romantic attachment and at the end of the game she chooses her true essence over her love interest. Her "duty" is never portrayed as something explicitly feminine or something she's required to do, but instead it's her duty to herself, something that she chooses to undertake for the benefit of her friends and for her people, but also for her own benefit. She is one of the best examples that exist of a strong female character with her own agency and her own defined goals and is an example that all who make video games should follow. It's been 20 years since Phaedra's Heart was released and yet very little progress has been made."*

-Anita Sarkeesian, "Tropes vs. Women In Video Games Part 3"

*"We really expected this game to do well everywhere. When Phaedra's Heart released in Japan, we released the same week as the CD version of Final Fantasy V, and we sold more copies! We beat Final Fantasy, and I really wanted the same success in the West, but that didn't pan out. We sold....I think 40,000 total in North America, which was extremely disappointing."*

-Keiji Honda, president of Enix, translated from an article in *Famitsu* magazine, October 1995

*"A lot of people asked me why I never did any more voice acting after Phaedra's Heart. Don't get me wrong, I loved doing the voice of Phaedra, it was a great opportunity for me. But I got the job I wanted as a teacher and I just chose to continue with my teaching career. I don't regret anything but I'm always grateful when anyone praises my work in that game. I really did have a good time."*

-Jessica Kalenz, voice of Phaedra in *Phaedra's Heart* and now an eighth-grade English teacher, excerpted from an interview with *Working Mom* magazine in November 2013

Enix's *Phaedra's Heart* is an exciting new RPG for the Super Nintendo CD! When the goddess Phaedra is cast down to the mortal world, she'll have to make new friends and battle fierce enemies to reclaim her powers and save her people! This RPG from the makers of *Dragon Warrior* and *Soul Blazer* will really test your mettle, but Nintendo Power is here to guide you through the first two dungeons and get you started out on one amazing quest!

-from the February 1994 issue of *Nintendo Power*

*You are bidding on a North American copy of **Phaedra's Heart** for the Super Nintendo CD, complete with instruction manual and all inserts. No scratches on the disc, no scuffs on the case. Only about 40,000 copies of this game were released in the States, this game is VERY RARE especially in this condition! Included with the game is the Prima Secrets of the Games Strategy Guide for Phaedra's Heart, in very good condition with no creases on the cover or marks on the pages. Only 5,000 of these guides were made!*

*Selling my husband's Super Nintendo CD collection after he was killed in a robbery on June 23, 2014. Need money to pay for funeral expenses.*

Price: USD: \$267.50 (17 bids)

-taken from an Ebay auction on July 20, 2014

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### **Lemmings 2:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 9 (quote: "Even better than the original! The puzzles are as tough as ever, but it's one of the most addictive games I've played in a while. There are a lot of skills you can use to guide your lemmings to safety.")

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 9

### **The Secret Of Monkey Island:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9

Al: 9 (quote: "This PC port is a revelation, featuring the classic tale of swashbuckling and silliness in all its glory. You won't want to stop playing until you see how this thrilling story ends.")

Sushi-X: 9

### **Daywalkers:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 7 (quote: "This game mixes platforming and horror really well, depicting a cop's quest to kill vicious vampires that are taking over his city. A lot of other games would shy away from blood and guts but this one doesn't.")

### **Phaedra's Heart:**

Ed: 9 (quote: "One of the best RPGs I've played on the system. The voice acting is superb, adding a real cinematic element to what's otherwise a great traditional role-playing game.")

Danyon: 9

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 8

### **Meteora:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 8 (quote: "Probably the best acting I've seen in any FMV game on the system. That's not really saying much but in this game it really is. It's Wing Commander meets Star Fox in a lot of ways.")

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7

### **Eskrima Warriors:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 8 (quote: "A really good fighting game with a variety of characters. The best weapon-based fighting game since Samurai Showdown, plus I got to learn what the martial art of eskrima is.")

### **Infiltrator:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 6

Al: 6 (quote: "Basically, you're a spy that's got to break into a variety of locations and collect items, or documents, or sometimes you have to kill someone. It's an all right game but some of the tougher levels can be needlessly frustrating.")

Sushi-X: 7

### **Kings And Knights:**

Ed: 3 (quote: "Maybe it's because I just got done playing Meteora, but my God the acting in this game is hideous. The quest to get back Excalibur has never been so awful as it is in this fully-FMV based turd of a game. The actor playing the king is worse than a mall Santa.")

Danyon: 5

Al: 1

Sushi-X: 1

-Reviews of February 1994's SNES-CD games from the March and April 1994 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"And here's Cheer High Detective Team. This is a kind of visual novel game, I guess somewhat like Super Detective Club, where you've got a bunch of cute high school girls and you're trying to solve a mystery. I mean, I guess it's supposed to be for young girls or something, because all these characters are teenage cheerleaders....you see all their fashion accessories, purses, they drive around in a nice pink car, but.... this game, I'll tell you.... \*shows three of the detectives walking around in one piece swimsuits\* this game has a lot of stuff in it that, uh... \*shows two of the detectives sitting back to back, tied up and gagged as a bomb is about to go off next to them\* kind of makes it seem like they were doing this on purpose. \*shows all six of them in cheerleader outfits kicking and waving pom-poms\* I mean, everywhere you turn, there's some kind of fanservice thing going on! \*shows four of the girls splashing around in the school swimming pool\* Literally. Everywhere. And it's not even that good of a game, I mean, Super Detective Club is way*

*better than this. The mysteries are easy as shit to solve, I swear the real challenge is finding all these fanservicey scenes. Like, fucking up bad enough to get one of the girls captured, or, visiting the pool just to see them in swimsuits, so.... you gotta wonder who this game was really trying to appeal to."*

-The Angry Video Game Nerd from his 85th video, "Detective Games", talking about another February 1994 SNES-CD release, *Cheer High Detective Team*

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## **February 25, 1994**

Tonya Harding looked up at the podium next to her. There was Nancy Kerrigan, her fierce figure skating rival, getting the gold medal after being Russia's Oksana Baiul by just a tenth of a point. Harding would have to settle for the bronze, and for a moment she'd wondered what it would've been like if her ex-husband had been able to carry out his plan to sabotage Kerrigan's Olympic hopes. The night of the United States figure skating championship, which Kerrigan had won, Harding's ex-husband Jeff Gillooly had called her to apologize. He'd told her that he'd hired someone to attack Nancy Kerrigan a couple weeks before but that the attacker had gotten caught up in playing a video game and had forgotten to carry out the attack. She remembered yelling at Gillooly and demanding to know what the hell he'd been thinking, but deep down in the bottom of her mind she'd found herself wishing the attack had gone off as planned.

Now, watching Nancy Kerrigan claim the gold medal that she'd felt she deserved, Harding couldn't help but think those same dark thoughts again. But then again... an attack like that, so close to the Olympics? It would've been glaringly obvious who had been responsible. In the end, it would've been more trouble than it was worth.

"Maybe..." thought Harding, "*this was the way it was meant to be. And....there's always the next Olympics...*"

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*We're continuing our FMV Games Week here at Gamesradar.com with Meteora, a classic space shooter game for the Super Nintendo CD. Meteora combined some really nice full-motion video cutscenes with exhilarating space shooter action to provide one of the best FMV games to come out for the system. As part of the Meteora-related fun, we've got an interview with the game's lead designer, Brad Richards, who is now best known as the creator and CEO of Excitech Games.*

Interviewer: We're here talking to Brad Richards, lead designer and scenario writer for the Super Nintendo CD space shooter *Meteora*. Thanks for sitting down to talk to us.

Brad Richards: Sure thing, I'm always happy to talk about one of my games.

Interviewer: *Meteora*, as I recall was originally supposed to be a PC game, and then a 3DO game. What convinced you and your team to develop for the Super Nintendo CD?

Richards: Well, the PC already had a lot of FMV-based space shooter games, it was a really saturated market at the time with stuff like Wing Commander, so we knew the competition would be tougher. And we weren't quite as impressed with the 3DO as I thought we'd be when we started developing for it. It was easier to make games on the Super Nintendo CD

and that's what really appealed to our team.

Interviewer: When *Meteora* was released, did you expect the critical reception that you got?

Richards: I was pleasantly surprised to see the review scores, and it was a definite pleasant surprise to get the kind of sales that we did. We didn't beat *Monkey Island* obviously, but I was really pleased that the game sold even moderately well.

Interviewer: I had to do a little digging but of all the games that came out for the SNES-CD that month, *Meteora* was #2 in sales.

Richards: Well yeah, a distant second but second place is still damn good.

Interviewer: What was it like working with Giancarlo Esposito and Milla Jovovich? I mean, they're both pretty famous now.

Richards: Not back then though! \*laughs\* Well, Giancarlo, I knew him from *Do The Right Thing* and I was really happy to get him. He played, uh, he played Colonel Caster. He was really good, I mean he took this thing really seriously and kind of raised the level of the whole production, which was nice. I know other FMV games, the acting was REALLY bad, like in *Night Trap*, that game was awful but we wanted to do something good for the players especially. You were paying \$50 for a game, you deserved to get something at least halfway decent, especially when you could go to a movie for \$5 and see great acting in that. Milla Jovovich, she was SO young back then but she was great too, she was really professional and I wish we'd have given her a bigger role than we did. I mean knowing how famous she is now, I would've had her be the main character or something instead of his tomboy best friend.

Interviewer: You know, a lot of people really liked her character in the game, she had some of the best lines. Where'd you come up with-

Richards: From the end of level 8? \*laughing\*

Interviewer: Yeah, you remember it don't you?

Richards: She ad-libbed that. I swear to God, she ad-libbed that and cracked us the hell up. The line I wrote for her for that scene, I don't even remember it but I know it sucked. I should've known then that she was gonna be a star.

-excerpted from an interview at Gamesradar.com, January 18, 2011

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts – February 1994**

1. Super Mario World 2 – 20,415
2. Secret Of Mana – 19,171
3. Mortal Kombat – 18,842
4. Star Fox – 14,994
5. The Simpsons – 14,277
6. Super Mario Kart – 13,231
7. Final Fantasy III – 12,310

8. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 10,784
9. Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts CD – 9,187
10. The Terminator – 8,988
11. Battletoads II – 7,654
12. Actraiser 2 – 6,800
13. Yoshi's Safari – 6,154
14. Jurassic Park – 6,060
15. Super Detective Club – 5,574
16. Deadman Sam – 5,224
17. Final Fight II – 4,826
18. Super Bomberman CD – 3,711
19. Kid Icarus CD – 3,442
20. Final Fantasy: New Generation – 3,398

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### **March 1, 1994**

Tom Kalinske was very pleased with what he'd been hearing from Yuji Naka and the rest of Sonic Team, and he'd just gotten to see the fruits of their labor first hand. The new Sonic 3 looked incredible. There were a staggering amount of levels to play, the Knuckles gameplay looked top-notch, and the game itself ran smoothly with no major bugs or hiccups to report. The few bugs that remained could be squashed quickly, which left plenty of time for the game to make its April 18th release date. The biggest problem facing this new Sonic 3 game was the cartridge itself.... it would be a special 34-megabit cartridge specifically designed for the revamped game. It would be quite expensive and the game would launch with an MSRP of \$59.99... but Sega fans had already shown they were willing to pay a premium for quality games, as those who'd shelled out \$80 for Phantasy Star on the Master System had proven. Kalinske already had visions of a special edition of Sonic 3, packed with the Sega Mega Charger (the name they were going to use in North America for "Project Phobos"), selling this holiday season for that same \$80 price point, a killer value once people realized how much the new lock-on coprocessor cart could do.

It did bug Tom Kalinske that the top selling game of the last month, *The Secret of Monkey Island*, was a game he'd once coveted for the Sega CD, before LucasArts decided to port it exclusively to the Super Nintendo CD instead. Nintendo kept one-upping him at every turn. Super Nintendo CDs were flying off the shelves faster and faster and the peripheral was dragging Super Nintendo sales upward as well, that console had outsold the Genesis now in the United States for each of the past four months. But April 18th was going to be different. Tom Kalinske knew that not only was Nintendo releasing *Super Metroid* for their Super Nintendo that month, but a slew of games were releasing for both the SNES and the SNES CD. And he wanted nothing more than to crash Nintendo's party.

"Mr. Nakayama," said Tom Kalinske, speaking with his boss on the phone. "Did you get a chance to see the new Sonic 3 in action?"

"I did," Hayao Nakayama replied. "I was very impressed. I was right to trust you on this. I just hope you're right about Phobos, the brass still really wanted to go ahead with Project Mars."

"One thing at a time, sir. One thing at a time."

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*"The release of Snatcher for the North American Super Famicom CD was a real high point in my career as a video game designer. I really had this sense that it was the right game at the right time and the sales figures justified that feeling completely. It paved the way for so much, both in my own career and in the genre of interactive novel games as well."*

-Hideo Kojima, Famitsu magazine, January 2001

*"I couldn't be more proud that I helped bring Snatcher to Western shores! It's a game that fulfills all the promises of 'interactive entertainment' that Kutaragi-san at Sony made when the Super Famicom Compact Disc System was released. I really hope that players give it a chance, it's not the kind of game they're used to but it's a new step in the development of video games."*

-Masahiro Sakurai, in the March 1994 issue of Nintendo Power

*"I've dabbled in playing video games before. I did check out some of the Terminator games, most of which weren't very good, which is unfortunate. One of the stunt people on True Lies told me about a game on CD-ROM called 'Snatcher', and I was supremely impressed with it. The level of storytelling was absolutely superb. I think as technology marches forward, the people who make video games are starting to think in the same way as the people who make movies. I'd like this trend to continue. Who knows, maybe some day Hollywood film directors will be working on games?"*

-James Cameron, in an interview with Entertainment Weekly, July 15, 1994

*"I remember NBA Jam being our first really big sports hit. A lot of the game companies that do sports games, particularly Electronic Arts, were kind of sitting out the first year of the SNES-CD, wanting to see how sales would go, so it took a while to get a hit like NBA Jam was. Of course, it was kind of a hit for everybody, including Sega, but it was still a game that drove sales for us that spring."*

-Peter Main

*"That SNES CD port of Alone in the Dark was a complete mess and we all knew it. The system was powerful but we had no clue how to get that kind of 3-D to work that early in the console's lifespan and Sony wouldn't work with us like they did with companies like Squaresoft and Konami, so we were really in the dark and the results were understandably horrible. We did our best but if you compare the SNES-CD version with the 3DO's....there's obviously no comparison, 3DO is way better. It's a shame too because judging from some of the games that came out later on, we might've been able to do a much better job if Sony had been more open to us about how to program for it. The system just wasn't capable of advanced 3-D without some really nifty hardware tricks that we weren't privy to. I'm sorry to anyone who had to suffer through that port, I'd refund your money if I had it to give."*

-Shaun Hollingworth, co-founder of Krisalis Software, from an interview with Electronic Gaming Monthly in September 2005

*"I heard that Dragon Warrior V almost wasn't released. Thank you to everyone at Nintendo and Enix who decided to bring this wonderful game over here to the United States. I enjoyed every minute of playing it. I'm looking forward to the next one as well!"*

-Edith Jeter, from a letter in the September 1994 issue of *Nintendo Power*

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Mr. Burns: And here we have the latest in interactive entertainment! The newfangled Ultra Compact Disc Game Enjoyment Device!

Bart: It's a Super Koki-yama CD, man! \*grabs the disc from Mr. Burns and puts it in\*

Mr. Burns: This game is based on the novels of Agatha Christie!

Bart: \*looking at the case\* Cool, "The Tale Of Twelve Murders"! \*playing it....quickly getting bored\*

\*The screen briefly shows a point-and-click interface, Bart randomly clicking on things in a stuffy looking mansion but nothing's happening\*

Bart: Hey, what gives?

Mr. Burns: Yes, this is the latest technology!

Bart: \*clicks on something and makes a shelf move\* Where's all the murders? ...this game blows. \*tosses down the controller\*

-from *The Simpsons* episode "Burns' Heir", April 14, 1994

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### **Welcome To NBA Jam!**

"Jam Day" is March 4th, the day when NBA Jam launches for the Super Nintendo, Sega Genesis, and the Super Nintendo and Sega CD-ROM systems! With so many ways to play this thrilling arcade hit, you can finally bring all the rough-and-tumble action of NBA Jam into your living room! We got our first copies of the game to review, and all four home console versions are superb, with great graphics, lifelike sound effects, and superior gameplay. Whether you game it up with Nintendo or Sega, cartridge or CD, be sure to pick up NBA Jam if you're a basketball fan.

Graphics: 5.0

Sound: 5.0

Play Control: 5.0

Fun Factor: 5.0

*(Note: The Super Nintendo CD version, with detailed character graphics and the most voice samples, is the closest version to the original arcade game, though again, all four versions play pretty much identically to the one you've been spending quarters on for the last year.)*

-from Gamepro's review of NBA Jam in its April 1994 issue

*"NBA Jam leads all other video games in sales for the month of March. It dominated sales rankings and completely swept the top three best sellers for the month, with the Genesis version narrowly outselling the Super Nintendo CD and Super Nintendo cartridge versions of the game. Other games of note include Ken Griffey Jr. Presents Major League Baseball for the Super Nintendo, Madden '94 for the Sega Genesis, Wario Land: Super Mario Land 3 for*

*the Nintendo Gameboy, and Snatcher for the Super Nintendo CD."*  
-The Wall Street Journal, April 8, 1994

*"The home console version of NBA Jam is a smash hit, but it's created some controversy with its release. Basketball superstar Michael Jordan, whose Chicago Bulls have been in a fierce battle with the New York Knicks for first place in the Eastern Conference and the Atlanta Hawks for the Central Division lead, has refused to appear in either the arcade or home console versions of the game. Indeed, his contract with the NBA Players' Association has precluded him from appearing in any sports video games in recent memory, with his last appearance in a basketball game being his appearance in last year's NBA Showdown. When asked about why he chose to remain absent from the hit game, Jordan had no comment other than stating that he wanted to focus on basketball as his Bulls fight for playoff position. Unlike his basketball counterpart, baseball's biggest star Ken Griffey Jr. has embraced the virtual limelight. He'll be the star of a brand new baseball game appearing later this month on the Super Nintendo."*  
-Keith Olbermann, reporting on SportsCenter, March 7, 1994

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### **Alone In The Dark:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7

Al: 6 (quote: "An otherwise excellent horror game is really marred by choppy graphics and sound problems, it's not really a port I can recommend unless the SNES-CD is your only option.")

Sushi-X: 4

### **NBA Jam:**

Ed: 9 (quote: "The Super Nintendo CD offers up the most arcade-realistic version of this basketball hit. It's so much fun to play, especially if you can get three of your friends together.")

Danyon: 9

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9

### **Power Instinct:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7

Al: 8 (quote: "This quirky fighting game featuring transformations is hilarious fun. The excellent animation really brings this game's unique cast to life.")

Sushi-X: 8

### **Ren and Stimpy:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 7

Al: 7 (quote: "A unique adventure for the Super Nintendo CD, this side-scrolling platformer features all the wacky fun of the hilarious animated series.")

Sushi-X: 6

**Snatcher:**

Ed: 9 (quote: "The storyline is intense and this game is just really awesome in general. This game may very well be the start of a new generation of cinematic storytelling.")

Danyon: 9

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 8

**Wheel Of Fortune:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7

Al: 4

Sushi-X: 5 (quote: "It's good enough, I guess. It features real clips of Pat Sajak and Vanna White, but I hate Wheel of Fortune and this just reminds me of evenings at my grandmother's house. Yes, I have a grandmother. No, she is not a ninja like me.")

**The Next Champion:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9 (quote: "This side-scrolling brawler lets you design your very own fighter and level them up as you traverse through 14 action-packed levels. It's kind of like Final Fight: The RPG, and I loved every second of it.")

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 7

**Furious Heart:**

Ed: 5

Danyon: 8

Al: 5

Sushi-X: 4 (quote: "This fighting game might look pretty, but the gameplay sure isn't. It's slow, it's choppy, and the characters are as generic as they come. This is no Street Fighter.")

**P.O.L.I.C.E.: Hostage Rescue:**

Ed: 3 (quote: "Is it bad that I got more entertainment from shooting the hostages than I did from saving them? The lousy voice acting made me do it!")

Danyon: 5

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 3

**American Dance-Off!:**

Ed: 4

Danyon: 1

Al: 1

Sushi-X: 1 (quote: "Not only is this the worst video game I've ever played, but the dance pad required to play made this hideous game cost \$90. Ninety bucks for this atrocious garbage game. Majesco should be ashamed of itself.")

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of March 1994's Super Nintendo CD games, from the April 1994 and May 1994 issues

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\*Our world is shown in the present day.\*

Narrator: In 1996, a terrifying plague of our own making brought humanity to its knees.

\*Brief scenes of chaos are shown, along with a scene of lights all over the world blinking out as humanity dies off\*

Narrator: But we rose from the ashes, and built new cities. We were destined for a new, bright future.

\*A futuristic city is shown as a nervous but brave detective, armed with only a pistol, runs through an alley.\*

Narrator: It's now the year 2046, and cybernetic killers called "Snatchers" prowl the streets. Created in a lab to look like typical human beings, these cyborgs are the super-criminals of the future, and only the "junkers" can stop their reign of terror.

\*The detective sees one of these cyborgs pinning a cowering woman against a wall, its eyes glowing red. The detective moves in.\*

Narrator: I'm Gillian Seed and I'm one of those junkers. It's up to me to take them down.

\*Seed shoots the cyborg, sending sparks flying from its head. He helps the woman to her feet, but as she gets away, someone shoots Seed from behind, bringing him to his knees.\*

Narrator: But lurking just behind the surface is an even deeper conspiracy...one that I may not be able to unravel.

\*Seed is being hauled away by two of the cyborgs\*

Narrator: That's where you come in. Unlock the mystery of the snatchers, and save the future... before all of humanity is replaced.

\*As this narration is playing, scenes from "Snatcher" are shown on the screen. Then the scene returns to Seed. He's being hauled into a lab and there's growing horror in his eyes. The scene fades to black.\*

**SNATCHER** – *From the creator of the Metal Gear series*

*Coming March 14, 1994, only for the Super Nintendo CD.*

-from a commercial that played during prime-time television in late February and March 1994

**March 14, 1994**

*Snatcher*, the CD-ROM remake of the 1988 original for the MSX2, is released for the Super Nintendo CD in North America. Nintendo chooses to have a unique advertising campaign in which the game is directly marketed to older players on prime-time television. Masahiro Sakurai, who assisted Hideo Kojima with the Super Nintendo CD port of the game, is extremely confident that the game will sell well, and when it was released in Japan during the previous November, it was a smash hit. While the game is outsold by hits like NBA Jam and Ken Griffey Jr. Presents Major League Baseball, it becomes a moderate hit for Nintendo, surprising most of the company's North American brass. The game receives mainstream media coverage and is praised by *Entertainment Weekly* and *Variety*. Most notably, the game is mentioned, though not glowingly, by Roger Ebert during his weekly TV show *Siskel and Ebert At the Movies*. While Ebert says that from what he's seen of the game (he hasn't played it), that he still doesn't believe video games will ever be art, he says that a game like *Snatcher* has the potential to elevate games to something more than merely toys, and he and Siskel then briefly debate whether games can be art (Siskel admits to playing some of *Snatcher* on the recommendation of a friend and enjoying what he played). The game also receives some controversy for its violent and at times sexual content, a 14 year old (who appeared nude in the game) was aged up to 18 for the North American release, and the game is the first game to ever be rated "M" by the nascent Entertainment Software Rating Board, or ESRB. In later years, *Snatcher* would be considered a very "soft" M rating, actually somewhat on the border between T and M, though in those early months the ESRB did "over"-rate some games out of an abundance of caution.

*Snatcher* becomes known as one of the games that truly solidified video gaming as no longer being just a medium for kids, but something that could be enjoyed by grown adults. The trend that was somewhat begun by Sega in 1992 was now running its course in full effect. Though the game doesn't reach a million sales in North America, or even half a million (indeed, it would finish around 400,000), it would be recognized as one of the most groundbreaking games in the history of the Super Nintendo CD.

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*Congratulations on the North American Snatcher release! First week sales were almost twice Nintendo's estimate and it's already on pace to sell a lot more than the original. Would love to work with you again in the future. Busy with Kirby at the moment but if you have any more ideas for games I would love to hear them. -Sakurai*

*Konami wants you in charge of Tokimeki Memorial port for Super Famicom CD if you're interested. I would love to revisit Metal Gear in the future but unsure if Super Famicom CD is capable of what I have in mind. Any word on when Nintendo will be sending dev kits for new console? -Kojima*

*Not a clue about new console, I'm curious too! Seems like it will be a while yet. Probably couldn't tell you even if I knew, Nintendo is very secretive about such things! -Sakurai*

-a translated series of faxed notes between Masahiro Sakurai and Hideo Kojima exchanged in April 1994, included in the "Konami Complete Works (1993-2002)" volume

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### **March 28, 1994**

"See, that's exactly why we're going to smash Nintendo once the Saturn comes out," said

Tom Kalinske. He and Al Nilsen were looking at some gameplay footage of the Super Nintendo CD's port of *Alone in the Dark*, and seeing how slow and glitchy the game was made him feel a sense of perverse glee. "They're already bumping up against the limits of their Nintendo CD. Hell, I bet we can get this game looking better than this on the Mega Charger."

"Should we call up Infogrames and offer to have them port it to the Genesis?" asked Nilsen, thinking a Genesis port of *Alone in the Dark* that looked better than what the SNES-CD was capable of would strike a fierce blow for the Genesis' superiority and would be just the thing to help push the Mega Charger to skeptical consumers.

"...we'll think about it," said Kalinske. While *Alone in the Dark* was a popular, critically-acclaimed game, it wasn't a system seller, and Sega wasn't interested in fighting the Super Nintendo CD with Genesis games. They were out to strike a blow against the Super Nintendo cartridge system. *Dragon Warrior V* was releasing that day and reviews were highly favorable, better than any RPG Sega had released in recent memory. Of course, *Dragon Warrior* was no threat to *Sonic 3*. "Seen the latest NBA Jam sales? The Genesis version is #1."

Kalinske knew that Nintendo buyers of NBA Jam were split between the cartridge and CD versions, but a win was a win and the Genesis needed a hit. NBA Jam had been a big part of Sega's marketing ramp-up to push the Genesis in the months before *Sonic 3*'s release. Even the Sega CD version of the game had outsold hits like Sega CD's *Aladdin*.

"Three more weeks," said Kalinske, still watching the screen. "Three more weeks until we put the nail in the Super Nintendo's coffin."

"You really think *Sonic 3* will do it?" asked Nilsen, sipping from a cup of coffee.

"Let me dream," replied Kalinske with a sigh. "And let's hope Nintendo can't program better games than this."

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#### **SNES-CD Power Charts – March 1994**

1. Secret Of Mana – 21,711
2. Super Mario World 2 – 21,496
3. Battletoads II – 17,284
4. Mortal Kombat – 16,651
5. Star Fox – 15,735
6. Super Mario Kart – 14,160
7. The Simpsons – 11,984
8. Final Fantasy III – 10,275
9. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 9,660
10. Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts CD – 7,064
11. The Terminator – 5,774
12. Kid Icarus CD – 5,417
13. Yoshi's Safari – 5,210
14. Deadman Sam – 4,185
15. Super Detective Club – 3,904
16. Jurassic Park – 3,827

17. Super Bomberman CD – 3,775
18. Final Fantasy: New Generation – 3,314
19. Secret Of Monkey Island – 2,940
20. Snatcher – 2,826

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*“That last stretch on Sonic 3 was the most difficult ordeal of my entire career. 16-hour days, sleepless nights, such a massive crunch toward the end that none of us thought we'd make it through. But seeing those first reviews and seeing the early sales figures made it all worthwhile. It was the culmination of everything we'd created Sonic the Hedgehog to achieve.”*

-Yuji Naka, in a 2011 interview with *Sonic Central*

*“I've been playing a lot of video games lately, not really thinking about music but playing a lot of games. That Secret of Mana's really good, you know? But I kinda lose track of time when I play and it pisses Courtney off so I gotta be careful.”*

-Kurt Cobain, speaking with MTV News on February 22, 1994

*“So we've been getting a lot of static about the 'perfect' score we gave Sonic the Hedgehog 3 a few months back. Everyone at EGM absolutely loved the game but some of our readers feel that only perfect games should get perfect scores. Fair enough. Starting with this issue, the Review Crew will only issue 10s to truly flawless games. We're also going to a half-point ratings system, so unless a game is truly flawless, the best score you'll see a game get in EGM is 9.5 out of 10. As always, 5 is average and we're saving our 0 rating for truly irredeemable crap.”*

-Ed Semrad, *Electronic Gaming Monthly* editor-in-chief, from an editorial in the October 1994 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*“There's no way we're moving Super Metroid. I'm not scared of Sonic the Hedgehog. Never have been, never will be.”*

-Howard Lincoln, in an internal Nintendo memo from April 5, 1994

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## **April 4, 1994**

Nintendo releases Kid Icarus CD for the Super Nintendo CD. In a month featuring more than a dozen Super Nintendo CD releases in North America, Kid Icarus CD is the biggest. It's the third game in the series, following up the 1991 Game Boy sequel, featuring Pit returning to save Angel Land. Kid Icarus CD becomes the highest selling SNES CD game of the month and is a moderate success for Nintendo, though it is outsold significantly by Super Metroid.

### **Kid Icarus CD – The Basics**

The difficulty of the game has eased significantly from its NES predecessor, and the game plays a bit like a hybrid of Metroid and Zelda II. Pit explores various realms and over the course of the game, including dungeons, forests, and towns, where he can interact with various townspeople and mythical figures. He can upgrade his weapons throughout the game and learn new angel powers as well, becoming stronger as the game goes on. The

game features an orchestral, epic musical score and graphics typical of a high-end SNES game with no 3-D used. There's no voice acting but there are some animated cutscenes in certain parts. The game is divided into five major parts, in the first segment of the game, Pit must once again take on the evil Medusa. After defeating Medusa, however, Pit is cursed by the jealous sea god Poseidon and set adrift to a mysterious island where he must fight his way back to Angel Land, defeating Poseidon at the end of the quest. Once he arrives, he discovers he's been branded a traitor and is being hunted down by the warrior goddess Athena, while his friend Palutena wants nothing to do with him. He must gradually win back Palutena's trust, unraveling the complex relationship between her and Athena. He eventually gets Palutena back on his side and the two work together to defeat Athena, who confides to Pit after she's beaten that the gods have been under the control of a mysterious dark force. The next part of the game involves Pit rising up against and defeating Zeus, and finally, Pit discovers that the gods have been under the control of the evil Titan Kronos, who seeks revenge for being defeated by Zeus eons ago. Pit enters the Hall of the Titans and he slays Kronos, freeing the gods and Angel Land. Pit and Palutena ask Zeus to allow humans to control their own destinies. Zeus accepts, on the condition that Pit becomes the protector of the humans from this point on. Pit agrees and a new pact is forged, allowing the humans of Angel Land to become truly free.

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### **Beavis And Butt-Head:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7 (quote: "This game makes nice use of the CD medium to add plenty of funny sound clips from the show. The bonus music videos are a nice touch in this otherwise mediocre platformer.")

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 7

### **Castlevania: Rondo Of Blood:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8

Al: 10 (quote: "The best Castlevania ever and it's not even close. This is a true adventure masterpiece, with one of the best soundtracks I've ever heard in a video game.")

Sushi-X: 8

### **ESPN Baseball Tonight:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 5

Al: 5

Sushi-X: 6 (quote: "The ESPN production values are nice but the baseball itself is just ok.")

### **Joe And Mac CD:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8 (quote: "This SNES-CD exclusive Joe and Mac game is a better looking alternative to Joe and Mac 2 for the cartridge system but the gameplay is fairly similar. Still, the huge dino bosses are really fun to fight!")

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 8

**Kid Icarus CD:**

Ed: 8 (quote: "This world is so much bigger than the world of the original NES game, and it's a lot more fun to explore now that I'm not worried about getting killed every few seconds.")

Danyon: 8

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 9

**The Masked Rider: Kamen Rider ZO:**

Ed: 4

Danyon: 3

Al: 4

Sushi-X: 2 (quote: "This FMV game is hideous and I weep for all the good Japanese games that haven't been brought over. Instead, they send us this awful thing.")

**RBI Baseball CD:**

Ed: 7 (quote: "The best pure baseball experience yet on the SNES-CD, though I still can't recommend it over Ken Griffey unless you REALLY need to hear more commentary. And if you do, you'd probably prefer ESPN's game.")

Danyon: 7

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 6

**Snow White: Happily Ever After:**

Ed: 5

Danyon: 6 (quote: "This isn't a terrible platformer, it's quite colorful and the music is excellent.")

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 5

**Space Ace:**

Ed: 6 (quote: "It's Don Bluth's classic laserdisc game in all its arcade glory. The problem is that if you've played it in the arcade hundreds of times like I have, you're not getting anything new.")

Danyon: 8

Al: 4

Sushi-X: 3

**Super Bases Loaded CD:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7

Al: 6 (quote: "It's a pretty damn fun game of baseball if you don't need authentic MLB teams. I liked this franchise a bit better on its cartridge form but this game features some really creative animation.")

Sushi-X: 6

### **Wolfenstein CD:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 7

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 9 (quote: "Now this is what I'm talking about! Killing Nazis has never been so fun and this version features some rocking music as well. Now when are they gonna get Doom up and running on this thing?")

### **Bumblebee: Zooble's Hive:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 9 (quote: "Konami really knows how to do a platformer. This game was clearly designed with little ones in mind, but after putting out so many grown-up games, it's good that their quality control doesn't suffer even when doing a game for younger audiences. I've never seen a bee kick so much butt!")

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 5

### **Gun Warrior:**

Ed: 8 (quote: "Tecmo does it again! This game mixes crazy gunplay action with a medieval theme and is just pure unadulterated fun. There are so many guns in this great run-and-run game that you'll have trouble picking a favorite.")

Danyon: 8

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 8

### **Soulqueen:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9

Al: 9 (quote: "One of the toughest shooters I've ever played, it's essentially Gradius with a plot. You'll get frustrated for sure but you'll want to keep playing to see what happens to Cleopatra next.")

Sushi-X: 9

### **Dazzler:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 7

Al: 5

Sushi-X: 5 (quote: "Believe it or not, this colorful puzzle game got boring quite quickly. You connect sparks of light, you get rewarded with more sparks of light, but I just couldn't get addicted to it like I got with games like Dr. Mario and Tetris. Too bad, really.")

### **Tomato Tommy:**

Ed: 3 (quote: "I'd rather chug a bottle of ketchup than keep playing this unimaginative platformer starring an anthropomorphic tomato. The music is grating and repetitive and

getting through even simple levels was a chore. I had to wash my eyes out with Sonic 3 after too much of this mess.”)

Danyon: 4  
Al: 2  
Sushi-X: 2

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of April 1994's Super Nintendo CD games, from their May 1994 and June 1994 issues

### **Super Metroid:**

Ed: 9  
Danyon: 9  
Al: 9  
Sushi-X: 9

### **Sonic the Hedgehog 3:**

Ed: 10  
Danyon: 10  
Al: 10  
Sushi-X: 10

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* May 1994 Review Crew column. The 40/40 awarded to Sonic the Hedgehog 3 would be the first perfect score ever awarded in *Electronic Gaming Monthly*. Following reader backlash over the practice of giving out perfect 10s, no other game would receive even one 10 from a Review Crew member until *Goldeneye 007* in April 1998, after EGM re-relaxed their scoring policy.

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*“Nirvana lead singer and guitarist Kurt Cobain checked himself back into rehab today, after climbing a fence to leave the rehab facility a few days earlier. In a statement made through one of his bandmates, he said that he'd been thinking suicidal thoughts for the last two weeks, and that he needed to get his head clear of drugs so that he could re-discover what gave him pleasure in life. Recently, he's also been dealing with a break-up from his girlfriend Courtney Love. The two had been in a series of violent arguments over the last few months, centered around, among other things, Cobain's drug use and his frequent playing of video games. One of these arguments put Cobain in the hospital for treatment of a slash wound to his shoulder. The troubled singer is being placed under 24-hour observation in the facility until he is considered to no longer be a danger to himself. In another statement, Cobain's ex-girlfriend Love stated that she believed Cobain's obsessive playing of video games to be the root cause of his depression, though the singer has repeatedly claimed inspiration from them in the past.*

*And speaking of video games, and on a more tragic note, local rap musician Marshall Mathers, 21 years of age, was found dead in his apartment today of three gunshot wounds to the chest. Police believe that Mathers' friend, 21-year-old Darrell Johnson, had come to Mathers' apartment to take a video game console that the two of them had purchased together and were sharing. When Mathers refused to give up the device, police claim that Johnson allegedly shot Mathers, then attempted to flee the scene, only for police to close in on him shortly thereafter. Johnson is currently being held without bail at the Wayne County*

*Jail."*

-From a WKYZ-TV news broadcast on April 6, 1994

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*Soulqueen didn't sell well.*

"Soulqueen didn't sell well. We didn't think it would be a great seller, with all the competition from all the other big games coming out that month, and it was a very difficult game, so we knew it'd be a tough sell, especially in North America. I was pleased with the reviews, and I was pleased with...with the reception to Cleopatra herself, the main character of the game. We wanted to create with her a type of protagonist that you weren't used to seeing, especially not in a space shooter game where typically it's just you and a ship and the enemy ships. We felt the player would be more inspired if they got to know the person in the cockpit of the ship. We sold...I think just 51,000 copies in North America, which was a shame but that character Cleopatra has had such a cult following, people still doing fanart of her and the like. I mean, there's as much fanart of her as there is of Yuuko from Valis and those games sold a lot better!"

*She has a really distinctive design though, the messy green hair, the facial markings, her pretty smile...*

"And players who played the game were REALLY endeared to her. It's a shame we had to release the game a week before Sonic 3. That game blew everything out of the water."

-excerpted from a ValisNet.com interview with Telenet Japan president Kazuyuki Fukushima, on October 8, 2006

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\*A boy is shown playing Mario games on his Super Nintendo CD.\*

Narrator: Hey kid, is that the Super Nintendo CD?

Boy: Yeah, it's really something!

Narrator: It's true, there's a lot of things the Super Nintendo CD can do. But the one thing it'll never be able to do is play the best video game of all time!

Boy: Huh?

Narrator: The reviews are in, and *Sonic the Hedgehog 3* is the best video game ever made! With perfect scores from dozens of video game magazines across the country, it's Sonic's biggest and best adventure yet!

\*Rapid-fire scenes from Sonic 3 are shown as the narrator continues to talk.\*

Narrator: Explore more than a dozen worlds with Sonic, Tails, and the all-new hero Knuckles the Echidna! He's got a serious spin and serious attitude and he can reach places never before reachable in a Sonic the Hedgehog game! Use the Chaos Emeralds to transform into Hyper Sonic or take Hyper Tails and Hyper Knuckles for a spin!

\*More Sonic scenes are shown as the boy watches the screen, his mind completely blown by all the awesome stuff he's seeing.\*

Boy: This game looks AWESOME!

Narrator: There's only one problem... you'll never, ever, EVER be able to play it on Nintendo! Only on the Sega Genesis!

Boy: Nooooooooooooooooo!!! \*holding his head in dismay\*

Narrator: It's Sonic 3 and it's too awesome for Nintendo CD! But you can go to the store and buy Sonic the Hedgehog 3, or buy the all new Sonic 3 Sega Genesis combo pack for only \$129.99!

\*The boy is shown continuing to panic and despair around the TV as his Super Nintendo CD sits sad and unused in the middle of the room.\*

## **SEGA!**

-from a *Sonic the Hedgehog 3* commercial that played in April and May 1994

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## **April 18, 1994**

In what would become the biggest selling day in video game history to that point in time, a slew of games including Sonic 3 and Super Metroid were released in North America. On the Super Nintendo CD front, two of the month's three baseball games, ESPN Baseball Tonight and Super Bases Loaded CD, were released, along with Beavis and Butthead, Bumblebee: Zooble's Hive, Snow White: Happily Ever After, and Space Ace were released. Super Metroid alone outsold all six of those games combined on release day by a factor of more than double.

Sonic the Hedgehog 3 outsold Super Metroid that day 11 to 1.

The game, with pre-orders counted, became the first video game ever to sell a million copies on its first day of release. The delayed release, along with the slew of incredible reviews and massive advertising campaign by Sega, built anticipation to a fever pitch and the release of Sonic 3 wasn't just an event in the gaming world but was recognized by the general media as well, raising awareness of the game's release in the general public to an incredible level.

Sonic the Hedgehog 3 received perfect scores by nearly every North American video game magazine, including *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, *GamePro*, and *GameFan*. *Famitsu* magazine awarded the game a 38/40. The game features 18 levels, all of them playable by Sonic, Tails, or the new character, Knuckles the Echidna, with a variety of added Special Stages and Bonus Stages to play through as well. The game featured even more content than the massively-hyped Sonic CD, considered a miracle for a cartridge game, even one that utilized a special 34-megabit cartridge.

The game succeeded in pushing nearly a quarter of a million Genesis systems in its first week of release, causing the Genesis to soar past the combined sales of the Super Nintendo

and its CD peripheral, and it would stay in that position for many weeks to come.

Super Metroid was received extremely well at the time of its release, with its fantastic graphics, excellent musical score, and brilliant exploration-based gameplay. History would eventually come to regard Super Metroid as the superior game to Sonic 3 and its impact on the medium itself would be far greater. Between it, Castlevania: Rondo of Blood, and Kid Icarus CD, April 1994 would not be known forever as Sonic the Hedgehog 3 Month, but as the month when a new sub-genre of adventure video game began to take shape, a genre that would eventually become known and loved as "Metroidvania".

But for now, it was Tom Kalinske and his fellow Sega executives popping corks and sipping champagne. They had earned it, and they could be forgiven for gloating.

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*"Thanks for waiting! As a special bonus for pre-ordering Sonic the Hedgehog 3, you'll not only receive this exclusive limited edition CD, but you're also getting this extra gift: a \$10 coupon for the Sega Mega Charger, a new Sega Genesis accessory coming this summer. Featuring our patented 'lock-on technology', it'll let you enhance the graphics and sound of your games even further than before, unlocking 'Mega Blast Processing' for an awesome new experience! This coupon is good toward the Sega Mega Charger accessory or any Mega Bundle of a Genesis game and the Mega Charger. Expires 12/31/94."*

-from an insert included with *Sonic the Hedgehog 3* pre-order bonus CDs

Tom Kalinske stood in front of a podium, smiling from ear to ear. It was the morning of April 18, 1994, and Sega had called a special press conference to celebrate the release of Sonic the Hedgehog 3. A week before, Sega had formally unveiled the "Mega Charger" lock-on device to the general public for the first time, the device that had been known internally as "Project Phobos".

"As you all know, today is the day that Sonic the Hedgehog 3 launched in stores across the country, and I couldn't be prouder of all the effort put forth by the dedicated individuals at Sonic Team. Without your tireless effort and long hours, none of this would be possible. When I asked Sega to delay Sonic 3 until April, I knew that it would take a Herculean effort to put this game together in time for the release, and all of you came through. The reviews are in and Sonic the Hedgehog 3 is the greatest video game of all time!"

As Kalinske spoke those words, a massive cheer went up through the gathered crowd of Sega supporters. He continued.

"Now, as you all know, we here at Sega have already begun our effort to usher in the next generation of video games. That next generation starts with the Sega Mega Charger, a device that will allow Genesis games to display 3-D graphics and feature cinematics previously only possible on CD-based devices. While we will continue to support the Sega CD, we here at Sega think that our customers shouldn't have to spend an arm and a leg to get great quality graphics and cinematics on their game consoles. We'll be launching the Mega Charger at a price of \$49.99, which is the cost of a single Genesis game. In addition, we'll be bundling the Mega Charger with some of our biggest hits, including Sonic 3 and two of our future arcade hits, Virtua Racing and Virtua Fighter, so that fans will be able to save even more money by buying both at once. We'll also be bundling the Mega Charger in with a special Genesis bundle that we'll unveil in the coming weeks."

Kalinske held up the Mega Charger, a device that looked just like a normal Genesis game with a small lock-on attachment on top. Originally, this technology was to be used to link up two Genesis games together, and would have connected the two halves of Sonic the Hedgehog 3 if Sonic Team hadn't been able to succeed with Kalinske's request to combine the two games back into their original and complete one. Now, it would be used as a bridge between Sega's present and Sega's future.

"With the release of Sonic 3 and the soon to be released Mega Charger, Sega continues to be the best value in video gaming today!"

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts – April 1994**

1. Secret Of Mana – 20,286
2. Super Mario World 2 – 19,544
3. Mortal Kombat – 14,208
4. Battletoads II – 13,576
5. Star Fox – 12,240
6. Super Mario Kart – 10,745
7. Fatal Fury 2 – 9,664
8. The Simpsons – 8,823
9. Final Fantasy III – 8,500
10. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 8,341
11. Icebiter – 7,116
12. The King Of Dragons – 7,045
13. Kid Icarus CD – 6,560
14. Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts CD – 6,114
15. Secret Of Monkey Island – 5,051
16. The Terminator – 4,552
17. Yoshi's Safari – 3,711
18. Deadman Sam – 3,352
19. Snatcher – 3,214
20. Super Bomberman CD – 2,843

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### **May 2, 1994**

Minoru Arakawa and Ken Kutaragi had spent the morning reading some of the North American sales reports as the two of them sat in a lounge at Nintendo headquarters in Kyoto. Super Metroid had been a hit. The sales numbers were great....they just looked terrible if you looked at them next to what Sonic 3 had done. Of course, if you did that, every game's sales figures would've looked terrible.

"I see Sega is quite happy with how their new Sonic game performed," said Arakawa, sipping from a cup of coffee with a stoic expression on his face. It didn't bother him how well Sonic 3 had done, but he was disappointed that none of Nintendo's games could pull in those kind of numbers. Even Super Mario World 2's opening week sales were dwarfed by what Sonic the Hedgehog 3 had done. Another troubling takeaway was that a number of people who purchased a Genesis to play Sonic 3 already had a Super Nintendo. Buying two systems was almost unheard of at the time, either you had a Super Nintendo or you had a

Genesis. If Sonic 3 was good enough to convert Nintendo's loyal fans, then maybe Nintendo *did* have a problem.

"Have you seen the latest footage of Donkey Kong Country?" Kutaragi asked, a smile on his face. "It's really something, what that Rare company is able to do with our hardware."

Arakawa looked up from his coffee and shook his head. He'd been meaning to ask Rare for an update on the game, but analyzing April's sales figures had kept him busy.

"Oh, you need to see it. I think there's a copy of the video they sent to Sony here as well."

What Kutaragi had seen blew him away. He'd already seen what Rare had done on Super Nintendo hardware, enabling the cartridge to render the familiar character of Donkey Kong in incredible 3-D. Once they'd gotten on the CD though....that was a game-changer. The processing power of Sony's peripheral allowed Rare to create animated three-dimensional backgrounds, feature twice as many on-screen enemies, and jam-pack more levels into the game, bringing the game from a projected 30 levels or so up to somewhere north of 50.

And then there was the work David Wise had done. His brilliant musical talent had a full showcase with the enhanced CD audio, he was adding tribal chants to his music now and was planning to work with a live orchestra for some of the game's tracks. *Donkey Kong Country* was shaping up incredibly well, and was poised to be the biggest game of the year.

Perhaps, Kutaragi thought, and opined to Arakawa, even bigger than *Sonic the Hedgehog 3*.

"I'll believe it when I see it," said Arakawa with a chuckle as the two men entered a small room where a Nintendo staffer was already setting up the video Rare had sent.

"Well, you know what they say," Kutaragi replied as he and Arakawa both took a seat to watch the film footage. "Seeing *is* believing."

*"Right around the spring of 1994 was really the time that the Super Nintendo CD was catching on not just as a family gaming console but as kind of a mainstream phenomenon, which we hadn't anticipated would happen. We had adults, lots of adults, buying the combo set and I think it was the first time where we had more than 50% of SNES buyers also buying the add-on, which was an incredible rate. It was still the time the Genesis was outselling us but we were putting so many CD peripherals in homes that we were turning more of a profit. Minoru Arakawa told me around this time that whenever he'd meet with Ken Kutaragi, there'd be this huge smile on Kutaragi's face, kind of an 'I told you so' smile. I told him once, if you'd been able to see from the very beginning the kind of mainstream thing this CD peripheral would become, we've got something called the lottery here and you might want to start playing numbers because you're some kind of a psychic."*

-Howard Lincoln, from a 2009 interview with *Forbes* magazine

*"Um, yeah, I did have my name on a video game once. After I won the gold in Lillehammer, they put my name on the Winter Olympics video game that came out later that year. I never played it though! Was it any good? ...oh, I'm sorry to hear that. \*laughs\*"*

-Nancy Kerrigan, in a 2006 interview with Fox Sports Net

*"Day of Malcarius was kind of the first real RPG effort we put forth on the Super Famicom*

*CD after leaving Game Arts. I felt, well, we all kind of felt that the Super Famicom CD was a much more RPG-friendly platform than the Sega CD, but our game didn't get nearly the reception that Lunar did, at least not from a sales standpoint. We learned plenty of valuable lessons though."*

*-Kozezuki Himura, lead character designer for the SNES-CD original RPG Day of Malcarious, in an interview with RPGPulse.com on July 13, 2010*

*"The Super Nintendo CD is the first video game console I really remember playing. I mean I remember I played Zelda on the NES a lot with my dad but the first game I actually have memory of playing is Carmen Sandiego on the SNES-CD. My dad says I played that game all the time when I was little and I believe him, and I thought it was just the most awesome thing to actually see video of Carmen doing some crime and then going to catch her. So yeah, I'm nostalgic as hell for the SNES-CD."*

*-Zelda Williams, in an interview with IGN.com on July 23, 2014*

*"With Virtual Bart, after The Simpsons had sold so well on the Super Nintendo CD, that we got the license to do the SNES-CD version of that game. Acclaim did the other one, kind of a Bart's Nightmare sequel action game for the Super Nintendo and the Genesis, and then for the CD version on Super Nintendo CD we got to make it a four-player beat-em-up like The Simpsons arcade game. We had four playable characters, Bart and Lisa of course, and they were joined by Nelson and Milhouse. With only a three month development time, that's where we kind of ran into some problems. Particularly...the balance for the new characters. Nelson was really really good, and Milhouse was really really bad. And we didn't have time to really fix that before we had to launch the game in June of 1994. I think the game was fine otherwise, we didn't have to do too much besides come up with the new levels and enemies which didn't take long. It was just balancing Milhouse and Nelson that we ran into trouble with. Reviews were still good, sales were still good, I mean we had way less dev time than Acclaim did and still got way better scores, but we were all glad to have a lot more lead time for the Itchy and Scratchy game. And as for Milhouse, I know a lot of people online do challenge runs of the game with him now, so something good even came out of that!"*

*-Jared Reely, localization/project manager for Konami of America, in a 2009 interview with Nohomers.net*

*"With the first pick in the 1994 NBA Draft, the Boston Celtics select... Grant Hill, out of Duke University."*

*-David Stern, announcing the first pick of the 1994 NBA Draft on June 29, 1994*

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*It's becoming abundantly clear that video games aren't just for kids anymore. Indeed, it seems that the latest games have begun seeping into all parts of pop culture, with the so-called "console wars" becoming a hot topic among Hollywood's biggest celebrities!*

*Some of the brightest stars on Hollywood have been touting the virtues of the Super Nintendo CD, the CD-ROM attachment for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System. While Nintendo's been pushing family friendly games at American kids for nearly a decade, some of the biggest hits on the Super Nintendo CD are decidedly NOT for kids.*

*\*scenes from Mortal Kombat begin to play\**

*Case in point, Mortal Kombat. One of the biggest arcade hits of 1992 and one of the biggest*

home entertainment hits of 1993, it features violent, bloody fighting and some brutal finishing moves, and stars like Roseanne's Johnny Galecki and the Fresh Prince Of Bel-Air's Will Smith can't get enough of the game.

*Johnny Galecki: Oh yeah, Mortal Kombat, we play it all the time, definitely. We hook up the CD and then start ripping each other's heads off, it's a lot of fun.*

*Will Smith: I'm lucky enough that I got both, I got the Genesis and the Super Nintendo, so I kinda go back and forth. We got a Genesis hooked up in the dressing room, but that Super Nintendo CD, it looks a lot more realistic and we got that hooked up on a big TV and it's even better than the arcade. And I just got the new Castlevania game, and that's really something too, all those creepy vampires. I tried to get Tatyana (Ali) to play that game but it creeps her out. \*laughs\**

*There's also the sci-fi mystery game Snatcher, about a dark future where evil cyborgs attempt to steal human identities. The praises of the cinematic game have been sung by directors such as Quentin Tarantino, and even Siskel and Ebert have shown interest in Snatcher's cyber-noir storyline.*

*The Super Nintendo CD has been capturing the same kind of attention that Sega has been attempting to capture with its Genesis console for the past three years. Sega has been a familiar sight at celebrity events, and the company and its familiar characters have had a presence at the MTV Video Music Awards since 1992. Now, it seems like the new generation of video games, featuring sophisticated multimedia and three-dimensional graphics, are putting Nintendo into the spotlight in a big way. Actress Winona Ryder, famous for her recent role in "Bram Stoker's Dracula", discusses her recent escape into the world of Soulqueen, a video game where you take the role of a hotshot female pilot as she rockets across the galaxy shooting down aliens.*

*Winona Ryder: I'm not normally one to play video games, but a friend showed me this really beautiful game where you're this awesome pilot named Cleopatra, and these animated scenes play out between you shooting down other ships. And she's just awesome, if they ever make a movie of it then sign me up. I've never seen anything like that from a video game before but whenever I have some free time I'm playing it. And Monkey Island too, it's a lot slower paced but there's so much to do.*

*Celebrities playing video games is nothing new. Courtney Love recently attributed her breakup with Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain to his video game habit, and there's one A-list actor who can't get enough of Nintendo's latest hits.*

*\*Footage is shown of Robin Williams playing Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego? on the SNES-CD with his daughter Zelda.\**

*Robin Williams, known for such hits as Mrs. Doubtfire and Good Morning, Vietnam, is a long-time gamer who even named his daughter after the titular character from The Legend Of Zelda on the NES. He's another big fan of Nintendo's CD-ROM system, and plays games like Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego? with his daughter every chance he gets.*

*Robin Williams: These games, they're just getting better and better. They've got real voice acting now, and they're filmed just like movies, it's amazing.*

*\*The footage shows Williams and his daughter right in the middle of capturing Carmen.*

Zelda is celebrating, pumping her fists while Robin points at the screen and yells "Yeah! You go DIRECTLY to jail, you do not pass go, you do not collect \$200!" as the screen shows a dejected looking Carmen Sandiego behind bars.\*

*When we asked Williams about some of the Super Nintendo CD's more mature games, he showed enthusiasm for them as well, though as the father to a four-year-old girl, he's careful about what games he lets her play.*

*Robin Williams: Well of course, I love Snatcher, and Meteora's a good one. But I don't let Zelda play those. I mean, she can be in the room when I'm playing Snatcher sometimes. But she prefers Carmen Sandiego, and Secret of Mana, those kind of games. She's playing Monkey Island now, we're playing through that together and it's a lot of fun. You know, we're waiting for the next Zelda game. You know Nintendo's working on that one, don't you? They're going to have it out next year. \*he catches himself, laughing\* Oh, I don't think I was supposed to tell you about that! \*laughing some more\* Oh, they're not gonna be happy with me.*

*Director Joel Schumacher has mentioned that he's been somewhat inspired by some of the latest video games as he gets ready to film the third Batman film, set for release next year. And as technology improves, and games get closer and closer to films in terms of production quality and content, we're likely to see even more crossover between Hollywood and the gaming world.*

-From *Entertainment Tonight*, May 23, 1994

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*"When I'd heard that Robin Williams kind of broke the news about Zelda 4 a bit early on Entertainment Tonight, I was kind of worried at first. We'd told him about the game hoping he'd keep mum about it until we could announce formally that we were working on it at next month's Summer CES. But, you know, he hadn't signed anything like an NDA or anything like that, we hadn't even really told him to keep it close to his vest. But, ultimately it wasn't a big deal. You didn't have the internet back then, at least not in the form we have it in today, so there wasn't much in the way of viral buzz generated by the comment he'd made. Not many of our fans even watched Entertainment Tonight, so that was another thing that kind of kept this contained. And finally, most people who did see it probably thought he was joking. Just, you know, Robin being Robin. So we couldn't get mad at him for the slip-up. How the hell are you supposed to be mad at Robin Williams anyway?"*

-Howard Lincoln, from a 2012 Kotaku.com article: "Nintendo and Robin Williams: A Whimsical History"

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## **FIFA World Cup '94:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7 (quote: "A fun soccer game that captures the excitement of the World Cup perfectly. Controls are a bit clunky but the graphics and sound effects are nice and it has all the teams!")

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 6

### **Jeopardy:**

Ed: 8 (quote: "It's the best Jeopardy experience on the home console. The full-motion video brings Alex to life like never before and there are over 5,000 questions and answers, so you'll have to play a LOT of games before seeing any repeats.")

Danyon: 8

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7

### **Nobunaga's Ambition: Lord Of Darkness:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 8 (quote: "An incredibly detailed turn-based strategy game, one of the best available for the SNES-CD. The historical content is a big plus.")

### **Thrillseeker:**

Ed: 9 (quote: "This REALLY ambitious virtual board game won't be for everyone, but I had a lot of fun with it. When you can get three friends together it's the best multiplayer game since Super Bomberman.")

Danyon: 5

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 7

### **Day Of Malcarius:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8

Al: 8 (quote: "As far as RPG plots go, it's pretty generic. A group of young heroes rise up to challenge an evil wizard. It's clearly inspired by Lunar which makes sense since the people who made the game actually branched off of the Lunar creators. That said, it still boasts really beautiful graphics and an amazing soundtrack, so I can't knock it too badly for being a little bit of a rehash.")

Sushi-X: 8

### **Fireball:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 6

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 6 (quote: "This shooter game is pretty much Asteroids with fireballs instead of asteroids and somewhat better graphics. If you're desperate for an arcade-style shooter, try your luck with this, though you'll find better on the SNES-CD.")

### **Invasion 2022:**

Ed: 5

Danyon: 4 (quote: "A REALLY forgettable X-Com ripoff, it's not even the best turn based strategy game of the month (that honor goes to Nobunaga's Ambition). You can skip this one.")

Al: 6  
Sushi-X: 4

### **3 Ninjas Kick Back:**

Ed: 4  
Danyon: 5  
Al: 2 (quote: "Horrible, horrible, horrible platformer. If you suffered through the movie you might survive this game. Otherwise, take a pass.")  
Sushi-X: 3

### **ClayFighter: Tournament Edition:**

Ed: 7  
Danyon: 7  
Al: 8  
Sushi-X: 8 (quote: "Last year's hilarious fighter is back with new characters, new moves and updated graphics. If you've never played the original, this is the one to get. If you have, you might wanna rent this first.")

### **Mad Dog II: The Lost Gold:**

Ed: 6 (quote: "It's not bad but it's significantly shorter than the first game, which was short enough on its own. If you liked the first though, you'll probably want to check this out even if you have to pay full price.")  
Danyon: 6  
Al: 6  
Sushi-X: 6

### **Nancy Kerrigan Olympic Gold '94:**

Ed: 4  
Danyon: 7 (quote: "It's not a terrible Winter Olympics game. The play controls on the figure skating could be better, which is a shame since it's the feature game of the entire package.")  
Al: 5  
Sushi-X: 5

### **Spectre:**

Ed: 9  
Danyon: 7  
Al: 6  
Sushi-X: 7 (quote: "The addictive computer shooter comes to the SNES-CD, which I felt did a great job rendering the excellent vector graphics of the original. It's not the best shooter out there but it's really pretty to look at.")

### **Tetris CD:**

Ed: 9  
Danyon: 8  
Al: 9 (quote: "You can't really go wrong with Tetris, and this updated version features great

musical selections and a lot of fun modes, including a Challenge Mode similar to the terribly difficult Japanese arcade games. The definitive home console version of Tetris for sure.")  
Sushi-X: 8

### **The Incredible Hulk:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7 (quote: "It's a pretty standard action platformer for the most part, but the graphics are awesome, with really good animation on the characters and enemies. If you're a Hulk fan be sure to check this out, even if you have to smash other people out of the way to get it up to the counter.")

### **The Lion King:**

Ed: 8 (quote: "This game continues the streak of excellent Disney adaptations that started with Aladdin. The soundtrack is amazing and it pretty much covers the whole movie, meaning that you'll have hours of fun reliving Simba's adventures.")

Danyon: 7

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 8

### **The Simpsons: Virtual Bart:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 7 (quote: "I feel like this game COULD have been better. It straight-up lifts the excellent engine from last year's Simpsons arcade game, but the character balance is a bit screwy (don't pick Milhouse, whatever you do!). While a fun game, it seems like it was a bit rushed to make a quick buck after the first one was such a hit.")

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 7

### **WWF Raw:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 7

Al: 7 (quote: "I really enjoyed this wrestling game, especially for its variety of moves and detailed character animations. Probably the best WWF game to come to a home console.")

Sushi-X: 7

### **After The Lights Go Out:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 3 (quote: "If you're going to make ANOTHER detective game, try not to retread the same old cliches in every other detective game out for the console. And try to include some decent acting for crying out loud!")

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 5

### **Heavily Armed Princess:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 6

Al: 9 (quote: "This game certainly lives up to its title. Pretty much everything your princess character can find is a weapon, and there are more than 30 in all. People might not like the over the top violence in a game that seems so sweet and girly at first, but I laughed my butt off the whole time I played. Tremendous fun.")

Sushi-X: 4

### **Fatal Strike:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9 (quote: "One of the best beat-em-up games on the Super Nintendo CD, in this game you're a warrior named Notukaga who has to punch, kick, and slash his way through hundreds of foes on your way to find the shogun who ruined his life. With such variety in enemies and stages and some of the best graphics I've seen on an SNES-CD game, I can't recommend Fatal Strike enough.")

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of May and June 1994's SNES-CD games, in the June, July, and August 1994 issues

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*There were a LOT of games that came out for the SNES-CD in June 1994. We got some classics like Tetris CD, Virtual Bart, Fatal Strike, and The Lion King, all really awesome games, but I'd like to talk about two of the stranger and more obscure titles that we saw for the system in the month of June 1994.*

*First up we have The Incredible Machine. This game was a port of a PC game about making Rube Goldberg devices, and I have to say that the SNES-CD's interface was pretty good. You could use the Mario Paint mouse or you could use a controller, and honestly either one of them works well here. It plays pretty much the same as the one on the PC, with the difference here being that you get some Mario themed items to use. You can have Yoshi eat something and then spit it back out, or lay an egg, that's pretty nice.*

*Next up, Hurricane Season '94. This is an educational game, specifically a hurricane tracking/simulating tool. You can actually plug in variables and simulate a hurricane from formation to landfall, or to it going out to sea. It only does Atlantic hurricanes but it's actually a fairly detailed simulator and I'm surprised they made a game like this. It sold....very few copies, less than 20,000, most of those to educational institutions but I was able to find this on Ebay for 25 bucks. It's kinda fun to mess around with, if you're into hurricanes and the weather.*

*So that's two of the really obscure, weird games to come out for the Super Nintendo CD in June of 1994. Next video, we're doing July and August 1994. And yeah. That means we're doing Oops!. That's gonna be fun.*

-excerpted from a Youtube video, "SNES-CD Weirdness (June 1994)", by ultivillain86

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts – May 1994**

1. Super Mario World 2 – 19,751
2. The Secret Of Monkey Island – 18,640
3. Secret Of Mana – 17,054
4. Mortal Kombat – 13,519
5. Star Fox – 11,440
6. Battletoads II – 10,355
7. Super Mario Kart – 8,859
8. Meteora – 7,415
9. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 7,014
10. Lemmings 2 – 6,351
11. Final Fantasy III – 6,274
12. Kid Icarus CD – 5,800
13. Fatal Fury 2 – 5,471
14. Snatcher – 5,056
15. Daywalkers – 4,771
16. The Simpsons – 4,700
17. Icebiter – 4,365
18. Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts CD – 3,882
19. The King Of Dragons – 3,759
20. Phaedra's Heart – 3,400

#### **SNES-CD Power Charts – June 1994**

1. NBA Jam – 30,417
2. Snatcher – 23,218
3. Super Mario World 2 – 18,088
4. The Secret Of Monkey Island – 16,443
5. Secret Of Mana – 14,287
6. Mortal Kombat – 9,713
7. Super Mario Kart – 8,453
8. Alone In The Dark – 7,800
9. Star Fox – 7,471
10. Battletoads II – 6,988
11. The Next Champion – 6,755
12. Final Fantasy III – 5,972
13. Furious Heart – 5,581
14. Kid Icarus CD – 5,372
15. Power Instinct – 5,334
16. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 5,244
17. Meteora – 4,980
18. Ren And Stimpy – 4,471
19. Lemmings 2 – 3,618
20. Phaedra's Heart – 3,287

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Charlie Steiner: After last night's 94-87 loss in Game 3 of the NBA Finals, Michael Jordan is vowing revenge. His Bulls are down on the Houston Rockets 2 games to 1, but game 4 Tuesday night is in Chicago, and Bulls fans will be roaring for their team to tie this series. While Jordan was fuming after the loss, he had high praise for Rockets center Hakeem Olajuwon. Olajuwon posted 38 points, 12 rebounds, and 7 blocks in last night's Rockets'

victory, including two blocks on Jordan in the same play.

\*A brief clip of Michael Jordan in the locker room after the game is shown.\*

Michael Jordan: He's an incredible athlete. I've gotta give credit where it's due. He was unstoppable. But I'm coming back, this team is coming back and we're gonna be right back here in Chicago Tuesday night and I'm giving it everything I've got. I can guarantee that.

Reporter: Can you guarantee that the Bulls will win Game 4?

Michael Jordan: Well, anything can happen. But I guarantee that I'm going to lay it all out on the court for Game 4 and there is no way I'm going to let that game get away like this one did.

\*Back to the SportsCenter anchor desk.\*

Charlie Steiner: \*looking back behind him and holding his ear like he's listening to something in his earpiece, he has a rather shocked expression on his face\* ....is that...is that confirmed? \*inaudible mumbling behind him, he turns to face the camera\* Uh, uhm, we've got a story now out of Los Angeles, and this is somewhat beyond belief but it is a tragic story that has just broke and I'm reporting it to you as I'm hearing it. O.J. Simpson, NFL Hall of Famer, a sports legend who is beloved around the world, has been found dead, along with his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson, in her Los Angeles home just a few minutes ago. And we're being told, and this is preliminary barring any autopsies but this is what the Los Angeles Police Department is reporting...we're being told that this appears to be a murder-suicide, that O.J. Simpson allegedly murdered his wife and then shot himself fatally immediately afterward. Again, we are reporting this story as soon as we're hearing it and obviously a very shocking and tragic report now out of Los Angeles. O.J. Simpson, NFL Hall of Famer, dead at 46 and, if what we're hearing is correct, in one of the most shocking ways imaginable. \*shaking his head somewhat in disbelief\* Unreal.  
-from the 12:00 AM broadcast of ESPN's *SportsCenter*, June 13, 1994

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*The following commercial aired on Nickelodeon during the last week of June and the first days of July in 1994.*

\*"Stars And Stripes Forever" plays\*

The Fourth of July!

Food! \*images of hamburgers and hot dogs are shown\*

Fun! \*images of a friendly backyard football game are shown\*

Fireworks! \*Fireworks footage\*

...and the year's most exciting video games! \*rapid-fire footage of a variety of Nintendo and Sega games is shown\*

Join Mike O'Malley at the 1994 Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago, as Nickelodeon gives you the scoop on 1994's biggest and best video games! Sega! Nintendo! One awesome half-hour special!

\*Footage is shown of Mike O'Malley playing a bunch of games\*

Mike O'Malley: This is gonna be HUGE.

### ***The Nickelodeon Video Game Spectacular July 4th***

***6:30/5:30 central***

Mike O'Malley: Only on Nick!

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*"The Mega Charger, as Sega called it in North America, was the first thing Sega did since I had started working on the Super Famicom CD that really impressed me. From a technical standpoint it was quite advanced and a really well made device. It got some of the people at Nintendo worried as well! I remember at the time we were talking about what we might do to counter it. People were talking about making a new H.A.N.D.S. cartridge to pump up the power of the Super Famicom CD, or maybe doing a lock-on cart for the regular console, but I wasn't worried and none of those things came to pass. We really didn't need them. Once Squad Four and Donkey Kong Country came out and everyone remembered what our CD add-on was really capable of, the worries about the Mega Charger sort of faded."*

-Ken Kutaragi

*"Would you like a free copy of the Squad Four Origins comic while you're waiting to play the game? It's the first issue of a comic we're going to be publishing in Nintendo Power starting with next month's issue, it's the perfect introduction to the characters and the world of the game!"*

-overheard at Nintendo's Squad Four booth at the Summer 1994 CES, Nintendo workers handed out free copies of the first issue of Nintendo Power's Squad Four comic to people waiting in line to play

*"Lunar Silver Star on the Genesis, that was news to me. Nobody had told me that Sega asked Game Arts to do a Genesis port of the game. I was pessimistic from the start and when I got to see what they did to the game I was pretty pissed off. Even with that lock-on cart they had to cut about half of the spoken dialogue, they pretty much butchered the game and of course it was going to sell like shit. The problems between me and Sega started when they decided to put Lunar on the Genesis."*

-Victor Ireland, speaking to The Gaming Intelligence Agency in a March 1999 interview

*"Going up to Chicago for the 1994 CES, that was a pretty fun trip. Nickelodeon put me up in a real nice hotel and I got to play a lot of the games before a lot of other people did. I mean, I've never been much of a gamer. I've played a few games, I played, uh, that Chrono Trigger game, I played a little bit of that because Mo (Quirk) did some voices in it and I wanted to see how she was doing. I'll play Madden with friends sometimes, maybe a little Call of Duty that kinda thing. But I didn't mind, it was 1994, the technology wasn't so good but it was great for the time and like I said, I had a lot of fun. My favorite game from the*

*show? Madden, obviously. I think it was Madden 95? I still remember the guy from Sega showing me the Genesis one. I don't remember much about the game itself but I remember having a ball with it."*

-Mike O'Malley, *Entertainment Weekly*, July 2014

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## **June 22, 1994**

It was the night before the 1994 Summer CES, and Tom Kalinske and some of his fellow Sega executives were enjoying the end of Game 7 of the NBA Finals at one of Chicago's best sports bars.

"Bulls down by three, Armstrong bringing the ball up the court, 25 seconds to go..." Marv Albert's voice echoed through the bar as Tom Kalinske and Al Nilsen watched the game together. They were enjoying the game of course, but they had plenty of other things on their mind as well. Kalinske would be giving a big speech the next day, where he'd not only be pitching the Mega Charger, but would be teasing Sega's next generation system as well.

"They really think it's a good idea to tease the Saturn, do they?" asked Nilsen, keeping one eye on his friend and one eye on the game.

"Armstrong gets it to Jordan, down to 15 seconds now...." The Houston defenders began crowding around Michael Jordan while Olajuwon hung out by the rim, determined not to let Chicago's star player get an easy layup.

"Well, it's coming out in Japan this December, we gotta say something about it...." Kalinske replied. He was glad to have Al Nilsen by his side. Nilsen had contemplated leaving Sega the previous year, but Kalinske had been able to convince him to stay. Sega was lucky to have him, and they'd need all the help they could get if they were going to win this latest round of the console wars. "Don't worry. This is the Genesis' show and I'll make sure it stays that way."

"Jordan drives, Olajuwon's there....he flips the ball out to Scottie Pippen who's wide open for three!"

The crowd in the bar, including Kalinske and Nilsen, stood up as Pippen took the three point shot that could tie the game. Everyone held their breath.

"Pippen, for the tie.... bounces off the rim! Olajuwon's got it and he's fouled with five and three tenths seconds to go!"

There was a loud groan in the bar and the sound of swearing and butts collapsing into seats could clearly be heard, while on the TV, the crowd in Houston erupted into euphoria. Kalinske shook his head and took another sip of his beer as Hakeem Olajuwon made the free throws that would ice the game and the championship for the Houston Rockets.

"Tough break, eh?" Nilsen said, thinking that his friend was bummed about the result of the game.

"Not really," Kalinske replied with a shrug and a smile, leaning in and whispering. "Can you imagine how tough it would've been to get back to our hotel if the Bulls had won?"

Al Nilsen stifled a laugh.

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Mike O'Malley: I'm here at the Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago, and I'm headed to Sega's booth, Sega, you know them, they make Sonic the Hedgehog, they make the Sega Genesis, they make Toejam and Earl, they've got the hottest selling game console out there and I'm about to get the scoop on what they've got going on!

\*He walks over to a display that's showing Virtua Racing and begins to play.\*

Mike O'Malley: This here is Virtua Racing, it's the newest, fastest, most exciting racing game you can buy. Check out the 3-D graphics, they're so lifelike you'll think you're really cruising down the road.

\*Footage of Virtua Racing is shown on the screen\*

Mike O'Malley: Now this game's actually been out for a while on Sega Genesis, but I'm playing it on the new and enhanced Mega Charger. And to get all the details about the Mega Charger, there's one guy I gotta see.

\*Now Mike O'Malley is standing with Sega's Tom Kalinske\*

Mike O'Malley: I'm here with the head honcho, the big man himself, this guy is the president of Sega of America, Mr. Tom Kalinske, and he's got all the top secret info on this awesome new Mega Charger device.

Tom Kalinske: \*holds up the Mega Charger\* That's absolutely right and here it is.

Mike O'Malley: All right then, there's something we like to say on my show *Guts*, and if you guys watching at home are a fan of the show you'll know what's coming up next, so Mr. Tom Kalinske, spill...your...guts!

Tom Kalinske: \*chuckles\* Well all right Mike, this is the Sega Mega Charger and it's a brand new peripheral that will bring arcade-quality graphics to a lot of the Sega Genesis games we've got coming up. As you can see here, it looks an awful lot like a Sega Genesis game, and what you do is you put it into your Genesis just like a game. You'll then take any of our Mega Charger compatible games and you'll just plug it right into the top like this... \*it shows him putting Sonic 3 onto the Mega Charger, easy as pie\* and our patented lock-on technology will do the rest.

Mike O'Malley: It's that easy?

Tom Kalinske: It's that easy. Now this Mega Charger contains a lot of technology in a very small package. You've got a pair of processor chips, one of them is for 2-D, things like animation, so that our games can look more like the cartoons you might see on Nickelodeon, or for example in Street Fighter, you can have a lot more detail on the characters and animations. And the second processor chip is for 3-D, things like Virtua Racing, so the game can run a lot more smoothly and quickly, just like in the arcade.

Mike O'Malley: I saw Virtua Racing, I gotta say, it is really fast. I mean the game moves by

at a blistering pace, and it was really exciting, I think the people at home are gonna have a lot of fun playing it.

Tom Kalinske: We hope they do. The Mega Charger also has a pair of extra memory chips and an enhanced sound chip for things like voice samples, so that characters will be able to talk and sing just like they can do on film or on TV.

Mike O'Malley: Well, this Mega Charger sounds pretty awesome. You know, on Guts we've got a little something called the Mega Crag, so this is just perfect, Mega Charger, Mega Crag!

Tom Kalinske: There you go!

Mike O'Malley: It's, it's a step up from what you had going on before. So now that we've gotten acquainted with the Mega Charger itself, care to show us some games?

Tom Kalinske: Absolutely. First off of course is Sonic the Hedgehog 3, not only the fastest selling video game of all time but the best reviewed video game of all time as well. It's the best video game ever. But the Mega Charger makes it even better.

Mike O'Malley: Okay, so let me get this straight...you're taking the best video game of all time, and you're making it better?

Tom Kalinske: That's right. \*smiles proudly and nods his head\* When you hook your Sonic 3 cartridge up to the Mega Charger, it'll open up nine new levels on top of the 18 there already are in the game. In addition to that, it'll add some new 3-D minigames which you can see here....

\*The screen shows one of the Mega Charger enhanced 3-D minigames, Sonic is sort of flying through the air shooting at creatures that appear on the screen, the 3-D is quite smooth and quite fast\*

Mike O'Malley: Now that looks REALLY impressive, let me play that for a little bit.

\*As Mike O'Malley plays, Kalinske continues.\*

Tom Kalinske: We've also got a Mega Charger exclusive Sonic 3 theme song and, and this is really nice, we've got a brand new final boss that appears if you beat all the new levels. This new final boss is even tougher than Dr. Robotnik, he's the toughest boss we've ever put in a Sonic game, he's really hard to beat.

Mike O'Malley: \*having a bit of trouble with the minigame\* This game right here, this is pretty hard to beat... \*he laughs and puts the controller down\* it was fun, but man, that's not easy.

Tom Kalinske: This new final boss is WAY tougher than that game.

Mike O'Malley: Would you say beating this new final boss is even tougher than climbing the Mega Crag?

Tom Kalinske: \*laughs\* That's a tough one, that Mega Crag looks like a serious challenge but....I'm gonna say, yeah. It will be tougher to beat this guy than it is to climb the Mega

Crag.

Mike O'Malley: \*looks at the screen\* You heard it here first, this new final boss....even tougher than the Mega Crag. \*turns to Kalinske\* Thanks again, that was a lot of fun.

Tom Kalinske: Any time Mike!

\*A bit later, we see Mike O'Malley at the booth for Lunar: The Silver Star, talking with a random Sega employee\*

Employee: This is Lunar and it's appearing on Genesis for the first time, only on the Mega Charger.

\*It shows one of the characters talking\*

Mike O'Malley: This is pretty neat, it's kinda like a storybook come to life to hear them talking like that.

Employee: \*he nods\* This is one of the most well-known Sega role playing games.

Mike O'Malley: Well, this is a cool game here, but you know, role playing games aren't really my thing, I'm more of a sports game kinda guy, you got any sports games to try out?

Employee: We absolutely do, right this way please!

\*The next scene shows O'Malley at the Madden '95 booth with the Mega Charger enhanced version of the game\*

Employee: You know, Sega's bread and butter has always been sports games, we've always prided ourselves on delivering the best sports experiences on a video game console and Madden NFL '95 is no exception.

Mike O'Malley: \*playing the game with a smile on his face\* Well this is great, I'm gonna be the Patriots here and maybe get a little revenge on the Bears for what they did to us a few years back in the Super Bowl.

Employee: \*laughing\* Well don't let some of the locals here see that!

Mike O'Malley: Oh, I'm gonna invite some of them over here to watch! \*he begins playing\* I can already tell, the players look really lifelike on this game.

Employee: Right, the Mega Charger delivers enhanced player animations and more detailed sprites for a richer and fuller experience. We've also been able to include a lot more voice samples for more realistic commentary from John Madden and Pat Summerall.

\*Pat Summerall's voice is heard commentating on a play, it's still quite stunted and unnatural but it's a lot more detailed commentary than most other console sports games of the time.\*

Mike O'Malley: It sounds just like the game on Sunday afternoon, this is great! \*he scores a touchdown\* I'm having a ball here.

Employee: You haven't even seen the best part. This is a feature exclusive to the Mega Charger, you won't see it on Nintendo or even the Nintendo CD. If you exit the game-

Mike O'Malley: I don't wanna exit the game, this is too much fun! \*laughs as he exits the game out to the main menu\* All right....

Employee: Now you'll see that we have a Play Editor. With this, you can actually create your own customized plays.

Mike O'Malley: Are you serious? \*they go into the Play Editor and there's a bevy of options\* I can make the patented Mike O'Malley Super-Duper Fumblerooski?

Employee: \*laughing\* You can make any play you want, you can save up to 16 of your own custom plays and access them during a game at any time.

Mike O'Malley: That is just awesome. That really puts this game over the top.

Employee: Madden NFL '95 will be coming out a few weeks after the Mega Charger, so once you buy the game for the Genesis, if you have the Mega Charger you'll be able to access this mode and start making your own plays.

Mike O'Malley: This just blows me away!

-from the *Nickelodeon Video Game Spectacular* that aired on Nickelodeon on July 4, 1994

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"While Sega's big push at the 1994 Summer CES was clearly their new Mega Charger peripheral, there were a huge variety of games featured at the show, some that will take advantage of the new peripheral and some that won't. We were quite impressed with the long awaited sequel to *Ecco the Dolphin*, *Ecco the Dolphin: Tides of Time*. The game features beautiful graphics and sound and while we were told that the game wouldn't be compatible with the Mega Charger, it was a fun and gorgeous game regardless. It picks up right where the first game left off, and it should be a blast to play when it's released this August.

We also saw a couple of great comic book games featured for the Genesis system. First up was *Spider-Man: Maximum Carnage*, featuring the vicious villain from the comic book and TV show. The game uses a really neat comic book style of animation to punctuate the action appearing on screen and I think it looks like it'll be the best Spider-Man game ever made. There's also *The Adventures Of Batman and Robin*, which looks to be based more on the animated series than the comic book. Unlike Spider-Man, this game has some enhanced Mega Charger features including the actual voices from the show itself, which makes this game maybe the closest thing we'll get to being able to play the actual cartoon.

Sega's also pushing *Earthworm Jim*, and this game was one of our favorites at the show. It features some great graphics (which are even better if you use the Mega Charger), and off-the-wall humor. It's clear that they're trying to push Earthworm Jim as the next big video game mascot and if this game is any indication, they might just succeed. We're not quite sure if he's up to Sonic's level but time will certainly tell!

Of course, the biggest thing at the show was the Mega Charger, and we were quite

impressed by what we saw. The peripheral, which you plug into your Genesis console like an ordinary Sega game, enables some very advanced graphics and sound via the use of a number of special chips embedded in the device, surpassing even the great graphics in Super FX chip games like Super Squadron X. While not quite up to par with some of the very best Super Nintendo CD games, as developers get more time to program for it we could see some efforts matching what Nintendo's CD marvel can do, and at \$50, it's priced at just a third of the cost of the Super Nintendo CD. We really liked what it did with Virtua Racing and Sega has promised to bring Virtua Fighter to the device by early next year. We also got a glimpse at a very good version of Doom for the Mega Charger, while Nintendo's rumored Doom port was a complete no-show. With Sonic 3 still burning up sales charts and Doom as a potential killer app, the future looks very bright for Sega and its fans.”  
-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* August 1994 article summarizing the Summer 1994 CES

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“Hi, I'm Tom Kalinske and I'd like to welcome everyone to the Summer 1994 Consumer Electronics Show. As you all know, Sega is devoted to providing the best video games to players all over the world, and at this summer's show we're pleased to announce the beginning of a new era for our company. In six months, our newest game console, the Sega Saturn, will launch in Japan. And while we and our partners at Silicon Graphics are very pleased with how the new console is turning out, we'd like to remind everyone that the Sega Genesis remains and will continue to remain the number one selling game console in the world. We've topped worldwide charts for the past two months now and this month is shaping up to make it a third. Those of you in North America thinking that you're being left out, let me assure you that on August 1st, the next generation of game consoles will begin for Genesis owners everywhere. That's when we'll be launching the Sega Mega Charger peripheral. This device, the size of a Sega Genesis game, will make the Genesis console four times faster and able to display many more colors on screen. It will enable games to be three times bigger and feature beautiful 2-D animation, life-like 3-D graphics, and enable sounds and sights that you've never seen before on a home game console. With our all new “Mega Blast Processing”, a Genesis console fitted with a Mega Charger will have more processing power than a Super Nintendo CD. And this little device will be available for the cost of a single Sega Genesis game. In some cases, less than the cost of a Genesis game. We'll be launching it for \$49.99, but we've also made a Genesis console bundle available that will include Sonic the Hedgehog 3 and a Sega Mega Charger for only \$129.99. And for those of you who already own a Genesis, we have five special bundles on launch day that will include both the Mega Charger and a Mega Charger-compatible game. Those bundles are: Sonic the Hedgehog 3, Super Street Fighter II, Virtua Racing, Lunar: The Silver Star, and Silpheed. The Mega Charger game bundles will be available for the low price of \$79.99. Those of you who remember that Virtua Racing cost \$99.99 when we launched it on Genesis a few months back, you'll know that those bundles are an incredible deal. But even if you don't purchase the Mega Charger, the vast majority of our upcoming Genesis library will be playable without one. Games that require the Mega Charger, and games that don't require it but are enhanced by it will be clearly marked on the outside of the box so that consumers will be able to pick the games that correspond with their device. With that said, we are hoping that most Genesis owners will consider the Sega Mega Charger a good deal, and that Sega will continue to provide the best value in home entertainment for years to come. Thank you, and enjoy the show!”

-Tom Kalinske's keynote speech at the Summer 1994 Consumer Electronics Show

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Mike O'Malley: We've seen Sega's games, we've seen what they've got coming up and it looks awesome. Now we're headed over to the Nintendo booth to get the latest scoop on what's going up with Mario and all his friends, let's go!

\*We see him at a booth for the upcoming SNES *Rocko's Modern Life* game\*

Mike O'Malley: Here we've got *Rocko's Modern Life: Carnival Of Horrors*. This game, of course based on the newest Nicktoon, and here, we have the director of *Rocko's Modern Life* himself, Steven Hillenburg, to talk about the game.

Steven Hillenburg: Hello again Mike, here of course you can see we have *Rocko's Modern Life* for Super Nintendo.

Mike O'Malley: Now this game, based on your very funny cartoon show, and you guys had a hand in this game correct?

Steven Hillenburg: We certainly did, we were involved in it every step of the way. With the earlier game, *Spunky's Dangerous Day*, that game actually started production before the cartoon even premiered! But Nickelodeon wanted there to be another *Rocko* game and we started on that last fall, right after the show started. We've kind of got a Halloween theme going here, *Rocko's* at the carnival and getting into all sorts of trouble.

\*Scenes are shown from the game, *Rocko* is going into a tent and getting attacked by a psychotic clown\*

Mike O'Malley: *Rocko* appears to be in some trouble here, I'm gonna throw a baseball at this clown.

\*The baseball knocks the clown back\*

Steven Hillenburg: We actually included several characters you can play as in this one, try using Heffer, he's got a body slam attack that does a bit more damage here.

\*Mike switches to Heffer and slams the clown, it seems to knock him back a little bit more\*

Mike O'Malley: Hey, that worked! That was pretty good.

Steven Hillenburg: We had a lot of fun in the writers' room coming up with ideas for the game and there were some really talented programmers that took our ideas and brought them to life.

Mike O'Malley: Well, just like it takes a big team of hard working people to put a cartoon together, it's the same way with video games and I can tell they worked really hard on this one, can't wait to play it.

Steven Hillenburg: We're hoping to have it out in October, thanks again for stopping by!

\*A bit later, we see Mike O'Malley at the *Fire Emblem* booth\*

Mike O'Malley: This game looks really fun, it's called *Fire Emblem* and I'm here with the head honcho of Nintendo, Mr. Howard Lincoln, who looks really excited to tell me about this game. I don't even think I have to tell him to tell me about it but I have to say it, Mr.

Howard Lincoln, spill...your...guts!

Howard Lincoln: Well this is Fire Emblem, it's making its first appearance stateside after being exclusive to Japan for the past few years, we're bringing the latest Super Nintendo game over to America and we know our fans are going to love it.

Mike O'Malley: You seem pretty confident.

Howard Lincoln: I'm really confident about this game. In Fire Emblem you're the commander of an army and you're placed into a battle with your enemy's army, and you get to sort of micro-manage them, so each of your soldiers gets one move every turn. You can equip them with different weapons and armor and gain experience in battle to make them the strongest soldiers they can be.

Mike O'Malley: So it's like in the real army, how they have that slogan "be all you can be", it's kind of like that?

Howard Lincoln: That's absolutely right. So here we have a battle from the game and you're just going to click on your guys and send them into battle.

Mike O'Malley: \*messing around with the controls a bit\* Okay, I'm gonna send him right up into this guy's face.

Howard Lincoln: Now you have to be careful, you have to really watch out because in this game, when one of your soldiers gets killed, that's it, he's gone for good. Even if you win the battle, you don't get to revive him.

Mike O'Malley: Whoa, are you serious? That definitely ramps up the challenge in a game like this.

Howard Lincoln: Right, and we also think it makes you care a lot more about each soldier in your army, knowing that every battle is for keeps.

Mike O'Malley: Yeah, you should've told me that before I moved my guy right into the line of fire here. \*it shows on the screen Mike's soldier taking damage but surviving with 5 HP\* Well, it looks like he survived this time.

Howard Lincoln: You got lucky. \*laughs\*

Mike O'Malley: Well- \*he turns to the camera\* Remember that when you play Fire Emblem, WATCH YOUR GUYS.

\*Now we see Mike over by the Donkey Kong Country booth, an absolutely huge booth with lots of people crowded around it\*

Mike O'Malley: This is one of the biggest games at this year's show, it's for the Super Nintendo CD, it's Donkey Kong Country and Howard Lincoln from Nintendo is going to tell me all about it.

\*Footage from some of the game's early levels is shown, the pre-rendered graphics and moving backgrounds look quite amazing\*

Mike O'Malley: It certainly looks awesome and this line is really long, but thanks to Howard here I've got a copy of the game all to myself, and I've got the inside scoop on one of the year's biggest games.

Howard Lincoln: Well, this is Donkey Kong Country and this is the game that we're really pushing for this holiday season. We're working with a company called Rare, who's also responsible for the Battletoads games, and their work on this game has been quite impressive as you can see.

Mike O'Malley: These graphics, they're just mind-blowing. The characters look great, there's so many things moving in the background, but I gotta ask, is the game good?

Howard Lincoln: Play it for yourself and see. \*he smiles as Mike begins to play the game's first level\*

Mike O'Malley: This is a lot like the Mario games, a lot of running and jumping involved, really fast paced. I have to ask though, I'm Donkey Kong here and isn't he supposed to be a bad guy? I remember playing Donkey Kong in the arcade and he was kidnapping princesses and throwing barrels, and this Donkey Kong seems a lot more fun.

Howard Lincoln: Well this is actually a different Donkey Kong. It's the grandson of the original Donkey Kong and this one is a lot more relaxed, instead of kidnapping damsels he just hangs out in the forest and eats bananas and throws parties.

Mike O'Malley: That sounds like my kinda guy.

Howard Lincoln: These Kremling guys, these alligator looking things, they took Donkey Kong's banana stash and now he's trying to get it back.

Mike O'Malley: \*continues to play\* Well, you never want to mess with a monkey's bananas. I've got to say, I'm enjoying this game a lot. Who's this little guy with Donkey Kong, is that his son?

Howard Lincoln: That's his friend Diddy Kong, they kind of have a big brother little brother thing going on, Diddy hangs out with Donkey Kong and they party together in the jungle, and he helps Donkey Kong get his bananas back. The two of them have different sets of moves, Donkey Kong is the bigger, more powerful character and Diddy's a lot quicker and more acrobatic.

Mike O'Malley: Yeah, these flips are amazing. I'm having a blast with this game!

\*Mike plays for a little while longer before turning and shaking Howard Lincoln's hand, he seems really impressed with what he's seen.\*

Mike O'Malley: Thanks, that really was a lot of fun.

Howard Lincoln: I hope everybody watching Nickelodeon gets a chance to play this game, I think they'll have a blast just watching you play it.

Mike O'Malley: Well it looks really good, I'm sure they will.

\*We next see Mike O'Malley at the Squad Four booth, holding a comic book in his hand.\*

Mike O'Malley: They're giving out comics over here! This is the booth for Squad Four, it's Nintendo's latest original game and this booth looks really busy too, so I'm gonna go over here where we've got this guy giving me a private demo. Your name is?

Dylan Cuthbert: I'm Dylan Cuthbert with Argonaut Games, we designed Squad Four exclusively for Nintendo.

Mike O'Malley: Tell us a little bit about Squad Four.

Dylan Cuthbert: Well, Squad Four is a group of four space adventurers who explore the galaxy in search of adventure, fighting evil and stopping space criminals. It's a little bit like our earlier game Star Fox, but unlike Star Fox, which was a space shooter, these four heroes actually get out of their ships and fight on the ground, they're kind of like interplanetary space soldiers.

Mike O'Malley: I'm already excited about this game and I haven't even touched a controller yet! So who are these guys in Squad Four?

Dylan Cuthbert: Well, you've got Shad, he's the leader of the team, very brave and heroic. You've got Marcus, he's a bit of a hothead, very brash, very foolhardy. There's Rebecca, she's calm and collected but with a really fierce heart, and then there's Lane, he's the team computer expert, a bit of a nerd but also really brave. In Squad Four, these four heroes crash-land on a planet and while they're searching for parts to repair their ship they get caught up in a sort of planetary civil war that's taking place, they've got to figure out which side they're on and get off the planet alive.

\*Mike takes the controller and begins playing. The game is in a sort of third-person perspective, you can move in all directions but the action is sort of on rails, with automatic lock-on shooting and branching paths to explore and find secrets.\*

Dylan Cuthbert: This game really focuses a lot on exploration, you'll want to search every nook and cranny for weapons and items that'll help you out against the different enemies you'll be fighting, which include alien life-forms and enemy soldiers.

\*Mike seems to be having some trouble with the controls at first but once he gets used to it he gets better as the footage goes on.\*

Mike O'Malley: I'm not used to playing a game like this, there's a lot going on isn't there?

Dylan Cuthbert: There is, you'll have times when you're under attack from all sides and you've got to move around quickly to take out the enemy before you get taken out. But there's also places you can kind of relax, natural breaks in the scenery and there are also towns to explore and people to talk to.

\*We see footage of Mike up against an early boss monster, a giant yellow frog, he gets some good hits on it and gets its boss meter down pretty low but it kills him and sends him back to the checkpoint.\*

Mike O'Malley: \*he laughs\* Well that didn't go so well. \*puts the controller down and shakes Dylan's hand\* Squad Four looks like a really fun and unique game, I'm gonna go read this comic and try to learn a bit more about the characters, and maybe come back for

another go at that frog.

Dylan Cuthbert: I'll be right over here if you come back, thanks for checking out the game!

-from the *Nickelodeon Video Game Spectacular* that aired on Nickelodeon on July 4, 1994

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"Nintendo didn't fail to impress with their offerings at the 1994 Summer CES. We saw a variety of games for both their cartridge and CD systems, and a couple of them stood out as potential rivals to *Sonic 3* for Game of the Year.

Let's start off by making something abundantly clear. Nintendo's current direction is trending toward the Super Nintendo CD and it doesn't seem like a course that's going to be reversed any time soon. Though Nintendo's cartridge games, which included the excellent Japanese import *Fire Emblem* (actually an adaptation of the third *Fire Emblem* game, though it's the first to see Western release), *Crystalis II*, a sequel to the NES classic, and the dark action platformer *Blackthorne*, were quite impressive, they pale in comparison to the Super Nintendo CD's blockbuster offerings. If you have the Super Nintendo but not the CD peripheral, you WILL be missing out on an increasingly growing number of Nintendo's best games. Sega has offered a budget alternative to Nintendo's pricey peripheral in the form of the impressive Mega Charger, but we do think that those who spring for Nintendo's CD system will get a ton of bang for their buck.

We were most impressed with *Donkey Kong Country*, which clearly emerged as the game of the show in the eyes of most of the people who saw and played it. The game features tremendously impressive rendered graphics that give everything, from the characters to the backgrounds, a highly polished 3-D look that blows anything appearing on the Jaguar or 3DO away. The game features eight worlds and more than 50 playable levels, rivaling *Super Mario World 2* in terms of sheer game content. While we didn't hear any voice acting from the game, its musical soundtrack is a thing of absolute beauty. We've been told the game will feature more than 40 music tracks across a variety of genres, from pounding hard rock to ancient pirate shanties to epic orchestral pieces, this game is creating a new level of atmosphere in a platformer and if what we saw at CES is any indication, it represents the future of video gaming.

Speaking of the future of video gaming, *Squad Four* was the second Nintendo game to truly impress us. While not quite as graphically polished as *Donkey Kong Country*, it was impressive nonetheless. The 3-D graphics were quite smooth and moved along at a good clip, unlike the atrocious slowdown seen in the less visually impressive *Alone In The Dark*. Again, Jaguar comparisons are quite appropriate for the level of what we saw in this game. Nintendo also seems to be heavily pushing this game's storyline angle. It features voice acting (and from what we heard, impressive voice acting), numerous cutscenes, and its main four character cast seems highly fleshed out. Nintendo was even handing out comic books to people standing in line, giving a brief insight into the origins of the four characters and how they came to be in this group together. Argonaut Games is clearly picking up with this game where *Star Fox* left off, and when the rumored *Super Squadron X* sequel is released for the SNES-CD next year, we'll all be eager to see what they have in store for us next.

We also REALLY liked what Nintendo showed us with *F-Zero CD*, the sequel to 1991's SNES launch game. The game moves faster than ever and there are more than 10 playable

characters this time around, as well as the addition of a multiplayer mode. *Alien vs. Predator*, originally intended to be an Atari Jaguar game, will instead hit the SNES-CD, as Rebellion Games, the company behind the game, told us that they would have an easier time developing the game for CD. The graphics are right up there with *Squad Four* in terms of detail, perhaps even exceeding it, and even though Nintendo isn't getting *Doom* this year, *Alien vs. Predator* looks like a damn good consolation prize. Activision's *Jewels Of The Realm* looks like another fantastic game, it's a colorful adventure platformer that gives you the ability to mix and match special power jewels to enhance your character's abilities. The voice acting, which featured actress Alyson Court from TV's *Beetlejuice* and *X-Men: The Animated Series* is top-notch and quite humorous and it looks to be a game that will appeal to all ages when it comes out this August. For those of you into FMV games, *Wing Commander* and *Corpse Killer* should appeal to that segment of the SNES-CD's fanbase, while those of you craving military strategy games will love *Cannon Fodder*, which looks like it didn't miss a step from its excellent Amiga version."

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* August 1994 article summarizing the Summer 1994 CES

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"I'm Howard Lincoln, president of Nintendo of America, and here at Nintendo we've been hard at work making the industry's best games. Whether you own a Super Nintendo CD or you've stuck with our SNES cartridge system, there are hundreds of games to choose from, and we've got hundreds more in store over the next year. Our partnership with Rare has produced a game that I think will be recognized as the best video game yet. *Donkey Kong Country* will be receiving a massive marketing push leading up to its upcoming November release, and I think that every Nintendo fan will agree that this game was worth the wait. We'll be bundling it with all of our Nintendo CD peripherals and combo sets starting this December, but for those of you who purchase a Nintendo CD now for the Mario World 2 bundle, we'll be including a \$10 coupon good for a copy of *Donkey Kong Country* when it launches this November 21st. We've also continued our partnership with Jim Henson's Muppet studios. Their company did an excellent job on last year's hit game *Star Fox*, and this December, our new game *Muppet World* will let SNES-CD owners explore the incredible world of the Muppets for the very first time, with a variety of games and adventures that will let players experience one of the greatest entertainment franchises of all time. Our newest original property *Squad Four* will be launching in October, and players will be teaming up with a squad of space heroes who have crash landed on a mysterious planet torn apart by war. On the Super Nintendo cartridge system we've got a treasure trove of role-playing games for fans to dive into this fall, including our very own *Fire Emblem*, a blisteringly difficult strategy game that will require every ounce of ingenuity our players possess! We've got *Crystalis II* coming out as well, along with Enix's amazing world-traveling adventure *Illusion of Gaia*, which launches for both our cartridge and CD-ROM based systems this October. It's been an incredible ride for us these past three years, and I just want to thank all the great Nintendo fans out there who have been playing and enjoying all of our Nintendo systems as we head into the second half of 1994. This year we'll be launching our new 'Play It Loud' campaign, showcasing some of the amazing new audio and visual experiences that Nintendo is working on for our newest and latest games. The campaign will begin with the launch of our new Game Boy Pocket device next month and will be heavily featured in our ad campaigns for this fall's biggest games. I do have one final bit of news to report at this time. As some of you might have seen on *Entertainment Tonight*, our good friend Robin Williams, one of the best actors in the world, mentioned a new *Zelda* game for the Super Nintendo CD that we plan to release next year. While he spoke a bit sooner than we would've liked him to, we would like to say that yes, we are planning to release a new *Zelda* game and are indeed hard at work on Link's next amazing

adventure, and that it will appear on the Super Nintendo CD sometime next year. While we don't have anything from the game to show at the Summer CES, we are planning a big presentation for the Winter CES in January, so until then, please be patient and remember that Nintendo is always working on the next big thing. Thanks for coming, and we'll see you out on the floor!"

-Howard Lincoln's keynote speech at the Summer 1994 Consumer Electronics Show

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\*Mike O'Malley stands off to the side of the convention floor after his Sega and Nintendo segments.\*

Mike O'Malley: We've seen the big games from Sega, we've seen the big games from Nintendo, and I gotta tell ya, it's way too close to call. Both these companies brought it big time at this year's Consumer Electronics Show, and I had a great time playing both their games! That's what I love about competition, it's just like on Guts, you've got these two big companies pushing each other to be their best and giving it their all and laying it all out there on the floor and we get to sit back and enjoy it all. If I was Mo, scoring this one, I'd give them both 300 points. It's just too bad we can't get Mario and Sonic up there on that Mega Crag to settle it because right now there's just no way to pick a winner! But you know what? I think we're all winners this time. I hope you had fun, now get outside and watch some fireworks! This is Mike O'Malley signing off and telling you to 'play on!'"

-from the *Nickelodeon Video Game Spectacular* that aired on Nickelodeon on July 4, 1994

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## **June 30, 1994**

Ken Kutaragi sat in Norio Ohga's office at Sony headquarters in Tokyo, Japan. The two men were discussing the latest developments between Sony and Nintendo, and Kutaragi was excited over what was in store for the partnership between the two companies.

"All reports from the CES are that *Donkey Kong Country* was the game of the show," said Kutaragi, "and *Squad Four* didn't fare too badly either. I don't care what people are saying about that Hyper Drive (the European and Japanese name for the Mega Charger) device Sega's got coming, we've got them beat."

"I'm confident as well," Ohga replied, though the look on his face said that he had something else on his mind. Kutaragi was too excited to notice, and he had something else on his mind as well.

"And did you see what we just finished working on with Rare? The new 3-D fighting game? *Killer Instinct*, I think it's called. It's launching in arcades in a couple months and I think we can port a really good version of it to the Super Famicom CD."

"I have seen it, it's quite impressive," said Ohga, staring at Kutaragi from across the table. "I've been watching the news on Sega's latest console...the Saturn."

Kutaragi nodded in response. The latest reports on the Saturn had been nothing short of amazing. Game footage had started to leak out and the visuals blew away anything the SNES-CD was even remotely capable of. Once it launched in North America sometime next

year, it would be very stiff competition even with the new Zelda game coming out.

"Nintendo's probably going to be asking us about contributing to their follow-up console pretty soon," said Kutaragi, who'd already heard whispers about Nintendo's next console when he'd visited the company's Kyoto headquarters. "I already have some ideas in mind but I'd like to have Sony's approval this time around..."

"That...could be a problem," said Ohga, who was now getting to the point of what he'd called Ken Kutaragi into his office to discuss. "Some of the directors don't like what we've been doing with Nintendo. Our profits haven't been up to their expectations, especially with the losses we continue to take on each peripheral and combination set we sell."

"But...we've been raking in record profits on software and music CDs, more than enough to cover the losses," Kutaragi replied, referring to the age-old strategy of 'giving away the razors to sell the blades'.

"The three biggest Nintendo games coming this winter are all first-party games," said Ohga. "*Squad Four*, *Donkey Kong Country*, *F-Zero*, all first-party games. Our cut is much smaller on them, we barely get anything at all. We will sell plenty of copies of the new *Street Fighter* and *Mortal Kombat* games, yes, but will it be enough to satisfy everyone in the company? I doubt it will...."

Kutaragi slumped in his seat. Ohga continued.

"Right now....it is about 50-50 that we will not be helping Nintendo on their new console. In fact...there are some within the company who wish for us to work on our own device, separate from Nintendo."

"Well, that would be.....I have no doubt it'd be successful but without Nintendo's games....we'd have a lot of trouble."

Kutaragi knew that Sony had already contracted several big game projects for 1995 and that the company had begun establishing its own separate partnerships for its burgeoning video game production company. But he was doubtful that Sony would have the kind of third-party support that Nintendo could expect to have.

"If we could convince Square and Konami to produce games for us, we might have a chance at going it alone but....I still think we should stick with Nintendo. And they're going to be asking us about the next console soon."

"Then you should start working to convince the members of the board that we need to continue this partnership," said Ohga, giving Kutaragi a very serious look. "I'm willing to put my trust in you when it comes to this matter, but if you can't convince them we'll have to go another direction and I'll need your cooperation in that, am I understood?"

"Absolutely sir," said Kutaragi, nodding his head. "Whatever Sony decides is best, I'm on board."

"Good."

The two men stood up and Kutaragi graciously bowed to his superior before turning to leave the room. While Sega's immediate future was very clear, Nintendo's, it seemed, was about

to become very clouded indeed.

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*"In a lot of ways, July 1994 was the 'calm before the storm' in terms of the console wars, the month before a slew of big games including Super Street Fighter II and Jewels Of The Realm were released on the SNES-CD, and a month before the Mega Charger was released for the Genesis. All I know is that it was the month I got an SNES-CD for my 7th birthday."*  
-excerpted from an anonymous blogger relating his experiences with gaming, from the start of the SNES-CD section of the article

*"Though games titled Final Fantasy II and Final Fantasy III have been released in North America, in reality, those games are actually Final Fantasy IV and Final Fantasy V respectively. Contained on this disc, for the first time on Western shores, is the true Final Fantasy II and Final Fantasy III, fully re-mastered for your Super Nintendo CD."*

*Final Fantasy VI – Coming Spring 1995"*

-from an insert included with North American copies of *Final Fantasy Origins*, which included remastered versions of the first three Final Fantasy games

*"Damn, I'm way too good at this!"*

-Major Hazard, one of the many random comments he makes during the game *Major Hazard*

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(What was the thought process that went into the release of *Final Fantasy Origins*?)

Hiranobu Sakaguchi: Originally of course, when the Famicom was popular, we intended to release Final Fantasy II and Final Fantasy III in the West. But by the time that we were working on the localization for those games, the Famicom was fading in popularity and we were too busy with working on Final Fantasy IV and its localization, so it was decided to scrap those projects and retitle IV as Final Fantasy II for the West. With the popularity of role-playing games on the Super Famicom CD console with Western players, particularly Final Fantasy V and Secret of Mana, we decided that we should localize the collection that we were doing for Japan. It had already been released as The Final Fantasy Collection in Japan in December 1993, and since we had a bit of a lull between the release of Secret of Mana and the release of Final Fantasy VI, we decided to ask our North American division to localize this collection as well.

(Did you worry that there would be some confusion among American players, considering that North America already had a Final Fantasy II and a Final Fantasy III?)

Hiranobu Sakaguchi: We did our best to make it very clear what these games were. We did not label them on the cover at all, we simply titled the collection "Final Fantasy Origins" and put some text, I believe it said something like "two all new games never released in the West" or something of that nature. (editor's note: The exact text was "Includes two Final Fantasy adventures never before played on Western shores!") It was only once players bought the collection that we had the insert in the case that explained what these games were. Also in the lead-up to the release of Final Fantasy VI, which was the first game to be

correctly labeled in North America, we had plenty of press releases to explain that this was the sixth game and that the other five games were available under other names, so by the time we did the CD remake of IV and released it there in September 1995, people understood that it was actually Final Fantasy II. I believe that people who play our games are quite smart!

(Did you believe that before or after the release of Final Fantasy V in the West? I know that Squaresoft thought that American gamers couldn't handle a game that was that difficult which is why we almost didn't get it at first.)

Hiranobu Sakaguchi: I admit that before I learned the sales numbers, I thought the game would do quite poorly in the West, as New Generation barely did enough sales to convince us to allow V to be localized. I was one of the people pushing to localize it but it was a difficult decision. I was so pleased that it did well and I was VERY pleased at how Secret of Mana did! After Secret of Mana did so well I knew that Western gamers were willing to buy quality role-playing games. It was why I had no problem localizing Alcahest for the Super Famicom. I remember, we were in a bit of a panic after Capcom wanted to publish Breath of Fire for themselves, because of that rule requiring Super Famicom releases (editor's note: When the Super Nintendo CD was first released, companies that published games on the Super Nintendo CD were also required to publish at least one game on the Super Nintendo during that same calendar year. If they failed to meet this release quota, they risked having their Super Nintendo CD game fail to be approved, or in the case of canceled SNES releases, risked having to pay a heavy fine to Nintendo. This rule was scrapped starting with the 1995 calendar year.), we had no Super Famicom games scheduled that year but then we realized we could localize Alcahest and we satisfied the requirement with that, and it did decent numbers at least considering what we expected.

(Did Final Fantasy Origins match your sales expectations? I remember it doing fairly well.)

Hiranobu Sakaguchi: It didn't sell quite as much as Final Fantasy III did but it made a profit for us, so that satisfied me!

-excerpted from an interview with Hiranobu Sakaguchi for GameInformer magazine in August 2004

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### **ESPN National Hockey Night:**

Ed: 7 (quote: "The presentation is this game's strong point, featuring some nice filmed segments with ESPN's Bill Clement. As a hockey video game, it's only average.")

Danyon: 7

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7

### **Final Fantasy Origins:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8

Al: 8 (quote: "While the gameplay might have aged a bit, this trilogy of NES role-playing classics gets a nice upgrade with Final Fantasy III quality visuals and CD audio. The third game is definitely the strongest one of the bunch. The best thing about this collection is that

for the first time, all five Final Fantasy games are available in America!")  
Sushi-X: 7

### **Liberty Or Death:**

Ed: 7  
Danyon: 6 (quote: "This strategy game by Koei is pretty tough to get into, but it does a great job capturing the feel of a Revolutionary War battle.")  
Al: 7  
Sushi-X: 7

### **Princess Maker:**

Ed: 5  
Danyon: 8  
Al: 6  
Sushi-X: 5 (quote: "What a weird game this is. Part RPG, part life-sim, it was way too girly for me but if you ever wanted to raise up a princess, this is the game to play, I guess.")

### **Total Eclipse:**

Ed: 8 (quote: "The graphics in this space shooter are REALLY hard to beat, it features some of the best visuals of any game on the system, though the gameplay's not quite up to the level of Starfox and it runs a bit slow compared to the one on the 3DO.")  
Danyon: 6  
Al: 7  
Sushi-X: 8

### **Monster Wars:**

Ed: 8  
Danyon: 8 (quote: "Of the two Koei strategy games released this month, this game, which features hordes of vampires, frankensteins, werewolves, mummies, and many more creepy monsters in turn-based combat, is a lot more silly and a lot more fun. George Washington is cool enough but sending a gang of vampires to fight a gang of pumpkin men is just awesome!")  
Al: 7  
Sushi-X: 7

### **Astra:**

Ed: 5  
Danyon: 7  
Al: 6 (quote: "This is a pretty standard RPG featuring a group of typical heroes sent out to fight a deadly dragon. While RPG fans will probably enjoy it, I myself preferred the much more dated and yet much more engrossing Final Fantasy Origins.")  
Sushi-X: 6

### **Logjam:**

Ed: 8 (quote: "This platforming game featuring a plucky lumberjack was a pleasant surprise for me. The variety of levels and obstacles you have to dodge rivals any other action game

on the system, though the music could've been a bit better.")

Danyon: 6

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 6

### **Major Hazard:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8

Al: 9 (quote: "This was my personal game of the month. This top-down action shooter game features a Rambo-like hero with way more guns and a really funny mouth, and the graphics were excellent as well. I'd go to war with Major Hazard any day!")

Sushi-X: 8

### **Fearleaders:**

Ed: 4

Danyon: 4

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 3 (quote: "This platformer was absolutely as generic as they come and the ability to switch between the five cheerleading heroes on the fly was no help considering there was no difference between the characters except their hairstyles.")

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of July 1994's SNES-CD games in their August 1994 and September 1994 issues

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Keith Olbermann: And it's been three weeks now since O.J. Simpson brutally murdered his ex-wife Nicole Brown before taking his own life. In those three weeks there have been a number of clarion calls for the NFL to investigate what many are calling an epidemic of domestic violence among the league's players. It has become common knowledge now that Simpson regularly committed domestic violence during the couple's marriage, and the horrific murder has led a number of brave women to step forward and report domestic violence in their own lives. Commissioner Paul Tagliabue has not commented on the issue as of yet but there are growing number of critics who say that the commissioner can't remain silent forever. So far, no suspensions or fines have been issued despite several incidents of domestic violence being reported to the league within the past month.

Charlie Steiner: Chris Webber is said to be taking his time to get adjusted to his new team the Chicago Bulls, but coach Phil Jackson says that he's looking forward to the challenge of working with someone he calls a "one of a kind talent". The Chris Webber trade was the biggest story on draft night, as the Bulls sent B.J. Armstrong, Horace Grant, Toni Kukoc, and a king's ransom of draft picks, five in all over the next four years, to the Golden State Warriors in exchange for 1993's number-one pick. The Bulls...

-from the 11:00 PM broadcast of *SportsCenter*, July 5, 1994

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### **Top 5 SNES-CD Games (July 1994)**

Howdy there! It's Jackbob1985 again and this time we're looking at July 1994's crop of SNES-CD games. I played all nine American releases (well, as much as I could stand to....shame on you, Fearleaders) and here's my top five.

#### *5. Princess Maker*

This was an SNES-CD version of the classic MSX2 life-sim game that allowed you to raise a young girl to become a beautiful princess. It contained some RPG elements but was for the most part a life-sim, similar to games like Harvest Moon. I'm actually surprised this game was localized for North America and it did pretty poorly, selling only around 30,000 copies. The North American version had a LOT of stuff taken out, things like the prostitute ending were obviously scrapped for Western sensibilities but other bits of dialogue and violent scenes were removed to get this game down to an E rating (Nintendo tried marketing it for young girls but it didn't take). Compared to Princess Maker 2 which never saw an official American release, this game was pretty plain but a semi-fun diversion nonetheless. I had to play this one on an emulator because the original disc is going for over \$100 on Ebay!

#### *4. Total Eclipse*

This was a port of a 3DO space shooter game known for outstanding pre-rendered graphics. While the SNES-CD should have been capable of running this game as well as the 3DO did (faster processor), it was a bit slower in framerate because the developers had trouble with the port. Regardless, it's still a great looking and decent playing game and worth checking out if you're a fan of space shooters.

#### *3. Monster Wars*

This game was the start of one of my favorite Koei franchises, and whoever had the idea to pair classic horror monsters with the RTS genre is a genius. Basically, you're the general of an army and you can pick between a variety of creepy people to use, there's like a Vincent Price guy, an Elvira ripoff, all of them kind of based on various scary character tropes, and you raise up an army of classic monsters and do battle across a variety of stages. There are some hilarious voice samples in the game and the music wasn't bad either. My favorite characters to use were definitely the vampires. They could drain enemies of their life points and they had some slick "magic" attacks at their disposal. You could use witches for magic too but they were glass cannons.

#### *2. Major Hazard*

Major Hazard is a game that was done by Activision, it's a top down third-person run and gun shooter game (think Duke Nukem meets Zombies Ate My Neighbors) where you play as Major Hazard, a trigger-happy, roided up soldier who commands a squad of hapless soldiers on a number of battlefields. He's as gung-ho as gung-ho can be and you get a variety of awesome weapons and cool items to help you out against endless hordes of enemies across 12 maze-like battlefields. This game was so much fun to play as a kid, it wasn't quite as foul-mouthed as Duke Nukem (Activision wanted to make sure it got a T rating) but the good major still had plenty of attitude, spouting off hilarious one-liners as you gunned down wave after wave of enemies (again, to keep it at a T rating there was no blood). This was actually, if the sales figures I got are right, the best-selling new SNES-CD game for the month of July 1994, barely beating out the #1 game on my list. I still remember the commercials for it and of course the game became a decently popular franchise.

## 1. Final Fantasy Origins

What else could be number one but this awesome collection of the three NES Final Fantasy games? This was the first time American audiences got to experience two of these games (II and III) and Squaresoft did a really good job with the presentation, giving them SNES quality graphics and CD quality sound. Not too much was changed in terms of the gameplay, these games were classic Nintendo Hard, though it was easy to break II in terms of difficulty if you knew what you were doing. They DID add an overworld save feature to all of the games, which especially helped in terms of Final Fantasy III since otherwise you would've had to go back through two whole dungeons if you had been killed by the (VERY difficult) final boss. I remember back then that this was when Squaresoft started using the "true" numbers for the series' games, so II became IV and III became V. It was confusing at the time.

-posted on the "Jackbob's Video Game Reviews" blog on Wordpress, August 21, 2014

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*This month in Nintendo Power, it's the very first issue of our special "Squad Four: Origins" comic series. Before you play the game this fall, join Shad, Marcus, Rebecca, and Lane on their very first mission with this all-new comic drawn by Benimaru Itoh, who also drew last year's Star Fox comic and this year's Super Metroid comic!*

-introduction to the first of 12 installments of Nintendo Power's *Squad Four: Origins* comic, which ran monthly in the magazine from July 1994 to June 1995

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## **SNES-CD Power Charts – July 1994**

1. NBA Jam – 24,533
2. Kid Icarus CD – 21,744
3. Super Mario World 2 – 17,280
4. Snatcher – 16,977
5. Secret Of Mana – 13,164
6. Gun Warrior – 11,753
7. Secret Of Monkey Island – 11,424
8. Castlevania: Rondo Of Blood – 9,056
9. Super Mario Kart – 8,605
10. Beavis and Butthead – 7,741
11. Mortal Kombat – 7,420
12. Joe And Mac CD – 6,574
13. Wolfenstein 3D – 5,742
14. Bumblebee: Zooble's Hive – 5,325
15. Star Fox – 5,289
16. Battletoads II – 4,327
17. Final Fantasy III – 4,060
18. Super Bases Loaded CD – 3,821
19. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 3,780
20. The Next Champion – 3,774

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\*Scene shows a boy playing Sonic the Hedgehog 3 on his Genesis\*

Narrator: The Sega Genesis is already the greatest video game console of all time.

\*Scene shows the same boy playing Virtua Racing\*

Narrator: But now the time has arrived.

\*Suddenly the game is yanked from the console. The boy looks around, bewildered.\*

### **MEGA-CHARGE IT!**

\*The Mega Charger is jammed into the Sega Genesis and Sonic 3 is put back on. Footage from the game's Mega Charger enhanced levels is shown. The boy's eyes go wide as he plays. Then Virtua Racing is put on the system and the game's 3-D graphics whiz by with incredible speed.\*

### **MEGA-CHARGE IT!**

\*Footage from more games including Super Street Fighter II, Silpheed, Spider-Man: Maximum Carnage, Streets of Rage 3, and Star Wars Arcade is shown, including the boy's awestruck reactions as he plays.\*

### **MEGA-CHARGE IT!**

Narrator: It's time to Mega Charge your Genesis with the Sega Mega Charger. Featuring 64 bits of built-in memory, an all new Mega Audio chip for lifelike sounds, and introducing Mega Blast Processing with four times the processing speed. Your Sega Genesis will never be the same.

\*The footage continues as the boy looks more and more excited with every game he plays.\*

### **MEGA-CHARGE IT!!!**

\*Finally the controller drops and the boy is left twitching on the floor. The camera shows us his face, frozen in ecstasy. He mouths the Sega scream.\*

### **SEGA!**

-an advertisement for the Sega Mega Charger that began running in late July 1994

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*"You think this game's bad now, like 20 years after the fact? Have you forgotten what a hot mess this thing was on the SNES-CD?"*

-Pat

*"Yes, this is the latest technology!"*

*"This game blows."*

-Matt and Pat, quoting "Burns' Heir"

*"Why did the Super Nintendo CD never get a port of the X-Men game? It's super unfair!"*  
*"Because, Woolie, it would have been the LITERAL EXACT SAME GAME with the sprites swapped, and even in the 90s, no one was stupid enough to buy the same game twice."*  
-Woolie and Pat, discussing the X-Men arcade game

*"Don't tell that to all the people who bought Street Fighter 2 like, 4 times."*  
-Liam, in response to Woolie and Pat

*"Stay tuned for the next Best Friends Beat 'Em Ups, where we'll play Virtual Bart. Pat gets Milhouse!"*

*"Fuck off, Matt! You play fuckin' Milhouse!"*  
-Matt and Pat, on Milhouse

-From Zaibatsupedia, the Two Best Friends Play wiki, article "The Simpsons Arcade Game." November 20, 2013.

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*"Damn, the Genesis outsold us again? That makes four months in a row....and if I have to read about another Mega Charger sellout I'm gonna puke."*

-overheard at Nintendo of America HQ sometime early in August 1994

*"So if we gather more jewels we'll keep getting stronger? That's good to know, but won't the bad guys just keep getting stronger too? It's gonna take more than just pretty rocks to save the kingdom!"*

-Lily (Alyson Court), during level 1-2 of *Jewels Of The Realm*

*"Welcome to John Madden NFL Football 1995. I'm John Madden."*

-from the title screen of *Madden NFL '95* on the Sega Mega Charger

*"Awww no, that Power Ranger game sucks, get the CD one, the CD one!"*

-overheard at a K-Mart, two boys discussing whether the Genesis Power Ranger game or the Super Nintendo CD Power Ranger game was better. The Genesis wouldn't get a Mega Charger-compatible Power Rangers game until 1995.

*"So in August of 1994, we were just about done with our work on the Saturn for the Genesis launch and the Mega Charger, which we'd contributed some chips to, was selling great, and Tom Kalinske and some of the other Sega execs want to take us to Vegas for a night on the town. Well of course, we accepted, there was no better way to celebrate a job well done. It was one of the best nights I can remember, and it was on that trip to Vegas that I knew we'd chosen the right company to cast our lot with.*

*...at least, you know, at the time."*

-Ed McCracken, of Silicon Graphics, from an interview with Sega Retro on February 13, 2010

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**START. YOUR. ENGINES.**

\*Scenes are shown from *Virtua Racing* on the Mega Charger\*

Narrator: *Virtua Racing*, the hottest arcade racing experience around is now Mega Charged for your Sega Genesis. With the all-new Mega Charger, the critically acclaimed international hit is now playable in the comfort of your home in full arcade quality.

\*More scenes are shown of the game\*

Narrator: And this....is from the other guys.

\*Scenes are shown from *Stunt Race FX* on the Super Nintendo...the game is graphically impressive but runs much much slower\*

Narrator: Left in the dust!

\*More scenes are shown from *Virtua Racing*, the cars whiz by on the screen, the game appears in the whole screen and looks fantastic...then more scenes are shown from *Stunt Race FX*\*

\*Some teenagers come by and look at the *Stunt Race FX* game on a monitor, laughing at the chugging graphics and cutesy cars\*

Girl: It's...almost kinda cute!

\*The teenagers all laugh and then pile onto a couch to play *Virtua Racing*, having a blast while the monitor showing *Stunt Race FX* sparks and sputters like a broken down car\*

Narrator: If you're not Mega Charging, you're roadkill. *Virtua Racing* on the all new Sega Mega Charger. Nothing's faster.

**SEGA!**

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\*The scene shows a fancy restaurant with a sign that says "Chez Super Nintendo CD". A boy is seated at a table, playing *Jewels Of The Realm* on the Super Nintendo CD.\*

Waiter: And how are you enjoying your advanced graphics and lifelike voices, sir?

Boy: \*nods, looking satisfied\* It's pretty good.

Waiter: Your bill, sir. \*hands him a bill, the boy reads it... it says "ONE ARM, ONE LEG"

Boy: Huh?

\*A scary looking doctor with a chainsaw comes up to the boy, who screams. Cut to some kids at home, playing one of the 3-D stages of *Sonic the Hedgehog 3* on the Sega Mega Charger and having a great time.\*

Boy: These 3-D graphics are awesome, and check out Sonic's voice!

\*A clip of Sonic speaking from the Mega Charger version of the game is played\*

Boy 2: Awesome! Hey, don't they have 3-D graphics and voices at that fancy restaurant down the street?

Boy: Yeah, but I heard they charge an arm and a leg!

\*The boys laugh and keep playing\*

Narrator: Get advanced graphics, lifelike voices, and blazing fast animation with the all new Sega Mega Charger. Available as part of the new Sega Mega Bundle with the Sega Genesis and Sonic the Hedgehog 3 for \$129.99. Because you shouldn't have to pay an arm and a leg to get the latest in awesome video game technology.

\*Cut to the boy from the restaurant strapped to a table as the scary doctor prepares to operate.\*

Boy: \*lets out the Sega scream\*

## **SEGA!**

-from a pair of commercials that began running in early August 1994

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## **August 1, 1994**

On a date advertised as "Mega Monday", Sega launches the Sega Mega Charger in North America for \$49.99. A PAL release would come the very next week, while Japan would get the Mega Charger at the end of the month. The Mega Charger is included in \$79.99 bundles with the games *Sonic the Hedgehog 3*, *Virtua Racing*, *Super Street Fighter II*, *Lunar: The Silver Star*, and *Silpheed*, and in a \$129.99 bundle with the Genesis and Sonic 3. The Mega Charger is an immediate hit, selling out in many stores, with some parents forced to buy the Lunar or Silpheed bundles to get their hands on one (indeed, up to half of the sales of those games may have been attributed to people who bought them just for the Mega Charger bundled with them). The peripheral receives rave reviews from publications like *Electronic Gaming Monthly* and *GamePro*, the later of which devotes a cover feature to it in its August 1994 issue. Coming off of four straight months of excellent sales for the Genesis driven by the release of Sonic 3, the Mega Charger continues the momentum, and it would lead to the Genesis outselling the Super Nintendo and CD peripheral for the fifth straight month.

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### *Sega Mega Charger specs*

The Sega Mega Charger is a device shaped like a Genesis cartridge with a lock-on slot on top where a Genesis game can be placed. It doesn't need its own power source (unlike the 32X OTL), you just stick it into the system like you would any other Genesis cartridge.

It contains:

-2 11 Mhz processor chips, one used for 3D graphics acceleration (like the SuperFX chip),

the other used for 2D sprite graphics (to bring Genesis games near the Neo-Geo in terms of sprite detail), this effectively brought the total processing power of the Genesis to a smidge under 30 Mhz.

-8 MB (64 Megabits) of re-writeable memory. Mega Charger enhanced games contain a certain amount of extra content in compressed form. When a game is locked on to the Mega Charger, it decompresses that data and copies it to the re-writeable memory in a process that takes anywhere from 30 seconds to 2 minutes. When a different game is locked on, it erases that data so it can decompress another game. This meant that if you kept playing the same game, you wouldn't have to sit through a decompression sequence every time you booted up, but if you switched games often you might have to do it more often. Considered a mild annoyance but back in 1994 people played individual games longer.

-128KB of RAM, 96KB of video RAM

-An advanced sound chip somewhat better than the SPC chip in the SNES, could be used to play enhanced music samples (though not quite as good as the CD audio on the SNES-CD) or voice clips.

Sega and Silicon Graphics lost money on each one sold, though they made that back through game sales, plus the \$399 price tag of the Saturn basically included a hidden "Mega Charger tax" that would also offset the losses from peripheral sales IF the Saturn sold well.

The majority of Genesis games, around 70% of them, had no Mega Charger-enhanced data, though many of the bigger games would at least be enhanced somewhat by locking in with the device, and a few dozen future Genesis games (including launch titles *Lunar* and *Silpheed*, along with the later *Virtua Fighter* and *Doom*) would require the peripheral.

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(Looking back at that Mega Charger launch, we noticed that the five games that you chose to have bundles with the Mega Charger initially kind of paralleled Nintendo's launch line-up for the SNES-CD. You both had a Street Fighter game, you both had an RPG, Nintendo had Final Fantasy and you guys had Lunar, you both had a racing game, your Virtua Racing vs. their Mario Kart, you both had a kind of shooter game, they had Sewer Shark, you had Silpheed, and finally both you guys had a sort of family game, you had Sonic 3 and they had Dragon's Lair. Was that deliberate or just a coincidence?)

Tom Kalinske: \*chuckles\* It was a coincidence, I mean I didn't even notice that until you told me, but wow, strange world huh? But no, our idea with the Mega Charger bundles was to make sure there was something for everybody. We could've just done a Sonic 3 bundle, but a lot of people already had Sonic 3 and we'd have lost a lot of potential sales if we didn't have options. So instead, we looked at the most promising games, tried to have a variety and then, you know, put the bundles together. Looking back, Nintendo did a pretty good job on that launch. I mean they were always pushing us hard, they were the industry leaders, so a lot of the stuff we did that looked like we were imitating them, we did it just because it made good business sense.

(Speaking of good business sense, could you explain some of the strategies you had going into the Mega Charger launch, and what difficulties you experienced with everything?)

Tom Kalinske: Absolutely. The strategy was to accentuate the value of our Mega Charger versus Nintendo's CD. And I remember we had a three-pronged ad campaign with the launch, we ran three different advertisements at the time. The first one was just us promoting the Mega Charger with that "Mega Charge It" ad that got a lot of rave reviews, it

was kind of our self-promotion ad. Then we did a pair of attack ads against Nintendo, the first one was kind of an update of our old race car ad that we did when Mario Kart came out and we showed it compared to Sonic. Here, we had their Stunt Race FX game, which ran at a pretty atrocious framerate on their cartridge system, and put it up against our Virtua Racing. Because at the time, our Genesis/Mega Charger bundle was selling for the same price as their cartridge SNES bundle with Mario All-Stars. And we were showing that we were the better value. And then, then we did that famous "arm and a leg" ad that showed how much of a value we were compared to the SNES-CD. The Genesis/Mega Charger combo was half the price of the SNES/CD combo. We could deliver a similar experience for half the price, and we did a whole campaign over the next few months where we kept saying that Nintendo would take your arms and legs if you bought an SNES-CD from them. \*laughing\* I mean here's the thing. Until 1995, they sold the SNES-CD by itself for \$150. And you could get a Genesis AND the Mega Charger AND a game for \$130. So, what I wanted to do, and at the time this was considered to be almost impossible, but I wanted to convince parents whose kids owned a Super Nintendo already and were thinking of getting the SNES-CD to say, okay, look, there's like 150 games for that one, and on the Genesis there's over 500 games and counting. And instead of getting the SNES-CD, you could get a Genesis instead. We wanted to take Nintendo families and make them Sega families. At the time, you didn't buy two systems unless you were rich. But if you were going to spend all that money on a Super Nintendo CD, we were saying "hey, why not a Genesis instead?"

(Did that work?)

Tom Kalinske: Actually, yes. We got letters from parents who said they had done just such a thing. We would have liked to have gotten more, but that strategy paid off in some ways.

(Until the Saturn launched at \$399.)

Tom Kalinske: \*laughing\* Yeah, we had to scrap a really good ad campaign when the Saturn came out.

(I know that there were a lot of games ready for the Mega Charger launch. You guys had just announced it a few months before. Did third parties have longer to prepare?)

Tom Kalinske: Well, you have to understand that the Mega Charger began its life as a lock-on cart for Sonic 3. We'd been working on the technology for years. Then Silicon Graphics came on board, right around the time the Super Nintendo was using the Super FX chip, and I asked them if they could work on a little side project for us. I asked, basically, "what's the most chips you can pack into a cart and keep it right around the price of a game?" And they came back a few weeks later with the Mega Charger specs, and then I shopped those around to our third-party partners and said "this is technology that we're going to have in some form in 6-8 months, start planning games around it". I mean, if I hadn't gotten my way on Project Mars, those Mega Charger games would've just ended up Project Mars games. So it wasn't too big of a risk, and we had plenty of Mega Charger games for that late 1994 release window.

-excerpted from an interview with Tom Kalinske on 16-Bit Life, January 8, 2012

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Anchor: The new "Mega Charger" from Sega hits store shelves today. The device, the size and price of a Sega Genesis game, allows players to bring arcade-quality graphics into their

living rooms. The device has been the subject of a lot of hype for the last few weeks, and when we hit the stores today, we found a lot of unsatisfied shoppers, and not for the reasons you might think.

\*Scenes are shown of shoppers at a local Walmart store\*

Reporter: Sega's Mega Charger is here and it's a hit...much to the chagrin of shoppers looking to buy one.

Woman: Uh, it was sold out.

Reporter: That's the story all over Charlotte. In fact, we called eleven local electronics stores, and only one of them had the device left in stock...and by the time we got there, it was sold out too.

\*A scene is shown of another local woman with a Mega Charger box in hand.\*

Woman: I think we got the last one! \*she laughs\*

Reporter: The new Sega Mega Charger promises to enhance the graphics and sound of your favorite Genesis video games. Just hook up the device to your favorite game and voila, the game moves faster, 2-D becomes 3-D, and new sound enhancements like spoken lines are added. Advertisements touting the device have been playing for weeks now and it looks like players can't resist Sega's newest toy. We asked some shoppers if the device's cost has been a deterrent but parents agreed, it's a lot more economical than some of the alternatives.

Woman: Well, we've always been a Sega family because they respect the consumers' budget. I mean, Nintendo wants more than a hundred dollars for their game things, but this is the same cost as a game so we can justify it a lot more.

\*They ask another woman buying the device with two young girls with her.\*

Woman: We always get good deals on Sega stuff. We bought this with the new Sonic game they've been wanting, it's nice to be able to get them both at once and we got a good deal on it.

Reporter: Sega has promised that there will be enough Mega Charger devices to meet demand, but so far it looks like not everyone is satisfied that they'll meet their end of the bargain.

Boy: Um, it really stinks that we can't get one today. Why'd they sell out?!

Anchor: And not only has Sega promised more Mega Charger devices will be available, but more games as well, the popular arcade game *Virtua Fighter* is planned to hit stores next month, and Sega has announced another Sonic game starring his pal Knuckles will be out some time next year.

-WSOC-TV news report from August 1, 1994, from the 5:30 PM broadcast

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**Aero Fighters:**

Ed: 5

Danyon: 5 (quote: "Just another run of the mill shooter on the SNES-CD. Graphics are mediocre and the music is repetitive.")

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 6

**Animaniacs:**

Ed: 7.5

Danyon: 4.5

Al: 5

Sushi-X: 6 (quote: "If there's one thing this game excels at, it's the presentation. The graphics are a lot like on the TV show, and I liked the sound clips from the game. It's just too bad playing this game isn't as fun as just watching the show.")

**Cannon Fodder:**

Ed: 9 (quote: "War has never been so much fun than when you're playing this superb port of the classic Amiga strategy game. A computer classic becomes a home console hit.")

Danyon: 9

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 8

**Corpse Killer:**

Ed: 4

Danyon: 7

Al: 4.5 (quote: "Bad acting and a lack of scares mar this ho-hum FMV dud.")

Sushi-X: 4

**Madden 95:**

Ed: 9.5 (quote: "While it lacks the play editor of the Mega Charger version, it excels in everything else, from player animations to life-like presentation. This might just be the best sports game ever made.")

Danyon: 8

Al: 8.5

Sushi-X: 7

**Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 7

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 8 (quote: "This fun beat-em-up is enhanced by clips from the show and voice acting when you're traveling through the game's stages. Unlike the 7 stages in the SNES version, this game gives you 12 and a number of unique boss fights.")

**Sam and Max Hit The Road:**

Ed: 9.5

Danyon: 9.5

Al: 9 (quote: "It's a shame this game is probably going to fall through the cracks in a very crowded month because it's a hilarious, heart-warming, and all around fun game and another great computer port.")

Sushi-X: 9

### **Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 8 (quote: "I mean, it's fun and all, but this is the third Street Fighter II game and while I'll never get tired of playing Street Fighter, I wish I didn't have to pay for it more than once.")

### **Superman CD:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 7 (quote: "Superman flies through ten side-scrolling levels in this all right comic book adaptation. It gets really fun when they mix up the familiar level formula, like when Superman gets to fly up a skyscraper or explore Lex Luthor's maze-like factories.")

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7

### **Solus:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 9 (quote: "This is the game that justifies your Super Scope purchase. Nintendo's R+D 1 has outdone itself in this adventure that transforms from a standard first-person arena shooter to a masterful and thrilling adventure game.")

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 6

### **Jewels Of The Realm:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 8

Al: 9 (quote: "The charming characters and huge variety of power-ups make this perhaps the best action game I've played since Super Mario World 2.")

Sushi-X: 7

### **Oops!**

Ed: 3.5

Danyon: 2

Al: 2.5

Sushi-X: 1 (quote: "Oops! is an understatement. This game is one of the worst I've ever played. It makes Night Trap look like Citizen Kane.")

### **Your City:**

Ed: 7 (quote: "This city micro-manager isn't for the faint of heart, it's not nearly as intuitive as SimCity but it makes up for it in its depth and strategy.")

Danyon: 4

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 4

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*Two of the Super Nintendo CD's best original games were released in August 1994. Jewels of the Realm and Solus were outstanding original titles, one of them becoming a major hit and a franchise and the other becoming one of the system's biggest cult classics.*

*Jewels of the Realm was an Activision title and was one of the best selling games for the Super Nintendo CD in 1994. It took place in a medieval sort of kingdom and focused on two children, Chris and Lily, whose village is destroyed by the tyrannical wizard king Luxor. The children set out on a massive quest to stop Luxor and save the kingdom before he conquers it all. The game takes the form of a stage-based action game, not so much a platformer but kind of a test of combat skill like the Kirby games. There are 7 levels in all, divided into 4 stages each for a total of 28 stages. You can control either Chris or Lily, who can use a variety of powers to fight enemies and make traversing the stages either. You get your powers from colored gems you collect, you get five slots for gems and different gem combinations allow you to use different powers. There were eight different colors of gems, red, yellow, blue, green, orange, purple, white, and black, and over 60 different powers, depending on which combinations you had. Some powers took two gems, some took three, some took four and some took five. Some single gems could enhance certain powers as well, so if you had four gems and a certain color you could use an enhanced version of that power, if you had one combination of two and another of three you could use two powers at once, etc. It was amazingly fun and on top of that the game had stellar production values, Chris and Lily were voiced by Hadley Kay and Alyson Court respectively. If you remember, they were prolific in Canadian cartoons in the late 80s and early 90s and Alyson Court still voice acts with regularity today. The game sold well upon release and there have been several sequels, the most recent in 2009 with one planned for later this year as well.*

*Solus, on the other hand, was a bit more esoteric of a game. A level-based Super Scope rail shooter, the game had 12 levels and one of the best storylines ever seen in an on-rails game. Developed by Nintendo's R+D 1 division as a follow-up to Metal Combat, your character is a man who's been trapped in a mysterious arena by a group of unseen villains and is forced to fight for his life against other similarly trapped combatants. For the first five levels, you have to shoot down hazards and creatures in pursuit of your opponents, who you fight in a series of fast-paced boss matches. However, at the end of the fifth level, your female opponent, named Marie, is able to free the two of you just before you land the finishing blow. The two of you spend the next three stages looking to free other combatants while being pursued by increasingly dangerous waves of enemies, and then spend the last four stages taking the fight to the people who put you in the arena in the first place. While on-rails, the game offers several divergence points to choose your path through the levels, and what you do at those points determines the fate of some of the characters, including Marie's. The game was extremely well received critically but despite Nintendo promoting the game well, sales are still poor. You didn't even need the Super Scope, you could use the Justifier to play but it still sold fairly poorly and no sequel or even spiritual successor has been made since.*

*These two excellent games were released amidst a slew of hits in August 1994. One*

*succeeded and thrived and the other survives as a cult classic, but both are a reminder of the creativity inspired by the Super Nintendo CD.*

-excerpted from a Nintendolife.com article on January 28, 2012

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*Amiga ports to the Super Nintendo CD were in a lot of ways a mixed bag. While the Super Nintendo CD, in a lot of ways, provided the platform that would give the spotlight to many games that otherwise might not have gotten the mainstream recognition that they did, it also did a lot to undercut the Amiga's success and might have been a catalyst for the platform's eventual decline.*

*1994 was a big year when a lot of the Amiga success stories began to be ported to the SNES-CD. The Secret Of Monkey Island was obviously the biggest and one of the best sellers of the year, but there were also games like Cannon Fodder and Sam and Max Hit The Road. I remember when Cannon Fodder came out, Nintendo hyped it quite a bit. The American magazine Nintendo Power even gave it the cover of the August 1994 issue. The game turned out to be a moderate success for them, nothing like Monkey Island but still a success. Sam and Max, of course, well...in retrospect I wish they'd given that game the cover instead. It had everything going for it...lovable characters, great voice acting, an amazing story, awesome gameplay... but instead of being a mega-hit like it should've been, it barely sold 50,000 copies in North America and only broke even because of PAL territory sales. What went wrong? The lack of hype and advertising for the game didn't help. The existence of family games like Power Rangers and Jewels of the Realm made for stiff competition. Even the release of the Sega Mega Charger that month probably harmed it somewhat.*

*More Amiga ports would come to the SNES-CD throughout its lifespan. Some of them would do well, others would flop like Sam and Max. While us die-hard Amiga fans will swear up and down that the Super Nintendo CD was no substitute for the Amiga, there's no doubt that for better or worse, it provided a much larger mainstream audience for games that would've otherwise been played by a devoted few.*

-excerpted from an article about Amiga ports at amigahistory.co.uk on December 3, 2010

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Angry Video Game Nerd: You know, for such a shitty game, Nintendo sure hyped this one up. \*showing articles from Nintendo Power magazine about the game "Oops!"\* This game was made by Sony for Nintendo, it was an FMV game and Nintendo hyping it up so much I think was their way of saying "We're sorry we didn't let you put Night Trap on our system so here, you can make this one instead." And that's basically what it is, Night Trap for little girls. I mean, even Night Trap was kinda fun! At certain parts. But this game, it's so boring! And the acting is so lousy, I mean, check out this blonde girl here. She's the main character and she's the one who sets all the traps.

\*The girl goes to another room and begins to place a bunch of thumbtacks on the floor.\*

Girl: Are you sure these thumbtacks will stop the bad guys? If they're wearing shoes you might want to have me put down sticky glue instead! Oh well, it's too late now!

AVGN: And sure enough, here come the bad guys wearing big old shoes. They go right over the thumbtacks and this girl's totally trapped!

Girl: Oh no! They're gonna get me!

AVGN: But wait, look, press a button and you'll send Stephanie into the room instead. So the bad guys are grabbing Stephanie now, but she's got a joy buzzer! She's really zappin' em now. You know, joy buzzers really aren't very useful. And why are they called joy buzzers? I mean if you're getting shocked by them you're probably not very joyful! But it's not much of a shock, so what kind of joy is the person shocking you getting either? I tell ya, joy buzzers, that's some fucking false advertising right there.

\*Later on in the review....\*

AVGN: So if you do everything right, and believe me, that's a lot easier to do than in Night Trap, you catch all the bad guys and the cops show up. Hooray, ya win. Not like that's all that big of an accomplishment. I mean, even if you get caught, there are SO many outs that it makes losing practically impossible! In Night Trap there were some real stakes, if you got caught it was game over. Hell, there was even a Congressional hearing about it! Can you imagine if there was a Congressional hearing about this game? I imagine it going something like this.

\*Cuts to AVGN dressed as Bill Clinton\*

AVGN: Well, I think that Oops! is a detriment to the American people and a threat to the free world. It's an awful, awful game, and playing it makes me want to quit being president and go live under a rock. Also, it doesn't have Dana Plato in it. Which means at least I can play it when Hillary's around. What say you, president of Nintendo?

\*Now he's dressed up as Howard Lincoln\*

AVGN: Uh...oops?

\*Now he's dressed normal\*

AVGN: Oops? You're abso-fucking-lutely right oops! This game is a turd, a shitstain on the mostly spotless record of one of the greatest video game consoles of all time. They made it for little kids, but I think the reason they really made it was to get all the little kids to stop playing so they could put another Mortal Kombat game on there! I mean Mortal Kombat II came out the very next month, that can't be a coincidence. If this is what Nintendo is spoon-feeding to the kids who played this console, then it's gonna take a lot more than a fucking airplane to get me to swallow it down, it's gonna take a whole god damn fleet of airplanes while FDR, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and General George S. fucking Patton hold me the fuck down and cram it into my throat, and even then I'm gonna puke it back up onto all of them because this game is a fucking piece of shit! And another thing, the actress who played the little girl is a no-talent hack who-

\*Jennifer Morrison comes up behind the Nerd\*

Jennifer Morrison: You trashing my acting?

AVGN: Uh....no honey, you were great in this game. I was just telling the viewers that your

performance in this game was an Oscar-worthy-

Morrison: You don't have to bullshit me, I know this game was fucking trash. \*smiles and leans in, kissing him on the cheek\*

AVGN: ....well, there you go, if even the star of the game thinks it's trash, then it's REALLY FUCKING TRASH!

Morrison: \*under her breath\* But not as trashy as the Angry Video Game Nerd movie... \*smirks\*

AVGN: ...huh?

Morrison: Nothing, nothing. So what's the next game you're gonna do?

AVGN: Well, since you're the star of Once Upon A Time, how about helping me review some shitty fairy tale games next week?

Morrison: Well how shitty are we talking about here?

AVGN: Fairy Tale Friends for the Sega Saturn. \*holds it up\*

Morrison: You know, I think I'll take my chances with the Evil Queen....

AVGN: \*now dressed up as Rumplestiltskin\* Ah, but we have a deal, dearie! \*laughing\* One cleaning of the house for one shitty game review!

Morrison: But you ALWAYS clean the house.

AVGN: Well then, you owe me a whole SLEW of shitty game reviews! \*holds up a bunch of bad fairy tale games\* Mwahahahaha!!

-from AVGN #91, "Oops!"

(Yes, ITTL the Angry Video Game Nerd is married to actress Jennifer Morrison. It doesn't butterfly too much with his reviews except that his budget is somewhat bigger. I'll share more on how they get together in a future post...)

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts – August 1994**

1. NBA Jam – 20,286
2. Kid Icarus CD – 17,988
3. Super Mario World 2 – 16,586
4. Secret Of Mana – 14,086
5. Snatcher – 12,287
6. Secret Of Monkey Island – 9,065
7. Gun Warrior – 8,426
8. Super Mario Kart – 7,844
9. Castlevania: Rondo Of Blood – 6,953
10. Mortal Kombat – 6,504

11. Wolfenstein 3D – 5,183
12. Star Fox – 4,764
13. Joe And Mac CD – 4,511
14. Thrillseeker – 3,967
15. Beavis And Buttthead – 3,504
16. Final Fantasy III – 3,485
17. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 3,070
18. Bumblebee: Zooble's Hive – 2,843
19. Battletoads II – 2,757
20. Phaedra's Heart – 2,401

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### **August 24, 1994**

Howard Lincoln met with Minoru Arakawa at Nintendo of America headquarters on a bright Wednesday morning in Redmond, Washington. The two gentlemen were discussing the latest sales figures...it looked like the Mega Charger was about to power the Genesis to its fifth straight month of topping Nintendo in sales, but there was encouraging news. Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition was driving major sales for both the Super Nintendo and the SNES-CD, while Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers had exceeded sales expectations on the CD and Jewels of the Realm had been a major hit at well. SNES-CD sales were seeing an upswing, just not enough to topple the Genesis' lead. Not yet.

"The latest estimates are that we're going to be trailing Sega until Squad Four is released in the West," said Arakawa. "The game just released in Japan and it's dominating the charts there, it's the biggest game debut this year."

"I expected as much," Lincoln replied, though the idea of the Super Nintendo spending half a year behind the Genesis in sales was still troubling....and it could be even more than that. "I'm worried we won't pass the Genesis until Donkey Kong Country is released."

Donkey Kong Country was, like Super Mario World 2 had been before it, the company's ace in the hole. The game had been generating hype for months and now that it was near completion, the game was being seen in its full glory by both Nintendo employees and game industry journalists. The consensus was that the game was incredible and it topped anything the Mega Charger was even remotely capable of.

"Then there's the question of the Saturn's release in Japan..." said Arakawa. "The launch lineup is taking shape....they have the Virtua games and a few others including a game called Panzer Dragoon...it is like our Star Fox but....you're riding dragons. Early footage is impressive."

"It looks better than Donkey Kong?" asked Lincoln. Arakawa replied with a nod. Of course it looked better...it was on a next generation system. And speaking of which... "Ken Kutaragi called again the other day...it seems some of the people at Sony are really dead set on parting ways with us."

Arakawa shook his head....the news was deeply distressing, though he knew that Kutaragi would always be a champion for Nintendo. There was still plenty of time to work with him...but they needed to finalize plans for a next-generation console soon. Sega was already going to get at least a year's head start...that was all they needed.

"Keep working him," said Lincoln, patting his friend on the shoulder. "You know he's better than anybody at convincing the Sony brass that they need to see things his way."

"I have a feeling it's all going to depend on Donkey Kong," said Arakawa, forcing himself to smile. "Just like it did 13 years ago."

Howard Lincoln let out a chuckle and walked with Minoru Arakawa to the break room, giving his reply as they walked.

"Some things never change..."

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January 1994: Mega Man X (as in OTL)

February 1994: The Secret Of Monkey Island (OTL: Bugs Bunny Rabbit Rampage)

March 1994: Wario Land: Super Mario Land 3 (as in OTL)

April 1994: Kid Icarus CD (OTL: Ken Griffey Jr. Presents Major League Baseball)

May 1994: Super Metroid (as in OTL)

June 1994: Donkey Kong (as in OTL)

July 1994: Super Street Fighter II (as in OTL)

August 1994: Cannon Fodder (OTL: Stunt Race FX)

September 1994: Mortal Kombat II (as in OTL)

October 1994: Squad Four (OTL: Illusion Of Gaia)

November 1994: Donkey Kong Country (as in OTL)

December 1994: F-Zero CD (OTL: Earthworm Jim)

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*1994 is well remembered for being the peak of the console wars, but what a lot of people don't know is that it was also the peak for animated TV shows based on video games. There were a lot of these shows in the mid 90s, and 1994 was possibly the biggest year for them in general.*

*At the time, of course, the biggest cartoon shows were the two shows based on Sonic the Hedgehog, particularly the Saturday morning cartoon series that featured Sonic and his friends as heroic freedom fighters out to stop the evil Dr. Robotnik. Toward the end of the show's second season, it was struggling in the ratings against the mighty juggernaut, the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers. In fact, the show barely got a third season at all! It was later said by one of the show's writers that the show was about 20,000 viewers above the threshold for cancellation when it was green-lighted for a final season of 20 episodes that aired during 1995. It was likely that the runaway success of Sonic the Hedgehog 3, which had been released earlier that year, gave the cartoon the extra bump it needed to get those episodes. The show's survival was by such a narrow margin that Sega knew these episodes would be the last and got plenty of time to wrap up the show's ongoing storyline, which featured the wizard Nagus supplanting Dr. Robotnik as the final villain. It also saw Sally's*

computer NICOLE transforming back into her original human form, and Sonic and Knuckles (who appeared with nine episodes remaining in the show) briefly fighting for the affections of Princess Sally, creating tension leading up to the epic final showdown with the dark wizard.

Another show that debuted that fall was the cartoon version of Mega Man, which appeared in syndication and featured characters from the hit NES series of games. Though characters from Mega Man X showed up toward the end of the show's run, budgetary problems put an untimely end to the show in late 1995. 1995 would see the start of a TV show based on the hit game Earthworm Jim, starring Dan Castellonetta as the titular hero. The show appeared on Kids' WB and was a moderate success, lasting two seasons in all. One of the most successful video game based cartoon shows was Where On Earth Is Carmen Sandiego?, based on the hit educational game series. Featuring a superb voice cast including the debut of veteran video game and cartoon voice actress Jennifer Hale and the EGOT-winning entertainer Rita Moreno as Carmen herself, the show was a major hit for FOX Kids which already had hits in shows like Power Rangers and X-Men. The success of the Super Nintendo games bolstered the success of the show, which lasted more than five years before finally ending in late 1999.

Speaking of Nintendo, the company was juggling a pair of TV show ideas in 1994, based on their hit games for that year's holiday season. They initially intended an animated series based on Squad Four, but the company's creative wing was unable to decide on a suitable premise. Squad Four would later receive a successful 52 episode anime series in 2000, the anime made it Stateside in 2001 on Cartoon Network. Nintendo got closer to having a Donkey Kong Country animated series, the idea was to have a CGI-based series that would begin airing in 1996, but the idea fell through when the Canadian company that Nintendo intended to have make the show instead picked up a traditionally animated series based on Activision's hit Jewels Of The Realm video game franchise. Nintendo also mulled the idea of another Legend Of Zelda series, a more serious show based on their 1995 video game The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina of Dreams, but that idea barely got past the planning stages.

With all the video game-based animated series being conceived and aired during the mid 90s, it's a surprise that Nickelodeon, which had done a couple of video game specials with Mike O'Malley and had aired Nick Arcade in 1992, never picked up one of these shows for their own network. During the fall of 1994, of course, Nickelodeon was preparing to debut their fifth Nicktoon, Klasky Csupo's "Aaah! Real Monsters!" The network was also finalizing a deal for what would become their sixth Nicktoon, based on a pitch from two writers on another hit Nicktoon "Rocko's Modern Life". Their new show, about two inventive young boys who get into all kinds of crazy adventures while their older sister tries in vain to tell their mother, would ultimately become one of Nickelodeon's most successful shows.

-excerpted from the article "1994: Video Games And Beyond", posted on Pop Culture Flashback on January 11, 2013

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"Compared to the situation we had in 1993, with all the media controversy and getting

*dragged up before Congress and all, the release of Mortal Kombat II in 1994 went by with pretty much no fanfare at all. There wasn't even a problem with putting it on the cover of Nintendo Power. So much had changed in just a year, we had games like Snatcher performing well and with the T-rated Squad Four coming out the very next month, Nintendo had turned a crossroads. There were still people within the company who thought that we shouldn't be doing everything so fast, but the industry itself was changing and we were just going with the flow."*

-Howard Lincoln, "The Chase: Sega's 20 Year Struggle To Take Down A Giant"

*"Doing two Contra games at once was quite an ordeal but I think things went really well! It was actually a lot of fun getting to utilize the new tech provided to us by Sega and Nintendo. Our experience with those games cemented the idea that Contra games were really fun to make."*

-Nobuya Nakazato, director of Contra, speaking with Famitsu in December 1995

*"The World Series might be canceled but in MLBPA Baseball, enhanced by the Sega Mega Charger, you can have your own World Series in the comfort of your own home, with lifelike graphics just like the games on TV!"*

-from a magazine advertisement for the Sega Mega Charger's sports line-up that began appearing in fall 1994

*"Once we saw what Sega was planning to do with its next generation system, and how much success Nintendo was having with its own CD system, we just felt it would be the best thing for our company to back out of the arrangement with Bandai. The time just wasn't right for an Apple video game console."*

-Steve Jobs, in an interview with Wired magazine, August 2003

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\*Al Bundy is just finishing setting up the device on his television as Bud walks into the room.\*

Al: Son, this is a great day for the Bundys. You know why?

Bud: You finally started washing your socks?

Al: ....no! The Bundys have a CD player!

Bud: \*looks at the device, his eyes go wide\* Dad, that's not just a CD player, it's the best video game console ever made! It plays the newest video games with high-definition graphics and arcade-quality sound! Oh man, I can finally play that new ultra-violent shooter I can't afford to play at the mall!

Al: Bud, you're not gonna be playing any games on this thing. \*holds up a CD\* Your dad is going to be using it to listen to the soundtrack to *Hondo*!

Bud: But dad, you can't use the best video game machine ever as a CD player!

Al: I can and I will! Son, do you know how long I've been hiding money from your mother to afford this thing? I had to hide money in places that....well frankly I don't want to talk about!

Bud: \*shudders\* How did you even get the people at the store to take your money?

Al: It's money, Bud. People don't care where it's been. Where do you think they got the term "filthy stinking rich" from? Now unless you want to listen to the soundtrack of the greatest movie ever made, I suggest you go upstairs and read your little girly magazines and play with your joystick.

Kelly: \*leans in from behind the couch\* Yeah, I hear Bud's got all the high scores.

-excerpted from the *Married With Children* ninth-season premiere, "Super Hondo CD", on September 4, 1994 (with Katey Sagal's pregnancy butterflied away, the Wanker County arc never took place)

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### **Ballz 3-D:**

Ed: 7 (quote: "Not a terrible fighting game, and the 3-D graphics are quite good, but the soundtrack could really use some work.")

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 6

### **Contra IV: Hard Corps:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9

Al: 8.5

Sushi-X: 9 (quote: "Branching paths and a whole team of characters to play with make this perhaps the best Contra game to date.")

### **Lethal Enforcers II: Gun Fighters:**

Ed: 6.5

Danyon: 7 (quote: "Gameplay wise, this Western-themed shooter is an improvement over the first, but it's pretty short.")

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Michael Jordan: Chaos in the Windy City:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 4.5

Al: 5 (quote: "The unforgiving difficulty and lousy play controls take what could've been a decent action game and make it into an unfortunate slog.")

Sushi-X: 5.5

### **Mortal Kombat II:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8 (quote: "Mortal Kombat is back and it's just as fun and violent as you remember. With several all new characters and excellent background animation, it might be even more

fun than the arcade!")

Al: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Pitfall CD:**

Ed: 6.5

Danyon: 5

Al: 7 (quote: "I wasn't particularly impressed with this CD adaptation of the SNES' *Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure*. What good are voiced characters and cutscenes if there isn't that good of a story to tell?")

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Road Rash:**

Ed: 8.5 (quote: "This arcade-style motorcycle combat game really shines on the SNES-CD. The graphics are a tad choppy compared to the 3DO version, but the soundtrack is really superb, providing an exciting backdrop to the fun racing action.")

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Samurai Shodown:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9.5 (quote: "Last year's best video game comes to the Super Nintendo CD and it's just as good if not better than the Neo-Geo version, with a couple of new characters added to the mix. This might just be the system's best port ever.")

### **Wing Commander:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 6.5

Al: 6 (quote: "While it's nice to play to play this space combat classic on the SNES-CD, it could have been a better port. The sound quality of the voices is rough and the game has some notable slowdown. For SNES-CD space combat you're better off with Star Fox or even Total Eclipse.")

Sushi-X: 6

### **Ys IV:**

Ed: 7.5

Danyon: 8.5 (quote: "The enhancements given to this outstanding RPG on the SNES-CD make it a far cry better than the clunky trilogy port. This one seems like it was made for the SNES-CD from the ground up. No voice acting to be found but this game's excellent graphics and really awesome anime cutscenes are a big plus. This is my RPG of the year so far on the system.")

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Knightstar:**

Ed: 7.5 (quote: "It's not the best RPG, but I thought the voice acting was decent and the graphics were quite good as well. Join Hiroshi on his quest to save his kingdom and you'll have a really good time.")

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Snakey Snakington:**

Ed: 4

Danyon: 3.5

Al: 2.5 (quote: "Another crap platformer on the SNES-CD. You're better off waiting for Donkey Kong Country.")

Sushi-X: 3

### **School Daze:**

Ed: 1 (quote: "The acting in this game makes Saved By The Bell look like an Oscar-winning movie. Even at its worst, high school was NEVER as lame as it is in this FMV stinker.")

Danyon: 1

Al: 2.5

Sushi-X: 2

### **My Name Is Silence:**

Ed: 6.5

Danyon: 9

Al: 8.5 (quote: "Perhaps the best FMV game on the SNES-CD, this cryptic but addicting thriller puts you in the shoes of a reluctant assassin caught up in a web of international political intrigue. It's almost like getting to play a James Bond movie. Even the acting is really good, which makes this game a must buy for anyone starved for FMV games.")

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Hunter:**

Ed: 4.5

Danyon: 5.5

Al: 4.5

Sushi-X: 4 (quote: "This painfully generic run-and-gun shooter features terrible level design and lousy play controls and I'd stay as far away from it as possible.")

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of September 1994's SNES-CD releases in their October and November 1994 issues

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### **The Story Of Contra IV**

*Contra III: The Alien Wars* is hailed as one of the greatest Super Nintendo games of all time. Initially, it was to receive a port to the SNES-CD some time in 1993, but instead,

Konami decided to utilize the Super Nintendo CD's technology to produce a new Contra game using ideas already conceived for a potential Genesis installment of the series. This would lead to the development of *Contra IV: Hard Corps* for the Super Nintendo CD peripheral. The game featured four playable characters and branching storyline paths that allowed the player to earn one of several endings. The multiple ending concept was not new to video games, having been utilized by, among other games, the hit 1993 RPG *Secret Of Mana*, as well as the space shooter *Star Fox*, but it added a great deal of replay value and storytelling quality to *Contra IV* that hadn't yet been seen in the series. Like many other SNES-CD games, it featured voice acting for all four main characters and a number of the villains, as well as proper narration for storyline scenes. It proved to be one of the top selling games of September 1994 for the Super Nintendo CD, outsold only by *Mortal Kombat II* among new release titles, and the critical reception for the game matched and at times even exceeded that of its acclaimed predecessor.

The Sega Genesis, on the other hand, received an entirely different Contra game. Called *Contra: Probotector*, the game starred a pair of freedom fighters, Ken Severn and Ashley Steelgard, seeking to fight off an invasion of killer robots led by a sadistic and hyper-intelligent AI. It differed, however, from such man vs. machine plots as the *Terminator* film series by teaming the heroes up with benevolent robots and AI programs, putting the two heroes in the middle of a sort of robotic civil war, where they were usually tasked with either protecting or rescuing heroic AIs or scientists that would help provide better weapons or other devices for the heroes. The game featured only one ending but differed in that your choice of character deeply affected how the game would play out in terms of gameplay. Ken was a more brash, run-and-gun type of character with more powerful weapons, but Ashley had a better relationship with the robots and had access to better utility devices to weaken the robots she had to fight. Players could choose between a more action-type game experience with Ken, or a more strategic experience with Ashley. When linked up with the Sega Mega Charger, the game was enhanced with three more stages, bigger (and tougher) bosses, and a limited amount of voice acting. It wasn't quite as well received critically as *Hard Corps* but was still one of the Genesis' most successful games of the fall of 1994.

-From the article "Konami: The Untold Story Of The Company's Greatest Games" in the February 1997 issue of *GameFan*

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(Can you tell me what exactly happened with Victor Ireland around that time?)

Well, the roots of the end of Sega's relationship with Working Designs probably had roots in the decision to do a Mega Charger port of *Lunar: The Silver Star*. Looking back, I think it would have been smarter to bring over *Lunar 2: Eternal Blue* for the Mega Charger instead, because at least there, it was something people hadn't played before. We wanted to give Genesis fans who never had the Sega CD to play this great RPG. We tried to get as much of the original content in the game as possible. We kept most of the animations in. We kept the soundtrack mostly intact in terms of quality. We kept about half the spoken dialogue. But Victor, from the very beginning he hated it. And he's always been really difficult to work with. So when the Genesis port of Lunar failed, and I mean it utterly flopped, we sold less than 30,000 copies... you combine that with the Sega-CD pretty much tanking out around that time and we just couldn't financially justify localizing *Lunar 2* for either the Genesis or the Sega CD. And Victor...did not take it well. When I told him that we weren't going to bring *Lunar 2* over, he completely went berserk. He swore at me, pointed his finger at me, I mean he used pretty much every obscenity you could think of. And I kept my cool, I stayed

professional. I mean he wasn't going to hit me or anything like that, he just kept swearing and when he was done I asked him calmly, "are you done?", and he replied "yeah, we're done, we're f-ing done" and then he swore at me again and stormed out of my office. And that's how we lost Working Designs. When they popped up a year later working with Nintendo on their big RPG for 1996, I wasn't surprised. I was kind of relieved actually, I was thinking "well, he's your problem now!".

-excerpted from an interview with Tom Kalinske on 16-Bit Life, January 8, 2012

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### **The Sad Tale Of The Bandai Solaris**

When Apple told Bandai that they were backing out of their partnership to make a Macintosh-based next-generation video game console in the fall of 1994, Bandai probably should have just cut its losses and scrapped the entire thing. But the company, flush with money from Power Rangers merchandise and confident that with Nintendo and Sony having yet to reach a deal on their own next-generation console that there was room for another player in the video game market, pressed forward. They ended up making the same mistake that Phillips, Pioneer, Atari, and 3DO had made before them: the combined juggernaut of Nintendo, Sony, and Sega was just too tough of a nut to crack.

While Bandai was unable to use the Pippin name, they conceived of a new name for the console: Solaris, a name that conjured forth images of the shining sun. With Apple allowing Bandai to retain use of its technology in order to avoid a potential lawsuit for backing out of the deal, Bandai believed that the console, a powerful 66 Mhz system three times faster than the SNES-CD and comparable to Sega's upcoming Saturn, could compete when it launched in the fall of 1995. It launched with an all-new Power Rangers game, as well as a Japan-exclusive game based off the popular Gundam anime series. But with little else in the way of software support, practically nothing from third parties and a difficult user interface, the console flopped hard, selling less than 100,000 copies over its lifespan. Despite the initial failure, Bandai pressed on, pouring millions upon millions of dollars into game development to support what was rapidly becoming a white elephant.

When the console ultimately failed in late 1996, it plunged the company into a state of near-bankruptcy, saved only by the continued success of its Power Rangers merchandise. In desperation, the company sold its idea for a virtual-pet toy, known as the Tamagotchi, to the toy company Hasbro for just enough money to stay afloat through 1997. The Tamagotchi later became an enormous hit franchise for Hasbro and was said to be the beginning of a nearly two-decade era of success that continues to this very day with franchises such as *My Little Pony* and the popular *Monster High* and *Ever After High* toy lines. Bandai's ultimate liquidation and acquisition in 1998 for a song by, in the ultimate irony, Sega, was born out of its desire to compete in the very same industry that Sega had succeeded in.

-excerpt from the book "Stupid Is As Stupid Does: The Dumbest Technology Fails Of All Time", published in 2011

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts – September 1994**

1. Super Mario World 2 – 17,559
2. The Simpsons: Virtual Bart – 14,300
3. NBA Jam – 13,746
4. Kid Icarus CD – 12,905
5. Secret Of Mana – 10,478
6. WWF Raw – 9,421
7. Snatcher – 8,876
8. Secret Of Monkey Island – 8,143
9. The Lion King – 7,468
10. Super Mario Kart – 7,339
11. Gun Warrior – 7,253
12. Fatal Strike – 6,574
13. Tetris CD – 5,900
14. Mortal Kombat – 5,887
15. Castlevania: Rondo Of Blood – 4,956
16. ClayFighter: Tournament Edition – 4,738
17. Star Fox – 4,665
18. Wolfenstein 3D – 3,880
19. Final Fantasy III – 3,389
20. Mad Dog II: The Lost Gold – 3,024

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1994 was the year that defined me a connoisseur of comic books even though I did not realize it at the time. Like most ten-year-olds at the time, I was heavily into video games and between that and my LEGO obsession; I only had enough money to buy an occasional issue of *Superman* and *Spider-Man*. One of those issues was the first part of "Power and Responsibility" in *Web of Spider-Man #117*, which reintroduced Ben Reilly to the Spider-Man canon. Unfortunately, this was a time when Spider-Man appeared in four interconnected titles (*Amazing*, *Spectacular*, *Web*, and *Adjectiveless*), which was more than what my meager allowance could pay for. I spent most of 1995 and 1996 busting my hump—working various chores and oddjobs to pay for a Sega Saturn just in time for Christmas '96. Needless to say I learned a valuable lesson about the virtues of hard work and persistence, but missed out on what was likely the most seismic event in comic books that decade.

The success of *The Death and Return of Superman* and *Knightfall* was not lost on the powers that be at Marvel. Both events saw the death (or incapacitation in the case of the latter) and replacement of Superman and Batman, but also increased sales in what was then a hot collectors market. Marvel decided to draw from a relatively obscure storyline from the seventies, or at least obscure to those who were under twenty-five at the time, to shake up the status quo once more: Marvel brought back the Spider-Man clone from *Amazing Spider-Man #149*. Peter Parker was undergoing something of an identity crisis at the time; the machinations of the Chameleon and the late Harry Osborn (as the second Green Goblin) saw him pushed to the verge of insanity when they inserted robot duplicates of his parents, Richard and Mary Parker, into his life. Combined with Aunt May's deteriorating health, Peter estranged himself from Mary Jane and withdrew from his life. Aunt May had been speaking with a stranger whose the artists kept hidden on the phone months prior and when said stranger finally appeared on the last page of *Web #117*, we learned at it was the clone who now went by "Ben Reilly."

*Power and Responsibility* unfolded over six months with Peter headlining *Amazing* and *Web* while Ben took over *Spectacular* and *Adjectiveless*. Peter's issues focused on his reconciliation with Mary Jane and the revelation her pregnancy while Ben's focused on forging a life for himself in New York City. However, the arc climaxed not with an epic battle with a supervillain but the quiet passing of Aunt May in the beautifully written *Amazing Spider-Man #400* by J.M. DeMatteis and Mark Bagley. "A Death in the Family" will go down in the annals of comic book history as the most significant issue of Spider-Man since "The Night Gwen Stacy Died" because of Peter's decision to assume the responsibilities of husband and father, and retire as Spider-Man.

Superheroes rarely if ever passed on the torch unless they died or sustained heavy injury. Jay Garrick and Alan Scott, the Golden Age Flash and Green Lantern, faded into obscurity in the early fifties; the second Flash, Bally Allen died so that Wally West could become the third in the eighties; and Superman and Batman's replacements were temporary. Ben Reilly will always be a polarizing figure in the Marvel fandom. Older fans from the sixties to the eighties typically pine for Peter Parker whereas newer fans from the nineties onward accepted Ben Reilly as their Spider-Man. It has not helped that subsequent animated series and movies featured Peter and not Ben, which confuse the readership even further because of the complex continuity behind Ben Reilly,

The ugly truth was that Marvel had written themselves into a corner with Peter's marriage to Mary Jane. Writers on the books were never fond of the marriage because Peter's troubles with his love life were often a central pivot in his storylines where his sense of responsibility as Spider-Man conflicted with any potential romance. Making Ben Reilly the "one true Spider-Man" seemed to be the best idea at the time. Ben Reilly was single and struggling with his professional and personal lives, plus the fact that he did not cultivate relationships with New York's heroes added an interesting wrinkle to his interactions with the *Avengers*, *X-Men*, and *Fantastic Four*. (I highly suggest you read his crossover with the pre-*Onslaught* *Fantastic Four*. His banter with the Human Torch is hilarious.) However, Ben Reilly was and is a satellite character of Peter's because of his nature as a clone.

I believe one of the reasons why Ben Reilly has endured so long despite being persona non grata on television and the movies is due to the video games. *Spider-Man: Power and Responsibility* for the Super Nintendo CD and Sega Genesis (I advise you play it with the Mega Charger), the sequel to *Maximum Carnage* for the "vanilla" SNES/Genesis, introduced Ben to a whole new audience. Nearly every Spider-Man video game released afterward featured Ben Reilly as Spider-Man, which created a significant contingent of diehard fans. Though former Marvel Editor-in-Chief, Joe Quesada said that he wanted Peter to return as Spider-Man in several interviews, and even joked that he would even sell Peter's soul to Mephisto to do it. However, nothing came of it—and personally, I am glad that Joe Quesada was not serious when he said that. Imagine all the Ben AND Peter fans that would burn him in effigy if it had actually happened.

One reason why I believe why Ben Reilly endured as long as he has is because his status of a clone had constantly searching for identity and second-guessing himself. It spoke to many Spidey fans of my generation who came of age in the Ben Reilly era. There was nothing wrong with Peter, but his decision to retire so that he could become a family man was a natural growth of the character. What one needs to remember is that Ben Reilly IS Peter Parker, or rather, a Peter Parker with different life experiences and how is coming into his own as a realized being. The trouble with Superman and Batman is that they have remained static over the decades and that neither Clark Kent or Bruce Wayne will vacate their respective mantles. I would say the status quo is god, but the Grant Morrison and Mark

Waid's "millennium" revamp of the Superman titles proved that wrong (another post for another day.) Marvel prides itself on being more realistic than its distinguished competition, or as realistic as it can get with purple giants devouring planets, and the only way to bring Peter back is to wipe the slate clean with a Crisis-style reboot. Rumors of that persist, especially with a new iteration of *Secret Wars* on the horizon, but until Marvel gives us confirmation, Ben Reilly is here to stay.

*-from the blog "The Musing Platypus" by B. Ronning, January 3, 2014*

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*"Right after we started working on the SNES-CD port of Doom, Nintendo gave some of us a tour of their studio, and the game that impressed me most was Squad Four, easily. Yeah, Donkey Kong Country might've had smoother graphics but I absolutely loved what they were doing with Squad Four and it's clear they took some inspiration from Doom with the psuedo 3-D environments and really creative uses of sprites to create depth. It was then that I knew that the SNES-CD was the only system capable of handling the definitive home console port of Doom. It's still one of my favorite games on the system. Hell of a game."*

*-John Carmack, co-founder of Id Software, in an interview with Electronic Gaming Monthly, June 1998*

*"But the best Nintendo Power cover art of all time was the October 1994 issue with Squad Four. Benimaru Itoh, the guy who did the Squad Four comic for them, did a great piece of original art that had all four characters on Planet Velna, posed perfectly, there's Shad sitting there looking up at the sky with this hopeful expression, Marcus kinda off to the side looking like a badass, Rebecca with her twin energy swords looking up like Shad is and then Lane's sitting there looking straight up with his hands in his lap like a kid at a playground. The sky is full of stars and it's such a beautiful piece of art, like an old-timey movie poster. When I saw the October 1994 issue of Nintendo Power, I wanted this game. I didn't wanna wait for Christmas, I wanted it right fuckin' now!"*

*-The Angry Video Game Nerd, "Nintendo Power Retrospective"*

*"My first voice acting role was on the video game Squad Four. We had just finished up with The Party and I was kind of at a crossroads in my career, still really young, about to start doing musicals but I heard about this audition, they needed voices for a video game. I'd always wanted to do voiceover and this was kind of a chance to get my feet wet, so I auditioned and I got it, I was SO surprised because I was 18 and this was my first role ever but Nintendo thought I was the best for the part. It's been 20 great years since. I love doing Rebecca and I hope I can keep voicing her as long as I can do the part!"*

*-Deedee Magno Hall, "Q+A with the cast of Steven Universe", IGN.com, December 22, 2013*

*"Yeah, that created some tension between Enix and us, the whole Illusion of Gaia thing. We'd been giving all this hype and promotion to Squad Four and it became apparent that the two games were going to release at about the same time and Enix wasn't happy about us sort of shafting their game in promotions. We'd offered to delay the game until the following spring but they didn't want to compete with Final Fantasy VI. We tried to position the games as sort of counter-programming to each other and also tried to heavily push the SNES cartridge version but that just made the CD version undersell quite badly. Enix blamed us for botching the release and I really don't blame them for doing so, but at the same time they needed to realize that we had a LOT of games coming out that month."*

-Nintendo executive Peter Main, recalling October 1994's competing releases

*"It's part of the mission we signed up for! If there's people in trouble, we gotta help 'em. It doesn't matter who they are, it's what Squad Four does!"*

-Shad, during Mission 14 of *Squad Four*

*"Forgive me, Leonardo, but my loyalty to my father trumps anything else. Rest assured, I won't enjoy killing you."*

-Karai, just before you fight her in *TMNT V: Wrath of the Foot*

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\*Scenes from the opening of *Squad Four* are shown, we see four young people on a spaceship heading for a crash on a distant planet.\*

Narrator (Don LaFontaine): Four heroes crash-land on a distant world. Cut off from Mission Control, they can only rely on themselves...and each other.

\*More scenes from the game are shown, showcasing the beautiful scenery of the mysterious world the group has crashlanded on. The four main characters can be seen waking up apart from each other.\*

Narrator: Now, you'll need to master the skills of all four heroes if you want to survive. Take these brave space warriors on a journey beyond imagination. Battle dangerous enemies, befriend mysterious strangers, and wield powerful weapons as you fight to stay alive in this space charting adventure.

\*More scenes are shown, Rebecca wields her dual energy blades against some aggressive soldiers, Shad is shooting at monstrous birds in the sky, Marcus rolls to avoid an attack from a two-headed lizard beast, and Lane runs through the forest dodging bolts of lightning from above.\*

Narrator: This amazing story comes to life with hours of real dialogue from dozens of characters and lifelike animations that put you in the center of the story. Will these four brave young souls survive, or will they meet their doom light years from home?

***SQUAD FOUR, from the makers of Star Fox, only for your Super Nintendo CD. For a limited time only, buy a Super Nintendo CD peripheral and receive Squad Four as part of a special bundle pack.***

***PLAY IT LOUD.***

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**October 17, 1994**

*Squad Four* is released for the Super Nintendo CD in North America. The release is the culmination of a massive marketing campaign involving commercials and magazine ads along with months of coverage leading up to the game's release. The game is the first Nintendo first-party game to receive a Teen rating from the ESRB, though it's on the softer end of that rating scale. The game receives great to excellent reviews upon release from most publications, it's not considered a true classic like Super Mario World 2 or Secret Of

Mana, but overall reception is very favorable. Among many reviews, it receives a 36/40 from Famitsu with solid 9s across the board. It very narrowly misses out on a perfect score from GamePro, getting perfect 5s in all categories except Play Control, for which it receives a 4.5. It becomes the third fastest selling Super Nintendo CD game to date, behind only Super Mario World 2 and Mortal Kombat, with nearly a quarter of a million sales in its first week. It receives a special SNES-CD bundle that includes the Squad Four game and the SNES-CD peripheral, though it doesn't replace the very popular Super Mario World 2 bundle, instead becoming a limited-time special edition bundle like Nintendo released for Star Fox during the summer of 1993. The game's release is the beginning of a massive holiday season for Nintendo, just over a month before the release of *Donkey Kong Country*. It would later come to be known as the start of the "second era" of the Super Nintendo CD, when games truly started to push the capabilities of the peripheral and when the cartridge-based Super Nintendo began to recede into the background. Though the SNES-CD was released in December 1992, it was *Squad Four* that may truly have kicked off the fourth-and-a-half generation for Nintendo.

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### **Squad Four: Origins**

From July 1994 – June 1995, *Nintendo Power* ran a twelve-issue comic in their magazine based on the very first adventure of the main characters of Squad Four. The comic was drawn by Benimaru Itoh, who is also known for his work on the *Star Fox* and *Super Metroid* comics (which ran in Nintendo Power IOTL, both comics are also featured ITTL but *Star Fox* has some significant storyline changes). These are brief summaries of the twelve issues:

Issue One - "Graduation Day" (July 1994): Introduces Shad, Rebecca, Marcus, and Lane and shows them graduating from Lockstar Academy and being placed into Squad Four together.

Issue Two - "The Mission" (August 1994): Squad Four is assigned its first mission, but there's already tension between Shad and Marcus.

Issue Three - "The Price Of Failure" (September 1994): A suspect slips away from the squad because of squabbling between Marcus and Shad. Marcus decides to sneak away from the group and investigate a potential enemy base, while Rebecca follows him.

Issue Four - "Sneaking Suspicion" (October 1994): While infiltrating the enemy base, Marcus and Rebecca are captured. Shad tries to help Lane become more confident.

Issue Five - "Within The Fortress" (November 1994): Marcus and Rebecca escape the enemy base while Shad and Lane attempt a rescue. The squad reunites.

Issue Six - "Where There's A Will..." (December 1994): Rebecca and Lane help Shad and Marcus reconcile just in time to catch a dangerous fugitive.

Issue Seven - "No Rest For The Weary" (January 1995): The squad is commended for apprehending the criminal, but all of them feel there's more they can do.

Issue Eight - "Third Time's A Charm" (February 1995): Squad Four takes a big risk in order to find out what their enemy is really planning.

Issue Nine - "Best Laid Plans" (March 1995): Squad Four's actions cause a crisis at headquarters, putting the group at risk of becoming criminals themselves.

Issue Ten - "Shad's Gambit" (April 1995): Shad proposes a last-ditch idea to help he and his friends redeem themselves, while Dr. Barris plans his final move.

Issue Eleven - "The Madness Of Dr. Barris" (May 1995): The mastermind behind the group Squad Four has been investigating unleashes his devastating plans on an unsuspecting Planet Lockstar and our heroes are the only one who can stop it!

Issue Twelve - "The End Of The Beginning" (June 1995): Squad Four and their allies finally put a stop to Dr. Barris' evil plans. At the end, there's a flash-forward to two years later with Squad Four getting deployed on the mission depicted at the start of the game...

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### **Squad Four: The Basics**

Squad Four was developed by Argonaut Software as their follow-up to 1993's *Star Fox*, though unlike *Star Fox*, the main characters are all human and not the anthropomorphic animals of the *Star Fox* series. The gameplay is a sort of hybrid of *Star Fox*, *Sin and Punishment*, and *Jet Force Gemini* in terms of gameplay. The game is divided into 26 missions, though unlike *Star Fox*, which was an arcade-style game that could be played and beaten in a half-hour, *Squad Four* is much more of an adventure game. The missions are longer and divided into several parts and the game will take a first time player about 10-12 hours to complete. There are three types of gameplay. The first and most common type of gameplay is an on-rails walking section similar to the gameplay of *Sin and Punishment*, where your character runs and guns at creatures and enemies coming at them. You point your weapon and shoot, though there's also a melee weapon you can use to strike at enemies who get close (somewhat like in *Kid Icarus: Uprising*). The second type of gameplay is an exploration mode, where your character is given free range of 3-D movement and can wander around an enclosed area. Sometimes this can be part of a wilderness environment or a segment of a temple. Other times it's a town where you can actually talk to people and purchase things. Because of the hardware limitations of the SNES-CD, these are somewhat limited segments, but they're still numerous and nearly every mission has at least one (some have several). Finally, there's all-range combat mode which allows for combat with enemies with 3-D movement. You can get close and use your melee strike (indeed, your projectile weapon is better in the on-rails segments while your melee weapon is better in the 3-D segments most of the time), or you can shoot at enemies. To shoot, you hold down the R button which plants your character's feet in place, you can then use the directional pad to turn in any direction (while holding down R in this mode, your character will automatically lock onto enemies, you can switch the lock-on with the X button). Again, this fixed-movement shooting style is due to the SNES-CD's hardware limitations, later installments of the game allow for full movement while shooting.

During the game, you have a limited number of lives (you start with 5 and can acquire extra lives through various means). Each mission has several checkpoints, if you die during a mission, you'll return to the checkpoint, but if you lose all your lives you have to start the mission over. Unlike in *Starfox*, you only have to start at the beginning of your current mission, you automatically save at the end of each mission and you can return to a previous mission to replay it, go for a higher score, or look for power-ups. During a mission, your character can acquire or purchase various upgrades to their weapon or life bar. These

upgrades aren't permanent like in an RPG-styled game, but more like the weapon upgrades in *Star Fox*, you keep them until you get a game over. Each of the four main characters has missions that you are required to use them for, but for some missions (eight in all), you are free to use any of the four playable characters.

The game features a mix of sprite-based and polygonal graphics. Where things would get overly blocky if presented as polygons (such as human characters or highly detailed monsters), sprites are used, and the environments look rather like those presented in games like *Doom*. The frame rate is a tad slow when a lot is happening on the screen but for the most part the game is designed to run as smoothly as possible, using graphical tricks wherever possible to make things look as good as they can within the limits of the SNES-CD software. The game features more voice acting than any previous SNES-CD game, with dozens of characters having spoken dialogue (and the main characters having lots of it). Spoken dialogue is particularly featured during important storyline scenes, and at one point, Deedee Magno's character Rebecca even sings a short lullaby to a child character (the directors were directly influenced by Magno's history on the 1990s Mickey Mouse Club show and as part of the band *The Party*, suggesting the scene for her character). The voice acting is considered to be perhaps the best ever featured in a video game to that point, with Charles Martinet's performance receiving particular praise (up until then he'd only been known for voicing the wacky Mario characters, his performance as the brave young hero Shad was a surprise to many who didn't know his talents). This was also one of the first roles for Michael Reisz and Tom Kenny, the latter of whom was mostly known at the time as a sketch comedian and for voicing Heffer on *Rocko's Modern Life*.

#### *The Squad:*

Shad (voiced by Charles Martinet): The leader of the team, a brave and idealistic young man who has very heroic ideals. In the Five Man Band archetype, he'd be The Hero, while in the Four Temperament Ensemble, he'd be Sanguine. His long-range weapon is a pistol while his melee weapon is a long sword.

Marcus (voiced by Michael Reisz): Also brave and heroic, but somewhat more cynical than Shad and clashes with him often. Hot-headed at times. In the Five Man Band archetype, he'd be The Lancer, while in the Four Temperament Ensemble, he'd be Choleric. His long range weapon is a shotgun while his melee weapon is a spear.

Rebecca (voiced by Deedee Magno): A bit more reserved than Shad or Marcus but still a very tough woman who can easily hold her own with them, not a damsel in distress by any means. In the Five Man Band archetype, she'd be The Big Guy, while in the Four Temperament Ensemble, she'd be Phlegmatic. Her long range weapon is a sniper rifle while her melee weapon is a pair of twin energy blades.

Lane (voiced by Tom Kenny): The team tech-nerd and computer expert, he can be a bit cowardly at times but is just as heroic as the others. In the Five Man Band archetype, he'd be a cross between The Smart Guy and The Chick, while in the Four Temperament Ensemble, he'd be Melancholic. His long-range weapon is a bolt thrower while his melee weapon is a taser.

#### *The Plot:*

The game starts out with the team en route to a disturbance on a distant planet where space pirates are attempting a coup. However, the ship passes too near a gravitational

disturbance, and it crash-lands on the planet of Velna, a rather primitive jungle world. During the crash, the group is forced to eject in separate escape pods, and so, starting with the second mission (the first is a tutorial mission taking place in a combat simulator), you take turns controlling one of the four characters on their own separate paths as they try to survive in the wilderness while meeting the denizens of Planet Velna. During these first missions, you learn that the planet is embroiled in a civil war between two rival factions with grievances that seem equally valid, and that Squad Four finds themselves taking sides. Shad and Lane seem to gravitate toward the more law-and-order Krills, the current rulers of the planet, while Marcus and Rebecca side with the rebel Hadro faction, who seem to be in the right despite their at-times ruthless tactics. About halfway through the game, the four characters re-unite and for a few missions you can choose which one to control. However, later on there's a disaster and the squad is once again separated, for a somewhat briefer time this time around. During this third phase of the game, you learn that the Krills are indeed the faction in the wrong, and that the ruthless tactics of the Hadro are necessary because the Krills have discovered a way of gaining partial immortality by forcing the Hadro to gather mysterious minerals that the Krills use to brainwash and create super-soldiers out of captive Hadro. At the end of Mission 22, the Krills are preparing to subject Shad to this process when it is interrupted by Marcus, Rebecca, and Lane coming to his rescue. The final four missions revolve around the once-again reunited Squad Four as they battle the remaining hostile Krills to save the Planet Velna from oppression. At the end of the game, the liberated Krill survivors and the appreciative Hadros reconcile and the planet Velna knows peace once more. The grateful Velnians give Squad Four a new ship, and the game ends with the squad flying off to complete their true mission.

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### **Bubsy CD:**

Ed: 6.5

Danyon: 5

AI: 5.5 (quote: "This middle of the road platformer is made interesting only by Bubsy's at times irreverent quips.")

Sushi-X: 5.5

### **Eye Of The Beholder:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7 (quote: "This RPG based on an Advanced Dungeons and Dragons campaign is as hard as they come, but it's nice to have an old-school dungeon crawler appear on the SNES-CD.")

AI: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7

### **Firestriker:**

Ed: 8 (quote: "This action game can be quite entertaining and addictive despite its rather simplistic, pinball-like gameplay.")

Danyon: 7

AI: 7

Sushi-X: 4.5

### **Illusion Of Gaia:**

Ed: 8.5

Danyon: 9

Al: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8.5 (quote: "One of the most epic RPGs to come to the Super Nintendo CD, this globe-trotting adventure is a big improvement on the already impressive classic Soul Blazer.")

### **NBA Live 95:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 8.5

Al: 9 (quote: "The NBA Live series takes graphics to the next level with this excellent SNES-CD version of the game that features excellent commentary and detailed player animations.")

Sushi-X: 7

### **Nightmare Busters:**

Ed: 9 (quote: "As far as run-and-gun games go, this off-the-wall game is a true original, and I had fun with its card-slinging hero for hours on end.")

Danyon: 9

Al: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **SimCity 2000:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8.5

Al: 7.5 (quote: "While not as instantly addictive as the 1991 SNES classic, this is still a worthy follow-up with a lot more options and opportunities to build your perfect city.")

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Street Hockey '95:**

Ed: 4

Danyon: 3.5 (quote: "Compared to NHL '95, this hard hitting arcade-style hockey game should be spending five minutes in the penalty box.")

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 3.5

### **Super Adventure Island CD:**

Ed: 8 (quote: "The primitive hero Higgins makes the jump to the SNES-CD in a really fun action game featuring great graphics and a swinging soundtrack.")

Danyon: 8

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7

### **TMNT V: Wrath Of The Foot**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 9

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 9.5 (quote: "Making me choose between this game and Turtles In Time is like having to pick between my own kids. Can I just say they're both instant classics?")

#### **Squad Four:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9

Al: 8.5 (quote: "While the controls in all-range mode take a bit of time to get used to, it's worth it to experience this game's amazing visuals and good storyline.")

Sushi-X: 8

#### **Slumlord:**

Ed: 6 (quote: "This overly violent brawler where you control a brutal crime boss who roughs up everyone who crosses him is a pretty ho-hum game, it's clear the developers are hoping that shock value is the main selling point.")

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 6.5

Sushi-X: 7.5

#### **Dunk Star:**

Ed: 5

Danyon: 5

Al: 4.5 (quote: "Lousy play controls and the worst announcer this side of the Jaguar's *White Men Can't Jump* make me recommend staying far away from this awful basketball game.")

Sushi-X: 5

#### **Real GT Racing:**

Ed: 7.5

Danyon: 7

Al: 7.5 (quote: "The graphics and variety of cars in this racing sim make it one of the best racing games available for the SNES-CD. We just wish there were more tracks!")

Sushi-X: 5

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of October 1994's SNES-CD games, from the November and December 1994 issues

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#### **Illusion Of Gaia Special CD Offer!**

While you can pick up *Illusion of Gaia* for the Super Nintendo, complete with a free T-shirt for a limited time, if you have a Super Nintendo CD the game comes with even more excellent bonuses. The special bundle, retailing for \$79.99, comes with a t-shirt just like the one in the cartridge edition, a cloth map of the game's world, a CD soundtrack containing selections from the game's score, a special hardcover instruction book/strategy guide with a full walkthrough of the game, AND included on the disc is a port of the Super Nintendo classic *Soul Blazer*, the predecessor to *Illusion of Gaia*. We hope all this cool extra stuff

encourages you to discover *Illusion of Gaia* for yourself when it releases in stores this month!

-a blurb at the end of the *Illusion of Gaia* article in the October 1994 edition of *Nintendo Power*

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### **So what exactly was the deal with *Illusion of Gaia*?**

It was the last major game that we released as a cross-platform release for the Super Nintendo and the Super Nintendo CD. In fact, it was one of the last major games of ANY kind to receive such a release. At the time, we had a deal with Nintendo where they would publish and promote the game, and we were hoping that this would mean a big boost in sales for us. But then we got stuck in October amidst all kinds of competition. There was *TMNT V*, there was *NBA Live 95*, and then there was Nintendo's *Squad Four* game. And as a result of that, Nintendo kind of buried our game. I know that Nintendo had been planning on *Squad Four* and working on it for a long time but they could have given our game more of a platform instead of making it an afterthought. It wasn't just that that was our big problem, it was Nintendo's close relationship with Squaresoft which grew even closer during 1995 and especially during that huge year in 1996. Nintendo and Squaresoft were really close and we felt that we were being treated as the red-headed stepchild, so to speak. And this was after our *Dragon Warrior* games had sold so well for the company.

### **Would you say it was *Illusion of Gaia* that started the problems Nintendo and Enix had with each other in 1995 and beyond, or was it at an earlier or later point?**

It definitely started there. I mean, we still did all right on the SNES cartridge system, but we got buried on CD. Less than 100,000 copies sold, and this was with all the extras we'd packed in to try and encourage people to buy it. After *Illusion of Gaia*, the prevailing mood started to be that Nintendo didn't appreciate Enix, and that led to the problems that came later on.

-excerpted from a Gaming.moe interview with Robert Jerauld, former Enix USA producer, November 24, 2014 (OOC: inspired by this OTL interview from November 15 <http://gaming.moe/?p=331> )

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And now we have the series' fifth game, "Wrath Of The Foot". Konami did a fifth *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* beat-em-up game for the arcades in 1993, and this was the first game actually designed from the ground up for the optical home console peripherals. When the Sega CD version got deep-sixed due to declining sales, it became exclusive to the SNES-CD (though the *Mega Charger* would get a separate *Turtles* game to make up for it in 1995, we'll be looking at that one next). *Wrath Of The Foot*, as the title would indicate, focuses on the *Foot Ninja*, the servants of *Shredder*, particularly his daughter *Karai* who plays a BIG role in this game. In fact, for most of it she's the main villain, deploying her seven ninja servants to battle the *Turtles* throughout the stages. As this game was designed for the CD medium, it's got a good amount of voice acting and much more detailed characters than the previous game, it even has full-motion video cutscenes for certain parts. Of course, those of us who know *TMNT* lore know that *Karai* isn't ALL bad and indeed, she even harbors feelings for *Leonardo* in this game. After a climactic battle with *Karai* in the next-to-last level, she

surrenders to the Turtles and Shredder takes over as the proper villain in the final epic level. The game let you control any of the four Turtles, with a slightly different storyline and dialogue depending on which Turtle you played as (in four-player games, the first player's Turtle would be the storyline focus). The gameplay didn't change, just the dialogue for the most part. Here's where the FUN part comes in: in the SNES-CD version, after beating the game, you could replay it...as Karai! The storyline changed to that of a rebellion against her fellow Foot Ninja, with dialogue focusing on Karai's inner struggle and her fellow ninjas considering her a traitor. During the next-to-last level, Shredder revealed that he had kidnapped and brainwashed Leonardo to fight against you, making for a REALLY fun fight where you actually got to fight Leonardo as a boss. This all led up to the final emotional showdown between Karai and her father and one of the most beautiful endings in the history of the series....indeed, a lot of TMNT fans actually consider Karai's path to be the true path through the game. This game got really good reviews, and though initial sales were disappointing due to having to go up against Squad Four and Donkey Kong Country in its first couple of months, the game showed a lot of legs and is overall considered to be a success for Konami. Sadly though, by the time this game was released the TMNT fad was considered to be winding down, and the SNES-CD didn't see any more Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles games. It's a shame, but at least the series went out with a bang!

-from "TMNT: Turtles In Review", an article on Kotaku.com posted on July 11, 2012

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#### *SimCity 2000-*

This version of the popular PC classic, released as a sequel to the classic SimCity game featured on both the PC and the Super Nintendo, was somewhat modified from the PC version like the original SimCity to more closely resemble a Nintendo game. Like the SNES game in 1991, this version allowed you to have Bowser wreck your city, and as you achieved different levels of population, a different background song would play for your city. Despite the changes, it still featured the same level of depth and complexity as the original PC game, featuring the addition of water lines, arcologies, and a huge host of other features that made it a far more involved game than the original. It proved to be one of the month's best sellers, trailing only *Squad Four* and *TMNT V: Wrath of The Foot* on the October SNES-CD new release sales charts.

#### *Nightmare Busters-*

One of the system's quirkiest action games, *Nightmare Busters* almost didn't make it to fruition at all! The company Nichibutsu had originally conceived the game as a Super Nintendo release, but the capabilities of the Super Nintendo CD encouraged them to retool the game from the ground up as a CD release instead, and it was published in October 1994. Despite good reviews for its spooky atmosphere, fun gameplay and tough difficulty, it had trouble finding an audience amidst the slew of great games released for the SNES-CD that month, and sales were middling at best.

#### *Real GT Racing-*

Though it may seem like an SNES-CD precursor to Gran Turismo, Polyphony actually had nothing to do with this racing game, though it shares that series' proclivity for real cars and lifelike driving. Despite the decent graphics and realistic cars, the track selection featured only a few mostly cookie-cutter racetracks and the racing itself got quite dull after a while of

playing. Without the license system and car purchasing that *Gran Turismo* is known for, there was no variety to spice up this game's pretty visuals and sales and reviews hovered around the mediocre mark.

### *Home Improvement-*

Yes, there was a Home Improvement game for the SNES-CD released in October 1994. No, it did not do well.

-Excerpt from "The SNES-CD Games Of 1994" article on 16-Bit Life, published March 17, 2013

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts – October 1994**

1. Final Fantasy Origins – 15,960
2. Super Mario World 2 – 15,894
3. Secret Of Mana – 11,226
4. Kid Icarus CD – 10,585
5. Major Hazard – 8,866
6. NBA Jam – 8,560
7. The Simpsons: Virtual Bart – 7,984
8. Super Mario Kart – 6,314
9. Secret Of Monkey Island – 6,064
10. Logjam – 5,766
11. Snatcher – 5,670
12. The Lion King – 5,562
13. WWF Raw – 5,080
14. Tetris CD – 4,633
15. Final Fantasy III – 4,571
16. Gun Warrior – 4,483
17. Mortal Kombat – 4,372
18. ESPN National Hockey Night – 3,823
19. Fatal Strike – 3,690
20. Monster Wars – 3,447

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### **November 7, 1994**

Tom Kalinske had seen the preliminary sales reports for the month of October, and for the first time since March, the Super Nintendo had managed to outsell the Genesis. It was only barely, but it was still a sign that Sega had to stay on top of its game if it was going to have any chance of toppling Nintendo. He wasn't surprised that Nintendo had won the month. With a slew of huge releases including the inescapably hyped *Squad Four*, the Super Nintendo CD's line up easily trumped what Genesis was offering. The next big things to hit the Mega Charger were *Doom* and *Star Wars Arcade*, and both of those games were slated for December releases. While the holiday season was up for grabs, it was clear that fall was going to belong to Nintendo.

But at the moment, he let that bit of bad news fade from his mind. He was already thinking

ahead, to the impending release of the Sega Saturn in Japan and, next year, in North America. The Saturn was what it was because Tom Kalinske saw into the future. He was the one who made the call to hook up with Silicon Graphics, and now the Saturn was loaded with the best hardware in the history of console video gaming. He had been the one to recruit the talent that would give the Sega Saturn the best third-party lineup in video game history. He'd even scouted an 18-year-old wunderkind from Iowa to score the soundtrack for one of the Saturn's biggest launch games. *Ultima: The Worldly Lord* would have its soundtrack created by Jeremy Soule, a brilliant musical genius who'd sent his musical portfolio out to any company that would have him. He'd been rejected by LucasArts and even by Squaresoft (though, not because they already had Nobuo Uematsu on payroll, but that they had no other projects that needed him at the time....their proposition for a game called *Secret of Evermore* for the Super Nintendo cartridge system was canned when Nintendo decided not to follow through with their SNES cartridge development mandate for 1995). It was Tom Kalinske at Sega who'd given Soule his chance, and when he'd heard that Nintendo had cast Deedee Magno as a voice in *Squad Four*, he'd exchanged a laugh with one of his colleagues: "They got a Mouseketeer? I went out and got the next Mozart."

And there was one more project that was very near and dear to Tom Kalinske's heart. Once again, he was paying a visit to Sonic! Software Planning headquarters, where development was well underway on a little Saturn launch RPG that would be known as *MagiQuest*. This three-player action RPG was the fulfillment of the promise Tom Kalinske had made his daughter, that Sega would have a game like *Secret of Mana*. The gameplay, however, was much faster-paced, featuring hack-and-slash like RPG combat performed by its three colorful main characters, brave young girls named after Kalinske's daughters.

"Well, how's the game look so far?" Kalinske asked, smiling as he patted the game's lead programmer on the shoulder. On the screen, one of the game's beautiful backgrounds was taking shape. The three main characters were traveling through a colorful, circus-like world with lots of large trees and beautiful low-hanging flowers and leaves. When they encountered an enemy, one of the girls blasted it with a powerful burst of fire magic, causing multiple damage numbers to appear, one for each fireball that hit. "Oh, that looks awesome! All the main attacks are spells, right?"

"That's absolutely right, your main attacks will be magic and we're programming over 100 different spells to use into the game."

Kalinske just nodded his head, watching with joy as the game inspired by his daughters played out on the screen. Development was barely halfway done, but already the game looked absolutely amazing and like it would be a blast to play. He spent more than an hour talking with various programmers and developers, all of whom showed great enthusiasm for the game and appreciation for Kalinske's praise.

*"With games like this, we'll blow Nintendo out of the water next year. They can push their Donkey Kong Country all they want, once the Saturn launches next year it's game over."*

As Kalinske finally left the development office, he was approached by a secretary who told him about a phone call that had come for him at the main desk. He picked up the phone and on the other end was his friend and colleague Shinobu Toyoda.

"Shinobu, if you're calling to tell me about the SNES-CD sales, I know, I know, we got our asses kicked last month--"

"It's not that. I just spoke to Nakayama-san about the Saturn...what we'd talked about earlier?"

"Oh....what did he say?"

"He said that Silicon Graphics and the board agree that there's no way we're going to be able to sell the Saturn for anything less than 58,000 yen. Any less than that and we'd lose too much money on each one sold."

"And that means.....at least \$349 in North America."

"Probably \$399. Maybe more."

Kalinske's shoulders slumped. He'd been giving Nintendo hell about the price of the SNES-CD for the past three months now. The latest commercial had two kids wondering what Nintendo could be doing with all of those arms and legs they were collecting from SNES-CD buyers, depicting parodies of Mario and Luigi in a humorous sword-fight with one of them holding an arm and the other holding a leg. As soon as Nintendo found out what the Saturn was going to cost, they'd turn the ad campaign right back on him.

"Well.....that's a pickle," said Kalinske, letting out a sigh. "Did you happen to hear anything about what Sony and Nintendo are up to for their next-gen system?"

"Nothing," Toyoda replied. "Though I've been hearing through the grapevine that the two companies are having some rather serious disagreements."

"Well that's been the news for the past two months, lemme know if you hear something new and we can go out and have a drink to celebrate," said Kalinske, trying to force a laugh. "I'm gonna head back to the States, we gotta try and figure out a counter-ad for this Donkey Kong game or we're gonna get our asses kicked even worse this month. Hope I can see you there soon."

"I hope we get some good news soon."

"You and me both, Shinobu..."

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*"Between Donkey Kong Country, Squad Four, and Alien vs. Predator, it was clear that the Super Nintendo CD completely blew the Mega Charger out of the water from a technical standpoint. For the first few months after the Mega Charger's release, you could kinda make the argument that the two were equal, or close enough that there wasn't a difference between the two. But those three games trumped anything Sega could produce before the Saturn came out and they knew it."*

-Adam Sessler, from an article on GameInfinity.com, January 23, 2013

*"While Nintendo combs through the video game retirement home for the hero of its latest game, hook up your Genesis and blast your way through hot new games with radical new heroes like Sonic, Tails, Knuckles, Earthworm Jim, Akira Yuki, and more!"*

-excerpt from Sega's anti-Donkey Kong Country ad hyping the stars of its Mega Charger

games

*"This may be the best looking video game I've ever played. Everything about Donkey Kong Country is polished to a high mirror shine. The graphics are stunning, the music is so good I could sit and listen to it for hours, and the gameplay transcends even the best of the Mario games. It's a feast for your eyes, ears, and hands."*

-excerpt from Ed Semrad's 9.5/10 review of *Donkey Kong Country*

*"I don't think we could have made a game that good on our own!"*

-Ken Kutaragi, speaking about *Donkey Kong Country* in a 1999 interview

*"To be fair, I wasn't following politics all that much back then. When Newt Gingrich and the Republicans swept into Congress in 1994, some of us were upset, some of us were happy, but as far as I was concerned, as long as neither party went after video games again I didn't care who got in there. And by then, aside from an occasional politician saying that video games are too violent in order to score some quick soccer mom brownie points, nobody was really coming after us. The industry had dodged its biggest bullet in the 1993 Congressional hearings. After that it was smooth sailing, after Congress backed off it opened the way to a new age of freedom and creativity in games and all I cared about was being out in front of it and beating our competition. And competition was fierce!"*

-Tom Kalinske, in an October 2008 interview with gamepolitics.com

*"Trouble In Paradise? Nothing can be confirmed, but behind the scenes scuttlebutt says cracks could be forming in Nintendo and Sony's lucrative partnership, and with mum being the word on their next-generation answer to Sega's upcoming Saturn system, could those cracks be the first signs of a genuine rift?"*

-excerpt from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* Quartermann column, December 1994

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(Author's Note: This ad is largely as IOTL, with a few minor, butterfly-caused differences along with the TTL changes of course...because why change one of the best video game ads of all time?)

A quick shout-out and thanks to Starwarsfan, who cooked up a nice little video edit version of this ad for us:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUWFweohx-I>

This is the update you've been waiting for, so I hope you enjoy it!)

\*Scenes of planet Earth are shown as a faint jungle drum beat goes off in the background.\*

### **HE'S COMING.**

\*A kangaroo looks up\*

### **OUT OF HIBERNATION.**

\*A monkey jumps between two trees, a herd of zebras run by the screen.\*

### **IT'S THE BODACIOUS BEAST.**

\*More jungle scenes of animals are played between the next few words\*

**THE PRIME PRIMATE.**

**DONKEY KONG.**

\*Scenes from the game are now shown, showcasing the beautiful graphics and variety of levels.\*

**INTRODUCING DONKEY KONG COUNTRY.**

\*More scenes from the game are shown between each phrase\*

**THE FIRST MULTI-LAYER RENDERED VIDEO GAME EVER.**

**FEATURING HIS SIDEKICK DIDDY KONG.**

**AND OVER 50 STUNNINGLY ANIMATED LEVELS.**

\*more scenes\*

**WHERE YOU GONNA FIND IT?**

**NOT ON SEGA.**

**NOT ON MEGA CHARGER ADAPTORS.**

**NOT ON PERSONAL COMPUTERS.**

\*more scenes\*

**IT'S ONLY FOR THE SUPER NINTENDO CD.**

***DONKEY KONG COUNTRY.***

**JUNGLE FEVER SPREADS.**

**NOVEMBER 21**

**PLAY IT LOUD**

-one of the commercials for *Donkey Kong Country* which aired in the United States through most of November and December 1994

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**November 21, 1994**

*Donkey Kong Country* is released for the Super Nintendo CD, and simultaneously as a bundled game with both the stand-alone SNES-CD peripheral and the Playstation Combo Set (along with the Super Mario All-Stars cartridge). The game doesn't quite reach the lofty

sales heights of *Sonic the Hedgehog 3*'s first day sales (mostly due to Nintendo not pushing pre-orders nearly as heavily as Sega did) but it still manages to reach nearly a million sales in its first week alone and would easily become the biggest selling game of the holiday season. The game is the biggest single driver of SNES-CD sales ever, even more than *Mortal Kombat*, and is the primary push for many families to finally purchase the peripheral or even the combo set. Because of the success of *Donkey Kong Country*, Nintendo would more than double Sega's hardware and peripheral sales in the month of October. The game is released to rave reviews, equally as good as the reviews *Sonic the Hedgehog 3* received and in many cases more so. Primary praise for the game goes to its groundbreaking graphics. While fully-rendered graphics are nothing new for the Super Nintendo CD, having been featured in games such as *Deadman Sam*, the painstakingly animated backgrounds, boss animations, and other technical features make *Donkey Kong Country* a marvel of its time, surpassing even the best graphics found on nearly all Atari Jaguar games despite the Jaguar's superior hardware. The game even makes the engineers at Silicon Graphics take notice. While the Saturn, due to release in Japan in just two weeks, is capable of far superior visuals, the fact that *Donkey Kong Country*'s graphics surpass those of some of the Saturn's launch lineup is something that surprises Sega brass and third party software developers.

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### **Donkey Kong Country: The Basics**

*Donkey Kong Country* is, in terms of gameplay and story, virtually identical to OTL's game. It remains a tricky platformer that takes Donkey Kong and his friend Diddy Kong to a variety of jungle locations in search of Donkey Kong's hoard of bananas, stolen by the evil reptilian Kremlings. However, the game is significantly expanded from OTL's version in terms of content. Instead of the six worlds and 33 levels (40 if boss levels are counted) of the OTL game, the SNES-CD *Donkey Kong Country* features eight worlds and 52 levels (61 counting boss levels). The worlds are as follows:

World One: Kongo Jungle (as OTL), the boss is a giant gorilla twice Donkey Kong's size that swings from vine to vine.

World Two: Monkey Mines (as OTL), one extra level from OTL, the boss is a crazed witch doctor character (think someone like Mola Ram).

World Three: King K. Rool Park (an amusement park level somewhat like Krazy Kremland from DKC2 OTL), seven levels, the boss is an evil clown.

World Four: Vine Valley (as OTL), one extra level from OTL, the boss is an evil giant shark.

World Five: Gorilla Glacier (as OTL), one extra level from OTL, the boss is an evil snowman (like Bleak from DKC3).

World Six: Kremkroc Industries, Inc. (as OTL), one extra level from OTL, the boss is a giant oil drum (only boss that remains the same as OTL with the exception of the final boss King K. Rool).

World Seven: Chimp Caverns (as OTL), two extra levels from OTL, the boss is a huge rock/gem monster that shoots lots of projectiles at Donkey Kong and Diddy.

World Eight: Mt. Konguea (a giant fiery volcano world), six levels, the boss is a huge fiery dragon with probably the best animation in the whole game and probably the best animation seen to date in a console video game.

Then the final confrontation with King K. Rool is largely as IOTL.

The game's graphics feature something that Nintendo and Rare call "multi-layer rendering", using the increased storage capacity of the CD format and the processing power of the

SNES-CD to produce multiple layers of animation at once, particularly for background layers but also for Donkey, Diddy, and enemy characters. It's a subtle but very beautiful effect, producing a level of graphics seen in many OTL PS1 games. The only real drawback to this technique is that levels take a few seconds extra to load when entered from the main world screen. Because of the many deaths that the player is likely to suffer during a level, this might cause frustration. However, there IS an option in the options menu to give the player the choice of whether they want to go back to the level select map or directly back to the level when they die, if the player goes directly back to the level they can avoid these load times. The soundtrack, composed by David Wise, is a beautiful orchestral score featuring all sorts of instruments and even effects like tribal chanting. With over 30 unique music tracks in the game, it features one of the biggest soundtracks on the SNES-CD.

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### **Alien vs. Predator:**

Ed: 8.5 (quote: "A superb first-person shooter that lets you control a deadly Xenomorph, a fierce Predator, or a human soldier caught in the middle. The graphics are out of this world!")

Danyon: 8.5

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 8

### **Donkey Kong Country:**

Ed: 9.5

Danyon: 9.5

Al: 9.5 (quote: "There's really not much else I can say about this game. It's better than *Sonic 3* and better than any other game for the Super Nintendo CD. Believe the hype.

Donkey Kong Country is fantastic!")

Sushi-X: 9.5

### **Super Bomberman 2:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9 (quote: "It's the same old Bomberman formula but it's a formula that doesn't get old, especially when you've got three friends over to play.")

### **Koolblocks:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8 (quote: "This fun puzzle game combines elements of games like *Tetris* with space shooter games to create a fast-paced and super addictive matching game that's easy to pick up and hard to master.")

Al: 7.5

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **At Land's End:**

Ed: 4.5

Danyon: 6

Al: 5.5 (quote: "Though this adventure game clearly takes inspiration from the *Zelda* series, it falls apart in so many ways. This deeply flawed game is for serious adventure fans only.")

Sushi-X: 3

### **Science Fighters:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 8.5

Sushi-X: 7.5 (quote: "I never thought I'd have so much fun making nerds beat the hell out of each other *Street Fighter* style, but I really did have a blast with this.")

### **Tut's Tomb:**

Ed: 5

Danyon: 4 (quote: "The good king should've stayed in his tomb rather than starred in this sickeningly sweet platformer with lousy play controls and repetitive music.")

Al: 3.5

Sushi-X: 3.5

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of November 1994's SNES-CD games, from the December 1994 and January 1995 issues

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### **Behind The Scenes At Capcom: What's Next?**

Capcom has created some of the very best video games of all time. From *Street Fighter II* to the awesome *Mega Man* series, you've almost certainly got at least one Capcom game at the top of your all-time favorites, and now the company has graciously offered to let us go behind the scenes and check out some of their latest projects.

We're starting off with the Blue Bomber himself, Mega Man, who's got two huge games coming out right at the start of next year! First off is *Mega Man X2*, the sequel to January's excellent SNES re-imagining of the iconic character, *Mega Man X*. Unlike the first game, this game will appear on both the SNES cartridge system AND the Super Nintendo CD, with the latter game offering exclusive animated cutscenes to go along with the action! *Mega Man X2* features eight new Mavericks to fight and eight awesome new abilities for Mega Man X as the hero seeks to stop Sigma once more. Will X's friend Zero, who sacrificed himself at the end of the previous game, be making a return? Capcom refused to say for sure but they did say that Zero would have some role in the upcoming game. Whether that's as a live ally or a deceased spirit like Dr. Light has yet to be seen. Also coming up is a new Mega Man game for the Sega Genesis! Appropriately called *Mega Man: Mega World*, the game is scheduled for a February release and is said to be a remake of the first three games in the NES series, combined into one incredible adventure! The game is said to feature Mega Charger enhancements that will enable the game to receive a full graphical update and will also enable new abilities for Mega Man. It's good to know that whether you play Nintendo or Sega, you'll have a Mega Man game to look forward to when the next year begins.

We're also pleased to report that the sequel to Capcom's excellent role-playing game, *Breath of Fire*, will be released in the United States sometime in 1995. *Breath of Fire II* is

set to be released very soon for the SNES-CD in Japan. The plot features a variety of new characters and some great new dragon abilities as well, and is said to pit its main character Ryu against a corrupt god who rules the world through his all-encompassing worldwide religion. The game's heavy basis on religious themes would likely have made it very difficult to release as a cartridge-based game in North America, but being a CD format game allows for much more mature content and we're excited to experience the game's very intriguing plot when it hits our shores!

We've been hearing more and more about Capcom's upcoming action game for the SNES-CD. Titled *Victory*, we got to look at some exclusive new footage of the game that will be released sometime next spring in North America and in January in Japan. It plays somewhat similarly to the old NES Metal Gear games, though with the weapon variety and fast-paced gameplay of a game like *Zombies Ate My Neighbors*. From what we can tell, the game is heavily story based, with full voice acting and a cast of intriguing characters. It stars a man named Nash Grieves, a soldier who, while fighting in the middle of a war, begins to see very strange, otherworldly things, sightings that become stranger and more frequent as time goes on. These sightings eventually lead Nash to a discovery that will change both his life and the entire world. We were VERY impressed with what we saw and if the footage is any indication, this is going to be one of next year's most talked about games.

We finally got a quick glimpse at some technical video of a game that Capcom is developing for Sega's new Saturn console. It's said to be a horror game and the graphics are some of the best we've ever seen, far surpassing anything available for the SNES-CD or the Genesis Mega Charger device. Capcom refers to the game only as Project Biohazard, and it looks to be especially frightening and especially violent, but also looks like a lot of fun. We'll try to bring you more on Project Biohazard and all the rest of Capcom's upcoming projects as more information is made available!

-from the December 1994 issue of *GamePro* magazine

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*"Alien vs. Predator is definitely the project that we're most proud of out of everything we've done. The decision to stop development on the Atari Jaguar version and bring all of our work to the Super Nintendo CD wasn't one that we took lightly. On the surface, the Jaguar was the more powerful platform, but the difficulty in programming for it caused us numerous headaches, while Sony's offer to assist us with development of the game was a big factor in our decision. Ultimately, with Sony's help we were able to do pretty much everything we wanted to do on the Jaguar on the Super Nintendo CD, and the game came out looking and playing fantastic."*

-Andrew Whittaker of Rebellion Games, discussing the Super Nintendo CD's *Alien vs. Predator* with *Nintendo Power* in the February 1996 issue

*"You know, considering how well the game sold, I don't think I could ask for much more. I mean, obviously coming out the week after Donkey Kong Country hurt us initially. We knew that coming in. But holiday sales were huge and we sold way more copies of the game than we ever would've on the Atari Jaguar. I think we provided a nice alternative, a more grown-up game that people could play when their kids were tired of playing Donkey Kong. It was also a time that first-person shooters were really coming into vogue on the system, so that was another huge plus. We beat Doom to market by almost nine months!"*

-Mike Beaton of Rebellion Games, discussing the Super Nintendo CD's *Alien vs. Predator* in the October 2008 issue of *GameInformer*

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### *Super Bomberman 2*

The sequel to 1993's hit *Super Bomberman CD* hits both the SNES and the SNES-CD, but if you want the best game, the CD's the best way to go. While the levels and gameplay are pretty much the same, the SNES-CD version features enhanced graphics and gives voices to each of the Five Dastardly Bombers, which is a nice little addition that gives some real character to each one.

Graphics: 4.5

Sound: 5.0

Play Control: 4.5

FunFactor: 5.0

Challenge: Intermediate

### *Science Fighters*

One of the quirkiest fighting games we've EVER played, *Science Fighters* takes ten scientists, including a chemist, a biologist, a MARINE biologist, an astrophysicist, and others, and pits them against one another in classic 2-D fighting action. The special attacks range from merely quirky to absolutely hilarious and each character, from Quaker Bob, the earthquake-generating geologist, to Tessa, the cute quantum physicist, has their own variety of moves and strategies to use. If you're into science or just want an alternative to the bloody action of *Mortal Kombat*, then *Science Fighters* is definitely for you.

Graphics: 4.0

Sound: 4.5

Play Control: 4.0

FunFactor: 5.0

Challenge: Intermediate

-excerpted from reviews of *Super Bomberman 2* and *Science Fighters* in the December 1994 issue of *GamePro*

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## **Spaceworld 1994 – New Zelda, New Mario, Next-Gen No-Show?**

It's a rare Shoshinkai where Nintendo isn't launching a new piece of hardware, but that was the case here at Spaceworld 1994. While some expected Nintendo and Sony to be announcing their next gen SNES-CD successor, especially in the wake of the impending Saturn release from Sega, we didn't even get an inkling of such news here. It wasn't a complete disappointment though, as we got lots and lots of news on upcoming games, including new installments from both of Nintendo's primary franchises. First up, lots and LOTS of info on the new Zelda game, set to launch here in Japan sometime in the spring. Titled *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina of Dreams*, the game is set to be a sequel to both *A Link To The Past* and *Link's Awakening*, combining elements from both games in what is said to be Link's biggest journey ever. Link returns to Hyrule, and indeed, the world we saw was pretty much identical to LttP's Light World with a few new areas added in...but we did see video footage of an entirely *new* world that becomes accessible sometime during the game. The graphics were superb, it's still the familiar top-down Zelda we all know and love, but Link and the enemy characters had a lot more detail to them and the entire world

looked completely enhanced, with more color and detail everywhere. The game is shaping up to be an incredible one and I'm sure we'll hear more about it in the coming months leading up to its release. Nintendo also announced the long-awaited *Super Mario World 3*, the latest game in the classic Mario Bros. series. This game had a whole new perspective, with a pseudo 3-D Mario exploring what appeared to be a series of isometrically-based levels. Though it looks like the same classic platforming gameplay of previous *Mario* games, this new perspective gave everything a fresh new appearance and I wish we could have seen more. It's likely that Nintendo will be showing off even more of this game at the Winter 1995 CES coming up in a couple months.

I gotta say, *Donkey Kong Country* was everywhere at this thing. As of the time of this writing the game has yet to release here in Japan and people were crowding around booths to play, the only booths more crowded than the DKC booths were the booths for *Ocarina of Dreams* and for *Final Fantasy VI*. Speaking of THAT game, which launches in Japan next month, *Final Fantasy VI* is shaping up to be fantastic as well. The game debuts a new, highly-detailed graphical style for the series. It's strictly 2-D but character sprites are very detailed and the enemies in battle even have some rudimentary animations, a first for the *Final Fantasy* series and one that gives everything a beautiful look, like something out of an animated storybook. The game centers around a girl named Tina who has mysterious magical powers and is being exploited by an evil empire when she is rescued by a bandanna-wearing rogue from the rebellion seeking to overthrow the empire's oppression. The game has the familiar Moogles and chocobos that have become a trademark for the series, and also features a wonderful fully-orchestrated and CD-audio enhanced soundtrack. But *Final Fantasy VI* wasn't the only RPG at the show. We also got a glimpse of Telenet Japan's *Tale Phantasia*, and as good as *Final Fantasy VI* looked, I have to say that *Phantasia* looked even better. Not only that, but the game features full voice acting and a wonderfully fun interactive battle system where you control character movement and attack timing. Telenet Japan's clearly been developing this game for a LONG time, and while Squaresoft is getting all the hype for the latest *Final Fantasy*, I think this is the game Nintendo really wants to push. No word yet on a United States release for *Tale Phantasia* but a Japanese release is scheduled for summer.

Nintendo made a point of emphasizing how pretty a lot of their SNES-CD games are, and I was impressed by the 3-D capabilities on display in games like *Battle Arena Toshinden*, this one a fighter published by Nintendo's hardware partner Sony. It looks tremendously good, better than any previous fighting game on the system, and the playable demo showed the game running at quite a good framerate. It launches on New Year's Day in Japan, so it may already be out here by the time you read this, and it has been scheduled for a Western release sometime in 1995. We saw plenty of other games here, such as *Lucienne's Quest*, *Super Punch-Out CD*, *Super Squadron X: Critical Dawn*, and *Double Dragon: Triple Trouble*. The one thing we didn't see too many of...cartridge-based Super Nintendo games. With the exception of a couple games like *Mega Man X2*, SNES cartridge games were almost as much of a no-show as Nintendo's SNES-CD successor. It's clear that the SNES-CD is both Nintendo's present AND its future right now, and though it pales in comparison to the Saturn from a technical standpoint, it's still got an incredibly bright future as demonstrated by the wealth of games on display here at Shoshinkai.

-Excerpted from an article in the January 1995 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, written by Peter Molyneux

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## SNES-CD Power Charts: November 1994

1. Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 27,763
2. Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers – 20,886
3. Jewels Of The Realm – 18,294
4. Super Mario World 2 – 17,168
5. Final Fantasy Origins – 11,562
6. Cannon Fodder – 10,847
7. Superman CD – 9,607
8. Secret Of Mana – 9,508
9. Madden 95 – 8,874
10. Kid Icarus CD – 8,065
11. Sam And Max Hit The Road – 7,753
12. NBA Jam – 6,950
13. Corpse Killer – 6,375
14. Major Hazard – 6,227
15. The Simpsons: Virtual Bart – 5,768
16. Oops! - 5,608
17. Solus – 5,370
18. Super Mario Kart – 5,066
19. Secret Of Monkey Island – 4,784
20. The Lion King – 4,658

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## December 6, 1994

The Sega Saturn is launched in Japan with five launch games: *Virtua Fighter*, *Clockwork Knight*, *Mahjong Goku Tenjiku*, *TAMA*, and *Wan Chai Connection*. Despite the small launch lineup, and despite the high 48,200 yen price tag, initial sales are decent due to the success of *Virtua Fighter*. At Sega of America headquarters, Tom Kalinske follows news of the Japanese Saturn launch. He knows that if the American launch is to be successful, he's going to need many more launch games to bolster the system's success, especially considering Nintendo's robust Space World lineup.

*"New Mario...new Zelda...Nintendo's going balls to the wall next year. They're already crushing us in sales thanks to Donkey Kong, no way we're winning the holiday. We need the Sega Saturn to be successful if we're going to beat Nintendo."*

The one solace that Tom Kalinske had was that Nintendo and Sony still hadn't hashed out a deal on the SNES-CD's successor. Nintendo almost never held Space World without a new system to show, but this year they'd done it. Were they getting desperate? Or were they just that confident in their line-up of games?

Or were they waiting for the big show?

Not the Consumer Electronics Show, which, despite its importance to the tech industry, had seemed to treat video game companies like second class citizens during most of its lifespan. Ironically, had the Super Nintendo CD not been released and raised the profile of the game industry to the point where it had managed to eke out a modicum of respect, Sega would have likely pulled out of the CES before 1994. But even with the CES treating game companies a bit better, there was still somewhat of a need for the game industry to have its

own trade show, where it could make its own headlines. With the founding of the International Digital Software Association, the game industry would have its own show. It was scheduled for May 1995 of that year, and would provide Sega with the perfect platform to hype the impending North American launch of the Sega Saturn.

*"And also," Kalinske thought, "would give Nintendo and Sony a chance to hype THEIR new machine...if they even had one."*

The prevailing rumors, growing in volume, were that Nintendo and Sony were at odds with one another...that the SNES-CD's successor would *not* be a Nintendo and Sony collaboration. Of course, it was only a rumor...but one that Tom Kalinske desperately hoped was true.

Because even with the success of the Mega Charger, there was a growing terrible feeling within Tom Kalinske that the Genesis' days were numbered.

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At that exact moment, Ken Kutaragi was in a conference room at Sony headquarters with Norio Ohga and Sony's board of directors. They had all gotten news of the initial sales success of *Donkey Kong Country*. The game was a hit, bordering on a phenomenon. The technological achievements of the game justified everything that Ken Kutaragi had put his heart and soul into from the day he'd started working with Nintendo.

"Our collaboration with Nintendo has been...a lucrative one," said one of the directors, though his face remained stern as he looked across the table. "Troublesome, at times, but ultimately profitable. It has influenced in many ways the direction of this company."

"While we're not all in agreement on this issue, the majority of us believe that to continue the partnership with Nintendo would be a....good decision."

Kutaragi's heart began to beat faster and faster, though he dared not show the growing joy that was filling it up. He remained as stoic as the directors as they continued to speak.

"We do have....several conditions, that would need to be fulfilled in order to maintain our partnership," the first director continued. "Conditions that would not be difficult for Nintendo to meet, conditions that would greatly enhance the profitability of creating a new video game device in partnership with them. We ultimately seek more recognition and more profit potential for our products. If these conditions are met, we hope development on a new device with Nintendo would begin immediately."

"If they are...not met?" asked Ohga, looking at the director and then back at Kutaragi.

"We are prepared to create a video game device on our own, without any input from Nintendo," said another director. "Kutaragi, you are prepared to do so as well?"

"Of course," said Kutaragi with a nod. "But...I'm sure Nintendo would be happy to fulfill any conditions the board of directors sees fit to set forth."

"We are sure as well," continued the director with a slight nod of his head. "Thank you all for meeting here today. Kutaragi, I trust you'll let Nintendo know of our conditions as soon as possible?"

Kutaragi nodded in reply. He had a feeling that Sony wouldn't demand much, but any demands would be very difficult to make Nintendo's president Hiroshi Yamauchi acquiesce to. Still, if it had been possible to make the Super Nintendo CD a reality even with all the drama that had arisen around *that* little video game device, he knew that it couldn't be too much of a stretch for the next console.

"The tough part is over," said Norio Ohga as the two men left the room together, placing his hand on Kutaragi's shoulder and allowing a hint of a smile to cross his lips. "You did it."

"We'll see...." Kutaragi replied with a nervous laugh.

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*"As big of a holiday season as 1993 was for us, 1994 was even bigger. We avoided the shortages of 1993 by shipping a lot more units, and we finished second in sales that year to, I believe, only Power Rangers. I never doubted for a moment that Donkey Kong Country would be our biggest blockbuster game ever, and the success of that game absolutely justified the decision to make it exclusively on CD."*

-Howard Lincoln

*"We came back down to Earth, I think, at the end of 1994. Did we sell a lot of Genesis systems and Mega Chargers? Sure. But just like in 1993, Nintendo creamed us. We were going to end 1994 in the same place we ended 1993. But all things considered...that kind of felt like a win."*

-Tom Kalinske

*"This holiday season, pick up Star Wars: X-Wing on Super Nintendo CD, Super Return Of The Jedi on the Super Nintendo cartridge system, or Star Wars Arcade on the Sega Mega Charger. Because whatever you're playing on, the Force will always be with you."*

-from a commercial aired during the 1994 holiday season, advertising that year's selection of Star Wars games

*"The technology available on the Super Nintendo CD really inspired a lot of us during the time that we were developing Rayman. It was conceived for the system right from the start but as we realized more and more what it could do for us from a development standpoint, we kept getting ideas and not just new ideas for Rayman."*

-Ubisoft's Michel Ancel in the June 2006 issue of *GameInformer*

*"This game is the most insidiously devilish thing I've ever seen. It's spawned from Satan in the pits of Hell!"*

-Jerry Falwell in a December 20, 1994 sermon condemning the SNES-CD game *Shin Megami Tensei*, a game that would have spawned significantly more controversy had it sold more than 20,000 copies in North America

*"Two of the biggest influences for me in terms of game design probably were the shooter games Universalizer and Soulqueen for the SNES-CD. Universalizer showed me how to properly do a challenging shooter game, and Soulqueen showed that these types of games could have a compelling story. So those games were I think the most influential games on the design of the Chorokai Project series."*

-ZUN, discussing his Chorokai Project series in a January 2008 *Famitsu* interview

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## **December 7, 1994**

It didn't take long for Ken Kutaragi to arrange a meeting with Minoru Arakawa to discuss Sony's terms for maintaining their partnership with Nintendo.

"Basically, Sony wants three assurances from Nintendo. The first is that Sony receive more recognition from Nintendo as it pertains to their role in hardware development. They've come up with a little paragraph that they're wanting to put on all Sony products in the future, including on the box of whatever this successor device will be."

Over the past few months, Sony had been re-considering its role in the technology business. The higher-ups at Sony had come to see the company as a sort of...concierge of dreams. With Sony's technological muscle, the dreams and visions of creative visionaries in all fields, particularly the field of home entertainment, could become reality. They saw Nintendo as one of those "dreamer" companies. Sony wanted the new Nintendo console to be part of its overall strategy of attracting the attention (and cash) of entertainment companies all over the world. It would help with the tech, and its partners would supply the ideas.

"That sounds agreeable," Arakawa replied, "as long as it is not a large section of the box."

"It would be a graphic and a statement in a corner on the back of the box," said Kutaragi. "Nothing too large, it wouldn't even take up an eighth of the box I don't think."

"I'm sure Yamauchi-san would agree to that," said Arakawa, who then asked Kutaragi to continue.

"The second condition is that Sony receives either a cut of first-party game revenue or a larger cut of third-party game revenue."

"How much larger?" asked Arakawa, immediately dismissing the first option.

"Ten percent larger," said Kutaragi, "though that number is negotiable."

Ten percent added to a reasonably small cut wouldn't be too much of a stretch, though such a concession might be a blow to Yamauchi's pride. Still, it seemed as reasonable as the first condition and Arakawa assured Kutaragi that Nintendo could concede such a thing without much difficulty.

"And the third?"

"The third....Sony wants backward compatibility for the new device. They want it to play all Super Famicom CD-ROM games as well as music CDs."

Arakawa's expression hardened. Nintendo and Sony both wanted the new device to use a proprietary disc format, particularly one that would allow for more memory, perhaps up to a gigabyte of space. But backward compatibility for the new system would present somewhat of a technological problem. Nintendo had considered backward compatibility for the Super Nintendo, to allow it to play NES games, but that idea had been scrapped for being

unfeasible. For a proprietary system to allow SNES-CD compatibility would be a costly stretch...and might harm the last couple years of SNES-CD profitability as well.

"It will not be easy to convince Yamauchi-san to do this," said Arakawa.

"Backward compatibility...is the main sticking point with Ohga-san," said Kutaragi. "If the new system does not allow for backward compatibility, Sony is prepared to develop its own console."

Kutaragi shrunk back in his chair as he spoke. Clearly, it wasn't his decision to make backward compatibility such a non-negotiable. Arakawa sighed.

"If it was up to me, I'd certainly like the SNES-CD successor to have backward compatibility," said Arakawa. "But it's not. I'll try to convince Yamauchi-san to implement it in the new system but it might take time."

"I understand," said Kutaragi, standing up to shake Arakawa's hand. "We're willing to give you at least six months to decide, perhaps more...but I'm worried that too much of a delay-

"I know, the Saturn," said Arakawa, a worried look on his face. "We need to get this deal done soon."

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## **December 12, 1994**

F-Zero CD is released for the Super Nintendo CD. Lost somewhat amidst all the Donkey Kong Country hype, it does modest sales at launch and throughout the holiday season. It receives very good reviews, scoring a 35/40 in Famitsu and 8s and 9s from most American video game media outlets, as well as a perfect score from GamePro. The game is considered even more difficult than the first, though it's also considered a far more complete game and an excellent fit for the CD-based system. F-Zero CD completes the Super Nintendo CD's trifecta of first-party hits during the 1994 holiday season, and flanked by a slew of excellently received third-party games, it helps to drive Super Nintendo CD sales to even loftier heights in one of the most lucrative holiday shopping seasons in North American history.

### **F-Zero CD: The Basics**

F-Zero CD is the sequel to the original F-Zero for the Super Nintendo. Featuring ten playable racers as opposed to the four featured in the original game, and 24 tracks that can all be raced in time trial mode, F-Zero CD is considerably more robust than the original game. It features rapidly moving graphics with dynamic, animated backgrounds and lightning-fast racing action, along with a jam-packed soundtrack with a unique song for each track. The single-player mode features four circuits: Knight, Prince, Queen, and King, each with six tracks that the player must earn first place in to advance. The player gets four lives that are lost whenever a vehicle runs out of life (from slamming into obstacles or other cars) or fails to finish in first place in a race (unlike the original F-Zero, you can finish a lap in any place as long as you finish the race first). The game is considerably more difficult than the original F-Zero, making this one of the hardest racing games on the SNES-CD. The individual racers have their own storylines for each circuit, told over a series of short non-

animated cutscenes (similar to Super Mario World 2). The game also introduces two-player multiplayer to the F-Zero series. You can race a partner in Grand Prix mode, race in Vs. mode on individual tracks, or compete in a Death Race, where the player who runs out of energy first loses (invisible rubber-banding is used to make sure the competing racers stay relatively close).

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### **F-Zero CD:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9.5

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 9 (quote: "If you have enough patience to master the brutally difficult gameplay, this is one of the most satisfying racing video games ever made.")

### **Muppet World:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7

Al: 7.5 (quote: "While clearly geared toward kids, some of the mini-games are surprisingly appealing to older players too, and it seems that this game is a love letter toward long time Muppet fans.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Rayman:**

Ed: 9.5 (quote: "The most pleasant surprise of the year is this superb platformer from Ubisoft that looks and plays almost as good as Donkey Kong Country. Yes, I said it.")

Danyon: 9

Al: 9.5

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Shin Megami Tensei:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 6

Al: 6.5 (quote: "While hardcore RPG fans will find the game's old-school sensibilities rewarding, the bare-bones graphics and convoluted plot will scare off those new to the genre.")

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Space Pirates:**

Ed: 7.5 (quote: "This sci-fi adventure is one of the more fun FMV games, but I wish there was a bit more interactivity during the admittedly pretty cutscenes.")

Danyon: 5

Al: 5.5

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Star Wars: X-Wing:**

Ed: 9.5

Danyon: 8.5 (quote: "Not a PERFECT PC port, but good enough, this really fun space-flight sim is one of the most in-depth space shooters I've ever played, and the best Star Wars game since Super Empire Strikes Back.")

Al: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7

### **Terminator II: Judgment Day:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 8

Al: 8 (quote: "This sequel to last year's fun Terminator game, basically took the engine from that game and grafted the T2 plot onto it. Much closer to the movie than last year's game, it's a lot of fun to take control of Arnold's awesome Terminator character. The music's not quite as good though.")

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Tin Star:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 8.5 (quote: "You CAN use the SNES controller but I really recommend the Super Scope, it makes aiming and shooting at the bad guys in this Western-themed rail shooter a lot more fun.")

Sushi-X: 6

### **X-Men: Mutant Apocalypse**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 6.5

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 8.5 (quote: "This was an awesome adaptation of the X-Men comics and I loved the variety of characters you can use to punch your way through stages.")

### **Universalizer:**

Ed: 9.5

Danyon: 9 (quote: "An absolutely beautiful shooter with one of the best soundtracks I've ever heard in this type of game. It was tough as nails, but getting through this game's fourteen stages was a lot of fun.")

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9

### **Unearthed:**

Ed: 5

Danyon: 6

Al: 6 (quote: "Pretty much just your standard RPG, featuring a fairly boring story and some bottom-of-the-barrel SNES quality graphics. Pales in comparison to some of the great RPGs that hit the SNES-CD this year.")

Sushi-X: 3.5

## **Race For Your Life:**

Ed: 5.5

Danyon: 7

Al: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7 (quote: "This violent racing game lets you take the wheel as one of several criminals who go on a cross-country death race to escape the police. It's kind of fun but really, really violent, and definitely deserves the M rating it got.")

## **Oceanica:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 8 (quote: "Enix's sorta sequel to E.V.O. focuses on sea creatures in a giant ocean. I had a lot of fun getting my creature stronger and ducking giant ocean predators in the early stages, but the later stages with the human hunters could at times be an exercise in frustration.")

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7

-*Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of December 1994's SNES-CD games in the January and February 1995 issues

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*"I'd never done a video game before, so developing Muppet World was a major challenge for me. It was, however, one that I was glad to take on, and the work we did on it laid the groundwork for future endeavors in the industry. It was nice to have Nintendo's help, the same way that we contributed our help to their Star Fox game, and it was of course another chance to work with my good friend Mr. Shigeru Miyamoto."*

-Frank Oz, discussing his work on *Muppet World* with *Muppets Monthly* magazine in February 2001

## **Muppet World**

*Muppet World* is a game nearly two years in the making, brought into existence by a deal made by Nintendo with the Jim Henson Company. In exchange for their work on *Star Fox*, the Jim Henson Company would be allowed to make a Muppet game for the Super Nintendo CD, and would be assisted by Nintendo itself in the game's development. The result is a surprisingly fun mix of mini-games and adventures, featuring a ton of Muppet-related fun and more than a half-hour of new live-action Muppet footage. The game takes place in a sort of hub world, you select an "adventure" from the main screen featuring one of twelve muppets. There's Kermit, Miss Piggy, Rowlf, Gonzo, Animal, even Statler and Waldorf get their own adventure (in this case, a wacky platformer where they make jokes about everything). Five of the "adventures" are basically mini-games, but seven of them are games in their own right, ranging from about an hour to three hours to complete. Once you beat all seven games and complete the five mini-games to a satisfactory level, the final "adventure" is opened up: a two-hour adventure featuring all the Muppets that's a great culmination to the game's storyline as well as being a love letter of sorts to those who've followed the Muppet franchise for the last 30 years. While the game is relatively easy (being targeted to kids after all), more hardcore players will still get some fun out of the game, especially if they're fans of the Muppets at all. *Muppet World* is pretty much everything you could ask for out of a Muppet game.

Graphics: 7  
Music: 7  
Control: 9  
Play Mechanics: 8  
Originality: 9  
Overall: 40

-review of *Muppet World* from the February 1995 issue of *GameFan* magazine

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*"So, with the Mega Charger version of Doom, they told us they wanted the game out for the holiday season 1994. But the problem with that was that we needed to make some cuts to get the game to run smoothly on the Mega Charger, and we really weren't given the time to get everything working properly. Given, maybe three more months, the game would've been perfect on the Mega Charger. As it stood, the music had to be somewhat downgraded, which was a shame because the Mega Charger's audio chip was really good. The game had some slowdown, not a lot but definitely noticeable compared with say, the Jaguar version or the Super Nintendo CD version. It was a decent port, but we really got crunched and that prevented it from being as good as it could have been."*

-John Carmack, co-founder of Id Software, in an interview with *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, June 1998

*"Star Wars Arcade, while a very nice looking game that definitely rivals a lot of the stuff you might see on the Super Nintendo CD, is fundamentally flawed in several important ways. The game's fairly short and fairly repetitive, and while that might work for an arcade game, this is supposed to be a home console game and one of the Mega Charger's killer apps. The controls aren't that great, in fact, they're significantly worse than the SNES-CD's X-Wing game. So what you have is something that's very pretty, but under the surface the true colors of this game aren't so pleasant."*

-excerpted from Al Manuel's 6/10 review of *Star Wars Arcade* in the January 1995 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"Just like in 1993, our big holiday 'killer apps' turned out to be disappointments and that seriously hurt us when it came to countering the SNES-CD's sales push that holiday season. Earthworm Jim for the Genesis was a pleasant surprise, but that was coming to the SNES-CD the very next month and it had a nearly identical version on the SNES as well, so we really didn't have any good exclusives to push Mega Charger adaptors. We just kept advertising Sonic 3 and Virtua Fighter and tried our best to keep chugging along until the Saturn launch."*

-Tom Kalinske

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"So with the Niners about to meet the Titans in Super Bowl XLIX, our first Super Bowl appearance in a quarter of a century, I feel like it's time to revisit the closest I feel we've been to the Super Bowl since 1990, and that was in 1995, with Steve Young and probably the best team I feel we've had since those great Joe Montana years. Everyone who was a Niners fan back then will remember all the hype going into the 1994 season. We'd just traded with the Atlanta Falcons for their star receiver Andre Rison, the guy that was going to give us a Super Bowl-winning receiver tandem like the Dallas Cowboys had with Michael Irvin and Alvin Harper. Jerry Rice and Andre Rison soon dominated the league and the

Niners were off to a 13-1 record, on track to crush the NFC playoffs with a number-one seed and one of the best offenses in league history.

But on the night of December 13, 1994, all of that became moot next to one of the most tragic incidents in NFL history. At the time of course, Andre Rison was dating Lisa "Left-Eye" Lopes, one of the members of the hit band TLC, and the two had had a very tumultuous relationship. Of course, the backdrop to all of this was the NFL's ongoing crackdown on domestic violence in the wake of the OJ Simpson murder-suicide, with a major spotlight being placed on the league and its commissioner Paul Tagliabue. We'll never know the whole truth about that night. To this day, Rison claims that Lopes was threatening to "burn the house down" and that she had started the fight. But however that night's fight started, it ended when Rison punched Lopes in the face and knocked her head into a stone coffee table. The blow caused a massive cerebral hemorrhage and Lopes died on the way to the hospital. Rison was immediately barred from the NFL, and though he managed to cop a plea to voluntary manslaughter, he served eight years in prison for the crime.

Only nine at the time, I was shocked, saddened, bewildered...horrified by the news that the man who'd become maybe my favorite player on the team could have done something so horrible. To this day, there's no way I can bring myself to side with Rison even if his story of the events of that night was true...though considering that he'd had a history of abusing Lopes even before the incident took place, I highly doubt the validity of his version of events. I kept my Rison jersey for some time after the incident, though I never actually wore it again and eventually my mom threw it away (she wouldn't have let me wear it again even if I'd wanted to). What happened afterward....the Niners, despite bravely attempting to fight through the enormous distraction and emotional toll of the event, making it to the NFC Championship only to lose 35-17 to the Dallas Cowboys, who would go on to become the first team to ever win three straight Super Bowls after beating the Pittsburgh Steelers in Super Bowl XXIX. Paul Tagliabue resigning as commissioner after the season in the wake of overwhelming public outrage. All of it just seems inconsequential next to the loss of a beautiful and talented young musical star on the rise.

Steve Young never did get his ring, and indeed never got that close again, never again making the NFC Championship. Here's hoping that Andrew Luck and this year's great Niners team can exorcise all those old demons of the last 25 years."

-from *Dispatches From Candlestick*, a San Francisco 49ers fan blog, on January 28, 2015

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This month will see the release of three very quirky but very fun games for the Super Nintendo CD, and here are some brief rundowns so you can consider picking them up if you want something a bit outside the box!

### **Universalizer**

Universalizer is a 2-D space shooter somewhat similar to the Gradius series. You're a pilot who's pursuing an ancient evil that traverses numerous galaxies in search of ultimate conquest! Your ship possesses a great weapon: The Universalizer, which allows you to call forth the energy of the planets and stars and convert them into different types of projectiles and shields to blast enemies on your way through the cosmos! There are fourteen different levels to conquer, each one taking place in a different galaxy and each one featuring its own beautiful musical score, the SNES-CD's enhanced audio capabilities really come to life in this excellent but very difficult game!

## **Oceanica**

From Enix comes this spiritual successor to *E.V.O.: The Search For Eden*. It takes place in a vast ocean, where you're a tiny fish that must hunt down and consume other fish to grow bigger and stronger. Along the way you can explore various undersea caves and even ancient city ruins in search of new powers you can use to aid you on your quest. Your ultimate goal is to become the Great Whale of the Sea, an ancient guardian who is completely impervious to all predators. To reach this goal, you'll need to dodge thousands of other sea creatures and even smart and skillful human hunters to survive.

## **Shin Megami Tensei**

One of the absolutely strangest role-playing games we've ever played, this game is for mature audiences and hardcore RPG fans only! It's a first-person RPG, played somewhat like the old Dungeons and Dragons games, but the gameplay is very much like Final Fantasy in that you're fighting monsters and collecting loot. You're also tasked with collecting demons to aid you on your quest. These demons can be fused into a variety of creatures from myth and lore, and you'll need all the help you can get to fight some of the toughest enemies we've ever seen in a role-playing game, or any video game for that matter!

-from the "Pak Watch" segment of *Nintendo Power* in the December 1994 issue, which also contained a brief walkthrough of the first four stages of *Universalizer* and would cover *Shin Megami Tensei* in more depth in January 1995's debut of the "Epic Center" feature (which debuted IOTL in March 1995)

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## **Ubisoft: The Hottest Game Company You've Never Heard Of**

Though Ubisoft has been around for several years now, they've burst onto the scene this month with their new Super Nintendo CD game *Rayman*. It's been getting rave reviews and is set to be one of the hottest selling titles of this holiday season. The company is headquartered in France, which is perhaps known for its fine art and delicious cuisine rather than its video games. But Ubisoft has gathered some of the freshest talent in the industry, including Michel Ancel, *Rayman*'s young but talented creator. So what's next for this exciting company?

Believe it or not, Ubisoft has a Japanese-styled RPG set to release in North America in February 1995! Called *The Darkest Ritual*, the game centers around a pair of teenage girls, Etienne and Kris, who accidentally unleash an evil curse upon their high school and must become powerful witches in order to stop it! Ancel says that the game is partially inspired by 1992's film *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, but the game will be facing stiff competition, as *Final Fantasy VI* is set to release the very next month. Judging by how *Rayman* has directly challenged Nintendo's megahit *Donkey Kong Country*, it's clear that Ubisoft isn't afraid of a little competition. We can't wait to see what this company on the rise comes up with next!

-from the January 1995 issue of *GamePro* magazine

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Jackbob1985 here, and today I'm continuing my in-depth look at Super Nintendo CD

releases with a countdown of my top five games from December 1994. This month was absolutely stacked, with hit franchise games and superb original titles, and it was hard to choose a winner (but fun to play most of these games!). So without any further ado, let's get this list started.

#### 5. *X-Men: Mutant Apocalypse*

The first X-Men game to hit the SNES-CD, this was a pretty straight forward action title, but it featured great graphics and music and I loved the variety it gave you when it came to choosing which mutant to go into battle with. This game let you choose nine mutants, including Beast, Cable, Cyclops, Gambit, Jubilee (ew), Psylocke, Rogue, Storm, and Wolverine. The storyline was fun and fresh too and overall this was just an awesome X-Men game.

#### 4. *Star Wars: X-Wing*

A lot of people consider the PC version of this game an all-time classic, and it was really good on the SNES-CD as well. The SNES-CD version cut out a decent chunk of the cutscenes, which was a shame, but the gameplay was left pretty much untouched and it included all the missions from the PC version, some 40 in all. It was one of the best straight-up space-flight simulators on the SNES-CD, with gameplay that I honestly found superior to Star Fox. The SNES might have had those cool (but super-hard) action games, but the SNES-CD was where you could find the best Star Wars action of all, and it started with this great port.

#### 3. *Universalizer*

From a straight-up space sim to a balls-to-the-wall bullet hell game, Universalizer might be the toughest game on the SNES-CD (and yet it actually sold a decent number of copies). You traverse the entire UNIVERSE in your quest to achieve cosmic glory, and with a great variety of weapons (and awesome music), you'd have fun even while you were getting blown up again and again and again.

#### 2. *F-Zero CD*

This sequel to 1991's F-Zero surpassed the original in pretty much every single way. It gave these compelling characters an actual story (true, it was just a backdrop to the racing, but still) and had one of the most fun (and fistfight-inducing) multiplayer modes on the system. F-Zero CD remains my favorite in the franchise and one of my favorite racing games of all time period.

#### 1. *Rayman*

The original Rayman for the SNES-CD (it got a Saturn port later on, but it'll always be a Nintendo game to me) is one of the best platformers of all time, period. With enchanting graphics and pixel-precise action, it's a tough call between this and *Donkey Kong Country* for my favorite platformer of the year (Sonic the Hedgehog can go to hell). While all the hype went to *F-Zero CD*, this game slipped in under the radar and endeared a lot of players. It's super fun to go back to again and again and again.

-posted on the "Jackbob's Video Game Reviews" blog on Wordpress, November 3, 2014

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\*After a Christmas-themed version of the Angry Video Game Nerd theme, the Nerd heads downstairs to open up his gifts.\*

AVGN: You know, there's no better time of the year than Christmas morning. The warm feeling you get from sitting by the fire with friends and family, the delicious taste of Christmas cookies and egg nog, and of course, the gifts. Definitely the gifts. I wonder what awesome games I'm gonna get this year?

\*The Nerd looks under his tree to find...nothing.\*

AVGN: Huh? Where are all the presents? \*he looks around and spots a VHS tape under the tree with "Play Me" written on a note taped to it\* What the...? \*he pops it into the VCR\*

\*On the screen is the Grinch, laughing and sneering at the nerd.\*

AVGN: Goddamn it, I shoulda known! This fucker, the Grinch, stole all my presents!

Grinch: Angry Video Game Nerd, I've stolen your presents, and everyone else's presents...in fact, I've stolen the jolly old elf himself! \*laughs and steps aside to reveal Santa Claus tied to a chair\*

Santa Claus: \*struggling\* Help me! Help me Nerd!

AVGN: That son of a bitch! The Grinch kidnapped Santa!

Grinch: I've kidnapped Santa Claus, and I'm not giving him back unless you, the Angry Video Game Nerd, play a video game!

AVGN: Well that doesn't sound so bad.

Grinch: I want you to play THIS! \*somehow hands the Nerd the game through the screen\*

AVGN: \*he sees the game and screams\* NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!  
NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!

\*It's "Who Kidnapped Santa Claus?", an FMV game released in December 1994 for the Super Nintendo CD\*

AVGN: This is one of the worst video games ever made! This is maybe THE worst Super Nintendo CD game ever made!

Grinch: If you don't play it, I'll make Santa play it instead! \*laughing\*

Santa: No! NO! Please, please Nerd, save me! You have to do it, for all the children!

AVGN: \*groans\* Fine...but I better get some damn good presents this year. \*he pops the game into the SNES-CD, leans back into his couch and takes a big swig of egg nog with alcohol\*

\*The review continues, interspersed with Tay Zonday singing a profanity-laced parody

version of "You're A Mean One, Mr. Grinch" (retitled to "You're An Asshole, Mr. Grinch"). The game is a horribly acted FMV disaster where the player has to help two annoying kids solve the mystery of who kidnapped Santa Claus from the North Pole. It's barely better than *Plumbers Don't Wear Ties* in terms of production values with none of that game's humor.\*

-from episode 101 of *The Angry Video Game Nerd*, "Christmas Special: Who Kidnapped Santa Claus?"

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: December 1994**

1. Mortal Kombat II – 29,256
2. Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition – 22,087
3. Contra IV: Hard Corps – 19,656
4. Jewels Of The Realm – 16,338
5. Super Mario World 2 – 16,057
6. Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers – 11,862
7. Wing Commander – 10,586
8. Final Fantasy Origins – 9,057
9. Lethal Enforcers II: Gun Fighters – 8,446
10. Secret Of Mana – 7,906
11. Cannon Fodder – 7,708
12. Kid Icarus CD – 7,554
13. Madden 95 – 6,940
14. Road Rash – 6,067
15. Superman CD – 5,864
16. NBA Jam – 5,547
17. Sam and Max Hit The Road – 5,360
18. Pitfall CD – 4,702
19. Super Mario Kart – 4,451
20. Ys IV – 4,203

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### **December 19, 1994**

Hiroshi Yamauchi had been considering the terms that Sony had laid out to Nintendo for more than week. The terms relating to increased recognition for Sony and an increased cut of Nintendo's game profits had been tolerable, but the demand for backward compatibility for the SNES-CD successor was considerably more of a stumbling block, and as Yamauchi discussed the issue with Howard Lincoln and Minoru Arakawa, he was already having unpleasant flashbacks to those days in 1991 when Norio Ohga had raked him over the coals.

"What possible use could they have for this backward compatibility, if not to push their music CDs?" said Yamauchi, a stern look on his face. "It does us no good to make this new system compatible with the old games when we will still be trying to push the old system!"

"Sir, I think it could work out to our advantage," said Howard Lincoln, who, along with Arakawa, was favorable to the idea of backward compatibility if it would help seal the deal with a very lucrative partner. "The ability to play music CDs is something that the Saturn

has, and we need to keep a leg up on them if we're to keep our competitive advantage."

"We'll keep our competitive advantage the same way we always have, by selling great games," Yamauchi replied. "The ability to play music CDs is a side feature, nice to have but not if it costs us even more money to manufacture the system."

"Sony is more than willing to absorb most of the additional manufacturing costs," said Arakawa.

"And they'll absorb them the same way they absorbed them with the current console, by demanding even more of a cut from the games we sell."

Hiroshi Yamauchi was convinced that Sony's ultimate goal was to absorb Nintendo completely and take over the company that had been in his family for more than a century. He'd rather die than let the company be taken. If Sony wanted to compete against Nintendo, so be it. He'd rather be beaten from the outside than taken over from within.

"My answer remains the same, I will agree to the first two terms but not the backward compatibility. Keep trying to work out a deal with them that doesn't require that and if they wish to go their separate ways then that is the way it will be.

Arakawa and Lincoln left Yamauchi's office disappointed, but not surprised. Somehow, the two of them knew they'd have to convince one side or the other to cave in. They knew they'd need Ken Kutaragi's help. While they were willing to let Nintendo go its own way and compete with Sony, neither one of them wanted that. Nintendo's partnership with Sony had been highly lucrative, and not only that, but Howard Lincoln believed it had advanced the medium of video gaming itself. Neither man was about to let backward compatibility be the stumbling block for one of the greatest partnerships in the history of the industry.

"We have to keep working him," said Lincoln to Arakawa, who replied with a nod. "And before I forget, Merry Christmas."

"Merry Christmas, my friend."

And, if Hiroshi Yamauchi or Norio Ohga could be convinced to cave, a happy New Year.

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*"This award came down to Rebecca, the eventual winner, and Mai Sharanui from The King Of Fighters '94. Though we had great fun watching the bouncy ninja Mai, we had even more fun watching the fierce Rebecca gunning down hordes of aliens and twirling those glowing twin swords of hers all over Velna. And that voice! Rebecca from Squad Four, you can sing us to sleep any day of the week!"*

-from the "Hottest Game Babe (All Systems)- Rebecca (Squad Four)" award commentary in EGM's 1995 Video Game Buyer's Guide

*"By 1995, we'd begun acknowledging that we were phasing out the cartridge-based Super Nintendo. Even in Nintendo Power, so much of the coverage had gone to the SNES-CD that we began covering the system like we had the NES back in 1993. While we still had a couple big games left in the pipeline, Yoshi's Island the biggest among them, we'd finally begun*

*formally saying that the SNES was on its way out. It had been a great, albeit somewhat short run."*

-Howard Lincoln

*"The Super Nintendo, now just \$69.99! Comes with Super Mario All-Stars and two controllers!"*

-from an ad that Nintendo began running in January 1995 after dropping the Super Nintendo cartridge system to \$69.99 (and the Playstation Combo Set to \$199.99)

*"Mark my words, 1995 will be the year of the Sega Saturn. We're bringing the arcade experience home in ways that players haven't even begun to imagine."*

-Tom Kalinske, in a January 3, 1995 press conference announcing Sega's plans for the coming year

*"So uh, we're gonna change focus and start developing games for the Super Nintendo CD and the upcoming Saturn system. I feel like the market focus at the time is on producing cheaper hardware and we just, I think the 3DO machine might have been a bit...I don't think the market was ready for it yet. And it hurts to admit that, but after talking to our manufacturing partners and our creative team, I feel like...like this refocus is going to lead to more long-term success for our company."*

-3DO co-founder Trip Hawkins, speaking at a January 16, 1995 press conference on the future of the 3DO

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**Top Selling Super Nintendo CD Games of 1994** (pack-in sales included, only sales during the 1994 calendar year are counted):

1. Super Mario World 2
2. Donkey Kong Country
3. Super Mario Kart
4. NBA Jam
5. The Secret Of Monkey Island
6. Squad Four
7. Mortal Kombat II
8. Star Fox
9. Secret Of Mana
10. Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition

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**1994 Nintendo Power Editors' Choice Top Ten SNES-CD Games**

1. Donkey Kong Country

*Donkey Kong Country amazed us all with its incredible graphics, awesome soundtrack, and great gameplay. No monkey business here, Donkey Kong Country was our number one pick!*

2. Squad Four

*This action-packed space adventure introduced us to four brave heroes and broke new ground in storytelling and cinema-like effects.*

### 3. F-Zero CD

*F-Zero is back and it's better than ever! We loved this sequel to 1991's smash hit and we can't get enough of taking all ten racers out on the track.*

### 4. Snatcher

*Hideo Kojima's cyberpunk thrillride was one of the most innovative titles we've ever played on a Nintendo system. We can't wait to see what he comes up with next!*

### 5. The Secret Of Monkey Island

*From Lucasarts came this fun pirate adventure starring Guybrush Threepwood, an intrepid adventure seeking to take down the evil LeChuck. Yo ho ho and a bottle of fun!*

### 6. Mortal Kombat II

*Mortal Kombat returned, as brutal and bloody as ever. Though the controversy was lighter this time around, the gameplay certainly wasn't, and we had even more fun playing this than we did last year!*

### 7. NBA Jam

*We loved hitting the hardwood with all 27 NBA teams in this excellent arcade port. Shattering the backboard and catching on fire has never been so much fun!*

### 8. Contra IV: Hard Corps

*Konami does it again with this action-packed run and gun adventure that featured multiple paths and loads and loads of tough enemies to gun down.*

### 9. Jewels Of The Realm

*We loved this colorful adventure game that gave us tons of ways to get through its beautiful levels. We also felt that it featured some of the year's best voice acting and storytelling.*

### 10. Rayman

*This platformer featuring graphics right out of a storybook was one of the most original and fun action games we've ever played. It even gives Donkey Kong Country a run for its money!*

*-featured in the January 1995 issue of Nintendo Power as part of their Super Power Club bonus insert*

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**1994 Nintendo Power Awards ("The Nesters")**- compiled from fan voting, not a complete list of awards

Best Graphics and Sound (SNES-CD)

1. Donkey Kong Country
2. Squad Four
3. NBA Jam

#### Best Challenge (SNES-CD)

1. Donkey Kong Country
2. Snatcher
3. Phaedra's Heart

#### Best Play Control (SNES-CD)

1. NBA Jam
2. Donkey Kong Country
3. Squad Four

#### Best Theme And Fun (SNES-CD)

1. Donkey Kong Country
2. Squad Four
3. The Secret Of Monkey Island

#### Best Hero

1. Donkey Kong
2. Samus
3. Shad

#### Best Villain

1. King K. Rool
2. Ridley
3. LeChuck

#### Most Innovative

1. Snatcher
2. The Secret Of Monkey Island
3. Squad Four

#### Best Overall (Super Nintendo)

1. Super Metroid
2. Dragon Warrior V
3. Super Street Fighter II

#### Best Overall (SNES-CD)

1. Donkey Kong Country
2. Snatcher
3. Squad Four

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We're now going to take a look at how video game technology is making the leap in 1995. It's been more than two years now since the release of the major CD-ROM video game peripherals, and though Sega's CD add-on has largely been a failure, Nintendo and Sony's CD-ROM has thrived, with more games promised this year than ever before. Sega has chosen to move on to the next generation of gaming technology, and though their new Saturn device won't be released here in North America until the fall, we've managed to get our hands on the Japanese version of the device in order to take a look under the hood and see just how advanced it really is.

The device is packing a graphics processor from Silicon Graphics, a company known for making high-tech computer internals. The Saturn can replicate some of the most advanced computer graphics we've yet seen on a home device, and though the price tag of nearly 50,000 yen is steep, it's significantly less than the 3DO device released in 1993, and vastly more powerful. As seen in the hit game *Virtua Fighter*, the Saturn can perfectly replicate the performance of its arcade counterpart, in fact showing even more detail and quickness of movement involving the game's cart of characters. Sega remains quiet about the system's exact graphical specifications, but similar graphics chips have been clocked at over 80 megahertz, rivaling some of the speedier home PCs available on the market. Though Sega is hinging most of its long-term plans on the Saturn, its cartridge-based Mega Charger attachment for the Sega Genesis continues to sell at a robust pace. Capable of 22 megahertz of processing speed, it too is capable of displaying accelerated 3-D graphics, though its version of *Virtua Fighter* isn't quite as clean or speedy as the arcade version.

Sega's arch-rival Nintendo has yet to announce the successor to its Super Nintendo, though it will almost certainly use optical disc technology similar to the SNES-CD. Whether or not Nintendo will partner with Sony on its new system is unknown, though an inside source says negotiations are "ongoing". Nintendo impressed many with the rendered graphics of its hit *Donkey Kong Country* game, and ports of popular PC titles such as *Doom* are planned for release in the upcoming year. All in all, Nintendo was much more secretive about their upcoming plans than Sega was, but it's likely that if Nintendo and Sony do collaborate on a new console, its performance and processing power will almost certainly rival that of the Sega Saturn.

Nintendo and Sega are clearly the top dogs in the gaming industry, putting companies such as Atari and the upstart 3DO Company in the red by easily beating their own next-generation hardware devices on the market. The 3DO Company is expected to refocus its efforts on designing software titles for Nintendo and Sega's systems, while Atari continues to push on, recently dropping the price of its Jaguar system in an effort to keep pace with Nintendo's recent price cuts. There's also a new contender in town, as Japanese toymaking giant Bandai is said to be announcing its own next generation console at the Winter CES, coming up later this month. Whether or not Bandai can break up what's turned into a duopoly has yet to be seen, but Nintendo and Sega seem to be far more worried about each other than any potential third party in this industry race.

-Computer Chronicles, January 8, 1995

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## **SEGA MEGA CHARGER**

## **Sega Enterprises, Ltd./Silicon Graphics**

The Sega Mega Charger is a powerful graphics accelerator in the form of a Genesis cartridge that can be easily plugged into the Genesis video game console and linked up with certain games to provide enhanced 3-D graphics and sound capabilities.

-Popular Mechanics, "Design and Engineering Awards 1995", January 1995

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### **Electronic Gaming Monthly 1994 Editors' Choice Awards** (selected)

Game of The Year: Donkey Kong Country (SNES-CD)

Runner-up: Sonic the Hedgehog 3 (Sega Genesis)

*Game of the Year was a damn tough decision, probably the toughest we've ever had to make. Sega brought its A-game with Sonic 3, but in the end, the graphics and music in Donkey Kong Country, along with its fantastic platforming gameplay, put it over the top. We couldn't get enough of guiding Donkey Kong and his sidekick Diddy through the eight beautifully designed worlds, fighting giant bosses (that dragon!) and pushing through some of the toughest platforming challenges we've ever faced. Even with the Mega Charger backing it up, Sonic 3 just couldn't quite take this one.*

Super Nintendo Game Of The Year: Super Metroid

Runner-up: Fire Emblem

*This one was pretty easy. Super Metroid took the Planet Zebes and super-sized it, providing some challenging but rewarding exploration segments as we made our way through fire, rain, and jungle environments on our way to take out the deadly Mother Brain.*

Sega Genesis Game Of The Year: Sonic the Hedgehog 3

Runner-up: Virtua Fighter

*Sonic 3 was the first game to ever get a perfect score from EGM, and for good reason. It was Sonic's best adventure yet, taking us through colorful environments faster than the speed of sound. Virtua Fighter was superb and a great showcase for the Mega Charger's capabilities, but in the end we couldn't say no to the hedgehog.*

Super Nintendo CD Game Of The Year: Donkey Kong Country

Runner-up: Snatcher

*While we loved the innovative and unique Snatcher, and its storytelling absolutely blew us away, there was no doubt that Donkey Kong Country was taking this one home. The chest-pounding, monkey-rolling, Kremling-stomping adventure was just too good!*

Best RPG: Fire Emblem (Super Nintendo)

Runner-up: Dragon Warrior V (Super Nintendo)

*Two challenging RPGs that showed that the Super Nintendo cartridge system can still bring it when it comes to epic adventures. In the end, it was Fire Emblem and its high-stakes, high strategy gameplay that took the crown over Enix's old school epic.*

Best Fighting Game: Virtua Fighter (Sega Genesis)  
Runner-up: Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition (SNES-CD)

*We'll always have a soft spot for Street Fighter, but Virtua Fighter is the next generation and boy did it kick butt with its 3-D gameplay and glimpse into the future of fighting games!*

Best Action Game: Donkey Kong Country (SNES-CD)  
Runner-up: Sonic the Hedgehog 3 (Sega Genesis)

*Just like in our Game of the Year debate, the monkey won out over the hedgehog, with just a bit more platforming satisfaction.*

Best Music: Donkey Kong Country (SNES-CD)  
Runner-up: Snatcher (SNES-CD)

*Snatcher's jazzy tunes and cyberpunk sounds definitely struck a chord, but the fully orchestrated Donkey Kong Country soundtrack made every jump, barrel throw, and enemy knockout as epic as it could be.*

### **System Reviews:**

Super Nintendo CD:

Ed: 10 (quote: "The Super Nintendo CD continues to impress with every game released for it. Hands down, the most robust and varied lineup of any of the major game consoles.")

Danyon: 9 (quote: "While the RPG selection this year was a bit lacking, every other genre was well represented, especially the fighting games, which I'm sure Sushi-X will appreciate.")

Al: 10 (quote: "What wasn't there to like about the SNES-CD this year? From Donkey Kong Country, to Squad Four, to Snatcher, there was enough on this system to make my job as a game reviewer as fun as ever.")

Sushi-X: 9 (quote: "This thing is an arcade lover's dream machine, though it's yet to be seen how well it can handle the next generation of 3-D arcade hits.")

Super Nintendo:

Ed: 7 (quote: "It's clear that this system is on the way out, but it's been a good ride and we've still got some great games to come.")

Danyon: 7 (quote: "I know that people who are sticking with the SNES over its CD add-on might have been a bit disappointed, but games like Fire Emblem and Super Metroid still keep me playing this awesome console.")

Al: 7 (quote: "Three years in and already showing its age? Technology is really something, isn't it? That being said, I can't get enough of Fire Emblem and I'll be sad to see the end of cartridges.")

Sushi-X: 6 (quote: "The existence of the SNES-CD really highlights this thing's flaws, especially as it pertains to fighting games.")

Sega Genesis:

Ed: 8 (quote: "We all loved playing Sonic 3, but outside of that, the Genesis' lineup left a bit to be desired. Here's hoping the Mega Charger peripheral will stimulate some creativity.")

Danyon: 9 (quote: "The Mega Charger really saved this thing's bacon just when I was

starting to get bored with it! I can't stop playing *Doom* on this thing."

Al: 8 (quote: "Sonic 3 was my game of the year and I'm hoping for good things from *Knuckles: Renegade* when it hits in the spring.")

Sushi-X: 9 (quote: "The Mega Charger is a huge boon to fighting games, giving us the best home console version of *Super Street Fighter II* and making *Virtua Fighter* possible. Will we see some SNK ports? I hope so!")

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* 1995 Video Game Buyer's Guide

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### **Gamepro 1994 Editors' Choice Awards** (selected)

Super Nintendo Game Of The Year: Super Metroid

Runners-up: Ken Griffey Jr. Presents Major League Baseball, Dragon Warrior V

Sega Genesis Game Of The Year: Sonic the Hedgehog 3

Runners-up: Virtua Fighter, Madden '95

Super Nintendo CD Game Of The Year: Donkey Kong Country

Runners-up: Squad Four, The Secret Of Monkey Island

Fighting Game Of The Year: Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition

Runners-up: Virtua Fighter, Mortal Kombat II

Action/Adventure Game Of The Year: Sonic the Hedgehog 3

Runners-up: Donkey Kong Country, Jewels Of The Realm

Role-Playing Game of the Year: Dragon Warrior V

Runners-up: Phaedra's Heart, Final Fantasy Origins

Game Of The Year (Overall): Sonic The Hedgehog 3

Runners-up: Donkey Kong Country, Super Metroid

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**Game Watch** (starting with the January 1995 issue, *Nintendo Power* magazine officially changes their "Pak Watch" list of selected upcoming games to "Game Watch", in accordance with the increasing irrelevance of cartridge-based games with the decline of the Super Nintendo)

*SNES-CD:*

Bass Masters Classic – Winter '95

Don't Go To Bed! - Winter '95

Earthworm Jim: Special Edition – Winter '95

Escape From The Lab – Winter '95

Flintstones: The Movie – Winter '95

Justice League: The Battle For Earth – Winter '95

Lords Of Thunder – Winter '95

MechWarrior 3050 – Winter '95

Mega Man X2 – Winter '95

Nightsquad – Winter '95  
Real Ultimate Football – Winter '95  
Scooby-Doo: The Mansion Mysteries – Winter '95  
The Darkest Ritual – Winter '95  
Timecop – Winter '95  
Urban Strike – Winter '95  
3-D Pool – Spring '95  
Backwoods Racing – Spring '95  
Bikerz – Spring '95  
Cat Jackson – Spring '95  
Chumoking – Spring '95  
Cosmic Fantasy – Spring '95  
Dark City: Heart Of Darkness – Spring '95  
Double Dragon: Triple Trouble – Spring '95  
Eyes Of The Vampire – Spring '95  
Fatal Fury Special – Spring '95  
Final Fantasy VI – Spring '95  
Friendly Fire – Spring '95  
Gex – Spring '95  
Icebiter 2 – Spring '95  
International Superstar Soccer CD – Spring '95  
Kirby's Avalanche – Spring '95  
Lucienne's Quest – Spring '95  
NBA Jam: Tournament Edition – Spring '95  
NCAA Final Four Basketball – Spring '95  
P.T.O. 2 – Spring '95  
Parallel World – Spring '95  
Pickton Lake 2 – Spring '95  
Populous CD – Spring '95  
Shadowrun 2 – Spring '95  
Spawn – Spring '95  
Stargate – Spring '95  
Super Punch-Out CD – Spring '95  
Super Turrican 2 – Spring '95  
Swords of Samnaria – Spring '95  
Top Gear 3000 – Spring '95  
Victory – Spring '95  
Virtuoso – Spring '95  
Batman Forever – Summer '95  
ClayFighter 2 – Summer '95  
Deadman Sam 2 – Summer '95  
Doom – Summer '95  
Earthbound 2 – Summer '95  
Gryphon – Summer '95  
Hotel Havoc – Summer '95  
Hyperspeed – Summer '95  
Madden 96 – Summer '95  
Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers: The Movie – Summer '95  
The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams – Summer '95  
The Mask – Summer '95  
Toxic Waste – Summer '95  
WWF Wrestlemania – Summer '95

Battle Arena Toshinden – Fall '95  
Cannon Fodder 2 – Fall '95  
Eskrima Warriors 2 – Fall '95  
Killer Instinct – Fall '95  
Super Star Wars Trilogy – Fall '95  
Where in Time Is Carmen Sandiego? - Fall '95

-published in the January 1995 issue of *Nintendo Power*

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*“1994 was arguably the high-water mark of the console wars, at least as far as the SNES vs. Genesis portion of it was concerned. Sega went into the year in near panic mode. Their CD-ROM experiment had been a disaster in the face of the Super Nintendo CD's superior line-up of games. But Sega responded with a bold strategy: focus on value and re-double its efforts on the Genesis, the system it had been pushing for the last four years. With the massive release of Sonic 3, those efforts paid off, and Sega spent a good part of the year ahead of Nintendo in sales. The release of the Mega Charger that August was perhaps the second most successful peripheral launch ever...second, of course, only to the Super Nintendo CD. It gave Sega the processing power it needed to compete with Nintendo's high-capacity CD-ROM games and successfully bridged the gap between the Genesis and Sega's fifth-generation console, the Saturn. Nintendo followed up a fairly weak summer with a massive holiday season of hit games, including franchise-starter Squad Four and the massively acclaimed Donkey Kong Country. It swept most of the major game publication awards and dominated sales that holiday season, pushing Nintendo's SNES and its CD-ROM peripheral, which had become overwhelmingly the focus of its development efforts, back in front to stay. Though Sega ended the year in pretty much the same place it had started, they'd at the very least bought valuable time, keeping their company a clear close second in the console wars rather than falling into irrelevancy. 1995 would see the beginning of the next generation with the North American launch of the Sega Saturn... but Sega would have to navigate a minefield of challenges along the way.”*

-“The History Of Console Gaming: Year-By-Year (Part 5)”, Wired.com, June 12, 2012

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And here's a list of all the SNES-CD games of 1994 whose franchises were completely original to this timeline, along with brief descriptions to help you get an idea of what kind of game it would have been:

Squad Four: An adventure game by Argonaut featuring a squad of four interstellar explorers who crash-land on a planet in the midst of a massive war. A majorly-hyped first party game for Nintendo.

Daywalkers: A platform horror game about a cop who fights vampires that are attempting to take over a city. A fairly violent game that gets decent reviews and sales.

Cheer High Detective Team: A visual novel/detective game about a group of cheerleaders who end up solving mysteries. While intended as a game for tween girls, the numerous unintentional fanservice moments in the game make it a surprise cult hit among males, though overall sales are pretty low and reviews are below average to middling at best.

Thrillseeker: A board/party game for 2-4 players. One of the first party games to come to the SNES-CD, it's actually a fairly decent game and because it's one of the first of its kind, sales are fairly good.

After The Lights Go Out: A noirish detective game full of FMV cutscenes. The protagonist, Sam Steele, investigates a variety of mysteries in a city full of crime. The game isn't bad but there are a ton of cliches and the acting is cheesy. This game is around the time that there are a glut of detective games on the system and sales are poor.

Monster Wars: A tactical RPG by Koei featuring all kinds of horrific monsters. Vampires, werewolves, skeletons, mummies, and other creepy crawlies clash on numerous battlefields, fighting for control of the Dark World. One of the best SRPGs on the system, sales are about average for the genre.

Knightstar: A JRPG about a young boy destined to become a knight and save his kingdom. A middle-of-the-road RPG, though there are a decent amount of voice acted lines in the game, giving it a boost in the production values department.

Snakey Snakington: A generic platformer starring a snake named Snakey Snakington. Repetitive music and unoriginal stages doom this game to below average reviews.

Phaedra's Heart: A JRPG by Enix, starring a goddess named Phaedra who loses her powers and must journey through the world of the mortals to reclaim them. Features some voice acting. One of the best-received original RPGs on the system, but sales are atrocious. The game is now a collector's item.

Solus: The spiritual successor to the Super Scope games Battle Clash and Metal Combat, this is a lightgun game by Nintendo's R+D 1, which has the player battling for his life in a futuristic arena. About halfway through the game the scene shifts to where the player is battling those who put him in the arena with the help of some of his surviving opponents.

Bumblebee: Zooble's Hive: A platforming/action game where you control an anthropomorphic bumblebee named Zooble who has to fight to protect his hive from a gang of evil spiders known as the Webkins. Featuring some catchy music and tight platforming gameplay, this Konami game is a success for the most part.

Slumlord: An action game where you play a rather shady character who runs a crime racket and dishes out punishment to those who cross him. A somewhat below average game that

would be controversial for its violent content if many people had bought it.

**The Next Champion:** A sidescrolling fighting game where you customize a character and then take them on a journey to become the next world martial arts champion. Receives some praise for its early use of RPG elements and its character building tools.

**Who Kidnapped Santa Claus?:** An FMV-based detective game where you have to find out who kidnapped Santa Claus. Atrocious, cheesy acting and boring gameplay make this one of the worst games to be released for the console. The Angry Video Game Nerd does a Christmas special on this.

**Hurricane Season '94:** A piece of educational simulation software where the player can simulate or track hurricanes, the simulator allows the player to plot weather conditions to steer or strength hurricanes. A fairly well-made, if quirky piece of software with very few sales.

**Gun Warrior:** An action game where the player battles the evil army of the dark wizard Zekto, with only his many, many guns to aid him. Features some pretty fun action and slick animation, along with good music, the game is a hit for Tecmo and becomes a franchise.

**Astra:** A fairly generic RPG featuring a band of warriors who battle an ancient, evil dragon and his demon hordes. Sales are pretty lousy and the game is mediocre.

**School Daze:** An FMV game where you're a student in high school and you have to deal with high school romance, bullying, classes, and other things. Another one of those FMV games that is "so bad it's good", the acting is atrocious and the game itself isn't very good.

**Meteora:** An FMV space shooter where your character has to fight off a variety of armadas. The acting is actually halfway decent (a couple of the actors in this become more famous later on) and the game itself is well received.

**Universalizer:** An arcade-style space shooter in the vein of the "bullet hell" genre, similar to games like Gradius and Axelay. Excellent animation, a variety of levels and weapons, and outstanding music makes this one of the best received shooters on the whole system.

**Koolblocks:** A puzzle game that has the player matching groups of similar blocks, while also shooting blocks with other blocks to clear increasingly large arenas. Despite the generic name, the game is decently received and has a fun multiplayer mode.

**At Land's End:** A Zelda-esque adventure game featuring a brave knight who has to explore several kingdoms in search of a captive princess. The game has none of the charm of similar adventure games and the repetitive and clunky gameplay earns it middling reviews

at best.

**Jewels Of The Realm:** An action/adventure game by Activision, featuring two characters, a boy and a girl who are forced onto a journey together when their village is destroyed by an evil tyrant, they have to power up mystical jewels to increase their power to get strong enough to save the realm. The game features voice acting and cutscenes, the girl is voiced by Alyson Court in her first major video game role (before she plays Claire in Resident Evil). The game is very well received for its gameplay and production values and sells quite well.

**Soulqueen:** A space shooter starring a badass female bounty hunter named Cleopatra who calls her fighter ship the Soulqueen. Very fast-paced and difficult, the game is considered one of the founding games of the modern bullet-hell genre. An instant cult classic.

**Furious Heart:** A fighting game featuring a variety of brawlers. Really generic in terms of its gameplay but does receive some praise for its graphics.

**Science Fighters:** A quirky fighting game which features scientists of various disciplines brawling. Almost completely tongue-in-cheek, this game is actually praised somewhat for some unique characters and moves, and has a fun, albeit completely wacky storyline.

**My Name Is Silence:** An FMV game about a mysterious assassin caught up in a tale of political intrigue. One of the better-acted FMV games on the console despite featuring a cast of complete amateurs, it's known as one of the better FMV games on the console and receives a cult following.

**Hunter:** A first-person shooter/army game where you have to hunt down a tyrannical warlord. The graphics are rather simplistic and the clunky gameplay and confusing level design make it an ignored and panned game.

**Day Of Malcarius:** An RPG created by a group of former Game Arts workers who spun off from the company to form their own. Somewhat like Lunar but a bit more experimental, about a group of warriors who rise up to battle a warlock named Malcarius. With solid gameplay and graphics and a good musical score, the game is one of 1994's better SNES-CD RPGs.

**Fireball:** A multi-dimensional shooter game without much of a plot, it's somewhat like a much faster paced Asteroids, where your single ship flies around the screen shooting down balls of flame that light up with bright colors. Decently fun but nothing special.

**Tut's Tomb:** An Egyptian-based platformer game where you play as King Tut. Lousy graphics and clunky play controls make this a below average title.

Unearthed: A generic-as-they-come RPG with bad graphics and very dull gameplay, with an unoriginal story to boot. Poorly reviewed, disappears among the herd of other RPGs this year.

Dunk Star: A basketball game featuring a variety of fictional players where the object of the game is to come up with the most spectacular dunk possible. A fairly generic sports game with a hilariously bad announcer.

Heavily Armed Princess: A platformer about a princess who takes up a sword and many other weapons after her prince boyfriend is kidnapped. Excessively violent and filled with hilarious cutscenes and one-liners, the game receives a very mixed reception but becomes a cult classic.

Oops!: A trap-em-up FMV game featuring a group of girls at a slumber party. Developed by Sony after their proposal to get Night Trap on the console was shut down, this game is a much more kid-friendly Night Trap Lite in both content and difficulty. The acting is even worse than Night Trap, with the exception of a young Jennifer Morrison who plays one of the girls. Nintendo actually tries to hype this game but the atrocious reviews kill sales pretty quickly.

Real GT Racing: A racing game featuring 20 real cars from across the racing world on a variety of licensed tracks. One of the better looking games graphically of 1994, the racing itself is fairly dull and the game receives middling reviews.

Race For Your Life: A racing game featuring cars driven by escaped criminals looking to avoid the cops and wreck each other as they race across the country. The first racing game to get an M rating on the SNES-CD, this game is notorious for letting you run over bystanders and the language is fairly extreme for an SNES-CD game.

Oceanica: A spiritual successor of sorts to E.V.O.: The Search For Eden, developed by Enix, the game has you as a small sea creature who must grow bigger by devouring other larger creatures, eventually you end up having to evade human hunters. A decently received adventure/RPG game.

City Planner: A sort of rival game of sorts to SimCity, City Planner is a much more in-depth city simulation, which involves running the day-to-day business of a city more than it does building one. It even lets the player make illicit deals, though there is the risk of being caught by police or investigative reporters. Very low sales but another cult classic game for the console.

Logjam: A platforming game about a lumberjack in a forest who must dodge bears, environmental hazards, and other things on his way back home. The game actually has a pretty good soundtrack and decent level design and does fairly well.

**Major Hazard:** A third-person action/shooter where the title character, Major Hazard, battles a variety of enemies in his quest to help his army win a war. A somewhat silly game, Major Hazard is an overly manly hero in the vein of Duke Nukem and the game is fairly fun, with fully voiced gameplay.

**Fatal Strike:** An action game/brawler where you control the samurai Notukaga as he quests through a variety of levels for revenge against the shogun who wronged him. Made by Koei, the game features excellent graphics and level design and is a minor hit for the company.

**Invasion 2022:** A real-time strategy game where the player must repel an alien invasion. Compared to X-COM in a number of ways, but the gameplay isn't nearly as good and the graphics are mediocre, leading to poor reviews and sales.

**Icebiter:** A run-and-gun action game where you play a soldier who must save his icebound village from a huge ice monster and its monster minions. Somewhat comparable to Gunstar Heroes in gameplay, it features decent level design and music and is fairly well received.

**Eskrima Warriors:** A fighting game featuring the martial art of eskrima, involving sticks, blades, and blunt weapons. Considered a sort of pre-cursor to Soul Edge, though the two games have nothing to do with one another and aren't by the same company (this game is Tecmo, Soul Edge is Namco), the game is one of the better fighting games of the year.

**Infiltrator:** A sort of stealth action/adventure game where you play a professional spy that breaks into a variety of locations. Decently received, though not a great or even really good game.

**Dazzler:** A puzzle game where you combine sparks of light in certain combinations. Instead of racking up your score (though you do get a score), the object of the game is to make more and more impressive combos for brighter visual displays. Though the gameplay is mediocre, the graphics and art design get a lot of praise and it shows off the SNES-CD's 2-D capabilities in a big way.

**Tomato Tommy:** A puzzle/platformer starring an anthropomorphic tomato. The gameplay is extremely bad and the graphics, while colorful, are very repetitive. Add in a complete lack of decent music and it's one of the SNES CD's worst platformers.

**Kings And Knights:** A medieval FMV game where a mystical king sends you on a quest to retrieve the ancient sword Excalibur. The actor playing the king is terrible, hilariously so and the game itself is miserable.

**P.O.L.I.C.E.: Hostage Rescue:** An action game where you're a police officer who has to rescue hostages. It's as generic as it gets and the poor voice acting doesn't help matters,

the game is repetitive and the play controls lousy.

American Dance-Off!: A dance game that attempted to bring back a version of the NES' floor mat accessory to the SNES-CD. Made by a third party, the accessory barely worked and when it did, the game was horrible anyway. The one saving grace is that this game's atrocious sales and critical reception don't have any butterfly effects on the later Dance Dance Revolution, indeed, nobody remembers this game by the time that one comes out (except for EGM's Seanbaby and later, the Angry Video Game Nerd).

Fearleaders: An action game where you can switch between five cheerleaders as they attempt to battle a variety of scary monsters in an attempt to save their school from the living dead. A generic, ho-hum platformer that features cookie-cutter dialogue and below average graphics and sound.

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*"I remember how well Pulseman did when it first launched in January 1995. There was a lot of competition, including from the new Mega Man X game, but sales were still great and Nintendo's promotional push was a big rush for that. The success of Pulseman was a big reason why I was hoping we'd stay on board with Nintendo."*

-Ólafur Jóhann Ólafsson, in an interview with the Gaming Intelligence Agency, January 11, 2001

*"Pulseman was considered as a solid platformer. It had interesting level design, a strong futuristic look and feel, a character which was original, with intriguing powers, and of course, a legendary soundtrack, considered one of the best of the SNES-CD. It proved a moderate success. However, it's biggest impact would be solidifying the relationship between Sony and Game Freak. Sony had accepted the game for distribution, and heavily promoted the game. Game Freak and Sony discussed a sequel, which never came into fruition. However, it was this friendship that would prove very substantial in the near future..."*

-excerpt from the Kotaku.com article "Game Freak: The Pre-Pokemon Years," August 8th, 2014.

*"Valis: Rebirth was big in terms of convincing me that Telenet Japan was for real. They'd done a lot of great work already, but this game in particular was a lot like Popful Mail, a game I'd wanted us to bring over for the Sega CD before my fallout with them. We were already mulling over approaching Nintendo but that Valis remake was the clincher."*

-Victor Ireland, from "AMA: Victor Ireland" on Rootalk (TTL's Reddit equivalent), February 23, 2013

*"Sega brings the arcade hits home!"*

-a line from a new Sega advertisement campaign pushing the company's arcade ports that started in early 1995

*"On the subject of plan B, I believe we could go forward if absolutely necessary. The technical specifications of a new console could easily exceed those of the Saturn. From a technological standpoint, we would be safe with this strategy."*

-Ken Kutaragi, from a Sony internal memo in January 1995 discussing the possibility of creating a new console without Nintendo's help

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### **Carrier Aces:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 7

Al: 6.5 (quote: "A fun little World War II aerial combat game, but the difficulty could use some re-balancing.")

Sushi-X: 6

### **Earthworm Jim: Special Edition**

Ed: 9 (quote: "In a lot of ways this is the best version of Earthworm Jim, though the Genesis version still has a couple extras that this CD-ROM port inexplicably lacks. Still, the animation is top notch.")

Danyon: 9.5

Al: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Flintstones: The Movie:**

Ed: 4

Danyon: 2.5 (quote: "What a miserable game. Yabba-dabba-don't buy this.")

Al: 4

Sushi-X: 2

### **Lords Of Thunder:**

Ed: 7.5

Danyon: 8

Al: 7 (quote: "While the game itself isn't terrific, the graphics and music got a really nice boost from when this game was on the TurboGrafx CD, and as far as shoot-em-ups go, it's one of the best looking on the system.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **MechWarrior 3050:**

Ed: 7 (quote: "Not quite as revolutionary as the original, but it still brings the classic mech gameplay we all know and love. It's tough as nails but the original was too.")

Danyon: 7

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 8

### **Mega Man X2:**

Ed: 8.5

Danyon: 8

Al: 8 (quote: "While it could've been upgraded a bit more for the SNES-CD, it's still Mega Man and it's still fantastic, with even more creative bosses and power-ups than the

original.")  
Sushi-X: 8

### **Mighty Max:**

Ed: 5.5  
Danyon: 6  
AI: 6  
Sushi-X: 6 (quote: "This was a fairly generic action game, so if you're not a big fan of the show or the toy, you might want to skip this one.")

### **Pulseman:**

Ed: 9.5 (quote: "This gorgeous action game is a revelation and even better than Mega Man X2, to which it'll undoubtedly be compared. The ability to jump from wall to wall opens up new dimensions of gameplay and the real-time animated cutscenes littering the game bring Pulseman's incredible world to life.")  
Danyon: 8  
AI: 8.5  
Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Urban Strike:**

Ed: 7  
Danyon: 7  
AI: 7.5 (quote: "Flying a helicopter around and blowing stuff up has never been so fun. We loved the smoothness of the graphics, though the play controls could be somewhat difficult at times.")  
Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Valis: Rebirth:**

Ed: 8.5  
Danyon: 9 (quote: "A superb upgrade of a rather nondescript action game, this game takes the best elements of action games and outlandish fantasy adventures and mixes them up into one big bowl of awesome.")  
AI: 9  
Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Moonlight:**

Ed: 7.5  
Danyon: 9  
AI: 8  
Sushi-X: 7 (quote: "Capcom's SNES-CD RPG doesn't quite approach the quality of Breath of Fire for the cartridge-based SNES, but its intriguing storyline and fascinating characters will still suck you in.")

### **Dragon's Destiny II**

Ed: 6.5  
Danyon: 7

AI: 7 (quote: "This sequel to 1993's flying dragon deathmatch game improves on its predecessor in pretty much every possible way, and multiplayer is a blast!")  
Sushi-X: 7

### **Don't Go To Bed!:**

Ed: 6.5

Danyon: 5

AI: 6

Sushi-X: 5 (quote: "The nausea inducing graphics and strange enemies littering this platformer about a kid sucked into a nightmare realm whenever he goes to sleep only made me want to put this game down sooner.")

-reviews of January 1995's SNES-CD games in the February and March 1995 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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### **Mega Man vs. Pulseman: The Showdown (Which should you buy?)**

*This month, we reviewed two excellent SNES-CD action platformers in Mega Man X2 and Pulseman. Both games are great, and both games are quite similar, but also have some key differences. So which one should you buy? Let's break it down.*

Graphics:

Graphically, Mega Man X2 is excellent. While the upgrade to CD didn't change things up too much from the SNES version, it still features some great 3-D effects, very smooth animation, and a variety of bright and colorful stages. On the other hand, Pulseman seems to be designed for the SNES-CD from the ground up and it shows. The animations are fantastic and each level even features short cutscenes that pop up during gameplay. In contrast, Mega Man X2 features no cutscenes, even on the CD version. We've got to give the edge to Pulseman here for its slightly better in-game graphics and its animated cutscenes. **WINNER: Pulseman**

Sound/Music:

Both games feature superb soundtracks. Gamefreak's Pulseman soundtrack features some nice variety in music, though some of the motifs get a bit repetitive and not all of the sound effects impressed us. On the other hand, Mega Man X2 featured an amazing variety of rock and roll songs, some very good atmospheric music (the Crystal Snail stage for example), and a much better theme for bosses. While both games were good, Mega Man X2 was just a bit better. **WINNER: Mega Man X2**

Play Control:

We've got the familiar Mega Man control scheme vs. the innovative but at times tricky Pulseman controls. Pulseman has the ability to leap between walls very rapidly and on the whole, this is a fun skill to pull off, though at times can be a bit difficult. Mega Man is equipped with a variety of dashes, leaps, and the wall cling ability unique to the X series. While Pulseman has to be given credit for originality, it was Mega Man X2 that was ultimately a bit easier to master and more fun to control. **WINNER: Mega Man X2**

## Storyline:

While storyline isn't always important in games, here we agreed that both games did have compelling stories that drove the action of the games. In Mega Man X2, the robot is once again tasked with defeating Sigma and his Mavericks, with the added twist that his friend Zero, thought destroyed for good, has actually had his body parts scattered and needs to be recovered before Sigma can claim them and rebuild him. Pulseman, however, had what we feel was a bit more original and engrossing story, of a half-robot, half-human boy named Pulseman who struggles to find his place in the world and must save it and his friends from the evil Doc Waruyama, who happens to be Pulseman's father. The cutscenes added an additional layer of excitement to Pulseman's characters and story, and we just felt that Pulseman told its story better than Mega Man X2 did. **WINNER: Pulseman**

## Gameplay:

Finally, we come to the clinching category, and the most important category of all which is gameplay. Again, Mega Man X2 is a game we've all played before now many times, while Pulseman brings something new and unique to the table. That said, the Mega Man game formula is tried and true and this is one of the most fun Mega Man games ever, with excellent level design and just the right amount of difficulty. Pulseman crams its nine stages with fun enemies and bosses, though the game can be somewhat frustrating at times, it's ultimately rewarding to finish off the final boss and see the excellent ending. While this category was extremely close, probably the closest of all five, we had to give the slightest of edges to Mega Man X2. When it works, it REALLY works, and it was the game we kept going back to. While Pulseman is a great game, if you can only get one, choose the Blue Bomber. **WINNER: Mega Man X2**

-a comparative article of *Mega Man X2* and *Pulseman* featured in the February 1995 issue of *GameFan*, which awarded both games an identical score of 41/50

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*"Moonlight was created to be sort of a companion series of sorts to Breath of Fire. We intended to keep our Breath of Fire RPG series on the cartridge Super Famicom and came up with Moonlight for CD players, but once the CD became pre-eminent, we transitioned Breath of Fire to the CD format starting with the sequel. Due to Moonlight's commercial success we were able to support two RPG franchises on CD!"*

-Capcom's Tokuro Fujiwara, speaking with *Famitsu* magazine in the December 1997 issue

*"So the first half of Moonlight is a pretty straight-forward game where you're crushing this evil crime syndicate and their sadistic leader. But about halfway through there's a serious twist and you soon find yourself not only trying to save the city, but the entire world! The game opens up completely and goes from a gritty noir RPG to a full-on cyberpunk fantasy adventure. I think the first Moonlight is still the best, and it's definitely one of my favorite RPGs on the SNES-CD."*

-a user on Kotaku.com, discussing the game *Moonlight* in a comment on a "Talk Amongst Yourselves" article

## Epic Center

*Welcome to the very first installment of Epic Center, a new feature in Nintendo Power*

magazine! Here, you'll find tips, tricks, strategies, and previews for a variety of RPG and adventure games coming to Nintendo systems!

## **DANCING IN THE MOONLIGHT**

*Moonlight* is a new role-playing game from Capcom taking place in a dark, crime-infested city called Banboru. Over the course of the game, twelve characters from all walks of life will join your party as you work together to battle the evil Jade Syndicate and restore peace to this troubled metropolis. Be warned, defeating this crime syndicate won't be the end of your adventure! Indeed, it'll be only the beginning.

Characters in *Moonlight* include...

**Shuko:** The main character, a rookie police officer who is new to the city. He starts out naive and inexperienced but as he gets deeper and deeper into the seedy underworld, he'll discover that things definitely aren't what they seem.

**Craig:** Shuko's partner and best friend, a cop who's been on the force several years and tries to teach Shuko the ropes. Don't rely completely on his experience, he can't carry you the whole way!

**Wei Lin:** A mysterious informant who soon joins Shuko's cause to get revenge on the syndicate's leader. She might be beautiful but don't underestimate her.

**Jack:** A bouncer who has a score to settle with the syndicate. He knows a few criminals and you'll need their help to get further in your quest.

**Julia:** Another officer at Shuko and Craig's precinct, she's a crack shot and you'll bump into her a few times before she joins your party later on.

**Taifung:** A martial-arts master who runs an illegal underground dojo, he clashes with Craig plenty but the two of them will need to work together to help Shuko succeed.

You'll meet plenty of other characters on your long journey. This truly is an RPG like no other!

(...)

## **A FANTASY FOR THE AGES**

*Final Fantasy VI* hits the Super Nintendo CD in just two short months. The game already released in Japan to record sales and stellar reviews, and we got a chance to sit down with Ted Woolsey, head translator for the North American version of the game, for a quick preview of what we'll be looking forward to.

**NP:** Thanks for giving us this interview, we can't wait to play *Final Fantasy VI*! What's been your favorite thing about translating this game?

**Ted Woolsey:** The sheer variety of characters, playable and otherwise. I feel like this *Final Fantasy* has the best cast of characters yet, both heroes and villains. The cast of heroes alone is huge, there are 14 in all and that's not counting the temporary characters who join your group for a brief time.

NP: We know you can't spoil any of the game's HUGE twists, but can you give us a quick tease on what to expect?

Ted Woolsey: The game on its surface is about the conflict between magic and technology, but from a character standpoint, the main character Terra is conflicted about who she is and what she's going to become. She's torn between two sides of herself, and you'll see in the story that the conflict forms the heart of a big part of this game.

NP: So this will be a more mature, epic Final Fantasy than those in the past?

Ted Woolsey: I feel that the story of this game rivals that of any Hollywood movie. The production values are astonishing and the dialogue is really well written, I'm working really hard to make sure none of the great work from the Japanese writers gets lost in translation. It's been a challenge but a really gratifying one.

NP: Thanks again for agreeing to talk with us, we're excited for this game!

Ted Woolsey: No doubt, you're gonna love it!

(...)

*That's it for this month's edition of Epic Center. For those of you with this month's issue of Nintendo Power CD, your disks contain preview videos that take you behind the scenes of the upcoming RPGs The Darkest Ritual and Final Fantasy VI! In addition, Moonlight, The Darkest Ritual, and Final Fantasy VI, along with seven other great games, have playable demos for you to try them before anyone else!*

-excerpted from the "Epic Center" feature in the January 1995 issue of *Nintendo Power*

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*Valis: Rebirth* was the first major release from Telenet Japan for the Super Nintendo CD in North America. While FMV games such as *Time Gal* had been featured on the system before, *Valis: Rebirth* was the beginning of a larger strategy for the company to gain a foothold with international gamers, and they would start with one of their flagship action franchises. *Valis: Rebirth* was a remake of their 1986 MSX game *Valis: The Fantasm Soldier*, and it could actually be considered a complete reboot rather than a remake, taking elements from the first four games of the series in retelling the first. It tells the story of the heroine Yuko, whose friend Reiko is abducted and brainwashed by the evil soldier Rogles into helping him defeat the only person who can stop his reign of terror. The game features fourteen side-scrolling levels and is a hybrid of an action game, a platformer, a hack and slash, and a puzzle game with some RPG elements as well. Yuko can upgrade her equipment by finding treasures or defeating enemies, and each level features a ferocious boss (with many levels featuring one or more sub-bosses as well). The game features animated cutscenes and in level voiced scenes specifically made for this version, indeed, it was a complete revamp from the ground up, with only the basic storyline and a few elements taken from the 1986 original. Also, unlike in the original game, Yuko's friend Reiko survives at the end and indeed would become playable in the sequel. With this game, Telenet Japan intended to create a flagship franchise, and it largely worked. The game sold massively in Japan and decently in the States, which justified both the creation of sequels and their localization, indeed, there would be three SNES-CD *Valis* games in all, and the series would continue on

the Ultra Nintendo with 1999's *Ultra Valis: Knight Of Light* that would take the series into three dimensions. Though subsequent games such as *Tale Phantasia* would be far more successful for Telenet Japan, *Valis: Rebirth* laid the important groundwork for the company becoming one of Nintendo's best second parties.

-Excerpted from "Early Gems Of The Super Nintendo CD", an article posted on Gamesovermatter.com, December 17, 2013

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### **Sega At The Arcade: A New King?**

While 1995 is poised to be the Year of the Saturn for Nintendo's everpresent rival, Sega also seems to be trying to make 1995 the Year of the Arcade! Sega has begun porting a number of their arcade hits to the Mega Charger, and the Saturn has already been promised a number of major ports including *Virtua Fighter*, *Virtua Racing*, *Desert Tank*, and *Daytona USA*. But Sega is hard at work on the next generation of arcade games, and Yu Suzuki has been quoted as saying that he's already working on a new lineup of games that will hit arcades in 1995, including a space shooter that is said to be the spiritual successor to the Space Harrier series called *Galactic Savior*. Suzuki promises that this game will utilize new hardware from Sega to bring to life dozens of lifelike spaceships on screen at once, with an addicting storyline that will keep players putting quarters in machines until their pockets run dry.

Suzuki is also said to be in talks with Namco for a deal that would put new Sega arcade boards in Namco machines to create upgraded versions of games such as *Ridge Racer*, and that such tech would also be utilized in a brand new 3-D fighting game that would involve a variety of characters wielding powerful bladed weapons in battle. Namco has already stated its intent to develop exclusively for the Saturn in the future, and as the two companies draw closer, it seems that their alliance is hellbent on challenging Nintendo for market supremacy. With many of these Namco arcade games sure to be ported to the Saturn over the next two years, it could draw plenty of arcade junkies into Sega's fold, something that's sure to be music to the blue hedgehog's ears.

-from an article in *GamePro* magazine, February 1995

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### **Winter CES Update!**

The Winter 1995 Consumer Electronics show was a bit dialed back in terms of video game floor space. The big game companies seemed to be holding back, most likely for May's upcoming Electronic Entertainment Expo, but Nintendo and Sega were still showing off some exciting upcoming games, and we're sure you'll be seeing a lot more of them in the coming months.

First off was Nintendo, and the big game at their booth this year was their newest Zelda game, *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams*. The game was playable at Nintendo's booth, and despite the crowds, I managed to get some time with the controller in my hand. What I saw was nothing short of incredible. The character animation has received a huge upgrade, Link looks so alive and colorful on the screen even from a top-down perspective, and the enemies moved in fun and unique ways. Though the game won't have any voice

acting to speak of, we could still hear some loud grunts when Link swung his sword or went for his famous spin-attack, and enemy growls could be heard as well. The added sound effects give Link some much needed personality, though the gameplay spoke for itself. You can now wield two items instead of one, with one mapped to the Y button and the other to the X button, making it a bit more intuitive so you're not constantly switching. There will be new items featured in this game, and some returning items from Link's Awakening never before seen in a console Zelda. This includes Roc's Feather, which allows Link to jump across pits and to new areas, bringing more of an action element to the classic adventure franchise. I wish I'd gotten more time to play but from what I saw, *Ocarina of Dreams* is going to be a huge hit like the Zelda games before it.

Sega's booth was also quite crowded, with the biggest crowds around the new game *Knuckles: Renegade*. This game stars Sonic's new pal Knuckles in a quest of his own. Gameplay seemed somewhat similar to Sonic, though Knuckles has a few combat moves at his disposal, giving you a lot more ways to take out enemies. Knuckles is going to be teaming up with some new friends in this game that has the titular echidna leading a rebellion against Dr. Robotnik. One of those friends is a beautiful butterfly woman named Corona who seems to be Knuckles' love interest. She's actually playable for certain parts of the game and has a cool attack where she fires sonic lasers out of her hands. This game will be out in April and I got to play through the first couple of levels, I was quite impressed and I can't wait to take Knuckles and his band of rebels out for a spin.

There was another player at this year's CES, and that was Bandai, showing off their next generation system. They call it the Solaris, and from what I saw, the graphics are quite good, this thing is capable of some powerful 3-D effects comparable to what the Saturn can do, but time will tell if Bandai can compete with Nintendo and Sega. Bandai only had tech demos to show off and a concept design of the system. It looks really sleek but it's important to remember that this is a project that Apple backed out of, and they must've had a reason for doing that. So far, it's too early to tell if they'll repeat the mistakes of their predecessors, but I'm sure some of those failed predecessors would tell you that their biggest mistake was just trying to take on the two juggernauts.

-excerpted from an article in the March 1995 issue of *GameFan*

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**SNES-CD Power Charts – January 1995** (starting with the January 1995 issue, *Nintendo Power* stopped printing point totals for their Power Charts feature, which remained a combined ranking of player votes, editors' choices, and sales figures for the month three months prior)

1. Squad Four
2. Mortal Kombat II
3. Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition
4. TMNT V: Wrath Of The Foot
5. Super Mario World 2
6. Contra IV: Hard Corps
7. Jewels Of The Realm
8. SimCity 2000
9. Secret Of Mana
10. Donkey Kong Country
11. Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers

12. Wing Commander
13. Illusion Of Gaia
14. Final Fantasy Origins
15. NBA Live 95
16. Nightmare Busters
17. Kid Icarus CD
18. Lethal Enforcers II: Gun Fighters
19. Cannon Fodder
20. Super Mario Kart

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### **January 23, 1995**

Ken Kutaragi and Norio Ohga met once again in Ohga's office to discuss the latest developments in Sony's video game division. Despite the terrible earthquake in Kobe six days before that had killed over six thousand people, it was business as usual at Sony, and a busy time it was indeed.

"We've confirmed that Namco will be exclusive to Sega for the foreseeable future," said Kutaragi, adding to the news that Capcom would likely be primarily supporting Nintendo and Sega regardless of what Sony did in the future, and that Squaresoft would almost certainly remain loyal to Nintendo as well. "The two are working together on a series of arcade games that will receive exclusive ports to the Sega Saturn."

Ohga furrowed his brow and took on the familiar stern expression that Kutaragi had grown to know so well. The news that Sony would have difficulty gathering third-party support if it struck out on its own with a game console did not please Ohga, and once Nintendo caught wind of it, it would likely reduce the company's leverage in any negotiations.

"Keep reaching out to Capcom and Konami, their support will be extremely important going forward. We need to begin development on the console immediately...I'm wanting to release it in Japan next summer, and have a release before Christmas of 1996 in the West. We'd be only a year behind the Saturn there, and would likely be far ahead of Nintendo's next console."

"Work on the chips and initial development kit has already begun," said Kutaragi. "We'd likely be able to have the kits sent out to software developers sometime in April."

Ohga nodded, pleased with this information. He knew Kutaragi didn't want to go behind Nintendo's back, but he'd had a history of going behind people's backs before. Still, there was plenty of time for Nintendo to change its mind, even after the development kits had been sent out. He and Kutaragi both would prefer it if Nintendo accepted Sony's terms to develop their next generation console...together.

But as the old adage goes, hope for the best and prepare for the worst. Such thinking had saved lives when the earthquake had hit, and it would give Sony an advantage that it would need if it indeed began competing with Nintendo.

"Our big holiday game for the Super Nintendo CD, *Ballistic Limit*, I believe it's called. Can you get a hold of Mr. Olafsson?" asked Ohga, looking across the table at Kutaragi.

"Yes, I can."

"If Nintendo doesn't agree to our terms within the next three months, we'll need to pull that game and redesign it as a launch title for the new Sony console."

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*"People didn't realize it at the time, but Nightsquad was actually quite an incredible programming feat. Controlling up to five onscreen characters at once and being able to assign them independant actions, even very basic ones, actually did tax the SNES-CD significantly and it's a minor miracle that WayForward was able to pull it off. For a first effort, it's a fantastic game and it helped put publisher THQ on the map."*

-*"Retro Games That Pushed The Limits: SNES-CD"*, Racketboy.com, March 1, 2006

*"I'm not surprised these two characters struck a chord with people, especially Etienne. The protagonists of The Darkest Ritual were two of the first really popular female video game characters and it's gratifying to me that this series became one of Ubisoft's biggest franchises. I never had more than an advisory role in the series' production so I can't take too much of the credit, but just to have gotten the chance to work on the series has been one of the biggest joys of my career."*

-Michel Ancel, discussing *The Darkest Ritual* in a Kotaku.com interview about the series' fourth game *The Darkest*, on October 21, 2013

*"Kris, I know we're dealing with things far beyond our control, but I'm not afraid! Having these powers is awesome and I want to use them to protect people! Please...please stay with me. I can't do this alone."*

-Etienne, *The Darkest Ritual*

*"The new Scooby-Doo and Justice League video games for the Super Nintendo CD present a major marketing opportunity for Cartoon Network. Tying in these games with a preview of Cartoon Network's programming will help get the network into more households as families who play these games will hopefully call their cable providers to ask for it."*

-from an internal memo distibuted to the Cartoon Network marketing department on January 29, 1995

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### **Bass Masters Classic:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 6 (quote: "While a passable fishing game, it features fairly primitive graphics and doesn't do anything to make itself attractive to typical players.")

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 6

### **Justice League: The Battle For Earth:**

Ed: 7.5 (quote: "This exciting action game at first plays like somewhat of an X-Men: Mutant Apocalypse rehash, but the second half really distinguishes itself and it features a superior storyline and cutscene sequences.")

Danyon: 6.5  
Al: 6  
Sushi-X: 7

### **Metal Warriors:**

Ed: 8  
Danyon: 8  
Al: 8  
Sushi-X: 8.5 (quote: "LucasArts does it again! This badass game is definitely the closest you'll ever get to piloting a giant mech suit and the controls are surprisingly intuitive.")

### **Revolution X:**

Ed: 3  
Danyon: 3.5  
Al: 2.5 (quote: "This Aerosmith game was barely fun in the arcades and it translates quite poorly to the SNES-CD. The graphics and music got ported over well, but the gameplay just isn't suited for a home console and it clearly shows.")  
Sushi-X: 1.5

### **Scooby-Doo: The Mansion Mysteries:**

Ed: 5.5  
Danyon: 8  
Al: 7.5 (quote: "If you're a fan of Scooby-Doo this is definitely the best Scooby-Doo game ever. It feels like several episodes of the TV show connected together and it mixes the point-and-click mystery genre and platforming fun quite well.")  
Sushi-X: 5.5

### **Timecop:**

Ed: 5 (quote: "A mediocre game for a mediocre movie. There are far better action games out there.")  
Danyon: 4.5  
Al: 4.5  
Sushi-X: 5.5

### **The Darkest Ritual:**

Ed: 7.5  
Danyon: 7 (quote: "While not the best RPG on the SNES-CD, indeed, the gameplay is fairly generic as far as RPGs go, the appeal of this game lies in its characters and fun dialogue. I wish the game had featured some voice acting, but it's not a deal-breaker.")  
Al: 8.5  
Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Escape From The Lab:**

Ed: 5.5  
Danyon: 4  
Al: 6 (quote: "Matt Frewer's hilarious performance is the only good thing about this FMV

game about escaping from a science lab disaster area, but even he can only carry this game so far, and even then, it's no Max Headroom.")

Sushi-X: 4

### **The Hunt For Sasquatch:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 6 (quote: "This lightgun powered action game isn't really anything to write home about. Thankfully, it's not too frustratingly difficult, so you should at least have SOME fun on the way to find the sasquatch.")

Al: 5

Sushi-X: 5

### **Jim And Kim:**

Ed: 6.5

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 5 (quote: "While this platformer's graphics are pretty, that's the only thing saving this mediocre game featuring level after level of these two kids adventuring through seemingly endless factories. Stick to Donkey Kong Country.")

### **Real Ultimate Football:**

Ed: 0.5 (quote: "An utterly disgraceful FMV football game. Technical glitches plague what's already some of the least fun gameplay I've ever had the dishonor to slog through. The worst game on the SNES-CD, even worse than Who Kidnapped Santa Claus.")

Danyon: 1

Al: 1

Sushi-X: 0.5

### **Nightsquad:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 9 (quote: "This awesome run-and-gun features innovative gameplay and a variety of weapons and enemy types. Switching between members of your squad is surprisingly easy thanks to the excellent control scheme.")

Al: 8.5

Sushi-X: 9

-reviews of the SNES-CD's February 1995 games from the March and April 1995 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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*"When describing Etienne and Kris, some people like to use the 'Tomboy and Girly Girl' trope, but the two of them really don't conform to that. In a lot of ways, they're two halves of the same soul. I like to think of them as....well, if you're a fan of the Beetlejuice movie, the way I describe Etienne and Kris is that Kris is more like the original Lydia from the movie. Dark, morose, quiet, that sort of thing, where as Etienne is more like the Lydia from the Beetlejuice cartoon. She's dark as well but she's more upbeat, outgoing, adventurous. They're both closer to being girly girls than tomboys, but not in a typical "girly" fashion.*

*They're not into the latest trends, maybe the latest GOTH trends perhaps, but even then...they're both so unique and I think that's why the two of them have had such appeal to players over the last twenty years."*

-Ubisoft's Elliot Birke, lead character designer for *The Darkest* series, discussing Etienne and Kris in a 20th anniversary interview with Topless Robot, February 13, 2015

## **The Darkest Ritual – Ubisoft's RPG Gamble**

*The Darkest Ritual is one of the most intriguing games of the year. A Japanese-style role-playing game by a Western publisher, it's actually been getting a good deal of buzz over the past few months as critics line up to praise the game for its charming characters and unique storyline. Let's dive in to our Game of the Month and give you all the details on this fascinating adventure.*

*The Darkest Ritual* is a game that takes place in a modern day high school, in contrast with the high fantasy settings of most RPGs. It stars two 17-year-old best friends, Etienne and Kris, who have been dabbling in magic spells, witchcraft, and the occult for most of their young lives. When Kris accidentally uses a spell that opens up a gateway to the underworld, it triggers a demonic invasion at the girls' school! Now the two of them must master their powers, recruit fellow adepts, and conquer the demon hordes in one of the strangest RPG quests ever brought to a home console.

*Etienne-*

Etienne is a tall, platinum blonde, upbeat girl with a gift for light magic. Though she's cheerful and perky, she has a very dark sense of humor at times that can make her somewhat creepy to those who don't know her. Her very pale skin and black lipstick give her a soft of "dark widow" look but if you get to know her, she's actually very nice! Etienne's affinity for light magic makes her somewhat of an unlikely witch, but when pushed too far she can combine her light magic with bursts of dark energy for a spectacular chain reaction! A bit of trivia about Etienne: though Etienne is a girl, the name is actually almost always used for males, and in the French version of *The Darkest Ritual*, Etienne goes by the name Stephenie.

*Kris-*

A bit shorter than Etienne, not quite as pale with short black hair, Kris is a perfect counterpart to Etienne's upbeat charm. She's somewhat depressed but still courageous and determined to use her powerful dark magic to help those in need. She's a bit more passive than Etienne but when push comes to shove she can be even fiercer than her friend! She's the one who enacted the dark ritual that brought the demons to her hometown, and she feels a deep guilt about unleashing such forces on her friends and loved ones. This guilt drives her to accomplish incredible things, making her a witch who will fight to the bitter end!

-excerpted from *The Darkest Ritual* cover story in the March 1995 issue of *GameFan*, which gave the game a 47/50, the best review the game received from a major video game publication. It was also the runner-up for *GameFan*'s 1995 RPG of the Year award behind *Final Fantasy VI*.

*"The Darkest Ritual ended up being a major success story for us. It became the first non-Squaresoft, non-Enix JRPG to sell over 100,000 units in North America. We actually limped*

*to 100,000 in 1996, a week before Tale Phantasia blew past that mark. Our game sold 110,000 in North America overall. Combine that with the 250,000 units we sold in Europe and the 150,000 we sold in Japan and we moved over half a million copies of the game, so by the time the Ultra Nintendo came out we were already in the planning stages for The Darkest Night. It, along with Rayman, helped to put Ubisoft on the map, and we've been putting out great games ever since."*

-Michel Ancel

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*"Before 1995, we were mostly doing educational or licensed games. Nightsquad represented our first really big original project, and we wanted to make the most of the technology of the SNES-CD. We knew a game like Nightsquad wouldn't have been possible on the Sega CD and it took some serious doing to get the game to work on Nintendo's system. The months of long nights and little sleep paid off in the end, but it was a hell of a ride."*

-Matt Bozon, creative director at WayForward

### **How THQ Found Its WayForward With *Nightsquad***

In 1993, THQ was a struggling toy company looking for a foothold in a new business. Noticing the great success that video games were having, in large part due to the exciting new technology represented by the Super Nintendo and the Sega Genesis, THQ began looking for companies to develop games that it could then publish to one of the new game systems. Enter WayForward with their concept for a video game about a group of special-ops police officers battling crime in a city riddled with drug lords and bank robbers. The unique aspect of the game was that instead of controlling one character, you would control five, making your way through the city with each character having their own individual weapon or skill while you battled hordes of enemies. It didn't seem like it could be done, the SNES-CD, for all its processing power, still featured a fairly limited amount of RAM and at first the game would stutter relentlessly. Nevertheless, WayForward pressed on, finally stumbling on a programming trick that would allow the five characters to be displayed on screen while still acting independently, simplifying their AI enough to eliminate the slowdowns and stuttering while at the same time actually making an easier control scheme for players to use. Now, with practice, the player could easily rotate through five characters at once, switching weapons and issuing commands on the fly even with the limited capabilities of the SNES controller. Nightsquad became one of the most addictive run-and-gun games on a system flush with great fast-paced action titles, and was seen as one of the best video games of the first half of 1995. The success of the game, which sold over a quarter of a million copies in North America, put THQ on the map and established WayForward as a studio that put out quality games that pushed the limits of fourth-generation hardware. Though the two companies only collaborated a few more times in the future, both companies emerged from 1995 as bigger names in the video game industry, especially THQ which would go on to become one of the fifth-generation's biggest publishers of games.

-Excerpted from "Early Gems Of The Super Nintendo CD", an article posted on Gamesovermatter.com, December 17, 2013

"You're going to run into a horde of Armor Platers right at the start of Stage 3. If you've got the Railgun, give it to Jones and put him in the lead and watch him take out the entire group of enemies while the rest of the squad should be able to keep Jones from taking damage with suppressing fire.

Stage 5's boss is a massive tank, and the guy inside will chuck deadly Molotov Cocktails which can deplete your entire squad's health in a hurry. Order everyone but your leader to back off. Elliot or Marie can use an upgraded Pistol to shoot the guy in the tank, but if you're taking too much damage, try to damage the front of the tank with Shotgun blasts from Jones. Make sure not to let the five members of the squad get too close together.

When the helicopter comes down the second time in Stage 6, there'll be a hostage dangling from it and it only takes a tiny bit of damage to kill the hostage and fail the stage. Make sure you use a weapon that can aim up at the front of the helicopter, once the helicopter is just hovering, use a Pistol to shoot at the rope and cut the hostage down."

-Excerpted tips from Nintendo Power's coverage of the first eight stages of *Nightsquad* in the February 1995 issue of *Nintendo Power*

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"Oh, going back to do the voice of Daphne was great fun! I'd never done a voice for a video game before but it was largely just the same as the cartoon. It wasn't like the video games I'd seen, it was more like a story or a movie, from what I saw it was a lot like the cartoon itself. When I talk to Mary Kay (Bergman) about voice acting, sometimes she mentions video games to me and she says that they're hard work with a lot of yelling and grunting but there wasn't really any of that with this game, it was just a really fun time with all of my old friends."

-Heather North, in a 2009 interview with the Scooby-Doo Wiki about the making of *Scooby-Doo: The Mansion Mysteries*

"Well, our *Justice League* game came out right around the same time as that *X-Men* game came out, and so of course there were comparisons, but we really weren't trying to copy them, we just wanted to tell a story with the *Justice League* characters and fortunately I think the people who played it realized that. We made our game at the same time they did, there's no way we could have ripped them off!"

-Jared Reely, localization/project manager for Konami of America

"And now, a special preview of the all new Cartoon Network!"

-from the introduction to a special *Cartoon Network* preview video included with both *Scooby-Doo: The Mansion Mysteries* and *Justice League: The Battle For Earth* on SNES-CD

"It's all about brand synergy, getting your properties out there for people to take a look at and say, 'Well that looks good, I want that!'. These games are getting better and better every day, they're just like movies, just like cartoons, and that's why this *Cartoon Network* promotion is such a good idea for us, because on *Cartoon Network*, you're gonna see *Scooby-Doo*, you're gonna see *Superman*, and *Batman*, and all these characters, and so why not start with the games? And I'm also trying to get a *WCW* game on there too, been talking to some real smart guys over there in *Japan* about a *WCW* game."

-Ted Turner, from a February 28, 1995 interview with *Forbes* magazine where the conversation briefly turned to Warner Brothers' SNES-CD projects

### **From Cartoons To CD-ROM: Warner Brothers' All New Video Games**

Warner Brothers has always been a player in the video game market, and with vast holdings all over the spectrum of media, it's no surprise to see their latest efforts for SNES-CD. What is surprising is that both games are actually quite good, and should be two of the biggest

selling video games of the quarter.

*Scooby-Doo: The Mansion Mysteries* reunites the old gang of Freddy, Velma, Shaggy, Daphne, and of course that lovable dog Scooby-Doo, as the group investigates a series of mysteries that take place in and around a seriously haunted mansion. The game is structured as a series of "episodes", six in all, each with its own self-contained mystery to solve, but all six tying in to their own mystery that the player will solve at the end of the game. The game features a number of cutscenes that, while not animated quite as well as the old cartoons, are still entertaining and tell the game's story in a fashion that fans of the old show would surely appreciate. Players alternate between searching for clues and moving between rooms, occasionally dodging traps and the odd monster. The mysteries aren't too tough to solve, the joy is in discovering snippets of dialogue or uncovering a hidden artifact that's not really necessary to solve the mystery.

*Justice League: The Battle For Earth* is an arcade-style action game that lets you choose between Superman, Wonder Woman, Batman, Green Lantern, The Flash, or Aquaman as you work to stop the evil Darkseid and his minions from taking over the Earth. It's quite a fun game with each character possessing their own weapons and moves to use on the enemies. The game also has in-level and between-level cutscenes in the form of still images accompanied by character voices. It's a lot more storyline heavy than the similar game *X-Men: Mutant Apocalypse* released last December, and should appeal to DC Comics fans who have been somewhat starved for games on the CD-ROM systems.

-from an article in *Wired* magazine's March 1995 issue, previewing some of the top video games of the first part of 1995

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts – February 1995**

1. Donkey Kong Country
2. Alien vs. Predator
3. Squad Four
4. Mortal Kombat II
5. Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition
6. Super Mario World 2
7. TMNT V: Wrath Of The Foot
8. Contra IV: Hard Corps
9. Super Bomberman 2
10. Jewels Of The Realm
11. Secret Of Mana
12. SimCity 2000
13. Final Fantasy Origins
14. NBA Live 95
15. Koolblocks
16. Kid Icarus CD
17. Wing Commander
18. Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers
19. Illusion Of Gaia
20. Science Fighters

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*Thinking of names for the new Sony console. Why not an acronym? **New and Outstanding Visuals and Audio. Nova.***

-Ken Kutaragi in an internal memo to Norio Ohga, March 7, 1995

*The acronym itself needs work but I like the idea of Nova. The directors want to announce it at the 1995 Electronic Entertainment Expo if Nintendo hasn't accepted our conditions by May. I'll discuss the name with the board and we'll start getting promotional materials created immediately.*

-Norio Ohga in an internal memo to Ken Kutaragi, March 7, 1995

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1995 would be a seminal year for DC Comics, particularly because it was the tenth anniversary of the multiverse shattering *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. Though DC's intent for the maxi-series was to streamline the Pre-Crisis multiverse into a single universe to make more accessible for new readers, it had the opposite effect. According to writer Marv Wolfman, none of the characters in the new DC universe (save for a few survivors from the multiverse like Harbinger, Lady Quark, and Pariah) were supposed to remember the Crisis or the existence of the multiverse, which caused the first of many continuity snarls. Janette Khan's edict that Superman be the sole survivor of Krypton caused the first major snarl. Kara Zor-El's sacrifice to save Superman in *Crisis on Infinite Earths* played a critical role in the story as did Barry Allen's. However, if DC's heroes remembered Barry's sacrifice, then who saved Superman in *Crisis on Infinite Earths* #7?

Similarly, John Byrne's *Man of Steel* established that Superman began his career as an adult and never was Superboy in the new universe. That created a snarl for the Legion of Super-Heroes because Superboy and Supergirl were charter members of the team. Additionally, Superboy sent Mon-El to the Phantom Zone in the previous continuity and created another paradox. Legion writer Paul Levitz attempted to rectify it by creating a Pre-Crisis Superboy from a pocket universe. Then in 19898 Superman editor Mark Carlin ordered the new Legion creative team to sever any ties to the Man of Steel, which necessitated the a soft reboot where Mo-El took Superboy's place as Valor that created more snarls.

Wonder Woman and Hawkman's revised origins also created paradoxes that required multiple retcons to correct. In the case of the former, the retcons did not affect Wonder Woman herself as it did Donna Troy AKA Wonder Girl. The character herself was the product of a misunderstanding; "Wonder Girl" was originally Wonder Woman as an adolescent but Bob Haney, the creator of the Teen Titans, thought she was a separate character and thus included her in *Teen Titans* #1. She became an orphan rescued by Wonder Woman— however, George Perez's reboot of Wonder Woman placed her debut in the contemporary DC universe, well after the debut of Wonder Girl and the Justice League (though DC substituted her with Black Canary as a JLA founding member.)

As for Hawkman, Tim Truman planned for *Hawkworld* to be a retelling of Katar Hol incarnation of the character, which would lead into 1961's *Brave and the Bold* #34. However, John Ostrander's follow up *Hawkworld* established that Katar Hol, like Wonder Woman, debuted in the contemporary DC universe. However, Katar Hol was a longtime member of the Justice League of America and appeared in *Action Comics* and *Justice League International* Post-Crisis, which created even more complications. Despite attempts at

substitution (the Golden Age Hawkman, Carter Hall taking his place on the JLA and a Thanagarian spy assuming the role in *Invasion*), it was clear that DC's continuity became too complicated for new readers hence the need to iron out the kinks.

DC intended to release *Crisis in Time: Zero Hour* in July 1994 but according to *Zero Hour* writer, Dan Jurgens, Janette Khan believed that February 1995 would be more appropriate for it to coincide with the original Crisis. What DC originally slated to be a five issue series expanded into eight parts released over two months. The delay also gave DC's other talent more room to accommodate the event as well as provide creative input. The rehabilitation of former Green Lantern, Hal Jordan; *Emerald Twilight* was an extremely polarizing story arc because it reduced a longtime member of the Justice League into a murderer. Eventually, Mark Waid came up with the solution that Hal Jordan's breakdown was part of the manipulations of longtime Legion foe, the Time Trapper who became the primary villain of *Zero Hour*.

The best way I can condense the plot is this: after Hal Jordan (now Parallax) absorbed the power of the Central Power Battery on Oa, the Time Trapper fed him visions of the original Crisis where the five remaining Earth merging into one. Convinced that if he restarted time, he would restore the multiverse and Coast City along with it. Time began to unravel, erasing the 30th century entirely, and temporal anomalies brought back previously deceased or incapacitated, like the second Doctor Mid-Nite (Beth Chapel) and Batgirl, and caused the various timelines to converge. Once the heroes discovered the source of the anomalies they confronted Parallax in the void that existed before the Big Bang. The Time Trapper revealed himself and then struck Jordan down to take control of time itself. Jordan, having come to his senses and repentant for his actions used the last of his power to destroy the Time Trapper and create a new Big Bang and a new timeline.

The event in itself was almost as controversial as *Emerald Twilight*. Like *Armageddon 2001* before it, a leaked memo revealed that DC originally planned to kill off the Justice Society because Mike Carlin believed that, "no one wanted to read a book about old superheroes." Fan outcry prompted a last-minute revision; instead of killing the Justice Society, they lost the plot contrivance that kept them young. Those deemed redundant, like the Golden Age Atom, Dr. Mid-Nite, and Hourman as well as Starman and Wildcat, went into permanent retirement while their successors took their mantles. There were still casualties other than Hal Jordan. The Golden Age Hawkman and Hawkgirl died in a particularly gruesome fashion, impaled from behind by Parallax when he revealed himself. Power Girl, a throwback to the pre-Crisis Earth-2, also died in a scene that mirrored the original Supergirl's in the previous Crisis.

DC launched a special "zero" issue for each of their ongoing titles that "revised" the continuity discrepancies via modified origins. For example, Donna Troy's post-Crisis origin remained intact, however, Wonder Woman debuted before her and was again a Justice League founder and thus took Donna on as an "apprentice" as well as Hippolyta declaring her an honorary Amazon. Similarly, Katar Hol's *Hawkworld* origin was still in continuity but he arrived on Earth at the same time as his Silver Age compatriots. DC Comics also released *DC Comics Presents #0*, which contained the definitive timeline of the new DC Universe.

*Crisis on Infinite Earths* earned the largely undeserved reputation of helping usher in the "dark age" because the maxi-series was contemporaneous with *Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight Returns*, which deconstructed the medium. Most comic book historians credit *Zero Hour* with the reconstruction of the genre. In the wake of the crossover, DC wanted the "iconic" versions of the Justice League and Teen Titans to return. As such Mark Waid, having

proven himself on *Flash*, took on writing duties of *Justice League* (formerly *Justice League America*), which restored the "Big Seven" plus longtime members like Green Arrow and Black Canary as well as a new Doctor Fate. *Justice League* also reinvigorated the career of George Perez, who stayed on the title for an unbroken four-year run. *New Titans* simply became *the Titans* written by Karl Kesel and drawn by Howard Porter, which involved Robin (Tim Drake), Superboy, Impulse, and a new Wonder Girl under the tutelage of Troia, Nightwing, and Arsenal.

However, DC completely rebooted *the Legion of Super-Heroes* overseen by *Animal Man* and *Doom Patrol* writer Grant Morrison and a young Bryan Hitch. In many ways, Morrison's *Legion* was a loving pastiche of old pulp science fiction like *Buck Rogers*, *Flash Gordon*, or even the UK's own *Dan Dare*. Fans responded positively to the new direction and for a time it even outsold *Justice League*. In some ways, the success of *Legion* and *Justice League* paved the way for Morrison and Waid's acclaimed reimagining on *Action Comics* and *Superman* at the end of the decade.

So did *Zero Hour* fix all of DC's continuity problems? No, but they were far less pronounced post-ZH and DC's policy was to ignore past mistakes and focus on the present and future. It also helped bring an end to gun-toting antihero trend that defined Image and, to a lesser extent, Marvel. For the first time in decades, DC outsold Marvel on a consistent basis where *Justice League* and *Legion* regular surpassed *X-Men* (albeit by a narrow margin.) With its non-*Spider-Man* and *X-Men* titles in disarray, DC's revamp would force Marvel to reexamine its strategy. However, the battles in the boardroom and Marvel's bankruptcy would complicate matters.

But that is another story for another day.

-from the blog "The Musing Platypus" by B. Ronning, January 9, 2014

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*"Final Fantasy VI was immediately popular in Japan, and with the increasing prevalence of RPGs in the West, we had high hopes for its Western release. The amount of enthusiasm among players there for this game surprised a lot of us! We shouldn't have been surprised but we kept our expectations somewhat muted."*

-Hiranobu Sakaguchi, executive producer of the *Final Fantasy* series in a December 1995 Famitsu interview

*"We'd originally intended to have Sarah Brightman as the singer for Celes' part in the opera, but we were unable to secure her, she wanted too much money and so we had to look elsewhere. We found another singer, a young singer who was quite brilliant, and certainly of course now she's quite popular but back then she was largely unknown."*

-Nobuo Uematsu, discussing the making of "Aria di Mezzo Carattere" in *Final Fantasy VI* with Kotaku.com on December 22, 2009

*"Well, in 1995 Sega was struggling quite a bit, Nintendo was doing very well and Sega was having trouble keeping up, so we got a lot more creativity with the Mega Charger than we would've normally been given. I remember many people wanting to develop for the Saturn,*

*but the limitations of the Mega Charger and the Genesis were something I viewed as a challenge."*

-Makoto Uchida, Sega Enterprises game developer

*"Cat Jackson was really Sony's first attempt to establish a sort of 'character mascot', certainly I think Sony was looking to really establish a distinct identity back then, as part of Nintendo or otherwise. It sorta flopped, I guess you could say. I mean the game did decently but it was no Mario or Sonic, not even close."*

-Blake Harris, discussing Sony's history on the SNES-CD in an article in *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, July 2014

*"Oh, Frederico, you must help us! Generalissimo Garcia is at it again! He's bullying our village and taking all the children off to work in the mines! Do something, Frederico!"*

-A random villager in *Frederico* as the titular character enters Soleado Village in Level 2

*"Yamauchi-san was never happy to be given an ultimatum. Leading up to that fateful meeting in the spring of 1995, when he made his decision on partnering with Sony, I don't think I ever saw him in a good mood. None of the options he had were entirely good, but then again, none of them were entirely bad either. One day, finally, he just....made his decision and called Howard Lincoln and I to his office. A huge decision and he made it just like that. I'll never know what he was thinking before he made the final call, and neither of us ever got up the courage to ask him."*

-Minoru Arakawa, in an interview with *Forbes* magazine after Hiroshi Yamauchi's death in 2014

*"One of my husband's friends works on video games. I don't know too much about them. I think if I started playing them I wouldn't have any time left to make music!"*

-Selena Quintanilla-Pérez, from a December 1994 interview in *People* magazine

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## **March 13, 1995**

*Final Fantasy VI* is released in North America for the Super Nintendo CD, following a very successful release in Japan the previous December. The game is highly lauded by critics upon its release, scoring a 39/40 in *Famitsu* magazine and perfect scores from many American video game publications. It receives the biggest marketing campaign to date for a Squaresoft game, with commercials appearing on both children's TV (despite the game's Teen rating for some violence and mild language) and prime-time TV. This marketing campaign contributes to the game becoming the SNES-CD's biggest seller in North America for the month of March, even beating out *NBA Jam: Tournament Edition*. The game even receives some prime-time news coverage for its critically lauded opera scene, in which the character Celes performs as Maria in the Jidoor Opera House. The scene features the first ever lyrical music in a Squaresoft video game, with Celes' part performed by then-unknown actress Kristin Chenoweth. *Final Fantasy VI* is instantly hailed as the game of the year thus far upon its release, though the year wasn't even a fourth of the way over, and indeed, competition would be arriving fairly quickly for that title the very next week.

## **Final Fantasy VI: The Basics**

*Final Fantasy VI* (which was known IOTL as *Final Fantasy III* upon its initial release) is largely as OTL in terms of gameplay and plot. The game features fourteen playable

characters (two of them optional) and the classic turn-based ATB battle system of the previous two games in the series. It allows party members to learn spells by equipping Espers, this game's equivalent of the summoned monsters known in previous Final Fantasy games. The game's graphics are significantly more detailed than in OTL. Though still in 2-D, Squaresoft used very detailed sprites for the overworld, town, and dungeon graphics, an example of which can be seen here:

[http://images2.wikia.nocookie.net/...ly\\_Concept.jpg](http://images2.wikia.nocookie.net/...ly_Concept.jpg) (This image was taken from the Final Fantasy Wiki, IOTL it's an early concept mock-up for Final Fantasy VII and provides an example of what Nivek and I envisioned for TTL's level of graphical detail in Final Fantasy VI)

The game is also the first to feature animation for characters and enemies in battle. Though enemies appear as detailed sprites, they also have animated parts and complex attacks, the first Final Fantasy game thus far to feature this. The musical score, conducted by Nobuo Uematsu, is largely the same as IOTL, though many of the songs in the game are fully orchestrated given the capacity of the CD storage medium. The graphics and sound in *Final Fantasy VI* are highly praised, while not as advanced as games like *Donkey Kong Country* and *Squad Four* in terms of technological achievement, the game is considered a 2-D masterpiece and a new standard for sprite animation.

The plot largely follows the same storyline as OTL's *Final Fantasy VI*. The world is threatened by the growing power of the Geshtalian Empire, which seeks to use Magitek Energy to conquer the world. Having already occupied the southern continent, the Empire now sets its sights on the north, waging war with only the Returners to resist them. In the mining town of Narshe, an Esper is found, and the Empire uses an enthralled young woman named Terra to help them capture it. When Terra has a strange interaction with the Esper, it sets off a journey as the girl joins the Returners in order to discover who she really is. This eventually leads to a climactic battle between the Empire and the heroes atop a giant floating continent, where the Empire's mad lieutenant Kefka undoes the careful balance between the magical statues that keep the world in balance, leading to its destruction and the party's separation.

This is where the game takes a different turn from IOTL. IOTL, the World of Ruin was largely a non-linear portion of the game, where after retrieving Setzer's airship, you could go pretty much anywhere you wanted and recruit party members and complete tasks in any order you chose. Here, however, Hiranobu Sakaguchi decides that in order to demonstrate the increased story-telling abilities of the new CD medium, that the second half of the game would follow a more linear route, with Celes required to recruit more party members and complete more quests for the game to open up for exploration. The World of Ruin largely follows the same route as OTL until you reach the end of the quest to recruit Edgar. After Edgar is recruited, instead of going to Kohlingen to get Setzer and his airship, the party instead goes to Maranda to recruit Cyan from Mt. Zozo, and undertakes the Doma dream quest as a mandatory part of getting him back. After Cyan is recruited, the next step of the game takes the party to the Veldt, where a new quest is available for Gau (you are required to recruit him here). Gau discovers that his father is alive and must rescue him from a vicious monster on the Veldt, which kicks off a quest to fight the monster by accomplishing various tasks, you'll then be able to fight the monster in a random encounter. Once the monster is defeated, Gau sort of reconciles with his father and he also admits that he saw Relm enter a mysterious cave in the Veldt (you also find out that Gau kind of likes Relm). If you saved Shadow on the Floating Continent, this is where you get him back, if not, Relm is found injured instead. Either way, the next part of the quest is to proceed to Jidoor where

Reim must be rescued from the possessed painting. The party then returns to Mobliz, where they finally get Terra back after she defends the orphans from Hunbaba. Terra agrees to re-join the party and asks them to go to Narshe with her, she wants to confront the Esper and find out the secrets of her past. The party reaches Narshe, which has been converted into a fortress town by a crazed Banon and the last remnants of the Returners, who now blame Terra for causing the doom that has befallen the world. The only resistance to Banon is Mog, but his band of moogles has been decimated, leaving him the last survivor. Narshe is a two-part dungeon, the first part involves the party making their way to Banon and confronting him, he uses a giant suit of modified Magitek Armor to battle the party. Defeating him seems to drive him out of his madness, but it's too late and Banon passes away after apologizing to Terra and encouraging her to find her true destiny. The next part of Narshe involves finding and confronting the esper Valigarmanda, who is much more antagonistic toward Terra than in OTL's Final Fantasy VI and has a major boss battle with the party. After Valigarmanda is defeated, he accepts Terra as the true heir to the Esper race and grants the party his power. After Valigarmanda's defeat, Terra mentions that Setzer once told her about a lost love of his and an airship that the party might be able to use. The party then goes to Kohlingen and we get IOTL's Darill's Tomb quest, though the boss at the end is significantly tougher. After the party gets the airship back, however, you don't get to explore right away, as you're instead forced to go right to the Phoenix Cave and split into two parties for a major dungeon, including a mandatory boss fight (the Red Dragon is there too but this time you also fight another major boss), a scene where Celes saves Locke's life, a reprise of Aria di Mezzo Caratterre (this time much softer and also sung lyrically by Kristin Chenoweth) and the climactic reunion between Celes and Locke, after which the game finally opens up to side-quests and the like. Cult of Kefka Tower is a required quest before attempting to enter Kefka's Tower proper, though the rest of the game including the final boss and the ending play out almost exactly as OTL.

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*"A lot of the controversy I think this game is having is from people who don't realize how proud I am of my Mexican heritage and how this game is a celebration of that culture, not a stereotype or a way to make fun of Mexicans. There IS a lot of humor in the game but it's not racial humor, it's character-based humor from how zany all the characters are. Thankfully I think the vast majority of players realize that and I'm so grateful for all the praise Frederico's gotten, it absolutely blows me away."*

-Silver Sail's Carlos Delgado, creator and lead designer of *Frederico*, in an interview with the New York Times, April 8, 1995

*"And to be completely honest, I probably had more fun with Frederico than I did with Final Fantasy VI. Every Super Nintendo CD owner should check this game out."*

-*Electronic Gaming Monthly's* editor in chief Ed Semrad in the April 1995 EGM Review Crew article. *Final Fantasy VI* and *Frederico* were awarded co-Game of the Month in that issue.

## **Enter The Wacky World Of Frederico!**

*Frederico* is the latest hit action game from Acclaim. You're Frederico, a sombrero-wearing, butt-kicking hero whose girlfriend Madelina has been kidnapped by the evil Generalissimo Garcia. Not only do you have to venture through 17 huge levels to save her, but you've got to help all the other denizens of Fiestopia whose lives have been disrupted by Garcia's dastardly deeds. You can pretty much just plow through this game's highly colorful levels, taking out enemies with the more than two dozen weapons and items and skills at your disposal, but you'll lose out on accessing secret areas and winning lots of pesos that you use

to buy new skills for Frederico's arsenal, and if you decide to stick to the beaten path, you'll find the game getting frustratingly difficult later on. This is one of the most exploration-heavy platformers we've yet seen, levels are VERY non-linear, though there are plenty of signposts directing you to the exit goals.

The game is beautiful, there are lots of different characters and the game doesn't use the same character design too often, the backgrounds are colorful and full of life and the animation is some of the best yet seen on the SNES-CD. The game features an outstanding soundtrack with catchy, energetic tunes, and while there's not much in the way of voice acting, the characters still make quite a few humorous exclamations, adding even more liveliness to the game.

Graphics: 5.0

Sound: 5.0

Play Control: 5.0

Fun Factor: 5.0

Challenge: Intermediate

-excerpted from *Gamepro's* review of *Frederico* in the April 1995 issue

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### **Double Dragon: Triple Trouble:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 6.5 (quote: "While we liked the idea of the three villains and while the storyline in this game was nice and robust, the gameplay itself was somewhat lacking, especially for a game that was designed for the SNES-CD. We're hoping the next go-around for our favorite beat-em-up series is a bit more innovative.")

AI: 6.5

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Fatal Fury Special:**

Ed: 7.5

Danyon: 8.5

AI: 8

Sushi-X: 8.5 (quote: "SNK does it again with the latest installment of Fatal Fury! They've even added a couple new characters exclusive to the SNES-CD version, which is a great bonus.")

### **Final Fantasy VI:**

Ed: 9.5 (quote: "The best Final Fantasy yet and quite possibly the SNES-CD's best RPG. A brilliant storyline featuring more than a dozen unique characters, role-playing adventure doesn't get much better than this.")

Danyon: 9.5

AI: 9

Sushi-X: 9

### **International Superstar Soccer CD:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 9

Al: 7.5 (quote: "It's not a perfect soccer game but it features outstanding graphics and you won't get bored quickly if you're a soccer fan.")

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Jungle Strike:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8.5

Al: 7.5 (quote: "I loved the graphics in this helicopter-based game but it was a bit short and the missions could've used more variety.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Lost Eden:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 5 (quote: "Beautiful graphics, but I thought this game got old pretty quickly and it was one of the shorter games I've played on the system, so that probably says something.")

Al: 4.5

Sushi-X: 7

### **NBA Jam: Tournament Edition:**

Ed: 8.5 (quote: "Not much more than an incremental roster update and some slightly more polished graphics, but it's definitely the definitive version of NBA Jam and if you don't have the original, this is the one to get.")

Danyon: 8

Al: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8

### **Ninja Gaiden Trilogy:**

Ed: 7.5

Danyon: 8

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 9 (quote: "Being a ninja myself, I have to love this game. The updated graphics and all new musical score make this challenging trilogy worth playing through all over again.")

### **Populous CD:**

Ed: 6.5

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 6 (quote: "It's not a bad game but gameplay is somewhat slow and it's not too much better than the SNES version of the game. Despite an all new interface, the graphics really didn't get that much of an upgrade.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Rise Of The Robots:**

Ed: 5.5 (quote: "Yet another game featuring pretty graphics but rather pedestrian gameplay, there are much better fighting game options on the SNES-CD.")

Danyon: 5.5

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 1

### **Romance Of The Three Kingdoms IV:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9 (quote: "Koei does it again! This is the definitive Romance of the Three Kingdoms game, full of gorgeous graphics and there are so many missions to play. The customization options are a welcome addition to this already amazing series.")

Al: 8.5

Sushi-X: 9

### **Spawn:**

Ed: 6.5

Danyon: 6.5

Al: 5.5 (quote: "Just a generic platformer at best, the animations are decent but otherwise this is not really a worthy use of the franchise.")

Sushi-X: 4.5

### **The Ignition Factor:**

Ed: 8.5

Danyon: 8.5

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 7.5 (quote: "Firefighting's never been so fun than in this excellent action puzzler that lets you put out fires in dozens of stages.")

### **Top Gear 3000:**

Ed: 6.5

Danyon: 7 (quote: "A decent racer featuring some nice graphics, I loved the detail put into the stages and how quickly the cars seem to zip around.")

Al: 5

Sushi-X: 5

### **Virtuoso:**

Ed: 3 (quote: "Soooo repetitive and boring, you'd think the life of a rock star would be fun and exciting but this game hardly gives you anything to do.")

Danyon: 3

Al: 2.5

Sushi-X: 2.5

### **Wild Guns:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8

Al: 8 (quote: "This game is oh so tough but oh so fun, it gives you so many things to shoot

and I love having the option of using the controller or a light gun. A light gun makes things a BIT easier but not much.”)

Sushi-X: 8

### **Frederico:**

Ed: 9.5 (quote: “This was one of my favorite action games in a long time. Colorful and with a really fun protagonist, there's always something to do and there's a HUGE variety of weapons that give you plenty of incentive to take out baddies.”)

Danyon: 9

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9.5

### **Dark City: Heart Of Darkness:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 7

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 9.5 (quote: “The greatest detective game ever made, hands down. The game improves on the first in so many ways and the story is like something out of a movie. I had to keep playing right to the end.”)

### **Return To Pickton Lake:**

Ed: 7.5

Danyon: 7.5 (quote: “Cody and Cassie's new quest is fun even if it's somewhat of a retread of the first game.”)

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7

### **Friendly Fire:**

Ed: 5.5

Danyon: 5.5 (quote: “This arena shooter game is heavy on jokes but light on gameplay. The split-screen multiplayer can be fun but it lacks the charm of the cheesy dialogue. This game isn't horrible but it's not all that good either.”)

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 6

### **Chemistry Master:**

Ed: 6.5 (quote: “This action game where your protagonist mixes chemicals to use on enemies showed some promise, but I wish the stages had been somewhat better designed.”)

Danyon: 4.5

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 7

### **Chumoking:**

Ed: 4

Danyon: 3.5

AI: 6.5

Sushi-X: 5 (quote: "This cookie-cutter fighting game has some of the worst graphics I've ever seen. It's hard to enjoy any game when it looks like a glitchy mess.")

### **Extreme Deerhunting:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 7

AI: 5.5 (quote: "It's you and some deer and a gun. That's pretty much it. I do like that it pretty much replicated the arcade deer hunting experience but if this isn't your bag it's going to bore you.")

Sushi-X: 4

### **Cat Jackson:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7.5 (quote: "Beautiful animation really does make this otherwise generic platformer worth a look. Cat Jackson isn't as fun as Mario, but it was quite whimsical nonetheless.")

AI: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7

### **Melia's Kingdom:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 6.5 (quote: "This wasn't a terrible RPG, though the graphics are positively last-gen. Despite that, I liked the interaction between the main characters. This RPG lacks the heart or polish of Final Fantasy VI, but for hardcore genre fanatics it's worth a play.")

AI: 6.5

Sushi-X: 5.5

### **Eyes Of The Vampire:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 8.5 (quote: "A sort of mash-up of vampire lore, this is the best FMV game on the SNES-CD. Scary and actually well-acted, with really smart puzzles, it makes me clamor for another game like it. It's an oasis in the middle of a huge desert.")

AI: 6.5

Sushi-X: 8.5

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### **Sega Spring Preview!**

The Sega Genesis and Mega Charger are getting a slew of exciting new games over the next few months, enough to keep any Sega fan busy until the big Saturn release this fall. This month will see a pair of major games for the Sega Genesis, including *Star Trek: The Borg Collective* and *Ristar*. *Star Trek*, out for the Genesis with some Mega Charger enhancements, is an action-RPG hybrid that allows you to create your own Starfleet captain and command your crew as the Borg close in. It's somewhat tied in with *The Next Generation* TV series, as the cast of that show are characters in the game that you can meet and interact with, and even have them join the battle at certain points in the game.

*Ristar* is an exciting new action platformer featuring a fun new character and beautiful graphics, with some very fast-paced gameplay that's become a hallmark of the Genesis lineup. The Mega Charger gets some love as well, with an enhanced, Mega Charger-exclusive remake of the classic shooter game *Space Harrier*. Zip around from level to level shooting dozens of enemies from the sky in this highly-anticipated release. It's one of several big games planned for the Mega Charger this year, including the Mega Charger-enhanced games *Earthworm Jim 2* and *Vectorman* and the Mega Charger exclusive title *Lords of Skylein*, coming to the Mega Charger this June. Featuring voiced cutscenes and gorgeous animation, it's coming out the same month as Nintendo's highly anticipated SNES-CD *Legend of Zelda* title. Sega is betting big on this RPG and hoping it won't replicate the failure of *Lunar: The Silver Star*, which has sold poorly since being ported to the Mega Charger last year. Speaking of RPGs, a localization of *Phantasy Star IV* has been announced. It's getting some new upgrades for the Mega Charger and Sega is hoping to have it released sometime before the end of the year.

-excerpted from *Game Players* magazine, April 1995

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Stuart Scott: Michael Jordan. You know him. Everybody knows him. He's going for a record breaking 70 wins this year with the Chicago Bulls alongside teammates Scottie Pippen and Chris Webber, but he's also making the virtual leap back to the world of video games. After being absent from basketball-related video games for the last couple years, Jordan is making his big comeback in the new *NBA Jam: Tournament Edition* video game for the Sega Genesis. Jordan recently signed a multi-million dollar deal to appear exclusively in Sega video games for the next three years, in addition to Sega's *NBA Jam* games, he'll also be appearing in *NBA Live 96*, coming to the Genesis later this year. And hey, if you've got a Nintendo system like some of my homeboys, don't worry. You won't be seeing Michael Jordan, but you WILL be seeing NBA Rookie of the Year front-runner Grant Hill, who's currently trying to get the Boston Celtics back into the NBA playoffs. Next year, he'll be starring in an all new video game for the Nintendo CD. Nintendo has yet to release any details about the deal, only that it'll be an all new NBA video game to rival the *NBA Live* series. So it looks like Grant Hill and Michael Jordan will not only be rivals on the hardwood, but on the virtual hardwood as well. And hey. Bulls overwhelmingly in first place, Celtics right now sitting in eighth...an NBA playoff showdown looming in the immediate future?

-from the morning edition of *ESPN SportsCenter*, March 17, 1995

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*"That time, spring 1995, was so hectic for all of us at Sony. We were preparing to launch out on our own if we had to, I was frantically getting everything ready for the reveal of the Nova at E3, and of course, this whole time I was also helping Olafsson-san with the games division. We were going to need very strong first and second party games to take on Nintendo...in the unfortunate event that we'd have to take them on, of course."*

-Ken Kutaragi

*"While we were really heavily working on the development of Ballistic Limit, which at that time was our huge release for the holiday season and potentially would have to be the big launch game for the Nova, we were also working with Naughty Dog on their pirate game which was looking outstanding....and then there was Cat Jackson. I was never all that enthusiastic about that one, but many people at Sony, particularly higher-ups including Mr. Ohga himself, said that we'd need good characters, mascot characters to help forge Sony's*

*identity. And so, Cat Jackson was born."*

-Olafur Johann Olafsson

Cat Jackson was Sony's first attempt at a "mascot" character. A playful, fun-loving anthropomorphic cat, not a lot unlike the classic character Felix the Cat, only with "attitude", *Cat Jackson* the game was a pretty basic, generic platformer, featuring the titular cat traversing a variety of fairly straight-forward levels to rescue his girlfriend from The Fatcat, the main villain of the series. The game itself wasn't all that inspired, and it paled in comparison to games like *Frederico* in terms of level design and even in terms of plot. The one thing it did nail down was the animation. The game had some outstanding graphics, Sony showed off its skills pretty well and it had some of the best graphics of any SNES-CD game at the time. That, along with the decent amount of promotion the game got, added up to it becoming one of the month's best sellers alongside games like *Final Fantasy VI*, *NBA Jam: Tournament Edition*, the aforementioned *Frederico*, and *Double Dragon: Triple Trouble*. In a really crowded month, Cat Jackson carved out a decent niche, and sort of validated Sony's efforts, though of course at the time, the company had much bigger things on its mind.

-excerpted from a Kotaku.com article, "Sony The Software Company", posted on June 27, 2013

*"By the end of the month, it was clear that Ohga-san wasn't going to budge on any of his three conditions for the new Nintendo system, particularly the backward compatibility condition. Yamauchi-san hadn't budged either. But at that point, it would be entirely Nintendo's call."*

-Ken Kutaragi

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*We've got your first exciting news about three of Nintendo's upcoming hits! In this Nintendo Power exclusive preview, you'll get a first look at The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams, Super Squadron X: Critical Dawn, and Super Mario World 3, all making their way to the Super Nintendo CD this summer!*

*The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams* is the fifth and latest game in Link's adventures. You'll be retreading some old ground in Hyrule before a major twist sends you plummeting into an all new world of magic and mystery! Right now, we'll take a look at Hyrule's three new dungeons that you'll be exploring in the game. First up is the Lost Labyrinth, a hidden dungeon found deep in an uncharted area of the Lost Woods. It's the first dungeon Link will be exploring, and where he'll once again find his trusty bow. You'll have to deal with hordes of dangerous insects as you make your way through the confusing tunnels, so be wary of bites from above! The next dungeon is the City of the Dead, found beneath the sanctuary graveyard in the Light World. The dungeon is full of scary skeletons and ghoulish ghosts, with a fierce boss at the end designed to bring Link's worst nightmares to life! Finally, we'll show you a glimpse of the game's third dungeon, located in an all new area to the south of Hyrule that you'll have to explore thoroughly if you want to find it. The dungeon is full of all new monsters never before seen in a Zelda game, and will put all of Link's skills to the test!

*Super Squadron X: Critical Dawn* continues the story of the Super Nintendo cartridge game *Super Squadron X*, which saw Captain Xenda, accompanied by an elite squad of fighter ships, pilot his powerful tank, the VIXIV, and lead the charge against a deadly alien invasion of the new planet that humans now call home. *Critical Dawn* sees Xenda returning to Earth in order to save stranded refugees from being devoured by a mysterious evil force. Once

again, Xenda leads a team of troops into battle, but this time the VIXIV tank will play an even larger role, transforming into a battle-mech for certain fights as the evil force, known as the Blight, takes control of some of Earth's abandoned weaponry. Fighting amidst the ruins of a mostly-abandoned Earth, Xenda will need all his skills and bravery to survive!

Finally, *Super Mario World 3* looks to be the most fun Mario game yet, taking Mario into the third dimension for the very first time as you explore new worlds and levels from an isometric point of view. Mario's familiar foe Bowser has returned once more, this time with a mechanical army of deadly Mechakoopas armed and ready to take Mario out! Princess Toadstool hasn't been kidnapped this time around, and she's there to lend a hand with a variety of new power-ups for Mario and Luigi, including the Cannon Hat which lets Mario blast his foes with explosive projectiles! You'll need all the help you can get, as these levels are tougher than ever and Bowser has a seemingly endless army of Mechakoopas at his disposal!

-excerpted from the "Summer Unveiled" preview article in the March 1995 issue of *Nintendo Power*

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### **Fists Of Fury: A Trio Of Brawlers Leap Into Battle!**

This month, Nintendo's got a slew of games coming to the Super Nintendo CD, and right now we're going to cover three hard-hitting brawlers that should definitely quench your thirst for fighting might.

First up is *Double Dragon: Triple Trouble*, the first Double Dragon game to hit the SNES-CD. The Lee brothers, Jimmy and Billy, must once again fight their way through countless enemies, this time in order to take down three deadly crime lords: Fong Chow, a ruthless drug-pushing gangster, Soulfei, a mysterious but brutal sword master, and the mysterious Karina Su, a femme fatale who charms both brothers and might not be as evil as she seems. Depending on your actions during the game, you'll go after either Fong Chow or Soulfei first, though you must take out the two of them in order to reach the final confrontation. Is Karina Su friend or foe? You'll have to reach the end of the game to find out for yourself!

Next up, it's an outstanding port of SNK's hit fighting game, *Fatal Fury Special*. It's an upgraded version of *Fatal Fury 2*, but the SNES-CD version adds two characters from the brand new arcade game *Fatal Fury 3*, Hon-Fu and Blue Mary, to make 18 characters in all, giving this game one of the biggest rosters of any fighting game around! It also retains the all new combo system of the arcade version, adding an extra incentive for skilled players to master the game.

Finally, Tecmo brings its *Ninja Gaiden* series together for the very first time with *Ninja Gaiden Trilogy* for the SNES-CD. This game has a slew of enhancements over the NES originals, from revamped graphics, remastered sound (including voiced cutscenes), and removal of all the censorship from the original versions of the games. The result is one epic collection that anyone who hasn't played the originals has to own. It's one of the best compilation treatments on the system, rivaling even last year's *Final Fantasy Origins*, and even long time Ninja Gaiden veterans should pick this up, as it's almost an entirely new game.

While there's plenty to choose from this month in terms of video games on the SNES-CD, we think that fighting game fans are getting the best deal, and those of you itching to pound some faces in won't be disappointed!

-excerpted from the April 1995 issue of *GameFan* magazine

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*"The first game to really shock me, in terms of content, had to be Dark City: Heart Of Darkness on the Super Nintendo CD. I was NOT expecting that game to go to the places it went and even though it covered the subject matter with the utmost respect and gravity it deserved, I was amazed to see such a game on a Nintendo system, even after they'd weathered the storm with Mortal Kombat and had allowed Shin Megami Tensei. Dark City: Heart Of Darkness, of course, featured human trafficking, a very realistic depiction of human trafficking, and was one of the darkest games ever featured on a console, even still to this day. It was a great game, MUCH better than the frustratingly difficult original, and far and away the best detective game to come to the system. But holy hell, was it a rough game to get through."*

-Adam Sessler, from an article on Gameinfinity.com, April 14, 2014

*"Oh yeah, me and Alex played both of the Pickton Lake games. I loved the second one where you got to team up with some of your friends instead of just saving them, there was a lot of really funny dialogue and despite all the scary monsters running around it was such a light-hearted game! I wish it had sold better because we never got a third Pickton Lake game, at least not until this gen when they revived the series finally. Of course it did come out at pretty much the exact same time as Final Fantasy VI...and we're both kinda guilty of letting that game take our attention away from Pickton Lake."*

-Ariel Hirsch, speaking about *Return To Pickton Lake* in a November 2014 GameInformer article

Lost amidst the overwhelming slew of games that released in North America for the Super Nintendo CD in the spring of 1995 (26 in March alone!) were two of the system's biggest cult classics: *Dark City: Heart of Darkness* and *Return To Pickton Lake*. The latter of course was the vastly under-anticipated sequel to 1993's beloved cult classic *Pickton Lake*, while *Heart of Darkness* was the sequel to one of the SNES-CD's most notoriously difficult detective games. *Return To Pickton Lake* was an utter commercial failure. Selling only 34,000 copies, it was as well reviewed as the original game, despite some criticism for being somewhat derivative of the first. Like the first game, it starred Cody and Cassie attempting to save their beloved camp from an invasion by supernatural monsters. Unlike the first game, which saw the twins rescuing their friends, this game saw Cody and Cassie's friends returning the favor by helping them fight the bad guys, providing distractions, combat assistance, obstacle or puzzle help, or just moral support. The game was still in large part similar to the first, but the presence of the twins' school buddies added an additional layer of humor and charm to the game. *Dark City: Heart of Darkness* was about as far from funny or charming as a video game could be. While the first game saw its detective protagonist solving ordinary crimes such as robbery or murder, *Heart of Darkness* saw its lead character descend into the world of human slavery, as he had to bust a ring of very wicked criminals who were kidnapping ordinary people (many of them young people) in order to sell into slavery in foreign countries. It was a deeply serious, depressing plot and though the hero did succeed in the end (if you could traverse the game's difficult mysteries, which were admittedly not quite as frustrating as those in the first game), he was left a somewhat broken man due to all those he wasn't able to save in time. The game, despite low sales,

actually DID receive a third installment for the SNES-CD (unlike Pickton Lake which has only recently been revived in a next-gen retro digital title), which treaded on somewhat lighter ground. While *Final Fantasy VI* is considered the month's best game and one of the greatest of all time (and rightly so), there are a few critics who believe *Dark City: Heart Of Darkness* to be the superior game due to its groundbreaking storyline.

-from the article "The SNES-CD's Forgotten Sequels" on Kotaku.com, January 8, 2013

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts- March 1995**

1. Donkey Kong Country
2. Alien vs. Predator
3. F-Zero CD
4. Super Mario World 2
5. Squad Four
6. Star Wars: X-Wing
7. Mortal Kombat II
8. Rayman
9. Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition
10. Muppet World
11. Terminator II: Judgement Day
12. TMNT V: Wrath Of The Foot
13. Universalizer
14. Super Bomberman 2
15. Race For Your Life
16. Contra IV: Hard Corps
17. Jewels Of The Realm
18. X-Men: Mutant Apocalypse
19. Secret Of Mana
20. Shin Megami Tensei

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### **March 30, 1995**

Norio Ohga, Ken Kutaragi, and a host of Sony executives had gathered in the Sony board room, awaiting the arrival of Minoru Arakawa and Howard Lincoln from Nintendo. The two men arrived, Arakawa holding an envelope in his hands as he took a seat at the table. The meeting had been called after Arakawa had told Ohga that Hiroshi Yamauchi had finally decided on whether or not Nintendo could meet Sony's conditions for the new console. The tension in the room was clearly visible on the faces of the gathered men, particularly on the face of Norio Ohga, who did not want to wait long for Yamauchi's response.

"I have in my hand a letter from Mr. Yamauchi, regarding his decision as to whether or not we will be accepting Sony's three conditions for the new Nintendo console. These are words directly from Mr. Yamauchi himself, words which Mr. Lincoln and I have discussed with him but the ultimate decision was Mr. Yamauchi's alone to make. I will be reading the letter now."

Arakawa opened up the envelope, already knowing what it was going to say. Though he and Howard Lincoln had faces of stone, the looks on the faces of Ohga and Kutaragi were far

less stoic. The men gathered in the room knew exactly what future lay ahead if Nintendo refused Sony's conditions. Ohga had been very clear with the men from Nintendo that Sony would not budge, and that they were prepared to abandon development of Nintendo's next generation console if all three conditions were not met.

The future of two companies hinged on the balance of the words contained in the letter, Hiroshi Yamauchi's final decision on the matter of Nintendo and Sony's relationship in the console business.

"We accept Sony's three conditions."

As soon as the words left Minoru Arakawa's mouth, Kutaragi couldn't contain the smile on his face. He quickly restrained himself, though Lincoln saw Kutaragi's smile and allowed a smile of his own, along with a small nod.

*"I know. I'm relieved too,"* thought Lincoln, sensing immediately that the tension had begun to come out of the room. Ohga stood up and reached across the table to shake both men's hands, and Kutaragi quickly followed suit.

"We're looking forward to doing continued business with Nintendo," said Ohga, giving both men a hearty handshake.

"And we're looking forward to forging the future of video games, together," said Arakawa in reply. "Mr. Yamauchi understands that compromise is sometimes important in running a successful business."

Hiroshi Yamauchi had agonized over the decision to agree to Sony's conditions, but in the end, he knew that the key to Nintendo's success had been its innovation and creativity. With Sony handling much of the heavy lifting on the technological side, it would free Nintendo's creative minds up to generate innovative new ideas. He knew that Sony needed Nintendo's creative energy more than Nintendo needed Sony's technology, which he ultimately viewed as a luxury that could be eschewed should the need ever arise. He'd seen so many other companies try and fail to stand up to the Nintendo juggernaut. For every Sega, there were a dozen Ataris, or 3DOs, or Phillips that had tried and failed to forge forward with their own console. Sony had to realize this, which is why, Yamauchi realized, they'd only given three conditions for continuing their work with Nintendo. Had it been the other way around, Yamauchi would've made a lot more demands.

And Cat Jackson, which 20 years later would be a largely forgotten element of Sony lore, had perhaps been the final catalyst for Yamauchi's decision. Sony had attempted to come up with their own Mario...and they'd pretty much ripped off Felix the Cat. While Sony's pedestrian first attempt at a mascot character hadn't been the only thing that convinced Yamauchi to make the deal, it had quite possibly been the final ray of sunshine to thaw the ice around the Nintendo boss' heart.

Within days, Nintendo and Sony had already begun work on the initial specifications for the new console, which, as outlined by the deal, would be backward compatible with all SNES-CD games. Sony's work on the Nova was quietly rolled into what would become the new console, with Gunpei Yokoi leading up the technical work on Nintendo's end in collaboration with Ken Kutaragi from Sony. It was Howard Lincoln who came up with the proposed project name for the next-generation system, which both companies expected would be ready for release sometime in 1997.

The name he proposed was "Project Eunice", which not only was a play on the expected UNES (Ultra Nintendo Entertainment System) name of the console, but also meant "good victory" in Greek, as in the expected victory that Nintendo was to experience over Sega's Saturn in the next generation. The groundwork had finally been laid for Nintendo and Sony's continued partnership, though for the time being, there was still a long road ahead...

*Apparently Sony had come up with a proposed fifth-generation system called the Nova to compete with Nintendo and Sega if that deal to create the Ultra had fallen through. The specs on it looked pretty impressive and they would've had a nice launch lineup from what I can tell, headlined by a next-gen Ballistic Limit (which of course was on SNES-CD IOTL). So what do you guys think would've happened if Yamauchi had said no to Sony's demand for backward compatibility in the new console?*

-excerpted from "WI: Nintendo/Sony Split In 1995?" from Alternatehistory.net

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### **March 31, 1995**

Chris Perez's phone rang at 8:51 AM, stirring him from sleep. He picked up the phone and could hear a familiar voice on the other end.

"Hey Chris, it's Carlos and you owe me ten bucks."

"Unnnh...." Chris groaned and rubbed the sleep out of his eyes, not expecting to get a call from his friend Carlos so early in the morning. The two of them had grown up together in San Antonio and had become friends, with Carlos helping Chris out with his math homework and showing him how to program a computer. The two had stayed in touch, bonding over their shared love of guitar music, though while Carlos' love of computers had drawn him to the video game industry, Chris had become a musician and was now married to one of the hottest rising stars in the Latin American music world, Selena Quintanilla. "What the hell man, you woke me up...."

"Sorry, sorry....I just got the sales figures back from *Frederico*, you know the game you bet me ten bucks wasn't gonna do well? Well guess what, it was the number one best selling new game of the week! We sold like 50,000 copies! And you bet me ten bucks it was gonna fail."

"Ah, shit man, that's great..." mumbled Chris, still bleary-eyed as he held the phone up to his ear. "Look, you come down here to Texas and we'll go for a steak dinner or something, I'll pay, how about it?"

"You need to come up here to Seattle and we can have a big fucking party, man! This is like a dream come true, you gotta-"

Chris could hear the shower running in the other room. He then noticed that his wife had gotten up early and seemed to be getting ready to go somewhere...and he had a pretty good idea as to where.

"Hold on, I gotta call you back," said Chris, hanging up the phone and climbing out of bed. As soon as he'd gotten dressed he could see Selena already making her way out the door. "Hey, you're not going back to that motel are you?"

Selena had a look of distress on her face as her husband confronted her.

"You know that bitch is crazy," said Chris, trying to block the door only for Selena to push past him. "Why would she want to meet you alone unless she had something up her sleeve?"

"She's just scared," replied Selena, placing her hand on the doorknob. She was going to meet with Yolanda Saldivar, the former president of her fan club, whom Selena had suspected of embezzling money from the club over the past few months and who had some important tax documents that Selena would need to conduct her financial affairs, which due to her meteoric rise to fame had become increasingly complex. "She told me last night that she'd been raped."

"That's a bunch of bullshit and you know it! She's trying to lure you there, she's gotta be up to something--"

"I still see her as a friend....I just think she's made a terrible mistake and that she wants to make amends for it. Let me try and talk some reason into her."

"You're not going to see her without me there."

Selena started to open the door. Chris held it shut for a moment but when she tried to force it open he backed off, his anger turning to concern.

"Please," Chris said, looking into Selena's eyes. "Let me go with you. I'll stay back but if she tries anything--"

"....."

Selena knew that her friend....if Yolanda still was her friend at that point, was almost certainly fabricating her story. But she also didn't want to suspect that she had any suspicious motives, that she was just desperate for sympathy, that she knew she was in trouble and just wanted Selena to try and understand why she was doing what she was doing. Ultimately, Selena desperately wanted to salvage the friendship the two of them had formed...but something in her gut told her that Yolanda Saldivar wanted more than just friendship.

"All right," said Selena, looking back at her husband. "You can come along....if she is my friend she'll know why I brought you."

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*"It...it happened in like a split-second... she had the gun pointed right at me, but Chris, he grabbed the gun so fast... he grabbed it and he grabbed her hand and he wouldn't let her fire it....and when she realized she couldn't get to me she started shouting 'rape, rape!' at the top of her lungs, like....like she wanted people to think Chris was trying to hurt her....but....but there were so many people there, thank God for that and they called for help and....and I just thank God every day that Chris wasn't hurt. If he'd been hurt I never would have forgiven myself for letting something like that happen to him. ....no, no, no, I don't....I don't think about what....what could've happened if he hadn't been there. I don't....I don't even like talking about that day but.... but the only thing that....that I draw*

*on as a positive is how much he loves me, that...that he would come there like that to protect me. I love him so much. Half of the songs on the album are about Chris. He is my star."*

-Selena Quintanilla-Pérez, discussing her new English-language crossover album in an interview with MTV News on November 30, 1995

Hola cuates, Aquí Gus Rodriguez de Club Nintendo aquí en Nintendomania con una Entrevista Exclusiva con el compadre Carlos Delgado sobre el nuevo juego de Super Nintendo CD, Frederico, el Juego Protagonizado por el epónimo heroe en su misión en un mundo que sería el México de fantasía(no muy diferente al que vemos en las telenovelas de televisa) y uno de los pocos juegos en estar completamente en español.

*Hello Buddies, Here's Gus Rodriguez from Club Nintendo in Nintendomania now with an exclusive interview with the fella Carlos Delgado, about the newest SNES-CD Game, Frederico, the game started by the eponymous hero in his mission in a world that would be the Fantasy Mexico (not so different what we watch in Televisa Soap Opera) and a very rare type of game, one that's in Spanish!*

Gus: Un Placer Tener su Tiempo para esta entrevista, Señor Delgado, Dígame en pocas palabras en qué consiste Frederico para el público.

*G: A pleasure having your time for this interview, Mr. Delgado, tell me in few words, "what is Frederico?" for our audience.*

Carlos: Ya un placer mío compadre Rodríguez, como ya dijo el juego protagonizado por frederico podría describirse como Mario con Metroid en Mexico, exploras el mundo, peleas contra enemigos y explorar el mundo del juego.

*C: The pleasure is mine fella rodriguez, as you say the game would be described as Mario meets Metroid in Mexico, you explore the game world.*

Gus: Como Nacio la Idea de frederico, es algo bien raro ver un juego como este

*G: How was this Frederico idea born? It's pretty unusual seeing a game like this.*

CarloLa idea de Frederico nacio cuando un poco después que me Uní a Silver Tail después de terminar la Universidad, ya con experiencia en programación y tenia buen nivel como artista, fue reclutado como programador para dar ideas para posible juegos, una vez, uno de nuestros cliente, Acclaim, estaba interesado en un juego completamente nuevo para el Super Nintendo CD y querían algo nunca antes visto, así que hable con mis compañero y jefes y le dije, porque no usamos la idea de un Mario Latino y ellos me dijeron: Podría elaborarla.

*C: The Idea about Frederico was born a little later on, I joined Silver Sail After finishing college. I've got experience as programmer and artist and was recruited into company to give my ideas for possible games, one time, when one of our customers, Acclaim, was interested in a game that was completely new for the SNES-CD and wanted something not done before, and I propose the idea of Latin Mario and they say, can you elaborate on it?.*

Gus: Asi propuso la idea de repente, aprovechando la oportunidad que tenia.

*G: So suddenly you shouted the idea, taking the heat of the time.*

Carlos: Claro, sentí era ahora o nunca, si me quedaba callado tal vez no tendría la oportunidad de hacer nada.

*C: Yeah, I felt it was now or never, if i was quiet maybe I'd miss a big opportunity.*

Gus: Que Dijo cuando propuso la idea, ya tenía la temática del juego.

*G: What did you say when you proposed the idea for the game?*

Carlos: En si no tenía mucho, solo la idea de hacer el juego con personaje Latino, propuse la idea de exploración citando Metroid y Castlevania y proponiendo como una versión mexicana de Mario.

*C: As I said, I mentioned the concept, of the character being a latino/Hispanic, I proposed the exploration elements quoting metroid and castlevania and proposed him as a Mexican version of Mario.*

Gus: Si con Mario y Sonic, los juegos de plataformas estaban vibrando y pegando duro, así logro convencer a Acclaim le diera luz verde.

*G: Yes, with mario and sonic, platformers were alive and kicking in the market, so that was how I managed to convince Acclaim.*

Carlos: Claro, Nos dieron la fecha de desarrollo y ya esta listo para ahora lanzarlo a finales del mes.

*C: Of Course, they gave us the deadlines and now the game is ready for completion at the end of the month.*

Gus: Algo que he oído de mis compañero reporteros anglo, es que para algunos Federico era inusual por sus temas, casi algo dijeron estereotípico de la cultura hispana, porque cree que se deba eso, personalmente no encontraba nada malo, he mas he visto representaciones peor en en otros medios, en especial la televisión

*G: Something I've heard for our reporter partners in English, some for them consider Fredereico weird for their theme, almost feeling like an stereotype of the Hispanic culture, why was that controversial, I've watched far worse stuff in television sometimes.*

Carlos: Eso es algo que pasa, especialmente cuando se toca temas de culturas extranjeras, haya en los Estado Unidos ellos son muy prudente para evitar herir sensibilidades de otros países, pero en si Federico no es ridiculizar o caricaturizar, es celebrar como somos los mexicanos y latinos, somos bastantes alegres y festivos comparando con nuestro primos anglos, pero también hay nuestro lado oscuro, lo cual refleja los crímenes del villano, Generalísimo Garcia, que sabemos fueron episodios oscuros paso la historia, pero la aventura de frederico es algo así, sacar lo mejor de lo peor de lo peor mientras se divierte en el camino

*C: That is something tend to happen, especially when touch topic about foreign cultures, back them in United States they're really careful to avoid hurting the sensibilities of other*

*cultures, but again, Frederico was not intended to ridicule or stereotype, it was to celebrate, specially how Mexican and latin we are. We're pretty upbeat and jovial comparing our anglo cousins yet we've got our dark side and history, something you notice about the crimes of the villain, Generalissimo Garcia, those were dark moments that happened in history but the adventure of Frederico was that, take the best from the worst when you've got fun in the way.*

Gus: Algo que Amamos de Frederico, la opción de Idioma en Español (con todo y bandera Mexicana) al iniciar el juego, como salió la idea de idioma español, fue algo que se quisieron poner pensando en mercado hispano.

*G: Something we loved from Frederico was the Spanish Language option (with mexican flag and all) at the start of the game, how was the idea for the Spanish language, was it something you had in mind for the Hispanic market?*

Carlos: De hecho el Idioma español fue una chance de milagro, habíamos terminado el juego para diciembre y comenzábamos el debugging, entonces estaba discutiendo con un compañero de grupo como a veces explicabas referencia en español y como tenía más sentido en su idioma y me dijo, si no podía yo con el traducirlo e insertar el idioma antes de enviar el Master a Acclaim. Yo le dije si contaba su apoyo para una maratón para la inserción de texto y dijo: "sure not problem, would be fun". y así lo hicimos los dos.

*C: In fact Spanish language was a lucky break, we finished the game in December and started the debugging, so there was discussing with of one team members about how sometimes I tell stories about some Spanish reference and say if it makes more sense in Spanish and how would be if was in Spanish, so say tell me if me knowing Spanish would not be translated in the text before sending the Master to Acclaim. So I say, sure if we can get his help for a long programming marathon for the text insertion and he said: "sure, no problem, would be fun" and that was how were able to do it.*

Gus: Entonces el esfuerzo suyo y de aquel programador pudieron poner todo el juego en español, que dijo Acclaim y el resto al ver eso.

*G: So was a two man personal effort, the programmer and you, and you were able to put all the text in spanish, what did Acclaim say when they saw it?*

Carlos: La compañía estaba sorprendida, no esperaban eso de nuestra parte, aunque dijeron que le gusto, así si había gente entre hispano o gente que sabía español el juego tendrían eso ya sin pagar extra y le gusto.

*C: The company was suprised, nobody expected that from our part, but they loved it, so they would be able to market the game to people who knew spanish or here in Mexico without extra cost because it was already translated.*

Gus: Eso fue algo cuando me sorprendió, Nos enviaron nuestra copia de evaluación y el equipo quedo sorprendido al ver todo en español, junto al ingles, todos jugamos en español, aunque algunos escogimos ingles para comparar y esta genial.

*G: Yeah we got suprised too, we sent our review copy and was nice seeing the Spanish option, all game text and menus with alongside enGLISH, we all played in Spanish but some chose English and it was nice seeing the comparison.*

Carlos: Eso me encanta, espero en México le encanten tener el juego en su idioma, y si las ventas son buenas, nos ayuden para la secuela.

*C: I love it too, hope the game here in Mexico is a hit, so that can help for the sequel.*

Gus: Con gusto aquí en México se espera también que sea un éxito

*G: The same here, Hope here in Mexico it's a hit.*

Aquí Termina la Entrevista, para mas información y trucos del juego, la revista club nintendo de april tendrá frederico de portada y tema principal no se la pierda

*This concludes our interview, for more info and tricks about the game, Club Nintendo in April will have Federico on the cover. Don't miss it!*

Tercer Programa de Nintendomania, Marzo 18 1995.

-Interview from March 18, 1995, translated for the Federico Fanpage, Fiestopia.com

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*"You don't look like one of Robotnik's goons. I guess I can trust you but you better not do anything to make me change my mind. I'm Corona and you're talking to the leader of the Renegades!"*

-Corona the Butterfly, from *Knuckles: Renegade*

*"I knew I'd burned my bridges with Sega, Nintendo was pretty much the only other game in town. I liked what they were doing with RPGs, I liked what Telenet Japan was up to, so I figured I'd take a shot at asking them straight up for the Phantasia job."*

-Victor Ireland, president of Working Designs

*"The guy's name....is fuckin' BADBAD? This is supposed to be a serious killer warlord here, and you're telling me that with all the brilliant translations for games like Final Fantasy and Secret of Mana, the best that Tecmo can come up with for this guy's name is BADBAD? You put out Deadman Sam, for fuck's sake! What were they thinking?"*

-from the Angry Video Game Nerd episode #62, "Tecmo's Secret Of The Stars"

*"Sony and Nintendo coming to an agreement really did make my job a lot easier. It eliminated all the uncertainty about where we were headed in the coming months and it kept my relationships with a lot of the third-party companies intact. Once I knew that Project Eunice was a go, I could focus on building up a really good game library for the years ahead. Ballistic Limit was especially crucial and I knew it'd make a much better SNES-CD game than a fifth-gen one."*

-Olafur Johann Olafsson

*"I'm always gonna have fond memories of working on GameTV. We really were the first TV show about video games to become a big hit and I honestly wish I was still working on there today. We got to cover what I think was the best time for video games and I haven't done anything more fun since."*

-Ted Crosley, co-host of MTV's *GameTV*, in a September 2012 interview with *GameInformer* magazine

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### **Bust-A-Move:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 8.5 (quote: "This fun, exciting and ridiculously addictive puzzle game looks beautiful on the SNES-CD and the soundtrack makes getting combos all the more enjoyable.")

Al: 7.5

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Cosmic Fantasy:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 6 (quote: "Telenet's remake of this classic sci-fi RPG isn't terrible, but they could've updated a few more things to make it comparable to the great RPGs available on the market instead of just making it basically mediocre.")

Sushi-X: 5

### **Frank Thomas' Big Hurt Baseball:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8

Al: 8.5 (quote: "The awesome graphics make this game the best on the SNES. The presentation is just superb and the gameplay is pitch perfect, no pun intended.")

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Kirby's Avalanche:**

Ed: 7.5

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7 (quote: "I'm still clamoring for a real SNES-CD Kirby game, but this fun puzzler should tide over fans of the pink puffball for now.")

### **NCAA Final Four Basketball:**

Ed: 6 (quote: "Fairly basic basketball gameplay and pedestrian graphics make this NCAA basketball game just an average sports title. If you're clamoring for your favorite college teams on CD, you'll just have to settle for it.")

Danyon: 5

Al: 5

Sushi-X: 6

### **P.T.O. II:**

Ed: 6.5

Danyon: 5.5 (quote: "Koei's sequel to its classic naval strategy game doesn't quite measure up to the first. We wish the graphics had been updated somewhat and the campaign is surprisingly short.")

Al: 7  
Sushi-X: 7

### **PGA Tour 96:**

Ed: 5  
Danyon: 6.5  
Al: 6.5 (quote: "You could do a lot worse for golf games but the graphics definitely could've used a bumping up.")  
Sushi-X: 7

### **RBI Baseball 96:**

Ed: 7 (quote: "This is a pretty fun baseball game even if the gameplay's not quite as tight as some of the others on the system. The presentation could've used a bit of work.")  
Danyon: 6.5  
Al: 7.5  
Sushi-X: 6

### **Stargate:**

Ed: 8.5  
Danyon: 6.5  
Al: 7 (quote: "An actually decent movie tie-in, who woulda thunk it? We like that the SNES-CD version integrated some of the scenes from the movie into the gameplay. It's generic in parts but if you're a fan of the film this is a worthy title to play.")  
Sushi-X: 7

### **Tecmo Secret Of The Stars:**

Ed: 4  
Danyon: 6.5  
Al: 3  
Sushi-X: 3.5 (quote: "A generic as they come RPG further marred by a crap translation, this is one of the worst RPGs on the system.")

### **Swords Of Samnaria:**

Ed: 7.5 (quote: "Taito's Axes of Avenglia sequel plays somewhat better than the original, I liked the graphics a lot and the plot was engrossing and easy to follow.")  
Danyon: 8  
Al: 6  
Sushi-X: 6

### **Salvation:**

Ed: 7  
Danyon: 7  
Al: 6.5 (quote: "This was a somewhat generic arcade-style space shooter but the ability to rack up truly ludicrous combos makes it at least worth a try.")  
Sushi-X: 7

### **Nights Of Excitement:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 6.5

Al: 8 (quote: "This game might not be for everyone but I enjoyed the cute characters and some of the minigames were really fun. It seems to be designed for younger players but there were some frustratingly hard minigames later in the quest.")

Sushi-X: 5.5

### **Parallel World:**

Ed: 8.5

Danyon: 9 (quote: "Another classic RPG so soon after Final Fantasy VI? Yes, please! It may not have a lot of hype behind it but if you're an RPG fan you HAVE to check out Parallel World for its great gameplay and deeply emotional storyline.")

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9

### **Warriors And Conquerors:**

Ed: 5 (quote: "A generic Civilization clone that tries to mix things up by focusing on battles and combat. It would have helped if the combat were actually all that interesting.")

Danyon: 5.5

Al: 5.5

Sushi-X: 5

-*Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of SNES-CD games in the May and June 1995 issues

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*"Knuckles: Renegade is the next big step forward in the Sonic the Hedgehog series. Knuckles is one of the most popular new characters we've ever introduced, and we're confident that fans are going to love seeing him star in his own game with a new cast of characters that will become a crucial part of the ongoing Sonic franchise."*

-Tom Kalinske, in a statement to Sega shareholders on March 30, 1995

### **Knuckles: Renegade Brings Mega Attitude!**

*Knuckles: Renegade* is the newest game in the *Sonic the Hedgehog* franchise and the first *Sonic* game exclusive to the Mega Charger. The enhanced graphics and sound capabilities of the Mega Charger make this the best looking *Sonic* game ever, with fluid animations and a fantastic soundtrack featuring some gritty new tunes. Though this game plays a lot like the original *Sonic* trilogy, it's not your typical *Sonic* game. It stars his pal Knuckles, who's a bit more rough and tumble than the rest of his crew, and he's on a pretty serious mission as he's helping a band of rebels stop a somewhat more vicious Dr. Robotnik. You'll be teaming up with several new friends and all of them are playable at some point, meaning you'll have to master some brand new skills to survive the six worlds and sixteen levels of this quest. First up, there's Corona the Butterfly. Though she might be a beautiful butterfly with brightly colored wings, don't underestimate her for a second. She's even more dangerous than Knuckles himself, and she can fire sonic energy waves from her hands! Then there's Espio the Chameleon, a no-nonsense ninja who can blend in almost anywhere. Vector the Crocodile is a fierce detective with a heart of gold, and Charmy Bee is the comic relief of the

cast but he's still got a lot of heart and a pretty strong stinger.

While the graphics and sound were superb, we did have a few problems with the gameplay, which wasn't quite as fluid as *Sonic the Hedgehog 3*. Some of the levels seem a bit rehashed from earlier *Sonic* games, and levels on the whole are a bit shorter too, making this game not quite as epic as *Sonic 3* or even *Sonic 2*. We DID enjoy the gritty storyline which really reminded us of the great Saturday morning *Sonic* cartoon, and we hope that's a sign that the series will be a bit darker when it makes the jump to the Saturn. Either way, this game seemed like more of a side-story than an evolution in the series, but nonetheless, it's a very fun diversion. *Knuckles: Renegade* releases on April 10th.

Graphics: 5.0

Sound: 5.0

Play Control: 4.5

Fun Factor: 4.5

Challenge: Intermediate

-excerpted from the May 1995 *GamePro* review of *Knuckles: Renegade*

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*"All told, April 1995 was actually a pretty good month for us. Knuckles Renegade and Space Harrier drove Mega Charger sales while the year's annual crop of sports games helped us out with regular Genesis owners. Combine that with a bit of a lull in the SNES-CD release slate and we just about pulled even. Not to mention our big win at the Kids' Choice Awards. I even got to make an appearance at the awards and get slimed, which was a lot of fun and my daughters really loved it. It wasn't a really serious award but I still have the blimp at home and any win over Donkey Kong Country was great in my book."*

-Tom Kalinske

\*Ben Savage and Rider Strong are on stage at the Kids' Choice Awards to present the Favorite Video Game award for 1994.\*

Ben Savage: And the nominees are... *Donkey Kong Country*, for the Super Nintendo CD....

Rider Strong: *Sonic the Hedgehog 3*, for the Sega Genesis...

Ben Savage: And *NBA Jam*, for multiple systems. And the Kids' Choice Award goes to...  
\*opens envelope\*

Ben and Rider: *Sonic the Hedgehog 3!*

Announcer: Here to accept the award for Favorite Video Game is *Sonic the Hedgehog* himself, along with Tom Kalinske, president of Sega of America!

\*Tom Kalinske and a costumed *Sonic the Hedgehog* come up to the podium and accept the blimp.\*

Tom Kalinske: Ah, *Sonic* is so happy to win this award that he can't speak, so I'm gonna speak for him. \*the guy in the *Sonic* costume whispers something to Kalinske\* *Sonic* says that he wants to thank everyone who voted on him, and he also says that....this guy next to me really wants to get slimed! ...huh? \*looks at *Sonic* who backs away\* I didn't say that!

\*gets a massive amount of slime dumped on him\* Aaaaaaaaahhhhh!!! \*all the kids laugh\* You know, that Sonic is a real prankster, but I guess that's why all you kids love him, thanks again for this award and be on the lookout for Sonic's next adventure! \*he walks off the stage with Sonic\*

Announcer: Coming up next, the award for Favorite Male Athlete of the year! And remember to stick around after the Kids Choice Awards for a special preview episode of our newest Nicktoon, *Phineas and Ferb*!

-excerpt from the 1995 Kids' Choice Awards, April 29, 1995

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*It's a big month in Nintendo's Epic Center. We've got four big RPGs releasing this month for the SNES-CD, and we're going to cover them all. Also, be sure to check out this month's Nintendo Power CD if you're a subscriber, we've got playable demos of Parallel World and Cosmic Fantasy.*

### **Two Worlds, One Quest:**

*Parallel World is an exciting new RPG from Enix that takes place in a world divided between a vast underground kingdom and a bustling society on the surface. The two worlds have never come into contact but have heard terrible things about the other. When four young heroes from each world start out on a journey, they never suspect that they'll meet, and that their meeting will change everything...*

(...)

Narcel and Kate might be bumbling thieves, but they're surprisingly capable in battle and you'll need to use all your skills to defeat them. Have Sally keep healing every turn while Roger and Xander attack with their best sword techniques. If Xander is level 13, you can use your Forward Charge to hit Narcel and Kate at the same time which will be a major help in this fight.

(...)

### **The Secret Is In The Stars:**

*Tecmo's Secret Of The Stars follows Ray and his band of warriors on a mission to defeat Homncruse and restore peace and justice to the land. While on their mission, the warriors can also team up with a group of warriors known as the Kustera, giving this game one of the largest casts we've yet seen in an RPG.*

(...)

Be sure to search Badbad-House thoroughly for treasures, you'll need them in the fights ahead and that 100 gold will come especially in handy.

(...)

### **A New Kind Of Fantasy:**

*Telenet's Cosmic Fantasy isn't related to Square's Final Fantasy series, but with its animated cutscenes and voice acting, it's arguably more thematic. It's an updated remake of a pair of games that appeared on TurboGrafx systems, with improved enemy AI and a retooled*

storyline.

(...)

Taking an old series and combining it into a single game seems to be a trend for Telenet, which did the same for *Valis: Rebirth* earlier this year. While *Cosmic Fantasy* follows much more closely to the original, it also has a somewhat condensed version of the second game's plot contained within.

(...)

### **Sword Fighters:**

*Taito's Swords of Samnaria is the sequel to 1993's SNES-CD game Axes of Avenglia. Featuring an all new cast of characters and a new storyline, it features one of the best soundtracks we've heard in an RPG. Join Castion and his fellow sword fighters as they journey out on a quest to defeat the evil sorceress Aritelle!*

(...)

Though all of your characters use swords for weapons in this game, each character has their own different type of sword that they specialize in. Thugarr uses the hefty Bastard Swords, while Sileen specializes in light rapiers.

(...)

-excerpted from the Epic Center column in the April 1995 issue of *Nintendo Power*

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*We got sports, lots of sports in this month's issue of GamePro magazine! On the SNES-CD, RBI Baseball '96 goes head to head with Frank Thomas in a big time clash of bats! We've got golf action with PGA Tour '96, and just in time for March Madness, it's NCAA Final Four Basketball, the first NCAA basketball game to contain all the big teams and let you pair them up in the NCAA Tournament!*

So which baseball game is best? While RBI Baseball '96 stepped up to the plate with its typical tight gameplay and new simulation options, we had to give the edge to Big Hurt Baseball. The SNES-CD version looks and feels like a next-gen baseball game, with outstanding player animations and even better presentation than last year's ESPN Baseball Tonight. While we're still aching to see Ken Griffey Jr. show up on CD, this Frank Thomas game is outstanding and it really does combine the best features from all the previous SNES-CD baseball classics.

### **Frank Thomas' Big Hurt Baseball (SNES-CD)**

Graphics: 5.0

Sound: 4.5

Play Control: 4.0

Fun Factor: 4.5

Challenge: Adjustable

-excerpted from the April 1995 issue of *GamePro*

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Bernard Shaw: And we now have an update on the attempted bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah building in Oklahoma City. The two men that were arrested attempting to drive an explosive-laden truck in the vicinity of the building are believed to be connected to this morning's assassination of Attorney General Janet Reno by Timothy McVeigh in Washington, DC. This now appears to have been a coordinated attack against the United States by these three men, the two men arrested in Oklahoma City, Terry Nichols and Michael Fortier, and Timothy McVeigh, who is still in a Washington DC hospital in intensive care after being wounded by police following his assassination of the Attorney General. Right now we cannot speculate on the motives of these three men, only that the attack on the federal building in Oklahoma City appeared to be a coordinated attack with this assassination.

-from a report on CNN at 3:00 PM on April 19, 1995

*"And so right after I got that alert, over the radio that there had been an assassination in Washington and that all the federal buildings were to be put on enhanced security, there was this truck. And I had noticed that the man driving the truck was looking very strange, very nervous, and seemed to be in a hurry. And I stopped him and, you know, I began to question him and I wanted him to open up the truck and that's when he started firing at me.*

(...)

*You know, they call me a hero, but....but I can't....I can't claim to be a hero. I just was doin' my job. They said I probably saved 500 lives that day, I dunno how many people were in that building or what would have happened... all I know is that if I hadn't stopped that guy in the truck from detonating that bomb, I never woulda seen my wife again. I wouldn't have seen my daughter Abby grow up and graduate from college and get married. But I ain't the only guy that was there. I was pinned down and two of my buddies came and saved me and we all stopped those guys that day. It uh....you know....it was... \*he has some trouble reaching up to wipe his eyes with his right arm which was crippled from two gunshots sustained after being fired upon by Terry Nichols and Michael Fortier\* ...I was just doing my job. That's all I was doing."*

-from an interview with heroic security guard Brad Cullman on CNN's documentary special "20 Years Later: The Day That Shocked A Nation", on April 19, 2015

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(Authors' Note: This entire *Tale Phantasia* segment was created by Nivek, this is only the first part of what he wrote up and there will be more as the months go on!)

### **The Tale Of A Phantasia:**

Yoshiharu Gotanda: I've always wondered how all this would have unfolded if it wasn't for that fateful meeting with the head honcho of Nintendo back in 1993. I was just a fresh programmer from high school, 18 years old and already I was making games, and I got the idea for a game, it was a novel I was writing in high school, but when Telenet and the team I was working with signed a development deal for Nintendo, they wanted something big to impress them. They told me if I could come up with a prototype in a month to show Nintendo and Sony, they'd help get them to sign off on the idea.

Famitsu: Only a month for a prototype?

Y.G.: Yeah, but that was Nintendo's way of doing things. You show a prototype of what you want your game to be, they look at it, and a simple yes or no can mean the difference between starting a project and having your idea thrown in the trash.

Famitsu: Yeah, we've heard that from other Nintendo developers, but you seem different, so young and with your very first game impressing all those other Nintendo developers from all over the world, and of course impressing Nintendo's top management as well. That's not an easy feat!

Y.G.: You make it sound harder than it was and it was already brutal! \*laughs\*

Famitsu: \*laughs\*

Y.G.: Yeah, it was hard but after that I had all the time in the world, and I wanted to focus on all the different aspects of the game. Like the battle system. All the other RPGs I've ever played, and they were some nice RPGs, but always turn-based, you never really got to show off your skills, or see the magician casting his spell, such talented fighters and I wanted to show that off. Again, going back to the prototype, my savior in that regard was Joe Asamuna. He saw the promise in it and he was the old who really sold it to Nintendo and Sony.

(...)

Joe Asamuna: I still remember when (Kazuyuki) Fukushima-sama called me from the production of *Soulqueen* to form a new team for a new game based on the idea from my employee Gotanda-san. They said they had the whole concept in pre-production since he joined the company just a few months before we wrapped up a couple games for the Super Famicom and Nintendo was looking for new ideas for Super Famicom CD games. He said he needed me to coordinate a prototype with Gotanda-kun and Ueki-san, and that we'd only have a month to do it.

Famitsu: Yeah, Telenet's been really pushing this game hard and I have to imagine there was a special reason.

Joe: I think I can say it now but at the time, Telenet was having some serious financial problems. We'd been developing some Genesis game but they were having rough sales, especially in North America and Europe. If it wasn't for Nintendo and Sony's support, we might not have made it through that time.

Famitsu: Right, they were going to merge all the development teams together, weren't they?

Joe: That's right, and undoubtedly we'd have lost some of those really creative minds we've been utilizing these past few months. I myself was helping to get *Soulqueen* and *Cosmic Fantasy* and *Valis: Rebirth* ready for release on the SNES-CD.

Famitsu: Wasn't Telenet taking a big risk on the Phantasia Project?

Joe: Correct, a really big risk, and if Nintendo hadn't thrown such support behind us, Telenet was ready to shop the project off to other companies. They were throwing out names like Enix and Namco, both of those companies were taking a look at our team around

this time.

Famitsu: It looks like Telenet had enough faith in the Phantasia Project to keep you guys around! What might've happened if Nintendo hadn't pushed this project hard for the Super Famicom CD?

Joe: Honestly, that's not an easy question, but Nintendo and Sony have been the best partners we've ever had, they gave us everything we needed to complete the development on this game and I couldn't be happier with how it went.

-excerpted from *Famitsu's* interviews with Yoshiharu Gotanda and Joe Asamuna in the April 1995 issue of *Famitsu* magazine which covered *Tale Phantasia's* Japanese launch

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts- April 1995**

1. Donkey Kong Country
2. Super Mario World 2
3. F-Zero CD
4. Mega Man X2
5. Alien vs. Predator
6. Squad Four
7. Pulseman
8. Mortal Kombat II
9. Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition
10. Star Wars: X-Wing
11. TMNT V: Wrath Of The Foot
12. Rayman
13. Moonlight
14. Muppet World
15. Secret Of Mana
16. Contra IV: Hard Corps
17. Universalizer
18. Earthworm Jim: Special Edition
19. MechWarrior 3050
20. Dragon's Destiny II

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*"This is GameTV, MTV's first ever TV show focused entirely on video games! For the next 60 minutes, we'll be giving you the hottest news about everything going on in the world of gaming. We'll be talking Sega, Nintendo, the PC, the arcades, and everything in between, so let's get started! I'm Ted, this is Alex, and right now we've got an awesome segment for you, it's an exclusive world-premiere preview of Sega's brand-new arcade game, Virtua Cop 2!"*

-from the beginning of the very first episode of MTV's *GameTV*, May 2, 1995

MTV's *GameTV* was the first really successful and popular TV show about video games. It aired from May 1995 to September 2000, every Tuesday night from 9:00 PM to 10:00 PM. It featured previews, reviews, interviews (and they landed some pretty major stars for these), and even tips and tricks for some of the biggest games. It was the first real sign

that video games weren't just kids' stuff anymore, the show was aimed at teens and adults and really brought "attitude" to game journalism without being overly patronizing. The show featured a 0-5 review scale where two of the hosts (usually Ted and Alex, but the other hosts got involved in the reviews sometimes as well) gave a brief talk about the game and then a numerical score (they also used half-points). 0 was totally awful, 5 was an instant classic. If a game got at least a 4 from both reviewers it was a "GameTV's Choice", if a game got 5s from both reviewers it was inducted into the "GameTV Hall of Fame" with a little ceremony and everything.

What really stood out about this show was the hosts. They were young, mid 20s-early 30s, and ALL of them enjoyed video games. They actually picked hosts who knew what they were doing and legitimately liked games, which was a big part of the show's appeal. The show had nine hosts over the years, sometimes hosts came and went, but the original five were:

**Ted Crosley:** A kind of preppy looking dude, he came off as a sort of "cool jock" type of guy but make no mistake, this guy absolutely loved video games. He was 27 when the show started and he and Alex, along with Brittany, were the three original hosts to stay through the show's entire run. He was an unabashed Sega fan, loved Sonic games, sports games, and fighting games.

**Alex Stansfield:** A bit more of a joker than Ted, Alex was a huge Nintendo fan and so he and Ted went at it quite a bit, they had a Siskel-and-Ebert sorta thing going on and when they were arguing about a game it was great TV. A huge RPG fan as well and he also loved to play puzzle games. I believe he recently competed in a Tetris Grand Master tournament in Japan and did quite well. Very very smart.

**Brittany Saldita:** The only female in the original cast (was joined by Lyssa in early 1997), she was another huge RPG fan and like Alex, preferred Nintendo to Sega, though she had a soft spot for the Sonic series. I had a HUGE crush on her as a kid (and, I'm suspecting a lot of Gen X and Millennial gamers grew up with crushes on her). She could be really fierce when advocating her opinions on the show and could also play circles around the guys in multiplayer games. She's the only one out of the nine hosts of this show that we've lost, she sadly died of ovarian cancer last September at the age of 43.

**John Walden:** The only African-American to host the show, he left in 1998 but when he was around he was one of my favorite hosts. He loved fighting games and sports games and was also great at doing interviews, his interview with Shigeru Miyamoto in 1997 was an absolute classic. I also remember that excellent skit he did with Alex around the time the Ultra Nintendo came out, the two of them were trying to decide between Castlevania and Final Fantasy and John was this hilarious vampire character. He's probably had the best career out of any of the original hosts besides Lyssa, he's hosting The Price Is Right and I think he's doing a fantastic job of it.

**Kazzi DeCarlo:** "Kaz" was the wild man of the original hosts and also the first host to leave the show (in 1996). This guy was in most of the skits playing the wacky characters, but his reviews were hilarious too, he'd give these totally off the wall reviews interlaced with his serious opinions out of the game. I remember him being tough as nails too, he only ever gave one 5 to a game, of course we didn't see him do too many of the reviews but when he did he was pretty tough.

-excerpted from "GameTV: A Retrospective" on IGN.com, January 31, 2015

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**April 24, 1995**

"*Tale Phantasia* is doing really well in Japan and I think we should bring it here," said Howard Lincoln as he and Minoru Arakawa were walking down the hallway of Nintendo of America headquarters. "In fact, I think I'd like for 1996 to focus on Nintendo's lineup of role-playing games. We had several of them release this month and sales figures were decent, *Parallel World* sold a good amount of copies and *Final Fantasy VI* has been our best selling third party game this year."

"I agree that it should be brought over, but localizing it will be difficult," said Arakawa. "With the amount of voice acting in the game, it may be difficult to find a translator and a studio that can get all of the game's dialogue conveyed in a way that will engross the player into the storyline."

"I thought about using a lot of our *Squad Four* cast, but that may get expensive considering how much dialogue is in this game," said Lincoln. "I did have an offer over the phone a few days ago, a company that specializes in translating Japanese games and is building a working relationship with Telenet Japan. Telenet recommends them but they wanted to get our approval considering the...interesting personality of the person in charge."

"And who might this person be?" asked Arakawa. The two men stepped into Howard Lincoln's office, and Lincoln played back a message that Nintendo had received four days ago.

"This is Victor Ireland with Working Designs. I just want to say, *Tale Phantasia* is an amazing game and it would be my honor if Working Designs got the contract to localize this game. We've been working with Sega for a while, it didn't work out with them but I admire what Nintendo's been doing with game localizations and I think we could do really well together. If you want a sample of the work we can do just let me know. I really want to help you bring this awesome game to the States."

Howard Lincoln already knew about Ireland's volatile personality and the way his company's relationship with Sega had ended. He had to wonder if this offer to Nintendo was less about wanting to help bring *Tale Phantasia* over and more about spiting Sega. But the work they'd done on the original *Lunar* was excellent, and Telenet and Working Designs seemed like they could have really good synergy together.

"It's entirely your call," said Arakawa, who knew less about Victor Ireland than his American colleague. "This will be a major game for us, if you want us to foot the bill for the Squad Four team to work on this game, we would be willing to do that."

"This man has never had a hit project, even *Lunar* was a niche title," said Lincoln. "But...if Telenet wants to work with him and they think he can help make this game a success in North America, I'm willing to trust their judgment and put Working Designs in charge of the localization."

The two men sat down in Lincoln's office. They had more to discuss.

"Two weeks," said Lincoln. "Two weeks until E3."

"I am confident that whatever Sega is planning for their new Saturn, it will not be enough to counter all of the games we are going to put on display. We have a new Zelda game, a new Mario game, Doom is coming to the Super Nintendo CD..."

"And the Year of the RPG," said Lincoln. "We might not 'bring the arcade hits home', but...I think the arcade is going out of style anyway, isn't it?"

The two men shared a laugh. E3 was coming...and the console wars would soon be elevated to their biggest stage yet.

-

Okay, I wrote this piece a few weeks ago, in response to questions about the Archie continuity. This is a brief synopsis of how Archie's Sonic series is coming along. It will bleed into 1997, as major events in the comics occurred then.

"Archie's Sonic the Hedgehog series, which began in 1993, was a whole different animal from the games or the two animated series. It was a fusion of all three forms, incorporating elements from all three elements. However, from issue 10 onwards, it began to create its own continuity, separate from either series. Despite this, many of the cues were taken from both Saturday Morning Cartoons, particularly "SatAM" as it was later referred to as.

[..]

Knuckles the Echidna was introduced in issue 13 in an adaptation of Sonic 3. (You could tell by all of the ads for the Mega Charger, including a reference to Eggman's machine being charged by one!) At first, he wasn't used often. However, when Knuckles: Renegade came out in 1995, and as he was introduced on SatAM as a character, he was given more prominence. This was especially true under the authorship of Ken Penders, who was hired under head writer Michael Gallenger in 1993. Penders soon became more and more active. Knuckles became a particular favorite of Penders, and he set about trying to focus on his mythology and that of the Echidnas. Renegade was made into a special 48 page special [1], which adapted the game's prologue, essentially an ad for the game. (Penders also was an advisor on the game's story, in order for it to resemble the comics more). Here, Robotnik manages to build a large city near the edge of the Floating Island, and begins to bring some prisoners there. Luckily, Knuckles comes to their rescue, and together, they try to stop Robotnik. The Renegades were retooled to become Knuckles' version of the Freedom Fighters, after he rescues them from robotization, and settle them onto Angel Island. Each issue from Issue 35 had at least one Knuckles' story. Also, like in SatAM, Knuckles, Sonic, and Sally are involved in a love triangle. However, unlike the show, where it was shoe-horned in, the comic expanded on this feature, often making it unclear whether Sally loved Sonic or Knuckles. (Corona was downplayed as love interest for Knuckles until much later on). It also lasted much longer than on the show.

[...]

Issues 40-44 involved several botched battles involving Robotnik (or another minor villain from the comic, such as Anti-Sonic), the Knothole Freedom Fighters and the Renegades. This, along with the tension between Sonic and Knuckles, leads to the arc "Endgame" (Issue 45-50, January to June, 1997.) Here, Robotnik engineers the stealing of the Floating Island's Master Emerald[2] and pins this on the Freedom Fighters. He also has Princess Sally killed off, and framing Sonic for it. This would lead to Sonic going on the run, and the Freedom Fighters and Renegades fighting. This leaves Robotnik free time to work on his Doomsday Device, which will completely erase Knothole and the Floating Island. The

Doomsday Device is fueled by the Master Emerald .Eventually, Sonic clears his name, the truth comes out that a fellow Freedom Fighter had killed Sally on accident, and also, a traitor stole the chaos emerald. Sonic, Knuckles, and their joint forces storm Robotropolis. Robotnik and Sonic engage in one final battle, before the Doomsday device is turned on Robotnik, erasing him from reality. This action also shatters the Master Emerald. However, this news of Robotnik's death is dampened by the death of Princess Sally.[3] Issue 51 (Funeral for a Freedom Fighter) shows Sonic and Knuckles engaging in a tough battle out of frustration for her tragic death. However, they sort out their differences, and look forward to the future. And the issues to come proved that it would be a interesting future indeed.

[..]

Penders also had an intended pet project of a Knuckles the Echidna comic series. However, this was shelved due to new character restraints from Sega, and the plan was reduced to a single four issue miniseries. Most of what he had planned for that was introduced into the main series Knuckles stories. The Miniseries largely adapted the rest of Knuckles Renegade, followed Knuckles and the Renegades as they find the pieces of the Master Emerald, and also noted the return of the Echidnas in the last issue of the miniseries. This would become a major plot point for Knuckles' storyline" [4]

- From blog "Sonic Boom: a blog about a Hedgehog", entry entitled "Archie's Sonic the Hedgehog: Issues 1-50 (and 51)," March 5th, 2009

[1]Chaotix, and several other games, were given this treatment OTL.

[2]The Master Emerald as it is in the games doesn't exist in the Comics OTL at this point. It created a little bit later, when a villain called Mammoth Mogul... you know what, you probably don't want to hear about that. Anyway, due to the higher promotion of Sonic 3, the generic chaos emerald used is replaced with the Master Emerald itself

[3] Sally was to be killed off in Issue 50 OTL. She was woken up by Sonic at the end of Issue 50. However, Issue 51 revealed that she was an android. Sega forced Archie to have her live. Hence, the sequence in issue 51 was changed to a dream sequence. Here, they just outright say that she's dead at the end of issue 50.

[4] The series was the OTL Knuckles the Echidna spin-off comics series that ran for 40 issues. It was quite popular, and there was even a film in the works, from what I've heard.

-

*"E3 1995 was obviously a pivotal moment in Sega's history. We needed to 'go big or go home' with the Saturn, and it was quite a relief to see the positive reaction that a lot of people had to it. There was brief discussion among the higher brass in Japan to actually release the Saturn in North America at the time of E3, but thankfully, Mr. Nakamura convinced them that it would be an enormous mistake. At the time, only two of the launch games would've been ready to ship, and what was the rush? Nintendo still had at least two years before it was going to launch its next console. I'm glad cooler heads prevailed, because releasing the Saturn in May would've been the dumbest decision in the history of business."*

-Tom Kalinske

*"I've been asked, 'why didn't you talk more about the Ultra Nintendo at E3 1995?', and the fact of the matter is, we wanted this show to be about all the great SNES-CD games coming out. The SNES-CD still had at least three years of life left and we didn't want to do anything*

*that would overshadow it at that time, plain and simple."*

-Howard Lincoln

*"E3 1995 was a lot of fun! I wasn't picked to be the keynote speaker but I did get to give a lot of interviews and show off some of the new Sony games. I also got to do a neat little presentation comparing the SNES-CD soundchip, the evolution of my SPC ship for the SNES, with the Mega Charger's sound chip. It was a very busy time for me but I remember it fondly."*

-Ken Kutaragi

*"We're here at E3 and it's a huge spectacle! Some of the biggest celebrities are here to join in the festivities, including Seal and yes, at Acclaim's booth, Selena is going to be performing! It's a big party and GameTV's been invited!"*

-Ted Crosley, introducing GameTV's E3 special on May 16, 1995

*"I remember the first time I got to play Tale Phantasia at E3 1995. It was one of the most crowded booths and it was completely in Japanese, but there really wasn't an RPG like it. Fully voiced and the battle system was a LOT of fun. I remember thinking the first time I saw it, this game is going to be very big."*

-Ed Semrad, editor in chief of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, discussing E3 memories in the July 2002 issue of *EGM*

*"Oh no, no, I'm just here to play this new video game, it's a lot of fun, Sony and Nintendo invited me here to play some video games and I'm having a wonderful time."*

-Michael Jackson, talking to the press at the *Tales Of The Seven Seas* kiosk at Sony's E3 1995 booth

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## **May 10, 1995**

*"Good morning, everybody. I'm Tom Kalinske, president of Sega of America, and today we are formally unveiling the Sega Saturn in North America. It's been tearing up the sales charts in Japan for nearly six months now, and indeed, we're less than four short months away from its official North American launch. The Sega Saturn is the culmination of a nearly two-year effort by Sega in Japan, North America, and Europe to create the greatest video game console ever devised. Our efforts have been joined by the company Silicon Graphics, which provided us with the technology to make the Sega Saturn possible. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you...the Sega Saturn."*

\*A video begins to play on the projected screen, showing scenes from the games Virtua Racing, Virtua Fighter, and Virtua Cop.\*

### **THE ARCADE COMES HOME**

\*More scenes are shown, this time a huge magic spell being launched against a giant boss monster in MagiQuest, followed by scenes of a man entering a village in Ultima: The Worldly Lord.\*

### **THE GREATEST ADVENTURES**

\*Scenes are then shown of Madden '96, NHL '96, and Bases Loaded '96\*

## **LIFELIKE SPORTS**

\*There's a scene shown from Panzer Dragoon, the huge dragon flying in the air amidst a beautiful landscape.\*

## **NEW WORLDS**

\*Scenes are shown from Resident Evil and Tomb Raider, the very first builds but still looking very impressive, showing Lara Croft shooting at a tiger and Jill and Chris running from zombies.\*

## **NEW CHARACTERS**

\*A group of friends are shown playing Daytona USA with four of the new six-button Saturn controllers.\*

## **A NEW WAY TO PLAY**

\*Various scenes are then shown from Saturn games, each punctuated by three words: **YOU WILL BELIEVE** as the graphics get more and more impressive, looking better than anything previously seen on a video game console. The final scene is shown from an early build of Nights, probably the best looking game yet, of the main character flying through the air, followed by one more **YOU WILL BELIEVE**.\*

## **Sega Saturn**

### **Launching Saturday, September 2, 1995**

#### **PLAYING IS BELIEVING.**

\*The crowd erupts into raucous applause as Kalinske takes the mic once more.\*

*"As you just saw, the Sega Saturn will be launching in North America on 'Saturday', that's Saturday, September 2nd. Labor Day weekend, so you'll have three days off to enjoy more than a dozen launch games that will be available at launch. The Sega Saturn will retail for \$399, and for that you get the Sega Saturn, two controllers, and Virtua Fighter as a pack-in game. We'll also have a special Virtua Arcade Bundle that will cost \$499, and for that you get the Saturn, Virtua Fighter, Virtua Racing, Virtua Cop, two controllers, a steering wheel accessory, and our new Saturn lightgun accessory. We understand that the Saturn's price point is significantly higher than that of the Sega Genesis. But imagine how much you would pay for a high-end gaming PC, over \$2000. Imagine how much you'd pay for one of our Sega arcade machines, over \$6000. The Sega Saturn produces graphics equivalent or in some cases better than either a PC or an arcade machine and you're paying just a tiny fraction of the cost. And we are partnering with Namco and we plan to bring every single Sega and Namco arcade game released in the next five years to the Sega Saturn as a home console game. That's right, every single Sega or Namco game that you enjoy in the arcade, you'll be able to purchase and bring home for your Sega Saturn to play in the comfort of your home with your friends whenever you want, and it'll look just as good or in some cases better than what you get when you go to the arcade and spend your quarters.*

*In addition to bringing the arcade hits home, the Sega Saturn will be the best sports gaming*

device your money can buy. We'll be featuring games from all four major sports leagues in the very first three months of release. In addition, we'll be bringing sports like tennis, golf, auto racing, boxing, and many others to the Sega Saturn, and as you've already seen, they'll feature lifelike graphics so that when your friends walk into the room, they won't know whether they're watching a TV broadcast or seeing you play your Sega Saturn. We've also got some of the best epic role-playing games coming to the Saturn. I am proud to announce for the very first time that an all new original video game, *MagiQuest*, is going to be at launch for the Sega Saturn. This is a game very near and dear to my heart because it's inspired by my own daughters and their love of adventure. In *MagiQuest*, you'll take on the role of three very brave young girls as they discover their hidden magical powers and journey on an epic quest. But this game isn't just for girls, this is one of the most challenging and deep role-playing games that's ever been developed, with monstrous bosses, deep, dark dungeons, and dozens of powerful spells to use on your foes. And you'll be able to play with two of your friends as you take these three girls on an amazing adventure. We've also got a Saturn-exclusive installment of the classic *Ultima* role-playing game series. It's called *Ultima: The Worldly Lord*, and it's going to take this great series into the third dimension for the first time. With polygonal graphics and plenty of beautiful effects, it's the most atmospheric *Ultima* game ever, and with a soundtrack composed by the brilliant young musical maestro Jeremy Soule, who will be appearing at our Sega booth tomorrow, you'll be sucked right in to this enormous world. In *Ultima: The Worldly Lord*, you play as the lord of a small kingdom and you must help it to grow while protecting it from evil threats in the world beyond. You'll explore the world to recruit warriors, craftsmen, and merchants alike, combining the world-building elements of a game like *SimCity* or *Populous* with the classic *Ultima* adventuring gameplay role-playing fans have loved for more than a decade.

I'm also proud to reveal that Sega's plans for the Saturn extend well into 1996 and beyond with several games already in development for the console's second year. Among them is a new franchise we like to call *Nights*. Developed by Sonic Team, it is the next evolution of action gameplay. You'll take to the skies and soar through a beautiful dream world, collecting items, battling enemies, and exploring the most beautiful video game landscape ever conceived. We're proud to show off a tech demo of *Nights* at our booth at E3 and we'll be offering much more on this game in the months to follow. We've also been hard at work with our third-party partners to develop games that take advantage of the new technology present in the Sega Saturn. One of these games is called *Tomb Raider*, where you'll take control of explorer Lara Croft as she plunges into ancient temples and battles deadly creatures, including creatures from beyond the grave. This game is very early in development but we've got plenty of early footage to show off and more information about this game will be available at Sega's booth. There's also a horror game from Capcom, originally known as *Biohazard* but now known as *Resident Evil*. This game takes place in a mansion that's become ground zero for an outbreak of a deadly virus that turns human beings into shambling zombies, and you'll need to use your wits and courage to escape. This game has been in development now for nearly two years and it's been designed specifically to take advantage of the technology afforded by the Sega Saturn. We do have a playable demo of this game that will be available at Sega's booth and we encourage everyone to try it out to get a serious glimpse at the Sega Saturn's potential. I am proud to be here in Los Angeles for this week's E3 and I look forward to seeing all of you out on the convention floor. The future of gaming is here, it's the Sega Saturn, and playing is believing!"

-keynote speech from Tom Kalinske at the 1995 Electronic Entertainment Expo

"Hello, I'm Olaf Olafsson and I'm the president of Sony Interactive Entertainment, Sony's videogames division. We've been in partnership with Nintendo for four years now, and

recently I'm sure a lot of you have heard rumors that the Nintendo-Sony relationship is not on sound footing. I'm here to tell you right now that those rumors are not true. In fact, Sony is doubling down on its relationship with Nintendo and we are in the middle of developing several new games for the Super Nintendo CD over the next few months. The first game I'd like to tell you about is *Tales Of The Seven Seas*, a brand new action-adventure game from our development partner Naughty Dog. This game stars a band of seven characters who have their own pirate ship and they use it to explore islands amidst a vast sea in search of adventure. This brilliant and creative game has some very fun characters and a variety of gameplay types, from puzzle solving to hack and slash action platforming, to RPG-like exploration, and is fully voiced by a cast of some of the best voice actors in all of animation. We at Sony feel that *Tales Of The Seven Seas* will be a new paradigm of storytelling and fun in video games and we encourage everyone here to try it out in our booth, both to get a taste of the various types of gameplay and to see the seven stars of the game for yourself. Next up, we have *Twisted Metal*, a car combat game that features some of the best graphics possible on the Super Nintendo CD as you hop into a car loaded up with weapons to hunt down and destroy other drivers. It too features some very colorful characters, including a psycho clown named Sweet Tooth who drives a fully-loaded ice cream truck. Finally, there's a game that we at Sony are very proud of, that Sony has developed in its own in-house game studio and is going to launch in October of this year. It's an action shooter game called *Ballistic Limit*, where you play as a futuristic soldier named Ash Beckland. Ash is the lieutenant captain of a squad of highly-trained recruits who hunt down alien threats to protect a colony that orbits a dying Earth. When Ash's captain is mysteriously killed and he is separated from the rest of his squad, he must resume his mission alone while trying to find any allies he can. The gameplay is that of a run-and-gun shooter where you have a variety of weapons at your disposal, but at any time during the game, you can switch to a first-person mode called *Ballistic Mode*, where you'll become much deadlier as you gun down enemies until your *Ballistic Meter* reaches its limit. You're also able to use this first-person mode to find hidden treasures that you can't find normally. You're not by yourself on this quest, it's a story-driven action game with twists and turns rivaling those in the most popular movies or television shows, and like *Tales Of The Seven Seas*, it involves fully voiced cutscenes. Sony will continue to publish and create games for the Super Nintendo CD and whatever lies beyond. Thank you all and enjoy E3!"

-keynote speech from Olafur Johann Olafsson at the 1995 Electronic Entertainment Expo

"Good morning, I'm Nintendo of America president Howard Lincoln. As you heard just a few minutes ago from Mr. Olafsson, Nintendo and Sony's partnership is stronger than ever. In fact, we're already hard at work on the next great gaming console of the future. But this year, Nintendo is all about the games, and the Super Nintendo, Super Nintendo CD, and Game Boy will feature the best games on the market. We'd like to start off by talking about a little game called *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams*. For the past two years, Shigeru Miyamoto and the game makers at Nintendo have been working tirelessly on a Zelda game worthy of the Super Nintendo CD. This game will conclude the epic trilogy begun in *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* and continued in the Gameboy game *The Legend Of Zelda: Link's Awakening*. It will bring the real world of Hyrule and the dream world of Koholint together through the magic of an ocarina, and send Link on his biggest adventure ever. Link will need all the weapons and abilities he can get, and this game brings back many of your favorites from both *A Link To The Past* and *Link's Awakening*, while introducing brand new items to use in this game's collection of deep dungeons, some of the most difficult and mind-bending dungeons ever featured in a Zelda game. The technology of the Super Nintendo CD and its advanced graphics processor will enable some of the most amazing visuals ever seen in a Zelda game, including atmospheric dungeons, massive bosses, and new animations for all of your favorite classic characters, including Link

himself. *Ocarina Of Dreams* has been released in Japan to rave reviews and record-shattering sales and we hope you'll enjoy playing the full North American version of the game over at our booth. Of course, none of us would be here if it wasn't for Mario, the plumber whose games have delighted millions across the world. This August, *Super Mario World 3* will be released for the Super Nintendo CD. For the first time, Mario will be able to run, walk, and jump in all directions with this game's new 3-D isometric gameplay. You'll be able to explore more than 40 levels in the new style as you battle Bowser and his army of Mechakoopas who are once again seeking to conquer the Mushroom Kingdom. The new dimension will offer a new degree of freedom for Mario, though he'll be without his green dinosaur pal Yoshi for the first time since *Super Mario Bros. 3* on the NES. Yoshi fans, don't despair, we've got an all new game on the Super Nintendo starring Mario's green friend in a prequel to the original *Super Mario Bros.* game. *Yoshi's Island* is an all new cartridge that utilizes our new Super FX 2 Chip to create worlds that look right out of a storybook. The game takes place back when Mario and Luigi were just little babies. When Bowser's court wizard Kamek snatches Baby Luigi up, it's up to Yoshi and Baby Mario to rescue him. You'll utilize the new Ground Pound technique to stomp enemies into the ground in this latest Super Nintendo classic!

We've also got SNES-CD sequels to a pair of 1993 SNES hits. First up, there's *Super Squadron X: Critical Dawn*, which continues the story of *Super Squadron X* by having Captain Xenda and his battle tank the VIXIV return to Earth in search of those left behind after humanity fled the planet. He'll encounter hordes of deadly alien creatures along the way, and only the VIXIV can blast them out of the skies and save the refugees. We also have an RPG, *Earthbound 2*, the sequel to the SNES hit *Earthbound*. In this game, aliens invade the peaceful town of Onett, and Ness and his new friends have to rally forth to save humanity. Of course, a lot of you are here for news about a home console version of Nintendo and Rare's hit fighting game *Killer Instinct*. Rest assured, you won't leave here disappointed. The game has been in development for the Super Nintendo CD for much of the past year, and it will finally be coming home this fall. *Killer Instinct* for the Super Nintendo CD features the combo-based gameplay of the arcade hit, with all of the exciting characters and pulse-pounding moves you've been using on your friends in the arcades. We've got a big *Killer Instinct* display set up at our booth so you can see just how smoothly this game runs on the SNES-CD. For fans of the pink puffball, Kirby's back in a pair of exciting new adventures for the Super Nintendo and the Gameboy. First up, *Kirby's Adventure 2* for the Super Nintendo. It features seven brand new worlds for Kirby to explore and more than a dozen new forms to transform into as he battles a new threat to the galaxy in the form of the tyrannical alien wizard Thraxor. For the Gameboy, *Kirby's Dream Land 2* is a sequel to the very first Kirby game, *Kirby's Dream Land* released all the way back in 1992. This time, he's teaming up with an adorable hamster named Rick as he adventures through several worlds, swallowing up enemies all along the way. *Kirby's Dream Land 2* will be available later this month, while *Kirby's Adventure 2* is set to release in August. We're also proud to announce that Rare is hard at work on *Donkey Kong Country 2*, the sequel to the hit *Donkey Kong Country* game which is still burning up the sales charts even as we speak. We'll have more information on this game available at our booth, but rest assured, this game will be bigger and badder than ever.

Nintendo is also proud to present dozens of games from our third-party development partners. We've already heard from Sony, who will have a trio of excellent games available later this year. Another of the Super Nintendo CD's biggest games this year is the SNES-CD port of the hit PC game *Doom*, in development by Williams right at this moment. It's going to be the definitive home console version of *Doom*, with development assistance directly from the original programmers of *Doom*, John Carmack and John Romero. Both men will be

at Nintendo's booth to show off the game and to explain why this is going to be the only home console version of Doom worth buying. We're looking forward to releasing the game in August, alongside the release of Super Mario World 3. We're also proud to announce that a game based on the upcoming movie Batman Forever, developed by Acclaim, will be available for the Super Nintendo CD, and that Acclaim is showing off the Batmobile at its booth, alongside a demo of the SNES-CD version of the game. We're proud to be hosting the performing artist Seal, who will be performing the theme song for the new Batman Forever movie and will be giving a live performance immediately after this presentation. Two more of the year's most anticipated games will be exclusive to the Super Nintendo CD from our partners at Tecmo. Tecmo Super Bowl CD is an updated version of the classic Tecmo Super Bowl game, featuring the latest NFL rosters and all new cutscenes to help bring the exciting action on the football field to life. Next up, Tecmo is bringing a sequel to 1993's surprise hit action game Deadman Sam. In Deadman Sam 2, Sam teams up with his ghostly wife Nellie to battle even more evil denizens of the underworld. Nintendo is also proud to announce a pair of games from Konami. Later this year comes Zombies Ate My Neighbors: Ghoulish Patrol, a sequel to the highly praised and highly strange horror game about two kids trying to save their neighborhood from an invasion of the dead. In Ghoulish Patrol, developed in partnership with LucasArts of Secret Of Monkey Island fame, Zeke and Julie recruit a team of neighborhood kids to help them battle against a circus of horrifying creatures. Speaking of horror games and Konami, we're pleased to announce Eternal Night, a terrifying new game from the makers of the Castlevania series. You play as a count who must restore the light to his castle after an otherworldly intrusion of demons threatens to swallow up his realm. With gameplay that harkens back to Konami's classic Castlevania series, the game features a variety of weapons and hordes of massive bosses to bar your path.

But as good as Nintendo's 1995 is looking to be, we're already looking ahead to 1996. And for 1996, we have a theme in mind. When we set out to create the Super Nintendo CD in partnership with Sony, we intended to create games featuring the latest in electronic technology. We did that, but we also accomplished something more. Through some of the most talented minds in the gaming industry, the Super Nintendo CD has advanced the medium of storytelling in gaming, particularly through the role-playing game genre. RPGs have been some of the most popular games on the Super Nintendo CD, and Squaresoft's hit Final Fantasy VI has been one of the top selling games of the year. For that reason, we've decided to declare 1996 the Year of the RPG. More than a dozen role-playing games are in development for the Super Nintendo CD for 1996, and in this presentation we're going to highlight four of them. Joining us from Squaresoft is the president of Square USA, the creator of Final Fantasy, Mr. Hiranobu Sakaguchi!"

\*Hiranobu Sakaguchi takes the stage along with a translator to great applause from the crowd. He begins to speak in Japanese, the translator then speaks in English.\*

"Here at Squaresoft, we are proud to be partners with Nintendo in the creation of video games for the Super Nintendo CD. We feel that the technology afforded by the Super Nintendo CD has made it possible to do our very best work, and we will continue that work both in this year and the years beyond. Our next great RPG title is something we have called the Dream Project because it brings together many great minds from all over Japan to work on a game that I feel is the greatest we have ever produced. I am proud to announce Chrono Trigger which will be released in Japan for the Super Nintendo CD in the fall and in North America next spring. In this game, you must journey through time to prevent an apocalyptic crisis. Brave heroes will join together in an adventure spanning many eras of time, utilizing powerful magical techniques and combining those techniques

*into powerful attacks to use on the enemy. With the help of the anime legend Akira Toriyama, we intend to include over 45 minutes of anime full motion video in the game, which will be fully voiced both during these videos and during battles and other scenes. It will be Squaresoft's first fully voiced video game and it will also be the first Super Nintendo CD game to span two discs. One disc alone will not be enough to contain all the content in this magnificent adventure. The next game I would like to announce, is one of the most anticipated, perhaps the most anticipated game in the history of Squaresoft. It is the sequel to a game that won great acclaim in 1993, both here in North America and back in Japan. In fact, I understand it is the best selling role playing game in the history of North America! So I imagine that the anticipation for this sequel, the sequel to Secret Of Mana, is very high indeed. We do not have a name for it here in North America as of yet but in Japan it will be called Legend Of The Holy Sword 3. In this game you will be able to choose from among six heroes to form a party of three. Just as in the original Secret Of Mana, you will be able to battle with three players at a time, exploring a world even bigger and more beautiful than the first. This game is still early in development but we have a video to show at our booth out on the floor and I'm hoping you enjoy what you see. Finally, I would like to announce a game that has been a grand partnership between Squaresoft and Nintendo, a game that has been in discussion for quite some time and a game that I'm very happy to announce with the help of Mr. Howard Lincoln."*

*\*Sakaguchi cedes the floor to Howard Lincoln, who begins to speak again.\**

*"Thank you, Mr. Sakaguchi. As I said before, none of us would be here without Mario, and what better way to celebrate the Year of the RPG than by giving Mario a role-playing game of his own? Coming in 1996, Nintendo and Squaresoft will present Super Mario RPG, which will star Mario and his friends in an adventure spanning the Mushroom Kingdom and beyond. The game will feature isometric graphics and gameplay similar to that in Super Mario World 3, while battles will test your reflexes like never before. All your Mario favorites will team up with brand new characters to face a terrible new evil in Super Mario RPG, coming to North America sometime next summer. Finally, I'd like to announce a project that Nintendo's been helping to create along with its partner Telenet Japan, who recently released the excellent Valis: Rebirth for the Super Nintendo CD. Telenet Japan's talented Wolf Team has created a quest unlike any other, a game that released in Japan two months ago to great reviews and stellar sales. It's a game called Tale Phantasia, and it's coming to North America next summer. We've got the Japanese version of the game fully playable at our booth, and we've already begun the process of localizing the game, which will include more spoken dialogue than any other video game on the Super Nintendo CD to date. It's absolutely beautiful and we were proud to help Telenet Japan and its brilliant Wolf Team make it a reality. We hope you'll enjoy playing Tale Phantasia and all the other excellent upcoming Nintendo games at our booth this year. Thank you, enjoy E3, and here's Seal!"*  
*-keynote speech from Howard Lincoln at the 1995 Electronic Entertainment Expo*

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Ted Crosley: We're here in Las Vegas for E3, the Electronic Entertainment Expo! It's an exclusive event, which means that if you're not in the media or part of the video game industry, you can't get in! But guess what? Since you're here watching GameTV, you're about to get an all-access pass to the hottest show in gaming, and you don't even have to get up off the couch! For the next hour, we'll be taking an in-depth look at the future of video games, so get ready, get set, and let's do this thing!

(...)

Ted Crosley: I am here at the Sega Saturn booth and this massive line is for *Virtua Cop*, the home console version of Sega's hottest arcade game. Two weeks ago we looked at *Virtua Cop 2*, it's coming to the arcade later this year, but this is the home console version of the original, so let's see how it stacks up.

\*Ted goes up to the booth where a man from Sega of America is waiting.\*

Ben: Hey there Ted, I'm Ben Glass with Sega of America and this is the Saturn version of *Virtua Cop* which will be available on launch day in September.

Ted: Well, I'm looking at the game and the first thing I noticed is that it looks JUST like the one in the arcade, I mean everything just looks amazing in this game.

Ben: *Virtua Cop* for the Saturn has been designed to replicate the original in almost every aspect, in fact, wherever possible it's been made to look even better than the original arcade game.

Ted: This is absolutely incredible. Being a big Sega fan, I've got to say I was a bit worried about this one because arcade games have a history of looking a lot better than they do at home, but I'm really impressed with how good it looks. I'm gonna play, can I play?

Ben: Absolutely.

\*Ted starts playing with the lightgun attachment, blasting bad guys on the screen. The game looks very realistic and moves at a quick pace, there's absolutely no slowdown or loss in translation from the arcade version.\*

Ted: It's as tough as I remember at the arcade too. \*he laughs\* Thank God I don't gotta put another quarter in.

(...)

\*Now Ted is in front of a screen showing off the *Nights Into Dreams* tech demo. Standing with him is Tom Kalinske.\*

Ted: I'm here with Sega of America president Tom Kalinske. We're looking at *Nights*, the game everyone's been talking about, and I can see why. Everything's so beautiful. The sky's full of stars, you got your water there in the moonlight, this game is like watching a dream come to life.

Tom: Well, that's exactly the effect we were going for, Ted, this game takes place in a magical dream world and you'll be exploring as this character *Nights*, who is a Nightmaren who is created for evil but ends up turning good and helping two young children realize their dreams.

Ted: That sounds a lot like a fairytale, so this game, it's the next generation of action platformers?

Tom: It's not exactly a platformer, it's a fully free-roaming flying game, you'll be spending much of this game gliding through the air and exploring the worlds. We're hoping to utilize the Saturn's technology to create an entirely new gameplay experience.

Ted: It looks, absolutely....amazing. I mean, this is all gameplay, correct?

Tom: That's right, and this is early alpha gameplay at best, so it's going to look even better in the final product.

Ted: So the Sega Saturn, it's clearly more advanced than anything before it. It trumps the 3DO, it blows the Jaguar away and it looks a lot better than the Super Nintendo CD. The asking price of 400 dollars is a bit high but I haven't seen games look quite this good on anything else.

Tom: Exactly, we've worked with Silicon Graphics who makes high-end computer chips and the Sega Saturn is designed to replicate the technology found in those PC games. It uses CD-ROM like the Sega CD but with vastly improved technology. It can do 3-D, it can do 2-D, we learned from the Mega Charger that it's a bit more difficult to do 3-D and 2-D with two different processor chips, we've had some difficulties with that so we've decided to do a single chip for both, we can do the latest in 3-D graphics but we can also do very detailed and beautiful 2-D graphics for games where those would work best.

Ted: And this system is...how many bits is it?

Tom: It's a 64-bit system but we've actually tried to avoid using the "b" word. We feel like there are other ways to describe the abilities of a game console besides the number of bits it has, it's more about how you use those bits. Jaguar was a 64-bit system and it looked nothing like this, not even close. We're using an advanced processor chip and that's what powers the graphics on the system.

Ted: So you're declaring the "bit wars" over then, pretty much?

Tom: \*laughing\* If that's how you want to put it, yeah. I mean, we're gonna use another "b" word and that's "believe", this Saturn is going to do things that you won't believe until you've played it.

Ted: Well, I've played the Saturn and right now I'm a believer.

Tom: Yeah!

Ted: Come on now, this is MTV, you gotta show a little attitude.

Tom: Hell yeah! \*laughing\* This isn't my first time on MTV, I've done the VMAs before so I'm glad to be appearing on MTV again. Tell Beavis and Butthead I said hi.

Ted: I will absolutely do that. I gotta ask one more thing, we haven't seen any sign of a new *Sonic* game for the Saturn, and as probably the world's biggest Sonic fan I'm a bit disappointed.

Tom: Rest assured, Sonic the Hedgehog will be showing up on the Sega Saturn. Sonic 3 was a tough act to follow and we want to make sure that the next Sonic game is his biggest and best game ever. I don't have anything more I can say at the moment but just watch this space because I imagine E3 1996 will be the hedgehog's big show. We will not keep you waiting!

Ted: I will hold you to that! Thanks again for speaking with us, the Saturn really is an impressive device.

Tom: Thank you!

(...)

Alex Stansfield: Right now I'm about to play the new Legend Of Zelda, the line for this game is massive but I'm here with Gail Tilden from Nintendo and she's going to help walk me through this dungeon here.

Gail Tilden: Well, right now you're in the City of the Dead, it's the second dungeon in the game and you're underground in a haunted complex of rooms and caves.

Alex: This is pretty scary, there's ghosts everywhere... \*he's fighting off Poes with his sword as he makes his way through the rooms, he's at a late stage of the dungeon\* Now I've got the jumping feather, which is pretty fun.

Gail: That's Roc's Feather, it's from Link's Awakening and it's making it's first appearance in a console Zelda game as the item you find in this dungeon.

Alex: Yeah, I can already see how these rooms kinda utilize the feather and...and...get back, get back! \*having some trouble keeping Poes away in a room full of gaps and holes\* They are coming outta the woodwork!

Gail: As you can see you're gonna need all your skills to get through these new dungeons.

Alex: Oh I can absolutely see that but I think I'm through this part here. So this new Zelda game, who's the new bad guy, or can you not tell me?

Gail: In this game the bad guy is a thief named Gaddis who steals the pieces of the Ocarina of Dreams and you have to track him down. He's a lot younger than Agahnim, just a little older than Link actually and almost kind of an evil counterpart to Link.

Alex: So he's like an evil whiny teenager pretty much?

Gail: Not so much whiny or teenager but yeah definitely evil.

\*So now Alex is in the boss room, up against a giant ghostly foe, a huge Poe surrounded by other Poes\*

Alex: Whoa, whoa, whoa! \*he gets hit by a wave of Poes surrounding the monster\*

Gail: There's a trick to this but I'll let you figure it out.

Alex: Right, that's the neat thing about Zelda, a trick to every boss in this game. \*he leaps up onto a balcony, this lets him avoid the spinning Poe attack\* Oh, that worked! \*he keeps playing and uses a stabbing downward slash to hit the beast's weak point and stun it\* That worked too! All right! \*begins slashing the beast repeatedly now\* I love the animation in this game, Link looks so much more alive and the boss does too, a lot of detail in pretty much everything. \*a couple more downward stabs and slashes finish off the boss\* And he's dead!

Gail: Congratulations, enjoy playing that?

Alex: I absolutely did, thanks again, that was really fun. Definitely looking forward to playing this game.

(...)

Alex: And now for another epic game, we're over at the Sega Saturn booth and this is *Ultima: The Worldly Lord*. Right now we're out exploring in a field just to the west of our main town, as you can see on the screen we've got bandits and raiders coming after us.

Tim Stellmach: You've got to decide whether these guys are friends or foes. Sometimes you can actually recruit some of the enemies who accost you in the field, it might be more helpful than fighting them for their loot.

Alex: I'm going to go ahead and fight them for their loot. ....and I'm dead.

Tim: In the early stages of the game it's absolutely crucial that you avoid combat if it looks like you're outmatched, you've gotta be careful because sometimes your enemies can be really powerful.

Alex: So it helps if I use diplomacy to settle some of these disputes?

Tim: Absolutely, most of the time the human enemies won't fight you if you don't attack them first. Sometimes they will and you'll learn to identify which of them are hostile and which of them are open to talking it out.

Alex: This series has always been a lot more intuitive, I think, than some of the other role playing games where you just kill everything.

Tim: Right, this game offers you a lot more choice about how you're going to progress in the world and build up your kingdom.

Alex: It's one of my personally most anticipated Saturn games, really looking forward to playing it when we review it later on.

(...)

Brittany Saldita: Brittany here, I'm over at Nintendo's booth and right now I'm playing *Tale Phantasia*! This is an absolutely beautiful RPG and I can't get enough of it, right now I'm just walking around getting into fights and tearing into enemies. I'm here with Yoshiharu Gotanda who designed the game, he's been really helpful in getting me acclimated to the game's combat systems and translating for me since I'm not very fluent in Japanese.

Yoshiharu Gotanda: Right now you've just gone back to the past and you're making your way to a town where you'll be able to figure out just how you got here.

Brittany: Between this and *Chrono Trigger* I'm doing a lot of time traveling in games! I have to say, I love the rich detail in the character sprites and the background animation, these graphics are gorgeous. The combat system is a lot like a fighting game, you have moves and even combo moves to perform, you can set up to four special moves to the B button

and then use B and press a direction on the controller to do your special move. You run out of magic points REALLY fast if you do too many special moves so you'll want to stick to your regular attack most of the time.

Yoshiharu: You have it mastered already! \*he laughs\*

Brittany: This is not my first RPG, lemme tell you, but I've never played a game like this. Maybe Secret Of Mana but that game didn't have the sheer variety of moves that this game has.

Yoshiharu: You can set even more special moves to the L and R buttons!

Brittany: I am gonna be playing this game forever. I can see the people standing in line to play, they're jealous of me, looks like one of them wants to kill me so I'd better stop talking and keep playing. \*laughs\* Oh my god you guys, I need to import this from Japan. It's just that damn good. \*she keeps playing\*

(...)

Ted: We're here at Sony's booth and this is one of the busiest booths in the show because it's the line for *Ballistic Limit*, the highly anticipated shooting game from Sony for the Super Nintendo CD this fall. I've started playing through level one and it's pretty fun so far, I've already got three weapons that I can switch back and forth between but what's REALLY interesting about this game is that once you go into Ballistic Mode, your weapon switches functions, check this out. I've got a pistol, but when I switch into Ballistic Mode it takes on this cool tri-laser function and I can kill multiple enemies at once. You can also go into the menu and change up the weapon function, so for example if you want it to do the same thing in regular mode and Ballistic Mode you can do that. You can find new weapons or you can even buy them in shops. This game is a lot like Metroid but much less about exploration and more about killing stuff, you also interact with a LOT more people than you do in Metroid where you're kinda just by yourself on an alien world.

(...)

John Walden: I'm hanging out here at the Saturn booth and I'm about to play \*sings\* DAYTOOOOONNAAAAAAAAAAAAAA USA with three other E3 attendees. Now, you CAN use the steering wheel for this game, same thing in Virtua Racing and also in Ridge Racer which isn't coming out at launch, but I'm using the controller, it feels real good in my hands and I'm kinda used to it from Virtua Racing on the Mega Charger. Let's get this thing started!

\*There's a countdown and then the race begins, John is in second out of four at the start.\*

John: I'm lovin' the graphics, they look just about as good as what you see in the arcade, no trees popping up all of a sudden like in Virtua Racing for Mega Charger, the crowd looks real good and of course there's the awesome theme song. Right now, I'm in second, I'm gonna try to pull ahead of this guy but he's pretty good.

\*The race continues, John and another attendee battling it out for first.\*

John: I think out of all the Sega racing games here at E3, this one's probably the best. I might have a soft spot for Daytona but I really think this is the best racing game out there, it's gonna be hard for anything on Nintendo to beat it.

\*Finally the race ends, John pulls out a thrilling last-second victory.\*

John: Yeah! All right! \*shaking hands with and kind of hugging the guy next to him who got second place\* I'm having a lot of fun here at E3, I'm gonna kick it to Kaz, he's checking out one of the weirdest games at this year's show.

(...)

Kazzi DeCarlo: This is Panorama Cotton, it's coming to the Genesis in North America this June and it's a hella weird game. I'm not really an anime fan, but this game's pretty fun. It's out there but it's pretty fun. It's made by Sunsoft, who's also making Andrekah which is another kinda weird game for the SNES-CD but this one definitely takes the cake. You play as this witch who's shooting stuff while on a broom, it's a lot like Space Harrier but....you know what I'm having fun with this game. I'm here with Jenny from Sega of America and she seems like she enjoys this game too, is this your favorite Genesis game?

Jenny: It's one of the best games I've played, I love the graphics and all the animations.

Kazzi: Yeah that's another thing. This....you see this? It's not hooked up to a Mega Charger, this is an honest to God Sega Genesis game and it looks pretty damn awesome. Not a Saturn game, not a Mega Charger game, a Genesis game. And check this stuff out! \*he heads over to another booth where Vectorman is being shown off\* This is ANOTHER Sega Genesis game! Just the Genesis, no Mega Charger in sight! I'm tellin' ya, the Genesis is still kicking.

Jenny: Absolutely, we'll be releasing games for the Genesis and the Mega Charger through 1997 at least, we have over 100 new Genesis and Mega Charger games planned for the rest of this year alone.

(...)

Ted: Guess who me and Alex found? It's Joel Schumacher, he's gonna be directing the new Batman movie but right now he's here at E3.

Alex: Mr. Schumacher, what brings you here to E3?

Joel Schumacher: Right now I'm here at Acclaim's booth to help promote *Batman Forever*, both the movie and the game. I'm also here because I've become a bit of a video game fan, I don't play a lot of them but I enjoyed some of the games on the Super Nintendo CD and so I'm here to kind of get a taste of all of that.

Ted: What's your favorite video game?

Joel: I enjoyed *Snatcher* tremendously. The level of storytelling really approaches what's being done in films and I got a real kick out of seeing all the twists and turns, it was very inspiring.

Alex: So is there a little bit of a *Snatcher* feel to *Batman Forever*?

Joel: Not really, but I did take inspiration from the darker themes in the game, I felt that if a video game could bring that level of emotion to its world and its characters, that the

*Batman* series could use some of that as well. I actually got inspired to kind of exert some more creative control over the movie, convince Warner Brothers that the film could be better served by going in a more mature direction and they finally broke down and listened to some of my advice. It won't be quite as dark as *Batman Returns* but hopefully it's the kind of film that all audiences young and old can really enjoy.

Ted: Well, we're really eagerly looking forward to the new film. Have you visited with Selena? She's here at the booth too and I thought you two might have met each other.

Joel: Oh, she's beautiful and wonderfully talented. She'll be singing a song on the *Batman Forever* soundtrack and I'd love to perhaps have her appear in one of my movies someday.

Ted: She'd make a good Catwoman. Nothing against Michelle Pfeiffer but she really would.

Alex: I think he just wants to see Selena in that Catwoman outfit.

Joel: \*laughing\* Well they do kind of have the same name, don't they?

(...)

Ted: We'll be back with more coverage from the floor of E3.

Alex: And don't miss the end of our show where we'll be bringing you a performance from pop superstar Selena who's going to be performing one of her new hit songs at the Acclaim booth!

-from the May 16, 1995 episode of MTV's *GameTV*

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### **EGM From The Floor Of E3!**

*E3 1995 was definitely the biggest video game trade show of all time and we've got tons of news live from the showroom floor!*

*The biggest news at E3 was the announcement of the launch plans for the Sega Saturn, which is set to release on Saturday, September 2, a date that Sega is calling "Saturday". With over a dozen launch titles planned for release, the Saturn will have one of the most robust launch line-ups ever. While Sonic the Hedgehog was a disappointing absentee, the Saturn had plenty of other great games to ease the pain of waiting. We were probably most impressed with the Saturn's exclusive Ultima title, Ultima: The Worldly Lord. We felt like this game takes the series in a completely different direction from previous titles and we love the freedom of exploration it gave us. We also loved Virtua Cop, the booth was one of the most crowded at the show but when we got to play we were blown away by the graphical detail which was pretty much identical to the arcade version. As always, sports fans will have plenty to do on launch day weekend, with a pair of racing games and games for all four of the major American sports, in addition to an outstanding fighting game in Virtua Fighter. All in all, the Saturn is a somewhat pricey (\$399) but very impressive looking piece of tech and we were quite blown away by it.*

*On the Super Nintendo CD front, we were impressed with the sheer quantity and variety of games available for the CD console. Whether you're a fan of RPGs, platformers, shooting games, strategy games, sports titles, fighting games, or anything else, the SNES-CD had*

something for you with more than 60 games on display. *Ballistic Limit* was like nothing we'd ever seen before with rapid-fire strategic switching between 2-D gameplay and 3-D first-person shooter gameplay, with more weapons than we could count. *Tales Of The Seven Seas* looks especially fun, it combines the swashbuckling humor of the *Monkey Island* series with *Deadman Sam*-like action gameplay with a little of *Zelda*-esque exploration thrown in. Speaking of *Zelda*, *Ocarina of Dreams* looks like *Link To The Past* on steroids. We got to see the first three dungeons and bosses in all their glory and they looked spectacular. Nintendo seems to be keeping the game's second half under wraps but if what we saw with the *Dark World* in *LTP* is any indication, it's going to be amazing. Nintendo announced a slew of role-playing games for next year but don't count out the rest of this year's crop, *Earthbound 2* looks weird but wonderful and *Squaresoft* showed off an upgraded version of *Final Fantasy IV* with enhanced graphics and CD based audio that makes us want to journey with Cecil and his companions all over again. We also liked what we saw from *Capcom's Breath of Fire* sequel, which seems to incorporate a more mature storyline featuring religion.

For those of you who still haven't upgraded your SNES (what's taking you so long?), there were plenty of games shown off, not as many as there were for the CD but enough to keep stubborn cartridge players well entertained. *Kirby's Adventure 2* was a welcome sight, *Kirby's world* looks as fun and colorful as ever, and we also got a bit of a shock when *F-Zero: G-Force* was announced. Not a racing game, it's actually an action-platformer that takes players behind the scenes, so to speak, starring *Captain Falcon* and his fellow racers as they try to stop an evil conspiracy. The graphics compare favorably to games like *Super Metroid* and the gameplay, as appropriate to the series, is really fast paced. The big SNES game of the show was *Yoshi's Island* and word on the street is that it's Nintendo's swan song to the original SNES. If what we saw is any indication, it's a hell of a swan song, with the most beautiful graphics we've ever seen on a cartridge game.

The *Genesis* and *Mega Charger* also got plenty of love with the announcement of *Vectorman*, a new platformer game utilizing rendered graphics that looked really impressive even without the *Mega Charger* attachment. Using the *Mega Charger* to play, though, opens up new worlds and new 3-D environments similar to the enhancements for *Sonic 3*. We also saw *Phantasy Star IV*, due to be released in December, and it was one of the best RPGs shown off at E3, even compared with Nintendo's murderer's row of role-playing games. RPG fans who stuck with *Sega* are going to get plenty of love over these next few months, in addition to *Phantasy Star IV*, upgrading to the *Saturn* will get you *MagiQuest*, a *Secret Of Mana*-looking game with much faster gameplay that stars three adorable girls who fill the screen with colorful spells.

Aside from *Nintendo* and *Sega*, we didn't see much from *Nintendo's* competitor *Atari*, who's pretty much thrown in the towel as far as the *Jaguar* is concerned. Meanwhile, *The 3DO Company* seemed to be advertising its software just as much if not more than its hardware. The platformer *Gex*, previously thought to be the 3DO's "killer app", was being promoted as an SNES-CD port set to be released later in May. There was also a booth set up by *Bandai* showing off their technically impressive but lacking in games *Solaris* system. We saw two games displayed at the show, a *Power Rangers* game and a strange looking platformer which paled in comparison to *Sega's* tech demo for *Nights*. If what we saw from *Nintendo* and *Sega* is any indication, it'll be an uphill climb for *Bandai*...

-excerpted from a report in *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* July 1995 issue

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**E3 1995**

The E3 expo was to be the "successor" event of sorts to the Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago. It was to be an event where video games held the center stage rather than being relegated to the basement as they were at the CES. The show took place at the Los Angeles Convention Center from May 11 to May 13, 1995. The day before the show, executives from Sega, Sony, and Nintendo held press conferences outlining their future plans. Sega's show, headlined by Tom Kalinske, was all about the upcoming Saturn. The Saturn's high price point of \$399 drew some groans from the crowd despite Kalinske's efforts to justify the price by comparing it to much higher priced gaming options on the PC or arcade platforms. To his credit, the promotional video shown demonstrating the Saturn's technological capabilities was quite impressive and the Saturn did compare favorably to middle-end PC gaming rigs of the time. Olaf Olafsson from Sony then spent some time re-iterating the relationship between Sony and Nintendo (which became somewhat strained in the days before the companies agreed to work on the Ultra Nintendo together) before announcing three games for the SNES-CD's fall lineup. Then it was Howard Lincoln's turn for Nintendo, and he spent his time promoting the Super Nintendo CD's great lineup of upcoming games, barely even mentioning the Ultra Nintendo (or even "Project Eunice", its codename at the time). He even had Hiranobu Sakaguchi up on stage briefly to promote the "Year of the RPG", Nintendo's term for what would indeed be a banner year for role-playing games on the system.

Nintendo spared no expense to promote their games at E3 that year, even hosting the performer Seal who would do the theme song for the upcoming *Batman Forever* movie. Similarly, at Acclaim's big booth (in which games based on *Batman Forever* and *Judge Dredd* were promoted, among others), Selena did a performance (almost certainly due to her friendship with the creator of Acclaim's big hit game *Frederico*, which an urban legend credits with saving the singer's life from a crazed fan). There were plenty of "booth babes" at the show, though Sega's booth was rather tasteful, instead of booth babes there were featured three models dressed in the relatively conservative outfits worn by the main characters of the action-RPG *MagiQuest*. Believe it or not, the infamous celebrity John Wayne Bobbitt also appeared at the first E3, in a closed-off area of the show promoting his new pornographic computer video game *Uncut*. Speaking of Selena and urban legends, there's another one that's actually probably true of Bobbitt attempting to call up Selena's hotel room in the middle of the night and getting instead her irate husband on the phone, who threatened to kill him amidst a tirade full of Spanish profanities.

The most crowded booths at the show were probably those of *Ballistic Limit*, *Virtua Cop*, *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams*, and *Tale Phantasia* in that order, with *Ballistic Limit* considered to be the consensus Game of Show amongst the gaming media. Curiously, especially on the last two days of E3, the *Super Mario World 3* booth wasn't very crowded on the last two days. It had been extremely crowded, probably the most difficult booth to get into, on the first day, but the last two days it was relatively easy for any journalist or celebrity who wanted to play the game to be able to do so. It was perhaps the first indication that the game was somewhat of a disappointment compared to *Super Mario World 2*, as word of mouth spread throughout the convention the crowds had thinned out around the game. However, except for the most popular of games at the show, most booths were fairly easy to get to with only a small amount of waiting time. Nintendo, Sega, and the myriad of third parties that had set up booths at the show made sure to include enough gaming kiosks to cut down on the waiting times that had plagued earlier conventions like CES. The fact that the gaming companies had the vast space all to themselves probably made this a lot easier of a feat to pull off, and E3 1995 received mostly rave reviews from both game companies and gaming journalists alike. It was clear that once 1996 rolled

around, everyone would be ready to do it all over again...

-excerpted from IGN's E3 1995 article (based on this real-life article on IGN.com about the original E3: [http://www.ign.com/wikis/e3/E3\\_1995](http://www.ign.com/wikis/e3/E3_1995) )

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*"It was a great time to be working at Capcom. Sega was pushing the cutting edge of what was possible in a video game console and Nintendo and Sony gave us a lot of freedom to create many different types of games, so we were more than happy to just make games and back then we were making a lot of great ones."*

-Shinji Mikami, in an interview with BradyGames for the Collector's Edition of the Victory: 20th Anniversary HD Remake strategy guide

*"People forget that Snatcher was just the beginning, that it wasn't all that great of a game. The storyline itself was fantastic for sure, but its real influence came from all the great games it inspired. Policenauts was one, of course, but there were others, much lesser known, that were even better."*

-Gaming historian Cassidy Relintz, quoted in the January 21, 2014 IGN.com article "Top 25 Most Influential Games (That Weren't All That Great), #3: Snatcher"

*"Aw dude, you totally spun him out! Way to go!"*

-Meat Brick, *Bikerz*

*"These murderers are after me, all of my friends...except for you...are dead....! What the hell am I supposed to do now? Where the hell am I supposed to go? Why can't I go back to yesterday morning when I just had a normal life?"*

-Corrine Pearl, *Daughter of Pearl*

*"I think, if I'd known that the Super Nintendo CD in particular was going to be so big, the 3DO wouldn't have been made at all. I had no idea that Sony was going to be so competent at making video game hardware. I thought Nintendo and Sony's collaboration was going to be a comedy of errors when we surged forward with the conception of our standard. It was a dumb call to make. That thing ended up running most of our games as well as the 3DO did for a third of the price or less. I was in denial about it for a while, but... I'm enough of a man to admit that I got my ass kicked on that one. Hats off to Sony for kicking my ass."*

-Trip Hawkins, discussing the 3DO's failure in *Wired* magazine, January 2004

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### **Gex:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8.5

Al: 7.5 (quote: "Gex is one of the best looking platformers on the SNES-CD, but at it's core it's still a fairly generic mascot platformer. While it might've been a killer app on the 3DO, here it's drifting in a sea of fantastic games and might not be for everyone.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Lucienne's Quest:**

Ed: 4.5

Danyon: 7

Al: 4.5

Sushi-X: 4 (quote: "Stuttery graphics and really boring gameplay make Lucienne's Quest an RPG to forget.")

### **Pocky And Rocky CD:**

Ed: 8.5 (quote: "Definitely my favorite Pocky and Rocky game, featuring a charming soundtrack and lots of difficult but rewarding gameplay.")

Danyon: 8.5

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 8

### **Shadowrun: Worlds Without End:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7.5 (quote: "I'd be lying if I didn't say that this game was somewhat of a disappointment, the previous Shadowrun was an RPG classic but it seems like this game took a bit of a step back.")

Al: 7.5

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Super Punch-Out CD:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 8 (quote: "A nice little update to last year's SNES game, though if you've already played it the biggest thing you'll miss if you skip this one is a really fun two-player mode.")

### **Super Turrican 2:**

Ed: 9 (quote: "A beautiful, exciting, and really challenging shooter with some of the most fast-paced action I've ever seen.")

Danyon: 7

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Daughter Of Pearl:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9

Al: 9 (quote: "One of the greatest visual novels I've ever played. Heart-rending and truly mind-bending, it's indeed better than Snatcher and you'll need to play more than once to see every little detail of its story.")

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Clownin' Around:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 6

Al: 6.5 (quote: "I liked the colorful graphics in this platformer where you're a clown who basically fights other clowns but if you're not into clowns you'll have to look elsewhere for a great action title.")

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Backwoods Racing:**

Ed: 6.5

Danyon: 6.5 (quote: "It's good enough for what it is, some of the courses are genuinely challenging and running moonshine to soup up your vehicle is an intriguing gameplay mechanic that could be expanded on if this game gets a sequel.")

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 7

### **Chicken Fighter:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 5

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 4.5 (quote: "I thought I'd never see the day when they'd make a fighting game about a bunch of anthropomorphic chickens but here it is and it's a bad day.")

### **Bikerz:**

Ed: 8 (quote: "Kids will definitely like this game more than adults, but the colorful cast of characters should appear to cartoon fans and those who are young at heart.")

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 7.5

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **3-D Pool:**

Ed: 5.5

Danyon: 6 (quote: "I can't recommend this to anyone who hates pool, but if you're a fan of pool, this is probably the best billiards game you'll find on a console.")

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 5.5

### **The Legend Of Annie Oakley:**

Ed: 7.5 (quote: "This is a really fun platforming/shooter game that offers up a silly but still engrossing portrait of the legendary gunslinger's early days. We could use more games that turn famous American heroes into exaggerated cartoon legends. Teddy Roosevelt, anyone?")

Danyon: 7

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7

### **Puzzle Pals:**

Ed: 3

Danyon: 4.5 (quote: "I'll take a pass on this rather kiddy game where you're a detective

who solves a series of boring and unintuitive puzzles to close cases. The voice acting is horrid and the story's not even all that good either.")

Al: 5.5

Sushi-X: 4

### **Icebiter 2:**

Ed: 8 (quote: "While it doesn't do much different from the previous Icebiter game, I still loved the gameplay and it's a bit faster-paced this time around, with more weapons, more obstacles, and bigger bosses. It's a really worthy sequel to the original hit.")

Danyon: 8

Al: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Last Resort:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8.5 (quote: "While FMV horror games are usually pretty terrible, this thriller taking place at an abandoned resort island is extremely well made and relies on spooky camera tricks rather than hokey acting to put you in the middle of the action. This and Eyes of the Vampire are both must-plays for any horror fan.")

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 9

### **Victory:**

Ed: 9.5 (quote: "Capcom has perfected the top-down run-and-gun action game with this incredible effort featuring some of the best voice acting I've ever heard in a game and some of the best combat I've ever had the fortune to experience. Believe the hype, this game absolutely lives up to it.")

Danyon: 9

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9

- excerpted from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of May 1995's SNES-CD games in the June and July 1995 issues

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*When the war is over...*

\*A group of soldiers are seen returning from a great war, smiles on their faces...one of them is getting the Medal of Honor from the president, another is seen walking to the store, while another is coming home to his family\*

*The peace is not always guaranteed...*

\*The soldier getting the Medal of Honor doesn't notice the evil glow in the president's eye...the soldier at the store doesn't see the clerk contacting someone with a weird-looking communicator device... the soldier coming home is horrified to see his family transforming into hideous creatures...\*

*And sometimes surrender is only the beginning....*

\*More soldiers are seen walking down the street together when they are suddenly confronted by an army of space aliens... the soldiers drawn their weapons as the aliens rush at them, the scene dissolving into scenes from the game, featuring a well-animated soldier on a large battlefield charging into an alien base, swapping weapons, firing large rocket bursts, using a laser gun, setting up trap mines, then two soldiers fighting together on the same screen, then another scene where the main character is battling an enormous boss creature...\*

Narrator: When one war ends, another war begins. Fight the war to save humanity from the alien hordes. Collect dozens of weapons, explore through levels on Earth and in space, and team up with a friend for two-player co-op action. It's *Victory* and it's coming May 8th for your Super Nintendo CD, from the makers of Mega Man and Street Fighter.

### **PLAY IT LOUD.**

-from the commercial for the Super Nintendo CD game *Victory*, which aired in late April and May 1995

### **Victory: The Basics-**

Victory was released for the Super Nintendo CD by Capcom on May 8th, 1995. Hyped for a number of months, it became one of the fastest selling SNES-CD titles to date, and good word of mouth led to the game continuing to sell well for the remainder of the year, becoming one of the biggest hits of 1995 for the SNES-CD. It was a top-down run-and-gun action game, similar to games such as *Zombies Ate My Neighbors*, but also drawing comparisons to *Metal Gear*. The main character was a man named Nash Grieves, and the first two levels are both an introduction to the game mechanics as well as a background of the game's action. It depicts Grieves fighting for the United Forces Army in the late 21st century. The army is said to be conquering the territory of a united force of enemy nations who are hoarding a resource needed for humanity's continued survival. The war ends with a United Forces victory and Grieves is named a war hero. But even during the war, he notices strange occurrences. His buddies dismiss them as war delusions but even after the war ends, Grieves is haunted by his visions and decides to report them to government officials. This leads to Grieves becoming a prisoner and discovering something terrible: all major Earth nations, both among the United Forces and among the enemy, are ran by disguised aliens who are using the humans as both resource gatherers and proxy soldiers in their civil war. Grieves must unite with other soldiers, including his friends from the war and others, to stop the alien threat. However, it's not that simple, as human leaders have become interwoven with the aliens and humanity, rather than being an oppressed race of oblivious prisoners, may become the biggest threat of all as Grieves fights his way through more than 20 levels seeking to untangle the deadly web of schemes and crimes that threaten the freedom of the people of Earth and beyond. The game combines open combat sections where Grieves faces hundreds of enemies and even huge bosses to smaller, more stealthy sections inside buildings and other enemy-controlled places. While stealth is never required, it sometimes makes things a lot easier if he is not detected during certain missions. The game also has a multi-player mode where two players can cooperate, Grieves teams up with his war buddy Jett Sharklund in co-op mode, while in single-player mode, Sharklund is an important and trusted ally. The game is littered with in-game cutscenes and a generous amount of voice acting during important plot segments, with Grieves voiced by Scott McCulloch.

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Ted Crosley: As you can see, *Victory* is an exciting action game filled with twists and turns and bumps and bruises.

Alex Stansfield: We both enjoyed it for its thrilling gameplay and great storyline, but Ted, what's your final verdict?

Ted: *Victory* was a lot of fun up and down and all the way around, with lots of cool weapons and some great characters. The main guy Nash was kinda boring but I liked his friend Jett and I liked Stephanie, the French spy who seems like she's gonna be teamed up with the aliens but she turns out to help you a lot over the course of the game. The voice acting was surprisingly good and like I said, the gameplay was a ton of fun. While it's not quite as groundbreaking as some of the other games I've played, there really wasn't a dull moment to be had. I'm giving *Victory* a 4.5 out of 5. Not quite a 5 but really really really good.

Alex: I'm giving it a 4. I really loved the weapon variety, but later on a lot of the weapons were pretty useless and it seemed to shoehorn you into one style of play. I also liked the indoor sections a LOT more than the battlefield segments, which I felt got repetitive except for the boss fights. I DID love the boss fights, all of them. The fight against the mutant ice creature in level 9 kicked ass.

Ted: That fight did kick a lot of ass, the Siberia level in general was probably my favorite in the game.

Alex: That and level 15 on the ship. I wish more of the levels could've been like the alien ship, it gave you a lot of stuff to do and blowing up those aliens was a lot of fun.

Ted: I don't think there's any disagreement here that *Victory* is a GameTV's Choice game. Highly recommended.

Alex: Absolutely.

-from the May 9, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

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And looking back at May 1995 for the Super Nintendo CD, there was a surprising slew of quality games that were released. The best and by far most significant of these games was Capcom's hit *Victory*, though it was a bit surprising at the time that it was such a major hit, releasing around the same time as a number of somewhat anticipated sequels. It was thought that the majorly-hyped original IP and the squad of sequels would cannibalize each other, but *Victory* stomped them all. The sequels were for the most part disappointments, which probably contributed to *Victory's*, well, victory. Let's take a brief look at each of them and analyze what went wrong.

*Shadowrun: Worlds Without End*- This was far and away the biggest disappointment, especially to me. The original *Shadowrun* had been a cult classic when it was released in May of 1993 and it was thought that the sequel would take the series into the mainstream and be a much bigger hit. Instead, it got above-average reviews at best and sold about as poorly as the first. While it brought back many of the well received game mechanics from the original, the plot, adapted loosely from the new (at the time) *Immortals* trilogy, left a

LOT to be desired, and the game seemed to focus on bumping up the graphics rather than bumping up the gameplay. It was a decent enough game but not the *Final Fantasy VI*-killer some expected.

*Pocky and Rocky CD*- This probably turned out to be the best of the lot! Natsume's cute franchise about a girl and her raccoon buddy seemed like it was made for the SNES-CD, the add-on eliminated a lot of the slowdown that plagued the SNES games when things on screen got too hectic and enabled the designers to make the game a whopping 14 levels! It was huge, the bosses were challenging, numerous, and very well animated and there were tons of different power-ups. It was the perfect *Pocky and Rocky* game and very well received critically, but it was somewhat of a bomb commercially and the series never got another installment.

*Super Turrican 2*- This was another game that was actually really good, it just sold horribly. Yes, it was hard, VERY hard but if you were playing a shooter in those days you knew what you were getting into. *Super Turrican 2* was exclusive to the SNES-CD after the previous one appeared in both cartridge and CD form, and the transition to full CD really showed with vastly improved animation and music. It was a quality game but this was always a niche series.

*Super Punch-Out CD*- This was essentially an enhanced port of 1994's *Super Punch-Out* for the Super Nintendo. What did it add? Another circuit of four fighters that you could face after beating the Bruiser Brothers (to be fair, the last fighter was Donkey Kong, so that was pretty awesome), a bit more voice acting, and a pretty fun two-player split-screen mode that let you box your friends. If you had the SNES version you weren't missing too much by skipping this on CD. Nintendo actually had a deal where you could send in proof of purchase for *Super Punch-Out* on the SNES to get a \$30 off coupon for *Super Punch-Out CD*. It wasn't a bad deal for people who REALLY wanted to upgrade.

*Icebiter 2*- Finally, we have *Icebiter 2*, the sequel to 1994's hit run-and-gun game about a soldier sent to protect his village from a giant ice monster. This game ups the ante by sending the same soldier out to battle some evil warlords who want to conquer his village. The levels were a lot bigger and more complex but the gameplay was pretty much exactly the same as the first. It wasn't a bad game and commercially this probably performed the best of the month's five sequels. Compared to *Victory*, though, it didn't do all that well.

-from "May 1995: The Month The Sequels Flopped", an article on Gamesovermatter.com, January 22, 2013

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\*A group of animated punk-looking kids walk down a long street, laughing and joking amongst themselves. They suddenly hear the sound of revving motorcycles and look to see another group of punk-looking kids across the street. The leader of the group across the street is chewing on a toothpick.\*

Leader: Ya think ya got what it takes to beat us?

\*The leader of the first group of kids, a boy with spiky green hair, raises his fist.\*

Leader: Bring it on!

\*The kids all get on little motorcycles and begin racing around the street, spinning each other out with hilarious weapons like a bouncy ball bomb and a chain made out of red plastic monkeys.\*

Narrator: Join the gang for some extreme motorcycle action! It's *Bikerz*, the craziest racing experience to ever hit your video game console! Join Stank, Crash, Abbey, Lars, Darcy, and all the rest as you take on Meat Brick and his crew of motorcycle meanies!

\*A huge crash is seen as motorcycles slam into each other, sending kids from both sides flying hilariously into the air.\*

Meat Brick: You'll pay for this ya punks!

Narrator: *Bikerz*, now on sale for the Super Nintendo CD and the Sega Genesis featuring enhanced Mega Charger gameplay!

-the commercial for *Bikerz*, which aired on Nickelodeon and other kids' channels in May 1995

### ***Bikerz*: Gaming's Hottest New Phenomenon?**

The video game *Bikerz*, featuring a somewhat light-hearted take on the old motorcycle gang cliché with a bunch of silly kids on colorful motorbikes, is selling well in response to favorable reviews from game journalists and polls of kids are calling it one of the most popular video games of the summer alongside *Knuckles: Renegade*, *Frederico*, and *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina of Dreams*. The game's exciting racing gameplay is getting praise from all around and there's even talk of an animated series potentially in the works. Though the Genesis version is outselling the Super Nintendo CD version by about 2 to 1, the SNES-CD version of the game was still one of that system's best selling games of May, finishing third behind *Victory* and *Gex*. While the rudeness of some of the characters and the opinion of some that the game may be promoting the motorcycle gang lifestyle make it controversial among some parents, most are singing the game's praises as a fun and exciting new title that promotes friendship and fun.

-from an article in *Newsweek*, July 10, 1995

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*"Snatcher, I think, has inspired a lot of people who never would have thought of video games as a medium for storytelling otherwise. I set out to make a game a lot like Snatcher but as the idea kind of gestated in my head it took on a bit of a life of its own. I'm proud of this game. It's not selling like Snatcher but I never expected that it would. I just hope the people who play it appreciate it and that I get to do another game like it, I have a lot of ideas."*

-Stan Bartollini, lead designer of *Daughter of Pearl*

The success of *Snatcher* saw a lot of imitators in the next couple of years that followed. Most of the imitators were bad games that sold poorly. *Daughter of Pearl* was...an outstanding game that sold poorly. The game was developed by Neversoft and was one of the first titles released for the company, which started with three men, Joel Jewett, Mick West, and Chris Ward. Seeing the increased popularity of story-based games on the Super Nintendo CD, the three hired two writers to help develop ideas for their SNES-CD games, while also focusing more on gameplay-based games for the Sega Saturn. One of the writers

was let go shortly afterward. The other, Stan Bartollini, designed and wrote *Daughter of Pearl*, a hybrid action/point-and-click that featured a young office worker, Corrine Pearl, whose life is thrown into chaos after she stumbles upon a conspiracy, is pursued by lethal killers and who witnesses the brutal death of the detective she hires to protect her. It was a very unusual subversion of a common trope, where the beautiful, helpless young woman hires a detective who then becomes her protector and the solver of the mystery. Here, Corrine is forced to fend for herself and must decide who she can trust as she unravels the mystery, getting stronger and braver as she goes along. Corrine's story arc was praised as one of the greatest in all of gaming up to that point and the game was instantly praised for its storyline and gameplay (the latter of which was almost universally considered to exceed *Snatcher's* in quality, with significantly more action scenes). Unlike *Snatcher*, the game didn't feature voice acting (Neversoft couldn't afford to hire voice actors at the time). The game sold very poorly at first release, but critical praise and word of mouth led to a slow trickle of sales throughout the SNES-CD's life and eventually *Daughter of Pearl* managed to turn a (very small) profit and get a sequel. As for Bartollini, the game had established him as one of the best writers in video games and his creative mind would be behind several more hits for Neversoft on future systems.

-from "A Pearl In The Rough", an article in *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, July 2003

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts- May 1995**

1. Donkey Kong Country
2. Super Mario World 2
3. Mega Man X2
4. F-Zero CD
5. Squad Four
6. Mortal Kombat II
7. Alien vs. Predator
8. Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition
9. Justice League: The Battle For Earth
10. Pulseman
11. Star Wars: X-Wing
12. Nightsquad
13. Rayman
14. TMNT V: Wrath Of The Foot
15. The Darkest Ritual
16. Secret Of Mana
17. Contra IV: Hard Corps
18. Jewels Of The Realm
19. Earthworm Jim: Special Edition
20. Universalizer

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*"Sega's plans for a Game Gear successor may be dead in the water but the company is rumored to be working on a new portable: a handheld version of the Sega Genesis, with the Mega Charger's enhancement chips along for the ride. The portable won't come cheap: it's expected to launch at \$249.99 when it's released this holiday season, but with that much power under the hood, you're definitely getting what you pay for."*

-excerpted from the Quartermann rumor column in the June 1995 issue of *Electronic*

## Gaming Monthly

*"Nomad's a stupid name. Just call it the Venus. We'll talk to Shocking Blue about getting the rights to their song for the commercials."*

-overhead from Tom Kalinske at Sega of America HQ

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*"Just remember, the world of Hyrule is full of all kinds of secrets, tricks, and traps that are a lot more fun to figure out on your own. So my recommendation is that before you turn to me for help, you try to solve the puzzle yourself. And hey, don't worry, if you're stumped, I'm here for ya. Just think of me as that cool friend who just happens to be really good at video games. Don't worry, we'll get through this together. Ocarina of Dreams is the toughest Zelda game yet, but with your pal Brady here to help you out, you'll never walk alone in Hyrule!"*

-excerpted from the introduction to the BradyGames *Totally Unauthorized Legend of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams Player's Guide*

*"Mega Charger sales were really starting to slow by the middle of 1995. Part of it was the imminent release of the Saturn, part of it was the fact that Nintendo was churning out a lot of good games, and part of it was that things were slowing down on the Genesis. We'd tried to keep a steady stream of games going, but it was clear that developers were gravitating to the Saturn and we were also losing one or two to Nintendo. By the summer of 1995, it was apparent that the Genesis had peaked in sales."*

-Tom Kalinske, "The Chase: Sega's 20 Year Struggle To Take Down A Giant"

*"Uh, yeah, Earth is in the same galaxy as the Lylat System. We hadn't planned it that way at first but Mr. Miyamoto thought it would be kind of neat to tie the three games together."*

-Dylan Cuthbert, Argonaut Games, in a June 1995 interview about *Super Squadron X: Critical Dawn*

*"Nintendo continues to top themselves with every big game they release. Super Mario World 2, Secret Of Mana, Donkey Kong Country, and now Ocarina Of Dreams. I've never seen a company on such an incredible roll. For the fourth time in two years, I'm proclaiming a Super Nintendo CD game the greatest video game of all time."*

-excerpted from the July 1995 issue of *Game Informer* magazine

*"Link, you must gather the three pieces of the Ocarina of Dreams. If you fail, I fear all of Hyrule is doomed."*

-Princess Zelda, *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams*

*"What will become of us this time? After you wake up from the dream? I don't want to disappear again..."*

-Marin, *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams*

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*"And so once again I return to Earth, the planet humanity once called home. I know that this will be the last time I return here."*

-Captain Xenda, from the introduction to *Super Squadron X: Critical Dawn*

## **Super Squadron X: Critical Dawn – The Basics**

Super Squadron X: Critical Dawn was released on June 5, 1995, for the Super Nintendo CD. It is the third game in the X series of tank-based shooters by Argonaut games, and the direct sequel to the SNES game *Super Squadron X*. In *Super Squadron X*, humanity has been forced to leave the Earth due to an environmental crisis, but on their new planet there is an infestation of deadly aliens that Captain Xenda is tasked with wiping out, using his battle tank known as the VIXIV and receiving air support from a squadron of soldiers. In *Critical Dawn*, Xenda returns to Earth to rescue stranded refugees, but Earth has become home to dangerous mutated creatures and Xenda must once again use the VIXIV to save them. Over the course of the game, the nature of the crisis that caused the Earth to become uninhabitable is revealed: it is the machination of a group of deadly aliens known as the Grutals, who tainted the Earth's environment and are now growing a mutant army on the planet. Though Xenda defeats both the mutants and the Grutals and saves the refugees, the damage the Grutals have done to Earth is irreversible and Xenda returns with the refugees to humanity's new home world. The game is a shooter where Xenda pilots a tank (somewhat like the Landmaster in OTL's Starfox 64). The gameplay in *Critical Dawn*, unlike the rail shooter gameplay in the SNES *Super Squadron X*, is free-range, you are required to rescue a certain number of refugees in each stage before making your way to the exit. There is usually a boss guarding the exit and mini-bosses guard some of the refugees on occasion. It's to your advantage to rescue all of them, not just the required number, as rescuing more refugees will give you health or weapons bonuses and you need to rescue every single refugee in every single level to get the true ending. The game also is the first game to tie into Star Fox and Squad Four, establishing all three series as taking place in the same galaxy, though in *Critical Dawn* it's only in the form of minor allusions (the three series do eventually cross over properly but that isn't until well into the 2000s). There's a bit of voice acting (between levels, mostly), again, nothing near what was present in Star Fox or Squad Four.

*Critical Dawn* is received decently by critics, scoring mostly 7s and 8s, it's not as well recieved as Squad Four or Star Fox, though it does well in sales and is considered to be a good game. The graphics and sound aren't quite as good as Squad Four's, though the free-roaming gameplay is praised for being a departure from the original *Super Squadron X* which was largely considered "Star Fox in a tank".

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## **ClayFighter 2: Judgment Clay:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 6.5

Al: 6.5 (quote: "A decent enough follow-up to the original ClayFighter, though there really isn't anything too innovative to be had here. The graphics got a touch-up but the gameplay's pretty much identical to the first.")

Sushi-X: 5

## **Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers: The Movie:**

Ed: 4

Danyon: 2.5 (quote: "A serious disappointment, just like the movie it's based on. I wish they could've just kept the beat-em-up gameplay of the first intact, and compared to the

soundtrack of the first game, the music in this is a crime.")

Al: 1.5

Sushi-X: 4.5

### **Primal Rage:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7 (quote: "It doesn't look quite as good as it does in the arcade but this is still probably the best home adaptation of Primal Rage we're going to get until the Saturn comes out.")

### **Super Squadron X: Critical Dawn:**

Ed: 7 (quote: "A pretty good shooter, though it can be hard to find some of the refugees you need. I also wish the graphics and presentation could've kept to the same high standard Argonaut set with *Squad Four*.")

Danyon: 8

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Tecmo Super Bowl CD:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 8

Al: 9 (quote: "An outstanding update to a classic sports title, Tecmo kept the wonderful and simple gameplay intact while seriously beefing up the presentation. Maybe my sports game of the year!")

Sushi-X: 9

### **The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams:**

Ed: 9.5

Danyon: 9.5

Al: 9.5

Sushi-X: 9.5 (quote: "This game's an absolute masterpiece, there's really nothing more to say.")

### **Weaponlord:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 7.5 (quote: "A really fun fighting game, kind of reminiscent of Eskrima Warriors but with a much deeper combo system.")

Sushi-X: 9

### **WWF Wrestlemania:**

Ed: 8.5

Danyon: 6.5

Al: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7 (quote: "Based on the pretty good arcade game by Midway, this port is pretty good and it even adds some quick videos for the wrestlers, which was a nice touch. It's kind of simplistic but if you're a wrestling fan, check this one out.")

### **P.O.L.I.C.E: City Under Siege:**

Ed: 4 (quote: "One of the most unnecessary sequels ever, this lightgun game is just as bad and as frustrating as the first.")

Danyon: 4

Al: 2.5

Sushi-X: 3

### **Sock Monkeys:**

Ed: 6.5

Danyon: 7.5 (quote: "This kind of silly platforming game definitely takes some cues from Donkey Kong Country, though the gameplay's not nearly as refined. Still, I loved the graphics and the humor had me in stitches.")

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7

### **Gryphon:**

Ed: 5.5

Danyon: 8

Al: 8.5 (quote: "I imagine this game will be hit or miss with some folks. It's one of the most blisteringly difficult adventure games I've played but it's also really rewarding if you stick with it.")

Sushi-X: 5

### **Hotel Havoc:**

Ed: 7.5

Danyon: 7

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 6 (quote: "This game combines platforming and puzzle elements as you ascend the floors of hotels in search of a kidnapped lady. It's definitely not the best puzzle game out there but you could do worse.")

### **Polar Bear Adventure**

Ed: 5

Danyon: 5

Al: 4.5 (quote: "I never thought I'd get to play a platformer where I'm an actual polar bear but here it is. If they'd have just gone the whole hog and had me mauling people I might've given this game a higher score.")

Sushi-X: 5

### **Martial Masters:**

Ed: 7.5

Danyon: 7

AI: 6.5

Sushi-X: 9.5 (quote: "This is a fighting game for true masters! It has a steep learning curve but once you've got it down you'll be pulling off amazing combos and impressing all your friends. It's definitely not for casual button mashers.")

-reviews of June 1995's SNES-CD games in the July and August 1995 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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John Walden: So, Tecmo Super Bowl CD is a damn good game.

Alex Stansfield: I think it's the best football game on the Super Nintendo CD. It's definitely the most fun, it's got the updated 1995 rosters, and I loved all the little animated cutscenes you get between quarters.

John: The commentary can be a bit silly at times but I had a good laugh at it.

Alex: Well, it's no John Madden, but I enjoyed it.

John: Speaking of Madden, I think the king's dethroned. I think this is better than the Madden games on here.

Alex: Oh yeah, a hell of a lot better than Madden. I'm giving it a 4.5.

John: I'm not going quite that high with it, I'm gonna give it a 4 but that still makes it a GameTV recommended game and for anyone who's a fan of the NFL, Tecmo Super Bowl CD is as good as it gets. The only thing it's missing is Bo Jackson.

Alex: Yeah, no Tecmo Bo! But, but, Emmitt Smith is really good on here.

John: He is, but he's no Bo.

(...)

Brittany Saldita: So how did you like Gryphon?

Ted Crosley: Well, I'll tell you, it was all right.

Brittany: It was all right?

Ted: It was okay. The difficulty was way frustrating, but the puzzles at least made sense.

Brittany: I loved the puzzles but the graphics could've been better. It's definitely flawed but it's not bad. It's like...kind of like an all-dungeon Zelda but without any of the charm, it's just puzzle after puzzle.

Ted: I needed help to get through.

Brittany: \*laughing\* Yeah you called me at midnight begging for help.

Ted: Shh, shhh!

Brittany: Like a little bitch.

Ted: Shhhh! \*covers her mouth with his hand\*

Brittany: \*starts laughing as she gently pushes his hand down\* But anyway, I give Gryphon a 3.5. It's got its flaws but it's a solid adventure game.

Ted: I give it a 2.5. It's unimaginative and frustrating, it has a few good parts but I'd wait for Zelda

Brittany: \*looks excited\* Only two weeks away...

-excerpted from the June 13, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted: So, WWF Wrestlemania, does it satisfy your urges to slam people?

Alex: As a fan of the arcade game, I found it fun but the arcade game itself was really only ho-hum.

Ted: I liked the arcade game and this was a pitch-perfect port. In fact, it was better than perfect, we get little ten second snippets of the wrestlers on the selection screen which is a nice touch.

Alex: It's an average fighting game that just happens to have WWF wrestlers in it.

Ted: Which makes it good!

Alex: I give it a 3. If you like wrestling and you spend a lot of time and quarters on the arcade game then sure, it's a must buy, but if you don't like the WWF it's not worth it.

Ted: I give it a 3.5 for being a really great port of a fun arcade game and spicing it up with real WWF videos.

\*Video of Razor Ramon saying "I'm the bad guy" appears on the screen\*

(...)

Kazzi DeCarlo: Philips definitely makes better games than they do game systems. I'm surprised this one came out for Nintendo considering the whole bait-and-switch thing Nintendo pulled with them back in 1991.

Brittany: Hotel Havoc is a decently fun puzzler but it could have been a lot better, it had the most boring main character in the history of Western civilization and I would've liked seeing what this game could've been if the developers had gone with their original plan to make this a Mario game.

Kazzi: What would they have called it? Mario's Hotel? Hotel Mario?

Brittany: I like the ring of Hotel Mario. But, they would've had to get rid of the animated

cutscenes, I just...Mario would've looked really weird in those.

Kazzi: You don't like Don the Doorman?

Brittany: He's boring as hell!

Kazzi: I thought this game was pretty boring actually. There's only so much you can stand of opening doors and climbing elevators.

Brittany: It played really well. It was a really polished game. I'm giving it a 3. It's a solid game. It's pretty fun, but the main character was a complete bore and I would have rather seen Hotel Mario.

Kazzi: I give it a 3 too. I know I said it was boring but it has its charm and the cutscenes were decently amusing.

-excerpted from the June 20, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

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## **June 21, 1995**

Sega releases its big-budget turn-based RPG *Lords of Skylein* for the Sega Mega Charger, one of the Mega Charger-required games on the Genesis. Taking place high above the world on a floating continent called Skylein, it tells the tale of the young hero Aerio, whose grandfather is one of the legendary heroes/rulers of the continent known as the Lords of Skylein. Aerio's world is shook to its core when his grandfather is murdered by another of the Lords, a man named Shaddock, and in the wake of all of this, Aerio is cast down to the dark world below with his childhood friend (and love interest) Tulia. The world below is a world of famine and those who come from Skylein are hated. Aerio and Tulia must find what few allies they can as they attempt to make their way back up to Skylein to stop Shaddock's dark machinations. The game is epic in scale, with 50+ hours of gameplay, and in a lot of ways it's Lunar: The Silver Star for the Mega Charger done right, with plenty of cutscenes and some voice acting but not an overwhelming amount, the game pushes the limits of the Mega Charger but also conforms to them. It's a big seller, the biggest RPG seller on the Genesis (including any of the Phantasy Star games), and it's one of the best reviewed Genesis games of the year. While *Lords of Skylein* is ultimately considered a success critically and commercially, it utterly fails at its true aim, which was to push the sales of Genesis consoles and Mega Charger peripherals. Sales of Genesis consoles don't even show a blip after the release of *Skylein*, indeed they continued their slow decline that had begun in late 1994. *Lords of Skylein* would be one of the last majorly hyped Sega Genesis games and the last one before the release of the Sega Saturn. While a great game, it could not stop the runaway train that had begun with the release of *Donkey Kong Country*, and in less than a week, the train would get much faster...

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*"Ocarina Of Dreams was a game that I had envisioned since before we released the Super Famicom CD. I had so many ideas for another Zelda game, and with the introduction of CD-ROM, the technology was there. I am humbled by the reception this game has recieved. I just tried to make it the most fun Zelda game possible. I'm glad that people are having so much fun!"*

-Shigeru Miyamoto, speaking at Nintendo Spaceworld in 1996

\*The scene shows the middle of the Lost Woods, where Link's Master Sword lays dormant.\*

*The Master Sword sleeps...*

\*A dark cloud is sweeping over Hyrule\*

*And so does the Hero of Hyrule...*

\*Link is tossing and turning in his bed, still dreaming of the Wind Fish and Koholint and Marin, but also of Zelda, who is in her palace looking dreadfully worried as the storm clouds gather\*

*But when darkness descends...*

\*A shadowy thief is shown cutting down guards before stealing away with a treasure as the dark clouds cast down lightning from the skies\*

*A hero must awaken...*

\*Link takes up the Master Sword just in time to see darkness and lightning swallow up all of Hyrule. He has a vision of Zelda screaming and Marin swallowed up by the shadows as the thief lifts an ocarina to his lips...\*

*But he awakens to a world of nightmares...*

\*Scenes from the game are now shown as Link roams dungeons, battles enemies, picks up new items and even faces off against a couple of the bosses, the familiar Zelda theme plays but with an ominous tone.\*

*Find the Ocarina and restore light to the darkness.*

\*More scenes from the game are shown as Link sees Zelda and Marin standing in shadows, he reaches out to them only to see them both swallowed up, a single hand reaches out of the shadows and takes his and then all goes black.\*

*End the nightmares and restore the dreams.*

\*One more in-game scene is shown of Link surrounded by eight brilliant lights and lifting his sword.\*

## **THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF DREAMS**

### **JUNE 26**

-a commercial for *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams* that began playing in June of 1995, it was the first major Nintendo game since late 1994 not to be featured as part of Nintendo's "Play It Loud" campaign (which has already lasted several months longer than IOTL)

### **June 26, 1995**

*The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams* is released for the Super Nintendo CD in North America, just under three months after its Japanese release. The game shattered records in Japan and in North America it became the third fastest selling Super Nintendo CD game to date. It received an enormous number of overwhelming positive reviews from practically every publication, beating *Sonic the Hedgehog 3*'s record for average review score. *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, which gave it four 9.5s out of 10, was its worst review score on initial release and that was merely because of the current editorial policy not to give a perfect 10 to a game unless it was truly without flaw (Ed Semrad would later say in 1998 that he considers this policy one of his biggest mistakes and that without it, *Ocarina of Dreams* absolutely would've received a perfect 10 from all four reviewers and would have gotten the magazine's first Platinum Award). Due to these positive reviews and extraordinary word of mouth, *Ocarina of Dreams* would remain in the top ten sales list for the Super Nintendo CD until the end of its lifespan. In addition to the excellent software sales, the game also produced more sales of the Super Nintendo CD peripheral than any other game except perhaps for *Mortal Kombat*. It was cited as the last major push for SNES owners to purchase the CD peripheral and would become a pack-in game for the peripheral and the Playstation Combo Set later in the year. The game receives a 32-page cover article in the June 1995 issue of *Nintendo Power*, unprecedented coverage at the time, with the issue swelling to 130 pages to accommodate all the *Zelda* coverage. It would also have five strategy guides published for it in North America alone: the official guide by Nintendo and unofficial strategy guides by Prima, BradyGames, GamePro, and Infotainment World Books. Despite the glut of strategy guides available, the game's release would produce the largest spike in the history of Nintendo's phone-in hint lines (and last major such spike before the advent of the internet).

### **The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams – The Basics**

*The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams* is the sequel to *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* and *The Legend Of Zelda: Link's Awakening*, the conclusion of what comes to be known as the "Link To The Past trilogy". It features essentially the same classic top-down *Zelda* gameplay as the other games in the series, with mostly graphical enhancements and a new enhanced soundtrack designed to take advantage of the Super Nintendo CD's capabilities. Character sprites are significantly more detailed, though they retain a somewhat similar look as *A Link To The Past*, not going a more realistic route but instead adding more detailed animation to the sprites, enemy sprites receive an equal amount of detail and bosses become much more complex, boss fights do as well, taking place in rooms that span more than one screen in several cases. The game takes place soon after *Link's Awakening*, with peace restored to Hyrule and Link spending his time resting. The game begins with Link getting an urgent telepathic message from Princess Zelda, summoning him to Hyrule Castle where there has been a theft of a valuable treasure: The Ocarina of Dreams, a musical instrument with the ability to bring dreams into reality. Zelda says that the thief has been trapped in the castle catacombs but that Link is needed to track him down and retrieve the ocarina. The catacombs are the introductory dungeon to the game, similar to Hyrule Castle in *A Link To The Past*. Link makes his way through the catacombs and confronts the thief, a young man named Gaddis who says that he'll use the ocarina's power to make his dream of ruling all of Hyrule come true. Before he can use it, Link attacks him and the ocarina is broken into three pieces, which Zelda uses her magic to scatter to all parts of Hyrule. Angered, Gaddis attacks Link but is repelled and he escapes, vowing to hunt down the ocarina pieces. This triggers the beginning of the quest and the first three dungeons. For this part of the game, the world is like a slightly enlarged version of the Light World from the original *Link To The Past*, a few new areas are opened up but

the terrain is mostly familiar. The first three dungeons are as follows:

*Lost Labyrinth*- The game's first real dungeon located deep in the Lost Woods, it's full of creepy insect monsters and you get the Bow in here, the boss of the dungeon is Gohma, a huge scorpion monster.

*City Of The Dead*- Located under the Sanctuary Graveyard, this dungeon is full of creepy Poes and other undead creatures. You get the Roc's Feather in this dungeon and the boss is an enormous Poe called Ghoulord.

*Uncharted Marsh*- This is a swamp-like area that connects several small dungeons together, you'll find a brand new item, the Soul Stone that allows you to make a copy of Link that you can leave on switches. The boss of this dungeon is Tongura, a huge toad monster with a dangerous tongue.

After collecting the pieces of the ocarina from the first three dungeons, Gaddis invades Hyrule Castle and takes Zelda hostage, demanding the ocarina in exchange for her safe return. Link doesn't give it to him and Zelda manages to get away from him on her own, Gaddis attacks Link and injures him, and Zelda tells him to play the ocarina. He does so, but Gaddis gets a hand on it as he plays it and the dream that forms is a corrupted version of Link's dream...

When Link awakens he finds himself in a new world, a twisted combination of Hyrule and Koholint. Unlike in *A Link To The Past*, you can't travel between the two worlds. However, any treasures missed in the original Hyrule will be able to be acquired in the new world, in different locations. This new Hyrule is ruled over by eight Nightmare Lords, one of whom is Gaddis. In order to restore peace and freedom to this strange new world, Link must defeat the eight Nightmare Lords and liberate the area under their control. The Nightmare Lords inhabit eight dungeons, and the first one is Gaddis, the thief who set this whole thing in motion. Gaddis rules his realm from the former Kahariko Village, now an enormous but corrupt city steeped in vice and featuring a huge coliseum in the center. Link must make his way to the coliseum but before he can get in, he is required to retrieve his Master Sword. As he goes to retrieve it he meets up with Marin (this is where he discovers that Koholint is part of this world as well). Marin begs Link not to try and liberate the world, because she fears that once the magic of the ocarina has faded, everyone who lived in Koholint before will once again fade away. For now, Link continues on his mission, determined to find the Master Sword and also to reunite with Zelda. After a quick trial, Link retrieves the sword and can access the first dungeon of the new world, which happens to be the labyrinthine halls below the coliseum. Once Link gets the dungeon's treasure (the first Power Bracelet), and the Boss Key, he makes his way up to the arena itself and battles Gaddis in a fierce boss fight (Gaddis is the only of the eight Nightmare Lords who doesn't transform into a huge monster upon fighting Link). Once Gaddis is defeated he gives Link a cryptic clue as to the Nightmare Lords' true intentions before dying. Gaddis is beaten, but seven Nightmare Lords remain and a huge new world stands open...

Once Link gets the Master Sword, he can reforge it by hunting down six pieces of Silver Ore. The sixth piece can't be found until Link has beaten the fourth Nightmare Lord, once that's found the blacksmith can forge the Silver Sword for Link. That sets Link forth on a new quest to find six pieces of Golden Ore that can be used to forge the Golden Sword once Link beats the seventh Nightmare Lord. There are 11 Heart Containers in this game (from beating the three bosses) and 24 Pieces of Heart to be found.

The remaining dungeons are as follows...

*Hanging Cliff*- A dungeon in a huge cliffside overhang, you get the Hookshot as your treasure here and battle Kristia, the first of two female Nightmare Lords, who transforms into a huge rockbeast upon Link entering the boss room.

*The Menagerie*- A dungeon in the middle of a huge jungle that was made from the twisted corruption of Animal Village, Link must free his animal friends from both Link To The Past and Link's Awakening by retrieving the Gust Bellows treasure and fighting the Nightmare Lord Zaphic, who transforms into an enormous evil flower monster to battle Link.

*Zero Core*- A strange futuristic ice dungeon, the first appearance of a futuristic environment in a Zelda game, this dungeon is the creation of the Nightmare Lord Baska, who transforms into a huge robotic creature to battle Link, who must use his new Electro Rod to fight Baska off.

*Shadow Hollow*- A dungeon that combines the environments of Misery Mire and the Face Dungeon, this horrifying dungeon was created by the dark wizard and Nightmare Lord Aravec, who turns into a shape-shifting shadow creature. You'll use the Mirror Shield gained in this dungeon to shine some light on Aravec and drive him away.

*Oceanic Tower*- An enormous tower in the middle of a vast ocean, this is the game's obligatory water dungeon, though it's surprisingly one of the most beloved in the series with complex but intuitive puzzles and beautiful imagery, starting a trend of good water dungeons in later Zelda games. You get the Living Bomb here. The boss is Zanithera, the second female Nightmare Lord, who turns into a huge dragon beast to attack Link.

*Hadean Crater*- A fire dungeon on the sight of the former Death Mountain, which exploded in an enormous volcanic eruption. Here, you get the Ice Rod, and you'll need it to face Vanaxu, who transforms into a lava-dwelling demon-like beast during his boss fight.

After seven dungeons are defeated, there's still no sign of Zelda. All the while, Link has been finding more mysterious clues as to the Nightmare Lords' true purpose, while he's also been encountering Marin and other Koholint residents more and more, and is still unsure about whether or not to finish his quest, not wanting to destroy the dream that the Koholint denizens are a part of. He puts those doubts aside long enough to venture into the eighth dungeon, a twisted combination of Mt. Tamaranch and Hyrule Castle, where the eighth Nightmare Lord Calavir resides. Calavir has made appearances throughout the second half of the game and is clearly the ringleader of the Nightmare Lords, having recruited a naive and grief-stricken Gaddis into his circle after the deaths of Gaddis' parents at the hand of a band of thieves consumed him with a lust for power so that he'd never be helpless to help those he loves again. Halfway through the eighth dungeon, Link comes across Zelda's room and finds it sealed by a mysterious force. Approaching the door he finds that he is able to enter, and there, having been in her room the entire time, is Princess Zelda... nursing a wounded but still-alive Gaddis back to health. She explains that Calavir's true purpose is to awaken the fallen Ganon using the dream of the Wind Fish, trapped in the castle in a corrupted form. The Nightmare Lords have been siphoning the life energy of the people of Hyrule and Koholint into the castle, where, combined with the Wind Fish's energy, it can resurrect Ganon from the dead. Gaddis apologizes to Link and says that he was a fool to listen to Calavir's lies. After this scene, Zelda gives Link the final dungeon treasure, the Silver Arrows, and implores him to stop Calavir once and for all. Link goes to the final part of the dungeon and there he finds Calavir who has absorbed the power of the Wind Fish.

The Calavir battle is similar in a lot of ways to the final Nightmare battle from Link's Awakening but with entirely different and more complex forms that it will take almost all of Link's accumulated items to defeat. Finally, Calavir falls and the game seems to be over, only for Ganon's evil theme to be heard as the dark villain returns to full strength and appears behind Calavir. Calavir bows down to Ganon and begs to be given enough power to defeat Link, but Ganon merely absorbs him, laughing and calling him a fool. He then attacks Link only to be hit with a wave of light energy from Zelda, who rushes into the room with Gaddis. Ganon goes to kidnap Zelda, only for Gaddis to put himself in the way. He is struck down by Ganon, this time for good, and Ganon escapes with the princess and the ocarina, using it to construct a huge castle in the center of Hyrule. A distraught Link is met outside by Marin, along with a lot of other people from Koholint and Hyrule. Marin says that she finally understands that as the Hero of Hyrule, Link has a duty to protect as many people as he can and that no matter what happens to her or her people, Link must do what's right and fight evil.

The final dungeon is Ganon's Castle and it's truly enormous, the most complex and difficult dungeon in the game, even making Hyrule Castle seem like a cake walk. The challenges of the castle will test everything Link's gained throughout his journey and you'll even rebattle versions of several of the game's previous bosses. Finally, Link battles Ganon and instead of being an oversized pig-like monster, he's a huge, multi-screen spanning beast, the battle is in multiple phases and features a fully orchestrated final boss theme complete with chorus. During the final boss battle, Link frees Zelda, and both she and Marin help with various phases of the fight. Finally, Ganon is defeated, and light is restored to Hyrule. The ocarina's power is drained, but due to the goodness of Link's heart, it uses the light within him to recreate Hyrule... no longer twisted and evil, but pure and light, and fully integrated with the dream world of Koholint, brought into reality by Link's goodness and courage. The people of Hyrule and Koholint celebrate an era of eternal peace in their new world, and Link lays the Master Sword to rest once more.

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Alex: Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina of Dreams is a masterpiece in every sense of the word. It's just a brilliant, challenging, supremely fun game and the best Zelda game I've ever played.

Ted: I agree on all points, I can't find anything bad to say about it. It's everything I dreamed it would be and more.

Alex: From the beautiful graphics to the incredible music score, the ridiculous bosses, the enormous dungeons, the lovable characters, this game from top to bottom is just pure awesome. I give it a 5.

Ted: And I also give it a 5. And you know what that means.

\*A trumpet fanfare plays as Brittany, Kazzi, and John walk out with party hats on\*

Ted: We have our first EVER inductee in the *GameTV Hall Of Fame!*

Alex: And hopefully the first of many. To the wall!

\*The five hosts walk to the wall, Alex humming the Legend Of Zelda theme as he holds up a framed case with a copy of the game inside, there's a big wall with a *Game TV Hall Of Fame* plaque on it, the wall stands empty as the hosts mount the framed game up on the wall.\*

Ted: And there it is, *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina of Dreams* becomes the first member of the GameTV Hall of Fame. Very, VERY well-deserved.

Brittany: Everybody go out and buy it right now!

-excerpted from the June 27, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts- June 1995**

1. Donkey Kong Country
2. Final Fantasy VI
3. NBA Jam: Tournament Edition
4. Super Mario World 2
5. Mega Man X2
6. Frederico
7. Double Dragon: Triple Trouble
8. F-Zero CD
9. Squad Four
10. Mortal Kombat II
11. Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition
12. International Superstar Soccer CD
13. Cat Jackson
14. Alien vs. Predator
15. Pulseman
16. Rayman
17. Return To Pickton Lake
18. Fatal Fury Special
19. Ninja Gaiden Trilogy
20. Secret Of Mana

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### **July 6, 1995**

Tom Kalinske returned from his Fourth of July holiday with a renewed focus on making Sega the most successful video game company it could possibly be. He'd seen the glowing reviews and the huge sales figures for the new *Zelda* game and he'd expected that. Right now, he was busy planning just how the Saturn would take over the video game world, as the Genesis had seemed poised to do just a year earlier. To that end, he was meeting with executives from Namco, the company to whom Sega had tied so much of its fortunes for the next generation.

"So *WeaponLord*, that's the final game you guys had to publish for the SNES-CD?"

"That's correct," replied the Namco executive, acknowledging the last of the games Namco had on its previous deals with Nintendo. "We are now publishing games exclusively for the Sega Saturn."

"Good," said Kalinske, as he and the men from Namco walked down one of the hallways of

Sega of America headquarters. "We're looking on bringing a lot of Japanese games here to North America for the Sega Saturn...for one thing, it'll keep the guys at Sega of Japan satisfied and it'll give me more leeway to do what I want to do with the Saturn. For another thing...honestly...Japanese games have done a lot better than American games for a long time and the Saturn's success depends on plenty of Japanese hits coming to Western shores."

Kalinske had seen the Super Nintendo CD thrive on Japanese RPGs and games such as Mario and Zelda. While Western-developed games such as *Donkey Kong Country* and *Mortal Kombat* had been major hits, the epicenter of game development was still in Japan, and if the Saturn was going to succeed, it would need to have as many localizations as possible.

"We look forward to having *Ridge Racer* and *Tekken* positioned as major games within the Saturn's launch window," said one of the executives. Namco's *Ridge Racer* would be coming out in November, positioned to give it some breathing room away from *Virtua Racing* and *Daytona USA*. *Tekken* was positioned for an early 1996 release. "And the other game...the sword-fighting game, *Soul Edge*...."

"That looks like an awesome game, way better than that *Eskrima Warriors* the Super Nintendo CD has..." Kalinske didn't mention he was already negotiating to bring that game to the Saturn as a port, though he knew *Soul Edge* would be far more successful. "The name of the game's gonna be a problem, seems some small company has a trademark on the *Edge* title but I'm gonna have some money thrown their way to let us use it."

Kalinske was going all in with the Saturn, he'd spare no expense to make sure it was a success. With Genesis sales fading fast, he knew the company's future rested with the Sega Saturn...and that the Sega Saturn was Sega's future.

Two months away... Saturday was two months away, and Tom Kalinske'd be damned if he was going to let *The Legend Of Zelda* be the gaming story of 1995.

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## **Batman: 20 Years After *Forever***

Twenty years after the third theatrical Batman film was released in theaters in 1995, it's still remembered as an excellent part one of the best superhero film franchises, largely due to the tireless work of producer Tim Burton and director Joel Schumacher to make the film a worthy third installment to Batman's theatrical story. A little bit of background information is needed: the film was the direct sequel to *Batman Returns*, a dark, brooding film that proved to be very controversial and not nearly as successful as the original *Batman* movie. Because of this, Warner Brothers wanted *Batman Forever* to be much lighter and more family-friendly. This of course was occurring in the midst of a renaissance in entertainment, spearheaded by the re-introduction of video games to more mature players after the 1983 crash nearly destroyed the industry and relegated the hobby to a mere "children's toy". Beginning with the introduction of the Super Nintendo CD in 1992, video games took a decidedly more mature turn, which culminated in 1994 with the release of the cyberpunk point-and-click classic *Snatcher*, a game that was the first true penetration of the medium into the mainstream consciousness since *Pac-Man* in the early 80s. One of the entertainment figures who took great notice of *Snatcher* was Joel Schumacher, who'd just

been tapped to direct the third Batman film and was inspired by the game's mature, uncompromising storyline. After getting support from Tim Burton, Schumacher asked, practically begged Warner Brothers to dial back some of the family-friendliness of the film, and eventually he wore them down, allowing *Batman Forever* to be much closer to Schumacher's original vision.

The film was two-and-a-half hours in length, briefly touching on Batman's past and how it related to the duality of Batman and Bruce Wayne as he embarked on his most dangerous adventure yet, clashing with two dangerous villains instead of one. The primary villain of the film was the Riddler, played by Jim Carrey, a tormented genius whose mind had been cracked by repeated failures, especially once Bruce Wayne rejected his latest invention for fear it could be used to brainwash people. Originally, Carrey was to play the Riddler as a straight-up comic character, similar to his previous roles in films like *Ace Ventura* and *The Mask*, but Schumacher decided that that wouldn't mesh with the darker mood of the film, and so Carrey played the Riddler as a sort of brooding, on-edge villain (with occasional hints of dark manic humor, allowing Carrey to get in a few slapstick scenes that would be precisely times to maximise audience amusement). Billy Dee Williams reprised his role as Two-Face from the previous two films. An intriguing "what if" scenario was in play here as Two-Face was to be originally portrayed by Tommy Lee Jones, who turned down the role. This actually may have been a good thing, as it prompted Schumacher to expand Two-Face's backstory to have more continuity with the previous two films, we see him get splashed with acid by a deranged criminal in one of the film's opening scenes and this starts him down the path to insanity. Batman's sidekick Robin is introduced in this film, played by Leonardo DiCaprio (in a very good performance), Robin seeks revenge for the deaths of his family at the hands of one of Two-Face's criminal capers and gets a character building arc that stands in parallel to the duality of Batman. Nicole Kidman plays Batman's love interest Dr. Chase Meridian.

Over the course of the film we occasionally get flashbacks to Batman's past as Bruce Wayne, exploring the choice he has to make between living a normal life and avenging the deaths of his parents by fighting crime in Gotham. There's a particularly powerful scene toward the end of the film, after Wayne Manor is attacked, Dr. Meridian is kidnapped, and Bruce Wayne receives a brutal blow to the head that temporarily erases his memory. Alfred helps to restore it by taking Bruce to a secret cave below the Batcave, where Bruce sees the giant bat that inspired him to become Batman in the first place as Alfred reads him a passage from his father Thomas Wayne's diary. We also get a lot of callbacks to the first two films and it does a fantastic job confronting the fact that Batman, known for NOT killing his foes, did kill criminals in the first two films, it's in *Batman Forever* that he confronts this aspect of his past and decides not to kill criminals anymore (a lesson he must then impart to Robin, who is furious as he looks to avenge his family's deaths). Toward the end of the film, Robin and Dr. Meridian are both held captive by the Riddler, who wants Batman to choose between his new sidekick and the love of his life. In the original script of the film, Batman saves them both. The scene, however, is changed somewhat, to reflect the character arcs of both Robin and Two-Face. Throughout the film, we see that Two-Face is truly of two minds, not a psychotic villain like the Riddler but of someone struggling between hatred and justice, like Batman and Robin are. Through most of the film, Two-Face is Riddler's willing partner and commits evil criminal acts. But, at the end of the film, during the climactic scene, Robin is able to free himself enough to sacrifice himself which would enable Batman to save Dr. Meridian without having to worry about him. But as Robin is falling, he is rescued by Two-Face, (but at the cost of Two-Face's own life seconds later). As Two-Face is about to plummet to his own doom, he tells Robin that he can't ask him to forgive him, but Robin makes the choice to forgive Two-Face and even tries to save him,

unsuccessfully. The Riddler is defeated by having his own mind-wipe device turned on him, and ends the film in Arkham Asylum, screaming as nightmarish visions of a giant bat torment his broken mind.

*Batman Forever* was well-received by critics, it holds a 78% Fresh rating on Rotten Tomatoes and is frequently cited as one of the top ten superhero films of all time. It grossed \$56 million over its opening weekend in North America, which was a record at the time, and ended up making \$230 million total at the North American box office, making it a financial success that vindicated Joel Schumacher's vision.

-from an article at Superherocinema.com, June 19, 2015

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## **The 1995 NBA Playoffs**

The 1995 NBA Playoffs were perhaps the most exciting of the 1990s. The Chicago Bulls, who had set an NBA record that season with 71 wins behind the terrific trio of Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen, and Chris Webber, were looking for revenge against the defending champion Houston Rockets. The Rockets had had a bit of a scare early in the season after Hakeem Olajuwon tweaked his back during a game, but he turned out to only miss a week of action and the Rockets were able to fight their way to a #3 seed in a rough and tumble Western Conference. Here are some of the most intriguing playoff series in this awesome playoffs.

*(1) Chicago over (8) Boston, 3 games to 1-*

This first-round matchup was billed as the battle between the reigning king Michael Jordan and the up-and-coming superstar Grant Hill, who had led the Celtics to the eighth-seed and won Rookie of the Year. The first two games were easily won by Chicago but in game three in Boston, Grant Hill had a legendary and spectacular performance, with 52 points, 12 rebounds, and 11 assists en route to a 100-97 Celtics win. The performance called back memories of Michael Jordan's amazing 63 point game against the Celtics back in 1986. The Bulls responded by winning a somewhat close Game 4, but the series showed that not only was Grant Hill the next big thing, but that the Bulls were vulnerable...

*(4) Golden State over (5) Utah, 3 games to 2-*

Over in the Western Conference, the Golden State Warriors were proving to be one of the most dynamic and exciting teams. The Warriors' road began back in 1991, when the team decided not to trade its star Mitch Richmond for exciting and big rookie Billy Owens. Keeping its exciting "Run TMC" line-up together seemed smart at first, but in the 1992-93 season it seemed to be a mistake when Mitch Richmond suffered a career threatening injury and missed the entire season. The Warriors crashed and burned, but lucked into a good draft pick that netted them Penny Hardaway, who they then traded to the Magic along with a package of draft picks, bringing them the big man they thought would take them to the top, Chris Webber. It seemed to work. With Mitch Richmond back and better than ever, the Warriors dominated the 1993-94 season and achieved the best record in the regular season with 62 wins and the one seed...but were then shocked by the Denver Nuggets, who beat them in five games. The Warriors then traded Chris Webber to the Bulls, not only getting their three first round draft picks back, but also getting young stars BJ Armstrong, Horace Grant, and Toni Kukoc. With their young nucleus complete, the Warriors managed to scrap their way to a 4 seed, and in the first round they knocked off John Stockton and Karl Malone to make it to round two.

*(1) Chicago over (4) Indiana, 4 games to 3-*

This was perhaps the best series of the entire playoffs, particularly its legendary game 5 moment. The series was tied at 2 games each, with Indiana's home court proving VERY tough even for the historically good Bulls to win on. Now back in Chicago, with 4.2 seconds left the Bulls had seemingly survived a tough challenge from the Pacers. The score sat at 91-86... but then came Reggie Miller. Miller scored a catch and shoot three pointer to make the score 91-89 with two seconds to go. On the inbound, Miller stole the pass, dribbled back to the three point line, tossed up a desperation shot at the buzzer...and it went in. "6 Points in Four Seconds" became a classic Pacers battle cry and one of the greatest NBA moments of all time. It was for naught, however, as the Bulls rallied to win the last two games and the series. Despite all of this, the Pacers proved that they were one of the most resilient and talented teams in the NBA, and that this could prove to be a long-lasting rivalry...

*(3) New York over (2) Orlando, 4 games to 2-*

As good as Shaq and Penny were becoming, the veteran Knicks managed to knock them off in this exciting series that saw Patrick Ewing absolutely playing his ass off, particularly in game 5 in Orlando, where his 37 points and 18 rebounds, along with four big blocks, led the Knicks to a close win that enabled them to close it out in New York.

*(4) Golden State over (1) Phoenix, 4 games to 1-*

The Phoenix Suns looked damn good throughout the season, taking the #1 seed with 59 wins behind their star Charles Barkley. But in this series it was all Golden State. Horace Grant's excellent defense kept Barkley contained while Mitch Richmond provided the scoring and Toni Kukoc provided excellent play off the bench. The Warriors dominated the clinching game in Phoenix, 112-89, behind Richmond's 40 points in one of the best NBA playoff performances of the year.

*(3) Houston over (2) San Antonio, 4 games to 3-*

Big time big men clashed in this series, Olajuwon and Robinson both played well but Olajuwon wouldn't be denied and the Rockets held onto their title in another of the most entertaining series of the playoffs.

*(1) Chicago over (2) New York, 4 games to 2-*

The Knicks provided a tough challenge for the Bulls in a physical slugfest that saw Jordan and Ewing nearly come to blows in Game 4 as obscenities rained down from the raucous New York crowd. It was a fierce series that saw Chris Webber prove to be the difference, he overpowered the Knicks at the rim and averaged 14.7 rebounds over the course of the six games. The Bulls moved onto the finals where once again they would challenge...

*(3) Houston over (4) Golden State, 4 games to 3-*

The Western Conference Finals saw Houston's team of big vets against Golden State's team of small young talents, and in the end, experience won out, though it wasn't without a fight. The Rockets won Game 7 94-90 despite an outstanding defensive performance from Horace Grant. Olajuwon, like he'd done in Game 7 of last year's Finals, took the game into his hands and kept pounding the rim, proving too athletic for the Warriors to stop. The finals

would be a rematch between the Rockets and the Bulls, and Michael Jordan was eager to get revenge.

*Chicago over Houston, 4 games to 0-*

Yes, the NBA Finals were completely anticlimactic after what was an otherwise excellent playoffs, Jordan played with a fury and he was easily the Finals MVP. It sucked to see the Rockets go down like that, after the 1994 Finals was a classic we were all expecting a repeat performance for the sequel, but some teams just wouldn't be denied. The Rockets were worn out after running with the Warriors for seven games and it showed, while the Bulls carried their battle scars from the Knicks series extremely well. For the fourth time, Michael Jordan would win a ring.

-excerpted from Bleacher Report's 1995 NBA Playoffs retrospective

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*Just 15 months ago, Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain was checking himself into rehab, deeply addicted to drugs and having suicidal thoughts. Now, the band is poised to release its fourth live album, and despite being typically withdrawn from the glow of public attention, Cobain says he's never felt better.*

"It's about being trapped, being in dark places and just kind of dwelling there in them to find comfort, not trying to find the light but kind of embracing the dark."

Kurt Cobain doesn't open up with the media very often, and coming out of rehab hasn't changed that, though he's definitely looking a lot better than where we saw him early last year. He's launched headlong into working on the band's fourth album, *Stains*, and along with his bandmates, he's been totally focused on his work, with only the occasional helpful distractions. Krist Novoselic is a bit more talkative.

"Meditation, certainly, I think that's helped. Kurt plays video games some, more now that he's away from Courtney. He likes to hang out with people, just random people who look like they're having a rough time. He's trying to open up, but it's hard to know what he's feeling."

Band member Dave Grohl is probably the most open with Nirvana's mood, which seems to be positive and dare we say it, excited to have a new album out there.

"I've been having fun, it helps when the three of us can just close ourselves up somewhere and think of new songs. We banged out like five songs in a week, the album came along faster than all of us kinda thought it would."

"Been getting a lot of ideas from all over the place," Cobain adds while strumming a few notes on his guitar. "One night we just all sat around and each of us came up with something. The album's got a real spontaneous feel to it, it's just kind of a reflection on what everybody puts up with from time to time, maybe it'll help people deal with what they've got going on."

Cobain credits his bandmates with helping him deal with everything he's had going on over the past couple of years.

"I just thought, during that week when everything was going to (expletive), if I took that gun and put it to my head and pulled the trigger, what the (expletive) would Dave and Krist think of that? Who the (expletive) am I to put more stuff in their lives? All the pain I was dealing with, I just woulda been putting it on them and that's not the kind of person I wanted to be. And then, you know, Frances. I couldn't do it. I don't know where the hell my mind was but it's not a place I ever wanna be again."

Nirvana's album *Stains* is scheduled to be released in late August.

-excerpted from a *Time* magazine article from June 26, 1995

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*Phineas and Ferb* was Nickelodeon's sixth Nicktoon and one of their most successful. Conceived by Dan Povenmire and Jeff "Swampy" Marsh, the two had been pitching the idea for the show to various children's networks even since before *Rocko's Modern Life* began airing on Nickelodeon in 1993. Soon after the first season of that show ended, Nickelodeon decided to pick up *Phineas and Ferb*, noting both the success of *Rocko* and the fact that they hadn't had a Nicktoon with a non-infant human protagonist since *Doug* back in 1991. The show featured two young brothers who created a variety of inventions, while in a parallel story to each episode, their pet platypus named Perry tried to foil the plans of the somewhat evil Dr. Doofenshmirtz. The plotline of each episode, except for the occasional special, was usually the same, and the show like *Rocko* even featured an occasional musical number sung by some of the characters. The show's voice cast included Courtland Mead as the voice of Phineas, *Pete and Pete* star Danny Tamberelli as the voice of Ferb (Author's note: He's not British as IOTL), Jennifer Morrison as the voice of their meddling sister Candace, Jeff Bennett and Kath Soucie as the voices of Phineas and Ferb's parents, Anndi McAfee as the local Fireside Girl troop leader (who also happened to have a huge crush on Phineas) Isabella, and Dan Povenmire himself as the voice of Dr. Doofenshmirtz. The show, which debuted as a pilot preview after the 1995 Kids' Choice Awards and had its proper premiere on September 3, 1995, was a major ratings hit for Nickelodeon, placing second only to *Rugrats* which also happened to blow up around 1995. The show continued on until 2001, when it got a half-hour finale special that saw the end of summer and a flash-forward episode concerning the characters' fates ten years on. It remains one of the most popular Nicktoons and is frequently mentioned on retro Nickelodeon sites. The debut of the show is said to have launched the "second era of Nicktoons" which included other hit shows like *Sam and Kira* and *Spongebob Squarepants*, and continued until 2000 with the debut of *Constant Payne* kicking off the "third era".

-excerpted from an article on the "Nick Unplugged" blog on June 21, 2011

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The story of how *Sailor Moon* made it to North America was an intriguing one, and an integral part of the children's entertainment revolution of the mid-1990s. Initially, a company called Toon Makers wanted to bring *Sailor Moon* over as a live-action/animation hybrid, but *Sailor Moon*'s parent company Toei shut this down. They also shut down another, much higher profile bid from DiC Entertainment, which would have adapted the original anime series but with heavy censorship and Americanization that Toei found unpalatable, especially considering how video games of the time were becoming increasingly less lax in localization censorship. Instead, Toei accepted the bid from Saban and the Vancouver-based Ocean Group to bring *Sailor Moon* to American shores, after promises from both companies that censorship would be kept to a minimum. This resulted

in the series debuting on Fox Kids' weekday lineup in the fall of 1995, alongside shows such as Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers. The first season of 46 episodes aired throughout the fall of 1995, keeping such moments intact as the deaths of the Sailor Senshi (renamed the Sailor Guardians for North American audiences), though the violence of the deaths was censored somewhat to obtain a Y7 rating. The show was highly acclaimed by critics on its American release, praised that it finally brought a super hero girls could identify with in contrast with the more boy-centered Power Rangers series. Upon the success of the first season, Sailor Moon R was dubbed and released in the fall of 1996, to similar ratings success.

Sailor Moon S seemed to be on a similar track for the fall of 1997, but controversy erupted over the presence of two homosexual characters, Sailor Uranus and Sailor Neptune. Initially, Saban had decided to dub the series as intended, believing that the show's popularity would be enough to overcome the controversy. But after Ellen DeGeneres came out on her show *Ellen* in early 1997, the controversy that erupted proved too much for Saban to handle, and instead of dubbing Sailor Moon S, Fox Kids simply continued to air reruns of the first two seasons until their contract ran out in 1998. It seemed that Sailor Moon in North America would be incomplete, at least for the time being...

-excerpted from "The Curious Tale of *Sailor Moon*", an article on Cartoonapalooza.com, January 21, 2010

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With *Jumanji* having just wrapped filming and on schedule for release this December, some of the stars of the film have some interesting stories to relate.

"Toward the end of filming, Robin Williams wouldn't stop talking about the newest *Zelda* game," said Kirsten Dunst, who co-starred with Williams in the film. "He even brought in all the *Nintendo Power* magazines that had coverage of the game to read between takes. He was so excited for that game that he kind of got me and Bradley (Pierce) excited about it too."

Nobody was more thrilled than Dunst to receive a gift of a brand new Super Nintendo CD with a copy of *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Dreams* from Williams once filming wrapped.

"And, I've been playing it a lot obviously. I'm at the big water tower dungeon now, the one with like 13 floors that you have to climb up. He was right, it's really really fun. We actually played through the first couple of dungeons together so I could get the hang of the game. He's so good at it though, he kind of made me feel like a dummy during some of the parts."

Dunst also says that if there's ever a *Legend Of Zelda* movie, she'd like to play the princess herself!

"Oh, I could definitely play Zelda, as long as I'm not some damsel in distress waiting on top of a tower. I want a sword too!"

-excerpted from an article in *Nickelodeon Magazine*, October 1995

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Montel Williams: Well, I just can't get over how brave you are. You saved your friends and

you helped alert police about a very, very dangerous man.

Polly Klaas: Thank you. If he hadn't tripped over that game...

Williams: Don't think about it like that. It was your bravery and courage that helped to stop that dangerous criminal.

Klaas: Thank you.

Williams: Although...speaking of games, you are still playing the Nintendo, correct?

Klaas: I am, sometimes, yes.

Marc Klaas: \*smiles\* When she's got her homework done. \*the audience laughs\*

Williams: Well, I've asked a very special guest to come and I think he might have something for you.

\*Howard Lincoln walks out onto the stage\*

Williams: I'd like to introduce Mr. Howard Lincoln, the president of Nintendo of America.

(...)

Lincoln: And, to commemorate your real-life bravery in stopping a dangerous criminal, Nintendo is going to award you \$5,000 toward a college scholarship.

Klaas: \*smiling like she's almost going to cry\* Oh, thank you!

Williams: And, because you know, all work and no play is just no fun at all, Mr. Lincoln has another surprise...

Lincoln: Nintendo is going to be sending you one game a month for the next ten years, any of our Nintendo games that you want. And we'll also be giving you our new game system when it's released.

Klaas: Wow, that's really great...thank you very much! \*she hugs Howard Lincoln\*

(...)

Williams: So what's next for you and your daughter...?

Marc Klaas: Well, we're actually moving away from Petaluma, my wife and Polly and I decided that it might be best for us to go somewhere else, so we're actually going to be moving to Littleton, Colorado, Polly will be starting high school there in the fall.

Williams: And I'm sure you're excited about that.

Polly Klaas: Very excited, yes!

-excerpted from the *Montel Williams Show*, August 9, 1995

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- #27: A Night In Terror Tower
- #28: The Cuckoo Clock Of Doom
- #29: Monster Blood III
- #30: It Came From Beneath The Sink!
- #31: Night Of The Living Dummy II
- #32: The Barking Ghost
- #33: The Horror At Camp Jellyjam
- #34: Supermarket Of Nightmares (summary: A boy and his twin sister see mysterious ghosts inside the freezer cases at the supermarket, on one of their trips the twin sister disappears and the boy has to find her before the ghost drags her to the underworld)
- #35: The Haunted Mask II
- #36: A Shocker on Shock Street
- #37: Another Night In Terror Tower (summary: A sequel to A Night In Terror Tower where Sue and Eddie must return to the past to defeat an evil wizard before he destroys their present, R.L. Stine would later cite the video game *Jewels Of The Realm* as his inspiration for this book)
- #38: The Headless Ghost

-a list of 1995's *Goosebumps* books, the first year that TTL's *Goosebumps* books have been majorly affected by this timeline's butterflies

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Chandler: Well, if you don't like it, I say you should just give it to me.

Monica: And just what would you do with it?

Chandler: Sell it.

Monica: Sell it?!

Chandler: Yeah, so I can finally upgrade to a Super Nintendo CD.

-from the *Friends* episode "The One Where Heckles Dies", October 5, 1995

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*This year's upcoming fall TV season is drawing some serious buzz, with a number of highly anticipated shows stepping onto the television landscape! Among the new shows is another Star Trek series, Star Trek: Voyager, which will feature the first female captain and is getting a lot of buzz for casting Terminator star Linda Hamilton in the lead role.*

*Star Trek: Voyager* is generating a lot of buzz among so-called "Trekkies", though the choice to put a woman in the captain's chair is proving controversial among some fans. The role of Captain Nicole Janeway was originally set to go to actress Genevieve Bujold, but after she pulled out during the filming of the pilot, the showrunners turned to Linda Hamilton, whose veteran sci-fi chops and proven acting ability were key factors in her casting. Though some fans are balking at the idea of a female captain, most long-time *Star Trek* fans are eager to see Captain Janeway's adventures begin later this year, and it's likely that the casting of Hamilton will pull in plenty of *Terminator* fans to see how Sarah Connor

fits in as a starship captain.

One of the year's most anticipated comedies is the CBS show *Extracurricular*, starring Christopher Reeve as a high school teacher whose ex-wife (played by Jane Kaczmarek) happens to be the superintendent of schools and also the high school rival of his current wife (played by Heather Locklear). Reeve took on the role after turning down a role in the made-for-TV movie *Kidnapped*, about a war between highland and lowland Scotsmen. The role is a return to form for the talented and affable Reeve, who seems to have launched full-steam ahead into rejuvenating his acting career, even giving up his horse riding hobby to devote more time to taking on roles. Reeve's hard work seems to have paid off, early reviews of *Extracurricular* are highly positive and it seems to be one of the big shows of the coming fall season.

-excerpted from an article in the August 4, 1995 issue of *Entertainment Weekly*

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*Zero Hour* came at a time when DC and Warner Bros. looked to expand its brand awareness. As Ted Turner himself said, "It's all about brand synergy, getting your properties out there for people to take a look at and say, 'Well that looks good, I want that!'" *Justice League: Battle for Earth* gave heroes like Flash and Green Lantern a higher profile, *Batman: The Animated Series* was one of the most popular shows on the Fox Kids block, and Joel Schumacher's *Batman Forever* convinced DC/Warner Bros. to fast track other properties.

*Superman: Last Son of Krypton* was in development since 1993 when Warner Bros. bought back the film rights to Superman and handed the project to producer Joel Silver. Silver brought on Sam Raimi to direct and in turn Raimi brought Bruce Campbell to play the Man of Steel. Kevin Spacey and Lawrence Fishburne played Lex Luthor and Brainiac, respectively, and Dana Delany as Lois Lane (who would reprise the role in voice form for *Superman: The Animated Series*.) *Last Son of Krypton* was not as reverential to the Superman mythos as Richard Donner's vision, but had enough action to make it the third highest grossing film of 1996 after *Independence Day* and *Twister*. Some of the more over-the-top scenes featuring Spacey's Lex Luthor even became Internet memes a decade after the film's release.

However, it was Fishburne's portrayal as the cold, calculating, and alien Brainiac that made the film memorable. Despite the lighthearted banter between Superman and Luthor, his Fishburne's Brainiac balanced it out with a sense of menace that forced the mortal enemies to put their differences aside to save Metropolis from becoming a part of Brainiac's collection of bottled cities. Fans who stayed to the end of the credits found themselves rewarded with a short clip that revealed Brainiac survived the destruction of his spaceship as a computer virus that spoke of a "darker force."

Raimi revealed that it was originally a throwaway line meant to keep the fans buzzing during an interview to promote the 1999 sequel, *Man of Tomorrow*, but it planted the seeds for what would become the "DC Movie-verse." As such, DC initially treated later movies like 1998's *Green Lantern* starring Billy Zane as Kyle Rayner and 1999's *Wonder Woman* with Catherine Zeta-Jones as the titular heroine as standalone films. Interestingly, CBS produced a pilot for *Justice League of America* in 1997 that only survives to this day in bootleg form.

It is obvious to see why CBS chose not to pick up; the production values were low and the acting was atrocious. When questioned on the failed pilot, DC president, Jeanette Khan cryptically told *Wizard* magazine that the company had bigger plans for the Justice League.

The Green Lantern franchise owed more to Schumacher's *Batman Forever* than it did *Last Son of Krypton* in the respect that it drew inspiration from video games. Schumacher admitted in numerous interviews that Hideo Kojima's *Snatcher* for the SNES-CD was a source of inspiration and the reason why he resisted pressure from Warner Bros. to make the film appeal more to children. Similarly, Warner Bros. wanted Green Lantern to appeal to "the MTV generation" and sought to tap into the growing video game and anime culture of the time, hence the choice to use the younger Kyle Rayner over the more-established Hal Jordan.

After seeing the successes of *Stargate* and *Independence Day*, Warner Bros. lured the team of Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin away from the American-produced *Godzilla* to work on the project. Billed as the "Star Wars of the new century," *Green Lantern* followed a similar "hero quest" narrative where struggling artist receives a Green Lantern ring from Ganthet, the last Guardian of the Universe. Joe Morton played former army ranger and Green Lantern, John Stewart, who served as combination Obi-Wan Kenobi/Han Solo and foil to the more idealistic Rayner. While the film bore superficial similarities to 1994's "Emerald Twilight," Hal Jordan was conspicuously absent and Parallax treated as a nebulous entity that destroyed the Green Lantern Corps. Geoff Johns would later use the concept of Parallax as a separate entity that the Time Trapper manipulated Hal Jordan into freeing from the Central Power Battery in 2002's *Green Lantern: Recharged*.

Meanwhile, Wonder Woman's first foray into cinema was almost a given her iconic status in comics and the dual successes of *Batman Forever* and *Last Son of Krypton*. A then-largely unknown Joss Whedon, whose only major credits at that time were *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Toy Story* aggressively petitioned Warner Bros. to write the screenplay. *Wonder Woman* was largely an adaptation of George Perez's 1987 "Gods and Mortals" combined with the subversive elements of William Moulton Marston's Golden Age tales. For example, *Wonder Woman* overturned the "damsel in distress" trope by making Col. Steve Trevor a hostage of Ares for Diana to rescue, but in a way that was not demeaning or condescending to the largely male comic book-reading audience. The playful nature of the film as well as the mythological elements also drew a wider audience that helped restore the comic book industry after the speculation bubble burst in 1996.

It is needless to say that both films performed extraordinarily well at the box office. While neither film was the top grossing film of its respective year, many science fiction enthusiasts compare the *Green Lantern* trilogy more favorably to the *Star Wars* prequel trilogy and *Wonder Woman* exposed a generation of young girls to comics outside of Betty and Veronica. Both films inspired the Cartoon Network's *The Brave and the Bold* ensemble series that teamed either Green Lantern, Wonder Woman, or the Flash with lesser-known heroes like Hawkman/Hawkgirl, Zatanna, and Firestorm (the latter of whom would headline a movie in the 2000s.)

Marvel's entry into film would be delayed by the film rights of its properties held by various studios and its bankruptcy and subsequent acquisition by NewsCorp. However, 20th Century Fox released *X-Men* directed by Bryan Singer on July 3, 1998. Singer had initially turned down the offer Fox gave him after *The Usual Suspects* in 1995 as he was not a fan of the comics and unfamiliar with the characters. However, his friend, Tom DeSanto, convinced him to reconsider. With the successes of *Batman Forever* and *Last Son* as well as *Green*

*Lantern* in the pipeline Fox and Marvel hurried X-Men into production. The film's success led to the release of Chris Columbus' *Fantastic Four* in 1999 opposite *Wonder Woman*.

By the close of the 20th century, as Master Yoda would say, "*Begun the Superhero Wars has.*"

-Tales From The Superhero Wars, sequentialhistory.net, July 1, 2010

*"For a lot of girls, the big anime craze started with Sailor Moon coming to North America in the fall of 1995. But for me, it started with a video game and a sweet little witch girl named Andrekah."*

-Rebecca Sugar, from a post on Tumblr on February 3, 2014

*"By the time Ogre Battle came out, the die was pretty much cast for us leaning more toward Sega than toward Nintendo. Enix in Japan just didn't think that Nintendo gave Enix and its games their proper due in comparison with Squaresoft's games. Sega was welcoming third parties with open arms and right when the Saturn came out was when they were courting Enix."*

-Robert Jerauld, former producer at Enix USA

*"The Super Nintendo cartridge system continues to sputter along, with a small but potent lineup of games that include what might be some of the best games of the year."*

-from the August 1995 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, discussing the upcoming SNES lineup for the second half of 1995

*"Sha-sha-sha-boooooom! Oh....that was too much, wasn't it?"*

-Andrekah, from *Andrekah*

*"He is too far gone... there is only one thing that can reach him but I have been praying for an eternity for him to hear my voice and he cannot."*

-Maria, from *Earthbound 2*

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### **Batman Forever:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 7 (quote: "Good graphics and a decent soundtrack make this game passable but we wish the gameplay wasn't so repetitive.")

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Earthbound 2:**

Ed: 9 (quote: "A weird but utterly amazing and epic RPG that takes players to our world and to an entirely different dimension.")

Danyon: 8

Al: 8.5

Sushi-X: 7

### **Hagane: The Final Conflict:**

Ed: 5

Danyon: 3.5

AI: 5.5 (quote: "We like hard games but this game's difficulty is completely unfair and the graphics look like an 8-bit game which is unacceptable for the CD-ROM format.")

Sushi-X: 5.5

### **Izzy's Quest For The Olympic Rings:**

Ed: 4

Danyon: 4

AI: 2 (quote: "What a positively horrid platformer. If they were trying to get us hyped up for next year's Olympics, they officially made me less hyped.")

Sushi-X: 2.5

### **Ogre Battle:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8

AI: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8.5 (quote: "A smart and rewarding strategy game that gives players lots of choice about what paths to take.")

### **Rise Of The Phoenix:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7 (quote: "Another good Koei strategy game with excellent graphics and a good variety of missions.")

AI: 6.5

Sushi-X: 5.5

### **The Mask:**

Ed: 5.5

Danyon: 6

AI: 6 (quote: "The graphics are decent but this platformer is about as blah as they come.")

Sushi-X: 5.5

### **True Lies:**

Ed: 6.5 (quote: "I enjoyed the presence of Arnold's voice in this game, though hearing the same quips over and over again does eventually get boring.")

Danyon: 4.4

AI: 5

Sushi-X: 5

### **Zoop:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 5.5

AI: 5

Sushi-X: 6.5 (quote: "This is an addictive puzzler but it's no Tetris.")

### **Andrekah:**

Ed: 9 (quote: "One of the most fun action games I've ever played, with amazing graphics and superb voice acting. This game gives new meaning to the term girl power.")

Danyon: 8.5

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9

### **Puzzle Blast:**

Ed: 7.5

Danyon: 8 (quote: "I really enjoyed this fast-paced puzzler that combined some elements of shooter games to the classic matching puzzle formula, makes for lots of high scoring fun!")

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 6

### **Toxic Waste:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7

Al: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7 (quote: "It's a well-made platformer but the grossout elements of this game may turn off some players. Then again, for the Ren and Stimpy crowd, this game is going to be quite popular.")

### **Trapmine:**

Ed: 8 (quote: "This fun action/puzzle game is like a faster paced Bomberman, you can lay a big variety of traps and the four player mode is addictive as hell.")

Danyon: 8.5

Al: 7.5

Sushi-X: 8.5

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*Andrekah* was a lot of things. It was the best-selling new SNES-CD game of July 1995 in North America. It was the game that saved Sunsoft from restructuring in the face of imminent bankruptcy. And it was one of the most spectacularly fun and visually beautiful games on the Super Nintendo CD. *Andrekah* released on July 10, 1995 in North America after a January 1995 release in Japan. The game had sold excellently there and its North American release was accompanied by a large amount of pre-release hype. Sunsoft threw a LOT into promoting this game. It had commercials on Nickelodeon and Fox Kids, it had magazine ads...for a game about a little anime witch it was really out there in a big way.

The game revolved around a young witch girl named Andrekah who found herself lost in a strange new land. Having found herself without anything to do with her mysterious magical powers, she decides she'll use them to help solve the problems of the people in the new land she finds. With that, the game begins, immediately giving you the choice of three missions to take on (you have to take all three but you can choose the order). The game has short little cutscenes (fully voiced and animated) where Andrekah sees someone having

some kind of problem, asks them what's wrong, and then ventures into the unknown lands beyond the towns and villages to solve their problems in a platforming/action stage. During the stages Andrekah encounters various beings, friends, foes, humans, animals, ghosts, monsters...she meets dozens of whimsical characters on her journey. The game is lovely, Andrekah is instantly cute and charming while never quite crossing the line into outright annoying. As you progress on your journey you open up more stages, while there's also an ongoing myth arc where Andrekah slowly discovers her true purpose, setting the stage for the game's incredible climax. The gameplay is somewhat similar to *Mega Man* but it also compares to a game like *Jewels Of The Realm*, with light platforming segments mixed with various forms of combat. The graphics were a beautiful mix of 2.5-D styled, colorful stages and environments, almost like a somewhat enhanced version of what we'd later see the *Yoshi's Island* cartridge pull off on the cartridge-based SNES, giving the game a serious anime aesthetic. The soundtrack was mostly lighthearted but with some menacing tracks (especially toward the end). The voice cast, as in most games of the time, consisted of largely unknown actors and actresses. Jillian St. James, known mostly for minor anime roles in the mid-90s, was the first actress for Andrekah and played her very well, though later actress Rachel Lillis (who voiced Andrekah on the Ultra Nintendo/Saturn game and a couple of sequels for later consoles) and current actress Shelby Rabara (who voiced Andrekah in the most recent, current generation game) have both done excellent work as the young witch.

The marketing campaign for *Andrekah* was a big success, the game went on to be one of the surprise hits of 1995, and is also partially credited for kicking off the American anime craze (with *Sailor Moon* helping to do so on the TV side of things). It was known as one of the earliest successful games geared toward girls and Andrekah was a popular Halloween costume in 1995 and 1996. It also helped to boost sales of *Panorama Cotton* on the Genesis (especially once Andrekah was ported to the Saturn), and Cotton and Andrekah have crossed over on each other's games ever since. Worldwide, Andrekah pushed well over a million copies and gave Sunsoft an enormous boost that it needed during one of the toughest times in its history. While 1995 is known largely as the year of the Saturn launch and *Ocarina of Dreams*, it's important to remember the tale of the little witch that could...and did!

-from a post on Kotaku.com, "Why *Andrekah* Was The Most Important Video Game Of 1995", on August 14, 2014

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## **Earthbound 2: The Basics**

*Earthbound 2* (known as *Mother 2* in Japan), was the sequel to *Earthbound/Mother*, which originally released for the NES in Japan and got a remake for the SNES that made it to North America in December 1993. Launching in North America on July 17, 1995 (delayed by Nintendo a month to keep it out of *Zelda's* way), the game picks up where the original *Mother* left off, taking place in a land called Eagleland and revolving around the strange events that occur after a meteor crashes in the home town of a young boy named Ness. The meteor turns out to be sent by the evil cosmic horror Giygas, and its evil energy causes creatures and humans around the world to go completely berserk, while Giygas' alien legions begin their invasion of Earth. The game is largely as *Earthbound* was OTL, though with a few minor differences, most of them related to graphics (significantly better than OTL, some of the battle backgrounds utilize real video for example) and sound (the soundtrack is for the most part the same with some minor changes to tracks, a few original tracks to TTL and utilizing the enhanced audio of the CD medium). The biggest change is

toward the end, after the Ness' Nightmare sequence. Before returning to the past to battle Giygas, the party seeks out Giygas' homeworld and discovers the Tree of Enlightenment. They also psychically channel the spirit of Maria, who gives them a prayer to use on Giygas. This mini-quest adds 2-3 more hours to the game and is complete with a town and a new dungeon where the party battles a boss, the Omega Starman, before finally going to the past to defeat Giygas.

Nintendo tries a different marketing strategy with *Earthbound 2* than in OTL. With gamers already familiar with the series and more receptive to RPGs, Nintendo utilizes a more traditional ad campaign, playing up the sci-fi adventure aspect of the game rather than utilizing a quirky scratch-and-sniff or "this game stinks" campaign. The game is also released without the official strategy guide included (Nintendo still publishes a separate guide for the game though). *Earthbound 2* sells slightly better than in OTL, though *Andreakah* outsells it by a significant margin. Most importantly, however, is that the game is not seen as a complete failure by Nintendo, though it is no less loved by players and loyal fans...

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### **Ogre Battle, Enix, And A Tag-Team With Sega**

By the time *Ogre Battle* was released in North America in late July 1995, Sega and Enix had already entered into an agreement that would help to shape the fifth-generation console landscape. While Enix would continue to make games for the Super Nintendo CD until 1997, their new agreement with Sega would keep Enix games off the Ultra Nintendo entirely, and would put every late-generation SNES-CD game on the Saturn in some shape or form, drawing a clear battle-line between Enix and its RPG rival Squaresoft. The first big Enix agreement with Sega was over the game *Ogre Battle*, which would receive a Sega Saturn port sometime in 1996. Sega decided on a straight-up port over an enhanced 3-D remake of the game, instead reserving the series' 3-D transition for the game's 1998 sequel, *Ogre Battle 2: Princes Of The Universe*.

Enix had joined Namco as a major Japanese game company that would be developing games exclusively for the Saturn. The nature of the Sega/Enix deal wouldn't become open knowledge until late 1996, when the last of the Nintendo-based Enix games were about to release on the SNES-CD. The two major releases, *Terranigma* and *Dragon Warrior VI*, weren't games that Nintendo could easily downplay, and *Terranigma* even made the cover of Nintendo Power in January 1997. But the die was cast, and gamers would have to take sides: Sega or Nintendo, Enix or Squaresoft?

-excerpted from an article in the February 2010 issue of *Game Informer*

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"At first, you know, I didn't want to take sequels. I'd done *Ace Ventura*, but....you know, after that I figured, no more sequels. So I do *Batman Forever*, and that's such a tough role, a lot more serious, a lot darker, and I kind of needed a break and then I get offered *The Mask II*. So I basically just said 'what the hell, it's gonna be fun, why not?'"

-Jim Carrey, on *The Late Show With David Letterman*, August 6, 1996

IGN.com: Okay, we know you've probably told this story before, but...you've been married to James Rolfe, also known as the "Angry Video Game Nerd", for seven years now. The two of you seem to be really happy together, but it is a shock for some people to learn that you

two are married. How did you guys meet?

Jennifer Morrison: \*she laughs\* It's okay, I like telling this story. So, back in 1995 there was this contest in *Nintendo Power* magazine, when *The Mask* video game came out they had a contest where if you won, you got to be in *The Mask II* (note: Jennifer Morrison starred in the film as Lily, the niece of Stanley Ipkiss' fiance Tina Carlyle) as a walk-on. And he won the contest. So he's there on set, and they don't need him for like a couple hours, and so I see him just sitting there looking kind of bored, and they don't need me for a couple hours either, so I offer to let him come in my trailer and play some video games.

IGN.com: Do you remember what games you played?

Morrison: We played *Twisted Metal* for like two hours and had a blast and it was a lot of fun and so we kind of became friends right there on the set. It wasn't love at first sight or anything like that but we talked a lot while we were playing and he talked about how much he loved movies and wanted to make movies, and I ended up giving him my e-mail address so we could stay in touch. I didn't give him my phone number or anything like that, but the internet was, you know, kind of becoming a thing, so I gave him my e-mail and said, you know, you're pretty cool, e-mail me or something. And we did e-mail off and on for a couple years and eventually I told him that if he ever does like a student film or something, I'd like to be in it. So right after I got done wrapping *Urban Legends* in 2000, he e-mails me and asks if I can come be in this little student production he's doing. I go out to his college and we have a blast, again, you know, just friends at the time, but over the next few years we stayed in touch and eventually he asked me out, and that led to us getting married in 2007.

IGN.com: All of that from just a little Nintendo contest!

Morrison: It's crazy how things work out, isn't it? And so now I'm acting and he's directing, he's still doing the Nerd as kind of a hobby, but he's also directing some indie films.

IGN.com: And he directed the *Tron* episode of *Once Upon A Time* last season!

Morrison: I know and that episode was great, wasn't it?

IGN.com: It was one of our favorites.

-excerpted from an interview on IGN.com promoting season 4 of *Once Upon A Time*, September 16, 2014

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*1995 was for all intents and purposes the Super Nintendo's swan song. Though the cartridge-based system would see some games released as late as fall 1996, the last major releases were in the second half of 1995: F-Zero: G-Force, Storm Guardians, Kirby's Adventure 2, and of course, Yoshi's Island.*

*F-Zero: G-Force* was an action/adventure game that put you in the shoes of Captain Falcon and a band of brave heroes who raced super-fast vehicles by day and protected the streets of Mute City by night. The game was a sort of hybrid platformer/beat-em-'up that let you control one of four main characters: Captain Falcon, Dr. Stewart, Jody Summer, and Super Arrow. The four heroes team up to battle the forces of the evil villainous mastermind Black Shadow and his hired henchman Samurai Goroh (who later becomes a reluctant ally of

Captain Falcon's team). The game took some cues from Super Metroid in terms of combat style, though it's much faster paced. The graphics were excellent, on par even with a lot of the SNES-CD games of the time, with really detailed backgrounds and animation, utilizing the Super FX2 chip for some really stunning effects. All in all, it was a fun and well recieved action game that gave players a look "behind the scenes" of the F-Zero universe, so to speak, and though it wouldn't recieve a proper sequel until the Ultra Nintendo, it was still a really fun game that established Captain Falcon as one of Nintendo's most awesome heroes.

*Storm Guardians* was the last really big third-party game for the Super Nintendo. Developed by Midway, the game was a sort of superhero shooter game that featured five brave warriors who could transform into forces of nature to battle huge enemies and bosses. It definitely lifted from the popular *Power Rangers* franchise somewhat, but was much better than any of the *Power Rangers* games, with great graphics, great combat, and some of the most visually stunning boss battles on the Super Nintendo. You could rapidly switch between the five Storm Guardians, who shared a health bar but each had different weapons and abilities depending on your chosen style of play. The game was sort of light on plot but the gameplay and action sequences made up for it. It was one of the most successful SNES games of 1995, and it too would recieve a sequel on the Ultra Nintendo.  
-excerpted from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts- July 1995**

1. Donkey Kong Country
2. Final Fantasy VI
3. NBA Jam: Tournament Edition
4. Super Mario World 2
5. Frederico
6. Mega Man X2
7. F-Zero CD
8. Squad Four
9. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
10. Double Dragon: Triple Trouble
11. Kirby's Avalanche
12. Mortal Kombat II
13. Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition
14. International Superstar Soccer CD
15. Pulseman
16. Alien vs. Predator
17. Secret Of Mana
18. Frank Thomas' Big Hurt Baseball
19. Cat Jackson
20. Rayman

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Alex Stansfield: What did you think of *Andrekah*?

Ted Crosley: I'm gonna be honest. Going in, I thought it was going to be some silly little girls' game, but I had trouble putting it down toward the end. It was really, really good.

Alex: Yeah, I absolutely agree with you there. This game is great. It's one of the best games of the year. The graphics are gorgeous, the gameplay is stellar...

Ted: Honestly, it reminded me of Mega Man with the hub world and choosing what level you're gonna play.

Alex: Right, right, but you don't pick up weapons, you already have everything you need and you use your skills to win. And you need a lot of skills, this was a hard game at times.

Ted: It was hard, but it was a lot of fun and I didn't have too many problems getting through it, the only problem was I didn't WANT to get through it because I was having so much fun! I give *Andrekah* a 4.5 out of 5.

Alex: I do too, 4.5 out of 5, really good game, highly recommended.

-excerpted from the July 11, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany Saldita: *Ogre Battle* is an amazing game.

Alex: I wasn't quite as enamored with it as you were, I really didn't like not being able to control my team in battle.

Brittany: That is the point of a strategy game, you have to equip your guys and prepare BEFORE the battle and then properly position them during the battle, just like a real war!

Alex: I didn't like how you could be defending a town and you're fighting guys that you can barely damage and they get one guy that scores a good hit on you and you lose the fight and lose the town.

Brittany: If you know how to outfit your army you won't have trouble! Don't put a weak squad in an important town! This is one of the deepest, most rewarding RPGs I've played in a long time.

Alex: You know, it wasn't a bad game, I just got frustrated. I loved the soundtrack, I loved that there were lots of secrets, but this game isn't for the faint of heart.

Brittany: It's one of the best RPGs of the year.

Alex: And while we're discussing *Ogre Battle: The March of The Black Queen*...been seeing a lot of Queen stuff lately since Wayne's World.

Brittany: Well, if *Ogre Battle 2: Fat Bottomed Girls* is anything like this game I will be first in line to buy it.

Alex: \*snickering\*

Brittany: They're gonna keep with the Queen theme!

Alex: I give *Ogre Battle* a 3.5. It's a good game, but it could've been better.

Brittany: An amazing soundtrack, challenging battles, really deep strategy make *Ogre Battle* one of the year's best games. I give it a 5, it made my rockin' world go 'round!

Alex: \*snickering again\*

Brittany: \*getting the giggles, the two of them are having trouble holding in their laughter\* Whew....

Alex: \*still laughing\* Ted and Kazzi are gonna talk about *Trapmine* right after the break... \*laughing\* Fat Bottomed Girls...you think we'll see *Ogre Battle: Radio Ga Ga*?

(...)

Kazzi DeCarlo: *Trapmine* was the bomb, and I'm not just saying that because you actually can lay bombs in this game.

Ted: With 82 single player levels, this excellent action puzzler will keep you playing for hours on end but it's in the multi-player mode that you'll really have a blast.

Kazzi: Yeah, but you're likely to lose some friendships over this game. Ted, I hate your guts right now.

Ted: Hey, it's not my fault you can't see a spike trap if it walked up and bit you on the ass.

Kazzi: It did! About fifteen times!

Ted: And it was hilarious.

Kazzi: I give *Trapmine* a 4, but I give Ted a big fat zero for being a cheater and a jerk.

Ted: I give *Trapmine* a 4, it's super addictive and the opportunities to lay hidden traps make it a much more complex and challenging game than the similar *Bomberman* games, and also much more rage inducing, clearly.

Kazzi: I'm gonna kill you! \*pretends to attack Ted\*

Ted: We're gonna review *Comix Zone* next if somebody can pry Kaz off of me before he strangles me to death!

(...)

Ted: It's the master of *Doom* himself, John Romero. Welcome to *GameTV*.

John Romero: Good to be here.

Ted: Nearly two years on and we're still playing *Doom*, still talking about *Doom*, such an awesome game, how's it feel to have been a part of such a huge phenomenon?

John: It's really special. It's something that really makes me proud and to hear people talking about the game just makes it all the more rewarding. It still blows my mind how many people have played *Doom*.

Ted: Well, even more people are about to play it, it's hitting the Super Nintendo CD next week, so tell us about that.

John: Working with Nintendo on this game has been a lot of fun. A lot of work, of course.

Ted: Obviously, porting anything from the PC to a home console is going to involve some challenges.

John: Well, yeah. But Nintendo gave us plenty of time. When we ported to the Mega Charger it was a lot more rushed, and there wasn't as much memory with the cartridge as there is with the CD. This is the most faithful *Doom* port you're going to get.

Ted: I've been playing through some of it already, our review's next week but this game runs exactly like it does on PC, at least so far.

John: It was painstaking getting it to run as well as it does. I wasn't going to stop until I was pleased with the results. I think players are going to be pleased too. The only thing that we weren't able to get that I really wanted was multiplayer deathmatch, there was just too much going on for us to be able to do split-screen deathmatches even with all the time we had, the SNES-CD just wasn't quite powerful enough. Maybe for the next one.

Ted: You're already looking toward the future?

John: We've got a version of *Doom* coming to the Sega Saturn and we're looking to port *Doom II* either to the SNES-CD or Project Eunice, and of course the Saturn too. But I've got other projects in the works and I think they're going to be even better.

Ted: Better than *Doom*?

John: \*nodding\* You heard me.

Ted: For right now, let's just keep talking about *Doom*.

-excerpted from the August 1, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

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*"It was a challenge, to be sure. We had to squeeze out every drop of power we could out of the SNES-CD. We made what I like to call 'hidden compromises', places where we had to cut little corners to make everything work. It's a testament to what we did that some of these weren't found until more than a decade later."*

-John Carmack, talking about the porting of *Doom* to the SNES-CD in an interview with PhobosLegions.com

*"Doom! Hell yeah, man! Doom!"*

-overheard by local news reporters in a line of shoppers waiting to purchase *Doom* for the SNES-CD on August 7, 1995

*"You know, I honestly don't get the problem people were having with this game. Super Mario World 3 was my favorite of the three Super Mario World games and I'm not*

*apologizing for that. It looked amazing, the gameplay was awesome, and the bosses were outta this world. I get that it was different from most Mario games, but I felt like it was the perfect transition between the old-school Mario platformers and the awesome game we got on the Ultra Nintendo."*

-the Angry Video Game Nerd, discussing the three *Super Mario World* games in a 2009 special episode

*"That's right Mario, I don't need the princess anymore! Not when I have a whole army of Mechakoopas to stomp anybody who gets in my way!"*

-Bowser, during the intro to *Super Mario World 3*

*"You've never seen water look this good in a video game."*

-excerpted from an advertisement for *Ecco 3: The Omega Stone*

*"You guys do know the water in Ultima for the Saturn looks like ten times better than this, right?"*

-Tom Kalinske, overheard in the Sega of America marketing department, chastising his ad team for focusing on graphics over gameplay in the ad campaign for *Ecco 3*

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*"Approved by the creators of Doom themselves, Doom for the Super Nintendo CD is the only way to get the true, authentic Doom experience on your home console. All the original levels, all the original enemies, and the game's hardcore original soundtrack are all there, just like on the classic PC game."*

-excerpted from the commercial for the SNES-CD version of *Doom*

## **August 7, 1995**

The Super Nintendo CD port of *Doom* is released amidst a slew of pre-release hype and excellent reviews. The release is heavily promoted in magazine ads and even ads on primetime television proclaiming the game to be the definitive home console version of the game. The hype reaches a mainstream fever pitch not seen since the release of *Mortal Kombat* in 1993, and the game's opening day sales trail only that game, *Super Mario World 2*, *Donkey Kong Country*, and *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams* in opening day sales for the Super Nintendo CD. The release is accompanied by a bit of controversy over the game's violent content, but not nearly as much as *Mortal Kombat* had, and the fact that the game is advertised largely toward older players does a bit to mitigate the controversy somewhat.

*Doom* doesn't sell too many SNES-CD add-ons to gamers who don't already have them, but it's another nail in the coffin of the Genesis, whose decent but ultimately inferior Mega Charger port of *Doom* looked even worse in comparison with the SNES-CD's near perfect port. The game is universally praised as one of the best of the year, and becomes one of the year's top sellers as well, becoming the first game to unseat *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams* from the top of the sales charts. The success of the SNES-CD *Doom* port not only gives other PC game makers confidence in putting out their own ports to the SNES-CD and future Nintendo systems, it also endears John Romero and John Carmack to Nintendo as a company for allowing them to take the time and care they needed to port their game so faithfully. The relationships Nintendo forged via the release of *Doom* would serve them greatly in the years to come, perhaps even moreso than the release of *Doom* itself served the SNES-CD's pedigree as a game console.

## **Doom: The Basics**

The SNES-CD port of Doom is a nearly flawless home console port of the original game, with all the levels, environmental textures, and enemies intact. The only changes are the absence of a deathmatch multiplayer mode (which is essentially the only knock that most mainstream reviewers have with the port) and what John Carmack dubs "invisible compromises", nearly imperceptible differences from the PC original such as well-hidden slowdowns and a few microscopically less detailed textures in certain areas. The original gritty rock soundtrack from the original PC game is still there, and in fact, most fans proclaim the SNES-CD's slightly more detailed versions superior to the original. The game runs exceptionally well on the SNES-CD's 21 Mhz processor and the memory capacity of the CD-ROM format enables the game to retain all the texture details of the PC original, with all the levels of the original PC game. Id Software briefly considered including the Doom II levels as a package with the game but decided against it when it proved too time-consuming to get them into the game, initially Doom II was planned for 1997 for the SNES-CD but those plans would be scrapped later on in favor of a game for the Ultra Nintendo.

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## **Casper:**

Ed: 4

Danyon: 6.5

Al: 3.5 (quote: "Casper's three cousins have to be the most annoying characters in movie history and unfortunately, that quality is the only thing that carries over well from the film.")

Sushi-X: 2

## **Doom:**

Ed: 9.5

Danyon: 9

Al: 9.5 (quote: "An absolutely flawless port of one of the greatest PC games of all time. I couldn't get enough of killing demons in the depths of Phobos.")

Sushi-X: 9.5

## **Judge Dredd:**

Ed: 7.5 (quote: "The SNES-CD does a good job capturing the gritty aesthetic of the film and we're glad that the game chose to go a somewhat different direction with Judge Dredd himself.")

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7

## **Madden 96:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 7 (quote: "It's a good looking game but I wish it had as many customization options as it does on the Genesis.")

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 7

### **NFL Quarterback Club '96:**

Ed: 6.5

Danyon: 6.5

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 7 (quote: "It was tough choosing between this and Madden. If you like more fine-tuning, pick this game, but Madden does have the better gameplay.")

### **Super Mario World 3:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 8 (quote: "It's definitely different and a fun game, but don't expect to be sucked in like you were with some of the classic Mario games. This seems more like a transition title than a new installment in the series.")

Al: 9.5

Sushi-X: 8

### **Zombies Ate My Neighbors: Ghoul Patrol:**

Ed: 7.5

Danyon: 8 (quote: "This is definitely a worthy sequel to Zombies Ate My Neighbors. The difficulty's been dumbed down just a bit but it's no less fun.")

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 8

### **Deadman Sam 2:**

Ed: 8.5 (quote: "Our favorite skeletal hero's adventures continue in this horrifyingly fun title.")

Danyon: 8.5

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 8

### **That's Gotta Hurt!:**

Ed: 6.5

Danyon: 4

Al: 7 (quote: "While I got a kick out of some of the hilarious kills in this parody FPS, it made a big mistake coming out in the same month as Doom, and its technical flaws are really brought out by the comparison.")

Sushi-X: 7

### **Hyperspeed:**

Ed: 4.5 (quote: "This game tries to rip off F-Zero and does a lousy job even being a servicable racing game.")

Danyon: 5

Al: 5.5

Sushi-X: 4.5

### **Five For Fighting Hockey:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7.5 (quote: "This hilarious hockey game focuses more on fighting than the actual game and somehow succeeds in being fun at both.")

### **Treasure Hunters:**

Ed: 8.5

Danyon: 8.5 (quote: "This awesome adventure game takes the best aspects of Gauntlet and adds a variety of collectible loot to the mix. It's awesome four player fun.")

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 8

### **Pig Wars:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 7 (quote: "I enjoyed this fun little RTS a lot more than I probably should have. It's hilarious seeing all the little pigs attacking each other in battle and I've never played a game with so many varieties of oinking noises. Now I'm hungry for bacon.")

Al: 4

Sushi-X: 7

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of the SNES-CD's August 1995 releases in the September and October 1995 issues

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### **A Pair Of Spooky Sequels Grace The Super Nintendo CD!**

It might still be a couple months until Halloween, but the Super Nintendo CD is overrun with skeletons and zombies this month as a pair of monstrous sequels are poised to make their debut later this month!

First, it's *Deadman Sam 2*, sequel to 1993's surprise hit SNES-CD game! Sam and Nellie might be dead but their adventures are alive and kicking as they traverse the underworld, working together to stop King Polter and his horde of ghostly monsters! Use Nellie's ghost powers to enhance Sam's weaponry and strike down dozens of different foes as you cross 15 spooky levels in order to liberate the underworld from King Polter's control! Even take control of Nellie herself and possess enemies to make them fight each other!

In *Zombies Ate My Neighbors: Ghoul Patrol*, Zeke and Julie are back and trying to stop another undead invasion from a circus of killer clowns! But this time, you've got your friends by your side. Team up with six kids from Zeke and Julie's school, each with their own special abilities. Trust us, you'll need all of them to send this circus of horrors packing! -excerpted from the September 1995 issue of *GamePro* magazine

"It's kind of a shame that these two games released when they did. Both of them were great, especially *Deadman Sam 2*, which wasn't quite as well reviewed as the first game but got even better reviews than *Super Mario World 3* in some publications. *Ghoul Patrol* was

*great fun and some of Zeke and Julie's friends were really hilarious, but the game completely bombed in sales, it was one of the worst selling games of the month and pretty much killed any chance of us getting a third game. Deadman Sam 2 did all right, it paled in comparison to the twin juggernauts of Doom and Super Mario World 3, but it did well enough to keep the franchise rolling. It was pretty simple really, Deadman Sam 2 found its niche and Ghoul Patrol didn't. There just wasn't enough room for three great action platformers on the SNES-CD in the same month."*

-excerpted from "Spooky, Scary Skeletons On The Super Nintendo CD: A Retrospective Of The SNES-CD's Horror Platformers" on Kotaku.com, April 14, 2012

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## **An Adventure Like No Other**

*Kirby's Adventure 2* on the SNES is probably the best cartridge-based game we've played all year. This 32-megabit cartridge features stunning graphics and a beautiful soundtrack, while giving Kirby some amazing new moves. It's the sequel to 1993's NES hit *Kirby's Adventure*, picking right up where that game left off as the evil wizard Thraxor launches an invasion of Dreamland. You traverse six worlds and more than 40 stages on your way to battling Thraxor, eating and spitting lots of different enemies along the way. Kirby can transform into 22 forms in this game, not counting the one-off forms that Kirby can acquire such as a giant microphone and a huge exploding Kirby bomb. Kirby can even summon forth a friend by pressing X after transforming, Kirby will lose his transformation but gain a special helper, somewhat similar to the function of the animal helpers in *Kirby's Dreamland 2*.

This game is actually a fairly decent challenge, certainly moreso than in *Kirby's Dreamland* or *Kirby's Adventure*. In addition to the end of world bosses, there are numerous mid-bosses that challenge Kirby along the way, each with their own attack patterns and skills. You'll have to master them all, especially if you want to challenge the Boss Rush mode that's unlocked after beating the main game. While *Super Mario World 3* is the majorly hyped game this month for the SNES-CD, those who are still playing with cartridges shouldn't feel too bad, some of us here at GamePro actually preferred this game to Mario's newest adventure! It's fun, it's colorful, it's got its own kind of charm and *Kirby's Adventure 2* is definitely the best Kirby game yet.

Graphics: 5.0

Sound: 5.0

Play Control: 5.0

Fun Factor: 5.0

Challenge: Intermediate

-excerpted from the September 1995 *GamePro* review of *Kirby's Adventure 2*

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*As development was getting started on Diablo for the PC, Condor had another project in the pipeline for Blizzard: a Super Nintendo CD game simply called Treasure Hunters. The game, inspired by the RPG arcade classic Gauntlet, featured a new spin on the top-down questing of that game: enemies and treasure chests would drop randomized loot for players to collect, a system that would appear in full-force in Diablo later on.*

David Brevik: So this game that Blizzard had us working on was kind of a game that they'd be releasing in-between the first and second Lost Vikings games, sort of a questing adventure/RPG kind of like *Zelda* or *Gauntlet*.

Game Informer: And it ended up being a sort of dress-rehearsal for *Diablo* in a way.

Brevik: A much lighter take on *Diablo*, but yeah, pretty much that. It would have four-player multiplayer, lots of questing, optional dungeons and the like but the main focus was on gathering more and more powerful loot to make the most powerful characters you could be.

Game Informer: The game also featured customizable characters.

Brevik: Right, not like what you see today but we had a bunch of silly costumes you could wear, different faces and heads, that sort of thing, kind of letting the player feel like they were a part of the game. You could progress through the main game or re-tackle any dungeon you've already beaten, so if you wanted to go through it with friends you could and we also gave the option of level scaling if you wanted it to be harder on your second go-around. The SNES-CD gave us a lot of leeway with that kind of thing, the graphics were pretty simple but we had lots of data in the game.

Game Informer: And again, you were prepping for what would eventually show up in *Diablo* later on.

Brevik: Yeah, absolutely. We were kind of surprised that *Treasure Hunters* was so successful, it ended up doing pretty well even though we came out right after *Doom*, we were all pretty happy with it. Later on, when the Ultra Nintendo came out, Blizzard wanted to make a *Diablo* port a top priority.

Game Informer: Do you think the SNES-CD helped to kind of propel your company and Blizzard to success in those early days?

Brevik: Absolutely, there really were a lot of similarities between developing for it and developing for the PC, that's why so many of the old Amiga classics did so well on there too.

-excerpted from a February 2011 interview with David Brevik of Condor (later Blizzard North), discussing the company's early history and eventual acquisition by Blizzard in 1996

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## **August 24, 1995**

The Windows 95 operating system by Microsoft is launched following an enormous and expensive marketing campaign. It immediately becomes one of the most successful product launches of all time, and would soon become the most popular operating system for desktop computers.

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\*An animated scene of Mario, Luigi, Princess Toadstool, and Toad all eating together at Peach's Castle is interrupted by powerful shaking of the ground. The four heroes run to a window and look outside only to see Bowser's Mechakoopas marching on the kingdom.\*

Narrator (Don LaFontaine): Bowser's back, and this time, he's brought an army...

\*Mario and Luigi look at each other and nod, they're about to leave when Princess Toadstool places a hand on Mario's shoulder and stops him.\*

Narrator: Mario's going to need all the help he can get...

\*Scenes from the game begin to play, showing off colorful 3-D worlds in the new isometric perspective as Mario dodges attacks from Mechakoopas and uses his new Ice Mario powers to freeze them in their tracks.\*

Narrator: Join Mario and Luigi on an all new adventure. Traverse over 40 new levels containing stunning new 3-D graphics. Battle gigantic Mechakoopas with help from Princess Toadstool...

\*Toadstool is seen throwing a power-up to Mario and in another scene she drops a POW block that takes out a bunch of Goombas.\*

Narrator: For the first time ever, Mario can move like never before in three dimensions.

\*More scenes show off the isometric perspective as Mario moves through a haunted house environment, dodging Boos.\*

Narrator: Mario's quest has never been tougher, and Bowser has never been crueller.

\*Briefly shows Mario fighting a huge mechanical Bowser robot\*

Narrator: *Super Mario World 3*, only for the Super Nintendo CD, coming August 28th. The bigger they are...

\*Shows off another huge boss, a giant Magikoopa that fills the screen with magical energy blasts\*

Narrator: The harder they fall.

\*Shows Mario about to land on the Magikoopa's head\*

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*"But when Peach got captured, AGAIN, at the end of the game, imagine my disappointment. My disappointment then turned to cheers and jubilation when Peach burst her bonds and socked Bowser right in the face. No, it wasn't the finishing blow, it's Mario (or Luigi) who lands that, unfortunately. But it was a step forward and it was the first time since Mario Brothers 2 that Peach has actually been able to strike back against the bad guys. I don't think that the makers of this game had any idea how much it meant to girls like me to actually see Peach rescuing herself for once."*

-Anita Sarkeesian, from "Tropes vs. Women In Video Games Part 4", October 30, 2014

## **August 28, 1995**

*Super Mario World 3* is released for the Super Nintendo CD in North America, following a

successful Japanese release in mid-July that saw the game break many of the sales records that *Ocarina of Dreams* had set there in April. In North America, the game didn't fare quite as well, though it was still one of the year's biggest selling games. The reason for this was the reviews: the game's new isometric viewpoint was technically gorgeous but somewhat hard to get used to for longtime Mario fans. The SNES-CD controller only had four directions and though you could move in eight (by pushing down two of the directional arrows at once), the game still somewhat lacked the precision platforming element that had been so key to success of earlier Mario games, making for a few frustrating moments. The game was less well-received by reviewers, getting largely 8s and 9s as opposed to the near perfect 10 scores that *Super Mario World 2* had gotten. The game was widely considered a disappointment, and sales figures reflected that: ultimately, the game was outsold by *Doom* in North America over its lifespan, and *Doom's* first week sales nearly doubled that of *Super Mario World 3's*. The game was extremely heavily promoted, though not quite to the degree that *Super Mario World 2* had been, and though it was a good or perhaps even great game, it just hadn't lived up to the high standards that had been set by *Super Mario World 2*.

### **Super Mario World 3: The Basics**

*Super Mario World 3* is definitely a different game from the first two *Super Mario World* titles, featuring a 3-D isometric viewpoint (similar to OTL and TTL's *Super Mario RPG*) in which Mario can move in multiple directions. This allows for much more detailed graphics than in *Super Mario World 2*, utilizing 3-D-like figures instead of the largely 2-D ones in that game. The game features a soundtrack by Koji Kondo that features more than 20 different themes, more than in the previous game, and the soundtrack itself is highly praised. The gameplay itself is largely similar to that of previous Mario platformers. Mario can grow when he collects power-ups (including the new Snowball power-up that lets Mario become Ice Mario, the game removes the Jet Mario power-up from SMW2 and also removes the Cape from the first two Mario World games, Mario is unable to fly in this title) and he shrinks when he gets hit. The game features six worlds and 40+ levels, including a few secret levels and a seventh secret world, though with 80 goals in all, the game features less than *Super Mario World 2* (with 120) or even *Super Mario World* (which had 96), making for a more streamlined game that is also a point of controversy amongst fans of the previous two titles. Yoshi is gone from the game, though he's replaced by Princess Toadstool, if you find her hiding spot in certain levels, she can help you with power-ups, she can attack enemies, or even find secret worlds for you.

The plot of the game is fairly simple: Mario, Luigi, Princess Toadstool, and their friends are enjoying a leisurely lunch in the Mushroom Kingdom when suddenly Bowser attacks with an enormous army of Mechakoopas and tanks. The heroes are forced to flee the castle before it is destroyed by Bowser's massive army. Bowser orders his troops to spread out and hunt down Mario, Luigi, and Toadstool as they continue to overrun the Mushroom Kingdom, forcing Mario to once again spring into action to liberate it from Bowser's no-good legions.

#### *World 1: Mushroom Grasslands*

A set of grassland stages, fairly plain, as is the tradition for Mario games, these levels are mostly ordinary with only a few tricks and traps. At the end of the stage you fight a boss, the boss is a giant version of the standard Mechakoopa enemy.

#### *World 2: Kalamari Desert*

A set of desert stages. The Ice Flower is especially effective here. The boss of this stage is a giant mechanical Angry Sun that attacks you with fire breath.

### *World 3: Monty's Caverns*

A set of underground stages somewhat like Vanilla Dome in *Super Mario World*. This time around, Monty Mole and his friends help Mario out on their quest. The boss of this realm is a huge tunneling robot that chases Mario through an abandoned mineshaft.

### *World 4: Ancient Ruins*

A set of stages taking place amidst long-lost temples that Mario must protect from being desecrated by Bowser's troops. The boss of this world is a giant mechanical Magikoopa.

### *World 5: Harsh Marsh*

A series of levels taking place in the middle of brackish jungle swamps. The boss of this stage is actually five bosses, a set of mechanical jungle warriors considered to be one of the toughest boss battles in the Mario series.

### *World 6: Bowser's Battlefield*

A set of battles taking place amidst Bowser's battle fortifications. The final battle of the game is a multi-staged battle against Bowser and his enormous Bowser-shaped mech. During this battle, Bowser has captured Princess Toadstool but during a part where Bowser is about to scorch Mario with a lethal fire blast, Toadstool breaks free and socks his mech with her fiercest punch, causing it to malfunction and scorch itself, opening it up to the final blow from Mario.

### *World 7: Tower Of Power*

By finding ALL of Toadstool's hiding spots throughout the game, you can access a hidden seventh world with some of the game's toughest challenges as you ascend a giant tower to a secret final boss: Mecha Mario.

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Ted Crosley: The SNES-CD port of *Doom*, I gotta say, it kicked ass.

John Walden: Yeah, it's pretty much just like playing it on the computer. All the levels are there and the game ran super smooth with plenty of graphical detail in the stages.

Ted: Honestly, the one thing I didn't like was that it lacked a deathmatch mode.

John: That was a shame. A deathmatch mode would've put this game over the top for me but honestly, as excellent as *Doom* is, this is a perfect port. I have to give it a perfect 5.

Ted: I have to dock half a point for lacking a deathmatch mode. They could have gotten it in there. 4.5 for me.

John: Even the original *Doom*, it's tough to get a deathmatch going, you gotta have internet and how many people have internet?

Ted: But I was looking forward to being able to play this game with three of my friends, or even one of my friends, and as good as this game is, for me to give it a five it's gotta be better than the original, I can't just give a 5 to a straight up port unless it's got a little something extra.

John: Well regardless of that, *Doom* is still highly recommended by GameTV.

Ted: Oh yeah, absolutely, if you haven't played Doom, what are you thinking? Go get this game, go get it right now!

-excerpted from the August 8, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

John: *Five For Fighting Hockey*, I mean, for me, I had a lot of fun with it.

Alex Stansfield: No NHL license, obviously, but the game is full of fun teams with silly names that really add to the humor of this tongue-in-cheek hockey game. I just wish the hockey itself could actually have been a bit better.

John: Well, that's what hockey is, when you go to a hockey game you're really going to a fight and maybe some hockey will break out.

Alex: I wish the hockey had broken out a bit better.

John: I really liked this game. The hockey itself is fine but the real point of this game is the fighting, pretty much everything you do leads to a fight and the fighting itself is really well done. The announcers are hilarious and I was laughing my ass off at the fighting scenes, when I played against Alex I'd be constantly trying to start fights with his team.

Alex: And even that....after a while, the fighting got kind of boring, you know? I have to give this game a 3. I got some good laughs but for a hockey game I'd stick with the NHL series.

John: I'm giving it a 4.5. It's got everything that a hockey game should have, which is lots, and lots, and lots of fighting.

-excerpted from the August 15, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

John: So now that you've seen our mini-reviews of *Madden '96* and *NFL Quarterback Club '96* across the two major systems, which one should you get? For *Madden*, the customization options really only show up in the Mega Charger version of the game, we were hoping to get the Create-a-Play feature on the Super Nintendo CD this year, but that didn't materialize. The game itself looks somewhat better on the Super Nintendo CD, but the Genesis and Mega Charger versions played a lot better and it just seemed like EA put a lot more effort into Sega's versions of these games. On the flipside, *Quarterback Club '96* largely played the same on both Nintendo and Sega's systems, but the Super Nintendo CD version lets you customize your own teams and really seemed a lot like the PC games in terms of customization options. If you've got a Super Nintendo CD, *Quarterback Club* is probably your best bet, but if you've got the Genesis and especially if you've got a Mega Charger, *Madden* is the best football franchise out there. We're hoping to see an even better version of *Madden '96* once the Sega Saturn launches next month, the technical capabilities of that system show a lot of promise, so if you're planning to get the Saturn you might want to hold off on picking up a football game until that version of *Madden '96* comes out.

(...)

Brittany Saldita: So that's *Ecco 3: The Omega Stone*. It's exclusive to the Mega Charger and I can see why, it's an absolutely gorgeous looking game.

Alex: I agree, it's really lovely all around, beautiful water, beautiful environments, Ecco's never looked better.

Brittany: This game was a bit of a surprise, I remember that Sega didn't show it off very much at E3. It was there but it was kind of off to the side and I'm not sure why it wasn't featured more because it's a great game. I thought it was even better than *Tides Of Time*.

Alex: It's a close call but I really enjoyed it. The bosses are huge and difficult, the temples you explore are just lovely.

Brittany: I know, the environments were amazing, this game REALLY shows off what the Mega Charger can do.

Alex: I can't wait until we get Ecco on the Saturn.

Brittany: I give Ecco 3 a 4.5 out of 5. A really fun game that every Mega Charger owner needs to check out.

Alex: I give it a 4. It's a great game.

-excerpted from the August 22, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted: Well, I know what YOU thought of this game.

Alex: I thought it was fantastic. The controls took a bit of getting used to but once I'd gotten the hang of it I was having a great time and it's a more than worthy successor to *Super Mario World 2*. Make no mistake, *Super Mario World 3* is one of the best looking video games of all time. With huge bosses, beautiful levels, and outstanding music, it's the complete package.

Ted: I thought it was good but it could have been better and I'm still frustrated with the controls. You just can't get the perfect jumping in that viewpoint like you can in the original games. I'm glad they made the jumps a bit easier to compensate but isn't that kind of the point of a Mario game, to jump?

Alex: Well, this game had a lot more emphasis on combat, it gave you a ton of enemies to fight and a great new power-up for doing it.

Ted: I'd have rather kept the Cape. The Ice power is kinda lame.

Alex: Lame? Are you kidding me? Freezing Bowser's Mechakoopas was awesome, I couldn't get enough of it!

Ted: It wasn't a bad game but for a Mario game you gotta admit that the last one was a lot better. I had more fun playing *Wario Land* than this.

Alex: Wario Land was great too! This game is amazing.

Ted: I think you're just blinded by the good graphics. Which, by the way, are gonna look like puke after the Saturn comes out this week.

Alex: That has yet to be seen.

Ted: You've seen it! You've seen the Saturn! It blew you away! You were like a kid at Christmas playing Panzer Dragoon! I saw you!

Alex: Super Mario World 3 looks better.

Ted: You liar! You're lying! There's no way in hell!

Alex: I give Super Mario World 3 a 5 out of 5. It's a fantastic game. It's not QUITE the best Mario game ever but it's damn close.

Ted: I almost want to give Super Mario World 3 a 3.5 just to spite you. But...but I can't. I can't because it's a good game. I give it a 4, but as far as Mario games go, it's still a disappointment. And there's gonna be about five or six Saturn games released this week that are gonna blow it out of the water.

Alex: Bullcrap.

-excerpted from the August 29, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts- August 1995**

1. Donkey Kong Country
2. Final Fantasy VI
3. Victory
4. Super Mario World 2
5. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
6. Gex
7. NBA Jam: Tournament Edition
8. Super Punch-Out CD
9. Bikerz
10. Frederico
11. Mega Man X2
12. F-Zero CD
13. Icebiter 2
14. Squad Four
15. Super Turrigan 2
16. Super Mario World 3
17. Shadowrun: Worlds Without End
18. Mortal Kombat II
19. Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition
20. Backwoods Racing

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## September 1, 1995

On the eve of the North American Sega Saturn launch, Tom Kalinske and his associates at Sega of America were perusing sales reports and discussing the latest news amongst themselves, knowing that tomorrow would be the big day. Initial sales for *Ecco 3* had been promising, it had been the second biggest Mega Charger launch of the year behind *Knuckles: Renegade*, despite the game receiving somewhat limited pre-release coverage. And initial reports that *Super Mario World 3* was, despite still being a major hit, somewhat of a disappointment, were also a welcome sign, as Kalinske still had memories of the massive *Super Mario World 2* launch that thrust the SNES-CD into the public consciousness. *Super Mario World 3* hadn't even gotten a sixth of the launch day sales that *Sonic the Hedgehog 3* had gotten, proving that the hedgehog still dominated the plumber when it came to sales and reviews.

"Looks like their attempt to pre-empt the Saturn launch with their newest Mario game is gonna backfire on them," said Shinobu Toyoda, unable to wipe the smile from his face.

"Just wish we were launching with *Sonic 4*," said Kalinske, shaking his head softly. "Imagine the headlines if we'd have dominated Mario on launch week. Imagine if we had moved ten times the units in our first day."

"That would have been.... 1.8 million units," said Toyoda, quickly doing some math in his head.

"You think *Sonic the Hedgehog 4* could sell that many copies in a single day?" asked Al Nilsen, looking around at the rest of the table with some trepidation.

"Gentlemen," said Kalinske, looking around at his fellow Sega execs with a glimmer in his eyes. "When we launch *Sonic 4* next year, we're gonna sell TWO million copies on launch day."

The others at the table weren't even sure they'd be able to sell two million Saturns on launch day. Not at that price. But Kalinske already anticipated that there'd be a price drop before *Sonic 4* would even be formally announced. He knew initial sales at \$399 would be low, even the \$499 unit with three pack-in games probably wouldn't be a hit right away. But this was a marathon, not a sprint...and the Sega Saturn, at minimum, was going to have a year and a half head start. In all likelihood, probably two years.

And unlike when Sega launched the Genesis in obscurity, this time, the eyes of the world were upon them. Everyone already knew Sega's name. And on Saturday, everyone would know the Sega Saturn.

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\*There is a completely dark room. Two people, a young man and a young woman, walk out to the middle of that room as a faint light shines on them. They take each other's hand and look at each other for a moment before looking down at a small black pedestal before them. Each of them reaches forward to take a controller.\*

\*The room is illuminated by light, the light from a video game on a huge screen, *Virtua Fighter*. The two of them play for a few seconds as the vivid, fluid graphics of the game are shown on screen. Then the two of them begin to play *Panzer Dragoon*, and the floor

beneath them falls away. The two of them are seen riding on a pair of dragons, matching the action in the game of a dragon flying through the air. The two of them land in the middle of a crowd of scary-looking soldiers in full face masks and nightsticks that approach them. The young woman steps forward and extends her hand.

Woman: Join us.

\*The young man hands the soldier a controller and he begins to play. The game is *Ultima: The Worldly Lord*. The soldier plays for a moment and passes off the controller to another soldier. The soldiers drop their nightsticks and remove their face masks and bask in the sunlight. One of them changes into a police uniform and is seen running toward a criminal who is holding several people hostage. The game being shown changes to *Virtua Cop*. The soldier takes out the criminal and extends his hand to the rescued hostages.\*

Soldier: Join us.

\*The hostages run in different directions, one of them climbs into a car and begins racing down a long track in a beautiful field. The game now being shown is *Virtua Racing*. The track continues until the car rides into Daytona Speedway where the car joins a race in progress, the game switches to *Daytona USA* and the Daytona USA game theme is even briefly heard as the cars cross the finish line. The man takes his place on the victory podium and when he is interviewed by a reporter, he holds his hand out to the crowd.\*

Man: Join us.

\*The crowd disperses and we see them taking on various roles now, as games including *Madden '96*, *NHL '96*, *Golden Axe: The Duel*, *Bug!*, *Solar Eclipse*, and *Primal Rage* are shown. Finally, a girl is shown walking through a field and confronting an enormous monster. The girl (played by one of Tom Kalinske's daughters) shows a bit of fear at first but the man and the woman from the start of the commercial stand with her and give her encouraging looks. She steps forward and her hands are illuminated with magical energy as she steps forward to confront the monster. She lifts her hand up and stares into its eyes. A scene from *MagiQuest* of the protagonists fighting together against a huge monster is shown. Then we see the girl, striking down the monster with a burst of magic and causing the entire field to sparkle with white light, while a huge crowd of people is shown gathering in the field behind the girl, the man, and the woman. The girl is shown now looking into the camera and extending her hand to the viewer.\*

Girl: Join us.

\*The scene finally fades to black with the words **Playing Is Believing** shown in white.\*

**Sega Saturn**

**Available Everywhere**

**Saturday, September 2**

-excerpted from the Sega Saturn launch commercial widely shown in both its full and abbreviated forms across American television throughout August 1995

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*Going into the Saturn launch, were Sega of Japan and Sega of America still at each other's throats?*

Tom Kalinske: I wouldn't put it like that, but there were definitely some differences left between our companies. We hadn't wanted them to launch the Saturn in Japan until the spring of 1995, for example. While Nakayama-san was able to keep some of Japan's more draconian edicts from affecting SoA, there were still some things that the two branches of the company had to work out. I think the rift kind of started to close back in April of 1995. Diane (Fornasier) proposed that maybe some of us from SoA and some of the folks from Sega of Japan should have a little....I guess you could call it a retreat, maybe? We'd have a little week-long retreat at Lake Tahoe just to relax and decompress and air out all the old grievance that the two branches of the company had with each other.

*Did that help?*

Kalinske: It helped. I mean, it didn't fix all the problems we were having with SoJ, we'd still clash throughout the Saturn's lifespan on certain things, but it did a lot to kind of allieviate some of the bad blood between us. We went out speedboating on the lake, we drank...a lot, we listened to a ton of loud music and watched movies, that kinda thing. It was a lot like summer camp but with a lot more drinking. And basically, I told the SoJ guys, "look, we can't help what the top brass are saying about us and about you, but we're both in this together and if we don't work this stuff out, Nintendo's going to whip us both". I mean, I said it differently, it was kind of a half hour of rambling I did but they got the message and after the retreat there seemed to be a lot more cooperation between the two sides.

*What do you think Sega of America's role was going forward during the Saturn era?*

Kalinske: I feel like Sega of Japan trusted us a lot more with the marketing. There were some stumbles. You know that great commercial we did, the "Join Us" thing and the whole "Playing is Believing" campaign? That wasn't me. My original idea... \*laughs\* it was kinda stupid. It'd be this kind of crpytic, esoteric kind of commercial directed by the guy who did the Mario Bros. movie, huge mistake right there, but it'd be where we'd have some dude's eyeballs getting sucked out while he was playing the Sega Saturn. I kept seeing it in my head and thinking it'd be great but Al (Nilsen) sort of talked me out of it and the campaign we went with, I liked a lot better. I even got to put my daughter Ashley in the commercial, so it ended up working out fantastic.

*But ultimately, you were able to keep Sega of Japan from scuttling the whole thing and I imagine you consider that a success.*

Kalinske: \*laughs\* Well they did have some good ideas but I'm glad we got to keep our autonomy at the very least!

-excerpted from a July 2008 interview with Tom Kalinske for GamePro magazine

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*"We are excited to be launching the Sega Saturn here in Seattle, Washington! The Sega Saturn brings arcade-quality gameplay to the home and is the most advanced gaming*

*console ever made! Now who wants to be the first to purchase one here today?"*

-Tom Kalinske, announcing the Sega Saturn launch at a special launch day event at the Walmart store in Seattle, Washington where he and several others from Sega were on hand to help sell some of the first Sega Saturns

## **September 2, 1995**

The Sega Saturn officially launches in North America, with a price tag of \$399. The original Saturn includes the console, two controllers, and the Saturn port of *Virtua Fighter*. There is also a *Virtua Arcade Pack* for \$499, which includes the Saturn, two controllers, a lightgun controller, a steering wheel controller, *Virtua Fighter*, *Virtua Racing*, and *Virtua Cop*. The Saturn launch is accompanied by fanfare not seen since the launch of *Sonic the Hedgehog 3*, with simultaneous events at stores all across the United States giving fans a chance to try the Saturn out for themselves before purchase. The launch is given mainstream news coverage on CNN, which features live video from the special Mall of America launch event outside Minneapolis. The Saturn launches with twenty games, about half of Japan's current available game list, though more of these Japanese games would be making their way to North America over the next few months. The biggest seller on that first day, apart from the pack-in *Virtua* games, is *Daytona USA*, which even sold well amongst people who bought the *Virtua Arcade Pack* with *Virtua Racing* included. Other popular games at launch include *MagiQuest*, *Ultima: The Worldly Lord*, *Madden '96*, *NHL '96*, and *Primal Rage*.

Though the Saturn launch is well received by the gaming press, criticism immediately erupts over the high selling price. At \$399, the system is twice the price of Nintendo's Playstation Combo Set, and this prevents the system from being a major success on its first day, selling an underwhelming amount of units. There are very few sell-outs reported, only the \$499 *Virtua Arcade Set* reports sell-outs and even those are rare. The Saturn launch is far from a flop, but it's far from the breakout success that Sega had come to expect from its major product launches, and Tom Kalinske immediately begins lobbying Sega of Japan for a price cut, to no avail. For now, Nintendo still leads the market, because without a killer app to speak of, there's not much of a reason for the mainstream consumer to spend that kind of money on a game console.

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Anchor: The Sega Saturn launched today at the Mall of America, to great fanfare from a large crowd who had gathered to purchase the device. It's the newest game system from Sega, rivals to popular game company Nintendo, and it's said to be the most advanced game system ever made, with 3-D graphics and cinema-quality sound. We'll talk live to Sega fans who were there at the mall to have a chance to buy the hottest thing in video gaming.

\*Scenes show a jubilant crowd around a large stage stacked with television screens showing off the newest Sega Saturn games.\*

Sega Employee: Welcome to the world of Sega Saturn!

\*The crowd cheers\*

Anchor: Today at the Mall of America, it was a holiday for Sega fans, who waited for hours to gain admittance to the big Saturday launch fest. The hottest games were shown off and lines stretched deep into the mall, but some say that this new game system is all hype and

no substance.

Woman: \*with her two kids\* You know, I took a look at it and it was impressive but it was 400 dollars and that's with just one game.

Anchor: Though the Sega Saturn is undoubtedly cutting edge, the hefty price tag scared away many we talked to at the mall.

Woman: It's just too much to ask, you know?

Anchor: But ask others who were at the event, and they'll proudly proclaim their allegiance to Saturn mania.

Teenage Boy: \*holding up his Virtua Arcade Pack\* I'm ready to get home and play the Sega Saturn, yeah!!!

Reporter: Was the 400 dollar price tag a bit discouraging?

Teenage Boy: Well actually, this was 500, but I've been saving up my allowance for a long time for this, ever since Sonic 3 came out I've been saving up for the Saturn.

Anchor: And some parents at the event were willing to fork over the cash as well.

Dad: Well, it was a lot of money, but the technology is so good that I imagine the kids'll be playing it for a while. It's cheaper than getting them a new computer to play games on and the graphics look just as good. I was really impressed with the uh, the dragon game, I got them that one and then I got Ultima for myself, I've been playing Ultima since back in the day and this one looks awesome.

Anchor: He's referring to *Ultima: The Worldly Lord*, said to be one of the Saturn's biggest games. Boasting a movie-like soundtrack and a huge world to explore, it's just one of 20 games that Sega planned to make available for people purchasing the system. Other games launching with the Saturn include new versions of the popular *John Madden Football* series, and a home version of the arcade hit *Virtua Cop* where you're a police officer who guns down bad guys.

Boy: \*with his mom, he's wearing a Sonic the Hedgehog baseball cap and t-shirt\* Well, my mom said she'd get it for me but they said there weren't any Sonic games so I decided maybe to wait for Christmas instead.

Reporter: You look disappointed, are you disappointed that there aren't any Sonic games to buy?

Mom: He was heartbroken. I asked the Sega employee about Sonic games and he said they were working on them but that he didn't know when one would be available. It's kind of a shame, that they wouldn't have them because that's the whole reason we bought the Genesis in the first place.

Anchor: *Sonic the Hedgehog* was completely absent from the presentation today, and when we talked to Sega representatives, they told us the same thing, that any games starring the beloved blue mascot wouldn't be ready until at least next year. As of right now there are plenty of Sega Saturns remaining for purchase at the mall and throughout the Minneapolis

area, though Sega expects them to be in short supply as the holiday season approaches.

-from the September 2, 1995 evening KMSP-TV newscast

*The Sega Saturn launched yesterday morning in North America, and fans lined up in droves to buy it, but initial sales reports are said to be disappointing. Most of the criticism circles around the Saturn's \$399 price point, which is said to be above what most middle-class Americans are willing to pay for a video game console. When you look under the hood, however, there's reason for the Saturn's high price, and most technology analysts have concluded that the price is likely a bargain, considering the Saturn's technical specifications.*

*The Sega Saturn utilizes a 64-bit VR4200 processor capable of running at 86.75 MHz, with a Silicon Graphics "Reality" GPU coprocessor running at 62 MHz. The system contains 4 megabytes of random access memory, which is by far the most RAM ever featured in a home console device, comparable to mid-range family computers and almost certainly a large reason for the Saturn's high price. It utilizes CD-ROM discs as its medium, similar to the discs for the Sega CD peripheral, though the Saturn's CD-ROM discs are a bit higher in terms of memory capacity. The system utilizes a six-button controller with additional shoulder button inputs, allowing for a variety of arcade-like control layouts. Initially, the Saturn was to utilize quadrilateral shapes for its graphics, but when Silicon Graphics told Sega that it would be easier to use triangular shapes, Sega relented and games now feature triangular shapes. The Saturn is capable of rendering both 2-D and 3-D graphics with ease due to its unique Dual Transfer Engine, hardwired into the system's graphics chips. Originally the Saturn was conceived as a 2-D device, but once Silicon Graphics came on board, developers in Japan worked with SGI to create a way for the Saturn to easily display both 2-D and 3-D graphics and switch back and forth between them on the fly, enabling the creation of games that utilize both at the same time, or enabling developers to choose between a more retro graphical style, as seen in popular Japanese anime games, or to emulate the cutting-edge 3-D graphics in the latest PC and arcade games.*

*All of these graphical tricks and tools make the Sega Saturn the most advanced gaming device on the market, and its strategy seems somewhat similar to that of the 3DO, which debuted in 1993 to critical acclaim but also a steep price tag of over \$700. The Saturn is significantly more capable than that device, and at 300 dollars less, it appears to be a much bigger bargain, but with Sega having to compete with Nintendo's popular Super Nintendo and its CD peripheral, it will be an uphill battle for the company to convince gamers to make the leap forward. Perhaps once more "killer apps", particularly a new Sonic the Hedgehog game, are released, Sega fans will hop on board with the Saturn and ride the wave to a new generation of video game consoles.*

-from the September 3, 1995 episode of *Computer Chronicles*

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*"For all the bluster about the high launch price, the truth is that the Saturn is an amazing game console. The graphics blow away anything I've ever seen and there's a launch game for just about everyone, there's RPGs, there's platformers, there's shooter games, racing games, sports games, fighting games, it's the best launch line-up I've ever seen even if it lacks a true 'killer app' in the traditional sense. The truth is that the Sega Saturn is only going to get better as time goes on and I imagine if the high price hurts sales, there's going to be a price cut at some point (the Genesis got a HUGE one early on if you all remember). Whether or not you wait to buy it, you'll want to get a Sega Saturn if you're a Sega fan. This*

*is probably the best we've ever felt about a console launch."*

-Ed Semrad, from an editorial in the October 1995 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

### **Ace Combat**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 8

Al: 7.5

Sushi-X: 5 (quote: "The graphics might be good, but this is pretty much just another boring air combat game. I wasn't a huge fan of this in the arcades and it's not any better on the Saturn.")

### **Astal**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 7 (quote: "This game looks really pretty and plays a bit like *Jewels Of The Realm*, but the combat's pretty simplistic compared to that game and the levels get pretty boring after a while. I wish there were more variety in levels and enemies.")

Al: 8.5

Sushi-X: 6

### **Bases Loaded '96: Double Header**

Ed: 3 (quote: "They promised us an MLB game! What happened? Instead we get another entry in the Bases Loaded series and it's definitely the worst of the bunch. It looks like an SNES-CD game and a crappy one at that.")

Danyon: 4.5

Al: 4

Sushi-X: 5

### **Bug!**

Ed: 7.5

Danyon: 5

Al: 7 (quote: "This is a decently fun platformer, though it's not the killer-app mascot title we were hoping for. Instead it's just a solid action game with some nice graphics and decent music.")

Sushi-X: 7

### **Clockwork Knight**

Ed: 8.5

Danyon: 8.5 (quote: "This fun and creative platformer features beautiful graphics and wonderfully animated boss fights. It might be the best platformer we played at launch.")

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 7

### **Corpse Killer**

Ed: 3

Danyon: 1.5

Al: 1 (quote: "No. Just no.")

Sushi-X: 3

### **Daytona USA**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 8

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 6.5 (quote: "It's a fun and pretty game but it's way too short. We wish Sega had taken advantage of the console medium to add a few more cars and levels.")

### **Golden Axe: The Duel**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7

Al: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.5 (quote: "It's not a bad fighting game by any means but is it wrong to ask for a traditional beat-em-up side-scroller? I do love what this game did with the classic Golden Axe characters and the animation trumps anything on the competition's systems.")

### **Madden '96**

Ed: 5.5

Danyon: 8

Al: 7 (quote: "It seems like EA didn't spend that much time bumping up the graphics for the Saturn, it's a good looking game but it could look a lot better. Maybe next year?")

Sushi-X: 5.5

### **MagiQuest**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7 (quote: "Maybe the prettiest of the Saturn launch games, with a lot of fun combat, we just wish the storyline was anywhere near as good as Secret of Mana. The dungeons got really repetitive after a while and there's only so much hack and slash magic action I can take.")

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 6

### **NBA Jam: Tournament Edition**

Ed: 9 (quote: "Looks even better than it does in the arcade and they added tons of new announcer quotes too. The best arcade NBA game available.")

Danyon: 9

Al: 7.5

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **NHL '96**

Ed: 9.5

Danyon: 9.5 (quote: "This might just be the best hockey game ever made, with superb graphics and tons of customization options. For NHL junkies, this game is the Saturn's killer app.")

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9

### **Panzer Dragoon**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9

Al: 9 (quote: "Utterly gorgeous, the best looking video game ever released on a home console. Star Fox, move over, there's a new king of rail shooters and it's Panzer Dragoon.")

Sushi-X: 9

### **Primal Rage**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 5 (quote: "This really could've used more of an upgrade, it barely looks better than it did on the Mega Charger.")

### **Solar Eclipse**

Ed: 6.5

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7.5 (quote: "I had a lot of fun with this game, the FMV sequences are a bit hokey but don't take away from the great rail shooter action.")

### **Ultima: The Worldly Lord**

Ed: 8.5

Danyon: 9.5 (quote: "Could this game top Final Fantasy VI as the RPG of the year? It's damn close. The graphical compromises made were worth it when you consider just how huge this world really is, and the soundtrack is absolutely astonishing.")

Al: 9.5

Sushi-X: 8

### **Virtua Cop**

Ed: 9 (quote: "I had way too much fun with this pitch-perfect port. It's even fun to play with a controller but you'll have a blast with the light gun.")

Danyon: 9

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 8

### **Virtua Fighter**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8.5

Al: 9.5

Sushi-X: 9.5 (quote: "Still the reigning king of 3-D fighters, this port is the smoothest and best looking yet.")

### **Virtua Racing**

Ed: 7.5 (quote: "It's a bit primitive in terms of options compared to other racing games out there but only Daytona USA comes close in terms of graphical clarity.")

Danyon: 9

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 8

## **Worldwide Soccer**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 7

Al: 8.5 (quote: "I'm not a huge soccer fan but Worldwide Soccer is an awesome way to get me excited about the sport, I had trouble putting it down!")

Sushi-X: 8.5

-excerpted from reviews of the Sega Saturn's launch games in the October and November 1995 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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"*Saturday has come and gone, but if you're still on the fence about buying a Sega Saturn, it's time to come down on one side or the other. We played the hell out of the Saturn over the last few weeks and now it's time for the verdict. It's an all-Sega Saturn episode of GameTV and it's starting right now!*"

-Ted Crosley, from the introduction to the September 5, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany Saldita: When it comes right down to it, *MagiQuest* is no *Secret of Mana*, but I still thought it was a really good game.

Kazzi DeCarlo: Yeah, I had a fun time with it. I wish you could use the big spells more often but I guess that would've wrecked the difficulty of the game.

Brittany: It's not that hard of a game. It really is a game designed for younger players. That's not a bad thing but when you're pushing it as one of your big launch titles, you need to make it a more well-rounded game and I thought *MagiQuest* kind of failed at that.

Kaz: It's a little girls' game, you can say it!

Brittany: It's not a little girls' game and that's not a bad thing!

Kaz: Tom Kalinske made it for his daughters to play and I have some advice: just let your kids play *Secret of Mana*.

Brittany: But wouldn't that be like the president of Coke chugging a Pepsi, or Ronald McDonald eating a Whopper?

Kaz: Now I'm hungry.

Brittany: I give *MagiQuest* a 3.5. The graphics are gorgeous and the combat is really fun, but not fun enough to not be repetitive after slogging through the same damn dungeon

three or four times.

Kaz: And I give it a 3.5 for having awesome spells and cool bosses, but, yeah, what Brittany said, the dungeons and quests are repetitive and it's a little girls' game.

(...)

Alex Stansfield: *Ultima: The Worldly Lord* was awesome, I thought it was the best Ultima game ever, even better than *Ultima VII* which was an RPG classic. I loved exploring the world, I loved recruiting people to come to your town, I loved being able to build my town into this huge city, or seeing what else I could build it into.

Ted Crosley: Yeah Alex, I'm with you on the game being awesome. I've never been keen on *Ultima* games, I thought a lot of them were boring but this game seems custom made for the console experience. It plays a LOT differently from *Ultima Underworld* on the Sega-CD and I really appreciated that.

Alex: The music, I want to talk about the music because-

Ted: The music was amazing. And the guy who composed it, I heard he was only 19 when he did it!

Alex: Yeah, Jeremy Soule has a promising career ahead of him. He's going to be doing movies. He's as good as John Williams.

Ted: I wouldn't go that far but he's amazing, I love how the music switches between areas with no need to load it or anything, it switches with characters, it switches with the mood, it's so dynamic and a real testament to what the Sega Saturn can do.

Alex: I give *Ultima: The Worldly Lord* a perfect 5. It's the best RPG I've played since *Secret of Mana*, it's just that damn good.

Ted: I give it a 4.5. I almost gave it a five but it can be a bit slowly paced and some of the dungeons were repetitive. That said, it's a really fun game in a huge world and you all should be playing it if you have a Sega Saturn.

(...)

John Walden: *Daytona USA* is a bit of a short game but it was really really fun.

Ted: Yeah, it's as good as I remember it being in the arcade.

John: It was a tough choice for me between this and Virtua Racing, I gotta say I prefer Daytona but it's a tough call.

Ted: Honestly I liked Virtua Racing a lot more. Daytona is a decent game but I thought Virtua Racing was a more solid racing game, Daytona needed some more tracks, maybe some better music-

John: You don't like Daaaaaaaaaaaaayyyyytooooooooooooooooonnnnaaaaaaa?

Ted: I liked that one but the rest of the soundtrack was kind of blah for me. I give Daytona

USA a 3.5 for being true to the arcade and a lot of fun but way too short to be a truly great game.

John: I give it a 4.0, it's a blast to play especially with friends.

(...)

Brittany: Being a hockey fan, NHL '96 is the real deal. I always liked hockey but there haven't been many games to capture the experience of playing an NHL game in video game form, but this, this one is fantastic.

John: Yeah, a LOT of good sports games on the Saturn but this one was the best I thought.

Brittany: Well, the graphics are great and the commentary is all there, probably the best commentary in any video game. It looks like a TV broadcast in some ways.

John: The NHL series has always been huge for Sega and I'm glad EA decided to have this game available at launch.

Brittany: It's a definite 4.5 for me. It's everything you could ask for in an NHL game.

John: I give it a 4.5 too. Only thing better than this is going to the actual game.

(...)

Kaz: *Virtua Cop*, for my money, the best damn Saturn launch game! It's even better looking than the arcade and you gotta have a lightgun too.

Ted: That's the thing, I thought, you know, maybe this should have come with a lightgun. But honestly, I still enjoyed it. It's still a great game and another reason why Sega kicks Nintendo's ass.

Kaz: Yeah, their best lightgun game is what, that Yoshi game they have?

Ted: \*laughing\* This is no Yoshi game, this game, you shoot criminals, you have a hell of a time doing it, I had a lot of fun.

Kaz: I'm giving *Virtua Cop* a perfect 5!

Ted: I'm giving it a 4, it's a lot of fun but it's still kind of short and pretty simplistic in terms of gameplay. The Saturn port is great though, definitely worth a purchase if you loved it in the arcade.

(...)

Ted: *Panzer Dragoon*, what did you think of it?

Alex: I was really impressed but not blown away. I thought it looked amazing, the water looks awesome, but it's still somewhat lacking compared to other rail-shooter games like *Starfox*.

Ted: Oh no, no! No, there's no way *Starfox* is better than this, it had the stupid Muppets!

Alex: The Muppets are not stupid!

Ted: *Panzer Dragoon* has a great story but it cuts out all the BS that *Starfox* had and is just a really, really good game with lots of challenge and lots of fun.

Alex: I don't see why you have to trash *Starfox* to praise this game. It IS really good but it's not the best Saturn game.

Ted: To be honest it's a close one between this and *Ultima* for me. I'm giving it a 4.5, it could stand to be a bit longer but it's an amazing looking game and really fun to play.

Alex: I give it a 4, it's definitely gorgeous and fun but it's not quite up there with the best of the best.

(...)

\*Ted, Alex, Brittany, John, and Kaz are all sitting around a table in front of a big TV, holding Saturn controllers in their hands at the end of the episode.\*

Ted: Overall, it's pretty clear to me that the Sega Saturn is the future of gaming. There's already tons of great games out for it and the technology is super advanced, it's only going to get better from here.

Alex: I was really impressed with everything the Saturn could do but I'd hold off until the Ultra Nintendo comes out before making a judgment call one way or the other.

Ted: Yeah, I'm sure our viewers would be happy waiting until the 5th of Never to get your opinion on the Sega Saturn.

Brittany: Simmer down you two. For me, it comes down to how fun the games are, and the Saturn has a lot of really fun games. *Ultima* was awesome but I was really disappointed in *MagiQuest* and I'm hoping we see some good RPGs coming in the future. I'd love to see *Phantasy Star V* blow all of us away when it comes out in a couple years or so.

John: The Saturn had some really good sports games, though let's not talk about *Bases Loaded* as I was really disappointed in it. *Madden*, *NBA Jam*, and *NHL '96* were all really good, so if you're a sports gamer you'll definitely want to pick up the Saturn.

Kaz: Can we PLEASE talk about *Bug*? I had a great time playing *Bug*, who needs *Sonic* when you've got *Bug* to bug out with?

Ted: That's one thing I wanted to talk about.

Kaz: *Bug*?

Ted: *Sonic*. We NEED a *Sonic* game for this thing Sega, hurry up and make one!

Alex: Well I know that I'm plenty happy with *Super Mario World 3*, now available on the Super Nintendo CD to play right now.

Ted: \*rolls his eyes\*

Brittany: And that's the thing that gamers are going to have to look at, is the Saturn a better bargain than the Super Nintendo CD?

Ted: Yes.

Alex: Ermmmm...

Ted: Shush!

Kaz: Remember when Sega did that commercial about the kid who had to pay an arm and a leg for his Super Nintendo CD?

Alex: \*laughing\* Oh, the irony!

Ted: But this is different, the Saturn IS worth the money. I mean, so is the SNES-CD but the Saturn is NOT overpriced. Look at how much the 3DO was!

Alex: Okay, I will concede that the Saturn, for what it can do, is probably a bargain and if you get the 500 dollar combo set it's an even bigger bargain.

Ted: Thank you!

John: Can I just say, I think Ultima is probably a contender for Game of the Year. If you want a "killer app" for the Sega Saturn, there's a really good place to start.

Brittany: Agreed.

Alex: Ultima was amazing.

Ted: That's all the time we've got for today, I think it's safe to say that everyone here at *GameTV* liked the Sega Saturn, but with that 400 dollar price tag it's up to you, the gamer, to decide if it's worth buying. I say it is, but it's entirely up to you. Next week, we're gonna be talking *Mortal Kombat 3*, launching for Super Nintendo CD and Sega Genesis next week, it's gonna be a bloodbath! See you next time and as always, never stop playing.

-excerpted from the September 5, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

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*You're gonna be seeing a lot of reviews of the Sega Saturn launch games, but which ones should you buy and which ones should you pass up? Here at Next Generation Magazine, we're gonna cut through all the BS and count 'em all down, Casey Kasem style, so you know which ones live up to the hype and which ones aren't worth the plastic they're printed on.*

#20: Bases Loaded '96: Double Header

*This miserable baseball stinker is plagued with graphical glitches and some really lousy gameplay. Our advice, wait until Frank Thomas' Big Hurt Baseball hits the Saturn later this year.*

#19: Corpse Killer

*This FMV-based game was fun when it first showed up on the Sega CD, but it looks positively dated on the Saturn and the horror and special effects are as lame as they come.*

**#18: Ace Combat**

*We weren't fans of the original arcade game and though the graphics are quite nice, the gameplay is pretty boring compared to other aerial combat games.*

**#17: Solar Eclipse**

*This game's a poor man's Starfox at best and the graphics really don't show off everything the Saturn can do. Combine that with some truly hokey FMV scenes and you've got a pretty mediocre game.*

**#16: Astal**

*We loved the colorful, almost anime-style graphics, but the gameplay itself is pretty derivative of the genre.*

**#15: Worldwide Soccer**

*Not a bad soccer game, but we're still gonna wait for FIFA.*

**#14: Primal Rage**

*The graphics could've been a lot better but pounding the crap out of other prehistoric creatures never gets old.*

**#13: Bug!**

*We really liked the tight platforming action of this game and though it was a bit unoriginal, it still looks and plays quite well. For those Saturn fans sad about missing out on Super Mario World 3, this is a decent substitute.*

**#12: NBA Jam: Tournament Edition**

*Not much got upgraded here from last gen but it's still the best version of NBA Jam you're going to find on a home console.*

**#11: Madden '96**

*This game looks really nice and plays better than any Madden so far. One gripe: where's Create-A-Play mode?*

**#10: Virtua Racing**

*Honestly, the Mega Charger version is almost as good. The draw distance improvement is a big plus but it's largely the same as what we got last gen.*

**#9: MagiQuest**

*You'll never play a faster-paced action RPG than this really fun game starring three young witches on a magical journey. It could've used a better story but with combat this addictive, who can complain?*

**#8: Clockwork Knight**

*This game does things that a lot of platformers don't do. We loved the fantastical style and fun characters and we couldn't help but play through it more than once.*

**#7: Virtua Fighter**

*The best looking Virtua Fighter yet. 'Nuff said.*

#6: Virtua Cop

*It's easy to see why this excellent shooter game is a hit in the arcade. We were addicted pretty quickly, trying to best each other's high scores, and the graphics transitioned perfectly in this very well made port.*

#5: Daytona USA

*The best arcade racer...maybe ever finally gets a console worthy of displaying it in all of its awesomeness. Out of all the Saturn games, this one was the most fun to play in four-player mode, the racing is really tight and it runs perfectly on the Saturn's lightning-fast processor.*

#4: Golden Axe: The Duel

*Does a classic side-scrolling franchise really translate well to the fighting game genre? We say...absolutely yes! It features some of the best 2-D graphics we've ever seen and blistering combos that rival even that of Nintendo's Killer Instinct.*

#3: Ultima: The Worldly Lord

*We imagine that a world this huge could only have been possible on the Sega Saturn. You'll get lost, but in the most wonderful of ways, as you explore this enormous world searching out quests and finding new residents for your growing town.*

#2: NHL '96

*EA outdoes themselves with this superb Saturn hockey game, providing the closest thing we've yet seen to making a video sports game look like it does on TV.*

#1: Panzer Dragoon

*The perfect showcase for the Saturn's amazing graphics, this stunningly beautiful and fun rail-shooter shows us all what "next generation" is all about.*

-excerpted from the November 1995 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

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*"Looking back, do I wish there was more we could've done with the Sega Saturn launch in North America? Rush a Sonic game to market? Get that price down? Sure. But even if the sales weren't there, the gaming press loved us. And as I kept telling the staff as that year went on, it's a marathon, not a sprint."*

-from a July 2008 interview with Tom Kalinske for *GamePro* magazine

*"I appreciated the gesture, obviously. It's one of the greatest gifts if not the greatest gift my dad's ever gotten for me. I played MagiQuest a LOT after my dad gave me my copy, I loved it and I loved being a part of it and everything about the game was a lot of fun. But...I still prefer Secret of Mana. I didn't have the heart to tell him for a long time but I think a few years later I finally told him and he understood. It's the thought that counts though, right?"*

-Ashley Kalinske in an article in the USC student newspaper, November 13, 2003

*"Sega pretty much got me my start in the game industry and I'm always going to be grateful to them. Being such a huge part of the Sega Saturn's launch and everything surrounding it was so gratifying, and it gave me a lot of mainstream exposure. I imagine it's a big reason why I got this job!"*

-Jeremy Soule, speaking about his work in video games in an interview with *Entertainment Weekly* about his work scoring the upcoming *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy, August 25, 2000

*"If the Sega Saturn had had a true 'killer app' to go along with that 400 dollar price tag, it might have been an immediate success the same way the economically-priced Mega Charger had been. Ultimately, the Saturn had plenty of 'good games' and a few 'very good' games, but the closest thing it had to truly 'great' games were Panzer Dragoon and Ultima: The Worldly Lord, both somewhat niche titles that people weren't exactly stampeding into stores in order to buy. Nevertheless, the Saturn had largely stuck the landing on its launch, releasing the console at the perfect time with an already impressive library of games. It would be up to Sega of America and Sega of Japan to work together and convince skeptical Genesis owners that they needed a Sega Saturn in their lives. The one thing that Sega had on its side was time, but even that would eventually run out."*

-from an article on IGN.com, "The Sega Saturn's First 18 Months"

## **September 18, 1995**

Tom Kalinske had reviewed the sales figures for the Saturn's launch, and while they weren't disastrous, they weren't all that great either. The Saturn had sold 55,000 units on launch day in North America, with 25,000 of those being the Virtua Arcade Set. While far far far short of Kalinske's wildest dreams pie-in-the-sky 2 million figure, it was still far from being a complete failure. Saturn had actually had a better launch day than the SNES-CD did upon its release, though Sega had spent far more on advertising and events related to the launch. He knew a price cut had to come at some point, it was only a matter of when Sega of Japan saw fit to do it.

Things were looking up. The Genesis had a big holiday season on the way with games like *Vectorman* and *Phantasy Star IV* leading the charge, and the Saturn's first holiday season looked to be even better, featuring games like *Ridge Racer*, *Myst*, and *Rayman*. And 1996, when the Saturn's first true killer apps were set to be released, looked to be the year that might just turn the tide.

Kalinske's phone rang.

*"I imagine that's Al or Diane wanting to talk about one of the upcoming Saturn releases,"* said Kalinske, though he hoped it wasn't someone from Sega of Japan offering 'suggestions' to boost sales. He picked up the phone. "Hello?"

"Dad!" came the voice on the other end of the line. It was Tom Kalinske's daughter Ashley and she had been playing *MagiQuest*. "I just beat the game!"

"Huh? Oh...you mean *MagiQuest*?"

"Uh huh, just beat the final boss and it was a lot of fun!"

"You already beat it?" Kalinske said with some laughter. "You've only had it a couple of weeks, I'll have to talk to your mom about letting you play video games too much..."

"Well...she let me play it more because it's the game you made for me," said Ashley. "And I read what you put in the credits!"

Tom Kalinske immediately remembered the message he'd put in the 'Special Thanks' part of *MagiQuest*'s credits, crediting his three daughters for being the inspiration for the game and thanking them for being the light of his life. It almost brought a tear to his eye to hear how

much Ashley appreciated the message.

"Well...the game wouldn't have even happened if it wasn't for the three of you..."

"Thank you daddy!" Ashley replied, beaming over the phone. "It was really special seeing our names in the credits...."

"You guys are the most important things in my life, you know that?"

Ashley giggled and nodded.

"I know and we miss you daddy, now that the Sega Saturn is out will you have to work so much?"

"I think my vacation's coming up in a couple weeks, I'll let you guys know as soon as I do, okay?"

"Okay...thanks again for making this game for us!"

"Sure thing sweetie, I love you, tell your mom and sisters too okay?"

"Okay, I love you too daddy!"

Tom Kalinske slowly put the phone back on the receiver and let out a sigh, a big smile on his face, a smile like he'd just moved five million Sega Saturns in a single day. Whatever happened with Sega and Nintendo, there wasn't anything in the world that could make him happier than hearing the joy in his daughter's voice. He didn't care how good *Secret of Mana* was. In his mind, the greatest game of all time would always be *MagiQuest*.

Or....maybe *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*.

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*"Toshinden was meant to really show off the 3-D capabilities of the Super Nintendo CD and it came out at the perfect time considering that the Saturn came out that very same month. It looks very dated now but back when it was released I was very proud of it, we got quite a lot out of that wonderful little machine!"*

-Ken Kutaragi

*"Tales of the Seven Seas really kind of began its life as a side project we worked on while trying to figure out how to get the SNES-CD to do the kind of 3-D that we wanted it to do. We'd spend hours tossing out ideas for it and it really took on a life of its own. The moment I knew it was gonna be big was when me and one of the other writers got into our first serious screaming match over a plot point. If it meant that much to us, it would mean that much to our fans too."*

-Mark Cerny, co-creator of *Tales Of The Seven Seas* and current creative director at the Nintendo Treehouse, in a December 2012 interview with [TheNintendoProject.com](http://TheNintendoProject.com)

*"September 1995 was, for my money, the best month for fighting games in history. You had Virtua Fighter and Golden Axe on the Saturn launch, you had Killer Instinct, Battle Arena*

*Toshinden, and Mortal Kombat 3 on the Super Nintendo CD, you had several excellent arcade games coming out... what shocked me was how well all of them sold despite the competition. There's nothing deeper than the wallet of a fighting game junkie but that's a hell of a lot of quarters."*

-Ken Williams, AKA "Sushi-X", posting on Rootalk

*"I am NOT going back to that gilded cage! I may miss my clothes and my money and my nice, soft bed, but I do NOT miss everyone telling me what I cannot be!"*

-Victoria, *Tales Of The Seven Seas*

*"You spoony bard!"*

-Tellah, *Final Fantasy IV*, speaking one of the popular lines that remained in the SNES-CD remake

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*"Nintendo's Killer Instinct was an enormous shock when it hit the arcades in 1994. They didn't even have their next-gen deal with Sony finalized at the time, but the game itself was outstanding and showed what Nintendo was capable of in terms of next-gen graphical content. It really made us stand up and take notice, in terms of what kind of games we were going to be able to make with Nintendo going forward. We did end up making games for both the Ultra and the Saturn, but the release of Killer Instinct definitely pulled us a lot closer into Nintendo's orbit. If their next generation games were going to look THAT good, imagine the possibilities for our games."*

-Hideo Kojima

*"Was Killer Instinct a prototype of Ultra? Well, nope, at least not in hardware, but more software and philosophy, Killer Instinct was something more like an indirect jab to Sega when they were pushing their '3D' with their blocky Virtua Fighter, we showed something better and more dynamic and we succeeded. How the future would take shape was different, but it seems Killer Instinct made its impact in the business."*

-Ken Lobb

## **September 11, 1995**

*Killer Instinct* is released in North America for the Super Nintendo CD. The game is a significant graphical downgrade from the original arcade version but still features decent 3-D graphics and a quick framerate (with a bit of slowdown during graphically heavy scenes). The game also preserves the arcade edition's soundtrack via use of the CD medium to store songs and sound effects, making the game at the very least a reasonable facsimile of the arcade experience. The home console port is extremely well received by the gaming media, praised for being just about as good a translation from the arcade version as possible and pushing the Super Nintendo CD close to its limits in terms of technological ability. The game is one of Nintendo's most hyped of the year and sells extremely well in its initial release week, less than *Doom* and *Super Mario World 3* by a considerable amount but still one of the hottest video game launches of the year.

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## **Battle Arena Toshinden:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 8

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 8 (quote: "This fighter features fantastic graphics but the gameplay is a bit generic. Still, it's nice to see that a good 3-D fighter is possible on the SNES-CD's tech.")

### **Brandish:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 9

Al: 7.5 (quote: "This dungeon crawler features some serious challenge and a very good soundtrack. The controls are a bit confusing but it's still worth delving into this dungeon.")

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Final Fantasy IV:**

Ed: 9 (quote: "This is an excellent remake that adds so much clarity to the story and provides hardcore gamers with a real challenge.")

Danyon: 9

Al: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8

### **Killer Instinct:**

Ed: 8.5

Danyon: 9 (quote: "It's as fast and furious as the original arcade hit! Rare's outdone itself!")

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9.5

### **Mortal Kombat 3:**

Ed: 7.5

Danyon: 6.5 (quote: "Is the Mortal Kombat formula wearing a bit thin? Perhaps, but I did love the character variety.")

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 8

### **NBA Give 'n Go:**

Ed: 7 (quote: "This fun game brings great arcade-style NBA action to the SNES-CD.")

Danyon: 7

Al: 6.5

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **NBA Live '96:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8.5

Al: 7.5 (quote: "This year's NBA Live features the best graphics yet and the customization options are highly welcome.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Spider-Man: Showdown With Venom:**

Ed: 7  
Danyon: 7  
Al: 7  
Sushi-X: 7.5 (quote: "Spider-Man fans should find plenty to love about this game.")

### **Starblade Alpha:**

Ed: 7  
Danyon: 7  
Al: 6 (quote: "It sure looks pretty but it's a lot easier than other space shooters.")  
Sushi-X: 6

### **Theme Park:**

Ed: 4.5 (quote: "It seemed like fun to be able to make your own amusement park but there's a lot of clutter in the menus and the crowd AI is pretty bad.")  
Danyon: 5.5  
Al: 5.5  
Sushi-X: 4

### **Schemes And Dreams:**

Ed: 3 (quote: "This FMV title seems to take inspiration from 3DO's Plumbers Don't Wear Ties. It's a lot less raunchy and it actually has real video cutscenes, but the plotline is boring and the acting is hideous.")  
Danyon: 2.5  
Al: 5  
Sushi-X: 2.5

### **The World Wars:**

Ed: 6  
Danyon: 7.5  
Al: 7.5 (quote: "Another Koei strategy game, this is a pretty fun way to play out the two World Wars, with plenty of tactical options.")  
Sushi-X: 7

### **Tales Of The Seven Seas:**

Ed: 9.5 (quote: "I couldn't stop playing this game until I discovered all the secrets it held, some very very close to its chest.")  
Danyon: 9  
Al: 9.5  
Sushi-X: 9.5

### **Mysteria:**

Ed: 8  
Danyon: 8 (quote: "Even though the plot is somewhat generic, I still loved this anime-inspired RPG.")  
Al: 8

Sushi-X: 8

### **Naval Guns:**

Ed: 8.5

Danyon: 9

Al: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.5 (quote: "I didn't expect to have so much fun with this game but I really did thanks to the huge variety of playable boats.")

-reviews of September 1995's SNES-CD games from the October and November 1995 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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### **Sailing The Seven Seas – How A Side Project Became A Video Game Classic**

In 1994, Jason Rubin and Andy Gavin were at a creative crossroads. Their company, Naughty Dog, was attempting to create a brand new video game that would take advantage of the 3-D graphical technology that was becoming available to the industry. They began to work on a 3-D platforming game that would utilize perspective to create a vivid three-dimensional world while keeping required processing power to a minimum. They began to jokingly nickname their project the "Sonic's Ass Game", since the camera perspective would be focused behind the character as he walked, forcing the player to look at his backside the entire game. Initially, Naughty Dog considered producing games for the upcoming Sega Saturn system, knowing it would have the most graphical power to produce the most impressive games. But Rubin and Gavin also knew that putting their games on Nintendo's Super Nintendo CD would bring in more potential sales, despite the technological limitations. While Naughty Dog began to work on its 3-D platforming game (with their work on the "Sonic's Ass Game" concept somewhat explored in the 1996 sidescrolling platformer *Dog Dash*, and then fully realized with *Crash Bandicoot* on the Ultra Nintendo Entertainment System in 1997), its developers also tossed around other potential game ideas. One idea they kept coming back to, an idea initially conceived by Andy Gavin and Mark Cerny, was the idea of a pirate adventure game. The success of *The Secret Of Monkey Island* in 1994 intrigued them, though Cerny wanted a game with much more playability, preserving the charming characters and funny storyline of *Monkey Island* while turning the concept into a full-on action game. Gavin and Cerny, along with Rubin and others at Naughty Dog, tossed around ideas for several months before a game began to take shape. By 1995, Sony had taken notice of Naughty Dog's work and *Tales Of The Seven Seas* had found a publisher. One of the greatest video games to grace the SNES-CD had been born.

-excerpted from "Naughty Dog: 25 Years Of Games", an IGN.com article published on July 29, 2014

### **Tales Of The Seven Seas – The Basics**

*Tales of The Seven Seas* is at its heart and soul an action-platformer game, though the game mixes a variety of genres, including puzzling, open-world exploration, shooting, visual novel, and RPG elements. The OTL games it most resembles are the Genesis/Saturn games *Beyond Oasis* and *Legend of Oasis*. The game is a level-based game, but after the initial two levels, the game opens up completely, allowing players to select from a variety of missions, called "chapters", at all times. There are seven playable characters in all, and the character you play as depends on the chapter. Some chapters allow you to play as any character,

some allow you to choose between certain characters, and some force you to use a specific character. On the chapter select screen, which takes the form of an overworld map that your ship can sail around to access playable chapters (marked by Xs on the map), most available chapters won't advance the story. The game tells you which ones do before you select them, it also tells you what chapters will no longer be available if you select a chapter to play, or what ones will become unavailable but available again later on. If you play the game straight through, you'll play through 24 chapters, though there are 110 playable chapters in all, there's no way to play all the chapters in a single playthrough but if you use a guide and follow it exactly, you can play through all of them in two (most players will take about four or five playthroughs to play through everything, though some chapters are hard to access). Gameplay usually takes the form of action platforming segments where you either explore a level and battle enemies, each of the seven characters has their own weapon and plays a bit differently. Though characters don't actually level up or obtain different equipment (you can get stronger within chapters by collecting power-ups or through the right dialogue choices), when you attack an enemy, damage numbers will appear and the character you're playing has a life bar. There are no "lives" in the game, when you die you return to the checkpoint which is usually close by. The game isn't very difficult, though some puzzles and bosses can be quite tricky. The game instead plays a lot like a "choose your own adventure" book (which Naughty Dog says they were inspired by) that allows you to take the path through the game that you see fit, using the characters and advancing the storylines that you want to see. It relies more on character and story-based gameplay rather than challenging action, and for this it's widely considered a game ahead of its time. The game features a large soundtrack, and a lot of fully voiced dialogue (the game would become one of the first to utilize professional voice actors on a console, Sony had confidence in the game and shelled out the money to hire them). The graphics are considered average to above average for the SNES-CD, not much 3-D is utilized but the 2-D backgrounds and detailed character designs are highly praised. Nintendo publishes an official strategy guide for the game, at 236 pages it's Nintendo's largest strategy guide until significantly into the Ultra Nintendo's lifespan several years later, and it's largely considered better than Prima's strategy guide which doesn't include maps for most of the chapters and doesn't cover them all in the detail Nintendo's guide does.

The storyline itself concerns seven young people who are introduced at the start of the game. They are...

Erick: The "main" character (if the game truly has one, Erick is the character who's ending you get if you take the straight-forward path through the game with no side missions), Erick is your typical courageous hero who wants to explore the seas for purposes of adventure and fun. However, when it comes to actual battles and danger, Erick is a bit of a coward, so he'll need encouragement and strength from his friends if he is to fulfill his dreams. Voiced by Jason Marsden, who had also recently finished starring in *A Goofy Movie*.

Dona: Dona is a beautiful rogue of Spanish heritage, she is a wannabe pirate and raider who is quite capable in battle and very headstrong, though she doesn't suffer fools easily and Erick's cowardice is a bit of a bother to her. She becomes somewhat conflicted when she realizes that her pirating and theiving have real consequences. Voiced by Maria Canals, the game becomes her first voice acting performance of many.

Victoria: A beautiful blonde debutante who runs away from home for a life of adventure on the high seas, Victoria seems to have bitten off more than she can chew but she's extremely well educated (in addition to being a prim and proper rich girl, she's also the team's closest thing to a "tech nerd"), despite having a bit of a spoiled attitude she has a

truly warm heart. Voiced by Olivia D'Abo, known largely at the time for playing Karen on *The Wonder Years*, though by 1995 she'd started branching out into voice acting.

Creel: Creel is a boisterous young man who enjoys partying, rum, and punching people, not necessarily in that order. He quickly bonds with Erick and the two become close friends, he helps Erick to find his true courage, though he also sometimes gets his friends into a lot of trouble. Voiced by Will Friedle, at the time mostly known for playing Cory's older brother on *Boy Meets World*.

Albert: Albert is an escaped slave from a Caribbean plantation, despite his rough life he has a very sensitive and gentle demeanor and greatly appreciates his new friends. He and Dona are probably the team's most experienced navigators, Albert spent lots of time studying sailing in secret while planning to make his escape, and he takes to the seas quite quickly. He and Victoria greatly distrust one another but not for reasons you might think. Voiced by Giancarlo Esposito, whose other recent work included the 1993 video game *Meteora*.

McKenna: A young girl, the youngest of the seven playable characters, McKenna is a bold sneak-thief who spends her time stowing away on ships and stealing food and treasure, though she's currently racked with guilt over an event in her recent past. She and Dona form a sisterly bond over the course of the story (though she can also form a bond with Victoria if you take the right missions). Voiced by Tara Charendoff, who was at the time largely known for doing voices in Canada as a child actress during the 1980s and was only just recently performing in American productions.

Jack: A young boy, one year older than McKenna, whose entire family died in a shipwreck, he's distraught over all of this when he gets stuck with his six companions, he's the only one who didn't choose the life of a pirate but he and McKenna bond over the course of the game and he also learns a lot from Erick and Albert as well. Voiced by Toran Caudell, who would later go on to voice the main character in 1996's *Dog Dash*.

These seven characters are brought together at the start of the game, when a massive hurricane destroys the various ships that the seven are on, all but Jack having boarded or stowed away on the ships in search of new lives of freedom on the seas. The seven wash up together on an island, (seemingly) the only survivors of the various shipwrecks. The first two chapters involve them meeting up and getting to know each other (in a sort of tutorial) before they find an enormous wrecked pirate ship on the island. They work together to fix it up and become a pirate crew, exploring the high seas. After Chapter 2, the game fully opens up and you're free to embark on whatever chapters you see fit. Though you'll eventually have to choose the mandatory story-advancing chapters (which may or may not change depending on circumstances), the side chapters you embark on change the characters' relationships. At any time, you can enter the pirate ship and visit the various rooms, talking to characters as any of the playable characters you have available (for example, you can talk to Victoria as Erick, or Albert as McKenna, any combination you desire, and certain dialogue scenes open up chapters or provide power-ups for the next chapter you play). Sometimes certain characters aren't available on the ship (Creel passes out after a mission, Albert temporarily leaves, Victoria gets kidnapped, etc.), limiting dialogue choices at certain times. At other times, there are additional NPC characters on the ship that you can talk to. The dialogue scenes on the ship almost always aren't voiced (though very important ones occasionally are), it's usually in-chapter dialogue that's voiced (again, saved for more important scenes). The path you take through the game largely depends on the relationships the various characters have forged. It's sometimes difficult to know what choices do what, though the game is designed in such a way that if you like a

certain character, the game will largely trend toward focusing on that character more (you get more side missions that involve them, they become available to play in storyline missions that they usually wouldn't be, etc.). It's extremely intuitive for its time (Naughty Dog conducted extensive playtesting to make sure) and one of the game's most highly praised systems. Ultimately, the game's storyline eventually leads up to a final confrontation with the main villain, Admiral Schark, a vicious warlord who seeks to bring all of the Moonlight Islands (the archipelago where the game takes place) under his control. Depending on the path you took through the game, Schark's main subordinate and sometimes the location of the final battle will change, along with the gameplay of the final battle itself, but all paths lead up to a battle with Admiral Schark. The game has seven endings, all of them are happy endings but the ending you get will focus on whichever of the seven characters you had more affinity for during the game. The ending that is considered "canon" is Erick's ending, though all seven endings have largely the same events, it's just focused on a different character.

## September 25, 1995

*Tales Of The Seven Seas* is released for the Super Nintendo CD, amidst a slew of excellent reviews (of that year's games, only *The Legend Of Zelda: The Ocarina of Dreams* had received better reviews up to that time) and a good amount of pre-release hype fueled by Nintendo's enthusiasm for the game. The game exceeds its own lofty sales expectations. Though its launch-day sales don't exceed *Killer Instinct's*, its launch week sales do and its launch month sales exceed *Killer Instinct's* significantly, making it one of the biggest surprise successes of 1995 in the world of gaming. Word of mouth is excellent, the game is covered in the mainstream media and it even kicks off a mini-pirate fad that triggers a spike in the sale of pirate costumes for that year's Halloween. Along with the spike in ninja costume sales (due to the Power Rangers beginning their "ninja" arc earlier that year to coincide with June's feature film), it becomes known as the Halloween of "pirates vs. ninjas". The game is largely credited with undoing the damage that *Cutthroat Island* had done to the pirate genre in mainstream entertainment, and would help to kick off a slew of pirate-themed media in the months and years ahead. For Naughty Dog, the game's success is quite encouraging, and the sequel is immediately placed on the company's "to-do" list behind their upcoming sidescroller *Dog Dash*. The company was at the time wavering on what would later be known as *Crash Bandicoot*, trying to decide whether to attempt to make the game for the SNES-CD or to target it as a launch game for the Ultra Nintendo. The success of *Tales Of The Seven Seas* made that decision for them. *Crash Bandicoot* was Ultra-bound. *Tales of The Seven Seas 2* would take its place as the company's last SNES-CD game, targeted for release in 1997.

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"I remember being told, 'you're crazy to release this game against *Killer Instinct*, Nintendo's gonna kick your ass', but I was confident. *Mortal Kombat* had always dominated the month it had come out in. We dominated in 1993, we dominated in 1994. So what happened in 1995? *Killer Instinct* kicked our ass. Did we still make a ton of sales? Of course. Did we make as many as the first two games did? No. So in retrospect, should we have held off on the game and released it in October against *Ballistic Limit*? Maybe. Should we have rushed it and tried to put it in July against that prissy little anime game? Maybe. Or maybe *Mortal Kombat* just wasn't as big as it used to be. Hell if I know."

-Ed Boon, discussing the home console release of *Mortal Kombat 3* in a podcast for 'Finish Him!' Internet Radio, November 17, 2013

*Mortal Kombat 3* offers up torrents of blood when it debuts on the SNES-CD on September 18th. Featuring even more characters than the first two games, it's definitely the most violent of Nintendo's big trio of fighters coming out this month, but is it the best? Hardcore *Mortal Kombat* loyalists will swear by this game for sure, but graphically it's probably inferior to the other two games and the removal of longtime fan favorites like Scorpion and Kitana will probably piss off a few fans, though Midway has promised their return in future games.

Sony's *Battle Arena Toshinden* is far more intriguing. With 3-D graphics that at times even exceed those of *Killer Instinct*, it's a visual feast for the eyes, but in terms of character variety and gameplay it's a bit lacking and it does suffer from occasional slowdown. Still, for those looking for a refreshing new game, it's a change of pace from *Mortal Kombat* and definitely worth a look. The top SNES-CD fighter of the month is the long awaited *Killer Instinct*, but there are a pair of very viable alternatives for those who haven't bought into the hype.

-excerpted from the October 1995 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

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\*Scenes of Sailor Moon doing battle with monsters begin to play.\*

*She's an international phenomenon, and now for the first time ever, she's coming to American shores!*

Sailor Moon: Moon Prism Power, make up!

*It's Sailor Moon, the most popular anime series of all time, and she's coming to Fox Kids! Join Sailor Moon and the Sailor Guardians as they battle Queen Beryl and her minions!*

Usagi: \*diving out of the way from a monster as it swings its weapon down at her\* Luna....!

Luna: Usagi, hurry and transform into Sailor Moon!

Sailor Mercury: Mercury Bubbles....Spray!

Sailor Mars: Mars Spirit...Fire!

Sailor Jupiter: Jupiter Thunderbolt Power!

Sailor Venus: Venus Crescent Beam!

\*Various scenes are shown of the Sailor Guardians battling monsters.\*

*Can Usagi and her friends Ami, Rei, Makoto, and Minako protect our world from evil, or will Queen Beryl's darkness sweep over all? Find out on Monday September 4th, only on Fox Kids!*

\*The Sailor Moon logo appears on screen along with "September 4th", and "3:00 PM".

-from the official Fox Kids premiere promo for *Sailor Moon*, which began airing throughout the month of August

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"Obviously a lot of us wanted to play *Final Fantasy IV* again. It looked great with those new graphics and I loved the endgame twist of being able to use characters like Yang and Porom again in the final dungeon. But it would've been a crime to overlook *Mysteria*. Though it wasn't as jam-packed with anime cutscenes as the RPG classic *Chrono Trigger* that came out the next year, it was still the first SNES-CD game to really feature Lunar-like cutscenes in an RPG, and was arguably as good as either of those great Sega CD classics. Seeing as how we never got *Lunar 2* in North America, at least not until much later on, *Mysteria* was a lot more than a consolation prize and it actually sold reasonably well despite the competition! It was clear that RPG fans were buying anything they could get their hands on on the SNES-CD."

-SetzerWrath, in a July 2008 blog post on RPGGamer

*Nintendo's Epic Center is huge this month! Final Fantasy II is back, this time as its original title, Final Fantasy IV, with all new updates for the Super Nintendo CD! Also, we'll be covering the incredible new RPG Mysteria and the hardcore dungeon crawler Brandish.*

(...)

*Final Fantasy IV* might be better known to North American players as *Final Fantasy II*, the title with which it originally appeared when it made its debut on the Super Nintendo in 1991. Now that the true *Final Fantasy II* and *III* have been released in the *Final Fantasy Origins* collection, this SNES-CD remake can bear its true name while it shows off all the new bells and whistles that Squaresoft has given it for its big CD makeover, coming to the SNES-CD later this month. It's got all new graphics similar to those in *Final Fantasy VI*, showing off an incredible level of detail to show off the game's cast of colorful characters and its huge two worlds in a whole new light. Its soundtrack has been re-orchestrated for the Super Nintendo CD's high quality audio capabilities, and Ted Woolsey, the man behind the translations of *Final Fantasy V*, *Secret Of Mana*, and *Final Fantasy VI*, has overhauled the game's translation completely. Its brand new and improved script reveals details about the game's characters and story previously known only to Japanese players. Don't worry though, fan-favorite lines such as Tellah's classic "you spoony bard!" are still very much included!

(...)

### **Three Ways To Play**

The new *Final Fantasy IV* asks you to pick a difficulty when you start a New Game. You won't be able to change the difficulty once you select it, so choose wisely! Here are some brief descriptions of the three modes.

**Easytype:** This difficulty mode is the original difficulty given to North American players when they played *Final Fantasy II* on the SNES.

**Hardtype:** This is the original difficulty featured in the game's Japanese release. It gives characters new abilities, but enemies are much tougher and move much faster.

**Mastertype:** This difficulty level is for seasoned *Final Fantasy IV* veterans who want a whole new challenge. It gives enemies much more striking power, a lot more HP, and it mixes up

commonly-used strategies, meaning that the old tried-and-true tactics that worked on bosses in the original game usually won't work here, and many times will send you quickly to the Game Over screen. Only *Final Fantasy IV* masters need apply!

(...)

*Mysteria* is an epic RPG featuring nearly 30 minutes of fully animated, fully voiced cutscenes that bring the action of this beautiful traditional role-playing game to life. The game takes place in a land called Mysteria, and focuses on six young heroes who set out on a journey to defeat the witch queen Lethisis. It's one of the few RPGs that lets you control six characters in battle, and with all these characters in your party there are lots of battle strategies to use on the hordes of enemies and massive bosses that stand in your way. *Mysteria's* combat system makes use of location, before your turn you can move your party members around on a sort of tactical grid to put them in prime position to strike, but be careful not to set yourself up for a vicious counterattack! This epic 50 hour game is one of the biggest and best RPGs of the year and it's only on Super Nintendo CD! We'll walk you through the first few hours of your journey, but remember that the rest of Mysteria is best explored on your own.

-excerpted from the Epic Center section in the September 1995 issue of *Nintendo Power*

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Ted Crosley: *Showdown With Venom* is a decent Spider-Man beat-em-up that gets a bit repetitive at times but has a really good storyline and a good fast paced combat style that definitely fits the character.

John Walden: I kind of disagree with you on the combat, I thought it was a bit too loose for my tastes, with somewhat dubious hits and glitchy moves. I don't know if I got a bad copy of the game but I had a hard time getting a handle on it.

Ted: Honestly, you probably have a point there, for those not used to this series of games, it's really rough getting the hang of the combat system even with practice. Your game's not glitched, I noticed it too but as a Spidey veteran I'm kind of used to it, *Maximum Carnage* on the SNES and the Genesis was the same way. I still had a lot of fun and it's the last time we'll be seeing Peter Parker in a game, next year's Spider-Man game is gonna be introducing Ben Reilly so that'll be a fun one.

John: I'm looking forward to seeing the new Spider-Man finally show up, I just hope the combat's been improved for it. I have to give this game a 2.5. The storyline was good but everything else just didn't click for me.

Ted: I'm giving it a 3.5 but I'll definitely acknowledge that the play control needed to be tightened up just a bit and that if you're new to Spider-Man games you might want to start with *Maximum Carnage*.

(...)

Brittany Saldita: *Tales Of The Seven Seas* was one of my favorite games of the year. I loved the well-balanced cast, I loved the mission progression system, it was just like playing a storybook.

Alex Stansfield: This game is a full-on contender for my Game of the Year. It might even be better than *Ocarina of Dreams* and *Final Fantasy VI*.

Brittany: Let's not go THAT far, I thought the action levels got just a bit repetitive at times, just a tiny bit.

Alex: The game does a really good job of mixing things up, you'll have an action stage and then maybe a puzzle and exploration stage, then there's a stage of pure platforming and then you might even have a foot race, did you get to the foot race?

Brittany: Damn, I didn't play it all!

Alex: There's a level where you're McKenna and you have to beat Baron Couley to the treasure, you have to set traps to bar his path, it's actually really hilarious because McKenna says really funny stuff when he falls into the traps.

Brittany: See, that's another thing, there's almost TOO much to do! I feel like you almost need the guide to see everything, I played about 90 missions and I know there are like 20 more but I just didn't have the time to find them all.

Alex: You played more than I did, I played like 75.

Brittany: We need to go back and talk about this game again after we've 100 percented it. I want to play it again anyway, I loved it.

Alex: I have to give it a 5. It's a fantastic all around game, some of the best characters you'll ever see.

Brittany: I LOVE that they included three girls and not just one. I'm glad they didn't pull a Smurfette and just have guy guy guy girl. They have three girls and ALL of them are fantastic. I thought the rich girl would be a total bitch but then she turns out to be this bookworm and a REALLY kind-hearted person. They explored the subject of race in this game with the character of Albert. This is such a deep and complex game and I'm worried kids who play might not understand all of the little character nuances.

Alex: This is a game for kids and for adults, it's a game for everyone, boys and girls and I think it's gonna be huge.

Brittany: I give it a 4.5. I wanted to give it a 5 and make it our second Hall of Fame game-

Alex: Why didn't you?

Brittany: I just wish the levels had been a bit more different, there were times when I felt they could have been more creative and they weren't. I know it's hard doing 110 of them, but maybe they could have made less chapters, I dunno. It was so close to being a 5 for me though.

Alex: *Tales of the Seven Seas*, definitely highly recommended by GameTV.

Brittany: Absolutely, yes, a wonderful game.

(...)

Ted: *Naval Guns*! It is not a game about guns fired from your belly button.

Alex: No it is not. It's actually a pretty good game, going in I didn't think I'd like it but the more I played, wow.

Ted: Yeah, they give you so many different boats to use on the missions. And you're not just shooting down planes either, they give you a swift boat to go on runs into the jungle, you've got a speed boat, you can do submarine missions, those were my favorite part.

Alex: Graphics were good too. The music was really repetitive, I gotta say that's a knock on it.

Ted: Well, it's a realistic naval combat game, music's not an important thing. I turned the music off. The sound effects were fantastic, get a surround sound system and you can hear those booming battleship guns, they shake the room!

Alex: That was pretty cool.

Ted: I'm giving *Naval Guns* a 4. Probably the best video game about boats ever made.

Alex: I give it a 3.5, again, it could've used better music and I would've liked to see some kind of multiplayer mode! But, you know, for the most part a really solid game.

-excerpted from the September 26, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: September 1995**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Donkey Kong Country
3. Victory
4. Super Mario World 2
5. Final Fantasy VI
6. Primal Rage
7. Super Squadron X: Critical Dawn
8. NBA Jam: Tournament Edition
9. WWF Wrestlemania
10. Gex
11. Super Punch-Out CD
12. Super Mario World 3
13. Tecmo Super Bowl CD
14. Mega Man X2
15. Frederico
16. Squad Four
17. F-Zero CD
18. Bikerz
19. Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers: The Movie
20. Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition

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## September 30, 1995

Howard Lincoln was extremely pleased with the first sales reports for *Tales Of The Seven Seas*, with sell-outs reported in stores across the country. It was clear that Sony was becoming not only a valuable hardware partner with Nintendo, but an outstanding software publisher as well, and he was extremely glad that the company was going to be on Nintendo's side for the foreseeable future. Not only was *Tales Of The Seven Seas* a huge hit, but Sony's upcoming game *Ballistic Limit* was set to be one of Nintendo's two huge holiday titles for the Super Nintendo CD, along with the sequel to 1994's megahit *Donkey Kong Country*. Rare had just completed work on *Diddy's Kong Quest*, and the game looked amazing, with even better graphics than the first, along with more levels, nine worlds, and many, many more secrets to find. And in a perfect coincidence, the game's pirate motif was set to capitalize perfectly on the success of *Tales Of The Seven Seas*. Along with the disappointing Saturn launch and the success of *Killer Instinct*, September of 1995 had been one of Nintendo's best months ever, and October looked to be just as good if not better.

Also in October was the upcoming swan song for the Super Nintendo cartridge system. Nintendo's last big first party game, *Yoshi's Island*, was nearing release. With beautiful storybook-like graphics, the game looked gorgeous thanks to the Super FX2 chip, and it squeezed every drop of graphical power out of the Super Nintendo cartridge format. Perhaps in another world and another time, even more power could have been squeezed out of the cartridge, but technology marches on and the SNES-CD came on faster and better than anyone, even Howard Lincoln or his bosses, could have anticipated. It had become such a success that Nintendo was finally getting ready to cut the SNES-CD loose from its base with a stand-alone version of the peripheral, one that fans had been clamoring for in droves for more than a year. The Super Nintendo CD stand-alone would release in November for \$129.99, and would be accompanied by price cuts for the Playstation Combo Set, along with price cuts for the SNES-CD attachment and the cartridge-based SNES itself. The price cuts would be small but would hopefully be another blow to the Saturn, which was still languishing with low sales at its \$400 price point. With luck, this would be Nintendo's biggest holiday season ever, and maybe, just maybe, Nintendo would win the console wars at last. Naughty Dog's band of swashbucklers had fired the first shot. Now would come the fusillade.

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## Sailor Moon (Fox Kids, 1995)

The Beautiful Transformation (September 4, 1995) (Note: ITTL, the Masked Rider series is never brought over, so there's no crossover with Power Rangers and the "Ninja Quest" arc of Power Rangers begins airing a week earlier. Sailor Moon and season 3 of MMPR debut on the same day along with new episodes of X-Men and Batman and Robin.)

The House Of Fortune (September 5, 1995)

Radio Love (September 6, 1995)

Usagi's Fitness Club (September 7, 1995)

Scent Of A Monster (September 8, 1995)

Usagi Plays Cupid (September 11, 1995)

Becoming A Star Is Hard Work (September 12, 1995)

Girl Genius, Or Monster? (September 13, 1995)

Beware The Confusing Clock (September 14, 1995)  
The Guardian Of Fire (September 15, 1995)  
Nightmare In Dreamland (September 18, 1995)  
Danger Cruise (September 19, 1995)  
Guardians Unite (September 20, 1995)  
A New Enemy Appears (September 21, 1995)  
Rei's First Date (September 22, 1995)  
Usagi Becomes A Bride (September 25, 1995)  
The Flash Of The Monster Camera (September 26, 1995)  
Shingo's First Love (September 27, 1995)  
A Love Letter From Tuxedo Mask? (September 28, 1995)  
Summer Beach Love Story (September 29, 1995)  
Sailor V: The Movie (October 2, 1995)  
Romance Under The Moon (October 3, 1995)  
Wish Upon A Star (October 4, 1995)  
Catch A Falling Star (October 5, 1995)  
The Guardian Of Power (October 6, 1995)  
Usagi's Friendship (October 9, 1995)  
The Boy Who Saw The Future (October 10, 1995)  
The Painting Of Love (October 11, 1995)  
Of Love And Chaos (October 12, 1995)  
Grandpa In Danger (October 13, 1995) (Note: Aired as part of a special "Friday the 13th" event on Fox Kids along with both parts of the MMPR episodes "A Ranger Catastrophe", which introduced Kat to the show.)  
Luna's Worst Day Ever! (October 16, 1995)  
Umino The Hero (October 17, 1995)  
Enter Sailor Venus (October 18, 1995)  
The Princess Appears (October 19, 1995)  
The Princess Remembers (October 20, 1995)  
Tuxedo Mask: Evil? (October 23, 1995)  
Usagi's Bizarre Training (October 24, 1995)  
Snow Blindness (October 25, 1995)  
Makoto, The Ice Princess (October 26, 1995)  
The Legendary Lake Yokai (October 27, 1995)  
Ami's Courage (October 30, 1995)  
Minako's Old Friend (October 31, 1995)  
Undercover Usagi (November 1, 1995)  
A Message From The Past (November 2, 1995)  
The Eternal Wish (Part 1) (November 3, 1995)  
The Eternal Wish (Part 2) (November 3, 1995) (Note: These two episodes aired as a one-hour special on Fox Kids. The deaths of the Sailor Guardians are left intact with only the most violent parts cut out, their deaths are acknowledged in the show itself and these episodes are later known as a watershed moment in children's television.)

### **Sailor Moon R (Fox Kids, 1996-97)**

The Return Of Sailor Moon (Part 1) (June 14, 1996)  
The Return Of Sailor Moon (Part 2) (June 14, 1996) (Note: These two episodes aired on Fox in primetime as a one-hour special.)  
The White Rose (July 15, 1996)  
Usagi's Crisis (July 16, 1996)  
A New Transformation (July 17, 1996)

Venus To The Rescue (July 18, 1996)  
Mamoru And Usagi: Babysitters (July 19, 1996)  
The Song Of Queen Rei (July 22, 1996)  
Jupiter On Fire (July 23, 1996)  
Snow White Steals A Kiss (July 24, 1996)  
Usagi In Detention (July 25, 1996)  
Secret Of The Makai Tree (Part 1) (July 26, 1996)  
Secret Of The Makai Tree (Part 2) (July 26, 1996) (Note: These two episodes aired as a one-hour special.)  
Mysterious Girl From The Sky (September 16, 1996)  
The Break Up (September 17, 1996)  
Goodbye, Ami? (September 18, 1996)  
Rei Unbound (September 19, 1996)  
The Search For The Silver Crystal (September 20, 1996)  
Makoto vs. Minako (September 23, 1996)  
Usagi, The Mom (September 24, 1996)  
Vacation (September 25, 1996)  
Protect Chibi-Usa! (September 26, 1996)  
Sleeping Beauty (September 27, 1996)  
Clash In Flame (September 30, 1996)  
The Bonds Of Friendship (October 1, 1996)  
The Four Sisters (October 2, 1996)  
Abduction Of The Sailor Guardians (October 3, 1996)  
Save The Sailor Guardians! (October 4, 1996) (Note: The scenes depicting the Sailor Guardians on crosses are cut as IOTL, though they ARE dubbed and they are shown when this episode is aired in Canada in mid-1997.)  
Sailor Pluto Appears (January 6, 1997)  
Esmeralde And The Power Of Darkness (January 7, 1997)  
Usagi And Mamoru: Together Again? (January 8, 1997)  
Minako's Nurse Mayhem (January 9, 1997)  
Artemis' Adventure (January 10, 1997)  
Ami's Terrifying Illusion (January 13, 1997)  
The Dark Gate (January 14, 1997)  
Battle In Space And Time (January 15, 1997)  
Dimande's Dark Ambition (January 16, 1997)  
The Evil Wiseman (January 17, 1997)  
The Queen Of Darkness (January 20, 1997)  
The Message (January 21, 1997)  
Usagi's Determination (January 22, 1997)  
The Final Battle (January 23, 1997)  
Visions Of The Future (January 24, 1997)

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*"To save humanity, Ash Beckland will push beyond every limit imaginable..."*  
-the tagline featured in magazine advertisements for *Ballistic Limit*

*"So toward the end of 1995, Sony's interactive division was kicking around ideas for advertisements that we could use for our own games or perhaps to help Nintendo along. Someone, I forget who, came up with this sort of metallic noise, which would be followed by a kind of computerized voice. It was very striking when we came up with it and we had the*

*voice saying 'Nin-ten-do', three syllables in a kind of Japanese accented voice and we proposed it to Nintendo that they would start playing it in ads for the SNES-CD's exclusive games. And Shigeru Miyamoto, he loved it and then even Yamauchi-san liked the idea and so that's how the whole 'Nin-ten-do' ads came to be."*

-Ken Kutaragi

*"The end of development on Yoshi's Island was kind of bittersweet because it was our last Super Famicom cartridge game, or at least the last one I personally worked on. The Super Famicom was a wonderful device and of course the CD-ROM changed everything, technology improves but it was improving so quickly!"*

-Shigeru Miyamoto in an August 1997 Famitsu interview

*"If you ask me which of the two consoles I would prefer to develop games for it would absolutely be the Super Nintendo CD. And I know that the Saturn is the more technologically advanced of the two, but Nintendo's philosophy is so developer-oriented that I do prefer working with them when I'm porting a PC game. It was very easy to port Civilization over, it was nearly identical to the original game, no problems really there at all. I'm pondering a Pirates! port but it's such an old game I think I might wait and do an updated version perhaps for the new game console they have coming out."*

-Sid Meier, in a January 1996 interview with PC Gamer

*"I've been separated from my squad for nearly eighteen hours now. No sign of them or of any human life anywhere. There surely must be survivors. I gotta keep looking. If my suspicions about the attack are true, I'm not gonna survive alone for long."*

-Ash Beckland, *Ballistic Limit*, level two

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## **Cannon Fodder 2:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8.5 (quote: "Though not much has changed, war is still a lot of fun in this excellent strategy sequel. The tougher levels will give Cannon Fodder vets a serious challenge.")

Al: 7.5

Sushi-X: 8.5

## **FIFA Soccer 96:**

Ed: 7.5

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 8 (quote: "At its heart and soul it's still the same old FIFA but that still makes it one of the best soccer games around.")

Sushi-X: 7

## **Kawasaki Superbike Challenge:**

Ed: 5

Danyon: 5

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 4.5 (quote: "The graphics are decent enough but there isn't enough stage variety and the bikes don't handle very well.")

**King's Field:**

Ed: 6 (quote: "It's definitely one of the toughest RPGs you'll ever play. I wish the graphics were as good as they are in some of the other SNES-CD games but those looking for a challenge won't mind as much.")

Danyon: 6

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 6.5

**NHL '96:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9 (quote: "The SNES-CD version's graphics don't quite match up with the excellent visuals on the Saturn but the gameplay is top notch and most of the quality commentary remains intact.")

**Sid Meier's Civilization:**

Ed: 8.5 (quote: "One of the best PC games ever comes to the SNES-CD and it's a spot-on port.")

Danyon: 8.5

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 8

**Super Star Wars Trilogy:**

Ed: 9 (quote: "While the only added bonus is the addition of a few clips from the original movie trilogy, getting all three of these excellent SNES games in one package is bonus enough.")

Danyon: 9.5

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9.5

**X-COM: UFO Defense:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9

Al: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8.5 (quote: "Between this and Civilization, this was definitely a great month for PC ports to the SNES-CD! The gameplay is pretty much completely intact, this game is chock-full of content and it's definitely one of the best strategy games ever made.")

**Ballistic Limit:**

Ed: 9.5

Danyon: 9.5 (quote: "With masterful gameplay punctuated by some of the best graphics yet on the SNES-CD, this is clearly one of the best video games of the year.")

Al: 9.5

Sushi-X: 9.5

### **Eskrima Warriors: The Tournament:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 7

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 6.5 (quote: "So while I liked the new characters, this game was a bit of a disappointment compared to the first, it seems more like a minor upgrade than a true sequel.")

### **Gun Warrior: Big Guns:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9.5

Al: 9 (quote: "The addition of two new heroes adds much-needed variety to the gameplay and makes this sequel one of the freshest games I've played all year.")

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Cyber City:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 4

Al: 4.5 (quote: "This wannabe-Snatcher game does nothing new and a lot of things wrong, it's probably one of the worst point-and-click games I've played in a while.")

Sushi-X: 4

### **The Sea Adventure:**

Ed: 2 (quote: "Make it stop! This is a horrid underwater FMV game that tries to be exciting but is just incredibly boring and the acting is seriously terrible. I'm glad these kinds of games are being phased out on the SNES-CD, it's so hard to do them right.")

Danyon: 3

Al: 3.5

Sushi-X: 1

### **Nintendo Music Maker:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 7 (quote: "It's not bad and those who loved the music tool on Mario Paint will have a ball with this, which adds a ton of real instruments to the mix of silly sounds featured in the original. I wish there was more to do with it but it's really good at what it does.")

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 7

- excerpted from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of October 1995's SNES-CD games in the November and December 1995 issues

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This brilliant, beautiful platformer from Nintendo represents in a lot of ways the end of an era. When the Super Nintendo was first released back in 1991, it was expected to be the future of the video game industry. The CD-ROM drive from Sony was intended to be a peripheral, a mere supplement to what was supposed to be the premiere cartridge-based

gaming device. No one predicted that the Super Nintendo CD would take on a life of its own, that within three years of its release we'd be talking about the last first party Super Nintendo cartridge game. But barring some unexpected surprise, *Yoshi's Island* is it, and what a way to go out. The Super FX 2 chip, though paling in comparison to games like *Donkey Kong Country* or *Ballistic Limit*, paints a gorgeous picture not unlike the colorful straight-out-of-an-anime graphical stylings of *Andreakah*. Clearly, the Super Nintendo was capable of quite a lot, but it was clear from the get-go that software companies preferred the storage capacity of the CD-ROM format and the processor speed of the CD peripheral.

And so it's come to this. *Yoshi's Island*, featuring 48 levels (not to mention the six secret levels you can attain by getting perfect scores in every stage), is one of the year's best games and also the best possible way for first-party games on the Super Nintendo to go out. Yes, there will be more Super Nintendo games, games such as Acclaim's *Heliscap* are set to release early next year. But Nintendo itself is moving on, and it's likely that 1996 will see the last cartridge games ever made for home game consoles. Nintendo's even doing something they probably should have done sometime last year by releasing a stand-alone SNES-CD, which significantly lowers the cost of entry for those who haven't yet hopped aboard the next-gen train, while not forcing them to purchase what's now a dying system. Even so, there's plenty of reasons to buy a Super Nintendo cartridge system if you haven't done so. Games like *A Link to the Past*, *Super Metroid*, and now *Yoshi's Island* are still exclusive to it and the \$69.99 price tag is somewhat of a steal. While the best games are on the Super Nintendo CD, if you skip the original SNES, you're missing out.

*5 stars (out of 5)*

-excerpted from the *Yoshi's Island* review in the November 1995 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

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I remember *King's Field* for the Super Nintendo CD. It came out about the same time that *Virtual Hydlide* did on the Saturn and the two were compared quite a bit. Make no mistake, *King's Field* was the superior game. The story was dark and fascinating, and the gameplay was unrelentingly tough. *Virtual Hydlide* had better graphics what with its faux-realistic characters and environments, but I loved that dark, dank aesthetic that *King's Field* had, a great example of From Software using the limitations of the available technology and turning it into an asset. *Virtual Hydlide's* gameplay was extremely generic, but *King's Field* had its own unique charm. It wasn't an RPG like *Final Fantasy*, it was a single-person dungeon crawl that dropped you right in the middle of a mysterious labyrinth and said "now find your way out". The game was a niche title and sold pretty poorly in North America but did great sales in Japan and we ended up getting the next two games in the series, both of them on the SNES-CD as well. It definitely inspired some developers and we ended up with a few of this game's ideas fully realized with later games on the Ultra Nintendo and on the Saturn.

-from a comment on Kotaku.com's "TAY: Favorite Game No One Else Talks About?" article on February 23, 2013

Though both games were overshadowed by *Ballistic Limit* and both sold only decently well (with *Civilization* the more successful of the two), *Sid Meier's Civilization* and *XCOM: UFO Defense* continued the tradition of excellent PC ports to the Super Nintendo CD. *UFO Defense*, a difficult but extremely engrossing strategy game about repelling an alien

invasion, might just be the best SNES-CD game that nobody played. The game was a hit on the PC and got a near-perfect port on the SNES-CD but just got swallowed up amidst all the other big games debuting that month. It did manage to sell enough games later on to turn a profit, but with earlier PC games like *Secret Of Monkey Island* becoming massive hits on the system, it was a definite disappointment that this game didn't click with gamers, who seemed to prefer shooting aliens in the face (in *Ballistic Limit*) to carefully plotting a military campaign against them. *Civilization* sold somewhat better, it didn't sell QUITE as well as 1994's port of *SimCity 2000*, but it did all right and was a very well received port, even getting a commercial that I remember seeing on Nickelodeon during that time (though it wasn't nearly as good as *Ballistic Limit*'s commercial. I'm surprised we never got *Sid Meier's Pirates!* on the SNES-CD, what with how well *Tales of The Seven Seas* did, but a lot of gaming decisions made around that time are still mysteries to me (like, "how did Sega expect the Venus to be a success when you could only play Mega Charger games on it for like an hour on six AA batteries?!").

-excerpted from "SNES-PC: A History Of PC Ports On The Super Nintendo CD", an article on IGN.com, October 22, 2009

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### **Virtual Hydlide**

Saturn's latest RPG is a bit of a mess, but at least it's a pretty mess. *Virtual Hydlide*, set to release October 9th, is a 3-D remake of the original RPG classic *Hydlide*, and while it looks absolutely gorgeous with a realistic-looking hero and it runs at a smooth framerate, its gameplay is pretty mediocre and extremely repetitive. The game does have an innovative procedurally-generated dungeon mechanism to ensure that every playthrough takes you through a different set of dungeons, but cutting down the same enemies hour after hour gets pretty repetitive after a while and competing with your friends for high scores isn't quite as fun when it's only one of you questing at a time.

When compared with the other two RPGs out so far on the Saturn, *MagiQuest* and *Ultima: The Worldly Lord*, the game's flaws soon become apparent. Its combat is much slower and less exciting than *MagiQuest*, and its gameplay is much less engrossing than *Ultima*. When it comes to rebooting age-old RPG classics, we'd have much rather seen a remake of *Phantasy Star* than this game.

Graphics: 4.5

Sound: 3.5

Play Control: 2.5

Fun Factor: 2.0

Challenge: Intermediate

-excerpted from the November 1995 *GamePro* review of *Virtual Hydlide*

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Kazzi DeCarlo: *Gun Warrior: Big Guns* is just the kind of nutty, wacky game that I love to play. Three big dudes taking huge ridiculous guns into an underground dungeon and blowing away tons of monsters and bad guys and racking up the points. It ramps up the ultraviolence and fun of the original *Gun Warrior* to the extreme and makes no apologies for what kind of game it is.

Ted Crosley: I liked the option to select between three characters, they were a lot more than just Mario and Luigi palette swaps, each guy brings his own guns to the table and you can kind of pick which one best suits your strategy. I felt like after a while this game got kind of repetitive but overall it was pretty good.

Kaz: Repetitive? It's fun as hell, who cares if the levels are pretty much the same, the gameplay is ridiculously addictive and fun.

Ted: Also some of the levels were kinda long. I mean, don't get me wrong, I had lots of fun with it but maybe it could've been shorter.

Kaz: Awww man, shorter?

Ted: Level 6 went on for what had to be half an hour and if you messed up, back to the start you went. I don't mind a challenge but there's got to be enough of an incentive to plow through.

Kaz: What more incentive do you need than three dudes with lots of big guns? I give *Gun Warrior: Big Guns* a 5 out of 5, easily.

Ted: And I give it a 4. It's definitely fun and an improvement on the first, but it could have used some variety in the gameplay and a better checkpoint system to keep you from having to repeat the game's sometimes dull levels too often.

(...)

Brittany Saldita: You know, I dug the original *Eskrima Warriors*, but this sequel really feels like a rehash and not in a good way.

John Walden: Is there ever a good rehash? I agree though, just adding a few new characters and making the graphics a bit prettier doesn't make a good sequel.

Brittany: Uuuuuuuuuunless you're *Street Fighter*.

John: \*laughs\* Yeah, when's *Street Fighter III* coming out?

Brittany: The year after *Ultra Mega Super Duper Street Fighter II*, Capcom promises. Anyway, this is a game that's not worth full price. If you really like the new characters, maybe you could wait until it hits the bargain bin.

John: I think you're being a little bit harsh, five new characters is quite a bit for a fighting game sequel and it kept all the old ones, but it also kept a bit too much of the old gameplay to really be a true sequel. As far as fighting games go, three vastly superior options just came out last month for the Super Nintendo CD. MAYBE if you're gonna wait for this game to come out on the Saturn next year you could see if they make a few more changes then.

Brittany: I would definitely wait on the Saturn version if you have the Sega Saturn, at the very least the graphics should look a LOT better. I give *Eskrima Warriors: The Tournament* a 2.

John: And I give it a 2.5.

(...)

Ted: *Mallrats* is a fantastic movie, I've seen it and it cracked me up and I hope everyone watching this goes to see it when it hits theaters this Friday.

Kevin Smith: Thank you, thanks very much.

Ted: Now before we let you go, this IS a video game show-

Smith: Well finally, I was wondering when the hell we were gonna talk about games!  
\*laughs\*

Ted: See-

Smith: If I'd have known you wanted to talk about games, we could've talked about them the whole time!

Ted: \*laughing\* Why didn't you tell me, man? So what games have you been playing?

Smith: Aw man, right now, definitely *Zelda*, plowing my way through that and waiting for *Ballistic Limit*.

Ted: So you're a Nintendo guy?

Smith: You know, for right now yeah but the Saturn looks pretty sweet too, I'll probably try to pick it up when I can, maybe I'll get it for Christmas or something, I'll bug Ben Affleck about it and maybe he'll get me one.

Ted: I recommend *Ultima* and *Panzer Dragoon*.

Smith: You know, *Panzer Dragoon* looks really cool. I uh, I really want to play another *Earthworm Jim* game, is that coming out for the Saturn, do you guys know?

Ted: I WISH they would make an *Earthworm Jim* game for the Saturn, I'd buy that in a second. Oh, and speaking of games, I spotted *Frederico* in *Mallrats*, that was nice. The scene where Jay kicks the kid off the Super Nintendo in the mall and plays *Frederico*, that's a hilarious scene.

Smith: I wanted to put a game in there, I was thinking "what game would Jay want to play if he got high?" and boom, *Frederico*. Now I wish we could've put *Yoshi's Island* in there for that trippy level with the Fuzzies.

Ted: \*laughing\* That would've been perfect.

-excerpted from the October 17, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

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Al Michaels: ABC's coverage of Game 7 of the 1995 World Series is brought to you by... McDonalds. Have you had your break today? Ace Ventura: When Nature Calls, starring Jim Carrey, premiering November 10th. And *Ballistic Limit*, only for the Super Nintendo CD. Go

Ballistic, tomorrow. And I think this Atlanta crowd's about to go ballistic tonight if Tom Glavine can get this final out to win the World Series for the Atlanta Braves. One on, two outs, bottom of the ninth with Atlanta clinging to a 4-3 lead.

Tim McCarver: Well, we saw manager Bobby Cox call a timeout and go up to the mound to talk to pitcher Tom Glavine. Glavine, maybe feeling some soreness in that arm after pitching this entire game.

Michaels: Well, with the Indians' slugger Albert Belle coming up to the plate, this is definitely a moment when Cox might want to think about bringing in a closer.

McCarver: But it looks like Glavine's going to stay out there. He's performed well today, he did give up that three-run shot in the third inning but he's held the Indians to only two hits since then.

Michaels: He's been great this whole playoff run for the Braves, he had that excellent performance in Game 2, pitched a no-hitter and gave the Braves what everyone thought would be a commanding 2-0 lead but the Indians have roared back, they forced a Game 7 and now it's down to one last inning and perhaps, one last out. Glavine winds up and there's the pitch, Belle swings and it's a miss and that's strike one.

McCarver: Albert Belle's been playing great, had that three-run homer and he's batted .380 for these playoffs. He wants to win a World Series real bad.

Michaels: The sometimes volatile Albert Belle, always speaks his mind but is one of the best pure sluggers in Major League Baseball. And he watches this ball go to the outside for ball one. Albert Belle, 51 homers this year and if not for the shortened season, maybe he could've had a shot at Roger Maris' record of 61. Absolutely magnificent the whole year and he's been a big reason why the Indians have been so good this season and why they're here in the World Series.

McCarver: He puts such power into his swing, doesn't hold anything back. He swings the bat a lot like he talks!

Michaels: \*laughing\* That he does. And there's a fastball right down the plate, maybe a bit outside but it's called strike two.

\*Belle comes off the plate for a moment and glares at the umpire, he talks to him a bit and looks quite furious at the strike call, the crowd roars in glee behind him\*

Michaels: And now the crowd can sense it, the Braves one strike away from winning the World Series, and Albert Belle needs to be very careful here, he does not want to get tossed out of Game 7 of the World Series.

McCarver: This crowd can definitely sense it, they're on their feet here in Atlanta, I don't think there's a single fan right now sitting.

Michaels: 52,000 fans on their feet in Atlanta, one strike away from a world championship, Tom Glavine is one pitch away from immortality, the Braves leading by one and if he strikes Albert Belle out here that is going to be all she wrote! He winds up. Here's the pitch and Belle swings and it's a big hit! That ball is heading toward the stands! It's back in the outfield, it's fair and at the warning track...it could be...yes! Yes, that is a home run and the

Cleveland Indians have won the World Series!

\*The Atlanta crowd lets out a tremendous groan of dismay as Albert Belle rounds the bases, as he does so he seems to make a "suck it" gesture at the groaning and booing crowd but the TV camera don't catch it entirely, he rounds third and jumps on home plate and into the arms of his jubilant Indians teammates as Tom Glavine collapses to his knees on the mound, tears streaming down his face as Bobby Cox comes over to comfort him.\*

Michaels: In one of the most improbable, incredible finishes in World Series history, the Cleveland Indians come back from a 2 to nothing deficit to win the World Series!

McCarver: And that is why Albert Belle might be the best player in baseball, one of the greatest moments in World Series history, right up there with Kirk Gibson back in 1988.

Michaels: And the Cleveland Indians are celebrating in Atlanta, they are the world champions of baseball!

-from ABC's broadcast of Game 7 of the 1995 World Series, October 29, 1995

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#### **SNES-CD Power Charts: October 1995**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Donkey Kong Country
3. Victory
4. Super Mario World 2
5. Earthbound 2
6. Final Fantasy VI
7. Andrekah
8. Ogre Battle
9. Super Squadron X: Critical Dawn
10. Primal Rage
11. Toxic Waste
12. WWF Wrestlemania
13. Super Mario World 3
14. NBA Jam: Tournament Edition
15. Super Punch-Out CD
16. Mega Man X2
17. Squad Four
18. F-Zero CD
19. Tecmo Super Bowl CD
20. Trampoline

-

\*A man, Ash Beckland, is seen running through a darkened hallway where only a few lights are flickering, showing the outlines of scary alien creatures pursuing him. He continues to flee through decrepit corridors, past shuttered storefronts and closed doors. He hears a cry off in the distance. He dashes around a corner and sees a group of helpless colonists being menaced by a terrifying creature shown only in shadow. The man distracts it with a burst of gunfire, causing the creature to turn and join his pursuers while the family escapes.\*

\*The man continues running, while the increasing sounds of the aliens continue to swell behind him. He makes one more turn and his eyes go wide. It's a dead end. He continues to run toward the wall, then stops, hearing the sounds building up behind him even more. His eyes narrow. He turns, and pulls out two large guns as the aliens come upon him. The camera zooms on his eyes and zooms out to reveal footage from the game's first-person mode, of the player using their weapons on a variety of alien enemies. The footage then switches to the game's normal platforming mode, showing Beckland using a variety of guns and grenades on enemies, fighting a large boss and then switching to first-person mode to show the transition between the two modes as the player continues to fight seamlessly, the weapon is much more powerful in this mode and it shows the monster roaring and falling back as it's defeated.\*

\*The view then switches back from the game footage to the live-action scene, as Beckland walks over the corpses of the aliens he's killed. He hears another roar off in the distance and the camera zooms in on one of his eyes.\*

### ***Go Ballistic.***

## **BALLISTIC LIMIT**

### **October 30**

\*At the end of the advertisement is the first instance of TTL's new Nintendo "slogan", the combination of metallic sounds and a voice saying "Nin-ten-do" in a slight accent, identical to OTL's classic "Play-sta-tion" advertisements. The slogan will be used for nearly all SNES-CD commercials throughout the remainder of the console's lifespan, and for all Sony-published Nintendo games through at least the Ultra Nintendo's lifespan.\*

-from the *Ballistic Limit* commercial that aired on US television throughout October 1995

### **Ballistic Limit: The Basics**

*Ballistic Limit* is a game published and developed by Sony Computer Entertainment, and greatly hyped by both Nintendo and Sony before its release. The game is a hybrid 2-D platformer and 3-D first-person shooter (somewhat similar to OTL's *Metroid: Other M*, though largely without the exploration aspects). The gameplay revolves around controlling a soldier named Ash Beckland and is largely based on combat against a variety of alien, mutant, and sometimes human foes with a large assortment of weapons, explosives, and sometimes melee. The game is level-based with 19 levels in all, nearly all levels contain a boss at the end and a few have mid-bosses at important checkpoints. The player has a certain number of lives in each level, dying sends you back to the last checkpoint but running out of lives sends you to the beginning of the level (without any items or weapons obtained). Over the course of the game, Ash obtains a variety of weapons, which are permanently added to his collection. You can select up to three gun weapons, one explosive/special weapon, and one melee weapon before entering a level, finding a new weapon during a level enables you to swap it with one of your equipped weapons immediately. The game's 2-D segments are largely similar to *Metroid* in terms of combat (though at somewhat of a quicker pace), it's run and gun with the ability to aim on the fly, different weapons have different effects, there's pistols, laser pistols, shotguns, rifles, specialty alien weapons that fire different types of projectiles, etc, with 34 total gun-type weapons, 7 total explosive/specialty weapons, and 6 total melee weapons available in all.

The unique aspect of the game's combat system is Ballistic Mode. Ash has three bars: a life bar, an armor bar, and then a Ballistic bar that basically controls how much time you have in the game's special Ballistic mode. When entering Ballistic Mode, the game takes on a first-person perspective. Ash becomes fixed in place but can turn in any direction to aim at enemies. When in Ballistic Mode, weapons usually become somewhat more powerful, sometimes FAR more powerful, you're able to aim more easily at enemies' heads, guns take on special properties, can fire multiple projectiles, etc., depending on the weapon. You can only stay in Ballistic Mode for a short time before having to wait for the meter to gradually recharge, certain items increase the size of the Ballistic bar (and also you can find upgrades for health and armor bars as well) or you can collect items to recover it more quickly. Learning to properly time and strategize your Ballistic Mode gameplay is the key to winning the tougher battles in the game. You can replay old levels to collect missed items and you can also save at any time between levels. The game features in-level voiced dialogue and in-level and between-level cutscenes that take the form of motion-comic like animations.

The game takes place sometime in the late 21st century, Earth has been rendered uninhabitable by natural disasters and ecological destruction and mankind now lives in huge space colonies orbiting the planet. As humanity slowly makes its way out to the stars, the solar system is under relentless assault by alien monsters. The colonies have formed special squads of soldiers to venture out and face the alien threat. Ash Beckland (voiced by Michael Masseo, known in OTL as a somewhat prolific character actor and also for accidentally firing the fatal shot that killed Brandon Lee during the filming of *The Crow*, ITTL that accident never took place and Brandon Lee continues to appear in films, more on him later) is lieutenant captain of one of these squads, and on a mission to take out an alien warship, Beckland is separated from his squad and he finds his captain has been killed. After fighting off an alien onslaught, Beckland manages to reunite with several of his squadmates, including Beckland's training partner and romantic interest Sara (voiced by Peta Wilson, known as Nikita in OTL's *La Femme Nikita*, which isn't made ITTL) and Danny, Beckland's rival at the academy. After a major boss fight in level 8, Beckland and his friends manage to pilot the alien warship back to the main Earth colony, only to find it under attack, the alien warship was only a distraction for the main invasion and many humans have already been killed. The next few levels involve Beckland, Sara, and Danny liberating numerous areas of the colony only to discover to their horror that many of their friends on the colony have been subjected to hideous alien experimentation, transforming them into terrifying creatures. One of these subjects is Beckland's seemingly deceased commanding officer, who has been turned into a somewhat-sentient commander for the alien forces, under alien control. At the end of level 15, Beckland reluctantly fights and kills his mutant CO, only to see that during his dying moments, the man has managed to free his mind from the aliens. He reveals the aliens' plans to mutate humans due to their natural stubbornness and creativity and to re-colonize Earth as a hybrid human-alien race before re-launching a new conquest of every sentient race in the galaxy. Beckland also begins to fight against human collaborators with the aliens, and for a time it's teased that Danny is one of them, though it's later revealed that Danny's just been going undercover to sabotage their operations (this is revealed during an exciting moment in the level 17 boss fight where Danny saves Beckland's life). In the aftermath of level 17, Sara is captured and mutated by the aliens, and she becomes the level 18 boss in a very poignant fight. At the end, however, Sara manages to force her mind out of the brainwashing just before she would have killed Beckland, she then uses her mutant upgrades to wreak havoc on the alien forces, clearing the way for Beckland in level 19 where he fights the alien warlord leader in a fierce multi-stage battle. The game ends with a cure found for the mutations (including Sara's), as well as the humans capturing some alien technology that might help them restore Earth to habitability again. Beckland has saved humanity and the alien conquerors have been wiped

out, but the galaxy remains a dangerous place...

## October 30, 1995

*Ballistic Limit* is released for the Super Nintendo CD in North America, with Japanese and European releases the following month. The game is immediately successful, the massive advertising campaign for the game raised awareness to a limit unseen since *Donkey Kong Country*, and it's the second fastest-selling video game of the year in North America behind only *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams*. It performs quite well in Japan and Europe also, easily surpassing two million sales worldwide before the end of 1995. Reviews for the game are stellar, its advanced graphics (some of the best yet seen in an SNES-CD game, its 2-D graphics exceed those seen in most early Saturn games and every Mega Charger game), highly praised soundtrack and quality voice acting (the performances of Michael Masee and Peta Wilson are particularly praised and Ross Hull, who is most well known for playing Gary in *Are You Afraid Of The Dark?* is also praised for playing the young scientist Dr. Reeve Grantley, who comes up with the cure for the alien mutations and is also the man behind the Ballistic System utilized in Beckland's weapons) make it one of the year's best reviewed games. With the recent film success of *Mortal Kombat*, the film rights to *Ballistic Limit* become a hot property, and several directors, including Joss Whedon and Joel Schumacher, express interest in producing the film adaptation. Along with *Snatcher*, the game becomes an early example of the importance of story telling in video games, and the game is the start of one of Sony's most enduring video game franchises.

(...)

Ted (dressed up as the cop from *Virtua Cop* for *GameTV's* Halloween special): *Ballistic Limit* is everything I thought it would be and then some. The graphics are amazing, the gameplay is incredibly fun with a huge variety of weapons, and even the voice acting was fantastic!

Alex Stansfield (dressed up as *SimCity's* Dr. Wright): I think companies are starting to get the hang of voice acting in games, especially with budgets growing to allow professionals to be brought in. *Tales Of The Seven Seas* is another example of that.

Ted: And how awesome are the bosses? They're tough as hell, definitely.

Alex: That four-headed bastard in level 13 was not easy even with my best weapons.

Ted: Right, this game's not easy but it at least gives out enough extra lives to where you're not repeating whole levels all that often.

Alex: And levels aren't THAT big unless you're going off the beaten path a lot. Honestly I thought this game was kinda short, it took me maybe six hours to get through and I was looking for upgrade items too.

Ted: It was a fun six hours though, wasn't it?

Alex: A REALLY fun six hours.

Ted: I really have no problem giving *Ballistic Limit* a 5 out of 5. It deserves it, it more than deserves it, I had so much fun and there were moments that just blew me away.

Alex: I think I have to agree, everything was done just so well, I thought maybe the first-

person parts would be clunky but the controls worked so well. I mean in *Squad Four* the shooting was kind of awkward but in *Ballistic Limit* it was really well done. 5 out of 5.

Ted: And you know what that means!

Alex: Absolutely, it's time to finally put game #2 on the Hall of Fame wall!

\*Ted and Alex, along with Brittany (dressed as *The Darkest Ritual's* Etienne), John (dressed as Bo Jackson from *Super Tecmo Bowl*), and Kaz (dressed as Tuxedo Kamen from *Sailor Moon*), walk up to the Hall of Fame wall with a framed copy of *Ballistic Limit*, hanging it up there next to *Ocarina of Dreams*.\*

Brittany: *Ocarina of Dreams*, you've finally got a friend!

Ted: *Ballistic Limit*, you're now in the GameTV Hall of Fame. Congratulations!

Alex: Coming up after this commercial break, is *Kawasaki Superbike Challenge* going to be game #3 on the Hall of Fame wall?

John: I'll give you a hint: no.

-excerpted from the October 31, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

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Nintendo Power Covers Of 1995:

January 1995: Pulseman (was *Adventures Of Batman and Robin* IOTL)  
February 1995: Justice League: The Battle For Earth (was *Mega Man X2* IOTL)  
March 1995: Final Fantasy VI (was *NBA Jam: Tournament Edition* IOTL)  
April 1995: Stargate (same as IOTL)  
May 1995: Kirby's Dreamland 2 (same as IOTL)  
June 1995: The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams (was *WeaponLord* IOTL)  
July 1995: Donkey Kong Land (same as IOTL)  
August 1995: Super Mario World 3 (was Virtual Boy IOTL)  
September 1995: Killer Instinct (same as IOTL)  
October 1995: Yoshi's Island (same as IOTL)  
November 1995: Ballistic Limit (was *Mortal Kombat 3*) IOTL)  
December 1995: Donkey Kong Country 2 (same as IOTL)

"My Sega Venus story ended in tears. I got it for Christmas in 1995 along with *Lords of Skylein*. So one day soon afterward, I'm playing *Lords of Skylein* and having a blast, I'm really getting sucked into the game and not really paying attention to much else. Any time the Venus runs out of juice (which is quite often), I replace the batteries, six at a time, not really paying attention to how many I'm using. Well, that evening, I'm playing through the fourth dungeon when suddenly I hear my mom downstairs yelling 'who used all the batteries?'. So you know, I just go down there and tell her I did, and she says 'you used 40

*batteries in one day?', and when I tell her I did she says 'do you have any idea how much those batteries cost?' Turns out, 40 batteries cost about 40 bucks. I had gone through forty dollars worth of batteries in about six hours of playing. When I tell her how I went through so many batteries, she goes ballistic, she takes the Venus away and I never ever see it again. Five or six months later I asked her what she did with it and she told me she sold it to a pawn shop to replace that forty dollars. I never had a Sega Venus again until I bought one on Ebay a few months back for eighty bucks. I should've just used the damn AC adapter."*

-A post on Rootalk.com's /segamemories subforum on December 18, 2014

*"Was that good luck or what? We didn't even imagine pirates would be a big thing when we came up with the theme for Donkey Kong Country 2. We all just thought pirates would be a cool, adventurous thing to use for our game. Then Tales Of The Seven Seas came out and I'm sure we got a big boost from it!"*

-Tim Stamper, producer of *Donkey Kong Country 2*

*"It has been a really busy time for me! But I am always thinking of new ideas for games. I'm already thinking of games for the next Nintendo system as well!"*

-Toshiro Tsuchida, creator of *Front Mission* and *Arc the Lad* in the January 1996 issue of *Famitsu* magazine

*"By the time the Saturn had been released worldwide, Sega was essentially the number one arcade game company. We knew that would be our best asset going forward, something Nintendo didn't have and would be trying to replicate. As long as we kept our advantage in the arcades, we would always be competitive in the console market."*

-Yu Suzuki

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## **Donkey Kong Country 2: The Basics**

*Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest* is the sequel to 1994's *Donkey Kong Country*. The graphics are largely similar to its predecessor, using the same multi-layer rendering techniques as the first game to provide very detailed background and character animations, with a slight bump-up in animation detail from the first game and improved presentation quality. The soundtrack is expanded from the first game with 48 different music tracks spanning a variety of genres but largely consisting of adventurous orchestral music to fit in with the game's pirate motif. Gameplay remains largely the same, though the player now controls Diddy Kong and his girlfriend Dixie Kong after the abduction of Donkey Kong by Kaptain K. Rool and his pirate Kremlings. The two Kongs must traverse eight worlds and 61 levels to save Donkey Kong, and there's also a hidden ninth world with seven levels that becomes available if enough bonus Krem Coins are collected. Here are the eight worlds.

*Gangplank Galleon*: A world taking place on a giant pirate ship, largely the same as IOTL with a couple extra levels. The boss is Krow, the same boss as OTL.

*Crocodile Cauldron*: A volcano-themed world similar to OTL's, the boss is Kleever, a giant spinning sword, again identical to OTL.

*Krem Quay*: A swamp-themed muck world similar to OTL, with a huge muscular Kremling boss named Kudgel, again the same as IOTL.

*Zinger's Domain:* The first world that's majorly changed from IOTL, instead of Krazy Kremland, an amusement park level (TTL's Donkey Kong Country already featured an amusement park level), this world is entirely beehive-based, and a couple of the worlds even show Kremlings fighting Zingers. The huge bee boss King Zing remains from IOTL.

*Port Kremtuga:* The first truly original world from TTL, Port Kremtuga is based on a bustling Caribbean port city. Levels featured include a stage depicting a huge Kremling bar fight and a stage featuring a large earthquake. The boss is Krench, a busty female pirate Kremling who wields two swords.

*Gloomy Gulch:* A spooky ghost forest world, the same as IOTL. The boss is Kreepy Krow, a resurrected ghost version of World 1's Krow, again the same as IOTL.

*K. Rool's Keep:* A climb up a huge tower castle with dungeon-themed levels, similar to OTL's version of this world. ITTL, Kerozene (from OTL's Game Boy Advance remake) again appears at Stronghold Showdown, though his attack pattern is much more complex and difficult and he's animated with a lot more detail.

*The Flying Krock:* ITTL, this world has six sky-themed stages instead of just one stage before the final boss. Screech's Sprint is still the final level before reaching the showdown with Kaptain K. Rool.

*Lost World:* The ninth secret level, accessed by acquiring all the Krem Coins from the bonus stages. It features seven levels that must be completed before reaching the bonus showdown with Kaptain K. Rool at Krocodile Kore. This showdown is different from OTL's, after hitting him once, he doesn't die as IOTL, but instead hops on board a giant K. Rool robot that must be hit several times to defeat, this robot is by far the toughest challenge in the game.

## **November 20, 1995**

*Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest* is released for the Super Nintendo CD. Reviews are as stellar as the first game's, in some cases even better, and it's named an immediate contender for Game of the Year. Its release isn't accompanied by quite as much anticipation and hype as the first *Donkey Kong Country*, but it sells nearly as well upon its debut and continues to be a strong seller throughout the holiday season, helped along by its great reviews, good will from the previous game, and a wave of popularity of pirate-themed media. It becomes Nintendo's biggest hit of the holiday season, even moreso than *Ballistic Limit*, and contributes massively to Nintendo's enormous sales victory over Sega that Christmas.

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## **Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest:**

Ed: 9.5 (quote: "Even better than the original? Absolutely. From the variety of levels to the graphics to the amazing music, Donkey Kong Country 2 builds upon everything from the first and raises the bar yet again.")

Danyon: 9

Al: 9.5

Sushi-X: 9.5

**Front Mission:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9

Al: 8.5 (quote: "Squaresoft's tactical RPG is deep, challenging, and highly addictive. This might be the best strategy game of the year.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

**Street Fighter Alpha:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 8

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 8 (quote: "The excellent graphics and gameplay are par for the course in this Street Fighter side story.")

**Super Detective Club 2:**

Ed: 8.5

Danyon: 6.5 (quote: "It's largely more of the same but fans of the genre will still want to check this out.")

Al: 7

Sushi-X: 8

**The Simpsons: Itchy And Scratchy:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 6

Al: 5.5 (quote: "Repetitive levels and rather bad music make this Simpsons game somewhat inferior to the previous two.")

Sushi-X: 5.5

**Where In Time Is Carmen Sandiego?:**

Ed: 6.5 (quote: "It doesn't have the charm of 1993's excellent title, but it's still a solidly made mystery game.")

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 6.5

Sushi-X: 8

**The Endless War:**

Ed: 8.5

Danyon: 9.5 (quote: "A truly incredible strategy game that gives the player so much customization.")

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 9

**Rage:**

Ed: 9 (quote: "This game takes beat-em-ups to a whole new level. You'll definitely want to play this game more than once.")

Danyon: 8  
Al: 9  
Sushi-X: 8

### **The Jade Cat Museum Heist:**

Ed: 4.5  
Danyon: 4 (quote: "While it's not a truly terrible FMV game it's still extremely boring and I found beating it a real chore.")  
Al: 5  
Sushi-X: 6

### **Ferrari Worldwide Rally:**

Ed: 7.5 (quote: "It's no F-Zero but it's probably the best simulation-style racing game on the SNES. I liked the graphics and the variety of cars to choose from.")  
Danyon: 7.5  
Al: 7.5  
Sushi-X: 7

-reviews of November 1995's Super Nintendo CD games in the December 1995 and January 1996 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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*Though the Sega Saturn had been the biggest hardware launch of 1995, the holiday season saw a pair of launches from Nintendo and Sega that gave gamers more options concerning their current-gen game systems.*

### **Free At Last: The Stand-Alone SNES-CD**

Even since the middle of 1993, Nintendo fans had been clamoring for a Super Nintendo CD that wasn't dependent upon the purchase of a cartridge-based Super Nintendo. Eager to keep their beloved fourth-generation system going, Nintendo stood firm and refused to release a stand-alone SNES-CD to market, instead continuing to sell its CD peripherals and Playstation Combo Sets, which meant that if you wanted to play Nintendo's rapidly growing library of CD-ROM games, you had to purchase the "vanilla" SNES. Once *Donkey Kong Country* was released at the end of 1994 to major commercial success, Nintendo and Sony began working on a stand-alone version of their popular CD peripheral, and it launched on November 27, 1995, one week after the release of *Donkey Kong Country 2*.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/rcrywzt1yu...azine.png?dl=0> (Author's Note: This is an SNES-CD mock-up taken from OTL's *Super Play Magazine*.)

The new Super Nintendo CD was a sleek, compact device with the ability to play the entire library of SNES-CD games, and it included four controller ports right out of the box. It was one of Nintendo's better-designed devices, much smaller than the original peripheral had been, and at \$129.99, it slashed the price of entry for Nintendo's CD-ROM games by more than a third, the price was also just under a shade of one-third the price of Sega's \$399 Saturn. Combined with across-the-board price cuts for Nintendo's cartridge-based SNES (to \$59.99 from \$69.99), Nintendo's SNES-CD peripheral (to \$129.99 from \$149.99), and the Playstation Combo Set (to \$169.99 from \$199.99), Nintendo had positioned itself to be the

budget alternative to Sega's high-priced marvel, the Sega Saturn.

### **I'm Your Venus, I'm Your Fire...**

For the past five years, the Sega Game Gear had flagged behind Nintendo's lower-tech but significantly more economical Game Boy. On November 14, 1995, Sega released the Venus, a handheld Sega Genesis with the Mega Charger internals built right in. The Venus was by far the most powerful handheld game system that had ever been released up to that date, and it launched at \$249.99, more than twice the price of Sega's Genesis (Sega would begin selling the Mega Genesis, a Genesis with a Mega Charger built in, for \$99.99 around that time as well). The Venus launched with quite a bit of fanfare, including a slickly produced commercial featuring Bananarama's classic "Venus" song interspersed with scenes of people looking like they were having a ball playing Genesis and Mega Charger games on a handheld. The Venus had a pair of pretty nasty Achilles heels. The price was one (it was slashed to \$199.99 within a couple of months and then slashed further to \$149.99 a couple months after that), and the other was the battery life. When playing Genesis games, battery life was just under three hours on six AA batteries. That was bad enough, but when playing certain Mega Charger games (*Star Wars Arcade* and *Lords of Skylein* were the biggest culprits), battery life could be as short as 45 minutes. The thing consumed batteries at a prodigious rate, someone once calculated that playing the 50-hour *Lords of Skylein* could cost nearly \$400 in batteries. You could buy a Saturn for that much! Though the Venus wasn't a complete flop (the slickly produced commercial and price cuts drove the Venus to 3.5 million in sales by the end of 1996), it failed to achieve the lofty success of Nintendo's Game Boy.

- "The History Of Console Gaming: Year-By-Year (Part 6)", Wired.com, June 12, 2012

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\*A husband and wife are out walking on the boardwalk on a date.\*

Wife: Are you sure it's okay to leave our son home alone?

Husband: Oh, he's a responsible boy, I think we can trust him.

\*The two of them see a group of teenagers walking by, talking about something.\*

Teenage Boy: Hey, did you hear about that sweet new video arcade?

Teenage Girl: Yeah, I heard it just opened up, I can't wait to go over there and play.

Husband: \*to his wife\* A new arcade? I bet our son would love it. \*walks over to the teens\* Hey guys, you mind telling us about that new arcade? We've got a kid your age, he loves video games, where's it at?

Teenage Boy: Sure thing dude, it's at 1724 Spruce Street!

Wife: Huh? Say that again?

Teenage Girl: 1724 Spruce Street. It's the hottest arcade in town, all the kids hang out there.

Husband: Wait a minute, that's our house!

Teenage Girl: It's a house all right and it's an awesome arcade, there's dozens of games!

Wife: Our son put an arcade in our HOUSE?

Husband: \*looking panicked\* We gotta get home....

\*The husband and wife rush home to see lights flickering inside their house and tons of kids hanging out around it\*

Wife: \*pushes through the crowd and opens the door\* You put an arcade in here? You're in big trouble!

Husband: \*looking around\* Wait, where are all the arcade machines?

Son: \*sitting by the TV with a Saturn controller in his hand with his friends around him\* There aren't any machines, it's just the Sega Saturn!

\*The son and his friends are shown to be having a blast playing *Virtua Fighter* while his parents sigh in relief. The screen switches to show Sega's arcade lineup including *Virtua Fighter*, *Daytona USA*, *Virtua Cop*, and *Ridge Racer*.\*

Announcer: With dozens of the hottest arcade games, including the newest hit from Namco, *Ridge Racer*, who needs the arcade? Stay home, save your quarters and bring the arcade home. Only the Sega Saturn brings you the biggest arcade hits, and with dozens more on the way, you'll never need to leave your living room again.

Husband: \*sitting down by the TV with his wife\* So, can we have next game?

Son: No way!

Wife: You're grounded.

Son: .... \*nervously hands a racing wheel to his mom\*

Wife: \*has a smirk on her face as she begins playing *Ridge Racer*\*

### **Playing Is Believing**

\*cue the SEGA! scream\*

-excerpted from a Sega Saturn commercial that aired in late 1995 and early 1996

*Without question, the Sega Saturn's biggest early successes were their arcade ports. The Virtua Trio of Virtua Fighter, Virtua Cop, and Virtua Racing drove Saturn sales more than anything else during that rough 1995 holiday season, but it was their November 1995 release of Ridge Racer that proved to lay the foundation for the relationship that Sega and Namco would form throughout the latter half of the 90s. Namco's deal to produce arcade games with Sega was regarded as the biggest coup in the history of the arcade industry. Indeed, it was around this deal that the entire arcade game industry would orbit starting with the release of the Saturn. The Saturn's technology became the benchmark for arcade*

*cabinets throughout its lifetime. Using their combined negotiating power, Sega and Namco were able to reduce costs and enable arcade chip technology to progress far more rapidly. Their lucrative contract with military contractor Lockheed Martin to produce these high-tech arcade chips gave the two companies the inside track on becoming the leaders in arcade cabinets. This greatly increased the longevity of Sega's Model 2 arcade platform and enabled Sega and Namco to take their time with Model 3, which wouldn't see release until 1997.*

*Though Ridge Racer's release provided only a minor bump to Saturn sales, it was still a critically acclaimed and highly desired game throughout the 1995 holiday season. Sega had initially feared that the game might fall by the wayside in the wake of their big racing game releases at the Saturn's launch, but Namco had distinguished Ridge Racer from other games on the market and the port became the Saturn's best selling non pack-in game of 1995, outselling even Daytona USA. Namco's next arcade port to the Saturn would be the 3-D fighting game Tekken, which was set to release in February 1996 in North America. Tekken would be followed up by Soul Edge in June 1996, and the two games were only part of a very promising Saturn lineup for the year. While Nintendo continued to prosper with its strong lineup of SNES-CD games, Sega's near monopoly on major arcade hits would prove to be a huge selling point for the Saturn going forward.*

-excerpted from the article "Bringing The Arcade Hits Home: The Sega/Namco/Arcade Symbiosis" on GoldenAgeArcade.com, September 18, 2013

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*"Front Mission Preview: An exclusive promotional video for Squaresoft's new strategy-RPG Front Mission, only available to Nintendo Power CD subscribers!"*

-excerpted from the October 1995 issue of *Nintendo Power CD*, describing a special 5-minute promotional video for *Front Mission* that only aired in Japan IOTL (Author's Note: This video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kidzS-EkVY8> only with English narration and text replacing the Japanese)

*In this month's big Epic Center feature, we're taking a look at Squaresoft's newest hit game, Front Mission! When it released back in April in Japan, it became one of the fastest-selling video games ever! Now it's here in the West and Nintendo Power's got tips and strategies to help you through the first few missions of the game.*

-excerpted from Nintendo Power's Epic Center section in the November 1995 issue

*Were Front Mission's North American sales a disappointment to you?*

Toshiro Tsuchida: I knew we weren't going to sell half a million copies in the first week like we did in Japan! I believe the first week in North America, we ended up selling about 40,000 copies which really was not bad considering just how many excellent games were released that month. Our total North American sales were...somewhere just under 200,000 I think? Not as big as *Final Fantasy* but certainly all right for any other game.

*Did you begin work on Front Mission 2 immediately after the first?*

Tsuchida: Not immediately after but after sales were so high in Japan, we did. We quickly realized that the game would not be possible on the Super Famicom CD and that is why it

did not release until later on the Ultra.

*I remember there being considerable controversy after the release of Front Mission 2 for the Ultra Nintendo in North America, there was a lot of really controversial content and some of those concerns also came up with the first game.*

Tsuchida: Well, it was not my decision to localize it! Certainly it helped that the Super Famicom CD had opened a lot of doors in North America. Square was a big factor behind pushing those envelopes. I was glad to see all the Front Mission games localized and to see the reception to them from around the world.

-excerpted from an interview with Toshiro Tsuchida with RPGamer.net, June 10, 2010

*Front Mission* for the Super Nintendo CD releases on November 13, 1995, and it's somewhat similar to Enix's earlier strategy game *Ogre Battle*, though unlike *Ogre Battle* you have much more control over your soldiers as you march them across the battlefield. Gameplay is somewhat linear, the cut-scenes (despite not being voiced) are beautifully depicted with animation for certain very important scenes and the battles themselves are full of very detailed animation and realistic graphics. Customizing your battle mech (known as a "wanzer") is a very complex affair but once you get the hang of it you'll have trouble stopping.

The plot is quite complex but very engrossing and we loved the option to play a special second scenario after the completion of the main plot, we won't spoil any more than that but it was essentially like getting two games in one and it added lots of extra play time to this already epic game. Squaresoft has outdone itself in a big way with *Front Mission* and this just makes us more excited to see what they have in store for what looks like a very jam-packed 1996.

Graphics: 5.0  
Sound: 5.0  
Play Control: 5.0  
Fun Factor: 5.0  
Difficulty: Advanced

-excerpted from *GamePro's* December 1995 review of *Front Mission*

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Sort of lost in all the holiday hype of 1995 was the two big detective game sequels released that November. Nintendo was localizing the long-awaited sequel to 1993's *Super Detective Club*, while we also got *Where In Time Is Carmen Sandiego?*, which at the time was actually one of the more hyped games considering the reception the first one got.

*Super Detective Club 2* was designed for the Super Nintendo CD from the ground up, it contained four all new cases along with cut scenes and voice acting to dramatize the cases. The fourth case was linked to each of the first three cases which could be solved in order. The game was a bit more dramatic and mature than the Famicom games, it got a Teen rating in North America and even featured a bit of mild language which was almost unheard of in a Nintendo game up to that time! The first case of the first three was a murder, a miserly businessman is found dead and his five grandchildren, who also attend the school that the protagonist and his friend Ayumi Tachibana attends, are the prime suspects, you

have to figure out which of the grandchildren is the murderer. Ayumi's friend Michuri is one of the suspects and the evidence actually points to Michuri but a smart player will see the hidden clues that actually implicate the businessman's youngest grandson Banko in the crime. The second case is a kidnapping, Ayumi Tachibana is kidnapped and it's a race against time to save her (though she eventually escapes on her own and helps the protagonist implicate the criminal). The third case is another murder, this time of a female racehorse jockey, it's a very complex case to solve, probably the toughest of the three. The prime suspect at first is her jealous rival but it turns out that she and her rival were actually lovers and about to elope, it was the rival's manager that ends up being the murderer. The fourth and final case ties in to the other three. Ayumi's friend Michuri is kidnapped by the culprit from the second case (who escaped from jail), Michuri happens to be the owner of the murder victim's racehorse from the third case and not only do you have to stop the kidnapper but you have to find out who hired them, which turns out to be a dangerous crime syndicate. The game does have a happy ending (assuming you solve the mystery in time) and despite the serious material, it does have plenty of lighthearted moments. The game was largely well received and sold even better than the first, even in North America. That brings us to that month's second game...

*Where in Time Is Carmen Sandiego?* was the sequel to one of the best selling video games of 1993. *Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?* was the first real post-release hit for the Super Nintendo CD and the sequel was expected to perform just as well...so why didn't it? For one thing, the critical reception to the game just wasn't quite as good as the first. It replaced the rather charming live-action cutscenes from the first game with animated cutscenes somewhat similar to the animation found in the Fox Kids series *Where on Earth Is Carmen Sandiego?*, with Rita Moreno even reprising her voice acting role from that show. In fact, the game borrowed considerably from that show, including Carmen's history with ACME and her sympathetic background. The game would also include elements that would be featured in the later PBS game show series *Where In Time Is Carmen Sandiego?* including the theme song (which was decent but nowhere NEAR Rockapella's legendary theme song for *Where In The World*) and the Chronoskimmer. The result was a somewhat disjointed amalgam of elements that made the game somewhat...confused compared to the first game's significantly more focused effort. That's not to say the game wasn't good, which it largely was, but it was ultimately forgettable. The second reason it didn't succeed to the degree the first one had...the competition. It came out just one week after *Donkey Kong Country 2*, and was largely ignored in favor of that game. Ultimately it was outsold even by *Super Detective Club 2*, and other games such as *Rage*, *Front Mission*, and *The Endless War* also outperformed it both critically and commercially. The disappointment that was *Where In Time Is Carmen Sandiego* proved that the franchise was largely past its peak in the public eye, and that the detective game genre itself was past its prime as well, despite Nintendo's success with *Super Detective Club 2*.

-excerpted from "Dueling Detectives", an article on Nintendo Digital Digest, November 19, 2012

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## **The Many Faces Of Rage**

*Rage*, coming November 6th to the Super Nintendo CD and coming in early 1996 to the Sega Saturn, is the latest beat-em-up from Capcom. It features nine fierce brawlers who are geared up to pummel their way through endless waves of enemies. Depending on your chosen path through the story, you can obtain one of four different endings. Here's a quick

*look at all the brawlers you can chose from.*

Jason Gurds: A captain in the United States Marines, Jason is seeking revenge for the ambush and deaths of his comrades in a war. Upon hearing that the warlord Blackstone is responsible for the deaths of Jason's comrades, Jason resolved to punch, kick, throw, and bodyslam his way through everybody that gets in his way.

Adam Crasher: With superhuman strength gained from a nuclear accident, Adam is equipped to beat down legions of criminal thugs. There's no way he's going to let Blackstone or anyone else steal the loose nuclear material that's already caused him so much pain. Adam moves somewhat slowly but his punches pack more power than anyone else in the game.

Kitsuko Atsuri: Kitsuko may look like a harmless geisha girl but don't be fooled, her swift kicks and fierce leaps can devastate much larger foes. She seeks to protect her friends from Blackstone's criminal empire.

Icarus Lowell: The youngest of the brawlers in Rage, Icarus is a 14-year-old boy who's had wings grafted onto his back by Blackstone's evil scientists and doesn't need much motivation to pick a fight with the evil mastermind. He can float above enemies for a short time to land fierce blows from above!

Artemis Night: Artemis is a private detective who failed to stop Blackstone from murdering his beautiful lover. Now he seeks only revenge and he's brought his trusty pearl-handled pistol along for the ride.

Savage Paul: Though he's got a scary name and an even scarier appearance, Savage Paul is mostly a gentle giant, he runs an orphanage but he's not going to let Blackstone threaten his beloved orphans without bearhugging him and his minions into submission first.

Kim McIntosh: A fiery redhead with a positive attitude, Kim doesn't have anything personal against Blackstone, she just likes beating the crap out of people. With a reckless style that emphasizes charging in rapidly and bashing enemies, Kim's the definition of a glass cannon but if you like to live dangerously, she's your girl.

Lord Masters: Lord Masters is an old man who has been kicked out of his hard-earned mansion by Blackstone. Now he uses his remaining fortune to train himself into a fierce martial artist, while sometimes getting his butler Jenkins to do some of his dirty work.

XCR-333: XCR-333 is a rogue combat robot who got a mind of his own after being given an order to slaughter a bus full of children by Blackstone. Instead, he fought off ten other robots and moved the children to safety. Now he uses his programming to fight back against his evil creator.

-excerpted from the December 1995 issue of *EGM2*

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John Walden: *Ridge Racer* is just a great game, I say it's better than *Virtua Racing* and *Daytona USA*, the graphics are awesome and the racing action is a ton of fun.

Alex Stansfield: It's close for me between the three of them. I think *Ridge Racer* is definitely

the closest to an authentic arcade experience but the other two games have their good qualities too. Not a knock against *Ridge Racer* by any means, it's a ton of fun, such a beautiful game and the racing is top notch.

John: If you can get a friend over to play this, you'll definitely want to go head to head. Hook up a couple racing wheels and you're absolutely golden.

Alex: Plays so good with the wheel, I mean the controller's fun too but if you use the Sega racing wheel it's just like it is in the arcade. And I can't stop talking about the graphics, it looks really pretty with great draw distance.

John: The graphics are what most impressed me about *Ridge Racer*, can't get over how good this game looks. I'm giving it a 4.5.

Alex: And I'm giving it a solid 4, this is definitely a GameTV recommended title.

(...)

Brittany Saldita: Squaresoft's *Front Mission* is a decent game but it did get somewhat repetitive toward the end, the later missions I felt were kind of a grind.

Ted Crosley: I agree, I'm not quite sure if maybe they ran out of ideas or what?

Brittany: But the plot was terrific and I liked the added USN scenario, that added some replay value to the game at least.

Ted: For me, *Front Mission* definitely pales in comparison to say, the *Final Fantasy* games.

Brittany: Agreed.

Ted: But for what it's worth it's still a good game.

Brittany: I feel like it laid the foundation for a great game and that it had a lot of good ideas but the execution could've been better. If they find a way to make longer missions not such a drag, this could be a real masterpiece. I give *Front Mission* a 3.5 out of five.

Ted: I give it a 3.5 too, it's definitely got a lot going for it but it's not a classic like *Final Fantasy VI*.

-excerpted from the November 14, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted: So let's wrap this up, what did you think of *The Endless War*?

Kazzi DeCarlo: Well it's not endless, the game DOES have an ending! So that's ONE strike against it. But to be honest, I feel like this game was trying too hard. I'm all for having options but it seemed like it turned into a LOT of micro-management. Even *Civilization* managed to make a really complex strategy game easy to get into.

Ted: I LOVED all the customization options, I just wish there were more nations to pick from. There were only eight and even though they gave all of them a lot of story details and

gameplay quirks, I felt like they could have included a lot more or even let you make your own.

Kaz: Why'd all the countries have to be fictional? I wanted to kick France's ass.

Ted: \*laughing\* But yeah, the customization for individual soldiers and units added a ton of strategy. This game is the deepest war game I've ever played, it's deeper than Koei's great games, deeper than *Civilization*, it's a game all about planning battles and strategy and it works on a ton of levels. And the music was awesome.

Kaz: The music was the ONLY redeeming factor I thought, when I was muddling through menus at least I had good music to listen to.

Ted: This game did come with a huge instruction book.

Kaz: You mean I have to read INSTRUCTIONS?!

Ted: It helps to read instructions, yeah.

Kaz: \*groans\*

Ted: I give *The Endless War* a 4.5 but you really do need to read the instructions.

Kaz: I give it a 3. I just didn't have much of a clue when it came to planning out my attacks.

Ted: The instruction book helps!!!

(...)

Ted: *Donkey Kong Country 2* is pretty much everything we expected a DKC sequel to be. Beautiful, challenging, and lots of platforming fun.

Alex: Yeah, make no mistake about it, this is one of the best games of the year and even better than the original.

Ted: I'll definitely give it that even though I thought the original *Donkey Kong Country* was a bit overrated. I loved the adventurous feel of this one, it felt like you were going on a real pirate quest and the enemies were really creative compared to the first.

Alex: Any flaws the first *Donkey Kong Country* game had, this one fixes.

Ted: A word of warning, it's blisteringly hard. I enjoyed the challenge but you will be frustrated at times.

Alex: Oh yeah, this one definitely beats out the first. The bosses are a LOT tougher.

Ted: The music was beautiful especially in the thorn stages, though most of the time I couldn't hear the music over my loud swearing.

Alex: Screech can go right to hell!

Ted: Oh, (expletive) that bird. I got a bird to give him.

Alex: Birds aside, *Donkey Kong Country 2* gets a 5 out of 5 from me.

Ted: I'm gonna give it a 4.5, it's definitely one of the best platformers around and sets a new bar for the series.

-excerpted from the November 21, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: November 1995**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Super Mario World 3
3. Doom
4. Donkey Kong Country
5. Super Mario World 2
6. Victory
7. Final Fantasy VI
8. Ogre Battle
9. Earthbound 2
10. Deadman Sam 2
11. Treasure Hunters
12. Madden 96
13. Andrekah
14. NFL Quarterback Club '96
15. Super Squadron X: Critical Dawn
16. Five For Fighting Hockey
17. Pig Wars
18. Primal Rage
19. WWF Wrestlemania
20. Mega Man X2

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### **December 2, 1995**

At Sony's headquarters in Japan, chairman Norio Ohga was monitoring an event in North America with great interest. Not the success of *Donkey Kong Country 2*, or the continuing strong sales of *Ballistic Limit*, or anything having to do with video games at all. Instead, Ohga and his fellow Sony executives were tracking the performance of Pixar's computer-animated film *Toy Story*, which had been highly lucrative at the North American box office for the past two weeks and had generated critical praise like few animated films before it. The technology used in *Toy Story* was exceptionally advanced, and Ohga knew that no video game console would be able to produce visuals like it for at least a decade and probably much longer.

"This new computer-generated animation is the future of the industry," said Ohga, who could see nods of agreement from those seated at the table. "And, as we've done in the video game industry, we should be involved in this."

Ken Kutaragi looked over at new Sony president Noboyuki Idei, seated to the left of Ohga. Ohga's fellow executives had been skeptical of the choice to pick Idei as Sony's new number-two man, but Idei represented a new wave of thinking within Sony, a tendency to take risks, to look for opinions outside the company, ideas that could drive Sony forward into a new era of business. That kind of thinking had gotten Sony into perhaps its most successful business endeavor to date, its partnership with Nintendo on video games, and now it seemed that Ohga wanted Sony to forge another partnership.

"It's not likely that we'd be able to make a deal with Pixar," said Idei, "though I am certainly open to working with them if it's possible."

"Not Pixar," said Ohga, knowing that Pixar already had a strong relationship with Disney, yet another entertainment titan. "But there are many other movie studios who may wish to utilize this new animation technology, and will be looking for a company like Sony to provide the hardware."

Ohga had big plans for Sony going forward. It would already be making itself more visible as a partner to Nintendo once the Ultra was released, and Ohga hoped to use this visibility to form a unified front across the entertainment industry. Wherever big ideas were formed, Sony would be there to bring them into reality. The company already had an advertising campaign that would begin launching in Japan in 1996 and across North America hopefully later that year. The Ultra Nintendo was just one part of Sony's business strategy...and with luck, its partnership with an animation company would be another. Ohga already had a few potential partners in mind...

"Do you already have someone in mind?" asked Idei, his mind already searching for potential partners for Sony in this new endeavor. "Because...there's a former Disney executive who's just built a new animation studio and he has some very powerful partners."

Ohga's lips curved into a smile. The two men had the same idea.

"I've been looking into that possibility," said Ohga. "They've been looking into partnering with a company called Pacific Data Images, but the deal's not done yet."

"Is there any way for us to arrange a meeting with them?" asked Idei. "Or should we go looking elsewhere?"

"We should have many potential options," Ohga replied, "but if you'd like to arrange a meeting I'd be in full support of it."

Within the week, Idei was placing the call... he'd just started at Sony and already he'd be discussing a partnership with one of the most powerful men in show business...perhaps one of the most powerful men in the world.

"This is Mr. Noboyuki Idei from Sony... I'd like to speak with Mr. Spielberg, please."

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*"Twisted Metal is yet another game that pushes the Super Nintendo CD to its limits. With its wide open spaces, colorful cars, and blistering fast action, it's a game that proves that*

*Nintendo's CD device can still hang in there with consoles like the Saturn."*

-Next Generation magazine, December 1995

*"We went into December ready to launch two games. Of course Twisted Metal was our biggest and the one we put most of our energy into, but a lot of the people inside Sony were quite pleased with our other game that month as well. Arc the Lad was a great game for us, we had really modest expectations for it but we exceeded those and sold more copies than we expected to, about 80,000 or so which is really good for a game considered to be a niche title. I kind of regretted that we rushed the localization for the holidays, it wasn't that good and the voice acting could have been a lot better but that might be part of the game's charm."*

-Olaf Johann Olafsson, "The Chase: Sega's 20 Year Struggle To Take Down A Giant"

*"I remember when Arc the Lad came out in Japan, it was a game that I would've been interested in localizing, but with all of our efforts devoted to Tale Phantasia and Bahamut Lagoon, we couldn't offer our services and Sony went ahead and localized it, it surprised me that they did it at all and especially that they got it done so fast!"*

-Victor Ireland

*"Legend Of The Sorcerers was a game that always intrigued me. It was definitely more experimental and innovative even than Tale Phantasia, but the final product was somewhat of a disappointment. I always felt that the idea of an FMV-based role playing game could have been explored later on with more powerful consoles with more software capacity, but by then the industry had moved on from FMV games entirely."*

-Yoshiharu Gotanda

*"I was really impressed with the Sega Saturn from the moment I first got one. The technology was top-notch and the games looked absolutely beautiful. I knew we could do great things with such a marvel, but...I was still curious to see how Nintendo and Sony would respond."*

-Hideo Kojima

*"I begged the suits in Japan to let me lower the Saturn price for the holidays. Even a drop to \$349 would have been better than nothing. If Black Friday had been a huge thing in 1995 like it was just a few years later on, I imagine I could've at least gotten some \$299 sales for that. The best I could get was for Sega to let us give away some free game vouchers. That pushed some Saturns but it was still a rough holiday that year."*

-Tom Kalinske

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### **Arc The Lad:**

Ed: 7

Danyon: 6

Al: 6.5

Sushi-X: 6.5 (quote: "This tactical RPG does some interesting things, but a bad localization still hurts it quite a bit.")

### **Breath of Fire II:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8.5 (quote: "Featuring great music, quality animations and a surprisingly heavy storyline, Breath of Fire II is a worthy sequel to the SNES classic.")

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 8

#### **Gradius IV:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8

Al: 7 (quote: "It definitely brings plenty of difficulty and high-flying action to the table, though the mid-stage and between stage cutscenes are a bit hokey.")

Sushi-X: 8

#### **Forever With You:**

Ed: 7 (quote: "We don't get too many games like this in the West, but it's one of the best dating sims period, with very deep characters and a complex relationship system. It's the kind of game that'll be hit or miss with a lot of people.")

Danyon: 7

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 4.5

#### **Toy Story:**

Ed: 9 (quote: "The graphics in this game are excellent and the use of real cutscenes from the movie really brings the action of Toy Story to life.")

Danyon: 9

Al: 8

Sushi-X: 8

#### **Twisted Metal:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 9.5 (quote: "It's hard to believe this game can look so good on a current-gen system but it really does. Sweet Tooth's missiles aren't the only thing that blew me away.")

Al: 9

Sushi-X: 8.5

#### **Legend Of The Sorcerers:**

Ed: 6

Danyon: 5.5

Al: 5.5 (quote: "While this game is undoubtedly a technological marvel, it looks a lot better than it plays, the RPG battles are bare-bones at best.")

Sushi-X: 6

#### **Lilywhite:**

Ed: 8

Danyon: 8

Al: 8.5

Sushi-X: 9 (quote: "Dammit, this adorable platformer has even melted my cold ninja heart.")

It makes Andrekah look like Rambo but the levels are incredibly well designed.”)

### **Battlesun:**

Ed: 5

Danyon: 5 (quote: “The graphics are the only good thing about this unimaginative space shooter.”)

Al: 6

Sushi-X: 5.5

### **Door To Demonia:**

Ed: 9

Danyon: 7.5

Al: 7.5 (quote: “This game will surely draw immediate comparisons to King's Field, though in some aspects it's better. It's a much scarier game with an incredibly spooky atmosphere.”)

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Sweet Ninjas:**

Ed: 6.5

Danyon: 5.5

Al: 6.5

Sushi-X: 6 (quote: “Believe it or not, this game shares an engine with the Japanese Sailor Moon fighting games. With the show currently dominating the daytime TV ratings, one wonders why they didn't just bring that game over instead of this generic girlfighter, that would've made it more interesting at least.”)

-excerpted from the *Electronic Gaming Monthly* reviews of the SNES-CD games of December 1995 in the January and February 1996 issues

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*With Christmas just two weeks away, the holiday shopping season is predicted to be slightly down from last year, even with the improving economy. With that said, there's still billions of dollars at stake, and one of the largest holiday shopping sectors, as always, is toys. This year, the hottest toys are those from the hit CGI animated film Toy Story, a film that's been performing exceptionally well at the box office. Buzz Lightyear seems to be this year's hottest toy, with voice samples and retractable wings just like in the movie. His best friend Woody is another hot seller in both pull string and non-talking varieties. Of course, Power Rangers is still one of the hottest toy franchises out there, and though it's somewhat down from last year's record breaking holiday, plenty of shoppers are still snapping up the latest items from the hit show. This summer's movie has propelled sales of the new generation of Power Rangers toys, with the Ninja Megazord being quite hard to find. Another toy franchise that's done quite well? The Japanese import Sailor Moon, which is taking in big bucks among those buying for young girls. While Sailor Moon hasn't quite matched the sales of fellow Japanese sensation Power Rangers or perennial girls' favorite Barbie, the toys are still some of the best selling of the season, with sales increasing nearly every week. Of course, all of these franchises are tied in with this year's biggest toy craze: Pogs. The little cardboard caps featuring designs from hit shows like the aforementioned Power Rangers, hit video games like Super Mario, and logos of famous sports teams, among many, many others, are*

*selling like hotcakes this year despite controversy from parents and school officials concerned that the collectible caps promote gambling, with kids betting them during high-stakes games on the playground.*

*Speaking of high-stakes games, video games are, as always, a big seller, with Nintendo once again leading the pack. The company is promoting a new version of its hit Super Nintendo CD device, this time no longer tied to the previous cartridge-based model. With a new price of \$129.99, they're flying off the shelves, with best-selling games such as Donkey Kong Country 2, Ballistic Limit, Super Mario World 3, Doom, and The Legend Of Zelda. Nintendo's rival Sega also released new devices this year, the state-of-the-art Saturn and a portable version of its Genesis console called the Venus. With these new spacey names comes stratospheric prices that are scaring many parents away. Instead, shoppers are continuing to flock to Sega's Genesis console, which just launched the new action game Vectorman. According to leading retail trackers, the Genesis is outselling the Saturn this holiday season 3 to 1, which might be good news for bargain hunters but bad news for Sega, which is pinning its future strategy on the success of the Saturn. When we asked Sega's president Tom Kalinske if the Saturn's price would come down in the future, he said he had no comment. Toy retailers aren't worried about the slight downturn in sales this holiday season, and those we talked to said that there isn't really a new must have toy out there on the market. Despite the downturn, this Christmas holiday is expected to bring in major cheer for retailers across the country.*

-from the "CBS Evening News with Dan Rather", December 11, 1995

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### **Twisted Metal: The Basics:**

Published by Sony, developed by SingleTrac, and released on December 11, 1995, *Twisted Metal* is a 3-D vehicular combat game largely similar to the version of the game that released IOTL for Sony's Playstation system. Instead of OTL's 12 vehicles, the game features 10, though popular characters such as Sweet Tooth are still available. The game's graphics are in 3-D, but with a slightly lower framerate, much more 2-D in the backgrounds, and with a somewhat shorter draw distance than OTL's game. Despite these technical differences, the game is considered one of the very best graphically on the Super Nintendo CD and its fun gameplay and edgy content make it an immediate hit, especially among teens and young adults. The game features a one-player mode where players compete in a series of increasingly more difficult arenas against other cars, using the game's large variety of weapons to blow away enemies and clear the stage so they can move on to the next one. A heavily promoted aspect of the game is the multiplayer mode, which supports up to four players in split-screen. One reviewer describes the mode as "Mario Kart's Battle Mode on steroids", and though there's a bit more slowdown on four-player mode than there is on single player, it's still the most popular aspect of the game and *Twisted Metal* is considered by players and the gaming media alike to be right alongside the *Super Bomberman* games as one of the best multiplayer games on the system. Reviews for the game are glowing, though unlike in OTL where it was considered a Game of the Year candidate (based on the fact that it was the best launch window game for the highly regarded new Playstation), here it's just considered a really good game while not in the same tier as games such as *Ocarina of Dreams* or *Ballistic Limit*. It becomes one of the top selling SNES-CD games of the holiday season, and though technical limitations would prevent the vehicular combat genre from taking off properly on the SNES-CD, it would inspire a number of similar games on the Sega Saturn.

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*So, you're looking at the three, count 'em, three RPGs coming to the Super Nintendo CD this month and wondering which one to get? Have no fear, the RPG experts at GameFan are here to give you an answer!*

First off, there's *Arc the Lad*. It's a classic Japanese-styled RPG, with some interesting battle mechanics. Instead of turn-based battles like in traditional RPGs, battles take place on a combat grid and you fight by moving your character a certain number of spaces toward the enemy. You can jump and employ various strategies but the basic gameplay is a lot like Squaresoft's *Front Mission* in that you must carefully decide on the best move to draw the enemy out. This game features some fun characters and a good storyline, though these factors are hampered somewhat by a pretty lousy translation and really terrible voice acting. It seems that Sony rushed this game out for the holiday season and it really shows, if the localization had been better we might have enjoyed it a bit more. The battle system is interesting, but the game is somewhat flawed.

*Legend Of The Sorcerers* is a Telnet-developed game, and it basically plays out like your traditional fantasy RPG but with a major difference. The battles themselves play out as full-motion anime FMVs, similar to games like *Time Gal* or *Road Prosecutor*. You select your move and then you see it actually play out on the screen! It's quite creative and really neat at first, but the problem is that it severely limits the amount of actions your characters can take. You essentially get a basic attack, a special and/or one or two spells, an item option and that's it. You can power up these attacks but they play out the same every single time and battles tend to get very repetitive very quickly. The boss fights are cool but there aren't even that many of them and ultimately, once you strip away the pretty FMVs it's a generic-as-they-come RPG. This seems like more of a tech demo than an actual game, it's something that could be really amazing given the right medium (maybe this would've worked better on the *LaserActive*?) but with the limitations of the SNES-CD it's just a neat experiment and nothing more.

Which brings us to *Breath Of Fire II*. Despite being the most traditional RPG of these three it's also the best, with an enthralling, emotional, and sometimes quite dark storyline, strategy-heavy battles and a great soundtrack, it's a more than worthy sequel to the original. Capcom's definitely outdone itself with this game, which even features a few minutes of animated cutscenes and some limited voice acting. The game isn't afraid to cover heavy subjects such as sex and religion, though these topics are covered quite tastefully and not with the intent to shock or titillate, but to instead present a very well-told story about the dangers of blindly following authority. It's the most well-developed and emotionally mature game of these three and ultimately the most fun to play, that's why *Breath of Fire II* is our choice for the SNES-CD RPG of the month!

Now, whether or not *Breath of Fire II* is better than *Phantasy Star IV* is a question to be settled in our official review column...

-excerpted from the January 1996 issue of *GameFan*

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*"The Sega Mega Genesis with built-in Mega Charger, now just \$99.99. And included for a limited time, get your choice of Vectorman or Phantasy Star IV as a free bonus game."*

-excerpted from a Genesis commercial that aired during the 1995 Christmas season

*People forget that while the Saturn launched in 1995, Sega was continuing to push the Genesis very hard during Christmas that year. Their two big holiday releases were Vectorman and Phantasy Star IV, and they were among the very best Genesis games. Vectorman used faux-3D graphics to try and simulate what Nintendo was doing with the Donkey Kong Country games. It looked amazing and didn't even require the Mega Charger, though if you had one you could access three bonus levels, some voice acting was unlocked, and the backgrounds had some animation to them. It was actually quite a good game, I remember it being better than Super Mario World 3 and right up there with Ballistic Limit in terms of how good it was. It actually pushed a lot of Genesis systems that Christmas and according to the official sales figures the Genesis was way out ahead of the Saturn, at least at that time.*

*The other big holiday game was Phantasy Star IV. The game had actually been released two years before in Japan, Sega was going to localize it earlier on but after the success of the Mega Charger the game was re-tooled with voice acting and some graphical upgrades. Those without the Mega Charger could still play the original version of the game, which was quite good, but the Mega Charger version was outstanding, it had a lot more combo attacks, the graphics looked great and it even unlocked a bonus second ending that hinted toward the next Phantasy Star game (which would turn out to be Phantasy Star V on the Saturn in 1997). This version was also released in Japan as a special edition version of the game. All in all, Phantasy Star IV ended up being the best selling of the three Genesis Phantasy Star games in North America. It wasn't as big a hit as Vectorman but it gave Sega a nice little boost during a time it was sorely lacking in the RPG department.*

-excerpted from "From Genesis To Saturn: The Great (And Sometimes Painful) Transition", an article on SegaRetro.com, January 11, 2014

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Ted Crosley: All told, Vectorman was a really fun game. I loved the fact that you could use a projectile attack and the platforming was really challenging as well.

Alex Stansfield: Yeah, this game was superb. It's a nice change of pace from the Sonic games to see a bit more..exacting platformer on the Genesis.

Ted: Well, they gave us time to stop and enjoy the beautiful graphics. I'll admit, it's no *Donkey Kong Country*, but with the Mega Charger it still looks amazing.

Alex: The animation quality, the creativity of the enemies, it's all there. Vectorman is truly one of the year's best games.

Ted: It's absolutely the best Sega Genesis game of the year in my opinion.

Alex: For me it's between this one and Lords of Skylein, but for quality to time ratio I think I do have to agree that it's Vectorman.

Ted: I give Vectorman a 4.5 out of 5, definitely a platformer you need to play.

Alex: And I give it a 4.5 too which makes it a GameTV recommendation. Very highly recommended.

-excerpted from the December 5, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted: The single player campaign was really short but the multiplayer blew me away.

Alex: I'm in full agreement, *Twisted Metal* is the best multiplayer game of the year, no doubt about it. The game's definitely pushing the Super Nintendo CD when the weapons really get flying but other than some graphical stutter it runs really well.

Ted: I just wish that maybe there could've been more than eight levels. Even *Super Bomberman* had a more robust single-player mode than this.

Alex: And that's true, though the single player mode did get a bit repetitive for me.

Ted: Well yeah, multiplayer's definitely where it's at with this one. Even if I suck at it.

Alex: Brittany was kicking our asses earlier today, I'm surprised she's not over here bragging about it.

Ted: I think she's still raging about *Legend of the Sorcerers*, she HATED that game.

Alex: Well, that game sucked but this game does not. A 4.5 from me.

Ted: I'm giving it a solid 4, definitely one to check out.

(...)

Kazzi DeCarlo: *Lilywhite* is one of the most unique action games I've ever played! It's super adorable, but also super tough.

Brittany Saldita: Well, right, tough is a good word to describe this game. It's no *Andreka* for sure but it does have its charm.

Kaz: It is just such a sweet little game.

Brittany: The storyline was where I think this game fell short for me. You had *Andreka*, which really charmed me quite a lot with her interactions with all the characters but this game's just a straight-up platformer. You go from stage to stage, fire your little twinkle stick at enemies....

Kaz: \*snickering\*

Brittany: I mean, ultimately can you really say it's better than most every other platformer out there? The only thing this game has going for it is character design and a decent soundtrack but other than that I wasn't impressed.

Kaz: I'm not gonna be quite so harsh on it. It was really fun, it was really cute, I enjoyed it.

Brittany: *Lilywhite* gets a 3 from me.

Kaz: And I give it a 4.

(...)

Alex: *Blackthorne* was a really, REALLY good SNES game but the definitive version is definitely this one for the Sega Saturn.

John: The added cutscenes, voices, and excellent graphics make it a far cry better than it was on the SNES and I can see why they canceled the Mega Charger version for this one. It's a great mix of 2-D and 3-D and probably the best Saturn game to come out after launch day.

Alex: It's a tremendously fun, very creepy, challenging, but all-around good game and I wish I'd played this one first because it makes the SNES version a waste of time.

John: \*laughing\* It's not often that you prefer the Sega version of a game to the Nintendo one!

Alex: Well, this game really shows the possibility of the Sega Saturn and I'm excited to see what comes out for it next year. Maybe this game will get a Saturn sequel?

John: Maybe, maybe not, all I know is that I like what I played and I'm giving it a 4.

Alex: I'm giving it a 4 too. It's GameTV recommended so if you've got a Saturn, definitely pick up *Blackthorne*.

-excerpted from the December 12, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

\*It's the end of the episode and Ted, Alex, Brittany, John, and Kaz are around a tree in pajamas and slippers exchanging gifts, they're each holding a gift-wrapped present in hand.\*

Ted: Being Christmas time here on *GameTV*, it's a special time of the year and so we've got one last present for everybody. We got our number one most wanted gift from next year. So let's start opening the gifts. I'll go first.

Brittany: Why the hell do you get to go first?

Ted: Because I'm the oldest.

John: I'm older than all y'all!

Alex: Look, let's just let Ted go first so he shuts up.

Ted: Thank you. \*he tears open his gift\* Let's see what we got here...oh....oh look...look! \*holds up a generic Saturn game case that says "SONIC 4" on it in big letters\* This is exactly what I wanted! I want Sega to get busy and make Sonic 4! And I think everyone who just dropped 400 bucks on a Saturn...

Alex: Or 500 if you got the Virtua Arcade package....

Ted: Right, right, everyone who spent all that money on a Saturn wants Sonic 4. What are you waiting for, Sega?!

Kaz: Okay, time for me to go next. \*he just rips open his gift before anyone can say anything, it's a Bandai Solaris box\*

Alex: \*groaning audibly\*

Brittany: Oh, I'm sorry.

Ted: You've been a naughty boy this year, Kaz.

Brittany: Seriously, how many people did you like, kill for Santa to bring you that piece of crap?

Kaz: Hey! Hey! No! No, I want some RECOGNITION for this thing! This is a quality gaming device!

John: No, it's really not.

Ted: Denial, that's stage one.

Kaz: No, this is a good game system and there's a really good game coming out next year called *Gon: Prehistoric Panic*. And it's cheaper than the Saturn, it's a hundred bucks cheaper!

Alex: And there's literally six games out for it that aren't educational games. It's junk, it really is junk.

Brittany: Okay, that's it, it's my turn to go. \*opens her box and there's a copy of *Sailor Moon: Another Story* for the Japanese SNES-CD\* Dear Nintendo... \*holds up the game\* Localize this. It is your "Year of RPGs" next year, this is a GREAT RPG that just came out in Japan, this needs to be in America.

Ted: Oh, is that the one where the girls are going around in skirts fighting monsters?

Alex: Hey, I like *Sailor Moon*, *Sailor Moon* is really cool.

Kaz: ...I'll trade gifts with you.

Brittany: No, no way! Nintendo, *Sailor Moon* is a HUGE hit right now. There are lots of little girls who want to play an RPG and for those of them whose parents won't let them play *The Darkest Ritual* because of some bullcrap about the occult, this is a game they can play.

Ted: Or they can play *Final Fantasy VI* which has two much much better female protagonists.

Brittany: Okay, you've got a point but-

John: Is it even that good of a game?

Brittany: It is a very good game. I think it would be a big hit and it's the "Year of RPGs"!

Ted: It's gonna be the year of the Sega Saturn next year.

Brittany: \*groans\*

John: I'll open my gift now. \*opens his present, it's a baseball bat\* Aww yeah, what I want is a real baseball game on the Sega Saturn. And next year it's coming, *Frank Thomas' Big Hurt Baseball* is coming to the Sega Saturn.

Alex: You know what's also coming? Ken Griffey 2 for the Super Nintendo CD.

John: Next year is looking to be BIG for sports games, you've got Grant Hill Basketball coming to the SNES-CD, NBA Hangtime is coming to the arcades, but I'm looking forward to seeing *Frank Thomas* make his way to the Sega Saturn.

Brittany: And I heard it's gonna have the real teams, too, the last one on the SNES and the Genesis didn't.

John: The early video of the game looks real great, I'm looking forward to it.

Alex: All right, finally it's time for my gift. \*opens it up, it's a Game Boy\*

Brittany: That's a good gift.

Ted: I don't get it.

Alex: \*takes out the Game Boy and it's been drawn all over with crayons\*

Ted: Why would you do that to a perfectly good Game Boy?!

Kaz: It's pretty.

Alex: Nintendo, it's been six years since the Game Boy came out and it's great, but it needs COLOR! Game Gear has it, Lynx had it back in 1989, the Game Boy needs to get with the times! It needs colors!

Ted: It needs games.

John: Well, in Japan, they're coming out with some kinda...bug-catching game?

Brittany: I heard about that, I forget what it's called but it looks pretty fun, it's made by the same guys who did *Pulseman*.

Ted: You just need to get a Venus, I think.

Alex: I'm gonna need to ask Santa for a truckload of batteries.

Ted: I can play *Vectorman* on the toilet!

Alex: I can play *Tetris* on the toilet...

Brittany: You two are disgusting, remind me never to touch either of your handhelds.

John: Well, it's been a fun time here at *GameTV*, but now we're signing off, we'll be back with a special New Year's Eve year-end special in 12 days. I'm John, that's Kaz, that's Brittany, and \*points to Ted and Alex\* those two are disgusting, and from everyone here at *GameTV* we wish you all a very Merry Christmas!

Brittany: Hope you get all the games you want, bye! \*waving with the other hosts\*

-excerpted from the December 19, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: December 1995**

1. Tales Of The Seven Seas
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Super Mario World 3
4. Killer Instinct
5. Mortal Kombat 3
6. Donkey Kong Country
7. Doom
8. Super Mario World 2
9. Final Fantasy IV
10. Final Fantasy VI
11. Victory
12. NBA Live 96
13. Earthbound 2
14. Ogre Battle
15. Treasure Hunters
16. Spiderman: Showdown With Venom
17. Battle Arena Toshinden
18. Madden 96
19. Naval Guns
20. Mysteria

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### **December 25, 1995**

Though Christmas wasn't typically celebrated in Japan the way it is in the West, and certainly not with the religious significance it holds for many Christians, it was still celebrated as a jovial time of gift giving and to celebrate the coming new year, and Hideo Kojima was in a Christmasy mood as he sat at home reading the fax he'd just recieved from his friend Masahiro Sakurai at HAL Labs. The reception that *Tokimeki Memorial* had gotten in the West as *Forever With You* was pleasing to him. Though the game would only sell 29,000 copies in North America, its very positive response from Western game critics still made him quite happy and the game sold more than well enough in Japan to cover any shortfalls that low sales in other territories would cause.

1996 was a big year for him and for his company Konami. In two short months, *Eternal Night* would be coming to the West. The action-adventure game, styled like the company's

series *Castlevania* but with a Kojima flair, had sold nearly a million copies in Japan already and had been a smash hit with critics, earning a 39/40 in Famitsu. It was already being heavily hyped by Western game publications and would no doubt be one of the biggest games of the quarter for the Super Nintendo CD. An enhanced remake compilation of the first two Metal Gear games titled *Metal Gear 1+2* was also set for release the very same month, and was sure to be at least a decent success. Then there was *Policenauts*, the follow-up to Kojima's international hit *Snatcher*. *Snatcher* had been possibly the most influential Super Nintendo CD game ever released, and he had high hopes that *Policenauts* would be equally well received.

Of course, there was the question of Kojima's next project, a game he'd been conceiving in his mind since 1994. A game he'd thought at one point to release for the 3DO, and then perhaps for the Super Nintendo CD...but he had too many ideas in his head, the ideas had grown far too ambitious for either of those systems. Now he had his eye on the Saturn, a system he'd been enjoying for the past year. He KNEW the Saturn was more than capable of handling his vision for Metal Gear 3... it was top-notch technology, which is why it was commanding such a high retail price. But Kojima also knew that another console was coming, he'd been asking Sakurai about it for more than two years, but still had only news articles, snippets of press conferences, and test time with early development kits to glean information off of. He'd definitely have to give Nintendo's new console a chance to prove itself before making any kind of decision on Metal Gear 3. He was extremely impressed with the Saturn, but if this game was going to be the best it could possibly be, he'd have to weigh all his options extremely.

Another fax was coming in as Kojima was lost in thought. He turned to the fax machine and walked over to it, tearing the fax off of the roll. It was from Konami HQ. He blinked.

"New Eunice dev kits are here. Merry Christmas."

Kojima smiled. Merry Christmas, indeed.

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Here's a list of SNES-CD games that I imagine would get official soundtracks for purchase in North America up to the end of 1995:

- Super Mario World 2
- Final Fantasy III/V
- Secret Of Mana
- The Secret Of Monkey Island
- Final Fantasy Origins
- Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition
- Mortal Kombat II
- Donkey Kong Country
- F-Zero CD
- Phaedra's Heart
- Soulqueen
- Jewels Of The Realm
- Squad Four
- Mega Man X2

Pulseman  
Valis: Rebirth  
Final Fantasy VI  
Cosmic Fantasy  
Pocky and Rocky CD  
The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams  
Ogre Battle  
Doom  
Super Mario World 3  
Final Fantasy IV  
Mortal Kombat 3  
Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest  
Front Mission  
Forever With You  
The Darkest Ritual  
Frederico  
Parallel World  
Victory  
Andrekah  
Tales Of The Seven Seas  
Mysteria  
Ballistic Limit  
Rage

-

*"While we were extremely impressed by the level of graphical fidelity and high-quality sound found in the Sega Saturn launch line-up, we couldn't stop playing The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams. Battling fierce bosses, plunging deep into huge dungeons, and discovering secret after secret, this game had a hold on us and we're still playing it today. That's the reason why we're awarding our 1995 Game of the Year award to this outstanding title."*

-excerpted from the February 1996 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

*"Larry, 1995 was the year we saw video games embraced by older players more than any other year before. Poll after poll is showing that the demographics of our fans are getting older and older, and so going forward I think those people are going to be buying a lot more games."*

-Howard Lincoln, excerpted from the January 25, 1996 episode of *Larry King Live*

*"At this stage it seems a Saturn price cut is inevitable, the only question is when and how much."*

-Quartermann from his rumors column in the February 1996 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"This is a song about loss and about how we all hope that we'll be able to see our loved ones again. Working with our dear friends Mariah Carey and Boyz II Men on this song has been really bittersweet and it's so gratifying to hear how it's been helping so many people cope with the losses in their own lives."*

-Rozonda "Chilli" Thomas, speaking with MTV news about the song "One Sweet Day" on

January 5, 1996

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**Top Selling Super Nintendo CD Games of 1995** (pack-in sales included, only sales during the 1995 calendar year are counted):

1. Donkey Kong Country
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Super Mario World 2
4. Super Mario World 3
5. Doom
6. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
7. Ballistic Limit
8. Tales Of The Seven Seas
9. Killer Instinct
10. Super Mario Kart

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### **1995 Nintendo Power Editors' Choice Top Ten SNES-CD Games**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams

*Ocarina Of Dreams towered above a great year of fantastic games. Link's latest quest was his biggest and most epic to date, and players and editors are in agreement: it's the most inspired title in one of Nintendo's most storied series.*

2. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest

*Diddy Kong returns in this sequel that's somehow even better than the first! Along with his pal Dixie Kong, the two monkey heroes explored eight huge worlds in their epic quest to save Donkey Kong from the evil Captain K. Rool.*

3. Super Mario World 3

*Mario's newest adventure was a bit different from what players were used to but for our money it was his best quest ever! Bowser's Mechakoopa army couldn't keep the plucky plumber down, and the new 3-D graphics brought Mario's adventure to life in a way we've never seen before!*

4. Doom

*The long-anticipated SNES-CD version of this instant PC classic was worth the wait! With more than a dozen levels, this awesome shooter left us all clamoring for more.*

5. Final Fantasy VI

*Squaresoft's latest RPG is a true classic, featuring a beautiful soundtrack (including that amazing opera scene!) and one of our favorite villains in any video game.*

6. Ballistic Limit

*From the depths of an alien-infested space station to huge motherships, Ballistic Limit was a sci-fi odyssey and gave players dozens of ways to blast the alien hordes.*

#### 7. Killer Instinct

*Rare's arcade fighter impressed us all with beautiful 3-D visuals and high-impact combo moves!*

#### 8. Tales Of The Seven Seas

*This seafaring pirate adventure swashbuckled its way into our hearts with a cast of fun characters and over 100 levels to explore!*

#### 9. Tecmo Super Bowl CD

*Tecmo gave a new spin to the classic football series with updated graphics, all-new rosters, and the introduction of commentary for the first time ever!*

#### 10. Earthbound 2

*This quirky modern-day RPG was one of the most epic role-playing quests we've ever experienced. Ness' journey to take down Giygas featured thrills, friendship, and laughter.*

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**1995 Nintendo Power Awards ("The Nesters")**- compiled from fan voting, not a complete list of awards

#### Best Graphics and Sound (SNES-CD)

1. Ballistic Limit
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Twisted Metal

#### Best Challenge (SNES-CD)

1. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
2. Doom
3. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams

#### Best Play Control (SNES-CD)

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Doom
3. Ballistic Limit

#### Best Theme And Fun (SNES-CD)

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
3. Super Mario World 3

### Best Hero

1. Link
2. Mario
3. Doomguy

### Best Villain

1. Kefka
2. Gaddis
3. Bowser

### Most Innovative

1. Ballistic Limit
2. Tales Of The Seven Seas
3. Earthbound 2

### Best Overall (Super Nintendo)

1. Yoshi's Island
2. Kirby's Adventure 2
3. Storm Guardians

### Best Overall (SNES-CD)

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Doom
3. Final Fantasy VI

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### **The Billboard #1 Songs of 1995**

January 7: On Bended Knee by Boyz II Men  
January 14: On Bended Knee by Boyz II Men  
January 21: Creep by TLC  
January 28: Creep by TLC  
February 4: Creep by TLC  
February 11: Creep by TLC  
February 18: Creep by TLC  
February 25: Creep by TLC  
March 4: Creep by TLC  
March 11: Take A Bow by Madonna  
March 18: Sure Ain't Me by TLC  
March 25: Sure Ain't Me by TLC  
April 1: Take A Bow by Madonna  
April 8: Take A Bow by Madonna  
April 15: This Is How We Do It by Montell Jordan  
April 22: This Is How We Do It by Montell Jordan  
April 29: This Is How We Do It by Montell Jordan

May 6: This Is How We Do It by Montell Jordan  
May 13: This Is How We Do It by Montell Jordan  
May 20: This Is How We Do It by Montell Jordan  
May 27: This Is How We Do It by Montell Jordan  
June 3: This Is How We Do It by Montell Jordan  
June 10: This Is How We Do It by Montell Jordan  
June 17: Have You Ever Really Loved A Woman? by Bryan Adams  
June 24: Have You Ever Really Loved A Woman? by Bryan Adams  
July 1: Don't Take It Personal (Just One Of Dem Days) by Monica  
July 8: Don't Take It Personal (Just One Of Dem Days) by Monica  
July 15: Don't Take It Personal (Just One Of Dem Days) by Monica  
July 22: One More Chance/Stay With Me by The Notorious B.I.G.  
July 29: One More Chance/Stay With Me by The Notorious B.I.G.  
August 5: One More Chance/Stay With Me by The Notorious B.I.G.  
August 12: Kiss From A Rose by Seal  
August 19: Kiss From A Rose by Seal  
August 26: Kiss From A Rose by Seal  
September 2: Gangsta's Paradise by Coolio  
September 9: Gangsta's Paradise by Coolio  
September 16: Gangsta's Paradise by Coolio  
September 23: Gangsta's Paradise by Coolio  
September 30: Fantasy by Mariah Carey  
October 7: Fantasy by Mariah Carey  
October 14: Fantasy by Mariah Carey  
October 21: Fantasy by Mariah Carey  
October 28: Fantasy by Mariah Carey  
November 4: Dreaming Of You by Selena  
November 11: Fantasy by Mariah Carey  
November 18: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
November 25: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
December 2: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
December 9: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
December 16: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
December 23: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
December 30: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men

(Author's Notes: "Sure Ain't Me" is a song made up for TTL, written by Lisa Lopes and referring to her relationship with Andre Rison, recorded three weeks before her death in December 1994, in the song she references how the relationship problems aren't caused by her and that anything wrong that she does in the relationship is because of her boyfriend, after Lopes' death the song becomes an anthem for women in abusive relationships. As for "Waterfalls", which Lisa Lopes penned while in prison for burning down Andre Rison's mansion IOTL, the house-burning never happens ITTL and so the song is never written, which is a rather large butterfly considering how many weeks the song topped the charts IOTL. "Dreaming Of You" peaked at #22 IOTL, it would seem paradoxical that the song would do BETTER with Selena alive, but with her alive to finish and promote the album it does significantly better critically and sales-wise and the song "Dreaming Of You" becomes a #1 hit, at least for a week. The album itself tops the sales charts for four weeks. "One Sweet Day" is an even MORE massive hit than it was IOTL with the involvement of the two surviving members of TLC. It ends up topping the charts for an astonishing nineteen consecutive weeks across 1995 and 1996.)

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**Electronic Gaming Monthly Editors' Choice Awards 1995 (selected):**

Game of The Year: The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams (Super Nintendo CD)  
Runner-up: Doom (Super Nintendo CD)

*With The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams our pretty much unanimous choice for Game of the Year, the much more difficult decision was which game to put as our runner-up. There were a number of strong contenders, including Ballistic Limit, Yoshi's Island, and NHL '96 on the Sega Saturn, but ultimately we felt that the SNES-CD port of Doom, a near perfect port of the PC version, deserved our pick.*

Super Nintendo Game Of The Year: Yoshi's Island  
Runner-up: Kirby's Adventure 2

*Yoshi's Island was our winner here and it wasn't close. The beautiful, storybook-like graphics and brilliant level design made this an easy decision. As for our runner up, we loved the cutesy Kirby's Adventure 2 and its great bosses and power-ups which made it a worthy successor to the NES classic.*

Sega Genesis Game Of The Year: Lords Of Skylein  
Runner-up: Vectorman

*Vectorman blew our minds with its graphics and fun gameplay, but the epic Lords of Skylein just narrowly beat it out. This 50-hour journey was one of the longest RPGs we've ever played, and its enthralling storyline made us care deeply about its cast of amazing characters.*

Super Nintendo CD Game Of The Year: The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams  
Runner-up: Doom

*This was also what our overall Game of the Year came down too and ultimately Zelda won in a landslide with its beautiful visuals and brilliantly designed dungeons, along with probably the best storyline yet in a Zelda game.*

Sega Saturn Game Of The Year: NHL '96  
Runner-up: Virtua Fighter

*NHL '96 just might be the best sports game of all time, making us feel like we're really at the arena. Virtua Fighter was a pitch-perfect home port of a game that we all got super-addicted to at the arcades.*

Best RPG: Final Fantasy VI (Super Nintendo CD)  
Runner-up: Lords Of Skylein (Sega Genesis)

*It was a close decision but in the end, Final Fantasy VI was our top RPG of the year. It had a huge cast of characters and all of them brought their own good qualities to the table. Though Lords of Skylein was longer, it wasn't quite as epic as Square's classic.*

Best Fighting Game: Killer Instinct (Super Nintendo CD)  
Runner-up: Virtua Fighter (Sega Saturn)

*Hoo boy, this category almost had us fighting for real! Both games had their pros, but in the end, Killer Instinct and its fun combo system won out over the graphically-superior but not quite as addicting Virtua Fighter.*

Best Action Game: Yoshi's Island (Super Nintendo)

Runner-up: Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest (Super Nintendo CD)

*Donkey Kong Country 2 was certainly amazing, and it's a testament to how good this year was that a game superior in every way to last year's Game of the Year winner couldn't even win its own genre this time around. Yoshi's Island was beautiful, challenging, and fun to come back to over and over again.*

Best Music: Final Fantasy VI (Super Nintendo)

Runner-up: Ultima: The Worldly Lord (Sega Saturn)

*Final Fantasy VI's epic score just barely won out over Ultima's movie-like soundtrack. In the end, it was the opera scene that won it for Squaresoft's masterpiece.*

### **System Reviews:**

Super Nintendo CD:

Ed: 10 (quote: "The Super Nintendo CD continued to be the best video game console around by a wide margin. Even with the Saturn having just released, this thing continues to impress with games like *Ballistic Limit* and *Ocarina of Dreams*.")

Andrew: 9 (quote: "*Ocarina of Dreams* alone makes the Super Nintendo CD worth the money, especially since you can finally buy it as its own console.")

Mike: 10 (quote: "The SNES-CD had more hits than all the other game consoles combined. There's literally something for everyone on this amazing game system.")

Sushi-X: 9 (quote: "The visuals are showing their age just a bit compared to the Saturn, but *Twisted Metal* proves that developers can still push this bad boy.")

Sega Saturn:

Ed: 9 (quote: "People might balk at the price but there's no balking at the amazing graphics and great initial lineup.")

Andrew: 9 (quote: "With games like *Panzer Dragoon* already here and *Sonic 4* on the way, Genesis owners should start saving up.")

Mike: 8 (quote: "Though none of the games really blew me away, there's still enough here to like that it's worth it for someone with \$400 to spend.")

Sushi-X: 8 (quote: "I can't wait until the awesome Namco arcade hits like *Soul Edge* come to this thing.")

Super Nintendo:

Ed: 6 (quote: "It's finally looking like the end of the line for the venerable SNES, but it's been a great run.")

Andrew: 6 (quote: "Without the need to buy it in order to play SNES-CD games, there's not too much need to purchase an SNES console now.")

Mike: 7 (quote: "*Yoshi's Island* proves that there's still life in those old SNES cartridges.")

Sushi-X: 6 (quote: "It's been fun but compared to the Saturn, the SNES is downright

primitive.”)

Genesis:

Ed: 6 (quote: “If I had to choose between a cheap Genesis and an expensive Saturn, I'd probably go for the Saturn.”)

Andrew: 7 (quote: “It's arguable that the Sega Genesis had some of the year's best RPGs between *Lords of Skylein*, *Phantasy Star IV*, and *Star Trek*.”)

Mike: 6 (quote: “You pretty much needed the Mega Charger to get much fun out of the Genesis this year.”)

Sushi-X: 8 (quote: “I'm not giving up on my Sega Genesis yet, it's still the best value console around even with the SNES-CD plummeting in price.”)

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* 1996 Video Game Buyer's Guide

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### **Gamepro 1995 Readers' Choice Awards** (selected)

*Back in our March 1996 issue, we asked our readers to name their favorite games of the year, and boy, did you guys come through! Over 3,000 letters came in naming over 100 different games in more than 20 categories, and here are the results!*

Best Role-Playing Game:

*You guys clearly had a favorite and that was Final Fantasy VI! Squaresoft's epic SNES-CD game took nearly half of the vote, while a likely Sega Genesis split between its two great RPGs allowed Earthbound 2 to slide into second place.*

Final Fantasy VI: 48%

Earthbound 2: 14%

Phantasy Star IV: 12%

Lords Of Skylein: 9%

The Darkest Ritual: 8%

Breath of Fire II: 6%

Best Sports Game:

*While we voted the Saturn's NHL '96 as our personal favorite, a lot of our readers balked at the Saturn's then-high price of \$399, and the more popular Genesis sports titles got a lot more votes. Tecmo Super Bowl CD scored a surprisingly close second as Nintendo gamers showed their love for the excellent NFL title.*

NBA Live '96 (Genesis): 29%

Tecmo Super Bowl CD (SNES-CD) : 26%

Madden '96 (Genesis): 20%

NHL '96 (Saturn): 8%

Best Fighting Game:

*This was largely a three-way race between Killer Instinct, Mortal Kombat 3, and Virtua Fighter. In the end, readers showed their love for the combo-heavy KI.*

Killer Instinct (SNES-CD): 41%  
Mortal Kombat 3 (SNES-CD): 26%  
Virtua Fighter: (Saturn) 19%

Best Action Game:

*Wow! This one was neck-and-neck all the way! We thought the SNES-CD's top two titles might split and allow Vectorman the win, but Nintendo fans had enough votes for both DKC2 and Ballistic Limit. Only 19 votes separated them!*

Donkey Kong Country 2: 26%  
Ballistic Limit: 25%  
Vectorman: 22%  
Yoshi's Island: 11%  
Knuckles: Renegade: 10%

Best SNES Game:

*Yoshi's Island was expected to win, and it did, but look at how many of you voted for Storm Guardians! This fantastic game got a lot of praise in GamePro and it looks like our readers listened to us.*

Yoshi's Island: 41%  
Storm Guardians: 23%  
Kirby's Adventure 2: 18%  
F-Zero: G-Force: 8%

Best Genesis Game:

*Vectorman is a clear hit! Vectorman got a ton of votes from readers and it beat out even Knuckles: Renegade by a big margin. RPG gamers had their say as well, putting Phantasy Star IV and Lords of Skylein in a virtual tie for third (in truth, PSIV won by two votes).*

Vectorman: 39%  
Knuckles: Renegade: 25%  
Phantasy Star IV: 12%  
Lords Of Skylein: 12%  
Madden '96: 7%

Best SNES-CD Game:

*While there were lots of great SNES-CD titles this year, it was all about Zelda. Ocarina of Dreams nearly tripled the runner-up, Final Fantasy VI, to run away with this year's award.*

The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams: 47%  
Final Fantasy VI: 16%  
Ballistic Limit: 15%  
Doom: 9%  
Killer Instinct: 9%

Best Saturn Game:

*We apparently have a lot of hockey fans reading this magazine. NHL '96 was the big winner, beating out runner-up Virtua Fighter and hoisting this year's GamePro Cup. Ultima: The Worldly Lord finished in a very respectable third.*

NHL '96: 32%  
Virtua Fighter: 29%  
Ultima: The Worldly Lord: 14%  
Virtua Cop: 9%  
Madden '96: 7%

#### Best System Overall:

*As we expected, Sega fans split their vote somewhat, though Super Nintendo CD still had eight more votes than both the Genesis and Saturn combined, even with the cartridge-based Super Nintendo siphoning off votes. The Super Nintendo CD had its best year yet, with dozens of quality games and some of the greatest games of all time! We imagine the Saturn will surge after this year's recent price drop!*

Super Nintendo CD: 43%  
Sega Genesis: 29%  
Sega Saturn: 14%  
Super Nintendo: 9%

#### Best Game Overall:

*We figured Zelda would win, though we didn't imagine it would be this much of a blowout! Ocarina of Dreams took home more than a third of the votes, that's over a thousand of you who loved Zelda enough to make it your favorite game of the year. We don't blame you, Link's amazing quest was definitely the best thus far in the series and one of our favorite games of all time. Sega fans rallied behind Vectorman, who finished in second by quite a wide margin. And look at that support for Virtua Fighter! Though it didn't beat out NHL '96 to win the best Saturn game honors, loyal fans did give it enough of a push to put it ahead of the hockey title for this award, finishing in a very close fourth behind Final Fantasy VI. The strangest games to get votes this year? SNES-CD's Chicken Fighter, The Smurfs on Sega Game Gear, and Spot Goes To Hollywood on the Sega Genesis were among the 37 games that received a single vote in this category.*

The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams (SNES-CD): 35%  
Vectorman (Genesis): 14%  
Final Fantasy VI (SNES-CD): 8%  
Virtua Fighter (Saturn): 8%  
Ballistic Limit (SNES-CD): 6%  
NHL '96 (Saturn): 5%  
Doom (SNES-CD): 5%  
Phantasy Star IV (Genesis): 4%  
Yoshi's Island (SNES): 3%  
Donkey Kong Country 2 (SNES-CD): 3%  
Killer Instinct (SNES-CD): 2%  
Knuckles: Renegade (Genesis): 2%

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Ted Crosley: We've just finished counting down the 5 Worst Games of 1995, along with our Top 5 Computer Games and our Top 5 Arcade Games. Now here's the moment you've all been waiting for, it's our Top 10 Console Video Games Of The Year.

Alex Stansfield: Remember, these games were selected by all five of us together, so games that receive a better review from just the two of us may not have been liked as well by the other three. So don't write any letters to us asking why a Hall of Fame game might be ranked below a game that didn't make the Hall of Fame.

Kazzi DeCarlo: But DO write letters sharing with us your recipes for delicious desserts, because those are yummy.

Ted: Yes, keep the dessert recipes coming!

Alex: Here are our top ten games of 1995!

Brittany Saldita: Number 10... **Knuckles: Renegade**. Of all the great action games to come out for the Genesis this year, *Vectorman*, *Ecco 3*, this latest game in the Sonic franchise stood the tallest. Introducing edgy new storylines, tight gameplay, and Knuckles' kick-ass new pals in the Renegades, this game made the wait for *Sonic the Hedgehog 4* just a bit easier.

Ted: But not too much easier.

Alex: Knuckles: Renegade brought in a lot of the dark aesthetic from the Saturday morning *Sonic* series, letting gamers take Knuckles for a spin in a thrilling new world with ruthless new enemies.

John Walden: Of all of Knuckles' new friends, Corona the butterfly and her lethal sonic waves made her an instant favorite. She fluttered her way into our hearts even while she was bringing Robotnik's robot legions to their knees.

Ted: Our number 9 game of the year was **Super Mario World 3**. Though it wasn't nearly as good as the previous *Super Mario World* title, and though we gave it a LOT of flack, it's undeniable that the graphics are gorgeous and some of the enemy designs were out of this world.

Brittany: Bowser's legions have never looked better, the Mechakoopas were fearsome foes and even though Mario's jumping was a bit cumbersome in the new isometric viewpoint, we all sucked it up and got the hang of it anyway, making for a really fun experience.

Alex: Mario World 3 featured a jovial soundtrack from Nintendo's master musician Koji Kondo. The mix of jovial jaunts and fearsome mechanical melodies made this game emotionally stirring from start to finish.

Kaz: The number eight game on our list was **Ultima: The Worldly Lord** for the Sega Saturn, which brought RPG exploration into a new dimension with a huge world to traverse and lots of people to recruit. Also, I loved exploring the pie factory.

Alex: Being able to chuck pies at NPCs was a hilarious diversion, but this huge world had lots of them to undertake and we spent more time with this game than most of this year's other games combined.

Ted: *The Worldly Lord* was probably the best game in this venerable RPG series, and that's saying something. It's a different experience every time you play.

Brittany: From start to finish, *Ultima: The Worldly Lord* is a game full of mystery and wonder, and it was the one Saturn game we absolutely couldn't put down.

Alex: Our number seven game of the year was **Tales Of The Seven Seas**.

Ted: Exploring the seas has never been so fun than with this motley crew of outcasts and misfits. Brilliantly voice acted and featuring some really inspired level design, few games have surprised us so pleasantly as this one.

Brittany: With deep characters, tons of secrets, and seven different endings, *Tales Of The Seven Seas* is the most fun I've had with a video game in a long time. We sang its praises during our review earlier this year, nearly putting it into our Hall of Fame.

Alex: It's a real step-up in terms of interactive storytelling and we're already clamoring for a sequel. *Tales Of The Seven Seas* is more than worthy of being called one of the year's best games.

John: At number six, **Yoshi's Island** is the best looking Super Nintendo game ever made, with 2.5-D graphics that could've been right at home even on CD.

Ted: It features dozens of challenging and creative levels, and lots of fun secrets to find.

Kaz: It's also one of the year's funniest games, featuring the bumbling yet menacing villain Kamek and a fight inside the stomach of a giant evil frog.

Brittany: These plucky dinosaurs travel through jungles, volcanos, and even above the clouds on their journey to reunite the baby brothers Mario and Luigi.

Ted: Yoshi's Island was an amazingly fun game and a great way to say goodbye to the cartridge Super Nintendo as we usher in a new generation of games.

Alex: Our number five game of the year was **Doom** for the Super Nintendo CD. We didn't think they could make *Doom* as good as it was on the PC, but they did.

Ted: While we lamented the lack of multiplayer, the single-player campaign was as good as any and all the levels from the original PC version were here in all their glory.

John: The awesome rock-inspired soundtrack was there too, and killing demons has never been so fun as it was when done to driving guitar riffs.

Kaz: Simply put, Doom kicked ass.

Ted: Our number four game was **Ballistic Limit**. This brilliant sci-fi adventure became our second Hall of Fame game back in October, and for damn good reason.

Brittany: With nineteen levels jam-packed with action and alien monsters, along with a unique and intuitive perspective switching mode, *Ballistic Limit* is one of the most unique shooters we've ever played.

Alex: Taking its cues from games like *Super Metroid*, *Ballistic Limit* plunged us into the depths of desperation and kept us on the edges of our seats.

Brittany: In third place, the RPG masterpiece **Final Fantasy VI**. With a storyline both uplifting and heartrending, this role-playing classic was clearly the best game in the series, featuring both the best visuals and the best score to date.

Ted: While I've never been a fan of the opera, *Final Fantasy VI*'s stunning opera scene, featuring actual real-life singing, brought a tear even to my cynical eye.

Kaz: And the villainous Kefka with his terrifying laugh made him a villain we all loved to hate.

John: The game even featured one of the biggest twists we've even seen in a video game, but we won't spoil it for you, you'll have to play it for yourself.

Alex: *Final Fantasy VI* is utterly worthy of the title "masterpiece" and its a game every Super Nintendo CD owner needs to play, RPG fan or not.

Ted: That brings us to our #2 game of the year, and it's the sequel to what a lot of people considered last year's #1. We're talking about **Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest**. Not too many people believed that last year's amazing *Donkey Kong Country* could ever be improved upon, but this one proved all the doubters wrong.

Alex: The sheer number of secrets contained in this game boggled all our minds, and the challenging platforming made us all yell at our screens.

Kaz: The Lost World alone probably contributed to the invention of hundreds of new swear words.

Brittany: But all of that challenge made for an incredibly rewarding experience, and when you finally saw that 102%, your heart was filled with a sense of supreme accomplishment.

Ted: *Donkey Kong Country 2* is itself a supreme accomplishment, and it's got us super excited for *Donkey Kong Country 3*.

Alex: And now we reach the #1 game of the year.

Ted: I'm sure those of you who have been following GameTV since we've been on the air can probably guess what it is.

Kaz: And those of you who haven't been following us...why the hell not?

Ted: Our pick for Best Game of 1995, and it is absolutely unanimous, even Kaz agreed with us on this one is... **The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams**.

Alex: What else is there to say that hasn't already been said? Nintendo's epic quest blew all of our minds. From deep, dark, deadly dungeons to a twisty turny storyline that brought the events of *A Link To The Past* and *Link's Awakening* full circle, *Ocarina of Dreams* completed an epic trilogy and was simply one of the best video games ever made.

John: No bull here, *Ocarina Of Dreams* is a big step forward in video gaming and a sign that Nintendo is still the number one company around when it comes to creating video game classics.

Ted: Even I've got to admit, if I only owned a Sega Genesis I'd be pretty damn jealous of Nintendo owners for being the only ones who get to play this brilliant classic of a game.

Brittany: Yeah, and honestly, this really was Nintendo's year. Don't get me wrong, I loved a ton of games Sega put out and the Saturn's future is looking so bright that Sonic should probably start wearing some sunglasses, but 1995 was the Year of Nintendo and really was the Year of Zelda.

Alex: The Super Nintendo CD had seven of our top ten games. We thought about balancing out the list but we had to be honest, most of our faves were of the spinning disc variety.

Kaz: And there were lots of great Nintendo CD games that we DIDN'T include on this list. Twisted Metal, Earthbound 2, Andrekah, Victory, Rage, so many really great games that easily could've made it with the others.

Ted: I'm feelin' it though, next year is the Saturn's year.

-excerpted from the December 31, 1995 episode of *GameTV*

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*With the introduction of the Sega Saturn and tons of great games, 1995 was one of gaming's biggest years in recent memory. Here's a brief countdown of the top 10 news stories from the past year in video games.*

#### *#10: Michael Jordan Signs With Sega*

Michael Jordan is the world's most famous athlete and the king of the NBA. With his exclusivity deal with Sega, you'll only be able to play with Michael Jordan on basketball games for the Genesis and Saturn. He might even be a bigger MJ than the last one Sega signed...

#### *#9: Sail The Seven Seas*

*Tales Of The Seven Seas* was perhaps the year's biggest sleeper hit, selling hundreds of thousands of copies and scoring rave reviews from lots of game magazines (including this one). The Super Nintendo CD's pirate-themed hit even kicked off a bit of a mini-pirate craze!

#### *#8: We're Heading To Venus*

Now you can play Sega Genesis games anywhere you go with the release of the Sega Venus, which even includes Mega Charger support. Though you'll need lots of batteries, being able to play Genesis games anywhere is pretty amazing.

#### *#7: Nintendo Decouples The SNES-CD*

Before November 1995, those who wanted to play the slew of hits on the SNES-CD needed

to own a Super Nintendo or buy an expensive combo set. With the introduction of the stand-alone version, the SNES-CD became available to a whole new group of players.

#### *#6: Mortal Kombat A Blockbuster*

With a big \$25 million opening weekend, *Mortal Kombat* became the first video game movie to achieve major Hollywood success (and even got mediocre reviews from critics, which for a video game movie is a big accomplishment). Will this lead to more video game-to-film adaptations in the near future?

#### *#5: Sega And Namco Create An Arcade Powerhouse*

Early last year, Namco and Sega signed a deal to create a new generation of arcade chips, which we've already begun seeing in games such as *Tekken* and *Soul Edge*. Namco is poised to play a big role in Sega's future success.

#### *#4: Nintendo And Sony Make A Deal*

It was looking a bit iffy for a while, but in March of last year Nintendo and Sony signed the paperwork to begin developing a new console known as Project Eunice. While it likely won't see release in 1996, we can't wait to see all the latest news on what this console is going to be.

#### *#3: A Show Of Our Own*

The first ever expo dedicated solely to video games took place in Los Angeles last May. E3 was a rousing success and the next one is already scheduled for this spring, where we'll likely see a brand new crop of future hit games.

#### *#2: Ocarina Of Dreams*

The overwhelming critical favorite last year was Nintendo's *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina of Dreams*. Link's latest adventure was his best received yet and one of the year's best-selling games.

#### *#1: Enter The Saturn*

The launch of the Sega Saturn was easily the biggest video game story of 1995. Though sales weren't exactly overwhelming, the system's strong launch lineup and great critical reception have set it up nicely to have an excellent 1996.

(...)

*1995's been great but we're already looking forward to 1996. Here are the ten games we expect to be next year's biggest hits.*

#### *#10: Resident Evil*

The Saturn's survival-horror thriller is looking amazing as it gets set to release in Japan. From what we've seen, it's going to be one of the scariest games ever made and with movie-like visuals, it's set to be a technical marvel as well.

*#9: Super Mario RPG*

We can't wait to see Mario and friends take their turn at becoming RPG heroes. While we don't know too much about the game, it looks amazing graphically and the thought of playable Bowser makes us giddy with anticipation.

*#8: Panzer Dragoon II Zwei*

Last year's *Panzer Dragoon* was our favorite Saturn launch game and the sequel looks to build on everything the first game set up.

*#7: Chrono Trigger*

Squaresoft's "Dream Project" just released in Japan to amazing reviews and record-breaking sales and we expect more of the same in the States. It's set to be the Super Nintendo CD's first ever two-disc game, and if one disc isn't enough to contain all the awesomeness it'll be hard for this game to be topped!

*#6: Tomb Raider*

We're highly enamored with this adventure game's beautiful heroine and stunning environments and can't wait to explore the ancient ruins with Lara Croft next year.

*#5: Elements of Mana*

The sequel to *Secret Of Mana* is shaping up to be even more fun than the first from what we've seen. Choosing our own party should give the game some excellent replay value.

*#4: Squad Four 2*

Other than the fact that it IS coming next year, Nintendo's keeping surprisingly tight-lipped about the details of the sequel to one of 1994's top original games, but the few screenshots we've seen look incredible.

*#3: Tale Phantasia*

The game's been out in Japan nearly a year and we loved what we've played. Battles are a blast and the localization, done by the same team who did the classic *Lunar* on Sega CD, is sounding highly promising. This game's hyped to the moon, we think it'll live up to that hype.

*#2: NiGHTS: Into Dreams*

From the very first Saturn tech demo we knew this game would be a winner and we're not backing down from that prediction. This game is the best looking Saturn game we've ever seen and now it's only a few months away.

*#1: Sonic The Hedgehog 4*

Perhaps the most anticipated game of all time, the latest title in the Sonic series is building hype to an enormous fever pitch. If it's not Game of the Year 1996, it'll probably be viewed as a massive disappointment.

-excerpted from the February 1996 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

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## **Game Watch**

*SNES-CD:*

Battletoads: Dark Queen - Winter '96  
Bumblebee 2 - Winter '96  
Chessmaster 3D - Winter '96  
Eternal Night - Winter '96  
Klepto: The Invisible Thief - Winter '96  
Mega Man X3 - Winter '96  
Metal Gear 1+2 - Winter '96  
Mickey Mania: The Timeless Adventures Of Mickey Mouse - Winter '96  
Natalia: Teardrop Of Fate - Winter '96  
Samurai Shodown II - Winter '96  
Tunnel Vision - Winter '96  
Twinblade - Winter '96  
Art Of Fighting 2 - Spring '96  
Axelay 2 - Spring '96  
Belle Weather - Spring '96  
Chrono Trigger - Spring '96  
Fatal Strike: Touch Of Death - Spring '96  
Fire Emblem: The Holy War - Spring '96  
Fire Pro Wrestling Presents: WCW Monday Nitro - Spring '96  
Hacker Jack - Spring '96  
Jewels Of The Realm 2 - Spring '96  
Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run - Spring '96  
Kyuriadan - Spring '96  
Major Hazard: FUBAR - Spring '96  
Maui Mallard in Cold Shadow - Spring '96  
Mechanix - Spring '96  
Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge - Spring '96  
Monster Wars II - Spring '96  
NASCAR Racing - Spring '96  
Phineas And Ferb - Spring '96  
Pinocchio - Spring '96  
Prehistorik Man - Spring '96  
Quizmaster - Spring '96  
Samurai Buster - Spring '96  
Steam Agent - Spring '96  
Tactics Ogre - Spring '96  
The Need For Speed - Spring '96  
VideoVision - Spring '96  
Whizz - Spring '96  
Ys V - Spring '96  
College Football '97 - Summer '96  
Extreme Deerhunting 2 - Summer '96  
FIFA '97 - Summer '96

Grant Hill In NBA Basketball - Summer '96  
International Track and Field - Summer '96  
Knightstar 2 - Summer '96  
Madden 97 - Summer '96  
Ninja Gaiden IV - Summer '96  
Pocahontas - Summer '96  
Road Storm - Summer '96  
Soul Matrix - Summer '96  
Stealth: Dangerous Mission - Summer '96  
Street Fighter Alpha 2 - Summer '96  
Super Mario RPG - Summer '96  
Tale Phantasia - Summer '96  
Valis II - Summer '96  
Dead End - Fall '96  
Icebiter 3 - Fall '96  
Mortal Kombat Trilogy - Fall '96  
Policenauts - Fall '96  
Secret Of Mana 2 - Fall '96

-excerpted from the January 1996 issue of *Nintendo Power*

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*"1995 saw the grand encroachment of video games into the cultural mainstream in a big way. Games like Doom on the SNES-CD and Virtua Cop on the Sega Saturn saw mainstream headlines, and with Mortal Kombat a marginally big hit at the box office, scoring \$70 million in North American box-office receipts, video games were definitely on the forefront of the cultural zeitgeist. It was a bit of a cruel irony that the year saw Sega, which had become a force in the industry by attempting to push video games further into the mainstream, saw their worst sales year since 1991. The Sega Saturn had launched at seemingly the perfect time and with an excellent launch line-up, and the technically advanced system had scored rave reviews from game critics, but the steep price of entry was far too much to ask players to bear, especially when Sega had prided itself on being the budget alternative to higher-priced Nintendo consoles. Nintendo struck while the iron was hot, not only enjoying the best lineup thus far in their history, with new installments in their flagship Mario and Zelda series along with excellent third-party efforts from Squaresoft, Capcom, Konami, and Sony, but launching a new stand-alone SNES-CD that was perfectly priced at just \$129. Nintendo crushed Sega over the holidays and as 1996 began, the company stood poised to deal their rival a finishing blow, even before announcing a single game for their long-awaited Ultra Nintendo. Once again, as it had been in 1991, it would be up to the blue hedgehog to strike back against the dominant Nintendo. Could Sega take advantage of their technological superiority before their window of opportunity slammed shut for good?"*

-*"The History Of Console Gaming: Year-By-Year (Part 6)", Wired.com, June 19, 2012*

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And here's a list of 1995's original franchise games along with some brief descriptions of them, this is mostly for games that didn't get covered much in the original updates so you can get an idea of what they were like. A few of these didn't get covered in the updates at all.

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Dragon's Destiny II: A sequel to the 1993 aerial combat game featuring slightly better graphics and the option for four-player battles. The game is a bit more well received than its predecessor.

Dark City: Heart Of Darkness: A sequel to the 1993 detective game, the main character returns to Dark City to bust a human slavery ring. One of the best detective games on the system, the very dark subject matter draws some controversy but the game is very well received even though sales are poor.

Deadman Sam 2: This sequel to the 1993 hit features Sam and Nellie fighting a horde of ghosts who want to conquer the human world. Not quite as well reviewed as its predecessor but still a solid game that sells well.

Swords of Samnaria: Taito's sequel to Axes of Avenglia featuring a new cast of characters. The game's graphics and soundtrack are good but the RPG gameplay is about as generic as it comes.

Icebiter 2: Sony's sequel to 1994's action platformer, somewhat faster paced and with much larger worlds and better graphics. About as good as the last game, it's criticized for being somewhat derivative but it's solid nonetheless.

Eskrima Warriors: The Tournament: A sequel to 1994's Eskrima Warriors, this updated fighting game bumps up the graphics a bit and adds a few new characters. It's fun but considered to be worse than the original.

P.O.L.I.C.E.: City Under Siege: A sequel to 1994's game, this game features more levels and baddies to kill but ultimately it's considered just as mediocre as the original.

Gun Warrior: Big Guns: Another Tecmo sequel to an earlier SNES-CD hit, this game features the titular Gun Warrior teaming up with two fellow heroes (with guns of their own) to battle their way through a monster-infested labyrinth. Combining the ludicrous run and gun gameplay of Metal Slug with the dungeon crawling atmosphere of games like Ultima, it's considered one of the silliest, most violent action games for the SNES-CD and is very well received, becoming one of the year's bigger original franchise hits.

Return To Pickton Lake: Cody and Cassie return to the haunted lake, this time with some of their school friends. Instead of rescuing them, their friends help them out in their fight against more horror-styled baddies. It sells quite poorly even though it's reviewed as well as the first one.

Frederico: An action/exploration game about a Mexican hero named Frederico who has to save his girlfriend from the evil Generalissimo Garcia. Very colorful and bright, the game is very well-received in terms of gameplay but draws some initial controversy due to being accused of stereotypical portrayal of Mexicans. The creator, however, is Mexican himself and intended the game to celebrate Latino culture, not stereotype it. The controversy blows over quickly and the game becomes a franchise.

Moonlight: An RPG by Capcom that takes place in a modern city, featuring 12 playable characters who are battling a crime syndicate, eventually though it turns into something

much greater.

**Legend Of The Sorcerers:** Telenet Japan's experimental RPG combining the elements of an FMV game like Time Gal with the mechanics of a JRPG. It's VERY basic in terms of combat and plot and gets mixed reviews, it's considered more of a unique experiment than a classic RPG.

**Sock Monkeys:** An action platformer starring three sock monkeys who have to explore various levels. It's pretty generic as far as platformers are concerned but the creative enemies and very good graphics get the game some good reviews. It also gets some criticism for being a "Donkey Kong Country ripoff", though it plays somewhat differently and wasn't intended to piggyback off of DKC's success.

**The Darkest Ritual:** This is a JRPG-styled game by Ubisoft about two teenage girls, Etienne and Kris, who are messing around with witchcraft for fun when they accidentally unleash a horde of monsters on their school and have to stop it, eventually going into the underworld with a couple of their friends to take out the monsters' leader. It's a very well received game and actually a minor hit.

**Friendly Fire:** This is kind of a tongue-in-cheek third person arena shooter game. There are lots of jokes but the gameplay is pretty middling and sales are mediocre.

**Chemistry Master:** This action platformer involves a quirky scientist hero who mixes up different chemicals to toss at enemies. The combat is pretty fun but the graphics and sound are kind of primitive for the SNES-CD and the game isn't very well regarded.

**Chumoking:** A fighting game with pretty clunky graphics and slow gameplay. Not very well received at all.

**Escape From The Lab:** A fully-FMV game where you play a student who has to escape from a science lab gone crazy. Starring Matt Frewer as a crazy mad scientist, the game is pretty hokey (as most FMV games were) but not as bad as other FMV games on the system.

**Salvation:** A fast-paced space shooter game featuring hundreds of ships on screen at once, a bit like Gradius crossed with Space Invaders. The plot is pretty generic but the gameplay, which allows the player to rack up huge combos, can be addictive and the game receives middling to above average reviews.

**Last Resort:** A hybrid FMV/point-and-click horror game that takes place in an abandoned luxury resort island. Exceptionally well made, the game isn't a huge seller initially but good reviews and word of mouth make this game a profitable seller over its lifetime.

**Lilywhite:** A very quirky, obscure platforming action game starring a cute magical sprite named Lilywhite. The game barely makes it out of Japan and sales in the West are pretty lousy but the game is critically hailed.

**Schemes and Dreams:** An FMV game featuring several young entrepreneurs trying to make it in the world of business. After Plumbers Don't Wear Ties was rejected for the SNES-CD due to sexual content, this tamer game was made instead. It's actually not a horrible game but it's still pretty bad and sales are low.

**Extreme Deerhunting:** A hunting simulator utilizing either the Super Scope or the Justifier,

or other proprietary light guns. Reviews are mediocre but it does decently well due to it being the only game of its type on the system.

**The World Wars:** A war-RTS game featuring battles from the two World Wars. While it's praised for the number of units allowed on screen, other than that gameplay is pretty mediocre.

**That's Gotta Hurt!:** A somewhat silly but still quite violent FPS game that involves various hilarious and yet violent ways to kill people. It's got a four-player multiplayer mode but it runs really slowly and aside from internet Let's Plays in the present day, it's a mostly forgotten game.

**Cat Jackson:** A Sony published attempt to start a platformer franchise, this game stars a wise-cracking anthropomorphic cat named Cat Jackson, who has to hunt down his kidnapped girlfriend while exploring more than a dozen different levels. It's as generic as it comes in terms of gameplay but the colorful graphics and great music, along with the voice acting, receive praise.

**Tales Of The Seven Seas:** This is an adventure game, published by Sony, featuring a crew of misfits on a pirate ship who explore various islands in search of treasure and adventure. The game combines a number of genres, from platforming, to hack and slash, to RPG-like exploration, and is known as one of the best games on the Super Nintendo CD.

**Andrekah:** A colorful platformer starring a lovely little witch girl named Andrekah who goes around just helping random people. Featuring voice acting, a whimsical musical score, and great graphics, it's a big hit for Sunsoft.

**Puzzle Blast:** A puzzle game that combines elements of shooters with puzzle games like Tetris, it's a fun little title with modest sales.

**Battlesun:** A fairly generic space shooter that involves a war around a dying sun. The graphics receive some praise but the music is fairly lousy and the gameplay is standard generic fare.

**Dr. CD:** An educational medical game where you're a doctor who diagnoses patients with various illnesses. While the information presented is accurate and the game is legitimately educational, it's also exceptionally boring.

**The Hunt For Sasquatch:** An action game where you play a park ranger who has to hunt down the legendary monster Sasquatch before it slaughters campers on a big weekend at the park. You use the lightgun to kill feral beasts in various levels before finally reaching the sasquatch. The game receives mediocre reviews and sales are poor.

**Melia's Kingdom:** An RPG about a young man who teams up with a mysterious girl named Melia to reclaim her lost kingdom from evil forces. It's nothing too terribly special and doesn't feature any voice acting, the graphics are rather primitive and it's clear that the game is just a game originally made for Super Nintendo but moved to the CD once SNES sales declined.

**Nights Of Excitement:** A rather unique game, or collection of mini-games, with a quest behind them. Your characters are a group of girls seeking to have some fun after midnight in a big city. While the game itself is a bit disjointed and reviews and sales are somewhat

mediocre, it would later be compared to games like the Warioware series as the years go on.

**Door To Demonica:** A first-person horror/RPG game somewhat similar to Sony's King's Field, it receives comparisons to that game, though this game made some graphical compromises in order to run smoothly. While this makes for a really blocky and primitive looking game, it contributes to the horror atmosphere in a certain way and the game becomes somewhat of a cult classic.

**Eyes Of The Vampire:** An FMV game about a young man in Victorian times who gets involved with palace intrigue involving vampires, both good and bad. Combining elements of various sources of vampire lore, the game is one of the best received FMV games on the system, though sales are poor.

**Shopping Mall:** A sim game where you're in charge of a shopping mall. Bring in new stores, build attractions, and do everything you can to make your mall as lucrative as possible. It's actually quite a detailed simulation game and one of the most unique of its kind. Sales are average for the genre.

**Hyperspeed:** A very fast racing game in the vein of F-Zero, but with more simplistic levels and music. In the wake of F-Zero CD, it gets compared unfavorably and sales and reviews are bad.

**Cyber City:** A sort of noirish point and click sci-fi game where you're a detective investigating mysterious thefts by a gang of evil replicants. One of the numerous Snatcher imitators that began to crop up after the 1994 hit's success. This is one of the more generic of the imitators and one of the least well regarded.

**Daughter Of Pearl:** Another of the Snatcher imitators but much more well regarded, this game features a young female office worker who gets caught up in a conspiracy and has to take over an investigation when the detective helping her is brutally murdered. The main character's story arc is known as one of the best in the SNES-CD's history and the gameplay is said to be better than Snatcher's. Sales are poor but the game becomes a cult classic and gets at least one sequel.

**Gryphon:** A fantasy adventure game featuring a young hero who explores a series of mazes. The graphics are pretty simple and the sound is nothing great, but the game's difficulty and the intuitive nature of the dungeons make it a hit among certain players.

**Clownin' Around:** A platformer starring a friendly clown character who has to battle an evil clown character. It's a fairly generic platformer but the graphics win some acclaim.

**Victory:** A top down run and gun shooter, somewhat similar to Zombies Ate My Neighbors but also drawing comparisons to Metal Gear, it features a soldier who encounters otherworldly phenomena while fighting in a war. The phenomena turn out to be related to a secret cabal of world leaders who turn out to be extraterrestrials. The game's sophisticated storyline, excellent graphics, decent voice acting and fun combat mechanics make it one of the best reviewed games of the year, a major commercial hit for Capcom and the start of a franchise.

**Backwoods Racing:** A racing game where you're a moonshiner, you start out evading the cops and then after a few levels of that you're entered into races with other moonshiners. It

allows for car and driver customization and is sort of inspired by the early days of NASCAR (though it's not a NASCAR game in and of itself). The more moonshine you run, the better you can soup up your car. Gets decent reviews but sales are merely mediocre.

The Endless War: A strategy war game featuring a number of fictional nations, it's probably the SNES-CD's most successful strategy game both critically and commercially due to its great music and deep combat system.

Mysteria: An anime-styled JRPG with full anime cutscenes, it's a first attempt to bring a Lunar-styled anime RPG to the SNES and it's actually one of the system's more popular original RPGs.

Chicken Fighter: A silly 2-D fighting game where you battle with anthropomorphic chickens. Filled with silly chicken puns, it really wasn't that bad of a game but it's still pretty obscure.

Naval Guns: A game where you're a gunner on a battleship, trying to shoot planes down out of the sky as well as other ships. You can also be on a swift boat, a speedboat, or other types of boats. Despite being fairly simplistic in its gameplay, it's actually pretty fun and the graphics are excellent, leading to decent reviews and sales.

Hotel Havoc: Created by Fantasy Factory, this game is essentially Hotel Mario but since Hotel Mario doesn't exist ITTL, the game features completely original characters and different animated cutscenes as a framing device. Without the stigma of being a bad Mario game it's actually regarded as a fun and decent puzzler especially since a lot of the problems of ITTL Hotel Mario are fixed because the game makers can't lean on the Mario name as a crutch.

Toxic Waste: A platformer about an anthropomorphic sludge pile crawling his way through various levels full of toxic garbage. Known as a gross-out game, it's actually fairly popular, featuring voice acting and decent level design despite being full of weird sights and grossness.

Five For Fighting Hockey: A violent street hockey game named after the penalty, though you don't get any penalties for fighting in this game. Featuring original teams and hilarious characters, it features more fighting than actual hockey but the animation, humor, and gameplay are widely praised.

Jim And Kim: A platform game featuring a brother and sister named Jim and Kim who go through various levels, many of them factory related. The animation in this game is actually pretty good but the levels are repetitive and the gameplay mediocre.

Real Ultimate Football: A fully-FMV football game featuring you as a quarterback and games played using entirely FMV. There's barely any variety in teams and gameplay is hideous, this game is seen in a lot of ways as Scottie Pippen's Slam City but with football.

The Sea Adventure: An FMV game where you're in an underwater city under the ocean and you have to repel an invasion by mysterious marine creatures while keeping your team alive. Full of hokey acting and standard FMV gameplay, this is one of the last fully-FMV games released for the system, as both Nintendo and Sony are increasingly becoming averse to these games and barely any of them sell even remotely well, this game is no exception.

Trapmine: A strategy/puzzle game where you have to lay down various traps to take out your opponents. The single-player game is a 60 level puzzle game but there's also a multiplayer mode supporting up to four players.

Parallel World: An RPG featuring four young heroes who live in a vast underground nation, while at the same time, above ground there are four other young heroes living in the surface world. You alternate between the parties, who believe that they're out to destroy the other, only for the real threat to emerge, a threat that seeks to destroy both worlds. Lauded for a great soundtrack and storyline, it's actually a decent seller for its genre.

Bikerz: An action/racing game featuring a variety of silly bike gang characters, it's a kind of sanitized, family-friendly take on the biker gang cliché. The gameplay isn't bad and it sells pretty well, starting a franchise.

3-D Pool: It's a pool game. That's basically it. The graphics are all right for what it is but it's as basic a billiards video game as you can imagine.

The Legend Of Annie Oakley: A western-themed action game, combination platformer/shooter that utilizes the Justifier for certain segments, it's a sort of stylized fantastical interpretation of the legendary gunslinger Annie Oakley's life. While sales aren't quite up to snuff, it's generally regarded as the system's best Western themed game.

Rage: A side scrolling beat-em-up game, reviewed quite well to its large variety of characters compared to most other beat-em-ups and its branching storyline depending on what characters you use. The characters have somewhat different motivations and there are four different possible final bosses depending on your main character, it's a pretty big commercial hit.

Treasure Hunters: A dungeon-crawling adventure game similar to Gauntlet in a lot of ways, you play up to four characters as you traverse through a top-down dungeon, collecting loot and battling enemies. Created by Blizzard, ITTL it's considered somewhat of a proto-Diablo (though much more light-hearted, similar to The Lost Vikings in humor). Because of the success of this game, Diablo will be ported to the SNES-CD's successor console.

Polar Bear Adventure: A platformer where you play as a polar bear. Not an anthropomorphic polar bear but an actual polar bear, out to battle other beasts but also to battle humans trying to take your land. You can literally bite humans, shake them around and toss them aside like rag dolls (no blood though). Because of the bloodless violence it's actually not really considered controversial and it's pretty much just an average platformer game.

Nightsquad: A run-and-gun action game where you're an elite squad of special ops officers battling crime in a really, really crime-infested city. Somewhat unique in that you actually have five characters on screen with you at once, you're one character and the others sort of mimic your actions though you can also assign them independent controls. It's a fairly fun game and sales are pretty decent.

Sweet Ninjas: This is a 2-D fighting game actually made by the company that did the Sailor Moon fighting games in Japan, though instead of localizing Sailor Moon, we get this game that plays fairly similarly, it's a fighting game packed with female characters and is very anime in its design. Reviews and sales are both average.

The Jade Cat Museum Heist: An FMV game where you actually play a burglar who steals a

variety of things from museums and tries to avoid being caught. It's pretty simplistic and pretty short and pretty easy and another fairly humdrum FMV game in the waning days of the genre.

**Ferrari Worldwide Rally:** A racing game where you race Ferraris in tracks around the world. The graphics are quite good and the racing itself is considered fairly realistic considering the SNES-CD's limitations.

**Ballistic Limit:** This run-and-gun shooter is probably Sony's biggest hit of 1995 on the system. You're a futuristic soldier charged with protecting the world from aliens and all manner of threats and you have to travel through a variety of levels to do so. What's innovative about this game is that you switch to first-person for a number of segments. The graphics are excellent, it has one of the SNES-CD's best soundtracks, and the gameplay is considered superb.

**Pig Wars:** A combination strategy/shooter game where you're the leader of an army of anthropomorphic pigs. The game is divided into RTS-like segments where you place your armies and do battle, and action segments where you have to control individual pigs as they try to kill other groups of pigs. The game is full of silly humor and has a variety of weapons, sales are disappointing but the game does just well enough that it's profitable.

**Fairytale Storybook:** A game consisting of twelve classic fairy tales. It's more like a game collection, you can read through the original fairy tale and then play a short video game based on it. With fairy tales like Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella, The Three Little Pigs, Jack and the Beanstalk, and others, it's considered a cute little game for kids but not really challenging or fun enough for serious gamers.

**Warriors And Conquerors:** A strategy-sim game sort of like Civilization (which releases for SNES-CD the same year) but focusing on war and battles. It's also rather generic and not nearly as fun or interesting.

**Martial Masters:** A fairly complex 2-D fighting game that's praised for a fairly in-depth fighting system as opposed to games like Mortal Kombat and Street Fighter. It's designed to be a fighting game for experts and though it doesn't sell very well it does become a cult classic among hardcore fighting game fans.

**Puzzle Pals:** A detective/puzzle game sort of similar to Professor Layton in gameplay, you're a detective who investigates a series of mysteries and uses puzzles to solve the clues. It's sort of framed as an educational game for kids and it really doesn't have much of Layton's charm, making it do poorly critically and commercially.

**Don't Go To Bed!:** This is a really trippy platformer game taking place in the dreams of a young boy who is trying to save himself from a variety of nightmarish creatures. Aside from the psychedelic graphics it's as generic as platformers come.

**Nintendo Music Maker:** A sort of expansion of the music creator on Mario Paint, this is an in-depth music creator for the SNES-CD, made by Nintendo and allowing you to use hundreds of instruments and sound effects to compose your own tunes. It sells very well and it's regarded as quite innovative for the time though it's obviously not as good as later tools like the KORG synthesizers for the DS IOTL.

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*"With such a huge variety of games available for the SNES-CD, it was both liberating and restricting. Certainly developing for the SNES-CD gave us an environment where we felt like we could do anything, but at the same time, there were so many hit games already out there that we had to find a niche to slip into where we wouldn't be rehashing something that had already been done."*

-Jonathan Ellis, co-founder of Psygnosis

*"Mega Man X3 was a bit of an ordeal, the step-up to a fully next-generation game was a hard transition and I had to fight for control over my own project, it was a bit of a mess for a while. I will say that the finished product does look quite good. I am glad I was able to get Zero fully playable at the very least."*

-Keiji Inafune, in the January 1996 issue of *Famitsu*

*"Nintendo says this is the year of the RPG. So when you buy a Super Nintendo CD, you'll spend most of your time waiting, and waiting, and waiting....meanwhile, Sega Saturn players are punching. And kicking. And shooting. And racing! And jumping! And flying!"*

-excerpted from an early 1996 Sega Saturn commercial

*"How's that wait for Sonic 4 going, Saturn owners?"*

-excerpted from a letter to *Nintendo Power* in the April 1996 issue

*"We realized around 1996 that we were going through a time of transition for the entire children's entertainment industry. Video games were getting more grown-up and kids' shows were too. We had to make sure that even as we were appealing to a new generation of kids, we had to produce shows that were as smart and 'cool' as what they were getting everywhere else."*

-Former Nickelodeon president Herb Scannell, quoted in *Slimed: An Oral History Of Nickelodeon's Golden Age*

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### **Chessmaster 3D**

Andrew: 6.0

Mark: 7.0 (quote: "The computer is pretty slick and smart, but the bare-bones feature list could use a boost.")

Mike: 6.0

Sushi-X: 5.5

### **Mega Man X3**

Andrew: 8.5

Mark: 8.5

Mike: 8.5 (quote: "Mega Man FINALLY steps into the next generation with fantastic sprite animation and action packed cutscenes.")

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Mickey Mania: The Timeless Adventures of Mickey Mouse**

Andrew: 7.0 (quote: "It's not quite up there with Capcom's 1993 Mickey Mouse effort, but Sony Imagesoft produces a fun and challenging Disney romp.")

Mark: 7.5

Mike: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Mohawk And Headphone Jack**

Andrew: 6.0

Mark: 4.5

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 5.0 (quote: "This game doesn't know what it wants to be. The slick graphics make it look pretty but deep down it's a pretty lousy platformer.")

### **Samurai Shodown II**

Andrew: 8.0

Mark: 8.5

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 9.5 (quote: "SNK does it again! This game is as good as the last and the SNES-CD port is just amazing.")

### **Bumblebee: Save The Queen!**

Andrew: 6.5 (quote: "The last Bumblebee game was a fun little surprise. This one's fun too but there's very little about it that surprises.")

Mark: 6.5

Mike: 5.5

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Tunnel Vision**

Andrew: 7.5

Mark: 7.0

Mike: 7.0 (quote: "It reminds me of that old Sewer Shark game but with all the hideous cutscenes removed. It's a pretty fun rail shooter.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Natalia: Teardrop Of Fate**

Andrew: 6.5 (quote: "While I enjoyed parts of this RPG, it never got fun enough to make me lose myself in its uninventive storyline.")

Mark: 6.5

Mike: 6.0

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Klepto: The Invisible Thief**

Andrew: 8.0

Mark: 8.0 (quote: "Psygnosis provides an excellent mix of stealth and action in this quirky little title.")

Mike: 7.5  
Sushi-X: 8.0

-excerpted from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of January 1996's SNES-CD games in the February and March 1996 issues

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*While Sega Saturn sales continue to flag here in the States, in Japan, the Saturn is doing quite well. It's outsold the Genesis nearly every month since its 1994 release there, and with a lineup that now includes over 50 games, the Saturn has nearly caught up to the Super Nintendo CD in monthly sales despite its still high price of 45,000 yen. Virtua Fighter-mania has fully swept the Land of the Rising Sun, and with Virtua Fighter 2 pulling in record arcade profits on its way to a March release in the island nation, it looks to push sales of Sega's next-gen console even more. While Virtua Fighter is a popular game here in the U.S., it hasn't been nearly enough to overcome consumer distaste of the Saturn's \$399 asking price. This month's lineup of games, which includes an enhanced port of the SNES-CD hit Andrekiah, a fast paced four-player block puzzle game called Sokusha, and an anime-styled platformer called The Light Fantastic, aren't expected to do much to move the sales meter despite all three games scoring good reviews. Sokusha is especially highly regarded, with its four-player combo action said to be comparable to a cross between Bust-A-Move and Panel de Pon. The game was a big hit in Japan, but doesn't seem to be selling very well stateside. Next month's Western lineup, which includes a port of Namco's hit fighting game Tekken, could tip the scales somewhat in Sega's favor, but the company has a lot of ground to make up to catch up with Nintendo. The company is releasing a hit arcade port of its own: Twinblade, an arcade game said to be a response to Namco's popular Soul Edge game, which comes stateside to the Saturn in April, is hotly anticipated after being one of last fall's most popular arcade titles.*

*While industry analysts continue to call for Sega to slash the Saturn's price, the company refuses to budge. The rumor mill is ripe with the expectation that Sega may make the Virtua Arcade Set, the one bright spot in the Saturn's American sales, the standard package for American Saturn buyers. Were it to become the standard package at \$399, it may help to get more people to take the plunge on Sega's next generation console, but most analysts recommend that Sega make a version of the Saturn available for \$299 or less. The Saturn's lineup of games for 1996 continues to look promising, with a number of exclusive titles along with versions of some of the SNES-CD's biggest hits, such as Andrekiah, Rage, and the upcoming Konami adventure game Eternal Night. Sega has also been engaging in a sustained marketing blitz similar to the one that accompanied the early days of the Genesis. Advertising experts have been praising Sega's "Playing is Believing" campaign, but even the most compelling commercial won't get economically-minded families to open their wallets. Sega insiders say that the company might be banking on the upcoming tax refund season to drive consumer sales, along with a wave of upcoming games that includes both the aforementioned Tekken and Soul Edge, along with the massively hyped horror game Resident Evil which also is set for release in April in both America and Japan.*

-excerpted from the February 1996 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

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Sony's history with the company Psygnosis began with its acquisition of the company in 1993. At the time, Sony was beginning to buy up and partner with game developers, both in order to bolster its own software library and in preparation for a potential split with its

hardware partner Nintendo. By 1995, Sony and Nintendo had inked a deal for the next generation of console hardware, and Psygnosis was tasked with producing a game that would be a hit for Sony in the latter part of 1995. The company initially wished to make a futuristic racing game in the vein of *F-Zero*, but Sony advised against it, citing both technological limitations and the desire not to make a game too similar to Nintendo's series. In addition, the slightly disappointing sales performance of *F-Zero CD* (which sold less than a million copies in North America, around 700,000 by the end of its lifespan) had made Sony wary of oversaturating the genre. They asked Psygnosis to propose another concept, and that was the basis for the game *Klepto: The Invisible Thief*. A top-down stealth/puzzle/action game, *Klepto* tasked players with guiding the titular character through a series of increasingly difficult levels in order to steal a certain item (in some cases, more than one item). Encountering an enemy or tripping a trap would cause increasingly difficult waves of enemies to come at Klepto, who could fight them or flee, though it would eventually become impossible to stand against the waves of increasingly aggressive enemies. The game was fairly simple, but quite fun, scoring decent reviews and sales for Sony during the early part of 1996 and giving them confidence that Psygnosis would be a valuable partner for them. Perhaps, someday, that racing game could re-surface when the time was right...

-excerpted from "The Many Software Partners of Sony", an article on Goldcontroller.com, June 18, 2012

*Mickey Mania: The Timeless Adventures Of Mickey Mouse* was a game originally conceived for the Super Nintendo, but was canceled and delayed so that it could be rebuilt from the ground up for the Super Nintendo CD. It finally came out in January 1996, three years after Capcom's hit *The Magical Quest starring Mickey Mouse*. The game consisted of a series of levels based on classic Mickey Mouse cartoons, and Sony delayed the game in order to polish up the animation and add voice acting, in this case Wayne Allwine as Mickey Mouse and Jim Cummings as Mickey's rival Pete. Did the game work? Well, yes and no. Visually the game was quite impressive, with animation easily surpassing the graphics in the Sega CD version of *Aladdin*, still the benchmark for graphics in a Disney video game. But the gameplay was what Sony and their partner Traveller's Tales REALLY should have been working on. Instead of the intuitive and fun gameplay of *The Magical Quest*, we got a frustrating and badly-paced game that, when you strip out the frustrating difficulty, was all too short with only seven levels to speak of. The game might have been better had Sony not pulled David Jaffe off the project to work on *Twisted Metal*, but that game was one of Sony's "big three" for the holiday season 1995 and it's obvious what their priorities were at the time. *Mickey Mania* wasn't a BAD game, honestly, and those willing to slog through the stages definitely found value there, but it's still a case where graphics trumping gameplay isn't always the best strategy. The best Super Nintendo CD games, of course, had both. -"Disney Games: A History (part 3)", excerpted from IGN.com, February 29, 2012

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(...)

*Mega Man X3* was the first *Mega Man X* game to be designed exclusively for the SNES-CD, and the first game in the series to include animated cutscenes, voice acting (though the voice acting in *X3* was quite poor) and the ability to play as X's best buddy Zero. We talked briefly with series co-creator Keiji Inafune about *Mega Man X3*, its development, and its critical and commercial reception.

UGO.com: *Mega Man X3* was the first game in the series to be designed with the CD

medium in mind.

Inafune: Yes it was.

UGO.com: Tell me how much input you had during the game's development.

Inafune: I absolutely wanted to make this game for the CD. The cutscenes, the graphical enhancements, those were my idea, though I did not have complete input on what exactly those would contain. Capcom went with another company, Minakuchi, for things like the music and some of the level design.

UGO.com: Was the final product at least close to what you envisioned?

Inafune: Yes, I can honestly say that it was. The game was very good, the best of the original three certainly. It was a beautiful game, very fun and people seemed to really enjoy it.

UGO.com: Were you surprised that sales didn't match up to the first two games?

Inafune: A little bit, at first. I think the first game did so well because it was an entirely new thing. People wanted a next-generation Mega Man and *Mega Man X* was it. The next game was the follow-up to that and of course it was available on both Nintendo platforms at the time so it did quite well also. The third, I think people might have been a bit burned out. The annual releases, maybe not such a good idea.

UGO.com: Well, it did work for Rare and *Donkey Kong Country*.

Inafune: Ah, but those were utterly huge games! \*laughs\* Mega Man, not quite so much. Not by the time *Mega Man X3* came out. We sold enough. We did very well in Japan.

-excerpted from a June 13, 2011 interview with Keiji Inafune on UGO.com

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*This month's Nintendo Power is all about The Year Of The RPG! Our Epic Center section is super-sized, with over 40 pages of preview articles dedicated to this year's upcoming role-playing hits! And if you're a Nintendo Power CD subscriber, you're really in luck! Not only do you get all of the great regular content you've come to know and love from your quarterly CD, but if you're an RPG fan, you'll love this month's bonus Counselor's Corner videos showing you through the toughest parts of some of last year's biggest RPGs. You'll also love our exclusive behind the scenes looks at Chrono Trigger and Tale Phantasia, where you'll meet some of the talented actors who will be bringing those games' amazing characters to life! And finally, you'll not only get to play a demo of Chrono Trigger, but you'll be treated to a world premiere demo of the localized version of Tale Phantasia, months before its June release! Only Nintendo Power CD is giving you this all-access pass to be the first gamers on American soil to experience one of the most incredible RPGs ever made!*

(...)

*If you can identify all 18 heroes on our "Year Of The RPG" cover, you could be eligible to win some amazing prizes in this month's bonus contest! Just read through our Epic Center section for the scoop on all the great RPGs coming out this year. The information contained*

*within will give you everything you'll need to identify the 18 heroes from 9 different games featured on our cover. Then, put the names of the heroes (order doesn't matter as long as you have them all!) on an index card and send it in to Nintendo Power!*

*One (1) Grand Prize Winner will receive the new Super Nintendo CD, along with every single RPG we're releasing on it this year! Including, but not limited to: Chrono Trigger, Tale Phantasia, Super Mario RPG, Elements of Mana, Fire Emblem: The Holy War, Suikoden, Romancing SaGa, Soul Matrix, Lufia II, Tactics Ogre, Day Of Malcarius II, Natalia: Teardrop of Fate, and many more!*

*Five (5) First Prize Winners will receive copies of Chrono Trigger, Tale Phantasia, Super Mario RPG, and Elements of Mana, four of this year's biggest RPGs for their Super Nintendo CD!*

*Ten (10) Second Prize Winners will receive one game of their choice between Chrono Trigger, Tale Phantasia, Super Mario RPG, and Elements of Mana.*

*Fifty (50) Third Prize Winners will receive an exclusive Tale Phantasia t-shirt!*

*-excerpted from the January 1996 issue of Nintendo Power*

Victor Ireland: So right now we're recording the main theme song for *Tale Phantasia*. And we're not going to spoil the whole thing but here's a little preview, we have a really talented young woman named Jenny Stigile and she's here to record right now so let's listen in.

Jenny Stigile: *\*standing at the mic to record\* Standing beneath the pale blue moonlight... between the worlds fate has chosen... there is still a place for love.*

*While our swords clash in the darkness, I feel the weight of fate pressing on me... and my longing for adventure starts to fade...*

(...)

Victor Ireland: *Tale Phantasia* has been an incredible project to work on. I think this really is the best RPG ever made and I know fans in North America have been waiting to play it for a long, long time. The wait is just about over. I promise you, we are going to make this game even more fun than it looks if you've seen footage of the Japanese game, I promise, it's absolutely going to be worth the wait.

*\*A quick snippet is shown of Cress leaping into battle and yelling as he strikes down at a foe\**

(...)

Moira Quirk: I'm here, actually about to record, um, my last lines for *Chrono Trigger*. And it's been a really fun experience, definitely, for sure. Ummm....can I tell you who I'm playing? *\*looks offscreen\** Can I? Yes, I'm being told that I can. I perform the voices of two characters, actually. One of them is named Schala and the other is this queen named Zeal. And Schala is actually Queen Zeal's daughter, but they couldn't be any more different. I don't think I should say any more than that! *\*laughs\** For Schala, I kind of have to...kind of have to raise my voice up just a bit, because she's a bit younger than me. And I have to kind of dial down the accent a bit, I have, you know, a Midlands accent and so I have to

remember to keep that kind of under control and speak with a more general, still sort of fancy but not so Midlands-ish for her voice. And then...Queen Zeal, she is a lot of fun. I get to act a LOT for her. I'm being told not to say too much about her but out of the two characters she is definitely more fun to play.

\*there's a brief snippet of Quirk in the recording booth performing some of her lines for Schala, such as "and who might you be?", in another clip she seems to be yelling out the name of a magical attack\*

Moira Quirk: I do know that a lot of people watching this will recognize me from *Guts* on Nickelodeon. \*she laughs a bit\* So I like that this is a chance to get them to see, well, um, hear, another side of me. \*laughs again\* I had so much fun doing this game. I hope I'll get to voice more games in the future!

-excerpted from preview videos on the January 1996 issue of *Nintendo Power CD*

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*Super Bowl XXX was one of the greatest Super Bowls of all time. The road to the Super Bowl wasn't quite so great, but the game itself was amazing. First, of course, you had the underdog upstart Indianapolis Colts, led by Jim Harbaugh, who steamrolled the San Diego Chargers with a huge performance from Marshall Faulk. Then they went into Arrowhead Stadium and kicked the 14-2 Kansas City Chiefs right in the mouth, 23 to 9, once again thanks to Marshall Faulk. Then finally you had the AFC Championship game against the defending conference champion Pittsburgh Steelers. Everything, and I mean everything seemed to go right for the Colts in that game and everything that could go wrong for the Steelers did. You had Kordell Stewart getting a touchdown only to have it be ruled incomplete because he stepped out of bounds. You had Quentin Coryatt of the Colts intercepting the ball twice, including one for a pick-six. You had Marshall Faulk making huge running play after huge running play, with two touchdowns. The Colts ended up winning 31-3, it wasn't even close. And remember, this team had a 9-7 record. Of course, on the other side of the coin you had the 12-4 Dallas Cowboys. They got the bye and then whipped the 49ers in the divisional round. The 49ers, of course, still reeling from that whole Andre Rison thing which they never seemed to recover from. Then they beat the Packers handily in the NFC Championship, setting up the Super Bowl.*

*Well, right from the start, the three-time defending champs dominated the game, starting off on a 17-0 run. It seemed like they were going to make it four in a row for sure. But they didn't call Jim Harbaugh "Captain Comeback" for nothing. He led the Colts all the way back, but the Cowboys defense continued to play tough. Their offense started making some dumb plays but with just under a minute left, the Colts had the ball on their own 9 yard line, no timeouts, down 24 to 20. That was when Jim Harbaugh made the most amazing drive in Super Bowl history. He took the Colts down to the 44 yard line of the Cowboys with just a second to go. Then he launched an incredible Hail Mary toward the end zone. Aaron Bailey came down with it but was surrounded by guys, the ball fell out of his hands and right onto his chest. It seemed like it would roll to the turf but somehow he managed to close his hands around the ball and pin it down tight, securing the touchdown and the Super Bowl victory for the Colts, who not only became the first 9-7 team to win a Super Bowl, but the first team to come back from more than 10 points down to win one. It was a tough loss for the Cowboys, but with their rival 49ers having pretty much collapsed, it seemed that they'd rule the NFC for years to come. Of course, they didn't count on the rise of the Packers and Brett Favre, but that's another story.*

-excerpted from "A History Of The Super Bowl: From I to XLIX", posted on BleacherReport.com, January 26, 2016

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Brittany Saldita: So, in conclusion, *The Light Fantastic* is a delightful game. It's not quite as good as *Andrekah*, but it's still super fun and one of the better platformers I've played in the last few months.

Kazzi DeCarlo: I have to disagree, the game is pretty derivative and the hero is nowhere near as endearing as *Andrekah*.

Brittany: Lumex is very endearing, he's super cute and really funny!

Kaz: He's kind of a dork.

Brittany: Well, anyway, I give *The Light Fantastic* a 4 out of 5 for its trippy graphics, really tight gameplay, and charming hero and musical score.

Kaz: And I give it a 3. It's not very original, not very difficult, and while visually pleasing, just isn't as compelling of a game as some of the others in its genre.

(...)

Alex Stansfield: \*looking disappointed\* So, yeah...yeah, I thought *Natalia: Teardrop of Fate* was pretty bad.

Brittany: It wasn't a bad game, but it definitely wasn't a GOOD game. Nintendo's "year of the RPG" starts off with a bit of a dud.

Alex: Let's hope this is just the calm before the storm.

Brittany: To be fair, I liked the dark aesthetic, and the battle system was somewhat original, sort of reminding me of *Lufia*'s but with a good deal more customization. The character of Natalia was also quite well written, it was just a chore to slog through overly long and grindy dungeons to get to the next bit of storytelling.

Alex: And you WILL grind if you are playing this game. You will grind like Sir Mix-A-Lot at a booty convention.

Brittany: \*snickering, about to lose it with laughter\*

Alex: Just wait for *Chrono Trigger*, do not waste your time on this game. 1.5 out of 5.

Brittany: I give it a 2.5. \*turns to Alex\* Sir Mix-A-Lot at a...\*laughing\* really?

Alex: I thought it was funny and clearly you did too.

Brittany: \*she keeps laughing\* You're a dork, I swear...

(...)

Ted Crosley: While the voice acting was....tremendously bad.

Alex: Oh yeah.

Ted: I still loved *Mega Man X3*. The music was fantastic, the Mavericks were some of the best yet, especially Neon Tiger, Whirl Gecko, and Scatter Albatross. I will never know how they made an albatross badass.

Alex: The creativity of Capcom knows no bounds, Ted.

Ted: You got that right, my brother.

Alex: I will say I do wish the gameplay would have evolved just a little bit. Zero is a great addition but let's hope they change things up a bit for *X4*. Regardless, I'm giving this game a 4.5.

Ted: And I'm giving it a 4, which makes it a GameTV Recommended game.

Alex: And highly recommended at that.

-excerpted from the January 23, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany: And we're here on *GameTV* with the singer Monica, whose hit single "Don't Take It Personal" was a number-one hit last year. What's it like, being just 15 years old and already with a number one single?

Monica: It's pretty great, I have a lot of people to thank of course.

Brittany: Obviously, no one gets to the top without help but you should give yourself some credit, your voice is amazing!

Monica: Thank you.

Brittany: Now before we get to talking about your next songs and that new gig you have lined up on Nickelodeon, I do want to ask, since this is a video game show if you've been playing any games lately.

Monica: You know, I haven't really had time to play any games unfortunately.

Brittany: That's understandable, I play a lot of role-playing games and some of them take FOREVER to play. I mean we're talking 80 hours on one game.

Monica: \*laughing\* Well there's songs I've put hundreds of hours into so...

Brittany: Well yeah, obviously when you're working on a song you can get into the flow and you look up at the clock and whoops, it's five in the morning!

Monica: I've had nights like those for sure! \*she laughs again\* But I guess if I do kick back and play some games, I mean, I've played *Sonic the Hedgehog* before. And I've played *NBA*

*Jam* and *Mortal Kombat*, you know, just a little bit with friends but yeah.

Brittany: Do you have a favorite *Mortal Kombat* character?

Monica: I like the one with the purple, uh, the mask and she's purple.

Brittany: Oh, Mileena, she's my favorite too! She's a badass.

Monica: She seems like one, that's why she's my fave!

-excerpted from the January 30, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: January 1996**

1. Ballistic Limit
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Super Mario World 3
4. Tales Of The Seven Seas
5. Donkey Kong Country
6. Killer Instinct
7. Doom
8. Mortal Kombat 3
9. Super Mario World 2
10. Super Star Wars Trilogy
11. Final Fantasy VI
12. Gun Warrior: Big Guns
13. Victory
14. Final Fantasy IV
15. FIFA Soccer '96
16. Earthbound 2
17. NHL '96
18. Sid Meier's Civilization
19. Ogre Battle
20. King's Field

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### **Nickelodeon Making Changes For 1996?**

The cable network Nickelodeon is still #1 in kids' TV, with hit shows like *Rugrats*, *Phineas and Ferb*, and *The Adventures of Pete and Pete*. Nevertheless, the company is looking to add some fresh new shows to its lineup this year in order to remain at the front of the pack in the hunt for youthful eyeballs. Of biggest note are a pair of live-action shows that will be debuting later this year. First up is *Swashbucklers*, a pirate-themed show that follows the adventures of six kids who are stranded on an abandoned pirate ship and set out on the high seas in search of adventure and a way home. The show is said to be Nickelodeon's biggest budgeted show to date, which could make it an enormous hit or a tremendous flop. The other show set to debut this year is *Space Cases*, a sci-fi show that's somewhat like *Star Trek* for kids. The show, which features a familiar face for *Power Rangers* fans: that of Walter Jones, who played the Black Ranger Zack before leaving the show in 1995 after

Saban refused to give him and two of his co-stars bigger contracts. Jones plays the devil-may-care young space cadet Harlan Band, one of a cast of five young cadets who find themselves stranded after a ship they stumbled onto accidentally launches them into a wormhole. The show is taking another cue from *Star Trek*, in this case *Star Trek Voyager*, by featuring a female captain. That would be Alyssa Goddard, played by Vancouver-based actress Teryl Rothery. Though unknown to most American viewers, kids may have heard her voice on *Sailor Moon* as the wicked Queen Beryl.

In other Nickelodeon related news, the hit sketch comedy series *All That* will be getting a new cast member, and she's a big one. Hit recording artist Monica is set to join the show when it starts its new season in the spring. Though the 15-year-old is much more well known for her singing skills than for her acting chops, showrunner Dan Schneider says that he was "very impressed" by Monica's audition and that she'll be a welcome new face on the show. Though Schneider has to be happy to have Monica, he's probably disappointed that his idea for a sitcom spinoff featuring *All That* cast members Kenan Thompson and Kel Mitchell fell through, after Thompson had to decline the offer to star on the new show due to a commitment involving a comedy film he's shooting with Matthew Broderick. Nickelodeon may offer Schneider the opportunity to have another show in the near future, but for now, he'll be concentrating his creative energies on *All That*. With a name as big as Monica on board, he'll have plenty of talent to work with for the foreseeable future.

-excerpted from *Variety* magazine, January 29, 1996

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Commander Keen is a name familiar to any kid who played games on the family computer back in the early nineties. With the advent of the Internet we learned that the original staff of id Software developed the first trilogy on company computers they "borrowed" from their employers at Softdisk during their weekends, which appears to be a reoccurring theme of the series. Most people today remember id Software for *Wolfenstein 3D* and *Doom*. After the runaway success of the latter, it appeared that the 8-year-old boy genius had hung up his battered and scorched helmet after his sixth adventure, *Aliens Ate my Babysitter*, but Tom Hall was not finished with him just yet.

id Software had originally committed *The Universe is Toast* trilogy to a Christmas 1992 release. However, the success of *Wolfenstein 3D* postponed it until E3 1995 when Tom Hall saw an early build of Sega's *Nights* and decided that he wanted to model the next Keen games on it.

"Something clicked in my mind when I saw the demo with the freedom of movement present in the game," recalled Hall in interview for *Electronic Gaming Monthly* in 2008. "That was how I wanted to make Keens 7 through 9. I had a vision in my head and it remained stuck in my mind for months afterward."

Though he left id Software after a dispute with John Carmack over the violence and gore in *Doom* two years prior, Hall and Carmack reportedly came to an understanding and id released the rights to Commander Keen back to Hall. With help from John Romero, Adrian Carmack, and a few staffers from Apogee Software, Hall spent most of his off hours developing fine-tuning the three-dimensional platforming engine from scratch.

"Admittedly, *Universe* wasn't technically a 3D game. Keen was still a hand-drawn sprite that moved on two planes while the backgrounds and platforms were polygons that 'moved' along with him." Romero admitted, "It was kind of a cheat and looked like Keen was running up a spiral staircase at times, but it was a labor of love and I believe the fans appreciated it."

Fans of the series did respond well to the initial installment *The Universe is Toast, Into the Inferno*, upon its release Christmas 1995. While the game had more than its fair share of glitches, it was not broken and its quirky sense of humor made it stand out. While it was ostensibly a "run and gun" platformer *UiT* also possessed puzzle elements and involved more stealth than similar titles like *Mega Man*. Ammunition for Keen's neural stunner was scarce and many enemies were immune to it. There were no bosses to speak of, aside from Mortimer McMire, but many "security checkpoint" levels where Keen would need to outmaneuver a pursuing (and invincible) Robo Red Hunter and use the stage hazards to slow it down or destroy it outright via a series of buttons and switches. *UiT* was a difficult game and infuriatingly so at times, but it forced the player to think of ways out of tight spots.

The game itself controlled similarly to *Goodbye Galaxy* and *Aliens Ate my Babysitter*, with each action delegated to a single key on the keyboard: jump, fire, and another to activate Keen's trademarked pogo stick. A control scheme that was easily transferable to console. Teleporters took you to four different worlds where Keen's objective was to destroy the Universal Toaster Cannon's secondary nodes.

The volcanic mining world, Savarrg, was the typical "Lethal Lava Land" (of which Keen is the trope namer), which took place on a molten planetoid. In addition to avoiding falling into lava pools, Keen needs to use the convection to raise platforms and avoid raining meteors. The lower gravity is another wrinkle where you must carefully execute your jumps because serrated stalagmites and stalactites are everywhere.

Meanwhile, the fauna of the jungle world, Ogonoc, is out to kill you. Many of the enemies from Keen 4, *Secret of the Oracle*, like Poison Slugs, Skypests, and Mad Mushrooms return; however, the Dopefish's comeback is the most glorious. One of my favorite pleasures of this world is the underwater level where you use the stage enemies as fodder the lovable dumb guppy's appetite.

The ice world Juttoon is the standard ice level with poor traction though it is memorable for the encounter with "Eddie the Yeti" who tries to roast Keen over a spit. Rounding out the worlds is the storm-ravaged Sakans where Keen must navigate the air currents and avoid tornadoes. *Keen 7* was the biggest game in the series at the time with twenty-one levels.

While it did not light the sales charts on fire like *Doom* and its sequel, *Into the Inferno* it did warrant a jump from PC to the Sega Saturn where the game gained a champion in the form of Sega of America President and CEO Tom Kalinske.

"I remember showing the game to him in January 1996. Though it clearly was no *Nights*, Keen already had an installed fan base and he saw the potential of the series. He was supportive of the port and even helped us improve the game and enhance it." Hall said of his meeting with Kalinske. "Unlike Nintendo, who said 'no thanks' when we showed them our smooth-scrolling graphics engine in 1990, Sega wanted to be a partner in this."

Indeed, Sega invested considerably by assisting in rectifying the technical issues that

riddled the PC version and the Saturn version of *The Universe is Toast* ran much smoother. Sega Technical Institute also helped in finishing the eight and ninth installments *Danger in the Desert* and *Clash of the Intellects* for the planned October 1996 release as one package.

Keen 8, *Danger in the Desert*, was the shortest and likely the hardest installment of *UiT* with only eleven levels and lacks the variety of environments present in *Into the Inferno*. After completing destroying the control nodes on the four worlds, Keen heads to the Universal Toaster Cannon to destroy the final one when a Shikadi warship intercepts the Bacon-with-Beans Megarocket and shoots it down over the desert world Apollus IV. Ammo is even more limited and enemies are more abundant. As with *Keen 5*, the Shidaki take four shots to stun and it is better to avoid them than confront them directly.

McMire also dispatched a Keendroid to commit crimes and terrorize the populace in your name, turning most of Apollus' inhabitants against you. Thankfully, the planets' periodic sandstorms and dark caves offer you plenty of covers to avoid your Shidaki and Apollian pursuers. Thankfully, you also enlist the help of a young Apollian, Pallo, you rescued in the first level to help you gather the parts needed to rebuild your ship, destroy the Keendroid, and restore your reputation. Pallo would later play a crucial role in later games as the first recruit of the "Commander Keen Corps" in the *Multiverse Madness* trilogy.

Once Keen finds the parts needed to repair his ship, he heads to the UTC for the final showdown in *Clash of the Intellects*. Personally, some of my favorite levels are in this part of the trilogy. As it takes place on a space station orbiting a blue supergiant, this is where Mortimer McMire keeps his most heinous experiments. Enemies from as far back as *Invasion of the Vorticons* return, except cybernetically enhanced and even more aggressive. There are Gargs, Vorticons, and Bloogs—oh my! Unlike the previous two installments *Clash of the Intellects* is more generous with the ammo. You will need it when a herd of roid-raged Gargs rush you (and another trope namer.)

The low-gravity mechanics from *Into the Inferno* return and some switches even flip the station's gravity so that you can run along the walls and ceiling. This is a crucial mechanic for the battle with Mortimer McMire where you need to flip the gravity to temporarily disorient him and trick him into disabling the force fields protecting the final control node by leading his shots. McMire seemingly dies when the Universal Toaster Cannon self-destructs.

With the profits from the PC version and some money from Sega, Apogee added animated cut scenes to the Saturn version where Kath Soucie (late of the SatAM Sonic the Hedgehog) voiced Billy Blaze/Commander Keen and television's Bart Simpson, Nancy Cartwright, lent her voice to Mortimer McMire. If you meet certain criteria, the game rewards you with a cut scene of a shadowed figure rescuing McMire at the last second. As most gamers know by now, said figure was Keen's mirrorverse counterpart, Captain Khaos, who would be the primary antagonist of *Multiverse Madness* saga for the Sega Saturn.

Most fans of the series agree that the Saturn version of *The Universe is Toast* is the superior version. While Apogee developed and Sega published the Saturn version in September 1996, Apogee published a slightly truncated version for the SNES-CD the following year before the release of the Ultra Nintendo. This version was much slower and buggier than even the PC version, which Hall admits was not his finest effort.

"To be honest, I wanted to move onto the next part of the series by then. John and I were working on the engine for *Keen 10* and so much of my attention went to that and thus I could not give *UiT* for the SNES-CD the care I gave the PC and Saturn versions. However,

by that time Keen was already entering the Saturn's orbit after everything Sega had done for us."

Romero laughed at the mention. "Didn't Angry Video Game Nerd guy pan that port? I wasn't involved in it and Tom barely had any input at all. They gave that port to an inexperienced team and it showed. Poor Tom took it rather personally, but Apogee told us we needed an SNES-CD port. That was one of the main reasons why he decided to take Keen and found Ion Storm. I couldn't join him as *Commander Keen* was only a side project done more for fun than profit.

"Tom and I parted on friendly terms and I am proud of my (admittedly small) contribution to the Keen 10 engine."

Indeed, many reviewers panned the SNES-CD port of *UiT* for its unresponsive controls, slowdown, and horrendous graphics compared to the Saturn. It would be the only *Commander Keen* game to grace a Nintendo console. Sega directly invested in Ion Storm, which effectively made them a second-party developer similar to Rare and HAL Laboratories' relationship to Nintendo. The studio would also bring in additional talent like Warren Spector who created *Deus Ex*, which many Sega fans consider a rival to *GoldenEye* when it comes to multi-player though the single-player experience is much different.

As for Keen, *The Universe is Toast* pulled in solid sales though far less than *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*, which Sega released the following month. Between those two games, Sega gained a considerable lead on Nintendo in the fifth generation—at least when it came to flagship series. *Commander Keen* is the only other Sega-affiliated franchise that spun off into an animated series and comic book by Archie Comics. Sadly, *Commander Keen: The Animated Series* lasted for one twenty-six episode season in fall 1999. As with the games, many critics and players praised its irreverent humor and cultural reference and compared it to the late *Calvin and Hobbes*. The comic book still continues onto this day under the pen of Dan Slott.

"I consider *UiT* and *Multiverse Madness* the height of my career," reflects Hall, who still oversees the series to this day. "We're not churning out Keen games like we did in the Saturn days and some complain that the gameplay has not changed that much. To them I say this: look at Mario and Sonic. Their core gameplay has not changed a great deal over the years. Sega and Nintendo didn't waste money and time on reinventing the wheel with each new game. Sometimes you need to look under the hood and tweak the engine a little bit to see what works when you add something new. That's my philosophy when it comes to Keen and part of the reason why he has stood the test of time."

The world of *Commander Keen* is one fans keep returning to because of its charm and refined gameplay. Hall's metaphor is a perfectly apt one. While technology progresses, consoles grow more powerful, and audience tastes change, there will always be an appreciation for the classics. *Commander Keen* is one the "Cadillacs" in every retro gamer's collection and with the advent of downloadable content, the series finds a new audience every year. Not bad for a series that started out as a prank, isn't it?

-from the blog "The Musing Platypus" by B. Ronning, March 12, 2013

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"If you mention the Bandai Solaris today in the West, you're likely to get a bunch of blank stares. Sometimes when I talk to my friends, if they're really nerdy, at least one might describe it as 'that one console that deep-sixed Bandai.' I'm not joking when I say that the bad ass sun logo on the hardware itself is one of the best things about it. Remember when Power Rangers was huge here in the States? Yeah, most of that cash went into keeping this piece of crap afloat in the market toilet bowl long after it should've been flushed.

To those of you who don't know why this thing even exists, I'll give you the skinny. Back in the '90s, everyone and their grandmother was trying to take down Sega and Nintendo/Sony. Philips, Trip Hawkins, SNK, NEC - all of them went into the ring and they all came back with a bloody nose for their troubles. Even Namco at one point wanted to (the TurboGrafx-16 was rushed to market because Hudson Soft didn't want NEC to be courting them). In the midst of all of this, Bandai wanted in on the action; taking a piece of the market share created by both gaming giants after Atari's collapse was just too good to pass up. In '94, Apple got approached by Bandai to produce a stripped down Macintosh that would have the capacity to play CD games. Apple, intrigued by the recent success of the video game market, agreed at the time but on the condition that it would be marketed more as a multimedia device that just happened to play games. Y'know, like the water cooler at an office where people stand around and shoot the shit? You're probably thinking to yourself, 'It's a stripped down computer - who the hell would want to buy a multimedia device that can't even do half the things a desktop can do?'

...and you'd be absolutely right. Good thing '90s-era Apple decided to stop hemorrhaging money long enough to check themselves into the psych ward so they could realize that this was an absolutely stupid idea and backed down from it. Unfortunately, that left Bandai stuck footing the bill and if you know anything about Japanese corporate culture, this sort of thing is absolutely humiliating. But they had to stand by what they'd done and scrambled to find someone to help them put it to market (not that you'd know that from their E3 1995 presence where everyone was all smiles about the next big thing in gaming, mind you). They found another weird partner to help them, Mitsubishi. Of course, it wasn't going to come cheap. Though Mitsubishi said they'd manufacture the hardware, they wanted a steep 45% of the profits from each console sold. Reluctantly, Bandai agreed.

This isn't to say that the Solaris doesn't have its place in history. Aside from being the primary reason that one of Japan's great post-WWII success stories was taken out back, put up against the wall, given a cigarette, and executed by a firing squad with Sega uniforms, it actually holds a more dubious claim to fame. A lot of people in NTSC and PAL regions think that *NiGHTS into Dreams...* is the first 3D platformer, but this isn't actually true. Bandai Games was responsible for releasing theirs six months shortly beforehand in early 1996. What do you know: it's a licensed title to boot.

*Gon: Prehistoric Panic* is based on a manga series by Masashi Tanaka, following the adventures of a Not T-rex. It's alright, I guess. I'm not personally big on silent media, but there's got to be an audience for it. It lasted a long time, too (it just ended not too long ago; '02, I think) so what do I know? Prior to its Solaris title, Bandai had actually done a previous Gon game on the Super Famicom.

The comic itself has absolutely no dialog in it and all of the humor is strictly visual; as such, it's pretty accessible to anyone who picks it up and in this regard GPP is pretty true to its source material. Most of the time, it's just Gon picking fights with animals or whatever. Some gaming purists out there might actually be interested in this. It cuts the crap and

doesn't pretend to have a deep or meaningful story. I mean, no one plays Mario (hah) or (hah!) Sonic for their stories, right? You take the role of the big-headed, wide-eyed Gon and roam around a 3D world based on a vaguely prehistoric setting. You can attack enemies in three ways (each corresponding to the controller's three main buttons; the fourth is used for jumping): breathe fire (?!), tail whip, or, um, a toxic fart. The last is just as juvenile as it sounds but the enemies admittedly make some funny over-the-top facial expressions if you can use it against them.

The worlds found in game are pretty much what you'd expect. Swamp-themed, volcano-themed, tundra-themed and the like; nothing spectacular or noteworthy. Based on that, you might be thinking that *Gon: Prehistoric Panic* is just really middle of the road. To be fair, that's pretty much true so far as presentation is concerned. Music is serviceable and there are times when the art direction sort of works, seeing obscure animals like a giant ground sloth as a boss is pretty fun. Gon's model looks okay. That's the most charitable thing you can say about it from a creative standpoint: it's so middle of the road that it doesn't even need to exist.

You might be confused as to why this would be made a flagship title for a Mind Blowing Next Gen Console™ and the answer is... well, I have no clue, to be quite honest. Most sources I can find about it say that Bandai threw money at it after panicking when Apple backed out and figured that it would ultimately save costs by doing it in house once the hardware (hopefully) panned out. This begs the question why it wasn't a Power Rangers game or something similar; the old beat 'em up on the Super Nintendo could've been a solid basis for something, maybe a *Streets of Rage* sort of game. Again, nothing mind blowing, but you needed the thing to move so why wouldn't you take advantage of an insanely successful property? A property which, need I remind everyone, they had relative easy access to?

Regardless, what's the real downfall of *Gon: Prehistoric Panic*? **Everything else.**

It feels like they were trying to make a 3D version of Data East's old Joe & Mac games. Well, imagine that without any of the fun those had. Half the time in a level you're just wandering around a blank void - or at least it looks like it because the draw distances in it are so awful that you might as well be. You don't even really care about any of the good stuff I mentioned before because half the time you're so bored looking for something to do that it just kind of blends together in a drone of monotony. When you finally do encounter bad guys to fight, the enemy types can more or less be summed up as follows: sabre tooth cats, woolly mammoths, bears, rhinos, and some big prehistoric bird things. That's it. While it might be funny to see woolly mammoths bumbling around an active volcano at first, it quickly makes you realize that what you're playing must have been ridiculously rushed. It's true: the game had less than a year to be completed as the Solaris was tanking so hard after its launch that Bandai was throwing just about everything they could at it to keep its corpse propped up.

Even if it's not that great in design, it might make up for things if it at least played well, right? Oh, hopeless optimist, there's still more disappointment to come!

The controls are mutilated beyond belief. Keep in mind that for some God forsaken reason Bandai still kept the track ball from their deal with Apple; you can see it present in the prototypes for what they called the 'Pippin' then. This, rather than the controller's d-pad, is the primary way in which you move. Rather than being able to go in a straight forward line, you slide all over the place like someone spilled oil over the floor.

On.

Every.

Single.

Stage.

This wouldn't be as frustrating if you could actually get a handle for things. But you can't, at least not in any meaningful way. Soon as you think you've mastered **walking** in one world, it's off to the next and you have to relearn how things work all over again. Not only is this bad for trying to go around and collect the assorted precious stones you need per level, but it makes fighting against bosses nigh impossible. You'll probably throw the controller on the ground in frustration when you get to the last one, a cave man whose name I don't remember, because he's got projectile weapons that he constantly fires at you like spears and arrows.

In the end, *Gon: Prehistoric Panic* would've maybe been acceptable in the late '80s or early '90s. But gamers expected something more. Despite eventually being put as a pack-in for the Solaris it didn't help matters and by 1997 Bandai was filing for bankruptcy. Despite Sega now owning a big chunk of the rights to produce anime-based games and more, to this day they've never done an official re-release and it remains shelved - except to people like me, I guess, who have nothing better to do than masochistically torture themselves.

Ugh.

2/10"

- Excerpt taken from, "HiJack's 9th Circle of Gaming Hell: A Blog Dedicated to Gaming's Worst of the Worst," dated March 10, 2007

*"I didn't set out to create another Castlevania game, though Castlevania certainly inspired me. I just wanted to create a game that was exciting, scary, and most of all, quite fun."*  
-Hideo Kojima, in a March 1996 interview with *Electronic Gaming Monthly* about *Eternal Night*

*"All of those fighting games, no matter how fun they were, couldn't get the Saturn out of the hole it was in. You could get the same kinds of games on the SNES-CD for much cheaper. I don't have a clue why they thought Tekken would be any different."*  
-Dan "Shoe" Hsu discussing some of the games he covered his early years with *Electronic Gaming Monthly* in an interview with Gamesovermatter.com, June 23, 2014

*"And while we were developing Donkey Kong Country 2, I kept getting these ideas for a Dark Queen game. She was such a popular character and I thought she deserved a game of her own. Developing DKC 2 and 3 and Battletoads: Dark Queen made for a very busy 1995 but I'm glad I got to make the game."*  
-Tim Stamper

*"I'm NOT defeated! I'll NEVER be defeated! I'll rule this universe or I'll kill every living thing in it!"*

-The Dark Queen, *Battletoads: Dark Queen*

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### **Battletoads: Dark Queen**

Andrew: 7.5

Mark: 8.0

Mike: 7.5 (quote: "While it's not quite as fun (or tough) as the classic Battletoads games, this was still a really entertaining game and it's worth checking out for anyone who's a fan of the series. Could have been a bit longer.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Metal Gear 1+2**

Andrew: 8.0

Mark: 7.0

Mike: 9.0 (quote: "Not only is this a superb remake of a classic NES game that makes it a lot more playable, but it finally brings the superior sequel to our shores. It's the definitive Metal Gear experience.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **The King Of Fighters '96**

Andrew: 8.0

Mark: 8.0

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "One of SNK's premier series returns to the SNES-CD and it's a very good port.")

### **Slaughterbox**

Andrew: 7.5 (quote: "While the fast-paced action of Slaughterbox may not be for everyone, it's a very fun, very addictive, very violent game.")

Mark: 5.0

Mike: 5.5

Sushi-X: 5.5

### **Killer Robot Stanley!**

Andrew: 6.0

Mark: 7.0 (quote: "This REALLY weird sequel to the obscure Jaguar game *Attack Of The Mutant Penguins* is a strange game but still worth a try.")

Mike: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Eternal Night**

Andrew: 9.5

Mark: 9.5 (quote: "The parallels to the Castlevania series are definitely there but make no mistake, this amazing adventure game stands extremely well on its own.")

Mike: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.0

## **Twinblade**

Andrew: 9.0

Mark: 9.0

Mike: 9.0 (quote: "Wielding two swords has never been quite as much fun, and there are a lot of times when it's been really really fun.")

Sushi-X: 9.0

-*Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of February 1996's SNES-CD games in the March and April 1996 issues

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"*Terrifying is the Night...*"

-the tagline for *Eternal Night*, used in its numerous magazine advertisements

## **Eternal Night: The Basics**

Konami's SNES-CD (and later Saturn) title *Eternal Night* was released in North America on February 5, 1996. The game is an action-adventure title somewhat similar to the Castlevania games, though the protagonist has a much larger variety of weaponry and attacks come at a much faster pace, it almost plays like a Metroidvania fighting game. The game is directed by Hideo Kojima, who worked on it largely at the same time that he was working on *Metal Gear 1+2* and getting *Policenauts* ready for an SNES-CD release later that year. The game's protagonist is a baron named Alec von Sturmer, a man who was forced to kill his beautiful bride on her wedding day after she was possessed by the demon witch Lespell. As it turns out, Lespell was also betrothed to Belial, the demon king of hell, and his punishment toward the human race is turning the sun black and unleashing a horde of hideous demons upon the world. Alec must journey through a series of castles where Belial's demons have invaded and taken over. The gameplay is more combat-focused than exploration focused, and every level (14 in all) ends with a boss, usually a very large and fierce one, culminating with the final levels in which Alec must enter Hell itself to slay Belial. The game uses copious amounts of demonic and arcane imagery and very little of it is censored for the North American release, it gains an M rating for violence and disturbing imagery but the game is still a massive hit, with a huge wave of pre-release hype before its release. It becomes one of the top selling SNES-CD games of the first half of 1996, with praise directed toward its graphics, its gameplay, and ESPECIALLY its haunting soundtrack composed by Takanari Ishiyama and Michiru Yamane.

*1996 was the busiest year yet in Kojima's career. Not only was he bringing his first two Metal Gear games and his Snatcher follow-up Policenauts to the SNES-CD's eager audiences, but his intense horror adventure game Eternal Night had just been completed. The fruits of Kojima's efforts, however, were soon evident. Eternal Night was one of the most successful games, critically and commercially, of 1996, and while Metal Gear 1+2 wasn't nearly as successful as his later mega-hit Metal Gear Solid would be, the compilation was highly critically regarded and became one of February's top sellers. If Policenauts could repeat the mainstream success of Snatcher, it would be the cherry on the sundae. But of course, Kojima was just getting started...*

-excerpted from "Konami: Empire Of Fun", a book published in 2013

Phil Donahue: I couldn't tell these games from a cartoon to tell you the truth. \*looking at a screen\* So this one's *Eternal Night*. It's uh, supposedly it's connected with the occult, it's violent...I want to make sure I know what I'm talking about before I go out there.

Producer: It looks fun. \*laughing\* No really, it looks fun.

Donahue: Well, I'm, I gotta be impartial here, let our guests debate it out. How many of the best-selling games are violent like this? Are all of them?

Producer: Um...\*flipping through some sheets\* Well, last year's top two sellers were Donkey Kong Country and um, *Zelda*. They're not really violent, but *Doom*, that one-

Donahue: Yeah, we'll be talking about *Doom*. What about...how did that one game, with the girls doing magic, how'd that do?

Producer: Uh.... *Darkest Ritual*?

Donahue: Yeah.

Producer: It sold...85,000 copies last year? Not a big seller I don't think?

Donahue: But *Eternal Night* and *Doom*, they both sold really well.

Producer: *Eternal Night* is the top selling game right now. Last week it sold the most.

Donahue: Okay. \*he flips through the notes, reading them while he walks over to where his wife is\*

Marlo Thomas: \*sitting, watching someone playing through *The Darkest Ritual* while another producer takes notes, she's watching a scene of dialogue between Etienne and Kris\* Those two girls are lesbians. They're totally lesbians. \*she smiles\*

Donahue: Huh?

Thomas: Did they catch that? The way they talk to each other. They're totally into each other. I don't know if any of the people complaining about the "occult stuff" in this game even caught that. It's so neat. \*she laughs a bit\* Wow, I can't believe it.

Donahue: Are you sure?

Thomas: Yeah. It's really, REALLY subtle though. But um, don't bring it up and give your guests anything else to flip out about. \*laughs again\* I didn't even know they did that in these games. That is amazing. That's beautiful. Such strong girls in this game.

Donahue: Maybe that IS why they're really upset about this game.

Thomas: It wouldn't surprise me. \*smiles\* Have a good show. \*leans in and kisses his cheek\*

-overheard backstage on *Donahue* before the filming of the episode "Are Video Games Harming Our Children?", February 27, 1996

## A Tale Of Two Fighters

February 1996 was the month of the two fighting fighters, and by that I mean *Tekken* on the Sega Saturn, and *Twinblade* on the Super Nintendo CD. Both games were ports of hit fighting games in the arcade. *Tekken* involved fighting with punches and kicks, while *Twinblade* involved dual-wielding duelists duking it out. Both were fairly well hyped at the time of their release, *Tekken* was to be the game that would help the Saturn finally get a leg up, while *Twinblade* was Nintendo's answer to *Soul Edge*, a game that wouldn't even launch in North America for the Saturn until April of that year. So, how good were the two games, and how well did they do?

*Tekken* was pretty much your standard 3-D fighting game. It featured 17 characters, basically by adding the sub-bosses and final boss Heihachi from the original arcade version. The Saturn version, believe it or not, looked somewhat better than the arcade game and was probably the best looking 3-D fighter on the system up until that time. That said, the gameplay was pretty basic. It was a decently fun game, but nothing terribly special, and *Virtua Fighter* was somewhat better received critically. *Twinblade* featured ten playable characters, each with their own dual-wielded weapons. The graphics obviously were somewhat of a downgrade from the arcade as the developers had to deal with the SNES-CD's limitations. That said, the gameplay was quite excellent and arguably better than *Killer Instinct*. The different weapons, ranging from a pair of dual samurai swords to lethal twirling ribbons for the character Jenny, made strategy and fighter selection an important part of the metagame, and while the graphics were pretty primitive compared to *Tekken*, they're regarded as some of the best on the SNES-CD. Commercially, while *Tekken* became a hit for the Saturn, it, like other games before it, didn't push Saturns like Sega had wanted it to do. It actually outsold *Twinblade*, though not initially. *Twinblade* did quite well also, it was the #2 selling new SNES-CD game of the month behind *Eternal Night*, and was a front-runner for Fighting Game of the Year in many publications. It was also better received than the later *Soul Edge*, though it can be somewhat argued that Namco would "lift" some of *Twinblade*'s better-liked mechanics for its *Soul Edge* follow up down the road. Nothing can be proven, of course, but some of *Soul Calibur*'s new characters looked eerily similar to a few of the ones in *Twinblade* and its 1997 sequel. It's just something to think about.

-excerpted from "1996: A Look Back" on ComboBreakers.com, June 23, 2013

*The Dark Queen would later get a game of her very own, when Battletoads: The Dark Queen was released for the Super Nintendo CD in February 1996. The game, though significantly easier than previous Battletoads titles, was an intriguing look at the past and present of this beloved villainess. The game was somewhat unique in that it switched back and forth between the Dark Queen's past and her present, with levels alternating between them. In the past, we see the Dark Queen's origins as a young apprentice sorceress named Vixariel. In these stages, the young Dark Queen completes a series of tasks but we soon discover that she plans on betraying her master and stealing his immortality. In the present stages, the Dark Queen is once again plotting to conquer the universe, and you must gather components to build a massive machine that will drain the universe of its life energy. As the Dark Queen ventures forth to gather the components, she slaughters all who oppose her in a series of levels that make you truly feel the Queen's evil power. Finally, the past stages culminate in a boss battle against the Queen's master, where she defeats him and takes his immortality to become the Dark Queen. In the final level of the present stages and of the*

game itself, there is a unique final boss... YOU are the final boss, controlling the Dark Queen as she faces off against the Battletoads. It is...extremely neat to play as a final boss and whether you win the fight or not, the game ends, giving you one of two endings. If you lose to the Battletoads, the Dark Queen once again retreats to the ends of the universe, where she actually considers relinquishing her immortality and the ending is left very ambiguous as to whether or not she'll attempt her evil schemes again. If you defeat the Battletoads, the Dark Queen conquers all and there's a very entertaining and triumphant ending of her subjugating the entire universe. The game actually makes it quite fun to play as the villain and though there are a couple scenes in the "past" levels that give her sort-of a sympathetic line or two, ultimately she's an unrepentant villain and the character is all the better for it. -excerpted from "The History of The Dark Queen", an article on IGN.com, January 24, 2012

It's a busy time to be an employee at Rare, and Chris and Tim Stamper know that all too well. Their Battletoads spin-off game *Battletoads: The Dark Queen* just launched, but there's no rest for the weary, as the company has been hard at work on *Donkey Kong Country 3* over the past few months, with more planned titles on the way. Among them, a sequel to *Killer Instinct* which is set to hit arcades later this year, and a game based on the hit new James Bond movie *Goldeneye*.

"We can't really tell you anything about *Goldeneye*, not even what system it's gonna be on," Chris Stamper told us as he walked us around company HQ. "I will say that our Ultra dev kit just arrived and we've been really excited about it but we have no clue what game will be the first we're gonna develop, right now we're just taking everything as it comes."

Today, the Stampers were showing us the nearly-completed sequel to 1994's hit SNES baseball game, *Ken Griffey Jr. Presents Major League Baseball*. For the sequel, which comes out in May, Rare has added voiced commentary and has improved the graphics dramatically. We loved what we played, but when we asked if we could have a go at the newest *Donkey Kong Country* game, we were sadly turned down.

"The first playable *Donkey Kong Country 3* demo will be available at Spaceworld in Japan," said Tim Stamper, referring to this year's Nintendo blowout in Japan (which should be taking place right about the time this magazine reaches your eyeballs), where it's rumored that the first Ultra Nintendo games will be shown off. "Even if we wanted to show you the game, it's not quite ready for playable demonstration just yet."

Rareware employees, however, were eager to demo their new *Killer Instinct* game for us, which looked even better and played a lot faster than the previous hit title. Like *Goldeneye*, it's not yet clear which system this game will be available on, though the Super Nintendo CD has already shown it can handle a limited degree of 3-D visuals. *Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run* looks outstanding on the system, and is expected to be a big seller when it releases in May. It's clear that Rare has no shortage of great games on the way, something Nintendo is very grateful for.

"All these games we're showing off will only be available for Nintendo systems, not on the Sega Saturn, no matter what," said Chris Stamper as I continued to play *Killer Instinct 2*. "A lot of companies are doing upgraded versions of Super Nintendo CD games on the Saturn, but if we think a game needs to be on the Ultra, we can wait for it to be released. I can't say anything about what was on the dev kits but everybody here is really excited to get our hands on them for the first time."

-excerpted from "A Rare Breed: Our Trip To Rareware HQ" in the April 1996 issue of

*Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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Ted Crosley: This game is insane. *Eternal Night* is one of the scariest action games I've ever played but also one of the most fun.

Alex Stansfield: It's definitely a huge step up from *Castlevania: Rondo of Blood* in terms of gameplay, particularly in how many ways it gives you to kill those huge-ass bosses in every level.

Ted: Even the plot which is usually an afterthought in these kinds of games is pretty good.

Alex: Right, that was a pretty big step-up from *Castlevania* too. This game really shows off the sprite capabilities of the Super Nintendo CD with all those huge bosses on screen.

Ted: You can't stop talking about the huge bosses, can you?

Alex: The huge goat lion from level 10 was amazing.

Ted: Oh, Baphomet. Yeah he gave me some serious nightmares. This game, all in all was absolutely outstanding, I'm awarding it a 4.5.

Alex: I'm also giving it a 4.5. The only knock I have against it was that the levels could've been just a bit bigger, but it does a good job keeping the action moving and the bosses were so creative and fun that the game absolutely zipped by, maybe it just SEEMED shorter.

-excerpted from the February 6, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany Saldita: *Slaughterbox* is an absolutely brutal game. It can be fun at times but I felt like there was too much focus on the gore and not on the gameplay.

John Walden: I agree, the game was trying way too hard to be shocking and not hard enough to be fun. *Mortal Kombat* did a great job at both but this game fails at that and what's worse is the really frustrating AI, like when you're put into a room with five guys and they all come at you at once and there's really no way to win.

Brittany: Which is a shame because it feels like there's the idea of a good game there. I don't MIND a really gory and bloody game, I mean I love the *Mortal Kombat* series but this is not that.

John: It's not that at all and it really could've been better. I give *Slaughterbox* a 2.5.

Brittany: And I give it a 3. It's got some moments of fun but you have to look really hard for them.

(...)

Ted: *Tekken* was just...kind of boring compared to *Virtua Fighter*. To me, I felt like every

fight ended up being kind of the same. Half the characters are pretty much clones which is almost an unforgivable sin.

John: I was able to forgive most of *Tekken's* sins. It looks gorgeous and it plays really smoothly. I felt it was easier to do quick combo moves than it was to do in *Virtua Fighter* which for me was more of a slower game.

Ted: I have to give it credit for that, it is an intuitive game but after a while...

John: I didn't even mind the clones.

Ted: How could you NOT mind the clones?! The whole point of a fighting game-

John: Would you rather have just had nine characters?

Ted: Yes! God, yes, give me nine characters that are different instead of 17 characters where half of them are the same as the other half!

John: I just think there are situations where clones are okay.

Ted: Wouldn't a costume swap have sufficed? Instead of, instead of giving them a whole character slot, let me press a button when I pick them and then you get the alternate character! That is a WAY better idea.

John: You have a point, maybe that way would've been better.

Ted: I give *Tekken* a 3.5. It's definitely not the best fighter out there but it plays decently and can be fun for the first few hours.

John: I'm giving it a solid 4, it's a really nice game and a lot of fun to play.

Ted: And you have to unlock the clones too. What a joke.

-excerpted from the February 20, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: February 1996**

1. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
2. Ballistic Limit
3. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
4. Super Mario World 3
5. Tales Of The Seven Seas
6. Donkey Kong Country
7. Rage
8. Killer Instinct
9. Super Mario World 2
10. Doom
11. Front Mission
12. Street Fighter Alpha
13. Where In Time Is Carmen Sandiego?

14. Mortal Kombat 3
15. Final Fantasy VI
16. The Endless War
17. Victory
18. The Simpsons: Itchy and Scratchy
19. Ferrari Worldwide Rally
20. Super Star Wars Trilogy

-

## February 28, 1996

Selena Quintanilla-Perez: And the nominees for Best Rock Album are... *Wildflowers*, by Tom Petty... \*an excerpt of the album is played\* ...*Stains*, by Nirvana... \*an excerpt of the album is played\*... *Jagged Little Pill*, by Alanis Morissette... \*an excerpt of the album is played\*... *Vitalogy*, by Pearl Jam... \*an excerpt of the album is played\*... and *Mirror Ball*, by Neil Young... \*an excerpt of the album is played\* And the Grammy goes to... *Jagged Little Pill*, Alanis Morissette!

\*Alanis Morissette comes up to accept her Grammy, giving Selena a big hug as she is handed the trophy\*

(...)

MTV News Interviewer: And now we're here live with Nirvana. You guys got shut out tonight, unfortunately.

Kurt Cobain: \*looking like he really couldn't care less, he shrugs\* It is what it is.

Dave Grohl: We weren't really expecting to come away with anything tonight, so...

Kurt Cobain: Alanis is brilliant. I just want to say that, she's (expletive) brilliant and she absolutely deserved to win every award she won tonight.

Krist Novoselic: She sounded so pissed off on that whole album, I mean, I shudder to think if she didn't win tonight...

Dave Grohl: \*laughing\*

MTV News Interviewer: Any plans, maybe another album coming up?

Kurt Cobain: Right now, we're just gonna relax and get ready for our tour coming up this summer. I have no idea what or when or if our next album is gonna be.

Krist Novoselic: Pretty much what he said.

Dave Grohl: When it comes, it comes.

MTV News Interviewer: Thank you guys, good luck with the tour. \*Nirvana leaves, Kurt flashes a peace sign at the camera as the three quickly make their way in another direction\* Coming up next, we're gonna TRY to talk to the big winner of the night if we can get to her, right now there's a massive crowd around Alanis but if I can get a microphone

into that mess, maybe we'll hear what she has to say and if she's still pissed off after winning so many Grammys.

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### **March 1, 1996**

Tom Kalinske sat across a desk from his boss, Hayao Nakayama, as the two discussed Kalinske's proposals for the Sega Saturn's next direction.

"So the brass in Japan finally have a decision? What's it gonna be.... the \$299 price drop? The \$399 Virtua Arcade set? Neither?" Kalinske was expecting to hear 'neither' from Nakayama. Japan had resisted chopping the price of the Saturn even as sales continued to fall from their peak on Saturday. If anything, Kalinske expected to hear that he could package the Virtua Arcade Set as the Saturn's standard pack-in equipment. At the very least, \$399 for all of those bonus games and accessories would move a few Saturns.

"Both," said Nakayama. "They've decided to allow both. Effective Saturday, March 23, the price of the Saturn will drop to \$299 in North America and the Virtua Arcade Set will be re-launched as a \$399 premium package."

Kalinske could barely contain the excitement on his face. Finally, Sega was making the decision they needed to make to move Saturns! It was coming six months later than it should have, but late was always better than never!

"That is....awesome!" shouted Kalinske, pumping his fist. Nakayama also allowed himself a jovial laugh, he'd been advocating the price drop himself for several months. "Thanks for bugging them so much about it for me, I know they wouldn't have done it if you hadn't been behind me 100 percent."

"Well, we have to do something, the SNES-CD is outselling the Saturn in North America 5 to 1..." said Nakayama, shaking his head. "Saturn's doing a lot better in Japan, which...I think that put them in a good mood, having the Japanese branch do better for a change."

"Well, we need to make sure we keep bringing plenty of Japanese games over," said Kalinske. "Looking forward to a big push for *Guardian Heroes* this month, and of course *Resident Evil* and *Soul Edge* are coming..."

Nakayama nodded, expecting all three games to sell well, especially *Resident Evil* which was being heavily promoted in gaming magazines, while a general TV advertisement push would begin later that month.

"We already have an ad lined up for this new price drop," said Nakayama. "We'll call it, 'Spring Into Saturn'."

Kalinske briefly reviewed the advertisement material. The spots were catchy, they showed Sonic the Hedgehog mischievously changing price tags in stores to reflect the new lower price of the Saturn.

"That rascal," said Kalinske with a chuckle. The ads were fun, they'd work to push Saturns in the short-term, but he knew Sega needed a bigger strategy and he'd already been mining his brain for ideas. "I think though...that we'll need another campaign to push more Saturns

later this year. I have an idea for a campaign that we could announce at this year's E3."

"Of course," Nakayama replied with a nod. Sega already had big plans for E3...along with the inevitable *Sonic 4* announcement, they'd be showing off hotly-anticipated games like *Nights*, *Tomb Raider*, and *Virtua Fighter 2*... the announcement of a new ad campaign would be the perfect way to top off all the big news. "What did you have in mind?"

Tom Kalinske remembered all the comparison reviews the previous month, showing the beautiful *Tekken* up against the impressive but dated *Twinblade*. It didn't matter that *Twinblade's* reviews were better, it had already given him an idea...

"We dust off an old classic, we kick Nintendo right in the fucking teeth the same way we did back in 1990. We show off all the things the Saturn can do that their last-gen machine could never dream of. We show people that Saturn does...what Nintendon't."

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1995 saw the dawn of what I call the "reconstruction" phase of DC Comics in the wake of *Zero Hour* and *Batman Forever*, the latter of which inaugurated the DC Cinematic Universe. Many fans regard Mark Waid and George Perez's seminal run *Justice League* as the most definitive run since Gardner Fox's in the sixties. For one, it brought the "Big Seven" of the original league: Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Flash, Green Lantern, Aquaman, and Martian Manhunter back to the fore. Though it is purely a matter of personal opinion, the *Justice League* was supposed to be about DC's heavy hitters banding together against universe-shattering threats and unlike the Marvel's *Avengers*, its roster remained stable until then-writer, Gerry Conway, removed most of the line up that kept B-listers like Zatanna and Elongated Man and replaced the others with no names like Gypsy and Vibe in the often maligned "Justice League Detroit." Most fans hold its successor "Justice League International" in higher regard because of its emphasis on humor. However, the two leading creative voices behind the *International* era, Keith Giffen and J.M. DeMatteis, had departed and the line stagnated shortly thereafter. Interestingly it began with the SNES-CD game, *Justice League: Battle For Earth*.

"Brian (Augustyn) called me up with an offer to take over what was then *Justice League America* after my work on *the Flash*. However, he told me that editorial wanted the opening arc to be an adaptation of the video game." Waid recalled in an interview, "I never played the video game. I wasn't really interested in playing it so the most I knew about the game was that it was the original seven against Darkseid. It sounded generic to me and I struggled with the proposal until Grant (Morrison) suggested that I kill the New Gods."

Jack Kirby originally intended to end the New Gods since their debut in 1970, but low sales led to the cancellation of the Fourth World titles before Kirby could conclude the epic. Since then the New Gods occasionally reappeared, most famously in 1982's *Great Darkness Saga* and the *Superfriends: The Legendary Superpowers Show* animated series from 1984 in addition to Kenner's *Superpowers* toy line. One could understand why DC editorial was initially reluctant to part with Darkseid.

"Janette [Khan] and Paul [Levitz] initially vetoed the idea because Darkseid was the quintessential villain. However, Paul eventually relented and Janette not too long afterward." Waid continued, "I believed that the best way to honor Jack Kirby's legacy what

to finish the saga he started. Paul, being a creator himself, agreed.”

*Justice League America* became *Justice League* with issue #100 in June 1995, which began with the prelude to “the Fall of the New Gods” arc. Darkseid had finally found the missing piece to the coveted Anti-Life Equation on Earth and uses it to begin his enslavement on the planet and his assault on New Genesis. Hence it fell to DC’s Big Seven to fight not only the horde of Apokolips, but also other heroes that Darkseid enslaved with the Anti-Life equation. “Fall of the New Gods” also crossed over into the *Superman* titles because of their historical connection to the Fourth World and *Wonder Woman* to involve the gods of Olympus. Neither the *Superman* nor the *Wonder Woman* titles had an effect on the main story; it is notable for the introduction of Wonder Woman supporting character, Vanessa Kapatelis becoming the new Wonder Girl who would later join the (Teen) Titans.[1]

As for the main arc itself, it involved two main threads: Superman, Aquaman, Batman, and Wonder Woman’s last stand against Darkseid and Flash and Green Lantern exchanging barbs as they join Martian Manhunter and Mister Miracle in their frantic gambit to assemble the Life Equation. Perez’s rendition of Superman captured the power of the Man of Steel when he fought Darkseid in one-on-one combat. However, even Superman falls and through the intervention of Orion does he survive.

Meanwhile, Mister Miracle’s group set charred and broken New Genesis on a collision course with Apokolips to end the threat of Darkseid’s armies. Orion engages Darkseid in final combat for a mortally wounded Orion to deliver the killing blow. Earth survives, but the New Gods aside from Mister Miracle, Barda, and Metron are dead. As Metron tells the assembled and battered Justice League before his departure to parts unknown, “The Fourth World of the New Gods has ended. The Fifth World of Man begins today.”

Metron’s words reveal the overall theme of “The Fall of the New Gods”: legacy. It is particularly evident with the inclusion of Wally West and Kyle Rayner in the lineup, both being the successors of Barry Allen and Hal Jordan, respectively. While Barry and Hal were the best of friends in the halcyon days of the Silver Age, the relationship was initially tense and the differences between them stark. Wally was the kid sidekick who “did good” but growing into the mantle while Kyle received the last Green Lantern by pure happenstance (though latter stories would change this), thus both characters initially despised each other. Wally saw Kyle as undeserving of the mantle, ironic considering his inferiority complex towards his predecessor, and Kyle saw him as an elitist snob. It changed the dynamics of team through their respective relationships to the veteran members considering Wally’s ties to Batman and Aquaman and Kyle’s relationships with Superman and Martian Manhunter. While influenced by the Silver Age League, Waid made it clear that this was not the same league.

The theme of legacy was also evident by how the Justice League absorbed the remnants of the Justice Society with the inductions of both a new Sandman [2] and Doctor Fate to the League in the issues following “Fall of the New Gods.” With Jay Garrick, Alan Scott, and their compatriots permanently off the board, it made sense for their successors to join the League and “streamline” its heroes into one organization. Granted, James Robinson, David Goyer, and a young Geoff Johns attempted a revival of *Infinity Inc.* with the children of the Justice Society in 1999, it barely lasted two years before cancellation. Similarly, Waid’s *Justice League* did not forget its predecessor, as Ted Kord AKA Blue Beetle became a prominent member of the Justice League whose company, along with Wayne Enterprises, provided the tech and the capital for this incarnation of the League. [3]

However, "Fall of the New Gods" was not without its critics. Many critics today believe that the Waid/Perez run started out too strong and ended on a comparative whimper. There is a kernel of truth to this, however, with the title flagging—DC needed to go big or go home. The comic book industry had been in decline with the rise of other media, notably television in the fifties and then video games in the eighties/nineties, *Justice League: Battle for Earth* for the SNES-CD introduced a generation of children who largely did not read comic books. If those that played *Battle for Earth* were to pick up a copy of *Justice League America* circa 1993, the likes of Rocket Red, General Glory, and Maxima instead of Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman would have confused them.

"Fall of the New Gods" was a risky gambit but it paid off as far as DC was concerned. *Justice League #100* may not have sold millions of copies, but it was the best-selling title of 1995 at nearly 300K copies. Granted, sales fell and stabilized, but *Justice League* would go on to contest *X-Men* for top-selling title each month. Its main legacy was that it successfully brought past and present together. One of my main criticisms of *Crisis on Infinite Earths* is that it wanted to give its universe a clean break but was reluctant to completely let go of the past and thus tried to have its cake and eat it at the same time. This resulted in a nearly incomprehensible continuity nightmare with rampant retcons to force a square peg through a circular hole. If *Zero Hour* and "Fall of the New Gods" accomplished one thing, it rounded the edges to make that peg fit. After nearly a decade of anti-heroes and deconstruction; the industry was ready for a reconstructive approach. Waid/Perez's *Justice League* was not just the cornerstone for the new DC Universe (at least, until Grant Morrison's *Hypercrisis*) but also its animated and cinematic universes.

*-from the blog "The Musing Platypus" by B. Ronning, May 5, 2015*

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[1] Butterflies fluttered John Byrne's run on *Wonder Woman* away, thus Cassie Sandsmark never existed ITTL and an oft-overlooked supporting character from the Perez era took the mantle instead.

[2] Sandy Hawkins takes the mantle from the retired Wesley Dodds earlier and an alt-Jared Stevens becomes the new Doctor Fate complete with signature helmet instead of the dagger.

[3] In my mind, the League at the end of the Waid/Perez run consists of the Big Seven, Green Arrow/Black Canary/Hawkman/Red Tornado (representing the "Satellite League"), Sandman/Doctor Fate (the Justice Society), and Blue Beetle/Plastic Man/Captain Marvel (characters from companies DC acquired)

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*"At \$399, the Saturn was already a bargain. At \$299, it's a must-have gaming console, especially if you're a Genesis owner. There are too many great games coming out for it this year to miss."*

*-Dan "Shoe" Hsu in an opinion article in the May 1996 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly**

*"And now we have the greatest Super Nintendo CD role-playing game ever made. It's *Chrono Trigger*, for a number of reasons. The graphics are pretty much the pinnacle of*

*sprite art. The soundtrack is by far the greatest video game soundtrack ever. The animated cutscenes are done masterfully and there are so many of them, and the voice acting is superb, especially by SNES-CD standards. The SNES-CD was an RPG lover's dream device, and the cream of the crop, the jewel in the crown, the top of the mountain is and will always be Chrono Trigger."*

-GameTV's Alex Stansfield, in an article on his website on January 11, 2012

*"This was the first time I'd ever done a project of this scope. It was the first time ANYONE had ever done a project of this scope. Nearly an hour of animation for a video game. This game had more animation than even the laserdisc games for arcade systems had! It was very intimidating but I knew we were making history. It was truly a Dream Project in every sense of the word!"*

-Akira Toriyama

*"Nintendo had not allowed any game for the SNES-CD to be more than one disc. They cited costs, consumer inconvenience, any number of reasons and at the time it was not a major problem, we'd had to reduce the sound quality for Final Fantasy VI but that was the only time we'd bumped up against the limit. From the beginning, Chrono Trigger was going to need two discs. We asked Nintendo at the very start of the project if we could do two discs and to our surprise they agreed immediately! I think they realized that this technology was advancing so fast that two discs would be necessary. Also, I imagine the Sega Saturn had a lot to do with it as well."*

-Yoshinori Kitase

*"For Schala, we had nearly forgotten about her fate but when it came time to decide what to do with her, we were greatly torn. I initially wanted a tragic end for her, as such a delicate and kindhearted character I was planning to just have her disappear, another victim of Lavos' wrath. But among the writing staff, there was the opinion that perhaps her tragic fate would be overshadowed by the very violent death of Crono and that it wouldn't have the impact I'd intended. And then (Akihiro) Matsui-san showed how adding another playable character could add another layer of strategy to the game. So I relented and we then made Schala able to be found and added to the party. In hindsight, this is a decision that I think ended up being the right one to make."*

-Masato Kato

*"MARLE!!"*

-Crono, after Marle disappears in Guardia Castle in 600AD, it's his first words spoken in an animated cutscene. In TTL's *Chrono Trigger*, Crono has spoken dialogue and playable character names cannot be changed.

*"Please go...I could not save Crono and I could not stop my mother. I deserve neither your time or your pity."*

-Schala, after the party comes to retrieve her after the Ocean Palace disaster in the optional sidequest to recruit her into your party

*"Mother, for the first time in my life I will defy you....! I will NOT allow you to bring Lavos into this world!"*

-Schala when the party faces down Queen Zeal at the Ocean Palace

*"Wow, March 1996, hell of a month there. Chrono Trigger sorta overwhelmed everything but you also had Guardian Heroes and Frank Thomas for the Saturn, plus Major Hazard and Monster Wars sequels, Milon's Adventure, Belle Weather, that sweet WCW Nitro*

*game...even had a fairly playable Donald Duck game. I can't imagine being a kid at that time with only five bucks a week allowance, must've been torture."*

-a comment on Kotaku.com's "TAY: Best Month For Video Games Of All Time?" post on June 24, 2013

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\*The main theme from *Chrono Trigger* begins to play as animated cutscenes from the game are displayed on the screen, including the launch of the Epoch, Crono, Marle, and Lucca fighting Zombor, Magus and Ozzie facing down Frog and Cyrus, and Marle disappearing in 600AD. Text flashes on the screen as the scenes play, the commercial features no narration.\*

**From the creators of *Final Fantasy* comes an adventure spanning millions of years.**

\*More cutscenes are displayed, showing off more footage from the game including Frog pulling up the Masamune, Lavos bursting up from the ground on the Day of Lavos, and Queen Zeal cackling wickedly.\*

**Featuring nearly one hour of film-quality professionally acted animated cutscenes**

**Over 50 musical tracks in full CD audio**

**Stunning high-definition characters and backgrounds**

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\*More cutscenes and gameplay footage is shown on the screen\*

**Squaresoft's Dream Project – Nearly three years in the making**

**CHRONO TRIGGER**

\*The screen goes black\*

**March 18**

**ONLY on Super Nintendo CD**

\*mechanical sound effect\* *Nin-ten-do*

-the North American television advertisement for *Chrono Trigger*, which began airing in early March 1996

## Chrono Trigger: The Basics

Squaresoft's *Chrono Trigger* is the first 2-disc game for the Super Nintendo. A large part of this space is taken up by the 47 minutes of animated cutscenes, the more than three hours of voice acted spoken lines, and the entirely CD-audio based musical soundtrack by Yasunori Mitsuda and Nobuo Uematsu. The game is so large, in fact, that it took up nearly all the space on two CDs and was nearly a 3-disc game. The game is mostly similar to OTL's *Chrono Trigger* in terms of plot, with most of the changes consisting of storyline details and the addition of a new playable character and three more endings. The game is fully voice acted, including the main character Crono who was mute IOTL. Because of this, none of the characters can be named, as they are named in voice acted lines and cutscenes and thus have to remain consistent. Character dialogue is featured in battle, characters do not call out their attacks but do speak as an attack is launched, this is context-based and sometimes a spoken line can vary depending upon how close an enemy is to dying or whether a character is targeting one enemy or multiple enemies. For example, when you launch an attack targeting three enemies, and one of them moves out of range of the attack, a character may express disappointment. This is seen as ground-breaking for the time, even surpassing the level of voice acting quality in *Tale Phantasia*, a game that would be compared to *Chrono Trigger* many, many times after that game's launch. The voice acting itself is considered to be quite good, though the cast is nearly entirely unknowns. The only two voice actors that go on to have highly successful careers after performing in *Chrono Trigger* are Moira Quirk, who voices Schala and Queen Zeal in the game, and Crispin Freeman, who voices Magus. Graphically, the game looks quite a bit better than IOTL, with sprite graphics comparable to those featured in games like OTL's *SaGa Frontier* and *Legend of Mana*. The highly detailed character sprites are considered among the very best 2-D graphics on the SNES-CD, only surpassed by certain titles on the Sega Saturn. In terms of gameplay, though the basic attack/tech/combo structure is unchanged from OTL, because of the addition of Schala as a playable character, the elemental scheme of the game is changed somewhat. Instead of a character having only a single element they're associated with, they're associated with both an element and an attack discipline, physical (known as Force in the game) and magical (known as Aura). Crono is Force-Light, Marle is Aura-Water, Lucca is Aura-Fire, Robo is Force-Shadow, Ayla is Force-Fire, Frog is Force-Water, Magus is Aura-Shadow, and Schala is Aura-Light. This also changes up some techs. Crono no longer has OTL's Luminaire, that instead becomes Schala's eighth and final tech. Instead, he has Tornado, a full-screen attack that does physical damage. Ayla's ultimate attack becomes Meteor Strike, where she leaps into space and returns to earth with the force of a meteor impact to damage foes with fire and physical damage (her Triple Kick becomes her seventh tech and she loses Dino Tail). Schala's magic consists of mostly healing techs with light-based magic attacks interspersed (Crono's basic lightning tech becomes Lightning Strike, where he uses his sword to deal lightning/physical damage). Also, the tech list is SIGNIFICANTLY expanded, with every single possible two-person team getting three dual techs between them, this makes for 84 dual techs in all. Triple Techs continue to require Crono, but Magus and Schala get Triple Techs with him as well. Along with nine bonus Triple Techs that don't require Crono (acquired with special colored rocks as IOTL), this makes for a total of 30 Triple Techs, for a grand total of 114 combination techs and 64 single techs (with a few repetitions among these) available in the game.

The plot remains identical for the most part to OTL's *Chrono Trigger*. It starts with Crono waking up and meeting a beautiful girl named Marle at the Millennium Fair, only to see her getting transported through time by an invention created by his friend Lucca. Crono pursues Marle through time, leading to a series of misadventures that leads to the three youths learning of a terrible apocalypse that ruins the future. The creature responsible for this

apocalypse is Lavos, and the three of them, along with a robot they meet later on named Robo, decide to stop the apocalypse by any means necessary. They come to learn that a wizard named Magus in the Middle Ages may have created Lavos and team up with Frog to stop him. Once they defeat Magus, however, they learn that Lavos was merely summoned by Magus, and another time portal sends them back to prehistoric times to reunite with Ayla and witness Lavos' arrival on Earth in the form of the meteor that killed the dinosaurs. This creates a portal that sends the group to a mysterious ancient land called Zeal, where the true story finally comes into focus as the group confronts the evil Queen Zeal in an attempt to stop Lavos forever. This fails, and results in Crono's death (and ITTL the end of disc one). After the group then escapes Dalton's Blackbird, the game opens up as a possibility for reviving Crono is revealed. This second portion of the game, the sidequest portion, contains the biggest changes from IOTL's *Chrono Trigger*. Each of the game's eight playable characters has a quest. The Death Peak quest revives Crono, the Fiona's Forest quest allows Lucca to confront her past, the Ozzie's Fort quest gives Magus a chance to put his former henchmen down once and for all, the Geno Dome quest allows Robo to settle accounts with Mother Brain, and the Rainbow Shell quest allows Marle to reconcile with her father. The three quests that have the biggest changes from IOTL: The Cyrus' Tomb quest, in which Frog acquires his ultimate weapon the Masamune, also requires Frog to battle the ghostly Cyrus in a one-on-one showdown before receiving his prize. The Sun Stone quest requires a climb up Singing Mountain in 65,000,000 BC to place the Sun Stone before it can be charged, and this quest also sees Ayla confronting the last remaining Reptites and also marrying Kino. Finally, there is a remaining quest added from OTL, the quest to rescue Schala in 12,000 BC (which requires you to both revive Crono and spare Magus' life). After the fall of the Ocean Palace, Schala is sent to a place called Time's Wasteland, in which Lavos casts those who no longer fit into any time period. After Crono is revived, bringing Magus to the Last Village in 12,000 BC will prompt the cat Alfador to follow him. One of the villagers will comment on how Alfador was digging around for something in the village. Alfador will then run to a spot where Magus will dig up Schala's pendant. You must then take this pendant to all three Gurus, beginning with Gaspar, and then to Melchior who will mount it into a crest. Presenting this crest to the sleeping Balthasar Nu will stir him from his seemingly eternal slumber just long enough to use the crest to create a portal to Time's Wasteland, begging you to find and save Schala. Time's Wasteland is a curious dungeon, a mixture of environments with versions of monsters from all time periods (in terms of difficulty level it's a bit less than the Geno Dome and Giant's Claw). You MUST bring Magus into this dungeon in order to defeat its boss, Dalton, who is siphoning Schala's power in order to make himself an incredibly powerful sorcerer. If Magus is not with you, he won't be able to convince Schala to break free of Dalton's control and strike back against him, you'll be forced out of the battle and will have to put Magus in your party before trying again. If Magus is in your party, then after hitting Dalton to the tune of 15,000 HP, Magus will reveal himself as Janus to Schala and beg her forgiveness. Seeing Magus finally causes Schala to snap out of Dalton's energy sapping spell and fight back, allowing Magus to finish him off for good. After this, Schala joins the party, at Level 37 like her brother, with a full-party Heal spell, a Life spell, and a single-target Light magic attack spell. She later learns Haste 2, Cure 2, Lucent Array (a Light Magic attack that hits all enemies with the same power as Magus' Dark Mist), Life 2, and Luminaire. Her basic weapon is a staff. Following the eight side quests is the optional Black Omen dungeon, where Queen Zeal can be confronted (as IOTL, if you face Queen Zeal with Magus in your party, the normal "Boss Battle 2" theme will change to Magus' theme, or if you face her with Schala in your party, Schala's Theme will play during the battle, if you use both of them, Magus' theme takes priority), or you can go directly to 1999 AD using the time machine or the bucket, either way the final battle with Lavos plays out almost exactly as IOTL. The game then ends with the characters returning to their original timelines, the ending is a bit different if you've acquired Schala, who

resolves to rebuild 12000 BC as the new Queen of Zeal, where Earthbound and Enlightened Ones will be treated the same, in this ending, Magus decides to return to 600 AD to atone for his crimes there. The game then ends with a beautiful panorama of the Epoch traversing the world (or a balloon if you've destroyed the Epoch by crashing it into Lavos). As IOTL, you're given the option of starting a New Game+ to fight Lavos earlier in order to acquire one of 16 possible endings.

### **March 18, 1996**

*Chrono Trigger* is released in North America to the most positive critical reception for a video game since *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina of Dreams*. The game is universally proclaimed as being Squaresoft's masterpiece, exceeding *Final Fantasy VI* and comparable to *Secret of Mana* in quality. The game breaks many of *Secret of Mana*'s North American RPG sales records, with over 50,000 sales on the first day, 150,000 in the first week, and 250,000 by the end of April. With Sega's price cut on the horizon, the resounding success of *Chrono Trigger* further highlighted the significant "games gap" that remained between Nintendo and Sega, especially amongst the older demographic that Sega was attempting to court. It kicked off Nintendo's "Year of the RPG" in earnest and struck a major blow for Nintendo at a time that it was going to need to go on the offensive as the Saturn's price dropped and its library of games increased.

For Squaresoft, the release of *Chrono Trigger* further solidified the close relationship between the company and Nintendo. *Final Fantasy VII* had been formally announced for the Ultra Nintendo just a few weeks before, and while that game would not have a demo ready for Spaceworld, E3 was only two months away...

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### **Chrono Trigger**

Andrew: 9.5

Mark: 9.5

Mike: 9.5

Sushi-X: 9.5 (quote: "Squaresoft does it again! This RPG combines great gameplay, a beautiful soundtrack, and anime-like cutscenes into a complete package that tops even *Final Fantasy VI*."

### **Fire Pro Wrestling Presents: WCW Monday Nitro**

Andrew: 7.0 (quote: "The interface is pretty simple but that belies one of the most realistic wrestling games ever made.")

Mark: 8.5

Mike: 9.0

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Frantic Flea**

Andrew: 5.0

Mark: 6.5

Mike: 5.0 (quote: "The graphics are decent but the gameplay leaves a LOT to be desired in this boring platformer.")

Sushi-X: 5.5

### **Maui Mallard In Cold Shadow**

Andrew: 8.0 (quote: "Donald Duck's latest adventure is a real treat and yet another fun title this year featuring one of Disney's classic characters!")

Mark: 8.0

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Milon's Adventure**

Andrew: 9.0

Mark: 9.0 (quote: "Pretty much everything that was dumb or frustrating about the NES game has been totally overhauled in this surprisingly sweet sequel.")

Mike: 9.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Major Hazard: FUBAR**

Andrew: 9.5 (quote: "You'll be laughing your ass off when you're not gunning down enemy soldiers like a total badass in one of the year's best sequels.")

Mark: 8.5

Mike: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Monster Wars II: Risen From The Grave**

Andrew: 9.0

Mark: 9.0 (quote: "With even more monsters and an overhauled interface, Koei has made perhaps their best strategy game ever.")

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Belle Weather**

Andrew: 7.5

Mark: 7.0 (quote: "This quirky little action title where you control the weather to fight your way through a wacky world is pretty fun if somewhat generic. Belle's no Storm, but she's a great protagonist nonetheless.")

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Maze Mice**

Andrew: 6.0

Mark: 6.0

Mike: 5.5 (quote: "I tried to find more fun in this puzzler but it gets pretty tiresome after the first few stages.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

-excerpted from reviews of March 1996's SNES-CD games in the April and May 1996 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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\*Scene shows a boy at the toy store, looking at a Sega Saturn\*

Boy: Oh man, the Sega Saturn is awesome!

\*Footage of Sega Saturn games begins to play\*

Boy: No other game system brings you realistic 3-D graphics, intense sports action, and the best home arcade ports like the Sega Saturn does! \*looks at his mom\* Mom, can we get it?

\*The boy's mother looks at the price tag and shakes her head\*

Mom: Sorry but it's just a little too much for us right now, maybe next year?

Boy: \*looks disappointed\* Okay...

\*As the mom and her son are walking away, the boy catches a blue blur out of the corner of his eye\*

Boy: Huh? \*turns and looks but sees nothing\*

\*The blue blur streaks by again, followed by a bunch of store security guys\*

Boy: Is that...Sonic? \*watches as Sonic taunts the security guys who can't catch him\*

Sonic: You're too slow! \*flees out of the store\*

Boy: ....\*he goes back over to the Saturn display\* ...MOM! MOM, COME QUICK!

\*The mom rushes over to the Saturn display and sees the price tag has been changed from \$399 to \$299\*

Boy: Can we get it now?

Mom: Well... okay. But don't tell your dad!

\*It then shows Sonic rushing down the highway to another toy store with a big red marker in hand and a smirk on his face\*

Narrator: Sonic is at it again! Now the Sega Saturn is just \$299! With the latest graphics and the hottest arcade ports, now's the perfect time to Spring into Saturn!

\*Footage of various Saturn games is shown on screen\*

Narrator: Get the Saturn with *Virtua Fighter* and two controllers for just \$299, or get the *Virtua Arcade Set* with everything shown here \*shows the three *Virtua* games plus the light gun and steering wheel accessories\* for a new low price of \$399. And for a limited time with the purchase of any Saturn is a \$20 off coupon toward the purchase of your next Sega Saturn game. With games like *MagiQuest*, *Daytona USA*, and *Ridge Racer*, plus all new games like *Guardian Heroes* and *Frank Thomas' Big Hurt Baseball*, the Saturn is the home

for all of today's biggest hits!

\*Sonic is shown running into the next store, the security guards try to follow him but end up tumbling into a big pile in the parking lot.\*

Security Guard at the bottom of the pile: SEGA!

-excerpted from a Sega Saturn commercial that began airing on March 23, 1996

### **March 23, 1996**

The price of the Sega Saturn is dropped from \$399 to \$299 in North America, while the price of the Virtua Arcade Set, containing *Virtua Fighter*, *Virtua Racing*, *Virtua Cop*, and a number of accessories, is cut to \$399 from \$499. The price drop is accompanied by a new marketing campaign for the Sega Saturn, highlighting the price drop and showing off games such as *Guardian Heroes*, *Soul Edge*, and *Resident Evil*. The price drop causes the first major price spike for the Sega Saturn, and though it still remains significantly behind the SNES-CD in sales, the Saturn passes the Genesis in North American sales for the first time during the month of April 1996. \$299, though still expensive compared to the Super Nintendo CD and the Sega Genesis, is considered by the gaming media to be a more than acceptable price for the Saturn, and sales of hardware and software begin a steady rise that would continue throughout the remainder of the year.

*Of the games that benefited from the Sega Saturn's price cut in the immediate short term, perhaps none did more than Guardian Heroes, a hybrid RPG/beat-em-up from Treasure that probably would've faded into obscurity had Sega and Tom Kalinske not chosen it to be the game that would be pushed heavily in promotional material accompanying the Saturn price drop. Having been released just twelve days before, Guardian Heroes was a fun game, and a gorgeous one too, with beautiful anime-style 2-D that looked amazing on the Saturn's high-powered processor (though Chrono Trigger's graphics were getting a lot of praise at the time, it couldn't compare to what the Saturn's 4x powerful processor could do with 2-D). The game starred four brave warriors who set out on a quest to fight an evil wizard Kanon. The game was highly praised for its four-player gameplay, it probably offered up the best multiplayer experience on the Saturn thus far, with chaotic fights that could take up the whole screen as enemies rushed in. It was beloved by critics, and though it didn't score as highly as Chrono Trigger, it's probably the second best regarded game to come out of that month (and competition was FIERCE!). Among people who used their \$20 Saturn coupons, Guardian Heroes was one of the most purchased Saturn games and it ended up selling over 500,000 copies in North America. Tom Kalinske proudly cited the game as an example of how well Japanese games could do in the West if properly marketed, and the success of Guardian Heroes was a big reason why Treasure's 1997 action title Troublemakers (starring enemy-tossing cutie Marina Liteyears), received such a big promotional push. The other big Saturn game of the month, Frank Thomas' Big Hurt Baseball, was another big success, though it was outdone later on by Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run on the SNES-CD and was ultimately outsold by Guardian Heroes, the little Treasure game that could.*

-excerpted from the article "The First Cut Is The Deepest: A History Of Console Price Cuts" on Kotaku.com

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(Note: The information about *Fire Pro Wrestling*, including the entire roster for TTL's SNES-CD game, comes from the user Geaux. Thanks a lot for all of this info and for giving us the

idea for the game!)

*Coming to the SNES-CD, it's Fire Pro Wrestling Presents WCW Monday Nitro! The makers of Japan's most popular wrestling game series have teamed up with the hottest wrestling federation in the world to bring you the ultimate wrestling video game. Not only does it feature the most realistic wrestling action ever, it also features a mode to create your very own wrestlers! But with a roster this big, you may not need to.... here's a list of all the WCW wrestlers featured in the game!*

*Hulk Hogan  
Randy Savage  
Sting  
Lex Luger  
The Renegade  
Jim Duggan  
Dave Sullivan  
Booker T  
Stevie Ray  
Johnny B. Badd  
Marcus Bagwell  
Scotty Riggs  
Paul Orndorff  
Diamond Dallas Page  
Lord Steven Regal  
Earl Robert Eaton  
Squire David Taylor  
Brian Knobbs  
Jerry Saggs  
Bunkhouse Buck  
Dick Slater  
Big Bubba Rogers  
The Taskmaster  
The Giant  
The Shark  
Meng  
Kamala  
The Zodiac  
Ric Flair  
Arn Anderson  
Brian Pillman  
Chris Benoit  
Big Van Vader  
Sabu  
Road Warrior Hawk  
Kensuke Sasaki  
Hiroyoshi Tenzan  
Jyushin Thunder Liger  
The Great Muta  
Scott Norton*

-excerpted from an article in the April 1996 issue of *EGM2*

"Oh man, WCW Fire Pro Wrestling. That game was the shit back in the day and it's the game that actually got me into watching WCW. Pretty much EVERYBODY in the company was in that game. I was used to wrestling game rosters having 12, maybe 16 guys tops. To see so many guys AND to be able to add the new ones as they came, or even to put myself in the game? Yeah, it didn't have the story modes or anything like today's games do. It was just straight-up pro wrestling. Hell, you could make up your own stories if you wanted to, just act out the promos between matches like me and my friends did. ...yeah, we were dorks."

-excerpted from the comment section on Rootalk's /wrestlinggames/ subroot on February 17, 2014

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### **The Major's Back To Kick Some Ass**

*Major Hazard: FUBAR* is one of the most anticipated sequels of the year, and for the most part, it lives up to the hype. Major Hazard and his band of misfit grunts, along with a couple of new characters, get stuck behind enemy lines and have to fight their way out. And fight they do, while getting into a whole lot of trouble along the way. Those of you who remember the last *Major Hazard* game know that it's a laugh riot along with being really fast paced and fun. This game takes the humor up to 11. There are tons of ridiculous weapons and lots of potty humor, which some fans might not appreciate, but it's not gratuitous like in certain children's TV shows, for the most part it's spaced out well and when it does occur it hits the mark and makes you laugh.

The graphics have been amped up from the previous title. Explosions are a lot more detailed as are the enemies, and there's a lot more going on on the screen at once. There's a lot more voice acting in this game (and the last one had plenty to spare), and everything just seems like a marked improvement over the previous title. The challenge is ramped up too, there are some really frustrating levels (and the Major himself expresses his frustration at times with some great one-liners). There's even two-player co-op and competitive modes for when you want to enjoy the game with a buddy. We wish you could play with four players at once, but the game already suffers from a tad of slowdown during particularly crowded segments, so a four-player mode might be too much for the SNES-CD to handle. Regardless, *Major Hazard: FUBAR* is one of the most fun AND funny games of the year so far.

Graphics: 4.5

Sound: 4.5

Play Control: 5.0

Fun Factor: 5.0

Challenge: Intermediate

-excerpted from the April 1996 *GamePro* review of *Major Hazard: FUBAR*

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Brittany Saldita: *Guardian Heroes* is a really fun, really challenging beat-em-up that's best played with three friends but still quite fun when you're all by your lonesome.

John Walden: It's one of the most addictive Saturn games to date, taking cues from the awesome *Golden Axe* series and throwing in an RPG twist.

Brittany Saldita: While the plotline was a bit thin, it still had some good moments and for the genre, it's a pretty good story. *Guardian Heroes* keeps the action going in every stage, there's never a dull moment and it takes some serious strategy to beat some of the tougher bosses.

John Walden: And those graphics....damn. I mean, don't get me wrong, the Saturn is great at 3-D, but these amazing visuals look like something out of a storybook come to life.

Brittany Saldita: I love that they didn't try to force much 3-D in here. It looks beautiful the way it is. Colorful, vivid, fluid in motion, *Guardian Heroes* is not only one of the most fun video games I've ever played, it's also one of the most beautiful. I'm giving it a 4.5 out of five.

John Walden: And I give it a 4.5 also.

(...)

Kazzi DeCarlo: *Monster Wars 2* is the only game where you can see Jack the Ripper get eaten by a horde of mutant pumpkins.

Ted Crosley: This game was a bit too weird for me. I wasn't a fan of the original and I really wasn't much of a fan of this, though I've never been a huge fan of Koei strategy games to begin with.

Kaz: Well, the fact that you can pick from some really obscure monsters is pretty neat. They got Cthulhu in this thing!

Ted: Uggggggggghhhhh, Cthulhu.

Kaz: You don't like Cthulhu? You don't like Lovecraft?

Ted: I despise Lovecraft!

Kaz: Oh man, I thought you were cool.

Ted: What's cool about a bunch of weird stories with a bunch of weird giant space demons and a bunch of scared people running around and going crazy?

Kaz: Everything you just described is cool. C'mon, man, when the Great Old Ones rise out of the Earth, the end times will be upon us!

Ted: The only Great Old Ones I care about are my grandparents and they're pretty boring too.

Kaz: Well, *Monster Wars 2* was a lot of fun. It wasn't perfect by any means, with quite a few repetitive missions, but the sheer variety of monster types had me entertained and I'm giving this game a 3.5.

Ted: I'm giving it a 3. Fans of Koei games will love it but it's nothing special.

-excerpted from the March 12, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Alex Stansfield: *Milon's Adventure* wasn't what I expected at all. I was super frustrated with the NES game, but this game actually was a lot of fun.

Ted: Well, I never played the NES game.

Alex: And I'm glad you didn't, it was a mess.

Ted: But this game was pretty fun. It's a bit derivative of games like *Castlevania* and *Andreakah* but it works on most levels, the graphics are kinda cutesy and simple but I really liked the soundtrack.

Alex: I had tons of fun, the game fixed literally EVERYTHING wrong with the original NES game and it's one of the biggest sequel improvements I've ever seen.

Ted: HudsonSoft is known for their weird titles and this is no exception but I did have fun.

Alex: I'm giving *Milon's Adventure* a 4.5 out of 5.

Ted: I'm giving it a 3.5.

(...)

Ted: Wow. That's all I can really say about *Chrono Trigger*.

Alex: This game lived up to the hype and then some. And the replay value is just through the roof!

Ted: Yeah, going back and kicking ass with fully-leveled characters is something that should be in EVERY RPG from now on.

Alex: The soundtrack is the best I've ever heard in a game, hands down, bar none.

Ted: I'm gonna disagree with that, I thought the *Sonic 3* soundtrack was bigger.

Alex: Yeah we are DEFINITELY disagreeing there.

Ted: The voice acting surprised me, I thought it was fantastic. Usually voice acting in games kinda sucks, even *Lunar* for Sega CD was really campy but this was pretty good. I can't say too much about the voice acting without spoiling a lot of the plot but it was really good.

Alex: Let us just say this, if you are a fan of *Guts* on Nickelodeon this game will blow your mind.

Ted: Yeah, they should've called the Mountain of Woe the Aggro Crag.

Alex: \*laughing\* That would have been appropriate.

Ted: I'm giving this game a 5 out of 5. I can't give it anything else.

Alex: Yep, 5 out of 5 for me. \*sirens go off\* Uh oh...uh oh, guess what time it is?

Ted: Time to change Kaz's dish?

Alex: It's time to add another game to the GameTV Hall Of Fame!

\*A framed copy of *Chrono Trigger* is brought over to the wall where *Ocarina of Dreams* and *Ballistic Limit* are mounted.\*

Ted: And let's put it up here, right next to *Ballistic Limit*, there you go.

Brittany: It looks pretty good up there.

Alex: And there is *Chrono Trigger* and when we come back we are going to be giving you all an EXCLUSIVE world premiere sneak peek at Sega's upcoming game *NiGHTS Into Dreams*.

-excerpted from the March 19, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: March 1996**

1. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Ballistic Limit
4. Super Mario World 3
5. Twisted Metal
6. Donkey Kong Country
7. Super Mario World 2
8. Tales Of The Seven Seas
9. Doom
10. Killer Instinct
11. Front Mission
12. Rage
13. Street Fighter Alpha
14. Where In Time Is Carmen Sandiego?
15. Final Fantasy VI
16. Gradius IV
17. Mortal Kombat 3
18. Victory
19. Toy Story
20. Secret Of Mana

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"And it is with great excitement that we award our first perfect 40/40 score to a game that is not on the Super Famicom CD! **Biohazard** for the Sega Saturn simply blew us away with its cinematic graphics and terrifying atmosphere. It's absolutely worth checking out for anyone who owns a Sega Saturn and the perfect incentive to purchase one for those who don't own one already!"

-excerpted from an editorial in the April 1996 issue of *Famitsu* magazine

-  
"It's a great feeling, having the #1 video game in the world. The entire world, is that right? Ha, it feels really great."

-Shinji Mikami, in an interview on a Japanese talk show on April 30, 1996

"Resident Evil is a superb game that takes the Sega Saturn to another level. Combined with the recent price cut, the Sega Saturn is now the must-own game device of the year."

-from the review of *Resident Evil* in the May 1996 issue of *GamePro*

"Sega's got its balls back."

-overheard in the halls of Nintendo of America sometime shortly after the North American release of *Resident Evil*

"Entering into optical media was something I was so eager to do, so much space and power would allow us to go nuts creatively and *Fire Emblem: The Holy War* is the result of that. Nintendo was supporting us better than ever, *Shield of Seals* was a hit Super Famicom cartridge and Nintendo wanted the next one to be bigger and better. The Super Famicom CD was the best thing to ever happen to *Fire Emblem*."

-excerpted from a translated December 1996 *Famitsu* interview with Shozuo Kaga

"Localizing *The Holy War* was a big task, not only because of the time crunch, but because how controversial some of the content of the game would be. I had long conversations with Treehouse and Mr. (Howard) Lincoln about how to deal with some of the content, especially...well, if you've played the original Japanese version you know what I'm talking about. Obviously we had to avoid creating a glaring plothole. I think we chose the most sensible approach, I know some fans disagreed with how we handled it but we got as close to the original story as we could get."

-Marcus Lindblom

"God dammit, it's full of incest!"

-Howard Lincoln, overheard during a 1995 brainstorming session at the Nintendo Treehouse about how best to translate *Fire Emblem: The Holy War*

"Video games are getting more violent and graphic, absolutely. I think the culture in general is getting increasingly permissive about sex and violence and it's something that the American people are going to have their say about in the election."

-United States Senator and 1996 Republican nominee Bob Dole, in an April 19, 1996 news interview

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## **Resident Evil: The Basics**

*Resident Evil* for the Sega Saturn is for the most part identical to the OTL Playstation version, though due to the added processing power of the Saturn compared to OTL's Playstation, the in-game graphics are somewhat better, comparable to OTL's Nintendo 64 version of *Resident Evil 2*, while the cutscenes are also somewhat better looking, making the game perhaps the best looking console video game ever made up to that point. The game retains the familiar cast of Chris Redfield, Jill Valentine, Barry, Wesker, Vickers, and

Abby (Abigail) Chambers (renamed from Rebecca due to there already being a very popular video game character named Rebecca in Nintendo's *Squad Four*). The game retains the familiar plotline of a haunted mansion where mysterious scientific experiments are being performed, and the character of Wesker being a traitor. There is an additional boss fight from OTL, a monstrous two-headed reptilian beast fought toward the middle of the game, in order to show off the Saturn's graphical capabilities. Despite the progress that video game voice acting has made OTL, *Resident Evil*'s voice acting is still largely known as being bad even by 1996 standards, and is unfavorably compared to the voice acting in March's release of *Chrono Trigger*. The infamous "Jill sandwich" line from OTL is one of many pieces of bad dialogue that makes it into the game. The voice acting and dicey script are considered virtually the only flaws in an otherwise fantastic game.

## **April 15, 1996**

*Resident Evil* is released in North America for the Sega Saturn, three weeks after its Japanese release as *Biohazard* and five days after its European release. It receives some of the year's best reviews (only *Chrono Trigger* has received better in 1996 so far, and even then only barely) and is a major hit in all three territories, rapidly becoming the biggest selling non pack-in Saturn game. Despite controversy over the graphic violence present in the game (which is not censored as was the case IOTL), the game is an enormous success, and combined with the Saturn's price cut a month before, is the first game to seriously push Sega Saturns off the shelves. The Saturn surpasses the Genesis in sales in North America for the first time, and it's a position the Saturn would never relinquish for the remainder of its lifespan. It also begins a long but steady march toward surpassing the Super Nintendo CD in sales. The game receives mainstream press coverage, and even when portrayed in a bad light, the footage of the game shows off the Saturn's graphical capabilities. The game easily surpasses anything the Super Nintendo CD is capable of and for the first time truly shows off Sega's technical superiority. It's also the game that establishes "survival horror" as a viable genre of video games. Previously, *Alone in the Dark* had been a popular PC title (and had bombed on the Super Nintendo CD), and the SNES-CD had its share of horror games like *Last Resort*, but it was *Resident Evil* that truly brought the genre into the mainstream and, as *Super Mario World 2* had done for the SNES-CD back in 1993, established the Sega Saturn as a viable console in the North American market.

*"Once the first post-Resident Evil hardware and software sales figures had come in, I knew it. The Saturn finally had its killer app and it justified everything I'd been telling the suits in Japan about the need for a price cut. Finally, things were looking up for the Saturn."*

-Tom Kalinske, "The Chase: Sega's 20 Year Struggle To Take Down A Giant"

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## **Fire Emblem: The Holy War**

Andrew: 9.0

Mark: 9.0

Mike: 9.5 (quote: "A challenging and extremely addicting strategy RPG with an epic storyline.")

Sushi-X: 8.5

## **Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge**

Andrew: 8.0

Mark: 9.0

Mike: 9.0 (quote: "In a lot of ways, *Monkey Island 2* surpasses its predecessor. It does a great way on expanding the world of Guybrush Threepwood and Elaine Marley.")

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **NASCAR Racing**

Andrew: 7.0 (quote: "The graphics could use a bit of work but we enjoyed the wide selection of real-life tracks.")

Mark: 7.0

Mike: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Phineas and Ferb**

Andrew: 6.0

Mark: 6.5

Mike: 5.5

Sushi-X: 5.5 (quote: "Fans of the cartoon will snap this game up no doubt, but anyone looking for a great platformer needs to look elsewhere.")

### **Prehistorik Man**

Andrew: 7.5

Mark: 7.5 (quote: "I enjoyed this action game for its tight play control and fun characters.")

Mike: 7.0

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **XCOM: Terror From The Deep**

Andrew: 7.5 (quote: "While not quite as good as the original XCOM game, it's still a rewarding installment of this excellent strategy series.")

Mark: 7.5

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Ys V**

Andrew: 8.0

Mark: 6.5

Mike: 6.0

Sushi-X: 7.0 (quote: "While Ys doesn't match up to the Final Fantasy series, it's still a really fun action RPG with a great storyline.")

### **Jewels Of The Realm 2**

Andrew: 7.5

Mark: 8.0 (quote: "I really wish they'd have done more to improve upon the previous title, but then again, it's a fun formula that doesn't need much tweaking.")

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 7.5

## Steam Agent

Andrew: 7.0

Mark: 7.0

Mike: 6.0 (quote: "Atlus' steampunk RPG will appeal to RPG junkies, but it's not even the best RPG this month. The steampunk motif is fun but the grinding gets pretty old after a while.")

Sushi-X: 6.0

## VideoVision

Andrew: 8.0

Mark: 8.5 (quote: "Kids will really dig this colorful action game that hilariously spoofs pop culture.")

Mike: 7.5

Sushi-X: 8.0

## Quizmaster

Andrew: 4.0

Mark: 7.0

Mike: 4.0

Sushi-X: 5.0 (quote: "I enjoy pub trivia but this boring game has none of the fun of competitive trivia.")

-excerpted from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of April 1996's Super Nintendo CD games in their May and June 1996 issues

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## Fire Emblem: The Holy War – The Basics

*Fire Emblem: The Holy War* is the TTL version of OTL's *Fire Emblem: Seisen no Keifu*. Released on the SNES-CD, the game is expanded significantly from what it was IOTL, owing to the CD format which allowed significantly more space for what the game designers intended. The sprite-based graphics of OTL's game are retained, but with more detail, including full portraits for each character as they are speaking or as they appear in battle, adding much more detail to the appearance of the characters. The game's soundtrack is a mixture of in-game music and fully orchestrated CD audio (with this as an example of the quality of certain musical tracks: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Dng...Zc\\_Ap-k9u6UqwQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Dng...Zc_Ap-k9u6UqwQ) ). The game also includes a detailed character pairing system similar to OTL's *Fire Emblem: Awakening*, with characters able to have conversations both in and out of battle, male and female characters can even hook up and have children with enough relationship points, adding a deep dynamic of strategy to which characters you choose to take onto the battlefield. The relationship system also appeared in OTL's version of the game, though ITTL it's even more advanced, with much more involved conversation and character parameters, in some aspects it's one of the deepest dating sims on the SNES-CD in addition to being one of the most epic RPGs.

The plotline is similar to OTL's with some changes (more changes are introduced in North America due to content issues with the localization). The game touches on the history of the continent Jugdral, at one time ruled under the peaceful Gran Republic when a dark wizard

arrives and shatters the republic. He establishes an empire and rules over the people as his slaves, only for 12 brave warriors to battle him and restore the Gran Republic as the new nation of Granbell. This leads in to the main storyline of the game, 200 years after the evil empire was destroyed. The main character is the Knight Lord Sigurd, descended from the Holy War's hero Baldur. The game starts out as Sigurd goes to free his friend Aideen, Duchess of Jungby, from a horde of bandits. This simple mission turns into a massive quest when war breaks out. Sigurd unites with an army of friends to protect the freedom of Granbell. Eventually, after a victorious campaign, Sigurd is assassinated after having a son, Seliph, to carry on his legacy. This begins the second part of the game, though unlike IOTL where the events of *Fire Emblem: Thracia 776* are a separate game, here they are integrated into the middle of the game as a sort of intermission quest, forming several chapters of their own and adding to the game's epic scale. Following the Thracian chapters, the game's second part, taking place 16 years after the first, is largely as IOTL, with Seliph and other heroes' descendants setting forth on a quest of their own to restore freedom to Granbell. The new characters encountered during the Thracian chapters are involved in this part as well, adding new character dynamics that did not appear IOTL.

The major controversy of *Fire Emblem: The Holy War*, and the issue that may have precluded any chance of an OTL localization for the game, was the relationships between a number of love interests that were clearly intended to be incestuous. Despite the somewhat more relaxed attitude toward game censorship present IOTL, this was still considered unacceptable for European and North American sensibilities, and certain plotlines and dialogue had to be significantly altered for the localization. The plot device of Alvis and Dierdre being half-siblings was altered somewhat controversially and clumsily, altering certain scenes to make it appear that Sigyn had only birthed Dierdre and not Alvis. In addition, any attraction between half-siblings Seliph and Julia later in the game was also edited out, somewhat less clumsily, through dialogue alteration. Fans of the original Japanese version largely did *not* appreciate these changes and for many years afterward a fierce fandom war erupted between fans of the North American version and fans of the original Japanese version in a debate mirroring the common "subbed vs. dubbed" anime debates from both IOTL and TTL. Fans of the Japanese version largely saw the alterations as a "copout", while fans of the North American version were just grateful to get to play the game.

*"You have to remember what time this was done in. It was the spring of 1996 and Bob Dole and Pat Buchanan were on the prowl for primary votes. An incest-laden game on a Nintendo system would have made video games THE big topic of controversy in the 1996 presidential election! Clinton and Dole would've torn our hobby apart. Look how they reacted to Resident Evil for the Saturn which came out around the same time. The ESRB wouldn't have been enough, we would have gotten federal censorship."*

*"My ass, Nintendo should've shown some damn balls and not cut out some of the most important scenes of the game. They RUINED the North American version with some of the bullshit dialogue they cobbled together."*

*"Ruined? It was one of the best reviewed games of the year. If you think one of the most brilliant strategy RPGs of all time was ruined by not having incest in it, you need to get your priorities straight."*

*\*someone posts a picture of Jim Carrey hilariously eating popcorn from The Mask II\**

-excerpted from a thread on the *Fire Emblem: The Holy War* for SNES-CD board on

## April 22, 1996

*Fire Emblem: The Holy War* is released for the Super Nintendo CD, having been one of the most hyped games thus far during Nintendo's "Year of the RPG", with extensive coverage in *Nintendo Power* magazine including the cover of the April 1996 issue, a mini-strategy guide spread across the April-June 1996 issues that details the first half of the game, and a demo of the first chapter in *Nintendo Power CD*, along with television and magazine advertisements. The game is one of the fastest selling JRPGs to date in both North America and Japan. In North America, it's April 1996's second biggest selling SNES-CD game (behind *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge*). The release of *Fire Emblem* in 1994 for the Super Nintendo was a decent success, the release of the sequel in 1996 for the SNES-CD is a bonafide sleeper hit and proves the series' financial viability in North America.

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The spring of 1996 was extremely crowded for the Super Nintendo CD, and aside from the big RPGs, the most anticipated games of that spring were a pair of sequels to 1994 hits *The Secret Of Monkey Island* and *Jewels of the Realm*. Ever since *The Secret Of Monkey Island* proved one of the SNES-CD's biggest success stories, selling over two million copies overall, it was inevitable that the critically-beloved sequel *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge* would also get the porting treatment. And it did, in April of 1996. Along with *Fire Emblem* and *Jewels of the Realm 2*, it was one of the most hyped SNES-CD games of the month. Critically, it lived up to the hype. The game was highly praised and though it didn't quite blow people away like the port of the original game had, it still averaged somewhere around a 9 out of 10 from most publications of the time. The game itself, which continued the hilarious adventures of Guybrush Threepwood and Elaine Marley, was arguably better than the first, with a more involved plotline and significantly more challenging (and clever) puzzles. Despite all that, the game didn't even manage to sell half of what the original did on the SNES-CD. It WAS still the biggest selling game of the month (well, if you don't count the Saturn's *Resident Evil* which eventually sold five million copies in North America alone), and considered a success, but sales were still somewhat disappointing, especially considering that pirate games were in vogue after the success of *Tales Of The Seven Seas*. It seemed that a lot of casual SNES-CD fans were looking for a bit more action in their games, which is why they SHOULD have loved *Jewels of the Realm 2*.

*Jewels of the Realm 2* largely picked up where the previous game left off, continuing the story of Chris and Lily, the kid heroes who saved their realm in the previous title. This time, they had to contend with two evil kids, Gliss and Larry, who were also using magical jewels, but they were using them for evil and mischief. It was a fairly fun plotline and the story had improved from the previous game, but the game mechanics were somewhat changed and it proved to be controversial. Now, you could be (somewhat) arbitrarily locked out of using certain jewels. It was supposed to add an element of strategy and difficulty to the game but it often left players stuck in certain levels forced to use combinations that really didn't fit what they needed to have to clear the level, and some boss fights were near impossible to beat! The game was still very fun and reviews hovered around 8/10, but the game doesn't hold up nearly as well today and sales, while good, were still a disappointment, not even beating out *Fire Emblem* in North America (which *Jewels 2* was easily expected to do). For the third game, which wasn't released until 2000 on the Ultra Nintendo, the developers went back to the drawing board to a largely positive response, but *Jewels of the Realm 2*, supposed to be one of 1996's biggest hits, ended up only being a middling hit.

-excerpted from "1996: Year Of The RPG, Or Year Of The Saturn?", an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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"I'm not sure we can call it *Soul Edge* in North America, there's a company called *EDGE Games* that-

"Tell them to go fuck off. They try to sue us, they'll lose. Trademark squatting's a crime. We'll countersue for their whole company."

-from a conversation between Shinobu Toyoda and Tom Kalinske in 1995 at Namco headquarters. Sega's lawyers successfully intimidated *EDGE Games* into not suing Namco or Sega, and the company would fold in the year 2000.

*Soul Edge* was originally intended as an experimental game by Namco, but after Sega execs saw the game in progress and took a liking to it, it became a major arcade hit and would become a key release for the Sega Saturn in 1996. It was a weapon-based fighting game, the second after Sony's *Battle Arena Toshinden*, but was a huge step up from that game in terms of graphics, using Namco's arcade hardware (and later the Saturn's hardware) to great effect. The game was developed with a Saturn port in mind from the getgo, and thus the Saturn version was released in Japan just a month after the initial arcade release, and in April 1996 in North America. Featuring high-definition (for the time, anyway) graphics and full voice acting to accompany the game's detailed character based storylines, it was compared to *Mortal Kombat* in terms of story depth and to *Tekken* in terms of combat style (though the addition of weaponry made *Soul Edge*'s combat significantly deeper). The game featured twelve heroes and a villainous pirate named Cervantes de Leon, giving it one of the biggest rosters of any Saturn fighting game (*Tekken*'s was larger but none of *Soul Edge*'s characters were clones). *Soul Edge* benefitted significantly from the Saturn price cut, upon its release on April 1, 1996, it became the fastest selling fighting game on the Saturn since *Virtua Fighter* and aside from *Virtua Fighter* and *Virtua Fighter 2* it was the best-selling Saturn fighting game of 1996. Though five games were released for the Saturn in North America in April 1996, *Resident Evil* and *Soul Edge* topped them all by a significant margin, making *Soul Edge* one of the defining games that made the Sega Saturn a force in the North American console market.

-excerpted from "The Top 25 Fighting Games on the Sega Saturn: #7- *Soul Edge*" on IGN.com

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With its first season now winding down, Nickelodeon's *Phineas and Ferb* is the network's #2 rated show, closely following fellow Nicktoon *Rugrats* in the ratings. The show has been a hit for Nickelodeon since its release last fall, following the efforts of two young boys to have what they call the "best summer ever" by creating dozens of wacky inventions and schemes while their sister attempts to tattle on them and their pet platypus Perry battles an evil scientist named Dr. Doofenschmirtz. The show aims at a slightly older demographic than *Rugrats* does, as its main characters are primarily elementary school students as opposed to the babies and toddlers on *Rugrats*. Series co-creator Dan Povenmire attributes the show's success to "including something for every child, as well as their parents, to be entertained by", and its mix of light-hearted fun and edgy (but not TOO edgy) humor has won over fans

all across the country. It's proven to be a bigger success than the previous two Nicktoons, 1994's *Aaah! Real Monsters*, which has enjoyed only moderate ratings success, and *Rocko's Modern Life*, which Povenmire worked on, a show that started off a hit but its ratings have dipped in recent months. With *Ren and Stimpy* and *Doug* having already ended their runs of new episodes, and *Rugrats* airing only sporadic specials such as a direct-to-video Las Vegas vacation special, it's *Phineas and Ferb* leading the pack for Nickelodeon in terms of exciting new content, with a new season set to start in June and a video game on the way for the Sega Genesis, the Super Nintendo CD, the Nintendo Game Boy and the Sega Game Gear. The video game is your basic action fare, featuring Phineas and Ferb traversing several levels as various enemies and obstacles bar their path. Reviews are tepid, but fans of the show are likely to buy it in droves. As for Nickelodeon, this fall they've got a pair of new Nicktoons on the way: *Kablam!*, a compilation of shorts that the network hopes could potentially be developed into shows of their own, and *Action League Now!*, a superhero comedy created using a process that its creators call "chuckimation". It was originally intended to be a featured short on *Kablam*, but after test audiences responded very positively, the short was expanded into a full order of episodes for its own show. Nickelodeon is also in talks with *All That* co-creator and showrunner Dan Schneider on creating a potential Nicktoon, one that would presumably debut next year. For now, the future of Nickelodeon, its Nicktoons, and particularly *Phineas and Ferb*, is a bright one indeed.

-excerpted from an article in *TV Guide* magazine, April 13-19, 1996

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"Heroes leaping into action! VideoVision! The ultimate game!"

-from the theme song from *VideoVision*, featured in a TV commercial for the game

Infogrames' *VideoVision* was hyped big time as the "next big thing" when it debuted in April of 1996 for the Super Nintendo CD and the Genesis Mega Charger. It starred a kid named Ralph who had the ability to leap into any screen, be it a movie screen, a TV show, or a video game, and like any overly excitable 10-year-old boy, he used this ability exceedingly. The game basically consisted of Ralph entering various worlds to mess around with the people in them, using a variety of weapons and items to attack bad guys and protect himself from the various aggressive denizens of those worlds. He was your typical wisecracking 90s hero kid, not quite as vulgar as Bart Simpson but definitely a step up from Dennis the Menace. Despite being a fairly typical action game, there was actually a lot of creativity in the level and weapon design. Ralph didn't visit the standard collection of worlds, like caveman world, desert world, Paris send-up, etc. This game was a love-letter to the 90s. He visited cheesy soap operas like a hilarious skewering of *Melrose Place*. He visited a super rainy super-grungy version of Seattle and did battle with *Nirvana* look-alikes (astonishingly, in a later interview Kurt Cobain said he played the game and found the Seattle level hilarious). He met the cast of TV's *Friends*...and beat them up! It was one of the funniest SNES-CD games ever made and Ralph's voice acting (by ubiquitous 90s voiceover artist Kath Soucie, using a slightly deeper version of the voice she used for Phil on *Rugrats*), was side-splittingly hilarious. While *VideoVision* wasn't the mega hit that Infogrames had hoped for, it still sold a pretty solid amount of copies, slotting in just behind *Fire Emblem: The Holy War* and *Jewels Of The Realm 2* on the sales charts that month.

-excerpted from "The 50 SNES-CD Games You Must Play Before You Die", an article on Dorkly.com, December 13, 2010

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John Walden: *Soul Edge* is one kickass fighting game. There's weapons galore and a ton of great characters.

Brittany Saldita: And don't forget the excellent storyline. Cervantes is the best fighting game villain since M. Bison.

John: He makes LeChuck look like Chuckie from *Rugrats*.

Brittany: \*laughing as she makes her voice all nasally\* Tommy, I'm scared!

John: The strategic depth, the great graphics, all combine to make for one sweet fighting game. I give *Soul Edge* a 4.5 out of 5.

Brittany: I give it a 4, I loved the storyline and the characters, the music could've used a little work, I really wanted to hear something classic like Guile's Theme or whatnot but this was still a really good fighting game.

-excerpted from the April 2, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted Crosley: And *Resident Evil* is without a doubt the best looking video game I've ever played, which adds greatly to the fear factor.

Alex Stansfield: I definitely recommend playing at night. You'll have a heart attack and die, but you'll die with a smile.

Ted: While screaming for your life.

Alex: The multiple endings, I think nine in all? Maybe more depending on who you save? They really add to the replay value of this game.

Ted: Just being such a good game added to the replay value of this game. As soon as I beat it, I wanted to go back and play it again...I couldn't because I had more games to review, but I wanted to. I wanted to so bad.

Alex: This is the game that shows off what the Saturn can do. This game and *Panzer Dragoon*, but this game in particular is just a showcase of the Saturn's next-gen power.

Ted: That it is. I'm giving it a 5 out of 5.

Alex: And I'm giving it a 5 too.

\*sirens go off\*

Ted: Aaaaaaaaaah (expletive)!

Alex: Still jumpy after playing this game?

Ted: Yes! That scared the (expletive) out of me!

Alex: \*laughing\* Well you know what that siren means, another one for the Hall of Fame!

Ted: Geez, didn't we just do this last month?

Alex: That we did, but we're gonna do it again. \*the other hosts appear as they hang up a framed copy of *Resident Evil* on the wall\* There we go, our first Saturn game in the GameTV Hall of Fame!

Ted: Hopefully our first of many.

(...)

Brittany: I can tell you really didn't like *Steam Agent*.

Alex: I really didn't like it. I just thought....I thought it was way too tough and I know what you're gonna say.

Brittany: That you suck and should get good?

Alex: There's no excuse for the difficulty of the enemies, especially in the first part of the games!

Brittany: I've learned that Atlus games, for the most part, are somewhat tougher than Squaresoft games. *Shin Megami Tensei* was an ordeal. At least this game has some really nice graphics and music to make up for it, and the characters were really fun.

Alex: They were cookie cutter!

Brittany: Alexandra was not cookie cutter, she was a beautiful inventrix and-

Alex: Inventrix?

Brittany: Female inventor. And her inventions were really cool.

Alex: Lucca ripoff.

Brittany: *Steam Agent* came out in Japan before *Chrono Trigger* did!

Alex: The graphics compared to *Chrono Trigger* are awful.

Brittany: ...they're not as good as *Chrono Trigger's*, you're right. This game's no *Chrono Trigger*.

Alex: It's not even an *Ys V*.

Brittany: It's a really fun, really compelling, amazingly beautiful steampunk RPG with brutal but fair difficulty and a cast of fun and awesome characters.

Alex: It's a tremendously boring slog through repetitive environments with primitive graphics and uninspired characters. I give it a 2 out of 5.

Brittany: And I give it a 4.5. What in the hell is wrong with you? \*begins ranting at him in Spanish\*

Alex: I know half of those words are bad!

-excerpted from the April 16, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

Alex: Top to bottom, *Fire Emblem: The Holy War* blew me away. It was an epic adventure spanning multiple generations of heroes, the character pairing system is INCREDIBLY addictive and the graphics and soundtrack are typical Nintendo: high quality and beautiful.

Ted: I'm surprised you're okay with the permadeath mechanic.

Alex: Playing *Fire Emblem*, you know what you're getting into. There's a lot of strategy involved and I rarely thought the game was unfair.

Ted: Because last week with *Steam Agent* you gave it a two because-

Alex: The difficulty in *Fire Emblem* is way different than the difficulty in *Steam Agent*.

Ted: Well, either way, *Fire Emblem* is a really solid game. It's fun to play, the plot gets a bit confusing but the meat of the game is in its battle mechanics and in planning your army and your strategy and those aspects of the game were fantastic. You WILL get frustrated but it's rewarding enough to keep you satisfied all the way through.

Alex: I give *Fire Emblem: The Holy War* a 5 out of 5.

Ted: And I give it a 4.

-excerpted from the April 23, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

*"Eheh, I remember the original version of the episode had us talking about the Japanese version of the game with all the incest in it. But Nintendo caught wind of it and sent a memo to MTV, they didn't want us to mention it at all. We had this whole bit where we were gonna make fun of the game. But Nintendo deep-sixed that and what you got instead was something pretty boring. We did get a really nice interview with Nintendo's localization team for the game that took us into the Treehouse, but I still wish we could've made some of those incest jokes. C'est la vie."*

-Ted Crosley, in a Kotaku.com interview on February 23, 2013

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*"And the campaign trail continues as Bob Dole, now the presumptive Republican nominee after surviving a bit of a scare from Pat Buchanan in the early weeks of the campaign, made a speech in Topeka, Kansas today. Bob Dole emphasized the ongoing need for more morality in America, continuing a crusade that began last year against what he believes is an increasing level of gratuitous sex and violence in movies, television programs, video games and popular music. He's seeking to motivate his electoral base in the run-up to November's election which will see him facing off against President Bill Clinton. For the most part, Clinton has kept popular culture on the backburner of his campaign, instead focusing on the need to stay the course as America's economic growth continues. Recently, a video game on the Sega Saturn called Resident Evil has drawn scrutiny for its graphic violence*

*and use of strong language, and Senator Dole mentioned the game by name in a recent news interview.*

*Dole: 'Well, there's this game I've been told is called Resident Evil, and right there in the title, is the word evil and I think that might be reflective of the influence these games are having on our children. It's just this ongoing issue in our culture and I think Americans are getting increasingly sick of the permissiveness we're seeing.'*

*One critic has even blamed the game for the recent shooting in Australia, where Martin Bryant took 32 lives in Port Arthur, Tasmania before taking his own life last week. However, the Australian media dismisses this claim, saying that Bryant did not play video games. Most in the Australian media cite a lack of gun control as the main factor in the shootings, another issue which will inevitably be a factor in America's November election as well. Bill Clinton signed a ban on assault weapons into law in 1994, a law that Senator Dole opposes."*

*-excerpted from the CBS Nightly News on May 8, 1996*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: April 1996**

1. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina of Dreams
3. Ballistic Limit
4. Super Mario World 3
5. Donkey Kong Country
6. Super Mario World 2
7. Mega Man X3
8. Twisted Metal
9. Doom
10. Tales Of The Seven Seas
11. Killer Instinct
12. Rage
13. Front Mission
14. Klepto: The Invisible Thief
15. Samurai Shodown II
16. Final Fantasy VI
17. Victory
18. Mickey Mania: The Timeless Adventures Of Mickey Mouse
19. Street Fighter Alpha
20. Secret Of Mana

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*"And so for the first time, we unveil to the world the Ultra Nintendo Entertainment System. This device, created with the cooperation of Nintendo and Sony, will revolutionize video gaming forever. It contains a new high powered graphics chip from Hitachi, custom-built to maximize the power behind games such as Super Mario, The Legend Of Zelda, and many others that we hope to bring to this new game machine. We will be demonstrating our new Mario game, Super Mario Dimensions, here at the show. In addition, we will also be demonstrating Mario Kart R. Both games will be playable at the event. I sincerely apologize*

*that we do not have any other Ultra Nintendo games to play at this time, but our software partners are hard at work creating the next generation of games for our new system. The Ultra Nintendo will also utilize a new game disc technology that will allow more memory than ever to be stored on our game discs. We cannot reveal many specifics at this time, but the memory capabilities will exceed significantly the 650 megabytes available for Super Famicom CD games. We hope that you will enjoy the games and that you will enjoy the show."*

-excerpted from a translation of Nintendo president Hiroshi Yamauchi's keynote speech at the Nintendo Spaceworld show on April 29, 1996

*"So now I will reveal the Ultra Nintendo controller. As you can see, this controller is an evolution of the design of the Super Famicom's controller that was also used for the Super Famicom CD. It is largely the same basic button scheme, with a D-pad and four buttons, A, B, X, and Y, with Start and Select in the middle and L and R buttons on the top. But you can now see in the center of the controller and on the sides, we have added some very important features that will allow us to create entirely new experiences on the Ultra Nintendo! First, on the sides of the controller we now have handles for greater ergonomic comfort, one on the left under the D-pad and one on the right under the four main buttons. These handles allow for players to hold the controller in a way that will allow them to reach the new inputs much more quickly while increasing their comfort while playing. Now, in the middle, the two analog sticks. These are not like the joysticks in the arcade, these are designed with the thumbs in mind and can be used to move a character, such as Mario as you can see in this demonstration of Super Mario Dimensions, can move him very easily in all directions. Or...if you push on the stick slightly, he walks slowly, but if you push with a lot of force, he can run! This frees up the other buttons for other functions. One used to be a run button but now we can do that with the sensitivity of the left analog stick. The right analog stick has a variety of functions, in some games, not in Mario but in some games it can be used for movement. In Mario, it is used to control the camera, and as you can see the camera can be moved in any direction. There are two camera options for Mario, toggled with the R button, you can have a fixed camera where you can look in a first person perspective, or move the camera out, or you can have a free camera where the stick is used to look in different directions or face the direction you see fit. And now here on the back of the controller are the two trigger buttons, ZL and ZR. And these are used to give additional functionality, in a shooting game they can fire a gun or a bomb, in role-playing games they can be given different functions or etcetera. These are a lot of buttons but it will allow for an incredible amount of flexibility in our next generation of games! There are other functions, as you can see at the bottom of the controller there is a slot for a memory card device, but also the controller may have other functions that I am not allowed to reveal yet!"*

-Ken Kutaragi, translated, speaking at 1996 Nintendo Spaceworld

Violet Berlin: This is the 1996 Shoshinkai games show, one of the largest video game events in the world, where Nintendo is showing off all of its upcoming hardware and software for the coming months. The big news at Shoshinkai? The long-anticipated Ultra Nintendo, the next generation games system set for release sometime next year.

\*footage from various Nintendo games is shown as the camera pans out over the show\*

Violet: This was the very first time that Nintendo's shown off their new games console, and so it's the first time that journalists from around the world are going to get to play it. A bit of bad news, however, as the system still isn't ready for a full exhibition. That means that only two games were playable: *Super Mario Dimensions*, and *Mario Kart R*. I was a bit disappointed to learn that Nintendo would only have these two games available, but I've

been waiting for a long time to check out the Ultra Nintendo, so let's get started, shall we?

\*Violet sits down in front of a console where *Super Mario Dimensions* is playable.\*

Violet: The Ultra Nintendo controller's a bit bulkier than the one on the Super Nintendo. It's got handles on the sides, which make it a bit easier to hold, and some new buttons on the back, just under the familiar L and R buttons on top. There's also the addition of a pair of analog thumbsticks, smaller but similar to those found on arcade consoles. With all that in mind, let's see how this new game plays!

\*Violet takes Mario through his paces, running him up a hill as a group of Goombas come down at him\*

Violet: As you can see, these all new 3-D graphics bring a whole new level of detail to Mario's incredible world. This isn't pre-rendered, this is what you actually see when you play the game! There's a real wow factor when you're seeing it all for the first time. It very much reminded me of the 3-D graphics on Sega's Saturn system, but perhaps with a bit more color and smoothness.

\*Mario is now in a sort of space level, surrounded by stars that come down from the sky and attack him, Violet gets hit by one but is able to roll and leap out of the way of the others.\*

Violet: Mario can move in all eight directions, but unlike in last year's *Super Mario World 3*, it feels very natural and smooth and quite easy to pick up.

\*Now Mario is in a water level, swimming around.\*

Violet: As you dive under the sea, look at how beautiful everything looks while Mario's swimming around. The graphical detail and ease of movement are amazing, and Mario's never looked better than this.

\*Finally, she stops playing and turns back to the camera\*

Violet: \*smiles\* I think I did all right, didn't I? *Super Mario Dimensions* was certainly impressive, and a great sign of just how far graphics in Nintendo games have come over just a few years' time. Again, I wish there were more games to play. Nintendo had video of a few upcoming Ultra Nintendo games here at this year's event \*these videos, including *Cruisin' USA*, *Extreme-G*, *Ultra International Superstar Saga*, *Body Harvest*, *Ultra Bomberman*, and the skeleton fighting demo of *Ultra Legend Of Zelda* (a preliminary title) play while she speaks\*, and there was even a preview video of the highly anticipated *Final Fantasy VII* \*shows a quick video of a spiky-haired blonde, a woman with long, black hair, and a man with long, silver hair fighting a huge stone golem\*, but nothing playable of these games, which was a shame. That said, what I did see of the Ultra Nintendo looked very impressive, and the fact that I felt so disappointed about a lack of more playable games indicates just how excited people are getting for this new system.

-excerpted from an episode of the UK show *Bad Influence* that aired on May 11, 1996, based on this real-life excerpt from an OTL episode of the show covering Spaceworld 1995 ( <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtLPrazftds> )

**Live From Spaceworld 1996!**

Nintendo was pulling out all the stops at their latest games reveal show in Tokyo, including the unveil of the highly-anticipated Ultra Nintendo and previews of some of their biggest SNES-CD games of the year. The Ultra Nintendo was shown off and some playable demos were finally made available. Though only *Super Mario Dimensions* and *Mario Kart R* were playable at the show, the parts we did get to play left us hungry for more. *Super Mario Dimensions* looks to be the full realization of the 3-D trend Nintendo attempted to get going in *Super Mario World 3*, and finally it looks like there's a console that can handle what Nintendo wants to do. In the levels we played, Mario was running and jumping across big, beautiful, wide-open worlds. Even in this clearly alpha version of the game, the graphics surpassed most Saturn games we'd played, including the highly-touted *Resident Evil*, and we estimate that this new Ultra console may be packing 100 megahertz or more under the hood. As for *Mario Kart R*, we could only play two levels, a basic Mario Circuit-like level and a haunted house level, but both were exciting and we loved the new power-drift functionality of the karts, which should enable tighter turns and more strategic racing. We even saw a demonstration video of *Final Fantasy VII*. More of a tech demo than anything, the footage showed three unnamed heroes battling a huge stone monster, and the graphics, like all the other Ultra games we'd seen, looked extremely impressive.

As for the SNES-CD front, Nintendo's slate of games showed that they're not done with their current system, not by a longshot. We got our first chance to play *Donkey Kong Country 3*, and it looks like Dixie Kong is returning, along with a new big baby Kong who seemed to be following Dixie around. Does this mean that Donkey Kong AND Diddy Kong are being held captive this time? Either way, the game plays the same as the last two *Donkey Kong Country* outings, with exciting new worlds to explore and some very cool new enemies. We also got to take the SNES-CD version of *Policenauts* for a spin. Created by Hideo Kojima, it's the follow-up (not a sequel) to the 1994 hit *Snatcher*, featuring fully animated cutscenes and what already seems like a compelling new storyline. There were a couple of RPGs with a lot of buzz at Spaceworld: Square's new RPG *Soul Matrix*, which should be out in Japan by the time you read this article and out in the States sometime this summer, and of course, *Super Mario RPG*, featuring Mario and his friends (and Bowser) on an epic quest. The game features the same kind of isometric graphics and gameplay as *Super Mario World 3*, but with Final Fantasy-like RPG gameplay, making it a very interesting hybrid that looks and sounds amazing. We had a lot of fun journeying through Bowser's castle just before it got impaled by a giant sword, which looks to be the starting impetus for the game's events. One of the best games of the show was an SNES-CD game called *Aria*. Visually stunning and featuring several fully-vocalized music tracks, it appears to be an action game utilizing notes and rhythm, where the player must time jumps and attacks in time with the songs as a beautiful girl traverses a series of gorgeous levels. It was one of the most stunning games we'd seen, and the developers tell us that the game will likely need to use three discs because of the highly detailed music and graphics of the game. If that's true, it would make *Aria* the biggest SNES-CD game to date and certainly one of the most intriguing, it's set to release in Japan in May and a North American release has not yet been announced.

Finally, there was some surprise news at the show: the announcement of a new model of Game Boy, featuring full color and slightly more internal memory. Called the Game Boy Color, the device is set for release in Japan in June and in North America in September. We got to play several games on it, including *Donkey Kong Land 2* and a fun little RPG called *Pocket Monsters*, both of which were utilizing the new Game Boy's color capabilities to bring vivid hues to the game's backgrounds and characters. While this new Game Boy doesn't quite match up to Sega's Game Gear in graphical fidelity (it's essentially just the regular Game Boy but smaller and with color added), it's still a long-overdue addition to Nintendo's

handheld repertoire and the enhanced memory could open the way for more detailed games down the road. Nintendo's Gunpei Yokoi spoke briefly about the Game Boy Color at the event, and sounded very excited about the device's potential. 1996's Spaceworld definitely gave us all reason to be excited about Nintendo's prospects, and we hope to at the very least play more Ultra Nintendo games down the road.

-excerpted from an article in the June 1996 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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*"The Saturn is fleshing out its library with some really good games as of late. There's something for everybody, and most of the big guns haven't even been fired yet. We're expecting the Saturn to make a big splash at the upcoming E3 show."*

-from an editorial in the June 1996 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"If you're looking for Tactics Ogre on the Super Nintendo CD, prepare to shell out some dough. Complete copies of the game typically run for \$200 on Ebay, and if you want a sealed copy, you'll need to fork over more than a thousand big ones."*

-excerpted from the article "The Most Valuable SNES-CD Games" on CollectibleCrazy.com, December 17, 2014

*"I'm Ken Griffey Jr., and this is my game."*

-Ken Griffey Jr., from the introductory video to *Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run*

*"I do think we are devoting much more of our resources toward the Ultra Nintendo now, even our Super Famicom CD development has been influenced by what we are currently developing for the Ultra."*

-Squaresoft president Hiranobu Sakaguchi, discussing his company's current game philosophy with a Japanese technology program, May 11, 1996

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## **Art Of Fighting 2**

Andrew: 6.5

Mark: 7.5 (quote: "It's got fantastic graphics and sound, but it's hard to enjoy the game when the computer is always kicking your ass!")

Mike: 6.0

Sushi-X: 6.0

## **Axelay 2**

Andrew: 8.5 (quote: "Brilliantly designed, very difficult levels make this a worthy successor to the SNES classic.")

Mark: 8.5

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

## **Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run**

Andrew: 9.0  
Mark: 9.0  
Mike: 9.0 (quote: "An awesome baseball game and one of the SNES-CD's best sports titles.")  
Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Pinocchio**

Andrew: 4.0  
Mark: 4.0  
Mike: 5.5  
Sushi-X: 6.0 (quote: "It has its charm but this Disney game just doesn't match up to other platformers.")

### **Prince Of Persia: Calnor's Destiny**

Andrew: 8.0  
Mark: 8.5 (quote: "You'll need to draw your own maps but Prince of Persia has never looked so good.")  
Mike: 7.5  
Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Tactics Ogre**

Andrew: 8.0  
Mark: 8.0  
Mike: 6.5  
Sushi-X: 7.0 (quote: "While this game is harder to get into than the more intuitive Fire Emblem, those who stick with it will be rewarded for their persistence.")

### **The Need For Speed**

Andrew: 7.0  
Mark: 9.0 (quote: "The best looking racing game on the SNES-CD, bar none.")  
Mike: 7.5  
Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Whizz**

Andrew: 3.0  
Mark: 2.5  
Mike: 4.0  
Sushi-X: 4.0 (quote: "This bunny needs to go back into his hat.")

### **Fatal Strike: Touch Of Death**

Andrew: 8.5  
Mark: 9.0  
Mike: 9.5 (quote: "This beat-em-up has one of the SNES-CD's best soundtracks and storylines and is an absolute must have for just about anyone.")  
Sushi-X: 9.5

## **Kyuriadan**

Andrew: 7.0

Mark: 7.0

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "While Squaresoft will always be known as an RPG company, this quirky action title is quite a good game.")

## **Mechanix**

Andrew: 6.5

Mark: 6.5 (quote: "I loved fighting the huge bosses in this game but it's still fairly uninventive.")

Mike: 6.0

Sushi-X: 6.0

## **Hacker Jack**

Andrew: 8.0 (quote: "It's a platformer at heart but it's also one of the funniest games I've ever played.")

Mark: 5.5

Mike: 5.0

Sushi-X: 6.0

## **Samurai Buster**

Andrew: 9.0

Mark: 9.0

Mike: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.0 (quote: "This game is one of my sleeper hits of the year. It's absolutely superb.")

## **Skater Girl**

Andrew: 7.0

Mark: 7.5 (quote: "This game features some surprisingly competent voice acting and the main character, who seems like an annoying teenage girl to start off, really grew on me.")

Mike: 6.5

Sushi-X: 6.5

## **Parachute To The Princesses**

Andrew: 5.0

Mark: 4.0

Mike: 5.0 (quote: "While there was some fun humor in this game, it got really old really fast saving all of those princesses.")

Sushi-X: 4.0

-*Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of May 1996's SNES-CD games in the June and July 1996 issues

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*"Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run is a huge step up from the previous cartridge-based Griffey title. This game brings 3-D graphics, realistic crowd noises, real-time commentary (and a tutorial mode voiced by Ken Griffey Jr. himself) and even four player action, a first for a baseball video game. It's right up there with Frank Thomas' Big Hurt Baseball on the Saturn, even though Winning Run doesn't feature the real MLB players like Big Hurt Baseball does. If you're craving baseball on the SNES-CD, your wait for the perfect game is finally over. Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run is it."*

-excerpted from the 47/50 review of Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run in the June 1996 issue of GameFan

*"You can't blame Ken Griffey Jr. for smiling. He's having what might be the best year of his life. Last month, he earned the all-time MLB record for home runs in a single season with 62 and won the AL MVP award. But Griffey says that even that legendary record pales in comparison to the Seattle Mariners winning the 1996 World Series. He's even the name behind one of today's biggest video game franchises, having released one of the year's top sellers for the Super Nintendo CD. Is there anything Ken Griffey, Jr. can't do?"*

-excerpted from an article in the October 28, 1996 edition of Sports Illustrated

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*The Sega Saturn version of Desert Tank is a clear improvement over the arcade title, with a new storyline, more levels, and some of the best graphics yet seen on the system. With all of that said, even the most intriguing missions can get pretty old pretty fast, and this is all in all a fairly strange port to bring over. As far as tank video games go, the Super Squadron X titles are still the gold standard despite their inferior production values.*

Graphics: 5.0

Sound: 5.0

Play Control: 4.0

Fun Factor: 3.0

Challenge: Intermediate

*Kudos to SNK for partnering with Sega on this excellent port of the NeoGeo's Metal Slug. The game plays fantastically on the Saturn, making excellent use of the system's 2-D capabilities. Let's hope this game is a sign of things to come in terms of run-and-gun action on the system.*

Graphics: 4.5

Sound: 4.0

Play Control: 4.5

Fun Factor: 5.0

Challenge: Advanced

*Descent is a pretty game but it's not the best first person shooter out there. Still, the Saturn's been lacking in FPSes and hopefully this is what gets the ball rolling for them down the road. It's fun if you're a fan of the genre, if not you may want to look elsewhere.*

Graphics: 4.5

Sound: 4.5

Play Control: 4.0

Fun Factor: 3.5

Challenge: Advanced

-excerpted from *GamePro's* reviews of three of the Sega Saturn's May 1996 releases in the June 1996 issue

"The summer of 1996 for the Sega Saturn was definitely all about *NiGHTS Into Dreams*, but aside from that classic title, what do you remember from around that time?"

"Playing *Resident Evil* over and over again for the multiple endings."

"Isn't that about when *Desert Tank* got ported over? I remember having a great time playing that with one of my friends. The multiplayer was a lot better than the single player which got really repetitive after a while."

"I remember playing *Metal Slug*. It was pretty remarkable that Sega got that thing ported pretty much simultaneously with the Neo Geo release."

"Sega did make a deal with SNK to port some Neo Geo games before they made it to the SNES-CD. IIRC, it worked out pretty well for them."

"Didn't Saturn see a couple of RPGs come out around that time? I know they had some commercials where they kinda bashed RPGs, and most of their really good ones didn't come out until 1997 or 1998, but I remember a few, one came out in May called *Lost Faerie* that was really good."

"Once Working Designs stopped working with Sega it really hurt them on the RPG front. Their localizations were pretty shoddy for a while, *Lost Faerie* included but the game did have its charm."

"Back then the Super Nintendo CD did have a higher quantity of games, but the Saturn was slowly but surely gaining on them and I think they had more quality titles around this time, especially if RPGs weren't your bag. Give me *NiGHTS* and *Resident Evil* over *Tale Phantasia* and *Chromo Trigger* any day. Once that price came down, most of the Sega hardcores bought in even before *Sonic 4* came out. With the Genesis having done so well, especially holding out against the SNES-CD as long as it did, Sega fans had faith in the Saturn. Their commercials blew Nintendo's out of the water too. Nintendo was still winning in sales, but Sega fans had a lot more to look forward to, and who knew when the Ultra was coming out?"

-comments from a video game message board topic on June 21, 2013

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### **Do you think the release of *Fire Emblem* hurt *Tactics Ogre in the West*?**

Oh, considerably. The two games played a lot differently and both were excellent games, but if you only looked at them for a few minutes, *Fire Emblem* appeared to be the prettier, faster paced game, and obviously Nintendo was giving it heavy promotion at the time. I can't blame them, it was THEIR game, but it still helped to further cement Enix's decision to go exclusively with Sega.

### **How disappointed were you when the sales figures came in for *Tactics Ogre*?**

We weren't expecting much, because *Ogre Battle* had performed underwhelmingly, but it was still rough even by our low standards. We sold....I believe it was just a shade under 15,000 copies in North America? It was terrible. The game was well reviewed but most stores didn't even stock our game. It's a huge collector's item now because of how few of them there are.

**And so by now, Enix's relationship with Nintendo was just about done.**

We could see the writing on the wall. Nintendo was doing everything to push Squaresoft games and very very little to push Enix's games. That *Terranigma* was able to achieve what it did in early 1997 was a miracle. And of course that game would land on the Saturn later that year, along with...just about every game we released on a Nintendo system. Saturn played host not only to a ton of Nintendo remakes and ports, but all of our new products as well. It was about to become a very busy time to work for Enix.

-excerpted from a Gaming.moe interview with Robert Jerauld, former Enix USA producer, November 24, 2014 (OOC: inspired by this OTL interview from November 15 <http://gaming.moe/?p=331> )

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*In 1996, during the "Year Of The RPG", Squaresoft began to do something very strange...it began releasing games that weren't RPGs. 1996 would see the first year that major non-RPG titles would be released for the SNES-CD by Squaresoft. It was part of a growing "experimental movement" within the company, one that was partially in response to the receipt of the Ultra Nintendo development kits in 1995. Inspired company employees began branching out, creating games that didn't necessarily fit the mold of the company's usual fare. The results were mixed, but one of the first things to come out of Square's new design philosophy was a game called Kyuriadan.*

*Kyuriadan* was released in Japan in January 1996, and in North America in May of that same year. The game was about a young boy named *Kyuriadan*, who is destined for greatness and can use abilities in a variety of disciplines, including martial arts, swordplay, and magic. When evil befalls the land, *Kyuriadan* ventures through 12 levels to battle the Dark Mist, and within each level he teams up with a master of a certain discipline. These masters converse with *Kyuriadan* and accompany him. They help in battle, but only rarely, encouraging the boy to learn and fight on his own. Each master has their own musical motif, and each level does as well. Along with the typical boss themes and other musical tunes there are nearly 40 different songs in the game, making *Kyuriadan's* soundtrack, composed by Nobuo Uematsu but other composers contributing on various tracks (about half the soundtrack is Uematsu, while the other half is shared by about five different artists, making for excellent variation in musical stylings), one of the SNES-CD's best. The gameplay itself was fairly basic, and despite *Kyuriadan* being able to learn a huge variety of attacks, ultimately you could win by spamming two or three of the best. The game is beloved, however, for its beautiful graphics, fun characters, and excellent soundtrack. It wasn't a huge success, either in the United States or in Japan, but Squaresoft's pedigree allowed the game to earn decent sales that it otherwise wouldn't have.

-excerpted from "Not Just RPGs: Squaresoft's Complex Library", an article on Gamesovermatter.com, November 11, 2004

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The month of May 1996 saw two excellent hack-and-slash classics released for the SNES-CD. Both were highly lauded by critics, but while one succeeded, the other faded largely into obscurity. They both featured intuitive combat, excellent soundtracks, and compelling storylines, so why did one do so well and the other had to settle for cult classic status?

*Fatal Strike: Touch Of Death* was the sequel to Koei's beat-em-up hit *Fatal Strike*, one that scored well with critics and moderately well with fans, winning praise for its tough but fair AI and highly intuitive combat system. *Touch of Death* saw Notukaga returning to the Kingdom of Hasai to defeat a warlord who had taken over the land and was ruling with an iron fist, using his one-touch kill technique to slay all who opposed him. *Samurai Buster* was a much more violent game, starring a samurai named Matsuhito. Disgraced into ronin status after his master betrayed a benevolent lord, Matsuhito seeks to redeem himself by working underground in a city teeming with brutal murders and slavers. The game is known as one of the most violent and mature on the SNES-CD, with lots of blood and some rather graphic adult themes. It's probably that that made the game a hard sell. Despite SNES-CD fans being willing to play gritty titles with lots of blood and adult themes, *Samurai Buster* lacked a lot of the hype and promotion that other mature titles had on the system, and though it's beloved by all who play it (and the numerous remakes on handheld and mobile platforms have sold quite well, though those are usually under \$10), it was a very tricky sell at the time. *Fatal Strike: Touch Of Death*, being a sequel to an already popular game, was much more accessible and had a built-in audience. Proving the point further, when a similar title, Telenet Japan's *Samurai Rush*, was brought over later in the year, it sold somewhat better than *Samurai Buster*, probably due to the fact that it had a more diverse cast of characters, higher production values, and much less violence (it's also universally considered an inferior game).

- "Why did *Samurai Buster* do so poorly when similar SNES-CD titles released around that time succeeded?" from the FAQ on SamuraiMatsuhito.com

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Alex Stansfield: Whether you're playing it on the Neo Geo or the Sega Saturn, *Metal Slug* is a really fun time.

Kazzi DeCarlo: It's a frickin' gun fest! It's just like, "pow pow pow!" all over the place!

Alex: Has the Neo Geo actually outlasted the other two systems? I mean, SNES, the cartridge one, is pretty much dead. Genesis has *Vectorman 2* and a few other big games still coming, but Neo Geo's showed no signs of slowing down. This very well good be the best Neo Geo game ever.

Kaz: That's why I've always loved the Neo Geo! The fighting games are the best and every once in a while you get something really cool like *Metal Slug*.

Alex: If you've got a Sega Saturn though, save your quarters at the Pizza Hut and just wait until you get home. It's a much better experience on the Saturn, with added voice acting and a lot more stuff going on on screen.

Kaz: But there's nothing better than hopping on the Neo Geo machine while you've got a full belly of pizza. Or while you're waiting for them to seat you.

Alex: I guess that is true.

Kaz: My Pizza Hut doesn't even HAVE a Neo Geo machine anymore, they replaced it with a jukebox full of country music. \*looks disappointed\*

Alex: That should be a crime!

Kaz: Yeah, you should have to go to....friggin' Pizza Hut jail, or something.

Alex: Do they serve pizza in Pizza Hut jail?

Kaz: Yeah, but you still have to watch yourself in the shower. You definitely don't want to drop your pizza in the shower.

Alex: That's good advice even if you're NOT currently in Pizza Hut jail. And it's also good advice to play *Metal Slug*, I'm giving it a 4 out of 5.

Kaz: And I'm giving it a 4 too, it's a damn fun game!

(...)

Brittany Saldita: So, I...I wasn't really feeling *Tactics Ogre*, as much as I LOVED *Ogre Battle*, I felt this was a potentially great game marred by some poor interface choices.

Ted Crosley: I agree, I really felt this game could've been a lot better. Um, it was a good challenge, but a lot of that challenge felt artificial due to the trouble I had navigating the menus. The graphics were primitive, I know you didn't have a problem with that but compared to say, *Fire Emblem*...

Brittany: There's no comparison.

Ted: There really isn't.

Brittany: I liked the strategy, I liked the options for customizing your army but the rough menus made doing that a major chore.

Ted: This game, to me, felt...rough.

Brittany: And where *Ogre Battle* succeeded, this game stumbled. I'm giving it a 3.5 out of 5.

Ted: I won't be quite that generous, I'm giving it a 3.

-excerpted from the May 7, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

Ted: So, what did you think of *Axelay 2*?

Alex: I was kind of disappointed, it wasn't as good as the first! Graphically, it's fantastic. Soundwise, it's fine. But the levels did get a bit repetitive and I also felt they could've tried harder with the storyline.

Ted: Yeah, no cutscenes, what gives? You've got 600 megabytes of space, use it!

Alex: The classic shooting, gameplay, that hasn't changed. It's still a brutally difficult game and it's all the better for it, but I just wish they could've been as imaginative as they were with the first game. They didn't need to REMAKE the first game for CD, they already did that back in 1993 and it was awesome! Do something new!

Ted: Sometimes more of the same is good, if the original is good. And it was, but we both wish it could've been even MORE, am I right about that?

Alex: You're absolutely right.

Ted: Sega is better than Nintendo.

Alex: Don't press your luck!

Ted: \*laughs\* Axelay 2 gets a 3.5 out of 5.

Alex: Same here, 3.5 out of five. We both liked it, but it needed to REALLY take advantage of the technical abilities of the SNES-CD.

-excerpted from the May 14, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

John Walden: I found *Prince of Persia: Calnor's Destiny* to be a lot of fun, but with some flaws.

Alex: I enjoyed the game TREMENDOUSLY. It finally brought Prince of Persia, a classic franchise, into the optical age and did it in style. Calnor is an excellent new protagonist, Princess Vyseria is one of the loveliest and toughest ladies in video games, and the tricky dungeons will test all your courage and then some.

John: Princess Vyseria was annoying, I had to save her ass more times than I could count.

Alex: If you had to save her ass, you messed up. No spoilers, but if you play the game right, she can save herself.

John: That's another thing that bugged me, it promised storyline interactivity but it hardly tells you anything! I get not wanting to tell you where to go in the dungeons, that's part of the challenge, but it doesn't tell you where you can affect certain things and then stuff happens and you've got no idea what the hell you just did wrong!

Alex: ...you do have a point there, I do think the game could've been a bit more forthcoming about those segments. Like, in the Seeker's Labyrinth, I kind of stumbled onto the switch you need to use to get Vyseria the weapon she needs.

John: See, I had no idea there even WAS a switch and she ended up getting trapped. It's poor game design and it mars what would've otherwise been one of the year's best games.

Alex: I still think *Prince of Persia: Calnor's Destiny* IS one of the year's best games and I give it 4.5 out of 5.

John: I give it a 3.5, it's a lot of fun IF you can figure out what to do to have the most fun.

Brittany: \*dancing onto the screen\* I have the most fun when I go dancing on Saturday night. Ha! \*swinging her hips around\*

Alex: You still gonna be going out to the club after *Tale Phantasia* comes out in a few weeks?

Brittany: Hell no, I'm gonna be eating ice cream and sitting on my couch and unhooking my phone after THAT one comes out.

Alex: You can't unhook your phone, how am I supposed to bug you at three in the morning asking for help?

Brittany: Geez, I should be unhooking it right now shouldn't I?

Kaz: You should get a cell phone like the one I have in my car!

Brittany: Forget it, the car is the only place people don't ask me how to beat any games! And speaking of beating games, me and Alex are gonna show you how to kick butt in *Soul Edge* when we get back from the commercial break. Not only are we gonna show you how to beat Cervantes, we'll also show you how to unlock him.

Alex: \*appears back on screen wearing a pirate hat, an eyepatch, and holding a shovel\* Yarrr!!!

Brittany: What the hell are you doing?

Alex: We're gonna unlock a pirate, that involves buried treasure right?

Brittany: \*facepalms and shakes her head\* I'm gonna bury you....

-excerpted from the May 28, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: May 1996**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Eternal Night
3. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
4. Super Mario World 3
5. Ballistic Limit
6. Twinblade
7. Super Mario World 2
8. Donkey Kong Country
9. Doom
10. Battletoads: Dark Queen
11. Twisted Metal
12. Metal Gear 1+2
13. Tales Of The Seven Seas
14. Killer Instinct
15. Mega Man X3

16. Final Fantasy VI
17. Front Mission
18. Slaughterbox
19. Rage
20. Victory

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*"Tonight on NBC Nightly News: an American tragedy. Martin Lawrence, one of the biggest stars in comedy, gunned down by police at the age of 31 after charging an armed police officer with a knife. Tonight, we'll discuss the impact of Lawrence's death on the entertainment world, and we'll also take a look at the growing and troubling phenomenon of "suicide by cop", where troubled individuals brandish weapons at police officers in an attempt to trigger them to respond with deadly force. Was Lawrence's death a suicide, or was it a nervous breakdown at the worst possible moment?"*

-Tom Brokaw, from the May 8, 1996 edition of the *NBC Nightly News*

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Joe Asamuna: I think the prototype dismissed any doubts about the game, the smooth gameplay transitions were what really impressed Nintendo. Remember, this was on just a regular Super Famicom, this was before we were able to put *Tale Phantasia* on CD. Some of the people from Nintendo who didn't know actually asked us if we were using the Super Famicom CD or a computer for the prototype of the game.

Famitsu: So needless to say they were impressed?

Joe: Yes. \*laughs\* Something similar happened to our producer, Takeda-san, when he went to visit with a team in North America and showed them the prototype for the Super Famicom, they were also quite impressed with it, particularly the audio, they wanted to know how we were able to do what we did there.

Famitsu: That was the sound programmer's work?

Joe: Correct, especially Hatsushiba-san, he wanted to implement voices into the game even while it was in the Super Famicom stage. He came up with a programming trick to use voice samples on just a normal Super Famicom cartridge, very low memory but very realistic sounding. He had some extra development time and was able to find a solution to enable that.

Famitsu: So what ultimately caused *Tale Phantasia* to move from the Super Famicom to the Super Famicom CD?

Joe: There were a lot of reasons for it, mostly because Nintendo wanted it, Takeda-san also wanted it and he really loved Gotanda-kun's work. Cost also became a factor, if we'd gone with our original idea it would've almost certainly required a 32-megabit cartridge or larger, perhaps even 48, and at that stage cost was a factor. Even now it's cheaper to do a 4800-megabit CD than a 48-megabit cartridge.

Famitsu: So ultimately it got too ambitious for the Super Famicom.

Joe: That's right, not only was Nintendo heavily interested in the game, but Sony was as well, and Nintendo wanted to make it a flagship title for the Super Famicom CD.

(...)

Genyo Takeda: After wrapping up the work on *Startropics II* for the Super Famicom, I was talking to Yamauchi-sama and Yokoi-san, along with some other board members, about creating an RPG for the Super Famicom CD. Yamauchi-sama initially had some reservations about putting me on the project, but I persuaded him that I could help make the game as good as it could be, especially with the help of the team from R&D3 who'd just finished up work on *Solus*.

Famitsu: Yamauchi-sama usually has big expectations for all Nintendo games, was this any exception?

Takeda: It certainly wasn't, he's always very direct with his opinions, especially when devoting so much time and resources to a project like this.

Famitsu: Didn't Miyamoto-san have reservations about it as well?

Takeda: And Yokoi-san, who was one of our biggest critics at the time \*laughs\*, of course considering their track records their doubts were understandable and I knew I had to do a lot to persuade them. But our track record was very good, we had *Super Punch-Out* and *Startropics II* under our belts, so this would be our biggest title yet.

Famitsu: Were there any more major obstacles before the game was approved for the Super Famicom CD?

Takeda: The initial release date of the game was to be during the holidays in 1994, but there was another major game at that time, *Super Donkey Kong CD*, not only that but we would be competing with other role-playing games during that time as well.

Famitsu: What do you think ultimately convinced them to approve the game?

Takeda: Sony's involvement helped, they really pushed the game hard for us, in exchange for a share of the profits, which for Nintendo published games did not usually occur. We gave them an additional share of our cut of the game's profits and they assisted us with several technical things, the game became a major collaborative effort and I think that will show in the finished product.

-excerpted from *Famitsu's* interviews with Joe Asamuna and Genyo Takeda in the April 1995 issue of *Famitsu* magazine which covered *Tale Phantasia's* Japanese launch

*It's Finally Here!*

*After more than a year, the RPG that took Japan by storm, Tale Phantasia, is finally coming Stateside! We'll have plenty of coverage of Tale Phantasia in next month's Epic Center, including part one of our three part strategy feature to help get you through the first part of the game! Don't miss it!*

-from the "Coming Next Issue" page in the May 1996 issue of *Nintendo Power*

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*"In retrospect, that Coolio performance at E3 1996 was just about one of the dumbest things I'd ever seen. But at the time, we were all so hyped up on the Saturn that we didn't even care that the performance totally sucked."*

-Dan "Shoe" Hsu

*"I guess E3 1996 was the transition between primarily 2-D gaming and primarily 3-D. Both next-gen systems were highlighted and for the first time in four years, the Super Nintendo CD took a back seat. Sega's head start, then, was a serious boon."*

-Nintendo historian Jeff Ryan, in an interview with Gamespot.com, February 23, 2012

*"That's a bit of an old chestnut to be dusting off, isn't it?"*

-Nintendo's Leslie Swan, speaking to a fellow Nintendo employee in the crowd at Sega's E3 1996 keynote address

*"It's all so intimidating, I've never seen this many people in my life! I um, feel like kind of a rock star I guess?"*

-Jennifer Stigile (18 years old at the time), during an interview at Nintendo's Tale Phantasia booth at E3 1996

*"No, I'm not gonna fire Jaleel White just because someone saw him playing Mario Kart at Nintendo's booth. I'm Console War Eisenhower, not Console War Stalin."*

-Tom Kalinske, overheard during E3 1996

*"Final Fantasy is a series that is and always will be exclusive to Nintendo."*

-Hiranobu Sakaguchi, speaking at the Ultra Nintendo booth at E3 1996

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## **May 16, 1996**

*"Hello, I'm Howard Lincoln. Today is a good day. Today is indeed a historic day, because for the first time on American shores, the next generation in video game hardware is being shown. Today is the day that we are unveiling the Ultra Nintendo Entertainment System!"*

*\*the crowd applauds as the system is shown, it looks like a hybrid of OTL's Nintendo 64 and Sony Playstation, the system is colored black with a somewhat taller base than OTL's Playstation system, four controller ports with a slot for inserting discs in the front of the system\* "The Ultra Nintendo is the most technologically advanced game device ever made, featuring state-of-the-art custom built co-processors to provide the latest in 3-D visuals. We project that the system will have at least five times the processing speed of the Super Nintendo CD, and more than twenty times the graphics processing power, enabling the system to run top-of-the-line graphics with no slowdown. The new controller, seen here, will enable players to move in any direction with incredible precision, while controlling the way they see these new worlds with the dual-analog stick system previously only seen in advanced simulation games for the PC." \*the screen begins to show Super Mario Dimensions, in an early alpha stage but still with excellent, very smooth graphics\* "Here we have Super Mario Dimensions, Mario's latest quest. You'll explore 21 different worlds. Here we have a large tower stage..." \*this is similar to TTL's Whomp's Fortress\* "And as you can see, these are real time graphics. No pre-rendering, this is what you actually get when you*

play." \*the crowd is very impressed\* "I'm going to move Mario in all eight directions now, here he is running in a circle...now, you can do a variety of moves with this new controller." \*he takes Mario toward a wall, performing a wall kick quite easily, the crowd seems impressed with this as well\* "So not only do we have a wide-open world to explore, but new challenges with the element of verticality involved. This is something we sort of touched on with last year's Super Mario World 3, but only now does the technology truly allow us to create this huge open world for Mario." \*Lincoln continues to play through the level for a minute or two, continuing to talk as he does, before finally putting the controller down\*

"Looked fun, didn't it?" \*the crowd applauds\* "Well, you'll all get your chance to take Mario for a spin. Super Mario Dimensions is one of three playable Ultra Nintendo games we have at our booth today. Another of our games is Mario Kart R, sequel to our Super Mario Kart game which was a launch title for the Super Nintendo CD. It's been one of our most successful titles to date with nearly eight million copies sold worldwide. Mario Kart R will expand upon that classic game, allowing four players to play all the stages, something that was impossible in the original game. As you can see from our brief video, these stages are big and beautiful, in full 3-D just like Super Mario Dimensions, and you'll be able to use a variety of new items to add a layer of strategy to an already fun and challenging racing experience. Finally, we are very proud and honored to be hosting the first playable demo anywhere in the world of Final Fantasy VII." \*the crowd bursts into loud applause\* "Squaresoft, one of our most valuable third-party partners, has been working overtime to put together this special demo for our E3 attendees. This game is massive, and what you will be playing in the two demo programs we have is just a small slice of the huge world Square has created for the series' first foray into 3D. You'll first get to explore a factory that your team's been tasked with shutting down. In the second demo, you'll come face to face with one of the game's epic boss monsters, a huge slithering serpent that can wreak havoc with powerful attacks. You'll need to use your awesome summoned monsters to have any hope of victory. These three games aren't the only games we'll be showing off here at E3. We have a preview video of Star Fox 2 on display, as well as video footage of Cruisin' USA, Killer Instinct 2, Nightsquad 2, and our brand new watersports franchise Wave Race, among several others. Last but not least we have a very brief but very impressive demonstration video for our new Legend of Zelda title-" \*another round of loud cheering interrupts Lincoln's speech\* "right now it's in the early concept stages but we're hoping to have something playable at next year's E3. Unfortunately, we're not going to have the Ultra Nintendo ready for release in 1996, and things such as pricing details and technical specifications are also not yet ready for this year's show. We hope that everyone continues to have patience and remember what our great visionary Shigeru Miyamoto once said, that great things truly are worth the wait."

\*Lincoln turns to the stage and picks something up, then returns to the podium\* "We've got something else we'd like to show off today, a lot of you have been playing the Game Boy for seven years now, and it's still the most popular handheld console on the market today, with hundreds of hit games such as the Super Mario Land series, Kirby's Dreamland, The Legend Of Zelda: Link's Awakening, Metroid II: Return Of Samus, Tetris, Donkey Kong and Donkey Kong Land... but something's been missing. These great worlds haven't lacked for excellent gameplay, but they've been devoid of color. The Super Gameboy was able to bring a limited color palette to a few of these games, but now, you can hold brilliantly colored worlds in the palm of your hand. I'd like to introduce the Game Boy Color." \*holds it up to applause\* "The Game Boy Color features a new colored screen that can bring colors to any old Game Boy game...in addition, our newest games will feature customized color palettes, starting with Donkey Kong Land 2 this September. We have a number of games lined up to take advantage of the Game Boy Color's improved palette, including a fun new puzzle game

*called World of Color, adaptations of the hit animated films Toy Story and Pocahontas, a version of our hit Super Nintendo CD fighting game Battle Arena Toshinden, and many more. The system also features numerous technical improvements, including more internal memory and a vastly improved sound chip from our hardware partners at Sony, a chip that can be utilized by software programmers to create lifelike musical scores for certain Game Boy Color games. We already have a pair of role-playing games lined up next year from Squaresoft and from Game Arts that take advantage of the new sound chip, and there's a listening booth at the Nintendo display to hear samples of the music that this new Game Boy Color is capable of. The new Game Boy Color will be released in September 1996, it'll retail for \$89.99-" \*the audience cheers at this\* "and Donkey Kong Land 2 will be included as a pack-in title." \*more cheers\**

*"Last, but absolutely not least, our upcoming plans for the Super Nintendo CD, our flagship gaming device. The Super Nintendo CD has sold over 30 million units worldwide, either as a peripheral, as part of the Playstation Combo Set, or as its own device, which we just released last year. It remains the top selling video gaming device in the world, and we're not finished yet. In fact, the Year of RPGs is only a third of the way through, with three of our major titles still remaining for release. We'll be talking about all of them today, but first, I'd like to show off a game that Argonaut has been working on for more than a year now." \*the crowd cheers, already knowing what it's going to be\* "It's the sequel to one of the most successful games on the Super Nintendo CD and part of the SNES-CD's most popular original franchise. This is Squad Four: Eclipse." \*a video plays on the screen\**

*\*The scene shows the Planet Lockstar, seemingly at peace\**

Marcus: When we returned from Planet Velna, we returned triumphant.

Rebecca: We'd liberated a planet and saved billions of innocent lives.

Lane: We never imagined our deeds would come back to haunt us.

*\*A shadow begins to fall over the capital city of Lockstar. People begin to look up.\**

Shad: But the only thing that's certain in this galaxy we call home...is revenge.

*\*A shadow is coming over the sun, bringing the city and the planet into darkness. From a balcony in the Lockstar Space Defense HQ, Squad Four looks on with trepidation.\**

*\*A fleet of ships begin to pour from the sky. Scenes of gameplay with Squad Four shooting at aliens in an urban environment play briefly on the screen.\**

Marcus: And now...

Rebecca: The planet we must liberate...

Lane: Is our own.

## **SQUAD FOUR: ECLIPSE**

Shad: *\*looks back at his teammates\** Squad Four...let's go!

*\*The team leaps into battle\**

October 1996, only for Super Nintendo CD

\*metallic sounds, robot voice\* **Nin-ten-do**

\*the crowd applauds as the teaser trailer ends\*

*"Squad Four: Eclipse is a game designed to push the Super Nintendo CD to its limit, with 3-D graphics and cinematic sound, along with even more voice acting than the previous game. It sees Shad, Marcus, Rebecca, and Lane charging into battle against an endless horde of aliens invading their home on Planet Lockstar, and will have you battling your way through incredible urban environments as you try to kick the aliens off your world. We've got plenty of demo booths set up at the Nintendo display, so you'll get your chance to try this game out as soon as this presentation is over. Now, the Year of the RPG has gotten off to a great start. Games like Chrono Trigger and Fire Emblem: The Holy War are tearing up the sales charts, and we're just getting started. Next month will see the release of Tale Phantasia, our collaboration with Telenet Japan and the excellent localization team at Working Designs. This game is just about ready to ship, last year you got to play the Japanese version but this year you'll finally get to play it in English and it looks and sounds amazing. It's another time travelling adventure as Cless Alvein and his friends rise up to challenge the tyrannical dark lord Dhaos. The battle system is unlike anything you've played in an RPG before, it's real time combat, no waiting for your turn, you'll attack as fast as you can press the button and you'll need to press it fast because as you can see in our preview video, some of the bosses hit VERY ferociously. Tale Phantasia is just one of the great role-playing games we've got for you this year. We've also got Super Mario RPG, and right now here's another quick preview video." \*the video shows Mario and Bowser about to fight when suddenly Exor descends upon Bowser's castle in the form of a giant sword, tossing the two rivals to the winds along with Princess Toadstool\* "That sword you see there was sent by the evil weaponsmith Smithy, who is seeking to bring the entire world including the Mushroom Kingdom under his control. Mario will need to team up with new heroes, along with some surprising old ones, in order to take Smithy down. The battle system in this game also incorporates lightning quick action, I'm going to demonstrate here..." \*Howard Lincoln takes the controls, he gets into a battle with a Goomba and shows off the game's system of timed hits\* "As you can see, if you press a button at just the right time, Mario will hit twice as hard. Also, when you're on defense, if you hit the button at the right time you'll block the enemy's attack!" \*the crowd looks impressed at this\* "Super Mario RPG is just another example of how the Super Nintendo CD has totally changed the game for role playing games. Another example of this is the long-awaited sequel to our hit 1993 title Secret of Mana." \*more loud cheers from the crowd\* "Elements of Mana is not only one of the most epic quests yet seen on the Super Nintendo CD, it's one of the most replayable RPGs ever made, because you'll get to pick your team from among six heroes, and the way the quest takes shape will greatly depend on which heroes you choose. The game not only features multiple endings, but multiple villains, each with different motivations depending on your chosen hero. Elements of Mana has a battle system that is even faster paced than the original game. Unlike in Secret of Mana, where you had to wait for your next attack to reach 100 percent, in Elements of Mana you can attack at any time for maximum damage, making battles much more exciting and fun. Elements of Mana is one of the most visually beautiful games ever released, and with an all new soundtrack featuring over 50 new songs, it's also one of the most beautiful sounding. ...you think we're done with the RPGs? Not by a long shot! Squaresoft's also got a brand new franchise releasing in just two months. It's called Soul Matrix and it takes place in a futuristic world where certain people have their ability to project their spirits into the aether. You star as Alice, a young woman who discovers her*

soul projection powers just as a new president comes into power wanting to hunt down and kill Alice and all those who share her gift. It's a sci-fi epic with one of the most complex storylines ever featured in a video game. Also coming from Squaresoft is Romancing SaGa, a game that might be familiar to you if you've played the Final Fantasy Legend titles on Game Boy. Romancing SaGa is part of the same series, but now featured on Super Nintendo CD, it's got a huge cast of characters each with their own goals and adventures, and you get to choose whose story you pick up first. From Konami, we have the role-playing game Suikoden, a game that will allow you to recruit your own army to do battle against an evil invasion force set on conquering all. Recruit all 108 Stars of Destiny and choose your favorites. There are many, many more RPGs still coming out for the Super Nintendo this year, and we've got most of them playable at our booth, so check them all out if you possibly can!

I'd also like to show off a game that's been previewed in our Nintendo Power publication. It's from our partners at Sony, developed by the talented folks at a company called Naughty Dog, who if you recall also did our hit Tales Of The Seven Seas game from last year. This title is about a boy, and his dog, setting out on an incredible adventure." \*a brief video of the game appears on the screen, the boy is riding on top of an oversized shaggy St. Bernard, with big floppy ears and a huge tongue\* "This boy is named Clark and his dog is named Woofle, and together, the two of them must make their way home after Clark ends up in a strange world with only his new four legged friend for company." \*there's some laughter in the crowd as Woofle uses some fairly humorous moves on enemies, licking them into submission or pouncing on them, with the same friendly face the whole time\* "In Dog Dash, you'll guide Woofle and Clark through more than twenty levels, you'll meet a lot of bad guys, you'll meet a few pals, and hopefully you'll have a great time. We look forward to making Dog Dash one of our big titles for later this year." \*the video then switches to show some scenes from Donkey Kong Country 3, drawing more cheers from the crowd\* "And here we've got Donkey Kong Country 3. Rare's been working very hard to have a playable demo of this game ready for our booth, and you'll be able to take Dixie and her new pal Kiddy for a swing after the presentation. The graphics have gotten a bit of a boost from last year's title, and the Northern Kremisphere, where Dixie and Kiddy have journeyed in the hopes of rescuing Diddy Kong and Donkey Kong, is full of secrets that you'll need every trick in the book to find." \*the video switches again, now showing off a very well polished basketball game\* "Coming this July is our big new sports title, Grant Hill in NBA Basketball. Grant Hill is still resting up after his team's unfortunate loss to the Chicago Bulls in the NBA playoffs-" \*this draws a few cheers from Bulls fans in the crowd\* "-so he unfortunately can't be here at E3, but he has been helping us greatly with this title and you'll see a lot more of him in the run-up to its release two months from now. The game features a mix of realistic simulation and arcade-style action, letting players choose what kind of basketball game they want to play. With an interactive tutorial from Grant Hill himself, even the most novice players can become experts and even masters at this fun new basketball game." \*Howard Lincoln briefly covers a few more upcoming SNES-CD games, including Tetris Attack, Kirby Super Deluxe, Policenauts, and Roadstorm\* "Finally, those of you who enjoyed Fire Emblem: The Holy War will be very excited to know that we are already hard at work localizing the next title in the series, Fire Emblem: Keepers Of The Light, which we very much hope to have ready for a Spring 1997 release. For the past decade, Nintendo has been about pushing the envelope in game design to create the most fun and exciting experiences for people all over the world. Next year, we'll talk a LOT more about the Ultra Nintendo and we're sure we'll have plenty of new Super Nintendo CD and Game Boy games to talk about as well. No matter how you choose to play, Nintendo will continue to have the very best video games on the market. Thank you and I hope to see all of you at our booth enjoying all the great games we have to offer!"

-keynote speech from Howard Lincoln at E3 1996

*"All right, I'm Tom Kalinske and I already know what you all want to see, so I'm just gonna cut the bullshit right off the bat."* \*loud laughter comes from the crowd\* *"Here it is, the world premiere preview video for Sonic the Hedgehog 4."* \*loud laughter is replaced with very very loud applause and cheering\*

\*A blue streak, barely slow enough to see, whizzes by on the screen.\*

\*The same blue streak whizzes by in the opposite direction\*

\*The blue streak comes by again, finally Sonic slows down and stops, he walks up to the camera and taps on it a few times.\*

Sonic: \*smirks\* Hey! Check this out! \*zooms off the screen again, the blackness fades into the first footage of the game\*

\*The footage shows Sonic quickly picking up speed and racing through a 2-D world, it looks a lot like previous Sonic games but with much better animation and 3-D backgrounds and objects, Sonic is 3-D as well but the game's a sidescroller, though with a lot more obstacles and items, there's more sound effects and a lot more stuff going on on the screen, Sonic is going faster than he ever has, rocketing through multiple loops before leaping across a huge gap as a large enemy takes a swipe at him, landing on a platform and continuing to run. This continues for a bit until Sonic reaches a boss area, there's a loud roar and a huge chimera coming out of the foreground, suddenly the screen turns and Sonic finds himself in a fully 3-D arena, running and moving in all directions as the boss begins to attack. The boss breathes some very impressive looking fire, its four heads all with their own distinct animations as Sonic leaps and dives to escape the attacks and fully orchestral majestic sounding boss music begins to play, complete with a choir punctuating the dramatic moments. The crowd gasps as Sonic narrowly misses getting hit with a huge fireball. He rolls into an icon with Tails' picture on it and suddenly Tails appears to distract the enemy, giving Sonic free reign to hit it with impunity. Soon the boss is defeated and the end-of-stage victory animation plays. The preview then shows brief snippets from multiple levels, some of them featuring Sonic and others with playable Tails, Knuckles, Amy, Corona, or Big the Cat, other levels featuring Tails or Amy as helpers, either in boss fights or during the side-scrolling portions of levels, one level has Knuckles running through a fiery volcano level as Corona rains down beams of energy from above, another has Amy wielding a hammer to smash up some robots and then a scene shows Amy in a 3-D boss battle using her hammer against a giant mechanical gorilla as Corona hits it with her beams, there's a brief snippet of various voiced cutscenes as well, before a final scene plays with Dr. Robotnik cackling as Sonic and his friends stare him down.\*

## **SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 4**

### **Coming to the Sega Saturn**

**Sonic 4sday, November 7, 1996**

\*The crowd cheers wildly as a gleeful Tom Kalinske begins to speak again.\*

*"Sonic the Hedgehog 4 is the culmination of nearly two years of effort to create the perfect Sonic the Hedgehog game. We know you've been waiting a long time for this game, but we*

wanted to make it as good as it can possibly be, and when you play it both at our booth and when it's released in November, you'll see why we've spent so much time releasing this game. We decided to both go back to the basics and to try something new. As you can see, the normal stages are in the classic side-scrolling Sonic the Hedgehog style...obviously with a few fresh coats of beautiful new paint. But once you come up against one of the game's big bosses, you'll enter a fully 3-D world where you'll need to learn an all new set of skills to come out on top. You'll be able to try your luck against that giant chimera boss at our booth and trust me, he's no pushover. Sonic the Hedgehog 4 is also a tribute to the series' success over the last five years, incorporating storylines from our previous games and even our animated television series, so fans who've been extensively following the Sonic universe will have some nice little easter eggs waiting for them. However, the game's storyline itself is all new, so you don't need to have played the original games or watched the television show to be able to jump right into the action as Sonic and his friends once again do battle with the evil Dr. Robotnik. That being said, I can tell from the reaction to the announcement of this game that most of you here are the kinds of big-time Sonic fans who have made Sega such a success over the last few years, and you have my sincerest gratitude for all your support." \*loud applause\* "The Saturn itself has been largely a success, especially over the last couple of months which have seen hardware sales increase dramatically. Resident Evil is still the top selling video game in the world and it shows no signs of slowing down over the next few months. Speaking of the next few months, I'd like to talk about all the awesome games we have planned for the Sega Saturn, both in this year and beyond! First up is a title that we're releasing just next month, called NiGHTS Into Dreams." \*the crowd cheers as another preview video plays, showing off the finished game's high-quality 3-D graphics, including the character himself flying through large, beautiful levels\* "NiGHTS is our newest franchise and it revolves around the mechanic of flight, as demonstrated by the fluid moves of our titular character. NiGHTS is a Nightmaren, created by the evil wizard Wizeman to steal dreams from children. But he rebels, and instead joins forces with two young children, Claris and Elliot, to stop Wizeman's plans! You'll fly through eleven huge levels, flying through rings and collecting items to get one step closer to your goal of bringing Wizeman down. We showed off a tech demo of this game last year, but now it's fully playable and the first three levels are all ready to play at our big Sega booth!"

"There's another game that I think might be my personal favorite out of all the games we're showing off this year. It's about a woman named Lara Croft who explores hidden ruins all over the world in search of treasure and ancient secrets, and it's called Tomb Raider. Created by our friends at Crystal Dynamics, Tomb Raider is full of puzzles and mystery and we think you'll agree that Lara might just be the most kickass video game heroine ever created." \*a gameplay video showing Lara exploring a temple and shooting mummies with her twin uzis is shown\* "As you can see, it's not all puzzle solving and treasure hunting, Lara's activities have disturbed some pretty nasty creatures and if she wants to survive she'll need to take them all down. Crystal Dynamics has been working on Tomb Raider ever since before the Saturn was released in Japan, and now it's just about ready to go. They've spent a lot of time working on these gorgeous temples and ruins, it's a HUGE 3-D environment for Lara to explore, one of the very first fully 3-D games we have on the Sega Saturn, and it's a really good demonstration of just how powerful the Saturn truly is. Now, we've got plenty of other games coming out for the Saturn, including a pair of sequels to some of our most popular launch titles." \*someone from the crowd yells out VIRTUA FIGHTER 2!, and Kalinske laughs\* "We do indeed have Virtua Fighter II coming out in August and it's even better than the last game, with all new characters and much better 3-D. It's a huge hit in the arcades and it's the game Resident Evil knocked out of first place in Japan. I've played it, I've gotten my ass kicked at it but I still had a really fun time and I'm sure those of you who are actually good at fighting games will have even more fun with it

than I did. Not only do we have Virtua Fighter 2 on the way but we've also got the newest entry in our acclaimed Panzer Dragoon series, Panzer Dragoon II Zwei. Panzer Dragoon II Zwei will feature multiple routes through the game, so you can play it over and over again as I'm sure all of you did with the original Panzer Dragoon title. We have some video available to show off just how much better the graphics look, I think you'll agree..." \*the video begins to play, the crowd sounds very impressed at the graphics which look even better than those in NiGHTS or Sonic 4\* "I think you'll agree that the Sega Saturn is the most technologically advanced system on the market by a long shot. I'd like to show you another game, this from the creators of Doom..." \*there's some murmurs and quiet cheers in the crowd, thinking the game is Quake which hasn't even been released yet for the PC\* "This is Commander Keen." \*there's a mixed reaction, some groans of disappointment but also mixed with cheers from the Keen enthusiasts in the crowd\* "Commander Keen: The Universe Is Toast, sees the classic hero return to a new 3-D world and fighting both familiar and unfamiliar foes." \*a brief video shows some of the gameplay and the impressive 3-D visuals\* "Commander Keen will join Sonic the Hedgehog and NiGHTS as one of our big flagship platforming games for 1996, making the Sega Saturn THE go-to system for action games. As many of you know, the Saturn is also the go-to system for sports titles, and once again, we have a full slate ready for 1996, including new installments of NBA Live, John Madden Football, and of course a new installment in EA's NHL series. NHL '96 was one of the top selling Saturn games and until Resident Evil was the best reviewed game on the Sega Saturn, we know hockey fans all over the world will be pleased to see the series make its return to the Sega Saturn this fall."

\*Kalinske shows off several more Saturn games, including Virtua Cop 2, and Hexen, before doing another quick teaser for a 1997 title.\*

"Sega's well known for its big roster of original characters, and with Namco's help we've built up one of the biggest rosters of fighters in all of video gaming. Next year, we're going to bring the pain in a big way. Here's a little taste."

\*A brief video plays showing characters from Tekken, Virtua Fighter, and Soul Edge briefly fighting one another in 2-D fights, this gets some cheers as the title of the game is shown\*

## **FIGHTERS MEGAMIX**

*Coming to arcades and the Sega Saturn - 1997*

"And also coming to the Saturn in 1997 is the latest installment of one of the most popular RPG franchises in history. When Ultima: The Worldly Lord was released at the Saturn's launch, it became one of the most popular and critically acclaimed launch titles we released. Here's a quick preview of the next Sega Saturn Ultima title."

\*There's another brief video showing a woman waking in what appears to be a modern city, she walks over to a mirror only for a jeweled hand to grab her wrist through the mirror. She screams as she is pulled in, her head looking through the mirror only to see an enormous medieval world on the other side. The figure pulling her forward, a cloaked person, is unable to get her all the way through the mirror. She kicks him away and flies back, and the cloaked figure emerges through the mirror and removes his hood to reveal a decrepit and withered looking Lord British.\*

Lord British: Please...come with me...my world does not have much time...

\*The woman looks at him with great concern, only to see a ball of magical energy forming in her hand. Her eyes go wide.\*

## **ULTIMA: SCION OF BRITANNIA**

1997

*"So as you've already seen, the Sega Saturn is the best video game console on the planet, capable of doing things that no other console can do. We saw Nintendo's presentation a little while ago, and, well, frankly, we weren't very impressed. And after seeing the Saturn in action, I don't think a lot of gamers are really impressed with what Nintendo's console can do either. That's why we're going to start a new campaign where we, well, we sort of educate all those still debating about whether or not to get the Sega Saturn about just why the Saturn is clearly the only smart choice."*

\*another video begins to play\*

\*This video shows off footage from some of the SNES-CD's recent games. *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina of Dreams*, *Super Mario World 3*, *Eternal Night*, etc. Then the screen zooms out and another TV is shown, showing off footage from the Sega Saturn. *Panzer Dragoon*, *Magiquest*, *NHL '96*... the screen showing off the SNES-CD shows footage from *Alone in the Dark*, which stutters and skips while the Saturn shows off cutscenes and gameplay from *Resident Evil* running smoothly and flawlessly. *Twinblade* is shown next to *Soul Edge* on the Saturn, *Killer Instinct* next to *Virtua Fighter 2*, in all cases the Saturn games looking supremely better. Then it shows two kids playing each of the consoles, the kid playing the SNES-CD keeps looking over at the screen of the Saturn player's TV, looking more and more disappointed. Finally, he throws down his controller and tries to take the Saturn player's controller, prompting a brief scuffle that ends in the kids' big brothers coming in and separating them.\*

Nintendo player: It's not fair, he won't let me play!

Nintendo player's big brother: Well, you gotta learn to share.

Nintendo player: But his is better!

Sega player: Hey, it's not my fault!

Nintendo player: Huh? Not your fault what?

Sega player: That Saturn does what Nintendon't. \*smirks, meanwhile the audience watching the commercial begins to cheer as this part plays\*

Nintendo player: ...where'd you hear that from?

\*The Sega player looks up at his smiling big brother, who's proudly wearing a "Genesis Does What Nintendon't" t-shirt. The Nintendo player's big brother, as if suddenly recalling a very bad memory, frowns and looks down at the ground.\*

Nintendo player: \*looks up at his big brother who starts sniffing and crying\*

Nintendo player's big brother: ...it's not fair! \*runs out of the room sobbing\*

Sega player's big brother: \*just shakes his head and brings out two more controllers, hooking them up to the Saturn so all three of them can play it together\*

Narrator: Stunning 3-D visuals. Incredible sound. The latest and greatest arcade games, uncut and uncompromised. With dozens of hits already here and hundreds more on the way, one thing is clear.

### **SATURN DOES WHAT NINTENDON'T.**

\*Cut to the Nintendo player's big brother, sobbing in the corner. He curls his hands into fists and cries out the "SEGA!" scream.\*

\*Loud cheers from the audience as the commercial ends.\*

*"You heard the commercial and it's plain to see, Saturn does what Nintendon't. And we'll keep doing what Nintendon't for the rest of this year and for many years to come. The Sega Saturn is our future. And now, here's chart-topping rapper Coolio here to let everybody know exactly what it is that we do."*

\*The crowd's attention is directed to a curtain, which lifts to reveal Coolio with his backing band, about to perform for the crowd.\*

Coolio: Yeah, yeah, let's make some noise up in this place!

\*the crowd cheers, Coolio begins rapping\*

Coolio: When I say Saturn, you say does! SATURN!

Crowd: DOES!

Coolio: SATURN!

Crowd: DOES!

Coolio: When I say Saturn, you say does! SATURN!

Crowd: DOES!

Coolio: SATURN!

Crowd: DOES!

\*Coolio then launches into an original rap song extolling the virtues of the Sega Saturn while heavily dissing Nintendo, called (obviously) "Saturn Does What Nintendon't". The song, or at least a snippet of the chorus, becomes part of the Sega Saturn's 1996 marketing campaign.\*

-keynote speech from Tom Kalinske at E3 1996

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Brittany Saldita: And we're back with GameTV's coverage of E3 1996! And I'm standing here with the amazing, the awesome, the guy who plays Urkel on TV's *Family Matters*, Jaleel White!

Jaleel White: Hey there, how's it going?

Brittany: It's going fantastic. Now of course you're here to help show off *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*, and you'll be playing the voice of Sonic in the game. I've already gotten to play some of the game and you do an excellent job. What's it like voicing for a video game as opposed to a cartoon?

Jaleel: There's a lot more grunting involved. You've gotta make a different sound for all the different hits Sonic can take, so I spent a lot of time in the booth just making like "oof!" or "unngh!" noises and we did a lot of different takes of those.

Brittany: Was it really exhausting for you?

Jaleel: Well, yeah, it's the first game I've done so I'm not used to doing all of that repetitive work, but it was still really fun.

Brittany: Have you gotten to play *Sonic 4* yet?

Jaleel: I'm a BIG fan of all the *Sonic* games so of course I've played it, what kinda question is that? \*laughing\* That's one of the first things I said when I agreed to do the voice, I was like 'you guys are gonna let me play it first, right?', so yeah, I've played more of the game than most of the people here are getting to play. It's a really fun game, I think it's the best Sonic game ever.

Brittany: Okay, now before we go, can you do a little Urkel for me?

Jaleel: \*gives her an annoyed look\*

Brittany: \*starts laughing\* I'm just screwing with you! \*she keeps laughing and kind of grabs his shoulder\* That must get annoying! I'm sorry, I swear I was just messing with you.

Jaleel: \*starts laughing\* I can actually do some Urkel if you really want.

Brittany: No, no, PLEASE don't. \*shaking her head and still laughing a bit\*

(...)

Alex Stansfield: We're here at Nintendo's booth and we're about to play *Mario Kart R* for the very first time.

Ted Crosley: Alex and I both loved the original *Super Mario Kart* so we're both really psyched to play this game.

\*They sit down with Ultra Nintendo controllers and begin to play a course that looks like OTL's Mario Circuit, Alex picks Mario and Ted picks Wario\*

Ted: Wario is in this game, that's really neat.

Alex: Well, Mario always beats Wario so this shouldn't be too hard for me.

Ted: I'm going all over the place!

Alex: It says you can actually do a power slide by holding down the R button and jiggling your stick back and forth.

Ted: Hey, this is *Mario Kart R*, not *Mario Kart* rated-R!

Alex: The analog stick. \*groans and he shows off how to do a power slide\* You even get a little boost at the end if you do it right.

Ted: What?

Alex: Yeah. \*by now he's significantly in the lead, having got the hang of it way faster than Ted\*

Ted: You gotta be kidding me! \*goes over some item boxes and gets a Star\* All right!

Alex: \*gets a Fake Item Box\* Okay, this is neat, if you put this amongst a crowd of item boxes it LOOKS just like an item box but once they go over it, they explode. \*sets it down amongst the next group of item boxes while Ted comes out of invincibility\*

Ted: That's dumb, who's gonna fall for- \*he goes right over it and gets blasted into the air\* Ah, (expletive)!

Alex: \*laughing as he finishes the first lap\*

Ted: Wario's one of those guys with crappy controls, isn't he? Like how Bowser was in the first game? Hold on, I'm gonna be Toad. I wanna be Toad, this isn't fair.

Alex: \*really has the hang of it now, zooming around the track\* *Mario Kart R*, a game that will certainly end lots of friendships, coming next year hopefully to the Ultra Nintendo.

(...)

Alex: I'm here with Mark Cerny from Naughty Dog and we're taking a look at *Dog Dash*, the new platformer for the Super Nintendo CD.

Mark Cerny: This game's all about just having lots of whimsical fun. It's a straight-up platformer but this dog here, this dog is the real star of the game.

Alex: He's very big and very cute, I've got a dog at home who's a lot like him, kind of lays around the house a lot.

Mark: Well, Woofle doesn't lay around. He can run, he can jump, and this tongue here he can do all kinds of stuff with his tongue. You press A to make his tongue come out.

Alex: \*presses A and Woofle's tongue goes straight forward\*

Mark: Now depending on what buttons you press along with A, Woofle's tongue can do all

kinds of things. He can smack the enemies with his tongue, he can give them a little lick which can melt certain enemies and just kind of gross out other ones, he can grab someone with his tongue and send them flying-

Alex: I just did that, just now, look. \*Alex uses Woofle's tongue to grab a gangster and fling him into the air into a pair of other gangsters, knocking all three of them down\* That was pretty cool!

\*Clark's voice is heard saying "Good job, Woofle!" as he pats the dog on the head\*

Alex: Whoa!

Mark: Whenever you do something particularly cool, Clark will actually give Woofle some praise. There's a really close bond between these two, we really try to convey that during the game.

Alex: That is VERY cool.

Mark: The game's marketed toward kids but we designed it with all gamers in mind. We're hoping it becomes a success with all ages, like *Tales of the Seven Seas* did.

Alex: Speaking of *Tales of the Seven Seas*, how's progress coming on the sequel?

Mark: Well I can't announce anything officially but we're definitely looking into the possibility of a sequel.

(...)

John Walden: Right now I'm here with the man, Nintendo's Howard Lincoln himself, and this is the booth for *Grant Hill in NBA Basketball*. I got my Grant Hill jersey on \*showing off his Boston Celtics Grant Hill jersey\* and so I'm ready to play.

Howard Lincoln: Right, so let's get started! Now this game was developed over the course of about a year and a half, right here in North America with the cooperation of Grant Hill and of the NBA. It's got all the licensed teams and all the players except for one.

John: Right, right, I know which one that is. \*is referring to Michael Jordan who instead appears as B-Ball Player in this game, on the Bulls with the same stats as Jordan would have\* But yeah, the graphics look really slick and the gameplay's really fun from what I've seen.

Lincoln: We took an approach where you can sort of play either arcade-style basketball or play it closer to how a real game would play, sort of the same way our *Ken Griffey* games are.

\*John and Lincoln get into a quick game, John as the Celtics and Lincoln as the Sonics, John takes a quick early lead as Lincoln plays really awkwardly\*

John: Get up, get up! \*is having Grant Hill go up for a rebound against Shawn Kemp\* Get it, get the ball, get it! \*Hill grabs the offensive rebound and in the same motion slams it back down into the hoop, making it 8 to 2\* Yeah!

Lincoln: It's a lot of fun, isn't it?

John: The animation's so fluid. I love the level of detail in the crowds too.

Lincoln: We really hope this game and *Ken Griffey* become part of a sports franchise for us.

John: Think we'll see an NFL game next?

Lincoln: Maybe so, maybe so.

(...)

Kazzi DeCarlo: \*is playing a game at the Saturn booth\* This is *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain*, and this is one of the best games I've seen at E3. You play as a vampire who's out for revenge, and let me tell you, this is a bloody, violent, brutal vampire game and it kicks ass! \*Kain is going around sucking the blood out of some helpless villagers\* I mean, look at this! You go around and just drink the blood right out of their bodies, you can see it flying out of them! What a game. I'm here with Denis Dyack, director of *Legacy of Kain* and I have to say it again, your game kicks ass!

Denis Dyack: Well thank you. \*he laughs\* *Legacy of Kain* is being released for the Saturn, we think in January 1997 but we're not sure, but we're hoping that it's going to be very popular because of the big huge world we've created.

Kaz: I'm definitely getting some, kind of *Ultima* vibes from this game I think.

Denis: It's more of a straight-up action/adventure title than *Ultima*, but we did take some inspiration, yeah.

Kaz: You didn't take inspiration from like, the Anne Rice novels for this did you?

Denis: \*laughing\* No, no, this is much more like the old scary gothic vampires from the 1800s. It's more of a fantasy horror game.

Kaz: Nothing more scary than a vampire sucking the blood out of a whole village!

(...)

Ted: There are some GREAT PC games here at E3 1996, we already showed you what Microsoft's cooking up with their new line of games for Windows, but now here's the game that most of you probably wanted to see and that's *Quake* and here's John Romero and he seems really excited to show me this game.

John Romero: Hey Ted, and hell yeah, let's show these people some *Quake*.

\*Ted begins playing the game which looks very nice on the computer that's been set up, the 3-D visuals trump pretty much every other game at the show.\*

Ted: It looks a LOT better than *Doom*, I imagine you guys had 3-D in mind every step of the way with this game.

Romero: We absolutely did, we're hoping to do for PC graphics what the original *Doom*

game did back in 1993, we want to be the new benchmark for what games can be.

Ted: It's really dark. It's really spooky. \*picks up a gun and opens a door\* Okay, let's see how I- \*sees some mad dogs coming at him\* Oh, crap! \*shoots at them frantically\*

Romero: \*laughing\* We want players to have a lot of "oh crap" moments when they're playing *Quake*.

Ted: Should I be wearing a diaper when I'm playing this game?

Romero: \*laughing harder\* To each his own, I'm not gonna judge. Usually when someone says "oh crap" they don't mean it literally. I guess in *Quake* that expression might take on a new meaning!

Ted: Is there going to be multiplayer in *Quake*?

Romero: Absolutely. And hopefully if it comes to consoles down the road we'll be able to have some form of multiplayer there too. The game's less scary when there's other people in the room, isn't there?

Ted: There's like a thousand people in this room and I'm still scared!

Romero: \*laughs\*

-excerpted from the May 21, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

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*Nintendo Power was all over E3, and we're back with the latest news on the hottest games you'll be playing later this year! Check out this month's issue of Nintendo Power CD for a 12 minute video feature with even more highlights, along with playable demos of some of the games at the show!*

*Kirby Super Deluxe-*

Kirby's back in his first ever outing on the Super Nintendo CD! It's 10-games-in-1, as Kirby explores a variety of worlds and game genres in one of the biggest SNES-CD games yet! *Kirby Super Deluxe* brings back old foes like King DeDeDe and Meta Knight, along with dangerous new enemies like the mysterious galactic tyrant Marx!

*Tetris Attack-*

It's a brand new puzzle game, coming to the Super Nintendo CD and the Game Boy! Match three colors in order to send a big stack of blocks crashing down on your opponent! The Game Boy title is also Game Boy Color compatible!

*Iron Combatant-*

Hop into a mechanized combat suit to battle enemies in this exciting sci-fi adventure. You're playing as Layla, a no-nonsense colonel who's the last line of defense between her country and an army of evil conquerors in their own souped-up mechsuits.

### *World Of Color-*

A beautiful new puzzle game for the Game Boy designed to take full advantage of the Game Boy Color's capabilities, in this game you have to organize multi-colored shapes in order to create pathways and even new realms to explore. Features both a story mode and a high-score mode, with the option to hook up two Game Boys with the Link Cable for competitive multiplayer!

### *Bahamut Lagoon-*

Another exciting new title from Squaresoft, this game is a sort of hybrid of *Fire Emblem* with dragons...lots and lots of big dragons!

-excerpted from *Nintendo Power's* E3 coverage article in the July 1996 issue

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## **The Future Of Gaming Is Here!**

*E3 1996 was full of huge announcements, big surprises, and plenty of excitement. There was too much news at E3 to fit into one magazine, but we'll cover all the biggest stuff right here.*

*First up was Nintendo, with their announcements of the Ultra Nintendo and the Game Boy Color. The Game Boy Color was probably the biggest surprise of the show, and with the Game Gear pretty much dead in the water, it's surprising to see that Nintendo felt the need to upgrade the Game Boy, even if it's just with the addition of a color screen and a better sound chip. Still, games like Donkey Kong Land 2 and the excellent new puzzle game World of Color play great on it, with Donkey Kong Land 2 in particular showing off the capabilities of the sound chip. The sound wasn't as good as what we hear in typical SNES-CD or even Super Nintendo games, but it actually sounds like real instruments rather than electronic noises, and that should bring some epic soundtracks to upcoming portable titles. The Ultra Nintendo was the centerpiece of Nintendo's booth, and they proudly showed off the new Super Mario game, Super Mario Dimensions. The graphics blew us away, full 3-D with amazing detail in backgrounds and with characters. The three levels we got to see at the show looked huge and with the announcement of 21(!!!) levels in all, clearly this is going to be one of the biggest Mario games of all time and we'll bring you updates on this game as soon as they come in. We also got to play Final Fantasy VII, and even though the gameplay is classic Final Fantasy, with the ATB battle gauge returning and turn-based combat also back, the graphics are hugely stepped up. Everything's in 3-D, enemies and characters have realistic (if a bit stiff) movements, and the music thus far is impressive. We didn't get any details on the characters or plot, though those should be revealed as the game gets closer to release. There were plenty of Super Nintendo CD games being shown off as well, most notably Squad Four: Eclipse, Super Mario RPG, and Elements of Mana. Squad Four: Eclipse looked incredibly impressive, with 3-D visuals approaching the quality of some Saturn games. The game revolves around an alien invasion, and there were plenty of new enemies for the heroes to fight, we even saw Squad Four team up with some soldiers to take a squad of alien invaders down. Out of the RPGs shown off at E3, Elements Of Mana looked extremely impressive and should be as good or even better than Secret of Mana, which will make it a serious contender for the year's best title.*

*The Sega Saturn had an even MORE impressive lineup with a mix of new original titles and*

*sequels. Sonic the Hedgehog 4 was the biggest game featured at Sega's booth and probably the biggest game featured at E3. With a mix of classic side-scrolling elements and 3-D movement (in the game's boss fights, which feature some enormous looking bosses and fierce combat action), the game seems to be sticking to what worked in the first three Sonic titles while giving the presentation a MASSIVE upgrade. Another sequel we really liked was Virtua Fighter 2. We've played it in the arcades, but the Saturn version looks even more impressive, adding more characters and a new storyline mode to test even seasoned arcade players' mettle. Among the original titles we saw and enjoyed was a new action platformer called Sun and Moon, featuring a pair of twins with the power to control light and darkness. The game seems to be geared toward playing with a friend, though from what we saw the AI is capable of controlling the other character and a single player can switch back and forth between the two. Sun and Moon is said to be releasing in August and should give players who are through with NiGHTS Into Dreams something to do while waiting for Sonic 4. We also LOVED Tomb Raider, its heroine Lara Croft is one of the most compelling new protagonists we've seen in a game and the game itself looks like the perfect mix of action and exploration.*

*While we continue to wait for the Ultra Nintendo, the Sega Saturn looks to be making a big move to take advantage of its technical superiority during the last year it'll be alone in the next-gen market. This holiday season looks to be lucrative for both Nintendo and for Sega, and right now it's anyone's guess who's going to come out on top.*  
-excerpted from a report in the July 1996 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

All right, here's what happened at E3! I'm surprised I was even able to get in with my somewhat flimsy press credential, I really gotta thank my friend Jake for going out on a limb for me so I could get in. Anyway, it was REALLY crowded and a lot of the booths had huge lines, but I tried to play all of the big games I could. I DID manage to play a little bit of Final Fantasy VII despite it being pretty much the most crowded booth there, and WOW! It looked really awesome. I had to choose between the gameplay mission which was like a factory or doing a boss battle. I did the factory because it showed off more of the games. There's three characters, this guy with spiky yellow hair, this girl with black hair and this big black dude with a gun arm who both looks and talks like Mr. T. Apparently in the boss battle there is also this girl with long brown hair and a big ponytail. Anyway, the dungeon looked great, it was nice being able to roam around in 3-D and the factory looked really cool, this game's clearly going for a modern-day cyberpunk aesthetic and I liked it, at least what I saw so far. The battle system is typical Final Fantasy, wait your turn and then attack. Battle animations were cool, they took a little long though but I guess they were trying to show off the system's power. I caught a glimpse of the boss battle and saw Shiva coming out...holy CRAP, the animation was awesome but it took a long time. I also got to try out Sonic 4 after waiting in another huge line, it was probably the most fun of any game at the show. If you loved Sonic 3 (and who didn't?), you'll love Sonic 4, describing it doesn't do much justice, you really need to see it in action. The graphics were fantastic, everything had polygons and the boss battle was spectacular. It was in a fully 3-D arena, there was this huge monster with four heads breathing fire and Sonic was running around trying to avoid it while looking for an opportunity to strike. SO much better than the boss battles in other Sonic games.

I also hit up the big Super Nintendo CD RPGs. The Tale Phantasia booth was pretty crowded but while I was waiting I got to meet a couple of the voice actors, the guy who did Alex in Lunar on Sega CD was there, along with this blonde girl who I'm told sings the theme song and voices another character in the game. They were really nice and seemed to be having a

lot of fun talking to people although the blonde girl didn't like when people crowded around her a bunch and eventually some security guy had to kind of push people back. Tale Phantasia is awesome, the voice acting's decent and the game itself is a lot of fun. Combat was AWESOME, it's a lot like a fighting game with combos and special moves. Not QUITE Street Fighter or anything like that but a damn sight better than any other RPG I've ever played except for Secret Of Mana. Speaking of Secret of Mana, I got to play the sequel over at another part of Nintendo's booth. They actually had us playing three people at once, and one of the people playing with me was the cute girl from that video game show on MTV, Brittany I think her name is. She was really friendly and seemed to be having a LOT of fun, she picked this big guy with a sword and I picked a thief with two knives while the other guy with us picked some chick with a spear. The combat's a lot better than the original Secret Of Mana, you can hit so much faster, especially my thief guy who was racking up tons of hits and criticals. We ended up fighting this huge boss, a big spider looking thing called a Full Metal Hugger, the animation on him was great and we had a blast fighting him, I almost got killed a couple of times and Brittany ended up saving our asses after the dude with the spear chick got killed. There were actually quite a few celebrities there, I saw a couple guys from the Dodgers, Kirsten Dunst was checking out the new Super Mario game and Jaleel White was playing Mario Kart. I think he wasn't supposed to be over there because he was hiding his face with a hood and somebody told me he was over promoting Sonic 4 earlier. Toward the end of the day I got to play the new Game Boy Color and it was all right, the biggest improvement is actually the new sound chip they put in, the color looked kind of washed out on a non-backlit screen (in other words, Game Gear still looks better). Sega had some Venuses set up at their Genesis booth, they were showing off Vectorman 2 and a couple of sports games but there weren't many people over there.

So that's E3! If you guys have any questions for me, post a reply and I'll try to answer as best I can.

-a post by MotorMatt on a video game message board at 12:13 AM on May 17, 1996

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## **E3 1996**

The second Electronic Entertainment Expo took place between May 16 – May 18, 1996 at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

Since the last E3, Nintendo had seen a huge spike in sales driven by a series of hit games for their Super Nintendo CD console, which had gotten an economically-priced stand alone version during the 1995 holiday season. Sega's Saturn console had had a disappointing launch, but after a price drop in the spring of 1996, sales had begun to pick up.

Nintendo started off the proceedings by showing off their Ultra Nintendo system. Though information on the system's specifics including price weren't available, they did have a few games available to play, including *Super Mario Dimensions*, *Mario Kart R* (later changed to *Ultra Mario Kart*), and *Final Fantasy VII*. All in all, despite the lack of information, the Ultra Nintendo and its three playable demos were very well received and generated a lot of buzz for the system even though launch was still more than a year away. Nintendo also revealed its Game Boy Color system (more like an incremental update to the Game Boy) to a slightly less enthusiastic but still largely positive response, and a slew of SNES-CD games, including *Super Mario RPG*, *Elements Of Mana*, *Dog Dash*, and *Squad Four: Eclipse*.

Sega FINALLY revealed the long-awaited *Sonic the Hedgehog 4* to by far the most positive response at the show. Other games, including *Ultima: Scion of Britannia*, *Tomb Raider*, *Panzer Dragoon II Zwei*, and *Commander Keen* were shown off, all of them receiving positive responses (though *Ultima* only got a teaser trailer and wasn't playable at the show). Sega took a more heavy-handed approach to E3, featuring celebrities such as Coolio and Jaleel White (who created some controversy when he was later seen playing *Ultra Mario Kart* at Nintendo's booth), with Coolio hosting a brief rap concert to promote the return of Sega's "Does What Nintendo't" campaign.

PC games had a big presence at E3 as well, with *Quake* drawing large crowds. Bill Gates showed up to promote a new line of Windows games to push the new operating system as a must-have for PC gamers. One of the big games featured in their line-up was *Close Combat*, a World War II simulation that at the time looked better than anything Nintendo or Sega had in the genre, even Koei's World War II games looked rather spartan next to Microsoft's sim. With the idea of a "third console" somewhat dead at the time, PC software and hardware makers were in prime position to win over those disillusioned by Nintendo and Sega, and the mid to late 90s would be a successful time for them.

E3 1996 was characterized by the large crowds and long lines for many of the big demo booths. Though E3 1995 only had about four or five games with overly long lines, more than 20 titles at E3 1996 had hour-long waits or more, including all three Ultra Nintendo games, *Sonic 4* (of course), *Virtua Fighter 2*, *Tomb Raider*, *Panzer Dragoon II Zwei*, *Squad Four: Eclipse*, *Super Mario RPG*, *Elements Of Mana*, *Dog Dash*, and even *Policenauts*. Even with the large convention space, the sheer number of people present on the convention floor made it a chore for media outlets to report on every single game, and organizers would be a bit stingier with the lanyards for E3 1997, largely in response to the long lines for games at E3 1996. Though the long lines and big crowds were annoying, it was a promising sign for the video game industry, and with another new console on the horizon, business was poised to pick up even more.

-excerpted from IGN's E3 1996 article (based on this real-life article on IGN.com about OTL's E3 1996: [http://www.ign.com/wikis/e3/E3\\_1996](http://www.ign.com/wikis/e3/E3_1996))

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*The Marvel Universe was at its nadir in 1996 if you were not Spider-Man or the myriad X-Men titles. Both franchises had successful animated series on Fox Kids, their respective titles in top ten, and films on the horizon. However, both the Fantastic Four and Iron Man animated series that comprised the Marvel Action Hour ended due to low ratings and the respective merchandise consigned to toy store bargain bins. Despite Mark Waid's acclaimed run on Captain America, it appeared that the Avengers titles and Fantastic Four were flagging in both popularity and sales. Marvel's attempt to jumpstart Avengers and Iron Man with "the Crossing" by making Tony Stark/Iron Man a traitor and replaced him with a teenage version of himself alienated readers. However, Marvel suffered from "quantity over quality" with titles like Fantastic Force, Thunderstrike, and War Machine, which many fans at the time considered redundant. With the contraction of the market leading to the mass cancellation of redundant titles and Ron Perelman's financial abuse of the company that would leave it bankrupt by year's end, Marvel could not be in more dire straights.*

*Mark Gruenwald, who served as Editor-in-Chief from 1995[1] until his deteriorating health forced him to resign in 2002, made the boldest decision of his career: kill the Avengers and*

*Fantastic Four. At least that was what early advertisements for Onslaught insinuated would happen with the tagline, "Can Earth's Mightiest Heroes survive the coming Onslaught?" Marvel had been laying the groundwork for the crossover for nearly three years beforehand in the X-Men titles when Charles Xavier wiped Magneto's mind in the "Fatal Attractions" arc. In releasing his fury against his one-time friend, he opened a dark part of his psyche he kept repressed since the Phoenix Saga of the first Claremont/Cockrum run. Deteriorating relations between baseline humans and mutants, as evidenced by the presidential campaign of rabid mutant hater, Graydon Creed, caused him to snap under the strain.[2] Taking on a distorted mirror image of Magneto, the newly christened "Onslaught" dragged the Fantastic Four and Avengers into his war against humanity by kidnapping and forcing a psychic merger between him, Nate Grey (AKA X-Man), and Franklin Richards, son of the Invisible Woman and Mister Fantastic.*

*It is worth noting that Onslaught marked the last appearance of Peter Parker as Spider-Man. After his retirement in the Spider-Man titles, Tom DeFalco, then-writer of Fantastic Four, moved the Parkers to title as supporting characters after Reed Richards offered Peter a position at Fantastic Four Inc. Both Peter and Ben Riley donned their respective costumes and battled Onslaught alongside the Avengers, Fantastic Four, and X-Men. However, unlike the Fantastic Four and (most of the) Avengers, the Spider-Men did not "sacrifice" themselves but rescued X-Man and Franklin after the heroes forced a merger with the Onslaught entity and the X-Men "destroyed" it.*

*However, the Fantastic Four and Avengers did not die. Through the unconscious influence of the omnipotent Franklin Richards, they "shunted" into a pocket universe created by the four-year-old's desire to save his family and their friends, hence the birth of the Heroes Reborn universe. Marvel outsourced Heroes Reborn to Image founders and former Marvel alumni Jim Lee and Marc Silvestri. Marvel approached Rob Liefeld at one point, but Liefeld had since left Image after an acrimonious falling out with the other founders and focused his efforts on new company Awesome Entertainment. Silvestri worked on Fantastic Four and Captain America while Lee handled Avengers and Iron Man. The best way to describe the titles was that it was a bizarre marriage of early Marvel and nineties tropes. The origins of the characters remained the same but with a few minor tweaks; for example, Lee's Avengers was essentially a copy of Stormwatch where the titular team operated under the aegis of that world's S.H.I.E.L.D. instead of the UN.*

*However, Heroes Reborn was influential in the sense that some elements crossed over into the Marvel films Fox released in early oughts. For example 2001's Captain America (starring Casper Van Dien of Starship Troopers fame) used certain elements like Cap's leadership of the Howling Commandos. Bucky was also aged up to his late teens to give both the comic and the film a more realistic tone as the film also drew inspiration from Steven Spielberg's Saving Private Ryan. Similarly, 2003's Iron Man (starring Tom Cruise as Tony Stark and Gene Hackman as Obidiah Stane) similarly changed the setting of Iron Man's origins from Southeast Asia to the Middle East as Heroes Reborn did to keep it contemporary.*

*However, the biggest contribution Silvestri made to the Captain America's was the "revival" of Bucky as the Iron Cross, a neo-Nazi cyborg assassin brainwashed by the Heroes Reborn version of Baron Heinrich Zemo (not to be confused with Baron **Helmut** Zemo, his son in the mainstream Marvel Universe.) His ongoing conflict with the Star-Spangled Avenger and Cap's attempts to "save" him formed the overall arc of his twelve-issue run on the title. This iteration of the character proved popular enough for him to make the leap from the Reborn universe to the mainstream Marvel Universe for Heroes Return as well as form the basis of the film's sequel.*

*As for Fantastic Four, Avengers, and Iron Man, most fans look at their Heroes Reborn as middle of the road. They were better than the post-Crossing Avengers, but it was largely a re-telling of the Silver Age stories moved into what was then the present. Sales still substantially improved and many of these titles appeared on the newsstands once dominated by Spider-Man, X-Men, Superman, and Batman and gained a more significant share of the direct market. Moreover, it set the precedent for how Marvel would market its titles over the coming years: restart the numbering of their titles with a new "#1" to generate interest with the readership. To date there have been at least seven volumes of Captain America and six of Iron Man along with multiple volumes of Daredevil, Amazing Spider-Man, and even X-Men.*

*Personally, I have always preferred DC's approach, which was the opposite of what Marvel had done. For example, Justice League picked Justice League of America's numbering (261 issues) after its one hundred thirty-eighth issue to become Justice League #400. Similarly, the second volume of the Flash resumed the numbering with #150 becoming the Flash #500 (fitting, considering that the first volume continued the numbering of the Golden Age Flash Comics.) Wonder Woman (vol. 2) #171 became Wonder Woman #500; Green Lantern (vol. 2) #176 became Green Lantern #400, and so forth. It suggested that the title had history, legacy, and continuity where the constant Marvel relaunches seemed to be a cynical attempt to inflate sales. In any case, it appeared that Marvel would copy DC's reconstructionist approach. Kurt Busiek's work on Marvels earned him an acclaimed run on Avengers that many fans compare to the Waid/Perez Justice League (despite its rotating roster of artists) for Heroes Return in 1997.*

*-from the blog "The Musing Platypus" by B. Ronning, May 7, 2015*

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*[1] Butterflies fluttered Mark Gruenwald's heart attack in 1996 away so he lives a few years later than he would have IOTL.*

*[2] Apparently, the X-Men writers wanted Onslaught to be Xavier's dark side only and not a fusion with Magneto's psyche but editorial insisted. Not the case ITTL.*

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*"Truly, if there is evil in this world, it lurks within the hearts of men."*

*-Edward D. Morrison (voiced by John Truitt), from the intro to Tale Phantasia (same exact intro quote as IOTL)*

*"Wow, this is a gem mint condition unopened special edition of Tale Phantasia. This game was a big hit for the Super Nintendo CD back in 1996. Nintendo released two editions, they released the normal edition, which sold nearly a million copies, and then this limited edition box set, with the game, and the soundtrack and the strategy guide and everything. They didn't think this would sell very well, so they only made like 10,000 of them. Those all sold out. So they did a second run of 20,000 and sold those only through their Nintendo Power catalog. Those also sold out. Now, the thing is that most of those were opened and played. People didn't really buy them to collect them. The people who did, the thing with those is that a lot of them come from that second run, in the mail, and you know, postman drops it off, it gets banged up, dented, you know how that is. This one's totally in mint condition,*

*you can see how it's graded by the video game grading company, a perfect 10. I've seen...three of these sealed and this is the only one I've seen that's mint like this. This game...it's such a popular game. People wouldn't buy this box for the game, there are so many copies out there and it's been remade a lot, so you can play the game relatively cheaply. But the collector's value of this sealed box is through the roof. This is one of the most sought after items among video game collectors. I'd put the value of this, if I were selling it at my store, at right around...probably \$5,000."*

-Johnny Jiminez, appraising a sealed copy of the limited edition of *Tale Phantasia* on the Pawn Stars episode "Fail Phantasia", which aired on October 16, 2014

*"Tale Phantasia was a kind of combination big break and last chance for us. I'd burned so many bridges at Sega and Nintendo was already so cautious, if we fucked this up I'd probably have been done in the industry. Thankfully, I didn't fuck it up."*

-Victor Ireland, in an October 18, 2010 interview with IGN.com

*"In retrospect, that was my bad. The original Saturn analog controller was approved by me. Thinking, you know, Americans with our big hands would need something like that. Already in Japan there was a smaller controller, but, you know, I thought the bigger one would work. To our credit, we did get plenty of the smaller one here for the holiday season, so it was more of a speed bump than a fiery crash. But yeah, um...not one of my best decisions."*

-Tom Kalinske, from an interview with Sega Retro

*"Oh...oh my god! There's a huge earthquake! I think...I think...yes! Someone just dropped the new Sega Saturn controller on the ground and it is chaos everywhere! I need to find somewhere to duck and cover!"*

-Kazzi DeCarlo, playing a frantic news reporter in a segment in the June 18, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

*"At that time, we were thinking handhelds and we thought the acquisition would help us in that aspect of the business. We'd just helped Nintendo out with the new model Game Boy and we needed games to put on it. So that was the logic behind that acquisition."*

-Ken Kutaragi, speaking of an acquisition made by Sony in 1996

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*"Certainly, Sonic Team worked extremely hard during those times when we were working on both Sonic 4 and NiGHTS. We divided into two teams, I headed the NiGHTS team and then as soon as production finished on that game, I moved right over to oversee the latter parts of Sonic the Hedgehog 4. My number one goal was to make sure that neither game suffered because of the division of labor. Once NiGHTS was released, I knew that I had succeeded in half of my goal. The difficult part, then, was the waiting to see if Sonic 4 would live up to the astronomical expectations placed on it."*

-Yuji Naka

## **June 17, 1996**

*NiGHTS Into Dreams...* is released for the Sega Saturn, simultaneously with the Saturn Enhance, a game controller featuring an analog stick in addition to the normal D-pad and six-button layout. The original North American version of the Enhance controller is large and strangely shaped, and though most players responded well to the analog controller, a significant portion of Saturn fans believed the controller to be too big, and began importing a smaller analog controller from Japan (this practice largely stopped once Sega introduced

the smaller controller to North America officially in the fall). *NiGHTS* retains the same basic gameplay as its OTL counterpart, featuring the protagonist, a Nightmaren named NiGHTS, flying across magical dreamscapes while collecting items and avoiding enemies. However, in TTL's version of the game, the ground-based parts with the children Elliot and Claris are significantly expanded, and in some levels, the children even find weapons that allow them to fight off the monsters chasing them. The game features 11 levels, as opposed to the seven in OTL's version of the game, with five focusing on Claris, five on Elliot, and then one level featuring both children. Still, the vast majority of the game focuses on NiGHTS and the flying segments, which are both more complex and more beautiful than IOTL. Indeed, the game is regarded as the most graphically beautiful console game to date, even exceeding *Panzer Dragoon* in terms of graphical fidelity. With the game's music (which can be altered by NiGHTS' performance in the various levels) also highly regarded, reviewers consider the game a feast for the eyes and ears, and just as much an experience as an actual game (though this DOES hurt the game with some reviewers who believe the beautiful visuals to be a distraction for the gameplay's flaws). Ultimately, the game becomes another success for the Sega Saturn, and another boost for the system's sales. In some markets, it had begun to seriously challenge the Super Nintendo CD, and with Genesis sales added in, Sega had drawn nearly even to Nintendo in terms of overall market share.

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\*An animated cutscene shows a group of young heroes facing a giant tree.\*

*A quest beyond imagination...*

\*The heroes, Cless, Chester, Mint, Arche, and Claus, look up to the sky to see energy beams raining down around them. They take fighting stances as the evil lord Dhaos descends, bringing darkness in his wake.\*

*The ultimate battle between good and evil begins.*

\*The heroes leap up to clash with Dhaos as a wave of light energy slams into a wave of darkness. The game's vocal theme song, "The Dream Will Not End", plays as scenes from the game begin to flash on screen.\*

Narrator: It's the role-playing game that broke records in Japan, now coming to our shores. *Tale Phantasia*, a quest spanning three worlds and two discs. A quest that will bring freedom to our world or cast it down into darkness. Take control of heroes like never before with the all new Active Battle System where you control every spell, every slash, every step. Jam-packed with over 100 hours of gameplay.

\*The heroes are shown traveling through time as they continue to battle alternate forms of Dhaos, a few more scenes from the game are shown, demonstrating the game's voice acting and the animated cutscenes.\*

Narrator: It's finally here, and it's only on Super Nintendo CD. *Tale Phantasia*. The ultimate quest has arrived.

**TALE PHANTASIA**

**June 24**

\*robot voice, metal sounds\* **Nin-ten-do.**

-the North American commercial for *Tale Phantasia*, which began airing in June 1996

### **Tale Phantasia: The Basics**

*Tale Phantasia* is largely the same as its OTL counterpart *Tales of Phantasia*, though with many graphical, gameplay, and presentation enhancements. The game is the second Super Nintendo CD game to be on two discs in North America. The original Japanese version spanned only one disc, numerous cutscenes and voice cues were added to the North American version that prevented it from fitting onto only one disc (Nintendo released this version in Japan in early July 1996). The game features around ten minutes of anime cutscenes, all fully voiced, with even more voice acting outside of cutscenes than Chrono Trigger. The game also features four fully lyrical songs, far more than any previously released SNES-CD game. The localization work was done by Working Designs, their first job for the Super Nintendo CD, utilizing their translation (which, like their OTL work, contains a few pop culture references, though not nearly as many as OTL's *Lunar* localizations, Nintendo didn't approve of having very many) and voice actors. Cless is played by Ashley Angel (who played Alex in OTL's original *Lunar* game), Mint is played by Kathy Ostrander (who voiced Lemina in OTL's *Lunar 2: Eternal Blue*), Arche is played by Jennifer Stigile (who also performs all of the game's lyrical themes and sang the themes for the *Lunar* games IOTL), Chester is played by Mark Zempel (who voiced Hiro in OTL's original *Lunar 2* dub), Klaus is played by John Truitt (who voiced Ghaleon in OTL's original *Lunar* dub), and the villain Dhaos is voiced by Ty Webb (who played the voice of Leo in OTL's *Lunar 2*). As typical of a Working Designs release, the company worked with Nintendo to produce a special limited edition box for the game, which was released alongside the game's normal edition. The limited edition contained the game, a selected soundtrack CD (24 tracks), a 30-minute making of video CD, a *Tale Phantasia* t-shirt, a cloth map of the game world, and the 184-page Official Nintendo Power Player's Guide (which was also sold separately in stores). Unlike the normal edition, which was produced in mass quantities and sold for \$59.99, the limited edition was priced at \$79.99 and shipped only to specialty game stores like Babbage's and Electronics Boutique, along with a few independent stores, some KB Toys stores also got copies. After the initial 10,000 copy run of the limited edition sold out within a few weeks, Nintendo did a re-print for the Super Power Club catalog that sold for \$90 (and also quickly sold out). The game itself is visually stunning, similarly to how the OTL game pushed the OTL Super Nintendo to its limits, this game does so for the Super Nintendo CD, with high-quality animation and excellent sprite work rivaling even what can be done on the Sega Saturn. The game features high-quality CD audio in nearly all of its tracks, the extra disc space allows for most of the soundtrack to be upgraded in terms of quality. The gameplay itself is somewhat faster than IOTL in battle, attacks that would stop the battle such as Indignation do not do so IOTL, instead the user of the attack is shown in a tiny window in the upper left hand of the screen and the battle continues without pause.

The plot itself is mostly unchanged, though a few key details, mostly toward the end, are altered a bit. The game begins with the dark lord Dhaos doing battle with a group of ancient warriors. He is defeated, and travels into the future where he is met by the warriors' descendents and sealed away. Some time later, an evil warlord begins a campaign of conquest with the goal of reviving Dhaos utilizing special pendants held by the descendents of those who sealed him away. The warlord razes several villages, slaughtering all those within, including the families of Cless and Chester. Cless and Chester are separated and Cless ends up captured in a dungeon, where he meets up with Mint whose mother was also slaughtered by the warlord. The two of them aren't strong enough to prevent Dhaos'

revival, but a man named Trinicus, one of the heroes who sealed Dhaos away in the past, send Cless and Mint back to the past before Dhaos was sealed away, in the hopes that they'll get strong enough to beat him. Cless and Mint eventually meet a summoner named Klaus and a magician named Arche. Together, the four heroes overcome numerous trials and adventures, eventually taking part in a massive sky battle against Dhaos' forces (this part is expanded significantly from IOTL, showing off the animation capabilities of the SNES-CD, fully a third of the game's animated cutscene time is during this battle which involves the heroes riding winged horses into battle). They then raid Dhaos' castle and defeat him. However, Dhaos escapes to the future once more, and the group is forced to find a time machine. They do so and arrive back in the future (Cless and Mint's present), reunite with Chester, and stop Dhaos seemingly for good. However, they are then presented with a vision of an even darker future where Dhaos has taken over. They once again travel to the future, arriving in an oppressed world and teaming up with two more party members, a ninja girl named Suyu (voiced by Kelly Weaver, OTL's Lucia voice in *Lunar 2*) and a freedom fighter named Zarui (voiced by Blake Dorsey, OTL's voice of Dragonmaster Dyne in *Lunar*), both characters join the party as playable characters in this version of the game (Suyu didn't IOTL, and Zarui is a totally new character). After traversing a few more dungeons, Cless earns the Eternal Sword, which prevents Dhaos from doing any more time traveling. They confront him in his final stronghold and defeat him for good, but with his dying breath, he reveals the purpose for his conquests. His own world, Derris-Kharlan, is being sucked dry of energy, its people being slaughtered. He merely sought enough energy to liberate his own world. Using the power of the eternal sword, the Summon Spirits, and Dhaos' last energy, Cless and the group journey to Derris-Kharlan to battle Krios, the dark force consuming Dhaos' world. Krios is a dimensional being who seeks out worlds to consume, his only thought is of consumption and he has turned into a mindless being with only one purpose. After another incredibly fierce battle, Krios is defeated and all the energy he has taken is returned to the great world tree that binds the dimensions together, to be recirculated through the universe. Eventually, Derris-Kharlan will be healed utilizing the liberated energy. With evil finally destroyed, Cless and his friends return to their own times and worlds, their adventure at last over. The game ends as Cless and Mint both return home to their families, having used the time machine to return to just before they were killed (and with no Krios or Dhaos, there's no evil force compelling the warlord to destroy the towns).

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## **June 24, 1996**

*Tale Phantasia* is released in North America for the Super Nintendo CD. Initial reviews are excellent, though overall the game is just a smidge lower than *Chrono Trigger* in critical acclaim. Fan opinion on the two games is heavily divided. Though most RPG fans love both, everyone's got a favorite and the two games are inextricably linked in fan debates for many years to come. *Tale Phantasia* does top *Chrono Trigger* in first day, week, and month sales, breaking many of the North American sales records that *Chrono Trigger* set due to Nintendo heavily hyping the game. The success of the game instantly catapults Telenet Japan from a fairly obscure producer of niche games into a household name (at least among the video game community). Though the company is still lower in the pecking order than big companies like Squaresoft, Capcom, and Konami, it achieves a visibility that would definitely boost the profile of its next few releases. The release of *Tale Phantasia* also comes at a time that Nintendo needed a hit to counter the success of *NiGHTS into Dreams* on the Sega Saturn, and once again, Nintendo struck a heavy blow in the console wars. *Tale Phantasia* would ultimately go on to be one of the Super Nintendo CD's top-selling RPGs in North

America and would be regarded as one of the greatest video games of its time.

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### **Cotton's Flying Adventure**

Andrew: 7.5

Mark: 7.5

Mike: 7.0 (quote: "This is definitely a cute and fun on-rails game, but it doesn't have the same innovative feel that *Panorama Cotton* did, and a game that looked amazing on the Sega Genesis only looks so-so on the Super Nintendo CD.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Fatal Fury 3**

Andrew: 8.0

Mark: 8.0

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "It's definitely a good translation from the arcade version, and while series vets may need a bit of time to get acclimated to some of the changes, it's definitely worth your time and effort!")

### **FIFA '97**

Andrew: 6.5

Mark: 8.0 (quote: "FIFA's back and looking even better! Even though it lacks the high-def visuals of its next gen cousin, the animations are still quite realistic and it definitely has the feel of a great soccer game.")

Mike: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Pocahontas**

Andrew: 5.0

Mark: 3.5 (quote: "I've seen the colors of the wind, and they're ugly and boring.")

Mike: 5.0

Sushi-X: 3.0

### **Power Rangers Zeo**

Andrew: 4.0 (quote: "This bland beat-em-up is a serious disappointment compared to previous Power Rangers games.")

Mark: 5.5

Mike: 6.0

Sushi-X: 4.0

### **Spider-Man: Power And Responsibility**

Andrew: 8.5 (quote: "This excellent beat-em-up game should set the tone for all future Spider-Man titles, and it features one of the best storylines ever in a superhero video game.")

Mark: 7.0

Mike: 8.0  
Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Tale Phantasia**

Andrew: 9.0  
Mark: 9.5  
Mike: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 9.5 (quote: "One of the deepest, most involved RPGs I've ever played and easily the best battle system of any game in the genre.")

### **Vandal Hearts**

Andrew: 7.0  
Mark: 6.0 (quote: "It's certainly not a bad game but really could've used a lot more action to make it truly epic.")  
Mike: 6.0  
Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Universalizer 2**

Andrew: 9.0  
Mark: 9.5  
Mike: 9.0 (quote: "This game sets a new bar for graphical excellence in its genre.")  
Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Knightstar 2: Revenge Of The Dragon King**

Andrew: 5.5 (quote: "Plays okay but innovates NOTHING. Compared to some of the other RPGs next year it's extremely bland.")  
Mark: 5.0  
Mike: 5.0  
Sushi-X: 4.0

### **Dino Dudes**

Andrew: 3.0  
Mark: 1.5  
Mike: 1.0  
Sushi-X: 3.5 (quote: "Who were they trying to fool with this Battletoads ripoff? Certainly not anyone with a functioning brain.")

### **Agent Number 9**

Andrew: 6.5  
Mark: 6.5 (quote: "As far as shooters go it isn't really all that bad. Not quite on the level of Doom, but some of the missions are pretty well made.")  
Mike: 8.0  
Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Tropical Trouble**

Andrew: 3.0 (quote: "Just what we needed, another generic platformer.")

Mark: 5.0

Mike: 5.0

Sushi-X: 5.5

### **Stealth: Dangerous Mission**

Andrew: 7.0

Mark: 2.5

Mike: 7.0

Sushi-X: 6.0 (quote: "I expected a lot more from this game but what I ultimately got was a rather simplistic flying sim that might've been too ambitious for the Super Nintendo CD.")

-

*Panorama Cotton* had been one of the strangest games on the Sega Genesis and the very definition of a niche title, selling fewer than 20,000 copies in North America. It was, then, very surprising to see the sequel, *Cotton's Flying Adventure*, turn up on our shores, and even MORE surprising to see it turn up on the Super Nintendo CD! Of course, by then, Sunsoft was trying to build a whole franchise out of the *Andrekah* series, and *Andrekah* and *Cotton* were about to become inextricably linked, so it was ultimately out of the desire to further the success of *Andrekah* that *Cotton's Flying Adventure* landed in North America. It was essentially the same as *Panorama Cotton* in terms of gameplay. The titular character, a young and somewhat rude witch named Cotton, flies around increasingly weird worlds, blasting anything and everything she can with magic spells, leveling up within levels and eventually battling very large and very strange bosses. *Panorama Cotton* had been a technological marvel on the Genesis, what with its very detailed animations and high frame rate, and while *Cotton's Flying Adventure* looked great on the SNES-CD, for the system it was on and the time it came out it really wasn't that special. It even looked a bit inferior to *Andrekah*, which had been developed a year before. Fans who played *Andrekah* did see the girl from that game pop up in a few of the later levels, and a nice character dynamic was established between them, with *Andrekah* the nice one and Cotton the mean and snappy one, it was cute to see the two of them interacting and even teaming up in an optional secret level. As far as rail shooters go, the game was certainly fun, but if you REALLY wanted to play a good shooter in the summer of 1996, you needed look no further than *Universalizer 2*, the sequel to 1994's very difficult but incredibly fulfilling shooter game. With *Axelay 2* having been good but somewhat of a disappointment, it fell to *Universalizer 2* to carry the space shooter torch, and did it ever! It LOOKED stunning, and expanded on the first game's intergalactic travel theme by sending the hero into alternate dimensions and even through time to battle endless hordes of alien ships. It was just as trippy and just as hard as the first game, with really powerful new weapons to help you battle the enemy waves (and you would definitely need them, this game featured some of the most seemingly-OP weapons out of any bullet hell game and it was STILL one of the hardest to ever be released on a console). The game sort of slipped into the cracks in the month of *Tale Phantasia*, but its loyal fans still bought up about 75,000 copies when all was said and done (more than double what *Cotton's Flying Adventure* sold in North America). It was good to see that fans of space shooters still had plenty to love on the SNES-CD, which ultimately proved to be one of the best consoles for that genre of games.

-from "The Space Shooters Of 1996", an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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*Finally!*

*It's good to see that the world of video games has finally caught up to the world of comics. I'm talking about, of course, Ben Reilly who was properly introduced to the gaming world in "Spider-Man: Power and Responsibility" for the Super Nintendo CD, a game worthy of this new Spider-Man and everything he brings to the table. I thought angry Peter Parker fans would keep Nintendo away from bringing on Ben, but he's an awesome new Spider-Man and his new game is great too, being an awesome re-telling of the comic book storyline (they took some liberties, but it IS a video game after all). I hope you guys aren't getting any angry mail from Peter Parker supporters, I'm sure he'll be back in a game sometime down the road, but for now, it's the Ben Reilly era, baby!*

*-Zach Brennan*

Zack,

Thanks for the letter! The editorial staff at *Nintendo Power* has been pretty torn over Spider-Man ourselves. We definitely have people on both sides of the debate, but for those who miss Peter Parker, there are plenty of SNES, SNES-CD, and Game Boy games featuring the original Spider-Man! We're glad you loved *Power and Responsibility*, we loved it too and we can't wait for the next great Spider-Man game (which will probably be on the Ultra, which makes us even MORE excited!)

-a letter featured in the September 1996 issue of *Nintendo Power*

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Brittany Saldita: \*shaking her head\* What went wrong with *Stealth: Dangerous Mission*?

John Walden: Pretty much everything in my book. Blocky graphics, glitchy gameplay, repetitive missions...we were hoping this would be THE definitive combat flight-sim on the Super Nintendo CD, but it fell way short.

Brittany: And this plane's got no parachute to bail out the developers. Some of the things in this game, there's just no excuse for. I was worried when there wasn't a booth for this game at E3 after it had been hyped for quite some time, obviously now we know why. The intro screen theme song is probably the best thing about this game.

John: Ocean games are always great in the musical department, even the *Flintstones Movie* game had decent music, so that's no surprise there.

Brittany: Well, let's not go THAT far, this game's not as bad as the *Flintstones Movie*.

John: The game? Or the movie?

Brittany: Both. But it's still a serious disappointment and I can't recommend it for anyone. 2 out of 5.

John: I'm giving it a 1.5.

(...)

Alex Stansfield: *Vandal Hearts* is a pretty fun strategy game with a few somewhat crippling flaws.

Kazzi DeCarlo: A few?! This game is pure crap! Compared to *Fire Emblem*, which was really good, the characters are generic, the missions are generic, it's basically just "go here, kill this, then do it all over again". It didn't even have a good storyline to make all the bad stuff tolerable.

Alex: It wasn't that bad. There were a good variety of characters and battles I thought went by pretty quickly. It was easier to play than *Tactics Ogre*, which I really appreciated. It wasn't as confusing, it was pretty straightforward and I got through missions really fast.

Kaz: The graphics are crap...

Alex: The graphics are better than *Tactics Ogre*.

Kaz: The graphics in *Tactics Ogre* were crap too! These tactical games, unless you have gameplay and storyline twists like, say, *Fire Emblem*, get INCREDIBLY old incredibly fast. It was a chore to play through, a chore to figure out anything good about it, and I give it a 1 out of 5.

Alex: Wow, WOW it doesn't deserve a 1. This was a quality game.

Kaz: Oh no, noooo it wasn't. You compare it to all the other tactical RPGs that came out this year and you tell me it deserves anything better than a 2.

Alex: I gave it a 3.5.

Kaz: WHAT?! Aaaaaaaaaaagggggh! \*holding his head like he's in pain\* Why?!

Ted Crosley: \*yelling from off-screen\* I told you you'd be pissed at him, I told you he liked the game even though it sucked.

Alex: You played it too?

Kaz: Ted, you didn't even have to play it, it sucked!

Ted: I played a bit of it and what I played I didn't like.

Alex: What didn't you like?!

Ted: It was boring.

Kaz: I told you!

Alex: No! You guys are...no! *Vandal Hearts* isn't the most innovative strategy RPG but it's still a solid game! It's worth playing! It's really fun! The storyline is good! It has pirates!

Ted: So does *Tales of the Seven Seas*!

Brittany: \*yells from off-screen\* Yeah, just play *Tales of the Seven Seas*!

Alex: You guys!

-excerpted from the June 4, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted: And that's why *NiGHTS into Dreams* was a freakin' amazing game.

Alex: It is a gorgeous, fun, inspiring, beautiful, heartwarming game with the type of heart you don't usually see in an action title.

Ted: Yeah, even I shed a tear at the end. It's such a beautiful game, takes me back to my childhood when I was getting woken up and taken to dream worlds by magical nightmare harlequins.

Alex: ...when you put it that way it makes the game sound creepy.

Ted: Well, it kinda is. The bad guy's really creepy.

Alex: All creepiness aside, *NiGHTS* is fantastic and every bit as good as the tech demo we saw at last year's E3. It is the most beautiful game on the Saturn, even moreso than *Panzer Dragoon*, and it raises the bar for *Sonic 4* later this year.

Ted: If *Sonic 4* is better than *NiGHTS*, it's Game of the Year.

Alex: I give *NiGHTS* a 4.5. It was almost a five BUT I did find the parts with Claris and Elliot dragged on just a little bit.

Ted: There was a bit of frustration there but the later stages where you get the weapons for them made me feel like a badass. Especially since, if you can beat enough enemies, *NiGHTS* gets a power boost and he can go around the stages at hypersonic speed. The final level, I'm not gonna spoil, but oh man make sure you kick ass with Claris and Elliot. Oh man oh man oh man.

Alex: You havin' a *NiGHTS*-gasm?

Ted: I'm havin' several. The game gets a perfect 5 from me. It's a masterpiece.

Alex: Well, go take a cold shower and when you come back, we're gonna take a look at *Spider-Man: Power and Responsibility* for the Super Nintendo CD and the Sega Genesis.

-excerpted from the June 18, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted: I'm Ted!

Alex: And I'm Alex!

Ted: And why do we have our co-host Brittany all taped up? \*the two of them are carrying her, Ted holding up her back while Alex has her legs, she's sloppily wrapped up in duct tape with a strip of it covering her mouth kind of loosely, giving comical struggles\*

Brittany: \*glares at them\*

Alex: Well, she got so much into *Tale Phantasia* that she didn't want to stop playing and come in to do the review, so... we kinda had to come to her house and kidnap her.

Brittany: Mmrph!

Ted: You know, I think that's a good sign for how good the game is.

Alex: And a bad sign for workplace productivity.

Brittany: Mmph...mmrrph! \*thrashing\*

Ted: Anyway, today on GameTV, we'll be reviewing the Saturn games *X-Men: Children of the Atom* and the space shooter *Darius: Evolved*. We'll also be giving our two cents on the all new *Power Rangers Zeo* game for the Super Nintendo CD. And, in a GameTV exclusive interview, we meet up with Yu Suzuki and chat about the next generation of Sega arcade hardware.

Alex: Me and John'll be taking a look at this year's huge line-up of sports games, AND we're gonna give you a crash course on *FIFA '97* so you can school all your friends.

Brittany: \*kicks Alex in the side of the head, causing Ted to laugh\*

Alex: \*selling the kick like it hurt\* Hey....! \*glares at Brittany\* And YOU and I are gonna review *Tale Phantasia*.

Brittany: Grmm...mleh! \*pokes the tape off her mouth with her tongue\* 5 out of 5, now put me down! \*looks frantic to get back home to her game, over-exaggerating her distress like an addict on withdrawal\*

Alex: The idea behind a review is that we take our time, show the audience everything about the game, and you're not leaving until the show's over!

Brittany: Uh, uh... I think you guys left the oven on at my house, lemme just go back and-

Ted: Your house is just gonna have to burn down, we're not stopping this train for anything!

Brittany: You lousy sons of- \*is cut off by Ted awkwardly sticking the tape back on\* - bmmph!

Ted: We're bringing you previews, reviews, and news to help you choose. This...is *GameTV*! \*the two of them carry a furiously thrashing and kicking Brittany off the stage, she gets the tape off her mouth again and starts yelling at them\*

Brittany: I'm gonna kick your asses...! You two are in so much... you guys are \*bleep\*holes!!!

-intro segment to the June 25, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany: *Tale Phantasia* is one of the greatest games I've ever played, period. Once you start playing you won't be able to tear yourself away and I can tell you that from experience.

Alex: The voices, the music, the visuals, everything comes together perfectly to create a magnificent RPG that ranks among the very best games ever made. This is the first role-playing game I've played where I don't get tired of random encounters. The battle system is just so fun that I find myself grinding pretty much without even needing to.

Brittany: That MIGHT be why they made some of the latter bosses so powerful and tough, because they KNEW people would grind! My dudes were way up in levels and I still had trouble with some of the last few bosses. This is the best RPG on the Super Nintendo CD, bar none.

Alex: I think *Chrono Trigger* might still be a bit better.

Brittany: No.

Alex: I think the pacing in *Chrono Trigger* is better, it's a bit less grindy, um, the storyline is better.

Brittany: That's debateable.

Alex: Well, we're debating right now, right?

Brittany: The thing I loved about *Tale Phantasia* in terms of its story is that all of these worlds are tied together so intimately. What affects one world affects the other, and it's not like in *Chrono Trigger* where it's kind of blatant, in this game it's a lot more subtle and at the end everything comes together in this beautiful sort of way. Don't get me wrong, *Chrono Trigger* is AMAZING but in the end there's no better RPG than *Tale Phantasia*. I think it might be my favorite game of all time and as I said at the very start of the show, it's a 5 out of 5 for me. The easiest 5 I've ever given.

Alex: It's a pretty easy 5 for me too. Despite a few nitpicky things, I have very few qualms with this epic, epic game.

\*Sirens begin to go off\*

Ted: \*runs over with Kaz and John\* Is Brittany trying to escape? Do we need to tape her up again?

Brittany: \*rolling her eyes\* No, it's time to put *Tale Phantasia* in the GameTV Hall of Fame!

Ted: Oh yeah, I figured that was gonna happen.

\*The group takes *Tale Phantasia* to the wall where Brittany hangs it up right next to *Resident Evil*\*

Brittany: And that makes five! And a very deserving fifth game at that. \*turns to the group\* Now that that's over, can I PLEASE go home and play *Tale Phantasia* now?

Ted: Uh, Brittany, the thing is...the janitor kind of complained about the huge mess from you knocking over a bunch of stuff earlier...

Brittany: You were carrying me into the room!

Alex: Sorry but you made the mess and you have to stay here tonight to clean it up. The janitor will be back to get you in the morning.

Brittany: WHAT?! \*she runs after the other four as they quickly flee\* You gotta be kidding me! You guys...!!! \*they run out the door which locks behind them, she tries to get out but she can't\* Dammit! \*pounds on the door for a few seconds\* You guys are gonna pay for this! \*she sighs\* Well this is just a bunch of.... \*she sees a Super Nintendo CD still hooked up to the big screen, and looks over at the Hall of Fame wall\* ...hmmm... \*goes over to the wall and sees the *Tale Phantasia* game up on the shelf\* .... \*she grabs the frame and looks around for a few seconds, then smashes the glass frame on a table and gets the game out\* Hehehe... \*has a smirk on her face as she goes over and puts the game into the SNES-CD, then sits down on the very comfortable looking couch and begins to play as the credits roll\*

-excerpted from the June 25, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: June 1996**

1. Chrono Trigger
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Eternal Night
4. Major Hazard: FUBAR
5. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
6. Super Mario World 3
7. Ballistic Limit
8. Super Mario World 2
9. Donkey Kong Country
10. Fire Pro Wrestling Presents: WCW Monday Nitro
11. Doom
12. Twinblade
13. Monster Wars II: Risen From The Grave
14. Twisted Metal
15. Battletoads: Dark Queen
16. Final Fantasy VI
17. Metal Gear 1+2
18. Killer Instinct
19. Victory
20. Secret Of Mana

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(NOTE: The following dialogue comes from Mr. E., one of our readers who sent this in to us. We edited it up a bit but the dialogue and idea of the conversation itself comes from him.)

**June 30, 1996**

Satoshi Tajiri had had a good past few years. He, and his collaborator Ken Sugimori, had turned their popular game fanzine "Game Freak," into a gaming company in 1989, and had been churning out games every year for the past 6 years. Their most successful finished product thus far was *Pulseman*, which was a major success in Japan and in America, despite the release of *Mega Man X2* at the same time. Tajiri was feeling pretty good. His dream project, a creature collecting game called *Pocket Monsters Red and Green* had just been released. The game had been inspired by his childhood collecting bugs in the suburbs of Tokyo. It was a game that he had pressed Nintendo to make for over 4 years, and (with a little help from Shigeru Miyamoto) finally got the go-ahead to develop. And which his company almost went bankrupt trying to create. He was relieved. The technology for the Gameboy had become primitive compared to the SNES-CD, (which he personally witnessed when he was developing *Pulseman*), and now the Ultra Nintendo. He didn't want to develop his game for those systems, because they lacked the connectivity the Game Boy link cable provided. Furthermore, Nintendo didn't have high hopes for the property, and Tajiri was worried that his project would bomb. That fear turned out to be false. There had been modest sales at first. However, that changed when Mew, (added by programmer Shigeki Morimoto late in the game's development) was discovered. The gaming magazine *Corocoro* had a contest the previous month where twenty entrants would get the elusive Mew, and sales were now exploding. This success had peaked the interest of a certain company. And that's what brought Tajiri to a Machida Coffee shop. He waited, and when he saw someone, he got up, and shook his hand.

"Kutaragi-san, it is a pleasure to see you again."

"It is a pleasure to see you too, Tajiri-san."

The two had previously met when Sony and Game Freak had discussed a *Pulseman* sequel. Whilst the discussions went nowhere, Tajiri had mentioned that he was working tirelessly on a game where the players could capture creatures, and have them battle. Apparently, Sony had been following the production of the game since. As *Pocket Monsters* continued to garner high profits, Kutaragi had called and requested a meeting with Tajiri.

"So, I hear you've been some success with your little bug catching game."

"Yes, that's right."

Ken Kutaragi asked, "So, do you have plans to release more?"

Tajiri wasn't sure, but he knew about the numerous bugs in the original games, and if given an opportunity, would love the chance to create another version of the game to fix those bugs.

"So, you said that *Pocket Monsters* almost bankrupted Game Freak."

"Yes, That's right."

"Well, based off what we have seen, the massive sales figures for the game, we think that the effort was well worth it. And we want to help you make more games. The new model Game Boy, it's a device that we helped with so that we could try our hand at working with portable games. I think a new *Pulseman* game would work well, similar to how Capcom released many *Mega Man* titles for the Game Boy. And your *Pocket Monsters* game is extremely intriguing."

Kuturagi leaned forward:

"I have a proposal for you..."

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### **Sony Acquires Game Freak**

The Japanese electronics company Sony acquired yet another video game publisher, completing a merger with the video game maker Game Freak yesterday. Details of the deal have yet to be revealed, but it's another edition to the company's growing stable of developers.

-excerpted from an article in the July 10, 1996 *Wall Street Journal*

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*The Legion of Super-Heroes is something of a curiosity in the DC Universe. It began life as a throwaway story by Otto Binder in 1958 where the nascent "Legion of Super-Heroes" inducted Superboy into their ranks through a series of trials. It eventually replaced the Boy of Steel in Adventure Comics where it would gain its own rogues gallery and iconic elements like the inverted rocket clubhouse. They would move to Action Comics by the end of the sixties, then to Superboy where the title would become Superboy and the Legion of Superheroes, and then eventually oust Superboy from his own title by the dawn of the eighties. At the height of its popularity, some claim the Legion was seconds in sales to only the Marv Wolfman and George Perez's New Teen Titans. However, Crisis on Infinite Earths was not kind to the team. The removal of both Superboy and Supergirl created the mother of all continuity snarls as Superboy was the inspiration for the team and Brainiac 5's complex relationship with Supergirl was a longstanding subplot. Paul Levitz attempted to rectify this with the Pocket Universe saga, which worked as something of a stopgap measure, and then the "Five Years Later" story arc sparked a series of retcons that fed into Zero Hour.*

*DC wiped the slate clean and assigned Grant Morrison to the Legion titles: the fourth volume of Legion of Super-Heroes and Legionnaires. Well, Morrison himself wrote LoSH while writers like Mark Millar and Tom Peyer scripted his plots for Legionnaires. Despite protests from Superman editorial (Superman and Batman's editors were notorious for being uncooperative with the characters in their stables), Grant Morrison restored Superboy to the Legion of Super-Heroes in a roundabout way. Since the clone Superboy already appeared in his own book and the Superman titles, Morrison reused the Kent Shakespeare and Laurel Kent characters as the Superboy and Supergirl of the 30th century though no one explicitly referred to them by those appellations in-story. Instead, Morrison used the now-vacant codenames Valor and Andromeda to distinguish them from their contemporary counterparts. The setup was simple: Earth of the 30th century was utopian society free of hunger, war, disease, and other societal ills under the cyclopean eye of the "benevolent" Solaris, the Living Sun. Kent Shakespeare had everything he ever wanted: a stable hoe, loving parents, and a girlfriend until a trio of strange teenagers whisked him away and revealed the truth of his "perfect" existence.*

*Cosmic Boy, Saturn Girl, and Lightning Lad exposed Solaris' true nature. The tyrant sun brainwashed countless worlds into submission while his army of stellar computers were subjugating the galaxy. Part of his plans included "programming" the various superhero "dynasties" into compliance. Kent and Laurel was members of the Superman dynasty, the greatest of the heroic houses. Over time Morrison introduced characters from the Flash with Impulse's cousin, Rush, and with James Robinson's blessing, retroactively made Thom Kallor (AKA Star Boy) a member of the Starman dynasty. With the veil over his eyes lifted, Kent dedicated himself to the overthrow of Solaris.*

*Some fans often derisively call his take on the team, "the Justice Legion" because of its overt use of legacy characters from the Justice League. Interestingly, Morrison himself would appropriate the name for a future project. Morrison's Legion was something of a sleeper hit for DC Comics; it garnered critically acclaim that compared his run to science fiction pulps like Flash Gordon and Bryan Hitch's panels introduced the "widescreen" look that gave the book a cinematic feel. He would alternate with Morrison's frequent collaborator, Frank Quitely, for a two year run before he moved on to Adventures of Superman. However, the penultimate arc involved a concept that would reshape DC Comics over the next two decades: the introduction of Hypertime.*

*After the Legion had finally defeated Solaris, Kal Kent, the Superman of the 853rd century, arrives at Legion headquarters to enlist the aid of Valor, Andromeda, and the Legion founders for a mission to stop the Chronovore an eldritch abomination that fed on time. Many fans criticize the story for having little to do with the Legion itself, but it introduced the Fortress of Solidarity where various "discarded" versions of Superman and his supporting cast (including previous versions of the Legion) gathered to combat threats to Hypertime.*

*Kal Kent described it as this, "Imagine time as a river where you throw a stone and the ripples change its course. The main timeline changes but the old timeline exists as a ripple... an echo that exists independently of the changed timeline; every possibility exists within Hypertime and it is the mission of the Superman Squad to protect all of it."*

*By "ripple," Kal obliquely refers to the events of Crisis on Infinite Earths and Zero Hour, and the appearances of the Superman: The Animated Series, Christopher Reeve, Dean Cain, and Bruce Campbell versions of the Man of Steel enforce that these versions are all exist within the Superman canon. Morrison essentially revived the DC Multiverse; the original Superman from Action Comics #1 now existed in his own timeline, as did the 50s version of Superman, the Silver and Bronze Age versions—hell, Supermen from obscure "Imaginary Stories" existed in their own timelines. In many ways, it more resembled the Marvel Multiverse that took the many-worlds interpretation with branching timelines rather than the pre-Crisis DC Multiverse though the possibility that Earth-2 and those other Earths still spun somewhere out in Hypertime was present. However, DC would not fully explore this idea for nearly a decade.*

*The idea was not without controversy either. Alan Moore was working on Supreme, a Rob Liefeld pastiche of Superman who had spent much of the nineties as a violent anti-hero, accused Morrison of plagiarizing his work. Moore's grand arc on Supreme included the idea of the Supremacy; a limbo-like dimension where various versions of Supreme (themselves mirror images Superman's various incarnations) went after reality "revised" itself. Similarly, Morrison criticized Alan Moore's complaint as, "ludicrous considering the character he was writing was himself a copy of Superman." The point became moot as a lawsuit from Marvel/NewsCorp over the long-forgotten Joe Simon/Jack Kirby creation, the Fighting*

American, bankrupted Awesome Comics when its larger investors backed out and Disney (of all companies) ultimately bought its properties in 1999. Moore would leave his run on both *Supreme* and the new *Youngblood* unfinished... but I digress.

*Justice League* might have been the best-selling title of the mid-to-late nineties, but *Legion of Super-Heroes* was arguably the most influential. Many elements from his *Legion* run carried over into other titles such as the expansion of the superhero dynasties in Mark Waid's run on the *Flash* and James Robinson's *Starman*. *Solaris* would plague the *Justice League* and *Superman* when he forced them to build his past incarnation as part of a convoluted time travel plot in 1998's DC *One Million* crossover and the idea of "rippling Hypertime" played into his 1997 "[evolution](#)" of the *Superman* titles that saw many changes (including the controversial removal the red briefs from the uniform) to the *Man of Steel* that rivaled John Byrne's 1986 reboot. However, one of the most notable was the third season *Superman: TAS* episode "Must There Be A Superman?" three-parter that aired in the spring of 1999.

As mentioned earlier, *TAS* version of *Superman* appeared in Morrison's final *Legion* arc and "Must There Be a Superman?" adapted it from the perspective of the *TAS* *Superman*. After Lois is hospitalized in an Intergang attempt on her life; a distraught *Superman* has a crisis of confidence when two imposter "Supermen" appear in Metropolis voiced by Christopher Reeve and Bruce Campbell as special guests. After a brief battle, he follows them through the lightning door to the Fortress of Solidarity where he meets Valor (voiced by Christopher Daniel Barnes), Andromeda (Mary Kay Bergman), and the Legion (Lightning Lad voiced by Jason Priestly, Saturn Girl by Melissa Joan Hart, and Cosmic Boy by Chad Lowe.) The story follows Morrison's nearly verbatim and boasts some of the most fluid animation since "World's Finest." However, Paul Dini wrote an epilogue that answered the question "Must There Be A Superman?" where the *TAS* *Superman* speaks as the lightning door closes.

"Must there be a Superman, Kal? The answer is yes. Even as an idea, every world needs a Superman."

"Must There Be A Superman?" is a personal favorite of mine and many other fans. Not only did it "canonize" the Morrison story, it also received a mention in 1999's *Man of Tomorrow* film. Grant Morrison's *Legion* run had far-reaching consequences on not only the comic books but on other media as well.

-from the blog "The Musing Platypus" by B. Ronning, May 10, 2015

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## **The Blockbuster Summer '96 Movie Season**

The summer of 1996 was perhaps the biggest summer blockbuster season since 1989, largely due to the success of three huge films. Going into the summer, the two films with the most hype behind them were the sci-fi alien action film *Independence Day*, starring future A-lister Will Smith, and *Superman: Last Son of Krypton*, the superhero's return to the silver screen nine years removed from the disastrous *Superman IV: The Quest For Peace*. Though Christopher Reeve had to step down from the lead role (due to age and due to starring in the moderate CBS hit *Extracurricular*), fans still clamored for the hero's return to the big screen after a very popular trilogy of *Batman* films in the interceding period. The

*Superman* film was expected to be the summer's biggest hit, with *Independence Day* a very close second, but an unlikely blockbuster interceded and *Superman* ended up having to settle for third. That film was *Twister*, a film which, along with *Independence Day*, renewed the "disaster film" genre and ended up as the year's second highest grossing film, with over \$250 million at the North American box office. *Independence Day* scored first, with over \$300 million, while *Last Son of Krypton* had to settle for a "mere" \$235 million in domestic receipts (though its \$60 million opening weekend did break *Batman Forever's* opening weekend record). Aside from the "big three", theaters remained packed due to a big glut of lesser but still successful hits. Tom Cruise's *Mission: Impossible* scored nearly \$200 million in domestic receipts, and action hits like *The Rock*, *Eraser*, and *Barcode* (a dystopian sci-fi thriller starring a young actress named Milla Jovovich about an android who had to flee from a pro-human government that sought to scrap her) all made north of \$100 million in North America. On the comedy front, the big hit film was expected to be the Jim Carrey sequel *The Mask II*, but despite a big opening weekend that saw more than \$40 million in box office receipts, the film barely limped past \$120 million at the North American box office. Instead, it was the Eddie Murphy film *The Nutty Professor* that reigned supreme, beating out *The Mask II* by \$12 million (and doing even better overseas). Elsewhere on the comedy front was the family film *Schemers*. Starring Matthew Broderick and at the time *All That* star (now *Saturday Night Live* actor) Kenan Thompson, the movie depicted Thompson as a young con artist who manages to sucker his hapless high school teacher (played by Broderick) into helping him with a huge score, only for the two to end up together on a cross-country flight from the authorities (and a group of much more dangerous criminals). The movie only made \$90 million domestically, but that was a huge success considering its \$12 million budget, and it would receive a sequel in 1998. Disney's *The Hunchback Of Notre Dame*, while one of the summer's most lucrative films, was somewhat of a disappointment after the huge success of 1994's *The Lion King* and the disappointing but still decent performance of 1995's *Pocahontas*. While *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was mostly well received by critics, it still drew some flak for its changes to the original story (which included a "kinder, gentler" Phoebus, who was still one of the film's antagonists until Esmeralda and Quasimodo saved him from a hanging at the hands of Clopin and his fellow gypsies in the Court of Miracles, and also saw Quasimodo and Esmeralda paired up together in the end, which was a complete reversal of the grim ending of the book and seen as "typical, predictable" Disney fare). While critics may not have loved the summer of 1996 (*Barcode* and *Last Son Of Krypton* received the highest praise, with scores of 91% and 87% respectively on Rotten Tomatoes), it was the most attended in ticket sales since 1996, and set the bar quite high for the summer of 1997.

-excerpted from an article on [boxofficereview.com](http://boxofficereview.com), October 14, 2013

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"You know, he really is a hell of a player. I'll give credit where it's due. I'm still the better basketball player but I can see him having a bright future once I'm out of the league."

-Michael Jordan, in a post-game interview with Hannah Storm after Game 6 of the 1996 Eastern Conference Semifinals

The 1996 NBA Playoffs weren't quite as exciting as the 1995 playoffs, but they did see a number of excellent young superstars exhibiting their talents and taking their teams on deep playoff runs. Coming into the playoffs, the overwhelming favorite was the Chicago Bulls, who had just rattled off their second consecutive 70-win season behind the trio of Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen, and Chris Webber. The only threat to the Bulls' hopes of repeating as NBA champs were the Orlando Magic, who'd won 58 games in the Atlantic

Division and had easily bested the declining New York Knicks for the division title. Reggie Miller's Pacers had won 54 which was good for the third seed. The West was a war, with the Seattle SuperSonics having won 62 games, good for first place, with the Golden State Warriors also winning 62 but losing the tiebreaker. The San Antonio Spurs had grabbed 59 wins, and the Utah Jazz were close behind them with 57.

The first round of the playoffs had little in the way of drama. The Bulls, Magic, Warriors, and Sonics all easily swept their series and the Pacers beat the Cleveland Cavaliers in four. The Boston Celtics, led by Grant Hill, beat the New York Knicks in a three-game sweep, though the West's 4-5 series was an exciting slugfest that saw the Jazz barely beating the Rockets in a game five overtime thriller. In the conference semifinals, the Pacers and Magic played what was probably the best series of the playoffs, though the Pacers ended up bowing out in seven games for the second straight year. Despite flashes of brilliance, Grant Hill could only carry the Celtics to game six, where the Bulls blew out the Celtics at the brand new Fleet Center. In the West, the Jazz managed to upset the Sonics in six, while the Warriors went all the way with David Robinson and the Spurs. In game 7, played in Oakland, Horace Grant had a dominating performance with 19 points and an incredible 27 rebounds, and the Warriors beat the Spurs in the deciding game, 132-109. In the conference finals, the Magic were stomped by the Bulls in five games, while the Warriors only needed five to beat out the Jazz, setting up an NBA Finals between the Chicago Bulls and the Golden State Warriors. It was thought to be Mitch Richmond's chance to prove himself as an NBA superstar, but despite pushing the Bulls to six games, Chicago's tough trio was too much for the Warriors to handle. Michael Jordan famously shouted "Fuck you, Mitch Richmond!" in the celebratory aftermath of Game 6, proving once again his dominance over yet another pretender to his throne, and the Bulls had won their fifth championship in just six years.

-excerpted from TheBasketballHound's series of blog posts recapping the 90s-era NBA playoffs, posted on January 29, 2014

### **High Drama At The 1996 NBA Draft**

The annual NBA draft saw a flood of excellent talent from both the collegiate and high school ranks entering the league, and teams were clamoring for spots, with the first round seeing plenty of trade action that started pretty early in the night. After the night's first pick, which sent Allen Iverson to the Washington Bullets, all bets were off. The 76ers sent their number two pick, which ended up being Shareef Abdur-Rahim, to the New York Knicks for a package of players that included John Starks and New York's number-one picks for 1998 and 2000. Marcus Camby was grabbed up by the Dallas Mavericks, and New Jersey and Toronto swapped the fourth and sixth picks, which were Ray Allen and Lorenzen Wright respectively. The Nets seem to be hoping that Wright can give them the big-time center they need, while the Raptors seemed very happy to be adding both Ray Allen and Derrick Coleman to their growing young nucleus that includes Damon Stoudamire. There was a bit of high drama concerning Kobe Bryant, who had previously stated that he wouldn't play for any other team except the Los Angeles Lakers. That didn't stop the Western Conference champion Golden State Warriors from trading Chris Mullin up to pick him, and after some lengthy negotiations it seems that Bryant is happy with playing by the Bay. The Indiana Pacers seemed to be going with the hometown favorite Brian Evans with their first-round pick, but then they traded up to obtain Steve Nash from the Atlanta Hawks, sending Derrick McKey and their second rounder along with Evans. The trade was criticized in some circles, as the Pacers already have a capable point guard in Mark Jackson, but GM Donnie Walsh tells the media that Nash will make an excellent addition to the Pacers' second unit, where he'll be able to learn and grow. Overall, analysts seemed to pick the Raptors as the draft's

biggest winners, with the Bullets, having obtained the consensus best player, as a close second. Only time will tell if this draft ends up as a major turning point for the NBA or a major disappointment for a lot of hopeful teams.

-from an article in *USA Today*, June 28, 1996

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Narrator (Don LaFontaine): Last year, *Sailor Moon* took America by storm. Now, after nearly a year, *Sailor Moon* is back.

\*Scenes play from the first two episodes of the Makai Tree saga\*

Narrator: New villains. New powers. New threat. Can *Sailor Moon* and her friends re-unite in time to save Tokyo, or will the world be overgrown?

\*Shows the Makai Tree spreading its roots\*

Narrator: Find out when *Sailor Moon* comes to prime-time, this Friday, June 14th in a one hour special, *The Return of Sailor Moon*. Only on Fox!

-a *Sailor Moon* promo commercial that aired during early June 1996 on Fox

### **When Fox Kids Kicked Butt**

During the fall of 1996, Fox Kids kicked off a new campaign to promote their lineup, particularly of action-oriented shows. A series of promos began to air bearing the new slogan: "Fox Kids: Where Kids Kick Butt!" The lineup was largely to promote the new weekday line-up, which included *Sailor Moon*, *X-Men: The Animated Series*, *Power Rangers Zeo*, and a brand new cartoon from Craig McCracken called *The Buttkickin' Girls*. Originally called *The Whoopass Girls*, and known as *The Powerpuff Girls* when a pilot short aired on Cartoon Network's *What A Cartoon!* anthology series, the show depicted three young girls who were created in a science experiment by a man named Professor Utonium. With their new superpowers, the three girls, Blossom, Bubbles, and Buttercup, fought crime together against a horde of strange and hilarious villains. The new Fox Kids slogan earned some controversy, particularly from Brent Bozell's Parents Television Council, who claimed that the slogan promoted violence and weren't pleased with the gratuitous use of the word "butt". Fox Kids was very proactive in clarifying the meaning of their new slogan, however, explaining that "kicking butt" didn't just mean literal fighting, but also meant that kids took an active role in self-improvement and community involvement, through staying in school, picking up litter, and other positive acts (in a similar way to Nickelodeon's *Big Help* campaign). They even aired a series of public service ads featuring various Fox Kids stars. The most famous and most effective such ad was the one featuring *Power Rangers* stars Jason David Frank and David Yost. It was an anti-bullying ad that featured the shocking admission that Frank had bullied Yost during their time together on the show, and showed Frank earnestly and humbly asking for Yost's forgiveness. It didn't specify the exact reason for the bullying (which, down the road was revealed to be related to the fact that Yost was gay), but was still seen as a very effective and honest commercial, and probably contributed to Yost remaining on the show after *Power Rangers Zeo*. The slogan itself wasn't especially effective and the campaign was quietly phased out in late 1997, but it remains one of the more memorable times in the history of Fox Kids.

-from an article on the website Kids' TV Memories, posted on September 15, 2008

\*Two young women are seen walking down the sidewalk at a crowded park.\*

Catherine Sutherland: Hello, I'm Catherine Sutherland, you might know me as Kat the Pink Ranger on *Power Rangers Zeo*!

Lalainia Lindbjerg: And I'm Lalainia Lindbjerg and you might know me as the voice of Sailor Venus on *Sailor Moon*.

Sutherland: You might know Fox Kids as a place where kids kick butt, but "kicking butt" isn't just about winning a fight or beating up bad guys.

Lindbjerg: Kicking butt is about being the best you that you can be! Staying in school, studying hard, volunteering in your community, all of these things are a great way to kick butt each and every day!

Sutherland: In fact, let's see how these kids from a local elementary school are kicking butt right now by volunteering to help clean up this beautiful park.

\*The two walk over to the group of kids who are picking up trash that's been left by various park-goers, they begin chipping in to help as well\*

Sutherland: Making your community a more beautiful place to live helps everyone living there! It makes for a more healthy environment, it helps people feel better about where they live, and it makes the park safer so it can be enjoyed by people of all ages!

Lindbjerg: And when you help make the world a better place, it makes others want to pitch in and help out too.

\*The two actresses and the kids finish up cleaning the park and are now standing together under a big tree.\*

Sutherland: So remember, while you may not be a superhero and while you may not come across evil monsters in your every day life....

Lindbjerg: You can still be a hero if you devote yourself to being the best you you can be, help out where you can and make the world a better place for everyone!

Everyone: And that's why kids kick butt!

(...)

\*A young woman is walking down the sidewalk in a neighborhood.\*

Saffron Henderson: I'm Saffron Henderson, and I play the voice of Sailor Jupiter on the show *Sailor Moon*. But what a lot of people don't know is that I've been fighting a battle every day since I was a young girl.

\*Henderson walks up to a little girl and her mother.\*

Henderson: You see, I've been fighting a battle against diabetes. Keeping it in check is a full

time job, but that's what "kicking butt" is all about. It's about taking care of yourself so that you can be the best you you can be.

\*Henderson begins to talk to the young girl, who also has type 1 diabetes.\*

Henderson: It's not an easy fight, but with the right attitude and a lot of courage, you can handle even the toughest of challenges. \*to the little girl\* So you already know what you have to do every day, don't you?

\*The girl nods and smiles, and she and her mother go through the various steps to inject the girl with her daily insulin.\*

Girl: It's easy to get discouraged, but my doctor says that as long as I take care of myself, I can do almost anything I want!

Henderson: That's right, you can. You're very brave. \*she smiles and she does some of her Sailor Jupiter lines for the little girl, who smiles and then the two of them do some Sailor Jupiter poses together\*

Girl: I like Sailor Jupiter the best because she's really brave and no matter what happens to her she always stands up and protects her friends!

Henderson: \*to the camera\* Stacie here kicks butt every single day, and there are thousands of kids out there just like you who are also dealing with diabetes and other serious diseases like cancer, HIV, and congenital heart defects. Sometimes it might seem like it's hopeless. I know it did for me when I was first diagnosed. But if you keep your chin up, remember to take care of yourself, and never lose hope, you can kick butt just like Sailor Jupiter and just like Stacie! And even if you don't have a serious disease like diabetes, it's important to eat right and get plenty of exercise so that you can stay healthy and strong well into the future!

\*Henderson, Stacie, and her mom strike one more Sailor Jupiter pose together and shout "Kids Kick Butt!" into the camera.\*

-commercials from Fox Kids' "Where Kids Kick Butt" campaign that aired in the fall of 1996

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### **From MTV to *Mad TV***

Kazzi DeCarlo has been cast to join the second season of *Mad TV* when it returns to Fox in the fall. DeCarlo, known for playing Kaz on the hit MTV video game news show *GameTV*, will be leaving that show some time in July. In addition to his reviewing duties, DeCarlo often played wacky characters in the various sketches on the show, providing much of the comic relief in contrast to the shows' straight-man hosts Ted Crosley and Alex Stansfield. Though the loss of DeCarlo will be felt, *GameTV* should weather it relatively well. The show is currently the second highest rated show on MTV behind hit cartoon *Beavis and Butthead*, and the show will be getting a new co-host, Gary Westhouse, to replace DeCarlo after he leaves.

-from an article in the June 25, 1996 issue of *Variety* magazine

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*\*Lisa, Bart, and Homer are running from a pack of wild dogs. They quickly slip into a room but the walls begin closing in on them.\**

*Lisa: We're trapped!*

*Bart: Game over man, game over!*

*Homer: No it's NOT! \*begins punching the walls angrily, when this doesn't work he starts ramming his head into them\**

*Lisa: I don't see how giving yourself a concussion is going to help us!*

*Homer: I don't see how it's NOT going to help us! \*keeps doing it\**

*Lisa: \*she rolls her eyes and sees something\* Bart, help me up!*

*\*Bart lets Lisa climb on his shoulders and she manages to grab a long pole from a shelf, she props it between the walls and this gives them time to think of a way out of the room. Lisa and Homer make it out but Bart is very nearly crushed, they pull him out at the last second.\**

*Bart: Whoa, man, I was almost a Bart sandwich!*

*Homer: Mmmm....Bart sandwich...*

-excerpted from the "Resident Annoying" segment of *The Simpsons* episode "Treehouse Of Horror VII", based on the video game *Resident Evil*, which aired on October 27, 1996. The segment was seen as an excellent send-up of the game, which included Milhouse as a parody of the traitorous Albert Wesker, and as the best of the episode's three segments.

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*"And it seems that the Latin music craze of the past year is showing no signs of stopping. Los Del Rio's earworm dance hit Macarena has just topped the chart for the tenth straight week, one of the longest runs in the modern era. And what song has been the runner-up for the past three weeks? Selena's hit "Moonlight Romance", from her album Dreaming Of You. The album has sold nearly five million copies thus far and looks to be a front-runner for next year's Grammy Awards, though Selena herself has expressed some misgivings about the success of Macarena, saying in an interview 'I think the song depicts a somewhat harmful relationship and then completely glosses over it by making it the background of a catchy dance beat, it's not the kind of song that should be coming out of the Latin music community.' While some music critics agree with Selena, others attribute her attitude to jealousy. Though it's clear to see that it's very hard to achieve such chart success without attracting some measure of controversy."*

-excerpted from an MTV News report on September 30, 1996

Brittany Saldita: *\*wearing a Bikini Kill t-shirt\** And it's just an honor to have you guys here today.

Kathleen Hanna: Well thanks, it's great to be here on the show.

Brittany: Aaaaand performing after the interview.

Kathleen: \*she laughs and smiles\* We'll do our best.

Brittany: So explain to a lot of the people watching what the riot grrrl movement is all about, because I think, you know, even with a lot of girls watching this show, most people who play games are guys who might not have been exposed to your particular sort of brand of music. Which is a real shame because you guys kick more ass than a lot of the bands with a lot more exposure.

Kathleen: It's cool, we're not really used to being in the spotlight, we get that our message is pretty subversive and we're just gonna keep playing until one day it isn't. But anyway, the riot grrrl movement is about empowering women, it's about addressing a lot of the issues that effect women today and inspiring women and girls to express themselves, to use their voice because every woman HAS a voice, even if you have to shout as loud as you can, to just keep shouting and keep being heard because it's a message that HAS to be heard. A lot of our music addresses things like rape, like domestic abuse, things that women have to confront every single day. At a lot of concerts, women can't have a good time like the men can because whenever they're in a crowd, they're getting groped, they're getting assaulted verbally and physically and a lot of what we do is about creating safe spaces where women can feel free to rock out and feel the music and not have to worry about being touched or insulted just because they like the same kinds of music as guys do.

Brittany: It's a big problem and I know from personal experience, going to concerts and not feeling comfortable getting in the middle of the crowd because I know there's going to be some \*bleep\*hole there who wants to touch me or whatever. And at a Bikini Kill concert I know that's not gonna happen to me.

Kathleen: \*she smiles\* I remember you from the front row a couple of times.

Brittany: \*smiling, she looks at the camera\* Full disclosure, I am an ENORMOUS fan of this band.

Kathleen: You're a riot grrrl yourself aren't you?

Brittany: Well, aside from not performing music, yeah. But you know, I feel that video games are becoming an increasingly safe space for women. There's still a lot of chauvinistic stuff there, obviously, guys still saving the princess and women being treated like garbage, but then you have games like *The Darkest Ritual*, and *MagiQuest*, and *Tomb Raider* is coming out pretty soon and that looks like there's a really good female protagonist there.

Kathleen: Oh, *MagiQuest*, Kurt Cobain and me got together and played some of that a while back.

Brittany: You saw Kurt Cobain again?

Kathleen: We're not dating again, not right now anyway, but he's been kind of chilling out, going around and performing with some of my friends and one night he just wanted me and Billy and Tobi to come play some games with him and we spent a lot of time messing around in *MagiQuest*. It's a little cutesy for me but it's pretty fun. I don't play many games because, you know, I don't think there's enough representation of women there, but I know

it's getting better. You're a HUGE part of that, you know that, right?

Brittany: \*blushing\*

Kathleen: Stop it! \*laughs\* I'm serious, I hear little girls talking about games and mentioning your name. They love you.

Brittany: I think Bikini Kill is doing WAY more for women in music than I'm doing for women in games. And then Bratmobile, did you see the charts? They just got a song to No. 38!

Kathleen: I don't really follow the charts but I did hear that "Sail Over The Waterfall" did really well.

Brittany: I swear to God, I almost passed out when I heard Casey Kasem actually talking about Bratmobile on his top 40.

Kathleen: Shut the \*bleep\* up. Shut the \*bleep\* up, no \*bleep\*ing way!

Brittany: Right now, "Sail Over The Waterfall" is the number 38 song in America.

Kathleen: See, and a lot of that is Kurt's doing because he helped get them back together. That's the thing about riot grrrl, a lot of people think we hate men, but no, we don't hate men. I \*bleep\*ing love men. We're about elevating women, not bringing down men. We're about full equality so that men and women can be together and be good to each other and not have to worry about the \*bleep\* that anybody says about it, saying that you're less of a man for not treating women like \*bleep\*. You're more of a human being if you treat other human beings with dignity and respect, women and men.

Brittany: I've never felt more safe or comfortable than when I'm doing this show with Ted and Alex and John and Gary, and Kaz back when he was still on. They're awesome.

Kathleen: See? But you do really need to have a few more women on here with you.

Brittany: Do you want to be on the show? I think we could make room for you guys.

Kathleen: Is that a serious offer?

Brittany: \*looks a bit nervous, smiling nervously\*

Kathleen: \*she laughs\*

Brittany: I mean if it was up to me-

Kathleen: I know, I know. \*she laughs again and gives Brittany a hug\*

Brittany: Well, everybody, it's time for Bikini Kill to take the stage. So here they are, performing their latest song "Reject All American", it's Bikini Kill!

\*The band performs, Kathleen even pulls Brittany up on stage to sing a verse with her at one point.\*

-excerpted from the August 6, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

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On July 28, 1996, Nickelodeon premiered the show *Swashbucklers*, a pirate-themed live action comedy/drama that ended up becoming one of their most popular shows of all time. Building off of the pirate craze kicked off by video games such as the *Monkey Island* series and *Tales Of The Seven Seas*, the show was criticized at first for being a bit of a ripoff of the *Seven Seas* game, but soon found its own footing and ended up as a critical and commercial success. It featured six orphaned youths, ranging in age from 12 to 18, three girls and three boys from various backgrounds, as they set out on-board an abandoned pirate ship and soon found themselves stranded at sea. It was sort of regarded as a hybrid of *Tales Of The Seven Seas* and Nickelodeon's sci-fi show *Space Cases*, though unlike in *Space Cases*, the kids on-board the ship, called the *Sea Spirit*, had no adult supervision most of the time. The main cast was largely unknown, with the most famous among them being Scottish actress Kelly MacDonald, who had just finished her work on the film *Trainspotting* when Nickelodeon cast her in the show. She played the fiery character Emma Stanton, who was the sort of co-leader of the group of kids, along with the young man Balthasar who was Emma's rival (and eventual love-interest). The show featured plenty of guest star appearances, including a young Angelina Jolie as an adventurous treasure hunter in the show's third season who ended up being one of the show's most memorable and wicked one-shot villains. Though *Swashbucklers* started out as a Sunday night show on Nickelodeon's "Nickel-O-Zone" block (airing right before *Nick News*), it would eventually make it to SNICK in 1997, replacing *Space Cases* (which ended up barely getting a concluding third season in its own right, returning to SNICK in early 1998 for a one-night marathon of its final three episodes). *Swashbucklers* remains one of Nickelodeon's most beloved shows. It ended its run in 2001 after four successful seasons, the ending of the show largely seen as the end of Nickelodeon's "Golden Age" which lasted from the mid 80s to the early 2000s.

-excerpted from "Nickelodeon Memories: The Network's Greatest Shows", an article on TVTubeTime.com in 2009

### **Nickelodeon's Late Night Line-Up For Fall 1996 ("Nickel-O-Zone" on Monday-Friday and Sunday, "SNICK" on Saturday)**

Monday Night (8:00 PM): Rugrats  
Monday Night (8:30 PM): Rugrats

Tuesday Night (8:00 PM): Phineas And Ferb  
Tuesday Night (8:30 PM): Phineas And Ferb

Wednesday Night (8:00 PM): The Adventures Of Pete And Pete  
Wednesday Night (8:30 PM): The Adventures Of Pete And Pete

Thursday Night (8:00 PM): Jessie's Jeans (a show featuring a young Amber Tamblyn as a girl running her own clothing shop, it was a decently successful kid sitcom that lasted two seasons)  
Thursday Night (8:30 PM): Live! With Stick Stickly (a Space Ghost Coast to Coast-like talk show featuring Stick Stickly sketches and interviews with celebrities, it only lasted a year)

Friday Night (8:00 PM): Kablam!  
Friday Night (8:30 PM): Action League Now!

Saturday Night (8:00 PM): The Secret World Of Alex Mack  
Saturday Night (8:30 PM): All That  
Saturday Night (9:00 PM): Space Cases  
Saturday Night (9:30 PM): Are You Afraid Of The Dark?

Sunday Night (8:00 PM): Swashbucklers  
Sunday Night (8:30 PM): Nick News With Linda Ellerbee

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*"So, we're getting ready to air The Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest, and a big aspect of the new show is the character of Jessie, who's Race Bannon's daughter. Everyone's real excited about her, wanting her to be popular with critics, but I noticed that the first episode we had, the one critics were going to see, was The Darkest Fathoms, an episode that saw Jessie getting captured by pirates and rescued by Jonny. Now, how are we supposed to sell Jessie as being Jonny's equal if he's saving her in the very first episode? So I convince them to move Darkest Fathoms to the fifth episode in order and have Escape To Questworld as our big premiere. It does a lot of things, it introduces Questworld properly right away and it has Jonny, Jessie, and Hadji all saving the day together as equals. The critics loved it and conversely, they loved the show and loved Jessie. I like to tell people I 'saved' The Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest. Would we have gotten three seasons, including a big finale TV movie, if I hadn't gotten them to make that change? Maybe, maybe not. But every little bit helped, considering how close we were to getting canceled after season two."*  
-Peter Lawrence

Toonami debuted on Cartoon Network in the fall of 1996 as a weekday action-oriented block on the network, largely conceived to run counter to the action-packed Fox Kids weekday block. It ran from 3 to 5 initially, though in 1997 it moved to 4 to 6 in order to capitalize on kids returning from school later in the afternoon. The very first line-up consisted of *Robotech*, *Reboot*, *Slayers*, and *The Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest*. Of particular interest was *Slayers*, which had to be fairly heavily edited in order to get down to a TV-Y7 rating, but was still considered probably the edgiest show to air on kids' TV. *Sailor Moon* had paved the way for somewhat edgy anime series to air in North America a year before, but getting *Slayers* on Cartoon Network in 1996 was still a feat of incredible editing acumen and it was a small miracle Cartoon Network pulled it off without butchering the primary plotlines and character traits. The block itself was received well, though ratings in the early days lagged behind what Fox Kids was offering, and it was *Jonny Quest* that largely propped up the block. It was an intriguing choice to use the character Moltar to introduce the shows, he'd largely been seen as the backstage producer in *Space Ghost Coast to Coast*, but his deep voice and space-agey look did a lot to sell Toonami as something "cool" to that generation of kids. Cartoon Network had initially considered *Dragon Ball Z* for the block, but they went with *Slayers*, which they believed would be more popular with young girls (another choice influenced by the popularity of *Sailor Moon*). *DBZ* languished in syndication for a couple of years before being picked up by Toonami in 1998 and becoming one of its biggest hits, but it all began with that fateful choice in 1996 to air a weekday block of action cartoons.

-excerpted from a 2008 article on TVTubeTime.com

### **Kids' WB Aims To Challenge Fox Kids For Saturday Morning Supremacy**

Last year, Warner Brothers started a new block of Saturday morning cartoons, and this year, Kids' WB is looking hotter than ever with a huge block of Saturday morning shows as

they look to knock reigning champ Fox Kids off its perch. The network is banking heavily on the success of *Superman: The Animated Series*, but shows such as *Animaniacs* and spin-off *Pinky and the Brain* are also planned to be a major part of Kids' WB's fortunes in the near future. Many shows are castoffs from Fox Kids, which used to air many Warner Bros. shows until the formation of Kids' WB, including the acclaimed *Batman: The Animated Series*, which makes the block its new home starting in the fall. There are also a pair of shows airing on the block based on hit video games: *Earthworm Jim* and *Jewels Of The Realm*. With a mix of Looney Tunes-style comedy and major superhero action, Kids' WB is eschewing the live-action shows that have helped to make Fox Kids such a major success, but they might just have the strongest block of animated shows on all of television.

-excerpted from an article in TV Guide's 1996 Fall Television Preview

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*We were recently granted an interview with Joss Whedon, whose upcoming show Buffy the Vampire Slayer will be premiering early next year.*

(...)

*You've mentioned getting inspiration from video games a few times when discussing plans for your new show. Exactly which games have been the inspiration for Buffy?*

Joss Whedon: Well, definitely a big one is this role-playing game called *The Darkest Ritual*, about these two girls who get caught up in magic and unleash a horde of demons on their school. That one I found quite a bit of inspiration from, the characters were great and it was really well-written. Also, um, *Secret of Mana* was a great game. They even named one of the vampire bosses after Buffy from the movie! I thought that was a neat little tribute, so I mined that game for some ideas. Credit where credit's due, of course. I really liked *Castlevania: Rondo Of Blood*, but I'm not sure if the setting's compatible with what I'm trying to do, maybe there'll be a reference or two in there somewhere. And of course *Snatcher*, I think a lot of us young writers were inspired by that game. I'm waiting for *Policenauts*, I want to see if there's anything cool in there.

*So Buffy might go into space?*

Whedon: \*laughs\* I wouldn't rule anything out!

-excerpted from an interview with Joss Whedon in the September 1996 issue of *Wizard* magazine

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The final episodes of *Neon Genesis Evangelion* were known for their bizarre nature, though the final two episodes are largely considered a triumph. The history of the show's production issues is well documented, despite being a critically acclaimed anime series, the show was running out of funds by the time the last few episodes were set to be produced. Enter Sega. Flush with cash after the Japanese success of the Sega Saturn, the company propped up the production of *Evangelion*'s final two episodes, which is evident from the increased production quality seen in them. As a consequence of this injection of funds, Sega gained a measure of control over the production of the show during its later stages, namely in the company's insistence that creator Hideaki Anno seek help for his issues with depression. At

the time, Japan was notorious for the large number of suicides among workers (it still is), and executives at Sega, particularly Norio Ohga, were concerned that Anno might take his own life before production on the series ended. The resulting creative disputes between Anno and Sega delayed production of the series for nearly three months, though when it finally began airing in January 1996, the resulting series became one of the most popular and acclaimed anime of all time. The final two episodes themselves reflect the continued internal struggle Anno was facing at the time, though despite Sega's interference, he largely got the ending he wanted. Episode 25 took place largely in Shinji's mind as the Human Instrumentality Project, to merge all human souls into a single entity, got underway as Shinji and his companions each confronted their own reasons for existence. In Episode 26, which was the episode most affected by the added funds from Sega, Shinji emerges from his shell, having rejected Instrumentality, only to be confronted by an enormous Angel constructed from the soul energy of those humans who had chosen not to reject it and who now formed a collective being of immense power. Shinji once again pilots EVA-01 in a seemingly suicidal effort to stop this being, but just as hope seems lost, it is Asuka, piloting a reconstructed EVA-02, who embraces her own individuality to help Shinji penetrate the huge entity's armor. Shinji emerges into the core of the beast, where he is confronted by Rei, who has not come to accept her own individuality and who has created this creature to ensure humanity's survival. As Asuka struggles to survive on the outside, Shinji engages in a fierce battle with Rei (their battle of the wills is depicted as a battle between two glimmering angels featuring some of the best special effects ever seen in anime at the time). Through sheer force of will, Shinji convinces humanity to reject Instrumentality and reject Rei. She fades into the aether and into nothingness as humanity is freed. Shinji re-emerges alone on a beach and finds Asuka, having fought the huge creature with everything she had, seemingly dying on the sands. Shinji staggers over to try and comfort her, but she rejects him, asserting her own individuality by turning away from Shinji in her final moments. When he tries to insist on helping her, she begins to strangle him with the last of her strength, only stopping when she realizes the gravity of what the two of them have accomplished together. She fades away, giving him one last smile before dying in his arms. The final scene of the series is of an uncertain Shinji holding Asuka with a contemplative look on his face as a large group of people, led by Misato, run up to congratulate him for freeing humanity. The ending of *Evangelion* was definitely controversial, though fans of the series largely embraced it, with the most controversial aspects being the deaths of Asuka and Rei. Anno later stated that their deaths and Shinji's reaction symbolized his own feelings about "aspects of myself that needed to die in order for me to start a new phase of my own life". He also has come to state on repeated occasions his gratitude to Sega for providing the funding to help him finish the series and encouraging him to get help for his depression, understanding that their involvement with the ending of the series wasn't out of a desire to produce a more commercially-friendly ending but out of concern for his well-being. He would later write several games for Sega beginning in 1999.

-excerpted from "When Games Met Hollywood: A History Of Video Game Companies' Involvement In Your Favorite Movies And Shows", a book published in 2007

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*"By 1996, the Internet was definitely 'a thing', and I knew Sega needed to get involved in it at some point. There was the Sega NetLink, which wasn't really a success for us but at least got our foot in the door, but I knew our internet presence would be important to the continued success of our company going forward, and if we could get online before Nintendo and Sony did, all the better."*

-Tom Kalinske

*"You know, we've gotta stay on the cutting edge in technology and that's something I'm determined to do, because being #2 is not acceptable. I'm working around the clock brainstorming ideas for the next version of Explorer and Microsoft has hundreds of people working around the clock on doing nothing but that, coming up with ideas to make surfing the web with Explorer the best possible experience it can be."*

-Bill Gates, in a July 2, 1996 interview with a reporter from CNN

## **Browser Wars Heating Up?**

With more and more people accessing the Internet every single day for news, sports, and weather updates, in addition to checking their electronic mail, the web browser business is becoming more and more lucrative by the week, and the top two companies in browsing the web are Netscape and Microsoft. Netscape's Navigator browser is the industry leader, with over 60 percent of the current market share, but Internet Explorer is gaining by the day due to its inclusion with the radically successful Windows 95 operating system.

A surprising new front in the browser wars is the world of video games, with Sega set to release a new internet peripheral for their Sega Saturn gaming console. Sega has announced that its new NetLink device will include a proprietary internet browser developed by Sega itself, though it's been rumored that Netscape offered a \$50 million deal to include a version of their browser with the NetLink device. Microsoft has been making inroads into the video game industry itself, developing a series of best-selling computer games. When asked if Microsoft would jump into the console business itself, Bill Gates offered no comment, though industry analysts say that entering the video game market at this time would be unwise, and point to Apple's decision, now universally considered to be the correct one, to reject Bandai's offer to enter the market with a console of its own nearly three years ago. Bandai forged ahead with its own console which has proven to be a market flop, selling less than 250,000 units worldwide and costing the company more than \$200 million dollars. As for Nintendo, the company currently has no plans to include internet capabilities with its upcoming Ultra Nintendo console, though those plans could change as the device draws nearer to an expected release some time next year.

-excerpted from an article in *Time* magazine, July 8, 1996

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*"Squaresoft isn't just about Final Fantasy, and I think a lot of people are beginning to understand that. Of course, Chrono Trigger and Secret Of Mana were quite successful and people still call us the Final Fantasy company!"*

-Hiranobu Sakaguchi, in an interview in the July 1996 issue of *Famitsu* magazine

*"Where are the games? Where are the games? We gotta keep giving people reasons to buy the Saturn! If you see a great game in Japan, localize it! If you see an American studio with a lot of talent, let's go talk to them! I want the Saturn to have a bigger library than the SNES-CD. I want us to have a bigger library than the Ultra when it comes out. Let's keep churning out those games!"*

-Tom Kalinske, in an August 4, 1996 staff meeting

*"Right now we don't have any plans to bring Sim games to the Sega Saturn. The technology is very good, but right now the Ultra Nintendo shows far more promise. Maybe that'll change in the future."*

-Will Wright, in an August 1996 interview with *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"And there, there's Muhammad Ali with the torch! Look at that, one of the towering athletes of the 20th Century is going to light the Olympic Flame! This is truly incredible!"*

-Bob Costas' commentary on Muhammad Ali lighting the Olympic Torch for the 1996 Summer Olympics, somewhat different from OTL's commentary but with the same person lighting the torch

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### **Final Fight 3**

Andrew: 8.0

Mark: 8.0

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 9.0 (quote: "Final Fight returns better than ever with new characters and some creative new enemies as well.")

### **Grant Hill In NBA Basketball**

Andrew: 8.5 (quote: "A great basketball game, one of the best yet seen on the SNES-CD. It definitely focuses on fun over everything else.")

Mark: 8.5

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **International Track and Field**

Andrew: 7.0

Mark: 8.5 (quote: "Great graphics for an SNES-CD game, but I wish there'd been more events to choose from.")

Mike: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **PGA European Tour**

Andrew: 6.5

Mark: 6.5

Mike: 6.0 (quote: "It plays decently but the options are rather spartan.")

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Romancing SaGa**

Andrew: 7.0

Mark: 7.0

Mike: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.5 (quote: "The game does a good job of conforming to your preferred play style. My only gripe is that it could be longer.")

## **Street Fighter Alpha 2**

Andrew: 9.0

Mark: 9.0 (quote: "Another outstanding installment in the Street Fighter series, with the best graphics yet.")

Mike: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8.5

## **WWF In Your House**

Andrew: 4.5

Mark: 5.5 (quote: "A decent enough game, but really bad when compared to Fire Pro Wrestling.")

Mike: 3.0

Sushi-X: 1.0

## **Day Of Malcarius II**

Andrew: 9.0 (quote: "An absolutely superb RPG that surpasses even the excellent first game.")

Mark: 9.0

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.5

## **Soul Matrix**

Andrew: 7.5

Mark: 8.0

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 7.5 (quote: "Squaresoft did an excellent job of creating a great new original RPG and it's very creative, but it doesn't quite match up to the classics.")

## **Honorbound**

Andrew: 5.0

Mark: 4.5 (quote: "The attempt at a storyline to flesh out these boring characters was just a coat of ugly paint on a mediocre fighting game.")

Mike: 4.0

Sushi-X: 4.0

## **SimZoo**

Andrew: 6.0 (quote: "One of the lesser *Sim* games, I'd rather just have a third SimCity. It gives you plenty of nice menus but it's really hard to get your zoo up and running smoothly.")

Mark: 8.0

Mike: 6.0

Sushi-X: 6.0

## **Stackector**

Andrew: 6.5

Mark: 6.5

Mike: 7.0 (quote: "A rather fun puzzle game, though I'm still going to wait for next month's Tetris Attack.")

Sushi-X: 6.5

-reviews of July 1996's SNES-CD games in the August and September 1996 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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*Nintendo is teaming up with NBA superstar Grant Hill to bring you the greatest basketball experience on Super Nintendo CD! In Grant Hill in NBA Basketball, take control of your favorite NBA teams like never before! Grind through an 82-game season, or team up with your friends for some arcade-style action! When you're playing Nintendo's new NBA basketball game, there are tons of ways to play!*

#### *Game Modes-*

In *Grant Hill in NBA Basketball*, there are numerous ways to play. In Exhibition mode, you can play a no-pressure single game with any of the 29 NBA teams, or take one of the game's special teams onto the court, including the NBA All-Star Teams, this year's Olympic Team, or even your own custom team! In Season mode, you can play through an entire NBA season. Play 28 games, 56 games, or go all the way through an 82-game season, just like in real life! Or, you can jump straight into the playoffs with Playoffs mode. You can pick your own playoff teams, use the teams from the 1996 NBA Playoffs, or have the CPU pick 16 teams at random! In Grant Hill's All-Star Challenge mode, you can play a 3-on-3 streetball style game, enter a skills challenge, or have an all-star style 3-point shootout.

#### *Options-*

On the Options screen, there are plenty of options to choose from to play the kind of game you want to play. You can tweak the rules to make games as realistic or as outlandish as you like. Prefer to have the refs look the other way on offensive fouls? Want to make traveling legal? Or would you like to play an anything-goes arcade-style game? How about tweaking the shot percentages to make even Reggie Miller shoot free throws like Shaquille O'Neal? It's totally up to you!

#### *Roster Editing-*

In the Roster Editing mode, you can tweak NBA rosters any way you wish. You can even create your own custom players and teams! Note that while you can play through a season with say, an LA Lakers team with your own custom players, you can't play through Season or Playoffs mode with a created team.

#### *Marco Jondell?-*

Unfortunately, a certain Chicago Bulls superstar is not present in this game (rumor has it that he was last seen being stuffed into the trunk of a car by a blue hedgehog). However, there is a player on the Chicago Bulls named Marco Jondell, and for some reason he's quite good at a lot of things. His number is even #23! If you like, you can even go into Roster Editing mode and do a bit of creative name changing...

### *Rookies-*

This game came out a bit too early for this year's latest crop of rookies to make it in. However, the Roster Editing mode will let you create any player you like, and you can save up to 50! That's enough for most of this year's rookie class, and we've taken the liberty of creating ten of this year's hottest rookies and listing their profiles here for you to put into your game.

### *The Play's The Thing-*

During a game, you can press the L button to bring up a selection of plays from each team on your screen. Grant Hill and the Boston Celtics actually helped Nintendo include some real plays from lots of NBA teams, so you can run your offense and defense just like the pros do!

### *Good Teams, Bad Teams-*

While you can certainly be successful with any team in the game, if you're looking for a leg up, pick the Bulls, the Magic, Grant Hill's Celtics, the Spurs, the Warriors, the Rockets, or the Jazz. However, if you're looking for a bit more of a challenge, the Bullets, 76ers, Timberwolves, and Mavericks are your best bet.

-excerpted from the *Grant Hill in NBA Basketball* article in the July 1996 issue of *Nintendo Power*

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"Free Your Soul.../A Game Too Big For One Quest!"

-from Squaresoft magazine ads touting both *Soul Matrix* and *Romancing SaGa*, their dual July 1996 releases

You knew it was the Year of the RPG when Squaresoft was doing two releases in a single month! Back in July 1996, the company best known for its awesome RPGs decided that one game just wasn't good enough, so they went ahead and released two of them. *Soul Matrix*, a strangely esoteric sci-fi epic, and *Romancing SaGa*, a fantasy-based remake of a Super Famicom game touting eight quests in one. Many of us who had to rely on our parents to buy games for us had to choose, and which one you picked largely depended on what kind of a gamer you were. If you preferred the classic medieval fantasy games, or if you were a fan of the *Final Fantasy Legend* titles and knew that *Romancing SaGa* was one of them, you picked *Romancing SaGa*. If you preferred strange looking sci-fi titles, you picked *Soul Matrix*. Which game was better? Most will tell you *Soul Matrix*, but it was a fairly close call.

*Soul Matrix* told the story of Alice, an 18-year-old girl who discovers that she is a Soulscaper, a person with the ability to project her soul into a place called the Aether, a realm where one could access the spiritual energy of godlike beings known as Espers. Alice is one of dozens of Soulscapers, but these gifted individuals are being hunted down by President Lituya Chen, who finds them a threat to her growing lust for power. Chen is seemingly being manipulated from behind the scenes by a young man named Ark, and it's Ark that eventually becomes the true antagonist of the story. He's a Soulscaper himself and is hunting down and killing Espers to take their power. The game itself is a sort of cyberpunk game, though it's a rather clean cyberpunk world, not like the later somewhat dirty aesthetic of *Final Fantasy VII*. Though the game is very beautiful graphically, comparable to *Chrono Trigger*, it doesn't feature cutscenes or voice acting, instead relying

on its expressive character models and facial animations accompanying text boxes to tell its story. The battle system itself is quite fast paced for an SNES game. Though battles are technically turn-based, commands can actually be entered as soon as an attack or spell animation finishes, so there's very little wait time between commands. Of course, this means that enemies get to hit fast and furious as well, so there's little margin for error in some of the game's tougher battles. It's a very fun game, though it didn't sell well enough to garner a sequel, even in Japan.

*Romancing SaGa* is a remake of the Super Famicom cartridge version of the game, and aside from adding some slightly better graphics, better music and a sidequest or two, it's somewhat primitive compared to *Soul Matrix*. That being said, the game's eight quests offer somewhat more playtime than *Soul Matrix*'s single story. The game is also HIGHLY non-linear, much more so than *Soul Matrix*, allowing you to play through certain dungeons and bosses in any order. That does make it a bit tougher to get a handle on the game, but for certain types of players, allowing more freedom is definitely a plus. In all the quests, your ultimate goal is to take down an evil wizard named Saruin. The battle system is fully turn-based, with one attack per turn per character. Interestingly, as you use your characters' skills, they can learn more, better skills, and will also level up according to what stats you require most often in battle. It's an innovative combat approach and is used in future *SaGa* games. The game itself sold rather poorly, worse than *Soul Matrix*, but that didn't stop Squaresoft from bringing over *Romancing SaGa 2* and *3* in a bundle disc in 1997, and later *SaGa Frontier* in 1998, where it was Squaresoft's final SNES-CD game.

-from "Squaresoft's Summer of '96", an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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"The Year Of The RPG **Saturn**"

-the headline on the cover of the July 1996 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, "RPG" is crossed out with a red line and "Saturn" is written under it with red spray paint, with a mischievous looking Sonic the Hedgehog standing nearby with a can of spray paint and a smirk

*It's been a pretty good year for Sega. Though the Saturn continues to trail the Super Nintendo CD in sales (and has been for quite some time), things have been looking up, especially after the release of Resident Evil, which is a front-runner for our Game of the Year and one of the Saturn's best selling games to date. Sega had an excellent show at E3 (more on that later in the article), and they just released a brand new action game called NiGHTS Into Dreams... that should already be on store shelves by the time this magazine reaches your hands. Check out our Review Crew article to see what we thought of it (hint: it's Game of the Month). While those of you used to Nintendomination may not believe it, we feel the Sega Saturn is definitely the system to own right now, and over the next 16 pages, you'll learn exactly why.*

-Dan "Shoe" Hsu's introduction to the Sega-featured cover article of the July 1996 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

(...)

*Tom Kalinske is used to having his back against the wall. Even within his own company, his division, Sega of America, had long been seen as the "little brother" to the big boys in Japan. But under Kalinske's watchful eye (and sometimes his iron fist), the division has*

*transformed itself into the driving force behind promoting change and innovation at Sega. We talked to Kalinske at this year's E3, and he gave us some juicy information about where Sega's been and where they're going next.*

EGM: It's good to talk to you again, how have you been?

Tom Kalinske: Pretty good!

EGM: That's good to hear. Were you nervous about this year's E3?

Kalinske: Quite honestly, no. I was excited, actually! I was excited to finally show off *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*. I knew our fans would love it, and from the reception we got I was right to be excited. It was pretty hard keeping everything we'd been working on under wraps for so long, especially since that's all everything was asking about in interviews since even before the Saturn's release. I've got a lot more to talk about now!

EGM: Well, might as well ask. What can you tell us about *Sonic 4*?

Kalinske: \*laughs\* Plenty! This is definitely our biggest project to date, even bigger than *NiGHTS* which is itself an enormous game. *Sonic 4* is going to feature 36 levels across nine worlds, and those are JUST the storyline worlds, I can't go into detail about the secret worlds but they do exist. We're featuring all the old characters you know and love, and a lot of new ones too. There's been lots of creative energy going into this game and yes, we also took fan input into account. This is going to be the *Sonic* game that everyone wants to play. We've been working on it even since before the release of *Sonic 3*.

EGM: Just how high are you setting the sales bar for this game? *Sonic the Hedgehog 3* set a record with a million sales on the first day, is that the goal for *Sonic 4*?

Kalinske: Well, we know that even with the upswing in sales, there probably won't be as many Saturns in households as there were Genesis systems when *Sonic 3* came out in 1994. We know that. With that said, I don't think there's any reason why we can't sell a million copies of *Sonic 4* on the first day at least, considering how much demand there's been for this game. We're planning on having a pre-order program with some very nice incentives, we're going to roll out a huge ad campaign, and it's the game every Saturn owner's been waiting for. So a million sales on the first day, even with a lot fewer Saturns out there, is something I think is definitely in play.

EGM: Speaking of Saturn sales, the Saturn only recently started selling more after the price cut and the release of *Resident Evil*. Is there anything planned, such as an additional price cut, to get people to buy the Sega Saturn?

Kalinske: Right now, \$299 is the price I see the Saturn being for the foreseeable future. Will there be more bundles? Special offers? Certainly everything is on the table. Right now I think the Saturn is a great deal, it comes with *Virtua Fighter* which is one of our most highly regarded games, and it also comes with a demo disc and a coupon for a future Saturn game, so you can play a few other games, see which one you want to buy and then save some money when you finally do purchase a game. Also, the games coming out later this year are an enormous incentive. Many of the launch titles are getting sequels and there's also great original stuff like *NiGHTS* and *Tomb Raider*. So there really is no better time than right now to buy a Sega Saturn.

EGM: Besides *Sonic 4*, which upcoming Saturn game are you personally most excited or?

Kalinske: That's quite a tough question, you're asking me to pick between a lot of great games! But if I absolutely HAD to choose, I'd go with *Tomb Raider*. We love Lara Croft as a character and the game itself is like nothing you've ever played before, certainly not anything possible on Nintendo's system right now.

EGM: You're bringing back your old marketing campaign from the Sega Genesis...

Kalinske: \*laughing\* Right, right, Saturn does what Nintendon't!

EGM: What's the primary reason behind bringing back that campaign?

Kalinske: Well, it's the truth! The Saturn is easily the most advanced game console ever created and it's far beyond anything the Super Nintendo CD's capable of. I'm not bashing the SNES-CD. Certainly, they have plenty of good games, Nintendo's always been tough competition. But the Saturn's technological capabilities put it far beyond Nintendo and with our Saturn games you can see how Nintendo just doesn't match up. Right now the SNES-CD's outselling us but we're going to change the game and show consumers that a Saturn really is the right decision. It's the ONLY decision, in my book.

EGM: Fair enough. What do you think of Nintendo's new Ultra system?

Kalinske: Well, I'd sure like to know when it's coming out! That's the thing, Nintendo is promising so much with the Ultra, and I'm sure it'll be impressive when it finally does come out. But there's no clue when that's going to be. It may not even come out in 1997 and it's definitely not coming in 1996, even Nintendo's confirmed that. So, whatever the Ultra does, the consumer has to realize that here's the Sega Saturn staring them in the face. And I saw the Ultra games, they all looked good but remember that we haven't even scratched the surface of the Saturn's capabilities. So whatever the Ultra is, you have to realize that it may not be better than what the Sega Saturn can do. Right now, all you have to go on is what the SNES-CD is, and it's definitely nowhere near the Sega Saturn.

EGM: How big of an advantage do you feel that Sega's partnership with Namco will be for the Saturn going forward?

Kalinske: It's absolutely huge. Here's the thing, a lot of our Saturn games are games that were hits at the arcade already, so you've got that built-in fanbase who plays the games in the arcade and then buys them for the Sega Saturn. With the Saturn and with those games, you know exactly what you're going to get, and with that promise that all of these arcade games will be coming to Saturn, there's a huge built-in lineup of great games there.

-excerpted from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* interview with Tom Kalinske in the July 1996 issue

*While the Super Nintendo CD may have more games on the way than the Sega Saturn, the Saturn seems to have higher quality games, and we've got plenty coming to keep us playing the Saturn well into 1997 and beyond.*

*Tomb Raider-*

Sega's upcoming action/puzzle/exploration game seems to be their biggest hit for the

holiday season, and it's one of the most highly anticipated games to date, with Lara Croft already showing up everywhere months prior to the game's release. If this game is what we expect it to be, Lara could be Sega's biggest new star since Sonic the Hedgehog.

#### *Panzer Dragoon II Zwei-*

The more we see of this game, the more we want to play it! We loved how smooth and pretty everything looked at E3, and the replay value seems to have skyrocketed from the first game, which featured one short (albeit very good looking) campaign.

#### *Virtua Fighter 2-*

The arcade hit finally makes it to Saturn in August, and everything tells us that this game's going to be as kickass as the first and possibly the best fighting game of the year. With tons of new characters added, we're going to be kicking each other's asses even more than we did the first time.

#### *Worms-*

One of the most amusing titles featured at E3 was this splendid shooting game featuring worms and lots of them. This might be the most addictive puzzler since Tetris, and even though it's coming to both the SNES-CD and the Sega Saturn, it looks like, as with a lot of other cross-platform titles, the Saturn version will be the one to get.

#### *Alien Trilogy-*

This intense looking FPS is coming only to the Sega Saturn, though it seems to be somewhat of a follow-up to 1994's SNES-CD hit *Alien vs. Predator*. You step into Ripley's shoes in this game, playing out the events of the three *Alien* movies in a game that's one of our most anticipated titles of the year.

#### *Commander Keen: The Universe Is Toast-*

This action game from the makers of *Doom* is much less bloody and intense than the FPS classic, but it appears to be just as fun, and amused us greatly when we played it at E3. This update of the classic PC series could be one of the year's biggest sleeper hits.

#### *Virtua Cop 2-*

Sega's sequel to one of the most popular Saturn launch games is likely to drop in December, and with upgraded gameplay it's looking even better than the original, especially with its improvements to its competitive multiplayer mode.

#### *Sun and Moon-*

This quirky little action title featuring a pair of twin protagonists was also a surprisingly fun game to play and allows two players to take control at once, making for a very amusing multiplayer experience where the twins can work together to solve puzzles and battle scary bosses.

#### *Shining Wisdom-*

A whimsical dungeon crawler set to release in North America in July, *Shining Wisdom* is somewhat reminiscent of *Zelda*, though its graphics are superior to last year's *Ocarina of Dreams*, and if the gameplay is anywhere as good, we could be looking at one of 1996's best games.

*Uroborus-*

We're really excited about the surprise sequel to the Sega CD's (and later Mega Charger's) 3-D space shooter *Silpheed*. The game looks intense, with some of the best shooter gameplay we've yet seen, and it's said to be releasing in December.

-excerpted from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* Saturn previews in the July 1996 issue

(...)

*A Match Made In RPG Heaven?*

Sega's partnership with Enix is set to yield its first fruit later this year, when *Ogre Battle* and *Tactics Ogre* are set to be ported to the Sega Saturn. Next year, we're expecting to see the first of a wave of *Dragon Warrior* re-makes, starting with the first three. Early screenshots show the games looking even better than the SNES-CD's *Final Fantasy* titles. We're also expecting an original RPG from the company and perhaps even a port of the upcoming SNES-CD title *Terranigma*. With Enix to begin making games exclusively for the Saturn starting in 1997, it seems Saturn could have a partner to rival the tight relationship between Nintendo and Squaresoft. Only time will tell if Saturn's deal will draw RPG players to Sega's console.

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* July 1996 Saturn coverage

(...)

*NEXT MONTH-*

*Electronic Gaming Monthly: August 1996*

We're giving you the first look at Mario's latest adventure, an epic RPG for the ages! We'll be covering *Super Mario RPG*, a collaboration between Nintendo and Squaresoft that's sure to have you jumping for joy and right into those question-mark blocks!

*EGM2: August 1996*

It's a *Tale Phantasia* kind of month for this month's EGM2! Skip the strategy guides, we're the only magazine that'll give you a full walkthrough of *Tale Phantasia*, from the very first village to the final battle, we've got you covered! We'll also have plenty of strategies for *NiGHTS*, *Universalizer 2*, *Spider-Man: Power And Responsibility*, and *X-Men: Children of the Atom*!

*The Official Saturn Magazine: August 1996*

Rejoice, Saturn fans! Next month is the debut of the only monthly magazine dedicated to the Sega Saturn! Along with our HUGE cover article on *Virtua Fighter 2*, we'll be covering plenty of Saturn games past, present, and future. Each issue contains a free demo disc jam-

packed with demos of upcoming Sega Saturn games!

Demo disc includes:

- Virtua Fighter 2
- Sun and Moon
- Shining Wisdom
- Madden '97
- The Legend Of Oasis
- and more!

-from the next issue preview section at the end of the July 1996 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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Ted Crosley: As RPGs go, *Soul Matrix* is a good one, but plenty flawed as well.

Alex Stansfield: Yeah, for me, I felt the storyline was rather convoluted and there weren't enough good characters. Alice was good and President Chen was pretty compelling, but there were too many silly twists and it did a disservice to a lot of the characters. Where *Chrono Trigger* was a really clean and straight-forward game, *Soul Matrix* was all over the place.

Ted: Like they spent too much time on the atmosphere and not enough on the story.

Alex: Exactly.

Ted: I also had a beef with the fighting system, on the one hand it moves by really quick and can be lots of fun, but on the other hand some later battles were pretty frustrating.

Alex: As I mentioned before, it feels like they were kinda stuck between something like *Final Fantasy* and something like *Tale Phantasia* and it didn't quite work.

Ted: This game has a lot of things that don't quite work.

Alex: Like on my grandpa!

Ted: Yes, but unlike your grandpa, this game doesn't have any cool stories about fighting Nazis in the war. I'm giving it a 3.5.

Alex: I'm giving this game a 3.5 but I'm giving my grandpa a 5 for being awesome and for actually watching this show even though it's about something that I'm sure really bores him!

Ted: My grandparents think this channel's for the devil.

Brittany Saldita: And speaking of the devil, me and Kaz are gonna be summoning the devil when we take a look at *Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Summoner* for the Sega Saturn, right after the break!

Ted: If Bob Dole's watching this, I'm sure he's taking notes.

(...)

Brittany: *Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Summoner* is a really challenging but really rewarding RPG that's light on graphics but very heavy on strategy and spooky atmosphere. It's a big step up from the original *Shin Megami Tensei* title on the Super Nintendo CD, and one of the best RPGs yet released on the Saturn.

Kazzi DeCarlo: I really liked this game too, and, um, you know, just the huge variety of creatures you can unleash on your opponents made me giddy!

Brittany: This game made you giddy?

Kaz: I summoned a giant dick monster!

Brittany: Did you now?

Kaz: I did and I have a picture! \*he brings up on screen, the demon Mara which resembles a giant penis, it's blurred out on TV\*

Brittany: \*she breaks into laughter and has to cover up her mouth to stifle herself from giggling ferociously\*

Kaz: It's really strong too!

Brittany: Kaz.... \*she keeps laughing\*

Kaz: You'll never beat off a giant dick monster!

Brittany: I'm sure, I'm sure you do that on a daily basis Kaz. \*trying not to cry she's laughing so hard\*

Kaz: \*starts laughing too\* It's just way too hard!

Brittany: \*barely keeping a straight face\* You just whip that thing out and enemies go running?

Kaz: Well, not all of them.

Brittany: \*she rolls her eyes\* Well....\*snickering\* ...dick monsters aside, this game's got a ton of demons to use and it's a big part of the strategy choosing which ones are appropriate for which fights. There are...likely a lot of places where that thing \*points at the screen\* would not be appropriate. I'm giving *Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Summoner* a 4 out of 5.

Kaz: Me too, 4 out of 5 from me.

Brittany: \*takes one more look at the screen and facepalms, still snickering\* Ay dios mio...

-excerpted from the July 9, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

John Walden: So *Grant Hill in NBA Basketball*, while being a really fun game to play, isn't quite the definitive NBA basketball game I was expecting it to be.

Ted: The graphics and sound effects at least, were fantastic. I loved the dynamic crowd effects, where the home crowd gets louder if you're going on a run, or they quiet down if the visiting team drains a huge shot. That was really cool.

John: Yeah, presentation-wise the game was fine, I just expected a bit more from a gameplay perspective. It's *NBA Live 96* with a Nintendo coat of paint, pretty much.

Ted: Which is too bad, since the game itself is a lot of fun.

John: Right, it's just not as good of a basketball game as say, *Ken Griffey Jr. 's Winning Run* is a baseball game.

Ted: That, I can definitely agree with but I'm still giving it a 4 out of 5.

John: For me, it's a solid 3.5.

-excerpted from the July 16, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Alex: Some puzzle games are easy to learn but hard to master. In *Stackector*, it's hard to do BOTH.

Ted: Yeah, I just wasn't having a lot of fun with this game. In a lot of these types of games you can learn how to get big combos pretty quickly, but here it just seemed really arbitrary.

Alex: It's a shame because this game's got a lot going for it. Graphically, it's really pretty, with some nice 3-D effects, but it's hard to enjoy all the polish when you're too frustrated to make it past level four.

Ted: Pulling off big combos is NOT easy and on some stages I'm not sure it's even possible.

Alex: Just wait for *Tetris Attack*. I'm giving *Stackector* a 2 out of 5.

Ted: And I'm giving it a 2.5.

Alex: You know, the scale I use to determine how much I liked a puzzle game is how addicted I got to it. Like, when I first played *Tetris*, I didn't eat. I didn't sleep. I think I grew a pretty gnarly beard because I didn't want to shave.

Ted: And with *Stackector*?

Alex: I stopped playing when I saw an interesting dog outside.

Ted: Yeah, I think, um, a puzzle game you don't lose meaningful sleep over can't get more than a 3 from me.

(...)

\*The *GameTV* hosts are gathered on stage.\*

Ted: That's it for *GameTV* but before we go...we have to say goodbye to our very good friend.

Alex: The man, the myth, the legend, Kaz, Kaz is going away...

Brittany: He's leaving us! \*bows her head sadly\*

Kaz: Guys, it's been....I've had such a blast with all you guys, I'm gonna miss you all so much. It's been...what, it's been more than a year now?

Alex: Barely a year!

John: You left us after barely a year, man!

Kaz: I know, I know, it's gonna be rough out there but I'm heading for a new thing.

Ted: \*wraps his arm around Kaz's shoulder\* It sucks to see you go, man.

\*A brief montage of Kaz's best moments on the show plays, when the montage ends all five hosts are standing real close together, everybody has an arm around Kaz who is looking pretty sad as everyone begins kind of rocking back and forth.\*

Ted: We'll see you guys next week, minus Kaz, we'll have a new host but there's no filling your shoes buddy.

Brittany: Who would want to, they stink!

Alex: Got a tip, for your next job, Odor Eaters man. \*laughing as he pats Kaz on the back\*

Kaz: I just wanted you guys not to be sad I was going! \*laughing\* I had a real blast here, I'm gonna miss this place a lot! Goodbye everybody!

\*The credits begin to roll as everybody hugs Kaz goodbye, Brittany gives him a kiss on the cheek and so does Ted, followed by a big ol' bro hug, the five hosts are still talking as the credits end.\*

-excerpted from the July 23, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

Ted: It's *GameTV*, I'm Ted...

Alex: And I'm Alex.

Gary: And hey there, I'm the new guy! I'm Gary Westhouse and this is my first week on *GameTV*.

Ted: Oh good, we get to haze the new guy!

Gary: Haze?

Alex: Well, you played *WWF In Your House* for the Super Nintendo CD, right?

Gary: Uh.....oh. \*he shudders\*

Alex: Yep, that was your hazing. And now you gotta review it.

Gary: \*gulps\*

Ted: Yeah, sorry buddy. Hope you don't wanna quit!

Gary: Will I have to play any more games like THAT?

Ted: Lots more!

Gary: Ugggghhhh...\*bows his head in dismay\*

Alex: This week on *GameTV*, we're reviewing *Shining Wisdom* for the Sega Saturn, we'll be looking at a pair of fighting games in *Street Fighter Alpha 2* and *Honorbound*, and yes, we'll also be reviewing *WWF In Your House*.

Ted: We'll be starting on four straight weeks of *Virtua Fighter 2* coverage when me and Brittany give you the run-down on all the old characters and how they've improved from the first game.

Alex: And we're gonna take a look at some of the best video game endings of all time. We'll give you plenty of opportunity to change the channel if you don't want spoilers, but be sure to change it back because we're going to give you an exclusive *GameTV* preview of the new arcade game *Dead or Alive*.

Ted: We're bringing you previews, reviews, and news to help you choose. This...is *GameTV*!

Gary: Can you guys please choose a better game for me to review next time?

Alex: But then...how would we save enough good games for us to review?

Ted: Yeah, that's how it works around here, we get all the good games, newbies get the bad ones.

Gary: But I'm the only newbie! Guys...! Guys...!!! \*they walk off, leaving him there to complain\*

-intro segment to the July 30, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: July 1996**

1. Chrono Trigger
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Fire Emblem: The Holy War
4. Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge
5. Eternal Night
6. Jewels Of The Realm 2
7. VideoVision
8. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest

9. Ballistic Limit
10. Super Mario World 2
11. Donkey Kong Country
12. Major Hazard: FUBAR
13. NASCAR Racing
14. Doom
15. Final Fantasy VI
16. Fire Pro Wrestling Presents: WCW Monday Nitro
17. Twinblade
18. Twisted Metal
19. Steam Agent
20. Killer Instinct

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### **July 19, 1996**

The Summer Olympics begin in Atlanta, Georgia, with a huge opening ceremony featuring a performance of the Olympic theme song, "The Power Of The Dream", by Celine Dion, with Muhammad Ali as the person to light the Olympic Flame. The Olympics showcase the world's best athletes, with the Dream Team (sans Michael Jordan and featuring new basketball stars like Penny Hardaway and Grant Hill) returning to take the gold medal in the basketball event, while at the 100 kg freestyle wrestling event, Kurt Angle took the gold. Namibian track-and-field runner Frankie Fredericks became known as the "world's fastest man" after winning the 100m and 200m events over Canadian Donovan Bailey and American Michael Johnson respectively.

### **July 27, 1996**

Richard Jewell groaned as he uneasily shifted in his bed. He'd been feeling miserable for the past 24 hours, his stomach roiling in agony as he let out a loud groan. While he'd been enjoying his job as a security guard at Centennial Park, there was no way he'd be able to come to work feeling as terrible as he did. He reached over to the dresser by his bed and grabbed a glass of water, taking a large swig before setting the glass back down and trying to get back to sleep.

At Centennial Park that night, the concert by the band Jack Mack and the Heart Attack was still going on stage, and a huge crowd of park-goers were milling around the stage, enjoying the show. It was a warm summer night, the world had come to Atlanta to have a good time, and everyone seemed to be in a great mood as the band's tunes echoed through the park. Two young women were standing near the sound tower. They had to scream to understand each other but were still having a great time as they engaged in conversation.

"Gonna go see the basketball game tomorrow?" asked one of them, smiling as she rocked back and forth to the music. "I'm hoping I can get Michael Jordan's autograph!"

"He ain't playin', I think," replied her friend, shaking her head somewhat disappointedly. "He's skipping the Olympics this year!"

"Why's he skipping the Olympics?"

"I think he's still filming that movie with Bugs Bunny!"

"Awww, man," said the young woman, sadly shaking her head. "Hey, maybe Scottie Pippen's there, I bet we can get one from-"

An enormous explosion shattered both women's eardrums instantly, along with the eardrums of dozens of others standing near the sound tower. The explosion sent hundreds of nails ripping through the crowd, the shrapnel tearing flesh and lacerating organs as it went out in all directions. The band, playing on stage, ducked for cover, though lead singer Max Carl barely had time to react before a nail went into his forehead, killing him instantly.

That day, he and seventeen others lost their lives in the deadliest act of terrorism on American soil in many years and the deadliest act of terror at an Olympic Games, surpassing the infamous Munich massacre 24 years earlier. Hundreds were injured.

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*"This cowardly act of terror has shattered lives forever. But it will not shatter the spirit of brotherhood symbolized by the Olympic Games. Rest assured, those who perpetrated this murderous act will be caught and they will face justice. And though we mourn, and though the peace of the Games has been shaken, the Olympic Games will continue. The peace and brotherhood they represent will continue. And the American spirit will continue. Thank you."*  
-President Bill Clinton, in a speech on July 28, 1996

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*"The key to being king of the arcades was, of course, to start building your OWN arcades. Sega Gameverse was a natural extension of Sega's goals. Even though the arcade scene was declining in North America at the time, Sega was hoping that these new Japanese-style mega arcades would kick off a new golden age."*  
-Arcade historian Keith Smith, "The Three Ages Of The Arcade", published in 2013

*"Everyone says that it was Sonic 4 that began to turn the tide for the Saturn. No. It was Virtua Fighter 2. That game comes out, blows everyone away, and kicks Super Mario RPG in the teeth. For the first time, a Saturn blockbuster had gone up against a Super Nintendo CD blockbuster and had come out on top. I think everyone at Nintendo had a collective 'uh oh' moment when they saw the first sales figures."*  
-Adam Sessler, on an X-Play TV special, "The Console Wars"

*"These dogs, they think they should be entitled to win a game simply because they bought it. I'll never make my games that way. Absolutely not."*  
-Tomonobu Itagaki, in a translated interview with a Japanese game publication that appeared in the September 1996 issue of *GameFan*

*"Did we think people would buy Tobal just for a chance to play the next Mana game? Ehh....at the time, yes we did."*  
-Tobal No. 1 producer Koji Yamashita, on the decision to include a demo of *Elements of Mana* with the North American version of the game

*"I am Princess Peach Toadstool of the Mushroom Kingdom!"*  
Princess Peach, giving her name in *Super Mario RPG*, the first time the name Peach was

used to refer to the character in a North American game

*"I'll whip you moles into shape! Now find me that Star!"*

Smithy Gang member Lashina, bossing around a group of enslaved moles in Moleville in *Super Mario RPG*

*"Tear Up The Road!"*

the tagline from a magazine ad for the Super Nintendo CD (and later Sega Saturn) game *Road Storm*

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*"And the manhunt continues for the perpetrator of one of the worst terrorist attacks in American history. Though the Olympics are over, the person or persons who planted the bomb in Centennial Park that claimed 18 lives and injured over 600 people is still at large. FBI director Louis Freeh spoke at a brief press conference today. He says that while there are no suspects as of yet, all angles are being explored. So far, no group or individual has claimed responsibility for the attack, and there is an unease that whoever committed this crime might strike again. In the meantime, security has been stepped up at numerous national landmarks and at sporting events, with bag checks implemented at Major League Baseball games."*

-Dan Rather, on the CBS Nightly News, August 7, 1996

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(NOTE: A thanks to Cataquack Warrior for contributing some ideas for *Super Mario RPG*, particularly the Axem Rangers' airship dungeon idea, which was quite superb. You'll be seeing some of his contributions showing up as Saturn games toward the end of 1997 too!)

### **Super Mario RPG: The Basics**

*Super Mario RPG: Legend Of The Seven Stars* is a collaboration between Nintendo and Squaresoft. It is in many ways similar to OTL's game, with five playable characters: Mario, Mallow, Geno, Bowser, and Princess Toadstool, known in this game and in all subsequent Mario games as Peach. The game is graphically very close to *Super Mario World 3*, with 3-D isometric gameplay and quite detailed backgrounds (in other words, a lot like OTL's *Super Mario RPG* in graphical style, but somewhat smoother and with more background 3-D and object animation). The soundtrack, composed by Yoko Shimomura, is a whimsical mix of Mario music and original compositions (identical to OTL's soundtrack save for a couple small changes due to butterflies, and a few added songs due to the additional areas present). The game features some limited voice acting, including narration from Leslie Swan (the voice of Peach), and a few phrases from various heroes (Mario says "Lucky!" when he gets a Lucky flower in battle, for example). The game's battle system is the same as OTL's, featuring turn-based combat and timed hits and defending. However, there is an added element, certain attacks that can be defended can also be countered, allowing Mario and his allies to score an extra hit on a foe after blocking their attack. A few enemies and bosses are damaged extra by counter attacks and the damage from regular attacks is reduced, making this a strategically important element of the game.

The plot itself is largely similar to OTL's. Princess Peach is kidnapped by Bowser and Mario raids Bowser's castle in order to save her, only for a giant sword to crash down from the sky, scattering the three to the winds. The sword announces that Bowser's castle is Smithy

Gang property now, kicking off the events of the story. Mario ventures to the Mushroom Kingdom first, where he meets up with Mallow and eventually liberates the castle from a dagger-shaped foe named Mack. Next, Mario and Mallow visit Toadfcucus, who tells Mallow that he is not actually a frog as he believes and advises him to go with Mario on his journey. After some more adventuring, the group comes across Rose Town, which is under siege from an evil bow-shaped foe named Bowyer. Mario and Mallow team up with a mysterious doll/man named Geno, defeating Bowyer and liberating the town. Here's where the game begins to divert from OTL somewhat. The next place the group visits is Moleville, but unlike in OTL's game, the town is under siege from an evil lady with a whip named Lashina, another member of the Smithy Gang. After going through the Moleville Mines and defeating Punchinello, the group realizes that Lashina has the third Star and they must go to her factory in order to get it back. While at the factory, the group sees that Lashina is furious after a breakup with a man named Booster, who dumped her after Princess Peach landed on his tower. After defeating Lashina (before the group can face her, they must once again fight refurbished clones of Mack and Bowyer) and claiming the third Star, Mario and friends venture to Booster Tower (recruiting Bowser just outside). They venture up Booster Tower and meet Booster himself, who in this game must actually be defeated to advance (and he's not easy, though Knife Guy and Grate Guy are omitted from this game). After a chase up a hill, the group reaches Marrymore, where Mario crashes Booster's wedding and rescues Peach. The group returns to the Mushroom Kingdom, where Peach joins the group for the next part of their journey, a trip to Star Town, where a clue about Mallow's true home is said to be. The clue, however, is a trap laid by the fourth member of the Smithy Gang, a cannon-like man named Boomer, who abducts Mallow and takes him to Star Hill, which, instead of being a peaceful place like IOTL's game, is a battlefield wrecked by explosions from Boomer and his minions. Eventually, Mario and friends reach Boomer. After beating him in battle, he gives them a choice: they can save Mallow or the Star. The group picks Mallow, but thanks to Mario's slick jumping they manage to save both. After that, the group ventures to a seaside resort where the next Star seems to have been pilfered by a pirate named Jonathan Jones. After a trip through a sunken ghost ship and a confrontation with the pirate himself, the star is claimed, but upon the group's return to Seaside Town, they are threatened by Yaridovich, who demands they hand over the star or the townspeople will be in danger. They give Yaridovich the star, but stop him before he can make his escape and defeat him in a tough battle. The heroes then venture through Land's End, Monstro Town, and Bean Valley to make their way up to Nimbus Land, where Mallow's real family lives (though Mallow doesn't know it yet). These areas are largely the same as IOTL, though there is a small difference: the group encounters the Axem Rangers for the first time at Land's End, and there is a boss battle in this area: a pair of Chargin' Chucks. Finally, the group reaches Nimbus Land and uncovers the intrigue of Queen Valentina, an imposter to the throne who has locked Mallow's parents in a dungeon. After Valentina is beaten, the group journeys to Barrel Volcano. They defeat the Czar Dragon and are about to claim the Star when the Axem Rangers suddenly arrive and take the Star away, forcing Mario and friends to chase them to their airship. Unlike ITTL, the airship is a dungeon of its own, with similar music to the classic airship theme in Super Mario Bros. 3. At the end, the Axem Rangers are confronted, but once you defeat them, their Breaker Bot is its own boss, and one of the toughest in the game at that. Finally, the sixth Star is claimed, and Mario and friends return to Bowser's Castle. They venture through the castle, defeat the giant sword Exor, and make their way to Smithy's Factory. As you venture through the factory, beating tough bosses along the way, Smithy's backstory is revealed. He is said to be the wish of a realm that watched all the other realms advance in technology while they were left in the dust. The entire realm wished for a way that it could elevate its technology to those of its neighbors, resulting in the birth of the robot Smithy. It began to build, and build, and build, but soon it became too powerful to control, and started wiping out the neighboring realms

before turning on the realm that wished it into being. Smithy's factory was built on the ruins of this realm, its people trapped as mindless slaves (and Geno is the only free person of this realm that remains). After Smithy is defeated, Mario and friends use their wish to restore this realm and its people, and Geno can at last return home, while the Mushroom Kingdom and Princess Peach are safe once again.

### **August 12, 1996**

*Super Mario RPG* is released in North America for the Super Nintendo CD. Despite a significant amount of pre-release hype and advertising, the game doesn't succeed quite as much as *Chrono Trigger* or *Tale Phantasia*, critically or commercially. It's still regarded as an excellent game, but doesn't quite rise to the level of the two earlier major RPGs to be released that year. Criticism primarily revolves around the simplicity of the game's storyline, which is considered somewhat juvenile compared to the previous two major RPGs, even with Smithy's somewhat darker origins. Despite these issues, the game is still the top selling Super Nintendo CD game of the month and comes to be regarded as an RPG classic.

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### **College Football '97: The Road To New Orleans**

Andrew: 6.0 (quote: "The inclusion of all the teams helps out the realism factor of the game, but the gameplay itself doesn't quite match up.")

Mark: 7.0

Mike: 7.0

Sushi-X: 5.5

### **Madden 97**

Andrew: 7.5

Mark: 7.5

Mike: 7.5 (quote: "Another decent game, but the series is showing its age on this system.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Ninja Gaiden IV: Escape From The Forbidden City**

Andrew: 8.5

Mark: 7.5

Mike: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "While the difficulty is definitely frustrating at times, no game gets you closer to being a ninja than this one.")

### **Olympic Games '96: Atlanta**

Andrew: 4.0

Mark: 2.0 (quote: "An utterly horrible tie-in game with absolutely no effort whatsoever. The controls are miserable and the graphics look really ugly.")

Mike: 2.5

Sushi-X: 5.0

### **Pac-Man CD**

Andrew: 7.0 (quote: "A neat mix of classic arcade gameplay and action platformer fun, this whimsical game brings the classic series to the SNES-CD in a great way.")

Mark: 6.0

Mike: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Silverload**

Andrew: 5.5

Mark: 4.0

Mike: 9.0 (quote: "While the controls may not please action-loving gamers, the dark atmosphere and haunting score makes this Western-style point and click a true classic.")

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Super Mario RPG**

Andrew: 9.0 (quote: "Mario's first role playing adventure is a masterpiece of graphical whimsy, a triumphant soundtrack, and amazingly fun gameplay.")

Mark: 9.0

Mike: 9.5

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Tetris Attack**

Andrew: 9.5

Mark: 8.5 (quote: "Super fast-paced and super addictive, it's best played with a friend but even the single player mode is really enjoyable.")

Mike: 9.5

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Tobal No. 1**

Andrew: 9.0 (quote: "Outstanding music from some of Square's best and great character design makes this a sort of fighting game equivalent of Chrono Trigger.")

Mark: 8.0

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Valis: Soldier Of Light**

Andrew: 7.5

Mark: 7.5

Mike: 7.0 (quote: "This sequel isn't quite as innovative as the first but it's just as fun and a great continuation of the previous game's story.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Williams Arcade's Greatest Hits**

Andrew: 6.0 (quote: "If you loved Defender and Joust, you'll have a fun time with this compilation but there's nothing new here, obviously.")

Mark: 6.0

Mike: 5.5

Sushi-X: 5.0

### **Warriors and Conquerors II: Champions Of War**

Andrew: 7.0

Mark: 5.0

Mike: 6.0 (quote: "Combat by champion is an interesting gimmick for a Civilization-esque strategy game, but it's still not a very deep title.")

Sushi-X: 5.0

### **Hotel Havoc 2**

Andrew: 6.5

Mark: 6.5 (quote: "The graphics got a nice bump and it's nice to be able to choose a character, but it's still the same fairly straight-forward puzzle title.")

Mike: 6.0

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Extreme Deerhunting 2**

Andrew: 4.0

Mark: 6.0

Mike: 4.5

Sushi-X: 4.5 (quote: "It's just deer hunting. Not much else to say.")

### **Road Storm**

Andrew: 8.0

Mark: 8.5

Mike: 9.0 (quote: "One of the most exciting new franchises to come out in a while, maybe the best motorcycle racing game ever made.")

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Everest: The World's Bravest**

Andrew: 7.5

Mark: 6.0

Mike: 6.0

Sushi-X: 6.5 (quote: "A Mount Everest climb isn't exactly the most compelling subject for a platformer, but this game is at the very least amusing.")

### **The War Between The States**

Andrew: 8.5 (quote: "Koei does it again with this excellent Civil War strategy title that features dozens of the Civil War's most pivotal battles and even throws in some alternate history scenarios.")

Mark: 8.5

Mike: 7.5

Sushi-X: 8.0

-from reviews of August 1996's SNES-CD games in the September and October 1996 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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## August 26, 1996

*Virtua Fighter 2* is released in North America for the Sega Saturn. Arriving on a tide of strong sales and good will for the Sega Saturn, and released around the same time as the improved, smaller Saturn analog controller (though it's also released with an optional fight stick accessory), the game is an immediate hit and the fastest selling Sega Saturn game to date. Reviews are stellar, topping those of the first, and the game is considered even better than the original arcade version, adding two characters original to the home console version of the game. It becomes the best selling game of the month, topping *Super Mario RPG* in sales despite only being out for six days in the month of August. In September, the Saturn Virtua Arcade Set has *Virtua Fighter* replaced with *Virtua Fighter 2*, driving sales for the bundle as well (it also helps that many stores clearance out the old *Virtua Fighter* sets at \$349 or even \$299, the same price as the Saturn base set). Though the Super Nintendo would still outsell the Saturn for the month of August, the week of August 26-September 2 is the first week that the Saturn outsells the Super Nintendo CD in North America.

(...)

### *Character Strategy- Ralph Burce*

Ralph Burce is one of the two Saturn exclusive *Virtua Fighter 2* characters. He's a master of slow but powerful strikes, particularly his punches, so you'll need to be very precise to use him properly. That said, with his added power he can easily take down an opponent who isn't concerned about blocking and insists on charging forward with offensive strikes. When on the defensive, keep your guard up, weather your opponent's attack, and then strike back with a furious counter!

### *Character Strategy- Cynthia Grennel*

Cynthia is a very technically savvy character exclusive to the Saturn version of the game. She can move fairly quickly but you need to know her advanced combo techniques to utilize her abilities to the fullest. Cynthia's lithe frame can withstand a surprising amount of punishment, so you don't have to be afraid to go on offense if your opponent leaves themselves open.

(...)

Official Saturn Magazine: Explain the two new characters, what was the reasoning behind adding them, besides giving those who waited two years for the Sega Saturn version of this game an extra reward?

Yu Suzuki: We felt they added a lot to the story of the game, which was also given added emphasis in the Saturn version. Ralph is a sort of heroic character who just tries to help out where he can, he's a bit of a dope but he is the most purely heroic character in the series so far! And Cynthia, she is a pure femme fatale. We added her for sex appeal more than anything! \*laughs\* But she does have a good heart deep down and so she kind of appeals to many different types of fans, those who want a wicked woman and then those who also think 'well, maybe she's not so bad, I want to see her redeemed'. Both of them will be added to supplemental material later on of course.

(...)

*Sun and Moon is a brand new action game from Treasure! You can team up with a friend for co-op action, or take on the game's challenges by yourself while switching back and forth. Be careful, this game contains horrors beyond imagination! There are 14 levels in all, we'll cover the first five to get you started. You can even play through the first level for free on this month's demo disc and then transfer the save to the full game!*

(...)

### *Level 3: Atavan's Arc*

Level 3 is the first really tricky level of the game. If you're controlling Sun by yourself, you'll need to have him light up the pathway to the ship before you can advance. If you're controlling Moon, you can concentrate more on the difficult enemies that are blocking your path. Circle around the large stacks of crates and have Moon protect Sun by using her Darkness attacks as Sun lights your path. Two players can usually coordinate this pretty easily.

You'll have trouble with the game's second Gorgon enemy as soon as you get on the ship. Try to blind it with Sun's rays, or if you're controlling Moon, let Sun get out in front of the Gorgon while Moon hits it from behind with magic. There are two Runes to collect on the ship's deck but you can save them until after the Gorgon is dead.

(...)

### *Level 5: Nightshade Forest*

(...)

The boss here is exceptionally tricky. The huge tree will immediately try to wrap up Sun or Moon in its vines and the boss can't be damaged unless both are working together. Sun will be able to burn through the boss' vines, so it's probably better if it grabs Moon first. If the boss grabs Sun, you'll need to have Moon gather up enough materials for a Darkblaze spell (the Nightshade Roots and Deathcaps that constantly fall from the boss during battle should be able to fuel such a spell pretty quickly). Once both Sun and Moon are free, use their strongest spells in combination to damage the boss while dodging its swinging vines and the roots that come out of the ground. Remember, if one of the kids dies while the boss has the other wrapped up, it's game over.

(...)

*Each game is reviewed by our staff, who then discuss their individual opinions on the game to come up with a composite score from 1 to 10, with 1 being truly atrocious and 10 being a masterpiece. There are no half-points given.*

## **Virtua Fighter 2**

*This amazing fighting game has been tearing up arcades since 1994, and it's finally here on the Saturn, where it's better than ever. This is the Saturn's best fighting game to date.*

Score: 9/10

## Sun And Moon

Treasure's tricky twin title is best played with a friend, but even when you're playing by yourself, it's a real treat despite its difficulty.

Score: 8/10

-excerpted from the August 1996 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

(...)

## Sega Teams With Universal For New Arcade Chain

Sega, which has been slowly rising back up the sales charts with its Saturn console, is now looking to bring back the arcades after their system promised to bring the arcade hits home. The company is teaming with the film studio Universal to build a chain of large arcades in various cities in North America. Known as *GameVerse*, the chain will have both the latest arcade games and a myriad of Sega classics, while also offering various interactive attractions and even a full-service restaurant in some locations. The company originally planned to collaborate with Dreamworks, but that company recently announced a deal with Sega's rival Sony to produce computer animated films, forcing Sega to go in with Universal alone. The first locations are set to open in the spring of 1997, and could signal a new step in Sega's plan to conquer both the arcades and the living room.

-excerpted from the September 1996 issue of *GamePro*

-

Everyone seemed to compare *Tobal No. 1* to the Saturn's *Virtua Fighter 2*, since they both came out in the same month. That's a shame, because even though yes, *Tobal* is the inferior game, it also has its own charm and things that *Virtua Fighter 2* lacked. Its soundtrack, which included contributions from Yoko Shimomura and Yasunori Mitsuda, was superior, and its Quest Mode, while not really too terribly engrossing, was still an innovation that Saturn's flagship fighter lacked. Of course, at the time of its release, most of the buzz surrounding the game had nothing to do with the game itself, but the demo of *Elements of Mana* that was included with all first-run copies of the game. The demo allowed you to play right up to the first boss, Full Metal Hugger, a spectacular arachnid-like creature that filled up the screen and showed off just how far graphics had come since the original *Secret of Mana*. And even that demo didn't drive *Tobal* sales much. In fact, it was probably Square's least successful North American game of 1996, it even sold less copies here than the cult RPG game *Soul Matrix.*, *Tobal No. 1* is a unique and fun title that showed off what the SNES-CD could do (it might be the best looking fighting game on the system outside of *Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo*), and even though it included a demo of one of the most hyped games of the year, it still got far less sales than it deserved.

-“The Top 20 Most Underappreciated Super Nintendo CD Games- #7: *Tobal No. 1*”, an article on IGN.com, posted on June 3, 2011

-

*The open road beckons in this exciting new motorcycle racing game published by Infogrames! In Road Storm, pick from one of 12 racers as they make their way across 14 tracks all across North America!*

-the introduction to the *Road Storm* article in the August 1996 issue of *Nintendo Power*

*Road Storm* is one of those games that kind of came out of nowhere, though it should've been expected based on the reception it got at E3. *Road Storm* was based on a concept by the software company Ocean, though after Infogrames bought Ocean in 1996, it took the game and improved greatly upon it before its release in late summer of that year. While leaving Ocean's stellar musical score, the company greatly improved upon the gameplay, and most importantly, gave each of the game's twelve characters a personality and a storyline, making them somewhat like the characters in fighting games in terms of how emotional their journeys were as they raced across the game's stages. The gameplay itself was pretty simple, it was a motorcycle race along a paved road (though some stages went off-road). There were some combat elements but it wasn't like *Road Rash*, you could bump and jostle other racers and this would affect them somewhat, but the primary focus was on racing. The storyline involved a million dollar cash prize and a series of illicit road races commissioned by a mysterious billionaire named Jurgen. Each of the twelve characters had their own reasons for winning, here are brief summaries of each of them.

Jack- The game's main character, a 26-year-old man who needed the money to pay off some gangsters threatening his family. He's got a good heart though, and finds himself torn when other characters seem to need the money even more than him.

Gourman- A somewhat morally ambiguous character, Gourman is considered Jack's rival, though unlike the rivals in a lot of games who happen to be about the same age as the main character, Gourman's a 40-year-old man and he's even somewhat overweight, also, he doesn't need the money nearly as badly as any of the other characters.

Jessica- A 23-year-old woman with long black hair and a tough look about her, Jessica is Jack's primary love interest but she'll stop at nothing, even crashing Jack out, to get the prize money, which she needs to cure her cancer.

Rizzel- A 19-year-old redheaded woman, Rizzel is quite wild and fun, but she has a dark secret beneath all her playfulness and needs the money to settle a debt from her past.

Breckin- A 25-year-old reckless daredevil, he's seeking glory more than money, but he's still a fierce opponent.

Dr. VanCombe- A 37-year-old scientist who needs the money for research into alien technology. He's a bit ruthless and eccentric but he's become a fan favorite over the years.

Jillian- A 14-year-old girl and also Gourman's estranged runaway daughter. She's super hyper and energetic and wants to win the money to spite her dad.

Lord- Lord is a grizzled, 65-year-old biker gang captain and probably the most evil character in the game outside of Jurgen. There's a rumor he may have been the primary inspiration for Clay Morrow in *Sons of Anarchy*, but the creator of the show denied it when someone asked him at ComicCon.

Viv- A 46-year-old woman and mother of three kids, she actually has her kids following her around in an RV from race to race. She's like a femme fatale soccer mom and one of the best characters in the whole series. She flirts with Dr. VanCombe CONSTANTLY, the two have a love-hate thing going on throughout the series.

Reck- An 18-year-old frat brother who makes a LOT of potty-related jokes. Probably the least popular of the original twelve in the series, he plans to use the money to buy a skyscraper-sized keg of beer. It's very satisfying to see him lose.

Shade- A seemingly generic 29-year-old man but with a deep, dark past, he's actually a ninja and is planning to use the money to save his young daughter from a cruel master. He's also become a fan favorite.

Ken- A 35-year-old man who joined the races to escape a monotonous blue collar life. It seems like he's in the game to fulfill the game's "token black guy" quotient, and he probably is, but he's not stereotypical at all and he's actually a pretty likable character, if a bit generic.

Though *Road Storm* only did moderate sales, its positive reviews and devoted fanbase ensured that it would get a sequel (which it did, in 1998 on the Ultra Nintendo and the Saturn). It would also pick up lots more characters along the way, becoming pretty much the quintessential motorcycle racing series (though I guess you could say *Bikerz* was first, *Road Storm* is a far superior franchise). It even got its own animated series and comic book.

-excerpted from "The SNES-CD's Franchise Starters", an article on Gamesovermatter.com, March 17, 2013

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"You DOG! Did you truly think you were worthy of challenging me? You are pathetic! Ha ha ha ha!"

-Shogun Gatsu, after killing Irene Lew in the "Dog Mode" ending of *Ninja Gaiden IV*

When *Ninja Gaiden* finally came to the Super Nintendo CD, it came back in style. The game once again starred Ryu Hayabusa, who learned that an evil shogun named Gatsu had taken over a huge part of Tokyo and had carved out an area for himself called the Forbidden City. He'd even taken Ryu's love interest Irene Lew captive, intending to make her his bride. Ryu would have to battle through Gatsu's armies to save Tokyo and his love in 13 tough but fun levels. The game was the first to feature (albeit limited) voice acting, with phrases spoken by Ryu, Irene Lew, and Gatsu, among others. It also featured pseudo 3-D, especially for the game's boss battles, which often took place in enormous multi-platformed battlegrounds.

*Ninja Gaiden IV: Escape From The Forbidden City* was not only the best game of the series thus far, it was easily the toughest. The game included three difficulty modes to start with: Normal, which was extremely hard, Hard, which was intensely, catastrophically hard, and Ninja, which was an exercise in masochistic pain. There were also two hidden difficulty modes. If you got three Game Overs on Normal mode, the game opened up the Dog Mode difficulty, which was significantly easier (but still somewhat tricky). Once you reached the final battle with Gatsu, you defeated his first form and went to save Irene Lew, just as in previous modes. However, in Dog Mode, instead of triggering the start of Gatsu's second form, Gatsu simply stood up and beat Ryu into submission, before impaling Irene Lew through the chest (this was shown in silhouette). As she fell dead to the ground, Ryu cried out in agony as Gatsu taunted him with that classic "You DOG!" quote, and the game practically scolded you for playing through it on easy, telling you to go back and try again "if you dare" in a harder mode. However, if you conquered Ninja mode, it opened up TRUE Ninja mode, which was...it was more difficult than Ninja mode, moreso than Ninja mode was more difficult than Normal mode. That's how hard it was. And if you could beat it without losing a single life, you got to see a secret ending. It's been done (it's even been done without taking a single hit by people who clearly have no lives), but... I can't imagine how most players ever could. Normal mode is hard enough for most gamers. Still, despite the insane difficulty, the game was really fun, properly introduced Ryu Hayabusa to the fourth generation, and featured the best storyline of any *Ninja Gaiden* game up to that point.

-excerpted from "A Ninja Gaiden Restrospective" on Gamesovermatter.com, posted on

September 1, 2010

-

The summer of 1996 was one of the NBA's most interesting summers. It featured that classic NBA draft with players like Allen Iverson and Kobe Bryant, but it also featured one of the most bizarre and in retrospect hilarious storylines of the 90s: how the Orlando Magic kept Shaquille O'Neal around.

By the summer of '96, Shaq's contract was up and he was looking for a change of pace. He was becoming disgruntled with fellow superstar Penny Hardaway, and the team's loss to the Chicago Bulls in the NBA playoffs didn't help. He offered the Magic an ultimatum: "get rid of Penny or get rid of me". But even though Orlando capitulated with Shaq's demand, trading Penny to the Boston Celtics in exchange for Dana Barros, a few scrubs, and some draft picks, Shaq wanted more. Not just a big money contract (which ended up being the most lucrative in league history to that date), but he wanted a sign of appreciation from the team. That was the story behind "Shaq Day" at Walt Disney World, where the Magic paid Disney to make September 28, 1996 a day devoted to Shaq. He got a parade through the Magic Kingdom and was honored in a big ceremony by Mickey Mouse. There's a pretty famous picture from "Shaq Day" of the face character Esmeralda (from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*) giving Shaq a big kiss on the cheek. One wonders if maybe Shaq wanted to be compared to Quasimodo? Either way, despite the farce that was Shaq Day, the move seemed to secure the Orlando Magic's immediate future. They'd also acquired Dennis Rodman in the off-season, which would give them perhaps the league's most intimidating frontcourt. Only time would tell if the Magic could live up to the hype and topple the Bulls.

-excerpted from "The NBA: 1996" on Bleacherreport.com, posted on January 10, 2014

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Alex Stansfield: So what's your verdict on *Tetris Attack*?

Ted Crosley: My verdict is, it's fun as hell! It's even fun to play by yourself which was my only beef with the original *Tetris*, that you can only play multiplayer if you have two people with Game Boys. Here, on the SNES-CD, you can play single player and it's a lot of fun!

Alex: But of course, the multiplayer is best.

Ted: Well, yeah. You can make killer combos, dump bricks all over your opponent, it's a blast!

Alex: It's caused...incidents here at *GameTV*.

Ted: Yeah, um...there has been violence.

Alex: We're not allowed to play in the studio anymore, things have been broken.

Ted: People have been killed.

Alex: Let us remember, those lost in the great *Tetris Attack* incident of 1996. \*shaking his head sadly as sad music begins to play\*

\*Ted and Alex bow their heads as the sad music plays, having a "moment of silence"\*

Alex: ...okay, so what's your score?

Ted: I give it a 4.5. The combos are so easy to make, the game is super fun, it's absolutely a blast to play.

Alex: And I'm also giving it a 4.5. Definitely the best puzzle game I've played in a while.

-excerpted from the August 6, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

*"We caught some flack for the Tetris Attack segment. It came like a week after the Atlanta Olympics bombing, and people called in and said we were mocking the tragedy by having that little moment of silence bit. We weren't even THINKING about that when we came up with the segment. I guess that was kind of the problem, somebody should've said something but at least all we got was a stern talking-to. When they did the Saturday afternoon rerun of the episode, they took that bit out, so the review looks kinda dumb. But, that was our bad for not thinking."*

-Alex Stansfield

(...)

Brittany Saldita: When all's said and done, I thought *Super Mario RPG* was a really good game. I don't think it matches up to a lot of the RPG classics, but it's still lots of fun and a great tribute to the Mario series.

Ted: I think I liked it a little more than you did. The timed hits system is great-

Brittany: Well yeah, I mean, that was the best part of the game I thought. I loved being able to increase my damage by pressing the button at the right time, and countering attacks is really fun too. So that was a big plus.

Ted: The soundtrack is superb, I thought it was well paced...

Brittany: Some parts dragged on. I thought, later in the game some of the dungeons got a bit repetitive.

Ted: And I know you didn't like the villains.

Brittany: Why not have, like, Kamek as the villain? We didn't get to see Kamek killed in *Yoshi's Island*, I thought, well, if Bowser's a good guy, maybe they're fighting Kamek!

Ted: Well, all spoilers aside, I thought the villain turned out to be pretty good.

Brittany: I like that Peach finally got a proper name. Princess Toadstool is an awful name. Thank God, thank God she's Peach now.

Ted: Peach Toadstool is still just about the dumbest name I've ever heard.

Brittany: Engelbert Humperdinck.

Ted: I stand corrected. But I'm still giving this game a 4.5.

Brittany: And I'm giving it a 4.

-excerpted from the August 13, 1996 edition of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany: You know, after the awesomeness that was *Tale Phantasia*, I expected a bit more from Telenet Japan. *Valis: Soldier Of Light* was just a solid action game. Nothing more, nothing less.

Gary Westhouse: Yeah, I wasn't too impressed. Graphically, gameplay-wise, it's pretty much just your standard fantasy platformer.

Brittany: Which is a shame, because, again, *Tale Phantasia* was so awesome.

Gary: You're not going to be comparing ALL of Telenet Japan's games to *Tale Phantasia* from now on, are you? It might be more fair to just compare, you know, the RPGs.

Brittany: Point taken. That said, controlling Reiko WAS a decent change of pace. She actually handles a lot differently from Yuko and so you get two different ways of approaching the game depending on your playstyle. Even Mario Brothers doesn't do this with Mario and Luigi. So that's ONE thing the game has going for it. I liked the music, a little bit.

Gary: As far as action games go, it's just average.

Brittany: I'll actually give it a 3.5, which is more than I usually give an "average" game but the effort they made to have Reiko control a lot differently was a plus.

Gary: I'll give it a 3.

(...)

John Walden: So yeah, *Sun and Moon* is a game that you pretty much have to play with a friend. The AI is decent but in a game this tough, without a partner some of the latter stages are exercises in frustration.

Alex: It's such a creative game, full of some brilliantly designed bosses, excellent levels, and awesome music. I will concur that it's a lot more fun if you play it with two players but it is at least doable with one. I think if you play with one character you need to use Moon, her spells are much more easily controlled by a human. Sun doesn't do as much and so the AI can handle him better.

John: I tried both, was frustrated with both. It's a good game though. It's just...

Alex: It's a Treasure game. These guys made *Gunstar Heroes*, they're definitely known for doing this with their games. I heard next year's *Troublemakers* was going to be a bit easier, we'll see if that's the case.

John: With a partner though, this game's a blast. Alex and I got together one night, beat the whole thing, had a ball.

Alex: Yeah, I mean, this is the kind of game that can restore the friendships that *Tetris Attack* has broken apart. If your friend will still let you come over to play on his Saturn after you've schooled him at *Tetris Attack*, recommend this game. I highly recommend it, I give it a 4.5 out of 5.

John: And I give it a 3.5.

-excerpted from the August 20, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Gary: *Virtua Fighter 2* is kickass, it's so kickass! Even when you're getting your ass kicked, it's still a kickass game!

Ted: I think I've wasted an entire Saturn's worth of quarters on this game at the arcades. Now, finally, I can come home, sit on my ass, kick back and enjoy this game on my TV and not have to worry about getting bumped off the machine by some spoiled 12-year-old whose mom dropped him off at the machine while she rummages through the 75% off rack at Nordstrom. This game rocks.

Gary: Did that actually happen to you, getting bumped off a machine by a 12-year-old kid?

Ted: Yeah.

Gary: And you'd admit that on national TV, that a 12-year-old kid beat you at *Virtua Fighter 2*?

\*There's loud laughing from Alex, Brittany, and John in the background\*

Ted: Hey, shut up! Shut up, he got lucky!

Gary: Well, it's okay, now you can get beaten in private and no one will have to witness your embarrassment.

Ted: Well, what's your most embarrassing *Virtua Fighter 2* story?

Brittany: \*yelling\* The time Tracy Grandstaff came in and beat him on the office machine and she's never played before!

Alex: \*yelling\* I remember that!

Ted: Oh man, you got beat by Daria?

Gary: At least she's a grown person!

Ted: At least when Mike Judge beat me, he had actually played the game before.

Gary: Did he do the Butthead voice?

Ted: He did the Butthead voice and it was humiliating. But anyway, see, that's the great thing about *Virtua Fighter 2* is that anyone can pick it up and play but only a truly skilled

person can master it.

Alex: \*yelliing\* Which doesn't include either of you!

Ted: I give *Virtua Fighter 2* a 5 out of 5.

Gary: And I give it a 4.5.

-excerpted from the August 27, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: August 1996**

1. Chrono Trigger
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run
4. Fire Emblem: The Holy War
5. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
6. Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge
7. Eternal Night
8. Fatal Strike: Touch Of Death
9. Super Mario World 3
10. Kyuriadan
11. Super Mario World 2
12. Ballistic Limit
13. Samurai Buster
14. Axelay 2
15. Donkey Kong Country
16. Prince of Persia: Calnor's Destiny
17. Jewels Of The Realm 2
18. VideoVision
19. The Need For Speed
20. Tactics Ogre

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart – August 1996**

(NOTE: *The Official Saturn Magazine's* chart is done somewhat differently than Nintendo Power's top 20, it's a top 10 with a combination of sales, reader votes, and editorial picks. It's much more heavily weighted toward reader votes than anything else (unlike Nintendo Power's charts which weigh sales, fan votes, and editorial votes equally) and also includes many more unreleased games than Nintendo Power's charts.)

1. Resident Evil
2. NiGHTS Into Dreams...
3. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
4. Virtua Fighter 2
5. Soul Edge
6. Tomb Raider
7. Virtua Fighter
8. Ultima: The Worldly Lord
9. Panzer Dragoon II Zwei
10. Guardian Heroes

-

## **Pocket Monsters To Receive Anime Adaptation**

The *Pocket Monsters* games for the Nintendo Game Boy, which continue to be best-sellers in Japan, will be receiving an anime series that will begin airing in spring 1997. This news was confirmed by Nintendo, which shares partial ownership of the series with the software company Game Freak, itself owned by Sony. The series is said to closely follow the storyline of the games, with a special emphasis on the character Pikachu, one of the 150 creatures that appear in the games. It is not clear whether Sony or Nintendo will be handling the creative aspects of the series itself, though the series is intended to be aimed at children, who make up the vast majority of the game's fanbase. It is still unclear whether or not the game or the anime will be coming to Western shores, though with the continued success of the games and Sony's stated intention to make all of its game releases worldwide, it seems overwhelmingly likely that American gamers will be playing *Pocket Monsters* sometime down the road.

-from an article in the October 1996 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"Tales Of The Seven Seas was certainly a massive hit for us and an unexpected classic, but Dog Dash was the game we expected to be a hit all along."*

-Jason Rubin, of Naughty Dog, in a February 1999 interview with *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"Thanks to the assistance from Sony, the Game Boy Color was the first handheld ever to have rich, detailed sound. While the graphics were still somewhat primitive, the music was a major leap from anything possible before."*

-Gunpei Yokoi, in a May 1999 interview with *Famitsu* magazine

*"Wait, we're in competition? We're on the same team, aren't we? \*laughs\*"*

-Masahiro Sakurai to a reporter who asked him what he felt about the debate between *Kirby Super Deluxe* and *Dog Dash*

*"This is it, Kirby! This time it's the end of you! Now take THIS!"*

-King Dedede, just before the true final battle in *Kirby Super Deluxe*

*"Whoa, whoa boy! Hey! Hey! ....naughty dog!!"*

-Clark to his dog Woofle in a brief animation that plays before the Naughty Dog logo appears in the intro to *Dog Dash*, Woofle would become the official mascot for Naughty Dog and a variation of this intro would play before every Naughty Dog game in the future

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## **College Slam**

Andrew: 8.0

Mark: 8.0

Mike: 8.5 (quote: "A fun arcade-style basketball game in the style of *NBA Jam*, my only

beef is that you can't pick from more teams.")  
Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Cyberia**

Andrew: 4.5  
Mark: 3.0  
Mike: 5.0 (quote: "The smooth visuals of this shooter are impressive at times but the game moves far too slow on the SNES-CD to be enjoyable.")  
Sushi-X: 1.0

### **Darkstalkers: The Night Warriors**

Andrew: 9.0 (quote: "It takes the best aspects of the Street Fighter series and throws on a shiny coat of anime paint.")  
Mark: 7.0  
Mike: 7.0  
Sushi-X: 9.5

### **Kirby Super Deluxe**

Andrew: 9.0  
Mark: 9.0 (quote: "Kirby has never been more fun than in this amazing collection of games for the Super Nintendo CD.")  
Mike: 8.5  
Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Mario Artist**

Andrew: 7.5 (quote: "A bit too little, too late, but still an excellent collection of art tools.")  
Mark: 8.0  
Mike: 8.0  
Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Phantasmagoria**

Andrew: 4.0  
Mark: 3.5  
Mike: 6.0 (quote: "While the technical limitations make this a somewhat poor adaptation, it still has its thrilling moments.")  
Sushi-X: 4.0

### **Popful Mail**

Andrew: 7.0  
Mark: 6.5  
Mike: 7.5  
Sushi-X: 7.5 (quote: "A fairly fun action game that's bolstered by its fun characters and decent voice acting.")

### **Realm**

Andrew: 5.0 (quote: "A really ho-hum platform shooter, not much else to say here.")  
Mark: 5.0  
Mike: 6.0  
Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Suikoden**

Andrew: 8.5  
Mark: 7.5  
Mike: 8.0 (quote: "A low-tech but very deep RPG with tons of characters to recruit.")  
Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Ultimate Mortal Kombat Trilogy**

Andrew: 8.0  
Mark: 8.0  
Mike: 8.0  
Sushi-X: 9.0 (quote: "The best features of all the Mortal Kombat games and chock-full of characters.")

### **Worms**

Andrew: 9.0 (quote: "One of the best Amiga ports ever to hit the Super Nintendo CD, this game is full of strategy and full of fun.")  
Mark: 9.0  
Mike: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Bikerz 2**

Andrew: 8.5 (quote: "This game is a big step up from the original with lots more characters, tracks, and weapons.")  
Mark: 7.0  
Mike: 7.5  
Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Samurai Rush**

Andrew: 8.0  
Mark: 9.0 (quote: "This is a superb anime-styled action game, somewhat comparable to Samurai Buster but much more lighthearted.")  
Mike: 8.5  
Sushi-X: 8.5

### **It Was A Dark And Scary Night...**

Andrew: 7.5  
Mark: 6.5  
Mike: 6.0 (quote: "A cute but ultimately repetitive horror-themed party game, good for filling a couple of boring party nights but not much else.")  
Sushi-X: 7.5

## **Dog Dash**

Andrew: 9.5 (quote: "One of the best platformers I've ever played, this fun and quite endearing game is a must-play.")

Mark: 9.0

Mike: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.0

## **Filliard**

Andrew: 7.0

Mark: 7.0

Mike: 7.5

Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "A tough but somewhat addicting game, it calls to mind memories of Uniracers on the SNES. It's quite a bit more fast paced and with a seriously good soundtrack, it's worth buying if you loved that game.")

## **Off-Track**

Andrew: 5.0

Mark: 3.0 (quote: "One of the worst racing games I've ever played. It's been a long time since I've played a good monster truck game and the drought continues.")

Mike: 3.0

Sushi-X: 3.0

-

\*A boy and a dog run through a field with one another.\*

Narrator: You've heard the story of a boy and his dog....

\*The ground begins to shake. The dog and the boy look at each other and nod, then forward again at a landscape that's become a volcanic jungle filled with enemies.\*

Narrator: Now there's a new twist.

\*Scenes from the game begin to play as Clark rides Woofle through the game's various levels, leaping over huge gaps, taking out enemies, and battling bosses.\*

Narrator: In *Dog Dash*, a boy and his dog must fight their way home across more than 20 sprawling levels. Collect power-ups, save innocent bystanders, and discover secret paths, it's all in a day's work for this heroic duo.

\*The commercial shows the boy and his dog again, walking back home with their hair all messy and dirt all over them.\*

Boy: Ready for level two, boy?

\*The dog woofs.\*

## **DOG DASH**

## **Only for the Super Nintendo CD.**

\*metal sounds\* **Nin-ten-do**

-the commercial for *Dog Dash*, which played on various kids' TV shows during September 1996

### **Dog Dash: The Basics**

*Dog Dash* is a game created by Naughty Dog and published by Sony for the Super Nintendo CD. The game is a standard side-scrolling platformer like the *Mario* and *Sonic* games, featuring 21 levels spread across six worlds, each world containing a boss at the end. Levels are fairly long, usually with 1-3 checkpoints. You start with five lives and when you lose them all, you go back to the start of the world, though lives are fairly plentiful if you know where to look. Levels also contain secret items, including power-ups that give Clark's dog Woofle more attacking power and more health, and secret collectibles that you can gather up throughout the game. The distinct element of *Dog Dash* is the sheer number of moves Woofle can perform. Along with the standard jump, Woofle can lick with his long tongue, pounce on an enemy, swipe with his paws, throw enemies with his tongue, etc. There are also temporary power-ups that let Woofle breathe fire or ice, that make him invincible, or that give him the ability to make earthquakes wherever he walks. Woofle has a health bar, when it's depleted, you lose a life. Occasionally, there are parts of the game where Woofle is incapacitated and Clark has to fight on his own, he can use sticks or his fists but typically the player will need to slip by enemies to avoid tough confrontations. Woofle can leap very long distances but he doesn't have a lot of height, levels are designed around this with big bounding gaps designed for players to leap across in some pretty cool moments. There are objects like springboards to help Woofle leap higher into the air. The game features a somewhat unique graphical style that looks more like art than highly technical pseudo-3D, the game is known as one of the better looking games on the SNES-CD, and the soundtrack is fairly well received also. There is plenty of voice acting, Toran Caudell (who IOTL was the first voice of Arnold in *Hey Arnold* and later King Bob on *Recess*) plays the voice of Clark, while veteran voice actor Frank Welker makes all the dog noises for Woofle (who doesn't talk). Various other characters are voiced as well, including some of the bad guys and supporting characters like Clark's parents. This game is Grey Delisle's first voice acting job ITTL, she voices the evil queen Nefertara.

The game itself begins as a 10-year-old boy named Clark moves to a new city with his parents, but is lonely and unable to make friends. He's also been having fights with his parents, so he decides to run away. This turns out to be an ill-fated decision, as Clark finds himself getting sucked into a wormhole, where he ends up in a mysterious land surrounded by bad guys. Just as he's about to be done in, a big friendly dog pounces the bad guys and wants Clark to hop onto him. Clark does so, and he and Woofle soon come to a city where the mayor tells him that their two worlds are parallel and that in order to get home, Clark will have to find another wormhole. However, he'll have to watch his back because the wormholes are being created by a mad scientist named Klavenstein (voiced by Tim Curry), who was Woofle's original owner but performed cruel experiments on him which forced Woofle to flee. This begins the journey of Clark and Woofle across six worlds, which are as follows:

*World One: Big Dog City – A sprawling city with urban-themed worlds. The boss is a large robot deployed by Klavenstein.*

*World Two: Rococo Jungle – A jungle with many fiery volcanoes. The boss is Hunter Jake, an evil hunter who wants to make Woofle his prey.*

*World Three: Fantastic Fun Park – An amusement-park world with some circus themes. The boss is an evil game show host.*

*World Four: Blizzard Glacier – An icy world with many caves. The boss is a huge abominable snowman.*

*World Five: Blazing Desert – A desert-themed world. The boss is an evil queen, Nefertara, who you fight after climbing a huge pyramid.*

*World Six: Klavenstein's Lab – The evil mad scientist's lair and the desolate forest leading up to it. The boss of this world is also the final boss of the game, Klavenstein.*

After defeating Klavenstein, Clark uses the wormhole machine to get back to his home and to his parents, who he misses very much. He brings Woofle along and his parents decide to let Clark keep the big dog.

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December of 1996 saw the beginning of what's known as The Great Game Show Shuffle. Some people blame a dog, particularly a video game dog. In the game *Dog Dash* for the Super Nintendo CD, there's a bad guy about midway through the game that seems to be a parody of Bob Barker. He seems obsessed with neutering the hero's dog (they don't actually say neuter, it's a kid's game, but it's strongly implied), and the hero, a young boy named Clark, has to team up with his dog Woofle to stop him. Bob Barker, at that time the legendary host of *The Price Is Right*, did not approve, and even considered suing to get the game pulled. Did the stress over the game controversy lead to Barker's fatal heart attack on December 13, 1996? Almost certainly not (hell, more people blame Friday the 13th), but if the game WAS to blame, it caused one of the more interesting times in TV game show history. With Barker's sudden death, CBS needed to find a quick replacement. The front-runner was former *Family Feud* host Ray Combs, who had even joked about *Price is Right* in his very first episode in 1988, but by that time Combs was part of the cast of the NBC sitcom *Fair Play* and after his somewhat rude ouster from *Family Feud* in favor of original host Richard Dawson, he didn't want to have anything more to do with CBS. Eventually, the network chose *Supermarket Sweep* host David Ruprecht, who began hosting *The Price Is Right* in the fall of 1997. Ruprecht, of course, lasted 12 years before moving on. He was followed by Rosie O'Donnell, whose very unpopular two year stint nearly tanked the show, though the hiring of John Walden, the current host, in 2011 has seen the show's ratings recover. In the meantime, Lifetime selected none other than Marc Summers, most well known for hosting the Nickelodeon game show *Double Dare*, to replace Ruprecht on *Supermarket Sweep*. He did well enough at first, though in his second season the show became a lot more gimmicky (Summers introduced *Double Dare*-style physical challenges to the show, which the Lifetime viewership largely balked at) and the show was eventually canceled in late 1999.

-“The Great Game Show Shuffle”, an article posted on TVFreshness.com in June 2015

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**Kirby Super Deluxe: The Basics**

*Kirby Super Deluxe*, which is known IOTL as *Kirby Super Star*, is the follow-up game to *Kirby's Adventure 2* and is a lot like OTL's game but with a decent number of differences. The first difference is that unlike IOTL's game, which had eight games (the five main games, two mini-games, and the Arena), this version has ten: (the eight from OTL, along with *Kirby's Showdown*, where you can battle it out against a friend or against the CPU by picking one of Kirby's transformations, and *King Dedede's Revenge*, somewhat similar to the version found in the OTL DS game *Kirby Super Star Ultra*, which unlocks after beating the Arena and is a super-tough final quest featuring a climactic showdown with King Dedede at the end, making HIM the true final boss of the game instead of Marx). Also unlike OTL's game, the five main games from OTL are highly specialized in terms of genre, making them a lot more like actual distinct games within a game. While *Spring Breeze*, an enhanced remake somewhat of the original *Kirby's Dreamland*, is largely as IOTL, *Dyna Blade* is much different, taking on more of a shooter feel. While Kirby still acquires power-ups and transformations, there are many segments of the game where you use them in a sidescrolling shooter-like fashion, making the game somewhat of a *Ballistic Limit* send-up. Then there's *The Great Cave Offensive*, which is massively expanded from IOTL and turned into a full-on Metroidvania-styled action RPG, complete with damage numbers appearing above enemies' heads, several more bosses, and largely expanded levels that are unlocked as you progress. Kirby even levels up as you play through the game and collect treasures. *Revenge of Meta-Knight* is turned into a multi-leveled game with a very strict time limit and a boss at the end of each level, leading up to the final showdown with Meta-Knight. It's extremely fast-paced, which is unusual for a Kirby game, and considered the toughest of the sub-games outside of *King Dedede's Revenge*. Finally, *Milky Way Wishes* is a mix of all four genres, changing itself up as you progress from planet to planet. There are twelve planets in all, with three planets in each "genre" (three in classic Kirby style, three in shooter style, three in RPG style, and three in fast-paced arcade style). The battle with Marx himself, however, is done in classic Kirby style, as is *King Dedede's Revenge*, which ends with a multi-staged battle against King Dedede (the Masked Dedede from *Ultra* is used but is only the FIRST part of the battle, in part two you have to defeat a giant robot and in part three you have to defeat a magic-slinging Dedede who attacks like an enhanced version of Marx).

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*"While Kirby Super Deluxe represented a new game for one of Nintendo's marquee franchises, the company chose to make Dog Dash the massively hyped game of the month, showing how much faith the company had in Sony and how much confidence they had in the game. Nintendo truly believed Dog Dash could become a major franchise and...they were right. It was one of the biggest selling original games of the year. Kirby Super Deluxe sold fairly well, meeting expectations, but it wasn't the smash hit that Dog Dash was, despite scoring nearly as well with critics (some critics, notably MTV's GameTV, actually ranked Kirby Super Deluxe better). The fact of the matter is that both games were excellent and rightfully rank among the Super Nintendo CD's best. While Kirby Super Deluxe was largely the easier game (though it has difficulty spikes that top anything in Dog Dash if you want to 100% the game), it was also much more complex and diverse in its game styles. That said, Dog Dash was pure platforming perfection, both a joy to watch and to play. What the 'showdown' between the two games really represented was that Sony had truly assumed a place as an equal partner with Nintendo, both in hardware AND software. The two companies were truly intertwined, and Hiroshi Yamauchi had to be glad to have Sony in HIS corner."*

-excerpted from the book "Partners: The Super Nintendo CD Story"

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"What's up with Nintendo? A barking dog? A pink puffball? Commander Keen's gonna blow them both outta the water. This game'll be a huge hit."

-Tom Kalinske, talking to *Commander Keen* creator Tom Hall at a release party for *Commander Keen: The Universe Is Toast* at Sega of America headquarters

*Commander Keen is facing some stiff competition, but with three excellent games in one, Commander Keen: The Universe Is Toast is the only action game you'll need this month. We'll take you through the first few levels of each of the three games to give you a leg up, and we'll also tell you where some of the game's most jealously guarded secrets can be found. If you like what you see, make sure to try out the game in this month's demo disc, with the first level from each game included!*

-the introduction to the *Official Saturn Magazine's* September 1996 cover article on *Commander Keen: The Universe Is Toast*

"I remember back when *Commander Keen* came out for the Saturn, Nintendo had all these action games coming out that looked really good, and I kinda felt myself regretting to get a Saturn instead of an SNES-CD. But then I played *Commander Keen*. It was tough...definitely tougher than the games on Nintendo. There were a ton of tricky stealth spots, nothing like in *Dog Dash*. The voice acting was great too, and I remember the cutscenes being really funny. The game just had a lot of attitude, way more than Nintendo's cutesy action games. While I did eventually get to play *Dog Dash* and *Kirby Super Deluxe*, in my opinion, neither of them can compare to the fun I had playing *Commander Keen*."

-a user commenting on a Kotaku.com Talk Amongst Yourselves article asking about their best Saturn memories, November 13, 2014

## **Commander Keen**

*Billy Blaze is back and better than ever! This game is actually a collection of three games, giving you a lot of bang for your buck. This game combines precision platforming, run-and-gun action with uproarious humor, making it one of the year's best action titles.*

Score: 8/10

## **Alien Trilogy**

*This spooky FPS might just be the best video game adaptation of *Alien* to date. Fans of the trilogy should definitely play it and fans of shooters in general should definitely give it a try.*

Score: 8/10

-excerpted from the September 1996 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

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September 1996 was an absolutely HUGE month for the Super Nintendo CD. In addition to seeing the release of *Kirby Super Deluxe* and the *Mario Paint* sequel *Mario Artist*, it also saw the release of Naughty Dog's *Dog Dash*, the first game in what would become one of the

company's biggest franchises. But, amidst the month's giant releases, a bunch of quality games got lost in the fold. Though some of them sold decently well, others slid painfully into obscurity. We'll take a brief look at five of these titles.

*Darkstalkers: The Night Warriors*- This fighting game was a LOT like *Street Fighter II*, though instead of featuring brawling humans, it featured fearsome demons and vampires battling it out. While it's easily dismissed as "just another 2-D fighting game", and indeed, a lot of players did, it sold rather poorly, it's probably one of the best 2-D fighters on the SNES-CD. With detailed animation and full voice acting, the game has excellent production values for the time, and characters like Morrigan and Felicia have become instant classics among fans (and some of gaming's biggest sex symbols). The game came to the Sega Saturn in 1997 (and sold somewhat better), but surprisingly, the graphics weren't really updated from the SNES-CD version. Still, the SNES-CD version is excellent and right now it's a tough game to find.

*Phantasmagoria*- People don't remember, because the game flopped so badly, but *Phantasmagoria* was a highly anticipated title when it was first announced for an SNES-CD port. People wondered how they were going to port it, since the game (on PC) was SEVEN discs and at the time there were only three two-disc games on the Super Nintendo CD. Seven would've been completely infeasible. Well, Sierra decided to take a lot of the cutscene content out and replace it with in-game rendered graphics, while keeping the gameplay and puzzles largely intact. The plot (including the game's most controversial scenes of sex and violence) was kept COMPLETELY intact, but the game itself really suffered for the removal of the cutscenes and was regarded by a lot of reviews as a clunky mess. The game sold decently in its first week, though sales fell apart soon afterward and it ended up being one of the Super Nintendo CD's most disappointing games, which is largely a shame for such a highly anticipated port. It is another example of a game that did a LOT better on the Saturn, whose fans were undaunted by the game's six discs.

*Suikoden*- Konami's RPG was perhaps the biggest success story of any of these games due to its sales actually EXCEEDING expectations. Granted, the expectations weren't much, but 88,000 copies in North America has to be considered a success for a non-Squaresoft RPG. The game involved a fairly simple storyline and was somewhat short, but had a lot of characters to recruit and some fairly strategic gameplay. It also featured some fairly good character animation, though the graphics weren't as good as games like *Tale Phantasia* and *Chrono Trigger*. It also lacked voice acting, though it had an excellent musical score. *Suikoden* would go on to get a number of sequels, becoming a beloved, if somewhat niche RPG series. It's worth noting that some of the deeds of *Suikoden II*'s Luca Blight make *Phantasmagoria*'s horrors look like an episode of *Sesame Street*.

*Popful Mail*- *Popful Mail* was one of two Working Designs localized games to be released this month for the SNES-CD, and easily the least popular of the two. It was a whimsical anime-styled action game where you play as a girl named Mail who has magical powers. It featured voice acting...quite a bit of voice acting, and can be compared somewhat with the *Valis* series from Telenet Japan, though *Popful Mail* had significantly more RPG elements to it. Though it was liked by critics and promoted well (it even had a commercial on Fox Kids!), it just didn't have the wide appeal to achieve sales success. It's a shame and somewhat of a surprise, since it seemed like the perfect game to appeal to the rising contingent of girl gamers and the anime crowd that loved *Sailor Moon* so much at the time, but its somewhat pedestrian graphics and quirky story made it a hard sell. Much less so than Working Designs' other localization of the month...

*Samurai Rush*- This anime-styled game was developed by Telenet Japan and localized by Working Designs, and it's about a samurai named Nokaji who teams up with a group of friends to save a kingdom under the oppression of a warlord. There are lots of anime cutscenes, plenty of voice acting, and Nokaji's friends all have likable properties (and they all help you out at various times during your adventure). The gameplay can be best compared to *Pocky and Rocky*, though with a bit of an influence from the *Final Fight*-style brawlers at the time. It's much more lighthearted and fun than *Samurai Buster*, the game it gets compared to quite often. It was one of the month's top selling games for the SNES-CD, though it's still fairly obscure these days and only got one sequel in 1999 for the Ultra Nintendo.

-from the article "The Hidden Gems Of 1996" on Gamesovermatter.com

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*"And this is from Saturday night's chaotic scene on Las Vegas Boulevard where more than a dozen people have been injured and five people have been killed in what is believed to be an attempted drive-by shooting on the rapper Tupac Shakur. Four men ranging in age from 19 to 23 have been arrested and charged with multiple counts of murder in what is one of the worst mass shooting incidents in American history."*

-from the CBS Evening News on September 9, 1996

The East vs. West hip-hop rivalry had been a defining element in the world of gangsta rap throughout the 1990s, but the rivalry came to a head in the form of two tragic incidents, incidents that could have taken the lives of two of hip-hop's most talented artists, but instead tragically took the lives of more than a dozen innocent bystanders between them, leading to the most storied truce in music history.

It began with the incident on the night of September 7, 1996. Tupac Shakur and his entourage had just left the Mike Tyson vs. Evander Holyfield fight that saw Tyson defending his heavyweight title in a brutal first round knockout that would eventually lead to Holyfield's retirement from the sport the following year. As Shakur was leaning out the window of the car he was riding in to curse at a group of hecklers, a car pulled up beside his. Seeing a potentially dangerous situation, the driver of Shakur's car began to speed off, triggering a hail of gunfire from the other car. Seven bullets were put in Shakur's car, injuring the leg of Suge Knight, a member of his entourage. The remaining bullets went into a nearby crowd, cutting down four people immediately and gravely injuring another, while 16 others suffered gunshot wounds of various severity. After the incident, Shakur initially refused to speak to police, in accordance with the "no snitching" policy many hip-hop artists had at the time. However, upon learning that three of the dead were fans of his, with one of the dead being a 13-year-old girl who had owned nearly all of his records, he relented, giving police information that helped identify the would-be assassins. The incident left Shakur deeply shaken, though it wouldn't be until another incident six months later that the biggest feud in hip-hop began to come to an end.

That incident was on March 9, 1997, in Los Angeles, California. Biggie Smalls, known as The Notorious B.I.G., had been presenting at the Soul Train Music Awards. Sometime after the show, Smalls was walking down a sidewalk with his entourage when he stopped to sign some autographs for a group of his fans. While he was doing so, an SUV pulled up and a man leaned outside of the car, firing wildly at Smalls, who was pushed out of the way by one of his bodyguards. Smalls' bodyguard, along with eight others at the scene, were killed in the hail of gunfire before police shot the driver of the SUV dead. The tragic incident was

the second mass shooting to result from an attempt on the life of a controversial hip-hop artist in just six months, and it caused an enormous public outcry. Two months later, Smalls would be contacted by Shakur, who reportedly told him "this shit used to be between you and me but now it's our fans gettin' killed, and that ain't cool". Over the next few months, the rift between the two former friends turned bitter rivals began to close, though the end of their feud didn't become public until the two made a surprise appearance together at the 1997 MTV Video Music Awards, embracing on stage and performing their new song, "Increase the Peace", together. "Increase the Peace" would go on to top the charts for many weeks and would eventually win the Record of the Year award at the 1998 Grammys.

-excerpted from the article "Increase The Peace: How Hip-Hop's Greatest Tragedy Became Its Greatest Redemption", published on Hiphopstar.com on January 14, 2010

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Brittany Saldita: *Suikoden* is definitely a good game, but is it a great game?

Alex Stansfield: I'm not sure. Honestly, I thought it was pretty simplistic. I thought there were too many characters and I thought there were a lot of unnecessary elements. The constant weapon sharpening...

Brittany: Yeah, that was a pain in the ass. But I did like the level of strategy that you get from having so many characters and despite there being so many of them, the storyline was still good. Simple, yes, and WAY too easy.

Alex: Oh, yeah, that too, you can blaze through it really fast.

Brittany: It's the kind of game that does just enough to skirt by...

Alex: Like me in college!

Brittany: Precisely!

Alex: But at least it never got drunk and stuck its bare ass out the fraternity at the dean as he walked by.

Brittany: Did YOU ever do that?

Alex: No, I'm just making up an example!

Brittany: Uh huh....

Alex: I was a good boy in college! I slacked off but I was good!

Brittany: And that describes *Suikoden*. It's good, but it definitely slacks off. I'm giving it a 3.5 out of 5.

Alex: And I'm giving it a 3.

-excerpted from the September 3, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted Crosley: *Commander Keen: The Universe Is Toast* is a really tough but really fun action game with lots of different elements that make it stand out from the other games in its genre.

Gary Westhouse: It's not *NiGHTS* but it's not really trying to be, it stands on its own two feet and it's a great comeback party for a really fun classic character. It's three games in one, which is a serious bargain, and it's not three games in one in the way that *Kirby Super Deluxe* pushes itself as being ten games in one but really it's just one game across a lot of different genres.

Ted: Well, *Kirby* was great but *Commander Keen* is great in its own way. It has a WICKED sense of humor and I loved the stealth levels, I think some people will get frustrated with them but I was having a blast.

Gary: I'm not sure I liked the fact that you had to avoid combat in many points, that made some sections a real chore.

Ted: It's a good change of pace, I think. Again, it's another difference between *Commander Keen* and *Kirby*.

Gary: Are we gonna keep comparing them?

Ted: Well, you brought it up first.

Gary: I liked both, I really did! It's just, there were some parts in *Commander Keen* that weren't as fun as the rest of the game and if you're buying it, you need to know that.

Ted: Well, you also need to know that you don't have to play the other games to get into this one. It's really designed to introduce the character to a new generation of players, and I think *Keen* fits right in on the Saturn. I'm giving *Commander Keen* a 4.5 out of 5.

Gary: And I'm giving it a 4.

-excerpted from the September 17, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted: So Alex, are you going to the dogs?

Alex: Well, *Dog Dash* is really fun but it's not without its flaws. I did have trouble getting used to the jumping, it's not like it is on Mario, it's a bit harder to do some of those precision jumps in the later levels.

Ted: Yeah, even after I'd gotten the hang of it there were still some frustrating moments. But mechanically it's mostly fine. The combat is great, better than any platformer I've played, certainly better than in Mario or Sonic.

Alex: The characters are great too. You can really feel the love between Woofle and Clark.

Ted: Yeah, this game made me want to play with my dog more and that's always a plus.

Alex: And the villains are hilarious, from the evil mummy queen in the desert world to Klavenstein himself...

Ted: Voiced by Tim Curry!

Alex: \*laughing\* I was hoping they'd do some Rocky Horror Picture Show stuff with him but they didn't.

Ted: Well, it is a kids' game.

Alex: That said, even though its a kids' game, it's fun for all ages. It's not perfect but it gets a solid 4 from me.

Ted: And I'll give it a 4 as well. It's a lot of fun, definitely check it out.

-excerpted from the September 24, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany: \*she is drawing a picture of herself zapping Ted with a magic wand\* Let's see if I can animate this...

Ted: \*he watches as Brittany makes the picture come to life, showing a few frames of Brittany zapping Ted like in a flipbook\* You know, that is really cool even if you're killing me.

Brittany: I'm supposed to be turning you into a frog, hold on... \*keeps playing around with the mouse\*

Ted: Well, the sheer number of things you can do in *Mario Artist* is really staggering and the CD really gives it a boost. You can do a LOT more with music and the mini games are really fun, giving you a ton of distractions from the painstaking work of animating yourself turning your co-host into a frog.

Brittany: I can't believe I'm getting paid for this. \*giggles\*

Ted: While *Mario Artist* isn't as robust as the paint tool on your computer, it's still a really great tool and just like the original *Mario Paint*, you'll get many hours of fun out of it.

Brittany: Okay, I'm not gonna get this done in time. \*sighs and stops clicking on the mouse\* But you can see, it's really easy to get sucked in!

Ted: Yeah, and that's why I'm giving *Mario Artist* a 4.5 out of 5.

Brittany: Wow, a 4.5.... well that's what I'm giving it too. If you loved the original *Mario Paint* this is an absolute no-brainer, *Mario Artist* exceeds it in every single way.

Ted: Now it's my turn... \*deletes Brittany's drawing and begins doing his own\*

Brittany: Hey, hey HEY!!!

Ted: I'm gonna turn you into a snail.

Brittany: I'll slime you!

-excerpted from the October 1, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: September 1996**

1. Tale Phantasia
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Chrono Trigger
4. Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run
5. Fire Emblem: The Holy War
6. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
7. Universalizer 2
8. Eternal Night
9. Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge
10. Super Mario World 3
11. Super Mario World 2
12. Power Rangers Zeo
13. Ballistic Limit
14. Donkey Kong Country
15. Fatal Fury 3
16. Spider-Man: Power And Responsibility
17. Samurai Buster
18. Kyuriadan
19. Fatal Strike: Touch Of Death
20. Axelay 2

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart – September 1996**

1. NiGHTS Into Dreams...
2. Resident Evil
3. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
4. Virtua Fighter 2
5. Tomb Raider
6. Virtua Fighter
7. Soul Edge
8. Commander Keen: The Universe Is Toast
9. Panzer Dragoon II Zwei
10. Alien Trilogy

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\*In a black and white scene reminiscent of *The Wizard Of Oz*, a young girl who looks like Dorothy is playing *Super Mario Land* on her classic Game Boy. Her little dog is sitting next to her.\*

Girl: Ohh...!

\*The girl continues to play when suddenly the house shakes.\*

Girl: Oh my goodness, a twister!

\*The house is picked up and dropped somewhere else. The girl steps out of her home and into a world of color, again like in *The Wizard Of Oz*. She looks down at her Game Boy, which has turned into a Game Boy Color. She begins to play, it's now *Donkey Kong Land 2* in full color on the screen.\*

Girl: Toto, I don't think we're playing Game Boy any more!

\*A witch who looks like Glinda comes down in a bubble.\*

Glinda: Oh, but you are!

\*As she continues to speak, scenes from various Game Boy Color games begin to play on the screen.\*

Glinda: The Game Boy Color brings full color to all of your favorite Game Boy games, including brand new games like *Donkey Kong Land 2*, *World of Color*, and *Toy Story!*

Girl: Wow! This is magical!

Glinda: Now, if you wish to go home, just click your heels together three times and-

Girl: I don't want to go home, I want to stay here and keep playing!

\*The girl, accompanied by her dog, skips down a yellow brick road still playing the Game Boy Color as "Optimistic Voices" from *The Wizard Of Oz* plays in the background. "Color Your World", the Game Boy Color's official slogan, is shown on the screen, along with the date of its release, September 15.\*

-the commercial for the release of the Game Boy Color, which began airing in late August 1996

(...)

Ted: *World of Color* is without a doubt the best puzzle game released on the Game Boy since *Tetris*. I was hooked from the beginning and I've been hooked ever since.

Alex: The single player modes are stellar, I love the "adventure" mode but the real meat of the game is in its endless score attack modes where you try to rack up combos and shift an increasing number of color blocks together.

Ted: The game even plays good on the regular old black and white Game Boy! For a game that seems to revolve around color, the option to play on the Game Boy with symbols instead of colors is welcome for people who might not be able to get the Game Boy Color until, say, Christmas, or who might not be able to convince their parents that the Game Boy Color is enough of an upgrade over the original Game Boy to buy it.

Alex: The jury's still out on the Game Boy Color being enough of an upgrade, but maybe once more exclusives come out...? I'm AMAZED this wasn't an exclusive.

Ted: I'm glad it wasn't. EVERYBODY should be playing this game! I give it a 5 out of 5.

Alex: Same here. *World of Color* is getting a 5 from me.

\*Sirens begin to go off\*

Ted: Whoa, whoa, whoa! It looks like it's time for another Hall of Fame entrant!

Alex: The first ever portable Hall of Famer, and well deserved at that!

\*The two of them, accompanied by the other three hosts, head to the wall to hang up a framed copy of the game. However, Ted notices that the *Tale Phantasia* frame is...somewhat damaged.\*

Ted: Uh...

Brittany: \*nervously laughing\*

Alex: \*takes *Tale Phantasia* off the wall\* Why's the frame cracked...? What's all this duct tape doing on here?

Brittany: ....maintenance guy.

Ted: \*shrugs\* Sounds about right! \*hangs *Tale Phantasia* back up and puts *World of Color* next to it\* And that's it, *World of Color* is in the GameTV Hall of Fame!

Alex: Coming up next, our final verdict on the Game Boy Color. Should you go out and spend 90 bucks or should you wait until some exclusive titles come out?

John Walden: I think we need to spend 90 bucks on a new frame for *Tale Phantasia*...

Brittany: Or we COULD get a cheap two dollar frame...

Ted: This is the Hall of Fame, we don't cheap out on anything! It's okay, we'll take it out of the maintenance guy's salary.

Brittany: ....\*she looks guilty\*

(...)

Ted: And so that's it, by a four-to-one margin, our verdict on the Game Boy Color is wait. Wait until some exclusives come out or at least wait until Christmas when you can have Santa bring it to you, I don't think Santa cares that it's not that much of a technical improvement over the original Game Boy.

Alex: Well, that's it for *GameTV*. We have *Tale Phantasia* up in a brand new frame, it was 150 bucks but that's okay, the maintenance guy who broke it doesn't HAVE to eat this week!

Brittany: Wait...! \*bowing her head\* You guys, uh....I broke the frame. After you left me locked in, I kind of smashed the frame and started playing.... it's not like I had any choice, I didn't want to stay here all night with nothing to do!

Ted: \*snickering\* Oh, we knew you broke the frame.

John: Yeah, who else could it have been? I noticed it was broke the day after.

Alex: We were kind of wondering how long it would take you to fess up.

Brittany: Well, I guess I'll pay for the frame but you guys are still jerks for locking me in here!

Ted: \*shrugs\* It's okay, we just took it out of the new guy's wallet when he wasn't looking.

Gary: Wait, WHAT?!

Brittany: Ha!

Gary: You....you guys...! \*looks in his wallet\* Ah, dammit!

Ted: We'll see you guys next time!

Gary: I didn't do anything! I need that money for stuff! Guys...!!! \*keeps complaining as the credits begin to play\*

-excerpted from the September 17, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

### **September 15, 1996**

The Game Boy Color is released in North America, along with two "launch titles", *Donkey Kong Land 2* and the puzzle game *World Of Color*, both of which achieve excellent critical reviews and achieve more than a million sales. Though the release of the Game Boy Color does give Game Boy sales a significant bump throughout late 1996 (especially for the Christmas season) and early 1997, over the next few months few games are released to take full advantage of the system's graphical capabilities and new soundchip. Despite this, the Game Boy Color continues to sell well due to a lack of competition from Sega's Game Gear (which is quietly discontinued around this time) and Sega's Venus (which is still considered too expensive and too much of a battery hog to catch on). Meanwhile, in Japan, *Pocket Monsters* is slowly becoming a major cultural phenomenon, continuing its march toward an eventual worldwide release...

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*"The fantastic 3-D visuals paint a very detailed cityscape despite the significant amount of pop-in. Visually, it looks like a Sega Saturn or even an Ultra Nintendo game in certain segments. It's clear that Argonaut squeezed every last drop of power they could get out of the Super Nintendo CD, which, at just under 22 megahertz, is an incredibly impressive feat considering the results."*

-excerpted from "Games That Pushed The Limits (SNES-CD): Squad Four: Eclipse" on racketboy.com (based on this OTL webpage: <http://www.racketboy.com/retro/games...-limits-part-1> )

*"Even the eclipse itself, the iconic imagery of the game, was a graphical trick designed to help us add detail to the enemies and buildings. The constant darkness enabled us to limit what we would allow the player to see."*

-Argonaut's Dylan Cuthbert, discussing *Squad Four: Eclipse* in the December 2007 issue of *GameInformer*

*"Tomb Raider threw the female video game action hero into the mainstream for the first time and was an enormous step forward in the portrayal of women in games. Lara Croft is a fierce, resourceful, intelligent, and strong woman and the narrative of the game went a long way toward giving her credibility as one of gaming's most well developed heroes. Yes, she became a sex symbol, but not by design. This is evidenced in the game development documents that show how Lara's breast size was reduced as the game gained graphical fidelity later in development. They could've easily given her a massive chest to attract more male players, but instead, she was portrayed realistically both physically and in terms of her personality."*

-Anita Sarkeesian, "Tropes vs. Women In Games (Part 4): Women In Games Done Right", posted on May 28, 2015

*"Lara Croft is a heroine I'd be proud for my daughters to look up to. That's a big part of the reason why I wanted this game on Saturn so badly."*

-Tom Kalinske, in an interview with *Time* magazine, December 9, 1996

*"Well, Snatcher was sort of lightning in a bottle, wasn't it? I do know by that time the Super Famicom CD was in decline, so that explains why Policenauts didn't do quite so well. It WAS a success, but I was a bit worried that it wouldn't match up to Snatcher and unfortunately that was the case."*

-Hideo Kojima, in an interview in the February 1999 issue of *Famitsu* magazine

*"If you insist on stopping me, I guess neither one of us will get out of here alive!"*

-Jade Bessemer, just before the final boss fight in *Tomb Raider*

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*"Only on Sega Saturn: An Adventure Like No Other"*

-the tagline for *Tomb Raider* that began appearing in magazine ads during the summer and fall of 1996

## **Tomb Raider: The Basics**

*Tomb Raider* is quite a bit different from its OTL counterpart, owing to its creation with a higher-powered Sega Saturn in mind as opposed to the Playstation IOTL. Its graphics are significantly better than the OTL version of the game, areas are much larger and presented with much more detail and Lara's graphical design is more detailed as well, looking less boxy and jagged than in OTL's game. The gameplay is largely the same, though Lara has a couple of additional melee moves and can counter enemy blows and animal lunges, making her less dependent on firearms for offense. She also moves a bit more fluidly, making jumping sections (which are more numerous and complex than in OTL's game) easier to navigate. There are also more puzzles than IOTL's game, both environmental and logical. Like IOTL's game, the save system only allows the player to save at certain checkpoints and like IOTL, this receives some criticism and is fixed for the sequels and for later ports. The game, like OTL's, contains voice acting, Lara Croft is voiced by Olivia D'Abo while Jade is voiced by Moira Quirk.

The plot itself is also largely altered from IOTL. Entire plot points are changed wholesale, with new characters introduced and different landmarks and artifacts explored. Instead of the main villain being Jacqueline Natla, the villain is a woman named Jade Bessemer, who is not only a rich industrialist but a skilled tomb raider in her own right. The quest is set off when Lara steals an artifact from a temple in Peru, the first of seven legendary artifacts that are said to unlock the secret of immortality. Lara is contacted by Jade Bessemer, who offers Lara a great deal of money for the artifact and the other six if she is able to find them. Lara turns down Jade's offer, but that night, Lara is attacked at her mansion by Jade and her thugs. Jade nearly kills Lara, but Lara manages to wound Jade, who escapes with the stolen artifact and vows to find the others. Lara sets out to find the remaining six artifacts which are in the following areas: Greece (in Europe), Ayers Rock (in Australia), Chaco Canyon (in North America), the Congo (in Africa), Lake Vostok (in Antarctica), and finally Xanadu (in Asia). In Antarctica, the sixth level, Lara has a climactic showdown with Jade, only for the two of them to be attacked by an ethereal being (the spirit within the artifacts, which does not want to be disturbed). The two work together to survive and there's a point where it seems that Lara and Jade are about to settle their differences, only for Jade to betray Lara and leave her for dead, taking all six artifacts to Xanadu. After a spiritual journey, Lara awakens and goes to Xanadu for the final showdown. It's an enormous temple complex with numerous puzzles and difficult dungeon sections, but finally Lara confronts Jade in a one-on-one battle. Lara defeats Jade, but Jade manages to harness the power of the spirit and she transforms into an angel-like being to confront Lara once more. After this second boss fight, Jade is defeated and Xanadu begins to collapse. Lara is forced to leave the artifacts behind and there is a timed escape sequence, once she escapes, the ending shows Lara returning to England with a few treasures in her bag, after the game credits, Jade's hand is shown emerging from the rubble of the temple.

### **October 10, 1996**

*Tomb Raider* is released in North America for the Sega Saturn, amidst a massive slew of hype and a huge advertising campaign. The game proves an immediate hit with fans and sells extremely well, even faster than *Resident Evil* earlier in the year. Though critics don't respond to the game as well as they did to *Resident Evil* and *NiGHTS* (*Tomb Raider* averages in the high 8s, low 9s with critics), it's still regarded as an excellent game and another hit for the *Sega Saturn*. A special *Tomb Raider* edition of the Saturn is released with the game packaged in, while promotional events for the game's release all over the country are hugely attended events and the game (and its very popular heroine) receives a huge amount of mainstream attention, dwarfing the media coverage of September's *Dog Dash* on the SNES-CD (and a significant part of the attention for that game came from the controversy over the Bob Barker parody). It's clear that, at least in the eyes of the mainstream media, the Sega Saturn is the video game system to get. The Super Nintendo CD is still leading in sales, but the gaming media now agrees that it's only a matter of time before that changes, and *Sonic 4* is still on the horizon...

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### **October 14, 1996**

At Nintendo headquarters in Kyoto, the company had called a meeting of some of its most important people. In addition to the top Nintendo brass present, Sony's Ken Kutaragi was there at the meeting to update the men on his progress regarding the GPU for the Ultra Nintendo and other issues regarding the new system.

"Sales in North America for the Super Nintendo CD are dropping," said Howard Lincoln, showing the men at the table a chart. "Without any major breakout hits, we aren't moving as many consoles as we did in 1995. *Dog Dash* is giving us a bit of a bump, but now we've stabilized again."

Nintendo's "Year of the RPG" had been a success...in terms of software sales. The company had taken what was normally a niche genre and had bolstered its success significantly in North America. *Tale Phantasia* was on its way to being a million-seller in the territory, and *Chrono Trigger* could potentially still limp there over the course of the next year or so. Even middling hits like *Soul Matrix* and *Suikoden* were selling better than they could've without the extra promotion. And *Elements of Mana* was still on the way. However, the additional RPG sales hadn't moved many extra Super Nintendo CD consoles. They were simply selling a few more games to people who already had the console.

"It is the same in Japan," Minoru Arakawa added. "*Seiken Densetsu 3*, *Terranigma*, and *Dragon Quest VI* are all selling like crazy here in Japan but it's not moving any extra hardware units...and soon we will not have Enix making games for us anymore."

Meanwhile, the Saturn was continuing to sell majorly in both Japan and North America. Even in Europe, the Saturn had drawn even with Nintendo's CD console. It was clear that the decline would continue until the next generation of Nintendo hardware was ready.

"Super Famicom CD sales are still strong enough to make a good profit," said Hiroshi Yamauchi, choosing, for once, to look on the bright side of things. He was in a good mood, all things considered, having recently seen the uptick in Game Boy sales generated by the release of the new model. "Kutaragi-san, how is Sony's progress coming on the Ultra Nintendo components?"

"It's finished, sir," said Kutaragi, passing a document across the table. "The new Sony GPU is the most powerful such unit ever created for a home gaming console. It surpassed even my lofty expectations. The work by our technicians has been superb."

Yamauchi took a brief look at the document and his eyes, for a moment, betrayed his expression.

"Is this really how fast the new graphics processor will be?" asked Yamauchi, somewhat skeptically.

"It is," Kutaragi replied proudly. "In conjunction with the custom SH3 processor from Hitachi, the Ultra Nintendo will dwarf the Saturn in power. Its graphical capabilities will be unparalleled."

Howard Lincoln smiled, and asked to inspect the document. He looked over it and began to speak.

"The Hitachi SH3 CPU, codenamed 'Hippolyta', will be capable of a clock rate of 140.5 megahertz. Sony's GPU, codenamed 'Artemis', will be capable of a 102 megahertz clock rate," Lincoln read, grinning now. "Isn't the Saturn's CPU only capable of--"

"86.75," said Kutaragi.

"And with only four megabytes of RAM," said Lincoln. "If Rambus is capable of giving us the price for RAM they quoted before, the Ultra Nintendo will be able to have 16 megabytes of RAM."

"That's still a big if," said Yamauchi. "Make sure they stick to that price, I do not want to charge too much money for the Ultra Nintendo."

"May I add something?" said Kutaragi, raising his hand for a moment. "If I may... we've also been able to perfect the new proprietary format for the Ultra Nintendo's game discs. The Sony Gigadisc can hold up to one gigabyte of data and the discs are somewhat more durable than CDs. It will allow games to contain more graphical detail while remaining on the same number of discs as corresponding Sega Saturn games."

"And what is the expected release date for this new console?" asked Yamauchi. "Surely it will be ready before the end of 1997."

"It will," said Arakawa. "We expect to release the Ultra Nintendo in Japan in June 1997 at the latest, and it will be ready for release in North America and Europe in time for the 1997 holiday season."

Yamauchi nodded with approval at this news. It still gave the Saturn eight more months to have the market to itself, but he'd already resigned himself to the fact that Sega would probably win Christmas. If he had anything to say about it, it would be the last Christmas they ever won.

"We need to counter *Sonic 4* with everything we have," said Yamauchi, his face growing stern as he sized up everyone at the table. "Next month will be very important for us."

"We've got *Elements of Mana* and *Donkey Kong Country 3* both releasing in November," said Howard Lincoln, referring to two of the most anticipated SNES-CD releases of the year. "And of course *Squad Four: Eclipse* coming at the end of the month. All three games should sell extremely well."

Gunpei Yokoi, who at the moment was in the process of developing an SNES-CD game, *Days Of The Hunt*, and a Game Boy game, *Serfa's Root*, both expected to be released some time in 1997, exchanged a look with Shigeru Miyamoto. Miyamoto, of course, was hard at work on both *Super Mario Dimensions* and *Star Fox 2* for the new Ultra system.

"As long as Nintendo continues to do what it always has done, which is continuing to innovate and design fun new games, we will be victorious over Sega," said Miyamoto. "Their *Sonic 4* looks very similar to past Sonic games. Not much has changed. Fans will tire of it. *Super Mario Dimensions* is like no Mario game before it."

Yokoi, of course, was still considering ideas for the next *Metroid* game. He knew it would be too late to produce one for the Super Nintendo CD, and his mind was racing with ideas for what the new technology of the Ultra could provide. He had intended to retire from Nintendo earlier in the year, but his time working with Sony had changed his mind. They were at the cutting edge of technology, and it stimulated his creative drive like no other. He couldn't wait to see what the future would bring.

But for right now, Nintendo's immediate future was preoccupied with the looming shadow of the blue hedgehog and the imminent release of their next gaming console.

"I expect everyone to be working many hours to keep Nintendo in front of Sega this year," said Yamauchi, who rose from his chair to adjourn the meeting. "We'll have another meeting after the release of the new *Squad Four* game to discuss this month's sales. Goodbye for now."

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### **King's Field II**

Andrew: 6.0

Mark: 7.5

Mike: 6.5 (quote: "While it's as tough and spooky as the first game, it's still a bit bland in comparison to some of the other epic RPGs to come out this year.")

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **NBA Live '97**

Andrew: 7.5

Mark: 7.5 (quote: "The leading basketball series is back and as good as its ever been, but it's clearly starting to get outdated on the SNES-CD.")

Mike: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **New Horizons II**

Andrew: 7.0 (quote: "Though this game is clearly comparable to *Tales Of The Seven Seas* and features excellent music, the variety of missions and levels leaves a lot to be desired.")

Mark: 8.0

Mike: 7.0

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Policenauts**

Andrew: 9.0 (quote: "An outstanding anime-inspired game with one of the best storylines on the system.")

Mark: 8.0

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Project Overkill**

Andrew: 6.0

Mark: 5.5

Mike: 6.0

Sushi-X: 6.0 (quote: "A well made but ultimately bland isometric shooter featuring some uncharacteristically bad music for Konami.")

### **Squad Four: Eclipse**

Andrew: 9.5

Mark: 9.5 (quote: "With incredible graphics and awesome cinematics, Squad Four: Eclipse

exceeds the original in every possible way.")

Mike: 9.5

Sushi-X: 9.5

### **Icebiter 3**

Andrew: 5.5 (quote: "This game is far worse than the first two, with clunky platforming and outdated graphics that aren't helped by the addition of a second character.")

Mark: 8.0

Mike: 6.0

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **The Basement**

Andrew: 7.5

Mark: 9.0

Mike: 9.0 (quote: "A dark horror adventure in the vein of *Resident Evil*, but perhaps even scarier.")

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Flame Squad**

Andrew: 8.5

Mark: 8.5 (quote: "One of the funniest top-down shooters since *Major Hazard*, you'll be roasting enemy soldiers for many hours.")

Mike: 9.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Dead End**

Andrew: 7.5

Mark: 7.5

Mike: 7.5

Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "A unique and fun concept where you take control of one of two spies locked in a deadly struggle for survival. The voice acting is a highlight.")

### **King Of The Jungle**

Andrew: 5.0

Mark: 4.0

Mike: 6.0 (quote: "A really generic platformer that kids might like.")

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Chainsaw**

Andrew: 7.0 (quote: "The chainsaw wielding killer who can pop up at any time adds a big element of tension to this otherwise ho-hum horror game.")

Mark: 5.5

Mike: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

-*Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of October 1996's SNES-CD games in the November

and December 1996 issues

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With *Snatcher* becoming one of the most influential video games of all time, it was only a matter of time before Kojima's follow-up game, *Policenauts*, got a port to the SNES-CD and got localized in North America. And, in the fall of 1996, it did, joining games like *Elements of Mana*, *Donkey Kong Country 3*, and *Squad Four: Eclipse* as one of the fall's most anticipated games. It was expected to be a big sales success, and while it DID sell a decent number of copies (260,000 in North America, nothing to sneeze at), it failed to match the sales figures and critical acclaim of *Snatcher*. Instead of becoming an instant classic, it had to settle for being just another of 1996's good games. What happened? It seemed that *Snatcher*, a game about robots stealing the likenesses of humans and slowly taking over the world, had a more attractive concept than a game about police astronauts. *Snatcher* sounded cool, *Policenauts* just sounded...weird. Advertising tried to play up the similarities between *Policenauts* and *Lethal Weapon*, but the *Lethal Weapon* franchise wasn't as big as it was in the late 80s/early 90s, so that fizzled out as well (in addition to the game itself being nothing like *Lethal Weapon* other than the appearances of the main characters). In the end, while *Snatcher* was a cultural phenomenon, *Policenauts* was a mere historical footnote, and a stepping stone on the way to Kojima's eventual blockbuster success with *Metal Gear Solid*.

-excerpted from the article "Kojima and Nintendo: A Profitable Partnership" on Gamesovermatter.com

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### **October 15, 1996**

Hideo Kojima let out a sigh as he sat on his couch. *Policenauts* had just been released for the Super Nintendo CD in North America, and while critical reception was largely positive, it was apparent that the game wasn't going to be the breakout success that *Snatcher* had been. Combine that with the failure of *Project Overkill*, and Konami was having a fairly rough month. But, things WOULD get better. Kojima had been made privy to the final expected specs of the Ultra Nintendo, and it was now clear on which system his next *Metal Gear* game would be.

There was nothing on the market quite like the Ultra Nintendo. Sure, there were plenty of computers that could top it, but in terms of home consoles, the Ultra clearly outclassed the Saturn, and he wanted *Metal Gear Solid* to be as good as it could possibly be. It was as simple as that.

"I just hope we have enough time to produce a trailer in time for E3 next year..." thought Kojima, imagining all the buzz it would generate if he were able to steal the show with the first footage of his new game. "We will need to begin immediately."

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### **October 16, 1996**

Jim Lehrer: This next question is for President Clinton.

Allison Kohler: Um, I'm Allison Kohler and I'm a mother of two boys from Providence, Rhode Island. One is 12, and one is 10. And I'd like to know, Mr. President, with the increasing prevalence of violence in the media, on TV and in video games, what do you intend to do to limit the exposure of vulnerable children to this harmful element? Thank you.

Bill Clinton: Well, that's a very good question and one that I think has many different answers, I'm sure my opponent has an answer to your question as well, but as for me, as a father myself I'm very aware of the effects that exposure to violence in the media can have on our children. As you know, I signed legislation just this year requiring the V-chip on all new televisions sold in the United States that will give parents the power to block these violent programs if they so choose. You know, and I think, certainly acting, within the first amendment and with the power that the FCC has to regulate certain shows, I think it's best to use that power to encourage networks to make the right choices in terms of teaching kids the right lessons. I'm very supportive of including educational messages in these shows, that if these shows choose to show violent content that they make it very clear that in the real world, the world we live in, that kids need to treat one another with dignity and respect. And as it pertains to video games, of course these games are becoming very violent. Certainly the industry is attempting to label these games with content ratings, but stores are still selling them to kids and I think that perhaps in my second term, were I to receive a second term, we could work with these stores and maybe have penalties for selling these games to young kids. But also, I think we need to take a proactive role in getting kids up off of the couch and outside doing physical activity. That is so important. If they're up and about, running and playing sports and exercising, then they're not in front of the TV playing violent video games and that solves two very big problems. And I'm going to lead by example, I'm, I'm cutting down on the fast food and getting a lot more exercise. \*some laughs from the audience\* We all have to lead by example to create a better America. Thank you.

Bob Dole: Mr. President, I don't think that's good enough. When a child is given the choice between a brand new video game with all its bells and whistles and blood and guts, and going out and running around, most of the time kids these days will choose the video game. And parents aren't going to always be there to say no. Certainly, Mrs. Kohler, I think you are an excellent parent and I'm sure you already monitor what games your children play, but there are so many parents in this country who can't, or won't do that. And so kids are playing these games, these terrible games, I've heard of one game now where you're in a mansion shooting people in the face and there's blood everywhere and it's the most popular game! It's the most popular game and kids aren't going to be able to say no to that. So I think, legislation is definitely needed to punish these stores that sell these games to kids. Any store that sells a violent game to a child, and I don't necessarily trust the game makers themselves to rate these games, but I think a government council of concerned parents should be involved with this, any store that sells a game determined to be violent should be heavily fined, and maybe even put the clerk in jail for 30 days or so. Because these games, and these violent television shows like *Power Rangers* and *Sailor Moon*, these shows are hurting our kids and if parents can't or won't do anything about them then maybe it's time for the government to step in. And I am absolutely a small government conservative, but this is one issue where I think the government needs to play a role.

Bill Clinton: Well, Mr. Dole, I agree that there is a problem but I did recently host some actors from the *Power Rangers* at the White House and that show has positive messages for young people. There is some violence, yes, and I think maybe they could cut down on the violence, but it's also presenting positive messages, which is what I said before, that some of these kids' shows do at the very least show to kids that this kind of violence is entirely in

a fantasy setting and that in the real world, conflicts are best solved with words and with compromise. And it also encourages physical activity which is important for the future of our nation's children. I don't think the government should play an active role in the content of these shows and games, but I do think that we could encourage these companies to take on more of a role of responsibility.

Jim Lehrer: Next question is for Senator Dole.

Kevin Baker: Senator Dole, my name's Kevin Baker, I'm a college student at California Berkeley and I'd like you to clarify your comments that you made on October 7th, about the possible link between the Atlanta Olympics bomber and certain Christian militia groups. Um, when a member of the Army of God came forward and said that he might know the identity of the bomber, you commented in an interview that it was impossible for any true Christian to commit an act of terrorism, which, in the face of several abortion clinic bombings over the past few years, is clearly not the case.

Bob Dole: Well, you know, I erm, that's.... certainly what I said has been taken out of context by a lot of folks in the media and I'm going to say right now that I absolutely realize that certain...very, very extremist elements of the Christian faith may have been responsible, in the past, for absolutely reprehensible and intolerable acts of violence.

-excerpted from the second presidential debate on October 16, 1996

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### **Squad Four: Eclipse- The Basics**

*Squad Four: Eclipse* is the sequel to 1994's *Squad Four*, developed by Argonaut Software and released exclusively for the Super Nintendo CD. The game picks up where the first game left off, following Shad, Rebecca, Marcus, and Lane on their quest to liberate Planet Lockstar from an invasion by a vengeful armada of Krills, the evil aliens defeated in the first game of the series. The gameplay itself remains largely the same: a rail-shooter with some first-person exploration components, though this game is somewhat more streamlined than the original: 22 missions, less than the 26 of the first, and containing much more rail-shooter elements than the first game, with only a few open exploration areas. However, this tightening of the gameplay focus has led to a major refinement of the gameplay and graphics. The graphics themselves are superb, considered the best on the Super Nintendo CD. The game pushes the console to its absolute limits, with graphics rivaling many OTL 1995-1997 Playstation games. In terms of gameplay, the combat has increased in complexity, with more large enemies to fight and the addition of a "special" meter that allows the player to use a powerful move after charging up for a time. The specials are:

**Blaster Array (Shad):** Shad's special is a move that fills the entire screen with aiming reticles, locking onto enemies as dozens of bursts of blaster fire are fired off at once. A great way to deal with large groups of enemies.

**Automatic Shotgun (Marcus):** Marcus' shotgun becomes automatic, and can fire at will at a very rapid rate. Good for taking out hordes of enemies or directing lots of fire at a single one.

**Whirlwind Rush (Rebecca):** Rebecca swings her twin blades in a flurry, striking enemies around her with numerous blows. Great to use on bosses.

Stunbolt (Lane): Lane uses his taser to zap enemies on screen, freezing them in place and readying them to absorb attacks from his bolt thrower. Quite useful for both defense and offense.

The game gives you a lot more choice as to which character to use in a level, allowing for more strategy. Only eight of the game's missions require you to use a certain character, letting you choose which character to use for the other 14. The combat is somewhat faster paced due to Argonaut being able to bump up the frame rate, allowing more complex attack animations and noticeably faster attacks. This refinement is likely the reason the game is so much more well received than the first. With the addition of allowing free-roaming for many of the game's boss monsters, it resembles OTL's *Sin and Punishment* more than any other game. It contains even more voice acting than the original *Squad Four*, in both cutscenes and in battle.

The game starts off with the first mission, which is actually to finish the mission given to Squad Four in the original game, liberating a planet from a group of space pirates. The first mission introduces you to the basics of the game and finishes off with a tricky but fairly easy battle against a space pirate mecha. Squad Four returns to Planet Lockstar and after a couple of cutscenes showing the team's happy return, it flash forwards to six months later. After another cutscene, the sun is blocked off by an eclipse...signaling the arrival of a huge army of Krills on the planet, led by Warmaster Zarx, who appeared as a minor villain and boss in the original *Squad Four*. Zarx, now exiled from his own planet along with an army, has gathered some of the galaxy's deadliest weapons to bring to bear on Planet Lockstar, and his hordes soon overrun the capital city. Over the next few missions, Squad Four concentrates on defending and rescuing civilians caught in the crossfire, but it's soon apparent that Zarx's forces are too strong, and the Squad and much of the Lockstar army is beaten back. The Squad decides to infiltrate the capital city to undermine the invasion. They aren't given much help at first, but eventually a faction of the army led by the brash General Vasher decides to lend its might in support of the squad. Eventually, Squad Four fights its way to the Presidential Palace, where Zarx is ruling the planet with an iron fist. In a fierce fight against Zarx's huge mech, he is beaten, and the Lockstar army repels his armies from the planet. But all is not saved yet... Zarx has been chased back to his mothership, where he decides to simply destroy Lockstar with a superweapon in revenge. Squad Four makes their way up to Zarx's mothership, where the final two missions take place. After fighting their way to Zarx and defeating him once more, Squad Four dons some spacesuits and in the final battle of the game, must battle the mothership itself to bring it down before it can destroy Lockstar (this spectacular multi-stage space battle is considered one of the SNES-CD's crowning achievements in graphical presentation, final boss music, and action gameplay). Once again, Squad Four has saved the planet, and they are given a victory parade through the streets of the capital city, having truly proven their worth as Lockstar's greatest heroes.

## **October 28, 1996**

*Squad Four: Eclipse* is released for the Super Nintendo CD, becoming the fastest-selling SNES-CD game of the year and one of the fastest selling games of the year overall. It is showered with praise from critics, regarded a true classic as opposed to the good-to-great reception received by the original game. It cements the series as one of Nintendo's flagship franchises, and is labeled the SNES-CD game of the year in some publications, even topping some of the great RPGs released for the system such as *Tale Phantasia* and *Chrono Trigger*. It even generates a sale spike for the Super Nintendo CD that ensures that it emerges from

October the number one selling game console in North America, despite the huge Saturn release of *Tomb Raider* earlier in the month.

*"Squad Four: Eclipse proves that Nintendo can absolutely still blow us away with their excellent games. It's the latest in a line of spectacular games for the Super Nintendo CD, and a top-flight contender for Game of the Year."*

-Andrew Baran in his 9.5/10 review of *Squad Four: Eclipse* in the December 1996 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*. The game would win the magazine's Game of the Month award in a month that also saw the magazine's review of *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*.

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(...)

Alex Stansfield: *Tomb Raider* lives up to the hype but it isn't without its flaws. Certain dungeons and certain types of puzzles got sort of repetitive, especially by the time I got to about the fifth dungeon.

Ted Crosley: Yeah, when I got to that one I was definitely groaning "oh god, no, not this again!" which is not what you want to be hearing yourself say ever when you're playing a video game. That said, it finished really strong.

Alex: It did, it absolutely did but I'm not going to spoil any of the late game twists.

Ted: It was like a movie, wasn't it? All those twists and turns, the action sequences and the great, great graphics, this game really was a lot like a movie!

Alex: And, like a movie, it had a somewhat boring middle only to turn things around for a great finish.

Ted: Let's talk about who's hotter: Lara, or Jade?

Alex: I like bad girls. I think Jade is pretty good looking. She's got that whole evil rich lady thing going on.

Ted: \*he smirks\* And would you ever marry an evil rich lady?

Alex: Well, probably yeah.

Ted: Imagine, you marry an evil rich lady and you plan out all the stuff you're gonna buy, and then just when you go to buy everything she takes the money away! It wouldn't be fun!

Alex: Yeah but maybe we could BOTH be evil and then she wouldn't take the money. We'd be like Boris and Natasha.

Ted: Were they rich?

Alex: Well they had all those machines they used on Bullwinkle and Rocky didn't they?

Ted: Yeah, you got a point. But now, now I think she'd want to spend it on machines. Anyway, I prefer Lara because of her sexy British accent.

Alex: Dude, they BOTH have sexy British accents.

Ted: Oh yeah. Well I'd still pick Lara. Isn't she rich too?

Alex: But she's not as fun as an EVIL rich lady.

Ted: Speaking of fun, *Tomb Raider*, despite some repetitive puzzles, is still a very enjoyable game. So much so that I'm giving it a 4.5 out of 5.

Alex: Yeah, it's flawed but it's got a LOT of things going on for it, enough for me to give it a 4.5 as well.

-excerpted from the October 8, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Gary Westhouse: And so that's *Flame Squad*, which to me was basically *Major Hazard* with flamethrowers but not nearly as fun. You would think adding flamethrowers to a game would make it a lot of fun but no, enemies went down WAY too easily and I ended up just being bored out of my mind.

John Walden: Oh, no, there was nothing boring about this game! For me, it was 13 levels of awesomeness from top to bottom. I loved the number of things it let you burn and the enemy screams were super hilarious.

Gary: There were only like five different screams! How many variants of "aaaaaaahhh!" or "owwww!" could you hear before thinking "meh"?

John: Well, they also made little comments like "my buns are burning!", the guy running around with his ass on fire while yelling it had me rolling.

Gary: You'd think they could've used more than one animation for a guy with his ass on fire.

John: It's a damn good animation! This game was insane!

Gary: Well, if the definition of insanity is, as they say, doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results, then you're right, this game is insane. For me, it's just a 2.5 out of 5.

John: It's a solid 4 for me. Play *Flame Squad*, you'll have a blast.

-excerpted from the October 15, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Gary (dressed up like Butthead from *Beavis and Butthead* for *GameTV*'s Halloween special): *The Basement* had to be the scariest video game I've ever played. While the graphics are pretty primitive next to *Resident Evil*, the game uses them to chilling effect and the Lovecraftian references are also really well done.

Alex (dressed up like Lex Luthor from *Superman: Last Son of Krypton*): It is really well done horror, and while the gameplay's somewhat of a slog, I can't find too much fault with the

atmosphere. Plus, the bosses are literally out of this world.

Gary: There's just one thing though, the name itself is a bit misleading since you only spend about half the game in basements, and most of those are technically tunnels.

Alex: It was named *Descent* in Japan, but here the Saturn got a shooter named *Descent* and they had to change it. Curse you Sega, taking away everything good from us!

Gary: Dude, your fanboyism is showing.

Alex: I bet that Superman plays Nintendo...I'll get him! \*he goes over and "grabs" Brittany who is dressed as Arche from *Tale Phantasia*\* I have Lois Lane!

Brittany: Lois Lane? \*scoffs and pushes him away with her wand\* Indignation!

\*There's a bright flash of light and when it fades, Alex is left "scorched" on the ground, his costume in tatters\*

Brittany: Who needs Superman now? \*smirks and walks away\*

Gary: Heh heh, magic's cool. Heh heh.

Alex: \*staggeres to his feet\* I give *The Basement*... 4 outta 5. \*collapses back to the ground\*

Gary: And I give it a 4.5 out of 5. *The Basement* kicks ass. Heh heh. Heh heh.

(...)

Ted (dressed as Wesker from *Resident Evil*): *Squad Four: Eclipse* just...friggin' floored me. I mean there's not much else to say.

Brittany: The graphics are positively fantastic, the soundtrack is WAY better than the first game and the gameplay itself is really improved. *Squad Four* has embraced its genre. It's a rail shooter game and it's superior to *Star Fox* in that regard.

Ted: It still doesn't have any Muppets.

Brittany: Well, no game's perfect.

Ted: Still, *Squad Four: Eclipse* is as close to perfect as they come. For its amazing presentation and fantastic gameplay, I have no choice but to give it a 5 out of 5, and an easy one at that.

Brittany: Well, I'm giving it a 4.5. It's...not without its flaws, and though they're nitpicky, there were just enough of them for me to deny the 5. The biggest one is that...Lane's kinda useless. I mean, he's not BAD to use but he's significantly harder to use than the other three characters and the two missions that require him were a bit of a chore. He was a lot better balanced in the first game, but with the faster combat, Lane's tech skills leave a bit on the table. His bolt thrower is quite slow to damage bosses, you REALLY need to use his special to get much use out of him but even then, it's just...slower to use him. I like a good challenge but not when it's flat-out time consuming.

Ted: You have over 120 hours on your *Tale Phantasia* file.

Brittany: That is (bleep)in' different!

Ted: You collected all the individual treasure chests in the game. Talk about time consuming.

Brittany: \*points her wand at Ted\*

Ted: Oh sh-

Brittany: INDIGNATION!

\*zap, flash\*

-excerpted from the October 29, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: October 1996**

1. Tale Phantasia
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Grant Hill In NBA Basketball
4. Chrono Trigger
5. Soul Matrix
6. WWF In Your House
7. Fire Emblem: The Holy War
8. Ken Griffey Jr's Winning Run
9. Final Fight III
10. Super Mario World 2
11. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
12. Eternal Night
13. Super Mario World 3
14. Day Of Malcarius II
15. Street Fighter Alpha 2
16. Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge
17. Universalizer 2
18. Romancing SaGa
19. Donkey Kong Country
20. Ballistic Limit

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart – October 1996**

1. Virtua Fighter 2
2. Tomb Raider
3. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
4. Resident Evil
5. NiGHTS Into Dreams...
6. NHL '97
7. Panzer Dragoon II Zwei

8. Madden '97
9. Sun And Moon
10. Virtua Cop 2

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## **November 4, 1996**

It was just three days before the release of *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*, and Tom Kalinske and his team were in a meeting room at Sega of America HQ, finalizing their plans for the big day. "Sonic 4sday" would be Sega's biggest game launch ever, with events taking place around the country. The big one, of course, would be in Los Angeles, where celebrities and Tom Kalinske himself would celebrate the hedgehog's big day.

"Saturn sales have been strong this quarter," said Shinobu Toyoda, thumbing through a document full of sales figures that was in front of every person at the table. "But *Sonic 4* preorders lag somewhat behind those for *Sonic 3*. It is not likely we'll sell a million on the first day, simply due to how few Saturns are out there compared to how many Genesis systems there were for *Sonic 3*."

It was a disappointment, to be sure, but *Sonic 4* was still set to have the biggest launch day of the year, with projections easily surpassing those of the year's current holder of that title, Nintendo's *Squad Four: Eclipse*. *Sonic 4* was set to smash *Eclipse*'s opening day, meaning that Nintendo's game would only hold the title for ten days. A smile crossed Kalinske's face at the thought.

"Those kids have nothing on Sonic," said Kalinske, "and if THOSE graphics are the best the Super Nintendo CD can offer, *Sonic 4* is gonna make them look like an 8-bit game. Make it part of the new ad campaign, show *Squad Four: Eclipse* side by side with *Panzer Dragoon II*. We've booked Rachel Leigh Cook to do the new holiday ad for us, right?"

"She is booked and we're filming next week," said Diane Fornasier. "This new commercial is going to be in-your-face, we're going to directly challenge Nintendo players on why they're still sticking to the old system."

"Great," said Kalinske, "though next year we're gonna have to get proactive. We've all seen the rumored specs for Nintendo's new machine... it's powerful, but Nintendo still doesn't have the kinds of games that we've got. The arcade hits, the big movie-like hits like *Resident Evil* and *Tomb Raider*, and they don't have Sonic. They'll never have Sonic. And Sonic is still the hottest franchise in the gaming world."

"Three days, you guys," said Al Nilsen, pounding his fist on the table. "Let's get fucking hyped!"

A raucous cheer went up at the table and the Sega execs exchanged high-fives. Sega board meetings, at least Sega of America board meetings, weren't stuffy, formal affairs like the stone-faced meetings held by Hiroshi Yamauchi in Kyoto. At least not most of the time, and especially not when Sega was about to celebrate its greatest victory yet.

Bring on the monkeys. Bring on *Mana*. In three days, none of those games would matter.

"And oh, yeah," said Kalinske, "remember that whoever wins the election tomorrow, we

gotta get a photo op with Sonic. Bill Clinton I know is down for it, I'm not sure about Dole."

"He's not gonna win," said Fornasier, referencing the latest poll results that indicated an easy Clinton victory. "Hey, hey, what if it's Ross Perot? He's polling at like...8 percent."

The execs gathered at the table exchanged a hearty laugh, all of them imagining Ross Perot and Sonic the Hedgehog standing together.

"I don't even know if Ross Perot's even heard of video games," said Kalinske. The Sega execs laughed again.

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*"It was a fantastic month for new games here at EGM, perhaps the best month ever! The Review Crew's been working overtime to play all these games, and our Game of the Month might not be what you expect. That said, there were a lot of contenders this month, which means a lot of games vying for your holiday dollars. We really burned the candle at both ends to make sure you know as much as possible before you buy!"*

*-Andrew Baran, in the mini-editorial before the Review Crew column in the December 1996 issue of Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"What a huge show of support from all the Sonic fans around the world! Everyone here at Sega is extremely grateful for making Sonic 4sday such a huge success!"*

*-Tom Kalinske, speaking in front of a gathered crowd at the Los Angeles launch of Sonic the Hedgehog 4 on November 7, 1996*

*"And Sonic the Hedgehog is another great example of the role of technology in improving lives all over the world. I join the kids of America and Japan and everywhere else in saying that we love Sonic the Hedgehog!"*

*-President Bill Clinton, meeting with Sonic the Hedgehog at the White House in a November 8, 1996 photo-op*

*"Robotnik, this is unforgivable! I've had it with your schemes!"*

*-Sonic the Hedgehog, in Zone 6, Act 4 of Sonic the Hedgehog 4*

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The 1996 presidential elections didn't see gaming become a big issue, though it was brought up in the second presidential debate, when a question about violent video games saw the two candidates, Bill Clinton and Bob Dole, give their responses about how they would handle the issue. While Clinton took a more moderate approach, saying that he'd consider putting pressure on retailers to avoid selling violent games to young children, Dole (running as the "culture warrior" candidate) took a much stronger stance, saying that he might use the power of government to put content restrictions on games. This didn't win Dole much love from the gaming community, and seeing that it was the first presidential election since the Super Nintendo CD and the Sega Genesis helped bring voting-age gamers back into the hobby for the first time since the Crash of 1983, in an extremely close election it might have cost Bob Dole the presidency. However, it was not an extremely close election. Bill Clinton won by taking 49.6% of the popular vote and 384 electoral votes, beating out Dole handily. Even Bob Dole's Atlanta bombing gaffe in October probably didn't

cost him the election (though it probably did cost him Georgia, where Dole lost by just 3,000 votes). Meanwhile, his "culture warrior" stance didn't sway voters away from the popular President Clinton, who was overseeing a major economic recovery (I remember how well we were doing at the time since my parents were able to afford both a Sega Saturn and an Ultra Nintendo for me). It might have won Dole Kentucky (by just 400 votes), but to everyone else, it was "the economy, stupid", and Clinton easily won his second term. Despite the Clinton victory, the Republicans kept control of the House, losing only six seats in 1996 to maintain a 224-209 majority. They even gained two Senate seats to maintain their majority, bumping it up to 55-45. How did Bill Clinton celebrate his presidential victory? By hosting Sonic the Hedgehog at the White House, of course! The photo-op was to celebrate the release of Sonic the Hedgehog 4, with Bill Clinton, Sonic the Hedgehog, some Sega execs, and a whole bunch of kids gathered around as the president gave a speech promoting technological progress. Considering that Sega had plans to meet with Bob Dole if Dole had won the election, one can only imagine how awkward that speech would've been....

*- "The 1996 Election: A Gamer's Perspective", posted on Gamepolitics.com, October 27, 2007*

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### **Sonic The Hedgehog 4: The Basics**

Sonic The Hedgehog 4 follows the events of Knuckles: Renegade and the previous three Sonic games. It's a side-scrolling platformer with 3-D elements, particularly in the bonus minigame stages and the boss fights. The graphics are fully polygonal, objects and backgrounds are in full 3-D while the game features highly detailed sound effects, more than 25 music tracks, and full voice acting and rendered cutscenes. Though the game plays similarly to the Genesis titles in many respects, it introduces a new "combo" system for Sonic, allowing him (and his allies) to rack up multiple hits on enemies in a row to score massive amounts of rings and charge up for special attacks. Sonic can transform into Super Sonic for brief periods of time with enough combos, while Tails can use a laser gun on enemies, Knuckles gains fierce melee attacks that can knock out powerful enemies in a single blow, Amy's mallet gets super-sized, Corona gains a 360-degree energy wave attack, and Big the Cat can pound enemies into submission with giant fist attacks. Movement has been altered to allow Sonic to go through loops much more easily and allowing for more spectacular and fast-moving stages. The stage structure is such that most levels have Sonic and only Sonic playable, about a third of the levels allow you to choose certain other characters and a few even require you to use someone other than Sonic. In some levels, characters such as Tails, Amy, or Corona play the role of helpers, attacking or distracting enemies or helping you to find secret passages. The game has numerous secret items that you can collect for the purpose of opening up bonus minigame stages, although if you collect ALL of the secret items in every single level, you can open up an entirely new world to play through with a super tough boss at the end. The voice cast of the game is largely shared with the animated series, with Jaleel White reprising his role as Sonic, Bradley Pierce as Tails, and Jim Cummings as Dr. Robotnik. In addition, Amy Rose is voiced by Katie Leigh, Corona is voiced by Cree Summer, and Big the Cat is voiced by Rob Paulsen. The game features several lyrical songs, including the theme song "Race To The Power".

The plot of the game is that Dr. Robotnik, tired of Sonic's constant thwarting of his plans, has devised the ultimate weapon: an enormous machine that sucks the very life essence from the world. To fuel the machine, Robotnik has begun kidnapping massive amounts of

creatures from all over, draining their energy to power the evil machine until he can gather up the Chaos Emeralds for a more permanent power source. Robotnik's machine has turned entire continents into lifeless wastelands filled with evil monsters that Sonic and his friends must defeat as they journey across nine worlds to thwart the mad scientist's plans. The worlds, nine in all, each containing four acts, are as follows:

#### World One- Terra Firma Zone

A basic grassland/jungle zone with mixed areas of lush vegetation and nightmarish desolation. The boss of this area is the giant chimera featured in the E3 demos.

#### World Two- Steamwork Zone

A factory/coast zone where the marine wildlife has been turned into vicious carnivores and mechanical monstrosities due to Robotnik's machinations. The boss of this zone is an enormous mechanical shark that spits dozens of vicious barracudas at you.

#### World Three- Ancient Ruins Zone

A huge temple complex that Robotnik is attempting to convert into his private vacation land. You'll have to battle evil mummies and stone golems roused from their eternal slumber by Robotnik's machine. The boss of this zone is Dr. Robotnik, who has mounted an enormous stone golem to attack Sonic and his friends.

#### World Four- Eternal Sun Zone

An oppressive desert land where the sun beats down constantly, Robotnik is building a mirror array to focus the sunbeams to use for his own vile purposes. The boss of this zone is an enormous desert-dwelling fire breathing sand dragon.

#### World Five- Misty Forest Maze Zone

This zone takes place in a seemingly endless forest that Robotnik is harvesting with his huge machine. You'll need to battle your way through winding forest paths and even a haunted mansion. This zone is limited to Corona and Amy, as Sonic, Knuckles, Tails, and Big have been abducted by Robotnik prior to exploring this zone. The boss of the zone is an evil witch who lives in a huge mansion in the middle of the forest.

#### World Six- Mobius City Zone

This zone takes place in a ruined cityscape and contains the most references to and continuity from the SatAM Sonic series. Knuckles and Corona are heavily involved in this zone that also sees Robotnik taunting Sonic over Princess Sally's death. The boss of this zone is Robotnik in a huge arena, deploying robotic clones of himself to battle Sonic. This is portrayed as a climactic battle and a "fake final boss" to fool players, though after this world, Robotnik reveals that he has gained all the Chaos Emeralds, enough to power his machine and finish his work.

#### World Seven- Chaotica Zone

The Chaotica Zone is an other-dimensional realm Robotnik throws Sonic and his friends into following the events of World Six. You'll have to rescue Sonic's friends one by one over the course of this world, while also confronting their worst fears and regrets over their past. The boss of this world is a battle against shadow versions of Sonic's friends, defeating them releases them from their nightmares and enables Sonic and his friends to continue the fight against Robotnik.

#### World Eight- Robotnikopolis Zone

When Sonic and his friends return to the world, it's in the far future, and Robotnik has

transformed it into his vision of paradise: a world where all are forced to obey him. This world contains bright environments reminiscent of earlier games' Casino zones, though underneath all the bright lights it's a terrible world of oppression and fear. The boss of this world is the TimeFiend, a huge humanoid monstrosity pulsing with electricity. Once he's defeated, Sonic and his friends are enabled to return to the present to stop Robotnik before he warps the world into Robotnikopolis. However, he still has his machine and the Chaos Emeralds...

#### World Nine- Egg Labyrinth Zone

Sonic and his friends plunge into the depths of Robotnik's labyrinth to defeat him across the final four acts. This world contains a boss in every act, with two heroes teaming up on each one: Amy and Big team up to take out a huge mechanical heart boss in act one, Knuckles and Corona team up to take out a flying helicopter boss in act two, and Sonic and Tails team up to fight Robotnik in act three. The final act is just the final battle, with Sonic getting help from all of his friends in a big multi-staged fight against Robotnik's mech. The fight has seven stages where each Chaos Emerald must be knocked out of the boss one by one. In the final stage, Robotnik dons the final Chaos Emerald in a mechanical suit and battles Sonic by using energy weapons and a big glowing sword on him. After Robotnik is defeated, his mech is destroyed. Robotnik's prisoners are freed, their energy restored by the Chaos Emeralds, which then disperse. The world is saved from Dr. Robotnik and Sonic and his friends decide to kick back and have a big party together to celebrate.

#### World Ten- Legendary Zone

The final secret world, accessed when all the secret items from the other nine zones are collected, this Zone contains some of the game's toughest challenges, culminating in a battle against the Legendary Champion, a golden knight that wields the power of the Chaos Emeralds. Despite his somewhat small size, he is incredibly tough to defeat.

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Ted Crosley: I'm Ted Crosley...

Alex Stansfield: And I'm Alex Stansfield, and we're here for the launch of Sonic the Hedgehog 4 here in Los Angeles. Right now there's an enormous crowd gathered around the stage enjoying the festivities, there's a concert by Smashing Pumpkins, and there are plenty more celebrities here.

Ted: Yeah, Rachel Leigh Cook is here and I'm going to try and get an interview with her.

Alex: Jonathan Taylor Thomas is here too and right now he's playing the game at one of the many kiosks set up. Our Brittany Saldita is actually over there talking with him right now, Brittany?

\*Brittany is standing next to Jonathan Taylor Thomas as he plays through Zone 1, Act 2\*

Brittany: So are you here just on your own or did Sega actually ask you to come?

JTT: Well, Sega invited me but I woulda come on my own, I love Sonic! \*he leaps over a couple of flying ladybug robots on the screen, running Sonic through a couple of loops\*

Brittany: One thing I've noticed is that this game moves really fast, faster than any Sonic game before it but as we said in our review a few days ago, it still feels perfect, you can

control Sonic easily and you've got plenty of time to jump over these enemies and find hidden items. Are you having any trouble at all?

JTT: Oh, no way, I've got this down.

Brittany: Are you sure? 'Cause it's okay to admit if you need help with the game.

JTT: \*laughing\* No, no, I've been playing Sonic since the first one, I'll be fine.

Brittany: What do you like best about the game so far?

JTT: The graphics are awesome, everything looks so colorful and real. The 3-D is great, it looks really cool and there's so much stuff going on. And the theme song too, the theme song's really cool.

Brittany: You wanna sing it with me?

JTT: \*laughing loudly\* Oh, no, no way.

Brittany: Oh come on! You sang in The Lion King!

JTT: That...that wasn't me singing.

Brittany: What?!

JTT: That was some other kid, I didn't actually sing for Simba in that movie.

Brittany: \*she is exaggerating how shocked she is\* Wha....no! No, everything I know is a lie!

JTT: Ohhhh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry-

Brittany: I thought you could sing! \*she's pretending to cry\*

JTT: \*laughing as he finishes the stage\* Aww man, I'm really sorry to disappoint you!

Brittany: Ted, Alex, I'm standing here...with a complete fraud...! \*JTT and Brittany both start laughing as they put their arms around each other's shoulders\* This guy is a liar and a fraud, and nothing is real anymore. \*JTT is doubling over with laughter and shaking his head\* Back to you guys.

Ted: Okay, well that was enlightening. And now I'm going to try to talk to Rachel Leigh Cook. Can she sing?

Alex: I have no clue.

Ted: Well anyway.... \*some yelling is heard\* huh? \*he looks up toward the stage\* We gotta....?

Alex: \*looking up too and looks a bit nervous\* Uh, okay, we're being told....we're being told we have to get back from the stage. I don't know why but....

Ted: We better move, that cop looks pissed. \*doesn't know what's going on\*

Alex: Uh, we'll be back in a few moments I guess...?

-excerpted from the GameTV Sonic 4 launch special which aired live on the afternoon of November 7, 1996

"Disaster was narrowly averted today at an event for the release of the video game Sonic the Hedgehog 4, when an explosive device was found near the stage. The bomb was discovered by LAPD officer Mark Fuhrman, who is being called a hero tonight after discovering the device and moving it a safe distance away so that it could be safely destroyed by the LAPD bomb squad. Fuhrman, who works for the LAPD as a detective, had been assigned as the head of security for the event and was making one last sweep near the stage during the Smashing Pumpkins concert when he spotted the device near a stage support, in the middle of a large crowd of attendees, many of them children. Police are now alleging the device had been planted by this man, Eric Rudolph, \*a picture is shown\* who was caught acting suspiciously a half mile from the event and was being detained by LAPD officers when word of the attempted bombing came in. Rudolph is also a suspect in the Centennial Park bombing at the Atlanta Olympics that killed 18 people, after police reported that he took credit for the bombing in an initial interrogation. We'll have more news on these events later in tonight's broadcast."

-Dan Rather, from the CBS Evening News on November 7, 1996

(...)

Ted: Okay, we're back, uhhhh..... I guess.... there was a bomb threat called in or something?

Alex: Hmmmm....

Ted: You know, I did see a Bob-Omb walking around the stage a few minutes ago.

Alex: You're saying Mario had something to do with this?

Ted: Well, who else would it be?

Alex: Okay, well, while we try to solve this mystery, and while Ted keeps trying to get that interview with Rachel Leigh Cook, let's check out more footage from Sonic 4.

-excerpted from the GameTV Sonic 4 launch special which aired live on the afternoon of November 7, 1996

### **November 7, 1996**

Sonic The Hedgehog 4 launches worldwide amidst enormous hype and glowing critical reviews, including a 39/40 from Famitsu and a 9.25/10 from Electronic Gaming Monthly. The game sells over a million copies worldwide on the first day, though it falls short of that mark in North America, selling a "mere" 700,000 (which instantly made it the fourth highest selling Saturn game in North America to date, and that counts the pack-in sales of Virtua Fighter and Virtua Racing). Though Sonic 4 isn't made a pack-in game immediately, a Sonic 4 Saturn bundle is expected to be released around Thanksgiving. The launch is accompanied by a massive worldwide release party that includes 15 North American launch events,

including the main one in Los Angeles (which continues despite an attempt by Olympic Park bomber Eric Rudolph to detonate an explosive device at the event, he later claims that the fact that the Saturn had a game called Devil Summoner was his primary reason for the attempted bombing, this event has major negative repercussions for the Christian right, particularly Brent Bozell's Parents Television Council, which goes under after repeated offensive comments on various news channels draw the mainstream media's ire and bring the organization down by late 1997). Sonic the Hedgehog 4 is the final push that the Sega Saturn needs to surpass the Super Nintendo CD in monthly sales in North America. Indeed, there would never again be a month in which the Super Nintendo CD outsells the Saturn in the territory.

(...)

(Authors' Note: The following segment was contributed by our reader **Mr.E!**)

"So, Sonic 4 was HUGELY hyped in 1996. I remember TV ads every other day, the Saturn Magazine having interviews with the staff. Archie's Sonic Comics (which will play a minor role later on in this review) made a 3-D(!) comic adaptation of the game. (I already looked at that in detail, in its nearly unreadable glory). For my part, I must have seen that E3 footage on tape at least 10 times. Tom Kalinske said it best when he said that Sega was going to make "the perfect Sonic game." It was the most innovative Sonic game up to that point, with beautiful graphics, unparalleled speed sections faster than any before a complex story, little tributes to all of the franchises success, but most notably 3-D cutscenes and boss battles, which were revolutionary for a Sonic game at the time. A game of this quality should have been the game that would truly make the Saturn a breakout. And it did. People credit it with increasing Saturn sales. And it was critically acclaimed. Most publications gave it 9s and 10s, and the burgeoning game website IGN named it one of the best games of the year. It was even a contender for Game of the Year in 1996's EGM awards. This was the definitive Sonic game. This will probably make this a contentious review, because this game is good. But I don't think it is as incredible as people thought at the time. It hasn't aged well.

So, as you may or may not know, this is a side scrolling platformer, with some 3-D elements to it, such as the minigames and boss battles. The graphical elements have been upped from previous games. It is brighter, more colorful, more interesting to look at. There is also the sound effects, which hadn't been heard in a Sonic game before. The music was far better than the other games before it. Hell, what other Sonic game had songs with lyrics to them before? There was also the voice acting, including the always fantastic Jaleel White as Sonic. However, let's go into the main parts of the game. Despite the fact that Sonic now has the ability to do a number of combos, it still hasn't progressed much beyond the same gameplay of the first three games. You still run, you still use the Sonic dash attack, you still jump on the enemies, and you still have to collect rings. It isn't much different from the first three. The only point of innovation is the addition of new characters and the 3-D sections. Yeah, some people hate it, but you know what, it gives variation to these levels, more than the rest of the game has. Although, the fact that you could only play as (new) characters like Amy, Big and Corona for a few levels at best. The 3-D sections still are very fun to play, and provide a nice break from the more typical side-scrolling platformer. However, the 3-D really hasn't aged well. The 3-D looks nice, particularly the backgrounds and the cutscenes. However, let's compare to a game like Super Mario Dimensions. That had full 3-D gameplay throughout the game, and it was far more distinct from other Mario games before it. The 3-D still looks incredible in that game. In this game, it really looks dated, like it feels like a Saturn game, and in the end, it doesn't feel distinct from the other Sonic games. Despite

this, those particular 3-D scenes have more innovation and more technique required than the rest of the game. The end boss fight with the Legendary Champion is still perhaps the hardest boss I have ever had. None of the 2-D stuff is bad, but other than the boss fights, it doesn't have much difference from the core gameplay of the previous three games. Following Sonic 3, considered now to be one of the greatest Sonic Games of all time, doesn't help. The sidescrolling sections are beautiful to look at, that's for sure. But it really isn't as revolutionary as Sonic 3.

The story follows Sonic and his new friends, after Doctor Robotnik creates a device to completely drain the lifeforce from the world. He kidnaps many different animals to fuel the machine, until he could get a hold of the Chaos emeralds, which he could use as a permanent energy source. Sonic, Tails, Knuckles, Corona, Amy, and the new character Big the Cat go to stop him. You travel around a jungle, a desert, some ruins... Yeah, that's another thing. Those are the same level designs that we had in the other three games. Well, at least those ones. Let's be fair to those levels, those have many more worlds, than the other games, and they have many different facets that you could get to with other characters. Starting with the Mobius Zone, we do get more unique level designs. But even then, they are still too reminiscent of the zones in other games, like the Metropolis or Casino Night Zone. The Egg Labyrinth and Legendary Zones are the most interesting levels in the whole game. There, you have to team up various characters to defeat the bosses, particularly Eggman. After you defeat him, the Chaos Emeralds are dispersed, and you can go back, and get them. I didn't even know about the Legendary Zone, until I looked at a guide, and collected all the items I couldn't collect. Of course, there are many references to the SatAM series, including a reference to Princess Sally's death. Let me go on a tangent for a minute. Now, Sega wanted to have the story game be close to the popular animated series. However, most of the creators of that show had moved on from Sonic at that point. So, they went to the Archie Comics, considered the official successor to SatAM, and once again, Ken Penders was brought on to advise the game's story, and make it like the SatAM/Archie series. I talked a little about him during the Archie retrospective, and in my Knuckles Reneges review. Penders was not allowed to bring any of his characters into the game. However, he definitely had influence in the story. Knuckles and Corona's relationship is very similar to that in the comics. Eggman (Yeah, I know people complain about me calling him, but you know what, Eggman and Robotnik are same person.) has a certain degree of sadism that he had in the Comics, particularly with his plot to literally drain the Earth of life itself, and replace it with machinery. Even Sonic's personality had elements of comics in them. There are little allusions to comics in the game's backstory. Penders had a wider influence on the game than people often give him credit for. All while still writing the comic (he wrote that terrible 3-D adaptation of 4, if you recall). In fact, I think the reference to Princess Sally's death eventually caused her death in the comics. I find this particularly interesting. And this game is part of his complicated legacy amongst Sonic fans.

I don't hate this game. In fact, I actually like this game a good deal. I played many times on my Sega Saturn. But, looking back, it actually isn't as good as I remember. Sonic 3 was an amazing game, and it would be hard to top it. Being on the Saturn, a newer console, didn't help matters. It was built as a demonstration of the Saturn, and it works, I suppose, but it really seems disappointing, when compared to the awesomeness of Sonic 3.

Ultimately, it isn't, in many respects, revolutionary, and it does play it very safe. But, once again, it still is a good game. Just one that was unfortunate to have come out when it did. I still have my Saturn, and I still play Sonic 4 many times."

- "Sonic Boom: Blog about a Hedgehog," entry entitled, "Review: Sonic the Hedgehog 4," dated June 11th, 2010

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### **Sonic The Hedgehog 4**

What else can we say? This game is absolutely incredible. It sets a new bar for graphics and gameplay in a Sonic title, and it's got more levels than any Sonic game before it, providing hours of fun. This game is highly recommended for any Sega Saturn owner and if you don't have a Saturn, here's your reason to get one.

10/10

### **Beat Rush**

Namco's fighting/RPG arcade adaptation is somewhat reminiscent of Guardian Heroes, though it's much faster paced and plays much more like a sidescrolling Tekken than a game like Final Fight. That said, we wish this game were a lot less repetitive, as while the combat is pretty fun, you'll definitely tire of seeing the same enemy types over, and over...and over again.

7/10

### **Uroborus**

This Silpheed sequel dazzled us with some fantastic graphics and the story was quite enthralling, but it was definitely a lot shorter than we would've liked. Uroborus gives us a delicious taste of its beautiful world, but just as we're starting to savor it, the plate is snatched away. Add to the fact that the replay value is somewhat diminished compared to other shooters in its genre, and we were left more than a little disappointed.

7/10

-excerpted from reviews of some of November 1996's Sega Saturn releases in the December 1996 issue of Official Saturn Magazine

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### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart – November 1996**

1. Tomb Raider
2. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
3. Virtua Fighter 2
4. Resident Evil
5. Panzer Dragoon II Zwei
6. NiGHTS Into Dreams...
7. NHL '97
8. Beat Rush
9. Virtua Cop 2
10. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter

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\*Ted Crosley and Alex Stansfield are standing outside of an office building, the Iguana headquarters.\*

Ted: We're about to give you guys an EXCLUSIVE look at Turok: Dinosaur Hunter for the Sega Saturn.

Alex: That's right, the game's still a few months away but you're getting a special sneak

peek, so let's go talk to some of the guys at Iguana and check it out.

\*The two of them are inside now with David Dienstbier.\*

Ted: All right, we're inside Iguana headquarters with the man himself, the lead designer for the Turok game, David Dienstbier.

David: Hey guys, so this is where all the magic happens, this is where we've been working on Turok now for more than two years, it's almost ready for release and you guys are some of the first outside people to see it.

Ted: Which means that the millions of people watching at home will be some of the first.

David: Absolutely right.

Ted: \*looks at the camera\* You see? You watch GameTV, we take care of you.

\*So now the three of them are facing a television screen showing footage of the game as one of the testers plays through an early level.\*

David: This is level one of Turok, we've got fifteen levels in all to explore.

Alex: Fifteen?

David: And they're huge. The CD-ROM on the Saturn gave us a lot of space to work with, so we sort of went nuts. Actually, right now we're just working on ironing out the final bugs.

Alex: Right, with a game this big, you know, not everything is 100% at first.

Ted: I have a question. Are there any ACTUAL bugs in this game?

David: You know, it's funny you should ask that question because there is actually a giant acid-spitting praying mantis boss that you have to fight.

Ted: Oh, sweet!

Alex: Oh man. \*shudders\*

Ted: My man Alex here, he's scared of bugs.

Alex: Hey!

David: If you're scared of bugs you won't want to play Turok, there are lots of creepy crawly bug monsters crawling about in very dark places.

\*Scenes are shown of Turok being attacked by dozens of bugs that he's desperately firing his shotgun at to try and kill them before he's eaten alive.\*

Alex: Damn! Why not take THOSE bugs out of the game?

David: \*laughing\* We're going to add even more of those kinds of bugs just for you.

Ted: Well, bugs are cool and all, but what about dinosaurs? There's "dinosaur" right in the title of the game, why not have some dinosaurs to fight?

David: You will be fighting LOTS of dinosaurs in this game, don't worry.

\*More scenes from the game are shown of all the dinosaurs that appear, including raptors, a triceratops, and a brief snippet of the T-rex fight from near the end of the game.\*

David: And you'll be using lots of different weapons to do it. We have over 35 weapons in this game, including a gun that fires a nuclear explosion. That's called the Fusion Cannon, you won't be getting it until late in the game, but when you do...

Ted: \*faking an Arnold accent\* You will crush your enemies, see them driven before you, and hear the lamentations of their women.

David: Exactly.

Alex: What's the lamentation of a dinosaur woman sound like?

Ted: \*making a dinosaur noise\* Like that, maybe?

\*The two are now sitting down in front of a TV, Ted has a controller in his hand and is playing through level one.\*

David: So here you'll be controlling Turok and heading through just the first part of the first level. You're looking for a key so you can open up level two later on.

Ted: So this game...it reminds me a lot of Doom but it takes place in this big, open world, which is really cool.

Alex: Like Doom by way of Zelda.

David: That's sort of a good way to put it, yeah.

\*Ted takes down the first two enemies, some bad guys with pistols, using a pistol of his own.\*

David: As you play through the game, you'll get stronger and stronger weapons, which you keep once you find them. So it's like "leveling up" in a way.

Ted: Kinda reminds me of Metroid if it was a first-person game.

Alex: Do you think Metroid could work as a first-person game?

Ted: Well, if Turok works maybe we'll have our answer. Right now I'm having a lot of fun just exploring this world. It really is a huge world.

David: You WILL have to go off the beaten path to find these things, it's not a straight-forward path.

Ted: Yeah, I can already see where this branches off.

Alex: Is there multiplayer in this game?

David: There isn't, and I know I would've liked to have had it in there, but graphics-wise this game's already pushing it. This game, we feel it pushes the Saturn harder than any game before it.

Alex: It is really impressive looking. Check out these graphics, everybody.

\*The camera zooms in to show the game's impressive 3D visuals, though there is some fog that clouds the path further out, the game does look like one of the best Saturn games so far.\*

David: There is some distance fog but-

Ted: Actually it's kind of a cool effect, to see these creatures coming out of the mist. It's a necessary evil with some of these games, but you guys are using it to your advantage here I think. ...oh (bleep), a raptor! \*struggling to kill it with his pistol\*

Alex: This looks like a hard game!

David: It's definitely a challenge but we think Saturn players can handle it.

\*Ted hands the controller to Alex, who plays for a while longer. The scene then switches to the Acclaim motion capture studio as the two begin the next segment of the interview, talking with the mo-cap coordinator and one of the stuntmen.\*

-excerpted from the November 19, 1996 episode of GameTV

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*"I think that sometimes when you spend so much time working on a game and it has so much anticipation from fans, it's always going to be a disappointment no matter what you do. I feel, and many others felt, that the game was a masterpiece. I'm very happy with Seiken Densetsu 3 and there isn't a thing I'd change about it."*

-Hiroki Kikuta, in the January 1997 issue of Famitsu magazine

*"So, while developing Biohazard, I kept thinking of ideas for Super Famicom CD games, because Capcom wished for a big seller on both main consoles and they did not have as much faith in Mega Man 7 as they did initially. It did not take me a long time to think of the idea for Iron Combatant. It was the little details that were hard to work out!"*

-Shinji Mikami

*"You run out of ways to push the technology, past a certain point anyway. We saw what Argonaut was doing with Squad Four: Eclipse and we knew that we had hit kind of a wall. And by then we were working with the Ultra and going way further than we ever knew was possible. The development of Donkey Kong Country 3 made Goldeneye a no-go on the SNES-CD. By then, we said to ourselves, 'well, Tomorrow Never Dies will be out before we get this game finished'. But by 1996 we knew for sure that Goldeneye had to be on the Ultra."*

-Ken Lobb

*"Ohohohoho! You heroes greatly amuse me but once I have the power of the God Beasts I will become the new goddess of the world!"*

-Bigieu, *Elements Of Mana*

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### **Donkey Kong Country 3**

Andrew: 9.0

Mark: 8.5

Mike: 9.0

Sushi-X: 8.5 (quote: "Though the gameplay's gotten a bit stale, this lush, colorful world is still full of fun challenges and wacky creatures.")

### **Elements of Mana**

Andrew: 9.0 (quote: "While not the transcendent classic that its predecessor was, it's still a feast of visuals and music and it's one of the SNES-CD's most epic RPGs.")

Mark: 9.0

Mike: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Lufia II: Rise Of The Sinistrals**

Andrew: 8.0

Mark: 8.0 (quote: "It might be a bit dated in terms of its graphics, but it's still a wonderful old-school RPG adventure.")

Mike: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Mega Man 7**

Andrew: 7.5

Mark: 7.5

Mike: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8.5 (quote: "This game brings all the fun of old school Mega Man and gives it a massive graphical uplift.")

### **NHL '97**

Andrew: 6.5

Mark: 6.5

Mike: 6.0 (quote: "This series is really showing its age, and it's clear that most of EA's effort went into the Saturn version.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Super Bomberman 3**

Andrew: 8.0

Mark: 8.0 (quote: "This great puzzle game remains a multiplayer treat.")

Mike: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Science Fighters 2**

Andrew: 7.0

Mark: 4.0 (quote: "The first game was so much fun, but despite adding several fun new characters, the gameplay is way too clunky.")

Mike: 6.5

Sushi-X: 4.0

### **Slumlord: Back II The Streets**

Andrew: 1.5 (quote: "One of the most unnecessary sequels I have ever played.")

Mark: 3.0

Mike: 1.0

Sushi-X: 1.0

### **Dark City: A Death In The Family**

Andrew: 8.0

Mark: 7.0 (quote: "While not quite as good as the brilliant second game in the series, it's still a great way to end this excellent trilogy.")

Mike: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Stolen In Shadow**

Andrew: 9.0

Mark: 8.0

Mike: 6.5

Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "Dark, thrilling, and intuitive, this is one of my favorite visual novels and continues the story of the previous game perfectly.")

### **Iron Combatant**

Andrew: 9.0

Mark: 9.0

Mike: 9.0 (quote: "One of the best action games I've ever played, there's not a single useless weapon.")

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **The Human Body**

Andrew: 3.0 (quote: "An extremely dull platformer that sees you fighting your way through a human body battling parasites along the way. This game is a parasite.")

Mark: 4.5

Mike: 3.0

Sushi-X: 3.0

-reviews of November 1996's SNES-CD games in the December 1996 and January 1997 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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"Amidst the huge releases of Nintendo's big holiday tentpole games *Donkey Kong Country 3*, *Squad Four: Eclipse*, and *Elements of Mana* came a mecha action game from Capcom called *Iron Combatant*. Starring a badass woman who piloted an even more badass mecha suit, the game managed to be the third best selling new SNES-CD game of November 1996, and one of the best selling new IPs of the year. It remains one of 1996's most highly regarded games, and started one of Capcom's most enduring franchises. In fact, apart from *Resident Evil*, it was Capcom's most successful home console game of the year, beating out two *Mega Man* titles and a *Street Fighter* game! How the hell did it do it? Never underestimate the power of a good ad campaign."

-excerpted from "The Best Marketed Video Games Of All Time", an article on the website The Business Of Gaming

Though *Iron Combatant* was conceived to be a game that would give Capcom a hit on the SNES-CD to parallel the expected success of *Resident Evil* on the Saturn, it was anything but an afterthought. Designer Shinji Mikami worked on the game throughout the last half of 1995 and the first half of 1996, and he would later on go to say he enjoyed working on it just as much as he did *Resident Evil*. The game was conceived as a shooter/action title, somewhat similar to games such as *Major Hazard*, that saw the player navigating a large battlefield, following mission objectives to take down hordes of enemies. However, it also had a side-scrolling action component for some of its levels, and in other levels, its protagonist Layla even climbed out of the house-sized mecha suit to fight enemies on her own. The game featured anime cutscenes with much higher production values than the much-maligned ones in *Mega Man X3*, and they were even better received than those in *Mega Man X4*, though this is largely in part due to the performance of Layla's voice actress in the first game, Sheri Candela (Candela would later be replaced by the much more well-known and prolific Jennifer Hale in 2000's *Iron Battalion* for the Ultra Nintendo). The game featured fast paced combat, Layla's mech was no lumbering behemoth, it was agile and very well-animated, allowing it to rapidly dash and run across battlefields, taking down hordes of enemies as it went. The combat is sort of similar to a 3-D *Metal Slug*, with dozens of enemies appearing and quickly being destroyed by the mech's many, many different types of weapons. In side-scrolling mode, the combat could be compared to *Contra*, though both Layla and her mech are far more versatile and mobile. The game is also known for featuring large bosses, though the toughest (and most fun) boss fights are largely considered to be Layla's battles against her fellow "Iron Combatants", the six human antagonists who don mecha suits of their own to battle Layla with. The plot of the game is that Layla is a survivor of an apocalyptic war along with her fellow colonists, living in a small village that mostly subsists on finding and salvaging scrap. When a neighboring, much larger empire looks to absorb Layla's village and enslave its people, she alone must defend it using the mecha that she and her friends have managed to unearth. That's pretty much the game, in terms of plot twists there aren't too many, though there are a few instances of friends becoming foes and foes becoming friends, with one character (Layla's love interest Albrecht) even going back and forth between the two numerous times before the penultimate boss battle when Layla is finally forced to put him down after realizing he's irredeemable. The game is also memorable for its magazine ad campaign which featured numerous artworks of Layla just generally being badass. Most of the artwork showed off Layla, her body lined with lean muscle but still very much feminine, clad in a green tanktop and baggy brown pants and riding her mecha suit into battle. Her face became etched into the minds of gamers throughout the year (she was seen as the SNES-CD's equivalent to Lara Croft in a lot of ways) and when the game finally was released, it sold extremely well. Surprisingly, the game did better in North America than it did in Japan, though it was

considered a success in both territories and in Europe when it released there in the spring of 1997. *Iron Combatant* is remembered as one of the best games to be released in the waning days of the SNES-CD, and for those who eschewed the *DKC* and *Mana* hype to give it a try, their curiosity was very well rewarded.

-excerpted from "Made Of *Iron*: A History Of The Best Mecha Combat Series In Gaming"  
from Gamesovermatter.com, July 21, 2014

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*"Before we begin, this Counselors' Corner video contains some HUGE spoilers for Lufia II: Rise Of The Sinistrals, so if you haven't played the game yet, do NOT watch this! I mean it, it will completely spoil the game's biggest secrets for you!"*

*Okay, a LOT of people have been asking if there's a way to somehow keep Maxim and Selan alive at the end of Lufia II. And the answer is...yes! IF you're willing to put in a lot of work. At the end of the game, Maxim is told by Iris that he can save the world from the falling Doom Island if he can reach the controls at the island's core. However, what she does NOT tell Maxim, UNLESS you have beaten the 100 level Ancient Cave, is that there are three hidden emblems that Maxim can find and press on his way to the island's core. Now, here's the thing. You do NOT need to have beaten the Ancient Cave to activate those emblems. The intention of the game was that you will need to beat the Cave to learn about their existence, but since you have the counselors of Nintendo to help you out, you've just learned about them! However, they are well off the beaten path, and finding and pressing them will take you right to the edge of the time limit that the game gives you, so follow these exact steps to locate them. \*tells you how to reach all three of them in time\* Once you have activated all three emblems, activate the core and the game will end as normal. You'll get the normal ending, the world will be saved, Maxim and Selan's sacrifice is remembered through the ages, yada yada yada. However... now that the emblems have been activated, the game will ask if you want to save outside of Doom Island. Say yes and now you will end up just outside of Parcelyte. After you load the game, there will be a cutscene of an enormous island tower rising up from the ocean in the center of the three Triangle Islands. This is Sinistral Tower and this is the tower you will need to climb and beat if you want to unlock the game's secret ending.*

*Make your way to Sinistral Tower, you can access it via submarine. Sinistral Tower is a 25-floor tower with lots of puzzles and the game's toughest enemies. It is tougher than Doom Island, though, in this counselor's opinion it is NOT tougher than the Ancient Cave. It does not, for example, contain the super cheap Gold Dragons that lurked at the end of the Cave with their instant kill attacks that relied on luck for your party to survive. Now, a detailed strategy on Sinistral Tower would make this video too long for Nintendo Power CD. However, we DO have a guide on how to beat this tower's puzzles in this month's Epic Center, so look for that guide in the magazine. You should be around level 80 to challenge Sinistral Tower, beat up on Cores to get your party to this high level. Once you reach the top, Arek the Absolute, true leader of the Sinistrals, will be waiting. He is incredibly dangerous, with the attack Hell Storm and twice as much hit points as Daos, the normal final boss of the game. Use your strongest special attacks like Octo Strike to take him down. Once Arek is beaten, you'll automatically evacuate Sinistral Tower as it sinks into the sea. Then, just beat the game again as normal. After fighting your way through Sinistral Tower, Doom Island and the Sinistrals will be an absolute cinch. Once you beat Daos, enjoy your well-earned secret ending. We won't show it here, but rest assured, Maxim and Selan make it out alive. Obviously, this isn't the OFFICIAL ending of the game, since the events of the*

*first game show Maxim and Selan falling at Doom Island, but for those of you who can't stand sad endings, this video has shown you how to earn a happier one. Good luck!*

-from the Counselors' Corner video "Can I save Maxim and Selan in *Lufia II: Rise of the Sinistrals?*" in the July 1997 issue of *Nintendo Power CD*

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## **Elements Of Mana: The Basics**

*Elements Of Mana*, known in Japan as *Seiken Densetsu 3*, is the sequel to the acclaimed RPG *Secret Of Mana*, and plays largely the same way, but with many key differences. The game is an action RPG, featuring real-time combat against enemies. Combat is considerably faster than *Secret Of Mana*, due to the elimination of the need to charge up attacks before using them and also the replacement of combos with special attacks that are charged by damaging enemies. The game continues to utilize the "ring" item system from *Secret of Mana* and also continues the item storage system that appeared in the game IOTL and in *Secret of Mana* ITTL, allowing the player to enter a menu outside of combat to transfer items into their battle bag. Among the differences in the game from the OTL version: like in *Secret of Mana*, three characters can be controlled by humans at the same time, unlike only two as IOTL. All characters, not just magic characters, possess "magic", though physical characters like Duran, Kevin, and Lise have physically-based "magic" abilities, similar to the Force characters in *Chrono Trigger*. The game retains some of OTL's more criticized aspects, such as the random items required for character class changes and the enemies toward the end of the game that can utilize potentially party-wiping attacks. However, Hawkeye's critical attack glitch, which severely reduced his OTL effectiveness, is discovered early in production and fixed. The game's graphics are significantly better than IOTL, and are on par with the graphics in *Legend of Mana*, similar to *Chrono Trigger*, with even better character animation. In battle, attacks display a combo count and a "total damage" count, allowing the player to see numerically the number of hits they've landed in a short span and even enabling them to recover magic points for making large combos.

The biggest change from OTL's version of the game is the plot, and though many of the basic elements of the game remain, many things are fundamentally overhauled, making for a game that's a significantly different experience from IOTL's game. First off, though the six playable characters are the same as IOTL, they now represent three different 'factions', the same factions laid down in the original *Secret Of Mana*: The natural world, the human world, and a balanced approach. Lise, princess of the valkyries, and Kevin, a beastman hybrid, represent the natural world. Charlotte, a half-elf of Light, and Hawkeye, of the thieves' guild, represent the balanced approach, and the human knight Duran and the ice princess Angela represent the human world. Lise and Kevin's main enemy, and the final boss of the game if you choose one of them as your main character, is the Dragon Emperor, who represents the crushing advance of humanity and the oppression that will destroy nature if technological progress is not kept in check. Charlotte and Hawkeye's main enemy is the Dark Witch Bigieu (who replaces the Dark Prince as the main villain from IOTL), who represents the worst mix of Mana energy with human ambition, and Duran and Angela's final enemy is the Mana God and its avatar, the Archmage Seivre, who represent the cruelty of nature and its desire to destroy mankind and halt technological progress. Depending upon the main character you select, the game's action is set off either by an attack by the Empire's forces on the Holy City of Wendel (the natural path), a mysterious series of magical killings in a desert village (the balance path), or an assault by beastmen on the port town of Jadd (the humanity path). Either way, the first half of the game involves your three

chosen characters on the hunt for the eight Mana Spirits as the Empire, the Dark Witch, and Seivre battle both the heroes and each other for control of the world. Once the Mana Spirits are found, the conflict eventually comes to a head at the Mana Holyland, where an enormous battle between the Empire, Bigieu, and Seivre and his army of Beastmen is taking place. Unlike in OTL's game, where two of the factions are totally destroyed in the battle, here, all three main enemies survive, though one of them (Bigieu in the natural path, Seivre in the balance path, and the Empire in the humanity path) is left to battle you after the eight God Beasts are released after the events that transpire. After defeating one of the factions for good at the Mana Holy Land, the game once again branches off into three paths. Eight God Beasts must be defeated, but their locations and forms depend on which path you take through the game. In the humanity path, the God Beasts will appear largely as they do in OTL's *Seiken Densetsu 3*, though they'll be attacking different cities and you must stop them there (after fighting through a dungeon created smack in the middle of the city being attacked). In the balance path, the dungeons where you fight the God Beasts appear largely as they do IOTL, though their forms have changed as Bigieu has mutated them hideously with her dark magic. In the natural path, the God Beasts are being controlled by the Dragon Emperor to absorb the very elements of Mana from the Earth, and you must go into different large factory complexes to battle them, where they will appear as enormous, dangerous machines. During the game, the party, depending on which party members you choose, all have their own opinions about how the world should be, and they will quarrel with one another throughout the game, though unlike the villainous factions, the party members will come to all work together as a team to stop the evil that's taking over the planet. Once four of the God Beasts are defeated, the game takes a side trek as one of the two remaining main villains (Seivre in the natural path, the Empire in the balance path, and Bigieu in the humanity path) threatens to destroy the world and the party must take a break from their quest to defeat the God Beasts in order to handle this new peril. Once the villain is stopped, the game continues, with the remaining God Beasts hunted down and destroyed, only for the main villain to enact the final part of their plan: Seivre unleashes a horrible Mana plague to kill all the humans, Bigieu absorbs the Mana Sword to become a goddess, and the Dragon Emperor launches an assault on the Mana Tree. The final quest involves the party storming the final dungeon and finally defeating the main villain. Whatever happens, the ending is bittersweet: though the heroes all survive and the world is at peace, the events of the game have had severe consequences on the planet, which must recover for 1,000 years afterward.

### **November 11, 1996**

*Elements Of Mana* is released in North America for the Super Nintendo CD. It becomes the second fastest-selling JRPG in North America, after *Tale Phantasia* and ahead of *Chrono Trigger*, but initial sales soon fade somewhat as word of mouth and critical reviews indicate that the game isn't quite as good as *Secret Of Mana*. Though a significant faction of fans do claim the sequel as superior, many more claim it to be a disappointment, despite largely excellent reviews from game publications. It's likely increased competition from other highly acclaimed RPGs that hurts the game's reputation somewhat (as when *Secret of Mana* was released, there weren't nearly as many RPGs to compare it to), but whatever the reason, *Elements of Mana* isn't considered a Game of the Year contender and it doesn't move SNES-CD systems nearly as well as *Secret of Mana* did three years before.

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The success of the Super Nintendo CD put Capcom in a bit of a bind when it came to their classic *Mega Man* series. They'd intended to release *Mega Man 7* as an SNES cartridge as

their swan song for the system, but seeing how poorly the SNES version of *Mega Man X2* performed led them to scrap their plans for *Mega Man 7* entirely in favor of creating the game for the Super Nintendo CD. When it was finally released, in Japan in April 1996 and in North America in November, it was less of a continuation of the series and more of a "love letter". The game combined elements and brought back Robot Masters from each of the six previous games: Cut Man (MM1), Heat Man (MM2), Top Man (MM3), Pharaoh Man (MM4), Star Man (MM5), and Yamato Man (MM6), revamping them to give them a weakness to one of the five other Robot Masters in the group. After Mega Man defeated these six, a NEW group of six new Robot Masters appeared after Bass and Treble, who'd been Mega Man's allies throughout his battle against the first six Robot Masters, betrayed him. However, Mega Man gained a new ally in Proto Man, who would advise Mega Man in his fight against these six new Masters: Burst Man, Cross Man, Fade Man, Scythe Man, Quake Man, and Gold Man. After defeating the six new Robot Masters, Mega Man then had to battle his way to Dr. Wily, first taking down Bass and Treble, and then being forced to battle against a brainwashed Proto Man before finally doing battle with Wily. The game, which featured graphics on par with *Mega Man X3* and even some animated cutscenes, was considered a mild success, though it's clear *Mega Man's* stature had faded from its days on the NES. Despite this, it was considered to be one of the best games in the series and long-time fans of the series loved the callbacks to the original NES games. *Mega Man 8* would be released in 1999.

-from the article "*Mega Man 7: Tribute Or Trouble?*" on Gamesovermatter.com

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The fading days of the Super Nintendo CD also saw the fading days of the detective game genre, and with it came the final installment of the *Dark City* trilogy, known by many as the pinnacle of the genre. This game, though not going to the human trafficking depths of its predecessor, still covered some pretty dark territory with a straight-up mob story. *Dark City: A Death In The Family* had the protagonist hired by a mob boss' beautiful daughter to find out the identity of her father's killer. As it turns out, the killer was a rival mob boss who begins coming after the detective's friends and family, leading him to question if he truly desired to remain on the job. It was a well-plotted and well-paced game and though hardcore purists disliked its drop in difficulty compared to the previous two games, most people praised it for being much more intuitive, and they enjoyed that in this game they could actually get to reach the ending, which provided a satisfying book-end to the series as a whole.

The month of November 1996 also saw the release of *Stolen In Shadow*, the sequel to 1995's cult hit *Daughter of Pearl*. In this game, protagonist Corrine Pearl is abducted by an evil syndicate similar to the real life myth of the Illuminati, and in order to earn her freedom, she must unravel the group from within. It's one of the most brilliant character studies in the history of video games, certainly ahead of its time, and also maybe the best deconstruction of the "secret society" trope that exists in all of fictional media. That said, with how brilliant the game's plot and characters were, the gameplay itself was a slog compared with the tight, intuitive gameplay of *Daughter of Pearl*. *DoP's* great action sequences are almost entirely absent in the sequel, and the puzzles in *Stolen in Shadow* are frustrating at worst and boring at best. Those willing to get through the crappy gameplay to uncover the game's secrets were rewarded with an amazing storyline payoff, but the game itself sold horribly and it's a miracle the franchise wasn't killed (it's likely that the low-budget nature of the games enabled the making of further sequels).

It's clear that by the end of 1996, video games were transforming. The detective genre,

which had thrived in the early days of the CD-based systems, was fading away as the novelty of FMV gave way to the rendered cutscenes and advanced animation techniques made possible by systems such as the Saturn and the Ultra Nintendo. Though detective games and visual novels would always have a presence in gaming thanks to the groundwork laid during the fourth (and a half?) generation, they'd remain a niche genre until new technological opportunities arose to bring them back to prominence.

-excerpted from "Detective Games: A Fascinating History (Part 1)", an article on [Gamesovermatter.com](http://Gamesovermatter.com)

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*"Before we get into the Mask II review, I know I've been getting a lot of comments and e-mails from people wanting to see a review of Space Jam. But to be totally honest, Space Jam just...wasn't that bad of a movie. Michael Jordan's acting was pretty bad but they knew that and put him in situations where it wouldn't be that much of a problem. There were a few jokes that fell flat, but the movie itself was pretty decent and there's not much material I can use for a review. So...sorry, Space Jam haters...or, I guess, fans with a masochistic streak? I won't be doing Space Jam, at least not for the foreseeable future. So with that out of the way, here's my review of The Mask II!"*

-Doug Walker, in the November 13, 2007 episode of *The Nostalgia Critic*

*Space Jam* was released on November 22, 1996. The movie saw Michael Jordan team up with the Looney Tunes to save Looney Tune Land from an alien invasion by playing a game of basketball against an evil group of space aliens called The Monstars. Now, while that doesn't sound like a good concept for a film, the movie itself touched on some of the more interesting aspects of Michael Jordan's personality, making it a decent character study in addition to a reasonably fun film about the Looney Tunes and basketball. The movie spent a lot of time dealing with Michael Jordan's defeat in the 1994 NBA Finals at the hands of the Houston Rockets, and takes place between the 1993-94 season and the 1994-95 season. The superstar, mired in doubt over not being able to lead his team to victory, finds himself leading a new team when the Looney Tunes take him to their world to help them defeat a group of space aliens led by the evil Swackhammer (played by Danny DeVito) who wants to abduct the Looney Tunes to make them part of his interplanetary theme park. By this time, the Monstars have stolen the talents of Patrick Ewing, Muggsy Bogues, Larry Johnson, and Charles Barkley, but when Michael Jordan arrives, he shows off some moves that leave even the giant Monstars in the dust. But Swackhammer, who has been watching footage from the 1994 Finals, decides to have the Monstars complete their team by stealing the talents of Hakeem Olajuwon, the "only man ever to beat Michael Jordan". Once the Monstars steal Olajuwon's talent, it leads to a crisis of confidence for Jordan, who must take a trip back to his childhood home and talk with his father James (played by James Jordan himself) over a one-on-one game of Horse. The sequence, considered the best segment in the film (the two play Horse together while Bugs and Daffy go to retrieve Jordan's old North Carolina jersey) involves the two men discussing what made Michael Jordan so good: it's that he elevates his teammates and enables them to carry some of the weight for him, and that he doesn't have to shoulder the burden of losing alone. The sequence includes a flashback to the aftermath of the 1990 Eastern Conference Finals, where Michael Jordan went back to the team bus and cried in his father's arms, and shows a moment of vulnerability for Jordan that was uncharacteristic of his brash image (Jordan didn't want to do the scenes at first, but Phil Jackson and Jordan's agent both recommended that he show a softer side to fans, who were becoming antagonized by Jordan's arrogance during the 1995-96 season). The pep talk gives Jordan the confidence he needs to lead the Looney Tunes to victory, and the

NBA superstars' talents are returned. The film ends with showing scenes from Michael Jordan and the Bulls' sweep of the Houston Rockets in the 1995 NBA Finals. The movie was well received by fans, crossing \$100 million at the domestic box office. The filming also led to a friendship between James Jordan and Bill Murray, the two can still be seen hanging out at golf tournaments today.

-from "Welcome To The Jam: A Brief Review Of *Space Jam*", on Bleacherreport.com, June 12, 2012

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### **Donkey Kong Country 3: The Basics**

*Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble*, is the third game in the *Donkey Kong Country* series and plays similarly to the first two. It sees Dixie Kong, friend to Donkey and Diddy, teaming up with the young Kiddy Kong to rescue their two friends after the two of them are abducted by aliens. It's the first *Donkey Kong Country* game that doesn't feature K. Rool as a villain, instead the villain of the game is the alien lord Konqueror. The game takes place in the Northern Kremisphere, a land that's similar to Canada and the Pacific Northwest, and involves the two Kongs travelling between locations via various watercraft that are earned throughout the game. Just like the previous two games, *DKC3* is chock-full of secrets, including collectible bonus coins and a secret world, and the two Kongs also interact with the Brothers Bull, 15 anthropomorphic bulls who team up with the Kongs to help them rescue their 15 girlfriend cows who were also abducted by the aliens. If the Kongs can rescue all 15 cows, the Brothers Bull help them to open the secret world, the ninth world of the game. The eight worlds are as follows:

#### *World One: Funny Farm*

A farm-based world that introduces the basic gameplay of the game. The boss battle takes place in a giant barn against a huge barrel named Belcha (the exact same boss from World One of OTL's game)

#### *World Two: Kremwood Forest*

A forest-based world similar to OTL's second world of the same name. The boss of the world is a giant spider named Arich (again, the same as IOTL)

#### *World Three: Barrel Bay*

A huge ice-bound bay similar to Hudson Bay, featuring ice and water based levels. The boss of this world is a giant polar bear who throws barrels.

#### *World Four: Konghenge*

A sprawling ruin/toxic waste laden field where many aliens lurk. The boss of this world is a huge multi-tentacled alien beast named Kongthulhu.

#### *World Five: Razor Ridge*

Similar to OTL's Razor Ridge, with many cliffside levels and sharing the urchin boss Barbos from OTL's game.

#### *World Six: K3*

Similar to OTL's K3 world, this is an ice-bound mountain stage with lots of slippery terrain. The boss of this world is the evil snowman Bleak, similar to OTL.

### *World Seven: Kremling City*

An urban-themed world with some allusions to the Game Boy's *Donkey Kong* game, depicting an attack on a Kremling-populated city by alien forces. The boss of this world is a massive UFO, and after the Kongs defeat it, they actually steal it and use it to enter the Mothership.

### *World Eight: The Mothership*

A sci-fi themed world featuring lots of electrical-based hazards and alien enemies. The final boss of the game is Konqueror himself, a huge alien with lots of weapons.

### *World Nine: Krematoa*

Similar to OTL's Krematoa, this is the secret world of the game with six very tough levels. The final boss is a souped-up version of Konqueror, though he's not as tough to beat as K. Rool in *DKC2*'s secret world.

## **November 18, 1996**

*Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble* is released for the SNES-CD, and while it is well received by critics with mostly 8s and 9s, it, like *Elements of Mana*, is somewhat of a commercial disappointment compared to its predecessors. It's a hit, but not a runaway one, and by now it's clear that the SNES-CD is somewhat of an outdated system, despite a continuing stream of quality games. Where the previous two games broke new ground in graphical prowess, *DKC3* looks dated despite being technologically better than the previous two games. Soon after the release of *Donkey Kong Country 3*, Rare announces that *Donkey Kong Country 4* is in production for the SNES-CD for late 1997, despite coinciding with the expected release of the Ultra Nintendo. Rare is determined to make the game as good as it can possibly be so that it serves as a swan song for the now late-age console. Despite the disappointment of *DKC3*, the Super Nintendo CD is still selling quite well, seeing an uptick in sales due to the impending holiday season. With the Ultra Nintendo entering the latter stage of its development, the mood at Nintendo is optimistic, and company brass are getting ready to send the Super Nintendo CD off into the sunset.

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Brittany Saldita: *Elements Of Mana* is a really, REALLY good game and I love that you can pick your party and that the game differs so greatly based on who you pick. Seriously, it's worth playing through three times for that reason, you get a different experience every single time.

Alex Stansfield: I just didn't like how, especially toward the end, there are random enemies who can and WILL kick your ass. It sucks losing a half hour of work because some enemy you thought was a joke decided to whip out Vacuum Sword and cut your party to ribbons. You call it challenge, I call it bad game design.

Brittany: If you know which enemies can do it-

Alex: No, no, because sometimes they can do it while hiding out behind a tree or something!

Brittany: I have never been killed by an enemy hiding behind a tree.

Alex: I have and it sucked. This is a great game but there are some nasty flaws that *Secret*

*Of Mana* didn't have.

Brittany: And once again, you're bashing a game because you aren't good at it.

Alex: I beat the game three times! It was just a lot harder than it needed to be!

Brittany: If you stay prepared....you can take nine full party heals into battle with you. There's magic to heal and you have nine magic restoring items too. There is no reason you should be caught unaware at any point in the game. You have everything you need to get through it.

Alex: No, this...this is worth docking a point over. I give *Elements of Mana* a 4 out of 5. It is a great game but seriously, seriously flawed.

Brittany: I'm giving it a 5, it's my third favorite RPG of the year.

-excerpted from the November 12, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

Ted Crosley: *Donkey Kong Country 3* is the same fun Donkey Kong Country gameplay that I've come to expect from the series, but man...man, not a lot has changed.

Alex: If it's not broke, why fix it?

Ted: It doesn't need fixed but it could use a fresh coat of paint. And I don't just mean graphically. And even that looks like crap compared to *Sonic 4*.

Alex: I'm gonna agree that this game didn't do much to push the limits like, say, *Sonic 4* did. I was hoping for some kind of 3-D boss fight but the closest thing to that was the snowball fight against Bleak.

Ted: If a snowball fight is the most unique aspect of your game, you've got issues.

Alex: Yeah, and even that snowball fight is wholesale copied from one of the minigames.

Ted: \*laughing\* That minigame is one of my favorite things about this game, seeing Cranky ranting and raving as you kick his ass is hilarious. The game had a lot of good humor, but it just didn't mix things up enough to really wow me. I'm giving it a 3.5 out of 5.

Alex: I'm gonna be a bit more generous and give it a 4, but wow, this is the first *Donkey Kong Country* game not to get a *GameTV* recommendation.

Ted: Well, if you want me to recommend you, you gotta mix it up a bit more.

(...)

Brittany: We're about to give you all an exclusive first look at *Turok*, but before that, we've got a *GameTV* exclusive music video that we put together, featuring some of the fine ladies of this holiday season's biggest games. Here it is, set to Blackstreet's hit song "No Diggity", this one goes out to all the girls out there!

\*cue a music video of video game moments featuring Lara Croft from *Tomb Raider*, Rebecca from *Squad Four: Eclipse*, Corona and Amy Rose from *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*, Dixie Kong

from *Donkey Kong Country 3*, Lise, Angela, Charlotte, and Bigieu from *Elements of Mana*, and a few others, set to a somewhat abridged version of Blackstreet's *No Diggity\**

-excerpted from the November 19, 1996 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: November 1996**

1. Super Mario RPG
2. Tale Phantasia
3. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
4. Road Storm
5. Chrono Trigger
6. Tetris Attack
7. Grant Hill In NBA Basketball
8. Soul Matrix
9. Madden '97
10. Tobal No. 1
11. Fire Emblem: The Holy War
12. Super Mario World 2
13. WWF In Your House
14. Ninja Gaiden IV
15. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
16. Eternal Night
17. Super Mario World 3
18. Valis: Soldier Of Light
19. The War Between The States
20. Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge

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SEGA SATURN (including *Sonic the Hedgehog 4!*)- \$249.99

SEGA SATURN VIRTUA ARCADE SET (including *Virtua Fighter 2*, *Virtua Racing*, and *Virtua Cop*): \$299.99

SUPER NINTENDO CD SYSTEM (including *Donkey Kong Country!*)- \$99.99

SUPER NINTENDO CD: PLAYSTATION COMBO SET (including *Donkey Kong Country*, *Super Mario World 2*, and *Super Mario All-Stars*)- \$129.99

GAME BOY COLOR (including *Donkey Kong Land 2!*)- \$59.99

ALL SUPER NINTENDO CD GAMES (including *Elements Of Mana*, *Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble*, *Super Mario RPG*, *Squad Four: Eclipse*, and more)- \$39.99 or less

ALL SUPER NINTENDO CD PLAYER'S CHOICE GAMES (including *Super Mario Kart*, *Super Mario World 2*, *Donkey Kong Country*, *Star Fox*, *Squad Four*, and more)- \$19.99

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 4- \$49.99

VIRTUA FIGHTER 2- \$39.99

RESIDENT EVIL- \$39.99

NIGHTS: INTO DREAMS- \$34.99

SUN AND MOON- \$29.99

TOMB RAIDER- \$49.99

DAYTONA USA- \$29.99

SOUL EDGE- \$29.99

TEKKEN- \$19.99

-excerpted prices from Best Buy's day after Thanksgiving sale ad on November 29, 1996

*"These shoppers are waiting outside of Wal-Mart this morning for the doors to open on what is considered by many to be the first shopping day of the Christmas season. Dubbed 'Black Friday' by some within the industry, so-called because it is said to be the first day that retailers turn a profit during the year, it's ranked as one of the year's top five shopping days since the early 90s, and for the last few years retailers have begun taking advantage of the day by offering sales on certain popular items. Appliances, furniture, and electronics all see price cuts today. One of the biggest selling items is expected to be the Sega Saturn. It normally retails for \$300, but today in stores like KB Toys, Best Buy, and right here at Wal-Mart, it's being offered for \$250, fifty dollars below its normal retail price. With hot games like Tomb Raider and the brand new Sonic the Hedgehog 4 being offered on sale as well, Sega games are going to be a hot commodity this holiday season. We're also seeing Star Wars toys becoming popular again in the wake of a theatrical re-release of the trilogy beginning in January of next year...."*

-excerpted from a report from KWOC-TV on the morning of November 29, 1996

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Here's a list of the Nintendo Power covers for 1996.

January 1996: The Year Of The RPG

February 1996: Battletoads: Dark Queen

March 1996: Chrono Trigger

April 1996: Fire Emblem: The Holy War

May 1996: Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run

June 1996: Tale Phantasia

July 1996: E3 Special

August 1996: Super Mario RPG

September 1996: Game Boy Color

October 1996: Squad Four: Eclipse

November 1996: Elements Of Mana

December 1996: Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble

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*"While sellouts are impressive, we also wanted everyone who wanted to buy a Saturn for Christmas to be able to have one that year. So that was a BIG focus for 1996, keeping supply well ahead of demand and keeping our fans happy. Because when our fans were happy, we were VERY happy."*

-Tom Kalinske, in a 2013 interview with Kotaku.com about Sega's 1996 holiday season

*"And while Sega does have a huge dearth of arcade hits and fighting titles, for those looking*

*for Star Wars games, Nintendo's your best bet, with ports of some of the best PC Star Wars games and a Star Wars fighting game planned for later this year."*  
*-quoted from "Comic-Consoles: Which One Should A Sci-Fi Fan Buy?", an article in the January 1997 issue of Wizard magazine*

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### **Bahamut Lagoon**

Andrew: 8.5

Mark: 8.0

Mike: 8.0 (quote: "Squaresoft's take on the strategy RPG is challenging but superb, and features competent voice acting to boot.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Clock Tower**

Andrew: 5.0

Mark: 7.0 (quote: "A thrilling point-and-click title with plenty of challenge and some nice scares.")

Mike: 5.0

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Duke Nukem 3-D**

Andrew: 8.0

Mark: 7.5

Mike: 6.5

Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "While this port's not perfect, it's still a really fun first-person shooter with a great sense of humor.")

### **Marvel Super Heroes**

Andrew: 9.0 (quote: "Marvel's heroes punch and kick their way onto the SNES-CD in one of the most excellent fighting games to grace the console!")

Mark: 8.0

Mike: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Space Jam**

Andrew: 3.5

Mark: 4.0 (quote: "This game's just really bad, especially the SNES-CD version which doesn't even let you use Michael Jordan!")

Mike: 2.0

Sushi-X: 2.0

### **Star Wars: TIE Fighter**

Andrew: 8.0

Mark: 8.5

Mike: 8.5

Sushi-X: 9.0 (quote: "A superb port, this title surpasses the excellent X-Wing and is one of the very best space combat games you'll find anywhere.")

### **Cat Jackson Comes Back**

Andrew: 6.5

Mark: 7.0 (quote: "While this platformer sequel is fun, it still seems like an afterthought compared to some of Sony's other titles this year.")

Mike: 7.0

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Strange Seed**

Andrew: 7.5

Mark: 8.5 (quote: "The game that proves the FMV genre isn't quite dead yet, it's filled with lots of great anime cutscenes and is thrilling enough to keep the player glued to the controller.")

Mike: 5.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Aria**

Andrew: 9.5

Mark: 7.0

Mike: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.5 (quote: "A beautiful and rewarding rhythm game that really pushes what the SNES-CD is capable of.")

-Electronic Gaming Monthly's reviews of December 1996's SNES-CD games in the January and February 1997 issues

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"If there's anything I remember about Christmas '96, it was Sonic the Hedgehog. Sonic was EVERYWHERE. You couldn't go into a mall, a department store, or a toy store without seeing Sonic and his friends plastered over everything. Not just Sonic 4, either, but toys, clothes, all kinds of stuff with Sonic on it. To a lesser extent, Sega was everywhere that year. Resident Evil, Tomb Raider, NiGHTS, in plenty of stores you had signs and posters with all the characters from those games on them. Sega was really trying to hammer home that the Saturn was the console with all the coolest games and all the best characters, and at the time, they really were. Nintendo didn't have much to push that Christmas, I think I remember Dog Dash and Squad Four showing up a lot but that's about it and those ads looked lame next to Sega's. Even on TV, Sega was everywhere. You had Sonic being advertised during kids' shows, and Resident Evil and Tomb Raider advertised on prime time. I saw huge lines at Saturn demo kiosks and kids looking at the posters in awe. I don't think Sega was trying to get Genesis owners to buy the Saturn, they were already gonna do it. I think they were trying to lure in people who were getting sick of waiting for the Ultra Nintendo to show up. All those cool posters, they were saying 'hey, sick of the same old crap from Nintendo? Check out the cool games you could be playing with us'. I'm sure with a lot of people it worked."

-a Youtube comment on the video "1996 Sega Christmas Ad!"

## Once Again, Video Games Among Top Selling Toys This Holiday Season

It's another major Christmas for retailers, with sales up significantly from last year. And once again, video games are among the top-selling devices. Topping the list of biggest sellers is the Sega Saturn, a next-generation game console with hit games like "Sonic 4" and "Resident Evil". The Saturn is proving to be a major hit despite the steep \$299 price tag, and it's hard to find in some stores. Sega says that the asking price is justified due to the advanced technology under the hood, and Sega seems to be banking on the popularity of its mascot Sonic the Hedgehog to drive family sales. It's not just kids buying the Saturn: adults make up a majority of players, and games like "Resident Evil" and "Tomb Raider" are giving them plenty of reasons to play. In a close second, however, is the ever-popular Nintendo, driven this year by "Squad Four: Eclipse" and the latest game in the "Donkey Kong Country" series. Their Nintendo CD device is much cheaper than the Saturn, the system is selling for \$99 and comes with a game and two controllers. However, many shoppers are holding out for the newest Nintendo device, which is said to play brand new games and the games of the current Nintendo CD. Nintendo does have an advantage: it's the only system selling the new Star Wars game, "TIE Fighter", which puts you in the shoes of an Imperial soldier who must choose whether to lead a rebellion against the Empire or defend his life. With Star Wars one of the fastest selling toys this holiday season due to an upcoming theatrical re-release of the original trilogy and rumors of a prequel movie, those games could give Nintendo the edge on its edgy rival.

-excerpted from an article in the December 17, 1996 Chicago Tribune

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\*A girl (Rachel Leigh Cook) enters a big, dark room lit by screens with video games playing on them. The games are Nintendo games, and she looks at one of the screens and scoffs.\*

Girl: You're still playing games on Nintendo?

\*The girl looks across the room to a pedestal with a Sega Saturn on it. She takes a controller and turns the system on. New screens pop up, showing footage from Sega Saturn games in comparison with the Nintendo footage.\*

Girl: Get a Sega Saturn.

\*The girl begins to play through the sweeping landscapes of Panzer Dragoon II Zwei.\*

Girl: What does the Saturn do? It does this.

\*Rapid-fire footage from various Saturn games begins to flash on the screen.\*

Girl: And you can't do this on Nintendo.

\*Footage from Sonic the Hedgehog 4 begins to play, showing Sonic zooming through the beautiful 3-D world and battling the huge bosses. A TV displaying footage from Dog Dash begins to spark before going static.\*

Girl: Or this.

\*Footage from Daytona USA begins to play, showing a car racing smoothly around the

track. Footage from SNES-CD's NASCAR Racing is playing on another TV that soon malfunctions\*

Girl: Or this....

\*Footage from Tomb Raider plays, showing Lara Croft leaping across a chasm and shooting at a tiger. Footage from The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina of Dreams plays before the TV sparks and goes staticy.\*

Girl: Or this.

\*Footage from Resident Evil plays, showing Jill nearly getting tackled by a zombie. Footage from The Basement is shown alongside it before the TV showing it sparks and goes out.\*

Girl: Or this.

\*Footage from NiGHTS plays, showing Nights flying through the colorful world. Footage from Super Mario RPG plays before the TV showing it sparks violently.\*

Girl: And don't even TRY doing this on Nintendo.

\*Footage from Panzer Dragoon II Zwei plays, showing the beautiful graphics of a complex shooting section. The TV next to it showing footage of Squad Four: Eclipse sparks violently and then explodes, throwing a shower of sparks that the girl walks through like a badass.\*

Girl: \*looking right at the screen as the TVs with the Sega footage continue to play behind her amidst a bunch of sparking, smoking, and broken TVs that used to be playing Nintendo footage\* Saturn does...what Nintendon't.

\*cue the Sega scream\*

## **SEGA!**

-a commercial that aired on North American TV beginning in late November 1996 and continuing through March 1997

-

Panzer Dragoon II Zwei inhabits a beautiful world that definitely builds upon what the first game achieved in both technological prowess and gameplay innovation. Unlike the previous game, there's no set path through this one, with numerous paths to take and levels to conquer. And your dragon changes as you play, enabling you to take on more and more challenges. Our only complaint with the game is that it's fairly short, with even a novice player usually able to play through the game in less than two hours. Yes, there are multiple ways to play, so there's some replay value present, but we were disappointed that this thrilling ride ended so soon, as we were expecting a game with far more epic length. Despite this shortcoming, the game itself is a masterpiece. It's easily the best looking title on the Sega Saturn and that's definitely saying something. The music is atmospheric, beautiful, and poignant. The game thrilled us at times, but we wish there could have been more.

Our score: 9/10

(...)

Tempest Revolution is one of the year's most pleasant surprises, but in the end we shouldn't have been all that worried. Tempest 2000 is known as the best game on the ill-fated Atari Jaguar, receiving ports to the PC, the 3DO, and the Super Nintendo CD. When we learned that the Saturn wouldn't be getting a port of the game, it was disappointing, but when we learned it was because Jeff Minter and his team were making an all NEW Tempest game for the Sega Saturn, with the same amazing arcade-style shooter gameplay but also featuring an amazing new soundtrack and, get this, an actual storyline? We were blown away, and when we played this game, we were doubly blown away. Tempest Revolution may not be as pretty as, say, Panzer Dragoon II, but it more than makes up for it with its incredibly addictive gameplay, its huge supply of stages, and a compelling storyline featuring a crew of likeable space cadets on a seemingly impossible mission against endless waves of enemies. The boss stages are exciting and fun, and the game itself features a variety of addictive modes, including an endless mode (for high score purposes) and a four-player competitive multiplayer mode. It also features a hidden easter egg in the form of a port of the original arcade version of Tempest! All the hard work Minter's team put into this amazing game was worth it. For our money, this is one of the best Sega Saturn games ever made.

Our score: 10/10

-excerpted from Official Saturn Magazine's reviews of two of December 1996's Sega Saturn games in the January 1997 issue

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### **Sega NetLink Is Here!**

Releasing in stores on December 1st, the Sega NetLink accessory will let you play online with millions of Sega fans from all over the world! For only \$129.99, the device will add a 28.8 kbit/s modem to your Sega Saturn, which works with your standard phone line to hook up your Saturn to the internet. Initial games compatible with the device include Daytona USA, Virtua Fighter 2, Tekken, and Tempest Revolution, with more games coming later on. Sega also plans to sell a special Sega Saturn bundle including the device and Virtua Fighter II for \$379.99.

-excerpted from an article in the December 1996 issue of Official Saturn Magazine

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Bahamut Lagoon finally launched in the USA today! My first impressions of the game are that the graphics, while not quite as good as in Chrono Trigger, still really fit with the game's mood and style. The gameplay is quite fun, comparable to Fire Emblem but maybe more complex? The voice acting is...interesting. Working Designs has done work for Nintendo before with Telenet Japan's game but this is the first time they've done work for Squaresoft and it's an interesting mix. Basically, the game has briefly voiced skits/cutscenes in between levels and then characters say short lines on the battlefield as they're about to attack or if they're about to get killed. Some of the voices don't seem very appropriate for the characters, but I haven't seen all the characters because I've only played a little ways into the game. I'll have a full review some time down the road, but this game may take quite a while to get through.

-from The UnOfficial SquareSoft HomePage on December 2, 1996

RPGamer.net: So, Bahamut Lagoon was your first collaboration with Squaresoft. It wouldn't be your last, but what was it like as opposed to working with Telenet Japan or Game Arts?

Victor Ireland: Squaresoft wanted to exert a lot more control, as I expected. There weren't any pop culture jokes in the game, for example, though we did get to have some fun with a few of the characters. We got to inject some humor into it, characters like Anastasia and Mist got some really funny lines and so I think there's some well-needed comedy relief in certain parts, which is good as it's a really serious game.

RPGamer.net: You were also considering doing Treasure of The Rudras around that time, but nothing seems to have come of it.

Victor Ireland: Well, unfortunately Squaresoft decided not to bring that game over. It's a real shame, since we'd have been willing to do it. Still, I'm glad that because of us, certain games were brought to the West that Squaresoft would've otherwise neglected.

RPGamer.net: I know you were all really busy at the time with all the work on Tale Phantasia and Bahamut Lagoon. Did the work on those games teach you anything when you did the work on Starseekers of Exion?

Victor Ireland: We learned a lot working with Squaresoft and that definitely carried over to Exion, it also carried over into our work on the two Lunar games for the Ultra. I got to be good friends with Ted Woolsey and we even collaborated on a couple projects together later on. Localizing games, it's definitely an art and I know a lot of the best cut their teeth on the Super Nintendo CD.

-excerpted from RPGamer.net's 2003 interview with Victor Ireland

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The end of 1996 saw the release of two of the Super Nintendo CD's most obscure cult hits, games that sold extremely poorly but were embraced by devoted fanbases and critics alike.

Telenet Japan's Strange Seed was one of the last pure FMV games to be released, and one of the most beautiful. The game plays similarly to other FMV games such as Time Gal, though it also has similarities to the much more commercially successful Galaxy Fraulein Yuna series on the Sega Saturn. It is the story of Cassandra, a mysterious young woman who possesses the universe's last Khyber Seed in her body, a seed that if planted at the core of the galaxy will bring peace and prosperity to all the worlds within it. Cassandra must reach the galactic core before two powerful civilizations tear each other apart. It's a somewhat cliched plot but the ending, which features a journey into a black hole and through space and time, is truly inspired and the game has a bittersweet conclusion that fans still debate about to this day (though the Ultra Nintendo sequel, released as a traditional JRPG, answers most of the questions raised).

The other game released that month that was very good and yet very unsuccessful commercially was Aria. The game was the first three-disc Super Nintendo CD game (indeed, it was one of only two three-disc games for the SNES-CD to be released in North America, the other being Game Arts' RPG classic Starseekers of Exion). The game consisted of 14 semi-platforming levels, though the game wasn't so much a platformer as it was a rhythm-based game, with a different song for each level. The game featured 14 lyrical songs, all of

them sung in Japanese, with more of the song revealed as the player pressed buttons in time with the music, guiding a young girl named Aria through 14 mysterious and visually stunning levels. The game was actually somewhat hyped before its debut, appearing at E3 1996 and in numerous gaming magazines in the months leading to its release, but as the release date approached, the hype withered and it released with virtually no fanfare. The game sold well enough in Japan to recoup most of its large (for the time) budget, scoring a 36/40 in Famitsu and being quite well known when it was released there in spring of 1996, but its US release saw it sell less than 10,000 copies. It's a shame, because those who have played it call it the best rhythm game of all time and some even call it one of the best video games of all time, period.

-excerpted from "Unearthing The Classics: The SNES' Most Obscure Games", posted on Alex Stansfield's blog on November 19, 2013

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(Author's Note: We have to thank reader **Lavanya Six** for his Star Trek: Rubicon idea! I definitely think that it'll have some interesting ripple effects down the road...)

"It's a full-on fuckin' horror renaissance, man. Between that zombie video game, that vampire show on TV that's coming out soon, and *Scream*, people can't get enough of being scared shitless. It's great. This is my time and I'm lovin' every minute of it."

-Wes Craven, in an interview in the January 16, 1997 issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine

This Friday there's two big movies coming to the box office, and we've got the scoop on both of them and which one you should see. First up, there's *Scream*, a sort of spoof horror film directed by Wes Craven. Featuring a group of teenagers who are being stalked by a mysterious killer who has an affinity for scary movies, it's not only a thrilling movie in its own right but it's an excellent skewering of its own genre for a generation who's increasingly aware of cliches and tropes in a genre that's become rather stale as of late. Next up, it's *Star Trek: Rubicon*, a new *Star Trek* film with a bit of Roman flavor to it, as Picard and his crew end up in the time of the Roman Empire, just before Caesar famously crosses the Rubicon and starts the Roman civil war. Ed Harris puts in an excellent performance as the then-general Caesar, while Patrick Stewart is always solid as Captain Jean-Luc Picard. The film itself, however, which sees the crew of the starship *Enterprise* teaming up with Caesar's legions to battle a Borg invasion, is somewhat of a disappointment, and the novelty of the crew in Roman times soon degenerates into a bit of a slog, especially since it seems like they just took what could've been a two-part episode of the show and turned it into a movie. The special effects and costumes are decent, which helps make this film worth it for *Star Trek* fans but not necessarily a must-see for anyone else. If you have to go to one movie this weekend, make it *Scream*. You'll be on the edge of your seat and you'll even get a few laughs when you're not screaming your head off.

-excerpted from a KERO-TV entertainment news report on December 20, 1996

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Brittany Saldita: Squaresoft's *Bahamut Lagoon* is a lot of fun and compared to other strategy RPGs, it's a lot faster paced which was a big plus for me.

Gary Westhouse: I liked it, but.... there were some issues. I like to explore in RPGs and the format the game took, for me it just wasn't very much fun. Even in *Fire Emblem* I felt more freedom to roam the world.

Brittany: And there is something that really disappointed me and that was the voice acting. And I'm surprised, because this is the same crew that did Tale Phantasia, so what gives? Maybe there just wasn't as much and they couldn't get into a good rhythm? I know the game has a lot of characters.

Gary: Right, sometimes it was hard to keep track of what was going on and that took me out of the action too.

Brittany: I liked feeding my dragons, it was kind of like feeding the capsule monsters in Lufia II but even more involved.

Gary: Yeah but I just wished I could get them to follow simple orders!

Brittany: On the one hand I guess that's part of the idea on the game but on the other hand I agree with you, sometimes the dragon didn't do what I wanted and it really pissed me off. But once I learned to feed it in a way that made it obey me, it did help. Ultimately, Bahamut Lagoon can be really rewarding if you're willing to put in the work and I give it a 4 out of 5.

Gary: And I give it a 3.5.

(...)

Ted Crosley: Panzer Dragoon II Zwei is an amazing game! Unfortunately, it MIGHT not be worth 60 bucks.

Alex Stansfield: And I felt the first game had this problem too, that it was just too short!

Ted: Know what you're getting into, if you buy this game you will have fun...

Alex: TONS of fun.

Ted: BUT you are going to plow through the game pretty quick. It's challenging, but not so much that you're likely to get stuck, and so what happens is that you'll likely beat it in a couple of hours.

Alex: That said, you should play through it and I played through it more than once to see all the levels. It's stunningly gorgeous...I mean absolutely on another level in terms of graphics, it looks amazing.

Ted: You can see out to the horizon, the sky effects are outstanding, the water looks great, the Saturn is really showing off what it can do. So definitely buy it and play it, but yeah, just watch out that it'll probably be over all too soon. I give the game a 4.5.

Alex: I'm giving it a 4.5 too. Short but oh, so sweet.

-excerpted from the December 3, 1996 episode of GameTV

(...)

Ted: Star Wars: TIE Fighter, what did you think?

John Walden: This game kicked ass! You know I'm a big Star Wars fan and this game, I've played it on PC already but the SNES-CD version, just as good.

Ted: Yeah, they did the same control scheme as they did for X-Wing and it translated over really well. As far as ports go, it's a superb one. The sounds are all there, the graphics are pretty much identical, it's one of the best shooters available for the system.

John: Right, and everything's there, all the missions, the training simulator, it's just this big huge package for everyone who loves Star Wars.

Ted: I can already tell what you're gonna give this game, I'll go ahead and give it a 4.

John: It's a 5 for me. The PC version is just about my favorite game ever and this is one of my top games of the year for the SNES-CD.

Ted: And speaking of Star Wars, we're gonna give you guys a GameTV exclusive look at some cool stuff from Star Wars and Nintendo that's coming down the bend for next year.

John: We've got all the info on the brand new fighting game by Rare coming out in 1997: Star Wars: Masters of Juyo. And we've also got a look at the Star Wars-themed Super Nintendo CD.

(...)

John: \*standing with a representative from LucasArts as they show off the Star Wars SNES-CD on a pedestal, it's designed to look like the Millennium Falcon\* Now this thing is really cool.

LucasArts Rep: Not only will you get a special limited edition Super Nintendo CD, but this will come with three games: Star Wars: X-Wing, Super Star Wars Trilogy, and Star Wars: TIE Fighter. It'll retail for \$159.99, and we're planning to release it around the time that Return of the Jedi will be hitting theaters next year, so some time in March you'll be able to get your hands on this.

John: This is amazing, is this working right now?

LucasArts Rep: Yep, you can plug it in and play it right now.

John: Awesome. I think I'm gonna fire up some TIE Fighter on this thing, you guys stay tuned as we've got a review of PowerSlave for the Sega Saturn, coming right after this!

-excerpted from the December 10, 1996 episode of GameTV

(...)

Ted: You know, I was pretty disappointed with this. I've always liked Duke Nukem but I think they should've done something a bit lighter instead of trying to port over Duke Nukem 3D.

Alex: I think after Doom was ported over so well, 3D Realms thought "maaaaaaaaaaybe this thing can play Duke 3D". And it can, and it's a fun game, it's just not as fun as it is on PC.

Ted: It's a decent port. I liked playing it, it's a fun game. I can't complain about the game itself, the game's fantastic and if you've got an SNES-CD and nothing else, go for it. It's not Alone In The Dark. They did a decent job.

Alex: Yeah, if that's all you've got....I mean, the Saturn version drops in February so I'm probably getting that.

Ted: Well, if you've got a Saturn there's no need even to be watching this, you've wasted five minutes of your life.

Alex: We are handsome enough guys that watching us for five minutes is not a waste.

Ted: You're right about that. In fact, we're so handsome that we're going to spend the next minute just posing and flexing so you all feel you've gotten your money's worth. \*begins flexing his arms and making manly grunts alongside Alex\*

Brittany: \*yells from off the screen\* Take your shirts off!

Alex: We don't love our viewers THAT much. \*stops posing\*

Ted: But yeah, Duke Nukem 3D is a great game and there's not much that can change it, even a low frame rate. I'm giving it a 3.5 out of 5.

Alex: I'm gonna be a little less generous and give it a 3. Good game, solid port, but if you've got a Saturn you can wait.

-excerpted from the December 17, 1996 episode of GameTV

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: December 1996**

1. Super Mario RPG
2. Dog Dash
3. Tale Phantasia
4. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
5. Kirby Super Deluxe
6. Chrono Trigger
7. Ultimate Mortal Kombat Trilogy
8. Samurai Rush
9. Road Storm
10. Bikerz 2
11. Darkstalkers: The Night Warriors
12. Tetris Attack
13. Soul Matrix
14. Super Mario World 2
15. Fire Emblem: The Holy War
16. Mario Artist
17. College Slam
18. Suikoden
19. Grant Hill in NBA Basketball
20. Madden '97

## The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: December 1996

1. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
2. Tomb Raider
3. Resident Evil
4. Panzer Dragoon II Zwei
5. Virtua Fighter 2
6. NiGHTS Into Dreams...
7. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
8. Virtua Cop 2
9. NHL '97
10. Tempest Revolution

-

### December 31, 1996

"And the ball is about to drop live here at Times Square!" shouted Dick Clark jubilantly, standing on a balcony overlooking the massive gathered crowd. Flanking him were a number of celebrities, including recording artist Selena who had just performed a concert to promote her new album which would be debuting next month. "Just 60 seconds to go now until we ring in 1997!"

Selena smiled and clapped her hands, giving a loud cheer. Nearby was Celine Dion, the woman whom the media had been trying to provoke a feud between, due to the fact that their albums, Selena's Dreaming Of You and Dion's Falling Into You were front-runners for that year's Album of the Year Grammy. Despite the prodding, the two women had become friends, albeit not terribly close friends, due to their shared love of singing and music and the fact that both of them were enjoying a great deal of success without their sales seriously affecting each other's.

"50....49....48....!" Selena counted down, reaching over to take her husband Chris' hand. The two of them had remained extremely close, especially since Selena's near deadly ordeal nearly two years earlier.

"45...44...43..." Also up on the balcony was NBA superstar Shaquille O'Neal. His Magic had been going through somewhat of a rough patch and were currently in a three-way battle with the Celtics and Heat for number one in the division, but he and Dennis Rodman were the top rebounding tandem in the league despite their personal friction. "Hey, hey, Dick Clark, uh, what about my new album coming out soon?"

Dick Clark laughed. He wasn't much of a hip-hop fan, but Shaq was naturally charismatic and the two had been cracking jokes whenever the camera was off them.

"Well, you might not be as good of a singer as Selena here..."

Selena and Shaq both laughed.

"I can't rap though, I think he's very good, maybe my husband would like to give rapping a try though?" asked Selena, playfully nudging her husband as the ball continued to drop to usher in the new year.

"Give it a try, come on, make a New Year's resolution right now that you'll give rapping a try. I wanna hear Celine Dion make a resolution too."

"No, no, no way! Ahahahaha....I would be terrible!" laughed Dion, taking a glance at the big countdown clock. "20... 19... 18...."

"We are just moments away now from bringing in 1997! 15! 14! 13! 12! 11!"

Everyone in the balcony began to count down now.

"10! 9! 8! 7! 6! 5! 4! 3! 2! 1! HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!"

Everyone in the balcony and everyone down in Times Square began to cheer as confetti fell from the sky and "Auld Lang Syne" started to play. Selena and her husband Chris shared a passionate kiss in the balcony while Dick Clark and his wife did the same. Out above Times Square, among the dozens of advertisement signs for various companies and products, were two that might catch the eye of a gamer watching the festivities. One was a large, colorful electronic light advertisement for Sonic the Hedgehog 4. The other, a large black banner with a cryptic logo on it, which read "Ultra is Coming..." with "1997" under it at the bottom of the banner.

Across the country at the Kalinske household, Tom Kalinske didn't notice the Ultra ad. He was too busy kissing his wife as his daughters blew streamers and clapped their hands in excitement for the new year. After the kiss was through, he looked at his oldest daughter and then his other two, trying his best to form a stern "dad" voice.

"All right, we let you guys stay up, but it's time for bed, head up there and get ready."

"Oh, I think we can let them stay up for another half hour," said his wife with a smile. "They're so excited now they won't be able to fall asleep until then anyway."

"...okay, just a half hour and then bed," said Kalinske, who heard the phone begin to ring. "Who'd be calling now...?"

He walked over to the phone and picked it up. It was his boss at Sega of Japan, Hayao Nakayama.

"I hope I did not wake you, though I am sure you are up celebrating the New Year, am I correct?"

"Ahaha, yes, that's right," said Kalinske, hoping he wasn't being called about some urgent news regarding the Saturn. It had been doing so well as of late, the sales figures they'd gotten predicted that Sega would win its first holiday over Nintendo since 1992, the year Sonic the Hedgehog 2 was released. Once again, the blue hedgehog had brought victory to Sega, and Kalinske hoped the streak would continue even as Nintendo prepared to release a new generation console. "Something going on?"

"Only that we are having our best sales year in the company's history and it is largely thanks to you, my friend," said Nakayama, a gracious tone in his voice. "I simply called to thank you for everything you have done for this company. We could not have enjoyed such success without you. I wish you and your family the happiest of new years."

Kalinske couldn't help but be a bit choked up at what he was hearing. His job at Sega hadn't always been an easy one, he'd steered the company through some of its lowest times, and the end of the previous year seemed like the biggest struggle to date. But just a year later, Sega was thriving, the Saturn was the word on everyone's lips and Sonic the Hedgehog 4 was the biggest game in the world. He didn't know what the future would bring, but the present was extremely bright.

"Uh....um, thank you....and...happy new year to you too, sir."

"Enjoy this time with your family. We'll meet in two weeks to discuss our plans for 1997. For now, please, get some rest and have some fun. You have earned it. Thank you again."

"I certainly will," said Kalinske, smiling as he set the phone back down. He turned to his family.

"Who was it?" asked his wife, wondering what could possibly be making her husband smile so big.

"It was my boss, he said happy new year and have fun and I'm the luckiest man in the world to have you guys."

Tom Kalinske gave each of his daughters the biggest hug he could give before giving his wife another passionate kiss.

"Are you guys trying to make us go to bed?" groaned Kalinske's middle daughter, rolling her eyes before covering them up with her hands. "Geez guys!"

*"1996 is always going to be remembered as the Saturn's year. It's when Sega showed off the system's full potential and when the third parties were churning out hit after hit. Sonic 4 might have aged a bit, but games like Resident Evil and Tomb Raider had timeless appeal."*  
-Dan "Shoe" Hsu, in an editorial in the January 2002 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"In retrospect, was pushing a 'year of the RPG' really the best way to counter the Sega Saturn? Despite the popularity of the Final Fantasy games and Secret of Mana, role playing games were still a niche genre at the time. Also, though games like Tale Phantasia and Chrono Trigger frequently pushed the limits of what the Super Nintendo CD could do, 2-D RPGs tended to be a somewhat technologically backward genre of games, and compared to games like Resident Evil and NiGHTS, looked downright primitive to new buyers trying to choose between the SNES-CD and the Sega Saturn."*

-from "Games With James #17: Saturn vs. Ultra Nintendo", on the Angry Video Game Nerd website on August 14, 2013

*"Choosing our overall Game of the Year was no small task. In recent years there's been a dominant game: Street Fighter II in 1992, Secret Of Mana in 1993, Donkey Kong Country in 1994, and The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams in 1995. Not so this year, in fact, there were more than 20 games we found worthy of consideration for this award, spanning the SNES-CD, the Sega Saturn, the Sega Genesis, and even the Game Boy. It was our toughest decision yet, and we know not everyone will be happy with our selection."*

-from the January 1997 issue of *GameInformer*, before choosing *Squad Four: Eclipse* as their game of the year, the only major publication to do so

*"Is the Ultra Nintendo out yet? \*laughing\* I need something to do when Matt's away shooting Titanic."*

-Robin Williams, from an interview on the set of *Good Will Hunting*

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**Top Selling Super Nintendo CD Games of 1996** (pack-in sales included, only North American sales during the 1996 calendar year are counted)

1. Donkey Kong Country
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Super Mario World 2
4. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
5. Squad Four: Eclipse
6. Dog Dash
7. Super Mario World 3
8. Tale Phantasia
9. Super Mario Kart
10. Chrono Trigger

-

**1996 Nintendo Power Editors' Choice Top Ten SNES-CD Games**

1. Tale Phantasia

*Telenet Japan's beautiful RPG blew us all away with its engrossing battle system and epic storyline spanning space and time.*

2. Squad Four: Eclipse

*The sequel to 1994's hit game broke new ground for what the Super Nintendo CD could do as the four heroes battled an alien invasion.*

3. Chrono Trigger

*Squaresoft's time-travel RPG was a true masterpiece, following Crono and his companions on a journey across millions of years to battle a world shattering space parasite.*

4. Super Mario RPG

*In the Year of the RPG, even Mario got his own epic adventure! The plumber's quest to battle Smithy was a hit with Nintendo Power staff and players alike!*

5. Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble

*Squad Four wasn't the only team battling an alien invasion, as Dixie Kong and her new pal Kiddy battled to rescue Donkey and Diddy from some nasty extraterrestrials.*

## 6. Fire Emblem: The Holy War

*Tactical battling took a big step forward in this strategy RPG spanning two generations of heroes!*

## 7. Eternal Night

*Konami's dark journey took a combat-ready noble through deep dungeons and even into the depths of the underworld to battle some truly scary foes.*

## 8. Elements Of Mana

*Square's sequel was a real delight, giving us a choice of heroes and a step-up in graphics and sound as we battled to take down eight fearsome elemental beasts.*

## 9. Kirby Super Deluxe

*Kirby came back in a big way with ten games in one, ranging from classic Kirby action to a wonderful RPG to a super-addictive racing mini-game!*

## 10. Dog Dash

*The Super Nintendo CD went to the dogs in this heartwarming tale that saw a young boy having to rely on man's best friend to make it home.*

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**1996 Nintendo Power Awards("The Nesters")**- compiled from fan voting, not a complete list of awards

### Best Graphics and Sound (SNES-CD)

1. Squad Four: Eclipse
2. Chrono Trigger
3. Super Mario RPG

### Best Challenge (SNES-CD)

1. Tale Phantasia
2. Donkey Kong Country 3: Diddy's Kong Quest
3. Squad Four: Eclipse

### Best Play Control (SNES-CD)

1. Tale Phantasia
2. Elements Of Mana
3. Dog Dash

### Best Theme And Fun (SNES-CD)

1. Chrono Trigger
2. Tale Phantasia

### 3. Squad Four: Eclipse

#### Best Hero

1. Crono
2. Cless
3. Woofle

#### Best Villain

1. Dhaos
2. Lavos
3. Smithy

#### Most Innovative

1. Tetris Attack
2. Tale Phantasia
3. Aria

#### Best Overall (SNES-CD)

1. Chrono Trigger
2. Tale Phantasia
3. Super Mario RPG

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### **The Billboard #1 Songs Of 1996**

January 6: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
January 13: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
January 20: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
January 27: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
February 3: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
February 10: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
February 17: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
February 24: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
March 2: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
March 9: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
March 16: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
March 23: One Sweet Day by Mariah Carey, Chilli, T-Boz, and Boyz II Men  
March 30: Because You Loved Me by Celine Dion  
April 6: Because You Loved Me by Celine Dion  
April 13: Because You Loved Me by Celine Dion  
April 20: Because You Loved Me by Celine Dion  
April 27: Ironic by Alanis Morissette  
May 4: Because You Loved Me by Celine Dion  
May 11: Ironic by Alanis Morissette  
May 18: Noche Amor by Selena  
May 25: Noche Amor by Selena  
June 1: Tha Crossroads by Bone Thugs n Harmony

June 8: Tha Crossroads by Bone Thugs n Harmony  
June 15: Tha Crossroads by Bone Thugs n Harmony  
June 22: Tha Crossroads by Bone Thugs n Harmony  
June 29: Endless (Theme from "Barcode") by Des'ree  
July 6: Endless (Theme from "Barcode") by Des'ree  
July 13: How Do U Want It/California Love by 2Pac with KC and Jojo  
July 20: How Do U Want It/California Love by 2Pac with KC and Jojo  
July 27: Beyond The Blue by Counting Crows  
August 3: Beyond The Blue by Counting Crows  
August 10: Macarena (Bayside Boys Mix) by Los Del Rio  
August 17: Macarena (Bayside Boys Mix) by Los Del Rio  
August 24: Macarena (Bayside Boys Mix) by Los Del Rio  
August 31: Macarena (Bayside Boys Mix) by Los Del Rio  
September 7: Macarena (Bayside Boys Mix) by Los Del Rio  
September 14: Macarena (Bayside Boys Mix) by Los Del Rio  
September 21: Macarena (Bayside Boys Mix) by Los Del Rio  
September 28: Macarena (Bayside Boys Mix) by Los Del Rio  
October 5: Macarena (Bayside Boys Mix) by Los Del Rio  
October 12: Macarena (Bayside Boys Mix) by Los Del Rio  
October 19: Macarena (Bayside Boys Mix) by Los Del Rio  
October 26: Macarena (Bayside Boys Mix) by Los Del Rio  
November 2: It's All Coming Back To Me Now by Celine Dion  
November 9: No Diggity by Blackstreet featuring Dr. Dre  
November 16: No Diggity by Blackstreet featuring Dr. Dre  
November 23: No Diggity by Blackstreet featuring Dr. Dre  
November 30: No Diggity by Blackstreet featuring Dr. Dre  
December 7: Car Crash by Sheryl Crow  
December 14: Car Crash by Sheryl Crow  
December 21: I Believe I Can Fly by R. Kelly  
December 28: I Believe I Can Fly by R. Kelly

(Author's Notes: Noche Amor, Endless, Beyond the Blue, and Car Crash are all original songs TTL. Toni Braxton's "Unbreak My Heart" is completely butterflied away, she just never writes it and consequently is much less famous than IOTL. Beyond The Blue is the theme from *Superman: Last Son Of Krypton* (it is a much, much better Superman song than that godawful Five for Fighting song from IOTL).)

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### **Electronic Gaming Monthly Editors' Choice Awards 1996:** (selected)

Game of the Year: Chrono Trigger  
Runners-up: Tale Phantasia, Resident Evil

*This was a tough call. Two classic RPGs and a brilliant horror game on the Sega Saturn that had us thrilled for weeks. You could make a case for any one of these games, but in the end, it was Chrono Trigger that wowed us the most with its great soundtrack and awesome storyline.*

Super Nintendo CD Game Of The Year: Chrono Trigger  
Runners-up: Tale Phantasia, Squad Four: Eclipse

*It was another close three-way race but we gave it to Chrono Trigger. Tale Phantasia is an excellent game and Squad Four: Eclipse was a technical marvel, but Chrono Trigger edged them both out.*

Sega Saturn Game Of The Year: Sonic the Hedgehog 4  
Runner-up: Resident Evil, Virtua Fighter II

*Another razor-thin race saw Sonic 4 beating out Resident Evil to take the award for Best Saturn Game. Both games were amazing but we loved the action and storyline of Sonic 4 which took us to new worlds of wonder.*

Handheld Game Of The Year: Donkey Kong Land 2  
Runners-up: World Of Color, Dynastar

*The color enhancements given to Donkey Kong Land 2 by the new Game Boy pushed it over the addictive puzzler World of Color and the challenging shooter Dynastar.*

Best RPG: Chrono Trigger  
Runner-up: Tale Phantasia, Super Mario RPG

*Chrono Trigger beats Phantasia once again, though we have to emphasize that we adored both of these games. And don't count out Super Mario RPG, which was a role-playing game fitting of Mario's great reputation as an icon of gaming.*

Best Fighting Game: Virtua Fighter II  
Runner-up: Soul Edge, Tekken

*Sega Saturn brought it big time in the fighting games department. We knew a Saturn game had to take this, and Virtua Fighter II took it by a mile, seriously improving the graphics and adding fun new characters to the mix.*

Best Adventure Game: NiGHTS: Into Dreams  
Runner-up: Samurai Rush, Commander Keen: The Universe Is Toast

*There were some epic adventures this year, but NiGHTS Into Dreams... wowed us so much with its beautiful landscapes and high-flying action. Samurai Rush was a close second and we also loved the return of Commander Keen.*

Best Action Game: Resident Evil  
Runners-up: Squad Four: Eclipse, Tomb Raider

*For thrilling action, three games stood above all the rest, and we loved Resident Evil just a hair more than the thrilling Squad Four: Eclipse and the exploration-heavy Tomb Raider.*

Sidescrolling Game Of The Year: Sonic the Hedgehog 4  
Runners-up: Donkey Kong Country 3, Guardian Heroes

*It was a great year for the side-scroller and for the second time in three years, it was a battle between Sonic and Donkey Kong for the crown. This time, the hedgehog won. His Saturn game was his biggest adventure yet and innovated quite a bit more than Donkey Kong Country 3.*

Best Graphics: Sonic The Hedgehog 4  
Runners-up: Panzer Dragoon II Zwei, NiGHTS Into Dreams

*The Saturn really showed off what it could do with these three games, but in the end, the hedgehog's trip through nine beautiful new worlds impressed us even more than the beautiful but brief Panzer Dragoon II Zwei.*

Best Music: Chrono Trigger  
Runner-up: NiGHTS Into Dreams, Sonic the Hedgehog 4

*NiGHTS and Sonic both featured excellent soundtracks, but Chrono Trigger just might be the best we've ever heard in an RPG. This was an easy award to call.*

### **Electronic Gaming Monthly Readers' Choice Awards 1996:**

Game of the Year: Resident Evil  
Runner-up: Chrono Trigger

Super Nintendo CD Game Of The Year: Chrono Trigger  
Runner-up: Tale Phantasia

Sega Saturn Game Of The Year: Resident Evil  
Runner-up: Virtua Fighter II

Handheld Game Of The Year: World Of Color  
Runner-up: Runic Gold

Best RPG: Chrono Trigger  
Runner-up: Tale Phantasia

Best Fighting Game: Virtua Fighter II  
Runner-up: Soul Edge

Best Adventure Game: NiGHTS: Into Dreams  
Runner-up: Eternal Night

Best Action Game: Resident Evil  
Runner-up: Tomb Raider

Sidescrolling Game Of The Year: Sonic the Hedgehog 4  
Runner-up: Donkey Kong Country 3

Best Graphics: Resident Evil  
Runner-up: NiGHTS Into Dreams

Best Music: Chrono Trigger  
Runner-up: Aria

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### **Gamepro 1996 Readers' Choice Awards**

### Best Role-Playing Game:

*This was clearly a hotly debated category. In the end, Tale Phantasia won...by just three votes! Obviously, our readers loved both of these epic RPGs, and we can't blame them! Super Mario RPG was able to carve out a respectable third.*

Tale Phantasia: 30%  
Chrono Trigger: 30%  
Super Mario RPG: 17%  
Elements Of Mana: 11%  
Fire Emblem: The Holy War: 8%  
Lufia II: Rise Of The Sinistrals: 2%

### Best Sports Game:

*With big time NBA and MLB games, the Super Nintendo CD really brought it in the sports category this year, a category usually won by Sega titles! It was Ken Griffey's debut on the SNES-CD that won by a pretty decisive majority.*

Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run (SNES-CD): 36%  
Grant Hill In NBA Basketball (SNES-CD): 17%  
NHL '97 (Saturn): 15%  
Frank Thomas' Big Hurt Baseball (Saturn): 10%  
Madden '97 (Saturn): 10%  
College Slam (Saturn): 4%  
NBA Live '97 (SNES-CD): 4%

### Best Fighting Game:

*This one was the biggest landslide of the year. Virtua Fighter 2 won by a mile! Not only was it the biggest arcade hit of the last year, it was easily the biggest home console smash and it dominated your voting.*

Virtua Fighter 2: 51%  
Soul Edge: 14%  
Twinblade: 12%  
Tekken: 9%  
Ultimate Mortal Kombat Trilogy: 7%

### Best Action Game:

*Sonic 4 was the most hyped game of the year and the results of this poll clearly reflect that! Sonic trounced his competition, beating back his Saturn rival NiGHTS and this year's Donkey Kong Country title for a huge victory.*

Sonic the Hedgehog 4: 48%  
NiGHTS Into Dreams: 20%  
Donkey Kong Country 3: 17%  
Dog Dash: 9%  
Kirby Super Deluxe: 3%

Best SNES-CD Game:

*Once again, it was Tale Phantasia and Chrono Trigger, and once again, it was very close, but you liked Tale Phantasia just a bit more.*

Tale Phantasia: 23%  
Chrono Trigger: 21%  
Squad Four: Eclipse: 14%  
Super Mario RPG: 14%  
Elements of Mana: 9%  
Donkey Kong Country 3: 6%  
Eternal Night: 5%  
Dog Dash: 3%

Best Saturn Game:

*Sonic 4 won but it wasn't easy! Resident Evil was extremely popular for most of the year, but Sonic wouldn't be denied his crown.*

Sonic The Hedgehog 4: 29%  
Resident Evil: 23%  
Virtua Fighter 2: 12%  
Tomb Raider: 7%  
NiGHTS Into Dreams: 7%  
Commander Keen: The Universe Is Toast: 4%  
Soul Edge: 4%  
Guardian Heroes: 3%  
Panzer Dragoon II Zwei: 3%

Best System Overall:

*In another incredibly close vote, you chose the Saturn as your top system of the year! But look at that! The Game Boy got seven percent of the vote. Guess some people really like the new color upgrade!*

Saturn: 40%  
SNES-CD: 39%  
Genesis: 9%  
Game Boy: 7%  
Super Nintendo: 4%

Best Game Overall:

*Sonic 4 won, but it wasn't an easy win, and it might have been the split between Tale Phantasia and Chrono Trigger that gave him the victory. Still, the hedgehog had to deal with his own votes being siphoned by our fourth and fifth place winners, so Nintendo fans can't blame the split entirely!*

Sonic The Hedgehog 4: 20%  
Tale Phantasia: 18%  
Chrono Trigger: 17%  
Resident Evil: 10%

Virtua Fighter 2: 8%  
Tomb Raider: 5%  
Squad Four: Eclipse: 5%  
Super Mario RPG: 4%  
NiGHTS Into Dreams: 4%  
Donkey Kong Country 3: 2%  
Elements Of Mana: 2%

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*Sonic the Hedgehog 4 is out and it's the biggest hit of 1996, but is the hedgehog slowing down in 1997? Come on, you know Sonic NEVER slows down! Just recently, Sega announced not one, not two, not three, but FOUR Sonic the Hedgehog games making their way to the Saturn in 1997, and whether you're a fan of classic Sonic or a fan of any number of other popular game genres, there's going to be a game for you starring Sonic and his friends.*

### **Sonic Jam**

Sonic Jam is a compilation release containing *Sonic the Hedgehog 1*, *Sonic the Hedgehog 2*, *Sonic the Hedgehog 3*, *Sonic CD*, and several other Sonic games that have yet to be revealed. The games will all feature enhanced musical scores and new bonus levels!

### **Sonic Fighters**

This is a 2-D fighting game featuring your favorite Sonic characters, from the blue hedgehog himself to characters like Knuckles the Echidna and Corona the Butterfly. It's scheduled for a spring 1997 release.

### **Sonic RPG**

There is a *Sonic the Hedgehog* role-playing game in development for late this year! Not too many details are yet known but the game is said to combine elements from nearly every game in the series into a truly epic quest.

### **Sonic R**

*Sonic R* is a kart-racing game somewhat similar to Nintendo's upcoming *Ultra Mario Kart*, featuring Sonic the Hedgehog characters racing across a number of different zones. The game is to support four-player racing and will be released sometime this fall!

-excerpted from the February 1997 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

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*Development on the Ultra Nintendo is rumored to be nearly complete, and though the company has been largely mum about details on the console, they've begun to give certain media outlets a limited degree of information on the new console's specs, outside of what we've already gathered from trade shows like E3. From what we've seen, this console will definitely be the most powerful home gaming device to date, and its release is sure to be the biggest gaming event of the year.*

## Hardware

The Ultra Nintendo's hardware is rumored to be based off of an existing Hitachi-made CPU capable of over 130 megahertz of clock speed, which is vastly faster than the CPU found in the Super Nintendo CD. Such a fast processor would easily be capable of 3D graphics even better than the ones seen at E3. From the demonstration of *Star Fox 2* shown at the San Jose Tech Conference in November, it's clear that the 3D in this game makes the 3D in games like *Squad Four: Eclipse* look utterly primitive. The console features impressive anti-aliasing capabilities that make for very smooth shapes, while the frame rate is impressively fast. Compared to the Saturn's *Panzer Dragoon II Zwei*, *Star Fox 2* features faster movement and much more impressive shading, especially in stages taking place over water. The water in *Star Fox 2* is highly reflective, demonstrating beautifully the console's graphical capabilities. *Final Fantasy VII* looks incredible, as seen at the 1996 Tokyo Game Show. The characters are rendered in full, detailed 3D, while the backgrounds contain a level of detail unheard of in even the most impressive Super Nintendo CD games. In addition to the powerful CPU, the Ultra Nintendo is running an enormously powerful graphics processor. Codenamed "Artemis", the chip runs at over 100 megahertz, easily the most powerful graphics chip in a home console and more powerful than a lot of midrange gaming PCs. It's the Artemis that likely makes much of the advanced graphics of the Ultra Nintendo even remotely possible. Compared to the Saturn's co-processors, the Ultra Nintendo's co-processors enable the system to do a significant amount more work, and things that would be very taxing for the Saturn are much smoother on this system. Again, we're talking about a two year technological gulf, and Nintendo's decision to make gamers wait for the Ultra might well pay off. Even current arcade games, which run on significantly improved technology from the Sega Saturn, don't look as good as what we've seen from the Ultra Nintendo.

## Software

The Ultra Nintendo will definitely have at least one major hit available at launch, likely *Super Mario Dimensions*, which looked to be in a late stage of development as of E3 1996 and is probably nearing completion for the Japanese launch in June. We're not sure what other games will be available for the holiday season, but out of *Ultra Mario Kart* and *Final Fantasy VII*, it's likely we'll see one or both of those games available in the launch window. *Star Fox 2* is likely a spring 1998 release, though Argonaut has told us that they're working overtime on the game and not to be surprised if it's ready for the American launch, though they also told us they won't rush anything. Naughty Dog, developer of the hit game *Dog Dash*, says that they'll have a platformer ready for launch, while WayForward, who's been working on the Game Boy Color game *Shantae*, says that the sequel to their 1995 hit *Nightsquad* is in development as we speak. We've seen no less than a dozen impressive looking games for the Ultra Nintendo, with *Super Mario Dimensions* leading the pack. The game is shaping up to be massive, and it plays incredibly well, with the Ultra Nintendo much more well-suited to handle 3D gameplay than the Super Nintendo CD which tried with mixed results in *Super Mario World 3*. We're also fully hyped for *Final Fantasy VII*, which will be the first *Final Fantasy* game to take place in a modern world. Konami is said to be fully on board with the system, they're developing a new Castlevania game that they hope to have ready for launch, and Hideo Kojima tells us to "expect a surprise" at E3 1997. The only potential stumbling block for the Ultra Nintendo on the software front could be the new proprietary "Gigadisc" format, which packs a gigabyte of data onto a single disc. Sony has promised that the new format is largely similar to the CD-ROM, and so far we haven't heard any complaints from developers, but any new format can be tricky to work with at first, and time will tell if Nintendo and Sony's decision proves a wise one. Whatever happens with the

Ultra Nintendo, it's clear that there won't be any shortage of quality games, something that slowed the Super Nintendo CD down early until *Super Mario World 2* was released.

-excerpted from an article in the March 1997 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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Ted Crosley: Okay, okay, no more teasing. It's now the time you've all been waiting for.

Alex Stansfield: It's time to count down *GameTV's* top 10 games of the year!

Gary Westhouse: There was a lot of fighting, biting, arguing, death threats, but we finally made our decision.

Ted: Now remember, what two of us rated a game earlier in the year doesn't necessarily reflect what all five of us ranked a game for this list. Soooo, if a Hall of Fame game finishes below a non-Hall of Fame game, it's not us being inconsistent and fickle.

Brittany Saldita: It is TOTALLY us being inconsistent and fickle.

Ted: Well, with that in mind, let's start the countdown!

Narrator: \*in a big booming voice\* **GameTV's Top Ten Games Of 1996.**

Ted: And we start off the countdown with our number ten game... **Elements Of Mana.**

Brittany: The *Secret Of Mana* sequel was a beautifully crafted epic RPG that gave you the choice between six main characters, each with their own strengths, weaknesses, and storyline.

Alex: That's right, depending on who you chose, you'd end up fighting to preserve the natural world of Mana, advance the technology of humanity, or strike a balance between the two.

Ted: The game featured the same super fun fighting system from *Secret of Mana* and once again let you take two friends into battle with you, making it one of the year's best multiplayer games as well.

John Walden: At number nine, we had **Eternal Night.**

Alex: Konami's violent, bloody castle crawler had you playing as a count who had to purge the forces of evil from his castle by any means necessary.

Gary: Yeah, and then you got to take the fight straight to the devil himself in Hell.

Brittany: Yeah, any game that turns the phrase "go to hell" into a good thing gets a thumbs up in my book.

Ted: It takes all the style of the classic Castlevania series and turns it up to eleven, making for one of the year's most thrilling and spooky games.

Alex: At number eight, the Sega Saturn's **NiGHTS Into Dreams...** didn't disappoint. It

lived up to the hype and then some, thrusting us into a magical dream world where anything was possible.

Ted: It showed us how beautiful a Saturn game could be and also featured some of the most impressive boss fights of the year.

Brittany: It featured a huge 3-D world that you could fly through, making flying not just something restricted to rail shooters any more. It was also a heartwarming tale of two kids and their protector, punctuated with a beautiful musical score that truly brought video game magic to life.

Ted: It moved at a bit of a slower pace than its cousin *Sonic the Hedgehog*, but that just gave us more time to explore the beautiful world and all its incredible sights and sounds.

Brittany: Our number seven game of the year, believe it or not, was a handheld game! **World of Color** on the Game Boy is one of the most addictive puzzlers we've ever played and showed off the new Game Boy Color's capabilities in a big way.

Gary: In *World of Color*, you have to create a path by bringing differently colored shapes together in order to guide your cursor through the stage before the world collapses in on itself. It's fast paced and it takes a lot of skill, but it's surprisingly easy to learn, the hallmark of a truly great puzzle game.

Ted: You can play through on endless mode or you can enjoy the 88-level campaign, where the difficulty ramps up gradually as you go along. This game got into our Hall of Fame earlier this year, and for good reason. It's the best handheld puzzle game since *Tetris*, and we're still picking it up and playing it today.

Alex: Hell, I'm playing it right now! \*holding his Gameboy\* Can you believe I'm getting paid for this?

Ted: Well put that thing away, it's your turn to reveal the next game on the list.

Alex: Uh....right, right....sure! Number six was **Virtua Fighter 2**, the hit arcade fighting game that became an even bigger hit on the Sega Saturn.

John: With vastly improved graphics, faster combos and characters galore, *Virtua Fighter 2* makes its predecessor, an excellent title in its own right, look pretty outdated. That's probably this game's only real flaw, the rest of it is pure fighting perfection.

Gary: It even introduced new storylines for each character that made us feel like we really got to know these guys we were beating the hell out of each other with.

Ted: *Virtua Fighter 2* provided the perfect balance of skill and intuitiveness, so that whether you're a fighting game expert or a total rookie, you could still have a great time.

Brittany: Our number five game of the year was **Squad Four: Eclipse** for the Super Nintendo CD. While the original *Squad Four* was somewhat larger in scope, *Eclipse* provided a perfectly streamlined experience that made the game a non-stop rush of hard hitting action.

Ted: It seemed like aliens were everywhere this year, from *Independence Day* to the new

*Donkey Kong Country* game, but nowhere was an invasion more fun than in this awesome sequel that let us blow away gigantic bosses and hordes of invading soldiers as we fought to liberate the galactic capital.

Alex: Not only that, but the game featured some truly incredible graphics and a final boss fight that was completely out of this world.

Ted: All right, we're down to the top four. And I gotta tell you, this top four was really close.

Alex: That's right, only a single ranking point separated each of these four games from each other. In other words, all four of these games are worthy of the title Game of the Year. Each of these games was somebody's favorite game of the year, the #1 game was chosen by two of us which gave it the edge, but you can see how close it was when each of us has a favorite among them.

Ted: So without any further ado, let's count them down. And the #4 game of the year was Alex's top choice.

Alex: Number four of the year was **Chrono Trigger** for the Super Nintendo CD. It's a classic RPG with a killer soundtrack and some truly great characters. The battle system, which let you string together dozens of two-character and three-character combos, made every fight a strategy goldmine, and the incredible environments made this one of the most beautiful RPGs ever made.

Brittany: Yeah, Chrono Trigger was a masterpiece in no uncertain terms. You could time travel between six different eras, and your actions affected events in each one as you went along. The voice acting was superb and this game was definitely worthy of all the hype.

Alex: Chrono Trigger is a truly brilliant game, and was my personal pick for Game of the Year. Sadly, it finished fourth, but these next three games are awesome too. John, you're up.

John: Well, my top choice for Game of the Year and our overall #3 was **Sonic the Hedgehog 4**. The blue hedgehog came back in a major way, with all new moves and a great new 3D perspective for this game's epic boss fights. Seriously, check out this fight against that huge dragon. That's only one of the more than a dozen bosses you'll face in this game, and that's not counting the hidden world you can open up by collecting all the hidden stuff.

Ted: Gamers have been waiting for this game for a long time, and it DEFINITELY lived up to the hype. It contained everything that we've loved about Sonic over the last five years and was the perfect killer app at a time Saturn needed it most. And speaking of Saturn killer apps, Gary, your top pick is coming up.

Gary: That's right, my #1 pick and our overall #2 was **Resident Evil**. This survivor horror game was unlike anything we've seen before, putting players in a mansion inhabited by mutated creatures and homicidal zombies. It brought a new level of fear through its gameplay which pushed players to their absolute limits, keeping them on the edge through the deprivation of resources and constant tension.

Alex: Resident Evil was a fantastic game, it forced players to relearn everything they thought they knew about action games if they wanted to make it out of this spooky mansion

alive.

Gary: I loved Resident Evil, I wasn't on the show when you guys reviewed it but it's clear from the perfect score it was given that all of us here at *GameTV* felt the same way I did, that this game is a masterpiece that'll be loved for years to come.

Ted: And now we get to the big one, the number one game of the year, and...I gotta say, I'm surprised I ended up liking this game more than everything else because it's not usually the type of game I go for. But, but, that's how good this game was, that it completely defied my expectations for it and rose to become one of my personal favorite games of all time. And Brittany, I know you loved it too.

Brittany: I did! This game was my number one favorite and I'm thrilled to hear it was your favorite too. \*she gives Ted a hug\*

Ted: The *GameTV* number one game of the year was... **Tale Phantasia!**

Brittany: And what an amazing game it was. It took players to a magical world where the evil Dhaos threatened to conquer all. The innovative battle system made every fight a thrilling life and death struggle and this game had so many twists, turns, and secrets that it took more than 100 hours to uncover them all!

Ted: *Tale Phantasia* broke new ground for its genre with its unique battle system and vast world. Its graphics were some of the most beautiful we've ever seen and the voice acting was full of humor and emotion, making us truly care about these characters who embarked on this epic journey.

Alex: *Tale Phantasia* was my number two game of the year, right behind *Chrono Trigger*, and it was REALLY hard to pick between them. I agonized over the decision but ultimately it didn't matter because *Tale Phantasia* was number one anyway, and a worthy number one it is.

Ted: Again, this year was full of amazing games. Any one of these games could have been number one, you could even have made a case for *Squad Four: Eclipse* and I'm sure there are some *World of Color* fans out there who are throwing their Game Boys at their TV screen right about now. Whether you're a Sega fan, or a Nintendo fan, you had some amazing games to play last year and this year doesn't look any different.

Brittany: That's right because you've got the ULTRA Nintendo coming out finally!

Alex: And next week we'll be here to review *Terranigma* for the SNES-CD, so don't miss that one.

-excerpted from the January 7, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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*And once again, we look back on a great year in games with our countdown of this year's ten biggest stories from the world of video gaming.*

*#10: A Monster In Your Pocket*

When *Pocket Monsters Red and Green* launched early last year in Japan, few suspected that it would become a major phenomenon with millions of sales and a hit anime series on the way, while also persuading Sony to acquire its creator company Game Freak. We have yet to hear official news on the franchise's arrival in the West, but an announcement to that effect seems like a matter of time.

#### *#9: Saturn Does What Nintendon't*

Sega brought back its classic "Nintendon't" campaign for the holiday season and it was likely a major part of the company's success, topping Nintendo in sales over the holidays for the first time since 1992. Everyone loves the classics!

#### *#8: Games Find Their Voice*

This year saw a surge of video games to feature professional voice acting. Though the craze seemed to start with the rise of optical gaming media in 1992, this year it blew up with high profile Saturn games and SNES-CD titles alike, and now this craze seems to be here to stay.

#### *#7: Sega Goes Online*

The introduction of the Sega NetLink service to link up Saturn gamers with the World Wide Web is one of the more promising innovations in recent memory. Though sales of the expensive modem device have been slow, they're liable to pick up as more games are added to the service.

#### *#6: Color Your World*

The launch of the Game Boy Color brought full-color games to the handheld and enhanced sound capabilities as well. Hit games like *Donkey Kong Land 2* saw a big boost in sales from the new Game Boy, and it's likely that *Pocket Monsters* will benefit greatly as well if it ever sees a North American release.

#### *#5: Resident Evil*

The survivor horror game became a huge phenomenon and the Saturn's first killer app when it launched in April, garnering numerous Game of the Year awards and millions of sales. A sequel has yet to be announced but like any good horror franchise, it seems inevitable.

#### *#4: Games Court Controversy*

Though the video game violence debate was largely settled in 1993 with the birth of the ESRB, video games still found themselves in the middle of political debates, including the 1996 presidential campaign. And let's not forget the near-tragedy at the official *Sonic the Hedgehog 4* launch when a disgruntled bomber attacked the festivities in part due to his opposition to the Saturn's game *Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Summoner...*

#### *#3: An Ultra Revelation*

Nintendo formally unveiled their new Ultra Nintendo console at E3, and games like *Super Mario Dimensions* and *Final Fantasy VII* were playable for the first time. The system looks impressive and will no doubt be a huge hit when it's released later this year.

## #2: *Sonic Boom*

*Sonic the Hedgehog 4* was undoubtedly the biggest release of the year, selling millions of copies in its first month of release and spurring a huge holiday season for Sega's Saturn console. The game received rave reviews and proved that Sonic is still one of the biggest if not the biggest face in gaming.

## #1: *The Saturn Surges*

And the biggest story of 1996 was the incredible performance by the Sega Saturn, which sold more than ten million units worldwide over 1996. Spurred by a price drop and a series of smash hits including *Resident Evil*, *Tomb Raider*, and last but certainly not least, *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*, Sega got a big year when they needed it most, and now the ball is in Nintendo's court to respond.

-excerpted from the February 1997 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

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## **Game Watch**

### *SNES-CD:*

Brandish 2: The Planet Buster - Winter '97  
Energy Breaker - Winter '97  
Klepto: Thief In The Night - Winter '97  
Rage 2: The Rage Returns - Winter '97  
Salvation 2 - Winter '97  
Sam & Max: Freelance Police - Winter '97  
Terranigma - Winter '97  
Toxic Waste 2 - Winter '97  
World Championship Boxing - Winter '97  
Commander Keen - Spring '97  
Deadman Sam 3 - Spring '97  
Dragon Quest VI - Spring '97  
ESPN: X-Games - Spring '97  
Fire Emblem: Keepers Of The Light - Spring '97  
Gun Warrior: Cannon Fire - Spring '97  
Gungriffon - Spring '97  
Harvest Moon - Spring '97  
Maruthiel - Spring '97  
Mega Man X4 - Spring '97  
Road Rash: World Tour - Spring '97  
Sailor Moon - Spring '97  
Wild Arms - Spring '97  
Blast Corps - Summer '97  
Breath Of Fire III - Summer '97  
Disney's Hercules - Summer '97  
Dog Dash 2 - Summer '97  
Intelligent Qube - Summer '97

International Superstar Soccer '98 - Summer '97  
NBA Hangtime - Summer '97  
Norse By Norsewest - Summer '97  
Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo - Summer '97  
Tales Of The Seven Seas 2 - Summer '97  
Kirby's Adventure 3 - Fall '97  
NBA Live 98 - Fall '97  
Victory 2 - Fall '97

*Ultra Nintendo:*

Final Fantasy VII - Fall '97  
Nightsquad 2 - Fall '97  
Super Mario Dimensions - Fall '97  
Ultra Mario Kart - Fall '97  
Star Fox 2 - 1998  
Tale Phantasia 2 - 1998  
Zelda - 1998

-excerpted from the January 1997 issue of *Nintendo Power*

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*"1996 was a time of transition in the gaming world, particularly for Nintendo, whose fans would have to wait another year for the release of their next-generation console. Nintendo kept fans satisfied with some of the best Super Nintendo CD games, including Chrono Trigger, Tale Phantasia, Super Mario RPG, Squad Four: Eclipse, Eternal Night, and Dog Dash, but Super Nintendo CD sales finally began to go into decline due to the impending release of the Ultra Nintendo. Sega saw an opportunity and capitalized by releasing an unrelenting wave of hits including Sonic the Hedgehog 4 and Resident Evil. Sega positioned the Saturn as the "cool" system for a new generation of gamers, and became the first home games console whose user base consisted of a majority of adult players. On the PC front, Microsoft became a huge presence with a lineup of games for its Windows operating system, though it was Quake that proved to be the most popular and well received game of the year on computers. The game sold millions of copies and even challenged Sonic 4 and Chrono Trigger for Game of the Year in publications that included PC games in their considerations. While the year is largely remembered as being the year that Sega "came back", it will also go down in history for seeing the beginnings of many of the most beloved and enduring gaming franchises of all time. Though Sega had won the battle, the Ultra Nintendo loomed large, and though the Saturn would continue to hold the lead over Nintendo throughout 1997, Nintendo's new console was a shadow that would only grow as the year went on."*  
-*"The History Of Console Gaming: Year-By-Year (Part 6)"*, Wired.com, June 19, 2012

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Squad Four: Eclipse: The sequel to Nintendo's 1994 hit Squad Four, the team has returned to the capital planet, only for an army of invaders led by a Krill warlord hungry for revenge to invade the planet. Now Squad Four has to repel the invasion. The game is generally considered even better than the first and is one of the very best games on the SNES-CD in terms of graphics and general production values.

Cat Jackson Comes Back: The sequel to Sony's 1995 mascot platformer, Cat Jackson Comes Back features the feline hero trying to save his girlfriend once more. Basically more of the same in terms of graphics, sound, and gameplay and gets middling to good reviews.

Warriors and Conquerors II: Champions Of War: The sequel to 1995's strategy sim, featuring a new gimmick in the form of combat by champion, army leaders can engage each other in one-on-one duels. The game is better received than the original, though it's still no Civilization.

Hotel Havoc 2: A sequel to Hotel Havoc, this game features the same puzzle-based gameplay as the original, though the graphics are better and there are three playable characters instead of one.

Universalizer 2: The sequel to 1994's well received shooter game, this game ups the stakes by sending players into alternate dimensions and even back in time, with time travel being a huge part of the gameplay. This game is as highly praised as the original was, with some of the best graphics seen in an SNES-CD shooter game.

Jewels Of The Realm 2: This sequel sees the main characters from the original game once again traveling through various stages and collecting power jewels, this time in pursuit of a pair of evil children. This game makes a few gameplay changes that are criticized and while still a good game, it doesn't do as well critically or commercially as the original.

Bumblebee: Save The Queen!: The sequel to Zooble's Hive, it has the hero Zooble attempting to rescue the queen of the hive after she's kidnapped. It's a solid platformer game but nothing special.

Science Fighters 2: Sequel to the silly 1994 cult classic, it introduces a bigger cast of fighters, 17 in all, but the novelty has worn off a bit and the gameplay is somewhat lacking.

Major Hazard: FUBAR: Major Hazard is back, this time getting stuck across enemy lines with a squad of bumbling infantrymen and having to fight his way back through hordes of enemy soldiers. It's considered a step-up from the original in terms of gameplay and humor.

Day of Malcarius II: The sequel to the original Day of Malcarius, this RPG takes place 300 years before the original and features a much darker storyline, with a group of young vampire hunters caught up in intrigue and terror when they're trapped in the domain of a dangerous death lord. It's not successful commercially but it's remembered as an RPG classic.

Icebiter 3: This, the third Icebiter game, changes up the formula somewhat by heavily featuring two main characters, a man and a woman, and a new behind the character viewpoint, turning the game into a sort of full-on run and gun with platforming elements.

It's a fairly polarizing game, seen as the series black sheep by some and a classic by others.

**Knightstar 2: Revenge Of The Dragon King:** The villain from the first Knightstar game returns in this sequel to plague a new generation of heroes. Despite the game's decent production values, it's super generic and drowns commercially in a sea of great RPGs.

**Fatal Strike: Touch Of Death:** Notukaga returns, this time to save the realm from an evil warrior king who knows a touch that can kill with one strike. With the same great gameplay style as the original it's a fairly big hit for Koei.

**Monster Wars II: Risen From The Grave:** A sequel to the monster strategy game from 1994, it's basically the same game but with significantly improved graphics, voice acting, a lot more monsters and a really good campaign mode. It's considered one of the best strategy games of the year.

**Slumlord: Back II The Streets:** The sequel to 1994's somewhat controversial Slumlord game, this game is far worse than the original and is considered one of the year's worst games.

**Dark City: A Death In The Family:** The third and final installment in the cult hit mystery series, this game has the lead detective contending with a powerful mob boss who comes after those he cares about most.

**Stolen In Shadow:** The sequel to Daughter of Pearl, this visual novel/action game has the main character caught up in another worldwide intrigue when she's kidnapped by an unknown criminal syndicate and must discover their secrets if she wishes to be safe again.

**Extreme Deerhunting 2:** The sequel to 1995's Extreme Deerhunting game, it's basically identical gameplay with different settings and some bigger species of deer.

**Bikerz 2:** The sequel to 1995's kid-friendly biker gang racing game features a lot more tracks and characters and is generally better received than the original.

**Slaughterbox:** An isometric beat-em-up fighting game that takes place in a series of small rooms and is quite bloody, with a variety of brutal wrestling moves and even the involvement of bladed and bludgeoning weapons. Becomes probably the most controversial SNES-CD game since Mortal Kombat, the gameplay is rated somewhat above average.

**Soul Matrix:** A Squaresoft RPG about a young man and woman who are born on opposite sides of the world but are drawn together by a strange psychic connection that gives them mysterious powers. The two start out as enemies but later bond and become friends and possibly even lovers. You can start the game as either one of them and the quest differs

depending on which one you pick. While the game isn't quite as big as Elements Of Mana or Chrono Trigger, it's a very well reviewed game and a decent new IP for the company.

Kyuriadan: Another Squaresoft game, this one an action/platformer featuring a young boy named Kyuriadan who journeys with a series of guides across numerous levels to find his destiny. It's praised heavily for its beautiful artstyle and wistful musical score, though the gameplay itself is only decent.

Mechanix: An action game where you take control of one of five car mechanics who have to battle various monsters and enemies with different tools and weapons. It's a fairly mediocre game though some of the bigger bosses have decent animation.

Tunnel Vision: A rail-shooter game about a plucky young hero who pilots a ship through a series of monster-infested tunnels. Actually somewhat like Sewer Shark in terms of gameplay but without all the FMV cutscenes. The gameplay itself is fairly fun though the graphics and music are somewhat generic.

Samurai Rush: This game from Telenet is an action-RPG about a samurai who wields dual blades as he fights his way through a cartoonish version of feudal Japan to protect the innocent and uphold justice. It's one of two games that Working Designs works on in concert with Telenet in 1996, the first being Tale Phantasia, the game features a fun cast of characters and lots of voice acted scenes. The game is marketed well and ends up being a decent-sized hit.

The Basement: A horror game taking place in an island mansion and the tunnels underneath, it plays somewhat like a dungeon-crawl/puzzler but has some combat sequences as well. Features some fairly advanced sprite-based graphics for the SNES-CD. It's compared somewhat to the Saturn's Resident Evil, and though Resident Evil is considered the superior game for tech and gameplay reasons, The Basement's more cosmic-horror type elements win it some fans.

Road Storm: A motorcycle-racing game taking place in a variety of locales. Featuring twelve characters and customizable bikes, it actually turns out to be quite a hit due to its fast-paced racing action and gameplay, and it becomes a franchise.

Hacker Jack: A puzzle/platformer where you play a nerdy teenage boy named Jack who goes around with his computer infiltrating various places and hacking into them, he starts out as a petty criminal but eventually becomes a hero. Though the gameplay is somewhat frustrating at times, the game does have its charm.

Dino Dudes: A sort of Battletoads ripoff starring three anthropomorphic dinosaurs. The dialogue is horrible, gameplay is bad and it's inferior to Battletoads in every possible way.

Agent Number 9: A first-person shooter about a secret agent sent on various missions to kill enemy soldiers and spies. The plot is somewhat generic and the gameplay isn't as fun as games such as Wolfenstein or Doom, indeed, the graphics aren't as good as those games either.

Strange Seed: An FMV game from Telenet, one of the very last for the SNES-CD, about a space war and a mysterious woman that holds the key to ending that war. Though it features the same rather generic gameplay of other FMV games, the artwork and story is very highly praised and it's considered perhaps the best FMV game on the system. The game would receive a "sequel" in the form of a full-on RPG for the Ultra Nintendo later on.

Killer Robot Stanley!: From Sunrise Games, it's a follow-up to their Jaguar game Attack of the Mutant Penguins, where the player must gather up forces of lawn gnomes to defeat a killer robot named, you guessed it, Stanley. The game is extremely strange but the graphics receive some praise.

It Was A Dark And Scary Night...: A silly horror-based board/party game featuring a variety of spooky traps, funny cutscenes, and weird mini-games. It's considered decently fun, though not quite as good as Thrillseeker.

Maze Mice: An action/puzzle game where you take control of a mouse in a series of mazes. Though the gameplay is rather simplistic, it does have some addictive puzzle solving elements that earn the game a few good reviews.

Tropical Trouble: A group of people get shipwrecked on an island and have to dodge the natives and an increasingly scary variety of creatures in order to escape. This silly platformer is as generic as they come and gets average reviews and poor sales.

Dog Dash: From Naughty Dog, this is an action platformer starring an energetic boy who rides on top of a giant dog, the dog can attack in a variety of ways, using his big tongue, his huge paws to pounce, or with supersonic barks, the dog is big and cute and cartoony and there are a variety of cutscenes showing the boy and the dog bonding. This is the game made by Naughty Dog in lieu of Crash Bandicoot, a game that they decided to shelve for the launch of the Ultra Nintendo due to technological reasons. Dog Dash is still one of the best looking SNES-CD games and becomes an enormous hit due to its excellent gameplay, lovable characters, and silly humor.

Honorbound: A fairly generic fighting game featuring a group of fighters in a tournament for their survival, with the unique gimmick being that all the fighters are considered "good guys" and are given their own sympathetic reasons for being in the tournament. Despite this attempt at creating good characters, the game is largely considered a Mortal Kombat ripoff.

Flame Squad: A top-down strategy-esque game somewhat comparable to Cannon Fodder

where you command a group of flamethrower-wielding soldiers across a variety of maps littered with enemies. The art style is actually quite cartoonish and the game is played for pure laughs, the gameplay is praised and the series becomes a franchise.

**Eternal Night:** From Konami, this is an action game that is somewhat similar to Castlevania but much faster paced with a focus on fighting huge scary bosses, you play as a black-garbed baron who ventures through haunted castles and even the netherworld to battle hordes of terrifying demons. The graphics, a dark landscape of haunting imagery with 3-D effects and lots of animation, is considered among the system's best, the soundtrack is an all time classic and the gameplay is widely praised, making this one of the year's biggest hits.

**Stealth: Dangerous Mission:** A flight-based game where you play a stealth bomber on various missions into enemy territory, the gameplay is considered somewhat spotty and overall the game is a disappointment after being hyped for several months beforehand.

**SimZoo:** From Will Wright, it's another game in the Sim series, this one putting you in charge of running a zoo. Acquire exotic animals, include rides, decide what to charge for admission and souvenirs, it's all up to you.

**Shopping Spree:** An action game geared toward young girls, the game takes place in a variety of stores, malls, etc, you create a teenage girl character with the goal of spending as much money as possible. Action segments give your character more money to spend. The game's reviews are truly horrendous and the graphics are barely SNES-CD quality.

**Twinblade:** A weapon-based fighting game using 3-D graphics. Featuring a variety of characters and weapons, it's considered somewhat similar to the arcade game Soul Edge, though with less detailed graphics. The gameplay is considered excellent and the graphics among the best on the system. The game is promoted heavily and becomes a major success.

**Stackector:** A fast-paced puzzle game where you have to build large stacks of chained blocks in order to form combos and rack up points. It's considered a significantly more complex puzzler than Tetris Attack, though this makes it somewhat less intuitive. The graphics are also better, with some nice pseudo-3D and shading effects. It's well reviewed and gets decent sales.

**Filliard:** A game that takes place on a track and has you leaping from track to track, dodging obstacles while targeting enemies. The game is extremely fast-paced and quite difficult but the gameplay is considered somewhat addicting and it gets good reviews for its music and how fun it is.

**Dead End:** An action/stealth/shooter game where you're one of two dueling spies attempting to corner the other while in pursuit of assassins, criminals, and terrorists. The

game features branching paths and difficult gameplay and gives you multiple ways to confront your rival spy. While some parts of the gameplay are quite generic, other parts are praised and the graphics and voice acting are considered quite good.

King Of The Jungle: A game where you're a lion who's setting out to restore balance to the jungle after it's attacked by a horde of terrible beasts. You team up with a group of jungle friends to fight the beasts across many platforming levels. It's a fairly standard action platformer but it's popular amongst younger players.

Samurai Buster: A hack-and-slash beat em up game where you're a samurai out to bring justice to a city of criminals and slavers. A rather violent game with lots of blood and a very mature storyline, it's still considered quite an excellent game in both graphics and gameplay and Matsuhito, the main character, becomes rather well loved among SNES-CD fans.

Natalia: Teardrop of Fate: A fairly obscure RPG quietly localized and released amidst the slew of other RPGs released this year. Though a decent enough game, it pales in comparison to many of the others released this year and reviews are only average while sales are very bad.

Everest: The World's Bravest: A mountaineering action game where you have to climb Mt. Everest, facing a myriad of obstacles along the way. Rather fantastical (featuring the Yeti as a final boss), it's considered a decent action game but nothing special.

The War Between The States: A US Civil War real time strategy game from Koei. Featuring dozens of Civil War battles, it's considered one of their very best strategy games, letting you take control of the Union or the Confederacy in some of the most famous battles of the war.

Skater Girl: An action game starring a bubbly teenage girl who loves to roller skate as she fights off a variety of enemies who are menacing her friends. Fully voiced and featuring numerous animated cutscenes, it's praised for its graphics and production values but the gameplay itself is fairly ordinary and sales are low.

Steam Agent: An RPG from Atlus taking place in a steampunk world, you're a group of detectives out to stop a vicious murderer and his gang from taking over the city. Featuring fantastical weaponry, it's a cult classic game but sales are really low compared to other RPGs that year.

Belle Weather: An action/adventure game about a girl who can control the weather to help her battle enemies and bosses. Deploy rain, lightning, burning heat, even tornadoes on your enemies as you trek through 17 levels. The weather controlling mechanic is considered quite unique and the game is well received.

**Aria:** A music-based action game where you play as a beautiful girl named Aria and use musical notes to advance through levels. Featuring over 100 minutes of vocal music, it's the first three-disc game on the SNES-CD (the first two-disc game being Chrono Trigger) and is quite an obscure game, though it's considered beautiful and innovative by reviewers.

**Klepto: The Invisible Thief:** A top down puzzle game where you play a thief who tries to steal from various buildings in a sort of stealth-puzzle based gameplay. You can utilize various items to make the thefts easier. Moderately well received with good sales.

**Chainsaw:** A horror game where your character is trapped in the wilderness and has to make his way back to civilization while being chased by a killer with a chainsaw. The chainsaw-wielding killer can appear at any time, adding a unique element of tension to this game.

**Parachute To The Princesses:** A somewhat generic action game where you're a cartoony paratrooper who has to rescue princesses across various levels. Gameplay is somewhat frustrating and the game gets below average reviews.

**VideoVision:** A colorful and fun action game where you're a kid who leaps into video screens to discover new worlds and defeat a variety of villain. With dozens of weapons and abilities at his disposal, you have lots of ways to defeat these enemies and the game itself is quite well reviewed and successful.

**Iron Combatant:** In this action game, you take the controls of a huge mechanized powersuit as you battle enemies across various stages. The game features several cutscenes and its main character is a badass female colonel named Layla. It has quite a good storyline and it gets very good reviews and sales.

**The Human Body:** As the title describes, it's an action game that takes place inside the human body, battling viruses, parasites, and other enemies. Not well received at all.

**Off-Track:** A racing game featuring big wheeled trucks on dirt tracks. Pretty simplistic and the graphics aren't much to look at either.

**Quizmaster:** An original quiz game that takes the form of a game show with a snarky announcer and a variety of minigames. It has lots of questions to avoid too many repeats but the game itself gets only average reviews and below average sales.

**Tree Town:** An educational game taking place in a town with lots of houses and stores, it's made for elementary-school aged kids and features quizzes and fun characters. It's actually not a bad game, but sales are pretty lousy.

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*"As development on Legacy of Kain went on, we saw what was going on over at Nintendo with all of their successful RPGs, and that helped to shape what we ended up doing with our game. Just subtle touches here and there, but we wanted to bring the game in line with successful games like Secret of Mana. As fate would have it, we released during the same month as Terranigma, and Sega thrust us right up for comparison."*

-Denis Dyack, creator of the Legacy of Kain series

*"Nothing made me sadder about losing Enix than seeing Terranigma. That was an incredible game and it represented the end of an era for Nintendo. Nintendo thought, maybe doing right by Enix to promote this game might help get them back, but by then it was too late."*

-Dan Owsen, translator of the English version of Terranigma

*"Why Sega? Why not? I mean, the Ultra had the better tech, but we liked what they were doing over there at Sega."*

-Sam Houser

*"And despite improvements in technology that bring home consoles closer and closer to arcade-level graphics and sound, the arcades are still popular. Much of that popularity can be attributed to Sega, whose partnership with Namco has made the company the market leader in arcade board technology."*

-from the January 19, 1997 episode of Computer Chronicles

*"The Ultra Nintendo is coming by the end of the year! But what will you be playing on Nintendo's newest system? Here's the scoop on many of the Ultra's biggest games, including games first introduced right here in the pages of Nintendo Power!"*

-from an article in the January 1997 issue of Nintendo Power

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### **Sam and Max: Freelance Police**

Dan: 8.0

Shoe: 8.5

Crispin: 7.5 (quote: "This exciting SNES-CD exclusive builds upon its predecessor, but in a lot of ways it's also a reread that doesn't do enough to distinguish itself from Sam and Max Hit The Road.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Terranigma**

Dan: 9.0 (quote: "Challenging, poignant, and beautiful, this RPG is worth playing for anyone who's a fan of the genre, going far beyond anything else Enix has done in recent years.")

Shoe: 9.0

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Salvation 2**

Dan: 7.0

Shoe: 7.0 (quote: "This shooter is fairly generic but it moves along at a blisteringly fast pace and provides a refreshing challenge.")

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

## **Toxic Waste 2**

Dan: 6.5

Shoe: 5.0

Crispin: 4.0 (quote: "The first game was pretty fun but this one's just plain gross.")

Sushi-X: 4.0

## **Assassin**

Dan: 5.5

Shoe: 5.5

Crispin: 6.0 (quote: "It's a decent enough game but if you want ninja brawling action on the SNES-CD, Ninja Gaiden IV is still the way to go.")

Sushi-X: 6.0

## **World Championship Boxing**

Dan: 9.0

Shoe: 8.0 (quote: "Way more realistic than Super Punch-Out and the create-a-boxer mode is pretty robust.")

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

-*Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of January 1997's SNES-CD games in the February and March 1997 issues

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"*To Save The World, You Must First Rebuild It...*"

-the tagline for the North American release of *Terranigma*, which appeared in magazine advertisements for the game

## **Terranigma: The Basics**

Enix's *Terranigma* launched for the Super Nintendo CD in North America on January 13, 1997. The action RPG is almost identical to OTL's in terms of gameplay and storyline, the main changes from OTL are somewhat improved sprite animations, limited 3-D in certain boss battles (particularly the battle with Dark Gaia), about five minutes of *Granstream Saga*-style anime cutscenes, and more references to God, the Devil, Heaven, and Hell in the game's English translation, owing to the more lax censorship standards in TTL. The game still tells the story of a boy named Ark, who is born in the Underworld and must rebuild the surface of the Earth, which was destroyed in a conflict eons ago. After emerging from the Underworld and taking on quests that rebuild the continents and guide the Earth's lifeforms back through their evolution to a technologically-based human civilization, Ark comes into conflict with the evil scientist Beruga, who froze himself into cryosleep before the first destruction of the Earth and seeks to reshape the world in his own image by contaminating it with a virus that kills all "weak" lifeforms and preserves the rest as mindless, immortal

slaves. The primary villain of the game is Dark Gaia, implied to be this game's version of Satan, who has been using Ark to resurrect the world so that it can take control. Through sacrificing himself and all his friends back in the Underworld, Ark is able to defeat Dark Gaia and protect the lifeforms on the surface. In the end, it is implied that the people of Ark's village, and eventually Ark himself, will come back to life someday, and in a final animated cutscene after the credits, Ark's friend Elle gets a knock on her door. As she begins to turn the knob, the cutscene ends, leaving it up to the player to decide if Ark has returned or not.

The game is promoted heavily by Nintendo, who realized in the process of translating the game that it could be a major success, and that they didn't wish to lose Enix as a software partner. However, Enix's exclusivity with Sega was a done deal by that point, and despite Nintendo's promotion of the game, *Terranigma* would be the second-to-last Enix game to appear on a Nintendo system. It receives stellar critical reviews and it is considered by many to be the SNES-CD's best game of 1997, even after the year is all said and done. It exceeds 300,000 sales in North America, making it one of Enix's top-selling games in the territory. When added to the 200,000+ sales in Europe and over 700,000 Japanese sales, the game becomes a million-seller for Enix. The game would later be ported to the Saturn as an enhanced remake in late 1997 in Japan and 1998 in North America.

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It's hard not to compare the Saturn's new action-RPG *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* to the new Super Nintendo CD action-RPG *Terranigma*. Both games feature single protagonists from a top-down perspective, exploring the world, battling enemies, solving puzzles and the like. And though *Legacy of Kain* features an entirely connected world, compared to *Terranigma*'s overworld screen, traveling from place to place in Kain's bat form is somewhat like using an overworld map to get around. Of course, *Legacy of Kain* covers much darker material, and the game is far more violent. Blood spews from everything you kill, and there are even spells that drain entire screens full of enemies of their blood and transfer it to Kain. In the end, however, the production values of *Kain* far exceed the SNES-CD's admittedly inspired RPG. The world of *Kain* is far bigger, the voice acting is far, far better, as are the graphics. We played both and though we'll be the first to admit we're somewhat biased, *Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain* is the superior game. In fact, it might just be a contender for Game of the Year.

OSM Score: 10/10

(...)

Official Saturn Magazine: So, a lot of the RPG elements were a late addition?

Denis Dyack: Indeed they were. The damage numbers you see when striking an enemy or getting hit? That was a late add, as were some of the weapons. Initially, you could collect only five swords for Kain, but once we decided to make the game a bit more like an Eastern RPG in certain ways, we decided to add a few more swords and now there are twelve. We also made the combat just a bit smoother, though that can also be attributed to the power of the Sega Saturn.

OSM: Was this always a Saturn game?

DD: No, in fact our initial wish was to put this game on the 3DO, but when that system went belly-up, we switched to the Saturn. The Super Nintendo CD was never considered,

there were things we wanted to do that we couldn't have done. A lot of the full-motion video, we couldn't have done the 3-D like we wanted unless we were on the Saturn, and the load times on the SNES-CD would've been hideous. We wanted to make the load times as short and as infrequent as possible.

OSM: There are a lot of comparisons to some of the games on the Super Nintendo CD, but there really aren't many games like *Legacy of Kain* on the Saturn. *Magiquest*, *Ultima* perhaps, but *Legacy of Kain* is quite unique compared to most of the other games on the system. Did that help in your decision to bring the game to Saturn also?

DD: Honestly no, we didn't really worry about if there would be other games in this genre on the Saturn, because we knew *Legacy of Kain* was going to be the best game regardless. This game has been three years in the making, it's a real passion project for all of us and I'm overwhelmed with the reception so far. In fact, we're hoping it encourages more games like this to come to the Sega Saturn!

-excerpted from the *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* cover article in the January 1997 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

Moderator: I think we have, in the third row someone here has a question...

Anna Gunn: Oh, yes, hello!

Moderator: Do you have a question for Mrs. Gunn?

Fan: Um, sure, thanks, you are...an AMAZING voice actress but I'm wondering, if you've ever considered doing on-camera work. I know a lot of people don't consider voice acting to be "real" acting, though I think most of the people here understand all the passion and effort and skill that goes into voiceover and it's as real as any other kind of acting. But...you know with your talent I think, I think you'd definitely be able to make it doing on-camera work so I'm wondering if that was ever...if you'd ever considered on-camera work before?

Gunn: Well first off thank you, I, um, you know it's really nice to hear when the fans let us know that they consider voice acting to be synonymous with acting because it really truly is, it's hard for people who don't know what goes on in the booth, all the moving around we do and all the emoting and everything else, to understand that it really is no different from what you see on-camera. On-camera work, I mean....in my early career I actually did primarily on-camera work, and I've done a few things, little guest things here and there. But, after doing *Legacy of Kain*, I think that was when I made the transition to doing primarily voice, that game just did so well and a lot of job offers came in, that's when voice acting in video games REALLY blew up and now 18 years later, there are so many jobs in it. So I'm glad to have had the career I've had. I mean, just to be mentioned alongside, you know, Jennifer Hale, Moira Quirk, actresses who are my friends and who are some of the legends in this industry, that is amazing and so I've loved every second of my voiceover career and I can't wait to see what awesome characters I get to do next!

Fan: Thank you, thank you and you are amazing at your job. You are an amazing Samus.

Gunn: Thank you very much!

-from the *Metroid: Starlight* panel at the 2015 San Diego Comic-Con, July 8, 2015

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### ***Virtua Cop 2* A Big Hit**

It was *Virtua Cop 2*-mania at the Toys-R-Us in Long Beach, California yesterday. The game, which launched at arcades in 1995, finally came to the Sega Saturn to the excitement of hundreds of Sega fans lined up waiting their turn to bring one of their favorite arcade games home. The game, a sequel to the 1995 Saturn hit *Virtua Cop*, puts the player in the shoes of a police officer as they hunt down criminals, kidnapers, and terrorists in order to save their city. The game gives you the option of playing with a normal controller or using a realistic electronic gun to aim at targets on the screen. The game has drawn some controversy for its violent content, but Saturn owners are no stranger to violent video games. Earlier this month, the vampire adventure *Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain*, sold more than 150,000 copies in its first week, despite the graphic violence depicted in the game. The Sega Saturn has appealed largely to older male players, though *Virtua Cop 2* does introduce a female officer to the series in an attempt to convince players of both sexes to play the game. Most of the people lined up at the Toys-R-Us were boys and young men who ranged from their early teens to their late 20s, with some parents lined up to purchase the game for their kids. Despite warnings from clerks about the game's level of violence, few, if any parents were deterred from purchasing the game. The Sega Saturn has been the top selling game console now for the past two months, and industry analysts predict that it will remain so through the month of January.

-from an article in the *Long Beach Press Telegram* on January 31, 1997

### ***Tekken 3* Soars Into Arcades, Saturn Release Not Yet Scheduled**

While Saturn owners are getting ready for *Tekken 2* to hit home consoles next month, *Tekken 3* is getting ready to make its way into arcades. It's scheduled to make its North American premiere at the grand opening of the first Sega Gameverse location in Seattle in early March, with a rollout into arcades across the country over the rest of the month. After the major success of the previous two *Tekken* games, it's set to be one of the biggest arcade launches ever, and should help to propel Sega's new arcade into the public eye as well. Sega is inaugurating the *Tekken 3* launch with a major tournament at Gameverse, where the company also plans to hold a mini-press conference announcing a few of their games for later this year. EGM will have an article on *Tekken 3* in next month's issue, and we'll also be there at Sega and Namco's launch event in March to give our readers the scoop on all the big announcements.

-from the January 1997 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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The decision by LucasArts to launch a new *Sam and Max* game for the Super Nintendo CD was somewhat unexpected, especially considering the commercial performance of the port of *Sam and Max Hit the Road* on the console in 1994. Though critically beloved, the port had done underwhelming numbers, especially compared with how well *The Secret Of Monkey Island* had done. Still, though adventure games as a genre had declined on the system, LucasArts decided to take a risk, especially since there were no further plans for *Monkey Island* games on the console. The game would be designed with the SNES-CD in mind from the very beginning, maintaining the 2-D graphics and voice acting used in the original game, but with an optimized control scheme and references to Nintendo within the game's

dialogue. It saw Sam and Max contracted to solve five cases, which were tied in with an overarching mystery plot about a mysterious feline woman and a treasure buried beneath an abandoned old hotel (an allusion to "Al Capone's Vault", which Geraldo famously opened up and found largely empty, though in *Freelance Police* the treasure, belonging to a gangster named Rochester Ralph, was very much real). The critical reception to the game was good, though not QUITE as good as *Sam and Max Hit The Road* had been. However, commercially, the game was a surprise success, more than doubling the sales of the SNES-CD port of *Hit The Road*, and becoming one of the top selling new SNES-CD games of the month, trailing *Terranigma* and finishing a close second to *World Championship Boxing*. The game would eventually receive a PC version in 1998 (with an extra two cases but with the Nintendo references excised) and it paved the way for a third *Sam and Max* game in 2001. The inexplicable disappointment of the first *Sam and Max* game on the SNES-CD had been reversed by the inexplicable success of the second (though it's likely that clever advertising for the game played a role).

-excerpted from "Sam And Max Hit The SNES-CD" on gamesovermatter.com

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Brittany Saldita: *Terranigma* is a damn good RPG and out of the three Enix action RPGs, it's the best of the series.

Ted Crosley: Wait, wait, it's part of a series?

Brittany: According to Quintet, yes, *Terranigma* is the third game of a loosely-connected series of games that includes *Soul Blazer* and *Illusion of Gaia*.

Ted: See, I thought *Soul Blazer* was connected to *ActRaiser* because they both had The Master in them.

Brittany: Well....they're sorta all connected.

Ted: \*holding his head\* Why can't they just be numbered like normal sequels?

Brittany: They're not sequels, per se....

Ted: \*groaning\*

Brittany: I know, I know, it IS confusing, but there was nothing confusing about how good *Terranigma* is. The story is amazing, I won't spoil what hasn't already been revealed in the review, you just have to play the game. It's outstanding, I give it a 5 out of 5.

Ted: Well, I'm not quite so thrilled about it, I'm giving it a 4. Yes, the game had an excellent storyline and excellent music, but the battle mechanics are a bit unbalanced, you're gonna have a lot of trouble killing anything in the late game until you level up but if you level up too much you'll be really overpowered.

Brittany: I didn't mind that, I thought it cut down on level grinding more than you absolutely had to.

Ted: The problem is that you don't know if you have to, you either get your ass kicked or you can beat the final boss with one hand.

Brittany: Didn't you beat *Tomb Raider* with one hand?

Ted: ...that was Alex!

Brittany: Don't lie, I saw you, one hand on the controller and the other one...buried in a bag of Doritos.

Ted: I was hungry!

Brittany: You got Dorito dust on the controller! And IN the controller!

(...)

Alex Stansfield: And I KNOW you're gonna compare this game to *Terranigma* because the two of them are quite a bit alike.

Ted: I REALLY preferred *Legacy Of Kain*. The gameplay was better, the world was bigger, and the voice acting, holy crap!

Alex: Yeah, the guy who did the voice of Kain was amazing and even the dude who played Frollo in *The Hunchback Of Notre Dame* shows up as one of the characters.

Ted: So yeah, I loved this game. It kicked a ton of ass, the vampires in this are way better than those vampires in the Anne Rice books.

Alex: Yeah, Kain's a badass, everyone in this game is a badass pretty much.

Ted: And you FEEL like a badass when you play. I mean...look at this spell! He sucks the blood out of EVERYBODY on the screen at the same time! That's the most badass thing I've ever seen in a video game!

Alex: More badass than Sub-Zero yanking a dude's head off in *Mortal Kombat*?

Ted: Way more badass than that. He even has a cool catchphrase.

Alex: Vae victis!

Ted: What's that even mean anyway?

Alex: It means "woe to the vanquished".

Ted: Oh, SEE?! That is badass! I'm giving *Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain* a very badass 5 out of 5.

Alex: I'm also giving it a 5 out of 5. This game is REALLY good, all the way around. The graphics, the music, everything about it is just killer. Definitely check it out, it's the best RPG since *Tale Phantasia*.

Ted: Agreed.

\*a siren sounds\*

Ted: To the wall!

\*Alex and Ted bring up a framed copy of *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* to the Hall of Fame wall as Brittany, Gary, and John gather around.\*

Gary Westhouse: I take it you guys liked the vampire game?

Alex: It's going on the Hall of Fame Wall so indeed, we liked the vampire game.

John Walden: Sweet, let's get that thing up there!

\*The game is mounted on the wall.\*

Ted: *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* is an absolute, must-play game, an instant classic that belongs in any Saturn owner's collection and is a VERY good reason to buy a Saturn if you don't already have one.

-excerpted from the January 14, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

John: And we're here in New Orleans for Super Bowl week!

Brittany: GameTV's here for the very first time to interview some of the players from the Packers and the Dolphins about the upcoming game.

John: And by that we mean what video games they play, because this is a video game show and that's all you guys care about, right?

\*John is shown with Packers quarterback Brett Favre\*

John: So what kinds of video games do you play?

Favre: \*laughing\* Honestly, I can't say that I play any video games. Football takes up a lot of my time, I wish I had time to play them because some of them look pretty fun, but I mostly focus on football.

John: Well, you've been lighting it up this year, you're the MVP, so all that hard work has definitely paid off. Lemme ask you this, if you DID play video games, which one would you play?

Favre: Uh, Mario, I guess maybe? That looks kinda fun. You'd have to show me how to play.

John: Everybody can play Mario! Come on, if you can beat the Dallas Cowboys in the NFC Championship, you can play Mario.

\*Next up, John is shown interviewing Dan Marino from the Dolphins\*

John: All right, Dan Marino! I know we don't have much time but I'd like to ask if you like to play any video games.

Marino: Awww, man, you know, I don't, but my kids play. My kids play all the time, they like to play uh, Mario, and there's this game with a silly looking dog that my sons have been playing.

John: Oh, *Dog Dash*, that's a real good one!

Marino: Yeah, they have a blast playing it.

John: Hey, congrats on beating the Broncos and good luck in the Super Bowl. I'm supposed to be unbiased but I'm rooting for you guys since I'm from Florida.

Marino: Hey, yeah, sure thing.

\*Now Brittany is shown with Packers kick returner/wide receiver Desmond Howard.\*

Brittany: This is Desmond Howard and I've got some questions for you about video games.

Howard: Sure, sure, I love video games, go ahead.

Brittany: If you could be any video game character you wanted, which one would you be?

Howard: I'd be myself in Madden '97.

Brittany: \*laughing\* Yourself?

Howard: Yeah, I go for 300 yards a game in Madden. If I was going for 300 yards a game, man, we'd never lose!

Brittany: That's a really good point! So are you a Nintendo guy or a Sega guy?

Howard: Sega Saturn all the way, think you can tell me anything about Turok? I'm really looking forward to Turok.

Brittany: It's gonna be awesome, there are t-rexes and there's a gun that fires a nuclear explosion.

Howard: Really? \*he looks quite excited\* Now I REALLY wanna play Turok!

Brittany: It's coming out in March!

Howard: Think you could hook me up early?

Brittany: \*laughing\* I wish! I'd probably look MYSELF up first, I'm looking forward to playing Turok too! Hey, good luck in the game Sunday!

Howard: Thanks, thanks!

-excerpted from the January 21, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

John: So *Virtua Cop 2*, not quite as...revolutionary as the first, but still a pretty solid game.

Gary: Yeah, I mean, the graphics have improved, the gameplay's somewhat better, there's more characters to pick from...I dunno, I feel like there should be more to it.

John: It was short.

Gary: Right. There's like, three friggin' levels, and I just....I don't know if you can justify paying that much for such a short game.

John: The multiplayer's fun.

Gary: The multiplayer IS fun if you have a buddy who's around your skill level.

John: And since all four of us are way better than you, you didn't have much fun with it?  
\*smirks\*

Gary: I am not THAT bad at the game, I beat it, didn't I?

John: Let's show another brief clip of Gary trying to get through *Virtua Cop 2*.

\*John and Gary are shown playing together, John is dominating in the points while Gary hits two civilians in succession\*

John: You're supposed to be saving the hostages, not shooting them!

Gary: I'm....I'm putting them out of their misery!

John: What?

Gary: They look like they've been held hostage for like two hours, they gotta be bored as hell by now, I'm ending their boredom!

John: \*laughs\* I think....I think....I think maybe they could've waited, I dunno, at least a few more hours to get back to their families.

Gary: What if their kids are REALLY bad? Like Dennis the Menace bad?

John: I still don't think-

Gary: You don't think Mr. Wilson was wishing just once for someone to end his misery? Here comes Dennis messing up the car again! Some of those comics, he looked REALLY miserable.

John: \*laughing\* Well, okay, if Dennis the Menace shows up, you might be onto something there.

\*the flashback ends\*

John: Now I kind of want to shoot Dennis the Menace.

Gary: Well, regardless, this isn't a BAD game. It's decent and if you liked the first, you'll like the second. Just know that there's not much to the game. I give *Virtua Cop 2* a 3.5 out of 5.

John: Yeah, I agree, a solid 3.5 from me too.

(...)

Ted: Well, that's it for this week's episode of *GameTV*. Before we go, we want to give a special shout-out to the Green Bay Packers who won the Super Bowl 45-17 over the Miami Dolphins.

Brittany: And to Desmond Howard, who won the MVP after taking TWO kickoff returns back for touchdowns! Enjoy your offseason and enjoy playing Turok when it comes out in a couple of months.

Alex: And we also want to give a shout-out to Gunpei Yokoi who was gracious enough to let us interview him for our Days of the Hunt feature, that's coming next week along with our review of the game, we'll also be previewing a game coming out in April that was written by, get this, a former writer for the show *Clarissa Explains It All*.

Ted: Yes, we'll be explaining THAT and lots more next week on *GameTV*!

-excerpted from the January 28, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: January 1997**

1. Squad Four: Eclipse
2. Super Mario RPG
3. Dog Dash
4. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
5. Tale Phantasia
6. Policenauts
7. Chrono Trigger
8. Kirby Super Deluxe
9. Descent
10. Ultimate Mortal Kombat Trilogy
11. Samurai Rush
12. NBA Live '97
13. Road Storm
14. Icebiter 3
15. Tetris Attack
16. Flame Squad
17. Super Mario World 2
18. Soul Matrix
19. Darkstalkers: The Night Warriors
20. Donkey Kong Country

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: January 1997**

1. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
2. Tomb Raider
3. Virtua Cop 2

4. Panzer Dragoon II Zwei
5. Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain
6. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
7. Resident Evil
8. Virtua Fighter 2
9. NiGHTS Into Dreams...
10. Duke Nukem 3-D

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### **February 3, 1997**

It had been about six months since DMA Design had turned down an offer from Nintendo to collaborate on games for the Ultra Nintendo. The company had wanted to keep its options open, and saw the rising Saturn sales and public interest in the system as a sign that they should focus on developing games for the Saturn console, at least for the moment. At the time, the company was developing a game for both the Saturn and for the PC, a game that they planned on releasing late that year.

The game was called *Race'n'Chase*, a game where the player could assume the role of a cop or a criminal as they completed various tasks in a large, open city. The game would focus on car races and cop chases, hence the name, and was coming along nicely. Sega had given DMA some input, though the company would still be free to produce the game as they saw fit. Still, Sega's influence on the game was beginning to show. The racing portions of the game had been expanded, and car chases were extremely fun, both on the law enforcement side and from the criminals' point of view.

"If you ask me, I still prefer playing as the bad guy," said Sam Houser, leaning over a desk where a co-worker was testing out a build of the game. Of course, Houser had always been somewhat of a rebel, and playing as the 'bad guy' appealed to that rebellious nature. Even so, even he had to admit that the game had become even more fun with Sega's suggestions put into place. Furthermore, the company hadn't made any attempts to cut down on the violence. You could still gun down pedestrians or run them over, and could commit crimes at your leisure. The company had no problem with controversy, and Sam and his brother Dan were thrilled that Sega hadn't once tried to censor their game. "I almost think maybe the game should focus more on committing crimes."

"Do we really wanna get rid of the cop chases though? Some of them are pretty fun," said Houser's co-worker. "Giving the player a choice about what side of the law they wanna be on does make the game more about 'freedom'..."

"True," said Houser, continuing to watch the footage on the screen. He was already formulating an idea, probably too ambitious for this game but possible some day down the road, about playing as a criminal, committing a slew of crimes, and then getting to play as the cop who'd be responsible for hunting that criminal down. Maybe playing both sides of the law *could* be fun, for certain players at least. "I'm still not quite sure about the name though...maybe I could run my idea by Dan?"

He had thought about calling the game *Grand Theft Auto*...but if the cop aspect stayed in, it might not be entirely fitting.

"Then again...maybe you could play as a *CORRUPT* cop..." thought Houser, a brief smile

crossing his face. He still had some time to think of more ideas. After all, the game wasn't due out until October...

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*"Sega's role in kicking off the next generation of fighting games can't be understated. The days when Street Fighter II and Mortal Kombat were the biggest games in town was over, and now games like Virtua Fighter and Tekken ruled the roost. It became the fighting game system, and gamers still loved to play fighting games."*

-Tom Kalinske, "The Chase"

*"It was my work with Sony and my friendship with Kutaragi-san that led me to modify my philosophy on game design to some extent. I had always believed that expensive, powerful technology interfered with creativity in design. But working with Kutaragi, I saw the possibilities that could arise with more advanced technology. While I never abandoned my beliefs about 'lateral thinking' entirely, I was given new ways in which to expand on those ideas."*

-Gunpei Yokoi, in a November 2002 interview with *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"3...2...1...Begin The Hunt!"*

-the introduction phrase to every level of *Days Of The Hunt*

-

## **Brandish 2: The Planet Buster**

Dan: 7.0

Shoe: 9.0

Crispin: 7.0 (quote: "A challenging and fun dungeon crawler with great music and a gripping plot.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

## **Energy Breaker**

Dan: 6.5

Shoe: 7.5

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.0 (quote: "Taito's take on the strategy RPG is pretty good fun, though the stages can be somewhat repetitive.")

## **Klepto: A Thief In The Night**

Dan: 8.5

Shoe: 8.5 (quote: "Compared to the first game, which was fun but somewhat unfocused, this game gives significantly more bang for the buck. Every stage is exciting and there's not a single enemy or item out of place.")

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.0

## **Rage 2: The Rage Returns**

Dan: 8.0  
Shoe: 8.0  
Crispin: 7.0  
Sushi-X: 6.0 (quote: "The familiar gameplay is retained, but despite the addition of new characters, this game's quite the retread from the first.")

### **Applejack Road**

Dan: 5.0  
Shoe: 6.0 (quote: "Kids will like this colorful Western-themed game but most gamers should look elsewhere for platforming fun.")  
Crispin: 5.0  
Sushi-X: 2.5

### **Ocean Watch**

Dan: 7.0 (quote: "The beautiful graphics make this game a bit less boring, though it does say something when a game where you shoot into the ocean at hideously scary sea creatures gets boring.")  
Shoe: 4.5  
Crispin: 6.0  
Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Chocopop!**

Dan: 5.0  
Shoe: 5.0 (quote: "Another boring platformer. The chocolatey level designs just made me hungry.")  
Crispin: 4.0  
Sushi-X: 4.0

### **Days Of The Hunt**

Dan: 7.5 (quote: "One of the most exciting rail shooters in quite some time. The Super Scope 2 accessory enhances the fun.")  
Shoe: 7.5  
Crispin: 8.5  
Sushi-X: 8.5

-reviews of February 1997's SNES-CD games in the March and April 1997 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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*"With the release of Tekken 2, the series takes its seat as one of the very best fighting game franchises on the Saturn. It's one of the most vastly improved ports of an arcade game and a must-play for all Saturn owners."*

-excerpted from *Gamepro's* perfect 20/20 review of *Tekken 2*

### **Tekken 2: The Basics**

With *Tekken 2*, Namco poured a great deal of effort into making the game as good of a port as it could possibly be. In contrast with the original *Tekken* port, which featured only slight improvements, *Tekken 2* got a full overhaul, including enhanced graphics and full CGI ending cutscenes for every character. In addition, the Saturn Enhance controller greatly improved the playability of the game introducing full arcade-style controls. The game exceeded even the popular *Virtua Fighter 2* in terms of critical reception, and though sales weren't quite as robust, *Tekken 2* still became the fastest-selling Saturn game since *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*. The release also kicked off what Sega and Namco were calling "The Month Of Tekken", the month spanning the Saturn release of *Tekken 2* and the arcade release of *Tekken 3*, with tournaments, contests, merchandise releases, and even a half-hour television special that aired in syndication. While the television special was mostly remembered for its cheesy acting from actors dressed as characters from the game, it was also an effective promotional tool for both *Tekken 2* and *Tekken 3*. Coupled with a serious TV and magazine advertisement campaign, and the Month of Tekken elevated the franchise in terms of stature, to where only *Virtua Fighter* was seen as being equal to *Tekken* in the eyes of Saturn owners.

(...)

\*Two hosts, a man and a woman, are shown in a somewhat dingy warehouse-like setting.\*

Man: And when *Tekken 2* releases on February 18, Tekken Tuesday, you're going to get to play with some all new characters.

Woman: Characters like Lei Wulong, a fierce martial artist-slash-cop who uses his fighting skills to put the most dangerous criminals behind bars.

Man: Here's a quick peek of Lei in action.

\*Footage is shown from the Saturn version of *Tekken 2*, showing Lei taking out opponents with fierce combos. After the footage is shown, the scene cuts to an actor playing Lei on screen, running into a building as he chases down a criminal.\*

Lei: \*he pursues the criminal into a large room\* Stop, in the name of the law!

Criminal: \*smirks\* You've fallen into a trap...

\*Lei is surrounded by criminals who slowly advance on him.\*

Lei: \*doesn't look fazed\*

Criminal: Why aren't you scared?

\*The criminals rush at Lei, who fights them off with a series of rather goofy looking karate moves as generic techno music plays in the background.\*

Lei: \*does a martial arts pose after taking out the last baddie\*

-excerpted from the syndicated "Tekken Special" show/advertisement, which aired on the weekend of February 8-9, 1997

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## **Eighth Nicktoon To Air This Fall**

Nickelodeon has formally announced its newest Nicktoon, which will air its pilot episode after the Kids' Choice Awards on April 19. The show is titled *Sam and Kira*, and it follows the adventures of two seventh grade girls as they experience the trials and tribulations of middle school. The show is created by Dan Schneider, most well-known as being a member of the cast of *Head of the Class*, but currently working as the showrunner for Nickelodeon's variety comedy show *All That*.

"There's definitely going to be a lot of humor in *Sam and Kira*, but it's not going to be quite as zany and random as the humor on *All That*," said Schneider in a brief interview. "The girls have real adventures and real problems, and so not every moment is going to be laugh-out-loud crazy, there's going to be some emotional stuff there too."

The announcement of *Sam and Kira* is a departure from Nickelodeon's recent Nicktoons such as *Phineas and Ferb* and *Kablam!*, which have emphasized slapstick humor over serious character development. The show is said to be comparable to one of the first Nicktoons, Jim Jinkins' *Doug*, which was also a comedy but occasionally showed deep glimpses into the mind of its protagonist. The two girls, Sam and Kira, have contrasting personalities but a deep friendship that has existed since the two were in kindergarten. Sam (voiced by *All That* cast member Amanda Bynes), is cautious but also quite silly, while her pal Kira (voiced by *Casper* actress Christina Ricci) is a bit more serious and introspective, and somewhat defiant of authority. A role as a voice in a Nickelodeon animated series might seem like a step down for Ricci, who is considered one of Hollywood's most popular child stars, but the actress eagerly took the role after she was turned down for the main role in Disney's remake of their classic caper film *That Darn Cat!* (losing the role to singer Brandy Norwood). She and Bynes record their lines together whenever possible, and the two have already developed a friendship that Ricci says has helped the characters' chemistry on the show.

"Getting to work directly with Amanda in the studio is really helpful, I can bounce lines off of her and we both have a lot of fun," said Ricci during a break in a recording session.

*Sam and Kira* is scheduled to begin airing weekly in September.

-excerpted from the February 17-23 issue of *TV Guide*

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*This month in Epic Center, it's a double dose of RPG adventure from Koei and Taito! First, Brandish 2: The Planet Buster is the sequel to 1995's dungeon crawling adventure Brandish. The adventurer Varik once again finds himself in danger when he finds a mysterious sword capable of destroying the planet! This time, he must team up with his rival, the sorceress Alexis, to survive. Then, Taito brings us Energy Breaker, a strategy-RPG where you play as a girl named Myra who must carefully plan her every move in battle, lest she be defeated by powerful enemies who seek to destroy her! We'll have strategies to get you safely through the first few hours of both of this month's releases, and we'll also preview the new RPG from Working Designs and Game Arts, Starseekers Of Exion!*

-The intro to the Epic Center section in the February 1997 issue of *Nintendo Power*

By this time in the SNES-CD's life, we were seeing some fairly obscure games make their way to the system. None of them were major hits. For example, February 1997's two JRPG releases were *Brandish 2* and *Energy Breaker*, which barely sold 75,000 copies between the two of them in North America. Contrast that with the Saturn game *Dragon Force*, which sold well over 100,000 copies by itself. Still, there was life left for RPG fans on the system, including games like *Dragon Quest VI*, and of course, *Starseekers of Exion*, which proved to be one of the greatest RPGs to hit the system and was the swan song for Working Designs on the SNES-CD. RPG fans who owned the SNES-CD and who had gotten used to a steady stream of classics must've been dismayed to see games like *Legacy Of Kain*, *Windborn*, *Krystalshade*, and *Planetary Probe* all come out for the Saturn one after the other. But the Ultra Nintendo, and with it, the most anticipated RPG of all time, *Final Fantasy VII*, was on the horizon, and Nintendo fans were confident that they would have the last laugh.

-from "A Brief History Of RPGs On Nintendo Systems" on Kotaku.com

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### **Selina Over Celine At 1997 Grammy Awards**

The hotly-debated, much-anticipated showdown between Tejano superstar Selina and spectacularly gifted diva Celine Dion was finally settled at the Grammy Awards, and it was Selina who took home the big prize of the night, winning Album of the Year for *Dreaming Of You*. After Dion won for Best Female Pop Vocal Performance for her hit song "Because You Loved Me", many thought Selina would come up short. But when *Dreaming Of You* won Best Pop Album, and then Selina went on to win Best Song for the song "Dreaming Of You", it became a foregone conclusion that she would take the night's biggest award. The big win gave her three Grammys in all and cemented her status as one of music's biggest stars. Among the other big awards of the night, Record of the Year went to Alanis Morissette for "Ironic", giving her her second straight year of winning one of the major Grammy awards after her big night last February. Best New Artist went to LeAnn Rimes, whose song "How Will I Live Without You" will appear this summer in the Nicolas Cage film *Con Air*.

Selina accepted her Album of the Year award with a tearful speech giving thanks to her parents and husband, she also thanked her fans. On Grammy night there were massive celebrations in Southern Texas after news broke of Selina's big win. One highly-publicized gathering, which was briefly broadcast on the Grammy Awards ceremony itself, was a huge gathering of 14,000 people at a park in Houston, Texas which was showing the awards show on a massive screen set up for viewing. Dion was gracious in defeat, in an interview after the ceremony she called Selina a "wonderful performer" and an "inspiration", and indeed, the two are said to be friends despite multiple reports in the media of a rivalry between them. Selina's next album, *Last Night*, is scheduled to be released at the end of April.

-from an update posted on February 27, 1997, on Musicnews.com

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"Your games come to life with the all new Super Scope 2, only from Nintendo! Use it to play the all new game *Days Of The Hunt*, where you chase some of the most dangerous creatures in the land!"

-excerpted from a commercial that aired in February 1997 advertising Nintendo's Super Scope 2

An obscure bit of video game trivia comes from the files of Nintendo creative director Gunpei Yokoi, who was briefly pondering the creation of a portable 3-D gaming console set to be released some time in 1996. Ongoing development on the Ultra Nintendo killed the idea, but small pieces of it did survive in a somewhat ill-advised update to Nintendo's Super Scope accessory. Dubbed the Super Scope 2, the device used a limited form of stereoscopic 3-D to enable 3-D graphics in a very small selection of games, most notably *Days of the Hunt*, which had a Super Scope 2 mode that could be activated in conjunction with the accessory. The 3-D wasn't very good and produced somewhat of a nauseating effect for some gamers. The device was also used for games like *Gungriffon* and *Independence Day*. Perhaps the Super Scope 2 might've been more widely adopted if the original plan, to use it in conjunction with Nintendo's hit game *Squad Four: Eclipse*, had come to fruition, but the Super Scope 2 wasn't ready in time and it was instead promoted with Yokoi's game *Days of the Hunt*. That game WAS actually a decent success, but not due to the Super Scope 2 (in fact, many reviewers and players found the game much better without it). It's unknown if Yokoi's dream of a 3-D game console would've succeeded had it been made a reality, but the Super Scope 2 showed that even ideas that seem good at the time don't amount to anything without some games to go with them.

-excerpted from an article in the June 2007 issue of *GamePro*

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Gary Westhouse: *Higrise* was just about the most addicting and fun puzzle game I've played since *Tetris Attack*. The four-player mode is absolutely great and it's one of those games that people will be playing at parties for a long time.

Ted Crosley: Yeah, and in contrast to a lot of other puzzle games where, you know, if your stack gets built up, you lose, it was nice to see a puzzle game where you actually have to build up your stack and keep it from falling down. And the falling down animations are pretty spectacular, seeing blocks and bricks rain down on the heads of the little anime characters down below is a lot of fun, it makes losing and making your opponents lose a lot of fun.

Gary: Sending a cruise missile into the base of your opponent's stack is one of the most satisfying things I've done when playing a video game, it's right up there with dropping a 15-layer brick in *Tetris Attack*.

Ted: The Saturn's not really a system known for its puzzle games, it's good to see them come up with one here. I think some people might be turned off by the anime motif but I loved it, it adds to the quirkiness and the amusement of the game.

Gary: And the tutorial lady is pretty cute.

Ted: Michiko the Tutorial Lady, yeah, she's no Sailor Jupiter but she's quite fine.

Gary: She has a great laugh!

Ted: It's actually a pretty annoying laugh.

Gary: But it adds to the satisfaction in landing a huge blow on your opponent's stack. Their stack falls, Michiko laughs at them....

Ted: \*imitating her cackling laugh\*

Gary: Well yeah, it's annoying when YOU do it!

Ted: Anyway, I'm giving *Highrise* a solid 4 out of 5.

Gary: I'm giving it a 4.5, it's full of addictive puzzle play and has one of the best multiplayer modes of the year.

-excerpted from the February 4, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

Brittany Saldita: You know, as much as I dug the animations and the music in *Dragon Force*, I just couldn't get into the gameplay.

Alex Stansfield: And you know, the game kind of finds itself stuck between that Koei real-time strategy mode of play and that Bahamut Lagoon RPG-like mode of play and you're right, I didn't really feel like this game moved at a pace that I found all that fun.

Brittany: It gets SO repetitive, battles are really just a matter of spamming your best attack, sitting around and waiting for the results.

Alex: And the good animations actually work against this game because they're soooooooooo sloooooooooow!

Brittany: Do that again.

Alex: \*moving like he's in slow motion\* Soooooooooo sloooooooooow!

Brittany: \*laughing\* Battles take way longer than they should and the game isn't very strategic either. It's a shame because I felt like this game really WANTED to be good but in the end... \*she shakes her head\* I'm giving it a 3 but I feel like that might be generous.

Alex: I'll go ahead and give it a 3 too, again, the graphics are fine, it's just everything else that's not very good.

-excerpted from the February 11, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

Alex: *Tekken 2* builds on what worked from the first, improving the graphics and presentation significantly. It's still the same old *Tekken* gameplay, but if you liked the first, you'll LOVE the second.

Ted: Yeah, I felt that when using the NiGHTS controller especially, I had a lot more control. And you can use that controller for the original *Tekken* but it's even better with this new one.

Alex: Absolutely. The moves are a lot easier and I could pull off combos a lot quicker.

Ted: Well, it's not like *Street Fighter* where you really have to know everything. Here, it's much easier to chain up smaller moves to keep your opponent reeling.

Alex: How'd you like the storyline in this one? Better? Worse?

Ted: Do fighting games NEED to have a storyline?

Alex: I thought the cutscenes were pretty neat.

Ted: Well, yeah, I mean they could've used some voice acting but they were still pretty cool. I'm gonna give this game a 4.5 out of 5. It's better than the first *Tekken* and it makes me really excited to play *Tekken 3*.

Alex: Yeah, 4.5 is my score too. A really good fighting game with a LOT to do, it's one of the most fun and most rewarding of all the Saturn fighting games.

-excerpted from the February 18, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

John Walden: When it comes right down to it, what *Days Of The Hunt* is is just a rather simple rail-shooter with the added option of multiple paths through the same level. It's fun but when you compare it to a game like *Squad Four: Eclipse*, it loses a lot of its novelty.

Alex: I enjoyed this game. I didn't enjoy it with the Super Scope 2...\*holds it up\* But I enjoyed this game and I thought the story was really engaging too, you really feel for this girl who's hunting all these monsters.

John: What's the deal with having a gun accessory for a game where you're shooting arrows, anyway?

Alex: I know, I wish they could've made some kind of plastic attachment to make your gun look like a bow.

John: We could do that with some duct tape and some tin foil.

Alex: That is actually a good idea. It might look kind of stupid but it can't be more stupid than shooting arrows with a gun.

John: Anyway, I give *Days Of The Hunt* a 3 out of 5. It was just way too repetitive for my tastes, even with the multiple level paths you ultimately end up having the same experience.

Alex: I'm giving it a 4, I loved the open worlds that many of the levels seemed to portray, I loved the story and some of the monsters were really creative. As far as rail shooters go, you can do a hell of a lot worse.

-excerpted from the February 25, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: February 1997**

1. Elements Of Mana
2. Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble
3. Squad Four: Eclipse
4. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
5. Super Mario RPG
6. Dog Dash

7. Tale Phantasia
8. Mega Man 7
9. Chrono Trigger
10. Policenauts
11. Kirby Super Deluxe
12. Lufia II: Rise Of The Sinistrals
13. The Basement
14. Samurai Rush
15. Ultimate Mortal Kombat Trilogy
16. Super Bomberman 3
17. NHL '97
18. Super Mario World 2
19. Road Storm
20. Tetris Attack

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: February 1997**

1. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
2. Virtua Cop 2
3. Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain
4. Tekken 2
5. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
6. Tomb Raider
7. Resident Evil
8. Virtua Fighter 2
9. Dragon Force
10. NiGHTS Into Dreams...

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John Walden: It's an honor and a privilege to sit down with Mr. Gunpei Yokoi from Nintendo. Thank you again for giving us this interview.

Gunpei Yokoi: \*nods graciously\* Of course.

John Walden: The first thing I'd like to talk with you about is your new game, *Days Of The Hunt*. What was the inspiration for the game and what would you like players to take away from it?

Yokoi: With *Days Of The Hunt*, I tried to imagine the beauty of nature and how this girl, Ana, would survive as she wanders through this enormous forest. These creatures you see, they've all been driven hostile by this mysterious force, and I wanted to contrast the beautiful environments you see with the fear that this girl must be feeling as she is forced to hunt these creatures and try to find a way to make it out of this situation.

John: In that sense it's sort of like the situation that Samus is facing in your *Metroid* games, isolated and needing to fight her way to safety.

Yokoi: That was where I drew a bit of the inspiration, yes. Though Ana is not a battle-tested warrior like Samus is, she has the same bravery and courage.

John: Was it your idea to utilize the Super Scope 2 for this game? I remember that the

game *Solus*, which was played with the original Super Scope, was really loved by a lot of people and this game played in similar ways when you used the Super Scope 2.

Yokoi: The Super Scope 2 was a combination of my work and the work of others at Nintendo... taking one of my old projects and then combining it with some of theirs. I think it enhances the game, but I'm glad that it's not necessary to get full enjoyment out of the game.

John: Are you planning to use the Super Scope 2 in future projects?

Yokoi: I have thought of maybe using it for a future game similar to the original *Mario Bros.* title, but so far there hasn't been any progress on it. Perhaps later on?

John: So even with the SNES-CD nearing the end of its lifespan potentially...

Yokoi: Oh, I don't think we've seen the last of it! You know, I always try to utilize established technology in new ways, so if there's any idea I have for it, I'll try to find a way to put it into action!

John: Well, speaking of technology, I was wondering if you had any plans for the Ultra Nintendo coming up soon.

Yokoi: It's a really intriguing machine, isn't it? There's so much power there, but also a lot of potential. I have a lot of ideas for it too...

John: Can we talk about Metroid? Because I know a lot of people watching this show want to know if you have anything planned for the next Metroid. Is there any chance it shows up on the SNES-CD?

Yokoi: Well, I thought of many potential ideas for the follow up game to *Super Metroid*, but I never settled on anything that could've been possible on the SNES-CD. I think if we do see a new *Metroid* game it would be on the new system. I do have ideas for a new Metroid on the new system but I don't know if we're close to having an actual game ready!

John: I think EVERYONE has ideas for what the new Metroid game could be.

Yokoi: \*laughing\* I get those ideas from people sometimes, I know everyone has their own opinion because the Metroid games are quite popular. I hope that everyone who loved the previous Metroid games will have a bit more patience, you'll know about the new game when it's ready to be announced!

John: Is it ready to be announced yet?

Yokoi: Ahh, still not!

John: All right, all right, let's talk about the new Game Boy. We've seen some recent innovation with the color screen and the new Sony sound chip, but what ideas do you have for something a bit more advanced?

Yokoi: With the Game Boy, my original design philosophy was one of simplicity, to conserve battery power and to make games easier to develop. That philosophy still holds true, you know all the problems Sega's handheld systems have had that have limited their potential.

John: Right, the Venus and its hour-long battery life were really troublesome.

Yokoi: Right, right. And so whatever comes next from Nintendo will have to retain the same philosophy.

John: You think we'll ever see something at least as powerful as, say, the Super Nintendo?

Yokoi: We could release a portable Super Nintendo or even a Super Nintendo CD, but it would be very expensive and would drain batteries rapidly. I think any major advance in handhelds would need major advances elsewhere to be feasible. But I'm always open to new ideas! I'd love to see a much more powerful Gameboy.

John: It's been rumored that you considered retiring at some point, is that true?

Yokoi: Well, I did consider it, but then I began to realize that I'd be stepping down at a really exciting time! I think that as long as Nintendo and Sony are working and creating things together that I want to be a part of that process.

John: Would you have stayed with Nintendo if, say, Sony and Nintendo had split up before agreeing to make the Ultra?

Yokoi: I really can't say!

John: So it wasn't your entire reason for staying.

Yokoi: Right, it wasn't, it was just a part of it. I had other reasons and I'm glad to still be working with Nintendo.

John: So, what's next for Gunpei Yokoi?

Yokoi: Right now I am advising a team that's working on a game for the Ultra Nintendo next year, and I'm also working on new games to utilize the technology in the new model of Game Boy.

John: Have you yourself been playing any games recently?

Yokoi: When I have the time to play, I enjoy *World of Color*, and *Ballistic Limit* is very much like what I might have come up with for a CD-based Metroid, so if you haven't played that game yet and you are very impatient for a new Metroid title you might want to play it! I was very impressed with it and it was the game that introduced me to many of the people working at Sony.

John: Thank you again for your time, this was a really fun interview and I hope we'll get to do it again in the future. \*smiles and leans in, shaking Gunpei Yokoi's hand\*

Yokoi: Of course, thank you too!

-excerpted from the February 25, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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*"Anything Nintendo can do, we can do better. We do shooters better. We do fighting games better. We do platformers better. We do RPGs better. The Saturn does what Nintendon't. It's just that simple."*

*-Tom Kalinske, to a reporter from CNN at a press event for the release of Turok: Dinosaur Hunter on March 28, 1997*

*"Was I impressed with Turok? Well, yeah, it's a well made game, of course. Was it a game we wanted to have on the Ultra? I think....I think Acclaim's got something good in store for the Ultra, so don't read too much into Turok for the Saturn. I can't say anything else, but don't take Turok as the end-all be-all."*

*-Howard Lincoln, quoted in an article in the June 1997 issue of Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"Turok's definitely turned things around for us. Before Turok, things were rough. After Turok, things are looking up. I'm looking forward to seeing what both Nintendo and Sega have in store and to working with them in the future."*

*-Acclaim's Jeff Spangenberg, speaking in an interview on the May 6, 1997 episode of GameTV*

*"Maybe people in America just don't like Dragon Quest, I don't know. The sales of VI were really disappointing, especially after Terranigma had done so well."*

*-Robert Jerauld*

*"So, the producers of GameTV had a problem. Though the hosts had embraced Brittany Saldita as an equal, the producers wanted a woman who could bring in male viewers, and the fiery, opinionated Saldita was bringing in more girls than guys. So, in the spring of 1997, they went straight-up eye candy by bringing in Lyssa Fielding. With her blonde hair, penchant for showing cleavage and her history hosting the game show Singled Out, producers thought they had the girl who could bring in even more drooling males. What they got, however, was a host who was even more opinionated and just as much of a gamer as Saldita. In fact, rather than becoming rivals as the producers thought they might, Saldita and Fielding became best friends very quickly, and the two joined with the male hosts to form a united front against any potentially sexist actions by the producers of the show. The producers could afford to potentially lose Brittany Saldita, but they could not afford to lose Ted Crosley and Alex Stansfield, who were enormously popular with viewers and who threatened to walk if they caught wind of any harassment of Saldita or Fielding."*

*-from the G4 TV episode "Icons: GameTV", which aired in February 2003*

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*\*Faint footsteps are heard running through a grassy jungle\**

Narrator: Beyond space and time comes a world beyond imagination...

*\*The footsteps keep running as a roar is heard in the background\**

Narrator: A world full of creatures from the distant past...

*\*The footsteps stop.... the man who's running turns and quickly loads up a shotgun\**

Narrator: And horrors that defy description.

\*There's a pause....then a raptor leaps out at the man, who desperately pumps shotgun blasts into it as it leaps on top of him.\*

Narrator: And every moment is a fight for survival.

\*The man manages to push the raptor off, but more are coming. He runs, desperately trying to get away, only to come face to face with a T-Rex. He takes out another gun, a sci-fi looking gun, and blasts the T-rex with energy projectiles as it comes down on him.\*

\*Scenes from the game begin to play, showing the first-person action of Turok and showcasing the game's incredible graphics as Turok ventures through a variety of worlds, ancient temples, lava fields and even futuristic ruins.\*

**Will you survive?**

**TUROK: DINOSAUR HUNTER**

**Own it March 28**

**Only on Sega Saturn**

\*cue the SEGA! Scream\*

-from a commercial that aired on primetime television during the month of March 1997

**Turok: Dinosaur Hunter- The Basics**

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter for the Sega Saturn is a significantly larger game than OTL's game for the Nintendo 64. Rather than the eight levels featured in the Nintendo 64 game, TTL's Turok has fifteen, due to the significantly larger amount of space available on the Saturn CD format (OTL's game was 8 MB, TTL's is over 600). The levels comprise a diverse variety of environments. A plurality of the levels are jungle environments, but others take place in large lava fields, a futuristic alien labyrinth, an ancient temple, there's even one that takes place on an icy glacier. The game features even more music tracks including a few atmospheric pieces, Jeremy Soule collaborated with Iguana's Darren Mitchell on certain tracks (the glacier theme is reminiscent of the Phendrana Drifts music from OTL's Metroid Prime, for example). The game doesn't feature any voice acting aside from a few shouted lines from human characters, Turok does make groans and grunts but cutscenes are not voiced, this is said to be a stylistic choice to allow the player to put themselves in Turok's shoes. The game's graphics are somewhat more detailed than IOTL, again due to the increase in memory. In addition, there is a larger selection of guns and other weapons, more than 40 guns in all (the Cerebral Bore from OTL's Turok 2 makes it into this game) and more bladed weapons including a Japanese-style katana, for a total of 62 different equippable weapons, easily dwarfing the weapon selections found in most other console first-person shooters.

The game's plot is largely similar to OTL's, with a few changes owing to the increase in the content of the game. As IOTL, the main character is a Native American warrior named Tal'Set, who takes on the mantle of Turok and pledges his life to protecting time from evil beings. One such evil being is a warlord who calls himself The Campaigner, who is attempting to find a powerful ancient weapon known as the Chronoscepter. Turok pursues

the Campaigner through space and time, finally tracking him down to a place where the time fields have converged due to the Chronoscepter's influence. Turok must gather a piece of the Chronoscepter from all fifteen levels as he hunts the Campaigner down. Bosses include a deranged soldier in a Humvee, a giant praying mantis, a T-Rex, and The Campaigner himself (all bosses from OTL's game). Other bosses exclusive to TTL's game include a vicious abominable snowman, an alien overlord, a megalodon, a massive flying pteranodon, and an ancient magical cult leader. Turok also meets Shema, a priestess who falls in love with Turok after the two of them meet in the fourth level (an ancient temple ITTL's game). Eventually, Turok battles Shema's father in the eleventh level (he's the magical cult leader), and at the end of the game, Shema sacrifices herself to allow Turok to get the Chronoscepter away from the Campaigner.

### **March 28, 1997**

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter is released amidst excellent critical reviews (the best reviewed game thus far in the year, surpassing even Blood Omen and Terranigma) and a wave of hype to become the fastest selling Saturn game since Sonic 4, even selling faster than Resident Evil did after its release the previous year. Turok becomes a major killer app for the Saturn and a bit of a cultural icon. Just as 1995 was known as the "year of the pirate" and 1996 was known as the "year of the alien", 1997 was somewhat known as the "year of the dinosaur" between the releases of Turok and the Memorial Day release of The Lost World, the long-awaited sequel to the film Jurassic Park. The game is immediately greenlighted for a sequel, scheduled to release sometime in 1998 for the Sega Saturn.

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### **Command And Conquer**

Dan: 8.0 (quote: "One of my favorite PC games finally comes to the SNES-CD, and while it's not a perfect port and not as good as the Saturn version, it's still an excellent, really fun game.")

Shoe: 9.0

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Commander Keen: The Universe Is Toast**

Dan: 6.5

Shoe: 5.5

Crispin: 5.0 (quote: "I wanted to enjoy this game but it's a badly gimped port of the excellent Saturn version.")

Sushi-X: 5.0

### **Dragon Warrior VI**

Dan: 7.5

Shoe: 7.5

Crispin: 8.0 (quote: "RPG fans will find a lot to love in this great game that's as old-school as it gets.")

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Road Rash: World Tour**

Dan: 7.0

Shoe: 7.0

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "This fun motorcycle series takes its show on the road, letting you visit lots of countries as you smear your opponents on the pavement. Upgrading your bike is a fun and necessary diversion.")

### **Sailor Moon**

Dan: 7.0 (quote: "While I was hoping for something a bit more interesting than a cookie cutter beat 'em up, fans of the show will lap this game up.")

Shoe: 6.5

Crispin: 6.0

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Samurai Showdown III**

Dan: 8.0

Shoe: 8.0

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "Not much else to say except that this game picks up where the last two awesome fighters left off, continuing SNK's streak of success with this franchise.")

### **Shin Megami Tensei: Persona**

Dan: 7.5 (quote: "The interface could use some work, but there's no doubting the originality of this excellent RPG.")

Shoe: 5.0

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Deadman Sam 3**

Dan: 8.5

Shoe: 7.5

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.0 (quote: "The graphics are some of the best I've seen this system put out, and the new characters add some hilarious humor to this already fun series.")

### **Gun Warrior: Cannon Fire**

Dan: 6.0

Shoe: 6.0 (quote: "This series has really lost some of its luster, though the selection of guns remains quite robust.")

Crispin: 5.0

Sushi-X: 5.0

### **Jim And Kim Meet Tim**

Dan: 5.0

Shoe: 5.0

Crispin: 5.5 (quote: "They should've called this game Jim and Kim Meet Mediocrity.")  
Sushi-X: 5.5

## **Chifighters**

Dan: 8.0 (quote: "The variety of energy projectiles available gives a lot of strategic depth to this 2-D fighting game.")  
Shoe: 8.0  
Crispin: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 7.0

-reviews of March 1997's SNES-CD games in the April and May 1997 issues of Electronic Gaming Monthly

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Dragon Warrior VI was the last game produced by Enix for a Nintendo system. It was released on the Super Nintendo CD in Japan in August 1996 and in North America in March 1997. The game was a traditional turn-based RPG, somewhat graphically primitive compared to other games of that era, though with extremely detailed character and monster designs and, in a series first, animation for its monsters. The game continues the "Zenithian Era" of the series, which spanned games IV-VI, and it has a somewhat lighter storyline compared to the previous two games as well, depicting the heroes venturing through various dream realms to find a sacred sword that will rend the enemy, Nastinaria the Nightwitch, asunder. The game is the first in the series to feature a female villain, a devious witch who seeks to steal the youth from the beautiful maidens whom various dream realms sacrifice to her in order to keep her evil magic at bay. The hero gains his first companion when he saves a girl from being sacrificed to Nastinaria, the girl (whose name is Beatrice) joins the party and she and the hero gain other companions as they venture forth. Eventually, the heroes come across the ancient King Zenith, who tells them of the path they must take to find the sword. Dreams are a very big part of the game's plotline, in this world particularly strong dreams are made real, while Nastinaria is said to come from a realm that feeds off of nightmares. The game had the same basic RPG gameplay as previous entries in the series, returning the class system back from the third game in the series, enabling the heroes to learn various techniques by spending enough time in a certain class (similar to the "job system" found in certain Final Fantasy games).

Though the game, as Dragon Quest VI, performed extremely well in Japan (becoming one of the top selling SNES-CD games there), it did disappointingly in the states, failing to match the sales of Terranigma, though it was one of the top selling SNES-CD RPGs in North America of 1997. It was clear that in North America, Squaresoft ruled the RPG roost, and Enix had to hope they would find better sales with Saturn owners than they had on the Super Nintendo CD.

-excerpted from "Dragon Quest And The West: A History", published on Gamesovermatter.com

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*"I wanted us to have all five seasons of Sailor Moon. I truly did, it was making us a lot of money at the time. I just felt that the political environment, at the time, was not conducive to those two characters and I didn't want it harming my other brands, particularly Power*

*Rangers which was still very big at the time. I didn't do it because of homophobia or anything like that. It was a business decision and in retrospect, it was a bad one. I had no way to know that those two characters would be tolerated when they eventually did show up. All the people I talked to said that at the time, 1997, it couldn't be done."*

-Haim Saban, when asked in a 2009 interview with the magazine *Animazing* why he decided not to pick up *Sailor Moon S* in the fall of 1997

In the spring of 1997, *Sailor Moon* was peaking in popularity in the United States. The second season had just finished airing on Fox Kids, merchandise was flying off the shelves, and a brand new video game was set to come out for the Super Nintendo CD. Though it seemed like *Sailor Moon* was about to become the biggest cultural phenomenon in America, there were speed bumps ahead, and though the series continued to experience popularity and prosperity well into the next decade, it never quite reached the love it had from fans in early 1997.

The biggest bump on the road, of course, was the subject of just what Fox Kids and Saban would do with the controversial Outer Senshi, Sailors Uranus and Neptune. The two characters were an integral part of the upcoming season, and the two of them, though not explicitly in the series itself, were easily identifiable as lesbians. At one point, Fox Kids had been willing to go through with airing the third season and later seasons anyway, hoping that the relationship was low-key enough to be ignored by sensitive parents, but just before a decision was to be made, *Ellen* aired its groundbreaking "Puppy Episode", where comedian Ellen DeGeneres' character came out as a lesbian. The issue blew up massively in popular culture, and despite right-wing watchdog groups being somewhat muted by Parents Television Council president Brent Bozell's inflammatory comments on the Olympic bomber Eric Rudolph, the backlash toward DeGeneres was still enough to scare Fox Kids off from licensing the third season of *Sailor Moon*. Thus, the show, despite being the third highest rated on Fox Kids at the time (behind *Power Rangers Zeo* and *The Buttkickin' Girls*), was precluded from airing its third season, and the show continued airing reruns until the rights expired in 1998 and the show was snatched up by Cartoon Network (who was willing and able to order up the show's third, fourth, and fifth seasons for immediate dubbing and localization). But despite the show's success on Toonami, it never quite recovered from Fox Kids and Saban's refusal to localize episodes past the end of *Sailor Moon R*.

In addition, the *Sailor Moon* video game, released in March 1997, was somewhat of a disappointment. Due to the success of the show on Fox Kids, the original beat-em-up SNES video game from Japan was given a fresh coat of paint and somewhat revamped for a Western release. It was ported to the SNES-CD, given added cutscenes right from the show, and even dubbed with the show's English voice cast. And yet, despite lots of commercials for the game on Fox Kids and elsewhere and cover features in both *Nintendo Power* (in March 1997) and *GamePro* (in February 1997), the game was somewhat of a disappointment, both critically and commercially. It sold well enough to turn a profit, but was not the mega-hit that had been expected, and it was another sign that *Sailor Moon* was on the decline. Of course, once the show started airing on Cartoon Network, somebody got the idea to re-do *Sailor Moon: Another Story* for the Ultra Nintendo and even to give it a Western localization...but that's a story for another day.

-*"A History Of Sailor Moon In The West: Chapter 3 (The Speed Bump)"*, excerpted from an article on IGN.com, June 27, 2012

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*Did you think there was any way that the first Persona game would come to North America?*

After it came out that the guy who tried to bomb the *Sonic 4* release did it because of *Devil Summoner*, absolutely not. First off, *Shin Megami Tensei* had been a commercial failure in the states, and then we were in a position of having to downplay *Persona*! The fact that the game tripled the sales of the original *Shin Megami Tensei* in North America was astonishing to me since we hadn't advertised it at all. It was entirely on word of mouth and I think maybe the internet might've had something to do with it. I guess the buzz on early Internet forums about this game made a lot of people curious, and also the magazine coverage due to what had happened with *Devil Summoner*. In the end though, there was no controversy about this game, at all. Like, none. We flew totally under the radar. *Shin Megami Tensei* was still far from being on the level of games like *Final Fantasy* or *Mana*, but it was a foothold at the very least, and a good sign of things to come.

-excerpted from an interview on RPGamer.net with the Atlus localization employee responsible for bringing *Shin Megami Tensei: Persona* to the West

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Marv Albert: And so Grant Hill is about to shoot two free throws, the Celtics lead the Magic, 76 to 74 and Rodman's still talking to the referee.

Ahmad Rashad: And he's gotta be careful because if he gets another technical-

Marv Albert: And he just got one! Rodman just got T'd up and that's his second and he is livid now! Dennis Rodman is furious and he just got ejected from this game.

Ahmad Rashad: And this has been a problem for Dennis Rodman this year, here comes Shaq to try and hold him back from the referee...

Marv Albert: And Rodman now decides he's going to finally leave the court. He's still fuming and he seems to be looking at a fan in the crowd. Someone in the crowd just yelled something and- oh my goodness, Rodman's in the stands!

Ahmad Rashad: Uh oh, uh oh, this isn't good.

Marv Albert: Dennis Rodman is going up into the stands after a fan and it's bedlam here in Boston and now there's a fight on the court! Shaq and Penny are fighting on the court and Penny is down, Shaquille O'Neal just decked his former teammate while Rodman is in the stands on top of a fan!

Ahmad Rashad: Not good, someone's got to get up there and try to control Dennis Rodman!

-from the *NBA on NBC* broadcast of Magic at Celtics on March 16, 1997

"The melee in Boston stands out as one of the defining moments of the NBA in the late 90s. Lemme set the scene: The Orlando Magic had been one of the Eastern Conference's premier teams, but after Shaq demanded that Penny Hardaway be traded in the 1996 off-season, the team found itself in fourth place in the Eastern Conference. They were going into Boston to play the Celtics, who had the division lead by only a game, and the game had been fierce thus far with Shaq and Dennis Rodman dominating the boards. These two guys hated each other but they somehow cooperated well enough to keep the Magic in contention for the

division lead. The Magic jump out to a lead in Boston, but the Celtics roared back in the third quarter and they lead by two when Rodman got called for a very questionable over the back foul on Grant Hill on a rebound. Rodman goes ballistic on the referee, and he'd already gotten one tech for arguing with the refs earlier in the game, he'd grown increasingly frustrated with the calls and finally enough was enough for him and he soon ended up getting tossed. Now, as he's walking to the locker room, an idiot Celtics fan shouts a racial slur down at him from the fourth row. That set Rodman off big time and he charged into the stands, punching the offending fan and tackling him into his seat. Meanwhile, on the court, Penny and Shaq start having words and Penny shoves Shaq, who responds with a punch that breaks Penny's nose and knocks him to the floor. This sets both teams off and a huge melee erupts. Grant Hill ends up holding Penny back, and this isn't one of those "somebody hold me back, somebody hold me back!" kind of things, Penny looked like he literally wanted to kill Shaq and Grant Hill probably saved him from getting Rudy Tomjanovich'd by keeping him from trying to go after Shaq again. (Also, right about now I'm pretty sure Disney regretted their decision to host a "Shaq Day" at Disneyworld after seeing their star-for-a-day break an All-NBA First Teamer's nose on national television.) Finally, security is able to pull Rodman out of the stands and they literally have to handcuff him and drag him off the floor. It's a hideous moment for the NBA and I'm amazed David Stern let Rodman play in the playoffs that year (though he did get suspended for the rest of the regular season). The fan that provoked Rodman did get called out after cameras clearly spotted his lips mouthing the racial slur and he ended up getting a five year ban from the Fleet Center, but the damage had clearly been done, both to the Magic and to Rodman's career. After the Magic's 45-37 finish and their loss to the rising Toronto Raptors in the first round, I'm sure Shaq was wishing he'd gone to the Lakers like he'd threatened before the Penny trade." -excerpted from an article in an Orlando Magic fan blog on October 11, 2013

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1997 saw two of the SNES-CD's most popular original franchises release their third and final installments on the system, and the performance of both of them is a reflection of how well the franchises held up over the years.

*Deadman Sam 3* was the better of the two by far. It saw Sam and Nellie, still denizens of the dead but occasionally paying visits to the surface world to playfully haunt people, meet a group of three playful and adorable harpies on a sacred mountain under siege from a gang of wicked spirits. It retained the same platforming gameplay of the first two games but the graphics got a significant bump from the previous two games and it's known as one of the best looking SNES-CD games overall, with huge, brilliantly designed bosses and outstanding animation and visual effects. The three harpies became fan favorite characters and fixtures of the series, and reviews were as excellent as the previous two games, cementing *Deadman Sam* as one of the SNES-CD's best trilogies.

Meanwhile, *Gun Warrior: Cannon Fire* was a departure from the series' previous two titles...and not in a good way. As implied by the title, the game focused on cannons, its characters wielding them to take down enemy hordes. And while the cannons provided plenty of big booms, the gameplay was stilted, much slower paced and much more frustrating than the previous two titles. The on-the-fly rapid fire gunplay of the first two games was supplanted by slow, exacting cannon fire that made the game much more difficult than it should've been. Furthermore, while the option to use lighter guns still existed, they did MUCH less damage to the enemies, pretty much forcing cannons on you. While *Gun Warrior* DID get a much better received fourth installment on the Ultra Nintendo and the Saturn, the series' momentum had been severely curtailed.

-excerpted from "SNES-CD Year In Review (1997)", excerpted from a blog post on [Gamesthatdontsuck.com](http://Gamesthatdontsuck.com), January 19, 2014

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Ted Crosley: I'm Ted....

Alex Stansfield: And I'm Alex.

Ted: And it's a big day on *GameTV* because today, we're introducing a new host to the show.

Gary Westhouse: \*pokes his head on screen\* Wait a second, so I'm not the new guy anymore?

Ted: That's right, Gary, you're not the new guy anymore!

Alex: Well, actually, we're introducing a woman so...technically Gary is still the new *guy*.

Ted: Hmm, guess you're right, so we can keep ragging on him still?

Gary: No! You guys promised you'd stop!

Ted: Well, anyway, we do have a new host and you might recognize her because she used to be the host of the game show *Singled Out*. Here she is, welcome to *GameTV*, Lyssa Fielding!

Lyssa: \*runs onto the stage, clapping her hands excitedly\* Hell yeah, let's get this thing started!

Alex: I like her already.

Lyssa: You better!

Ted: So, is this better than *Singled Out*?

Lyssa: Well, on *Singled Out* I helped people find love, but here I'm going to get re-acquainted with my first love.... video games! I've been playing 'em since *Space Invaders*, and yes, I ALWAYS kill the last guy.

Ted: Well, we're not so sure about that so we brought out a *Space Invaders* machine and you can show us how good you really are.

Lyssa: \*cracks her knuckles\* You got it... \*she begins to play, quite quickly wiping out most of the aliens on screen, not having any trouble as she shoots through her shields and dispatches the last few of them with ease\* Piece of cake.

Ted: Well, today on *GameTV*, you'll be reviewing *Chifighters* and that won't be so easy.

Gary: You guys made me review a bad game!

Alex: Well, we'll find out if it's bad when the two of you review it, we've also got *Command And Conquer* for the Super Nintendo CDand also *Duke Nukem 3D* for the Sega Saturn. Plus, we're going to be going to the Sega Gameverse in Seattle for a behind the scenes look at the arcade before it opens! We'll be showing you all the sweet new games that you'll want to fight the crowds to play.

Ted: So, Lyssa, you think I'd have a chance on *Singled Out*?

Lyssa: Lemme get a good look at you... \*walks around Ted, randomly poking him in various places\* Ehhh... \*looks at his teeth\* Hmm.... well... I dunno, Brittany, would you go out with this guy?

Brittany Saldita: Not a chance in hell! \*smirks\*

Ted: Oh come on!

Lyssa: We're bringing you previews, reviews, and news to help you choose. This...is *GameTV*!

Gary: You let her do the intro on the first DAY?!

Alex: Well, she's got experience!

Ted: No, I agree with Gary, that was just plain wrong!

-intro segment to the March 11, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

Gary: So *Chifighters* is a pretty solid fighting game but not without a few issues.

Lyssa: I gotta say, playing this game is like having Ryu and Ken using the Hadouken all the time. It's pretty neat and you've got to really change up your strategy when you know your opponent can toss a projectile attack with the push of a button.

Gary: I just wish the actual melee fighting was a bit more developed, I get what the developers were trying to do but forcing you to use energy attacks because the punches and kicks are boring is kind of a bad way to go about it.

Lyssa: Y'know, I think I disagree. It's part of the strategy. Energy blast, rabbit punch. Energy blast, rabbit punch!

Gary: I loved the character design.

Lyssa: They ripped off my look! Sandy looks just like me! \*shows a quick juxtaposition of the buxom blonde fighter Sandy and Lyssa doing the exact same fighting stance and pose, Lyssa's hair is even done up like her\*

Gary: Does she host a game show?

Lyssa: No, but she wants to, I can see it in her eyes!

Gary: You can tell someone wants to host a gameshow just by looking into their eyes?

Lyssa: What can I say, I have the world's weirdest superpower. \*shrugs\*

Gary: Well, I give *Chifighters* a 3.5 out of 5. The basic concept is good but the sequel needs to work on the melee moves.

Lyssa: And I give it a 4 for being really fun and having awesome characters even if one of them is a complete ripoff of my look!

(...)

Brittany: So *Command and Conquer* on the Super Nintendo CD and the Saturn are both great. The Saturn port's a little bit more accurate to the original PC game, so if you've got both systems, get the Saturn version, otherwise this game is great on both consoles.

Ted: Yeah, the in-game cutscenes are all there in both versions and that's really the attraction of the game. It's a little hokey but who doesn't love some cheese in a video game cutscene? If you played *Dune* on the PC or the SNES-CD, you'll know what to expect from the gameplay here, it builds off of that and requires a lot of strategy to succeed. I had a ton of fun with it.

Brittany: It's not an easy game but it's really rewarding if you put in the work. The graphics are good, especially on the Saturn, the SNES-CD version looks just a bit backward but it's still just as much fun to play.

Ted: In the end, *Command and Conquer* is a worthy port and I'm giving it a 4 out of 5.

Brittany: No arguments there, 4 out of 5 for both versions. And, you know, it's good to see that the Super Nintendo CD can still play some of the Saturn's games. Even *Duke Nukem 3D* is fairly serviceable on the SNES-CD.

Ted: Yeah, but still, the Saturn has so many games that just aren't possible on the Super Nintendo CD.

Brittany: I know, I know. The Saturn is awesome but the Super Nintendo CD is still really-

Ted: Saturn does what Ninten-

Brittany: \*covers his mouth with her hand\* If I gotta hear that one more time...

Ted: \*just mumbles it through her hand\*

Brittany: Just....just.... \*twitching\*

Alex: \*yelling from off screen\* Is he saying it again?

Brittany: Yes!

Alex: Do we have to show the Ultra Nintendo preview footage again?

Ted: \*pulls away from Brittany\* Saturn's still better!

-excerpted from the March 11, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

Ted: *Turok* is just about as good as it gets. The massive levels, the outstanding music....

Alex: All those weapons...

Ted: Show that beautiful Cerebral Bore footage again!

\*Footage is shown of the Cerebral Bore gutting an enemy's head\*

Ted: YES!

Alex: It's easily the best FPS I've ever played on a console, bar none, hands down. It might be even better than *Quake*. Well....no multiplayer, but still.

Ted: The single-player campaign is worlds, worlds better than *Quake*.

Alex: Right. It's an epic adventure comparable to the *Zelda* games and it's a FIRST PERSON SHOOTER. I was just blown away. 5 out of 5, no question.

Ted: Yep, 5 out of 5 easily.

\*A siren begins to blare\*

Ted: Oh, you know what that means?

Lyssa: Can I do it this time? It's my first one!

Alex: Only the people who reviewed the game get to hang the game up on the wall.

Lyssa: That's no fair!

Alex: Actually that's....perfectly reasonable, really.

Lyssa: Fine, fine, but I get the next one!

\*Ted and Alex hang *Turok* up on the Hall of Fame wall while Brittany, Gary, John, and Lyssa watch and cheer.\*

(...)

John Walden: *Dragon Warrior VI* was good, but I felt like it just didn't innovate very much for an RPG, you know?

Alex: Yeah, it definitely had that old school feel to it but I wasn't feeling it like with games like *Tale Phantasia*. I mean, we just had *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* a couple months ago and it's hard to go back to a game like *Dragon Warrior VI* after something like that. Not like it was a BAD game, I mean, the music was awesome, the characters were great, the storyline was excellent, it was really long and epic... what I'm saying is....maybe....maybe an RPG doesn't HAVE to be cutting-edge to be an awesome game?

John: I hear you, but it's still a bit primitive of a game. The music was definitely the best part. The game didn't suck and it WAS good, I was just waiting for something more.

Alex: Enix definitely knows what they're doing, the game sold like hotcakes in Japan. Will it do well here? I dunno, but I'm going ahead and giving it a 4.

John: Only a 3.5 from me, it's a solid game but nothing special.

-excerpted from the March 25, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: March 1997**

1. Elements Of Mana
2. Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble
3. Squad Four: Eclipse
4. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
5. Tale Phantasia
6. Marvel Super Heroes
7. Super Mario RPG
8. Chrono Trigger
9. Dog Dash
10. Duke Nukem 3-D
11. Star Wars: TIE Fighter
12. Bahamut Lagoon
13. Kirby Super Deluxe
14. Policenauts
15. Lufia II: Rise Of The Sinistrals
16. Cat Jackson Comes Back
17. The Basement
18. Samurai Rush
19. Super Mario World 2
20. NHL '97

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: March 1997**

1. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
2. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
3. Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain
4. Tekken 2
5. Resident Evil
6. Virtua Cop 2
7. Tomb Raider
8. Doom II
9. Fighters Megamix
10. Duke Nukem 3-D

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### **Final Fantasy VII Details Released**

*Final Fantasy VII*, one of the most anticipated role playing games of all time, is set to release on the Ultra Nintendo in Japan in August, and as the game nears completion, we're

getting more and more details about the game's content. The game will span two of the Ultra Nintendo's 1GB Gigadiscs, making it easily the most massive Ultra Nintendo game released in the system's launch window. The game will also feature a first for the series: fully voiced cutscenes, with a good deal of character dialogue being voiced as well. After a positive reception to the voice acting in *Chrono Trigger* and *Bahamut Lagoon*, Squaresoft has spared no expense on the voice acting for its flagship series. The Japanese voice cast is a who's who of famous "seiyuu", with some of the biggest names in anime among the cast, and Squaresoft intends the English version to be fully dubbed as well. The game is also said to feature multiple paths, depending on choices made throughout the game, and Squaresoft says that the player's actions in the first disc will determine the course of the story in the second. It's clear that the company intends for *Final Fantasy VII* to be their most successful game to date, and it's going to be one of the highest profile releases of the year, especially if it shows up in the Ultra Nintendo's North American launch lineup.

### **Squaresoft's Future**

Squaresoft is also already beginning work on *Final Fantasy VIII*, despite the game not likely to be released before 1999. The storyline has yet to be hashed out, but it's rumored that the company will be tapping Tetsuya Takahashi to develop the bulk of the game's plot. The company is also beginning work on a game for 1998 based on the hit Japanese novel *Parasite Eve*. Squaresoft is likely to position the game as one of their biggest releases of the year when it hits the Ultra Nintendo. Squaresoft has doubled down on Nintendo in recent months, with staff frequently praising the system's technical and graphical capabilities. With rival Enix beginning to develop exclusively for Nintendo's rival Sega, Squaresoft is invested even further in Nintendo's success, and as the console war heats up further with the Ultra Nintendo's Japanese release just three months away, the company is undoubtedly gearing up to produce some of its best work. Future Ultra Nintendo titles slated for release in Japan by the end of 1997 include the fighting game *Bushido Blade* and the shooter *Einhander*.

-excerpted from the April 1997 issue of *Game Informer*

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### **March 31, 1997**

Polly Klaas walked down one of the hallways of Columbine High School, still somewhat saddened by the news she'd seen on that day's ChannelOne broadcast. It covered the story of the Heaven's Gate cult and how 39 of their members had committed suicide after the Hale-Bopp comet had passed near Earth recently. She couldn't imagine the kind of mentality that would lead someone to take their own life, especially over something as beautiful and awe-inspiring as a comet passing by the Earth.

She was shaken from her thoughts by the yelling coming from nearby. They were words all too familiar to her, she heard them all the time from her fellow students. They were cruel words, hardly ever directed at her, but much more often directed at students like the boy she saw out of the corner of her eye, being harassed by a group of boys as he walked with his head down toward his next class.

"Hey....hey! Why don't you look at us, huh?"

"What's wrong with you, you little freak?"

"Stop picking on him," Polly found herself saying, directing a scolding look over at the boys. Her friend Caitlyn stood up for kids who were getting picked on all the time, and she found herself increasingly recognizing that she needed to take a stand against bullying like that too. "Leave him alone, why are you picking on him anyway?"

"He's dressed all fuckin' weird," said one of the boys, glancing angrily over at Polly.

"Says who?" she replied, not backing down from the three bullies even as all of them turned toward her. "What are you guys, the fashion police or something? Leave him alone."

The three boys shrugged, not wanting to waste their time arguing with Polly, and turned to walk in the other direction. The boy who'd been getting picked on just kept on walking, ignoring Polly even as she came right up behind him.

"Are you okay...?" she asked, touching him on the shoulder only for him to twist away from her. "I'm sorry...."

"What the fuck do you even care for?" he said coldly, barely looking over his shoulder at her.

"Sorry... I just....they shouldn't talk about you like that."

"Who cares? I don't even give a shit," the boy mumbled, starting to walk away. Out of the corner of her eye, Polly could see the name written on the side of one of his textbooks.

"Eric...?" Polly said, her voice lined with concern. "It's not okay for them to say those things to you. ....are you sure you're okay?"

Eric could tell this girl was concerned for him, though he didn't think she should be. He didn't get picked on all that terribly often and he *did* have friends, even if he had trouble keeping them. Besides, he could take care of himself....he already felt the anger coursing through him, every time someone picked on him like that it made him want to....

"It's okay, if you don't want to talk....I should probably get to class."

"...no, it's cool," said Eric, letting out a sigh. There was something...calming about this girl, though he still could feel a deep, intense, almost uncontrollable rage at what those bullies had said to him. "You're right, those guys are shitheads. Thanks for speaking up, you're pretty cool."

"Oh...right, yeah sure..." Polly said, letting out an almost nervous giggle. "*What's with this guy...?*"

"See you around," said Eric, turning away from Polly and walking back down the hall. "*She's like those preppy girls who walk around the school, not giving a shit about anybody...but...something's different about her. At least she fucking said something. None of the others ever would.*"

Polly looked up at the clock...she was almost late, she knew she needed to hurry but she couldn't stop thinking about that boy she'd just seen. She could tell that deep down something wasn't right about him but she could also tell he was hurting...was it something going on at home? Or was it just all the bullying?

"Or is he just...broken? Like the guy who broke into my house and tried to..."

Polly's thoughts trailed off. She didn't want to remind herself of THAT terrible moment... however broken the boy she'd just met was, there was no way anyone could be *that* terrible.

It would not be the last she'd see of Eric Harris.

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Power Rangers was a staple of my later elementary school years from fourth grade to seventh grade in middle school. I followed the series closely from the first season of *Mighty Morphin'* to the middle of *Lost Galaxy*. The series was beginning a steady decline when *Sailor Moon* and *Kickbutt Girls* began to accrue a greater share of the ratings on Fox Kids. Power Rangers seemed tamer in comparison to *Sailor Moon*, which did not shy away from depictions of death and violence (though they were still sanitized compared to the Japanese originals) whereas Power Rangers generally shied away from death. That changed after the conclusion of *Power Rangers Zeo* when Saban decided to take the series in a more serious direction.

It is worth noting that Power Rangers Japanese precursor, *Super Sentai*, often explored more mature themes and characters died. *Zeo's* counterpart, *Chouriki Sentai Ohranger*, was actually quite dark. Unfortunately, the 1995 Subway Sarin Incident in Tokyo forced constant rewrites that nearly led to the series' cancellation. As such, *Ohranger's* successor, *Gekisou Sentai Carranger*, was much more lighthearted and regarded as a parody of *Super Sentai* itself, which proved a challenge for the American writers who wanted to take Power Rangers in a more serious direction. Saban and Fox decided to bridge *Zeo* with what would become *Turbo* with a film for summer of 1997. Steve Cardenas, who played Rocky DeSantos, wanted to focus on his karate school and planned to leave the series at the end of *Zeo*.

The main plot of *Turbo: A Power Rangers* movie was a space pirate named Divatox looking to awaken a dark force called Maligore so she could marry it and take over the galaxy, of course! In order to do that, she needed a talisman that belongs to a wizard from Zordon's order called Lerigot as well as the sacrifice of five souls of "strength and purity." We learn that two of those souls belong Jason Lee and Kimberly Hart from the *Mighty Morphin'* era; what the audience did not expect that they were meeting with Zach and Trini to surprise Billy and Tommy with an impromptu "reunion." However, Divatox's forces arrive kidnap to kidnap though overwhelming numbers in the establishing scene before the opening credits. Most fans did not expect to see the return of Walter Jones or Thuy Trang to Power Rangers after their fallout with Saban (along with Austin St. John who did return for a stint as the Gold Ranger in *Zeo*) over salary. Their memberships in the Screen Actors Guild was an obstacle, especially to Haim Saban, but 20th Century Fox stepped in and forced him to relent because of the promotional opportunity by uniting the original Power Rangers one more time.

Billy and Tommy arrive on the scene to fight the horde. Longtime comedy relief Bulk and Skull bumble into the fight and even provide some entertaining confusion fu before Divatox's Piranhatrons abduct them along with the MMPR Rangers. However, even with the power of the Red Zeo Ranger, Tommy is barely able to retreat with Billy in tow. Meanwhile,

Rocky is training along with student T.J. Johnson (played by Selwyn Ward) and Adam for a charity martial arts tournament. Tanya and Kat are there with them when Tommy and Billy burst in with the news of their friends' kidnapping. Zordon then summons them to the Power Chamber with Billy, but unbeknownst to the (Zeo) Rangers, T.J. witnessed their exchange and learned of their identities.

Zordon provides the typical exposition to explain the situation to the Rangers, when Divatox contacts the team with an offer: she will exchange Bulk and Skull for Billy on the condition they remain unmorphed. Despite protests from Tommy and the other Rangers, Billy agrees to the exchange and the two parties meet in an underwater cave, however, the meeting place in question is out of teleporter range, forcing the Rangers to walk. While Divatox holds up her end of the bargain, she and her subordinate open fire on the rangers, targeting their morphers. She also planted explosives, which she detonates to implode the cave upon escaping as extra insurance. With their morphers damaged and the Zeo powers failing, Rocky uses the last of his power to buy the others enough time for the other to make it to teleportation range while the cave collapses on him.

Rocky's death was a shock to the fanbase as no one had died on the show up to that point. Death was not that uncommon in *Super Sentai*; for example, Burai the Dragon (Green) Ranger from *Kyōryū Sentai Zyuranger* (the series Saban adapted into *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*) died. However, Rocky's death had a greater impact because of the suddenness of it. The Internet was only beginning to penetrate the mainstream culture and most of the show's core audience did not read the trade papers so we had no idea that Cardenas was leaving.

*"I remember getting a sack full of letters from children and parents alike who were upset at Rocky's death after the movie,"* Cardenas told the audience of a panel at Power Morphicon in 2007. *"One even went to say that I ruined her son's childhood. However, you have to look at it this way. We can't shelter children from the fact that everyone has to die sometime. Some people die of old age and some people die to save their loved ones from danger. I'm glad Rocky got to die that way. It made the movie and the character mean something to the audience."*

Indeed, Rocky's death also gave the movie greater weight than its predecessor and established the stakes and that anyone could die. Producers also gave T.J. something a B-plot in the first act where he "borrows" one of Rocky's old communicators from the MMPR days and accidentally transports himself to the Power Chamber just in time to witness Rocky's death on the viewing globe. After the Rangers return, Zordon reveals that Billy finished the creation of a new set of powers before the prisoner exchange: the Turbo powers. Though in disarray, the Rangers agree but ask who the Blue Turbo Ranger will be. T.J. says that he will assume the mantle because, *"It is my responsibility as Rocky's student to finish the work he had started."* The Rangers (with the freshly-inducted T.J.) pursue Divatox to the Nemesis Triangle; Though Zordon informed them that they were under no obligation to assist the Rangers, Bulk and Skull agree to go on a mission to rescue Lerigot. Meanwhile, the Turbo Rangers divert Divatox's main forces away from them. Despite the grimmer tone, Bulk and Skull's mission to infiltrate Divatox's dungeon relies heavily on slapstick comedy and dumb luck to avoid or incapacitate the Piranhatron guards.

Through Lerigot's talisman, she opens up the Dark Pit and offers the MMPR Rangers as her sacrifice. She sends a small army of Piranhatrons to delay the Turbo Rangers long enough for her to drop the MMPR Rangers into the Dark Pit and reawaken Maligore. He reincarnates the MMPR Rangers into his minions and even restores the original Dinozord powers [1] so that they can morph and face off with the Turbo Rangers. The battle is lopsided one could

accept, the Turbo Rangers are hesitant to hurt their friends while their MMPR have no such scruples. For example, Kimberly thrashes Kat and then uses Tommy's lingering feelings for her to get close and kick him in the chest. Meanwhile, Maligore hungers for more "pure souls" and grows to giant size and begins his long march towards Angel Grove. The Turbo Range attempt to withdrawal and pursue Maligore in the Turbo Megazord. However, the MMPR Rangers intercept them in the (Dino) Megazord. While the two teams battle , Bulk and Skull fumble to free Lerigot from confinement, they succeed and Lerigot uses his magic to free the MMPR Rangers from Maligore's corruption.

It should be worth noting that unlike the original *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers: The Movie*, Turbo largely used practical effects. It was a visual treat to see two Megazords fighting with out them looking as overly fake like the Ninja Megazord from the previous film. The closest the series as ever come to seeing a Zord fight on the television was the Tigerzord and Dragonzord battle from "Return of the Green Ranger" though it required much editing because both Zords were from different *Super Sentai* series and the audience never even got to see their attacks connect. Once freed from their corruption, both teams team up against Maligore and destroy him.

*Turbo: A Power Rangers Movie* finishes with Rocky's funeral where Tommy and Kimberly's relationship received some proper closure after the "Dear John" letter she had sent to him in Zeo. Tommy lets go of his feelings for Kimberly and affirms his affection for Kat with Kimberly's blessing. The original Power Rangers say their good-byes and go their separate ways. Meanwhile, Bulk and Skull come to a truce with the Rangers and decide to rejoin the Junior Police Force upon realizing they could be heroes in their own right. T.J. enters and wins the tournament in Rocky's place, ending the film a somewhat uplifting note. Meanwhile, Divatox swears vengeance on the Rangers by destroying everything they love and protect.

So how does *Turbo: A Power Rangers Movie* hold up? Personally, I liked it better than the original film. Though it had a smaller budget (\$10 million in comparison the *MMPR: The Movie's* \$15 million), still made around \$40 million total worldwide gross. Critical reception to *Turbo* was actually more positive. Roger Ebert, who compared *MMPR: The Movie* to synthetic foods "that have no fat, no sugar, no vitamins and no calories, but they come in bright packages and you can chew them" said that Turbo "Had substance. Maybe not the best kind of substance but least the characters has discernable traits, the monsters move more fluidly than the previous film, and the fight cheorography improved dramatically." Ebert rated the film two stars out of four compared to the original's half a star. Indeed, when looking at *Turbo* in the present, it was a film with substance unlike *MMPR: The Movie*. It proved there was still more life in the franchise going into its fifth season.

-from the blog "The Musing Platypus" by B. Ronning, March 28, 2012

[1] Later series would confirm that Maligore incidentally restored the Green and White Ranger powers.

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"The Ultra Nintendo is, simply put, the most advanced gaming device ever made. I consider my work on the new graphics chip to be the most challenging and fulfilling work of my career thus far, and I hope everyone who plays it will realize immediately just how much work went into this device!"

-Ken Kutaragi in the June 1997 issue of *Famitsu*

"There's no shortage of RPGs releasing this month, but everyone here is still waiting for the big kahuna, by which I am referring, of course, to *Final Fantasy VII*."

-Dan "Shoe" Hsu" in the May 1997 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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### **Fire Emblem: Keepers Of The Light**

Dan: 8.5

Shoe: 9.0

Crispin: 9.0 (quote: "Nintendo's new Fire Emblem is even bigger and more epic than the previous game, and the graphics are some of the best yet seen on the system.")

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Harvest Moon**

Dan: 8.0

Shoe: 8.0

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 7.0 (quote: "While some may find this life sim rather boring, for those willing to put in the time it's a fulfilling experience.")

### **Mega Man X4**

Dan: 7.5

Shoe: 7.5 (quote: "It's got the same classic Mega Man X gameplay, but the cutscenes can get pretty cheesy.")

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Wild Arms**

Dan: 7.0

Shoe: 8.0

Crispin: 9.0 (quote: "This western-style RPG is just what the doctor ordered, it's a bit short but the characters and story are fantastic.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Ys V**

Dan: 7.0

Shoe: 7.0

Crispin: 6.5 (quote: "While somewhat basic compared to other RPGs, it's still a fairly engrossing game.")

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Syrielle**

Dan: 7.5

Shoe: 9.5

Crispin: 9.5 (quote: "One of the most emotional and heartwarming games I've ever played. It transcends its medium.")  
Sushi-X: 4.0

### **Maruthiel**

Dan: 7.0  
Shoe: 7.0  
Crispin: 8.0 (quote: "It's definitely a gorgeous game but the controls are somewhat weak compared to classics like Axelay.")  
Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Stay Off My Lawn!**

Dan: 3.5 (quote: "I'm amazed this game even got made. It gets boring pretty fast despite some of the unintentionally hilarious dialogue.")  
Shoe: 2.0  
Crispin: 2.0  
Sushi-X: 4.0

### **Hellstormers**

Dan: 8.0 (quote: "Very reminiscent of Cannon Fodder, this is one of the best war shooters available on the system.")  
Shoe: 8.0  
Crispin: 8.0  
Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Cherubim**

Dan: 7.5  
Shoe: 6.5  
Crispin: 7.5 (quote: "Sort of a cutesy alternative to Maruthiel, it's also a bit like the Cotton games in that it's a pretty cookie cutter "cute 'em up". Not great, but certainly decent.")  
Sushi-X: 7.0

-reviews of April 1997's SNES-CD games in the May and June 1997 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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"*The awesome new action game Boom Island and a pair of RPGs highlight this month's new Saturn titles! There's something for everyone in this month's Review section!*"

-the intro to the Review section of May 1997's *Official Saturn Magazine*

*Boom Island* encompasses a huge world and gives Chipp a ton of things to do as he hops from island to island, battling pirates along the way. Though some of the missions are a bit repetitive, the catchy music and wacky characters make this game a treat regardless and you'll also have lots of fun battling the game's numerous bosses. *Boom Island* might just be the best action title on the Saturn since *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*, and it's not to be missed.  
Score: 9/10

*Shining The Holy Ark* is a challenging but engrossing RPG that harkens back to the old school days of classic dungeon crawlers like *Phantasy Star*. The battle system's a bit simplistic but long-time RPG players will still find the game's difficult dungeons worth the trek. It's a decent sidestory to the *Shining* series and for Saturn owners who are craving some classic-style RPGs, it's worth checking out.

Score: 6/10

*The Lost Kingdom* is an epic quest that will take at least 30 hours to complete. With a great combination of 2-D and 3-D graphics, the game's visual style is excellent and you can recruit nearly a dozen characters to your party. While not as challenging as RPGs like *Phantasy Star*, it's a well-paced quest that ranks as one of the Saturn's best in the genre.

Score: 7/10

-excerpted from the May 1997 review section of *The Official Saturn Magazine*

April 1997 saw a couple of very good original titles on the Saturn, particularly *Boom Island*, a 3-D platformer that beat *Super Mario Dimensions* to the punch by several months. The game played somewhat similarly to the later title *Ape Escape*, though it had a charm and a style all its own. The game starred the boy pirate Chipp, who lived on an island by himself. He did have numerous friends on neighboring islands who played with him and traded with him, and even a sort of "girlfriend" named Marie. However, one day the surrounding islands are invaded by Captain Maroon and his squad of silly but dangerous pirates, forcing Chipp to go on a mission to liberate his friends and save the day. The "Boom" in *Boom Island* came from the fact that Chipp could build cannons to fire at the pirates and their ships. You had to go from island to island, rescuing people from the pirates and liberating the islands. Of course, Marie got captured, and Chipp saves her early on, only for her to get caught again...and again...and again (literally, the final boss on each island is holding Marie hostage, this happens seven different times including the final battle against Captain Maroon). The game was fully voiced, with Jeff Bennett as Captain Maroon and Billy West as Chipp. The game was the start of a successful multi-platform franchise, but it all started with the first title on the Sega Saturn.

Next up was *The Lost Kingdom*, sort of a spiritual successor to the *Sword of Vermillion* game on the Sega Genesis. It was a strictly traditional RPG, though with some modern touches including voice acting and pseudo-3D. The game basically involves a young man who stumbles his way into an ancient underground kingdom and eventually joins up with a band of rebels to overthrow a tyrannical king and defeat the monsters he unleashes. It's full of classic RPG cliches but it's still a pretty fun game. It was the first major Saturn RPG to be released that year, and one of the least commercially successful, though it did move a decent number of copies. April 1997 was a month chock full of RPGs on both the major systems, the SNES-CD saw the release of *Wild Arms* and another *Fire Emblem* title around this time, and so *The Lost Kingdom* was a sign that yes, the Saturn could be an RPG powerhouse too (though later games that year, particularly *Windborn* and *Planetary Probe*, cemented that fact).

-excerpted from "The Saturn Games Of 1997", a blog post on Gamesovermatter.com

"*The Sega Saturn continues to dominate in Japan and Europe, and in the United States, its sales lead is steadily increasing. The release of Turok: Dinosaur Hunter in North America has provided a major boost in console sales, with nearly 300,000 Saturn consoles sold in the United States and Canada during the month of April. In Europe, Sonic the Hedgehog 4 has lead the overall software sales charts every single week since its November release,*

*despite a fierce challenge from Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain in the month of February. It too will see the release of Turok in June, so it remains to be seen if that game can knock the hedgehog off the throne he's sat in for the last five months. In Japan, it's Phantasy Star V that's lighting up sales charts, spurring another major surge in Saturn sales ahead of the June 1997 release of the new Ultra Nintendo Entertainment System. Phantasy Star V takes the sci-fi based series into the past, though the fantasy-based setting hasn't alienated fans of the series, who gave the game its biggest opening sales week in series history."*

-from the June 1997 issue of *Wired* magazine

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*"After the success of Fire Emblem 4 on the SNES-CD, Nintendo rushed Fire Emblem 5 out the door for 1997. Despite the rapid production time, the game was still really, REALLY good, showing that Nintendo could do no wrong regarding its flagship RPG series. Keepers Of The Light took the story in a somewhat different direction, focusing on Naga and her Dragoon Legion, the 'Keepers of the Light' referenced in the title. The game wasn't as epic in scale as the previous title, but it did give players a choice of what route they wanted to take, essentially providing three games in one. It was also more difficult than the previous title, so despite the slightly reduced size, it may have taken longer for players to finish, also giving the impression that it was a larger game."*

-*"A Brief History Of Fire Emblem: A Player's Perspective"*, from Kotaku.com on September 18, 2014

*Fire Emblem: Keepers Of The Light* was a much less controversial game than its predecessor, and thus was censored very very lightly (only minor things like certain swear words and some partial nudity were cut). The incest plotline central to *The Holy War* was dropped, in favor of a more straight-forward storyline featuring a war between the humanity-favoring goddess Naga and her rival god who wished to see humans exterminated. The game also featured a slight bump in graphical quality from the previous game, though this was mostly due to a presentation overhaul more than anything else. It didn't sell quite as well as *The Holy War* in North America, though it was still a fairly successful game, especially in the somewhat sparse environment of the Super Nintendo CD's pre-Ultra lineup. With one of the fastest production times of any first-party Nintendo game, it was rushed out in response to the success of the previous title, but for the most part it succeeded in upholding the high standards of the series due to Shouzou Kaga's tireless work. He'd take a much needed break after work on *Keepers of the Light* was completed, and needless to say, he'd certainly earned it.

-excerpted from *"Coming To North America: Fire Emblem's Western Odyssey"*, an article on RPGHero.com, December 10, 2011

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*"The wedding sequences in Harvest Moon are still some of the most beautiful cutscenes on the SNES-CD. The game had only 12 anime cutscenes in all, about 30 seconds each, and six of them were reserved for the weddings between the player character and each of the six available wives. Managing to be both heartwarming and funny (especially Eve's, where we see just how much of a wild girl she is), the wedding scenes make the player feel a real sense of accomplishment at getting that far into the game, and enrich the game that much more."*

-from IGN.com's retro review of the SNES-CD's *Harvest Moon*

*"Remember Wild Arms? That goofy animated Western-styled commercial that played during*

*Fox Kids? The really slow but still impressive pseudo-3D battles? The game was no masterpiece but it was unique for its day. Hell, the overworld theme even sampled 'Ecstasy of Gold'! While it was completely overshadowed by all the other great RPGs available on the SNES-CD, it still remains one of my favorites and a cult classic to a lot of people."*  
-a comment on Kotaku.com's "Talk Amongst Yourselves: Forgotten RPG Classics" post

*"It's a bit of a shame that the Ys series really hit its stride at the same time that Final Fantasy VII was about to come along and usher in a new age of RPGs. The game was the best of the series to date, featuring some great action-RPG combat and a really expansive world and epic storyline. I remember it took a long time for Ys VI to come out afterward because they had to figure out how to retool the series to meet the new expectations of gamers, but V was an excellent swan song and it's a shame it tanked so badly in the States. Did pretty well in Japan, IIRC."*  
-from a comment on the /ys/ root on Rootalk.com

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*Mega Man X4* was the last of the "fourth generation" *Mega Man X* titles, though it embraced innovations like voice acting and cutscenes like no game before it. Though it retained the look and motif of previous *Mega Man X* games, it once again allowed the player to choose between X and Zero, providing a different quest for the two of them to overcome, essentially making for two games in one. X was tasked with hunting down and destroying Sigma once and for all, while Zero was tasked with tracking down a gang of young but dangerous Mavericks who were gathering materials to build themselves a leader. The game's cutscenes were particularly infamous for bad voice acting, X's cry of "What am I fighting FOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOR?!" cry after discovering a city full of Sigma's scrapped victims was particularly infamous, though the voice acting during Zero's cutscenes was a bit better received (Alyson Court's performance as the rogue Maverick Sclera in Zero's quest was particularly praised). All in all, Zero's side of the game was seen as superior to X's, and gamers wondered if Capcom was "passing the torch" to Zero, so to speak (the series would split for later games with Zero being absent for *Mega Man X5* only to return in late 1999 with a game of his own). Overall, *Mega Man X4* mostly continued the series' slow critical and commercial decline. The game was a very moderate success, mostly overshadowed by other releases around that time. Was *Mega Man* becoming irrelevant? Gamers would have to wait for the Ultra and the Saturn to find out.  
-excerpted from "Mega Man X: A New Generation", an article on Gamesovermatter.com

### ***Resident Evil 2, Breath Of Fire III* Lead Capcom's Charge**

Fresh off the release of *Mega Man X4*, Capcom's braintrust is hard at work on the next wave of home console and arcade releases, with games planned for the Sega Saturn, the Super Nintendo CD, and the upcoming Ultra Nintendo, many of which are expected to be major hits.

Of course, first among them is *Resident Evil 2*, sequel to last year's mega-hit for the Sega Saturn. Capcom says that this sequel will be even bigger than the first game, alluding to the possibility of two separate quests. Capcom's no stranger to including more than one playable storyline in their games, their recent *Mega Man X4* featured separate stories for both X and Zero, and Shinji Mikami is taking notice of his colleague Keiji Inafune's efforts.

"I think that providing two separate journeys, if at all possible, provides extra value for the player and an added incentive to play your game. So it would certainly be preferable to

offer two scenarios in this sequel, which certainly will make this game even more popular than the first," said Mikami in an interview with a Japanese video game program.

Of course, Capcom's other franchises, such as *Breath of Fire*, are also receiving new installments. *Breath of Fire III* launched to good sales and positive reviews in Japan in February, and in August, it makes its way stateside for the Super Nintendo CD. Capcom says that the game's animations and backgrounds will push the system to its limits, providing a truly epic experience in the SNES-CD's waning months. Of course, that isn't to say the game will be Capcom's last for the system, *X-Men vs. Street Fighter* is said to be getting an SNES-CD port this holiday season. For fans of comic vs. video game battle royals who happen to own a Saturn, you won't be left out, *Marvel vs. Street Fighter* launches on the Saturn at about the same time.

While companies such as Squaresoft and Namco have staked their fortunes on one side of the console wars, Capcom looks to continue to play both sides for the foreseeable future. According to Capcom founder Kenzo Tsujimoto: "We are very excited by the technology offered by both Nintendo and Sega, and look forward to creating games that take advantage of the unique opportunities presented by both company's game devices." What this means for the average gamer is that whatever side you take, you'll be able to play some of Capcom's best efforts for many years to come.

-excerpted from an article in the June 1996 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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"At the time I started working on *Syrielle*, which was 1996, I was doing a show for Nickelodeon about this girl detective, Shelby Woo. Nickelodeon had ordered some episodes from us and the show aired as a small preview series, but then we found out that they had declined to order more because they had decided to do a third season of their sci-fi show and because they were also ordering more episodes of their pirate show. So that left me with nothing to do, and then I got a call from a company, which turned out to be Activision, and they wanted to know if I would work on a video game for them. And of course, I didn't know the first thing about designing games, but they assured me that it would be a writing job and not an actual game design job. And of course, me not knowing then how good the writing in games had become, I was baffled that they needed a television writer to work on a video game. But it was good money and they gave me enough freedom that I agreed. And so that's how I started to formulate the idea which became *Syrielle*, which of course became what it is today."

-Suzanne Collins, speaking to a group of convention goers at PAX East in 2009

*Syrielle* remains the most unlikely hit in the history of the Super Nintendo CD. Part visual-novel, part platformer, the game takes its cues from games like *Forever With You*, though the plot and gameplay of *Syrielle* is vastly deeper (say what you will about Koji Igarashi, but Suzanne Collins writes circles around him). The game is classified most accurately as a "friendship sim", *Syrielle*'s relationships with her classmates form the heart and soul of the game and determine just how the game will play out. In that regard, it compares favorably to games such as the *Tales Of The Seven Seas* and *Persona* series, though again, it's an entirely different beast. It stars a 15-year-old high school freshman named *Syrielle*, a girl who discovers, somewhat gradually, that she is part girl and part spider. While she looks exactly like a normal girl (most of the time), she can form webs, crawl on walls, and she has an almost irresistible urge to eat bugs (her "powers" manifest themselves different from Spider-Man's, she's not nearly as dextrous or strong and her webs work somewhat

differently, and in the end, she's not really a superhero, just a very very VERY weird girl). While Syrielle is coming to grips with her "other side", she still has to navigate the trials and tribulations of high school. She's not really a nerd, nor is she a popular girl, at least at the start of the game, she's an average girl with somewhat average friends, who, depending on your choices, you can lose or keep during the course of the game. Again, relationships with other students are a major part of *Syrielle*, there are more than 70 students you can form relationships with, whether it's being best friends, bitter enemies, or somewhat neutral, or anywhere in between. There's no voice acting in the game, dialogue plays out through a series of motion-comic like scenes where the characters pop in and out of the screen, their expressions changing from moment to moment. *Syrielle* is a two-disc game, there's so much dialogue and animation that the developers couldn't fit it all on one disc, so at the midpoint of the game there's a point of no-return that shifts the game from one set of dialogues and scenes to the next. Interspersed with *Syrielle*'s dialogue scenes are platforming action stages, eighteen in all, though depending on what you do during the game, you'll end up playing through anywhere between six and twelve of them, and most of the stages have variants depending on what you do during the game. *Syrielle* is an emotional game at its core. Her struggles to fit in and cope as her powers manifest in increasingly dramatic ways is at the heart of the game. Her relationship with the popular and seemingly bitchy (but in reality, deeply, DEEPLY troubled) Stacy is one of the most complex in the game. In most games, you will LOATHE Stacy and she will loathe you, but if you work at it, Syrielle and Stacy can form the deepest and closest friendship in the game, a friendship in which Stacy throws away everything, her popularity, her own friends, to be friends with Syrielle. It's the only way to get what is universally considered the game's best ending.

The game was hyped with a wave of advertisements on all the kids' channels, but was NOT expected to be a success by analysts, who believed that the game's format would turn off those used to platformers like *Dog Dash* and more gameplay-intensive games like *Tales Of The Seven Seas*. However, the game, while not a HUGE seller, made back significantly more than its budget and also became somewhat of a merchandizing dynamo throughout the late 90s and beyond, spawning an animated series, a line of children's novels (most penned by Suzanne Collins herself), and of course, a series of games that continues to this day. Many thought that *Syrielle*'s success might kick off a visual novel craze, but despite some imitators showing up on the Ultra Nintendo and the Sega Saturn, none could catch the lightning in a bottle that *Syrielle* had caught upon its release. The series had, in many ways, brought the "kids' TV" hits from networks like Fox Kids and Nickelodeon to the video game medium. It achieved its success while *Sailor Moon* took a two-year break from airing new episodes in North America. It probably wouldn't have been made at all if Nickelodeon hadn't decided on airing shows about space adventurers and pirate kids over the girl detective show that Collins had been working on at the time. *Syrielle* was both a snapshot at where children's entertainment was in the late-1990s, and a peek at where it was headed in the next decade.

-excerpted from an article on the website Pop Culture Wave, posted on January 14, 2015

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Ted Crosley: *Fire Emblem: Keepers Of The Light* is definitely tougher than *The Holy War*, I found myself losing my best soldiers quite often.

Alex Stansfield: Yeah, same here, and more often than not it left me pretty much doomed to failure. Normally that'd be a flaw in the game design but in *Fire Emblem*, most players

will know what they're getting into.

Ted: Yeah, it just encouraged me to start the fight over and form a better strategy. That said, I could NOT keep my best mage no matter what I did, eventually I just threw up my hands, said \*bleep\* it, and moved on.

\*A brief montage plays of Ted's mage Cara dying over and over again as Enya's *Only Time* plays in the background. Included in the montage is Ted throwing down his controller in frustration and it ends with him looking into the camera and shedding a single tear.\*

Alex: Dead mages or not, I loved how you could pick different routes, unlike *The Holy War* where you were pretty much stuck.

Ted: Yeah, more RPGs, especially strategy RPGs where you're a campaigning army, need to do this. It added a lot of variety to a game that I felt was a bit on the short side.

Alex: Yeah, I agree but if you take multiple playthroughs into account, it's a lot longer.

Ted: Well, if you're a reviewer who doesn't have time for multiple playthroughs...

Alex: You would've, if you didn't keep trying to keep your glass mage alive.

Ted: Hey, she was my wife! My main character MARRIED her, he can't just let her die!

Alex: Just use it for motivation to wreak vengeance on your enemies, like in a Harrison Ford movie. Anyway, I give *Fire Emblem: Keepers Of The Light* a 4.5.

Ted: And I give it a 4. It's a great game and a worthy successor to the last one.

(...)

Brittany Saldita: *The Lost Kingdom* is an RPG that's mediocre in every sense of the word. Graphics, mediocre. Gameplay, mediocre. Characters, mediocre.

John Walden: It was just plain boring.

Brittany: Yeah, and really, what's with the glut of generic RPGs as of late? There's *Wild Arms*, which, except for its kinda neat Western setting is pretty much just an average RPG, and now this, where the setting is the same mythical medieval thing in pretty much every RPG out there these days. It's really sad and I think Saturn owners deserve better.

John: Well, yeah, I mean look at what Nintendo just released, another awesome *Fire Emblem* game, and then you get this hot mess on the Saturn.

Brittany: Well, it's not a hot mess...

John: It's just average.

Brittany: It's just average and I'm giving it a 3.

John: I'm giving it a 2. RPGs aren't even my cup of tea and this game pretty much illustrates why.

-excerpted from the April 15, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany: So, *Boom Island* is a really fun game, but...

Alex: But?

Brittany: But Marie is completely useless. I mean, look. She gets kidnapped in every single world. Compare her with like, Dona from *Tales Of The Seven Seas*. Some guy tries to kidnap her and she punches him in the balls so hard that everybody with testicles who played that game probably felt it.

Alex: Oooh yeah. \*covering his groin with his hands and wincing\*

Brittany: And even Victoria, I mean she actually got kidnapped but ONE time. One time and she never let it happen again. And that was only in one possible part of the story where the player had to kind of mess up. Victoria was infinitely less useless and a better character than Marie. Practically everybody else on those damn islands but Chipp was useless, and Chipp was annoying as hell.

Alex: So I take it you didn't like *Boom Island*?

Brittany: \*sighs in resignation\* It's a really fun game. I can't deny that, it's right up there with *NiGHTS* in terms of 3-D platforming, it's really good, the boss battles are excellent, the puzzles are intuitive...it's a great game but the storyline could have used some work.

Alex: Chipp's not that annoying, he has a lot of silly one-liners but-

Brittany: But that's what passes for humor in games these days, is silly one-liners?

Alex: Well, what about James Bond?

Brittany: But those are actually clever. Chipp just says whatever stupid crap comes into his mouth. When you shoot one of the fire enemies for example...

\*cue a scene from the game where Chipp blasts a fire enemy with water and quips "Guess that puts out that fire!"\*

Brittany: \*she sighs in exasperation\* No \*bleep\*, Sherlock.

Alex: \*chuckling\* Yeah, I mean, some of the humor in this game is pretty bad, but I can't dispute that the game itself is really fun.

Brittany: Right, I did have a lot of fun playing it, but some of the one-liners just made me groan. If you're a fan of cheese, you'll love this game.

Alex: So it'll sell well in Wisconsin then?

Brittany: I'm surprised they don't MAKE the game in Wisconsin, that's how cheesy it is. I'm giving it a 4.

Alex: I've never seen you so pissed off at a game you're giving a 4 to. Well, I'm giving it a 4 too.

Brittany: Just think, if the characters were just a little better I might've given it a 5.

-excerpted from the April 22, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Lyssa Fielding: *Syrielle* might seem like a game that's not worth your time, but it's incredibly deep and absolutely one of the greatest games I've ever played.

Ted: I disagree....VIGOROUSLY.

Lyssa: And you're wrong.

Ted: I'm not-

Lyssa: It was an amazing game!

Ted: It was barely a game in the first place! You spend the VAST majority of the game walking around and talking to people. And it's not like an RPG, where you go to a town, find a guy, talk to him and that opens up a big huge dungeon, this game is talk to about fifty guys, then play a little platforming level, then talk to about fifty more guys!

Lyssa: Have you ever played *Alter Ego* on the Commodore 64?

Ted: I've never even heard of *Alter Ego* on the Commodore 64.

Lyssa: Okay. *Alter Ego* was a life simulation game, where you explore dialogue trees and make decisions that individually don't seem significant, but they add up to an entire life. As you play through the game, you're making friends, you're having a relationship with your family, you're living out your entire life....it's a really emotional game. It actually....I played it when I was thirteen, back in 1986 I played it and I cried. I cried just from reading text on a screen.

Ted: Okay, I can see crying at an animation in a game, but crying at text on a screen?

Lyssa: Have you ever read a book that made you cry?

Ted: It's supposed to be a GAME, not a book!

Lyssa: Did you even have one emotional moment at all playing this game? Because I cried...I'm not going to spoil it but there's a point in the game where *Syrielle* and this character are just talking and I cried at it. This game **MOVED** me and I think it's going to move a lot of people who play it because the characters are so well written and brilliantly developed.

Ted: I will admit to liking some of the interactions and the platforming was decent when I played it, but this is not as good of a game as you're making it out to be.

Lyssa: It's brilliant.

Ted: I don't think so.

Lyssa: It's brilliant and it's my game of the year so far this year.

Ted: Better than *Turok*? Better than *Terranigma*? Are you kidding me?

Lyssa: It's even better than both of those games, in my opinion.

Ted: Then your opinion's wrong!

Lyssa: Did you even play the same GAME that I did?

Ted: I played it enough to play through all 18 of the action levels, I played through it and got four of the endings. There are 12 endings.

Lyssa: I got seven and I'm going back home after this to get the other five.

Ted: I will admit to this being a very well made game, I'll admit that Syrielle herself is a REALLY interesting character. I thought she was going to be a ripoff of Spider-Man but I was pleasantly surprised to see how complex she was. I liked her. I did not like a lot of the other characters.

Lyssa: So what score are you giving the game?

Ted: I gave it a 3.

Lyssa: I'm giving it a 5.

Ted: \*snorts and shakes his head\*

Lyssa: I personally recommend it to everybody watching this show.

Ted: If you're not into visual novel games, I can't recommend it. If it could've been more like, say, *Snatcher* and *Policenauts*...

Lyssa: Both of which are great games but nothing like *Syrielle*.

Ted: Precisely.

Lyssa: I can't believe you didn't like this game.

Ted: I can't believe you gave it a 5.

-excerpted from the April 29, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

*"I think, when people saw how vigorously Lyssa defended Syrielle, they knew that she could hold her own with the other hosts, and they saw just how passionate of a gamer she really was."*

-Alex Stansfield, from the G4 TV episode "Icons: GameTV"

*"She mentioned having a Commodore 64. I mean, who the hell mentions having a Commodore 64? I didn't even have a Commodore 64!"*

-Brittany Saldita, from the G4 TV episode "Icons: GameTV"

*"For a LONG time after that episode, people thought I hated Ted. I love Ted! I loved him even when we were having a huge fight over Syrielle! He just doesn't like visual novel games. It's okay. I mean, nobody's perfect."*

-Lyssa Fielding, from the G4 TV episode "Icons: GameTV"

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: April 1997**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Elements Of Mana
3. Terranigma
4. Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble
5. Squad Four: Eclipse
6. Tale Phantasia
7. Chrono Trigger
8. World Championship Boxing
9. Super Mario RPG
10. Dog Dash
11. Sam and Max: Freelance Police
12. Marvel Super Heroes
13. Toxic Waste 2
14. Kirby Super Deluxe
15. Super Mario World 2
16. Duke Nukem 3-D
17. Star Wars: TIE Fighter
18. Donkey Kong Country
19. Policenauts
20. Bahamut Lagoon

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: April 1997**

1. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
2. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
3. Boom Island
4. Tekken 2
5. Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain
6. Doom II
7. Tomb Raider
8. Resident Evil
9. Fighters Megamix
10. Time Crisis

### **April 30, 1997**

Ken Kutaragi smiled as he stared at the black box in the glass case in front of him, a box

with a CD-sized slot in the front of it and four controller ports lined up next to one another. It was the completed Ultra Nintendo, and it had just entered mass production in Japan.

"Less than two months now," said Kutaragi quietly, turning to his colleague, Minoru Arakawa. "I feel as if I cannot contain my excitement."

Arakawa too was excited to see the reception that Nintendo and Sony's new gaming device would receive once it was released to the public. The "Artemis" graphics chip provided by Sony brought a new level of fidelity to games that had even blown Shigeru Miyamoto away when he realized how beautiful games like *Super Mario Dimensions* and *Star Fox 2* were going to look.

"Saturn's sales continue to rise," said Arakawa, citing a recent sales report that had Saturn sales near what Super Nintendo CD sales had peaked at just after the release of *Ocarina of Dreams* in Japan. "It will be difficult making up this much ground."

"I don't think it will be," said Kutaragi confidently. "Once the advertising begins it will generate a wave of anticipation unlike anything ever seen before."

"You seem so sure," replied Arakawa. "Yamauchi-san expects sales to be slow at first."

"He also did not expect the Super Famicom CD to succeed as it has done," said Kutaragi. "There was a time when I was the only person who believed in it, and look where I am now. Standing next to you, looking at the greatest video game device ever created. It will sell millions even before it releases in North America."

Arakawa took one more look at the Ultra Nintendo, sleek and shiny in its glass case. He smiled, allowing himself to share in some of Kutaragi's confidence.

Ken Kutaragi had been right about everything else. Minoru Arakawa had no reason to doubt him now.

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*"For the first time on a home console, you can take the awesome multiplayer fun of Doom online. We'll give you the tips and tricks you'll need to compete in Doom NetLink."*

-from the introduction to an article on *Doom II*'s online mode in the July 1997 issue of *GamePro*

*"We would've liked to port Doom II to the SNES-CD, but we put all of our efforts instead toward making the best port possible for the Sega Saturn. We hope our SNES-CD fans aren't disappointed, but we've got plenty coming up for the Ultra. I've been designing Daikatana with the Ultra in mind, so expect that to be pretty amazing."*

-John Romero, in an interview in the June 1997 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"I squeezed every drop I could out of the Super Nintendo CD for Frederico II, using games like NiGHTS as inspiration. I think the results turned out pretty amazing."*

-Silver Sail's Carlos Delgado, talking about *Frederico II* in the August 1997 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"Namco's been doing incredible work with us and Time Crisis is just the latest example of synergy between our companies. We have Fighters Megamix coming to the Saturn very*

*soon, so look out for that!"*

-Tom Kalinske, in an interview in the June 1997 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

*"I am absolutely dedicated to keeping HAL at the forefront of game design innovation as we prepare to launch the Ultra Nintendo. We are working on many games, it is difficult work but I think anyone who plays the Ultra will enjoy the results."*

-Satoru Iwata

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### **Alundra:**

Dan: 8.0

Shoe: 7.5

Crispin: 7.5 (quote: "It's a great action-RPG that will challenge and reward the player.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **ESPN: X-Games:**

Dan: 6.0

Shoe: 5.0

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 5.0 (quote: "The somewhat outdated graphics and simple gameplay keep this collection of extreme sports from being everything it could have been.")

### **Gungriffon:**

Dan: 6.0

Shoe: 7.0 (quote: "This first-person mech piloting games shows lots of promise, but the SNES-CD does struggle to keep the game moving at a playable pace. The Saturn version runs much smoother.")

Crispin: 4.0

Sushi-X: 4.0

### **MLB '98:**

Dan: 7.5

Shoe: 9.0

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.0 (quote: "It's the best looking baseball game on the SNES-CD, even better than Ken Griffey's Winning Run from last year, and the presentation is quite good.")

### **Romancing SaGA 2+3:**

Dan: 8.5 (quote: "A very well put-together collection of classic Super Nintendo RPGs, it doesn't add much in the way of graphics but it's the only way to play these excellent games on Western shores.")

Shoe: 8.5

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Frederico 2: Garcia's Revenge!**

Dan: 8.5

Shoe: 8.0

Crispin: 8.0 (quote: "It's just as fun as the original, though some of the 3-D segments are a bit dull. You'll prefer the 2-D platforming which thankfully makes up a majority of the game's content.")

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Empire: The Steel Kingdom:**

Dan: 9.0

Shoe: 9.0

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.0 (quote: "Move over, Civilization! This title takes the best aspects of nation sims and RTS games to make for the best hybrid-sim game since Actraiser.")

-*Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of May 1997's SNES-CD games in the June and July 1997 issues

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### **May 5, 1997**

Satoru Iwata was seated in his office at HAL Laboratory. Across from him sat Masahiro Sakurai, and the two gentlemen were discussing HAL's upcoming plans for the Ultra Nintendo. The company had just released *Kirby's Adventure 3* in Japan to positive reviews, which left Sakurai free to work on his next project, while Iwata had been asked to help with another matter...

"Sony has asked me to help them with something pertaining to the *Pocket Monsters* games," said Iwata.

"Are they already thinking about the next one?" asked Sakurai. A sequel was inevitable due to the success of *Red and Green*, but he didn't think it would be coming so quickly.

"Yes, but that is not what they asked for my help with," Iwata replied. "They want me to help them with a proof-of-concept for a *Pocket Monsters* game utilizing technology more advanced than what exists on the Game Boy."

Sakurai thought that could only mean work on that battling game for the Ultra Nintendo, the one scheduled for release sometime at the beginning of 1998. Iwata had mentioned working on that game, but it too wasn't what he meant.

"You're talking about *Pocket Monsters Stadium*?"

"No. They want me to help create something for the Super Famicom CD, something that can form the base of the sequel to *Red and Green*. Sony and Nintendo are considering work on a new handheld Game Boy, far more powerful than the Game Boy Color."

Sakurai looked to be in shock. He knew Gunpei Yokoi was starting to become more receptive to advances in handheld tech, but he didn't think Yokoi would let them go THAT far.

"How powerful are we talking about exactly?"

"Possibly more powerful than the Super Nintendo CD," said Iwata. "They're worried that the Saturn's success might drive Sega to try a new handheld and they'd like to beat Sega to market. A new Game Boy could be finished as soon as the end of next year and Sony wants Game Freak to have a new Pokemon game ready for its release."

Sakurai allowed himself a hearty laugh. The prospect of designing games for a new, more powerful Game Boy was exciting, and Iwata seemed pleased about the development as well. If Nintendo was really ready to take handheld technology into the new generation, the men wanted HAL Laboratory to be at the forefront. A new Kirby game for the new handheld would be quite successful, *if* that's what Nintendo was planning to do.

"Well, if you need any ideas on the game, feel free to let me know, you know I'm full of them," said Sakurai. Iwata responded with a smile and a nod.

"Absolutely, I'm sure I'll hit a road block sooner or later. Now....let's discuss that project *you* were talking with me about earlier."

Sakurai had been considering a Nintendo fighting game for quite some time. With Sega having recently launched *Fighters Megamix* in Japan to considerable success, the concept of a video-game fighting mashup was proven, and the technology the Ultra Nintendo offered could easily make for a quality game.

"Well, you know that game *Dragon King* we thought up together? I think that could form a good framework for what I'd like to do," Sakurai began.

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Matt Lauer: And certainly Windows has been a major success.

Katie Couric: Now, I'd like to get your opinion on the recent chess match between Garry Kasparov and the computer Deep Blue. Deep Blue became the first computer to defeat a world chess champion yesterday, what's your take on this historic event?

Bill Gates: Well, certainly it proves that computer technology has advanced so much in the past decade. The idea of a computer chess champion, it seems to the outside observer that something like that would have limited applications, but in reality it opens the door to a whole host of possibilities. Artificial intelligence provides the backbone of modern computing, it allows the computer to do more of the work so that the end user is free to focus on the tasks that they want to perform. The more work the computer can do, the less work the individual using the computer has to do and ultimately you can accomplish a lot more tasks. I've been working everyday to make computing easier for the average person. Windows has helped bring the personal computer into so many more homes, and it's allowing ordinary people to accomplish more things which ultimately is going to enrich the world.

Matt Lauer: And are there any other advancements in computing technology that have piqued your interest?

Bill Gates: Well, I've seen the most recent video gaming device from Nintendo, set to launch

next month in Japan. It's called the Ultra Nintendo, I'm sure you'll be hearing a lot more about it in the coming months, but it's got the most advanced graphics processor of any dedicated gaming device. It's even comparable to some of the processors in a lot of the computers using Windows these days, which is really quite impressive.

Katie Couric: Is that a field in which you'd like to take Microsoft someday, into video games?

Bill Gates: Well, I get asked that from time to time, and the thing is this. Unless we can create a device that does a lot of what the personal computer can do, a device that has a lot of onboard memory to store applications, a device that allows the user to create their own content, a device that allows for an easy connection to the Internet, I still think that the PC is the best platform for gaming. Everything you can do on a home console, you can accomplish with a PC. Maybe in the future, when technology's come a bit farther along, we'll see.

Katie Couric: Well, we've all learned that we can never say never when it comes to Bill Gates.

Bill Gates: \*laughs\*

Katie Couric: A man who's accomplished, I think, so much in the realm of technology.

Bill Gates: I had a lot of help along the way, but thank you.

Matt Lauer: Bill Gates, thank you for coming on the show today. \*shaking his hand\*

Katie Couric: \*shaking Bill Gates' hand\* And you'll be speaking at the New Horizons Technology Conference right here in New York later today.

Bill Gates: Yes, it's going to be a very exciting afternoon.

Katie Couric: We'll take a commercial break, and be right back, here on *Today*.

\*a series of commercials airs, then the show comes back on\*

Katie Couric: Before we continue, we have... some rather sad news to pass along. This news involves one of the great....one of the great legends of American music. Bob Dylan, a legend, and, the voice of a generation, really...um, has died, at the age of 55. We're being told that he died of a heart attack earlier this morning, and...and it's just shocking news because he's right up there with some of the most influential voices in music history.

-excerpted from the May 12, 1997 episode of *Today*

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"*Hell comes to the Sega Saturn!*"- the tagline for the Saturn release of *Doom II*

## **Doom II: The Basics**

On May 15, 1997, *Doom II* is released for the Sega Saturn. The game is in reality a compilation pack containing both the original *Doom* (in its *Ultimate Doom* version) and *Doom II*. While the Saturn is technically capable of a 3-D *Doom* (as seen in OTL's *Doom*

64), the game remains largely in its original sprite style in order to enable the game to fit lots of content across both games (with over 50 playable levels between them). The game also contains a first for a console version of *Doom*: a multiplayer mode that enables up to four people to engage in a deathmatch at once. The multiplayer mode is fairly spartan (only deathmatches and a handful of maps), but it allows some of the popular PC multiplayer aspects of the game to be enjoyed by console players for the first time. It's even enabled for NetLink, allowing Saturn players to connect with one another across the Internet to compete in deathmatches (and also to download a handful of WADs handpicked and uploaded by Id software). *Doom II* quickly becomes the most popular NetLink game and it also spurs an uptick in Saturn modem sales (especially after *Doom II* becomes a pack-in game for it), but it doesn't become the killer app that would have put millions of modems in Saturn owners' homes. The technology is still too crude and unreliable (many players report lag with their 26K connections while playing) for *Doom II* to take off majorly. The game itself is a decent hit, though it doesn't quite match up to the sales of *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*. Still, the game largely makes up for the disaster that was *Doom* on the Mega Charger, and becomes one of the best-selling Sega Saturn games of 1997.

"The *Doom II* port to the Saturn was a real treat, especially since it included the original game for those of us who had a Genesis and missed out on getting a good *Doom* port. The frame rate was excellent even if the graphics were somewhat primitive compared to games like *Turok*. What I liked most was the multiplayer. I never went online with it, but I loved getting three of my friends together and spending the whole night hunting down and killing each other in the spooky levels. The music was some of the best of any of the *Doom* ports, especially since the game let you choose between a hard rock track (called "classic" *Doom*) and a spookier more atmospheric track (called "terror" *Doom*). I would sometimes play through the game during the day with the classic track and then at night I'd crank up the terror track and play through the game on the hardest mode. Taken together, the two games made for one of the most epic first-person shooters of all time, and even for seasoned players you could easily fill up a whole night playing through all the levels. While I waited for *Quake* to finally get released, I passed the time with *Doom II*, one of the best FPSes ever on the Sega Saturn."

-a comment on a Talk Amongst Yourselves article at Kotaku.com

"Porting both *Doom* games to the Saturn was a real cinch since the system was so powerful. It wasn't any problem getting a smooth frame rate and I was just as proud of the *Doom II* port as I was with what we did with *Doom* on the SNES-CD. There was just too much content in *Doom II* to get it to run nearly as well on that system. We really did try, the first game sold something like three million copies on there so if we could've gotten *Doom II* on there, we would've. We just didn't want to half-ass it."

-John Carmack, in an interview in the June 1997 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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One of the last great SNES-CD sequels, *Frederico 2: Garcia's Revenge!* was released in 1997, and the anticipation was quite high considering what a popular sleeper hit the first game had been. *Frederico 2* saw the sombrero-wearing hero return to action after Generalissimo Garcia begins to once again terrorize the land, this time by building a giant mech to smash up everything. He leaves Frederico's girlfriend, the vivacious (and rather busty) Madelina alone this time, instead simply gathering up as many robot parts as he can to build his machines. The game has largely the same exploratory platforming gameplay as the first, but adds in a few 3-D sequences that are somewhat awkward considering the SNES-CD's capabilities at rendering such sequences. The Ultra Nintendo would've handled

them perfectly, but in *Frederico 2* they're fairly mundane, short, and largely extraneous. The boss fights, all of them thankfully in 2-D, are much better than in the first game, with massive monstrosities for Frederico (and his friends) to fight. Madelina will show up from time to time with a silly comment or some items for Frederico to use, and on one occasion she even beats up a boss herself after it stirs back to life following a fight and attacks Frederico. She's much better in this game than in the last game when she spent most of it as Garcia's captive, and it's in this sequel that she became the fan-favorite she is to this day (and not just because of the fan service either). Familiar characters like Nacho the cat and Frederico's buddy Maloney also return to lend help as they always do. Overall, the game received a reception that was a bit muted from the first game (which itself had been such a surprise), but it still sold really well. In fact, it was one of the SNES-CD's best selling new titles of the year. The future of the series clearly looked bright, and fans eagerly waited to see what the next title, which was released on the Ultra Nintendo in 2000, would bring.

-excerpted from "A History Of Frederico" on Nintendomemories.com

Interviewer: Now, we hear the new game has a special theme song, is that true?

Carlos Delgado: It IS true! But you'll have to beat the game to hear it. It was performed by Selena, who of course is pretty much the hottest music star in the world right now.

Interviewer: And how did you ever get Selena?!

Delgado: Well, being friends with her husband helps! \*laughs\* She was really excited to do the theme song for this game and our music director was excited to write something up. It's a little Latin-styled James Bond kind of thing, not very long but it's pretty funny. You'll enjoy hearing it as a nice little reward for beating the game.

Interview: Well, *Frederico 2* comes out on May 19 for the Super Nintendo CD! Don't miss it!

-excerpted from an interview with Carlos Delgado in the May 1997 issue of *Hispanic Tech News* magazine

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*"Alundra isn't quite The Legend Of Zelda, but it's still an excellent action-RPG for the Super Nintendo CD, its second great such title in a year after Terranigma. The system might be entering the last phase of its lifespan, but if you're a fan of hack and slash dungeon crawlers, it's still pumping out the hits."*

-excerpted from *Alundra's* 4.375/5 review in the June 1997 issue of *GamePro* magazine

*"We were spending a lot of time working on Starseekers of Exion at the time, that was our big project, but Alundra was a labor of love for the people who worked on localizing it. We didn't want to take it lightly even though it wasn't our big thing at the time, so I spent a lot of time micromanaging that game and making sure that our team was putting in the necessary work. The result is a game that I think was one of our best pieces of work, and once again showed the thought and effort we put into all of our games."*

-Victor Ireland

*Alundra is the newest RPG for the Super Nintendo CD! It's full of mysterious dungeons and lovable characters, in one of the most epic quests you'll ever undertake! The game disc also contains an exclusive demo of Starseekers of Exion, which we'll be covering extensively in next month's issue.*

-introduction to *Nintendo Power's* article on *Alundra* in the May 1997 Epic Center

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And what *Empire: The Steel Kingdom* lacks in graphics, it makes up for in terms of sheer depth and variety of gameplay. It's very reminiscent of the game *ActRaiser* back in 1992, that required you to micro-manage a town and then go out and battle bad guys in various platforming levels. Here, you have to micromanage your kingdom while expanding into other territories to build your empire. If you keep too tight or tyrannical a reign on your people, expect rebellions and defections. If you allow too much freedom, you might get overthrown or your kingdom could be infiltrated by spies. Of course, you also have to decide which nations to slaughter and which to absorb into your empire. A particularly strong band of soldiers could form a valuable division of your army, or they could become unruly and make trouble from within. It's one of the deepest strategy games in a long time, with an excellent combat system that's even more advanced than some of Koei's RTS titles, and it's a sim with all the smarts and strategy of *Sid Meier's Civilization*. It's among the very best strategy titles on the Super Nintendo CD, and if you can look past the somewhat archaic visuals, you have a very deep and fun nation-sim on your hands.

Graphics: 3.0  
Sound: 4.0  
Play Control: 4.5  
Fun Factor: 5.0  
Challenge: Advanced

-excerpted from the review of *Empire: The Steel Kingdom* in the June 1997 issue of *GamePro* magazine

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### **Namco Brings The Big Guns To Saturn**

*Time Crisis* is just the latest Namco arcade hit to come to the Sega Saturn in recent months, but it won't be the last. A console version of *Point Blank* is in the works, and the company says that it hopes to bring more such games to the Saturn in the future. Of course, the Namco/Saturn partnership has largely hinged on the company's fighting games, and next month, North America will finally see the long anticipated *Fighters Megamix*, a collaboration between the two companies that will bring characters from some of their biggest fighting game franchises together at last. It's the most pre-ordered Sega Saturn game since *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*, and fans hope the game can deliver on everything the two companies have promised.

In addition to the shooting and fighting games, Namco is publishing a game that they say will counter the Ultra Nintendo's *Final Fantasy VII*, set to release some time in the launch window of the Ultra Nintendo. Titled *Windborn*, the game is an old-school fantasy RPG with highly stylized graphics and a quest that Namco says will require over 60 hours to complete. Reviews of the game in Japan have been highly positive, including a 39/40 in *Famitsu* magazine and rave reviews from a hit Japanese television show that reviews popular video games. Namco, who once considered purchasing Telenet Japan's Wolf Team division (which created the hit *Tale Phantasia* for the Super Nintendo CD, intends to push *Windborn* hard in the West, to avoid the niche label that most Japanese RPGs not called some variant of *Final Fantasy* seem to bear. A number of RPGs are scheduled to be released for the Saturn in the

coming months, including an RPG starring the mascot Sonic the Hedgehog, but Namco is hoping that *Windborn* surpasses them all and further cements the lucrative relationship between Sega and itself.

### **May 20, 1997**

Sega and Namco executives had gathered at Sega of Japan's headquarters to discuss the latest business pertaining to both their companies. Sega president Hayao Nakayama had recently approved a venture to improve the Saturn's technological prowess in the wake of the impending Ultra Nintendo release, and he knew that Namco would need to be involved every step of the way.

"Gentlemen, today I would like to discuss a new endeavor," said Nakayama, "one that will bring our companies' games to the forefront of technology. As you all know, the Saturn is technologically inferior to the Ultra Nintendo, despite our best efforts to futureproof the system. It is clear that we will need to enhance the Saturn to have a better chance at maintaining our market share once Nintendo's system is released. Therefore, I present to you the prototype for the "Ring" of Saturn, a device that will provide a memory boost to the Saturn to make it significantly closer to Nintendo's system in terms of capability."

A schematic for the prototype appeared on a projection screen. The executives from both companies studied it carefully as Nakayama continued to speak.

"The Ring will expand the Saturn's memory and perhaps even provide increased processing capabilities, similar to the Mega Charger device for the Sega Genesis. We will announce the Ring sometime next year, once all of the technical specifics are in place. We hope that Namco will contribute some ideas or certainly some games that will utilize this device."

One of the men from Namco, a high-ranking technician within the company, raised his hand to speak. Nakayama nodded.

"Will this device enable the Saturn to match the capabilities of our next generation arcade technology?"

"The next generation of arcade games will still likely need to be pared down somewhat to be playable on the Saturn," said Nakayama. "However, the Ring device will allow them to run in a form that will be nearly indistinguishable from their original counterparts."

The men from Namco exchanged whispers, but seemed pleased with the announcement regardless. Internally at Namco, there had been some recent consideration of revising the company's agreement with Sega to allow the company to make Nintendo games starting in 1999. Certain arcade titles would remain exclusive to the Saturn, but the company could make games that would take advantage of the increased capabilities of the Ultra Nintendo. With the announcement that Sega was taking steps to close the gap between the two consoles, the men could take the news back to Namco, and could hopefully head off talks of re-negotiating their contract with Sega, at least for the moment. It was clear that Sega had begun taking pre-emptive moves to counter Nintendo's impressive new console.

"The *Soul Edge* sequel, it will likely only be possible on the Saturn with this new Ring device. We're looking to create the most advanced arcade game ever. Having it exclusive to the Saturn would be a major benefit, but only if it truly looks comparable to what it will look like in the arcades," said Hiroaki Yotoryama, whose Project Soul group was already hard at

work on what would come to be known as *Soul Calibur*. "Can the Saturn provide the graphical fidelity we'll need?"

"Absolutely," said Nakayama confidently. "We're looking to make *Soul Calibur* one of the biggest Saturn releases ever. It'll blow Nintendo and their *Killer Instinct* sequel right out of the water. That's why we need your help to make the Ring a reality."

"We'll do whatever is needed," said one of the Namco executives. "We believe the Sega Saturn is the console of the present and the future."

"Then let's get to work," said Nakayama.

-

Ted Crosley: *Doom II*, is it better on the Saturn than it is on the PC? Yes? No?

Alex Stansfield: Yes, with some caveats. The PC does provide a level of customization that you just can't get on the Saturn, and of course the online play is superior on a PC.

Ted: You know, I tried Sega's online service for this game and it was actually pretty fun. If you've got a decent 28K connection, there's really not much lag at all, it's just like playing with your friends at home. Which, by the way....THANK YOU, Sega, for finally bringing us multiplayer console Doom!

Alex: Right, the multiplayer is a really nice addition to what's already an outstanding single player campaign. Combining *Doom* and *Doom II* into one makes for a truly epic marathon game that any *Doom* fan will want to spend a whole weekend just plowing through.

Ted: And the multiplayer?

Alex: Coulda been better. They could've had more levels, bigger ones, and a capture the flag mode would've been nice.

Ted: Capture the flag is for kids at summer camp.

Alex: Capture the flag is fun as hell in an FPS!

Ted: Deathmatches are where it's at, and *Doom II* has some of the best deathmatch action ever.

Alex: I won't disagree with that, I did have a lot of fun even with the paltry stage selection. Honestly, you can't really go wrong with this game. I had some quibbles but they're mostly minor, *Doom II* is one of the best shooters out there for the Sega Saturn.

Ted: Agreed, I give *Doom II* for the Saturn a 4.5 out of 5.

Alex: A 4.5 from me too.

-excerpted from the May 13, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany Saldita: So in the end, *Frederico 2: Garcia's Revenge* won't win any awards for innovation, but it's still a great action game and one of the best looking games on the Super Nintendo CD.

Lyssa Fielding: Right, it doesn't really build on the first but it does everything that the first game did right, AND it introduced a lot of quirky new characters.

Brittany: Like Salazar the blacksmith, he cracks some pretty funny jokes when you visit his shop.

Lyssa: And don't forget that we see a LOT more of Frederico's sassy girlfriend Madelina.

Brittany: You'd think she'd be just another damsel in distress, but this time she actually gets to stretch her legs and help Frederico out.

Lyssa: Oh? You had doubts about her?

Brittany: Well, she does seem to attract a lot of the male gaze.

Lyssa: Hey now, just because a girl has big boobs- \*she puts her hands on her own chest\* doesn't mean she can't be fun and interesting.

Brittany: Well of course YOU'RE fun and interesting! \*laughing\* No, no, I like what they did with Madelina in this game. She kind of reminds me of those wacky talk show hosts on the Spanish language channels. Very energetic and vivacious.

Lyssa: Oh yeah, you can understand those weird soap operas, can't you?

Brittany: Yeah, why, wanna watch 'em together and have me explain what's going on?

Lyssa: Are you sure you can tear yourself away from *Tale Phantasia* long enough to watch them with me?

Brittany: *Ay dios mio*, they told you about that?!

Lyssa: It's okay, I used to be obsessed with *Super Mario Bros.* like that too. ...\*smirks\* When I was 12.

Brittany: Okay, things are about to get VERY Mexican soap opera up in here... \*fuming\*

Lyssa: \*snickering\* Settle down, what's your score for *Frederico 2*?

Brittany: I'm giving it a 4, because while it's a really fun game to play, it doesn't improve significantly on the first game other than a graphical bump and an increased role for the best side characters.

Lyssa: A 4 sounds about right. Okay, so in the show with the two heiresses fighting over their dad's fortune, what's the old guy with one tooth saying when the younger girl goes to see him about mixing up a batch of poison?

Brittany: Oh, I have no idea.

Lyssa: Don't you know Spanish?

Brittany: Well yeah, but the guy only has one tooth, so...

Lyssa: Oh, yeah. Maybe he's saying, "I should have flossed more often?" \*walking off the stage with Brittany as the show goes to commercial\*

-excerpted from the May 20, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

\*The six hosts of *GameTV* are standing outside of the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum.\*

Ted: I'm Ted Crosley!

Alex: And I'm Alex Stansfield!

Ted: And we're here at the LA Coliseum, because it's Sports Week on *GameTV*!

Alex: That's right, we're going to be holding the *GameTV* Games where us six hosts will compete in a series of athletic events to decide which one of us is the best at sports!

Ted: And while we're doing that, we'll be reviewing some of this month's sports themed games! We'll be taking a look at *MLB '98* for the Super Nintendo CD and the Sega Saturn! Plus, we'll check out *ESPN: X-Games* for the SNES-CD. We're also gonna review the new arcade game *NFL Blitz*, where the games are short but the hits are brutal!

John Walden: And we'll also show you how to kick ass at the NBA arcade game *NBA Hangtime*, with some tips from the pros right here on *GameTV*.

Lyssa: Hey guys, don't forget, we took an exclusive tour at EA Sports, where we got to see a sneak peek at some of the upcoming games for this year, including *NBA Live 98*, *Madden 98*, and *NHL '98*!

Brittany: So get off that couch! Oh, wait....get ON the couch and watch us do the exercising for you!

Ted: We're bringing you previews, reviews, and news to help you choose. This is Sports Week on *GameTV*!

-the intro sequence to the May 27, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Alex: We're back, and this game of HORSE is about to enter its final stage. Ted and Brittany are the last two left standing and they're both at S, so whoever can put a letter on the other person next will win the game.

Ted: \*is standing about 18 feet back from the hoop, his back is turned and he's going to try a behind the back shot\*

Brittany: You're not gonna make that in a million years.

Ted: \*takes a few dribbles\*

Lyssa: Miss it!

John: If this goes in, this is gonna be...

\*Ted flings the ball back over his head and it goes in the hoop, nothing but net. Everyone cheers, even Brittany who has a bewildered and dismayed look on her face as Ted hands her the ball.\*

Alex: I can't believe that went in!

Gary: Oh man. Oh man, Brittany...

Brittany: I'll make this. \*stands where Ted stood and turns her back to the hoop\*  
Everybody cheer me on!

Ted: Booooooooo!

Lyssa: Come on, Brittany!

Alex: I think she can hit it.

Ted: I don't think so.

Brittany: \*takes the shot, the ball actually bounces around the rim a couple times but slides off\*

Ted: Yeah!

Lyssa: Awwwww!

Brittany: \*bleep\*!

Lyssa: That was close though!

Brittany: That was close, it almost went in!

Ted: I win! I win the first event! I'm the HORSE master! \*doing a silly dance\*

Brittany: Don't rub it in.

Alex: All right, we're gonna review *MLB '98* while we set up for the next event.

(...)

Ted: So when it comes right down to it, *MLB '98* is a solid game, I thought it really improved on last year's with a lot more options and way better presentation. The Saturn version especially I thought was way better. You've got a much better home run derby mode, a lot more customization options...

Alex: Yeah, the SNES-CD version is all right but obviously the Saturn version is significantly better.

Ted: The hitting in both games I thought was better, the new swing system works great on both consoles and I thought it was a lot easier to take the kinds of swings I wanted to take.

Alex: The SNES-CD is still a great system for sports games, though. It's not the kind of cutting-edge TV like stuff you get on the Saturn but still some really good games and MLB '98 is no exception. I give the SNES-CD version a 3.5 and the Saturn version a 4.

Ted: I'm giving a 3 to the SNES-CD version and a 4 to the Saturn version.

(...)

\*Ted, Alex, Brittany, John, Lyssa, and Gary are totally soaked after a water gun fight that Brittany won, she's only slightly less soaked than the others\*

Alex: You play NASTY!

Brittany: I play for keeps, bitches! \*she swings her hips around and raises her water gun up and down\*

Lyssa: I'm sore all over.

Gary: Why did you guys all come after me? Honestly!

Ted: Well, Brittany won the water gun fight, I still don't see how water gun fights are a sport but she won fair and square....sort of. We want to thank Larami for donating these awesome new Super Soaker CPS-2000, Constant Pressure System water guns for us to use...

Alex: Water guns which will soon be banned by the Geneva Convention....

Brittany: \*pumps up her water gun and sprays Alex in the shoulder\*

Alex: Aaaahhh! \*bleep\*! \*bleep\*!

Ted: \*laughing at Alex's misfortune\* We'll do the final event soon but first, check out our review of *ESPN: X-Games*.

(...)

Gary: The variety of events in this game is nice, but the presentation leaves a lot to be desired.

John: I gotta agree, the commentary, which is pretty limited, doesn't really sync up with the events on the screen...

Gary: Right, I don't want to hear "Right on! Killer!" every time I wipe out trying to pull a 540 bike jump.

John: It gets annoying REALLY fast.

Gary: I think ESPN could've waited for the Ultra to release this because the technical limitations of the SNES-CD really come to light here. The controls are decent but again, a more advanced controller might've helped, it's hard to pull off advanced tricks on some of the events.

John: *ESPN: X-Games* is like half of a game. If you're a fan of the X-Games on TV, I mean, REALLY a huge fan....I still can't recommend this, watching them on TV is a lot more fun. Hell, going to the skate park and scraping up your knees is debateably more fun than this game.

Gary: When I was a kid, scraping up your knees at the skate park was a badge of honor. "Hey, look at this cool kid, he's bleeding, he must be totally awesome!"

John: Yeah, I remember when I got a cast back when I was 10 and all the cute girls were signing it.

Gary: Lyssa, if I got hurt skateboarding, would you sign my cast?

Lyssa: Yeah sure, I'd sign it, "nice compound fracture, moron!"

John: Man, that's harsh! And I'm gonna be just as harsh on this game. 2 outta 5.

Gary: 2.5 from me. It's at least got the base of a decent game there. Maybe next year on the next-gen systems it'll be better.

(...)

Alex: And the winner of the first ever *GameTV* Games is Ted Crosley! His team beat Brittany's team in Ultimate Frisbee, 7 to 4.

Ted: Yeah, thanks to your awesome skills, buddy. \*wraps his arm around Alex's shoulder\*

Brittany: \*groaning\* All right, well, I win the silver medal and I'm keeping the water gun in case Ted tries bragging about it too much.

Ted: It'll be worth it!

Brittany: \*lowers her Super Soaker toward his groin\*

Ted: \*laughs nervously\* On second thought I think I'll be a gracious champion...

Alex: Well, next week on *GameTV* we've got the awesome new role playing game *Starseekers Of Exion*, we'll be reviewing it AND we'll be taking you right up to the first boss so if you're a fan of epic role playing adventures like all the good people are, you won't wanna miss it!

Ted: From the beautiful Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, this has been *GameTV*!

\*The credits roll as the hosts playfully point their water guns at each other, Brittany blasts Ted a few times in the back making him yelp.\*

-excerpted from the May 27, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: May 1997**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Rage 2: The Rage Returns
3. Elements Of Mana
4. Terranigma
5. Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble
6. Tale Phantasia
7. Days Of The Hunt
8. Chrono Trigger
9. Squad Four: Eclipse
10. Klepto: Thief In The Night
11. Super Mario RPG
12. World Championship Boxing
13. Super Mario World 2
14. Dog Dash
15. Chocopop!
16. Donkey Kong Country
17. Policenauts
18. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
19. Sam and Max: Freelance Police
20. Kirby Super Deluxe

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart – May 1997**

1. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
2. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
3. Doom II
4. Tekken 2
5. Fighters Megamix
6. Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain
7. Tomb Raider
8. Time Crisis
9. Resident Evil
10. Boom Island

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### **May 27, 1997**

Michael Burns had spent a fun afternoon playing *Doom II* on the Saturn with his friends, but the day had taken a somewhat frightening turn. Now he was crouched in a closet with one of his friends as sirens blared outside.

"Tornado emergency...?" said Michael somewhat nervously, referring to the extremely frantic nature of the warnings that were flashing on their television. "I've never heard anything like that before."

"They're saying on the news it totally wiped out a neighborhood a half an hour from here," said Michael's friend, an equally nervous tone in his voice. The two didn't have a basement, but the house they were in was really sturdy and the closet they were taking shelter in was far from any windows or from the sides of the house. "Like every house, clean off the map."

"Shit..." Michael muttered under his breath. Outside, the wind was blowing and the sky was an ugly green, while on the news, the weather man had a dire tone as he continued to discuss the huge tornado slowly churning its way through the suburbs north of Austin, demolishing nearly every building it hit. "Should we have tried to get out? Like drive away?"

"Dude, you never drive away from a fucking tornado, didn't you see what happened up on I-35?"

"Yeah, but....those people had no idea the thing was coming..." said Michael, his voice trembling a bit as he remembered what he'd seen on the television just before he and his friend had decided to take shelter. The tornado engulfed the highway, packed with cars, and after it passed, it left a wide section of scoured asphalt...and no cars. "I just....maybe we oughta go next door or something, they got a basement, maybe..."

His voice trailed off. The loud rumbling outside was getting louder and louder. The tornado was bearing down.

"Burnie, help me get this mattress over us!" screamed Michael's friend over the rapidly loudening roaring of the tornado. "Oh shit, here it comes....!"

The two young men huddled in the closet with the mattress over them, listening to the tornado as it got closer and closer. Michael could feel his ears popping as the pressure suddenly dropped...then he could hear the outer walls of the house ripping away.

"FUCK!" he shouted, his voice unable to be heard over the ferocity of the tornado. The closet began to shake. "Oh fuck! OH FUCK!"

The last thing Michael Burns and his friend ever saw was a black wall of death engulfing them as the wall of the closet was torn away.

## **May 28, 1997**

By the time it was all over, the Central Texas Tornado Outbreak of 1997 (known in some circles, particularly in Texas, as "Super Outbreak II") had claimed 496 lives. The steepest butcher's bill by far had been exacted by the tornado that had started in a field in Jarrell, wiped a neighborhood off the map, then remained on the ground as it moved, somewhat slowly at 20 miles per hour, toward the northern suburbs of Austin. Though the tornado would kill 471 and injure thousands, its relatively slow forward speed undoubtedly saved thousands of lives, giving people in the crowded urban area the time they needed to either take adequate shelter (which in the case of this particular tornado was either deep underground or in a reinforced concrete storm bunker) or flee the tornado's path in their vehicles. While this seemed to defy all conventional knowledge about what one should do in a tornado, the long lead time made this a strategy that actually saved many lives... though it did kill many who attempted to flee too late: nearly half the deaths from the tornado occurred when it passed directly over a packed Interstate 35, shredding over a hundred cars and leaving only five survivors among those whose cars were destroyed in the winds. The tornado, the strongest ever recorded, left a scar in the Earth nearly a mile wide and 40

miles long. A mobile Doppler radar van measured the tornado's wind speed at 347 miles per hour, a figure that would be debated and disputed for years to come, but led many in the media to dub the tornado an F6, previously thought "inconceivable" (officially, meteorologists awarded the tornado an F5 rating based on the actual damage reports, which included hundreds of houses completely removed from their foundations, and an entire shopping mall erased, leaving only a few twisted steel beams standing, in a miraculous occurrence, no one died at the mall, the people inside having all been ushered into an underground area of the building that had once been designated as a Cold War fallout shelter). The tornado prompted the first ever "tornado emergency", issued as the storm seemed on an inexorable course to slam into downtown Austin, but mercifully roped out and lifted up just two miles from downtown.

The day after the outbreak, President Bill Clinton came to Texas, flying over the areas worst hit by the storm before making a speech to a packed audience in Austin.

"And though this disaster has tested the resolve of those who have lost friends, loved ones, homes... the people of Texas are strong and they will rebuild. We will rebuild from this storm. We will clean up the damage and these homes that were destroyed, these businesses that were damaged, they will be rebuilt and we will come out of this stronger. The people of Texas have come together in this time of great need and great suffering, and I have already seen the spirits of these people. I have heard the stories of lives saved by the courage and quick thinking of those caught in this storm's path. And as you rebuild from the storm, America is with you. Our hearts are with you, our thoughts are with you, our prayers are with you and America stands with you!"

The gathered crowd cheered and applauded, and President Clinton continued his speech.

"There is no storm furious enough to break the will of the American people. God bless the people of Texas, and God bless the United States of America."

The crowd cheered again, and President Clinton turned to embrace a woman who had lost all seven of her kids when the house her children had been sheltering in was shredded by the tornado. The woman still had tears streaking down her face as Clinton embraced her, trying as best he could to reassure her.

"*These were the kinds of days I was grateful I had Monica for...*" thought the president, thinking back to his affair with a young intern named Monica Lewinsky, whom he'd turned to for comfort when the stresses of the job began to weigh heavily on him. The two had stopped meeting about two months before, but the job hadn't gotten any easier for Clinton, even after being elected to another term. Now, he faced the worst tragedy of his administration, and though his skills at comforting the American people were proving useful once again, the pain he felt when he listened to the stories of the tornadoes' victims was something he couldn't heal.

"*There was nothing you could've done...*" he remembered his wife Hillary telling him before he'd left to go to Texas. And she was right, of course, even a president couldn't stop Mother Nature. He had to keep repeating those words in his head as he toured the damage sites. There are things even a president can't prevent, and a tornado was just about at the top of the list.

He longed to get back to Washington as soon as he could. He'd have to deal with a hostile Republican Congress, but that he at least had some measure of control over.

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"Sega brings the arcade hits home. And now, Sega brings them all to you... in a single game!"

-the intro to the *Fighters Megamix* TV commercial

"*Fighters Megamix* was the culmination of all the arcade fighting games we'd been able to have on the Saturn. It was a celebration of the fighting game craze that had swept the arcade world for the past six years and we were hoping it would be the hit of the year."

-*Fighters Megamix* director Hiroshi Kataoka

"*Starseekers Of Exion*, with its three discs and enough cutscenes to make an anime movie, was a truly epic adventure and the last of the great fourth-generation JRPGs. It was the end of the Golden Age of JRPGs, with *Final Fantasy VII* set to kick off the Silver Age just a few months later."

-from a 2013 article on IGN.com detailing the history of console JRPGs in North America

"I didn't ask for you to come with us! You came on your own! This isn't the time to get homesick or to start crying, it's the time to fight and if you're not ready to fight, then get back on the ship and don't even move until we're all done!"

-Serai, *Starseekers Of Exion*

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### **Blast Corps**

Dan: 8.0

Shoe: 7.0 (quote: "A really ambitious game, but somewhat limited by the SNES-CD's capabilities. We can't wait to see Rare try this one again on the Ultra.")

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Independence Day**

Dan: 4.5

Shoe: 2.0

Crispin: 5.0

Sushi-X: 5.0 (quote: "For such an epic movie, the game itself is mediocre at best.")

### **International Superstar Soccer '98**

Dan: 8.0

Shoe: 8.0

Crispin: 8.5 (quote: "An excellent soccer title featuring great graphics and a huge roster of teams.")

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **NBA Hangtime**

Dan: 6.0  
Shoe: 6.0  
Crispin: 7.0  
Sushi-X: 5.5 (quote: "It's a decently fun game, but it doesn't run nearly as smoothly as the excellent NBA Jam.")

### **Nobunaga's Ambition: The Star Lords**

Dan: 7.5 (quote: "This is a really fun and tricky strategy game that builds on what the last game achieved.")  
Shoe: 6.5  
Crispin: 6.5  
Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Norse By Norsewest**

Dan: 8.0  
Shoe: 9.0 (quote: "One of the best platformers I've ever played and a perfect sequel to the original Lost Vikings.")  
Crispin: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Super Bomberman 4**

Dan: 7.0  
Shoe: 8.5  
Crispin: 7.5 (quote: "It's not a very original game but Bomberman is always fun regardless.")  
Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Annie Oakley In London**

Dan: 6.0  
Shoe: 8.0  
Crispin: 6.0  
Sushi-X: 6.0 (quote: "A really wild, really steampunky game that has a lot of fun moments but isn't very innovative in terms of gameplay.")

### **Starseekers Of Exion**

Dan: 9.0  
Shoe: 9.0  
Crispin: 8.5 (quote: "This is an outstanding RPG with great characters and over 50 hours of fun gameplay.")  
Sushi-X: 8.0

-reviews of June 1997's SNES-CD games in the July and August 1997 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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"*Starseekers Of Exion* was a much bigger project than either of the Lunar games. It was a

*game we created to really push ourselves to our limits in terms of what we could do with a CD-based system, and in a way was a sort of intermediate step between those original Lunar games and the remakes we would do later on. A lot of the lessons we learned with Exion, we applied toward those remakes."*

-Toshiyuki Kabooka, art director at Game Arts

## **Starseekers Of Exion: The Basics**

*Starseekers Of Exion* is a three-disc RPG for the Super Nintendo CD. Developed by Game Arts and published in North America by Working Designs, it's an action RPG, with a combat system that has elements from both *Secret Of Mana* and *Tale Phantasia*. The player explores areas, including towns, dungeons, and the pathways between them, and when enemies are encountered, gameplay remains on the same screen but the player shifts into combat mode, where health and magic bars of the four current party members appear on screen as you fight the enemy with weapons and magic. Once the current combat is completed, experience points and money are gained and sometimes items are dropped. The game also contains puzzle elements with different action items to use outside of battle, as new items are gained, new areas are opened up. The game's graphics are highly detailed, comparable to the graphics that appear in games like *Tale Phantasia*, and the game has a huge musical soundtrack with over 60 songs, along with over 90 minutes of anime cutscenes in by far the most cutscene time of any SNES-CD game (which is the reason for requiring three discs). There are eight playable characters in total: the main character Orlan, a boy who gets caught up in the adventure, a girl named Melina with mysterious magical powers, the no-nonsense captain of the mission Serai, a woman who has a very painful past, Zakki, a wild former space pirate who bonds with Orlan, Luke, a nerdy boy who serves as the ship's bomb maker, Trina, a sharp-shooter who's also somewhat of a joker, Nashua, an older gentleman who's the most experienced crewmember on the ship, and Eileen, the ship's doctor and somewhat of a mad scientist. These eight characters each have distinct roles in battle and part of the strategy of the game is finding the best combination of them to use in a fight. Orlan, Serai, Zakki, and Trina are the more physical characters, while Melina, Luke, Nashua, and Eileen rely more on magic and techniques.

The plot of the game begins more than 3,000 years earlier. The ancient planet of Exion is the galaxy's peak civilization, but a great evil has taken root on the planet. While those few who realize what is going on are trying to preserve nine ancient artifacts to keep them out of the hands of evil, the planet comes apart, with the artifacts being launched into space just in time. In the present day, Serai leads a crew of treasure hunters that includes Melina, Zakki, Luke, Trina, Nashua, and Eileen on a mission to find these artifacts. While on a planet to search for the first one, the planet is attacked by an army from the tyrannical Prism Empire, leaving many dead, including the family of a teenage boy named Orlan, who ends up stowing away on Serai's ship as it leaves the planet with the first artifact in hand. Serai wants to kick Orlan off the ship, but Zakki and Trina want to keep him around, much to the objections of Melina, who doesn't trust him at first. Initially, only Orlan, Melina, and Zakki are playable as party members but as events in the game continue to unfold, others become playable as well, eventually all eight of the ship's crewmembers are available to you (though sometimes events during the game prevent certain party members from joining you, people get separated, etc.). As the game goes on, Serai comes to trust a woman named Clarion, a member of the Prism royal family who wants to try and prevent the artifacts from falling into the wrong hands. Melina has her doubts about Clarion but Serai believes she is the key to stopping the Prism Empire. Eventually, however, at the end of the first disk, Clarion betrays the party and also betrays the Prism higher ups, becoming the queen of the Prism Empire and the main villain of the game. She seeks the dark power of

Xadin, the evil wizard whose corruption destroyed Exion 3,000 years ago, and by bringing the artifacts together, she can achieve the power he never did. Clarion's betrayal leaves Serai in a near catatonic state and for a brief time, Melina becomes the leader of the crew. During the second disc of the game, Melina and Orlan become increasingly close, and eventually, at the end of the second disc, Melina realizes she's in love with Orlan. It's too late, however, as she is abducted by Clarion's dark forces, leading to a huge rescue mission at the start of the third disc that also co-incides with the search for the ninth and final artifact. Eventually, Melina is rescued after two or three dungeons' worth of adventuring, but Clarion manages to seize all of the artifacts and begins to impose her dark will on the galaxy. After a bit more adventuring, the final dungeon is reached. The final boss battle consists of three stages: the first is a fight against Clarion (a very powerful magic user) herself, the second is a fight against Clarion after assuming the power of the artifacts, and the third and final battle is a fight against a monstrous Xadin, who has absorbed Clarion and the artifacts and takes the form of a hideous eidritch beast. In the end, evil is defeated, peace is restored, and Orlan and Melina resume their adventures together, now as a couple, accompanied by Serai and their other friends as they continue to search the galaxy for new quests.

In North America, the game launched with an optional special edition similar to the one for *Tale Phantasia*, making the game a 5-disc set when the bonus music CD and making-of video CD were factored in. Though this special edition didn't include the Official Nintendo Power Player's Guide (which could be purchased separately), it did come with a hardcover 96-page instruction booklet that included a short mini-guide that covered the first few hours of the game. It also included a special oversized poster/map showing all the planets that the team visits over the course of the game. The game itself, though hyped up quite a bit by *Nintendo Power* and other publications, and achieving excellent reviews, doesn't quite reach the sales heights of games like *Terranigma* or the major RPG hits of 1996. It sells a modest but still decent 200,000 copies in North America, not as many as it does in Japan but still enough to make the game a reasonable success and a beloved SNES-CD RPG, perhaps the last great RPG of the fourth generation.

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(A special thanks to Starwarsfan for contributing the roster for TTL's *Fighters Megamix*!)

*"Fighters Megamix combines all the big Saturn arcade hits into one epic battle royale. It's the most strategically deep fighting game yet and we'll help you pick which character you should take into your next arcade showdown."*

-from the June 1997 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

*"So people were saying, well, Super Smash Bros. was obviously a ripoff of Fighters Megamix. And that's not really true. Fighters Megamix, for all its characters and stages, was still essentially a 2-D, Street Fighter-style fighting game, while Smash Bros. is a four-way multiplayer rumble with items and gimmicks and the like. They're two totally different games. Hell, if you really want to get into this conversation, you could just say that Fighters Megamix ripped off X-Men vs. Street Fighter, but you don't hear anybody saying that."*

-James Rolfe, in a blog video recorded on January 10, 2014 comparing the fighting games of the Saturn and the Ultra Nintendo

*"What I remember about the summer of 1997 is sitting around with friends and playing a ton of Fighters Megamix. We all had it and we'd go around to each other's houses and play until we couldn't stay awake any longer. Each of us had our favorite characters to use. We'd*

*make fun of each other for playing with crappy characters, we'd make fun of B.M. for his name, we'd have a hell of a time. That was the game I have a ton of nostalgia for from that year and I'm sure a lot of Saturn players will concur with me."*

-from a comment posted on a subroot at Rootalk.com in 2014

\*scenes play from the various Fox Kids action cartoons of the time, with different lines dubbed in\*

Wolverine: You wanna throw down, bub?

Buttercup: Bring it on!

Sailor Jupiter: I'm gonna take you down!

Red Ranger: You want a piece of me?

\*Images of more than a dozen Fox Kids characters come together on the screen, followed by a cloud of smoke and fighting sounds, symbolizing a massive Fox Kids cartoon melee\*

Announcer: Fox Kids' greatest heroes are mixing it up! And that can only mean one thing...it's time for the Fox Kids Megamix Contest! Sega's *Fighters Megamix* is the biggest game of the summer, an all out brawl between some of your favorite Sega characters! And now, you can bring all the action of *Fighters Megamix* right into your living room! How? Just send a 3x5 postcard with your name, address, and phone number to Fox Kids Megamix Contest! \*gives the Fox Kids contest address\* You can win one of thousands of prizes! Ten grand prize winners will win a brand new Sega Saturn Arcade Set, with copies of *Virtua Fighter 2*, *Virtua Racing*, *Virtua Cop 2*, and a brand new copy of the hit fighting game *Fighters Megamix*! Fifty first prize winners will win a copy of *Fighters Megamix* for their Sega Saturn! One hundred second prize winners will win this awesome *Fighters Megamix* t-shirt, and one thousand third prize winners will get a Fox Kids prize bag with some cool *Fighters Megamix* stuff! So join the rumble and enter the Fox Kids Megamix Contest!

Bubbles: \*flies out of the scrum\* I'm gonna get HARDCORE! \*flies back in\*

Sailor Moon: In the name of the Moon, I'm gonna kick all your butts!

Announcer: Guys, you can stop fighting now! Guys, the commercial's over!

\*The rumble continues, rolling around the screen and overtaking the announcer, who lets out a dismayed yell.\*

-from an advertisement that aired on Fox Kids in June 1997

### **Fighters Megamix: The Basics**

*Fighters Megamix* is a 2-D fighting game with 3-D graphics, released in arcades in late 1996 and for the Sega Saturn in North America on June 12, 1997. It contains characters from a large number of Sega and Namco franchises, including *Virtua Fighter*, *Fighting Vipers*, *Soul*, *Tekken*, *Virtua Cop*, *Sonic*, and others. The game was a major arcade success (IOTL, it was never released to arcades) and received a huge amount of pre-release hype accompanying its Saturn release, both in Japan (in spring 1997) and in North America (in June).

The game's roster includes the following characters: From *Virtua Fighter*: Akira Yuki, Pai Chan, Lau Chan, Wolf Hawkfield, Jeffrey McWild, Kage-Maru, Sarah Bryant, Jack Bryant, Shun Di, Lion Rafale, and Dural. From *Fighting Vipers*: Grace, Bahn, Raxel, Tokio, Sanman, Jane, Candy, Picky, Mahler, B.M., and Kuma-chan. From *Sonic*: Sonic, Amy, Dr. Robotnik, Bark, and Bean. From *Tekken*: Heihachi, Jin, Kazuya, and Jack. From *Soul*: Siegfried and Nightmare. From *Last Bronx*: Yusaku Kudo, NagiHojo, Joe Inagaki, and Hiroshi Tomiie. Other characters included Janet (from *Virtua Cop*), Pac-Man, among several others. Most of the game's characters were unlockable after performing certain tasks within the game, though everything could be unlocked via the use of a wildly distributed cheat code. The game receives good but not great reviews upon release, with *Tekken 2* largely considered the superior game, but its huge roster and mix of characters from many Sega and Namco franchises is the main attraction of the game and it becomes the fastest selling Saturn game since *Turok*, making it the biggest video game hit of the summer.

-

*NBA Hangtime*, which releases on the Super Nintendo CD, the Game Boy Color, and the Sega Saturn later this month is just the latest arcade hit to make the transition to home consoles. Games such as *Tekken 3*, *Mortal Kombat 4*, and *NFL Blitz* are all slated to release on consoles sometime next year, with *Tekken 3* already signed as a Saturn exclusive, and *Mortal Kombat 4* having just been announced as an exclusive to the new Ultra Nintendo system. Though arcade attendance is down overall, the arcade is still heavily influencing the new generation games, with the biggest arcade hits also among the biggest console successes. Partnerships like the one between Sega and Namco have bolstered the profile of arcades and may have been a major influence in the development of the new arcade franchise Sega GameVerse, which is set to open several locations around the country over the next 18 months. Meanwhile, Nintendo's *Killer Instinct 2* is still one of the most popular arcade titles, and the upcoming Ultra Nintendo port is one of that console's most anticipated games.

The success of the games on Sega's Model 3, which, at 266 Mhz is one of the most powerful gaming machines ever created, is going to be a big driver of the Saturn's success going forward. *Tekken 3* is the most popular arcade game in the world, and though that title won't look quite as good on the Saturn as it does in the arcades, should still be a major step forward in home console technology when it launches early next year, and could very easily slow some of the post-launch momentum of Nintendo's Ultra machine. The Model 3 is also seeing the launch in August of a new arcade title, *Kogura Kings*, a fighting game with action platformer elements, said to be inspired by Sega's work with the game company Treasure. *Kogura Kings* is said to alternate between fighting segments and competitive platforming, with the players' performance in the action segments said to directly influence how they'll then perform once the game returns to the fight. It's an innovative and somewhat risky title and will be receiving a Saturn port sometime in 1998.

While Nintendo's modern arcade profile is so far limited to the *Killer Instinct* series, the company is pondering a version of *Mario Kart* for the arcades, said to be an enhanced version of their *Ultra Mario Kart* game which will launch with the Ultra Nintendo in Japan later this month. *Ultra Mario Kart* features only eight playable characters, but Nintendo's arcade version of the game could feature several more, and graphics that surpass even the powerful co-processors of the Ultra system. With *Super Mario Kart* being the third best selling Super Nintendo CD game worldwide, expanding the series to arcades seems like a logical step, and if the transition goes smoothly, it could lead to a wave of arcade hits from the company to rival its days in the early 1980s, where hits like *Mario Bros.* and of course

*Donkey Kong* laid the groundwork for the company's entry into the home console business.

-excerpted from an article in the June 1997 issue of *GameInformer*

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Enix's updates to these games, which were quite primitive when released on the original NES, are small but meaningful. The graphics have been given a significant overhaul, though they still resemble Super Nintendo games and not the games we're used to seeing on the Sega Saturn. The difficulty remains, which will please classic RPG fans but will definitely turn off others. Overall, we're definitely glad to see the first three *Dragon Warrior* games on the Sega Saturn and we hope that IV-VI will be making their way here in the future. They're not the best RPGs, but they're some of the first, and RPG fanatics owe it to themselves to play the games that made later RPG hits possible.

Score: 7/10

-excerpted from the review of *Dragon Warrior I-III* in the June 1997 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

### **Was the transition from working with Nintendo to working with Sega a smooth one, or were there some problems?**

At that time, Tom Kalinske wanted to get a lot of the big Japanese games to North America, and he put plenty of pressure on us to get that done. There were some of us, myself included, who worried about the profitability potential of RPGs on the Saturn, considering that aside from *Phantasy Star*, role-playing games had never been a huge thing on the Genesis. But with the success of RPGs on the Super Nintendo CD, Kalinske felt like Saturn fans would embrace RPGs on the Saturn as well, and there was the plus of not having to compete with Squaresoft. It was a challenge, but one that we were willing to embrace.

### **That first year was a big one. Remaking the first three Dragon Quest games, Soul Blazer, Illusion of Gaia, and then of course there was Planetary Probe which was the big title Enix was doing that year.**

Enix REALLY put pressure on us to get *Planetary Probe* out ahead of *Final Fantasy VII*, since it was Enix's first big 3-D role playing game and they wanted to be able to say that we had a 3-D RPG before Squaresoft did. The quality of the game, thankfully, didn't suffer, but it was a hell of a crunch for the localization team. Compared to *Planetary Probe*, doing the *Dragon Quest* remakes was easy. There wasn't much more text in them than the original ones on the NES, so there wasn't much work to be done on that front. There was less text in those three games than there was in *Final Fantasy VI*. And don't forget about *Krystalshade*, the other big Saturn RPG that we were localizing that year. Actually, *Krystalshade* was probably my favorite game I've done for Enix up to that point. The team that had to work on *Planetary Probe* was jealous of the *Krystalshade* guys, absolutely.

-excerpted from a Gaming.moe interview with Robert Jerauld, former Enix USA producer, November 24, 2014 (OOC: inspired by this OTL interview from November 15 <http://gaming.moe/?p=331> )

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"Not too many people played that original *Blast Corps*, but I was proud of it. We pushed the SNES-CD pretty far and I thought it was just as fun as the sequel. Maybe it didn't look as

*good as what we did on the Ultra, but it was still a hell of a good game."*

-Chris Stamper

## **June 17, 1997**

Chris Stamper sat in his Atlanta hotel room, laptop in his lap, looking over the details of what Rare was going to be showing off at that year's E3. It would be the biggest E3 yet for the company, which was finally going to be revealing its big plans for Nintendo's upcoming Ultra, with games like *Goldeneye 007* and the formal unveiling of what the company had been referring to internally as "Project DREAM".

Yesterday, the company had released *Blast Corps*, a demolition-based action title for the Super Nintendo CD. Though much of what Rare had wanted to do was limited by the technological capabilities of the SNES-CD, the game still received decent reviews, and though nothing had been announced, everyone at Rare, Stamper included, knew they wanted to do a sequel for the Ultra, where technological limitations wouldn't be a problem.

The company was also going to be announcing its final SNES-CD game at the show, a game that, while many in the company thought it was redundant, was ultimately considered necessary due to how many people had played the previous three titles in the series. This time, however, they were going to mix things up. This game was going to be a step up from the last three. Rare was going to go out of the fourth generation with a bang, making the best damn game they possibly could and showing everyone that the company would be a force to be reckoned with once the Ultra Nintendo was released.

Though the company would be revealing many titles for the Ultra Nintendo, Chris Stamper doubted that any of them, even *Goldeneye 007*, would get the kind of reception that they'd get when they announced *Donkey Kong Country 4* for the SNES-CD.

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Brittany Saldita: *Starseekers Of Exion* is a beautiful game, with endearing characters and a ton of awesome anime cutscenes.

Alex Stansfield: Maybe too many anime cutscenes, to be quite honest. You can't skip them and I counted, I think there are more than 50 of them in the game. They pop up all over the place.

Brittany: I think they added a lot to the game. The voice acting was fine, and they looked beautiful. Game Arts has come a long way from the Lunar games on the SNES-CD, these cutscenes looked smooth like real anime. They put a LOT of work into them.

Alex: Here's the thing though. Some of them, some of the longer cutscenes are right before bosses, HARD bosses, and after the boss kicks your ass you gotta watch the whole thing again!

Brittany: You could...NOT get your ass kicked.

Alex: That's not the damn point.

Brittany: It's a fair criticism to make. Putting a three minute cutscene before arguably the hardest boss in the game does make it a pain in the ass to have to reload and watch all of it

again. If that's not your bag then you might have a problem with this game. BUT... I didn't have any problems with it at all. I felt the cutscenes, the voice acting, everything really added to the epic feel of this game. It's not too terribly difficult, I mean there's nothing in this game like there was in Lunar 2...remember having to spend level up points to save?

Alex: \*groans\* Yeah.

Brittany: There's nothing like that in *Starseekers Of Exion*. It's long, it's beautiful, you'll get REALLY attached to the characters by the end of it, I think it's the best RPG of the year and I give it a 5 out of 5.

Alex: That's...really generous, I think. I'm gonna go 4. I definitely recommend it but damn, just let us skip those anime movies!

Brittany: Maybe after the first time, yes, it could use a skip, but you don't want to skip them the first time! They're really beautiful!

(...)

Ted Crosley: So what was your opinion on the long-awaited *Lost Vikings* sequel?

John Walden: Well, *Norse By Norsewest* is a fun game, but I don't think it does enough to distinguish itself from the first game. The new abilities are nice, the new characters are nice-

Ted: I like the dragon.

John: But the graphics are pretty much the same as they were in 1993. Even on the Saturn version, I thought, this looks like a game from 1993.

Ted: Yeah, but graphics aren't everything and it's still nice to get more of *The Lost Vikings*. I felt that the original game was one of the best of 1993. Now, is 1993's best gonna cut it now that it's 1997? I dunno.

John: I'll tell you: it's not.

Ted: But it's not a bad game.

John: No, no, absolutely not a BAD game. You know, that's the thing. A lot of companies, they think, "if it's not broke, don't fix it". Rare's been doing that with the *Donkey Kong Country* games now for three years and those are all great, but this series was never THAT good. Not *Donkey Kong Country* good, anyway.

Ted: So what's the verdict?

John: It's a solid game. The puzzles are entertaining, the new abilities are fun to use, I just wish they'd done more to improve on the first game. 3.5 out of 5.

Ted: I agree with you, it's a 3.5.

-excerpted from the June 3, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

Alex: I have a confession to make, I was NEVER a fan of the *Dragon Warrior* games. I didn't really get into RPGs until *Final Fantasy*. And these games, while they do LOOK nicer, a lot nicer than the originals, I still didn't have much fun playing them.

Gary Westhouse: Well, RPGs have come so far since *Dragon Warrior*...

Alex: Right. Last week we reviewed *Starseekers Of Exion*. And that game, blew me out of the water in terms of how good it looked. And then look at the preview footage for *Final Fantasy VII*...

Gary: Astonishing!

Alex: And I'm NOT the kind of guy to bash a game because the graphics are primitive. But when the gameplay itself is primitive...

Gary: I feel like these games are on the Saturn because Enix wants to give people a chance to play all the old ones before they do *Dragon Warrior VII*, whenever that game is gonna be, and so people will go back and play these and be like... "man, the old ones sucked"!

Alex: Well, I know the series sells huge in Japan. And even here in the States, a lot of people bought the originals. And V and VI were both great.

Gary: Right.

Alex: But even comparing these with like, the classic *Final Fantasy* games...when Square did *Final Fantasy Origins*, they improved those games. It was subtle but those games played more like modern *Final Fantasy* games. And Enix did NOTHING to improve these original three. I give *Dragon Warrior I-III* a 1 out of 5.

Gary: That is harsh. That's harsh as hell-

Alex: Why's it harsh?

Gary: They're faithful ports.

Alex: Of lousy games.

Gary: Here's the thing. Partly, I want to judge them on how well they hold up today. And that's...admittedly pretty bad. But this is a well put together remake. And on those merits, I'm giving this compilation a 2.5.

Alex: You just said they sucked!

Gary: If you liked the original three on the NES and you have a Saturn, they're worth picking up.

Alex: So if you're one of like two people who had an NES and has a Saturn now...

Gary: There's a LOT more than two people who have both.

Alex: Okay, okay, but still. If you want to know what REALLY old RPGs are like, then yes, pick this up. If you're like a normal person who realizes that games have moved on from

those days, stay far, far away.

-excerpted from the June 10, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

Ted: Apart from its huge roster, *Fighters Megamix* doesn't do much to distinguish itself from games like *Virtua Fighter 2*. I feel like the big thing about this game is its roster. The actual gameplay... is fine, but...

Alex: The dodge feature is pretty innovative.

Ted: You know, that is. You don't have to block, you can sidestep moves and that does add a layer of strategy to the game. And you know what else is awesome?

Alex: What?

Ted: Getting to play as a giant chunk of meat!

\*shows footage of Mr. Meat beating on people\*

Alex: You're about to make a bunch of jokes about beating meat, aren't you?

Ted: NOBODY beats my meat.

Alex: You know, for what it is, *Fighters Megamix* is a pretty fun game. For those of you who've wanted to see Sonic and Nightmare beat the hell out of each other, this is your game. For those of you who want a fighting game as good as *Tekken 2* or *VF2*, you might want to look elsewhere.

Ted: I agree, it's more of a gimmick game than something that's going to change the fighting game landscape, but it's still a really great gimmick and I'll go ahead and give it a 3.5 out of 5.

Alex: I'm gonna give it a 4. It's really fun to play, I think fighting game fans should pick it up, just know what you're getting into.

-excerpted from the June 17, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: June 1997**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Terranigma
3. Elements Of Mana
4. Tale Phantasia
5. Dragon Quest VI
6. Rage 2: The Rage Returns
7. Chrono Trigger
8. Sailor Moon
9. Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble
10. Commander Keen: The Universe Is Toast
11. Super Mario RPG

12. Squad Four: Eclipse
13. Deadman Sam 3
14. Days Of The Hunt
15. Shin Megami Tensei: Persona
16. Dog Dash
17. Super Mario World 2
18. Klepto: Thief In The Night
19. Command And Conquer
20. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart – June 1997**

1. Fighters Megamix
2. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
3. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
4. Doom II
5. Sonic Jam
6. Tekken 2
7. Tomb Raider
8. NBA Hangtime
9. Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain
10. Resident Evil

-

Super Mario Dimensions – 40/40

Ultra Mario Kart – 35/40

Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night – 39/40

Wave Race – 33/40

Ultra International Superstar Soccer – 31/40

Ultra Adventurers – 24/40

Doraemon: Nobita to Mittsu no Seireiseki – 29/40

Gasu Hikari no Senshi – 29/40

-*Famitsu's* reviews of the Ultra Nintendo's eight Japanese launch titles

### **June 22, 1997**

The Ultra Nintendo is launched in Japan, with eight launch titles. The biggest seller among these launch titles is *Super Mario Dimensions*, the long-awaited 3-D Mario platformer developed by Shigeru Miyamoto. Nearly 85 percent of the people who by the Ultra Nintendo on launch week purchase the game. The system is an immediate sales success in Japan, becoming one of the biggest product launches of all time. The week that the Ultra Nintendo is released in Japan, Saturn sales there drop nearly 40 percent from the previous week, while the Ultra Nintendo's 800,000 units sold easily dwarfs the launches of all previous Nintendo consoles there. Reviews for all of the launch games rank from mediocre (in the case of the Camelot-developed *Ultra Adventurers* and the Japanese-only *Gasu Hikari no Senshi*, a puzzle/2-D platforming game), to among the best reviewed games of all time (both *Super Mario Dimensions* and *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* are considered among the best games ever released, with a perfect and near-perfect score from *Famitsu* respectively). Sales continue to remain strong after the first week, with shortages reported in many places. The console launches in Japan with a 44,000 yen price tag, at the time equivalent to around \$335 in the States. With E3 having come and gone (and most of the

Ultra Nintendo's Western launch details having been revealed), the Japanese launch only adds to the intense amount of hype among the gaming community for the Ultra Nintendo's international launch. Despite the Ultra Nintendo's region locking (albeit weak and easily circumvented), imports of the console from Japan become commonplace over the next few months, especially after Squaresoft launches the hotly anticipated *Final Fantasy VII* in August. With an even more robust lineup of launch titles planned for the States, Nintendo anticipates selling one million Ultra Nintendo consoles in the first week after launch in North America. Production on the console ramps up in anticipation.

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*"Nintendo had given us a little taste of the Ultra at E3 1996, but what they showed us at E3 1997 blew everyone out of the building. It was a moment comparable to the first unveiling of the Super Nintendo CD at CES 1992, and everyone pretty much stood up and took notice."*

-Dan "Shoe" Hsu

*"When we saw what the Ultra Nintendo was capable of, I think I realized that my job had just gotten a lot harder."*

-Tom Kalinske

*"There weren't many long lines in Atlanta, but there were a lot of long walks! The place they had E3 in that year, it was just huge! I mean, I was glad there were plenty of kiosks for all the media to play games on, but I definitely got a workout that week."*

-Ted Crosley

*"My favorite E3 probably had to be the one in 1997. Our games were just huge that year. Quake, Daikatana, of course... it was the first year that Nintendo and Sega both had their next-gen consoles ready to go and our games took the show by storm. Well, and then there was that Goldeneye game..."*

-John Romero

*"1998 was going to be the Year of Rare, and for the first time ever, we had our own presser at E3! Me and Chris felt like rock stars that year. It was just about the only place that a couple of nerdy Brits could look like rock stars, outside of, I dunno, maybe a Doctor Who convention."*

-Tim Stamper

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## **June 19, 1997**

\*Howard Lincoln takes the stage.\*

*"Good morning, everybody. Twelve years ago, we introduced the Nintendo Entertainment System to North America, a console that revolutionized gaming forever. In 1991, we introduced the Super Nintendo, and the year after that, we teamed up with Sony to create the Super Nintendo CD, utilizing the new compact disc format to create games that were bigger and better, games that once again redefined what it meant to play a video game. This year, we're going to do it again. This year, the Ultra Nintendo will be released in North*

*America and around the world."*

*\*A picture of the Ultra Nintendo is shown, a black rectangular looking console with four controller slots and a slot for discs.\**

*"The Ultra Nintendo is the next generation of video game technology, the most powerful and advanced gaming device ever made. With dozens of companies already signed on to produce games for the Ultra Nintendo, it will also be the most innovative gaming device ever made. We're going to show you more than 50 upcoming Ultra Nintendo games this year at E3, most of which will be playable on the showroom floor. We'll be introducing some of these games shortly, but first, take a look at the innovation that our software partners, as well as the talented game makers at Nintendo and Sony, will be bringing to our newest game console."*

*\*A five-minute video, set to U2's "Where The Streets Have No Name", plays, showing off footage from games like Super Mario Dimensions, Final Fantasy VII, Ultra Mario Kart, Star Fox 2, Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night, Goldeneye 007, Yoshi's Story, Wave Race, Ballistic Limit 2, Oddworld: Abe's Odyssey, 1080 Snowboarding, Gran Turismo, Einhander, and more than a dozen other games, including early preview footage of Tale Phantasia 2 and the new Zelda game. When the video ends, there is raucous applause from the crowd.\**

*"As you can see, we have been preparing for this launch for a very long time, and on November 21st..."*

*\*The crowd applauds again as the release date is displayed on screen.\**

*"On November 21st, the Ultra Nintendo will launch in the United States and Canada, for \$299, with Super Mario Dimensions, Mario's newest and greatest adventure, as the pack-in game."*

*\*There is more applause as the price and pack-in are revealed.\**

*"The Ultra Nintendo brings a whole host of technological innovations to the table, and before we show you some of the many, many games that will be on display at this year's show, I'd like to introduce Mr. Ken Kutaragi, who has some more information about the Ultra Nintendo that we'd like to share."*

*\*Ken Kutaragi steps out, a smile on his face as he goes over to Howard Lincoln and shakes hands with him, the two hug briefly and then Kutaragi steps up to the stage.\**

*"Good morning, I'm Ken Kutaragi and I am the head of development at Sony Interactive Entertainment. When I first proposed the idea of a Super Nintendo CD nearly a decade ago, I could not have imagined that it would lead to the most successful partnership in the history of this industry. But with the trust that so many have placed in me, I hope that I have been able to give all of you the very best that Sony has to offer. Right now I would like to discuss the new storage medium for the games of the Ultra Nintendo." \*he holds up a disc that looks identical to a CD but with a gold surface\* "This is the GigaDisc, capable of holding up to one gigabyte of data. It is nearly double the size of the CD-ROMs used on the Super Nintendo CD and it will allow for far larger and more complex worlds to be created with these new games. The new Super Mario Dimensions, for example, spans 21 worlds emanating from a central hub world. All of these worlds could not have been made possible without the extra storage capacity of the new GigaDisc. This device will also ensure that the*

*new Ultra Nintendo games retain their value, making it very difficult if not impossible for software pirates to copy these games. This will ensure that the price of games remains affordable for the average player. Now, in addition to this new GigaDisc technology, I would like to discuss the legacy capabilities of the new Ultra Nintendo. The Ultra Nintendo will be capable of playing both music CDs and Super Nintendo CD game discs."*

*\*The crowd applauds at this, though it's a slightly muted applause since many in the media already knew of the Ultra Nintendo's backwards compatibility.\**

*"This means that gamers who might not have owned a Super Nintendo device will be able to jump right in and will have a large library of games already playable when they purchase the Ultra Nintendo. We hope to continue innovating in the years ahead, and we anticipate the Ultra Nintendo to remain the gold standard in video game devices for many years to come. Thank you, and now I will return the floor to Mr. Howard Lincoln."*

*\*Kutaragi smiles and shakes Howard Lincoln's hand again before exiting the stage. Lincoln begins to speak again.\**

*"Thank you, Mr. Ken Kutaragi. As you have seen, the Ultra Nintendo hardware is very impressive, but what good is the hardware without games to play it on? We've been showing more and more of Super Mario Dimensions for the past year now. The game is already complete and is in the process of localization, and we'll have both the complete Japanese release and the latest English version of the game playable here at E3 for all of you to enjoy. Let's take a brief look at Super Mario Dimensions.\**

*\*Another quick video, about a minute long, plays, showing off the game. Mario is in the Mushroom Kingdom, wandering amongst a realm where time and space have torn, opening up new worlds for him to explore. We see him exploring worlds, both similar to OTL's Super Mario 64 (like Bob-Omb Battlefield, Jolly Roger Bay, Lethal Lava Land, and Tick Tock Clock), and entirely new worlds such as a giant factory, an outer space world, a world based on ancient Greece/Rome, and a world that takes place in a huge city, complete with what looks like Donkey Kong climbing a giant skyscraper. After the video ends, the crowd once again applauds.\**

*"In Super Mario Dimensions, Mario must rescue Princess Peach, who has once again been kidnapped by Bowser. However, in Bowser's haste to make sure Mario can't follow him, he has ordered his court wizard Kamek to cast a spell to create a world that Mario can't reach. The spell was botched, and now holes are being ripped in the fabric of space and time all over the Mushroom Kingdom! Mario must explore these dimensional rips, 21 in all, in order to gather Stars that he'll need to reach Bowser and rescue Princess Peach. There are 180 stars to collect, so Mario's work is definitely cut out for him. This game is the biggest and most epic Mario title yet. The most worlds in any previous Mario game was ten, in Super Mario World 2. This game has more than twice that number, with seven different objectives available in each world, and dozens more missions and goals to achieve outside of the dimensions in the Mushroom Kingdom. You'll be able to explore all of these worlds when you play Super Mario Dimensions at our massive Nintendo booth. Now, we've talked a lot about Mario today, but what about Mario's green dinosaur pal Yoshi? Well, you won't see much of Yoshi in Super Mario Dimensions, but don't worry, because Yoshi's got his own game and it'll be coming out early next year for the Ultra Nintendo."*

*\*A brief video plays, showing the colorful graphics of Yoshi's Story, the sequel to the SNES game Yoshi's Island.\**

*"Yoshi's Story picks up where our classic game Yoshi's Island left off. In Yoshi's Story, Yoshi and his friends must work together to defeat a terrible evil that's darkened their land. You'll be exploring Yoshi's world, gathering items and completing mini-games in this brand new quest. As you can see, the Ultra Nintendo brings the colorful world of Yoshi to life like never before. It looks an awful lot like a living storybook, doesn't it? This game plays a lot like Yoshi's Island, with the familiar egg shooting and enemy munching moves that made Yoshi such a blast to play as on the SNES. Now, we know we haven't told you very much about this next game, because the folks at Argonaut Software have been so hard at work making it even better than the original. Last year, Squad Four: Eclipse continued the story of four brave interplanetary heroes, and this year, four different space heroes will see their own story continue..."*

*\*Brief scenes are shown from Star Fox 2, but instead of Muppets, it's full rendered graphics displaying Fox and his friends, similar to OTL's Star Fox 64 but with somewhat smoother graphics. The crowd applauds after the brief preview video is complete.\**

*"Star Fox 2 is the long awaited sequel to our 1993 hit, and as you can see, the technology that made Star Fox so amazing has gotten a significant improvement. Star Fox and his squad return once again to battle the evil Andross, but this time, they've also got to deal with the dangerous rival squadron Star Wolf, mercenaries hired by Andross to take them out. You'll need to fly faster and more skillfully than ever if you hope to survive an encounter with these ne'er-do-wells. But Star Fox 2 isn't just about an exciting and challenging single player mode...for the first time ever, we're introducing versus mode to the series. You'll get to take to the air or climb into the all-new Landmaster tank to battle your friends. Or, you can even do battle on foot. And, if you're on foot, you also have the option to play as the heroes of Squad Four. Star Fox 2 is looking to be our biggest space adventure yet, and you can demo both our exciting single player mode and the new versus mode out on the floor. Oh, and one more thing... Star Fox 2, like Super Mario Dimensions, will be available at the launch of the Ultra Nintendo on November 21st." \*the crowd applauds and cheers\* "Now, this next game, unfortunately, will not be available at launch, but we're hoping it's worth the wait. We're going to bring all the exciting fun of the biggest extreme sport in the world right now, snowboarding, to the Ultra Nintendo. Our 1080 Snowboarding is going to be the most exciting snowboarding game yet, and it's set for release sometime next spring. We want to make the Ultra Nintendo your one stop shop for all sports, not only the major sports, which will all have games appearing on the system within the first year of launch, but also the latest and most thrilling extreme sports. In addition to 1080 Snowboarding, we've got the new water sports game Wave Race, which WILL be one of the many games available on launch day this November. Wave Race is an exciting and competitive racing title that not only features some of the most challenging racing of any video game, but some of the most extreme stunts you'll ever see. You can compete in races or you can challenge your skills in the game's stunt mode, with dozens of different stunts to perform and some of the most realistic graphics ever seen."*

*"But while Nintendo's been hard at work producing some of the best original titles for the Ultra Nintendo, we wouldn't be where we are today without our many software partners who have also been tirelessly developing games for the Ultra Nintendo. Today, I'd like to announce that two of today's most popular video game franchises, which previously had not appeared on Nintendo systems, will be appearing on the Ultra Nintendo early next year. I think you've seen Lara Croft's face all over the convention center today..." \*the crowd begins to cheer\* "And I would like to announce that Tomb Raider, both the original game and its upcoming sequel, will be released on the Ultra Nintendo next year. And so I'd very*

*much like to thank Eidos for bringing Lara Croft's amazing adventures to our new console, I have no doubt that everyone who plays the Ultra Nintendo will enjoy both Tomb Raider games when they're released next year. The original Tomb Raider, in fact, will be appearing in January. And I'd also like to discuss our friends at Capcom, who not only will be bringing two Mega Man games to the Ultra Nintendo next year, including an installment of their hit Mega Man X series, but will also be bringing the terrifying horror franchise Resident Evil to the Ultra Nintendo, also sometime next year." \*there are more cheers at this announcement\* "And of course, I would be remiss to continue without thanking the folks at Sony, who have been our steadfast partners throughout the last five years, who have been equal partners in bringing our vision of the Ultra Nintendo to life, and who have also contributed some of the most beloved video game franchises in recent memory, including Twisted Metal, Tales Of The Seven Seas, Dog Dash, and Ballistic Limit. In fact, speaking of Ballistic Limit, there's a brief video those of you who are fans of that game will want to see..."*

\*A video begins to play on the screen. Ash Beckland's voice can be heard over a black screen.\*

Ash Beckland: Mission Log 2747, Ash Beckland reporting... the intel was right, this planet is unfit for all organic life...

\*A very brief scene of Ash and several others walking out on the surface of a hostile looking planet is shown.\*

Beckland: The virus on this planet is capable of radical mutation...

\*Ash's friend Sara is looking through her visor, a horrified look in her eyes as a shadow draws across her face.\*

Beckland: Anything it touches is transformed, irreparably. The virus...threatens all sentient beings in the galaxy.

\*Ash and his fellow crew members are standing in a circle, firing their weapons desperately.\*

Beckland: And due to our exposure to the virus...none of us can ever come back home.

\*A voice can be heard screaming "Oh God! Oh God, no!", as a scene of a crew member being swarmed by something hideous, followed by a very brief glimpse of Beckland looking slowly upward as an enormous monster, larger than a skyscraper, towers over him. The *Ballistic Limit* logo appears.\*

Beckland: We're already dead...

## **SUMMER 1998**

\*machine noises\* *Nin-ten-do*

\*The crowd applauds and cheers after the trailer concludes.\*

*"Ballistic Limit 2 is only one of the many games that Sony will be bringing to the Ultra Nintendo over the next year. In fact, the company, in partnership with Naughty Dog, will be*

*bringing another exciting game to the Ultra Nintendo just in time for the system's launch. Crash Bandicoot is the newest action platformer, starring a bandicoot with attitude named Crash who must rescue his girlfriend from the evil Dr. Cortex. Also next year comes perhaps the most realistic driving game ever made. It brings all the excitement of some of the most competitive racing in the world to your living room, and powered by the Ultra Nintendo's technology, it also brings some of the most realistic graphics as well. Say hello to Gran Turismo."*

*\*Another brief video plays, showing off video from Gran Turismo's exciting race courses, this too draws plenty of applause from the crowd.\**

*"So, as you can see, over the coming months and beyond, the Ultra Nintendo will continue to bring the exciting and innovative games you've come to expect when you purchase a Nintendo console. However, we do have one more game to show off, and for that, I'd like to introduce the director of Squaresoft's North American division, Mr. Ted Woolsey."*

*\*The crowd applauds as Ted Woolsey takes the stage.\**

*"Thank you, Mr. Lincoln. This is kind of a new role for me so I'm hoping all of you bear with me, I'm used to translating these games, so talking about them in public is something that's still a bit awkward." \*the crowd laughs\* "Fortunately, I can go ahead and let this game do the talking because I think it speaks for itself. I'd like to show you now the very first five minutes of Final Fantasy VII."*

*\*A video showing the first five minutes of Final Fantasy VII begins to play. It's very close to OTL, showing Midgar, Aeris, and the start of the familiar bombing mission, along with the game's combat system as you battle the first couple groups of soldiers outside of Mako Reactor No. 1. After the group enters the depths of the reactor, the video ends.\**

*"If you're all wanting to see more, we do have Final Fantasy VII playable at the big Squaresoft booth on the show floor. The game is in fact complete and will be releasing in Japan in August. It's currently in the process of localization and I'd like to announce for the first time that Final Fantasy VII will be a launch title for the Ultra Nintendo-" \*VERY loud applause and cheering interrupts Woolsey here\* "available on November 21st in the United States and Canada. But that's not the only game that Squaresoft plans to release for the Ultra Nintendo. We've also got a couple of fighting games on the way..." \*the crowd cheers again at this\* "Bushido Blade, featuring sword-wielding samurai, will be available in North America hopefully before the end of this year. And for early next year, we have God Bless The Ring, a sci-fi inspired fighting game with some very wild characters, that should be available next February. And we'd also like to announce a strategy role-playing title based on our popular Final Fantasy series, Final Fantasy Tactics, which will be available next spring. And it's not just the Ultra Nintendo we have games coming out for, Squaresoft will also continue to release games for the Super Nintendo CD, including a new title in our popular SaGa series, SaGa Frontier, that will also be coming out next spring. Also next year, two games still early in development that will be released later next year, including a sci-fi horror title based on a popular Japanese novel. You'll be hearing more about that game, Parasite Eve, most likely at next year's E3. Rest assured, Squaresoft is fully committed to the Ultra Nintendo and we hope to have many more games in the years ahead. Thank you and you can come see more of our games at the Squaresoft booth out on the floor."*

*\*Ted Woolsey leaves the stage and Howard Lincoln returns.\**

*"Thank you, Mr. Woolsey. So, as you've seen, Nintendo has no shortage of games for our new Ultra Nintendo. In fact, our launch is planned to be one of the biggest console launches of all time. We've got seventeen games planned to be released on launch day, including Super Mario Dimensions, Star Fox 2, Ultra Mario Kart, and Final Fantasy VII." \*the crowd applauds and gasps at the four mega-blockbusters announced for launch day\* "And....there is one more game I'd like to show off for you all right now, this game is still extremely early in development but we have a video ready. This game is from our partners at Konami, and I'd like just to show all of you an early look at this upcoming title."*

*\*A video plays showing off a very early look at Metal Gear Solid, once again the crowd applauds.\**

*"Metal Gear Solid is set for release late next year, and Konami will have a lot more of it to show off at next year's E3. But for right now, thank you all and enjoy the show!"  
-keynote speech from Howard Lincoln at E3 1997*

*"Hey, thanks guys, I'm Tim Stamper and this is my brother Chris, and we're here to show off some of the upcoming games that Rare has in the works. I think we're going to go ahead and kick this off with a look at the game that most of you are here to see, it's a game that's been in the works for a long time and has gone through many iterations to get here, so let's just show off the almost-complete Goldeneye 007 for you all today."*

*\*A video is played showing off a preview of Goldeneye 007, including the game's four-player split screen multiplayer mode. Chris begins to speak as the video is playing.\**

*"Er, as you can see here, this is our four player multiplayer mode, which is one of the very first first-person shooter games on a home console to have split-screen multiplayer. There's a variety of modes here, including classic deathmatch, there's capture the flag, or in this case, the briefcase, there's a lot of variety here so you can pretty much play however you'd like. The game itself follows the movie pretty closely but of course we've added a few things to make it a longer and meatier game."*

*"That's right, here you've got the classic dam scene from the start of the movie, you can hear the classic James Bond music playing, it's more of a driving rock beat here. So certainly, um, Goldeneye is a game that we realized was only possible on the Ultra Nintendo. We're not going to have it out before the release of the new James Bond movie, which is kind of a shame, but we're not the kind of people to just rush a game out there, and I hope you all agree it was worth the wait."*

*\*The Goldeneye video stops and the Stampers move on to the next part of their presentation, with Tim introducing the next game.\**

*"Now while Goldeneye was only possible on the Ultra Nintendo, we're not quite done developing games for the Super Nintendo CD. We know you all like Donkey Kong Country, and the big ape is getting ready for one more ride..."*

*\*The Donkey Kong Country 4: Donkey Kong Returns logo is shown on screen to a lot of cheers from the crowd.\**

*"That's right, Donkey Kong is back, and he's back with Diddy, Dixie, and Kiddy. For the first time, four players can take control at once, but with four Kongs comes new challenges, we've designed some tough stages that you'll be hard pressed to get through even with all*

*four Kongs at your disposal. King K. Rool has returned for one final showdown with the Kongs, and it's gonna get hairy."*

*"It's the biggest Donkey Kong Country game yet with ten worlds and over 70 levels. We're pushing Donkey Kong to his limits and we hope that this game sends the Super Nintendo CD off with a barrel cannon bang. We've got some levels available to play at the big Rare booth, so check us out if you get the chance."*

*\*Chris Stamper remains at the podium now. After briefly discussing Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo for the Super Nintendo CD, set to be released later that year, and the Ultra Nintendo release of Killer Instinct 2, scheduled for 1998, he changes tones as he discusses what has up to this point been referred to in game publications as Project DREAM.\**

*"We've got one more big game scheduled for next year, and this one is a project we've been working on internally for more than three years now. We originally conceived it as a Super Nintendo CD title but, like Goldeneye, it was clear that this game wasn't going to be able to become a reality on last generation's tech. So instead, we kept this game on the backburner until the Ultra Nintendo development kit became available to us. After that, our minds started racing. What we're going to show today is a game that is about halfway done, perhaps a bit more than halfway, and that we're planning to release sometime next year. We called it Project DREAM, and now it's very close to being a reality.\**

*\*A video plays on screen as a teenage boy begins to speak. The boy is sitting in a badly damaged home on an island as his younger sister sleeps nearby.\**

*I've always wondered, what's out there....? What's out there beyond this place that has nothing left for me?*

Boy: *\*he looks at his sister, a sad look on his face\**

*Before my parents died, they said there were dangers, that we could never leave this place... that everything we needed was right here.*

*\*Scenes are shown of the boy wandering around, gathering food, fishing, trying to provide for his sister, but then a scene is shown of a terrible storm that nearly destroys their house and kills them.\**

Girl: *\*looking into her brother's eyes\* Edison, are we going to be okay?*

Edison: *Of course, Ella...I promise.*

*It was a lie. After the storm, I knew if we didn't get off this island, we were going to die there. Whatever lay beyond this ocean, it couldn't be worse than what awaited us here.*

*\*The boy builds a raft, and with his sister, sails out across the ocean...another storm hits, he holds her close.... the raft washes up on shore and the boy is alone, nearly dead, as he is found by an anthropomorphic bear and his bird companion.\**

Kazooie: *Who is he....?*

Banjo: *He's hurt, we gotta help him!*

*I made a mistake. And now, Ella's.....*

Edison: \*sits up in bed\* Where's Ella, where is she? ELLA!!!

\*The boy realizes he's in a village full of animal characters, including Banjo the bear, Kazooie the bird, Tiptup the turtle, Bumper the badger, Pipsy the mouse, and a dog named Dinger\*

Tiptup: Please, don't try to get up-

Edison: I'm going to find my sister!

\*The first gameplay scenes are shown, the game seems to be a 3-D platformer like Mario but with much deeper combat, indeed the game in reality plays like a hybrid of OTL's *Banjo-Kazooie* and *Kingdom Hearts*, less role-playing elements than *Kingdom Hearts* and with a lot of *Banjo-Kazooie*-style collecting, after the gameplay scenes the boy is shown being brought on board a ship, blindfolded with his hands tied in front of him, a pretty girl about his age removes the blindfold and smirks at him, her name is Madera\*

Edison: Let me go, I have to find Ella!

Madera: You're not gonna be findin' anyone, pirate!

Edison: I'M the pirate?

\*More scenes play, showing a mix of human and animal characters in various roles, also showing more gameplay with Edison fighting alongside Madera and Banjo, Kazooie can be seen attacking out of Banjo's backpack. Then there's a scene showing a towering castle with lightning flashing in the sky, standing in the castle balcony is an ugly green witch who is almost identical to OTL's Gruntilda.\*

Gruntilda: Find them, find them all and bring them here!

\*Edison and Madera are seen standing in front of a shaman, OTL's Mumbo Jumbo.\*

Mumbo Jumbo: Inkum bokum! \*casting a spell that causes a wave of smoke to engulf Edison and Madera\*

\*Another scene plays, showing the two under attack from a pack of werewolves.\*

Edison: Madera, behind you!

Madera: \*barely dives out of the way in time to avoid the werewolf swiping at her\*

\*Another scene is shown of Banjo strumming on his banjo as Edison and Madera and some of the animal characters begin to dance. More scenes play, including a boss fight against a huge lava creature.\*

*I don't know if I'll ever see Ella again. I don't know if she's even still alive. But I'll never stop looking. I'll find Ella, or I'll die trying.*

\*Edison and Madera are sitting on a hill underneath the stars. Madera places a hand on

his.\*

Madera: I'll never stop looking either. We'll find her, Edison. You and me.

Edison: \*just smiles at her\*

\*The game's logo is displayed.\*

## **THE DREAMERS**

**1998**

### **Only for Ultra Nintendo**

\*The crowd explodes into wild applause as the Stampers soak it all in. Tim Stamper speaks.\*

*"The Dreamers is the culmination of all of our hard work, effort, and creativity over the past three years. We hope you enjoy it and we do have a demo available to play on the show floor. Thank you all and come see us at our booth!"*

-Tim and Chris Stamper's keynote speech at E3 1997

*"Welcome to Atlanta and welcome to E3 1997! I'm Tom Kalinske and I'm here to talk to all of you today about the number one video game console in the world. That's right from right here in North America to Latin America down south, to Europe, to Australia, and all over Asia, the Sega Saturn is the #1 selling game console of the past 12 months! And do you know why? Because Saturn does what Nintendon't: providing the best games with the best gameplay and the best graphics and the best everything else. Sonic 4 is the top selling game of the year and it's still lighting up the sales charts worldwide. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter is the top reviewed game of the year and still the top selling game in North America. And this year and next year, we're going to continue to bring you the greatest games that you can buy. We've prepared a music video with the help of our good friends, the Smashing Pumpkins, to show you all the games that you'll be playing over the next year and a half.*

\*A music video is played: OTL's "The End Is The Beginning Is The End", which IOTL was used to promote *Batman and Robin*. ITTL, a different song is used for the film, and so instead, Sega co-opts the song to use for a Saturn hype video. The video is similar to the one from OTL, but with clips from Saturn games, both upcoming and already released, instead of scenes from *Batman and Robin*. The games shown off include: *Fighters Megamix*, *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*, *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*, *Boom Island*, *Tekken 2* and *Tekken 3*, *Daytona USA 2*, *Raigeki*, *Tick and Tock: Time Tricksters*, *Troublemakers*, *Sonic RPG*, *Planetary Probe*, *Krystalshade*, *Windborn*, *Phantasy Star V*, *Tomb Raider* and *Tomb Raider 2*, *Resident Evil* and *Resident Evil 2*, *Ultima: Scions of Britannia*, *Panzer Dragoon Saga*, *Operation Zero*, and *Contra: World War*. The crowd cheers after the video.\*

*"The Sega Saturn continues to bring you the best games that you can't find anywhere else. And now, we'd like to announce that the Sega Saturn will be easier to buy than ever, because effective immediately, the MSRP of the Sega Saturn will be \$249.99." \*the crowd cheers\* "And, when you purchase the Sega Saturn, even if you've never played a Sega system before you'll be able to catch up on all of Sonic the Hedgehog's adventures, because not only will the all new Sonic the Hedgehog 4 be packed in with the console, but our Sonic compilation game Sonic Jam, featuring Sonic the Hedgehog 1, 2, 3, AND Sonic CD, along*

*with several other classic Sonic the Hedgehog titles, will be included, for free, with the purchase of the Sega Saturn console. And, we'll also be releasing the new Sega Saturn Arcade Fight Collection, which includes the Sega Saturn, Fighters Megamix, Virtua Fighter 2, Tekken 2, and an extra Saturn controller for \$329.99. So whether you're a Sonic fan or an arcade fighting junkie, we've got a fix for you. Now...on the subject of Sonic the Hedgehog. Our Sonic game collection: Sonic Jam, is available for sale right now. Right as I am talking, the new Saturn bundles and Sonic Jam are going on sale. And Sonic Jam, let me tell you about Sonic Jam because it's not just a collection of old Sonic titles. They've ALL gotten upgrades, including full CD audio soundtracks and, for all of these games, we've opened up the Sega vault to include all new levels. So even if you've played these games before on the Sega Genesis or the Sega CD, there are plenty of surprises in store and this collection retails for the low price of \$39.99. But, that's not all the Sonic news we have to share. If you think that the only Sonic content we're releasing this year is a collection of classic Sonic games, well....check this out."*

*\*Another video plays, showcasing the three new Sonic games set for release later in the year: Sonic Fighters, SoniQuest, and Sonic R.\**

*"Starting in July with the release of Sonic Fighters, we'll be releasing a brand new game featuring Sonic and all his friends every two months for the remainder of the year. In July, Sonic Fighters brings all of the Sonic characters you know and love, not just a select few like in Fighters Megamix, into the ring to brawl it out in one on one combat. In September, SoniQuest is an RPG featuring Sonic and his friends as they team up to stop a terrible evil that threatens their world. And in November, Sonic R brings the excitement of high speed racing to the world of Sonic for the first time! All three of these games will be playable at our booth, so go check them out and see all the latest fun that Sonic has to offer! But of course, one of our biggest games of the year is set for release this October, and to introduce that game, I'd like to bring Mr. Stephen Streater, president and founder of Eidos Interactive, up to the stage to talk about Tomb Raider II." \*the crowd applauds and cheers as Stephen Streater takes the stage\**

*"Thank you, Tom, it's a pleasure to be here today. Tomb Raider II is the sequel to one of last year's biggest hits, and I'm pleased to show off some gameplay footage right here right now, showing that Lara's learned a few new tricks over the past year..."*

*\*A gameplay video is displayed of Lara standing in a huge room filled with terracotta warriors, it's a maze room and Lara is being pursued by men in body armor.\**

*"Now, as you can see, Lara's in a bit of a spot here, but she's got some new tricks..."*

*\*Lara lays down a mine and goes to a different section of the room to detonate it, as she's making her way over there, an alert comes on screen, showing that Lara is being attacked from behind, with the touch of a button Lara can flip the attacker over her shoulder and with another timely button press Lara puts a bullet in his chest. The crowd cheers at this.\**

*"Lara's got a new 'situational awareness' that will help her out in melee situations. You'll be alerted to the presence of an enemy and if you trigger the command quickly enough you can get the jump on them even when they're coming from behind. Now, as for the rest of them..."*

*\*Another alert is displayed showing enemies in the proximity of the mine Lara just put down, even with a little split-screen showing the enemies approaching. Another button*

press and an explosion is triggered, blasting three of them into the air.\*

*"You've got new ways of dealing with enemies so you can focus on tomb raiding and exploration. There's a lot more to do, with even more levels than the previous game and an exciting new quest that will take Lara once again all over the world in pursuit of treasure. Tomb Raider II will be released for the Sega Saturn on October 9th. Thank you."*

\*Streater leaves the stage and Tom Kalinske comes back on.\*

*"And remember, the Sega Saturn will have Tomb Raider II before anyone else. We'll also have another hit game before anyone else, and right now we've got that game, Resident Evil 2, on the video screen right now."*

\*A preview video is shown of *Resident Evil 2*, depicting two new characters, Leon Kennedy and Claire Redfield, exploring a Raccoon City that's overrun with zombies. The game seems bigger in scope than OTL's game, taking Claire out of the city and to a strange survivalist compound outside the city's walls in a series of very creepy scenes, while Leon is shown dangling from a ceiling, shooting desperately as a massive licker approaches him.\*

*"Resident Evil 2 is set to be released on the Sega Saturn early next year, once again before it's released anywhere else. Now, here are some games that will be featured exclusively on the Sega Saturn, and while we're not going to call 1997 the Year of the RPG, we ARE going to say that this year, the Saturn's selection of epic role-playing games will be the best of any available system out there. We'd first like to announce that the latest installment of the classic RPG series Phantasy Star will be making its way to North America before the end of the year. Phantasy Star V: The Forgotten Colony, will take a new cast of characters to a world beyond imagination as they explore the remnants of an ancient civilization full of mysterious technology. This game is fully designed for the Saturn from the ground up, and as you can see, the graphics far surpass any of the previous four games in the series. This game has been a major best-seller in Japan since its release and we think it's the best Phantasy Star game yet. Leap into adventure with the all new epic role playing game Phantasy Star V, coming later this year. Speaking of great role-playing games, our partners at Enix have brought us two. First up is Planetary Probe, the kind of game you really need to see to believe."*

\*A video starts to play, showing a beautiful space backdrop illuminated by stars. Suddenly, a spaceship enters the frame, showing off the game's impressive polygonal graphics.\*

Lance: Our mission is to explore the worlds beyond the stars, to uncover what secrets the cosmos keeps hidden.

\*A woman steps up next to Lance and she begins to speak.\*

Atria: To spread peace and knowledge throughout the galaxy, and above all, to quench the human thirst for discovery...

\*The ship is shown landing on a seemingly desolate world. Several astronauts step out. The land seems deserted but as the camera pans up, it shows a sprawling civilization with a city that seems to encompass a third of the planet. The camera continues to pan out and it travels along the galaxy, showing world after world, all filled with different civilizations and different types of landscapes.\*

## PLANETARY PROBE

**October 1997**

\*The crowd applauds as Kalinske begins to speak again.\*

*"Planetary Probe will take players all over the galaxy in search of new, amazing worlds to explore, with danger around every corner. It's an RPG that spans many worlds, but in Enix's other RPG, Krystalshade, you're confined to one world...though it's a very, very big world to explore."*

\*Another video is played, showing off *Krystalshade's* battle system, an action-RPG similar to OTL's *Star Ocean*\*

*"In Krystalshade, a young man named Archie will confront his destiny. The game features a fast-paced battle system that will require strategic knowledge and lightning quick timing, and will challenge even the most seasoned of role-playing game veterans. RPG vets might also like our next RPG, published by Namco, which is in a bit more of a traditional vein..."*

\*A brief video shows an anime-like cutscene showing a young girl venturing across a beautiful landscape, being protected by her new friends, a group of heroes and heroines. The title of the game, *Windborn*, is shown, and then scenes from the game's exploration, with beautiful and colorful 2-D graphics, followed by scenes from the game's traditional turn-based battle system are shown.\*

*"Namco's Windborn follows the story of a girl named Brezia who is the last survivor of the People of the Wind, a race of people who can literally hear messages carried on the winds. Those who destroyed Brezia's people seek to destroy her as well, and only her new friends can protect her and help her find her purpose in this world. These four games are set to be released over the coming months, but they're not the only role playing games planned for the Sega Saturn. In fact, we've got another of our top original franchises getting the RPG treatment in Virtua Quest..."* \*the crowd cheers at this news as images of the Virtua Fighter characters are shown on screen\* *"Set to make its debut later this year. We've got more details on this game at our Sega booth, look under the big Virtua Fighter display for demo kiosks featuring Virtua Quest. And yet another of our original franchises is going to be making its RPG debut..."*

\*A video is shown of *Panzer Dragoon Saga*, which features amazing graphics and gets some of the biggest applause of the show.\*

*"Panzer Dragoon Saga takes our popular dragon-mounted shooter game into the realm of the RPG. This game is going to be the most massive Saturn game to date, spanning a full four discs and encompassing a truly epic scope, far longer than the previous two Panzer Dragoon games combined. Now, I'd like to bring another special guest on stage and this man really needs no introduction. He's the legend behind the classic Ultima series, so everyone please give it up for Lord British himself, Richard Garriott!"*

\*Richard Garriott takes the stage now, as the logo of *Ultima: Scion Of Britannia* is displayed on the screen above.\*

*"Thank you very much, Tom, and I'm glad to be here today. When I agreed to have Ultima featured on the Sega Saturn as one of its premiere franchises, I couldn't have imagined the*

*success we'd have when we brought forth Ultima: The Worldly Lord as a featured launch title. Now, Ultima: Scion Of Britannia continues the Ultima legacy in a big way. In this game, you play as a young woman, living in our modern world, who discovers her heritage as the lost heir to the throne of Britannia, and who must venture to a world she's never known before in order to claim her birthright. But in order to achieve this goal, she must prove herself worthy by obtaining the eight Virtues as she explores a massive world, far more massive than the world featured in the previous Ultima game. In The Worldly Lord, the player had to build a city while roaming the world in search of people to populate it. In Scion of Britannia, the player must choose whether to earn the throne through obtaining the eight Virtues, or to seize the throne through force and deception. On your journey, you'll come across others who seek to lay claim to the throne. This game is all about entering a brand new world and shaping it in your image, for better or for worse."*

\*Garriott continues to speak as gameplay footage is shown, the game is near completion and it's a vast, open world with significantly better graphics than *The Worldly Lord*.\*

*"Scion of Britannia will be released in just two months, this August it will be released exclusively for the Sega Saturn. Thank you and please come visit our booth to try out this incredible new game!"*

\*Garriott exits the stage to applause, hugging Tom Kalinske who returns and begins to speak again. Kalinske discusses several more games, including the fighting game *Raigeki* and *Contra: World War*, before reaching the end of his presentation, with *Tekken 3* as the last game he discusses.\*

*"Tekken 3 will be released exclusively for the Sega Saturn next February. It and many, many more games will be available to play at our Sega booth. The Sega Saturn continues to be the home of the best games, the best characters, and the best value of any game console on the market, and in this year, the next year, and beyond, Sega will continue to do what Nintendon't. Thank you all very much and enjoy E3!"*

-keynote speech from Tom Kalinske at E3 1997

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Ted Crosley: There's so many games here at E3, but obviously the first thing I wanted to check out, and Alex agrees with me, is the Ultra Nintendo.

Alex Stansfield: And honestly, I don't know where to begin with this thing! This year there are a LOT more games available to play, I counted at least 40, including all the big ones, I'm gonna go ahead and start with *Star Fox 2*.

\*Alex plays through the first level, Corneria, blasting enemy ships out of the sky as character dialogue plays every few seconds.\*

Alex: As you can see, no more Muppets, this is all in-game graphics, and your wingmen are a lot more talkative in this game. Falco, Peppy, Slippy, they're all back, and there's a new character, a girl fox named Krystal who seems to be Fox's girlfriend, maybe?

Ted: The game moves at a really smooth pace, everything looks a lot smoother, there are detailed environments and a lot more enemies this time around too. Even the bosses have something to say!

\*Alex is fighting the first boss who's talking trash to Fox and his crew as they circle around in all-range mode to take him down. After a bit more *Starfox 2*, the duo moves on to play some *Final Fantasy VII*\*

Ted: This is *Final Fantasy VII* and like *Starfox 2*, it's fully voiced.

Alex: Yeah, this game is way more movielike than any *Final Fantasy* game so far. The first mission has you bombing some kind of reactor, and then you end up in the slums, it's a lot darker and dirtier than any *Final Fantasy* game before it as well. I think a lot of players will like the new, more serious direction they're going with this but I almost kind of prefer the light-hearted high fantasy roleplaying games.

Ted: Well, we did try out *Ultra Adventurers* but it doesn't look nearly as fun as this, or as good. Check out how detailed the characters are in this game!

Alex: And every enemy attack is so beautifully animated, I could see myself getting into random battles just to watch all the animations, wow!

Ted: There are so many more Ultra Nintendo games to try out that it would take more than an hour to show them all to you. We'll try out a few more of them later in the show, including *Goldeneye 007*, which could very well be the game of the show so far.

(...)

Brittany Saldita: And I'm here with Yukio Futatsugi from Team Andromeda, trying out *Panzer Dragoon Saga*! I am just blown away by this game! \*she's in the middle of a battle with a large enemy, quickly having gotten the hang of the game's targeting system\* I never imagined that *Panzer Dragoon* could be adapted into such a fun RPG but I am enjoying myself way too much right now.

\*Brittany wins the battle and quickly gets into another one as Yukio points out some of the aspects of the battle system to her and the viewers.\*

Brittany: It looks like it's really complicated but honestly, it was pretty easy for me to master it and I imagine players won't have much trouble with this at all. It's such a beautiful game, it looks even better than *Zwei* and it looks better than most of the Ultra Nintendo games I've seen too.

Yukio Futatsugi: You can move the dragon in all directions, in order to fully explore the world around you.

Brittany: It's one of the biggest, most open RPG worlds I've ever seen. You've done amazing work and I can't wait to play this game once it's released. *Panzer Dragoon Saga* is looking like one of my most anticipated games of next year.

(...)

Gary Westhouse: This is *Race'n'Chase*, and it's definitely not like any game I've played before. You've got a lot of freedom here.

Sam Houser: Well that's the idea, you can pretty much do whatever you want.

Gary: It's a lot like cops and robbers, but as a video game.

Sam: \*laughing\* Well, did you actually shoot people when you were playing cops and robbers?

Gary: You know, some of those games got pretty intense! \*he runs over a couple of pedestrians\* Holy \*bleep\*!

Sam: \*laughing again\*

Gary: You can run over whoever you want?

Sam: That's right, but watch out or you'll have the cops after you.

Gary: It looks like they didn't notice me, that's good. \*gets out of his car and starts shooting people with a machine gun\* I think they'll notice this!

Sam: Yeah, you got a star, you better run. \*laughs\*

Gary: What if I don't wanna run?

Sam: You don't have to, that's the beauty of it! You can just stay there and shoot the cops if you want to.

Gary: \*laughing\* Before I continue, a disclaimer, MTV does not endorse the shooting of law enforcement.

Sam: You guys don't play any NWA videos then? \*laughs\*

Gary: \*he tries to shoot more of the police officers but he ends up getting wasted\* Damn, that didn't go so well!

Sam: It's not an easy game!

Gary: No, but it's a lot of fun. *Race'N'Chase*, for the Sega Saturn?

Sam: Yep, and then coming to the Ultra next year.

Gary: Sounds good!

(...)

John Walden: Hey, what's up? I'm John Walden and I'm sitting down to play some *Gran Turismo*. This game, a lot of people have said it's just about the realest racing simulator available anywhere, is that true?

Kazunori Yamauchi: We've been working on this game since before the Super Nintendo CD was released.

John: Is that right?

Yamauchi: That's right, it was originally supposed to be an SNES-CD game, but when we

saw the Ultra we re-did the whole thing from scratch, it just wasn't going to look good enough unless it was on the Ultra.

John: Well let's see how well a job you guys did on this game. \*he begins to play, the graphics look better than even *Gran Turismo 2* IOTL, the Ultra Nintendo easily making the game's graphics look significantly better even than some OTL Dreamcast games\* Good lord!

Yamauchi: It's good?

John: It's incredible! \*he begins racing but gets into a couple of wrecks early on\* It's not me, I'm just stunned by how realistic this game looks!

Yamauchi: It was a pure labor of love, this game.

John: It's got me floored. \*he quickly gets used to it and is driving quite well on one of the game's gorgeous tracks\* How many cars are in this game?

Yamauchi: Over 200 cars.

John: \*crashes again\*

Yamauchi: \*laughs\*

John: This game's unreal! I can't get over how realistic it is. Now, I had a lot of fun playing *Ultra Mario Kart* but this game seems to be for people who want something more realistic, more challenging.

Yamauchi: Hopefully there's room for both games!

John: I think there is, I think this game's gonna be a big hit. \*he keeps playing\*

(...)

Lyssa: \*is playing *Parappa the Rapper* on a Super Nintendo CD\* What we've got here is another musical game, in this game you're a rapping dog and you're trying to win the heart of a talking sunflower. The plot is ridiculous but some of these songs are really catchy!

\*Lyssa is playing the third level, with the flea market frog\*

Lyssa: In the rain or in the snow, got the funky funky flow.... \*singing it to herself as she plays\* It's a really charming little game! And that's the thing, even with all the hype over the Ultra Nintendo, a lot of the best games I saw at E3 were for the Super Nintendo CD. You've got *Donkey Kong Country 4*, *Tales Of The Seven Seas 2* looks just amazing, and then there's *Parappa*, which, honestly might be my personal favorite. \*continues singing\* I can sell a bottle cap like this...

(...)

\*Ted, Alex, Brittany, and John are sitting on a couch with Ultra Nintendo controllers in hand, the controllers are each a different color, one is black, one is gray, one is blue, and one is green.\*

Ted: All right, time to play some multiplayer *Goldeneye*. We don't have all day, so we'll play You Only Live Twice mode, if you die two times, you're out!

Brittany: Sounds fair.

Alex: Prepare to get capped!

John: Y'all are going down!

\*They start to play in the Facility level, Ted quickly arms himself with the Golden Gun and he's going on the prowl.\*

Ted: Now, the Golden Gun can kill a person in a single shot.

Brittany: Thanks for telling me so I know to stay away from you like I do after you've been eating Taco Bell.

Alex: Oh \*bleep\*! \*Ted takes him out in one shot\*

John: Damn, damn, damn! \*Ted takes him out too, he quickly respawns and is able to get a decent automatic weapon\*

Alex: Brittany, where are you?

Brittany: I'm not gonna tell you, you'll kill me!

Alex: We gotta team up to take down Ted!

Ted: Too late! \*he shoots Alex, killing him again\*

Alex: NOOOOO!!!

John: You're out, man.

Alex: \*shaking his head in dismay\*

John: \*gets behind Ted and sprays him with automatic weapon fire\*

Brittany: Ha!

John: \*gets into a firefight with Brittany now\*

Brittany: Oh no, oh no oh no....!!! \*John kills her too\*

Ted: \*takes John out from behind with a karate chop\* Hi-yah!

John: Hell no! \*groaning\*

Ted: Okay, so uh, who's not been killed?

Alex: I think all of you guys are down to one life. \*sighing\*

\*Ted, Brittany, and John walk around for a bit, searching for each other, John gets a Golden Gun\*

Brittany: I'm coming for you, Ted!

Ted: Aaaaahhhhh! \*he tries to get under the floor\*

Brittany: \*shooting at him\*

Ted: Come on, come on! \*gets killed\* NO!

Brittany: YES! \*kicking her legs excitedly\*

John: \*stalking Brittany\*

Brittany: \*she heads for where the Golden Gun spawn is but it's not there\* That's not good...

John: \*keeps stalking her\*

Brittany: Either Ted had it when he died or John has it now. \*she notices John getting close to her\*

John: Hey, hey, that's cheating, no peeking at my screen!

Brittany: \*laughs\* All's fair in love and Goldeneye!

Ted: Yeah, that's a legitimate tactic.

John: I'm still gonna kill you!

Brittany: \*manages to hit him a couple of times, ducking around a corner and John barely misses shooting her\* Come on...he's got like half his health left....come on come on...!!!  
\*making a run for open ground\*

John: \*following Brittany\* You can't run, you can't run!

Alex: I don't know, I think this one's over!

Brittany: No no no no no!!! \*laughing a bit now as she gets out into the open and turns to fire at John\*

John: Ah \*bleep\*, ah \*bleep\*! \*Brittany hits him a couple times and gets him down to his last life bar but he manages to hit her with the Golden Gun and she goes down\*

Brittany: \*lets out a shriek of frustration and kicks her legs in the air again\*

Alex: I gotta say, even though I suck and I got killed right away, that was pretty fun.

Ted: Yeah, *Goldeneye* multiplayer...dare I say it, more fun than *Doom* multiplayer?

Alex: The Ultra Nintendo seems to be setting itself up as THE multiplayer system, so games

like *Goldeneye* and *Star Fox* and *Mario Kart* are all playing really nicely into that. Will that put it over the top of Sega? I think so.

Ted: I wouldn't count Sega out just yet, they've got that awesome new Bomberman coming out.

Alex: Yeah, but so does Nintendo.

Brittany: Are you guys really fighting over Bomberman? \*rolls her eyes\*

-excerpted from the June 24, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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### **Games, Games, And More Games: E3 1997**

*As expected, Nintendo pulled out all the stops this year at E3, with their Ultra Nintendo as the centerpiece of the show. All the games they showed off in video form last year were playable for the most part, while Super Mario Dimensions, Final Fantasy VII, and Ultra Mario Kart all had completed versions ready at the show for us to try. Super Mario Dimensions was probably the best game at E3 as far as we were concerned, it's a massive game with an incredible variety of worlds to explore and objectives to achieve. No longer is Mario limited to "here's the stage, get to the end", each of the game's 21 worlds was fully open for exploration and while there were still familiar things like level goals and boss fights, there were also more obscure objectives, like exploring a sunken ship for buried treasure, or plunging into a fiery volcano. Even Donkey Kong makes an appearance in one of the levels, bringing some awesome nostalgia to this otherwise shiny and new game. We also got to play Star Fox 2 for the first time and while its rail-shooter gameplay is familiar to those who enjoyed the SNES-CD original, it got a huge presentation boost, ditching the Muppets for fully rendered character polygons and massive multi-staged boss fights. If there's a game that we liked almost as much as Super Mario Dimensions, it was the new Castlevania game, which seemed to take some cues from Super Metroid in its level design. While the graphics were fairly primitive next to most other Ultra Nintendo games, we had trouble putting the controller down as we guided the new hero Alucard through a spooky castle filled with all sorts of deadly beasts. We also got to play an early demonstration of Telenet Japan's Tale Phantasia sequel, which doesn't yet have a final name but does look quite lovely on the new hardware. Other games we enjoyed: A tongue-in-cheek 3D platformer called Blasto, featuring a superhero of the same name, a very lovely Squaresoft RPG called Fairytale, featuring the music of Yasunori Mitsuda (of Chrono Trigger fame), and Rare's title The Dreamers, which looks to be an incredible hybrid of 3-D platforming and hack and slash adventuring. Rare had an incredible E3, perhaps winning the whole show between The Dreamers, Goldeneye 007, and their fourth and final SNES-CD Donkey Kong Country game, Donkey Kong Returns. Even though Nintendo was focusing on the Ultra Nintendo, the Super Nintendo CD had a pretty good showing itself in what is likely to be the console's final year of major releases, with sequels to Tales Of The Seven Seas, Dog Dash, and Victory all heavily featured and all looking quite good, and a Disney title based on their classic obscure animated film The Three Caballeros, which we enjoyed almost as much as the new Donkey Kong Country game. If Nintendo needed to score a bit comeback at E3 to counter the rising sales of the Sega Saturn, mission accomplished.*

*However, it wasn't as if Sega had a bad E3. On the contrary. Though their two biggest third party games of the show, Tomb Raider II and Resident Evil 2, were also announced for the*

*Ultra Nintendo, they'll be coming to the Saturn first, and both of them look really good, among the best games displayed at the show. Our personal favorite Saturn game was Saturn Bomberman, which, while not visually as pretty as Nintendo's Ultra Bomberman, looked to be somewhat more fun, and unlike the Ultra Nintendo's game, will feature a TEN(!)-player versus mode. Sega also showed off a myriad of RPGs, and count us most impressed with Planetary Probe, a sci-fi adventure that looks to be in direct competition with Final Fantasy VII, with stunning 3-D graphics and some great battle animation. They also showed off RPGs such as SoniQuest, Virtua Quest, and Panzer Dragoon Saga, all three of which are based on some of the company's biggest franchises. It's clear that Sega saw Nintendo's big RPG lineup in 1996 and is now playing a bit of "monkey see, monkey do", with RPG lovers as the clear winners. Sega also showed off a couple of anime adaptations, Ghost In The Shell which is coming this fall, and a Neon Genesis Evangelion game that will hopefully make it to the West sometime next year. While Nintendo may have stolen the show at E3, Sega definitely made their presence felt, and the rest of this year and 1998 look to be the most exciting time in video game history.*

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* coverage of E3 1997 in the August 1997 issue

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*E3 1997 was the most eventful E3 to date, with games displayed by nearly every major software company. Nintendo and Sega proudly showed off their wares, while on the PC side of things, games like Quake II and Ultima Online made major splashes. Perhaps the most exciting game to come out of E3 is Half-Life, produced by Sierra and developed by Valve Software. The game is a first-person shooter focused on exploration. Though the game is still early in development, we were extremely impressed by its AI, which promises to provide the player with realistic enemies that will both challenge and horrify them. Half-Life likely won't be released until late next year or perhaps even early 1999, but in the mean time, we look forward to discovering more of this game as it gets closer to release. Another major game that was announced at this year's E3 was Duke Nukem Forever, the sequel to Duke Nukem 3D. Duke Nukem Forever promises to take the classic franchise into the next generation, with graphics rivaling even those found in games like Quake II. The game has been announced for a late 1997 release, with console ports announced to come some time in 1998. Another highly anticipated first person shooter is the game Daikatana, developed by John Romero and id Software. The game is being designed for Nintendo's new Ultra console, but is planned to have a concurrent PC release, and Romero has promised that the game will take the first person shooter genre to a "new level", with time travel said to be a major element in the game's storyline. Tomorrow, we'll count down the top ten games that have us most excited from E3, and we'll also let you know what to expect for the second half of 1997.*

-from a June 21, 1997 article on Gamespot.com

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>So, what was your favorite bit of news from E3?

-->Galaxy Fraulein Yuna is getting localized! Games 1 and 2 set to come out for Saturn later this year!

---->That game was stupid when it came out on the PC Engine, what a pointless port.

----->It looks so much better on Saturn though.

---->The Saturn gets all the anime games, doesn't it? It's getting Magic Knight Rayearth next year too, right?

----->Yeah and Ghost Of The Shell too  
----->Magic Knight Rayearth looks dumb  
---->Awesome!  
---->It looks SO good on the Saturn, I can't wait to play.  
-->Donkey Kong Country 4, yay!!  
---->Why not make Donkey Kong Country 4 for the Ultra Nintendo?  
----->They don't wanna compete with Super Mario Dimensions, duh  
----->That is such a crowded launch, I have no clue what games to buy  
---->And FINALLY Donkey Kong comes back to his own series, he was starting to get kidnapped more than Princess Peach  
-->The Dreamers looks amazing  
---->I know, right?  
---->AWESOME  
---->That bear looks stupid and why does he have a bird in his backpack?  
----->That was so cool  
---->Ella's not dead  
----->Yeah she'll show up later for sure.  
-->Resident Evil and Tomb Raider are coming to Ultra Nintendo!  
---->This was a no-brainer, of course they were gonna come over eventually.  
----->I knew Resident Evil was coming but I thought Tomb Raider would stay exclusive.  
---->This is a slap in the face to Sega fans.  
----->Shut the fuck up  
----->U shut teh fuck up  
----->Ha ha!  
----->You guys still have the best fighting game franchise so quit whining  
----->Nah, Killer Instinct is better  
----->Killer Instinct sucks  
----->Fuck you  
----->Street Fighter III is Ultra exclusive, what are you talking about?  
-->I was waiting for Zelda news, nothing : (  
---->Yeah really, when is it coming?  
----->1999 at the earliest  
---->It'll take FOREVER for the new Zelda  
---->They at least showed that old video from earlier this year again I think  
----->The one with the big Stalfos? That was from last year!  
-->The Ultra, it's backwards compatible, I don't have to buy an SNES-CD  
---->Dude, just go buy one, it's only like 79 bucks  
---->Don't most of us already have one?  
---->I wonder what Babbage's will give me in trade?

-excerpted from a video game forum on InsideTheWeb.com on June 25, 1997

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*The 3rd Electronics Entertainment Expo took place on June 19-21, 1997, in Atlanta, Georgia.*

*The show had moved to a larger space from the previous year's show in Los Angeles, partly as a move to counteract some of the painfully long lines at certain booths in 1996. While the larger exhibition space did mitigate much of the problems with the lines (though games such as Final Fantasy VII, Goldeneye, and Tekken 3 still had some decent waits), the sprawling space did make for a somewhat difficult trek for journalists who had to make their*

way from one end of the floor to another, which often took upwards of 20 minutes.

PC games had a bit of a resurgence at E3, particularly first-person shooters such as Quake II, Half-Life, Unreal, Duke Nukem Forever, Sin, and Prey. However, it was a console FPS, Goldeneye 007 for the Ultra Nintendo, that really stole the show, impressing many of the gathered journalists with its exciting four-player split screen deathmatch mode.

Nintendo had the biggest showing of all at E3, revealing all the details of their upcoming Ultra Nintendo console, including the price (\$299, largely as expected), several technical details (including backwards compatibility with the SNES-CD, the worst-kept secret in video gaming, and the new Gigadisc proprietary format for games), and most of the games in the console's launch window and beyond. As the event was just days before Nintendo's big Japanese launch, all of the Japanese launch games were present in their finished form, while Nintendo also introduced games such as Star Fox 2, Yoshi's Story, and 1080 Snowboarding to an eager public. Nintendo and Konami also showed off Metal Gear Solid for the first time, with a very impressive video that wowed audiences and confirmed the game to be a Nintendo exclusive. Other trailers that impressed the crowd included Ballistic Limit 2 and the former reveal of Rare's game The Dreamers, which, along with Goldeneye 007, showed that Rare had become Nintendo's most valuable second party, even ahead of companies like Argonaut and Telenet Japan, which also had impressive E3 showings. Zelda was, unfortunately, a no-show at E3. While it was in development at the time (and, as it turned out, fairly deep into its development cycle), Nintendo wanted to keep the game under wraps so as not to overshadow all the other games they were displaying at E3. While it was apparent by then that the SNES-CD was on its way out, games like Donkey Kong Country 4 and Tales Of The Seven Seas 2 were very well-received, and other titles like Intelligent Qube and Parappa the Rapper, both developed by Sony, also showed that the SNES-CD would continue to be a presence at least through 1997.

While Sega had some of its thunder stolen by the fact that arguably its two biggest third-party games (Tomb Raider II and Resident Evil 2) were revealed to be coming to the Ultra Nintendo before Sega got the chance to formally show them off, Sega still made waves at E3 by announcing a Saturn price cut and two new bundles: A Sonic collection that included Sonic 4 and Sonic Jam (which was announced as being released AT E3) and a fighting game collection that included Virtua Fighter 2, Tekken 2, and Fighters Megamix. The company also showed off a myriad of Sonic games and a bunch of new RPGs, hoping to counter quality (Final Fantasy VII) with quantity. Though Sega had reason to be worried after the very positive reception to the Ultra, the company didn't show it at E3, confidently promoting dozens of upcoming Saturn games, and for the most part, Sega's E3, while not the brash display of hubris that was Sega's E3 1996, did feature more quality games than the previous year, reassuring Saturn owners that they'd indeed bet on the right horse, at least for the moment.

3Dfx had a major presence at E3, with nearly every PC game displayed at the show featuring some kind of "powered by 3Dfx" logo nearby. The company even had some comparisons between games on the new Ultra Nintendo console and PC games featuring 3Dfx technology. Not surprisingly, the 3Dfx games looked better, though to Nintendo's credit, on some games it was hard to tell.

Star Wars had a big booth set up at E3 as well, not only to promote the VHS releases of the new "special edition" trilogy, but a host of new games as well, including the fighting game Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo on the Super Nintendo CD (which Rare also promoted in their

press conference), *Star Wars: Shadows Of The Empire* on the Ultra Nintendo, *Star Wars: Battle Of Despayre* on the Saturn, and the PC game *Star Wars: Jedi Knight Dark Forces II*. Their booth was flanked by men in Storm Trooper costumes and women in Princess Leia's slave outfit from *Return of the Jedi*, which highlights another aspect of E3 that really grew that year: booth babes. The Duke Nukem booth was flanked with numerous scantily clad women, and even the Eidos booth had a scantily clad Lara Croft on display to talk about *Tomb Raider II*. It was the beginning of a controversial trend that would continue in subsequent E3s, to a much greater extent.

Ultimately, the consensus Game of the Show was *Super Mario Dimensions*, with *Goldeneye 007* considered a distant second. If videos are counted, *Metal Gear Solid* has a good case for being considered Game of the Show. Either way, E3 1997 symbolized the true beginning of the fifth generation, with the Super Nintendo CD pushed aside in favor of the Ultra Nintendo, while the Saturn continued unabated, on an inevitable collision course with Nintendo's new machine.

-excerpted from IGN's E3 1997 article (based on this real-life article on IGN.com about OTL's E3 1997: [http://www.ign.com/wikis/e3/E3\\_1997](http://www.ign.com/wikis/e3/E3_1997) )

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## **The Summer Blockbuster Season Of 1997**

Looking back, talk about 1997's summer blockbusters begins and ends with three films: *Men In Black*, *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*, and *Batman and Robin*. The latter two were highly anticipated sequels to some of the biggest summer blockbusters of all time, while the first was a major sci-fi comedy featuring the talented Will Smith. The Fresh Prince was fresh off of starring in the biggest blockbuster of 1996, *Independence Day*, and once again he was starring in a film about defending the Earth from aliens, though this one had a much quirkier and comedic tone. And, despite being the only non-sequel among the summer's big three tentpole films, *Men In Black* performed the best domestically with a \$295 million North American take, just a shade less than *Independence Day*. While *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* was hugely hyped and scored the biggest box office opening to date with \$75 million over its first three days, it failed to live up to the critical performance of the original *Jurassic Park* and finished with a \$230 million domestic take. And while *Batman and Robin* was considered a good film (though not as good as *Batman Forever*) and a box office success with a \$65 million opening weekend and a \$200 million domestic box office take, it didn't match up to *Batman Forever*. It had to settle for being the third biggest hit of the summer, like *Superman: Last Son Of Krypton* had done before it. As for the summer's other box office films: The Harrison Ford action thriller *Air Force One* and the Nicolas Cage action flick *Con Air* both did rather well, with *Air Force One* soaring into fourth for the summer. Disney's *Hercules*, a rather loose interpretation of Greek mythology, taking cues from films like *Rocky* with its "zero to hero" motif and eschewing the dramatic pathos of the classic myths for the familiar Disney musical comedy formula, barely made it to \$100 million domestically, the least lucrative Disney film since *The Rescuers Down Under*. Featuring the voices of Tate Donovan as the titular demi-god, James Woods as the fast-talking villain Hades, and Susan Egan as the voice of Hercules' love interest Megara, the film did well with critics but didn't receive the high praise achieved by previous Disney classics. The biggest sleeper hit of the summer was the horror film *Event Horizon*, starring Sam Neill and Laurence Fishburne. The movie, about a crew of a ship that falls into a rift in space and time and experiences horrors beyond imagination, did well with critics and even better with fans,

scoring a \$26 million opening and eventually making \$150 million at the domestic box office, slotting in just behind *Air Force One* as the summer's fifth biggest hit and easily besting *The Fifth Element*, another space-based sci-fi film. The sixth biggest hit of the summer was the romantic comedy *Surf and Turf*, starring Sandra Bullock as a hotel manager at an exclusive seaside resort who falls in love with a surfer dude played by Matthew McConaughey. The film took in \$130 million at the domestic box office. All in all, though 1997 didn't quite reach the stellar heights of the previous year in terms of summer box office success, it still has to be considered a pretty good summer. The only films that didn't work that summer seemed to be children's TV show adaptations: *Sailor Moon: The Movie*, a localized version of *Sailor Moon R: The Movie*, took in a paltry \$8.3 million in its opening weekend and \$25 million domestically, failing to match even the pedestrian gross taken in by fellow Fox Kids film *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers: The Movie* in 1995. And Nickelodeon's second feature film, *The Pete and Pete Movie*, serving as a sort of "finale" to the beloved TV series (bringing back beloved characters like Artie, the Strongest Man In The World), was well reviewed by critics (Siskel and Ebert gave it two enthusiastic thumbs up), but it only took in about \$20 million domestically.

### **Batman And Robin: Not Great, But Still Pretty Cool**

After the success of *Batman Forever*, Joel Schumacher was given free reign with the next Batman film, *Batman and Robin*. While he intended to keep the series "fun", he also wanted to keep the subject matter serious as a way to pay respect to the classic characters and maintain the quality of the film franchise. For that reason, he decided to use Mr. Freeze as the villain of the fourth Batman movie, and cast Patrick Stewart to play the chilly character (Arnold Schwarzenegger was considered and the studio lobbied for him, but after a screen test, Schumacher decided that Arnold just couldn't cut it from an acting perspective and decided on the more serious and talented Stewart). He also cast Claire Danes as Barbara Gordon, daughter of Commissioner Gordon, who decides to become Batgirl after her father is injured after being taken hostage by the gangster Rupert Thorne (played by John Goodman) at the start of the film. Schumacher wrote the script in conjunction with *Batman: The Animated Series* writer Boyd Kirkland, with Kirkland and Warner Bros. deciding to combine the proposed plot of an intended direct-to-video Batman movie with Schumacher's live-action Mr. Freeze treatment (Kirkland would later write and direct a Harley Quinn animated film in 1999). *Batman and Robin* served as an origin story for Mr. Freeze, with Victor Fries fired from his job after attempting to illegally commandeer a medical lab to try and treat his wife Nora's incurable disease. At the same time, Batman and Robin (played by a returning Val Kilmer and Leonardo DiCaprio) are keeping the peace in Gotham, but the city is coming under an increased threat of crime due to the machinations of the crime boss Rupert Thorne. After a hostage situation leaves Gordon laid up, his daughter Barbara (who has already been training in martial arts under Gordon's insistence after we find out that Gordon's wife was murdered when Barbara was a young girl), who has been closely following Batman and Robin's exploits, decides to create her own superheroine identity (using seized items from her father's evidence locker to cobble together a costume and gadgets). Meanwhile, Fries tries to sneak into a chemistry lab to work on a cure for his wife, but after Batman and Robin go in to foil the break-in, an accident leads to Fries being unable to function without the creation of a special cryogenic suit. Now armed with an array of ice-based weaponry, Fries dubs himself Mr. Freeze and makes a deal with Thorne: Thorne will provide Freeze with thugs and money if Freeze provides him with weaponry to arm his gang. Meanwhile, Batgirl introduces herself to Batman and Robin, and a conflict emerges: Robin wants Batgirl on the team (partially because he's smitten with her), while Batman refuses to train her, not wanting to go behind his friend Commissioner Gordon's back. Batgirl proves herself capable in battle, and they are able to foil one of Mr. Freeze's

robberies. However, she does sustain a cut in a fight, and Mr. Freeze scans the blood and realizes that Barbara is a perfect match for his wife's DNA, and that her DNA could be used to make a cure for Nora's disease. Freeze abducts Barbara and takes her to an underground lab he's built on an offshore island. When Thorne shows up, demanding that Freeze stop working on a cure and commit a robbery for him, Freeze kills him. Batman and Robin head in to rescue Barbara and stop Freeze, though Barbara proves to be more than capable of defending herself, escaping her cell and making trouble for Freeze. Finally, there's a confrontation between Mr. Freeze and the Bat-team. Batman, Robin, and Barbara get the upper hand, though in the middle of the fight, Robin and Barbara are separated from Batman. The two of them stumble on Nora's room as Batman battles Freeze. Barbara reads Nora's diary in which it's shown that she and Victor were a truly loving couple and that Victor deeply laments the prospect of losing her, and she agrees to undergo the operation (which is very risky but not necessarily fatal to Barbara) in order to save Nora's life, something to which Robin deeply objects but which he can't bring himself to force Barbara not to do. However, the fight between Batman and Freeze has led to a lot of destruction in the lab, and eventually it causes a chemical vat to break and the lab to begin self-destructing. Being defeated by Batman and seeing his life's work go up in smoke, Freeze begins to despair, but Barbara (carrying Nora over her shoulder) tells him it's not too late and that they can still save Nora's life if they can get to a medical facility in time. Freeze shouts that Nora's been out of cryo-stasis too long and that there's no hope for saving her now. He allows the lab to collapse on top of him as Batman, Robin, and Barbara evacuate, taking Nora and Fries' lab notes with them. The final scenes of the film depict Gordon recovering from his wounds, but none the wiser about his daughter's new secret identity. Nora is back in cryo-stasis at Gotham University's medical lab. After Dick Grayson and Barbara share a kiss in the Batcave (making it clear that she intends to keep being Batgirl), Batman is asked by Commissioner Gordon what he thinks about a recent development: Victor Fries is alive and has agreed to turn himself in in exchange for being allowed to finish his work on Nora and find a cure that doesn't involve risking an innocent person's life. Batman tells Gordon that justice must sometimes be tempered with mercy and that Victor Fries isn't a monster. Mr. Freeze is then shown working in the lab on a cure, the lab having been relocated to underneath Arkham Asylum. The final scene of the film shows Batman, Robin, and Batgirl running toward the screen, and then the credits roll.

The film, though criticized for not being as deep as previous Batman films, still receives decent reviews (and a 71% rating on Rotten Tomatoes), and Warner Brothers begins work on *Batman Triumphant* soon afterward.

-from "The Cinematic History Of Batman", an article on SuperheroesOnFilm.com

### **Titanic: Smooth Sailing, or Monster Mess?**

James Cameron's *Titanic* is finally nearing completion. The film, which reportedly cost \$200 million to make, stars Matt Damon and Kate Winslet as star-crossed lovers aboard the doomed ship. Budget over-runs have plagued the film, but Cameron promises it'll be worth the wait. Originally scheduled as a summer 1997 tentpole, it's set to be released in December, and only time will tell whether it's a titanic hit or a mega-flop.

-excerpted from a July 17, 1997 Associated Press report

### **CGI Animation: The Wave Of The Future?**

Pixar continues to work on its next animated film: *A Bug's Life*, said to be about a colony of

ants forced to provide food for hungry grasshoppers. The film is scheduled for a holiday 1998 release, and after the success of 1995's *Toy Story*, big things are expected from it. Pixar MAY be receiving some competition from the film company Dreamworks, who in 1996 signed on with Sony to produce a set of CGI animated films. Though Dreamworks' planned adaptation of the book of Exodus is set to be a traditionally animated film, its CGI film, about a whimsical group of monsters who start a haunted circus, is set for a Halloween 1998 release and could compete with *A Bug's Life* for family dollars. Sony is also set to collaborate with Nintendo on the hotly anticipated release of the Ultra Nintendo later this year.

-excerpted from a July 30, 1997 Associated Press report

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The 1997 NBA Playoffs saw the Bulls trying to win their second three-peat in seven years, while a rising tide of young superstars were rising up to try and take him down. Here's a brief summary of each series.

*(1) Chicago Bulls over (8) New York Knicks, 3 games to 0*

Just a few years before, these two teams were battling for the Eastern Conference title. But the Knicks had clearly faded and Jordan and the 65-17 Bulls were just too good.

*(5) Toronto Raptors over (4) Orlando Magic, 3 games to 1*

The Orlando Magic had had a tumultuous season, being involved in one of the ugliest brawls in NBA history after Dennis Rodman ran into the stands to attack a fan and Shaq punched out his former teammate Penny Hardaway. Rodman was no match for Derrick Coleman, who had played the 1996-97 season like someone had lit a fire under his ass. Meanwhile, the Raptors' awesome backcourt combo of rookie Ray Allen and Damon Stoudamire was too much for the plodding Magic to handle and the Raptors took Games 3 and 4 at home easily to move on.

*(2) Boston Celtics over (7) Indiana Pacers, 3 games to 1*

The Pacers suffered through injury woes that season, though there was a silver lining in that the repeated injuries to Mark Jackson gave rookie Steve Nash a lot of time in the starting lineup and he was particularly heroic in the Pacers' valiant effort to survive in Game 4, but in the end, Grant Hill, Penny Hardaway, and the Boston Celtics moved on.

*(6) Washington Wizards over (3) Miami Heat, 3 games to 2*

The Wizards, who'd changed their name from the Bullets at the start of the season, had Rookie of the Year Allen Iverson and little else, but that was still enough to overcome Alonzo Mourning and the Heat. Iverson was sensational, with a 42 point performance in the clinching game which included a spectacular block on Alonzo Mourning that even made the hometown Heat crowd gasp in excitement.

*(1) Golden State Warriors over (8) Minnesota Timberwolves, 3 games to 0*

Kevin Garnett had led his Timberwolves to a 42-40 record, but all that got them was a date with the dominant Warriors in the first round. Mitch Richmond, Tim Hardaway, and Toni

Kukoc shredded the T-Wolves, while rookie Kobe Bryant made valuable contributions off the bench. All three games were blowouts.

*(4) Houston Rockets over (5) Seattle Supersonics, 3 games to 2*

Despite having Hakeem Olajuwon, Charles Barkley, and Clyde Drexler on the same team, the Rockets had struggled that year with some of the younger, fresher teams in the Western Conference, and this series was a battle. In the end, the Rockets survived.

*(2) Utah Jazz over (7) Dallas Mavericks, 3 games to 0*

Big rookie Marcus Camby helped lead the Mavericks back to the playoffs, but he couldn't overcome John Stockton and the Mailman. The Jazz swept.

*(3) San Antonio Spurs over (6) Phoenix Suns, 3 games to 1*

The Spurs had an injury scare with their leader David Robinson at the start of the year, but the injury only cost The Admiral a few games, and the Spurs finished the season with a 56-26 record, good for third in the conference. They beat the Suns in four.

*(1) Chicago Bulls over (5) Toronto Raptors, 4 games to 1*

Though the Raptors' young nucleus put up a decent fight against the Bulls in the two games that took place in Canada, the Bulls were far too good and won fairly easily here.

*(2) Boston Celtics over (6) Washington Wizards, 4 games to 1*

In a battle of the NBA's hottest young stars, two proved better than one, as Hill and Hardaway proved far too good for Iverson to handle. The Celtics won, setting up yet another Michael Jordan/Grant Hill showdown.

*(1) Golden State Warriors over (4) Houston Rockets, 4 games to 2*

This series was a bit of a coming out party for Kobe Bryant, who started at shooting guard in game 3 after Mitch Richmond went down with an injury in the Warriors' Game 2 loss. Bryant came up huge with 26 points in a close Warriors' win and once Richmond came back, Golden State was able to finish off the Rockets in six.

*(3) San Antonio Spurs over (2) Utah Jazz, 4 games to 1*

David Robinson and the Spurs dominated this surprisingly one-sided series, proving to be the better coached team. They would move on to the Western Conference Finals for a showdown with the Warriors.

*(1) Chicago Bulls over (2) Boston Celtics, 4 games to 3*

Once again, Michael Jordan beat Grant Hill, though it wasn't easy. The Bulls won Game 7 by two with a last second shot from Michael Jordan at the foul line, one of the best game winners of his career.

*(3) San Antonio Spurs over (1) Golden State Warriors, 4 games to 2*

The Spurs pulled off the upset in this series, closing out the Warriors in a thriller at the Alamodome. David Robinson once again proved to be the difference, averaging 31 points over the six game series and proving that the Warriors' center Rony Seikaly just couldn't compete with one of the best big men in NBA history. It was another tough sports break for Oakland, their Raiders had the first pick in that year's NFL Draft and were hoping for Peyton Manning, though Manning decided to stay in school.

*Chicago Bulls over San Antonio Spurs, 4 games to 2*

Despite a fierce fight from the Spurs, who split the first four games with the Bulls and nearly stole Game 5, Michael Jordan once again proved to be a champion. The Bulls took this series, their third straight NBA championship and their sixth in seven years.

### **The 1997 NBA Draft**

The 1997 NBA Draft was all about one man: Tim Duncan, one of the greatest NBA prospects of all time out of Wake Forest. The Los Angeles Lakers had the seventh best chance to get Duncan, but their ping pong ball came up first, giving them Duncan and prompting the biggest accusations of draft rigging since Patrick Ewing went to the Knicks in 1985. The Lakers missed out on Shaq in the summer of '96, but Duncan seemed to be a fair consolation prize. Other notable draft picks included Keith Van Horn, who went to the New Jersey Nets at #2, Chauncey Billups, who went to the Philadelphia 76ers at #3, and Tracy McGrady, who went to the Charlotte Hornets at #6. The Orlando Magic attempted to trade troubled power forward Dennis Rodman for the pick, but the Hornets turned them down flat.

- "NBA History: 1997", from an article on Bleacherreport.com

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### **The 1997-98 Network TV Season: A Brief Overview**

In the fall of 1997, NBC's "Must See TV" still ruled the roost, and that didn't change. *Friends*, *Seinfeld* (in its final season), and the medical drama *ER* were three of the highest rated shows on all of television, though *Union Square* and *Veronica's Closet* were also huge. In *Union Square*, NBC finally found a solid 8:30 PM show after canceling so many others for not being able to retain enough of *Friends*' viewers. Other NBC sitcoms that continued to do well were *Mad About You* and the Jay Mohr sitcom *Fair Play*, which starred Mohr as a high school sports referee, Ally Sheedy as his cooler-headed wife, and Ray Combs as the older brother of Mohr's character, a wise-cracking lawyer. On Fox, *Married With Children* aired its final season, which was essentially a straight-up spoof of the much maligned final season of *Roseanne*, where the titular character hits the lottery. In *Married With Children*, Al Bundy hit the lottery and won \$100 million and things still went terribly for him: his business investments failed, his son Bud dated a gold-digging supermodel (played by Uma Thurman in a performance that ended up winning her Best Guest Actress In A Comedy), his daughter Kelly became a publicly ridiculed socialite (in an "art imitating life" moment that now seems prophetic in the wake of the fame of heiresses like Paris Hilton), and his wife Peg still got on his nerves. The season was highly praised (a highlight was Ted McGinley's Jefferson D'Arcy being killed off after being eaten while attempting to jump a shark), and in the end, Al had lost all his money, barely able to get back his old job as a shoe salesman in a series finale that was universally considered better than *Seinfeld*'s (which saw the four main characters all tossed in jail after laughing at a man in the street instead of helping him). Fox's animated sitcoms *The Simpsons* and *King Of The Hill* excelled in the ratings as well. On

ABC, *Home Improvement* continued its run as a standout hit, while the new sitcom *The Game Of Life*, which saw Eric Stoltz as an energetic video game reviewer and hapless bachelor, was an unexpected rookie hit, finishing 21st in the ratings that year. For the most part, CBS largely lacked a major hit. *Touched By An Angel* took a dip in the ratings, though *Suits And Ties*, a drama featuring Bill Pullman as a ruthless businessman, was a sophomore success and CBS' highest rated show at 12th overall. The 1997-98 TV season is considered to be fairly unremarkable overall, despite two of the most famous sitcom finales of all time. It wouldn't be until the fall of 1998 that network TV would see what many critics now call "the last great network TV renaissance".

-excerpted from an article on zap2it.com on June 22, 2012

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1997 didn't bring much in the way of change for Toonami. Cartoon Network largely stayed the course, keeping *The Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest*, *Reboot*, and *Slayers* in the line-up, though they did ditch *Robotech* in order to bring in *Batman: The Animated Series*, which aired in re-runs while the new seasons aired on Kids' WB. The line-up wouldn't see a major shakeup until 1998, in which three of the anime mega-blockbusters that continue to define the block for so many would make their Toonami debuts.

-excerpted from an article on Toonzone.net

While the first season of *The Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest* was largely grounded in realism, the second season saw a return to the more fantastical elements that had defined the original 60s series: the supernatural, the weird, and the otherworldly. The tonal shift in the series was accompanied by a recasting of the voice actors, including swapping J.D. Roth as Jonny Quest for Roth's high-school buddy and fellow TV personality Ted Crosley (in a bit of GameTV-related trivia, Brittany Saldita read for Jessie Bannon to replace season one's voice actress Jesse Douglas and nearly got the part, but it went to Jennifer Hale in the end), Rob Paulsen replacing Michael Benyaer as Hadji, John de Lancie replacing George Segal as Dr. Benton Quest, and Robert Foxworth replacing Robert Patrick as Race Bannon. The change was lauded by a few old-school Quest fans but criticized by others who had grown accustomed to the more serious tone of the new series and who were alienated by Jessie becoming more of a "damsel in distress" archetype in season two. For season 3, which aired new episodes on Toonami every Friday in the spring and summer of 1998, there was a reconciliation of sorts. Some fantastical elements would remain but the series returned to a more realistic and serious tone, and season 3 was largely considered the best season of the show by fans, especially its thrilling ending.

-from an article on "Jonny Quest Central", posted in 2013

### **Cartoon Cartoons Make A Splash**

With *Dexter's Laboratory* moving from TBS to Cartoon Network, it joins two new cartoons to form the first lineup of Cartoon Network originals known as "Cartoon Cartoons": Van Partible's *Johnny Bravo*, and David Feiss' *Cow and Chicken*. While *Johnny Bravo* is somewhat of a throwback to 60s and 70s animated comedies, *Cow and Chicken* is edgier, somewhat of a *Ren and Stimpy* clone in terms of tone and content. Cartoon Network is also in talks with Danny Antonucci and Seth MacFarlane about creating the next wave of Cartoon Cartoons that will likely debut sometime in 1998.

-from an article in *TV Guide*, July 19-25, 1997

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*A new fantasy novel for kids, "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone", is making a splash across the pond with excellent reviews from various publications. Its initial small print run has sold out, though the publisher plans another, larger print run for general consumption later this year. No word yet on if the novel will come to the United States, but those lucky few in England who have read the book have enjoyed it and if it continues to sell well, it's likely to receive an American release at some point in the next year or two.*

-from a CNN report, October 10, 1997

*"This new book, Harry Potter, it's quite intriguing and something possibly worth looking into? The book rights were bought before it was released but maybe the rights to a video game or movie are still up for grabs? An animated collaboration with Dreamworks might be a hit and the format would be perfect for animation."*

-an e-mail from Olaf Olafsson to Ken Kutaragi on November 23, 1997

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**Nickelodeon SNICK Lineup** (beginning September 13, 1997):

8:00 PM- Rugrats  
8:30 PM- All That  
9:00 PM- Sam and Kira  
9:30 PM- Swashbucklers

Nickelodeon's sci-fi show *Space Cases* was barely renewed for its 20-episode third season, which aired during the summer and fall of 1997 and early 1998. It was thought that the success of *Swashbucklers* would kill any chances the show, which had middling ratings, would have of renewal, but *Nickelodeon* wanted to keep airing a sci-fi show and so *Space Cases* was saved. The third season saw the crew continuing their journey through the backroads of the galaxy on the ship *Christa* in search of Earth, but things got complicated when they ran into a search party sent from Mars, led by Prince Senfa (played by young actor/model Greg Sestaro in his first major acting role). Senfa ended up joining the crew after being stranded from his party. Eventually (after a four-part arc that saw the crew ending up in Andromeda, giving Radu a chance to reunite with his family), they made it back to Earth's Solar System, barely ahead of the invading Spung army. Instead of returning home right away, the crew returned to their home planets one by one to rally them to the cause of defending their homes from the Spung. When Senfa returned to Mars (in a two-part episode praised as the series' best), he seemingly betrayed the team to the Spung, only for it to be revealed as a ruse (he was attempting to lead the Spung into a trap instead, nearly costing him his life) and for him to return to the crew. Eventually, the *Christa*'s crew made it back to Earth, where they united the solar system's forces for an all-out battle with the Spung (that was depicted in a TV movie that aired on SNICK in February 1998). The series ended in spectacular fashion and became one of Nickelodeon's most beloved shows (though not as beloved as shows like *Swashbucklers*, which had a better reception from both critics AND fans).

-excerpted from "Tales From 90s Nickelodeon", an article on TVMemories.com

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It's the British invasion all over again! But this time it's not a Fab Four, but a Fab Five: The Spice Girls, Britain's hottest pop band, are burning up the American charts, taking two

songs to the top of the Top 100 in the first half of 1997 alone: "Wannabe" and "Say You'll Be There", the latter of which is arguably the song of the summer (though the current #1, "Bitch" by Meredith Brooks, has topped the chart quite a bit longer). The Spice Girls aren't through yet, they're planning an American concert tour later this summer and they're currently in the process of filming their movie *Spice World*, which is set to debut in theaters early next year. Not only that, but the girls have signed an exclusive deal with Sega to produce a Spice Girls video game for the Sega Saturn, set to release in conjunction with the movie.

-excerpted from *People* magazine, July 14, 1997

Brittany Saldita: And now, as part of our takeover of *GameTV*, it's the *GameTV* debut of the Spice Girls!

\*The Spice Girls walk onto the *GameTV* stage as their song "Spice Up Your Life" plays, giving Brittany and Lyssa warm hugs and kisses as they take their seats.\*

Lyssa Fielding: Okay, it's one hell of an honor to have you guys on the show.

Posh Spice: Well thank you both very much!

Sporty Spice: I've got to ask you, do you have a favorite Spice Girl?

Brittany: Well, I don't want to play favorites with you guys, but...I do have a bit of a preference for Scary Spice.

Scary Spice: \*laughing\* Ha! Thank you!

Lyssa: Do I HAVE to choose?

Baby Spice: Well I guess you don't HAVE to choose...

Lyssa: It's funny you say that because you're probably my favorite by just a little bit!

Brittany: I think it's because you two look so much alike!

Baby Spice: \*laughing\* Haha....I think when I grow up I'd like to look like Lyssa.

Lyssa: \*laughing loudly\*

Brittany: So how's it feel to be back in the US for the first time since your tour?

Ginger Spice: Um, it's very nice here, we love the great reception from our fans all over the world.

Sporty Spice: Yeah, it's really been amazing how well we've been treated by fans here in the States.

Baby Spice: It's great! And I love this studio, it's so big and nice and cool in here.

Brittany: It's a really fun studio to work in, for sure, but I imagine you guys have been in all kinds of studios.

Posh Spice: Oh, definitely.

Ginger Spice: Yeah, but this is one of the nicer ones for sure.

Scary Spice: I love all the screens here, are those for all different kinds of games?

Lyssa: Yeah, sometimes we put different games on them, other times we put things like, well, you guys since you're the guests of honor here.

Posh Spice: I feel like I want to get a game started up in here, do you all have the new Sonic racing one yet? We were over at Sega and we got to play it and it was really cool.

Brittany: It comes out next month I think.

Lyssa: Do you guys like the new Bomberman? I love the new Bomberman game for the Saturn.

Posh Spice: Oh, I'm no good at that one.

Scary Spice: She blows herself up every time she plays, it's kind of sad really.

Baby Spice: \*makes a sad face\*

-excerpted from the October 14, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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By 1997, Fox Kids had ended its "Where Kids Kick Butt" campaign, and the fall lineup for that year reflected that, with action shows *Sailor Moon* and *X-Men* gone from the weekday schedule and relegated to Saturdays (with *Sailor Moon* airing entirely reruns after Saban neglected to pick up *Sailor Moon S*). 1997 became what some Fox Kids fans called "The Year of Girl Power". Both of the new fall shows, the anime pickup *Magic Knight Rayearth* and the comedy *Jane's Brain*, created by and starring comedienne Janeane Garofalo, featured female main characters, meaning that the weekday Fox Kids lineup was 75% girl-centric shows (with *The Buttkickin' Girls* remaining on the block). *Jane's Brain* was Fox's latest attempt at giving a stand-up comic the chance to create their own show (after Howie Mandel's *Bobby's World* and Louie Anderson's *Life With Louie*). *Jane's Brain* was arguably better than both of them, the show about a teenage girl who finds a way (with her best friend) to venture into the weird spaces of her own mind was beloved by critics and a cult classic, but the edgy and hard to understand show was a ratings flop, and it was dropped from the weekday lineup by February 1998 (*Magic Knight Rayearth* lasted about a year longer). The surging *Power Rangers Turbo* (which got a boost from the well received film that depicted the death of Rocky, the Red Ranger) continued the series' ratings success, and *The Buttkickin' Girls* remained network TV's most popular cartoon (and TV's most popular overall behind *Rugrats* and *Phineas and Ferb*). The two shows would carry Fox Kids until 1999 saw the block finally pick up its next major hit.

-excerpted from "The History Of Fox Kids", on NostalgiaBase.com

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(Author's Note: Big thumbs up to our reader **Fardell** for this next Daria part! He sent me a big list of slight changes to Daria's first season that reflects the butterflies ITTL, full credit for this upcoming list goes to him, he gave me the list of references to use and I've adapted them into this list. The GameTV part after the reference list is mine.)

With *Daria* reflecting a lot of the late-90s cultural zeitgeist at the time, and video games a big part of that, they certainly played a role, albeit a small one, in the show. Here's a quick list of game references from the show's first season:

*Esteemsters* (March 3, 1997):

There is something that looks like an Atari 2600 in Jane's room when they're watching *Sick Sad World* for the first time. One of the background characters in the Self Esteem Class (the one who asks Mr. O'Neill about the essay that he was setting about 'How the world would be a sadder place if you weren't in it') has a tv shirt advertising *GameTV*.

*The Invitation* (March 10, 1997):

Brittany says that her father is getting her a 'Cronus', a game console in the *Daria* world (a reference to the real-world Sega Saturn).

*Cafe Disaffecto* (March 24, 1997):

Daria compares Melody Powers (the subject of her story at the Coffee House) to a 'video game heroine'.

*Malled* (March 31, 1997):

At least one video game store is seen in the Mall of the Millenium.

*The Lab Brat* (April 14, 1997):

Brittany mentions that Brian has been playing the 'Cronus'.

*Pinch Sitter* (April 21, 1997):

The Gupty parents tell Daria that she is not to bring any 'Gamepad' when she's babysitting their children.

*The Big House* (May 5, 1997):

One of the activities that Helen and Jake try to engage Daria and Quinn in while they are grounded is video game playing. (On a system that resembles a SNES-CD). Of course, the teens defeat their parents in those just as much as in the board games...

*Road Worriers* (May 12, 1997):

No game references in this one, just wanted to point out the great use of a song from Nirvana's album *Stains* in the background of a scene.

*The Misery Chick* (May 26, 1997)

Tommy Sherman compares Jane to a 'weird gamer chick'.

Also of note is the occasional crossover between *Daria* and *GameTV*: the production staff of both shows were friends, with Daria's voice actress Tracy Grandstaff a close friend of several of the *GameTV* hosts. Five of *GameTV*'s nine hosts showed up as voices on *Daria* at some point.

Ted Crosley: Probably the biggest role out of the *GameTV* hosts, he had a recurring voice role as a minor character at Daria's school who had a bit more of a major role in two later

season episodes.

Alex Stansfield: Appeared in two episodes: one notable guest appearance as the science nerd Billy in a season three episode.

Brittany Saldita: Only one episode but a very memorable role: she voiced Casey, a lesbian who had an unrequited crush on Daria in a season four episode that ended up being nominated for an Emmy Award (but lost to *The Simpsons*). Casey is regarded as among the best of the show's one-shot characters.

Lyssa Fielding: Could have had the biggest role out of all the *GameTV* hosts (she very nearly got the role of Daria's sister Quinn but lost out to Wendy Hoopes). Ended up playing a minor character over six episodes in the fifth season, a sorority girl from a nearby college who befriends Jane.

John Walden: Very minor season two role, plays the voice of the running back on the school's football team in one episode.

-excerpted from "Elements Of Pop Culture in *Daria* (Part 2)", an article on IGN.com, June 28, 2010

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### **Star Wars Prequels Announced, Filming To Begin Soon**

With the special editions of the *Star Wars* trilogy all achieving box office success, it seemed only a matter of time before additional *Star Wars* theatrical releases were announced, and now that time has come. George Lucas and Lucasfilm announced that filming would begin on a prequel trilogy for *Star Wars* and that the first film of the prequel trilogy would be released in 1999. Lucas says that the films will take place a generation before the original trilogy and will chronicle the Empire's rise to power and the early life of young Anakin Skywalker before becoming Darth Vader. Few other details have been announced, but it's likely that *Star Wars* merchandise sales will increase greatly in the months leading up to the first film. Books in the "Expanded Universe", which tell stories that take place separate from the films, have been flying off the shelves since the release of the special edition trilogy, and video game sales of the series are also high, with multiple games and an expansion of the popular computer game *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* are also scheduled for release over the next 12 months.

-excerpted from an article in *Entertainment Weekly*, July 22, 1997

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The controversial series *South Park*, which has shocked and offended many and has sent many others into convulsions of laughter, airs its third episode this week, following "Cartman Gets An Anal Probe" and "Weight Gain 4000". In this week's episode, "Dinosaur Hunters", which spoofs the popular film *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* and the hit video game *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*, Dr. Mephisto accidentally unleashes a horde of mutant dinosaurs on the hapless citizens of South Park, and it's up to Cartman and the kids to stop them, namely by arming a local Native American and sending him to hunt down the dinosaurs. Actor/Native American activist Russell Means has pre-emptively sent a letter about the upcoming episode to various media organizations in anticipation of stereotypes it

seems to depict in promotional material released by Comedy Central. No doubt this week's episode will add fuel to the fires of controversy that *South Park* has already kicked up in its first two episodes.

-from an article in the August 26, 1997 issue of *USA Today*

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### **June 30, 1997**

Kurt Cobain hadn't expected to find himself in Memphis, but on the invitation of his fellow musician, he'd come out and found himself having quite a good time. Now, under the starry skies, he sat down next to the Mississippi River as his fellow musician Jeff Buckley sat down nearby.

"So what's the progress on *your* next album?" asked Jeff, who'd been wrapping up work on an album he expected to release by the end of the year.

"None," Kurt replied, almost laughing at himself. "I've just been taking it easy. I got enough money that I never have to write another song again. Can you believe it?"

This time, Kurt didn't stop himself from laughing. Jeff laughed too.

"You write music, you get paid. All you gotta trade away is....fuckin' everything, pretty much," said Kurt, shaking his head.

"Shit, I'm sorry," Jeff replied, putting down his guitar and looking over at his friend. "You okay?"

"Yeah, don't worry about me," said Kurt, leaning back and looking up in the stars. "I'm in a much better place than I was three years ago, that's for sure. But still....damn, I don't know if I'm ever gonna feel like doing another album."

"Well, you said it yourself, you don't have to. How's things going with Kathleen?"

Jeff was referring to Kathleen Hanna, who Kurt had been meeting up with regularly over the past couple of years.

"Still friends but....we didn't hook up again. She's cool though. I like talking to her, she's got her head on straight, not like me most of the time. Actually....I've been seeing Courtney again."

"Didn't she try to stab you that one time?" asked Jeff, referring to the well publicized incident just before Kurt had gone into rehab. "You sure you can be with a woman like that?"

"I think a woman like that's just about the only woman I know how to be with," said Kurt, laughing again. "Besides, she's mellowed out too. Shit, she won't stop apologizing to me. I think we're gonna get back together."

Now Jeff was the one laughing, but he was happy for his friend. If Kurt says Courtney had mellowed out, Kurt was probably right.

"I just gotta watch it with the games around her," Kurt said with a smile.

"Hey, being with her, you don't need a video game for excitement."

Jeff stood up and walked down toward the river.

"Speaking of excitement, I think I'm gonna get in the water."

"You be careful," said Kurt. "Your buddies told me you almost drowned a month ago."

"Well this time you're here, you can be the lifeguard."

"Shit, fine, but I'm not taking off my clothes to get in there."

"Well neither am I!" Jeff said with a laugh, running into the river without taking off a single thing. Kurt just rolled his eyes and looked back up at the stars, listening to the sound of his friend's laughter as he thought about where he was in his life. Thirty years old and still one of the biggest music superstars in the world. It was still a tough life, knowing every word he wrote and sang would be endlessly scrutinized and that the media would never stop following him around...but even then, he could escape to peaceful moments like these.

And if he found enough of those peaceful moments, he might actually find time to start writing songs again.

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In Littleton, Colorado, Polly Klaas had just finished watching that evening's episode of *Daria*. She'd liked seeing Daria and Quinn school their parents at video games...she too could easily beat her parents in them, but then again her parents hardly ever played them. As she called her friend to talk about the latest episode, her thoughts never once wandered to that angry boy Eric she'd become acquainted with back at Columbine. The two had seen each other a few more times that year, and they'd even had a couple more brief conversations. She'd also become acquainted with Eric's friend Dylan, who seemed troubled in his own ways, though not as deeply as Eric was. The two of them were friendly to her, though they seemed angry whenever they looked at a few of the girls Polly considered to be her friends. Polly knew some of her friends said cruel things about boys like Eric and Dylan, and had begun asking some of them to stop, though most of them didn't. Polly's closest friend, Caitlyn, had never picked on boys like them, or anyone for that manner, and she was glad that she at least had one friend she didn't have to lecture about how to treat their fellow students.

"I think there's only a few new episodes left," said Caitlyn. "I hope it doesn't get canceled, it's a really funny show and the way Daria handles her problems is really amazing."

"I know, the show's so much like our school it's kind of creepy," said Polly with a giggle. "I think dad's gonna let me go to the mall with you tomorrow, you still wanna go?"

"Yeah, my brother's birthday is coming up, he wants this game....it's like a fantasy video game, *Seekers Of Exion* or something like that?"

"....oh! *Starseekers of Exion*, that's the game I got in the mail from Nintendo this month!"

"Are they still sending you games?"

"Yeah, but I don't play as much as I used to, not enough time....this game is going to take me forever, I can already tell....hey....maybe....you think your brother would mind if he got a slightly used copy?"

"Huh?"

"I could give you the game and you could wrap it up and give it to him."

"Oh... no, Polly, you can't do that, I can't ask you to-"

"I played it for like an hour and gave up, it's okay. I should've picked something else. You can have it, it's totally okay, I know he'll enjoy it more than me!"

"Wow....you're awesome, Polly, seriously you are."

"Don't worry about it Katie..."

"You are the freakin' best, I'm not kidding! Oh, I have to go.... I'll see you tomorrow okay?"

"Yep, I'll see you then, good night, Katie!"

"Night!"

Polly set the phone down on the receiver and smiled, glad that she could do that small thing to help her friend. She didn't know it yet, but one day, she'd have a chance to help more people than she could ever possibly imagine.

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## **July 1, 1997**

Steve Jobs sat down in his office, still not yet used to being back at Apple. After having his company NeXT acquired by them earlier in the year, he'd been brought on as a consultant, but later was named the company's interim CEO. Now he was back at the company he'd helped to found, which was currently going through one of its roughest patches to date. The company was in financial trouble, though it had sidestepped numerous potential disasters: most notably, the entry into video games that was about to sink the Japanese toymaking giant Bandai. Still, Apple was slowly bleeding money, and Jobs knew that Apple's future lay in whether or not NeXT's operating system could catch on with users. He was still seated at his desk when his secretary entered the room.

"Mr. Jobs, it's someone on the line, I think you'll want to take this call."

Jobs nodded, and his secretary routed the call to his desk. He picked up the phone.

"Steve, this is Bill....Bill Gates, from Microsoft."

Over the next hour, the two men discussed the deal that would give Apple enough money to keep them solvent and would put Microsoft Office and Internet Explorer in Apple's

computers. But one of the subjects that came up was something that Jobs was still highly skeptical of.

"So, what do you think about computer games, Steve?"

"Well, you know... I feel like Apple's strength lies elsewhere. Let's be honest, people don't buy Apple computers to play games on them."

"I understand that, but people who buy computers like to play games. Didn't you almost get into the video game business?"

"I wasn't even with the company then, but I would've said no to Bandai too. You saw what happened to them. One of the biggest toy companies in the world, they try to go into video games and now they're about to go bankrupt. I'm surprised you're not trying to buy them up too."

"Honestly, I thought about it," said Gates. "But the thing is, video games are still a growth industry."

"There's only room for two companies in that industry. Hell, there's barely room for two companies in this one."

Gates laughed.

"I know, I know. It's just... maybe if we put our heads together. Maybe we could make something happen. Think about it."

Jobs was already thinking about it. Between Microsoft and Apple, undoubtedly the two companies could come up with an impressive console. But Jobs had heard the news coming out of E3. The new Nintendo and Sony console looked like the tech product of the year. They could drive Sega out of the industry, just as Microsoft was threatening to do to its competitors.

Maybe, just maybe, if Sega ever faltered, there'd be an opening.

"The answer's no," said Jobs. "Next topic."

"Just a thought, just a thought," Gates replied. "And you're right, let's change the subject."

Steve Jobs didn't come back to Apple to bury it. And if he got into the game business, that's exactly what he'd be doing.

But he was always thinking.

*"Windborn could've been a Super Famicom CD game, certainly. Or it could have been an Ultra Nintendo game. During development, we reached a sort of awkward phase where the game was too advanced for the Super Famicom, but it wouldn't look good enough on the Ultra Nintendo. That was when the decision was made to consider making it a Saturn game."*

-Daigo Ashakawa, president of ArkiTek Software

*"On the surface, the Saturn should have been the greatest JRPG machine of all time. No console on the market could do both 2D and 3D so seamlessly. Even with the rise of 3D RPGs kicked off by games like Planetary Probe and Final Fantasy VII, Windborn proved that the Saturn was an incredible system for old-school 2D JRPGs."*

-Alex Stansfield in a blog entry on January 27, 2013

*"Tales of the Seven Seas was such a huge success that we had to make another one before we moved on to the Ultra. With the weight of the unknown lifted off of our shoulders, we just did more of what worked the first time. Luckily, it worked for us again."*

-Mark Cerny

*"This is a game meant to test the player's mind and courage. The graphics don't need to be cutting edge in order to do that."*

-Masahiko Sato, creator of *Intelligent Qube*, on why he chose to create the game for the Super Nintendo CD in lieu of waiting for the Ultra Nintendo or designing it for the Sega Saturn

*"I think in all the hype over the Ultra Nintendo, people don't realize that Nintendo's still selling nearly a million Game Boys a month. So the right game could do very, very well."*

Matt Bozon, co-creator of *Shantae*

*"With you, I am home."*

-Hane, *Windborn*

*"Remember, stealing without a care is what I used to do. I'm protecting the people of this city now. I...I don't know if I'm up to leave anymore..."*

-Dona, *Tales Of The Seven Seas 2*

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## **Disney's Hercules**

Dan: 6.0

Shoe: 7.0

Crispin: 5.0 (quote: "A fairly mediocre platformer with little of the movie's charm.")

Sushi-X: 5.0

## **Intelligent Qube**

Dan: 8.0 (quote: "A wickedly tough puzzler that will definitely test your brains.")

Shoe: 8.0

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.5

## **RayStorm**

Dan: 8.5

Shoe: 9.0 (quote: "This shooter has some of the best graphics I've ever seen on the SNES-CD. Taito really knows how to squeeze every drop out of this system.")

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Syndicate Wars**

Dan: 7.0

Shoe: 7.5 (quote: "Definitely a decent port, but limited in comparison with the amazing PC original.")

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Tail Of The Sun**

Dan: 6.0

Shoe: 5.0

Crispin: 5.0

Sushi-X: 6.0 (quote: "I like how much freedom this game gives you but there's really not all that much to do.")

### **Slaughterbox 2**

Dan: 3.5

Shoe: 5.5

Crispin: 3.0 (quote: "This sequel is a big step back from the original and that's a real shame.")

Sushi-X: 3.0

### **Tales Of The Seven Seas 2**

Dan: 9.0

Shoe: 9.0 (quote: "This game picks up right where the awesome original left off. It remains one of the top game franchises out there.")

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.0

-reviews of July 1997's SNES-CD games in the August and September 1997 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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### **Tales Of The Seven Seas 2: The Basics**

*Tales Of The Seven Seas 2* is the sequel to the pirate-themed 1995 hit *Tales of the Seven Seas*, published by Sony and developed by Naughty Dog. The game takes place a year after the first game and features the same seven playable characters: Erick, Dona, Victoria, Creel, Albert, McKenna, and Jack, returning from the first game with largely the same abilities and skills, with a few new ones added in. Graphically, the game is largely the same as the first, though with a few added 3-D effects, the game is considered one of the best looking games to appear on the SNES-CD, and, like the original game, features a CD audio soundtrack and fully voiced dialogue. This time, instead of sailing on a ship for the majority of the game (though the seven characters still have their ship and travel on it from time to time), the game largely revolves around the bustling town of Port Seashell, the characters' main base of operations. Instead of wandering the ship talking to characters between

missions, you can now wander the town and visit various places there, which, like in the original game, leads to dialogue trees and potential new missions. This game is a bit smaller in scope than the original, there are around 85 missions total, of which you'll complete somewhere between 20-30 if you take the straightest path through the story. There are once again endings for each of the main characters depending on the relationships formed during the game, though, like the original game, they're all "good" endings for the most part. The easiest ending to obtain and the "canon" ending is Dona's, as the main storyline somewhat revolves around her.

It's a year after the end of the first *Tales of the Seven Seas*, and Erick and his friends have found a port of call: Port Seashell, a relatively peaceful town that's home to pirates and refugees from all over the seas who are looking for downtown or somewhere stable to live. In Port Seashell, however, Dona has found her mother, father, and younger sister, all of whom she thought had died. The remainder of the crew wants to get back to sailing the high seas, but Dona is slowly reconnecting with her family and is thinking about settling down with them again. All of this is complicated by the arrival of Silverbeard, a vicious pirate captain who is launching raids on Port Seashell in search of information about an ancient hoard of gold that lies buried somewhere on a nearby island. The action of the game largely revolves both around doing favors for townspeople in Port Seashell and stopping Silverbeard from collecting clues to the treasure (and also defending the town). Over the course of the game, you'll battle various members of Silverbeard's crew (and in some paths you can turn them to your side as allies). Depending on how the story goes (and in the canon and most common branches taken by players), one or both of Dona's parents die at the hands of Silverbeard, and Dona's younger sister is kidnapped by him at the end of the story to be taken as his bride, leading to the final confrontation with the deadly pirate in an ancient fortress where the great treasure is buried. After Silverbeard's defeat, Port Seashell is made peaceful once again. Dona realizes that her true destiny lies on the high seas with her friends, and the crew once again sets sail for their next adventure...

*Tales Of The Seven Seas 2*, despite not QUITE reaching the same commercial success as its predecessor, is still one of the top selling new release games of the year and is fondly remembered as one of the last great hits on the Super Nintendo CD. It's also as well reviewed as its predecessor, with mostly 9s and even a few 10s. It doesn't kick off another huge pirate boom like the first game did, but it does solidify the series as one of Nintendo's best video game franchises.

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## **Sonic Fighters**

Though Sonic fans will undoubtedly welcome this game, it's a clear disappointment compared to the Saturn's other excellent fighting games. With a rather basic battle system, clunky graphics, and a poor single-player mode, *Sonic Fighters* seems like more of a quick cash-in than a worthy entry into the fighting game genre for Sonic and his friends. We liked the robust character selection and some of the neat special moves, but if you're looking for a serious brawler, look elsewhere.

Score: 6/10

## **Hexen**

id Software does it again with another outstanding port to the Saturn. The haunting caverns and dark corridors of Hexen look great on the Sega Saturn, and the atmospheric soundtrack

is perfect. It plays a lot like *Turok* but with a medieval twist. Though the graphics won't blow you away like *Turok's* did, the game itself is fun, challenging, and scary, and another outstanding first person shooter for the Sega Saturn.

Score: 8/10

### **Shinobi X**

While we wish Sega had done more to make this game stand out from the rest of the hack-and-slash beat-em-ups out there, *Shinobi X* is still a fun, fast-paced sidescroller with lots of different weapons and some killer boss fights too. It's one of those old arcade games that needed an update, and if you enjoyed the original, this is a borderline must-play.

Score: 7/10

### **Windborn**

In conclusion, this is an outstanding, epic RPG that stands among the best of all time. It's worthy of being compared to the classics on the Super Nintendo RPG, and now the Saturn has a classic to call its own. It features beautiful graphics, an engaging quest, a challenging but rewarding battle system, and one of the most emotional storylines we've ever experienced. Make no mistake, this is the game to beat for RPG of the year.

Score: 10/10

-excerpted from reviews of July's biggest Saturn games, featured in the August 1997 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

### **Windborn – The Basics**

*Windborn* is a JRPG for the Sega Saturn, published by Namco and developed by ArkiTek, a Japanese software developer (original to TTL) that got its start producing a few obscure games for the Super Nintendo CD, mostly RPGs and puzzle games. *Windborn* was also originally planned as a late SNES-CD game, but after ArkiTek realized that the game's advanced 2-D graphics wouldn't be possible on the SNES-CD and that the game might become lost amongst the Ultra Nintendo hype, the company switched to developing for the Saturn and signed on with Namco as a publisher. The game features entirely 2-D sprite graphics with animation and detail unparalleled in any console game before, made possible by the Saturn's 2-D graphics chip. It also features about 15 minutes worth of anime cutscenes and a large amount of fully voiced dialogue (which is performed mostly by semi-professionals, though a few voice actors who dubbed anime at the time like Tiffany Grant and Kimberly Yates also voice major characters in the game). The game also features a large soundtrack including two vocal songs, one performed about halfway into the game and the other performed over the game's credits. The game's battle system is largely traditional JRPG fare. There are eight playable characters in all with four spots in the party, three are open spots and one MUST be filled by the character Hane, the young girl whom the others are escorting throughout the story (occasionally Hane is gone from the party and this spot can be filled by someone else, but when she's there, she must be in the party). She's a decent spellcaster and healer, though she's defensively weak in terms of HP and defense stats. If Hane is knocked out in battle, you have a limited number of turns to revive her, if she's not revived by then (the number of turns you can take increases as the game goes on, however, certain enemy actions can reduce the counter), it's a game over. You can use healing items (fairly plentiful) or spells to revive her, if you don't have any of those, the other party members can all burn their turns to revive her as well (however, this can only be used a limited number of times per battle). However, there is a mechanic introduced

about a quarter of the way through the game where Hane will fuse with another party member for the duration of the battle (or until the fused character is knocked out). You can do this in almost any battle with any other party member. The fused party member gains a slight stat boost and a unique ability (or in some cases multiple abilities) only accessible through this fusion mechanic. In most major battles, it's recommended to fuse Hane with another party member to gain these abilities, the power of the fused party member exceeds what Hane and the original party member could do alone.

The game starts by introducing the "People of the Wind", who are given life by the winds that encircle the world and are tasked with nurturing and protecting normal humans and all life on the planet. They live in small, nomadic tribes, watching over people and protecting the weak. However, a warrior prince named Mizashi became very strong and began to conquer all other nations. When the Windborn began to interfere with his conquests, he began to slaughter them, and used his popularity to convince his people that the Windborn were evil and sought to stop all progress, leading to a wholesale slaughter of the Windborn. Mizashi eventually gained enough power to bend the winds to his will, stopping the birth of new Windborn and killing all the rest until there was only one left... a nine-year-old girl named Hane. Hane, however, was captured by a group of mercenaries from Dokaru, one of the last remaining free kingdoms left after Mizashi has conquered most of the globe. One of these mercenaries, Tengu, is the main human protagonist of the story, and when he realizes that Dokaru's king wants Hane's powers extracted through torture, he decides to betray his fellow mercenaries and run away with her, which starts the action of the story. As Tengu travels, he meets with various other people who wish to help Hane. The heroes are searching for a secret underground palace that Hane says holds the secret of the Windborn's power. Meanwhile, the heroes are fugitives, both from Dokaru's forces and from those of Mizashi, who will stop at nothing to see Hane dead. As the journey goes on, Tengu, Hane, and their allies venture to various places around the world, all the while growing closer to this mysterious and precocious girl. Eventually, Tengu and his friends are able to lead a coup to replace the king of Dokaru with a benevolent princess, Asari. However, the night after the coronation, Mizashi overruns the Dokaru capital, and Asari, who Tengu had fallen in love with, is executed (Tengu is about to lunge at Mizashi but his friend Nara, a young woman who ends up being Tengu's true love later in the game, knocks him out before he makes a suicidal charge). The journey continues, until finally, about two-thirds of the way through the game, Tengu's party reaches the underground palace at the same time Mizashi does. After a great battle, the secret of the fortress is revealed...the fortress was the pinnacle of Windborn civilization and was home to King Shaman, leader of the ancient Windborn...but to the horror of Hane and the others, Shaman was a cruel, conquering king who was just as bad as Mizashi, and was sealed away by the gathered peoples of the world, with those survivors of his empire, the few surviving Windborn, vowing to atone for their deeds by using their power to help the peoples of the world. Now that the Great Windborn King has been unleashed on the world, he is seemingly unstoppable. Over the next part of the game, Mizashi and his armies are beaten back by King Shaman's assault, while Tengu, Hane, and their friends try to stay out of their way while scouring the world for a way to stop Shaman once and for all. Eventually, the entire world is overrun, with only Mizashi's capital city holding out against Shaman's forces. Mizashi, at the end of his rope, makes a deal with the heroes: he will use what he knows about the Windborn to give Hane the power to defeat Shaman. With no other options, the heroes are forced to trust them, and of course, Mizashi betrays them, instead seeking to take Hane's power for himself. This leads the heroes to mount an assault on Mizashi's palace and in an epic battle, the party defeats Mizashi and then Tengu beats Mizashi in one-on-one combat, avenging Asari and saving Hane. However, the turmoil allows King Shaman to break through the walls of Mizashi's city, and though the heroes save who they can, the city is overrun and a good portion of its

inhabitants are slaughtered. However, there is one final secret that the Windborn kept, and it will enable Hane to defeat Shaman. The heroes make one final assault on Shaman's grand tower, battling his most powerful lieutenants along the way, including a zombie-like remnant of Mizashi, before finally confronting Shaman and defeating him in an epic four-stage final boss battle with four different unique final boss themes. After Shaman is defeated, however, Hane realizes that to truly annihilate him she must give up her life. Hane, after taking a piece of strength from every one of her friends, ascends to her true form as the Windborn Goddess, obliterating Shaman and his evil once and for all. Shaman is destroyed, but Hane is gone, having given up her life to defeat him. Tengu and his friends, though happy to have saved the world, also remember their friend, who, while no longer alive in her human, physical form, still lives on every time they feel the wind floating through the air.

*Windborn* is known as one of the best RPGs of the year (and among some critics, THE best RPG of the year). It receives immense praise from critics with mostly 9s and 10s, including becoming the first Sega Saturn game to achieve a 40/40 from *Famitsu*. The game's sales, while mediocre when compared with mainstream Saturn hits, are still strong for a JRPG, with around 140,000 sales in North America, around 90,000 sales in Europe, and over a million sales in Japan. It's concluded that while the game might have sold somewhat better on the Super Nintendo CD, it would not have been quite as good. The game establishes the Sega Saturn as a viable system for JRPGs, and it's only the first major JRPG to be released for the Saturn that year...

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Meanwhile, Sony's software success continues with *Intelligent Qube* on the Super Nintendo CD. It's the first puzzle game published by Sony, and it's received excellent reviews from media outlets around the world for its tense, challenging gameplay. The game has the player running around a flat plane as a large wave of blocks of various colors slowly rolls toward them. The player must clear these blocks before they reach the player's character and topple him over, which then triggers blocks to fall off the platform the player is standing on. If he falls from the stage, it's game over. The game then estimates the player's IQ based on their performance. The game's graphics utilize pseudo-3D to create the effect of a large, open plane as the blocks slowly roll toward the player, and though they're relatively simple, the game has been praised for creating a reasonable illusion of three-dimensional space. Though Sony is gearing up to begin releasing games for the Ultra Nintendo, including the platformer *Crash Bandicoot* at the system's launch, the company still has a strong lineup of games for this, which is largely considered the last year of major marquee releases for the Super Nintendo CD. Other SNES-CD games planned by Sony include *Parappa the Rapper*, which has the player controlling a cartoon dog who attempts to keep up with the rhythm and lyrics of various music instructors.

-excerpted from an article in the August 1997 issue of *Next Generation*

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And while Bullfrog, the company he helped to found in 1987, is launching *Syndicate Wars* on the Super Nintendo CD this month, a port of the successful PC game, Peter Molyneux says that he plans to leave the company after this month's release of *Dungeon Keeper*, also on the PC.

"I think I've accomplished just about all I can there, and it's time for me to enter a new

chapter of my life," said Molyneux, who continued to design games over the past decade while occasionally moonlighting as a correspondent for various video game publications. "I'll still be designing games, but they'll be entirely different from what I was doing with Bullfrog."

When asked if the new generation of console hardware held any promise, Molyneux did heap some faint praise on the upcoming Ultra Nintendo.

"I think the system is designed with big games in mind, big ambitious games and that it'll be capable of handling most of the big computer games over the next few years."

However, when asked if he would be designing games for Nintendo's new system, Molyneux was somewhat ambivalent.

"I still think the true potential of gaming lies with the home computer. The consoles, even the cutting edge ones, lag a bit too far behind. But if someone gives me an opportunity, who knows? But look at *Syndicate Wars* on the Super Nintendo CD. The poor thing can barely handle it. It's a shame because the original game was something I'm really proud of. It's good that Nintendo's moving on. Hopefully they've futureproofed the Ultra better than they did their last gaming device."

With Molyneux moving onto greener pastures and *Syndicate Wars* launching to fairly tepid reviews, Bullfrog is at a time of transition, but the man who helped start the company says his old team will be just fine.

"They're the best group of guys in the world to work with. This leaving's not a knock on them, I just felt I needed a new challenge. I wish them all the best."

-excerpted from an interview on Gamespot.com, July 29, 1997

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With many of the headlines focused on the Saturn and the upcoming Ultra Nintendo, Nintendo's little device that could, the Game Boy, continues to quietly chug along. Having released a new iteration of the console last year, the Game Boy Color, the system's been experiencing a bit of a mini-renaissance. The Squaresoft RPG *Sydonia* released in April to favorable reviews. The system has also recently seen a couple of adaptations of SNES-CD hits. *Deadman Sam's Skeleton Crew* is the sequel to 1995's portable *Deadman Sam* adventure, while *VideoVision: Remote Wars* is a small-screen version of the 1996 hit that many critics say is even better than the original. *Donkey Kong Land 3*, based on Nintendo's *Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble*, releases this fall and looks quite good in screenshots. The game is said to be designed for the Game Boy Color from the ground up, and is planned as the second Game Boy Color exclusive title. The first? This month's *Shantae*, a platformer/adventure title developed by WayForward, best known for 1995's *Nightsquad*. *Shantae* is significantly more lighthearted, it's a fantasy action romp featuring a genie with the ability to swing her hair to battle enemies and gain access to secret areas. The game features graphics better than any previous Game Boy title, comparable to many Super Nintendo cartridge titles and with an excellent soundtrack that takes full advantage of the new Gameboy's Sony-powered chip. What lies beyond for the little Nintendo that could? Zelda fans clamoring for a new portable adventure won't have to wait much longer: *The Legend Of Zelda: The Mystic Mirror* comes to North America in Spring 1998. And what of *Pocket Monsters*, the franchise taking Japan by storm? While Nintendo has confirmed that

the game will come to North America eventually, news is only very slowly trickling out of Japan, showing that Nintendo's in no hurry to let their portable hit go international. It's likely that the company is holding back news until after the release of the Ultra Nintendo, so as not to let the game get lost in the wake of the new console's big debut. It's most likely that *Pocket Monsters* will come to the west sometime in 1998. That's no consolation to Japan-watchers salivating at every bit of news of the franchise's success, but it appears that Game Boy Color owners will have no shortage of games to tide them over until then.

-an article that appeared in the September 1997 issue of *GamePro*

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Alex Stansfield: *Windborn* is, full-stop, the best RPG since *Tale Phantasia*. It's a tremendously epic game filled with adventure, challenge, lots of side-quests and a huge world to explore. It's also a deeply moving story involving fantastic characters. It's a must-play for all Saturn owners.

Brittany Saldita: Yeah, it's just an incredible game. I was blown away by how beautiful everything looked. The animation on the characters and the enemies was just superb. So much detail in all the backgrounds...I mean, this game arguably looks better than *Final Fantasy VII*. I think if you enjoy that sort of classic style 2-D, this is just about as far as you can go with it. It's incredible.

Alex: And I wasn't expecting much from this game. I liked playing it at E3, but I thought it'd be just another fantasy RPG. I never expected anything like this, especially from Namco.

Brittany: Yeah, they've been on fire this year, haven't they? Usually they just put out games about people punching each other, this is a nice change of pace.

Alex: Well, we enjoy the games about people punching each other, but yeah, this kind of game is something we've never seen from them before and I love it.

Brittany: Is the Sega Saturn really becoming an RPG powerhouse? You've got this game, you've got *Blood Omen*....

Alex: Remember that old Saturn commercial where they bashed RPGs?

Brittany: Yeah, we've come a long way. Though, you know, they'll bash pretty much anything Nintendo does.

Alex: Nintendo should do a game about breathing if they really wanted to show Sega up. Or a game about pooping. Watch all the Saturn guys going around with their butts clenched, like \*scrunches up his face\* Saturn does....\*groaning\* what Nintendon't....nnnnnggh....rrrrgggh.....

Brittany: \*giggles\* Sega usually gets better results from doing what NintenDOES rather than what they don't.

Alex: Go figure. I give this game a 5 out of 5.

Brittany: I'm also giving it a 5 out of 5. *Windborn* is a beautiful, amazing game. FINALLY, a great old school style RPG on the Saturn!

Alex: I love it! \*a siren sounds\* And you know what that means?

Brittany: Another one for the wall?

Alex: You got it!

\*Alex and Brittany, accompanied by Ted, Lyssa, Gary, and John, mount a framed copy of *Windborn* up on the Hall of Fame Wall\*

Alex: And there we go.

Brittany: *Windborn*, the newest member of the GameTV Hall of Fame. Way to go!

(...)

Gary Westhouse: So what's the verdict on *Shantae*?

Lyssa Fielding: I like it! Girl's got style, whipping her hair all around like that... \*she tries to whip her hair like Shantae's but only ends up with a sore neck\* Ooohh, you'd get whiplash REAL easy. \*groaning and holding her neck\*

Gary: Reminds me of my days headbanging at Metallica concerts.

Lyssa: Yeah, guess since she's a genie she can do that without any lasting health problems.

Gary: That and the way she just constantly swings her hips back and forth, even when she's standing still. Somebody give that girl a hula hoop!

Lyssa: Yeah, she just goes around and around, and around...

Gary: This game kicks a lot of butt though. It looks GREAT for a handheld game.

Lyssa: Easily the best looking handheld game I've ever seen. Holy crap!

Gary: Yeah, it looks like it could be an early Sega Genesis game even.

Lyssa: Well, good graphics don't mean anything without great gameplay, and *Shantae*'s got butt kicking, exploration, platforming, she's got it all. I'm giving *Shantae* a 4.5 out of 5.

Gary: And I give it a 4. Definitely one of the best Game Boy games of the year.

-excerpted from the July 8, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

John Walden: Damn, this guy's got skills!

Ted Crosley: Yeah, but *Shinobi X* was largely a dud for me. I'll give it credit for taking the great gameplay of the original arcade title and adapting it pretty well for the Saturn, but when you get over the hype of seeing Shinobi back in action, it's ultimately just a run of the mill platformer and a mediocre one at that.

John: That's where I'm gonna disagree. Now it's true, Shinobi doesn't tread any new ground, but the ground it DOES tread on is pretty nice. There's lots of cool bosses and the combat's pretty fun. It's a bit on the short side-

Ted: That's another complaint I have. It's eight levels, they're not even that long, the game's largely padded with artificial difficulty that forces you to start the whole game over again if you run out of lives. So you're basically forced to resort to cheese tactics that make the game repetitive instead of truly fun.

John: It's a challenge and yeah, sometimes not a fair one. But it looks great, it plays smooth....I think it's a good game! I give *Shinobi X* a 3.5.

Ted: And I'm giving it a 2.5.

-excerpted from the July 15, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

Ted: I'm glad to see *Tales Of The Seven Seas* is back and in fine form. The story, I thought, was even better than the last game, and the graphics got a nice upgrade. There's a lot of 3-D effects now, some great animation, I'm surprised they got it all on one disc.

Alex: I'm glad they did because switching discs would've been a pain in the ass. But yeah, this game's as fun as the last one. There's not as many missions, but it's essentially still just as long of a game as the first one and it's a bit tougher too.

Ted: I noticed that, a lot of the later missions and the boss fights are pretty tough. Whenever you fight one of Silverbeard's minions, you're in for a tough fight.

Alex: And they brought all the old voice actors back, which is really nice.

Ted: And Clancy Brown as Silverbeard is GREAT casting. If you've ever seen *The Shawshank Redemption*, you know this guy plays a convincing (bleep)hole.

Alex: Yeah, he's fantastic. I can just imagine him spouting some of Byron Hadley's lines at certain parts in this game.

Ted: Well, he does more of kind of a pirate accent in this game, so...Byron Hadley if he was a pirate?

Alex: Which makes him even more dangerous.

Ted: True, though in this game, Silverbeard doesn't beat someone to death for whining and crying.

Alex: Though you at least get the idea that he would.

Ted: Damn right he would.

Alex: So what's your final score?

Ted: I wanted to give it a 5 but I settled on a 4.5 because some of the missions DID get a bit repetitive, which made seeing everything just a bit of a slog.

Alex: Well, I gave it a 4.5 because the combat, while still fun, also does get a little bit repetitive eventually, and that can be a bit of a takeaway from a REALLY long play session. But other than those pretty minor quibbles, it's an amazing game.

Ted: Absolutely an amazing game, definitely recommended and lives up to the first.

-excerpted from the July 22, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: July 1997**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Fire Emblem: Keepers Of The Light
3. Tale Phantasia
4. Terranigma
5. Syrielle
6. Mega Man X4
7. Chrono Trigger
8. Elements Of Mana
9. Harvest Moon
10. Dragon Quest VI
11. Hellstormers
12. Rage 2: The Rage Returns
13. Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble
14. Super Mario RPG
15. Super Mario World 2
16. Squad Four: Eclipse
17. Commander Keen: The Universe Is Toast
18. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
19. Doom
20. Donkey Kong Country

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart – July 1997**

1. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
2. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
3. Fighters Megamix
4. Sonic Jam
5. Doom II
6. Hexen
7. Ultima: Scion Of Britannia
8. Sonic Fighters
9. Tekken 2
10. Raigeki

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*And Beverly Hills is still in shock and mourning tonight after seven people were killed and 19 were injured in a rampage carried out just after 3:00 PM today. Among the injured is Tonight Show host and comedy superstar Jay Leno, who was hit in the arm and initially*

*reported in serious condition, but is now said to be in good health and good spirits tonight in a Los Angeles hospital, on the way to a full recovery. The murders were carried out by 27-year-old Andrew Cunanan, who was shot and captured by police and is also in a hospital tonight, recovering from his wounds under heavy police guard. Cunanan was still conscious as he was loaded into the back of an ambulance after being shot by police, and when asked why he committed the massacre, he simply responded, "I wanna be famous."*

*The Beverly Hills massacre shines an increasingly white-hot spotlight on the matter of gun control, which has been a major part of President Clinton's domestic agenda since the passage of the federal assault weapons ban in 1994. This shooting is the third mass shooting incident in the past 12 months, following the incidents surrounding assassination attempts on the rappers Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls that between them left more than a dozen dead. Now, more than ever, President Clinton is putting pressure on Republicans in Congress to pass further measures restricting the availability of handguns. Conservative critics claim that any more gun laws represent an encroachment on Second Amendment rights, and many Republicans in Congress even want to repeal the assault weapons ban. The debate will surely echo through the halls of Congress into the latter part of the summer.*

-from a report on CNN on the evening of July 31, 1997

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Of the early Sonic the Hedgehog games, *Sonic the Hedgehog 2* has the most storied history. What makes it unique is the amount of content cut from the game itself, including the Hidden Palace and Wood Zones. Both levels as well as Dust Hill and Cyber City appeared in the *Sonic the Hedgehog 2* "Director's Cut" that first appeared in *Sonic Jam* in 1997 after completing *Sonic 2*. However, most fans believed that these additional levels were new but the truth is far more interesting. A ROM of a *Sonic 2* prototype appeared on a Chinese Geocities site, which revealed incomplete versions of Hidden Palace and the Wood Zone few weeks before E3 1997. Tom Kalinske later confirmed that the ROM was an authentic beta copy that an unknown party stole at a toy fair in 1992.

The reasoning behind why Sega included *Sonic 2: The Directors Cut* in *Sonic Jam* was simple: to reward fans who bought the Genesis (and in the case of *Sonic 3*, Mega Charger) versions of the games, provided you beat *Sonic 2* with the good ending. Sega placed *Sonic* co-creator Hirokazu Yasuhara in charge of the project, which included American members of the project like Tom Payne, Brenda Ross, and Craig Stitt. The game itself plays like a Mega Charger game with enhanced graphics, music, and sound. Most of the original levels had received a minor facelift, but the new levels included bosses that would have pushed the Mega Charger to its limits. I say that because aside from a limited run of one thousand copies distributed as prizes for various contests, the *Sonic the Hedgehog 2: The Directors Cut* did not receive a widespread Genesis/Mega Charger release, making it the rarest and most expensive *Sonic* game with a complete cart/box/instruction booklet set fetching nearly \$1500 on eBay. Though purists prefer the original 1992 version, *Sonic the Hedgehog 2: The Director's Cut* laid the foundation for later enhanced remakes.

### **Hidden Palace Zone**

Arguably the most infamous "lost level" that STI removed from the game late in its development as evidenced by the mysterious musical track from the game's sound test. The best way to describe it is a fusion of the cave and ancient ruins tropes with Chemical Plant

zone-like tubes, bridges that glow as you run across them, well as geysers that shoot you high into the air. Like Aquatic Ruin, there are underwater portions. Badniks like the fire-spitting [Redz](#), [Stegway](#), and [Bubbler](#), an underwater foe that would "bubble up" and explode when Sonic gets near. In keeping with the mostly-dinosaur theme of the Badniks, Robotnik attacks Sonic in a Tyrannosaurus mech equipped with flamethrower that requires Sonic to hit a knee to force it to kneel before he can attack Robotnik himself.

### **Wood Zone**

Another Zone included in the Sonic 2 prototype, which STI cut before Hidden Palace. It is a deciduous forest that Robotnik is clear-cutting to make room for his factories; as such, hazards in this zone include buzz saws and conveyor belts. Badniks include Saw; an Orbinaut-like enemy who throws saw blades when Sonic draws close; Divebomber, a swallow-like Badnik that does as its name suggests; [Leapfrog](#), and the return of Newtron from the original *Sonic the Hedgehog*. The boss of this zone is the Egg Spider that stays at the top of its web, fires sticky fluid to momentarily immobilize Sonic, and attempts to crush him with a body slam attack.

### **Dust Hill Zone**

A fairly obscure Zone cut from early development of the game, a mock-up screenshot of the Zone appeared in magazines and even the 1992 Sears catalogue. It is a desert in the vein of Sandopolis from *Sonic 3*, but more resembles the Southwest with its buttes and cacti. It is very much a level built for speed with the trademark loop-de-loops, much like the Game Gear version of *Sonic 2*, Sonic can ride mine carts (though bottomless pits and spikes are abundant in this level.) Badniks include [Banper](#), the snappy and treaded [Gator](#), and Madkart, a runaway mine cart Badnik who is particularly dangerous on inclines. Robotnik attacks in the Egg Rig, which draws inspiration from *Mad Max*. It is an auto-scrolling where Sonic must keep running ahead, time his leaps to the barrage of missiles Robotnik fires, and then roll to hit its weak spot.

### **Cyber City Zone**

Interestingly, the Sonic 2 prototype refers to this Zone as "Genocide City," which was problematic for obvious reasons. According to Tom Payne, what was supposed to be a single-act Cyber City in Sonic 2 ended up becoming the third act of the Metropolis Zone. Payne went back to the drawing board and created a new Cyber City that borrows design elements from *TRON*. Glowing circuit lines snake in between the chrome plates on the floor under a grid backdrop with laser traps and exposed wiring as common stage hazards. The stage also employs teleportation and reversed gravity as a gimmick, giving it a labyrinthine feel (not back for a single act.) Badniks include Cursor, an arrow shaped badnik that zigzags randomly across the screen at Sonic-like speed, and Kalmar, a Squid-like robot that wraps Sonic in its tentacles and self-destructs. Robotnik utilizes the teleportation gimmick of the stage to transport himself across the arena. However, he also uses holographic clones that will harm Sonic upon contact.

### **Zone Order in Sonic the Hedgehog 2: The Director's Cut**

Emerald Hill  
Chemical Plant  
Wood  
Aquatic Ruin  
Hidden Palace  
Casino Night  
Hill Top  
Mystic Cave

Dust Hill  
Oil Ocean  
Metropolis  
Cyber City  
Sky Chase  
Wing Fortress  
Death Egg

-

*"Scion Of Britannia was developed alongside Ultima IX, and both games influenced one another to a heavy degree. It was because of Scion that Ultima IX ultimately took a vastly different direction than what I'd originally intended for it."*

-Richard Garriott, in an April 2002 PCGamer interview

*"And so we needed to create a new form of lightsaber combat for the game. Well, George Lucas was working on something for one of the new characters in the new prequel film, and so together we sort of hashed out the idea of Form VII lightsaber combat, which became Juyo which is what we used for the game. It's a harsher, more aggressive style of combat, something appropriate for the type of game we were creating."*

-Chris Stamper, discussing *Star Wars: Masters of Juyo* in an April 1999 interview with *Wizard* magazine

*"May the Fighting Force be with you!"*

-the tagline for *Star Wars: Masters of Juyo*, appearing in the game's magazine advertisements

*"The Summer Of The Fist: Video Games Get Punchy"*

-from the cover of the August 1997 issue of *GamePro*, featuring previews of *Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo*, *Raigeki*, and *Twinblade II*, along with strategies for *Fighters Megamix* and *Sonic Fighters*

*"I've been gaming since I was like five, so it's pretty sweet to finally get to be IN a game. Dog Dash rules!"*

-13-year-old Ashley Johnson in a *Dog Dash 2* preview video featured in the July 1997 issue of *Nintendo Power CD*

*"Sega's partnership with Enix is finally paying dividends this month in the form of Krystalshade, but is the game the next big thing in RPGs, or a pretender to Tale Phantasia's throne? And is it even as good as last month's Windborn?"*

-an intro to *Krystalshade*'s 41/50 review in the September 1997 issue of *GameFan*

*"I let the boys play video games from time to time. I...personally I don't find them to be very engaging but Harry loves them. He enjoys this game where you're hunting dinosaurs. It's quite...it looks quite realistic, I suppose. It's a bit more violent than I'd like but I do know his friends are all extremely fond of the game. And it's just dinosaurs, after all. No harm done really."*

-Princess Diana, in an August 26, 1997 interview with BBC News

*"My God, they're going to bloody kill someone driving like that, aren't they?"*

-Princess Diana, watching a group of paparazzi on motorcycles drive by while being driven in a Mercedes on a Parisian street, August 29, 1997

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### **Breath Of Fire III**

Dan: 8.0

Shoe: 8.0 (quote: "Another outstanding RPG in this great series from Capcom, featuring a poignant storyline and some intriguing combat mechanics.")

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Madden 98**

Dan: 7.5

Shoe: 6.5

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.0 (quote: "Another year, another Madden. It's a decent upgrade from last year's edition and if you've got a Super Nintendo CD and like football, it's worth picking up.")

### **NCAA Football 98**

Dan: 6.0

Shoe: 6.5 (quote: "There's not enough of a variety of plays to call, making for some fairly bland games.")

Crispin: 6.5

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **NHL 98**

Dan: 5.0

Shoe: 5.0

Crispin: 5.5 (quote: "This looks really primitive next to Saturn's always excellent NHL title.")

Sushi-X: 5.0

### **Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo**

Dan: 9.0 (quote: "Rare's done it again, finally letting us duke it out with our favorite Star Wars characters!")

Shoe: 8.0

Crispin: 7.5

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Dog Dash 2**

Dan: 8.5

Shoe: 8.5 (quote: "While not too much is changed, the great platformer formula and Woofle's awesome moves combine for a fantastically fun title.")

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Five For Fighting Hockey '97**

Dan: 7.0 (quote: "Everyone's favorite hockey brawler is back and while it's not quite as polished or fun as the original, it's still the best hockey game to debut this month on the SNES-CD.")

Shoe: 6.0

Crispin: 6.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Twinblade II**

Dan: 8.0

Shoe: 8.5

Crispin: 9.0 (quote: "The addition of a character creator makes this weapon-based fighter even better than its arcade counterpart.")

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Wizard Stone**

Dan: 9.0 (quote: "A fast, fun, pretty platformer.")

Shoe: 8.0

Crispin: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Illusion**

Dan: 4.0

Shoe: 6.0

Crispin: 4.5 (quote: "A generic, ugly RPG that's not worth the 30 hours it takes to beat it. Final Fantasy, this ain't.")

Sushi-X: 3.5

### **18 Wheels Of Fury**

Dan: 6.5

Shoe: 6.5

Crispin: 7.0 (quote: "We didn't really need a game about semi-trucks, but it's got some thrilling racing action and decent AI.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

-reviews of August 1997's SNES-CD games in the September and October 1997 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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*"Ultimately, Scion of Britannia presents a more defined path than The Worldly Lord, largely culminating in a quest with only two real paths: The Path of Virtue, or The Path of Deception. Both paths play very differently, but regardless, this game isn't nearly as open-ended as the previous title, and is structured far more similarly to a Final Fantasy-styled roleplaying game than an open world quest."*

-excerpted from *Official Saturn Magazine's* 8/10 review of *Ultima: Scion Of Britannia*

## **Ultima: Scion Of Britannia – The Basics**

*Ultima: Scion of Britannia* is the Saturn-exclusive sequel to 1995's *Ultima: The Worldly Lord*. Jeremy Soule returns to produce the game's soundtrack, and the game follows a female Avatar as she is transported to the world of Britannia to embrace her destiny as the world's ruler. The game is an open-world quest that presents two major pathways: in one path, the player seeks out the eight Virtues: Honesty, Compassion, Valor, Justice, Sacrifice, Honor, Spirituality, and Humility, by completing a series of quests related to each Virtue. In the other path, the player uses deceit and subterfuge to gain the throne, before ruling as a tyrant for all eternity. The player isn't committed to any one path until very late in the game, which means that players may undertake quests leading to either outcome for the majority of the game's campaign. The world of *Scion of Britannia* is significantly larger than the one in *The Worldly Lord*, with many towns and dungeons to explore. However, the game is largely streamlined, which means that towers and dungeons are somewhat smaller than in *The Worldly Lord*. Also, the player's relationships with NPCs aren't emphasized quite as much, making the game's relationship system less complex. This makes for a game that is considered more of an action title than a straight-up role-playing game, disappointing some *Ultima* fans. Though the game is reviewed quite well and becomes one of the best selling Sega Saturn games overall, it doesn't quite reach the critical acclaim of *The Worldly Lord*, and these complaints are taken into account as Origin begins work on *Ultima IX* for the PC.

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*Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo* is a combo-based fighting game for the Super Nintendo CD! Developed by Rareware, well known for its work on *Donkey Kong Country* and *Killer Instinct*, the game lets you take your favorite Star Wars characters into the ring, joining some all new characters and a couple of Rare favorites as well!  
-excerpted from the August 1997 cover article in *Nintendo Power*

List of characters:

Luke Skywalker

Princess Leia

Han Solo

Darth Vader

Chewbacca

Boba Fett

Mara Jade

Stormtrooper

Castor Raid- A Force-adept who is being pursued by the Emperor after fleeing the Death Star in a stolen ship. Has trained himself in the ways of Juyo in secret and is now a soldier of fortune, with no alliance to the Empire or the Rebellion.

Gulfarr- A brutish four-limbed alien being who is attempting to defend his territory from an Imperial incursion.

Hurg Pylox- A winged pig-like alien who sells weapons to the highest bidder.

Shanti Elonn- A beautiful alien woman who escaped from Jabba's slave pens and has trained herself in the ways of combat.

Fulgore (unlockable)- From *Killer Instinct*

Eyedol (unlockable)- From *Killer Instinct*

*"But Masters Of Juyo isn't a straight-up clone of Killer Instinct, which might not necessarily be a good thing. It's arguably an inferior game, and as far as weapon-based combat goes, it*

*also doesn't quite match up to this month's excellent release of Twinblade II. But as a Star Wars fighting game, it works pretty well, translating the classic lightsaber combat of the Star Wars series to the home console in a big way. If you're a fan of Star Wars, this game is a must-buy."*

-excerpted from the 7.5/10 review of *Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo* in the September 1997 issue of *GameInformer*

George Lucas: All right, well, I guess I'll be Luke, he's the hero after all.

Ted Crosley: And I'm gonna pick the new guy, Castor Raid.

Lucas: So we just...hit the A button to start?

Ted: Yep. \*hits the button\* And away we go!

\*The fight begins, George Lucas is kind of awkwardly moving Luke around while Ted comes right over and hits him with a lightsaber combo to start the fight.\*

Lucas: Oh! \*he winces as Luke bounces on the ground\* That hurt!

Ted: \*kicking at Luke while he's on the ground, Luke gets up and takes a couple hits before swinging back and hitting Castor\* You got me!

Lucas: \*is just awkwardly hammering buttons, he lands a couple more blows before Ted starts blocking and then hits him with another lightsaber combo\* I'm losing!

Ted: Here, use the Force, use the Force.

Lucas: Which button is the Force?

Ted: Hold down the R button, like this. \*Ted holds down R for Castor, his Force meter begins depleting and he hits Luke with some strong blows, Luke is almost KOed now\*

Lucas: All right, all right, all right....! \*he holds down the R button and hits A, punching through Castor's block and hitting him for some decent damage\* That worked!

Ted: \*finishes Luke off with another lightsaber combo\*

Lucas: Did I lose?

Ted: There's another round, there's another round, it's not over yet.

Lucas: Another one? \*laughs nervously\*

-excerpted from the August 26, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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*"Well, after the first Dog Dash game, we had a lot on our plates. There was all that work on Tales Of The Seven Seas 2, we were doing Crash Bandicoot for the Ultra...but the first Dog Dash game had been so big that we knew we had to go back and do another one. So we pretty much just took what had made the first game so great and brought it all back for the*

*second game, adding a new girl to the mix to give Clark someone besides his dog to talk to. It wasn't the most innovative game but it was definitely fun and it sold really well for us. 1997 was a huge year."*

-Jason Rubin, of Naughty Dog, in a February 1999 interview with *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

The sequel to *Dog Dash* pretty much took the first game's formula and brought it back, making for a fun if not terribly creative platformer. The one big change? The addition of Clark's new friend Selkie (voiced by Ashley Johnson, who ended up working with Naughty Dog quite a lot after this), a mysterious 10-year-old girl who pops up through a portal in desperate need of help from Clark and his dog Woofle. Selkie is being pursued by mysterious creatures known as the Draconids, under the command of a pair of anthropomorphic dragon creatures Blaze and Roar (voiced by Jeff Bennett and Rob Paulsen), twin princes of a land called Draconia. The Draconids attack Clark's city, and he, Selkie, and Woofle must escape through the portal. Over the course of the game, Clark learns that Selkie herself is a Draconid who became human by stealing a power crystal from Blaze and Roar's personal stash, and that the crystal's power is gradually fading. It can only be restored, however, by absorbing the power from innocent human beings, and when its power is gone, Selkie will revert to a mindless, feral creature. Clark must choose between saving his new friend and protecting his fellow humans. You can switch between Clark and Selkie over the course of the game, Selkie possesses mysterious dragon powers including a spiked tail, fire breathing, and the ability to fly short distances. Like the original, *Dog Dash 2* has six worlds, which are as follows:

#### *World One – New Dog City*

Clark meets Selkie and the two flee from Draconids through Clark's home city. The boss of the world is a giant fire breathing dragon on top of a building.

#### *World Two – The Highlands*

Journey through a windy, grassy plateau. The boss of this world is a big Scottish man with a huge set of bagpipes.

#### *World Three – Watery Wall*

A water-themed world. The boss of this world is a giant aquatic lizard.

#### *World Four – Dogbone Mountain*

Clark, Selkie, and Woofle must ascend a giant mountain. The boss of this world is a gigantic bird.

#### *World Five – The Crystal Factory*

A factory in which Power Crystals are produced. At the end of the world, after battling Blaze and Roar in a tough boss fight, Clark learns the full truth about Selkie.

#### *World Six – Selkie's World*

Selkie's homeland, in which Clark must pursue the now-reverted Selkie through increasingly desolate landscapes. After battling Selkie herself in a boss fight, Clark offers to sacrifice himself to give Selkie permanent life as a human. Selkie is able to come to her senses long enough to refuse Clark's offer, saying that she doesn't want to live on as a human if it requires human lives to make it happen. It's then that Blaze and Roar appear in a giant dragon mech powered by the Power Crystals absorbed from the lives of everyone in Clark's city, including his friends and family. Clark, Woofle, and Selkie defeat the mech and Clark gets the crystal which will allow him to restore everyone back to normal, including the people of Selkie's world. However, once Clark has done so, there's a little bit of power left in

the crystal. The restored queen of Selkie's world tells Clark that his heroism has added extra power to the Crystal, a power that can never fade or be taken away. He bestows this power on Selkie, allowing her to live as a human forever (but she can also revert to a dragon form if she chooses). Selkie reunites with her own family but promises to visit Clark sometimes, and the game ends.

So, how did *Dog Dash 2* perform? Quite well, actually, selling a good deal of copies, though not quite as much as the first. The series remained popular and used its popularity to help hype *Crash Bandicoot's* release as a launch game for the Ultra Nintendo. How'd that turn out? That story is for another article...

-excerpted from "Dog Dash: A Brief History", an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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The development of *Krystalshade* began early in 1995, after Enix managed to poach a couple of the developers from Telenet Japan's Wolf Team who had left the *Tale Phantasia* project due to exhaustion. Enix was intrigued by *Tale Phantasia* and how innovative the battle system was, and wanted to develop something similar, either for the Super Nintendo CD or, most likely, for the Sega Saturn. By 1996, it was apparent that *Krystalshade* would be a Saturn game, and the main storyline and battle system began to take shape. Unlike *Windborn*, which was entirely fantasy-based, *Krystalshade* would be a combination of fantasy and steampunk elements, taking place in a world where magical technology was rapidly advancing the world's technological pace. The game's battle system was similar to *Tale Phantasia's*, though much faster paced due to the Saturn's enhanced abilities. It also allowed for the allocation of statistical bonuses upon leveling up, as well as the allocation of ability points which were gained in each battle, allowing a more customizable approach to character advancement. Graphically, while the game made heavy use of the Saturn's robust 2-D abilities, it also utilized limited 3-D in backgrounds and battle effects, making for a very unique and effective hybrid style.

The plot itself revolved around the character Archie, who was a bright young science prodigy in Luxio City, center of magical research. He worked with objects called Krystals, which were the key to magical power in the world. Archie seemed to have a supernatural affinity for Krystal use, though he always found himself unusually drained after a particularly intense study session. One day, a woman enters Archie's home and kidnaps him. This woman, Lana, also seems to have the same mysterious weakness when Krystals are used around her, even moreso than Archie. Lana has targeted Archie because her world, a world parallel to the one in which Archie lives, is undergoing a crisis where the land is fading and people are dying, and Krystals are to blame. The effect, in which a person from the other world suffers fatigue and sickness upon the use of a Krystal, is called Krystalshade, and the reason Archie has it is because he is also from the alternate world (though he doesn't discover this until later on). The main villain of the game is a man named Dr. Pollux, who was the first man to find a way to access the other world and extract Krystals from it, and Archie and Lana team up with a variety of people from both worlds to take Pollux down. Eventually, Pollux discovers the Krystal Goddess, the being that maintains the balance of energy between both worlds, and decides to extract her Krystal to absorb her power. Despite the heroes' efforts, he succeeds, and takes control of the energy flow between both worlds, making him a nigh-unstoppable god that must be defeated.

The game's plot is filled with a variety of twists and turns, but is also somewhat predictable (Archie and Lana's romance can be seen from miles away, though it interestingly reverses

the typical male/female role in these types of games by making Lana the badass and Archie the somewhat weak character in need of protection). Curiously, unlike *Planetary Probe* and *Windborn*, there's very little voice acting in *Krystalshade*, limited mostly to battle scenes (this was likely Enix trying to save money since *Planetary Probe* was such a high budget game). It received good reviews, though it wasn't regarded as one of the year's best RPGs like *Windborn* and *Planetary Probe* were. Sales were also a bit disappointing, though strong at launch, it eventually failed to sell quite as much as *Windborn* either in Japan or in North America. Regardless of the disappointment, *Krystalshade* is fondly remembered among JRPG fans and remains a cult classic today.

-from a 2003 article at RPGamer.net

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A pair of classic gaming franchises make their big debut this month on the Sega Saturn, and we're bringing you the scoop on both of these outstanding games!

First up, it's *Golden Axe: Legacy*. Yes, there WAS a fighting game already released, *Golden Axe: The Duel*, but *Legacy* brings back all the classic hack-and-slash action you've come to love, with four players able to take the controls at once! Kain, Milan, Gillius, and other descendants of the classic *Golden Axe* heroes now get their chance to shine in a sidescrolling adventure spanning eighteen stages.

Next, it's *Bomberman*, the first *Bomberman* game for the Sega Saturn! Enjoy the game's massive Story Mode, or blow up your friends in the exciting multiplayer mode featuring support for up to 10 players at once! You heard that right, 10 players at once, making this game the biggest multiplayer game ever brought to a home console.

-excerpted from the August 1997 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

"*Golden Axe: Legacy is a polished, fun game that instantly brings back memories of slaughtering baddies in the Sega Genesis classics. The graphics look gorgeous and colorful. The bosses are huge and challenging, and four-player multiplayer mode runs without a hitch. This is without a doubt the best hack-and-slash sidescroller ever released. It's absolutely brilliant.*"

-excerpted from Crispin Boyer's 9.5/10 review of *Golden Axe: Legacy* in the September 1997 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, the game received a 9.25/10 overall score and Game of the Month honors in that issue, shared with fellow Saturn release *Bomberman*

-

In Japanese, "raigeki" translates to a stroke of lightning. That is the feeling one gets from playing Sega's fast and furious fighting game *Raigeki*, which requires lightning quick reflexes from the player to dodge their opponent's furious blows. The game, which released in February 1997, became a quick hit, joining *Tekken 3* as one of the biggest fighting game hits of the year. Sega was already working on the home console port of *Raigeki* upon the game's arcade release, and now, it's set to debut for the Saturn next week. But what makes *Raigeki* so popular? The game is both loud and flashy, with colorful (literally) characters and a tongue-in-cheek sense of humor. The game has an announcer who insults players who get hit with a big combo, and even sometimes comments on the characters' strange fashion sense. There are 12 characters in all, ranging from a kimono-wearing geisha girl (who wears a different, randomly generated kimono to each match, the home console version promises to let players save their favorites or design their own) to a rich oil baron who drives right up

to his matches in a massive limo adorned with big cow horns. The villain is Lee Brute, a sendup of Bruce Lee, who regards himself as a "serious" martial artist and insults everyone he faces, especially after he beats them up. Popular tournament players seem to get into the game's spirit, one can't go to an arcade these days without seeing boisterous *Raigeki* fans crowded around the game machine.

In contrast, *Twinblade II*, the sequel to Nintendo's arcade hit *Twinblade*, is a much lower profile game. Like its predecessor, *Twinblade II* features characters who wield dual weapons in battle. The game moves at a much slower, more deliberate pace than *Raigeki*, requiring players to carefully plan out their strategies. It's not quite as popular as *Raigeki* in the arcades, or as popular as Nintendo's *Killer Instinct* series, but the first game did well and the second game still makes a reasonable profit. Like the original *Twinblade*, *Twinblade II* will face some stiff competition from Sega when it launches on home consoles, in this case, Sega's *Raigeki*. The SNES-CD version features a character creation mode which will allow players to create their own customized fighters in both look and ability. Nintendo hopes this feature will set *Twinblade II* apart from this month's console fighting game bumper crop which includes both *Raigeki* and Rare's big Star Wars fighting game, *Masters Of Juyo*. Who will rise to the challenge? This fight might not be settled until the holiday season.

-excerpted from an article in the August 15, 1997 issue of *Entertainment Weekly*

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\*An animated boy explores a cave, stepping through traps along the way.\*

Boy: There it is...! \*sees a runic stone on a pillar\* Careful...careful... \*tiptoes his way to the pillar, only for a huge chimera to leap down in front of him\* Aaaaaaaaahhhh!

\*The chimera roars, but the boy takes out a magical staff with a glowing orb at the end. The orb glows, and the scene fades into scenes from a sidescrolling video game that shows a boy leaping through levels, dodging traps, and casting spells on enemies.\*

Narrator: From the makers of *Bikerz*, it's *Wizard Stone*, an all new adventure game where you must explore hidden passages in search of the legendary stones that will make you the most powerful magician in all the realm.

\*More scenes from the game are shown, including one where the boy is fighting a chimera as seen in the animation.\*

Narrator: But watch out, because danger lurks around every corner, and finding all of the stones won't be easy...

\*The scene returns to the animation, where the boy is holding the stone.\*

Boy: Job well done... \*he emerges from the cave to see a massive world stretched out in front of him\* Only eleven more to go!

Narrator: *Wizard Stone*, available now for the Super Nintendo CD and Sega Saturn. Also soon to be available for your Game Boy.

-a commercial that aired on television during August and September 1997

-

Vince McMahon: And now Austin's got Owen Hart up...no! Look, Owen Hart with the counter!

\*Owen Hart picks Steve Austin up and turns him upside down\*

Jerry Lawler: Uh oh!

\*Hart sits down with Austin, Austin's head missing the canvas by half an inch, a properly executed Tombstone Piledriver\*

Jim Ross: Tombstone Piledriver! And Austin's down on the mat!

-from the *WWF Summerslam* pay-per-view on August 3, 1997

-

Alex Stansfield: *Breath of Fire III* is just an awesome, awesome game.

Ted Crosley: Look, I didn't like *Breath of Fire*, I didn't like *Breath of Fire II*, and I don't really like *Breath of Fire III* either. The presentation is nice, the graphics are really nice, but I'm still not convinced that this is anything more than an average RPG.

Alex: What's there not to like about it?

Ted: The plot is confusing, camping is clunky, the game's just not as fun as lots of the other RPGs out there.

Alex: I know you're not a big fan of RPGs...

Ted: I am! *Tale Phantasia* was great!

Alex: This game is outstanding. I loved the storyline, Ryu in this game was more developed than Ryu from the other two games... a lot more developed actually-

Ted: Oh, big accomplishment. \*rolls his eyes sarcastically\* Just another generic RPG hero, and he stole his name from a far more awesome character. Capcom, you really need to stick to ONE Ryu, ONE! And maybe make another *Moonlight* game instead of trotting out this tired old horse again. *Breath of Fire III* gets a 3 from me.

Alex: And I'm giving it a 4.5, it's an outstanding game and the best *Breath of Fire* game yet.

(...)

Ted: So, *Bomberman* for the Saturn is really fun.

Brittany: I liked it. I mean, it's *Bomberman*, you can't really make a bad *Bomberman* game. So it was fine. But the 10-character multiplayer...honestly, who owns two multitaps for the Sega Saturn?

Ted: I own four.

Brittany: Who owns two multitaps for the Saturn who isn't a massive video game geek like me and Ted?

Ted: Yeah, I get what you're saying, most people who play this will never get to experience the 10-player mode. But still, it supports any number of players from 1-10, so if you just want standard 4-player *Bombberman*, it's there.

Brittany: Right, and I felt like the multiplayer was fun. This game's just not a big enough step up for me. I looked at the Ultra Nintendo *Bombberman* at E3 and wow, I was blown away. Here, they didn't really do full 3-D and it comes off looking like it could be a Super Nintendo CD game. It's fun but it's not enough of a step up.

Ted: I see what you're saying...but still, it's a really fun game.

Brittany: Well, yeah.

Ted: I give it a 4 out of 5.

Brittany: And I give it 3.5.

-excerpted from the August 5, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

Gary Westhouse: *Tale Phantasia* it's not, but *Krystalshade* still really impressed me.

John Walden: There was a lot of stuff I liked about the battle system. The fact that using Krystal Powers drains your HP instead of your MP, that adds an extra element of strategy, where you have to decide whether to just use your regular special attacks that use your MP, or go for broke with those Krystal specials.

Gary: And customizing your level-up bonuses let me really strategize. The storyline left a bit to be desired though, it was kind of predictable and I didn't form attachments with the characters like I did in other RPGs.

John: I disagree, I thought the storyline was really interesting and the characters were outstanding, especially Lana.

Gary: Lana's a badass, I have to admit, she was probably my favorite but so was the tool guy, Terry.

John: Terry the tool guy, he's fun to play, kinda reminded me of Cid from *Final Fantasy*.

Gary: Which one, there's more than one!

John: \*laughing\* From 4, from 4.

Gary: Speaking of 4, that's what I give *Krystalshade*, a solid 4 out of 5.

John: I give it a 4.5, it's an outstanding role playing game even if it's not exactly the most memorable.

-excerpted from the August 12, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Alex: Here's my problem with *Scion of Britannia*, and I know you didn't mind it, but I minded it. It's an open world...but it railroads you. There are, pretty much two endings, and you really do HAVE to complete most of the quests before you can get to the end of the game. Basically, the few quests you miss become "optional", but you still have to complete a certain number of quests. The best way...the best way to play this game, I think, is to play both sides and then decide toward the end if you want to be good or bad because then you can play through most of the quests.

Ted: OR you could just play the game twice. Look, I loved *Ultima*, and I'm giving it a perfect 5 because it perfectly encapsulated the *Ultima* experience for me. I've played all eight of the PC games, I've played *The Worldly Lord*, I love *Ultima* and this game is like a love letter to *Ultima* fans.

Alex: Except that even though it's non-linear, it's linear, if that makes sense.

Ted: That makes NO sense.

Alex: I had a lot of fun playing it, the graphics were top notch, the voice acting was great and the world was huge, but this game does have problems and I think you should know that if you play this game, it's not REALLY an open-world RPG, it's an action RPG that you can choose the order of the levels you're going to play in, but really, most of your decisions except one don't really matter.

Ted: Maybe so but it's hidden so well.

Alex: So it's the ILLUSION that your decisions matter.

Ted: Isn't that all that matters? There's still so much different dialogue in the game. It DOES matter what order you do quests in. There's so much dialogue.

Alex: Well that's what I said, it's a very well made game but it's not what it presents itself to be. I'm giving it a 4 but it's not as good as *The Worldly Lord*.

Ted: I'm giving it a 5, it's a fantastic, fantastic game.

-excerpted from the August 19, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Alex: Okay, *Raigeki*'s definitely not for the faint of heart, but if you're looking for a challenging and really fun fighting game, it's one of the best of the year.

Lyssa Fielding: I've been playing *Raigeki* since it hit the arcades and I love it! This is an almost perfect port and the fact that you can save Hanami's kimono designs or even create your own is really awesome!

Alex: I could see you messing around in the kimono maker.

Lyssa: Yeah, I went with goth Hanami when I beat the game as her.

Alex: My favorite guy is still Tomu the college student, reminds me of me when I was in college.

\*A pre-fight scene shows Tomu scarfing down ramen and guzzling a can of energy soda before his match\*

Lyssa: And the dialogue is STILL hilarious!

Announcer: \*as Tomu gets beaten up by Kokorama, the busty wrestler woman\* Her eyes are on her face, pervert!

Lyssa: \*cackling with glee\* There are hundreds of different phrases the announcer says and a lot of them are exclusive to the Saturn version! Also, the Saturn version lets you play as Lee Brute.

\*A scene shows Lee Brute insulting a character by telling them that their kung fu is worse than their body odor\*

Alex: *Raigeki* is excellent, and has some of the best 3-D graphics in any fighting game on the Saturn, even better than *Fighters Megamix* and really only rivaled by *Tekken 2*. It's amazing that such a good looking game runs so fast and smooth but that's a testament to the programming, there's no slowdown pretty much ever and so you can punch and kick and throw to your heart's content.

Lyssa: There's really never a dull moment when you're playing *Raigeki*, I love this game to death and I'm giving it a 5.

Alex: It really is a pitch-perfect arcade port and one of the Saturn's best fighting games, I'm giving it a 4.5.

(...)

Brittany: While Ted and Alex had the awesome honor of visiting George Lucas to talk about *Star Wars: Masters of Juyo*, John and I had the admittedly slightly less but still awesome honor of heading to Rareware headquarters, where we talked with Chris and Tim Stamper about not only *Masters of Juyo* but of all the upcoming Rare titles as well. Let's check it out, shall we?

(...)

\*After talking about some of the processes that went into making *Star Wars: Masters of Juyo*, Brittany and John join the Stamper brothers as they head to a different part of the building, where *Donkey Kong Country 4* is being worked on\*

John: And so this is *Donkey Kong Country 4*?

Tim: That's right, this is our final SNES-CD project and we're really pulling out all the stops. As you can see on the screen, both Donkey and Diddy return as playable characters and we're kind of mixing things up a bit for this game. So if you'll both take a controller...

\*John, Brittany, Tim, and Chris pick up controllers, John is Diddy Kong, Brittany is Dixie

Kong, Tim is Kiddie Kong and Chris is Donkey Kong\*

Chris: And as you can see for this level...

\*There's a four-player splitscreen with each of them taking the role of a different member of the Kong family\*

Brittany: Oh, wow!

John: You're kidding me, all four of us at once?

Chris: In certain levels in each world....there are six of these levels in all, you have the option to have four people controlling each Kong. If you have one player you'll switch back and forth but if you have four we can do them all at once, and basically...

\*The gameplay continues with each player in a different part of the level\*

Tim: You can trigger switches for the other players. So you can work together to complete the stage.

Brittany: That's awesome! This, I've never seen this in a platform game before.

John: Holy crap, wow.

\*Diddy Kong hits a switch that opens a door for Dixie Kong, who then hits a switch later on that opens a door for Donkey Kong\*

Brittany: Now, what if one of us sucks and we die? Do all four of us lose?

Tim: Basically, if one of you dies, you lose a life, but you keep going, just restarting yourself from the beginning. But yes, if one of you gets a game over...

John: \*laughing\* Damn!

\*The four of them manage to get to the midway barrel and keep going, flipping switches for one another as the level goes on\*

Chris: Believe it or not, this is fairly taxing on the Super Nintendo CD, to get four players in a stage at once like this. So the backgrounds are downgraded just a bit so the game doesn't slow down.

Brittany: Well, obviously with four people playing at once, some compromises have to be made.

Tim: We'll still working on this so hopefully it looks as good as possible in the finished product.

\*They beat the level with Donkey Kong hitting the goal barrel.\*

Chris: And there we go, you two are the first two outside of Rare to play four-player Donkey Kong. We didn't even have this ready for E3. We wanted to, but it was too much to get done in time.

John: Well, thanks for showing us, that was really fun and this is definitely gonna be amazing, you guys are going away from the Super Nintendo era in a big way.

Brittany: So you've got a lot of Ultra projects in the works too, right?

Chris: Right, *The Dreamers* is top secret but we CAN show you a bit more of *Goldeneye 007* which is also almost ready.

\*John and Brittany head over to another part of Rare, where Chris and Tim proceed to show them the frigate level from *Goldeneye*\*

-excerpted from the August 26, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: August 1997**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Fire Emblem: Keepers Of The Light
3. Frederico 2: Garcia's Revenge!
4. Tale Phantasia
5. Chrono Trigger
6. Terranigma
7. Elements Of Mana
8. Syrielle
9. Empire: The Steel Kingdom
10. Mega Man X4
11. Super Mario World 2
12. MLB '98
13. Super Mario RPG
14. Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble
15. Dragon Quest VI
16. Alundra
17. Harvest Moon
18. ESPN: X-Games
19. Rage 2: The Rage Returns
20. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart – August 1997**

1. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
2. Ultima: Scion Of Britannia
3. Raigeki
4. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
5. Sonic Jam
6. Fighters Megamix
7. Krystalshade
8. Tomb Raider II
9. Doom II
10. Windborn

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*These paparazzi are chasing photos worth potentially tens of thousands of dollars, and that makes their high-stakes game of cat and mouse both lucrative and dangerous. Last night's incident in Paris, where three paparazzi on motorcycles, including a 17-year-old girl whose mother tells reporters she was planning to study photojournalism at university next fall, were killed in a fiery crash while pursuing a car in which popular French actress Juliette Binoche was a passenger, simply stands as the latest reminder of just how dangerous the paparazzi can be. When reached for comment, Binoche expressed shock and dismay at the deaths of the photo-seekers, and apologized to their families, though officers at the scene stated that the car was driving within the speed limit and that the speeding paparazzi were entirely to blame for the crash. Critics of the paparazzi express fears that someday their actions might get innocent bystanders killed, as seen in last month's terrifying near miss where a car driven by a man attempting to get a photograph of Princess Diana nearly struck a 5-year-old boy. You can see in this video the mother is barely able to pull her son out of the way as the car briefly drives up onto the curb. Princess Diana is a frequent target of the paparazzi, as seen here in this video, shot yesterday morning as she arrived in Marseilles with her friend Dodi Fayed. Camera bulbs flash while dozens of photographers jockey for position, a veritable mob scene and one that is becoming increasingly common as the value of celebrity photographs skyrockets.*

-from a BBC News report on August 31, 1997

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*"There is a new video game on the market called Race'n'Chase, available on Sega's newest game device. It allows the player to choose whether they wish to play as a criminal or as a police officer, and then gives them the freedom to do whatever they want. And it's that freedom that's a problem for some parents, who claim that the game gives points for committing lethal acts of brutality and may have a negative influence on young players."*

-Anderson Cooper, ABC News, September 29, 1997

*"A lot of us had more fun playing the bad guy, but the cop side of the game was fun too, so we left it in. Either people enjoyed it or they didn't care, because the game sold pretty damn well."*

-Gary Penn, DMA Design creative director

*"At Nintendo, at Sony, they make games for children and freaks. They can't handle the games that I am making for the Sega Saturn. The people who play those games on Nintendo, they are children who can't handle life."*

-Kenji Eno in a controversial interview in the April 1997 issue of *Famitsu*

*"Nooooo! Not again! Mariiiinnnaaaaaa!!!"*

-Professor Theo in a cutscene featured in world 3 of *Troublemakers*

*"If you wanna be a hero, you gotta fly  
Don't be a big baby and start to cry!"*

-a line from stage 5 of *Parappa the Rapper*

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### **Kirby's Adventure 3**

Dan: 8.0

Shoe: 7.5

Crispin: 8.0 (quote: "There's nothing special about this game and it doesn't have the variety of Kirby Super Star, but it's still a lot of fun.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Parappa The Rapper**

Dan: 8.0 (quote: "With fun lyrics and addictive gameplay, Parappa is the SNES-CD's newest star.")

Shoe: 8.0

Crispin: 7.5

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Rampage: The Revenge**

Dan: 6.0

Shoe: 4.0

Crispin: 5.0

Sushi-X: 4.0 (quote: "This is a pretty sorry attempt to bring the old school monster brawling franchise into the present day, with graphics that look backward even for the Super Nintendo CD.")

-reviews of September 1997's SNES-CD games in the October 1997 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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*"Race'n'Chase may afford a lot of freedom, but at its core, it's a fairly simplistic game with primitive graphics. Some of the 'cop' missions are interesting, but if you play as a criminal you'll spend most of your time driving around and running over pedestrians. For some players, that'll be great. For most serious gamers, this game lacks the depth of so many other action titles. Even the 'racing' component promised in the title is an absolute joke compared with games like Virtua Racing and Super Mario Kart."*

-excerpted from the 29/50 review of *Race'n'Chase* in the October 1997 issue of *GameFan*

Adam Sessler: For all that controversy, all the hype that this game generated in the media, it just wasn't that good. After you got through the first few missions, everything after those was just a variation of those initial few.

Ted Crosley: It was, uh.... you know, really not the game that the press would have you believe. People were making this big controversy about how the game was influencing little kids, but first the game itself has to be good, and *Race'n'Chase* really wasn't.

Alex Hirsch: Mom wouldn't let me play this game back then, but I had friends who had it and I finally got to go to a sleepover where my friend had the game. So, I got there and my friend was all 'you gotta check this out, you gotta check this out!' And I was SUPER excited. And you know, we were running over people for a half hour and laughing but then it started to get boring...and more boring...and at some point we just put the controller down and moved on to something else. The first *Race'n'Chase*... didn't live up to the hype at all.

Narrator: Though critical reviews were mixed, the game itself was a major sensation, especially once media coverage of the game's violent activities began to spread.

\*clips of the game's news coverage begin to play...\*

Female News Anchor: *Race'n'Chase*, the hot new game from Sega...

Male News Anchor: The newest video game controversy is *Race'n'Chase*, a game where you score points for running over police officers...

\*a clip is shown of a few middle school aged kids excitedly holding the game at a Wal-Mart\*

Female News Anchor: Kids as young as nine years old say that they're playing the game...

Tom Kalinske: I mean, kids had always gotten their hands on violent video games. Even with the ESRB rating system, we had tons of kids playing *Doom*, or *Turok*. We tried our best to educate parents, but a lot of them would just buy whatever for their kids.

-excerpted from "Parents vs. Pixels", a documentary that aired on G4 TV in October 2013

*Race'n'Chase* released on the Sega Saturn on September 4, 1997. The game didn't have any television commercials, but magazine advertisements and media coverage served to hype up the game quite well, especially once the news media began to report on how violent and controversial the game was. The game itself was a hybrid of racing and driving action, where the player could choose between a "cop" path and a "criminal" path. Each path had about 30 missions that could be performed to "beat" the game, the game took place in three cities: Liberty City (a pastiche of New York), Vice City (a pastiche of Miami), and Carcer City (a pastiche of San Francisco). However, you didn't have to perform the missions. The bulk of the game was spent just wandering around one of the cities. You could drive in a car (any car in the game could be stolen) and do anything you wished. If you were a cop, you could pursue criminals (or arrest innocent people, eventually doing this enough would draw out a crowd of hippie protesters that you could arrest or run over). If you were a criminal, you could commit crimes or participate in street races in various locations. Cops could also commit crimes, though if you did enough of them you got classified as a "bad cop" and other cops would come after you. The missions themselves were fairly boring, most involved just making deliveries or killing people. The cop missions could be a bit more interesting, involving rescuing people and even undercover work, but being a criminal was still considered more fun due to the flexibility of the activities you could perform as a criminal. The graphics in the game were really primitive, it had a top down perspective and in a lot of ways resembled an SNES-CD or Mega Charger game (the Ultra Nintendo version in 1998 improved the graphics quite a bit, though they still lagged somewhat behind what that system was capable of).

Though the game only scored moderately in reviews (a 5.625/10 average in *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, a 3.125/5 in *GamePro*, etc.), it sold quite well due to all the controversy and was the top selling new game of September 1997, beating out games like *Troublemakers* and even the long-awaited Sonic RPG *SoniQuest* on the Saturn. It also beat out SNES-CD games like *Kirby's Adventure 3* and *Parappa the Rapper*, both of which were quite popular with critics. *Race'n'Chase* illustrated the fact that a game didn't have to be "great" to be a great seller, it just had to give players what they wanted. DMA Design would refine the formula for 1998's *Race'n'Chase: London*.

-excerpted from "Race'n'Chase: Origins Of A Franchise", an article on IGN.com, posted on March 16, 2012

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"None of you can use magic? Well that's not a problem, we'll just go see the Fairy Queen to get you all set right up!"

-Wisty the Wizardess, *SoniQuest*

Ever since Nintendo had launched their "Year of the RPG", Sega had been mulling over the idea of a *Sonic the Hedgehog* RPG. The success of *Super Mario RPG* had clinched it, and by the time that game was released, Sonic Team had already begun initial work on a *Sonic the Hedgehog* RPG. The game would need to be distinct from *Super Mario RPG* to avoid accusations of "follow the leader", and Sonic Team had their template in 1995's launch title *MagiQuest*, which featured an action-based adventure with real-time combat. That would become the model for *SoniQuest*'s system, which was a hybrid of the turn-based combat made popular by the *Dragon Quest* and *Final Fantasy* series and *MagiQuest*'s real time system. Unlike Nintendo, which partnered with Squaresoft to create Mario's epic, Sega chose to go it alone, though a partnership with Enix was considered. *SoniQuest*'s battle system involved enemies on the field who could be approached. Once Sonic made contact with an enemy, a battle began, and during that battle, Sonic and his allies could be moved around and could fight with attacks or special techniques in real time. While this was going on, the player could see the enemy's turn charging up, and once that happened, attacks could be blocked or avoided. Parties consisted of four characters at a time, with the player controlling one at a time during battle (you could switch on the fly through the use of the shoulder button). The party consisted of six characters: Sonic, Tails, Knuckles, Amy Rose, and two originals: Wisty the Wizardess, a young magic using girl who was one of the first humans ever to appear in a Sonic game, and Tusk the Walrus, a walrus character who specialized in physical attacks. Unlike in *Super Mario RPG*, where Bowser joined the party, Sonic's nemesis Dr. Robotnik was one of the main foes of the game, though he was accompanied by a mysterious dark force called Prismatic. Prismatic sought the Chaos Emeralds and eventually took the form of an enormous monster to become the game's final boss. *SoniQuest* featured a lot of platforming, indeed, even though the game took place on a 3-D plane, there was plenty of Sonic-style platforming action in the game. The game was structured like a main series *Sonic* game, with zones and acts, though between the zones there were towns or other rest areas, and zones and towns could be revisited at any time. There were 12 zones in all, making for a fairly lengthy quest. Despite the fact that the game was very well made, with even better graphics than *Sonic 4* and full voice acting with the entire cast of that game revising their roles, *SoniQuest* was not received as well as *Super Mario RPG* or other Saturn RPGs that year such as *Windborn*. Criticism of the game mainly revolved around the opinion that it was trying to do two things at once: it was trying to be a great Sonic game and also trying to be a great RPG, and didn't fully succeed at either. Reviews averaged around 7.5/10. As for sales, while the game was a commercial success, it didn't come close to the runaway success that *Sonic the Hedgehog 4* achieved. It did outsell *Windborn* and *Krystalshade* and nearly matched the sales of Enix's hit game *Planetary Probe*, but ultimately, it wasn't the revolutionary RPG that Sonic fans were hoping for.

-excerpted from "A Not-So-Super *SoniQuest*", an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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"From the makers of *Gunstar Heroes* comes a magical new world of adventure for your Sega Saturn!"

-from the back of the *Troublemakers* game case

Treasure's *Troublemakers*, published by Enix, is one of the strangest games to come out for the Sega Saturn this year. It stars Marina Liteyears, an android invented by the eccentric (and somewhat horny) Professor Theo. The two find themselves on Planet Clancer, where Theo is abducted by the locals and Marina has to hunt him down, battling hordes of strange foes along the way. Marina has just a few basic actions: jump, grab, throw, and shake. The game's levels are fairly short, though they do involve some puzzle solving (you'll need to gather up gold gems to see the game's best ending), but the thing that really stands out about *Troublemakers* are the boss fights. Boss fights were a HUGE part of Treasure's earlier classic *Gunstar Heroes* and they make a big splash here as well. By the time the game's over, Marina will battle a giant dragon and numerous giant mechs piloted by her enemies. The boss battles can be extremely challenging and will test the skills you've honed throughout the game's more than 50 levels.

Ultimately, while *Troublemakers* isn't quite as good as *Gunstar Heroes*, it's a charming and fun game filled with several cute anime cutscenes and some very colorful graphics. It might be one of the best Saturn platformers of the year and should tide over most of you who are waiting for next month's excellent looking *Tick and Tock: Time Tricksters*.

Review: 8/10

-excerpted from the review of *Troublemakers* in the September 1997 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

\*Marina stands over the defeated Merco after beating up his mechanized bird, Phoenix Gamma.\*

Marina: Why are you doing this? Helping bad guys, kidnapping people...you're supposed to be heroes, not a bunch of losers!

Merco: Marina...forgive us...the Emperor...led us astray...he led us to believe you were...tormenting the people of this world...

Marina: That was my evil twin Calina! The Emperor hired her to trick you guys! You really are a bunch of IDIOTS! Now where's the Professor?

Merco: The Emperor needed him for something...that's all we know...really...he said...if we helped you...he would restore us to our human selves...

Marina: So you're not really a bird? And your friends aren't really a scary looking wolf and a goofy looking monkey? Ugggh.... if I help you guys out, will you help me stop the Emperor?

Merco: No can do, Marina...you see...I've fallen deeply in love with you...and....and if you don't love me back, then...I'll just have to show you how strong love has made me! \*he tries to stand up but he groans and hits the floor with a thud\*

Marina: You guys are LOSERS! I have to go find the professor.... \*runs toward the Emperor's base as Merco watches her leave\*

Merco: Marina...I'll prove to you how strong my love is! I will show you the glorious light of love! \*he begins to summon Phoenix Gamma back to him\*

-from the cutscene after level 5-6 of *Troublemakers*

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### **Interplay's *The Witcher* Nears Completion**

One of the year's most highly anticipated RPGs is set to debut on PC this November. *The Witcher*, based on the fantasy novel series, features some of the best graphics we've ever seen and spans an enormous open world, allowing the player to create a character and take them across a vast land full of magic and mystery. Interplay hopes to continue from the success of their post-apocalyptic RPG *Fallout*, which became a surprise hit due to its deep character customization and unique setting. The company acquired the publishing rights to *The Witcher* earlier this year and helped Metropolis Software see the project through to completion. The results are nothing short of breathtaking, with Interplay promising the biggest world ever seen in an RPG. Early beta testers are said to be extremely impressed by the game, and it's speculated that players could easily spend over 100 hours in the game's world. It's already looking to be an early contender for top PC game of the year.

-a news article in the September 1997 issue of *PCGamer*

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*Kirby's back for another epic adventure in Kirby's Adventure 3! He'll need all the powers he can get if he hopes to defeat Torogore, the bullish new villain who's out to stampede all over the magic of Dreamland! Joining Kirby in his quest is his new pal Girby, Kirby's pretty companion on this magical journey! Take control of Girby to unlock alternate powers for every enemy she swallows, or have a friend join you and take Kirby and Girby on their new adventure together!*

*Kirby and Girby explore seven exciting new worlds over the course of the game. Here's a brief description of all of them to get you started on your journey!*

*Green Greens – The familiar grassland is back, and Whispy Woods still rules the forest, but Torogore's fiery influence can even be felt in this early stage!*

*Molehill Mountain – Kirby's got to navigate these treacherous cliffs and duck the mole people living within if he wants to make it closer to Torogore's lair!*

*Aquatic Arboretum – Underwater gardens fill this beautiful stage, so put on your flippers and send Kirby and Girby on a swim!*

*Cake Canyon – This is the sweetest world in the game, full of yummy treats for Kirby and Girby to consume, but don't spend too much time eating cake and not enough time eating foes!*

*Doomdark Doorway – This creepy world harbors a secret: one of Kirby's old foes has been calling this place his home!*

*Skysurf Soaring – Kirby and Girby take to the air in this challenging world full of flying foes!*

*Big Bull Barricade – Torogore's made his lair here and some of the game's toughest challenges lay in your path. Don't give up, Kirby!*

-excerpted from *Nintendo Power's* October 1997 article on *Kirby's Adventure 3*

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*"I never imagined I'd get to work with Nintendo on a project like this. Masaya Matsuura and his team are the real geniuses behind Parappa, I'm glad my art was able to inspire them to create such wonderful work. I can't wait to see what they come up with next!"*

-Rodney Greenblat

*"Considering the art style we were working with, the Super Famicom CD was a natural choice for the game. We were able to use the same kind of graphics they had created for Yoshi's Island on cartridge, and that worked well for the flat paper look of the characters. When we needed to do a cutscene we just made a video and put it on the disc. We actually had trouble fitting it all on one disc! It was a tight squeeze but we succeeded and got all six levels onto a single disc. The game was a very interesting challenge for us and I'm glad it was quite popular, that popularity was very encouraging."*

-Masaya Matsuura

The initial game concept featured a fifth stage showdown with all of Parappa's previous teachers. They would be all fighting over who would get the bathroom first and Parappa would need to defeat them all by rapping in order to win access to the toilet. Gunpei Yokoi from Nintendo was touring the studio and he had a look at the toilet level idea and commented that it seemed rather crude. It was Sony who had the final call, it was Sony's game, but Matsuura respected Yokoi's opinion on the issue and he conceived a new stage five where Sunny Funny got trapped in a freezer and Parappa had to save her with inspiration from the superhero Jet Baby. The toilet level would have been interesting to see, but the Jet Baby level does fit in a bit more with the 'I gotta believe' theme of the game. It's just one of those interesting little 'what if's that come up so often in the development stages of games.

-excerpted from a rootalk.com subroot: "Most interesting video game 'what might have beens'?" posted on January 14, 2015

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*This month's Enemy Zero is one of the Saturn's most intriguing releases. The game, which is part FMV, part survival horror title, combines elements of both action and horror games to create a unique and challenging experience. We're now privileged to have a brief chat with the man behind Enemy Zero, Kenji Eno.*

(...)

Official Saturn Magazine: If we recall correctly, the original *D* was released to the Super Nintendo CD in Japan only. And then it was released here for the Sega Saturn. You caused a lot of controversy with your comments on Nintendo earlier this year...

Kenji Eno: \*laughs\*

OSM: They were very strong comments.

Eno: Well, they were true. Nintendo didn't respect my game. They didn't respect the work put into it. They didn't respect the message behind it. Only Sega gave *D* the treatment it deserved which is why it sold so much better in for the Saturn than it did for Nintendo. And *Enemy Zero* would just be impossible with the technology Nintendo has. They have only just now gotten around to releasing the Ultra Nintendo. It's disgraceful how long they took. Sega has had the best system on the market for three years now and there is no doubt who will win this so-called "console war".

OSM: *Enemy Zero* is an extremely unique and frightening game.

Eno: And Sega knew what I had in store for it. They did not make an attempt to censor or question me.

OSM: So, do you feel like there will be more Saturn games in the future for you?

Eno: I'm already working on one. It's not the sequel to *D*, that's coming later, but I'm continuing to make games for it right now. I want to push the player to their emotional limits and that's what I'm hoping to do with this game and with the next game I have coming out.

OSM: Can you share any information about your next game?

Eno: Absolutely! The next game will feature two protagonists and they will have to depend on each other. If either of them fails, both of them die. It will be a very frightening and dramatic game.

OSM: Do you think it'll be better than *Enemy Zero*?

Eno: Absolutely, but I recommend also that you play *Enemy Zero*, because it will frighten and stimulate you in much the same way. \*laughs\*

-excerpted from an interview in the September 1997 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

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Ted Crosley: The bottom line with *Race'n'Chase* is that while it's a unique game, it's also got lots of flaws and while it gives you a nice big city to play in, there's not really that much to do. Yeah, you can kill people. Yeah, you can do races. But I was looking for something more and I really didn't get it.

Alex Stansfield: The novelty of running people over and shooting them wears off really quick.

Ted: There was a lot of dialogue at least. I enjoyed some of the dialogue, it was pretty funny but once it started repeating...

\*A brief snippet of the game is shown, someone is getting their face blown off with a shotgun and yelling out "I'm gonna call my lawyer!"\*

Alex: \*chuckling\* Yeah, some of the dialogue was just ridiculous, this game has a tongue-in-cheek sense of humor that sort of serves it well. I mean, if you're a cop and you use

police brutality on enough people, this happens...

\*A clip of a bunch of hippies marching down a street is shown, holding up protest signs and chanting\*

Alex: And then you can just run them over with your car.

Ted: Yeah, I mean at least this game doesn't take itself too seriously like a lot of other games out there. And, you know, getting into a nice long cop chase can be pretty fun. I had more fun avoiding the cops than anything else. These cities are huge, some of those chases can be pretty epic.

Alex: Yeah, but the races are really lame. So at least half of the title means something.

Ted: You know what? I'm gonna give *Race'n'Chase* a 3.5. There's a lot of good ideas here, but the execution is just poor.

Alex: For me, execution is everything. I'm giving it a 3, mostly for the humor, a little bit for the cop chases and there ARE a few decent missions in there, but most of this game is a slog. I imagine we'll get more fun from the media freaking out over this game than we will from actually playing the game.

-excerpted from the September 2, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

Gary Westhouse: So what did you think of *King's Wrath* for the Sega Saturn?

Alex: I was immediately reminded of *Tactics Ogre*.

Gary: Did Enix do this game?

Alex: They did not, but someone took some cues. And like I said before, it's fun to play as a bad guy. It's fun to be an evil king and conquer your foes.

Gary: Well, it's like they say in *Conan the Barbarian*, what is best in life?

Alex: To conquer your enemies, see them driven before you, and to hear the lamentations of their women!

Gary: Yes! That is good and this is a good game.

Alex: You know, the combat's not quite as deep as *Tactics Ogre*, but the graphics are better at least.

Gary: The soundtrack could've used some work though.

Alex: Yeah, but still, it was a fun game and I'm gonna give it a 4.

Gary: Same here, I give it a 4 and it's a GameTV Recommended pick, so go pick it up!

-excerpted from the September 9, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Lyssa: I LOVED Parappa, I thought it was awesome and the music was soooo catchy!

Brittany: That's the thing though, it was such a fun game but I wanted MORE, you can beat it in half an hour and you can't justify charging 50 bucks for that.

Lyssa: Yeah but you can go back and do cool mode and challenge your high scores! And you can't tell me you beat it in half an hour, I'm sure you had to go back and redo level 5 a couple times.

Brittany: I redid it once and that's literally the only time I had to do a level over.

Lyssa: Liar!

Brittany: Want me to prove it? I can beat it right now no problem.

Lyssa: Look, I get it, it's a short game, but it's short and super sweet and has a ton of replay value. And it's the only time you'll ever get a love story between a dog and a sunflower.

Brittany: It was adorable to see that dog trying to win the heart of that flower. I wouldn't want to see the kids, but the love story itself was cute. The game was cute and it was fun but I just wanted to see more of it.

Lyssa: Honestly, I imagine it pushed the Super Nintendo CD to its limit the way it already was. 20 minutes of cutscenes and those graphics couldn't have been easy.

Brittany: It reminds me of the AMAZING work Nintendo did on *Yoshi's Island*, everything so vibrant and colorful.

Lyssa: Okay, time to give out the score and I'm gonna do it in the form of a rap. Brittany, gimme a beat!

Brittany: No!

Lyssa: \*shrugs and starts doing her rap anyway\* Parappa is short but it sure is sweet...

Brittany: \*rolls her eyes and starts beatboxing for Lyssa, doing a pretty lousy job of it\*

Lyssa: The awesome tunes got me moving my feet, the kickass songs made me feel alive, and that's why I'm giving it a 4.5! IN DA HOUSE!

Brittany: \*mock clapping for Lyssa\* Okay, okay, my score for Parappa is-

Lyssa: Brittany, you gotta rap!

Brittany: I beatboxed for you, isn't that enough?

Lyssa: Come onnnnnnn!!!

Brittany: No, no!

Lyssa: You're no fun, you're no fun! \*grabbing Brittany and playfully shaking her\* Come on and rap!!!

Brittany: Ugggh fine.... \*she groans as Lyssa starts doing a really good beatbox for her\* Parappa's fun but....it's sure not long...in fact this game is even shorter than Ted's schlong...

Lyssa: \*stops beatboxing and starts cracking up\*

Ted: Hey!!!!

Brittany: So uh....that's why...there's no way it's getting a 5....Instead I gotta give it...3.5.

Lyssa: You can't rhyme five with five, that's cheating!

Brittany: \*shrugs\* You put me on the spot!

(...)

John Walden: *Thunder Force V* was tight! I'm telling you right now, one of my top games of the year for the Sega Saturn.

Ted: Okay, calm down, it was good, but as far as shooters go, it felt like pretty standard fare. *Thunder Force III* for the Genesis was a classic and *Thunder Force IV* made great use of the Mega Charger, but I felt like *Thunder Force V* didn't push the Saturn as far as it could've been pushed.

John: What are you talking about, the graphics were awesome!

Ted: There was a lot of 2-D but it wasn't detailed enough to blow me away. The Saturn is capable of so much more. Now the gameplay, the gameplay was great, like it always is, but even that wasn't as innovative as say, *Thunder Force III* was. That was one of the classics of the shooter genre and broke a ton of new ground, but *Thunder Force V* didn't do anything that we haven't seen games like, say, *Universalizer 2* on the SNES-CD do.

John: *Thunder Force V*, lemme tell you what I liked most about it, besides the awesome musical score. The weapons, there were SO many to choose from and you could select between eight different weapons for your ship. The element of strategy in this game surpasses any other shooter. You have to learn the weapons, figure out what you're best with and go to town. That took this game to a whole different level.

Ted: I feel like there's so much more that can be done with shooter games. With the level of graphics these days, we can do a lot more. I like what Squaresoft is doing with *Einhander*, that game looks amazing and I can't wait to play it for the Ultra.

John: From what I saw though, it doesn't let you switch through as many weapons as *Thunder Force V* does.

Ted: And the graphics look incredible.

John: The graphics in *Thunder Force V* are fine, the 3-D bosses are spectacular and the moving backgrounds look gorgeous, I got lost in them when I was playing a few times and

crashed my ship.

Ted: That could be construed as a flaw, you know.

John: You just gotta get used to it. Anyway, I'm giving *Thunder Force V* a 5. It's the best game yet in the series and the best side scrolling shooter on the Saturn, period.

Ted: I'm giving it a 4. It's a very well made and fun game with a killer soundtrack, but it doesn't match up to some of the classics in the genre or what's coming down the road.

-excerpted from the September 16, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: September 1997**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Tale Phantasia
3. Starseekers Of Exion
4. Fire Emblem: Keepers Of The Light
5. Chrono Trigger
6. NBA Hangtime
7. Frederico 2: Garcia's Revenge
8. Blast Corps
9. Terranigma
10. Norse By Norsewest
11. Elements Of Mana
12. Syrielle
13. Super Mario World 2
14. Super Mario RPG
15. Super Bomberman 4
16. Mega Man X4
17. Empire: The Steel Kingdom
18. International Superstar Soccer '98
19. Harvest Moon
20. Dragon Quest VI

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart – September 1997**

1. Ultima: Scion Of Britannia
2. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
3. Raigeki
4. Tomb Raider II
5. SoniQuest
6. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
7. Troublemakers
8. Fighters Megamix
9. Sonic Jam
10. Planetary Probe

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**September 22, 1997**

Norio Ohga had just finished reading some notes that had been given to him that morning, mostly notes concerning Sony's partnership with the company Dreamworks. The American comedian Chris Farley was nearly done recording lines for an upcoming animated movie that the company was making, a movie about an ogre that was set to be released sometime in 1999. Dreamworks was also deep into the production of their first CGI animated film, a haunted circus movie set for release during the next year. Early reports were that Dreamworks was using Sony's computers to great effect, the animation of the circus film was said to rival or surpass what Pixar was producing for their next film. Ohga placed the notes aside and prepared to meet with Ken Kutaragi, who had just entered the room and had taken a seat across from Ohga at the desk.

"Anything new to report, sir?" Kutaragi asked.

"Our Ultra Nintendo sales continue to be extremely strong," said Ohga. "Nintendo is barely able to keep the product in shelves ahead of demand."

"We've ramped up production of our chips for the North American launch as much as possible, we're expecting to have two million units ready to go on launch day two months from now," Kutaragi replied. "That would be far more units than have ever sold at launch for any game console, even for Nintendo."

"Do you think it'll be enough?" asked Ohga.

Secretly, Kutaragi was hoping that it wouldn't. No console had ever even approached two million units sold on the first day, for the Ultra Nintendo to sell that much would be a staggering success that would immediately vindicate Kutaragi's entire career in an instant. The American economy was still picking up, but would two million families really shell out \$299 for such a product, no matter how much hype was behind it?

"I...believe so," said Kutaragi. "Either way, it's the most we can produce at this time. We'll keep production up to meet holiday demand, I'm sure the units we're putting out will be sufficient to meet even the highest level of demand."

Ohga nodded, though his mind was swirling with doubt. Two million units would either be too much and would leave store shelves filled with product, which would look extremely bad at a time when the Sega Saturn might be experiencing its biggest holiday ever. Or, two million units wouldn't be enough, and would alienate the loyal fan following Nintendo and Sony had helped to build together.

Kutaragi placed a sheet of paper on the table. It was in Japanese, translated from English. It was the small paragraph Sony would be including on the back of every Ultra Nintendo box, the company's mission statement: "*The Ultra Nintendo Entertainment System is built with Sony technology. Sony is helping to make the dreams of countless innovators come true through superior technology, bringing artistic visions to life and putting today's best entertainment in your home. Sony: We Make Everything Possible.*"

"This is what will appear on Ultra Nintendo boxes shipped to North America and Europe," said Kutaragi. Ohga read the sheet of paper and nodded. "It sounds good?"

"It's fine," Ohga said. "This partnership continues to be an enormous success, and I see

many more partnerships in this company's future. Video games, movies, music...our electronics company will soon be the world's biggest entertainment company."

Kutaragi tried to hide his smile. He was humble, but he knew he was a major part of Sony's success.

"It's all right, you can take credit if you'd like."

"Oh, no, no, it was your decision to let me work on this technology in the first place that made everything possible," said Kutaragi, bowing humbly. "I just-"

"You just created the best video game accessory in the history of the industry," said Ohga. "And this new console already appears to be the best video game console in the history of the industry. Now....I'll ask you again...do you believe we'll sell two million units at the North American launch?"

"Ohga-san, sir... I believe....if there were enough units... I believe we would sell significantly more."

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A brief little aside. In September 1997, *Nintendo Power* had its 100th issue. The magazine celebrated that issue by publishing a list of the top 100 games up to that time to appear on Nintendo systems. The list is here:

[http://nintendo.wikia.com/wiki/Ninte...es\\_of\\_All\\_Time](http://nintendo.wikia.com/wiki/Ninte...es_of_All_Time)

Obviously, here in TTL, *Nintendo Power* also celebrated their 100th issue in September 1997. So, here's TTL's version of that list.

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Secret Of Mana
3. Tetris
4. The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past
5. Super Mario World 2
6. Super Metroid
7. Super Mario Bros. 3
8. Tale Phantasia
9. Final Fantasy VI
10. Squad Four: Eclipse
11. The Legend Of Zelda
12. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition
13. Chrono Trigger
14. The Legend Of Zelda: Link's Awakening
15. Super Mario Bros.
16. Super Mario World
17. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
18. Final Fantasy IV

19. Secret Of Monkey Island
20. Ballistic Limit
21. Yoshi's Island
22. Mega Man
23. Tales Of The Seven Seas
24. Super Mario Kart
25. Terranigma
26. F-Zero
27. Super Mario RPG
28. Tetris Attack
29. Snatcher
30. Donkey Kong Country
31. Tecmo Super Bowl CD
32. Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble
33. Jewels Of The Realm
34. Fire Emblem
35. Super Mario World 3
36. NBA Jam
37. Punch-Out!
38. World Of Color
39. Mario Paint
40. Elements of Mana
41. Eternal Night
42. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2
43. Metroid II: Return Of Samus
44. Deadman Sam
45. Metroid
46. Super Bomberman CD
47. Kirby Super Deluxe
48. Squad Four
49. Doom
50. Dog Dash
51. F-Zero CD
52. Zelda II: Adventure Of Link
53. Final Fantasy
54. SimCity
55. Street Fighter II: The World Warrior
56. Contra 3: The Alien Wars
57. Dragon Warrior VI
58. Killer Instinct
59. Frederico
60. Castlevania: Rondo Of Blood
61. Kirby's Adventure 2
62. Rayman
63. Samurai Shodown
64. Battletoads II
65. Final Fantasy V

66. Starseekers Of Exion
67. International Superstar Soccer CD
68. Super Mario Bros. 2
69. Adventures Of Lolo
70. Dr. Mario
71. Universalizer
72. Intelligent Qube
73. Super Castlevania IV
74. Ninja Gaiden II
75. Golf
76. Contra
77. Bionic Commando
78. Victory
79. Syrielle
80. Actraiser
81. Mega Man X
82. X-COM: UFO Defense
83. Shadowrun
84. Crystalis
85. The Endless War
86. Star Tropics
87. Storm Guardians
88. TMNT IV: Turtles in Time
89. Soulqueen
90. Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?
91. Frank Thomas' Big Hurt Baseball
92. Super Detective Club 2
93. Pocky And Rocky CD
94. Sam And Max Hit The Road
95. Zombies Ate My Neighbors
96. Final Fantasy Adventure
97. Mortal Kombat
98. Andrekah
99. Cannon Fodder
100. Double Dragon

-

*"I think when it comes right down to it, the Saturn WILL have the best games no matter what Nintendo does. We've put an enormous amount of effort into providing games for all different kinds of players throughout the holiday season, and that effort starts with Tomb Raider II and we're going to keep right on going. We have an enormous amount of faith in our developers and in our marketing team to let people know that the Sega Saturn is the number one system out there. Just like in 1996, the Saturn is the system to own and we're going to keep making games well into the future. Count on it."*

-Tom Kalinske, talking to a reporter about the upcoming launch of the Ultra Nintendo in an

October 1997 news report

*"And while we gear up for the Ultra Nintendo, Sega has launched a three-pronged preemptive attack: Tick and Tock: Time Tricksters for families, Planetary Probe for hardcore RPG fans, and Tomb Raider II for everybody else. Sega is clearly coming out with both barrels, and those who love video games are the clear winners here."*

-excerpted from the Review Crew introduction of *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* November 1997 issue, their 100th

*"Mortal Kombat is not only the most brutal, bloody, fun fighting game franchise out there, it's also the one with the best storyline, and Mortal Kombat: Labyrinth is going to show that."*

-Ed Boon, in an interview on the October 28, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

*"You're pretty smart, Nash. I'm gonna give you that. But are you smart enough to know when to quit before somebody you care about gets hurt? Somebody like....Miki here?"*

-Dashiell Gant, *Victory 2*

-

\*A brief snippet of a cutscene showing Lara Croft standing over a sprawling jungle is shown.\*

Narrator: Lara Croft is back.

\*Scenes showing the game's combat system with Lara punching and kicking thugs are interspersed with critics' reviews of the game: "One of the richest combat systems ever. - Edge Magazine", "A true masterpiece.- GamePro", "It's official, Lara Croft is the greatest action hero of all time.- Game Informer", "9.0/10- Electronic Gaming Monthly", "A GameTV Recommended Title- GameTV"\*

Narrator: And this time, the fate of the world hangs in the balance.

Lara Croft: \*exiting a temple\* Well now, it's always the world at stake, isn't it?

\*More brief action scenes from the game are shown, followed by Lara facing down an enormous dragon while slowly removing her sunglasses.\*

## **TOMB RAIDER II**

*October 16*

### **Play it first on Sega Saturn.**

\*The SEGA! scream is heard\*

-the television commercial for *Tomb Raider II*

### **Tomb Raider II: The Basics**

*Tomb Raider II* is the sequel to the hit adventure game *Tomb Raider* from 1996. Once again, Lara Croft returns to stop bad guys and hunt for treasures in ancient labyrinths.

Unlike *Tomb Raider*, which had a plot quite different from OTL's, *Tomb Raider II* follows the OTL game a bit more closely. The game, as IOTL, starts out in Lara's mansion with a series of quick tutorials before starting you on your mission proper. And, as in IOTL, *Tomb Raider II* expands on the original game's play controls, with an improved combat system involving counters and an improved exploration system as well, giving Lara additional ways to get around the game's larger temples and landmarks. As IOTL, the game involves the legendary Dagger of Xian, an item said to give its wielder unnatural powers. However, this game's villain is changed from the OTL villain. IOTL, *Tomb Raider II* featured the villain Marco Bertoli, but in TTL's version, the villain is a Cambodian warlord, Cheng Din, who is basically an expy of Pol Pot. He has the same goal as OTL's Bertoli: Find the dagger and use it to gain enough power to take over the world. Lara chases Cheng Din and his personal army all over the world, from a remote island in the Indian Ocean to the Cambodian jungles, to China itself. Finally, Cheng Din is able to use the dagger and transform himself into a hideous dragon, whom Lara must defeat in the final boss fight. The game does not mention Jade Bessemer, the villain from the first *Tomb Raider*, in dialogue, though a news paper clipping in the background of a scene does reveal that Bessemer survived. After Lara defeats Cheng Din, she returns to her mansion and takes a shower, teasing the player by going black just before Lara's full body is shown.

### **October 16, 1997**

*Tomb Raider II* is released in North America amidst massive hype, though Sega does not push the game quite as hard as it was initially planning to, due to the fact that it is widely known that the game will eventually receive an Ultra Nintendo release. Still, it becomes the fastest selling title to date that year, even outselling *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* in release date and release week sales. The game's media coverage somewhat mutes coverage of *Race'n'Chase* in the headlines, though *Tomb Raider II* itself receives a small amount of controversy for its violence and sensual content (despite only having a T rating). *Tomb Raider II*'s positive reviews (not QUITE as good as *Tomb Raider*'s but still considered very good) earn the game a great reception from fans, and the game for the most part lives up to the hype that the first *Tomb Raider* game had generated for it.

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### **King's Field III**

Dan: 6.0

Shoe: 5.0

Crispin: 4.0 (quote: "While the classic difficulty of this series still remains, this game shows that the series has grown awfully stale.")

Sushi-X: 4.0

### **Mortal Kombat: Labyrinth**

Dan: 7.0

Shoe: 8.5

Crispin: 8.0 (quote: "An outstanding beat-em-up with all the familiar Mortal Kombat action you love.")

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **NBA Live 98**

Dan: 7.5 (quote: Yet another solid entry in this basketball series.)  
Shoe: 6.0  
Crispin: 7.0  
Sushi-X: 7.0

### **X-Men vs. Street Fighter**

Dan: 8.0  
Shoe: 8.0  
Crispin: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 9.0 (quote: "The sheer variety of characters makes this an incredibly rewarding fighting game. It's a bit of a flawed port but it's still fun enough to overlook those flaws and have a great time.")

### **Victory 2**

Dan: 9.5 (quote: "This is one of the best top-down shooters out there.")  
Shoe: 9.0  
Crispin: 8.5  
Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Hammercraft**

Dan: 7.0  
Shoe: 7.5 (quote: "If you love customizing weapons, this is a must-play.")  
Crispin: 7.0  
Sushi-X: 7.5

-*Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of October 1997's SNES-CD games in the November and December 1997 issues

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*"Five years after humanity won its freedom from the secret web of extraterrestrial oppression that had gripped it for decades, Nash Grieves had finally settled down, having devoted those last few years to rebuilding what had been lost. Now, the people of Earth could live in peace and freedom, with a bright future ahead of them. But there were still those who couldn't let go of the past. Those who believed humanity didn't deserve a future."*  
-the introduction to *Victory 2*

*"Aha...Nash, I can help you. Just give me access to the mainframe and I will stop this virus. You'll need to fight your way to the server room but I can help you get there. Please, just trust me...you won't regret it, I promise."*  
-Miki (Alyson Court), *Victory 2*

The summer and fall of 1997 saw a wave of sequels that pushed the Super Nintendo CD to their limits and carried Nintendo all the way up to the release of the Ultra console. *Tales Of The Seven Seas 2* and *Dog Dash 2* were highly acclaimed, but it was perhaps *Victory 2* that was the best of the lot in terms of gameplay, graphics, and storyline. The game took place a few years after the events of the first *Victory*, after Nash Grieves and his buddy Jett Sharklund wiped out the aliens who were secretly ruling Earth. While the first game took cues from sci-fi classics like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *They Live*, the second title

was an homage to action films, particularly the *Die Hard* series. The villain of *Victory 2* was Dashiell Gant, another of Nash's war buddies who Nash reluctantly allowed to be captured and tortured some 15 years prior to the events of the game. Now, Gant was out for revenge, executing a series of terrorist attacks designed to disrupt the fragile peace that had emerged after humanity threw off the alien yolk. Nash and Jett received help from a new ally: Miki Akayama, a young hacker woman who helps Nash and Jett throughout the game by detonating traps and helping them break into locked areas and computer systems. During the final level of the game, Gant kidnaps Miki and takes her to an enormous tower, which Nash must fight his way through to stop Gant and save Miki. The game's 18 levels were punctuated by numerous cutscenes in which Nash contemplates his role in the new world and if there's truly a place for soldiers like him, especially in contrast with a girl like Miki who'd never known fighting and who doesn't have any of the anger or resentment that veterans like Nash and Jett feel when reminded of the way the world used to be. The action of the game is vastly improved even from its excellent predecessor, with a surprisingly intuitive lock-on system that allows multiple enemies to be targeted at once. When combined with the ability to set and program traps and lead enemies into ambushes, *Victory 2* was a game ahead of its time.

The game was even compared favorably to *Operation Zero*, which debuted that month for the Sega Saturn (and later came to the Ultra Nintendo). The two games had somewhat similar run-and-gun styles, and even though *Zero* had the superior graphics and was also a bit longer, it received average review scores around 7 or 8, while *Victory 2* scored consistently in the low 9s, similar to its predecessor. *Zero's* stealth elements (which *Victory 2* largely lacked, being a more action-oriented game) won it praise, but once *Metal Gear Solid* came out, *Zero* looked instantly dated in comparison, while *Victory 2* remains a timeless classic, beloved by most gamers. It also elevated *Victory* to one of Capcom's signature franchises, joining *Mega Man*, *Street Fighter*, and later, *Resident Evil* at the top of the company's pecking order and making the next generation *Victory* installment one of the most anticipated titles in the years to come.

-from an article on the website Capcom Chronicles

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*"As the first JRPG to fully utilize the Sega Saturn's impressive 3-D abilities, Planetary Probe is a thing of beauty. From the very first opening cutscene showing the vastness of space and to the impressive shots of the main ship, the Arcus, the game blows the player away with amazing visuals we've never seen in such a game before. Is it dated now? Yes. But back then, it was gorgeous, and it beat Final Fantasy VII to the gate by one month. Did that win it many sales? It's hard to say, the game was never close to being the mega hit that Final Fantasy VII ended up being. But did it prove that Enix was fully capable of matching Squaresoft in terms of cinematic RPGs? Yes, it did."*

-Forum user SegaStillGotIt on the RPGamer.net forums, October 7, 2005

*Before you embark on your intergalactic journey, get to know the crew of the Arcen, the ship that will carry you from planet to planet as you play through the game.*

*Lance: The ship's captain, a brave, noble young man who wields a glowing energy sword (George Lucas, don't sue!). Over the course of the game, he comes to realize that there is a universe beyond what he and his crew have experienced, and must become more than just a commanding officer if he is to save his friends and the universe.*

*Atria: A young woman and the most recent member of the Arcen's crew, she's a military researcher who joined the ship to explore more worlds beyond the military base she's used to. Carries a laser pistol that converts into a massive cannon for more powerful foes.*

*Brent: The ship's junior officer, who frequently clashes with Lance over certain orders. Carries an energy spear and is quite athletic. His conflicts with Lance are a recurring thing throughout the game.*

*Fennoc: The ship's medical doctor, he's seen more planets and stars than anyone on the crew, but is mostly quiet and tries to stay away from conflict. His weapon is somewhat unorthodox: a hypodermic needle that can be loaded with different chemicals.*

*Burnum: The ship's weapon specialist, a mountain of a man with a great sense of humor and a huge laugh. He wields a pair of gatling guns that seem way too big for the other crewmembers to even pick up.*

*Shannora: Fennoc's research assistant, a quiet woman with a very dark personality. She uses explosives in battle and wears a pair of thin-lensed glasses.*

(...)

*Planetary Probe* is a gorgeous game with some stunning visuals, but ultimately, it's a fairly by the numbers RPG with a battle system similar to *Phantasy Star*. Though the game's graphics and voice acting show that a lot of time and effort went into the game, those looking for a new take on the classic genre might be disappointed. The game's storyline relies heavily on how you feel about its characters, which we felt were some of the strongest we'd ever seen, all of them, even the stoic hero Lance, have hidden depths to their personalities that made us care deeply for them by the time we were finished playing, some 60 hours later (though that time is a lot shorter if you don't go after all the sidequests like we did). Ultimately, *Planetary Probe* doesn't tread any new ground or boldly go where no RPG has gone before, but it was still a hell of a ride and if you want to play the best looking RPG the Saturn has to offer, this is it.

Score: 8/10

-excerpted from the October 1997 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

*Shannora barely counts as a "villain" more than Kain from Final Fantasy IV really does, but since Shannora had full control of her actions the entire time and Kain really didn't, she counts as a villain for the purposes of this list, even though she ultimately proves herself to be a good person in the end. Over the course of Planetary Probe, the crew of the Arcen ultimately explores seven planets over the main quest (it's ten if you do all the side quests, but for storyline purposes, it's seven). And during that time, we see Shannora get deeper and deeper into her own research. It's clear even from the start of the game that she's a disturbed individual, but what she does on planet Belcrant a little more than halfway through the game is nearly unforgivable and has kicked off internet debates over whether or not she deserved to be punished or redeemed that continue to this day. Essentially, her experiment leads to the deaths of thousands of innocent people and directly contributes to the rise of the game's true (but much less interesting) villain, Nachtmahr. Shannora's motives, while not 100% selfish, are still pretty bad, and the game does some very interesting gymnastics to justify how Shannora's experimentation and sabotage of the Arcen's crew was well-intentioned. Ultimately, the game's fanbase is evenly and bitterly divided over whether Shannora's goals were justified, but whether you believe they were or*

*not, in the end she ultimately realizes the horror her actions have caused and helps the party to defeat Nachtmahr at the Black Nebula. Still, before she comes to her senses, she's a positively nasty villain. While not a gloating or cackling type, she definitely makes you hate her guts, or love to hate her, whatever the case might be, and that's why she made this list of the top 10 RPG villains of all time.*

-*"Top 10 RPG Villains: #6- Shannora"*, a list posted on Gamefaqs.com, July 15, 2014

-

\*As a song begins to play, the two main characters, a young girl and a young boy, are shown in various scenes using their time powers to navigate the world and defeat enemies.\*

*Tick! Tock! Tick! Tock! Tick Tock Tick Tock!*

\*Both characters are now shown, navigating a vast 3-D world. The girl slows down time to allow the boy to land a few crucial blows on a fast moving enemy.\*

*When there's time trouble, just call their names! They can get the bad guys off their games!*

\*The boy is firing an oversized cannon device at enemies, completely stopping them in time before rushing past them all to pick up a spinning gold watch item.\*

*Slow down time or speed it up! 'Til the bad guys have had enough!*

\*The main villain of the game, a fat guy in a silly looking king outfit, is angrily pounding his fists and throwing a temper tantrum.\*

King Clockwork: I've had ENOUGH of those two!

*It's nonstop fun until you drop! You can even make time stop!*

\*A huge array of missiles are being fired at the boy, who is comically struggling while tied to a pole. The missiles stop just before hitting him and he looks to see the girl, holding a big stopwatch and giving an excited thumbs up.\*

*A boy and a girl with all the time in the world!*

\*The boy and girl stand on a big hill full of enemies, jumping up and down excitedly while using their time powers.\*

Announcer: Tick and Tock: Time Tricksters, only on the Sega Saturn!

*A boy and a girl with all the time in the world!*

\*Cue the "SEGA!" scream\*

-the television commercial for *Tick and Tock: Time Tricksters*

While *Tick and Tock: Time Tricksters* was probably the most kid-friendly of the Sega Saturn 3-D platformers, that didn't make the game any less challenging, or less fun. The game revolved around a pair of kids, a girl named Tick and a boy named Tock, who lived in a city

called Tinker Town with their parents who ran a junkyard full of all sorts of neat items. One day, while playing together in a big pile of junk, the two kids find a magical watch, but while playing around with it, they accidentally stop time in Tinker Town completely and must venture out on a journey to find the Wizard of Time to figure out how to get things in Tinker Town back to normal. However, the two realize that the watch belongs to the evil King Clockwork, who used it to control time in his kingdom and now that he no longer has the watch, he's in danger of losing his power. He deploys his armies and his robots to stop the two kids as they journey through various worlds to gather gears and watches that the Wizard of Time needs to build his grand machine to reset time in Tinker Town. It's your basic collect-a-thon platformer, but the fun twist is in the puzzles and the combat, which involve manipulation of time in order to get through them. Tick and Tock's magic watch can do all kinds of things: it can slow or speed up time or it can freeze time completely. There are other strange quirks it can perform, rapid aging or de-aging, creating rips to other dimensions, that sort of thing, but the primary use for the watch is those main abilities. You do have a limited amount of power in the watch, though it does regenerate slowly and you can collect items throughout the game that make the bar longer (along with your life bar). Eventually, after journeying through eight worlds, Tick and Tock confront King Clockwork himself in his castle. Clockwork has discovered how to make a watch of his own, so in the final battle, those same time abilities you've been using throughout the game can now be used against you, making for a fairly tough (but still fun and winnable) fight. In the end, time is restored, but those mischievous tricksters Tick and Tock have decided to keep the watch anyway, ensuring that the two of them will have plenty more adventures through time in the future.

As a quality kid-friendly platformer, which the Saturn was hurting for since *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*, the game sold exceptionally well, giving the Saturn two huge sales successes just before the release of the Ultra Nintendo (the other was, of course, *Tomb Raider II*). Tick and Tock even got their own animated series in 1999, which came out along with the sequel to the game. Though *Super Mario Dimensions* would largely steal much of this game's thunder, it still provided the Saturn with a new franchise and a best selling game, something they'd sorely need upon the Ultra Nintendo's release.

-from "A Timely Game About Time", an article posted on Gamesovermatter.com on December 13, 2013

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*A beat-em-up sounds like a strange diversion for the Mortal Kombat series, whose highly anticipated fourth installment is set to be ported exclusively to the Ultra Nintendo sometime next year. However, Mortal Kombat: Labyrinth treads some welcome ground for the series, whose backstory has previously only been explained through small amounts of text in the games themselves and supplementary materials in strategy guides and instruction books. In Mortal Kombat: Labyrinth, you take control of Sub-Zero, Scorpion, Sonya, and Mileena as the four make their way through their own unique dungeons over a series of levels. You'll encounter enemies and occasionally bosses, and the combat system is essentially the same as it is in Mortal Kombat, with the addition of equippable weapons at certain points during the stages. As you play, you'll discover more about each character's backstory, and the combat will get trickier, while navigating the game's fairly large dungeons becomes a test of endurance and skill. All in all, Mortal Kombat: Labyrinth is no replacement for the games themselves, but it doesn't need to be. It's a decent beat-em-up that gives lots of insight into the game's backstory and raises new questions that will hopefully be addressed in MK4.*

*Mortal Kombat: Labyrinth* will be released for the Super Nintendo CD in October. A Saturn version is scheduled for early next year.

Graphics: 4.0

Sound: 3.5

Play Control: 4.0

Fun Factor: 3.5

Challenge: Adjustable

-excerpted from a review of *Mortal Kombat: Labyrinth* in the November 1997 issue of *GamePro*

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*"Is Ken Griffey Jr. The Greatest Baseball Player Of All Time?"*

-from the cover of the November 3, 1997 issue of *Sports Illustrated* celebrating the Seattle Mariners' 4-1 World Series win over the Atlanta Braves

*"Ken Griffey Jr. is GOD!!!"*

-from a post on an InsideTheWeb.com baseball forum on October 23, 1997

For the second straight year, the Seattle Mariners found themselves facing the Atlanta Braves in the World Series. But it wasn't easy. They survived one of the greatest League Championship Series of all time, a seven game slugfest with the Baltimore Orioles that saw Ken Griffey Jr. leading his team back from a 7-0 sixth inning deficit in game 7 with excellent fielding and three home runs, including the game winning one-run shot in the 11th inning (leading to a debate that still rages to this day about whether Randy Myers should've been told to walk the red-hot Griffey instead of pitching to him). Meanwhile, the Braves faced off against the Dodgers in the NLCS, and swept them easily, 4 games to 0. Going into the series, it looked like it would finally be the year for the well-rested Braves, but Griffey played masterfully in all five games of the series, particularly the first two games which took place in Atlanta. Griffey homered in all four games that the Mariners won. His astonishing 15 home runs in that year's postseason more than DOUBLED the previous record and will almost certainly never be touched. Combined with his 56 home runs in that year's regular season, and by that time, Griffey was known as one of the greatest home run hitters in the history of the game. His epic home-run race with Mark McGwire in 1998, culminating in an awesome World Series showdown between the Mariners and Cardinals, would become one of the greatest spectacles in the history of baseball.

-excerpted from "A History Of The MLB: 1995-1999", an article on Bleacherreport.com

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*And anime is gaining a rising foothold in American culture as well, particularly in the realm of video games. Ghost In The Shell, a game based on one of the most popular anime films of all time, is set to release a game for the Sega Saturn later this month, while a pair of Neon Genesis Evangelion games, one for the upcoming Ultra Nintendo and one for the Sega Saturn, have both been confirmed for localization sometime next year. Pokemon, the official Western name for the Japanese Pocket Monsters franchise, will see its popular anime series, one of the highest rated in Japan, come to North America late next year, and Hasbro, which owns the rights to the popular Tamagotchi digital toy, is exploring options to produce a joint American-Japanese animated series based on the toy. Sailor Moon is currently airing in re-*

*runs on Fox's Saturday morning block as the network continues to ponder what to do about the controversial Sailor Moon S, which features two of its heroines engaged in a lesbian relationship. Its themes like these, considered too extreme or mature for American audiences, that have somewhat slowed anime's proper entry into the West. At the same time, however, the West is gaining a growing acceptance of these mature themes, likely due to the popularity of video games featuring these themes, which have been played by millions of American youths.*

*And just as video games are opening the doors for anime in the West, they continue to inspire creators of anime back in Japan, with the new series Witchery, starring a group of young witches in a magic academy, said to be influenced by popular games such as Andrekah and even the popular American video game Syrielle. Based on a manga series by Natsuki Takaya, the anime will introduce even more characters to the series, and Takaya says that she has many plans for the series to contain homages to her favorite games. Another upcoming anime series, Blader Special, appears to be heavily influenced by the popular video games Ballistic Limit and Iron Combatant, as seen in its mech suits that artfully slide and shoot their way through foes in early preview clips of the first two episodes. If these series are successful, they might make their way to America and around the world, as television stations across the globe broadcast more anime with each passing month. It's also likely that we'll be seeing more anime-based video games on the Ultra Nintendo and the Saturn than we ever did on the Genesis or the Super Nintendo.*

-excerpted from an article in the October 1997 issue of *Wizard* magazine

## **October 22, 1997**

Ken Kutaragi was visiting the studio where the *Pocket Monsters* anime was made. Though Sony had little direct input over the content of the anime, at least during the first batch of episodes, the company still occasionally observed the production of the series and offered up ideas for how certain episodes could be tweaked or improved.

The episode currently being worked on had the tentative title of "Electric Soldier Porygon", involving the main character Satoshi, along with Pikachu, Kasumi, and Takeshi, entering the world of cyberspace and coming into contact with the criminals Team Rocket. Now, one of the climactic scenes was playing on the screen. Pikachu was to leap up and intercept missiles fired at Satoshi and his friends, destroying them in a bright, flashy explosion of blue and red light.

"This is exciting," said Kutaragi, his eyes fixed on the screen. As soon as the lights began to flash, however, Kutaragi realized that there might be a problem. Though he suffered no ill effects from the rapidly flashing lights, he'd had a friend at university who had suffered from epilepsy, and lights like those Kutaragi knew could trigger his symptoms. "Oh....that might be a problem."

"Hmm?" asked one of the animators, unaware of what the problem was.

"Those lights," said Kutaragi, pointing at the screen. "Perhaps...take them out? The flashing blue and red lights, they can cause problems in epileptics."

"Oh..." said the animator, rewinding the tape and watching the screen. "Should we....slow them down?"

"No, no, that would look silly...just...replace them with something else. A comically large explosion perhaps? Anything but those flashing lights..."

"Umm....certainly, yeah," said the animator, nodding his head. Another animator on staff had already noted the potential problems with those lights, but his objections were dismissed. Now that the staff had a second opinion, and from someone as important as Ken Kutaragi, they realized something should probably be done. "We'll get rid of the flashing, certainly."

"Good, good...otherwise this is a very fun episode, please continue!"

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Brittany Saldita: So *Tomb Raider II* does a few things better than the first game and a few things worse. The variety of environments and puzzles has gone down a bit, I feel like *Tomb Raider II* relies more on movie-like action scenes to wow players instead of providing them with big open environments to explore like the first *Tomb Raider* did. That said, the combat system kicks ass and made getting into fights with bad guys a lot more fun.

Lyssa Fielding: Yeah, and beating up on humans is a lot more fun than beating up on tigers if you ask me. There are a lot more human fights in this game.

Brittany: Yeah, those tigers didn't deserve to get beaten up! It was Lara coming into their territory, not the other way around!

Lyssa: Also, the bad guy in this game isn't quite as interesting. It's not even a spoiler to reveal him, it's this dickish guy that you meet right out of the gate and you know right away he's a villain. It took a bit of time to reveal the villain of the last game, this guy here...I mean as soon as you meet him you know he's a dick!

Brittany: But even with those flaws, *Tomb Raider II* is still worth getting. It's still the *Tomb Raider* you know and love, Lara Croft is still awesome, and even though I said there were too many of those big action scenes in this game, some of them are still pretty awesome.

\*It shows a brief clip of Lara Croft leaping out of a biplane and snagging onto a cliff at the last moment.\*

Lyssa: I don't think that's possible in real life...

Brittany: You'd need some SERIOUS arm strength.

Lyssa: Guess it's time to do a few pull-ups?

Brittany: Or lift a few weights.

Lyssa: Well, we have been dragging Alex and Ted back and forth to the closet so I bet we're building some killer muscles there. \*snickering\*

Brittany: It must be KILLING those guys to miss out on reviewing this! We should let them watch the Spice Girls perform later.

Lyssa: \*laughing\* Don't you mean force them to?

Brittany: Well, either way. Anyway, I give *Tomb Raider II* a 4.5. It majorly improves on the gameplay mechanics of the first, even if some of the exploration elements have been dialed back.

Lyssa: I agree, a 4.5 is the perfect score!

Brittany: Coming up next, we've still got the Spice Girls, we're counting down the top 10 female heroes in video game history, AND we're gonna make Gary and John review *Barbie's Lamborghini Adventure* for the Game Boy! And I still don't know how Barbie has a better car than I do.

Lyssa: Well, she is a doctor AND the president of the United States...

-excerpted from the October 14, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Alex: *Planetary Probe* is a positively incredible game. It looks stunning, the gameplay is fantastic, it's absolutely huge...I couldn't find much to hate about this game.

Ted: The combat system was a bit old-fashioned for my tastes. All those pretty graphics and they couldn't come up with something like they did in *Krystalshade*? C'mon Enix, step up your game!

Alex: Well, I did appreciate the option to speed up the spell animations because some of them take forever.

Ted: Well, the game's gotta show off how pretty it is, and yeah, I liked that option too. I mean, it WAS a good game. I don't think I'm as excited about it as you are though.

Alex: It's not just the graphics, some of the characters in this game...

Ted: Yeah, that's what made me stick with it and enjoy it was the characters. The storyline's just superb, reminds me of a really well-written *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode.

Alex: Which reminds me, we NEED a good Star Trek RPG, one with the actual characters like Captain Picard.

Ted: Kirk all the way, dude.

Alex: What are you talking about, Picard's way better than Kirk!

Ted: Picard is BALD!

Alex: So is Stone Cold Steve Austin and he's your favorite wrestler.

Ted: Hey, Stone Cold kicks people's asses, that makes a big difference.

Alex: So does Picard sometimes!

Ted: But does Picard get the girls like Kirk does?

Alex: \*rolls his eyes\*

Ted: *Planetary Probe* might not be the most original RPG out there but it IS one of the prettiest and it's got a really engrossing storyline, so I'm giving it a 4 out of 5.

Alex: And I'm giving it a 5. The Saturn's had just an amazing slew of RPGs this year, definitely check this one out if you can.

(...)

Brittany: Can we just talk about how bad of a port this was? I was really disappointed. *X-Men vs. Street Fighter* the arcade game, I really liked. But this was really rushed and the graphics were bad and it still had slowdown.

John: I thought it was fine for the most part. I mean, yeah, it's not as good as the arcade version but I felt like it was a decent port.

Brittany: No, no no no no no no. This was really bad, it was a completely crippled game. Look at the framerates when you're executing this move with Dhalsim...

\*A clip is shown of Dhalsim executing a complicated combo and the frame rate slowing down significantly\*

Brittany: It's just inexcusable that it'd be released like this. They got rid of tag teams and just made it a standard one-on-one fighter, which was fine, but the slowdown is miserable.

John: It had all the characters, and I got through single player mode just fine. I didn't have any major problems. Yeah, the graphics got downgraded, but ultimately it is a passable game. You might not be able to run any tournaments with it, but-

Brittany: Exactly, this game isn't up to snuff for tournaments. Look, this is NOT a knock on the original *X-Men vs. Street Fighter* which I thought was an awesome game. But this is a piss-poor port. 1 out of 5.

John: Wow, that's REALLY harsh for a game that I still found to be really fun. I'm giving it a 3.5, if it ran better it'd be one of the best fighting games of the year.

Brittany: But it doesn't. It really doesn't. For shame, Capcom. And you were doing so well this month with *Victory 2!*

-excerpted from the October 21, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

-

Ted: I liked the idea that in *Hammercraft*, instead of buying your weapons from some kind of dwarven blacksmith who makes the weapons, in this game you ARE the dwarven blacksmith! And he's a pretty cool dude. But...

Gary: Yeah, but, this game was still pretty flawed. The dungeons you have to journey through are really simple. There's not much in the way of variety and they compensate by

just making the enemies REALLY strong.

Ted: Which means that frequently, you're backtracking to beat up on lesser enemies who hit less hard but still have a ton of HP. You CAN make powerful weapons to beat them easier but that requires you to gather components which are hard to make enemies drop. The random drops in this game are really unfair.

Gary: Right, there's so much backtracking and monotony in this game which could have otherwise been really great. THQ needed to take some cues from Blizzard and games like *Diablo*, this is their first crack at making a dungeon crawler type game and so while the backbone of a good idea is definitely here, the execution is lacking.

Ted: The one redeeming thing about the game is this main character, Krugg the dwarf. He is HILARIOUS. He has this ridiculous Scottish accent and says the funniest things, and makes some of the monotony of grinding a bit less unpleasant.

Gary: Krugg cracked me up. It's still not a great game but at least it's got some humor in it. I'll go ahead and give it a 3.

Ted: You know, I'm giving it a 3.5. Even with its flaws, there's enough good stuff here that I'm sure some players will enjoy this game. Just...know what you're getting into.

-excerpted from the October 28, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

-

### **SNES-CD Power Charts: October 1997**

1. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Tale Phantasia
4. Chrono Trigger
5. Fire Emblem: Keepers Of The Light
6. Starseekers Of Exion
7. Terranigma
8. Super Mario World 2
9. NBA Hangtime
10. Super Mario RPG
11. Intelligent Qube
12. Elements Of Mana
13. Disney's Hercules
14. Syrielle
15. Frederico 2: Garcia's Revenge
16. Syndicate Wars
17. Doom
18. Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble
19. Dog Dash
20. Slaughterbox 2

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart – October 1997**

1. Race'n'Chase

2. Tomb Raider II
3. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
4. Ultima: Scion Of Britannia
5. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
6. Planetary Probe
7. Raigeki
8. Tick and Tock: Time Tricksters
9. SoniQuest
10. Operation Zero

-

\*A teenage boy is dropped into various scenes from Ultra Nintendo games as 90s rock music plays in the background. (basically, in the style of this commercial from OTL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S40fBi65U8c> except with lots of games besides *Super Mario 64*) First, Bob-Omb Battlefield from *Super Mario Dimensions*.\*

Boy: Ultra exciting!

\*Next, a race from *Ultra Mario Kart*.\*

Boy: Ultra fast!

\*Next, a flying level from *Star Fox 2*.\*

Boy: Ultra intense!

\*Next, a summoning sequence from *Final Fantasy VII*.\*

Boy: Ultra epic!

\*Next, a castle scene from *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*.\*

Boy: Ultra spooky!

\*Next, he's seen flipping in a watercraft on *Wave Race*.\*

Boy: Ultra tricky!

\*Next, he's making a slam dunk in *NBA Hangtime*.\*

Boy: Ultra spectacular!

\*Next, he's in *Mirrorlight*, navigating a complicated light puzzle.\*

Boy: Ultra puzzling!

\*Next, he's in *Nightsquad 2*, following the five heroes around the city.\*

Boy: Ultra thrilling!

\*Next, he's in *Ultra Mario Kart*'s battle mode.\*

Boy: Ultra competitive!

\*Finally, he's facing off with a huge Bowser in *Super Mario Dimensions*.\*

Boy: Ultra...whoooooooooooa!!!

\*The boy then spins out of the scene and plops down on a couch, across from a TV, holding an Ultra Nintendo controller in his hand and looking like he's just experienced the most awesome thing ever.\*

Boy: That was ultra amazing...

\*Scenes from more games play before the Ultra Nintendo is shown on screen, spinning around as the words "IT'S AN ULTRA WORLD" appear on screen.\*

## **NOVEMBER 21**

-the first American commercial to air for the Ultra Nintendo, it began airing in late October 1997

-

And now, here's *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* Top 100 Games Of All Time list, as of their November 1997 issue.

Here's OTL's list:

<http://kirkjerk.com/vgames/powerlist/egm100.html>

And here's TTL's list:

### **Electronic Gaming Monthly's Top 100 Games Of All Time:**

1. Tetris
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Secret Of Mana
4. Sonic the Hedgehog 3
5. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition
6. The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past
7. Super Metroid
8. Super Mario Bros. 3
9. Chrono Trigger
10. NHL '96
11. Super Mario World 2

12. The Legend Of Zelda
13. Tetris Attack
14. Contra III: The Alien Wars
15. Yoshi's Island
16. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
17. Tale Phantasia
18. Super Mario Kart
19. Super Mario Bros. 2
20. Final Fantasy VI
21. Squad Four: Eclipse
22. Virtua Fighter 2
23. Universalizer
24. Super Mario World
25. Sonic CD
26. Snatcher
27. Resident Evil
28. Phantasy Star II
29. Gunstar Heroes
30. Super Castlevania IV
31. Saturn Bomberman
32. F-Zero CD
33. Ballistic Limit
34. Tecmo Super Bowl CD
35. The Legend Of Zelda: Link's Awakening
36. Bionic Commando
37. Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts
38. Vectorman
39. Super Mario Bros.
40. Strider
41. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
42. Tales Of The Seven Seas
43. Metal Gear 2
44. Ys I and II
45. Empire: The Steel Kingdom
46. Arkanoid
47. Herzog Zwei
48. Metroid
49. F-Zero
50. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
51. Castlevania: Rondo Of Blood
52. Doom
53. Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain
54. Contra
55. Gates Of Thunder
56. Shining Force II
57. Dragon Warrior V
58. Starseekers of Exion

59. Secret Of Monkey Island
60. Thunder Force III
61. Tomb Raider
62. Dragon Force
63. RC Pro-Am
64. Phantasy Star
65. Return Fire
66. Tecmo Super Bowl
67. World Of Color
68. Victory
69. Sam And Max Hit The Road
70. Terranigma
71. Guardian Heroes
72. Space MegaForce
73. Metroid II: Return Of Samus
74. Ultima: The Worldly Lord
75. Eternal Night
76. Windborn
77. NiGHTS Into Dreams...
78. Zelda II: The Adventure Of Link
79. Mega Man 2
80. Donkey Kong (Game Boy '94)
81. Blazing Lazars
82. Virtua Fighter
83. NBA Live 98
84. Lords Of Skylein
85. Virtua Cop
86. Fire Emblem: The Holy War
87. Panzer Dragoon II Zwei
88. Axelay
89. Bonk's Adventure
90. Mega Man X3
91. Final Fantasy V
92. ActRaiser
93. Kirby's Adventure
94. Ninja Gaiden II
95. Samurai Shodown
96. Moonlight
97. Kid Icarus
98. Ken Griffey Jr.'s Winning Run
99. Super Detective Club 2
100. Ms. Pac-Man

(Author's Note: A big thanks to **Roger Redux** for the *Virtua Quest* information! The *Virtua Quest* quote and the game description were sent to us by him some time ago for us to put

in the TL.)

*"Well, it's the waiting that's really the hardest part. I've had my pre-order at Electronics Boutique for a year and a half. No lie!"*

-a Nintendo fan, being interviewed by KOMO-TV about the Ultra Nintendo, November 17, 1997

*"It's Tamagotchi, your brand new digital friend! Feed it, play with it, just don't ignore it!"*  
-from Hasbro's commercial for the Tamagotchi toy, which began airing in October 1997

*"I'm telling you all right now, this will be the most difficult holiday season we've ever had. If you're not ready for that, start looking for another job."*

-Tom Kalinske, overheard in a Sega employee meeting on November 13, 1997

*"When I initially started working on RPGs I intended to say in the Virtua Fighter universe, but I needed to test the technology so I... that draft of the story became 'Peach Tree'. When I sat down to create 'Virtua Fighter RPG' (the Japanese name for 'Virtua Quest') my collaborators and I realized that we had so many ideas that they were actually several series,... we had at least three potential series there. So we made the decision to finish 'Peach Tree' for the Saturn. We continued to work on the story for "Sedge Tree" (the development name for what would become the 'Shenmue' saga) while we were producing the 'Virtua Quest' games, which looked better on the Saturn than 'Shenmue' would have. I think it was the best decision for us; the experience we gained working with the 3D technologies on 'Virtua Quest' proved invaluable when it came time to make 'Shenmue'; I shudder to think how expensive those games might have been if not for 'Virtua Quest'!  
\*laughs\* they might not have let us get past the fourth one! \*laughs\*"*

-excerpted from the Virtua Quest and Shenmue retrospective interview with Yu Suzuki from the November 2015 issue of GameFuture

*"The Sega Saturn, now only \$199.99. Comes with a controller and two Sonic games: Sonic the Hedgehog 4 and Sonic Jam. Also available for \$199.99, a Sega Saturn with the brand new Tomb Raider II. And look for the Saturn Fighters' Pack including Tekken 2, Virtua Fighter 2, and Fighters Megamix for \$249.99."*

-excerpted from a commercial announcing the latest Sega Saturn price cut, effective November 1, 1997

-

### **World Heroes Perfect**

Dan: 8.0

Shoe: 7.0

Crispin: 5.0

Sushi-X: 8.5 (quote: "A fast-paced and excellent fighting game featuring unique characters and challenging combos.")

### **White Wolf And The Red Hood**

Dan: 6.5 (quote: "Not the best adventure game, but the graphics and soundtrack can be hauntingly beautiful at times.")

Shoe: 6.5

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

-*Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of November 1997's SNES-CD games, from the December 1997 issue

-

\*Two friends are sitting in front of their TV with Ultra Nintendo controllers in their hands.\*

Narrator: When you play Super Mario Dimensions...

\*A dimensional portal opens up in the television and sucks the two boys in\*

Narrator: It's like jumping into a whole new world of Super Mario!

\*Various scenes from the game play, including the factory level with Mario barely avoiding getting smashed, Bob-Omb Battlefield with Mario leaping away from an explosion, and Cool Mountain with Mario sliding downhill.\*

\*The two boys leap into another dimensional portal and see a giant Bowser coming at them.\*

Boys: WHOOOOOAAAAA!!!!

\*Mario is shown grabbing Bowser and twirling him around before flinging him into a mine.\*

Narrator: Explore 21 different levels in search of the Power Stars that will enable Mario to rescue Princess Peach and save the Mushroom Kingdom!

\*Bowser is pulling Peach through a dimensional portal as Mario tries to jump in after them.

Narrator: But watch out...

\*The boys barely manage to leap out of the way of a giant Wiggler. Next, Donkey Kong is seen climbing a building as Mario rides a bi-plane toward him. Next, Mario is making his way up to the top of Wet-Dry World as the water rises.\*

Narrator: Cuz you never know which world you'll end up in next.

\*Several more scenes are shown in rapid succession before the boys are flung out of the TV just as one of the boys' moms enters the room.\*

Mom: Where have you two been?

\*The boys just look at each other and high-five.\*

Narrator: Super Mario Dimensions, included in every brand new Ultra Nintendo. Coming November 21st.

### **IT'S AN ULTRA WORLD**

-a commercial for *Super Mario Dimensions* that began airing in early November 1997

-

"Everybody's Super Sonic Racing! When your kart goes flying off the ground!"  
-excerpted from the theme song of *Sonic R*, "Super Sonic Racing"

"With *Sonic R*, we considered collaborating with a company, *Traveller's Tales*, that helped us with *Sonic 3D Blast* for the Genesis. But with the additions to *Sonic Team* from the production of *Sonic 4*, we figured that we could produce this game on our own. Several elements were changed. Originally, Sonic and his friends were to be racing on foot, as, of course, Sonic is quite fast and so he was capable of running faster than any kart. But some of us realized that it would be silly to have, for example, Big the Cat lumbering along as quickly as Sonic, so the game was changed to a go-kart racer. More levels and power-ups were added, and while we kept certain elements to keep the game as close to the Sonic experience as possible, we also wanted to make *Sonic R* work as a competent racing game, especially so close to the release of Nintendo's *Ultra Mario Kart* in North America. *Ultra Mario Kart* had already done exceptionally well in Japan, so we had a very high bar to compete with."

-Yuji Naka, in an April 1998 interview with *Official Saturn Magazine*

As a Sonic-themed party game, *Sonic R* doesn't have quite the roster that *Sonic Fighters* had. It boasts twelve characters in all: Sonic, Tails, Knuckles, Amy, Big, Corona, Wisty, Tusk (both from *SoniQuest*), Espio, Charmy, and two original characters: Dash (a human boy with racing goggles), and Kitzel (a koala girl). The characters each have their own special weapons and abilities, with Sonic specializing in speed, Tusk specializing in power and handling, and etc. The game's ten tracks are divided into three "Zones", with four tracks in the final zone. Each zone also has a boss at the end that you must race and beat to open up the next batch of tracks in both single player mode and time trial mode. There's also a four-player versus race mode you can compete in. Overall, *Sonic R* is a fun game that boasts some very creative tracks and an excellent musical score. Sonic fans who've been clamoring for a *Mario Kart*-like game on the Saturn, this is your wish come true.

Score: 8/10

-excerpted from the *Sonic R* review in the November 1997 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

-

\*Arwings are shown launching from the Great Fox into a massive space battle with explosions and missiles flying everywhere.\*

Narrator: The Lylat System is at war. Andross, the mad scientist, has launched his armies of destruction, and now, only Fox McCloud and his team can stop them.

\*Scenes from the game are shown, depicting the Arwing doing a barrel roll to deflect enemy fire as the ship flies over a Cornerian city bombarded by Andross' ships, and then the Arwing in all-range mode against a massive enemy mech with spinning tentacles.\*

Narrator: Join Fox McCloud, Peppy Hare, Falco Lombardi, Slippy Toad, and the newest edition to the team, the mysterious fox girl Krystal.

\*Krystal is shown walking through a jungle environment alongside Fox and Peppy.\*

Narrator: Take to the skies in your Arwing, or roll along the ground in the all new Landmaster tank.

\*The Landmaster is shown rolling through the deserts of Titania, firing at aerial enemies.\*

Narrator: Or even dive under the sea in the Blue Marine.

\*The Blue Marine is shown exploring some kind of creepy underwater science lab.\*

Narrator: As you battle Andross across Lylat, watch the war transform with every fight.

\*The game's mission screen is shown in rapid succession, depicting the available levels changing as every battle concludes in very dynamic fashion.\*

Andross: Only I am fit to rule the galaxy! \*laughs maniacally as Fox and his crew descend upon Venom\*

Narrator: Or battle your friends in the all new Versus mode.

\*A brief snippet is shown of a four-player combat match, with two Arwings and two Landmaster tanks fighting it out.\*

Narrator: *Star Fox 2*, only for the Ultra Nintendo. Win back the galaxy, or go up in flames.

\*A scene shows Fox's Arwing crashing.\*

## **IT'S AN ULTRA WORLD**

-the commercial for *Star Fox 2* which began airing in early November 1997

-

While Konami worked on *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* for the Ultra Nintendo, another division was hard at work on a Sega Saturn *Contra* game: *Contra: World War*, a follow-up to 1994's *Contra: Probotector* for the Sega Genesis. Ken Severn and Ashley Steelgard returned from the previous game, along with two new playable characters: Gary Faustus and Mai Liang. The four found themselves thrust into battle when the United Federation, the world peacekeeping force in the *Contra* universe, breaks down and the nations of the world align themselves into two opposing factions: The Alliance, and The Order. It's never stated outright but it's implied that The Alliance is composed of the United States and its allies Britain, France, Germany, and Latin America, while The Order is comprised of Russia, China, and various Middle Eastern nations. The game has a mission-based level structure, though the levels themselves consist of typical *Contra* side-scrolling gunplay, with quite a bit of difficulty. The four main characters start on the Alliance side (with Mai as a defector from The Order) but soon get caught up in intrigue when it's discovered that various shadowy factors are playing both sides against each other in order to profit from weapons dealing. The four must then try and take out the warmongers on both sides to keep the world from destroying itself. The storyline is deep for a *Contra* game, with full voice acted cutscenes and in-level dialogue. You can choose which of the four main characters to use, but once you pick, you can't switch until you reach the end of your current batch of levels (there are six such "batches", and the storyline is altered somewhat

depending on the character you choose, if you choose Mai most often, for example, the story will be heavily based on The Order, while if you choose Ashley, robots will come into play more often, etc.). *World War* was a big seller, especially after it became clear that there wouldn't be a *Contra* game on the Ultra Nintendo for a long time, giving Sega owners a one-up on those about to purchase the new Nintendo system. *World War* wasn't a Game of the Year contender (especially with the mega-hits about to be released for the Ultra), but it scored good reviews and is considered by some even today to be the best game in the series.

-excerpted from "Konami: Playing Both Sides In The Ultra-Saturn War", an article on Gamesovermatter.com, September 29, 2013

-

\*A bunch of cars are lined up at the starting line. The light is flashing red.\*

Announcer: Gentlemen, start your engines!

\*The light turns yellow and then green, and the cars hit the track, only to be taken out rapidly by a barrage of shells and banana peels. The familiar Mario Kart racers go around the carnage and take to the track. This is followed by scenes depicting the courses of Ultra Mario Kart as the commercial switches back and forth between footage from the game and footage from the track.\*

Mario: \*throws a blue shell, it zooms past everyone before hitting Bowser who's in the lead, sending him flying\*

\*Footage is shown of the new airship-based course as the racers have to dodge a gopher who pops up to throw a wrench.\*

Peach: \*she plants a fake item box among a group of them\*

Luigi: \*excitedly grabs the item box, only for it to blow up in his face\* NOOOOO!!!

\*Footage is shown of the four player versus mode, showing off how many tracks can be raced with four players this time around.\*

Wario: I'm-a gonna ween! \*holding a red shell only to get hit by a green shell as Mario zooms past him\* Oh-whoa-whoa-whoa-whoa!

\*Footage is shown of Mario jumping over the wall in Wario Stadium, then watching himself on the big screen as he zooms around a turn.\*

Yoshi: \*makes his familiar Yoshi noise as he nears the finish line, when suddenly Mario slams into him with a super star, taking him out\*

\*Footage is shown of the four-player battle mode, depicting a battle atop a skyscraper.\*

Mario: \*zooms across the finish line, pumping his fists in the air, the *Ultra Mario Kart* logo is shown on the track, followed by "IT'S AN ULTRA WORLD" and then "November 21"\*

-the commercial for *Ultra Mario Kart*, which began airing in November 1997

-

*Fractured fairy tales come to the Super Nintendo CD! You've never seen Little Red Riding Hood like this before!*

-the intro to the article on *White Wolf and the Red Hood* which appeared in the November 1997 issue of *Nintendo Power* magazine

Graphics: The graphics, while somewhat less detailed than games such as *Tales Of The Seven Seas 2*, depict a spooky atmosphere quite imaginatively, while the animation can at times be quite excellent. The color is a bit muted, however.

Play Control: There's not much to speak of here. Attacking and combat can get a bit boring at times, while selecting Red Hood's items in the menu can be somewhat cumbersome.

Moving around is pretty easy though.

Game Design: As mentioned before, it's comparable to *Tales Of The Seven Seas 2* in terms of gameplay, though the combat's not as deep. You control Red Hood, while her companion, a white wolf, will attack on his own. You explore a variety of areas, there's no overworld or mission select screen to speak of, though there is a bit of backtracking to explore previous areas.

Satisfaction: If you're a fan of fairy tales looking for a darker, spookier twist on classic stories, this game might be for you. If you're looking for an epic adventure and aren't intrigued by the subject material, best to look elsewhere.

Sound: There aren't that many songs, but the tracks that do exist are atmospheric and beautiful. There's no voice acting.

Comments: Terry- This game is a bunch of monotony interrupted by occasional moments of amazing beauty. Paul- The boss fights can be pretty fun.

Overall Rating: 6.8/10

-*Nintendo Power's* review of *White Wolf and the Red Hood*, from the November 1997 issue

-

(Reminder: The *Virtua Quest* stuff is ALL Roger Redux's, with only very minor alterations. The only thing I've added is the review/retrospective afterward.

### **Virtua Quest: The Basics**

*Virtua Quest* uses an evolution of the *Virtua Fighter 2* engine, altered to make it compatible with the RPG elements; with the gameplay being like a proto-Shenmue with more blatant RPG mechanics. All characters are using slightly more detailed versions of their *Virtua Fighter 2* models. The game is fully voiced and the cutscenes are animated. All of the fight scenes take place in 'Virtua Fighter Mode'\* (it literally looks like a VF match against whatever opponent you're facing), with the addition of multiple opponents (in some cases up to 5 at a time).

Voice cast:

Scott McNeil as Akira Yuki

Ryan Drummond as Jacky Bryant

Erica Schroder (a.k.a. Bella Hudson) as Sarah Bryant

Cree Summer as Pai Chan

Aaron Krohn as Wolf Hawkfield

Guile Lund as Kage-Maru  
Jennifer Hale as Dural  
Maurice LaMarche as Lau Chan and Shun Di  
Ian James Corlett as Lion Rafale  
Frank Welker as Jeffry McWild and Akira's Grandfather

The game opens with a brief cinematic giving the exposition on the origins of Hakkyoku-ken, Akira's family martial art; then moves immediately to the tutorial level: a sparring session with Akira and his grandfather. After that, Akira embarks on his quest. Chapter One takes place during the 2 years he's 'walking the Earth' before VF1. Every town/city you enter has at least one dojo devoted to a specific martial art, visiting that dojo during certain hours (in-game time system, part of the harbinger of Shenmue, though slightly less sophisticated) allows you to learn new moves from the masters there. You also have random encounters with townspeople who need your help, and with what at first might seem to be common street thugs or Yakuza (and some might be), but whom later events reveal to be scouts working for J6 to find fighters for 'The Tournament'. [The townspeople and rotating cast of temporary companions may possibly include cameos of characters from other SEGA franchises - i.e. Tekken, Fighting Vipers, the two kids from NiGHTS, etc.] When he defeats the 3rd or 4th "Yakuza gang" he's complimented on his skill and informed about the World Fighting Tournament. The Tournament concludes Chapter One and is an entirely plot-driven retelling of the events behind & around VF1, focusing on Akira's point of view, and including the canonical ending with Akira getting humiliated by Kage-Maru and Lau Chan actually winning the Tournament. Chapter Two focuses on Akira recovering from the defeat, intensifying his training, and (having stuck around long enough to see the final battle of the Tournament) trying to find out just what the hell Dural is. From this point he has a (more or less) consistent party of companions, whose friendship he made during the Tournament, including: Wolf Hawkfield, Pai Chan, and Jacky Bryant. When Jacky joins the party he tells Akira about J6 and what they've done to his sister (and it might be about that time the player starts noticing the J6/subsidiary company logos that have been all over everything since the beginning of Chapter One). The party basically helps each other train for the 2nd World Fighting Tournament; traveling to the many new towns/cities in addition to revisiting a few of the old ones, learning new moves in the dojos (and seeing a few familiar faces in the revisited towns, the people he helped earlier remember him and can provide useful clues on where to go/what to do next). The climax of Chapter Two is the story-focused remake of VF2. The epilogue deals with the aftermath of the Tournament: Akira wins the Tournament while also helping Jacky save Sarah from J6. (And people who are paying attention to the last cutscene of the Tournament may also see Kage-Maru, running off dragging Dural with him.) Sarah has completely lost her memory as a side effect of the brainwashing she was under, but Jacky is just glad she's alive; he vows to help her get her memory back, Akira, Pai, & Wolf offer to help any way they can. The game ends with everyone going their separate ways: Akira goes home with the Tournament trophy, Jacky & Sarah move to New York and try to get her memory sorted out, Pai goes back home to Hong Kong and continues her career as an action movie star.

*"So, in a lot of ways, Sega spent the final weeks before the release of the Ultra Nintendo sort of pre-emptively releasing games to compete with Nintendo's launch lineup. Sonic R to compete with Ultra Mario Kart, and Virtua Quest to compete with Final Fantasy VII. And while neither game could match Nintendo's launch games in sales or commercial reception, they both gave it a damn good try, especially Virtua Quest, which I remember being really well received at the time and it sold decently well (better than Krystalshade and Windborn combined in North America). Not only was Virtua Quest sort of a 'dry run' for 1998's Shenmue, it also did something fairly unique in incorporating a fighting game battle system.*

*No RPG had really done that before and while it had its detractors, you have to give Sega a lot of credit for trying something out of the box (especially when compared to Final Fantasy VII's battle system which was just classic JRPG). Virtua Quest was a really fun game, and it was one of Sega's biggest sellers that Christmas (when they DESPERATELY needed big sellers). And, most importantly...it was good enough to get sequels."*

-Alex Stansfield, discussing *Virtua Quest* in the "Honorable Mentions" section of his Top 25 JRPGs of All Time on his blog in 2014

-

\*The beginning of the Bombing Mission theme plays as the camera pans in to Midgar. We see Cloud Strife walking down the street. The Squaresoft logo is flashed briefly.\*

Cloud: My name is Cloud Strife, ex-SOLDIER.

\*People mill about on the streets of Midgar as Cloud walks past them.\*

Cloud: I am on a mission to save the Planet.

\*He encounters Aeris in the street. She looks up at him.\*

Aeris: You remind me of someone...

\*The camera zooms in on Cloud's face. His eyes begin to glow green. The music skips to the action portion of the Bombing Mission theme now as gameplay footage from the game's battles is shown, depicting Cloud, Tifa, and Barret fighting soldiers, Cloud and Aerith fighting a boss, and the Shiva summon casting Diamond Dust.\*

*Three years in the making...*

\*A cutscene is shown of Sephiroth amidst the burning ruins of Nibelheim, looking up into the screen.\*

*Comes an adventure that will change the way you think of video games forever.*

\*Cutscenes and battle gameplay are shown in rapid succession on the screen as the Bombing Mission theme hits its crescendo.\*

\*The scene with Cloud now zooms back out from his face and shows Aeris handing him a flower.\*

Cloud: You'd better go... you don't want to know me.

Aeris: Who are you?

Cloud: I'm...not sure.

*From the makers of Chrono Trigger, Elements Of Mana, and Final Fantasy VI...*

## **FINAL FANTASY VII**

*Available only for the Ultra Nintendo Entertainment System*

## IT'S AN ULTRA WORLD

-the commercial for *Final Fantasy VII* which began playing in late October 1997

-

Brittany: So, as you know, I'm really hyped for *Ultra Mario Kart*. Does *Sonic R* quench that thirst?

Lyssa: Honestly...no.

Brittany: Yeah, pretty much same here.

Lyssa: The single-player mode was nice, framing it as an adventure to take down Dr. Robotnik. That was really cool.

Brittany: But...you know, is it time to retire Dr. Robotnik as a villain? He's the same guy, he's got the same plan every game...

Lyssa: Well, so does Bowser.

Brittany: True, but they at least do something different with him from time to time. He's in *Mario Kart*, he was in *Super Mario RPG*... you know, he's got personality. Robotnik...ehhhh....

Lyssa: All of these Sonic spinoff games this year, *Fighters*, *SoniQuest*, and now this, all of them have tried to take Sonic characters and place them in different games and use the Sonic characters as the main draw. When Mario games do spinoffs, those games are fun! The fun is the FIRST thing they work on, and then comes the game! Sega just throws out Sonic characters and says, "look! These guys from this game you love!" But when you get right down to it, *Sonic R* is just a mediocre kart racer and nothing more.

Brittany: The music was nice.

Lyssa: Ehhh...

Brittany: The opening theme song, *Super Sonic Racing*, that was really cool!

\*A snippet of the theme plays, Lyssa is plugging her ears.\*

Lyssa: Turn that off!

Brittany: It was that bad?

Lyssa: Let's just get right down to it, I'm giving *Sonic R* a 3.

Brittany: I'm gonna be a little more generous and give it a 3.5. It's fun, it looks pretty....it's just not that great of a game.

-excerpted from the November 4, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted: *Fallen*...to me, it reminds me of the PC game *Fallout*, sort of. We reviewed that earlier this year and you and I both loved it. The mood, the atmosphere, it reminds me of *Fallout*. Though where *Fallout* is a top-down RPG, this is a full-on first person shooter.

Alex: It's like *Turok* and *Fallout* had a baby.

Ted: \*shudders\* That would be an ugly baby.

Alex: Well, *Fallen* is a really pretty game, they made good use of 3-D graphics and the lighting effects are really spooky. And Angel Dust, the main character, she's really well developed. I thought she was an even better character than *Turok*.

Ted: Well, if we're comparing this game to *Turok*, I have to say that the weapon variety leaves a lot to be desired. There were dozens of weapons in *Turok*, there's barely a dozen here. But, the atmosphere is really nice. Especially the opening levels in the sewers, those are creepy as hell. I was really scared and freaked out not knowing what was gonna come at me.

Alex: Yeah, there were a lot of really creepy baddies down there, though the game also relied a bit on jump scares which for me are kind of cheap.

Ted: I didn't mind the jump scares, kept me on my toes.

Alex: So you like somebody creeping up behind you and scaring you?

\*As they speak, Brittany is creeping up behind Ted\*

Ted: Yeah, I think this game does it really well.

Brittany: \*grabs Ted from behind suddenly and shrieks\*

Ted: AAAAAAAAAHHH \*bleep\* \*bleep\* \*bleep\*

Brittany: \*convulsing with laughter behind Ted, cackling maniacally\*

Alex: \*laughing his ass off\*

Ted: What the \*bleep\*? \*looks pissed at Brittany\*

Brittany: \*shrugs\* You said you liked people creeping up from behind you and scaring you.

Alex: You did say that, dude.

Ted: In the game!

Brittany: Well, in the end, isn't life just one big game?

Alex: \*still snickering\*

Ted: You guys....you guys.... damn you guys suck.

Alex: So, what do you give *Fallen* out of 5?

Ted: Can I change my pants first? Please?

Alex: We got a commercial coming up, you can go change then.

Ted: I give *Fallen* a 4 out of 5. It's not as big or robust as Turok, but it's got a really nice atmosphere and a grim, dark storyline that will give you nightmares for weeks.

Alex: I'm giving it a 4 as well. As far as horror FPSes go, it's one of the best I've ever played and if you're looking for another fun Saturn FPS this holiday season, it might be the way to go.

Brittany: And speaking of going... \*smirks\*

Ted: \*hustles off screen\* I'm getting you back, you know!

Brittany: \*laughs and gives Alex a high five\*

(...)

John: So now that SNK has finally brought *World Heroes Perfect* to the Super Nintendo CD, how's it hold up?

Gary: I've gotta be honest, I've played better fighting games from them. The characters are great, but I felt like the game was just kinda dated, you know?

John: I got that feeling too. Compared with more modern fighting games, *World Heroes Perfect* feels more archaic than it does a throwback, but, you know, it's still a solid fighting game and I had fun with it.

Gary: If you like SNK stuff, which I do, and I think most fighting game fans do, it's all right. I prefer the newer King of Fighters or Samurai Showdown games but, it is the first time this series has shown up on consoles-

John: Unless you've got a Neo-Geo.

Gary: Well, yeah, right, but if you don't, the SNES-CD has a lot of the best games from that system and this one's included on that list. It's fun. It's just not as good as some of SNK's other stuff.

John: Well, if we're grading on a curve...

Gary: I give this game a 3 out of 5.

John: I'll be a little more generous. 3.5 from me. I couldn't get enough of this game in the arcade, and it's nice to be able to sit at home and play it.

Gary: Yeah, but you could already do that on your Neo-Geo. Not an option for everybody, of course, but still.

John: I love my Neo-Geo. Do you still play yours?

Gary: Only always!

(...)

\*Brittany and Alex are tinkering around on Tamagotchis, having discussed the digital toy for the last few minutes.\*

Brittany: So, you know, Tamagotchi is a cute, fun little distraction, but be prepared to devote a lot of time to this little sucker.

Alex: He poops so much.

Brittany: I tried to cut down on that by not feeding mine, but then he died.

Alex: Yeah...why can't I stop playing?

Brittany: These little things are addictive!

Alex: Tell me about it, I'm playing fetch with mine right now...

Brittany: \*distracted by the Tamagotchi, she doesn't noticed Ted creeping up behind her wearing a hockey mask\*

Alex: Come on, get the ball you little...!

Brittany: Ay dios mio, that's the third time you've pooped in the last five minutes! Where's the spanking button?

Ted: \*grabs Brittany from behind and makes a scary noise\*

Brittany: \*just calmly looks up, smiling\* Hi, Ted. Oh, there's my hockey mask, thanks for finding it for me! \*takes it off of his face\*

Ted: \*flabbergasted\* Wha....what....you're not even.....?

Brittany: Scared? Who'd ever be scared of you? \*shrugs and goes back to playing after putting the hockey mask on her face\* That's what I should do, there needs to be a little hockey mask for your Tamagotchi to wear...

Alex: They're probably coming out with a new model next year, you should ask about that.

Brittany: I think I will. \*just keeps calmly talking with Alex as Ted slinks off in frustration\*

(...)

\*Ted, Alex, Brittany, John, Gary, and Lyssa are gathered on a couple couches on the stage.\*

Ted: Well that's it for our show. We want to give a special thank you to all of our country's veterans this Veterans' Day, thank you all for your service. Join us next week for a special

two hour MEGA episode completely devoted to the Ultra Nintendo.

Alex: Yeah, we'll be reviewing all 17 launch games. That's right, ALL 17 launch games!

Brittany: We're gonna go in-depth, hands-on, balls to the wall with the Ultra Nintendo!

Gary: And you'll also get to see us launching shells and banana peels at each other as we gear up for the GameTV Ultra Mario Kart tournament!

John: So watch us, next Tuesday at 9, for the GameTV Ultra Nintendo special.

Lyssa: If you miss it, you'll be Ultra sorry.

Ted: We'll see you then, and as always, never stop playing!

\*The credits roll as the hosts talk amongst themselves, looking excited about the Ultra Nintendo.\*

-excerpted from the November 11, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: November 1997**

1. Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2
4. Dog Dash 2
5. Twinblade II
6. Tale Phantasia
7. Chrono Trigger
8. Terranigma
9. Madden 98
10. Super Mario World 2
11. Breath Of Fire III
12. Fire Emblem: Keepers Of The Light
13. Starseekers Of Exion
14. Wizard Stone
15. NBA Hangtime
16. Super Mario RPG
17. Elements Of Mana
18. 18 Wheels Of Fury
19. Syrielle
20. Intelligent Qube

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart – November 1997**

1. Tomb Raider II
2. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
3. Race'n'Chase
4. Planetary Probe
5. Virtua Quest

6. Sonic R
7. Contra: World War
8. Ultima: Scion Of Britannia
9. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
10. Phantasy Star V

-

## **November 20, 1997**

The evening before the North American launch of the Ultra Nintendo, Tom Kalinske was sitting on his living room couch. He'd had a vigorous series of meetings that day with Sega brass, and now was the calm before the storm. In mere hours, all across North America, the Ultra Nintendo would be launching in stores everywhere. He'd seen the evening news reports of long lines outside of stores that were electing to open at midnight to sell consoles and games. He thought back to the Saturn launch and how very few lines were reported, only at major launch events in major cities. It was being reported as the biggest entertainment product launch of all time, with Peter Jennings on the ABC Evening News making comparisons to the opening weekend of *Return of the Jedi* 14 years before.

"It's gonna be huge..." thought Kalinske, now relaxing at home and watching a new episode of *Seinfeld* with his wife and oldest daughter. The episode, which saw the events playing out backwards from scene to scene, was sending Kalinske's wife into hysterics, but Tom couldn't focus. He kept thinking back to the sales reports he'd discussed earlier that day with Shinobu Toyoda. In June, when the Ultra had launched in Japan, Saturn sales took an immediate plummet and had not yet recovered to anywhere near what they were pre-launch. At the same time, the Ultra was still selling in Japan at a prodigious rate, with production barely able to keep up with the immense demand and millions already sold.

He'd slashed the price of the Saturn yet again at the start of the month, down from \$249 before to \$199 now. That, along with the continued success of *Tomb Raider II* and the successful launches of *Sonic R* and *Virtua Quest* earlier in the month, had kept Saturn sales high, and with Super Nintendo CD sales starting to rapidly fall, Sega had its highest market share ever. With every passing second, Sega's market share was increasing to a new record high.

"Honey...?" Kalinske's wife said, gently touching his shoulder.

"Dad, it's not your fault that the Ultra Nintendo's coming out tomorrow," said Ashley Kalinske, who felt a bit guilty as she anticipated her next trip to her friend's house... her friend who would have *Super Mario Dimensions*, *Ultra Mario Kart*, and *Final Fantasy VII* the next time Ashley saw her. "You ALWAYS come up with awesome ideas to sell more Sega stuff. Maybe the Ultra Nintendo won't be as good as everyone says it's gonna be."

As if on cue, the commercial for *Final Fantasy VII* began to play on the screen. Ashley had seen it more than a dozen times now, each time filling her with more and more excitement for the game. It looked amazing.

"I've played it," said Tom Kalinske, managing a small laugh. "It's...it's incredible. *Super Mario Dimensions* is...it's the greatest video game I've ever played. It's better than *Sonic 4*. People are gonna love it, it's gonna win all the awards. It's not gonna be as good as everyone says it's gonna be. It's gonna be better. But...you're right, Ashley, we're gonna

come up with something cool to beat it. ...actually....we do have something in store for Nintendo."

"Can you tell us?" Ashley asked, an excited look on her face.

"Well, you know, company policy, NDAs...I'll tell you later, okay?"

Ashley shrugged and turned back to the screen. Kalinske's wife leaned up and kissed him on the cheek, smiling a reassuring smile.

"It's going to be all right, it's not the end of the world. Next year you'll get them back. You always do."

Tom sighed and nodded, trying to think positive thoughts and enjoy *Seinfeld* as it came back on the screen. He leaned back into the couch and looked up at the ceiling, saying a silent prayer. His wife and daughter's words were reassuring, but nothing they said could change the fact that in just a few hours, Sega would face the biggest challenge it had ever faced.

At midnight, the hammer was about to fall.

-

It was eleven o'clock inside a Seattle Best Buy, and Howard Lincoln had butterflies in his stomach. He paced back and forth, while nearby, Mark Cerny leaned up against a display of computers, glancing across the store at a massive stack of Ultra Nintendo boxes that had been set up. In just an hour, the doors would be opening and the Ultra Nintendo would officially launch in North America.. Sony had asked Naughty Dog to send Cerny over to join Lincoln at the launch event, and the two had spent the time since the store's closing just making small talk, having never formally spoken outside of a couple brief meetings at various trade shows.

"First midnight launch?" Cerny asked Lincoln, who was admiring the Ultra Nintendo display while also waiting for the night's special guest to arrive.

"Yeah, we've never done one of these before...we usually do them in the day, you know, when we can have the press cover it live." Lincoln had thought that making the Ultra Nintendo's midnight launch a major media event would be innovative, other companies had done midnight launches for product before, and anticipating that over a million consoles would already be in gamers' hands if they started it in the morning, wanted to be part of the big initial rush as people acquired their new game machines for the first time. "I think people will be a lot more excited for this thing, don't you?"

"Well yeah, they'll be some of the first ones to get it," Cerny replied. He too was eagerly waiting the arrival of the special guest, and outside, a massive crowd of people had gathered, each of them having already preordered one of the 1,000 Ultra Nintendo consoles allotted to this Best Buy for the big launch event. "How many pre-orders were there?"

"Nearly all of them."

"Holy shit," Cerny blurted out, shaking his head in disbelief. "Two million on the first day?"

"Two million times 300 dollars a pop is over half a billion dollars," said Lincoln. "This is by a wide margin the largest product launch in the history of mankind."

"Fuck!" Cerny swore, prompting a loud laugh from Lincoln. "Sorry for the language, sir, but-

"Swear away," said Lincoln with another laugh. "I'm sure the cuss words'll be flying at Sega HQ today."

"Oh man, I can imagine, it'll be like *Pulp Fiction* over there," said Cerny.

"Bring out the gimp," Lincoln joked. "And this time, I don't think Bruce Willis is gonna be showing up with a katana to save Sega's ass."

As the two men exchanged another laugh, a young man in a red polo and black pants approached Lincoln.

"Sir, he's here," said the man, pointing outside to where a stretch limo had just pulled up. Outside, the crowd began to mob the limo, but several burly bodyguards forced them back, clearing the way for the doors to open and one of the world's most famous athletes to emerge.

Ken Griffey Jr., Major League Baseball MVP and World Series champion two years running, walked down a red carpet to the entrance of the Best Buy as bodyguards and ropes kept the rabid crowd back. The door was opened and Griffey stepped inside to be greeted by Lincoln and Cerny as they walked him over to the display that had been set up.

"Thanks again for coming tonight, Ken, this is gonna be a really fun night and these people are so excited to see you," said Lincoln.

"Oh, I can tell!" replied the baseball star with a laugh. "So how are we gonna be doing this?"

"Well, we'll be standing at this table here and handing the Ultra Nintendos over to the people as they come up with their preorder tickets. Then if they want games, they'll go over to the counter over there and the staff will help them with those."

"Any autographs?" asked Griffey, having brought a few pens of his own. Lincoln shook his head.

"There won't be time, and the Ken Griffey game isn't out until next year, so I think we'll just be okay with you handing out the systems to people, maybe shaking their hands, saying a few words...it's gonna be loud in here."

"Ah, all right," Griffey said, looking around the store. "How much time we got...?"

"About 55 minutes until it begins," said Cerny, looking at his watch. Griffey was eyeing the Ultra Nintendo demo kiosk, which had had a demo disc set up on it for the last month or so. The controller was beat up from near-constant use of people playing the demo over the last month.

"Hey...you guys think I've got enough time to try out a game?"

"Well...sure!" Lincoln said excitedly, and Best Buy and Nintendo workers were already setting up a machine for Griffey to play on. "Um, which game would you like to-"

"I think I'd like to play that new fighting game, *Deathblow*," said Griffey. Lincoln looked a bit surprised, he'd thought Griffey might want to play *Super Mario Dimensions*, or *Ultra Mario Kart*, or perhaps even *Final Fantasy VII*. But already, one of the Best Buy workers was opening up a brand new copy of *Deathblow* to put in the machine. It too was one of the more highly anticipated launch games, an original fighting game designed for the Ultra Nintendo. But compared with the so-called "big four" (or "big five" if you were keen on *Castlevania*), it was fairly obscure.

"Sure thing, want one of us to play against you?" asked Lincoln, looking back and forth between himself and Cerny. He'd only played *Deathblow* once, very briefly, of the little bit of video games he played, fighting games were not his specialty.

"Yeah, you guys could all take turns maybe," Griffey said, looking over at some of the employees. "You guys too, you gotta be bored right now, right?"

Griffey laughed as he walked over to the machine and took the Ultra Nintendo controller in his hand. Lincoln stepped up to challenge him first, but he was already mentally preparing to get beaten badly.

"*These games are fun, but the real fun is going to be once I see how many of these things we sell tomorrow*," thought Lincoln. He'd already won two World Series titles as CEO of the Mariners. And in less than an hour, he might just win the console wars too.

-

The Ultra Nintendo update is still at least a few days away, but here's a little treat I hope you'll enjoy.

IOTL, Nintendo sent out a promotional video to all Nintendo Power subscribers to hype up *Starfox 64*. The video is mostly known for its REALLY cheesy acting, but has become somewhat legendary among Nintendo fan circles for its extreme camp value.

That video can be seen in its glorious entirety here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBF3X3ZaS2Q>

ITTL, I envision Nintendo doing the same little promo film...but instead of hyping up *Starfox 64*, they do the film to hype up the Ultra Nintendo. So here's a script! It's mostly the same as the OTL video, but with certain elements changed.

-

\*Dramatic spy music plays as a handsome young man in a tuxedo drives up to Nintendo of America HQ in a slick black car. As he's driving up, we see a woman in a black catsuit

(played by Deedee Magno, the other three characters are played by the people who played them in the OTL *Starfox 64* promo video) communicating with someone over a walkie talkie.\*

Woman: Elvis has entered the building, I repeat, Elvis has entered the building...

\*The spy begins to walk up to the building when the woman walks over to him.\*

Woman: Sir...sir! \*she points to her car\* I'm sorry, but my car broke down, could you please help me?

Spy: Sure thing... \*he walks over to her car, only to be grabbed from behind by a big guy (wearing a red t-shirt with Sega's logo on it) with chloroform and wrestled to the ground\* Aaaaah! \*he passes out as the woman and the big guy stand over him\*

Woman: \*exchanges looks with the big guy before unzipping her catsuit to reveal a blue t-shirt with the Sega logo, then breaking out into loud evil laughter\* MWAHAHAHAHA!

Big Guy: MWAHAHAHA!

Woman and Big Guy: MWAHAHAHAHA!

-

\*When the spy wakes up, he's in a dark room. The woman, her catsuit zipped back up, is glaring down at the spy along with the big guy.\*

Spy: ...\*looks around\* What's the big idea?

Woman: \*talking into a megaphone\* Shut up! We'll be asking the questions here!

Spy: Do you HAVE to talk into that thing?

Big Guy: \*glares at him\* We hear Nintendo's got some new stuff coming out.

Spy: \*smirking\* You'll have to be more specific, we've got a lot of new stuff coming out.

Big Guy: \*mocking him\* Bleh blah bleh bleh blah!

Woman: \*nudges the big guy away\* We're talking about THIS. \*holds up the Ultra Nintendo\* The Ultra Nintendo we found in your car!

Spy: Oh, you wanna know about the Ultra Nintendo, huh?

Big Guy: Yeah, and you better tell us all you know. OR ELSE!

Spy: Or else what?

\*The woman walks over to a black shroud and yanks it off to reveal a Mario doll strapped in a chair.\*

Woman: Or else your little friend Mario here gets it! \*begins lighting a fire underneath the chair\*

Spy: \*freaking out\* What are you guys doing with Mario?

\*The woman and the big guy exchange a laugh as they get the fire started and the flames begin lapping at the chair.\*

Spy: Okay! Okay....! Leave Mario outta this! I'll tell you about the Ultra Nintendo!

Woman: \*puts out the fire with a fire hydrant and then leans in\* Well? Start talking.

\*The spy begins to talk as a camera shows off different angles of the Ultra Nintendo, along with test footage of its graphical capabilities.\*

Spy: The Ultra Nintendo is the coolest game console ever made! It's the brand new, ultra advanced game system from Nintendo. It's capable of producing high definition graphics and fully three-dimensional worlds populated with thousands of characters at a time. It takes video games to a brand new dimension of interactive excitement with next generation dual processor chips and a brand new sound chip that can reproduce any sound imaginable. The games come on the brand new Gigadisc, capable of holding over a gigabyte of data, nearly twice as big as the CDs used on the Super Nintendo CD.

Big Guy: \*shaking his head\* That sounds pretty impressive...

Woman: Yeah, it's pretty slick, but what kinds of games are on this new system?

Big Guy: \*scoffs\* Yeah, compared to Sonic I bet these games are really lame.

Spy: \*laughs\* You wish. The Ultra Nintendo is launching with some of the best games ever made, including *Super Mario Dimensions*, Mario's brand new adventure.

\*Scenes from the game begin to play, showing Mario exploring various worlds.\*

Spy: In *Super Mario Dimensions*, Mario has to rescue Princess Peach after Bowser kidnaps her once again, dragging her through a dimensional portal and making a mess of the Mushroom Kingdom! The game's got 21 different worlds to explore, and that doesn't count all the hidden secrets lurking throughout the game. Mario can move in eight different directions, and with the new right analog stick, you can control the camera to gain a whole new perspective on Mario's world.

\*Next, race footage from *Ultra Mario Kart* begins playing.\*

Spy: Then, there's *Ultra Mario Kart*, the sequel to *Super Mario Kart*, taking the racing action into three dimensions for the very first time. Race on 20 different courses, with new items like the Blue Shell, which automatically targets the leader of the race and sends him flying. And check out some of our new levels. \*footage is shown from Banshee Boardwalk and Wario Stadium\* In Wario Stadium, the race is shown on big screen TVs all over the arena. It's just like a real motocross track!

\*Then, footage is shown from *Starfox 2*.\*

Spy: And in *Starfox 2*, you get to leap into the cockpit of three different vehicles to battle the mad scientist Andross. There's the classic Arwing, the Landmaster tank, and the submarine, the Blue Marine, that has an infinite supply of torpedoes to fire at underwater enemies.

\*Footage is then show from *Final Fantasy VII*\*

Spy: In *Final Fantasy VII*, the latest RPG from Squaresoft, you play as Cloud Strife, a soldier of fortune battling against the evil Shinra Company. You'll team up with new allies like Barret Wallace, a man with a gatling gun built into his arm, and Aeris Gainsborough, the last member of an ancient magical race. And listen to the voice acting, a series first. \*a scene is shown of Barret and Cloud arguing as Tifa tries to pacify them\*

Woman: These sound like some really great games... \*has a worried look on her face\*

Spy: And that's not all. \*footage from *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*, *Wave Race*, *Crash Bandicoot*, *Ultra International Superstar Soccer*, and *Ultra Adventurers* plays\* When the Ultra Nintendo launches on November 21st, it'll launch with 17 games on the very first day. And every Ultra Nintendo will include a free copy of *Super Mario Dimensions*. Check out the spooky exploration in *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*, starring the vampire Alucard who has to achieve his destiny. Or the high-flying stunt-landing fun of *Wave Race*. Just look at that water, it's the most realistic watersports game ever made!

Big Guy: \*looks amazed\* Wow, this really is the coolest console out there.

Woman: \*angrily slaps the big guy's chest\* You see? I told you! \*turns to look at the spy\*

Spy: \*just laughs\* And that's not even the best thing about the Ultra Nintendo. You guys don't know the half of it.

Woman: You're saying there's more?

Spy: Well yeah, but.... \*he looks nervous\* Well....Bob would kill me if I told you.

\*The woman and the big guy look at each other\*

Big Guy: Well....we'll just have to find this Bob guy and get him to tell us!

-

\*The scene switches to the woman and the big guy at the Nintendo development lab. Bob, a man in a lab coat with glasses, is checking on something when the woman and the big guy, now wearing pizza delivery uniforms, approach him.\*

Big Guy: Pizza for Bob.

Bob: But I didn't order any...

\*The woman opens the pizza box and sprays knockout gas on Bob. He passes out. Then they look at each other.\*

Woman and Big Guy: MWAHAHAHAHAHA! MWAHAHAHAHAHA!!!

-

\*Bob wakes up tied to a chair in the Sega thugs' lair. He looks around to see the woman and the big guy standing over him.\*

Woman: \*smiling\* Hey there, Bob.

Big Guy: We already got your spy to tell you everything he knows about the Ultra Nintendo.

Bob: What? No!! \*looks around\* Peter...? You didn't...you didn't tell them about... Rumbleshock, did you?

\*The spy, now lying on a couch and eating the pizza, slaps his forehead in dismay. The woman and the big guy exchange a smile and turn to Bob.\*

Woman: Nope, Bob. \*smirks\* You just did.

Bob: ...I did. \*bows his head\*

Spy: \*nodding and eating pizza\* You did!

Woman: \*cups Bob's chin\* Tell us about Rumbleshock.

Bob: \*glaring hard at her\* Make me...

Woman: With pleasure. \*snaps her fingers to reveal that the big guy now has Mario hooked up to a battery cable\* Check out what we're gonna do to Mario now!

Bob: NO! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! \*struggles frantically\*

\*The big guy turns the battery on and zaps Mario.\*

Bob: NOOOO!!! NOT THE MARIO DOLL HOOKED UP TO THE BATTERY CABLE TORTURE TEST!!! \*shaking his head, looking away, unable to bear watching anymore\* That's enough...please...

\*Despite being tied to a chair, Bob is able to reach into his pocket and pull out an Ultra Nintendo controller.\*

Bob: This....is Rumbleshock. The big reason why the Ultra Nintendo is the coolest, most realistic game console ever made.

Woman: That's just a game controller...a very cool looking game controller, but just a game controller.

Bob: It's inside the controller. It's a force feedback system that lets players FEEL the game.

Woman: Wait a second...you're telling me that this controller actually lets players FEEL the game?

Big Guy: Like you're actually there, fighting and exploring alongside the heroes of the game?

Woman: That's impossible. No way.

Bob: Yes way.

Woman: \*snatches the controller and hands it to the big guy\* Hook it up. I wanna feel this myself.

\*The woman and the big guy sit down on the couch to start playing the Ultra Nintendo as footage begins to play from various games.\*

Bob: Rumbleshock lets you feel different degrees of vibration. Like when you run into an enemy in *Super Mario Dimensions*, or come off a ramp in *Wave Race*, you feel a slight vibration.

Woman: Whoa...! I actually felt that! \*hands off the controller to the big guy\*

Bob: I told ya. And when you get hit by a shell in *Ultra Mario Kart*, or cast a summon spell in *Final Fantasy VII*, you feel even more of a vibration!

Big Guy: Whoa, cool!

\*The spy is untying Bob as the two Sega thugs continue playing.\*

Bob: What's even cooler, is that when something REALLY big happens, like crashing your Arwing in *Starfox 2*? That's when you REALLY feel the vibration!

Woman and Big Guy: \*look astonished as they continue to play\* This is INCREDIBLE!

Spy: So, what do you say, guys? Ready to see why the Ultra Nintendo is also the greatest multiplayer console ever made?

\*The woman and the big guy look at each other and then look at Bob and the spy.\*

Woman and Big Guy: Let's get ready to rumble.

\*Multiplayer racing footage from *Ultra Mario Kart* is now shown.\*

Bob: Welcome to four-player action! You can race your friends on any of the game's 20 tracks, or...

\*The scene switches to *Ultra Mario Kart*'s battle mode.\*

Bob: Battle it out in one of six multiplayer arenas!

Woman: This is incredible!

\*Next, *Star Fox 2*'s versus mode is shown.\*

Bob: In *Star Fox 2*, you can engage in four player dogfights! Each player gets their own quadrant on the screen, and there are three different modes!

Big Guy: I got you, I got you! \*gets blasted with a bomb from behind by the spy\* Aw, come on!

Spy: \*laughing\* You gotta watch your back!

Woman: \*laughing as she blows up the spy's Arwing with a barrage of hyper shots\* You were saying? \*her own ship gets blown up by Bob's\* What the...?!

\*The scene switches to *Ultra Bomberman*, showing the game's 3-D battle mode with double decker arenas.\*

Bob: In *Ultra Bomberman*, you can play in classic top down mode or our new 3-D arena battle mode, where your opponents can be hiding around any corner!

Big Guy: 3-D mode? Our *Bomberman* doesn't have that!

Bob: Nope, it's only on Ultra Nintendo! \*laughing\*

Woman: And our *Sonic* racing game doesn't let you race with four players at once...and it doesn't have a battle mode!

Spy: No way! Only *Ultra Mario Kart* on Ultra Nintendo!

Bob: And check this out, even our new *Final Fantasy* game has a multiplayer mode!

Woman: But that's an RPG, RPGs don't have multiplayer!

\*Footage is shown from *Final Fantasy VII*'s Chocobo races\*

Bob: In *Final Fantasy VII*, you can raise your own chocobos, then put them on your memory card, take them to your friends' house and race against THEIR chocobos!

Spy: And if your friends don't have the game, you can raise four chocobos of your own and your friends can borrow them to race on eight different multiplayer tracks!

Big Guy: Man.... they've even got multiplayer RPGs!

Bob: And did Peter tell you? These games aren't the only games we've got coming out on the Ultra Nintendo!

Woman: ...what? \*exchanges a look of disbelief with the big guy\*

Big Guy: There's more?

Bob: Yep! Check THIS out!

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\*Footage begins to play of upcoming Ultra Nintendo games.\*

## **GOLDENEYE**

\*Brief footage is shown of *Goldeneye*, including the four player deathmatch mode.\*

## **YOSHI'S STORY**

\*Yoshi is shown walking through a level, firing an egg at an enemy and then firing an egg at a cloud to make a secret door appear.\*

## **ARMORED CORE**

\*An armored mech wanders a big open factory, firing missiles at enemy mechs.\*

## **KEN GRIFFEY JR.'S ULTRA GRAND SLAM**

\*Footage from a game is shown, including a ball being rapidly thrown to catch a runner at the plate.\*

## **BLASTO**

\*Blasto winks at the screen before leaping into a crowd of enemies, punching one out and throwing another into a wall.

## **QUIXSTERS**

\*A boy collects a bunch of rotating spheres before leaping up on several platforms and vaulting over the head of an enemy.\*

## **GRAN TURISMO**

\*Cars are shown racing on a track before footage is shown of the selection screen and a brief sight of the game's selection of 100+ cars.\*

## **TALE LEMURIA**

\*Battle footage is shown, showing a fully 3-D version of the battle system in *Tale Phantasia*, showing Efreet rising up and breathing fire down at a bunch of enemies.\*

## **ZELDA**

\*Link is shown briefly fighting a Stalfos before opening up a treasure chest.\*

-

\*The scene switches back to show the woman and the big guy looking agape at the screen before dropping their controllers in dismay.\*

Big Guy: That's a lot of awesome looking games...

Woman: \*tosses her controller down\* Boy, are we in big trouble.

Big Guy: We just can't beat you guys!

\*Bob and the spy are laughing as they continue to play.\*

Bob: Well, as much as we'd love to stay and play with you two, we gotta go.

\*Bob and the spy get up from the couch and unplug the Ultra Nintendo, leaving the two Sega thugs still sitting with their heads bowed in dismay.\*

Spy: Sorry, guys! \*laughing\*

Bob: Oh, by the way... \*pulls some guides out of his coat\* Seen these? \*flashes the *Super Mario Dimensions*, *Starfox 2*, *Ultra Mario Kart*, *Final Fantasy VII*, and *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* strategy guides\*

Woman: What are those?

Bob: These are the brand new Ultra Nintendo player's guides, hot off the presses. The Ultra Nintendo is gonna have the biggest, most epic games around, and these guides will tell you everything you need to know about them.

Woman: Let me see those...\*reaches for them only for the guides to be snatched away\*

Bob: You can buy them at the store!

Spy: Or, when you renew your subscription to Nintendo Power, you can choose one of these five guides as a free gift. \*takes out the megaphone from before and begins speaking into it\* And if you want to know even more about the Ultra Nintendo and all the new games we've got coming out, check us out on the web at [ultranintendo.com](http://ultranintendo.com)!

Bob: Oh, and thanks for the pizza!

Spy: Smell ya later!

\*Bob holds up the Ultra Nintendo and the spy holds up the controller as the two of them begin laughing. The woman and the big guy are shown sitting on the couch, heads in their hands, looking completely defeated as Bob and the spy keep laughing.\*

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With the ongoing success of Marvel's *X-Men* comic books and the animated series on Fox Kids, it was obvious that 20th Century Fox would make a live action film on the merry mutants. The success of both *Batman Forever* and *Last Son of Krypton* prompted them to accelerate their plans. Studio executives originally wanted a December 1997 release date but producers Laura Shuler Donner and Ralph Winter told them that it was unrealistic and thus Fox went with a summer 1998 release. However, production was not without its difficulties. The studio and director, Bryan Singer, wanted to cast Patrick Stewart for the role of Charles Xavier but Stewart reportedly hesitated out of concern of being type cast after *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Batman & Robin*. As he would later admit in an interview with Wizard Magazine:

*"If it weren't for Bryan's sincerity and persistence, I probably would have not taken the role so soon after Batman & Robin. We discussed my work with Amnesty International and how Charles Xavier was a leader of an oppressed minority persecuted by their government for simply possessing the wrong genes. I thought it took a certain strength of character for Xavier to not only take a stand for his own people, but to also stand in the defense of the*

*people persecuting him against extremists within his own community.”*

The X-Men's most popular member, Wolverine, proved just as difficult to cast. Several actors auditioned for the role but Singer wanted Russell Crowe who initially refused and even recommended obscure Australian actor, Hugh Jackman, for the role but the producers were not impressed with Jackman's audition. However, Crowe relented after the promise of a modicum of creative control over the character and joined the cast two weeks before production started. In terms of star power, the film included Michael Biehn as Cyclops, Famke Jansen as Jean Grey/Phoenix, Angela Bassett as Storm, Bryan Cranston as Beast, and interestingly, World Wrestling's Glenn Thomas Jacobs as Colossus. Early drafts of the script included Rogue and Gambit (who would play a prominent role in the sequel) to mirror the animated series lineup, but removed for various reasons. Rounding out the X-Men was then-unknown Patricia Ja Lee as Jubilee who would be the film's secondary focus.

In terms of casting, I would say it was a solid cast with Stewart and Biehn both having a background in science fiction *Star Trek: TNG* and *The Terminator* under their belts. Angela Bassett, for as comparatively few lines she had received, still gave the presence and gravitas of a weather goddess; Cranston, who at that time had been mostly known as Jerry Seinfeld's dentist on *Seinfeld*, surprisingly mirrored his animated counterpart by quoting poets but with a sharper wit around his far more serious teammates. Jansen had excellent onscreen chemistry with Crowe, and Singer flawlessly integrated classic Cyclops/Phoenix/Wolverine triangle into the story. My only complaint was with Jacobs, with the exception of Dwayne Johnson, I never particularly cared for professional wrestlers as actors. Jacob's Colossus spoke in a horrible Russian accent (when he spoke at all) and heavy lifting and executing the "fastball special" was the sole reason for his presence.

As for Magneto and the Brotherhood, Rutger Hauer played the master of magnetism and he carried out Magneto's villainous side, but his performance lacked the complexity and sympathetic aspects of the character. He also lacked chemistry with Stewart and you could hardly tell that Xavier and Magneto were ever friends; despite the background the film gave. Clancy Brown fared much better as Sabretooth, which in many respects was a reprisal of his previous role as the Kurgan in *Highlander* but with claws and a fur-lined coat. Meanwhile, Rebecca Romijn was only noteworthy as Emma Frost for her brief battle with Jean Grey during the film's climax.

At the studio's insistence, the film made use of the mutant-hunting Sentinels. The movie Sentinels used a combination of CGI and practical effects and interestingly took several design cues from *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, which helped the film's popularity in Japan. It was certainly an expensive option, pushing the budget north of \$100 million, but after the success of *Last Son of Krypton* and the hype surrounding *Green Lantern*, Fox wanted a strong start to what they hoped would be a series of X-Men films.

The film did start strongly with Senator Robert Kelly introducing the Mutant Control Act in Congress when Hauer's Magneto rips open the ceiling to deliver his ultimatum. If Congress passes the MCA, he will declare war on the homo sapien species and that he has an army in the Brotherhood to back up this threats. Unbeknownst to Magneto, Xavier is watching from the visitor's gallery. Cut to the credits and six months later where orphaned mallrat, Jubilation Lee, runs into trouble with mall security after her powers go haywire. She bumps into a familiar and surly loner before running off again. The Sentinels make their entrance bring her in for "questioning" and then the stranger be ran into unsheathes his claws and comes to her defense. Both destroy enough Sentinels to bring an entire army down on them, which is where the X-Men come in.

The X-Men take the injured “Logan” and Jubilee to the Xavier School for Gifted Youngsters where Professor Xavier reveals their purpose to promote peaceful human/mutant coexistence to a skeptical Logan. I personally appreciated how Singer and the writers sneaked in various cameos of prominent mutants from Iceman and Kitty Pryde to a few New Mutants like Sunspot and Mirage to even a couple from the *Generation X* comic like Chamber and M. The first act focuses on Logan’s budding Papa Wolf relationship with Jubilee, his attraction to Jean Grey, and his interactions with Xavier. The film pays very little attention to the other X-Men other than to antagonize Wolverine (Cyclops) or for exposition (Beast), which is a shame. Even the dichotomy between Magneto and Xavier’s approach to human/mutant relations take a back seat to Wolverine and Sabertooth’s rivalry in the second act.

Thankfully, the second and third acts alleviate this—to an extent. Singer and writer, Tom DeSanto, wanted to include allusions to the penultimate X-Men story arc, the Dark Phoenix Saga and thus included Emma Frost AKA the White Queen in the film. As with Rogue and Gambit, early drafts included the shapeshifting Mystique but Singer and DeSanto felt another telepath as a rival to Jean would better fit the story though the film initially downplayed her ties to the Hellfire Club, she was clearly manipulating Magneto, particularly in the scene prior to the Sentinel attack on his base. The stinger (a soon to be trademark feature of the Marvel films) revealed that she was working with the Hellfire Club to undermine Magneto and she brings Jean Grey to their attention.

The second act ends with the first skirmish between the X-Men and the Brotherhood with Magneto manipulating Jubilee to defect to his side. However, the US Government decides to strike against Magneto in the wake of the battle. A serious miscalculation when he uses his magnetic powers to rearrange the Sentinels’ circuit boards so that they will eliminate humans instead of mutants and flies off with his army of Sentinels. Jubilee tries to warn the X-Men but Sabertooth abducts her and goads Logan into a rematch when the Sentinels reach Washington D.C.

I probably should address one of the more controversial decisions in the film: the costumes. Where DC/Warner Bros. embraced the brightly colored costumes of Superman and Green Lantern, Marvel/Fox went with the slightly more functional leather outfits. Gone was Wolverine’s yellow spandex, though they kept a version of his signature mask as a concession to the fans. Storm’s costume was probably the sole exception, as her uniform resembled the silver one from the early 90s and the animated series. In any case, it was for the best as Singer and the studio wanted the film to feel more grounded than DC’s fare, a decision that would impact *Fantastic Four* and even *Spider-Man* (in the costume department.)

The climatic battle of X-Men was probably the most involved and heavily choreographed fight scenes in superhero film to that date with Wolverine’s duel with Sabertooth (with Jubilee joining the fray) as well as the X-Men vs. the Brotherhood and the Sentinels. This is where Bassett and even Jacobs got to shine in their roles as Storm and Colossus with the former summoning a tornado from out of *Twister* and latter hurling cars at the Sentinels. The most infamous scene in the film, if not Marvel cinematic history, is when Sabertooth attempts to drown Wolverine in the reflecting pool near the Lincoln Memorial. This scene even made waves weeks before the movies released in June 1998 when a draft of the script leaked on the Internet. Granted, this was before social media when such an event would have exploded.

Quote:

EXT. REFLECTING POOL OUTSIDE LINCOLN MEMORIAL – DAY

Sabretooth pins Wolverine underwater with his hands around his throat.

SABRETOOTH

They say your healing factor can heal any wound, "old friend." It won't save you from drowning.

QUICK CUT TO:

Wolverine's fist moves towards Sabretooth's crotch.

SABRETOOTH

Admit it. I'm stronger than you'll ever be.

SFX

SNIKT!

SABRETOOTH

(Screams)

WOLVERINE

(Throws Sabretooth off of him)

At least I'm smart enough to protect my family jewels in a fight, bub!

"Sabretooth's Family Jewels" became one of the Internet's first big memes; Fox's "canny" marketing department jumped on the leak and even used the slogan "The movie that will hit you in the..." in its advertising campaign. Though I cannot speak for its effectiveness, it made for some good, though juvenile humor, that Sega copied in its advertising to promote the Saturn during the holiday season, but I digress.

The film climaxes with a final confrontation between Xavier and Magneto on the front lawn of the White House. Xavier tries to reason with Magneto, who is beyond reason and attacks Xavier. Sadly, I always had an issue with this scene because it took away from the complexity of Magneto's character as a Holocaust survivor because he rants like a stereotypical supervillain so that Wolverine could carve off his pound of flesh. With the remaining Sentinels destroyed and himself fatally wounded, Magneto sets off a pulse that will cause every nuclear missile in the United States to launch, saying that he'd "rather destroy the world than hand it to the sapiens." Their only chance is to remove Magneto's telepathy-blocking helmet, with required use of the "fastball special" with Colossus and Beast. Yes, it was Colossus and Beast who save the day and not Wolverine.

Xavier (reluctantly) uses his telepathy to force Magneto to undo the pulse before placing him in a catatonic state. What is interesting about this short scene is that it reveals short slices of Magneto's history, including his time at Auschwitz and a cameo of Quicksilver and Scarlet Witch. The movie ends with Wolverine deciding to leave the school to investigate his past, though he leaves his dog tags with Jubilee with the promise that he would come back for them and Xavier visiting a still-catatonic Magneto in a plastic prison. However, that is not the "true ending," to borrow a video game term. If you stayed past the credits, it would reveal a scene where Emma Frost reports to the Inner Circle stating that they found their Black Queen. Many people missed this scene because it was written in later in production (the leaked script was not the final draft) so many fans missed it on their first viewing though it encouraged the diehards to pay to see the film again.

While *Green Lantern* barely edged out *X-Men* in domestic sales by a margin of two million dollars, the latter performed rather strongly overseas and in Asian markets in particular. *X-Men* managed to become extremely popular in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan and made approximately a half-billion dollars overall. In terms of its effects on its sister media, *X-Men: The Animated Series* still ended in 1998 after a respectable six seasons on Fox Kids, adapting the *Onslaught* crossover. Jubilee gained a higher profile in the comics that resulted in an ongoing series that lasted thirty-three issues as well as a prominent spot on the X-Men roster. It also propelled Patricia Ja Lee into a household name in nerd culture during the early 2000s, particularly with a prominent role in the Singer-produced television revival of *Battlestar Galactica*.

For its flaws, *X-Men* is still an enjoyable film. Though 20th Century Fox did not confirm it until 2000's *Spider-Man*, *X-Men* became the foundation for Marvel/Fox's "Media Universe" (no doubt a measure to copy DC/WB's "Expanded Multiverse"); Marvel used the term "media" as opposed to "cinematic" as Marvel would later commission Gainax to produce an X-Men anime that expanded the media universe and included characters left out of the movies like *Nightcrawler*, and the aforementioned *Gambit* and *Rogue*. Similarly, it was through Gainax that Fox and Sega would enter a partnership where the latter would exclusively produce games based on the Marvel Mediaverse for the Saturn. Granted, this was not unprecedented as Sega did publish *Spider-Man* and *X-Men* games for the Genesis in the early 90s.

Though 1998 was the official start of Hollywood's Superhero Wars would not begin in earnest until the following year when *Fantastic Four* went head to head with *Man of Tomorrow* and *Wonder Woman*.

-*Tales From The Superhero Wars, sequentialhistory.net, July 22, 2010*

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First off, the Nintendo Power covers from 1997...

January: Terranigma

February: Ultra Nintendo Preview

March: Sailor Moon

April: Fire Emblem: Keepers Of The Light

May: ESPN: X-Games

June: Starseekers Of Exion

July: Tales Of The Seven Seas 2

August: Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo

September: Issue 100 Special

October: Donkey Kong Land 3

November: Super Mario Dimensions/Starfox 2/Ultra Mario Kart/Final Fantasy VII (four collectible covers)

December: Donkey Kong Country 4

And then a quick little story about the night before the Ultra Nintendo launch...

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A young man entered his dorm room at Indiana University. It was just past nine o'clock on November 20, 1997.

"Hey Jared," said the young man, entering the room and calling for his roommate. "We better get over to Best Buy if we want to get a good spot in line..."

He looked around and could see his roommate seated in a chair in front of his desk. His roommate, Jared, was morbidly obese, but had recently decided to make a commitment to get his weight down.

"If we hurry, maybe we can hit up Subway on the way there...I know you've been eating there a lot lately... I still don't think you're gonna lose all that weight just eating at Subway...it's still fast food but whatever, let's go!"

Jared didn't reply. The young man walked over to the desk.

"Hey, Jared...?"

The young man looked at his roommate and gasped. Jared was slumped over, his eyes closed. He wasn't breathing.

"Holy shit...!" the young man gasped and ran over to the phone, dialing 911. "Please, help me....my roommate's not breathing, you gotta get an ambulance over here quick...!!!"

As soon as the paramedics arrived, Jared Fogle was pronounced DOA.

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### *Ultra Nintendo Technical Specifications*

The Ultra Nintendo is a rectangular black box, slightly smaller than the Xbox One in OTL. The top of it has the Nintendo logo in red in the center. On the front of it are four controller ports. The disc slot is in the upper left corner of the front, while in the lower right corner is a small silver Sony logo, and at the top center is the Ultra Nintendo logo, which is a combination of the original Ultra 64 font for the Ultra letters and OTL's Nintendo 64 font for the Nintendo letters. The controller ports resemble the OTL PS1 ports, long and flat. In back, there's a composite hookup (the standard YRW that also works with the SNES), an RGB component hookup, and an S-Video hookup. Also in back, the power supply can be hooked up, it's similar to the OTL Nintendo 64 power supply. The controllers are a sort of hybrid between the OTL Xbox 360 controller, the Dualshock 3, and the Wii U Pro Controller, with four colored buttons on the right side of the controller (A, B, X, Y, colored red, green, blue, and yellow), L and R buttons on top, ZL and ZR trigger buttons behind them, two analog sticks in the middle flanking start and select buttons, a D-Pad on the left side, and a slot in the back of the controller for memory cards and other accessory cards (the memory card slot is about as big as the Gamecube's memory card). The memory cards are 4MB a piece. The controller has built-in force feedback, nicknamed Rumbleshock.

As for the system internals...

CPU: 128-bit custom Hitachi SH-3 running at 141.75 Mhz (codenamed "Hippolyta"), capable of 220 MIPS

GPU: 64-bit Sony "Artemis" chip running at 100 Mhz capable of 850 MIPS

Memory: 16MB Rambus DRAM

Sound: Custom Sony sound chip, "Calliope", 46 Mhz, designed by Ken Kutaragi himself and said to be 120 times more powerful than the soundchip inside the SNES-CD

Overall, the system is significantly more powerful than OTL's Nintendo 64 and can be somewhat described as a "proto Dreamcast". The games are stored on the proprietary Gigadisc format which can hold up to 1,024,000,000 bytes of information, though the system is also capable of playing SNES-CD format games and music CDs.

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## **November 21, 1997**

The Ultra Nintendo is released across North America, along with 17 launch games which include *Super Mario Dimensions* (packed in with the console), *Star Fox 2*, *Ultra Mario Kart*, *Final Fantasy VII*, and *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night*. Retailing at \$299.99 and accompanied by excellent pre-release reviews and an enormous promotional blitz, the console sells out its entire launch allotment of 2 million units within 24 hours, save for a few thousand consoles remaining in isolated rural locations. That makes the Ultra Nintendo by far the most successful first day console launch in North American history, as no console had ever sold even 100,000 units in its first 24 hours before. The success of the launch instantly makes the Ultra Nintendo one of the most coveted toys in American retail history, with consoles going up on Ebay the same day for upwards of \$1,500. The launch is not without incidents: particularly a pair of deaths directly caused by the enormous demand for the console. The first, which took place shortly after midnight, was a fatal stabbing at a downtown Chicago electronics store. The other incident was a stabbing at a Target in suburban Minneapolis shortly after the store doors opened at 8:00 AM that morning. The two incidents, particularly the Minneapolis stabbing (which occurred as one mother stabbed another in a fight over the console), along with an incident a week after the launch on Black Friday, make national headlines and cast a bit of a shadow over an otherwise stunningly successful launch. Though Nintendo takes a bit of heat (accused by some of artificially driving up demand for a limited number of consoles), it's mostly the hysteria over holiday shopping in general that takes much of the blame (with similar, if less severe incidents, having erupted over the Tickle Me Elmo doll in 1996). Aside from the incidents of violence, the launch is considered a complete success, and Nintendo and Sony ramp up production of the consoles, vowing to produce more than half a million per week for the North American market all the way up till Christmas.

Sales of individual games are also extremely high, with a majority of buyers of the Ultra Nintendo buying at least one additional game at the time of purchase, and some people even buying games despite not being able to get a console, in anticipation of getting one down the road. *Ultra Mario Kart*, with 1.1 million sales on launch day, breaks the single-day sales record (for a non pack-in game) previously set by *Sonic the Hedgehog 3* in 1994, while *Final Fantasy VII* shatters the North American single-day sales record for a JRPG, previously held by *Tale Phantasia*. In all, this chart lists the total launch day sales for all Ultra Nintendo launch titles in North America:

Super Mario Dimensions: 1,996,819 (pack-in title)

Ultra Mario Kart: 1,126,730  
Star Fox 2: 354,672  
Final Fantasy VII: 345,618  
Wave Race: 153,721  
Crash Bandicoot: 129,864  
Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night: 110,278  
Deathblow: 103,662  
NBA Hangtime: 88,753  
Nightsquad 2 : 74,506  
Cruis'n USA: 62,891  
Myst: Legacy: 50,213  
Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee: 41,623  
Extreme-G: 39,506  
Ultra International Superstar Soccer: 33,207  
Ultra Adventurers: 25,741  
Cleo's Caverns: 8,514

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News Anchor: Last night, the Ultra Nintendo, the brand new video game system from Nintendo, went on sale to some very lucky folks at a Seattle-area Best Buy. Not only did one thousand people get to take home this year's hottest new product, but they got to meet one of Seattle's biggest sports heroes, Ken Griffey Jr.. Shana Willis has the story.

\*A huge crowd is shown outside the Best Buy where Ken Griffey Jr. was present to hand out Ultra Nintendos.\*

Reporter: This Best Buy played host to one of the most exciting events of the year, at least in the video game world. Last night, the Ultra Nintendo was released to a crowd of screaming Mario fans, and Ken Griffey Jr. was on hand, along with a couple of Nintendo executives, to hand out the new game systems.

\*Ken Griffey Jr. is shown smiling as he hands an Ultra Nintendo to a very excited 12-year-old boy and his mom.\*

Reporter: Ken Griffey Jr., baseball's reigning MVP and world champ, was all smiles as he helped launch Nintendo into a new era of gaming. The Ultra Nintendo, which Nintendo touts as the most technologically advanced video game system of all time...

\*Footage from *Super Mario Dimensions* is shown on the screen.\*

Reporter: ...was quickly snapped up by the massive crowd.

Young Woman: It's so awesome!

Middle Aged Man With Glasses: I'm just here to pick up an early Christmas present for my kids. I know these things aren't going to last very long on the shelves so I figured I'd better pick it up now. I'd have brought them here to see Ken Griffey, but they've got school in the morning and they'd better get good grades if they want to keep this thing.

Reporter: And despite it being a school night, a decent amount of the people here to buy the new Ultra Nintendo were children, accompanied by parents in varying stages of

enthusiasm.

Mom: Um... you know, I'm not a game player, but my two kids are, and they begged me for a while to get this game system, so I kinda caved and here we are.

Teenage Boy: I can't wait to get home and play *Final Fantasy* and *Nightsquad* on this thing. \*holds up his new Ultra Nintendo\* I'm so hyped right now!!!

Reporter: The crowd was mostly well behaved, though there were signs of boredom toward the back of the line, and of course, it being so late at night, there were also some signs of fatigue.

\*A 6 year old girl is shown yawning as she waits in line with her dad.\*

Reporter: Ken Griffey Jr. was in mostly high spirits. He even had his own personal game recommendations.

Ken Griffey Jr.: \*talking to a young man\* Well, I like the game *Deathblow* myself, it's pretty cool, way better than *Mortal Kombat* I think.

Reporter: *Deathblow*, a brutal fighting game where characters beat each other into a bloody mess...

\*Footage from the game is briefly shown, showing a brute with a large club bashing the face of a decked out warrior king.\*

Reporter: Was one of the more popular games at tonight's launch event, despite its controversial violence. Other games, such as *Ultra Mario Kart* and *Final Fantasy VII*, were snatched up eagerly, and with more than a dozen games already available to purchase, those waiting in line had some tough choices to make. And speaking of waiting, if you're at home and you don't have the Ultra Nintendo yet, you might not be able to get one. Though many area stores won't be opening until 8:00 this morning, there are already lines outside of many stores, including this Walmart store where there have even been some people camped out for a long period of time. One young man tells us he's been camping outside the Walmart store for nearly two weeks.

Young Man: I was first in line so I'm definitely getting an Ultra Nintendo. I've actually got a TV and a Super Nintendo CD hooked up to play right now, I've been playing games while I've been waiting.

\**Tales of the Seven Seas 2* is briefly shown on the screen as he plays.\*

Reporter: Nintendo has stated that they plan to keep supplying stores with new game systems throughout the holiday season, but if last year's Tickle Me Elmo craze is any indication, those who snooze may lose when it comes to finding an Ultra Nintendo in stores any time soon. For KING-TV, I'm Shana Willis.

Anchor: And certainly it might be a good idea to head over to a local store immediately if you want an Ultra Nintendo, we called a number of stores around the city and a lot of them were taking pre-orders for weeks in advance, so even if you show up, it might already be too late. Certainly...certainly it could be a hard toy to find this year.

Co-Anchor: Those graphics did look really good, so lifelike, games these days aren't they?

-A KING-TV news report from the morning of November 21, 1997

*"The Ultra Nintendo, a brand new electronic gaming device, was released today. The Ultra Nintendo boasts advanced computer graphics and an enormous amount of memory which helps it to produce huge worlds like the one seen here in the game Super Mario Dimensions." \*Mario is shown running around Toad Town\* "Sellouts are reported nationwide, and while that's good news for Nintendo, it might be bad news for many hoping to get their hands on Nintendo's new toy. Indeed, incidents of violence have broken out in a few locations, with two deaths reported in separate incidents, one in Chicago, where a teenage boy was knifed to death outside of a downtown electronics store after purchasing the device, and then another, a horrifying incident reported in a Minneapolis-area Target which saw two women come to blows before one pulled out a knife and stabbed the other woman in the stomach. Which, does of course beg the question, are people going too far in their efforts to get the latest and greatest toys for their kids?"*

-CNN reporter Wolf Blitzer, reporting on the launch of the Ultra Nintendo on November 21, 1997

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### **Super Mario Dimensions: The Basics**

*Super Mario Dimensions* is the follow-up to *Super Mario World 3*. The game takes place in a fully three-dimensional open world. Unlike OTL's *Super Mario 64* which took place in Peach's Castle and the surrounding grounds, *Super Mario Dimensions* takes place in the Mushroom Kingdom, and there's a much larger area to explore, with dimensional rifts connecting the different areas of the Mushroom Kingdom. The controls are essentially the same as they are in OTL's game, Mario can kick, punch, long jump, triple jump, somersault, wall kick, and more. The camera is controlled with the right analog stick and there are two different modes which are toggled with the directional pad. There's a free camera mode that operates much like the camera in modern open world games, with the player able to rotate the camera perspective with the stick. There's also a fixed mode, which operates similarly to OTL's camera. The game operates much like the original *Super Mario 64* in terms of progression through the worlds, Mario collects Stars that can be gained via the completion of various level objectives. There are 180 stars total: 7 in all 21 worlds (including one red coin star, there are NO stars for collecting 100 coins in each world, ITTL, playtesters had more time with the game and concluded that finding so many coins to earn a star would be too tedious and players could already hunt down eight red coins in each world for a Star, the 100 coin stars were replaced with another objective), one each for defeating Bowser in the first three battles you face him in (but not for the final Bowser battle), and 30 secret stars scattered throughout the Mushroom Kingdom for completing various objectives. The prize for earning all 180 stars? Being allowed to go through the game as Luigi and earn all the stars again. For getting all 180 stars as Luigi, the player is given a special reward: meeting Yoshi on the roof of Peach's Castle and earning an infinite Wing Cap that can be used to explore the Mushroom Kingdom at will, along with 150 extra lives.

The plot of the game is fairly simple: once again, Bowser kidnaps Peach from her castle. But this time, after Mario attempts to give chase, Bowser uses a special machine to create a dimensional rift that Mario can't pass through. However, Bowser's machine goes haywire and the entire Mushroom Kingdom is filled with these rifts to various other dimensions. In order to reach Bowser, Mario will need to collect Stars from various worlds, these Stars

guide Mario through the rifts so he can travel the dimensions safely. There are four different areas of the Mushroom Kingdom that Mario can explore:

*Toad Town-* (A bustling town full of Toads. The rifts have caused Toads to get sucked into them, Mario will need to explore the town and the worlds thoroughly to save them all. He can also get the Wing Cap and the Vanish Cap here once a certain amount of Stars are earned, 10 and 12 respectively, and once he gets 15 Stars, he can open a portal to Bowser's first lair.)

The worlds that can be found here are...

Bob-Omb Battlefield- Same as OTL.

Whomp's Fortress- Same as OTL but with a second, slightly smaller tower that can be accessed via cannon.

Jolly Roger Bay- Same as OTL.

Sky-High City- A massive cityscape full of big skyscrapers and fast moving cars. Donkey Kong makes an appearance here.

Cool Cool Mountain- Same as OTL, but the penguin mom has a husband that Mario needs to find.

Monty Mole's Hole- A huge complex of caves dominated by Monty Mole enemies. Some of the Montys are friendly and once Mario gets 15 stars and one star from this world, a friendly Monty Mole will guide Mario to Bowser's first lair.

*Pipe Hills-* (A hilly plain full of pipes and secret passages. Mario can find the Metal Cap after navigating a perilous pipe maze. This area of the Mushroom Kingdom has some of the game's only old-school 2D style platforming.)

Big Boo's Haunt- Same as OTL, but with some friendly Boos you need to rescue.

Mecha Metal Factory- A gigantic factory world with lots of moving parts and Mechakoopa enemies.

Hazy Maze Cave- Same as OTL, but without the Metal Cap.

Lethal Lava Land- Same as OTL but with more areas inside the volcano.

Shifting Sand Land- Same as OTL, but the pyramid has a bit more to explore.

Dire Dire Docks – Same as OTL. You reach Bowser's second lair pretty much the same way you did in OTL's game (requires 40 Stars to reach him in this game). After defeating Bowser, you take a boat from here to Mushroom Bay.

*Mushroom Bay-* (A seaside beach area with lots of swimming and secret coves. There are mermaid Toads living here.)

Ancient Antiquity Land-A land based on Ancient Greece and Rome, with many temples and statues.

Wet Dry World- Same as OTL, but looks a bit more like a cityscape, kind of Venice-esque

Angry Angry Sun- Another desert world like Shifting Sand Land, but dominated by sunlight and featuring wide open plains and many dunes, and the return of SMB3's Angry Sun enemy.

Tall, Tall Mountain- Same as OTL.

Tiny-Huge Island- Same as OTL but with more old-school Mario enemies like Fuzzies and Buzzy Beetles.

Tick Tock Clock- Same as OTL. Once you have 70 Stars here, you need to climb all the way up the clock to open a warp to Bowser's third lair. Once Bowser is defeated there, you can access Peach's Castle.

*Peach's Castle*- (Pretty much identical to OTL's *Super Mario 64*, though instead of 15 worlds here, there are only three.)

Strange Weird Land- A mysterious world dominated by psychedelic colors and strange phenomena, with lots of physics tricks.

Rainbow Ride- Same as OTL, though there's the addition of a huge rainbow dragon that Mario can fight to win a Star.

Space Chase Place- A huge space world where Mario can move from planet to planet in somewhat similar style to OTL *Super Mario Galaxy*.

After getting 100 Stars, including at least one from Strange Weird Land, Rainbow Ride, and Space Chase Place, Mario can access Bowser's final lair. Somewhat like *Mario World 2*, it's a twisted, dark, fiery version of Peach's Castle full of enemies and obstacles that Mario must navigate to reach the final battle with Bowser. In this game, the number of times Mario has to throw Bowser into the mines surrounding the arena (similar to how you beat him in OTL *Mario 64*) depends on which Bowser you're facing. The first time you face Bowser, you have to throw him once. The second time, you have to throw him twice. The third time, you have to throw him three times. In the final battle, you have to throw him SIX times (and it's much harder than IOTL). After Mario defeats Bowser, he and Peach use the power of the Stars to fix the Mushroom Kingdom, sealing up the dimensional rifts. Then, Mario enjoys a nice big cake baked by Princess Peach and gets a smooch on the cheek.

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### **Ultra Mario Kart: The Basics**

*Ultra Mario Kart* is in a lot of ways similar to OTL's *Mariokart 64*. The driving is similar, the games have identical character rosters (Mario, Luigi, Peach, Yoshi, Wario, Bowser, Toad, Donkey Kong), and most of the OTL stages appear in this game as they do IOTL, though with a few butterfly-altered changes, different shortcuts and the like. The power drift and mini-turbos introduced in *Mario Kart 64* OTL also appear in this game. However, this game and *Super Mario Kart* have the same number of courses (20), with 14 courses from OTL and six entirely original courses. This game also features six Battle courses, with only two appearing from OTL and four original ones. The game also features a lot more voice samples from the individual characters, and even an announcer that commentates on position changes and item hits, which never appeared IOTL. The announcer's commentary is limited to short quips, which can be on the silly and overdramatic side (which lends this game very well to Youtube parodies in the future). The list of courses appearing in this game are...

Mushroom Cup:

Luigi Raceway

Moo Moo Farm

Koopa Troopa Beach

Brickhouse Road (a course with lots of bricks and some mecha koopas wandering about)

Kalamari Desert

Flower Cup:

Toad's Turnpike

Frosty Forest (different from Frappe Snowland, a lot more trees and it looks more like Alaskan wilderness)  
Reznor Fortress (another original course, sort of like Bowser's castle but with no lava, it looks like the fortresses from Super Mario World and there are Reznors)  
Choco Mountain  
Mario Raceway

Star Cup:

Wario Stadium  
Nimbus Hills (a cloud-filled land based on Nimbus Land from Super Mario RPG)  
Sherbet Land  
Royal Raceway  
Bowser's Castle

Special Cup:

Airborne Armada (a course based on the airship levels from SMB3)  
DK's Crystal Caves (instead of Jungle Parkway, there's this cave-based course filled with shimmering crystals)  
Yoshi Valley (the biggest change from an OTL course, this one's not a maze, it is winding and curvy and filled with rocks though)  
Banshee Boardwalk  
Rainbow Road

And the battle courses...

Block Fort (from OTL)  
Skyscraper (from OTL)

Double Deck and Big Donut are removed. TTL's original battle courses are:

The Arena (a caged-in circular arena)  
Peach's Castle (The interior of Princess Peach's castle)  
Field Maze (A giant outdoor maze)  
Demolition Derby (a big dirt-filled rectangular motocross arena)

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## **Star Fox 2: The Basics**

*Star Fox 2* is the sequel to 1993's *Star Fox*. Unlike the first game, which featured Muppets in cutscenes and Muppeteer voice acting, here, the characters are rendered entirely in-game (similar to OTL *Starfox 64*). The game shares most of its controls with OTL *Starfox 64*, including all-range mode, lock-on, somersaults, and U-turns, in addition to all the other familiar rail shooter controls that *Star Fox* has. The game features a bit more voice acting than OTL *Starfox 64*, and the game lets you pick up to two wingmen (out of four: Peppy, Falco, Slippy, and Krystal) before entering each mission. The wingmen have different ways to help Fox during a mission, and what wingmen you pick may determine what parts of the mission you'll be able to complete. The game takes place in the Lylat system, and you can navigate an icon around the map screen to select your stage (similar to the canceled OTL *Star Fox 2* for the Super Nintendo). As you go through missions, you'll collect points from

shooting down enemies, with more points possible if you take out multiple enemies at once. Points are used for bragging rights mostly, though some missions will grant a better result and access to different stages with a certain point total. The game takes place as Andross wages all-out war on the Lylat system, and his forces are plunging the star system into chaos. While you'll always start out in Corneria, after the opening mission (in which there are three possible ways to finish), Fox will have the option of traveling to one or more "hot spots" in which a battle is taking place. It's similar to the system in OTL *Starfox 64*, but more open-ended, with less of a defined path through the levels. For example, the team can move to liberate a besieged planet, investigate one of Andross' bio-labs, or push forward with an attack on a crucial base. There are far more choices and each choice is fraught with both strategic and moral value. The team doesn't start out with Krystal, she becomes available during an entirely optional mission after Corneria (no matter what conditions are met, the Krystal recruiting mission becomes available after Corneria) and you'll have either one or two more chances to recruit her during the course of the game (if you don't recruit her the first time, it's likely Andross will capture her and you'll have to save her then). There are 19 different locations in the game, and 28 different possible missions. You'll complete between 8-12 missions on your way to the final showdown in Venom with Andross (in which there are four different paths: easy, medium, hard, or extreme, the extreme path provides the best ending).

The game's plot is nearly identical to OTL's *Starfox 64*, complete with the background involving the betrayal of Fox's father James and Peppy Hare by Pigma Dengar, who joins Star Wolf along with Wolf O'Donnell, Andrew Oikonny, Leon Powalski, and Vespa Sciutto (a wasp girl who is the evil counterpart of Krystal). However, there is an additional plotline of Krystal's homeworld, which has been ravaged by Andross, with Krystal as one of the last survivors seeking to avenge her family.

The locations that return from OTL *Starfox 64* are...

Corneria

Meteo

Fortuna (w/alternate mission involving a longer route and no Star Wolf encounter)

Sector X (w/alternate mission involving an intact research base and a more powerful secret weapon)

Titania (w/alternate mission involving the excavation of a hidden weapon)

Katina

Solar

Macbeth (w/alternate mission involving the rescue of a scientist and a Star Wolf fight, this alternate mission is TTL's equivalent to Bolse, leading to Venom on the easy path)

Sector Y

Aquas

Zoness (w/alternate mission involving the purification of the planet's waters)

Area 6

Venom (w/four different routes)

The six new locations are...

Serena (Krystal's homeworld, a world of poisoned forests, two different possible missions here)

Eladard (From OTL *Star Fox 2*, a ringed world where you must navigate a meteor field and then a planetary battlefield, you encounter Star Wolf here)

Exxcel (a world with many futuristic factories where Andross is constructing an enormous

killer robot)

Virion (a world navigated with the Landmaster tank, where strange and dangerous bioweapons lurk, this also is the final stage on most "medium" paths to Venom)

Lab 0 (an underwater bioresearch lab navigated with the Blue Marine, another potential "medium" path to Venom on certain routes)

Nebula (a mysterious realm of warped space, navigating this difficult and difficult to reach level is the only way to reach the "extreme" path of Venom and the true ending)

In order to get the best ending, you must take a grueling 12-stage route involving a number of difficult choices (hint: always make the moral decision) and skill checks with difficult objectives. The best route will take you through Corneria, Serena, Sector Y, Aquas, Exxcel, Titania (alternate mission), Zoness (alternate mission), Lab 0, Macbeth (blowing up the train), back to Serena (instead of to Area 6 which will only lead to the hard path, not the extreme path, though if you "fail" the second Serena mission you also end up in Venom on the hard path instead of going to Nebula), Nebula, and finally to Venom. In the "extreme" path, the Venom mission is a lengthy gauntlet, navigating several huge landmarks, dodging lots of enemy fire, hundreds of falling columns, battling a huge enemy bioweapon, THEN a very difficult Star Wolf fight before the final showdown with Andross, a multi-stage battle where Andross' brain inhabits a huge mechanized cyborg, where Fox gets to avenge his father, Krystal gets to avenge her people, and the Lylat system is truly liberated from Andross' evil rule.

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## **Final Fantasy VII: The Basics**

*Final Fantasy VII* is the first *Final Fantasy* game to be released in full 3-D, with characters appearing in towns, dungeons, and in battles in 3-D polygonal form (and in greater detail than in OTL, the increased capabilities of the Ultra Nintendo mean that Cloud and his allies aren't blocky like in OTL's game, they appear in slightly less detail than in OTL *Final Fantasy VIII*). *Final Fantasy VII* spans two Gigadiscs, the only Ultra Nintendo launch game to appear on more than one disc, and the gameplay is almost identical to OTL's, with the familiar Active Time Battle system, as well as the Materia system for the equipping of spells, battle commands, and various augments. Limit Breaks appear in similar fashion to IOTL, and, like IOTL, cannot be stored up, in order to use the normal Attack command again, the Limit Break must be used (a criticism of the game that remains from OTL). The biggest addition to the sidequests featured in the game is an optional multiplayer mode where the player can race chocobos against friends at the Gold Saucer, either with the friends using their own chocobos on their memory cards, or the player raising up four chocobos for three friends to use. The game's score is composed by Nobuo Uematsu, and is comprised of largely the same soundtrack as OTL, with some minor butterfly-induced changes and eight additional songs, including the addition of a lyrical theme, "Life And Spirits", that plays during the game's credits. The game is fully voiced by professional voice actors in battle, outside of battle in dialogue scenes, and in 3-D cutscenes. The voice cast includes: Bob Buchholz (Cloud), Amanda Winn Lee (Tifa), Mary Kay Bergman (Aeris and Scarlett), Beau Billingsley (Barret), Steve Blum (Sephiroth), Steve Cardenas (Red XIII), Gregg Berger (Cid), Cam Clarke (Vincent), Larisa Oleynik (Yuffie), Quinton Flynn (Rufus Shinra), Jim Cummings (Heidegger), Richard Cansino (Tseng), Jonathan Ward (Reno), David Coburn (Rude), and Janice Kawaye (Elena), along many others. It's one of the largest and most prolific voice casts to ever appear in a video game, and Squaresoft's casting, which spans from professional, long-time voice actors like Bergman and Cummings, to non-union (at the time of casting anyway, all non-union voiceover artists got their union cards to appear in the

game) newcomers who specialize in anime dubbing like Lee and Blum, lead to the rapid unionization of most anime dubbing (which has become feasible due to the rapidly increasing popularity and profitability of anime which began with Sailor Moon in 1995) and a shift toward more professional voice acting in games and anime in general. The game probably has the best production values of any of the Ultra Nintendo launch games, its cinematic-quality 3D cutscenes and mature subject matter rarely addressed in a mainstream JRPG win the game accolades and it does as much to popularize the JRPG as a mainstream genre as *Secret of Mana* did in 1993, if not moreso.

The plotline of the game itself, while largely similar to OTL's plotline, contains some major changes, especially at the end of the first disc. The game starts out in Midgar with a bombing raid on Mako Reactor No. 1, lead by Barret Wallace of the group AVALANCHE, which has dedicated itself to bringing down all Mako energy to preserve the life of the Planet. Barret is accompanied by Cloud Strife, an amnesiac soldier of fortune, along with Biggs, Wedge, and Jessie. While the Midgar sequences of the game largely play out as OTL (with Cloud becoming separated from Barret and Tifa, meeting Aeris, exploring Wall Market, etc.), there is a major change: the Detective Joe storyline, excised from OTL's version of the game, remains somewhat intact (influenced by the popularity of detective games). Detective Joe lives on the upper plate of Midgar and we first encounter him in the aftermath of the bombing, when he questions Aeris about her encounter with Cloud. Joe is present on the train when Avalanche is heading to Mako Reactor No. 5, and even gets into a tussle with Cloud at the reactor which ends with him being knocked out and left with Biggs, Wedge, and Jessie. While Cloud and Aeris explore the Wall Market slums, Joe and Tifa get to know one another and he actually becomes playable in a brief mission that sees Tifa and Joe temporarily teaming up against some thugs trying to kidnap girls for Don Corneo. The Sector 7 plate collapse happens as IOTL and it's here that Joe realizes the depths of Shinra's evil and joins forces with the party for the raid on the Shinra Building, helping them to infiltrate the building and rescue Aeris. After the party defeats Motor Ball, Joe heroically sacrifices himself to stall Shinra troops in order to give the rest of the party time to escape the city. After the escape from Midgar, Cloud and his friends head to the village of Kalm, where Cloud tells the party the story of how Sephiroth lost his mind and destroyed Nibelheim (this is largely preserved from OTL). After Kalm, the game again takes a few different turns. Yuffie is encountered in the Mythril Mine, not as an optional encounter out in the field. In the Mythril Mine, the party has a more in-depth confrontation with the Turks that ends with a boss fight with Rude, followed by Yuffie taking Elena hostage and forcing the Turks to back down, which impresses the party sufficiently enough to let her join them (though Yuffie still steals Materia and is still fairly annoying). The Junon quest largely proceeds as normal, but the Corel quest is very different. The party is no longer compelled to visit the Gold Saucer (though it's still optional at this point). Instead, after Barret gets a cold reception in North Corel, Dyne is reported in the Corel Reactor, having taken the entire staff of workers there hostage. The party reluctantly goes to the reactor to take Barret's old friend down. Instead of a one-on-one showdown between Barret and Dyne, the whole party faces Dyne after he injects himself with Mako to transform into a ferocious beast. Scarlet is also encountered by the party for the first time in the Corel Reactor, though she escapes before Barret or the party can get revenge on her. The Gongaga quest is also much more involved: we get a much more in-depth look at the character Zack, while Jessie is revealed to have survived the destruction of Sector 7, only to live in Gongaga atoning for the deaths caused by AVALANCHE. The Gongaga jungles are a much bigger area, the party has to stop the Turks from taking a vital piece of Materia from the destroyed reactor there and the party battles Reno, Rude, and Elena all at the same time. Aeris and Barret are both given heavy character development via the Gongaga quest. When the party returns from stopping the Turks, Jessie begs them to stop their quest because she doesn't want them to

cause any more violence, but Barret re-emphasizes his reasons for saving the Planet and Jessie mentions Cosmo Canyon (there's an optional sidequest later on where the party can lift Jessie's spirits, if they do so she moves to Cosmo Canyon afterward). The buggy still breaks down in front of it and the quest goes largely as IOTL, as does the Nibelheim quest, though again, Vincent is no longer an optional character, the party meets him after an encounter and boss fight with Tseng in the Shinra Mansion basement. The party then crosses Mt. Nibel and heads to Rocket Town, where they meet up with Cid, hoping to get passage across the seas on his plane the Tiny Bronco. Palmer shows up, things go south, and the Tiny Bronco crash lands in Wutai, necessitating that the party complete the quest here (which is also largely as OTL, though Yuffie and Elena have a bit more history now and patch things up somewhat because of their shared ordeal with Don Corneo, the party also discovers that Detective Joe was from Wutai, as you can meet his mother here, and Zack also gets more backstory in Wutai). After the events in Wutai, the Tiny Bronco is converted to a boat, which the party can use to start the quest to the Temple of the Ancients.

And here is where things get VASTLY different from IOTL's game, because once you reach the Gold Saucer, a series of irreversible events are set into motion. Depending on Cloud's affinity with various characters throughout the game, one of three things will happen: Cloud will go out on a date with Tifa, Cloud will go out on a date with Aeris, or Cloud will leave the Gold Saucer and return to North Corel with Barret. The character that Cloud spends the night with will die at the end of Disc One. IOTL, of course, Aeris was killed at the end of Disc One by Sephiroth, one of the most famous and iconic moments in video game history. In TLL's *Final Fantasy VII*, Tetsuya Nomura and Yoshinori Kitase still wish to kill off a main character to make a statement about death. However, the two men see *Final Fantasy VII* as a potential repeat of *Secret of Mana*, an iconic RPG that forever changed how good an RPG could be. With *Secret of Mana*'s primary iconic aspect being its three different endings, Nomura and Kitase realize that they could still present death as a final event with real tragic gravity while also still allowing the player's actions to determine how that event would play out. The two men thus create a scenario where the entirety of Disc Two is determined by which death the player experiences at the end of Disc One. It's a massive undertaking, creating three different storylines which at times vastly differ, though many elements remain the same throughout the three stories. The result is still considered by fans to be one of the greatest and most tragic moments in video game history, because, even though the player's actions determine which character dies, it still has a sense that it is out of the player's hands. Hidden factors throughout the game determine which character Cloud becomes closest to, and that character is the one who experiences inevitable death. If the player chose to have Cloud bond with the mysterious flower girl Aeris, she meets her tragic death, exactly as she does IOTL (and indeed, about 70 percent of first time players experience Aeris' death path). If Cloud bonds with his childhood friend Tifa (which about 25 percent of first time players have Cloud do), it's Tifa who is killed. And if Cloud bonds with his new war buddy, the gruff but still deep and caring Barret, Barret is the one who is killed (experienced by about 5 percent of first time players). The three paths play out as follows:

#### *Path One: Aeris Dies*

This path plays out the closest to OTL, with a few minor differences. After Cloud, under influence by Sephiroth, attacks Aeris at the Temple of the Ancients, she leaves the party and goes to summon Holy at the City of the Ancients, where she is tragically killed by Sephiroth. The party continues on to Icicle Inn, the Great Glacier, and ultimately the Northern Crater, where Cloud gives Sephiroth the Black Materia, allowing him to summon Meteor while Cloud falls into the Lifestream. The few changes from OTL are largely experienced in the Junon sequence after Tifa wakes up, after Tifa and Barret are freed from

captivity and the party reassembles, there is a fight with Sapphire Weapon that did not occur in OTL's game. Also, there is an additional quest before the party is able to rejoin Cloud and Tifa in Mideel: another trip to Wutai to complete a final case for Detective Joe, whose mother found some old case files of his relating to Zack and the Midgar-Wutai war, the quest explains Shinra's origins somewhat more and also confirms that Tseng is still alive, which didn't happen in OTL's game. Aside from this, the rest of the game plays out almost entirely as OTL, complete with the final epic battle with Sephiroth inside the Northern Crater (which is somewhat more fleshed out of a dungeon than IOTL, since the game designers weren't rushing it as much) and Aeris summoning the Lifestream from beyond the grave to stop Meteor from destroying the Planet.

### *Path Two: Tifa Dies*

If Cloud has more affinity with Tifa than either Aeris or Barret, he will date her at the Gold Saucer, and at the Temple of the Ancients, Tifa is able to snap Cloud out of Sephiroth's control before he attacks Aeris (instead of Cloud hurting Aeris and Tifa having to knock him out). Aeris remains with the party all the way to the City of the Ancients, where she tells the party that she has to pray for Holy. As IOTL, Sephiroth attempts to have Cloud kill Aeris before she can summon Holy. However, when Sephiroth comes down to stab Aeris, Tifa puts herself in the way and she sustains a mortal wound. However, unlike Aeris, who dies without a single word, Tifa has enough strength to tell Cloud that she always loved him but that Aeris is too important and that Cloud must protect her. The guilt nearly destroys Cloud, who is unable to participate in the Jenova LIFE battle afterward. By the time the group reaches Icicle Inn, Cloud is ready to fight again and is determined to avenge Tifa by defeating Sephiroth. Icicle Inn is a much bigger part of this storyline, with Aeris learning about Professor Gast and her mother. Aeris and Cloud commiserate over their shared losses, and Aeris tries to help Cloud commune with the Lifestream to no avail. The party ventures through the Gaea Cliffs to reach the Northern Crater, though this time, both Cloud and Aeris fall into the Lifestream. Cloud's "vision quest", which in OTL's game and in the "Aeris Dies" path consisted of Tifa accompanying Cloud through various memories inside the Lifestream, is instead a massive, multi-hour quest where Cloud and Aeris team up with characters like Tifa, Zack, and Detective Joe (who are all playable for this portion of the game) to exorcise the demons of their collective pasts. These quests alternate with the quests undertaken by Barret, Cid, and the other party members, first escaping from Junon and then undertaking the North Corel and Fort Condor quests while Cloud and Aeris explore the Lifestream. The Cloud/Aeris quests culminate in a battle against Jenova-AFTERLIFE, which, after it's defeated, Cloud and Aeris surface amidst the destruction of Mideel and the rest of the game plays out largely as IOTL post-Mideel, with Sephiroth as the final boss once again. The ending is somewhat altered, instead of Aeris using the Lifestream to stop Meteor (since she's alive, she's not directly in it and thus unable to stop Meteor alone), Cloud and Aeris join together to commune with the Lifestream, using the spirits of the ancient Cetra along with those of other departed characters, led by Tifa, to guide the Lifestream to stop Meteor.

### *Path Three: Barret Dies*

If Cloud has enough affinity with Barret, he and Barret go to North Corel together, where Heidegger has a large contingent of Shinra troops ready to take out the city for good. The two team up and defeat Heidegger, then Barret interrogates him for information about Shinra, getting him to admit that Cait Sith is a spy controlled by Reeve. The two then return to the Gold Saucer and the Temple of the Ancients plays out as IOTL. However, it's Barret that gets Cloud to snap out of attacking Aeris (calling him a "goddamned fool" and slapping

some sense into him) and Aeris again stays with the party up to the City of the Ancients. However, instead of Sephiroth attempting to kill Aeris as in Tifa and Aeris' death paths, Shinra is able to intercept Jenova-LIFE on the way to the city and kill it. A massive group of Shinra troopers storm the city, necessitating a bunch of fights. Ultimately, Barret sacrifices himself to protect Aeris and the rest of the party, dying in a hail of gunfire as Cloud and his horrified friends can only watch. This is the most different path from OTL's game, as Cloud and the party never visit the Northern Crater. Instead, thirsty for revenge, the group raids Midgar early, determined to take out Shinra while most of their army is at the Crater. In the second raid on the Shinra Building (which, like the first, involves a lot of boss fights and mayhem), Aeris discovers a lot about her past while Cloud discovers a good portion of the truth about himself as well. Eventually, after a battle with all four Turks, Cloud and the party meet with Reeve in the President's Office and Reeve reveals that he's been working against Shinra the entire time. While the party is talking with Reeve, however, Shinra has stirred up the WEAPONS at the crater, and one of them, Sapphire Weapon, is headed straight for Midgar. The party battles Sapphire Weapon on the roof of the Shinra Building and then are taken in a helicopter by Reeve back to Kalm, where they regroup and determine the next course of action. Cloud still has the Black Materia, though Jenova-DEATH is still intact and is searching for it. Eventually, Cloud is drawn to Nibelheim once more, where he encounters Sephiroth (Jenova-DEATH) in the basement of the Shinra Building. Though the party defeats Jenova-DEATH, it's just a ploy for Sephiroth to take control of Cloud and force him to deliver the Black Materia to the Crater. Cloud falls into the Lifestream and washes up in Mideel, while Aeris and Tifa stay with him as the party completes various tasks (the Detective Joe quest, a trip to Junon to pick up the Highwind, etc.). Cloud recovers quickly, but when Shinra shows up at Mideel, Cloud is unable to stop them from abducting Aeris and Tifa before the rest of the party can arrive in the Highwind. Hojo is now fully in charge of Shinra and he has taken Aeris and Tifa to an entirely new location to experiment on them, a location Vincent knows extremely well: a large underground research facility deep beneath Junon. The Underwater Reactor quest and this new quest to rescue Aeris and Tifa are combined into one. At the end of the quest, there is a brief sequence where Hojo tries to force Cloud to choose between Aeris and Tifa, but in an extremely moving sequence, Cloud refuses to do so, telling Hojo that both of them are extremely dear to him and that he's not going to lose anyone he cares about again. Tifa and Aeris are both able to free themselves, with Tifa decking Hojo in the face and Aeris blasting Hojo with magic (while saying "this is for my parents!") before the big multi-stage fight against them. After one more final quest in which a deranged Scarlet attempts to fire the Sister Ray on Cosmo Canyon and the party must go into Midgar a third time to stop her, the final battle with Sephiroth once again takes place as IOTL. The ending sees the biggest change from IOTL. Meteor is still falling on the planet and once again it requires the Lifestream to stop it, however, in this ending, Marlene is able to call out to her father Barret, who, finally at peace with his bloodstained past, is able to compel the Lifestream to stop Meteor.

In all three endings, though Midgar is destroyed, the Planet and humanity ultimately survive and recover. In subsequent materials, the "Aeris Dies" path is confirmed to be the canon path through the game, though many players cite the Tifa and Barret paths as their favorites, and debate about which path is the "best" rages among fans for many years to come.

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**Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night- The Basics**

*Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night* is largely unchanged from IOTL, though there are a few minor enhancements, most notably the addition of anime cutscenes at various points in the game (the voice acting and English translation are still considered fairly lousy), and much more 3-D than the OTL version due to the enhanced graphical capabilities of the Ultra Nintendo, with other graphical effects such as significantly enhanced background and enemy animation also present. The game retains the exploration adventure format of OTL's game, which is comparable to *Super Metroid* and creates the genre of "Metroidvania" for these types of games. It also retains Alucard as the main protagonist as he struggles to find and defeat the evil Dracula. However, there IS a major secret in the game: if you have a *Castlevania: Rondo of Blood* save file on an SNES memory card, you can swap the memory cards to access alternate versions of the game, one with Maria (for just having a Rondo of Blood save file on the card) and one with Richter (for having a Rondo of Blood save file where the game has been beaten). The versions are largely the same as Alucard's path in terms of the actual dungeon, bosses, and treasures, but it does unlock alternate dialogue and cutscenes. For those without a *Rondo of Blood* save file, Nintendo does include a file on the January 1998 issue of *Nintendo Underground* (the Ultra Nintendo version of *Nintendo Power CD*) that will unlock the Maria and Richter quests if saved to an Ultra Nintendo memory card. The Richter and Maria quests can also be unlocked if the game is beaten and their names are typed in on the name select screen (similar to how Richter's quest was opened IOTL). There are also Nintendo easter eggs placed throughout the game, Alucard can wield some of Link's weapons (with many more of Link's weapons unlocked in the hidden inverted castle), and there's also an optional boss encounter in the inverted castle with Gaddis from *Ocarina of Dreams*. When the game is ported to the Sega Saturn (in 1998 in Japan and in 1999 in North America), these Zelda-related things are removed, though they're replaced with items from the iconic *Phantasy Star* series.

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*"The Ultra Nintendo has finally arrived! The day Nintendo fans have been waiting for for years is finally here, and here at Nintendo Power, we've got wall-to-wall coverage of all the launch games to help you choose which ones to play in this super-sized issue! For the first time ever, Nintendo Power is over 200 pages, with in-depth strategies on multiple games and reviews of more than a dozen launch titles! We've also got previews of some of the biggest Ultra Nintendo games of next year and beyond. Even if you're waiting to buy the Ultra Nintendo, you can't miss this coverage!"*

-The intro to *Nintendo Power's* Ultra Nintendo coverage in the November 1997 issue, which, at 204 pages, remains their biggest issue until the present day

The Ultra Nintendo comes jam-packed with features that make this system the greatest game console ever made. Those features include:

#### KILLER GRAPHICS-

Nintendo and its partner Sony have teamed up once again to create the brand new Artemis processor, which powers the incredible graphics in each Ultra Nintendo game. Over 16 million colors can be produced at once, creating amazingly vivid images more realistic than anything ever seen in a video game before!

#### AMAZING SOUND-

The sound quality of the Ultra Nintendo is unparalleled, boasting a soundchip with more power than the entirety of the SNES-CD's CPU. This soundchip is able to replicate just about

any sound, from the laser fire of an Arwing to the motor of Mario's blazing fast go kart in *Ultra Mario Kart*. Plus, it enables games to produce clearer voice samples, meaning that the voice acting in your favorite video games will sound just as good, if not better, as the most popular animated movies.

#### COMPLETE CONTROL-

The Ultra Nintendo's brand new controller might look confusing at first, with all its new buttons and joysticks, but rest assured that within a few minutes, you'll have the hang of any game you play. Joining the familiar face buttons and shoulder buttons are a pair of all new trigger buttons just behind the top of your controller. These buttons will enable rapid-fire shooting in games such as *Star Fox 2* and next year's *Goldeneye*, while also allowing more complex controls in games like *Super Mario Dimensions*. And while the left analog joystick will let you control characters like never before, the right joystick is equally important, giving you a brand new perspective on your world. Use it to aim at enemies before hammering on the trigger buttons to blow them away!

#### ULTIMATE FUN-

But what good would even the most advanced game system be without...GAMES?! And rest assured, the Ultra Nintendo will have no shortage of those. With seventeen already out at the system's launch and eight more due to release by Christmas (making for a total of 25 games in the first six weeks), the Ultra Nintendo features the most diverse line-up of third party software partners ever, such as Squaresoft, EA, Capcom, Konami, Tecmo, and many more, while Nintendo and its studios are hard at work on many more games featuring your favorite Nintendo characters. With nearly a hundred games already confirmed for next year and beyond, you'll never have to put the controller down!

-excerpted from *Nintendo Power's* Ultra Nintendo launch article in the November 1997 issue

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#### **Super Mario Dimensions**

Dan: 9.5

Shoe: 9.5 (quote: "An incredible open world adventure with fantastic graphics and hundreds of fun things to do. The best Mario game of all time.")

Crispin: 9.5

Sushi-X: 9.5

#### **Ultra Mario Kart**

Dan: 9.0

Shoe: 9.0

Crispin: 9.5 (quote: "The Mario Kart series takes a quantum leap into the third dimension.")

Sushi-X: 9.5

#### **Starfox 2**

Dan: 9.0

Shoe: 8.5

Crispin: 9.5

Sushi-X: 9.0 (quote: "With a huge variety of missions and some spectacular graphics, this Star Fox game builds on the first by leaps and bounds.")

### **Final Fantasy VII**

Dan: 9.5

Shoe: 9.5

Crispin: 9.5 (quote: "Squaresoft's outdone themselves! This RPG is epic and full of cinematic-quality cutscenes.")

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night**

Dan: 9.5 (quote: "This game may be even better than Super Mario Dimensions.")

Shoe: 9.5

Crispin: 9.5

Sushi-X: 9.5

### **Cleo's Caverns**

Dan: 7.0 (quote: "A fun little platformer that might be a bit too cutesy for some players.")

Shoe: 4.5

Crispin: 4.5

Sushi-X: 5.0

### **Crash Bandicoot**

Dan: 8.0

Shoe: 8.0

Crispin: 8.5 (quote: "This fun game has a bit more attitude than Mario, though it's not quite as open or epic.")

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Cruis'n USA**

Dan: 7.0

Shoe: 7.5

Crispin: 6.0 (quote: "It's no Daytona USA, but it looks really nice.")

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Deathblow**

Dan: 7.0

Shoe: 8.5 (quote: "This fighting game is brutal but there's nothing wrong with a bit of the ol' ultraviolence!")

Crispin: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Extreme-G**

Dan: 7.5 (quote: "We'd have preferred another F-Zero but this game's a lot of fun.")

Shoe: 7.5

Crispin: 7.0  
Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Myst: Legacy**

Dan: 8.0  
Shoe: 8.0  
Crispin: 9.0 (quote: "The first two Myst titles are perfectly ported here, and the Ultra Nintendo's controls are surprisingly good.")  
Sushi-X: 8.0

### **NBA Hangtime**

Dan: 9.0  
Shoe: 7.5  
Crispin: 7.5  
Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "An outstanding port of the arcade B-ball hit.")

### **Nightsquad 2**

Dan: 8.5  
Shoe: 8.5 (quote: "The Nightsquad returns in a kickass game that lets you and three friends enjoy the action for the very first time.")  
Crispin: 9.5  
Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee**

Dan: 9.0  
Shoe: 9.0  
Crispin: 9.0 (quote: "Visually stunning and innovative, this might be the sleeper hit of the Ultra Nintendo launch.")  
Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Ultra Adventurers**

Dan: 7.0  
Shoe: 7.0 (quote: "This cutesy RPG is about as basic as they come, but if Final Fantasy VII is too dark and mature for you, try this Camelot game out.")  
Crispin: 6.5  
Sushi-X: 5.5

### **Ultra International Superstar Soccer**

Dan: 8.0  
Shoe: 9.0  
Crispin: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "I don't even like soccer and I enjoyed this game.")

### **Wave Race**

Dan: 9.0

Shoe: 9.0 (quote: "This game features beautiful graphics and addictive trick gameplay.")  
Crispin: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 9.0

-excerpted from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* December 1997 issue reviewing all the Ultra Nintendo launch games

(...)

*"The Ultra Nintendo is a technological powerhouse. Many of these games, and these are just launch games, look better graphically than ANYTHING we've seen from the Sega Saturn. And unlike the Super Nintendo CD, which launched with five games, this system launches with 17, most of them good (we gave SEVEN of the launch titles our Gold award, the highest award we can give here at EGM), and with a huge variety of genres, there really is a game for pretty much every taste, while the pack-in title, Super Mario Dimensions, might be the greatest video game ever and is mandatory for anyone who calls themselves a gamer. If you can't find at least two games out of this launch lineup that you really want to play, maybe you should be doing something besides playing video games. Not only that, but the upcoming lineup looks gorgeous: Resident Evil and Tomb Raider, two of the Saturn's best games, are coming in updated versions early next year, and with games like Goldeneye, Tale Lemuria, Metal Gear Solid, and of course Ultra ZELDA on the way, the Ultra Nintendo's future is so bright that Mario should be wearing shades. In short, should you get the Ultra Nintendo right now? Yes, if you can find it. As of press time, pre-orders have been selling out at an astonishing rate, and if you don't have the Ultra Nintendo pre-ordered by the time you read this, you could be SOL for getting one any time soon. We loved the Ultra Nintendo so much, in fact, we're having trouble putting down the launch games so that we can review this month's batch of games. We've been shooting each other down in Star Fox, racing each other in Ultra Mario Kart, and even raising up chocobos in Final Fantasy VII to race at the Gold Saucer (if you think the Japanese version of Fire Emblem 4 had an incest problem, my Golden Chocobo is his own grandpa!). While Sega is undoubtedly gearing up to respond to Nintendo's epic launch (we're sure they're already working on Sonic 5), the Ultra Nintendo might already have a better lineup than the Sega Saturn, and it just launched. Everyone here at EGM, and I mean EVERYONE, gives the Ultra Nintendo a 10 out of 10. If you see this thing in a store and you have 300 bucks to spare, BUY IT. Even if you don't have 300 bucks handy, get into your kids' college fund and buy it, they don't need to go to college anyway!"*

-Dan "Shoe" Hsu, at the end of the Ultra Nintendo launch special in the December 1997 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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Ted Crosley: I'm Ted...

Alex Stansfield: I'm Alex...

\*The camera pans out to reveal the six hosts piled onto a couch with Ultra Nintendo controllers in their hands, in front of an Ultra Nintendo on a pedestal.\*

Ted: And we have been playing the Ultra Nintendo nonstop!

Brittany Saldita: We have the best job in the world.

Lyssa Fielding: Damn right!

Alex: We've got ALL the Ultra Nintendo information you could ever want to know. How good are the graphics?

Gary Westhouse: Amazing.

Ted: How fun is the multiplayer?

John: Addictive!

Brittany: How good are the games?

Lyssa: We're gonna need a bigger Hall of Fame wall!

Ted: Indeed we are! It's our two hour Ultra Nintendo spectacular, tonight, on *GameTV!*

(...)

Ted: So that's *Super Mario Dimensions*, and what did we think of it?

Alex: Here's what we thought of it.

\*Ted and Alex get on the floor and begin bowing over and over again\*

Ted and Alex: We're not worthy! We're not worthy!

Alex: That game is the reason I love Nintendo. Not since I played the original *Super Mario Bros.* for the very first time have I been so blown away by a game.

Ted: And I have to admit....it's better than *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*.

Alex: The completely open world, the HUGE variety of stages and objectives, the amazing graphics, I mean this game is a more complete package than any other video game I've ever played.

Ted: I'm in love, that's all I've got to say. This game is a killer app, full stop, no doubt, and this game alone I think is gonna sell a ton of systems.

Alex: You cannot watch someone play this game and not think to yourself, "Damn, I wanna play this game right now!"

Ted: Yeah, I mean....there's nothing else quite like it. Easy 5 out of 5.

Alex: No doubt, perfect 5 from me and up on the Hall of Fame wall it goes! \*a siren begins to sound as the two hosts take a framed copy of the game up to the wall\* And something tells me this won't be the first game going up here tonight.

(...)

Brittany: *Final Fantasy VII*, in a lot of ways, transcends its genre. It is cinematically brilliant like no RPG before it. I was just blown away by how beautiful it was.

Alex: This is my new favorite RPG maybe ever. It's...close between this and *Chrono Trigger* but in terms of just visuals-

Brittany: Well yeah, it blows any SNES-CD RPG away including my beloved *Tale Phantasia*. What Squaresoft has done with this game is create an experience and that alone is enough to make this an instant classic RPG.

Alex: The twist in the middle of the game, and we won't spoil it here...

Brittany: Yeah, I had the duct tape ready in case you were thinking of spoiling the big twist. And I also had it ready because you were looking as much into this game as I was into *Tale Phantasia*.

Alex: \*smirks\* You were waiting, you were waiting to drag me here weren't you?

Brittany: Maybe... \*rolling her eyes and smiling\*

Alex: Geez, you and Lyssa taped up me and Ted for that girls' night thing last month, and now you wanted to do it for this.

Brittany: \*she laughs\* Well you DID play it an awful lot!

Alex: I was raising chocobos!

Brittany: Yeah, that quest is kind of a pain in the ass. That's the game's biggest flaw. And if that....if a totally optional minigame is your biggest flaw, you're doing something right. This game is pretty much perfect otherwise. 5 out of 5.

Alex: 5 out of 5 from me. *Final Fantasy VII* is an amazing game. It's truly a masterpiece.

\*The siren goes off again\*

Alex: And already, two in one night! A *GameTV* first! What can I say, the Ultra Nintendo is amazing. \*goes up with Brittany to hang the game on the wall\*

(...)

Alex: So *Ultra Mario Kart* is a really fun game.

John: Indeed. I loved the selection of tracks and four player mode is a LOT of fun, especially the battle mode which can get really heated.

Alex: There was some swearing involved.

John: Well, there's always swearing involved around here.

Alex: Damn right! *Ultra Mario Kart* surpasses its predecessor in pretty much every way. It's beautiful to look at, the soundtrack is superb, my personal favorite is the song from Toad's Turnpike, it reminds me of driving down the California highway at night, complete with the horrifying amount of traffic.

John: My personal favorite course is Wario Stadium. The screens are great, it's a nice long course and there's a helpful shortcut that'll help you beat the whole course in about 30 seconds flat.

Alex: Yeah, later on in the show we'll show you how to do that shortcut and a few others from the game. So yeah, *Ultra Mario Kart* is amazing and I give it a 5 out of 5.

John: I agree with you, a 5 out of 5... \*the siren goes off\* And what do you know, we've got our third Hall of Fame game in one night!

Alex: The hits just keep on coming, let's put it up on the wall!

(...)

Gary: So while *Star Fox 2* and its rendered animations are superior to the Muppet scenes from the first *Star Fox* game, I felt that the gameplay itself didn't break a lot of new ground even with the addition of the tank and the submarine.

Ted: Well, it's still a rail shooter at heart and a fairly easy one at that, though if you choose to go for the best ending, you're in for a challenge.

Gary: Right. All in all, *Star Fox 2* is still a great game. It looks amazing, the voice acting is full of hilarious one-liners...

\*cut to a scene of Slippy shouting "That monster's swinging his arms around like he's crazy!"\*

Ted: Oh man, the voice acting. \*chuckles\* Compared to like *Final Fantasy VII*...

Gary: Oh, there's no comparison there, this game has more camp than a Boy Scout jamboree.

Ted: But the camp has its charm and this game is a technical marvel. It's a bit short and it's not as much lasting fun as some of the other games we've reviewed but it's still really good and I give it a 4.5 out of 5.

Gary: I'm giving it a 4. Definitely recommended, but it's not perfect.

(...)

John: *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* was a brilliant adventure with tons of spooky atmosphere and plenty of nasty enemies to challenge even the toughest vampire hunter.

Brittany: Right, I couldn't put the controller down as I journeyed through the HUGE castle and found all the well hidden secrets. If you loved *Super Metroid*, you'll be a big fan of this game and even if you didn't, it still has its own charm. It's more of an RPG, and really this game and *Final Fantasy VII* make the Ultra Nintendo a really strong system for RPGs already.

John: And I'm not normally a big fan of games like this but *Castlevania* won me over.

Brittany: I wasn't the biggest *Castlevania* fan either. I felt like this game definitely has

transformed the series. It's found its groove.

John: It picks up where *Rondo of Blood* left off and just takes the football and runs with it straight to the end zone.

Brittany: And spikes the football for good measure, what a fun game this is.

John: I'm giving *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* a 5 out of 5.

Brittany: I'm going with a 4.5, while I loved the game and played the hell out of it, I was still a bit bored with some areas of the castle, which can be repetitive, I thought some of the item locations were more counter-intuitive than they needed to be, and the voice acting was pretty bad. Still though, one of the best games of the year.

(...)

Ted: So while *Deathblow* sometimes tries a bit too hard to be like *Mortal Kombat*, it still has a lot of its own charm and a ton of really fun characters. The violence is ludicrous, but adds to the charm of the game and I think it's one of the better 2-D fighters out there.

Gary: Yeah, *Deathblow* wasn't perfect but I felt like it accomplishes a lot of what it sets out to do. The graphics remind me a lot of the arcade version of *Killer Instinct*, of course mixed in with the ludicrous blood splatter of *Mortal Kombat*.

Ted: The combo system I thought was even better than *Killer Instinct*, it doesn't quite match the ferocity of a game like *Street Fighter* but it's still a really strategic and fun fighting game.

\*A scene is shown of a huge amazon woman ripping the arm off of her opponent and violently beating him with it.\*

Ted: And I love how the loss of a limb actually affects your fighting style. Like, you can lose your arm and still be fighting, but you won't be quite as good.

Gary: Well no, you just lost your arm. I wish you could do like what happened with the Black Knight in Monty Python, where he's got no limbs but he's still wiggling around and trying to bite his opponent's legs.

Ted: That would be hilarious, maybe for the sequel.

Gary: 'Tis only a flesh wound!

Ted: Your bloody arm's off! \*laughing\* Yeah, I give *Deathblow* a 4 out of 5.

Gary: 4 out of 5 from me too, it's a really good one.

(...)

Lyssa: \*is clad in a really tight wetsuit as she reviews *Wave Race* with Brittany who is also in a wetsuit\* *Wave Race* was really cool, I loved all the different stunts and the races and the water just looked amazing in this game.

Brittany: Well, that may be true but the amazing water didn't stop a lot of the courses from being really repetitive and I didn't think there were enough tricks to make that part of the game a whole lot of fun either. I did enjoy the multiplayer racing which does take a lot of skill, but it's not a flawless game by any means.

Lyssa: I loved the courses, they all had their own different challenging aspects to them and they all looked so beautiful as well. This might be the best looking game on the Ultra Nintendo, check out the amazing water effects here!

\*A dolphin leaps up on the screen as the glimmering water of one of the stages is shown.\*

Lyssa: Oh my god, a dolphin!

Brittany: You can see lots of dolphins in *Ecco*, you know there's a new one coming out next year right?

Lyssa: I know and I can't wait!

Brittany: *Wave Race* just didn't do it for me. I had enough fun with it and it looked good enough that I can confidently call it a GOOD game, just not a great game. It only gets a 3.5 from me.

Lyssa: And I'm giving it a 5, it's by far the best watersports game ever made and I think you'll have tons of fun doing the tricks. \*suddenly gets sprayed by Brittany's Super Soaker\* Aaaaaaaaahhhhhh!!!

Brittany: \*laughing as she chases Lyssa off the stage\* We got wetsuits on, we might as well get wet! \*keeps spraying her\*

Lyssa: That water's so COLD! \*shrieking as Brittany keeps chasing her\*

(...)

Alex: \*looking pained as he describes *Ultra Adventurers*\* This game....it's all right but it's just so...plain compared with *Final Fantasy VII*.

Gary: I suppose it works as maybe an alternative to *Final Fantasy VII* for people who don't like all the swearing and violence in that game, but... they could've at least made this a better game.

Alex: It's completely generic. Two guys, two girls, on a quest to save the world...I do like getting to pick your classes, that at least adds some strategy there.

Gary: Camelot did a good job with the graphics too and the soundtrack is at least decent. So it's not a truly horrible game, but for what it is, *Ultra Adventurers* pales in comparison to some of the other RPGs out there.

Alex: I'm giving it a 2.

Gary: And I give it a 2.5.

(...)

Brittany: I had fun with *Crash Bandicoot*. It's no Mario, but it's fun.

Ted: The perspective is unique. I thought, you know, I was going to have a rough time running into the screen but after you play a level or two, it actually really works. And Crash has a lot more attitude than Mario, that's for sure.

Brittany: Yeah that's the thing, the perspective was a bit weird.

Ted: You're looking at Crash's ass the whole time you play this game.

Brittany: \*laughs\* Yeah, but I mean...I liked the game though!

Ted: It did remind me of *Dog Dash* somewhat...

Brittany: It was tougher than *Dog Dash*. And they were made by the same company, so yeah, that explains the stylistic similarities.

Ted: It's fun, but it's not Super Mario.

Brittany: No, it's not quite THAT fun. I give it a 4 out of 5.

Ted: ....yeah, I'll go ahead and give it a 4. We do recommend it, but know what you're getting into. Six hours of bandicoot ass.

(...)

Alex: I'll never understand why so many sequels think it's innovative to say "okay, here's your team and now here's an EVIL version of your team!" *Star Fox* did it and *Nightsquad 2* now has done it. It's almost been done to death.

Ted: Well, if it's done well, it works and I thought it worked here.

Alex: And I did like the combination of side-scrolling gameplay from the first one and more open-world 3-D gameplay, though it's a little harder keeping your squad together in 3-D mode.

Ted: Right, you'll be using the team commands a lot there. The game plays a lot better with the extra buttons of the Ultra Nintendo controller though.

Alex: Oh, absolutely, it's so much easier to issue commands now. That at least made the 3-D sections work for me. This game definitely works, I like the *Nightsquad* series and WayForward's done a lot with it here. And between this game and *Shantae* on the Game Boy, they've had a really good year.

Ted: Yeah, *Nightsquad 2* is really fun and I'll go ahead and give it a 4.5.

Alex: A 4.5? Wow, really huh? I'm giving it a 4 but I didn't think you liked it more than I did.

Ted: My enthusiasm's just a bit... worn out from all these awesome games, it's hard to get

the energy to get really excited right now unless something really blows me away!

Alex: Oh, I know exactly what you mean, this has been a hell of a fun week.

(...)

Ted: And while we don't have enough time to go in-depth on all the Ultra Nintendo launch games, we DID play all of them...

Alex: And I've got the blisters on my fingers to prove it!

Ted: So here are some short and sweet reviews of the rest of the Ultra Nintendo's launch lineup.

(...)

Lyssa: *NBA Hangtime* was a fun port of the arcade hit, but it didn't get enough of a bump from the arcade version to make it really pop.

John: Yeah, in fact, it doesn't look better than the arcade version at all. It's definitely still fun, but compared to some of the stunning visuals we've seen on some of the other launch games, it's not that great. 3.5 from me.

Lyssa: And I gotta give it a 3.

(...)

Brittany: Speaking of arcade ports, *Cruis'n USA* was lousy in the arcades and it's no better on the Ultra Nintendo.

Alex: It's inferior to Sega's awesome *Daytona* series in pretty much every way. Hey look, it's the Hollywood sign! I recognize that!

Brittany: Yeah, that thing I drive past every day coming to work. Woohoo. 1.5 out of 5.

Alex: I give *Cruis'n USA* a 2.5.

(...)

Ted: *Ultra International Superstar Soccer* is a great soccer game, in fact, it might be just about the best console soccer game ever.

Alex: Konami really outdid themselves with this one. The visuals look amazing and the gameplay is way better than *FIFA*. 4.5 out of 5 from me.

Ted: Yeah, I can agree with that, I give it a 4.5 as well. Tons of fun, a must have for any soccer fan. This truly is the beautiful game.

(...)

Gary: *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee* is a gorgeous game full of haunting visuals and some really innovative gameplay. It's not just another platformer, it's an outstanding game.

Lyssa: I couldn't get enough of guiding Abe and the Mudokons through the game's spooky levels. I wanted to spend a lot more time in this world. It's not easy by any stretch of the imagination but it's really rewarding.

Gary: I'm giving it a perfect 5, easily.

Lyssa: And I'll give it a 4. Highly recommended.

(...)

Ted: *Myst: Legacy* combines *Riven* and *Myst* into one beautiful package. It's a complete and perfect port of two of the PC's best games.

Alex: If you've never played *Myst* before, you should, and if you don't have a computer that can run it but you do have an Ultra Nintendo, now you can.

Ted: Yeah, *Myst: Legacy* is a must have. 4.5 from me.

Alex: And I'm giving it a 4. An excellent double pack of outstanding puzzle games.

(...)

Brittany: *Cleo's Caverns* is a cute little Egyptian-themed platformer. It doesn't innovate much but it's an all right game, I suppose.

Ted: It's good for kids but even kids will like *Super Mario Dimensions* way more than this. Only get this if *Super Mario Dimensions* is sold out.

Brittany: But Ted, every Ultra Nintendo comes with *Super Mario Dimensions*.

Ted: Really? Oh, well then don't get this. 2 out of 5.

Brittany: I'll be nice and give it a 3 because I like this game's take on Cleopatra. ...even though the historical Cleopatra didn't have a cute snake on her head.

Ted: This game is a pain in the asp.

(...)

Gary: And finally, *Extreme-G* is a really fast paced racing game that is fun for a little while but eventually turns pretty dull.

Alex: I liked the futuristic graphics and the soundtrack wasn't so bad, but gameplay wise it's just so so. I'll give it a 3.5 for the presentation.

Gary: And I'm giving it a 2, it does nothing that other racing games haven't done before except look really pretty.

(...)

\*Ted, Alex, Brittany, Gary, John, and Lyssa are all piled onto the couch again, Alex is

holding an oversized trophy from winning the earlier *Ultra Mario Kart* tournament\*

Ted: And before we wrap up, guys, what's your final verdict on the Ultra Nintendo and by that I mean is it better than the Sega Saturn?

Alex: Hell to the yes, it's a LOT better. Saturn's got some excellent games but even right now I think there are more truly great games on the Ultra Nintendo than the Sega Saturn. *Super Mario Dimensions* alone is almost worth the cost of admission, but with all the other great games like *Final Fantasy VII*, *Ultra Mario Kart*, *Castlevania*, so many others to name, I think the Ultra Nintendo is superior.

Ted: Well, the Ultra Nintendo definitely has the superior TECH, but I'm still going with the Sega Saturn.

Alex: What?

Ted: Calm down, calm down. Yeah, *Mario Dimensions* is a hair better than *Sonic 4*...

Brittany: How big a hair are we talking about?

Ted: But the Saturn's also got games like *Turok*, *Legacy of Kain*, *Tekken 2*, *Virtua Fighter 2*...hell, all the Ultra's got in terms of fighting games is *Deathblow* and I can name a dozen fighting games on the Saturn that blow it out of the water. So I'm giving the edge to the Saturn.

Brittany: Well, I agree that the Saturn has some amazing games, BUT I have to give a slight edge to the Ultra Nintendo. It's got three, count 'em, three Hall of Fame games on its launch lineup alone, and *Oddworld* and *Castlevania* were near misses. *Final Fantasy VII* is a true classic and no true gamer can miss *Super Mario Dimensions*. The Ultra Nintendo lives up to the hype and then some.

John: Well, I'm gonna agree with my man Ted. The Saturn's better. You got all the big sports games, all the fighting games, the FPSes are better on the Saturn...

Alex: Wait for *Goldeneye*! Wait for *Goldeneye*!

John: Why wait when I can play *Turok* right now? I'm giving it to the Saturn.

Ted: Lyssa, you're up.

Lyssa: Don't make me choose!

Alex: You gotta choose!

Lyssa: They're both so good!

Ted: If you had a gun to your head right now...

Brittany: \*grabs her Super Soaker from behind the couch and points it at Lyssa's head\*

Lyssa: I don't care how super you soak me, I really can't pick between them! Yes, the Ultra Nintendo has vastly superior graphics. There's no doubt about that. But in terms of

individual games, both systems have incredible games on them. I don't agree that *Sonic the Hedgehog 4* is worse than *Super Mario Dimensions*, I think it's a dead even tie. *Sonic 4* has better boss fights, tighter platforming, better characters, it's only the sheer variety that *Super Mario Dimensions* has that makes it impossible to pick for me. And *Windborn* was every bit as good as *Final Fantasy VII*, *Final Fantasy's* just shinier is all. If you have never owned a video game system and you want to pick between these two, I mean... go with your gut. Don't ask me because honestly, my tastes are way different from yours.

Brittany: That's fair. \*puts down the Super Soaker\* We live in such a great time for video games. There's so much to choose from right now.

Ted: You GOTTA choose, Lyssa.

Lyssa: Nope, nope, Gary, you pick!

Alex: All up to you, Gary.

Gary: ...the Ultra Nintendo. It's a no-brainer for me. It begins and ends with *Super Mario Dimensions*, which I believe is the greatest game ever made. It's the perfect video game. And then, you know, there's still *Zelda* to look forward to. Yeah, it's a long way away but I'm already picturing Link exploring this huge 3-D world and getting goosebumps.

Ted: Well, there you have it. I disagree, but by a 3 to 2 margin, *GameTV* picks the Ultra Nintendo. For right now, at least.

Alex: Yeah, and it'll probably be tough to find one so make sure to pre-order if you can! Anyway, that's it for this week's *GameTV*. We're gonna take a week off for Thanksgiving...

Brittany: And, to be completely honest, to have more time to play Ultra Nintendo games...

Lyssa: But next week we're coming back to review *Phantasy Star V* for the Sega Saturn and we're gonna check out some of next month's Ultra Nintendo games including an all new *Bombberman!*

Ted: Thanks for watching us play the Ultra Nintendo for two hours, for those of you waiting to pick it up Friday it must have been agonizing but it's only three days away now. See you in two weeks and remember, never stop playing!

-excerpted from the November 18, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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## **November 28, 1997**

A young man stood outside a department store in Overland Park, Kansas, waiting for the doors to be opened for that morning's shopping. There were massive sales on a variety of items, but the big ticket item would be going on sale at MSRP... it was the Ultra Nintendo, Nintendo's newest game system. The store had received a new shipment of 60 consoles, and it was first come, first serve.

"Damn, there's a lot of people here..." the young man thought, eyeing the crowd nervously. He was smashed together with nearly a dozen other people, the crowds massing outside of

the doors as the nervous looking workers waited for the signal to open the doors.

The doors opened and the crowd rushed in at a full sprint. The young man nearly fell to the ground but managed to fight his way out of the main crowd somehow, falling back out of the side of the mass of people as it swarmed the huge display of Ultra Nintendo systems. He could see several people fall and the crowd not stopping.

"Hey...hey don't....!" the young man screamed, watching as the crowd trampled over anyone who fell. Several people were getting pushed against a solid wall of merchandise, a large stack of boxed furniture that was too heavy to be pushed over by the surging crowd. More people fell and soon cries of agony could be heard in the wave of people. "Oh my God!"

The stack of Ultra Nintendo consoles fell as the crowd rushed upon it like hyenas tearing apart the scraps of dead elephants. And behind them, a young woman was already dead. Twelve more people lay on the ground, some in imminent need of hospitalization. One of them, a 50-year-old Vietnam veteran, would join the young woman in death.

Unlike the young woman, a recent college graduate and gamer since the days of the Colecovision, the 50-year-old man hadn't come in to buy the Ultra Nintendo. He'd just wanted a good deal on a vacuum for his wife.

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Anchor: This morning, what has become known among some shoppers as "Black Friday" now appears to be living up to its name, as a terrible tragedy occurred in an Overland Park Kmart today. Two shoppers were crushed to death and eleven more were injured after the doors opened and a rush of shoppers surged into the store, leading to several of them being trampled under the weight of others. It's raising new questions tonight about the increasing amount of fervor over the holiday shopping season, particularly the large sales now commonplace on the day after Thanksgiving. It appears that most of the shoppers involved were attempting to purchase the new Ultra Nintendo game system, which has become the hottest holiday item in many years, and has led to multiple incidents on this Friday, though none as serious as the one which occurred tonight in Overland Park.

-excerpted from the KMBC-TV noon newscast on November 28, 1997

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*The Ultra Nintendo launch was enormously successful for a number of reasons. The immense popularity of the Super Nintendo and its CD add-on, along with the new demographics of gamers the latter brought into the fold, helped to stoke the hype for Nintendo's follow-up console. The long delays leading up to its release generated an enormous demand and gave developers plenty of time to create new games to take advantage of the console's technology. In fact, if there was one thing that Nintendo did wrong with the launch, it was that there may have indeed been "too many games". That's not a problem one normally associates with a console launch, but in Nintendo's case, with four bonafide triple-A games all releasing at the same time, along with numerous other lesser but still high-quality titles, many of those lesser titles were pushed to the wayside. Games like the brilliant but tragically under-appreciated Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee, garnered some of the best reviews of any of the launch titles, but was largely ignored at launch in favor of more traditional platformers. One of those traditional platformers, Crash Bandicoot,*

*could likely have achieved similar success to Naughty Dog's other marquee platforming franchise Dog Dash had it been released further away from the black hole that was Super Mario Dimensions. And Castlevania: Symphony of the Night, which Nintendo positioned as one of the "big five" launch titles, paled in comparison to the big hits, though it did garner enough sales to be decently profitable, especially once it was released for the Sega Saturn later on. Nintendo did consider spacing out Ultra Mario Kart and Starfox 2 further from the Ultra Nintendo's launch date, but decided to go with the "overwhelming force" strategy as a way to deal a knockout blow to the Saturn, which had captured a large portion of the North American video game market. Nintendo wanted to position the Ultra as a worthy competitor to the Saturn right away, and that meant a flood of marquee games, even if they likely limited each other in sales.*

*The Ultra Nintendo was difficult to find throughout the 1997 holiday season, and indeed, throughout 1998. Nintendo and Sony just couldn't produce the necessary amount of consoles to meet the overwhelming demand. It wasn't their fault, though some did accuse Nintendo of artificially limiting supply (indeed, after four people died in accidents related to the large crowds frantic to purchase the Ultra Nintendo during that first holiday season, Nintendo chose to publicly release proof that they lacked the capacity to produce more than the already large number of consoles they were bringing to market). Nintendo just wasn't prepared to sell that many consoles, and indeed, nobody expected the Ultra Nintendo to sell that many so quickly, even with the massive hype generated prior to its release. It truly was the perfect storm of factors: the greatest launch lineup ever, an enormous surge of goodwill following the excellent Super Nintendo CD, a surging economy allowing many families to be able to afford the \$300 price tag, and a self-fueling wave of media hype that was whipped into a frenzy by all the stories about the system being so hard to find. Nintendo couldn't have planned it any better if they tried, and by the end of 1997, the Saturn's market share had already fallen nearly a third from its peak level on November 20, 1997. The Ultra Nintendo had arrived, and the video game market would never, ever be the same.*

-from "A Retrospective Of The Ultra Nintendo Launch" on IGN.com

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## **December 1, 1997**

Even with the tragic Black Friday incident casting somewhat of a pall over the mood of some of the gathered Nintendo and Sony executives in Kyoto, the mood at the table was largely celebratory. In just eleven days, North American sales of the Ultra Nintendo and Ultra Nintendo software had topped a billion dollars. More consoles were being rushed to market and spirits were extremely high. Even the normally gruff Hiroshi Yamauchi was willing to crack a smile. The system would be released in Europe later that month, no doubt generating another huge smile of sales.

"To everyone here, the success of our newest product has been the result of the tireless efforts put forth by all of you. I cannot express how much gratitude I feel toward every one of you right now," said Yamauchi. "With that said, our work continues. We must continue to ensure that the games produced for this new game console are of the highest quality, and that any technical problems discovered as these consoles are shipped are quickly discovered and eliminated."

"Our workers have been made aware that they will be held to the highest standards," said an executive from Sony, in charge of producing the many, many consoles that were

currently being shipped to North America. "Not a single defect will go unnoticed."

"That is good," said Yamauchi. "Kutaragi-san, did you wish to state your business at this time?"

"Yes," said Ken Kutaragi, who, more than anyone else at the table, was overwhelmed with joy at the news of the success of the Ultra Nintendo and all the praise and love that went with it. "As you all know, in addition to the Ultra Nintendo, there is another product on which Sony and Nintendo have been collaborating. Iwata-san and Yokoi-san have also had a say in the development of this product, which we hope to bring to market in Japan sometime within the next 18 months. Please, open the folders you all have been given."

Howard Lincoln opened his folder to see a blueprint of what was certainly a handheld gaming device, along with proposed technical specifications. When he briefly scanned the specifications, his eyes went wide.

*"This...? In a handheld game system...?"* Lincoln thought with bewilderment. *"This thing is more powerful than the Super Nintendo CD...!"*

Gunpei Yokoi didn't entirely agree with all of Kutaragi and Iwata's plans for the device, but Kutaragi assured him that it could be made with the same design philosophies that had made the Game Boy such a success. An important factor remained battery life, but again, Kutaragi assured him that Sony had found a solution.

*"As long as I can make the games I wish to make, I believe this new device can be a success,"* thought Yokoi, who was at the very least impressed with Kutaragi's creativity.

"After you're finished reading, I welcome any and all input you would like to give me. Please, be completely honest. Project Aphrodite can only be a success with the same amount of collaborative effort we've put into the Ultra Nintendo."

*"Despite all the Ultra Nintendo hype, Donkey Kong Country 4 might just be the year's best game."*

-excerpted from the review of *Donkey Kong Country 4* in the December 1997 issue of *GamePro* magazine

*"Every time the media reports sellouts, it causes more people to rush to the stores and buy up the product they have left. It's a self-fulfilling feedback loop and I don't see the Ultra Nintendo being widely available in stores anytime soon."*

-Michael Pachter, quoted in a business journal published in December 1997

*"This Christmas, don't believe the hype. Just believe this. \*footage is shown of various Sega Saturn games\* The Sega Saturn, now \$199 and still the best game console in the world. Because Saturn still does what Nintendon't."*

-from a holiday 1997 Sega Saturn game commercial

*"Ah, Christmas '97. The winter of discontent for those who couldn't find an Ultra Nintendo in the stores. And the winter that I discovered a little game called Yuna Anthology."*

-a blogger on the website Visually Novel, in a June 12, 2014 blog post

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*"So they're finally here, performing for you! If you know the words, you can join in too! Four groovy Kongs to make you clap, as we jam out with this monkey rap!"*  
-the introductory line to the "DK Rap" played in the intro of the Super Nintendo CD's *Donkey Kong Country 4: Kong Family Reunion*, the song is a somewhat different but melodically similar song to OTL's "DK Rap" from *Donkey Kong 64*

## **Donkey Kong Country 4- The Basics**

Rare's *Donkey Kong Country 4: Kong Family Reunion* is the final *Donkey Kong Country* game and Rare's final game for the Super Nintendo CD. Though a similar platformer to the three previous games in the series, it's also more of a gameplay evolution than the previous games were. Now, all four Kongs: Donkey, Diddy, Dixie, and Kiddy, can be on screen at once, which gives the player four chances to get hit instead of two (levels are somewhat more difficult to compensate for this). The graphics are also improved from the previous three games, featuring some of the best if not the best rendered visuals on the Super Nintendo CD, comparable to some early 2-D Sega Saturn games in terms of graphical fidelity. Players are even able to go into the backgrounds of stages (like in *Donkey Kong Country Returns* for the OTL Wii), another series first. Another new addition to the game is the addition of four-player stages that can be played by up to four players at once via splitscreen, the four Kongs have to flip switches or defeat enemies to help the other players advance through the level until one or all of them reaches the goal. There is one level in each of the game's worlds that features this mechanic. If only one player is present, the levels can be played by switching manually between Kongs.

The game has been streamlined somewhat. Instead of previous games in the series, which featured up to nine different worlds, this game features only six, and no separate bonus world (though there are a few bonus levels that can be opened up by fulfilling certain conditions. The plot of the game is that the four Kongs have finally returned to Kong Island, only to learn that King K. Rool has recruited six evil primates to help him take over in a coup. The Kongs must hunt down these evil primates through the six worlds they've taken over in order to reach K. Rool and stop his evil reign. The Worlds are:

### *World One: Swingin' Tree Jungle*

A jungle world similar to previous jungle worlds in the series, easy levels and fairly basic gameplay are the norm here. The boss of this world is Meddle, an evil chimpanzee who leaps around frequently during his boss fight and must be jumped on.

### *World Two: Brickrock Canyon*

A quarry-like level with lots of rocky stages and cliffs. The boss of this world is Magomba, a brutish gorilla who throws rocks and is surprisingly agile.

### *World Three: Tar Pit Palace*

A huge temple-like building surrounded by hot, sticky tar pits. The boss of this world is Multreble, an orangutan who wields a megaphone and blasts the Kongs with powerful sonic attacks.

### *World Four: Surplus Island*

An island with an abandoned military base on it that's been taken over by an army of Kremplings and evil monkeys alike. The boss of this world is Marshal, a baboon in a military uniform who deploys his personal army to attack the Kongs.

### *World Five: Moonlight Archipelago*

A beautiful series of islands that hide a dark secret, a huge and powerful volcano that is doomed to interrupt and shatter these peaceful islands. The boss of this world is Melody, a lemur princess who wields powerful magic.

### *World Six: The Lost City Of Apelantis*

An underwater paradise that King K. Rool is seeking to gain power over the world forever. There are two bosses here: Manadu, an evil mandrill and leader of the primate rebellion, and then in the very next level, King K. Rool himself, who has commandeered a massive ancient machine to bring to bear against the Kongs. Defeating K. Rool liberates Kong Island forever and the Kongs and their friends can finally celebrate a lasting peace... with a huge banana pile, of course!

The game, released in early December 1997, is one of the biggest selling SNES-CD games of the year, though it is somewhat ignored in the massive hype over the Ultra Nintendo, just as Donkey Kong Country 3 was ignored in the wake of OTL's Nintendo 64 release. Still, the game sells over two million copies in North America and is at the very least a decent consolation prize for those who can't get their hands on the sold-out Ultra Nintendo.

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## **Darklight Conflict**

Dan: 6.5

Shoe: 5.0

Crispin: 7.0 (quote: "The gameplay in this space sim can be fun at times, but it's nothing we haven't see before.")

Sushi-X: 5.0

## **Donkey Kong Country 4: Kong Family Reunion**

Dan: 9.5

Shoe: 9.5 (quote: "Donkey Kong is back and this is his best game yet.")

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.0

## **Risk**

Dan: 6.0

Shoe: 6.0

Crispin: 5.0

Sushi-X: 5.0 (quote: "Some glitchy animations and very slow CPU gameplay make this board game pretty rough.")

## **Where In Space Is Carmen Sandiego?**

Dan: 7.5

Shoe: 7.0

Crispin: 7.0 (quote: "This series is still quite fun and the cutscenes are made by the same crew who did the Fox Kids animated series.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Andrekah/Cotton: Amazing Duo!**

Dan: 6.0

Shoe: 9.0

Crispin: 7.0 (quote: "I wish this game had been an open-ended action game like Andrekah. Going the rail-shooter route was a bit of a disappointment.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Tower**

Dan: 8.0 (quote: "This puzzle game makes perfect use of verticality and is fast paced enough to keep even puzzle vets on their toes.")

Shoe: 8.5

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Curia**

Dan: 8.0 (quote: "This is a really fun little RPG, though the cutesy girls and weird cutscenes might make it more of a niche title.")

Shoe: 7.5

Crispin: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Disaster Squad!**

Dan: 6.0

Shoe: 6.0

Crispin: 7.0 (quote: "This game reminded me of Robotron in some ways, and I liked all the colorful graphics.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Missing**

Dan: 6.5 (quote: "A decent visual novel, though there are much better games of this genre.")

Shoe: 6.0

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

*-Electronic Gaming Monthly's reviews of December 1997's SNES-CD games in the January and February 1998 issues*

### **Wipeout**

Dan: 7.5 (quote: "This is the fast-paced racing game Extreme-G should have been.")

Shoe: 8.5

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Madden 98**

Dan: 7.0  
Shoe: 8.0 (quote: "The Ultra Nintendo's first Madden looks great but it's a bit light in the feature department.")  
Crispin: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Duke Nukem: Time To Kill**

Dan: 8.0  
Shoe: 7.0 (quote: "This isn't the Ultra Nintendo's definitive FPS, but it's nice to see Duke back again.")  
Crispin: 6.0  
Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Ultra Bomberman**

Dan: 9.0  
Shoe: 9.0  
Crispin: 9.0 (quote: "This game features what may be the best adventure mode to date in a Bomberman game.")  
Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Bushido Blade**

Dan: 8.5  
Shoe: 8.5  
Crispin: 7.0  
Sushi-X: 9.5 (quote: "The Ultra Nintendo just got the fighting game of the year.")

### **Ultra Frogger**

Dan: 5.5  
Shoe: 3.0  
Crispin: 2.0 (quote: "The Ultra Nintendo doesn't need Frogger.")  
Sushi-X: 4.5

### **Arrow Of War**

Dan: 4.0 (quote: "It's Dynasty Warriors with bows, but hideously executed.")  
Shoe: 4.0  
Crispin: 3.0  
Sushi-X: 3.0

### **Mirrorlight**

Dan: 9.0  
Shoe: 8.5  
Crispin: 9.0 (quote: "A beautiful puzzle game with an amazing soundtrack.")  
Sushi-X: 8.0

*-Electronic Gaming Monthly's reviews of December 1997's Ultra Nintendo games in the*

January and February 1998 issues

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*"This ancient ruin may hold the key to the survival of our universe...or its destruction. We cannot delay in exploring this place until we know exactly what we're dealing with. In the meantime, be on your guard...I sense the presence of incredible evil here."*

-Princess Adriana Sornia, *Phantasy Star V*

## **Phantasy Star V- The Basics**

*Phantasy Star V: The Forgotten Colony* is the sequel to *Phantasy Star IV: The End Of The Millennium*. The game has similar gameplay to previous titles in the series, it's a turn-based JRPG where characters can attack or use various techniques by spending Technique Points in battle. Dungeons, however, are explored from a pseudo-3D top down perspective, similar to *Planetary Probe* or *Final Fantasy VII*. The game utilizes a mix of 2D and 3D graphics, though the 3D isn't quite as good as in *Planetary Probe*, it is largely considered a 3D game. Battles also have a new twist to them: in addition to only being able to use three characters in battle instead of four, characters possess both ranged and melee weapons, and attacks effect different segments of the battlefield, with characters able to move around during their turns before choosing their attack (you can only move a limited amount before you have to take an action, and faster characters can move around more). It's not an action RPG like *Tale Phantasia* or *Krystalshade*, there's simply a move phase before choosing an attack. Some attacks, including some melee attacks, can hit multiple enemies at once. This adds a layer of strategy to the battles that did not exist in previous *Phantasy Star* games. Dungeons themselves are quite large and complex, making for a very exploration-heavy game, and there is an overworld map, on which enemies can attack the player. Enemies in both dungeons and the overworld are visible to the player and can be avoided if they so choose. The game features voice acting, though compared to some other Saturn RPGs, there's not quite as much and the cast is largely unknowns. The plot of the game involves a planet called Fydell, whose civilization is dying. Fydell was once a futuristic, space-faring world, but a hideous cataclysm some 600 years prior to the beginning of the game has left the remaining people struggling for resources in an increasingly barren world (largely similar to the plot of *Phantasy Star IV*, though the similarities between the two games mostly end there). The young hero, Fain, is a boy who scavenges ruins in order to find treasures to sell to aid his ailing mother and young sister Lily. Fain's village lies on the outskirts of territory ruled by King Sornia, who has resorted to increasingly desperate measures to sustain his rule. After the king's wife dies in a tragic accident caused by the kingdom's chief researcher, Sornia is driven deeply into madness. His daughter, Adriana, watches her father's descent in dismay, and one day she escapes her contingent of bodyguards and runs away, finding Fain on one of his scavenging missions. Fain and Adriana have an adventure together before the two return to Fain's village only to find it burned to the ground, with most of the villagers, including Fain's mother, dead, and his sister Lily missing. The king, it seems, blames the village for his daughter's disappearance and burned it in revenge. Fain and Adriana go on a few more adventures as they evade the king's guards, eventually stumbling into an ancient transporter that takes them (and another party member they picked up along the way) to a colony on a far-off world. The colony, though utilizing a lot more technology, is also mostly ruined due to being cut off from Fydell for 650 years, and contains intrigue of its own. Fain, Adriana, and their companions soon discover that the colony harbors a secret: it was once home to a superweapon capable of resetting the universe and remaking it in the image of the one who used it. The colony is also home to Lady Sydonia, a treasure hunter/would-be conqueror

who seeks this weapon and will stop at nothing to get it. There's also trouble once King Sornia learns of the colony and sends his troops there in hopes of finding the superweapon, which Sornia hopes to use to bring his dead wife back to life and make him and his family the rulers of an eternal universe in which he is forever king. Fain and Adriana eventually meet up with four other characters who join their party, including Lily, who managed to escape the village before its destruction and found her way to the ancient colony, and even Lady Sydonia, who is reformed early on in the second half of the game and becomes the last character to join the party. Though Sornia remains a villain for most of the game, he is never actually fought, and eventually, we learn that he has been manipulated by the Black Flame, Dazandril (a manifestation of the Dark Force), an ancient evil who was responsible for both the space calamity that caused so much death and suffering on Fydel AND the death of Sornia's wife and Adriana's mother. Dazandril actually takes possession of the superweapon and remakes the universe, which directly leads to the final dungeon in which the heroes must plunge into the depths of Dazandril's dark world to stop him and restore the universe to its original state. In the end, the colony is destroyed, though Fain and Adriana help return the colonists to Fydel. The two of them ascend to the throne and pledge to finally restore Fydel to its former glory, ushering in a thousand years of peace and harmony.

*"Even though Sega lovers had clamored for Phantasy Star V ever since the release of Phantasy Star IV, you get the sense that the company wanted to push Planetary Probe as its big RPG that year. Enix's game looked somewhat prettier and all in all had a much more epic presentation. Still, Phantasy Star V was a worthy successor to the legacy of the series. It wasn't a groundbreaker like the original Phantasy Star, a timeless classic like Phantasy Star II, or even a grand RPG epic like Phantasy Star IV. The plot was somewhat predictable and the graphics looked a bit primitive compared to that year's big 3D RPGs. But the game was still exceptionally well made and proved that the series still deserved a place among the best RPG franchises of the time. It was the second biggest selling RPG of the holiday season, far behind Final Fantasy VII but a better seller than Planetary Probe and the best selling title in the series in North America to date. Needless to say, it was also a huge hit in Japan, and proved that Sega made a wise decision bringing the series to the next generation."*

-excerpted from a *Phantasy Star* retrospective on RPGamer.net, posted in July 2000, just before the North American release of *Phantasy Star VI*

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*Ultra Bomberman* was the first post-launch Ultra Nintendo game, released on December 1, 1997. It had actually been hyped a lot along with the other launch games, including in Nintendo's pre-release promotional video, giving off the impression that it was indeed a launch game. However, Hudson Soft needed a bit more time to finish up the game, and Nintendo, the game's publisher, allowed it to be held back a couple of weeks. The game was the first ever *Bomberman* game to include fully 3-D gameplay, in both the single player AND multiplayer modes. The game also included traditional 2-D gameplay modes in both single player and multiplayer, allowing players to be able to choose their *Bomberman* experience. The 3D adventure mode, the centerpiece of the game (and what was promoted heavily in the game's commercials which featured a parody of the Spiderman theme song: "Look out! It's *Ultra Bomberman!*"), included five different worlds and around 20 different levels, playing somewhat similarly to *Super Mario Dimensions* (though not quite as fun, the levels were a lot more repetitive and the platforming somewhat clunky, it was pretty fun to take Bomberman and his powerups into a fully 3-D environment). The 3D multiplayer mode was a novelty to the series and for the most part it played quite well. It had six different arenas

for players to move around and drop bombs in, bombs could also be thrown or kicked at other players as well. The game was compared to the Saturn's 1997 *Bomberman* game by many, though it lacked a proper ten-player mode (only allowing four players to play at once), and the 2D mode didn't have as much of a variety of stages or items as the Saturn game, it did have the 3D mode that the Saturn game lacked and was also a much bigger seller, becoming the biggest seller outside of the launch titles for the Ultra Nintendo during the 1997 calendar year.

Though not as popular as Mario, Cloud Strife, or Fox McCloud, Bomberman was a welcome addition to the Ultra Nintendo's holiday lineup, and his first Ultra Nintendo adventure remains one of the system's most beloved games.

-excerpted from "*Bomberman: Blasting Onto The Fifth Generation Scene*", an article on [Gamesovermatter.com](http://Gamesovermatter.com)

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## **The World Is Square**

*Why 1998 Is Poised To Be Squaresoft's Biggest Year Ever*

You can't blame the executives at Squaresoft, one of the world's largest video game software companies, for being cocky. *Final Fantasy VII*, the latest installment in their flagship role playing series, is one of the year's hottest titles and is poised to sell nearly a million copies by the end of the year in North America alone, in addition to the more than two million copies of the game that have already been sold in Japan. The game is up for a number of year-end awards, competing with fellow Ultra Nintendo megahit *Super Mario Dimensions* for Game of the Year in many publications.

This month, they're releasing *Bushido Blade* in North America, their second fighting game after *Tobal No. 1* and their first for the Ultra Nintendo. In *Bushido Blade*, characters fight with different bladed weapons, seeking to strike a fatal blow. The game lacks a traditional health bar. Instead, players must use strategy to strike when the time is right. It's a far cry from the typical 2D fighter, but the game is already scoring positive reviews and is likely to be another hit for the company in this busy holiday season.

But despite the huge year that Squaresoft is having, 1998 is poised to be even bigger. The company is working on several major releases, perhaps none bigger than *Parasite Eve*, a game which promises to merge the cinematic experience of movies with the interactive fun provided by a video game. The company is throwing a considerable amount of money and effort behind the game, which takes place in New York City amidst the horror of a biological plague that causes its residents to spontaneously combust while also producing terrible and hideous creatures. The game is still in progress, but Squaresoft promises to release information throughout the year, leading up to what the company says will be a worldwide simultaneous release scheduled for the fall of 1998.

Those looking for a more traditional role playing game might want to try out *Fairytale*. The game takes place in a mystical world of fairies and magic and has been described by those who saw footage of the game at 1997's Tokyo Game Show as "*Fern Gully meets The Nightmare Before Christmas*" with haunting but breathtakingly beautiful environments inhabited by lovely fairies with some of the strangest character designs ever seen in a video game. The score has been written by Yasunori Mitsuda, of *Chrono Trigger* fame, and Mitsuda is said to currently be assisting Nobuo Uematsu with the musical score to *Final*

*Fantasy VIII*, set for release sometime next year. For those who can't wait for *Final Fantasy VIII* or *Parasite Eve*, *Fairytale* should be an excellent appetizer, it's set for a Japanese release in January and a North American release sometime in the summer.

Apart from those two huge RPGs, Squaresoft is launching a massive salvo of games in a variety of genres, beginning in February with *Einhander*, a 3-D shooter, and *God Bless The Ring*, yet another fighting game, but this one focused heavily on story. Indeed, *God Bless The Ring* is part of what Squaresoft dubs "Project Ehrgeiz", which will see two games launched next year: *God Bless The Ring* and *Deepground*, described as a modern day old-school dungeon crawling RPG. *God Bless The Ring* was originally to involve characters from *Final Fantasy VII*, but a decision was made to remove those characters and focus more on the game's story by adding more original characters to the game's enormous world.

With those games and many more yet unannounced set for release in 1998 alone, Squaresoft is poised to be a major part of the Ultra Nintendo's success going forward. When asked if the company would ever be willing to develop for the Sega Saturn, Hiranobu Sakaguchi said simply: "We have no plans to develop for the Sega Saturn at this time. Our games have always pushed the limits of what is possible, and Nintendo and Sony's technology allows for far more freedom than any other platform would offer." Nintendo and Squaresoft have always been close partners, perhaps never closer than when developing 1996's *Super Mario RPG* together. Their relationship remains one of the tightest third party relationships in the gaming industry, and that doesn't look likely to change anytime soon.

-from an article in the December 1997 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

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(Author's note: We'd like to thank our reader **Moe Satyr** for this excellent idea for TTL's *Wipeout*! The game would not have appeared in TTL without his input, so thanks again!)

Psygnosis and Sony's *Wipeout*, for the Ultra Nintendo, isn't exactly *F-Zero*, but it doesn't have to be. The player jumps into the cockpit of a futuristic plane in order to race through more than ten different levels (which include futuristic versions of various world cities, such as Johannesburg, Kyoto, Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo, Moscow, New York, Sydney, Milan, St. Petersburg, and Rome, along with very cool ruined versions of Agra and Liverpool). The game is white-knuckle fast and there's a pretty steep learning curve, but once you get the hang of it you'll be flying around the track! We do wish there was more time to enjoy this game's great visuals, you'll be zooming past them too quickly to admire them most of the time, but the great track layouts and customizable weaponry and equipment (don't forget to install them before you go out and race!) makes this one of the smartest racing titles around.

Graphics: 5.0  
Sound: 4.5  
Play Control: 4.5  
Fun Factor: 5.0  
Challenge: Advanced

-excerpted from a review of *Wipeout* in the January 1998 issue of *GamePro*

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(Author's note: Thank reader **Cataquack Warrior** for his ideas for the *Galaxy Fraulein Yuna* games. There's actually more on the Yuna Anthology that he'll be posting later on, he contributed a lot of ideas for several future games for this timeline and so you'll be seeing more of his work down the road!)

After the Ultra Nintendo was released, Sega was reeling. Their lineup for December 1997 largely centered around *Phantasy Star V*. Other major titles included *Daytona USA 2* (a somewhat inferior port of the original arcade version which featured the just-launched Model 3 arcade board, a superior version would come out in 1998 once Sega released their "Ring" accessory), *Marvel vs. Street Fighter* (a really solid arcade port that was quite a lot of fun until *Marvel vs. Capcom* came out in 1999), and *Soul Blazer* (which also contained *Illusion of Gaia*, the two Enix/Quintet ports were somewhat enhanced but still looked pretty inferior compared to other Saturn games).

And then there was a little title called the *Yuna Anthology*. Based on the Hudson Soft video game franchise originally released for the PC Engine CD, *Yuna Anthology* was a collection of the first two games of the series, enhanced greatly for the Sega Saturn. The games starred a girl named Yuna Kaguarazaka, who wins an intergalactic beauty contest and then is told by a strange being named Elner that she was destined to become a hero. She does this by defeating the other competitors in the beauty contest, who have been corrupted by darkness to become the Frauleins of Darkness. In the sequel, Yuna does battle with an evil girl named Erika, who wants revenge on Yuna for winning another beauty contest that Erika couldn't attend due to being sick (yes, the two games are very quirky and strange). The games largely consist of full-motion video sequences (quite beautifully animated for the Saturn remakes) broken up by boss battles and mini-games. These battles and mini-games are actually quite fun and span a variety of different game genres. In addition, the games feature branching paths that lead to different storyline results and even different gameplay experiences. *Yuna Anthology* also came in a very nice box with a variety of extras, including a 96-page hardcover artbook/hint guide, four different posters, and the full CD soundtrack to both games. Clearly, the publishers realized the game's niche audience and went all out on the release bonuses, similar to what Working Designs did for their Sega CD and Super Nintendo CD games.

The game's sales performance was one of the biggest surprises of the holiday season. Despite being one of the hardest sells in recent memory, it sold over 70,000 copies in North America. What went right? In addition to decent reviews (mostly 7s and 8s from the usual publications, though Lyssa Fielding gushed over the anthology on *GameTV*, giving it a 4.5/5), the game got lots of promotion in various game magazines, with fun, colorful ads that invoked comparisons with the hit girl power anime *Sailor Moon* and *Magic Knight Rayearth*, the latter of which had just debuted on Fox Kids. In addition, the Sega Saturn had a solid contingent of anime fans and niche game lovers who swarmed over the game upon its release, making it very popular in early internet message forums. All of these factors contributed to the *Yuna Anthology* becoming a sort of "niche alternative" to games like *Phantasy Star V*. The Ultra Nintendo didn't have anything like it (yet, at least), and it was a really fun and well made game. The success of the game led to the *Yuna* series becoming one of the more enduring (though, sadly, not one of the more widely popular) franchises on the Saturn, and did pave the way for the vastly more successful *Legend Of Galactic Heroes* in 1998.

-excerpted from a "Fraulein Force" blog post on January 18, 2010

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*"Titanic finally ended its North American box office run today after a fierce push proved unable to topple Men in Black from its place as the #1 domestic box office champion of the year. Titanic finished less than a million dollars short, grossing nearly \$295 million over its domestic run. The film was widely praised and took home nine Academy Awards, including Best Actress for its young star Kate Winslet, but it lost Best Picture to L.A. Confidential, which likely cost it the domestic crown. The film did, however, make back its enormous budget, and then some, especially factoring in its international performance. The film has grossed nearly a billion dollars worldwide, which places it just shy of Jurassic Park on the all time list of most lucrative films ever, and it may catch Jurassic Park yet, depending on when the film finally leaves foreign markets. Much of the film's success can be attributed to its incredible visual spectacle, drawing comparisons to James Cameron's 1991 smash hit Terminator 2: Judgment Day. Kate Winslet also shined in her role as Rose Dewitt Bukater, lover of Matt Damon's character Jack Dawson. Though Damon was also praised for his performance, critics did consider him to be somewhat "wooden" compared to the electric performance of Winslet."*

-from *Entertainment Weekly*, August 9, 1998

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Ted Crosley: *Phantasy Star V* does a lot of things right, it finally mixes up its archaic battle system and presentation-wise it's pretty solid, but the game still had, I thought, a lot of flaws.

Alex Stansfield: I had fun with it.

Ted: It was really predictable, and the villains just weren't compelling. There was only one villain I found compelling.

Alex: You're talking Lady Sydonia right?

Ted: Yeah, Lady Sydonia is really cool. She was a fun character. Maybe the only fun character in this game.

Alex: I agree that *Phantasy Star*, the series, does kind of lack the memorable characters seen in *Final Fantasy*, but the gameplay was superb and I loved the battle system, it lets you move around and it actually makes a difference where you position your heroes.

Ted: And even that, toward the end of the game it kind of serves to lengthen fights since you have to position your team before every turn.

Alex: Well, you can set it to auto position but the CPU doesn't always make the best choices.

Ted: It put my healer right up in the boss' face and got her killed!

\*A quick scene of gameplay is shown as Adriana runs right up to a huge stone golem boss and gets smashed into unconsciousness on the very next turn.\*

Alex: It's better for regular encounters than it is for bosses.

Ted: You got that right!

Alex: I'm giving *Phantasy Star V* a 4 out of 5. It's not the masterpiece that *Phantasy Star II* was but I feel it's worthy of the series regardless.

Ted: I'm giving it a 3, it's a perfectly average RPG.

(...)

Gary Westhouse: *Andrekah/Cotton: Amazing Duo* for the Super Nintendo CD is a really fun, if really cutesy rail-shooter action hybrid that I felt could've used a lot more action and a lot less rail shooting.

Brittany Saldita: It seems like they tried to make the game more like *Panorama Cotton* than like *Andrekah* and that was a big mistake. However, the selection of power-ups was I thought the best of any shooter I've ever played. So I'm of two minds about this game. The shooting segments are repetitive and spectacularly easy but the power-ups are beautifully animated and really fun to use!

Gary: I felt like this game was more fun to watch than it was to play, and that's a bad thing for a GAME. It was a ton of fun to watch you play it.

Brittany: Well, I had a lot of fun while I was playing it! \*she looks like she's agonizing about what to think of the game\* Look, I really liked *Andrekah* and I thought this game was gonna be a proper sequel to that.

Gary: And it really wasn't.

Brittany: It's the ultimate "cute 'em up".

Gary: It IS beautiful to look at. The SNES-CD, even nearing the end of its life, can still pull off some amazing stuff.

Brittany: Oh yeah, definitely.

Gary: But I still have to give this game a 3 because it's just so repetitive and easy that it's a chore to blast through it.

Brittany: Yeah, I gave it a three too. And I LIKED it, but...

Gary: But maybe it could've been harder?

Brittany: Right. It's a little kids' game.

-excerpted from the December 9, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Lyssa Fielding: Okay, first *Ultra Bomberman* and now *Mirrorlight*, the Ultra Nintendo is becoming a great platform for action puzzles!

Ted: *Mirrorlight* was awesome and for a number of reasons. The graphics, which...showed off some incredible lighting effects, were just gorgeous. The single player mode, which stars

these anime-like characters that actually have personality and give you an actual reason to solve all these puzzles, that was really fun to play through...

Lyssa: And even the multiplayer mode...I mean look at this!

\*The game shows a split-screen with two players lining up moving mirrors as a beam of light bounces between them. The mirrors are of various colors and when the light beam hits the mirrors it bounces off of them and splits into different colors that hit various shapes, when the beams pass through the shapes it sets off a number of combos, a huge combo on one screen sets off a cascading rain of beams that shatters one of the other player's mirrors in a spectacular display of light and sound.\*

Lyssa: I thought this game had the best two player puzzle mode since *Tetris Attack*.

Ted: It's much slower paced....

Lyssa: Usually. In the later levels that beam is moving fast!

Ted: Right, but even at the slow pace it's still pretty challenging. Make no mistake, this game's not easy, though you do get a lot of exclusive powerups in the single player mode that'll help you out.

Lyssa: It's fun, it's pretty, I give *Mirrorlight* a 4.5.

Ted: And I'm also giving it a 4.5, I absolutely recommend it to anyone looking for a good puzzle game.

(...)

John Walden: I loved the first *Daytona USA* for the Saturn, and when *Daytona 2* came out in arcades a few months ago, I was blown away. But this port, it didn't do that for me.

Gary: It seems like they really rushed this port out.

John: Yeah, and I get why they would do that, Christmas is right around the corner, but they could've at least tried to optimize it for the Saturn. The graphics are a little smoother than *Daytona USA* on the Saturn but there's a lot more pop-in.

Gary: Is it a bad port?

John: It plays fine, it's a little slower though and when you're talking about a racing game...

Gary: Right.

John: I'm not sure I can recommend this.

Gary: Well, with the downgrade from the arcade version, it's *Daytona USA* with different tracks. And that's not a BAD thing but at full price maybe it is.

John: I think the biggest problem is that the Sega Saturn doesn't have enough RAM to handle a game like this. The Ultra Nintendo, that's why it has 16 megs of RAM, because that console probably could have handled this game.

Gary: Are you saying that Nintendo does what Sat....uh, Satdon't?

John: That really doesn't work. \*shaking his head\*

Gary: But it's true!

John: The Saturn has four megabytes of RAM. It just chokes on a game like this.

Gary: So...Daytona, let's go away?

John: Let's go far away from this inferior port. I give it a 2 out of 5.

Gary: And I'm gonna agree, 2 out of 5, save up your quarters and play it in the arcade.

-excerpted from the December 16, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: December 1997**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Kirby's Adventure 3
3. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2
4. Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo
5. Dog Dash 2
6. Chrono Trigger
7. Tale Phantasia
8. Parappa The Rapper
9. Twinblade II
10. Terranigma
11. Super Mario World 2
12. Fire Emblem: Keepers Of The Light
13. Super Mario RPG
14. Breath Of Fire III
15. Madden 98
16. Elements Of Mana
17. Rampage: The Revenge
18. Starseekers Of Exion
19. Doom
20. Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart – December 1997**

1. Tomb Raider II
2. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
3. Resident Evil 2
4. Phantasy Star V
5. Planetary Probe
6. Tekken 3
7. Race'n'Chase
8. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter

9. Ultima: Scion Of Britannia
10. Virtua Quest

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*The first holiday sales figures are in, and the big winner of this year's video game retail war is Nintendo. Their Ultra Nintendo console has sold more than five million units in North America alone since its release in late November, selling out every time a shipment hits stores. The console was in hot demand throughout the Christmas season, and though there were no more fatal incidents like those seen immediately after the system's release, reports of fights breaking out and assaults on retail employees were reported in several locations after tempers flared and shoppers came to blows. The company's Super Nintendo CD also got a minor increase in sales, likely due to shoppers being unable to find the new Ultra Nintendo and settling for the older device. A price drop to \$69.99 for the stand-alone unit (which was also packaged with the new Donkey Kong Country 4) likely helped, giving the SNES-CD its first sales bump since the release of Star Wars: Masters of Juyo back in August.*

*Sales of Sega's Saturn slowed significantly, though the console remained one of the year's top holiday gifts in terms of units sold. The Saturn, which peaked at 65 percent market share in late November, has dipped back below 50 percent, ceding control of the market back to Nintendo after nearly a year in the lead. Still, the company has positioned itself as a lower-cost alternative to the Ultra Nintendo, and with hits like Resident Evil 2, Tekken 3, and Panzer Dragoon Saga on the way, along with rumors of a new Mega Charger-like accessory in the works, the Saturn looks to remain competitive even as the Ultra Nintendo continues to sell at a record shattering pace.*

*On the handheld front, the Game Boy Color sold fairly briskly as well, despite failing to launch any major hit games this holiday season. The biggest recent seller has been Donkey Kong Land 3, a handheld adaptation of 1996's Donkey Kong Country 3 for the Super Nintendo CD. The next big game for the handheld is set to be a new Legend of Zelda. Word is that Nintendo expects to finally release the monster collecting hit Pokemon in North America this summer, and no doubt that game will also move a lot of Game Boy Color consoles as the handheld approaches its ninth birthday.*

-excerpted from an article posted to Gamebreak.com on January 21, 1998

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Okay, here are the details on the Galaxy Fraulein Yuna Anthology:

### ***Galaxy Fraulein Yuna I: The Savior of Light***

It is the 22nd century, and Yuna Kagurazaka is at home with her family on Earth after winning the Miss Galaxy Fraulein competition. She wakes up to find the fairy-like being Elnor, who tells her that the contest was actually set up to find the destined Savior of Light. Her powers are needed right away, as Yuna is suddenly attacked by Yoko, one of the other

contestants. She and the others have been corrupted by darkness into the Frauleins of Darkness. Elnor guides Yuna into transforming into a magical girl/mech (the series was actually inspired by Gundam). Although in the original Yuna beat Yoko in a cutscene, now you have an actual battle, albeit a simple one to get you into the feel of combat.

Elnor tells Yuna that her powers will remain incomplete until she gathers together the separate pieces of the Matrix of Light. Elnor does not know where they are, but they certainly aren't on Earth, so Yuna must take to the stars. ...After she gets some coffee, of course! Yuna goes to the local coffee shop, but a girl named Shiori is blocking the entrance. Shiori speaks extremely slowly, weighing down the conversation. Yuna tries to talk with her at first instead of fighting, but gets frustrated with the slow pace of the conversation and decides to just attack. Shiori only attacks once every several turns, but there is a chance that your attacks will get absorbed by Shiori's armor, triggering a counterattack. This is also your chance to see one of the game's new and outlandish bad ends; if you choose to be patient and simply wait for Shiori to finish her lengthy order, clicking Wait each time you are prompted, you get your coffee just in time for the universe to explode, with Shiori's last statement of confusion ending just after everything goes black.

Elnor finally convinces Yuna to start looking for the Matrix of Light, though Yuna's more interested in just seeing more of the galaxy. At the spaceport, you encounter a woman named Liavelt von Neuestein ("Lia"), who has lost a precious item. Once you return it to her, she helps you talk with a foreigner who was blocking the path to your ship. Lia seems interested in Yuna, and this is not the last time your paths will cross.

Yuna boards the ship, only to find it filled with flowers, the work of the Fraulein of Darkness, Mari of Flowers. Yuna tries to talk with her, but then Mari gets mad that Yuna stepped on a flower; Yuna points out that Mari has also stepped on some flowers, embarrassing her, but Mari weakly justifies it by saying that she's a friend of flowers, so her happiness is their happiness. She uses plant-based attacks, and can poison you.

Having retaken your ship, it's time to start exploring the galaxy. With no ready clues, Yuna decides to go to a tea festival on a distant planet. While there, Yuna fights Yoshika of Tea (ceremonies). She actually uses tea as a weapon, and will shoot tea kettles and the like at you.

Still clueless as to where the Matrix pieces are, Yuna investigates a world full of beaches. While there, she encounters Mai of Roppongi, another Fraulein of Darkness, in a swimsuit. Mai boasts about her own exceptional beauty, not actually recognizing that Yuna is the person she's been instructed to kill, but then gets upset that Yuna isn't paying attention to her outfit and attacks. She uses close-range attacks with lightning-based iron golf balls. Mai retreats, but vows to defeat her rival in the end.

Meeting up with Yuna again, Lia advises Yuna to travel to the machine planet Flint, which has a computer core they can access for information on the pieces of the Matrix of Light. After solving a couple of puzzles, Yuna accesses the elevator for a long ride down to the core. Along the way, she tries to start a conversation with fellow passenger Hime of Rock, who is rather snobbish toward her and eventually reveals that she is a Fraulein of Darkness, triggering a fight. She uses punk rock music as the source of her attacks. When defeated, Remi starts to warn Yuna about the others, but is pulled back into the World of Darkness before she can finish. Yuna steps out of the elevator and walks straight into Mai, who wants a rematch.

After defeating Mai again, Yuna can access the computer. At this point, the game branches, as you can choose which piece of the Matrix of Light to go after first. Each piece grants you special abilities that can unlock special areas, with bonus items you can keep after completing the game. Also, there are optional worlds you can visit along the way with their own adventures, such as Yuna entering a snowboarding race or visiting a shrine for the new year.

Jina of the Land can be found on a deserted jungle world. Jina gives you incredible speed on land, and she's rather quiet and laidback. On this planet or perhaps another, Yuna speeds around using Jina until she hears a violin playing. She follows the source to an abandoned temple. Alefina of the Violin is waiting for her, playing Yuna's funeral requiem. The music makes Yuna fall asleep, but Jina wakes her up by pinching and stretching her cheeks.

Marina of the Sea is found in a mangrove forest on a swamp world. While struggling through the swamp, Yuna stumbles on a welcoming parlor, only to find that it belongs to Ruminaev of Home Designs and Bloody Activities, a BDSM Fraulein of Darkness with a ballroom mask and a whip. Ruminaev manages to trap Yuna, but Lia intervenes and gets Ruminaev to back off, hinting that she is hiding something. Yuna searches the swamp some more and frees Marina. Marina turns Yuna's mech into a dolphin form that can swim underwater, and she is bubbly and ditzy, yet also sensitive.

Yuna enters a black hole to retrieve the last Matrix piece, Erina of the Sky, and has to fight Remi of China. Remi has a "Sky Glimpse Spear" and uses powerful physical attacks based on Chinese martial arts. Afterwards, you retrieve Erina, who can help you fly. She is snobbish and dislikes having to babysit Yuna, but still cares about her.

Despite having reassembled the Matrix of Light into the powerful mech El-Line, there is one more test for Yuna to complete. Yuna must defeat the previous Savior of Light, Ryudia of the Ancient Civilization, who is now a Fraulein of Darkness. She finds Ryudia in an underwater temple on a tropical planet, with a statue on the beach calling her "The Purest Warrior Ever." As Ryudia used to be the Savior of Light, Yuna's partners will not assist her in the battle.

Having proven herself the Savior of Light, Yuna must now venture to the World of Darkness and defeat the source of the evil plaguing the galaxy. She travels to a world that has a special library with possibly the answers on how to reach that dimension. The world is nothing but air, with landmasses and even oceans floating in the sky, so Yuna must use all three of her partners to progress. En route to the library, Yuna encounters Sayuka of the Highest Honor. Sayuka uses energy beams to attack as you fly about the sky.

At the library, you are confronted at the entrance by Mai again; this time, though, a library patron gets upset at the commotion Mai is making, and drops a ton of books out the window to shut her up, preemptively ending the battle. Here is another potential bad end, as you can choose to push Mai out of the way and get knocked out yourself; amazed at her "fan's" valiant sacrifice, Mai goes off on a comedic quest to save the world herself, while Lia in the shadows groans.

Having accessed a book inside the library, you now know where the entrance to the World of Darkness is: Yuna's high school! Yuna goes home and attends class, going through a few mini-games in the process. If you look closely, you can also see Mai trying to apply for a teaching job there. However, you are assigned detention by the new teacher, Emily of Education (yet another Fraulein of Darkness). Using her Intelligence Comb Dictionary, Emily

can probe Yuna for weaknesses and then strike with lasers for critical damage.

Eventually, you manage to find the secret entrance to the World of Darkness. However, Lia is waiting for you, and reveals herself to be Lia of the Phoenix, the chief Fraulein of Darkness. Lia helped Yuna get stronger so the duel would be fairer, as the champions for light and darkness fight at last to the death. Even so, Yuna holds onto her friendship with Lia, and after the duel manages to get Lia to change sides. Yuna then battles the Queen of Darkness and saves the universe, freeing Lia and the others from the darkness' control in the process.

### ***Galaxy Fraulein Yuna II: The Eternal Princess***

Yuna's class is going on a field trip to the moon, and Yuna is excited as can be. The enemies from the past game have reformed, and you have the chance to encounter them during your new adventure. Lia has become Yuna's friend, providing support throughout the game. Additionally, she has become the TV star and masked heroine Polylina, who Yuna absolutely adores, oblivious to her true identity. The anthology actually lets you take control of Polylina at a couple points in the game to fight alongside Yuna. On a related note, Mai is now Yuna's homeroom teacher, but still considers Yuna her rival and tends to slack off when teaching.

During the field trip, Yuna goes off on her own to explore, and discovers and befriends the little android Yuri, noted for her massive appetite. However, Yuna is suddenly ambushed by an upper-class girl named Erika Kosaka, student president. To correct RySenkari, Erika is jealous of Yuna for winning the idol contest that sparked the first game, and believes that she would have won if she hadn't gotten the flu. She has organized the school's club leaders into a posse called the Erika 7 to get revenge. Erika and her gang confront Yuna as she is looking at a strange artifact, and manage to knock her out. Before falling unconscious, Yuna fights back, and the monolith seems to glow for some reason.

Yuna wakes up with amnesia, and is back on Earth. Miki, the cute and well-mannered stage manager of the film club (and part of Erika 7) tries to trick Yuna into believing that they have been friends since childhood, and that Erika in fact won the contest. Yuna can regain her memories, but if you decide to not even try, you get a bad end where Yuna adopts a "bad girl" persona. Miki's normal attacks using a spotlight gun are pretty weak, but she can impersonate you and use your own attacks against you before reverting to her normal self after three turns.

Having regained her memories, Yuna reunites with Yuri, who followed the class back to Earth and got lost. However, a massive spaceship begins to approach Earth. It turns out that the monolith was a warning beacon and sent a message to Princess Mirage. Mirage resembles Belldandy from Oh My Goddess! (same artist), and pilots the doomsday ship Eternal Princess. When one of the beacons activates, thus warning about a crisis that could threaten the universe, Mirage uses her ship to destroy the threat. It's up to Yuna to stop Mirage before the ship destroys Earth. You need to first locate the beacons, and then need to find the keys necessary to shut down the beacons.

Easier said than done, given that the beacons are hidden on the moon, and the field trip is over. School is still in session, and Yuna has a lot of things to do. Not to mention that the rest of Erika 7 is out to get you, and Erika took the keys you need.

The Erika 7 consists of Miki of the Silver Screen, Mami of the Fighting Spirits, High Speed Serika, Ako and Mako, Striker Rui, and Midori of Ice (Skating). At this point, the game can branch a few different directions, depending on the order in which Yuna fights the Erika 7. Mami is on the softball team, and carries a large "bat" - a cannon that fires softballs at you. Serika is a race car champ, and tries to run you down with her race car after a racing mini-game. Twins Ako and Mako specialize in ping-pong combat, and use combo attacks as they bounce balls back and forth between each other - in fact, the battle ends up being similar to Pong; they also tend to speak in unison. Rui is on the soccer team, and as expected kicks soccer balls at you. Midori attacks while wearing ice skates, and basically uses figure skating attack styles.

Of course, Yuna also wants to have fun, even as the apocalypse approaches, so you can also explore some sidequests. For instance, you have the opportunity to collect Polyline memorabilia, which like the trophies from the first game will be saved into your bonus vault.

After defeating about half of the 7, you manage to convince Mai and Lia to take you up to the moon. You must now search for the beacons while dealing with the rest of Erika 7 in pursuit. Just as you are closing in on the last beacon, Erika herself confronts you. She doesn't have the best hp or attack power, but is a pretty well-rounded combatant. She wields a sword.

Unfortunately, your battle again activates an alarm beacon, making your efforts useless. Undaunted, Yuna travels with Yuri to the Eternal Princess and confronts Princess Mirage herself. Just before the final battle, there is another optional bad end where Yuna can shoot the computers, making the ship misfire and blow up the sun instead - not that that's much better. Yuri uses her powers to boost the El-Line, transforming it into even-stronger the El-Line Noi for the final battle.

In the end, Yuna defeats and befriends Princess Mirage, convincing her that Earth and the moon are safe in the Savior of Light's hands. Also, Yuna's family adopts Yuri, making her Yuna's little sister.

### ***Reception***

Although the gameplay is still fairly simplistic, with not much action outside of the boss battles, Hudson Soft, seeing the success of Sailor Moon in the U.S., put more effort than OTL into improving the gameplay and graphics, building off the improved systems of the Saturn.

All in all, though, the true highlight of the anthology rested in the characters. Bubbly, energetic, and really kind of indifferent about being a hero at first, Yuna just wants to have fun and make friends, and most of the gameplay is her interacting with her family, seeing new sights, and simply enjoying life. That said, Yuna can be determined when it comes to her friends, and will not back down, even protecting Lia and the Frauleins of Darkness from the Queen of Darkness. Even during the middle of her journey, she goes out of her way to help a puppy lost in the rain.

Her enemies, in turn, are all unique and interesting characters. Many of them aren't actually focused on their mission to defeat Yuna, and the interactions with them are fun to watch.

Plus, the game came with an extensive amount of bonus material, including a preview for

the next game, which, Hudson promised, would coincide with a special set of anime OVAs.

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*"I think reports about the death of Sega are pretty exaggerated considering that we still sold a massive amount of Saturn consoles this month. 1998 is going to be the best year ever for the Sega Saturn and if you write us off, you're making a big mistake."*

-Tom Kalinske in an interview in the January 1998 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

*"We're making 'em as fast as we can, but with all the games we've got coming out this year, the Ultra Nintendo's gonna be hard to find. It's supply and demand and when you consider the price we're charging, 300 dollars which is a massive bargain, we're barely profiting on each one, there are gonna be shortages."*

-Howard Lincoln in an interview broadcast on CNN on January 19, 1998

*"Um, that was a tough stretch, when we were doing the Ultra Nintendo special. Me and Alex had to play completely through 10 games each in about a couple of weeks and do our reviews and sit down with the writers to plan the episode. The games were great and we had fun, but by the end it did seem like a bit of a chore. It was worth it though, I remember 4.1 million people watched that episode which at the time was one of the biggest episodes of anything in cable history. I think we finished right behind Monday Nitro and Monday Night Raw that week and that was it."*

-Ted Crosley, discussing the Ultra Nintendo special and the process of making it in a March 2005 interview with IGN.com

*"Super Nintendo CD games are getting totally shafted in all the awards! Look, I know the Ultra is awesome, but everyone's forgetting about games like Terranigma and Starseekers Of Exion! Those games ruled!"*

-from a comment posted on InsideTheWeb.com, April 14, 1998

*"Dick Clark's Rockin' New Years 1998, brought to you by Surf and Turf, starring Sandra Bullock, now on home video! And the Ultra Nintendo, the newest home game system from Nintendo. It's an Ultra World! ...and we're back and right now I'm talking to Chris Farley. And Chris, it's a lovely evening tonight isn't it?" "Well, yeah Dick, it really is. It's cold! I just got outta rehab and everybody's telling me about this Ultra Nintendo. Dick, I have an easier time finding my feet in the shower than I'm having finding one of those damn things!"*

-excerpted from the 1998 New Years Rockin' Eve special, broadcast on December 31, 1997

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### **Top Selling Super Nintendo CD Games Of 1997** (pack-in sales included)

1. Super Mario World 2
2. Donkey Kong Country
3. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
4. Donkey Kong Country 4
5. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2
6. Super Mario Kart
7. Dog Dash 2
8. Super Mario World 3

9. Squad Four: Eclipse
10. Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo

**Top Selling Ultra Nintendo Games Of 1997** (pack-in sales included)

1. Super Mario Dimensions
2. Ultra Mario Kart
3. Final Fantasy VII
4. Star Fox 2
5. Wave Race
6. Ultra Bomberman
7. Deathblow
8. Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night
9. Crash Bandicoot
10. Madden 98

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**1997 Nintendo Power Awards- "The Nesters"** (compiled from fan voting, not a complete list of awards)

Best Graphics and Sound (SNES-CD)

1. Donkey Kong Country 4
2. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2
3. Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo

Best Graphics and Sound (Ultra Nintendo)

1. Super Mario Dimensions
2. Final Fantasy VII
3. Star Fox 2

Best Challenge (SNES-CD)

1. Donkey Kong Country 4
2. Terranigma
3. Starseekers Of Exion

Best Challenge (Ultra Nintendo)

1. Super Mario Dimensions
2. Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night
3. Wave Race

Best Play Control (SNES-CD)

1. Donkey Kong Country 4
2. Twinblade II
3. Terranigma

Best Play Control (Ultra Nintendo)

1. Super Mario Dimensions
2. Starfox 2
3. Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night

#### Best Theme And Fun (SNES-CD)

1. Donkey Kong Country 4
2. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2
3. Terranigma

#### Best Theme And Fun (Ultra Nintendo)

1. Super Mario Dimensions
2. Final Fantasy VII
3. Ultra Mario Kart

#### Best Hero

1. Cloud
2. Alucard
3. Mario

#### Best Villain

1. Sephiroth
2. Bowser
3. Rufus Shinra

#### Most Innovative

1. Intelligent Qube
2. Mirrorlight
3. Parappa The Rapper

#### Best Overall (SNES-CD)

1. Terranigma
2. Donkey Kong Country 4
3. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2

#### Best Overall (Ultra Nintendo)

1. Final Fantasy VII
2. Super Mario Dimensions
3. Ultra Mario Kart

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#### **The Billboard #1 Songs Of 1997:**

January 4: I Believe I Can Fly by R. Kelly

January 11: Don't Let Go (Love) by En Vogue  
January 18: I Believe I Can Fly by R. Kelly  
January 25: See-Through Heart by Jewel  
February 1: See-Through Heart by Jewel  
February 8: Wannabe by The Spice Girls  
February 15: Wannabe by The Spice Girls  
February 22: Wannabe by The Spice Girls  
March 1: Wannabe by The Spice Girls  
March 8: Wannabe by The Spice Girls  
March 15: Wannabe by The Spice Girls  
March 22: Key To My Love by Selena  
March 29: Key To My Love by Selena  
April 5: Can't Nobody Hold Me Down by Puff Daddy (Featuring Mase)  
April 12: Can't Nobody Hold Me Down by Puff Daddy (Featuring Mase)  
April 19: Can't Nobody Hold Me Down by Puff Daddy (Featuring Mase)  
April 26: Can't Nobody Hold Me Down by Puff Daddy (Featuring Mase)  
May 3: Can't Nobody Hold Me Down by Puff Daddy (Featuring Mase)  
May 10: Foolish Games/You Were Meant For Me by Jewel  
May 17: Foolish Games/You Were Meant For Me by Jewel  
May 24: Mmmmbop by Hanson  
May 31: Mmmmbop by Hanson  
June 7: Say You'll Be There by The Spice Girls  
June 14: Southside Serenade by Selena  
June 21: Say You'll Be There by The Spice Girls  
June 28: Say You'll Be There by The Spice Girls  
July 5: Say You'll Be There by The Spice Girls  
July 12: Bitch by Meredith Brooks  
July 19: Bitch by Meredith Brooks  
July 26: Bitch by Meredith Brooks  
August 2: Bitch by Meredith Brooks  
August 9: Bitch by Meredith Brooks  
August 16: Bitch by Meredith Brooks  
August 23: Bitch by Meredith Brooks  
August 30: Bitch by Meredith Brooks  
September 6: Bitch by Meredith Brooks  
September 13: Semi-Charmed Life by Third Eye Blind  
September 20: Honey by Mariah Carey  
September 27: Increase The Peace by Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G.  
October 4: Increase The Peace by Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G.  
October 11: Increase The Peace by Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G.  
October 18: Increase The Peace by Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G.  
October 25: Increase The Peace by Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G.  
November 1: Increase The Peace by Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G.  
November 8: Increase The Peace by Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G.  
November 15: Increase The Peace by Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G.  
November 22: Increase The Peace by Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G.  
November 29: Increase The Peace by Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G.  
December 6: Increase The Peace by Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G.  
December 13: Increase The Peace by Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G.  
December 20: Increase The Peace by Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G.  
December 27: Increase The Peace by Tupac Shakur and The Notorious B.I.G.

(The biggest butterflies here are the absences of "I'll Be Missing You" and "Candle In The Wind 1997", both inspired by tragedies that never occurred ITTL. "I'll Be Missing You" getting butterflyed clears the way for Meredith Brooks' "Bitch" to become the song of the summer and one of the most popular songs of the 1990s. In place of "Candle In The Wind 1997" is "Increase The Peace", a call from Tupac and Biggie for their fans to keep the East Coast/West Coast rap feud in the proper perspective and to not shoot each other in the streets over what's ultimately just music. "Key To My Love" and "Southside Serenade" are the two most popular singles from Selena's 1997 album.)

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### **Electronic Gaming Monthly Editors' Choice Awards 1997:** (selected)

Game of the Year: Super Mario Dimensions

Runners-up: Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night, Final Fantasy VII

*Our top three overall games of the year were all Ultra Nintendo games. The Ultra Nintendo's launch was fantastic and we can't wait to see what Nintendo's cooking up next.*

Super Nintendo CD Game Of The Year: Terranigma

Runners-up: Donkey Kong Country 4, Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo

*The epic Enix RPG edged out Donkey Kong's family reunion. It wasn't an easy pick for us, but Terranigma's bittersweet quest and the game's lovely soundtrack put Enix's game barely over the top.*

Ultra Nintendo Game Of The Year: Super Mario Dimensions

Runners-up: Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night, Final Fantasy VII

*Symphony Of The Night was amazing and the year's most pleasant surprise, but in the end this award wasn't even close. Super Mario Dimensions won a unanimous vote. Mario's huge world blew us all away and we couldn't stop until we had all 180 stars.*

Sega Saturn Game Of The Year: Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain

Runner-up: Saturn Bomberman, Turok: Dinosaur Hunter

*Don't get us wrong, we loved Turok, but Legacy of Kain was a dark and challenging RPG that took us into the depths of Nosgoth. As for Saturn Bomberman....10 players at once. 'Nuff said.*

Handheld Game Of The Year: Shantae

Runners-up: Sydonia, Donkey Kong Land 3

*Shantae is the most beautiful handheld game we've ever played and truly showed off the new tricks that the Game Boy Color brought to bear. It beat out Squaresoft's RPG Sydonia by a wide margin, though Sydonia's soundtrack was extremely impressive.*

Best RPG: Final Fantasy VII

Runner-up: Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain, Terranigma

*Final Fantasy VII was a masterpiece and though it didn't have the fun action combat of Blood Omen and Terranigma, it made up for it with one of the most epic quests ever.*

Best Fighting Game: Fighters Megamix  
Runner-up: Tekken 2, Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo

*Sega's all hands on deck fighting game was a revelation and we had a ton of fun pitting Sonic against our favorite Virtua Fighters. Star Wars was fun, but Megamix was awesome.*

Best Adventure Game: Turok: Dinosaur Hunter  
Runner-up: Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night, Tales Of The Seven Seas 2

*Turok's epic FPS actually got more votes from us in this category despite losing to Castlevania in our Game of the Year vote. It was one of the biggest worlds we'd ever seen in an FPS and we loved exploring it.*

Best Action Game: Super Mario Dimensions  
Runners-up: Tick And Tock: Time Tricksters, Contra: World War

*Super Mario Dimensions stomped all competition this year, even the innovative Tick and Tock didn't stand a chance against this instant classic.*

Sidescrolling Game Of The Year: Donkey Kong Country 4  
Runners-up: Troublemakers, Dog Dash 2

*Treasure's strange Troublemakers brought anime style and big boss fights to bear, but it's hard to beat DKC in the platforming department.*

Best Graphics: Super Mario Dimensions  
Runners-up: Turok: Dinosaur Hunter, Starfox 2

*Super Mario Dimensions showed all of us what the Ultra Nintendo was truly capable of with its big, colorful worlds and huge variety of characters.*

Best Music: Windborn  
Runner-up: Final Fantasy VII, Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night

*Windborn's amazing score stirred us with emotion, and got a very slight win over Nobuo Uematsu's epic work for Final Fantasy VII.*

### **Electronic Gaming Monthly Readers' Choice Awards 1997:**

Game Of The Year: Super Mario Dimensions  
Runners-up: Final Fantasy VII, Turok: Dinosaur Hunter

Super Nintendo CD Game Of The Year: Donkey Kong Country 4  
Runners-up: Terranigma, Victory 2

Ultra Nintendo Game Of The Year: Super Mario Dimensions  
Runners-up: Final Fantasy VII, Starfox 2

Sega Saturn Game Of The Year: Turok: Dinosaur Hunter  
Runner-up: Windborn, Phantasy Star V

Handheld Game Of The Year: Sydonia  
Runners-up: Shantae, VideoVision: Remote Wars

Best RPG: Final Fantasy VII  
Runner-up: Windborn, Terranigma

Best Fighting Game: Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo  
Runner-up: Tekken 2, Marvel vs. Street Fighter

Best Adventure Game: Turok: Dinosaur Hunter  
Runner-up: Tales Of The Seven Seas 2, Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night

Best Action Game: Super Mario Dimensions  
Runners-up: Victory 2, Contra: World War

Sidescrolling Game Of The Year: Donkey Kong Country 4  
Runners-up: Dog Dash 2, Frederico 2: Garcia's Revenge

Best Graphics: Super Mario Dimensions  
Runners-up: Final Fantasy VII, Turok: Dinosaur Hunter

Best Music: Final Fantasy VII  
Runner-up: Parappa The Rapper, Turok: Dinosaur Hunter

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### **Gamepro 1997 Readers' Choice Awards**

Best Role-Playing Game:

*Last year this was too close to call. This year? A complete stomp! The king of RPG franchises returned in epic fashion as Final Fantasy VII climbed a pile of pretenders to the top of the mountain.*

Final Fantasy VII (Ultra Nintendo): 68%  
Phantasy Star V (Saturn): 10%  
Terranigma (SNES-CD): 9%  
Windborn (Saturn): 5%  
Planetary Probe (Saturn): 5%

Best Sports Game:

*The Saturn proved itself once again the king of sports games, with the Saturn version of Madden on top due to its deep list of features which includes team and player creations, play creation, and even the ability to take over a franchise for a decade or more!*

Madden 98 (Saturn): 36%  
NBA Hangtime (Saturn): 23%  
NHL '98 (Saturn): 14%  
MLB '98 (Saturn): 10%  
Madden 98 (Ultra Nintendo): 9%

#### Best Fighting Game:

*It was a good year for fighting games but in the end it came down to a pair of Saturn titles, Tekken 2 and the crossover hit Fighters Megamix. In the end, you picked Tekken 2 as the year's champion.*

Tekken 2 (Saturn): 30%  
Fighters Megamix (Saturn): 22%  
Deathblow (Ultra Nintendo): 19%  
Twinblade III (Super Nintendo CD): 8%  
Marvel vs. Street Fighter (Saturn) 6%  
Raigeki (Saturn): 4%

#### Best Action Game:

*Another blowout in favor of an Ultra Nintendo game, this time it was Super Mario Dimensions dominating all comers.*

Super Mario Dimensions (Ultra Nintendo): 47%  
Tomb Raider II (Saturn): 15%  
Donkey Kong Country 4 (Super Nintendo CD): 13%  
Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night (Ultra Nintendo): 6%  
Race'n'Chase (Saturn): 6%

#### Best SNES-CD Game:

*While the SNES-CD might not have garnered the headlines that the Ultra Nintendo did, it still had an excellent roster of games, with Donkey Kong Country 4 coming out as king of the jungle.*

Donkey Kong Country 4: 31%  
Terranigma: 21%  
Tales Of The Seven Seas 2: 16%  
Starseekers Of Exion: 14%  
Victory 2: 5%

#### Best Ultra Nintendo Game:

*This was neck and neck all the way, back and forth with big pushes from the Final Fantasy and Mario camps. In the end, it was Final Fantasy VII, proving how much you all love to play RPGs.*

Final Fantasy VII: 38%  
Super Mario Dimensions: 35%  
Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night: 9%  
Ultra Mario Kart: 6%  
Star Fox 2: 6%

#### Best Saturn Game:

*Turok devoured the competition, though Phantasy Star V had a nice showing in second place. The epic dinosaur hunting FPS was loved by critics and fans alike and it wins here as*

*expected.*

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter: 41%  
Phantasy Star V: 13%  
Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain: 10%  
Windborn: 8%  
Planetary Probe: 8%  
Race'n'Chase: 5%

Best System Overall:

*Despite all the Ultra Nintendo hype, you still picked the Saturn as your favorite system of the year! Maybe next year once more of you have your hands on the Ultra Nintendo, Saturn will get more of a challenge...*

Saturn: 41%  
Ultra Nintendo: 33%  
SNES-CD: 24%

Best Game Overall:

*This was a three way showdown right from the very start and despite the Ultra Nintendo fans splitting votes between the top two contenders from that system, Final Fantasy VII came out on top! Sega fans threw their support behind Turok, but it just wasn't enough to claim the crown.*

Final Fantasy VII: 27%  
Turok: Dinosaur Hunter: 24%  
Super Mario Dimensions: 24%  
Terranigma: 7%  
Donkey Kong Country 4: 6%  
Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain: 4%  
Phantasy Star V: 3%  
Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night: 2%

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*"With the launch of the Ultra Nintendo, the Super Power Club operated by Nintendo decided to make some changes to the Nintendo Power CD program. While they would continue to produce Nintendo Power CD for SNES-CD owners through 1998, the launch of the Ultra Nintendo also saw the birth of a new program: Nintendo Underground. For an added \$10 a year for Nintendo Power subscribers, or \$15 a year for a stand-alone subscription, subscribers to Nintendo Underground would get four dual-Gigadisc sets a year. They'd be released quarterly on the same months that Nintendo Power CD was: January, April, July, and October, and, like Nintendo Power CD, would contain video previews, reviews, tips, strategies, and other news stories, but pertaining to Ultra Nintendo games. The second disc would of course contain demos of current and upcoming games. Nintendo Underground tended to be a bit more of a premium package than Nintendo Power CD was. There were usually more demos, strategies were more in-depth, and discs even contained things like save files from certain games that would give special bonuses if loaded onto a memory card. There were things like files that unlocked every character in certain fighting games, files that would put you ahead a few levels in a tricky game, files with unlocked cheat codes,*

*etc. Sony was heavily involved in the Nintendo Underground program, they'd even given Nintendo the idea for the name. It was aimed toward a slightly older contingent of players than Nintendo Power CD was, designed to emphasize a new generation of Nintendo players, so to speak."*

-from an IGN.com retrospective on Nintendo Power

## **Nintendo Underground #1.1 – January 1998**

Disc One:

Videos-

Ultra Nintendo: Under The Hood (8:05)  
Ultra Nintendo Launch Recap (7:28)  
Final Fantasy VII Behind The Scenes (5:58)  
Into Rare Studios – Goldeneye Preview (11:03)  
Resident Evil (4:50)  
Tomb Raider (5:17)  
What A Rush! - San Francisco Rush Preview (3:48)

Classified Information – Cheat codes for recent Ultra Nintendo games

Counselors' Corner (Strategy Videos)-

Super Mario Dimensions – Getting Started With Five Easy Stars  
Final Fantasy VII – Mako Reactor No. 5  
Ultra Mario Kart – The Best Shortcuts  
Starfox 64 – How To Get The Best Ending (SPOILERS!)  
Wave Race – Doing Awesome Stunts

The Pulse – Our Top 10 Ultra Nintendo Games

Download Station:

World 4 Open – Crash Bandicoot  
Everything Unlocked – Cruis'n USA  
All Fighters Unlocked – Bushido Blade  
5 Extra Save Ribbons – Resident Evil  
Maria and Richter Unlocked – Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night  
Start At Sector 7 (After The Mako Reactor No. 1 Mission) With A Full Set Of Master Materia – Final Fantasy VII

Disc Two (Demos and Videos):

Playable-

Ultra Mario Kart  
Star Fox 2  
Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night  
Final Fantasy VII  
Resident Evil

Tomb Raider  
Armored Core  
Ultra Bomberman  
Boom Island  
Bushido Blade  
Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon  
1080 Snowboarding

Videos-

Goldeneye 007  
Yoshi's Story  
Mysteria 2: The Four Princesses  
Construct-It

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John Walden: \*standing on the GameTV stage\* And I'm just so honored right now to have this opportunity to interview perhaps the greatest video game creator of all time, Mr. Shigeru Miyamoto. I got to travel to Japan and speak with Mr. Miyamoto personally, and it was truly an amazing experience and one that I'll never forget. We got to discuss a number of things and, I will say, I'm glad that I was able to get some...well some secrets out of him that have never before been revealed to any audience anywhere concerning the upcoming *Legend of Zelda* game. So sit back, relax, and enjoy this interview with Mr. Shigeru Miyamoto.

(...)

\*Miyamoto is speaking with the aid of a translator who is next to him as John sits across from them both\*

John: And thank you again so much for agreeing to speak to us here at *GameTV*.

Miyamoto: \*nodding\* Of course, I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak with the passionate fans who watch the show. I understand that it's the most watched video game television program in America, correct?

John: Yes it is, more than three million viewers a week!

Miyamoto: That's a lot of Nintendo fans!

John: Not everyone who watches the show is a Nintendo fan but certainly most of the people who watch the show have played at least one of your games. You've got...an amazing track record. *Super Mario*, *Zelda*, *Donkey Kong*, *Metroid*, *Star Fox*, the list goes on and on. With the Ultra Nintendo having so many games released right away, which game were you focused on the most?

Miyamoto: Well...\*he laughs nervously\* I was focused for the most part on *Super Mario Dimensions* and *Star Fox 2*. Um....*Super Mario Dimensions*, certainly that was the game I contributed the most to but it was also an effort of many here at Nintendo. Of all the things we were able to do in that game... I think most of the new ideas, they came from others here at the company. It was a true team effort, as was *Star Fox 2*.

John: Of all the new gameplay possibilities opened up by the Ultra Nintendo, what do you think is the most exciting?

Miyamoto: Certainly the controller allows for a much greater degree of freedom for the player. The right analog stick, at first I was not sure if we should have it, but getting to see how it allows the player to control the way they view the world, that I think is a major transformation in how I'll be able to create new games going forward. So I would say that the second analog stick is the biggest change.

John: There were a lot of games released for the Ultra Nintendo, and in a variety of different genres. Do you find yourself inspired by the other games released for the system?

Miyamoto: It's an enormous variety of games, certainly. But...while other companies have created amazing games and beautiful worlds to explore, at the moment I'm simply thinking of entirely new ways to play. So while I do keep myself aware of what others are doing with Nintendo's technology, I try to think of what would make the most fun for the most players and try to create something that will bring that vision to reality.

(...)

John: How far are you along on the new *Legend Of Zelda*?

Miyamoto: \*laughing\* I knew you would ask that!

John: The last *Zelda* was so amazing.

Miyamoto: I was very surprised at that. I was extremely happy with what I had helped to create with *Ocarina of Dreams*, but I had no idea it would be so highly regarded. I am pleased that so many people had a lot of fun playing it!

John: That's why we all want to know about the new one!

Miyamoto: It is....more than half done. Actually it might be more than 75 percent done. Certainly, I will not rush it. If it needs to be delayed because it is not as good as it could be, I will ask that we be given more time to work on it. But....it is coming along very quickly.

John: Really? Does that mean...it could be released this year?

Miyamoto: That is the plan, in fact, it may be released here in Japan very soon. I cannot reveal much more but I will say, and we have revealed this to video game news publications here in Japan, the game will involve time travel. There will be two different Links and the game will not be related to other *Zelda* games. I cannot reveal much more than that.

John: Two different Links?

Miyamoto: Well, with time travel, there is a Link of the past and a Link of the future.

John: Will the two Links interact?

Miyamoto: No.

John: So, no dungeons where past Link and future Link have to solve puzzles together?

Miyamoto: \*laughing\* That could be an interesting idea to explore for another game! But no, no dungeons like that. There will not be as many dungeons as in the previous game, but they will be bigger. That, actually, is something we have not told anyone before but now that development is closer to finishing, we can reveal that that is the case.

John: How many dungeons are there?

Miyamoto: That I cannot say! \*laughing\*

(...)

John: With all the improvements in cinematic presentation, voice acting, animated cutscenes, do you feel as if you need to make story telling a bigger element in your games?

Miyamoto: Um...I like to keep stories simple and that will likely continue with my games. I am content to let others tell bigger stories! \*laughs\* I just try to make games that are fun to play, that everyone can play and enjoy. If I can do that, I consider what I have done a success.

John: Well, I think certainly, what you've done already has been extremely successful and I'm looking forward to every game you work on in the future. Thank you again for this interview, it's been amazingly enlightening and a lot of fun. \*shakes Miyamoto's hand\*

Miyamoto: Thank you, please, keep playing and have fun!

-excerpted from a 15-minute interview of Shigeru Miyamoto on the December 16, 1997 episode of *GameTV*

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*"So we were looking for a new ad campaign that would stick in the minds of people in the wake of the Ultra Nintendo's release. A way to really carry us for 1998. And I looked at what Japan was doing and they've got this kung fu badass beating the shit out of people for not playing Sega Saturn. And it was awesome! And I looked at that and I said 'that guy is what we need, can we get that guy in America?' Well, obviously we couldn't just have him beating people up for not playing Saturn. We couldn't have him beating up women or kids. Which, I mean, obviously. So what we settled on was that we'd have him comically beating up grown men who tried to keep our fans from playing the Sega Saturn. Teachers who gave too much homework, store clerks who tried to push the Ultra Nintendo on people, that sort of thing. And it'd always be very comical and cheesy. Well, we kicked off the campaign in January 1998 and it became a big hit for us. Did it make a dent in Nintendo that year? I like to think that it did even though it probably didn't. Nevertheless, it was really cool."*

*-Tom Kalinske, discussing Segata Sanshiro in an interview in *The Chase: Sega's 20 Year Struggle To Take Down A Giant**

Narrator (Don LaFontaine): He came from a land across the sea...

*\*Segata Sanshiro is shown walking onto the beach out of the Pacific Ocean as serious music plays.\**

Narrator: And he became a legend...

\*A bunch of kids are shown at school\*

Teenage Boy: Man, I can't wait to get home and play the Sega Saturn!

Teenage Girl: Yeah, it's gonna be sweet!

\*Their teacher, a balding middle aged guy with glasses, plops a HUGE stack of homework down on their desks.\*

Teacher: \*menacingly\* Your HOMEWORK.

Teenage Boy: This sucks, mom won't let me play until all this is done!

Teenage Girl: We'll be doing homework all night!

\*The door is knocked down by a karate chop. The students all turn to see Segata Sanshiro standing in the door as his theme begins to play:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POkU70cjYI8> \*

Segata Sanshiro: \*points at the teacher and shouts in Japanese\* *These students must be allowed to play Sega Saturn!*

Teacher: But....homework!

\*Segata Sanshiro leaps at the teacher with a flying karate kick, we see the teacher being comically thrown around the room before landing on the students' desks, sending the piles of homework flying\*

Segata Sanshiro: \*to the students, in Japanese\* *Go forth and play Sega Saturn!*

\*The teens rush out of class with Saturn controllers in hand.\*

Narrator: Segata Sanshiro, making the world safe for Saturn players everywhere to enjoy games like *Daytona USA 2*, *Klonoa: Door To Phantomile*, and *Phantasy Star V*. \*as he speaks footage from the following games is shown on screen\*

Segata Sanshiro: \*points at the screen and shouts in Japanese\* *You must play Sega Saturn!*

Teacher: \*still lying on the students' desks, groaning as his glasses hang halfway off his face, he lets out the Sega scream\* **SEGA!**

\**Sega Saturn: Now \$199* is shown on screen as Segata Sanshiro does impressive karate moves\*

-a Sega Saturn commercial that began airing in late January 1998

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Ted Crosley: The time has come!

Alex Stansfield: It's that time again to pick our top ten console games of the year!

Lyssa Fielding: We had a tough time picking our faves....some of us did, anyway.

Brittany Saldita: But we managed to come to a...sorta consensus....

Ted: Okay, we admit, we're STILL fighting over this thing. But we think we've got a solid list!

Gary Westhouse: And now, our top ten games of the year 1997!

Alex: Let's DO THIS!

Brittany: Our number ten game of the year was the Sega Saturn fighting game **Raigeki**.

Ted: This game was totally nuts. Wacky characters, fast paced fighting, and that announcer...

John Walden: Yeah, if you sucked he'd definitely let you know.

Alex: *Raigeki* had us hooked from the moment the machine dropped at our local arcade, and once it hit the Sega Saturn, we couldn't keep our hands off the controller.

Ted: The Saturn had a lot of great fighting games this year and Raigeki was definitely one of the best. That's why it landed on our top ten games of the year.

Lyssa: And in ninth place was **Tales Of The Seven Seas 2**, for the Super Nintendo CD. We loved the original game way back in 1995 and the seven characters return in this great adventure game from Naughty Dog.

Brittany: While it wasn't quite as epic in scale as the original, the story, focusing on Dona, her family, and her checkered past, was even deeper and more emotional.

Gary: And this game brought back lots of the same exploration and combat that made the first game so much fun.

Ted: It was the perfect continuation of the original game, expanding its characters horizons and opening up a wider world. *Tales Of The Seven Seas 2* was just as fun as the first, and we can't wait to see what Naughty Dog does with this series next.

Alex: Our number eight pick was **Ultra Mario Kart**. It kept the original's amazingly fun gameplay while taking the graphics and presentation up to the next level.

Gary: The fast paced fun of Mario Kart was made even more fun with the addition of some amazing new levels, awesome shortcuts, and six killer battle stages.

Brittany: And Koji Kondo took it up a notch in the soundtrack department with some truly amazing tunes.

Ted: We inducted this game into our Hall of Fame when we reviewed it last month, and while we didn't rank it as high as some games that didn't make it in, due to the wider voting

for this top ten, we still all considered *Ultra Mario Kart* one of the year's best games. And now we get to number seven, and that brings us to the excellent double team platformer, **Tick and Tock: Time Tricksters** for the Sega Saturn.

John: This game might be on the cartoony side, but don't let that fool you into thinking this is a kids' game. It is, but there are some tricks and traps that'll challenge even seasoned gaming veterans.

Lyssa: Tick and Tock are two of the most fun heroes around, they're a brother-sister duo with the power to control time and you needed all of their powers if you hoped to beat some of this game's powerful bosses and tricky levels.

Alex: It's one of the most exciting new franchises to hit video games in recent memory, and we recommend it to every Saturn owner, no matter how "grown up" you are.

Brittany: Our number six game of the year is the beautiful and poignant Enix RPG, **Terranigma**. This action RPG puts you in the shoes of Ark, a young man with the power to restore light to a dark world.

Gary: The gorgeous soundtrack and variety of locales based on real world cities and countries brought a unique feel to this game that stirred the emotions of even the most jaded players.

Ted: *Terranigma*, despite being on the Super Nintendo CD, looked as lovely as any game this year, with amazing animation and brilliantly designed worlds that took all our breaths away.

Alex: It proved that the Super Nintendo CD was still capable of hosting some of the most epic RPGs imaginable. While this game is set to be released on the Sega Saturn this year and in enhanced form, we still likely won't be quite as moved by it as when we played it for the first time on the Super Nintendo CD.

Brittany: From its mysterious beginning to its stirring conclusion, *Terranigma* truly is an RPG quest for the ages.

Ted: And from the wide expanses of our Earth to the depths of a haunted castle, we come to the first game of our top five, and that's **Castlevania: Symphony of the Night**.

Alex: The followup to *Castlevania: Rondo of Blood*, *Symphony of the Night* took the series' adventuring to a whole new level. It gave us an enormous castle to explore, filled with tricky corridors and deadly enemies, and introduced plenty of RPG elements to the series, letting us level up and meaning every monster we killed made us just a little bit stronger.

John: The spooky motif of the game made creeping down those dark halls all the more atmospheric.

Lyssa: While the game didn't exactly push the Ultra Nintendo technologically, it absolutely pushed the creativity of Konami's game designers, creating a quest that took us many hours to complete and gave us many, many nightmares in the process!

Ted: Gary most of all.

Gary: Oh, come on!

Alex: *Symphony of the Night* is the best Castlevania game ever made, and from a series that's produced lots of classic adventures, that's definitely saying something. At #4 is another spooky game featuring lots of vampires, and that's the Sega Saturn's **Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain**.

Brittany: *Legacy of Kain* took us into the dark, deadly world of Nosgoth as the vampire Kain, in search of revenge for his bloody murder.

Ted: The game not only broke new ground in terms of action RPG gameplay, it also pushed storytelling boundaries as well, with a complex, morally ambiguous tale and some of the best voice acting we've ever heard.

Gary: *Legacy of Kain* was absolutely incredible. We were blown away by every dark dungeon, every shocking storyline twist, every new dark vampiric power we gained. We named it to our Hall of Fame and it wasn't a tough decision to make.

Ted: Very few games let you drain an entire village of its blood, but *Legacy of Kain* did all that and then some. And this was supposed to be the good guy?

Alex: In *Legacy of Kain*, you didn't know who was good or who was bad, and that made the story all the more enthralling. We couldn't stop playing until we'd reached the shocking conclusion.

Ted: And now, we've reached our top three games of the year.

Brittany: If you've been watching us all year, you PROBABLY know what those three games are... \*screens showing footage from *Final Fantasy VII*, *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*, and *Super Mario Dimensions* are shown behind the hosts\*

Alex: But if you want to see what order we put them in, stay tuned!

\*After a commercial break, the hosts return\*

Ted: We're back and we're ready to count down our top three console games of 1997! These games topped our list for good reason. They were full of epic adventure, they featured incredible graphics, they featured amazing musical soundtracks and they all broke new ground in terms of gameplay. BUT... only one could top our list. So what game will it be?

Alex: First, our number 3. At number 3, we have **Turok: Dinosaur Hunter**. This first person shooter from Acclaim took us to an ancient land filled with dinosaurs and danger.

Lyssa: Yeah, but mostly dinosaurs.

John: *Turok* featured an enormous variety of weapons, including a nuclear bomb cannon and a gun that drilled into enemies' heads and pushed out their brains.

Brittany: It also featured a massive open world structure novel to first person shooters at the time and while it lacked the multiplayer mode that might've given it a shot at number one, the single player adventure was still the best fun we've ever had in an FPS, and that

includes legendary games such as *Doom*.

Ted: From the first level to the final fight against the Campaigner, *Turok* was everything we wanted in an FPS. Weapons, blood, guts, and lots and lots and LOTS of dinosaurs.

\*A T-rex roars into the screen.\*

Alex: And now...we come to our top two. They're both Ultra Nintendo games...

Ted: \*grumbles a bit\* Yeah, all right, all right, the Ultra Nintendo kicked the Saturn's ass this year, even I'll admit it. These two games were the best of the best, in fact, among the very best games ever released in their genres. A platformer and an RPG, part of two of the most venerable video game franchises...ever. Our number two game of the year is... **Final Fantasy VII**.

\*The opening cutscene from the game begins to play.\*

Brittany: Squaresoft's new RPG redefined the word epic with a world-spanning quest set in a cyberpunk landscape. It starred Cloud Strife, a soldier seeking his purpose and his past, who teamed up with a band of freedom fighters trying to save their planet.

Alex: It rose to new heights for the genre in terms of cinematic presentation and graphical fidelity, with hours of cutscenes spanning two gigabyte capacity Ultra Nintendo discs.

Ted: The game's 50+ hour quest was big in and of itself, but when you add dozens of sidequests to the mix, a series first, you got what had to be one of the biggest quests in video game history, where you could proceed with the main story or hunt down massive monsters in boss fights harder than any we've ever played in an RPG. You could even enjoy hours upon hours of chocobo racing...and inbreeding.

Lyssa: All chocobo-related shenanigans aside, this game brought the series into the next generation in so many ways, with professional voice acting and the all new Materia system that let you customize your characters' battle layout to your heart's content.

John: And a sudden twist part of the way through your adventure will leave you speechless, and also ensures that you'll need to play through the game more than once to get the whole story.

Alex: *Final Fantasy VII* packed more than 100 playable hours into one epic quest, and it truly was one of the greatest RPGs of all time.

Ted: And now for our number one of the year and it was quite nearly unanimous. Only Alex voted for *Final Fantasy VII* as game of the year, the rest of us all voted for **Super Mario Dimensions**.

Alex: And for me it was pretty much a tie. *Super Mario Dimensions* was an amazing game, picking up where *Super Mario World 3* left off to put Mario in a fully 3-D world with so much to do. With 21 different dimensions, not to mention a massive hub world with Stars of its own to collect, *Super Mario Dimensions* will keep even expert gamers on their toes to collect all 180 Stars.

Brittany: The game's plot was familiar, with Bowser kidnapping Princess Peach once again,

but the quests for the Stars spanned a huge variety of different objectives, from exploration missions to difficult platforming runs to massive boss fights, hell, even Donkey Kong came back in one of the worlds!

Gary: With so many throwbacks to classic Mario games, this game was a love letter to all Mario fans, a reward for buying the Ultra Nintendo. This was the game you automatically got when you purchased the system, and Nintendo couldn't have picked a better game to include.

Ted: This was Mario at his finest. Jumping on enemies, leaping across platforms, the game even gave those who managed to get all 180 Stars a special surprise that'll make you want to play through the game all over again.

Alex: But even without that special surprise, I think fans will want to play this game over and over...and over...and over again. It's a timeless classic, it might just be the greatest game ever made, and despite not being my personal choice, there's no doubt this was GameTV's pick for number one game of the year. *Super Mario Dimensions*, we loved you.

\*Shows Mario collecting a Star, giving a peace sign, and shouting "Here we go!"\*

Ted: Well, that's it for GameTV's Year In Review 1997 special. Join us next week when we journey to the world of Phantomile in the Saturn's newest platformer hit.

Alex: And we'll be hopping into battle in Armored Core for the Ultra Nintendo. Don't miss it!

-excerpted from the January 6, 1998 episode of GameTV

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*1997 was a huge year for video games, with no shortage of great games and huge happenings. Here is our list of the ten biggest stories of the year.*

#### *#10: Enix's Epic Tag Team*

Nintendo and Square have rode together for many years, and this year, Enix made the leap to Sega's team after publishing two highly regarded SNES-CD RPGs, *Terranigma* and *Dragon Quest VI*, both of which have been announced for the Saturn sometime in the coming years. Sega continues to build an ever growing stable of productive third party partnerships.

#### *#9: Nintendo Poaches Sega's Killer Apps*

While Sega might've locked up Enix, Nintendo struck back by announcing that ports of *Resident Evil* and *Tomb Raider*, along with the sequels to both games, would be appearing on their new Ultra Nintendo system in 1998, stealing Sega's thunder at E3 before the company had the chance to show off two of the Saturn's biggest sequels of the year.

#### *#8: May The Force Be With You*

*Star Wars* returned to theaters with the Special Edition Trilogy, and there were plenty of Star Wars games to play as well, including *Masters of Juyo* on the SNES-CD and *Jedi Knight Dark Forces II* on the PC, with many more games announced for 1998 and beyond. As a

new prequel trilogy enters production, there won't be any shortage of *Star Wars* games to enjoy!

#### #7: *The Year Of The RPG...on PC?*

While there were plenty of epic console RPGs to go around, PC gamers had plenty of fun with role playing games too, particularly with the open world megahits *Fallout* and *The Witcher*, a post apocalyptic RPG and a massive fantasy quest respectively. The two games both sold over a million copies, winning numerous awards and showing that PC role-playing games can compete with any console experience.

#### #6: *Enter Turok*

*Turok: The Dinosaur Hunter* was one of the year's biggest blockbusters, helping to solidify the Sega Saturn's position as market leader. The game made a huge splash in the mainstream media and won Game of the Year accolades from numerous publications, including this one.

#### #5: *Racing With Controversy*

*Race'n'Chase* debuted for the Sega Saturn amidst a massive backlash from the media, depicting graphic violence and giving the player the ability to gun down civilians and police officers alike. Even though the game let you choose to play as a good cop, you could also be a corrupt cop..or a psychopathic criminal.

#### #4: *Metal Gear Solid*

One of the biggest attractions at E3 wasn't a playable demo at all. It was a five minute video previewing Hideo Kojima's *Metal Gear Solid* for the Ultra Nintendo. The game looks amazing and could challenge the next Legend of Zelda for Game of the Year honors, assuming they both come out this year.

#### #3: *A Fantasy For The Ages*

*Final Fantasy VII* was a smash hit, the first mainstream hit RPG since *Secret of Mana* and looks to even eclipse that game in North American sales, with nearly a million sold in its first two months of release alone. The game received rave reviews and high praise for its mature storyline and branching paths.

#### #2: *Saturn Price Drops*

In an attempt to push its way into more homes, the Sega Saturn slashed its price, first at E3 to \$249, and again to \$199 in November, just ahead of the Ultra Nintendo's release. Only time will tell if the strategy pays off.

#### #1: *It's An Ultra World*

The Ultra Nintendo's launch is of course the story of the year. With sellouts everywhere, the console kicked up a media frenzy, while also featuring the most stacked launch roster of all time. It's an Ultra world now, and we're all just living in it.

-excerpted from the February 1998 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

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## **Game Watch**

### *SNES-CD:*

Extreme Go-Karting- Winter '98  
Forever And Ever With You- Winter '98  
Monopoly- Winter '98  
Reel Fishing- Winter '98  
World Championship Boxing '98- Winter '98  
Hacker Jack 2- Spring '98  
Lufia III: The Ancient Tower- Spring '98  
SaGa Frontier- Spring '98  
Street Fighter Alpha 3- Spring '98  
Tamagotchi- Spring '98  
The Three Caballeros- Spring '98  
Winged Wonder- Spring '98  
Brigandine- Summer '98  
FIFA World Cup 98- Summer '98  
Fire Pro Wrestling Presents: WCW Thunder- Summer '98  
Flame Squad 2- Summer '98  
Lucky Luke- Summer '98  
Sphere Soldier- Summer '98  
Kartia- Fall '98

### *Ultra Nintendo:*

Armored Core- Winter '98  
Boom Island- Winter '98  
Clock Tower II: The Struggle Within- Winter '98  
Einhander- Winter '98  
Jeopardy- Winter '98  
Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon- Winter '98  
Operation Zero- Winter '98  
Resident Evil- Winter '98  
Rival Schools- Winter '98  
San Francisco Rush- Winter '98  
Star Wars: Shadows Of The Empire- Winter '98  
Tomb Raider- Winter '98  
Ultra Valis: Knight Of Light- Winter '98  
Wayne Gretzky Hockey- Winter '98  
1080 Snowboarding- Spring '98  
Armed And Dangerous- Spring '98  
Blasto- Spring '98  
Bloody Roar- Spring '98  
Bulbix: The Forest Adventure- Spring '98  
Construct-It- Spring '98  
Deepground- Spring '98  
Dust To Dust- Spring '98  
Gex: Enter The Gecko- Spring '98

Goldeneye 007- Spring '98  
Gran Turismo- Spring '98  
Ken Griffey Jr's Ultra Grand Slam- Spring '98  
Major Hazard: Blitzkrieg- Spring '98  
Mysteria 2: The Four Princesses- Spring '98  
Road Storm: Burning Rubber- Spring '98  
Speed Racer- Spring '98  
Tomb Raider II- Spring '98  
Tomba!- Spring '98  
Ultra Clay Fighter- Spring '98  
War Gods- Spring '98  
WCW/NWO Revenge- Spring '98  
Wheel Of Fortune- Spring '98  
Yoshi's Story- Spring '98  
Aeroboy- Summer '98  
Ballistic Limit 2- Summer '98  
Bikerz 3- Summer '98  
Diablo- Summer '98  
Fairytale- Summer '98  
Front Mission 2- Summer '98  
Grant Hill's Ultimate Basketball- Summer '98  
NFL Blitz- Summer '98  
Pulseman 2- Summer '98  
Quake- Summer '98  
Race'n'Chase- Summer '98  
Resident Evil 2- Summer '98  
Tenchu: Stealth Assassins- Summer '98  
The Dreamers- Summer '98  
Ultra FIFA Soccer- Summer '98  
Ultra Monster Wars- Summer '98  
Killer Instinct Ultra- Fall '98  
Metal Clash- Fall '98  
Mortal Kombat 4- Fall '98  
Parasite Eve- Fall '98  
Tale Lemuria- Fall '98  
The Legend Of Zelda- Fall '98  
Ultra Bomberman 2- Fall '98  
Ultra World Of Color- Fall '98

-excerpted from the January 1998 issue of *Nintendo Power*

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### **The 1997 Interactive Achievement Awards**

Game Of The Year: *Super Mario Dimensions*  
Console Game Of The Year: *Super Mario Dimensions*  
Computer Game Of The Year: *The Witcher*  
Action Game Of The Year: *Super Mario Dimensions*  
Adventure Game Of The Year: *Final Fantasy VII*  
Family Game Of The Year: *Ultra Mario Kart*  
Massively Multiplayer Game Of The Year: *Ultima Online*

Racing Game Of The Year: *Ultra Mario Kart*  
Role Playing Game Of The Year: *Final Fantasy VII*  
Shooter Game Of The Year: *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*  
Strategy/Simulation Game Of The Year: *Microsoft Flight Simulator 98* (Simulation), *Empire: The Steel Kingdom* (Strategy)  
Sports Game Of The Year: *Ultra International Superstar Soccer*  
Fighting Game Of The Year: *Tekken 2*  
Outstanding Art Direction: *Windborn*  
Outstanding Vocal Performance: Simon Templeman as Kain in *Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain* (Male), Mary Kay Bergman as Aeris in *Final Fantasy VII* (Female)  
Outstanding Game Design: *Super Mario Dimensions*  
Outstanding Gameplay Engineering: *Super Mario Dimensions*  
Outstanding Online Gameplay: *Ultima Online*  
Outstanding Sound Design: *Super Mario Dimensions*  
Outstanding Story: *Final Fantasy VII*  
Outstanding Visual Engineering: *Super Mario Dimensions*

(Note: This started in 1997 and is pretty much the most prestigious awards for video games, I might turn this into a full ceremony in future years. Here's the list of OTL winners: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academ...s\\_%26\\_Sciences](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academ...s_%26_Sciences) )

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*"In 1997, everyone knew that the Ultra Nintendo was coming. The Saturn continued to sell plenty of units throughout the year, propelled by hits like Turok: Dinosaur Hunter and Tomb Raider II, but even the most optimistic Sega fans knew that Nintendo would inevitably strike back. As the Ultra Nintendo loomed, Nintendo kept the Super Nintendo CD alive with some of the best games to be released for the system, proving that even though superior technology was on the horizon, the old system was still capable of some truly epic games. From Terranigma, to Starseekers of Exion, to Tales Of The Seven Seas 2, the SNES-CD played host to some of the year's best games, and would continue to release new titles in North America even as late as 1999. But it was the Ultra Nintendo that changed everything when it was released on November 21, 1997. The system's launch shattered records, many of which it still holds to this day. Pent-up demand and an enormous lineup of games that included Super Mario Dimensions, Final Fantasy VII, and Ultra Mario Kart made fans clamor for the system in such numbers that Nintendo and Sony wouldn't be able to fully catch up with demand until after Christmas 1998. Meanwhile, Sega and the Saturn were left reeling, but with a strong lineup of games and third parties eager to produce more, Nintendo's rival was down but definitely not out. Sega had a secret weapon lined up in the form of the Ring, an expansion to the technological capabilities of the Saturn. But Nintendo had a secret weapon as well, one that would bring the handheld gaming market, which had been in a half-decade slump, back to prominence, while launching a cultural phenomenon not seen since the likes of Star Wars in the late 70s. Pokemon had already swept Japan like a megatsunami, and now in the West, the ocean was beginning to recede..."*

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-"The History Of Console Gaming: Year-By-Year (Part 6)", Wired.com, June 19, 2012

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Here's all of 1997's original games TTL so you guys know what they were like:

SNES-CD:

Syrielle: Syrielle is part action-game, part visual novel, written by (at the time) children's show writer Suzanne Collins (who IOTL writes The Hunger Games trilogy, which is butterflyed away for various reasons). Syrielle is part-girl, part-spider, and the game chronicles her trials and tribulations in school and in various other places, not only does she have to contend with her school peers (who know all about her strange biology and abilities) but government scientists as well. It's known as one of the most unique games on the system. It features no voice acting, telling its story through motion-comic like cutscenes between various segments of gameplay. Though it receives only good to great reviews from video game magazines, it is greatly praised by non-game media and becomes known as a cult hit (though sales are actually quite strong for a "cult hit" and the Syrielle character becomes a franchise).

Andrekah/Cotton: Amazing Duo!- In this sequel/crossover game, Andrekah teams up with the magical girl Cotton to explore a strange new world. You can switch between Andrekah, who runs on the ground and uses her spells, and Cotton, who hovers overhead and shoots projectiles. There are also Panorama Cotton-like rail shooter segments.

Annie Oakley In London- This sequel to The Legend Of Annie Oakley is a steampunk/Western that sees Annie in London fighting dastardly villains who utilize huge mechanical monsters and robots. It's totally off the wall and gameplay is pretty mediocre, but it has a cult fanbase.

Deadman Sam 3- The third installment in the Deadman Sam series sees Sam and Nellie teaming up with a group of harpies to defeat strange spirits that have taken over their sacred mountain. The gameplay is a bit derivative but the graphics get a big boost from the previous two games and this game's reception and sales are generally pretty good.

Dog Dash 2- In this sequel to Naughty Dog's 1996 hit, our young hero and his dog return to team up with a girl named Selkie, the two of them can both ride the dog as they team up to battle a group of scary anthropomorphic dragons. While sales and reviews aren't quite as good as the first game it's still considered a hit.

Five For Fighting Hockey '97- The sequel to 1995's Five For Fighting Hockey, it has some enhanced graphics and new fighting mechanics but largely isn't considered to be as good as the first game.

Frederico 2: Garcia's Revenge!- The evil Generalissimo Garcia returns in this sequel to 1995's hit, this time he doesn't kidnap Frederico's girlfriend, instead he's building a huge robot to battle Frederico with, Frederico and his friends have to team up to stop Garcia. This is a more 3-D type game with some open world segments, the gameplay is pretty well received and this game is one of 1997's biggest hits.

Gun Warrior: Cannon Fire- In the latest installment of the Gun Warrior series, the three heroes from Gun Warrior: Big Guns get even bigger guns to battle their enemies with. This game has a somewhat mediocre reception and is a disappointment compared to the other two games.

Jim And Kim Meet Tim- The two kid heroes Jim and Kim team up with a little toddler named Tim to traverse more levels and fight more enemies. This game's pretty much as generic as they come and sales are similar to the first game, not terrible but not good either.

Klepto: Thief In The Night- Klepto returns, this time stealing from museums in order to build a device he needs to fight a terrible enemy. This game's actually got much tighter and better gameplay and it's quite well reviewed compared to the first.

Rage 2: The Rage Returns- Capcom returns with another installment of its popular beat-em-up game with eight all new heroes who have to defeat Blackstone. It gets some criticism for not improving much on the first but the story is well received.

Salvation 2- This sequel to 1995's shooter game features more varieties of ships and even faster gameplay. Sales are mediocre but reviews are fairly decent.

Slaughterbox 2- This violent brawler returns with largely the same kind of gameplay as the previous game. It's reception is pretty bad compared to the first.

Tales Of The Seven Seas 2- The seven main heroes from the first game are now living out a pretty good life working as adventurers in a bustling port town, but when the town is attacked by a group of raiding pirates, they take to the seas again to protect the place they now call home. Though the quest itself is a bit tighter than the first game's (about 80 or so missions compared to 110+ in the first), the game is highly praised and considered one of the year's best.

Toxic Waste 2- A sequel to 1995's gross action platformer, it largely picks up where the first left off, not much better than the first but no worse either.

Twinblade II- The sequel to 1996's hit fighting game, it doesn't improve on the gameplay much but it adds a ton of characters and even a character creator, making it one of the deepest fighters on the system and one of the year's best fighting games.

Victory 2- Nash and Jett return to fight an enemy from Nash's past. The graphics and gameplay are improved somewhat from the original, though the storyline isn't as good as the first. It's still considered to be one of the SNES-CD's best games in 1997 and sales are extremely good.

Tower- An action/puzzle game where you have to climb a series of large towers with increasing hazards on your way to the top. It's quite a fun game and even has a multiplayer mode.

Curia- An obscure JRPG brought over in the waning days of the SNES-CD, it features lots of cute magical girls and some cutscenes. While gameplay is considered to be quite good, it's as niche an RPG as they come.

Applejack Road- A western-themed platformer where you get a variety of guns and have to hunt down baddies in the old west. It's a bit of a kiddy game and isn't considered all that original or good.

Wizard Stone- A strange but really fun action game about a boy who is hunting for a series of powerful magical artifacts and battles enemies along the way. With challenging bosses and great character design, it's considered one of the best sidescrollers on the SNES-CD and eventually gets an Ultra sequel in 2001.

Maruthiel- A space shooter that takes place in a variety of environments, it's considered to

be quite a good game in terms of graphics and sound, but the play controls and gameplay are considered to be weak points.

Assassin- A generic sort of stealth action game where you're a ninja who is tasked with assassinating various warlords. Graphics and gameplay are mediocre and the sound is pretty lousy, and the game gets middling reviews.

Chifighters- A 2-D fighting game featuring combatants who specialize in ki energy fighting, melee blows are also used but the game largely utilizes energy projectiles. It receives a good amount of praise for its gameplay and an Ultra sequel.

Ocean Watch- A top-down strategy combat game where you're a gunner who hunts down and shoots enemies that stalk the oceans. It's largely repetitive and though the graphics get some decent praise it's not considered to be a very good game.

Stay Off My Lawn!- In this game you play as an old man who is trying to keep teenagers, paperboys, and other hazards off of his lawn. Though the gameplay and graphics are quite bad, this game is considered to be somewhat of a cult classic for its totally offbeat humor and hilarious voice acting.

Starseekers Of Exion- An action RPG featuring a group of young heroes who travel between worlds looking for fallen items called Star Crystals. It's the last collaboration between Game Arts and Working Designs on the SNES-CD and considered along with Terranigma and Dragon Quest VI to be one of the SNES-CD's best RPGs of the year.

Illusion- A fairly generic turn based JRPG, it gets some praise for its battle graphics but that's the only thing that stands out about it.

Hammercraft- An adventure dungeon-crawler where your character is a dwarven blacksmith who forges his own weapons. It's not a great game but it has a cult fanbase and the hero is very popular.

White Wolf and the Red Hood- A semi-retelling of Little Red Riding Hood, this fairy tale action game has gameplay somewhat similar to Tales Of The Seven Seas, but isn't nearly as well received. In it, a somewhat dark Red Riding Hood teams up with a beautiful white wolf to explore a fractured fairy tale world. It's a decent enough game but not considered to be hugely popular.

Disaster Squad!- A puzzle/action game about a group of emergency workers who rescue people in disaster areas. It's a top-down action game and gets decent reviews and mediocre sales.

Lemon Dealer- A used car salesman simulator where you play a sleazy used car salesman who runs his own lot and tries to rip people off. Featuring bawdy humor and bad voice acting, it's a cult hit but definitely not a good seller or even that good of a game.

Hellstormers- A military game somewhat similar to Cannon Fodder but with some first-person shooter elements as well, you play a group of grizzled soldiers who invade some of the most dangerous areas in the middle of a war. It's a fairly fun game and gets decent sales and reviews.

Empire: The Steel Kingdom- A simulation/strategy game where you play a king who must

keep his iron grip on his kingdom while conquering others. It combines simulation aspects of keeping your people happy (at least happy enough not to rebel) and military strategy game elements as well, making for a complex, if difficult and graphically simple, game.

18 Wheels Of Fury- A truck racing game where you go on a variety of missions or can race against other truckers or duck the police. Basically a low-tech version of what Big Rigs was supposed to be. Reviews are decent.

Missing- A visual novel where you're a gritty anti-hero who has to find a kidnapped girl and rescue her. It's not considered as good as the Dark City or Pearl games but it does get some cult appreciation.

Chocopop!- A platformer that takes place in a chocolatey candy world. While the graphics are impressive and the music is charming, the generic gameplay means that recents are decent at best.

Save The Planet- A SimEarth-type game where you have to micromanage environmental hotspots to prevent an ecological disaster. It's a pretty deep simulation but not a very popular game, especially when compared to the more popular Civilization or Sim series.

Cherubim- A side-scrolling shooter where you're an adorable little angel character who blasts scary looking cartoon demons. The gameplay and graphics are quite well-received though the game ultimately remains a niche hit at best.

World Championship Boxing- A fairly realistic boxing sim featuring realistic-but-original characters and including a create a fighter mode. For boxing fans who only have Super Punch-Out CD, it's a pretty welcome game and does decent sales.

Days Of The Hunt- A bow hunting/rail shooter that takes place in a vast medieval forest and stars a teenage girl who hunts various creatures through a series of stages. Despite the somewhat repetitive gameplay, it's still pretty fun and well received.

Ultra Nintendo:

Ultra Adventurers: A rather basic 3-D RPG by Camelot, set in a medieval fantasy setting about four heroes, two boys and two girls, who set out on an adventure to liberate their kingdom from a dark wizard named Xanthian. Even though it's really generic, the characters and soundtrack are somewhat praised and though it's completely overshadowed in the wake of Final Fantasy VII, it's still a cult classic.

Deathblow: A fairly violent but very good 3-D fighting game, an original franchise starting game that becomes one of the more successful games not in the "Big Five" launch releases.

Cleo's Caverns: An action game starting a chibi version of the Egyptian queen Cleopatra as she traverses many different levels. Plays somewhat like Klonoa but isn't nearly as innovative or fun, totally overshadowed by Mario Dimensions and is one of the rarest and least selling Ultra launch titles (perhaps the rarest)

Nightsquad 2: The sequel to WayForward's 1995 hit Nightsquad, this game sees the squad return in full 3-D as they battle a rogue gang of assassins and criminals that have adopted the original Nightsquad's tactics. A highly anticipated sequel, despite good reviews it gets lost in the shuffle of launch day and is a commercial disappointment.

Arrow Of War: A game somewhat like Dynasty Warriors that focuses on archery, with your character using a bow to fight other soldiers that possess bows of their own. The graphics and gameplay are fairly weak and the game is poorly reviewed.

Mirrorlight: A puzzle game where you must reflect light off an increasing number of mirrors to clear barriers and score combos. A very fun game with bright, colorful graphics, a decent soundtrack and even a somewhat decent storyline that becomes a bit of a sleeper hit/cult classic.

Saturn:

Planetary Probe: This is an Enix sci-fi RPG about a group of astronauts who are exploring various planets, coming into contact with a number of civilizations as they do so. It's a largely traditional RPG in terms of gameplay but is the Saturn's first fully 3-D RPG, with graphics just a shade worse than OTL's Final Fantasy VII. It's very well received critically, though it's not a blockbuster in terms of sales it's still one of Enix's biggest hits to date.

Krystalshade: An Enix RPG with a mixture of fantasy and steampunk elements, it involves a young man on a quest to find the secret of his birth. Its battle system is very similar to OTL Star Ocean's, the Krystalshade series essentially becomes this timeline's equivalent of Star Ocean, though its setting is much more fantasy based (in essence, Planetary Probe gets Star Ocean's sci-fi tropes, and Krystalshade gets its battle system).

Windborn: An RPG published by Namco, Windborn is an entirely 2-D RPG featuring incredible sprite animation and an epic storyline (it's longer than Krystalshade and Planetary Probe by quite a lot). It stars a young girl who is the last of her kind, the "People of the Wind", who is adopted by a group of adventurers who seek to protect and nurture her powers while fleeing those who seek to capture her. It's the most critically beloved RPG on the Saturn in 1997 (even more than Planetary Probe, Krystalshade, and Phantasy Star V, all of which average around high 8s/low 9s in score) and is one of the biggest contenders for Saturn's game of the year.

King's Wrath: A strategy-RPG where you play as a king who seeks to conquer the entire kingdom. It puts you in the perspective of the villain, making it somewhat unique as a game, and its gameplay is well received, compared to games like Tactics Ogre.

The Lost Kingdom: An original RPG developed by Sega, one of three major Sega RPGs that year (along with Sonic RPG and Phantasy Star V), it's somewhat like Sword of Vermillion in its gameplay style, featuring large bosses and a really traditional plotline and gameplay. It involves a young man who stumbles upon an ancient kingdom full of monsters, treasure, and intrigue, and though it's not as beloved or popular as some of the other Saturn RPGs that year, it's still a pretty popular game.

Whirlwind: A 2-D platformer with a hero who can transform himself into a living tornado to take out enemies. Jumps involve a combination of jumping and flying with the hero's whirlwind power. It's a pretty straightforward platforming game but the graphics and the jump physics are praised.

Boom Island: A 3-D platforming game starring a pirate boy who sails from island to island, gathering up treasure and battling other pirates. The "boom" in the title comes from the fact that many of the weapons in this game are various types of cannons and there are LOTS of explosions.

Tick and Tock: Time Tricksters: A 3-D platformer starring a brother sister team, Tock and Tick, who make their way through various levels while using special items that let them speed up, slow down, or even stop time completely. A really silly but extremely fun game, it becomes one of the Saturn's biggest action hits of the year.

Highrise: A puzzle game where you have to stack a tower higher and higher while keeping it from falling. The game gets very fast paced later on and there's a four-player mode that's extremely frantic. Colorful and whimsical animations add to the visual motif of this game.

Worldwide Rally: A racing game somewhat halfway between Virtua Racing and Gran Turismo, giving players the option to race a large variety of realistic cars on tracks around the world, more than 20 tracks in all. Praised for its fun gameplay and large selection of cars and tracks, it becomes Saturn's most popular racing game franchise, surpassing even Daytona and Virtua Racing.

Operation Zero: A third-person shooter where your character is a special agent who must complete a series of increasingly difficult missions. The game relies more on action than on stealth and is praised for its complicated but enthralling storyline.

Fallen: An first-person shooter that takes place in a post-apocalyptic world, starring a woman named Angel Dust who must first fight her way out of an abandoned system of sewers before making her way up to the surface world and confronting hordes of hostile survivors and mutants. A very gritty, scary game, sort of a dark alternative to Turok, it's not received quite as well but it's praised nonetheless.

Raigeki: A very fast-paced 2-D fighting game with 3-D graphics. It's known for moving at a much quicker pace than Tekken and Virtua Fighter and though it doesn't become one of the Saturn's biggest fighting game franchises, it still carves out a significant niche.

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*"Klonoa is something different from Sonic, it's much slower paced, more deliberate, the type of game where you can just stop and admire the lovely world you're in. If you stop too long in Sonic, he gets bored and jumps off the stage! I think there's plenty of room for a slower platformer on the Sega Saturn."*

-Hideo Yoshizawa, director of *Klonoa: Door To Phantomile*

*"Has anyone noticed that Sega does 2-D games a lot better than Nintendo does or is that just me?"*

-an anonymous poster on an InsideTheWeb.com video game forum

*"I got here at five fuckin' o'clock in the morning, and you're tellin' me...you're sold the fuck out? In January?"*

-overhead at a Walmart store on January 15, 1998, from an irate customer unable to get his hands on an Ultra Nintendo after missing a shipment that had been stocked just four hours earlier

*"A lot of the Spice Girls stuff on GameTV back in '97 and '98, that was me. Brittany, she was not a fan of their music. She was into the whole 'girl power' thing but she was more into the Lilith Fair kinda music. I was OBSESSED with the Spice Girls. And yes, I did legitimately love Spice World. The game. The movie, I'll admit, really sucked."*

-Lyssa Fielding in a 2005 interview with Gamepolitics.com

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### **Forever And Ever With You**

Dan: 7.0

Shawn: 5.5

Crispin: 6.0 (quote: "After the revelation that was Syrielle, this dating sim seems downright dated in comparison, even with improvements over the original.")

Sushi-X: 5.0

### **Monopoly**

Dan: 6.0

Shawn: 5.0

Crispin: 6.0

Sushi-X: 5.0 (quote: "It's Monopoly, what else is there to say? The A.I. makes some REALLY boneheaded decisions at times, making it so easy to win.")

### **Valis: The Crystal Clock**

Dan: 5.5

Shawn: 7.5

Crispin: 8.0 (quote: "Valis returns in this fun action game involving time manipulation and some very nice combat mechanics.")

Sushi-X: 5.0

### **Extreme Go-Karting**

Dan: 7.5 (quote: "SNES-CD players get thrown a bone with this kart game. It's tough as all hell and it's no Ultra Mario Kart, but it's fairly fun.")

Shawn: 8.0

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 7.5

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of January 1998's SNES-CD games in the February and March 1998 issues

### **Armored Core**

Dan: 8.5

Shawn: 8.5

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "This is a really slick mech combat game that does a great job showing off the Ultra Nintendo's capabilities. It's quite challenging but a lot of fun.")

### **Jeopardy**

Dan: 7.0

Shawn: 4.0 (quote: "Jeopardy comes to the Ultra, but there should have been a lot more questions. Repeats come quickly.")

Crispin: 5.0

Sushi-X: 5.0

### **Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon**

Dan: 6.5

Shawn: 6.5 (quote: "The game definitely has fun moments but it's not nearly the nonstop funfest that Super Mario Dimensions was.")

Crispin: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Resident Evil**

Dan: 9.0 (quote: "A magnificent port and a clear step up over the original Saturn version.")

Shawn: 9.0

Crispin: 9.5

Sushi-X: 9.5

### **Rival Schools**

Dan: 7.0

Shawn: 7.0

Crispin: 7.0 (quote: "A fun but pretty by-the-book 2-D fighter.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Tomb Raider**

Dan: 8.5 (quote: "This was a nice port but it could've used more improvements.")

Shawn: 8.0

Crispin: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Boom Island**

Dan: 8.0

Shawn: 6.0 (quote: "The game was fun on the Saturn but now it seems somewhat dated.")

Crispin: 6.5

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Cave Crew: The Stoneland Chronicles**

Dan: 4.0

Shawn: 4.5

Crispin: 2.0 (quote: "Bad graphics, damage sponge enemies, and crappy controls make this maybe the worst 3-D platformer since Bubsy 3D on the Saturn.")

Sushi-X: 2.0

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of January 1998's Ultra Nintendo games in the February and March 1998 issues

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January 1998 saw two of the first major Sega Saturn ports to be released for the Ultra Nintendo, *Resident Evil* and *Tomb Raider*. The two games had been hyped for the console long before its release, and their arrival just two months after its North American launch kept it a hot commodity even in the post-Christmas period.

*Resident Evil* was considered the superior port of the two, due to a number of factors. The first and most important was that Capcom had always intended to release the game for the Ultra Nintendo in the first place. The only reason it came to the Saturn first was because the Saturn was released more than two years before the Ultra Nintendo. By the time the Ultra Nintendo was release, Capcom had been working on that console's version for nearly two years, and for that reason, it was designed for the Ultra from the ground up. The Ultra Nintendo port was the "director's cut" version of the game, which had been released for the Sega Saturn in 1997, but enhanced with even more extras, including a demo of *Resident Evil 2* (which was also included on the Saturn version). The Ultra version of *Resident Evil* had better graphics, new music for certain scenes, and an extra mission taking place after the original game, which set up the outbreak in Raccoon City that would lead into *Resident Evil 2*. The port was extremely well reviewed (some reviewers even considered it to be the Ultra's best game to date) and was a massive best seller, the first game to knock *Ultra Mario Kart* off the top of the Ultra's sales charts.

The *Tomb Raider* port, while undoubtedly a great port, was much more of a straight-up port than *Resident Evil* was. The graphics got a slight bump, but no new content was added. It was the original Sega Saturn game, just ported to the Ultra. In reality, Sega had lobbied Eidos hard to make *Tomb Raider* exclusive to the Saturn, even offering them monetary support to make additional games, but after doing market research, Eidos determined that there was simply too much to lose by not porting the game than there was to gain from remaining exclusive to the Saturn. The *Tomb Raider* port also sold quite well, though it didn't do quite as well commercially or critically as the *Resident Evil* port. Nevertheless, both games would also see their sequels ported to the Ultra later that year.

The month would also see a *Boom Island* port to the Ultra Nintendo, but comparisons to *Ultra Mario Dimensions* crippled the game's sales potential, as it proved to be a clearly inferior game to Mario's groundbreaking 3D platformer.

-excerpted from "Fifth Generation Ports: A Look Back", an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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## **Klonoa: The Door To Saturn Fans' Hearts**

*It's been a year now since Klonoa: The Door To Phantomile was released, and we're talking exclusively with the game's director, Hideo Yoshizawa. We'll discuss the game's success and*

*if there's any plans for a sequel in the future.*

Official Saturn Magazine: Hello and thanks again for the interview!

Hideo Yoshizawa: It's always a treat to discuss *Klonoa*.

OSM: So, one year since the game launched in North America. After the game did so well in Japan, did you expect that *Klonoa* would be such a big hit worldwide?

Yoshizawa: Well, I had always hoped. A 2-D platformer in this age of 3-D games, it was tricky to pull off, but the Saturn was definitely the perfect system to bring it out on.

OSM: And to see a 2-D platformer doing so well with all those other games coming out around the same time was definitely a surprise. The game ended up being the best selling Saturn game in North America since *Tomb Raider II*. When did you realize that the game had succeeded so well?

Yoshizawa: Hearing *Klonoa* discussed among icons of video games like Sonic the Hedgehog, that was quite a surprise treat for me! I know some people are calling him Sega's second mascot now but I wouldn't go quite that far!

OSM: How did developing for the Saturn change your approach to game development?

Yoshizawa: I knew that from seeing games like *Sonic the Hedgehog 4* and *Yuki Yuki Troublemakers* ("Troublemakers" in North America) that these types of games could work on the Saturn. And the technology of the Saturn, I was impressed by the fact that the Saturn really does handle the type of graphics I wanted to do a bit better than the Ultra Nintendo does. So many people have told me that the Ultra Nintendo is quite a bit more advanced, but in 2-D graphics, it's easier to develop those types of games on the Sega Saturn. Originally, *Phantomile* was to have five areas, the kingdom of wind, the kingdom of water, the kingdom of fire, the kingdom of earth, and the moon kingdom, but the Saturn stimulated me so much creatively that I was able to add a sixth kingdom, the kingdom of darkness, that comes just before the final area which is *Cress*, the moon kingdom.

OSM: So *Shadir* was a direct result of the game being developed on the Saturn?

Yoshizawa: Exactly! And that huge boss at the end of *Shadir*, with all the very complex animation and effects, that boss was only possible to do on the Sega Saturn. *Shadir* actually, parts of it were inspired by the game *Nights*, I actually got permission to give him a little cameo, in *Vision 5-1* if you look very close in the background, *Nights* is there.

OSM: We did notice it and it was really cool! So, what are your plans now, are you going to work on *Klonoa 2* right away, or try something else first?

Yoshizawa: Well of course there is the new *Ridge Racer* game utilizing the Ring technology, and also I am working on a fighting game as well. But *Klonoa 2* is definitely something I'm thinking about and we have begun the first work on it, so you should hear a lot more about it soon!

OSM: Thank you again and good luck on all your future projects!

Yoshizawa: Thank you as well!

-from an interview in the January 1999 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

"*Klonoa is, in some ways, even better than Sonic the Hedgehog 4. It does new things that Sonic 4 didn't even dare to try, and the animation is stunningly beautiful even if it's not as impressive as Sonic 4 from a technical point of view. There's no doubt that this game is the start of a franchise on the Sega Saturn, and a worthy challenger to any platformer Nintendo's got coming.*"

-excerpted from Crispin Boyer's 9.5/10 review of *Klonoa: Door To Phantomile* in the February 1998 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

"*The first wave of Klonoa merchandise is hitting stores today, including action figures and plush dolls. The plucky little cat boy and all his friends may also be coming to a TV screen near you, Sega is mulling the possibility of commissioning an animated series for this brand new franchise.*"

-excerpted from the *Wall Street Journal*, May 11, 1998

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The game that *Armored Core* for the Ultra Nintendo is most frequently compared to is probably *Iron Combatant*, a game with a somewhat similar premise (mounting a giant mech and going on various missions). However, the games differ in a number of ways, most notably in how the protagonist is portrayed. *Iron Combatant* puts a heavy focus on its human protagonist Layla, telling her story quite cinematically, with the game being mostly linear. Also, its combat is somewhat faster than *Armored Core's* slower paced and more deliberate combat in battle. Also, *Armored Core* puts a heavy emphasis on mech customization, which *Iron Combatant* did not allow you to do. It's a much more freeform game, involving multiple paths through the story (where you can side with either Chrome, Murakumo, or a rebel terrorist faction). *Iron Combatant* is interested in telling its own story, but *Armored Core* largely lets the player tell their own story. And, quite obviously, the graphics are considerably better due to the vastly increased capabilities of the Ultra Nintendo when compared with the SNES-CD. While both games are excellent and worth playing for anyone who's a fan of giant mech combat, which game you'll ultimately prefer largely depends on your play style. And, of course, if you want the latest and most advanced game, go with *Armored Core*.

-*"Question of The Week: Iron Combatant vs. Armored Core"*, excerpted from the Q+A column of Sam Cromwell's Game Page on Angelfire.com, April 27, 1998

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When Tetsuya Mizuguchi showed interest in creating music-based video games, Sega assigned the talented young game designer a seemingly impossible task: create a Spice Girls video game, one that people would actually want to play. The mega-popular British girl band had signed a deal with Sega to create a game that would be released alongside their film *Spice World*, and Sega asked Mizuguchi to head up the development for this game. What he created was a game that would pit the Spice Girls against alien invaders attempting to take over the world. And in order to defeat them, players would have to...jam out! Yes, *Spice World* was one of the first rhythm-based video games, and it consisted of two parts. One part of the game was called the "create mode", where players could create remixes of Spice Girls songs to save to their memory cards and enjoy whenever they wanted. This part was received rather poorly, but the main part of the game was "adventure mode", a six level worldwide journey where the Spice Girls (or rather, somewhat cartoony

versions of the Spice Girls) would encounter aliens who had taken humans hostage and would have to defeat them by having players time button presses to the beat of six different Spice Girls songs.

Level 1 took place in Tokyo, Japan, where Baby Spice battled some aliens in a subway to the beat of "Too Much". Level 2 took place in Sydney, Australia, as Posh Spice battled aliens at the Sydney Opera House to the beat of "Say You'll Be There". Level 3 took place in Rome, Italy, in the Coliseum, as Sporty Spice rocked out to "Who Do You Think You Are?". Level 4 took place in Paris, France, with Scary Spice fighting off bad guys and saving tourists as "Wannabe" played. Level 5 featured Ginger Spice in New York City, rocking out to "2 Become 1". And the final level featured all the Spice Girls in Wembley Stadium in London in one last marathon battle with the aliens, singing "Spice Up Your Life".

The game was certainly quirky. It also featured a reporter named Ulala, who followed the Spice Girls around the world and whom the Spice Girls rescued during the final level. She covered the Spice Girls for a news channel called Space Channel 5 (indeed, the game was very nearly called *Spice Channel 5*, but Sega nixed that title after realizing that there was a pornography channel that went by *Spice Channel*). Ulala would later receive her own spinoff in 2000 for the Saturn with similar gameplay (and much better music, unless of course you were a Spice Girls fan). The game received mixed to positive critical reviews, and decent sales at the height of Spice-mania (*Spice World* notably was the first film to dethrone *Titanic* at the domestic weekend box office after its five week reign at #1). It showed that even though the Spice Girls sucked, at least their games didn't have to, thanks to the visionary work of Tetsuya Mizuguchi.

-excerpted from "The Life And Times Of Tetsuya Mizuguchi", an article on SegaClassics.com

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*Why did we never get Tokimeki Memorial 3 here in the States? That game was a masterpiece, a 3-disc Ultra Nintendo epic that built heavily on what Konami had accomplished with the original Tokimeki Memorial game! It seems like it could've done quite well considering the success of games like the Syrielle series. What gives?*

That is a very good question, and one that has everything to do with the fact that we DID get *Tokimeki Memorial 2* here in the States, a game that here was called *Forever And Ever With You*. A late-generation SNES-CD game, it was localized here due to the moderate "success" of the original *Tokimeki Memorial* game, which was localized as *Forever With You* and did around 30,000 sales here in North America, which for a Japanese dating sim was a hell of a number and was why we ended up getting the sequel here. The sequel, while it addressed many things that were wrong with the original (the dreaded "bomb" feature which forced you to basically be a Casanova or the neglected girls would gossip about you to their friends, was tamped down quite a lot for the sequel), retreaded a lot of the same ground as the original game and was largely seen by Konami as a cash-grab sequel while they were putting together the third game for the Ultra. It sold extremely well in Japan and was highly reviewed, but here in the States, games like *Syrielle* had set a new bar for visual novel sim games and *Forever And Ever With You* went largely ignored, with only 9,500 (!) copies sold here in North America. While that's good news for Ebayers (who are selling the game for \$230 or so last I checked), that's bad news for Konami and worse news for those who wanted to see the sequel localized. It's a shame, because *Tokimeki Memorial 3* is an all-time classic of the genre, and Konami probably could've spared the money seeing as how they made so much on *Metal Gear Solid* that year, but them's the breaks!

-excerpted from "Ask Alex" on Alex Stansfield's blog, January 29, 2015

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The lady soldier Valis gets one final run on the Super Nintendo CD with this month's *Valis: The Crystal Clock*. An entirely new adventure set in a mysterious kingdom made entirely of glass, the game sees Valis and her friend Reiko attempting to stop the monsters sent forth by the evil king of this mysterious land and his magical clock that can call forth beings from any period of time.

Though *Valis* is one of Telenet Japan's most popular series, it pales in comparison to the popularity of 1995's *Tale Phantasia*, which this week saw its sequel, *Tale Lemuria*, released in Japan to the fastest sales for any RPG since *Final Fantasy VII*. *Tale Lemuria* involves a group of heroes who discover a mysterious continent inhabited by half-elves, who long ago fled the oppressive prejudice and persecution of humans and elves alike. Though the game takes place in an entirely different world from *Tale Phantasia*, it features similar themes, such as half-elf discrimination and the presents of mysterious elemental summons. The game introduces a new 3-D battle system which allows players to run in all directions during battle, taking full advantage of the Ultra Nintendo's new analog sticks. The game is still being translated by Working Designs and is set for a summer 1998 release here in North America.

We've actually received a copy of the Japanese *Tale Lemuria* here at GamePro, and in next month's Import Preview column, we'll give you our first impressions!

-excerpted from the March 1998 issue of *GamePro*

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The 1997 NFL season saw Brett Favre's Green Bay Packers attempt to repeat the success of their dominating 1996 campaign that saw them win the Super Bowl, and, for the most part, they succeeded. They won the NFC championship easily after a 14-2 season, crushing their division rivals the Detroit Lions in the NFC Championship by a score of 45 to 14. The Packers' Super Bowl XXXII opponents would be the unlikely Jacksonville Jaguars, in only their third season in the NFL. The Jaguars, behind quarterback Mark Brunell (who won that year's MVP trophy despite Favre's dominating campaign), went 12-4, good for second in the AFC. Their opponents in the conference finals were the Denver Broncos, who were looking for their first ever Super Bowl win behind the legendary John Elway. After the Jaguars beat the Broncos 26-24 in what was considered an all time classic, they went on to the Super Bowl...where the Packers would crush them, 42 to 17, to win their second straight Super Bowl. The Packers were clearly one of the most dominant teams in the entire sports world, and looked to be the early favorites to win three Super Bowls in a row, a feat that would match the Dallas Cowboys and make them the second team in the decade to three-peat.

After the Super Bowl, all eyes were on the NFL Draft, which saw Peyton Manning and Ryan Leaf looking like the best quarterback prospects in a generation. Once the New Orleans Saints were locked into the #1 pick with an abysmal 2-14 record that conjured up memories of the "New Orleans Aint's" from the 1980s (they didn't even have to tank, they just sucked that much that season), everyone knew they would take Peyton, who was the son of the legendary Saints QB Archie Manning. That left the Oakland Raiders at 3-13 with the second pick in the draft, only they would trade it to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for the Bucs' first

round pick (22nd) along with a king's ransom of picks and players for the right to draft Ryan Leaf. The surprise of the first round saw Randy Moss fall to 14th, where the Colts would snap him up in order to give their aging quarterback Jim Harbaugh a new weapon to join Marvin Harrison in the Colts' backfield.

-excerpted from the article "NFL Recap: 1998" on Bleacherreport.com

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Alex Stansfield: *Treasures Of The Deep* is a lot of fun. Not only does it have some really atmospheric music, it gives you a LOT of stuff to do.

Ted Crosley: Well, I gotta applaud Sega and Namco for the spooky atmosphere, but I thought this game got a bit boring after a while. It sends you on the same missions, find this treasure, cap this oil leak, whatever, and by the time I got about eight or nine levels in, it was dragging for me.

Alex: Ted, you get to be a SHARK in this game.

Ted: In like a mini-game!

Alex: You get to be a shark and eat people.

\*The theme from *Jaws* begins to play\*

Alex: I'm surprised there hasn't been a game like that already!

Ted: Even shark mode was kinda boring!

Alex: You don't like shark mode? How can you ever be bored with shark mode? I mean, just listen to that music!

Ted: The game was too long for me.

Alex: \*attacks Ted with a plush shark as the music plays\*

Ted: Get that thing away from me!

Alex: It's a shark, get outta the water! \*playfully pokes him with the shark\*

Ted: \*trying to smack the shark away\* Anyway, I give *Treasures of the Deep* a 3.5. It's a fun concept but it overstays its welcome just a bit too long.

Alex: And I give it a 4.5. It's a ton of fun, you get to explore the ocean and you get to eat people as a shark, what's not to like? \*keeps trying to attack Ted with the plush shark\*

(...)

Alex: \*dressed up like Tom Cruise in *Top Gun* with sunglasses and flight jacket\* *Ace Combat 2* is just about the best combat sim out there. Fly around, destroy your foes, it's pretty awesome.

John Walden: Man, I loved the superfighter but you gotta do a lot of work to get to fly it. Once you do, oh man, you feel like some kinda sky god!

Alex: If you played the first game on the Saturn back in 1996 and enjoyed it, then this one was a long time in coming for you. It takes everything that made the first game so fun and it ramps it up bigtime for the second. More planes, more challenges, a better storyline, I mean this game has it all.

John: I gotta say, I think I mighta liked this one better than *Star Fox 2*.

Alex: This one's definitely a lot more realistic. And it's tougher. You won't have an easy time, but, you know, the life of a fighter pilot is one of danger and risk.

John: Yeah, yeah, let's do a couple more missions right now.

\*The two of them sit down and play as "Highway To The Danger Zone" by Kenny Loggins starts to play, with John as Alex's wingman. Suddenly, John's plane goes down in a mission and Alex begins screaming.\*

Alex: No...NO! NO, GOOSE, NO!!!

John: Aaaaaaaaaahhhhhh!!!!

Alex: That's what this game does to you, man, it's so realistic! 4 out of 5, great game.

John: And I give it a 4 outta 5 as well. Definitely highly recommended.

\*The song continues to play as the two do another mission right before the commercial break.\*

-excerpted from the January 14, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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(...)

Brittany Saldita: So, *Spice World* was a really, really....really....really silly game.

Lyssa Fielding: It's a lot of fun!

Brittany: I just don't know about the Spice Girls fighting aliens with the power of rock. Especially *this* kind of rock. I mean, this game plays a lot like Parappa, but maybe with a bit better graphics...? It's fun, at times. The create mode is a total waste.

Lyssa: Yeah, I don't see the reason why they put that in there. The Spice Girls' songs are fine as they are, no need to remix them!

Brittany: The Spice Girls' voice acting is....\*winces\* all right, I suppose?

Lyssa: Voice acting can be hard.

Brittany: \*yells back\* Hey Jonny Quest, is voice acting hard?

Ted: \*yells back\* No!

Brittany: See? And they're not playing characters, they're playing themselves.

Lyssa: Well at least it's not as bad as Milli Vanilli in the *Super Mario Bros.* cartoon.  
\*shudders\*

\*A quick clip is played of Milli Vanilli after being transformed by Cootie Pie, saying their infamous "we're nerds! This is terrible!" line\*

Brittany: Ay dios mio, never ever show that again!

Lyssa: Well come on, at least the Spice Girls did a lot better than that, right?

Brittany: Yeah, I suppose so. And the character Ulala, I like her. I thought she was more compelling than the actual Spice Girls.

\*A brief clip is shown of Ulala interviewing Baby Spice after saving the day in Tokyo\*

Brittany: Look, if you're a Spice Girls fan, this game is about as good as you're gonna get. It's... it's probably the best game to come out that's based on a musical band. Of course, when all you have to compare it to is, you know, *Journey* the arcade game, that's not much of an accomplishment. The adventure mode is fine, stay away from the create mode. I give it a 3 out of 5.

Lyssa: And I give it a 4, it's a really fun ride, ESPECIALLY if you're a Spice Girls fan. Like me! And like you too, right Brittany?

Brittany: Yeah, I mean, I suppose so... \*smiling\*

Lyssa: \*giggles as she hugs Brittany\* She loves them!

Brittany: \*blushing, looks a bit embarassed\* I like Scary Spice...

\*A clip is shown of Scary Spice zapping some aliens in level 4\*

-excerpted from the January 21, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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(...)

Brittany: So, is *Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon* the next big action hit on the Ultra Nintendo?

Gary Westhouse: \*looks like he's about to say yes, but then frowns and shakes his head\* No, no it's not.

Brittany: This game tried its best to be kind of a 3D *Zelda*, which...considering we have the real 3D *Zelda* coming out, hopefully by the end of this year, is a bit unnecessary. It's not a

bad game. Goemon's adorable, and the game's got a decent variety of gameplay types, it mixes things up really well. That said, it could've used some more interesting characters, especially since the voice acting was so good. Even Goemon himself, despite being so cute, is a bit obnoxious and not exactly the kind of protagonist that say, Mario is.

Gary: The platforming sequences are nowhere near as polished as the ones in *Mario*. You'll find yourself chucking your controller at some completely unnecessary difficulty spikes, and there are a lot of counter-intuitive directions in this game too.

Brittany: Yeah, I did notice that. Villagers aren't much help in telling you where you need to go. It'd be okay if exploring were more fun, but it's really not. Combat, however, is a strong point of the game. You can do several different sword swipes, enemies are tricky but for the most part not frustratingly hard, and there are lots of special techniques that are really fun to use too. So, at the very least, I enjoyed fighting enemies, even when I was getting frustrated about not being able to figure out where to go.

Gary: All in all, this game is a fairly lame attempt to establish Goemon as a standout game character. It's also a pedestrian emulation of games like *Super Mario Dimensions*. I honestly had more fun playing *Valis* on the Super Nintendo CD this month than I did this game. I'm giving it a 3 for combat and presentation, but I feel even that's being generous.

Brittany: I'll go ahead and give it a 3.5. I felt that what Goemon did right, it did really right. I think the developers just need to learn from their mistakes and the next *Goemon* game can be a true classic.

Gary: Better than this one would be a good start.

-excerpted from the January 28, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: January 1998**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Victory 2
3. Chrono Trigger
4. Tale Phantasia
5. Kirby's Adventure 3
6. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2
7. Mortal Kombat: Labyrinth
8. Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo
9. Dog Dash 2
10. NBA Live 98

### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: January 1998**

1. Final Fantasy VII
2. Super Mario Dimensions
3. Star Fox 2
4. Ultra Mario Kart
5. Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night
6. Wave Race

7. Nightsquad 2
8. Crash Bandicoot
9. Deathblow
10. Myst: Legacy

### **Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: January 1998**

1. Tomb Raider II
2. Resident Evil 2
3. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
4. Klonoa: Door To Phantomile
5. Phantasy Star V
6. Tekken 3
7. Ace Combat 2
8. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
9. Panzer Dragoon Saga
10. Spice World

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*"Ultra Nintendo shortages continue to plague retailers across the country, with shipments selling out in most locations as soon as they're stocked on the shelves. Exacerbating the problem has been the release of the controversial horror title Resident Evil, which originally released in 1996 on the Sega Saturn to millions of sales and an outcry from the media, decrying the game's violence as harmful to children. The controversy clearly hasn't deterred shoppers from buying the game and from buying Ultra Nintendo consoles in record numbers. On online shopping sites such as the auction website Ebay, Ultra Nintendo systems have been seen going for upwards of one thousand dollars, far in excess of Nintendo's 300 dollar asking price. As tax refund season begins to wind up, Ultra Nintendo sellouts could continue well into the spring, which is bad news for those hoping to play next month's new Star Wars video game, or the James Bond title planned for March which is said to put players in the shoes of the superspy himself in an adventure based on the hit 1995 film GoldenEye.*

*We now return to our top story: 'I did not engage in a sexual relationship with that woman, Miss Lewinsky.' That is what President Bill Clinton said at a press conference last night, addressing the explosive allegations that Clinton had an affair with one of his interns..."*

-Peter Jennings, ABC Nightly News, January 27, 1998

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*"The idea of two intertwining scenarios, I think, was a natural evolution of the first game. The challenge was making them intertwine while also providing two completely separate experiences for the player. I wanted to keep the series true to its horror roots, but in providing two different experiences, allow the player to determine what kind of horror game it would be."*

-Shinji Mikami, in a February 1998 interview with *Official Saturn Magazine*

*"But Claire in Resident Evil 2 wasn't a damsel in distress, at least the way people typically*

*think of that trope. At one point yes, she finds herself kidnapped by one of the villains and has to be rescued by Leon. But by that point in the quest, Claire's not a prize to be won, she's a full partner and she's necessary if Leon wants to get out of Raccoon City alive. And arguably, Leon's even more in distress when Claire saves him later on. The two of them are in this together, even if you're playing on Leon's quest, Claire saves your ass more than once. Claire, a simple college student, becomes a full fledged hero, and by the end of the game can hardly be called a damsel."*

-ChariceAngel71, on the /ResidentEvil/ subroot on Rootalk.com, December 15, 2014

*"I would do ANYTHING to get back to my brother Chris. I...I'd even kill to get back to him. I'm not afraid, Leon. I'm not afraid of anything."*

-Claire Redfield, *Resident Evil 2*

*"Birkin wants to see you. And he's been waiting a very long time."*

Terrence Falk, *Resident Evil 2*

*"The delay in the Ultra Nintendo's release meant that we had a bit more time to work on some of the other parts of our Shadows of the Empire franchise. It also meant that we had more time to work on the game itself, which I think made it all the better."*

-George Lucas

*"Making this movie family friendly doesn't mean coming up with a character only 5-year-olds will enjoy. You didn't have to do that 20 years ago, and kids haven't gotten any dumber."*

-overheard at a writers' meeting for *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*

*"As long as those guys are driving like maniacs in the street to make a few thousand bucks off a picture, a tragedy's bound to happen."*

-an LAPD officer, discussing an arrest of a would-be paparazzi on the local news, February 9, 1998

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## **Resident Evil 2- The Basics**

*Resident Evil 2* is the sequel to *Resident Evil* and is released for the Sega Saturn on February 5, 1998. Though Sega's promotion of the game, like its promotion of *Tomb Raider II* in 1997, is a bit muted due to the game being merely a timed exclusive for the Saturn, the game still garners excellent sales upon its release, even better than those achieved by *Tomb Raider II*. The game is contained on two Saturn discs, with one containing Leon's quest and the other containing Claire Redfield's. The game was developed over a period of a year and a half, with Shinji Mikami leading development, though he was assisted in later stages by Hideki Kamiya, who became the director of the project in early 1997. ITTL, the tensions between the two of them over the game's development were somewhat less than IOTL, with Mikami more receptive to Kamiya's ideas due to the two of them having previously worked together on 1995's RPG *Moonlight* as writers. Therefore, when Kamiya proposed that Leon and Claire's storylines would intersect, Mikami agreed to the proposal and had a more hands-on role with the project. The game's graphics receive a small but not dramatic bump from the original game (indeed, *Resident Evil* on the Ultra Nintendo looks better than *Resident Evil 2* does on the Saturn). The game employs largely the same voice cast as OTL's game, including Paul Haddad as Leon Kennedy and Alyson Court as Claire Redfield. Your choice of protagonist, either Leon or Claire, has an effect on how the game

plays out. On Leon's path, you are given somewhat more bullets and firepower, making the game more of an "action" experience (though not to the same degree as OTL's *Resident Evil 4*). On Claire's path, bullets and ammo are limited and survival is a heavy priority.

Though the basic plot of the game remains largely the same as IOTL, there are a number of differences, both major and minor. The game takes place after the events of the original *Resident Evil*. The Umbrella Corporation's T-virus has spread into Raccoon City, turning its population into zombies. Leon and Claire meet as they attempt to flee zombies with much of the city in ruins. The two of them split up before arriving at the police station. Eventually, after dealing with the zombies at the police station, Leon and Claire reunite and in both paths, the two of them travel together for a while, helping each other out and getting to know each other. This will come into play later on. During this time, a new twist is revealed. Umbrella has dispatched mercenaries, led by ruthless bounty hunter Terrence Falk, into the city, with the job of killing any survivors or witnesses to their crimes (this storyline comes into play in OTL in the game *Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City*). However, Falk is secretly under the employ of Umbrella scientist William Birkin, creator of a new G-virus bioweapon, who doesn't want to give up on his prized creations and is paying Falk under the table to ensure that the virus sample is protected. After Claire and Leon split up again, Claire meets a young girl named Sherry, William Birkin's daughter, while Leon encounters Ada Wong (little does he know that Ada is Falk's second-in-command, though she, like Falk, has a hidden agenda as well). While Leon dodges Falk's mercenaries, Claire and Sherry evade deadly mutants. After this next segment of the game, however, Claire is taken hostage by Falk (in Claire's path, you have the option of escaping on your own before Leon comes to save you, though if you choose that option you'll have to assist Leon in a boss fight). After this sequence in which Falk is taken out (either by Claire in Claire's path or by Ada in Leon's), Ada's true allegiance is revealed, but in Leon's path, Leon chooses to trust Ada anyway. Either way, the next segment of the game involves either Claire or Leon taking out the remaining mercenaries on their way out of the city. In Claire's path, Leon is captured by a deranged Annette Birkin, and Claire and Sherry must either sneak or blast their way in to save him. In Leon's path, Ada assists Claire in rescuing him, though Leon must also play a part in his own rescue. After this segment, in Leon's path, he and Ada are confronted by the Tyrant and though Leon defeats it, Ada is fatally wounded. In Claire's path, events lead to a final confrontation between Ada and Claire, with Ada revealing information about Claire's brother Chris with her dying words. Either way, unlike IOTL where Ada is revealed to be alive after the events of the game, ITTL Ada is dead for good and does not appear in any future *Resident Evil* games. In both Claire and Leon's path, the final segments involve the two of them working together to find a cure for a mutated Sherry, only for William Birkin to attack them both as a hideous mutated creature. Whoever's path you take plays the critical role in defeating Birkin, but either way, Sherry is cured and after the three escape the area, Leon and Claire promise each other that they'll find a way to prevent what happened in Raccoon City from ever happening anywhere else again. Claire knows that Chris is out there somewhere and that he can help them bring Umbrella down for good.

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### **Reel Fishing:**

Dan: 4.0

Shawn: 4.0

Crispin: 5.0 (quote: "There's not much in this game to distinguish it from other fishing titles.")

Sushi-X: 5.0

### **Mass Destruction:**

Dan: 5.5

Shawn: 5.5

Crispin: 5.0

Sushi-X: 5.5 (quote: "There are far superior tank shooters out there.")

### **World Championship Boxing '98**

Dan: 7.0

Shawn: 7.0 (quote: "This game isn't a technical marvel but it does feature one of the best fighting systems I've yet seen in a boxing game.")

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

-reviews of February 1998's SNES-CD games in the March 1998 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

### **Clock Tower II: The Struggle Within**

Dan: 4.0

Shawn: 2.5 (quote: "The real struggle was getting through this disappointing turd of a game.")

Crispin: 3.0

Sushi-X: 2.0

### **Einhander**

Dan: 9.5 (quote: "An absolutely brilliant sidescrolling shooter with a great collection of weapons.")

Shawn: 9.0

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **San Francisco Rush**

Dan: 7.5 (quote: "A really fun arcade racing port with some excellent graphics.")

Shawn: 7.5

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Star Wars: Shadows Of The Empire**

Dan: 7.0

Shawn: 7.0

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 8.5 (quote: "An amazing orchestral score and some challenging but fun missions make this Star Wars game an instant classic.")

### **Wayne Gretzky Hockey**

Dan: 8.0

Shawn: 8.0 (quote: "This title features some really fun arcade-style gameplay.")

Crispin: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Dragon's Destiny III**

Dan: 6.5 (quote: "It shows some promise, but ultimately tries too hard to be like Panzer Dragoon.")

Shawn: 6.0

Crispin: 5.0

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Operation Zero**

Dan: 8.0

Shawn: 7.0

Crispin: 7.0 (quote: "A great port of one of the Saturn's most action-packed shooters.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **God Bless The Ring**

Dan: 6.5

Shawn: 6.0

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 6.0 (quote: "The storyline and characters are really inspired, it's just not nearly as fun to fight with them.")

### **Lost And Found**

Dan: 6.0

Shawn: 7.0

Crispin: 7.5 (quote: "While the game does eventually get repetitive, this 2 1/2-D adventure title features some fun puzzles and a decent variety of treasure finding missions.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

-reviews of February 1998's Ultra Nintendo games in the March and April 1998 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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Namco's exclusivity deal with Sega left Squaresoft in a difficult place. The two had previously agreed to complete a collaborative project together, but with Square exclusive to Nintendo, there was no way the companies could complete this project as it stood. Still, Square wanted to follow up *Tobal No. 1* with more than just a straight-up sequel. The company decided on "Project Ehrgeiz", a game that would fuse Squaresoft's gift for creative storytelling with its desire to continue creating conventional fighting games. Along the way, the company also conceived the idea for an old-school style dungeon crawler set in the same world. This game, *Deepground*, would fall under the "Project Ehrgeiz" umbrella, but it was the fighting game, *God Bless The Ring*, that formed the meat and potatoes, so to speak, of Square's ambitious project. Squaresoft worked quickly on the project once they

had the Ultra Nintendo development kit. The project originally was projected to take until 1999 to complete, but work was accelerated to help the game release within the Ultra Nintendo's launch window and complement the sword fighting game *Bushido Blade*. *God Bless The Ring* released in Japan in December 1997 and North America in February 1998. It featured a small cast of playable characters, just eight, but those eight characters were highly fleshed out, and each had their own complex story. Indeed, the game was split into two parts: an Arcade Mode, that pitted each character up against an 8 character gauntlet (seven other characters and the game's final boss) and then Story Mode, which had each character going up against five normal characters, the game's final boss, and then a unique storyline final boss, for a total of seven fights in all. In between these fights, the character would receive some story exposition and would fight through a miniature "dungeon" in a sort of beat-em-up style mini-quest. The eight playable characters were:

**Ken Kuzama:** The game's "main" character, Kuzama is an escaped mercenary seeking to become world champion using his knowledge from the evil organization he once served.

**Han Daehan:** An action movie star seeking knowledge of ancient fighting techniques so that he can become a "legitimate" fighter.

**Prince Doza:** A spoiled, brash prince who believes he is superior to all others and seeks ancient fighting secrets so that he can return to the kingdom he was exiled from and overthrow its new ruler.

**Yoyo Yoko:** A supremely talented schoolgirl recruited by the international police organization to study criminal activities as she fights in the world martial arts tournament.

**Sasuke:** A brainwashed ninja under the employ of the Red Scorpion organization, Sasuke is gradually coming to grips with his true self, and once he does, he will seek to fight only for honor.

**Dasher Inoba:** A pro wrestler fighting in the tournament to avenge his father, who was brutally murdered by the Red Scorpion organization.

**Jadelyn Sera:** A femme fatale in the employ of the Red Scorpion organization, Sera has come to the tournament seeking either fame, fortune, or freedom.

**Frederick von Pelt:** A dashing professor, von Pelt is a bit of an homage to the "Cid" characters across various Final Fantasies. He fights in the tournament seeking only knowledge for its own sake.

**Django:** A werewolf-like fighter and the leader of the Red Scorpion organization, Django serves as the final boss of Arcade Mode and the penultimate boss of each character's Story Mode.

Completing one character's quest in Story Mode opens up Django for play in Arcade Mode, as well as that character's corresponding Story Mode final boss for play in Arcade Mode. Many of the storylines diverge from the typical "martial arts tournament" tropes and go full sci-fi, particularly in the case of Yoyo Yoko's storyline, which sees her becoming a superheroine type figure with the aid of a special super suit, and von Pelt's storyline, which sees him discovering an ancient civilization over the course of his battles. Completing all eight storylines will allow the player to understand the game's full unifying theme, as Red Scorpion seeks control of a powerful superweapon hidden in an ancient ruin. The

superweapon turns out to be a suit that can transform any sufficiently talented fighter into a godlike being, and the organization has been seeking a fighter that they can mold and train to become a human weapon to serve them and them alone. Only Ken Kuzama's storyline gives the player a choice about whether or not to take this power. While all the other characters defeat Red Scorpion, either for the greater good (Han Daehan, Yoyo Yoko, Sasuke, Dasher Inoba, Frederick von Pelt) or for their own selfish goals (Prince Doza, Jadelyn Sera), Kuzama can choose to either save the world, rule it himself, or rejoin Red Scorpion and serve as their instrument of destruction.

*God Bless The Ring's* fighting mechanics themselves were somewhat poorly received compared to games like *Tekken III* or *Killer Instinct Ultra*, but the game's storyline and characters were regarded as some of the deepest to ever appear in a fighting game, and the general consensus was that for fighting game fans, the mediocre gameplay was worth gutting through for the cutscenes and storylines. *God Bless The Ring* recorded mediocre sales, though it did exceed sales of *Tobal No. 1* (even with the latter's *Elements of Mana* demo helping it out somewhat). It stands as a testament to Squaresoft's ability to tell an engaging story, and remains as one of the more beloved cult classic fighting games of the fifth generation.

-excerpted from "Project Ehrgeiz: Squaresoft's Bold Experiment", an article on Gamesovermatter.com, posted on December 9, 2013

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### **Anime Fighting On The Sega Saturn? You Bet!**

There's no doubt that the Sega Saturn's latest fighting game, *Prismaclash*, is heavily influenced by anime, and the fact that it's here in North America is a testament to anime's growing popularity on our shores!

Created by Arc System Works, the game features sixteen colorful main characters inspired by various legends of anime and manga. Three of the characters, Ruby, Golda, and Seraph, are no doubt inspired by the hyper popular *Sailor Moon*, as all three of them leap into battle in sailor uniforms very reminiscent of our favorite superheroine team! Then there's Regalia, whose super loud and super annoying laugh, along with her massive bosoms, are a clear homage to the legendary Naga from *Slayers*, another anime that's become very popular in the States, especially after airing on Cartoon Network's Toonami block.

While the game contains a majority of women (11 of the 16 playable characters are female), there are five male characters, all but one conforming to the popular bishounen character archetype. The final character, a muscle-bound spiky haired martial artist named Haigen, is almost certainly an homage to the powerful fighters of the popular *Dragon Ball* series. The game is full of light and color, with color playing a huge role in the game's fighting mechanics: each character has two different color elements they can switch between, with eight elements present in all. When you switch to a different element, you switch to a whole different set of moves! While no element is inherently weak to another, certain styles definitely work better against others, so you'll need to plan your strategies carefully!

*Prismaclash* has sold extremely well in Japan, with nearly a million copies sold since the game's release there last fall. Even before that, it was an arcade hit, and it continues to top many of the country's arcade charts in terms of total number of plays during the last

month! We can't wait to play *Prismaclash* when it releases on the Sega Saturn later this month.

-from an article in the February 1998 issue of *Animerica* magazine

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## **Einhander**

Graphics: Amazing 3-D visuals, beautiful animated backgrounds, and gorgeous weapon effects make this one of the Ultra Nintendo's most stylish games to date.

Play Control: It's standard shooter fare. Switching between weapons is easy, moving around the screen is smooth and not frustrating. Though simple, the controls do what they need to do.

Game Design: This is one of the purest shooters we've played in a long time, very reminiscent of *Gradius* or *Axelay*. It's a challenge, but fans of this genre are used to that.

Satisfaction: It's a bit short, but Squaresoft makes an excellent shooter.

Sound: The sound effects are diverse and realistic. The soundtrack can be a bit repetitive though.

Comments: Scott- I was riveted by this amazing game. It tells a beautiful story amidst its depiction of a deadly war. Terry- Einhander was a real treat and it potentially does for shooters what Final Fantasy VII did for RPGs.

Overall Rating: 9.2/10

-*Nintendo Power's* review of *Einhander* from the February 1998 issue

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## **Superstar Singer Celine Dion Killed In Montreal Car Crash**

Tragedy struck the world of music last night as Celine Dion, known for selling millions of albums with her unmistakable and powerful voice, was killed in a single-car crash as she and her driver rode through the streets of Montreal. The singer's car was speeding down a street to avoid what witnesses say was a car with two photographers leaning out the side windows, attempting to take a picture of Dion as her car left a hotel parking lot. Witnesses say that the paparazzi's car was driving aggressively before Dion's driver began speeding, and that the car may have even sideswiped Dion's vehicle before being left behind.

The car containing Celine Dion lost control as it attempted to turn onto a side street and slammed hard into a brick wall at nearly 60 miles per hour, with the passenger's side taking the brunt of the impact. Though Dion was pulled from the car alive, she suffered several internal bleeding and organ damage and did not survive a surgical operation to save her life. The driver, though suffering severe lacerations and broken ribs, was released after testing negative for drugs in his system. Police are still deciding whether or not to charge him with reckless homicide in the singer's death. Police are also searching for the occupants of the paparazzi vehicle, who may also face charges.

The death of Celine Dion is only the latest in a series of high-profile incidents involving paparazzi driving dangerously in order to snap photographs of famous celebrities, from athletes, to politicians, to musicians such as Dion. Already, several countries, including France and the United States, are proposing laws to increase reckless driving penalties for incidents stemming from paparazzi activity.

-excerpted from a February 21, 1998 Associated Press article

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The 1998 Grammy Awards ceremony was quite somber compared to others, likely due to the pall cast over the ceremony by the death of Celine Dion just days before, along with the death of the legendary Bob Dylan the previous year. Tributes to the two deceased musicians permeated the ceremony and its mournful mood.

The night's big awards were largely split amongst a number of performers. The year's most acclaimed album, *Dispatches From A Padded Room* by Edie Brickell, was predicted to sweep most of the awards it was nominated for. Though Brickell was never herself a "riot grrrl" artist, the album was influenced by those musical stylings, with Kathleen Hanna even performing one of the album's songs with Brickell. However, the album had to settle for winning 4 Grammys in the minor genre categories, as it was shut out of all the major ones, particularly Album of the Year, which went to the sentimental favorite Bob Dylan and his *Time Out Of Mind*, which he completed just weeks before his death. Record of the Year was a crowded field as well, with Tupac and Biggie's "Increase The Peace" beating Shawn Colvin's "Sunny Came Home", Selena's "Southside Serenade", Hanson's "MMMBop", and Meredith Brooks' "Bitch". "Sunny Came Home" did come away with Song of the Year, while Erykah Badu won Best New Artist in what was considered somewhat of an upset over the ultra-popular Spice Girls and the highly acclaimed Paula Cole.

While the tributes to Bob Dylan and Celine Dion (Selena's tearful tribute to her left barely a dry eye in the house) set the mood for that night's ceremonies, there were a number of other interesting happenings. Kurt Cobain and Courtney Love were seen together in public for the first time since Cobain checked into rehab back in 1994, and Edie Brickell's loss to Bob Dylan actually had a bit of a mixed reaction in the crowd (with Sarah MacLachlan caught mouthing "bullshit" in the crowd on one of the live feeds after Dylan's win was announced).

- "The Entertainment Guy's 1998 Grammy Awards Recap", posted on The Entertainment Guy's blog, September 27, 2009

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Ted Crosley: So is *Resident Evil 2* more of the same, or does it live up to the hype?

Brittany Saldita: You know, more of the same isn't always a bad thing when the "same" is maybe the best horror game of all time. So yeah, I think this game lives up to the hype. Would've liked it to be maybe a bit more of a step up technologically, but what it lacks for that sort of improvement it REALLY makes up for in storyline and scale. I loved Claire Redfield, I thought her quest was awesome.

Ted: I preferred Leon's quest, more bullets.

Brittany: It's funny how the cop needs more bullets than the college student who's never gone through any kind of training in her life.

Ted: Well, she had good genes. AND good jeans.

\*A montage is shown of Claire's tight jeans in various scenes in the game\*

Brittany: You WOULD be a fan of Claire's tight jeans. \*rolls her eyes\* Though, she doesn't really have the ass to pull off tight jeans. Now Leon....\*biting her lip\* He's got more of an ass than Claire does!

\*A montage is shown of Leon's ass\*

Brittany: Now THAT is an ass! As for Claire, girl, you need some ice cream in you, stat!

Ted: You are going to be seeing their asses a lot because you are going to be running away a LOT in this game, it really does a good job of bringing the horror type feel that the original did and even with Leon and his extra bullets, you won't be able to kill every zombie you see.

Brittany: This game had some great boss fights, though, most of the really good ones are spoilers.

Ted: Let's just say that for all the giant monsters in this game, the most dangerous monster of all is man.

Brittany: Especially when that man is transformed into a brain eating zombie!

Ted: So yes, *Resident Evil 2* is quite good and while it's not as innovative as the last game, it doesn't need to be. Its storyline is excellent, the voice acting is great and the survival horror action is just as good as you remember it. I'm giving this game a 4.5.

Brittany: And so am I. It's not as revolutionary as *Resident Evil* the first, but it's just as fun! 4.5 from me too.

-excerpted from the February 3, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Alex Stansfield: *Radiant Silvergun* is a magnificent game! I'll tell you, it's one of the best shooters I've ever played. It completely blew me away.

Gary Westhouse: Yeah, Treasure outdid themselves with this one. The storyline is fantastic but really, with any shooter, it's the gameplay that matters and this game KILLED it in that regard. Giving you all the weapons right from the start is a stroke of genius, it lets the player decide how they're gonna play the game and in this genre that's a brilliant innovation.

Alex: I'm just surprised it took this long to figure that out. But yeah, *Radiant Silvergun* is on a whole different level of gameplay. I was just blown away by how brilliant this game is, it's an utter masterpiece.

Gary: It's a tiny bit short but that's the only problem I had with this game. There's only six levels, but each level is so flawlessly designed that you'll want to play over and over again to beat your high score.

Alex: This game almost didn't make it to North America, which would've been a real shame if it hadn't, because this might be the best Saturn game I've ever played. It's tremendous.

Gary: Yeah, this game blows *Starfox 2* out of the water.

Alex: It really does and I didn't think I'd say that. It's a totally different type of shooter but it's just amazing. I'm giving it a perfect 5.

Gary: Same here, 5 out of 5 from me too.

\*The siren goes off to signal another entry for the Hall of Fame wall\*

Gary: Whoa, whoa, what time is it?

Alex: You know what time it is, another game for the Hall of Fame!

\*Gary and Alex march up to put a framed copy of *Radiant Silvergun* up on the wall\*

Alex: I don't think we've done this since the Ultra Nintendo launch, have we? And speaking of the Ultra Nintendo and shooters, I'm definitely looking forward to seeing how *Einhander* compares to this next week.

Gary: Yeah, this has been a hell of a month for shooters, huh?

-excerpted from the February 10, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted: So *Einhander*, for me was a bit of a disappointment. It's a well made game.

Alex: Right, but compared to, well, last week's *Radiant Silvergun* which I'll admit may have spoiled me a bit, but...

Ted: It's slower.

Alex: It's a lot slower. But it's a very pretty game. It has all the typical Squaresoft production values, it's you know, great graphics, excellent music, but here's the thing. The weapon system I thought was pretty bad. Switching between weapons is easy but I kept having trouble finding a good gun to use. Most of the guns I felt didn't do anything.

Ted: Right, right, and then you have to kill the exact enemy that drops the gun you need and the game doesn't give much room for experimentation.

Alex: Whereas in *Radiant Silvergun*, you can experiment with your weapons right from the start and find the one you liked.

Ted: And the storyline in this game....I dunno, it gave me a headache.

Alex: I thought it was pretty well done, it shows the futility of war and the virtue of peace, and-

Ted: But there have been SO many war stories, even in games, that have told that story better. It seems like, for this kind of game, just kind of an excuse plot.

Alex: So what's your final verdict on *Einhander*?

Ted: Great looking game, plays all right, not the next great shooter though. 3.5 for me.

Alex: Right, I'm going with 3.5 too, I thought *Einhander* was really well made but as a shooter it does have a lot of flaws that definitely hamper the experience. For my money, give me *Radiant Silvergun*.

Ted: You know *Einhander* is gonna sell a lot better, right?

Alex: Yeah, and that's kind of a shame.

Ted: \*smirking\* Saturn does what Nintendon't.

Alex: ...yeah, this time, this time they do. \*looks disappointed and is pouting\*

-excerpted from the February 17, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

John Walden: So, is the Force with *Shadows of the Empire*?

Lyssa Fielding: You know, it was a lot of fun! It's not the PERFECT *Star Wars* game, but it's got all the fun stuff you'd expect from a *Star Wars* game. It's got the John Williams music, it's got Boba Fett, and AT-ATs, it's got some great cinematography... it's a good game! If you're an Ultra Nintendo owner and a *Star Wars* fan, definitely pick it up.

John: It seems like *Star Wars* is really picking up, isn't it? Got Episode I coming next year, got all these games coming out, it's a good time to be a *Star Wars* fan and a gamer!

Lyssa: It's ALWAYS a good time to be a *Star Wars* fan! \*sighs nostalgically\* I remember when my parents took me to see the first *Star Wars* movie. I mean, I BARELY remember, because I was like 4, but, you know, a lot of stuff from that movie still stands out to me. And then of course I saw the next two movies when I could understand them more and they blew me away. It was tough being a girl who liked *Star Wars* though. I mean, being a CUTE girl who liked *Star Wars*, that helped. \*smirks\* Like, once I started modeling, nobody expected me to like *Star Wars*, but I've ALWAYS been a fan.

John: Did you hide it? I mean when you got to high school? Did any of your friends like it?

Lyssa: Actually, they did! Even most of the cheerleaders, they loved *Star Wars*. *Star Wars* really helped make it cool to be sort of a geek, you know?

John: Well, we're both pretty big *Star Wars* fans I think, and this game, it's the real deal. Like you said, it isn't the PERFECT *Star Wars* game, I wish there was more lightsaber fighting and some of the battles are pretty underwhelming, but the graphics are superb. The voice acting, pretty much everyone from the films revises their roles.

Lyssa: Except Harrison Ford, since, you know, Han Solo is frozen in carbonite during all of this. \*makes a frowny face\*

John: But Mark Hamill does and he's excellent, Carrie Fisher is great, I mean Luke and Leia

aren't in the game that much but when they do show up it's really cool. I'm giving *Shadows of the Empire* a solid 4 out of 5.

Lyssa: And I'm giving it a 4.5. It COULD be better but it's still a must play for any *Star Wars* fan, which makes it a must play for...just about everybody I guess!

John: \*laughing\* You got that right!

-excerpted from the February 24, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: February 1998**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Chrono Trigger
3. Tale Phantasia
4. Victory 2
5. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2
6. Kirby's Adventure 3
7. Mortal Kombat: Labyrinth
8. Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo
9. Super Mario World 2
10. World Heroes Perfect

### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: February 1998**

1. Super Mario Dimensions
2. Final Fantasy VII
3. Ultra Mario Kart
4. Star Fox 2
5. Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night
6. Deathblow
7. Crash Bandicoot
8. Cruisin' USA
9. Wave Race
10. Ultra International Superstar Soccer

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: February 1998**

1. Resident Evil 2
2. Tomb Raider II
3. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
4. Panzer Dragoon Saga
5. Tekken 3
6. Klonoa: Door To Phantomile
7. Phantasy Star V
8. NFL Blitz
9. Duke Nukem: Time To Kill
10. Prismaclash

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The *Shadows Of The Empire* project was started by George Lucas and Lucasfilm in 1996. Created to be a brand new *Star Wars* story to be released alongside the Special Edition trilogy, the project comprised a novel, comics, a brand new toy line, and various other multimedia projects including a PC game (which follows a side story of the main game, with Dash and Iria in pursuit of the bounty hunter Boba Fett, who doesn't appear in the Ultra Nintendo title) and the centerpiece of a the project, an Ultra Nintendo game allowing players to experience the events of *Shadows of the Empire* for themselves.

In *Shadows of the Empire*, the evil Prince Xizor, an interplanetary crime lord (and secretly a would-be apprentice to Palpatine with hidden Sith powers), seeks to make an impression on Emperor Palpatine by delivering to him Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia. In order to do this, he conducts a campaign of terror throughout the galaxy in the hopes of drawing out Luke so that he can be captured. He also kidnaps Princess Leia, which forces Luke to attempt to go to her rescue. Assisting Luke in this endeavor are Dash and Iria Rendar, a brother-sister team of rebel mercenaries who are drawn into the conflict after one of Xizor's campaigns causes the death of their friends on a space station after it is destroyed by one of Xizor's captured ships. Dash and Iria battle Xizor, but once Xizor's Sith powers come out, Luke must use his Jedi training to help win the fight and defeat Xizor once and for all.

The *Shadows of the Empire* game consists of 14 missions, spanning from the Battle of Hoth, to the ill-fated space station that Dash and Iria once called home, to a series of high speed chases on Tatooine, and finally to a confrontation with Xizor himself on a long-forgotten planet. The game allows the player to choose between Dash and Iria on most missions, but Luke can also be controlled by the player on certain missions, especially those toward the end. The player can choose between Dash, Iria, or Luke for the final battle with Xizor, which changes in playstyle depending on who is chosen.

The entire project, game included, was considered a major success by both *Star Wars* fans and mainstream critics alike. *Shadows of the Empire* was one of the top selling early titles for the Ultra Nintendo, becoming the best selling new game of February 1998 for the system and one of the best selling new games of the entire month, behind only *Resident Evil 2* on the Sega Saturn. The project helped to contribute to the massive lead-up of *Star Wars* media to the release of the prequel trilogy, and remains one of the most beloved elements of the *Star Wars* media universe.

-excerpted from a *Star Wars* retrospective article chronicling the time leading up to the release of *Episode I: The Phantom Menace*, posted on Scifibulletin.com, January 22, 2008

### **Saturn Star Wars: An FPS?**

The Ultra Nintendo's *Star Wars* game, *Shadows of the Empire*, is set to release later this month, but the Saturn's not going to be left out! In fact, the Sega Saturn is getting a *Star Wars* game in a genre that the series has never seen before... a first person shooter. In *Star Wars: Battle Of Despayre*, you play as Tek Dekart, a prisoner on the planet of Despayre, which is on the verge of becoming the Death Star's first target. Your job is to escape the planet with the plans for the Death Star and bring them to waiting Rebellion soldiers! On your mission, you'll be helped by a variety of allies, including the beautiful but deadly Twilek, Rianna Saren, and a brutish Wookiee named Karakk. LucasArts is taking its cues from games such as *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* for the Saturn's *Star Wars* title, and what we've seen so far looks great, though the game has been delayed until later this year. We can't wait to play it!

-excerpted from the February 1998 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

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## **February 27, 1998**

George Lucas had shown his *Phantom Menace* script to just a few people outside of Lucasfilm. Filming was set to begin in just a few weeks, but Lucas was still making changes, still finding things that weren't absolutely perfect. One of the people who'd offered to help Lucas was his good friend and fellow filmmaker Steven Spielberg. The two had collaborated on *Indiana Jones* together, though *Star Wars* was Lucas' crowning achievement, something he was incredibly proud of and something that had made him an extremely rich man. But still, he valued his friend Steven's input, and the two were engaged in a rather heated discussion over the phone concerning a specific aspect of Lucas' script.

"George, I am telling you, nobody is gonna like this guy. He is NOTHING like E.T. You need to get rid of Jar Jar."

Jar Jar Binks was one of the new characters in *The Phantom Menace* that Lucas was most proud of. He'd found the character to be extremely funny and he's integrated Jar Jar fairly deeply into the plot, creating an entire race of sea-dwelling aliens, the Gungans, who would play an important role in the film's climactic battle. Jar Jar would play a huge role in the film and he couldn't just be taken out. George was hoping that Spielberg would see that.

"Jar Jar is great, he's....he's an important character and kids are gonna love him. This is a new generation of kids we're talking about--"

"That's my point, George. Look at what they're doing with video games these days. I don't have much time to play them with how busy I am, but... they're getting smarter and they're getting better. Look at your first *Star Wars* movie. It was brilliant and kids LOVED it. They bought the toys, they watched it over and over again and you didn't need a character like this Jar Jar to sell it to them. You can have someone in the film as a comedic foil to Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan without having to make them so damn annoying."

George was lost in thought. He'd fallen in love with his new character, but...his friend Steven Spielberg was rarely wrong, especially when it came to movies.

"Well...I'll consider it," he finally replied. "I just don't know."

"Hey, I didn't steer you wrong on Haley Joel Osment, did I?" asked Spielberg, referring to the talented young actor who'd been cast as Anakin Skywalker, on Spielberg's recommendation over Lucas' first choice, Jake Lloyd. "He's something, isn't he?"

"He's a natural," replied Lucas, who had to admit that Osment was the superior actor and his emotional versatility made him a great choice to play the young but troubled boy Anakin.

"And speaking of natural...you need to let your actors ad-lib a bit, some of these lines...."

"Harrison Ford told me that once," said Lucas with a sigh.

"Well he was right, when you read these lines they sound....they sound weird. You sure you don't want to bring in another director?"

"Why, are you offering?" laughed Lucas, despite he and Spielberg both knowing that the latter was still busy filming the war film *Saving Private Ryan*. "No, no, I want to direct. I'll keep what you said in mind."

"Well, whatever you do, get rid of Jar Jar, he's terrible."

"You're hurting my feelings, Steve!" George yelled over the phone, still laughing heartily. "Hey, it was nice talking to you, remember to keep it light over there. You always make such heavy movies."

"We got Tom Hanks, we'll be fine," Spielberg replied, laughing with his friend. "We'll talk again soon. ....get rid of Jar Jar."

George put down the phone and sat down in his chair, sighing as he flipped through the script. Was Jar Jar really THAT intolerable? He shook his head slowly...no...no, he was right. George Lucas was right, Steven Spielberg was wrong. The movie wouldn't be as good without Jar Jar, it needed the comic relief and kids would love him.

But as George Lucas started to drift off to sleep, an idea came to him. Every scene with Jar Jar Binks, he played back in his head.

"*What if.....?*"

He looked at the script again. He thought about Spielberg's comment about video games...and then he thought back to one of the games from his very own company.

"*Monkey Island.... what if....instead of....Jar Jar being silly....we had...*"

He remembered Guybrush Threepwood and a character who'd played so brilliantly off of him.

"*Elaine Marley.... Padme.....!!!*"

George Lucas already had the kids. What he didn't have, at least in the kinds of numbers he wanted, was girls.

"*Padme...Leia's mother...and what would Leia have been like at 14...?*"

He looked at the script again. It worked. Everything worked. The two serious Jedi needed a foil, but it didn't have to be a *fool*.

George Lucas rushed to his computer and frantically began typing.

Ted Crosley: Hey there, I'm Ted!

Alex Stansfield: I'm Alex!

Ted: And this...is *GameTV*!

Narrator: For nearly three years, *GameTV* has been the number one show on television for video gamers all around the world. But just how do we put this awesome show together?

\*Various scenes from the past three years of the show are played in snippets on screen, including Ted and John sitting on the couch with racing wheels playing *Daytona USA* on the Saturn, Kaz dressing up as the Doom guy and blasting a bunch of Mario toys away with an oversized Nerf gun, Ted and Alex giving the thumbs down to *The Simpsons: Itchy and Scratchy* on the SNES-CD, Brittany jumping up and down excitedly as Alex tries to calm her down, Ted and Alex arguing over *Vectorman 2* as Brittany calmly sits between them eating ice cream, John and Kaz in football uniforms while playing the Saturn's *Madden 96*, Ted, Alex, John, Brittany, Gary, and Lyssa all trying to squeeze in on the couch together, Lyssa dressing up a Barbie doll in provocative clothes, Ted throwing a temper tantrum after John beats him in *NFL Blitz*, Kaz dressing up like Santa Claus and delivering "presents" to action figures representing various game companies, and other scenes appear on screen as the narrator speaks.\*

Narrator: We'll take you behind the scenes to show you just how *GameTV* got started, how we make each and every episode of this weekly series, and we'll also give you a look at where we're going next. We'll show you some footage from last year's high school and college tour...

\*Ted is shown yelling excitedly in a megaphone, Alex and Brittany on either side of him, as a group of high school kids sitting in a gym cheers raucously.\*

Narrator: And we'll also take a look back at some of the show's greatest moments. So sit back, relax, put the controller down for just one more hour...this is *GameTV: Behind The Scenes*.

(...)

Narrator: The show needed a pair of hosts that could disagree without killing each other. And when it comes to the console wars, that can sometimes be hard to find.

Ted: Alex and I, we'd actually met before doing the show.

Alex: Both of us wanted to be actors, we were uh, drama dorks pretty much. I think I was probably more of a dork than Ted was.

Ted: Hell yeah you were!

Narrator: Ted Crosley grew up in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. His brother was a standout baseball player, and at first, young Ted wanted to follow in his footsteps.

Ted: I loved baseball. Still do, actually, but back then I loved playing baseball. My dream was to play for the New York Yankees, but, you know, I never got farther than Little League.

\*A brief home video is shown of 9-year-old Ted hitting a ball deep into the outfield and starting to run the bases.\*

Narrator: But Ted soon found out his real passion was the stage.

Ted: My best friend back then, and, we're still friends today, was J.D. Roth. He's pretty famous too, look him up. We hung out together, did plays...he was famous even when he was a kid, he did commercials and stuff, and I started auditioning but never got anything.

Narrator: But that didn't deter Ted from acting whenever he could.

\*A brief home video is shown of Ted as Joseph in his high school production of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, singing "Coat Of Many Colors".\*

Ted: I did school plays, some local theater. And, as you probably know, at the same time I was doing that, I was playing video games. Started with Pong, got my first Atari for my tenth birthday, got a Colecovision later on...then when I got to college, my roommate, he had the NES. And I watched him play *Super Mario Bros.* and it was pretty much the most amazing thing ever.

Narrator: Even after Ted graduated and took a job as an MTV VJ, he didn't stop playing games.

Ted: 1990, I got the Sega Genesis. It looked amazing, way better than the NES. Once *Sonic* came out in 1991, I knew, I was a gamer for life. Just the colors, the speed, everything was so amazing. I got the Super Nintendo a year later and loved it, but by then I was a Genesis fanboy and proud of it.

Narrator: Alex Stansfield can tell a similar story. He grew up in Durham, North Carolina, and he too had a passion for games.

Alex: I started, actually, with *Dungeons and Dragons*. Then we got a computer when I was like 15, and I started looking for computer role playing games. We had the Atari too but I mostly played games on the computer.

Narrator: Like Ted, Alex had a passion for performing.

Alex: I was a hardcore drama geek back in school.

\*A picture is shown of Alex in glasses, on his high school stage rehearsing a scene in the play *Our Town*.\*

Alex: I was in ALL the plays and, you know, when I got to high school, I was definitely one of the nerds. All those stories about nerdy freshmen, all those things applied to me. I never got shoved in any lockers, but for a while it was pretty rough. But I didn't care, I liked what I liked and I just figured, you know, get through high school, get to college, it'll all work out.

Narrator: But as Alex progressed through high school, he soon found himself adjusting better than he thought he would.

Alex: By the time...by the time I got to junior year, I was hanging out with, you know, kinda the in crowd. It sort of happened....like I was a late bloomer or something.

\*A picture is shown of Alex's junior prom, Alex is standing with a girl in a crown, she's leaning on him and smiling.\*

Alex: I actually dated the prom princess. We were pretty close. So yeah, by senior year, uh, I guess I was one of the cool kids? But even then I was still playing video games. Believe it or not, I was, I think the second person in the United States to get the NES. I had just gotten my driver's license and my parents, God bless 'em, they let me drive up to New York City to buy it right when it came out. I was a huge fan of Nintendo from their arcade games, *Donkey Kong*, *Mario Bros.*, and when I heard they had a home console coming out, I begged my parents to let me get it.

Narrator: From that moment, Alex was hooked on Nintendo.

Alex: I played all the great adventure games. *Dragon Warrior*, *Final Fantasy*, of COURSE *The Legend Of Zelda*. They were like no games I'd ever played before. I couldn't get enough of them.

(...)

Narrator: Brittany Saldita grew up in Santa Cruz, California.

\*A picture is shown of a five-year-old Brittany with her two older brothers, 11 and 8.\*

Brittany: I grew up with two older brothers. And...growing up with two older brothers, I know a lot of girls become sorta "tomboys"? I didn't really, but I did grow up being super ultra competitive. \*laughs\* I HAD to beat them at everything. They were bigger, they were boys, I didn't care. And what I quickly learned that I could easily beat them at was video games. Of course we had the Atari, and they both played the hell outta that thing. Well, so did I. I played...I played just so I could get good enough to beat them at it. And of course I played a lot of arcade games too.

Narrator: But even though Brittany developed a passion for video games, she still had her heart set on a career in journalism.

Brittany: Especially once I got to high school, I knew I wanted to be in the news industry.

\*Brittany is shown in a picture giving the morning announcements at her high school.\*

Brittany: And I didn't just want to be behind the scenes, I wanted to be on camera. I wanted to be...well, I grew to idolize Sally Jessy Raphael. She is amazing.

\*A brief scene of Sally Jessy Raphael's talk show is shown on screen.\*

Brittany: And, you know, follow in the footsteps of people like her, or of course Oprah Winfrey who's pretty much the queen of talk TV.

Narrator: Brittany double majored in communications and journalism at UC Santa Cruz. While there, she also DJed on the campus radio station for more than a year.

\*An old clip of her on college radio is played: "Hey, good afternoon, it's Brittany here and we're gonna keep rocking your world with this next one, this is Unwound..."\*

Narrator: And while Brittany was lighting up the airwaves, she was also lighting up her opponents in the video game arena.

Brittany: In 1992 I got really into *Street Fighter II*, like pretty much every gamer did at the time. I'd play it in the arcades, when it came out on the SNES I played it at home...and there was a tournament at UC Santa Cruz, where we'd be playing the new SNES-CD edition of the game. There were....I think about 60 people that entered that tournament, and I was one of only three girls who entered. Nobody...nobody expected me to win that thing.

\*A picture is shown of Brittany holding a controller and standing up as she faces off against her opponent in the tournament. The picture zooms out to reveal that it's from the front page of the campus newspaper, with the headline "Brittany Saldita Outlasts All Comers To Win Street Fighter Tournament"\*

Brittany: I won the tournament. \*she laughs\* And um, I won a Super Nintendo CD combo set. I could actually sell my old SNES for like 100 bucks. \*she laughs again\* But yeah, it shocked people, because, "oh my god, a GIRL won a *Street Fighter* tournament"? I don't think it would've been on the front page of the campus newspaper if a guy had won.

Narrator: When Brittany graduated, she took a job in Los Angeles, interning at a TV news station. Even there, her video game knowledge came in handy.

Brittany: When we covered the launch of *Sonic the Hedgehog 3*, the station manager asked around, "does anybody know anything about Sonic the Hedgehog"? Well, I'd been playing *Sonic* for like three years, so my hand went straight up and they sent me out to cover it.

\*An old clip from the story is shown of Brittany playing the first level of the game as the camera zooms in, explaining how the game works as she plays.\*

Brittany: I think we were...the only news station in LA that actually had someone who knew what they were talking about covering the game! \*laughs\*

(...)

Narrator: John Walden grew up in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and though video games were one of his first loves, like others in the cast, he wanted to perform on stage.

John: My favorite actor, growing up, was Ben Vereen. Incredible talent, such a great singer...I could never sing as well as him but that didn't stop me from trying to sing any chance I got.

Narrator: When John was in high school, he was a member of the AV club, and filmed the football and basketball teams for the school.

John: I was a volunteer helping to film the teams so that we'd have that game tape to study. I was a huge sports fan, so it was really fun, and I got to learn a lot about television production, which I thought would be a big help for me getting a job on camera later on.

Narrator: While in college, John continued in his film production work, but while helping to shoot student films, he would frequently be asked to go on camera himself.

\*A scene from one of John's old student films, a horror film about a hideous monster that

attacks unsuspecting students, is shown. John is playing the role of a scared bystander being interviewed by a police officer when the monster suddenly comes up on both of them, tackling the officer while John's character freaks out.\*

John: It was just cheap stuff mostly, horror, that kinda thing, but it was a ton of fun. Well, one of the films I did in my senior year, the one I actually starred in, that got noticed and we got invited to a national student film festival.

\*Another scene is shown, of a Victorian-like setting, as John and a young woman are talking to each other in the middle of a fancy decorated room.\*

John: In that film, it was kind of a riff on stuffy romance novels, like the old Jane Austen novels, where, instead of being, you know, the British nobility, it'd be a bunch of black people from the hood, like in *Friday*, that kinda thing, and, you know, it'd have all the classic *Pride and Prejudice* type cliches, but we'd be talking and acting like it was a modern comedy film.

Narrator: The parody caught the eye of numerous producers, and soon, agents were knocking on John's door.

John: So that's how I ended up getting cast in a few movies, just minor roles, I did some TV guest appearances, I was in an episode of *Fresh Prince*....

Narrator: But John never lost his passion for video games.

John: I'd be playing them any chance I got. I was actually introducing celebrities to them when I got the chance to do that. I met Robin Williams once and tried to get him hooked on games before I found out he probably was a bigger fan of them than I was! I mean, the dude named his own daughter after Princess Zelda, doesn't get much more hardcore than that, right?

(...)

Narrator: Gary Westhouse's love for video games started early.

Gary: I lived in Portland, Oregon, and back when I was growing up, in the 70s, it was a pretty happening place. The Blazers were like the best team in basketball, and we had tons of video arcades here when I was a kid. Mom would take me over there and give me a big handful of quarters and then she'd hang out in the food court area and watch while I played game after game after game. The first game that I REALLY truly loved playing was probably *Galaxian* when I was like nine, it came out and that was all I played for a good long time until *Galaga* came out a couple years later.

\*Footage of *Galaga* is shown on screen.\*

Gary: I played a ton of *Galaga*, and then when the Atari 7800 came out and it had *Galaga* on it, I think, it was the first game system to have it, I got it just so I could play *Galaga* at home. Of course, getting the Atari 7800 meant I kinda missed the boat on the NES until I got to college, which kinda sucked, but I had a ton of fun on that old 7800.

Narrator: Like Ted, Gary became an MTV VJ after graduating from college with a degree in communications.

Gary: I was actually, believe it or not, hoping to be a sportscaster, but MTV offered me a job and I said "yeah, sure, it's MTV, why not", you know?

Narrator: From there, Gary joined the team on MTV News, and when *GameTV* finally came calling, he knew he'd found the job he was looking for.

Gary: I never stopped playing games. I got the Neo-Geo pretty much as soon as they came out with it, cobbled 700 bucks together somehow and went to the store and bought one. Video games...it's more than a hobby for me, it's a passion and being able to do a job that I have so much passion and love for, it's really a dream come true.

(...)

Lyssa: I'm just about the last girl you'd EVER expect to see on a show like this, aren't I?  
\*she laughs\*

Narrator: Lyssa Fielding was destined for a modeling career.

Lyssa: My mom...she started taking me to pageants when I was like nine years old. She got me all dolled up, took me around...all around the country, really, doing these beauty pageants. And they were fun, I love being on stage and performing, but after a while, you know, it was a pretty grueling schedule.

\*Footage of 10-year-old Lyssa at one of her beauty pageants is shown, she's on stage doing a little dance as the judges watch.\*

Lyssa: By the time I got to be 13, things got even more intense. I um, I grew up quite quickly and mom thought I could be a superstar. Of course...by then, you know, I'd started playing video games. Lots and lots of video games. My big brother played them and I played them too, mostly to blow off steam from my mom being such a perfectionist.

Narrator: While Lyssa continued to excel on stage, even getting auditions for shows such as the new *Mickey Mouse Club*, her secret passion for video games turned into an obsession.

Lyssa: Finally when I was in my last year of high school, mom tried to put her foot down with me and she said "no more video games", and I told her right to her face that if she took my games away, I wasn't going to model or do pageants for her anymore. Because...by then...even though I loved performing in front of people....she was taking it way too far and I'd had enough. I told her point blank, "look, if I'm gonna keep doing this, I NEED these games, I need to blow off steam". I wasn't even scared about her kicking me out of the house or anything because I had friends who could take me in. So I had all the leverage and she backed off.

Narrator: Even though Lyssa was starting to tire of the relentless pageant schedule, she still remained active in the circuit even in college, getting third place in the 1992 Miss California contest. By the time she'd graduated in 1994, she was ready to take on the world.

Lyssa: I got an offer from Playboy, turned that down...they offered something like \$75,000, but...I didn't want to be....I mean, I'm proud of my body, definitely, but I really wanted to do something more involved than modeling by that point. So, I did a couple movies, just little bit parts, but I must've made an impression because MTV offered me a job!

Narrator: Lyssa became the co-host of MTV's *Singled Out* alongside Chris Hardwick in 1995.

\*Footage is shown of Lyssa cracking a joke during an episode of *Singled Out*, and then footage is shown from the episode of *Boy Meets World* where Eric goes on the show, he says something stupid and Lyssa rolls her eyes and makes a joke about it.\*

Lyssa: So while I was on *Singled Out*, I was a huge fan of *GameTV*. I still loved games and I was SO jealous of all the people on that show, I loved my job but *GameTV* looked like the best job in the frickin' world! And I told the people at MTV, I told them "if you guys ever need me on that show, just say the word and I'm there".

(...)

\*Ted, Alex, Brittany, John, Gary, and Lyssa are standing on the *GameTV* stage.\*

Ted: So you guys have seen this stage tons of times, but now we're gonna give you a little tour and show you just what it's like to hang out here with us.

\*The stage looks somewhat like a well furnished gamer's basement. On the raised stage at the center of the room, there's a big couch in front of a big CRT TV, the TV is sitting on a shelf on which an SNES-CD, a Sega Saturn, and an Ultra Nintendo are placed.\*

Alex: This is our TV, and it's a really nice one, got all the hookups and of course the game systems...

Ted: Right now we got the Super Nintendo CD, of course, still with the SNES cartridge slot, we got the Sega Saturn right here and then there's the new Ultra Nintendo, we've only had this one a couple months. We got our controllers down here... \*points to a shelf on which four controllers from each system are neatly set up\*

Lyssa: Yeah, I bet most of you at home don't have your controllers all wrapped up neatly like this, that's the benefit of having unpaid interns to do it for you! \*giggles\*

Alex: No, no, Lyssa, we do actually pay the people who make everything all nice for us.

Lyssa: \*she wipes her finger on the TV screen, getting some dust on her finger\* Whatever we pay them, it's too much, this TV is all dusty!

Alex: \*sighs\* Guess the maid hasn't been here lately. MAID!!!

\*A big burly bald guy in a French maid outfit walks out holding a feather duster.\*

"Maid": What do ya want?

Alex: \*points to the TV\* Clean off the dust!

"Maid": \*shoves the feather duster in Alex's hand\* Do it yourself, ya \*bleep\*hole. \*leaves the stage\*

Lyssa: \*sighing as she grabs the feather duster\* Do I have to do everything myself? \*walks off screen\*

Brittany: Well, anyway, that's not all we've got. We've also got... \*she walks over to the brick wall behind the TV, on which there are two embedded TV monitors flanking the stage\* Two extra screens for comparing one game to another!

John: \*walks over to a book shelf which is stocked with video game strategy guides, he picks up a guide for *NiGHTS: Into Dreams* and begins flipping through it\* We got some light reading up here...

Gary: And.... \*he walks over to the nearby refrigerator and opens it up\* A fully stocked fridge! \*pulls out a tub of ice cream\*

Brittany: Hey, that's mine! \*she snatches it away from him\*

Ted: So yeah, pretty much everything a self-respecting video gamer could want is here with us on stage, so that we can bring YOU the latest and greatest in the world of video game action.

\*As the hosts continue to talk, Lyssa comes back out, now in her own French maid outfit, and begins dusting off the bookshelf and the TV\*

Alex: This is where MOST of the magic happens, but not all of it, as you'll soon see. Come backstage with us and we'll show you even more!

Brittany: \*glaring at Lyssa as she dusts\* What are you doing?

Lyssa: Cleaning this place up, it's a mess! \*she hands Brittany a feather duster\* Wanna join in?

Brittany: Uh.... \*points to Gary\* Ask him.

Gary: Huh? \*Brittany playfully shoves him forward\*

\*Meanwhile, Ted and Alex are backstage now\*

Ted: Each of us has our own individual dressing room. But it's not JUST a dressing room, it's also... \*opens the door to his dressing room which is stocked with a couch, a mini-fridge, and another big TV\* It's where we do a LOT of the reviews for our games.

Alex: That's right, not only do we each have our own little spaces for sitting and playing games all day, we also have this...the GameTV lounge!

\*Ted and Alex and John step into a big room with game posters all over the walls, an air hockey table, and lots of furniture along with two big TVs and game controllers strewn all over the place.\*

John: This is the lounge, where we hang out, have fun, AND if we're reviewing a multiplayer game, we do it in here where we can all crash together and play versus mode until our fingers fall off!

\*Back out on stage, Brittany is showing off a closet stocked with lots of old game systems, games, and controllers.\*

Brittany: This is the GameTV storage closet, where we keep some old game systems for retro reviews. There's a Genesis in here, an Atari 5200....for some reason.... there's even an old Pong machine! \*smirking\* This is the closet we locked Ted and Alex in when the Spice Girls came here.

Lyssa: Fun times, fun times! \*she is showing off Gary who is now in the French maid costume and holding the feather duster\* Gary, you need to dust off all these old game systems!

Gary: Oh come on...even the Fairchild Channel F?

Brittany: ESPECIALLY the Fairchild Channel F. \*holds it up for him to dust\*

(...)

Ted: So, you've seen our game reviews in the past...

\*Various snippets of past *GameTV* reviews are shown.\*

Ted: The thing about *NASCAR Racing* is, if I want to crash a car and mess up the whole race, I oughta be able to do that!

Alex: *NBA Give'n'Go*, more like *NBA Suck'n'Blow*! Come ON, Konami!

Brittany: Vroom, vroom, vroom! \*holding the Saturn racing wheel\* When you play *F1 Challenge*, you look like an idiot, but...vroom!

John: \*he is flipping out as he plays *NHL '96* for the Saturn\* This looks like real hockey! I could set the computer to just play this and it'd be as good as a full season!

Gary: Is *Donkey Kong Land 2* as good as the real thing? Well, no, it's like Diet Donkey Kong Country.

Kaz: \*wearing a tinfoil hat as he plays *Cannon Fodder 2* with Ted\* Oh, I'm sorry, Nintendo sent a spy in here to steal my thoughts.

Lyssa: \*gets blasted with a water gun by Brittany during their *Wave Race* review\*

\*The snippets stop\*

Ted: But just how do we come up with all these reviews we do?

Alex: Well, it's a pretty simple process that involves lots of gameplay and a little bit of paperwork.

Ted: Every week, we're sent all the latest games, and those games are divvied out amongst us six hosts to review. Some of the games we can actually take home to play, others we stay here in the studio and play them in our dressing rooms.

Alex: After we play a game, and by that I mean beat the game and play as much of the extra stuff as we can, including multiplayer and any secret levels we can reach, we get this

form to fill out. \*holds up a sheet of paper with a big square on it and about half a page's worth of lines\* See that big square?

Ted: In that square, we put down the score we give the game, from 0 to "I wouldn't wish this game on Adolf Hitler", to 5 for "even if you HATE Barney, *Barney's Hug-A-Palooza* is a 5 and you won't regret buying it right now and playing it".

Alex: Disclaimer: we would NEVER give a game called *Barney's Hug-A-Palooza* a 5.

Ted: Then, after we put down our score, we write what we liked and what we disliked about the game.

Alex: And after that's done, this sheet is turned in to the writing staff. We sit down with the writing staff and together, we draw up a script for what we're going to say during the episode.

Ted: Now, here's the thing. The script is only about 50 percent of what we say. The rest of it, we kinda make up as we go along.

Alex: We usually don't drop or change what the writers give us. They're REALLY talented and damn funny and they always give us great stuff to say.

Ted: But they will leave us plenty of room to make stuff up on the fly. It's one big happy family, and we all come together to make great TV.

Alex: Of course, reviews aren't everything here on *GameTV*.

\*The scene switches back to the stage, where all six hosts are gathered.\*

Ted: Some of the BEST segments on the show are where we hosts make absolute asses out of ourselves being silly and doing skits.

\*Scenes from various skits are shown, including Alex as Link and Brittany as Princess Zelda, while Kaz plays Ganon in a scary pig mask.\*

Alex: I've come to save you, Princess Zelda!

Kaz: \*lunges at Alex\* You're no match for the power of evil!

Brittany: Link! \*she looks around for something to help him with\*

Kaz: \*standing victoriously over Alex\* Time to finish you off, Hero of Hyrule!

Alex: Noooo! I'm done for!

\*Suddenly, a bunch of senior citizens wearing bibs and carrying forks and knives walk onto the stage. Brittany is with them, smirking.\*

Kaz: What's THIS?!

\*The senior citizens set upon Kaz, quickly overwhelming him\*

Alex: You...defeated Ganon? But how?

Brittany: Well...he's a giant pig monster, so I just told them there's a half-off special on bacon for senior citizens. Have you ever seen the morning rush at Denny's? No pig is a match for a bunch of seniors who want to eat for cheap.

\*Now a scene is shown of Ted sitting on a giant Woofle plushie.\*

Ted: Ride the dog to victory!

Alex: That thing is WAY too cute to inspire fear in any bad guy.

Ted: \*throws the plushie at Alex, knocking him over\*

\*Next, Ted, John, and Brittany are seen on a parody of *Jeopardy!* while Alex plays the role of Alex Trebek.\*

Ted: I'm gonna take the Mushroom Kingdom for 800, Alex.

Alex: This is Bowser's favorite pasttime.

Brittany: \*buzzes in\* What is kidnapping princesses?

Alex: I'm sorry, you're incorrect.

John: \*buzzes in\* What is go karting?

Alex: You're absolutely right!

Brittany: That makes absolutely no sense!

\*The sketch montage ends.\*

Alex: Like with the reviews, the hosts and the writing team share equal responsibility for writing the sketches.

John: And sometimes, sketches are made up on the fly. I was interviewing Hideo Kojima for his game *Policenauts*, and while we were watching footage of the interview, he mentioned Japanese game shows and that gave us the idea for our famous *Happy Happy Funtime City* sketch.

\*A brief snippet is shown from the sketch of Alex and Ted sliding down a Slip 'n Slide filled with whipped cream and pillow fluff while Gary, playing the host of the show, laughs sadistically and Brittany, dressed in a sparkly and frilly costume, makes pouty faces at the camera to mock them.\*

Alex: What's the prize for this game? \*asking in exasperation as he frantically changes into a velcro-lined suit\*

Gary: You get to not die! \*laughing again\*

Ted: That's actually a pretty good prize!

\*The snippet ends\*

Brittany: Or right before the *Tale Phantasia* episode.

Alex: Yeah, you'd been playing the game relentlessly, and I made an off-hand comment about how I was worried we'd have to kidnap you to get you to show up for work.

Brittany: And then I respond with "you guys should totally do that!" and I run to grab a roll of duct tape off the nearest prop table.

\*A brief snippet from the *Tale Phantasia* episode is shown of Ted and Alex carrying Brittany onto the stage all taped up.\*

Ted: Honestly, I think a LOT of our ideas come from somebody saying "you guys should totally do that".

John: Yeah, it's so freeform here and so much fun, and we hope you guys watching us have just as much fun watching us play video games as we do playing them!

Lyssa: ...okay, there is no way the audience has as much fun watching us play video games as we do playing them. \*snickers\*

(...)

Brittany: You know, one of the BEST parts of the show in my opinion is all the musical guests we get in here.

\*Snippets are shown of various musical guest performances, including The Spice Girls, Smashing Pumpkins, LL Cool J, Bikini Kill, Sheryl Crow, and Hootie and the Blowfish\*

Ted: My personal favorite was when we had Radiohead in here.

\*A brief snippet of Radiohead's performance is shown, the band is playing a song off of their OK Computer album\*

Alex: And they saw our Ultra Nintendo and asked if they could play on it?

Brittany: This was like right after it was released here and right before it got released over in the UK. So yeah, I could tell how excited they were.

\*A never-before-seen behind the scenes video is shown of Thom Yorke and Jonny Greenwood playing *Star Fox 2* with Ted and Alex.\*

Thom Yorke: Umm....all right then, yeah, if I can just get behind one of you guys....

Alex: You know how to do the somersault?

Yorke: \*he does a somersault pretty much perfectly\* It's just you guys are too fast!

Alex: \*laughing\*

Yorke: Well it's not fair, you guys have had this game now for like a month, right?

Jonny Greenwood: Ah quit your whining! \*he shoots Yorke down\*

\*The snippet ends\*

Lyssa: It's surprising to see how many people in the music industry love to play video games.

Ted: Well that's why this show's perfect for MTV.

Alex: Yeah, and remember when we had Kurt Cobain on here?

Lyssa: That was before I became a host! I'm still freakin' jealous of you guys. \*crosses her arms over her chest\*

\*Kurt Cobain is shown sitting on the couch with Alex and Brittany, playing *Elements of Mana* with them\*

Cobain: This is harder than the first one.

Brittany: It moves a LOT faster, even I had trouble getting the hang of it at first.

Cobain: \*he gets in the red and quickly gets KOed\* I got knocked on my ass again!

Alex: Here, I'll heal you. ....awww man, I'm outta revives?

Brittany: Give him your controller!

Alex: What?

Brittany: He's our guest, give him your controller!

Cobain: \*laughing\* Are you like his mom?

\*The snippet ends, Alex and Brittany are both laughing as they remember that\*

(...)

Narrator: Since *GameTV* began in 1995, the show has become one of the highest rated programs on all of cable. It's now become a worldwide phenomenon, airing in more than a dozen countries. In late 1997, the show went on tour around the country, visiting numerous high schools and universities and even filming several episodes from college campuses.

Ted: We drew enormous crowds when we went on that college tour. I remember when we went to the University of Missouri and more than 10,000 people showed up for us, it was amazing!

\*Ted, Alex, Brittany, and Lyssa are shown taking the stage at an auditorium there, Ted has a microphone in his hand and he begins to speak.\*

Ted: How are you guys doing tonight here in Missouri?

\*The crowd cheers fiercely\*

Ted: How many of you are Sega fans?

\*There's a large cheer coming up from the crowd\*

Alex: And how many of you guys are Nintendo fans?

\*There's a slightly smaller cheer\*

Lyssa: And how many of you are Lyssa fans?

\*There's a MASSIVE cheer\*

Narrator: Speaking of Lyssa fans, the show's two female hosts, Brittany Saldita and Lyssa Fielding, have had their share of admirers over the years. For the Baby Boomer generation, one of the most debated questions among boys was "Ginger or Mary Ann?". And these days, for a new generation, that question seems to be "Lyssa or Brittany?"

\*There's a brief montage of teenage boys being asked that question.\*

Boy: Oh, definitely Brittany, she kicks ass.

Boy 2: Lyssa, she's the hottest babe on TV right now.

Boy 3: It's gotta be Lyssa, man!

Boy 4: I think I like Brittany best, she's really hot.

Boy 5: You mean at video games, or which one's the hottest?

Interviewer: Either one.

Boy 5: Uh....that's pretty tricky...

Lyssa: We're not in competition, or anything.

Brittany: Except when I kick your ass at video games. \*smirks\*

Lyssa: Oh, bring it on, I'll wipe the floor with you!

\*Brittany and Lyssa are shown playing at a *Tekken 3* machine, Brittany is winning but Lyssa is keeping it close\*

Lyssa: Come on, come on, COME ON! \*yelling as Brittany knocks her out\* I want a rematch, I want a rematch right now!

Narrator: But our male hosts have their fair share of admirers as well.

Teenage Girl: Ted's so cute, he's got that surfer thing going on, that cute sandy blonde hair...

Girl 2: I like Alex, he's really hot.

Girl 3: Where's Kaz, he was the cutest, bring back Kaz!

Girl 4: Oh, definitely Ted.

Ted: It used to be, if you played video games, that was like girl repellent. But now, tons of girls are into games, and, you know, tons of girls are into me.

\*Ted is shown between some booth babes at E3, smiling for the camera.\*

Brittany: \*smirking\* Ted thinks, because I guess I've gotten so many girls into playing games, that I've made it easy for him to pick up girls. But here's the thing, you actually have to be GOOD at video games to hook up with gamer girls. Because we are good and we WILL kick your ass.

\*A montage is shown of Ted, Alex, John, Gary, and Kaz losing to Brittany and Lyssa over and over again on the show\*

Lyssa: I've met so many girls who never would've even TOUCHED video games before they watched us on *GameTV* and realized that yes, video games are for everyone.

John: I've met old people who play video games. I've met 80 year old grandmas who play John Madden. Hell, my grandma bought a Sega Genesis after watching me on this show, and she used to think video games were the devil back in the day.

\*Some footage from the *GameTV* tour's visit to Columbine High School is shown. Brittany is playing against Eric Harris at *Doom II*.\*

Eric: ...oh, you got me again.

Brittany: You all right? \*kind of laughing a bit to lighten the mood, Eric seems pretty sullen as she's beating him\*

Eric: It's cool.

Brittany: You sure? \*kind of hugs him a bit after she wins, Eric seems to want to pull away but after she tightens her hug she gets him to actually kind of smile\* You are REALLY good at this game, you just about won.

\*Polly Klaas is being briefly interviewed now along with her friend Caitlyn\*

Polly: Well, Brittany is really awesome, she's my favorite host on the show.

Caitlyn: No way, Lyssa's the best! Lyssa's super cool!

\*Another high school visit is shown, this time Alex is giving an interview to an assembly.\*

Alex: Yes, I've got a job playing video games for a living, but you don't get a job playing video games for a living just by walking into an office some day and saying 'hey, I wanna play video games for a living!' You gotta be better than every single other guy that wants to

play video games for a living, and believe me, that's a LOT of competition!

\*Now Alex is shown watching a boy playing *Tomb Raider II*.\*

Boy: Awww, man, I really suck at this!

Alex: Did you play the first one?

Boy: I did but the fighting's a lot harder!

Alex: Yeah, you gotta be quick, try to press the button when the bad guy's winding up to punch you. You'll see the button on screen and if you press it right then, you'll counter.

Boy: ...

Alex: Did you get it?

Boy: I got it, I got him!

Alex: All right, yeah! \*gives the boy a high five\*

(...)

\*Now some of the hosts are shown after the assembly, all of them smiling but looking a bit overwhelmed\*

Ted: It's incredible, seeing just how excited people get for us. I mean, if you would've told me when I was a kid that, through playing video games, we'd be able to make so much of an impact on people...it's just insane.

Alex: I mean, MTV didn't exist when I was a little kid. So I never imagined a show like this could even exist.

Brittany: Um, it's not Sally Jessy Raphael, but in the end...seeing how many girls are playing games and seeing how much confidence the show's inspired in them, that's amazing and it's really gratifying to me.

John: I'm having the time of my life doing this show. *GameTV*'s just been an incredible opportunity for me.

Gary: These guys, on the show they give me a hard time, but really, we're all one big family. These guys are like family to me and I love them all so much.

Lyssa: This beats the hell outta Playboy! \*laughing\* I love doing *GameTV*, I've made five awesome friends, one super best friend \*hugs Brittany close\*, life is just amazing and I love all our fans! \*blows a kiss at the screen\*

(...)

Narrator: 1998 is gearing up to be one of the biggest years for video games ever, and *GameTV* is taking the show to new heights. Later this year, we'll be debuting a brand new, state of the art studio, complete with a huge projection screen.

\*A brief tour is given of the new studio space, now an empty warehouse but clearly much bigger than the original "basement" studio\*

Narrator: And we'll be playing more games than ever, with exclusive previews you won't find anywhere else.

Ted: We're gonna have the world premiere first playable preview footage of *Metal Gear Solid*, two weeks BEFORE the game launches at E3. That's right, we've got the exclusive scoop and coming this May, you'll see it here first.

Narrator: We'll have more celebrity guests, including some of the biggest names in Hollywood and in music, all here to discuss this year's huge lineup of games.

Alex: So tune in every week. We're now THE highest rated show on MTV, and that's all thanks to our fans. We wouldn't be here, doing what we love to do, without each and every one of you.

-from a *GameTV* behind the scenes special that aired immediately after the week's episode on January 27, 1998

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*"And as this year's upcoming games look to be some of the best ever, we've realized that our policy on game ratings may be a bit too strict. Therefore, in the future, we are going to return to our policy of giving perfect 10 ratings to games considered outstanding but not necessarily perfect, starting with this very issue's review column."*

Dan "Shoe" Hsu, in an editorial in the April 1998 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"The Ultra Nintendo is the only console that could have handled this ambitious project. While this meant that the game has been delayed more than a year, I'm absolutely certain that every extra second of effort put into this game has been worth it."*

Martin Hollis, director of *Goldeneye 007* for the Ultra Nintendo

*"It was an interesting experience, my first video game! I had no clue how much work went into this sort of thing! The hardest part was doing all of those death noises. I didn't die in the movie but apparently Natalya can die in many many ways in this game, so I had to make dozens of different dying sounds, I'm sure you'll hear them a lot!"*

-Izabella Scorupco in the March 12, 1998 issue of *Entertainment Weekly*, discussing her role in the video game *Goldeneye 007* voicing her character Natalya Simonova

*"This is our big game of the spring, make no mistake about it. We are promoting this game heavily and we hope it sells a million copies in North America. There will be no shortages of this game."*

-Tom Kalinske, discussing *Panzer Dragoon Saga* at a Sega press conference on March 27, 1998

*"Serratorpia is the game that Yoshi's Story should have been."*

-Brittany Saldita, on the March 24, 1998 episode of *GameTVi*

*"I understand the criticism toward Yoshi's Story, but understand that we have focused heavily on older players in the Ultra Nintendo's early games, and we designed this to be a more accessible game that everyone could play and enjoy."*

-Hideki Konno, director of *Yoshi's Story*, discussing the game in an August 1998 interview with *GameInformer* magazine

*"Look through the mirror, Link, and your adventure will begin anew!"*

Nayru, the goddess of wisdom and love, *Zelda: The Mystic Mirror*

*"The Nachtmahr is consuming all...only with your dragon can we hope to stand against it."*  
Serene, *Panzer Dragoon Saga*

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### **Goldeneye 007: The Basics**

*Goldeneye 007* is a first-person shooter based off of the 1995 James Bond hit *GoldenEye*. The game has the same basic gameplay and plot as OTL's game, though a few of the levels are changed around. Indeed, there are FEWER levels in TTL's *GoldenEye* than in OTL's game, though many of them are slightly larger and have extra mission objectives, particularly in the hardest difficulty mode, 00 Agent. The Bunker 1, Surface 2, Silo, and Archives levels do not appear in TTL's game (though the Archives still appear in multiplayer mode). In addition, both the Aztec and Egyptian bonus levels are removed. Instead, there is one large bonus level: Spectre, which is given as a reward for completing the game on 00 Agent level. In this bonus level, James Bond goes up against Blofeld for one final showdown. The mission is very difficult and very complex, but is also highly praised. In addition, the game's multiplayer mode is far more complex than IOTL, owing to the game's longer development time. In OTL, *Goldeneye*'s popular four-player multiplayer mode was added as an afterthought late in development. That remains true ITTL, but with several more weeks to work on the mode, additional things are added to it. In addition to the weapon sets available to choose from, there's now a custom loadout mode (similar to OTL's *Perfect Dark*) in which players can choose up to six weapons to appear in the stage. In addition, Rare and Nintendo were able to secure the rights to the images of Sean Connery, George Lazenby, Roger Moore, and Timothy Dalton, allowing them to be selected as alternate Bonds in multiplayer mode (and, after completing Spectre under 8 minutes, in single player mode as well).

The most major addition to *Goldeneye 007* is the presentation. A new version of the film's opening credits, complete with Tina Turner's theme song, appears before the player enters the main menu (though it can be skipped by pressing a button). The new credits sequence is somewhat similar to the one that appeared on the Wii game IOTL, a slightly shorter but remixed version of the song, though in this game it's also performed by Tina Turner. It features a silhouetted James Bond battling through some of the game's missions, accompanied by silhouettes of pretty girls, and also alludes to the game's multiplayer deathmatch mode toward the end. The game also features full voice acting, with the movie's entire cast returning to reprise their roles, except for Pierce Brosnan (despite appearing in the game's advertising, he was unable to perform voice work for the game despite his friend Robin Williams begging him to do so). Bond's voice was instead performed by a soundalike, a somewhat obscure soap opera actor named Nolan North, in what would be his first of many video game roles (though North's appearances in video games would be somewhat sparse until the mid-2000s).

## **March 7, 1998**

*Goldeneye 007* is released for the Ultra Nintendo. Heavily advertised in magazines and on television (including a Super Bowl ad starring Pierce Brosnan), the game's debut in North America garners the largest single-day sales for any Ultra Nintendo game except for *Ultra Mario Kart*, with over 600,000 copies sold on the first day. The game also garners spectacular reviews, with many publications declaring it the best Ultra Nintendo game to date, even better than *Super Mario Dimensions*. The game revolutionizes the console first-person shooter genre, which had previously seen only three major successes: *Doom* on the Super Nintendo CD, and *Doom II* and *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* on the Sega Saturn. The game's success shifts the title of "best console for first person shooters" back to the Ultra Nintendo, drumming up plenty of anticipation for future FPSes on the console such as *Quake*. It also solidifies Rare's place as Nintendo's number-one second party software company, putting Rare far ahead of companies such as Argonaut and Telenet Japan. In the eyes of many, it even elevates Nintendo above companies like Squaresoft as Nintendo's top software company period. The Teen-rated, largely bloodless shooter also avoids nearly all the controversy over video game violence that plagued earlier FPS hits. Even after a tragic school shooting later in the month, *Goldeneye 007* isn't even mentioned, with most of the controversy centering around the ongoing debate over gun control. The game immediately establishes itself as a Game of the Year contender, and Sega once again ends up with its work even more cut out for it.

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### **SaGa Frontier**

Dan: 8.0

Shawn: 8.0

Crispin: 7.5 (quote: "Probably the best SaGa game to date, but even with five (six!) games in one, it's still a bit on the short side.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Skullmonkeys**

Dan: 6.0

Shawn: 6.0 (quote: "While the visuals in this platformer are definitely good (even if a bit creepy, we're looking at you, Joe Head Joe), the gameplay is rather plain and even a bit imprecise at times.")

Crispin: 6.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Tamagotchi**

Dan: 5.0

Shawn: 8.0

Crispin: 5.5 (quote: "This SNES-CD version of the uber popular digital pet game has some nice extras, but there's little here for those who don't love the original toy.")

Sushi-X: 5.5

### **Winged Wonder**

Dan: 9.0 (quote: "A beautiful and innovative flying platformer with superb gameplay.")

Shawn: 8.5  
Crispin: 8.0  
Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Accelerati**

Dan: 3.0  
Shawn: 4.5 (quote: "A confusing, frustrating mess of a puzzle game that's almost impossible to play well.")  
Crispin: 1.0  
Sushi-X: 4.0

-reviews of March 1998's SNES-CD games in the April and May 1998 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

### **1080 Snowboarding**

Dan: 8.5  
Shawn: 8.5 (quote: "A fun, beautiful snowboarding game with fantastic gameplay and excellent graphical effects.")  
Crispin: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Devil Dice**

Dan: 7.5  
Shawn: 7.0 (quote: "A fairly addictive puzzler, though graphics are somewhat primitive.")  
Crispin: 7.5  
Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Goldeneye 007**

Dan: 10 (quote: "The Ultra Nintendo revolutionizes the console FPS with this masterpiece of a game.")  
Shawn: 9.0  
Crispin: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 9.5

### **Trap Gunner**

Dan: 9.0  
Shawn: 9.0  
Crispin: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 9.0 (quote: "This is one hell of a fun game, maybe the best multiplayer game on the Ultra Nintendo.")

### **Wheel of Fortune**

Dan: 4.0  
Shawn: 5.5  
Crispin: 8.0  
Sushi-X: 3.0 (quote: "Only fans of the show need apply. The voice samples are atrocious.")

## **Yoshi's Story**

Dan: 7.5

Shawn: 7.5

Crispin: 8.0 (quote: "This isn't a bad game but it's way easier than the previous Yoshi's Island game.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

## **Urban Raiders**

Dan: 9.0

Shawn: 8.0 (quote: "A brilliant 3-D action game full of haunting visuals.")

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

## **Bulbix: The Forest Adventure**

Dan: 6.0

Shawn: 7.5 (quote: "A beautiful game but it's definitely no Mario.")

Crispin: 7.5

Sushi-X: 6.5

## **Construct-It**

Dan: 8.0 (quote: "The single player mode is brilliant but the construct mode is clunky and unnecessary.")

Shawn: 7.0

Crispin: 6.5

Sushi-X: 7.0

## **Serratopia**

Dan: 8.5 (quote: "Supremely challenging but a gorgeous feast for the eyes.")

Shawn: 9.0

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.5

-reviews of March 1998's Ultra Nintendo games in the April and May 1998 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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\*A bunch of students are seen on a field trip to the cookie factory.\*

Factory Worker: And as you can see, each new product comes right off the line exactly the same as the one before it.

\*The cookie cutting machine is shown stamping various Nintendo RPGs, particularly *Final Fantasy VII*.\*

Student: But what if we don't want the same thing as before?

Factory Worker: But this is the product you're supposed to enjoy! What, you want something different?

Student: Well, yeah!

Factory Worker: Too bad!

\*Suddenly, a foot is shown flying at the factory worker's face, kicking him into the air. The students all turn to see Segata Sanshiro standing where the worker used to be.\*

Students: Segata Sanshiro!

Segata Sanshiro: \*looks at the machine sternly and leaps at it with a flurry of blows, making gears and machine parts and copies of *Final Fantasy VII* start flying around the room\*

Narrator: Tired of the same old cookie cutter RPGs? Then play *Panzer Dragoon Saga*, only for the Sega Saturn. Four epic discs filled with nonstop adventure.

\*Scenes from the game play as the narrator continues talking.\*

Narrator: With your trusty dragon, conquer the darkness to bring back the light. Explore a huge open world and battle enormous foes with the game's exclusive Dragon Action battle system, where you fly around your enemies and maneuver into position to strike the perfect blow. Meet dozens of characters and team up with a partner in battle to knock your foes out of the sky. *Panzer Dragoon Saga*, the newest RPG from Sega. It's nothing like you've ever played before.

Segata Sanshiro: \*does a fighting pose as he stands over the wreckage of the machine and the battered factory worker\* Sega Saturn, shiro! \*holds the Saturn in one hand and *Panzer Dragoon Saga* in the other\*

Factory Worker: \*groans in pain\*

-one of two North American commercials for *Panzer Dragoon Saga*. The other, more serious commercial that showed only the game, aired primarily on prime time television. Both commercials aired heavily during March 1998.

### **Panzer Dragoon Saga: The Basics**

*Panzer Dragoon Saga* is released for the Sega Saturn in North America on March 26, 1998, after a highly successful Japanese release two months earlier. The difference between how the game is handled ITTL and IOTL is like night and day. IOTL, *Panzer Dragoon Saga* was released for a dying Sega Saturn, when the company was run by Bernie Stolar and had very little faith in Japanese RPGs, leading to an exceptionally small release despite high demand for the game. ITTL, the Saturn, while getting beaten soundly in sales by the Ultra Nintendo, is still very much a thriving game console. In addition, Tom Kalinske is very enthusiastic about the game, and positions it as the Saturn's big game of the spring, with an enormous promotional campaign including television advertisement and in-store promotions. He even has the game's entire first disc used as the demo disc for April 1998's *Official Saturn Magazine* (similar to a promotion in OTL where the first disc was given away in a British

Sega Saturn magazine). Hundreds of thousands of copies are printed and shipped (as opposed to the 30,000 total units shipped IOTL) and there are even two editions: the standard edition of the game (for \$49.99) and a special edition (for \$69.99) which includes the game's complete soundtrack and a collector's edition cloth map of the game world. The gameplay is almost completely identical to OTL's game, featuring a large, open overworld where the main character Edge flies around on a dragon (which can be leveled up and outfitted like a character) or sometimes walks. Most battles take place in the air, and Edge can maneuver his dragon around to avoid enemy attacks or position himself better to attack an enemy (though doing this puts him at risk for taking more damage). The strategic battle system largely differs the game from RPGs such as *Final Fantasy VII*, and indeed, a major part of the game's promotional campaign involves how different the game is from Nintendo and Square's huge RPG. While acknowledging the technological gap between the Saturn and Ultra Nintendo (though *Panzer Dragoon Saga* is the best looking Saturn game to date and rivals many of the Ultra Nintendo's lesser games in terms of graphics, with some scenes even keeping pace with the best looking Ultra games), the marketing campaign emphasizes the more complex gameplay and storyline, claiming that *Panzer Dragoon Saga's* gameplay sets it well apart from other JRPGs on the market. The game also features voice acting, though it's from a cast of unknowns and while it's not terrible, it's also not regarded as great. The one major gameplay change from OTL's game is the addition of a partner system. From time to time, Edge will be accompanied by another character. This character is not "playable" in a traditional sense, but they can be given commands and directions during battle that they will obey. However, for most of the game, including the final boss battle, Edge fights alone.

The game's plotline sees the biggest change from OTL. In fact, the plot is almost entirely different. The game still takes place in a post apocalyptic world, and the main character is the same as IOTL. However, the game's main female character is a young woman named Serene, who claims to have come from a time before the cataclysm that brought ruin to Edge's world. The two journey through an ancient ruin together, where Edge is seeking a treasure to bring back to his imperial commander. When Edge is unable to find the treasure, he learns that Serene is the treasure his commander is seeking. He refuses to give the young woman up, but she is taken from Edge and he is branded a traitor. After a series of quests, Edge is able to rescue Serene, and the two (and some other friendly characters Edge meets along the way) become embroiled in a war between various factions to claim the powerful treasures left from the old world. Eventually, it is discovered that the cataclysm was caused by a force known as Nachtmahr, created by the dark ambitions within the hearts of men. As Nachtmahr claims more and more of the world, Edge (and sometimes his companions) save what they can, but one by one, his companions are seemingly killed in battles with increasingly deadlier foes. Finally, toward the end of the game (at the end of Disc 3), Serene also sacrifices herself in order to save the last remaining island of the world from Nachtmahr's grasp. Edge must fly his dragon into the heart of darkness to conquer it and save the world. As he does so, he discovers that all of his old companions are still alive, fighting the darkness from within. Finally, Edge comes across Nachtmahr's core, and Serene trapped inside. In one epic final battle, Edge defeats Nachtmahr, and with Serene's help, the world is restored to the paradise it once was, though at the cost of all of mankind's instruments of war. The world's people must start anew, this time with love and hope in their hearts, if they wish to keep the world a peaceful and beautiful place.

*Panzer Dragoon Saga* becomes the best selling JRPG to date for the Sega Saturn in North America, even outselling *Phantasy Star V*. Though sales are a bit disappointing (it doesn't become an uber-hit like *Resident Evil 2* or *Turok*, or *Final Fantasy VII* on the Ultra Nintendo), it still clears 500,000 total sales in North America, adding to over a million sales

in Japan to become one of the Saturn's top selling games worldwide. Critical reviews are also highly positive, beating even *Goldeneye 007* in a number of publications and joining it as a Game of the Year contender. Most notably, *Electronic Gaming Monthly* awards the game three 10s and a 9.0 in its May 1998 Review Crew column, making it very nearly the first game to receive a Platinum Award from the magazine.

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March 1998 was a big month for Nintendo. Along with their releases of *Goldeneye 007* and *1080 Snowboarding*, they also released *Yoshi's Story*, the highly anticipated sequel to their 1995 cartridge swan song title *Yoshi's Island*. With how popular *Yoshi's Island* was, *Yoshi's Story* was one of the most highly anticipated video game sequels of all time. To say it was disappointing was an understatement, though the game taken on its own merits was a quality work. The graphics were absolutely outstanding, looking like something right out of a storybook and really showing off what the Ultra Nintendo could do. The levels had some creative challenges, though for the most part they lacked the difficulty of *Yoshi's Island*, and that's what largely makes this game so polarizing amongst fans. The game was divided into six worlds featuring six levels each, and instead of carrying Mario from level to level, the Yoshis were on their own, working their way through a picture storybook in order to reach and defeat the game's final boss, a giant fire breathing dragon who was slowly but surely eating his way through the Yoshis' world. Yoshi controlled similarly to how he did in *Yoshi's Island*, though the game featured significantly shorter levels and easier platforming challenges. There WERE some additional puzzle challenges, but many were fairly simple affairs that a young child could easily solve, and others were more tedious than challenging.

The game seemed to be like a child's version of the original *Yoshi's Island*, with the easiest platforming in any Mario game to date. It was almost IMPOSSIBLE to die, extra lives were given out like candy, and bosses were spectacularly easy, with one boss, a giant cloud monster, usually able to be defeated within seconds. For hardcore gamers who'd worked their way through *Yoshi's Island* and were expecting a challenge, what they got was a game that could be beaten by a 5-year-old on a single Blockbuster rental. It was largely argued that with *Goldeneye* coming out so close to this game's release, that Nintendo wanted to position their first person titles in such a way that adults could enjoy the James Bond title and kids could be playing *Yoshi's Story*. The game got a mixed to good reception by game publications, and sales, while strong, were disappointing. Fans expecting an excellent traditional 2-D platformer on the Ultra Nintendo were left wanting so much more. Fortunately, salvation came for those who were smart enough to purchase *Serratopia*.

-excerpted from the article "1998: Nintendo's Spectacular Spring" on Gamesovermatter.com, posted on April 14, 2013

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### **The Legend Of Zelda: The Mystic Mirror- The Basics**

Released exclusively for the Game Boy Color on March 23, 1998, *The Legend Of Zelda: The Mystic Mirror* is the second handheld *Zelda* game, and takes place in the "timeline" before any of the others. Indeed, the game takes place at a time when the land of Hyrule was new and Link and Zelda's legend had not yet even begun. The game's graphics are somewhat better than *Link's Awakening*, similar to those in OTL's *Oracle of Seasons/Ages* games, with rich and vibrant color everywhere. The game's soundtrack is enhanced by the Game Boy Color's sound chip, with quality rivaling that of the SNES' *A Link To The Past*. Gameplay is

largely similar to *Link's Awakening*, with Link able to wield two items/weapons at once. The game's primary item is the Mystic Mirror, and it works largely like the Mirror of Truth from OTL's *Ocarina of Time*, though without the need to use up a Magic Meter (since this Zelda game doesn't have one), displaying secrets and hidden paths when it is used. The game heavily hints toward the appearance of these secrets when it's required for progress in the game, only non-essential secrets utilize trial and error with the mirror.

The game begins as Link, a young farm boy, is drawn to Hyrule Castle by the prospect of a job. The King is holding a fighting tournament, and Link decides to enter. When he impresses Princess Zelda with his sword skill, he is assigned the task of hunting down three shards of the Mystic Mirror, an artifact from a time before Hyrule existed. Link explores three dungeons and battles three bosses to gain the shards. In the meantime, he meets three beautiful girls: Farore, Din, and Nayru. The three girls guide Link on the early parts of his journey. Link gathers the shards and restores the Mystic Mirror, but when he does so and returns to the castle, it is invaded by a dark wizard named Ekkadan. He tries to take the mirror, but the mysterious powers of the three mysterious girls block him from doing so. Realizing the girls' true power, Ekkadan kidnaps them and drags them into a dark portal. Link must use the mirror to uncover passageways that will unlock a hidden world, including three new dungeons in which Ekkadan has imprisoned the girls. The Mystic Mirror reveals that these three girls are in fact the three goddesses of Hyrule, who were stripped of their powers and reborn as mortals after Hyrule came into being. After conquering the dungeons and freeing the girls (also restoring their memories of being goddesses in the process), they reveal that Ekkadan has taken their goddess powers and has formed a tower of evil from which he intends to rule Hyrule. Link must ascend Ekkadan's tower and defeat him. After doing so, the goddess' powers are restored. They reveal that though they welcome humans and will always protect them, Hyrule's presence will always be a constant drain on the goddess' powers. However, through Link and Zelda, it is learned that if great heroes step forth and show wisdom, courage, and power, the goddess' powers will be continually sustained and that Hyrule will always be prosperous. The goddess Nayru takes the mirror, preserving it for a time when it will once again be needed to save Hyrule from destruction.

*The Mystic Mirror* is the Game Boy's best selling title since *Link's Awakening* in 1993. It continues the revivification of the Game Boy that began with the release of the Game Boy Color in 1996, and sets the stage for an even bigger hit once *Pokemon* is released stateside later in the year.

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The Sega Saturn's attempt to bring back the "detective game" genre with *Tokyo Detective: Unforgivable Crimes* is a worthy, albeit clunky effort. The game combines the mystery solving aspects of games such as *Dark City* and *Super Detective Club* with the stealthy third person action gameplay of games like *Operation Zero*. It's supremely gritty, your detective protagonist finds himself investigating grisly murders and depraved sex crimes left and right (I'm pretty sure Tokyo is NOT a crime-infested hellhole in real life, but this game's version of Tokyo could put *Robocop's* Detroit to shame!), and at times goes completely over the top with certain cases, to the point where it becomes almost black comedy instead of straight-up noir. Still, for those looking for a grown-up detective game with some decent action gameplay and some genuinely difficult puzzles, you might want to check out *Tokyo Detective*. It's not perfect, but for now, it'll have to do.

Score: 6/10

-from a review in the March 1998 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

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*Though the Ultra Nintendo's first party trio was the big story of March 1998, the system also saw the release of four somewhat less hyped but no less well regarded games, each of which remain beloved in certain circles to this day. I'll cover them here in order of what I thought was the least of the four, and work my way up to what I regard as the best. These four games, taken in conjunction with the Ultra Nintendo's release lineup to that date, gave the system a highly diverse roster of games and essentially solidified the system as having a quality game in pretty much every genre, which, only four months after its release, is pretty astonishing and further served to drive up the system's already sky high demand.*

**Bulbix: The Forest Adventure-** This game was a 3-D platformer in the vein of *Super Mario Dimensions*, starring an anthropomorphic plant named Bulbix (basically, think of an onion with vines for arms). You walked around a huge series of forest and jungle areas, collecting seeds (the game's equivalent of "stars") in order to restore life to the forest. The game had a sort of conservationist message, though ultimately the plot was largely an excuse for the gameplay, which was good but nothing to write home about. Of the "Mario Dimensions clones" that sprung up in the game's wake, *Bulbix* was one of the better ones, though it couldn't hold a candle to the best of the games in the genre. It was largely a sales success and got a pair of Ultra sequels, though none were as good critically or commercially as the original.

**Construct-It-** Referred to by many as sort of the "opposite" of Rare's game *Blast Corps*, in this title you're a member of a construction crew assigned to various lots, where you'd build things such as a skyscraper or a shopping mall. Later on in the game you'd be building some really exotic structures like an arcology. The game was actually really fun, with lots of silly dialogue and animations from your construction crew (think like Bob the Builder meets The Village People). You'd basically just place your guys where you needed them to build and they'd do so automatically, you'd have to protect them from various enemies and hazards. The game even had a free construct mode where you could build whatever you want, though the structured Story Mode was largely considered the best aspect of the game. *Construct-It* sold fairly well, with about 450,000 total sales in North America and enough sales in Europe and Japan to push it close to a million worldwide.

**Urban Raiders-** A 3-D action title, though not an open-world platformer like *Super Mario Dimensions*. It was about a group of young adventurers exploring old cities in a post-apocalyptic setting, hunting for treasure while dodging other, more unscrupulous treasure hunters. It had kind of a *Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest* vibe to it (it helped that Jesse Douglas, who voiced Jessie in season 1 of that cartoon, voiced Ashley, the lead female character in this game), and was kind of a prototype of today's more action movie-esque 3-D games (1999's game *Runner Mike* was said by creator Dan Brown to have been heavily inspired by it). The graphics were excellent, with beautiful cityscapes and some haunting visuals, along with great, realistic character design.

**Serratopia-** And finally we come to *Serratopia*. While all four of the games I listed here are at the very least *good*, *Serratopia* is in my opinion the only true classic on the list. A 2-D platformer with an emphasis on combat and exploration, *Serratopia* and its 40 levels are both challenging and satisfying. The game featured the story of two boys and one girl, all around adolescent in age, who find themselves trapped in a mysterious underworld and must somehow make their way back home. The levels are full of challenges and traps, while

the three main characters (who alternate as the playable character over the course of the story, you can't choose between them either) gradually learn how to survive the monsters and villains they meet as they explore. Compared to some of the Saturn's best platformers of the day such as *Klonoa* and *Troublemakers* (and also compared to the multiplatform hit *Rayman* since Ubisoft created both titles), it's largely considered superior to most games in the genre, and far superior to *Yoshi's Story*, which was supposed to be the big 2-D platformer hit for the Ultra Nintendo. Though *Serratopia* exceeded sales expectations, it still wasn't considered a major hit. It sold 260,000 copies in North America and barely sold any at all in Japan. It was a big hit in Europe, selling just a shade over 400,000 there, and cementing creator Ubisoft's reputation as a maker of cult classic titles (a reputation it would gradually shed as the company expanded, going from making *cult* classics to just making classics).

-from the blog post "A Fourpack Of Ultra Nintendo Hits", posted on October 10, 2011

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Wrestlemania XIV on March 29, 1998 was seen by many as the start of the "Attitude Era", the event that finally saw Stone Cold Steve Austin claim the WWF Championship. The hype surrounding the match had been building ever since the "Montreal Screwjob" that saw Bret Hart lose the title to Shawn Michaels after Vince McMahon forced referee Earl Hebner to ring the bell while Michaels had Hart in the Sharpshooter. McMahon's reputation as a heel was sealed on that night, and he kept playing the heel in the lead-up to the big match. Originally, the fight between Michaels and Austin was to feature Mike Tyson as a ring enforcer, but the WWF wasn't able to secure Tyson due to Tyson being in training for his title defense against Lennox Lewis later that spring. Instead, Owen Hart, Bret Hart's brother, was positioned as the enforcer and guest referee for the match, with Vince McMahon threatening not only to fire Hart if Austin won the title, but to completely bar him from wrestling forever (due to a kayfabe no-compete clause in Hart's contract that would ban him from life from wrestling anywhere else if he was fired from the WWF). Hart was thus torn between the potential of losing his career and awarding the title to the man who'd helped screw his brother Bret. McMahon played the angle to the hilt, with promos where McMahon admitting that he had indeed screwed Bret and that he'd screw anyone else who got in his way, telling Owen Hart that "you won't even be able to wrestle in a pissant barn in the middle of Wyoming if you try to screw me". During the match, Shawn Michaels locked Steve Austin in the Sharpshooter, and then Vince demanded that Owen ring the bell (at one point he shouted "Ring the fucking bell, you son of a bitch!" completely unbleeped), an exact parallel of what had happened to Bret in Montreal. Owen stood there thinking as Austin writhed in pain but refused to tap. Then, as the capacity crowd roared with approval, Owen socked Vince McMahon right in the face. However, Austin was still in the Sharpshooter, and just like at Wrestlemania 13 during his match with Bret Hart, the bloodied Austin seemed on the verge of passing out, which would have given the victory to Shawn Michaels. However, this time, Austin powered out of it and landed a barrage of blows on Michaels before hitting him with the Stone Cold Stunner and getting the pin and the title. Owen Hart then followed it up by beating the living hell out of Shawn Michaels with a chair before celebrating in the ring with Austin, the two sharing beers over a livid McMahon and an unconscious Michaels. McMahon followed through on his threat to fire Owen the next night on Raw, but after a campaign of terror by Hart and Austin, McMahon was forced to give Hart the opportunity to fight McMahon for his job back at In Your House: Unforgiven, an opportunity that Hart capitalized on. The victory would lead to a Shawn Michaels/Owen Hart rivalry that built up to a 30-minute Iron Man match at Summerslam in August.

-excerpted from a Wrestlemania XIV recap on WWEJunkie.com, posted on December 9, 2007

### **Gun Control Debate Heats Up**

After the shootings in Jonesboro, Arkansas that saw middle schoolers Andrew Golden and Mitchell Johnson kill four of their classmates, the debate over gun control in the halls of Congress has grown even louder. This, of course, is the latest tragedy in a series of gun-related massacres, including last year's Beverly Hills massacre in which shooter Andrew Cunanan killed seven people, citing a desire for fame and glory. While President Bill Clinton has been demanding that Congress pass new gun regulations, many Republicans in Congress are blocking any proposed bills. Some are even demanding that Clinton come clean about his alleged inappropriate relationship with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky before any proposed gun bills are debated. Adding to the controversy is a comment from gun-rights activist and actor Charlton Heston. In a statement given at an NRA press conference, Heston called Clinton "a moral degenerate who has no right to dictate the rights of law abiding American citizens to own guns". Heston's comments drew sharp criticism from both sides of the aisle. Some critics on the left are demanding that ABC pull its annual Easter airing of Heston's *The Ten Commandments* over the comments.

-excerpted from an article posted on Yahoo! News on March 28, 1998

### **Arrest Made In Comedian's Death**

Businessman and movie producer Vince Offer was arrested today, charged with second-degree murder in the death of comedian Andy Dick, who was found stabbed to death outside a Los Angeles warehouse yesterday morning. Police theorize the stabbing resulted from a dispute over Dick's appearance in Offer's upcoming film *The Underground Comedy Movie*, related to the comedian's salary for starring in the film. Offer was taken into custody at his home and was said to be cooperative as officers loaded him into a police vehicle.

-excerpted from an article posted on Yahoo! News on March 28, 1998

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The Ultra Nintendo isn't the only Nintendo system to see some big releases this month. In addition to a new *Zelda* title on the Game Boy Color, the Super Nintendo CD will see several releases this month, the biggest of which are a platforming action title and a new Squaresoft RPG.

Square's *SaGa Frontier*, the latest game in the popular *SaGa* series, appears on the Super Nintendo CD and allows players to choose from five different characters: Red, a young man who becomes an avenging superhero after witnessing his father's death, Blue, a graduate of a magic school tasked with killing his brother, T260G, a robot recovered from a scrap heap who must do battle against an evil AI, Riki, a young monster who must hunt down nine magic rings to save his dying home, and Emelia, a beautiful supermodel who is framed for her fiance's murder. Each character has their own quest, and once all five are completed, a sixth quest is opened up that is said to both wrap up the events of the first five quests and set the stage for a future adventure.

Then there's *Winged Wonder*, a platformer from Iguana, makers of the SNES and Genesis title *Aero the Acrobat* and the Saturn hit *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*. In *Winged Wonder*, you're

a butterfly who must journey through a collection of levels, while having the ability to perform spectacular aerial tricks as you dodge enemies and venture forward. The game is one of the most beautiful to date for the SNES-CD, and should be a fun alternative to *Yoshi's Story* for those who can't yet find the elusive Ultra Nintendo in stores.

Though the Ultra is the new and hot system, Nintendo isn't neglecting the venerable Super Nintendo CD. There are numerous major titles still on tap for the console, including the long-awaited *Lufia III* and the exciting new Disney title *The Three Caballeros*, which has been getting positive buzz ever since appearing at last year's E3. We'll cover both games in depth in next month's issue, while you can head to the Review column for our take on all of this month's games!

-excerpted from an article in the April 1998 issue of *GamePro*

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Ted Crosley: So, of course *Goldeneye 007* is a 5 out of 5. I don't even need to explain that rating.

Alex Stansfield: Well, given that we both spent the last five minutes gushing our enthusiasm over the game...

Ted: It is, unequivocally, the best FPS I have ever played.

Alex: This game...and I played through the campaign all three times, all three difficulty levels...it is a masterpiece. It is the best movie based game ever-

Ted: Oh, without a doubt. I have played some absolute crap-

Alex: We both have.

Ted: And it is so refreshing to see a good game based on a good movie!

Alex: I think it helps that Rare had years and years to develop this game. Most games are just crapped out for release a few weeks or months after the film. This game comes more than two years after the movie it's based on. The amount of effort, time, money it must have taken...

Ted: And then the multiplayer.

Alex: We have not stopped playing the multiplayer. Look, look, look! \*the camera pans to show Brittany, John, Gary, and Lyssa playing multiplayer *Goldeneye* as the review is going on\* We're literally taking turns between filming segments to play this game during the show!

Ted: So yeah, this game gets the biggest 5...I have EVER given in the history of this show.

Alex: Not quite as big of a 5 from me, but yeah, 5 after 5.

\*The siren goes off, Ted and Alex go to put the game up on the wall\*

Ted: Come on guys, don't you want to join us for this?

\*The camera pans back over to show the other four hosts playing *Goldeneye*, completely ignoring Ted and Alex's crowning of the game on the wall.\*

Alex: ...yeah let's get back to the game. \*hangs the framed copy rather sloppily on the wall before rushing back with Ted to play some more\*

-excerpted from the March 3, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Lyssa Fielding: So Atlus' *Trap Gunner* is a pretty quirky little game, it's kinda like *Bombberman*, I enjoyed it but I can tell that you really didn't fall in love with it, Gary?

Gary Westhouse: It's a poor man's *Bombberman* with a tacked on story. The traps are dumb, the characters are cliché, the controls are sloppy...

Lyssa: I did take issue with the controls but I still liked this game. The multiplayer was really fun!

Gary: Just like in *Bombberman*, the multiplayer was the main attraction here. Do not play this game for the story, because it stinks.

Lyssa: Awww, you're grumpy today!

Gary: Well, when a game is SO frustrating...I slogged through the single player mode for hours on end. I got stuck... and I know it's stupid to blame the controls but-

Lyssa: No, no, you're right to blame them. It's not nearly as intuitive as it should be, weapon switching is too slow and I found myself losing because of the controls a lot. And in multiplayer too, it's hard to forgive that. I love the character design though, Lou Riche is a great character and I liked her backstory, I won't spoil anything but she's one of my favorite new game characters in a while.

Gary: I'm giving *Trap Gunner* a 2 out of 5, I just can't recommend it to anyone.

Lyssa: And I give it a 3.5, if you're looking for a fun action puzzler and multiplayer game you might really want to check this one out!

Gary: You're so happy, all the time, why are you so happy right now?

Lyssa: I'm going karaoke-ing today!

Gary: Kara...okeing? Is that even a word?

Lyssa: I don't care! \*giggles\*

(...)

Alex: As a puzzle fan, I thought Sega's *Cat Attack!* was pretty fun and really cute. It reminds me of *Pac-Man* in a lot of ways but also has some similarities to *Bombberman*, with making all those mice run away from those cats.

Lyssa: Everything is super cutesy in this game! It's not for everyone but if you're a fan of fast-paced puzzlers you'll really want to check this one out. The four player mode where you can send your cats to other people's screens can make for some hilarious moments.

\*A quick clip is shown of Lyssa dumping a bunch of cats on Brittany's screen during a four player session with Ted and Alex\*

Brittany: \*watches her mice get overwhelmed, then turns to a snickering and giggling Lyssa and glares furiously\* I am going to stab you to death with a rusty knife.

Lyssa: \*still snickering and giggling, her smile growing as Brittany's glare gets even harsher\*

\*Back to the review, Lyssa is pretending to be nervous as she looks over her shoulder\*

Alex: But yeah, puzzle games have really evolved over the years, from being single-player arcade-like experiences to multiplayer competitive funfests, this game sort of combines the best of both worlds and it's all the better for it.

Lyssa: Yep, I recommend *Cat Attack!* to just about anyone! Even if you're not a huge puzzle fan it's a blast to play with friends or even by yourself!

Alex: I'm giving it a 4 out of 5.

Lyssa: And I'm giving it a 4.5, which makes it a *GameTV* recommended game!

-excerpted from the March 10, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

John Walden: *1080 Snowboarding* is a good game, but I feel like it could've used a little extra polish, it seems like *Wave Race* is the more complete game.

Ted: And the same team did both games, so it's likely they just had trouble working on both at once. But honestly, I didn't see much of a problem. It's a great snowboarding game. It's fun and easy to pull off tricks, easier I thought than *Wave Race* was, and the snow looks crisp and real. It's the first really good snowboarding game, there was *Winter Gold* last year on the Saturn but I thought *1080* trumps it easily.

John: I just didn't think there was enough to it in terms of a competition mode. The competition mode was pretty underwhelming for me. *Wave Race* was a classic, lots of great tracks, great AI, opportunities to do tricks during a race...*1080 Snowboarding* doesn't quite match up to that.

Ted: We've been looking forward to this game for a long time. It's not a revolutionary sports title, but it's just a lot...a LOT of fun.

John: Did they have to release it in the spring, though? It kinda makes me want to go out and snowboard.

Ted: Well this is Los Angeles, you're not gonna be snowboarding here anyway! \*laughs\*

John: I'd take a drive up to the Sierras, but...you know, still playing *Goldeneye*.

Ted: That game is a free time vampire. This one...not quite so much but you'll still be playing it a lot. I give it a 4.

John: And I give it a 3.5. Flawed, but pretty fun.

-excerpted from the March 17, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

Brittany Saldita: *Panzer Dragoon Saga* lives up to the hype for sure. It's an epic adventure, it spans FOUR discs....you'll be playing this one for a while.

Alex: Yeah, but for me, it doesn't quite match up to the great RPG classics. Even though there are plenty of dungeons in this game, there aren't many towns to explore or people to talk to other than your party companions, and even those are temporary. Most you literally have for only one quest.

Brittany: I do wish we could've spent more time getting to know some of them, but at least we get plenty of time with Serene. She's kind of a shallow character but I still enjoyed the scenes she was in. And this battle system is incredible, they took *Panzer Dragoon's* amazing airborne shooter gameplay and turned it into an RPG flawlessly.

Alex: I have to agree, this battle system is the best I've ever played outside of *Secret of Mana*.

Brittany: For me, only *Tale Phantasia* tops this battle system, it's really incredible and Sega FINALLY has their true classic RPG. It's right up there with *Final Fantasy VII*, maybe even better, and I'm giving it a perfect 5.

Alex: For me, I'm giving it a 4.5. It's brilliant, but there are a lot of little flaws that for me, make it a somewhat less than perfect game. The lack of NPCs, some suspect voice acting...it's not much, but they do add up here and there.

(...)

Brittany: \*groaning and rubbing her temples\*

Alex: You didn't like *Yoshi's Story*?

Brittany: I'm not mad, I'm just disappointed. This game is a beautiful work of art, but from a level design standpoint, it's clearly designed with very young gamers in mind. I feel like the sequel to one of the most challenging platformers ever should've been....a little more challenging?

Alex: Yeah, there's a lot to like about this game but also a lot to dislike. I liked collecting fruit. I liked the graphics, I liked the music-

Brittany: Oh no. Oh no no no no no no no.

Alex: I thought it was whimsical!

\*A brief excerpt of one of the game's cutesy songs is played\*

Brittany: \*putting her head in her hands\*

Alex: I know. I know, Brittany. \*pats her on the back\* It wasn't everything we were expecting it to be.

Brittany: I think I'm gonna cry. \*her lip is quivering\*

Alex: Oh, don't cry. Please don't cry. Listen to the happy Yoshi music.

\*The music clip plays again\*

Brittany: \*is pretending to sob now with her head in her hands\*

Alex: I'm gonna give *Yoshi's Story* a 4 out of 5.

Brittany: \*is out and out bawling at him now, she's even making herself cry with real tears coming down her cheeks\*

Alex: \*gives her a hug\*

Brittany: \*buries her face in Alex's chest\*

Alex: Uh, so what score do you give the game?

Brittany: \*raises three fingers up and keeps sobbing into Alex's chest\*

Alex: A 3? A game that made you cry gets a 3?

Brittany: \*she lifts her head up\* I GAVE THE ORIGINAL YOSHI'S ISLAND A 5! THIS SHOULD HAVE BEEN AT LEAST A 4! \*sobs into Alex's chest again\*

Alex: Here, here, go play some *Panzer Dragoon Saga*. \*hands Brittany a Saturn controller\*

Brittany: \*sniffles\* Thanks... \*goes and sits down on the couch to play\*

Alex: Hey, we've got lots more on this week's *GameTV*, including an exclusive interview with the talented young actress Kirsten Dunst! \*to Brittany\* I bet she'd like *Yoshi's Story*!

Brittany: She's fifteen, not five!

(...)

Lyssa: So now let's talk about video games, because I know you play them.

Kirsten Dunst: I do!

Lyssa: What game are you playing right now?

Kirsten: *Zelda: The Mystical Mirror* on the new Game Boy.

Lyssa: An excellent choice.

Kirsten: Well, I've been Zelda crazy ever since Robin Williams got me into playing the games. After I beat *Ocarina of Dreams* I went back and played all the old ones. *Ocarina's* probably my favorite but I kinda have a soft spot for *Zelda II* on the NES.

Lyssa: And that one...that one's kinda the black sheep of the series, isn't it?

Kirsten: Really? I know it doesn't play like any of the others but I think the jumping and how you can level up Link's powers is really cool.

Lyssa: It is a unique game, a lot more RPG-like than the other Zeldas. Speaking of RPGs, are you a fan of any of those?

Kirsten: Everyone's telling me I should play *Final Fantasy VII*, but I haven't had time, I've been too busy filming *Small Soldiers* to play too many games.

Lyssa: And of course you and Robin are working together on that movie.

Kirsten: Yeah, he plays my dad, he invented the toys that come to life and attack. It's so much fun working with him and we've been talking about the new *Zelda* a lot, the one that's coming out at the end of the year.

Lyssa: Right, *Temple of Time*, everyone's looking forward to that one. Um, back to the subject of RPGs, we've been playing *Panzer Dragoon Saga* a lot for the Sega Saturn, I was wondering if you've gotten to try that game at all.

Kirsten: I don't have a Sega Saturn, believe it or not! \*laughing\* I'm just...not a Sega person!

Lyssa: \*snickers\* Ted's over there in the corner grinding his teeth.

Kirsten: \*laughing\* There's just more games I want to play on Nintendo right now.

Lyssa: Well, *Panzer Dragoon Saga* is really good so maybe if you'd like to try it a little bit after the show, I think we could hook it up for you.

Kirsten: That sounds like fun, maybe I'll give it a try!

-excerpted from the March 24, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: March 1998**

1. Donkey Kong Country 4
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Chrono Trigger
4. Tale Phantasia
5. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2
6. Victory 2
7. Andrekah/Cotton: Amazing Duo!

8. Kirby's Adventure 3
9. Super Mario World 2
10. Where In Space Is Carmen Sandiego?

### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: March 1998**

1. Super Mario Dimensions
2. Final Fantasy VII
3. Ultra Mario Kart
4. Star Fox 2
5. Duke Nukem: Time To Kill
6. Bushido Blade
7. Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night
8. Wipeout
9. Ultra Bomberman
10. Wave Race

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart – March 1998**

1. Resident Evil 2
2. Panzer Dragoon Saga
3. Tomb Raider II
4. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
5. NFL Blitz
6. Tekken 3
7. House Of The Dead II
8. Klonoa: Door To Phantomile
9. Phantasy Star V
10. Streets Of Rage IV

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*“Sega is almost certainly going to reveal their upcoming Saturn peripheral, 'The Ring', at this May's E3. Information is leaking from the company like a sieve, with numerous details about the peripheral already being revealed. It is rumored that the peripheral will be similar to the Mega Charger device released for the Genesis, including a RAM expansion and potentially a new co-processor as well. Rumored games in development for the device include a first-person shooter, an ocean exploration game (not Ecco: Blue Dream, which is set for release in July, but an entirely new franchise), and an open world mystery game. It likely won't come in at the Mega Charger's \$49.99 price tag, but should be competitively priced, with game bundle packages to help reduce some of the cost.*

*Meanwhile, Sony's recent patent of a new rechargeable battery lends a bit more truth to the rumors that they're helping Nintendo develop a new handheld game console, though nothing has been mentioned by Nintendo or Sony regarding any new hardware. Any potential Game Boy successor still seems to be a ways off, as the company is doubling down on the current Game Boy Color model with the North American launch of the Pokemon franchise just a few months away and several more games rumored to be in development, including the Pokemon sequel which is set for a Japanese release sometime next year. It'll be interesting to see if anything is announced at October's Spaceworld, the first such conference since 1996, when Nintendo formally revealed the Ultra.”*

-excerpted from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* April 1998 Quartermann rumor column

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*"Strategy Unleashed: A New Breed Of RPG"*

-the cover title of the April 1998 issue of *Next Generation* magazine, with a feature article that covered *Final Fantasy Tactics*, *Ogre Battle: Princes Of The Universe*, and *Sakura Wars* while promoting that strategy RPGs were the future of the genre

*"We're changing the name of our EGM2 magazine to Expert Gamer to more accurately reflect our purpose: to give readers the most bang for their buck in terms of strategy articles for their favorite games. And with this month's heavy load of tough RPGs, including Final Fantasy Tactics, Ogre Battle: Princes of the Universe, Lufia III, Mysteria 2: The Four Princesses, Sakura Wars, Deepground, and Magic Knight Rayearth, gamers should look no further than Expert Gamer for the strategies you'll need to conquer these tough quests! We've also got in-depth tips and strategies for Ken Griffey Jr.'s Ultra Grand Slam and a full walkthrough of Capcom's new epic action game The Three Caballeros! You're holding in your hand our most jam-packed issue ever!"*

-excerpted from the editorial of the May 1998 issue of *Expert Gamer*

*"I think, when Enix became exclusive to Sega, that was when I made the decision to create games for Square. I felt then, and still feel, that Nintendo's consoles are the best, from a game creator's perspective. Many of my friends do not share that view, but I strongly align myself with Nintendo."*

-*Final Fantasy Tactics* director Yasumi Matsuno

*"The Saturn gave everyone here at Quintet so many opportunities. I truly believe that Sega saved our company."*

-Tomoyoshi Miyazaki, in a December 1999 interview with *Next Generation* magazine

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## **Caesar's Palace II**

Dan: 6.0

Shawn: 6.0 (quote: "This update of the classic casino title brings some improved graphics and a few new games, but it's nothing special unless you're a big fan of casino games.")

Crispin: 5.5

Sushi-X: 5.5

## **Lufia III: The Ancient Tower**

Dan: 7.5

Shawn: 8.0

Crispin: 8.0 (quote: "While not the most innovative RPG, it still brings great characters and an excellent soundtrack to the table.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

## **The Three Caballeros**

Dan: 9.0  
Shawn: 8.0  
Crispin: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 9.0 (quote: "Capcom's globe-trotting Disney epic may have single-handedly justified the continued existence of the Super Nintendo CD.")

### **Coney Island Kid**

Dan: 4.0  
Shawn: 7.0 (quote: "Not the greatest platformer but it's got some cute moments.")  
Crispin: 4.0  
Sushi-X: 4.0

### **Hoppity Rabbit**

Dan: 3.5  
Shawn: 3.0 (quote: "This Easter themed game is an instant dud.")  
Crispin: 2.0  
Sushi-X: 2.0

-reviews of April 1998's SNES-CD games in the May and June 1998 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

### **Final Fantasy Tactics**

Dan: 9.0  
Shawn: 9.0  
Crispin: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 9.0 (quote: "Deceptively tough and with all that great Final Fantasy mystique, this breaks new ground for the strategy genre.")

### **Ken Griffey Jr.'s Ultra Grand Slam**

Dan: 8.5  
Shawn: 8.5  
Crispin: 9.0 (quote: "Aren't you glad baseball season is here? This baseball game looks gorgeous and plays even better.")  
Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Plok Returns**

Dan: 7.0 (quote: "The original SNES game was a classic, but despite the graphical bump, this game has little of the old one's charm.")  
Shawn: 6.0  
Crispin: 5.0  
Sushi-X: 5.0

### **Snowboard Kids**

Dan: 8.0 (quote: "For those who are turned off by 1080's realism, Snowboard Kids is a great Mario Kart style alternative.")  
Shawn: 9.0

Crispin: 7.5  
Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Speed Racer**

Dan: 6.5  
Shawn: 5.0  
Crispin: 7.0 (quote: "The Mach 5 plays accurately to the one from the show, but this game has too few tracks to be a real racing classic.")  
Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Mysteria 2: The Four Princesses**

Dan: 8.0  
Shawn: 8.0 (quote: "While a somewhat generic RPG, this beautiful game features just enough twists to keep players guessing.")  
Crispin: 8.5  
Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Deepground**

Dan: 5.0 (quote: "Squaresoft's dungeon crawler is far too confusing and boring to be compared favorably with Final Fantasy and the like.")  
Shawn: 7.5  
Crispin: 7.5  
Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Dust To Dust**

Dan: 6.5  
Shawn: 6.5 (quote: "Horror based RPGs are few and far between, it's too bad this one is so unimaginative.")  
Crispin: 6.0  
Sushi-X: 5.5

### **Danger Danger!**

Dan: 9.0  
Shawn: 7.0  
Crispin: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "One of the fastest puzzle games I've ever played, there's a real sense of urgency as you rearrange your blocks to capture your opponents' territory. It's a lot of fun.")

### **Monkey Shines**

Dan: 4.5  
Shawn: 5.0  
Crispin: 3.0  
Sushi-X: 3.0 (quote: "The most shameful Donkey Kong Country ripoff since Sock Monkeys, and a far worse game than that.")

-reviews of April 1998's Ultra Nintendo games in the May and June 1998 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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"*The Zodiac Crystals are the key to gaining control over this world. You must gather them and protect them from the Church at all costs. Do not fail, Ramza.*"

-Balbanes Beoulve, *Final Fantasy Tactics*, Chapter 8: The Pisces Crystal

After Enix began to gravitate toward Sega, many of its most talented developers had a choice to make. They could stay with their teams at Enix and hitch their wagons to a console that was behind Nintendo's both commercially and technologically, or they could seek employment elsewhere. While many at Enix, including the Quintet team responsible for classics such as *Terranigma* and 2001's *Shattered Arc*, and nearly the entire development team responsible for the *Dragon Quest* series, chose to stay at Enix, others, like Yasumi Matsuno, left Enix and went to Square, taking much of his creative team with him. That team had been responsible for *Ogre Battle* and *Tactics Ogre*. Now, they were working for Square, and Matsuno was tasked with creating a strategygame worthy of the *Final Fantasy* name.

The result was *Final Fantasy Tactics*, a critical and commercial success, partially due to riding off the coattails of the mega-successful *Final Fantasy VII*, and partly on its own merits as a bittersweet, complex, and epic game. The game was a tale of intrigue and strategy, with a lot of religious commentary mixed in. With earlier games such as *Terranigma* having paved the way for controversial religious themes in video games (even in North America), Matsuno and Square felt they had a free hand with *Final Fantasy Tactics*. Many of the religious themes that appeared in this game were originally planned for the story of the later *Final Fantasy VIII*, with the final battle of *Tactics* taking place against a false god named Deus and his angelic host Ultima, the High Seraph. *Final Fantasy VIII*'s religious themes were thus quite a bit more esoteric and obscure, which Hiranobu Sakaguchi, in a 2003 interview, claimed "freed us up to do a story that stood more on its own merits rather than being allegorical". *Final Fantasy Tactics* was the story of a young man named Ramza, his best friend Delita, Ramza's sister Alma, and the princess Ovelia. The four of them were caught up in the middle of a war between rival factions seeking to claim the throne of the land of Ivalice, while all the while both sides were being manipulated by the Glabados Church under the auspices of a false god summoned and sustained by the Dark Zodiac, a force that has corrupted the twelve Zodiac Stones that hold mankind's true power. As Ramza and his allies march across Ivalice, they battle these corrupted Zodiac beings and the agents of the Church. Obtaining the purified Zodiac Stones allows Ramza and his allies to access more jobs in battle (similar to how obtaining crystal shards allowed more jobs to be obtained in *Final Fantasy V*). In the end, though the false god Deus and his high seraph are defeated, the corrupt church remains in power, and Ramza, now branded a heretic, is forced with his sister into exile, while Ramza's friend Delita, himself corrupted by the power he has gained, marries Ovelia and becomes King of Ivalice (though in the ending of the game, the two kill each other, Ovelia stabbing Delita to save Ivalice and Delita stabbing Ovelia out of revenge). It is implied after the credits that though the church remains in power, now that the power of the Zodiac Stones has been liberated, it is only a matter of time before a hero (perhaps Ramza, perhaps another) gathers enough power to truly make Ivalice free again.

The game sold well in Japan, and somewhat (though not quite as well) in North America and Europe. The translation, handled by a team handpicked by North American Squaresoft head

Ted Woolsey (who contributed some of his own work to the translation when he had the time to do so) was regarded as the best of any Squaresoft localization to date. Unlike many of the Squaresoft games of the time, the game lacked voice acting for the most part, though there was some narration at key points in the story during explanatory cutscenes. It became yet another Squaresoft classic, and Yasumi Matsuno had established his place as one of Square's most gifted game designers, justifying his decision to leave Enix in search of new endeavors.

-excerpted from "The Enixodus: Game Designers Post-Enix", an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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Part two of "Project Ehrgeiz", *Deepground* is an old-school dungeon crawler starring the archaeologist Koji Masuda and his young assistant Clair, who venture into a deep dungeon to discover ancient secrets, battling monsters and other unscrupulous treasure hunters along the way. It's an action-RPG, with a combat system that's sort of like a fighting game (think of perhaps *Virtua Quest* on the Saturn, but in real time, with the combat system from *God Bless The Ring* with the addition of optional weapons). The dungeon crawling itself is similar to what's found in the *Brandish* series, though not quite so difficult. Resources are plentiful for the most part, as is new equipment, and the dungeon isn't quite so confusing. The dungeon itself is divided into six main sections, each one tougher than the last, though if you're looking for an action-RPG version of *Final Fantasy*, you're out of luck. Despite the game being made by Square, it shares very few similarities with any other series the company makes. It's a totally original property, though it's not the most innovative dungeon crawler out there, or the most fun. It's a well made game for sure, but it's not a classic by any means.

-excerpted from Gamespot.com's 7.1/10 review of *Deepground*, posted on April 14, 1998

### **Squaresoft's Plans For 1998 And Beyond Coming Into Focus**

With *Final Fantasy Tactics* and *Deepground*, Squaresoft's two April releases now in stores, the company is focusing its plans on their next major RPG. *Fairytale* topped the charts in Japan upon its release there and scored a 39/40 in Famitsu magazine, a near perfect score. The game, developed by much of the team behind the 1996 hit *Chrono Trigger* (though without Akira Toriyama and a few other key members of Dream Project), looks to be a major hit in the states as well when it releases here in July, as Squaresoft prepares a major advertising blitz for the game including store displays and magazine ads. Of course, Square's biggest hit of the year still looks to be *Parasite Eve*, which is set to release this holiday season. The game's English language voice acting is nearly complete, and we have received information about two of the game's main voice actors. Jennifer Hale, mostly known for her roles on *The Buttkickin' Girls* as Princess Morebucks and Miss Keane, but also known for appearing in several video games, is said to be starring as the lead character Aya Brea, while Broadway and *Hercules* star Susan Egan has been cast as the voice of Eve, the mysterious antagonist of the game. The game will be heavily featured at the upcoming E3 conference in May, though pre-release stills of the game's cutscenes are remarkably beautiful, showing off the full capabilities of the Ultra Nintendo. Squaresoft is also planning a sequel to its popular side scrolling action game *Kyuriadan*. Titled *Brave Fencer Kyuriadan*, the game is said to have more of an RPG feel and should presumably a bit more lighthearted than Squaresoft's other recent games.

Finally, we have another update on *Final Fantasy VIII*. Squaresoft has released the first screenshots of the game's most distinguishing feature: the fact that the player will be piloting giant mechs at some point during the game. These mechs, referred to as "Guardians", appear to be the game's summons, with one of the mechs shown in the screenshots named Quezacotl and the other named Shiva. The game is well into development now and we'll likely get more information at this year's Tokyo Game Show in the fall, when Squaresoft plans to release the first cutscene footage from the game.

-excerpted from an April 18, 1998 article on Gamespot.com

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Despite the departure of series creator Yasumi Matsuno, *Ogre Battle: Princes of the Universe* did not miss a beat from previous games in the series. In fact, many of the series' fans regard it to be the best game in the series. The game, named after the popular Queen song from the "Highlander" soundtrack as a tribute to Matsuno by one of his former colleagues who'd stayed at Enix, is very similar to the original Super Nintendo game *Ogre Battle: The March of the Black Queen*, though now with fully 3-D graphics and improved gameplay mechanics. The game puts you in the shoes of an unnamed lord who can be male or female. Much like the first game, the lord's initial personality and statistical development depends somewhat on answers given in a quiz at the start of the game, gauging the player's response to various situations. The player character is put at the head of an army and tasked with saving the land of Kyothera from the dark wizard Thalian, who has designs on conquest so that he can sacrifice the people of the land to gain more power from the dark god Goreth. A major task given to the player is the opportunity to recruit seven special princes, the "Princes of the Universe" referred to in the title. The player automatically recruits the knight prince Lans, though the other six can only be recruited through the completion of (sometimes very difficult) special missions that are optional to the main story. Depending on the player's actions, the princes can become friend, foe, or neutral. If recruited, they become powerful allies, the seven princes are the most powerful characters in the game (besides the player character) and recruiting all seven makes the player's army nearly unstoppable in battle. If you have a female lord, the princes can even be romanced (this doesn't change the story much, it's just another optional thing you can do). Though small parts of the ending can change depending on the player's actions, the game essentially has three main endings. In the "good" ending (which is somewhat bittersweet), the player fails to recruit the prince Rakard, who ends up becoming the game's primary antagonist. Rakard is portrayed as a tragic character, and in defeating him, the player saves the world and ensures peace, but at a rather high cost. In the "better" ending, the player recruits Rakard but does not recruit all seven princes. In this ending, Thalian is the final boss, and though he is defeated, the dark god Goreth remains. Peace has been restored to the land and all is well, but it is hinted that the peace is not a permanent one and that Goreth will rise again some day to wage war on mankind. In the "best" ending, only gained by recruiting all seven princes, Goreth becomes the final boss. It is a very difficult final battle (to compensate for having the power of the seven princes), but defeating Goreth wins not only peace, but an eternal peace, with the lord and the seven princes revered as heroes of the land (and if you have a female lord and romanced one of the princes, the game ends with a very happy wedding scene).

*Princes of the Universe* sold quite a bit better in North America than the original *Ogre Battle* or *Tactics Ogre*, largely due to Sega promoting the game as its biggest April release (alongside *Streets of Rage IV*, which was the Saturn's best selling new release that month by a significant margin). It wasn't a huge hit, but it was profitable, and along with the

game's massive sales in Japan, ensured the survival of the *Ogre Battle* series well into the next generation of consoles.

-excerpted from the article "Ogre Battle Fight" on Gamesovermatter.com

### **Terranigma And Beyond**

Along with *Ogre Battle: Princes Of The Universe*, Enix is finally re-releasing *Terranigma* for the Sega Saturn. Unlike the previous *Soul Blazer* compilation, *Terranigma*'s Saturn release is a significant graphical improvement over the original game, featuring 3-D visuals and more than twice as many anime cutscenes, along with full voice acting. The game's re-release should help boost North American sales of June's *Granstream*, Quintet's latest action-RPG, which was #1 in Japan upon its release in February. The game features fully 3-D environments and, unlike any of the previous Quintet titles, is said to be a sci-fi space epic. Enix is planning another space epic for 1999 with *Laika's Journey*, an RPG about a space mission conducted by an anthropomorphic dog, said to be based on the classic Russian space mission during the 1950s. The company has also been said to be in the early stages of development on *Dragon Quest VII*, a highly anticipated RPG which will likely release in Japan sometime next year.

-excerpted from an article in the May 1998 issue of *GamePro*

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*Lufia III: The Ancient Tower* was the final installment of the series on the fourth-generation, and though it didn't make any major strides from the series' first two games, it wrapped up the "trilogy" in a very nice bow. The game takes place 200 years after the events of *Lufia and the Fortress of Doom*, which saw Maxim, Lufia, Aguro, and Jerim bring down the Sinistrals and their fortress at Doom Island. The world is now quite a bit advanced in terms of technology thanks to the work of the Shaia Corporation, which has been built by the descendants of the scientist Lexis Shaia. Most of the game's civilization and tech is comparable to our modern day, with airplanes, cars, skyscrapers, and televisions. In fact, very little of the world's original magical heritage still remains. The events of the game kick off as a buried tower is discovered in a dig by a group of Shaia corporation scientists, though the tower is claimed by the game's two rival nations, who both get much of their weaponry from Shaia Corp. The company is run by Faram Hydale, who ran the previous president, a young and brilliant woman and descendant of the Shaia family, Angelina Rumalia Shaia (named "Angie" for short) out of the company in a hostile takeover. Now somewhat disgraced, Angie is seeking someone to help her test her new inventions in a bid to get back control of her company. Enter Maxim, descendant of a long line of heroes named Maxim, who is working as security for Lana Serani, the president of one of the warring nations. The other country is ruled by a military dictator, General Gash. Maxim's work for Angie soon grows afoul of Gash's ambitions, especially his mission to hunt down and kill a group of magic users led by the mysterious Sara, a descendant of Artea, the legendary elf hero. There's also a brash rebel leader named Shawn, a descendant of Tia and Dekar from *Lufia II*, who joins the group. Though there are two other playable characters over the course of the story, Maxim, Sara, Angie, and Shawn are the main four. Eventually, the party runs afoul of Lana as well, making enemies of both nations, though the main secret of the game is eventually revealed: General Gash is the Sinistral Gades, while Lana is the Sinistral Erim (and also Maxim's mother, since Maxim is a descendant of Maxim from the original game and Lufia, who was the Sinistral Erim originally, the blood of the Sinistrals runs through the new Maxim's veins, and Erim can manifest herself in any female of the

line). Faram is the Sinistral Amon, and together, the three are attempting to resurrect their leader Daos through starting an enormous war that will take many human lives, enabling Daos' resurrection. However, while Gades and Amon are full-on behind the plan, Erim, whose son is trying to stop her, is reluctant to help them, and Lana Serani is portrayed the entire game as a very reluctant villain who becomes close with all of the heroes at one point or another. Eventually, near the end of the game, Erim is forced to give her power willingly to aid in resurrecting Daos (Gades and Amon have taken Maxim hostage and will kill him if she doesn't comply). After Daos is resurrected, Doom Island lifts up into the sky once more, now with the massive tower at its center. The heroes must ascend the tower and put an end to Daos once more. After defeating all of the other Sinistrals, including Erim, the heroes battle and defeat Daos. But this time, Daos has a backup plan. He appeals to the Sinistrals' overlord, Arek the Absolute, for the power he needs to crush Maxim. But Arek has sided with humanity, viewing them as having become even stronger than the gods. Daos defies his master and takes Arek's power as his own, becoming Absolute Daos for one final battle with the heroes. Even after being defeated this final time, Daos refuses to give in, and vows to take the entire universe with him in death. It is Erim who sacrifices herself to destroy Daos once and for all, and having defied the will of the gods, Daos is cast into an eternal nightmare from which he can never return, while Erim, having finally shed the last of her evil, ascends to her new role as humanity's mother goddess from which she can watch humanity's progress from afar. Thus the Lufia series ends with the Sinistrals forever defeated and humanity victorious.

The game's battle system was very similar to that featured in the previous two games, though there is an intriguing addition: "Capsule robots", similar somewhat to the "capsule monsters" of *Lufia II*. The party can be accompanied by a pair of customizable robots. Unlike the capsule monsters, of which there were only seven, dozens of different kinds of robots can be built and customized with all sorts of different parts. It's a lot more complex of a system than the capsule monster system, and it's also somewhat easy to exploit the system and make your party nigh-invincible with a couple of well customized bots (usually one for attack and another for healing/support). The game ultimately wasn't the most innovative RPG to be released, the plot was strikingly similar to the previous two games (though *Lufia III* didn't have nearly as many "fetch quests" as *Lufia II* did, most of the quests were related to the main story....as a consequence of this, the game was a bit shorter than its predecessor). Technologically, it was somewhat spartan as well, with 2-D graphics that were only slightly more detailed than previous games (it can be argued that Taito's *Axes of Avenglia*, which released in 1993, had more advanced looking graphics). There were a few animated cutscenes, though they featured no voice acting at all and only totaled about five minutes, far less than the near hour that many major RPGs of the era had. Despite all of this, *Lufia III* is largely regarded as one of the SNES-CD's top games of 1998, competing with games like *Sphere Soldier* and *The Three Caballeros* for top game of the year honors for the SNES-CD. It sold poorly, making it one of the system's most collectible titles, though fans today still hold a soft spot for the game, which finished off the trilogy in perfect and largely happy fashion (it was the only game of the main trilogy to see its main female character not dead or an amnesiac by the end of it, though obviously the game implies that Lufia in the original game eventually did recover her memory since she ended up marrying Maxim and having descendants). The quirky but still badass Angie is probably the fans' favorite character in the entire series (though *Lufia II*'s Dekar remains a close second). The game was the last truly great RPG on the Super Nintendo CD, and for that, it remains etched in the hearts of RPG lovers to this day.

-from an article posted on RPGamer.com on November 22, 2004

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(Author's Note: *The Three Caballeros* was an idea sent to us by our reader **Cataquack Warrior**! He did a great job on it and he's got even more details on the game to post later on.)

Capcom returns for one final SNES-CD classic, particularly to the world of Disney. *The Three Caballeros* is an epic quest, far more complex than the company's previous outstanding titles *The Magical Quest Starring Mickey Mouse* and *Aladdin*, both of which were some of the best games the vanilla SNES had to offer. This is the first (and presumably last) Capcom Disney title on the Super Nintendo CD, and it's an absolute doozy, featuring some of the best graphics yet seen on the system (brilliantly animated 2-D and even some nice 3-D during certain scenes). *The Three Caballeros* is a Disney film most have never even heard of, though this game is a completely original story, penned by comic whiz Don Rosa, creator of the classic *Life And Times Of Scrooge McDuck*, among many others.

The game takes the Caballeros (Donald Duck, Jose Carioca, and Panchito Pistoles) on an adventure spanning Latin America, with dozens of levels to explore along the way. The game is very similar in some aspects to the recent 2-D platformers *Troublemakers* and *Serratopia*, though it also has its own charm (and relies a lot less on combat than the two previously mentioned games). There are even fully voiced FMV cutscenes along the way, making this game almost a modern Disney movie in and of itself. The game even features a bonus rhythm game in which you tap buttons to the beat of the music to make the Caballeros play. There are also flying levels and horseback levels, and these levels are done to perfection, with very little of the frustration that accompanies a sudden gameplay change in other games.

*The Three Caballeros* is one of the best Super Nintendo CD games in a long while, and though many of you might have moved on to the Ultra Nintendo, you'd be doing a disservice if you didn't check this game out (and if you don't have an SNES-CD, remember, the Ultra Nintendo IS backward compatible!)

Graphics: 5.0  
Sound: 5.0  
Play Control: 5.0  
Fun Factor: 5.0  
Difficulty: Intermediate

-review of *The Three Caballeros* from the May 1998 issue of *GamePro*

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*Mysteria 2: The Four Princesses* doesn't return to the land of Mysteria (which makes one wonder why they kept the title the same...). It instead takes you to a brand new realm, ruled by four princesses: Diamond, who rules a land of ice and snow, Emerald, who rules a land of lush green trees, Ruby, who rules a land of fire and volcanoes, and Sapphire, who rules a great oceanic archipelago. When a great evil threatens the world, these four princesses must be found and...."persuaded" to help the heroes' party (some are more reluctant than others). It's not the most innovative RPG, but it's got some excellent graphics, showing off what the Ultra Nintendo can do, and even the voice acting is decent (three of the princesses are voiced by the same woman, but that woman is Kelly Weaver and she's fairly talented). For those who enjoyed the first game on the SNES-CD, this is a

must have, and for RPG fans in general, it's a recommended pick-up if you can make time between all the great stuff that's been coming out for us as of late.

-excerpted from a review of *Mysteria 2: The Four Princesses* on RPGamer.com, on April 29, 1998

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And if you're an anime fan, it's increasingly apparent that the Sega Saturn is the system for you. Though the Super Nintendo CD did get the *Sailor Moon* game (and a remake of the RPG *Sailor Moon: Another Story* has just been announced for the Ultra Nintendo and will likely see Western markets this time around), most anime titles as of late have been coming to the Sega Saturn. That includes the dating sim/tactical RPG hit *Sakura Wars*, which after two years of languishing in Japan has finally made its way Stateside. The game features some exciting mecha based combat action, but the meat of the game is in how you interact with the game's large cast of female characters. Depending on how well you do with them, you'll improve their stats in battle and maybe even win the heart of the girl of your dreams in the game's ending!

The other big Saturn anime title as of note is the localization of the *Magic Knight Rayearth* game. The anime series has been airing on Fox Kids for several months now, and the game itself is dubbed by the English voice cast. The game is an action RPG that sees heroines Hikaru, Umi, and Fuu journeying to the world of Cephiro to fight the evil Zagato! This game too was delayed for quite some time, though the localization of the anime on Fox Kids undoubtedly made its Western localization more attractive. The graphics are somewhat primitive, but the gameplay is quite excellent and for Saturn owning anime fans, it's another great addition to your collection!

-excerpted from the May 1998 issue of *Animerica*

### **Cowboy Bebop Proving A Controversial Hit, Kronia Making Waves**

Japan's newest hit anime is the bounty hunting sci-fi action series *Cowboy Bebop*, set in the future and revolving around a group of bounty hunters who pursue criminals across the solar system on their spaceship, the *Bebop*. The first four episodes have already aired, but the series is already causing a stir due to its violent content and adult themes. Though some Western anime fans may believe Japan to be a land where censorship is exceptionally lax, in reality, violent content is perhaps even more taboo in Japan than it is in the West. Though Japanese television aimed toward children is more likely to allow certain content that wouldn't fly on American children's TV, in general, extremely violent content is still a point of major controversy.

Another major anime that's been a huge hit on Japanese airwaves is the fantasy time-travel epic *Kronia*, an adaptation of a manga series that began in early 1997. The series is about a young boy named Togushi who encounters mysterious rips in time that lead him to various dimensions and eras. He teams up with a girl from the future named Bellabeth, who cannot return to her own time because of a grievous error made by Togushi when he visited her era. The two must learn to co-exist as Togushi tries to find out what is causing the rifts, while evading bounty hunters who are pursuing Bellabeth. The series has proven a major hit among kids, adults, males, and females alike, and may be a candidate for localization to the West, with several companies already inquiring into the rights.

-excerpted from an article posted on AnimeStation.net, on April 21, 1998

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Lyssa Fielding: So yeah, *Final Fantasy Tactics* IS a strategy RPG, but it's still *Final Fantasy*. There's chocobos, there's moogles, there's magic, it's all there. Even Cloud is there if you look for him!

Gary Westhouse: That's right, AND we're gonna tell you how to find Cloud in *Final Fantasy Tactics* next week.

Lyssa: It's a really fun game! Recruiting new characters is a snap, though you'll want to seek out plot important characters since the generic guys you recruit at the bar don't get quite as powerful.

Gary: That's understandable, since, you know, you're basically recruiting random drunks off the street.

Lyssa: Hey, that IS a pretty good way to get an angry mob started!

Gary: The music is incredible. They got a different composer from Nobuo Uematsu, but this new guy, Hitoshi Sakimoto, sets a perfect mood for the game.

Lyssa: It's a pretty dark story, even compared with *Final Fantasy VII*. Those of you who like happy smiley RPGs might want to play *Mysteria 2* instead.

Gary: Don't you like happy smiley RPGs?

Lyssa: Well...yeah, but this one was good enough to keep me playing it anyway. I give *Final Fantasy Tactics* a 4.5 out of 5!

Gary: Yeah, 4.5 from me too, this is a pretty fantastic game.

(...)

Ted Crosley: *Ogre Battle: Princes of the Universe* was a well made game, but for me, something was missing.

Brittany Saldita: Like....?

Ted: The battles are still really repetitive. They improved the battle system, yeah, but you're still going around the map, freeing villages, fighting the enemy army...if you've played the first one, this game is the first one with a pretty coat of paint and seven dudes you have to go find.

Brittany: Well, six, they give you one.

Ted: Okay, still.

Brittany: We weren't the biggest fans of *Tactics Ogre* when it came out. But I LOVED the original *Ogre Battle* and this one's just as good. I liked the challenge of finding the princes and recruiting them. I even got to have a nice sweet little romance with one of them.

\*A brief snippet is shown of Brittany's lord character attempting to woo Debonair, who was made into one of the princes for this game.\*

Ted: The dude's name is Debonair. I mean, COME ON.

Brittany: Hey, you quit badmouthing my husband!

Ted: I will give *Princes of the Universe* credit. One, it's named after a badass Queen song. Two, it's better than *Tactics Ogre*. The graphics are great, the soundtrack is great, I just thought it wasn't anything special. I'm giving it a 3.5.

Brittany: Well, I'm giving it a 4.5. I didn't like it QUITE as much as I liked *Final Fantasy Tactics*...they're two completely different types of games. *Final Fantasy Tactics* did what *Tactics Ogre* tried to do, and did it right. Meanwhile, *Ogre Battle* went back to its roots and it should stay there. This is an excellent game.

Ted: Does your new husband Debonair know that you snore?

Brittany: He will learn to live with that!

-excerpted from the April 7, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

\*Ted and Alex are wearing very nice sombreros for their review of *The Three Caballeros*.\*

Ted: I was really into *The Three Caballeros*. I mean I've never seen the movie, is this based on the actual movie?

Alex Stansfield: It is not. And the movie is quite good in its own right. But uh, yeah Capcom outdid themselves with this one. There's more than 20 levels, three different characters to play as, some amazing graphics, outstanding voice acting....I think there's only one Disney game I've liked more than this, and it's *Ducktales* on the original NES.

Ted: *Ducktales*? Really?

Alex: That game was awesome! But yeah, I dunno what it is with ducks and Disney. You take a duck, you put him in a Disney game, instant classic.

Ted: I didn't really enjoy *Ducktales*-

Alex: Did you even play it?

Ted: I did, and it wasn't that good. But this game was really good. The gameplay's outstanding, I thought, you know, my favorite Disney game was *Aladdin* on the Sega CD, and this game beats even that one. It's got better cutscenes, and *Aladdin* had cutscenes from the ACTUAL MOVIE.

Alex: The level of detail in the graphics is out of this world. Don't give up on the SNES-CD just yet, there's some great stuff on there.

Ted: Well, this game will help breathe some life into it for sure. I give *The Three Caballeros* a 4.0.

Alex: And I'm giving it a 4.5, I absolutely recommend that you check it out. \*he rattles some maracas\* We should start singing!

Ted: No we shouldn't, but this game does make me feel like dancing! \*the two of them dance as it goes to commercial\*

(...)

Alex: I wasn't feeling *Streets of Rage IV*, I REALLY wasn't feeling *Streets of Rage IV*.

John Walden: This game was a disappointment. Um, the plot...they regressed in terms of the plot. They give you six characters, none of whom have a very interesting backstory, they even turned Axel and Blaze into, you know, sort of shades of what they were in *Streets of Rage 3*.

Alex: The graphics even....they were 3-D but it was kind of a clunky 3-D. Unimaginative level backgrounds... I was really disappointed with this one too.

John: I do appreciate them not censoring anything like they did with *Streets of Rage 3*, but there really wasn't much to censor. None of the bosses were interesting except maybe the lady doctor.

Alex: But that giant needle she was wielding? So silly. And then the final boss, I'm not gonna spoil him but his methods and his reasons were catastrophically stupid.

John: The fighting took a step back, as I said earlier, it's way too easy to pull off combos, the problem is that they gave you too many automatic combos, so you could be trying to do something unique and end up doing the same special punch over and over and over again, and they made the enemies damage sponges to compensate.

Alex: I'm giving *Streets of Rage IV* a 2. I know a lot of you Sega fans have been waiting for this one a long time and I'm really sorry to say how bad it was.

John: I gotta agree, 2 out of 5 from me. I imagine a lot of people are gonna buy this game anyway due to how much coverage it was getting, but take it from us, this game is not as good as it looks in the previews.

Alex: What a shame. \*shaking his head\*

-excerpted from the April 14, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted: And we gotta go for this week but...before we do....the sad news I have to report is that this is goodbye for our friend, long long LONG time host of the show for three awesome years, John Walden.

John: Yeah, guys, really sorry to go but I did get a pilot order from UPN, so I'll be heading over there for a show that's gonna premiere next January. It's a big opportunity for me but

I'm gonna miss everybody here a whole lot, this job has been...it's been like a dream. I got to talk to some amazing people, I got to meet SHIGERU MIYAMOTO...! Of all people....it's just been incredible.

Lyssa: \*hugging John and looking very sad\*

Alex: It's been a lot of fun having you here, we're all gonna miss you a ton. \*he hugs John from the other side\*

Brittany: You have been....such an amazing friend to me, and we'll still be friends, we just won't be seeing each other every week which I'm really gonna miss....it really sucks to see you go....

Gary: When I first got here you were the guy to help me out, show me the ropes because this was a whole different kind of show, I had a lot of fun right away and a big part of that was you, man.

John: Guys, you're making me not wanna leave! \*he looks really sad and Lyssa kisses his cheek\* Maybe I'll come back someday, you know?

Ted: Well, we do hope your show on UPN is a huge success even if it means you won't be back here, I know you're gonna do a great job over there, cracking everybody up like you've always done for three years on *GameTV*.

Alex: And that's the end of our show....next week, we enter a whole new, John-less world, it's not gonna be the same, but we are gonna head to Valve headquarters where we will be among the first to get to play the nearly completed, highly anticipated *Half-Life*.

John: AAAAAAAAAAGGGGGH oh my god no! I'm gonna miss *Half-Life*?

Lyssa: This is too cruel!

Alex: We're also gonna see if the Ultra Nintendo's *Tomb Raider II* stacks up to the Saturn version, and no, we are NOT gonna be getting locked in a closet for this one!

Ted: Also, that's right, it's *Tekken 3*, it's finally here on the Sega Saturn. A big week next week, a HUGE week...

John: Damn, now I really don't wanna leave!

Ted: Next week, on *GameTV*!

\*The show ends with all the hosts crowding around John, hugging him, shaking his hand, wishing him well, all of them really sad to see him go.\*

-excerpted from the April 28, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: April 1998**

1. Donkey Kong Country 4

2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Chrono Trigger
4. Tale Phantasia
5. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2
6. Super Mario World 2
7. Extreme Go-Karting
8. Victory 2
9. Kirby's Adventure 3
10. Forever And Ever With You

### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: April 1998**

1. Final Fantasy VII
2. Super Mario Dimensions
3. Resident Evil
4. Tomb Raider
5. Ultra Mario Kart
6. Star Fox 2
7. Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night
8. Armored Core
9. Bushido Blade
10. Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart – April 1998**

1. Panzer Dragoon Saga
2. Resident Evil 2
3. Tekken 3
4. Tomb Raider II
5. Streets Of Rage IV
6. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
7. Ogre Battle: Princes Of The Universe
8. Klonoa: Door To Phantomile
9. Terranigma
10. Quake

-

As of the end of April 1998, the Ultra Nintendo has sold over 10 million units in North America. The console remains in short supply, though it's now somewhat easier to find if you're smart about it. In some cities you can probably even wait a day or two after a shipment and stores will still have a few Ultras in stock.

In less than six months, the Ultra Nintendo has done what it took the Super Nintendo CD two years to do. The console is rapidly catching up to the total sales of the Sega Saturn and will likely surpass the Saturn's lifetime worldwide sales by the end of the year. That's an astonishing feat, and sales could surpass even current expectations due to Nintendo's recent announcement that the Ultra Nintendo will release at least one "flagship" title per month through the end of the year. The next big title? *Gran Turismo*, a racing game that is already receiving astonishing reviews from multiple outlets for its graphics and realistic simulation-style driving. The game has been in development for a number of years and though it's not receiving much coverage in the mainstream, among the gaming press it's

been one of the most hotly anticipated titles in a long time.

By the time this magazine reaches your hands, the E3 conference will be taking place, and it's believed among insiders that Sega is planning to drop a massive bombshell at the conference, though if the rumors are any indication, their announcement of a new "Ring" add-on for the Saturn is the worst kept secret in gaming. Despite the leaks, Sega's announcement should stir up some buzz and will quite possibly revitalize sales as Sega positions itself for its most important holiday season perhaps ever. Nintendo's E3 lineup will likely consist of games we've already been hearing about: *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time*, *Metal Gear Solid*, and *Parasite Eve*, among a number of others, including *Aeroboy*, a Satoru Iwata developed game that is currently at the top of the charts in Japan. Will Nintendo use E3 to reveal a surprise of their own, or to tell us more of what we already know: that the company is at the top of the mountain and looks to stay that way for the foreseeable future?

Whatever happens at E3, this much is clear: it's truly a wonderful time to be a gamer.

-from the editorial of the June 1998 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

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Three Caballeros

*Ohhh!!! Through fair and stormy weather,  
We're always together,  
So let come what may!  
Like brother to brother,  
We're all for each other:  
The Three Caballeros!  
Forever we'll stay!*

-Final Verse of The Three Caballeros Theme

Production

For this project, Capcom decided to turn to the world-renowned writer of Donald and Scrooge comics, Don Rosa. Having been inspired by the original writer of Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge comics Carl Banks, Don Rosa had built on the stories to make numerous adventures that would take Donald and his nephews around the world. He had a unique talent both in drawing and writing, and was particularly popular in Europe. However, he was becoming increasingly fed up with his publisher Egmont, which gave him little control over his own work and even used his work in promotions, all the while never paying him any royalties for his work besides the standard pay.

When Capcom contacted him, however, he was excited to make a game focused on *The Three Caballeros*, one of his favorite Disney movies. He put his full effort into the project,

and provided not only the plot but also much of the art. Many of the levels contain intricate backgrounds made by Rosa, often with little scenes and Easter eggs hidden in the backdrop. Similarly, the FMV cutscenes show the full emotions of the Caballeros, not to mention put scenes-within-scenes into the background. Most of all, the story was considered one of Don Rosa's best, embodying the sense of adventure that he loved.

Capcom appreciated Don Rosa's efforts, and repaid him through considerable royalties, the first he had ever received for his work. In addition, Don Rosa's reputation made the game a hit worldwide, not only in the Latin America niche the company hoped to appeal to but also in Europe and other parts of the world. This increased interest in his work helped give Don Rosa a lever in his negotiations with Egmont, allowing him to at last receive adequate compensation for his comics. Rosa always said that he was never in it for the money, but his new wealth at least allowed him to find some respite in his work. Some even say that his improved situation allowed him to stay active longer as a comic writer, only retiring in 2011 after his eyesight finally began to decline.

## Gameplay

You can play this 2D platformer as any of the three Caballeros, each with his own strengths and weaknesses. There are sombreros scattered throughout each level to let you switch character, or you can play in a multiplayer mode with up to three players.

Donald is the "Mario" of the team, lacking special abilities but having well-rounded stats overall. Despite liking to seem in control of himself, Donald has a short fuse under pressure. Used to getting the short end of the stick, Donald is embarrassed at the awe in which his two friends admire their North American companion, and is secretly afraid that they will reject him if they realize that he really isn't a hero like they think.

Jose Carioca is a green parrot from Brazil, wearing a dapper vaudeville hat and wielding an umbrella. He uses his umbrella offensively as a spear by thrusting it forward and defensively as a shield by opening it. He can also use it to glide down from high heights. On the downside, he is the slowest of the group, having a sort of gentlemanly walk. He is a smooth talker, and enjoys flirting with the ladies. Despite his suave demeanor and way of hitting it off with the ladies, Jose is actually in a rut, struggling to make a day's pay. Although he says that he has done well as a nightclub performer, he has had trouble making it on his own. In addition, he tends to panic when things go wrong. He is a big fan of Donald, but is also a little jealous.

Panchito Pistoles is a hot-blooded Mexican rooster, wearing a sombrero and wielding two pistols that let him hit enemies from a distance. Plus, as of the three species chickens are the only one that actually evolved for specifically ground travel, he is the fastest runner, but cannot jump as high as Donald or Jose. He has done pretty well for himself as a humble cowboy, but thirsts for adventure and finally striking it rich.

In addition to standard 2D levels, the game features some special levels requiring alternate forms of gameplay, such as flying a plane or riding a horse. The most famous of these bonus levels are the musical interludes placed at several points in the game. In them, you tap to the beat to help the Caballeros sing their theme song. The first two times, you eventually get cut off, but you get one last chance in the finale.

All in all, the game has over 50 different levels, not to mention an extra-hard and long bonus level you can unlock with enough effort.

Also, the game contains some bonus material accessible on the main menu, including information on some of the real-life locations in Central and South America included in the game.

## Story

The first mini-arc of the game actually comes from one of Rosa's OTL comics. The game starts out with Donald dropping off his nephews at the week-long Junior Woodchuck Jamboree in Divisadero, Mexico. Left on his own for a week, Donald checks into his hotel, feeling lonely not knowing what to do with himself. However, he learns that the management turned his room over to a local "gentleman" (bandit) after some convincing. Frustrated, Donald goes to the room to give him a piece of his mind. The elevator's out, so you need to take the back way in, while also getting some tips on gameplay. However, the bandit is away on "business," and his girlfriend is being courted by Donald's old friend Jose, who is working at the dinner club. The bandit unexpectedly returns, and Jose claims that she was bitten by a herd of venomous snakes and that he was merely trying to suck the venom away. The excuse failing to persuade the outlaw, Donald and Jose scramble in a mad chase through the hotel until they escape in Donald's car.

After things calm down, the two old pals get reacquainted, and try to find their way back to town on foot after the car gets a flat. Eventually, they encounter the third Caballero, Panchito, who is searching for the long-lost Spanish silver mine of Tayopa. After another level, the three find it, only to realize that it was buried by a flood of magma, now long-since hardened. However, Donald spots the open belfry to the mine's church, and remembers from his adventures with Scrooge that the Jesuit priests used their missions as cover for storing treasure. The team descends into the mission and deals with bats and still-hot magma along the way. Eventually they find a couple of silver kegs.

The Caballeros head to a nearby town and load their goods onto a train to ship to Divisadero. While waiting for the train to finish loading, they step into a local tavern, and stumble upon the bandit from before. It turns out that the bandit was searching for Panchito, having heard rumors that he had a map to Tayopa. They perform as the Three Caballeros as a cover, but the bandit gets wise and discovers the silver. He hijacks the train, and you have to chase after him, first riding on Panchito's horse to catch up with the train and then hopping onboard and running up the flatcars to catch up with the locomotive. The bandit comes out to fight you, his gun forcing you to use the stored mining cars for cover, but halfway through the fight the beleaguered train driver decides to just eject the flatcars, sending all of you careening back down the winding tracks through the canyon. Gold Hat still has his sword, though, and he's not out of the fight yet. You need to defeat the bandit, save the silver kegs, and get off before the cars reach the unfinished part of the track and plummet into a ravine.

After you get through the train ordeal, you realize that the "silver" kegs actually hold mercury, which the miners used to filter out and remove the gold. This would be the end of the adventure, but it is only the beginning, as you find a hidden note mentioning how the silver was transported to a secret vault made by Cortez underneath the pyramids of Mexico

City. The team travels to Mexico City and finds the secret passage leading deeper into the temples beneath the pyramids, facing various traps along the way. However, the vault itself has been ransacked. You find a diary note by a guard saying that mysterious attackers stole the gold and silver, and that he was going to hide the remaining treasure in the Caribbean, but half of the letter is missing.

Back in the city, the team rests in a local tavern and discusses their next move. However, the police storm the bar, led by Thoth, a black-headed ibis from Interpol. She intends to arrest them for looting a national heritage sight, but she seems to be hiding something. You run from the police in a wild chase through the markets of Mexico City, and then flee on horseback through another level. The chase continues in Acapulco, going through the beaches and resorts before culminating when the Caballeros involuntarily practice the traditional cliff diving into the sea. You have to avoid hitting the jagged rocks on the way down, so Jose is the best choice. They end up falling into a whirlpool, and have to find their way through flooded caverns running underneath Central America.

They come out in a well within a hidden section of the Mayan Copan Ruins in Honduras. After exploring the ruins, they end up encountering the Cuban toucan Poca, who is also investigating the raiders. It turns out that he has the second half of the journal. Together, the completed diary reveals that the Spanish guard hid the remaining treasure in a part of the sea that stank from horseradish; this is a reference to the Golden Goose, a ship piloted by Scrooge McDuck's ancestor that sank en route to Jamaica.

Poca temporarily joins the Caballeros as an optional player; he is the one member who can truly fly, allowing you to get to high places, and can throw bombs. The team travels to the Caribbean and has a number of adventures, from exploring the Belize Barrier Reef to crossing Trinidad's hot tear Pitch Lake. Finally, you reach the sight of the sunken Golden Goose, and dive down to the shipwreck to retrieve the remaining treasure. You also find another note from the guard, mentioning how he heard the raiders mention going after the golden king (El Dorado) next. Upon learning this, Poca turns on the party, leading to a fight. In the process, Poca destroys the entire ship and all the treasure, suggesting that he is after something else.

The Caballeros manage to escape in a lifeboat, and row to Guyana, where Donald has previously encountered the infamous golden city and its king. After a short trek through the jungle, you reach the golden city. At its heart is the towering El Dorado, who is still painted silver after his last encounter with Donald. He towers over you, so you need to climb up vines to get behind him and attack. After defeating him, you find a mural depicting how the first king of El Dorado defended the city's gold against strange invaders, and you also obtain half of a map that the attackers dropped; unfortunately, it is in a strange language.

On the way back from El Dorado, the party accidentally stumbles into a military zone, and the corrupt police take you to the notorious prison Muerte de Esperanza. There you encounter Poca, who has also been locked up. You team up with him again for a prison break, while dealing with both guards and prisoners. On the way out, you have to fight Thoth, who has personally showed up to gain custody of the Caballeros and Poca. From Thoth's conversation with Poca prior to the fight, it seems that both of them know something about the treasure that the Caballeros do not. Thoth uses a handcuff whip and can fire a laser beam that bounces off the prison walls. Poca eventually turns on the party again, but you manage to give him the slip by heading into the Amazon Rainforest.

There are a few levels in the rainforest. In one of them, you trudge through the underbrush

and deal with the local wildlife, from poisonous frogs to jaguars. In another, you have to cross the treacherous Amazon River while dealing with piranhas and other water hazards as the water level rises and falls intermittently. Next, you ascend through the massive trees, eventually reaching the canopy. The following level in contrast sends you below the earth to the Lost World, filled with dinosaurs.

Then, back on the surface, the goofy Aracuan Bird (a cameo from *Three Caballeros*) steals the map, leading to a wild chase. The background music for the level is the Aracuan Bird's zany, eccentric beat, highlighting the erratic nature of the level. The Aracuan is very sneaky and will give you the slip multiple times. The level is interspersed with cutscenes in which the Caballeros seemingly catch the "Clown of the Jungle," only to get tricked and humiliated. By the time this level is finished, you may be just as peeved as Donald with the aggravating bird. Be especially careful near the end of the level, as the bird will start using dangerous tricks such as mallets, dynamite, and even locomotives.

At the end of the chase, you find yourself at the bottom of a waterfall on the cliffs leading up to the Brazilian highlands. There seems to be no way up, but at night crystals in the waterfall light up, revealing a secret passage up the waterfall. This is one of the most beautiful parts of the game, as you get to see the waterfall lit up by the crystals under the moon, and also get a panoramic view of the jungle as you near the top.

When you reach the top, you find an abandoned crystal city filled with canals, though the booby traps are still active. After a level exploring the city, you get into a fight with the city's guardian, the gargantuan serpent Yacumama. It swims through the canals and burrows into the ground before suddenly striking. It will try to gulp you down for its lunch, but it has a delicate stomach, and swallowing the wrong thing might lead to its demise. Once defeated, it spits out the second half of the map. Even when assembled, the map cannot be deciphered.

The party heads out into the highlands and must traverse the Melancholy Mire, fending off snakes, piranhas, stingrays, and crocodiles. At the end of the level, you encounter a puffed-tailed woodseer, which speaks aloud the thoughts of those around it. The woodseer brings to light the hidden thoughts of the Caballeros and the issues they have with each other, leading to tensions coming to the surface, and the team splits up.

You now have four single-character levels. Donald travels on foot up the busy Pan-American Highway, trying to find a ride back to Divisadero; basically, you have to jump to avoid cars, and at times jump from one car or truck to the next. He eventually manages to hitch a ride with Herbie, who appears in a small cameo.

Jose arrives at the city of Salvador in Bahia, Brazil in time for city's spectacular Carnivale and gets caught in the parade and chaotic festivities while searching for nightclub openings, but struggles with his regrets on leaving the team.

Panchito attempts to be a gaucho on the southern pampas, and must catch and then ride a flying burro (another cameo from *The Three Caballeros* movie). Then there is one more level for Donald as he crosses the roadless Darien Gap at the eastern border of Panama, forcing him to venture through forests and swamps.

At the end of each level, two in Donald's case, the Three Caballeros all realize that they still care about their friends, and wish to reunite. Jose and Panchito catch up with Donald at Panama City, and the three friends launch into another reprise of the *Three Caballeros*

theme.

During the performance, Poca steals the completed map, and the team tails him as he boards the barge S.S. Toucan, headed through the Panama Canal to the Pacific. They spy on him, and learn that he can read the map. It turns out that the raiders took gold and silver from multiple locations, only occasionally coming up short. Poca is trying to figure out where they took all of the treasure in the end, and is going to the various collection sites for clues. He translates one part to learn that one site is in the Incan Andes, but then discovers the party. A fight ensues, but then the navy shows up led by Thoth, and the party dives into the ocean to escape.

The Caballeros wash ashore on the Galapagos Islands. There aren't boats running until the next week, so the team decides to investigate tales of the wildlife going crazy. After a couple of levels exploring the exotic habitats of the Galapagos, avoiding cacti, getting thrown upwards by playful sea lions, and using giant tortoises as platforms, you see what was riling everyone up: icebergs...?! You follow the icebergs to their source in an offshore iceberg factory run by Pablo, a penguin who immigrated to the Galapagos via an ice boat in *The Three Caballeros* movie. He has since decided to return home, and is working to create an iceberg he can float back down to Antarctica. After befriending the Caballeros, he lets you ride one of his icebergs back to South America.

Once you reach shore, it's up into the Andes Mountains to reach the ruins before Poca. The mountains are filled with hazards such as traps set by natives, pieces of the cliffs that fall away, and avalanches and rock slides. Along the way, there are callbacks to *Saludos Amigos* (predecessor to *The Three Caballeros* movie) and Donald Duck comics. For instance, you have to travel across Lake Titicaca, and then cross precarious suspension bridges using a cantankerous llama in homage to Donald's plight in *Saludos Amigos*. At one point, you come across the village community of Plain Awful, noted for making everything square-shaped and abhorring circles, and help rescue some lost cubic chickens (that lay square eggs). Then one level has stone termites (from a Mickey and Goofy comic), leading to a scramble as stone platforms crumble into dust.

You eventually reach the Incan treasury at the very southern edge of the Andes, within the frozen volcano Licancabur, which provides an interesting mixture of fire and ice. The outside of the volcano, including the lake in the crater, is chilly, but the interior is hot enough to make a three-course bird flambé. Once you get past the various traps within the dungeon, you reach the treasure room, only to find Poca already there. The silver and gold is gone, but Poca picks up some strange key that he seems to know the purpose for. Poca uses his bombs and flying skills again, but can also hide in the shadows before suddenly swooping forward. Also watch out for the Incan traps that sometimes go off around the battlefield. After being beaten again, he gives you the slip and flies off to the last collection stop: Easter Island, where he believes he can find the last clue he needs.

To catch up with Poca, you get a ride with the Chilean mail plane Pedro (from *Saludos Amigos*). This leads to a special level where you have to pilot the plane to Easter Island. After dealing with stone-head guardians, you get to the secret shrine on Easter Island, only to find that Poca has given up. He reads aloud a note that the raiders dropped, but it does not mention the drop-off site. However, the writer mentioned how she got lost on the way when her ship "crashed and fell," but was helped by a sailor named Featherbrain.

Donald recognizes him as the founder of Featherbrain Island in the Honker Archipelago, since Scrooge went there once with Donald and company in search of golden geese. After a

level in which you have to deal with the trained geese guards on the island, you talk with absent-minded geese shepherdess Fanny Featherbrain. She says that her great-great grandfather did help such a person, and that a few of the geese accidentally ate some of the "yellow garbage" she was carrying. Since then, a few geese of each generation inherit the "defect"; Fanny sees the gold as useless, as the feathers are too hard for pillows, the eggs are too gritty to eat, and the meat is too stringy. (However, strangely enough, if you pay close attention to Fanny's story, it appears that the raider also considered the gold worthless.) In any case, the person mentioned that she was taking the rest of the trash to a place with drawings you can see from the sky (the Nazca Lines).

The Caballeros head for the Nazca Lines to find the treasure. After a couple of levels in the desert (including one involving a flash flood), you find a secret entrance going down below the lines into a strange dungeon. They get to the heart of the hidden temple, but find Thoth guarding the final door. In addition to her tricks from last times, she uses homing missiles and a personal shield. After a battle you manage to defeat her, only to discover that Poca has been following you all this time to see if you knew something more, and took advantage of the fight to sneak past and unlock the door with his key.

To the Caballeros' surprise, the gate does not lead to a standard treasure vault, but instead teleports everyone to a secret facility built on the moon. It turns out that both Poca and Thoth are aliens, and so were the raiders. However, instead of what you might think, the Earthlings did not steal ideas from aliens, but rather the other way around. Poca's race of space pirates used knowledge such as the Incan communication system and the Mayan study of the stars to boost their own technology, but cheated the natives by paying in "worthless" gold and silver; to the aliens, gold and silver have no true value, as they don't have any special powers or uses. The pirates were eventually arrested by the Galactic Police, of which Thoth is a member. To collect evidence about the pirates' misdeeds, the police confiscated the gold and silver, thinking that they were actually helping by taking away the worthless items, and stored it all away.

· Poca isn't actually after the gold and silver, but rather the other confiscated evidence, as galactic regulations require that all evidence for a case be stored together. The last of his people, Poca intends to reclaim his race's glory by activating a secret weapon that the race had stolen from another planet. The Caballeros chase Poca through the lunar base to the vault, leading to one last battle against him. This time, he uses the attack that sank the ship back in the Caribbean; head for high ground before the entire floor erupts with bombs. Even after losing again, Poca manages to break into the vault. However, he learns too late that the police actually arrested the pirates for attempting to unleash the weapon, as it is impossible to control and can destroy an entire star system. Now that the vault has been reactivated, it is only a matter of time before the weapon awakens and destroys the star system.

Poca and Thoth redeem themselves by helping the party get to the weapon in time, and you hurry to deactivate the weapon. The vault contains treasures from the various civilizations you have encountered, so the level is a culmination of the many challenges you have faced on your journey. After a final boss battle against the haywire security system and subsequently the superweapon Kaguya Gun, you finally manage to disable the artifact and destroy it for good. In the process, you destroy all of the evidence, including the treasure. However, the Three Caballeros are content with saving the galaxy and regaining their old camaraderie.

Just then, Donald remembers that it's almost time to pick up his nephews. There is a final

level as you pilot a small UFO shuttle back to Mexico, passing through some of the earlier levels such as the ones in the Andes, Salvador, the Amazon, and the Caribbean. You crash the ship in Mexico, and must make the final sprint on horseback through rugged Copper Canyon to make it to Divisadero. There are a lot of cliffs in this final area, so watch your step as you leap across the canyon. On the last stretch, Gold Hat, the bandit from the start of the game, appears for a rematch, but is instead unceremoniously trampled by you as the Caballeros scramble onward toward Divisadero. After you reach the hotel, there is a final performance by the Three Caballeros for the assembled campers, and then the credits play.

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*"Gran Turismo was designed for the Super Nintendo CD originally. It was only after we received the Ultra Nintendo development kit in 1995 that we realized what this game could truly be: the most realistic driving simulation ever created."*

-Kazunori Yamauchi, creator of *Gran Turismo*

*"This game is amazing, truly amazing and the closest thing to actually being on the track. I'm thrilled to be a part of the promotion for Gran Turismo!"*

Ayrton Senna, speaking in a press conference at the Sony booth at E3 1998

*"Tekken 3 could be the killer app that turns things around for the Sega Saturn. Even with a new Killer Instinct game coming to the Ultra Nintendo later this year, it's Namco's smash hit that looks to be the superior brawler."*

-Dan "Shoe" Hsu, in a *Tekken 3* article in the May 1998 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"I am the Silver Fist and I will crush the angels themselves!"*

-Nakaya, *Tekken 3*

*"Tomba! was originally conceived as a two-dimensional game for the Super Nintendo CD, and then for the Sega Saturn, but once we decided to make the game for the Ultra Nintendo we switched to a 3-D format which required a simplification of the game. I feel like that decision was justified, but I would like to explore a 2-D Tomba someday if the opportunity arises."*

-*Tomba!* director Tokuro Fujiwara

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*"The record-smashing arcade hit is finally here on Sega Saturn. Experience the greatest fighting game ever made, featuring 22 characters including three exclusive to Sega Saturn. Do battle in the all new Tekken Force and Tekken Ball modes, and even play as the legendary Segata Sanshiro himself. And if you're new to the world of Sega Saturn, buy the brand new Saturn Arcade Set, featuring the Sega Saturn, Tekken 3, and a Tekken-themed fight stick for just \$249.99."*

-excerpted from a *Tekken 3* themed Segata Sanshiro commercial that saw Sanshiro beating up bullies in a *Karate Kid*-style tournament to help a kid win a Sega Saturn

### **Tekken 3: The Basics**

*Tekken 3* is an improved version of the arcade game released in 1997, exclusively for the Sega Saturn. The graphics are very slightly downgraded from the arcade version (though

the game is Ring-compatible and with the Ring, the graphics are very slightly better than the arcade version). The game's story is identical to the arcade version of the game, though three characters have been added (Segata Sanshiro, Gon, and Dr. Bosconovitch). The modes Tekken Force (a beat-em-up style mode) and Tekken Ball (a volleyball style mode) have also been added to the Saturn version from the original arcade mode (Gon, Dr. B., Tekken Force, and Tekken Ball were all console additions to the game IOTL). The game's plotline in both the arcade and the console versions is significantly different from OTL's game. Though Heihachi and Devil Jin feature prominently in the game's plotline, and the game skips 19 years in time, as IOTL, the game's primary antagonist is no longer the monster Ogre, but a new character, a young woman named Nakaya who Heihachi raised as a protege. Nakaya has been raised to be the "Silver Fist", a mighty warrior who has been tasked with destroying the angels and allowing Heihachi to rule over the world as its new god. However, upon discovering the extent of her powers, Nakaya betrays Heihachi and decides to carry out the plot herself, necessitating that she be defeated in battle. Nakaya and Jin have a romantic relationship at one point during the story, but Jin eventually realizes that Nakaya is irredeemable, and uses his Devil powers to defeat her in his storyline ending. All of OTL's *Tekken 3* characters with the exception of Ogre and True Ogre appear in the game, including Eddy, Law, Hwaorang, Xiaoyu, Jin, King, Julia, Bryan, and the secret characters. There are additional characters in the game that did not appear IOTL, such as the young jewel thief Kiri (who becomes rivals/best friends with Xiaoyu) and the brash American boxer Joe Fisto (who has a rivalry with Paul Phoenix).

The game is released in North America on May 7, 1998 to massive sales and acclaim, becoming the fastest-selling new game release overall since *Goldeneye 007*, and the fastest selling new Saturn release since *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*. It cements *Tekken* as the premiere Sega Saturn fighting game series, even over *Virtua Fighter*. The game is reviewed extremely well, it becomes the third game to receive a 10 from *Electronic Gaming Monthly* after they begin awarding 10/10s again (as IOTL, only Sushi-X fails to give it a 10, claiming that the game is too easy for newbies to pick up). Gamespot gives it a perfect 10 (their second ever, after *Super Mario Dimensions*), as does *The Official Saturn Magazine* and many other review publications.

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### **Space Invaders**

Dan: 7.5

Shawn: 7.5

Crispin: 7.0 (quote: "About as fun of a console Space Invaders as there has ever been.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Street Fighter Alpha 3**

Dan: 8.0

Shawn: 9.0

Crispin: 9.0 (quote: "The excellent animation makes this one of the SNES-CD's most visually stunning games.")

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Arcade's Greatest Hits: The Atari Collection**

Dan: 6.5 (quote: "A decent selection of games, but nothing to write home about.")

Shawn: 4.0  
Crispin: 4.0  
Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Hacker Jack 2**

Dan: 6.0  
Shawn: 8.0 (quote: "An excellent sequel to an underappreciated action game.")  
Crispin: 7.5  
Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Rapido!**

Dan: 7.0  
Shawn: 6.0  
Crispin: 7.0  
Sushi-X: 7.0 (quote: "A decently fun, if rather short, projectile-based action game.")

-reviews of May 1998's SNES-CD games in the June and July 1998 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

### **Blasto**

Dan: 5.0  
Shawn: 5.5  
Crispin: 7.5 (quote: "A fun game, punctuated by an outstanding voice acting performance from Phil Hartman.")  
Sushi-X: 5.5

### **Bloody Roar**

Dan: 9.0 (quote: "Spectacular graphics and innovative fighting make this a worthy rival to Tekken 3.")  
Shawn: 9.0  
Crispin: 8.5  
Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Gex: Enter The Gecko**

Dan: 7.5  
Shawn: 7.0  
Crispin: 7.5  
Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "Hilarious one-liners punctuate what's ultimately a really fun platformer.")

### **Gran Turismo**

Dan: 10  
Shawn: 10 (quote: "A stunningly beautiful masterpiece and easily the best driving game ever made.")  
Crispin: 10  
Sushi-X: 10

## **Tomb Raider II**

Dan: 9.0

Shawn: 8.0

Crispin: 8.0 (quote: "Another rather ho-hum port, but the game it's based on is excellent.")

Sushi-X: 8.0

## **Tomba!**

Dan: 6.0 (quote: "I wanted to like this game a lot more, but there are much better 3-D platformers out there.")

Shawn: 7.0

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.5

## **Ultra Clay Fighter**

Dan: 3.0

Shawn: 4.0 (quote: "The graphical upgrade doesn't make this turd of a fighter any better.")

Crispin: 3.0

Sushi-X: 3.0

## **War Gods**

Dan: 6.0

Shawn: 7.0 (quote: "The game looks and controls fine, but it's not a very innovative fighter.")

Crispin: 5.0

Sushi-X: 8.5

## **WCW/NWO Revenge**

Dan: 8.5

Shawn: 8.5

Crispin: 9.0 (quote: "This game even tops Fire Pro Wrestling as the best WCW game yet.")

Sushi-X: 9.0

## **Major Hazard: Blitzkrieg**

Dan: 6.0

Shawn: 5.0

Crispin: 6.0 (quote: "This game retreads a lot of old ground, and it does it in extremely clunky fashion.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

## **Road Storm: Burning Rubber**

Dan: 8.5

Shawn: 8.0

Crispin: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "Picks up where the first game left off, with some excellent updated

graphics.”)

### **Armed And Dangerous**

Dan: 7.0 (quote: “The tongue-in-cheek humor makes this otherwise typical action shooter really engaging, though it's still short.”)

Shawn: 8.0

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Aquaria**

Dan: 8.0 (quote: “One of the better RPGs of the year, this quest is quite fulfilling.”)

Shawn: 7.5

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Critical Incident**

Dan: 7.0 (quote: “This FPS doesn't live up to the hype, it's good but not the great game it was being advertised to be. Either pick up Goldeneye or, if you have a PC, wait for Half-Life.”)

Shawn: 7.0

Crispin: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.0

-reviews of May 1998's Ultra Nintendo games in the June and July 1998 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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\*At a press conference, Ayrton Senna is bombarded with questions from the reporters.\*

Senna: \*points at one of them\* Yes?

Reporter: Ayrton, last year you shocked the racing world by jumping from Formula One to NASCAR. Now you're leaving NASCAR for....*Gran Turismo*?

Senna: That is correct.

Reporter: Why the sudden change?

\*Scenes from *Gran Turismo*'s ultra realistic racing play out as Senna talks.\*

Senna: *Gran Turismo* is the most realistic, authentic racing experience around. There are dozens of cars to choose from and more than a dozen real life race tracks!

Reporter: So you're saying that this video game is more realistic than real life racing?

Senna: That's correct.

Reporter: I can't believe it!

Senna: \*hands him a controller\* See for yourself! Oh, wait a minute, you'll need this. \*puts a racing helmet on him\*

\*The reporter turns to a nearby television and begins to play as more scenes from the game appear on screen.\*

Narrator: It's *Gran Turismo*, the real driving simulator. With 157 true to life cars from all over the world, and 14 incredible tracks, there's never been a better racing experience. *Gran Turismo*, only for the Ultra Nintendo.

\*The reporter sets down the controller and takes off the helmet, his eyes bulging out as he breathes heavily.\*

Senna: \*laughing\* You see what I mean?

*IT'S AN ULTRA WORLD*

\*Play-sta-tion style voice\* **Nin-ten-do**

-an advertisement for *Gran Turismo* that began airing in late April 1998

### **The Long And Winding Road To Gran Turismo**

Even before the Japanese release of the Super Nintendo CD, Sony and game designer Kazunori Yamauchi had envisioned a realistic driving simulation game for the new peripheral. With the SNES-CD's technological capabilities topping any other console on the market, it seemed the perfect fit for an advanced driving game, and Yamauchi immediately set to work perfecting one for the machine. His first project was *Real GT Racing*, a 1994 SNES-CD release created as a sort of "test" game for his *Gran Turismo* project. While the game's graphics were heavily praised, the racing itself was considered dull and the game received middling reviews and sales. Yamauchi retooled his concept, hoping to release *Gran Turismo* sometime in 1996. But everything changed after he received the first development kit for the Ultra Nintendo. The new system was far more advanced than he had expected it to be, and he knew that his vision would only be able to be truly realized on the Ultra. *Gran Turismo* became only the second Ultra Nintendo game to enter development, right after *Super Mario Dimensions*. With the cutting-edge graphics the console allowed, Yamauchi and his team were able to create more tracks, more realistic cars, and improve the cinematic qualities of the game.

"The Ultra Nintendo was like nothing I had ever seen before," said Yamauchi in an interview with a Japanese video game publication. "I could not believe such power could be packed into a game console at the time that I received the development kit. I knew at that point that creating *Gran Turismo* for the Super Nintendo CD, especially after the disappointment that *Real GT Racing* had been, would be a mistake."

Yamauchi's team put in years of work and months of sleepless nights to create the most realistic game possible. Late in development, the team and Sony secured the support of world-renowned race car driver Ayrton Senna, who at the time had just won his fourth straight and seventh overall Formula One racing championship. The driver had just signed on with the American stock car league NASCAR, and was hoping to promote a game that would be played by car enthusiasts all over the world.

"Bringing on Ayrton Senna to promote the game was an incredible opportunity for us," said Yamauchi. "He is the world's greatest driver, and having him on board with the game would make it instantly appealing to players all over the globe."

The game released in Japan in January, and now that it's come out in North America, Yamauchi is curious as to where this game will take his team next.

"We were given the opportunity to start a new studio, Polyphony, and so we're already hard at work on the next *Gran Turismo* game. I want more cars, more tracks, and more power. I can't wait to see what we'll be able to bring in our next go around the track!"

-excerpted from an article in the July 1998 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

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*"And they're coming around the final turn and it's Earnhardt and Senna, side by side in the final stretch! And these two cars are jostling for position, this is going to be an incredible finish! Senna is NOT backing down, Earnhardt bumps him and Senna bumps him right back, they're about to cross the finish line and it's Dale Earnhardt.... I think, winning his first Daytona 500! Senna in second place by less than a nose, I think Earnhardt was ahead but it's so close! What an amazing spectacular finish!"*

-the call at the end of the 1998 Daytona 500 that saw Dale Earnhardt win in the most exciting finish to the race since 1979

When Ayrton Senna announced after the conclusion to the 1997 Formula One season that he was making the jump to NASCAR, racing commentators around the world were shocked. Senna had just won his fourth championship in a row, and NASCAR seemed like a step down for the beloved racing legend. But Senna welcomed the challenge of NASCAR (and a rumored to be extremely large endorsement package may also have swayed him). Now, he seems to be rising to that challenge in incredible fashion. As of the end of May, Senna holds the season points lead, and looks to become the first rookie driver ever to win the Winston Cup. Though Senna's presence has definitely put the eyes of the world on this year's NASCAR season, many of his peers in Formula One believe that Senna is making a mistake in competing on the stock car circuit, and the decision has drawn controversy among many fans of the Formula One cup. Still, Senna says that he does not regret his decision and that he has had "great fun" competing in NASCAR. He's also popular amongst many of the drivers in NASCAR, with Jeff Gordon saying "it's great to have him here" and even the legendary Dale Earnhardt calling him "a hell of a driver" after their memorable 1998 Daytona 500 finish that saw Earnhardt finish ahead of Senna by just a hundredth of a second.

-excerpted from an article in the June 1, 1998 issue of *Sports Illustrated*

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The Ultra Nintendo and the Sega Saturn both have RPGs this month, but how do they stack up? We'll find out in this month's Game Clash!

*Aquaria* on the Ultra Nintendo takes place entirely under the ocean, in underwater domes where the human race lives to escape the threats on the surface world. When massive undersea beasts threaten the integrity of the domes, the residents must band together to

combat these beasts and save their future. The game, developed by Sony, features excellent 3-D graphics and a fairly traditional battle system, and a cast of characters that includes a trident wielding diver and an eccentric lady scientist, among others.

*Song Of Spring* is an epic adventure RPG on the Sega Saturn, spanning three discs and featuring more than 60 hours of gameplay. It takes place in a mystical world inhabited by elves who must travel the world to save their dying forest. The game's graphics are a bit more stylized than those found in *Aquaria*, with 2-D animations and anime cutscenes. The battle system is somewhat tactical, with character placement greatly influencing how battles play out.

Which game is better? Both are fairly traditional RPG affairs, but *Song Of Spring's* storyline is quite a bit longer, featuring more sidequests and twists and turns along the way. The characters are also a lot more developed and interesting, from the somewhat naïve but brave main character Daran to the world-wiery elf chieftain Sladir, the seven playable characters each bring their own quirks and histories to the table in a way that *Aquaria's* main cast of eight simply doesn't. Cinematically, *Song of Spring* also shines, with a lot more voice casting and CGI cutscenes. *Aquaria* is an excellent first effort from Sony, but *Song of Spring*, developed by Game Arts exclusively for the Saturn, is a superb quest that most RPG fans will greatly enjoy. The Ultra Nintendo has already built an excellent RPG lineup, but the Saturn still shines in this department, and *Song of Spring* is another great addition to the system's library. If you have both consoles and can only play one new RPG this month, choose *Song of Spring*.

-excerpted from an article in the June 1998 issue of *GamePro*

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The spring of 1998 was a season of big releases for the Ultra Nintendo, including the first next-gen installments of two of the more popular games on the SNES-CD: *Major Hazard* and *Road Storm*. Both were highly anticipated sequels, with both games having first been revealed at E3 1997.

*Major Hazard: Blitzkrieg* had a great deal of hype leading up to its release, with the two SNES-CD games having been popular and very highly acclaimed. The new game promised to bring *Major Hazard's* antics to full-3D for the first time, but the game was somewhat of a disappointment, with significantly fewer levels than the previous two games, a somewhat lame plot (which saw *Major Hazard* and his team fighting Nazis in WWII-era Germany, only for the Nazis to be revealed as space aliens in what was universally considered to be a fairly stupid twist), and a multiplayer mode that was majorly hyped before release but ended up being a bit of a dud. The game received middling reviews and sales tapered off quickly after release.

*Road Storm: Burning Rubber*, the sequel to 1996's somewhat surprise hit by Infogrames, saw the familiar bikers from the first game join up with six new characters for another high stakes race, this time around the globe. The release of the game coincided with the announcement of a Fox Kids animated series that would release in the fall of 1998 (replacing the somewhat low rated *Magic Knight Rayearth* in the weekday lineup). The game was acclaimed even better than the original, with the added racers contributing even more excitement to the game's fairly silly but fun plot and the 20 playable tracks all featuring their own exciting quirks (the Tokyo and Munich tracks were considered the most fun by the game's fans). *Burning Rubber* wasn't a huge smash hit, but it sold really well and eventually

sold over a million copies in North America. It was the third best selling new Ultra Nintendo title of the month (after *Gran Turismo* and *Tomb Raider II*), and helped make *Road Storm* one of the hottest game franchises of the day, with a successful toy line and other tie-in products. It became Infogrames' premiere franchise, and when it was ported to the Sega Saturn later in the year, it became a major hit on that console as well.

The disappointment of *Major Hazard* and the success of *Road Storm* demonstrated that some franchises were transitioning better to the new generation than others, a trend that would continue as the years went by.

-excerpted from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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"*Armed and Dangerous* are the newest heroes to grace the Ultra Nintendo! Join Hank Armed and Jack Dangerous as they battle enemy armies in this all new third person shooter!"

Hank Armed- Armed specializes in guns, lots and lots of guns. He'll be your primary shooter AND your heavy weapon wielder as you progress through the game. You can load him up with as many weapons as you please, from ordinary pistols to massive multi rocket launchers and everything in between, and he'll wield these weapons in battle without losing a step!

Jack Dangerous- Jack Dangerous specializes in explosive ordinance. Give him grenades, land mines, even tactical nukes, he'll wield them all and blast the enemies sky high! He's excellent at scoring big combos through linking explosions together to take out as many enemies as possible. The more combos you land, the more damage you'll do, so don't be shy as you lay down as many bombs as you can. It takes a bit more skill to use Jack than Hank, but the rewards are potentially far greater.

-excerpted from *Nintendo Power's* coverage of the Ultra Nintendo game *Armed and Dangerous* in the May 1998 issue

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EGM: So the role in *Blasto* is your first video game role, are you going to be taking on more voice work in future games?

Phil Hartman: Right now I've got a lot of cartoon voice work on my plate, but if another interesting game offer comes along I'd be glad to take it. I'm signed on for a role in Matt Groening's new cartoon, *Futurama*, and I'm also going to be doing some voice work for Seth MacFarlane's new show on the Cartoon Network which starts airing in the fall.

EGM: Has your work on *Blasto* inspired you to start playing video games?

Hartman: I wish I had the time! Robin Williams and Kirsten Dunst were always playing them on the set of *Small Soldiers* and trying to get me to join in, but I'm so busy with work right now that it's been really tough. My kids play them, I just bought an Ultra Nintendo for my kids and they're having a good time with it. I might play *Blasto* if I get some free time because from what I saw of it, it looked really fun.

EGM: Thanks again for the interview, we really enjoyed talking with you!

Hartman: Well thank you, always a pleasure!

-excerpted from an interview with Phil Hartman in the June 1998 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

### **Accused Producer's Lawyers To Plead Self-Defense In Murder Case**

Vince Offer's lawyers continue to claim that his killing of comedian Andy Dick was in self defense, and are using toxicology reports stating that Dick was under the influence of cocaine at the time of his death to attempt to prove their case. They say that when the two confronted each other on the morning of Dick's death, the comedian began attacking Offer and Offer had no choice but to stab him. Attorneys say that the two had been in an escalating series of disputes, which began at a Christmas party held last year at the home of comedian Phil Hartman. Hartman was forced to throw the two of them out of the party after they got into a shoving match in one of the bedrooms. Offer's legal team is expected to call Hartman's wife Brynn, who witnessed the altercation at the Christmas party, to testify at the trial which begins on August 11.

-excerpted from a Yahoo! News report on May 29, 1998

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\*Ted, Alex, and Brittany are standing outside Konami studios\*

Ted Crosley: So this is Konami, where *Metal Gear Solid* is still in production. We were given the honor of having an exclusive world premiere look at the game with the man Hideo Kojima himself!

Alex Stansfield: We'll be playing through one of the opening missions so that you'll be able to see just what this game is going to be like when it hits the Ultra Nintendo.

Brittany Saldita: I can't wait to get started on this one, something tells me it's gonna blow us all away, so let's get inside and check it out!

(...)

Ted: The first thing I noticed about this game is how amazing the graphics are. The weather effects are just superb.

\*Alex is playing through one of the early missions, where Solid Snake is creeping outside of a large warehouse in a violent thunderstorm.\*

Hideo Kojima: We wanted to bring the real world to this game in a way that made you feel like you're watching a movie as you play.

Brittany: And the sound effects too, so lifelike. You can hear Snake's every step.

Hideo: \*laughing\* So can the bad guys, look!

\*An exclamation mark appears above a soldier's head as Snake walks up to him from behind, he turns around and Snake is forced into a confrontation.\*

Alex: Dammit!

Hideo: You've got to walk slowly in this game or the enemies will hear you. You can't just run up behind someone, if you're heard they'll know. If they hear you, you've got a chance to get to cover but it's a very quick chance!

\*The fight has lured out two more guards, Snake is quickly getting overwhelmed.\*

Alex: I'm gettin' my ass kicked!

Ted: \*laughing\*

\*Soon Snake is killed and he ends up back at the checkpoint.\*

Alex: \*hands the controller to Brittany\*

Brittany: \*she gets under a box and slowly creeps up behind the guard\*

Ted: Whoa, whoa, whoa, you can do that in this game?

Brittany: \*leaps out from behind the box and chokes the guard out without alerting the others\*

Hideo: You can get under all sorts of objects, just go up to one and your on screen icon will change.

Brittany: Yeah, that's how I knew I could get under the box, it's pretty intuitive.

Hideo: You can also turn off those icons in the full game if you want a more immersive experience.

Brittany: I'm already feeling pretty immersed, my heart's racing right now!

(...)

Ted: Thanks again for showing us the game, it looks really incredible and we can't wait to get our hands on the finished version.

Alex: Is it coming out by the end of the year?

Hideo: We'll reveal the release window at this year's E3. We still have a ways to go on development of the game but it's going to be amazing when it's released, I promise.

Brittany: Well, I had a lot of fun, my co-hosts I think had a lot of fun...

Ted: Even though Alex kept getting killed. \*laughs\*

Hideo: He's not very good at sneaking around!

Alex: I'll learn!

Hideo: You're gonna have to! \*laughs\*

(...)

Alex: We've been playing this game in the arcades for a long time, and *Tekken 3* for the Sega Saturn is the real deal.

Ted: It doesn't miss a beat from the original arcade game, we both had a hell of a time playing it and the new modes, while not perfect, are a fun little addition to what's already pretty much the perfect fighting game.

Alex: We really don't have much to say about *Tekken 3* that we haven't already said about the arcade version. If you have a Saturn, if you loved this in the arcade, pick up this game and never spend another quarter again....well, except for the 200 quarters it'll take you to buy this game.

Ted: For me and Alex, we've already spent WAY more than 200 quarters on this game at the arcade, so it's a no brainer. I give *Tekken 3* a perfect 5, no question, this is my game of the year so far.

Alex: I'm gonna go ahead and give it a 4.5, it's a great fighting game. It's not the best one ever made, there are some 2-D fighters I love more than *Tekken*, but as far as Saturn fighting games go, this one's the best. Highly highly recommended.

-excerpted from the May 5, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany: So *Shining Force III*, while a pretty fun game, does feel kind of incomplete.

Gary Westhouse: Well, there is a reason for that, it's a third of a game.

Brittany: Right, before you buy this you'll need to know that the story is in three parts, the next two parts are releasing separately in Japan and we'll be getting them sometime later on as *Shining Force IV*. That's KIND of a dirty trick, and without those extra parts the game feels a bit short.

Gary: It's still a good game, even with it being the first of a three part story, this feels like a complete title, with only a few kind of cliffhangers left as loose ends for the next one.

Brittany: The gameplay is really good, I mean, if you've played the other *Shining* games you know what to expect. It's no *Final Fantasy Tactics* or even *Fire Emblem*, but there's a lot of strategy involved and even with the incomplete storyline, what we get is really good.

Gary: The Saturn just keeps churning out tactical RPGs, doesn't it?

Brittany: And most of them are really good! I didn't think that would really be a genre that Sega would choose to focus on but I like it, it's a good trend and I hope they keep it up.

Gary: So what's your final verdict on *Shining Force III*?

Brittany: I'm giving it a solid 3.5. If it was complete, maybe I'd give it a lot higher score.

What you get is pretty fun and even though it's a shortened game, for tactical RPG fans there's a lot here to love.

Gary: I'm giving it a 4. It's strategic, it's fun, even with the cliffhangers the story is really solid.

Brittany: Sega Saturn, a strategy RPG powerhouse. Who knew, huh?

(...)

Lyssa Fielding: *Tomba!* was a cute game, but as far as 3-D platformers go, I was kind of disappointed, what about you?

Ted: Yeah, I was really disappointed with this one. The mission structure, where you go around and explore and get missions from people and open up more of the map as you go...that actually really worked, and it was the first time I've seen a 3-D platformer do it. Now....when Rare comes out next month with *The Dreamers*....

Lyssa: Right, that game seems to have a similar mission structure but also way better graphics and from what I've played, way better controls. Here, the jumping and the combat are really clunky. This game started out as a 2-D platformer and I kind of think that Whoopee Camp didn't upgrade the gameplay for the transition to 3-D, what do you think?

Ted: Oh, I definitely agree and that's this game's biggest problem. When Tomba swings his weapon around, he barely hits anything! I have to position him just perfect to kill an enemy and most of the time I just avoid them completely.

Lyssa: It's such a shame too, because there are some nice looking enemies and bosses in this game! The pigs you have to fight, they're so cute, but they're also so frustrating! This game made me want to go eat a BLT afterward, that's how much I started hating pigs from all the frustrating fighting.

Ted: Oh yeah, I definitely ate a lot more bacon after playing this, ya lousy pigs...!

\*Footage from the game is shown of Tomba trying and failing to hit a pig enemy multiple times as it jumps up and down, inflicting lots of damage on him.\*

Lyssa: This game had so much potential but I feel like the gameplay wasted that. It's a shame. I'm gonna give it a 3, but I wish I could have enjoyed this game more.

Ted: I'm giving it a 2, just a frustrating experience that you need to stay away from.

-excerpted from the May 12, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted: This game bills itself as the Real Driving Simulator and I gotta agree, it doesn't get much more realistic, especially if you use the driving wheel accessory. That said, there is a huge learning curve to this game and it can be frustrating at times.

Alex: Just like real driving.

Ted: But with that said, the HUGE variety of cars and the amazing looking tracks still make this a top-flight, A-plus game in my book. Just look at the beautiful scenery, I've never seen such realistic graphics in a game before. Even the new Sega arcade racing games don't look this good.

\*A montage of the game's tracks is played on screen, showing off the graphics.\*

Alex: It wasn't quite as fun for me as it could've been. I mean, I know it's supposed to be realistic, and it is, but maybe that's not the best thing for a racing game? I had a lot more fun playing *Ultra Mario Kart* than I did playing *Gran Turismo*.

Ted: They're two completely different types of games! Although...the two secret Mario Kart tracks they put into the game are a really nice touch.

\*Footage is shown from the Mario Circuit and Toad's Turnpike tracks inserted into the game, they play like realistic *Gran Turismo* courses but with the *Ultra Mario Kart* course layout and music, Toad's Turnpike doesn't have any traffic on it though\*

Alex: It pains me to see those courses and drive on them and not be able to throw a shell at the other race cars.

Ted: It's not that kind of game!!

Alex: I know!

Ted: Did you get through it all the way?

Alex: I did, but at times it was a real ordeal. The difficulty is ratcheted way up and in order to unlock a lot of the good cars, you have to be really good at this game. Many players will enjoy that, but some won't and this is a fair warning.

Ted: While Alex is right about it not being quite as "fun" as *Ultra Mario Kart*, it's still a beautiful and brilliantly made game. I give *Gran Turismo* a 4.5.

Alex: And I give it a 4. It's superb but it's maybe not for everyone.

Ted: I can't believe you want to throw shells in this game.

Alex: You know it'd be hilarious.

-excerpted from the May 19, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: May 1998**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Donkey Kong Country 4
3. Chrono Trigger
4. Tale Phantasia
5. Super Mario World 2
6. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2

7. Victory 2
8. Super Mario RPG
9. Super Mario Kart
10. World Championship Boxing '98

### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: May 1998**

1. Final Fantasy VII
2. Super Mario Dimensions
3. Resident Evil
4. Star Wars: Shadows Of The Empire
5. Ultra Mario Kart
6. Tomb Raider
7. Star Fox 2
8. Einhander
9. Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night
10. God Bless The Ring

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: May 1998**

1. Tekken 3
2. Panzer Dragoon Saga
3. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
4. Resident Evil 2
5. Quake
6. Tomb Raider II
7. Ogre Battle: Princes Of The Universe
8. Streets Of Rage IV
9. Song Of Spring
10. Bio FREAKS

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### **May 27, 1998**

Tom Kalinske sat in his Atlanta hotel room, butterflies in his stomach. Tomorrow, he'd be revealing the Ring to the world at E3. It was the biggest Sega related release since the Saturn itself, and it would come along with an entire host of Ring-exclusive games.

A number of leaks had gradually revealed more and more about the Ring to various game related publications over the past few months. These leaks were deliberate: Kalinske had planned them, wanting everyone to be anticipating the Ring as the big announcement at the show. He knew Nintendo didn't have anything to counter it, even if they announced a Game Boy successor (as some expected them to do, though Kalinske believed they wouldn't) it would pale in comparison to the Saturn's new peripheral, one which would enable the Saturn to keep up with the rapid advances in arcade technology that were featured in games like *Virtua Fighter 3* and the upcoming sequel to *Soul Edge*.

Kalinske's phone rang. He reached over from his bed and picked it up. On the other end was Hayao Nakayama.

"Tom? Are you still awake?"

"I answered the phone, didn't I?" Kalinske answered, his voice showing no signs of fatigue. He was far too nervous for that.

"Ha, having trouble sleeping then?" replied Nakayama.

"This is big..." said Kalinske, his voice showing his trepidation. He was normally confident about new product releases, but with the continued reports of record shattering sales of the Ultra Nintendo, everyone at Sega, including Tom Kalinske, was having trouble sleeping at night. "This could make or break the Sega Saturn."

"Then it is up to you to ensure it makes us," said Nakayama.

"Well now I'm *really* gonna have trouble sleeping," replied Kalinske with a nervous chuckle.

"Do not be nervous. You'll do fine, as you always have. Whatever Nintendo shows tomorrow, it will be nothing compared to our new Ring. Even if the Ultra Nintendo remains the more powerful system, the best games will be on the Sega Saturn. You're going to do well tomorrow. I'm sure of it."

Kalinske's successes with the Genesis and the Saturn had given Hayao Nakayama, who'd once been highly skeptical of Kalinske's bold moves, plenty of confidence, confidence that at the moment, Kalinske did not share.

"Thanks...I'm sure I'll feel a lot better once I take the stage tomorrow."

"I'm sure of it as well. Try to get some sleep, you're going to need it."

"*Now that, I AM sure of...*" thought Kalinske. "Good night, Nakayama-san."

"Good night, Tom."

Kalinske put the phone back on the receiver and looked up at the ceiling. He thought of his family, trying to banish the thoughts of tomorrow's press conference from his mind. Things had changed so much from the year before. He turned on the television and switched over to ESPN, trying to calm his nerves with some late night sports highlights. On the screen was Ayrton Senna.

"*Oh, a NASCAR press conference. This late at night?*"

"Now you're leaving NASCAR for...*Gran Turismo?*"

"That is correct."

Kalinske shut off the television.

"*Even the damn commercials are mocking me...*"

"In brightest day, in blackest night  
No evil shall escape my sight

Let those who worship evil's might  
Beware my power  
GREEN LANTERN'S LIGHT."

If you were a child of the nineties, you would remember Billy Zane's invocation of the Green Lantern oath at the conclusion of 1998's *Green Lantern* just before the credits rolled. After the successes of *Batman Forever* and *Last Son of Krypton*, Warner Bros and DC believed that it was time to expand their stable of cinematic superheroes, especially after NewsCorp's acquisition of Marvel and the announcements of \*development on the *X-Men* and *Fantastic Four* films. *Green Lantern* was the most obvious considering that the character lent itself to a sprawling space epic, which the studio wanted with the buzz behind the inevitable *Star Wars* prequels. Indeed, it was one of the main reasons why director/screenwriter Roland Emmerich and his writing partner Dean Devlin accepted Warner Bros.' offer. Emmerich himself said in a retrospective on the *Green Lantern* trilogy.

*"TriStar offered Dean [Devlin] and I a chance to write and direct Godzilla, but then WB approached us and even gave us a stack of Green Lantern comics this tall [raises his hand to the level of the armrest] to read. We spent the next week reading through every comic to see if we could pull off. We came to a decision and agreed to take the job. WB seemed to be very committed to the project though it was not without its challenges."*

The job came with certain conditions; notably that Kyle Rayner was to be the protagonist of the film, a condition that outraged fans of Hal Jordan who took to chat rooms and discussion boards in protest.

*"Roland and I getting a couple death threats myself though it wasn't our decision,"* Devlin said in an interview in the April 1998 issue of *Wizard Magazine*. *"I mean, I suppose it's possible to make a Hal Jordan film but Kyle [Rayner] is more accessible in way Luke Skywalker was in 'Star Wars' whereas Hal is more like Han Solo. A lovable rogue who serves as a foil and Warner Bros. wouldn't even let us use him for that."*

Emmerich and Devlin followed George Lucas' example and cited Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* as a major source of inspiration. However, they made the decision to keep the first film earthbound to develop Kyle from unemployed artist to superhero. For the role he chose Billy Zane, no stranger to the superhero genre as he starred in film adaptation of *the Phantom* (with future *Woman Woman*, Catherine Zeta-Jones.) Despite *the Phantom's* disastrous performance at the box office, Zane was willing to try his hand at superheroes again if it meant a starring role and even passed over *Titanic*. While Emmerich and Devlin could not use Hal Jordan in a substantial role, they received permission to use John Stewart to act as a combination of Yoda and Han Solo played by Joe Morton of *Terminator 2* fame.

In terms of villains, Sinestro and Mongul would have been the obvious candidates, however, Warner Bros. as well as Emmerich/Devlin believed them to be beyond the first film's scope. Thus they would look to 1994's *Emerald Twilight* for source material and instead used Major Force as the primary antagonist. Though originally a Captain Atom villain, the character ingrained himself in the Green Lantern mythos for reasons we will elaborate on later. Looking to Hollywood's A-List, Warner Bros. asked Arnold Schwarzenegger to audition for the role. Though Schwarzenegger was reluctant after his failed *Batman & Robin* audition, he agreed to it and won the role. Schwarzenegger embraced the character, which he compared to the Terminator from the original 1984 film.

Rounding out the principle cast were Denise Richards as Kyle's girlfriend Alex DeWitt. Her inclusion in the film was controversial, again, not for how Richards portrayed the character, but for the character's role in the overarching plot. Perhaps, in an inspired choice in casting, Warner Bros. cast *Camelot* star Richard Harris as Ganthet, the last Guardian of the Universe who gives Kyle his ring. Considering some common thematic elements between the Green Lantern ring and King Arthur's Excalibur, it was an appropriate decision.

The film begins with the Siege of Oa where a creature known as "Parallax" is attacking the Guardian's Citadel to claim the Central Power Battery. While Hal Jordan (played by Adam Baldwin) appears in this scene, the focus remains on John Stewart as he joins the Green Lantern Corps in defending its homeworld. However, Parallax breaches their defenses and kills several prominent Green Lanterns from the comics including Kilowog and Ch'p. Eventually Parallax engages the Guardians and slaughters them all save for Ganthet, who escapes with the last Green Lantern ring. Hal and John make one last attempt to defeat Parallax by trapping him in the battery itself. Hal makes the ultimate sacrifice, but things don't go exactly as planned. The Central Power Battery explodes, which seemingly kills Parallax and Hal but now renders the Green Lantern Corp defunct, setting the stage for the film.

While many Hal Jordan fans (notably Hal's Emerald Attack Team) wrote scathing critiques on how the film "disposed" of him in favor of Kyle it was a far better sendoff than *Emerald Twilight* four years prior. However, this scene is where the rehabilitation of Hal began. It established Hal and Parallax as separate entities (which later became canon in the comics), and spoiler alert, and that their fusion was borne from manipulation. This scene established Hal Jordan as fearless and courageous, which only made his reappearance in the sequel all the more tragic.

After the opening credits roll, the film picks up ten years later where the audience drops in Kyle Rayner (currently unemployed) freelance artist. It's pretty clear from the onset that Kyle is not what you consider an epitome of a superhero. He spends most of his time playing Ultra Nintendo, in a rather egregious example of product placement, rather than looking for more stable employment. His girlfriend Alex dumped him and this landlord evicts him from apartment in the span of fifteen minutes. Even then, he goes to the club and stumbles into the alley where he comes face-to-face with Ganthet who tells him that he must "carry the light" forces the ring upon him.

A confused Kyle goes to his girlfriend, where he reveals the ring to her and she gives him the idea to use the ring to become a superhero "like Superman." Much of the first act seemingly moves towards Kyle's reconciliation with Alex. He clumsily begins his career by foiling an armed robbery, which rouses the governments attentions and the Pentagon sends their super-soldier, Major Force, to retrieve the ring. One of the main problems with the films was that Major Force appeared from out of nowhere with no in-film mention of his back-story. In the comics he was USAF Major Clifford Zmeck who was serving a life sentence for murder and rape. The Air Force offered him a pardon if he survived the same experiment that created Captain Atom; *Green Lantern* omits most of his past with promotional materials mentioning that he was part of a "secret project." However, the fandom considers his comic origin to also be his film origin despite the absence of Captain Atom in the film universe.

Kyle later encounters a now homeless John Stewart who admonishes him for being reckless with his power and doesn't realize the legacy he's holding. Though Kyle brushes him off at first, he returns to Alex's apartment to the most infamous scene in DC film history.

Followers of the comic knew what was going to happen when Kyle reads a note from "Alex" that said she "left something for him in the fridge." Kyle opens the door to find Alex's body stuffed inside. It is a rather poignant scene. The way Kyle recoils in shock, which turns to horror, and then grief as he sinks to his knees and breaks down completely. Major Force makes his presence known and attacks Kyle to claim the ring for the government.

Their first battle is effectively a textbook curbstomp battle in Major Force's favor. Kyle is far too upset to put up much of a fight and Major Force even crushes his hand and throws him out the window. Even when he can muster the willpower to create constructs, his anger, fear, and grief weakens them to the point where the Major can easily smash through them. Major Force continues to nearly beat the life out of Kyle and appears ready to crush his skull when John intervenes. Using the last of the power in his power ring, John creates a blade construct to slice off the Major's hand (SPOILER: It grows back) and escapes with Kyle in tow.

Most of the second act devotes itself to building the mentor/student bond between Kyle and John. Ganthet makes his second appearance to charge John with the task of instruction Kyle in the use of his power ring. Naturally, John refuses as he put "this Green Lantern business behind him" after Hal and Parallax destroyed the Central Power Battery. That is when Ganthet reveals another revelation: Parallax still lives and is still consuming worlds through fear. So John (reluctantly) agrees to train him. It is also in the second act where the Major Force's superiors reveal why they were so interested in the ring. Apparently, a spacecraft crashed in the California desert and that its sole occupant bore the same symbol as the "Green Lantern" that recently appeared in Coast City. Not only do they have the alien's remains cryogenically frozen but also his power battery. The film does not explicitly say it, but the film implies that the alien pilot was in fact Abin Sur.

Meanwhile, both Kyle and John both learn to face their fears and past trauma—in Kyle's case, it's coming to grips with Alex's murder and managing his fear and rage. For John, it's about overcoming his own survivor's guilt over living when so many other Green Lanterns fell in the line of duty. The ring puts both men through a nightmare scenario, which they must overcome. They face another problem when they learn that Kyle's ring is running low on energy and needs a power battery to recharge. They learn of Abin Sur's battery from the ring and move to infiltrate the military base where the Air Force is keeping it.

As such, the third act is the climatic confrontation between Kyle and Major Force at the aforementioned base when Kyle's ring runs out of energy. The battle turns painfully one-sided and Major Force savagely beats Kyle and throws him around like a rag doll. John also takes part in the battle in his attempt to take the Major out via conventional means, an allusion to his in-film history of being a former Army Ranger, until Major Force "kills" him too. The villain does not waste the opportunity to taunt a shaken Kyle with the gory details of Alex's murder—how she screamed and begged for her life. Kyle then notices that Major Force is standing between him and the power battery; he boldly sweeps the psychopath and makes a run for it, but Major Force grabs his ankle before he can reach it. Kyle reaches out and recites the lantern oath to begin the recharging process.

With his ring recharged, the tide turns and Kyle and Major Force take the battle outside. Before we change scene, the audience will see a familiar bloodied hand reach for the battery as well. Kyle's final battle with Major Force is the battle most fans remember because of the special effects. Warner Bros. extensively used CGI that rivaled the following year's *Star Wars: Episode I*. Particularly for the complexity of Kyle's constructs, which included a Gundam-styled mech and (again with the product placement) Link from the *Legend of Zelda*

series. John re-enters the fray, as a full-recharged Green Lantern himself, when the military opens fire on Kyle and after dispatching them, the two take Major Force into space and hurl him towards the sun.

The film ends with Kyle standing at Alex's grave and placing flowers in front of the headstone. He tells her that his life would have no purpose if it weren't for her when John comes to comfort him. Kyle tells her that he and John are taking Abin Sur's remains back to his homeworld for a proper burial. John also reminds the audience that Parallax still remains at large and that they will need to restart the corps. Kyle nods and the two fly out into space to begin their mission with a voiceover of Kyle reciting the oath.

*Green Lantern* performed better than expected and even narrowly edged out *X-Men* at the domestic box office and even other territories like Australia and Europe. Though it did not resonate with Asian audiences as *X-Men* did, the appearance of Link did bump up Japanese gross slightly. Its critical reception was generally positive though many critics agreed that the similarities to *Star Wars* were a bit on the nose. However, one could argue that *Star Wars* borrowed concepts from *Green Lantern* whose Silver Age incarnation predates 1977's *Episode IV* by eighteen years. Despite the similarities, Lucas himself reportedly enjoyed the film and brushed off the comparisons.

As for the attempted boycott, Alex's gruesome murder angered many prominent feminists who claimed that the only purpose the most prominent female character played was to die so she could advance the male protagonist. Were they correct? Only to the extent that the death of a loved one is a powerful motivator in the hero's journey. Would Peter Park become Spider-Man if his Uncle Ben did not die? And Bruce Wayne Batman had that Joe Chill not shot Thomas and Martha in Crime Alley? Even the murders of Uncle Owen and Aunt Beru in *Star Wars: Episode IV* served as a powerful motivator for Luke Skywalker to begin his own journey. Emmerich and Devlin only followed the source material and meant no harm, but it did begin an important discussion about the treatment of women in comics. However, the increased profile the boycott brought to the film had the opposite effect as with the moral outrage over *Mortal Kombat* five years prior and speaking of which...

For many moviegoers, especially ones who grew up on Nintendo or were familiar with video games, the inclusion of Link was mind-blowing. While product placement was nothing new in cinema when you consider E.T. and Reese's Pieces, no one expected this cameo.

"The inclusion of Link was one of Warner Bros.' idea, I think, and very last minute. I don't think Roland or Dean liked it though." Billy Zane himself recalled for the 10th anniversary Blu-Ray release, "It was supposed to be some sort cross-promotion, but I didn't complain. I actually thought it was kind of cool and it gave me an excuse to play Ultra Nintendo on set. [laughs]"

This "cross-promotion" like had an effect on the film. By making Kyle, as one critic put it, "a manga nut with a power ring" they made him identifiable in a way that Batman and Superman were not. Kyle Rayner was the 90s everyman whose interests and concerns mirrored that of teenagers and young adults of he time.

More importantly, *Green Lantern* demonstrated that DC/Warner Bros. did not need to depend on its big two, Batman and Superman, for success at the cinema. In the immediate aftermath, DC/WB drew up plans for films based off of other properties like *Flash*, *Aquaman*, *Green Arrow*, and even *Firestorm*. Granted some of these projects took long to get off the ground; executives were unsure of whether to use Barry Allen or Wally West for Flash and

the viability of a *Firestorm* film. Warner Bros. announced development on the sequel title *Green Lantern: Chapter II – In Brightest Day* for a Summer 2000 release that December. However, Emmerich and Devlin would not be part of the production.

*"While I was proud of what Dean and I accomplished on Green Lantern, I felt that Warner Bros.' demands were too constraining."* Emmerich told the media after the announcement, *"We had to fight hard to get [the producers'] permission to use Hal Jordan—and, well, we were tired of their interference in the end."*

Despite their departure, DC/WB would continue with their plans for the franchise. However, they would turn to a familiar face to finish the work Emmerich and Devlin started: Richard Donner, whose assistant, Geoff Johns would prove instrumental to the DC Expanded Multiverse in the decade to come.

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*"In some ways, E3 1998 was a lot like E3 1995. Sega was showing off some impressive new hardware, but then there was Nintendo, with games, games, games, and MORE games, including an amazing looking Zelda. To me, it seemed like Sega was trying to play catch-up, and after Nintendo had blown us away at E3 1997, Sega needed to impress more than they did."*

-Dan "Shoe" Hsu, editor-in-chief, *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, in the July 1998 editorial

*"After hearing about Pokemon for nearly two years, it was amazing to see Nintendo's plans for the Western launch. The game had a shiny new coat with its enhanced Game Boy Color version, and you could hardly go anywhere near Nintendo's booth without seeing that little yellow rat Pikachu. As cool as it was to see the launch of a major franchise, it got a bit annoying by the time E3 was over."*

-Ted Crosley

*"Aside from the Metal Gear Solid booth, we had the biggest crowd of the whole show. Everybody wanted to play Half-Life, and I knew it would be the game to put Valve on the map. What the people there didn't know was that we were already getting offers from Nintendo and Sega to port the game to their systems. It felt good to be courted by the so-called 'titans' of the game industry."*

-Gabe Newell, co-founder of Valve Corporation

*"I'm John Romero, and I'm about to make all of you my bitches! \*laughs\* How y'all doing today?"*

-John Romero, from the start of his speech at the id Software booth at E3 1998

*"I'm not buying this damn thing just to play a game about a guy who wanders around a city beating people up."*

-overheard at the Ring display at Sega's booth at E3 1998

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## **May 28, 1998**

\*Before Tom Kalinske takes the stage, a video begins to play.\*

*For nearly three years, the Sega Saturn has brought the arcade hits home.*

*\*A brief montage of games such as Virtua Fighter, Daytona USA, Tekken, Soul Edge, and Ridge Racer plays, showing off scenes from those games.\**

*Now, the Saturn will bring a new generation of arcade hits right into your living room.*

*\*Games such as Fighting Vipers 2 and Virtua Fighter 3 are shown off, and very early but impressive footage from Soul Calibur is shown.\**

### ***Enter The Ring.***

*\*Ryo Hazuki is shown brawling with a gang and running around the city in Shenmue. Impressive FPS footage of a powerful minigun mowing down several angelic beings is shown from Arbiter of Sin. An impressive aerial dogfight is shown in Air Warriors. A man on a small boat is exploring a vast sea in Oceanfarer.\**

*New worlds, new possibilities...*

*\*More scenes from Shenmue are shown as Ryo climbs up the side of a building. An impressive combo attack from a battle in the action-RPG game Angels is shown. A pair of young children are exploring a huge city and collecting items from enemies in the game Spare Parts.\**

*Fight like never before.*

*\*Another battle, this time against a huge winged boss, is shown in Angels. The main character in Arbiter of Sin dodges magic bursts while trying to keep his gun steady. The two kid protagonists from Spare Parts are battling a trio of bears. Fights from Tekken 3 and Virtua Fighter 3 are shown.\**

*An evolution in interactive entertainment.*

*\*Rapid-fire scenes are shown from various games, concluding with a shot of Ryo Hazuki from Shenmue as the camera pans out to show the enormous city you can explore.\**

### ***Enter The Ring***

#### **November 4**

*\*Tom Kalinske then takes the stage to massive applause, holding up what looks like a long black bar the length of the Saturn console. He holds it up for the crowd to see.\**

*"This is the Ring. This is the new enhancement peripheral for the Sega Saturn, launching worldwide on November 4, 1998. This device will bring a new generation of arcade hits to the Sega Saturn, with better graphics, better sound, and better gameplay than ever before. It contains a co-processor to boost the Saturn's 3D capabilities by more than 50%. It contains a RAM expansion that will double the Saturn's available memory. And it contains a sound chip to boost the Saturn's already amazing audio fidelity. It will allow the Sega Saturn to match the capabilities of our new Model 3 wave of arcade games, including the hit title Virtua Fighter 3. This new device will cost \$69.99 when it launches in November.*

*However, as you know, Sega has been the best value in gaming for the last eight years, and that's not going to change. Several of the games we are launching this year will require the Ring peripheral, and a few of those games will come packaged with the Ring, if you buy the two together you'll be able to get the Ring and one of our new hit games for just \$99.99. We're also preparing a Sega Saturn combo pack for those who don't yet own a Saturn, those will contain the Saturn, a Ring peripheral, and two games, and will retail for \$259.99, they will all go on sale this November at the same time as The Ring. Now, we've spent a lot of time showing you the Ring, but now we're going to show you some of the games that will be available this November. I'd like to introduce to you the man behind many of Sega's greatest hits, including two of the Ring's biggest games. Mr. Yu Suzuki!"*

*\*Yu Suzuki takes the stage to applause as he and Kalinske shake hands and hug. He smiles and then bows to the crowd before holding up the Ring with a smile.\**

*"Hello, and thank you all for coming to the press event today. This is the Ring, the device that makes the Saturn better than ever before, and makes two of the games I am showing off today possible. I would first like to show off just what The Ring is capable of with a quick demonstration of Virtua Fighter 3."*

*\*The screen switches to footage of Virtua Fighter 3, from the arcade version.\**

*"As you can see, Virtua Fighter 3 sets a new standard for arcade graphics and gameplay, with beautiful environments and true to life character models. Now...."*

*\*A Saturn is being hooked up behind Suzuki, along with the Ring peripheral. The machine is switched on, and Suzuki enters a fight. The Saturn version looks almost identical. The crowd gasps.\**

*"And here we have Virtua Fighter 3 on the Saturn with the Ring peripheral. There is almost no difference from the arcade game to the console."*

*\*As Suzuki plays, there's only a tiny hint of slowdown which doesn't affect the gameplay. It looks better than any Saturn game ever seen thus far.\**

*"Virtua Fighter 3 is the new generation of fighting game and it is truly amazing on the Saturn with the Ring enhancement. You will be able to play without the Ring, but the graphics are somewhat downgraded, the original gameplay remains and is quite fun but the Ring brings a new level of arcade realism to the Sega Saturn. And now I would like to talk about my other game, Shenmue. Shenmue has been in development since 1996 and has been designed with the Sega Saturn in mind, but I knew that this incredibly large and open game would not be possible unless the Saturn were more powerful. And so that is when we began to develop the Ring. This game has been completely designed with the power of the Ring in mind. Shenmue is the story of Ryo Hazuki, a young martial artist who must hunt down his father's killer. In order to find him, he will have to explore a large, open city with many different people, all of whom can be talked to, some of whom may have to be fought."*

*\*On the screen, Ryo is shown talking to several people, then he is shown in the middle of combat, demonstrating the game's combat system.\**

*"This game has been a massive undertaking from the very beginning and I certainly did not create it alone. Many people at AM2 have been hard at work on Shenmue for two years*

*straight, and this game is a labor of love for all of us. We truly have poured many hours into this game and I hope that you, the player, can enjoy it for many hours."*

*\*Tom Kalinske re-joins Suzuki on the stage and begins to speak.\**

*"Shenmue is Sega's biggest undertaking ever, with more time and resources poured into it than any other Sega game to date, including Sonic the Hedgehog 4. There's an incredible amount of stuff to do. You can stick to the main quest, or enjoy an ordinary life, or anything in between. You have complete freedom, the type of freedom that only a game powered by the Ring can afford. Shenmue will be released on November 4 along with the Ring, and we hope that you all enjoy it. Suzuki-san, it's been an absolute honor to have you here with us today."*

*\*The two men smile and shake hands before Suzuki leaves the stage and Kalinske continues to speak.\**

*"But Shenmue isn't the only game we've got planned for the Ring this year. Spare Parts, from the creator of Nights Into Dreams, is a brand new 3-D platformer created exclusively for the Ring. It's the story of two young robot children, Zacki and Ella, and their quest to rebuild a world devastated by a calamity that completely wiped out the human species. You'll explore countless areas, including the remnants of destroyed human cities and the desolate wilderness of the world's remotest areas, including the Amazon rainforest and the peaks of the Himalayas. All the while, Zacki and Ella will try to find out what destroyed their world, find any friends they can, and protect each other from the evil creatures still roaming the Earth. There are plenty of twists, turns, and secrets along the way, and you won't have to go far to find your next adventure. Spare Parts will be debuting in December and it, like Shenmue, is a Ring exclusive title. Next up, we have The Oceanfarer. This is a game about a pirate captain in search of lost treasures, as he explores the vast expanses of the open seas in order to find long-forgotten loot."*

*\*A video plays on the screen, demonstrating the game's incredible water graphics which actually look a bit better than the Ultra Nintendo's Wave Race.\**

*"The ocean looks beautiful on the Ring, doesn't it? Well, you'll go from the sea to the air, because our next Ring-exclusive title is Air Warriors, a game all about aerial combat. You'll fly dozens of missions all over the world, protecting the innocent from the advance of a warmongering nation which boasts a powerful air force of its own."*

*\*Footage from Air Warriors is shown, demonstrating the game's graphics which are a considerable step up from Ace Combat, the game's mission screen is shown along with footage from several missions including a desert bombing raid and a dogfight above a city.\**

*"Next we have Angels, an action-RPG from the creators of MagiQuest. Now, my daughters, even though they ARE my little angels, don't show up in this game. But I think you'll see that this game might just top MagiQuest for action-RPG fun on the Sega Saturn."*

*\*Footage from Angels is shown, focusing on the game's combat system, where characters can string together some amazing looking combos that are even more impressive than those seen in Tale Phantasia. The crowd gasps as a particular combo of aerial punches and kicks, arrow fire, and magic spells is pulled off on a tough-looking boss for over 47,000 points of damage.\**

*"In Angels, you play as an angel named Lotherion who must defend the heavens from a terrible evil. This will require venturing down to the human world, where you might even team up with some humans to battle this threat to your home. And finally, we go from the halo to the horns. Here's the world premiere trailer for the Ring's first first-person shooter, Arbiter of Sin."*

\*A soldier is shown crawling through the mud during a thunderstorm, crying out in pain. He's fatally wounded. As he reaches out in desperation, a hand clasps around his. The soldier looks up to see a man in a black tuxedo smiling down at him.\*

Soldier: Who...are you....?

Man: I watched you out there. You fight like a man possessed. Seems it wasn't good enough, though.

Soldier: \*groaning\* I'm...dying....

Man: I can help you with that. \*his eyes glow red\*

Soldier: What....?

\*The soldier is shown walking through the gates of hell, following the black suited man. As he looks around, he sees horrifying demons, people being tortured...\*

Soldier: Please, I don't belong here....!

Man: And you don't have to stay here. All you have to do is pledge your soul to me...for all eternity.

\*The soldier is shown a magical portal. When he looks through it, he can see a medieval battlefield and the Knights Templar fighting.\*

Man: I want you to go through that portal... \*hands the soldier an automatic rifle\* And kill as many as you can.

\*The soldier looks at the gun, then at the man, who is smiling.\*

Man: Do that...and your time here will be most pleasant.

\*The scene switches to show a first-person view of the soldier gunning down the templars, only to be fired at by laser guns.\*

Soldier: What the hell?

Templar Commander: There he is, the Devil's Soldier! Kill him, kill him as we have been commanded by the One on High!

\*The Knights Templar open fire with futuristic laser weapons as the soldier is forced to take cover.\*

Soldier: \*gasping for breath as the mysterious man appears\* What's happening?

Man: All your life, you've been told I'm the one you should fear. But I'm here to liberate humanity. The are here fighting for a God who would enslave it! Take your weapon and kill them all!

\*The soldier looks at his gun again. More scenes play as the soldier is shown fighting various enemies, including more Knights Templar, massive magical monsters, angels, and even demons spilling out from portals all around him.\*

Soldier: \*screams as he leaps into battle against a medieval knight, firing his weapon as blood spurts from the knight's armor\*

## **ARBITER OF SIN**

### **Only on The Ring**

\*cue the Sega! Scream\*

\*The crowd erupts into applause as the trailer ends.\*

*"Arbiter of Sin will not only feature a robust single-player story, but a four player multiplayer deathmatch mode as well. \*the crowd cheers again\* "So those are the games we're bringing to the Ring this year, and remember that most upcoming Saturn games can still be played on the classic Sega Saturn, and that won't change. Many of our upcoming games will feature enhancements from having the Ring, but again, can be played on the regular Sega Saturn and are still fun and exciting games that will give you many hours of great Sega gameplay.*

*"In fact, those of you who don't have the Ring won't be left out of the FPS party this year, because we have another game on the way, and for millions of you who played the Saturn's hottest game of 1997..." \*the crowd begins to applaud as they can already anticipate what this game will be\* "You will be pleased to know that Turok 2: Seeds Of Evil is launching on November 18, just two weeks after the release of the Ring. Here to briefly discuss Turok 2 is Iguana's David Dienstbier."*

\*David Dienstbier steps onto the stage and shakes Kalinske's hand, then begins to speak as Turok 2 footage starts to play on the screen.\*

*"Turok 2: Seeds Of Evil once again follows the warrior Turok as he returns to the Lost Lands, this time to defeat a race of alien invaders known as the Primagen. The Primagen not only have advanced technology on their side, but they can take control of living beings, including the enormous prehistoric beasts that roam the land. You'll need to use all of Turok's old skills and a bunch of new ones to defeat the Primagen and prevent their evil from infecting all dimensions forever. Among the weapons you'll be using on this quest are various alien weapons, including a pair of dual laser swords and a gun that can create miniature black holes, as seen here in a fight with a room full of Primagen soldiers..."*

\*The black hole gun is fired, creating a vortex that sucks in a bunch of nearby objects and several of the soldiers as well. Turok has to dash backwards to avoid being sucked in himself.\*

*"As you see, you'll have to be careful about where you deploy your weapon! In addition to the single player campaign, we also have multiplayer mode..."*

\*The crowd cheers as footage from the game's multiplayer deathmatch mode appears on screen.\*

*"So, for the first time, you'll be able to take the fight to your friends in one of twelve different multiplayer arenas. Oh, and the Primagen aren't the only ones who can tame dinosaurs..."*

\*Turok is shown riding a raptor, coming up on an enemy and having the raptor bite him repeatedly.\*

*"There's a lot more to see and do in Turok II and we've got a display for the game set up in our booth, so come down and check us out when you're on the floor!"*

\*Dienstbier leaves the stage, and once again, Kalinske returns to show off another Sega game.\*

*"In 1995, we released Lords of Skylein for the Sega Mega Charger. It was one of the last great Genesis games, and showed off the best of what the Genesis could offer for a great traditional RPG. In 1998, that tradition will continue with Skylein II: The World Beyond."*

\*A brief video is played, showing off the overworld and the game's traditional combat system, the 3-D graphics are about on par with Planetary Probe.\*

*"In Skylein II, you'll follow a new band of heroes on an adventure to the world below the mystical continent of Skylein. Discover new friends, battle powerful enemies, and explore a huge world in a game spanning three discs. Skylein II also makes use of the Ring for enhanced graphics, though even on an unenhanced Saturn, I think you'll agree that this is the most beautiful RPG yet to grace a Sega system. Now I'd like to tell you about another Sega sequel, a new installment of one of our most beloved series. In Ecco: Blue Dream, the dolphin hero returns on a new quest to explore an alternate dimension, one where the Earth is entirely water, and civilization took hold below the waves. You'll meet mermaids and fierce sea creatures as you try to save this other world while making your way back home. Ecco: Blue Dream and Skylein II: The World Beyond both come out in July, exclusively for the Sega Saturn. Now this next game... is a classic franchise that was brought to the Sega Saturn back in 1996 and immediately gained a very dedicated fanbase. These fans were so dedicated, in fact, that Ion Storm produced this game with the Sega Saturn in mind. I give you Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted."*

\*A very hilarious trailer for the game is played, at the end of the trailer the crowd applauds loudly.\*

*"Ion Storm has been working on this title for nearly two years, and I'll tell you, it's easily the biggest Keen game to date. It's so big, it's bigger than the last three Keen games COMBINED, and it's coming to the Sega Saturn this October. There's a booth for Keen down on the floor, and we hope everyone here will go and check it out, as it's truly a game that's going to surprise you in a very good way. Now, we've got yet ANOTHER classic franchise that's making its way to the Sega Saturn. This game won't be out until next year, but I think when you see what it is, you'll know it's worth the wait. Earthworm Jim is coming to Sega Saturn."*

\*Footage from the game shows Earthworm Jim exploring a massive cave in full 3-D,

mounting a cow launcher and shooting cows at enemies as they come toward him. He leaps up to the next level of the cave and pummels enemies with a series of moves before taking out his blaster and vaporizing a bull who's charging at him.\*

*"Earthworm Jim will be exploring a fully 3-D world when he comes to the Saturn next year, there's a demo of the game down on the floor where you can explore this very cave and take Earthworm Jim on the first of what I'm sure will be many adventures in his bran new game. Now, next up, we've got a couple of titles from our friends at Eidos to tell you all about..."* \*the crowd erupts into cheers, already having heard rumors of both of these upcoming games\* *"Like Earthworm Jim, these games won't be ready until 1999, but I think when you see them you're going to be very pleased."*

\*The first video to play is the trailer for *Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver*. It's similar to part of OTL's game's intro, where Kain is introduced as a vampire lord and he burns Raziel for defying him, throwing the winged Raziel into a seemingly bottomless pit of water, only for Raziel to awaken and seek revenge.\*

*"Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver is the sequel to Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain. As you can see, it follows that game's 'bad' ending, with Kain as the evil ruler of a world terrorized by vampires. As Raziel, you must explore the underworld in search of Kain and his followers so that you can carry out your long-awaited revenge. And next, this game is one that I'm sure a lot of you have been waiting for. We've just got a teaser trailer at this point, but Eidos is hard at work on this one and it'll be released early next year. Take a look."*

\*Lara Croft is walking through the halls of her mansion, as a TV news broadcast plays in the background.\*

TV Reporter: Millionaire industrialist Jade Bessemer returns to work today after her dramatic and harrowing rescue from certain death in the Himalayas...

Lara: \*scoffs and turns off the television, only for her phone to ring, she picks it up\*

Jade: Are you surprised I survived?

Lara: I don't want to fight you. I hope you've learned your lesson.

Jade: That depends. Have you learned yours?

\*Scenes from the game play in rapid-fire, Lara Croft riding a zipline in the Amazon jungle, fleeing from a t-rex on a motorbike, getting into a shootout in a casino in Las Vegas, and entering an ancient Japanese temple. Then we see her on the phone again.\*

Lara: I never do.

Jade: Then I'm sure we'll be seeing each other again, Lara Croft.

Lara: I'd hope not.

\*More scenes: Lara brawling with what appears to be a mummy in the middle of a rope bridge, Lara leaping onto a speedboat and tackling a thug, and Lara sliding under a huge slab door just before it closes, an artifact in hand.\*

Lara: I always come back.

### **TOMB RAIDER III**

1999

\*Applause from the crowd as Kalinske starts to speak again.\*

*"Tomb Raider III is well into development and will be arriving on the Sega Saturn early next year. Now, we've also got an announcement about a game from our software partners at Enix. They're already about to release the RPG Granstream, the spiritual successor to the hit title Terranigma, developed by the team at Quintet. That game is complete and you can play it out on the floor. But, we'd also like to announce a game that Enix has been working on for next year, developed by the duo of Yoshinori Yamagishi and Masaki Norimoto. The game is a new spin on the classic action series ActRaiser, and it involves some of the most famous characters of Norse mythology. ActRaiser Valkyrie stars a woman named Lenneth as she is tasked by the god Odin with protecting the people of the world from evil on the eve of the great battle Ragnarok. This action-RPG/world sim will combine elements of the first two ActRaiser games with role-playing and simulation gameplay, making for one of the most epic role playing games to grace the Sega Saturn. The game is early in development and will likely see a release sometime late next year. Now, a big part of the Saturn's success has been because of its third party software partners. We've already shared with you information about Eidos and Enix's next games, but there's another great team of developers at Namco working hard on the Sega Saturn's next generation of titles. I'd like to introduce you to Glen Warren of Namco's North American division, who'll be discussing some of Namco's upcoming titles for the Sega Saturn."*

\*Kalinske and Warren shake hands, before Warren introduces footage from *Soul Calibur*.\*

*"Thank you, Tom, and thank you to everyone who's come out here today to be at E3. I think most of the buzz surrounding Namco's presence at E3 is about one game and one game only, and that's definitely understandable when that game is Soul Calibur, the sequel to the arcade and Saturn hit Soul Edge. Soul Calibur will be released into arcades in two short months, and I'm going to officially announce that the game will also be releasing exclusively for the Sega Saturn next summer! Soul Calibur features some of the most advanced graphics ever seen in a fighting game, and utilizing the Ring, those amazing arcade graphics will be presented on the Sega Saturn in their full glory."*

\*A trailer plays, showing off the arcade version of *Soul Calibur* and its new eight-way movement during fights, along with several of the new characters.\*

*"Soul Calibur is being developed with the new Saturn Ring technology in mind, and the game will be fully compatible with Saturn memory cards when it's released to the arcades. That means that once the game is released for the Saturn next year, you'll be able to take your arcade records home with you to the Sega Saturn, and vice versa. We've got arcade machines featuring Soul Calibur set up down at the Namco booth, so make sure you come down and play when you get the chance, the lines are sure to be quite long! Our next game that I'm going to be talking about today, and one that's releasing for the Sega Saturn this year, is Time Crisis II. The exciting gun combat game where you battle criminals and rescue hostages is also compatible with the new Ring peripheral, which will enable arcade realistic graphics and open up an extra bonus stage. We've got two more games coming to the Saturn, and these games will be releasing next year, including the RPG Agni Solemn, a title*

*about a girl whose destiny is to become the goddess of her world, only for her to reject it when she believes her world isn't worth saving. A young hero must help her find her courage before it's too late to save the world from eternal darkness. And finally, we have a puzzle fighting game called Orb Puncher, where you must land combos on your opponent in order to bury them in colorful spheres. You'll need brains and brawn to win this innovative and unique clash of genres! Namco is committed to producing the best arcade and console games anywhere, and you'll only find those games on the Sega Saturn. Thank you, and enjoy the rest of the show!"*

\*Warren leaves the stage as Kalinske returns to wrap up Sega's address.\*

*"Thank you to everyone who came out, and thank you to all our fans across the world. It's truly a joy working for Sega as they continue to provide the best value in entertainment and the best games in our industry. I hope you all enjoy the show, and make sure you stop by our booth for the latest-"*

\*The screen comes back on.\*

*"Huh?"*

\*A voice echoes through the room.\*

Voice: Aren't you forgetting someone?

\*The crowd cheers when they realize who the voice belongs to.\*

Voice: You can't end the day without talking about Sonic the Hedgehog!

*"But....Sonic? You've got another game for us?"*

Voice: Well...

\*A huge, open grassland is seen. All is peaceful as beautiful scenery is shown. Then, suddenly, a blue streak races across the plain. Then another. The blue streak runs right at the screen, then stops. Sonic the Hedgehog is standing in the middle of the field, tapping his foot.\*

Sonic: You ready to have some fun?

\*A few seconds of gameplay footage showing Sonic collecting rings, doing a couple of loops, and fighting enemies, all in a beautiful, fully-3D environment, is shown. Then Sonic is shown in the middle of the field again.\*

Sonic: I'll see you around! \*races off the screen\*

## **SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 5**

*Coming 1999*

\*The crowd erupts into the biggest applause of the address as Kalinske smiles.\*

*"We'll have more about Sonic 5 in the coming months and you can watch another exclusive*

*video down at our booth! It's gonna be a great year for Sega, this year and the next, because Saturn still does what Nintendon't! Thank you and enjoy the show!"*

-Sega's keynote address at E3 1998

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*"I'm Howard Lincoln, and welcome to E3! Over the past six months, the Ultra Nintendo has sold nearly 12 million consoles in North America alone, shattering the records for the most successful video game console launch of all time. We know it's been difficult to find the Ultra Nintendo in stores, and that's why we're ramping up production, starting today, to make it easier than ever to find the Ultra for anyone who wants one. And you have many reasons to want an Ultra Nintendo, for games like Super Mario Dimensions, Final Fantasy VII, Ultra Mario Kart, Starfox 2, Goldeneye 007, Final Fantasy Tactics, Gran Turismo, and many, many, MANY more. And today, we're going to be showing you plenty more reasons why you'll want to buy the Ultra Nintendo in the days and months and years ahead, and if you already have an Ultra Nintendo, why you made the right choice in an entertainment device for your home. We want to thank everyone who's supported Nintendo over the last 13 years we've been selling game consoles in North America, and we hope to provide lots, and lots, and lots more outstanding games for many years to come. And we're going to start today's presentation with a game we introduced you to last year. A game from Rare that's ready to ship, and will in fact be released just a few short weeks from today. That game is The Dreamers, and we've got a quick bit of preview footage to show before you hit the floor to try the game out for yourself."*

*\*On the screen, Edison and Madera are shown battling a giant tree monster, both of them are holding swords as the beast spins its massive arms around.\**

*"Now for this fight you'll be controlling the main character, Edison. Edison has a variety of moves, moves that you'll be learning throughout the game, that you can use to strike this huge boss creature here. You can lunge forward and attack from the front, or you can move around to the back and have Madera keep him distracted. Combat is a big part of The Dreamers, and you'll be battling hundreds of enemies and dozens of bosses on your epic journey to find Edison's sister and uncover the secrets of this massive world. Next..."*

*\*Madera is shown exploring an area on her own.\**

*"Here you're controlling Madera, and you've got to find five puzzle pieces, these pieces are used to fill up a picture, and once you've done that, you can access another area, an area where your friend Edison is being held captive by servants of the evil witch Gruntilda. In order to get these puzzle pieces, you'll have to perform a variety of tasks along the way. We're going to go help the witch doctor Mumbo Jumbo complete his spell, and for that, we've got to fight some enemies that he summons up for us. Madera's swordplay is a bit quicker than Edison's, she fights a bit differently and has a completely different moveset from Edison. This game is enormous, there are eight different sections of this world that open up as you go through the game, and within these sections are different sub-areas, so each of the eight main sections is like a new chapter of your journey. Rare's put together an incredible world filled with wonderful characters, and they've told a story like no other. You'll laugh, you'll definitely cry, and you'll believe that all your dreams can come true. The Dreamers will release on June 15, and the complete game is ready to play down at our big Nintendo booth, so come and try it out! Now our next game is also releasing next month. It's been a big hit in Japan and is a brand new original title from Nintendo, designed by my*

*dear friend, Mr. Satoru Iwata. Mr. Iwata is here to briefly describe his new game, called Aeroboy."*

*\*Satoru Iwata takes the stage, smiles and shakes Lincoln's hand before beginning to talk about his game.\**

*"Last year, I began thinking of ideas to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the new Ultra Nintendo game console. I have always dreamed of making a new version of my old game Balloon Fight. But when I began to come up with ideas for this game, the game took on a life of its own. It is no longer a mere sequel to Balloon Fight, but an entirely new game in its own right. Aeroboy combines the thrill of flying above beautiful places with the excitement of being a great hero. Aeroboy is a boy who has discovered how to fly through the use of devices including mechanical wings, jetpacks, and yes, of course, balloons."*

*\*Scenes from the game begin to play, showing Aeroboy in flight above a forest clearing. He sees several civilians down below, who are being menaced by imp-like creatures who throw pitchforks up at him.\**

*"Aeroboy can block and absorb attacks from above and below in order to gain power to use his special abilities. These abilities can include causing a projectile rain, levitating civilians, freezing enemies, and many other abilities depending on what Aeroboy is using as a flight method. He can also use a special blaster weapon without the need to charge his ability meter. Aeroboy can roam freely across the levels, where icons will appear to indicate his goals. He must rescue a certain number of civilians before he can complete the level. I am pleased to give this presentation and I am very proud of the work that has been done to bring Aeroboy to life. I hope that you all enjoy playing it as much as I enjoyed making it. Thank you and enjoy E3."*

*\*Iwata bows to the crowd before shaking Lincoln's hand again and exiting the stage.\**

*"And Aeroboy isn't the only original game Nintendo is debuting this year. We have another title to announce, one that's coming this fall exclusively to Ultra Nintendo.\**

*\*A brief trailer for a new game appears on the screen, showing gameplay footage. Battlebot-like machines, ranging in size from a briefcase to a car, are shown battling in an arena. Excited kids, holding remote controls for the robots, are making various expressions, from jumping for joy to pouting in dismay.\**

*In the future, robots battle for supremacy in the arena!*

*\*A robot rolls up to another robot and brings a saw down on its head.\**

*Create your machines!*

*\*Footage from the game's very detailed robot building screen is shown, along with different data bars and resource meters.\**

*Battle your rival!*

*\*A sneering snobby kid laughs as his robot tears through two foes at once.\**

*And achieve total domination!*

\*Scenes of robot destruction are shown, the game is shown to be somewhat of a hybrid of OTL's *Custom Robo* and *Battlebots*.\*

## **METAL CLASH**

*October*

\*The crowd applauds mildly.\*

*"Metal Clash is an exciting new game based on the brand new sport of robotic combat, with a Nintendo twist. You'll get to go on your own adventure, earning money and finding parts to build your own fearsome robots. Metal Clash will be released this fall in North America, and we've got a robot building demo down on the show floor. So now you've heard about some new ideas from Nintendo, and we'll keep bringing those new ideas as we look for new ways to engage our players and make games as fun as they can possibly be. But now....well, I think it's time to hear from the man himself, Shigeru Miyamoto."*

\*Shigeru Miyamoto takes the stage along with his new interpreter Bill Trinen, who speaks for Miyamoto after Miyamoto makes statements in Japanese. The crowd applauds Miyamoto wildly as he takes the stage, knowing exactly what he's here to talk about.\*

*"For me, working on The Legend Of Zelda is a chance to test the limits of my imagination, and a chance to test the players' imaginations as well. In Ocarina of Dreams, we continued Link's story from two previous games, but with Temple of Time, we are starting over with a brand new story, in a brand new Hyrule watched over by these three magical goddesses whom you might have met in The Mystic Mirror, our new Game Boy Zelda game. Temple Of Time starts off with a very young Link, a Link who is younger than any Link who has appeared before him, but as the secrets of this world are unlocked, you will discover that there is more to this Link than you know."*

\*The screen shows footage from the game's first dungeon, a dungeon filled with overgrowth and tree roots in the middle of Kokiri Forest. Link is exploring the dungeon with his sword and shield.\*

*"In this game, the first fully three-dimensional Zelda, we've created a new system to battle enemies. You'll be able to lock on with the R button and then target an enemy with either a projectile, like the slingshot, or your sword with a flying leap."*

\*Link leaps into the air and strikes down the bat enemy.\*

*"Not only does this game span years of time, but it spans the four seasons as well. In this game, Hyrule is governed by the four seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. You have seen a glimpse of the Spring dungeon, which takes place in the middle of Kokiri Forest, Link's home. You will be exploring four dungeons in this game....at least at first. \*Miyamoto laughs\* I won't reveal all the secrets of this new game, but rest assured, it is much larger in scale than we will be showing you today. Hyrule is truly enormous in this game."*

\*Now, Link is riding Epona across a vast, beautiful Hyrule Field. The crowd begins to cheer upon seeing the scale of the field that Link is riding across and just how many things are visible in the environment.\*

*"Anywhere you see, you can go to. There are many secrets in this new Hyrule, as there have always been in any Legend of Zelda game. This game will explore Hyrule's past, deeper than any game before it. I know that the expectations have been set enormously high by the success of Ocarina of Dreams. I truly hope we can exceed the expectations of players, and that we can exceed the praise that the last game received."*

\*A trailer is now shown, showing Link exploring the four dungeons, a forested dungeon for Spring, a fiery mountain dungeon for Summer, an ice palace dungeon for Winter, and a desert dungeon for Fall. He enters the Temple of Time and is greeted by an ancient sage who shows him the Master Sword. Link pulls out the sword and screams and the screen goes black. Then, the release date and title are shown on screen.\*

## **THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TEMPLE OF TIME**

*November 21*

\*The crowd erupts into enormous applause. Howard Lincoln walks up and shakes Shigeru Miyamoto's hand before beginning to speak.\*

*"The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time will release just six short months from now in North America, and the game will be available to play at our Nintendo booth so you can check out the brand new Zelda for yourself. I know you won't be disappointed. The next game I'm going to talk about is another highly anticipated sequel, to one of the biggest fighting games in history. I'm talking about Killer Instinct Ultra, and it's finally on its way to the Ultra Nintendo this September."*

\*The crowd cheers as the footage begins to play, the Ultra Nintendo version looks far better than the arcade version of *Killer Instinct 2*.\*

*"Killer Instinct Ultra is a souped up, greatly enhanced version of Killer Instinct 2, optimized for the Ultra Nintendo console. With console-exclusive characters and a brand new Quest Mode, Killer Instinct Ultra will be the definitive fighting game on the Ultra Nintendo. We've got the game down at our booth, and we'll even be having a tournament later today with prizes, so make sure you come down and sign up, as it's first-come, first-serve. The classic mystery solving series Detective Club is also coming to the Super Nintendo. Ultra Detective Club features six thrilling new cases and in a first for the series, interactive animated cutscenes that let you gather key clues as you watch the story unfold in real time. For all you wanna-be gumshoes out there, Ultra Detective Club is the closest you'll get to actually becoming a real detective. And, coming to home consoles for the first time is Ultra World Of Color, a sequel to the 1996 puzzle game that's become an enormous hit on the Game Boy Color. Along with a companion game, World Of Color 2 for the Game Boy Color, Ultra World Of Color is the best puzzle game of the year, and it'll introduce four player multiplayer action to the series for the first time, letting you battle it out with your friends in fast paced puzzle matches to see who's the fastest and the smartest of all. Now, our next title, you've probably heard a lot about, as it's releasing in Japan next month and has been a big story there. We're bringing the hero Pit to the Ultra Nintendo in Kid Icarus: Guardian. Kid Icarus: Guardian brings the classic exploration gameplay of the NES, Game Boy, and SNES-CD games to the Ultra Nintendo, while introducing fiercer monsters and the best visuals the series has ever seen. When mankind is threatened by the evil goddess Nemesis, whose grudge against humanity spans many eons, only Pit can save the people he's sworn to protect. Pit's quest is joined by the legendary hero Achilles and the young princess Phaedra,*

*who represent humanity and help Pit protect the people from a series of increasingly deadly disasters. Pit can unleash more moves than ever, he can upgrade his bow as you progress through the journey, and also learns some devastating magic that will be a helpful boon to your quest. Kid Icarus: Guardian will be available in North America in October."*

*\*The screen now shows a picture of massive crowd of Japanese schoolchildren cheering excitedly.\**

*"Here at Nintendo, we've been keeping a secret. And this secret is probably the worst-kept secret in all of video games. There has been a massive phenomenon that's swept Japan, and that phenomenon involves 150 mysterious creatures, big and small, called Pokemon. Now, we're finally ready to bring the Pokemon phenomenon to America, and everything that comes with it."*

*\*Pictures of various Pokemon are shown on the screen. Apart from some very minor changes, the original 150 Pokemon are exactly as IOTL.\**

*"The Pokemon games, involving catching and battling these 150 creatures, have sold millions of copies in Japan. We've created several versions of the games, including the latest, released last year, that have been completely overhauled for the Game Boy Color, with an enhanced music score and improved graphics. This is the version of the game that America will be receiving, though it can also be played on the original Game Boy. The two games, Pokemon Red and Pokemon Green, will be released on September 7th. That is also the day that the Pokemon animated series will debut on Cartoon Network's Toonami animation block. The animated series follows the events of the game, depicting young Sato Ketchum's journey to become a Pokemon Master by conquering the eight gym leaders and catching all 150 Pokemon. We hope you'll become a part of the phenomenon, because you Gotta Catch 'Em All!"*

*\*A brief hype trailer for the Pokemon game and anime is shown on screen, playing "The Journey's Just Begun". The crowd applauds after the trailer finishes.\**

*"We're all extremely excited about finally bringing Pokemon to Western shores, but you know, Pokemon isn't just a Nintendo game. It's part of our partnership with the company Sony, whose amazing technology has helped to make the Ultra Nintendo a reality. And Sony's not just our partner in the Ultra Nintendo. They're also at the forefront of making some really great games for the system going forward, including the sequel to their sci-fi SNES-CD hit Ballistic Limit. We showed you a trailer for Ballistic Limit 2 last year, but now the game is nearing release, and we've got a lot more to show off this time around."*

*\*Footage from the game begins to play as Lincoln continues to speak, the game is now a free-roaming third person shooter, which switches to first person when Ash enters Ballistic Mode. He can move completely freely in Ballistic Mode, though his time is still limited by the Ballistic Meter. Right now he's walking across a desolate, rocky field, taking shots at different creatures that cross his path.\**

*"In Ballistic Limit 2, Ash Beckland and his crew have journeyed to the far reaches of space, hoping to contain an alien virus before it spreads and infects the entire galaxy. The virus has already infected the world that Ash's crew have stepped onto, and they're in a race against time to find the source of the virus before the planet's deadly creatures devour them."*

\*Various scenes from the game's combat are shown, with an emphasis on all the horrifying creatures that Ash and his crew have to take down. The crowd gasps as an enormous winged wasp/dragon creature flexes a massive stinging tail as Ash fires desperately at it with a powerful gatling-gun type weapon.\*

*"The Ballistic system returns, granting bonuses to the player's weapon if they can take the enemy down in the first-person Ballistic Mode, but this time, you can actually strafe around enemies, giving you an added edge in combat. Sony has worked extensively on this game, and also on another sequel to a 1995 SNES-CD classic, Twisted Metal."*

\*The crowd cheers at the announcement of *Twisted Metal 2*. Lincoln continues to speak as footage from one of the game's brutal demolition derbies plays on screen, the graphics far better than the previous game.\*

*"In Twisted Metal 2, you'll take Sweet Tooth and his fellow psychotic destruction junkies on a whirlwind worldwide tour of mass destruction, battling it out all over the globe in a variety of vehicles and weapons. You can also play with four players at once, making this another multiplayer experience you can only find on the Ultra Nintendo. Finally from Sony, we've got one more game to talk about, this one from our friends at Naughty Dog. And speaking of naughty dogs, let's see what old Woofle's been up to..."*

\*The scene shows Clark in his room, working on his homework when suddenly his big dog Woofle comes up and leans on the desk.\*

Clark: Not now, boy, I'm busy working!

Woofle: \*barks, then uses his big tongue to eat everything on the desk, including Clark's homework\*

Clark: Woofle! The teacher'll never believe that my dog actually ate my homework! Naughty dog!

\*As Woofle is pouting, the door to Clark's room opens.\*

Clark's mom: Clark, your friend Selkie's here...

Clark: Really? \*he runs out the door and sees Selkie standing at the foot of the stairs\* Hey Selkie, what's up? You look...kinda sad.

Selkie: Clark, I need your help, yours AND Woofle's...

Clark: What's wrong?

Selkie: My family and I, we thought we'd found a new world where we could stay, but... this evil cat army's taken over and-

Clark: An evil cat army?

Woofle: \*growls and barks from upstairs\*

Selkie: And we need your help!

Clark: \*looks up at Woofle\* Well, boy? You ready for another adventure?

Woofle: \*barks eagerly and rushes downstairs, plowing into Clark and Selkie which causes them both to land on his back\*

Clark's mom: Now wait just a minute, you've got school tomorrow!

Clark: But mom, the fate of an entire world's at stake!

Clark's mom: Well be home by supper! \*as Woofle is running out the door\*

Selkie: \*smirks\* I highly doubt we'll be home by supper.

Clark: Let's go, Woofle, we've got a world to save!

\*The dog, with the kids in tow, leaps through a magical portal, which closes behind them. The logo of the game appears.\*

### **DOG DASH 3**

1999

*"In Naughty Dog's newest game, Clark, Woofle, and Selkie enter a fully 3D world for the very first time as they battle against the evil Feline Front, led by General Catsmeow. You'll see a lot more of this game in the months ahead, and be sure to check out our booth for some early gameplay footage. And if you can't wait for action platforming and Dog Dash 3 is too far away, Quixsters should ease the wait quite a bit. The game is about four kids who explore numerous worlds, battling enemies and gathering treasure, all while competing with one another for the title of World's Greatest Hero. These kids aren't just best friends, they're fierce rivals, and they're coming to the Ultra Nintendo in July. And from Konami... \*the crowd applauds massively, though this isn't the game the crowd has been waiting for\* comes a brand new game called Shadows of the Moon. \*there's a bit of a disappointed groan from some of the crowd, though others who have been following the game's coverage in Japan cheer quite a bit, making for a loud mixed reaction\* Check it out."*

\*The trailer, which is in Japanese with English subtitles, shows a mysterious woman clad in black as she hunts down a handsome looking man through a crowded city. About halfway through the trailer, the man is revealed as a werewolf, and a fierce battle ensues, with the woman firing silver bullets at the werewolf, who on several occasions nearly rips her to shreds. Finally, the werewolf is taken down, and the woman smiles as she holsters her gun. Brief gameplay footage is shown, revealing the game to be a somewhat Castlevania-esque 2-D action title but with beautiful and stylistic 3-D graphics, with a very robust combat system. The trailer ends and the crowd cheers, much more enthusiastically than their half-disappointed mixed reaction from before.\*

*"Shadows Of The Moon will be out sometime before the end of the year. And from Japan comes another game, this time from our partners at Telenet Japan. This is Tale Lemuria, the sequel to 1996's hit Tale Phantasia. While Tale Lemuria features an entirely different cast of characters undertaking a brand new quest, it features the same excellent gameplay from the first, including a vast world to explore and an action-packed real time combat system. But this time, you're not just restricted to fighting on a 2-D plane. Characters can run around in all eight directions as they battle foes, adding an all new element of strategy to*

*this highly regarded combat system. In Tale Lemuria, you play as a group of heroes who search for a mysterious continent at the behest of their ruler, only to discover an advanced civilization full of refugees from an oppressive world."*

\*A trailer begins to play, showing an anime cutscene of four soldiers on the march.\*

*A Mysterious Land...*

Kaster (the main hero of the game): They say this continent really exists?

Indra (the main heroine): It has to exist.

Kaster: And once we find it, we'll get rich beyond our wildest dreams!

*An Undiscovered Kingdom...*

\*The four heroes stand in a forest as they are surrounded on all sides by weapon-wielding half-elves.\*

Half-Elf Leader: No one can know of this place.

Kaster: Please, we mean no harm!

*A War is Brewing...*

Half-Elf Leader: The humans must pay for their crimes against our kind! Now is the time for war!

Teenage Girl: Father, you mustn't!

Indra: There must be another way!

Half-Elf Leader: Can you speak for the humans?

Kaster: I...

\*Various cutscenes from the game are shown as a lyrical song begins to play. Some humans and half-elves are fighting together against a massive beast. A man in full military uniform, the king of Kaster's country, is walking down the main hall of his throne room. A powerful ancient weapon is charging before discharging a massive laser blast that cuts through miles of forest.\*

Half-Elf Leader: There is no peace without subjugation.

\*The half-elf leader's daughter, Lyrica, is being embraced by Kaster as she sheds a tear. Another scene shows Indra holding a sword to Lyrica's neck.\*

Indra: I will not hesitate to kill you if your father doesn't back down.

Lyrica: \*just bows her head, showing more sadness than fear\*

\*The song reaches its climax as the half-elf leader makes an angry speech, followed by the

half elves slaughtering thousands of humans, Kaster and several other heroes leaping from a cliff, and several of the game's summon spirits, including Undine, Efreet, and Volt activating their powers.\*

*A World On The Brink...*

Lyrica: \*looking up and praying to the sky\* If I cannot save them, then...all is lost.

## **TALE LEMURIA**

*#1 In Japan For Two Straight Months*

*Arriving in America September 1998*

\*The trailer ends to massive applause.\*

*"We have a nearly complete English version of Tale Lemuria on display at our booth for you all to play and enjoy. Here at Nintendo, we're very proud of the RPGs we're featuring on the Ultra Nintendo, which we feel is poised to become the greatest system for RPG fans ever made. And we're getting plenty of help from the brilliant developers at Squaresoft. Here to show off some of Squaresoft's upcoming games is Mr. Ted Woolsey, head of Squaresoft's North American division."*

\*Ted Woolsey takes the stage and shakes Howard Lincoln's hand.\*

*"Hello again. Last year, I was here to show off Final Fantasy VII, a game that revolutionized the RPG genre. And now, this year, Squaresoft is going to do it again with a brand new RPG experience that will bring cinema quality storytelling and visuals to the Ultra Nintendo. Here is the opening scene of Parasite Eve."*

\*The famous opera scene from *Parasite Eve*, in which an entire concert crowd, with the exception of the heroine Aya Brea, spontaneously combusts is shown. Aya goes backstage to confront the singer Melissa, and after she speaks cryptically to Aya, the scene ends. The crowd applauds.\*

*"Parasite Eve takes place over eight horrifying days in New York City, in which a mysterious phenomenon is causing all lifeforms to randomly combust, throwing the city into chaos. Young NYPD officer Aya Brea must discover the cause of this phenomenon, and in the process, discovers her own true nature. This game features a brand new combat system that takes place in real time, with Aya utilizing guns and her latent psychic abilities to battle a variety of deadly foes as she explores the city with the help of a few souls brave enough to stay and assist her. You'll explore landmarks all over the city, including the Natural History Museum and Central Park, as you attempt to stop the mysterious force threatening all of humanity. Parasite Eve features more than three hours of fully rendered cutscenes featuring the best graphics yet seen in a video game, and cinema quality voice acting including actors and actresses from some of your favorite TV shows and films. We're combining classic, exploration, RPG style gameplay with some survival horror and cinematic elements to create a new genre of video game, and one that you'll have to experience for yourself to truly believe. We're positioning Parasite Eve as our major game this holiday season, but it's not the only game we'll be releasing. Here's a look at a scene from our RPG Fairytale, from the creators of Chrono Trigger."*

\*A fully rendered cutscene shows two fairies and their male human companion entering a very dark and spooky clearing.\*

Virtuosa: The princess has to be here, right?

Clariss: If she's still alive...

\*A rustling is heard from nearby. The four look to see a cocoon dangling, with muffled whimpers coming from it. They go over to the cocoon, and Clariss reaches to pull some of the webbing away from what appears to be the victim's face.\*

Ashlyn: \*as soon as her mouth is uncovered\* Please, help me...! \*she sounds utterly terrified\*

Clariss: Ashlyn, it's all right, we're here to-

\*A hideous skittering noise is heard from nearby. The three heroes turn, and out of the forest comes a massive, terrifying spider with long, thin legs. The crowd gasps as the spider appears, one of the reporters yells out "Nope, nope....!!!" while others are cheering.\*

Clariss: There it is, there's the thing that's been skulking these woods! That damned spider!

Ephret: We're dead, we're all dead!

Virtuosa: Oh my stars!

\*The cutscene smoothly shifts into a battle, the four heroes are facing the spider but as attacks are entered, the characters move naturally into various positions. The combat system is a lot like Chrono Trigger's ATB system but with more natural, spontaneous combos like SaGa Frontier. As the boss battle continues to play out, Ted Woolsey begins to speak again.\*

*"As you can see, Fairytale can be very beautiful but it can also be very scary. You can watch the battle playing out on the screen, the combat system's a lot like Final Fantasy, but character animations and movement are very organic, and you'll be able to use the characters' affinity toward one another to have a better chance of pulling off consistent combination attacks. Will Princess Ashlyn escape the spider with her life? You'll have to play Fairytale when it comes to the US in July to find out! Next, I'd like to announce the North American release of Brave Fencer Kyuriadan this fall. You got to experience Kyuriadan's noble quest in 1996, but now he returns in an all new quest, to liberate the land from an oppressive ruler and rescue the beautiful Princess Fillet. The game is a lot more RPG-like than the original, but maintains Kyuriadan's exciting combat system of timely attacks and counters to make fighting enemies a whirlwind good time! Of course, no Squaresoft press conference would be complete without announcing a new Final Fantasy game. We're of course hard at work on Final Fantasy VIII, and we'll have more information on that game later this year. But before we can move forward, we feel that this classic series deserves a look back."*

\*A brief video plays, showing off classic moments from Final Fantasy through Final Fantasy VI.\*

*"On the Super Nintendo CD, you could experience all six Final Fantasy games, through the*

*Final Fantasy Origins collection, Final Fantasy IV, Final Fantasy V, and Final Fantasy VI. But next year, we're bringing them all together in a single huge collection. Final Fantasy Collection will contain all six classic Final Fantasy games as they appeared on the Super Nintendo CD, with a number of extra features and goodies that we'll be announcing as the collection nears release. Thank you again for supporting Squaresoft and its games, and we hope you continue to enjoy our games for many years to come!"*

*\*Woolsey leaves the stage, and Howard Lincoln returns.\**

*"A big thank you to Mr. Ted Woolsey for that exciting presentation. But we've got one more guest to feature today, and that's Mr. Keiji Inafune from Capcom, here to show off Capcom's latest Ultra Nintendo releases!"*

*\*Keiji Inafune takes the stage, shaking Howard Lincoln's hand before beginning to speak.\**

*"It was on the original Nintendo Entertainment System that Mega Man got his start." \*the crowd cheers as Mega Man is mentioned\* "And that is why we have chosen the Ultra Nintendo to play host to four all new Mega Man games that will be released over the next 18 months." \*the cheering gets even louder, as the screen shows the images of four logos: Mega Man X5, Mega Man 8, Mega Man Legends, and Mega Man Zero\* "Mega Man X5 is the continuation of the new generation Mega Man series, featuring the return of the hero X in his battle against the Mavericks, once again led by the evil Sigma. The game will be X's first on the new generation hardware, and it features updated graphics and amazing new animated cutscenes that will bring Mega Man's world to life like never before. In Mega Man Legends, we'll take the Mega Man world to the genre of the adventure game for the first time ever. You'll get to explore a huge world as the Blue Bomber, meeting new characters and discovering all new secrets. Both of these games will be debuting in North America this August, in what we call the Month of Mega Man!" \*another loud cheer from the crowd\* "Mega Man 8 will not be released until next year, but it will see the classic Mega Man gameplay return, also featuring the latest in Ultra Nintendo graphical fidelity. And finally, Mega Man Zero is a Mega Man X-styled game starring Mega Man's ally Zero as he embarks on a quest of his own. Both Mega Man 8 and Mega Man Zero are early in development, but we hope to release them sometime next year in North America. Finally....finally is a game that I am not sure I am qualified to discuss, as it is not my game, but I know all of you are very enthusiastic about this particular series and so I will do the best that I can. I remember that one of the very first games to be released on the Super Nintendo CD, both here and in Japan, was Street Fighter II. And so I am pleased to announce that the home console version of Street Fighter III is also coming to the Ultra Nintendo exclusively."*

*\*loud cheers erupt from the crowd as footage from the Ultra Nintendo version of Street Fighter III, featuring very highly detailed sprites, appears on the screen looking even better than it does in arcades\**

*"Street Fighter III for the Ultra Nintendo will not only feature all of the new characters from the new game, but all of the returning characters as well, and it will be the first version of this game anywhere to feature the return of Chun-Li, who was absent in the original arcade version of the game. I hope you will all enjoy the Ultra Nintendo version of Street Fighter III when it is released this Christmas. Thank you all again."*

*\*Inafune shakes Lincoln's hand and hugs him before leaving the stage.\**

*"Last, but definitely not least, we have some all new footage to show you from Metal Gear*

*Solid-*"

\*The crowd interrupts Howard Lincoln by erupting into the biggest applause of any game yet.\*

"...we hope you enjoy it."

\*The screen shows gameplay footage as Snake sneaks through the top of a cargo ship, sliding between stacks of boxes and taking out guards along the way. His target is a high-ranking military figure pacing in a room high above the deck. After several narrow escapes that show off the game's stealth system, Snake slips over to the stairs, where several more guards await, Snake uses silent takedowns on them before kicking his way into the room where the military official is.\*

Snake: \*points his gun at the military official\* You're coming with me.

Official: How did you- \*is suddenly shot by a figure offscreen\*

Snake: What the hell?

Ocelot: \*sitting on the couch, he then points the gun at Snake who aims right back at him\* This is as far as you go, Snake.

Snake: You son of a bitch, how'd you get here?

Ocelot: \*he laughs\* I'm everywhere, Snake. Did you think I was just gonna let you come on board this ship and interrogate the man I've been funneling information through? That would ruin everything.

Snake: I've got other ways of getting what I need.

\*A helicopter shines its light through the window of the room. Ocelot is distracted for a moment, allowing Snake to shoot him in the shoulder. Ocelot fires back as Snake dives for cover. The helicopter opens fire, shattering the window and forcing Ocelot to roll for cover as well.\*

Meryl: \*from the helicopter cockpit\* Snake, I've got you covered!

Ocelot: Damn bitch! \*firing at the helicopter now\*

Snake: \*leaps out from behind cover and fires on Ocelot, who's forced to flee the room\*

Ocelot: I'm not giving up, not yet! \*he tosses a live grenade into the helicopter\*

Meryl: Shit! \*she tries to toss it out, causing the helicopter to spin out of control\*

Snake: Meryl!

\*The gameplay now takes over, you have to grab something to lasso onto the helicopter so that you can get Meryl out in time, meanwhile Ocelot's guards on the ship are firing at the both of you. After a heroic rescue, Snake and Meryl dive away from a large explosion onto a platform above the deck, then run toward an escape boat parked nearby. Just as the two of

you reach the boat, Ocelot emerges and fires, hitting Snake multiple times in the chest. Snake falls back into Meryl's arms. Meryl points her gun at Ocelot, but he shoots it out of her hand.\*

Ocelot: You can come quietly or-

Meryl: \*spits in his face\* Kiss my ass. \*shoves Snake toward Ocelot, Snake, despite multiple gunshot wounds, is able to tackle Ocelot and the two of them roll off the boat together in a cutscene as the video finally ends\*

\*The crowd erupts into more applause.\*

*"Metal Gear Solid will be released exclusively for the Ultra Nintendo in February 1999. We regret that the game won't be released this year, but Konami needs more time to make the game absolutely perfect for its release. We know it'll be worth the wait. These are only some of the great games we've got planned for the Ultra Nintendo, we'll be showing them all off on the floor, so come and check out everything we've got to offer! And remember, all of these great games can be played on the Ultra Nintendo as it is, no Ring required!"* \*the crowd erupts into cheers one more time\*

-Nintendo's keynote address at E3 1998

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Ted Crosley: We're here live on the floor of E3, and we're talking to Mr. Doom himself, that's right, John Romero is here live with us, it's great talking to you again.

John Romero: \*smiles as he shakes hands with Ted and Alex\* Always a pleasure.

Alex Stansfield: This year you're mainly showing off two games. Here we've got *Quake*, for the Ultra Nintendo and for the Sega Saturn, and we've also got *Daikatana* which is coming to the Ultra Nintendo later this year. What kind of a year has it been working on these games?

Romero: It's been busy but it's been fun! As you can see here, *Quake* looks great on the console. It looks a little bit better on the Ultra, but here on the Saturn it looks just as good as it does on the PC, and it works with the Ring which'll bring it up right around to where the Ultra is in terms of graphics, we were really pleased to get it working so well on both systems.

Ted: *Quake* is an awesome game, one of my favorite PC games to come out in a while...

Romero: Thank you.

Ted: But tell us about *Daikatana*.

Romero: Well, *Daikatana* is awesome, it's a time traveling game where you've got a big sword, which is called the Daikatana, Japanese for "big sword", and you're going around teaming up with warriors from across time to kick some bad guy ass, it's really very cool.

Ted: You sound very proud of this game.

Romero: \*laughs\* Well, the original tagline for it was simply, "John Romero's about to make you his bitch."

\*Ted and Alex both laugh hysterically\*

Romero: Yeah, the guys at Nintendo thought that too, they said, you know, I'm being too cocky.

Alex: Well, haven't you kinda earned it? First *Doom*, then *Quake*....

Romero: Well, after I split with Tom Hall, I mean we're still buddies but we're not making games together anymore, he's doing *Keen*, I'm doing *Daikatana*... I mean, it kinda humbled me a bit. JUST a bit, mind you!

Ted: \*laughing\* Well, if this *Daikatana* is as good as you say it's gonna be...

Romero: It is!

(...)

Brittany Saldita: I'm Brittany Saldita and I'm here with Kenji Eno and we're gonna talk about *Nightsyren*!

\*Brittany is playing through an early mission with the two female stars of the game, the two are having to work together to clear a series of obstructions blocking their path. All the while, they're being attacked by large, feral rats.\*

Brittany: You've made a lot of spooky games before and I gotta say, this game is creeping me out big time!

Kenji Eno: Well, that's the idea, to give the player a real sense of fear. These two women, they're trapped, they have to work together to get home alive.

Brittany: I can't keep these rats off me! \*she tries to maneuver one of the women around to the other side of the barricade but the rats swarm her, the other one is trying to beat down the rats but it's too late\* This is the third time I've died on this! No help?

Eno: No help! You need to figure out how to use them together to survive.

Brittany: Hmm.... well I love the graphics in this game, the atmosphere, it's all really effective to convey a sense of fear and terror. I'm enjoying myself, I'm not gonna give up on this!

(...)

Lyssa Fielding: I've been playing *Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted* for nearly half an hour and I'm almost through both demos! This might be my favorite game of the show so far. I love the new character, her name is Princess Lindsay and she is a kick butt princess! You play as her and you try to rescue Commander Keen after he gets captured...I can't get enough!

Tom Hall: We're definitely looking to defy people's expectations with this game, I know the last one was really well liked but we hope this one takes it over the top.

Lyssa: Over the top is a BIG theme for this game, it doesn't do anything halfway. It's really silly but it's got a great plot too, it reminds me of *Earthworm Jim* but I played that and then I played this and so far I'm liking this a lot better! It's the best 3-D platformer I've played since maybe *Super Mario Dimensions*, it looks and plays way better than the last game and has been my biggest surprise of the show so far. *Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted* is definitely gonna be the game to watch on the Saturn this year!

(...)

\*Alex is hunched over a Game Boy Color.\*

Alex: This is one of the hottest tickets of the show, believe it or not, Pokemon on the Game Boy. I'm here to see what all the hype's about and I gotta say, I've only spent a few minutes with it and it's pretty fun. There's tons of different creatures to catch, I've caught a couple of bugs so far and I'll tell you, it's a pretty tough little game. You've got 15 different attack types to memorize, it's like rock paper scissors on steroids and I think this game is gonna be a big hit.

\*The camera pans out to show the whole Pokemon display with a huge crowd around it.\*

Alex: They've actually had the first episode of the anime on loop. This is a really big thing Nintendo's pushing and I'm sure Santa will be bringing a lot of little Pokemon to the kiddies this year. I'm gonna keep going as long as I can before someone kicks me off this thing, I don't think I'll catch 'em all in the amount of time I've got but even if I had a hundred hours I don't think I would either!

(...)

\*Ted and Alex are now playing *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple of Time*, they're in the first dungeon and Link is climbing up a massive bunch of vines.\*

Alex: Of all the 2-D to 3-D transitions that we've seen so far out of the Ultra Nintendo and the Saturn, I think *Zelda* might be the best one to date. So far, it's utterly perfect.

Ted: Yeah, um, this is a huge dungeon, and Nintendo's telling us there's gonna be four, but...knowing that it's a *Zelda* game, I have a feeling we'll get quite a bit more than four dungeons in this one.

Alex: With time travel playing a big role in the game, I imagine maybe we'll get dungeons in alternate timelines?

\*Link reaches a room where he's got to bounce Deku Scrubs' projectiles back at them. Alex is using the new lock-on system to target individual Scrubs.\*

Alex: The lock-on's just perfect, I can tell the game exactly what I want to hit and boom, I'm hitting it!

Ted: I'm worried it might almost make the game too easy. But, we have already seen a doozy of a puzzle in this dungeon, so maybe the series is going that route? Tougher

puzzles?

Alex: I love puzzles, so I'm fully on board with that. *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple of Time*, we know it's gonna be good. We know it's almost certainly gonna be great. Can it top *Ocarina of Dreams*?

Ted: ...it's my turn. \*snatches the controller away from Alex\*

Alex: Hey, HEY! \*gets into a fight with Ted for the controller that causes Link to die\* I think we've just exposed the game's only flaw...no...two player...mode...! \*still fighting Ted for the controller\*

(...)

\*Gary is wandering through the city in *Shenmue*.\*

Gary: This is *Shenmue*, and this is the power of the Ring on full display. This city is huge, I feel I've explored...barely a tiny part of it and there's still so much to do!

\*Gary goes into a house and talks to an old lady.\*

Gary: I don't think I've ever played a game where talking to an old lady is interesting, but *Shenmue* actually makes it pretty fun to hear what she has to say. She's telling us about these Yakuza who threatened her the previous night and asking us if we'll do something about it. Well...yes, of course we'll do something about those Yakuza! I think I want some of your gum though. Can I ask for gum? ...no, I can't ask for gum. Well, all right then.

\*Gary then has Ryo wander over to a street, where two men are discussing a business deal. He listens in on them, the conversation isn't related to the main plot of the game but it's just something interesting that can be done.\*

Gary: I'm spying on these dudes, they're talking about business stuff. Again, something that would normally be boring, is not boring!

\*Ryo bumps into a tough looking guy, who glares at him. He has the option of challenging the guy to a fight, which Gary of course does, starting a street brawl between the two. Ryo's moves are somewhat slow and he gets pummeled.\*

Gary: And you gotta train in this game, if you don't you'll get your ass kicked, you can't just jump into a fight any time you want, you've gotta pick your battles and again, that adds a real element of growth and progression and realism. I'm really liking *Shenmue*, but you'll definitely need a lot of time to explore this game in full.

(...)

\*Alex is now in front of a display showing off both *Neon Genesis Evangelion* games.\*

Alex: Anime fans, good news, there's a pair of *Neon Genesis Evangelion* games coming to the States this year! First off, this game for the Sega Saturn, it's a bit more of an RPG in feel to it, you can play as Shinji, Rei, and Asuka, at least that's what I'm doing right now, and the EVA battles are in RPG mode, which is quite interesting and pretty fun. And then over here, the Ultra Nintendo *Evangelion* is more of an action title, you zoom around on

your mech, kicking lots of Angel ass.... honestly, I'm not sure yet which one I like best! The Ultra Nintendo one has better graphics, but the Saturn one is an RPG and I'm pretty keen on those, so... if you've got both systems and you REALLY like *Evangelion*, maybe...both? You probably already spend a lot on anime anyway!

(...)

Brittany: Hey again, this time we're here at the Ubisoft booth with Michel Ancel, and we're talking about *The Darkest Night*.

Lyssa: Yeah, if you remember *The Darkest Ritual*, that awesome game about a pair of teen girls who become witches and fight off demons at their school? It's getting a sequel next year!

Michel Ancel: Yes, this game picks up right where the first one left off, with Etienne and Kris in search of a powerful magical artifact that's also being pursued by some very unscrupulous relic hunters.

Brittany: And we can see that they have a new friend, her name's Sephora and she's pretty cool isn't she?

Michel: The mysterious Sephora, yes, she joins Etienne and Kris early on in their quest and is very important in the game, you'll see a lot of her certainly.

Lyssa: I remember in the last game you had Etienne and Kris and then you could choose from between three other characters for your third, is Sephora just your third all the time in this game?

Michel: That's right, it's Etienne, Kris, and Sephora as you hunt down the artifact.

\*The game's graphics are shown, they look very stylish though not as impressive as the graphics in games like *Final Fantasy VII*\*

Michel: The game will feature full voice acting as well, we actually recruited some brand new voice actors for this game, there is a very talented girl whose named is Sara Bareilles, she voices Etienne for us, she was still in high school when she recorded this game, great voice, we asked her to be here with us to promote the game but she is graduating high school this week so she couldn't! \*laughs\*

Brittany: Really authentic to have high school actors playing high school girls, is the actress who played Kris, is she in high school too?

Michel: No, she's in college but she also did an excellent job, we brought on all new talent but the entire cast did a wonderful job and I think everyone did a wonderful job and I can't wait for you all to see the complete game when it's released.

Brittany: One more question, Lyssa and I are both huge fans of Rayman-

Michel: Next year! Next year, I promise we'll have *Rayman 2*, we're working on it!

Lyssa: Don't rush him, Brittany!

Brittany: You're the one who bugged me to ask him!

Lyssa: Shhh, shhh shh shhhh!!

Michel: \*laughs\*

-excerpted from the June 2, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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### **An E3 To Remember**

*Nintendo and Sega were at each other's throats this year, showing off some of the most amazing games we'd ever seen! Front and center at Sega's booth was their new Ring peripheral, and while many Sega fans won't be thrilled about having to buy an extra \$70 peripheral to play some of the year's best Saturn games, they did show off some titles that make the purchase seem very much worth it. We loved their new open world mystery game Shenmue, which seems like the game that finally takes the slumping detective genre to an entirely new level. With hundreds of characters populating a massive city that can be fully explored, Shenmue was the game of the show in the eyes of many, including some of the editors here at EGM. Next to Shenmue, most of the other Ring games looked fairly ho-hum, though the FPS Arbiter of Sin, which is sure to drum up plenty of controversy for its violence and religious themes, did impress, and the platformer Spare Parts was at times brilliant in its postapocalyptic setting. Fighting games were also in full force for Sega, who not only showed off Fighting Vipers 2 and Virtua Fighter 3, but the upcoming arcade brawler Soul Calibur, which looked amazing and left us wondering how the Saturn could possibly pull it off, even with help from their new Ring. We'll find out next year, certainly, and it'll be quite the wait! We also got a look at a pair of Saturn platformers that both looked exciting in their own unique ways. First up was King Crab. While it seemed at first like another run of the mill "mascot platformer", the game has plenty of charm, and the controls might've been the best we've seen on a platformer, with different buttons to use King Crab's claws in various ways. Then there's Z-Stomper, one of the weirdest platformers we've ever played, starring a man with oversized feet who stomps everything in sight, including enemies and terrain. Combine that with a funky musical score from the composer for Toejam and Earl, and you've got what might be one of the Saturn's most interesting platformers to date. While the Saturn's upcoming racing game Hard Charge probably won't be a Gran Turismo-killer, it's got its own charm, featuring speedy supercars racing across some twisty, turny tracks. Turok 2 certainly impressed, especially with its multiplayer mode which we found at times to be even more fun than Goldeneye. And Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted improved on its predecessors by leaps and bounds, presenting a fully 3-D world populated by some truly hilarious characters. Don't sleep on Keen, Sega is positioning the game to be less of a sleeper hit and more of a major holiday seller. We also got another look at Star Wars: Battle of Despayre, which has the potential to be the year's best FPS, and with games like Goldeneye and the upcoming Turok 2 and Arbiter of Sin, that says a hell of a lot.*

*On the Nintendo side, it was games, games, and more games. The two elephants in the room were The Legend Of Zelda: Temple of Time and Metal Gear Solid, and both games were everything we expected them to be and more. Metal Gear Solid was confirmed to be delayed until early next year, but that clears room for Zelda to potentially dominate the holidays, even with games like Tale Lemuria, Killer Instinct Ultra, and Squaresoft's Parasite Eve all coming out around that time. Nintendo had a massive Pokemon display at the show as well, their biggest push for a Game Boy game ever. The long-rumored Game Boy*

successor was a complete no-show, and it seems that such a device is at least a couple years away, which should give Pokemon plenty of time to give the original Game Boy a long and lucrative ride into the sunset. Nintendo was also showing off Diablo and Fallout, both PC ports of popular games that won't be appearing on the Saturn until 1999 (in Diablo's case) and potentially never (in Fallout's). Both ports looked impressive and should carve out a nice niche among a crowded holiday lineup. Nintendo's crowded keynote address had a rather glaring omission: the company's working on a new F-Zero game, but gave very little details on what looks to be a 1999 release. Nintendo had some video footage of a few of the tracks, and some nice detailed pictures of some of the new race vehicles, which looked great on the new Ultra Nintendo. Working Designs was very happy to show off Tale Lemuria to us, but we also saw that they and Game Arts were working on an updated version of the Sega CD RPG Lunar: The Silver Star, which should also see release on the Ultra Nintendo sometime next year. Other RPGs that will appear next year on the Ultra Nintendo: a remade Sailor Moon: Another Story, which never came to America in its original form, and a sequel to the cult RPG hit from 1995, The Darkest Ritual.

Nintendo showed off an overwhelming amount of games at E3, but Saturn showed that they were still very much alive in the fight with their impressive looking Ring. While it didn't wow the crowd in the same way that the Mega Charger did back in 1994, it's clearly allowing Sega to put games on the Saturn that would otherwise have to wait for a successor that could be years away. Only time will tell if Saturn now stands more of a chance against the hottest selling game console in history.

-from Electronic Gaming Monthly's coverage of E3 1998 in the July 1998 issue

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While we didn't get any exact tech specs on the Saturn's new Ring, one thing we can say is that it definitely gives the system a much needed boost, with graphics on many games now at least matching or even exceeding some of the Ultra Nintendo's lesser offerings. Even with the Ring, no Saturn game to date has topped what we saw from The Legend Of Zelda: Temple of Time or Metal Gear Solid, but it's still the most impressive peripheral we've seen since the Super Nintendo CD, even topping the Mega Charger in terms of sheer impact. The best Saturn game at the show from what we could see was the amazing Arbiter of Sin, a brutal FPS that promises to top Doom and Quake for sheer violence and multiplayer thrills. We were also very impressed by the new Commander Keen game, which introduces an awesome character in Princess Lindsay, a damsel who is DEFINITELY not in distress. We saw plenty to love from Nintendo, but in terms of sleeper hits, the Saturn could end up on top if Sega plays all their cards right. We very much like what we saw from them at E3.

On the PC front, Half-Life was shown in a near complete version, and it, along with Arbiter of Sin on the Saturn, was probably our favorite FPS from the entire show. On the real time strategy front, though nothing was quite as good as StarCraft, which launched earlier this year, FASA Software did impress us with Colony Quantum, another sci-fi RTS but with an emphasis on territorial expansion, combining elements of the Civilization series with elements of previous RTS games and even throwing in a few connections to the classic series MechWarrior for good measure. Probably the most impressive PC game we saw was Baldur's Gate, developed by BioWare. While comparisons to last year's hit game The Witcher are inevitable, Baldur's Gate appears to be much deeper in terms of character enhancement, with much more depending on the choices the player makes during the game. We'll be keeping a close eye on the game as it nears completion, and it could join Parasite Eve and Tale Lemuria as a heavy contender for RPG of the Year.

-from a May 30, 1998 article on Gamespot.com

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*E3 returned to Atlanta, Georgia for the convention that took place between May 28-30, 1998.*

*It was easily the biggest show to date, and the game companies pulled out all the stops. We're not just talking about the amazing lineup of games featured at the show, but the entertainment as well. Bands such as Savage Garden were performing at Nintendo's booth, while Sega had a performance from no less than the legendary band Queen (without the late Freddie Mercury, of course) who performed their song "Princes Of The Universe" before Tom Kalinske's keynote address.*

*Sega started things off by showing off their new Ring peripheral, a sort of Mega Charger for the Sega Saturn. Though the Ring was very impressive, elevating the Saturn's graphics significantly and allowing it to play arcade-perfect ports of Virtua Fighter 3 and Time Crisis II, many of the gathered critics weren't as impressed as they were back in 1994 when the Mega Charger was released. Why? Back when the Mega Charger was released, it was an inexpensive alternative to Nintendo's still quite expensive Super Nintendo CD, which hadn't yet established itself as the standard package for Super Nintendo owners. Compared with the SNES-CD's \$150 price tag, the Mega Charger at \$50 looked quite attractive. But now, the idea of buying a peripheral just to be less inferior to what the Ultra Nintendo could do right out of the box was a bit less impressive. Still, Sega's lineup of Ring games, which included Spare Parts, Arbiter of Sin, and of course, the brilliant Shenmue, did impress, and showed that the company was still game to compete with the Ultra Nintendo. And of course, Tom Kalinske did an excellent job of selling the whole kit and kaboodle, complete with a teaser for Sonic the Hedgehog 5 at the end to bring the crowd to its feet. Sega seemed to have been given new life after E3 1998, and they would need it, considering what Nintendo pulled out.*

*In a year when Nintendo could do no wrong, they went and did everything right. Zelda. Metal Gear Solid. Killer Instinct. Ballistic Limit. Tale Lemuria. Parasite Eve. Game after game after game. Some, like Zelda, Metal Gear, and Killer Instinct 2, the gaming press had known about for ages and were just salivating for more information. But others, like Dog Dash 3 and F-Zero: Ultracharged (which wasn't even ANNOUNCED in Nintendo's keynote address!) were complete surprises and brought loud cheers from the rabid crowd. And all of that on top of Nintendo's enormous Pokemon blitz. The company was on top and they absolutely knew it, and the crowd ate it up. "Sega is dead", was commonly murmured among the gathered press, though of course Sega was very much alive and kicking. Nintendo even quietly showed off a couple games for the venerated Super Nintendo CD, which by then was on its last legs: Kartia: Word of Fate and Sphere Soldier were the two most notable that were shown, but others, such as Brigandine, also impressed.*

*We even got some interesting handheld news. Not from Nintendo, who refused to say anything about their rumored collaboration with Sony on a potential Game Boy successor, but from SNK of all things, showing off the Neo Geo Pocket, complete with a portable version of Samurai Shodown. It was nothing compared to the original arcade version but certainly looked more visually impressive than anything on the Game Boy. Most of us were skeptical of the Neo Geo Pocket's future prospects, but it was nice to see something different on that front for a change.*

*Even to this day, 1998 remains one of the greatest years in the history of the industry, when some of the greatest games ever made were released on home consoles and on the PC. Even all the way back then, at E3 1998, we knew it would be an amazing year. Those three days left us with shaking hands and sore trigger fingers, itching for more. Though Atlanta was still a mess of an E3 location, ask many gaming journalists today what their favorite E3 was, and they'll say 1998, for several dozen reasons.*

-excerpted from IGN's E3 1998 article (based on this real-life article on IGN.com about OTL's E3 1998: [http://www.ign.com/wikis/e3/E3\\_1998](http://www.ign.com/wikis/e3/E3_1998) )

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Before I begin my retrospective on *Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted*, I would like to preface with my story of how I became an aficionado for the Sega Saturn. My parents gave me a Sega Genesis with Mega Charger for Christmas 1994 and as with many other people of that generation, when I came to them to ask for a Saturn the following Christmas, they flat out refused. They bought me a "Sega machine" the previous year, shouldn't I have appreciated the one I had? Despite my incessant pleas, they were steadfast in their decision. However, we did eventually come to a compromise. If I managed to earn to half the money needed for a Saturn, they would provide the other half. So I spent the first six months shoveling neighbors' walks, moving lawns, and other sorts of odd jobs scraping the money I wanted to buy a Saturn and a couple games. Imagine the pride I felt when I finally bought one in summer of 1996 and *Sonic the Hedgehog 4* as well as *The Universe is Toast* later that year. While the Ultra Nintendo was definitely a superior system in a sense with a strong library, the Sega Saturn represented more than to me. It stood for accomplishment and that I could achieve anything when I set my mind to a specific goal.

As such, the Ultra Nintendo launch did not affect me that much, even when my classmates kept insisting that Sega was essentially "dead." One of my friends managed to buy one (or rather, his parents because he was autistic and did not like going out) managed to buy one at launch and he invited me over to his house on the following weekend where we played *Super Mario Dimensions*, *Ultra Mario Kart*, and *Castlevania*. Don't get me, I like the games but they lacked the "spark" I felt that Sonic and Sega's stable of characters had. Personally, playing *Super Mario Dimensions* left me hungering more for another *Commander Keen* game than anything else.

Shortly after Tom Hall and John Romero completed *The Universe is Toast*, Romero parted ways with Hall and Ion Storm to id Software to work on *Daikatana* and other games for the Ultra Nintendo. Encouraged with the modest success of *UiT*, Hall set out to make the first true 3D platformer of the series. It is worth noting that despite similar gameplay mechanics; *Super Mario Dimensions* had no direct influence on *Mars' Most Wanted*.

"We pretty much had a working alpha build of the engine around this time last year. So no, we didn't set out to rip off Mario." Hall told *Electronic Gaming Monthly* in an interview when asked about *Super Mario Dimensions* for 1998's E3 issue, "Though I admit that I spent a day waiting in line for an Ultra Nintendo and workplace productivity suffered afterwards (laughs). Tom [Kalinske] told me that the Saturn needed an answer to *Super Mario Dimensions* and the next Sonic game was a ways off. I didn't want to disappoint after the faith he showed in us with *The Universe is Toast*."

And so Sega released *Commander Keen: Episode 10 – Mars' Most Wanted* in autumn 1998. While ostensibly a 3D platformer, the game still maintained the "run and gun" and stealth elements of its predecessor but expanded on it immensely. *Keen 10* had more weapons, more playable characters, and even more animated cutscenes. In terms of weaponry Keen had the following in his arsenal:

- **Neural Stunner** – Keen and crew's standard side arm. It immobilizes small to medium sized enemies, but completely ineffective on larger enemies and robots.
- **Staple Gun** – Keen modified his father's staple gun into a rapid-fire weapon that sacrifices power for furious speed.
- **Glue Cannon** – Essentially equivalent to a shotgun with a very slow rate of fire that traps any non-boss in sticky goop.
- **Lightning Pistol** – This is essentially a version of the Neural Stunner that works on robotic enemies, though it electrocutes organic enemies in *Looney Tunes* fashion. You can also use it to turn on certain machinery
- **Super Incinerator 5000** – Keen also modified his own Power Drencher water gun into a flamethrower. It has limited range but is horribly powerful and can burn certain plants.
- **Bottle Rocket Launcher** – As it says on the tin. Launches explosive soda bottles that clear large areas and probably the hardest to find ammo for.
- **Poultry Buster** – This weapon is only available in Lunar Meadows and the game's multi-player mode. It's a cannon that fires chickens at enemies. In a nod to the Legend of Zelda, even the chicken impacts the target; an entire flock of them descends upon said target and attacks with complete impunity.
- **Tractor Beam** – This rare-but-extremely fun weapon picks up any object (including enemies) and uses them as ammunition. In the absence of useable ammo, it will pluck a meteor from the sky. Keen and company can also use it as a grappling hook in certain situations.

In addition to the new weapons, *Mars' Most Wanted* also included new characters to play as. Returning from *Secret of the Oracle* are Princess Lindsay and the cowardly, but lovable Page as well as Eddie the Yeti from *Into the Inferno*. Each character plays different; Keen being the jack-of-all trades in terms of jumping, speed, and strength. Princess Lindsay's jumps are much more floaty, but that and her ability to hover make precision jumps easier, but she takes more recoil when hit. Eddie has the worst jumping ability and cannot use weapons in one-player, but he is immensely strong and can throw objects (including enemies!) as well as stomp the ground and perform body slams. The Page—oh, the Page. The Page, unlike the others, can take unlimited hits and has unlimited ammo as well but the caveat is that not only does the game throw more enemies at you—it outright mocks you whenever you play as him, refuses to save your progress, and closes off the secret areas with a sign reading "No Pages Allowed." Also of note is a new "auto-target" system that allows players to lock-on to targets by pressing the L shoulder button. Granted, the Page is so horrible at aiming, this feature will not work for him. Poor guy is the universe's chew toy here.

As for the story and levels, the game begins during middle of his science class (with Ben Stein making a voice cameo as Mr. Boreski) when Billy Blaze receives a transmission from the Martian Regent demanding that he meet him outside. Upon excusing himself to go to the bathroom, Billy must navigate the halls of his school and avoid hall monitors and crazed janitors to make it outside. Not bad for an introductory level with introduces the player to both the run-and-gun and stealth elements. The level even presents us with something of

an optional mini-boss in the librarian, Ms. Shuster, tries to throw the book at you (literally!) for making noise.

Once Billy successfully escapes from the school, he meets with the Regent who then has him arrested on charges of heresy and theft. Apparently, Commander Keen stole the planet's five sacred treasures and hidden them. Despite Billy's protests, the Regent and his armed escort takes Billy to Mars for his (show) trial and execution. Princess Lindsay, having received word of Keen's plight and believes his innocence, attempts to secure his release through diplomacy. However, the Regent refuses to budge so, she decides to break Keen out herself in the second level.

Hall admitted that the Princess' jailbreak scene was a deliberate inversion of the "hero saves princess" trope. I recall watching an episode of *GameTV* where Brittany suggested they retire Dr. Robotnik because, and I quote, "He's the same guy, he's got the same plan every game." In the wake of the *Super Mario Dimensions*, I often asked the same of Bowser because with only a few exceptions, it was Bowser with the same plan over and over with kidnapping Peach. When the Page begs Princess not to go rescue Keen she remarks of how "tedious" the "hero saves princess from villain" cliché is and now it's her turn.

Once Princess Lindsay saves an indignant Keen from the Regent's Castle, the game let you choose from five "worlds" to retrieve the Sacred Treasures (really children's toys from Earth.) Each world has three levels plus a boss battle. Once the player completes these levels, they return to Mars for another two levels plus boss bring the level count up to twenty-three so far. They are as follows:

- **Lunar Meadows** – Earth Moon's is apparently the world's largest dairy-producing planetoid in the galaxy for some reason. Keen and crew must don their space suits and fight their way through alien farmers wield pitchforks, kung-fu cows, and kamikaze chickens to the main dairy. The boss of this world is a giant combine reminiscent of the mangling machine from *Keen Must Die*.
- **Venusian Jungle** – Apparently Venus is actually a jungle world filled with saber-toothed cats, rampaging mammoths, and overly affectionate amazons clad in leopard-skins who can crush you to death with their hugs. The boss of this world is Gurtha (voiced by Brad Garrett), their Queen who chases you through the jungle where you must lead her into hazards. Interestingly, she and Eddie hook up in the end credits.
- **Uranian Sewers** – Looks like Keen and crew are going to sewers of Uranus where there are alligators, turtles, and mutant Dopefish in addition to easily ignited methane. It's a bit of a labyrinth, which can lead you in circles if you're not careful. The bosses of this level are the Mediocre Gio Cousins™, two morbidly obese electricians envious of their plumber "rivals." Their main method of attack is body slam you and "release" methane on impact. The Super Incinerator 5000 comes in handy for this fight.
- **Io's Inferno** – This level takes you to the Jupiter's volcanic satellite and a parody of Dante's Inferno. Many of the enemies here are cartoon personifications of the seven deadly sins and even a few historical figures like Brutus, Napoleon, and "Mr. Hiller" show up in this galactic pit of torment. The boss of this level is Mr. Satin (voiced by none other than Leonard Nimoy), who refuses to let you leave the moon without besting him in a rhythm-based contest. However, you will need to play dirty get through this one.
- **North of Pluto** – Now we journey to the (dwarf) planet known Pluto where the inhabitants speak in heavy Minnesotan or Canadian accents. Since the hockey

playoffs are on, most of the population has turned into bloodthirsty rioters and even the once-placid wildlife (again, based on animals associated with Canada) is trying to kill you. Just beware of the boss, Goon Wanyesky, who was a mean slap shot he will use on you, as the puck.

Once you complete these five levels and collect the five sacred treasures, Keen and his crew head back to Mars to face the Regent and his army. The levels here are three-dimensional recreations of a select few from the first Keen game, *Marooned on Mars*. Once you storm the castle, the Regent attacks you in a giant mech for a multi-part boss battle where you must destroy the legs, then the torso, and finally the head. When the dust clears, the reveals that Commander Keen did steal the sacred treasures, just not this universe's Keen. His counterpart from the "Nega-Verse" Captain Chaos arrived in this universe when McMire's Universal Toaster Cannon self-destructed. He then sent Keen and his friends on this solar goose chase to gather information on his "Posi-Verse" self, and now has all he needs to invade this universe. The main game ends with a climatic dogfight between Keen's Bacon-With-Beans Megarocket and Chaos' Beans-N-Pork Ultrarocket ripped straight out of *Star Fox 2*. While the game "ends" with Chaos retreating to the Nega-Verse, the game still has its secrets.

Throughout the game Keen and friends can find sixty mysterious "relics" scattered across the six worlds. Once the player collects all the sixty, three new portals open inside the solar system, which Keen leaves to investigate. These portals take you to three new worlds from previous Sega games.

- **Miracle World** – Keen visits the world of former Sega mascot, Alex Kidd. Most of the levels take their inspiration from *Alex Kidd in Miracle World* for the Master System. Possibly the most humorous moment comes when Keen confronts Janken's henchmen at the end of each level. Like Indiana Jones and the Swordsman in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, he simply shoots them (Much to Alex Kidd's shock.)
- **Planet Shinobi** – Keen teams up with Joe Musashi to save his bride from Zeed in an alternate take on 1989's *Revenge of Shinobi*. Each of the three levels contains a boss from the game, including "Spider-Man" (with Marvel's approval.)
- **The City** – Again, Keen teams up with Axel, Blaze, and Adam from *Streets of Rage* to clean of the streets and rid the City of Mr. X's influence.

As with the previous six worlds, these worlds also contain an additional twelve relics. These relics require some keen vision and precision platforming skills that leave no room for error and are hands down the hardest to obtain in the game. However, when you do obtain them that open up the final secret level of the game.

- **Sonic's World** – Keen visits a faithful recreation of the Green hill Zone from the original *Sonic the Hedgehog*. Jaleel White and Jim Cummings reprise the roles as Keen teams up with Sonic to keep Robotnik from using the power of the portal. The game provides you with a Tractor Beam weapon where Keen uses Sonic (in this spin form) as a weapon against Robotnik's "Wrecking Ball" boss from the original game.

Once the player completes Sonic's world, they unlock the true ending of the game where Keen discovers that the very fabric of the universe is unraveling. Every single parallel

universe is beginning to collapse on each other, opening more and more of these "Genesis Portals." However, he then realizes that he accidentally cut class and rushes back Earth. He returns home where his anger parents ground him for a week, which means he's "stuck" on Earth for the time being. Meanwhile, Captain Chaos plots to take advantage of the collapse.

These secret worlds made the game quite rewarding and drew Keen (and Ion Storm itself) closer to Sega. Some wondered why they chose to showcase levels from dormant franchises rather than active ones like *Virtua Fighter* or *Panzer Dragoon*. Tom Hall explained that it was Tom Kalinske's idea to see if their appearance would stoke new interest in *Alex Kidd*, *Shinobi*, and *Streets of Rage*. As for Sonic, Sega and Ion Storm included him to build hype. The demo video for *Mars' Most Wanted* at 1998's E3 included a five-second clip of Keen and Sonic posing together, which created tremendous buzz for the title. Rumors of how to access Sonic swirled on the Internet in the weeks after the game released. None of them were true though, and most of us had to slog through the grueling challenge to access the level.

So did it work? In simple terms: yes. *Mars Most Wanted* was one of the Saturn's most successful titles that year and far outsold *The Universe is Toast*. It did not win any game of the year awards, but it scored highly across the board and critics lauded the variety of game play and humor. The game was its less punishing difficulty. Yes, the game still had one-hit kills, but the AA Batteries (essentially what coins are to Mario and rings are to Sonic) scattered across the levels award you with "force fields" with every fifty you collect. Since batteries were plentiful, it made the game less frustrating for newcomers. Also, unlike coins and rings, the batteries within the game also functioned as currency to buy weapons and ammo at the weapons asteroid. Very useful since death meant losing your weapons, all you needed was to farm batteries to regain them.

Though it was not a selling feature of the game, the multiplayer was actually pretty good as well. Unlike *Goldeneye*, it was completely a third-person perspective with six arenas to choose from (seven after you unlock and complete Sonic's World.) However, you had a choice of twenty characters to play as, including Mr. Hiller, the game's thinly veiled Hitler parody. After particularly intense *Goldeneye* sessions, my friends and I would hook up the Saturn and play a game of "Get Hitler" where one player would choose Mr. Hiller and the others would work together to hunt him down and open fire on him (Mr. Hiller cannot return fire as per the rules.) As much as I would like to take credit for creating the game, I must give the credit to the hosts of *GameTV* for it and the horrible German accents. Sadly, because of Mr. Hiller, Germany banned *Mars' Most Wanted* until Sega released a truncated European version of the game six months later.

As for any other thoughts on the game, I will leave you with the words of Tom Hall, reflecting on the game's release ten years later in 2008.

*"Was Mars' Most Wanted a Mario-killer? No it wasn't, but it wasn't supposed to be. I set out to make the best Commander Keen game I could and I personally believed that Sega was the best platform to do it. I love playing Ultra Nintendo games. L-O-V-E them. However, I set out to make as subversive a game as possible and the Nintendo/Sony juggernaut was, quite frankly, the establishment and I don't believe the humor could have worked if we made it for the Ultra Nintendo. Sega was clearly the underdog and we were poking the ribs of the giant. What I think surprised critics and the audience the most was how much we jammed into the game. Hell, it was a bear jamming it into one CD, but we did it.*

*"Looking back on it now, Mars' Most Wanted was a hodge podge of several games held*

*together with duct tape. Maybe that fit in with the feel of what Commander Keen was supposed to be: an eight-year-old boy genius who built a spaceship out of household gadgets and has adventures across the galaxy. It's unfair to compare it to Super Mario Dimensions and vice versa. Both games were their own thing and Commander Keen was something neither Nintendo nor Sony could replicate."*

*-from the blog "The Musing Platypus" by B. Ronning, March 14, 2013*

**OOC:** Here is the voice cast list for *Mars' Most Wanted*.

Kath Soucie as Commander Keen/Captain Chaos  
Cree Summer as Princess Lindsay  
Rob Paulsen as The Page/Goon Wanyesky/"Mr. Hiller"  
Frank Welker as Eddie the Yeti/Arthur Blaze  
Ben Stein as Mr. Boreski  
Tress MacNeille as Ms. Shuster/Susan Blaze  
Maurice LaMarche as The Regent/Gio Giovanni  
Brad Garret as Grunda  
Jess Harnell as Brutus/Lorenzo Giovanni/Mr. X  
Leonard Nimoy as Mr. Satin  
Tara Strong as Alex Kidd  
Daniel Dae Kim as Joe Mushashi  
Christopher Daniel Barnes as Axel  
Jennifer Hale as Blaze  
Dorian Harewood as Adam  
Jaleel White as Sonic the Hedgehog  
Jim Cummings as Dr. "Ivo" Robotnik

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*"The Dreamers is like nothing we've ever made before, and we learned so much about making games in the process. It's definitely changed our approach to what we're going to be doing going forward."*

*-Rare's Tim Stamper, in a June 1998 interview with Nintendo Power*

*"The conversation on video game violence has changed since the days of Doom and Mortal Kombat. This month's release of Quake has barely made a blip on the mainstream radar, though controversy is already swirling around the upcoming Arbiter of Sin."*

*-from an article posted on Gamespot.com, June 14, 1998*

*"With Quake, you had the first major third party non-sports title to be released on both consoles at once. And the Saturn version, despite being technically inferior, sold better. So there were things that Sega was doing right even if the Ultra was outselling the Saturn by a ton in 1998."*

*-Tom Kalinske, in a 2002 interview with Sega Retro*

*"My sister...she's still alive and this proves it! Madera, thank you....without you I wouldn't have found this."*

-Edison, *The Dreamers*

"So you've won and now you get to choose your prize. Your sister or this pirate girl with pretty eyes! You can only pick one, that's the truth, the one left behind, I get their youth! Ahahahahaha!"

-Gruntilda, *The Dreamers*

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## **The Dreamers- The Basics**

*The Dreamers* is TTL's version of Rareware's vaporware game *Project Dream*, mixed with elements from OTL's *Banjo-Kazooie*. The game can be described as "OTL Banjo-Kazooie heavily impacted by the success of *Tales of The Seven Seas*". In that sense, the success of *Tales Of The Seven Seas*, along with the increased technical capabilities of TTL's Ultra Nintendo, led to the game being much closer to *Project Dream* than it ever was in reality. The game's production values are exceptionally high, the graphics are noticeably better than *Super Mario Dimensions* and *Goldeneye 007*, and at the time of its release is considered the best looking console game ever made. The music, composed by David Wise and Grant Kirkhope, is a mix of whimsical themes and epic instrumentals, and is considered one of the best soundtracks ever featured in an action game. The game features full voice acting in gameplay and in cutscenes, and though the cast is largely comprised of mostly British unknowns (of the cast, only Parminder Nagra, who plays the voice of Madera, goes on to do anything else major later on), the voice acting is also highly praised. The game is focused less on collection and more on action and combat and exploration, with larger, more open worlds and a more open mission structure. You still have to collect items like puzzle pieces to advance in the game, but instead of collecting a bunch of them over the course of the entire game, you collect a few at a time to advance from mission to mission. The combat system is much more complex than OTL's *Banjo-Kazooie*, and is in fact closer to OTL's *Kingdom Hearts* (though with much less RPG elements and without a lock-on system). Essentially, the main character of the game, Edison, travels primarily with two other characters: his friend, a girl named Madera, and then another character, an animal companion. While Edison and Madera fight conventionally with swords and other weapons, the animal companions have different fighting styles depending on who you choose. Tiptop the turtle is more defensive, Banjo and Kazooie fight with a more melee style, Dinger the dog is a quick attacker, Pipsy casts shields and heals, etc. Also, each of the game's eight animal companions has a special ability that can help you advance in the world, some can smash barricades, some can unlock doors, some can steal items, etc. Madera can imprint three of these abilities at once, and your animal friend has one more, leaving you at any time with half of the various abilities. You'll need to find a special hub to switch Madera's abilities or to switch your animal buddy, but these hubs are frequent and numerous and you're never stuck at a puzzle without being able to switch to another buddy. Also, in most areas, you'll only need four or less abilities at once, so you can imprint the ones you need on Madera without needing to switch back and forth at all. In combat, you can fight with normal sword slashes, melee attacks, or with specials. These specials are learned as you progress through the game, similarly to the abilities in OTL's *Banjo-Kazooie*, and can be activated with different button presses. You have a "special" meter that can be replenished with items (or it replenishes slowly on its own), so you can't use specials all the time in battle. You can usually switch back and forth between controlling Edison and Madera. Your human companion and animal friend each have their own life bars, but when one or both are knocked out, you can continue journeying alone. They'll eventually revive and heal on their own, or you can find an item to revive them more quickly. However, if the human

character you're controlling is knocked out in battle, you lose a life and have to restart from the last checkpoint.

The plot of the game begins three years before, with a teenage boy named Edison and his little sister Ella on an island with their parents. They were shipwrecked there, and the waters surrounding the island are too stormy to try and venture back out to sea, so the family has lived like the Swiss Family Robinson, trying to make the best of things on their new island home. However, another horrible storm comes, and the two parents are killed and their island home is shredded. Edison tries to take care of Ella as best he can, but then another storm comes and very nearly kills the two of them. Edison realizes that if he doesn't get himself and his sister off the island, they'll both be killed by the relentless storms. Edison builds a raft to sail himself and his sister to safety, but sure enough, another storm hits the raft and nearly sinks it. Edison washes up on shore, while Ella goes missing and is presumed dead. Edison is found by some anthropomorphic animals, including Banjo, Kazooie, Tiptop, Bumper, Dinger, Pipsy, and three others, and they nurse Edison back to health and show him their village full of animals who live peacefully there. That is where the game begins.

*The Dreamers* is divided into eight gameplay chapters, not necessarily by the region of the world. There's a ninth, epilogue chapter, after the first eight are completed and certain conditions are met. Once you've completed a chapter, you can easily revisit prior areas to get collectibles you missed and to replay missions.

#### *Chapter One: Protecting The Village*

Edison learns how to survive and makes new friends in the village of animals who help him after he washes up on shore. He is determined to find Ella, who he refuses to believe is dead, but must first help his new friends free themselves from the tyrannical reign of the pirate Captain Blackeye.

#### *Chapter Two: The High Seas*

After defeating Blackeye, Edison takes his ship and tries to find Ella, but is captured by the adventurous girl Madera, who thinks that Edison is a pirate himself. To prove his worth, Edison must help Madera with her own mission on a series of islands she calls home.

#### *Chapter Three: Forest Of Fear*

Edison reunites with his animal friends as he and Madera go ashore. This is when they encounter the evil witch Gruntilda and must escape from her forest if they wish to continue their adventure.

#### *Chapter Four: All Hail The King*

Edison and Madera come across a kingdom ruled by a seemingly benevolent king. But all is not as it seems as they go on a series of missions in this strange and confusing place.

#### *Chapter Five: Ella Is Alive?*

After liberating the kingdom from danger, Edison is given a clue as to where his long-lost sister Ella may be. But Gruntilda is always one step behind, and Edison, Madera, and their friends will need to use everything they've learned to find Ella and save her!

### *Chapter Six: Respite*

After the events of chapter five, Edison and Ella are reunited and they emerge through a mysterious portal into a place that resembles early 20th century London. They are adopted by a wonderful family and their adventure seems to be over, but strange occurrences are happening, and when Madera arrives to tell Edison that her world is still in trouble, the boy must choose between staying in his dream life with his new family or returning to save Madera and his friends once and for all.

### *Chapter Seven: The Meaning Of A Hero*

Ella is kidnapped by Gruntilda, but tension arises between Edison and Madera. Edison blames Madera for Ella being taken, and Madera thinks Edison is a coward. After a series of harrowing missions, the two draw closer than ever, and on a starry night, the two realize their feelings and kiss under a beautiful moon. Not long after that, Gruntilda strikes and the two face off against her most deadly beast yet. After the fight, Gruntilda kidnaps Madera, and Edison and his animal friends must make the journey to Gruntilda's castle to settle the score once and for all.

### *Chapter Eight: Gruntilda's Castle*

The last few missions involve getting into Gruntilda's Castle, you'll have eight missions in all, each involving one of the eight animal friends from the game. The final mission is a board game (like in Grunty's Furnace Fun in OTL *Banjo-Kazooie*) where Edison must use his knowledge of everything he's previously done in order to win the "prize" at the end: Ella and Madera. But to his dismay, Edison realizes that he must choose between the two of them. He agonizes over the choice, but he and Madera both agree that Edison must choose to save Ella. Gruntilda takes Madera's youth and becomes a beautiful and powerful sorceress, leaving Madera as a shriveled up old maid. But now that Gruntilda has her beauty back, she no longer has any desire to cause any more trouble to anyone else (for the moment, at least), and she leaves. Edison realizes that while he wasn't able to save Madera, he was able to help Banjo and the people of the world, and he goes back to his new home and new family with Ella, his adventure over.

...or is it?

If you've completed a suitable amount of the game's optional missions (about 85% of them, not QUITE the level of completion to complete *Banjo-Kazooie* for real IOTL, but still quite a bit of the game), the real final mission opens up...

### *Chapter Nine: The Gift Of A Friend*

Edison is at peace in his new life. He's going to school, he has new loving parents, and his sister Ella is safe and happy. But Madera's fate and the fact that Gruntilda "won" still gnaw at him, and Ella can see it. She convinces Edison to return to the other world to get Madera's youth back and defeat Gruntilda. You must go back through all of the regions and open up secret areas with Ella's help (IOTL in *Banjo-Kazooie*, there were certain things, like a hidden key, that could only be accessed by linking the game with the sequel, *Banjo-Tooie*. Here, in each chapter, there are hidden things like that, eight in all, that you need Ella as your companion to open up.) to collect special items. Take these eight special items to Gruntilda's Castle and a secret warp will be opened up to Gruntilda's Summer Villa, the true

final level of the game. There, on the rooftop, Edison, Madera, Ella, and Edison's animal friends will confront Gruntilda, who is preparing to once again conquer the world, now with her power and beauty. In the first stage of the fight, you'll need to sap Gruntilda's youth a little bit at a time. Hit her six times and Madera will be fully restored, while Gruntilda is once again reverted to an ugly witch. In this second stage of the fight, which is tougher than the first, Gruntilda turns all her power and fury against you. Edison, Madera, Ella, and all the animal friends will each be involved in this final clash. Once Gruntilda is defeated, she is blown off the roof of the villa and into her moat, full of acid and sharks. Now that peace is truly restored, Edison gets a big kiss from Madera, and promises to visit her often as he and Ella finally return to their new, peaceful life once and for all.

## **June 15, 1998**

*The Dreamers* is released for the Ultra Nintendo in North America, with a Japanese and PAL release later in the month. The game is extremely well reviewed, and in time comes to be considered a sort of "bridge" between *Super Mario Dimensions* and *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time*. Sales are extremely good, though still a bit of a disappointment for Nintendo and Rare, who expected the game to be as big of a smash hit as *Goldeneye 007*. Indeed, the game isn't even the fastest selling game of the month (in first-week sales, the Sega Saturn version of *Quake* outsells *The Dreamers* by a few thousand copies). Later on, *Aeroboy* and *Grant Hill's Ultimate Basketball* would disappoint in sales as well, making what was supposed to be a huge month for the Ultra Nintendo turn out to be somewhat lacking in luster. Make no mistake, however, *The Dreamers* still goes on to be one of the Ultra Nintendo's best selling games, and as of 2015 is still mentioned fairly frequently on top-100 all-time lists.

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## **FIFA World Cup 98**

Dan: 6.0

Shawn: 5.0

Crispin: 6.5

Sushi-X: 6.5 (quote: "A decent enough soccer game for what is probably the last World Cup title on the last generation.")

## **Lucky Luke**

Dan: 5.0

Shawn: 5.0 (quote: "A decent Western platformer but there are better games out there.")

Crispin: 6.0

Sushi-X: 4.0

## **Flame Squad 2**

Dan: 8.5

Shawn: 9.0 (quote: "A really fun game with some great weapons and excellent graphics.")

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

-reviews for June 1998's SNES-CD games in the July and August 1998 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

### **Fighter Maker**

Dan: 7.5 (quote: "A lot of nice tools in this game but you can't really make something as good as Tekken or Street Fighter.")

Shawn: 6.5

Crispin: 7.5

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Grant Hill's Ultimate Basketball**

Dan: 8.0

Shawn: 8.0

Crispin: 9.0 (quote: "An outstanding basketball sim with great graphics and plenty of options.")

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **The Dreamers**

Dan: 10 (quote: "Rare's done it again with this excellent, sprawling adventure.")

Shawn: 9.0

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Quake**

Dan: 8.5

Shawn: 8.5 (quote: "The Ultra Nintendo really shows its muscle with the best version of Quake yet.")

Crispin: 8.5

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Race'n'Chase**

Dan: 7.0 (quote: "This open world game gets a decent graphical bump on the Ultra but it's still fairly primitive.")

Shawn: 2.5

Crispin: 4.5

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Ultra FIFA Soccer**

Dan: 9.5 (quote: "An outstanding soccer sim with tons of teams and a great World Cup mode.")

Shawn: 9.0

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Fatal Strike: Golden Fist**

Dan: 7.5

Shawn: 8.0 (quote: "A really fun brawler, though it does at times get repetitive.")

Crispin: 7.5  
Sushi-X: 8.0

### **DynaMomo!**

Dan: 6.0  
Shawn: 7.0  
Crispin: 3.0 (quote: "One of the weirdest games you'll ever play, and most people won't like it.")  
Sushi-X: 3.0

### **Breaker Ride**

Dan: 7.0  
Shawn: 8.5 (quote: "It's not as polished as Wave Race, but it does feature some outstanding racing action.")  
Crispin: 6.0  
Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Aeroboy**

Dan: 7.0  
Shawn: 7.5  
Crispin: 7.0 (quote: "Balloon Fight by way of Defender, the graphics are really nice but the levels could be a bit longer.")  
Sushi-X: 7.5

-reviews for June 1998's Ultra Nintendo games in the July and August 1998 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

-

It took two years, but the console ports of *Quake* were finally released in 1998, to much fanfare and celebration. June 22, 1998 saw the simultaneous releases of *Quake* on the Ultra Nintendo and the Sega Saturn, and both games flew off the shelves. However, rather than the revolution in console FPSes that many expected upon the ports' release, *Quake's* console versions produced only a minor rumble, with big sales but not the huge sales that the SNES-CD version of *Doom* saw when it was released in 1995. Was there anything wrong with the ports themselves? Let's break them down.

The Ultra Nintendo certainly had the best port of *Quake*, with all the levels from the original game, graphics that arguably surpassed the original PC version, and even the option for dual stick controls (though this wasn't implemented as well as it would be in Ultra FPSes down the road). It also featured a fun four-player multiplayer mode and the addition of five bonus levels for the single player campaign. Meanwhile, the Sega Saturn version, while slightly graphically downgraded from the original (unless you used the Ring, which brought it up to PC accurate level...though if you bought *Quake* on release you'd have to wait four months for that), still featured all the original levels, multiplayer mode, AND the option for online play. Both games sold well upon release. In fact, the Saturn version of the game sold nearly twice as much as the Ultra Nintendo version despite being graphically inferior! So why was *Quake* on consoles merely a big hit and not a huge one?

The answer? More competition. When *Doom* came out on the SNES-CD, it was pretty much the only game in town, as in it was pretty much the only good console FPS at the time. *Wolfenstein 3D* for the SNES-CD was all right, but it was *Doom* that was the major hit on consoles, just as it was on the PC. When *Quake* hit the scene in 1998, it didn't look all that impressive next to *Goldeneye 007* on the Ultra Nintendo, or *Turok* on the Saturn. And with *Turok II* and *Arbiter of Sin* coming out later that year on Sega's machine, *Quake* looked even LESS impressive (and sales fell off rapidly once those two games approached release).

But even though the *Quake* ports didn't produce a magnitude-8 sales earthquake, id still did excellent work on them. The Ultra Nintendo port maintains a 85.17% rating at GameRankings, while the Saturn port sits currently at 78.90%. Both ports were fine games, but FPSes had firmly established their own identity on consoles, and the once groundbreaking *Quake* was nothing new.

-excerpted from an article on Gamesovermatter.com, January 22, 2014

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*Take to the skies and defend the townsfolk in this brand new high-flying adventure from Nintendo!*

-the intro to the article on *Aeroboy* which appeared in the June 1998 issue of *Nintendo Power*

Graphics: Whether you're high above the clouds or flying low over villages, *Aeroboy* features a beautiful and detailed landscape full of wonderful sights.

Play Control: This game features some of the best flying controls on the Ultra Nintendo.

Weapons are easy to target and aim, so even in the more difficult challenges, you're rarely frustrated if you miss out on saving a villager. Activating your shield is just a matter of holding one of your Z-Triggers and it can be turned off and on on the fly.

Game Design: Levels can be a bit repetitive later on, but for the most part the game is quite intuitive and features a nice variety of level designs. Gameplay can somewhat be compared to *Super Squadron X*, though you're in the air instead of in a tank, flying around, saving people, and battling enemies.

Satisfaction: Like we said, the game can be a bit on the repetitive side and is also rather short, but it's really fun to beat your best times and high scores.

Sound: There are a variety of fun musical tracks in the game, lots of whimsical sound effects, and the villagers' voices sound good even if they don't have much to say.

Comments: Paul- A really good modern update on *Balloon Fight*. Kelly- Super fun, super cute, *Aeroboy* is a winner.

Overall Rating: 8.3/10

-*Nintendo Power's* review of *Aeroboy*, from the June 1998 issue

-

*Granstream* can be considered a spiritual continuation of the series that began with *SoulBlazer* all the way back on the Super Nintendo, but Quintet has taken the series in new directions, some promising, others troublesome. The game is the first by Quintet that's fully in 3D, with dungeons featuring fully polygonal graphics. The game looks gorgeous on the Saturn, though there are some areas that are clearly done better than others. It's the first primarily sci-fi game in the series, though it has its roots in fantasy. Like *Terranigma* before it, *Granstream* features voice acting and anime cutscenes, far more in fact than its

predecessor. The combat, which is a big portion of the game, did not quite fare as well in the transition to 3D as some other things did. In *Terranigma*, combat was smooth, fast, and fun, but in *Granstream* it can be a bit of a chore. You swing your sword fairly slowly, magic is hard to use, and enemy hitboxes can be somewhat tricky to discern at times, making certain bosses a frustrating experience. In *Illusion of Gaia*, there were frustrating bosses, but it was because you needed to get better, not because the controls were legitimately wonky. The game's puzzles also aren't quite as good as those found in previous games in the series, particularly *Illusion of Gaia*.

With that said, the game's plotline is quite excellent, as was the case with previous games in the series, and it's here where *Granstream* partially redeems itself. Your name is Eon, and you're a young man who has survived a terrible cataclysm that led to the death of many on your world. Up above, in the stars, an interstellar war rages, the war responsible for nearly destroying the world on which you now live. The only way to stop the war and save humanity is to go up into space and retrieve four power Orbs that have been stolen by the two warring factions. Along the way, you meet a young woman named Laramee, who also wishes to stop the war, but for her own reasons. Together, Eon and Laramee undertake a journey to save the world and find themselves. The two characters are both fairly deep despite initially seeming like cliches, and you'll be drawn more and more into their stories as the game goes on. *Granstream* is a game that RPG fans should try not to miss, but understand that it has flaws that weren't present in previous Quintet games.

Official Rating: 7/10

-excerpted from the review of *Granstream* in the June 1998 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

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Next Generation: This is looking to be a big year for you. *Space Station: Silicon Valley* and *Race'n'Chase: London* coming to the Sega Saturn, and of course the Ultra Nintendo port of the original *Race'n'Chase*.

Sam Houser: We'd been wanting to make an Ultra Nintendo port, knowing what that system could do. I still feel like there's more power we could get out of that system.

Dan Houser: Right, we're still thinking of other projects to put on that system, but right now we're just glad to have *Race'n'Chase* on there.

NG: *Silicon Valley* is one of the first 3D platformers to be released on the Saturn, and it's a really unique game. It's definitely got its own style.

Dan: Well, we know it's not as...controversial as *Race'n'Chase*. \*laughs\* We didn't really have a big role in it but we're proud of the work our team did on the game. I think it might be the best 3D game on the system, and I know that's sayin' a lot because you've also got *Nights* on there which was really incredible, but *Silicon Valley* busts all the cliches and it's just a hell of a fun game.

Sam: Yeah, that's the thing we most wanna do is make unique games, the type of games nobody else has come up with.

Dan: If you can at least say about us "they had original ideas", even if the games don't end

up being very good, that's good for something, right?

NG: You guys didn't have much of a presence at E3, we saw some of *Race'n'Chase: London* there, but are you keeping the game under wraps for a reason or was it just not your decision on how much to promote it?

Sam: It was that, we didn't get much of a booth to promote the game. I mean, here's the thing though, the title alone promotes it, right?

Dan: We sold over a million copies of *Race'n'Chase*, so that's built-in advertising for this one. If people liked the first game, they'll like the second. We used some new ideas, but really it's just our take on a kind of 60s version of London and all the crime and stuff that went on there. In our own heads, at least.

Sam: Same as the original, we're bringing it to the Saturn first and if it does well there, which we're pretty sure it will, it'll come to the Ultra later on.

-excerpted from an interview with Sam and Dan Houser in the July 1998 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

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\*Ted and Gary are wearing hard hats and construction outfits as they review the Saturn action game *Drillin'*.\*

Ted Crosley: So this was a really weird little game, both in its storyline and in some of the design choices they made.

Gary Westhouse: I really liked it, from a dungeon design standpoint. There are a lot of dungeons in this game, more than probably any other game of its type, and they never get repetitive either. If you're a fan of sidescrolling adventure games, this one might be for you.

Ted: The graphics are a bit primitive, I mean I guess it has kind of that retro look to it, but compared to other sidescrollers, it's not all that great. The music....

Gary: The music was great.

Ted: A different song for every dungeon. A different song for every boss. Some of the musical creativity, I appreciated.

Gary: And as you're going through the dungeons, each and every dungeon adds a different piece of the story.

Ted: The dungeons are for the most part short and sweet, which is maybe why they're able to pack so many into this game.

Gary: And the cutscenes that show the big drill going into the ground to dig up the next dungeon? Those are great, every time.

Ted: It's a fun action-adventure game, I'll give it a nice 3.5 for creativity at least.

Gary: And I'll give it a 4, it's really fun and if you've got a Saturn and like action titles,

definitely check it out.

(...)

Alex Stansfield: So, does *Breaker Ride* stand up to *Wave Race*?

Ted: Um...if you're gonna make the comparison then no, *Breaker Ride* loses pretty badly. The graphics are great, though they're not AS great as *Wave Race*. It's just...racing's not as much fun on this game as it is on *Wave Race*, and the game EMPHASIZES the racing. Stunts are few and far between.

Alex: I thought the racing was pretty exhilarating myself. Some of the tracks can be a bit simplistic...

Ted: ALL of the tracks, and the few that aren't are poorly designed. Look, if you're gonna play "follow the leader", and this game was clearly designed to follow *Wave Race*, you've at least got to be BETTER than the leader, and *Breaker Ride* doesn't come close.

Alex: I liked that it was faster than *Wave Race*, it was a more thrilling game and-

Ted: More thrilling than a game you loved?

Alex: Okay, I put that wrong....some of the racing...was...kind of....more thrilling....

Ted: Without the stunts?

Alex: There are a few stunts in this game!

Ted: Of some jackass going like "bllllleerrraaaaggh" on his Sea-Doo?

\*A quick clip is shown of one of *Breaker Ride*'s "tricks", a very simple leap off the water and a goofy pose\*

Ted: For a game that otherwise looks really realistic and serious, more than *Wave Race*, that stupid little pose looks even more stupid.

Alex: He's having fun!

Ted: He looks like a jackass!

Alex: Hey, when we went to Knott's Berry Farm and got a picture of you on that rollercoaster, you looked like a jackass too.

\*A picture is shown of Ted on a roller coaster making a really stupid looking face\*

Alex: People make goofy faces when they're having fun!

Ted: You promised you wouldn't show that! How many copies did you print out?

Alex: Enough for everyone here. And, AND there's one posted on GameTV.com-

Ted: NOOOOO!

Alex: Along with all the other cool pictures we took when we went to Knott's Berry Farm last month.

Ted: Well, what do you give *Breaker Ride*? I give it a 2.

Alex: I give it a 3.5, it's really not that bad of a game.

-excerpted from the June 9, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany Saldita: *The Dreamers* is a beautiful, captivating world, one of the most massive worlds in any game I've ever played, and the storyline will make your heart soar. It is incredible.

Lyssa Fielding: It's an amazing game with only one major flaw, and that was the fighting system that makes it somewhat hard to aim at your enemies. But other than that, I thought it was a really awesome game.

Brittany: The key is to use nice big attacks or just keep the enemy right in front of you.

Lyssa: Well-

Brittany: But....I know that's easier said than done with some of the enemies.

Lyssa: They have a tendency to run and jump around. But....the partner AI in this game is REALLY good. Even if you can't lock on to your foes, your partners can and will!

Brittany: And if they get themselves killed, they can always come back. Sometimes I'll just sit back and let Edison kill things while I run around and explore.

Lyssa: And yes, we both prefer to play as Madera, and not just because she's a girl. She hits faster, she has cooler moves, and she has awesome attitude.

Brittany: As for our preferred animal helper, Queenie the Bee was really fun to use, she has a nasty sting and her ability to fly up and get hidden items for us saved a lot of time.

Lyssa: And the villain, Gruntilda? She's hilarious!

Brittany: She is the classic, cliched wicked witch but we could NOT get enough of her!

\*A quick scene is shown of Gruntilda making a rhyme: "My warts are huge, my feet are smelly, you'll never get that Royal Jelly!"\*

Brittany: She is gross and she doesn't care! She's like me at seven o'clock in the morning.

Lyssa: Right down to the cravings for ice cream!

Brittany: Well, she craves "eyes cream", it's called that because it's made out of eyes.

Lyssa: Yuck! \*sticks out her tongue\* Enough about icky Gruntilda, I give this game a 4.5.

Aside from the occasionally frustrating combat, *The Dreamers* is a beautiful game full of heart, soul, and everything we love about video games.

Brittany: And I give it a perfect 5, it's a fantastic adventure game and might just be Rare's best game ever.

-excerpted from the June 16, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted: So, out of the two *Quakes*, which is the best?

Alex: Definitely the Ultra Nintendo version, it's got better graphics, extra levels, and it lets you use the right analog stick to aim which makes the game control a lot better.

Ted: Yeah, but the Saturn version has online gameplay.

Alex: True, but you gotta have a pretty good internet connection, either 28K or cable. Cable's preferred, but if you've got cable internet you're probably too busy munching on caviar down at the country club to play any *Quake*.

Ted: \*laughs\* Cable internet's not that expensive.

Alex: True, but most people who have the Saturn don't have NetLink, so that's probably not gonna be a big selling point.

Ted: I'll give you that. Actually, I agree, the Ultra Nintendo version of *Quake* is superior, but both are excellent ports of the PC hit, with plenty of gameplay and both of them boasting four-player deathmatch modes, so you don't even need to go online to play deathmatch with your buddies. I'll give the Ultra version of *Quake* a 4.5, and the Saturn version a 4.

Alex: Same here, 4.5 for the Ultra, 4 for the Saturn. Either way, console *Quake* can't be missed if you haven't played the original and are a fan of FPSes.

-excerpted from the June 23, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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## **June 26, 1998**

Polly Klaas had never played an FPS before, and had absolutely no idea what she was doing, making her an easy target for yet another headshot from one of her three opponents. She gripped the Ultra Nintendo controller tightly, gripping it hard as she felt it shake as it registered the kill.

"Got you again, got you again!" shouted Eric Harris, having once again taken the lead in the four-player match. Sitting next to him was Polly's friend Caitlyn, who'd just lost the lead after Eric's latest kill. The pretty blonde didn't seem like she'd be very good at first-person shooters, but her 13-year-old brother played them all the time, and she played with him whenever his friends weren't over. She'd had lots more practice at them than Polly. "Fuck yeah, FUCK YEAH!"

"Shhh, don't cuss so loud in the house," Caitlyn said. "If dad hears you he'll throw you out."

"My dad would never let me have you over," said Polly, blushing a bit as she looked over at Eric. Her father Marc had shown repeated disapproval of the growing friendship between the quiet outcast and the sociable and well-behaved Polly, though she insisted that Eric was just misunderstood and that he had reasons why he always seemed so hostile.

"That's cuz Polly's dad is lame," said Caitlyn's brother Chris, his eyes fixed on the screen as he tried to shoot his way out of third place. "Eric, you and Dylan are cool."

"See, this kid knows what's going on," said Eric, also staying focused on the screen. His friend, Dylan Klebold, was also a frequent guest at Caitlyn's house, though today Dylan was hanging out with some of his other friends at the mall. "Polly's dad isn't lame though, I mean somebody must've taught her not to treat people like me like shit."

Polly almost chuckled at that remark, appreciating the irony. Her parents were loving and kind and had certainly made her into the person she was today, accepting and open to others and capable of showing kindness to loners like Eric. On the other hand, her dad wouldn't allow people like Eric into their house.

*"Eric would call him a hypocrite probably..."* thought Polly. As quiet as Eric was, when he did speak it was typically to speak his mind, and he rarely minced words, almost as if he didn't care about what other people thought. *"But if he didn't care, then...why does he look so hurt every time people make fun of him?"*

Polly's dad had even once mistaken Polly's feelings toward him for a crush. But to Polly, it was just friendship. It was Caitlyn who had the crush on Eric, and she'd fallen somewhat hard ever since Polly had introduced them to each other. Even now, while playing, Caitlyn's eyes would glance over to him. The momentary distractions were probably the reason Caitlyn was behind to Eric in the game.

"Let's face it, I suck at this," said Polly with a sigh, groaning as she was shot down again, this time by Chris. "Even your little brother's beating me!"

"So Eric, do you think guys or girls are better at games? I think guys are totally better, what do you think?" asked Chris with a smirk.

"Uh....who cares?" said Eric with a shrug, barely any emotion in his voice as he kept watching the screen. He ducked around a corner, only for Caitlyn to blast him in the face with a shotgun, putting her back in the lead and needing only one kill to win the match. "Fuck....! This controller's jacked up or something!"

"Come on, Eric, it's not the controller's fault you're losing," said Polly, glancing at him. "Was it the controller's fault when Brittany Saldita beat you at *Doom II*?"

"Fuck this shit," said Eric in frustration, tossing the controller down just before Caitlyn finished off the match by shooting her brother Chris. "This game sucks anyway."

There was Eric, showing another of his outbursts. Though he'd never gotten physically violent in front of Polly or Caitlyn, Polly couldn't help but worry when she saw Eric showing so much anger like that....it was a frequent emotion in him and some of the thoughts he'd shared with her scared her. He'd asked her not to tell anyone about them, and she agreed,

but sometimes she wondered if maybe someone else should know... someone who could get him the help that she was beginning to think he needed.

"Eric...please..." said Caitlyn, reaching up and taking his hand in hers. He started to jerk it away, but when their eyes met, he calmed down and let her pull him closer. "Don't be like this..."

Their lips met, and soon the two of them were kissing deeply. Polly reached over and covered Chris' eyes with her hand.

"Hey, I don't wanna see my sister making out with Eric anyway!" said Chris.

"Well then you should thank me," said Polly, giggling. "Hey, can we pop in *The Dreamers*? I brought it over for Chris to see."

"Mmm....pop in whatever you want..." said Caitlyn, sitting down with Eric on the couch so that the two of them could continue their makeout session.

Polly rolled her eyes and began to switch the two games in the Ultra Nintendo while Chris looked at the graphics on the case.

Caitlyn was the sweetest, most fun girl Polly had ever known. Maybe that's all Eric needed. Ever since he'd started seeing Caitlyn, the other students were giving him less and less of a hard time.

But something deep in her mind told Polly that her friend Eric's problems went much, much deeper than that. She'd seen things Caitlyn hadn't seen.

And as the months went on, Polly would see far more.

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: June 1998**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Donkey Kong Country 4
3. Chrono Trigger
4. SaGa Frontier
5. Tale Phantasia
6. Winged Wonder
7. Super Mario World 2
8. Tamagotchi
9. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2
10. Super Mario Kart

### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: June 1998**

1. Goldeneye 007
2. Final Fantasy VII
3. Super Mario Dimensions
4. Yoshi's Story
5. Ultra Mario Kart

6. Resident Evil
7. 1080 Snowboarding
8. Serratopia
9. Construct-It
10. Star Fox 2

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: June 1998**

1. Quake
2. Tekken 3
3. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
4. Panzer Dragoon Saga
5. Resident Evil 2
6. Tomb Raider II
7. Granstream
8. Ogre Battle: Princes Of The Universe
9. Ecco: Blue Dream
10. Skylein II: The World Beyond

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### **June 30, 1998**

In some respects, it was the end of an era.

Sega was shutting down its Sega Channel service, a service that had delivered games to Sega Genesis owners for the past four years. Tom Kalinske had asked for the service to be maintained another year, but the company was moving on. Such a service would have been impractical for the Sega Saturn, with its far larger and more complex games. Meanwhile, the Saturn's NetLink service was in decline, with few adoptions in 1998 and few new compatible games. The recent addition of *Quake* to the service drove some modem sales, but it was a small blip on the radar and did little to push new Saturns or more copies of *Quake*.

Online wasn't a big part of Sega's strategy, though company brass, including Tom Kalinske, wanted it to be a big part of Sega's future.

And Sega's future went far beyond the Ring.

"We're barely halfway through the Saturn's expected life cycle, and you're already wanting to discuss the next console?" asked Tom Kalinske as he spoke on the phone with Hayao Nakayama.

"It's never too early to at least discuss our future," said Nakayama. "And certainly you've given the next machine some thought as well?"

Kalinske knew with the continued success of the Ultra Nintendo that the Saturn had almost certainly peaked in sales. If the Ring didn't boost the Saturn's sales back to pre-Ultra levels, the system would never reach those levels again, even with games like *Sonic the Hedgehog 5* on the horizon. So yes...maybe it was time to at least think of the next console, even if it was at least two years away.

"I like the name Katana," said Kalinske. "Not just for the codename, but the name of the console itself."

"We'll see what the board thinks, I'm sure everyone will have an idea," said Nakayama. "But I do agree that we should probably leave the planetary references behind for this next generation."

"And online will be a major component of the Katana?"

"It will," said Nakayama. "By the time it is released, many more people will be connected to the internet. Connections will be faster and more stable. Its time will have finally arrived."

"...I'll still miss the Sega Channel," Kalinske replied, a hint of sadness in his voice.

"You and I both, my friend."

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The summer 1998 box office season, while not boasting any runaway hits, was jam-packed with blockbusters, maybe even moreso than the massive summer 1996 season. As was the case in 1996, 1998's biggest blockbusters were from the action genre, and most notably, featured either disasters or superheroes. On the superhero front, both DC and Marvel saw major hits in *Green Lantern* and *X-Men* respectively. Though *Green Lantern* courted some controversy for killing off Alex DeWitt, that controversy created cash, and *Green Lantern* beat out *X-Men* to win the superhero battle, with both films making right around \$200 million at the domestic box office. The biggest hit, however, was Michael Bay's massive, star-studded, special effects-laden action film *Armageddon*. After *Deep Impact* was moved from May to December in order to improve the film's dialogue and scientific plausibility (a move that would ultimately make the film a Best Picture contender), *Armageddon* was the only asteroid disaster film left standing, and won the overall summer box office with a \$250 million domestic take. The film, starring Bruce Willis as an oil rig worker who leads a crew of his fellow workers up into space to destroy a Texas-sized asteroid, was lambasted by critics, but audiences ate the goofy but visually stunning popcorn film up. A much more positive reception went to *Godzilla*, which, in an interesting twist of fate involving Roland Emmerich turning down the project to do *Green Lantern*, ended up being written and directed by Quentin Tarantino. Though Tarantino initially turned *Godzilla* down, his friend Robert Rodriguez (who became a co-writer on the film) begged him to take on the project. *Godzilla* became Quentin Tarantino's first (and to date, only) PG-13 film, though it did push the edge of the rating. The film, which initially was to be a straight disaster film about Godzilla attacking New York City, was altered somewhat to be closer to the plot of the original Japanese film. Godzilla still attacks New York, but protagonist Ray Vaqo (played by Samuel J. Jackson), a military man tasked with taking down the beast, discovers that Godzilla's real target is a hidden nest of moth-like monsters who have taken refuge under a nuclear power facility near the city, and with the help of nuclear technician Samantha Craddock (played by Daryl Hannah) and guerilla cameraman Steve Gould (played by Hank Azaria) must defy his superiors' orders to lure Godzilla to the plant before the monsters' queen, Mothra, emerges. The film ends with a climactic three-way battle between Godzilla, Mothra, and the military, which ultimately ends with Godzilla triumphant. Godzilla returns to the sea, but humanity

has realized that nature is ultimately far more powerful than any human invention. The film featured a rap cover of Blue Oyster Cult's "Godzilla" by Tupac Shakur and the Wu-Tang Clan's RZA that became a #1 hit, and remains Quentin Tarantino's most lucrative domestic film, making just over \$210 million at the box office and becoming a major hit in Japan as well (largely due to the presence of Japanese actress Meiko Kaji, who played a Japanese businesswoman stranded in New York City during the attacks, who witnessed Godzilla attack Tokyo as a young girl in 1955).

It was also a summer of girl power at the box office, with Angelina Jolie's action film *Nightshade* leading the charge. The film, about an officer in a futuristic police force who must infiltrate a technology-hating death cult, received praise for its amazing stuntwork and Jolie's acting as a young rookie cop who must take over an investigation for her partner after his brutal murder. The film made nearly \$150 million at the domestic box office and made Angelina Jolie one of the biggest female stars in Hollywood. But girl power was particularly evident in the summer's family films, particularly Disney's animated musical *Mulan*, which became Disney's most lucrative animated film since *Pocahontas*. An adaptation of the ancient Chinese fable about a young woman who disguises herself as a man in order to become a soldier, *Mulan* featured a butt-kicking heroine voiced by Ming-Na Wen, and made nearly \$150 million domestically. Mulan proved that girls in films were more than just damsels in distress, but even when girls DID get captured by the baddies, as was the case in *Small Soldiers* and *Quest for Camelot*, they got themselves out of danger. In *Small Soldiers*, protagonist Kirsten Dunst's character was captured by the film's antagonistic toy soldiers in order to threaten her character's father, the inventor of the soldiers' enemies, the Gorgonites, played by Robin Williams. After seeing her father threatened, however, she escaped and saved her father as well. And in *Quest for Camelot*, protagonist Guinevere (or Gwen for short, as she was referred to in the film), was captured by the villain (voiced by Gary Oldman) and used as part of a trap to lure out the young prince (and future king of Camelot) Arthur. However, Gwen managed to wriggle out of her bonds (in the film's original script which included animal-like companions, a talking axe freed her, here, Gwen actually struggled so much that she was able to use her own blood to slip out of the ropes, one of the scenes that earned the film a PG rating), and attacked the villain. During the film's final battle, which saw Gwen and Arthur taking on the villain, Arthur was incapacitated and Gwen landed the finishing blow. Even outside of the action or family realms, girl power was strong at the box office. Cameron Diaz's *There's Something About Mary* went on to be the summer's fifth biggest film (behind *Armageddon*, *Godzilla*, and the two superhero films), and Lisa Kudrow and Sarah Michelle Gellar teamed up for *Sorority Row*, a sort of "Animal House with women" that grossed over \$100 million domestically. Outside of those notable films, Jim Carrey got serious in *The Truman Show*, a film about a man who discovers that his entire life is being filmed as a 24-hour reality show. He would get a Best Actor nomination at the Oscars that year, and *The Truman Show* would gross nearly \$125 million at the box office.

-excerpted from "1998 In Film", an article on Dan The Movie Man's blog posted on September 18, 2014

### **Disney Plans Big For 1999**

The summer of 1999 is shaping up to be a big one for Disney, with two major films in the works. The first is a swashbuckling pirate action adventure starring Cary Elwes, based on their *Pirates of the Caribbean* attraction at Walt Disney World. The second is an animated musical by Tim Rice and Elton John called *Aida*. The film will feature Disney's first black princess, and will be released next June. Disney had previously considered an adaptation of



selected Jason Williams at #6. Astonishingly, future superstar Dirk Nowitzki fell to the Orlando Magic, the #8 seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs, at #14. An interesting "what if?" in NBA history is the question, "what if Shaq had stayed long enough for Dirk Nowitzki to achieve his potential?", but by the next summer, Shaq would be disgruntled enough to demand a trade to the Los Angeles Lakers, and Nowitzki would be forced to soldier through the Magic's early 2000s rebuild largely by himself.

The prospect of an NBA lockout loomed large over the summer of 1998, but a coalition of players led by Michael Jordan was able to negotiate favorable enough terms to avoid losing any regular season games for the 1998-99 season, a season that would see #23 try to go out on top.

-excerpted from a Bleacher Report article on the 1998 NBA season and offseason, posted on July 22, 2013

### **A Home-Run Battle For The Ages**

Mark McGwire and Ken Griffey Jr. are not only leading their teams to the best records in their respective leagues, they're both chasing history. For Griffey, he's chasing his own home run record of 62, while McGwire is trying to unseat the Seattle slugger. As of June 30, McGwire is sitting at 36 home runs, while Griffey is sitting at 34. This historic pace is pushing both their teams to astonishing heights: extrapolated over the remainder of the season, the Cardinals would win 118 games, while the Mariners would win 120. These two men are dominating baseball, and fans are loving it.

-the introduction to the *Sports Illustrated* cover article for July 13, 1998

### **Netherlands Shocks The World To Win World Cup**

Dennis Bergkamp is a national hero tonight after the Netherlands' national team's historic 2-2 (5-4) victory over the home country France in the World Cup finals. With Bergkamp making the final penalty kick at the end of the game to secure the victory for the Netherlands, the entire country is celebrating, and rightfully so. The Netherlands knocked off England, the United States, and then Brazil on their way to the championship game, with all but their quarterfinal against the USA (which the Netherlands won in a 4-0 rout) being decided by penalty kicks.

-excerpted from an article on SportsUpdate.com on July 13, 1998

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The 1998-99 network television season is known as the "last great revolution" in network TV, a season that saw cracks appear in the facade of NBC's "Must See TV" block as a competitor appeared in the most unlikely form. ABC had decided to fill their Thursday nights with a block of sci-fi/adventure shows that very few people expected to do well. *Empyrean*, created by young writers Adam Horowitz and Edward Kitsis, starred *Tomorrow Never Dies* star Michelle Yeoh as a computer scientist who discovers a portal to an alternate universe. The show was expected to be one of the biggest flops in television history, but stole a massive amount of young viewers from NBC's major hit *Friends*. Though *Friends* remained the #5 show on TV for the season, the dent that *Empyrean* made led NBC to retool the show beginning in 1999-2000, leading to a notable decline in quality. The other two shows, *High School Heroes*, about a group of teenagers who gain superpowers (inspired by *Power*

*Rangers*, but a LOT more serious and way less cheesy), and *Shattered*, starring Michael Madsen as a violent detective (a darker retool of the original concept for the show, titled *Vengeance*), also finished in the top 20 for the season and became the first shows to pose a serious threat to NBC's seemingly invincible block. New hit comedies popped up all over the schedule, including Fox's *Say What?* starring Omar Gooding, which became the first hit sitcom on the network to feature an African-American since *Martin's* tragic end, and *Princess of the City* on CBS, starring the young comedienne Maria Bamford as an extremely energetic college graduate trying to make it as an advertising executive. The injection of fresh young talent into the seemingly stagnant landscape of network TV brought on a mini-renaissance for all the major broadcast networks, and though some of these new shows would fizzle out in their second, third, and fourth seasons, the ripple effects from the strange season of 1998-99 would play out for many seasons to come.

-excerpted from an article on Zap2it.com on June 29, 2012

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After the finale of *Beavis and Butthead* in late 1997, *GameTV* became MTV's highest rated program. The year of 1998 was very good to *GameTV*, seeing some of the biggest video game releases of all time, and seeing its hosts become household names. But MTV was looking for a way to bring music back to its network in a big way, and executives looked to their show *Total Request* as a possible way to do just that. The show had been introduced in 1997 as part of an initiative to air more music, but the show's ratings were stagnating. The network briefly considered a host replacement (*GameTV's* Lyssa Fielding was offered the job, but turned it down, she didn't reveal this until *Total Request Live* was ended in 2009), but instead decided to introduce a live component to the show, retaining Carson Daly as host and putting him on live in Times Square with a studio audience. The show was a huge hit almost immediately, passing *GameTV* in the ratings for the first time in early 1999, and becoming MTV's highest rated show for the next three years. Early in *Total Request Live's* history, it and *GameTV* were heavily influential on one another (there was an interesting "East Coast vs. West Coast" dynamic between the two shows, since *TRL* was filmed in New York City and *GameTV* was filmed in Los Angeles), at one point, producers considered making *GameTV* a live show or adding a live segment to it (they did ultimately add a fan-requested retro review segment to the show in late 1999), while *Total Request Live* featured *GameTV*-like sketches and skits which were ultimately canned after viewers complained that Carson Daly wasn't nearly as good of an actor as the *GameTV* hosts. *Total Request Live* helped to make music a major force on MTV again, and is seen as a cultural touchstone for the early 2000s in the same way that *GameTV* is seen as one for the late 1990s. The success of both shows helped to make MTV a launchpad for the careers of young entertainers who got their start hosting shows on the network, something it's still doing to some extent to this very day, despite the encroachment of reality shows on much of the network's schedule.

-excerpted from an article on TVLookback.com, May 10, 2015

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\*Moltar is seen adjusting levers and pushing buttons on a control panel.\*

Moltar: Here at Toonami, we know you love anime.

\*Scenes from *Slayers*, *Robotech*, and *Voltron* are shown on the screen\*

Moltar: But we haven't really mixed things up in a while.

\*Lina Inverse is shown looking bored on the screen, while a scene from season three of *The Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest* is briefly shown as well.\*

Jessie: Things are so boring here.

Jonny: Yeah, it almost makes me wish something interesting would happen.

Moltar: Well, you're in luck, Toonami faithful. Starting in July, business is picking up.

\*A scene from *Sailor Moon* is shown on the screen.\*

Moltar: There's a brand new heroine coming to Toonami. I think I've got a crush on her.

Sailor Moon: Moon Prism Power, make-up!

Moltar: *Sailor Moon* comes in for a landing. And that's not all.

\*Goku is shown firing a Kamehameha\*

Moltar: In August, *Dragonball Z* makes its Toonami debut.

\*Vegeta laughs\*

Moltar: And in September comes the biggest one of all.

\*Tentacruel's tail smashes a building, while Sato is shown gasping in fright as Gyarados comes at him.\*

Moltar: It's the sensation that's taken Japan by storm. *Pokemon* is coming in September.

\*Another scene from season three of *Jonny Quest* plays.\*

Race: Hey, where does that leave us?

Moltar: For all you *Quest*-heads, don't worry. *The Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest* has been our rock, and we'll be playing it for a long time, even after the big series finale this November.

\*A scene from season three plays showing Jessie rescuing Jonny.\*

Jonny: Thanks...I thought I was a goner.

Moltar: 1998 is Toonami's biggest year ever, and we're only getting bigger. Stick with us, we're really going places.

Sato: I'm going to be the world's number one Pokemon Master! I can't be defeated by the likes of you!

Moltar: Only Toonami.

\*The Toonami logo is shown on screen\*

-from a Toonami promo that began airing in June 1998

Though season three of *The Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest* was a big hit, and reruns of *Batman: The Animated Series* were always awesome, by 1998 Toonami had become a bit stale. The block was cycling through reruns of *Slayers*, *Reboot*, *Robotech*, *Thundercats*, and *Voltron*, along with *Batman* and *Real Adventures*, while also playing the occasional movie and showing the new season three episodes of *Real Adventures* on Fridays. In the summer of 1998, all of that changed. One by one, *Sailor Moon*, *Dragonball Z*, and *Pokemon* debuted, joining *Real Adventures* to make a lineup that would last from September of 1998 to December 1999, becoming what's known in the eyes of many as Toonami's best lineup ever. *Sailor Moon* entered the block first and began by airing through episodes from the first two seasons, going through them twice before debuting *Sailor Moon S* for the first time on American shores in the spring of 1999. *Sailor Moon S* retained the Ocean voice actors for its dub, and, like the first two seasons, featured only a minimal amount of edits. The relationship between Haruka and Michiru was never stated outright, but could be easily implied, and though there was SOME controversy over it, it was ambiguous enough on the show for it to largely avoid the scrutiny of American conservatives (who were reeling after their failure to get Bill Clinton impeached in late 1998 anyway). *Dragonball Z* started in August and steadily ran its first 52 episodes until the fall of 1999, when it would pick up where it left off with the Ginyu Force saga. *Pokemon* arrived next and would become Toonami's top rated show (and one of the top rated shows on all of cable), airing its first 52 episodes and rerunning them until the summer of 1999. The three shows would cement Toonami's reputation as a block that aired the most popular dubbed anime on television, and helped to make anime even more popular in the United States than it already was, leading the way for shows like *Gundam Wing*, *Tenchi Muyo*, *Ranma 1/2*, and *Kronia* to become hits on the block as well.

-from an article on Cartoonapalooza.com, February 27, 2011

8:00 PM- Johnny Bravo

8:30 PM- Ed, Edd, 'n Eddy

9:00 PM- Dexter's Laboratory

9:30 PM- Larry And Steve

-the Cartoon Cartoon Fridays schedule, beginning in the fall of 1998 on *Cartoon Network*

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In 1998, Nickelodeon decided to resurrect one of its old game shows, and with video games booming, what better show to bring back than the 1992 show *Nick Arcade*? The show, now titled *Nick Arcade 2.0*, returned with an all new set, bringing back the original host Phil Moore and pitting two teams of two kids each in a series of trivia questions and video game related challenges for cash and prizes. The first part of the game was a lot like the classic TV show. The two teams took turns navigating a boy named Mikey across an electronic gameboard (this time, instead of being a 2-D animation, Mikey appeared in crude 3-D). They'd answer a series of trivia questions (for this iteration of the show, game-related trivia questions were added as a separate category of challenge) or would be required to play a video game challenge in the show's game arcade. The arcade contained a collection of video games from either the Ultra Nintendo or the Saturn. Instead of competing for points, players were required to complete a specific game challenge in a certain amount of time, and could bet points on whether or not they could do it. Challenges included completing a

lap in *Ultra Mario Kart*, beating a character in *Tekken 3*, or grabbing a certain star in *Super Mario Dimensions*, among others.

The biggest change to the game was to the show's bonus round, which involved the winning team taking on a special challenge to win the grand prize (usually a big prize like a computer or TV, or perhaps a trip). The old *Nick Arcade* featured the Video Zone, a neat sort of live-action video game which involved a greenscreen in which players had to collect certain items and defeat a boss within a minute. The new *Nick Arcade 2.0*, however, had one contestant from the winning team step into the Nick Arcade Colosseum. There, they would take on one of three "gladiators" in a specific head to head challenge. And this was where *Nick Arcade 2.0* probably made a huge mistake. For the first season, the contestants were required to take on the *GameTV* Gladiators. Since Viacom owned both Nickelodeon AND MTV, they could utilize MTV talent for the show, and for *Nick Arcade 2.0*, they brought Ted Crosley, Alex Stansfield, and Brittany Saldita to compete against the would-be winners. What the *Nick Arcade 2.0* producers didn't realize was the fact that the *GameTV* hosts were ALL legitimate gamers who had been playing video games longer than any *Nick Arcade 2.0* contestant had been alive. To make matters worse, the winners got to PICK which of the hosts to face. 23 out of 52 times, Brittany was selected (likely due to winners believing that, because she was a woman, she was worse at games than either Ted or Alex...the overall consensus is that Brittany, at least in multiplayer games, was probably the best player of any of the *GameTV* hosts). Of the 23 times Brittany was selected to compete, she won...23 times. As she would later put it in an interview with *Giant Bomb* in 2009, "I cost kids more trips to Space Camp than the *Challenger* disaster." Alex had an overall record of 16-1, while Ted had a record of 10-2. That made for 49 out of the original 52 episodes where the grand prize was not won, which ended up hurting the show's ratings. For the second season, the *GameTV* Gladiators were benched, and three new "gladiators" were brought in, these gamers were far more vulnerable and overall won only 36 of the 52 second season grand prize matches.

Though *Nick Arcade 2.0* was a welcome comeback for Nickelodeon's video game fans, it was one of the lesser-rated shows on the network. Ongoing hits *Rugrats*, *Sam and Kira*, and *Swashbucklers* remained the network's three biggest shows of the year, while *The Wild Thornberrys*, about a girl named Eliza who could talk to animals, was a decent sized hit and easily beat out *Nick Arcade 2.0* as Nick's top new show of 1998. Still, *Nick Arcade 2.0* did manage to last two seasons, which was one longer than the original version of the show, and is considered among fans to be better than the original despite the near-hopeless bonus round from the first season. It even helped pave the way for *Double Dare 2000*, which brought back host Marc Summers and would become a much bigger hit than the *Nick Arcade* revival had been.

-excerpted from "Tales From 90s Nickelodeon", an article on TVMemories.com

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(Author's Note: Credit to Nevermore for the Zelda TV series idea! We've got more information on this one to share later on!)

## **A New Day At Disney Channel**

The Disney Channel, once a premium-TV home for classic Disney films and cartoons, is now retooling itself into a basic cable network, and it's adding a significant amount of new and original programming in order to lure in more subscribers. First and foremost among the new shows is an animated adaptation of Nintendo's hit video game series *The Legend Of*

*Zelda*. The animated series is headed up by Greg Weisman, who most recently worked on the animated series *Gargoyles*, which ended last year. *The Legend Of Zelda* is a sort of loose adaptation of 1995's *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina of Dreams*, though with its own original storyline that plans to divert significantly from any of the games. Nintendo and Disney's deal shows Nintendo's willingness to branch out its properties and Disney's willingness to take a risk on an edgy action cartoon. Indeed, in bringing back its Disney Afternoon block for the Disney Channel, the company is looking to compete head-to-head with Cartoon Network's Toonami block. Toonami is adding three major anime series of its own this summer, and Disney hopes to compete by adding dubbed anime to its new block as well, starting with *Legend Of The Galactic Heroes*, which will join *The Legend Of Zelda*, *Hercules* (a prequel series to the 1997 animated film, set in high school), and *Princess High*, a Disney Channel original animated series starring Kirsten Dunst as the voice of a modern day high school girl who comes to discover she's a princess. Disney is hyping up the series' main character as "the first made-for-TV Disney Princess" and is banking on Dunst's stardom drawing a big audience to the series. While Disney Channel is going to be heavily pushing its afternoon animation block, it's also introducing two live-action tween shows to its primetime lineup: *The Famous Jett Jackson* and *Zenon: Girl Of The 21st Century*, a sci-fi series based on a 12-year-old girl who lives in the future on a space station. Only time will tell if the Disney Channel can compete with its new rivals, Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network, but if it fails, you won't be able to blame a lack of trying.

-from an article in the July 25, 1998 issue of *TV Guide*

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*KURT COBAIN BACK IN THE STUDIO, NIRVANA WORKING ON FIRST NEW ALBUM SINCE 1995*

*BRANDY AND MONICA TO COLLABORATE ON TIE-IN SONG FOR NEXT SPRING'S FILM "THE BOY IS MINE"*

*"STILL THE" #1, SHANIA TWAIN TOPS BILLBOARD CHARTS FOR FIFTH-STRAIGHT WEEK*

*NEW TUPAC ALBUM "STREETWISE" SHATTERS RECORD FOR FIRST-WEEK SALES*

*SANTANA AND SELENA IN "SUPERNATURAL" CONCERT SERIES, NEW ALBUM ON THE WAY?*

-headlines in the August 8, 1998 issue of *Billboard* magazine

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Even though Bandai was in serious decline by the beginning of 1998, its acquisition by Sega, and for relatively cheap, sent shockwaves through the Japanese business world in the spring of that year. It was a big gamble for Sega, with the company's Saturn console's sales declining in the wake of the Ultra Nintendo release. But with the company's success in the video game realm over the past six years, Sega's coffers were flush with funds, and the merging of Bandai into the company gave Sega a wealth of new resources to use as it saw fit. Immediately, Sega set about creating new toy lines for its hottest properties, including *Sonic*, *Virtua Fighter*, and *Phantasy Star*, while also creating toy lines for popular Namco properties such as *Tekken* and *Soul Edge*. These toy lines became major successes in both Japan and in the United States, and with the continued success of existing toy lines such as the one for *Super Sentai/Power Rangers*, toys soon became a major part of Sega's ongoing

strategy, which would ensure continued profits for the company even when its games division was having downtimes.

Another component to the deal was that it made Sega one of the biggest distribution companies for hit anime shows like *Cowboy Bebop*. It also allowed the company to begin working on new anime shows based on its biggest video game properties, creating corporate synergy to a degree that Nintendo was currently unable to boast (its partner Sony was dabbling with Dreamworks in the animated film arena, though that was a rocky relationship at the time, Dreamworks had decided to scrap its plans to create an animated comedy film based on the fantasy parody novel *Shrek*, instead co-opting its star Chris Farley for a new animated comedy adventure film that would release in 1999). Sega's relationship with Evangelion creator Hideaki Anno also continued, not just in the arena of video games, which would begin in 1999, but in the anime realm as well. Sega would put him in charge of creating a *Phantasy Star* anime series that began airing in 2000, regarded as one of the greatest game-to-anime adaptations of all time. Sega's acquisition of Bandai ultimately proved to be one of their shrewdest moves, and at least in the immediate sense, gave the company a safety net for whatever Nintendo could throw at them.

-excerpted from an article on Gamesovermatter.com, posted on January 19, 2012

*"The new DVD format would be far too expensive to include with the Ultra Nintendo, there is simply no way to incorporate DVD technology and remain under 40,000 yen. We must remain aware of anything Sega has planned for their console following the Saturn, if DVD technology is incorporated, a DVD adaptor for the Ultra Nintendo may be required, though it may simply be more prudent to wait for whatever follows the Ultra to begin including DVD playback capability. I don't anticipate lack of DVD playback becoming a major problem at any point in the next five years, at least from a worldwide standpoint. It may harm Japanese sales later in the system's lifespan, perhaps a Japanese-exclusive version of the Ultra including DVD playback would be prudent in 2000 or so?"*

-internal Sony memo, sent by Ken Kutaragi to Norio Ohga on January 13, 1997

*AstormyNight.mp3*  
*Shipwrecked.mp3*  
*EdisonsTheme.mp3*  
*EllasTheme.mp3*  
*CaptainBlackeye.mp3*  
*Banjostheme.mp3*  
*DingersTheme.mp3*  
*BigBossBattle.mp3*  
*Shanghaied.mp3*

-from a list of *The Dreamers* songs on an early MP3 file-sharing network, accessed on July 11, 1998

## **July 11, 1998**

"Hey buddy, stop downloading those songs and help me with this," said Sergey Brin, looking over his friend Larry Page's shoulder as Larry downloaded some songs from *The Dreamers* onto his computer. "What are these from, anyway? 'Big Boss Battle'? Video game songs?"

"From *The Dreamers*," said Larry, getting up from the computer and walking over with

Sergey to check on the progress of their latest project. "It's a really good video game with really good music."

"We're not gonna have time for games next semester, you know," said Sergey, pointing at something on his screen. "Once we get this company up and running, it'll be that and our dissertations."

"Yeah, yeah, I know," said Larry. "That's why I'm trying to enjoy it while I can. Google...you think we're gonna be able to compete?"

"Well, it's easier to find things on Google than it is on other search engines," Sergey replied. "So we've got that going for us."

Larry sat down and started working on his friend's problem, wondering if he'd ever have the time to touch a video game controller again.

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### **July 12, 1998**

"Damn...really?" Steve Jobs groaned, reading an article in the New York Times. One of his colleagues at Apple walked over to see what he was talking about.

"Something wrong?" asked Jobs' co-worker, prompting Jobs to show him the article he was reading.

"They're counting down the most anticipated new electronic devices of the holiday season. The iMac is number two."

"And number one?"

Jobs pointed to the article again.

"The Ring... Sega."

"A game console. Actually....just an attachment for a game console," said Jobs, rolling his eyes. "They don't believe in us anymore."

"Video games are...really big right now," said Jobs' co-worker, trying to calm his boss down. "But...what do they know, right?"

Had Apple fallen that far? To the point where a revolutionary new computer was getting less hype than an attachment for the #2 game console on the market?

"We'll sell 100 times more iMacs than Sega will sell of those things," said Jobs, tossing the paper in the garbage as he walked out of the room. "They're nothing but a goddamn toy company."

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### **July 13, 1998**

Bill Gates was of two minds. Windows 98 had launched to massive success, the perfect follow-up to the ultra-popular Windows 95 operating system. Millions of copies had already been sold, many more were selling every week. But Microsoft's success had been a curse: the company was now embroiled in an anti-trust trial that sought to decouple its Internet Explorer browser from its Windows operating system. The government claimed that Microsoft's packaging of the two together constituted an illegal restriction on competition that pushed other competitors out of the business.

"It's a bullshit lawsuit, I agree," said Steve Ballmer, the new president of the company, as he and Gates sat across from one another in Ballmer's office. "They're jealous of us. Of our success, of everything....of everything YOU'VE built. Netscape, we're pushing them out of business because we've got the best internet browser in the world, not because we did something wrong."

Gates nodded, though he rarely got as fired up about things as Ballmer did. He understood full well the reasons for the lawsuit. Hell, if the situation was turned around, if it was Gates as the young upstart going up against an extremely powerful software company, he'd have probably pushed to sue as well. But he still had to figure out a way to protect his company from being broken up. He still had lots of work to do.

"They don't have a case. You'll see. The government's gonna try anything they can to break us up, but we can get through this."

"Oh, I agree," said Gates, his voice much more calm and quieter than Ballmer's. "But I think, you know, we've got to be careful not to antagonize anyone. We've made personal computing easier for millions of people around the world and that's the side of Microsoft we've got to show. We can be pissed off in private, but when I'm in that courtroom, I'm gonna have a smile on my face."

"Let's hope they don't get me in there, huh?" said Ballmer with a laugh, pulling out that day's issue of the Wall Street Journal. "Look at this shit."

He jabbed his finger at an article on page 5, about how the Ultra Nintendo was experiencing record-breaking sales over Sega's Saturn.

"This....look at this right here. Nintendo dominating again."

"I see it," said Gates, who'd recently been thinking once again about creating a home video game console. "They'd be a tough opponent if we ever got into the game business."

"No shit, they'd kick our fuckin' ass!" shouted Ballmer, his face starting to get red. "These are the fuckers the government oughta be going after, right here. Nintendo and Sony, colluding to make a game system. Nobody can beat 'em! Sega, I mean..."

"They're pretty big, didn't they just buy that toy company?"

Gates was referring to Bandai, the once-powerful Japanese toy and media conglomerate that had been driven under by a series of bad business decisions, most notably their ill-fated move to pour millions of dollars into a game console of their own... a story that gave Gates pause whenever he thought about entering the console business.

"The dying husk of a toy company, yeah," said Ballmer. "But here's the thing, as long as

Nintendo and Sony are workin' together, there's no future in video games! Not a future that doesn't involve that fatass plumber, anyway. If we're EVER gonna get into video games like you told me we needed to do someday, we need to sue the pants off Nintendo. Make it so they can never work with Sony again. Sue the shit out of 'em."

Ballmer tossed the paper down onto the desk.

"I tell you what, this world... you get too big and they just wanna cut you down," fumed Ballmer, shrugging his shoulders. Gates was amused for a moment by the irony of the statement, considering what he'd just proposed doing, but it was the truth. If Microsoft wanted to compete with Nintendo on an even playing field, they'd have to do something to get between Nintendo and Sony.

But if the government's lawsuit succeeded, Microsoft would have far bigger problems on its hands...

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*"Fairytale was a project that emerged from Squaresoft's desire to use the Chrono Trigger team for a follow-up game to Final Fantasy VII. They put together an amazing team and we spent a long time working on this game, even before the Ultra Nintendo was released here in Japan. Many hours of work from many different people went into this game. Did making this game prepare me for the next project? Perhaps a Chrono sequel? Ahhhh....it is far too early to say!"*

-Masato Kato in an interview in the July 1998 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"Fairytale was one of the very first games I did. It was...it was right after Final Fantasy VII kind of changed everything for the actors in my industry, and so... there was so much more competition for the lead role in this game. Being asked by Squaresoft not only to take on the lead role but to sing the theme song? It was quite intimidating at first!"*

-Mary Elizabeth McGlynn in a 2002 interview with RPGamer.net

*"I was hitting a brick wall for ideas for the next Frederico, we'd made a few other games for the SNES-CD, but for the Ultra we had nothing. Then, Lon, he got an idea for a game that we could do that was...well it was kinda like the 3-D platformers they were making so many of, but it was different, it was...a much faster paced game. You could pick it up, play it, set it down quick. It was a great idea and I knew we had to do it! The idea for the name of the game, that was mine, but the rest of it, most of the rest of it was Lon."*

-Silver Sail's Carlos Delgado on *Quixsters* in a September 1998 interview with *GamePro*

*"Everything old is new again. You got that new Aeroboy game...that's just Defender with balloons. Then there's Quixsters, which is, there's so much of it taken from Q\*Bert, it's an updated Q\*Bert. And all those Pac-Man clones masquerading as brand new puzzle games. Nintendo, Sega, they've been ripping off from the classic arcade guys for years. Sega's practically dependent on Namco. It all goes back to the arcade."*

-Billy Mitchell in an interview at the 1998 World Arcade Championships on July 25, 1998

*"Oh my God, both of these games are so friggin' scary! You'd think games about fairies and dolphins would be all light and sweet, but there are so many big creepy monsters in both these games. It's Halloween in July!"*

-Lyssa Fielding, on the July 14, 1998 episode of *GameTV*, discussing *Fairytale* and *Ecco*:

### *Blue Dream*

*"Bonecrusher's been hyped all year as the next Primal Rage, the next Deathblow, but it can't match up to either. 1998 might be the Year of the Fighter, and with games like Tekken 3 already out and Killer Instinct Ultra on the way, you've gotta bring something new to the table. Bonecrusher is just the same old song and dance, and it does nothing to distinguish itself from the wave of ultra-violent fighting games out there."*

*-from Sushi-X's 4.5/10 review of Bonecrusher in the August 1998 issue of Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"Humanity has been trying to exterminate us for millennia. You have to know it, Claris. Surely you realize their treachery!"*

*-Ashlyn, Fairytale*

*"Ysidra, we will no longer listen to your lies! You tried to turn the noble princess Ashlyn into your pawn. You tried to break Virtuosa's spirit. You tried to corrupt our human allies. You made me doubt my own heart! You have seeded hatred between humanity and fairykind for eons, and this is the day you pay for what you have done!"*

*-Claris, Fairytale*

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### **Fire Pro Wrestling Presents: WCW Thunder**

Dan: 6.0

Shawn: 6.0

Crispin: 6.0 (quote: "It's a decent wrestling game, but it's barely more than a roster update.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Mulan**

Dan: 5.5

Shawn: 4.5

Crispin: 4.0

Sushi-X: 2.0 (quote: "An abysmal Disney adaptation, with graphics that look stale even on the SNES-CD.")

### **Sphere Soldier**

Dan: 9.0 (quote: "A fast-paced action game with some amazingly vivid graphics.")

Shawn: 9.0

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Jack: The Dark Mercenary**

Dan: 3.0

Shawn: 4.0 (quote: "One of the worst *Doom* ripoffs I've ever had the misfortune of playing.")

Crispin: 3.0

Sushi-X: 4.0

-excerpted from reviews of July 1998's SNES-CD games in the August 1998 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

### **Mulan**

Dan: 7.5 (quote: "Probably the best of the *Mulan* tie-in games, featuring real voice acting from the film and some decent 3-D graphics.")

Shawn: 6.0

Crispin: 7.5

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Pulseman 2**

Dan: 6.0

Shawn: 6.5 (quote: "Pulseman 2 shows flashes of brilliance, but for the most part it's a fairly generic action game.")

Crispin: 7.5

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Tenchu: Stealth Assassins**

Dan: 8.0

Shawn: 8.0

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "I'm a pretty discerning critic of ninja games, and this is one of the best I've seen.")

### **The X-Files**

Dan: 7.0

Shawn: 6.0

Crispin: 6.5 (quote: "It's not as good as the show, but for hardcore fans, it's still worth at least a look.")

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **WWF War Zone**

Dan: 8.5 (quote: "An awesome wrestling game with plenty of attitude.")

Shawn: 8.5

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Logjam 2**

Dan: 2.5

Shawn: 5.0

Crispin: 3.0 (quote: "One of the worst sequels I've yet seen. The original was a decent platformer. This is just a mess. Almost as bad as the Saturn's Bubsy 3D.")

Sushi-X: 3.0

### **Ultra Monster Wars**

Dan: 7.5 (quote: "The smaller variety of monsters is a bummer, but we were very entertained by the animations.")

Shawn: 8.5

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Fairytale**

Dan: 9.5 (quote: "A memorable, beautiful RPG from the masters at Squaresoft.")

Shawn: 9.0

Crispin: 9.5

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Quixsters**

Dan: 9.0

Shawn: 9.0

Crispin: 9.5 (quote: "It lacks the scale of games like Super Mario Dimensions, but who needs scale when your game is full of bite sized fun?")

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Star Angels**

Dan: 7.0 (quote: "A cute, fun, colorful, energetic fighting game that sort of reminds me of Prisma Clash on the Saturn.")

Shawn: 7.0

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Boncrusher**

Dan: 6.0

Shawn: 6.0

Crispin: 5.0 (quote: "It's about as generic as a fighting game can be. The graphics are excellent but the game itself is very boring.")

Sushi-X: 4.5

-excerpted from reviews of July 1998's Ultra Nintendo games in the August and September 1998 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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### **Fairytale: The Basics**

Squaresoft's *Fairytale* is a traditional turn-based RPG produced largely by the team behind *Chrono Trigger*, led by Masato Kato with Yasunori Mitsuda as the composer. Character design of the game is led by Tomomi Kobayashi, primarily known as the character illustrator for the *SaGa* series, who uses both her own style and inspiration from the classic British artist Cicely Mary Barker (famous for her own depictions of flower fairies) to create the game's unique look and world (there is also some influence in the game's design and plot from the recent hit Japanese animated film *Mononoke-hime*, or as it would later be called in

North America, *Princess Mononoke*). The game shares a number of similarities with *Chrono Trigger*, including a three-person party and visible map enemies, as well as the Active Time Battle system. The game also has combination attacks, but these are not specific techniques that the player chooses, but happen spontaneously in a manner similar to *SaGa Frontier*. Whether or not combination attacks, which can be either two or three person attacks, occur depends on character affinity. Characters who like each other more are more likely to perform consistent combinations in battle, encouraging the completion of sidequests and dialogue scenes in order to build up the characters' relationships. Attacking is primarily performed with magic spells, which are on a regenerating MP meter, though weapons are also used, some characters (like Claris) are skilled with both. While there is a large overworld map in *Fairytale*, there are large segments of travel between sections of the overworld, so you might go through two or three villages or dungeons without ever seeing the overworld map. However, save points are frequent, and you can travel freely between certain save points in the same area (and once you get the airship, you can land both on the overworld map and at any valid checkpoint). The game has stylistic graphics that can be compared to a more detailed version of OTL's *Chrono Cross*, the graphics aren't quite as technically "polished" as those in *Final Fantasy VII*, but hold up much better over time. The game is a mix of lighthearted fantasy and some very unsettling horror, with beautiful scenes occasionally interspersed with horrifying monsters and extremely disturbing events, though the game is rated T for Teen, it later comes to be considered one of the scariest RPGs ever made due to its abundance of "nope scenes". The game has extensive voice acting and both anime and in-game rendered cutscenes.

There are eight playable characters in *Fairytale*. They are:

**Claris:** A young fairy woman, she is a soldier in the Faelian Army. Incredibly talented but rebellious and defiant, she comes from extremely humble birth, which, in the somewhat stratified Faelian society, causes her to be discriminated against and causes her superiors to look down on her. She is initially extremely untrusting of the humans but eventually comes to befriend some of them and realizes that humans and fairies share the same world and must work together. She is voiced by Mary Elizabeth McGlynn.

**Virtuosa:** A flighty, somewhat ditzzy, happy-go-lucky young fairy woman, Virtuosa is Claris' unlikely best friend. Of noble birth, Virtuosa was the first noble ever to treat Claris with kindness (indeed, she treats everyone with kindness) and possesses a powerful gift for magic. Though she is quite afraid of scary situations, she is a loyal friend and would give her life to protect Claris or anyone in need. She is voiced by Kimberly Yates.

**Ashlyn:** A fairy royal, Ashlyn is a somewhat haughty princess, though she is also a brave and skilled warrior willing to go to the front lines to protect her people. Though she despises Claris at first, after Claris saves her life and helps her through the traumatic aftermath, Ashlyn warms up to Claris and joins her in battle. After events cause Ashlyn to ascend to the throne of all Faelia, however, she becomes open to corruption. She is voiced by Moira Quirk.

**Schrall:** Schrall is a fairy guard captain whose soldier friends were killed by the same monster that nearly killed Ashlyn. Though he holds a grudge against her at first due to her recklessness getting his friends killed, he becomes a loyal friend to Claris and fights with exceptional bravery, though his loyalties are tested when Ashlyn becomes the ruler of Faelia. He's voiced by Kirk Baily.

**Ephret:** Ephret is a young human who discovers Faelia during a scout mission. Though some

of the fairies distrust him, others, like Virtuosa, befriend him quickly, and eventually, Ephret falls in love with the beautiful but aloof Claris. He is an idealist who wants to see human and fairy society cooperate, but when his human superiors begin attacking Faelia, he decides to abandon human society to join the fairies in their fight. He is voiced by Scott Weinger.

**Pauldron:** Pauldron is a blacksmith and inventor who is Ephret's best friend, and also like a surrogate father to him. He's gruff at times but has a heart of gold, and is loyal to Ephret's cause no matter the price. Big and with a big beard, Pauldron is sort of the "Cid" figure of the game, but is also a fierce fighter, capable of swinging a massive hammer to take out his enemies. He's voiced by Michael Gregory.

**Finn:** Finn is a young human noble and alchemist who is fascinated by fairy magic and soon becomes adept at it. Though he has some ulterior motives (he is initially a spy for the human authorities), he eventually befriends Ephret despite their initial disagreements, and also falls in love with Ashlyn later on in the game. He is voiced by Matt Miller.

**Remia:** Remia is a young inventor who works as an apprentice under Pauldron alongside Ephret. She's his best friend and also harbors a secret crush on him. She's an energetic genius who's great with tools, even better than Pauldron is, and also loves to hunt for ancient relics, particularly ancient fairy relics. She is voiced by Melissa Fahn.

*Fairytale* takes place in a world that is halfway covered by a massive, continent-spanning forest full of magic that is home to the fairies, humanoid beings (the same size as average humans) who have glimmering wings that allow them to flutter from place (though they can only fly a few feet above the ground). The fairies have been ruled for many, many millennia by the Faelian Authority, a hierarchy of nobles and royals who rule as well as they can, some of the royals are more benevolent than others, but despite a few tyrants over the Faelia's long history, the current rulers do the best they can to ensure peace and justice for everyone. The main problem with the Faelia's rule is a sort of caste system that leads to open discrimination (no violence or killing involved, but open contempt for one's "inferiors" and discrimination in official positions is frequently practiced) against those of lower castes. Claris is a young Faelian woman who has risen to a high rank due to her prodigious abilities (her favorable relationship with the influential noble Virtuosa also helps), but is held in open contempt by her superiors, including the arrogant princess Ashlyn. Meanwhile, human society rules the other half of the world, and the two halves, though there have been occasional encounters, rarely encroach on each other. Human society has many nations, but none more powerful or advanced than the Etherian Empire, an expanding nation led by the powerful Prince Neslan. Etherian technology has reached industrial level and is basically straight-up steampunk. Etherian bordertowns have expanded right up to the edge of the great Faelian forest, and curious individuals have already begun exploring, including an official party commissioned by Prince Neslan himself, led by the soldier-in-training Ephret. After a monster attack, Ephret is separated from his scouting party, and he stumbles upon Claris, bathing in a beautiful spring. Claris nearly kills Ephret, but is stopped by Virtuosa, who sees that Ephret has no ill intentions. Virtuosa invites Ephret to come along deeper into the woods, and the young human is introduced to Faelian society. Though many fairies disagree with Ephret's presence, he is allowed to stay as long as he does not lead other humans into that part of the forest. There is trouble, as a series of increasingly deadly monster attacks have caused numerous fairy deaths. Claris suspects the human incursions are somehow causing them. After numerous quests and dungeons, in which a mysterious and murderous human is encountered and also Claris hears a mysterious female voice telling her not to trust the human Ephret, the trio finally returns to Ashlyn's castle to learn that she has departed with a party of soldiers to discover the truth of the monster attacks.

However, Ashlyn's party is slaughtered and she is captured and nearly killed by a horrible spider monster, requiring Claris, Virtuosa, and Ephret to rescue her. Ashlyn is both physically and emotionally scarred by her ordeal, but it leads her to trust both Claris and Ephret more, and Claris is starting to become more trusting of Ephret as well. That trust is nearly shattered after Remia and Pauldron show up looking for Ephret later on, but Ephret agrees to leave. There are a couple more missions, first involving Claris, Virtuosa, and Schrall, then later Ashlyn decides to join Claris after recuperating. During this time, however, more monsters are attacking other parts of the forest, and various rulers, higher and higher up the chain of Faelian authority, are being mysteriously murdered. There are also now border skirmishes between armed humans and fairy warriors, necessitating that Claris head to the front lines. Claris and Ephret eventually reunite, and Ephret and his friends agree to help Claris and her friends get to the bottom of the situation. After several missions in the human world, which involve more monster attacks and a few unscrupulous humans as well. Events soon occur that lead to Ephret being declared a traitor to the human society and open war being declared on Faelia. Ashlyn hopes to reach the Etherian capital to make peace and sort things out. Eventually, they reach the capital (at some point here, Finn is met and he joins the party). There is more intrigue, but eventually, Claris is able to reach an understanding with Prince Neslan, and it is determined that dark forces in the fairy forest are causing trouble. It is decided that the Etherian armies will be allowed into the forest to help the fairies defeat the darkness. This leads to a series of quests that conclude with a battle against a huge monster. However, after the monster is defeated, the Faelian capital is burned and the grand ruler of the fairies is killed, both by a human army. This leaves Ashlyn as next in line to the Grand Throne of Faelia, and she reluctantly takes it and declares war on humanity. Claris and the others beg her to see reason, and Ashlyn agrees to let Claris talk to Neslan one last time. Claris returns to the human territory to discover a much more militaristic Etherian Empire. The party reaches the capital and battles Prince Neslan himself, but after defeating him, Neslan seems much more reasonable and agreeable. Claris seems to realize that something had happened to Neslan, but as she tries to get him to stand his army down, Ashlyn appears with a contingent of fairy guards and kills Neslan before a horrified Claris and her friends. Ashlyn declares that humanity will be destroyed. Claris refuses to obey her, prompting Ashlyn to instruct her contingent of guards to kill Claris and the others. They manage to flee from the burning Etherian capital, and as they look over the destruction, Disc 1 ends.

In Disc 2, Claris and the party must work together to try and stop Ashlyn before it's too late. They return to the Faelian forest, exploring more unexplored areas, all the while battling against Ashlyn's guards and increasingly powerful monsters. Eventually, they realize that Ashlyn is being possessed by a dark force calling itself the Arbiter, and that they must extract it from her and destroy it by any means necessary. The party invades the royal palace of Faelia and battles the possessed Ashlyn. After she is defeated, she is restored to her normal self, but the darkness still tries to claim her. Finn, now deeply in love with Ashlyn, refuses to let her be taken and opens a portal so that Claris' party can follow Ashlyn into the darkness. In this strange, dark world, the real truth is discovered. Human society has evolved seven times. All seven times, including times when humanity had vastly superior, space-age technology, humanity was destroyed by powerful Faelian armies after attempting to destroy Faelia. This is now the eighth time human society has risen. Claris and the others discover that both the Faelian and human rulers during those times were possessed by a being known as the Dark Fairy, whose true name is Ysidra (voiced by Julia Fletcher). Ysidra, who was also the mysterious voice Claris has been hearing throughout the game, was once a fairy in the lowest caste of Faelian society. At that time, fairies and humans cooperated. Good fairies and good humans became good friends and did many great works...but there were also evil fairies and evil humans, who sometimes formed

gangs to commit crimes and hurt people. After horrible discrimination and after watching her entire family being murdered by one of these human/fairy gangs, Ysidra, consumed with despair and rage, began studying magic. She learned she had an incredible gift and soon became the most powerful magic user in the history of the world. She used her powers to exert a dark influence on the rulers of humanity and fairykind alike, drawing them into genocidal wars, while learning to draw power and life from pain and death. The more humans and fairies she hurt, the more she killed, the more powerful she became, and as long as humans and fairies kept fighting and dying, Ysidra would remain immortal. She eventually hoped to kill enough to become an all-powerful god, where she could manipulate every living creature into suffering just as she and her family had suffered. She is now on the verge of godhood, only needing one final slaughter of humanity to become all-powerful. As Claris and the others go deeper into Ysidra's realm in search of Ashlyn, they begin seeing Ysidra and hearing her voice, and fighting increasingly dangerous monstrosities. Finally, they reach Ashlyn and battle the Arbiter itself, a dark arm of Ysidra's will. After defeating the Arbiter, Ashlyn is saved and returned to the party, but not all is well... Ysidra has activated her Seven Dark Kings. Every time human civilization was crushed, Ysidra retained control over the human ruler of that civilization, who now serves as her pawn. These kings have already been encountered at various points in the story: one of them was possessing Prince Neslan, another had been the assassin of various fairy rulers, another was leading a gang of evil humans Claris had fought throughout the story, etc. Now these seven pawns of Ysidra are causing havoc on the surface world for fairies and humans alike, and one by one must be hunted down and defeated. With the threat of Ysidra now fully realized by all, humans and fairies begin cooperating once more, and Claris' party are no longer fugitives, but have the full support of nearly every person as they go on the final series of quests. Finally, six of the Kings are defeated and Claris' party mounts a final assault on Ysidra's other-dimensional stronghold. After a huge and complex final dungeon with numerous bosses, Claris' party reaches the core of Ysidra's evil essence and must defeat the final King (fused with all the others into a hideous monster), Ysidra, and then Ysidra's ultimate form in a three-stage final battle. Ysidra is at last defeated and the world is finally liberated from her evil influence. The new Fairy Queen Ashlyn and the human prince Finn marry to seal the new bond between humanity and fairykind alike, while Claris and Ephret also seem to be beginning a romance of their own. The world walks into a new and peaceful future together.

As the first major Squaresoft RPG since *Final Fantasy VII*, *Fairytale* is highly anticipated and it sells extremely well upon release, with excellent reviews that declare it one of the year's best RPGs to date along with *Panzer Dragoon Saga*. It eventually becomes the best-selling non-*Final Fantasy* RPG up to that point in North America, surpassing the sales of the hit games *Secret of Mana*, *Chrono Trigger*, and *Tale Phantasia*. It allows Squaresoft to keep its place as the King of RPGs, and is still favorably remembered as a classic RPG even into TTL's 2015, being remembered about as fondly as *Xenogears* is today, or perhaps moreso (since the game actually has a complete Disc 2 and a much more straightforward plot).

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In an age that saw a massive glut of 3D platformers, it was the rare game that rose above the maddening crowd to establish itself as a fun and unique game. Such was the case with the Ultra Nintendo's *Quixsters*, published by Acclaim and developed by Silver Sail (probably best known for its *Frederico* series). With *Quixsters*, Silver Sail diverted from the familiar *Frederico* formula. The game gets some comparisons to the Saturn's hit *Tick and Tock: Time Tricksters*, both for its somewhat similar title and its kid protagonists (though while *Time Tricksters* had two, *Quixsters* had four). What separated *Quixsters* from others in its genre was the fact that many of its missions could be accomplished in a very small amount of

time. Though the game did have a few large, open areas, most of its worlds were bite-sized, and missions were more aptly considered "micro-missions", with your goal being to get through a small but tricky area, fight a few monsters, collect a few items, that sort of thing. Many of these micro-worlds had a height element to them and had to be explored quickly but thoroughly, a lot of people compared the gameplay in these to the classic arcade title *Q\*bert*. There was another interesting element to *Quixsters* and that was the dynamic between the four protagonists. There was Dash, Leep, Dive, and the female of the group, Spin. These four kids were all quite hyperactive and while they were best friends, they were also fierce rivals, competing to see who could be the biggest hero among them. So in some levels, you actually had to "compete" with your rivals (sometimes one, sometimes two, sometimes all three) to accomplish the goal, and your rivals could collect weapons and fight you. The game was EXTREMELY good at making you both hate your fellow Quixsters and love them as well, you often got really pissed at them but the game wouldn't let you stay pissed at them forever. They were a lot more likeable than they were annoying, and for the final missions, the four worked together to accomplish their goal of saving the world. *Quixsters* had a variety of multiplayer modes: a straight up battle mode, a race mode, and also a competition mode where your friends took control of the other Quixsters to see who could complete the mission first. There was also a co-op mode, where you and your friends could work together. The multiplayer mode was fairly simple but quite fun, and joined *Goldeneye* as one of the Ultra Nintendo's most fun party games of the year.

*Quixsters* was hyped as one of the biggest kids' games of summer 1998. There was a time you couldn't turn on Nickelodeon without seeing a commercial for the game, or flip open a magazine without seeing those four lovable brats smiling and waving at you. The game ultimately sold a lot better than the Saturn's *Time Tricksters*, which was a major hit in its own right. The game even outsold the Squaresoft RPG classic *Fairytale* to become that July's top-selling new game. While the game WAS a bit on the kiddy side (even the trickier missions were fairly easy, the game's toughest missions weren't nearly as hard as some of the toughest *Super Mario Dimensions* stars, or even the later missions in games like *The Dreamers*), it proved popular with kids and adults alike, and became probably the most well known Silver Sail franchise alongside *Frederico*. It might've become the biggest kids' video game phenomenon of the year, if it weren't for that yellow rat and his 149 fellow *Pokemon* friends...

-excerpted from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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\*A family is at a "Sea World"-like amusement park, watching a fairly boring marine mammal show. A dolphin leaps up above the water, making a small splash.\*

Dad: Aren't the dolphins cool?

Girl: They're nowhere near as cool as Ecco! I just wish I was back home playing the new Sega Saturn game *Ecco: Blue Dream*....

\*Scenes from the game begin to play as the girl keeps talking.\*

Girl: There's a huge new ocean to explore, and awesome new 3D graphics that bring Ecco and his friends to life! You can explore huge caves, ancient underwater cities, and battle terrifying sea monster bosses in thrilling underwater battle royales!

Mom: Well, you're not going anywhere, we've got a full day planned! There's the dolphin show, and then your brother wants to ride the flying whale ride, and then we're gonna go back to the hotel and watch game shows together as a family.

Girl: \*she's pouting and despairing when suddenly, under the water...\*

Segata Sanshiro: \*wearing his karate outfit and a snorkel, he pops up from the water and gestures "You must play Sega Saturn!"\*

Girl: Segata Sanshiro!

Segata Sanshiro: \*leaps out of the water and throws the girl's parents into the dolphin pool, making a huge splash that the crowd cheers\*

Girl: Yeah!

\*Now Segata Sanshiro is seen riding a pair of dolphins around the pool like jet skis as the girl's wet parents lean against the sides of the pool, groaning\*

Parents: \*do the SEGA! Scream\*

-a commercial for *Ecco: Blue Dream* that aired in late June and early July 1998

Though *Ecco 3* for the Sega Mega Charger wrapped up the original *Ecco* trilogy quite nicely, the series gets a nice continuation in *Ecco: Blue Dream*. Ecco gets transported to an alternate dimension, one that takes place on an entirely oceanic Earth with a huge civilization underneath the waves. When trouble threatens the peaceful undersea life, Ecco must summon his courage to defend this alternate world while also looking for a way back home.

This game is gorgeous from a graphical perspective and features some of the Saturn's best music as well. The *Ecco* series has always been a way for Sega to flex its technical muscles, and that doesn't change with *Blue Dream*. The quest IS fairly short, even though it's chock full of secrets and harrowing battles, so if you blaze right through it, you might find yourself beating the main quest before you know it. However, there's lots of ocean to explore, and plenty of optional things to do if you're so inclined. The game has a big focus on exploration, and encourages you to go off the beaten path before you reach your next goal. Also, depending on what optional quests you undertake, you can experience one of three possible endings. The default ending is nice, but if you do pretty much everything, you can unlock the "true" ending, which ties up all the loose ends really neatly and is a great payoff for those who've been following the series through its four games. *Ecco: Blue Dream* is a worthy successor to the series' legacy, and a really fun and beautiful game to boot.

Official Rating: 9/10

-excerpted from the review of *Ecco: Blue Dream* in the July 1998 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

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*Skylein II: The World Beyond* was the sequel to the hit Mega Charger game *Lords of Skylein*, an epic 50-hour RPG that was one of the last great Genesis hits and one of the few

Genesis RPGs to truly stand among the great classics featured on the Super Nintendo and its CD peripheral. Did it live up to that game? In a word, no. Though *Skylein II* did feature some very nice graphics (comparable to the gorgeous Enix hit *Planetary Probe*), the plot was extremely uninspired and the gameplay itself made no major strides over the first game. In *Skylein II*, you once again journey from a massive skysoaring continent to the world below, but unlike in the first game, which was ripe with political intrigue and had very memorable characters, in *Skylein II* you're largely flitting from one quest to the next, driven only by events that pop up suddenly. The game made very very liberal use of fetch quests, which was also a flaw that *Lufia II: Rise of the Sinistrals* on the SNES-CD had, though *Lufia II* had great characters and an entertaining plot. *Skylein II* has none of that and is mostly a very pretty game which is very shallow underneath. The game spans three discs, largely because it makes use of lots of cutscenes, which are voiced by a fairly pedestrian cast of unknowns that don't distinguish any of the characters. The only real joy for fans of the original in this game are a few well-placed cameos by some of the original cast, now 50 years older but no worse for wear from the original game (two of them even join your party, and you should make it a point to use them as much as you can to see their dialogue which is some of the most interesting in the game).

*Skylein II: The World Beyond* looked even worse because it came out right at the same time as the Ultra Nintendo's *Fairytale*, an epic RPG full of great characters, a plot full of surprising twists, and one of the greatest soundtracks in video game history. Us Saturn owners who thought we were getting the better of the two (I remember making fun of some Ultra Nintendo-owning school chums who were playing it, saying that their RPG was "full of fairies") were shocked and then dismayed when we realized how much better *Fairytale* truly was. *Skylein II* didn't just disappoint as the sequel to an RPG classic, its failure probably killed the franchise. *Skylein* was supposed to join *Shining* and *Phantasy Star* as a premiere Sega-exclusive RPG series, but *Skylein II* was one of the most disappointing RPGs of 1998, and was a major signal to Saturn owners that RPGs were one genre that Nintendo was just better in. Owning the Ring did bump *Skylein II*'s graphics up a bit (though not to *Final Fantasy VII*'s level), and Ring owners DID get to enjoy the far superior Saturn RPG *Angels*, something we'll cover in a later article.

-an article on the "Reminiscences of a Sega Fanboy" blog, posted on January 23, 2012

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Who says the Super Nintendo CD is dead? Not anybody who's played the fantastic new platformer/shooter *Sphere Soldier*. The game released in Japan in early 1997 and gained a cult following, and now it's finally here on American shores in all its glory. *Sphere Soldier* is about a young man named Gunner Ray who finds a mysterious glowing orb in the wreck of an alien spaceship. He soon discovers that the orb can take the form of a sword, a gun, or many different other weapons, but he also soon discovers that the alien civilization whom the orb belong to want it back...and they're going after Ray's planet for revenge. Ray must defend his friends and his home from the alien hordes, battling across 18 different levels as he unlocks new powers for the orb. There's a boss in each level, and sometimes multiple mini-bosses in some levels, making the game one of the most action packed run and gun sidescrollers in quite a while.

Ray can switch between various weapons and his sword depending on which enemies he's fighting. Enemies are color coded based on their attack type, and certain weapons are stronger against certain enemies. After the first two levels, Ray gets assistance from his girlfriend/tech geek Melissa, who gives him advice on where to go and what to do via the

use of in-game mini-cutsscenes that appear in the corner of your screen. The one major flaw with this game is the voice acting, it's very low quality and lines are often delivered as if the actors are bored, even in cutsscenes that are supposed to be very dramatic. Apart from this presentation flaw, *Sphere Soldier* is a pitch-perfect game that excels on every level, and might just be the best SNES-CD game of the year.

Rating: 5/5 stars

-from a review of *Sphere Soldier* in the August 1998 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

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While the Owen Hart/Shawn Michaels and Stone Cold/Undertaker feuds were building toward their eventual showdowns at Summerslam '98, *WWF War Zone* was brawling its way onto the Ultra Nintendo (and later on, the Sega Saturn). *War Zone* featured 20 different wrestlers as well as a Create-A-Wrestler mode, the first such mode to come to a WWF game (*Fire Pro Wrestling Presents WCW Monday Nitro* had previously been the first WCW game to have such a mode when it debuted on the SNES-CD). While *War Zone* had its flaws, it was still a lot of fun. The Ultra Nintendo version featured the Superstars' full entrance themes and videos, another wrestling game first. It also featured an exclusive storyline mode which let you pick between a Stone Cold Steve Austin face-based story, a Rock heel-based story, or a generic created wrestler story where you took your created wrestler from being a jobber to winning the WWF championship. You could also use any of the roster for this generic story, even Stone Cold or the Rock.

By the summer of 1998, the WWF had started to overtake the WCW as the #1 wrestling federation, despite some electric storylines featuring Bret Hart and the continuation of Goldberg's epic winning streak. By the end of July, Goldberg was starting to become a WCW title contender (the original plan at the time was for Goldberg to win the title early that month, but Hogan being a backstage prima-donna delayed the title win for several months...though Goldberg's title chase did end up giving the WCW a few more wins over WWF on Monday nights in the leadup to the massively over wrestler finally winning the title). WWF's increasing fortunes in the squared circle were reflecting themselves in the video game arena: it's largely accepted that the WWF wrestling games of the time were better than the WCW wrestling games (despite the earlier *WCW/NWO Revenge* on the Ultra Nintendo being a massive seller). That same month, a new *Fire Pro Wrestling WCW* game came out on the SNES-CD, but it paled in comparison to *WWF War Zone* in both sales and critical reception. 1998 was the year when WWF truly exploded onto the mainstream in a way it hadn't since Hulkamania back in the 1980s, and it had superstars like Stone Cold Steve Austin and The Rock to thank for that. It was also the era that would give wrestling and video game fans some of the best WWF games of all time.

-from an article on "Electronic Rumble: The Site For Wrestling Games", posted on February 27, 2013

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The summer of 1998 was a big time for *The X-Files* franchise. The show was moving from its fifth season to its sixth, leaving a massive cliffhanger that would be resolved in a feature film that debuted that summer. Called *The X-Files: Fight The Future*, the film follows the closure of the X-Files unit that Mulder and Scully were part of, and revolves around a coverup of an event that led to the deaths of hundreds of tourists in New York City. The

investigation into the coverup leads Mulder and Scully to pursue a mysterious government agent who turns out to be a member of an ancient group of individuals who can both create and travel between alternate timelines. Mulder and Scully's longtime nemesis, the Cigarette Smoking Man, is discovered to have knowledge of these rifts in time, but at the end of the film, he is killed, not by Mulder or Scully but by the agent, who escapes into a rift near the end of the film, setting up the events of future seasons. The movie represents a noticeable shift in tone for the series, both advancing its storyline involving extraterrestrial beings (the Syndicate, which was covering up the existence of extraterrestrial life, is only part of the conspiracy, the alien beings they were covering up for have an enemy within their own civilization, an enemy that Scully eventually makes contact with at the end of season 6) and introducing the idea of alternate timelines to the series (the agent who killed the Cigarette Smoking Man is from a timeline where the Tunguska impact destroyed New York City in the early 20th century). The series would continue to film in Vancouver until the end of its run (originally, David Duchovny wanted the series to move to Los Angeles to be closer to his wife Tea Leoni, but marital tensions which were exacerbated by Leoni losing the lead role in the blockbuster film *Deep Impact* led to Duchovny withdrawing his request and would eventually lead to his divorce from Leoni in 1999), which lasted for nine seasons total, ending in 2002.

The *X-Files* video game, which is notable for being the first Ultra Nintendo game to span three discs, explored the "alternate timelines" storyline more thoroughly, serving as a sort of sequel to the film and a prequel to the sixth season. In it, Mulder and Scully pursue a young woman who might herself be from an alternate dimension. Eventually, they discover that she is Joan of Arc, who was rescued from being burned at the stake and brought to modern times by the mysterious agent from the film. The "rescue", however, has caused catastrophic consequences for her original dimension, which has been locked in a rapidly escalating 500 year religious war, relics from which are leaking into Mulder and Scully's dimension through various time rifts. The convoluted storyline and outdated point-and-click gameplay turned off a lot of casual video game players, and even hardcore series fans had trouble finding things to love about the game. Ultimately, though it tied into the events of the movie and of the sixth season, it wasn't necessary to enjoy the show itself, and most people passed on the game, which is now somewhat of a collector's item among *X-Files* fans.

-excerpted from an article "The X-Files' Big Summer" on TVLookBack.com, posted on July 13, 2014

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Alex Stansfield: It's epic, it's beautiful, it's supremely engaging, *Fairytale* might just be the best RPG of the year.

Brittany Saldita: Yeah, and I'm in full agreement with you, I was blown away by how beautiful this game was.

Alex: You know, I was going into *Fairytale* expecting some kind of...you know, *Fern Gully*, kinda over-the-top, moralistic thing, you know what I mean? But what I got was a really epic story with so many twists and turns that I'd be spoiling just to reveal anything past the first 25 percent of the game.

Brittany: And, I mean, what did you expect from the people who did *Chrono Trigger*?

Alex: Right. I mean, not all the Dream Project people are there, no Akira Toriyama, no Hiranobu Sakaguchi, but a lot of the Chrono people worked on this game and it definitely shows, in the battle system, in the music...

Brittany: And some of the music is just amazingly beautiful. All of the character themes are perfect. Claris' theme in particular, it's just this quiet sort of piece but it builds up, there's a real strength to it which kind of shows her own kind of passive strength. And then there's Virtuosa's theme, which is so spirited and bouncy and it makes me happy every time I hear it.

Alex: Virtuosa is a LOT of fun.

Brittany: This game, this game has some scary moments. I don't know if I'd let young kids play this game. Swearing and Claris' partial nudity right at the start of the game aside, there are some utterly terrifying monsters in this game! I was thrilled, but this game could easily give a young child nightmares.

Alex: Well, to be fair, I think we all saw horror movies as kids that gave us nightmares. What's being a kid without being scared outta your wits by a creepy monster?

Brittany: True, true, just know that there are some dark corners in these deceptively beautiful woods. Oooh, what about the voice acting? Most of these people I've never heard of, but, you know, the referee from *Guts* is back, and....and...Aladdin is in this game! The guy who voiced Aladdin is in this game.

Alex: No kidding?

Brittany: No kidding!

Lyssa Fielding: \*pokes her head in\* Full disclosure, I dated him for like a year.

Alex: Seriously?

Lyssa: Yeah, right after the movie came out, we totally dated. \*puts her hand up to her ear like a phone and mouths "call me!" to the camera\*

Alex: \*snickers\* I wonder what your pickup line was, something about letting him rub your magic lamp, maybe?

Brittany: \*elbows Alex and glares at him\*

Lyssa: Nope! I just walked up to him and was like, "Hey, I'm Lyssa!"

Alex: Really? That's your pickup line?

Lyssa: It still is!

Brittany: I can totally vouch for her, it still is her pickup line.

Alex: Well, we better give this game a score before Lyssa tries to pick ME up. I'm giving *Fairytale* a perfect 5, it's a true classic RPG and a must play for any Ultra Nintendo owner.

Brittany: Yeah, it's getting a 5 from me too. It's an epic quest with beautiful graphics and great music, everything a great RPG should have.

\*The siren goes off\*

Lyssa: Oooh, oooh, oooh! Another one for the wall!

Brittany: That's right, *Fairytale*'s the newest member of the GameTV Hall of Fame!

\*Alex and Brittany go up to put a framed copy of *Fairytale* on the wall, while Ted and Gary join Lyssa and the others along with them.\*

Alex: Go ahead Lyssa, we'll let you hang this one up.

Lyssa: \*she hangs it neatly up on the wall next to *Goldeneye*\* Is that seriously the fifth Ultra Nintendo game we've put up here?

Alex: Yeah, five in only nine months, that little black box is on a roll!

(...)

Lyssa: All scariness aside, *Ecco: Blue Dream* is a really good game. A little bit short, but really quite sweet.

Ted Crosley: Yeah, *Ecco* is really fun, and, you know, it might be short but there's a lot to do, *Ecco* has a lot of new moves and there are plenty of tough bosses to extend your play sessions.

Lyssa: Right, some of those bosses can get pretty frustrating but the game is really good at letting you know what to do, you'll always have the item you need before any fight.

\*A quick scene from the game shows Ecco fighting a massive skeletal crocodile, the crocodile roars and Ecco drops a bomb into his mouth.\*

Ted: That little dolphin moves really fast!

Lyssa: Yeah, some people say Flipper is faster than lightning, but Ecco is WAY faster than Flipper and I think he's a lot cuter too. Hey, have you ever done the dolphin encounter thing, where you get to ride the dolphin and he takes you under the water? It's so amazing, you absolutely have to try it.

Ted: I think I'm gonna pass on that, people will laugh at me if they see me riding a dolphin.

Lyssa: No, nononono, they're gonna say "look, it's Ted, he's riding a dolphin, that's so cool!"

Ted: If it was Ecco, I might ride him, I mean at least it would be an exciting ride. I'd be dead in a few minutes-

Lyssa: Eaten by a giant sea monster maybe. \*snickers\*

Ted: But it'd be a fun way to go. And speaking of fun, I'm giving *Ecco: Blue Dream* a solid 4 out of 5.

Lyssa: I'm going a bit higher, I'm giving it a 4.5, it's the latest great game in one of Sega's best franchises.

-excerpted from the July 14, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Lyssa: \*sticking her tongue out and blowing raspberries\*

Gary Westhouse: You didn't like *Swordslayer*?

Lyssa: It's just another beat-em-up!

Gary: You know, I thought it was really cool. The graphics were great, the main character, he was a LOT of fun....

Lyssa: Generic badass ninja dude out for revenge, *Ninja Gaiden* does that so much better.

Gary: But no *Ninja Gaiden* game has ever looked this amazing or moved this fast. And, and, AND it's a lot more accessible in terms of difficulty than *Ninja Gaiden*.

Lyssa: Okay, yeah, that is a plus. Now look... Brittany, she LOVES the hard games. And I like the hard games, and Gary, I know you like the hard games because you've played so many Neo-Geo fighters and they're cheap as hell.

Gary: Oh yeah.

Lyssa: But it is nice to have a beat-em-up where you actually feel really powerful. You're mowing down guys left and right. BUT....it does get old.

Gary: I had so much fun cutting through waves of hundreds of enemies that it took a long time for it to get old for me. Look, yes, *Swordslayer* has generic gameplay and repetitive levels, but it looks really awesome and the plot is... well, just plain cool. You feel like such a badass, getting revenge for this ninja whose family is just brutally murdered at the start of the game...

Lyssa: \*makes an angry face\* Oooh, I'm a ninja, they killed my family, I want revenge, hurrerrgggg ggguuurrerrggg urrrrrggggghhh....

Gary: That is not what he sounds like. He's more like... \*does a much more serious ninja voice\* I must avenge my family's deaths...I will make them all pay...

Lyssa: I will make them all pay...hurrerrggg.... gurrerrggg....

Gary: What, is he supposed to be all constipated too? Because that's what you sound like, you sound constipated.

Lyssa: That's what ALL the protagonists in these kinds of games sound like. I'm starting to think maybe their families didn't die, they're just all really constipated and embarrassed to admit it, so they have to make up a reason why they sound like that.

Gary: ...you know, that's actually not a bad theory. But anyway, I give *Swordslayer* a 4 out of 5, it's an awesome looking game and you feel really awesome playing it.

Lyssa: I give it a 3, it's perfectly adequate but there are much better Saturn sidescrollers out there.

(...)

Alex: So what exactly went wrong with *Pulseman 2*?

Ted: Just a bunch of little things that kind of added up. The original *Pulseman* was really fun, really creative, it had a lot in common with *Mega Man* but really distinguished itself, good pacing, challenging levels, just a really fun little action game. Here, I'm not sure what *Pulseman 2* is trying to be. You've got sidescrolling levels but you've also got 3-D levels, the game has a more open-ended structure but doesn't give you good indications of where to go, the music's really nice but the graphics are a bit shoddy for the Ultra...

Alex: Yeah, I mean it's NOT a bad game, but it's not as good as the first and certainly not as good as it could have been. I almost wish it would've tried to be a little more like *Mega Man* than trying less to be like *Mega Man*.

Ted: Yeah, um, it lost a lot of its charm and turned into just kind of a generic action game. Like, okay, okay, and some of the levels are really barren of enemies, or obstacles, or....they're just...

Alex: There?

Ted: Level 3 for instance, it's a 3-D level but you can wander around huge segments of it and not find anything of note, like they tried padding the level to make it seem bigger than it really is. Or level 6, it's a 2-D platforming level but again, there are whole segments where nothing happens, just a few easy jumps, maybe a hidden power-up...

Alex: The plot, at least, was all right. The voice acting was good, the presentation was enhanced...

Ted: I like the in-world cutscenes now but hearing Beatrice tell you the same thing over and over and over when you're trying to find something interesting gets REALLY old.

\*A scene shows Pulseman aimlessly wandering around Level 2 as Beatrice keeps telling him how to charge up his new weapon\*

Ted: Like seriously, shut the (expletive) up!

Alex: Calm down, calm down.

\*Another scene plays showing Beatrice snapping "Don't take that tone with me, I'm warning you!"\*

Ted: Well, I'm calm enough to give *Pulseman 2* a 3 out of 5. Maybe next time they'll get the hang of what a next-generation game is supposed to be.

Alex: I'm giving it a nice solid 3.5. It's got some really good moments, the last three levels

are great, you just have to slog through a fairly boring game to get to them.

-excerpted from the July 21, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: July 1998**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Chrono Trigger
3. Donkey Kong Country 4
4. Tale Phantasia
5. The Three Caballeros
6. Super Mario World 2
7. Lufia III: The Ancient Tower
8. SaGa Frontier
9. Winged Wonder
10. Super Mario Kart

### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: July 1998**

1. Goldeneye 007
2. Final Fantasy VII
3. Super Mario Dimensions
4. Ken Griffey Jr.'s Ultra Grand Slam
5. Ultra Mario Kart
6. Final Fantasy Tactics
7. Resident Evil
8. Yoshi's Story
9. Serratopia
10. Deepground

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Charts: July 1998**

1. Tekken 3
2. Quake
3. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
4. Resident Evil 2
5. Panzer Dragoon Saga
6. Ecco: Blue Dream
7. Tomb Raider II
8. Skylein II: The World Beyond
9. Race'n'Chase: London
10. Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted

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### **Sailor Moon S (Toonami, 1999)**

The Mysterious New Guardians (March 15, 1999)  
A Heart Reborn (March 16, 1999)  
Haruka's Secret (March 17, 1999)  
The Graceful Genius (March 18, 1999)  
Protect The Pure Heart (March 19, 1999)  
Blinded By Love (March 22, 1999)  
A Cold Mission (March 23, 1999)  
Michiru Makes Waves (March 24, 1999)  
The Bonds Of Friendship (March 25, 1999)  
Heart On Fire (March 26, 1999)  
Transit Of Venus (March 29, 1999)  
The Glass Slipper (March 30, 1999)  
Moon Crisis (March 31, 1999)  
A Little Transformation (April 1, 1999)  
Chibi-usa's New Friend (April 2, 1999)  
Makoto's Quest For Power (April 5, 1999)  
Story Of The Sky Guardian (April 6, 1999)  
Artistic Love (April 7, 1999)  
The Moon Waltz (April 8, 1999)  
Revelations (April 9, 1999)  
The Twin Talismans (April 12, 1999)  
Reawakening (April 13, 1999)  
Child Of Light And Darkness (April 14, 1999)  
A Silent Horror (April 15, 1999)  
The Beautiful Mimete (April 16, 1999)  
Darkness Rises (April 19, 1999)  
Shelter In The Storm (April 20, 1999)  
Hotaru's Love Letter (April 21, 1999)  
The Master Of Games (April 22, 1999)  
Silence Rising (April 23, 1999)  
Mystery Of Mugen Academy (April 26, 1999)  
The Wicked Flower (April 27, 1999)  
Ami's Nanotech Nightmare (April 28, 1999)  
The Savior Awakens (April 29, 1999)  
Sacrifice (April 30, 1999)  
The Shooting Star (May 3, 1999)  
Hotaru's Second Chance (May 4, 1999)  
The Purest Heart (May 5, 1999)

### **Sailor Moon Super S (Toonami, 2000)**

The Dark Moon Circus (January 3, 2000)  
Pegasus Power (January 4, 2000)  
Dream Crisis! (January 5, 2000)  
The Trap (January 6, 2000)  
A Perfect Love (January 7, 2000)  
A New Kitten (January 10, 2000)  
A Moonlit Pegasus (January 11, 2000)

Teaching Chibi-usa (January 12, 2000)  
Usagi's Secret Mission (January 13, 2000)  
The Beautiful Fairy (January 14, 2000)  
The Dream Car (January 17, 2000)  
Clash Of Steel (January 18, 2000)  
Out Of Fashion (January 19, 2000)  
Minako's Double Date (January 20, 2000)  
A Lonely Woman's Tale (January 21, 2000)  
Super Sailors Strike! (January 24, 2000)  
The Girl In The Ocean Breeze (January 25, 2000)  
Prima Donna (January 26, 2000)  
The Runaway Princess (January 27, 2000)  
Makoto's True Love? (January 28, 2000)  
An Enemy In Need (January 31, 2000)  
The Mirror Of Dreams (February 1, 2000)  
The Amazoness Quartet (February 2, 2000)  
Computer Conflict (February 3, 2000)  
Mars' New Passion (February 4, 2000)  
Dangerous Dentistry (February 7, 2000)  
Venus vs. Jupiter (February 8, 2000)  
A Leap Into Danger (February 9, 2000)  
True Reflection (February 10, 2000)  
Pegasus' Betrayal? (February 11, 2000)  
The Truth About Pegasus (February 14, 2000)  
Rhapsody Of Love (February 15, 2000)  
The Dreams Of Everyone (February 16, 2000)  
Queen Of Darkness (February 17, 2000)  
Amazoness Ascension (February 18, 2000)  
The Mirror Maze (February 21, 2000)  
The Darkest Spell (February 22, 2000)  
Explosion Of Dreams (February 23, 2000)  
Sweetest Dreams (February 24, 2000)

### **Sailor Stars (Toonami, 2000-2001)**

Nehelena's Nightmare (Part 1) (November 24, 2000)  
Nehelena's Nightmare (Part 2) (November 24, 2000)  
Nehelena's Nightmare (Part 3) (November 24, 2000) (Note: Similarly to the "End Of Days"  
*Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest* finale special in 1998, the first three episodes of *Sailor Stars* air as a Toonami day after Thanksgiving special movie event called Nehelena's Nightmare)  
Illusions Without End (November 27, 2000)  
Echoes Of Friendship (November 28, 2000)  
Eternal Light (November 29, 2000)  
The Mysterious Stars (November 30, 2000)  
Stars In School (December 1, 2000)  
Minako The Idol (December 4, 2000)  
Seiya's Fury (December 5, 2000)  
Taiki's Comet (December 6, 2000)  
Yaten's Pet (December 7, 2000)

Cooking By Starlight (December 8, 2000)  
Michiru In Concert (December 11, 2000)  
Seiya And Usagi's Night Out (December 12, 2000)  
A Dangerous Duo (December 13, 2000)  
The Lakeside Monster (December 14, 2000)  
Sleepover Crashers (December 15, 2000)  
A Believer's Song (February 19, 2001)  
A Sweet Mystery (February 20, 2001)  
Chibi-Chibi's True Power (February 21, 2001)  
Fight Or Flight (February 22, 2001)  
Conflict Of Interest (February 23, 2001)  
Song Of Truth (February 26, 2001)  
The New Wave (February 27, 2001)  
Minako's New Dream (February 28, 2001)  
The Lost Princess (March 1, 2001)  
The Light Of Hope (March 2, 2001)  
The Ultimate Enemy (March 5, 2001)  
A Tragic Battle (March 6, 2001)  
Ruler Of The Galaxy (March 7, 2001)  
One Last Gambit (March 8, 2001)  
Moonlight Forever (Part 1) (March 9, 2001)  
Moonlight Forever (Part 2) (March 9, 2001) (Note: The final two episodes of the series air on the same day as part of a Toonami special event in which all four seasons' previous final battle episodes air before the series finale. Usagi's nudity during the final battle is edited with a white one-piece, though it covers only as much skin as is necessary to cover and is elaborately decorated. Cartoon Network airs the unedited version of these episodes only once, at 2 AM in the morning as part of an Adult Swim preview special in May 2001 with heavy warnings throughout the episode and a TV-MA rating, the TV-MA box stays in the upper left corner of the screen throughout the airing.)

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(And here's another brief bonus update on another Toonami show, this one being *The Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest*. IOTL, the show ended after two seasons and didn't get any sort of real finale. ITTL, the show does get a third and final season of 26 episodes, which wrap up the show's recurring plotlines as much as they possibly can. The final season is a two year timeskip from the previous two seasons, taking place in Jonny, Hadji, and Jessie's last year of high school, with the finale special taking place during their freshman year of college.)

**Echoes (Part 1)** (March 27, 1998)

*Things have been rather quiet for the Quest clan over the last few months, but that peace and quiet is shattered when Dr. Zin and his daughters return for their final revenge. Can Jonny and his friends stop Zin's evil plans once and for all?*

**Echoes (Part 2)** (April 3, 1998)

*Dr. Zin's plans have thrown the Quests and their allies' lives into disarray. Now, Race, Jonny, and Jessie must team up to save Dr. Quest and Hadji from Zin AND stop his daughters' plans to cause a massive earthquake in San Francisco.*

**Reap The Whirlwind** (April 10, 1998)

*The Quest clan travels to Kansas, where unnatural weather phenomenon are occurring. When a mad scientist plans to unleash the world's worst tornado on Wichita, the Quests may be in for their most dangerous mission yet.*

**Fly By Night** (April 17, 1998)

*Jonny and Jessie's impromptu date is compromised when the experimental car they're riding in proves to have a mind of its own.*

**Terminal Program** (April 24, 1998)

*Dr. Quest's latest excursion into Questworld is threatened when a group of teenage hackers (one of them is Hadji's new crush Priyanka) unwittingly cause malicious entities to appear in the program.*

**Albion** (May 1, 1998)

*The Quest clan is exploring an ancient British ruin that may be connected to the legend of King Arthur when they are attacked by vicious knights.*

**Chessmaster** (May 8, 1998)

*Hadji and Priyanka are competing in a chess tournament, but intrigue soon erupts when there is an assassination attempt on the world chess champion.*

**Clockwork Powerhouse** (May 15, 1998)

*Jeremiah Surd hatches a plan to steal the world's most accurate atomic clock, which is unknowingly housing a dangerous new element.*

**Apex Predator** (May 22, 1998)

*Jezebel Jade and Race Bannon are abducted by mysterious black helicopters and taken to an island where they must work together to escape the world's most dangerous hunter.*

**The Vengeful Spirit Of Roanoke Island** (May 29, 1998)

*While on a school trip to Roanoke, Jonny, Jessie, and Hadji discover that the disappearance of the ancient colony there might not have been an entirely natural occurrence...*

**The Devil's Machine** (June 5, 1998)

*The Quest clan is investigating ancient ruins in Turkey, only to come across a hideous monster that may be only the tip of a very huge iceberg...*

**Undercover** (June 12, 1998)

*Zin's daughters, held in separate prisons, make a deal with the authorities in order to be put in a cell together: a dangerous undercover mission with Dr. Quest and Race to infiltrate a group of terrorists who are planning to wreak havoc at a world expo.*

**Rage Against The Heavens** (June 19, 1998)

*The Quest clan is horrified when the seemingly impossible has happened: Ezekiel Rage has been sighted despite having been certainly killed during his previous plot. The Quests must investigate these Rage sightings before his next evil plan comes to fruition.*

**Ripples In The Stream** (June 26, 1998)

*The Quest clan must dive into Questworld to prevent a worldwide ocean catastrophe.*

**World Under The Ice** (July 10, 1998)

*Dr. Quest goes on a mission under a frozen Antarctic lake to discover the mysteries below, but what lies underneath could threaten the entire world.*

**Universitas** (July 17, 1998)

*Jessie and Priyanka are touring a college together, but when it is attacked by an armed gang working for Surd, the two must evade capture while trying to discover the reason why Surd's men would be taking so many students hostage.*

**The Forest For The Trees** (July 24, 1998)

*A mission into the Amazon rainforest turns into a fight for survival when the Quest clan is caught between a battle between heavily armed mercenaries and natives armed with supernatural powers.*

**Queen Of The Nile** (July 31, 1998)

*Jonny, Jessie, and Hadji are exploring an ancient pyramid when they discover a secret kingdom ruled by a woman who claims to be the lost queen Nefertiti, who supposedly died many millennia ago.*

**The Gray Forgotten** (August 7, 1998)

*The team goes into Questworld in order to probe the mind of a 107-year-old scientist who holds the secret to preventing a worldwide ecological disaster, discovering a twisted mindscape along the way.*

**Of Diamonds And Darkness** (August 14, 1998)

*Race, Estella, Jessie, and Jezebel are all trapped together in a mine collapse and must try to escape while working out their collective issues.*

**The Great Panic** (August 21, 1998)

*Chaos erupts after a hacker brings down the New York Stock Exchange, threatening to*

*destroy the world economy. Hadji is torn between friendships when his girlfriend Priyanka is suspected to be the hacker.*

**Questfall** (August 28, 1998)

*Questworld is going completely haywire, due to the final, desperate plans of Jeremiah Surd, now on his deathbed. Dr. Quest must make the ultimate sacrifice to prevent Surd from causing a terrible apocalypse.*

**Desperate Times** (September 4, 1998)

*Jonny and Jessie are kidnapped by a gang of criminals who want revenge on Dr. Quest and Race. While Dr. Quest, Race, and Hadji mount a rescue attempt, Jonny and Jessie must work together in order to get out alive.*

**End Of Days (Part 1)** (November 27, 1998)

*Jonny, Jessie, and Hadji are starting out in college, but they soon stumble across a plot to cause worldwide destruction and must somehow convince the only person who can do something about it to believe them.*

**End Of Days (Part 2)** (November 27, 1998)

*As disasters cause panic around the globe, an old friend returns and Dr. Quest and Race do their best to help the kids find the villain causing these deadly attacks.*

**End Of Days (Part 3)** (November 27, 1998)

*The true cause of the disasters threatening to destroy humanity is revealed. The Quest clan and their allies must work together to prevent billions of deaths. Tough decisions are made and sacrifices are inevitable with the future of the planet hanging in the balance.*

-

*"It was overwhelming to see how many people were so eagerly anticipating Ballistic Limit 2! It put a great deal of pressure on me and my team to get this game right."*

*-Tomoharu Kimura, creator of the Ballistic Limit series in an interview in the August 1998 issue of Famitsu magazine*

*"RPGs were undoubtedly a massive influence on this game. I didn't set out initially to create a Mega Man RPG, but that's the direction that inspiration took me."*

*-Keiji Inafune, in a December 1998 interview with Electronic Gaming Monthly about Mega Man Legends*

*"Mega Man is Capcom's #1 franchise, and now it's the Month of Mega Man!"*

*-from a Mega Man commercial that aired in North America in summer 1998*

*"My husband, at the time, he was way into Guns 'n Roses, so if I had gotten the chance to*

*name the bosses in that game, I probably would've given them names related to the band. But I was too busy doing both work for Capcom and work for Activision on their new Jewels of the Realm game for the Ultra, so I didn't really have time to come up with any kind of boss names or anything like that."*

-Alyson Court, in a 2011 web interview where the subject of *Mega Man X5* came up

*"There was no question that the Ultra Nintendo could handle Diablo. But would Nintendo gamers get it? That was the big question."*

-Eric Sexton, in the July 23, 2013 episode of the Alex Stansfield podcast on Gamesovermatter.com

*"Guys, I gotta tell ya...if we do this, we're never comin' home."*

-Ash Beckland, *Ballistic Limit 2*

*"Screw going home. If we don't do this, we wouldn't have a home to go back to anyway."*

-Sara, *Ballistic Limit 2*

-

*\*"All Along The Watchtower" by Jimi Hendrix begins to play as scenes from *Ballistic Limit 2* are shown.\**

*There must be some kinda way outta here...*

*\*Ash Beckland is shown blasting a group of skittering mantis-like bug enemies that are coming at him from all sides.\**

*Said the joker to the thief...*

*\*Ash goes into first-person Ballistic Mode as he blasts a large, bull-like beast spewing some kind of red acid.\**

*There's too much confusion...*

*\*Ash leaps onto a large rock outcropping just in time to avoid some huge armored beast rolling rapidly at him.\**

*I can't get no relief...*

*\*A rendered cutscene now plays as Ash and some of his comrades look around their desolate surroundings under a triple sun. The song continues to play, as do scenes from the game, as text also begins to appear on screen.\**

**Voted Best In Show At E3 By Next Generation Magazine**

**The Sequel To The Acclaimed Science-Fiction Video Game**

**Over 3 Million Copies Sold Worldwide**

*\*A cutscene plays of Ash holding a crying Sara to his chest.\**

Ash: We will get out of this...we will save our home...even if there's no going back for us.

\*Ash, Sara, Danny, and another soldier are firing at an enormous beast which sticks its arms into the ground and begins to churn up the rock underneath, sucking Ash down.\*

## **BALLISTIC LIMIT 2**

**August 25**

*All along the watchtower...*

\*robotic noises\* ***Nin-ten-do***

-the commercial for *Ballistic Limit 2*, which began airing in August 1998

### **Ballistic Limit 2: The Basics**

*Ballistic Limit 2* is the sequel to the hit 1995 video game by Sony, continuing Ash Beckland's adventures as he and a group of soldiers and technicians, including his love interest Sara, his best friend Danny, and his scientist friend Reeve, venture out from Earth and its colonies to explore a distant planet in a far corner of the galaxy. The game takes the series into full 3-D, alternating between third-person shooter gameplay and first-person shooter mode (when Ash enters Ballistic Mode). The combat system is adapted to the change in gameplay format, rather than being a level-based sidescroller like the first one, the game is a mission-based, open-world shooter. It's somewhat between *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* and OTL *Metroid Prime* in terms of gameplay, it's not a completely open world, and areas are delineated fairly well as to where you need to go. Instead of carrying only three weapons at a time, you collect weapons throughout the game and carry them all with you, switching back and forth as you go. You still have one button assigned to firing your main ranged weapon, one button assigned to an explosive/special weapon, and another button assigned to a melee weapon, and once again, Ash can enter a special first-person Ballistic Mode where your weapon will take on a different, more powerful function for a limited amount of time. Unlike in the first game, you can strafe and move around while in Ballistic Mode, making for a much more effective, versatile form of combat. From time to time, your companions will join you in battle, and though they have life bars and can be knocked out, you aren't penalized for your companion dying during a fight, other than having to go the rest of the fight without them. The world is divided into fourteen different "areas", though you can only travel within the area relevant to your current mission. Like in the original game, you can go back and replay missions. *Ballistic Limit 2* features some of the best graphics seen up to that point on the Ultra Nintendo, comparable with the graphics featured in *The Dreamers*, with what is considered incredible draw distance up to that point on a home console and some very highly detailed and large boss enemies, the boss fights are in fact considered a highlight of the game. The game features the voice cast returning from the original, including Michael Masee as Ash Beckland, Peta Wilson as Sara, and Ross Hull as Reeve. In addition, there are three other "main" characters in the game: Ken Braddock (voiced by Adam Baldwin, who was cast in this game just before obtaining the role of Green Lantern, the fact that he's become a much bigger star during the game's development is a big coup for it), Elia Fannell (voiced by Irene Bedard), and the young soldier-in-training Chris Selvers (voiced by Will Friedle). The game's atmospheric soundtrack isn't a standout, but is capable of conveying the mood of certain levels and scenes.

The plot of the game involves Ash and his crew of nine making their way to a strange planet. After the events of *Ballistic Limit*, mankind has begun recolonizing Earth, but Reeve

has identified the presence of a virus on this strange planet that can survive in space and is a threat to mankind's expansion through the galaxy if it is not destroyed. Ash and the crew soon arrive on the desolate planet, only to be quickly overrun by hideous creatures, the threat of the virus far worse than initially believed. The virus kills two of the crew members and scatters the others, leaving Ash to fend for himself for a time before reuniting with Ken and Elia. After another couple of missions, Ken falls victim to an infected creature, sacrificing himself to save Ash and Elia. Ash and Elia reunite with Sara and the others, and for a time are seemingly safe. Elia tries an experiment to try and track down the source of the virus, but when she doesn't return, Ash, Sara, Danny, Reeve, and Chris go out and find her body (and are attacked by a huge, hideous creature which they barely survive). The five return to their ship and realize that because of their multiple exposures to the alien virus, they'll be unable to ever return to the Sol system because of the risk of spreading it to humanity. They must stay and complete their mission, even though they'll never see humanity again. Later, Ash and Reeve are separated from the others and come across an abandoned military base, which surprises them since they thought sentient life had never been on the planet. After fighting their way through the base, they come across another surprise...Ken, still alive and using the base's resources to conduct experiments. Ken reveals that he volunteered for the mission after his research revealed that his old commanding officer had led a previous expedition to the planet, a scientific expedition aimed at weaponizing the virus. The weaponization attempts failed, but Ken read some top secret notes and learned that the virus could potentially be used to give a human being superhuman powers. He says that the new Earth needs a ruler and once he figures out how to enhance himself with the virus, he'll return to Earth and take over. A struggle ensues and that struggle gives Ash time to escape, but leads to Reeve's death. Ash also discovers that Ken also murdered Elia after learning to control some of the viral creatures, using them to maul her to death. Ash makes it back to the others, and they vow to stop Ken and destroy the virus once and for all. However, Ken's control over the virus is growing, and he uses it to set increasingly deadly creatures on Ash and his friends. They fight their way to a great, deep canyon, where the core of the virus is located. They battle their way to Ken, who has mutated himself into a hideous beast and attacks the group. After defeating him, however, the Viral Core still remains, and must also be defeated to truly stop the threat to the galaxy. The Core mutates into several forms before taking on the form of a massive monster with dozens of limbs. Defeating the core causes all viral activity on the planet to cease, but Ash, Sara, Danny, and Chris are still carriers of the virus, and know they can never return to Earth. However, their ship has enough supplies to sustain them for a lifetime, and the four heroes set about starting their new lives on this empty planet they now call their home.

*Ballistic Limit 2* is the biggest video game hit of the summer, outselling even *The Dreamers* and selling at a fairly even pace with *Goldeneye 007* over the first few months of its run, despite lacking a multiplayer mode. It is reviewed nearly as well as the first game and immediately becomes a Game of the Year contender and another major hit for the Ultra Nintendo.

-

## **Brigandine**

Dan: 8.0

Shawn: 8.0

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "Maybe the best tactical RPG to be released on the SNES-CD since last year's Fire Emblem game.")

### **Devil Dice**

Dan: 7.5

Shawn: 7.0 (quote: "A fun and quirky puzzler with colorful graphics.")

Crispin: 7.5

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Madden 99**

Dan: 4.0

Shawn: 5.0

Crispin: 3.5 (quote: "They barely tried on this last-gen sports game.")

Sushi-X: 3.5

### **Digman**

Dan: 7.0 (quote: "Remember Dig Dug? This game's a bit more complex but no less fun.")

Shawn: 5.5

Crispin: 7.5

Sushi-X: 5.5

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of August 1998's SNES-CD games in the September 1998 issue

### **Diablo**

Dan: 9.0 (quote: "The awesome PC RPG finally comes to consoles, and it's just as good on the Ultra as it is on the computer.")

Shawn: 8.5

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Front Mission 2**

Dan: 7.5

Shawn: 7.5

Crispin: 8.0 (quote: "Square's sequel isn't as ground-breaking as the original but it's still got a fantastic story and the same great gameplay, with enhanced Ultra Nintendo graphics.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Madden 99**

Dan: 9.0

Shawn: 9.0 (quote: "Now this is more like it! Madden 99 brings a true next-gen football experience to the Ultra Nintendo, a quantum leap from last year's bare bones launch title.")

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Mega Man Legends**

Dan: 8.5

Shawn: 8.5  
Crispin: 7.0  
Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "The combat's a bit clunky but this is the vast Mega Man adventure we've all been waiting for.")

### **Mega Man X5**

Dan: 8.0  
Shawn: 9.0  
Crispin: 7.5  
Sushi-X: 8.5 (quote: "A tremendously fun Mega Man game with an awesome storyline.")

### **NFL Blitz**

Dan: 7.5  
Shawn: 8.5 (quote: "For those who want something a little more out there than the realistic Madden, NFL Blitz brings the awesome arcade experience to the Ultra.")  
Crispin: 8.0  
Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Resident Evil 2**

Dan: 9.5 (quote: "The awesome horror game is as thrilling as ever and has never looked better.")  
Shawn: 9.0  
Crispin: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Ballistic Limit 2**

Dan: 9.5  
Shawn: 9.0  
Crispin: 9.5 (quote: "The classic 1995 shooter breaks out of its shell into a massive open world. Your jaw will drop at some of the bosses.")  
Sushi-X: 9.5

### **Bikerz 3**

Dan: 5.5  
Shawn: 7.0  
Crispin: 6.0 (quote: "The wacky kids' motorbiking series is back and while the graphics have improved, the annoying kiddy characters really haven't.")  
Sushi-X: 3.0

### **Laser Tag: The Arena**

Dan: 3.0  
Shawn: 1.5 (quote: "Why would you EVER play this when you can just go and do real laser tag?")  
Crispin: 2.0  
Sushi-X: 2.0

## Knights Of The Round Table

Dan: 7.5

Shawn: 7.5

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.0 (quote: "While this platformer about a young hero wanting to become one of King Arthur's knights is a bit repetitive, the voices and many of the missions are pretty fun, so it's worth a rental if you're interested.")

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* reviews of August 1998's Ultra Nintendo games in the September and October 1998 issues

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The *Mega Man* franchise had a major presence on the Super Nintendo and the Super Nintendo CD, with multiple games in the *Mega Man X* series appearing, along with *Mega Man 7* and a number of spin-offs. So, it was only natural that the Blue Bomber would show up on the Ultra Nintendo sooner or later, and he did, in a big way. In fact, Capcom decided to make as big a splash as possible by declaring August 1998 the Month of Mega Man. It was already the month of *Ballistic Limit 2* and *Resident Evil 2*, but Capcom had decided on August 1998 and they stuck to their guns. Still, though, the *Mega Man* games were solid counter-programming for families and kids who wouldn't be able to play the two M-rated mega-hits dropping on the Ultra that month.

The first of the two games was *Mega Man X5*, the fifth game in the *Mega Man X* series, and the first in which Zero didn't appear at all! Indeed, he was getting a spinoff game scheduled for 1999, and so X was flying solo for his latest mission. In *Mega Man X5*, Sigma returned for one final duel with X, and decided to release a Maverick virus that would gradually turn all replugins, including X, into Mavericks that would serve Sigma and Sigma only. In order to free himself of the virus, Dr. Cain tells X that he must have a new body constructed for himself, and must gather up parts from eight different areas before Cain can complete this new body. As X journeys through the stages, he finds himself slowly going Maverick, and he actually bonds with a few of Sigma's Mavericks that he fights along the way, coming to understand their reasons for joining him and coming to doubt his own purposes as well. After defeating the eight Mavericks and gathering the parts for a new body, Cain begins to construct the body for X while he goes to the space colony Eurasia, which Sigma and his most loyal lieutenants have taken over. In the course of doing this, X is convinced by Sigma's most powerful lieutenant, a female Maverick named Odessa, to reject humanity and join the Mavericks. There is a boss fight where X, as a full maverick, must fight his reconstructed new body which is being inhabited by an AI created by Dr. Cain. X has a choice between destroying his new body and rejecting humanity fully, or merging with his new body and fighting to protect humanity as a Maverick Hunter. Despite Odessa begging him to do otherwise, X assumes his new, virus-free body and turns his back on the Mavericks for good. He asks Odessa to join him, but she refuses and there is another heartbreaking boss fight. After being defeated, Odessa finally realizes the good in X's heart. He offers for her to join him, but as she goes to kiss X, Sigma shoots her through the back, fatally wounding her and setting up the final boss fight that sees X destroying Sigma for good and saving humanity once more. *Mega Man X5*, with its deep exploration of the characters of X and Sigma, is considered to be one of the best if not the best games in the series, and was the most commercially successful *Mega Man X* game since *X2*, which had combined sales from both cartridge and CD versions accounted for in its sales.

*Mega Man Legends* was a MUCH different game from any *Mega Man* game seen before. It was basically a Mega Man RPG, complete with leveling up (your weapon choices increased as you leveled up, though you could also find weapons in the game). Keiji Inafune said he originally intended to make the game a kind of mix of genres with some RPG elements, but with all the success RPGs were having at the time, he leaned more toward making it a kind of action-RPG. You don't play as the "original" Mega Man, per se, you play as a Mega Man named Volnutt, and crashland on an island where you encounter a mysterious family called the Bonnes, particularly the eldest daughter of the family, Tron Bonne, who serves as a recurring rival but eventual love interest. The main villain of the game is The Gatherer, a sort of collector-AI who attempts to gather rare robotic components through taking them forcibly from other robots. Tron Bonne initially views the Gatherer as a rival, but when she realizes that it is actually stooping to ripping the life out of sentient machines, she views it as a proper enemy and joins Mega Man in his fight against the Gatherer and its legions. Eventually, Mega Man Volnutt and Tron Bonne make it off the island and confront the Gatherer on the massive floating space colony that serves as its CPU. They defeat the Gatherer and Volnutt says his goodbyes, though Tron Bonne makes Volnutt promise to visit her as she and her family sail off into space on another adventure. The game was lighthearted but featured fun combat and some challenging puzzles, and of the two games released that month, generally has the fondest reception despite receiving much lesser sales.

Capcom's Month of Mega Man was largely a success, establishing the series proper on the Ultra Nintendo despite the heavy competition from the many hit games that made it to the Ultra that August of 1998. *Mega Man Legends* would be ported to the Saturn in 1999, in slightly downgraded form but with a couple extra little missions, and Saturn owners generally enjoyed the game as much as those who played it on the Ultra Nintendo did. The game would receive a sequel in 2000.

-from "The Month Of Mega Man", an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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With most of the hype over Nintendo's late summer 1998 lineup going to *Ballistic Limit 2*, it might've been easy to overlook the two massive ports the Ultra was getting that very same month: *Resident Evil 2*, which had been released earlier that year on the Saturn, and *Diablo*, the PC action-RPG about a hunter who must protect his world from the forces of the devil.

*Resident Evil 2* was the most significant of the two ports and the better reviewed. It, like the port of the original *Resident Evil*, was significantly upgraded in terms of graphics, so much so that like on the Saturn, the game came on two discs despite the Ultra Nintendo's larger capacity. The game was almost an exact port of the Saturn version, though with an added mission at the end for both Leon and Claire. The disc also contained a special bonus once the game was beaten on either scenario: a 30-minute "making of" video that covered both the making of the original game and some of the work that went into the port. It wasn't a major bonus but for those who enjoyed seeing behind the scenes stuff, it was a treat. *Resident Evil 2* sold very quickly upon release, about half of what *Ballistic Limit 2* did in its first couple of weeks but still dwarfing the sales of any other Ultra Nintendo game that month except for *Madden 99* which finished a respectable third. Though somewhat overshadowed by the huge Sony sequel, *Resident Evil 2* proved to be one of the biggest Ultra Nintendo hits of the year, justifying Capcom's decision to release the next game in the series as an Ultra exclusive (though there WAS a twist...)

As for *Diablo*, Blizzard's RPG was a pitch-perfect port of the PC original. Indeed, it even had some additional graphical and audio effects, and there were also some Ultra-exclusive items as well. Blizzard had once released a game called *Treasure Hunters* for the SNES-CD that some consider a precursor to *Diablo*, so it was only a natural fit that *Diablo* would find its way to the SNES-CD's successor. The port did only modest sales, though it was hardly a failure, the game would sell decently well throughout the Ultra Nintendo's lifespan, with a small pickup in sales in the leadup to the release of *Diablo II*'s port in 2001. JRPGs were still king on consoles, though games like *Diablo*, the Saturn *Ultima* titles, and later *Rise a Knight* in 1999, would get the foot in the door that western RPGs would need to invade the console gamespace in the future.

-from an article on the "Nintendo Memories" blog, posted on January 26, 2011

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### **The Racing And Chasing Comes To London!**

*Race'n'Chase: London*, a sequel to 1997's *Race'n'Chase* that sees the corrupt cops and ultra-violent criminal activity of the original going back in time to 1969 London arrives this month on the Sega Saturn. It plays largely the same as the original, though its cultural lampoonings now poke fun at 60s mod culture and events like the music-based British invasion. Though there's not much in *London* that didn't appear in the original, fans of the original game won't find too much to take issue with about this sequel and it should start flying off the shelves upon its August 17th release.

-excerpted from a blurb in the August 1998 issue of *GamePro* magazine

### **Race'n'Chase Studio Working on Beat 'em Up?**

Rockstar Games, which just released *Race'n'Chase: London* on the Sega Saturn, now seems to be in the initial stages of planning a new game: A beat-em-up title, similar to the classic *Streets of Rage* series, said to contain much of the bawdy humor and over-the-top violence that made *Race'n'Chase* such a controversial success. We'll surely hear more about this rumored game as the months go by, and we may be in for a proper announcement before the end of the year. If so, Rockstar is likely to show off the game at next year's E3 conference, though it hasn't yet been revealed if they intend to release the game for the Saturn, the Ultra Nintendo, or both.

-from an article in the September 1998 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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"*Dragonball Z* begins airing on Cartoon Network's Toonami block on August 17 as part of a general shift of the block toward airing more Japanese anime. Initially, the network plans to air the 52 episodes that have been cycling through syndication since 1995, though eventually if ratings are good, the network plans to pick up additional seasons of the show. Cartoon Network has already announced plans to air the third season of *Sailor Moon* which Fox Kids declined to order, the episodes should begin airing at the beginning of next year, and it is likely that any new *Dragonball Z* episodes would be aired sometime afterward."

-from an article on Anime News Network, posted on August 6, 1998

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While *Hunters Of The Borderlands* often falls back on the classic RPG cliches, this excellent spaghetti western really is one of the best RPGs to come out for the Saturn this year. It's heavily based in exploration, with not many towns to speak of, you'll be camping out a lot and finding materials to forge new weapons and armor, as opportunities to buy them are few and far between. It's a unique take on RPGs, even if the characters and storyline are a bit of a retread, and for that reason, we really do recommend this game for all Saturn RPG junkies.

Score: 8/10

*Legend Of The Galactic Heroes* is a real treat, a great mix of tactical RPGs with the visual novel genre that perfectly complements its source material (an extremely fun anime that might have already begun airing on the Disney Channel depending on when you read this) and may be even better than Enix's *Ogre Battle*, it contains a myriad of characters whom you'll instantly want to form relationships with, and two different quests, which means that you have to play through the game twice to get the whole story. It's a little on the tough side, but if you can manage your characters' relationships, you shouldn't get overwhelmed in battle. There really hasn't been a game like this on the Sega Saturn, at least not here in the United States, and we're really glad to be finally getting this one which has been doing really well in Japan for over a year. It's a long, complex game, but if you play through to the end, you'll be rewarded with one amazing quest.

Score: 9/10

*Guardian Heroes 2* has you sending a brand new set of heroes into battle. Even though the names and faces have changed, the basic gameplay has stayed largely the same, which is both a good thing and a bad thing. We wish the game had done more to expand on the first title's excellent combat, but on the other hand, if it's not broke, why fix it? The graphics did get a noticeable bump, and the game spans two discs due to being somewhat longer and more involved than the first. The great four-player multiplayer gameplay returns so that you can beat up hordes of baddies with your friends. It might not be the newest concept on the block, but it doesn't exactly need to be.

Score: 8/10

-excerpted from reviews in the August 1998 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

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Ted Crosley: *NFL Blitz* plays just like it does in the arcade, in fact, I thought it played even BETTER than it did in the arcade thanks to the awesome Ultra Nintendo controller.

Alex Stansfield: Yeah, it's a real treat being able to play it at home, take your records to your friends' houses, this really is the definitive version of the game.

Ted: So Alex, what team do you rock? You know me, I always go with the New York football Giants...

Alex: Well, we just got a team like a few years ago, the Panthers, so them.

Ted: Who'd you cheer for as a kid?

Alex: The Dolphins were my favorite team growing up. They're still good, here's Dan Marino, throwing the ball...

\*A scene shows Dan Marino throwing it for a long touchdown into the end zone, the receiver catches it and immediately gets tackled by a bunch of guys in the end zone after he scores\*

Alex: Some REALLY bad sportsmanship in this game, huh?

Ted: \*laughing\* They have additional animations in this version too, you can pull off some wrestling moves, like this badass leg drop right here...

\*One of the players does a leg drop onto the receiver\*

Ted: So yeah, *NFL Blitz* was great in the arcade, it's still great on the Ultra Nintendo and I give it a 4.5.

Alex: I give it a 4, it's such a fun football game, even if it's not remotely realistic.

(...)

Gary Westhouse: *Hard Charge* is no *Gran Turismo*, but it's still a lot of fun and if you only have the Sega Saturn it's about as good a realistic racing experience as you're gonna get. It has a lot more of a NASCAR feel to it than *Gran Turismo*, it rewards really aggressive racing and that makes it a lot of fun.

Lyssa Fielding: You know, I wasn't as thrilled with this game as I think you were, I mean for one thing, there's not much of a selection of cars, you get like 32 to choose from and once you collect them all there's not much else to do.

Gary: True, but at least you don't have to spend a lot of time unlocking a lot of cars.

Lyssa: And secondly, I had a lot of trouble activating the turbo boosts for racing aggressively, it seems like speeding up REALLY makes it a lot harder to hit the spots on the track you need to hit to get those boosts and without them it's hard to get around the other cars, so in a lot of races I was ending up stuck behind a pack of guys and not able to get forward.

Gary: I think, you know, this game isn't gonna be for everybody.

Lyssa: It's not a bad game, I definitely had fun with it. BUT some of the mechanics seemed a bit random to me and I felt like I was racing a different race than the game wanted me to race, you know? In *Gran Turismo*, you knew where the racing lines were. In this game, they're all over the place.

Gary: That's what made it more fun for me.

Lyssa: More fun than *Gran Turismo*?

Gary: Not...necessarily, but it IS different. And I am wondering if we're going to be comparing every racing game to *Gran Turismo* going forward, it made an impression, didn't

it?

Lyssa: It made me want a souped-up supercar....\*her eyes go wide\*

Gary: Yeah, me too. *Hard Charge* definitely isn't as realistic of an experience but there really are times when it's more fun and I'm giving it a 4.5.

Lyssa: Well, I'm giving it a 3.5. It's a fun racing game, but it doesn't play by its own rules all the time.

-excerpted from the August 11, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted: Hey, I'm Ted...

Alex: And I'm Alex, and today on *GameTV*, guess what?

Ted: What's that?

Alex: We've got a brand new host to introduce.

\*Another guy about the same age as Ted and Alex walks out onto the stage\*

New Guy: Hey there, I'm Adrian Fry and I'm gonna be joining the crew of *GameTV*, we're gonna have a hell of a fun time playing lots and lots of video games and I'm gonna tell you what games kick ass and what games belong in a dumpster fire.

Ted: Well, you will have some help from the rest of us.

Alex: That's right, and today you'll be helping to review the new anime game *Legend of the Galactic Heroes*.

Adrian: Sweet, does it have transforming babes or giant robots?

Ted: Nope. You're the new guy, you don't get to review transforming babes or giant robots until you've paid your dues.

Alex: We'll also be reviewing *Mega Man Legends* and *Race'n'Chase: London*, and we'll be dusting off the old SNES-CD to play *Brigandine*.

Adrian: Hey, you guys know that the Ultra Nintendo plays SNES-CD games too, right?

Ted: See, that was one of your new guy tests, and you passed!

Adrian: Sweet, do I get to review a giant robot space babe game now?

Ted: No, BUT you don't have to scrub the toilets backstage now, we'll just make Gary do it.

Gary: \*from offscreen\* WHAT?

Ted: We've also got a sweet sneak preview of *Dynasty Warriors*, and we'll show you how to

kick ass and take names in *Swordslayer* with some tips on some advanced techniques. And, if you haven't played *Fairytale* yet, we got some spoilers coming your way so you might want to get ready to leave the room.

Alex: Yeah, actually, you might wanna get ready to leave the room anyway, because we're counting down *Fairytale*'s top ten scariest moments.

Ted: All that, plus news and reviews to help you choose, this...is *GameTV!*

(...)

Adrian: What I took away from *Legend Of The Galactic Heroes* was that there's an awful lot to do, but it's an awful lot that you HAVE to do. You can get overwhelmed so easily in this game.

Brittany Saldita: Absolutely. Look, I like what this game was trying to do. Mixing a great tactical RPG with an engaging visual novel, awesome. But, and this is a big but...you almost need a walkthrough to avoid screwing yourself in this game, or at least it seemed that way to me.

Adrian: Make. MULTIPLE. Saves.

Brittany: Oh yes. Save scumming is a must on your first playthrough. And I don't like saying that because I think it kind of cheats the game. But when the game cheats you out of various things because you didn't talk to this guy, or say this thing to this girl....that's bull(expletive).

Adrian: As Matt Damon said in *Titanic*, it's HORSE(expletive)!

Brittany: And that said, I WANTED to love this game. I still like it, I mean, I wouldn't have even gone to all the effort of being so meticulous with it if I didn't like it. It does a lot of things right, but I just felt...

Adrian: Like you had to take notes to do well in the game?

Brittany: At some points, yeah!

Adrian: Look, this game...it's a beautiful game. The graphics are great, the music is beautiful, the voice acting is excellent for a video game. The gameplay, when it works, is fine. It's a fine game. It's probably the best anime game I've ever played.

Brittany: Not me. *Sailor Moon: Another Story* on the Super Famicom CD.

Adrian: Super Famicom CD?

Brittany: You don't import?

Adrian: It's expensive!

Brittany: \*looks at him like he just let out a bad fart\*

Adrian: I'll start importing.

Brittany: You'll start importing. Hell, you could've played this game like a year and a half ago if you'd imported it.

Adrian: Really?

Brittany: Thankfully, Sega's been pretty good about localizing the best Japanese Saturn games. This isn't one of the BEST, but it's a fine game. I give it a 3.5 out of five.

Adrian: And I agree, I'm giving it a 3.5 out of five as well. It's fun, it's a LOT of work and there's a lot of really really....frustrating elements about it, but it's a worthy game if you're willing to put in the work.

-excerpted from the August 18, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Alex: So Ted, how was *Ballistic Limit 2* for you?

Ted: It....didn't...completely blow me away like the original did, but nonetheless, this was still one hell of a game. Just for the boss fights alone, holy crap. I loved how they seamlessly took this 2-D sidescroller and turned it into an open world shooter game. It looks gorgeous, Ballistic Mode is SO much better with the Ultra controls...

Alex: You can move around!

Ted: Well, yeah!

Alex: Yeah, for me, I don't think it treaded any ground that like, *Turok* didn't last year on the Saturn, except for, you know, the boss fights, and the characters, those were better. But still, *Ballistic Limit 2* lives up to the hype. It's definitely worth getting, even if you haven't played the first one. It does play in a lot of respects like a whole different game. The Ultra Nintendo has a way of taking great 2-D franchises and bringing them to 3-D and making them even more awesome. *Mario*, awesome. *Final Fantasy*, awesome. *Ballistic Limit*, awesome. I can't wait to see how good *Zelda* is later this year.

Ted: As someone who does prefer Sega to Nintendo...I gotta say, Nintendo is really bringing it. Sega hasn't had a REALLY good game since *Tekken 3*. Sega's gotta step up. I'm hoping something like *Commander Keen* does it. I'm hoping once the Ring comes out that some of those games will do it. Right now....Nintendo....I mean....

Alex: Look what's coming next month, *Tale Lemuria* and *Killer Instinct Ultra*.

Ted: Stop. You're just rubbing salt in the wound now.

Alex: Well, anyway, I'm giving *Ballistic Limit 2* a 4.5. It's a fantastic game that hits all the right notes even if it isn't a transcendent game, it's still one of the best of the year.

Ted: Yep, 4.5 from me, I love the bosses, I love the storyline, I love the graphics, it's an incredible game. Sega....step it up! From a hardcore Sega fan, please, step it up!

Alex: I think *Commander Keen* looks really good.

Ted: Yeah....yeah I forgot about that one but that could be a *Ballistic Limit*-killer.

Alex: Don't go that far.

(...)

Alex: \*sitting on a couch with Brittany and Ted Woolsey\* We've got...well, we've got another Ted in the house.

Brittany: My favorite Ted in the world, Mr. Ted Woolsey!

Ted Crosley: \*from offscreen\* Your favorite Ted?

Brittany: \*yells\* You're a jerk!

Alex: \*smiling, he shakes Ted Woolsey's hand\* It's nice to have you here in the studio.

Woolsey: It's good to be here, this is a really comfy couch!

Brittany: Only the best for our guest! Now, we just reviewed *Front Mission 2*, I loved it, Gary loved it, it's a fantastic game. There wasn't a lot of promotion for the game though, was there?

Woolsey: Part of that was...we don't expect it to sell as much as say, a *Fairytale* or a *Parasite Eve*. I would love for it to sell as much as *Fairytale*'s been selling, but we'll see! Secondly, the plot of the game, it's extremely controversial. We nearly didn't localize the game because....well, politically...

Alex: I can absolutely understand that. I mean, what's going on in the world right now...

Woolsey: Right, with the embassy bombings and the military strike on Afghanistan, it's a really sensitive subject to broach. But....it's always been my belief that the player should decide what they want to see and what they don't, and so that's why this game did get a localization and it's getting a quiet release. I hope the fans decide for themselves that this game is something they enjoy playing. It really is a brilliant game, it's a privilege to localize it.

Brittany: And next up for Squaresoft is *Brave Fencer Kyuriadan*, which I think looks really cute and really fun.

Woolsey: \*laughing\* Yes, on a lighter note we have *Brave Fencer Kyuriadan*! We decided with this game to make it fully 3-D, but you're still on a preset course, so it's not like the *Mana* games where you can wander freely. You'll progress through the game in levels, you'll be able to roam around and dodge enemy attacks and explore and solve puzzles, but you're on rails, so to speak.

Alex: Well, I think it looks really fantastic and I can't wait to play it. And then of course there's *Parasite Eve*, is there anything about that game you can share?

Woolsey: Oh, no no no, I can't reveal anything else about it here.

\*Scenes from the gameplay are on the screen as Woolsey and the hosts are talking.\*

Woolsey: I can say that it's divided into eight different "days", which are like chapters, and that there is a part of the game that we initially were going to make optional that actually became our final dungeon. We did have to tone down the challenge on it just a bit but it's still very tough and this game overall is definitely for seasoned RPG players, it's got plenty of challenge but that fits in with the survival horror theme.

Alex: Absolutely. Limited resources, overwhelming odds, all add to that tension, that sense of fear...

Woolsey: Right, and it's a feeling we've never had showcased in an RPG before.

Brittany: Well, there was *Fairytale*, some parts of the forest were really scary.

Woolsey: \*laughing\* I think that was just some of the designers getting a bit carried away, but we're glad there's been a positive response to that, I think players like a good scare, so *Parasite Eve* I'm hoping will thrill players and challenge them both.

Brittany: I do have to say and this might not mean a lot to some people but it does to me, Jennifer Hale, as Aya, that is excellent casting.

Woolsey: She's quite talented, isn't she?

Brittany: Well, I know first hand, um, since I've worked with her, actually she beat me for the part of Jessie on *The Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest*, when they recast it for the second season... then they invited me back to audition for the character Priyanka, Hadji's friend, on the new season that's airing right now and I got that part, and I actually got to record an episode in the same room as Jennifer and she's amazing. We're about the same age but she's so much more....professional, I guess is the right word, than me? Um, she just goes into the booth and absolutely nails her performance and I think she's got an amazing future in voice acting ahead of her.

Alex: Do you have any say in the voice casting or do you use a casting director for that?

Woolsey: Oh, we have a casting director, I'm not that terribly good at picking out voices, I just translate the scripts for them to read! \*laughs\* But yes, I have met Jennifer and she's amazing, Susan, who plays the voice of Eve, she's amazing too and I think all our voice actors just do a fantastic job. Everybody from the top on down has poured so much effort into this game and I can't wait to see what everyone says when they finally get to play it.

Alex: So, one more thing, what's on tap for 1999?

Woolsey: Well, besides *Final Fantasy VIII*, we do have a lot of games coming up next year, and everyone who wants to know about some of those games, start watching for news out of Tokyo because we'll have a huge booth at the Tokyo Game Show next month where we'll be giving a lot more information on *Final Fantasy VIII* as well as some of our other big games coming up.

Alex: I think we're sending Lyssa there, believe it or not!

Brittany: Yeah, she can definitely pass for Sailor Moon so she'll fit right in.

Woolsey: \*laughs\* I'll be sure to look out for Sailor Moon then!

Alex: Mr. Woolsey, it was a pleasure having you here on *GameTV*.

Woolsey: It was a pleasure being here, hopefully I can come back!

-excerpted from the August 25, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: August 1998**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Chrono Trigger
3. Donkey Kong Country 4
4. Tale Phantasia
5. Super Mario World 2
6. Super Mario Kart
7. Donkey Kong Country
8. Lufia III: The Ancient Tower
9. Secret Of Mana
10. Street Fighter Alpha 3

### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: August 1998**

1. Final Fantasy VII
2. Tomb Raider II
3. Super Mario Dimensions
4. Goldeneye 007
5. Gran Turismo
6. Ultra Mario Kart
7. Final Fantasy Tactics
8. Ken Griffey Jr.'s Ultra Grand Slam
9. Major Hazard: Blitzkrieg
10. Resident Evil

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: August 1998**

1. Tekken 3
2. Quake
3. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
4. Race'n'Chase: London
5. Legend Of The Galactic Heroes
6. Resident Evil 2
7. Hard Charge
8. Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted
9. Panzer Dragoon Saga
10. Tomb Raider II

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## August 18, 1998

It had been a rough month for President Bill Clinton. Earlier that month, a pair of car bombs had exploded outside of two United States embassies in Kenya and Ethiopia, killing more than 200 people total, including 17 Americans. It could have been worse; a third truck bomb had been headed for the embassy in Tanzania, but local authorities stopped the truck and killed the driver before it could reach its destination. Before Clinton could order a strike in Afghanistan targeting the terrorist leader responsible for the attacks, Osama bin Laden, he had another duty to perform, and that was a much more personally humiliating one: admitting to the nation that he'd engaged in a sexual relationship with his intern, Monica Lewinsky, over the previous two years.

Clinton had denied it before, but with physical evidence having been presented to investigator Kenneth Starr in the form of a purple dress stained with Clinton's DNA, the facts were indisputable. There had been a sexual relationship, and now Clinton was going to have to come clean to the nation. The time to announce the Afghanistan strikes would have to come later on the week.

Clinton approached the podium and began to speak.

"My fellow Americans, tonight, I wish to speak to you about a matter that has been deeply troubling to me..."

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## August 25, 1998

Anika Noni Rose stepped out of an electronics store with a shopping bag in one hand and a spring of her step. She'd been working as an aspiring stage actress in San Francisco for the past few years and had just begun landing her first major roles in local theater productions. She still had dreams of Broadway in her head, but she still had a long way to go. When she wasn't working on her dreams of success in musical theater, she enjoyed some downtime, either watching her favorite television shows, listening to music, or, in one of her somewhat geekier pasttimes, playing video games. In the bag was two things she'd just purchased from the store, both of which had just been released that day: the new album *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*, and *Ballistic Limit 2* on the Ultra Nintendo. Having been a big fan of the original game on the Super Nintendo CD, she'd been anticipating the sequel for quite some time, and after she listened to her new CD all the way through, she planned on diving headfirst into Ash Beckland's latest adventure.

On the way home, she passed a movie theater, which had several posters of coming attractions over the next year. She passed the spectacular poster for *Deep Impact* and the somber poster for *Saving Private Ryan* as her eyes caught the colorful poster for next year's animated Disney film....

"Oh....there it is, *Aida*," she said to herself, staring at the poster for several seconds. "The first black Disney Princess... it's a shame it took them this long, but I can't wait to see that movie."

When Anika had started on her path to her own career on Broadway, she'd had a brief moment where she'd dreamed that she would be the one to perform the voice of the first black Disney Princess...but with her Broadway dreams still a long way off, she dismissed the

thought.

"At least it didn't take them *THAT* long," thought Anika, rolling her eyes for a moment and moving on. "Hopefully I make it big in time to play the second one."

But for now, the only 'second one' Anika Noni Rose would be playing was the second *Ballistic Limit*. She could already hear Jimi Hendrix's voice from the commercial echoing in her head.

"All along the watchtower..."

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## **September 1, 1998**

It had been one week since *Ballistic Limit 2* had released on the Ultra Nintendo, and early sales reports indicated another hit for Nintendo. It had been a huge month for the company, releasing a slew of highly reviewed games, many of which had sold better than any Saturn games released in the previous month. Even *Race'n'Chase: London* was a disappointment compared to the original. Only the anime game *Legend of the Galactic Heroes* was proving to be a bright spot. With sales far exceeding expectations, it might end up being the best-selling Saturn release of the month. Despite *GameTV* giving it only a 7/10, most review outlets had lauded the game. *Electronic Gaming Monthly* gave it a Silver award and it got high marks from *Official Saturn Magazine*, *GamePro*, and several of the growing online reviews sites as well.

But as well as *Legend of the Galactic Heroes* was doing, it wasn't driving new Saturn sales. The Ultra Nintendo was rapidly gaining on the Saturn in total sales and unless the Ring produced a huge sales surge, there was a chance that total Ultra Nintendo sales might pass those of the Saturn by the end of the year. While Japan and Europe were both bright spots for the Saturn, with sales only slightly lagging behind the Ultra, North America was seeing an average of 2-3 million Ultra Nintendo sales a month, and the holidays hadn't even hit yet.

All of this added up to a very stressful time for Tom Kalinske. Saturn sales were sliding and apart from the slew of major games coming to the Ring at the end of the year, there wasn't a potential megahit for the Saturn in sight until *Tomb Raider III* in February...and that was releasing simultaneously with the Ultra Nintendo version of the game. Kalinske was banking on the Ring. If the Ring failed to significantly boost Saturn sales (and significantly was a vast understatement), Sega would lose its second console generation in a row to Nintendo...third if you counted the Master System, though that wasn't on Kalinske's watch.

"Hey," said Kalinske as he picked up the phone in his office.

"Dad," replied Ashley Kalinske, her voice light and cheerful. "Sorry if I'm interrupting you at the office, but...I just had a feeling you were having a bad day and I thought maybe I could-"

"You just wanna talk? About anything?" replied Tom. "What happened at school, what's going on with your friends, anything at all?"

"Um...well, aren't you busy?"

"Nah," he said, a smile growing on his face. "I got all the time in the world to listen."

And Ashley told him about the great day she was having at school. And Tom forgot his troubles, at least while the two of them were talking. All his other calls could wait. Tom Kalinske needed a break.

Besides, he had a big trip to Tokyo to get ready for. He needed to spend as much time talking with his family as he could before then.

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Here is the basic outline of Legend of the Galactic Heroes. A big thanks to RySenkari and Nivek for letting me contribute.

### Legend of the Galactic Heroes

*Narrator- "In every time, in every place, the deeds of men remain the same."*

*Yang Wen-Li- "There are few wars between good and evil: most are between one good and another good."*

*Yang Wen-Li- "Perhaps, in this universe, there exists a sole, absolute truth. Perhaps it clarifies every question. But that is beyond the reach of these short hands."*

*Reinhard von Lohengramm- "Already, I have nothing to lose. But even so, I will fight. To keep my promise to you, and... to gain something to quench the thirst in my heart."*

*Reinhard von Lohengramm- "The conqueror cannot succeed without dirtying his hands? Very well."*

*Paul von Oberstein- "Without fail, in light, shadows must follow."*

*Jessica Edwards- "I want to ask the people who are in power, where were you? While you send young soldiers out to die, where were you and what were you doing?"*

*Fritz Joseph Bittenfeld- "Forward! Forward! The goddess of victory is waving her underwear in your face!"*

*Archbishop De Villie- "Have you heretics forgotten the planet that gave you life?! When humans first looked at the stars, it was from a common home, our Earth. But then humans defied God's command and scattered like seeds across a vast wasteland. Again and again, they fall into vice, feuding with one another and forgetting that they all share the same birth. In the Last Days, as the armies of man break unto themselves, the galaxy will find its purpose anew, with Terra to guide all to the Promised Land!"*

*Yang Wen-Li- "I only studied a little history, and I have learnt that there are two currents of thought in human society. One holds that there are things worth more than human life and the other holds that there is nothing preferable to life. When people goes to war, it is on the pretext of the former, and it justifies the latter when they stop. For how many hundreds... thousands of years has that been continuing?"*

*Siegfried Kircheis- "Lord Reinhard... please...win the universe....Tell Lady Annerose...that Sieg has kept his promise from the past...."*

## Gameplay

There are two sides to the game, each with its own storyline. For the Alliance of Free Planets, you play as Yang Wen-Li. For the Galactic Empire side, you play as Reinhard von Lohengramm.

The game is primarily split up into two forms of gameplay. First of all, there is the combat mode for missions. You have a seemingly bird's eye view of the battlefield in space, and each turn you can move your units to new points in the battlefield and select which targets to attack. You can also access a menu with further options. Each "unit" in facts comprises a fleet made up of usually about a half dozen ships and thousands of men, with specific individuals in charge of each fleet. Many of these individuals – and sometimes others serving in those units – are important to the story. Deaths are permanent in the game, and destroyed fleets cannot be regained. Therefore, you need to manage your fleets well and protect as many people as possible if you want to reach the best endings.

Certain ships can have long firing ranges, so you need to be careful how you position forces. Similarly, different fleet designs have different speeds and defenses, determining how far they can travel each turn and how much damage they can take. Additionally, the ships come with star fighter squadrons that you can send out; they are more vulnerable to damage, but make for smaller targets and have faster speeds. Also, personal combat is sometimes necessary in certain scenarios, requiring you to use ground forces such as the Rosen Ritter. Battle formations are important, and the way you position your forces can prove critical.

Enemy units vary in their degree of difficulty, as while some units follow simple tactics others use complex strategies. The A.I.s for Yang and Reinhard in the final battles, for instance, are capable of coming up with new strategies as the battle develops, and can push you to the brink of defeat if you are not careful. Also, enemy units come with many of the same components as your own fleets, so make sure that you account for star fighters, defenses, and other factors.

The tactics portion of the game is turn-based, going back between your units and enemy units. However, the preparations before battles are especially important, and have just as much influence on the battles' outcome. You need to properly supply and organize your forces in order to effectively utilize them on the battlefield, requiring you to apply strategy in a new direction in the game.

Connecting to the preparations side of things is the second form of gameplay, more of a

visual novel gameplay, as you can choose to explore different areas of worlds and talk with various people during the interludes after combat. Also, when talking with people, you are sometimes given multiple choices on how to act, each with its own pros and cons. Do not dismiss these portions of the gameplay in the short or long run. Some of your decisions can have immediate consequences, and could even result in your death. In the long term, your actions influence how you affect the course of history through the game, both in what actions you take and in what people you connect with. The relationships you build outside of combat become important in the course of the game, and help determine the ultimate ending. On a similar note, each side of the game offers two potential romantic routes.

Throughout the game, you have the potential to unlock many different characters that will assist you during and outside of battle. There are over 75 different characters to unlock, each with his or her own role in the coming adventure.

Also, there are a number of different achievements you can unlock during the story modes, and these are added to a large checklist on the main menu; many of these achievements are mutually exclusive of one another, so you may need to play through the same campaign multiple times to unlock all of the achievements.

In addition, while the story modes are single-player, once you complete one of the main campaigns you unlock a two-player battle mode that, while lacking the depth and complexity of the storylines, is still fun to play. It consists solely of the tactical mode, and lets you put your strategies to the task against other players.

## Disc I: Alliance Side

The prologue episode starts in 788 UC with Yang Wen-Li continuing his studies as a sub-lieutenant on the planet El-Facil. You have the opportunity to explore the city, and take part in a battle simulation that gives you a feel of the gameplay. You can also take the opportunity to read the history books that Yang has in his quarters, as they give you important details on the setting.

However, the planet is suddenly attacked from the nearby Iserlohn Corridor by the Galactic Empire. Alliance Rear Admiral Lynch, in charge of the planet's defenses, orders all of his forces to retreat, abandoning the civilian population to the Empire. Yang chooses to stay behind, and your first mission is to take command of the remaining troops and organize a civilian evacuation while fending off the Empire until everyone can escape. Fortunately, the Imperial forces aren't the best, so you can still get through this battle. Also, during the battle you encounter one of the two love interests, Frederica Greenhill, who gives you coffee after you nearly choke on a sandwich. Your response afterwards will help determine later interactions. In the anime, she would in time become the canonical wife to Yang.

After saving the civilian population and defeating a good portion of the Imperial fleet, you gain recognition as the "Hero of El-Facil." Lynch in contrast got captured by Imperial forces while fleeing. You are still low in the military hierarchy though, so you need to continue to work your way up.

The game then jumps ahead to 796 U.C. You are now a general staff officer under the 2nd Fleet, but are still subordinate to 2nd Fleet Admiral Paetta. The Alliance Fleet has assembled

in the Astarte Starzone to fight the newly-appointed Imperial High Admiral Reinhard von Lohengramm (who you play on the other side of the game). The Alliance plans to defeat the Imperial fleet using a classic three-pronged attack, but Yang has reservations. Unfortunately, you have no control over the battle for now.

Reinhard counters by going after one fleet at a time before they can unite, and successfully destroys the 4th and 6th Fleets. During the first stage of the battle, Paetta is injured, and cedes command to Yang. Now you need to find a way to turn the tide of battle back in your favor. The optimal strategy is to let the Imperial fleet pass through, and then come behind from the rear. If you can hold out long enough, the battle ends in a draw with both sides retreating.

Despite the losses, the battle is treated as a victory, and you are promoted to Rear Admiral of the 13th Fleet. However, during the award banquet you encounter Job Trunicht, Secretary of Defense and head of the Patriotic Knights Corps secret police. After you subtly criticized his warmongering, he assigns you the suicide mission of capturing the infamous Iserlohn Fortress, which has never been taken from the Empire.

Before departing, you have the opportunity for some downtime, and have an encounter with the other possible love interest, Jessica Edwards. She knew you at your old academy, as you were both friends with her later husband Jean Robert Lappe. Since then, you have acted as a go-between while Jean is part of the war effort. However, Jean was in the 6th Fleet and died at Astartes. After learning the news, along with the information that Jean has been arrested by the 6th Fleet admiral for suggesting surrender instead of fighting to the death, Jessica has become an advocate for peace, a view that Yang shares. You also have the opportunity to recruit the Rosen Ritter, a special regiment made up of Imperial defectors. Despite their reputation for disloyalty at times, they will serve you well, and can open the way for your army with their special tactics. Also, your aide for the 13th Fleet is Frederica. She turns out to have a photographic memory, and will remember verbatim the answer you gave at El-Facil.

If you have the Rosen Ritter recruited, you can use them to infiltrate and seize Iserlohn Fortress while the fleet is busy engaging your own fleet. This is especially important since the space station has a powerful cannon called the Thor Hammer. After taking the station, you can take care of the remaining Imperial fleet without much trouble. If not, it will be much harder, though not impossible, to take Iserlohn.

Afterwards, Yang returns to the Alliance capital planet Heinessen and submits a resignation to his commanding officer Sithole, as he believes that the Alliance has a strong enough position for peace negotiations to begin. Your superior and mentor advises you to keep the position, as the war council wants to continue the war.

During this interlude, you are invited to attend a ceremony for your alma mater, but get caught up in the political campaigns for the district. Jessica is helping the peace candidate Thorndike, who is under threat from police-supported terrorist efforts by the opposing war party. Your actions in this arc are important later on, as they help determine Yang's path. Yang knows that the war-driven, corrupt council is leading the Alliance to ruin. However, he also wants to uphold democracy, and therefore is hesitant to get involved in the politics. As a soldier, he is expected to follow his superiors, leaving him in a dilemma on the right thing to do. Around this juncture, you can become more involved in the peace movement, and also move up politically, though there are costs to your ideal.

The Alliance launches an ambitious invasion of Imperial territory, but overextends its supply lines, leading to a rout when Reinhard counterattacks. Your mission at the Battle of Amritsar is to help turn the tides once more and buy the fleet time to retreat. As a reward for saving the remains of the Alliance fleet, you are appointed as commander of Iserlohn, and the 13th Fleet is made into the Iserlohn Garrison Fleet.

The Alliance is weaker than ever, but the Empire is delayed in countering due to the death of the emperor. This is the turning point for Yang, as, depending on how involved you became in Alliance and military politics earlier on, you may be invited to become part of a military coup by officers dissatisfied with the corruption of the Alliance. If you agree to a meeting with Dwight Greenhill, father of Frederica and head of the planned coup, you become part of the National Salvation Military Council. Depending on your interactions with the peace movement as well, you can bring them in, giving you a good chance of making peace with the Empire.

However, this presents its challenges. While some of the leaders such as Dwight Greenhill are competent military leaders, others are less so. Furthermore, many of the council members want to push the war forward, taking advantage of the civil war breaking out in the Empire. You might ally with Reinhard, who is reforming the Empire; the Lippstadt League, which represents the worst aspects of the Empire; or take on the Empire as a whole, with individual council members advocating each option.

In addition, the initial council actions to reestablish order, as noted by Yang in the case that he doesn't join the coup, parallel actions marking the foundation of the Empire and the loss of freedom. Therefore, you have to balance your work for the NSMC and for the peace faction. Plus, while you now have control over most of the military, Trunicht and other Alliance members have escaped and are leading counter movements to retake power, supported by the "neutral" Terran Church. You may have also alienated some of your previous allies, especially if you fail to stop the NSMC from spiraling into tyranny. In some of the worse endings, you may end up becoming a dictator, sacrificing your ideals for an uneasy peace.

To make matters worse, your old superior Lynch, returned in a prisoner exchange, is a part of the council. He is secretly an agent for Reinhard, and initiated the coup as a way to keep the Alliance occupied. Therefore, he will do his best to sabotage any efforts to end the Alliance's internal conflicts. Dwight Greenhill is an old friend of Lynch and trusts him, making it difficult to expose him. Also, Veigh is secretly working for Trunicht.

This is also your main chance to complete the love route with Jessica. If you keep from alienating her, and instead try your best to help her with persuading the new government to make peace with the empire, your relationship will develop further. Eventually, Jessica will bring up an important event in their past. At a ball, Yang and Jean had flipped a coin to see who could ask to dance with her first. Yang couldn't dance that well, so Jessica switched with Jean. Now, though, she admits that she had been playing hard to get, and had been hoping that Yang would ask to her to dance with him again. Although she loved Jean, she still holds feelings for Yang.

Overall, this whole arc, whichever side you take, reflects the issues of Yang's ideals, as it deals with how far you can go to defend democracy before it becomes tyranny, and on the flipside if it is righteous to uphold the laws of democracy even if it means losing the opportunity for peace.

In the case that you did not get involved politically, or chose to pass on the meeting with Dwight, your path is also set, as you will continue to follow your oaths to the Free Planets Alliance and democracy and remain outside of politics. Isolated at Iserlohn, your forces escape the takeover. On learning of the successful coup, you stand as the last hope for the Free Planets Alliance and must defeat the NSMC. Your treatment of Frederica, who is innocent of her father's plans, will help determine your relationship with her. Also, at this point you are cutting off the route with Jessica; due to your absence from Heinessen, she is killed while leading a protest against the NSMC. After several battles with NSMC fleets, you reach Heinessen, but must deal with the capital's Artemis Necklace battle satellites. After you break through to the planet, the NSMC council members commit suicide, and Trunicht returns from exile.

Despite saving the Alliance, the politicians are wary of you due to your popularity. After a short interlude at Iserlohn, you are recalled for a trial. While you are ostensibly charged for destroying the satellites, the whole affair is a stage trial to eliminate your potential threat to the corrupt politicians; Trunicht controls the media, giving the people little true power in the democracy. If you can defend your ideals with conviction and poke holes in your interrogators' arguments, you can hold off the sentence long enough for word to come that the Empire is trying to retake Iserlohn. Unless you supported a second invasion of the Empire earlier in the NSMC route or made peace, you also have to deal with an Imperial assault on Iserlohn. In each case, you are tied down by infighting on Heinessen. Therefore, the battle is broken into two parts. In the first stage, Frederica and the 13th troops stationed at Iserlohn defend the station and buy for time. Once Yang returns, you can then focus on driving back the Empire.

For both routes, there is an intermission arc, just before the penultimate campaign begins. Fezzan is a neutral planet holding an important route between the Empire and Alliance. In the standard route following canon (where you fight the NSMC), Fezzan secretly makes a deal with Reinhard. Fezzan funds some ex-nobles from the civil war to kidnap the child Kaiser and take him to the Alliance. Trunicht supports the child Kaiser as the true emperor, using it as a ploy to damage the Empire even as the now-corrupt Alliance supports the aristocratic ideals it once defied. Fezzan then allows the Imperial fleet in through Fezzan, giving them a clear shot at Alliance space.

While Yang defends Iserlohn and is eventually forced to retreat, the main fleet moves through Fezzan. Your protégé Julian, reassigned to Fezzan, also has a mission of helping the Alliance personnel escape. Yang and Julian's groups eventually reunite for one last battle before returning to Heinessen to regroup. Yang is then given full power over the remaining Alliance fleets to stop Reinhard. At this point, you can also finalize the route with Frederica and marry her. These final battles culminate in the Battle of Vermilion, as Yang draws out Reinhard for a final battle between the two master strategists. However, once you are about to capture or destroy Reinhard's flagship, you learn that the Alliance government has surrendered to the Empire. Therefore, you have the choice to ignore the orders and kill Reinhard, or accept the command and surrender; the former choice counts as a "bad end," as while you caused the Empire to spiral into chaos, you still failed to save the Alliance and instead engulfed the galaxy in further centuries of war. Yang retires after meeting with Reinhard, and sits down to write a history of the war, wondering if he did enough in the end.

The NSMC route is more complicated. In the case that you either supported Reinhard in the civil war or made peace with him once he took power, the two powers begin to reach stable relations. This is tricky, as there are many individuals and factions interested in keeping the

war going. If you manage to handle things right, Fezzan makes one last gambit by hosting both the remnants of the corrupt Alliance council and the survivors of the Lippstadt Alliance. Both groups make a grudging truce and declare themselves to be governments in exile. Both of them are using Fezzan's neutrality as sanctuary, but Fezzan approaches you and offers a deal to let you move through and attack the Empire, as the Empire is apparently supporting the Alliance government in exile. In actuality, Fezzan is offering deals to both sides in a last attempt to make the Alliance and Empire go to war again. In the case that you figure things out and defuse the situation with the Empire, you and Reinhard lead a joint invasion of Fezzan. Be careful even in this final battle, as there will be terrorist uprisings on some of your planets and ships. It appears that there is some force, using Fezzan as a puppet, that seeks to prolong the war, but that remains a mystery for now (until the secret final act). Once Fezzan is conquered, assuming you have helped stabilize the Alliance government while also preserving democracy, the galaxy finally enters an age of peace, and Yang is satisfied, albeit while commenting that it would have been a lot less work for him if he had just stayed a historian.

Therefore, Yang's golden ending requires him to strengthen the peace party, and in the process make the people take responsibility for the democracy they are a part of. By helping restore the Alliance to a more democratic form and making peace with the now-reformed Empire, along with protecting as many people along the way as you could, you help guide the galaxy into a new golden age.

## Disc II: Empire Side

In the prologue, you, Reinhard von Musel, are assigned as the chief navigator to the Hameln II alongside your best friend Siegfried Kircheis. You clash with both the commanding officer and executive lieutenant, and must take control when a routine mission turns into a critical battle. To cover up his own mistakes, the commanding officer promotes you to lieutenant and reassigns you and Kircheis to a different fleet

Years later, you have risen up the ranks to high admiral. In the process, you have also been granted a nobility title, and now take the name von Lohengramm. The Alliance has assembled a massive set of fleets to defeat you at Astarte. Despite being outnumbered, you can take advantage of the poor organization early on to destroy much of the Alliance. After a certain point, Yang takes command of the Alliance forces, making the battle more difficult. Destroy enough of the Alliance fleet and hold out long enough against Yang, and the battle ends in a draw, albeit one more in favor of the Empire.

You return to the Imperial capital planet Odin, and are appointed fleet admiral and vice commander of the Imperial Space Fleet. You are invited to one of many Imperial court festivities. It is a birthday party for the daughter of Duke Otho von Braunschweig, son-in-law to Kaiser Friedrich IV. His daughter is one of the potential heirs to the throne should the emperor die.

At the party, you have an opportunity to meet with your sister Annerose, and the source of Reinhard's hatred for the Empire is revealed. When you and Annerose were children, the kaiser happened to see Annerose one day and took her away with him to be his concubine. Furthermore, the kaiser is inept at running the Empire, preferring to enjoy himself with

frivolous parties. Indeed, most of the attendees are arrogant and conceited, preoccupied with trivial plots while commoners struggle for what little they have.

You can spy on the kaiser, who has retired to a private area. He talks with his adviser Lichtenlade, and mentions that he is aware that Reinhard plans to usurp the throne, but in fact welcomes the danger. He wishes to bring the Goldenbaum dynasty to a close with his death, in the most spectacular fashion possible with the chaos he envisions. This only deepens Reinhard's hatred for the man and the Empire, as the kaiser shows no concern for the people who will suffer by his internal sabotage of the government.

You also have the chance to open up one of the two main love routes if you sneak out into the gardens, where you find Sabine von Littenheim, one of the potential heirs to the throne. She is currently in a rebellious phase, in part because she discovered a secret her father knows. Both she and Braunschweig's daughter, as the mothers are sisters, suffer from a rare genetic disease. An Imperial eugenics law requires the extermination of such people, and although it isn't practiced as often now nobles still use it to eliminate family members that are loose ends. Her father, Marquis Littenheim, still wants her to take the throne, but clearly does not care about her, and she suspects that he will quietly do away with her once she marries and has an heir.

You can befriend her at this point, though the route will be difficult. Despite her issues with her father, Sabine is still a naive noble, creating tensions given Reinhard's own despise for the aristocracy. Among other activities, she enjoys riding ponies. Furthermore, this arc will be bittersweet, as even in the best ending the story will close with the knowledge that she will die in less than a decade.

However, there is a darker subplot underway at the party. The disgraced Marquis Klopstock has attended the ball in order to assassinate the kaiser, not caring about the many others who will also die in the process. You have to uncover the plot and disable the cane bomb before it is too late.

You then need to assemble your new fleet, bringing like-minded men under your banner. Your first mission is to deal with Maximilian von Castrop, who rebelled after it was discovered that he and his father has embezzled money from the Imperial treasury. To protect himself, Castrop has purchased from the black market a single Artemis Necklace defense system, similar to the upgrades one that Yang faces while retaking Heinessen from the NSMC. Once you get past the satellites, the battle is over, as a retainer killed Castrop rather than to obey the order to pose as Castrop and commit suicide to cover his escape.

In the aftermath of the battle, you also have the chance to meet your other potential love interest, Hildegard von Mariendorf, as she and her father Franz were taken hostage by Castrop when the embezzlement was revealed. The Mariendorf family, while an old lineage, is less arrogant than other noble families, and is in fact working to reform the Empire, albeit with little success due to the massive corruption of the system. Unlike many of her peers, Hildegard is disinterested in traditional hobbies for aristocratic ladies, and instead is interested in political and military sciences. She was in fact the canonical love interest in the anime.

You return to Odin to learn that Yang has captured Iserlohn, leaving the three chiefs of the Imperial Armed Forces disgraced, though they still manage to pin most of the blame on staff officer Oberstein, who was smarter than the other commanders at Iserlohn and chose to retreat after his superiors foolishly disregarded his suggestions. If you choose to do so,

you can convince the kaiser to pardon the chiefs, in exchange for them pardoning Oberstein. Oberstein is skilled in Machiavellian tactics, and will prove to be a useful ally. The removal of the three chiefs will give you more power in the short term, but Oberstein will be critical later on.

The Free Planets Alliance, rather than seeking peace, leads an invasion of the Empire. If you recruited Oberstein, he suggests a scorched earth retreat tactic to delay the Alliance until they overextend their supply line trying to manage the multiple planets they "liberated," leading to revolts against the Alliance. If you do not follow this strategy, the conquered planets fare better, but in turn you face much more challenging odds in the defense against the Alliance. In any case, the campaign culminates with the Battle of Amritsar, where you destroy most of the Alliance fleet but fail to stop Yang Wen-Li from helping the remaining forces to retreat. You can either punish or pardon the admiral who failed to stop Yang, helping determine the kind of person that you are becoming.

The opportunity to counter and invade Alliance territory fails when news arrives that the emperor has died; Reinhard's only regret is that the man did not live for a couple more years so Reinhard could execute him. The court is now debating which heir to support, with multiple factions emerging. This places Sabine in a difficult position, not to mention you, particularly since the secret she shared with you could cripple the opposing candidates, but alienate her in the process. Depending on how you play the politics, you ally with the prime minister and support either Sabine (but not her father) or Erwin Josef II, a child Kaiser. This is the point at which you determine whether or not to lock onto the Sabine route, which is no longer an option if you choose the child Kaiser. The child Kaiser will prove to be easily manipulated, allowing you to largely run the government on your own, however, if someone else gained access to the Kaiser, his malleability could be turned against you. Sabine is more mature, and will sometimes disagree with your decisions; even so, she will be a more active agent of change, and is less likely to be turned against you later on.

Either way, Marquis Littenheim and Braunschweig organize the Lippstadt League of nobles to defend their rights against Reinhard's reforms, in a scene that parodies the Tennis Court Oath. They then begin to plot a coup against you. Around this time, Hildegard contacts you, as she has convinced her family to ally with you and go through with the reforms to transform the Empire. Anton Fellner, part of the Odin police, tries to assassinate the new kaiser, and the Lippstadt League flees Odin to start the civil war. Depending on how you set things up before the assassin plot, you can capture most of the escaping nobles, reducing the number you have to fight in the war.

You now have to fight a number of battles against the Lippstadt League. The nobles have an advantage of mass numbers, but are poor strategists and make critical errors. Furthermore, they treat their troops as utterly expendable. For example, Marquis Littenheim will try to cover his retreat by destroying his own ships that are in his path. If you sent Lynch to sabotage the Alliance before the civil war broke out, you don't have to worry about the Alliance during the civil war, but if you didn't they send supplies to the Lippstadt League as an effort to prolong the fighting.

A turning point comes when you learn that Braunschweig is sending a fleet to destroy the revolting planet of Westerland with nukes. If you let Braunschweig destroy the planet, he alienates most of his followers and loses the majority of his support. However, in doing so you sacrifice some of your morals for the ultimate goal. Be careful about delaying on the decision; Oberstein lied about the time of the strike, and if you change your mind later it is already too late. If you do stop the attack, you face much greater difficulty in the final battle

to capture Geiersburg Fortress.

In the aftermath, Kircheis confronts you about the Westerland Massacre in the case that you allowed it to happen. Your actions then and now affect your relationship with your closest friend and almost-brother, which is important given what is next. A little later, Braunschweig's aide Ansbach delivers his master's corpse to Reinhard, but suddenly pulls out a gun to assassinate you. Depending on what you do, either you or Kircheis may die. It is possible to save Kircheis and survive yourself, but it is very difficult and requires among other choices for you to have saved Westerland. If Kircheis dies, your sister may choose to go into retreat unless you have interacted with her enough and shown that you are still the brother she loves. If Kircheis does survive through this and to the end, he marries Annerose in the epilogue. Saving Kircheis proves to be one of the key factors for the golden ending.

Next, you deal with Prime Minister Lichtenlade, who has been framed for the murder. If you choose to keep him, be wary, as the wily old politician is sneaky and still has access to the Imperial Seal, limiting your ability to initiate reforms. Also, if Sabine is now the Kaiserina, she tries to assert her own authority, leading to new issues in your relationship. If you declined her route earlier on, she is exiled to the frontier along with the other surviving families of the Lippstadt League.

There is then an interlude period as you reform the Empire. During this time, a couple of events can pop up depending on which romantic arc you are locked on. For the Sabine route, you and Sabine have to figure out how to continue and expand your relationship with the new changes in place, and also foil an assassination attempt on her. For Hildegard, she asks if you could visit her terminally ill cousin, Heinrich von Kummel. He admires the sort of everyman who can embody both military might and cultural elegance, and therefore has taken an interest in Reinhard. You have a considerable chat with him, but something about him seems off. Just as you are preparing to leave, Heinrich announces that he has planted bombs in his mansion. Depressed at his own powerlessness, he wants to have his life end on a high note by putting the greatest man in the galaxy under his own power. Fortunately, his arrogance makes him treat this all as a game, and you have a chance to defuse the detonators. Hildegard is innocent, and you will need her help to escape the trap. However, she also has a fondness for her childhood cousin, and your actions and treatment of her during the plot can strengthen or fracture your relationship. Just before he dies, Heinrich hints that someone guided him to this end, but the truth is still unknown. In addition, assuming your sister has not isolated herself as she will do after Kircheis' death, you have the opportunity to visit your sister and work on rekindling your bond with her.

After an interlude period as you reform the Empire, Reinhard contemplates launching an attack on Iserlohn Fortress using the now-mobile Geiersburg Fortress. However, Hildegard (or Sabine) asks you to consider making peace with the Alliance, as the true enemy, the Goldenbaum Dynasty, has already been destroyed. Keep in mind that the Alliance council is desperately clinging to its power, and, treaty or not, may try to continue the war in spite of the growing losses, as doing so is the only way for them to keep their positions. Even so, this may be your last opportunity.

Whether or not you succeed in capturing Iserlohn Fortress after going through with the attack, the war stalls for some time, until you learn that some surviving members of the Lippstadt League have returned from exile on Fezzan. They are plotting to "rescue" the Kaiser and take him to the Alliance as "government in exile." As you plan to counter them, the Fezzan High Commissioner comes forward with the plan, and explains that Fezzan in fact wishes to help the Empire finish off the Alliance by providing the impetus for a final

battle. You can choose to allow the kidnapping to take place, in exchange for access to the critical Fezzan Corridor. If you refuse, Fezzan still carries out the kidnapping, demonstrating that it has key infiltrators in the Empire, and this time offers resistance in the Fezzan Corridor, albeit not too much; it appears that even Fezzan is a pawn to some other power, one that wishes to bring forth the final battle after so long. The situation becomes complicated if Sabine is now the Kaiserina. Unlike the child Kaiser, she refuses to cooperate with the government-in-exile, and the Alliance instead tries to use her as a hostage. Even so, Sabine is smart, and through her experiences with you she can handle herself; in fact, she eventually finds a way to secretly contact you and provide intelligence on the Alliance. The child Kaiser, on the other hand, easily accepts his new handler's orders. If you allowed the kidnapping, though, Sabine will not forgive you.

Once you conquer Fezzan and move into Alliance space, the final Ragnarok campaign to defeat the Alliance begins. You fight a number of guerrilla-oriented battles against forces commanded by Yang, and finally seek out Yang to destroy the last resistance to the Empire. At the same time, either Hildegard or Sabine convinces some of the other admirals in your fleet to secretly launch a second attack on Heinessen to bring the war to a close; you have to fight both battles whether you succeed or fail at either, and the results contribute to the final ending.

Reinhard's golden ending requires you to have maintained your ideals even as you gathered power, and to have protected the many people you have bonded with along your journey. For instance, saving Kircheis is important, and maintaining contact with your sister is also critical. Later history records that Reinhard helped bring the galaxy into a new golden age of peace and prosperity, but also notes that his love for his friends and family was equally important in his story.

### Disc III: Final Story

If you fulfill all of the achievement slots in the campaigns and reach the golden endings for each disc, you can unlock a final set of campaigns in which you play as both Yang and Reinhard in a combined version of the golden endings. In unlocking some of the extra achievements, you may have noticed strange mysteries, such as the unnatural stagnation of the war at critical moments in the past, as well as the role of the Terran Church. In the finale, all of these secrets come together.

The Terran Church, originally emerging as a way to ensure that Earth's memory lived on after humanity abandoned it to spread to the stars, has since transformed into a subtle conspiracy to reunite the world under Earth again. Disgusted at the endless warfare and factionalism, Terran operatives have worked to prolong the war until both sides are bled out, which they believe will then signal the return to a peaceful, united galaxy centered around the Earth.

Yang and Reinhard threw a wrench into the church's plans, and now they enter the final stage of their struggle. You first need to deal with some issues on the visual novel side as the church attempts to sabotage the relations between the Empire and the Alliance to reignite the war. They will also attempt to assassinate Yang and Reinhard. After the plan is at last revealed, Yang and Reinhard join forces to attack Terra and the church's headquarters at the titanic fortified monolith Tower of Babel. The church has secretly

accumulated an incredible force of troops, ships, and weapons over the centuries, so this will be a difficult battle, with multiple phases as the Terrans pull out all the stops in a last desperate attempt to fulfill their vision for the galaxy.

In the end, while not forgiving the church for all of the unnecessary suffering it has created, Yang and Reinhard recognize that the church had good intentions at the beginning, and vow to ensure that humanity always remembers its past so that it can move forward to a brighter, harmonious future.

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## **September 7, 1998**

On "Pokemonday", *Pokemon Red and Green* launches in North America. Sales are fairly soft on the first day, though it's still the biggest first day in sales for a Game Boy game in North America since the launch of *Donkey Kong Land 2* alongside the Game Boy Color back in 1996. The anime also launches and soon becomes the highest rated show on Toonami, though the entire block is now Cartoon Network's highest rated segment, and ratings steadily climb throughout 1998 and 1999. The sales of the *Pokemon* video game remain strong throughout September, October, and November, but come December, they explode and by the end of the year, *Pokemon Red and Green* would become one of the top five best North American sellers on the Game Boy.

### **Pokemon Red and Green: The Basics**

*Pokemon Red and Green* are the versions of the game that are released in North America on September 7, 1998. The games are based on a slightly enhanced version of the Japanese *Pokemon Blue Version* that released in 1997. Compared to the OTL North American *Pokemon* games, these can be described as slightly enhanced from OTL's *Pokemon Red and Blue*, but not quite on the level of *Pokemon Crystal*, with one major exception: the soundtrack, which has been totally overhauled for the enhanced speakers in OTL's Game Boy Color. While the games can be played on an original Game Boy unit, Game Boy Color players get a version of the game that is slightly bumped up in graphics and with sound quality approaching that of a Super Nintendo game. Many of the glitches found in OTL's *Pokemon* games do not appear in these, though the Missingno glitch is the most notable that remains. The glitch allowing players to obtain Mew via RNG manipulation has been removed, indeed, most of the RNG manipulation glitches have been taken out of the game.

The basic plotline of the game is identical to OTL's: you start as a young boy who is allowed to choose between three *Pokemon*: Charmander, Squirtle, and Bulbasaur. You then go around the world, collecting *Pokemon* and battling Gym Leaders for badges that allow you the opportunity to compete in the *Pokemon* league, battling your rival Gary at the end. The two biggest changes to the plot concern the S.S. Anne and Lavender Town. The S.S. Anne is attacked by a band of pirates, and you have to fight their leader, a female pirate named Calliope. In Lavender Town, it is explicitly stated that Gary's Raticate died from being overtrained and that's why Gary visited Lavender Town. You have to battle the vengeful spirit of Gary's Raticate at one point in *Pokemon Tower*.

Butterflies have left the original 150 Pokemon largely untouched, the major butterflies concerning alternate Pokemon do not occur until the sequel to the game. However, eight of the original 150 have either been majorly altered or switched out entirely, those are:

Sandshrew → replaced with Molbore, a mole Pokemon whose type is still Ground  
Sandslash → replaced with Molcrush, a mole Pokemon whose type is Ground/Fighting, Molebore's evolution  
Nidoran m and Nidoran f → Names changed to Nidobun and Nidobell  
Drowzee → replaced with Hotlein, a Psychic/Fire Pokemon holding a telephone  
Hypno → replaced with Oracoal, a Psychic/Fire Pokemon that utilizes tarot cards  
Kangaskhan → becomes an evolution of Marowak, its baby is a Cubone  
Lapras → name changed to Plesia

The trade evolution and PvP battle mechanics remain identical to OTL. For the most part, *Pokemon Red and Green* are nearly identical to OTL's *Pokemon Red and Blue*, with very subtle enhancements and changes. They are essentially the same games as IOTL and are equally well received and equally popular.

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## **The Pokemon Anime In TTL**

The Pokemon anime is also, at least for the first 70 episodes or so, nearly identical to the version that appeared IOTL. There are subtle changes which include:

- One of Misty's sisters, Lily, is a LOT nicer to Misty than she was IOTL and is actually a fairly competent battler. Sato develops a bit of a crush on her, making Misty jealous (in fact, ITTL Sato is more interested in girls in general, though not nearly to the degree of the lecherous Brock).
- A.J. does not have a Sandshrew, he has a Machop and he still beats Sato for his 99th victory and Team Rocket for his 100th.
- The S.S. Anne saga indeed heavily involves Calliope and her pirate crew, and when the ship is shipwrecked, Calliope and Sato get stranded on an island together and we learn a lot about her past.
- Sabrina isn't a deranged psychic who traps people in a dollhouse, she's just a very strong trainer. Sato still has to get Haunter to beat her.
- The Hypno episode is replaced with an episode where Team Rocket is running a fraudulent psychic friends hotline in order to catch Oracoal.
- In the Safari Zone Kangaskhan episode, Cubone and Marowak appear frequently.
- Sato's Charmeleon stays a Charmeleon for a few more episodes, the Aerodactyl episode appears later in the run
- Sato's Bulbasaur evolves into an Ivysaur in the Venusaur episode, initially it still doesn't want to but in order to save the Venusaur from being captured by Team Rocket it evolves
- Sato's Squirtle evolves into a Wartortle in the Misty Mermaid episode, Sato is the one who rescues Lily and Violet after Team Rocket takes their place, Sato wants to go after Team Rocket to impress Lily but gets into trouble at which point his Squirtle evolves to save him
- The episode where Sato gets the Earth Badge has heavy allusions to Giovanni being Sato's father and nothing about armored Mewtwo
- In the Pokemon League, Sato wins. He wins the entire tournament including an epic battle with a fierce and arrogant trainer at the end who is using a Zapdos, Zapdos and Pikachu have an epic battle but Pikachu wins. After Sato wins the Pokemon League, he becomes a Pokemon Champion, but is then told that in order to be a Pokemon MASTER, he has to

defeat the Elite Four AND the last person in order to do so. He is told that no champion has beaten the Elite Four in 10 years, and in fact most of them lose to Lorelai...who Sato now must face immediately after winning the League Championship.

-Sato defeats Lorelai, but it's a brutal battle and afterward his Charizard is frozen solid, similarly to how it was at the end of the Poliwrath episode. Sato is told that he will have a match against Bruno in one week's time. The remainder of the season, about 30 episodes in all, revolves around Sato prepping for the Elite Four and battling them one by one. Events that occur during this time include: Sato's Wartortle and Ivysaur evolving into Blastoise and Venusaur, Sato finding out more about his father, and Sato and Misty gradually drawing closer together.

-One by one, Sato beats Bruno, Agatha, and then finally Lance and his pair of Dragonites. Then he goes up against the Champion of the Pokemon League...and it's his father and the leader of Team Rocket, Giovanni. The battle between Sato and Giovanni is incredibly fierce and deeply personal, but in the end, Sato defeats Giovanni, who agrees to disband Team Rocket afterward (by this point, Jessie and James have already been reformed and are on Sato's side). He is given one final mission: to catch 'em all. He sets out on a new mission with Brock and Misty to catch all 150 Pokemon, and the first season ends.

-The Mewtwo movie is a canon post-script of this first season, capping off the series (Sato doesn't catch Mewtwo but Mewtwo tells Sato he'll have a chance to catch him someday if Mewtwo deems him worthy).

As for the dubbing of the Pokemon anime, it's done by BangZoom Entertainment in Los Angeles, and the North American version is much looser than IOTL in terms of censorship. The Porygon episode, which had its seizure-inducing scenes removed before ever airing in Japan, is of course brought over, as is the Safari Zone episode with the gun wielding warden and Team Rocket. Even the beach episode remains, though the part where James has giant inflatable breasts is removed. The voice cast of the TTL Pokemon dub includes:

Sato: Brianne Siddall

Misty: Rebecca Forstadt

Brock: Steve Cardenas

Jessie: Wendee Lee

James: Steve Staley

The first 52 episodes air on Toonami from September-November 1998. The next 52 episodes, all the way up to the end of the first season, air on Toonami from June-August 1999, with the first movie appearing in November 1999 as IOTL.

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But it wasn't just the games or the anime that infected all of America with Pokemania. There was a ton of merchandise, a TON of it that hit stores alongside the release or in the weeks and months afterwards. Action figures and plushies were made of many of the more popular Pokemon and even a few of the lesser Pokemon, allowing people to act out their Pokemon-related fantasies in real life. And on Halloween, it was very common to see people walking around dressed as a Pokemon trainer or even as a Pokemon, with Pokemon-related costumes selling better than anything else that Halloween season. There were plenty of electronic devices released as well. Tiger made a handheld Pokedex with information on all 150 original Pokemon (Mew was notably absent, Nintendo wouldn't even reveal Mew's existence to the West until the distribution events in 1999), and there were a series of devices to go up against Hasbro's Tamagotchi series of digital pets. By late 1998, due to Hasbro's huge marketing push, Tamagotchi was still going strong (and would get even

stronger once the anime came to Fox Kids in 1999). So Nintendo brought out four interactive digital pet devices: the Pokemon Pikachu, the Pokemon Charmander, the Pokemon Squirtle, and the Pokemon Bulbasaur. The keychain-like devices, which Sony worked on with Nintendo, featured full color screens and retailed for \$24.99, allowing you to raise up one of the four most notable Pokemon (and if you had Squirtle, Charmander, or Bulbasaur, you could evolve them).

There was also a card game, brought to the West by Wizards of the Coast in 1999. The company was already known for its radically popular *Magic: The Gathering* game, and Pokemon was somewhat similar, though vastly simplified, with six different types of Energy cards and the ability to power up your Pokemon's moves by attaching one energy card per turn. The success of the Pokemon card game inspired Sony to make its own collectible card game in 2000 featuring characters from its various video game properties, such as *Ballistic Limit*, *Tales Of The Seven Seas*, *Dog Dash*, and numerous others. The Pokemon card game instantly rose to become the #2 most popular collectible card game in the world and is still popular to this day.

Nintendo's *Pokemon* franchise wasn't just a game. It was a full-on merchandise blitz, and alongside Nintendo's record Ultra Nintendo sales, sent the company's fortunes soaring in the late 90s and into the dawn of the new millennium.

-excerpted from a 2013 article posted on Gamesovermatter.com

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Anchorwoman: And today is the day, "Pokemonday", as Nintendo calls it, when their much anticipated *Pokemon* game and animated series will formally launch here in the United States. While there weren't many crowds at a local Toys 'r Us this morning when we sent our reporter, staff there expects business to pick up this afternoon once area schools let out.

Reporter: Yes, it's one of the most highly anticipated games of the year. *Pokemon*, for Nintendo's Game Boy, puts you in the role of a young boy who must capture all 150 of these creatures, big and small. The creatures are split amongst two games, *Pokemon Red*, and *Pokemon Green*, and you'll have to trade with your friends if you want to catch 'em all. We're here with the manager of a local Toys 'r Us who expects major sales for the game all this week.

Manager: Well, we had a few people show up at midnight to buy the game, but so far business has been pretty light.

Reporter: It being a school day, do you expect more youngsters to come buy the game later on this afternoon?

Manager: We're actually not expecting the really big rush until Friday or Saturday, the weekend, that's when parents are more likely to come in and buy the game. We're not seeing sales like we saw with the last big game, which was *Ballistic Limit 2*, we had a midnight release for that game and nearly sold out, but for this one we've still got plenty of copies on the shelves.

Reporter: Now, have you tried out *Pokemon*?

Manager: I actually have, it's a pretty cute little game but it looks really time-consuming.

Reporter: \*laughs\* So you think kids will be spending a lot of time with their noses in a Game Boy from now on?

Manager: It sure looks to be that way.

Reporter: Well, we'll check back here at five o'clock to see if sales have picked up.

Anchorwoman: And of course the Pokemon game isn't the only thing Nintendo is debuting today. There's also an animated series on the cable channel Cartoon Network, which follows the storyline of the game and introduces the creatures as part of a living, breathing world. Nintendo's also announced plans for a line of toys and Halloween costumes that will be available over the coming weeks.

-from a news report on WHDH-TV that aired on the morning of September 7, 1998

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Ted Crosley: Behind all the hype, *Pokemon* to me was just an average RPG. The element of catching these little creatures is compelling, but compared to all the other RPGs that are out there, it's pretty plain. The graphics are...okay, I guess. The music is good if you're playing on a Game Boy Color.

Alex Stansfield: I have to disagree about the game being average, it's extremely fun and really addictive and I couldn't get enough of finding all the Pokemon.

Ted: Here's a big problem, if you don't have a friend with the game, or two Game Boys, you're not gonna find all the Pokemon. There are only about 135 Pokemon in each of these games, if you REALLY wanna "catch 'em all", you HAVE to trade. In fact, to evolve several of the Pokemon, you have to trade them.

Alex: Well, there ARE a lot of people with two Game Boys because of the Game Boy Color.

Ted: So you have to buy two copies of the game which are practically identical.

Alex: And that is a strike against it, I agree, but the gameplay is excellent. It's like a huge game of rock-paper-scissors where you have 15 types, some are weak to others-

Ted: And that's another thing. The Psychic and Dragon types are WAY overpowered, Dragon resists almost everything and is only weak to Ice and Dragon which are rare types to find.

Alex: Dragons should be stronger, they're dragons!

Ted: There's only three different Dragon types in the whole game! The balance is WAY out of whack. The graphics, even for Game Boy, aren't that great. I was really disappointed with *Pokemon*.

Alex: It's not for everyone but I think everyone should at least give it a chance. You can sit and play this game for hours at a time and not get bored. It's a fantastic game, there are lots of creative Pokemon designs...

Ted: Which is one thing I liked, the creativity of the different creatures. Pretty much every

animal under the sun is represented.

Alex: Right, and you never know what you're going to get when you encounter a Pokemon in the field. It makes for a really thrilling experience that I really liked. I'm giving this game a 4.

Ted: And I'm giving it a 3. It's got a lot of problems and I think you should know what you're getting into.

-excerpted from the September 8, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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### **Nintendo's Future Plans For The Pokemon Franchise**

With *Pokemon Red and Green* a massive success, Nintendo is set to announce their future plans for the series at their Spaceworld conference, coming up in a few days. Most notably, Nintendo is almost certain to announce the sequel to *Red and Green* and a timetable for its Japanese release. Nintendo has kept details of this new game a secret, and it's likely that the game will contain more than 100 new creatures, with some having already been revealed in the hit anime. We're also likely to learn more about the new *Pokemon Adventure* game set to release on the SNES-CD by the end of the year. The game is said to present an abbreviated version of the Game Boy's adventure and will probably see a North American release sometime next year, making it one of the final SNES-CD games. We're also likely to hear more news on the Ultra Nintendo titles *Pokemon Stadium* and *Pokemon Safari*. *Pokemon Stadium* brings the series' trademark battles into a fully 3-D arena, but little else is known about it other than the fact that it won't include all 150 Pokemon, but that a later version of the game might. Then there's *Pokemon Safari*, which takes players through a 3-D world filled with Pokemon and allows players to interact with them and even take pictures. The game will be released at the beginning of 1999 in Japan and will likely be a summer 1999 release in the States.

It's clear that Pokemon will be a major part of Nintendo's plans going forward, both on its handheld system and on its home console. We'll be sure to bring you any news as soon as it breaks.

-from an article posted on RPGamer.net on October 9, 1998

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*"With the Ultra Nintendo and the Saturn, especially with the Ring, fighting games really are becoming arcade perfect, and that's why we're seeing this renaissance which we haven't seen since the days of Street Fighter II. It shouldn't be surprising that fighting games are topping the charts and smashing sales records, and it's a trend that's only going to continue."*

-Dan "Shoe" Hsu in an editorial in the November 1998 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"Killer Instinct had been a sales disappointment on the SNES-CD. It was a hit, but it was*

*still a disappointment. So with Killer Instinct Ultra, it needed to stand as its own game. We couldn't just port Killer Instinct 2 to the Ultra Nintendo. We wanted to take everything that made Killer Instinct 2 great in the arcades and make it BETTER for the Ultra. We missed the launch window by a while, but I'll be damned if we didn't take the world by storm."*  
-Ken Lobb in a January 30, 2009 interview with JackedUpGames.com

*"Killer Instinct goes Ultra on the Ultra Nintendo. Score ultra combos in an ultra-fierce, ultra-fast, ultra-killer slugfest."*  
-excerpted from the *Killer Instinct Ultra* commercial

*"Once again, we were going up against Killer Instinct. Last time we did that, we got our asses kicked. But with the Ultra Nintendo's huge install base and fighting games surging again, we figured, why not? We got our asses kicked again. But the pie was so huge we were still one of the biggest games of the fall. At least we beat Twinblade."*  
-Ed Boon, discussing the home console release of *Mortal Kombat 4* in a podcast for 'Finish Him!' Internet Radio, November 17, 2013

*"Tale Lemuria was a great game. An awesome game. One of the best games we've ever done. But the big criticism, the BIG criticism was that the voices were.... not up to par. With what, with Squaresoft's pros? We'd been doing this longer than they have. Ashley Angel was voicing heroes when Moira Quirk was still blowing a whistle on Guts. These people are my friends and I'm gonna stand up for them."*  
-Victor Ireland, in a letter sent to Gamespot.com in November 1999

*"What games am I playin' to kill time? A whole lotta Tekken 3, uh, been goin' back and catchin' up on old Genesis games with my Venus, it's real useful to have on set when you don't have a TV handy. But when I'm in front of a TV, I'm playin' Tekken 3 and waitin' for that Ring, gonna get Virtua Fighter 3 next!"*  
-Will Smith, from a June 23, 1998 interview on the set of *Hurricane Season*

*"Stomp them feet, stomp them feet, stomp stomp stomp stomp stomp stomp them feet!"*  
-excerpted from the theme song from *Z-Stomper*

*"This is no mere tournament, Jago. You see, I am seeking a new mind for the perfect fighter. A fighter who can bring the world to its knees. And you...you will be that fighter. You will help me to create a new generation of cyber soldier!"*  
-Dekado, *Killer Instinct Ultra*

*"Only the mighty Summon Spirits can prevent this horrible tragedy. Please, great spirit Maxwell, I implore you, lend me your power so that I may bring peace to men and half-elves!"*  
-Lyrica, *Tale Lemuria*

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*"For Tale Lemuria, the challenge was telling a story that could conceivably take place in the same world as Phantasia, but introducing an entirely new world to the player in the process. I suppose I took inspiration from Final Fantasy in that respect, though the story I wanted to tell with Lemuria was entirely my own..."*  
-Yoshiharu Gotanda, in a September 1998 interview with *Famitsu* magazine

## **Tale Lemuria: The Basics**

Developed by Telenet Japan's Wolf Team, *Tale Lemuria* is the sequel to *Tale Phantasia*, developed exclusively for the Ultra Nintendo. Though the game shares many elements with its predecessor, in other ways it's a complete overhaul. *Lemuria* introduces a fully 3-D graphical engine to the series (the game's graphics are somewhat less than *Tales of Symphonia* OTL, also comparable to a lesser *Star Ocean: Till The End Of Time*), and battles take place in a 3-D plane, allowing the player to move in all directions and not just straight at the enemy. In many ways, however, the battle systems are similar: the game is an action RPG that allows the player to attack at any time, while dodging and/or blocking enemy attacks. Magic or physical attack techniques can be used at the touch of a button and equipped to the character, via the use of the Ultra Nintendo's controls, up to eight techniques can be equipped for use in battle at once. Summon spirits can be used as well, in this case by the summoner Lyrica, and the summon spirits in *Lemuria* are identical to the ones featured in *Phantasia*: Undine, Efreet, Sylph, Gnome, Volt, Aska, Luna, Shadow, Origin, and Maxwell, while also introducing a summon spirit of ice: Glacia. Like *Tale Phantasia*, *Lemuria* features an overworld that can be traveled to get between towns and dungeons, later in the game there is a flight option. The game features fully voiced anime cutscenes in certain pivotal spots, though it does not include the skit system from OTL *Tales* games. There is also voice acting in most scenes in towns and dungeons.

The plotline of the game involves a young soldier, Kaster, and his fellow soldiers/best friends: Indra (the main female character of the game, Kaster's love interest/rival), Elliot, and Daze. The game takes place in a world where half-elves have been hunted down and exterminated, those who live in human civilization are told that the extermination was a necessary evil, as the half-elves were plotting to slaughter all the humans. All of the world has been conquered, but out beyond the oceans, there are tales of tempests, monsters, and a mysterious continent (based on the real-world myth of Lemuria, from where the game derives its name). After proving themselves in a series of battles against an invasion force led by a pack of barbarian raiders (the leader of whom, Raven, becomes playable later on), Kaster and his companions are allowed to go on a quest to find this mysterious continent. After a few tribulations along the way, and a great storm, Kaster and his friends find this continent and soon come to realize that it's inhabited by half-elves, the surviving descendents of the race supposedly exterminated long ago. But the half-elves do not seem to hold grudges against these human visitors. They allow Kaster and the others to live on one condition...they must never leave the continent, as no one can ever know of the half-elves' continued existence. The four resign themselves to this fate, especially since they are treated well while on the continent. They soon come across a beautiful young woman named Lyrica, the daughter of the continent's ruler, who possesses an amazing singing voice and is the last remaining summoner in the world. Lyrica tells the group that the continent is dying and that she must visit the summon spirits: Undine, Sylph, Gnome, and Efreet, in order to restore life to their civilization. However, while Kaster and his friends accompany Lyrica on her journey, Lyrica's father, Antares, harbors a desire for revenge on humanity, and hopes to use Kaster as the instrument of his revenge. There is also a rebellion afoot on the continent, led by a dark sorceress named Maggie, who is the main villainess during the summon spirit portion of the game (during which two more playable half-elf characters join the party, Tipia, a spritely thief girl, and Crusher, a brutish warrior). Maggie and her henchmen constantly interfere with Lyrica's quest, and after gathering up the four summon spirits, Maggie manages to capture Lyrica and take her to a massive mountain fortress. The group raids the fortress and defeats Maggie, who, though wounded, manages to slink away, but not before offering a warning about Antares. The heroes return, and Lyrica performs the summoning ritual, which restores life to the ancient continent. Antares realizes that Kaster truly is a great hero and that perhaps humanity has redeemed

itself in the centuries since it conducted the half-elf genocide. During a great celebration to commemorate Lyrica's success and Kaster and his friends' bravery, Indra persuades Kaster that he, Elliot, and Daze need to escape the continent while they have a chance. Kaster secretly says goodbye to Lyrica, but Lyrica's brother overhears this and reports it to Antares. As Kaster's group is about to leave, they are set upon by Antares' soldiers and nearly killed, only for Lyrica to interfere, allowing Kaster's group to escape back to human civilization. Antares, seeing this as a betrayal, is enraged and renews his intentions to declare war on humanity, using the energy of the four Summon Spirits to power an ancient weapon.

Meanwhile, Kaster and his friends report about the lost continent to their ruler, who is astonished that half-elves are still alive and proclaims that war must be raised against them immediately. As Kaster is trying to persuade the ruler not to start a war, Antares' superweapon is seen activating from all the way across the planet. The beam cuts through a massive swath of forest before completely annihilating a human coastal town. The devastation sets humanity and the half-elves on a path toward war and enrages Indra, who agrees with the human ruler that the half-elves need to be dealt with, driving a wedge between her and Kaster. Kaster realizes he needs to return to the continent to try and stop Antares. Meanwhile, Lyrica has secretly left the continent and heads to the human world, where she's immediately confronted by a band of angry human soldiers and nearly killed before who else but Raven of all people shows up and saves her. Raven, whose war against the human civilizations stemmed from his descendancy from a group of humans who opposed the half-elf genocide, wants to help Lyrica in any way he can. He and Lyrica travel together briefly to an ancient library, where the secret of five more summon spirits: Volt, Glacia, Aska, Luna, and Shadow, is kept. The summon spirits from the human world are the only ones with enough power to counter Antares' superweapon. Meanwhile, Kaster, Elliot, and Daze have begun their journey back to the half-elf continent, where they reunite with Tipia and Crusher. After a bit more adventuring, they discover an ancient temple, where they discover the secret of the half-elf genocide: the humans didn't slaughter the half-elves, the vast majority of the half-elves were enthralled by Marduk, a dark Summon Spirit who imprisoned Maxwell and Origin before influencing the oppressed half-elves to rise up and wage war on the humans, after the humans beat back the half-elves, Marduk killed them all, as they no longer served his purposes. A band of human heroes defeated Marduk and sealed him as well, but he exerted his dark influence to poison the half-elves' continent, where he sleeps, sealed by the energy of the original four Summon Spirits that the ancient human heroes placed as locks on him. A creature possessed by Marduk attacks Kaster and the others, but after they defeat it, it grows and attacks again, only for Maggie to save them all. Maggie tells the heroes that they must defeat Antares and return the summon spirits to their rightful places before Marduk is able to rise again. Back on the human continent, Lyrica arrives at Volt's temple. She and Raven journey through it for a brief while before Lyrica is attacked and briefly taken hostage by Indra, who intends to kidnap Lyrica and use her to force Antares to end the war. Raven convinces Indra to join them instead, and the three are able to subdue Volt. As they are leaving the temple, however, they are captured by some of the human ruler's forces and taken to a base, where they swipe an airship and escape. Lyrica wants to continue rounding up the summon spirits, but Indra knows she has to get to Kaster, and goes to pick him up. This leads to a massive raid of all the characters on Antares' castle, ending with a fierce battle with Antares and Lyrica trying to persuade her father to call off the war, just as the human civilization's army launches a massive attack on the island. Antares agrees to end the war, but it's at that moment that Marduk emerges in a wave of terror, instantly enthralling half of the remaining half-elves. Antares gives his life to help Kaster and his friends escape the castle before it is destroyed by Marduk, who proceeds to slaughter most of the human army as well. The humans and half-elves

evacuate the continent together, which becomes entirely possessed by Marduk with a massive magical barrier. The next phase of the quest involves trips to Glacia's temple, Luna and Aska's temple, and Shadow's temple in order to gather up the remaining summon spirits, which, summoned together, can conjure up enough power to shatter the barrier around the continent. During this time, the heroes must also deal with human extremists who refuse to see the half-elves as anything but enemies. After the barrier is destroyed and all the evil humans are taken care of, the heroes journey back to the continent with the goal of first freeing Maxwell and Origin, and then defeating Marduk, who has taken up residence in a massive crater at the center of the continent, Marduk's plan is to force the volcano to erupt, spreading ash and his evil influence all over the planet. The heroes journey into the crater and defeat Marduk once and for all, bringing peace to the world. There are two different endings: one involving Kaster settling down with Indra, and one involving Kaster marrying Lyrica and joining her as the new ruler of the purified continent. The ending you get depends on your relationship values with either heroine throughout the game.

*Tale Lemuria* is extremely well reviewed by critics, splitting Game of the Month awards with *Killer Instinct Ultra* across the major game review publications of the time. However, it doesn't get the stellar reception that *Tale Phantasia* received upon release. There are numerous reasons why. The pacing of the game is considered to be somewhat inferior to *Tale Phantasia*, as there are several dungeons considered to be sprawling and overly long (a problem that plagued later *Star Ocean* games IOTL, which Gotanda directed), and the plotline is considered by some to be derivative of Squaresoft's *Fairytale* (which is of course a coincidence, as the two games were developed concurrently by two different companies, and indeed in Japan, *Lemuria* was released first). Also, the localization of the game is subject to scrutiny. Working Designs localized the game, as they did *Tale Phantasia*. Since *Phantasia*'s release, the quality of video game voice dubbing and localization had significantly advanced, and *Lemuria*'s voice cast of largely amateurs is considered inferior to the casts of RPGs like *Final Fantasy VII* and *Fairytale*, which were comprised of largely professionals. Though many reviewers praised the *Lemuria* performances, with Jenny Stigile's performance as Lyrica receiving special praise, others considered the game as an example of how Working Designs' localizations were inferior to Squaresoft's and others like Capcom's. The controversy created severe tension between Victor Ireland and Telenet Japan, who decided on using another company to localize the next *Tale* game. *Tale Lemuria* is remembered as a fantastic RPG, but would not contend for Game of the Year like *Tale Phantasia* had (though part of that was the massively higher quality of 1998's slate of games as opposed to 1996's).

## **September 14, 1998**

*Tale Lemuria* launches in North America as perhaps the most hyped JRPG up to that point in the year. Though the game sells extremely well initially, especially for its genre, it is soon overshadowed by the release of *Killer Instinct Ultra*, and sales fall much more quickly than *Tale Phantasia* did. In fact, the proximity of the release of *KI Ultra* to the release of *Tale Lemuria* is the most crippling factor toward the game's North American sales. *Tale Phantasia* had been heavily promoted by Nintendo, but *Tale Lemuria* receives considerably less help, both due to the Nintendo marketing machine working overtime for *Killer Instinct Ultra* and the perception that as the sequel to one of the most successful JRPGs of all time, *Lemuria* didn't need the help. It would become a multi-million seller worldwide, but wouldn't cross the million sales mark in North America. It's considered to be a hit, but not the enormous hit that its predecessor was.

## Killer Instinct Ultra: The Basics

*Killer Instinct Ultra* is the Ultra Nintendo port of *Killer Instinct 2*. Unlike OTL's *Killer Instinct Gold*, *Killer Instinct Ultra* is an essentially enhanced version of the original game, with arcade perfect graphics and even better music and sound. In addition, *Ultra* features five characters that were absent in the arcade version of *Killer Instinct 2* and were entirely created by Rare to be exclusive to the console version. Also, Chief Thunder, Riptor, and Cinder return for the console version of *Killer Instinct 2*, where they did not appear either in TTL's arcade version or in the arcade or console versions OTL, for a total of eight characters appearing in *Ultra* that never made it to *Gold*. Along with the 11 characters from OTL's game, minus one (Gargos) who is removed, that makes for a total of 18 playable characters in *Killer Instinct Ultra*, rivaling *Tekken 3* in terms of roster size.

New characters include-

Dekado, a megalomaniacal billionaire who manipulates Fulgore into helping him in his attempt to build the perfect cybernetic fighter  
Sarah, a high school cheerleader who forms a surprising friendship with Kim Wu, her ice powers contrast with Kim's fire powers  
Griffin, a mysterious man with bird wings and talons on his feet  
Pow-R, a robot designed for fighting and Dekado's original creation, rejected by Dekado after he founded his technology company, Pow-R now seeks to stop his creator  
Vangon, Dekado's brutal bodyguard, a bald man in sunglasses who doesn't speak a word

In addition to the traditional arcade and versus modes in *Killer Instinct Ultra*, there's also a Quest Mode, which ten of the game's characters (Jago, Orchid, Fulgore, Kim Wu, Sabrewulf, Spinal, Glacius, Tusk, Sarah, and Griffin) can go through. This Quest Mode is a souped up Arcade Mode (12 fights in all, including the final two bosses which are Vangon and Dekado), with cutscenes and brief beat-em-up segments between the fights. The Quest Mode fleshes out the game's story, and once you beat all ten, a special 5-minute cutscene plays that wraps up the storyline of the game. The storyline involves the evil billionaire Dekado, the last surviving executive of UltraTech, regaining control of Fulgore and using one of his company's plans to create a time machine. Using this time machine, he brings together all the great warriors from history and forces them into a tournament with the modern day fighters, ostensibly for a large cash prize, but his secret goal is to discover the greatest warrior among them and program their knowledge into a new model cyborg to succeed Fulgore. Depending on whose quest you undertake, he chooses either Jago or Black Orchid (but canonically, he chooses Jago), and your chosen fighter must battle Dekado and Vangon to break them free of Dekado's control. In the end, not only does Dekado's plan fail, but Fulgore revolts against him and rips him to shreds. Vangon escapes, however, to fight another day.

Unlike *Killer Instinct Gold*, which was only mildly positively received IOTL, *Killer Instinct Ultra*, with its excellent graphics (better than any other game on the Ultra Nintendo thus far, and the first game to really push the system's limits), popular characters, and fun gameplay (considered somewhat inferior to *Tekken 3* by fighting game enthusiasts, but still considered fun even if the gameplay leans toward flashy combos) make *KI Ultra* one of the year's best received fighting games and the year's top seller in the genre. It rides an enormous wave of hype and positive reviews to a massive first few weeks of sales, easily topping the robust but slightly disappointing sales of the original *Killer Instinct*. Unlike that game, which was overshadowed by the surprise success of *Tales Of The Seven Seas*, *Killer*

*Instinct Ultra* crushes all competition, including *Tale Lemuria*, and makes a name for itself as one of the year's biggest games.

### **September 21, 1998**

*Killer Instinct Ultra* launches and is a massive success. It's Rare's third megahit in just six months, and 1998 is beginning to become known as "The Year of Rare". Though Nintendo stops short of buying Rare outright, the two companies would sign a contract before the year was out, making Rare an exclusive second party of Nintendo through at least 2003. The company already has an ambitious slate of games planned for the future, a combination of both sequels and original titles. However, though some industry analysts expected Rare to certainly do it, the company would turn down an offer to make a video game adaptation of *Tomorrow Never Dies*. Those rights would be picked up by Ubisoft. Rare, in the meantime, was planning its own ambitious first-person spiritual successor to *Goldeneye*, but they wouldn't be ready to reveal that title to the world for at least a few more months...

### **G-Darius**

Dan: 8.0

Shawn: 8.0

Crispin: 7.5 (quote: "One of the best looking SNES-CD shooters ever made, with some really fantastic action.")

Sushi-X: 7.5

### **Kartia: Word Of Fate**

Dan: 8.0

Shawn: 9.0

Crispin: 8.0 (quote: "A surprisingly deep tactical RPG.")

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Cardarc**

Dan: 3.5

Shawn: 3.5

Crispin: 6.0 (quote: "Some very confusing gameplay in this isometric platformer, but the soundtrack is really nice.")

Sushi-X: 4.0

-reviews of September 1998's SNES-CD games in the October 1998 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

### **Ultra Road Rash**

Dan: 7.0

Shawn: 7.0 (quote: "While this is largely a reread of earlier Road Rash games, the vehicle damage system has never been better.")

Crispin: 6.5

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Killer Instinct Ultra**

Dan: 9.0

Shawn: 9.5

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.5 (quote: "While the game is very easy to get into, you'll need real skill to take on the game's toughest challenges....or your friends.")

### **Mortal Kombat 4**

Dan: 9.0 (quote: "MK4 leaps into 3-D with a fully realized, truly outstanding game.")

Shawn: 7.5

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **NASCAR '99**

Dan: 6.0

Shawn: 7.0

Crispin: 7.0 (quote: "We really wanted to see more real NASCAR tracks, though the graphics are excellent.")

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **NFL Quarterback Club 99**

Dan: 8.5

Shawn: 5.0 (quote: "The customization options are the only good thing about this game that's otherwise inferior in every way to Madden 99.")

Crispin: 6.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **NHL '99**

Dan: 8.0 (quote: "The best hockey game since NHL '96 on the Saturn, with lifelike graphics.")

Shawn: 8.0

Crispin: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Tale Lemuria**

Dan: 9.0

Shawn: 9.5

Crispin: 10 (quote: "The new combat system is a giant leap forward.")

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Twinblade III**

Dan: 8.0

Shawn: 7.0 (quote: "While inferior to Tekken 3 in everything except graphics, this weapon-based fighting game is still one of the best fighters out there.")

Crispin: 8.5  
Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Jewels Of The Realm 3**

Dan: 8.5  
Shawn: 8.5  
Crispin: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 7.0 (quote: "This game seems more concerned with being cute and kiddy than in being a really robust platformer. I did like that there were more jewels to mix and match, but many of them were gamebreakers.")

### **Rumor**

Dan: 6.5  
Shawn: 6.5 (quote: "A charming platformer with fairly average gameplay.")  
Crispin: 7.5  
Sushi-X: 6.0

-reviews of September 1998's Ultra Nintendo games in the October and November 1998 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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With games like *Tekken* and *Virtua Fighter* producing massive sales both in the arcade and on home consoles, series like *Mortal Kombat* seemed like a cultural relic. The groundbreaking and controversial fighting game series had been revolutionary in its day, but with the new technology available in the arcades and on the next generation of consoles, it seemed time had passed *Mortal Kombat* by. That's why Ed Boon and his team worked so tirelessly on *Mortal Kombat 4*, to produce a 3-D arcade fighter worthy of competing with the modern day hits. They made the series somewhat more serious and cut down on the character roster, which had begun to look overblown, but they kept the series' hallmark ultraviolence and even ramped up the blood, making *MK4* the most violent fighting game ever released, even ahead of the Ultra Nintendo's launch title *Deathblow*. Did it pay off?

It did, though not to the degree that one might think. Though the blood and gore kept *Mortal Kombat* true to its roots, at its core it was still considered an inferior fighting game to the Saturn's hits, and to *Killer Instinct Ultra*, which launched a week after *Mortal Kombat 4* on the Ultra Nintendo. But sales were up, certainly way up from *Mortal Kombat 3*, which had launched against the original *Killer Instinct* on the Super Nintendo CD and had disappointed. *Mortal Kombat 4* not only beat *Tale Lemuria* on its launch week to become the top selling video game in North America (its only week on top before *Killer Instinct Ultra* came and crushed it), it became the best selling *Mortal Kombat* game since *MK2*, topping sales of *MK3* and *MK Trilogy*. Though *Mortal Kombat 4* wasn't the best fighting game of the year by a longshot, it was a welcome return to form for the series, which joined the ranks of the next generation 3-D fighting games that were selling like hotcakes across the world.

-excerpted from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

Game Informer: So what was the reason for the console exclusivity on launch for *Mortal Kombat 4*?

Ed Boon: There were several reasons. One, the big one, we signed a contract with Nintendo to make it an exclusive for the first six months. Of course, the reason we signed that contract is because we knew the Ultra Nintendo was the only system that could bring *Mortal Kombat 4* to life the way we wanted it. We could've slapped a port for the Saturn together, but it would've been a piss-poor port that would've looked like shit. Once the Ring came out and once we had more time, we were able to bring *Mortal Kombat 4* to the Saturn in a way that didn't look like shit even if you didn't have the Ring. So basically, we realized we needed more time for the Saturn port and signed a timed exclusivity deal with Nintendo.

Game Informer: But you guys really pissed off Saturn fans with that move.

Ed Boon: A shitty port would've pissed them off even more, I imagine.

-excerpted from an interview in the February 2013 issue of *Game Informer*

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*"The problem that Sega was having was that the Saturn had peaked. By the end of 1998, it had peaked and all but the most diehard Sega fans knew it. Meanwhile, the Ultra Nintendo hadn't even gotten through the first year of its lifespan and it already had all these hits. For example, in the same month that Nintendo put out sequels to two of their biggest SNES-CD games, Killer Instinct Ultra and Tale Lemuria, Saturn launches...a couple of mascot platformers. Granted, they were exceptionally good mascot platformers that sold extremely well, but they were mascot platformers nonetheless."*

-Jeff Gerstmann, quoted in an episode of G4's *Console Wars* miniseries documentary in 2012

*King Crab* and *Z-Stomper* launched not only in the same month for Sega, but on the same day, September 10, 1998. *King Crab* was developed by Sega itself, while *Z-Stomper* was created by an offshoot of Johnson Voorsanger Productions, which had created *Toejam and Earl* on the Genesis, and was published by Activision. The two games were somewhat similar in gameplay, though they each had their own stylistic differences that won them each their own distinct group of fans, and both games were among the Saturn's top sellers in 1998.

*King Crab* was a fairly conventional mascot collectathon, starring an anthropomorphic crab named Crust who had to wander an undersea world, gathering up pearls for Princess Elisha, a beautiful mermaid who needed the magic pearls to restore her kingdom from being turned into stone by the shark wizard Lord Cartilage. Lord Cartilage had taken notice of Crust's deeds and decides to turn his magic on Crust's friends, giving Crust a two-pronged mission: gather the pearls for Elisha while also protecting his friends from falling victim to Cartilage's dark magic. The beautiful undersea environments and Crust's fun combat methods, which involved various attacks with his two big claws, made the game popular amongst critics, and its fun-loving crab protagonist, with spunk but not too much attitude, made him popular amongst families who were looking for a fun new action game to play on the Saturn. Not only was *King Crab* a HUGE seller, but Crust became one of Sega's most popular mascots as well, joining Ecco the Dolphin in the company's stable of undersea heroes.

*Z-Stomper*, on the other hand, had a lot more attitude, including the game's theme song which was performed by Busta Rhymes and was both extremely catchy and extremely cheesy. The game, which can be considered a spiritual successor to the *Toejam and Earl*

games, starts a man named Zeke who is cursed with huge feet and is overly clumsy, making him a loser in the eyes of his peers. One day, he finds a magical pair of sneakers that turns him into the hero Z-Stomper, who must then battle crime and save the city from an evil gang led by Funkmaster Stan. With a hip-hop inspired soundtrack and really fun platforming action that didn't require much, if any collecting, *Z-Stomper* stood in contrast to the much more traditional *King Crab*, and though it didn't sell as many copies, reviews were somewhat better, averaging about a half a point more across the review outlets of the day.

Both games were major hits at a time when the Sega Saturn sorely needed them. The very next month, they would be joined by another game, a game that arguably had more action and attitude than both of them put together...

-from "Sega Goes Crab Stompin': The Saturn Platformers Of Fall '98", an article posted on Kotaku.com, January 23, 2014

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Well, the Super Nintendo CD is still limping along. *Kartia: The Word of Fate* is a tactical RPG that seems simple at first glance, but that simplicity belies one of the most complex and strategic tactical RPGs of the year that in some aspects rivals *Final Fantasy Tactics* for sheer strategic depth. The game features two main characters whose stories eventually come together in one very enthralling tale, and the game can likely be considered a contender for overall game of the year on the Super Nintendo CD, it's that good. While there haven't been that many SNES-CD releases this year (and most of them have been shovelware or annual sports titles), games like *Kartia*, *SaGa Frontier*, and *The Three Caballeros* show that there's still life in this dusty old CD player.

We also might be getting a Pokemon game on this thing next year, so there's that.

-excerpted from a post on the RPGamer.com forums, September 26, 1998

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In some aspects, *Jewels Of The Realm 3* plays it simple. It retains its 2-D platforming style of gameplay, only now the game's graphics are in full 3-D. It returns Chris and Lily, the protagonists from the first two titles, and you can switch between them as you play. And it's just as cute and fun as the last two games, and even keeps the same voice actors from the original two games, including Alyson Court, who's had quite a busy year (with roles in *Resident Evil 2*, *Mega Man X5*, and now this). But in other aspects, *Jewels Of The Realm* has never been more complex. Instead of eight basic jewel colors, there are now 18, and over 200 different possible combinations of powers, spells, and attacks. There are also way more enemy varieties than there were before, and also lots more bosses and mid-bosses in the levels, many appearing when you least expect it.

Don't expect Treasure-level difficulty, the sheer variety of jewels and attacks ensure that you're hardly ever without a solution to use, even on particularly difficult bosses, and the platforming action itself is a breeze next to the trickier *Mario* levels. But *Jewels of the Realm* has never been a series about challenge, it's been a series about fun and fantasy, and even though the animated series just ended, this game's characters have never been more heartwarming. In this game, Chris and Lily meet a benevolent king and queen and are sent on a mission to help them out, with the reward being...well, we won't spoil the ending, you'll have to see it for yourself, but it's definitely a suitable reward for all the trials and

tribulations you go through during this one. We'll gladly go back to the world of *Jewels Of The Realm* any time.

Graphics: 4.5  
Sound: 4.0  
Play Control: 5.0  
Fun Factor: 4.5  
Challenge: Beginner

-excerpted from the October 1998 issue of *GamePro*

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## **Hollywood Update**

This year's already seen some action-packed movies, but there are more on the way. This holiday season will see a pair of disaster flicks dive into theaters when *Hurricane Season*, starring Will Smith, and *Deep Impact*, starring Joan Cusack, crash onto the big screen. *Hurricane Season*, in a somewhat more serious turn from his previous flick, *Men in Black*, sees Will Smith as a young police officer who is helping to evacuate residents as a category 5 hurricane takes aim at Miami. When he stays behind to look for stragglers, he comes face to face with the storm's deadly fury. In *Deep Impact*, starring Joan Cusack as a rising star reporter for MSNBC and Morgan Freeman as the president of the United States, a massive comet takes aim at Earth, forcing the world to make tough choices about who will survive. Both films look to be among the biggest box office smashes of the year, though *Deep Impact* has Oscars in its sights, with director Mimi Leder promising the film to be the first realistic and truly serious disaster film ever made.

In lighter fare, Dreamworks Pictures' animated film *Big Top* is popping up in theaters this October. It's the company's first CGI film, a circus spectacular about performers who are haunted by the ghost of an evil clown. The film, made with state-of-the-art Sony computer technology, is hoping to top Pixar's *A Bug's Life* for the CGI crown.

Speaking of Sony, the company is also looking to spread its video game creativity to the silver screen as well. The company has greenlighted a *Ballistic Limit* film, and they're also working with Nintendo on bringing the fighting game franchise *Killer Instinct* to life as well. Nintendo has been reluctant to produce feature films based on its video game properties since the critical and commercial failure of *Super Mario Bros.* back in 1993, but the company is said to be open to adapting *Killer Instinct*, which they say lends itself much more to a live-action film.

-excerpted from an article on Yahoo! News, posted on September 28, 1998

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Adrian Fry: *Twinblade III*, you know, looks real pretty on the Ultra, but when it comes to gameplay, it's the same old retreaded stuff from the first two games. This series needs to evolve, and I don't think the third installment pushed it far enough.

Alex Stansfield: That's fair to say. I still liked how smooth the combat was and how damn pretty it looks, but yeah, if you've played the first two and don't NEED to have this on the Ultra, maybe you can skip this one?

Adrian: The new characters, I liked. Kaguya with her kessen, I mean, she's no Kitana, but she fights really fast and of course she's hot as hell.

Alex: Then there's Sir Stanley and his HUGE swords. I don't know how a guy wields two swords that are THAT big. And this is an old dude, too.

Adrian: He takes vitamins.

Alex: No wonder old people are always trying to get me to take vitamins.

Adrian: Well, it's a shame because this is one of Nintendo's best fighting game series, but I'm gonna have to give it a 3.

Alex: I'll do a 3.5 for it, *Twinblade III* is a fine game but if it wants to distinguish itself from the rest of the herd, it's gotta evolve.

-excerpted from the September 8, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted Crosley: I'm Ted!

Alex: And I'm Alex!

Lyssa Fielding: \*has her blonde hair done up in odangos like Sailor Moon\* Konnichiwa! I'm Lyssa, and I'm reporting from Tokyo, Japan!

Alex: That's right, all this episode, Lyssa is gonna be giving us updates from this year's Tokyo Game Show.

Ted: I see you're getting into the spirit, that's Sailor Moon hair.

Lyssa: I AM Sailor Moon! \*twirls around, showing that she's in full Sailor Moon garb complete with wand\* I fight for love and justice!

Ted: Well, I hope you're not too busy fighting monsters to report on all of this year's awesome new games.

Lyssa: Oh, don't you worry. Right now I'm here at the Konami booth where I'll be playing the latest demo of *Metal Gear Solid*. There's also a scary new horror title on the way from them, I'm already shaking in my bright red boots!

Ted: We can't wait, we'll check in with you throughout the show.

Alex: And there's Brittany. You're here?

Brittany: Yeah, I showed up for work today.

Alex: But *Tale Lemuria's* out.

Brittany: *Tale Lemuria's* great, but not QUITE great enough to keep me from coming here.

Still great though.

Gary: Aw, dammit! \*sitting on the couch with Adrian and a huge pizza\*

Brittany: What?

Ted: Well, with Lyssa gone and *Tale Lemuria* releasing this week, we thought, you know...it'd be just us guys today and we could have a guy's day in. Chill on the couch, play *Madden*...we ordered like five pizzas!

Brittany: Well you're gonna have to share the pizzas, AND the controllers. \*slides in between Gary and Adrian\* Time to kick your asses at *Madden '99*. I've been boning up and I've got plenty of tips to help you beat your friends, even if they are a bunch of jerks who ordered pizza when they thought you weren't gonna come in to work.

Ted: ...we were gonna save some pizza for you...

Alex: Well, we've got plenty of fun on the way today, from *Tale Lemuria*, to *Brawl Balls*, to *Jewels of the Realm 3*. And if you caught *Pokemon* fever last week, we've got more coverage on that too. We'll show you how to get through the first couple of gyms, even if you were stupid enough to pick Charmander like I did.

Ted: We've got news, previews, and reviews to help you choose, this is *GameTV!*

(...)

Brittany: *Tale Lemuria* is a great game, no doubt about it. Some of the dungeons, you will get lost in, and that's okay. I did have some issues with a couple of the dungeons toward the end, be prepared to draw a map for those, but other than that, I really did love this game.

Alex: And yet, you aren't IN love with this game.

Brittany: Well, what did you think of *Tale Lemuria*?

Alex: The biggest flaw, I thought, was the pacing. There are parts of the game where the adventure seems to grind to a halt and you end up having to wander around looking for what to do next. That didn't happen in *Tale Phantasia*. It happened here. Not a lot, but enough to break the narrative flow and take me out of the game just a little bit.

Brittany: I didn't have that problem but I can see how people would. Also, there's not enough stuff to do on the side. *Final Fantasy VII* and *Fairytale* had some fairly extensive side quests. Here, even once you get the airship, it's go here, do this for the most part.

Alex: Yeah, I was disappointed in that too, there was less to do extra than *Tale Phantasia*. It's a VERY beautiful game and the new combat system-

Brittany: OH, that was fun. The new combat system is great and it's why I'm still going to give *Tale Lemuria* a 5. It's not my favorite RPG of all time, but if there's one thing that majorly improved from *Tale Phantasia*, it's the combat system.

Alex: For me, it's a 4.5. It's a brilliant game but with some glaring flaws. Nevertheless, it's a

must play if you're any kind of RPG fan.

(...)

\*Gary and Ted are dressed up in extreme sports gear to review *Brawl Balls* for the Sega Saturn.\*

Gary Westhouse: *Brawl Balls* combines dodgeball and football, but isn't really as fun as either of them.

Ted: Honestly, I loved *Brawl Balls*. It's high intensity, it's got that great extreme vibe that a lot of the modern sports games, especially the extreme sports games, are really expressing, and the multiplayer's awesome too.

Gary: The AI in this game is so bad though! If you're not playing in multiplayer mode, you're not gonna have a fun time and even in multiplayer, I didn't see the appeal of this game. The only fun thing I did was repeatedly bean someone with the ball in order to pick a fight with them.

\*A brief scene from the game is shown of a player getting drilled in the head with the ball, enraging them and sending them charging at you with a furious expression on their face, followed by the player throwing them down to the floor and punching them.\*

Ted: That reminded me of some of the hilarious fights from *Five for Fighting Hockey*. I mean, yeah, the AI is wonky, but when games can turn into something like an all-out bench clearing brawl, that, by the way, is actually consequential toward the game itself...well I had lots of fun and I'm gonna go ahead and give it a 4.

Gary: I thought it honestly sucked, and I'm giving it a 1.5.

Ted: Hey, you wanna fight? \*holds up a dodgeball\*

Gary: Not really but- \*Ted pelts him\* Aaaaah! \*grabs a dodgeball and chucks it at Ted\* Come here!

\*The two chase each other around throwing dodgeballs at each other while Lyssa looks on from a screen on the wall\*

Lyssa: Uh, did I call at a bad time? I've got major *Final Fantasy* info to dish out! \*sighs\* While I try to calm the boys down, enjoy these commercials! \*sighs and shakes her head\*

-excerpted from the September 15, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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Lyssa: Kickin' and punchin' and kickin' and punchin'....!!!

Ted: Calm down, I can see that this game's got you worked up.

Lyssa: \*breathes\* Well, is it any surprise? *Killer Instinct Ultra* is the best fighting game of the year. With 18 different characters, each with their own strategies and moves, and an amazing single player story mode, this game improves on the original 1995 game AND the

1996 arcade hit in a huge way.

Ted: While I wouldn't call it the fighting game of the year, it's definitely one of the best I've played in a while. The graphics are amazing, but the best part about this game is the amazing Ultra Combos you can pull off in battle.

\*A brief scene is shown of a massive 46 hit Ultra Combo delivered by Fulgore to Griffin, ending with a loud "ULTRA COMBOOOOOOO!!!" and a toss that sends Griffin into an electric fence\*

Lyssa: Oh, he is NOT getting up from that! \*laughs\*

Ted: While it's easy to perform big combos, the game steers clear from rewarding too much button mashing, imprecise combos are easily broken by your opponent, making the game one that's both flashy and strategic.

Lyssa: Yeah, don't be surprised to see matches that consist of combos, counter-combos, more combos... my head was spinning!

Ted: Did you have fun in Japan?

Lyssa: I had lots of fun in Japan, why?

Ted: I think you're still in hyperactive anime girl mode, maybe you wanna sit down?

Lyssa: No, no, I'm fine, I'm just so impressed by this awesome game! I'm giving *Killer Instinct Ultra* a perfect 5!

Ted: You know what? Perfect 5 from me too. \*a siren sounds\* To the wall!

\*Ted and Lyssa head up to the wall to place *Killer Instinct Ultra* up next to *Fairytale*\*

Adrian: This is my first one of these, I thought it'd be a lot more solemn or something, like maybe with some druids?

Ted: It's normally solemn, but since Lyssa still thinks she's Sailor Moon...

Lyssa: \*giggling as she puts the game up on the wall\* There we go! *Killer Instinct Ultra*, our newest Hall of Fame game!

Alex: Druids?

Adrian: Druids are cool.

-excerpted from the September 22, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: September 1998**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Chrono Trigger

3. Tale Phantasia
4. Super Mario World 2
5. Donkey Kong Country 4
6. Secret Of Mana
7. Donkey Kong Country
8. Super Mario Kart
9. FIFA World Cup 98
10. Lufia III: The Ancient Tower

### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: September 1998**

1. The Dreamers
2. Final Fantasy VII
3. Gran Turismo
4. Super Mario Dimensions
5. Quake
6. Goldeneye 007
7. Race'n'Chase
8. Tomb Raider II
9. Aeroboy
10. Ultra Mario Kart

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: September 1998**

1. Tekken 3
2. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
3. Virtua Fighter 3
4. Quake
5. Z-Stomper
6. King Crab
7. Legend Of The Galactic Heroes
8. Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted
9. Panzer Dragoon Saga
10. Arbiter Of Sin

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### **Tokyo Game Show '98 Recap**

1998's Tokyo Game Show, while not quite as big a shindig as E3, was still a massive exhibition from the top Japanese video game companies and showcased a lot of the big games you'll be playing in 1999. First and foremost, Nintendo's booth. The company showed off a few games at the show, but they're saving most of their upcoming stuff for Spaceworld next month, so what we got from them was largely old news. Still, Nintendo did show off more of *F-Zero: Ultracharged*, which is shaping up incredibly nicely with big, beautiful tracks and LOTS of new racers. They also revealed some footage from their new *Fire Emblem* game, which I'm sure we'll be seeing more of at E3. Apart from that, not much to report on the Nintendo front.

The big news came from two companies: Squaresoft and Konami. First and foremost was Squaresoft, whose massive *Final Fantasy VIII* booth was among the biggest and most crowded in the show. The video footage and playable demos revealed a TON of new

information about the game, and we'll report the basics. The game centers around a world where talented warriors pilot giant mecha known as "Guardians". These Guardians are mechanical suits of great power, and many of them share names with familiar *Final Fantasy* summons like Shiva and Ifrit. You'll spend a good portion of the game fighting in these suits, though you'll also have to do plenty of fighting on foot as well, requiring a balance between maintaining your characters and maintaining the massive Guardian suits that will be invaluable for the bigger fights. Speaking of characters, five playable characters were revealed: Squall Leonhart, a reluctant soldier who is recruited into a floating school called Garden after events that lead to the destruction of his hometown, Elhaym van Houten, named Elly for short, a mysterious woman who accosts Squall during an early mission, Bartholomew Fatima, Bart for short, who befriends Squall after commissioning the Garden's army, known as SeeD, to help him liberate his country, Quistis Trepe, a young woman who becomes Squall's first combat teacher, and Cid Uzuki, a guardian-like figure for Squall who reveals himself as the headmaster of Garden after Squall is recruited. Squaresoft says at least three more characters will be playable in the game and perhaps more. Very little information about the game's villain, named Edea, was revealed in the footage we saw, but she is said to be a powerful sorceress who commands the armies of Galbadia, the nation that SeeD opposes. It is interesting to note that *Final Fantasy VIII* continues the trend of playable Cids, and seems to be more futuristic than previous titles in the series. The booth was extremely crowded and we didn't get to play for long, but the game looks beautiful and will no doubt be a major hit when it launches in Japan next summer and North America sometime before the end of 1999. Squaresoft also showed off two more games: *Weyricht*, a medieval-themed action RPG, and *Academy*, a game about about students at a school for magic that reminded us somewhat of the Japan-only SNES-CD game *Live-a-Live*. *Weyricht*'s combat system seemed rather complex but we were able to pick it up after some practice, and it looks to continue in *Final Fantasy Tactics*' tradition of more serious RPG subject matter.

Squaresoft's Tokyo Game Show was impressive, and if there was anyone who could give them a run for their money, it was Konami, who showed off a nearly complete *Metal Gear Solid* at the show, to wild applause and massive crowds. The game is a complete overhaul of the classic *Metal Gear* series and the storyline trailer we watched sent the crowd into a frenzy. It's no doubt going to be a massive hit when it launches early next year, and without spoiling too much, the storyline is something that looks to rival Hollywood films in dramatic heft. Konami's other two major games were no less impressive. *Primrose Knight* was a gorgeous RPG, set in a cyberpunk-like modern city but featuring a beautiful woman who travels on floral wings, the game seems to be a mix of realistic and fantastical elements, and the combat system emphasizes targeting enemy body parts to disable them before going in for the kill, making it a somewhat more strategic RPG than traditional systems. Then there was *Silent Hill*, which had one of the most terrifying video game trailers I've ever seen. The game seems to be more of a psychological horror title than the straight-up jump scares of *Resident Evil*, and if what I saw was any indication, it's also going to take video game storytelling to a whole new level. While no company in Tokyo could quite match up with Squaresoft and Konami's showings, Sony was there to show off its own new horror title, *Emergency*, set in a hospital in the midst of a mysterious outbreak. While the game seemed to be more of a straight-up conventional horror title than *Silent Hill*, early gameplay footage looked really fun, like a more fast-paced *Resident Evil*, and the main character's dialogue had some audience members chuckling. Sony's setting out to create a new horror franchise with *Emergency*, and if early footage is any indication, they could have another *Ballistic Limit*-level hit on their hands.

Capcom was at the show as well, showing off a pair of new *Resident Evil* titles. The

announcement that one, featuring Chris Redfield and Jill Valentine, would be exclusive to the Ultra Nintendo, while the other, featuring Claire Redfield and Abigail Chambers, would be exclusive to the Sega Saturn, created some controversy, but the Capcom rep that was there explained that the games were optimized to take full advantage of the consoles they were going to be on, with the Saturn game announced as a Ring exclusive. It's cold comfort to those who only own one system and want the full *Resident Evil* story, but as long as both games are good, everybody wins. Speaking of the Saturn, Sega and Namco were both at the show, Namco showing off lots of *Soul Calibur* footage while also revealing *Point Blank Adventure*, an adventure game version of their hit lightgun arcade game series *Point Blank*. Sega showed off a bit more of *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*, which drew a big crowd to see Sonic running through a fully-3D environment similar to what we saw in *Super Mario Dimensions* except a lot faster. The game looked gorgeous, and Sega announced that you wouldn't need the Ring to play the game, though the peripheral would unlock a lot of content. Enix was there to preview its *Dragon Quest IV-VI* compilation and announce that *Dragon Quest VII* was in production, though the first footage wouldn't be revealed until early next year. Instead, we got more of *ActRaiser: Valkyrie*, which looks amazing as it brings back the city-creation aspect from the original *ActRaiser*, alongside thrilling action-RPG combat that looked a lot more fun than *ActRaiser II*. The game releases in just a few short months in Japan, and I'm sure North American audiences will be clamoring to play it. They'll also be clamoring to play the Ultra Nintendo remakes of *Lunar: The Silver Star* and *Sailor Moon: Another Story*. Both games were shown off in Tokyo and though it wasn't announced at the show, both games have been confirmed for North American releases next year. Though the TGS announcements were aimed at Japanese gamers only, North American gamers are nonetheless chomping at the bit after all the thrilling news that came out of Tokyo last week.

-excerpted from an article on GameSpot.com, posted on September 21, 1998

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### **September 30, 1998**

Pokemania had struck, and the game was still topping sales charts in North America as more and more players jumped on the bandwagon. The anime was already the highest rated show on Cartoon Network, and the Halloween costumes and other merchandise were flying off the shelves. *Pokemon* had taken over North America even faster than it had Japan.

Howard Lincoln was pleased. He and Minoru Arakawa were inside a Seattle Starbucks, sipping coffee as they discussed the latest news.

"The game is everywhere," said Lincoln, looking around the room.

"What are you looking at?" asked Arakawa, trying to see what his friend was looking at.

"Just wanted to see if I could spot someone with a Game Boy," said Lincoln, shaking his head.

"It's 12:30 in the afternoon, unless kids are skipping school to play *Pokemon* at Starbucks--"

"I know, I know, it's just...I haven't seen so many Game Boys out in public in....well, ever," Lincoln said as he took a sip from his cup. "I was at the Mariners game and I saw....dozens of Game Boys in the stands. It's a playoff game, Griffey was up to bat, and kids have their

Game Boys out playing Pokemon! They didn't want to take their eyes off their games for even ten seconds to watch him hit."

Arakawa laughed. He had seen the same thing in Japan with lots of other games, it was nothing new. But Pokemon was getting American children to play their Game Boys again...which meant that it was the right time to reveal the next evolution of the nearly decade-old handheld.

"I'm sad to hear you won't be coming to Japan in a few weeks," said Arakawa.

"I've gotta be here, with the Mariners and also I'm doing some work for the new games launching here, Kid Icarus and that robot game," said Lincoln. "It's all right, Spaceworld is your show, you have fun revealing the new....I guess I shouldn't talk about it here, should I?"

Arakawa looked around...nobody seemed to notice the two high-ranking executives of one of the world's hottest companies sitting in their midst.

"The Nova..." Arakawa whispered. "And yes...revealing it will be great fun."

"It was Kutaragi who came up with the name, wasn't it?"

"Said it was from an old project of his, never did tell me what."

"Crazy Kutaragi..." said Lincoln, rolling his eyes and taking another sip. "Crazy like a fox. A very, very, very...very rich fox."

"To crazy," said Arakawa, raising his Starbucks cup.

"To crazy," replied Lincoln, returning the toast.

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*"So what we're trying to do with Mars' Most Wanted is create the next evolution of the Commander Keen series and create a unique platformer that fits the Saturn."*

-Tom Hall, in an interview at E3 1998 with *GameTV*

*"The Ultra Nintendo had a lot of games, a lot of really serious games and a lot of great platformers. But what Sega always seemed to do better than Nintendo was creating platformers that had both real heart and that kind of edgy, subversive quality to them. Sonic, Commander Keen, you name it, Sega trounced Nintendo at those kinds of games, and it won them a nice little contingent of fans."*

-Blake Harris, in a 2015 interview about his book *The Chase*

*"One of the weirdest damn games I ever played. And one of the hardest, and one of the most controversial. Was Nightsyren Kenji Eno's masterpiece? Depends on who you ask, but plenty of people, including me, believe it was the most 'Eno' of Kenji Eno's games. If that makes sense."*

-Steve Harris, in a "Top 5 Kenji Eno Games" column in the December 2014 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

“Yokoi-san and I had many discussions about what kind of project this should be. Our philosophies...they clashed, of course! We made compromises. But...once Spaceworld '98 came, I couldn't have been happier with how it turned out!”

-Ken Kutaragi

“Oh, we're not waiting for that. We're gonna bust him out.”

-Princess Lindsay, *Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted*

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### **NBA Live 99**

Dan: 5.0

Shawn: 7.5 (quote: “The NBA Live series has always been quality on the SNES-CD, and it's still great even in the twilight of the system's lifespan.”)

Crispin: 6.0

Sushi-X: 6.0

### **Matsuki Zanna**

Dan: 6.5 (quote: “A really weird little adventure/visual novel game, it's not for everyone but I enjoyed certain parts.”)

Shawn: 7.5

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

-reviews of October 1998's SNES-CD games, in the December 1998 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

### **Azure Dreams**

Dan: 7.0

Shawn: 4.5

Crispin: 4.0

Sushi-X: 5.5 (quote: “Some decent challenge in this game, but the graphics look almost last-gen.”)

### **Dynasty Warriors**

Dan: 7.0

Shawn: 7.0

Crispin: 7.5 (quote: “There's some nice strategic gameplay in this hack-and-slash, proving that Koei is still the king of the console RTS.”)

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Twisted Metal 2**

Dan: 9.0 (quote: "This is what the first game should have been. Outstanding graphics and some spectacular weaponry make for great vehicle combat action.")

Shawn: 9.0

Crispin: 8.5

Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Kid Icarus: Guardian**

Dan: 7.0

Shawn: 8.0 (quote: "A really good game with lots of exploration, though it could have been quite a bit longer.")

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 6.5

### **NBA Live 99**

Dan: 8.0

Shawn: 8.0 (quote: "Another solid basketball sim from EA.")

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Neon Genesis Evangelion**

Dan: 4.5

Shawn: 9.0

Crispin: 6.5 (quote: "The game is beautiful, but it doesn't really capture what made the anime great.")

Sushi-X: 5.0

### **Blue Nexus**

Dan: 7.0 (quote: "Sci-fi RPGs are getting more common these days, but this one's really fun.")

Shawn: 8.0

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.0

### **Ultra Spinout**

Dan: 7.0

Shawn: 6.0

Crispin: 5.0 (quote: "Some spectacular tricks are in this racing game, but there's not much else here. The soundtrack is a slight redeeming factor.")

Sushi-X: 5.0

### **Phasewar**

Dan: 8.5  
Shawn: 8.5  
Crispin: 8.0  
Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "It's a really fun, if really wild shoot-em-up.")

### **Ultra World Of Color**

Dan: 9.0  
Shawn: 9.0  
Crispin: 9.5 (quote: "The year's best puzzle game and maybe the Ultra Nintendo's best four-player title.")  
Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Metal Clash**

Dan: 8.5 (quote: "This game's single player campaign is surprisingly robust, nearly Pokemon-like in its scale.")  
Shawn: 8.0  
Crispin: 9.0  
Sushi-X: 9.0

-reviews of October 1998's Ultra Nintendo games, in the November and December 1998 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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(Authors' Note: Much of the *Commander Keen* content in this update, including the Segata Sanshiro commercial and *GameTV* Mr. Hiller segment, was inspired by **Pyro**. Also, as a refresher, here's the *Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted* update he did that details the game: <http://www.alternatehistory.com/disc...postcount=2371> )

\*A bunch of kids are hanging out in a library studying.\*

Boy: This homework assignment is so boring.... why can't we be at home playing the Saturn?

Girl: Tell me about it.... \*groans\*

\*Suddenly, a huge pile of books is piled up in front of the kids by a stern-looking librarian.\*

Librarian: Shhhhhh! No talking! Study!

Boy: But-

Librarian: Shhhhhhhhh!

\*A pair of feet are seen silently entering the library. The librarian turns to see a very angry looking Segata Sanshiro staring at her.\*

Kids: Segata Sanshiro!

Librarian: Shhhhh!!

Segata Sanshiro: \*lets out a scream and flies at the librarian, his foot coming at her, the next thing we see is a librarian-shaped hole in the wall with lots of destroyed books around it and a bunch of ripped out pages coming down near the hole, the librarian pokes her head out of the hole and lets out a groan\* Sega Saturn...shiro!

\*Scenes from *Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted* play on the screen.\*

Narrator: It's hard to be quiet when the year's loudest game has just crash-landed on the Sega Saturn. *Commander Keen* is back for another space adventure. Join *Commander Keen* and his friends as they liberate Mars from an evil tyrant, then join up with friends for the game's new multiplayer mode. *Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted*, out now, only for the Sega Saturn.

\*Segata Sanshiro is seen meditating on a stack of books as the two kids play *Commander Keen* on a TV nearby.\*

\*Cue the SEGA! Scream\*

-from the commercial for *Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted*, which began airing in October 1998

*Mars' Most Wanted was a breath of fresh air, and once news of its success began to filter into Sega of America HQ, everyone, including Tom Kalinske, found themselves breathing a sigh of relief. Sales had surpassed expectations considerably, even after the hype generated by the game's favorable reception at E3. Now, the company had breathing room, and with Nintendo set to launch its biggest game of the year against Sega's Ring release, they needed all the good news they could get. The decision to put Sonic in the game had paid off: not only did Sonic get to show up in a Saturn game after a nearly year-long absence, but the mystery of how to obtain him was generating serious buzz in the online community. Mars' Most Wanted had been expected to be roughly even in sales with Kid Icarus: Guardian, the Ultra Nintendo's new game centering around their angelic bow-wielding hero Pit. But Kid Icarus had disappointed, and first reports indicated that Mars' Most Wanted was not only smashing Kid Icarus in both sales and rentals, but was probably the biggest action title in sales since The Dreamers back in June. It had scored more sales in its first week than King Crab and Z-Stomper had combined, and was undoubtedly the Saturn's biggest success of the fall.*

*“Now we've got some momentum.” Tom Kalinske smiled and placed the sheet of paper displaying Blockbuster's rental charts on the table. “Let's keep it up for the Ring launch. This is our year, not Nintendo's.”*

*The others in the room with Kalinske weren't so sure, of course. Kid Icarus was one thing, but Zelda was another. That game had already scored a perfect 40 in the venerable Famitsu publication and had topped the sales charts for five straight weeks in Japan.*

*“Remember the Mega Charger,” Kalinske reminded them. The success of the Mega Charger was the biggest reason the Ring even existed. The Saturn's future still hinged on the Ring, but thanks to Commander Keen, the panic gripping Sega on both sides of the Pacific had given way to a general unease. The situation was still dire, but at least for the moment, the water had stopped rising.*

-excerpted from *The Chase: Sega's 20 Year Struggle To Take Down A Giant*

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*Kid Icarus: Guardian* was one of two big first-party games Nintendo released in October 1998. Along with *Metal Clash*, both games were supposed to be moderate hits for the company to bridge the gap between *Killer Instinct Ultra* and *Temple of Time*. On that front, *Metal Clash* succeeded. But *Kid Icarus* was a disappointment, with underwhelming sales and mediocre reviews. What happened? On paper, *Kid Icarus: Guardian* looked to be a very good game. It was to pick up where the excellent *Kid Icarus CD* left off, and generated buzz at E3 due to its excellent graphics and fun new characters. But when the game was released, it was significantly less epic than expected. The graphics were great and the soundtrack was excellent, and new characters Achilles and Phaedra (not to be confused with Enix's RPG heroine) were well-received by fans and are still popular staples of the series to this day. Where the game faltered was in its structure and length. *Kid Icarus CD*, while not quite comparable to its contemporary, the SNES game *Super Metroid*, in terms of scale, was still a serviceable and fun Metroidvania-style game. But *Kid Icarus: Guardian* was a much more straightforward affair, with very few backtracking opportunities. Instead, it structured itself in the vein of a Treasure-style platformer, with hidden secrets within the levels encouraging the player to find them. But these secrets often forced random searching on the player, with very few hints as to where they were. This got to be frustrating, as many of Pit's bow upgrades were hidden in this way, leaving many players barely able to damage some of the later bosses. The game was also short...very short, with just 10 levels in all. While secret items were used to pad the length of the levels, it paled in comparison to some of the other Ultra Nintendo platformers such as *Serratopia*, and ultimately the game gained a reputation as being short, which it was for most players despite having to play with underpowered bows.

Among the new characters, as mentioned before, Achilles and Phaedra were popular. Achilles was a brash, arrogant warrior who helped Pit during some of the levels, though he often got himself into trouble and had to be bailed out. Still, he was quite funny, and seeing him could be a welcome thing when enemies were overwhelming Pit. Then there was the princess Phaedra, who often ended up as a damsel in distress, but after learning how to use a spear from Palutena later on, she ended up being a major asset to Pit's journey and in particular helped him fight the boss of level nine. The villainess, Nemesis, was not so well-received. She was obsessed with revenge on humanity, but her reasons for revenge were petty and cliched, and she was hardly a compelling villain at all, leaving us clamoring for Medusa (who was a complete no-show in this

game). *Kid Icarus: Guardian* is the big reason why we wouldn't see any more *Kid Icarus* games for a long time afterward. A common reason that the fans cite as why the game was such a disappointment is that Gunpei Yokoi didn't have much of a hand in it, having been spending much of his time working on Game Boy Nova games at the time. Of course, we would later find out what Yokoi had *really* been working on in 1998 (and would continue working on through 1999), and the consensus among fans was that it was a fair trade-off.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com from 2013

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## **Metal Clash**

Graphics: *Metal Clash*'s colorful 3-D visuals do a nice job of conveying a big world for the protagonist to adventure in, and there is some excellent detail on the robots you create during the game.

Play Control: Depending on what kind of robot you create, the controls can be either simple or complex, though they tend to get more complex as you progress through the game and build bigger robots. We thought the controls were intuitive enough, but certain weapons were mapped to awkward buttons initially. You can customize the controls any way that you like.

Game Design: There will be some comparison to *Pokemon* here, but there's a lot more customization. Then again, you don't visit too many places over the course of the game, even if the game makes it seem that you do. You'll spend most of your time either fighting in the arena or customizing your robot, finding parts is a fairly simple matter.

Satisfaction: *Metal Clash*, despite being a bit too simple at times, is a really fun game, a combination between an action game and an RPG. The single player mode is robust and challenging while the multiplayer is some of the best fun we've had on the Ultra Nintendo.

Sound: The music is a bit of a weak point for the game, but the sounds as the robots battle in the various arenas are very entertaining.

Comments: Paul- I had a lot of fun with this game, especially once I found a combination of robot parts that worked really well with my playstyle. Jessica- This game is more silly than realistic, but that's what makes it fun.

Score: 8.1/10

-from the *Metal Clash* review in the October 1998 issue of *Nintendo Power*

And while the sport of combat robotics in the real world remains mired in a fierce legal battle between England's *Robot Wars* and American event organizer Marc Thorpe, there's a brand new robot video game being released this month by Nintendo. *Metal Clash* is the company's newest original game, where a young boy competes in a series of robot combat events throughout the land, finding and buying parts to make his creations more and more powerful. Though the game tends more toward fantasy than realism (the game starts with the boy building small bots like one would typically see in a *Robot Wars* event and ends up with huge machines larger than the boy), it's the first video game to introduce the sport of robot combat to gamers all over the world, and most robot builders are supportive of the game even if it's not an entirely accurate representation of the sport.

“You know, I've seen footage of the game, it's pretty cool that Nintendo would be so enthusiastic about the sport,” said robot builder Carlo Bertocchini, whose robot Biohazard has competed in a number of events. “Wish we could get 'em to sponsor a robot or two, but one thing at a time I guess.”

“Oh yeah, I've definitely been wanting to play that game,” commented Grant Imahara, another combat robot enthusiast. He's been working on a robot to compete in the next event once all the legal issues have been cleared up, and has been playing video games in the mean time, with *Goldeneye* as a recent favorite. “It looks really neat, like *Pokemon* with robots, and hopefully I can apply some of the robot building skills I use in the real world to this game.”

-from an article in *Popular Mechanics*, October 1998

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*“Aww, you gotta be fuckin' kiddin' me! I leave that other chick back at the damn water treatment plant, I get all the way to the end of the chapter, and I fuckin' fail and gotta go all the way back because she died like an idiot? This is worse than Baby Moses on the NES, at least there I KNEW that was a bad game. This game's supposed to be good, it's not supposed to do this shit! There goes like an hour of my life, totally wasted. What a shitload of fuck.”*

-from *The Angry Video Game Nerd*, episode 82, “Nightsyren”

*“And why's that such a surprise? I don't make any of my games to be 'accessible', I make them to be good. In *Nightsyren*, you have to work together. You have to keep your partner in mind. If you forget that for one moment, you lose. That's the object of the game.”*

-Kenji Eno, in a March 2002 interview with IGN.com when the subject of *Nightsyren* came up

Kenji Eno's *Nightsyren* might have been the scariest game of 1998, and in a year that saw *Resident Evil 2* and *Parasite Eve*, that's definitely a challenge. But what *Nightsyren* had going for it was the level of fear you felt for another character. In *Nightsyren*, you controlled the character Michiko, who was trapped in a city after a blackout and an invasion of creatures from the sewers. From the beginning of the game, Michiko was paired up with Asuka, a nurse who, like Michiko, was trapped in the city and needed to escape. The two characters were completely dependent on each other, needing each other to battle enemies and complete puzzles. While the game wasn't an “escort mission” in the traditional sense, you had to keep Asuka alive at all times. Asuka could hold her own in combat, but it wasn't combat where you had to keep her safe most of the time....you'd be confronted by repeated decisions about where to go and what to do, and many times these decisions would either lead to Asuka's death or lead to a situation where you'd need to save her. Sometimes, you'd need her to save you, you'd be captured by a gang of enemies and unable to escape and you'd need Asuka to show up, having made decisions beforehand to put her in the right place to save you, or you'd be trapped in a room with rising waters and would again need Asuka's help. The game's final chapter had three different endings, depending on your actions throughout the game....either you would kill Asuka, Asuka would kill you, or the two of you would escape the ordeal together... and very small choices made early on in the game determined which ending you would get.

And here's the rub: *Nightsyren* did not have save points. The game was divided into six chapters, and ONLY between chapters would your progress be saved. If at any point during a chapter you died, you'd have to go back and do the entire thing over again. Chapters were short, lasting between 30-60 minutes even for new players, but you would definitely need to repeat them more than once over the course of the game. Combine that with the somewhat erotic elements, plenty of violence, and lots of horror, a mix of dark psychological horror and jump scares, and you had a game that proved to be one of the most controversial to appear on the Sega Saturn (which had a LOT of controversial games). There are those who consider it one of the worst games ever made, and those who consider it one of the best. It was quintessentially Kenji Eno, and even moreso than *D*, made its mark on the video game landscape in more ways than one.

-from the article "Top 10 Horror Games Of 1998- #7: Nightsyren" on Gamescares.com, posted on September 29, 2012

## **Nightsyren**

Dan: 4.0

Shawn: 5.0

Crispin: 8.5 (quote: "This game is absolutely not for everyone, but for those who have strong stomachs and don't get frustrated easily, it's one of the most rewarding experiences you'll have while holding a Saturn controller.")

Sushi-X: 7.0

-from the *Electronic Gaming Monthly* review of *Nightsyren*, in the November 1998 issue

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*The 1998 Major League Baseball season was one of the most exciting ever, largely due to the home run battle between Mark McGwire and Ken Griffey Jr. as they together challenged Griffey's 1996 record of 62 home runs. Both men slugged their way into the history books, with McGwire hitting 68 and Griffey hitting 65 (and toward the end of the race, a late surge by the Cubs' Sammy Sosa brought him to 63). As the home run kings dueled, their teams excelled, with the Cardinals going 114-48, and the two-time defending champion Seattle Mariners going 107-55. It seemed almost inevitable that the two teams would meet in the World Series, and indeed, they did, after the Cardinals swept both the Atlanta Braves and then the New York Mets en route to the Fall Classic. The Mariners didn't have it much tougher, sweeping the Boston Red Sox in the opening round before beating the Yankees 4-1 in the ALCS to meet the Cardinals in a World Series for the ages.*

Game 1: Mariners, 7 @ Cardinals, 6

*The Mariners took the first game and home field advantage, with Griffey hitting a grand slam home run in the third inning to put the Mariners on top for good. The Cardinals would rally but it wouldn't be enough.*

Game 2: Mariners, 5 @ Cardinals, 12

*The Cardinals roared back with a huge win, setting the tone early by going up 6-0 in the first inning and putting the Mariners in a hole they couldn't crawl out of.*

Game 3: Cardinals, 3 @ Mariners, 2 (10 innings)

*It was largely a defensive struggle, the game featured no home runs and went scoreless through four innings before the Mariners opened things up with a two-RBI double. The Cardinals would score one run each in the sixth, seventh, and finally the tenth inning to win a tight Game 3.*

Game 4: Cardinals, 4 @ Mariners, 7

*The Mariners came back in a big way with a seven-run eighth inning after the Cardinals got up 4-0 and threatened to take a 3-1 series lead. Griffey went hitless but the rest of the team stepped up with crucial hits.*

Game 5: Cardinals, 3 @ Mariners, 5 (12 innings)

*The longest game of the series saw Ken Griffey Jr. win it for his team with a two-run shot at the bottom of the 12th with two outs.*

Game 6: Mariners, 0 @ Cardinals, 10

*Game 6 was a rout, the second such game of the series. Todd Stottlemyre was the hero with a two-hit pitching performance.*

Game 7: Mariners, 4 @ Cardinals, 5

*The Cardinals closed out the Series and ended the Mariners' three-peat bid. Mark McGwire was the hero with two home runs, including the go-ahead home run in the eighth inning to put the Cardinals up for good.*

-from "World Series 1998" on Sportsrecaps.com

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Now we come to the next two games in our review of the Ultra Nintendo's top games of 1998: *Blue Nexus* and *Phasewar*. While *Blue Nexus* is known as a true cult classic sci-fi RPG, *Phasewar* was a shooter that actually managed to outsell Squaresoft's *Einhander*, at least in North America, and was one of the Ultra's most successful releases of October 1998.

*Blue Nexus* is unique in that nearly the entire game took place inside of a spaceship, a very large spaceship that is left nearly deserted after a strike from a mysterious energy weapon leaves its entire crew of thousands of people dead...save for four (later revealed to be six) survivors who must make their way through the city-sized ship, all the while avoiding incursions from invading aliens and also diving into the ship's very strange computer simulation program known as the Blue Nexus in order to uncover the mystery of just what kind of threat they're facing. The game was compared to Atlus' *Shin Megami Tensei* series, particularly its game *Soul Hackers* which appeared on the Sega Saturn to somewhat less North American success (as in, nearly none), though the action-based combat system was different and the game was significantly easier. Developed by Tecmo, the game was a far better effort than their previous title *Secret of the Stars*, and they hired a special North American team to handle the translation. They also kept the

original Japanese voice acting in the game rather than spend a significant amount of money to hire English language dubbers. The result was an RPG that seemed destined to be obscure, but it remains a heavily desired title among Ultra Nintendo collectors, going for up to \$150 on Ebay and far more for a sealed copy.

*Phasewar* was the first major shooter to attempt a *Gradius*-style shoot-em-up in full 3-D. Though the production values were somewhat less than *Starfox 2*, the game had a very slick look, and allowed the player to determine which path they'd take through the game. The plot was very straightforward, about an alien invasion from another dimension, which led to massive armies of strange alien beings and thousands of ships swarming the player's very nimble and surprisingly powerful flying ship. You flied at a rapid pace through different cities and planets with only a minimal amount of dialogue from various characters, none as silly as that found in *Starfox 2* but the dialogue really did give the game a very "arcadey" effect, and the soundtrack, a strange mix of techno beats and rhythms, was one of the most distinctive to appear on the Ultra, a style that would continue in later installments in the series. *Phasewar* was rated highly by critics and sold quite well, nearly passing Nintendo's first-party title *Kid Icarus: Guardian* in sales that month. It was ultimately regarded as one of the best, if not the best, shoot-em-ups of the year, and though it, like *Blue Nexus*, is somewhat underappreciated today, it and games like it show that the Ultra Nintendo had no shortage of great games, even the ones that didn't become blockbuster hits.

-excerpted from "Ultra Nintendo: The Hits (1998)", an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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Sony's latest, *Twisted Metal 2*, is a massive game, taking the suicidal, homicidal racers all over the globe, to 14 different arenas. Indeed, there are more combatants than there are arenas, with 12 in all, two of them unlockable. The game's graphics have significantly improved, from the clunky 3-D of the Super Nintendo CD to the smooth, quick 3-D to the Ultra Nintendo, the draw distance is enormous and the weapons light up the screen, creating massive fireballs and fully collapsible buildings (though not every building is collapsible, you'll quickly learn which ones are, collapsing buildings can cause major damage to racers unlucky enough to be caught underneath them). The game also features a storyline, a series first, with Sweet Tooth, Bella Donna, Marcus Kane, and others appearing in cutscenes between levels depending on which one you select. Of course, the real appeal of this game is its multiplayer mode, featuring eight different arenas based on the levels you encounter in the single player game, and support for up to four players at once. Unlike the first game, which was a slow affair with a limited amount of arenas, the four-player multiplayer in *Twisted Metal 2* runs very smoothly, and each arena has different gimmicks and tricks to spice things up (though at times, the arena can play TOO much of a role...fortunately, the option is there to turn off arena hazards). *Twisted Metal 2* is extraordinarily fun and is our Game of the Month here at *Next Generation*. It's only on the Ultra Nintendo, so if you have the system, check it out!

Score: 46/50

-excerpted from the review of *Twisted Metal 2* in the November 1998 issue of *Next Generation*

magazine

While *Emergency* was shown off very recently at the Tokyo Game Show, we've got some exclusive news on Sony's newest Ultra Nintendo game to pass along. A 1999 release in both Japan and North America is expected, and the game is said to have a massive amount of voice acting, with cinematic scenes interspersed throughout the game. Sony revealed that they are looking to create a full cinematic experience with their hospital horror title, and they're positioning the game as one of their biggest hits of the year. They also revealed the nature of the outbreak...it's different from the one that's featured in *Resident Evil*, as it won't mutate its victims into hideous creatures, at least not all of them. We saw footage of certain humans under the influence of the strain who were completely identical to normal human beings in appearance, but they committed evil deeds under its influence. Without revealing too much, Sony indicated that *Emergency* won't be like any other survival horror title before it, and it's quickly becoming one of our most anticipated titles of 1999.

-excerpted from an article in the November 1998 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

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*And while Korn's "Follow The Leader" continues to be the leader on the rock charts, the controversial Marilyn Manson is nipping at their heels with his new album, "Mechanicolocaust". While the current top two rock acts in the country are making headlines for their controversial, violent lyrics, the band that looks to have the most anticipated rock album of 1999, Nirvana, is promising a mellower sound for their new album, though not because they're trying to steer clear of controversy. According to Dave Grohl, "we're all just in a different place than we were a few years back, and the new stuff reflects that. Everyone's in a better place right now, the whole world's in a better place." Of course, if you ask Marilyn Manson if that's true, he'd respond with a resounding "no", and would probably add a profanity or two for good measure. His new album deals with the issues of drug abuse and self-harm, a satirical tour-de-force that will immediately shock the uninitiated, but for Manson, that's just part of the message he's trying to send. Another band courting controversy, this one looking to burst onto the mainstream scene, is Slipknot, whose demo tracks have been gaining notoriety through distribution on music-sharing services online. This notoriety has made their demo album, set to release early next year, among the most anticipated rock albums of next year, right alongside Nirvana's next album. Another of 1999's most anticipated rock album debuts is that of Alison Pipitone, whose performance was reported to have stolen the show at this year's Lilith Fair. Her debut album, "The Liltng Tree", might just be the biggest female rock debut since Alanis Morissette's "Jagged Little Pill".*

*The biggest rock story of the past few weeks has been the sudden announcement that Soundgarden has come back together to work on a new album, with bassist Justin Chancellor replacing Ben Shepherd. Chancellor, of course, has been a prominent solo performer for the last few years, with a Grammy nomination just last year. It's impossible to know what he brings to Soundgarden until we get a sample of their new work, but their new album should come out sometime next summer. As acts like Korn and Marilyn Manson grow rapidly in prominence, a rift appears to be forming in rock between the edge-pushing hardcore rock and the more*

*mainstream alternative sound, words that would have been an oxymoron just a couple short years ago. Next year will see several bands that helped to establish the current mainstream rock sound release new albums, whether or not these albums can challenge the controversial new faces of rock will determine the direction music will take as we head into the new millennium.*

-from "Rick's Music News", a Tripod.com website, update posted on October 24, 1998

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### **Hurricane Lisa Now Strongest Since Gilbert**

Hurricane Lisa has achieved Category 5 status in the Caribbean Sea. The hurricane has intensified rapidly, from barely a Category 2 just yesterday afternoon, to a huge Category 5 monster with sustained winds of 185 miles per hour. The pressure has dropped to 893 millibars, which is the lowest of any Atlantic hurricane since Hurricane Gilbert in 1988. That hurricane impacted Mexico with powerful winds and serious flooding, killing hundreds. Right now, Hurricane Lisa is forecast to impact the Yucatan Peninsula, but is projected to weaken somewhat before then.

-a Yahoo! News weather update from October 23, 1998

### **Hurricane Lisa Slams Into Cancun As A Category 5 Hurricane**

Hurricane Lisa has made landfall in Cancun with winds raging at 165 miles per hour, re-intensifying after an eyewall replacement cycle caused the storm to temporarily weaken to a Category 4. Due to a major evacuation and the storm striking at an off-time for tourism, Lisa's impact is unlikely to result in a large number of deaths or injuries, but monetary damage could be in the billions as the storm's powerful winds ravage Cancun's resort hotels.

-a Yahoo! News weather update from October 25, 1998

### **Tampa Residents Prepare For Hurricane Lisa**

Hurricane Lisa may have weakened after making landfall on the Yucatan Peninsula, but the storm is still a Category 1 hurricane with winds of 85 miles per hour, and is forecast to hit the Tampa, Florida area later today. Some fluctuations in the hurricane's path are expected, but residents are taking no chances. There has been a mandatory evacuation, and those who are choosing to ride out the storm have cleaned out supplies from local stores.

-a Yahoo! News weather update from October 27, 1998

### **Tampa Cleans Up After Lisa**

The storm may be over, but Tampa residents are left with lots of damage to clean up after the hurricane struck as a Category 2 with 100 MPH winds. The hurricane, which caused five deaths in Mexico after slamming into Cancun as a Category 5, has caused four deaths so far in Florida

alone, and coastal flooding from the storm's trip up the Atlantic coast has caused at least six more. Hurricane Lisa is estimated to be the most damaging hurricane to make landfall in the United States since Hurricane Andrew, with early estimates of damage ranging from \$6-8 billion. The eyewall went directly over the Tampa Bay area, causing many skyscrapers in the downtown area to be heavily damaged and an estimated wind driven storm surge of 8-10 feet in the bay. The storm has also caused the cancellation of door to door trick-or-treating in the city, though the city has set up several events for children returning from evacuation to have alternate Halloween festivities.

-a Yahoo! News weather update from October 31, 1998

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Brittany Saldita: This game though, was leaps and bounds better than the previous Saturn *Keen* game. And that was 3 games in one!

Alex Stansfield: Yeah, I think they've found their groove now, it helped that this game was made for the Saturn from the ground up.

Brittany: What I appreciated was that it wasn't just a *Mario* clone. It ends up being its own game, and...I'll tell you, it almost kind of reminds me of a more open 3-D *Zombies ate My Neighbors*. It's that kind of game with that kind of gameplay, and difficulty, and humor.

Alex: I think it's its own game for the most part. It's kind of a hodge podge of different genres, but it stands by itself and it really is better than I thought a *Keen* game could be. It embraces what it is and that's what makes it so great.

Brittany: \*laughing\* And while I DID think Princess Lindsay was a great subversion of the common "save the princess" cliché... is it possible to be too MUCH of a subversion, to the point where it's predictable and it loses some of its impact? Not a knock on the game, which is great, but just a thought I had.

Alex: Yeah, and then the multiplayer...I mean, they kinda just tossed it in there but it's still pretty fun. That's what *Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted* is. Just raw fun, kind of difficult but not too much so, I think it's the perfect action game for the Saturn and I'm giving it a 4.5.

Brittany: I loved it and I agree, a 4.5. It's got some flaws but they're few and far between, for the most part, this is a fantastic game and highly recommended by *GameTV*.

(...)

Ted Crosley: \*sitting on the couch with Alex, Brittany, and Gary\* and that's it for *GameTV*, but before we go, let's fire up *Commander Keen* one more time for a little game I like to call "Get Hitler".

Alex: Hitler, being of course, history's biggest (bleep)hole, is sort of in this game. He's actually

Mr. Hiller, who looks pretty much just like him, and guess what? You can be him in multiplayer.

Brittany: So what we're gonna do is make Gary be Hitler, and not do anything except run around while we chase him and kill him over and over again!

Gary Westhouse: Why do I have to be Hitler?

Ted: You do the best German accent.

Gary: No I don't, you guys do way better German accents than me!

Ted: \*doing a German accent\* No, no we don't, this is a lie!

Alex: \*also doing a German accent\* Why are you lying? This is punishable by DEATH!

Brittany: \*she is also doing a German accent\* Now START PLAYING!

Gary: \*lets out a yell and starts running around as Mr. Hiller, getting blasted as all of them do silly German accents, with Gary's easily the worst sounding out of all of them, the screen shows "Hitler" dying multiple hilarious deaths\*

-excerpted from the October 6, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Gary: *Time Crisis 2* was pretty good. I mean, if you liked the first one, you're gonna like the second one.

Ted: Yeah but with that said, the Saturn's showing its age with this one, the arcade version looks way better. Now, with the Ring coming out next month, I mean...hopefully it looks a little bit better on the Ring but as for right now, just know what you're getting into. The gameplay's solid, though it's pretty much the same as the original, just a bit longer and maybe a bit tougher.

Gary: *Time Crisis* was never my favorite lightgun series, that's probably *Point Blank*....

Ted: *Virtua Cop* for me but yeah, *Point Blank*'s a good one. Look, I mean...you're shooting bad guys, saving hostages, it's par for the course. This game, if you've played *Time Crisis* and didn't love it, you probably don't need to play this one.

Gary: It's good but definitely not great. 3.5 out of 5 from me.

Ted: And I give it a 3. So, when's the next REALLY fun light gun game gonna come out? At this point it's honestly more fun and exciting just to chase your friends around with your light gun. Remember when that was gonna be the next big thing? The light gun?

Gary: Does the Ultra Nintendo have a light gun game?

Ted: Like one or two, and neither one was any good. I wouldn't mind playing *Star Fox* with a light gun though.

(...)

Adrian Fry: So what's *Metal Clash* supposed to be? An RPG? An action game? A fighting game? I wasn't entirely sure.

Alex: Hey, I really enjoyed it. I loved how much customization you could have, if you want to make a humanoid robot with a giant saw on its face and big flamethrower arms, you could!

Adrian: I tried to make a robot dog....it didn't go so well.

\*The screen shows Adrian's robot dog limping along as it gets pounded by a massive hammer from another bot\*

Adrian: And when I went into the arena with you, it went even worse!

\*The screen shows Adrian's robot dog on its back, flailing around as Alex burns it with both flamethrower arms\*

Alex: Yeah, after that one I thought the ASPCA was gonna come and bust me. Now, this game wasn't perfect, the single-player quest had a lot of cliches, like that rival of yours who shows up, the one who's like Gary but ten times more obnoxious. Pokemon Gary, not our Gary.

Adrian: Right, and some of the bosses were really cheap, it's easy to get pinned against the wall and if you don't know what you're doing, it's really hard to control your bot.

Alex: Yeah, I did feel I was kind of limited in what I could do due to the controls being really crappy with certain bot designs, so watch out for that.

Adrian: You know, in the end it's a pretty good game. It's got its problems and even though you have a LOT of customization options, there's not as much freedom as you'd think, I still found myself having fun a majority of the time I played with it and that's enough to get a 3.5 from me.

Alex: I'm giving it a 4, it's another great first-party Nintendo game and I think it's gonna be another hit for them.

-excerpted from the October 13, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Gary: Okay, so can we admit it was a mistake to release *Fighting Vipers 2* before the release of the Ring? It's clear this game was meant for the Ring because the Saturn version is nigh-unplayable. It looks like crap, it STILL runs slow...why even BOTHER releasing this for the

Saturn and allowing you to play it without the Ring?

Adrian: Yeah, I get not wanting to limit the number of people who can play it but this just sends a bad impression.

Gary: That said, I have NEVER been a big fan of *Fighting Vipers*. Aside from Emi, there's really nothing that stands out about this game anyway. It's just average and then you get to the fact that this is a crippled port....

Adrian: I hope...I HOPE that not all Ring-enhanced games are like this. Great with the Ring, unplayable without it...

Gary: I think it's just this one. I HOPE it's just this one. *Virtua Fighter 3* played just fine without the Ring at E3! I mean, it didn't look quite as good but it still looked great and played great. So this is just a lazy port.

Adrian: Should we do another review once the Ring comes out?

Gary: Honestly, I don't think we should. Anyway, as it stands now...0.5 from me. And the .5 is just for Emi.

Adrian: Yeah, I can't give this more than a 1. I mean...look at it.

\*The game is shown again on the screen, one of the character is moving extremely slow while using his combo, which looks almost glitchy as it gets executed. The background looks really plain and everything just looks muted from the arcade version.\*

Adrian: It's a total mess. I hope it plays better when the Ring comes out.

-excerpted from the October 20, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany: \*dressed like Jem from *Jem and the Holograms* for the Halloween episode\* You know, and for me, who's actually seen the *Evangelion* anime, this game's kind of a mixed bag for me. I wasn't a HUGE fan of *Evangelion*, but I liked it, and this game doesn't capture much of the feel of the show. That said, it's a beautiful looking game and some of the giant mech fights are pretty fun, when you're not fighting a bunch of repetitive drones.

Lyssa Fielding: \*dressed like Kimber from *Jem and the Holograms*\* Apart from the repetitive fights, I had a lot of fun with this game. Of course, I've never seen *Evangelion*, I've been meaning too....you know *Sailor Moon* is more my speed. \*smiles\*

Brittany: Well yeah, mine too, I mean, come on.

Lyssa: And that game was crap! Why can't they make a GOOD anime game?

Brittany: Hopefully next year's *Sailor Moon* game is better. I can't believe we're finally getting the *Sailor Moon* RPG! But enough about that, let's talk more about *Evangelion*. The little cinematics that pop up during the levels, I enjoyed, though again, a lot of them get kind of repetitive after a while.

Lyssa: So much repetition! It's like they made this really pretty game, with really fun giant robot fighting, but they couldn't think of enough stuff to fill 18 missions, so a lot of the gameplay during the missions is the same kind of stuff you encountered on previous levels, just more of it, or tougher.

Brittany: So many games have that problem! It really pisses me off! So yeah, I can't give this game more than a 3.

Lyssa: I'll be a little nicer and give it a 3.5, because I DID have fun with it, it's just....

Brittany: If you don't have enough stuff for eighteen missions, do like ten missions?

Lyssa: \*mock gasps and puts her hands up to her cheeks\* Outrageous!

-excerpted from the October 27, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: October 1998**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Tale Phantasia
3. Chrono Trigger
4. Sphere Soldier
5. Super Mario World 2
6. Donkey Kong Country 4
7. Donkey Kong Country
8. Secret Of Mana
9. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2
10. Victory 2

### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: October 1998**

1. The Dreamers
2. Final Fantasy VII
3. Super Mario Dimensions
4. Fairytale
5. Gran Turismo
6. Quixsters
7. Goldeneye 007

8. Quake
9. WWF War Zone
10. Ultra Mario Kart

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: October 1998**

1. Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted
2. Virtua Fighter 3
3. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
4. Tekken 3
5. Turok II: Seeds Of Evil
6. Quake
7. Shenmue
8. Arbiter Of Sin
9. Z-Stomper
10. Nightsyren

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*“A decade ago, we introduced the Game Boy to the world. Since then, it has become the most successful gaming handheld of all time, with 75 million units sold. In 1996, we introduced the Game Boy Color, and brought a new world of color to our handheld platform. The Game Boy remains the most successful handheld on the market, and with the recent worldwide introduction of Pokemon, Game Boy sales continue to be strong. But, as we have seen with our home console platforms, technology and innovation continue to march on, and in Nintendo's constant effort to bring fun and entertainment to players all over the world, we never stop innovating. Now, in cooperation with our partners at Sony, I am proud to bring you the next generation of handheld gaming. I am proud to introduce for the first time anywhere... the Game Boy Nova.”*

-Hiroshi Yamauchi, from his keynote speech at Spaceworld '98, October 22, 1998

*“Hello again, friends! As Yamauchi-san said before, the Game Boy Nova is a handheld device for the next generation of players. Nintendo and Sony have worked on this for nearly two years, and the result is what I believe to be the most amazing handheld electronic device ever created! You're going to be...absolutely blown away by what the Nova is capable of. For the first time, we have home console-level technology inside a small handheld device. We have a next-generation chip inside this little thing, and it's capable of playing some fantastic games. Did you ever imagine you would see proper 3-D graphics on a handheld? Some of the things you will see this weekend, I think, will astonish you, much like the Super Nintendo CD astonished you when we first showed it off seven years ago. I see that some of you remember!”*

-Ken Kutaragi, from his keynote speech at Spaceworld '98, October 22, 1998

### **SPACEWORLD: Nintendo's Big Show**

It's been nearly two-and-a-half years since Nintendo last had a big show at Shoshinkai, but we're finally back and Nintendo made some major announcements at this year's show, while exhibiting more than a dozen new games for its various platforms.

First and foremost, of course, was the announcement of a new piece of hardware from Nintendo: the long-awaited successor to the Game Boy and the Game Boy Color. The new handheld is called the Game Boy Nova, and it's a true quantum leap from anything that's come before it. The new system, which has a clamshell design, with the screen (a wide screen in fact!) on top and the controls on the bottom. The rectangular handheld has controls similar to those found on the Super Nintendo, with four face buttons, the familiar A, B, X, and Y, along with two shoulder buttons, a Start button, a Select button, and a D-pad. The graphics are superb, this system is capable of anything the Super Nintendo CD could do, and some games even approached a few lesser Saturn titles in graphical fidelity. The games were divided between detailed 2-D and some nice 3-D, and the 3-D on some games exceeded what we saw in *Squad Four: Eclipse*, considered to be the best 3-D on the SNES-CD. And what games am I talking about? Well, first up, there's *Super Mario Nova*, a new platforming Mario game that resembles a much prettier *Super Mario World 2*. It's not in 3-D, but the colors pop to an extraordinary degree on the backlit screen, and the game features moving backgrounds like in the *Donkey Kong Country* games. Only two levels were playable, but they were both quite fun, and *Super Mario Nova* is expected to be a launch title. But there was a game even bigger than *Super Mario Nova* at the show.... Nintendo officially announced *Pokemon Sun and Moon*, the sequel to *Pokemon Red and Green*, and the game is a mix of 2-D and 3-D, with some 3-D used in the overworld and buildings, while battles appeared in fully animated 2-D, with highly detailed Pokemon. So far, most of the Pokemon that appeared in the game were of the original 150, but new Pokemon including a funny-looking owl and a fierce-looking dog were shown to appear in the game, along with a new Bug type that resembled a ladybug. Nintendo and Gamefreak, which is owned by Sony, promise to reveal more about *Pokemon Sun and Moon* in the coming months, but what I saw and played was amazing. The Game Boy Nova will also see a few ports, including *Super Metroid*, which Nintendo showed off at Spaceworld on the Nova (unfortunately, it was the only Metroid game that appeared at the show). What amazed me was the port of *Resident Evil* that was running on the Nova, it wasn't quite as good looking as the Saturn version of the game, let alone the Ultra version, but it still looked fantastic, beyond anything I thought a handheld was capable of before seeing it for myself. Among the technical specs that were revealed about the Nova was that it will use cartridges as a storage medium (CDs were considered, but the movement of a CD reading mechanism would have been a drain on the Nova's battery life). This might present a problem, considering that several SNES-CD ports are planned for the Nova, but with compression and the removal of animated cutscenes, the cartridges (estimated to hold between 4-64 megabytes of data, with more possible down the road as memory prices come down) should be sufficient enough for most SNES-CD games, let alone games designed specifically with the Nova in mind. The battery life clocks in at 6-8 hours on the handheld's rechargeable battery, which is relatively astonishing considering that Sega's less powerful Venus got about 2 hours on 6 AAs (with less than one hour on some Mega Charger games). Sony is rumored to have put a lot of money into the research of rechargeable battery technology specifically for the Nova, and it's likely to pay off once the Nova is released. The system is priced at an estimated 21,000 yen, with a Japanese release expected by the end of 1999, and a North American release likely either at the end of 1999 or sometime during 2000. The Nova looks truly amazing, but with Pokemon still going strong on the original Game Boy, its sales should remain robust even after the Nova's launch.

Nintendo was also showing off lots of Ultra Nintendo software at Spaceworld. Perhaps the most

intriguing title was *Super Smash Bros.*, a fighting game starring Nintendo characters facing off against each other! Yes, you heard that right. Mario, Link, Pikachu, Donkey Kong, Samus, Yoshi, Kirby, and a number of others who have yet to be announced will all throw down in this four-player fighting game, and even though I didn't get much time to play before having to step aside for the next person, the game looks incredibly fun. Surprisingly, no North American release has been announced as of yet, though the game will be releasing in Japan in December and I have to imagine it'll show up on our shores sometime in 1999. Nintendo also showed off the new *F-Zero* game, *F-Zero: Ultracharged*, which is coming out in Japan at the start of next year. Captain Falcon returns with a number of new racers, and the game not only boasts 18 all new (and very pretty) tracks, but it also features a course creation mode that will allow the player to design their own track and then bring it to a friend's house with the Ultra Nintendo's Controller Pak. *Ultracharged* looks incredibly fun and will definitely build off of the momentum that *F-Zero CD* created all the way back in 1994. There was a new Mario-based golf game and also *Mario Party*, a four-player board game that looked somewhat silly but should add to the Ultra's roster of really fun multiplayer games.

*X: Tactics*, the next game in the *X* series that includes the *Super Squadron X* titles, was announced at Spaceworld for the Ultra Nintendo. It takes a more deliberate approach to the popular tank war game, requiring players to plan out their attacks on a massive battlefield before engaging in tank skirmishes with the enemy. It combines elements from strategy games with the *X* series' tried-and-true tank fighting, and should be quite a hit when it launches in Japan in the spring. Speaking of strategy titles, the new *Fire Emblem* game, which now has a subtitle, best translated in English as *The False Princess*, was shown off at Spaceworld, though only with a small video trailer and a brief demo of gameplay. The fully 3-D battlefields look great, and characters seem to come to life with excellent animation and a series first, voice acting. *Fire Emblem: The False Princess* is still some time away but could appear in North America as early as next year. Masahiro Sakurai, who was there to show off his *Smash Bros.* game, also showed off a *Kirby* title for the Ultra, though only a small gameplay demo was available, showing Kirby moving around and sucking up enemies in a fully-3D world. Kirby showed off a couple of new powers, including the ability to transform into a Starfox-like ship, and Rick from the *Dream Land* games also made a brief appearance. We'll be sure to see more of the new *Kirby* game over the upcoming months. And finally, Nintendo announced the next *Squad Four* game, though again, only had a short gameplay demo to show off at Spaceworld. This demo, however, was extremely expressive. You controlled Shad, who was running around fighting guards in some type of prison area, and the demo showed off the game's impressive lock-on system. Basically, *Squad Four* has gone completely off the rails. It's now a fully 3-D adventure title, and the demo left me clamoring for more. Indeed, Spaceworld 1998 left most attendees begging for more and excited about the future, which is pretty much the hallmark of any successful trade show. 1999 is going to be a very fun year for Nintendo fans.

-excerpted from an article on Gamespot.com, October 28, 1998

And one more thing, here are 1998's *Nintendo Power* covers:

January 1998: Resident Evil  
February 1998: Star Wars: Shadows Of The Empire  
March 1998: Goldeneye  
April 1998: The Legend Of Zelda: The Mystic Mirror  
May 1998: Gran Turismo  
June 1998: The Dreamers  
July 1998: WWF War Zone  
August 1998: Ballistic Limit 2  
September 1998: Killer Instinct Ultra  
October 1998: Metal Clash  
November 1998: The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time  
December 1998: Parasite Eve

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I'll tell you what though, right now, here is a best-guess estimate top ten global sales chart for the Ultra Nintendo and the Saturn, total lifetime sales as of October 31, 1998, including pack-ins:

### **Ultra Nintendo:**

1. *Super Mario Dimensions* (18.5 million)- game was a pack-in title for North America and Europe but not for Japan
2. *Ultra Mario Kart* (6.3 million)
3. *Goldeneye 007* (4.4 million)
4. *Final Fantasy VII* (3 million)
5. *Gran Turismo* (2.7 million)
6. *The Dreamers* (2 million)
7. *Resident Evil* (1.8 million)
8. *Star Fox 2* (1.75 million)
9. *Ballistic Limit 2* (1.55 million)
10. *Killer Instinct Ultra* (1.5 million)

### **Sega Saturn:**

1. *Sonic The Hedgehog 4* (9.5 million)
2. *Virtua Fighter* (6 million)
3. *Resident Evil* (4.5 million)
4. *Virtua Fighter 2* (3.8 million)

5. *Tomb Raider* (3.5 million)
6. *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* (3.2 million)
7. *Tomb Raider II* (2.5 million)
8. *Sonic Jam* (2.4 million)
9. *Virtua Racing* (2 million)
10. *Tekken 3* (1.8 million)

-

### **The Best-Selling Super Nintendo CD Games:**

- Super Mario World 2- 25,174,553
- Super Mario Kart- 13,045,776
- Donkey Kong Country- 10,563,732
- Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition- 8,885,491
- The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams- 8,056,480
- Super Mario World 3- 7,348,660
- Doom- 6,851,336
- Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest- 5,831,479
- Secret Of Mana- 5,168,783
- Mortal Kombat- 4,459,800
- Dragon Quest VI- 4,180,335
- The Secret Of Monkey Island- 3,885,780
- Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie Kong's Double Trouble- 3,715,413
- Chrono Trigger- 3,448,219
- Squad Four: Eclipse- 3,391,540
- Donkey Kong Country 4: Kong Family Reunion- 3,224,516
- Final Fantasy VI- 3,060,784
- Ballistic Limit- 3,028,470
- Tale Phantasia- 2,970,383
- Super Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition- 2,954,631
- Star Fox- 2,841,369
- Killer Instinct- 2,785,710
- Mortal Kombat II- 2,686,331
- Dog Dash- 2,684,310
- Tales Of The Seven Seas- 2,613,882
- Squad Four- 2,576,184
- Elements of Mana- 2,360,584
- Twisted Metal- 2,286,491
- Star Wars: Masters Of Juyo- 2,274,386
- Andrekah- 2,187,415
- Tales Of The Seven Seas 2- 2,184,590

F-Zero CD- 2,104,762  
Puyo Puyo Super!- 2,057,663  
Dog Dash 2- 1,975,444  
NBA Jam- 1,907,864  
Victory- 1,817,329  
Samurai Shodown- 1,746,559  
Super Mario RPG: Legend Of The Seven Stars- 1,705,548  
Twinblade- 1,657,544  
Super Bomberman CD- 1,574,621  
Idol Star '94- 1,552,786  
Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?- 1,506,748  
Victory 2- 1,453,887  
Frederico- 1,446,785  
Tetris CD- 1,416,673  
Terranigma- 1,321,784  
Super Star Wars Trilogy- 1,315,429  
Kirby Super Deluxe- 1,305,882  
Sailor Moon- 1,305,167  
Snatcher- 1,288,469  
Romancing SaGa- 1,287,663  
Dragonball Z: Saiyan Battle Saga- 1,278,440  
Matsuki Zanna- 1,275,886  
Jewels Of The Realm- 1,226,887  
Final Fantasy IV- 1,226,881  
Iron Combatant- 1,204,785  
Ranma 1/2: Clash of Demons- 1,174,861  
Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge- 1,154,897  
Tetris Attack- 1,136,742  
The Terminator- 1,108,599  
Andrekah/Cotton: Amazing Duo!- 1,103,487  
Grant Hill In NBA Basketball- 1,097,582  
Pokemon Super Adventure- 1,088,643  
Sphere Soldier- 1,073,561  
Final Fantasy Origins- 1,054,879  
Derby Stallion CD- 1,054,613  
Eternal Night- 1,040,315  
Super Ghouls 'n Ghosts CD- 1,030,794  
The Three Caballeros- 1,027,113  
Road Storm- 1,008,461  
Final Fight II- 1,005,485

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*“With the Ring, the Saturn truly enters the next generation of gaming, with stunning visuals only previously seen in the hottest arcade games. Make no mistake, this is no Mega Charger. It takes the Saturn to a whole new level of graphical performance and enables it to play games that players could only dream of before.”*

-excerpted from the cover article of the November 1998 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

*“The Ring isn't a gamble, it's a logical next step. The Mega Charger was a success, ergo, the Ring will be a success and should push the Saturn past the Ultra Nintendo in this year's holiday sales.”*

-Tom Kalinske, in an interview in the November 4, 1998 *Wall Street Journal*

*“The mistake that Sega is making with the Ring is the same one they made with the Mega Charger: charging players a lot of money, and make no mistake, \$70 is a lot of money, for a peripheral that doesn't even bring the Saturn up to the level of the Ultra Nintendo. Certain games approach it, but remember, the Ultra is barely a year through its lifespan. The Mega Charger was a 'success' in that it extended Sega's lead over Nintendo for another three months. I don't call that a success, I call it a band-aid.”*

-John Davidson, from an editorial column in the December 1998 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*“Sega's still prattling on about bringing the arcade hits home? I got news for ya, Sega, the arcade is dying, so if you're hitching onto that wagon, you're headed off a cliff.”*

-an anonymous poster on an InsideTheWeb.com video game message board on November 19, 1998

*“Health insurance rip off lying  
FDA big bankers buying  
Console warring gamers crying  
Cloning while they're multiplying  
Fashion shoots with Beck and Hanson,  
Kurt Cobain and Marilyn Manson  
You're all fakes  
Run to your mansions  
Come around  
We'll kick your ass in!”*

-from “You Get What You Give” by the New Radicals

-

\*A wrestler (played by Goldberg, who as of the airing of the commercial is still undefeated in the WCW), is standing in a ring, tossing a hapless wrestler around as a bunch of kids watch him\*

Mr. Ultra: \*slams his opponent to the mat before throwing him out of the ring and roaring triumphantly\* WHO'S NEXT?!

Boy: Whoa, that guy is unstoppable! Who is he?

Boy #2: He's Mr. Ultra, and they say nobody can beat him!

Mr. Ultra: \*shaking the ring ropes and laughing\*

\*Suddenly, the crowd hushes and turns to the ring entrance. Goldberg turns as well. A song begins to play, it's the OTL Segata Sanshiro theme song.\*

Kids: \*gasp\*

Mr. Ultra: Who are you?!

Kids: It's Segata Sanshiro!

Segata Sanshiro: \*solemnly walking to the ring\*

Boy: Don't do it, Segata Sanshiro! He's too strong, nobody can beat him!

Segata Sanshiro: \*steps into the ring with Mr. Ultra and begins fighting him, the two push each other back and forth\*

Mr. Ultra: \*grabs Segata Sanshiro and slams him to the mat, the crowd gasps, it's the first time Segata Sanshiro has ever been taken off his feet before\* NOBODY can beat Mr. Ultra!  
\*laughing\*

Boy #2: Get up, Segata Sanshiro! Please, get up!

\*Segata Sanshiro's theme plays louder now, reaching a triumphant climax as he gets to his feet. He looks into Mr. Ultra's eyes with determination, before coming at him with a powerful flying kick that knocks him to the mat\*

Mr. Ultra: Uggggh!

Segata Sanshiro: \*pins him and wrenches his arm behind his back\*

Mr. Ultra: \*cries out in pain before finally tapping out\*

Boy: Segata Sanshiro, you did it! But how?

Segata Sanshiro: \*in Japanese, subtitled\* *To be victorious, you must enter the Ring.*

\*Scenes from various Ring enhanced fighting games, including *Fighting Vipers 2* and *Virtua Fighter 3* begin to play on the screen.\*

Narrator: Join the fight and step into the Ring, a brand new expansion accessory for the Sega

Saturn. Play the hottest arcade games like *Virtua Fighter 3* with graphics just like those in the arcade. Double your Saturn's memory and give its processor a major boost, turning your Saturn into the most powerful home console there is. The Ring, launching November 4th for the Sega Saturn. Buy it separately or with one of three combo packs: *Virtua Fighter 3*, *Angels*, or *The Oceanfarer*.

Segata Sanshiro: \*stands victoriously over Mr. Ultra as he holds up the championship belt\*

Reporter: \*holding a microphone up to him\* Segata Sanshiro, do you have any words for your fans?

Segata Sanshiro: Sega Saturn, shiro!

### ***Enter The Ring***

#### **NOVEMBER 4**

-from a commercial for the Ring that began airing in mid-October

*“Hey, remember Goldberg, that wrestler from the WCW who went on that huge winning streak? The totally unstoppable wrestler? Remember the first guy he ever jobbed to? Yeah, it was Segata Sanshiro.”*

-from a “Bruce Lee vs. Segata Sanshiro: Who Would Win?” vs. debate on Rootalk.com, posted on July 13, 2015

(...)

\*The Sega Saturn sits alone in front of a TV in a dark room. A group of young adults begin to play a game on it, and are having a good time.\*

*For three years, you've enjoyed the Sega Saturn.*

\*Various games including *Panzer Dragoon*, *Virtua Fighter 2*, *NHL '96*, *Resident Evil*, *Turok*, and *Sonic the Hedgehog 4* are shown on the screen.\*

*But you haven't truly played the Sega Saturn...until now.*

\*The Ring comes down from the ceiling and plugs into the back of the Saturn console. *Virtua Fighter 3* is shown on the screen.\*

*Now, the full potential of the Sega Saturn will be unleashed.*

\*The players having a blast as they play the Ring-enhanced *Virtua Fighter 3*.\*

*And now...nothing will ever be the same.*

\*The music picks up into a fierce techno beat as scenes from *Virtua Fighter 3*, *Spare Parts*, *Arbiter of Sin*, *Shenmue*, *The Oceanfarer*, *Angels*, and *Air Warriors* are shown on the screen.\*

*Double the memory.*

*60% faster processing for incredible graphics.*

*Lifelike sound.*

*And introducing...arcade Model 3 gameplay.*

\*Gameplay footage from various Model 3 games is shown on the screen. The players look blown away by what they're seeing as they continue to play.\*

*The greatest, the most advanced games, now in the comfort of your own home.*

## ***Enter The Ring***

### **November 4**

-from a more serious commercial for the Ring that began airing in late October 1998, it aired on primetime while the Sega Saturn commercial aired more on kids' TV

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### **November 4, 1998**

The Ring peripheral for the Sega Saturn launches worldwide. It launches as a stand-alone peripheral for \$69.99, a combo set with either *Virtua Fighter 3*, *Angels*, or *The Oceanfarer* for \$99.99, or with the Sega Saturn and *Virtua Fighter 3* for \$249.99. Later two-game combo packs are announced for later in the holiday season. The peripheral sales briskly, though the sell-outs reported with the 1994 launch of the Mega Charger are generally not repeated. This is partially due to Sega producing more of the Ring for this launch, but it's also somewhat due to the Saturn still lagging behind the Ultra Nintendo in sales. The Ring is launched alongside four games: *Virtua Fighter 3*, which does not require the Ring in order to play, and *Angels*, *The Oceanfarer*, and *Air Warriors*, which all do. *Virtua Fighter 3* is one of the biggest fighting game launches of the year, comparable to the launch of *Killer Instinct Ultra* in September. The biggest selling Ring-exclusive game is *The Oceanfarer*, followed by *Angels*, and then *Air Warriors*, *The Oceanfarer* and *Angels* are considered moderate successes, but *Air Warriors* is considered a disappointment. As for The Ring itself, critically it's praised, though some critics do take issue with the fact that even with the Ring attached, the Saturn is still less powerful than the Ultra Nintendo. In terms of sales, it meets expectations for Sega and provides the Saturn with a much needed sales bump. Indeed, when paired with the later launch of *Turok 2: Seeds Of Evil*, the Saturn would actually lead the first half of November 1998 in console sales. It was a very slight lead, but the first weekly leads the Saturn had enjoyed since the week that *Tekken 3* launched

back in May.

*The Ring specs:*

The Ring was an enhancement peripheral for the Sega Saturn that took the shape of a long, black bar, and plugged into the back of the Sega Saturn via one of its expansion ports. It had a 55 Mhz co-processor, which brought the Sega Saturn to a near tie with the Ultra Nintendo in terms of total CPU speed (discounting the Ultra's GPU). It had 4 MB of RAM memory, which doubled the memory available to the Sega Saturn. And lastly, it had a soundchip that tripled the Sega Saturn's sound processing capacity, allowing for extremely high-fidelity music and sound (but was still inferior to the Ultra Nintendo's custom sound chip). Most importantly, the Ring enabled the Saturn to run many Model 3 arcade games nearly perfectly, including *Virtua Fighter 3* and *Fighting Vipers 2*. Early Ring-enhanced games looked extremely good, some even surpassing similar Ultra Nintendo games in terms of graphics (fans even to the present day would argue about *Killer Instinct Ultra* vs. Ring-enhanced *Virtua Fighter 3* in terms of which game had the better graphics). The Ring elevated the Sega Saturn past any fifth-generation OTL system, though, again, it still wasn't up to par with the Ultra Nintendo.

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### **Virtua Fighter 3: The Basics**

*Virtua Fighter 3* was the first game to run on the Model 3 arcade board, and even in 1998 with its home console release for the Sega Saturn, its graphics were extremely impressive. The game was quite similar to OTL's *Virtua Fighter 3*, with the addition of three characters that did not appear IOTL: Ralph and Cynthia, from TTL's *Virtua Fighter 2*, and Kanna Saipachi, a mysterious shrine maiden who is attempting to stop Dural. The new characters from OTL, Aoi and Taka-Arashi, also make their first appearances in TTL's game. The plotline remains largely identical, with Dural returning as the final boss and Kage-Maru finally restoring her to her original self (though in TTL's version, he does it with the help of Kanna, who becomes a love interest for him in the series). The game does not appear with its Team Battle iteration in any form as IOTL, instead Sega devoted its energy to bringing a true-to-arcade version of the game to the Ring-enhanced Saturn.

Reception of the game was extremely positive, matching or exceeding that of *Virtua Fighter 2*, and being nearly as highly reviewed as *Tekken 3*. Sales are also exceptional, with the game becoming one of the Saturn's biggest of the year in all three territories, due to its status as the latest and best game of a highly popular series and as the flagship game for the release of the Ring. Even without the Ring, the game looks and runs extremely impressively (though not arcade-perfect), and so the game is popular with both purchasers of the peripheral and those who choose to abstain from doing so. It's one of two massively hyped games releasing that month for the Saturn (with the other being *Turok 2*), and at the time of its release, many believe that the one-two punch of *Virtua Fighter* and *Turok* can overcome even the mighty *Zelda*.

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## Angels: The Basics

*Angels* is an action-RPG created by many of the same people who worked on the Saturn launch title *MagiQuest*. A Ring exclusive, *Angels* features highly detailed, gorgeous graphics, animations, and backgrounds that simply wouldn't have been possible on the unenhanced Saturn. It's an action-RPG that plays a lot like *Secret of Mana*, but with much faster combat that relies heavily on combos. The game features a musical score by Jeremy Soule, his second non-*Ultra* work for the Sega Saturn (after *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*). It receives a high amount of praise, and the voice acting, though starring a cast of mostly British unknowns, receives a great deal of praise as well.

The plot of the game is relatively simple, though it involves a few twists and turns along the way. The main character, Lotherion, is a high ranking angel warrior who serves a deity known as The Light. Lotherion is content with serving The Light, though he harbors a distaste for the vulgar humans and their sinful ways. One day, a great darkness overtakes the heavens, imprisoning most of the angels and causing Lotherion and a few others to be cast down to the surface world. Lotherion has lost much of his powers and to make things worse, he's landed in humanity's most sinful city. However, Lotherion manages to find friends, including a gambler named Reese and a young prostitute named Shara. As Lotherion and his human allies journey, they encounter humans who have been corrupted by the darkness, and meanwhile, some of his fellow fallen angels are determined to kill Lotherion for cavorting with sinners. However, a few of the other fallen angels see reason, and though none of them join as playable characters (only six humans join Lotherion in his quest), they become valuable allies all the same. Eventually, Lotherion and Shara discover the cause of the darkness overtaking the heavens: it is corruption born from The Light itself, manifesting in the form of darkness as The Light subconsciously condemns humanity for its sin and vice. Lotherion and his human allies must return to the heavens and battle the darkness within The Light, enabling it to see the good in humanity in order to make the darkness overtaking both heaven and earth disappear for good.

Though the game isn't overly bloody or violent (none moreso than the typical action JRPG), its religious themes make it somewhat controversial. However, the graphics, sound, and combat gameplay are all praised and *Angels* scores excellent reviews, not quite on par with *Panzer Dragoon Saga* but enough to make it the year's second most successful Saturn RPG both critically and commercially, and ultimately the most financially successful of the three Ring-exclusive launch titles.

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The Ring for the Sega Saturn followed in the footsteps of the Sega Mega Charger: a peripheral that boosted the capabilities of its base console. The Ring was a big hit, especially upon launch, and at the time of the launch there were three games exclusive to the Ring (i.e., the base Saturn couldn't run them alone). Those games were *Angels*, *Air Warriors*, and *The Oceanfarer*. *Angels* was an outstanding RPG that a lot of Ring owners picked up and were pleasantly surprised by. But *The Oceanfarer* was actually supposed to be the biggest Ring-exclusive game at the time of the Saturn's launch. It was a beautiful action-adventure title that took place out on a vast sea and starred Charles Gallaway, a debonair pirate captain who ran his own crew of miscreants and

scoundrels with hearts of gold. Sound familiar? The game was intended to be Sega's answer to the *Tales Of The Seven Seas* series, though a bit more serious and with much better production values. And while the game was beautiful (there were definitely parts of the game that were there just to show off how well the Ring could handle water, plenty of “oooh, look at how awesome the water looks” scenes were placed in the game), it didn't quite have the kind of substance it had boasted in the various previews that had cropped up in the months leading to the Ring's release. Don't get me wrong, it was no *Waterworld*. Captain Gallaway was genuinely likeable and the game had some decent swashbuckling action. Still, many people, myself included, considered it a disappointment. The biggest reason: padding. *The Oceanfarer* was not an open-world, choose-your-own-adventure type of game like *Tales Of The Seven Seas* was. There were fourteen missions in all and in between most of them, you sailed from place to place in your boat. Occasionally you'd come across an island or a cove to sail into, but most of the time you were sailing to your next mission, and a few of these missions were quite short as well. If you knew what you were doing, the game could be beaten in a little less than three hours, hardly the 12-hour epic requiring multiple playthroughs that *Tales Of The Seven Seas* was. It seemed like with all that graphical fidelity, Sega had to cut the actual game short, so what we got was in a lot of ways more of a tech demo for the Ring than the next great adventure game.

The less said about *Air Warriors*, the better. It was a sort of ripoff of *Ace Combat*, just with significantly better graphics. It was a *Top Gun*-styled aerial combat game and it REALLY poured on the cheese in certain scenes, going way over the top with some of the characters and at times seeming like a parody of itself, which, when combined with the super-realistic graphics (well, super-realistic for the time, at least), just came off jarring. The game actually did sell a decent amount of copies, though not as much as Sega was expecting (to be fair, it was the only Ring launch game without a combo pack). Of the four games to launch with the Ring, *Air Warriors* is considered the worst and it really isn't close.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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## **Can Saturn Ring In A New Era?**

Sega's Ring peripheral for the Sega Saturn was released earlier this week, and initial reviews are good. The peripheral contains a co-processor, a memory boost, and an additional sound chip for the Sega Saturn, bringing the system's capabilities up to par with its lauded Model 3 arcade hardware. Only time will tell if the Ring will be what Sega needs to get back on top, but initial reports are promising, with fans and reviewers alike eating up the four launch games. *Virtua Fighter 3* already appears to be a smash success, and strong sales are also reported for *Air Warriors*, *Angels*, and *The Oceanfarer*, the three Ring-exclusive titles that launched with the system. Noticeably absent from the launch was *Shenmue*, Sega's open-world title that was initially announced to be released at the Ring launch. That release was pushed back to December as Yu Suzuki and his crew iron out some last-minute bugs to make the game as pitch-perfect as possible.

The Ring really is a great little device. From our tests, we could see a noticeable difference in the

games that were capable of running on the base Saturn console. *Fighting Vipers 2* went from borderline-unplayable to outstanding, and *Virtua Fighter 3*, which already looked gorgeous before, shows off its true arcade wow factor on a Ring-enhanced Saturn. *Quake* also looked superb when we tested it with the Ring, running nearly as pretty as it does on the Ultra Nintendo. The racing title *Hard Charge*, while not quite as pretty as *Gran Turismo*, had a sleek finish when we put it to the test on the new peripheral, and *Skylein II* ironed out a lot of its graphical rough spots, though the game itself is still fairly average. For \$69.99, it's a worthy upgrade, though savvy Saturn fans will opt to buy it with one of the three games that are getting a bundle pack with the device (and for those who can wait until Christmas, games such as *Spare Parts* and *Shenmue* are said to be getting Ring bundles as well).

When the Mega Charger released back in 1994, it gave the Genesis that extra push that it needed to hang tough with the surging Super Nintendo CD. We believe the Ring can do the same for the Saturn, but only if Sega supports it with the right titles that allow it to really show off its stuff. *Sonic the Hedgehog 5* will be getting a boost from it when it arrives sometime next year, and if there's any game that can show off what the Saturn is truly capable of, it's Sonic. *Sonic 4* gave the Saturn a massive push into a lead that it didn't relinquish until the launch of the Ultra. Can *Sonic 5* turn the tide for Sega once more?

-from an article posted on Gamespot.com, November 6, 1998

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*“Nickelodeon's All That will be getting a bit of a shake-up when the new season premieres this Saturday. The new season sees the departure of long-time show stalwart Lori Beth Denberg, along with Monica, who departed the show in order to continue her successful music career. Currently, Monica has just finished work on next year's romantic comedy 'The Boy Is Mine' with co-star Brandy Norwood, with the film's theme song of the same name set to launch in February. To replace Denberg and Monica are three new additions to the show's cast: Nick Cannon, Mark Saul, and Mandy Moore.”*

-from an article in the November 7-13, 1998 issue of *TV Guide*

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## **Turok 2: The Basics**

*Turok 2: Seeds of Evil* is the sequel to the 1997 hit *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*. The game sends Turok back to the Lost Lands, where he must confront and defeat a race of alien conquerors known as the Primagen (in OTL, the Primagen is a single being, here, it's an entire race). The Primagen are able to take control of the various creatures of the Lost Lands, including dinosaurs and other terrible beasts. The Primagen themselves are confronted in later levels and are among Turok's most dangerous enemies, capable of hunting him down with powerful alien weapons (but upon defeating the Primagen, these weapons can be claimed by Turok). Turok is also capable of taming and riding certain dinosaurs, including raptors and triceratops, to help him defeat some of the game's more challenging foes. The game retains the same first person

gameplay as the original *Turok*, but with even more weapons this time around, the game's large collection of weapons is one of the most praised aspects of the game. The game's graphics are improved as well from the original *Turok*, though surprisingly, the game is not compatible with the Ring peripheral. David Dienstbier is later quoted as saying "We don't need the Ring to make our game look good" in an interview when asked why the game doesn't use the Ring. The most notable addition to *Turok 2* is its multiplayer mode, which allows up to four players at once to engage in a variety of head-to-head or team combat modes, including deathmatch, capture the flag, or item collecting, among several others. While not considered as fun as the multiplayer in *Goldeneye 007*, it's considered the best FPS deathmatch gameplay to date on the Sega Saturn, and is another of *Turok 2*'s most highly praised aspects.

The game receives excellent reviews, though not as excellent as the reviews received by *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*. In contrast with that game's mostly 9s and 10s, *Turok 2* is given largely 8s and 9s. Though the multiplayer is praised, the single player campaign is considered inferior to that featured in the original game. With only 9 levels, as opposed to the fifteen found in the original *Turok*, it's significantly shorter (the levels are a bit bigger, but there are far less of them), and the plotline, a standard "alien-invasion with dinosaurs" plot, is considered inferior to the more personal, emotional storyline of the original game. The musical score, while decent, is also considered inferior due to Jeremy Soule not being a part of the soundtrack team. *Turok 2* is still a major sales success, not quite to the degree of the first but still enough to become one of the Saturn's biggest games of the year. Its total unreliance on the Ring makes it attractive to players unable to afford or unwilling to purchase the peripheral, and sales of *Turok 2* remain strong over the holiday season.

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Ted Crosley: So, I loved *Virtua Fighter 3* for a number of reasons besides the killer graphics. The new characters were great, the new Dodge function adds a major layer of strategy...

Alex Stansfield: Yeah, few fighting games give you that sidestep capability, so it definitely sets this game apart from most of the others out on the market. Look, I've been playing this game for the last two years since it came out in the arcades. I've put a ton of quarters into those machines.

Ted: Oh, me too, buddy.

Alex: And the thing is, this game is as close to arcade-perfect an adaptation as you can get. So I'm, I'm totally sold on finally having a home console version of *Virtua Fighter 3*.

Ted: Honestly, even without requiring the Ring, this game is by far the best reason to get the Ring. It looks SO much better. I had to look and see if I was still playing the Sega Saturn. It's just that damn pretty.

Alex: Which amazes me because the Model 3 board is a good deal more powerful than the Saturn even WITH the Ring. So I don't know what kind of magic they used to make the game look this good, but whatever it is, they oughta go to Las Vegas and start up a magic show like David Copperfield.

Ted: Obviously, I'm giving *Virtua Fighter 3* a 5. You?

Alex: It's a 4.5 for me. It's an amazing game, just spectacular and if you can get the Ring, get it because the game looks awesome.

Ted: It's...*virtually* awesome.

(...)

Adrian Fry: *Angels* isn't the most epic RPG but it's a lot of fun, particularly the combat since you can pull off some really nice combo moves.

Lyssa Fielding: Oh, I agree! You know, in *MagiQuest*, what I liked about the combat was the pace of it, how fast everything moves, and here, it's even faster. You can juggle bad guys back and forth if you're good enough!

Adrian: The plot I thought was nice too. Not the most original, I mean, it's almost kind of a ripoff of *Diablo*, but still, it's a better game than *MagiQuest*. And the graphics, I'll say it again, are lovely.

Lyssa: Yeah, the plot was a bit of a stumbling block for me too. It seemed, you know, kind of silly.

Adrian: Silly?

Lyssa: Yeah, um...most games with religious themes, there's a lot of symbolism there, and here it was just kind of laid out for you in really blatant over the top ways.

Adrian: Yeah, I can see what you mean but I did like the relationships between Lotherion and the humans he meets along the way.

Lyssa: Even in a game about an angel falling from heaven and fighting a demonic army, there's still the old "hooker with a heart of gold" cliché. I mean, really?

Adrian: Would you rather see a game with an evil hooker?

Lyssa: That would at least be original! Anyway, I'm giving *Angels* a 3.5. Cool combat and beautiful graphics can't quite redeem a fairly silly plot.

Adrian: And I'll give it a 4, the combat is better than any other action-RPG I've ever played and even though the plot's a bit lame, you'll still have fun.

(...)

Ted: So guys, what impression overall did you get from the Ring?

Alex: I think it's a sorely-needed upgrade for the Saturn.

Adrian: Right, with Saturn relying so heavily on arcade ports and arcade machines getting better and better, it's gotta keep up with the Joneses.

Brittany Saldita: Or in this case, the Model 3s. Look, I'm not usually one for market fragmentation, but it's worked. It worked with the Mega Charger, it worked in a BIG way with the Super Nintendo CD. If you make the games for it, people will buy it.

Ted: Right, and Sega is standing behind this thing 100 percent.

Gary Westhouse: Honestly, with *Virtua Fighter 3* I saw all I needed to see. This thing is amazing and it's definitely worth buying.

Lyssa: And I can't wait for *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*. Finally, a truly 3-D *Sonic*! It's gonna be amazing.

Ted: So, now that the Ring is out...Ultra Nintendo or Sega Saturn?

Alex: Ultra Nintendo.

Brittany: Ultra Nintendo. With *Zelda* coming out soon, it's not even close.

Adrian: You know, for me....I'm thinking this puts Sega over the top. The Saturn's library is about to get a lot bigger, especially with all those new arcade ports that can be brought over.

Lyssa: Right now...? Last year I couldn't choose....but now I have to say the Ultra Nintendo. Even with the Ring, there's just too many Ultra games I'm liking right now.

Ted: Gary, c'mon, you know I'm voting Saturn so you can tie this thing up!

Gary: \*agonizing\* Ahhhhhhhh....!!! Sorry Ted but...I agree with Alex and the ladies, it's the Ultra for me.

Ted: Sticking with the Ultra?

Gary: Sticking with the Ultra, there's just too much great stuff on there. Even for fighting game fans, you've got *Killer Instinct Ultra*, and then there's that exclusive *Street Fighter III*! I mean, *Street Fighter III*, Ted!

Ted: Well, I think the Ring kicks ass and the Sega Saturn's got a real shot to turn the tables on Nintendo now.

Alex: Fanboy!

Brittany: Amy Rose!

Ted: Amy Rose?

Brittany: She's the only one who loves Sonic more than you!

Alex: I think Ted loves him more. \*the other hosts laugh\*

-excerpted from the November 3, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany: So in the Ultra Nintendo game, you couldn't step out of the robots. In the Saturn *Evangelion* game, you can barely get IN the robots!

Lyssa: For an RPG though, this is a decent enough game. It's a nice little sidestory and I thought it actually conveyed the mood of the anime better than the Ultra Nintendo game did.

Brittany: Well, yeah, it's an RPG so of course there's more of a story. It was actually a fine game, really. The story was confusing but that's *Evangelion* for you. I agree, I thought it was a better *Evangelion* game than the Ultra Nintendo game was.

Lyssa: There's even some humor in this game!

Brittany: Misato is a surprising source of comic relief, ultimately this game's a lot more interesting than the Ultra Nintendo *Evangelion*. The graphics are a bit, erm...dated, but the anime cutscenes are well done.

Lyssa: If you're looking for a really good RPG this probably isn't your game but if you're a fan of anime, it's worth playing! I give it a 3.5!

Brittany: It gets a 3.5 from me too.

-excerpted from the November 10, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Alex: *Turok 2: Seeds Of Evil* is a really fun game. It's got all the wild enemies and great first-person shooter action that I loved so much from the original.

Ted: Yeah, it doesn't have the epic scale of the first game but it's just a lot of fun. And the multiplayer is the best you're gonna find on the Saturn, easily.

Alex: Hell yeah, especially when you bring dinosaurs into the mix. Whoever gets control of the raptor first is pretty much gonna win but it's fun watching everybody try to wrangle him.

\*A few scenes are shown of players in a multiplayer deathmatch mode trying to chase the raptor and mount it, one poor guy fails and gets chomped.\*

Alex: And it's always hilarious to see the raptor shake off his mind control and take a bite out of your opponent.

Ted: What can I say, it's *Turok*! It looks fantastic, it's lots of fun and the multiplayer mode is a blast. I'm giving it a 4.5.

Alex: So am I, *Turok 2* is an excellent game and one of the best on the Saturn this year. 4.5.

-excerpted from the November 17, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: November 1998**

1. Virtua Fighter 3
2. Turok 2: Seeds Of Evil
3. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
4. Shenmue
5. Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted
6. Arbiter Of Sin
7. Tekken 3
8. The Oceanfarer
9. Angels
10. Quake

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### **November 20, 1998**

Tom Kalinske had a smile on his face. He was attending a party at a Los Angeles bar to celebrate the success of the Ring and the big bump in Saturn sales it had created. He and his fellow Sega employees were chatting, laughing it up, and watching Tim Duncan and the Los Angeles Lakers take on the Toronto Raptors on the bar's multiple television screens.

“That Duncan, he's a hell of a ball player isn't he?” asked a man sitting near Kalinske, pointing at the screen. The Lakers had a healthy 11 point lead, and Duncan was leading the way with 18 points and 13 rebounds as the fourth quarter began. “Finally the Lakers are turning things around.”

“Yeah, and so are we,” said Kalinske, though he hardly believed the Ring would make the same impact on the Saturn that Tim Duncan was making on the Los Angeles Lakers. The jury was still out on that, and Kalinske was anxious. It wasn't the impending release of *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple of Time* that had him worried, even though the reviews for *Temple of Time* were nothing

short of astonishing. Perfect scores from every media outlet, Kalinske hadn't seen less than a 9.5 from anyone and most of the ratings were perfect 10s across the board, with numerous reviewers saying that it was the greatest video game ever made.

What had Kalinske really anxious was what was about to happen in just one week. Black Friday, the true test for Sega's new peripheral. The Ultra Nintendo had dominated Black Friday the previous year, having completely sold out stores across the nation. This year, even with much greater supply, the Ultra was expected to be equally difficult to find. He remembered the news reports the previous year, how people had died trying to get the Ultra. The husband and father in Tom Kalinske was horrified at the news. People dying just to get their hands on a game console? It was a terrible tragedy. But a tiny part of Tom Kalinske, deep in his mind, the driven businessman part of him that so desperately wanted Sega to win the console wars, was thinking... *"Damn... nobody ever died trying to get anything from Sega."*

Could someone really be a great person and a great businessman at the same time? Tom Kalinske thought so, but trying to be the best person he could be would make the businessman part of his job incredibly difficult if the Saturn didn't turn it around this year.

He looked around the room again, all those smiling faces, the laughter, the fun.

"Hey Tom, you think they're gonna drag you back in front of Congress again when that *Arbiter of Sin* game comes out?" yelled another of Kalinske's employees, one of his marketing people, with a laugh. "That game's gonna piss so many people off."

"Especially since the Republicans kept the House," said another employee. "Hey, they got bigger things to worry about though...like the president gettin' a BJ!"

The room erupted into laughter, Kalinske included. He loved these people, every single one of them. They were all working so hard to make the Saturn a success and it was such an uphill battle. This time, he told himself, this time had to be different.

Because if it wasn't, if Nintendo came out on top again...he was going to have to start figuring out who to let go.

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*"Many of the lessons we learned in developing the earliest games for the Ultra were applied to Temple of Time. It wasn't necessarily the technology of the Ultra Nintendo that made this game possible, it was everything we'd learned about how to make a fun video game."*

-Eiji Aonuma

*"I was thinking about the four seasons of the year, and how there are many people who love*

*each of those seasons for a different reason, and then...there are people who hate them as well. For an example, there are many children who love winter! The snow, the celebrations, the fun! But for some adults, winter is...more difficult, you have to drive on very slippery roads and so winter is not so fun again. So I hope that I captured both sides of all four seasons in this game.”*  
-Shigeru Miyamoto

*“It's a different type of game from the first Kyuriadan, but I think it's a better type of game for the Ultra Nintendo. It takes better advantage of what the console can do.”*  
-Brave Fencer Kyuriadan director Yoichi Yoshimoto, discussing the game in *Famitsu* magazine in the January 1999 issue

*“But courage, Link, that transcends the seasons and the ages! The courage to fight when you're faced with an overwhelming foe! Yes, Link, be very courageous indeed!”*  
-Farore, *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time*

*“Ganondorf is a relentless madman...he'll stop at nothing to gain power over all... but Link...I know how to stop him.”*  
-Nabooru, *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time*

*“My daughters didn't stop playing that game. From the moment they got it, they were playing Temple of Time for months. So every day, when I got home, the reminder of everything we were up against was staring me in the face! It was...it was kind of demoralizing at the time.”*  
-Tom Kalinske, from a panel at PAX East 2014

-

*“Cross the seasons and endure the ages to save Hyrule. Willst thou rise? Or willst thou suck?”*  
-from the commercial for *The Legend of Zelda: Temple Of Time*, which is somewhat similar to OTL's commercial (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JntHVUp7m4E>) but with numerous butterfly-induced changes, the final line from OTL's commercial remains but most of it is different

## **The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time- The Basics**

*The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time* is the TTL counterpart of *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*, and though the two games share many similarities, there are key differences in gameplay, plot, and game progression that distinguish the two. All the familiar systems from *Ocarina of Time* are present in *Temple of Time*, including Z-targeting. The right analog stick is used to control the camera (or the player can allow for automatic or semi-automatic control as IOTL), while the X,Y, and the two L and R trigger buttons are used to access items, allowing Link to have up to four items ready at once, in addition to his sword and shield which are utilized with the A and B buttons. The major gameplay addition to TTL's game is the addition of the Courage meter, which is powered by Link's companion Farore (Navi is not in this game, instead, Farore accompanies Link, her spirit accompanying him in his courageous heart, and popping out when she is necessary, Farore also powers the Z-targeting and gives gameplay advice, though she's not as annoying as OTL's Navi, she doesn't yell “Hey!” and “Listen!”). The Courage meter

fills up as Link fights enemies. If he chooses to block an attack instead of simply dodging it, for example, he'll gain Courage. He can spend this courage to use spells without depleting his Magic meter or to execute special attacks during battle, indeed, if Link saves his Courage up he can unleash a powerful combo attack that can shorten a boss fight dramatically. The Courage meter adds an extra layer of strategy to battles. Certain items from *Ocarina of Dreams* do not return, most notably Roc's Feather, though Link can jump as in the OTL *Ocarina of Time* game by approaching ledges at the proper angle. The game's graphics are vastly superior to OTL's *Ocarina of Time*, though ITTL, they're slightly less impressive than *The Dreamers*, *Ballistic Limit 2*, and *Gran Turismo*. The music is, like IOTL, composed by Koji Kondo, and while much of OTL's soundtrack remains (including "Song of Storms" and "Hyrule Field"), about half of it is original TTL. The ocarina appears in this game but its significance is greatly diminished, most of the plot related songs are butterflyed away, though many of the utility songs remain, the ocarina is largely relegated to a convenience item. There is very little voice acting, only a few cutscene narrations throughout the game are voiced, some by the Great Deku Tree and others by Farore. Link's grunts and exclamations remain and other character sounds (such as crying or laughter) appear, but there is nothing in the way of formal voice acting outside of narration.

The Link who appears in *Temple of Time* is completely distinct from the one who appeared in the two NES games, the *Link to the Past* trilogy, or the *Mystic Mirror* game on Game Boy Color, though this game is closely related to *Mystic Mirror* in terms of the mythology surrounding the goddesses Din, Nayru, and Farore. As in *Mystic Mirror*, the goddesses appear in this game in the flesh once again to guide Link on his journey. The Hyrule in *Temple of Time* is heavily connected to the goddesses, particularly Din, who governs the passing of the seasons, and Nayru, who governs the flow of time. Thus, the game does borrow somewhat from OTL's *Oracle of Seasons* and *Oracle of Ages*. While those games are butterflyed away, a few of the ideas from those games do seep into this game and others. The Hyrule in *Temple of Time* exists constantly divided between the four seasons. Rather than being governed by the tilt of the Earth, Hyrule's seasons are governed by the will of Din, who keeps the seasons moving along so that one-fourth of Hyrule is always in spring, another fourth is always in summer, another fourth is always in fall, and another fourth is always in winter. These seasons change every three months as they do in our world, and it's the constant flow of the seasons that keeps life in Hyrule stable and peaceful.

It's in this world that Link lives as a 10-year-old boy in Kokiri Forest. One day, he is awakened by a voice. It belongs to Farore, and she appears before Link, saying that once in a generation, she appears before the most courageous person in the land, and that she has chosen Link. She initially gives him the courage to give a present to his friend Saria, then she helps him to find a sword and a shield so he can seek out the great Deku Tree. Link explores the Great Deku Tree, which is largely like OTL's Great Deku Tree dungeon, he finds a slingshot and at the end of the dungeon, he battles the boss, a giant evil flower named Manhandla (replacing OTL's Gohma, who appeared in *Ocarina of Dreams* ITTL). After Link defeats the boss, he is given the Vernal Light by the Great Deku Tree, who tells Link that a great evil threatens Hyrule and that he must gather together the lights of the four seasons so that he may summon forth Din to confront this evil. Link then leaves Kokiri Forest and sets out on his adventure. He visits Hyrule Town and tries to get to the castle, but is told that the royal family is on a summer outing out on the Great Bay. He heads out to the Great Bay and sneaks into the royal family's summer castle, where

Zelda gives him Zelda's Lullaby and tells him that the Spark of Summer is with the Zoras in their cave. But as Link leaves, he sees Zelda being kidnapped. Zelda's kidnappers are a pair of Zoras, a brother and sister. The sister's name is Ruto, and Link pursues her to the Zora Caves, where he gets Ruto's older brother to admit that they are being forced to sacrifice Zelda by an evil spirit who lives deep below the bay. The spirit is demanding the spirit of a pure princess, and instead of sacrificing Ruto, Ruto is going to sacrifice Zelda instead. Link makes his way to the next dungeon, a big sunken ship, where Ruto is planning to sacrifice Zelda to the evil spirit within. Zelda manages to get away from Ruto and it's revealed that Ruto is jealous of Zelda. Link must explore the ship while also tracking down the quarreling girls. He finds a treasure, the Electro Rod, along the way, and after finding the girls, he must use the rod to defeat the evil Octopax boss to rescue them and claim the Spark of Summer. With the spirit defeated, there is no longer any need for a sacrifice, and Ruto apologizes to Zelda and thanks Link, telling him she's going to marry him someday, which makes Link and Zelda blush. Link returns Zelda back to her summer castle and is given a clue to go to Kakariko Village, where the fall harvest is occurring. The people of the village are also celebrating Halloween, but some pranksters are causing trouble and ruining the harvest. Link must track the pranksters to their lair, a large graveyard/maze dungeon. He finds the Boomerang here and uses it to make it through to the boss, a living pumpkin man named Jack O'Lantern. He defeats Jack, ridding the evil spirit from his body, and the pranksters promise not to interfere with the harvest, bestowing upon Link the Autumnal Glow. Link then returns to Hyrule Castle, where Zelda and her family have returned after her vacation ended. She tells him he must make his way up Death Mountain in the winter, up to the home of the Gorons, who have been disappearing one by one. The wintry caves of Death Mountain form the fourth dungeon, and Link obtains the Hammer here, which he can use to smash through certain blocks of ice. He can also use it on the dungeon's boss, a giant yeti named Abominatu, who has been capturing Gorons in order to cook and eat them. Link defeats the yeti, freeing the Gorons, whose leader Darunia bestows the Flash of Winter on Link. Now armed with the Lights of the Four Seasons, Link makes his way back to Hyrule Castle Town, where the Shrine of the Seasons is located. However, the castle town is under siege by Ganondorf. Zelda is spirited away by Impa, while Link goes to the temple only to find it shattered and Din being dragged away in chains by a victorious Ganondorf, who has taken her power to give himself the Triforce of Courage. Ganondorf sets his sights upon Link, but Link is saved by a shield generated by the goddess Nayru, who spirits Link away to the Temple of Time. Nayru tells Link that she must suspend him in time until he is ready to wield the Master Sword and slay evil.

When Link awakens, he is an adult who can wield the Master Sword, but it is seven years into the future and Hyrule is a dismal place, governed now by darkness. The seasons are twisted and contorted into dark mirror images of themselves and Link realizes he needs to return to Kokiri Forest to see what has happened. The forest is under siege, the growth of spring has accelerated hideously and plants have grown huge and monstrous. Saria is nowhere to be found. Link must penetrate deep into the Lost Woods, where the Temple of Spring is located, he must reactivate the Vernal Light by finding the Sage of Spring. After fighting his way through the temple, claiming the Bow and battling Phantom Ganon, Link finds Saria, who is now the Sage of Spring. She re-activates the Vernal Light and instructs Link that instead of visiting the Summerlands next, he must make his trip through the seasons in reverse, going instead to winter and back to Death Mountain. Death Mountain, however, is a dark and gloomy place. It has erupted as a supervolcano, covering the land around it for miles in ash and dropping the temperature to bone-

chilling proportions. Ironically, the Temple of Winter now lies in the middle of a giant magma field, and instead of being ice cold, the temple is one of fire. Link claims the Ice Arrows within, which he uses to freeze lava flows and gradually restore the temple to its normal cold self. However, one hot room remains at the volcano's core. Link enters the room and must battle King Dodongo (who is far, FAR stronger and more difficult than he was in OTL *Ocarina of Time*). After defeating this tough boss, Link finds Darunia, now the Sage of Winter, who restores Link's Flash of Winter. He also forges Link's Hammer into a much stronger Magic Hammer that can smash much bigger things. Link then leaves Death Mountain, but as he departs, he encounters a mysterious person identifying themselves as Sheik. Sheik offers to help Link clear out the terrible invasion of dark spirits that have overrun Kakariko Village. These spirits are far more evil than the mischievous Halloween pranksters of the past, they are deadly and frightening and they are pouring out of the Temple of Autumn, a dark and twisted place of evil much like OTL's Shadow Temple. Link enters the Temple of Autumn, and there he finds the Cane of Byrna, which Link must use to make it through the illusions and false walls of the temple (managing Link's Courage meter is crucial for this). Once Link reaches the end of the temple, he battles the terrifying being Amorphus, which is somewhat like OTL's boss Morpha, but instead of being a water blob, Amorphus changes forms between various terrifying creatures, somewhat like the final boss of *Link's Awakening*. Once Link defeats Amorphus, he reunites with Impa, the Sage of Autumn, who re-charges Link's Autumnal Glow and instructs him that to defeat Ganondorf, he must go to the place where Ganondorf was born and raised: Gerudo Valley. Gerudo Valley has been made accessible by the recession of the vast ocean on which Hyrule's summer vacation palace once stood overlooking a vast cliff, it now overlooks an enormous desert. Link must make his way out past the burning salt flats to reach Gerudo Valley. Link learns that the Gerudo have been capturing Zora refugees and keeping them as caged pets. After rescuing Ruto's brother from a Gerudo warrior, he tells Link that the Temple of Summer is no longer accessible in this era. Link must become a child somehow without returning to Hyrule Castle Town in order to reach it (similarly to how Link had to explore the Spirit Temple as both a child and as an adult in *Ocarina of Time*). In fact, the Temple of Summer is caught between two ages: past and future, and is a twisted puzzle maze of both desert and water based dungeons. Just as Ruto fought with Zelda in the past, in the future we see a now grown Ruto in pursuit of Nabooru, wanting revenge for the captivity of her people. The two are seen fighting back and forth as Link pursues them through the future segment of the temple. In one room in the past segment of the temple, however, Ruto appears again as a child, and is attacked by the witches Koume and Kotake. They try to capture her, but Nabooru pushes her out of the way and is taken instead. Ruto makes Link promise to help her repay her debt to Nabooru in the future, and thus, in the future, Ruto helps Link out in his battle against the Iron Knuckle inside which Nabooru is trapped. When Nabooru is freed, Ruto expresses gratitude, and Nabooru promises to make the other Gerudo set the Zora free. But just as the two are becoming friends, the witches appear again and capture them both. Link must reach the boss room with the help of the Mirror Shield treasure and battle Twinrova to save both Ruto and Nabooru. After defeating Twinrova, Ruto and Nabooru are revealed to be the two Sages of Summer, and working together, they restore Link's Spark of Summer. Ruto is seen to still be jealous of Nabooru, thinking that Nabooru has the hots for Link, but Nabooru has no idea what Ruto is talking about.

Finally, Link has re-charged the four Lights with the power of the Sages, and returns to the Temple of Time, where Nayru can use the Lights to free her sister from Ganondorf's control. It's

here that Sheik reveals herself as Zelda, and Nayru bestows upon her the Triforce of Wisdom. However, Ganondorf once again appears, taking both Nayru and Zelda to his grand tower in the center of Hyrule. Ganondorf's Tower is a four-part dungeon, divided into three towers: the Tower of Power, the Tower of Wisdom, and the Tower of Courage. Link must ascend the three towers, completing their trials in turn. The three towers alone aren't as long or involved as a normal dungeon, but combined, they form the longest dungeon in the game thus far. In the Tower of Power, Link must face mostly battle trials, culminating in a mini-boss battle with Dark Din at the end. In the Tower of Wisdom, Link must face puzzle trials, culminating in a mini-boss battle with Dark Nayru. As Link and Farore approach the Tower of Courage, Farore is confident, since Link has her by his side. But, just before Link enters, Farore is captured by Ganondorf as well, and Link must face the Tower of Courage's trials, a mix of battles, puzzles, and challenges that test the player's courage, without the use of Z-targeting or the Courage meter, making it a difficult mission. After defeating Dark Farore at the top of the tower, Link must then climb Ganon's Tower in the center. It's a mostly straightforward, simple climb up, and at the end, he battles Ganondorf in a battle that's somewhat like the battle from OTL's *Ocarina of Time*, only with the added challenge of freeing the three goddesses from their crystal prisons. It's best to free Farore first to restore your Z-Targeting and Courage meter, though freeing Din will dramatically reduce the power of Ganondorf's attacks, and defeating Nayru will reduce Ganondorf's speed and defenses. Once the goddesses are freed and Link defeats Ganondorf and frees Zelda, the rest of the game plays out largely as IOTL. Link and Zelda must race down the collapsing tower before the timer reaches zero, then outside, must battle an enormous pig-like beast. After Ganon is defeated, Nayru uses her power to reverse the tragedies that Ganon has wreaked on Hyrule. Din restores the balance of the seasons, while Farore returns to her home inside the Master Sword, where she will wait until the next great hero comes along. After a sequence showing how peace has been restored to Hyrule and its denizens, with Link and Zelda returned to their childhood pasts, the final scene of the ending again plays out largely as it did IOTL: Link approaches Zelda's window at Hyrule Castle to pay her one last visit. She notices him, and the game ends.

## **November 21, 1998**

*The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time* is released for the Ultra Nintendo and is an immediate and massive hit. Reviews are glowing from every game review outlet, surpassing even the amazing reviews its predecessor, *Ocarina of Dreams*, achieved upon its release back in 1995. The game sells as quickly as any other Ultra Nintendo game that year, with only *Goldeneye 007* having more opening day sales, and then only barely. When Black Friday comes, *Temple of Time*'s opening week races past *Goldeneye*'s and it becomes the biggest opening week for any non pack-in video game ever in terms of sales, breaking even *Ultra Mario Kart* and *Sonic the Hedgehog 3*'s records. The game lives up to and even exceeds all the hype leading up to its release.

Shigeru Miyamoto has yet another masterpiece on his hands, and the game is considered to be his magnum opus. Over the years to come, many game critics would acclaim *Temple of Time* the greatest video game ever made.

And yet, the game barely puts a dent in the hot sales of Sega's Ring peripheral. Tom Kalinske would later comment, "Sega has loyal fans. If you were gonna buy the Ring before *Temple of*

*Time* came out, you're still gonna buy it after it comes out. If you have both systems, you might *play* the Ring a little bit less, but you're still gonna buy it.”

The Ultra Nintendo had another smash hit. But Sega still had a chance to win the holidays.

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### **Rugrats: A Baby's Gotta Do What A Baby's Gotta Do**

Dan: 4.0

Shawn: 6.0

Crispin: 4.0

Sushi-X: 4.0 (quote: “About as simple of a licensed game as it gets, this one's a cheap cash-in on the movie and even Rugrats fans shouldn't bother.”)

### **Star of Light**

Dan: 7.5

Shawn: 6.5

Crispin: 5.0

Sushi-X: 7.0 (quote: “A fairly generic RPG somewhat redeemed by an outstanding soundtrack.”)

-reviews of November 1998's SNES-CD games in the December 1998 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

### **Rugrats: Search For Reptar**

Dan: 3.5 (quote: “A glitchy mess with terrible voice acting and repetitive levels, believe it or not the SNES-CD game is better.”)

Shawn: 2.5

Crispin: 2.0

Sushi-X: 4.0

### **The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time**

Dan: 10

Shawn: 10

Crispin: 10 (quote: “A brilliant masterpiece filled with challenging puzzles and beautiful dungeons.”)

Sushi-X: 10

### **Ultra Bomberman 2**

Dan: 7.0

Shawn: 8.0 (quote: “While the emphasis on single-player mode really short-shrifts the multiplayer, it's still a pretty fun quest.”)

Crispin: 6.5  
Sushi-X: 6.5

### **Ultra Detective Club**

Dan: 7.0  
Shawn: 7.0  
Crispin: 6.5  
Sushi-X: 6.0 (quote: "Abandoning the point-and-click gameplay of the SNES-CD installments isn't really an evolution, it just bogs down the gameplay.")

### **Brave Fencer Kyuriadan**

Dan: 8.5  
Shawn: 8.0  
Crispin: 8.0 (quote: "A really fun action-RPG full of light-hearted action and that great Squaresoft polish.")  
Sushi-X: 8.5

### **Chifighters II**

Dan: 7.5  
Shawn: 9.0  
Crispin: 8.0  
Sushi-X: 8.0 (quote: "A really excellent fighting game that realizes the great potential of the first.")

### **The Nest**

Dan: 6.5  
Shawn: 5.5 (quote: "The creep factor is pretty low in this fairly ho-hum horror game that's clearly a ripoff of superior games in the genre.")  
Crispin: 6.0  
Sushi-X: 3.0

### **Sunshine Schoolgirl**

Dan: 6.0  
Shawn: 1.5 (quote: "One of the worst visual novel games I have ever played.")  
Crispin: 8.0  
Sushi-X: 4.5

### **Despair: The Seven**

Dan: 6.0  
Shawn: 6.0

Crispin: 7.0

Sushi-X: 7.0 (quote: "I like what they were trying to do with this really dark take on traditional RPGs, it's very reminiscent of the Persona series and the gameplay is a bit more accessible for mainstream fans.")

## Strike Team

Dan: 7.5 (quote: "Been looking forward to this beat-em-up for a while. It's no Final Fight and the graphics are a bit clunky but for what it's worth it's an all right game.")

Shawn: 5.0

Crispin: 5.0

Sushi-X: 5.5

-reviews of November 1998's Ultra Nintendo games in the December 1998 and January 1999 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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*"And though Democrats weren't able to gain control of the House in the midterm elections, they came very close. With the six seats gained, Democrats now sit at 215 total seats, to Republicans' 218, with two independents keeping their seats. Voters appear to be torn about the cloud of allegations surrounding President Bill Clinton, who recently admitted to an affair with his intern Monica Lewinsky. Democrats were also able to take two seats in the Senate, though they still hold a minority, 47 seats to Republicans' 53. Despite the disappointing election results, Republicans still plan to move forward with impeachment proceedings against the President, though they may not have enough votes to impeach if only a few Republicans decide against it."*

-Dan Rather, from the CBS Evening News, November 4, 1998

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*Chifighters* was one of the lesser known of the Ultra Nintendo's exclusive fighting game series, and that comes as a surprise to many of the series' fans. How could such a flashy game, full of spectacular combos and powerful energy attacks, go largely unnoticed? Obviously, the crowded market of the time was a big reason. With series like *Street Fighter*, *Twinblade*, and *Killer Instinct* making their mark on the Ultra, not to mention the Saturn's stable of great games like *Tekken 3* and *Soul Calibur*, there was a massive glut of quality 2-D fighters on both fifth-gen systems. Still, *Chifighters*, and especially the series' second game, *Chifighters II*, deserves some recognition. Quietly released on November 9, 1998, just twelve days before the release of *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple of Time*, *Chifighters II* basically improved on every aspect of the original, which was already a kickass game. New characters were added, the series' signature energy attacks got a lot flashier (due to the Ultra Nintendo's great graphics), and the much-maligned simplistic melee system of the first game got a lot better. Now, you had to use melee attacks if you were going to excel at the game. Using them to feint or stagger opponents before unleashing a huge combo of energy blasts was a big part of the game's strategy, and as a result, *Chifighters II* became one of the Ultra Nintendo's deepest fighting games. Every character, from returning favorites like the Dragonball Z homage character Pakku, the buxom babe Sandy, and

the superheroic Captain Flash, to brand new characters like the super-serious Zenigama and the new villain Hyperion had their own signature moves, and the game got voice acting as well. While *Chifighters II* lacked the fleshed-out story mode of games like *Killer Instinct Ultra*, fans largely didn't need it. They were having too much fun beating and blasting the crap out of each other. Despite stiff competition, both from *Temple of Time* and from games like *Ultra Bomberman 2*, *Chifighters II* sold fairly well, and made a third installment in the series a no-brainer (though *Chifighters III* was a bit of a disappointment....we'll get to that later on). Some folks might've loved *Killer Instinct Ultra* and some folks might've loved *Street Fighter III*, but *Chifighters II* had a vocal fanbase of its own, and the game remains a favorite in the series for many players.

-from Zeke Brantley's editorial answer for "Question of the Week: What's Your Favorite Underappreciated Ultra Nintendo Game?" on a weekly column at SaveGameStation.com, posted on October 17, 2012

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The Ultra Nintendo's *Brave Fencer Kyuriadan* adds RPG elements to what was already an excellent action game, making it perhaps the best action-RPG to date on the Ultra Nintendo (a distinction that will probably end once *Temple of Time* comes out next week, but for now, it's got a good argument for being #1). The sequel to the SNES-CD's sidescrolling action game *Kyuriadan*, *Brave Fencer Kyuriadan* streamlines things somewhat, rather than sending its hero in search of 12 sages, you instead must search for six magical scrolls to increase the power of Kyuriadan's sword Lumina. The game's events make several references to the ancient Japanese legend of Musashi, and indeed, Squaresoft has confirmed that this was originally to be a separate title before changes were made to incorporate it instead as a sequel to *Kyuriadan*. As you journey on your adventure, you must meet up with eight sages (six from the original *Kyuriadan* and two new ones), and must also rescue Princess Fillet, who finds herself in trouble numerous times over the course of the adventure. Though the game can be a bit of a mish-mash at times (no doubt due to Squaresoft originally designing the game as an original concept before working it into a sequel of an existing property), the action gameplay is really fun, the voices and characters are quite cute and colorful, and the game itself does work really well as a nice little action-RPG. While it's no *Zelda* (and doesn't try to be, to its credit), *Brave Fencer Kyuriadan* will please both fans of the original game and Squaresoft fans looking for another exciting adventure.

Graphics: 4.0

Sound: 4.0

Play Control: 4.0

Fun Factor: 4.0

(...)

*Parasite Eve* is nearing release, and the game's stunning cutscenes are perhaps what will strike you first about this game that's unlike anything Squaresoft has ever done before. It captures New York City in great detail, while the horrific events that occur throughout its eight-day storyline will terrify and shock players from the opening cutscene. This is Squaresoft's biggest RPG of the

year, and they've clearly poured a lot of time and money into making everything look absolutely perfect. The cutscenes look better than anything else we've seen on the Ultra Nintendo, and with all the hype over the Saturn's Ring peripheral, it's hard to imagine anything on the Saturn looking better than what we've seen thus far from *Parasite Eve*.

The battle system itself is a strange mix of *Resident Evil* and, believe it or not, *Super Mario RPG*, with carefully timed button presses increasing the damage that your limited supply of bullets can do. You'll need to learn the timing pretty well if you hope to defeat every enemy the game throws your way. Otherwise, prepare to run for your life as your ammunition runs perilously thin. You also have a limited supply of "magic" as the game advances and more of Aya's powers unlock, but again, you'll need to conserve this carefully, as the energy required to use these special powers is difficult to replenish mid-mission. Resource management, as in any great survival horror game, becomes absolutely paramount.

The voice acting, particularly by relative newcomer Jennifer Hale as Aya Brea, is fantastic and takes the cinematic presentation of *Parasite Eve* to another level. It's impossible to understate how important voice acting is to this game. In Japan, Megumi Hayashibara, a "voice acting superstar" in that country, has been tapped to play Aya Brea, showing just how invested Squaresoft is in making every aspect of this game work. This game has the potential to re-define how video games are viewed, and has the potential to be one of the most significant games ever released.

-excerpted from the December 1998 issue of *GamePro* magazine

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### **Are We Entering A Golden Age Of Video Game 'Toons?**

With *Pokemon* now the highest rated show on Cartoon Network, with even higher ratings than Seth MacFarlane's surprise comedy hit *Larry and Steve*, it's fair to ask if video game based cartoons are becoming the biggest thing on kids' TV. *Pokemon's* success parallels that of Disney Channel's *The Legend Of Zelda*, which has seen a ratings boost in the days leading to the release of the highly anticipated Ultra Nintendo *Zelda* game. The show, which has aired nine episodes thus far, has thus far chronicled the quest of Link, his uncle Rusl, and their new friend, the Princess Zelda, on a quest to find the Triforce of Courage. Helmed by Greg Weisman, the show is somewhat more serious than the *Legend of Zelda* cartoon from the early 90s, and guest stars such as Robin Williams have already made appearances, lending star power to this thus far well received show. While these are currently the only two game-based cartoons currently airing on television in the United States, a *Commander Keen* cartoon has recently been greenlighted by Warner Brothers and will begin airing on the Kids' WB block next fall. A new *Sonic the Hedgehog* anime is also rumored to be in the works, and considering the continued success of the series and next year's *Sonic the Hedgehog 5* release, it seems like a sure bet that the anime would be brought over to North America were it to become a reality. Video games are definitely a hot commodity, and even if you don't pick up a controller, you're likely to see them on your TV in one form or another.

-from the November 17, 1998 issue of *Variety* magazine

### **1999: A Big Year For Toon Premieres?**

1999 is likely to see several new hit cartoon debuts, judging from recent news about greenlighted shows. In addition to a new Nicktoon, *Spongebob Squarepants*, to join current hits like *Rugrats*, *Phineas and Ferb*, *Sam and Kira*, and the *Wild Thornberrys*, Cartoon Network's Cartoon Cartoon lineup is also likely to get a new star. Seth MacFarlane's show *Larry and Steve* is proving to be a ratings success, and now his sister Rachael is rumored to be getting a show of her own. The pilot, *Star Girl: Middle School Superheroine* has recently been shown on the network's "What A Cartoon!" show, and looks to be greenlighted for a late-1999/early-2000 debut on the network. Speaking of superheroines and superheros, a new *X-Men* cartoon may be showing up on Fox Kids. It likely won't be picking up where *X-Men: The Animated Series* left off, but may instead pick up on storylines from the hit film from earlier this year. An adventure cartoon based on Hasbro's *Tamagotchi* will also start airing on the block in the fall of next year. Fox will also be getting a pair of grown-up cartoons in the fall. First, from Matt Groening, creator of *The Simpsons*, is *Futurama*, which follows the adventures of a hapless delivery boy who accidentally gets sent 1000 years into a strange future New York City. Then, joining *Futurama* will be Craig Bartlett's *The Patakis*, about a dysfunctional family living in a big city, including a beeper-selling dad, an alcoholic mom, a star college student, and a troubled young girl with anger issues. The two shows will double Fox's primetime animated offerings, joining hits *The Simpsons* and *King of the Hill* on the network's schedule next fall.

-from a report on animation-news.com, November 19, 1998

### **The Animated Movies Of Winter '98**

The holiday season of 1998 was a crowded one for films, including blockbusters like *Saving Private Ryan* and *Deep Impact*. But it's also well known as a big season for animated blockbusters, including the four that debuted over the last three months of the year. Two of them, the CGI film *Big Top* and the traditionally animated retelling of the book of Exodus, *The Prince of Egypt*, were made by Dreamworks, and both performed fairly well at the box office, though neither one was a major hit. *Big Top* was the first CGI animated film to rise from Dreamworks' (ultimately ill-fated) collaboration with Sony, and it was about a circus haunted by the spirit of an evil clown who was causing terrible accidents. Dizzy was a young boy who ran away from his family to join the circus, ultimately finding it not what it's cut out to be. He befriends a girl named Jessica, youngest of a family of trapeze performers, and together, the two investigate the haunted circus, eventually confronting the evil clown spirit (who is voiced masterfully by Tim Curry, DEFINITELY channeling his *It* role for this film). Dizzy and Jessica defeat the clown, while Dizzy decides that he wants to return home to his own family (after seeing how much fun Jessica has with her own family). Dreamworks' *The Prince of Egypt* was a musical re-telling of the Biblical story of Moses, featuring spectacular animation and some excellent voice acting from stars like Val Kilmer, Ralph Fiennes, and Michelle Pfeiffer. It actually performed a tiny bit worse than *Big Top* at the domestic box office (an early "canary in the coal mine" of the eventual shift from mostly traditionally animated films to CGI films that would take place over the decade of the 2000s), though it did quite well internationally and was probably the best critically

received animated film of the latter part of the year. From Pixar came *A Bug's Life*, starring Dave Foley as the voice of a screw-up ant named Flik who devises a plan to rid his colony of the evil grasshoppers who bully everyone into giving up their food. Like *Big Top*, *A Bug's Life* featured a circus, though it was largely used as a device to set up the introduction of the circus-performing “warrior bugs” that Flik enlists to help him save his colony. The most lucrative of that winter's films, *A Bug's Life* was a success for Pixar, though not as big of a success as *Toy Story* had been. And finally, *A Rugrats Movie* adapted the popular Nickelodeon cartoon to the big screen, which saw Tommy and his friends teaming up to save Tommy's new baby brother Dil. The film itself was only slightly better than mediocre, though the series' young fans loved it, and its theme song “Take Me There” topped the Billboard charts for a week in December.

Ultimately, 1998's crop of animated films was one of the strongest of the decade, and a harbinger of trends that would ultimately guide the animated films of the next decade as well. Dreamworks and Sony would collaborate on another CGI animated hit in 1999, though after that, Dreamworks would stumble for a number of years. Another company, Warner Brothers, became the next to venture forth into the brave new world of CGI with a string of hits in the early part of the 2000s, building on the successes of the traditionally animated *Quest For Camelot* and *The Iron Giant* in the closing years of the 90s.

-from an article on the “Know Your Animation History” blog, posted on October 11, 2010

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*Ultra Detective Club* was, for many who loved the two Super Nintendo CD titles, a big fat disappointment that took much of what made the original games good and threw it away. For the first time, the series opened up to a big 3-D world, and instead of a point-and-click/visual novel style interface, you actually had to walk around and search for clues and talk to people. The problem with that was that the game was extremely counterintuitive, and so you spent much of your time wandering aimlessly, looking for clues that had very little in the way of hints toward finding them. Much of the game's searching seemed random or arbitrary, and characters spoke very ambiguously, making much of the game an ordeal of guesswork instead of actual reasoning and deduction. The game had five cases, one more than the critically-acclaimed *Super Detective Club 2*, but other than Ayumi Tachibana, no characters returned from the previous game, and indeed, it seemed to take place in its own continuity, separate from the SNES-CD titles. The five cases were also completely unrelated to one another, unlike the game-spanning mystery of *Super Detective Club 2*. For many fans, *Ultra Detective Club* was a mess, and the game got mediocre reviews.

Of course, the game was still a big seller, due to the game's huge Japanese fanbase and the goodwill from the previous title. In fact, many Japanese publications, including the vaunted *Famitsu*, awarded *Ultra Detective Club* better ratings than American publications did. So, perhaps it's a matter of opinion whether or not *Ultra Detective Club* is a step forward or just a big flop.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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Ted Crosley: *Brave Fencer Kyuriadan* was a little silly for me.

Alex Stansfield: Mmmm...I'll tell you, I liked the silly aspects of it, but here's what I didn't like. The original *Kyuriadan* had that great soundtrack, half of which was composed by Nobuo Uematsu. And here, there's a totally different guy. The music's all right but compared to the original *Kyuriadan*, not so much.

Ted: I just thought, you know, this guy *Kyuriadan*, he's kind of annoying. He's got a really annoying voice, he goes around saying stupid things....it distracted me from the actual game. Which is an all-right action-RPG, but it's no *Mana* or *Zelda*. It's just, you know, all right. And for Squaresoft, that's not all right.

Alex: Honestly, apart from the music this is a solid game. Good action combat, good puzzles, great bosses...

\*A brief clip of *Kyuriadan* fighting the Steam Knight is shown\*

Ted: Yeah, okay, I liked that guy. It's just... even the first game wasn't that great to me.

Alex: Oh, I loved the first game.

Ted: And here comes this second one...the graphics are okay. The music's okay. The main character is annoying. So....where's that leave me? I'm giving this one a 2.5.

Alex: That's pretty harsh for what's ultimately a good game, I'm giving this one a 4.

Ted: If this wasn't a Squaresoft game I think you'd be a little more harsh.

Alex: You just got done saying you set higher standards for Squaresoft games!

Ted: And you set really low ones.

Alex: This game is really fun, the only huge problem I had was the music!

Ted: Squaresoft games are supposed to have great music! Remember *Chrono Trigger*? Or all the *Final Fantasy* games?

Alex: So I should dock more than a point?

Ted: Yeah, maybe!

Alex: \*groans and rolls his eyes\*

(...)

Adrian Fry: This game was weird!!!

Brittany Saldita: Yeah, if you haven't played a visual novel game before, *Sunshine Schoolgirl* is gonna leave you scratching your head. For me, this was just an average game. It hits all the cliches, the super powerful school council, the multiple love interests, it's just the typical Japanese visual novel and it probably should've stayed in Japan.

Adrian: I fail to see what's average about a student council president who can transform into a cat and bite faces off of people!

Brittany: Yeah...this game takes some weird turns. I....um....

Adrian: In Japan, are student councils really that powerful?

Brittany: Well, they don't exactly have life or death control over people if that's what you mean-

Adrian: Because I would have RAN if they were that powerful here!

Brittany: \*laughs\* I was on the debate team, we didn't have any power at all.

Adrian: Power to bore somebody to death maybe?

Brittany: \*laughing\*

Adrian: Also, was this game meant for girls or guys? Because it's a super girly game but look at some of these outfits!

\*A brief montage of the girls' very revealing outfits is shown off on the screen\*

Adrian: And those are the ones we can show on MTV! I mean, when you can't show something on MTV, it's REALLY risque!

Brittany: Yes, *Sunshine Schoolgirl*, the game where you have to get a really hot boy to like you while running around in a miniskirt straight out of Playboy. I'm giving it a 2.

Adrian: And I'm giving it a 1 for freaking me right the hell out!

Brittany: Welcome to the world of Japanese visual novels. Most of them are better than this.

-excerpted from the November 10, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

\*Brittany and Lyssa are reviewing the Rugrats games, Lyssa is dressed up like Angelica\*

Brittany: So if you're looking for good *Rugrats* games...keep looking. *Rugrats: Search For Reptar* will not be the end of your search.

Lyssa Fielding: \*pouting like Angelica\* Why can't video game companies make good *Rugrats* games? I want 'em, I want 'em, I want 'em! \*stomping her feet angrily and throwing an Angelica-like tantrum\*

Brittany: And here's the sad thing. *Rugrats* is a surprisingly smart cartoon. It might be about babies, but some of the humor is pretty grown-up. You'd think they'd at least make a game that respects kids' intelligence. Kids are smart, they're not stupid, they know how to play good video games. I personally know a ton of kids who are going to be playing the new *Zelda* game. So why do these companies have to play down to the lowest common denominator?

Lyssa: Well, it costs less money to make a bad game than a good game, and people will buy a *Rugrats* game for what's on the box and not what's actually in the game?

Brittany: Well said.

Lyssa: \*being like Angelica again\* Gimme a cookie!

Brittany: No.

Lyssa: \*shrugs\* Fair enough. So out of the four games, *Rugrats: The Movie* on the Game Boy, *Rugrats: A Baby's Gotta Do What A Baby's Gotta Do* on the SNES-CD, and *Rugrats: Search For Reptar* on the Ultra and the Saturn, which one's the best?

Brittany: \*groaning\*

Lyssa: I know, right?

Brittany: You go first?

Lyssa: I thought the Game Boy game was at least an okay platformer. I mean, it wasn't awful.

Brittany: \*sighing\* I guess *Search For Reptar* on the Ultra Nintendo was the best, but then again, it barely looks better than the one on the Saturn. Honestly, if you need a *Rugrats* fix this month, just go see the movie.

Lyssa: Yeah, I can't wait! You...dumb babies!

Brittany: You know, my favorite is Chuckie.

Lyssa: But he's a scaredy-cat!

(...)

Lyssa: \*now back in normal clothes\* *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time* is just about as close to perfect as games get.

Alex: Right. A few of the puzzles toward the end are a bit frustrating with some of the backtracking you have to do, but I have very few complaints otherwise.

Lyssa: The game introduces fantastic characters, puts a fresh new spin on old ones, and is probably the best 2-D to 3-D transition I've ever seen. Even better than *Super Mario Dimensions*!

Alex: It looks beautiful and some of the songs will bring you to tears. It doesn't just live up to the hype, it smashes through the hype ceiling in a big glass elevator.

Lyssa: It's a world of pure imagination. 5 out of 5.

Alex: Absolutely, no question, 5 out of 5.

\*Instead of a siren, the Zelda treasure chest fanfare plays\*

Lyssa: Oh, what's that, what's that?

\*A big treasure chest is sitting on the stage. Alex goes to it and slowly opens it up...and triumphantly holds up a framed copy of the game.\*

Alex: Duh duh duh dunnnnnn!!!!

\*Alex and Lyssa, along with the other hosts, go to put *Temple of Time* up on the wall.\*

Alex: \*puts it up next to the other games\* And there we go, *Temple of Time* is in the GameTV Hall of Fame!

Ted: And you know, it's fitting, because the very first Hall of Fame game was...

Brittany: *Ocarina of Dreams*, all the way back in 1995! Good times, good times...

(...)

Ted: And that's it for our show for today, we're taking a bit of a break for the Thanksgiving holiday but we'll see you on December 8 to review some of the holiday season's biggest titles.

Brittany: Yep, but before we leave we have a big announcement...

Alex: For the first time ever, MTV will be hosting the MTV Video Game Awards!

Ted: They'll be this February, right here in Los Angeles, hosted by film director and friend of the show Kevin Smith!

Lyssa: And MTV viewers will have a chance to vote for the winners! Voting won't begin until January, so you'll have a chance to play all of this year's games before casting your vote.

Gary Westhouse: And we'll also have exclusive previews of some of next year's hottest games.

Ted: Don't miss it, the MTV Video Game Awards, Tuesday, February 16, right here on MTV.

-excerpted from the November 17, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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### **SNES-CD Power Charts: November 1998**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Chrono Trigger
3. Tale Phantasia
4. Super Mario World 2
5. Donkey Kong Country 4
6. Donkey Kong Country
7. Sphere Soldier
8. Secret Of Mana
9. Doom
10. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2

### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: November 1998**

1. Ballistic Limit 2
2. Final Fantasy VII
3. Super Mario Dimensions
4. The Dreamers
5. Resident Evil 2
6. NFL Blitz
7. Gran Turismo
8. Fairytale
9. Goldeneye 007
10. Madden 99

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### **November 27, 1998**

Brittany Saldita and Lyssa Fielding walked through the crowded Westfield San Francisco Centre on the year's busiest shopping day, Black Friday. The two hosts of *GameTV* had become best friends in the year and a half since they'd begun working together, close enough that Lyssa had come all the way up to Santa Cruz to spend the weekend with Brittany's family. She'd spent Thanksgiving Day with her brother, the two Fielding siblings still estranged from their mother

for the past several years now. Brittany and Lyssa were now doing their holiday shopping together, and as multiple bags were draped over their shoulders, Lyssa saw the Electronics Boutique and made a beeline for it.

“Hold it, hold it, we gotta go in here,” said Lyssa with a smile.

The Electronics Boutique was crowded, though not as much as it had been when the mall had opened that morning. That morning, shoppers had rushed in to pillage the store's stock of Ultra Nintendos, and by the time the two women arrived at 5:45 in the evening, they were long gone. There were a couple of Saturn Rings and plenty of Saturns remaining, and the two could see a mother purchasing one, along with copies of *Tekken 3* and *Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted*, as they began to peruse the store's game selection.

“Any *Zeldas* left?” Brittany wondered aloud, scanning the wall. The young man behind the counter must have heard her, because he answered immediately.

“Yeah, we got plenty, no Ultra Nintendos though,” he said.

“Oh, no, I wasn't looking for one myself,” Brittany replied, turning around. “Just curious to see if you guys were sold out, I know it's selling pretty fast-”

“Hey, you're....!” he recognized Brittany immediately. Lyssa smirked and kept her head toward the game wall, though the clerk could recognize her from her long, blonde pigtails as she scanned the games. “Wait a minute... Lyssa too?”

Brittany stifled a laugh. She didn't mind being recognized in public, it was happening increasingly often...and she was prepared for it, she'd wanted to be the next Sally Jessy Raphael after all. As long as folks didn't get too...touchy with her, she was fine with the attention.

“Yeah, we're just in here looking,” said Brittany. Lyssa kept looking at the wall, though she looked over her shoulder to ask her friend a question.

“Hey, um...you didn't review *Mysteria 2*, right?”

“No, that was Gary and Alex...”

“Have you played it at all?”

“A little, at work, I don't have it but I was meaning to maybe pick it up later on?”

“You guys are awesome, I love the show... uh, sorry if I'm...you guys are great,” said the clerk, nervously fumbling over his words in the presence of the two hosts. Lyssa picked up a wrapped copy of *Mysteria 2: The Four Princesses* and approached the counter.

“Thanks,” Lyssa said with a friendly smile. Lyssa also welcomed the attention, even more than Brittany did, and starstruck men were a familiar sight for her. “I can autograph something if

you'd like?"

The clerk blushed and didn't have time to react before Lyssa produced a picture of the six current *GameTV* hosts and a felt-tip pen. Brittany approached the counter from behind Lyssa, empty-handed.

"Here Brittany, could you...?" Lyssa asked, handing Brittany the pen so she could sign the picture before Lyssa autographed it as well and slid it to the clerk. She then placed the game up on the counter. "So how often do you watch the show?"

"Oh, every week," said the clerk, taking the autographed picture before ringing up the game. "Um, \$48.93 please."

Lyssa reached into her wallet and slid her credit card over to the clerk, who slid it through the machine and then handed her the game.

"I loved when you guys were playing *Commander Keen* and pretending that you were going after Hitler, that was pretty funny."

Lyssa giggled and pointed to Brittany.

"Oh, that's all her, she's the funny one."

"Oh, that game was Alex's idea, I just started doing the funny accents...and Lyssa is hilarious, don't let her tell you different, she's the funniest person on the show!"

"I think you're all great," said the clerk. "Um, would you like that in a bag, or-"

Lyssa nodded, and the clerk put the game in a bag before handing it to her.

"Thanks again," said Lyssa, and Brittany nodded, both of them appreciating the clerk's words of praise.

"No, thank you!"

The two left the store, and Lyssa immediately handed Brittany the bag with the game in it.

"Merry Christmas," said Lyssa. "This game's really fun, you'll love it, you love RPGs."

Brittany blinked and took the game out of the bag.

"Oh, you didn't have to...."

"Sure I did!"

"Aww, now I gotta get you something..."

“No you don't,” said Lyssa, playfully elbowing Brittany. “We'd better get back to your place so your family can order the pizzas, I bet they're starving, I know I am!”

Brittany just sighed and smiled and put her new game in her Nordstrom bag as she and Lyssa headed toward the entrance of the mall. When she was a young girl, she never imagined that her passion for video games would make her face recognizable in a San Francisco mall on a busy Black Friday. She never imagined that she'd end up being best friends with the beautiful bubbly blonde MTV had initially intended to replace her with on *GameTV*. And she never imagined that video games would've come as far as they had over the past decade.

“*Guess they're not the only thing that's come a long way...*” thought Brittany, trying to imagine where life would take her and her beloved video games next.

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### **Video Game Retailers Report Strong Black Friday Sales**

Another Thanksgiving has gone by, and with it, another huge wave of sales for the day after Thanksgiving, also known as “Black Friday”. Some of this year's biggest sellers were video games, and there were good times to be had all around as Nintendo and Sega both report increased sales over the previous year.

For Nintendo, the company can credit its sales boost to the increased number of Ultra Nintendo units available for sale. Though no incidents like the ones that marred last year's Black Friday were reported, sellouts were still extremely widespread as demand for the Ultra Nintendo rages on the back of strong games such as *Ballistic Limit 2*, *Killer Instinct Ultra*, and *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time*. Nintendo also reported strong sales for its Game Boy and Game Boy Color systems, with *Pokemon* continuing to lead the way.

The Sega Saturn also saw increased sales from last year, which can be attributed to their new Ring accessory for the system. The Ring enhances the Saturn's graphics to bring them closer in quality to Sega's popular arcade titles, and *Virtua Fighter 3* was reported to be one of the hottest selling games of the holiday, though many retailers do hide their exact software sales figures, including the retail giant Walmart. Though Sega still lags behind Nintendo in market share, strong Saturn sales are a promising sign for the company, which is looking to make a big splash in December as a second wave of Ring-exclusive titles, including the much anticipated adventure game *Shenmue*, are released.

-from an article on Gamespot.com, posted on December 4, 1998

*“When I saw the cutscenes in Parasite Eve, I just gasped. The animation was so smooth, and everything looked amazingly detailed. That game showed off the real power of the Ultra Nintendo's graphics processor. With that game, the Ring already looked outdated.”*

-Victor Lucas, host of *The Electric Playground*, in a 2004 episode of G4's "Icons" based on Hiranobu Sakaguchi

*"Two ultra-violent games that blur the lines between fantasy and reality. The Ultra Nintendo's thriller Parasite Eve and the Saturn's shooter Arbiter of Sin, both featuring hyper-detailed graphics that make them two of the most realistic games ever made."*

-Anderson Cooper, on the ABC Evening News, December 15, 1998

*"Well, that's how you make a movie-like game. Don't make it like a movie. Just make it a game that evokes the same emotions."*

-James Cameron, discussing *Parasite Eve* on the set of *Terminator 3: Dark Angel* in a January 22, 1999 interview

*"The president is getting away with being a fornicator and now there is a video game where you're actively killing the angels of God. Ladies and gentlemen, this country is inviting God's vengeance upon us."*

-Pat Robertson, in a segment on the *700 Club* on December 21, 1998

*"Shenmue was perhaps too ambitious for the Sega Saturn, but the reception was so positive that I don't regret creating it when I did. Certainly, the next Shenmue game will be on a platform that can properly handle everything I want to do with it."*

-Yu Suzuki, in a December 1999 interview with *Famitsu* magazine

*"Take Castlevania, Tomb Raider, and the song Werewolves of London, put them all in a blender, and you get Shadows of the Moon. Sounds awesome? You bet it is."*

-Peter Bartholow, in Gamespot.com's 9.5/10 review of *Shadows of the Moon*

*"Aya...! I've always wanted to see you again...I don't have much time but you can stop this... you can save everyone, I know you can...you've always been my brave sister."*

-Maya, *Parasite Eve*

*"I'm not gonna stop looking. That's what a coward would do. I'll find my father's murderers and they'll pay for what they've done. That's the truth I've always been guided by."*

-Ryo Hazuki, *Shenmue*

*"So...tell me what I already know."*

-Tom Kalinske, overheard during a conference call on December 28, 1998

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*"The worst foe lies within the self..."*

-the tagline for *Parasite Eve* in both TTL and OTL

## **Parasite Eve: The Basics**

Squaresoft's biggest project of 1998, *Parasite Eve* is a sci-fi roleplaying game based on a hit

Japanese novel about a mysterious and terrifying phenomenon occurring in New York City. As IOTL, the game was intended by Squaresoft to be the first truly “cinematic RPG”, and the company pours massive amounts of money and resources into the game, even moreso than IOTL, as the game is not positioned near another major release (*Xenogears*) as IOTL. As a result, the game is considered to have the best looking cutscenes in gaming history up to that point, with the first truly OTL-Dreamcast quality CGI cutscenes that look better than anything else seen in a video game. The game's in-game graphics, though not quite as impressive, are still among the best of any game released in 1998, compared favorably to the year's other major hits and seen as a significant upgrade from *Final Fantasy VII*. The game's soundtrack, as IOTL, is composed by Yoko Shimamura, though the game also gets a significant sound upgrade from OTL in the form of voice acting in both gameplay and cutscenes. Jennifer Hale performs the voices of Aya Brea and her older sister Maya, while Susan Egan performs as the game's villain Eve and the opera singer Melissa Pearce. Other voice actors include Dave Fennoy as Aya's police partner Daniel, Michael Bell as Dr. Klamp, and Masi Oka, in his first OTL acting role, as Dr. Maeda (IOTL, he gets a job with Squaresoft's North American division instead of with Industrial Light and Magic, initially working as a localization specialist, he is noticed by one of Square's producers and offered a chance to audition for the role). The gameplay is changed somewhat from IOTL. While the combat is still largely turn-based, with an ATB meter and the battle stopping while you aim your shots, there is now a “timed hits” element to the combat, where you can increase the damage caused by bullets or spells by carefully timed button presses. You can also lessen damage from attacks by timing your guarding accordingly. Gun modding is largely similar to OTL, with Aya able to improve her weapons and armor by enhancing them via certain materials or by spending points earned by leveling up. The game is still largely linear, as IOTL, but a few more areas open up for exploration as you progress through the game, giving Aya the option of revisiting old areas or visiting sidequest-only areas to collect items and materials or even fight optional bosses.

The game's storyline also follows OTL's fairly closely, though the main story has been expanded, with the game taking place over a period of eight days instead of six. The Trueform Eve/Chrysler Building sidequest, which was an optional bonus dungeon in the original, has now become the game's final dungeon, with difficulty adjusted accordingly (it's still a very long and difficult dungeon, but not to the degree that it was IOTL). The game is slightly more cutscene/cinema heavy in order to show off the enhanced graphics. Due to this, *Parasite Eve* becomes the Ultra Nintendo's second three-disc game, following *The X-Files* from earlier in the year. Disc one ends after Day 4, while disc two ends after Day 6.

#### *Day 1: Resonance*

Aya and an unnamed date are attending an opera performance at Carnegie Hall on Christmas Eve. When the performer, Melissa, begins to sing, everyone except for Aya and Melissa bursts into flames as their mitochondria go into overdrive. Aya confronts and eventually pursues the singer into the sewers beneath Carnegie Hall, witnessing her transformation into Eve and eventually battling a giant sewer crocodile before emerging from the sewers with very little information about what has just happened.

#### *Day 2: Fusion*

In the aftermath of the Carnegie Hall incident, Aya and Daniel go to the police station to gear up

before investigating Dr. Klamp at the Natural History Museum. Aya then goes to Central Park to try and stop Melissa, but she is too late, Melissa as Eve already having killed everyone in the park. After battling Eve, Aya passes out.

#### *Day 3: Selection*

Manhattan is being evacuated after the Eve attacks. Aya and Daniel end up meeting a strange scientist named Dr. Maeda who says that he knows the secret behind what's been happening. After a skirmish at a pharmacy, Aya and Daniel return to the NYPD precinct only to be forced to confront a monstrosity that's been attacking the police officers there.

#### *Day 4: Conception*

Aya goes to St. Francis Hospital, where Eve has come to retrieve a sperm sample to help her conceive the ultimate mitochondrial being. She battles more of Eve's monsters at the hospital before going down to the basement and battling a spider-like beast. After defeating this beast, Aya pursues Eve into the sewers, where Eve announces that she has successfully conceived the Ultimate Being, which will soon be born. After a multi-stage battle with Eve, Aya manages to escape the sewers, and Disc 1 ends.

#### *Day 5: Evolution*

Aya and Daniel search for the gestating Ultimate Being in the New York subway tunnels, eventually emerging in Madison Square Garden to fight an enormous scorpion-like monster. They realize that Eve has been getting help from Dr. Klamp, and return to the Natural History Museum to find him. Aya battles numerous powerful monsters along the way, including several dinosaurs and a T-Rex at the end. Aya finds Eve, but it is too late, as Eve is already about to give birth to the Ultimate Being.

#### *Day 6: Absolution*

Aya goes to the Statue of Liberty to confront and defeat Eve. After doing so, she is resting on a naval boat, only for the Ultimate Being to emerge and attack. Aya defeats it after another multi-stage fight, and the danger to the city is seemingly over, but when Aya, Daniel, and a team of military personnel return to the Statue of Liberty, they realize that Eve is not dead.

#### *Day 7: Revelation*

Aya and Daniel scour the city for clues about the origins of Eve, and in doing so, discover the truth about Aya's deceased older sister Maya, while also cleaning up the last of the monsters left in Eve's wake. Aya realizes that Maya's DNA is what is allowing Eve to sustain herself, and must track down Eve before it unleashes a plague of horror upon the world. Aya is attacked at her apartment by a monster, and though Aya defeats it in a boss battle, it nearly kills her before Daniel sacrifices himself to save her life.

#### *Day 8: Liberation*

Aya realizes that Eve is once again attempting to give birth to another Ultimate Being and that she has taken up residence on the top floor of the Chrysler Building. Aya climbs the building (unlike in the original, where every floor has to be completely climbed, this quest is more like the Pharos Lighthouse quest in OTL's *Final Fantasy XII*, certain floors are skipped over at certain points, it's still a long and difficult mission). On the top floor, Aya battles the powerful

Trueform Eve, and after winning, Eve attempts to take over Aya's mitochondria to control her. It's then that Aya's sister Maya emerges, regaining control over Eve and telling Aya to be brave, restraining Eve and giving Aya the opportunity to overcome her and finish her off. With Eve finally defeated, the world is saved from the horror of Eve's mitochondrial machinations.

#### *EX Game: World Trade Center*

There IS a bonus mission ITTL's *Parasite Eve*, though it's not related in any way to the main plot. In an EX Game, you have the option of exploring deeper into the sewers, which gives you access to the complex below the World Trade Center. The entrances to the Twin Towers are blocked off, so the underground access is the only way to get inside. You'll start out climbing up the North Tower, then after a boss fight on the roof, cross over to the South Tower and climb back down to confront the game's ultimate boss, a powerful skeletal being composed entirely of mitochondria, in the South Tower lobby. The World Trade Center climb is significantly tougher than OTL's Chrysler Building mission and requires Aya to be nearly maxed out statistically. Even then, it's extremely difficult to win and is regarded as one of Squaresoft's most hardcore challenges.

*Parasite Eve* gets excellent reviews upon its December 7, 1998 worldwide release. As IOTL, the main criticisms revolve around the game's length, but the fleshed out sidequesting and expanded combat do dismiss some of those concerns a bit. The game is considered a cinematic revelation and is nearly as significant as the SNES-CD's *Snatcher* was in terms of storytelling and presentation in video games. Ultimately, the game's reception is somewhat like a slightly lesser version of OTL's *Donkey Kong Country*: a technical marvel praised as one of the year's top games at the time of release, only for its reputation to fade somewhat as video game technology progresses. Still, sales are excellent in both Japan and North America, and the game easily becomes Squaresoft's biggest hit since *Final Fantasy VII*.

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#### **A Bug's Life**

Dan: 5.0

Shawn: 7.0

Crispin: 4.5 (quote: "The graphics are real pretty, but there's not much to love about the generic gameplay.")

Sushi-X: 4.0

#### **Contra: World War**

Dan: 8.0

Shawn: 8.0 (quote: "A nice port of last year's Saturn hit that gives the graphics a pretty noticeable bump.")

Crispin: 8.0

Sushi-X: 9.0

#### **Daikatana**

Dan: 8.0

Shawn: 7.5

Crispin: 7.5 (quote: "John Romero's new FPS won't change the world like some of his previous games, but it's a lot of fun.")

Sushi-X: 8.0

### **Fallout**

Dan: 8.5

Shawn: 7.0

Crispin: 9.0 (quote: "The post-nuclear RPG plays fantastically on the Ultra Nintendo, though PC players may need some time to get used to the simplified controls.")

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Parasite Eve**

Dan: 9.0 (quote: "It's a tad short, but the cutscenes are absolutely gorgeous and the combat is a treat.")

Shawn: 9.0

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.0

### **Street Fighter III**

Dan: 9.5

Shawn: 8.5

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 8.5 (quote: "Street Fighter is back on Nintendo! We missed you.")

### **Shadows Of The Moon**

Dan: 9.0

Shawn: 9.5 (quote: "This excellent exploration game isn't to be missed, this game does for werewolves what Symphony of the Night did for vampires.")

Crispin: 9.0

Sushi-X: 9.5

### **Strange Seed: The Tree of Life**

Dan: 6.0 (quote: "This makes a decent RPG but I think I preferred it as a quirky point and click.")

Shawn: 6.5

Crispin: 8.5

Sushi-X: 6.0

-reviews of December 1998's Ultra Nintendo games in the January and February 1999 issues of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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## **The Ring's Second Wave: The Basics**

The Sega Saturn's Ring accessory sees the release of three Ring-exclusive games in December 1998. *Spare Parts* and *Arbiter of Sin* are released on December 3, while *Shenmue* is released on December 17. All three games are considered to be among the Saturn's best games of the year, with particular praise going to *Spare Parts* and *Shenmue*.

*Spare Parts* is a 3-D platformer created by Naoto Ohshima and many of the same Sonic Team members who worked on *Nights Into Dreams*. The game's main characters are Zacki and Ella, a pair of robot children who are among the last beings still "alive" on Earth after a horrible cataclysm wiped out humanity. Though the game is somewhat depressing in terms of its subject matter (with one of the most beautiful and poignant soundtracks ever heard in a platformer), it has moments of hope scattered everywhere and some lighthearted comic relief to push the player forward. Zacki and Ella were created as friends for children who lost their siblings or friends to the disasters that had been befalling the world in the time of humanity. The two had bonded very closely to their human friends, and now are determined to recreate some semblance of the world they once knew, by rebuilding a city and finding other living companion robots to populate it. To this end, they explore areas such as the destroyed remnants of human cities, abandoned amusement parks, and some of the old wilderness places such as Yellowstone or the Himalayas. They travel between points of interest using the few remaining transporters still functional, which allow them to warp across continents with great ease (but whose invention helped to spread the pandemic disease that caused the death of many humans). While hunting for friends, Zacki and Ella must battle the Paranoia, strange beings created from the sorrow and despair of the Earth's living creatures as the great waves of death swept across the planet. They must also collect Shards of Hope, objects that can be used to power humanity's remaining technology and reactivate the robots left behind. These shards are used to power the transporters that open up new areas for exploration. Eventually, Zacki and Ella realize that there is one settlement of living humans remaining: The Sanctuary, buried deep under the Alps, where a few thousand human beings have gathered, including two of Zacki and Ella's old human friends. However, the Sanctuary has turned into a totalitarian dictatorship run by a computer that has become malevolent (an homage to the evil computer AM from *I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream*). This computer is responsible for creating the Paranoia that now roam the planet with the mission of hunting down and killing anyone who threatens to discover the Sanctuary. Zacki and Ella, along with their robot friends, eventually penetrate into the Sanctuary and defeat the computer, liberating the last remaining humans and planting the seeds for humanity and robotkind to rebuild a new civilization. *Spare Parts*, though at its heart a collectathon platformer, is highly praised for its deep storyline, fun characters, and excellent gameplay, and is favorably compared by many to *The Dreamers* on the Ultra Nintendo. Not only is it the Saturn's best reviewed platformer of the year, it's one of its best selling games overall, with The Ring making its massive and gorgeous environments and huge game world possible. *Spare Parts* is the game that gets many families purchasing The Ring, and is perhaps the biggest driver of Ring sales during

that year's holiday season.

*Arbiter of Sin* is a first-person shooter created by an American development team and published by Sega. The game utilizes the Ring to create a variety of battlefields, from wide open plains to dark, fiery tunnels, to futuristic laboratories, and everywhere in between. The game's weapon selection pales a bit compared to other popular shooters of the time, but it makes up for that by allowing the use of various powers in battle. These powers are a bit more simplistic than, for example, *Bioshock's* plasmids, they're used largely to enhance durability and attack power in battle to give the main character an edge over his enemies. The game is structured largely like *Doom*, taking place across 18 levels with pre-rendered cutscenes between them (and some in mid-level). The game's multiplayer mode is fairly basic but allows players to play in any of the game's 18 battlefields, giving a wide selection of arenas for deathmatch combat. The game's violence is extreme, with copious amounts of blood and gore, even moreso than what's featured in the *Doom* games, making it thus far the most violent console FPS to date, nearly scoring an Adults Only rating from the ESRB but ending up sliding in at Mature. The game revolves around a character named Mitch Atwater, a soldier in an unnamed modern war who has been fatally wounded on the battlefield. As he crawls in the mud awaiting his death, he cries out in desperation, only to be saved by a mysterious black-suited man who is implied to be an agent of Satan. This black-suited man heals Mitch's wounds in exchange for Mitch pledging away his soul to the devil. He gives Mitch weapons and powers and sends him back to medieval times through a portal, where Mitch uses his modern weapons to easily kill soldiers fighting for the Church in the Crusades. These soldiers are fighting alongside the Knights Templar, who soon hear of a man who is gunning down Christian soldiers with mysterious weaponry. The Knights Templar are far more formidable foes than the average soldier, but they go down nonetheless, until strange Templars with modern-day weaponry appear on the battlefield to fight alongside their downtime brothers. Mitch is eventually overwhelmed by these new Templars, but he is rescued by a mysterious figure and taken to what appears to be an underground facility where he is given modern medical care and worked on by various scientists who also claim to be working for the devil. While this is going on, we meet the Archdeacon, a man who works directly under the pope as the commander of the Knights Templar. In reality, he is the agent of the Archangel Michael, who we learn led a successful rebellion against God after Lucifer, who now rules Hell, failed and was cast down. While God believed in the goodness of humanity, Michael saw an opportunity to gain great power and after defeating Lucifer, was able to gain the trust of the angels and of God himself, giving him an opportunity to overthrow God and take command of heaven on his own. The humans who believe they are serving God are actually serving Michael, and the Archdeacon is his right-hand man, manipulating humanity in order to carry out Michael's will on Earth. To these ends, Michael and Lucifer have begun to wage war on Earth by pulling technology and people from across time, using the medieval battlefields of the Crusades as their battleground and manipulating people on both sides. Lucifer's intentions, however, are not pure by any stretch of the imagination, as he allows humanity freedom at the cost of their eternal souls, only offering servitude as an escape from the torments of hell. Mitch ends up allying with people on both sides as they eventually confront the Archdeacon in a huge underground futuristic complex beneath Avignon. The Archdeacon has been given angelic powers by Michael, but Mitch is still able to defeat him. After defeating the Archdeacon, Mitch is taken to Hell, where he is rewarded by Lucifer for his deeds. Lucifer implies that one day, Mitch will lead a charge into heaven to take down Michael himself. However, as the game ends, we see that Mitch is

contemplating betraying Lucifer in order to free the souls condemned to hell, thus setting up a potential sequel. Needless to say, *Arbiter of Sin* receives extreme controversy for its subject matter and its violence. Many leading conservative figures claim that the game glorifies devil worship, and the game largely serves to stir up the cultural conservatives who were laid low by the Eric Rudolph incidents of 1996. While *Arbiter of Sin* isn't quite subjected to the same scrutiny given to *Mortal Kombat* and *Doom* in 1993, it's easily the most controversial video game since those days, and is the beginning of a new groundswell against offensive content in video games. Despite the controversy, it sells extraordinarily well, nearly as well as *Turok 2: Seeds of Evil*. The game's combat and the complexity of its levels are well received, even if the storyline is a bit convoluted (and despite many in the mainstream gaming media ignoring the controversy, some do criticize the storyline for being "edgy for the sake of edgy"), and compared largely unfavorably to the acclaimed comic series *Preacher*, which is still ongoing at the time. The game is touted as one of the best FPSes of the year.

Last but not least is *Shenmue*, an open-world adventure game created by Yu Suzuki. As IOTL, it revolves around Ryo Hazuki, a young martial artist who witnesses the murder of his father and swears revenge. An open-world game, *Shenmue's* events take place on an ongoing clock and events keep moving forward even when the game is turned off. Hazuki must get a job, attend school, and maintain relationships with friends while also tracking down clues and advancing the game's mystery. The Saturn's technical limitations do reduce the scale of the game somewhat from OTL's: there are slightly fewer characters, the town is a bit smaller, and the graphical detail of the game takes a significant hit. Despite this, the core gameplay remains, and the combat system is even slightly enhanced from OTL, taking more of a cue from the *Virtua Fighter* games in terms of overall complexity and offering Hazuki more chances to fight, there's even a martial arts tournament the player can compete in from time to time to earn money. *Shenmue* receives many comparisons to games like *Race'n'Chase* and the recent *Ultra Detective Club* and is easily considered vastly superior to either one of them, working within its limitations to provide a fulfilling gameplay experience for the player. In this game, there are three different girls that Hazuki can "romance" (though things never get too serious with any of them), including Nozomi (from OTL), Masuno (an original character with a bit of a quirky side), and Kagura (Kagura is somewhat tougher than the other two girls). The game changes somewhat depending on which girl Hazuki is closest to, if you're close to Nozomi or Masuno, for example, one of them will get kidnapped toward the end, while Kagura fights off the kidnappers and is put in the hospital instead, necessitating a slightly different final mission sequence). While Yu Suzuki was disappointed at some of the compromises that had to be made, both to complete the game on time and because of the Saturn's technological limitations, the game is ultimately a major success with critics, who praise it for being a truly engrossing open-world story and providing a deep motivation for its protagonist's actions. The game sells less than *Spare Parts* and *Arbiter of Sin* in North America but sells far more than the two of them combined in Japan, making it one of the Saturn's most successful games of the year and easily ensuring that production will begin on a sequel. At a time when the Saturn comes under fire for the content in *Arbiter of Sin*, *Shenmue* sort of plays the *Secret of Mana* to *Arbiter's Mortal Kombat*, showing that games have deep artistic value when created in the right way.

*“Preachers across the country are urging a boycott of Sega products in the wake of the recent release of Arbiter of Sin. The controversial game is drawing flak from all sides for its violent content and religious themes, which many view as offensive to Christianity.”*

-Tom Brokaw, from the NBC Nightly News on December 7, 1998

*“Oh yeah, the Great Sega Boycott of 1998. That was a pretty big story at the time, with Christians being urged to boycott the Saturn because of Arbiter of Sin. We took a bit of heat for that at first because some of our higher-ups thought it might eat into the profits of Sonic the Hedgehog 5. Hell, there was even that burning in Texas with people throwing their kids' Sonic dolls into a big bonfire. Can you believe that? Taking a toy away from a kid because of some stupid game your kid didn't even want to buy? I'm one to talk, I kept my girls from owning any Nintendo games for a long time, but at least I didn't take away the stuff they already had!”*

-Tom Kalinske, in an interview with Kotaku about the book *The Chase*

*“Can you believe it? A game where the devil encourages players to kill Christian soldiers? In this day and age? I never imagined such a thing could even be legal!”*

-a concerned mother in an interview with a local news station, December 14, 1998

*“It's just a game, man. I mean, I remember when Mortal Kombat came out and people were whining about that. You gotta chill out. It's just a game.”*

-a teenage boy in an interview with a local news station, December 14, 1998

*“This is the trend, folks. Morality in America is under attack and these games are at the forefront. That recent shooting in Arkansas last year, those two kids, I'm sure they got the idea from video games. That guy that shot up Beverly Hills last year, I'm sure he got the idea from a video game.”*

-Jack Thompson, calling in to a Sarasota, Florida radio station on December 16, 1998

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And so while *Battle of Despayre* doesn't quite capture the grand sense of epic wonder that *Shadows of the Empire* did on the Ultra Nintendo, it remains a worthy entry to the Star Wars video game canon nonetheless. It takes a lot of its cues from great FPS games like *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*, while having a flair all its own. Taking down Stormtroopers has never been so much fun thanks to the game's fantastic aiming system, and the imminent destruction of the planet gives missions a real sense of urgency, while the time limits are generous enough so as not to frustrate even novice players. Really, there's not much reason to go off the beaten path in this game, which might frustrate fans of more open-ended FPS games like *Turok*, but which gives this title a brevity and pace that really lends to its action density. There's always something to do (or someone to shoot) in *Battle of Despayre*, and for those of you looking for a kinder, gentler alternative to the brutal and controversial *Arbiter of Sin*, this may just be your game. It also fills in a crucial hole in the Star Wars canon, addressing just how Princess Leia ended up with the crucial Death Star plans in the first place, making it arguably more important to the overall scheme of things in the Star Wars universe than *Shadows*. *Battle of Despayre* is a fun, if linear FPS, and Saturn owning Star Wars fans can't afford to miss it.

8.4/10

-from the Gamespot review of *Star Wars: Battle of Despayre*, posted on December 6, 1998

*“And with filming having just wrapped on Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace, the long and painful wait for fans is just about over. The film debuts in May, while speculation continues about the movie's storyline. We know the basic facts: the film will chronicle the beginning of Emperor Palpatine's rise to power, it will show how Anakin Skywalker first started down the path of eventually becoming Darth Vader, and the mysterious and menacing Darth Maul will be the film's main villain. We also know that Queen Amidala, the future mother of Luke and Leia Skywalker, is more complex than she initially seems, and shots of Natalie Portman, sans the queen's elaborate facepaint, wielding a blaster and fighting alongside Ewan McGregor's young Obi-Wan Kenobi show the queen's more assertive side. Will she mirror her daughter Leia in starting out as a damsel-in-distress but later turning into an action hero, or does she begin as an action hero straight away? And can Haley Joel Osment accurately portray the boy who would become a monster? The answers to these questions and more are less than six months away...”*

-from an article in the December 1998 issue of *Wizard* magazine

*“One of the things I've always been told is that I don't listen enough. That I should listen more. Well, I tried to keep my ears open while making this film. And hey, if it's a disappointment, I know who to blame! And if it's a success, I'll try to give credit where it's due!”*

-George Lucas, in a December 11, 1998 interview with the E! Network

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While the arcade version of *Street Fighter III* tossed out many of the old characters in favor of new ones, the console *Street Fighter III* was an amalgamation of many of the gameplay improvements from *2nd Impact*, while introducing several console-exclusive innovations for what many consider to be the pre-eminent version of the game, even moreso than the later *3rd Strike* (which itself would be ported to the Ultra Nintendo and the Ring-enhanced Saturn in 2000). *Street Fighter III* returned ALL of the old characters including the fan-favorite Chun-Li, while also retaining all of the SFIII exclusive characters as well. This made for a combined total of 26 characters, one of the largest fighting game rosters to date. The game looked beautiful on the Ultra Nintendo. It wasn't quite arcade perfect, due to the Ultra Nintendo's limitations with 2-D, but it was still one of the most beautiful 2-D games on the system, and being able to use all 26 characters for the first time was a huge plus. The Ultra Nintendo also introduced a fun four-player tag team mode, where you could play with two teams of two players each. The tag mode could of course be done with one, two, or three players, but seeing a four-player tag mode in a fighting game was uniquely fun, and a big advantage *Street Fighter III* had over other games such as *Killer Instinct Ultra*.

Those who remember the history of *Street Fighter* know that it's always been a big franchise for Nintendo. *Street Fighter II: The World Warrior* made a huge splash on the SNES, and *Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition* was a major launch game for the SNES-CD, the first game that really showed off the system's arcade-quality graphics. Having *Street Fighter III* as an Ultra Nintendo exclusive was seen as a major coup for Nintendo, forcing Saturn players to wait until they got the

*3rd Strike* version in 2000. The game, however, wasn't as big a seller as the iterations of *Street Fighter II* had been, largely owing to increased competition in the fighting games market and a general glut of quality games for the Ultra Nintendo at the time. While sales for Christmas 1998 were big, they dropped off fairly steeply afterward, with SFIII never showing the real sales legs that *Street Fighter II* had done with its console releases. Still, while *Street Fighter III* wasn't quite what it was during the glory days of *The World Warrior*, the game still made the season a little brighter for the Ultra Nintendo's fighting game fans, giving them one up on the Saturn and its Namco exclusives.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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Electronic Gaming Monthly: The evolution of *Daikatana* has to be one of the most interesting stories in the history of game development. The game totally changed form from what it initially was.

John Romero: Well, yeah. The original idea for the PC had been something a lot more ambiguous, but when I started to design this game to play to the strengths of the Ultra Nintendo, things changed quite a bit. From 24 levels, we scaled back down to 15.

EGM: Which, you know, is still quite a lot.

Romero: Well, yeah. Not as many as *Doom*, but the original *Turok* had 15 levels, and I'm sure they'll compare the two games.

EGM: Was *Turok* the inspiration for the character Walking Waters?

Romero: No, though I was asked that by some of my own staff in the creation process. No, I think I just wanted a character who stood in contrast to Superfly Johnson, who was, you know, a lot more brash and outspoken, whereas Walking Waters is this wise shaman-like figure who teaches Hiro a lot about life and various other things. *Turok* didn't teach anyone about life, he just killed lots of dinosaurs.

EGM: \*laughs\* Point taken.

Romero: Anyway, the sidekicks were supposed to be a lot more vital to your success in the game. We were going to make it so that if your sidekick died, you failed the level. But that proved frustrating and hard to implement, so we just had them serve largely in a helper capacity. If they died, you lost their help for the level and you missed certain cutscenes but you could still advance.

EGM: And of course, to get the best ending, you need to keep them alive.

Romero: Well, yeah. No spoilers, but keep your sidekicks alive if you want to see the game's best ending.

EGM: Speaking of sidekicks, we've heard that early on, Mikiko was supposed to turn on Hiro.

Romero: I wanted to put a big twist in the game, like the one at the end of *Doom*, where Doomguy gets to Earth and everything's all fire and brimstone? Well, we put that Mikiko twist in there, but a lot of people on the staff really liked Mikiko. That she kind of had chemistry with Hiro and they wanted her to stay with him until the end. Now, I'm not gonna spoil what does happen to Mikiko at the end, but she does stay by Hiro's side with him. There's a new main villain and we liked that one a lot better.

EGM: Is it Superfly?

Romero: \*laughs\* It's not Superfly or Walking Waters, this is a villain who stays a villain through the whole game.

EGM: What did you enjoy working on the most in the process of making *Daikatana*?

Romero: The sword. Designing the sword, having this big f\*\*kin' sword you carry around with you and swing at enemies, giving it special functions, I mean we just went crazy with the sword and all it can do. It's in the name of the game, it better be an awesome sword!

EGM: Let's discuss Ion Storm. Sorry you left?

Romero: Nah, I mean, I'm real happy for Tom Hall and everything they've done with *Commander Keen*. That game's his baby and he's done a hell of a job making that baby big and strong. I loved *Mars' Most Wanted*, I can't wait to play the next one. I probably would've just ruined it if I'd have been involved in it. No, I'm happy here and I'm happy working on the next *Doom* title.

EGM: And that would be *Inferno*.

Romero: Yeah, for the Ultra too. We're churning out something for the PC that should be out by the end of next year, but we've put a lot of time and effort into working on a new *Doom* game for the Ultra, it's gonna be something else.

EGM: The biggest *Doom* game yet?

Romero: With over 35 levels, and a great multiplayer mode. I was actually kinda hands off with it, we've got a lot of young guys here at id who are doing great work and I think *Inferno* is coming together really well. Can't wait to show it off at E3.

EGM: We can't wait to see it!

-excerpted from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* interview with John Romero, part of the cover article of the January 1999 issue about all things id Software related

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It's been said that *Shadows of the Moon* did for werewolves what the *Castlevania* series did for vampires. That's somewhat true, though Konami's game does stand quite firmly on the shoulders of giants, namely games like *Eternal Night* and *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* in its heavily 2-D reliant gameplay. However, whereas *Shadows* shares many similarities with those two titles, it has its own flair and style that makes it possibly the first “modern” Metroidvania...if it can even be called that. *Shadows* is much more “linear” than most Metroidvania games, giving players the option of backtracking and exploring but rarely requiring it. Instead, the protagonist Ariel is almost always moving forward in her quest to rid the city Lunapolis of werewolves, moving from one location to the other and frequently getting into furious fights with the creatures there. Ariel, of course, is like no protagonist in the *Castlevania* series. Emotionally tortured, yes, but always with a sense of good humor, she's more Lara Croft than Alucard and even when those she loves fall victim to the werewolves or their curse, she just flips back her long, black hair and puts a silver bullet in the bad guys' skulls. Ariel became so popular with gamers all over the globe that she's probably surpassed Disney's Ariel in popularity in Japan, and when an American video game or Disney fan posts online “I think Ariel's hot”, they frequently have to specify which of the two they mean.

*Shadows of the Moon* is known for dragging the Metroidvania genre kicking and screaming into the modern age. While even *Symphony of the Night* looked largely outdated on the Ultra Nintendo, *Shadows of the Moon* uses stylized 3-D graphics and looks like a game that came out five years after *SotN* and not just one year. The combat is much faster as well, Ariel deftly jumps back and forth over enemies and you can shoot them to remain in midair. The game also made much more use of skillful platforming than the post-NES *Castlevania* series did, though thankfully a missed jump only meant a deduction to Ariel's health bar instead of a death (unless you're playing in “Expert” mode). The game received a big marketing push from Konami upon its release, almost as big as the one *Metal Gear Solid* got, and it paid off bigtime, making the game one of the Ultra Nintendo's top holiday sellers. The great reviews the game got didn't hurt, with many outlets giving it an even better review than Squaresoft's *Parasite Eve*. Not only did horror fans finally get a “good” werewolf game with *Shadows of the Moon*, they got one better than they could've possibly imagined.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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Alex Stansfield: Squaresoft's been all about horror this year, this game is freakin' scary!

Ted Crosley: Yeah, *Parasite Eve* has made me never want to go to the opera.

Alex: You already didn't want to go to the opera.

Ted: And now you know why. But yeah, this game is terrifying, suspenseful, and just a lot of fun. Customizing weapons can be a bit tricky but once you get the hang of it you'll be modding your guns like a pro.

Alex: And you'll definitely need to, there are some TOUGH bosses in this game. *Parasite Eve* definitely lived up to the hype. For me, it sets a new bar for Squaresoft and I think for games in general.

Ted: It's too short, that's the only problem I had. You CAN play through it again and there is a new dungeon but, um...

Alex: Yeeeeeah I had a hard time with the bonus dungeon too. If you LOVE being maxed out in RPGs, and have a lot of free time on your hands, the bonus dungeon is a challenging beast that will add hours...and hours....and hours of replay value to the game. Otherwise, *Parasite Eve* is a short but extremely sweet game and I'm giving it a perfect 5.

Ted: I have to dock half a point for it not being as long and epic as some of Squaresoft's other great RPGs, but it's still incredible to look at and I guess had it been any longer they'd have had to put it on five discs instead of three. 4.5 from me.

(...)

Ted: *Arbiter of Sin* is definitely gonna piss a lot of people off. For me, the things that pissed me off weren't the violence or the storyline stuff, but I thought the voice acting was lousy and the combat was kind of a slog.

Brittany Saldita: They definitely could've been a bit more creative with the weapons and powers. It's not a great game but it was really good and the graphics were fantastic. I liked the creativity of some of the enemies in this game, especially toward the end once you start fighting against demons and giant angel monsters and angels themselves. I thought that was pretty cool.

Ted: So you didn't have any problems with the content?

Brittany: Other than the fact that some of it seems to be deliberately provocative, no. Look, this game is fantasy, and if you can't tell the difference between fantasy and reality, you have problems that go WAY beyond video games.

Ted: Well said. In my opinion, a really nasty, competitive four-player game like *Ultra Mario Kart* is WAY more likely to incite violence than a silly angel hunting game like this.

Brittany: \*snickers\* Yeah, how many times have I wanted to strangle one of you guys after having a green shell hit me in the ass?

Ted: Right, so I mean, if this game makes you want to go out and kill people...get another hobby, I guess? Underwater basket weaving? I dunno. But anyway, *Arbiter of Sin* is a solid, if flawed first person shooter, and I give it a 3.5.

Brittany: I'm also giving it a 3.5. It's pretty and fun but it's not the FPS that's gonna change FPSes.

-excerpted from the December 8, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Gary Westhouse: Now, you may disagree, but I feel like *Fallout* is a game that's probably better off on PC. The way it works, the way you move, the way it's designed just seems tailored toward the keyboard and mouse.

Lyssa Fielding: Having played lots of computer games, including *Fallout*, I do respectfully disagree. But that being said, is *Fallout* the RPG of the year? No, far from it. I mean, I thought *Shadowrun* did this kinda game better.

Gary: You make an excellent point, *Shadowrun* back on the SNES-CD was a much better implementation of this kind of playstyle.

Lyssa: Yeah, and remember when it came out and people said it was gonna change RPGs forever? And then *Final Fantasy V* came out a couple months later and everybody forgot what they'd just said?

Gary: I don't think *Fallout* is a revolutionary game but it was really amazing on the PC. Here, you know, you move with the control stick instead of clicking where you want your guy to go. And I don't think that works because of the way this game is set up. You have to aim your weapon with the right stick and...

Lyssa: I liked that, I thought that aspect of it really helped me.

Gary: It was just confusing for me, it's so much easier to do everything by moving the mouse and clicking.

Lyssa: I think the new control system improves what was....kind of an average PC game. I liked the whole post-apocalyptic feel of *Fallout* but the game itself kinda bored me. Here, on the Ultra, it's faster and that's great! It's still a bit of a slow go though.

Gary: So what's your final verdict?

Lyssa: I give it a 4! I think the Ultra Nintendo's definitely the best way to play *Fallout*, but it wasn't a truly great game to begin with.

Gary: And I'm giving it a 3.5, I think it WAS a great game and now it's merely just a good one. Still a lot of fun though.

(...)

Adrian: *Shenmue* is definitely the most ambitious game the Saturn's ever had, and for all the challenges it must have been to put together, it really pulls everything off!

Alex: I agree, this game is just a masterpiece. It gives meaning to all the little stuff that you'd never think of a video game character having to do. Going to work, going out with friends, everything in this game has a purpose and everything leads up to that final goal, which, by the way, you don't have to reach.

Adrian: No, and that's another thing. The world keeps moving, but there's no time limit, you can take your time solving the mystery.

Alex: What I liked to do, every day, was talk to this old woman. She's always out in front of her house, planting flowers, and every day she had something different to say to me. I think they programmed her with like 250 different things to say. So I very very rarely had her saying the same thing twice. There are just so many amazing moments in the game that I can't help but just stand there sometimes, look up at the sky and be thinking how beautiful it is.

Adrian: The graphics aren't the best.

Alex: True. But every compromise they made made the world just a little bit bigger.

Adrian: Right.

Alex: I don't think this game could've been much better on the Ultra Nintendo. Because I don't think graphics make this game what it is. It's not a game so much as it's like a tiny world living inside your Sega Saturn.

Adrian: \*laughs\*

Alex: It's true!

Adrian: I keep picturing you opening up the Sega Saturn and looking for a bunch of little men and women that've crawled up in there.

Alex: It's just amazing to me how much they squeezed into it, even though they used four whole discs. I'm just blown away. *Shenmue* is a 5 out of 5 for me.

Adrian: Um, yeah, I agree. 5 out of 5.

\*The siren goes off\*

Alex: Hall of Fame?

Adrian: Yeah, Hall of Fame!

\*The other hosts join Alex and Adrian as they go to place a framed copy of *Shenmue* up on the wall.\*

Ted: You know, with all the great Ultra Nintendo games to come out this year, it's looking like the last truly great game is coming out for the Sega Saturn, and that really says something about the enduring appeal of the Saturn.

Alex: Well yeah, both systems have their must-play games. If you have the money to buy both, I think everyone here at *GameTV* recommends that you do it.

Brittany: It's a wonderful time to be a gamer, isn't it?

Ted: It sure is.

-excerpted from the December 15, 1998 episode of *GameTV*

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**SNES-CD Power Charts: December 1998** (this marks the final time that a Super Nintendo CD top ten would appear in *Nintendo Power's* Power Charts)

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
2. Chrono Trigger
3. Tale Phantasia
4. Super Mario World 2
5. Donkey Kong Country 4
6. Secret Of Mana
7. Tales Of The Seven Seas 2
8. Sphere Soldier
9. Kartia: The Word Of Fate
10. Madden 99

**Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: December 1998**

1. Killer Instinct Ultra
2. Final Fantasy VII
3. Tale Lemuria
4. Ballistic Limit 2
5. Super Mario Dimensions
6. Mortal Kombat 4
7. The Dreamers
8. Gran Turismo
9. Resident Evil 2
10. Goldeneye 007

**The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: December 1998**

1. Virtua Fighter 3
2. Shenmue

3. Turok 2: Seeds Of Evil
4. Arbiter Of Sin
5. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
6. Star Wars: Battle Of Despayre
7. Spare Parts
8. Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted
9. Tekken 3
10. Tomb Raider III

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*“I want to thank the American people for keeping their faith in the presidency during this trying time for our nation. I know that I have made many mistakes, and I know that even tonight, many of my fellow Americans feel that I have not been completely honest with them, and that I have not made adequate amends for my mistakes. To those people tonight, I say this. I know I have disappointed you, and in the two years I have left in office, I will spend every waking second to restore your faith, not only in myself, but in the office of the American presidency. I will work tirelessly toward the interests of all Americans, and will work to be a better husband and a better father. I know I am asking a great deal of many people. I still want to be your President, and I will do everything in my power to do my job to the best of my ability.”*

-President Bill Clinton, after being spared impeachment by the House of Representatives on four counts, including one count of perjury by just one vote (218-217), in a speech to the American people on December 17, 1998

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## **December 22, 1998**

Polly Klaas was largely silent as she watched her friend Eric Harris play his new Sega Saturn game, *Arbiter of Sin*. Eric would make the occasional yell as he blasted the head off of a particularly difficult opponent, but for the most part he was silent as well as he played.

Despite Eric having recently broken up with Polly's friend Caitlyn, he and Polly remained friends, largely due to their mutual friendship with Eric's friend Dylan and their shared enjoyment of video games...even if their tastes in games had grown apart significantly and Polly's enthusiasm for the hobby had diminished as of late.

Another reason Polly had stayed so close to Eric? She was concerned for him...greatly concerned. Though Caitlyn had cited Eric's emotional distance as the main factor in their break-up, there were other things Caitlyn had seen that had worried her, and thus, had worried Polly. Even though Eric had become significantly more popular in school during his senior year and had made several new friends, his demeanor remained dark...and at times disturbing. Caitlyn had never seen Eric act out violently, but he'd repeatedly expressed disturbing and violent thoughts to her, and while at first she'd dismissed them as mere jokes, a couple of them were a bit too disturbing for Caitlyn to laugh at, even in jest.

“Hey, Eric, this game...”

“Too violent?” Eric asked with a laugh, noting how squeamish Polly occasionally was at some of the violent subject matter of the games he enjoyed playing.

“No, it's...kinda boring,” said Polly. “You just go around killing things, and after a while even all the blood and guts are boring.”

Polly looked over at Eric's stack of games, picking one out and holding it up.

“I liked watching you play this one,” she said, holding up a copy of *Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted*.

“Ehhhh...that's kind of a little kid's game,” said Eric dismissively. He paused the game and turned to Polly, narrowing his eyes. “You can go home if you want to, I don't need you here watching me play.”

Polly let out a quiet sigh.

“*He's being an asshole again,*” she thought, “*this is why Caitlyn broke up with him, she told me he was always being an asshole.*”

But Polly was a bit more patient than Caitlyn, and shook her head.

“It's not that, it's not you, it's just...I'm worried about you.”

Now Eric was sighing, giving her a 'here we go again' roll of his eyes.

“I'm serious,” said Polly, reaching over and touching Eric's hand and looking sincerely into his eyes. “Caitlyn...told me about some of the things you said. And one of the notebooks you left lying around, it's got some...really messed up things in it.”

Eric just chuckled at Polly. If she thought *that* notebook was disturbing, he wondered how she'd react to his *other* notebook...the one where he'd begun pouring out the disturbing, violent contents of his twisted brain, the one where he laid out his plans for something that would put him in the history books forever...even if his friend Dylan was expressing doubts.

“Eric-”

“You know me, I'm always messing around,” said Eric, still smirking. “Hey, by the way, that offer still stands. I'm serious, too.”

Eric's 'offer' was one of the most disturbing things she'd ever heard him say. Out of all of her friends, there had only been two people whom Polly had discussed the horrific kidnapping attempt five years earlier with: Caitlyn and Eric. And both of them had offered their own solutions for the problem, solutions that reflected the innermost human beings both of them

were. When Polly had told Caitlyn, just a few short months after first coming to Littleton, the two of them had cried together and Caitlyn had told Polly that if anything like that ever happen again, that she would throw herself at whoever was trying to hurt Polly so that she could get away.

*“Caitlyn, you don't understand, he had a knife, he tied up my friends, there was nothing they could-”*

*“No, Polly, I would have thrown myself at him to keep him from hurting you, I promise I would. Even if he had a knife I would have thrown myself onto the knife so he couldn't use it on you.”*

*“Caitlyn...! Promise me you'll never do that....!”*

*“But Polly, you're my best friend...that's...what best friends do for each other right?”*

But when she'd told Eric about what had happened, Eric's reaction had been...markedly different.

*“When's that guy get out of jail?”*

*“Um....I think he's first up for parole in 2007...”*

*“Okay, when he gets out of jail I'm gonna find out where he is, and I'm gonna kill him. I'm gonna torture him, and I'm gonna cut him up into little pieces and...”*

*“Jesus Christ, Eric, stop!”*

And now, Eric was again offering to hunt down this guy and kill him.

*“I mean it Polly, I could do it. I could do it for you.”*

*“Eric, no, just....Eric.... look....”* Polly reached into her purse and pulled out something she'd been meaning to give to Eric ever since Caitlyn had told her about some of the disturbing things he'd said. *“Eric, here. This...this is the counselor I talked to when I first came here and was still having nightmares about the guy who tried to kidnap me. She REALLY helped me out and I think she might be able to do the same for you.”*

*“What? Is this some kind of a shrink?”*

*“It's a counselor, Eric-”*

*“I don't need any fucking help, I don't need any fucking pills-”*

*“It's just someone to talk to! Someone who'll listen! Someone like me, but...but with a degree in psychology, someone who...knows how to talk to....”*

*“You think I'm crazy?”*

“I think...I think you're gonna hurt yourself...and you're my friend and I don't want you to hurt yourself. You're just...you're always so angry, Eric... what's wrong? You've got friends now, people don't pick on you anymore, so-”

“Because of you.”

“No, Eric, you are...smart, and funny, and...and you're really fun to be around even when you're playing boring video games, and...and you're a good person. And I don't want to see you doing something bad to yourself.”

Polly was still tightly holding both of Eric's hands in her own, but he didn't pull away from her like he usually did. He just kept looking into her eyes.

*“Is she...trying to hook up with me?”* thought Eric, though he knew if Polly wanted to be his girlfriend she'd have already asked him...and that he wasn't the type of guy he'd seen her dating anyway. But still, for a friend, she seemed way too concerned for him, even more concerned than Dylan had seemed when the two had spent time together before. Eric knew one thing, he sure as hell didn't want to see any counselors or shrinks...but Polly was being so persistent that he figured he'd humor her. “Okay, whatever, I'll go see her. I don't think it's gonna do anything but whatever.”

It was a half-hearted answer, but at least he took the card from her. That was better than she thought he'd react.

“Thanks...” said Polly, slowly letting go of her friend's hands. “And promise me you won't ever do anything crazy if that guy gets out of jail.”

“I promise, okay?” said Eric, before unpausing his game and getting back into it. *“I won't live long enough to see that guy get out of jail anyway...maybe I'll crash the plane into his cell block.”*

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*“Furby might've created a brief hullabaloo for its wildly over-exaggerated artificial 'intelligence', but for the second straight year it was the Ultra Nintendo that topped toy sales this Christmas, generating widespread sellouts despite many more units being on hand at retail stores. Ultra Nintendo sales more than tripled that of the Sega Saturn over the period from Thanksgiving to Christmas, even with sales of the Saturn and its new Ring accessory seeing a boost from previous months. The Ultra Nintendo has now topped the Saturn in total worldwide sales with nearly 40 million units sold, a staggering number for a system that first appeared in Japan only a year and a half ago. In fact, the number of total Ultra Nintendo sales is now more than two-thirds the combined sales of the Super Nintendo and its popular CD accessory, with sales projected to surpass that benchmark by the end of 1999. Nintendo also saw hot sales for its new Pokemon brand. Its mascot Pikachu has become one of the most recognizable children's characters in the world, already approaching the awareness levels of Mickey Mouse and*

*Nintendo's own venerable plumber Mario. The only brands that came close to selling as many toys as Pokemon this year were the X-Men and Star Wars franchises. X-Men recently saw a boost to its bottom line thanks to the success of the recent film and the announcement of a new animated series, while Star Wars is building momentum toward next year's release of the first new film in 16 years, The Phantom Menace."*

-from an article on Yahoo! News, posted on December 30, 1998

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## **January 1, 1999**

Shigeru Miyamoto had already created some of the greatest video games of all time, but nothing, not all the praise from reviewers or all the millions of copies he'd sold, meant more to him than seeing his 11-year-old daughter playing through *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time* and enjoying herself. She was nearing the end of the Temple of Autumn now, and every room she entered, she'd tell him what she thought.

"That's the third time the hand almost got me...!" shouted Miyamoto's daughter as she had Link furiously swing his sword at one of the Wallmasters that had dropped down to eject her from the temple. "This is so difficult...!"

"Ah, but there's fun in mastering a level through playing it repeatedly, isn't there?" Miyamoto asked her with a smile. "Maybe you should let one of the hands catch you to see what happens!"

"I'm not going through all that again, no way!" his daughter replied, finishing off the Wallmaster. "I'm having fun, but not *that* much fun!"

Across the ocean, Tom Kalinske was watching his daughter Ashley play through the exact same game... taking careful note of the gameplay elements to understand just why this game had so much more appeal to people than anything on the Saturn. He wasn't going to blatantly rip off *Temple of Time*, but he was going to make sure Sega's creative staff took lessons from it. Ashley was swimming through an underwater area of the Temple of Summer as Young Link, making her way carefully through a narrow tunnel filled with Deku Babas.

"Dad...is Sega in trouble?" Ashley suddenly asked as she was playing, before getting flung back as she swam into a Deku Baba's teeth.

"No, no, we're just trailing in sales right now," replied Tom, though his voice betrayed his worry and Ashley, like her mother, could immediately pick up on it.

"Dad...I saw the news, you guys got creamed big time."

Tom groaned. He was tired of hearing about how Nintendo was killing Sega in sales, he especially didn't want to hear about it at home from his own daughter.

"It's not your fault, you know."

“Yes, but Ashley, in the world of business, whoever's in charge, it's their fault.”

“Well, there's guys above you, right? In Japan?”

“*Yes, and their jobs might be in trouble too,*” thought Tom, remembering how Saturn sales had begun taking a sharp dive even in Japan, with only the huge *Shenmue* sales as a silver lining.

“Well, honey, they're not very happy.”

“Maybe...they should play this game, see how good it is, and understand how hard it's going to be for you guys to beat them.”

“Well...you know how in basketball, how good Michael Jordan is?”

“I guess so?”

“Do you think that the coaches of the other teams, after the game, when they lose by 50 points, they go into the locker room and say 'well guys, we got our butts kicked, but Michael Jordan was just so good that there's nothing we could've done, good job guys!'"?”

“...well maybe they should,” said Ashley, finally maneuvering Link through the tight tunnel and into a large, open room. “...besides, *Sonic the Hedgehog 5* has to be better than this, right?”

“Yep, it pretty much has to be,” said Tom, leaning back on the couch and continuing to watch his daughter play. “*Or 1999 is going to be anything but a happy new year.* ”

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“*To say that 1999 is going to be a make-or-break year for Sega is a massive understatement.*”

-Dan “Shoe” Hsu, in an editorial for the January 1999 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

“*And as the anti-trust lawsuit against Microsoft continues to make its way through the courts, a lot of Nintendo fans, noting the company's recent dominance, are wondering if it could happen to their beloved gaming company. While Nintendo did draw the government's ire back in the late-80s with its anti-competitive software licensing practices, an anti-trust suit similar to the one Microsoft is currently fighting is unlikely.*”

-from an article on IGN.com, posted on January 12, 1999

“*The venerable old Super Nintendo CD might be ancient, but there were some great games to come out for the console this year, and here to give out the award for Super Nintendo CD Game of the Year is another beloved old-timer...here's Methuselah!*”

-Kevin Smith, introducing an actor dressed as “Methuselah” to give out the award for the best

Super Nintendo CD game at the MTV Video Game Awards on February 16, 1999

*“We all knew: the game of 1998 was Temple of Time. Nearly every major game outlet named that game as the Game of the Year, and deservedly so. The BIG debate that year was, who's #2? Everybody had an opinion. Goldeneye emerged as the consensus, but Tekken 3, Shenmue, Parasite Eve, The Dreamers, Gran Turismo, even outsiders like Commander Keen, Fairytale, and Spare Parts emerged as potential #2s. Even Pokemon was named by a few fan polls.”*  
-Jeff Gerstmann, discussing 1998's top games in a 2005 Gamespot round table

*“Sega To Begin Layoffs In Wake Of Rough 1998”*  
-an article on Gamespot.com, March 27, 1999

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**Top Selling Ultra Nintendo Games Of 1998** (pack-in sales included, North American sales only)

1. Super Mario Dimensions
2. Ultra Mario Kart
3. Goldeneye 007
4. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
5. Gran Turismo
6. Killer Instinct Ultra
7. Ballistic Limit 2
8. The Dreamers
9. Final Fantasy VII
10. Resident Evil

**Top Selling Sega Saturn Games Of 1998** (pack-in sales included, North American sales only)

1. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
2. Tekken 3
3. Virtua Fighter 3
4. Resident Evil 2
5. Turok 2: Seeds Of Evil
6. Quake
7. Tomb Raider II
8. Virtua Fighter 2
9. Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted
10. Spare Parts

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*“When GameTV became the biggest show on MTV in 1997 after the finale of Beavis and Butthead and the soaring popularity of the fifth-generation game consoles, it seemed inevitable that the network would put together a video game awards show to match its music video and*

*movie spectacles. The MTV Video Game Awards were born, and the very first ceremony, celebrating 1998's best games, took place on February 16, 1999. Hosted by Kevin Smith, who at the time was probably most famous for his film Mallrats, the ceremony was a star-studded affair, with guest presenters such as Busta Rhymes, Neve Campbell, and Sarah Michelle Gellar (who would go on to host 2000's ceremony), to name a few. The Game of the Year trophy was handed out by Robin Williams, who looked even more overjoyed when Temple of Time was named Game of the Year than Shigeru Miyamoto did when he went up to receive the trophy. Of course, the GameTV influence on the ceremony was strong, and the six hosts at the time (Ted Crosley, who also produced the first two ceremonies, Alex Stansfield, Brittany Saldita, Gary Westhouse, Lyssa Fielding, and Adrian Fry) all got to present awards (with Ted/Alex, Brittany/Lyssa, and Gary/Adrian presenting the Saturn Game of the Year, the Best Soundtrack, and the Babe of the Year awards respectively). The ceremony, like the Video Music and Movie award ceremonies it borrowed heavily from, featured plenty of skits and comedy, and the 'Parasite Beavis' short, created by Mike Judge as a parody of Parasite Eve that saw Beavis and Butthead teaming up with Aya Brea on one of her missions, only to end up getting her killed with their stupidity, was the most memorable. The MTV Video Game Awards were a BIG deal at the time, the ceremony generated nearly five million viewers the first year it was broadcast, and it featured a great mix of serious game commentary and hilarious comedy. The ceremony has declined since the first few years it was put on, but it remains a staple of the MTV awards season even now, going into its 17th year of handing out the coveted trophy (which still depicts MTV's Moon Man sitting in front of a TV with a game controller in hand)."*

-from an article on Kotaku.com, posted on January 29, 2015

**MTV Video Game Awards 1998 Winners List:** (nominees chosen by MTV committee including the *GameTV* hosts and about seven or eight others, winners voted on by MTV viewers both online and with mail-in cards, initially the awards ceremony only honored console games, PC games were added for 2002's ceremony)

Game Of The Year:

Goldeneye 007

**The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time**

Parasite Eve

Shenmue

Tekken 3

SNES-CD Game Of The Year:

Lufia III: The Ancient Tower

Madden 99

SaGa Frontier

Sphere Soldier

**The Three Caballeros**

Ultra Nintendo Game Of The Year:

Ballistic Limit 2  
Goldeneye 007  
Killer Instinct Ultra  
**The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time**  
Parasite Eve

Saturn Game Of The Year:

Arbiter of Sin  
Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted  
Panzer Dragoon Saga  
Shenmue  
**Tekken 3**

Handheld Game Of The Year:

The Legend Of Zelda: The Mystic Mirror  
**Pokemon Red and Green**  
Rotocandle  
The Three Caballeros  
Wario Land 2

Sports Game Of The Year:

1080 Snowboarding  
Ken Griffey Jr.'s Ultra Grand Slam  
**Madden 99 (Ultra Nintendo)**  
NBA Live 99 (Ultra Nintendo)  
NHL 99 (Sega Saturn)

Racing Game Of The Year:

**Gran Turismo**  
Hard Charge  
Ultra Road Rash  
Road Storm: Burning Rubber  
San Francisco Rush

RPG Of The Year:

Fairytale  
Panzer Dragoon Saga  
Parasite Eve  
**Pokemon Red and Green**  
Tale Lemuria

Fighting Game Of The Year:

**Killer Instinct Ultra**

Mortal Kombat 4

Street Fighter III

Tekken 3

Virtua Fighter 3

Shooter Of The Year:

Arbiter Of Sin

Daikatana

**Goldeneye 007**

Quake

Turok 2: Seeds Of Evil

Scariest Game Of The Year:

Fallout

Nightsyren

Parasite Eve

Quake

**Resident Evil 2**

Best Soundtrack:

The Dreamers

Ecco: Blue Dream

Fairytale

Killer Instinct Ultra

**The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time**

Villain Of The Year

Alec Trevelyan (Goldeneye 007)

**The Archdeacon (Arbiter Of Sin)**

Eve (Parasite Eve)

Ganondorf (The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time)

Gruntilda (The Dreamers)

Babe Of The Year

**Aya Brea (Parasite Eve)**

Claire Redfield (Resident Evil 2)

Claris (Fairytale)

Nina Williams (Tekken 3)

Princess Lindsay (Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted)

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### **Billboard Number One Songs Of 1998:**

January 3: Been Around The World by Puff Daddy and the Family  
January 10: Been Around The World by Puff Daddy and the Family  
January 17: Been Around The World by Puff Daddy and the Family  
January 24: Truly Madly Deeply by Savage Garden  
January 31: Truly Madly Deeply by Savage Garden  
February 7: Nice & Slow by Usher  
February 14: Nice & Slow by Usher  
February 21: Nice & Slow by Usher  
February 28: My Heart Will Go On by Celine Dion  
March 7: My Heart Will Go On by Celine Dion  
March 14: My Heart Will Go On by Celine Dion  
March 21: My Heart Will Go On by Celine Dion  
March 28: My Heart Will Go On by Celine Dion  
April 4: My Heart Will Go On by Celine Dion  
April 11: My Heart Will Go On by Celine Dion  
April 18: My Heart Will Go On by Celine Dion  
April 25: My Heart Will Go On by Celine Dion  
May 2: All My Life by K-Ci & Jojo  
May 9: Silly Boys by Brandy  
May 16: Silly Boys by Brandy  
May 23: Silly Boys by Brandy  
May 30: My All by Mariah Carey  
June 6: My All by Mariah Carey  
June 13: My All by Mariah Carey  
June 20: Godzilla by Tupak Shakur and The RZA  
June 27: Godzilla by Tupak Shakur and The RZA  
July 4: My All by Mariah Carey  
July 11: You're Still The One by Shania Twain  
July 18: You're Still The One by Shania Twain  
July 25: You're Still The One by Shania Twain  
August 1: You're Still The One by Shania Twain  
August 8: You're Still The One by Shania Twain  
August 15: I Don't Want To Miss A Thing by Aerosmith  
August 22: I Don't Want To Miss A Thing by Aerosmith  
August 29: You Can't Kill What You Don't See by Tupac Shakur  
September 5: I Don't Want To Miss A Thing by Aerosmith  
September 12: You Can't Kill What You Don't See by Tupac Shakur  
September 19: You Can't Kill What You Don't See by Tupac Shakur  
September 26: I'll Be by Edwin McCain  
October 3: How About Me And You? by Brandy

October 10: How About Me And You? by Brandy  
October 17: One Week by Barenaked Ladies  
October 24: One Week by Barenaked Ladies  
October 31: One Week by Barenaked Ladies  
November 7: Doo Wop (That Thing) by Lauryn Hill  
November 14: Doo Wop (That Thing) by Lauryn Hill  
November 21: Doo Wop (That Thing) by Lauryn Hill  
November 28: Doo Wop (That Thing) by Lauryn Hill  
December 5: Take Me There by Blackstreet and Monica  
December 12: I'm Your Angel by R. Kelly and Selena  
December 19: I'm Your Angel by R. Kelly and Selena  
December 26: I'm Your Angel by R. Kelly and Selena

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### **Electronic Gaming Monthly Editors' Choice Awards 1998:**

Game of the Year: The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time  
Runners-up: Goldeneye 007, Tekken 3

*The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time set new standards for what an adventure game should be. Indeed, it set new benchmarks for all video games. Believe it or not, this wasn't entirely unanimous. There was one editor who picked Goldeneye 007, and we don't completely blame him, its incredibly addictive multiplayer mode sucked us all in for weeks.*

Super Nintendo CD Game Of The Year: Kartia: Word Of Fate  
Runners-up: The Three Caballeros, Sphere Soldier

*There wasn't nearly as much competition for this award as there was in the SNES-CD's heyday, but Kartia proved to be perhaps the best strategy RPG of the year. The Three Caballeros came in a close second, its Western adventure stylings were a perfect way for the SNES-CD to ride off into the sunset.*

Ultra Nintendo Game Of The Year: The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time  
Runners-up: Goldeneye 007, Gran Turismo

*This really wasn't a close vote. Temple of Time was our near unanimous favorite, breaking new ground for all video games.*

Sega Saturn Game Of The Year: Tekken 3  
Runner-up: Shenmue, Panzer Dragoon Saga

*Saturn's killer fighting game Tekken 3 dominated the category, but Shenmue and Panzer Dragoon Saga were both epic, worthy contenders in this race.*

Handheld Game Of The Year: The Legend Of Zelda: The Mystic Mirror

Runners-up: Pokemon Red and Blue, Samurai Shodown

*There couldn't be any other choice but Zelda. Pokemon did make quite a run, and Samurai Shodown on the new Neo Geo Pocket was an excellent handheld adaptation of a fighting favorite.*

Best RPG: Panzer Dragoon Saga  
Runner-up: Parasite Eve, Fairytale

*It was a great year for RPGs, but in the end, the epic Panzer Dragoon Saga took a narrow victory over Squaresoft's excellent efforts.*

Best Fighting Game: Tekken 3  
Runner-up: Killer Instinct Ultra, Virtua Fighter 3

*We spent a lot of time beating the crap out of each other this year, but Tekken 3 proved to be the king of the ring when it comes to great fighting games.*

Best Adventure Game: The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time  
Runner-up: The Dreamers, Shenmue

*While Shenmue gave us a living city to roam around in, and The Dreamers touched our hearts, neither of them approached the sheer perfection of the latest Zelda epic.*

Best Action Game: Goldeneye 007  
Runners-up: Spare Parts, Arbiter Of Sin

*Spare Parts was a surprisingly good platformer, but Goldeneye's precision-perfect shooting and action packed Bond fun made this a pretty easy pick.*

Best Graphics: Gran Turismo  
Runners-up: The Dreamers, Virtua Fighter 3

*Gran Turismo broke new ground for realism with its lifelike cars and tracks. The Dreamers was typical Rare excellence and Virtua Fighter 3 delivered incredible arcade fidelity to the Saturn, but Gran Turismo crosses the finish line first here.*

Best Music: Fairytale  
Runner-up: Panzer Dragoon Saga, The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time

*Fairytale's gorgeous score by the composer of Chrono Trigger filled the quest with lovely song, and was a pretty easy pick for our favorite soundtrack of the year.*

### **Electronic Gaming Monthly Readers' Choice Awards 1998:**

Game Of The Year: The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time

Runners-up: Shenmue, Parasite Eve

Super Nintendo CD Game Of The Year: Lufia III: The Ancient Tower

Runners-up: The Three Cabelleros, Brigandine

Ultra Nintendo Game Of The Year: The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time

Runners-up: Parasite Eve, Goldeneye 007

Sega Saturn Game Of The Year: Shenmue

Runner-up: Tekken 3, Virtua Fighter 3

Handheld Game Of The Year: Pokemon Red and Blue

Runners-up: The Legend Of Zelda: The Mystic Mirror, Wario Land 2

Best RPG: Parasite Eve

Runner-up: Pokemon Red and Blue, Fairytale

Best Fighting Game: Killer Instinct Ultra

Runner-up: Tekken 3, Virtua Fighter 3

Best Adventure Game: The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time

Runner-up: Shenmue, The Dreamers

Best Action Game: Goldeneye 007

Runners-up: Arbiter Of Sin, Resident Evil 2

Best Graphics: The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time

Runners-up: Gran Turismo, The Dreamers

Best Music: Fairytale

Runner-up: Tekken 3, Pokemon Red and Blue

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### **Sony's Online Game "Pirate Quest" To Debut In April**

While Sony Interactive has been responsible for some of the year's biggest console hits, including *Ballistic Limit 2*, the company has also been making a foray into online PC games as well, and this spring, their highly anticipated massively multiplayer online game *Pirate Quest* is ready to enter production. The game will put the player in charge of his or her own pirate ship, where they'll be able to sail across uncharted waters and hunt for treasure. Players can team up with other pirates to claim loot or battle it out in massive player vs. player melees. Sony's *Pirate Quest* is said to be partially inspired by their hit *Tales of the Seven Seas* series, though don't expect any characters from those games to make an appearance in this one, Sony's already debunked those rumors. It's one of the most massive online multiplayer undertakings in history, though it has yet to be seen whether *Pirate Quest* can knock *Ultima Online* from its throne.

## **Peter Molyneux Working On Top-Secret Game Set To Be Released By The End Of The Year**

Peter Molyneux, creator of the hit *Populous* game series and part-time freelance writer for a variety of publications, is working on a game described as “part-RPG, part-life sim” that is set to be released for Windows PCs by the end of the year. The game is being touted as a highly ambitious role-playing game where you'll need to carefully micromanage your player character's inventory and relationships in order to gain enough power to venture out into a massive world and battle a variety of enemies. Though Molyneux is only too eager to give out small tidbits of information on the game, many aspects of the game's world are still being kept close to the chest. We'll surely learn more about the upcoming game at E3 later this year.

## **Ken Levine's “Junction Point” Nearing Completion**

One of the year's most highly anticipated games is Ken Levine and Irrational Games' *Junction Point*, an RPG/action thriller which is coming out sometime later this year. The game involves an assassination mission on a derelict space colony, and numerous reports have noted plot similarities to the classic novella *Heart of Darkness* and the Francis Ford Coppola film *Apocalypse Now*. *Junction Point* is being published by Microsoft for Windows PCs, and the gameplay looks to be somewhat of a cross between the classic RPG *System Shock* and the hit FPS from last year, *Half-Life*. The gaming press is already referring to *Junction Point* as one of the most anticipated titles of the year, even considering highly anticipated console games such as *Soul Calibur* and *Final Fantasy VIII*.

-from a series of PC game reports on Gamespot.com, published in January and February 1999

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## **NEW POKEMoN!!! Pokegods Confirmed?!?!**

*So apparntly in Japan they had this thing about the new pokemon games. and they showd off some new Pokemons and one of them was this which was Houhou like in the 1st episode of the show. And there was new Gameboys too!!!! With awesoum graphics and new pokemon games. So in 1999 we will definately b gettin new Pokemon. Watch out!!!*

*Also make sur 2 votez for my page!!! Just click button below to get us up in da top viewz!!!*

-from “DJ Carl's Awesome Pokemon Page” on Angelfire.com, update posted January 4, 1999

## **Pokemon Sun And Moon Confirmed!**

*Yes indeed, there is a brand new pair of Pokemon games coming to Japan! The Spaceworld show back in October recently revealed that Pokemon Sun and Pokemon Moon will be coming for the new Game Boy Nova system later this year. The Nova features some truly amazing graphics that will definitely bring the world of Pokemon to life like never before! We've got all*

*the coverage of the big announcements down below!*

-from an update on Pojo.com, posted January 4, 1999

> Any exact tech specs on the Game Boy Nova just yet? Will it really be more powerful than the SNES-CD was?

>> The 3-D graphics looked really smooth, so....I think so.

>> No way, it uses cartridges instead of CDs so it can't be more powerful.

>>> Most storage space on CDs is used for anime scenes and music, not the game graphics.

Super Mario Nova looks a lot better than Super Mario World 2.

>>>> Eh, they looked about the same to me.

>> It's hard to tell, Super Metroid looked a bit better on the Nova than the Super Nintendo but Ballistic Limit looks better on the SNES-CD than Super Metroid on the Nova.

>>> It's hard to tell anyway because the screenshots aren't that great.

> Sega's done for! Aside from Sonic 5, what's coming out next year? I'll tell you...NOTHING!

>> Fuk off.

>> Soul Calibur, the new Keen game, Soul Reaver, Earthworm Jim...

>>> Soul Calibur sucks, Killer Instinct is better, Keen is stupid, Soul Reaver looks dumb, Earthworm Jim sucks.

>>>> Soul Calibur sucks? Have you even played it?

>> Yeah seriously, Nintendo's gonna kick Sega's ass into the ground next year, I can't wait for Metal Gear Solid.

>> Quit trolling!

>>> I'm not trolling, I'm stating facts.

> Okay, Game of the Year?

>> Half-Life.

>>> PC games suck

>>>> Your mom!

>>>>> No your mom

>>>> Just because you're too stupid to set up your PC to play Half-Life doesn't mean Half-Life sucks.

>>>>> No, Half-Life sucks because it sucks. Goldeneye is better.

>>>>>> BLASPHEMY

>> No contest, it's Temple of Time. Best Zelda game I ever played.

>>> U must not have played Ocarina then

>>> Or Zelda II

>>>> Ewwwwwwwwwwwwww

>>> I agree with this man, Temple of Time was awesome.

>> Temple of Time, hands down! Hyrule was huge, the bosses were tough, and the music was great. Utterly fantastic game.

>> Goldeneye, it has to be

>> Fairytale

>>> That game's for girls

>>>> Yeah because that part where Claris was naked was totally for girls

>>>>> Oh yeah I forgot that WAS pretty hot  
>>>>> Speaking of hot, Aya Brea, you guys  
>> Tekken 3  
>>> Killer Instinct was better.  
>> Spare Parts was surprisingly good if anyone has the Ring here.  
>>> Yeah but the last part was a ripoff of I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream.  
>>>> No it wasn't, it had a happy ending.  
>>>>> Which makes it a WORSE ripoff.  
>>>> I have no Ultra Nintendo and I must play Temple of Time

-from various threads on an InsideTheWeb.com video game message board, as accessed on January 6, 1999

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Ted Crosley: And the time's come once again to count down the year's best console games!

Lyssa Fielding: That's right, but this year there were SO many great games that we can't just do a top 10!

Alex Stansfield: Instead, we're counting down our top 25 games of the year.

Brittany Saldita: Starting with number 25, **Pokemon Red and Green**. While some here at *GameTV* may not have liked it... \*glares at Ted\* catching all those Pokemon was super addictive and the game's big world made it one of the year's best RPGs.

Ted: Hey, I have valid reasons for not liking Pokemon! But this game, our number 24, **The Three Caballeros**, was simply fantastic and a really big old-school Disney platformer for the SNES-CD.

Adrian Fry: Number 23 was **Madden 99**. Both the Sega Saturn and Ultra Nintendo versions were great, but we preferred the smoother graphics and expanded modes of the Ultra Nintendo version, which introduced some of the series' most robust roster editing options.

Gary Westhouse: And at number 22 was another SNES-CD game, **Sphere Soldier**. This tricky but lovely game may have taken its time coming to the West, but it was definitely worth the wait.

Lyssa: And at number 21, **Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted!** One of the funniest games of the year, both for its silly main storyline and its multiplayer mode which gave us all sorts of funny little diversions including the many hours we spent killing Hitler.

Ted: At number 20 comes **Turok 2: Seeds Of Evil**. While not as big and epic as the original games, Turok 2 was still a thrill with its huge selection of weapons and its shiny new multiplayer option.

Brittany: Number 19 was **Tale Lemuria**. Another sequel that didn't quite live up to the original,

it was still a huge quest through an epic world, filled with memorable characters and challenging gameplay.

Alex: **Gran Turismo** comes in at number 18. Maybe the most realistic racing game ever, we loved Gran Turismo for its lifelike graphics and huge selection of cars.

Adrian: The werewolf hunting action game **Shadows of the Moon** takes 17th place on our list. This creepy hunt through a huge city for terrifying werewolves featured some of the best combat we've ever seen in a 2-D platformer.

Lyssa: And number 16 was **Virtua Fighter 3!** Sega's hit fighting game series once again broke new ground for graphical innovation and added a slick new dodge button to expand the strategy.

Gary: Our number 15 game of the year was **Ultra World of Color**. Maybe the best four player puzzle game ever, we spent countless hours matching colors and dropping blocks in this Ultra Nintendo puzzle sensation.

Brittany: Our number 14, **Resident Evil 2**, introduced us to Claire and Leon as they fought to stay alive in a city overrun.

Ted: And our number 13 pick, **The Dreamers**, touched our hearts with the epic story of a boy questing to find his missing little sister.

Gary: The little handheld that could, the Game Boy Color, gave us our 12th favorite game of the year with **The Legend Of Zelda: The Mystic Mirror**, which introduced the very first Hero of Hyrule as he fought to save the three beautiful goddesses.

Alex: And finally at number 11, **Radiant Silvergun**, Treasure's very challenging but brilliantly made shooter. We gave it a perfect score and we're still playing it today, as frustrating as it is.

Ted: And now we're down to our top 10. When we get back from the commercial break, we'll start counting down the ten best games of the year!

(...)

Ted: And we're back, and we're ready to reveal our GameTV Top Ten Games of 1998! This was an incredible year, and it was incredibly tough narrowing it down to just ten games, but in the end, these are the games we could all agree were some of the year's very best.

Brittany: At number ten, **Panzer Dragoon Saga**. The skyfaring series entered the RPG realm for the first time, and we're hoping it returns.

Alex: This epic quest spanned four discs, with some of the best graphics ever seen on the Saturn. The innovative battle system required both daring and cunning, and kept us coming back for more.

Gary: In *Panzer Dragoon Saga*, the shooting and RPG genres perfectly mixed to create a brilliant RPG epic for the ages.

Adrian: Our number nine game of the year was **Ballistic Limit 2**. Ash Beckland and his crew returned with some new recruits, and not all of them were as they seemed.

Ted: The run and gun gameplay of the original translated perfectly to 3-D, while the Ballistic System came back better than ever.

Brittany: This game was full of huge bosses that required every bit of effort and strategy from the player and showed off just what the Ultra Nintendo could do.

Lyssa: And the top notch voice acting gave this sci-fi thriller a Hollywood feel!

Ted: Speaking of top notch voice acting, **Fairytale**, our number 8 game of the year, was a treat for both our ears and our eyes, with some of the year's best music.

Brittany: Square's RPG of fairies and humans both awed us with its beauty and chilled us to the bone with some of the darkest and most horrifying creatures ever featured in a video game.

Gary: Yeah, this game wasn't for the faint of heart, but those who endured were rewarded with a magical quest.

Alex: And another magical quest made it to seventh place on our list. **Spare Parts** showcased the power of Saturn's new Ring with huge, open areas and gorgeous animation.

Lyssa: The game featured a quest both whimsical and melancholy as you played two robots who explored the Earth after the fall of humanity.

Ted: The game's story was littered with twists and turns, and the surprising last few areas are not to be missed.

Adrian: *Spare Parts* lived up to the legacy of its creators, the team behind the hit Saturn game *Nights*, and this game was just as fun and beautiful.

Ted: Coming in sixth place was one of the best arcade fighting games ever, which got a perfect port on the Saturn in the form of **Tekken 3**.

Adrian: Filled with tons of characters and featuring some of the best fighting action around, *Tekken 3* blew us all away and showed why the Saturn is the system to get if you've gotta have the best fighting games.

Brittany: The graphics and fighting mechanics were a quantum leap over previous *Tekken* titles, and the game's storyline, while a bit convoluted, still showcased this game's cast, giving them real personality and motivation.

Alex: All right, it's time to reveal our top five, and I've gotta tell you, each and every one of these games can safely be considered among the best games of all time.

Gary: Yeah, and we're starting with our number five title on the list, **Parasite Eve**.

Ted: Holy crap, was this game scary. And it was scary in large part because Square pulled out the full potential of the Ultra Nintendo, producing incredible cutscenes that hammered home the horror of Aya Brea's mission.

Brittany: Meanwhile, the battle system was incredibly fun, meaning fights were rarely repetitive and keeping your eyes on the enemy was of crucial importance.

Alex: *Parasite Eve* showed that Squaresoft is brilliant at making both great RPGs and cutting edge technical masterpieces, of which this game is definitely one.

Lyssa: Well, number four is another technical showcase for the Ultra Nintendo. This time, it's **Killer Instinct Ultra!**

Ted: Yeah, we all liked the first game but didn't really LOVE it...that didn't happen with Ultra.

Adrian: The game was full of ULTRAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA combos that looked great and were a hell of a lot of fun to pull off.

Lyssa: \*laughing\* And there were plenty of characters on the roster so just about everybody could pick someone they really identified with!

Brittany: The exciting new single player mode was plenty of fun, but what was really fun about this game was picking up a controller and fighting your friends.

Alex: We've certainly done a lot of that on the Ultra!

Ted: Hey, we gotta take another break. But when we come back, we're revealing our top three games of the year!

(...)

Ted: And we're back, and now, we're counting down the year's top three video games. Two of these games were on the Ultra Nintendo, while one of them, the one we're about to reveal, was on the Saturn.

Brittany: Yeah, and that game is **Shenmue**. While not a graphical masterpiece, the game's huge open world runs circles around games like *Race'n'Chase* in featuring lots of stuff to do. Literally, you lived your whole life in this game!

Adrian: Go to work, go to school, punch bad guy face...

Gary: You could even date girls in the game and it had a direct impact on the final missions.

Ted: Pretty much everything you do in *Shenmue* has a direct impact, which is what makes this game so innovative and fun.

Alex: Even on four discs, *Shenmue*'s one of the most impressive technical feats we've ever seen from a game. To pack a living, breathing city into just four discs is truly amazing and a real demonstration of the Ring's capabilities. We all had trouble pulling ourselves out of the world of *Shenmue*, and it easily got a perfect score when we reviewed it.

Gary: And speaking of a game we had trouble pulling ourselves away from, **Goldeneye 007** was one of those games that sucked us in and never let us go. We spent weeks playing the multiplayer deathmatch mode, and can you blame us? It's one of the most well put together multiplayer modes in video game history.

Brittany: Hey, aren't movie games supposed to suck?

Ted: Well, this one came out nearly three years after the movie, and it just goes to show that with time, you can accomplish great things.

Alex: Getting to retrace James Bond's steps was fun enough, but yeah, it was the multiplayer that REALLY hooked us. Whether you were running around slapping your opponents silly or blowing them away with the Golden Gun, *Goldeneye*'s multiplayer mode kept us coming back for more, and more, and more...

Ted: And now for the year's #1 game, and...well, you probably already know what it is.

Lyssa: We thought about holding back to build up some suspense, but come on, guys! Everybody knows our #1 game of the year was *Rugrats: A Baby's Gotta Do What A Baby's Gotta Do!* You could be Tommy, Chuckie, Phil, or Lil...or you could be everybody's favoritest person in the whole wide world...Angelica! And that's why *Rugrats* was our #1 game of 1998...you dumb babies!

Alex: Yeah, okay, you guys are REALLY dumb if you honestly believed it was anything else but **The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time** as our #1 game of the year. What more can we say that hasn't already been said by pretty much everyone who's played it? The massive expanse of Hyrule across two periods of time. The challenging dungeons. The epic music.

Brittany: There's really nothing like riding your faithful horse Epona across Hyrule Field in mid day, enjoying the sights and sounds of the beautiful countryside.

Adrian: Or finally getting that tricky solution to a tough puzzle to open up the way to the boss in one of the game's dungeons.

Gary: Or BEATING that boss and seeing them fall and disintegrate into puffs of smoke.

Ted: Or seeing Link and Zelda cross paths once again, the two fated heroes of time.

Lyssa: Yeah, all joking aside, all six of us chose *Temple of Time* as our unanimous Game of the Year choice. It wasn't even a debate!

Alex: Shigeru Miyamoto, Eiji Aonuma, Koji Kondo, and everyone at Nintendo who worked on this game have succeeded in creating a masterpiece for the ages, and a game worthy of not only being called our best of the year, but maybe the greatest video game of all time.

Ted: And that's our show.... \*cough\*Sonic3\*cough\* but join us next week when we'll take a look at some of the very first games of 1999!

-excerpted from the January 5, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

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*1998 might have been all about the games, but some megaton announcement bombs got dropped on gamers' heads this year as well. Here are the top ten stories in video games from the past year.*

#### *#10: SNES-CD Rides Into The Sunset*

This was probably the final year to see any major SNES-CD titles (okay, a Pokemon game is coming), but with some great RPGs and *The Three Caballeros*, the old peripheral got a nice little sendoff.

#### *#9: Arbiter Of Controversy*

The mega-violent and somewhat irreverent *Arbiter of Sin* had conservatives and the media up in arms, which, as these things usually do, only served to drive more sales for the contentious FPS.

#### *#8: Cinematic Gaming*

From *Parasite Eve* to *Shenmue*, games approached movie-like storylines more than ever, bringing them ever closer to emulating the silver screen.

#### *#7: Sonic 5 Is Coming*

It was somewhat expected, but the announcement of *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*, a fully 3-D platformer, made huge waves at E3 and brought renewed interest in the Saturn in the wake of Nintendo's huge year.

#### *#6: All Zelda, All The Time*

From two massive games to a new hit animated series, *The Legend of Zelda* has never had a better year, and for the second time in four years, is claiming the title of the year's best game.

#### *#5: A Supernova Announcement*

When Nintendo revealed the Game Boy Nova at Spaceworld earlier this year, it surprised some, but to others it was a long time coming. It's still a long ways off from North America but should debut in Japan by the end of the year.

#### *#4: Saturn Gets Its Ring*

Like the Mega Charger back in 1994, the Ring is a boost for its home console, and in the Saturn's case, a sorely needed one. Sales spiked on its release, though only time will tell if it can give the Saturn a fighting chance against Nintendo's surging Ultra.

#### *#3: Rare-ified Air*

Perhaps the only entity to have a better year than *Zelda* was the British game company Rare. With three of the year's biggest hits (*Goldeneye 007*, *The Dreamers*, *Killer Instinct Ultra*) the company is proving to be Nintendo's biggest weapon in the console wars and maybe the best software company in the industry.

#### *#2: Sega Acquires Bandai*

When Sega snapped up Bandai toward the beginning of last year, it was one of the biggest corporate acquisitions in Japanese history and gives Sega access to a huge library of lucrative intellectual property as well as one of the most prolific toymakers in the world.

#### *#1: Pokemania*

Simply put, it was the Year of Pokemon. The collectable monster craze that's been sweeping Japan for the past two years finally made it over to the States, and now it's everywhere. Games, a TV show, toys, a soon to be card game... Pokemon fever is now a global pandemic, with no signs of letting up anytime soon.

-excerpted from the March 1999 issue of *Next Generation Magazine*

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### **Game Watch**

#### *Ultra Nintendo:*

Beetle Adventure Racing- Winter '99  
The Curse Of Monkey Island- Winter '99  
Dead Midnight- Winter '99  
Metal Gear Solid- Winter '99  
Need For Speed: High Stakes- Winter '99

Prince Of Persia: The Jade Queen- Winter '99  
Shadow Man- Winter '99  
Tomb Raider III- Winter '99  
Ultra Deadman Sam- Winter '99  
Ultra Harvest Moon- Winter '99  
Ultra Phineas And Ferb- Winter '99  
Ultra SimCity- Winter '99  
Ultra Valis: Knight Of Light- Winter '99  
Ultra World Championship Boxing- Winter '99  
Andrekah: Witches Brew- Spring '99  
Ape Escape- Spring '99  
Army Men: Sarge's Heroes- Spring '99  
Crash Bandicoot 2- Spring '99  
Cyringe- Spring '99  
The Darkest Night- Spring '99  
Dino Crisis- Spring '99  
Doom: Inferno- Spring '99  
Drakkhen II- Spring '99  
Duke Nukem Forever- Spring '99  
F-Zero: Ultracharged- Spring '99  
Grim Fandango- Spring '99  
Hybrid Heaven- Spring '99  
Rock- Spring '99  
R-Type Delta- Spring '99  
Sailor Moon: Another Story Retold- Spring '99  
South Park- Spring '99  
Star Wars: Episode I Racer- Spring '99  
Super Smash Bros.- Spring '99  
Supercar World Circuit- Spring '99  
Ultra Klepto- Spring '99  
Ultra Triple Play- Spring '99  
Vanguard Bandits- Spring '99  
WCW Nitro- Spring '99  
Weyricht- Spring '99  
You Don't Know Jack- Spring '99  
Candyworld- Summer '99  
Dog Dash 3- Summer '99  
Gauntlet Legends- Summer '99  
Gex 3- Summer '99  
Hakendo- Summer '99  
Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete- Summer '99  
Mario Golf- Summer '99  
Mega Man Zero- Summer '99  
NBA Showtime: NBA On NBC- Summer '99  
Operation Zero 2- Summer '99  
Outfoxed- Summer '99

Pokemon Safari- Summer '99  
Primrose Soldier- Summer '99  
Rise A Knight- Summer '99  
Soulqueen 2: The Beyond- Summer '99  
Starcraft- Summer '99  
Tom Clancy's Secret War- Summer '99  
Twisted Metal 3- Summer '99  
Ultra Bust-A-Move- Summer '99  
Ultra Populous- Summer '99  
Warcraft- Summer '99  
Welcome To Magicka- Summer '99  
X: Tactics- Summer '99  
Dragonball Z- Fall '99  
Emergency- Fall '99  
Extreme Go-Karting 2- Fall '99  
Final Fantasy VIII- Fall '99  
Fire Emblem- Fall '99  
Half-Life- Fall '99  
Squad Four 3- Fall '99  
Starblade- Fall '99  
Ultra Donkey Kong Country- Fall '99  
Ultra Kirby- Fall '99  
Ultra Trampoline- Fall '99  
Umjammer Lammy- Fall '99

-as shown in the January 1999 issue of *Nintendo Power*

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*While **Sonic the Hedgehog 5** might be the elephant in the room when it comes to the Sega Saturn's lineup for this year, the Saturn has plenty more games to make players' mouths water, and here are a few of the year's biggest upcoming hits.*

*Needless to say, fighting game fans won't be disappointed next year. **Soul Calibur** is coming this summer and looks to be one of the most anticipated arcade ports of all time, but **Raigeki II** is another port that should prove to be among the year's best fighting games as well. In 1997, **Raigeki** was a surprise hit, and the sequel improves significantly on the original, with graphical upgrades and an even bigger cast of zany characters. **Duelists: Swift Strike** is also generating some buzz by promising story-focused gameplay, where the outcomes of single player fights aren't necessarily pre-determined, and losing a fight could set you on an entirely different path.*

*Horror game fans are also going to have plenty to love next year. Konami's highly anticipated **Silent Hill** is coming to the Saturn, and **Resident Evil: Code Veronica** will be a Saturn exclusive. There's also **Imprisoned**, where you choose one of five characters and then you'll have to escape the lair of a sadistic madman while choosing which of your fellow prisoners to bring along with you.*

The Saturn will be boasting a strong lineup of action platformers. **Tick And Tock Too** and **Troublemakers 2** join **Sonic 5** as some of the most anticipated sequels of next year, but don't sleep on **Zodiac World**, which has sold extremely well in Japan and will be landing on the Saturn in January. In **Zodiac World**, you must explore a huge series of levels, gathering the 12 mystical Zodiac Stones to defeat an ancient evil. And then there's **Earthworm Jim**, making his long anticipated return in what looks to be one of the year's funniest quests.

While the Ultra Nintendo may boast some of the most talked about RPG franchises, the Saturn will be seeing some excellent RPGs next year, including **ActRaiser Valkyrie** and **Virtua Quest 2**. There's also **Agni Solemn**, and for those who like to rock it old school, a compilation of **Dragon Quest IV-VI** will be appearing on the Saturn sometime next year as well.

We're expecting a new entry in the **Commander Keen** series next year, with more details coming at E3. **Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver** looks to be one of the year's best sequels, and we've heard great things about a game called **NYPD: Narcotics Squad**, which puts you in the shoes of a beat cop who has to train a young rookie while busting one of the most vicious drug lords in the city. Finally, we'll see if **Virtua Racing Reality** can match up with **Gran Turismo** and show off the best of what the Ring can do.

The Saturn may be down, but it's certainly not out, and with some of the year's potentially best exclusives, there's plenty of reason to believe that Sega can roar back with its best year ever.

-from the editorial to the January 1999 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*, with a cover story previewing Saturn's biggest upcoming games of the year

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### **Interactive Entertainment Awards 1998:**

Game Of The Year: *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time*

Console Game Of The Year: *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time*

Computer Game Of The Year: *Half-Life*

Action Game Of The Year: *Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted*

Adventure Game Of The Year: *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time*

Family Game Of The Year: *Ultra World Of Color*

Massively Multiplayer Game Of The Year: *Ultima Online: Ages of Britannia*

Racing Game Of The Year: *Gran Turismo*

Role Playing Game Of The Year: *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time*

Shooter Game Of The Year: *Half-Life*

Strategy/Simulation Game Of The Year: *Gran Turismo(Simulation), Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri(Strategy)*

Sports Game Of The Year: *Madden 99*

Fighting Game Of The Year: *Killer Instinct Ultra*

Outstanding Art Direction: *Fairytale*

Outstanding Vocal Performance: Sean Bean as Alec Trevelyan in *Goldeneye 007(Male)*, Kath

Soucie as Commander Keen/Billy Blaze in *Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted* (Female)  
Outstanding Animation: *Parasite Eve*  
Outstanding Game Design: *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time*  
Outstanding Gameplay Engineering: *Shenmue*  
Outstanding Online Gameplay: *Ultima Online: Ages of Britannia*  
Outstanding Sound Design: *Goldeneye 007*  
Outstanding Story: *Shenmue*  
Outstanding Visual Engineering: *The Dreamers*

(The list of OTL's winners: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academ...s %26 Sciences](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academ...s_%26_Sciences))

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*“1998 remains in the eyes of many gamers the greatest year in the history of the industry, and the lion's share of that year's great games were on the Ultra Nintendo. While the Saturn certainly had a strong year, perhaps its best year yet from a quality perspective with hits like Tekken 3, Panzer Dragoon Saga, Spare Parts, Shenmue, Virtua Fighter 3, and Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted, the system's sales declined steadily throughout the year in the face of the juggernaut that was the Ultra Nintendo. Despite continued supply shortages, the Ultra Nintendo's 1998 saw more units sold than any other system ever had in a single year before. A list of the Ultra Nintendo's 1998 hits reads like a who's who of the greatest games of all time: Gran Turismo. Parasite Eve. Ballistic Limit 2. Goldeneye 007. Killer Instinct Ultra. Fairytale. And of course, The Legend Of Zelda: Temple of Time, which is still considered by many to be the greatest video game ever made. While the launch of the Ring provided a small sales spike for the Saturn, it was quickly overwhelmed by Nintendo's massive holiday sales, and the company, which had trailed Sega as recently as 15 months before, now had its biggest lead in market share since 1992. Meanwhile, the PC gaming train chugged right along, its advocates largely unaffected by the continuing console wars, too busy enjoying classic games like Half-Life, Starcraft, Grim Fandango, and River Guardian to care. Bill Gates and Microsoft's Windows platform still cornered the market on some truly excellent PC games, and as the hits continued to fill CD trays throughout the world, the Microsoft mogul, who at the time was fighting in court for the future of his company, would only grow more and more tempted to jump into the home console fight, especially if Sega continued to show signs of weakness. Of course, the biggest ace in Nintendo's hand might not even have been its Ultra Nintendo, but instead, its 150 Pokemon now being hunted for on Game Boys and Game Boy Colors across the globe. Pokemon had finally left Japan to seek its fortune in North America and Europe, and the gaming landscape would never be the same. That year's Spaceworld saw the announcement of a new Pokemon game and even a brand new handheld, a joint venture from Nintendo and Sony called the Nova, that would launch in Japan the very next year and show just how powerful a tiny little handheld gaming device could be. For the time being, Nintendo reigned supreme. And while the world's richest man began peering in from the shadows, Sega had to think very long and hard about its next move... and about a new way to challenge Nintendo and Sony's technological superiority.”*

-“The History Of Console Gaming: Year-By-Year (Part 7)”, Wired.com, June 26, 2012

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*SNES-CD:*

World Championship Boxing '98- A slightly updated sequel to the previous game, with a bit more complex engine and more editing options. It's a bit better received than the previous WCB game but doesn't sell as well.

Hacker Jack 2- Jack returns in this puzzle/platforming sequel that puts a heavy emphasis on the puzzles. It's known as a decent action game and the puzzles are quite challenging.

Flame Squad 2- A sequel to the hit game from 1996, this title sees the squad and their flamethrowers infiltrating an enemy nation and fighting lots of giant robots. It's really cheesy and out there but the game is considered fun and one of the last really good games on the SNES-CD.

Coney Island Kid- A standard action platformer about a kid who has to navigate the Coney Island theme park while it's being overrun with monsters and baddies. It features fun and colorful graphics but mediocre to poor gameplay.

Star Of Light- A fairly generic RPG featuring outdated graphics, about a group of heroes who must make their way to a star in the sky made of pure magical enemy. The excellent soundtrack makes it a cult hit.

Accelerati: A strange and difficult puzzle game that features arcane rules and very fast moving pieces. Not very well received.

Rapido!: A fast-paced action platformer with lots of projectile weapons. A bit on the short side but considered a decent game.

Matsuki Zanna: A visual novel/adventure game that appeared in Japan in 1996, the game stars a schoolgirl named Matsuki who has to recruit her fellow classmates to go into dungeons and on adventures with her. A VERY quirky game that doesn't sell well but is remembered as a good game.

Sphere Soldier: An action/shooter game featuring very colorful and rapidly moving graphics, another Japanese export that's reminiscent of games like Gunstar Heroes. It has anime cutscenes, big bosses, and some low quality voice acting and is remembered as one of the year's best games.

Jack: The Dark Mercenary: A first-person shooter about a character named Jack tasked with

hunting down and killing people. It's really dark, both graphically and on a storyline basis and is seen as being a really edgy ripoff of Doom. It doesn't do well.

Cardarc: An isometric adventure game about a hero who is seeking to gain power and protect his kingdom. It has an interesting soundtrack but the gameplay itself is fairly confusing and dull.

Hoppity Rabbit: A fairly simple action platformer about a rabbit who collects carrots. The game has a heavy Easter motif. It doesn't do well.

Digman: A game where you have to dig deeper and deeper tunnels, avoiding enemies and collecting power-ups along the way. The gameplay is simple but the game is pretty fun to play.

Winged Wonder: A game about a butterfly character who flies around stages doing complex tricks (that you can score points for). The graphics and sound are quite good and the game itself is considered quite fun, one of the better received action platformers on the SNES-CD of the year.

Extreme Go-Karting: A really fast-paced realistic go karting game where you race on a variety of tracks with very fast go karts. It's a decent, if very hard game, and the last racing game released on the SNES-CD. It's not beloved like Mario Kart but it has a decent amount of fans.

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#### *Ultra Nintendo:*

Ballistic Limit 2: This sequel to Ballistic Limit features fully 3-D characters and environments and retains the first game's FPS/third-person shooter hybrid system as Ash Beckland, Danny, Sara, and several new characters launch a new mission to a planet said to harbor an alien virus that threatens the recolonization of Earth. In search of the virus, the crew finds that they may have bitten off more than they can chew. This is positioned as one of the year's biggest releases and performs extremely well, a hit just like the first game.

Strange Seed: The Tree Of Life: From Telenet Japan, this is a hybrid sci-fi/fantasy RPG that features the characters from the original game searching the galaxy for a tree said to bring prosperity to those who find it. It's a decent RPG, though it doesn't perform as well as Tale Lemuria.

Twinblade III: This game brings the hit arcade series into the third dimension with excellent graphics and a big cast of characters. While it's considered a good fighting game, it's compared unfavorably to the Saturn hit Tekken 3.

Jewels Of The Realm 3: This third game in the series brings back the kids from the first two games on another adventure, this time they are trying to help a king and queen (who later become their adoptive parents). The series retains its 2-D platforming roots but with 3-D graphics, it's considered better than the second game but not quite as good as the first (it's the easiest of the three thus far).

Mysteria 2: The Four Princesses: This RPG sequel from some former Game Arts staffers takes place across four great realms ruled by four benevolent (mostly) princesses who must be visited by the heroes in order to unite them and save the world. It's considered a somewhat generic but still quality RPG.

Ultra World Of Color: This brings the Game Boy Color puzzle hit to the Ultra Nintendo. It's a super addictive puzzle game with a great single player mode and is also considered one of the best four player games on the system, making it a major hit and a huge seller.

Major Hazard: Blitzkrieg: Major Hazard makes the jump to the Ultra and while it's not a bad game, it is considered somewhat of a disappointment, with inferior gameplay to the first two games in the series.

Road Storm: Burning Rubber: This game brings back most of the characters from the original Road Storm, adds a few new ones, and sends them on a cross-country race with much better graphics than the original game. Big things are expected of the game, and it too disappoints, though it gets decent reviews regardless.

Logjam 2: This game tries to capitalize on the original Logjam, making it into a 3-D style platformer. The transition isn't received well and the game is poorly reviewed.

Ultra Monster Wars: This RTS game brings the Monster Wars series to the Ultra Nintendo, featuring a slightly smaller cast of monsters but bumping up the presentation big time. Reviews are pretty good and sales are what Koei expect.

Fatal Strike: Golden Fist: Notukaga returns in this 3-D brawler, exploring a series of towns and realms to chase down the evil warrior Shamballa. It's a decently received game though it doesn't quite match up to the cult classic appeal of the first two.

Dragon's Destiny III: This game is a 3-D installment of the dragon dueling series Dragon's Destiny, with a four player multiplayer option. The game is ugly and glitch and it tries to imitate Panzer Dragoon fairly poorly.

Brave Fencer Kyuriadan: This game is the TTL equivalent of Brave Fencer Musashi, though it stars Kyuridan instead and has a mostly different plot (though Princess Fillet shows up as a love interest). It gets good reviews, becomes a cult classic, and is a decent seller for Squaresoft.

Chifighters II: This 3-D sequel to Chifighters builds on the first game by adding more characters and some spectacular attacks, making it one of the Ultra's best received fighting games of the year.

Bikerz 3: Appearing on the Saturn and the Ultra, this takes the kid friendly bike gang series into the fifth generation. Reviews are mediocre but the series is popular with kids and so this gets good sales.

Urban Raiders: An action/shooter game about a group of young adventurers in a post-apocalyptic setting who raid old destroyed cities for treasure and must battle monsters and other raiders in the process. The characters and storyline are quite fun and the graphics receive a lot of praise, making this a fairly popular game.

Metal Clash: A Nintendo original franchise that's sort of a hybrid between OTL Custom Robo and Battlebots, the game involves putting mechanical parts together to build your own combat robot, Battlebots-style. The game is very colorful, stylized, and fantastical and has a robust single player mode and multiplayer arena combat as well. Made at a time before robot combat caught on in the mainstream, this game gives Battlebots a popularity boost, enabling it to last for several more seasons.

Fairytale: A Squaresoft RPG about a fantastical world of fairies and other mystical creatures who come into contact with an encroaching human civilization and must unite with the humans to stop a threat to both of them. The game is very light-hearted at times but it also has some dark moments, it features a soundtrack by Yasunori Mitsuda and is rather traditional in its gameplay, though combat relies more on magic spells than on physical weaponry. It's probably Squaresoft's #2 most hyped game of the year behind Parasite Eve and its first major Ultra Nintendo RPG after Final Fantasy VII. It sells and reviews extremely well.

God Bless The Ring: This is Ehrgeiz essentially, but stripped of Final Fantasy VII characters (replaced with more original characters) and its dungeon mode (which is expanded in another entirely separate game), and given a more robust storyline. It isn't as highly praised as Bushido Blade but the dark sci-fi motif does win some fans over.

Deepground: This is the dungeon mode of OTL Ehrgeiz, but greatly expanded with a much larger dungeon and more characters and storyline. It's known as one of Square's lesser action RPGs, reviews are mediocre to above average.

**Bulbix: The Forest Adventure:** This is a 3-D platforming/collection game, one of the many developed in Mario Dimensions' wake, about a plant hero named Bulbix (an onion who walks around on vine legs). Despite the game's silly motif it's considered one of the better 3-D platformers of the year.

**Construct-It:** A game about a construction crew assigned to various empty lots who has to construct different kinds of structures while dealing with hazards and mishaps along the way. The characters are fairly silly and the game is actually quite fun, especially with a free construct mode that expands as you beat more of the main game.

**Ultra Spinout:** A racing game somewhat less realistic than Gran Turismo, with an emphasis on destruction and insane tricks. Fairly well received among those who like arcade-style racers, also has a pretty good musical soundtrack.

**DynaMomo!:** A quirky Japanese action/puzzle game involving a cute little blob character named Momo who has to clear different stages by the player clearing puzzle blocks. It's got an interesting artstyle but the game itself is mediocre at best.

**Dust To Dust:** A spooky RPG about the denizens of the dead returning to try and overrun Earth, who can only be stopped by a group of slayers specifically trained to take them down. It's a rather generic RPG in terms of gameplay, the horror motif makes it interesting but it's unfavorably compared to the other RPGs that year and isn't a big seller.

**The Nest:** A third-person horror shooter that's somewhat of a Resident Evil imitator, with a bit more action. It involves the main character discovering a house of horrors where weird experiments are taking place. It's considered mediocre in most aspects and isn't nearly as good as the games that inspired it.

**Sunshine Schoolgirl:** A very obscure, very weird visual novel anime game about a girls' school council that has an iron grip over a school and the player's character must infiltrate them and make as many friends as possible, all the while trying to find romance. While very popular in Japan, the game itself gets only mediocre reviews here and very poor sales.

**Shadows Of The Moon:** A 2-D adventure game starring a female werewolf hunter in a big city. The game heavily emphasizes action but also has lots of puzzle and exploration elements, as well as a highly complex storyline. The game is a big hit and the main character becomes almost as popular as Lara Croft.

**Phasewar:** A space shooting game that features a lot of 3-D combat, it's sort of a three-dimensional Gradius/Axelay type game with lots of bullet hell elements and branching pathways, as well as huge bosses. There's a huge debate over whether this game or Einhander is better, the general consensus is Einhander but only just barely, and this game ends up selling better (at least in the West)

Quixsters: A game about a group of four kids who explore various 3-D worlds, battling enemies and collecting treasure. Of all the Super Mario Dimensions-style 3-D platformers to be released in 1998, this one is considered the best, with excellent graphics, excellent music, huge worlds and fun characters, it sells extremely well and is hyped up long before release.

Laser Tag: The Arena: An FPS laser tag video game, meant to capitalize on the popularity of the actual game. It's a pretty poor game and real life laser tag is considered a lot more fun.

Armed And Dangerous: A game about a pair of badass soldiers who happen to be named Hank Armed and Jack Dangerous. It's a Contra-styled game, but in 3-D, with big levels to roam around in and lots of buildings to enter and battle soldiers in. The tongue-in-cheek humor is pretty well received and the game itself, while not revolutionary, is still fun enough to score decent reviews.

Aquaria: A Sony original RPG that takes place in an underwater world, in big domes where the human population lives, as they combat a threat that puts their homes in jeopardy. It's somewhat like Legend Of Dragoon in graphical style, but isn't nearly as well received as that game was IOTL (essentially, if Legend Of Dragoon is made ITTL, this game would be considered a "trial run" for it). Decent reviews, all right sales, but nothing special.

Danger Danger!: A VERY fast-paced and colorful four player puzzle game involving a large arena where players must compete to gain territory by matching colored stones and using items. It also has a single player mode but this is mostly considered a multiplayer game. Probably the second best Ultra Nintendo puzzle game of the year behind Ultra World Of Color.

Cave Crew: The Stoneland Chronicles: A really generic 3-D platformer starring a group of cavemen. The graphics are rather poor and the combat is really not fun (enemies take a LOT of hits to kill, even weak ones). One of the poorer action games of the year.

Lost And Found: A 2-D adventure game where the main character explores a series of dungeons, finding colorful artifacts while dodging enemies and solving puzzles. A fairly straightforward game but considered somewhat of a cult hit.

Star Angels: A colorful anime-styled fighting game starring magical girls, which became a major hit in Japan. Think OTL's Skullgirls but with higher production values (at least for the time). It's a 3-D fighting game but with 2-D-esque movement and a really quirky original soundtrack, it's very well reviewed but sales are mediocre.

Bonecrusher: A really violent 3-D fighting game with fierce creatures dueling it out. It's fairly generic in terms of gameplay and reviews are decent at best, but with lots of advertising and hype it's still a pretty high selling game.

**Breaker Ride:** A watersports racing game, sort of like Wave Race but focusing on racing rather than stunts. Graphically beautiful but quite challenging, the game gets decent reviews but isn't as polished in terms of gameplay as Wave Race.

**Rumor:** A 2-D platformer/collecting game starring a boy named Rumor who journeys through a mysterious land. The gameplay is fairly generic but the graphics and characters are quite creative and the game does have some degree of charm.

**Despair: The Seven:** An RPG about a young man who must acquire runes to defeat dark lords that are the embodiment of the seven sins. It's an action RPG and the graphics and gameplay are somewhat average, sales are pretty low due to the dark source material.

**Strike Team:** A 3D beat-em-up game about a group of special operations police officers who hunt down criminals. The plot of the game involves the team infiltrating and taking out a gang. The combat is somewhat repetitive and the storyline is fairly predictable. The game gets a mediocre critical reception but it does get a good deal of pre-release hype.

**Serratopia:** A fast paced 2-D platformer with a focus on combat and three protagonists, two boys and one girl, that players switch between over the course of the story as the three of them explore seven different worlds and more than 40 levels. Praised for its graphics and storyline, it's released the same month as Yoshi's Story and is significantly better received, providing the challenge and level variety that Yoshi's Story lacked.

**Critical Incident:** An FPS taking place in a huge lab after a science experiment leads to mutated beasts taking over a facility. Compared somewhat to Half-Life on the PC, but the comparisons are mostly unfavorable. Sells decently well because of pre-release hype but is considered a disappointment compared to games like Goldeneye 007.

**Knights Of The Round Table:** A 3-D platformer starring a young knight trying to make it into King Arthur's round table. Not a collectathon like other 3-D platformers of the time, it's actually a task-based platformer and has a pretty good combat system, along with decent voice acting. The game is pretty fun and though it's somewhat kiddy, it does get good reviews and good sales.

**Monkey Shines:** A 3-D platformer starring a playful monkey. The game is somewhat short and the levels are uninspired and repetitive.

**Blue Nexus:** A sci-fi themed RPG about a starship crew who gets caught up in a mysterious intergalactic war when their ship is attacked and they are left as the only survivors among thousands of dead. The game is full of plot twists and is indeed quite storyline-heavy, the game is considered among the better RPGs of the year.

Aeroboy: Another Nintendo franchise starter, this game is a combination action/flying game somewhat of a hybrid between Star Fox and NiGHTS. Your character is a boy who is given the ability to fly via the use of various implements (wings, jetpacks, balloons, etc.) and he swoops down to protect civilians and attack enemies, getting stronger through defense (blocking and absorbing enemy attacks charges Aeroboy's own attacks). Designed by Satoru Iwata, the game takes advantage of the Ultra Nintendo's graphical capabilities to show beautiful landscapes, while the gameplay itself is very easy to pick up and fun. Gets a very good critical and commercial reception.

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*Saturn:*

Nightsyren: A Kenji Eno directed game about two young women who are trapped in a city undergoing a hideous attack from demonic forces. The women must work together to survive. This game is a bit more conventional than some of Eno's other releases, it plays somewhat like Resident Evil, though there's a greater emphasis on cooperation between the two characters and it has a complex battle system.

King Crab: A 3-D platformer starring an anthropomorphic crab who must explore a sea-based land in order to defeat bad guys and protect his friends. It's regarded as one of the year's best 3-D platformers and the main character becomes a mascot of sorts for Sega.

Hard Charge: A racing game with an emphasis on speed, focused on cars that are a hybrid of NASCAR stock cars and exotic supercars. Somewhat less realistic than Gran Turismo but also a bit more accessible in terms of difficulty, it's a more "outlaw" alternative to Gran Turismo and becomes a very popular racing game for the Saturn.

Song Of Spring: An anime-styled RPG somewhat like OTL's Grandia, starring young elves in a forest that's slowly dying, who must travel the world. A cult classic and a high quality game featuring a beautiful score, full voice acting, and three full discs.

Z-Stomper: A very strange 3-D platformer that plays like a straight-forward action game, there are very few collectibles. It stars a main character with massively oversized feet who hops around stomping on foes and terrain. While it's a weird game it gets a lot of praise for its unique mood and is regarded a lot like Toejam and Earl back on the Genesis.

Tokyo Detective: Unforgivable Crimes: A noirish detective game that combines stealth, third person shooter gameplay, and detective/visual novel style puzzles and mystery solving as you investigate a series of murders and other unspeakable crimes in a dark version of Tokyo. Another cultish game but reviews are fairly decent.

Hunters Of The Borderlands: A western-themed RPG somewhat like Wild Arms, though the

Western themes are a bit more subtle in this one. It's a unique RPG in that there are very few towns, most of this game is spent hunting, fighting, and exploring and the game is fairly open ended, though there is a definite final boss.

Drillin': An action/adventure hybrid where you're an explorer sent into the holes created by gigantic drills that pierce the ground in uncharted lands. As you explore the various drilled dungeons, you collect weapons and treasures while piecing together the game's puzzling storyline. A generally lighthearted game.

Skylein II: The World Beyond: A sequel to 1995's original Mega Charger RPG *Lords Of Skylein*, this game spans three discs and takes place 50 years after the original game with an entirely new cast of playable characters (and maybe one or two old ones).

Angels: An action-RPG exclusive to The Ring, the game stars angelic characters as they battle a threat to their heavenly world. Showcases spectacular graphics and incredible combo moves, it's considered a far superior game to MagiQuest and possibly on par with Elements Of Mana.

Spare Parts: A 3-D platformer exclusive to the Ring, featuring some excellent graphics and huge worlds, it features young robot children who have to explore giant scrap cities to collect parts and build machines to rebuild society. Considered possibly Saturn's best game of the year.

The Oceanfarer: A Ring-exclusive game about an ocean exploring pirate captain, known for its incredible water graphics. This game is actually considered a bit of a disappointment, it was supposed to be the Saturn's answer to the Seven Seas series but ultimately comes across as too dark and too short. Still gets decent reviews.

Cat Attack!: A puzzle/adventure game somewhat like Bomberman where you have to evade lethal but cute cartoon cats. Sort of a precursor to Chu Chu Rocket, though there's less emphasis on scoring, multiplayer, and fast moves and it's more of a maze game.

Swordslayer: A side-scrolling action/beat 'em up about a brutal ninja who's out for revenge. Somewhat simplistic gameplay but features beautiful graphics and is quite popular for its dark and gritty mood and badass main character.

Brawl Balls: A sports game where teams combine elements of ball sports with vicious combat. Has a heavy emphasis on multiplayer with 4-way matches that can have four players competing at once.

Arbiter Of Sin: A very dark FPS for the Ring, where a gun wielding soldier is given demonic powers to go back to medieval times and wipe out the members of a Templar-like religious order who have been given access to futuristic technology of their own. Features a very

popular multiplayer mode and is extremely controversial but also extremely well received critically and sells very well.

Prismaclash: A 2-D fighting game focusing on beautiful, anime-styled women and cute bishounen men. Very colorful with lots of combos, it plays extremely well though it doesn't sell quite as well as other fighting games because of its niche appeal.

Air Warriors: A Top Gun-styled Ring exclusive aerial combat game. It's prettier than Ace Combat but doesn't play quite as well, one of the more underwhelming early Ring games, though it sells fairly well.

Adventures Of The Jungle Pals: A 3-D platformer taking place in the jungle, allowing you to pick between five anthropomorphic animal characters each with different abilities. Though not regarded as a great game, it's very popular among families.

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*"And while the Ultra Nintendo's latest 3D platformers are inferior emulations of Super Mario Dimensions, it's the Saturn's platforming hits that are innovating and taking the genre to new heights. It's one of the greatest ironies in gaming today, and what makes the upcoming Sonic the Hedgehog 5 the year's most anticipated game."*

-from the Sonic the Hedgehog 5 page on "Savage Stan's Saturn Source", posted on January 28, 1999

*"What was once Telenet Japan's flagship series has turned into one of the most generic game franchises on the market. The first SNES-CD Valis revived the series and held infinite promise. Ultra Valis is just another cookie-cutter 3D game. Telenet Japan's creative energies are clearly being spent elsewhere."*

-from the 2.75 review of Ultra Valis: Knight Of Light in the February 1999 issue of GamePro

*"I think both companies, Nintendo and Sega, have done a lot of things right over the last decade. Video games are in so many homes now, they're a big part of the culture. That's why Microsoft Windows has such a strong focus on games as a big selling point for our computers. We know people love to play games. Our customers work hard, and we think they should get to play hard too."*

-Bill Gates, in an interview in the January 1999 issue of PC Gamer

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(Author's Note: I'm changing things up a bit with the reviews. For the last few "years" of this timeline, I've been doing SNES-CD and Ultra Nintendo *Electronic Gaming Monthly* reviews exclusively. I'm retooling the reviews and instead of *Electronic Gaming Monthly* only, I'll be listing two scores: the EGM review average (which is averaged among three instead of four reviews, since EGM began going to three reviewers per game in 1999 IOTL), and the Gamespot review score. I've been doing the EGM scores a bit improperly anyway, I listed the same four guys for every game when of course in reality EGM's Review Crew

consisted of about 8-12 people who would review different games during the same month. So with this average score, I don't have to list any names and it's a lot more realistic. In addition, I can now add/remove review sources easily over time, so later on I might add IGN, GameInformer, etc., with Metacritic scores coming in eventually once Metacritic appears ITTL. I'll also begin doing Saturn games, as well as a few Game Boy games on occasion. The rule of thumb is this: I'm going to continue posting reviews of every Ultra Nintendo game, though not EVERY Ultra Nintendo game...even in prior years with SNES-CD games, I imagine there are obscure/annualized/shovelware games that came out but that wouldn't have been reviewed in any source, so I didn't mention them as part of the timeline. I'll also be including Saturn reviews, though the only Saturn games mentioned ITTL are the significant ones, I imagine we cover about 33-50% of North American Saturn releases. So with all that explained, here are this month's reviews.)

*Ultra Nintendo:*

### **Beetle Adventure Racing**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "A fairly by the numbers affair, but the courses are nifty and the cars look pretty great.")

Gamespot: 8.7 (quote: "Really easy to pick up, but ramps up to a satisfying challenge after easing players in.")

### **Monaco Grand Prix**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "The cars handle quite well, and though this game doesn't have the variety of a *Gran Turismo*, it's still very realistic and exciting.")

Gamespot: 7.2 (quote: "While we would've liked to see more cars, the racing itself is solid.")

### **NBA In The Zone '99**

EGM: 6.2 (quote: "The graphics are pretty bad considering how strong the Ultra Nintendo is.")

Gamespot: 7.0 (quote: "The game plays well, but it could've used some visual polish.")

### **Shadow Man**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "This game is creepy as all hell, making good use of the Ultra's sound capabilities even if it's pretty generic in terms of gameplay.")

Gamespot: 7.4 (quote: "We loved this game's horror aesthetic, and it does a good job of adapting the source material.")

### **The Curse Of Monkey Island**

EGM: 8.3 (quote: "Another fantastic Monkey Island adventure, with better presentation than ever.")

Gamespot: 7.9 (quote: "Even with the voice acting and animation enhancements from previous games in the series, it still seems a bit primitive for the Ultra Nintendo.")

### **Ultra BattleTanx**

EGM: 6.8 (quote: "It compares pretty well to Saturn's Desert Tank, but the storyline is only a thin veneer.")

Gamespot: 5.9 (quote: "It starts out great but quickly gets repetitive.")

### **Ultra Harvest Moon**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "There's so much to do that it's easy to get overwhelmed.")

Gamespot: 9.0 (quote: "A lovely game, full of life and plenty of activities for your young farmer.")

### **Ultra Valis: Knight Of Light**

EGM: 6.5 (quote: "A decent reboot of the series that does hit a few snags, mostly that it's quite short.")

Gamespot: 6.8 (quote: "Valis goes the generic platformer route, which is a shame because this series was so fun in 2-D.")

### **Swordslayer**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "This game isn't much better on the Ultra than it was on the Saturn, but the animation is a bit smoother.")

Gamespot: N/A (Saturn port, original received a 7.8)

### **Hell Freezes Over**

EGM: 4.0 (quote: "One of the most unoriginal RTS games I've ever played, and that's before you start seeing numerous glitches.")

Gamespot: 2.3 (quote: "The title of the game is accurate because I felt like that's when I'd start having fun playing it.")

*Saturn Games:*

### **Orb Puncher**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "While the idea to combine a fighter with a puzzle game is an innovative one, the fighting portion itself is fairly bare-bones, making this somewhat more of a straight-up puzzler.")

Gamespot: 8.4 (quote: "A superbly fun game that requires rapid reflexes and lots of quick thinking.")

### **Zodiac World**

EGM: 8.8 (quote: "Maybe the best platformer to ever come out on the Saturn, and that includes Sonic 4.")

Gamespot: 9.5 (quote: "Some of the challenges are nearly perfect, and the game's boss fights, based on the signs of the zodiac, are some of the most amazing you'll ever play.")

### **Fleet: A Dancing Adventure**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "We definitely have to give the battle system credit for being very original for the genre.")

Gamespot: 5.6 (quote: "While combining RPG gameplay and rhythm game controls is a unique idea, the execution is flawed...at best.")

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## **Zodiac World: The Details**

The Saturn's first major release of 1999, *Zodiac World* is released on January 14, 1999. The game, produced by *Vectorman* developers BlueSky, is a 3-D platformer/adventure title about a boy named Juni who must gather up the twelve ancient Zodiac Stones to battle an ancient evil that threatens his world. The game has a bigger focus on action and combat than a lot of other platformers, as Juni progresses through the world and acquires the Zodiac Stones, he'll gain special powers that will enhance either his movement, melee combat, special attacks, or will give him a special weapon. The game is somewhat more streamlined than a lot of other 3-D platformers, instead of roaming an open world and collecting items, the game is divided into levels that are accessed via a central hub. As each Stone is collected, a new world is opened up. When you enter each world, there's a separate hub that will take you to each level within the world, and each level has its own objective to complete, whether it be reaching the end of the level, finding an item, rescuing a person, or defeating an enemy or enemies. Each world also has a secret level that is opened up via completing a secret objective in one of the world's other levels, complete that secret level and you'll earn a special reward, complete ALL 13 secret levels in the game and you'll earn one more secret level that you can beat to get the game's best ending. The game is compatible with either the base Saturn or the Ring, using the Ring enhances the game's graphics somewhat and also opens up an additional playable mode that makes certain bosses and enemies more difficult and complex.

*Zodiac World's* plot involves Juni and his family, a family of explorers, discovering an ancient temple ruin. Juni's curious older sister Liza opens a door despite Juni telling her not to, causing an evil energy to rush out into Liza and possess her before rushing out into the entire world. Juni's family is overwhelmed by the energy and Juni is left alone. When he stumbles into the empty chamber he discovers that the only way to stop the darkness is by finding the 12 Zodiac Stones and returning them to the temple. This is the start of Juni's mission, on which he must defeat the evil monsters the dark energy has created, find new friends and allies to help him, and save his family including his sister Liza.

### *World One: Capricorn*

Juni must explore a pasture-like area and help out a young farmer boy save the farm from the dark energies swirling around it. The boss of the world is a mutated goat beast that has crawled out of the river to attack the farm.

### *World Two: Sagittarius*

Juni explores a huge wooded forest area in search of the Dark Hunter, who has begun targeting the forest's innocent woodland creatures as his prey. He finds and defeats the hunter to claim the second stone.

### *World Three: Scorpio*

Juni explores a desert area and must save a beautiful Egyptian queen from being sacrificed

to a hideous scorpion monster.

*World Four: Libra*

Juni explores an ancient medieval city that has been reformed by the dark energy and is being ruled over by an evil judge who sentences innocent people to terrible punishments.

*World Five: Virgo*

Juni explores a Greek Temple world and befriends a lovely young woman who is not all that she seems...in fact she is the leader of an evil cult, and uses her magic to put young maidens under her spell. Juni must defeat her to claim the fifth Zodiac Stone.

*World Six: Leo*

Juni crosses into a Roman-like world, where he is eventually forced to battle a great and powerful lion in the Coliseum.

*World Seven: Cancer*

Juni makes his way to a beach town under attack from a huge and powerful crab monster, he must defeat the crab monster to claim the seventh stone.

*World Eight: Gemini*

Juni returns to his own home town, which is under siege by a gang of evildoers led by a vicious pair of cruel twins.

*World Nine: Taurus*

Juni battles his way through a fiery forge world, before battling against a great mechanical bull monster.

*World Ten: Aries*

Juni ventures up a huge mountain, all the while helping the people and creatures he finds there. Once he reaches the summit he must come face to face with the evil spirit of the mountain, a great and powerful ram beast.

*World Eleven: Pisces*

Juni goes deep under the sea to help an undersea city of mermaids under siege by a hideous sea monster.

*World Twelve: Aquarius*

All the while that Juni has been collecting the twelve Gemini Stones, he's been pursuing his sister Liza, who has been the one causing many of the dark and evil events that Juni's had to prevent. He finally pursues his sister through a portal, to a dark and twisted false utopia where his family is being held prisoner. He is forced to battle Liza herself, exorcising her

possession and gathering the last Zodiac Stone.

### *World Thirteen: Serpentarius*

Juni has saved his family and now he must save the world. He returns to the temple and places the Zodiac Stones, but the darkness has grown too strong...he must go deeper into the temple, completing the final few levels to battle the darkness incarnate in the form of a terrifying snake monster. Once he defeats the darkness, the world is truly saved.

*Zodiac World* gets extremely good reviews for its gameplay length and combat complexity, and is regarded as Sega's third great family platformer in three months, after *Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted* and *Spare Parts*. It eventually becomes Sega's best selling platformer since *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*, even outstripping sales of *Keen* and *Spare Parts*. A Saturn platformer bundle which consists of the Saturn, the Ring, *Sonic 4*, *Sonic Jam*, *Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted*, *Spare Parts*, and *Zodiac World* is eventually announced at that year's E3, retailing for \$299.99, which is regarded as a spectacularly good deal for new Saturn purchasers (especially since the base Ultra Nintendo with just *Super Mario Dimensions* is still retailing for \$299.99) and becomes one of the best-selling Saturn bundles ever put on sale.

*“There's been a bit of a role reversal of sorts as of late, which the recent release of Zodiac World seems to accentuate. The family-friendly platformer joins a series of platformer hits released for the Saturn over the past year or so, giving Sega's machine a reputation for producing quality platforming games. In contrast, the Ultra Nintendo is preparing to release Metal Gear Solid, one of the year's most adult-oriented games, and this follows the M-rated Parasite Eve in the company's recent release schedule. Could the Saturn be rebranding itself as a family machine, especially with Sonic 5 in the pipeline? Is this their new strategy, or just a temporary aberration? We'll keep an eye on these trends in the coming months.”*  
-from an editorial in the February 1999 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

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With its graphical enhancements and the addition of voice acting, a series first, *The Curse Of Monkey Island* was one of the most beloved PC games of 1997, and it was only inevitable that it would get a release on the Ultra Nintendo, with the two previous games having been big hits for the SNES-CD. *The Curse of Monkey Island* was ported nearly unchanged to the Ultra, with little in the way of additions or enhancements, though it was still a fantastic game and it was thought that it would be one of the biggest hits of early 1999 for the Ultra. But while *Curse* sold quite well, indeed, it was comfortably the best selling new Ultra Nintendo title of January 1999, it continued the trend established by 1996's port of *LeChuck's Revenge* by having declining sales from the previous port. Indeed, it became the first Nintendo *Monkey Island* game not to achieve a million sales.

It certainly wasn't the game's fault. *Curse of Monkey Island* was a perfect port, and critics scored it highly...though not as highly as they did the PC version. Many critics thought that *Curse* seemed a bit primitive on the Ultra Nintendo, that maybe a more streamlined, modern remake of the game as opposed to the point-and-click gameplay would have been preferred (of course, many of these same critics criticized *Ultra Detective Club* for NOT being a point-and-click title...guess there's just no pleasing some people). Still, the game was hardly a critical flop, it averaged solid 8s and 9s from most outlets, and MTV's popular *GameTV* gave it a fairly glowing 9/10 review, including a perfect 5 from Lyssa Fielding.

Perhaps *Curse of Monkey Island's* lukewarm sales performance was just part of the overall post-Christmas, pre-*Metal Gear Solid* slump that the Ultra Nintendo was in at the time, the first since its North American release back in November 1997. Those who actually played Guybrush Threepwood's third grand adventure on the Ultra Nintendo generally weren't disappointed.

-excerpted from "Monkey Island On Nintendo: An Adventurous History", an article on Kotaku.com

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Which brings us to *Ultra Valis: Knight Of Light*, Telenet Japan's 3-D reboot of their popular hack and slash adventure series. This game takes Yuuko into a brand new world, the Eclipsis Peaks, to battle a swarm of demons and harpies threatening the great mountain kingdom there. While in Eclipsis, Yuuko must rescue the beautiful princess Kyuri and defeat the Dark Lord Skullfractur to save the kingdom. It's chock-full of anime cutscenes, though it's somewhat light on innovation: it's essentially a standard platforming action title with cutscenes as a bridge between play sequences. After working on two major RPGs (*Tale Lemuria* and *Strange Seed: The Tree of Life*), the company's creative energies seem to be a bit burned out, though the company does have *Soulqueen 2: The Beyond* coming out later this year (it recently released in Japan to excellent reviews but somewhat disappointing sales). *Soulqueen 2's* announcement for the West came as a shock to some. The performance of *Soulqueen* in North America was disappointing for the company, and the most of the sequel's hype is coming from internet sites and not from the mainstream gaming press. Still, Telenet Japan seems confident that the cult fanbase around the first game will propel greater sales here. The company has two other titles releasing this year in Japan, though only one of them, a quirky 2-D platformer called *Cyringe*, has been announced for a Western release. Work has already begun on the next game in the *Tale* series, and that's sure to get the company back in the attention of the mainstream gaming press. At one time, Telenet Japan was poised to become Nintendo's top second party game publisher, but the surging success of Rare has pushed Telenet Japan way out of the spotlight, and other companies have passed it even for the number two position. It seems likely that only the strong sales of *Tale Lemuria* are keeping Telenet Japan in a good financial position.

-from an article on Gamespot.com, published on January 23, 1999

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Natsume's *Ultra Harvest Moon* introduced voice acting to the series for the very first time, though only in specific animated cutscenes such as wedding proposals or significant milestones in your farming career. The game essentially followed the same basic gameplay as the SNES-CD *Harvest Moon*, only with 3-D graphics, an expanded town, and more activities for your farmer to perform. You could even build enough windmills to sell off excess electrical power to the town! A notable addition to *Ultra Harvest Moon* was the scenario mode, which kind of operated like the scenario modes in the *SimCity* games. You were put on a farm with a specific goal to accomplish and you had a limited time in which to do so. Some, like acquiring a certain amount of money with a fairly limited farm set-up, were quite simple. Others, such as extricating yourself from a romantic entanglement with one girl in order to marry another, were quite tricky. These scenarios added another layer of gameplay to the typical *Harvest Moon* experience, and became a staple of the series,

eventually leading to a fully structured Story Mode later on that separated itself completely from the normal, freeform *Harvest Moon* gameplay. *Ultra Harvest Moon* was a strong seller. In fact, it was the third best selling new video game of the month, behind *Zodiac World* and *The Curse Of Monkey Island*. It established new trends for the series that continue to this day, and also placed the series firmly on the North American radar, one of the few quirky Japanese game franchises to really make that leap.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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### **Super Smash Bros. Roster Revealed!**

Well, at least the first 12 characters, anyway. With six secret characters to unlock, that gives *Super Smash Bros.* a total of 18 playable characters. From what we've seen of Japanese footage of the game, here are the initial 12:

Mario  
Yoshi  
Donkey Kong  
Pikachu  
Fox McCloud  
Link  
Zelda  
Samus Aran  
Kirby  
Captain Falcon  
Shad  
Woofle

We'll be sure to give you information on the unlockable characters once they're revealed! A growing rumor is that Cloud Strife is available in the game immediately if you have a *Final Fantasy VII* save on your memory card and that Simon Belmont is available immediately if you have a *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* save on your memory card, but how to get these characters through normal gameplay has yet to be found through our first hour or so of playing!

-from an article on gaming-age.com, posted on January 27, 1999

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Ted Crosley: *Zodiac World* sort of reminded me of *The Three Caballeros* in its scope. There's so much of this game, and the levels are pretty short and sweet.

Alex Stansfield: Right, it's a kind of "bite size gaming" that stands in contrast to the larger, more open levels of *Super Mario Dimensions* and *The Dreamers*. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, but in *Zodiac World*, it really works.

Ted: Yeah, though some of the attempts to kind of "force" the zodiac are a bit lame. I mean, some of the zodiac signs like a bull or whatever make awesome boss fights, but the very first boss is this...water...goat thing?

Alex: For Capricorn, yeah.

Ted: I mean, couldn't they have come up with something else for that? And then for Libra, the boss is an evil judge.

Alex: Sometimes an evil judge works. Like Judge Doom in *Roger Rabbit*.

Ted: Yeah, but this wasn't that.

Alex: Or *Judge Judy*, she's pretty evil.

Ted: \*laughing\* But apart from the silly bosses, this was one of the best platformers I've played in a long time. I'm giving it a 4.5.

Alex: I'm gonna give it the same, a 4.5. This game is highly recommended, absolute must play for anyone who loves a quality action game.

-excerpted from the January 12, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Adrian Fry: It's good to see that even after *Gran Turismo* came out and made all other racing games on the Ultra Nintendo obsolete, that developers are still trying new things.

Brittany Saldita: Wait, are we talking about the same game? Because *Monaco Grand Prix* is the same cookie cutter racing experience that pretty much every F-1 style game has delivered over the past couple years. The track editor mode is too hard to work with and the career mode is a pretty poor facsimile of the great single player mode in *Gran Turismo*. This game is skippable, at best.

Adrian: I actually liked how streamlined it is compared to *Gran Turismo*, it's just a pure Formula One racing experience and one of the best around. Especially if you use the steering wheel accessory, the controls are stellar. The graphics are lovely, the cars look great, this is a really, REALLY good game.

Brittany: And everything you just said can also be said about *Gran Turismo*. Look, *Monaco Grand Prix* is made technically well, but if I'm going to play a racing game, it's gotta be different. Look at *Beetle Adventure Racing*, that game actually tries a bit of innovation. Here, it's the same game as every other Formula One racer made before it. Try something new!

Adrian: *Monaco Grand Prix*, I thought was really fun and I'm giving it a 4.0

Brittany: \*groaning and shaking her head\* Nope, you can pass on this game fairly safely. It gets a 2 out of 5 from me.

Adrian: You don't even like racing.

Brittany: True, not a fan of any of it. Racing games are fun though. Not this one, but some

of them are.

(...)

Lyssa Fielding: Aside from the killer tunes, *Fleet: The Dancing Adventure* definitely isn't the BEST RPG, but can we give it credit for trying something new?

Gary Westhouse: You know, as a rhythm game, it's really good. It made me deliberately want to get into battles so I could fight enemies and use my moves on them.

Lyssa: Some of the best attacks are SO tough to get, but if you're great at *Parappa* or *Spice World*, you'll nail your button presses and just be hitting for massive damage every single time. That DOES make the game, even the final bosses, a bit too easy, but it's still fun if you've got a lot of skill.

Gary: And if you suck at rhythm games, you can just use items to compensate for your lack of rhythm.

Lyssa: Just like chugging a beer in real life!

Gary: Although you probably would have to be drunk to get much enjoyment out of the....really...really cheesy storyline.

Lyssa: It's campy! ...but yeah, it is pretty bad.

\*A quick scene from the game is shown, where the main character Fleet is being told by the Great Rhythm Guru, a guy with a huge afro, that he has to collect the Disco Ball of Destiny\*

Gary: Is....is this what game developers think is "groovy"?

Lyssa: \*rolling her eyes\* They should've just let me write this thing.

Gary: If you're into rhythm games and RPGs, check this one out. It's a solid 3.5 out of 5 in my book.

Lyssa: I'll give it a 4, I had a ton of fun playing it even if the RPG aspects were no *Final Fantasy*.

Gary: Although NOW I wish someone would do a *Final Fantasy* with the dancing battle system. Maybe in *Final Fantasy VIII*, your giant robots can get down?

Lyssa: Oh that would be AMAZING!

(...)

\*Ted and Lyssa are sitting on the couch on either side of Stone Cold Steve Austin, who's being interviewed as part of the promotion for January 24's Royal Rumble.\*

Lyssa: It's such an honor to have you here, Stone Cold.

Stone Cold Steve Austin: Well, I don't play any video games, so I ain't gonna be talkin' about them, but if you wanna hear about how I'm gonna be whoopin' some sumbitches at the Royal Rumble, I can sure as hell talk about that.

Ted: Actually, that's exactly what we want to talk to you about, since I know for a fact you want your WWF Championship back.

Stone Cold: More than anything in the world. Right now, the Rock's got it, and if he's the guy who's ass I gotta kick at Wrestlemania to get my title back, then so be it. But first I gotta win the Royal Rumble, and there's not a damn soul alive who's gonna stand in my way.

Lyssa: Well, if you DO know about any video game characters, I would like to ask which one you see yourself as the most?

Stone Cold: I've played *Mortal Kombat* a few times before, and Sub-Zero is one stone cold son of a bitch, just like me. So I'd have to say him, but if the two of us were in the ring together, I'd whip his ass just like everyone else.

Ted: You know, Owen Hart's been talking quite a bit about winning the Rumble himself.

Stone Cold: Owen Hart's a good friend of mine, I helped him get his job back after he pissed off Vince at Wrestlemania. But the Rattlesnake's not afraid to tussle with anybody. That's why I'm always saying, "don't trust anybody". Now I've run with Owen before, but I don't trust him, and he shouldn't trust me. And if I'm in position to toss him out of the ring, you bet your ass I'm gonna do it.

Lyssa: But he's your friend!

Stone Cold: Little missy, there's one thing you need to know about Stone Cold, is that Stone Cold don't have any friends, and that's the bottom line, because Stone Cold said so!

Lyssa: Well, I hope he's not watching the show right now, if he heard that-

Stone Cold: I bet he is watchin' it, I see him back in the locker room sometimes playin' on his little Nintendo, so I'm sure he's got his eyeballs on the television screen right now. \*looks right at the camera\* And I'll tell you this, Owen, if you're watching. I ain't afraid to work with ya in the Rumble. I ain't afraid to help ya toss some of them big sumbitches out of the ring. But if you turn your back on me for one second, you're gonna get bit same as everybody else who turns his eyes away from the Rattlesnake.

Ted: So let me change the subject a bit. You know former WWF wrestler Jesse Ventura almost became governor of Minnesota, he lost to Norm Coleman by just a few thousand votes up there...do you see a future in politics in the cards for yourself?

Stone Cold: \*laughs\* I ain't getting' into no damn politics, I think they're all a buncha mealy-mouth sumbitches cryin' and moanin' about stupid crap that don't even matter. The only thing that matters is how big a can of whoopass you can open up on somebody. But I'll say this, if I was president, the national bird would be the finger. \*flips off the camera with both hands\*

Lyssa: Well, it's been lovely having you on the show, Stone Cold, is there anything else you'd like to say?

Stone Cold: Got any beer?

Ted: I think we do over here in the fridge!

\*Ted takes Stone Cold over to the fridge where he takes out a couple of beers, smashes them together and begins guzzling them down in typical Stone Cold fashion, getting beer all over the place\*

Lyssa: Oh, he's making a huge mess!

Ted: \*shrugs and grabs a couple more beers, tossing one to Stone Cold before toasting with him and guzzling one down with him as Stone Cold's entrance theme begins to play and the show goes to commercial as Lyssa just sits there on the couch shaking her head\*

-excerpted from the January 19, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

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### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: January 1999**

1. Killer Instinct Ultra
2. Final Fantasy VII
3. Twisted Metal 2
4. Super Mario Dimensions
5. Tale Lemuria
6. Metal Clash
7. Ballistic Limit 2
8. Kid Icarus: Guardian
9. Gran Turismo
10. Ultra World Of Color

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Charts: January 1999**

1. Virtua Fighter 3
2. Zodiac World
3. Shenmue
4. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
5. Arbiter Of Sin
6. Spare Parts
7. Turok 2: Seeds Of Evil
8. Tomb Raider III
9. Shining Force IV
10. Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted

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The Green Bay Packers entered their 1998-99 NFL campaign looking to win their third straight NFL championship, repeating the feat that the Dallas Cowboys had accomplished earlier in the decade. But when Brett Favre went down with a season ending injury in only the second game of the season, the Packers' hopes were ultimately dashed...which is a shame, because it would have been nice to see if they could have stopped the unstoppable Minnesota Vikings, who achieved the first perfect season since the 1972 Miami Dolphins, going 16-0 during the regular season en route to a Super Bowl victory. The Vikings had one of the most dominant units in NFL history behind the ferocious arm of Randall Cunningham, who had established one of the league's best QB-to-WR hookups with Cris Carter. Carter's 25 touchdown season remains an NFL record, and propelled the Vikings to an incredible 530 points worth of offensive. Combined with one of the league's stiffest defenses, and the Vikings couldn't be stopped. In fact, their opponents only managed to finish within a touchdown of the Vikings twice out of the 19 games they played. That year's other compelling story was the revivification of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. The Buccaneers started with a 3-5 record, and Ryan Leaf was looking to be one of the biggest busts in NFL history. But after what's reported to have been a "heart to heart" talk with coach Tony Dungy, Leaf emerged as that year's second best offensive rookie behind only the Saints' dynamic Peyton Manning. The Buccaneers won seven of their last eight games, losing only to the perfect Vikings, and ended up as a wild card at 10-6. Once there, the Buccaneers upset the Dallas Cowboys in the wild card round and the dynamic "Dirty Bird" Falcons in the divisional round to make it to the NFC Championship, where they'd face the Vikings (who'd just finished mopping the floor with Peyton Manning's Saints in the divisional round, picking him off five times en route to a 42-10 victory). Though Leaf's Bucs would come up short, 30-17, the Buccaneers hung in the game until midway through the fourth quarter, and Ryan Leaf proved to be one of the year's most inspiring sports stories. On the AFC side, the Denver Broncos finally broke through after knocking off Dan Marino's Miami Dolphins in the conference championship, setting up a showdown between a pair of teams that had lost four Super Bowls but had never won one. And in the end, the Vikings proved why they'd been the NFL's best team all year, beating the Broncos 35-14. John Elway would remain with Denver for one more year to continue chasing a Super Bowl ring, but for the moment, the Minnesota Vikings were the NFL's best team, and looked to be strong favorites to repeat in 2000.

In that year's NFL Draft, the New England Patriots had the top pick after a disastrous 1998-99 campaign. They used the pick to draft quarterback Donovan McNabb, passing over Tim Couch, who was picked up by the Philadelphia Eagles at #2. Ricky Williams went to the St. Louis Rams at #3. The Green Bay Packers, who'd been left reeling after Favre's injury, ended up with the #7 overall pick, which they used on running back Edgerrin James.

-excerpted from the article "NFL Recap: 1999" on Bleacherreport.com

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### **January 31, 1999**

"This damn Super Bowl sucks!" shouted a party goer as he watched John Elway throw his third interception of the game. "John Elway's a washed up bum!"

"I think Rich had money on the Broncos," whispered Tom Kalinske's wife to her husband as the two sat on the couch together at Kalinske's home. The Kalinskes were hosting a Super Bowl party, and though Tom had invited a few fellow Sega employees to his house to watch

the game, most of the attendees were either family members or friends from outside work.

“That or he's had one too many drinks,” Tom whispered back. “Just hope he doesn't start swearing too much, the kids are in the room.”

Tom's daughters seemed mostly uninterested in the game, though Ashley had seemed fairly invested in it before it became a blowout after an 89-yard interception return before halftime put the Vikings up 21-7. With the game now nearly out of reach for the Broncos, Tom thought it safe to go into his office and check a couple of e-mails from work. The news from Sega had been positive, for a change. The Ultra Nintendo had seen its steepest month-to-month North American sales decline since its release there, while the Saturn, bolstered by the strength of *Zodiac World*, had dropped much more modestly. The success of games like *Zodiac World* and *Spare Parts* was exactly what Kalinske had needed to see: something to build upon, in this case, the Saturn's growing library of quality 3-D platformers. That would be the thrust of a new marketing push for the company that would carry them all the way to the release of *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*.

“*Saturn: A Family System*,” thought Kalinske. It certainly wouldn't be the next tagline for commercials, but it was an idea to carry forward. Sega had *momentum*, something it hadn't had in a long time, and Kalinske was prepared to seize upon the opportunity. He opened up the two e-mails. The first one was a congratulations from Hayao Nakayama on the successful launch of *Zodiac World*. The second was a company directive. “....damn.”

Kalinske read the e-mail. The scheduled layoffs hadn't been scaled back...he was going to have to let a few dozen employees go. He let out a sigh and slumped back in his chair. One of the people he'd been planning on laying off was someone he'd invited to his Super Bowl party. He was one of the last on the layoff list, if the layoffs had been scaled back, Kalinske would've been able to retain him...but he'd have to go in the very next morning and let him know that he was being fired.

And then he'd have to lay out his new strategy for the company's new platformer-centric marketing strategy in a meeting immediately afterward. The meeting would also address the upcoming multiplatform launch of *Tomb Raider III* and how Sega would be doing their best to make *their* version of the game seem better than the Ultra Nintendo's. They wouldn't be discussing *Metal Gear Solid*...yet. But with its release just three weeks away, it loomed like a dark cloud over the horizon.

“*Tomorrow's gonna be a hell of a long day*,” he thought to himself as he walked back out to the living room. His wife scooted over to make room on the couch, but he shook his head. “I think I'm just gonna head upstairs to bed, got a long day tomorrow...”

“But honey, it's your party,” said his wife, giving him a look of concern. “Just stay down here until the end of the game, there's only seven minutes left in the fourth quarter.”

Kalinske sighed and sat down on the couch next to his wife, looking across the room at the employee he was going to have to fire tomorrow.

“Hey Tom, thanks for having us over to your house, it's been really fun even if the game's a blowout.”

“Sure thing,” Kalinske replied, trying to keep a smile on his face. “*We have momentum now...just remember...we have momentum...Sonic 5 is coming...momentum...*”

If Kalinske's plan worked, it wouldn't matter if *Metal Gear Solid* was a *Temple Of Time*-esque hit. And how ironic would it be if the Saturn's best weapon to take down Mario was the kind of games that Mario had made so huge in the first place?

Those were the thoughts he'd focus on to get to sleep that night, so he could forget how much he liked the man he'd have to fire on Monday.

Though Wired.com states that 1998 was the greatest years in video gaming accord, 1999 was a benchmark year for comics industry in the wake of the speculator market collapse, Marvel's bankruptcy, and subsequent acquisition by NewsCorp. The releases of both *Green Lantern* and *X-Men* started Hollywood's "Superhero Wars" in earnest the previous year where DC/Warner Bros. and Marvel/20th Century Fox would duel each summer in the oughts to see which property ruled the roost. Green Lantern's narrow victory saw a dramatic increase in sales of the comic as well as the launch of a second title in October in conjunction with a new story arc. In the year-long "Torchbearer" arc, the last Guardian of the Universe, Ganthet charged Kyle Rayner with the task of restarting the Green Lantern Corps when a new Corps using yellow rings appears. Additionally, with Hal Jordan dead in the aftermath of Zero Hour, Kyle learns that he inherited the power of Central Power Battery, which he uses to recover the souls of Kilowog, Tomar-Tu, and other Lanterns murdered in "Emerald Twilight" from Nekron's realm.

The second title *Green Lantern: Emerald Warriors* written by John Acruodi and pencilled by Doug Manhke focused on Kyle's then-love interest Jade and John Stewart who became Earth's new Green Lanterns after Kyle's departure. Both arcs ended with the restoration of both the Green Lantern Corps and Central Power Battery on Oa was well as the revelation the power behind the yellow rings was Mongul who made reference to an "Emotional Spectrum." An idea pitched by then production assistant, Geoff Johns, who would briefly take over the main title four year later.

Sales of X-Men saw a noticeable bump, though not to as great a degree as Green Lantern since Uncanny X-Men was Marvel's best-selling title. However, the success of the X-Men film and upcoming anime was the impetus behind the Magneto War, which evolved into a company-wide crossover that included *Avengers*, *Fantastic Four*, and (believe it or not) *Spider-Man*. The premise was a relatively simple one, Magneto reverses the Earth's magnetic poles and issues an ultimatum to the UN for a mutant homeland, which forces the X-Men and Avengers to team up to stop him while Fantastic Four and Spider-Man dealt with the consequences in their self-contained episodes.

"The Magneto War" is significant in itself because of the final confrontation where Magneto threatens to intervene with the X-Men/Avengers plan to use Polaris and Magneto's clone, Joseph to realign the poles. When Xavier's resolve falters when he momentarily neutralizes Magneto, Wolverine decapitates the longtime X-Men foe in revenge for killing Storm. The consequences were far reaching for the X-Men franchise because Wolverine's actions splintered the team into two camps: Xavier/Cyclops faction, which advocated a peaceful coexistence and cooperation with humanity, and Wolverine's, which took a militant stance against mutant extremism.

Meanwhile, *Fantastic Four* was riding on the hype generated by both "Heroes Return" and upcoming film. Marvel went to great lengths to make the title its flagship title once more, even integrating the retired Parker Parker into its supporting cast as Reed Richards protege. Similarly, Johnny Storm frequently crossed over Ben Reilly's Spider-Man titles as member of his supporting cast. This cross-pollination between the titles bore some fruit and bumped up sales as well as produce memorable stories like Scott Lobdell's "The Return of the Bombastic Bag-Man" where a crisis forced Peter Parker to don his humorous alter ego to rescue the Fantastic Four from the Mole Man (no joke!) While it did not placate fans of Peter Parker as "the one, true Spider-Man," it at least gave him a prominent role the Marvel universe while Ben Reilly headlined the comics and video games. Unfortunately, *Fantastic Four* was fighting an uphill battle since not only had Warner Bros. scheduled *Batman Triumphant* for release that summer, the sequel to *Last Son of Krypton*, *Man of Tomorrow* would shatter box office records that November to say nothing Fox's other sci-fi epic, *Star Wars: Episode I*.

1998 was also the year that *Justice League* writer Mark Waid, *Legion* writer Grant Morrison, and relative unknowns Tom Peyer and Mark Millar pitched their polarizing *Superman 2000* relaunch to DC Comics. Though incoming editor Eddie Berganza gave the rubber stamp to proposal and fired regular writers Dan Jurgens and Jerry Ordway in preparation for the new creative teams, but found resistance in DC Comics VP Paul Levitz. Company policy at the time disallowed A-List talent on its Superman and Batman titles. Levitz would have squelched the proposal had *Man of Tomorrow* not been scheduled for release that November. Pressured by both DC and Warner Bros. marketing departments, Levitz eventually greenlighted the revamp for April 1999.

The revamp was not without controversy; message boards across Internet erupted into a firestorm when they learned that after sixty years, Superman would be dropping the red shorts. Similarly, the mainstream media picked up on the story, brings the general public into the debate. "RUINED FOREVER!" Fans cried on Comic Book Resources forums, however, sales saw a dramatic increase. In fact, the newly-rechristened Superman Now would court further controversy later in the year again drive up sales to where the first time in decades, Superman outsold Batman.

"The Final Night" (or derisively known as "the Super-Annulment" in some circles) proved to be the biggest base-breaker in the company's history. Essentially, the story started strongly with Lex Luthor and Brainiac teaming up (again), and reveal Superman's secret identity to the world, placing his supporting cast and Lois Lane in particular in danger. Many fans draw parallels between this story and Alan Moore's "Whatever Happened to the Man of Tomorrow" except that the new Luthor/Brainiac team's plan now threatened even the Fifth Dimension, forcing Superman and Mr. Mxyzptlk to team up. Despite its initial good reception, fans decried the aftermath.

In an act of uncharacteristic spite, Brainiac alters Lois' brain chemistry so that the memory of Clark and Superman being one in the same literally became a poison that would kill. Faced with no other options, Superman turns to Mr. Mxyzptlk for help. Since, the imp is only permitted to do mischief in the Third Dimension, he can only "reset" reality so that Lois never knew and that they would never have been married. Longtime fans, especially one of the post-Crisis on Infinite Earths version of Superman, rose up in arms, accusing DC of pandering to Silver/Bronze Age fans. The furor became so great that *Superman* received attention from the mainstream media when *Batman Triumphant* and *Fantastic Four* duked it out in the box office.

In spite of the criticism it received, "The Final Night" is the defining Superman story of its generation. It had action, suspense, romance, and most of all tragedy. As distasteful as the idea of magically annulling the marriage was to fans, Morrison, Waid, et al. treated it with gravitas and gave it one hell of a send-off. Their waltz among the Aurora Borealis was a particularly well-rendered scene and their final embrace under the Daily Planet globe where Lois whispers that they find each other again as the sun sets. A statement that would prove prophetic as DC would later reverse the decision after Morrison's run on Superman ended.

Though it hardly received any media attention outside of industry trades such as *Wizard Magazine*, WildStorm Productions' sale to Disney was probably the biggest story in comic news in 1998. Since the collapse of the speculator's market in 1993, Jim Lee had been looking for a buyer. While DC Comics expressed interest, Disney outbid them after the successes of the superhero films of the mid to late 90s, which surprised industry insiders as rumors persisted that Disney was interested in purchasing the rights to Valiant Comics properties from Akkaim Entertainment. Granted, Wildstorm's stable of characters was comparatively small, it gave Disney a toehold in the comic book market.

Disney originally had laissez-faire policy towards its acquisition, as the case was for Warren Ellis' *Authority* and *Planetary*, but the staunchly anti-establishment Alan Moore immediately broke ties with WildStorm the moment the sale took effect on January 1, 1999. Likewise, creator-owned titles like Kurt Busiek's *Astro City*, Joe Madurera's *Battle Chasers*, and J. Scott Campbell's *Danger Girl* remained property of their owners. However, Disney took a more direct role in WildStorm-owned properties like *Gen13*, which they transformed (and cleaned up, considering the source material) into an animated series in 2000. However, with a limited stable of characters to choose from and Disney's appetite for a larger market share, the company not only sought more studios to purchase, but also properties to license after the success of the *Legend of Zelda* animated series on the Disney Channel.

-excerpted from the blog "*The Musing Platypus*" by B. Ronning, January 20, 2015

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Apologies for the brevity of this post. However, I would like to note that the [Superman 2000](#) proposal is real and quite an interesting read. Since Paul Levitz gave Waid, Morrison, et. al the keys to the "family car" we can assume such seminal Superman works like *Birthright*, *Red Son*, and *All-Star Superman* never come into existence TTL but elements from them will appear in TTL's Superman titles (Action Comics, Superman [Adventures of Superman and Superman Vol. 2 folded back into one title], Superman: Man of Steel, and a now-monthly Superman: Man of Tomorrow.)

As for Disney's acquisition of WildStorm, I will try to elaborate on that more later.

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Hmm, how's this sound for a *Gen13* cast list?

Caitlin Fairchild- Lyssa Fielding (for reference, I imagine her voice sounding a lot like Kate Mara's, so...think something close to the voice Kate Mara uses for Chrysalis in *Moonbeam City*)

Bobby "Burnout" Lane- Rider Strong

Roxy "Freefall" Spaulding- Grey Delisle  
Sarah Rainmaker- Irene Bedard  
Percival "Grunge" Chang- B. D. Wong  
John Lynch- John de Lancie

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*"If I can get players to feel many different emotions while playing this game, I've done my job properly."*

-Hideo Kojima on *Metal Gear Solid* in an interview on the February 23, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

*"No, Metal Gear Solid isn't the greatest game of all time. But it's absolutely the front-runner for Game of the Year."*

-excerpted from a review of *Metal Gear Solid* in the March 1999 issue of *GameInformer*

*"Shenmue and Parasite Eve had some of the most movie-like stories in recent memory, but Metal Gear Solid is undoubtedly the most cinematic game ever made."*

-excerpted from Dan "Shoe" Hsu's 10/10 review of *Metal Gear Solid* in the April 1999 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"Releasing the similar title Dead Midnight in the leadup to Metal Gear Solid might seem like sales suicide, but there's definitely enough here to distinguish this game from Konami's game."*

-excerpted from a preview article on *Dead Midnight* in the January 1999 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

*"The way you approach a console game has to be different from the way you approach a PC game. Can great PC games be ported to consoles? Absolutely. Can great console games be ported to the PC? Absolutely. But if you're designing a game from the ground up for a particular console, you've got to take an entirely different approach."*

-Will Wright, in an interview in the February 1999 issue of *Nintendo Power*

*"Oh, I had nothing to do with Harry Potter. That wasn't my call! I make game machines, not movie decisions! But if it was my call, absolutely I'd have gone a different way! No doubt about that!"*

-Ken Kutaragi, in a January 26, 2006 interview with UGO.com

*"I do remember being in the room for one of those Nintendo meetings, but I didn't have enough knowledge about video games at the time to make any kind of informed decisions. My kids weren't even old enough to play back then. The one video game I've ever watched that I enjoyed watching being played was Syrielle. Brilliant characters in that."*

-J.K. Rowling, speaking at the 2005 PotterCon

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*Ultra Nintendo*

**Age Of Empires**

EGM: 8.3 (quote: "A very capable port, though I still somewhat preferred playing this on PC, where more units can appear on screen at once.")

Gamespot: 7.5 (quote: "Definitely optimized for the Ultra, it's one of the better strategy games on the system, though it still pales in comparison to some of the great PC strategy classics.")

### **Aliens vs. Predator**

EGM: 5.0 (quote: "Everything that I loved about the SNES-CD game was removed from this one and in its place is a stunted, repetitive FPS rife with glitches.")

Gamespot: 5.8 (quote: "This was one of the more anticipated games of the year, it's a shame that it's such a dull shadow of our expectations.")

### **Darkstalkers: The Dreaded**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "A really fun port of *Darkstalkers 3* that works great on the Ultra and adds in a few exclusive characters to really mix things up.")

Gamespot: 7.8 (quote: "Just a really fun and clever game full of quirky twists and even some black comedy.")

### **King Of Fighters '99**

EGM: 7.3 (quote: "Another year, another spiffy SNK game. It's the series' first turn on the Ultra, and it looks really great.")

Gamespot: 7.4 (quote: "The series is wearing a bit thin, but it's a pitch perfect port with some of the Ultra's best animation.")

### **Metal Gear Solid**

EGM: 10 (quote: "An astonishing masterpiece that grabs your attention from the moment you first turn it on and doesn't let you go until the end of the credits sequence.")

Gamespot: 9.7 (quote: "There has never been a better stealth game and it's hard to imagine there even will be.")

### **Metal Slug X**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "A really exciting run and gun that takes this series to fantastic new heights.")

Gamespot: 8.6 (quote: "The sheer variety of weapons and animation quality make this a must play for action junkies.")

### **Need For Speed: High Stakes**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "We would've liked a little more track variety to match the graphical polish.")

Gamespot: 6.8 (quote: "A few of the modes from the PC version are missing, making this a fairly pedestrian game rather than an instant classic.")

### **Prince Of Persia: The Jade Queen**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "The series' transition to 3-D isn't perfect, but the puzzles are very creative.")

Gamespot: 7.6 (quote: "The production values aren't so hot (no voice acting?) but the game itself is really fun to play.")

### **Tomb Raider III**

EGM: 8.2 (quote: "While it's probably the worst of the three Tomb Raider games, Lara Croft's latest adventure is still a great thrill ride.")

Gamespot: 8.0 (quote: "We wish there were more upgrades from Tomb Raider II, but the quest itself is undoubtedly fun.")

### **Ultra Phineas and Ferb**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "Ultimately it's a very ho-hum collectathon.")

Gamespot: 6.7 (quote: "Fans of the show will dig the jump to 3-D.")

### **Ultra SimCity**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "This game simplifies things but at the same time captures a lot of the fun of the SNES classic.")

Gamespot: 8.6 (quote: "Some players won't like the dumbing down from SimCity 2000, but fans of the original SNES game will see this as a true sequel.")

### **Wild Arms 2**

EGM: 7.2 (quote: "It's more of the same, but the jump to Ultra did this series a lot of good in the graphics department.")

Gamespot: 7.2 (quote: "Cliches are everywhere, but it's still a solid RPG.")

### **X-Men: Apocalypse**

EGM: 6.3 (quote: "A fairly uncreative effort that at times seems to be just going through the motions.")

Gamespot: 8.5 (quote: "A supremely fun beat-em-up that fans of both the classic comics and last year's film will love.")

### **Ultra Deadman Sam**

EGM: 6.5 (quote: "The leap to 3-D brought some great graphics but some really uninspired gameplay.")

Gamespot: 5.0 (quote: "The Deadman Sam series has gotten worse with each game and this is definitely the worst yet.")

### **Ultra World Championship Boxing**

EGM: 7.8 (quote: "The story mode is definitely a ripoff of Rocky but I played the hell out of it anyway!")

Gamespot: 7.2 (quote: "While we're still waiting for an announcement of an Ultra Punch-Out! game, this more realistic boxing title is still a worthy diversion in the meantime.")

## **Dead Midnight**

EGM: 8.7 (quote: "With a really deep plot and some excellent gunfight mechanics, Dead Midnight is one of the most rewarding shooters I've played in a long time.")

Gamespot: 8.5 (quote: "The plot is a bit convoluted, but the action and gunplay are superb.")

## **Multiplicator**

EGM: 6.8 (quote: "This game can get extremely hard to play when all four players have hundreds of guys on screen at once.")

Gamespot: 8.1 (quote: "This fun competitive puzzle race is the most fun you'll ever have playing as dozens of characters at once.")

*Saturn*

## **Tomb Raider III**

EGM: 7.8 (quote: "The Ultra Nintendo version is prettier, but this is a more than capable adventure on the Saturn.")

Gamespot: N/A

## **Bomberman Universe**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "The multiplayer mode takes a step back to the single player adventure, which has its moments but not nearly as much competitive flair.")

Gamespot: 8.2 (quote: "It's Bomberman, what else is there to say? The single player mode is more robust than any yet seen on the Saturn in this series.")

## **Shining Force IV**

EGM: 9.5 (quote: "An outstanding, epic, brilliant RPG that feels like the culmination of this entire series. We've been waiting for this for a long time.")

Gamespot: 7.2 (quote: "Quality gameplay is marred by a reall convoluted plot.")

## **Mr. Driller**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "It's Dig Dug, but modern Dig Dug and one of the most addictive puzzle games we've played in a while.")

Gamespot: 8.3 (quote: "This great update of an arcade classic just works perfectly on the Sega Saturn.")

## **Infernal: Dark Reality**

EGM: 6.5 (quote: "It's kind of a bore, but it has its moments.")

Gamespot: 7.7 (quote: "The powerups and enemy variety make this action RPG a worthy quest.")

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## **Tomb Raider III: The Basics**

*Tomb Raider III* is the third game of the *Tomb Raider* series and the first to get a simultaneous release on the Ultra Nintendo and the Sega Saturn. ITTL, it doesn't have a subtitle like it did in OTL (*The Adventures Of Lara Croft*), but as in OTL, the gameplay improvements are somewhat small (which becomes a criticism of the game. Lara gains a few new moves, the swimming system is improved, and there are some added weapons (including a sword and an explosive shotgun). The sprint from OTL *Tomb Raider III* also makes its first appearance. The Save Crystal system from OTL does not appear in TTL's game, instead, there are defined save points within the missions. The graphics have received a boost, a minor boost on the Sega Saturn and a significant, but not major, boost on the Ultra Nintendo, so that the Ultra Nintendo version of the game now matches up with some of the better looking games on the console.

In *Tomb Raider III*, Jade Bessemer, the villain from TTL's original *Tomb Raider* game, has returned to running her company after escaping from the collapsed ruins of Xanadu. However, Jade's near-death experience has left her physically scarred and somewhat mentally unhinged, making her actions increasingly erratic and deranged as the game goes on. She plays a role in this game somewhat like a combination of Dr. Willard and Sophia Leigh from OTL's *Tomb Raider III*, and the basic plot of this game is somewhat similar. Jade has poured her company's resources into hiring a private army to find an ancient meteorite that once struck Antarctica in the distant past and is said to have great powers. After the game's tutorial level, Lara is seen exploring an ancient Japanese temple, once owned by a powerful shogun. Things are easy enough at first, but soon Lara comes across some armed thugs and must evade them to reach the center of the temple and the ancient meteorite fragment within. As she claims it, she is ambushed by some of the thugs and is nearly killed when she is suddenly rescued by a brash young adventurer named Gillens. Lara discovers a piece of evidence on one of the dead thugs and traces it back to Jade's company, indicating that her old rival is going after the meteorite pieces. Gillens wants Lara to thank him for saving her life, but she refuses and she eventually tracks the second meteorite piece to an ancient temple in the Amazon rainforest, where she discovers a completely deserted village and some tough wild animals to beat. She takes down the animals and eventually comes to a river, where she gets on a speedboat and makes her way to the temple. On the way there, she's set upon by more thugs and must jump onto one of their speedboats after her own is about to explode. She reaches the second temple and claims the second meteorite piece. On her way out, she is confronted by Jade, who taunts her with the third meteorite piece already in hand. After a brief fight in which Lara wins but Jade summons some thugs to keep her busy as she flees with the piece, Lara makes her way back to London to infiltrate Jade's corporate headquarters to snatch the third piece. On the way there, she stumbles across a lab in which Jade's thugs have taken some of the villagers from the Amazon hostage to perform experiments on them. She also reunites with Gillens who is revealed to be one of Jade's hired thugs. He captures Lara and takes her to Jade. Lara furiously denounces Jade for experimenting on the villagers. Jade says that she'd kill Lara but Lara is needed to open up the fourth temple, which is on Easter Island. As Lara is being flown to the island in a plane, she manages to escape and takes out a few guards before causing the plane to crash, separating Lara, Gillens, and Jade. While dodging dinosaurs and thugs on the island, Lara discovers that Gillens is actually a government agent whose job is to infiltrate Jade's operation. However, Jade discovers this too, and has Gillens taken prisoner. Lara must choose between saving him and stopping Jade from collecting the fourth meteorite piece. Jade manages to get all the pieces, but Gillens reveals that there's a fifth piece that Jade needs and that it's being exhibited at a casino in Las Vegas. This leads to a

big showdown between Jade and Lara in Vegas that ends in a dramatic casino shootout, and also ends with Jade getting away with the fifth and final meteorite piece. The final level of the game takes place in Antarctica. Lara and Gillens must team up to stop Jade before she can use the power of the meteorite pieces to become an unstoppable god. Jade manages to activate some of the meteorites' power, but thanks to Gillens' interference, Jade remains in a form that Lara can fight. After the final boss battle, in which Gillens sacrifices himself to help Lara win, Jade, reverted to normal, is left on the ground, apologizing and promising Lara she'll change. Lara looks like she's going to spare Jade, but then we see Lara point her gun at Jade's head, the screen going black just before we hear a gunshot. The credits then roll.

## **February 8, 1999**

*Tomb Raider III* is released for both the Ultra Nintendo and the Sega Saturn. Though the Ultra Nintendo version of the game is graphically superior, the Saturn version has a couple of very small bits of extra content, including a skimpy wetsuit for Lara in certain scenes and a bit of added dialogue, including Lara saying "shit" in a cutscene toward the end of the game. Sega markets these extra bits of "mature" content as evidence that the Saturn version of the game is superior (which somewhat contradicts their concurrent marketing push of family-friendly platform games). Initially, sales of the Ultra Nintendo and Saturn versions of the game are about equal, though in the months after the game's release, the Ultra Nintendo version begins to pull away, due to the system's larger install base. The game's reviews are good, but not quite as good as the previous two *Tomb Raider* titles, citing the lack of gameplay innovation and the somewhat derivative plot as evidence that the series is starting to run out of ideas. Still, sales are quite strong, even if the game would soon be largely overshadowed by *Metal Gear Solid's* release...

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It may have seemed crazy at the time to release a game like *Dead Midnight* for the Ultra Nintendo so close to the release of *Metal Gear Solid*. Indeed, the game not only released a mere two weeks away from Konami's massive game, but on the same day as the release of the third *Tomb Raider* game, another mega blockbuster. Still, Capcom put a heavy marketing push on their title, with commercials highlighting the game's rapid-fire gunplay, complex storyline full of fascinating characters, and excellent graphics as selling points. *Dead Midnight* took place in America in the year 2019. The country has been ravaged by a series of terrorist attacks, and now it's been discovered that rogue cells of terrorists are planning several more. A special operations unit led by Steve Scheckert is deployed to hunt down and take out these terrorists before any of them can strike again. Scheckert's team consists of a group of highly specialized and highly skilled operatives, including Divebomb Grey (a reckless agent who takes huge risks but gets results), Marie (a lovely French woman who can break people's necks with her legs), Alex Frier (a computer hacking whiz who's also highly trained with knives), and Raya Mystic (the first woman Navy SEAL, an intense commando who also happens to be the mother of two 17-year old fraternal twins, Derek and Darla, who she's training to follow in her footsteps). The game vacillates between taking itself highly seriously and offering up copious amounts of comic relief, and though you only control Steve through the course of the game, you can take up to two of your team on missions with you, while giving orders to everyone left behind. The game's villains, a team of seven dangerous terrorists, are as interesting as the heroes. Rather than serving one nation or ideology, the terrorists are each working for their own separate cause, working together to cause chaos and havoc all over the world, and though they each must be taken down, each of them has their own sympathetic backstory (except for the lead

villain, Raymond Fatal, who's just a genocidal dick). The game plays out over 14 different levels, with each villain getting two levels a piece: one level where you have to find their staging ground or lair, and the next level where you have to infiltrate and take them out. Each level takes place in a different American city, and once you've neutralized the threat in one city, you move on to the next. But here's the thing: the game plays out like Mega Man in that, for the first six cities, you choose the order in which you go after the bad guys. While there IS a recommended order for new players (some cities and bosses are definitely tougher than others), there's a lot of freedom in how the quest plays out. Also, at least for the first six terrorist leaders, you can choose to spare all, some, or none of them (but the option to spare them only comes up if you perform a certain action, such as bringing a certain operative or collecting a hidden item).

Playing out at a much faster pace than *Metal Gear Solid* (with stealth recommended in some levels but completely optional), *Dead Midnight* carved out a fanbase of its very own, and joined *Victory* as one of Capcom's most successful original franchises of the latter half of the decade. It sold more than enough copies to be a success even with the stiff competition, and its review scores in most publications topped those of *Tomb Raider III*. *Dead Midnight* wasn't a guaranteed success by any stretch, but its performance justified Capcom's decisions to promote the game heavily and release it into such a crowded month.

-excerpted from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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\*A bunch of police are crowded around a building, there's some kids outside complaining.\*

Officer: Nobody can go in, there's been a bomb threat!

Boy: But my Saturn's in there!

\*The crowd parts to make way for Segata Sanshiro\*

Segata Sanshiro: \*glares at the officer\*

Officer: Sir, there's a bomb in there.

Segata Sanshiro: \*looks up at the building and says in Japanese\* I will take care of the bomb.

\*He walks toward the building\*

Officer: You can't go in there without protection! \*offers up a huge bombproof suit\*

Segata Sanshiro: \*waves his hand and enters the building as he is, he makes his way to a room on the top floor where there's some ticking sounds coming from, he enters the room and crosses his arms over his chest\*

\*A large explosion noise is heard. The crowd gasps and looks at the door. Segata Sanshiro comes out, looking like he's been in an explosion with messed up hair and ripped clothing, and some dirt marks all over his body, but unharmed.\*

Segata Sanshiro: \*thrusts forward a Sega Saturn and a copy of *Bomberman Universe*\* Sega Saturn, shiro!

\*Scenes from *Bomberman Universe* play on the screen as the narrator begins to speak.\*

Narrator: The Saturn gets a lot more explosive with the all new *Bomberman Universe*. Take on your friends in the arena, or jump into the brand new adventure mode to tackle eight huge worlds with only your wits and your bombs to help you. *Bomberman Universe*, only on the Sega Saturn. Get ready to take cover.

\*Segata Sanshiro is seen playing the game with several heavily armored men from the bomb squad, there's another explosion noise and all of them get blasted across the room.\*

Bomb Squad Officer: \*clutching a Saturn controller, he does the Sega! Scream\*

*The Action Is Here* (the Sega Saturn's new slogan, introduced in 1999 to promote the console's action games, it appears in many of their game ads that year)

-a commercial for *Bomberman Universe* that aired in February 1999

*Bomberman Universe* does a number of things right, but in many aspects it's a step back from 1997's amazing Saturn *Bomberman* game, especially in the multiplayer department, which drops the ability to play with more than four players at once and also reduces the number of multiplayer arenas available. Instead, the game largely focuses on its single-player mode, for better or for worse, in an attempt to follow the success of the two Ultra Nintendo *Bomberman* games, which themselves heavily pushed their adventure modes. *Bomberman Universe*'s adventure mode does allow Bomberman to properly jump for the first time, but many of the levels are uninspired and repetitive, and while there is fun to be had, there are many levels that are a chore to get through. The cutscenes are quite silly (since when has Bomberman needed a personality?) and as far as the Saturn's recent action platformers go, *Bomberman* is arguably worse than all of them. *Bomberman*'s always been at its best as a fast-paced puzzle title or a frenetic multiplayer partyfest, not a wannabe mascot platformer. It's a solid title and *Bomberman* fans should pick it up, but it's not going to rewrite any of the series' longstanding rules.

Score: 7/10

-excerpted from a review of *Bomberman Universe* in the February 1999 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

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Another month, another pair of RPGs to add to the Saturn's library. The console currently boasts an impressive collection of great RPGs, including games like *Panzer Dragoon Saga* and *Windborn*, and even *Sonic* and *Virtua Quest* have gotten in on the action. Of course, the *Shining* series has been a stalwart for Sega, and in *Shining Force IV*, the Saturn might have its best one to date. Continuing right where *Shining Force III* left off, *IV* consists of the remaining two scenarios focused on the characters Medion and Julian. Julian in particular is of crucial importance to this game's plot, as he realizes his destiny as a hero that can lead an army to take down the evil Bulzome. While the tactical gameplay is familiar to anyone

who's played a *Shining* game before, it's the game's epic plot, which ties up all the loose ends from *Shining Force III*, that really makes this game a standout.

*Infernal: Dark Reality* may some of you of last year's *Angels for the Ring*, but this game is a far more straightforward RPG. You play as a priest who must go around slaying a demonic invasion of nearby villages, and while this sort of gothic-themed game is fairly cliched, the battle system, where you must manually aim at enemies with a magical gun, with damage determined by where you hit them on their body, is fairly innovative and makes battles a bit less boring. Atlus has made some excellent RPGs in the past (as evidenced by the *Shin Megami Tensei* series), and while *Infernal* isn't an all-time great, it's still a fun, if thematically simple, RPG.

-excerpted from an article on RPGamer.net, posted on February 27, 1999

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In February 1999, a month which saw several excellent Ultra Nintendo releases (including *Metal Gear Solid*), the Ultra Nintendo saw its first *Prince of Persia* game. *Prince of Persia: The Jade Queen* was perhaps the most hyped game yet in the series, but somewhat disappointing reviews and its release into a crowded month of games diminished its potential somewhat. Released by Activision, which had purchased Broderbund shortly after the release of *Where In Space Is Carmen Sandiego?* for the SNES-CD, *The Jade Queen* was the company's first *Prince of Persia* game, and the company tried to emulate the 3-D platforming style of recent hits such as *Super Mario Dimensions* and *The Dreamers*. The result? Collecting, collecting, and more collecting. *Prince Of Persia: The Jade Queen* saw the titular prince needing to venture across a vast desert filled with palaces and cities in order to collect various golden artifacts in each location. The desert was ruled over by a great and powerful dynasty which built a massive palace of pure jade from which to rule. As legend had it, the Jade Queen was trapped within the palace, and a warrior of pure heart and great courage who penetrated the castle walls could rescue her. Of course, in a somewhat predictable twist, the Jade Queen didn't need rescuing...she was the villain, and collecting treasures imbued her with limitless beauty and power. She'd been luring heroes into her trap for centuries, and now it was the prince's turn. Of course, the prince's love interest, Shana, a peasant girl in one of the cities the prince visited over the course of his journey, was able to break the Queen's hold over him, and eventually the prince battled her in her throne room as she entered a giant golden bird statue to do battle with him. While *The Jade Queen's* puzzles were creative and its platforming mechanics were solid (and indeed, future installments of the series would achieve great success by building on this tight platforming), the game itself was a bit of a bore, criticized for requiring the player to revisit certain areas in order to re-do already completed puzzles just to earn another piece of treasure. Ultimately, *The Jade Queen* was merely the framework of a great game rather than being a great game in its own right. Still, it sold well enough to easily justify the creation of a sequel, and by that time, Activision had learned what worked and what didn't when it came to *Prince of Persia*.

-excerpted from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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The differences between the Ultra Nintendo's *Ultra SimCity* and *SimCity 3000* are numerous.

In fact, *Ultra Sim City* in some ways has taken a step back from the level of customization available in *SimCity 2000*, instead presenting itself as a successor to the Super Nintendo's early *SimCity* title. Like *SimCity*, *Ultra SimCity* takes a more stylistic approach, bringing back Dr. Wright and the colorful animations and vibrant musical themes from *SimCity*. However, the game does contain many of *SimCity 2000*'s enhancements, allowing mayors to pass city ordinances and build with much more detail. Traffic options such as bridges and subway tunnels are included in the game, though the complex water management system of *SimCity 2000* has been removed, and arcologies are also a no-go until the player's city reaches a certain level of development. *Ultra SimCity* includes ten different population levels for the player's city to achieve: hamlet (up to 500 population), village (between 500-2,500), town (between 2,500-10,000), municipality (between 10,000-30,000), city (between 30,000-60,000), capital (between 60,000-150,000), conurbation (between 150,000-400,000), metropolis (between 400,000-1,000,000), megalopolis (between 1,000,000-5,000,000), and global city (5,000,000+). Each level has its own theme song, though in *Ultra SimCity* you have the option to change the background music. *Ultra SimCity* is more simplistic and easier to learn than *SimCity 2000*, and certainly moreso than *SimCity 3000*. It's been optimized for the console player, which is both a good thing and a bad thing, but in *Ultra SimCity*'s case, mostly a good thing.

-excerpted from *GameInformer*'s 8.5/10 review of *Ultra SimCity*

Nintendo Power: And are there currently plans to bring *SimCity 3000* to the Ultra Nintendo?

Will Wright: Currently there aren't, but if demand is there and *Ultra SimCity* pulls in good enough sales, it might be an option. Certainly the complexity of *SimCity 3000* doesn't lend itself well to consoles, but the Ultra Nintendo has the power to handle it, so if players are willing to play it, anything's possible.

Nintendo Power: Has the recent acquisition of Maxis by Electronic Arts limited your creativity?

Will Wright: Absolutely not! If anything, it's enhanced it, I've got more people around me now and they largely let me do my own thing. In fact, I'm working on a "virtual people" project that's coming to computers next year and certainly could come to the Ultra Nintendo, again, if there's enough demand for it.

Nintendo Power: Besides the *Sim* series, what other games are you currently working on?

Will Wright: Right now, all my attention and time is going into my "virtual people" project, but certainly if the opportunity arises I'd love to try my hand at another genre entirely.

Nintendo Power: Have you had any time to play the Ultra Nintendo? Has anything impressed you?

Will Wright: I really loved what I got to play of *Temple of Time*, and *Ultra World Of Color* is a really fun game to play with my daughter. I love the strategy behind the game and how easy it is to pick up, she certainly plays a lot better than I do! And I also like *Metal Clash*, since I build combat robots in my spare time.

Nintendo Power: Thanks again for the interview!

-excerpted from an interview with Will Wright in the February 1999 issue of *Nintendo Power*

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For the second straight year, a recently deceased artist won big at the year's Grammy Awards. This year, it was Celine Dion, whose tragic death in February of last year generated a wave of grief in the music world and a massive wave of success for her Titanic theme song, "My Heart Will Go On". The song won both Record of the Year and Song of the Year, but the night's big winner was Lauryn Hill, whose album *The Miseducation Of Lauryn Hill* won Album of the Year, while she took home Best New Artist. The night's biggest live performance saw Selena, who's been touring with recording artist Santana for much of the past year, perform a portion of Santana's classic "Black Magic Woman" before launching into her own newest collaboration with Santana, "Say What You Want About Me". The song is one of three joint Selena/Santana songs that will be appearing on Santana's newest album, *Supernatural*, set to debut later this year. Latin artists made numerous appearances at this year's Grammys, in addition to Selena and Santana's much-lauded performance, Ricky Martin, formerly of the boy band Menudo, made a major impression with his live performance of his new single "Livin' La Vida Loca". Tupac Shakur won a pair of Grammys for his hit album *Fender Bender*, with the hit single "You Can't Kill What You Can't See" taking home the award for Best Rap Solo Performance.

-excerpted from a Grammys recap posted on Yahoo! News on February 25, 1999

(Authors' Note: This next Backstreet Boys article was inspired by a PM sent to us by **Moe Satyr!** Thanks for the tip!)

### **Hype Builds For Backstreet Boys' *Millennium***

The Backstreet Boys have been one of the hottest bands in recent memory, and their album *Millennium* is set to drop in just three short months. While most of the songs on the album have already been recorded, two of them, including the much anticipated single "I Want It That Way", are being re-recorded this week after what the band's manager describes as "lyrical tweaks". Regardless of what lyrics make the final cut, the album is already being heavily promoted, and is set to have one of the biggest debut weeks ever when it's released this May.

The band is set to appear on both *Total Request Live* and *GameTV* to promote the album on its release date, May 25.

-excerpted from an update on MTV's website, February 27, 1999

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### **Metal Gear Solid: The Basics**

*Metal Gear Solid* is the sequel to *Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake*. Developed over four years by Konami and Hideo Kojima, the game was initially conceived for release on the 3DO, but after the failure of that system, Kojima briefly considered releasing the game on the Saturn before switching to the Ultra Nintendo after being impressed with the system's development kit. The gameplay remains as IOTL for the most part, it's heavily based on stealth, with

direct enemy confrontation only recommended as a last resort. Snake has a variety of ways to achieve stealth, such as hiding under or behind certain objects, or in certain environments, merely crouching in the shadows. TTL's *Metal Gear Solid* has the addition of a stealth meter that indicates which enemies are liable to be able to see Snake in his current position. The codec is also more integrated into gameplay, appearing in real time rather than in a separate screen, though the player has the option of pausing the game to receive codec messages. The graphics are significantly improved from OTL's game, which was already one of the most graphically impressive games on the original Playstation. Characters and backgrounds appear in great detail. Perhaps the greatest presentation enhancement is in the game's music and sound effects. Due to the Ultra Nintendo's powerful sound chip, Kojima's plan for dynamic music is fully realized in TTL's game. Music changes in real-time based on what's happening on the screen, and individual character themes can also dynamically change to suit their current mood, making for hundreds of different musical motifs that are possible in-game. The game is fully voice acted as IOTL, with most of OTL's voice actors, including David Hayter, Debi Mae West, and Paul Eiding performing as Solid Snake, Meryl Silverburgh, and Colonel Campbell respectively. Mari Devon appears as the voice of a major character, Lyra, and the TTL-exclusive members of FOXHOUND, Silicon Leech and Serrated Panther, are voiced by James Arnold Taylor and Cree Summer respectively.

The basis of the game's plot, about a group of rogue special operations forces seizing an Alaskan island, hijacking the experimental weapon Metal Gear REX, and threatening America with nuclear bombardment remains the same as OTL, but many details about the plot and a number of future plot threads are heavily changed, and the overall flow of the game widens somewhat in scope from IOTL's game. The early part of the game, with Solid Snake infiltrating an island and finding DARPA chief Donald Anderson, who dies suddenly while conversing with Snake, also remains the same. However, after Anderson dies and Snake meets Meryl, Meryl informs Snake of a third hostage, in addition to Donald Anderson and tech CEO Kenneth Baker: the United States Undersecretary of Defense, a 32-year-old woman named Lyra Marin. She was being given a classified tour of the facility when the FOXHOUND takeover took place, and is considered the highest value hostage at the facility. After a boss fight against Revolver Ocelot, Snake is able to find and free Lyra, who tells Snake that the man she was touring the facility with, a general named Martens, may be behind everything, a suspicion that grows once Snake discovers information about the connection between Martens and Liquid Snake. Snake and Lyra then locate Hal "Otacon" Emmerich, the designer of Metal Gear REX and an expert computer hacker. Otacon has been engaging in a covert cyberspace war with another hacker at the facility, a man who turns out to be FOXHOUND tech expert Silicon Leech, who Snake needs to find and kill if he is to progress any further. Snake has Lyra remain with Otacon while he goes to hunt down Silicon Leech, but on the way he is confronted by Psycho Mantis (who has the same psychic abilities as in OTL, the same controller trick works on him and he has some very interesting comments if the player has Mario games on their memory card!) and must defeat him. Snake and Meryl must then make their way through an underground maze which is controlled by Silicon Leech remotely. After getting through the maze, Snake kills Leech, who coughs up some information about Lyra before he dies: that Lyra is the true enemy in all of this. Before Snake can contact Otacon about Lyra, he and Meryl are forced to flee from the bullets of Sniper Wolf, who eventually wounds Snake and renders him unconscious.

Snake awakens and is confronted by Liquid Snake before being tortured by Ocelot, which, as in OTL, prompts the player to press the A button rapidly in order to resist the torture. Unlike IOTL, however, submitting to the torture does NOT effect the ending (ITTL, Masahiro Sakurai expressed frustration that the player could only get the best ending via a very

difficult button mashing challenge, and convinced Kojima to change the "reward" somewhat). Instead, successfully refusing to submit to the torture earns some cool bonus cutscenes during the latter part of the game (including an awesome Meryl rescue scene and another bonus scene with Otacon) but does not affect whether Meryl lives or dies. Whether or not Snake submits, he escapes, and learns that Metal Gear REX has already been moved out of the facility to another island. Lyra and Otacon are both gone, but Mei Ling tips Snake off to the fact that there's another ship heading to that island, and Martens is on it. Snake must infiltrate the ship, but before he can reach it, Serrated Panther cuts him off in her motorcycle. After inflicting enough damage, one of two things will happen: either Meryl knocks Serrated Panther off her motorcycle (if Snake didn't submit to the torture) or Snake sets a trap for Serrated Panther that knocks her off the motorcycle. Either way, Panther gets up and engages in one-on-one combat with Snake. An expert with a brutal hunting knife, Snake must keep his distance from her because getting close to her is certain death. After Snake takes out Panther, he and Meryl have a brief conversation before Snake catches the departing ship. He climbs up to the control tower to confront Martens, only for Martens to be shot dead by Ocelot. After a brief tussle on the boat (that involves Meryl coming to Snake's rescue, this time in a helicopter), the two tumble into the water together, both heavily wounded. The two of them crawl onto shore and another battle begins, quick but brutal. Snake seemingly kills Ocelot before collapsing on the shore. He awakens in a small shack with Lyra sitting near his bedside, tending to his wounds. Snake tries to attack Lyra, who frantically tries to defend herself both physically and verbally. She gives Snake information about Liquid Snake, including the fact that Liquid and Solid are brothers and that Liquid is really working for the government, that Martens, Kenneth Baker, and Donald Anderson were all working with FOXHOUND and that the information she's discovered could potentially bring down the entire government. Snake still believes that Lyra is lying and he holds a knife to her throat, he's going to kill her when Otacon tells him to back off, that Leech was lying and that Lyra's telling the truth about everything. Lyra tells Snake that when she was a little girl, she became privy to a piece of information. One thing led to another and eventually, when she first got to college, that she would work her way up to a powerful enough position in the government to discover the secrets she knows it's hiding. Otacon tells Snake that he has to go and stop Metal Gear REX before the missiles are used. Snake works his way up to Liquid Snake's base, battling and defeating Sniper Wolf and Vulcan Raven along the way. He reaches Liquid Snake, who reveals that he and Solid Snake are both clones of Big Boss, a legendary agent from the Cold War, and that after a virus implanted in both the FOXHOUND members and Solid Snake is activated, all of them will die and the government will be able to go in and retrieve Metal Gear REX. Snake then battles Metal Gear REX before taking on Liquid Snake atop the disabled machine. After Liquid Snake is defeated, Snake reunites with Meryl, who joins Snake as the two flee the base. Liquid pursues them and is about to kill them when he keels over and dies from the effects of the virus. Snake then contacts Colonel Campbell, who tells Snake that both he and Lyra are going to be considered fugitives from the United States government and that the two of them should go into hiding. Otacon tells Snake that he already made sure Lyra got out safely, and that she told him that she would continue working from the shadows to uncover more of the government's secrets. Snake and Meryl share a kiss as the two drive off into the wilderness together, Snake's days seemingly numbered due to the Foxdie virus.

After the credits, Ocelot, recovered from his seemingly fatal wounds, is seen talking to the President over a secure codec. He confirms that the Metal Gear specifications have been safely retrieved, and then it's shown that he's pointing a gun at the head of a captive Lyra, whom he captured some time after Otacon saw her off (it will be revealed in a later game that the Patriots had been tapping into Otacon's communications the entire time). The President tells Ocelot to kill her, and he says that he'll do it, but after their communication

ends, Ocelot tells Lyra that "they" have other plans for her, before injecting her with something that renders her unconscious.

## **February 22, 1999**

*Metal Gear Solid* is released for the Ultra Nintendo, to universal critical acclaim that nearly matches what *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time* had achieved the previous year. The game sells enormously well in its first week (a bit less than *Goldeneye 007* did in its first week of release), and due to the outstanding critical reception, easily becomes one of the Ultra Nintendo's best selling games of the year. The game is seen as living up to the hype and then some, and becomes a benchmark for both cinematic game design and technological achievement. Numerous characters, including Solid Snake, Liquid Snake, Revolver Ocelot, Psycho Mantis, Meryl Silverburgh, Otacon, and Lyra, become fan favorites, and once again, sales momentum swings back to Nintendo. Hideo Kojima becomes an instant celebrity among game fans, and his previous works, including both *Metal Gear* games, *Snatcher*, and *Policenauts*, all see a bump in sales due to *Metal Gear Solid's* release.

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Alex Stansfield: And while *Tomb Raider III* isn't groundbreaking like the previous two *Tomb Raider* games, it's still a great deal of fun and Jade Bessemer's return as the villain is truly welcome indeed.

Brittany Saldita: Now, if you're wondering whether or not to get it on the Ultra Nintendo or the Sega Saturn, if you're lucky enough to own both, definitely get the Ultra Nintendo version.

Alex: Right. It looks better, the control scheme is better, it's just the better version of the game.

Brittany: In fact, if you're lucky enough to have both systems and have to choose between the Ultra version or the Saturn version, always pick the Ultra version! We'll let you know if you ever need to pick the Saturn version!

Alex: Well, in the Saturn version of this game, Lara gets a sexy wetsuit \*Brittany rolls her eyes\* and there's a few more cuss words.

Brittany: It's not like you can't hear cuss words on Nintendo games. Didn't they say s(bleep)t 17 times in *Ballistic Limit 2*?

Alex: You counted?

Brittany: Somebody did and that's the number they gave.

Alex: But yeah, a wetsuit and a few cuss words aren't worth losing the superior graphics and sound effects of the Ultra game. If you have only the Saturn, it's definitely a good game on there though. I give it a 4.0 out of 5.

Brittany: A solid 4 from me too. *Tomb Raider III* is another fine adventure from the awesome Lara Croft.

(...)

Lyssa Fielding: *Mr. Driller's* quirky anime graphics and super addictive gameplay make it one of the best puzzle games I've ever played! I couldn't put my controller down!

Adrian Fry: Yeah, I gotta say, it's a surprisingly addictive game. There are so many quirky characters and you never seem to run out of things to drill!

Lyssa: It's like *Armageddon*, but without angry Bruce Willis or the fate of the world hanging in the balance.

Adrian: Hey, that might've made this game a bit more interesting!

Lyssa: It doesn't really need a storyline, although it does give you a really cute one that makes you really fall in love with all the characters you get to meet.

Adrian: So Lyssa, what's your final verdict?

Lyssa: Oh, an easy 5!

Adrian: Wow, you loved it that much?

Lyssa: Without a doubt! I told you, I'm super into this one!

Adrian: I give *Mr. Driller* a 4. It's a really fun ride but it DOES get repetitive after a while, and the multiplayer isn't as fun as some of the other great multiplayer puzzle modes.

-excerpted from the February 9, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Gary Westhouse: In the end, while I think *Age of Empires* is a solid port, it doesn't have that really killer hook that would've really gotten me into this game like I've done with other strategy titles.

Brittany: Yeah, for an Ultra Nintendo game, one, it really doesn't look very great, two, after a while it stops being fun. *Civilization II* never stopped being fun for me, I can go back and play that any day of the week. But *Age of Empires* is a somewhat lesser *Civilization II*, and I disagree with you that this was a solid port, it's way more fun to play this one on PC.

Gary: There was some hype for this game, when it first got announced for the Ultra. Was that hype justified?

Brittany: It wasn't a very good computer game, so I don't know why they thought it'd be better on the Ultra. It's worse. Not much worse, but still worse.

Gary: Without the custom scenarios from the PC version...

Brittany: You CAN actually make custom scenarios and save them to your memory card, though they take up a ton of space that could be used to save better games, like *Metal Gear*

*Solid*. Then you can take them to your friends' house and I guess play them there?

Gary: Would you?

Brittany: No. No no no.

Gary: Well, I give *Age of Empires* for the Ultra Nintendo a 3 out of 5. It's a decent strategy game but it is missing a few of the best things from the PC version.

Brittany: And I'm giving it a 2. Stick to *Civilization II*, or even wait for *Starcraft* for your Ultra later this year.

(...)

Ted Crosley: *Metal Gear Solid* is the perfect example of a "complete" game. It's all there. The graphics, the music, the characters... the care they put into all the characters. Nobody's in this game without a purpose. EVERYBODY's in the game for a reason.

Alex: Every character has their own theme song, and VARIATIONS of their own theme song! Ted, I'm gonna demand MTV for our own theme songs!

Ted: You and me both, when I walk into a room I wanna hear something badass playing.

Alex: The music sets the tone for this game. And then the vibration of the Rumbleshock on the controller...I won't spoil it but there's a moment when you're with a certain character and you can feel the tension in your hands because of that subtle rumbling.

Ted: The Psycho Mantis fight is a masterpiece.

Alex: This whole game is a masterpiece and I feel privileged to have played it.

Ted: And this game, it was in development WELL before the Ultra Nintendo was released. It was designed even before we got *Metal Gear 2* here in the States. Which, by the way, if you haven't played *Metal Gear 1+2*, you can get them pretty cheap on the SNES-CD and play them on the Ultra. If you liked this game, definitely play both of them.

Alex: If? If you like this game?

Ted: \*laughing\* I know, hard to imagine how someone could hate it, right?

Alex: Is it better than *Temple of Time*?

Ted: I say yes. You?

Alex: It's real close. I gotta say though, I'm giving it a 5.

Ted: I'm giving it a 5 going away.

\*The siren sounds\*

Ted: *Metal Gear Solid*, joining the *GameTV* Hall of Fame, let's put it up on the wall!

\*Ted and Alex make their way over to the Hall of Fame wall, joining the other hosts as they mount a framed copy of *Metal Gear Solid* up on the wall\*

Brittany: Completely deserving of the honor. *Metal Gear Solid* is one incredible game.

Ted: And on that note, we wish you good night and have a ton of fun playing *Metal Gear Solid*!

-excerpted from the February 23, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

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### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: February 1999**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
2. Final Fantasy VII
3. Killer Instinct Ultra
4. Super Mario Dimensions
5. Gran Turismo
6. Tale Lemuria
7. Ballistic Limit 2
8. Brave Fencer Kyuriadan
9. Ultra Mario Kart
10. Metal Clash

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: February 1999**

1. Tomb Raider III
2. Virtua Fighter 3
3. Zodiac World
4. Shenmue
5. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
6. Shining Force IV
7. Turok 2: Seeds Of Evil
8. Arbiter Of Sin
9. Spare Parts
10. Duelists: Swift Strike

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### **Warner Bros. Acquires Harry Potter Film Rights**

The Warner Bros. company recently acquired the rights to a future film adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, after engaging in a brief bidding war with Sony before that company backed off and did not match Warner's bid. The book series, which is set to release its third book, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, later this year, is growing rapidly in popularity with children and adults alike. Sony had submitted a joint bid with Nintendo that would have given the latter company the rights to all future video game

adaptations of the books, while Sony would have been in charge of producing the films.

-excerpted from an article in *Variety* magazine, March 5, 1999

*“So why didn't Sony acquire the Harry Potter film rights? In hindsight, such a move would seem like a no-brainer, but at the time, a number of factors made the company think twice about their initial plans to adapt the popular book series, and in the end, it was Warner Bros. who scooped them up after Sony dropped the ball. Sony's initial plans for the films were extremely ambitious. They envisioned a grand CGI animated adaptation of the books, jointly produced by Dreamworks and Squaresoft (under their Square Pictures label) and directed by Steven Spielberg, with Nintendo doing a game for each book in the series. Why an animated film and not a live-action adaptation? Two reasons: one, Spielberg and Dreamworks preferred animation, believing it would best convey the film's magical reality. And two, Sony was working on an adaptation of the game Ballistic Limit at the time, and didn't want to have two major live-action productions going on at once. Remember, at the time, Sony was just starting out in the film production business, and even though they were flush with cash from the success of the Ultra Nintendo, they didn't want to take the risk. Harry Potter? A risk? Even then, many believed that adapting Harry Potter into a film series would undoubtedly be a cash cow, and Warner Bros. was all too eager to purchase the rights once Sony backed out. But even though many within Sony itself could see how big Harry Potter was going to be, most of the ones in charge, including Norio Ohga, could not, and it was Ohga who ultimately made the deciding call in favor of backing off the pursuit of the Harry Potter film rights. Perhaps it was for the best: Sony and Nintendo were already dominating the video game world due to the Ultra Nintendo's unprecedented success. Adding Harry Potter to that would've been like adding Len Bias to the 1985-86 Celtics (at least before he overdosed): just too good to be true. In retrospect, considering the massive success of the Harry Potter book and film franchise, it's probably the dumbest move a gaming company had made since Atari declined to work with Nintendo in the mid 1980s. However, unlike Atari, Nintendo and Sony were more than able to absorb even a colossally boneheaded move like throwing away the Harry Potter franchise. The Ultra Nintendo kept right on truckin', unaware that it had just raced past a few billion dollars lying on the side of the road.”*

-excerpted from “Ask Alex” on Alex Stansfield's blog, April 17, 2014

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*“The job's easy when 99 percent of it is already done for me. Rare makes great games, and it's not a challenge getting people to buy great games.”*

-Reggie Fils-Aime, discussing his work as the VP of sales and marketing at Rareware in the June 1999 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

*“We were determined not to let Ape Escape become 'just another platformer', and I'm pretty sure we succeeded.”*

-Masamichi Seki, director of *Ape Escape*

*“Crash Bandicoot had always been kind of our third wheel, so we hoped that this spring release would give him a chance to shine. The problem was, of course, that our hearts laid with our other franchises, and so Crash was never going to be a marquee mascot.”*

-Mark Cerny

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*Ultra Nintendo:*

### **Ape Escape**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "A unique platformer filled with so many great mechanics that it really distinguishes itself from the Marios of the world.")

Gamespot: 9.1 (quote: "A colorful, unique game with some of the best play controls we've ever seen.")

### **Army Men: Sarge's Heroes**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "It's a decently fun shooter, but it doesn't do anything groundbreaking.")

Gamespot: 5.4 (quote: "These army men aren't even close to being the next great game heroes.")

### **Carmageddon**

EGM: 4.5 (quote: "The violence is the only thing that really stands out about this car combat game.")

Gamespot: 4.1 (quote: "Running people over gets old really fast.")

### **Crash Bandicoot 2**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "Builds on the previous game but doesn't really do anything new.")

Gamespot: 7.2 (quote: "The tight platforming of the last game returns, and Crash 2 is decent but doesn't stand out.")

### **R-Type Delta**

EGM: 6.8 (quote: "Old-school shooters haven't gone out of style, but R-Type isn't always a blast.")

Gamespot: 8.8 (quote: "Superb graphics and some brand new power-ups make this a brilliant update of a shooter classic.")

### **Snowboard Kids 2**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "Still a really fun game, the new tracks and power-ups are a welcome update.")

Gamespot: 7.8 (quote: "This cutesy title might be the best extreme sports franchise around.")

### **Ultra Shadowgate**

EGM: 6.3 (quote: "It has some strong points, but it's very clunky at times and doesn't take full advantage of the Ultra's capabilities.")

Gamespot: 7.0 (quote: "A capable old-school adventure game, but is weighed down by the awkward controls.")

## **WCW Nitro**

EGM: 4.0 (quote: "The controls are atrocious and this is actually inferior to WCW/NWO Revenge by quite a bit.")

Gamespot: 6.0 (quote: "A decent enough roster update but it definitely could've used more updated gameplay.")

## **Boom Island 2**

EGM: 5.8 (quote: "While the original game was cheesy fun, this game is merely cheesy and not very much fun.")

Gamespot: 5.4 (quote: "Clearly the makers learned nothing from the excellent platformers of the last couple years.")

## **Ultra Klepto**

EGM: 8.3 (quote: "This puzzle stealth title is still a ton of fun and the brand new multiplayer mode is hilarious.")

Gamespot: 8.7 (quote: "Another series to make a successful Ultra transition, the new Klepto is superb in its simplicity.")

## **Cyringe**

EGM: 8.2 (quote: "If you can look past all the weird fanservice moments, there's a really fun platformer here.")

Gamespot: 7.7 (quote: "The main character is quite lovely and you'll have a lot of fun sticking enemies with her giant syringe.")

## **Goat Gruff Bluff**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "Are we ready for a goat game mascot? Probably not, but there's nothing really terrible about this platformer.")

Gamespot: 6.5 (quote: "It's decent enough, but the controls could be a lot less frustrating.")

## **Rock**

EGM: 5.5 (quote: "As generic a shooter as they come.")

Gamespot: 2.6 (quote: "The plot is a complete ripoff of the movie Cliffhanger, which wasn't the best plot to begin with.")

*Saturn:*

## **Galaxy Fraulein Yuna 3: Siren's Sorrow**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "Yuna returns in a fun little title that adds some interesting mini-games.")

Gamespot: 7.1 (quote: "A bit light on content, but the characters are extremely lovable.")

## **Time Stalkers**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "A difficult RPG that has some fun moments but is mostly pretty plain.")  
Gamespot: 3.8 (quote: "A deeply flawed game with atrocious graphics and frustrating battle mechanics.")

### **Duelists: Swift Strike**

EGM: 7.7 (quote: "As far as fighting games go, this one is pretty nifty.")  
Gamespot: 8.2 (quote: "You'll love the cast of characters and the really polished controls.")

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If there's one thing Reggie Fils-Aime has, it's great timing. Having joined Rare in March 1998, just as *Goldeneye 007* was being released worldwide, he didn't have anything to do with the success of that game, but was immediately put to work on the promotional effort ramping up for that fall's *Killer Instinct Ultra*, which would go on to become the biggest console fighting game hit of the year.

"Rare had told me how disappointed they were with the sales of the previous game and asked me how to make the sequel a huge success. I just told them, 'let's show everybody what the Ultra Nintendo can do. Let's show them how gorgeous this game looks and how fun it is to play.'"

The ad campaign began early and ramped up over the summer in preparation for the game's September release. Fils-Aime directed Rare to emphasize the game's revamped combo system and to show off the game's impressive visuals in advertising material. Nearly every video preview for the game was showing off the furious combo moves. The impressive promos got the games media interested and from there, *Killer Instinct Ultra* was positioned as a major hit.

"By the end of it all, I wasn't surprised at the sales numbers we were pulling in."

Fils-Aime is himself a fan of video games, having played many of the classic Nintendo arcade titles in his youth, and once he became an adult, he continued to play games as an occasional distraction from the demands of his career in marketing and sales.

"I've started playing again a lot more since taking the job with Rare," says Fils-Aime, who previously worked at Procter&Gamble and Pizza Hut. He'd been working for Pizza Hut when he got the job offer from Rareware, who had impressed him with their sales pitch and by showing him the work they'd done on *Goldeneye*. "When I saw what Rare was doing with the James Bond license, I knew this was a company that was extremely serious about video games."

Fils-Aime's marketing push for *Killer Instinct Ultra* was a success, and now he's working on the company's next big push. In addition to a brand new *Donkey Kong Country* title scheduled for later this year, Rare is also working on a sequel to their SNES-CD game *Blast Corps*. There's also another shooter. While Rare turned down the opportunity to make a game based on *Tomorrow Never Dies*, the company instead elected to create a sort of spiritual successor to *Goldeneye*, a game based on an original storyline conceived by Rare, rather than adapting an existing property. When we asked Reggie about the new game,

titled *Velvet Dark*, Reggie was excited but fairly cryptic.

“A lot of people are waiting for news on *Velvet Dark*, and we're excited to see that, but I've been instructed not to give away too much about it until E3,” said Reggie, referring to the big annual video game trade show taking place in May. “All I can say is that it's going to make *Goldeneye* look like a tech demo!”

Reggie was also fairly quiet about Rare's next platformer project, *Conker: Twelve Tales*, which is scheduled for release sometime next year.

“On the one hand, with all these big projects I'm going to be pretty busy, but on the other hand, these games of Rare's really do promote themselves.”

Rareware's been on quite a roll, and Fils-Aime seems more than happy to be along for the ride.

-excerpted from an article in the April 1999 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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Sony's *Ape Escape* was released on the Ultra Nintendo in March 1999, accompanied by quite a bit of hype at being quite possibly the best original Ultra Nintendo platformer title since *Super Mario Dimensions*. While Sony was initially reluctant to make a monkey-based game (due to the success of the *Donkey Kong Country* series), they eventually proceeded and were even able to release the game sooner than initially anticipated due to their experience working with the game *Ballistic Limit 2* (which shares an engine with *Ape Escape*, believe it or not). The *Donkey Kong Country* similarities encouraged Sony to differentiate their title from the game somewhat, they added a bit more stealth and also more gadgets, both of which were things that the *DKC* series lacked for the most part. The plot of the game involves a boy named Spike who is given the task of hunting down dozens of monkeys after they're set free by an evil villainess named Queen Saranya, her pet monkey Specter is the boss of the runaway monkeys in the game and serves as Saranya's right hand pet, so to speak. Saranya has dispatched the monkeys, altering their minds with her Pipo Helmets so that they can change history to make her arch queen throughout the ages, Spike must capture the monkeys and free them from Saranya's control. With its emphasis on capturing and by giving the monkeys a variety of different temperaments and personalities, *Ape Escape* was able to set itself apart from being just a typical platformer and was nearly as successful for the Ultra Nintendo as *Zodiac World* had been for the Sega Saturn. While the *Ape Escape* characters weren't quite memorable enough to become mascots for Nintendo, the game itself became one of the more highly regarded franchises put out by Sony, and at least one sequel would follow.

-excerpted from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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*Crash Bandicoot 2* had some stiff competition in the platformer department, with *Ape Escape* being released for the Ultra Nintendo that very same month. Still, the first game had been one of the better selling launch titles for the system, and it was hoped that *Crash 2*, with its larger world and more compelling villain, would surpass the first and would establish

the series as one of the Ultra Nintendo's top franchises. It ultimately fell short of those goals, despite being a quality game. The problem with *Crash 2* is that unlike *Ape Escape*, which it was inescapably compared to upon its release, *Crash 2* didn't innovate in its genre at all. It stuck to the same basic platforming gameplay of the original, with only a few relatively minor graphical improvements. Instead of rehashing Dr. Cortex as the main villain, *Crash 2* instead introduced Crazy Wing, a maniacal giant bird who commanded an army of evil anthropomorphic animals to conquer Crash's world. While the boss fights were fairly fun, the levels themselves were fairly lacking in innovative gimmicks, and the game itself was largely seen as a rehash of the original. Ultimately, while *Crash 2* sold relatively well, the game's sales paled compared to Naughty Dog's other highly successful franchises, and ultimately the game was the last in the series to be released for the Ultra Nintendo, as Naughty Dog largely moved on from the character after that. The rights to *Crash Bandicoot* would be sold later on, leading to a revival of the character on future consoles, but the promise that Crash Bandicoot held as being one of the Ultra Nintendo's great mascots went up in smoke with the mediocre performance of the second game.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

### **Crash Bandicoot 2 And Beyond: Naughty Dog's Impressive Lineup**

As Naughty Dog celebrates the release of the second game in the *Crash Bandicoot* series, the company now looks forward to the summer and its big upcoming release: *Dog Dash 3*. The game sees friends Clark, Woofle, and Selkie entering a fully 3-D world to rescue their friends from the evil General Catsmeow and his feline army. Boasting some of the year's most impressive visuals, with gameplay that looks like a perfect transition to 3-D, *Dog Dash 3* is sure to be a major hit. Of course, Naughty Dog is also working on a pair of games for the year 2000, one of them being the third title in the acclaimed *Tales Of The Seven Seas* series.

The third *Tales Of The Seven Seas* is said to be significantly more storyline-heavy than the two titles that came before it, and just as the first game focused on Erick and the second game on Dona, this third game has already been stated to focus heavily on Victoria, the noble girl-turned-pirate, who, according to the game's director Mark Cerny, must "make a major decision" in the upcoming game. While Victoria will be the main focus of the game's plot, Cerny assures fans that you'll still be able to play as all seven of the beloved main characters in the new title, and that there will still be lots of freedom to perform a variety of different tasks and jobs. Naughty Dog's other upcoming game of 2000 hasn't been revealed yet but is said to be a "war" game that will be a bit more mature than their previous titles. We'll see if there's any announcement at E3 concerning this unannounced game.

-excerpted from an article on Gamespot.com, posted on March 22, 1999

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*"One of the year's most successful arcade titles, Duelists has been a surprise hit for Sega, which initially viewed the game as somewhat of an afterthought. Featuring ten fighters ranging in age from 14 to 19, the game's heavy basis on the character's backstories and difficult single player AI has forced players to deposit many, many quarters to see how each character's story plays out, and fights have broken out at arcades when human challengers have interrupted players' quests by putting in their own coins."*

-from the June 1998 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

Following its console release in Japan last November, the arcade hit *Duelists* has come to the Sega Saturn as *Duelists: Swift Strike*. While the game's combat is fierce and smooth, the game's main draw is its cast of young fighters. Sega's arcade hit *Raigeki* was fairly wild in terms of its character backstories, but *Duelists* takes itself a lot more seriously, with some of the stories being quite dramatic and the characters largely grounded in realism. The most popular character in Japan is 14-year-old Lily, a schoolgirl who begins fighting in order to teach her rival, Maitreya, leader of the school's powerful student council, a lesson. Maitreya herself is another playable character and she fights in order to uphold her family's honor, while keeping her dark secrets hidden from Lily in the guise of domineering bullying. Each of the game's player characters has a rival, and with ten characters in all, that adds up to five rivalries (though one of those, the rivalry between Veil and Kraig, is also probably the game's most enduring romantic couple). Every battle has meaning in *Duelists*, every character has some sort of relationship with every other character in the game. There's no defined "final boss", the final battle is with your character's rival, and the result of the battle determines the ending your character gets (yes, if you lose, there's no "game over" or "continue", you get your character's "bad ending" and must start over if you want another try at their "good" one). This "story based" approach to fighting games has become somewhat of a trend on both major consoles, we just saw *Killer Instinct Ultra* take that approach somewhat with its adventure mode, and *Mortal Kombat* and *Street Fighter* both have a ton of story-related tie-ins outside the main games. With the main draw behind fighting games still largely their competitive multiplayer nature, such story modes seem fairly extraneous, but if companies are trying to sell fighting games to players who have few real life friends or are unwilling to put in the time needed to become good at such games, these single-player story modes might indeed raise sales, and there's a good chance we'll see them expand in the future. Whether or not *Duelists* is the beginning of a trend is at this time uncertain.

-excerpted from an article in the April 1999 issue of *GameInformer*

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(Authors' Note: All the info on *Galaxy Fraulein Yuna 3* was given to us by the user **Cataquack Warrior**, who's done some excellent work for us so far!)

Woman: Hey! I'm Stacy Grenna and it's time for today's Here and Now segment! As always, Here and Now is where I take a look at a game I've played in the past, and I have somebody else who's never played it before spend some time playing it for the first time, and then we compare notes! Today's Here and Now game is *Galaxy Fraulein Yuna 3: Siren's Sorrow*, a fun little title from a few years back on the Sega Saturn. I'm a big fan of the *Galaxy Fraulein Yuna* games, and I enjoyed this one a lot, so I asked our own Mindy Kaling from *G4 Weekly News* to play it this week!

\*Mindy joins Stacy on the screen.\*

Stacy: So Mindy, you played *Yuna 3*, what did you think?

Mindy: Well, it's one of those weird anime games...

Stacy: I know, isn't it fun?

Mindy: For a game, there's not a lot of actual...game, is there?

Stacy: Ah, there's plenty of game!

Mindy: Like the slot machine where you get to choose what ultra-revealing outfit Yuna's gonna wear this time? \*as the slot machine shows on screen\* "Come on, Daddy needs a new pair of high-heeled shoes!"

Stacy: Did you like the game where you got to save the puppy?

Mindy: I never understood how saving a puppy could be so hard. I don't see why Yuna can't just jump in the river and save it. With the kind of game this is, you'd think a wet outfit would be the least of her problems!

Stacy: Well, the river WAS moving really fast.

Mindy: Isn't she supposed to be some kind of hero or something? Anyway, with everything in this game that didn't make sense, I liked the trial sequence and how every decision you make plays into the outcome of the trial. It kind of reminded me of the trial from *Chrono Trigger*, but even more complex than that. So that was a part of the game I liked.

Stacy: For me, I just love all the great characters. I think Yuna is really funny and really inspiring, and her little dialogues with Elnor throughout the game are a nice treat. I thought *Yuna 3* was better than either one of the first two games, the plot was a lot better and the fact that they actually had a lot of animation instead of just a bunch of still screens was also really nice.

Mindy: Wait a minute, the last games only had still screens? How lazy is that?

Stacy: Well, the technology wasn't there for animation just yet.

Mindy: Imagine if this game just had slides showing off what was happening in the game. It'd be like visiting your relatives, only if they were weird anime characters. \*screenshot of Yuna's mech digging in the ground for ingredients\* And here's where we hunted for buried treasure on the beach. I just wanted to use a metal detector, but my husband insisted on breaking out the giant robot. \*screenshot of Yuna being spied on in the locker room\* Here's where we visited Pervert Canyon and experienced the thrill of voyeurism for the first time! \*Yuna watches the puppy drown after failing to rescue it\* Here's where Spot went swimming in the river, all the way to a nice old couple's farm! At least that's what we told the kids. \*Yuna is shown chained up in a prison cell\* Here's what happened when we got caught stealing from the souvenir shop at Disney World. They take that sort of thing very seriously.

Stacy: So did you like the game at all?

Mindy: It wasn't bad. I don't think I like it as much as you did, but as far as weird anime character games go, it was decent enough.

Stacy: Well, *Yuna's* kind of an acquired taste. It's not the most popular series out there.

Mindy: How'd it end up doing?

Stacy: Believe it or not, it actually sold a decent number of copies! Even more than the *Yuna Anthology*, which itself sold better than expectations.

Mindy: Anthology? They made a boxed set of these things?

Stacy: Well, technically it was only the first two games.

Mindy: That's not an anthology. That's like...two games. That's like Wrigley calling Doublemint Gum a "gum anthology". *Super Mario All-Stars*, that's an anthology. The *Final Fantasy Collection*, that's an anthology. Two games...is two games. Call it a double pack or something.

Stacy: Anthology sounds fancier!

Mindy: Put it in a little tuxedo! Don't call it something it's not, that's false advertising.

-a segment from an episode of the show "Focus" on G4, originally aired on December 3, 2003

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*"And the release of WCW Nitro for the Ultra Nintendo and the Sega Saturn coincides with this Sunday's pay-per-view, Uncensored, which will see Goldberg defending his title and his nearly 200 match unbeaten streak against the Nature Boy, Ric Flair. Uncensored marks the final day of Flair's 90-day control over WCW that he won last December, and has used this power to challenge Goldberg for the belt, despite supposedly being Goldberg's friend in the weeks leading up to the pay-per-view. Uncensored will also see Booker T face off against Hollywood Hogan for the first time, though Booker T now has Bret 'The Hitman' Hart in his corner, making for an interesting match dynamic, as Hogan will have to keep both eyes open during the match, especially since both Kevin Nash and Scott Hall are to be escorted from the arena after the conclusion of their tag team championship match against Chris Benoit and Dean Malenko, and won't be able to help Hogan in his match against Booker T."*

-excerpted from an online news report on WCW Uncensored 1999, posted on March 10, 1999

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*Saving Private Ryan* dominated the Oscars, winning Best Picture, Best Director for Steven Spielberg, and Best Actor for Tom Hanks, his third such award in six years. That was the big story of this year's Oscar ceremony that proved to be a largely "by the numbers" night, with no major upsets to speak of. Though *Shakespeare in Love* was speculated to be a dark horse Oscar pick, and did several Oscars of its own (including Best Actress and Best Supporting Actress Oscars for Gwyneth Paltrow and Judi Dench), it was unable to take down *Saving Private Ryan* for the big award of the night, despite a fierce pre-Oscar campaign by Harvey Weinstein to promote the film. *Deep Impact*, which was nominated for several major awards (including Best Picture and Best Supporting Actor for Morgan Freeman), failed to win any of the big prizes, but did manage to win the Best Visual Effects Oscar. Celine Dion won

another posthumous award to go with her Grammy when her song "The Prayer" from *Quest for Camelot* took home the award for Best Song, beating out "When You Believe" from *The Prince Of Egypt* among others. It was, once again, Spielberg's night, though the director did give a bit of time during his Best Director Oscar speech to send well wishes to his friend and colleague Stanley Kubrick, who's currently recovering from the heart attack he suffered several weeks back.

-excerpted from a Yahoo News! report posted on March 22, 1999

*"The games have been getting better and better, especially lately. I was very impressed with the most recent Zelda game, and I got my hands on Metal Gear Solid, and that was extremely impressive as well. These games, they're definitely becoming a lot more movie-like, and so with Medal of Honor, I'm hoping to give the player the same type of experience they might've had when they were watching Saving Private Ryan, only now they've got a controller in their hands and they can storm Omaha Beach. It wasn't easy in real life and it's certainly not going to be easy in the game.*

*Something I'm growing to appreciate about the world of games is that the games that win the big industry awards and the games that win with the fans are usually one and the same. You'd be hard pressed to ever see the Oscars and the MTV Movie Awards pick the same movie as their Best Picture, but that's what happened with the Interactive Arts and Sciences Awards and the MTV Video Game Awards, both of you picked The Legend of Zelda. I think in the world of video games, the best games are oftentimes appreciated more than the best movies necessarily are in the cinematic world. And that's an encouraging thing for video games going forward."*

-Steven Spielberg, in an interview in the June 20, 1999 issue of *Parade* magazine

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Brittany Saldita: *Ultra Klepto's* single-player mode was really solid, but...Ted, I gotta say, I got REALLY into the multiplayer!

Ted Crosley: Yeah, it was a ton of fun for me.

Brittany: Okay, so in the multiplayer, there are several different modes. My favorite mode was the competitive mode because in this mode, basically, one or more players is the thief, and they're going up against one or more players being the security guards.

Ted: And basically, if you're the guards, you get a nightstick and a flashlight, and if you're the thieves, you gotta try and sneak past the guards.

Brittany: Because if you're the guards, you can just...whack the crap outta people! Look at this!

\*A video from the game's multiplayer mode shows a comically over-exaggerated animation of a security guard pummeling the crap out of a thief with his nightstick\*

Brittany: He's getting beat on, and his eyes pop out of his head and go bouncing around the room before he disappears from the screen!

Ted: How the HELL did this game get an E rating? Yeah, there's no blood or anything, but

look at the bouncing eyeballs!

Brittany: So if you manage to sneak past and get the treasure, and get it back in time, the security guards...

Ted: They start crying like little babies!

Brittany: The animations in this game are pure gold, and the SNES-CD games never really got this silly with the animations.

Ted: The multiplayer modes are so much fun. Not just the competitive mode, but the co-op mode, which basically is "cooperative until it becomes funnier to mess with your teammates".

Brittany: Right, you can screw your friends over so badly in this game.

Ted: I loved finding all the myriad little ways I could mess with Brittany when we were trying out the co-op mode together.

Brittany: You spent more time laying traps for me than actually playing the game!

Ted: \*snickering\*

\*A brief video is shown of Brittany's character getting caught in one of Ted's traps for the fourth time while they're playing the game together\*

Brittany: You did that on purpose!

Ted: ...no I didn't.

Brittany: That was four times in a row! Ted!

Ted: I swear, that was an accident. \*he's laying another trap for Brittany while he's "apologizing"\* I am so sorry.

Brittany: \*steps in another trap\* (bleep)! You (bleep)hole!

Ted: \*laughing hysterically\*

\*the video ends\*

Ted: So yeah, *Ultra Klepto* mixes a really fun and challenging single player mode with a fantastic and hilarious multiplayer mode for plenty of long-lasting fun. It's the best game in the series and I'm giving it a perfect 5.

Brittany: Wow, you liked it that much? I'm giving *Ultra Klepto* a 4.5, the single-player mode could use a bit of work but that multiplayer mode is one of the best on the Ultra and I agree with Ted, this is the best game thus far in what's overall a pretty quality series. Nice work.

-excerpted from the March 2, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Alex Stansfield: *Ape Escape* combines some really unique gameplay with cutesy characters and visuals for one really solid platforming experience.

Ted: Right, it's just a really fun game. The plot's a bit silly but I can forgive that, catching apes is a lot of fun.

Alex: Who came up with the idea of putting siren hats on those little monkeys' heads?

Ted: Not me but damn if it's not adorable.

Alex: You add monkeys to anything, it makes it better. True or false?

Ted: Well, I'm not sure if *Saving Private Ryan* would've been better with a little chimp soldier going around...it might've been a lot less depressing.

Alex: Oh yeah. Seeing them walking around bombed out towns, and then they cut to this monkey sitting against a tree, maybe smoking a cigarette? Instant laugh.

Ted: Or at the somber graveyard scene, he starts crying but then we see a monkey just sitting on one of the tombstones?

Alex: Well, video games are definitely better with monkeys. *Donkey Kong* and now *Ape Escape*. Some of the levels DO get a bit repetitive, even when the apes get new gadgets to help themselves out, that was my big complaint about the game. Is it a valid one?

Ted: I think it's reasonably valid, I mean, you can only catch so many of those apes before they all start to kind of blur together. So it's not the best platformer in the world but I think it deserves a 4.

Alex: Yeah, I agree, I'm giving *Ape Escape* a 4. Some parts are a bit of a slog but for the most part it's a unique and really fun game.

-excerpted from the March 16, 1999 review of *Ape Escape*

(...)

Lyssa Fielding: Oh my god this game was crap.

Adrian Fry: I have no idea why you hated it so much!

Lyssa Fielding: *Army Men: Sarge's Heroes* is the most unimaginative, derivative, uninspired and boring shooter I've ever played! If not for the fact that you're controlling plastic army men, there'd be NOTHING special about the game!

Adrian: The graphics are good, the gameplay is solid, why don't you like it?

Lyssa: The level design is the most basic a game can possibly be. The voice acting is

terrible. The plot is so cliched. It's like, "okay, here are the green army guys, and you're fighting the tan army guys!" Literally a three year old could come up with that. Literally, that's what a three year old does when he plays with his army men.

Adrian: It doesn't need a great plot, it's just a fun shooting game where you run around killing the other army. Look, I thought *Army Men* was refreshing. It is a bit simple, but you know where to go and what to do, it's easy to pick up, you have a decent variety of weapons...

Lyssa: None of which do anything special, it's as basic as it can possibly be.

Adrian: There's destructable environments. They put a lot of thought into the visuals of the game.

Lyssa: And yet when your army man gets hit he just falls over. The trees can be damaged, the buildings can be damaged, but army men are either knocked down or they disappear. There's no army man limb injuries or anything like that. For an Ultra Nintendo game, the graphical detail is lousy. I'm giving *Army Men* a 0.5 out of 5.

Adrian: Oh man, that's a really low score. I'm giving it a 3.5. You didn't even like the multiplayer mode?

Lyssa: Not at all. Just not a fan of these *Army Men* games, and this was the worst of the bunch.

-excerpted from the March 23, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany: So while I appreciated *Time Stalkers'* difficulty and what it was trying to do, this game didn't really work for me from an overall standpoint.

Ted: As far as RPGs go, *Time Stalkers* is definitely different, but I felt like it could've done a lot of things better.

Brittany: You REALLY have to manage your items closely in this game, and while it's not the first RPG to make you start leveling all over again in every dungeon, that was still an aspect of the game that I felt really slowed it down.

Ted: It did have some nice Easter eggs from previous obscure Sega titles. If you played *Shining in the Darkness*, Pyra from there is in here.

Brittany: You played that back in the day?

Ted: I did! Have you ever played it?

Brittany: No, but I did play *Sword of Vermillion* and *Phantasy Star* back in the day. This game, while looking a heck of a lot prettier, is not nearly as good as those.

Ted: I think I'm gonna be a bit less harsh on *Time Stalkers* than you're being, I thought it

had its moments and the graphics aren't so bad. For the Saturn, they're decent, if a little bit blocky looking.

Brittany: The pacing is really bad. This RPG slows to a crawl at times and without a compelling plot to keep you going, what's the point? I'm giving it a 2 out of 5.

Ted: I'm giving it a 3.

-excerpted from the March 30, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

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### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: March 1999**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
2. Parasite Eve
3. Final Fantasy VII
4. Street Fighter III
5. Super Mario Dimensions
6. Killer Instinct Ultra
7. Daikatana
8. Shadows Of The Moon
9. Ballistic Limit 2
10. Fallout

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: March 1999**

1. Tomb Raider III
2. Virtua Fighter 3
3. Shenmue
4. Mortal Kombat 4
5. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
6. Zodiac World
7. Duelists: Swift Strike
8. Turok 2: Seeds Of Evil
9. Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver
10. WCW Nitro

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### **March 31, 1999**

Polly Klaas looked out the passenger side window of her friend Caitlyn's car as the two headed back to Caitlyn's house after school that day.

“I'm gonna miss high school,” said Caitlyn, smiling wistfully at her friend. “But it's gonna be a lot of fun rooming together at Stanford, right? God, I was so nervous waiting to see if I got in. I mean, I knew *you'd* make it, but I was biting my nails the whole two months since I applied!”

“They don't look like it,” Polly replied, smirking as she glanced back at her friend Caitlyn's flawlessly groomed nails. “Unless those are falsies?”

“Pfffffft...” Caitlyn snorted, slapping the steering wheel. “But yeah, I mean... have fun learning psychology. Maybe after you graduate you can figure out what's wrong with Eric?”

Polly's friend Eric had become further and further withdrawn, though the two had continued to speak even as Eric withdrew further into himself over the last few weeks. He'd stopped having Polly over at his house, and his comments about others and about himself had gotten increasingly dark and disturbing. He'd gone to see Polly's therapist...once, and never again.

“Did he say anything else to you?” Polly asked Caitlyn.

“Nothing,” Caitlyn replied, shaking her head. “He's said...nothing to me since we broke up. When we pass in the halls, he doesn't even look at me. Is he still hanging out with Dylan?”

“No...I don't think they're friends anymore,” Polly replied. “Has Dylan told you anything?”

“Dylan doesn't even *mention* Eric anymore. Actually...the last time I did mention Eric to him, he looked kind of...scared.”

“I know they used to be so close,” said Polly, shaking her head. She wondered if she was the only friend Eric had left...if Eric even saw the two of them as friends anymore. Even when other students reached out to him, he seemed to pull back or lash out, as if he didn't want anybody around. Sometimes Polly wondered if Eric just...hated everybody. But that couldn't be true, because she knew he didn't hate her. “I told him if he ever feels like he might hurt himself to call me, that I'd be there for him.”

“And if he feels like hurting other people?”

Polly just stared straight ahead.

“Polly, if he shows any signs of that-”

“Once I do that...he'll...he'd never forgive me if I got him in trouble.”

“This isn't about you, or him. Polly, if you think he'll do something to hurt anyone, himself or anyone else...you have to tell the school counselor, or something. I mean...I know you can't go to the cops just if you think he's gonna do something bad, but...”

“I know...I know, I...”

Polly sighed and bowed her head. As much as she felt a need to help Eric, now she was regretting ever meeting him in the first place. She'd gotten a weird feeling from him from the moment they first met, and now...now every time Caitlyn brought up the possibility that Eric might hurt someone, she got a shiver through her spine.

“...I'm sorry,” said Caitlyn. The car was pulling into their neighborhood now, and she could tell just how distressed this was making Polly. “I didn't mean to bring that up, now you're... let's talk about college again, okay?”

“Yeah...I'd rather talk about that,” said Polly, a smile returning to her face. “So you're definitely thinking about law school?”

“Maybe. Like, I REALLY want to do entertainment law, but I'm trying to figure out if it's something I actually want to do or if it's just so I can meet celebrities.”

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Across town, Eric Harris was sitting in his room, flipping through a magazine. He saw an ad for next month's *Doom: Inferno* for the Ultra Nintendo, and his eyes lit up.

“*That looks fucking sweet,*” he thought, eyeing the advertisement which was filled with detailed screenshots from the game and emblazoned with artwork of the game's demonic monsters.

Then his eyes glanced at the release date, and he let out a long sigh.

“*Too bad I'll never get to play it.*”

The game's release date? April 20, 1999.

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Here are some more details on Yuna III: Siren's Sorrow. A big thanks to RySenkari and Nivek for allowing me to contribute.

## Production

Siren's Sorrow, called Yuna FX IOTL, was initially intended just as a limited edition bonus and as the basis for a parallel set of OVA specials. However, the popularity of the Anthology led Hudson to turn the material into a full game. As a result, the new version of Siren's Sorrow has a more complex plot, and the anime was likewise extended to three OVAs instead of two. Even so, there were some flaws in the design. A particular source of criticism was that some of the OVAs' scenes were taken straight out of the game. Still, the game was a considerable improvement over the previous two games, and had a fair amount of success.

## Gameplay

The game plays similar to the previous games, but there are more choices for Yuna to make and

more exploration available. Plus, there are more mini-games, from saving a puppy to being on a game show. As for the scenes, the graphics have improved, with animated scenes instead of stills.

Also, as expected in the series, Yuna III has an extensive bonus section filled with various special content for fans.

## Plot

In the prologue to the game, Yuna is participating in a galactic cooking championship, and is using her mech to search for a rare Star Swallow Egg (much to Elnor's frustration, as she hardly appreciates Yuna using her and the Matrix of Light for such frivolous ends). However, she is suddenly attacked by an enigmatic, monstrous mech called Anderope. Yuna manages to defeat it after a battle, and hurries back to the judging center, where there is a short mini-game to win the competition with her sunny-side up omelet. However, afterwards the scene cuts to a mysterious figure watching a playback of Yuna's earlier fight. The figure concludes that all of the information is prepared, and that soon the Guardian of Light will fall.

Next comes the main plot. After being woken up by Princess Mirage's bombardment alarm (she literally has the Eternal Princess open fire on the house to wake Yuna up), Yuna and Yuri hurry to school. Yuna's class has a new transfer student, a stoic girl named Misaki who seems especially interested in Yuna but actually seems to avoid direct interaction with her. Yuna thinks that Misaki has a crush on her (and has various fantasies), but Misaki is actually a police agent for the Galactic Alliance, codename Siren. Her superior Fraulein D. has sent her to investigate rumors that Yuna is actually using her powers for evil.

Instead of Mai releasing the class early as in the OTL OVAs, you end up going through the full school day, with chances to interact with your many friends and participate in mini-games such as sports-related ones with the Erika 7. At lunch, Yuna and Yuri get into an argument about food (Yuri ate all of it), and Misaki intervenes, thinking that Yuna was bullying Yuri before getting the details straightened out. Later during P.E., Yuna is late getting changed in the locker, and accidentally stumbles on someone spying on her. Caught in the act, Lika gets into a fight with you. Lika is a ninja and uses classic ninja moves such as throwing ninjas stars. However, when other people arrive, she pretends that Yuna was bullying her and escapes in the confusion. The other students believe Yuna's side of the story, but Misaki appears suspicious.

After school, Yuna goes shopping with Yuri, but then finds a trail of Polyline cards leading to the far end of town. In the process, Yuna gets caught up in finding and rescuing a lost puppy; one of the mini-games involves saving the puppy from drowning in a river. Yuna then tries to find her way back home; she convinced Yuri to collect the rest of the cards while she looked for the puppy, so she's on her own now. She ends up encountering Lika again, along with another suspicious character named Lucia. Yuna is wondering what's going on, and the two enigmatically comment that they managed to keep her busy long enough. Yuna is actually more concerned with the revelation that Lucia made all of the cards herself for the trap, meaning that

they are all counterfeits, something unforgivable for the number one member of the Polylina fan club. You now have to fight both of them. Lucia is an artist and uses her sketchbook to attack. They manage to give Yuna the slip, so Yuna goes home. However, she gets ambushed by Misaki and knocked out.

Yuna wakes up chained down in a prison cell. Misaki enters, and despite Yuna's erotic misinterpretation of the situation, quickly makes it clear that Yuna has been arrested as a criminal. Yuna is taken to a trial committee and shown a news video of her attacking the main part of Neo Tokyo when she had been busy in that other part of the city, without a solid alibi. A trial mini-game commences as you try to defend yourself against the various charges laid against you – from attacking Neo Tokyo to destroying a government prototype (Yuna expresses confusion about this charge, but does not receive an answer) – all serving as evidence that you are plotting to take over the galaxy. The trial is a farce, but if you handle your defense well enough, the Alliance counselors have enough doubt to delay the judgement until more evidence can be gathered. You are returned to your cell to wait, your future still bleak, but Polylina breaks in to save you. After sneaking past guards and getting into a fight with Misaki, you escape the facility. Even so, you are now a wanted criminal, and need to clear your good name.

Yuna decides to first contact the independent news reporter and investigator Mashe, who filmed the attack on Neo Tokyo; hopefully Yuna can learn more about the robot and give her own side of the story. You travel to a news studio and have to sneak in by participating in a game show. You manage to get a private interview with Mashe, but she reveals that she was actually working for the same purpose as Lucia and Lika. Mashe uses her camera as a weapon in battle, and can use its powerful flash to temporarily stun you. Security forces you to retreat, but Mashe lets slip the next location that the Yuna impostor is going to attack: a massive dam on a mountainous planet that is the only thing keeping the capital from being flooded.

You hurry to stop the attack and arrive ahead of time. Along the way, you have to complete a lumberjack challenge to get a ride to the dam. However, Misaki has tracked you down. You end up having two consecutive battles – first against Misaki, and then against the fake Yuna when she arrives. After the fight, the artificial Yuna retreats, but you find evidence that she was constructed by Red Factory, a company employed by the Galactic Alliance. While still wary about Yuna, Misaki is now aware that there is more going on than she thought, and teams up with Yuna to investigate.

You now have to investigate Red Factory's headquarters. There are a couple of mini-game puzzles to solve along the way, such as one that involves controlling conveyor belts to take an item to a specific point. While exploring the factory, you get into a fight against three Anderope mechs. It turns out that the mechs and other soldiers are part of a special government project that is intended to replace Yuna once she is convicted. You reach the central office of the factory, and Misaki and Yuna come up with a plan. Yuna approaches the factory chief Aira and pretends to be the fake Yuna, in need of repairs and a new assignment. Aira falls for the trick and reveals that is part of the conspiracy to frame Yuna, but says that there are no more missions for her now, and tries to activate her self-destruct programming. Yuna naturally does not comply, and Misaki bursts in to arrest Aira. Aira desperately summons the fake Yuna to fight you, but the copy rebels. She had been told that once Yuna was gone, she would be the new hero, but now

she realizes that she was meant to be expendable from the beginning. Deleting the safeguard protocols from her programming, the artificial flies off, leaving Aira to fight you herself. She has a cold, managerial personality and avoids physical conflict; she instead uses the factory's defense systems against you. After her equipment is destroyed, she considers fighting you herself, but then decides to call it quits with this operation and escapes.

You still have not figured out who is behind all of this, but you have enough evidence to clear the charges. Misaki contacts her superior and mentor Fraulein D. with her new discoveries and arranges a private rendezvous. However, it turns into a trap, and both you and Misaki are arrested. It is revealed that D. was behind the framing all along. D. tries to convince Misaki to just return to her work and forget about Yuna, but Misaki refuses. With some regret, D. gives Misaki the same sentence as Yuna: to be sealed within a black hole for eternity.

However, just as the execution is about to take place, the Alliance Headquarters space station is hijacked by a rogue communication being broadcasted across the galaxy. Mashe has had a change of heart, and now unveils a new broadcast that clears Yuna's name. All of your friends defend you, and you are shown to have been saving the puppy when the alleged attack on Neo Tokyo took place. On seeing this, the council members withdraw their support for Fraulein D. and realize that they were deceived.

Although the first part of her plan failed, D. goes through with the second stage of her plan. The trial and execution of the Guardian of Light required all key members of the Galactic Alliance government to be present, and D. uses her assembled army – along with more from the black hole – to launch a coup and still carry out your execution, even without official sanction anymore. Fortunately, Yuna's many friends such as Polyline, Yuri, and Princess Mirage (among many others) arrive to free you, and you chase down D. while they handle her army.

After dealing with Lucia and Lika again, you catch up with Fraulein D. Misaki is shocked and betrayed that D. is doing all of this. D. reveals that she is in fact the "Devil Fraulein," banished to a black hole by a previous Guardian of Light. However, she was in fact innocent of the accusations at the time, but due to a misunderstanding was sentenced to imprisonment regardless. After escaping by giving in to darkness, she decided to have revenge by showing the current Guardian of Light the despair she felt when the galaxy turned against her. Yuna points out that D. made new friends and a new life for herself, but she is throwing it all away for revenge. This makes D. hesitate, but she still fights you. After a fight against her in her regular form, D. becomes a demonic behemoth vaguely resembling Giratina from Pokémon.

Yuna manages to defeat D. by transforming into the super mech El-Line Noi, but then there is one last surprise. As D.'s power starts to dissipate, artificial Yuna suddenly appears, stabs D. in the back, and absorbs the darkness into herself. She saw D. as her mother, and is enraged that she was nothing but a tool in the end. On realizing how she has committed some of the same sins she hated the previous Guardian for, D. has a breakdown. The copy then confronts Yuna for a final battle to determine the point of her existence. Whether she dies as a villain or triumphs as a hero, she will create her own destiny.

After one last battle, Yuna defeats her copy, but shows mercy. She tells her that she can be her

own person, and choose her own path in life. The copy renames herself Anuy (“Anny”), and reconciles with her mother, with both of them reforming. Also in the aftermath, Misaki apologizes to Yuna and offers to take any punishment she decrees; Yuna replies that Misaki’s “punishment” is to become her friend. Everyone then has a party to celebrate Yuna’s victory.

## Reception

Yuna III proved popular like its predecessors, but the continued criticism of certain aspects of the game convinced Hudson that it needed to take the series to a new level. Fortunately, the second set of OVAs in store, as well as the Yuna Tactics project, would fulfill that goal in the coming future.

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*“I've never been opposed to putting third party characters in Super Smash Brothers. Nintendo, at first, was reluctant, but I think they realized what I already knew, that these other companies have been an important part of our success and are as much a part of Nintendo as Mario and Link! And of course, the added sales draw from these characters doesn't hurt either!”*

-Masahiro Sakurai, discussing third party characters in *Super Smash Bros.* in an interview with *Famitsu* magazine in March 1999

*“It's always gratifying to please our fans! Enjoy, enjoy, enjoy this game!”*

-Satoru Iwata, discussing *Super Smash Bros.* at a panel at E3 1999

*“This is the kind of game you just can't do on the Sega Saturn. It's our first next generation Doom game, we haven't even done this on PC yet. The Ultra Nintendo's getting the first real 3-D Doom, and it's a deserving platform to get it.”*

-John Romero, discussing *Doom: Inferno* in the April 1999 issue of *Nintendo Power*

*“Wat an asshoel, u had no prolem putting quake on saturn, wtf man”*

-an anonymous poster on an InsideTheWeb.com forum, discussing John Romero's *Nintendo Power* interview, posted on April 29, 1999

*“I guess video games were an inspiration for The Matrix. I mean, we're both big gamers, but they weren't a huge influence. We'd love to do a more video game-ish film later on, though.”*

-Andy Wachowski, fielding a question about *The Matrix* at Comic-Con 1999

*“I think I wept openly after reading that part of the script. We had to stop recording for about ten minutes until I could compose myself.”*

-Sara Bareilles, answering a question from a fan at a music festival in 2008 about what it was like to work on *The Darkest Night*

*“Don't underestimate me!”*

-One of Rebecca's two victory quotes in *Super Smash Bros.*

“Hohoho...hahahahaha!Fire and blood, burn...burn burn burn, all of you BURN! I'll see your bones ripped from your flesh before the day is done!”

-Luca Blight, *Suikoden II*

“I'm always here, Kris. And I always will be. No matter what.”

-Etienne, *The Darkest Night*

“For something like that to happen on the release date of that huge Doom game, I mean...you shudder to think about it.”

-Adam Sessler, discussing the April 1999 incident at Columbine High School on a video game podcast on April 20, 2009

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\*Mario, Yoshi, Pikachu, and Donkey Kong, played by people in giant plush costumes, are skipping happily through a field of flowers as “So Happy Together” by The Turtles plays. Suddenly, the four of them come face-to-face with Fox McCloud, Shad, Captain Falcon, and Link. The two groups stare at each other from across the field, then charge at one another, punching, kicking, and bashing one another with a variety of weapons.\*

Narrator (Don LaFontaine): Something's gone wrong in the happy-go-lucky world of Nintendo. Introducing *Super Smash Bros.*, where all your favorite characters duke it out in one epic four-player star studded slamfest.

\*Donkey Kong bashes Shad over the head with a giant mallet\*

Narrator: Only on the Ultra Nintendo.

\*The Ultra Nintendo logo is shown, along with Nintendo's current slogan: “Ultimate Fun”\*

-the North American commercial for *Super Smash Bros.*, which was shown on TV during the spring of 1999, based on OTL's commercial seen here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K783SDTBKmg>

## **Super Smash Bros.: The Basics**

*Super Smash Bros.* is a four-player fighting game created by Masahiro Sakurai and HAL Laboratory and featuring 18 of Nintendo's first, second, and third party characters. The gameplay, in which characters brawl and fight, racking up damage until a character is knocked out of the arena, is almost identical to OTL's game, and like OTL's game, this first installment is fairly bare bones in terms of features, with a single player arcade-style mode where players fight a progression of battlers until they reach the final boss, a giant gloved hand named Master Hand, or a versus mode in which players can battle either the CPU or other human players in 2-4 player fights under a variety of rules. The biggest change from OTL comes in the form of additional characters included in the game. Unlike OTL's game, which featured eight characters and four hidden characters, TTL's game features 12 characters and six hidden characters, which are unlocked via a variety of methods. The only character from OTL's game that doesn't appear in TTL's game is Jigglypuff, which is

butterflied away due to Jigglypuff having a slightly smaller role in the Pokemon anime.

The twelve characters available in this game from the outset are: Mario, Yoshi, Link, Zelda, Donkey Kong, Samus, Pikachu, Fox McCloud, Kirby, Captain Falcon, Shad (from *Squad Four*) and Woofle (from *Dog Dash*). The six unlockable characters are: Cloud Strife, Simon Belmont, Ness, Luigi, Rebecca (from *Squad Four*) and Ash Beckland (from *Ballistic Limit*). Of the characters that don't appear in any of the OTL Smash Bros. games, here's a quick overview of their fighting styles:

Shad (a somewhat slow fighter who specializes in the use of his laser gun, he's somewhat more of a bulkier Fox McCloud)

Woofle (Romps around the stage pouncing on people and licking them with his tongue, he's surprisingly quick for his size but can be knocked around easier than other heavy fighters)

Cloud Strife (A bulky sword fighter who can deal a lot of damage with his blade, think a bulkier version of OTL's Ike)

Simon Belmont (specializes in whip fighting and is fairly agile, sort of like Zero Suit Samus but without as many kicks)

Rebecca (uses her twin blades for quick, furious melee strikes, she's fast but her attacks don't pack much punch)

Ash Beckland (fights a lot like OTL Solid Snake but is a bit more accessible for newbie fighters, uses bombs, guns, and powerful melee blows)

Of the six unlockables, Luigi and Ness are acquired identically to OTL. Cloud, Simon, Ash, and Rebecca can be unlocked one of two ways: either via game saves (with *Final Fantasy VII*, *Castlevania: SOTN*, *Ballistic Limit 2*, and the as of yet unreleased third *Squad Four* game respectively) or via in-game methods, Cloud and Simon's are fairly easy, Rebecca's is a bit trickier, and Ash has the toughest unlock method in the game (requiring players to beat single-player mode in Normal on a single life). This leads some players to come up with conspiracy theories stating that Nintendo wanted to drive up sales of *Ballistic Limit 2* (and when Ash's unlock is included in the July 1999 issue of *Nintendo Underground*, they say it's to drive up Nintendo Underground subscriptions instead). It's not a major controversy but it is brought up time to time on online message forums of the day.

*Super Smash Bros.* is a major seller for Nintendo upon its release in North America, easily clearing a million copies there amongst a variety of players. The game doesn't get great reviews, but it's considered to be a solid game, a really good multiplayer title, and a must-own game for all fans of Nintendo's primary franchises. The game's popularity also leads Sega to begin working on a sequel to *Fighters Megamix*, which is eventually released for the Saturn in 2000.

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*Ultra Nintendo:*

### **All Star Tennis '99:**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "Solid graphics and accurate gameplay make this a good, if somewhat bare-bones, tennis game.")

Gamespot: 7.3 (quote: "We would've liked to see some real life courts but at least a few real pros are included.")

### **Doom: Inferno**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "Doom comes to the Ultra Nintendo and the action blew us away!")

Gamespot: 9.1 (quote: "A tremendously gorgeous game with some fantastic level design.")

### **Drakkhen II**

EGM: 6.5 (quote: "Old-school role playing translates moderately well to the new school Ultra.")

Gamespot: 4.6 (quote: "This game stumbles in a number of ways. RPGs have come a long way since the original, this series clearly hasn't.")

### **Grim Fandango**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "Awesome puzzles and a witty storyline make this a can't miss game.")

Gamespot: 9.2 (quote: "What a great port! This game is a step ahead of Curse of Monkey Island in terms of ingenuity.")

### **Suikoden II**

EGM: 8.2 (quote: "A beautifully crafted RPG with a long, epic storyline.")

Gamespot: 8.7 (quote: "Some of the most amazing characters in recent memory, complete with a truly memorable villain.")

### **Super Smash Bros.**

EGM: 8.3 (quote: "It's a bit simplistic but you can't beat the fantastic character selection.")

Gamespot: 8.0 (quote: "This game is definitely best if you have three friends in the room.")

### **Thousand Arms**

EGM: 7.7 (quote: "The dating-sim elements are a bit unnecessary, but we liked this game's rather kitschy feel.")

Gamespot: 7.6 (quote: "A classic RPG with an anime twist.")

### **Ultra Triple Play**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "EA put a lot of effort into the presentation, and it pays off big time.")

Gamespot: 7.9 (quote: "It succeeds in several ways that last year's Ken Griffey game didn't, though the gameplay's not as authentic.")

### **Vanguard Bandits**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "The mech-based action is unique, but the game suffers from a bit of a sloppy translation.")

Gamespot: 6.8 (quote: "With a lot of fun characters, Vanguard Bandits might keep you hooked on the story even if the gameplay suffers somewhat.")

### **You Don't Know Jack**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "The humor gets old fairly quickly, as do a lot of the questions.")  
Gamespot: 5.1 (quote: "Your first few play sessions are kind of fun, then this game quickly wears out its welcome.")

### **The Darkest Night**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "What starts out as a fairly play-by-numbers RPG with good voice acting turns into a heartrending character study that will attach you very deeply to these characters.")  
Gamespot: 7.8 (quote: "It surpasses the original in every way even if there's nothing really innovative about the gameplay.")

### **Andrekah: Witches' Brew**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "Andrekah is back with a fresh coat of paint in this whimsical Ultra installment.")  
Gamespot: 8.5 (quote: "Few franchises' leaps into 3D have worked as well as this one's has.")

### **When The Sun Sets**

EGM: 6.2 (quote: "The jokes are cribbed straight from Buffy and ultimately this vampire thriller is just mediocre.")  
Gamespot: 7.4 (quote: "One of the funniest vampire games ever made, the gameplay's pretty straightforward but the script had us in stitches.")

### **Felidae**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "Some of the designs on this game's barely scary cat monsters are far more hilarious than they're supposed to be.")  
Gamespot: 5.9 (quote: "Laugh-worthy CGI and clunky gameplay drag down what could have been a decently good game.")

### **Supercar World Circuit**

EGM: 8.8 (quote: "One of the best racing games since Gran Turismo.")  
Gamespot: 8.4 (quote: "The 18 tracks each have their own tricks and quirks, and the cars themselves look gorgeous on the Ultra.")

*Saturn:*

### **Mortal Kombat 4**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "Looks really pretty on the Ring, and plays as good as the Ultra original.")  
Gamespot: 8.4 (quote: "Bloody good fun, on the Sega Saturn at last.")

### **Agni Solemn**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "Namco's latest RPG is a fairly ho-hum effort, and I've seen better.")  
Gamespot: 7.9 (quote: "Dark and melancholy, with a unique plot, this goddess tale is one of

the best RPGs in the Saturn library.”)

## **Whirlwind 2**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: “While this platformer doesn't do much that the first game didn't, it adds some unique levels and thrilling boss fights to what was a pretty good mix before.”)

Gamespot: 6.7 (quote: “About as by the numbers as platformers get, Whirlwind 2 has some pretty animation but doesn't offer much new to the genre.”)

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It's going to be a big year of films for Warner Bros. In addition to their various superhero films, *Batman Triumphant* and *Superman: The Man of Tomorrow* first among them, there's also next month's *Twister 2*. But the first highly-anticipated Warner Bros. film of the year is *The Matrix*, the sci-fi thriller from the Wachowski brothers, best known for their 1996 crime drama *Bound*. *The Matrix* is about a man named Neo who discovers that the world he lives in is a lie, and must risk everything to free humanity from oppressive rule. The film stars Brandon Lee, son of the late martial arts film legend Bruce Lee, and this is easily Lee's best performance yet. Best known for his work on the two *Crow* films, which did only middling box office numbers, Lee's been puttering around in martial arts action films for half a decade now. 1997's *Legend of the Dragon* was supposed to be a major film, picking up where his father left off, but it was a poorly reviewed flop despite what critics described as a film-carrying performance from Lee. Here, Lee plays Neo as a complete, well, neophyte to the strange war he's been unwittingly dragged into, and even as he learns kung fu in what seems like an instant, it takes time for him to gain confidence, something Lee portrays extremely well. Lee's costar in the film is Lucy Liu, who plays Trinity, a woman who helps bring Neo into the strange world these characters are inhabiting. Trinity dismisses Neo at first, but over the course of the film, comes to realize his potential, growing along with him throughout the movie. Laurence Fishburne is superb as Morpheus, the leader of the band of heroes that Neo's been brought into. He serves as a guide to Neo, leading him on his journey and telling him everything he needs to know about the war he's getting ready to fight. Fishburne's work on 1997's surprise hit *Event Horizon* has been widely praised, but his work in *The Matrix* is arguably better, and he's ultimately one of the strongest characters in the film. There are also strong performances from Joe Pantoliano (who previously worked with the Wachowskis in *Bound*) and Hugo Weaving (who, as one of the government agents tasked with bringing Neo and his friends down, is a long, long way from his hilarious performance in *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*).

*The Matrix* is both a thrilling action masterpiece featuring brilliant special effects and a thought provoking work of philosophy. It's one of the year's smartest blockbusters, and every film goer who loves great action films owes it to themselves to check it out.

3.5 stars out of four

-from a review of *The Matrix* in the Des Moines Register, April 7, 1999

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Andrekah's back and there's gonna be trouble! For the bad guys, that is! *Andrekah: Witches' Brew* is the first installment of the series to be released on the Ultra Nintendo, and Sunsoft's latest takes the fantastic spell-swapping gameplay of the SNES-CD and Genesis

games and adapts it brilliantly to 3-D. This game is a fully 3-D adventure, where the young witch Andrekah is seeking her certification as a Master Witch. Unfortunately, only one certification is given out every blue moon, and Andrekah is competing with a fierce rival named Beatrice who is already two steps ahead of her! In order to win the title of Master Witch, Andrekah must learn the Six Secret Spells, which will require her to go to six different corners of the world to seek them out. The gameplay's been adapted for 3-D, Andrekah can now lock onto enemies and fire spells at them, which have a variety of effects. Some spells are for attack, others are for defense, and some help Andrekah find treasures or access secret areas. In addition, as you progress through the game, Andrekah will learn new spells and her old spells can gain in strength. The game has a lot of similarities with *Mega Man Legends*, which makes sense, since the earlier titles had a lot of similarities with the original *Mega Man* games. The game is also full of anime cutscenes, and features voice acting by an entirely new group than in prior games (if you've seen *Slayers*, you'll be familiar with many of the voices, including Rachel Lillis as Andrekah herself). While the *Andrekah* series took a bit of a left turn in recent games, becoming more shooter than platformer and crossing over numerous times with *Panorama Cotton*, this game takes the adorable witch back to her roots, and it should be a big hit! *Andrekah: Witches' Brew* is definitely one of the standout games of the spring, and if you love anime, you'll love this game!

-from a review of *Andrekah: Witches' Brew* in the June 1999 issue of *Animerica*

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While Ubisoft's ***The Darkest Night*** is this month's most anticipated RPG (ironically, it's the only Western-made RPG of the month), this is one of the biggest months for RPG fanatics in a long time, with no less than five games spread across the two major consoles. Ultra Nintendo is getting five, while the Saturn is getting two (*Thousand Arms* is going multiplatform). We've already told you about *The Darkest Night*, here are some brief summaries of the other four games.

**Suikoden II:** Apart from *The Darkest Night*, this is probably the month's most anticipated RPG, after *Suikoden* became a cult hit back on the SNES-CD. This game steps it up in every way from the original. The graphics have improved (though don't expect something as pretty as the upcoming *Final Fantasy VIII*), and the plot has taken a significant step forward. This game sees your heroic armies attempting to stop the conquests of the maniacal Luca Blight, perhaps the nastiest RPG villain since Kefka. Once again, over 100 characters are available to recruit, and the game features some exciting turn-based battles that will test all of your skills, with traditional battles being supplemented by one-on-one duels and huge army-based battles similar to *Fire Emblem* and *Final Fantasy Tactics*. Plus, if you still have your old SNES-CD save data from the previous game, you can import it into *Suikoden* to boost your characters' stats, making the game somewhat easier (it's one of the tougher RPGs in recent memory).

**Vanguard Bandits:** From Working Designs, which previously worked on *Tale Lemuria* and will be releasing an updated *Lunar* later this year, this is more of a strategy RPG than any of the others released this month. Your characters will mount giant mecha suits and engage in combat on a large grid where you must carefully position them for maximum strategic value. While this game is hardly anything new to anyone who's played the *Front Mission* series, the fun characters and voice acted cutscenes do add to the presentation value, and if you're a Working Designs fan, it's a game worth looking at.

**Thousand Arms:** This game combines elements of RPGs with elements of dating sims, and is releasing for both the Ultra Nintendo (this month) and the Sega Saturn (in June). Romancing certain female characters allows your main character to wield more powerful weapons and magic, making the dating-sim elements a necessary part of the game. While this is certainly a unique feature, it can be somewhat annoying and frustrating for anyone who's never played a dating sim before, and as just a standard RPG, the game is relatively basic. Still, for those looking for a little romance in their RPGs, this game is right up your alley.

**Agni Solemn:** Apart from *Mortal Kombat 4*'s long awaited port and the multiplatform title *Supercar World Circuit*, this Namco title might just be the most anticipated Saturn game of the month. It features a girl named Solemn, born into poverty and slavery, who discovers her destiny: to become a goddess and save the world. However, in her 16 years of life, she's seen only the worst of humanity, and refuses the call, preferring that the planet fall into the hell she thinks it deserves. It's up to her companions, a boy named Kevin and a girl named Kyra, to convince her otherwise while cultivating her powers by battling both evil humans and powerful demons. *Agni Solemn* has one of the more intriguing power-up systems in recent memory, Solemn's skills are leveled up by the sacrificing of living beings. Sacrificing evil beings raises Solemn's skills slowly, but choosing to sacrifice good beings, while taking the story on a much darker path, will make Solemn a lot more powerful a lot more quickly. This is one of the more melancholy RPGs we've ever played, and at an M rating, one of the most mature as well. It's also right up there with the very best Saturn RPGs, and if you can handle a really dark story, *Agni Solemn* could be the RPG for you.

-excerpted from an article on the website GameRush.com, posted on April 26, 1999

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### **Fuel Up With Supercar World Circuit!**

*Supercar World Circuit* is Tecmo's newest racing game for the Sega Saturn and the Ultra Nintendo. Featuring more than 30 of the world's most famous supercars and 18 of the world's greatest racetracks, *Supercar World Circuit* takes you around the world and back on a high-octane racing challenge that will test your skill and courage.

Unlike most racing titles, including *Gran Turismo*, *Supercar World Circuit* doesn't make you race over and over again to unlock the best cars. All 34 cars are available right from the moment you first turn on the game. Instead of dangling unlockables in front of you, *Supercar World Circuit* presents increasing levels of challenge as you win more and more races. From the initial Easy, Medium, and Hard difficulty modes come four more modes to unlock as you progress through the game's challenges: Expert, Master, Grandmaster, and Super. Beat all the game's challenges in Super mode, and you'll get a special code that you can actually send to Tecmo to purchase a special t-shirt bragging about your skills in the game.

*Supercar World Circuit* features several racing modes, including:

Single Track: Battle it out on any of the game's 18 tracks against a selection of opponents. You can also play with up to 3 other human players in this mode.

Racing Challenge: Take on a variety of challenges with numerous stipulations, which can involve handicaps, weather conditions, mirrored tracks, or other special rules. There are 80 different challenges to complete, with many of the challenges available in different variants depending on what difficulty mode you compete in!

Racing Circuit: Compete in a 3, 6, 9, or 18 race season on a variety of tracks. This is the game's main racing mode, where the toughest challenge can be found. Winning an 18 race season on Super mode is considered to be the toughest challenge in the game, and only racing experts need apply!

*Supercar World Circuit* will be released on April 6 for both the Sega Saturn and the Ultra Nintendo.

-excerpted from an article in the April 1999 issue of *Game Informer* previewing *Supercar World Circuit*

*“Supercar World Circuit was designed for the racing game fan who wanted a 'purer' experience than Gran Turismo. It dispensed with all the collecting and unlockables from that game and simply boasted one thing: the different levels of challenge it offered to players of all types. The Easy and Normal modes were great fun for players new to the racing game genre, and most casual players rarely got past the Hard mode, which was challenging enough. The Super mode was on another plane entirely. If I recall correctly, only 29 of those t-shirts were ever awarded, out of more than a million people who played the game across both platforms. The game was designed to never ever give up the code if any alteration via GameShark was ever detected, so it was impossible to cheat your way to that shirt, and Tecmo only gave it out until the end of 1999. When one of those things went up on Ebay, it went for about 500 dollars (\$470.50 to be exact). While most reviewers didn't consider SWC quite as good as Gran Turismo (it wasn't quite as realistic and the graphics were a step down), for racing game purists who wanted a challenge, it was the best thing out there.”*

-Stephen Totilo, in an article on Kotaku.com, posted on July 11, 2012

### **Madden 2000 Likely To Be Last SNES-CD Title**

Electronic Arts announced that a version of their annual NFL series *Madden NFL* will be making its way to the Super Nintendo CD in August, and with no later games announced for the system, it's likely to be the last SNES-CD game released in North America. *Pokemon Super Adventure* has been announced for a July 1999 release.

### **Nintendo To Develop NFL Game?**

Rumors are beginning to come out of Nintendo that the company is set to begin work on a possible National Football League video game, to join its *Ken Griffey Jr.* and *Grant Hill* series in the company's sports lineup. The game would likely be released sometime in 2000 to coincide with next year's announced installments of Nintendo's already existing sports series. The company has seen great success with its MLB and NBA franchises, both of which have sold over two million copies worldwide.

### **Sony Developing New NHL Series For Ultra Nintendo**

While Sony has previously experimented with the idea of creating an NFL game series of its own to compete with the popular *Madden* and *NFL Quarterback Club* series, the company now appears set to produce an NHL game sometime next year, after shelving work on its NFL franchise to work on titles such as *Ballistic Limit 2* and *Ape Escape*. It's also likely that Sony shelved its NFL plans after being informed of Nintendo's plans to develop an NFL-based game.

### **Sega In Talks For Next-Gen Sports Series**

While Sega's negotiations to make Electronic Arts' popular *NHL* series exclusive to the Saturn fell through, it's now looking to develop a series of sports games on its own, games that would presumably appear on the company's rumored next-gen "Katana" device. No concrete details have been released, but rumor has it that Sega is planning games for all four major North American sports leagues (MLB, NFL, NBA, and NHL) and may even be planning to work on a soccer game to compete with EA's popular *FIFA* franchise.

-excerpted from a sports update article that appeared in the April 1999 issue of *GamePro* magazine

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Ubisoft's *The Darkest Ritual* was a surprise cult hit upon its release in 1995. A Western-designed JRPG, the game incorporated a modern day setting with mysterious occult horror mixed in with plenty of character-based humor and a little bit of sweetness. The success of the first game ensured that a sequel would be made, and in 1999, *The Darkest Night* was released for the Ultra Nintendo. While *The Darkest Night* featured largely the same basic battle system as *The Darkest Ritual*, with only one or two real enhancements, the real overhaul was in terms of presentation. The graphics had vastly improved, with Ubisoft growing into a much larger profile company since the release of the original game, and having a lot more money to spend. There was an enormous amount of detail in the game's rendered cutscenes and even in the backgrounds and character animations. In addition, the musical tracks were fully orchestrated and the soundtrack contained more than 40 songs. The game featured voice acting, a series first, and though the cast consisted largely of unknowns (the only performer of note was Sara Bareilles, who started recording Etienne's lines when she was just 17, she would later go on to become a Grammy winning recording artist, Evanescence's Amy Lee would later join the cast as Kris' voice actress in *The Darkest 3* but that wouldn't be until 2006), their performances were highly praised.

A direct sequel to the original game, it took place a year after the original and featured Etienne and Kris, now high school seniors, getting pulled into another otherworldly adventure after the unearthing of an ancient artifact, the Tablet of Osiris. The Tablet is said to grant untold power to whoever possesses it, and when the two girls discover that there's a dangerous cult of magic users who are seeking it out, they decide to come out of "retirement" and use their magical skills to track it down before it can be obtained by the bad guys. As in the previous game, a number of students, including two guys named Robbie and Lance, and a mysterious new foreign exchange student named Sephora, take interest in Etienne and Kris' magical activities. Sephora takes particular interest, revealing that she has magical talent of her own, but Kris doesn't trust her. After Etienne is kidnapped by some of the cultists and Sephora accompanies Kris on a rescue mission, Sephora joins them formally and the girls become a party of three as they continue to investigate the cult's activities. For

the first half of the game, it's a fairly standard adventure with Etienne, Kris, and Sephora each occupying a different magical niche as the three girls delve deeper and deeper into the cult's activities. Finally, the Tablet is taken by the cult, and the three girls go into the cult's headquarters to retrieve it, defeating the remainder of the cult and a massive boss in the process. They go into the room where the tablet is, and thus begins one of the most shocking cutscenes in video game history, a moment comparable to Ghaleon's betrayal in *Lunar: The Silver Star*, or the death of one of your main party members in *Final Fantasy VII*. Before the three girls had infiltrated the cult's headquarters, they had agreed that Kris would be the one to take the tablet and receive its power, as reluctant as she was to do so. Kris goes up to take the tablet, and as she's climbing up to retrieve it, she is struck down with a powerful magical blast...from Sephora. While Etienne stands at the base of the stairs in shock, Sephora casually walks up to retrieve the tablet. Meanwhile, Kris, who's writhing on the steps in extreme pain, yells to Etienne to stop Sephora. Etienne runs up the steps and confronts Sephora, telling her that she'll give her one chance to stop what she's doing. All we see is the look on Etienne's face as she is suddenly run through by a green magical blade that protrudes from Sephora's hand into Etienne's stomach. Etienne collapses onto the steps, gasping, as Sephora claims the tablet and its power. As a horrified Kris watches, Etienne mouths what would be her last words: "I'm sorry...Kris..." before dying on the steps. Sephora now possesses the tablet's power, but her body needs time to adjust to it, and so she has to teleport away instead of finishing Kris off. Kris sobs in agony as Etienne dies in her arms...and then we go to the next scene which is Etienne's funeral. Yes, it's for real, Etienne is dead and her death is final.

It was a player gut punch of truly epic proportions. "Surely," we all must have thought, "Etienne's not really dead." But she is, and Kris is in a state of crippling grief as the second part of the game begins. The grief brings her back to square one, all Kris' stats are reverted to level one and her magic has vanished, the player must literally start over as Kris comes to terms with her grief. While Etienne's parents have already told Kris it wasn't her fault, and Etienne and Kris' friends do their best to comfort the girl, Kris must confront and overcome her own grief, and she spends a huge part of the second part of the game just trying to come back from what happened so that she can somehow confront Sephora, who has accumulated the powers of a goddess. Robbie and Lance join Kris later on, giving the player a party of three again, but the second half of the game becomes as much about overcoming Kris' grief as much as it becomes about taking Sephora down. It was considered an extremely brave turn for a series that had been for the most part very light-hearted up to that point. While the game does tease the possibility that there may be a way to bring Etienne back, in the end, both Kris and the player must accept the reality of Etienne's death. Kris, accompanied by Robbie and Lance, eventually does become strong enough to confront and defeat Sephora, and after defeating her and saving the world, Kris is left still sad but ultimately hopeful, and finally ready to move on.

*The Darkest Night* was considered one of the year's best RPGs and is still considered one of the best RPGs on the Ultra Nintendo to this very day. Sales reached about 600,000 worldwide, more than doubling the 260,000 worldwide sales of *The Darkest Ritual*. Though Etienne's death in *The Darkest Night* took her out of the game's living world, she remains one of the series' most enduring characters, with cameo appearances in both *The Darkest 3* and this year's *The Darkest*. Her death remains known as one of gaming's most shocking moments, and her presence is felt throughout the series' latter two games even if she herself is no longer among the living.

-excerpted from a 2012 article on Gamesovermatter.com

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“Hell hath no fury like one really badass Marine.”

-the tagline for *Doom: Inferno*, which appeared in the game's extensive magazine advertising throughout the first part of 1999

### **Doom: Inferno: The Basics**

Created by id Software as an Ultra Nintendo-exclusive *Doom* title, *Doom: Inferno* is a sort of alternate-timeline continuation to *Doom II*, where Hell has not only survived Doomguy's efforts to destroy it in *Doom II*, but has recovered to become more formidable and dangerous than ever. Doomguy must return to Hell with a squad of Marines in order to defeat the most powerful demons lurking there. *Doom: Inferno* is the first fully-3D game in the series, with gameplay similar to OTL's *Doom 64*, but significantly better graphics, it looks even better than the Ultra Nintendo's port of *Quake*, and is considered to be the best looking FPS on the system up to that point. The gameplay is similar to previous *Doom* titles, though *Inferno* isn't as puzzle heavy as OTL's *Doom 64*, instead, the game concentrates heavily on action, on Doomguy fighting his way through the game's 36 mazelike levels to take out as many demons and monsters as he possibly can. The game also features voiced cutscenes, and Doomguy himself is voiced by Vin Diesel in one of his first roles (he still voices the Iron Giant ITTL as well). The game's music features a mix of driving rock tracks, quiet, creepy tracks, and atmospheric pieces, and each of the game's 36 levels has its own unique music track, making *Inferno*'s soundtrack one of the most highly praised on the Ultra.

*Inferno* starts with the Doomguy (never referred to as Doomguy in the actual game of course) entering Hell along with five other Marines, all of them badasses like he is. The game is broken up into six layers of six levels a piece, somewhat mirroring the nine levels of Dante's classic Hell. The first layer of Hell is Outer Hell, a place of powerful winds, and it's in these six opening levels that one by one, Doomguy's buddies are picked off and brutally killed. Starting in the second level, one of Doomguy's squadmates is killed by the demons, until the final level of the first layer in which Doomguy's last squadmate, his very best friend from the academy, is slaughtered in front of his eyes by the game's first boss. After the death of his squadmates, Doomguy is on his own as he descends deeper into Hell. The second layer of Hell is a giant sewer of creepy insect and reptile monsters and grotesque filth. The third layer of Hell is an enormous city modeled after the city of Dis. The fourth layer of Hell is a huge underground tunnel complex where Hell's most violent residents are waiting to tear Doomguy apart. The fifth layer is a series of palaces and dungeons, while the sixth layer is a frozen hellscape with Satan himself at the very core of Hell, with Doomguy making an epic speech about how he's going to “rip him a new asshole” before the battle begins.

Though the plot of the game is basically just an excuse for Doomguy to be as violent and badass as possible, the dungeons are designed extremely intuitively and the game is highly praised for its large and challenging variety of enemies. There's also a multiplayer mode that, while not as highly praised as the one in *Goldeneye*, is still popular among fans for its stage variety and high level of violence. The game itself is extremely bloody and violent, one of the bloodiest games yet released, and reaches levels of controversy unseen since the release of *Arbiter of Sin*. It's also considered probably the best console FPS of the year and sells enormously well upon its release, easily topping *Super Smash Bros.* as the best selling

Ultra Nintendo game of the month.

-

Ted Crosley: *Super Smash Bros.* isn't the best fighting game around, but that's not why you're buying it. You're buying *Super Smash Bros.* because you want to see Mario and Link beat the crap outta each other, and this game definitely delivers on that.

Alex Stansfield: You know, it's different. It's a different kind of fighting game, and while I don't think it's a very "good" game from that perspective, the Nintendo fanboy in me just loves all the different characters in here! So I'm REALLY torn about what to think of this game!

Ted: Well, for me, *Fighters Megamix* wasn't that good of a game either. I feel like in a lot of these cases, the characters come first and the game second. But actually, after I played *Smash Bros.* for a while, I actually did start to like the fighting!

Alex: The characters aren't very well balanced, there are some who just plain suck, and I know that holds true for any fighting game, but it's really notable here.

Ted: Yeah, I mean if you want to use, say, Link, you're not gonna do too hot. And a LOT of people are gonna want to use Link!

Alex: Yeah, why does Link have to suck? Why does his stage have to suck?

\*A quick snippet of video is shown where Link is getting blown out of Hyrule Castle by the whirlwind\*

Alex: That's his own level he's getting blown out of!

Ted: This is a game I feel like is a LOT more fun to play with friends than it is to play by yourself. If you're playing by yourself, the single player mode is pretty lousy, and the AI isn't great, but if you've got three friends, this is one of the best party games ever.

Alex: Just don't pick Link. God, he sucks.

Ted: I'm giving *Super Smash Bros.* a 4 out of 5.

Alex: And I'm giving it a 3.5 out of 5. Mostly for the Nintendo characters.

(...)

Gary Westhouse: *Suikoden II* really surprised me by how deep it was, and that villain is a guy you'll IMMEDIATELY love to hate. Just look what this bastard does!

\*The "die, pig!" scene is shown, where Luca Blight kills a woman after forcing her to beg for her life and crawl on the ground like a pig\*

Lyssa Fielding: \*gasps in horror, she already saw it when she played through the game to review it but it still shocks her\*

Gary: And believe it or not that's not even one of the worst things he does. He is a grade-A, bonafide (bleep)hole whose blood you'll be calling for by the time you finally get to take him down!

Lyssa: From top to bottom, *Suikoden II* is a legitimately epic RPG, one of the best of the year and a game I think players will be talking about for a long time.

Gary: Just like in the last *Suikoden* game, you need to find all the Stars of Destiny to see everything the game has to offer!

Lyssa: Yeah, but good luck with that! With 108 in all to find, it'll take you many many MANY hours to find them all, not to mention that you can lose your chance to recruit some of them if you mess up!

Gary: So for those of you who like old-school RPG fun and have a ton of hours to kill, *Suikoden II* is for you! 4.5 out of 5!

Lyssa: I'm in full agreement, *Suikoden II* gets a 4.5 from me!

-excerpted from the April 6, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany Saldita: And remember, we awarded *Grim Fandango* our top PC game of the year award in our *GameTV* Awards for 1998. This Ultra Nintendo port doesn't lose a beat, the game is still an absolute masterpiece and if you haven't gotten a chance to play it on PC yet, this is the perfect chance. It's still just as beautiful, just as funny, and just as challenging as it was last year.

Alex: Yeah, *Grim Fandango* is one of those games that hasn't gotten any love from the mainstream gaming press.

Brittany: Well, that's not true, we're the mainstream gaming press and we love this game.

Alex: \*laughs\* I guess you're right! But I don't know if it's really possible for our review to convey just how fun this game is, it's really something you'll have to experience and enjoy for yourself.

Brittany: If you like animated movies, that's the best analogy I can really give. If you like animated movies and solving puzzles....it's like playing through a Disney movie, and then somebody hands you a really fun logic puzzle and tells you to solve it using the clues you got from watching the movie.

Alex: That's kind of a good analogy, I guess? With a little film noir in there too?

Brittany: And Manny Calavera is one of my favorite video game heroes.

Alex: Skeletons in general, you can't go wrong. First Deadman Sam, and now Manny.

Brittany: But Deadman Sam's getting kinda stale, this game is something totally fresh and new and it works on a ton of levels! Anyway, port or original, it's a 5 out of 5.

Alex: And I'm giving it a 5 out of 5 too, which would normally trigger it getting put up on the Hall of Fame wall but...

Brittany: The PC game's already on our wall! Along with *Civilization II* it's one of only two PC games to make our Hall of Fame. And now it's on the Ultra Nintendo! So what are you waiting for? Go out and buy it, there's no excuse!

(...)

Adrian Fry: The Sega Saturn hasn't had all that many good games this year but one genre they've excelled in this year is their platformers. Does *Whirlwind 2* continue the trend?

Ted: You know, I liked the original *Whirlwind*, and this is pretty much more of the same. The levels are a little longer, the bosses a bit bigger, but the same quirky graphical style and basic platforming gameplay remains. That's not a knock against it, but I felt like there could've been just a little more innovation. Look at what *Sonic 5* is doing and look at what this game's doing.

Adrian: True, but you can't expect EVERY game to be like *Sonic*.

Ted: No, no, of course not, that would take what's special about *Sonic* away from it. But with a sequel like this, you do expect some things to change.

Adrian: The first game was good, maybe if it's not broke, don't fix it?

Ted: It doesn't have to be broke to make it better though! It's like a car, it might be a perfectly good car but if you can put a nicer engine in it to make it go faster, or make it into a convertible, then why not do it? *Whirlwind 2* is a decent car that needed a better engine. Right now it'll get you to work and back, but can it do it in style? This game gets a 3 from me.

Adrian: I'm giving it a 3.5. And if *Whirlwind 2* was a car, what kind of car would it be?

Ted: A Chevy Impala. It's nice, but everybody has one and you'd much rather have at least a Camaro.

Adrian: You're making me want to go back and play *Supercar World Circuit* now!

-excerpted from the April 13, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany: I just think we fundamentally differ on what makes a game great!

Ted: You agree that *Inferno* is a really well made game, right?

Brittany: Right, I do.

Ted: But you don't think it's a great game?

Brittany: I think it's a boring game, like every other FPS out there since *Goldeneye*!

Ted: If you're coming after *Inferno* for the story, why not come after *Goldeneye*? It's adapted from a movie!

Brittany: It's adapted from a really good movie and they adapted the story perfectly for the game! *Doom: Inferno* is just "go to this next level, kill these slightly more dangerous demons, rinse and repeat"! Just like every other FPS since *Goldeneye* with maybe the exception of *Half-Life*, which at least tried to do something different and mostly succeeded. The original *Doom* was fantastic because it was new. *Inferno* is nothing new! It's just *Doom* with a fresh coat of paint!

Ted: This was a brilliant and fantastic game, it was a lot of fun, the multiplayer-

Brittany: The multiplayer is crap too, it's only notable because of all the blood flying everywhere, *Goldeneye* literally tops it in every possible way!

Ted: So you didn't like *Inferno* at all?

Brittany: I can acknowledge how well made it was. I can acknowledge the graphics and the soundtrack and I can acknowledge certain puzzles and bosses as being really fun, but this is not the next great shooter like you seem to think it is.

Ted: So what is it?

Brittany: A very pretty but perfectly average FPS that gets a 3.5 from me based on production values and not being a glitchy mess.

Ted: You already know I'm giving it a 5.

Brittany: Only a moron would give a perfect score to this game!

Ted: I can't believe you don't like this game.

Brittany: I gave it a 3.5, what more do you want?

Ted: Did you even play the game?

Brittany: I beat it before you did, *estupido!*

(...)

\*Britney Spears is sitting on the couch with Brittany, Alex, and Lyssa, they've just finished up discussing Britney's favorite video games and now they're talking about her music video for *Baby One More Time*\*

Alex: And that video's just incredible. The animation, it's like something out of an anime

show, what gave you the idea for something like that?

Spears: Actually my record company really wanted to do an animated video, which at first, I was like "huh?" because I wanted to do something in live-action, I had this idea for a kind of schoolgirl thing with lots of dancing, but then my sister, Jamie Lynn, me and her watch *Sailor Moon* all the time and I told her about them wanting me to do an animated video and she's like "you have to do it!"

Brittany: See, I knew *Sailor Moon* was an inspiration, where you're letting your hair down and letting it flow in the wind, with all the petals and everything-

Lyssa: That was really cool.

Spears: So I went back to the record company and said "yeah, we can make it animated, but this is how I wanna do it". And they actually got the real company behind *Sailor Moon* do to the video. I got to tour their studios, I took Jamie Lynn along, it was so amazing.

Brittany: So are you gonna play the new *Sailor Moon* game coming out next month?

Spears: Oh man, there's a new *Sailor Moon* game? \*laughing\* Oh my God, I've been so busy with everything I didn't even know.

Lyssa: Hold on, hold on, hold on. \*gets up from the couch and runs out of the room\*

Spears: \*laughing\* Does she gotta like pee or something?

Alex: She does drink a lot of juice, that might be it. So anyway, where's your career taking you next?

Spears: Going on tour in a couple months, which is real exciting, um...I'm maybe gonna be in a movie soon? We're still working that out.

Brittany: Would you do a live action *Sailor Moon* movie if that was offered to you?

Spears: Hell yeah, I'd totally be down for that.

Lyssa: \*slides back onto the couch holding a game\* Here it is, we JUST got our review copy in. \*holds up a North American copy of *Sailor Moon: Another Story Retold*, in a cardboard box with a bunch of extras in it\*

Spears: Wow, that looks really pretty.

Lyssa: This is the collector's edition, it comes with all kinds of neat stuff. Wanna do an unboxing right here?

Spears: That would be the coolest freakin' thing!

\*Lyssa proceeds to unbox the package, which includes the game, a 96-page hardcover instruction book/strategy guide with the Sailor Moon symbols on it, a soundtrack CD with about 12 tracks from the game, and a pen that looks like Sailor Moon's transformation pen\*

Spears: Holy crap... \*holding up the pen and looking at it\* That is so cool!

Lyssa: I know, right?

Alex: This has officially turned into a girls' slumber party- \*Brittany reaches over and covers his mouth with her hand\*

Brittany: Shhh, shh shhh.... \*laughing as Lyssa and Britney Spears fangirl out over the Sailor Moon stuff\*

Spears: I gotta buy one of these next month, huh?

Lyssa: Yeah, totally.

Spears: \*laughing\* God, it's just like me and Jamie Lynn. We could be sisters!

Lyssa: \*hugging Britney Spears\* We totally should!

\*The interview continues for a couple more minutes, after which there's a commercial and then when the show comes back, Spears performs *Baby One More Time* to close out the show\*

-excerpted from the April 20, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

*“Oh yeah, that Sailor Moon unboxing with Britney Spears, that was one of my favorite moments doing the show. It was right before she got REALLY huge and then everybody was trying to tear her down, saying she was a huge bitch or whatever...but no, those people have no idea what they're talking about. Britney is one of the nicest, most down-to-earth and one of the most talented people I've ever met and we still talk to this day. Love her music, love her as a person.*

*Of course, the day that episode aired...well, we'd visited Columbine on our high school tour back in 1997, and...when I found out what happened...it was just pure devastation when I got the call.”*

-Lyssa Fielding, in a January 2013 interview with *Game Informer* magazine

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### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: April 1999**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
2. Final Fantasy VII
3. Parasite Eve
4. Super Mario Dimensions
5. Killer Instinct Ultra
6. Street Fighter III
7. Gran Turismo
8. Ballistic Limit 2
9. The Curse Of Monkey Island

10. Shadows Of The Moon

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: April 1999**

1. Tomb Raider III
2. Mortal Kombat 4
3. Virtua Fighter 3
4. Shenmue
5. Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver
6. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
7. Sonic the Hedgehog 5
8. Supercar World Circuit
9. Earthworm Jim
10. Zodiac World

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### **April 20, 1999**

It was 11:15 AM, and Eric Harris was sitting in his car outside of Columbine High School, waiting for the plans he'd set into motion months before to unfold. Months earlier, he'd planned to ask his friend Dylan to help him, but Dylan had spent too much time with Eric's other friends to see the world the way Eric did. Still, by himself, he could accomplish everything he wanted to do.

He'd loaded his car up with guns, ammunition, and explosives, and once the bomb he'd placed in the cafeteria went off, he'd shoot everyone fleeing the school. Once he'd done that, he'd take his car and drive down to the local airport, where he planned to take a plane, any plane would do, and crash it into the prison where Richard Allen Davis, the man who'd tried to kill his friend Polly six years earlier, was being held, killing himself, Davis, and all the other scum in prison with him.

That was the plan that had been swirling in Harris' twisted, tormented mind for nearly a year now, and in just over a minute, the sound of the explosion would signal that the first part of his plan had been a success. He knew Polly wouldn't be taking her lunch hour until noon, so she'd be safe, and once she'd heard about what he'd done, she would understand why he was the way he was.

The last thing he expected to see was Polly coming out of the school and making a beeline for his car.

"What the fuck...?" Eric muttered under his breath as Polly approached his car at a rapid pace. "Polly, you need to get the fuck outta here, some serious fucking shit is about to happen and you can't be here."

"What are you talking about?" she exclaimed, a look of serious concern on her face.

"Polly, go home," said Eric, opening the door and stepping out of his car. "I like you, go home."

“...all this week, you've been acting...super weird... you haven't been talking to me or to anyone, you've been skipping school, you missed a test today, a really important test for like... your semester grade-”

“It doesn't matter,” said Eric, shrugging his shoulders with resignation. After today, nothing would matter. “Just get out of my face.”

“...” Polly didn't know whether to run from Eric or to try and keep talking to him. Something was *seriously* wrong, and as he walked toward her, she could see a look in his eye like he wasn't even there with her. “Eric...I'm your friend.... I just want to talk to you, you're going to ruin your whole life-”

“It's already ruined,” said Eric, looking down at his watch. The time was 11:17.  
“That's...weird...the bomb's supposed to go off.”

“No it's not,” Polly replied, her hand trembling as she reached out to touch his hand, only for him to push it away. “Eric, I told you once if there was anything you needed to talk to me about-”

“Fuck,” Eric muttered, and walked past Polly as if she was invisible. “I'm gonna have to do this myself.”

“Do *what* yourself...?” Polly asked, following him back toward the school. “Eric?”

Eric walked back into the school and into the hallway. As he made his way toward the cafeteria stairs, he felt Polly grabbing him.

“Eric, just listen to me...!”

As Polly grabbed Eric and pulled back on his coat, she saw the shotgun tucked inside of it. She gasped and recoiled, a look of pure terror on her face. She shook her head. She felt a fear she hadn't felt since that terrible night at the slumber party when she'd nearly been kidnapped from her own house. Eric just stared at her, a cold, lifeless look in his eyes.

“I said get the fuck outta here,” said Eric, pulling the gun out of his coat and pointing it at her in a threatening manner. “And don't scream or I'll blow your head off.”

Polly was too shocked and frightened to scream, but she got out a few words anyway. She had to try and make Eric see reason, not just for her classmates' sake but for his as well.

“Eric....you don't have to do this....don't throw your whole life away....just....put the gun back and....and...”

“And do what?”

“Eric....please....”

“If you were really my friend, you'd know why I have to do this. Nobody's gonna ever know my name otherwise. Now they're gonna talk about me forever. And when it's over, that guy

who tried to hurt you? I'm gonna kill him too. So you got nothing to worry about as long as you stay the fuck outta my way!"

"I won't let you...." Polly choked out, her legs shaking so much she thought she'd collapse at any moment.

"What?"

"I won't let you...!" Polly said, reaching for the gun while getting ready to scream. Eric immediately shoved the barrel of the gun under her neck and pushed, hard, but didn't pull the trigger. Tears streaked rapidly down Polly's face as she felt paralyzed in place, having a weapon pointed at her for the second time in her life, by someone who was clearly even more deranged than the twisted pervert who'd tried to snatch her out of her parents' home. She immediately regretted ever speaking to Eric, let alone reaching out to him and trying to help him. Some people couldn't be helped. She knew that now. But it was too late.

"Scream and you die..." said Eric, his face curled into an expression of rage. "Don't try to stop me."

The hall had filled up with people now. It was passing period, though Eric and Polly were, at least for the moment, out of sight of anyone who could see them. As soon as anyone did see them, Eric was going to start shooting.

Then Caitlyn walked by, and her eyes immediately registered what was happening between Eric and Polly.

"Polly?!" Caitlyn cried out, and without thinking of her own safety or anything but protecting her friend, ran toward Eric and grabbed the barrel of his gun, aiming it up and away from Polly and toward the ceiling. "GET AWAY FROM HER!"

"Caitlyn, NO!" Polly screamed as Caitlyn and Eric wrestled for the gun.

"GUN! GUN! HE'S GOT A GUN!" Caitlyn shrieked at the top of her lungs as loud as she could, prompting every student and teacher within earshot to begin running for their lives.

"You fucking BITCH!" Eric yelled, furious that his plans to cause death and destruction were unraveling before his eyes, first his bomb had been a dud and now his planned shooting spree was being ruined by the screams of his ex-girlfriend, someone who he knew he should've killed before he even got to the school that day. "I'll kill you, I'll fucking kill you first!"

"Caitlyn....!!!" Polly was in a near panic as she watched her friend and Eric wrestling for the shotgun, time seeming to slow down.

By now, other students and teachers had arrived, and not everyone was running for their lives. One of the teachers was coming over to attempt to help Caitlyn get the gun out of Eric's hands, but with adrenaline flowing through her body, Caitlyn was doing a pretty good job of that herself. Caitlyn felt Eric's grip on the gun weakening, and she could feel it slipping from his hands. Eric pushed himself back, and managed to point the barrel at

Caitlyn's stomach. With his finger already on the trigger, that was all he needed.

An explosion from the barrel sent Caitlyn flying back into the arms of one of the teachers who'd come over to help. With other teachers and students closing in on him, Eric only had enough time to fire one more shot.

A shot meant for himself.

Eric was dead before he'd hit the ground, but Caitlyn, despite having been shot in the gut at point-blank range with a shotgun, was still clinging to life as the teacher who'd caught her frantically screamed for a medic. Polly was now collapsed on the ground, weeping as her eyes met her best friend's.

Caitlyn knew she was dying, and with every single spark of life she had left, she knew she had to say one last thing to her best friend. She had so many regrets, she was so scared to die, but she knew she couldn't die while letting Polly think any of this had been her fault.

“Polly....it....wasn't....”

Caitlyn closed her eyes for the last time, a pool of blood rapidly forming around her body. Polly wept over Caitlyn until paramedics physically dragged her away. Polly's actions that day had averted a horrific massacre, but it would take her many years to fully realize that. On that day, and for many days to come, one thought would echo through Polly's mind.

*“My best friend is dead and it's all my fault.”*

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*“For many days, and indeed, for many years after that terrible day, that was all I could think about, was to blame myself for Caitlyn's death. Among many other things, it was a video game that actually helped me cope. I played The Darkest Night afterward, and...of course when I got to Etienne's death, I physically wept, I felt ill and I couldn't play the game anymore, I was reminded so much of Caitlyn. But I forced myself to keep playing, and the lessons that game taught me were the first thing that really helped me to stop blaming myself for what had happened to Caitlyn. That's when I began to see the power of entertainment media to help people cope with stressful events in their lives. That game was the start of my research, and twenty years later, we're still working.”*

-Polly Klaas, director of the Stanford University Institute For Media and Human Psychology, in an interview with the Huffington Post, July 23, 2019

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Batman had, by far, been the dominant DC character for the first half of the nineties. His movies were international sensations and *Batman: The Animated Series* was one of the highest-rated shows on the Fox Kids block. Aside from live-action television efforts like the short-lived *Flash* television show and *Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*, Batman was the flavor of the day. Many attribute this to the Dark Knight becoming a mimetic badass in Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*, but also had much to do with

demolishing Superman as a character. That trend reversed with 1996's *Kingdom Come* by superstar artist Alex Ross and James Robinson. On its surface, *Kingdom Come* is a repudiation of the nineties anti-hero trope popularized by creators like the ever-controversial Rob Liefeld and Todd MacFarlane. In the not-so-distant future, Superman comes out of retirement to rein in a new generation of vigilantes who outright execute their enemies without due process and threaten civilian lives through their destructive battles.

Another story element is also the different approaches Superman and Batman take in dealing with the metahuman problem. Superman favoring a more direct approach by reforming the Justice League while Batman takes a more subtle approach by infiltrating Lex Luthor's Human Liberation Front, who looks to take advantage of the situation. Though I do not know whether it was Ross (who proposed the mini-series) or Robinson, but Batman is not only shown to be contemptuous of metahumans but also openly disdainful towards other non-powered heroes like Green Arrow, Black Canary, and Blue Beetle. Moreover, even his former protégés Dick Grayson and Tim Drake sided with Superman. In fact, it was Superman who delivered a "What the Hell, Hero?" speech to Batman when the Gulag Crisis was moments away from growing critical. Batman "reformed" in the end by making Wayne Manor a hospital for those injured in the Battle of the Gulag and mending fences with Dick, Tim, and Clark.

The character Magog would be another element of the story that would gain greater prominence in the DC mythos in the coming years. Interestingly, the character was brainchild of Mark Waid. DC had initially wanted him to write the mini-series but he was already committed to four books at the time and as such the assignment went to James Robinson who Alex Ross pitched the idea to. In an interview with Comic Book Resources, Ross stated, "*That's a character that Mark Waid invented that was really just put to me to come up with the most God awful, Rob Liefeld sort of design that I could.*" Apparently Ross and Robinson like the idea enough to incorporate into the mini.

Ross continues in that interview. "*What I was stealing from was - really only two key designs of Rob's - the design of Cable. I hated it. I felt like it looked like they just threw up everything on the character - the scars, the thing going on with his eye, the arm, and what's with all the guns? But the thing is, when I put those elements together with the helmet of Shatterstar -- I think that was his name -- well, the ram horns and the gold, suddenly it held together as one of the designs that I felt happiest with in the entire series.*"

There was an interesting dichotomy between Magog and the Man of Steel. Many critics and readers view Superman as a messianic figure considering how his origin mirrors that of Moses and one can also draw comparisons to Samson as well. Hardly surprising when you consider the cultural backgrounds of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster-- Magog was very much an antichrist figure with his horned helmet resembling that of the golden calf. It was for that very reason Sam Raimi wanted to include Magog in his second Superman film. *Last Son of Krypton* was by no means a failure, but taking third to both *Independence Day* and *Twister* was something of a blow to Warner Bros. and Superman's esteem thus Raimi wanted to change the one of the films tone from light-hearted to serious though not dark.

Raimi consulted with Joel Schumacher, who he had befriended on a visit to the set of *Batman Forever* after he landed the job of directing *Last Son of Krypton*. The WB top brass wanted a purer adaptation of "The Death of Superman" complete with Doomsday, but wanted Magog after reading *Kingdom Come*. Schumacher told Raimi to stick to his guns and the studio and director came to a compromise: the plot would be "Death of Superman" but Magog would be the villain. However, when Raimi handed the studio brass the treatment,

they told him that there was no way to condense it into one film; hence *Man of Tomorrow* effectively became two films produced concurrently. There was precedence for this move. Richard Donner had intended to film *Superman: The Movie* and *Superman II* concurrently, but time and budgetary constraints prevented him from completing *Superman II*.

In Blu-Ray commentary for *Man of Tomorrow*, Bruce Campbell recalls, "*Man of Tomorrow and Man of Steel were single most grueling films of my life. It was physically demanding to the point of exhaustion, especially fight scenes and stunts, Sam and I barely even saw our own families. But we saw it as worth it to make the best film possible. The studio had high expectations; the audience had high expectations; hell, we had even higher expectations. Superman deserved the best effort we could make and we would die trying and you screwheads can put the Book of the Dead down. That's what we did, except the dying part.*"

Additionally, *Man of Tomorrow* and *Man of Steel* would be the most expensive films Warner Bros. produced at the time. It was risky considering that Warner Bros. invested heavily in the familiar, but untested *Green Lantern* and *Wonder Woman* properties. Interestingly, the idea of a shared DC "cinematic universe" and a Justice League film would germinate in the Superman franchise.

-*Tales From The Superhero Wars, sequentialhistory.net, August 5, 2010*

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"*I didn't even know they'd started showing Sailor Moon there again! Can they handle Haruka and Michiru this time around?*"

-Naoko Takeuchi, on a Japanese talk show, when asked if she'd heard that *Sailor Moon S* was airing in North America, on May 5, 1999

"*Believe it or not, we'd considered making Soul Reaver a multiplatform game! Not because the Saturn wasn't strong enough to realize the game, but simply so more people could play. In the end, after Silicon Knights backed out, Eidos made the choice to keep the game exclusive to the Saturn, and believe it or not, that might have made the game more high-profile than it would be otherwise, considering how the Saturn was beginning to wind down.*"

-Amy Hennig, director of *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*, in an interview in the December 2002 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

"*To secure Dan Castellaneta's voice as the titular character in the new Earthworm Jim game, Shiny paid him the biggest salary to date given to a voice actor in a video game.*"

-from the cover article in the May 1999 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

"*Taking the reins of the ActRaiser series was really an honor, and I hope that I was able to make a game worthy of those that came before it.*"

-*ActRaiser Valkyrie* director Masaki Norimoto, in the February 1999 issue of *Famitsu*

"*With a pair of big blockbuster sequels and an amazing RPG dropping this month, and the year's most anticipated game coming in July, it's clear that the Sega Saturn isn't ready to roll over and die. Not by a long shot.*"

-from *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* June 1999 cover article on the Sega Saturn's comeback

*"I'm no servant. I'm the queen of this planet and you will not address me in that manner again."*

-Padme Amidala, *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*

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*Ultra Nintendo:*

### **Dino Crisis**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "A spooky thriller full of great looking dinosaurs and heartpounding action.")

Gamespot: 8.3 (quote: "Resident Evil it's not, but it's damn close.")

### **Duke Nukem Forever**

EGM: 6.8 (quote: "Nothing revolutionary, but Duke fans will eat it up.")

Gamespot: 7.7 (quote: "Better late than never, and it looks fantastic on both the Ultra and the PC.")

### **Hybrid Heaven**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "While this game can be a mess at times, the mix of RPG and action elements work brilliantly together.")

Gamespot: 3.6 (quote: "What happened? Did all the creativity that was supposed to be found in this game go to Metal Gear Solid instead?")

### **Sailor Moon: Another Story Retold**

EGM: 8.8 (quote: "A brilliant RPG that brings the classic Sailor Moon characters to life.")

Gamespot: 8.2 (quote: "While it could have stood to have been a bit longer, Sailor Moon: ASR checks off everything on the list of things we love about RPGs.")

### **Scooby-Doo: Mystery Island**

EGM: 5.0 (quote: "Lame gameplay and dumb mysteries are only somewhat redeemed by the use of the voice actors from the recent movies.")

Gamespot: 6.3 (quote: "Those who enjoyed Scooby-Doo on Zombie Island will get a thrill out of this, but it's not the best cartoon adaptation by a longshot.")

### **South Park**

EGM: 4.2 (quote: "Ugh. Barely even funny, let alone fun to play.")

Gamespot: 2.9 (quote: "For all the fantastic first-person shooters on the Ultra Nintendo, this should have been so much better.")

### **Star Wars: Episode I Racer**

EGM: 9.5 (quote: "This challenging racer might be the best Star Wars video game ever made, and there have been some great ones.")

Gamespot: 8.6 (quote: "There's definitely a learning curve, but the fantastic graphics and customization can't be beat.")

### **The Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest**

EGM: 5.8 (quote: "It's a shame this game couldn't have been as good as the cartoon. The Questworld sequences are a slog.")

Gamespot: 7.1 (quote: "If you liked the show, you'll probably like this game.")

### **Ultra Naval Guns**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "The ships and the sea look fantastic, but the campaign mode needed to be more robust, with less repeat missions.")

Gamespot: 6.3 (quote: "We definitely preferred this game on the SNES-CD. A graphical update can't forgive the repetitive missions.")

### **Undefeated**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "A boxing beat-em-up is a creative idea, and this game's mob spoof storyline made me laugh many times.")

Gamespot: 7.2 (quote: "The combat gets a bit repetitive, but the plot is really quite a hoot.")

### **Weyricht**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "Squaresoft's latest RPG plays like a much more serious Brave Fencer Kyuriadan, with a plot full of twists and turns.")

Gamespot: 7.7 (quote: "We had quite a lot of fun with this game, even if we found the combat to be at times frustrating.")

*Saturn:*

### **Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "A fantastic sequel with a deeply intriguing plot and excellent action-RPG gameplay.")

Gamespot: 9.2 (quote: "One of the very best games on the Saturn, with beautiful graphics even without the use of the Ring. With the Ring, the game provides some of the system's very best visuals.")

### **Earthworm Jim**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "The classic gameplay returns, but not much has changed besides a fresh coat of paint.")

Gamespot: 8.4 (quote: "One of the funniest platformers we've yet played, Earthworm Jim is a fantastic retro blast from the past.")

### **ActRaiser Valkyrie**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "An amazing soundtrack and wonderful gameplay make ActRaiser Valkyrie one of the year's best RPGs.")

Gamespot: 9.7 (quote: "A brilliant masterpiece combining the best aspects of both SNES titles and adding some incredible Norse mythology.")

### **Final Fight Revenge**

EGM: 7.2 (quote: "Final Fight is back, but the jump to 3-D isn't always a smooth one.")

Gamespot: 6.8 (quote: "There are some great parts of this game, but to get to them you have to fight your way through a lot of the same old baddies.")

### **Dragon Force II**

EGM: 4.7 (quote: "What a disappointment. We loved the first game, but this sequel is a complete mess.")

Gamespot: 6.8 (quote: "Horribly clunky menus and a tough to figure out customization option mar this otherwise capable sequel.")

### **Spirit Of Exploration**

EGM: 8.7 (quote: "The graphics have a beautiful anime style to them and the puzzles make dungeons a tricky but rewarding experience.")

Gamespot: 8.1 (quote: "This is the adventure genre boiled down to its most basic. It's nonstop fun.")

### **The Wilderness**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "How many Resident Evil-like horror titles do we need? That said, The Wilderness isn't all bad.")

Gamespot: 7.1 (quote: "There's so much camp in this horror title, it's surprising that the game is as effective as it is. It's not great, but it's a worthy rental.")

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### **May 5, 1999**

What is believed to be the second strongest tornado ever recorded (after the 1997 Austin Tornado) strikes the southern suburbs of Oklahoma City before passing directly through the downtown area at F5 strength. Part of a larger tornado outbreak that spawned over 100 tornadoes across four days, the largest tornado of the outbreak started in Moore, Oklahoma before passing through a section of downtown Oklahoma City. The Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, which was believed to have been the target of a foiled bombing plot in 1995, suffers particularly devastating damage, taking a direct hit from the tornado and having its entire west side gutted by winds measured by a mobile Doppler radar van just outside the city at 303 miles per hour. Fortunately, the people in the building had enough warning to reach the building's parking garage, and no fatalities were recorded at the building itself. The people of the Oklahoma City area, however, weren't so lucky: the tornado killed 82 people, the biggest single tornado death toll since 1997's Austin tornado. The outbreak itself killed a total of 111 people in Oklahoma and 2 people in Texas.

## **Despite Tornado Disaster, Twister Sequel To Premiere As Scheduled**

After yesterday's tornado outbreak, which spawned dozens of tornadoes including an F5 that devastated Oklahoma City and its southern suburbs, it's been speculated that Warner Brothers may choose to cancel tomorrow's *Twister 2* opening, which has, as part of its storyline, a devastating F5 tornado impacting Oklahoma City in an extremely eerie case of art imitating life. However, with the film already scheduled to air in theaters across the nation, the studio has elected to keep the premiere date May 7. They have, however, given individual theaters permission to pull the film if believed to be inappropriate. So far, only a handful of theaters have announced that the film is being pulled. *Twister 2* is expected to open in the \$65 million range when it debuts tomorrow, and it has yet to be seen whether or not the disastrous tornado outbreak will impact the film's bottom line either positively or negatively.

-from a report on Yahoo! News, May 6, 1999

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## **Silicon Knights Agrees To Eidos Deal, Soldier Of Misfortune Coming To Ultra In 2000**

The company that helped to create the *Legacy of Kain* series has agreed to stop its legal action against Eidos and Crystal Dynamics. In exchange, Eidos will publish the company's upcoming Ultra Nintendo game *Soldier of Misfortune* on the console next year. Silicon Knights had been in a bitter feud with Eidos concerning the *Kain* series, among its grievances was the company's insistence that the upcoming *Soul Reaver* title be ported to the Ultra Nintendo, which would have increased development time significantly, perhaps causing the game to miss Eidos' projected launch window of spring-summer 1999 entirely. With Silicon Knights now satisfied, Eidos expects to launch *Soul Reaver* for the Saturn sometime in the spring.

-from a November 18, 1998 article on Gamespot.com

## **Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver- The Basics**

*Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver* is the sequel to *Blood Omen: Legacy Of Kain*, exclusively for the Sega Saturn (though an Ultra Nintendo port was considered during the game's development). It plays somewhat differently from *Blood Omen*, keeping pace with the changes from OTL's game to make *Soul Reaver* more of an action-puzzle title rather than a straight up adventure game. The changes from OTL's *Blood Omen* to make that game more RPG-like (damage numbers, a greater selection of weapons/armor) largely remain in *Soul Reaver*, and combat is a bit slower than in OTL's game. At its heart, *Soul Reaver* is a hack-and-slash title, but a much slower one than modern OTL hack-and-slashes like *Devil May Cry* or *God of War*. As in OTL's game, the protagonist Raziel gains abilities as the game progresses, both story-based abilities via defeating bosses and combat-based abilities gained by leveling up. Raziel levels up by collecting items left behind by enemies to gain experience, an element that did not exist in OTL's game and represents the shift of the series to a more RPG-like experience. Also, ITTL, the production troubles that delayed *Soul Reaver* are not as severe. Silicon Knights, which originally assisted with the development of *Soul Reaver*, is given the opportunity to create a later Ultra Nintendo game with Eidos' assistance, this game appears in 2000 and because of this opportunity, the company allows

Eidos to proceed with finishing up *Soul Reaver* unimpeded, allowing for an earlier release of the game than IOTL. The game's graphics are a bit better than OTL's Playstation game, and with the Ring, the graphical quality is boosted even higher, though it's not the best looking Ring game.

The plot of *Soul Reaver* remains largely the same as OTL, particularly at the beginning of the game. After the events of *Blood Omen*, Kain rejects the idea of sacrificing himself to save Nosgoth by restoring the pillars. Instead, he makes himself an immortal vampire god, spawning countless vampires to do his bidding and ravage the world. Over more than a thousand years of Kain's rule, Nosgoth falls into chaos and darkness, with humans nearly completely wiped out. Kain takes on seven lieutenants (IOTL, he took on five), including Raziel. One day, after Raziel grows a pair of wings, Kain, in a jealous rage, tears them off and condemns Raziel to death by flinging him into a bottomless pit that mutilates and kills him. Eventually, Raziel is revived by the Elder God and given the task of killing Kain, both to get his revenge and to save Nosgoth. Raziel must walk the ravaged land, hunting down his brothers, Kain's other lieutenants, along the way, killing them and taking their powers as his own. The major plot divergence from OTL is the existence of time travel within the game. In addition to the physical and spectral realms, Raziel eventually gets the ability to travel to the Nosgoth of the past, before Kain allowed the Pillars to be destroyed (this time travel only first appeared in *Soul Reaver 2* IOTL). It's here where Raziel learns of his Sarafan origins, and it's also here where he battles one of Kain's lieutenants (one of the two original to TTL). Raziel eventually confronts Kain, but for this final battle, he realizes that Kain's intentions weren't entirely evil, and that Kain has always been searching for a way to revive Nosgoth and keep the vampire race alive. However, the two still do battle, as Raziel is obsessed with his revenge nonetheless. Raziel defeats Kain, but due to the interference of Moebius the Timestreamer, Kain is able to escape, and Raziel gives pursuit, leading to a similar cliffhanger ending as IOTL.

*Soul Reaver* is released on May 6, 1999. It is positioned as one of the Sega Saturn's major hits of the year (possibly its biggest blockbuster game before *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*). Due to heavy promotion and favorable critical reviews, it receives the best launch week sales for a Saturn game since *Virtua Fighter 3*, and becomes the top selling new video game release of the month overall. The success of *Soul Reaver* is a big boon for Sega, but even as the game is a sales success, there are some within Eidos and Crystal Dynamics who would still like to bring the series to the Ultra Nintendo, especially as the Saturn's hardware sales continue to slowly decline. With Silicon Knights now developing a game for the Ultra, a port of the first *Legacy of Kain* game would be as simple as patching things up with them, and many at Silicon Knights still have good relationships with the folks at Crystal Dynamics and Eidos...

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*Dino Crisis* was positioned as one of the Ultra Nintendo's major releases of spring 1999, after Capcom chose to release the game as a Nintendo exclusive, forgoing a Saturn port (though the Katana would later receive a compilation port of the two *Dino Crisis* games, *Dino Crisis Complete*, in 2001). Described as "*Resident Evil*, but with dinosaurs", the game made heavy use of the Ultra Nintendo's more complex controller to allow a larger variety of moves for its main character Regina. You could shoot while running, something that couldn't be done in the *Resident Evil* games, and a variety of special weapons and gadgets could be deployed with the Ultra Nintendo's shoulder buttons, including tranquilizer spray and explosive grenades. Despite being more fast-paced than *Resident Evil*, the game stuck to the familiar survivor horror conventions of limited ammunition and plenty of tension,

including moments where the player would have to respond with rapid button presses to avoid being killed by dinosaurs hiding in dark spaces (in a precursor to today's "quick time events"). The game was fully voiced, with Stephanie Morgenstern as the voice of the protagonist Regina, and a variety of other Capcom regulars voicing other characters in the game.

*Dino Crisis* allowed players to choose their next course of action at several points in the game. Depending on what action the players take, their companions could live or die, and various in-game events, including certain boss battles, are only open on certain paths. This is a sort of evolution of gameplay elements from *Resident Evil 2*, though in that game, many of the paths were predetermined by which character's path you decided to take at the start of the game. Regina's companions include Gail, Rick, Cooper (who dies at the start of the game no matter what you do), and a civilian scientist named Nikki, who forms a deep bond with Regina over the course of the game and whose survival is the most difficult to guarantee out of your companions, saving her requires making very difficult decisions at several points in the game and playing through its most difficult story path (and even then, you need to succeed a QTE challenge to save her from being shot by Dr. Kirk at the very end of the game). This method of storytelling in games had become popular in recent games, and in *Dino Crisis* was perhaps its most cinematic to date.

*Dino Crisis* achieved good reviews upon its release, though it didn't quite achieve "blockbuster" status as Nintendo and Capcom had hoped. The game was good, but reviewers and players didn't believe it was great, and with a packed release schedule coming up, the game didn't stand out as much as Capcom would've liked. Still, the game did well enough to get a sequel in 2000, and remains one of the more popular horror titles on the Ultra Nintendo, which would see several more horror hits before the year was up.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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And while we would've preferred the new *Earthworm Jim* to mix things up like *Earthworm Jim 2* did, the new *Earthworm Jim* on the Saturn is quite a fun platformer and visually gorgeous, with enough levels (14) to keep players satisfied for a good long while. Featuring many of the same voices as the animated series and a hilarious storyline (you could almost call this game the third season of the animated series), this game will please both *Earthworm Jim* fans and platformer fans alike. The game is full of great villains (Queen Slug-For-A-Butt and Psy-Crow make memorable appearances) and *Earthworm Jim*'s one liners are better than ever. It might not be the most unique game, but we're glad to see *Earthworm Jim* is back.

Score: 8/10

-from the *Earthworm Jim* review in the May 1999 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

*Earthworm Jim*: All right, come on out! Who's been causing all the crap I've had to go through getting here?

\*A booming voice echoes from the shadows\*

Voice: Why, it's me...don't you remember?

Earthworm Jim: How am I supposed to remember someone I can't even see?

Voice: Hahahahaha....of course you don't remember...

\*The lights in the room turn on, exposing the villain.\*

Earthworm Jim: Wait a minute...it's...a cow!

Cow: That's right, Jim! I'm the cow you so carelessly launched all the way back in New Junk City! Do you know how long I was flying through the air? How hard I fell?

Earthworm Jim: But...you already got your revenge...you crushed my girlfriend!

Princess Whats-Her-Name: \*from under a sheet nearby\* I'm not your girlfriend!

Cow: NO! My dastardly surprise...you ruined it! \*flustered\* I was....I was gonna....

Earthworm Jim: You were gonna what?

Cow: I was gonna... you know, pull back this sheet, like this... \*pulls back the sheet to reveal Princess Whats-Her-Name tied to stakes in the ground\* And then you were gonna be all like, "PRINCESS WHATS-HER-NAME! NOOOOOOO!" and then I was....I was gonna laugh, like, "hahahahahaha!" And then...and then...what was I gonna do then?

Princess Whats-Her-Name: \*groans\* You were going to crush me again.

Cow: QUIET! Stop...stop ruining my....stop it!

Earthworm Jim: \*shoots the cow\*

Cow: \*falls over, yelling in pain\* No! You're not...you're not supposed to...no! You're ruining everything, both of you...are...ruining everything!

Princess Whats-Her-Name: \*groans and rolls her eyes\* Care to untie me now?

-from level 14 of the Saturn *Earthworm Jim*, the cutscene before the final boss, eventually the cow manages to get into a giant mecha suit which begins the final boss battle

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IGN: And all I remember was *Hybrid Heaven* being really polarizing.

Yasuo Daikai: Right.

IGN: Review scores were all over the place. Some magazines loved it, I think we gave it a decent score, but I remember Gamespot really hating it and *GameTV* gave it like a 3 out of 10.

Daikai: Well, the reason for that, I think, is that I don't think we ever made as much use out

of the Ultra Nintendo as say, *Metal Gear Solid* did. We put a lot more of our time and our thought into the battle system and the puzzles that, from a technical standpoint, the game was only quite average.

IGN: And that battle system was pretty polarizing too.

Daikai: There were so many traditional RPGs on the Ultra Nintendo at the time that we really wanted to do something quite different. And so we created something with more action emphasis to it, more strategy, but I don't think players quite understood it despite our efforts to make it as intuitive as possible. Because there were so many RPGs for the Ultra, I don't think the game got as much promotion or notice before its release as maybe it should have. In North America, at least, it was one of the first Konami games after *Metal Gear Solid*, so it got some hype from that, but otherwise it came out really without a lot of fanfare and so that might have been the reason that the game is largely considered a failure.

IGN: But you did do a lot of unique things.

Daikai: Many of those were incorporated into *Metal Gear Gaiden* (the RPG *Metal Gear* side-story game released for the Ultra Nintendo in 2002) later on!

IGN: *Hybrid Heaven* is a game that doesn't get a lot of the appreciation that perhaps it should, are you ever sad or angry about that?

Daikai: Sometimes I feel disappointment about it, but it led to opportunities for me later in my life, so I have to also be a little bit grateful!

-excerpted from an interview with Yasuo Daikai, director of *Hybrid Heaven*, posted on IGN.com on September 18, 2006

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*This month sees a pair of action RPGs, one made by Enix and the other by Square, facing off in a battle to see which hack-and-slash role playing epic reigns supreme. Which one is better? We'll let you decide, but here's our take.*

First up is **ActRaiser Valkyrie**, a Sega Saturn game by Enix. It's the latest title in the classic *ActRaiser* series which appeared on the SNES and SNES-CD, and the series makes its first appearance on a Sega console with a brand new protagonist and a lot of fresh new gameplay mechanics. In *ActRaiser Valkyrie*, you play as Lenneth, who is commanded by the god Odin to recruit brave warriors, known as einherjar, for the upcoming apocalyptic battle of Ragnarok. To these ends, Lenneth must descend to the world below and find the bravest warriors she can, but in order to do that, she will need to borrow Odin's power to transform the land and raise human settlements from which to cultivate these warriors. Meanwhile, the dark god Loki has sent powerful demons into the world to destroy the humans living there, smashing their cities and preventing Lenneth from raising the army she needs to assist Odin. Depending on where you build cities and how prosperous they become, you'll be able to recruit from amongst 57 warriors of varying strengths and abilities. In order to combat Loki's demons, you'll need to descend to the world below and infiltrate his dungeons, which are numerous and dangerous. Battles take place in classic action-RPG fashion, though unlike in previous *ActRaiser* games, Lenneth will be accompanied by two of

her fellow einherjar in battle, and they'll assist you as you go through the dungeons. These warriors must be carefully managed, given proper equipment and leveled up just as Lenneth is. Also, you can't just pick your two favorite warriors and take them with you. You'll need to raise up warriors to send back to Valhalla, where they'll do battle against Loki's demons there without the player's input. If you're successful, Odin will reward Lenneth with power-ups and equipment. Fail, and you may lose the ability to modify or build new villages, which will make upcoming challenges, particularly the final battle of Ragnarok, much harder.

In Squaresoft's **Weyricht** for the Ultra Nintendo, you play as Weyricht, an ancient knight in the Holy Roman Empire, who must confront a band of insurrectionists who seek to assassinate the Emperor and take his throne. Intrigue abounds in this title, which has more in common with *Final Fantasy Tactics* than it does Squaresoft's other *Final Fantasy* games. Combat takes place in a variety of places, from large, open fields with many enemies and allies on the battlefield at once, to dark underground tunnels beneath huge castles. The battle system is somewhat like that found in *Secret of Mana*, though it's considerably more tactical and *Weyricht* lacks any sort of magic. Instead, you'll need to find a favorite weapon and build proficiency with it. Battles are somewhat rare in this game, and experience points are rewarded for excellent technique in battle and making quick work of your enemy. They're also awarded for the successful completion of non-combat missions such as recruiting a traitor back to the side of the emperor, or rescuing a soldier held for ransom. *Weyricht* is the most *Ultima*-like of Squaresoft's RPGs to date, though it's still clearly a Squaresoft game, with their design fingerprints all over it.

So which one of these two action RPGs is better? *Weyricht* certainly has some intriguing plot twists, and it's one of Squaresoft's more ambitious endeavors, but combat is rather boring and there's often a lack of direction on where to go next, while some of the branching plotlines are too arcane to figure out. Meanwhile, *ActRaiser Valkyrie* combines the fun god-game gameplay of the original *ActRaiser* with the creativity of the second game, features the series' most complex and symphonic soundtrack to date, and introduces a huge cast of characters that makes Lenneth's quest a lot less lonely than anything the Master ever did. Unlike in *ActRaiser*, you really get the sense that you're building a living, breathing world, adding very high stakes to the climactic battle with Ragnarok at the end of the game. The original *ActRaiser* for the SNES was a classic, but it's not a stretch to say that *Valkyrie* exceeds even the original, and is the true sequel that the series deserved, rather than the controversial *ActRaiser 2*. While *Weyricht* is an ambitious game that falls short of Squaresoft's classic reputation, *ActRaiser Valkyrie* is a step forward for Enix and has the potential to be the best RPG of the year.

-excerpted from an article posted on Gamespot.com on May 11, 1999

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### **Sailor Moon's Controversial New Heroines?**

The long-awaited third season of the hit animated superheroine show *Sailor Moon* is currently airing on Cartoon Network's Toonami block. It's been nearly two years since new episodes have been seen on American television, and perhaps the biggest reason is the inclusion of a pair of Sailor Guardians who may or may not be attracted to one another.

Sailors Uranus and Neptune, civilian names Haruka and Michiru, are a pair of mysterious young women who frequently clash with Sailor Moon before teaming up with her to stop a new villainous threat. The two characters are quite close with one another, and series

creator Naoko Takeuchi has confirmed that they are, in fact, a couple! While the show never comes out and states this as fact, astute viewers have noticed the attraction, though the show hasn't drawn the controversy that many might have expected.

While the two characters are stated to be a couple, the show never in fact explicitly shows any romantic contact between them, and it can just as easily be inferred that the two girls are simply very close friends. The show itself is rated Y7-FV, with the FV standing for "fantasy violence", and indeed, the show's sometimes violent battles draw significantly more controversy than any romantic entanglements between Haruka and Michiru, at least in the eyes of media watchdog groups that occasionally comment on controversies in children's media. So for now, Haruka and Michiru's secret is safe, and *Sailor Moon* remains one of Cartoon Network's highest rated shows.

-from an article that appeared in the May 1-7, 1999 issue of *TV Guide*

*"We know you're waiting for the next season of Sailor Moon. So are we. But while you're waiting for another season of new episodes, why not check out the brand new Ultra Nintendo game Sailor Moon: Another Story Retold? It's got all your favorite characters from the show, doing battle with a brand new villain and all the old villains from seasons past. It's like having a whole new season of the show at the touch of a button. So check out Sailor Moon: Another Story Retold, and while you're at it, take a look at another new game, The Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest, based on another of Toonami's biggest hits. You watch Toonami on TV, why not play it too?"*

-Moltar, from a Toonami interstitial that began airing after the season finale of *Sailor Moon S* in May 1999

*Sailor Moon: Another Story Retold* was released on May 10, 1999 in North America, just five days after the season finale of *Sailor Moon S* aired on Toonami for the first time. The game had already released in Japan in December 1998, and was a remake of *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon: Another Story* for the SNES-CD, which never came to North America. The game was given a complete graphical overhaul, with 3-D character models in both the overworld and in battle. Anime cutscenes, created by Toei, were added to certain moments in the game, and a significant amount of voice acting was also added to the game (in the previous SNES-CD version, voice acting only appeared in battles). In North America, this voice acting was performed by the Ocean Group, who'd also done the English dub for the anime, the original dub cast reprised their roles for the game. In addition to the enhanced graphics, the gameplay was altered somewhat, with combination attacks between Sailor Guardians becoming far easier to perform. In addition, character statistics were rebalanced. Originally, it was very easy for certain characters in the original game to become extremely overpowered, with their moves hitting for thousands of points of damage at once, while other characters were largely rendered useless, with damage outputs in the single digits. Now, it's possible for all characters to do heavy damage in battle, though certain characters such as Makoto and Haruka still specialize in physical attacks, while others such as Chibi-Usa and Ami are more utility characters. Character elements also play a heavy role in battle, with elemental weaknesses far more significant than in the SNES-CD version of the game. Pluto's Time Stop technique, which was considered broken in the SNES-CD version, is significantly powered down and comes with heavy consequences with repeated use. The game itself is actually shortened somewhat, with about 20 percent of the content, mostly fetch quests and a couple of boss battles, removed in favor of adding more detail to remaining areas. This created a more streamlined, if shorter game, that moved at a faster pace than the original.

For the most part, *Another Story Retold* received good reviews, including a 37/40 from *Famitsu* and a 9.1 from the website IGN. It also got a 9.0/10 on *GameTV*, with Lyssa giving it a perfect score, though Brittany criticized the game for being somewhat shorter than the original and only awarded it a 4. The game maintains an 83 rating on Metacritic to this day, and sales were better than any anime adaptation released in North America up to that point, though up to that point, anime adaptations were rather rare, and sales were around that of Ubisoft's *The Darkest Night* in North America. The game's deluxe edition (which contained a cloth map, a soundtrack CD, a mini strategy guide, and a replica transformation pen), which sold out within a few weeks of the game's launch, is coveted among *Sailor Moon* collectors, with sealed copies selling for \$1,000 or more on Ebay. The game's strategy guide, published by Prima, is also somewhat of a rarity and can fetch around \$70 in good condition.

-from an article on the Sailor Moon USA HQ fansite, posted on January 23, 2014

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*“And Owen still has Stone Cold in the Sharpshooter! Folks, Stone Cold has never tapped out in his life, he didn't tap out when Owen's brother Bret had him in this hold back at Wrestlemania XIII and he's damn sure not gonna tap out now! Stone Cold is fighting it, he's fighting to break the hold and Owen's starting to let go now, Stone Cold overpowering Owen but what's this? ...what the hell is going on? McMahon is looking at the timekeeper and he's calling for the bell! ....NO! NO! THAT SON OF A BITCH, NO! STONE COLD NEVER TAPPED OUT! WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?! And now Stone Cold gets up and he is livid, and here comes Shane McMahon with the chair, and oh my God, he just smashed Stone Cold across the back of the skull! Owen Hart has won the WWF Championship, but I never imagined it would happen like this! How the hell can he live with himself after what has just transpired? After the McMahons did it to his brother, how can any human being with a beating heart in his chest allow them to do it to somebody else?!”*

-Jim Ross, commentating Owen Hart's first WWF Championship victory at *Over The Edge '99*, which saw Hart beating Stone Cold Steve Austin in a parallel of the Montreal Screwjob following Owen Hart's heel turn in April

*Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* was released on May 19, 1999. One of the most anticipated films of all time, it was the first film in a prequel trilogy that explained how Emperor Palpatine and his Galactic Empire came to be in power before the events of the original *Star Wars* trilogy. The first film chronicled how Qui-Gon Jinn and Obi-Wan Kenobi, along with Queen Padme Amidala, met the young Anakin Skywalker, whose destiny would come to shape the fate of the galaxy.

The film begins as Qui-Gon Jinn (Liam Neeson) and his young apprentice Obi-Wan Kenobi (Ewan McGregor) are attempting to negotiate an end to the Trade Federation blockade of the planet Naboo. After the Trade Federation attempts to assassinate them on the orders of their secret contact Darth Sidious, the two Jedi are forced to use escape pods to reach the planet, where they witness a massive droid invasion from the Trade Federation. As the two Jedi attempt to find a way to reach the capital city to warn of the invasion, they come across a party of soldiers escorting a seemingly unimportant handmaiden into the jungle. The soldiers are spotted by droids, who fire on them, killing several of them, though the handmaiden shows an unusual amount of fighting skill and dexterity. She's no match for shielded droids, but the Jedi are able to deflect the blasts and save her and the remainder of her escorts. The young handmaiden, Padme (Natalie Portman) tells the Jedi that she and

the soldiers are attempting to reach a ship that's been stashed away in a hidden base so they can escape the planet. Eventually, she is forced to tell the Jedi that she is Queen Amidala and that she's being snuck off the planet so that she can convince the Galactic Senate on Coruscant to provide aid for the planet. She and the Jedi find the hidden ship, but it's been destroyed, necessitating that the three of them infiltrate Naboo's capital of Theed so that they can take the queen's flagship offworld. Utilizing underwater diving equipment stashed amongst the remains of the base, they make their way to the Gungan city of Otoh Gunga, but Padme is unsuccessful in negotiating with Boss Nass due to her rather blunt nature (she drops her queenly demeanor the second he starts getting short with her, angering Boss Nass but impressing Obi-Wan with the strength of her convictions). The Gungans do agree to give the three a transport to Theed, where they dodge various huge sea monsters along the way as Obi-Wan pilots them to the capitol. They make it to Theed, where they're barely able to get the queen's flagship off the ground. They fly through the blockade, though the ship is heavily damaged and they're forced to make an emergency landing on Tatooine for repairs. While on Tatooine, Qui-Gon and Padme encounter a young slave boy named Anakin (Haley Joel Osment) in the service of a flying alien named Watto. Qui-Gon notices Anakin's reflexes and natural instincts go beyond those of a normal human, and that the boy may in fact have capabilities in using the Force. Meanwhile, Anakin notices Padme, and he seems to have a crush on her, though he never states as much in the film (a deleted scene would show Anakin introducing himself to Padme by calling her an "angel", the film itself is much more subtle). We eventually come to see that Anakin is a podracer and that he's secretly built his own pod to race that's much better than the one Watto provides him. We also learn that Anakin does indeed have Force abilities...in fact, he's far more adept with the Force than any Jedi ever tested, with his "midichlorian count" being sky high (the controversial explanation of Force powers being generated by midichlorians is one of the film's main points of contention among *Star Wars* fans, one of several in what is otherwise considered a good film that doesn't quite live up to the original trilogy). Eventually, a deal is struck with Watto in which Qui-Gon bets on Anakin to win the big podrace, if Anakin wins, Watto will provide the parts needed to fix the queen's ship and will free Anakin from slavery (Watto originally agrees only to free Anakin's mother Shmi, but Qui-Gon persuades him to roll a die for it, which he uses Force powers to subtly manipulate into the desired result). In a dramatic sequence, Anakin defeats the cheating podracer Sebulba to win both the race and his freedom. Anakin says a tearful goodbye to his mother and accompanies Qui-Gon and Padme to their ship, but they are set upon by the evil lightsaber wielder Darth Maul (Ray Park), who had previously been seen conversing with Darth Sidious earlier in the film. After a brief skirmish, Qui-Gon escapes with the others on the repaired ship, and the group makes their way to Coruscant.

While Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan bring Anakin to the Jedi Council (which includes Yoda and the Jedi Master Mace Windu, played by Samuel L. Jackson), Padme pleads her case before the Galactic Senate, but is unsuccessful. Senator Palpatine tries to convince Padme to put up a vote to make him the new Chancellor, but in a later scene we see that Padme doesn't entirely trust Palpatine. It's Obi-Wan who convinces Padme that she should put Palpatine forward for Chancellor, a decision that Obi-Wan would come to regret in a later film. Meanwhile, despite the Jedi Council's objections, Qui-Gon insists on training Anakin. Eventually, Padme decides to head back to Naboo to help in the liberation of her planet, bringing Anakin and the Jedi along with her. They return to the planet, and Padme again returns to Otoh Gunga to convince the Gungans to help her people win the war. The Gungans are much more belligerent this time and threaten her with death. When Padme defies them, literally staring death in the face, they are convinced of her strength and agree to help with her fight. This defiance impresses Anakin, who compliments Padme as they're making their way back to the surface. It also convinces Anakin to defy the Jedi's orders to

stay put, deliberately taking a ship up to the Trade Federation mothership to take out the droids (an earlier draft of the film had him heading up to space accidentally). While Anakin is up in space and Padme is leading a group of her most loyal soldiers to confront the Trade Federation viceroy, Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon encounter Darth Maul. They engage him in a fierce lightsaber battle, which results in Qui-Gon's death, but Obi-Wan overcomes the Sith apprentice and strikes him down, while Padme defeats one of the viceroy's best droids and Anakin defeats the rest by taking out the mothership. Naboo is liberated and Palpatine has become Supreme Chancellor, while Anakin begins his training under Obi-Wan Kenobi. The film ends on both a victorious note and an ominous one, as Yoda notes... "always two Sith there are: a master and an apprentice". Obi-Wan has defeated the apprentice, but the master still schemes in the shadows...

-excerpted from the *Star Wars: Episode I* article on FilmDatabank.com

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*"If you played video games in the late 90s, two iconic institutions will immediately conjure up memories: Blockbuster Video, and GameTV. It was then no surprise that the two frequently came together on a variety of ventures. Blockbuster was one of GameTV's biggest sponsors, and Blockbuster rental cases frequently sported stickers boasting that a game was either a "GameTV Recommended" or "GameTV Hall of Fame" title. GameTV's hosts even appeared in advertisements played on video screens in store, talking about the latest games and encouraging customers to rent them. Perhaps their most famous joint venture was a 1999 promotion where Blockbuster locations briefly became the GameTV Hall of Fame..."*

-from an article on Kotaku.com, posted on March 18, 2013

\*Ted Crosley and Alex Stansfield finish putting up another game on the *GameTV* Hall of Fame wall\*

Alex: Another game for the Hall of Fame wall!

Ted: Man, it makes me wish there was a real *GameTV* Hall of Fame somewhere...

Alex: Actually, there is!

Ted: Really?

Alex: Yeah, come on!

\*The two are seen walking into a Blockbuster Videolocation, where a large shelf displaying many copies of recent *GameTV* Hall of Fame titles is located, with *GameTV* signage and even a video monitor playing clips from recent Hall of Fame game reviews\*

Alex: It's the *GameTV* Hall of Fame, here at your local Blockbuster!

Ted: Whoa, they've got *Metal Gear Solid* and *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time*! And here's *Shenmue*!

Alex: At Blockbuster, when any game makes our Hall of Fame, it's guaranteed in stock for

the first six months after our review airs! That means that if you come into *Blockbuster* and they don't have it, the next time they do you get a free one week rental!

Ted: That's awesome!

Alex: You know what's even more awesome? These games.

Ted: Totally!

\*The two grab one of the games and take it up to the register to rent it as the Blockbuster logo appears on screen\*

Narrator: Visit the *GameTV* Hall of Fame at any Blockbuster location, and make it a Blockbuster night!

-a Blockbuster Video commercial that began airing in May 1999

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Ted: So while *Soul Reaver* doesn't quite deliver the RPG goodness like *Blood Omen* did, it's still a compelling, challenging, and ultimately really fun game.

Alex: This is turning into one of my favorite franchises. The voice acting. The combat. The exploration. It's all there. Toward the end, the plot gets a little weird, and we're not gonna spoil anything, but it does take a bit of a hard left turn that I kind of wish it hadn't taken.

Ted: I dunno, I think the plot twist works, but we'll let the fans decide for themselves. Really, if you liked *Blood Omen*, you can go ahead and get this game.

Alex: And if you didn't like *Blood Omen*?

Ted: There's enough here that's changed that honestly, I'd get it anyway. It's a different kind of game in a lot of ways. It's one of the more "actiony" action-RPGs there is. Aside from leveling up, it's more of a straight up action game than an RPG. There ARE some block puzzles, which Alex is a big fan of but I'm kind of bored by.

Alex: What's wrong with block puzzles?

Ted: Only kindergarteners play with blocks.

Alex: So *Soul Reaver*, a brutal game where vampires slaughter the innocent and people get their flesh ripped from their bodies, is a baby game?

Ted: Babies can be violent!

Alex: Well, *Soul Reaver* is violently fun and I give it a 4.5.

Ted: I'm giving it a 4. It's a great action game with some slow parts but it's ultimately pretty fun.

(...)

Lyssa Fielding: \*dressed up like Regina in her S.O.R.T. suit\* I totally feel like I can slaughter a T-rex in this thing!

Adrian Fry: I'm glad that video game makers are finally realizing that nothing is scarier than dinosaurs. First *Parasite Eve*, and now *Dino Crisis*. Who needs lumbering zombies when there are raptors who can leap out at you at a moment's notice?

Lyssa: This might just be the scariest game I've ever played. And yeah, *Resident Evil* is fantastic, but this seems like a new evolution in the series. From all the different choices you have to make, to the different kinds of weapons, *Dino Crisis* really is a cut above the rest, isn't it?

Adrian: I'm glad we both agree. This is survival horror taken to its logical extreme.

Lyssa: Capcom's calling it "survival panic", do you agree with that?

Adrian: Absolutely. Nothing gets me more panicked than seeing a big dinosaur craving for my flesh, skulking around a corner and then BAM! Dead!

Lyssa: This game will thrill you, it'll chill you, and everything wants to kill you. I'm giving *Dino Crisis* an enthusiastic 5 out of 5!

Adrian: Same here, 5 out of 5!

\*The Hall of Fame siren goes off, Lyssa immediately drops into battle position, gun drawn\*

Adrian: Whoa, whoa, that's not a dinosaur, that's just the Hall of Fame siren going off!

Lyssa: I knew that, I just wanted to be ready!

\*Adrian and Lyssa accompany the other hosts to mount *Dino Crisis* up on the wall\*

Ted: And there it is, a perfect score for *Dino Crisis* and it joins its fellow Capcom survival game *Resident Evil* on our Hall of Fame wall!

Lyssa: Well gosh, I'm all dressed up with nothing to do. I feel like I need to hunt something.

Alex: There's always Gary....

Lyssa: \*smirks\* Come here! \*chases Gary around the room with her prop gun\*

Gary: I'm not a dinosaur!

-excerpted from the May 4, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Alex: So, what's the verdict? Always bet on Duke, or Duke craps out?

Ted: \*sighing\* I'm a big fan of Duke Nukem, but this game is just typical Duke in a shiny new graphical sheen. They hyped this up in 1997, it took them two years to put it out, and what do they have to show for it? Nothing new, nothing really different, it's just the same old Duke.

Alex: Well, I'm gonna be a little bit nicer. It's still got all the classic Duke Nukem humor.

Ted: I will give it that, there are some fantastic one-liners in this game.

Alex: And at least the aliens you're hunting have proper motivation this time.

Ted: \*laughing\* Well, sort of proper considering the series. It's Duke's old fling, a hot alien babe who's invading the Earth because Duke cheated on her.

Alex: You seriously expect Duke Nukem to stay monogamous?

Ted: \*laughing harder\* Aside from the funny dialogue and pretty graphics, this game is more a mission pack for *Duke Nukem 3D* than a full fledged sequel. Nothing notable changed about the gameplay. I can't give it more than a 3.

Alex: I'll give it a 3.5. If you like *Duke Nukem*, check this one out. It's more of the same but sometimes that's not so bad.

(...)

\*As Brittany and Gary are reviewing *The Wilderness*, the lights in the studio go out, leaving Brittany in the dark\*

Brittany: \*gasping\* Where'd everyone go? Ted? Alex? Gary?

Gary: It's okay...! The thing didn't get me...yet!

Brittany: Gary! \*clings to him tightly\* Thank God! We still have to give this game a review score!

Gary: Aren't you the least bit worried about the monster going around killing everybody? I saw it grab Lyssa!

Brittany: Lyssa?

Lyssa: \*shrieking from off screen\* HELP MEEEEEEEEEE!!!

Brittany: Lyssa! \*shaking\*

Gary: Maybe once we finish the review, the monster will stop killing everybody!

Brittany: You're right, you're right! \*sighing\* While *The Wilderness* is more silly than scary...

Gary: Kind of like this sketch?

Brittany: Shhhh! \*continues\* Its atmospheric soundtrack really makes you feel frightened at times, and the characters are endearing enough that you actually care about them when they disappear one by one. Some of the puzzles are a nice challenge, though some of them are also frustrating and repetitive.

Gary: As far as horror games go, it relies more on atmosphere than action. It's an interesting experiment but it can't really sustain itself over the course of an entire game. By the end, you're hoping to solve the mystery not to save your friends but because you just want it to be over. There's a reason most horror movies are short.

Adrian: \*from offscreen\* Help! Aaaaahgghghghghghg!!!!

Brittany: \*shrieks\*

Gary: It's all right Brittany, we'll get through this! ...I give *The Wilderness* a 2 out of 5!

Brittany: And I give it a 3, it's got its moments but for the most part it's a perfectly average-

Ted: Save us!

Alex: The monster's gonna eat our flesh! AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGGGGGGGGGGGHHHHH!!!!

Brittany: I thought finishing the review would stop it!

Gary: You didn't finish, you were interrupted by Ted's screaming!

Brittany: All right, I'll finish now! *The Wilderness* has its moments but for the most part it's a perfectly average-

\*Now everybody is shrieking in terror, interrupting the review, Gary is dragged offscreen\*

Brittany: IT'S A PERFECTLY AVERAGE HORROR GAME THAT CAN BE SKIPPED UNLESS YOU REALLY LIKE THE GENRE!!!

\*The lights come back on, Brittany looks around and everybody's fine\*

Brittany: Whew....you guys are all okay! But didn't the monster get you? Wasn't he eating your flesh?

Ted: Nah, you finished the review so the sketch is over now. \*shrugs\*

Brittany: Ah, fair enough.

(...)

\*Ted and Alex are finishing up their review of *Star Wars: Episode I Racer*, Ted's just given it a 4 while Alex gives it a perfect 5.\*

Alex: And that's it for *Episode I Racer*, but don't forget that *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* is coming to theaters next week!

Ted: In just eight days, and that's one day after our big E3 recap show next week!

Alex: That's right, we'll be coming back from L.A. just in time to catch the new *Star Wars* movie-

Ted: Back? We're in L.A. right now, remember? Our studio's like a mile from the convention center!

Alex: Oh yeah! \*laughs\* God I love this job.

-excerpted from the May 11, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

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### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: May 1999**

1. Metal Gear Solid
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
3. Tomb Raider III
4. Final Fantasy VII
5. Super Mario Dimensions
6. Dead Midnight
7. Parasite Eve
8. Killer Instinct Ultra
9. Gran Turismo
10. Ultra SimCity

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: May 1999**

1. Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver
2. Virtua Fighter 3
3. Tomb Raider III
4. Sonic the Hedgehog 5
5. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
6. Earthworm Jim
7. Mortal Kombat 4
8. Shenmue
9. ActRaiser Valkyrie
10. Spirit Of Exploration

-

### **May 12, 1999**

It was the night before E3, and once again, Tom Kalinske was having pre-show jitters. He had reason to be nervous, but also had reason to be confident. *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver* was shaping up to be a hit both critically and commercially, *Earthworm Jim* was set to pull

in plenty of sales, and *ActRaiser Valkyrie*'s early review scores were through the roof. The Saturn had scored a trio of hits, and Sega's momentum going into the show was excellent.

Kalinske was also getting set to show off the most anticipated game of the year, *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*. Just as he'd done with *Sonic 4*, he'd show off the game to the crowd, they'd roar, and the Sega Saturn would be the talk of E3.

That was why, ignoring the advice from his friend Shinobu Toyoda, he'd decided that Sega would not be making any mention of the Katana at the show. The Katana would be formally announced for the first time at the fall trade shows in Japan, but not here at E3. The focus at E3 would be on the Sega Saturn and its killer fall lineup. The Saturn still had a bright future ahead of it, and Kalinske didn't want to undermine that future by showing off the next big thing.

*"The future isn't here yet. The Sega Saturn still has a future."*

The release of *Soul Reaver* hadn't put a dent in Nintendo's lead, but Ultra Nintendo sales had begun a slight decline over the first half of the year, and that would give the Saturn an opportunity to slip in and do some damage. After the launch of *Sonic 5*, the Saturn would be well positioned to take the rest of the year by storm. *Soul Calibur*. *Commander Keen: When Universes Collide*. *Resident Evil: Code Veronica*. The Saturn's big holiday releases, combined with a well-timed price cut to \$149.99 by the end of the year, would give the Saturn the boost it needed to stay competitive. Would it ever pass the Ultra Nintendo in sales? Not even in Tom Kalinske's wildest dreams did he dare imagine that, but he knew the Saturn could do more than just tread water until the Katana was ready to be released.

Tomorrow, Tom Kalinske would lay out his plans to begin the Sega Saturn's ride into the sunset. With any luck, it would be one hell of a fun ride.

Without it, it would be a ride into hell.

-

*"Headlining E3 was the culmination of a life's dream for me. For Nintendo to trust our team to carry the best selling game console in the world through the rest of the year was an enormous honor, especially after Mr. Miyamoto himself met with all of us before the show. Nintendo had all these amazing games to show, including the new Game Boy, and to pick our little game to lead off? I had to fight back the tears watching them present our game, I was so proud."*

-Argonaut creative director Dylan Cuthbert, remembering E3 1999 and *Squad Four: Rebellion* in a 2008 interview with Kotaku.com

*"It was my very first E3! They wanted me at the booth to help show off Final Fantasy VIII. I really wasn't sure what everyone would think, I had to hope we'd live up to the great expectations set by the previous game."*

-*Final Fantasy VIII* director Tetsuya Takahashi, remembering E3 1999 in an interview in the July 2009 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"This Summer, The World Of Sonic Is Finally Revealed"*

-the tagline for *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*, first used at E3 1999

*"Handheld Gaming Reborn"*

-the North American tagline for the Game Boy Nova, first revealed at E3 1999

*"#1: Nintendo (1999)"*

-from "The 20 Greatest E3 Lineups Of All Time" on Screwattack.com, posted on June 11, 2015

*"Where's the Katana?"*

-overheard many times at Sega's E3 1999 booth

-

### **May 13, 1999**

\*Tom Kalinske steps onto the stage, receiving vigorous applause from the crowd as he approaches the podium.\*

*"Good morning, everybody! I'm Tom Kalinske, and once again, I'd like to welcome you to Sega at E3! For nearly four years, the Sega Saturn has provided countless hours of entertainment to gamers all over the globe, hosting some of the most revered and well-known video game franchises around. And today, we're going to be featuring perhaps the most beloved video game franchise of them all. Today, I'd like to show you why Sonic the Hedgehog 5 is not only going to be the game of the year, but also might just be the greatest video game ever made. Check this out."*

\*Sonic is seen standing in the middle of a bustling city. The camera pans around him to show all the different landmarks and buildings.\*

Sonic: It's time to go!

\*Sonic takes off in a rapid spin down a busy street, knocking out robotic enemies and collecting rings all along the way. He hits a ramp and speeds up it, doing a quick loop that spits him out on the other side, onto a much longer ramp that takes him up into the air, where he does a flip through several large rings before landing on a tall building, from where he can see the entire city laid out before him. A large blue arrow is pointing to something down below. Sonic takes off from the roof, landing on another street and charging down it. He runs toward the arrow, where a massive robot with two huge claws is holding Tails and Cream hostage.\*

Tails: Help us, Sonic!

Cream: Hurry!

\*Sonic dodges a lunging claw from the robot before spinning toward it, slamming into a weak spot on its chest. The robot tumbles back, and then Sonic launches a furious combo of punches and kicks, knocking the robot onto its back.\*

\*Next, we see Sonic running across a grassy field, collecting more rings. He comes across a large enemy with two huge mallets, pounding the ground and creating large cracks. Sonic leaps over the enemy and begins spinning as soon as he comes down, dodging a mallet

blow before slamming into it again.\*

\*Sonic runs around a massive boss creature made of crystal energy. He collects a power-up, which causes him to leave a trail of fire on the ground behind him. The boss creature tries to attack Sonic, but misses and burns himself on the fire, leaving him vulnerable for a spin move.\*

\*A rapid-fire montage of scenes now, of Sonic spinning around a jungle, Sonic doing some impressive flip moves on a ramp, Sonic running across several loops before leaping down onto a beach filled with enemy crabs, Sonic exploring a laboratory, and Knuckles fighting off some masked ninja-looking enemies.\*

Knuckles: This isn't gonna be easy, Sonic.

Sonic: If we don't find the Chaos Emeralds, the whole universe could be destroyed!

Tails: But we don't even know where to begin!

\*A salamander with crazy white hair and a long beard shuffles over to Sonic.\*

Dr. Scales: I can help!

\*After a quick scene shift...\*

Dr. Scales: The Chaos Emeralds are scattered all over the multiverse!

Sonic: And let me guess, Robotnik's trying to find 'em?

Dr. Scales: Oh no, something far more powerful! \*as he speaks, a video is shown of a massive creature emerging from the ocean\* A being made from pure chaos itself!

Sonic: That could be bad...

\*Another scene shift\*

Amy: Sonic, look out!

Sonic: \*barely rolls out of the way as an enormous tail slams into the ground behind him\*

Rouge the Bat: Well well, lucky me finding a cutie like you here. \*touches Knuckles' cheek\*

Corona: \*rolling her eyes\* You've gotta be kidding me.

Emerl: \*firing shots at a mysterious robotic ninja\*

Tails: \*doing calculations on a mini-computer as Cream looks over his shoulder\*

Sonic: Dr. Robotnik, I know you're in there! Come out and face me now!

Robotnik: \*standing on the roof of an ancient castle\* You need my help to save the universe? \*laughing\* Well now, THIS is a surprising turn of events.

Knuckles: You'd better help us, or we'll tear you limb from limb.

Robotnik: Oh, this IS serious! \*laughs\*

\*Sonic and his friends face down the massive water being\*

Sonic: We won't let you have our universe!

Chaos: \*just makes a hideous noise and sends a massive tsunami toward the gathered heroes\*

Sonic: \*spins out of the way as the other heroes draw their weapons\*

\*There's another rapid-fire montage of scenes with Sonic, Tails, Knuckles, Corona, Big, Emerl, Cream, Rouge, Dr. Scales, and Vector all displaying various combat abilities, while other scenes show off how huge the levels are, finally the scene shifts back to Sonic and Tails approaching the huge castle where Robotnik was seen earlier in the video.\*

Sonic: Tails, you ready?

Tails: I'm always ready!

Sonic: Then let's go!

\*One more scene is shown of Sonic and Tails fighting the castle's massive stone golem boss. Then the screen goes black. The horrible Chaos noise is heard again, and then the game's logo is displayed.\*

## **SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 5**

***July 20, 1999***

\*cue the Sega! Scream\*

\*the crowd gives a very loud standing ovation as Tom Kalinske begins to speak again\*

*"Sonic the Hedgehog 5 is our biggest, most ambitious video game to date, the culmination of more than three years of incredible efforts by our amazing Sonic Team. Here's the director of Sonic Team, Yuji Naka, here to show off some of the awesome things Sonic and his friends will be able to do."*

\*Yuji Naka takes the stage, and he and Kalinske show off *Sonic 5's* features for a few minutes, demonstrating the game's huge open world levels and Sonic's new melee combat moves, which include punches and kicks, along with his familiar spin attack. Footage of Tails, Knuckles, and the new character, Dr. Scales, who uses a variety of technological weapons in combat are also shown. Then Kalinske begins to speak again.\*

*"I've played this game and I've gotta tell you, it's one you won't be able to tear yourself away from. Sonic the Hedgehog 5 can be played with or without the Ring, though the Ring adds two exclusive worlds to the game and a number of hidden bonuses, along with an extra final boss and a secret ending. We'll be offering a special Sonic 5/Ring bundle that will retail for \$99.99, and a Sonic 5/Ring Saturn bundle for \$249.99 when the game launches on*

*July 20. We'll have plenty of playable Sonic 5 booths down on the show floor, so I definitely suggest that you go try the game for yourself immediately upon the conclusion of this presentation. Our next title is another Sega original. It's the latest installment in one of our flagship series that has been around since the Sega Genesis days, and that you might have played in the arcades over the past year. I'm of course talking about the hottest racing title in arcades today, Virtua Racing Reality."*

*\*A brief trailer of the game is shown, demonstrating the game's detailed graphics and large selection of challenging courses.\**

*"Virtua Racing Reality brings the series to all new heights, with better visuals than ever, based on our latest arcade hardware. It's coming exclusively to the Ring, and when you're home playing it, you'll understand why a game like this could only be possible on a Ring-enhanced Saturn. Virtua Racing Reality brings a new level of racing intensity to one of our most beloved franchises, and with 16 tracks, you'll be hooked as you try to top your best runs. Virtua Racing Reality will be released on July 6, and will be offered by itself or as part of a bundle with the Saturn Ring."*

*\*The screen now shows an image from the new Saturn exclusive, Battleborn.\**

*"And now we'd like to show off a couple of new games from our software partner Treasure, best known for the Gunstar Heroes series." \*a small cheer goes up from the crowd as that game is mentioned\* "First up is Battleborn, a brand new shooter where you play a soldier whose planet is threatened by a horrifying menace."*

*\*Footage from the game displays a rail shooter very much like OTL's Sin and Punishment. Hordes and swarms of aliens fill the screen, and the player can switch between a variety of weapons to target and destroy them. You can also call upon allies in battle to assist with their own weapons, though you have to watch their damage meter to protect them from being killed themselves.\**

*"Battleborn is full of futuristic environments and weapons that you can mix and match for maximum effect."*

*\*The player on screen is shown swapping between weapon combinations, combining a gatling gun-like weapon with a fire enhancer to spray the screen with napalm bullets that catch dozens of enemies on fire, bringing them down quickly.\**

*"And as par for the course in a Treasure game, Battleborn contains some difficult and highly stylized boss fights as well."*

*\*One of the game's bosses, a massive creature with three huge toothy mouths and gigantic horns, is seen menacing the player as they fire their weapon at it. The creature extends its horns, causing massive damage as the player is gored.\**

*"Battleborn is an alien-blasting war for the fate of humanity, and you'll be pushed to your limits to save the world. Now, Treasure has another title on the way, and it should be familiar to anyone who played a certain platformer in 1997..."*

*\*The trailer for Troublemakers 2 is shown, showing Marina Liteyears piloting a spaceship with Dr. Theo in the co-pilots seat. She receives a distress call from a nearby planet.\**

Woman in Black: Marina Liteyears, you must come to our aid. Our planet is in grave danger.

Marina: I'm on my way!

Dr. Theo: Are you sure this is a good idea, Marina? \*looks at the screen and gets a peek at the Woman in Black's ample cleavage\* O-ho-ho, we'd best get down there right away!

\*Marina's ship lands on the planet, which is convulsing with storms. She is immediately attacked by a robot horde, which she destroys by flinging them into one another. Meanwhile, the Woman in Black is seen watching this over a video monitor.\*

Woman in Black: Good...she's here...now I shall destroy her...

\*Gameplay footage of Marina exploring various environments is shown. We see a map, where it's shown that Marina explores several planets over the course of the game. We see a number of new characters, including a tall, burly man with green hair and a woman in a purple jumpsuit firing a laser cannon. We also see appearances from Teran, as well as Lunar, Tarus, and Merco in their human forms.\*

Woman in Black: \*holds Marina up by her throat\* Did you think you could interfere with my control over this system?

Lunar: \*blasts the WiB in the back\* HEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEERE'S LUNAR!

Marina: \*breaks free and deploys a huge laser cannon\*

Dr. Theo: \*being dragged off by tentacles\* HELP ME MARINAAAAA!!!!

\*Marina is shown riding a huge winged bug creature across a field of lava\*

Marina: Hi-YAAAAAH! \*throwing a moon at an enormous city-sized robot\*

Woman in Black: I will crush her!

\*More rapid-fire scenes are shown, followed by the game's logo\*

## **TROUBLEMAKERS 2**

\*applause is heard as Tom Kalinske begins to speak\*

*"Troublemakers 2 debuts next month for the Sega Saturn, and a complete North American version of the game is playable on our floor right after the show! Now I'd like to introduce Shinji Mikami to talk about Resident Evil: Code Veronica."*

\*The crowd erupts into applause as Shinji Mikami takes the stage.\*

*"Hello, I'm honored to be here at E3 in Los Angeles. Resident Evil: Code Veronica has been developed exclusively with the Sega Saturn in mind, and utilizes the Saturn Ring to produce the best graphics ever seen in a Resident Evil game."*

\*A gameplay video, featuring Claire Redfield running down a dark corridor is seen. The graphics look outstanding, even better than the two Resident Evil ports on the Ultra

Nintendo. Claire is accosted by a monster with large claws, and has to back away from it while firing her pistol.\*

*"As you can see, Claire Redfield is the star of this game, and she must escape from an Umbrella controlled facility, while also discovering what experiments the evil company is cooking up. Code Veronica comes with a number of gameplay elements new to the Resident Evil series, including the ability to dual wield weapons for maximum effect."*

\*A video shows Claire firing two pistols at once to fend off a horde of mutated creatures.\*

*"Code Veronica will be the most terrifying game in the series to date, with threats lurking around every corner. This will force the player to be completely aware of their surroundings. You won't be able to divert your attention for even a single second."*

\*A scene shows Claire walking past a window, only for a tentacle to wrap around her neck, she tries to escape it but it squeezes tightly and eventually pops her head off in a spray of blood. The crowd gasps and then applauds.\*

\*laughing\* *"Yes, there are consequences for not paying attention! But Claire won't be alone. You'll be joined by Abigail Chambers, and the two of you will need every resource you can find to survive and escape back to the mainland. Resident Evil: Code Veronica is the best Resident Evil game yet, and it'll only be playable on the Sega Saturn. Thank you."*

\*Tom Kalinske shakes Shinji Mikami's hand and then begins to speak again.\*

*"Also from Capcom is another fantastic game, this one being a fighting game. In Marvel vs. Capcom, your favorite video game characters and your favorite superheroes will clash in a three-on-three, winner-take-all brawl for supremacy! Marvel vs. Capcom comes to the Saturn in December, and is not to be missed by anyone who loves comic books or videogames, it's going to be a real treat."*

*Last year, one of the biggest surprises was Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted. The story of how Billy Blaze saved Mars resonated with players and made the Commander Keen series into one of Sega's hottest franchises. Now, Commander Keen is back in the all new game Commander Keen: When Universes Collide."*

\*The crowd cheers as the logo is revealed.\*

*"Commander Keen returns, now with his sister Becky. Keen and his friends must travel the universe and beyond to battle the archvillain Captain Chaos. Here's some gameplay footage that I'm sure will have Keen fans drooling with anticipation."*

\*The game's trailer plays, interspersed with various gameplay moments, including Keen using his new Black Hole Bazooka to suck up enemies, Becky sneaking around Chaos' HQ under a cardboard box, Keen hitting enemies with his new Wedgie Gun (prompting laughs from the crowd), Princess Lindsay battling enemies before confronting the cackling Commandant Lindsay, and footage from the game's multiplayer mode showing off some of the new weapons and levels. The trailer ends, and Kalinske begins to speak again.

*"Commander Keen: When Universes Collide is coming to the Sega Saturn in October. Also coming to the Saturn this October is a new Saturn exclusive from Rockstar Games, whom you might know for their Race'n'Chase series. Now, the company is trying their hands at the*

*beat-em-up genre, and for those familiar with games like Final Fight and Shenmue, Chaos City is an irreverent twist on a beloved old formula."*

\*Some gameplay footage from *Chaos City* is shown, featuring a smartass protagonist who runs around a city, beating up thugs and other miscreants. Unlike in games like *Shenmue*, the fighting is much more comical, and also much more violent. Blood spurts from enemies with every blow, and usually when someone is finished off, their body explodes in a shower of blood and gore. There's also plenty of swearing and rudeness, and your character can also just beat up random pedestrians on the street if they so feel like it.\*

*"In Chaos City, you play as Elvis McCracken, a down-on-his-luck criminal who takes a once in a lifetime job offer to be the enforcer for crime boss Big Billy Balls. In addition to doing jobs for crime bosses and criminals, you can also choose to fight crime in the city...or just beat up random folks on the street. Everything's legal in Chaos City, and that can make for some extremely interesting situations."*

\*Elvis is seen fighting a horde of clowns who seem to be very angered by his insults. He beats up the clowns, though one of them manages to score a hit with a pie to the face.\*

*"Do anything and go anywhere, if you're looking for freedom or just for a fight, Chaos City is the place. Now, in our next game, you're on the side of justice, in a city plagued by a criminal scourge. Here's the trailer for NYPD: Narcotics Squad."*

\*A cop car is seen driving down the streets of Brooklyn.\*

Fred Kroenin: \*to his young partner, Ethan Stone\* First day on the job?

Ethan: Yeah.

Fred: You nervous?

Ethan: A little.

Fred: Good.

\*The car drives up to a large warehouse, where prostitutes and drug dealers are seen frequently entering and exiting the building. Fred and Ethan go inside and confront a group of drug dealers, who put their hands up.\*

Fred: You're under arrest for dealing narcotics. You have the right to remain silent. You have the right to-

\*One of the drug dealers draws a gun, and the game shifts to a third-person shooter perspective, where you have to quickly aim at the bad guys as Ethan dives behind a dirty-looking couch.\*

Ethan: Backup, requesting backup!

\*Fred and Ethan report to their superior.\*

Police Captain: The 13th Street Blades are the deadliest drug dealing gang in the city. They control huge territories and they've even chased out the mob.

Ethan: How the hell is that possible?

Police Captain: Through brutal, unforgiving violence. \*as he speaks, his words are intercut with scenes of the Blades' violent deeds, including executions, torture, and even bombings\*

\*The scene shifts to Fred and Ethan in the precinct's locker room.\*

Fred: Don't ever take your guard down for a second. Every stop, every step, you could be a second away from getting your head blown off. If you're not ready for that, you need to quit right now.

Ethan: This job's what I was born to do. I got a wife at home, she's got a kid on the way.

\*Ethan enters his house.\*

Ethan: Baby, I'm home... \*enters the kitchen to see his wife gagged and tied to a chair, she's been roughed up\* Oh God! \*as his wife is trying to scream a warning to him, we see someone come up behind Ethan with a gun\*

Fred: \*hanging up his coat at his own house and collapsing into his chair in front of the TV, letting out a groan\* I been doing this job too damn long. \*Fred's words are intercut with scenes of him mourning at the grave of another longtime officer, of him being serviced by a prostitute, of him drinking away his sorrows at a bar\*

Police Captain: The narcotics business in New York City alone is a multi-billion dollar a year business, and these pieces of scum will do ANYTHING, and I mean ANYTHING to keep that money flowing.

\*Numerous action scenes from the game play, showing off the third-person shooting aspect, it's much more complex and involved than the *Virtua Cop* series, a real third person shooter instead of an on-rails game\*

Ethan: You think I don't know how dangerous this is?

Fred: Until you've been on the force even half as long as I have, you don't know a damn thing about how dangerous this is.

\*More scenes from the game play, showing Ethan morally conflicted as the villains who kidnapped his wife seem to be forcing him to work as their mole on the force, we see Ethan and Fred bonding as well, Ethan kissing his wife goodbye, the police precinct going up in flames, and Fred being beaten on by a gang leader\*

Fred: All my life I've been trying to clean up this city. I've seen what these drugs can do. I've seen what these thugs can do. And I've seen what happens when good men do nothing.

Ethan: Do you think we're good men?

Fred: Compared to the son of a bitch running the drugs in this city, I think anyone's a good man.

\*More gameplay scenes are shown, culminating in Ethan pulling a gun on Fred.\*

Ethan: I'm sorry.

Fred: So am I.

\*The screen goes black as a gunshot is heard.\*

## **NYPD: NARCOTICS SQUAD**

*Only on Sega Saturn*

\*The crowd erupts into massive applause louder than anything so far except the applause for the *Sonic 5* trailer.\*

*"NYPD: Narcotics Squad will be coming out this summer. And now, I'd like to welcome Mr. Glen Warren from Namco to show off a pair of arcade hits soon to make their way to the Sega Saturn."*

*"Thank you, Tom. Now as you know, Ridge Racer has been one of our most successful franchises, and last year, Ridge Racer 2 debuted in the arcades to a great reception from players and critics alike. Ridge Racer 2 will finally be making its way to the Saturn early next year, and thanks to the Ring, it's going to look and play just as great as it does in the arcades. Check it out."*

\*A brief trailer showing off *Ridge Racer 2*, looking much better than OTL's game because of the far longer lead time between releases. The trailer ends and Warren begins to speak again.\*

*"Of course, you're all probably waiting for me to tell you about Namco's other big arcade adaptation, and it's almost here. On August 31, Soul Calibur will be released for the Sega Saturn, and fighting games will never be the same."*

\*The crowd erupts into applause as the trailer for *Soul Calibur* is shown, featuring all of the game's fighters, 16 in all (less than IOTL's Dreamcast title). The game's graphics are outstanding, better than *Virtua Fighter 3*, though the game is also announced as being exclusive to the Ring, unlike *VF3*. Once the trailer ends, Warren begins to speak.\*

*"As you can see, Soul Calibur is the most beautiful fighting game ever made, and the gameplay is top notch as well. It introduces smoother combos and more complex fighting moves than Soul Edge, which was already regarded as one of the very best Sega Saturn titles. And, exclusive to the Sega Saturn version are two new characters. We'll show them both off today."*

\*Another trailer plays, this time showing off the character Turok in battle, using a high-tech tomahawk against his foes. Then, another character, Lenneth Valkyrie, is shown in battle with her large spear.\*

*"From the Turok franchise and from the new ActRaiser Valkyrie come Turok and Lenneth, and we know they'll be welcome additions to the Soul Calibur ring. You can of course play the complete game down at the Sega booth, and while you're there, check out our new Soul Calibur collectible action figures, featuring all the characters from the game. Thank you and enjoy the show!"*

\*Tom Kalinske takes the podium again, smiling.\*

*"You know, it's very appropriate that Mr. Warren brought up Turok, because we have some new Turok footage to show..."*

\*A very brief trailer for *Turok III: Generation War* is shown, featuring Turok and his sister Danielle battling a massive army of warriors armed like they are. The new villain is shown to be a man decked out in black armor known as the Lord of Ages, and he has at his command a portal that can open the gate to any dimension, calling forth terrible creatures. The game's logo is shown, along with "2000", the game's release year. The crowd applauds.\*

*"Turok III will be coming to the Sega Saturn in 2000, and we'll have much more information on that game over the coming months. Indeed, we have more than 40 playable games at the various booths set up by Sega and its software partners, and video previews of even more games, showing just what we're working on over the next year and beyond. Now, we'll conclude the show with one final preview..."*

\*Some murmurs of "Katana" are heard from the crowd\*

*"Our latest RPG epic, Phantasy Star VI."*

\*A video is shown of *Phantasy Star VI*, boasting amazing graphics, probably the best yet seen in a Saturn RPG to date, and also showing off the game's cast of heroes as they wander a massive open world. The game draws some impressed murmurs from the crowd, and plenty of cheering at the end of the trailer, but some are left disappointed that nothing from the Katana was shown.\*

*"Phantasy Star VI will be coming to North America in 2000, and we've got a gameplay demo set up at our booth from the Japanese version which is set to be released in December of this year. We hope you've enjoyed this presentation, and we plan to make many more awesome games for the Sega Saturn, fulfilling our promise to make the Saturn the best video game console on the market today. Thank you, and enjoy E3, everyone!"*

-Sega's keynote address at E3 1999

\*Howard Lincoln approaches the podium.\*

*"Hello again, it's good to see all of you here for Nintendo's E3 presentation. The last year has been one of our most successful ever. The Ultra Nintendo is now in over 40 million homes worldwide, something we couldn't have imagined when we first set out with the cooperation of Sony to create what we believe is the ultimate home video game console. Already, nearly 300 games have been released for the Ultra Nintendo, and combined with nearly a thousand playable Super Nintendo CD titles, the Ultra Nintendo has one of the most robust video game libraries in history. And over the next two years, that library will be getting a lot more impressive. I'm here to talk about a few of our upcoming games, and I'll be inviting some of our top software developers on stage to share our vision with you. We're also planning to introduce a brand new gaming device to North America here at E3, but that will be a bit later on. For now, here are a few of the games we've got coming up."*

*And we're starting off the show with one of our biggest releases of the year. In 1993, Argonaut Software helped us bring Mr. Shigeru Miyamoto's vision about a group of hotshot pilots who save the Lylat System from evil to life. Star Fox was one of the most technologically advanced games ever made, and sold nearly three million copies. And when we asked Argonaut Software if they had an idea of their own to share with us, they revealed to us and to the world their own dream about a group of four brave heroes, traveling space and fighting for freedom. And now, this November, Squad Four is ready to battle evil again. Here is the world premiere trailer for Squad Four: Rebellion."*

\*The crowd cheers as the trailer begins.\*

\*Shad, Marcus, Rebecca, and Lane are walking down the main street of the Lockstar capital as confetti and ticker tape rain down on them.\*

President of Lockstar: You're the bravest heroes this planet has ever known, and you have saved us all.

Shad: Thank you, Mr. President.

General Vasher: Your courage and hard work are an inspiration to us all. You will forever be known as four bright lights, shining above Lockstar to protect us from evil.

\*The squad is returning to their homes now\*

Marcus: Another day, another successful mission.

Rebecca: Good job, everyone.

\*In the halls of the presidential palace, soldiers are marching. In the beds of Squad Four, Shad is peacefully resting.\*

\*The door to Shad's room is blown in.\*

Soldier: Wake up!

Shad: What the? \*sits up to see his bed surrounded by soldiers, Marcus, Rebecca, and Lane wake up in their own rooms in a similar predicament\*

Rebecca: What's the meaning of this?

Marcus: You can't arrest me!

Lane: Hey, get off!

\*Squad Four is marched into a courtroom in chains to face a judge.\*

Judge: You, the members of Squad Four, are charged with high treason... \*as the judge speaks, various scenes play, the presidential banner is replaced with the icon of the Lockstar Military, and on all TVs throughout the city, a message is read.

Reporter: All citizens remain calm. There is a mandatory curfew in effect. The new government will ensure peace and order on Lockstar.

Shad: We're not traitors, we've risked our lives for the people of this planet!

Judge: You stand with those who would oppress the people of Lockstar!

Rebecca: The only oppression is coming from you!

General Vasher: \*standing at a podium\* The galaxy stands at a new age, and only with strength can we maintain peace. For too long, our people have been at the whims of those who would destroy us. An invasion, one we barely survived, brought great death and destruction to our world, and only with strength can we protect our people! Squad Four are criminals of the highest order. These so-called heroes have sided with our enemies in the past and they would do so again if given the chance! We will not give them that chance.

\*As the general speaks, Squad Four is found guilty and is taken to a massive prison complex, they're thrown into individual cells and locked away, desperate looks are seen on their faces as the general's speech concludes.\*

Vasher: Squad Four has betrayed you. I will protect you. There is a new order now. Resistance will not be tolerated.

\*Shad leans against the wall of his cell.\*

Shad: Why would they lock us up? We've done nothing wrong...!

\*In a common room, Rebecca is slumped against the wall when a woman sits next to her.\*

Woman: The new government, they're taking over everything. Anybody who objects gets thrown in here.

Rebecca: They threw us in here before we said a single word against them.

Woman: Because they know you're the only ones who can stop them.

\*Marcus, Rebecca, Shad, and Lane are together in the common room now, talking with the woman.\*

Woman: \*extends her hand to Shad\* I'm Raquel. And I want to help.

Shad: \*narrowing his eyes as he looks ahead\* Let's bust out of here.

\*Scenes of Squad Four and their friends attempting to escape the prison are interspersed with gameplay scenes of the game's prison levels, showing off the new 3D gameplay\*

Vasher: \*to one of his subordinates\* I want them found and I want them brought to me dead or alive! Preferably alive!

Subordinate: Why alive...?

Vasher: So I can execute them myself...

\*Squad Four is seen outside the prison now, in what looks like a refugee camp, rallying

rebels.\*

Marcus: We can't let Vasher and his armies intimidate us! The people of Lockstar want to be free!

Lane: \*to Rebecca\* It's an army of millions against a bunch of ragtag rebels, even with all our skill we don't stand a chance!

Rebecca: Wouldn't you rather die than hide?

Raquel: \*passing out weapons to other rebels\* Finally my life means something....and it's all thanks to you. \*looks into Shad's eyes and smiles\*

\*Scenes of warships bombarding refugee camps are shown. Shad and the other squad members charge toward a huge army of Vasher's heavily armed soldiers. Gameplay scenes show hundreds of enemies on screen at once. Another gameplay scene shows Rebecca slicing through monsters in a massive cave complex.\*

Shad: \*screaming as he leaps down toward a huge crowd of enemy soldiers\*

Marcus: \*rolls under a gigantic mech's leg and blasts it with his shotgun\*

Rachel: \*standing back to back with Raquel, fighting off waves of soldiers\*

Lane: \*sets off a massive trap to bury a tank\*

\*The screen goes black... a transmission comes on\*

Rebecca: This is Rebecca of Squad Four....don't give up hope. For those still keeping the light of freedom alive, don't let that light die. We will return to the city and free all of you. Even at the cost of our lives. Squad Four is still here...and we will always keep fighting.

## **SQUAD FOUR: REBELLION**

### ***November 15***

\*The crowd cheers wildly after the conclusion of the trailer. Howard Lincoln begins to speak again.\*

*"Squad Four: Rebellion takes the series into full 3D for the very first time. Here you can see the basic gameplay, this is Shad and he's currently in prison, this is one of the very first levels of the game."*

\*Shad is running around the prison area, you can run in all directions now as the game is no longer on-rails but in full 3D, like OTL *Jet Force Gemini* but with infinitely better controls\*

*"You use the left control stick to run and the right control stick to control the camera. For the first time in the fully 3D environment, you can shoot and move at the same time! You can also dodge as seen here, and lock onto enemies..."*

\*Shad is able to lock onto foes and blast them, switching targets is quite easy as well and he can use melee attacks also, quickly switching back and forth between ranged shots and

melee in an impressive display that causes the crowd to cheer again.\*

*"And there are also power-ups to collect throughout the level. While your power-ups don't carry over from level to level, as the game goes on, the collectibles get more and more powerful to keep pace with the growing power of your enemies. Of course, you can choose your characters in most levels, and for the first time..."*

\*Shad reaches a checkpoint, and is given the option to switch to either Rebecca, Marcus, or Lane.\*

*"You can also switch between characters in mid-level! So, for example, if you're using Shad and decide, well, he's not the best for this level, I want to use someone else..."*

\*The player switches to Marcus, who then approaches a big guard mech with his shotgun and blasts it to pieces.\*

*"And there you go! Of course, what would the Squad Four series be without some boss fights..."*

\*Rebecca is seen running into a big area and fighting a giant mechanized battle armor, she slashes at its legs with her sword only to get kicked away, we see someone shooting at the battle armor and Rebecca runs over....it's Raquel fighting with her\*

*"Sometimes you'll be joined by helpers. Here's Raquel, she's a rebel leader in the game, but there are other helpers as well, including Jack the grenadier, Froggo the diver, and there's also Karen who's a medic. And sometimes the other members of Squad Four will join you. In this mission, Lane must navigate a sewer tunnel by himself to rescue Rebecca. And after he saves her..."*

\*Lane is fighting a massive crocodile beast, Rebecca is seen fighting alongside him.\*

*"There's Rebecca as your companion in battle. So that's Squad Four: Rebellion, and of course there are many more elements of the game that we'd like you all to experience for yourself down at our big booth.*

*So up next, we have another sequel to a classic SNES-CD game. Back in 1994, F-Zero CD was a major hit, with some of the most challenging and innovative tracks, and the game also brought in a host of new characters to race alongside classic characters like Captain Falcon and Samurai Goroh. And now in 1999, F-Zero makes its debut on the Ultra Nintendo. Here is the trailer for F-Zero: Ultracharged."*

\*The trailer for F-Zero: Ultracharged is shown, showing off the game's new tracks and the 30 on-screen racers at once, along with several new racers. The game looks difficult even in the trailer, and 22 tracks are promised in it, including a new version of Fire Field that looks incredibly intense, both visually and in terms of difficulty. The trailer gives the game's release date as July.\*

*"F-Zero: Ultracharged is not only the most challenging F-Zero game ever, but the fastest as well, with vehicles zooming around tracks at speed that could only be made possible on the Ultra Nintendo. We can't wait for players to take the ultimate challenge when the game is released in July. Another game coming later this year is from Masahiro Sakurai, whose Super Smash Bros. recently brought forth some of your favorite video game characters in*

*an all-out slugfest. And in Ultra Kirby: Dreamland Friends, Kirby's favorite pals, including Girby, Rick, Meta Knight, and even King Dedede will need to team up against a dangerous new threat to Dreamland, the powerful Dark Matter, which seeks to overtake all they hold dear. If they can work together to find the magical Crystal Shards, Dreamland will once again be restored to its wonderful glory. Ultra Kirby is playable down in our Nintendo booth, and we encourage all of you to take it for a spin.*

*In the meantime, we're not done with Argonaut. In addition to Squad Four: Rebellion, they've also been working on the latest title in the series X. Captain Xenda, now promoted to Colonel, must command a platoon of battle tanks as a new army of evil invaders threatens civilization. You'll plot out your moves on a map before charging into battle. If you pick your battles properly, you'll have a much easier time. But mess up, and you could find yourself facing hopeless odds. The battle enters a new phase when X: Tactics comes out on the Ultra Nintendo next month.*

*And this summer is also the summer of Mario, with two brand new games featuring your favorite plumber and all of his friends. Next month, join Mario for a round of golf, as Mario Golf makes its way to the Ultra Nintendo. Mario, Bowser, Donkey Kong, Peach, Luigi, and a cast of original characters are all competing on a variety of fun and challenging courses that will test your skill at one of the world's oldest and grandest of sports. Then, in August, kick back when Mario throws a party. Mario Party is an all new board game starring Mario and his friends competing to collect stars and thwart Bowser. It's the most fun you'll ever have rolling dice. Every turn holds new twists and surprises. Compete in fun minigames and battle it out on the board, racing to win. Mario Party is four player fun when it comes out on the Ultra Nintendo in August."*

*\*As Howard Lincoln has been speaking, scenes from the various games have been displayed on screen. Now the logo of a new game, Fire Emblem: The False Princess appears, drawing cheers from the crowd.\**

*"At long last, Fire Emblem joins the many classic Nintendo franchises that have made their way to the Ultra Nintendo, and this September, Fire Emblem: The False Princess will be released here in North America."*

*\*A trailer begins to play, detailing the game's basic plot involving a young peasant woman with dark hair, her clothes tattered in rags, shoving a young man up against a wall to rob him in an anime cutscene.\**

Peasant Woman: Give me everything you've got, I won't hesitate to hurt you!

*\*The woman is pulled off by guards\**

Guard: It's execution for you...!

Young Man: Wait, she was just-

*\*The peasant woman fights off the guards easily, then glares at the young man.\**

Peasant Woman: Why were you going to help me?

Young Man: You're....the one I've been looking for.

\*In the palace, another young woman, the princess of the realm, her hair long, beautiful, platinum blonde, is seated at her throne.\*

Princess: What do you mean she beat up the guards and got away?

Soldier: She has...unusual power...

Princess: This is unacceptable...

\*The princess is shown in a room showered in stained glass, pointing her hand at a wall, out of which comes a beam of pure light energy, she fires it and the beam creates a powerful explosion, meanwhile the peasant woman is seen in lord's armor, practicing her knife wielding skills against a soldier and besting him easily.\*

Young Man: You've been a soldier before.

Peasant Woman: Not by choice.

*Lead your armies into battle...*

\*Gameplay scenes show the various battlefields, and 3-D battles not unlike those in OTL *Fire Emblem: Awakening*, though the graphics aren't quite as smooth\*

Young Man: The princess of our realm is Magris, the Princess of Light. She is beloved throughout the realm.

Peasant Woman: She's an impostor. The real princess is me.

Young Man: Is that true?

Peasant Woman: When I was a child, my birthright was stolen from me. I don't know when or how this Magris assumed the throne, but I want it back and I will take it from her.

\*Magris casts powerful light magic onto a battlefield, scattering a number of rebel forces.\*

Magris: All who oppose me will be vaporized...

Soldier: Your majesty!

Magris: \*she glares at him\*

\*The peasant woman stands before an army.\*

Peasant Woman: Come with me....fight at my side and together we will take back the throne of this realm!

\*More scenes of gameplay are shown, then the game's logo appears.\*

## **FIRE EMBLEM: THE FALSE PRINCESS**

*Fall 1999*

\*The crowd cheers and Howard Lincoln once again begins to speak.\*

*"The False Princess will be available to play down on the show floor, it's the same classic Fire Emblem gameplay but with some amazing new twists, some of which you saw in the video. And now for another long awaited sequel, here's a brand new Wave Race game coming out next summer."*

\*A short trailer for *Wave Race: Ultramarine*, showing off the game's even better new graphics along with a few new racers and lots of new stunts, is shown. The crowd cheers afterward and Howard Lincoln begins to speak once again.\*

*"One of the most beloved Nintendo franchises ever has been the Donkey Kong Country series, and today-"* \*the crowd cheers loudly\* *"Today I am proud to once again welcome to the E3 stage Mr. Chris Stamper, here to show off the new Donkey Kong Country game for the Ultra Nintendo."*

\*Chris Stamper takes the stage to some very loud applause.\*

*"Thank you Mr. Lincoln, thank you everyone. As everybody here knows, Donkey Kong Country has always been a groundbreaking series, setting new standards for technological and gameplay innovation. And in Ultra Donkey Kong Country, we've broken new ground yet again. Take a look."*

\*The *Ultra Donkey Kong Country* trailer is almost pure gameplay, showing off the new levels and gameplay to the crowd. Unlike OTL's *Donkey Kong 64*, *Ultra Donkey Kong Country* is a hybrid sidescroller and 3-D game, sort of like *Super Mario 3D World*. The game contains a mix of pure sidescrolling levels and linear 3-D levels where Donkey Kong, Diddy Kong, Dixie Kong, and the newest playable character, Lanky Kong, can roam and explore. Both kinds of levels are playable in four-player splitscreen mode, which means that the sidescrolling levels can be played as a pure race to the finish where the Kongs can either help or hinder one another's progress, while the open world levels can be played either cooperatively or competitively as well. Levels take place in a huge variety of environments, with jungles, ice levels, fire levels, undersea levels, desert levels, factories, pirate ships, cloud areas, temples, and others all represented, the biggest variety of *Donkey Kong Country* levels to date. The crowd again cheers after the trailer ends.\*

*"In Ultra Donkey Kong Country, King K. Rool has once again returned to mess with our favorite monkeys, sending his Kremlings to destroy Kong Island once and for all, and our heroes have to team up to stop him. As you saw in the trailer, this game features the biggest variety of levels ever seen in a Donkey Kong game, or any platformer for that matter. With 60 levels spread across ten different worlds, it's easily our most ambitious game yet, and the culmination of our efforts across the entire series. There's also a multiplayer battle mode where you can take on your friends across six different arenas. Take a look."*

\*Another trailer is shown for the game's multiplayer battle mode, which is fairly similar to the one in OTL *Donkey Kong 64*, complete with weapons like Donkey Kong's Coconut Gun and Diddy's Peanut Pistol.\*

*"Ultra Donkey Kong Country brings all the incredible fun of the classic DKC series to the Ultra Nintendo, and if you're a fan of the SNES-CD series, you'll absolutely love our newest game. So come down to the booth and check it out. So that's Ultra Donkey Kong Country,*

*and along with Ultra Blast Corps, we've got a busy lineup for 1999. But we've also been planning out the games of 2000, and here are your first looks at both of them."*

\*A pair of trailers are shown. The first is for *Velvet Dark*, TTL's version of *Perfect Dark*. The trailer shows off both the game's multiplayer, which is a much more advanced version of *Goldeneye 007*'s with a variety of different modes, and the game's single player mode, which features Joanna Dark and involves a plot revolving around AI rather than an alien invasion, with Joanna's sister Velvet as a major character. The second trailer shows off the game *Conker's Twelve Tales*, which features the titular squirrel in a 3-D platforming collectathon and retains the game's original, fairly innocent motif rather than the vulgar, foul-mouthed appearance it took later on.\*

*"Velvet Dark is our spiritual successor to Goldeneye 007 and a game we've been working on even since before Goldeneye was released. It features the same great first-person shooter gameplay you've come to love, but with many, many changes that we believe optimize the FPS experience and make Velvet Dark the best shooter ever created. In addition to a robust single-player campaign with a cinema-quality storyline, we've also worked hard on bringing you the best multiplayer experience on the Ultra Nintendo console. For the very first time, you'll be able to utilize sims in your multiplayer game, so that you can either compete alone or team up with friends against a team that's trying to take all of you down. The multiplayer experience also carries over to our campaign, with a brand new Counter-Operative mode where one player can leap into the body of an enemy soldier to stop Joanna from completing her mission. Velvet Dark will take first-person shooters to a whole new level, and we plan to give you a lot more information on the game before it launches next spring. And later next year, Conker's Twelve Tales is our take on the 3D platforming genre. You'll take control of the adorable squirrel Conker as he explores a massive world in search of missing presents stolen by the villainous Hoodlums. Along his way he'll also have to save his woodland friends, who have been kidnapped and hidden away."*

\*After a bit more gameplay footage of *Conker's Twelve Tales* is shown, Chris Stamper leaves the podium and Howard Lincoln returns to speak once again.

*"One of Nintendo's oldest software partners has been Squaresoft, makers of the fantastic Final Fantasy series. And once again, we have a Final Fantasy game to show off here at E3. Here, for the first time, is the introduction to Final Fantasy VIII."*

\*The intro starts out like OTL's *Final Fantasy VIII* intro, with the tide washing up on a sea as the song "Liberi Fatali" begins to play. Unlike OTL's intro, however, the Guardian mecha, the equivalents of the Gears from OTL's *Xenogears*, are heavily featured, with a flashback to a massive Guardian battle between Galbadia and Esthar being shown as scenes of Squall, Elly, Bart, Cid, Edea, Ramsus, and Miang are also featured as well. The connection between Squall and Elly is paralleled by the connection between Ramsus and Miang, while Miang's scenes and Edea's scenes are also heavily interspersed, implying a connection between them as well. The trailer ends with a rapid-fire succession of images that concludes with Squall and Elly reaching out toward one another. Then the trailer and song end and the *Final Fantasy VIII* logo is shown, instead of depicting Squall and Rinoa as IOTL, it depicts a Guardian mech that will later be revealed as *Xenogears*. The crowd erupts into loud applause as the trailer concludes.\*

*"And here to discuss more about Final Fantasy VIII is Square's director of North American operations, Mr. Ted Woolsey!"*

\*Ted Woolsey takes the stage and begins to speak, while video of the game's battle system is shown on the screen.\*

*"Final Fantasy VIII is a collaborative effort, the work of countless thousands of people here at Square, from writers, to developers, to programmers, to voice actors, to translators, bringing this game to all of you this fall is an enormous effort, and as you can see, it's going to be our best looking and I think our best playing game yet. Here you have in battle, Squall, Bart, and Quistis, and for this battle, they're on foot. Now, each of them has their own weapon, Squall has a Gunblade, which is exactly what the name implies, Bart uses his fists, and Quistis has a whip. In battle, your attacks take the form of combos that you can learn as you advance through the game. Basically, the more powerful the weapon, the more advanced combinations you can use. In addition, Squall's Gunblade can utilize timed hits in order to double the damage he can do."*

\*The player is shown executing a three-hit combo, Squall's blade executes its timed trigger on each one and the enemy, a Gayle, goes down easily.\*

*"So if your timing's right and you pick the right combination, you can easily score a lot of damage! As for magic, you gain magic by drawing it from the enemy. So, for example, you can draw Water, Quake, and Cure from this enemy. When you draw magic, it goes into your pool and you can cast the spells you've drawn at any time. For your basic characters, you gain experience by defeating enemies, and your levels and stats increase accordingly. Now, we're going to summon our Guardians. So, in certain battles, you'll be able to do that by hitting R2 and then selecting Call Guardian."*

\*There's a cool animation sequence as the Guardians, Quezacotl, Shiva, and Ifrit enter battle and the heroes board them. The Guardians have significantly better stats than the heroes alone do.\*

*"So now you're in your Guardians and there's an entirely new set of commands to use. You can utilize basic attacks or magic, and for Guardians, their magic doesn't use up anything from your pool, but it DOES use up Fuel, which is limited, so you'll need to watch that. There's also a Special, it uses up all your remaining fuel but does a massive amount of damage and you can use that any time you like."*

\*Shiva's special, Diamond Dust, is unleashed, killing the remaining enemies and easily ending the battle. The audience cheers at the spectacular effects.\*

*"Now let's show you how to improve your Guardians. They don't level up normally, they get stronger through equipping them with various Parts. Some Parts are specific to certain Guardians, others can be used by all. You can buy Parts, find them as treasure, or...."*

\*The player enters a Triple Triad card game.\*

*"You can win them by converting cards won in Triple Triad. Some of the most powerful Guardian parts are only available through winning in Triple Triad, though to keep things balanced, a lot of the best cards don't show up until much later in the game."*

*So that's a bit on how you'll play Final Fantasy VIII. The plot of the game involves a war fought between Galbadia and the rest of the world. There's an organization called SeeD that sends mercenary soldiers to protect the people from Galbadia's advances. SeeD trains its soldiers at special Gardens, which are like enormous dormitories, one of which our main*

*character, Squall Leonhart, joins at the start of the game after using the Guardian Quezacotl to defend Balamb Town from a Galbadian squadron. Unfortunately, Squall's use of this Guardian also causes great death and destruction in Balamb, and he is haunted by guilt and discouraged from fighting. His guardian, Cid Uzuki, who happens to also be the headmaster of Balamb Garden, takes Squall in and helps train him to use his Guardian to protect others. He's trained by his new teacher, Quistis Trepe, and he soon begins to make friends, including the energetic young Selphie Tilmitt and the young prince Bart Fatima, who Squall helps out on his very first mission. He also gains a dangerous rival in Kahran Ramsus, who has a mysterious relationship with a woman named Miang, a woman who becomes very important over the course of the adventure. And then of course there's Elly..."*

*\*We see Elly pointing a gun at Squall in a rendered CGI cutscene\**

*"Elhaym Van Houten, Elly for short, is a soldier from a mysterious and secluded country on the other continent known as Esthar, which fought Galbadia to a draw in the last great war. The mysteries that Elly holds are key to Squall's future and that of the world as well.*

*Final Fantasy VIII is set to release on October 10, 1999, and will come on three discs. The game is our biggest and most ambitious RPG to date, and we all hope you really love it. The next game we'd like to talk about is an upcoming RPG called Academy, and here's a quick preview..."*

*\*The trailer for Academy, which depicts six young students, three male and three female, at a magic school, is shown. The game features anime cutscenes and a battle system almost identical to that found in Live-A-Live, and shows the students uncovering a threat to their school from within before the trailer ends. The game is applauded, though not nearly as much as Final Fantasy VIII.\**

*"Academy will put you in the shoes of six young students studying magic while uncovering a threat that could bring an end to their world as they know it! You'll have to get to know these six young heroes very well, as all of them bring their own stories and skills to this magical world. Academy releases this December for the Ultra Nintendo.*

*Also releasing this December, the Final Fantasy Collection, which brings all six Final Fantasies on two discs to the Ultra Nintendo. While all six games are already playable as SNES-CD titles, we've included new animated cutscenes for all six games and plenty more extras including a soundtrack selection and a special artbook as well, showing off some previously unreleased works from Nobuo Uematsu. All six games will be available at a special price of \$59.99, and the collection will be in stores this December.*

*Now, before we go, there is one more thing we'd like to announce..."*

*\*The logo for Super Mario RPG 2: A Plumber's Beginning appears on screen, drawing massive applause and cheers from the crowd.\**

*"Squaresoft has once again been working with Nintendo on a brand new Super Mario RPG. And for the first time, you'll find out how Mario and Luigi came to live in the Mushroom Kingdom. This game will tell their origin story, from their childhood growing up in Brooklyn to their first arrival in the Mushroom Kingdom and beyond. We hope you'll enjoy playing Super Mario RPG 2, and we hope to have more information at next year's E3. We plan to release the game worldwide by the end of next year. So that's it for Squaresoft's E3 presentation, come see us at our booth and enjoy the show!"*

\*Ted Woolsey leaves the stage and Howard Lincoln returns to the podium.\*

*"That was an excellent presentation from Squaresoft, and we're not through yet. Here's a preview video for the upcoming action game from Sony, Dog Dash 3."*

\*The Naughty Dog logo is shown, with Woofle making mischief and Clark calling him out for being a "naughty dog", before a gameplay preview of *Dog Dash 3* is shown.\*

*Explore New Worlds!*

\*Clark and Woofle roam around a giant grassy field, then are shown dodging rocks spewed from a volcano.\*

*Battle Bad Guys!*

\*Woofle pounces on a robotic cat monster, before Selkie is seen spewing a bunch of fire at some advancing caveman cats with clubs.\*

*Free Your Friends!*

\*Clark and Woofle attack a cage, destroying it and freeing the grateful people inside.\*

*Become A Legend!*

\*A cutscene of Clark, Woofle, and Selkie atop a castle, raising their fists in the air as thousands of villagers cheer below.\*

*And Take Down The Evil General Catsmeow!*

General Catsmeow: I'll tear them apart, and I won't even play with them first! \*bats around a mouse on a string\*

Clark: You'll never defeat us, Catsmeow! \*hops on Woofle's back and charges forward\*

## **DOG DASH 3**

*It's A Barking Good Time!*

*July 19*

\*the familiar "Playstation"/Nintendo mashup sound is heard\*

\*Cheers from the crowd as Howard Lincoln speaks\*

*"Dog Dash 3 is only two months away, and you can play a complete version of the game down at the Nintendo/Sony booth. Now for this next preview, I'd like to introduce Mr. Mark Cerny."*

\*Mark Cerny takes the stage and shakes Lincoln's hand before approaching the podium.\*

*"How's everybody here doing? You know, I'm doing great, and it's not just because Sony has the year's most killer lineup of Ultra Nintendo games. From Dog Dash 3 to Twisted Metal 3, Emergency, and Umjammer Lammy, 1999 is shaping up to be our best year ever. But next year is going to be just as good, and this next game is a big reason why."*

\*Another video begins to play.\*

Victoria: *\*narrating\** *All my life, they've told me I should be a noble woman... marry into a noble family, live in a castle, be rich and safe and happy...*

\*Brief flashbacks of Victoria's adventures across the previous two *Tales of the Seven Seas* games are shown.\*

Victoria: *But I've only been happiest when I've been out on the open sea...to feel the wind in my face, to feel the spray of the water, to smell the salt of the ocean...yes, there have been rough times. I've been hurt, I've been dirty, I've been in peril...but I've never felt more alive.*

\*Victoria walks through a set of fancy doors.\*

Victoria: *And yet...I've missed my home.*

### **Next summer...**

\*Victoria embraces her parents as Erick and the others look on.\*

Victoria: Mummy, daddy, I'm home...

\*Erick and Dona stand out on a balcony, overlooking the sea.\*

Dona: What do you think, is she gone for good?

Erick: That's...really up to her.

\*Victoria is in her study, looking at a map as her father points something out.\*

Victoria's father: There. That's where they've been coming from.

Victoria: The Empire is already here?

Victoria's father: Our nation is about to become a part of something... something bigger. And you, Victoria...you can be a part of it as well.

\*A well-decorated young man enters the mansion.\*

Young Man: You must be Victoria...

McKenna: *\*grumbling\** I don't trust any of this.

### **The Seven Seas come to life like never before...**

\*Gameplay scenes of the various characters, including Erick, Dona, and Victoria, fighting in

various environments are shown. The gameplay is now fully 3-D and resembles *Dynasty Warriors*, though without the massive hordes of enemies and with the ability to jump and climb\*

**And one woman must make a choice that will change the course of her own destiny...**

Victoria: Dona, I thought he'd be a monster, but he's not....and I think I love him.

\*The Emperor's son is holding Victoria close as she smiles up at him.\*

Emperor's son: What my father is doing is wrong. But we can make it right.

Victoria: I....

**And the destiny of the entire world.**

\*Erick is riding his pirate ship into a storm toward the Emperor's massive flagship.\*

Erick: I won't let you do this, I won't let you take away Victoria's freedom!

Emperor: Boy, she's made her own choice!

Erick: Fire!

\*The cannons rip through the sides of the Emperor's ship. Victoria is seen clashing swords with a heavily armored soldier.\*

Victoria: You won't take me without a fight!

\*A ship is seen sailing into unknown waters, Victoria is standing on the bow, her hair flowing in the wind, an unsure look on her face.\*

Victoria: Where I go, the world follows...

## **TALES OF THE SEVEN SEAS: THE VICTORIAN LEGACY**

*Only on the Ultra Nintendo*

### **Summer 2000**

\*The crowd again erupts into loud cheers as Mark Cerny continues to speak.\*

*"Tales Of The Seven Seas: The Victorian Legacy will let the player choose what path our lovely heroine takes, while also taking control of her six best friends to help her on her path. This game will be a new paradigm in interactive storytelling, and we'd love to have you all along for the ride. And as we said before, we have more games coming out before the end of the year. Umjammer Lammy is a spiritual successor to 1997's Parappa the Rapper, starting a young guitar player named Lammy who's counting on you to help her achieve her dreams. And Twisted Metal 3 picks up right where Twisted Metal 2 left off, with more carnage than ever and an even more destructive multiplayer mode, it's thrilling vehicular combat at its finest.*

*The last game we're showing off today is a game you've probably read about in magazines or even online. We first showed it off last year in Japan at the Tokyo Game Show, and it's our first attempt to create a survival horror frightfest. Here is the trailer for Emergency."*

\*The trailer for *Emergency*, which depicts its main character as a doctor who has to barricade himself in a room from a massive outbreak of diseased and homicidal freaks, before crawling out through the vent and exploring the hospital for survivors, is shown. He finds one survivor in the trailer, a 20-something woman named Anessa, and the two have several narrow escapes from the monsters. There's one scene where something comes out of the floor and grabs Anessa, and then the trailer ends, drawing lots of cheers from the crowd. Mark Cerny speaks as gameplay video plays on the screen, the game seems to play like a faster-paced *Resident Evil* with a lot more dialogue.\*

*"Emergency is a game we've been working on at Sony for the past couple years. It's a survival horror game where you never know what's waiting for you around the corner. You can choose to find the quickest way out of the hospital or to try and save as many people as you can, and your actions effect how the game's events will play out. Emergency will be coming out November 1st."*

\*After the *Emergency* presentation, Mark Cerny once again cedes the podium to Howard Lincoln, as the logo for *Silent Hill* appears on the screen.\*

*"Emergency isn't the only horror game coming to the Ultra Nintendo. From Konami, the people behind this year's amazing Metal Gear Solid, comes Silent Hill, a psychological thriller where your enemy isn't just the monstrous threats facing you on the outside, but the terror within your own mind. Play Silent Hill at Konami's booth if you dare. Also from Konami is a platformer exclusive to the Ultra Nintendo."*

\*Gameplay from *Outfoxed*, which depicts a wise-cracking anthropomorphic fox who collects magical orbs to rescue his friends, is shown on screen. The fox protagonist, named Phil, uses his tail to sweep enemies off their feet, and can also wield a variety of weapons, including a freeze ray and a lasso.\*

*"This is Outfoxed, a 3-D action title from Konami. In it, you play as Phil, whose friends have been kidnapped by an evil hunter."*

\*A big, burly hunter with a massive chin is shown on the screen, wielding a shotgun that fires a net that captures some of Phil's friends, including his girlfriend Lisa.\*

*"In order to stop the Huntmaster, you can't just beat him, you'll have to outfox him! Outfoxed makes its way to the Ultra Nintendo next month. And now we've got another preview for you. Take a look at the newest RPG from Konami, Primrose Soldier."*

\*Another preview video is shown. In it, a soldier in training is walking around what appears to be a modern city, when he spots a beautiful and mysterious girl in a crowd. In contrast to the drab looking people around her, the girl has lovely pink hair and is dressed in an outfit that's more like a flower than a dress. As he approaches her, the girl disappears in a cloud of flower petals. Later, the soldier is talking to his superiors about the girl, who is said to possess magic, something that's been banned in their world for centuries. We see that soldiers in the army have devices to detect magic, and that magicians are routinely found and shot on sight. The soldier is shown chasing down the girl, who kneels before him and

closes her eyes, expecting him to kill her...but he doesn't. The game's battle system, which isn't quite an action-RPG but involves rapid-fire button presses and precision timing, is also shown, and another cutscene, depicting a skyscraper-sized robot fighting against a massive magical beast, is briefly shown as well. The game's logo is shown, and the crowd cheers\*

*"In Primrose Soldier, technology and magic clash as we follow the story of young Exeter, a soldier assigned to a special task force whose job is to slay the last of the world's magicians. When he meets the mysterious Flora, a girl seemingly made entirely of magic, his oath becomes a burden, and he must decide whether to help destroy magic or to help save it.*

*We have another RPG to show you, this one is more of an open-world RPG, and it takes place in an ancient kingdom beset by beasts and invaders. In Rise A Knight, you start as a simple peasant, but as you accomplish different tasks and show your courage, you'll rise through the ranks to become a great knight, and eventually, a legend."*

\*Gameplay footage from *Rise a Knight* is shown. It's a pure Western-style RPG, taking place in an open world similar to that of the *Ultima* games. A bit of the game's combat, showing the player battling against goblins is shown, and the player can also rise from place to place on horseback. A cutscene showing the player being knighted by a beautiful queen finishes the presentation.\*

*"In Rise a Knight, while becoming a knight is the goal, how you accomplish that goal is up to you. And now I'd like to talk a little bit about Pokemon..."*

\*The crowd cheers as the Pokemon logo appears on screen.\*

*"Over the past eight months, Pokemon fever has taken America completely by storm. The Gameboy games were some of our best selling titles ever, the anime is a ratings hit, and the toys are selling out of stores faster than we can restock them. So it's no surprise that 1999 and beyond will feature even more Pokemon games for players to enjoy. Pokemon will be coming to the Ultra Nintendo for the first time in the form of Pokemon Safari, a game where you'll be able to explore eight different areas, capturing photos of Pokemon to have them rated by Professor Oak. You'll need to be quick, as Pokemon don't always cooperate for the camera...."*

\*Brief footage is shown of the player capturing various shots of different Pokemon.\*

*"And after you've snapped a great picture, take your memory card down to any Blockbuster Video to print out stickers that you can put on almost anything! But that's not all the Pokemon fun coming to the Ultra. Next year, Pokemon Stadium will make its North American debut, and it'll be worth the wait. We're bringing over the second Japanese Pokemon Stadium game, which means that all 150 Pokemon will be playable in battle, and you can even bring the Pokemon from your Gameboy games into the arena! We're even getting the Super Nintendo CD involved. That's right, Pokemon is coming to the Super Nintendo CD, in the form of Pokemon Super Adventure, a brand new Pokemon adventure designed specifically for the SNES-CD. You'll be able to play it this July, it'll be one of the very last Super Nintendo CD games and I can think of no better way to send such a great system off into the sunset than with one of our franchises of the future."*

\*The lights come up now, and the screen goes blank.\*

*"And while we're on the subject of the future... I think the time has come to introduce to*

*North America our newest gaming handheld."*

\*The crowd erupts into wild applause at this, many of the reporters have been waiting for the Nova's unveiling, and the excitement has now reached a fever pitch.\*

*"To help introduce the Game Boy Nova, I'd like to welcome to the stage Mr. Gunpei Yokoi and Mr. Ken Kutaragi!"*

\*The two men, accompanied by a translator, step up to the podium and shake Lincoln's hand. The translator takes the podium as the two men begin to speak, Kutaragi speaks in English while Yokoi speaks in Japanese and lets the translator translate.\*

*"Hello friends, I'm Ken Kutaragi and you might know me as one of the fathers of the Super Nintendo CD. I was very pleased to hear it mentioned here, I'm hoping some of you still play it!"*

*"I'm Gunpei Yokoi, and I helped to develop the original Gameboy. All throughout my career, I have worked to make video games accessible and fun for everyone. Mr. Kutaragi and I both have very different ideas on what makes a video game device special. But, with the Game Boy Nova, his ideas about the wonders of technology and my ideas about simplicity and fun have come together to create the best handheld gaming machine ever made."*

\*The Game Boy Nova is held up for the crowd. It resembles in some ways a Nintendo DS without the bottom screen, it has a clamshell design, a single, wide screen on top and the familiar shoulder buttons, start/select buttons, and A/B/X/Y buttons on the bottom, along with a third speaker to go with the ones flanking the screen. Ken Kutaragi begins to speak again.\*

*"The Game Boy Nova is where technology and functionality meet in beautiful harmony. While being able to run six hours on a single battery charge and being able to be held in your pocket, it also plays games never before thought possible on a handheld device. Its graphics processor is capable of producing visuals that far outshine those on the Super Nintendo CD, and its advanced soundchip and speakers put console-quality audio in the palm of your hand for the very first time. Here is the Game Boy Nova in action."*

### ***Introducing...A New Era In Handheld Fun***

\*Pounding techno music plays as the Game Boy Nova's visuals are shown on screen. Versions of *Street Fighter*, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*, and *Resident Evil*, all with graphics approaching those on the OTL Playstation 1, are shown off.\*

### ***Games Like You've Never Seen Before***

\*New entries in the *Contra* and *Castlevania* franchises are shown, *Contra* boasting some excellent 3-D while *Castlevania* shows incredible animation.\*

### ***Brand New Experiences***

\*A swimming level of another, unknown game is shown, depicting how good the ocean looks. An anime cutscene from an unknown RPG shows how well the animation can be depicted on the screen.\*

### **Old Favorites In The Palm of Your Hand**

\**Super Metroid* and *Squad Four* are both shown running on the device, along with *Final Fantasy VI*. A version of *A Link To The Past* with graphics like those in *Ocarina of Dreams* is also shown.\*

### **Amazing Sound**

\**Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* is again shown, with lifelike sound effects and even some real-life songs able to be heard, though in compressed form. *Street Fighter III* is shown off as well.\*

### **Incredible Control**

\*A boy is shown playing the system, his fingers hitting the buttons, showing off the system's SNES-like controls.\*

### **The Revolution Is Here**

\**Super Mario Nova* is shown off, with 2-D visuals better than those in *Super Mario World 2*, including some great animation effects\*

### **The Game Boy Nova. Coming March 2000.**

### **Handheld Gaming Reborn**

\*The video ends and the crowd again erupts into applause as Ken Kutaragi begins to speak.\*

*"The Game Boy Nova is coming and handheld games will never be the same. Not only does this system play some amazing games, it's also fully compatible with all of your old Gameboy games, and you can even save your games on the system's built-in memory. Certain Game Boy Nova games will have compatibility for transferring data between these games and the old Game Boy Color games, but more on that will be revealed at a later time. The system also has on it..."*

\*Ken Kutaragi holds up the system to his face and a low-res picture of his face is displayed on the screen. The crowd cheers.\*

*"It has a built-in camera! Now this camera can be used with certain games not only on the Game Boy itself but you can do things like take a picture of something and then put it into the new game Velvet Dark, so that in the multiplayer, you and your friends can actually appear in the game! Or you can use the new Game Boy Printer accessory to print out stamps of any picture you've taken!"*

\*The crowd cheers again, Kutaragi holds up the Nova.\*

*"The Game Boy Nova will be released on March 26, 2000, and will retail for \$169.99, that price will include both the Game Boy Nova and Super Mario Nova, which will be packed in with every unit. We have nearly a dozen playable games including the new Super Mario, Street Fighter, Tony Hawk, and Resident Evil down at the booth for you to try!"*

\*Now Gunpei Yokoi takes the console and begins to speak.\*

*"And there is one more game to show off, and for that, we give the podium back to Mr. Howard Lincoln."*

*\*Kutaragi and Yokoi leave the stage, and Howard Lincoln returns to the podium.\**

*"Thank you gentlemen for introducing the folks here at E3 to the Game Boy Nova. We do indeed have one more Nova game to show off, and I think a lot of you already know what that is. Please look at the screen."*

*\*The screen begins playing another preview video, this one of *Pokemon Sun and Moon*. It's accompanied by the Pokemon Theme Dance Mix as it shows off not only the new gameplay, but several new Pokemon as well, including OTL ones like Ariados and Ampharos, and new ones like a timberwolf Pokemon and a fierce looking tarantula wasp. The graphics appear much like OTL *HeartGold and SoulSilver*, and the gameplay shows full Pokemon animation in battle, much like OTL *Black and White*. When the trailer is over, the crowd roars with applause.\**

*"Pokemon Sun and Moon will be making their way to North America a few months after the launch of the Nova in the summer. Now, the Game Boy Nova is our next generation handheld device, but we still have a few more games to show off for the Ultra Nintendo. Take a look."*

*\*A preview video shows off a few more Ultra Nintendo games, including the long-awaited ports of *Half-Life* and *Starcraft*. There's also a special segment of the video introducing games "from best-selling authors", showing off *Tom Clancy: Secret War* and then another game, *Runner Mike*, "from the author of the technological thriller *Digital Fortress*", which shows an explorer investigating an ancient Greek temple and dodging gun-wielding pursuers. The video seems to end, but there's another longer segment, showing off the exclusive Ultra Nintendo *Resident Evil* title, *Resident Evil: Operation Stormwind*. The game shows Chris Redfield and Jill Valentine landing at a heavily guarded military site, where mercenaries clad in body armor with the Umbrella logo are waiting for them. Jill is then seen going through an underground tunnel system, where a massive mutated beast lumbers toward her. She shoots at it with numerous bullets. The scene switches to show Chris hacking a computer when he's grabbed from behind by a man who tries to inject him with a needle. Chris throws the man off of him just in time. After the *Operation Stormwind* footage, the video ends. Howard Lincoln remains on stage.\**

*"I'd like to thank everyone here for coming to our Nintendo at E3 1999 presentation. There's just...one more game I'd like to show before we finish up today. Please look at the screen."*

*\*Another video begins to play, depicting the inside of a futuristic looking area, like the inside of a massive spaceship. A female voice is heard.\**

*From when I was a little girl, I made it my goal to protect the innocent. I've always been fighting alone, a silent sentinel, rarely getting to see with my own eyes the people I was protecting...*

*\*People are pacing around the inside of the ship, a massive open area with elevators and trees and white walls and rooms, like something out of *2001*. It's a bustling space colony.\**

*I guess that's why I took this job, so I could...be around people again.*

\*A hand is seen sliding a keycard through a reader, then blue boots are seen walking through a door.\*

*It's not the most exciting job in the world, but..*

\*A little girl looks up at the camera, smiling and giggling. A blue gloved hand is seen lightly touching her face.\*

*But I feel like I'm home.*

\*The camera pans up to show a tall, blonde woman clad in blue, as the *Metroid* musical motif quietly plays. The crowd, slowly recognizing the music erupts into the loudest applause of the entire show.\*

\*In a science lab, various creatures are seen trapped in containment.\*

Samus: \*to a scientist\* You're keeping them here? With all these people?

Scientist: There are countless security measures here designed to keep these things and the people separate. And besides...if anything does happen, that's why you're here, Miss Head of Security.

Samus: I should have this operation shut down.

Scientist: This operation's been ordered by the Federation itself. We need to study these things precisely so they can't threaten humanity.

Samus: You have no idea what you're doing.

\*Another scene of many, many people out in the colony. Then, the lights all go off. Auxillary power kicks in, then goes off as well. There are a few lights flickering, but mostly darkness. Samus enters the area and can see people nervous and starting to panic.\*

Samus: What is going on...?

\*The screen goes black. The roar of a monster can be heard. Samus, still clad in her Zero Suit, rushes to put on her armor. A pack of monsters can be seen rushing out of containment and into a large crowd of people. Samus in her armor blasts a few of them but she is quickly tackled to the ground as one of the creatures begins tearing at the armor viciously. The little girl from before screams.\*

*And my home is about to be shattered again...*

\*A version of Samus Aran's Theme from *Super Metroid* now plays as rendered cutscenes of Samus trying to save people while monsters attack are interspersed with gameplay scenes, showing that the game features the same 2-D gameplay of previous series titles, but with 3-D graphics. Samus is shown fighting a pair of large bosses at the same time, collecting new powerups including a version of OTL's Annihilator Beam, before another rendered cutscene shows her diving to grab the little girl as a vicious flying beast swoops overhead. Then there's another cutscene, of a battered Samus in a tattered Zero Suit, lying on the

ground and gasping for breath, she has her blaster on one of her arms and she's looking up defiantly at something coming down at her.\*

Samus: Come and get me you son of a-

\*The screen goes black. The crowd goes ballistic.\*

## **METROID: DARKNESS**

### **2000**

\*The crowd is still hollering as the video ends and the lights come back up.\*

"Thank you again and enjoy E3!"

-Nintendo's keynote address at E3 1999

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\*1999's E3 keynotes were broadcast on television for the first time, in this case they were filmed and broadcast as part of 1999's three hour *GameTV* E3 special, and after the keynote speeches, we see the hosts' reactions to both of them.\*

Ted Crosley: Whoa, whoa-ho-ho, what an amazing presentation by Nintendo!

Alex Stansfield: Yeah, that was really amazing. Nintendo just blew me away with all the great games they just showed off, and don't forget the Game Boy Nova. *Squad Four: Rebellion* looks absolutely incredible, the combat looks like a lot of fun and the plot is incredibly intriguing.

Ted: Hey, what about the game we just saw? *Metroid*, we're finally getting a new *Metroid*!

Gary Westhouse: *Final Fantasy VIII* looked killer, as did the new *F-Zero* and *Fire Emblem*.

Brittany Saldita: I can't wait for the new *Final Fantasy*, that intro was a thing of beauty and got me hyped up to play it right now! But yeah, out of the two keynote presentations I definitely thought Nintendo's was the best, they were showing off a lot more games-

Alex: And it makes sense, because, you know, the Ultra Nintendo's earlier in its lifespan than Saturn.

Ted: Yeah really, um, why didn't Sega show off the long-rumored *Katana*? That's what I'm wondering, we've been hearing about the *Katana* forever but it doesn't look like we're gonna see it this year.

Adrian Fry: Well, I thought Sega took more of a quality over quantity approach this year. They showed off a bunch of good games, I mean, *Sonic 5* looked awesome, *Soul Calibur* looked amazing, and I gotta be honest, I think I like what I saw from their *Resident Evil* game more than Nintendo's. Nintendo's had better graphics, but Saturn's *Code Veronica* looked straight up scarier.

Alex: Well, I will say this, *NYPD: Narcotics Squad* could be the surprise of the show.

Brittany: Yeah, that game looked absolutely incredible. And I love *Sonic*, so *Sonic the Hedgehog 5* is a must-play for me.

Lyssa Fielding: Are you all forgetting about the new *Pokemon* game that's coming out? I mean, did you see it? How much the graphics have improved, that definitely shows off the power of the new Game Boy.

Ted: Well, we're going to have to get down to the floor and play some actual games before we can call anything the best game of the show. When we come back, we'll bring you more coverage from the E3 floor. That's next on the 1999 E3 Spectacular, right here on *GameTV!*

-

\*Ted and Alex are at the Nintendo booth now, playing the Game Boy Nova.\*

Alex: So this is the Game Boy Nova, and I think the camera guy should zoom in so you can see just how good this looks. I'm playing the new Super Mario game right now and it's just amazing. It's just as fun as I remember *Super Mario World 2* being, it's been a long time since we've had a proper old school Mario game, and this one plays fantastically.

Ted: I'm playing *Resident Evil*, and the graphics are just out of this world. It looks about as good as it did on the Sega Saturn, and on this tiny little handheld! I still don't know how this thing can keep a charge for six hours, though the battery pack in the back does feel kind of hefty.

Alex: Right, I feel that, the bottom is a bit weighty though the system can easily fit into your pocket. It's got a built-in backlight, which is great, and the speakers make the music sound just as good as it does coming out of your TV. I'm in awe of this little thing.

\*The camera zooms in to show Ted blowing some zombies away in *Resident Evil*.\*

Ted: I remember the Tiger Game.com trying to do *Resident Evil 2*-

Alex: Ew, oh God, don't remind me of that thing.

Ted: Yeah, it really couldn't handle it, but this is just amazing.

\*The scene switches now to show Ted and Alex both trying out the new *Pokemon* game.\*

Alex: Okay, the graphics have gotten a MASSIVE bump, and these new Pokemon are pretty cool. I'm playing with one of the new starters, Chikorita...

Ted: Alex picked the wimpy one, I'm going with Totodile, he's a little crocodile and he's badass.

Alex: Get this. You can take your old Pokemon from the original game and transfer them to the Game Boy Nova's built in memory before then transferring them into *Pokemon Sun and Moon*. It's really incredible. It's a one way trip though, so make sure you want to take your Pokemon off the old game before bringing them into this one.

Ted: All right, enough talk, I wanna keep playing!

(...)

Brittany: All right, Alex and I are now gonna check out the new *Squad Four*! Here I am as Rebecca, and right now I'm in prison.

Dylan Cuthbert: Right, you begin the game trapped here in this large prison area, and over the first few levels you've got to figure out how to escape. Once you find a way out, you'll be set upon by guards and security devices, so make sure you're prepared before making your break for it.

Brittany: I'm loving the lock-on system in this game. You can choose to aim manually or you can lock-on, and the game will either pick the most threatening enemy or you can lock on by using the D-pad to scroll rapidly between targets.

Alex: Right, the game gives you so much freedom to play the way you want to play it.

Cuthbert: That's the key, from the very outset of the game we made the decision that the player would have a lot more fun if they had the most amount of control possible over their style of play.

\*Rebecca rolls out of the way of incoming fire before dashing over to a guard and taking him out with her twin energy blades.\*

Brittany: This is just incredible, and just like in *Eclipse*, you can charge up for special moves as well.

Alex: And you can also find special collectibles that give you all new special moves within that stage! That is really something and I think it'll encourage players to go off the beaten path and explore the levels you guys have created.

Cuthbert: That's absolutely something we want to see.

(...)

\*Ted and Lyssa are checking out the new *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*, Ted has the controller and he's sending Sonic through a series of loops in one of the city levels.\*

Ted: It's so weird but so cool getting to take Sonic anywhere I want him to go. For the very first time, Sonic can move pretty much anywhere we want to take him. I see a big ring on top of that building, I'm gonna try to go and get it.

Lyssa: This game doesn't just have city levels either, there's all kinds of levels to explore and over on the other monitor, somebody's exploring the beach, while Ted tries to get that big ring let's check out how this guy is doing!

\*The camera briefly shows the beach level before going back to Ted maneuvering Sonic up onto the building to collect the big ring.\*

Ted: Now my goal in this stage is actually to find the entrance to the subway, and there are arrows all over the place pointing out where I need to go. There's also some enemies here so let's just take them out...

\*Sonic goes up to a crowd of enemies and uses melee attacks to knock them all out, Ted doesn't bother with Sonic's spin move, instead he has Sonic run around a corner, where a big gorilla mech is waiting for him.\*

Tails: Sonic, catch! \*tosses him a banana cannon\*

Ted: Oh, I see! \*shoots the bananas at the mech, distracting it and causing it to expose its weak spot, which Ted damages with a spin move\* Nice, nice...

Lyssa: Why does the robot gorilla like bananas?

Ted: It's his programming, makes him a more realistic gorilla!

(...)

Gary: I'm here with Ubisoft's Michel Ancel, and this is their new game *Welcome to Magicka*. Now how this game works is that you explore different areas of this world called Magicka, your goal is to get to the end but if you explore, you can find items that power up your sorcerer.

Michel Ancel: That's correct, it's a more freeform take on the open world platformer genre, we don't require you to collect a lot of things to advance in the game but instead we reward you with power-ups and stronger spells.

Gary: And I gotta say, this game really reminds me a lot of *The Dreamers*, with emphasis on exploration and combat. It looks really beautiful and I'm in awe of the variety of spells I've already found.

\*Gary shoots a spell at an enemy on screen, turning it into a chicken.\*

Gary: I'm assuming this spell doesn't work on everyone?

Ancel: It doesn't, but it'll work on most basic enemies, yes! But watch out, a lot of your enemies have spells and they can turn you into things as well.

Gary: That's not good!

(...)

\*Ted and Alex are now at the *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* booth with the skating legend himself, Tony Hawk.\*

Ted: It's an honor to meet you, you're one of the most talented and creative athletes who's ever lived and I've loved watching you at the X-Games over the past few years.

Tony Hawk: Thanks, it's a pleasure to meet you guys, I'm a big fan of the show.

Alex: Man, we should've had you on earlier then!

Ted: But anyway, your video game, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*, it really is something else. The amount of tricks you can do, it's really addictive to try and string together big combos.

Hawk: Well, I wouldn't put my name on a game if it wasn't fun, being a gamer myself, I made sure this was the type of game that I would want to play.

Ted: It's definitely the type of game I want to play!

Alex: Now, this game's going to be on the Ultra Nintendo and the Sega Saturn, but also on the upcoming Game Boy Nova.

Hawk: That's right, you can take it with you anywhere, even out to the skate park! I wouldn't recommend playing it while skating though.

Alex: No, that would definitely be a mistake.

Ted: Thanks again for talking with us and we'd love to have you show off some tricks on the show sometime. We'd even let you jump over Gary.

Hawk: \*laughing\*

(...)

\*Brittany and Lyssa are at a booth trying out the new *Syrielle* game for the Ultra Nintendo, *Syrielle Soul*.\*

Brittany: *Syrielle Soul* is a really unique game because it'll give you the option of either starting fresh or using your save from *Syrielle* on the SNES-CD to import your choices from the old one to this new game.

Lyssa: Even if you don't have a copy of the old game, it'll still let you make a few choices because there's an interactive scene at the start of the game that will call on you to make decisions that simulate a playthrough of the previous title. Or, again, you can start totally clean. I loved the original *Syrielle*, so when I found out there was gonna be a sequel, I was absolutely thrilled.

\*The screen shows Syrielle, her spider powers having manifest visually on her body, giving her several extra legs and a big bulbous spider butt, looking embarrassed as she has a dialogue with Stacy. In this playthrough, Stacy is Syrielle's best friend and tries to comfort her through her embarrassment.\*

Brittany: There you see Stacy from the original game, but most of Syrielle's friends in this new game are all new and you can form all new relationships with them.

Lyssa: Yeah, only a few of the really important characters like Stacy return from the old title. Also, I'm told that there's a lot more dialogue and sim elements and less action elements to this one, so those like me who were really pleased with that aspect of the game are gonna be hyped up to play this new one. *Syrielle Soul* comes out this winter, but gosh darn it, I really wanna play more of it right now!

(...)

Ted: I'm here with Dan Houser and we're checking out *Chaos City*. Dan, I have beaten the (bleep) out of a bunch of innocent people and now the cops are after me.

Dan: \*laughing\* Well mate, looks like you're gonna have to kick the cops' arses as well!

Ted: I guess so! \*runs up to the cops to fight them, only to get shot and killed in a hail of gunfire\* That's not fair!

Dan: You gotta be more clever about it, you ain't got no firearms but you can find a sword or a chainsaw to use maybe.

Ted: There's a chainsaw in this game?

Dan: Maybe not this early on. \*laughs\* Good luck though!

(...)

Alex: \*is playing *Junction Point* for the PC, he's going through a dimly lit hallway and is getting creeped out by the numerous weird noises he's hearing\* This game is significantly scarier than I thought it would be!

Ken Levine: Well, it's largely based on the original *System Shock*, which in and of itself was pretty creepy. Plus it's got the whole *Heart of Darkness* thing going for it.

Alex: Now that was a fantastic book. So basically, I'm trying to hunt down a captain who's gone totally out of his mind, and this ship is flooded with crazies and freaks. \*collecting some health items as he turns a corner, he sees a disheveled woman stumbling down the hallway and has to open fire on her\* Believe it or not this isn't nearly the creepiest thing I've seen in this game! \*comes across a room with a sparking floor, it's a puddle of water that will shock him if he goes into it\* All right, this could be tricky...

\*Before long, two more crazies are coming through the doorway, forcing Alex to step onto the electrified puddle which shocks and kills him\*

Alex: Damn!

Levine: It's not easy!

Alex: It's really fun though. \*keeps playing\*

(...)

Brittany: I'm here with Peter Molyneux, and we're talking *Colony*, his new game due to be released by the end of the year.

Peter Molyneux: Thank you, Brittany, I'm glad to be discussing this game with you. Let me just say, *Colony* is a game that's going to blow a lot of people's minds. It combines the best aspects of life-sim games with a thrilling RPG adventure. So it's the best of both worlds really.

Brittany: From what I got to play, I'm pretty impressed with how well the relationship development is in this game. How you deal with your fellow colonists does effect how much stronger your character becomes, though I didn't get to try the gameplay outside of the colony yet, the RPG aspects of the game, but I'm sure if it plays anything like the colony

itself it's gonna be a lot of fun.

Molyneux: The combat is something I'm quite proud of, you'll be able to choose a discipline, swordsmanship, archery, magic, etc., depending on what you want to specialize in. So there's so much freedom and choice in the game, and I'm looking forward to players getting to play and enjoy it on their PCs this fall.

Brittany: I'm looking forward to playing a lot more of this, thanks again!

(...)

\*Lyssa is seated in a limo outside the E3 convention in Los Angeles.\*

Lyssa: So you guys all know that E3 is the biggest show in gaming, and we've given you a ton of inside access to all the biggest upcoming games of the year. But how is it possible for us to get all of that access? Well, thanks to all the loyal *GameTV* viewers, *GameTV* gets closer to the games and the developers than anyone else, and that royal treatment starts even before we get to the show!

\*A little featurette is shown, detailing the red-carpet treatment the *GameTV* hosts enjoy during E3, including private limos and extremely nice hotel rooms\*

Lyssa: \*resting on the bed in her hotel room\* I live like five miles from here, but who's gonna turn down a suite, huh? \*giggles as she kind of bounces on the bed a little bit\* I'm gonna order up some room service! \*she orders up a jumbo hamburger\* Now let's go see how my fellow hosts are doing! \*makes her way across the hall to Brittany's room and knocks on the door\* Brittany?

Brittany: \*opens the door\* Oh, hey there Lyssa, what's up?

Lyssa: We're showing all the viewers about how awesome it is to cover E3! \*pokes her head in\* Are you...playing *Chrono Trigger*?

Brittany: ...maybe.

Lyssa: You're supposed to be compiling your notes, we still have lots of games to talk about!

\*A hotel worker approaches Lyssa with her room service burger\*

Worker: Room service!

Brittany: \*raises her eyebrow\* You ordered room service on the job?

Lyssa: ....\*begins rapidly shoving the burger in her mouth to make the evidence disappear\* ...no!

Brittany: \*rolls her eyes and shuts the door\*

Lyssa: ...well, while I head over to Ted's room to go bug him, here's Gary with a look at the all new *Commander Keen: When Universes Collide*! \*casually munches on the other half of the burger as she heads down the hallway\*

-excerpted from the May 18, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

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Adam Sessler: Hey there, I'm Adam Sessler and this is Dan Hsu, editor-in-chief of Electronic Gaming Monthly, and we're reporting from the floor of E3. There's been a lot of games shown off so far, including games from some of the biggest franchises around. Sonic, Final Fantasy, Squad Four, Metroid, and Resident Evil among many others have all had their games shown off here, and we talked to several developers who are excited about the future of the industry.

\*A series of interview snippets are shown\*

John Romero: As technology improves, we're gonna be seeing games getting more and more realistic. With *Doom: Inferno*, we were able to use console technology to make monsters and dungeons more vivid and realistic than ever, and I think the next generation of console FPSes are going to take graphical fidelity to a whole new level.

Peter Molyneux: Oh, there's absolutely a paradigm shift in gaming. You can already see it. The worlds are getting bigger, and games are getting a lot more complex in what you can do with them.

Dylan Cuthbert: The graphics have just taken a quantum leap. The technology is at a level where we're creating these huge, realistic worlds, and the sky is absolutely the limit.

Gabe Newell: It's what I say to everybody who tells me about how amazing *Half-Life* looks: "guys, you haven't seen ANYTHING. We're already seeing chips that can put out graphics that make *Half-Life* look primitive. The leap is coming and it's going to be incredible."

\*The snippets end.\*

Dan Hsu: And Adam, I was surprised that Sega didn't show off their Katana console. We saw some great games from them, but compared to what Nintendo was showing off, only a few of those games managed to measure up to Nintendo's best.

Adam: The Saturn is still a capable system. We saw that with games like *NYPD*, but yeah, I was definitely surprised to see the Katana as a no show. I'm wondering if it's even ready, though that would mean we don't see it actually released until 2001 or even 2002.

Dan: And how many games would Nintendo have released by then?

Adam: It's hard to say what Sega's thinking. But even without the Katana, I think this has been the best E3 yet and I'm really glad to be here.

Dan: Oh, so am I.

-excerpted from a ZDTV special on E3 1999 on the *Gamespot* television program, airing May 19, 1999

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- E3 1999: Live Updates (471 posts)
- Damn this dial-up, I wanna see the Metroid video! (8 posts)
- Nintendo owned Sega so hard (53 posts)
- WHERE'S THE KITANA?!?! (20 posts)
- Squad Four 3 (759 posts)
- Double Dragon at E3 (14 posts)
- NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOVVVVVVAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA (25 posts)
- Oh man is that a tarantula wasp pokemon those things scar me (3 posts)
- NYPD Narc Squad: Game Of The Show (13 posts)
- All things Sonic thread (1428 posts)
- Sphere Soldier 2 Confirmed For Winter (7 posts)
- Klonoa sequel revealed at E3 (11 posts)
- Can we talk about Lissa Fielding's boobs plz guyz?!1 (240 posts)
- oh no samus shouldnt talk this games gonna suk (38 posts)
- Sonic 5 > All Nintendo's E3 stuff. (171 posts)

-from a topic list on the Gaming Age Forums on May 18, 1999

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### **Game Critics Awards- E3 1999**

(based on the OTL Game Critics Awards, OTL's winners can be found here:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Game\\_Critics\\_Awards](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Game_Critics_Awards) )

Best Of Show: *Squad Four: Rebellion*

Best Original Game: *Colony*

Best Console Game: *Squad Four: Rebellion*

Best PC Game: *Colony*

Best Peripheral/Hardware: Game Boy Nova

Best Action Game: *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*

Best Action/Adventure Game: *Squad Four: Rebellion*

Best Role-Playing Game: *Final Fantasy VIII*

Best Racing Game: *Virtua Racing Reality*

Best Sports Game: *Grant Hill Basketball 2000*

Best Fighting Game: *Soul Calibur*

Best Strategy Game: *Homeworld*

Best Social/Puzzle Game: *Samba de Amigo*

Best Online Multiplayer: *Team Fortress*

Special Commendation Awards: *Squad Four: Rebellion, Junction Point, NYPD: Narcotics Squad*

Best Booth: Sony

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*In 1999, E3 finally came back to Los Angeles.*

*It was a star-studded show. Celebrities like Tony Hawk and Haley Joel Osment were there, helping to promote Tony Hawk's Pro Skater and Star Wars: Battlefront respectively, while others like Phil Hartman and Alyssa Milano were pacing the floor simply to check out the games. There were also plenty of concerts with Janet Jackson highlighting the show over at Sega's booth, promoting the upcoming Samba de Amigo game.*

*Sega might've pulled out all the stops in terms of celebrity guests, but they held back on the one thing that might've turned their E3 into one for the ages, and that was the Katana. Sega's upcoming console was a complete no-show at E3, though Sega reps did give cryptic answers when pressed on their next-generation console, saying they were hard at work on the next console but that their current focus was on the Sega Saturn. Make no mistake, the Saturn did boast an impressive lineup. Sonic the Hedgehog 5 was the star of the show, but Soul Calibur impressed boothgoers even more with its arcade perfect graphics and incredible gameplay. Commander Keen: When Universes Collide didn't surprise everyone like Mars' Most Wanted did the previous year, but that's because 1998's game had significantly raised the profile of the series. We were expecting Keen to be great now, and its demo booth was among the show's most crowded. The Saturn did, however, have a surprising hit in NYPD: Narcotics Squad, whose gritty storyline and slick looking gameplay brought the game a ton of attention, with many calling it the sleeper hit of the show. Code Veronica, the latest title in the Resident Evil series, also impressed, even moreso than Nintendo's exclusive Operation Stormwind in the eyes of many. Though the Saturn was clearly winding down, E3 1999 still proved that the console could still churn out some quality games.*

*Sega's sparse lineup and lack of info on the Katana might have been acceptable had Nintendo not shown up with what many even today still call the greatest E3 lineup of all time. After blowing us all away with a Squad Four: Rebellion trailer and gameplay demo, the hits just kept on coming. By the time Nintendo got around to showing the Game Boy Nova, we were already exhilarated over the Ultra Nintendo lineup, and the fact that a new Pokemon game was coming (the trailer even brought a few Pokemon-loving reporters to tears of joy) was just icing on the cake. All of that would've been more than enough...then Nintendo showed off Metroid: Darkness, and sent the crowd into hysterics. By the time the show was over, those Sega executives who were standing near the back to snoop on Nintendo's show could be seen looking like a bunch of kids who'd just been caught egging the principal's house. They knew they were in trouble. 1999's E3 is known today as the beginning of the end for the Sega Saturn, with the Ultra Nintendo just entering its peak years. While 2000's show would be the Year of the Katana, 1999 belonged to Nintendo, and everyone in Los Angeles with half a brain knew it.*

*Among PC games, the all-time classics Junction Point, Team Fortress, and Homeworld were shown off. Peter Molyneux was all too happy to show off his upcoming game Colony, but we all know how that one turned out.*

*Tom Kalinske's ill-fated decision not to show the Katana at E3 1999 has been cited as one of the industry's biggest mistakes, though knowing what he knew at the time, it's hard to blame him. The Saturn still had more than a pulse, it had a strong heartbeat, and the Saturn was on the verge of entering one of its strongest stretches of games. Kalinske clearly wanted to keep the Saturn alive, and announcing a \$149.99 Saturn price cut at Sega's booth on the last day of the show did stop the bleeding at least a little bit. The Ultra Nintendo, however, was still going strong at twice the price of the Saturn, and its first price cut, to \$249.99, wouldn't happen until November of that year (to coincide with the release of Squad Four: Rebellion). Whether or not Kalinske's decision was a mistake or not, Sega's continued declining sales inevitably created internal pressure at the company, and that call would come to haunt him sooner rather than later...*

-excerpted from IGN's E3 1999 article (based on this real-life article on IGN.com about OTL's E3 1999: [http://www.ign.com/wikis/e3/E3\\_1999](http://www.ign.com/wikis/e3/E3_1999) )

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This one has been a long time coming, but here is the other half to the Power Rangers Turbo update.

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Despite the promise *Power Rangers Turbo* showed in its theatrical outing, fan reception to this season is mixed. Again, the nature of its corresponding Super Sentai, *Gekisou Sentai Carranger*, made it difficult for the writers of the show to depict as serious children's entertainment especially after the dark nature of the feature film. The general consensus among fandom is that Turbo is...confusion as it darker than *Zeo*, but the slapstick nature of the original Sentai undermined the underlying theme of adulthood and the challenges of the real world. It was also a time of transition as the team's mentor and technical help, Zordon and Alpha 5 also quietly departed the show to return to Eltar, though Zordon's capture and the search for him served as the impetus for the following season, *Power Rangers Mega Force*. However, it would be Billy Cranston who would step in the role as the team's advisor and technical support. At one point during *Zeo*, David Yost had considered leaving the series due to the harassment he had received on set. In fact, the two-part episode "Rangers of Two Worlds" had Billy leave the team in its early drafts but Jason David Frank's on air apology and the promise of a bigger role in Turbo. Additionally, the restoration of his Triceratops powers only held crossover potential, ultimately did not happen until the conclusion of *Mega Force*.

Meanwhile, Jason David Frank and Catherine Sutherland both expressed their desire to leave, Frank having been with the show since it's inaugural season. Tommy Oliver was and remains the most popular Ranger, and his departure left some big boots to fill. Writing Frank and Sutherland out was fairly simple; shortly after their graduation from Angel Grove High, Kat receives an offer to train to become a ballerina in London, however that would require her to move overseas. Kat made it clear that she intends to take this opportunity, leaving Tommy with a conundrum as his long-distance relationship with Kimberly did not work out. By "Passing of the Torch" and after much soul searching, Tommy decides to move with Kat and focus on his martial arts. His replacement was probably the most polarizing topic as his successor was none other than Ryan Steele from Saban's other tokusatsu-derived series, *VR Troopers*.

Some fans loved it because it established continuity between both series (and *VR Troopers* arch-nemesis, Grimlord would later appear as a member of the United Alliance of Evil.) Others thought the producers were trying to shoehorn a character from another series that was a dubious choice. The truth was that the producers wanted to cast Brad Hawkins into *Power Rangers* and he was original choice to play the Gold Zeo Ranger, but scheduling conflicts prevented him from taking the role and it went to Austin St. John. In any case, fans warmed up to Ryan after Turbo when he became the Black Ranger in *Mega Force*. Interestingly, though Ryan deferred to the Red *Mega Ranger*, Andros (played by American-born Super Sentai veteran, Kane Kosugi), he was still the de facto leader as the case was for *Mega Force*'s Super Sentai counterpart, Denji Sentai Megaranger.

Fans responded more positively to Kat's replacement, Ashley Hammond (played by Tracy Lynn Cruz), who was outspoken, fiery tempered, and loved to play video games... just like a certain hostess of a popular gaming show at the other time. Showrunner Judd Lynn later admitted that idea for the character came from a writer that was fan of their show; they wanted to make a Pink Ranger different from Kimberly or Kat. Ashley Hammond was very

much representative of the growing "girl power" movement in children's media popular with both boys and girls. She often ranks behind Kimberly as the best Pink Ranger among Power Rangers fans. Her first appearances were fairly low key with non-speaking cameos in the first episodes, and later appearing as a cheerleader one of at Adam's soccer games.

Ryan's introduction in "Passing of the Torch" was more of an event, with Divatox approaching Karl Ziktor (AKA Grimlord) who had moved his operations to Angel Grove. The show never offered an explanation for the move, but a mysterious figure representing the United Alliance of Evil promises him an empire in both the real and cyber worlds in exchange for his assistance. This is actually foreshadowed in "The Millennium Message" where Grimlord appears with Rita, Zedd, the House of Gadgetry, and Divatox in the Blue Senturion's message to the Rangers. The Rangers bring attention to this fact, and wonder who this mysterious foe is though those who watched VR Troopers knew. Grimlord tells Divatox that they need to destroy their leader and the "rest of the team would fall" so the Pirhanatrons and Grimlord's mutants attack Tommy and Kat on route to their camp site. What neither Grimlord nor Divatox anticipated was Ryan Steele's arrival.

Ryan who saw them under attack at a nearby rest stop, assists Tommy and Kat despite the (unexplained) loss of his Trooper powers. Meanwhile, the other three Rangers come under attack one of Divatox's monsters, who knocks their keys away. Ashley coincidentally shows up to distract the monster and says what will become a meme that would echo for years afterward: "I know Street Fighter."<sup>[1]</sup> Despite what one would think of the cheerleader, Ashley proves herself a capable fighter and even uses a Sega Saturn controller as a lariat to buy the Rangers enough time to morph and force it into retreat. At the end of the two-parter, Tommy and Kat announce their departure from the team and name Ryan and Ashley their replacements. It was bittersweet seeing one of the longest-serving and most beloved Ranger leave, but it could've been worse. Despite what many thought about Ryan, we got a veteran and a capable leader and Ashley brought some needed new blood into the team.

Series' villain, Divatox is nearly universally despised by the fanbase because of whining and petulance. Many (including *History of Power Rangers* producer Lewis Lovhaug) particularly hate how she chewed the scenery with her tantrums who had no real good reason for wanting conquering Earth, being a pirate and was generally as ineffective as her henchmen, the Pirahnatrons. Personally, I disagree, call me corny but I love villains who act in an exaggerated manner. I personally found her tantrums as amusing as Rita Repulsa's headaches. Most fans consider Grimlord to be the superior villain is it was his strategies that lead to the Rangers' defeat at the end of the season with him leading the charge into the Power Chamber. However, Divatox, living up to her name, takes credit for his victory. As competent as Grimlord was, he lacked much in the way of personality compared to Rita and Lord Zedd.

And then there's Bulk and Skull, the unsung heroes of the Zordon era. It appears that the writers and producers did not know what to do with them for the first half of the season. First Divatox's annoying nephew, Elgar, devolves them into chimpanzees, then returns them to human form albeit invisible, and then has them doing odd jobs for the rest of the season until they finally land jobs as security guards for NASADA in the final episodes of the season. The producers didn't give them much development until the final thirteen episodes where they acted as the Power Rangers' secret keepers and Bulk even expressed his resentment that the Rangers got all the recognition when their good deeds went unnoticed. The peak of their character development came at the season finale "Chase Into Space" where the duo have their "Big Damn Heroes" moment when Divatox and Grimlord's forces lay siege to the Power Chamber. Through little confusion fu and old-fashioned badassery

when they pick up the enemy's weapons and fire, they give the Rangers a chance to escape. Personally, I found it amusing when Divatox mistook them for "great warriors" (Grimlord knew better, though) and decided to bring them before "Dark Spectre."

Turbo ended on what had to be the most depressing note of any Power Rangers' series. It starts with a seemingly pointless news bulletin of the new NASADA shuttle prepping for launch, but quickly turns darker when Zordon informs the Rangers that his homeworld and source of their power, Eltar, is under attack. The situation escalates when Divatox and Grimlord summon the Goldgoyle, which destroys both Megazords and their weapons. Things get worse when they learn Eltar fell to the forces of the United Alliance of Evil. Though the Rangers insist on helping, Zordon and Billy veto them because it would leave the world defenseless. Strangely, this did not make much sense to me at the time. Mega Force would later establish that the Dinozord powers were from Earth and not Eltar, so it made sense for the Turbo Rangers to go instead of the Mighty Morphin' Rangers. However, this was in fact a gambit on Billy and Zordon's part, which would come into fruition next season.

Divatox and Grimlord then begin their siege on the Power Chamber, and oh boy is it a desperate battle with Pirhanatrons and Mutants rappelling in. Despite their spirited defense, Elgar sets the explosives and destroys the chamber. It is also worth noting that Johnny Yong Bosch decided to leave at the end of the season (and would later follow Steve Cardenas into voice acting), so the blast also injured Adam. Before Divatox or Grimlord could finish them off though, a ghostly head to inform them that the Alliance captured Zordon and the other rangers and also summons them to the Samarian Planet on orders from Dark Spectre himself. Both villains (reluctantly) withdrawal. However, Alpha 6 gives them the black box, which gives them instructions to go NASADA where sneak aboard the shuttle to pursue Divatox and Grimlord to outer space.

Overall, Power Rangers fans view Turbo as one of its better seasons and is a mainstay of many fans' "Top Ten" lists despite the regular veering into slapstick thanks to Carranger. It started with massive spike in ratings in the wake of the film, which remained higher than Zeo's (though ratings took a slight dip when Frank and Sutherland departed) and the season cliffhanger excited the fanbase for Mega Force, which Fox touted as "The end of Power Rangers as we know it." Some fans, mostly fans of Jason David Frank, had a particular loathing for this season and of Ryan Steele in particular, who declared him an inferior copy. Frank and Brad Hawkins often banter that the latter always seems to follow the former. Indeed, the *Cybertron* pilot Frank filmed for Saban in 1993 was the forerunner for VR Troopers starring Hawkins and Hawkins replaced Frank as the red ranger, but it was always a lighthearted "rivalry" if one could call it that. Despite fan gripes over the departures of one of its most beloved characters and lacklustre villain in Divatox, Turbo offered a compelling, if not dark, storyline with suspense and compelling characters. With ratings and expectations high, the franchise would fly higher than ever before.

*-from the blog "The Musing Platypus" by B. Ronning, March 29, 2012*

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*"Konami continues its domination of 1999 with not one, but two great new games. Metal Gear Solid alone would have been enough to make it a great year for the company. Now, it seems, they're just piling on."*

-from the editorial of the July 1999 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"After all the drama associated with our work on Tale Lemuria, I was glad to get to work on a Lunar game again."*

-Victor Ireland, in a December 2002 interview with RPGamer.net

*"Ah, X: Tactics, the forgotten Argonautverse game. Then again, X is probably the forgotten Argonautverse series."*

-Noah "Spoony One" Antweiler, discussing *X: Tactics* in his Argonaut Retrospective, posted on November 6, 2014

*"And when the darkness draws near, never fear, I am always here..."*

-Luna, *Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete*, from the third song she sings in the game after *Wings* and *Winds Nocturne*

*"Games are telling real stories now. I caught a bit of footage from the recent E3 expo and was quite blown away by the kinds of narratives being offered up. NYPD: Narcotics Squad could easily be a true crime thriller, and Silent Hill is right up there with some of the most disturbing stuff I've done. Would I ever write a video game? Never say never, I suppose."*

-Stephen King, in an interview in the June 4, 1999 issue of *Entertainment Weekly*

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*Ultra Nintendo:*

### **Gauntlet Legends**

EGM: 8.8 (quote: "A tremendously fun port with outstanding graphics makes this one of the best four player RPGs ever.")

Gamespot: 7.4 (quote: "Even the mighty Ultra Nintendo can't quite replicate the amazing arcade graphics, but it's still a pretty fun, if pretty basic game.")

### **Gex 3: The Gecko Who Loved Me**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "The spy jokes get pretty old pretty fast, though the platforming is pretty solid.")

Gamespot: 7.1 (quote: "Amusing, if unimaginative fun.")

### **Jurassic Park: Awakening**

EGM: 6.2 (quote: "I was hoping this game would tell a story that the movies haven't told twice. I was very disappointed.")

Gamespot: 4.2 (quote: "One of the most disappointing games of the year. Clunky controls and an awful storyline make this game one to avoid.")

### **Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete**

EGM: 9.5 (quote: "The perfect version of the archetypical RPG.")

Gamespot: 8.3 (quote: "The graphics are quite low-tech but this is an excellent adventure.")

## **Mario Golf**

EGM: 8.3 (quote: "There's plenty to do in this fun golf game.")

Gamespot: 8.1 (quote: "With lots of different modes, you'll be hitting the links over and over again.")

## **Superman: Luthor's Revenge**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "It's not the perfect superhero game, but it's definitely worth a play for comic book fans.")

Gamespot: 7.8 (quote: "The combat could use a lot of work, but flying around the city is a thrill.")

## **The Simpsons: Alien Attack!**

EGM: 5.0 (quote: "Only diehard Simpsons fans need apply. Everyone else, stay away.")

Gamespot: 5.8 (quote: "A few funny jokes does not a funny game make.")

## **Ultra Bust-A-Move**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "A fairly fun, if fairly plain puzzler.")

Gamespot: 8.5 (quote: "I absolutely couldn't get enough of the multiplayer mode!")

## **Warcraft**

EGM: 7.3 (quote: "Probably the best version of this RTS classic, but it's still a fairly plain game.")

Gamespot: 7.4 (quote: "After you play through the main campaign, there's not much reason to go back and play more.")

**Worms Armageddon** (reviewed for both Ultra Nintendo and Saturn, simultaneous multiplatform launch)

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "A fantastic and fun game that becomes an all-time classic when played with friends.")

Gamespot: 8.6 (quote: "We liked the controls on the PC version a bit better, but make no mistake, this game is really fun on console as well.")

## **X: Tactics**

EGM: 6.8 (quote: "Apart from some later missions, the tank gameplay is really easy if you know what you're doing.")

Gamespot: 7.4 (quote: "A simplified combat system is going to be a flaw for some people, though as a tactical strategy title, this game isn't terrible.")

## **Outfoxed**

EGM: 8.8 (quote: "Creative levels and characters make this platformer a cut above many similar games.")

Gamespot: 8.6 (quote: "While we went into this expecting something we've played a lot before, the gameplay twists and humorous plot had us excited for this genre again.")

### **Candyworld**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "Kids will enjoy this cutesy platformer, there aren't any major flaws, it's just a really kiddy game.")

Gamespot: 5.6 (quote: "It really is the Candy Land of 3-D platformers, and not just because it's full of candy gumdrops and peppermint lollipops.")

### **Bill's Escape**

EGM: N/A (too obscure to review)

Gamespot: 1.4 (quote: "An abysmal, atrocious, glitchy mess of a platformer that'll make you hope Bill never escapes.")

### **Hakendo** (reviewed for both Ultra Nintendo and Saturn, simultaneous multiplatform launch)

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "While Konami's hit arcade fighter doesn't distinguish itself from the crowd in too many ways, it's still a really fun game.")

Gamespot: 9.0 (quote: "The huge cast of characters means that every player will have a favorite.")

### **Under The Earth**

EGM: 2.7 (quote: "Glitches aside, this rip-off of Doom is still pretty awful.")

Gamespot: 3.9 (quote: "Every time we started to almost enjoy this game, there was another glitch! What a shame.")

### **Explorers Of Badun**

EGM: N/A (too obscure to review)

Gamespot: 6.7 (quote: "A decent enough RPG, but it doesn't do enough to distinguish itself, and it's barely better than Ultra Adventurers.")

### **Campaign**

EGM: 8.7 (quote: "I loved how the game transformed as your army marches across the map. This RTS does a lot of things really well.")

Gamespot: 7.2 (quote: "While the menus and gameplay were somewhat confusing, the game does score some points for innovation.")

### **Invasion: 2031**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "There have been worse alien invasion RTSes, and the pace of this game makes it pretty fun.")

Gamespot: 6.6 (quote: "It's definitely enjoyable at times, though I would've liked to see a more original plot.")

### **Days Of War**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "One of the best storylines I've ever experienced in a game is marred by poor stealth gameplay, making certain sections frustrating.")

Gamespot: 6.2 (quote: "Not every stealth game can be Metal Gear Solid, but you'd think companies could learn a little something.")

*Saturn:*

### **Duke Nukem Forever**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "It doesn't run quite as well as the Ultra Nintendo version, but if you've gotta have Duke, it's a decent version.")

Gamespot: N/A (port)

### **Troublemakers 2**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "Another excellent action platformer by Treasure, this game hits all the right notes.")

Gamespot: 7.9 (quote: "The characters aren't always the best, but the throw and shake gameplay is still fun.")

### **Virtua Quest 2: Jacky & Sarah**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "Despite being two games in one, it's still a fairly short, if fairly fun, RPG.")

Gamespot: 8.1 (quote: "The excellent fighting gameplay is back, making the wait for this sequel well worth it.")

### **Antopolis**

EGM: 7.2 (quote: "I really wasn't expecting much from this platformer, but it surprised me.")

Gamespot: 6.4 (quote: "The game curbs a decent amount of its plot from A Bug's Life (probably a coincidence though), but the gameplay's solid, if uninspiring.")

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As Working Designs was severing ties with Sega in late 1995, Game Arts was preparing to remake their classic Sega CD role-playing game *Lunar: The Silver Star*. The game had been one of the most famous and acclaimed games from the ill-fated peripheral, and the company felt that a remake of the game for one of the next-generation systems would give it the exposure it needed. The company originally set out to remake the game as a Sega Saturn title, but upon getting a glimpse at the specs for Nintendo's new Ultra hardware, decided to instead remake the game from the ground up as an Ultra Nintendo game. This was also around the time that the company had begun work on *Starseekers of Exion* for the Super Nintendo CD. Game Arts decided to focus on *Exion* first, and applied the lessons they learned from the making of that game toward the remake of *The Silver Star*. Game Arts created more than two hours of anime cutscenes for the *Lunar* remake, necessitating two discs for what was otherwise a fairly low-tech title, with 2-D graphics that could have been right at home on a late-generation SNES-CD game. Rendered 3-D backgrounds were created for certain areas of the game, giving it a mix of 2-D and 3-D graphics that worked

perfectly together and gave the game a sort of CGI anime feel. Entire plotlines were altered, with characters' personalities fleshed out by the addition of more dialogue and through the game's extensive cutscenes. The game's villain Ghaleon was given two additional lieutenants: Phacia and Royce, both of whom would fight the player late in the game, and both of whom would survive to be redeemed by the heroes. Ghaleon's lieutenant Xenobia, from the original *Lunar: The Silver Star*, was too far gone to be redeemed (as she had a deep love for Ghaleon and would not betray him) and fell by the heroes' efforts. The game also alluded to the previous quest undertaken by the previous four heroes, Dyne, Ghaleon, Lemia, and Mel, and introduced the villain Eiphel. Not only did this material flesh out the backstory of the original *Lunar* game, it also laid the groundwork for a potential new title in the series.

The game was released in Japan in August 1998 and achieved significant sales success, and by then, Working Designs was already hard at work on the North American localization. After the release of *Tale Lemuria*, which received criticism for Working Designs' localization (particularly the voice acting), the company looked to redeem itself with *Silver Star Story Complete*, and in the eyes of most who bought the game, the company succeeded. The game's original run was packaged with extra content, including a soundtrack CD and a making-of documentary disc, a hardcover instruction booklet, a cloth map, and a few other trinkets that made the game's collector's edition a sought-after prize for RPG fans. The game was enthusiastically received, with excellent reviews in most publications (most of the criticism was leveled at the graphics, but even those received praise from other outlets), and sales exceeding 450,000 in North America by the end of 1999, making it one of the best selling RPGs of the year and one of the biggest selling new releases of the month.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

*“But Nintendo wasn't about to let the mad genius slip through their fingers like Sega had done. When Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete neared its release date, they rolled out the red carpet for Mr. Ireland's game. It made the cover of that month's Nintendo Power, in lieu of games like Konami's hyped platformer Outfoxed and Nintendo's own Mario Golf and X: Tactics (not exactly Nintendo's A-team, but first-party releases nonetheless). The negative reaction to Tale Lemuria's dub wasn't Working Designs' fault. The gaming landscape had changed, and expectations for games had changed with it. Nintendo would let Working Designs go back to doing what they'd always done best: localizing obscure games and making them look really good. As for Tale Illumina, nearing completion in Japan, Telenet Japan was already scouting Los Angeles-area voice artists for the localization. Lemuria would be the last Tale game that Working Designs would work on, but that was all right with Victor Ireland. He was already looking toward the future, and a chance to bring over the game he'd always wanted to do: Lunar 2: Eternal Blue.”*

-excerpted from *The Chase: Sega's 20-Year Struggle To Take Down A Giant*

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### **Get Into Trouble Again!**

*Treasure's newest game, Troublemakers 2, is the sequel to 1997's hit platformer about a girl named Marina Liteyears who must protect her creator Theo as they explore a mysterious new solar system together. Filled with new enemies and new friends alike, it's a bigger, badder, and much more mischievous adventure!*

(...)

*In addition to many of your favorites from the original game, Troublemakers 2 is full of brand new characters, some good and some bad! Here's a quick rundown:*

**Obsidia:** This mysterious woman in black has called Marina to her planet in the hopes of repelling an enemy invasion, but the truth is that she is the mysterious invader and is luring Marina into a trap in order to destroy her!

**Spur:** A brave knight of Loka, the first planet Marina visits during her adventure. He's been doing his best to hold Obsidia and her armies at bay, but he's at the end of his rope by the time Marina arrives.

**Pirouette:** An assassin working for Obsidia, Pirouette's skillful moves have Marina seeing stars, but she has a painful secret and a reason why she's decided to sell her skills to the highest bidder...

**Briqar:** A space pirate captain who literally flies a giant sailing space pirate ship, Briqar pillages and loots for whoever is paying him, and Obsidia is paying him handsomely. By the time Marina arrives, he has complete control over the planet Ruminstar.

**Shimsham:** A whip-wielding warrior whose reign of terror over the planet Vortex seems unending, it's up to Marina to put an end to him.

**Descenta:** A megalomaniacal weapons dealer, Descenta is forcing the inhabitants of the planet Malachor to construct a massive army for Obsidia.

**Exscalla:** A knight clad in white, Exscalla is a noble warrior but also a very dangerous one, and has a fierce rivalry with Merco.

**Daisy:** A young girl scrubbing the decks on Briqar's ship, Marina will help her numerous times over the course of the story.

**Dr. Shana:** A beautiful scientist working under Obsidia, Shana is being held prisoner and bonds with Theo after Obsidia's armies take him captive.

**Grissol:** A despairing animal trainer who's watched countless species go extinct during Obsidia's invasion, he seeks out the few remaining beasts to train and protect.

(...)

*Marina will explore many worlds over the course of the game, seven in all! Here's a brief primer on each of them:*

**Loka:** A simple planet ruled by a mighty king and his brave knights, the planet has been quickly overrun and decimated by Obsidia's forces.

**Ruminstar:** Once a beautiful ocean world, the pirate king Briqar has transformed it into a hostile and fearful planet.

Vortex: A planet where massive warp zones can open at any moment, Shimsham's mastery of these warps has allowed him easy control over its people.

Appolcore: A beautiful world covered in fruit and plant life, the breadbasket of the solar system under siege from some of Obsidia's toughest troops.

Malachor: Once a place where the system's great tools and gadgets were built, it's now an oppressive factory world whose people are enslaved to build weapons and war machines.

Valiant: A world of grand adventure, Valiant is now ruled with an iron fist by Exscalla and his army.

Obscura: The capital world of the system, now lorded over by Obsidia herself. Only the bravest heroes should come here.

(...)

So while *Troublemakers 2* doesn't build very much off of the original game in terms of basic gameplay, it's a massive step forward in level design, and the boss fights (of which this game has many) are incredible and challenging. The musical score is one of the best yet heard in a Saturn game, and beats any of Treasure's prior offers, including, dare we say it, *Gunstar Heroes*. This game has brave heroes, wicked villains, and more than one character who straddles the line. Plus, for those who have to have collectibles to collect, each of this game's 68 levels has a gold gem, which you'll be needing to collect to see the game's entire ending. In short, *Troublemakers 2* beats the original in every way, and you'll be shake-shake-shaking your head at some of the amazing moments this game delivers.

Score: 9/10

-excerpted from an article in the June 1999 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine* detailing *Troublemakers 2*

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\*A big, tough looking hunter walks into a nature preserve with an oversized shotgun. He begins pointing it at the animals and firing, the shotgun fires out nets that trap the animals as laughs. Finally, he reaches the area of the nature preserve where the foxes are located, but nothing's there.\*

Hunter: Eh?

\*from up above, a fox tail comes down, slapping the back of his head.\*

Hunter: Hey!

Voice: Over here!

Hunter: \*turns around, only to get slapped in the face\* Why you...!!! \*randomly fires his net in all directions, only to see the fox standing right in front of him\* Gotcha... \*fires the net at the fox, who leaps out of the way, the net hits a trampoline that was leaning against

a tree behind the fox, it bounces back and hits the hunter, who ends up on the ground, trapped in his own net\* Aaaaargh!

\*The fox laughs and scampers off into the woods. The narrator begins talking as scenes from the game play on the screen.\*

Narrator: From the makers of *Metal Gear Solid* and *Castlevania*, it's *Outfoxed*. Free your friends and outwit the most dangerous hunter around. Explore big worlds, gather up the Orbs of Power, and wield killer weapons like the freeze ray and the Vacuumator. It's *Outfoxed*, and it's only on the Ultra Nintendo.

\*The hunter has freed himself, he stands up, only to see all the animals he caught stampeding toward him.\*

Hunter: \*screams\*

Fox: \*standing off to the side, laughing\*

\*the *Outfoxed* logo is shown\*

### ***Ultimate Fun***

-from the commercial for *Outfoxed*, which began airing in late May 1999

With 3-D platformers like *Super Mario Dimensions*, *The Dreamers*, and the *Commander Keen* series scoring tons of sales and rave reviews, Konami decided to jump into the game with its own new hero, and *Outfoxed* was born. Starring a wise-cracking anthropomorphic fox named Phil, the game was big on humor and even bigger on gameplay, with several features unique to platformers of the day. While the plot was largely similar to that of other platformers of the time, i.e. the "hero's girlfriend gets kidnapped, hero has to catch villain to save her" plot, the gameplay itself relied heavily on puzzle solving and creative exploration of the game's environments. Each of the game's levels was a sort of "duel" between Phil the fox and the game's villain, the Huntmaster, who'd captured a bunch of Phil's friends and was hiding them in cages in each individual level. Phil had a variety of moves and weapons at his disposal, but in order to properly "defeat" the Huntmaster in each level, Phil had certain goals to accomplish. With every magical orb Phil collected, a new path was opened or a new power was gained. You weren't required to collect all of the magical orbs. Indeed, you weren't required to collect ANY of them, though you'd have a tough time figuring out how to defeat the Huntmaster if you didn't. The goals in each level varied. Sometimes you'd have to defeat the Huntmaster in straight combat, but you'd need to set up a trap in order to do it. Sometimes, you'd have to gain access to your friend's cage by activating a series of detonations or devices. As the game went on, the methods for defeating the Huntmaster got more and more complex. Not every level had only one solution, either. In fact, getting the best ending (in which you actually got to see Phil and Lisa get married) required you to find every single "difficult" solution in the game, and some of them were incredibly difficult to pull off. As for the plot itself, while it was fairly standard, there was plenty of humor to keep the game fresh. Phil's friends included exotic animals like an ostrich, a rhinoceros, a lemur, etc., and as you freed more and more of them, they sometimes showed up to help Phil in their own special ways. The Huntmaster himself was quite funny. His reason for kidnapping Lisa was that he needed to claim her one-of-a-kind white tail to proclaim himself the world's greatest hunter, but keeping Lisa prisoner was harder than it seemed, as she'd

never fail to miss an opportunity to launch an insult his way. She was NEVER afraid of him, even when directly threatened with violence (in fact, that just seemed to make her biting remarks all the wittier), and seeing the Huntmaster make a complete fool of himself as Phil got closer and closer to his goal was a source of great hilarity for the player.

Konami spent a great deal of time and money hyping up *Outfoxed* throughout the first part of 1999. In contrast with the adult-oriented *Metal Gear Solid*, *Outfoxed* was a game for younger players, and if it succeeded, Konami would achieve four-quadrant success in 1999. Due to its unorthodox approach to platforming and its outstanding character humor, *Outfoxed* was a hit with critics, and a major hit in terms of sales, one of 1999's biggest platforming hits. It wasn't the runaway success *Metal Gear Solid* was, but few games that year were.

-from "1999: The Year Of Konami", an article on Gameflex.com

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### **Konami's Hakendo Scores A Knockout Blow**

Konami's arcade fighter *Hakendo*, one of the biggest arcade hits of 1998, is making a big splash on the Ultra Nintendo and Sega Saturn after its June 21st release. The game features 16 fighters battling it out in a fierce tournament for the Hakendo Cup, unaware that their powers are being funneled into the life force of the mighty Zakado, an ancient demi-god seeking full godhood by absorbing the skills of the world's greatest fighters. *Hakendo*, which received high praise for its 3-D visuals and its unique 7-button control scheme, made the leap to both main game consoles and was the top selling game of the week on both of them after its release, topping the Blockbuster rental charts as well. Many are calling it the best console fighting game since *Virtua Fighter 3* late last year.

Fighting games continue to remain among the most popular with players, and *Soul Calibur* is expected to be one of the year's biggest when it launches exclusively for the Saturn's Ring later this summer. As for the Saturn, *Hakendo* isn't the only fighting game to drop for the system... well, if you consider the RPG *Virtua Quest 2: Jacky & Sarah* a fighting game. The RPG was a mild hit with Saturn players this month. Though it didn't top the Ultra Nintendo's *Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete* in sales, the game did slightly better than expected in its first week of North American sales, and *Virtua Quest 3* is expected to be released here some time in 2000.

-excerpted from an article on Gamespot.com, posted on July 3, 1999

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(Authors' Note: The following information about *Virtua Quest 2* is entirely the work of our reader **Roger Redux**. Let him know what you think!)

### **Virtua Quest 2: Jacky & Sarah**

[Known in Japan as "Virtua Fighter RPG: Jacky & Sarah Bryant's Quest"]

All of the voice actors whose characters appear in this game reprise their roles.

This game is actually two different games in one, as the player has the option of playing from either Jacky or Sarah's POV.

The game also allows you to choose a control scheme: either moving with the d-pad while

controlling the camera with the analog stick, or vice-versa.

The game opens with an intro cinematic cutscene of the 1990 Indianapolis 500. The subtitle reads: "Indianapolis, Indiana, United States - Sunday, May 27, 1990" (The OTL date of the real Indy 500)

Just as Jacky "The Blue Flash" Bryant is about to take the lead, he seemingly loses control of his car; the wreck is spectacular and it's a minor miracle that he survived it, albeit with severe injuries.

All we actually hear is the commentator saying "Jacky Bryant is being pulled from the wreck, he's not moving..." \*fade to black\*, then the scene comes back with Sarah beside his bed in the hospital.

Sarah: "Hey, welcome back. Thought I'd lost you a couple of times. How do you feel?"

Jacky: (Looks confused for moment, then settles on a basically 'How do you think?' sort of look) \*beat\* "Mouth's dry."

\*Sarah holds a bottle of ice water so the straw is near his mouth\*

\*Jacky takes a drink\*

Jacky: "Mph...Cold. 'Little too cold....Sarah, I can barely feel my legs."

Sarah: "They said you might not. It'll pass...in time."

\*The music swells and transitions into the game's main title theme (an appropriately more subdued, soft orchestral version of the first game's "arcade techno-rock" theme) & splash screen\*

'Press Start Button'

-Character Select Screen-

'Jacky's Quest':

Prologue: This starts with a montage of cutscenes and QTE sequences that cover Jacky's rehabilitation (takes place from mid 1990 through late 1992) after the accident.

[The QTEs make use of rapid shoulder/trigger button sequences, d-pad/button combos, and analog stick movements. Some sequences will result in failure even if perfectly executed, to more accurately reflect the struggle of someone recovering from such severe injuries.]

{When the player actually gains control of him for the first time, he has the option of just rolling around the hospital (at break-neck speed) in the wheelchair for a bit (not that there are too many places to go; there are a few, but not many).}

Sarah refuses to believe that Jacky was responsible for the accident (the conclusion of the Racing League's investigation) and conducts her own, keeping Jacky informed of her findings before her calls and letters abruptly stop. \*A brief cutscene where we see Sarah walking into an ambush and being captured, followed by Jacky waking up as if from a bad dream.\* He's now all but fully recovered from his injuries, but his martial arts skills are a bit rusty from two years of rehab and his doctors have finally given him the go-ahead to start practicing again. The tutorial level proper begins with him dusting out his dojo and setting up his sparring dummies to practice with. [The controls will be deliberately sluggish at first to emphasize his being out of practice and not wanting to re-injure himself on his first day. The more you practice, the tighter the controls will get and the faster Jacky will move.]

Borrowing from Shenmue, Jacky's 'dojo' is a space that he rents above a shop in town (if you know Shenmue's map, then it would be roughly where the Slot House is on Dobuita's side street.) so you get some exercise walking from his apartment to his dojo. This also allows plenty of space for NPCs to stop him and ask for help; his first fight is one of these missions on the second game day (meaning before the controls have really had time to tighten much - this is intentional, it's meant to be a confidence builder).

{It's implied but never stated outright that he lives in New York, but the city itself looks more evocative of Station Square/Speed Highway from OTL's Sonic Adventure 1.}

On about the fourth day of week two game time (so roughly late October - mid November

1992) he receives a package: Sarah's notebook of her investigation, which reveals that she's on to a major lead, but doesn't quite trust the source; the last few entries becoming increasingly cryptic, jotted/half-scribbled references to "Arcana" and "Judgement", the final entry on the last page reads: "Not what they seem!" and contains sketches of an unusual symbol along with an envelope containing six tarot cards. Jacky calls her on the (very 90s looking) telephone, but she doesn't answer. He hasn't heard from her in a while, and he decides that the fact that she sent him her notebook means that she knew (or at least suspected) that her lead might be a trap, and that she must be in danger. The Prologue ends with Jacky packing some things and setting out to find Sarah... and maybe the people who tried to kill him as well.

Chapter 1: Desperately Seeking Sarah: As Jacky retraces the last few weeks of Sarah's investigation journal, he finds himself traveling not just the country, but the world. During his travels he stops to practice in some of the local dojos (a returning mechanic from the first game) and help random people deal with their problems, some of whom met and remember Sarah and can point you in the right direction.

{It turns out that Sarah isn't much of an artist (or she was in a big damn hurry when she scrawled the symbol) because it takes until nearly the end of the chapter for Jacky to recognize it as the nearly omnipresent J6 logo. The tarot cards themselves are revealed to represent: The XJX Corporation (Judgement - XX) Judgement itself, noone knows what XJX is supposed to stand for and fewer still even know of its existence beyond its J6 logo on nearly everything; DX3 Incorporated (Death - XIII) an advanced nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons manufacturer; 16 Towers Security (The Tower - XVI), a major alarm and surveillance system company; the X. LVNAR III Bank (Luna - The Moon - XVIII) a major international bank, which covertly funds all manner of scum and villainy; TAROX (The Wheel of Fortune - X, which has an inscription that can be read TARO) The Congress of Nations' (VF/VQ 'verse's U.N.O.) Time And Resource Office X (signifying worldwide jurisdiction); and Xavier D. & Viceroy Arms and Robotics Company (The Devil - XV) they make conventional weapons and created the Dural Project.}

The chapter ends with Jacky (finally) noticing that he's being followed, a boss fight against the J6 thugs/ninjas, and them giving him an invitation to the Tournament. At first he refuses, but relents when they promise that he'll see his sister there.

Chapter 2: Everybody was Virtua Fighting: The (First) World Fighting Tournament as seen in VF1 and VQ1, but this time from the POV of Jacky Bryant. During this chapter he meets the rest of the Virtua Fighter cast, forming friendships with some of them. When he sees Sarah fight, he calls out to her but she seems not to hear him; when he does get her attention, she just glares at him, stunning him into silence.

Jacky does alright in the tournament (considering that he's not quite himself, and very worried about his sister) until J6 sends Sarah into the ring to fight him, then he chokes and Sarah wipes the floor with him. [This fight is different in that it's a QTE battle where you're fighting on 'autopilot' and the QTE commands are actually getting him to hold back, if you fail a command Jacky will use one of his special moves, fail too many and Jacky will K.O. Sarah resulting in failure - you'll have to do the fight over. He's trying to get through to her, not defeat her.] As Sarah is standing over him about to deliver a fatal blow, she hesitates, one of the J6 officials orders her to do it, and she refuses. The guards tranq her and drag her away, Jacky tries to go after her but they tranq him as well, he wakes up back in his room. After telling his new friends Akira, Pai, and Wolf about his sister, they promise to help in any way they can. The four stick around long enough to see the end of the Tournament, then leave.

Chapter 3: Walking the Earth: Most of this chapter is much like chapter 2 of VQ1, they're

going from place to place, training, helping people (some of whom recognize either Akira or Jacky from VQ1/earlier this game), and finding out as much as they can about J6. At the end of the chapter they find out about the Second Tournament.

Chapter 4: Round 2 - FIGHT!: This time even the fight against Sarah is a regular battle, albeit intercut with dialogue, and Jacky succeeds in getting her to break out of J6's control...only to discover that her memories have been completely erased.

Epilogue: As the friends say their goodbyes, everyone still promising to help however they can to help Sarah get her memory back, they agree to keep in touch and go their separate ways, with Jacky and Sarah going back home to ("New York?").

'Sarah's Quest':

Prologue: Refusing to believe that her brother Jacky was responsible for the accident, Sarah begins her own investigation into the matter. Sarah's prologue is her tutorial level {some people compare the feel of her controls to Lara Croft's}, and it's a bit more straight forward. She doesn't have her own dojo space, so she trains at her neighborhood gym.

[During the course of her investigation she helps some NPCs with some problems, these are the NPCs that remembered her in Jacky's Quest.]

Chapter 1: Prepare to be Judged: The investigation takes a bizarre turn when she stumbles onto a conspiracy theory about how a number of major corporations are secretly linked, and are plotting to take control of the whole world (Of Course!). Even more bizarre are all the tarot card references that she's finding in connection to so-called Judgment 6. Her actual reasoning for sending Jacky her notebook was that she didn't want J6 realizing how many clues they'd actually left behind, and covering their tracks better next time.

Chapter 2: Live or Die, Make Your Choice: Sarah wakes up in a secret J6 facility, they congratulate her intelligence and strength, and offer her a place at the head of their private army...all she has to do is kill her brother. She tries to bargain her service for Jacky's life, but they refuse, saying they thought she'd say as much and they'll just have to do this "the hard way".

[The player will actually experience the brainwashing presented as a quest through a series of flashbacks/hallucinations as a series of fights, QTEs, and cutscenes that gradually take a darker turn (and which the player is not being made entirely aware whether or not they're real, going back and forth between the real and false versions of events), to make you (Sarah) really hate Jacky and want to fulfill your (her) mission to take him down.]{These are in fact false memories that gradually overwrite her true memories, making her believe that her brother was always abusive and that she finally has a chance to rid herself of him.} The chapter ends with her version of The Tournament, in the fight against Jacky she is fighting on 'autopilot' and the player is trying to score combos to prevent her attacks from landing (fighting the program to regain control so-to-speak).

Chapter 3: Resistance is (Not) Futile: After she fails to kill her brother in the Tournament, Sarah's "training" is redoubled [another hallucination quest (though this time the player is pretty aware of what's happening, but - like Sarah herself - they're pretty powerless to stop it)]. She fights the brainwashing as hard as she can, and ultimately J6 decides to wipe her memory entirely, and just program her to kill Jacky. The chapter ends with the Second Tournament and Sarah's rescue; the battle against Jacky is a normal fight, with QTE commands whenever he speaks, these allow him to break through enough for her to fight off the conditioning.

Epilogue: Sarah is free of J6's mind control, thanks to someone who claims to be her brother and his three friends, who she vaguely recalls fighting. They seem nice and her "brother" seems genuinely concerned for her; hopefully she'll remember someday. {The bittersweet ending of her being rescued by her brother and his new friends, at the cost of all her memories probably has more impact at the end Sarah's Quest than at the end of Jacky's Quest, for the players having gone through the experience with her.}

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*Which RTS is better? The Ultra Nintendo update of a beloved PC classic, or the brand new RTS based on realistic warfare? We'll weigh these two games and tell you which one we think is best.*

**Warcraft** is a classic for sure, and the Ultra Nintendo updates are welcome. The game even dips into a bit of the material from *Warcraft II*, though the game is largely just an enhanced remake of the original *Warcraft*. The game itself was originally praised for being highly innovative in terms of the variety of missions you could complete over the course of the game. It wasn't just about destroying your foe, plenty of other mission types were included, requiring the player to learn many different skills to succeed. It's a good game, though it falls short of being an excellent one, even with the enhancements afforded by the Ultra Nintendo. It's not the borderline-revolutionary game it was back when it was initially released, but it's still worthy of your time.

**Campaign** is, well, what the title implies. You select from one of ten different (fictional) countries and then conduct a campaign of world domination over the course of many battles. It's a fairly slow paced RTS with some clunky menu navigation, but the graphics are excellent and the procedurally generated individual units add a lot of variety and spice to battles. You'll need to plan carefully to win battles in this game, especially the latter part of it, and while it's definitely a deeper game than *Warcraft*, especially in terms of its battle strategy, it's also not quite as easy for a new player to jump in and enjoy. The soundtrack is also somewhat inferior, making the game a more "sterile" experience. There's a lot going for *Campaign*, especially if you're really into RTSes, but it's definitely not for everyone.

*Warcraft* isn't perfect. It's definitely been improved upon, both by its own sequel and by the excellent *Starcraft*, which we're looking forward to playing on the Ultra Nintendo later this year. But it's still a really fun game, and in our opinion, more fun than *Campaign* unless you're a certain kind of player. If you love navigating menus and micromanaging individual units, you'll get a lot out of *Campaign*. If you just want to see massive armies of orcs and humans smashing into each other, you'll probably enjoy *Warcraft* a lot more. *Warcraft* gets our vote for the best console RTS of the month.

-excerpted from an article posted on Gamespot.com on June 29, 1999

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\*As tanks are positioned on the screen, one of them is selected, and a battle begins, with three friendly tanks up against seven enemy tanks, marked on the battlefield by red arrows.\*

Spoony: \*imitating a gruff general voice\* Gentlemen, we're going into battle yet again. I

know most of ya are crappin' in your drawers right about now. I know most of ya are only here because you couldn't cut it in Squad Four. We're hungry and we're desperate. But these are the times that try men's souls.

\*On the screen, the player's tank makes its way toward one of the arrows, accompanied by the other two tanks, controlled by the AI. As the players' tanks move, three of the enemy tanks come up from the sides.\*

Spoony: We're outnumbered four to three. It's time to deploy the secret weapon.

\*On the screen, the player's tank is armed with a missile.\*

Spoony: \*breaking character for a moment\* In this game, you're pretty much required to go out of your way to find these weapons depots on the map, because if you don't find 'em, you won't have enough missiles to survive these fights. If you're outnumbered, and you don't have enough items to even things up, you're pretty well fucked. That, on top of it being a pain in the ass to actually get to the weapons depots, AND the fact that there are usually enemies waiting for you there, makes certain maps in this game a monumental pain in the ass to complete.

\*The missile blows up a pair of enemy tanks, while one of the other enemy tanks fires a shot into the side of one of the AI tanks, knocking out about half its health.\*

Spoony: \*returning to character\* Men, I long for the simpler days when we got a mission, dropped down to the planet, and kicked ass. We were truly a "super squadron" then, and, in the most critical of dawns, we achieved victory and had fun doing it. Now we have to do things like plan ahead, and position our tanks carefully, and \*one of the AI tanks blows up and he breaks character again\* and what the hell, that guy wasn't anywhere NEAR me! Guys, I'm just about done with this shit. See, this is what happens when companies try to add things to games that don't need them. Giant robots in *Final Fantasy*? That was damn awesome and a big reason why *Final Fantasy VIII* is the best *Final Fantasy* ever. Tactical RPG elements in a tank battling game? No! No! Bad Nintendo! It would be like if, in *Squad Four: Rebellion*, before you got to fight anybody, they made you play a dumb board game where you had to move Shad and Lane behind the guards, without dropping the soap in the showers. Because here, if you don't move your tanks the right way, you are just done for. Even if you can't see the fucking enemy tanks!

-from the January 18, 2010 episode of *The Spoony Experiment*, "X: Tactics"

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Brittany Saldita: *Outfoxed* was a really fun, clever little game that I enjoyed quite a lot.

Ted Crosley: Didn't have any problems with the damsel in distress?

Brittany: Well, I won't spoil anything, but I'm actually quite okay with this damsel.  
\*smirking\*

Ted: Yeah, this game goes quite a bit out of its way to be funny. Some of the jokes I thought were pretty dumb though. Like, it's Saturday morning cartoon humor, and not the

good Saturday morning cartoons.

Brittany: It can be a little childish at times but it's a kids' game. Look, *Outfoxed* does what a lot of platformers these days don't do, and that's challenge the player's mind. It lives up to its name.

Ted: Some of the traps you get to set, they reminded me of that old board game *Mouse Trap*. You remember, with the Rube Goldberg mouse catcher thing, it took forever to set up but it was so much fun?

Brittany: I never played it but the commercials looked really fun.

Ted: I played it all the time. I made my big brother set it up for me.

Brittany: See, big brothers are perfect for that, aren't they?

Ted: That and getting candy off the top shelf.

Brittany: \*giggles\* My oldest brother would put me on his shoulders to get candy.

Ted: \*laughs\* That's awesome teamwork! So yeah, I was pleased with *Outfoxed* but not blown away by it, I'll go ahead and give it a 4.

Brittany: And I'm giving it a 4.5 out of 5, it's quite a good game.

-excerpted from the June 8, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Alex Stansfield: *Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete* is old-school RPG gaming at its finest, it's a ton of fun and if you're like most people who didn't get a chance to play it the first time around, you'll definitely want to give it a try now.

Gary Westhouse: Well, how many people owned a Sega CD?

Alex: I did.

Gary: How many people who don't play video games for a living?

Alex: Good point.

Gary: *Lunar* is a solid game, I thought it was too simple. There's excellent music and a lot of old-school dungeon crawling, having bosses scale with your party's level is a stroke of genius, but when it comes right down to it, this IS a 1993 RPG with a fresh coat of paint.

Alex: It's a REALLY fresh coat of paint though, and a really good color. I'm giving it a 5 out of 5.

Gary: I just can't give a 5 to an unambiguously last-gen RPG. I love the classics, but they could've done more to spice this up for the current generation. I'm giving it a 4.

-excerpted from the June 15, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Lyssa Fielding: I can't get over how much fun it is just to fly around the city in this game!

\*Superman is seen flying around Metropolis\*

Ted: If only it was as much fun once you land. Look, this is a solid comic book game, but *Superman: Luthor's Revenge* is by no means a great game. The combat is only mediocre, the levels are uninspired, and Luthor's revenge consists of kidnapping Lois Lane and sending all of Superman's old enemies after him. Comic books have been amazing as of late, couldn't they have come up with a better plot for a *Superman* game than that?

Lyssa: Right, all that Metropolis and so little creativity! And then there's Flight Challenge mode, which consists of just flying through a bunch of rings over and over.

Ted: The time limits are insane on that and it's nothing more than a distraction from the main game.

Lyssa: And I don't know why, when there's the option of flying around Metropolis at your leisure in the main game, why you'd do a mode where you're forced to fly through a bunch of rings in a strict time limit.

\*Superman is shown swooping down to save a woman from a burning building\*

Lyssa: I'll never get tired of finding random people to save! It's just like really being Superman!

Ted: I wish you could float down and just punch random people.

Lyssa: Superman would never do that!

Ted: But I would, if I was him, and this game is all about letting me be Superman!

Lyssa: You'd be the worst superhero ever! All you'd do is go around beating up people who didn't play the Sega Saturn.

\*A clip from one of the original Japanese Segata Sanshiro commercials plays\*

Ted: He is the BEST superhero ever.

Lyssa: Well, I give *Superman: Luthor's Revenge* a 3.5. It's really fun to be Superman, even if the game is just a typical Superman adventure.

Ted: I'm giving it a 2.5, it's mediocre in pretty much every single way and for a game that gives you so much freedom to fly around, it doesn't give you much freedom once you touch the ground.

(...)

Brittany: I'm gonna give *Days of War* a little bit of credit, because the plot is fantastic. But the game itself is too frustrating to really enjoy all that much.

Adrian Fry: I really gotta disagree. I thought, hear me out, I thought *Days of War* was a supremely impressive game. The stealth sections that you're saying are flawed, I didn't have much of a problem with.

Brittany: It's too easy to get caught and it's too random. When you're infiltrating a guy's headquarters to assassinate him, there are...I swear there are psychic enemies! You can sneak through a place perfectly but by the time you get up to the top floor, there will be guys all over you!

Adrian: Honestly, I just took those guys out.

Brittany: Really?

Adrian: Which sections are you talking about again?

Brittany: The Budapest level, particularly.

\*The game is shown on the screen. The protagonist has to assassinate three different ambassadors in a large palatial compound.\*

Brittany: I took out the first guy no problem. But with this second guy...

\*The protagonist heads toward the stairs, sneaking past or silently killing guards along the way and dragging their bodies away. As soon as he reaches the third floor, he's swarmed by guards.\*

Brittany: You do EVERYTHING right and sometimes the enemy still gets you.

Adrian: Okay, that was a bit of a frustrating section.

Brittany: And there's no trick to it, the game just sometimes decides to randomly spawn bad guys. It's not a glitch, it's just a total bit of arbitrary difficulty and the game's full of sections like that. The plot is amazing, it takes the familiar "cold hearted assassin" character and gives him a LOT of internal conflict, and those conflicts are meaningful. A lot of these games are starting to really flesh these characters out, but the gameplay's got to keep up, and in *Days of War* it really doesn't and I can't give this game more than a 3.

Adrian: I gave it a 4, I still feel like you're being a bit unfair with it but I can see why some parts would be frustrating. I think we can both agree, it's no *Metal Gear Solid*.

Brittany: Oh, not even close.

-excerpted from the June 22, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

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### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: June 1999**

1. Metal Gear Solid
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
3. Super Mario Dimensions
4. Final Fantasy VII
5. Ape Escape
6. Tomb Raider III
7. Parasite Eve
8. Gran Turismo
9. WCW Nitro
10. Crash Bandicoot 2

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: June 1999**

1. Hakendo
2. Sonic The Hedgehog 5
3. Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver
4. Virtua Fighter 3
5. Tomb Raider III
6. Troublemakers 2
7. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
8. Virtua Quest 2: Jacky & Sarah
9. Soul Calibur
10. Worms Armageddon

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### **Stephen King In Talks To Bring The Dark Tower To PC**

Famed author Stephen King will be assisting the company BioWare with developing at least one PC game based on his *Dark Tower* series of fantasy novels. The announcement was made yesterday by BioWare, and that the game will be an open-world RPG with survival horror elements. The company announced that the game would not directly follow the events of the novels and that King himself would write the basic story of the game, which is targeted for a 2001 release date.

-from an article on Gamespot.com, posted on June 21, 1999

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*“And we have more breaking news now from the scene of that horrific gas pipeline explosion that has heavily damaged parts of Bellingham, Washington this afternoon. So far we have 31 confirmed deaths in that explosion and what you're looking at right now, that is the tour bus belonging to the band Nirvana, and that bus seems to be flipped over onto its side by the force of the explosion. That bus was traveling just outside the city, on its way to a concert in Vancouver, and as you can see, ambulances around that bus and right now we have no idea what the condition of the band or anyone on that bus is, but you can see paramedics now crowded around that overturned bus right now.”*

-Wolf Blitzer, from a CNN breaking news report on June 22, 1999

*“And we now have an update for you on the status of the band Nirvana, whose tour bus was tipped over by the Bellingham pipeline explosion that has now claimed 42 lives and has injured more than a thousand people. The two people who are reported to be seriously injured in that crash are not members of the band, they are said to be with the band's equipment crew. All three members of Nirvana are reported to be in good condition, they were transported to the hospital as a precaution but all three band members are said to have only minor bruises and lacerations. Again, all three members of the band Nirvana are in good condition. That band, of course, their most recent album has been atop the charts now for three straight weeks, and they've been in the midst of their summer tour. Again, the band Nirvana has been reported to be all right after their bus was tipped over, but tragically 42 people have been killed and emergency officials say that number is expected to rise, as large parts of the city of Bellingham are said to be heavily damaged at this time.”*  
-Wolf Blitzer, from a CNN breaking news report on June 22, 1999

*“We will not forget the 91 people who lost their lives in this tragedy, nor will we forget those whose lives have been indelibly affected, who have lost limbs and homes and loved ones. We will remember those who have been killed and we will not let a tragedy like this happen again.”*  
-President Bill Clinton, at a memorial service for the victims of the Bellingham pipe explosion, June 26, 1999

NIRVANA SUSPENDS “WASTE OF TIME” TOUR TO PERFORM BENEFIT CONCERT FOR EXPLOSION VICTIMS  
-from an AP News headline, July 1, 1999

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*So light up the sky, see the fireworks fly  
Let the world see just how we dance  
Oh don't turn out the lights, no not even at night  
Share the secret of our romance*  
-from “Light It Up” by Santana and Selena, *Supernatural*

## **The Music Of 1999**

1999 is known as a turning point year for the music industry, setting the stage for the trends that would carry through most of the next decade, especially the first half of the 2000s.

1999 saw arguably the peak of the boy band/pop princess trend, though you could also argue that those trends didn't peak until 2000. Backstreet Boys, N'Sync, Britney Spears, and Christina Aguilera all had major hits that year, with the Backstreet Boys' *Millennium* album achieving the biggest debut week for any album up to that point. After a decade dominated more by R+B acts than traditional pop, pop made a comeback in a huge way, and songs like Britney Spears' “...Baby One More Time” catapulted artists into superstardom and sent tweens into a frenzy. These acts were bolstered by the radical ascendancy of MTV's *Total Request Live*, which passed *GameTV* early that year to become the network's highest rated show. Appearing on *TRL* meant that you had “arrived”, and anybody who was anybody in music that year sat down to talk with Carson Daly.

Of course, that's not to say that R+B and rap didn't have big years in 1999. The biggest R+B hit was Brandy and Monica's "The Boy Is Mine", from the soundtrack of the movie of the same name. When *The Boy Is Mine* debuted in theaters that year, it scored a \$30 million opening, which up to that point was a February record. The film went on to take \$140 million at the domestic box office, and the soundtrack, featuring songs by both Brandy and Monica, with additional songs by Mya and the up and coming band Destiny's Child, was the best selling film soundtrack since *The Bodyguard*. Meanwhile, the Notorious B.I.G. announced a partnership with Jay-Z, with the two set to release an album together early in 2000. The rap industry itself was in a time of flux. Hardcore gangster rappers like Tupac and Biggie dominated the scene, though their lyrics were becoming increasingly controversial, and it was hard for them to find audiences among suburban America. Meanwhile, rising stars like Puff Daddy, R. Kelly, and Usher were charting a milder path. Their songs still featured profanity-laced lyrics, but with a much less harsher sound. The R+B genre was becoming divided along an increasingly widening faultline, and it was a chasm that would ultimately prevent the genre from dominating the industry like it seemed that it would just a year or two before.

A growing chasm was also forming in the rock industry, which saw its biggest album of the year released when Nirvana dropped *Waste Of Time* in 1999. Featuring a somewhat more mainstream tone than the band's previous albums, the album divided longtime fans into two equally big camps: those who believed Nirvana had "sold out", and those who believed the album was the band's best work ever. Among mainstream music fans and critics, however, the album was a dynamite success, and became one of the best-selling albums of the year, with the song "Way No Way" finally giving Nirvana its first #1 hit. The band that had once thrust alternative rock into the spotlight was now at the center of the genre's mainstream, and they were going up against a rising tide of bands such as Limp Bizkit, Korn, and Slipknot that pushed the boundaries of mainstream rock with their "nu metal" sound. Joining *Waste Of Time* as one of the year's most acclaimed rock albums was *In The Shade*, Soundgarden's first album after the reformation of their band with Justin Chancellor playing bass. The album was nearly as acclaimed as *Waste of Time*, though it didn't achieve nearly the sales success. Growing in stature in the industry was a rising wave of "chick rockers", women and women-led groups that had their roots in the "riot grrrl" movement earlier in the decade and had risen to prominence through festivals such as Lilith Fair. Alison Pipitone's acclaimed *The Liltng Tree* was showered with accolades and would win Pipitone a Best New Artist Grammy in 2000, while the album itself was nominated for Album of the Year in what was considered one of the strongest fields ever.

But perhaps the biggest story of 1999 was the explosion in popularity of Latin music. Latin music had always been popular even from the beginning of rock and roll back in the 1950s, but in 1999, it was *everywhere*. Ricky Martin topped the charts for several weeks with his hit "Livin' La Vida Loca", Enrique Iglesias emerged onto the scene with his hit "Bailamos", but ultimately it was Carlos Santana who had the biggest success with his album *Supernatural*. It featured collaborations with many different musical artists, but most notably Selena, who shared three songs on the album with Santana. Two of them, "Corazon" and "Light It Up", became massive #1 hits for many weeks. In fact, four songs from *Supernatural* ("Corazon", "Smooth", "Light It Up", and "Maria Maria") topped the charts for at least eight weeks a piece, giving Santana nearly an entire year where he topped the Billboard singles charts between the four songs. The runaway success of Santana, and the meteoric success of Selena (as recently as 1995, her fame was mostly concentrated in Texas, as of the end of 1999 she was easily the biggest female superstar in modern music, bigger than Gloria Estefan had ever been and still rising) led to what is

known as the "Latin music boom", a trend that would come to dominate the music scene of the 2000s. By the middle of the decade, pretty much everybody had some Latin influence in their music, and that was largely thanks to the trend that culminated in 1999.

-excerpted from an article on "Pop Overview", a popular culture blog, posted on March 18, 2011

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*Batman Triumphant*, the fifth *Batman* theatrical film and the final in what is known as the "Burton/Schumacher Series", debuted in June 1999. In it, Val Kilmer, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Claire Danes reprised their roles as Batman, Robin, and Batgirl one last time as they did battle with a pair of dastardly villains: Joker's daughter Harleen Quinzelle (aka Harley Quinn, played by Madonna, who barely beat out *GameTV's* Lyssa Fielding for the role) and the Scarecrow (played by Brad Dourif). In *Batman Triumphant*, much of the action revolved around Arkham Asylum, where Dr. Jonathan Crane (who would later become the Scarecrow) served as director. Batman was investigating a string of strange murders, while having terrifying dreams involving past endeavors, most of them featuring The Joker (played by Jack Nicholson), but others involving Catwoman (played by Michelle Pfeiffer). Batman began consulting with Dr. Crane about the nightmares and looking into old asylum records, where he made a connection between the Joker and one of the psychiatrists at the asylum, Harleen Quinzelle. As Batman was investigating, Quinzelle was also learning about her father and coming to idolize him, while descending deeper and deeper into madness. One night at the asylum, Batman is doing some research when he is ambushed by Quinzelle, now going by Harley Quinn. Batgirl manages to save him from the surprise attack, but she herself is taken hostage by Quinn and given a wild ride through the city while Batman struggles to defeat the dozens of dangerous inmates that Quinn freed in her wake. Robin swoops in and manages to save Batgirl from Harley, though the villainess gets away. As Harley Quinn emulates her father's greatest crimes on a crime spree through Gotham, Batman's dreams of the Joker get more and more intense, forcing Robin and Batgirl to take on an increasing role in stopping Quinn's crimes. Eventually the truth is uncovered: Crane has been drugging Batman AND Quinn and numerous inmates in the asylum in order to test a new psychoactive drug that can be used as a weapon of mass destruction. Batman must conquer his own internal demons in order to bring a stop to Crane's plans. In the end, Batman, Robin, and Batgirl defeat Crane (who takes on the Scarecrow moniker toward the end of the film), Batman manages to save Harley Quinn from her father's fate (though Quinn is still locked up in Arkham until the drugs wear off completely), and Robin takes on the mantle of Nightwing.

*Batman Triumphant* is probably the least well received of the five Keaton/Kilmer films, though it has an overall 68% Fresh rating on Rotten Tomatoes and performed fairly well at the box office (\$66 million opening, \$185 million domestic take). Critics praised Madonna's performance as Harley Quinn, though they thought Scarecrow to be a fairly weak villain despite Dourif's effort. Still, *Batman Triumphant* is known as a fitting book-end to the 90s-era *Batman* films and remains a fun watch even today.

-excerpted from a *Batman Triumphant* review on a comic book movie blog, posted on October 17, 2010

Another summer of blockbusters is in the books, so let's take a look back at some of the notable films of the summer of 1999.

*Twister 2*, despite some controversy resulting from its debut just a few days after a devastating tornado outbreak in Oklahoma City (which mirrored events depicted in the film), scored big bucks at the box office with a \$75 million opening and a \$210 million domestic take. Critics weren't very kind to the film, but it did go to show that art imitates life, and when it does, the people flock to see it.

Critics were even less kind to Will Smith's *Wild Wild West*, which barely managed to limp to a total of \$100 million at the domestic box office. Filled with silly special effects and a boring plotline, the film will likely do little to hurt Will Smith's career, though I imagine he wishes he hadn't turned down *The Matrix* for it.

Disney's *Pirates of the Caribbean*, based on the popular Disney World ride and starring Ben Whishaw and Melanie Lynskey as two young residents of a port town overrun by vicious pirates, met Disney's expectations and became a moderate summer hit, plundering about \$160 million at the domestic box office. It was a much bigger hit overseas, its worldwide take of \$500 million should ensure that a sequel is made sometime in the next few years.

*Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* was a massive hit at the box office, taking in over \$200 million domestically after the previous film enjoyed a successful run on home video. The film, which sees Mike Myers returning as international superspy Austin Powers and his nemesis Dr. Evil, and Alicia Silverstone as Powers' love interest, the sexy Felicity Shagwell, was lauded as one of the funniest of the summer. Even the band Nirvana had a cameo (with Dr. Evil kidnapping them to perform at his son Scott's birthday in an ill-fated attempt to win his son's affections).

Sony's *Ballistic Limit* was a minor hit, becoming the second film based on a video game (after *Mortal Kombat*) to achieve some measure of box office success. Based on the hit series of games, the film saw Ash Beckland (played by Nicolas Cage) attempting to save the people of a space colony from an alien infection that had turned many of its residents into hideous mutants, and had also infected his fellow soldier and love interest Sara (played by Gina Gershon). The film's special effects and Cage's performance got some kudos from critics, and the film itself opened to a \$36 million dollar bow, on its way to a \$110 million domestic finish (topping *Wild Wild West*).

-excerpted from an article posted on BoxOfficeRush.com on September 7, 1999

### **1999: Animation's Best Year Ever?**

In a year that saw a number of hit animated films released, four in particular stand out: Disney's *Aida*, Pixar's *Toy Story 2*, Dreamworks' *Donny Quixote*, and Warner Brothers' *The Iron Giant*.

We'll start with *Aida*, created by Tim Rice and Elton John and based on the Giuseppe Verdi opera. The film, which tells the story of the Nubian princess Aida (voiced by Cree Summer) and her struggle to win her freedom after she is taken as a slave. The film is one of the darkest Disney films to date, though the ending, which sees Aida and her lover, the Egyptian captain Radames, rescued by Aida's new friend (and Radames' one-time fiance) Amneris before they would have succumbed from being entombed together, is a happy one (when Disney later adapted the film for the Broadway stage, they changed the ending to a much more somber one where the two lovers die together but are reborn in the modern

world). The film performed in line with films such as *Hercules* and *Mulan* at the box office, finishing with around \$120 million domestically, though it did achieve the best critical reception for an animated Disney feature since *The Lion King*.

Pixar's *Toy Story 2* was much more successful, bringing back Woody and Buzz Lightyear, along with all of their friends from the previous film including Rex, Hamm, and Mr. Potato Head. The film involved Woody being stolen by a greedy toy collector for part of a collection of Western toys he intends to sell. Woody meets the yodeling cowgirl doll Jessie (played by Mary Kay Bergman, initially Bergman was only to perform the yodeling for Jessie, but after Joan Cusack had to turn down the role due to other commitments, Tom Hanks convinced Pixar's casting directors not to search for another celebrity, that Bergman was an excellent actress and perfect for the part, it was Tom Hanks' support that Bergman would later cite in a 2009 autobiography as the thing that most pulled her back from the brink of wanting to commit suicide around the release of *Toy Story 2*). The film was an enormous box office smash and critical success, leading to a *Toy Story* animated series that began airing in 2001.

Dreamworks' *Donny Quixote* set the classic Cervantes story in the modern day, with Donny (voiced by Chris Farley, who was given the role after the shelving of *Shrek*), a man of many personal failures, seeking to right those wrongs by doing something great, something he constantly fails at until he catches the eye of the girl of his dreams, Dulce (voiced by popstar Selena). The film was only moderately well received by critics, though Farley's vocal performance was a high point and the film did manage to outgross *The Big Top*. And last but definitely not least, Warner Bros. Animation's *The Iron Giant*, which featured the story of a young boy named Hogarth, growing up in the 1950s amidst nuclear hysteria. After he meets a gigantic robot of extraterrestrial origins, he befriends it, but must keep it hidden from the government agents seeking to find it. *The Iron Giant* achieved overwhelming critical acclaim, even more than *Toy Story 2*, and became the first animated film since *Beauty and the Beast* to be nominated for Best Picture (though it would lose to *American Beauty*). It opened to only a modest \$16 million take, but as word of mouth spread, the film managed to gross \$125 million total at the domestic box office, outgrossing even Disney's mighty *Aida* and forcing everyone to take notice. Warner Bros. Animation had become a force in the cinematic world, and their next film, which would be released in 2001, was now hotly anticipated.

-excerpted from an article on animated films of 1999 that appeared on Toonzone.net, posted on March 3, 2014

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1999's television season was the beginning of a game show boom led by the runaway success of *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* Hosted by Regis Philbin, the show featured the highest stakes in game show history, with contestants answering 15 questions to win a million dollars. The show's popularity would lead to primetime quiz shows returning to CBS and NBC beginning in 2000, with *Super Jeopardy!* even making a return (Tournament of Champions winner and *How To Get On Jeopardy (And Win!)* author Michael Dupee would beat out the legendary Chuck Forrest and 1998 5-time champion Lucrezia Burrell in the finals to win the \$1,000,000 grand prize).

ABC's sci-fi block continued to be strong, with *Empyrean* and *High School Heroes* both gaining viewers in their sophomore seasons. Michael Madsen's *Shattered*, however, descended into cheesy and repetitive plotlines and took a massive dip. Still, the success of

the first two shows spelled the beginning of the end of NBC's Must See TV's dominance, with the decline of *Friends* (which fell in the rankings from #5 to #18, largely due to the introduction of several unpopular, younger characters to the cast in an attempt to retool the show) as a major reason why. NBC did have a bright spot in the rookie show *The West Wing*, which chronicled the trials and tribulations of the nation's president. It would become a ratings hit and a perennial awards show darling for the network. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* soared in popularity on the WB Network, which ultimately would prompt Fox to bring it onto the schedule for the 2000-01 season (creating an even larger ratings surge for the show). CBS' biggest new hit was the comedy *Mighty Megan* (starring Megan Mullally), which ultimately debuted at #6 in the ratings for the season, one of the biggest comedy debuts in recent memory outside of the Must See TV block.

-excerpted from an article on Zap2it.com on July 6, 2012

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### **Three New Nicktoons To Debut Over The Next Year**

The children's network Nickelodeon is set to get not one, not two, but three new Nicktoons beginning this fall. First up is the extreme-sports adventure show *Rocket Power*, revolving around a group of kids who participate in sports such as street hockey, skateboarding, and surfing. Developed by Klasky Csupo, the show is set to debut in the fall and is hoping to capitalize on the new extreme sports craze sweeping the nation. Next up is *Cat Diner*, about a down-on-his-luck anthropomorphic cat who starts his own diner, attracting a group of kooky regulars. Created by Joe Murray, whose previous work was on *Rocko's Modern Life*, the show is set to debut in January 2000 and is sure to feature plenty of Murray's typical offbeat humor. And finally, debuting in the summer of 2000 is the anime-inspired action show *Constant Payne*, developed by Micah Wright. The show features a family who battles the forces of evil, with the young and plucky schoolgirl Amanda Payne just starting to come into the trade.

-from an article on Yahoo! News, posted on July 14, 1999

### **SNICK Becomes SNICK House, Introduces New Lineup**

In the fall of 1999, SNICK is set to become SNICK House, a dynamic new block hosted by a succession of guest stars and featuring comical sketches and games between shows. SNICK House is set to debut with the following shows in its lineup:

8:00 PM: Rugrats

8:30 PM: The Amanda Show (a new variety show starring Amanda Bynes)

9:00 PM: Caitlin's Way

9:30 PM: All That

When the block debuts on October 16, the first guests are planned to be Ted Crosley and Lyssa Fielding from *GameTV*, and the two will be hosting a video game tournament played between the casts of *Caitlin's Way* and *All That*.

-from an article on NickelodeonUpdate.com, posted on September 21, 1999

“And not to be outdone by Nickelodeon's trio of upcoming Nicktoons, Cartoon Network is adding its own trio of originals to the mix. Rachael MacFarlane's *Star Girl: Middle School Superheroine*, John R. Dilworth's *Courage the Cowardly Dog*, and Charles Swenson's *Mike, Lu, and Og* will all make their debuts on the October 22 Cartoon Cartoons block. With the debut of *Star Girl*, Rachael and Seth MacFarlane will become the first brother-sister duo in television history to have shows featured on the same network at the same time (Seth MacFarlane's *Larry and Steve* has also been airing on the network).”

-from an article in TV Guide's 1999 Fall Preview, September 11, 1999

### **Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest To Leave Toonami In December 1999**

*The Real Adventures Of Jonny Quest*, one of the most venerable shows on Cartoon Network's Toonami block, is finally taking its leave after three highly successful seasons. It will be replaced by the show *Gundam Wing*, about a group of five young pilots who are trained to do battle in massive mechs called Gundams. *Gundam Wing* will debut on Monday, December 27.

-from an article on Toonzone.net, posted on November 14, 1999

### **Tamagotchi A Smash Hit For Fox Kids**

Hasbro's *Tamagotchi* animated series might just be the biggest hit since *Pokemon*, and it's been ratings gold for Fox Kids since its debut in July. It follows the adventures of young Kiro, who finds a mysterious egg in his backyard. When it hatches into a tiny creature who starts out as completely helpless, Kiro must balance the responsibility of raising the creature with the trials and tribulations of middle school life. Soon, thanks to Kiro's care, the creature begins to grow, but the boy soon becomes a target for extraterrestrial visitors wielding their own battle-hardened Tamagotchi creatures, which forces Kiro to train his own young Tamagotchi to fight if he wants to protect his friends, family, and home. The series does take some cues from *Pokemon*, but with a number of key differences. Unlike *Pokemon*, Tamagotchi depicts far more of Kiro's care for the creature, much like how one would raise a pet. However, once the creature grows up and gains intelligence and agency of its own, it becomes a friend and companion to the boy, creating a friendship that does mirror the one between Ash and Pikachu (though Kiro's Tamagotchi, who Kiro calls Tamo, actually talks in human speech). The show's success has spawned a run on the handheld digital creatures, and video games based on the property (including one that just came out for the Ultra Nintendo) are flying off the shelves as well. The series hits a few different notes from *Pokemon*, but it's seeing a similar level of success, and it's bringing the Fox Kids block back into prominence in a way that few recent shows have done.

-from an article on Toonzone.net, posted on November 29, 1999

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(Authors' Note: All credit to **Lavanya Six** for this excellent *Star Trek* contribution! Thanks again!)

*I remember some commercials for it because of that jingle, but I've never played it. Video games really aren't my thing.*

-Ronald D. Moore, AOL Message Board, (1999)

*Developed by Paramount Pictures, the film was the first not to be associated with producer Rick Berman after the underperformance of Generations and Rubicon. Jon Peters produced the film, with veteran Trek writer Michael Piller and husband-wife duo Rick Jaffa and Amanda Silver providing the script, titled Star Trek: A Tangled Web. The project was originally intended for release in December 1998. Filming was delayed thanks to Patrick Stewart's commitments to X-Men (1998) and ultimately cancelled due to the departure of Stewart, also an Associate Producer, over intractable creative conflicts with Peters.*  
-Undeveloped Star Trek projects, retrieved from the Memory Alpha wiki (2015)

"The station doesn't go anywhere."

-Common complaint about Star Trek: Deep Space Nine, Paramount focus group (OTL and ATL)

*A coming-of-age story set in a NYC college with no SF elements? Doesn't really seem like UPN fare, Keri Russell's bod or not. Unless they were trying to compete with the WB for the Dawson's Creek demographic.*

-*"The Greatest TV Pilots Never Picked Up?"*, a Rootalk thread (2011)

"Not doing another season [of TNG] when we had them under contract was a mistake, pure and simple. We blew all that money on two disappointments."

"You mean the movies, or the spin-offs?"

"Don't even get me going. First time's an honest mistake. We tried something new and it didn't stick. But those people are on a goddamn ship. It's what the viewers wanted. So why isn't anyone fucking watching anymore?"

"Rick—"

"Fuck him too. He said the cast could carry a film series, and look how that turned out. Now that Patrick's gone, we're handcuffed to a corpse."

"...Are we, really?"

-Alleged exchange in a Paramount bathroom, January 1999

All scores being relative to their series, 'Equinox' gets a seven out of ten. The idea is a good one, but the execution is haphazard. Chakotay is practically an extra in his own series finale. Janeway is quick to order the slower-traveling Equinox stripped for parts, and affronted at the idea that the ship's crew would have a problem with her orders. And why not? The Equinox crew should be glad that Janeway didn't institute mandatory organ donation for her killer cyborg program, especially since she can only recycle Harry's corpse so many times before Neelix steals the rotting parts for his latest stew.

However, a string of strong character scenes even the scales. The love triangle between Kes, B'Elanna, and Tom is resolved in unexpectedly moving fashion. The Doctor's conversation with his Equinox counterpart rises above its scripting thanks to David Livingston's direction and Robert Picardo's usual charm. Seven's babysitting of the Equinox children is dumb but provides some much needed comedic relief in a heavy episode.

And... that's it, really. Equinox is a makeshift finale built out of the scraps of another script, just like Voyager itself was being salvaged for parts to repair a listing franchise. For a series

that premiered as the flagship show of UPN, it was an ignominious fate. The ship and her crew had survived five years of Kazon, Borg, and Janeway's tender mercies — only to finally be sunk by TNG's underperformance at the box office. We'd leave our heroes overseeing the scuttling of the Equinox, speculating amongst themselves about how long it would take them to get home. One answer was no time at all. They were home, amongst themselves, more family than crew.

Another answer turned out to be a couple of months, for viewers at least.  
-extract from 'Equinox', a review by SFDebris, 2015

*Again, the new show's model is Have Gun — Will Travel, like how Gunsmoke influenced DS9. That's a western, not a swashbuckler.*

-Ronald D. Moore, AOL Message Board, 1999

### **Paramount Confirms "Star Trek: Nemesis", Announces Full Cast**

*After months of speculation, Paramount Pictures yesterday officially announced that the next Star Trek series will be called Star Trek: Nemesis. It will co-star Martin Sheen as Captain Alphonse 'Al' Drake with Keri Russell as Jennifer, his daughter and First Officer.*

*Newly appointed Star Trek producer J. J. Abrams, who co-created the series, had no shortage of praise for his lead. "Martin is a fabulous actor. He personifies the charm and intelligence that the role calls for, and it's an honor to work with him. I am also thrilled to be working on a TV series with Keri again."*

*Paramount's press release did not officially confirm the next series' setting, but this news makes it all but certain that the series will indeed be set aboard a 25th-Century Voyager manned by the mercenary descendants of the original crew. More information about the show's premise can be found in the casting sheet that was leaked to the internet two weeks ago, as well as the recent pilot script review.*

-Lead article on TrekToday.com (May 14, 1999) [based on [this](#)]

*Gene would NEVER have approved of space pirates!*

-comment on the TrekToday forum thread "Star Trek Nemesis: Tales of the Seven Seas?"

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Lyssa Fielding: Brittany can't stop blushing!

Nick Carter: \*laughing as Brittany scoots back on the couch\*

Brittany Saldita: I am *not* blushing!

Lyssa: Yes you are, you totally are! \*Brittany tries to reach over and cover up Lyssa's mouth but Lyssa easily keeps Brittany at arm's length\* She was listening to "Backstreet's Back" in her dressing room, I caught her!

Brittany: It was research!

A.J. MacLean: You know, I'm kinda flattered that you like us, cuz you're kinda my favorite on the show. You kick the guys' asses at them games.

Ted Crosley: Not all the time!

Brittany: \*still blushing\*

Kevin Richardson: Hey, I think we got time to play something after the interview.

Howie Dorough: \*laughing\* I think they're gonna beat us.

Nick: Nah, we're pretty good at the new *Doom* game. And *Goldeneye*, that's my thing.

Howie: Your little brother beats you at *Goldeneye*.

\*Ted, Alex, and Brittany all crack up laughing\*

A.J.: Aaron's really good. He's not like, Brittany good, but maybe Gary good?

Gary Westhouse: Hey! Not you guys too!

Lyssa: We'll play any game you guys wanna play.

Brittany: \*kind of leaning on A.J.\*

A.J.: \*puts his arm around Brittany\*

Lyssa: You're too old for him! \*laughing\*

Brittany: I'm 28!

Ted: So what game do you guys most like to kick back with on the tour bus?

Nick: *Goldeneye*.

Brian Littrell: *Madden*.

A.J.: Uh, probably *Zelda*, maybe? But we gotta take turns at that one.

Howie: I'm also partial to *Goldeneye*.

Kevin: I think I like *Goldeneye* too.

Ted: Nobody here likes Sega?

Brian: I think *Madden* is on Sega, right?

Nick: Yeah but the Ultra one is a lot better.

Brian: Yeah, true.

Alex Stansfield: The Ultra one is usually better.

Nick: It came out like two years later, right? The Ultra Nintendo?

A.J.: When's Sega's next thing coming out?

Ted: I was looking all over E3 for it. Nothing.

A.J.: Weird.

Lyssa: \*has been watching Brittany snuggle against A.J. for the past minute and is staring at them with a big grin\*

Brittany: Jealous?

Lyssa: Nope! \*hugs Nick tightly and smooches his cheek\*

Brittany: I think you're too old for him too.

Nick: I don't mind! \*laughs\*

-from the May 25, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

\*In the *GameTV Celebrity Deathmatch* triple threat championship match (following Ted having beaten Alex, Brittany having beaten Lyssa, and Gary having beaten Adrien), clay versions of Ted and Brittany are staggering around the ring, heavily bruised after having beaten the hell out of each other with various video game weapons\*

Johnny Gomez: And it looks like Brittany is about to move in for the kill!

Brittany: \*picks up a blue shell\* See you in hell, Ted! \*throws it at him\*

Ted: \*begins running around the ring as it follows him while taking shots at Brittany with the BFG\*

Nick Diamond: What is that that Brittany just threw, Johnny?

Johnny: That's the blue shell from *Ultra Mario Kart*, Nick! It seeks out whoever's in first place and blows them straight to hell!

Brittany: \*takes the BFG hits, losing various body parts but laughing\* By hurting me you're just putting yourself even farther ahead in first!

Ted: \*screaming as the blue shell chases him\* Oh (bleep)! \*he sees the shell hovering over him\* ...wait a minute! \*he takes out a chainsaw and cuts off his own leg\*  
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGH!

Brittany: I hope you're not planning to hop after me, because I- \*sees the blue shell hovering over her now\* I'm screwed. \*the shell hits her, blowing her into pieces that fly all over the ring\*

Ted: YES!

Nick: A brilliant move, Johnny!

Johnny: That's right, Nick, Ted's self-mutilation put him behind in the points, which made the shell turn on the one who deployed it!

Ted: \*starts to leave the ring, only for a badly-bloodied Gary to crawl back in\* Gary? You're still alive...?

Gary: That's right...Ted! \*pushes him away as he holds a bazooka\* You think you've seen the last of me?

Johnny: I sure thought I saw the last of Gary after he supposedly hanged himself after Ted forced him to play that godawful Osmond Brothers game!

Gary: Well, I only PRETENDED to hang myself so you'd thought I left the match! And now...\*loading up the bazooka with game cartridges\* Let's see how you like some bad games! \*shoots Ted\* Barney's Hide and Seek! \*shoots him again, badly caving Ted's face in\* Who Kidnapped Santa Claus? \*shoots Ted again, blowing his arm off\* Bebe's Kids!

Ted: Gary, wait! \*spitting out teeth\* Somebody's gotta review those games, to tell people how crappy they are!

Gary: You KNEW how crappy they were! \*points it at Ted's chest\* E.T.: The Extraterrestrial!

Ted: No, WAIT! Not that one!

\*Gary shoots Ted with the game, blasting a massive hole in his chest. Ted falls over, dead.\*

Gary: I WIN! FINALLY I WIN!

Mills Lane: \*holds up Gary's arm\* The winner!

Johnny: A stunning upset, Nick! Gary Westhouse wins the *GameTV* Celebrity Deathmatch Tournament!

Nick: That's great, Johnny! But...now that all the good hosts are dead, what are people gonna watch on this network?

Johnny: Well...us, of course.

Nick: Oh, right! \*laughing\*

Johnny: From all of us here at *Celebrity Deathmatch*, we wish you good fight, good night!

-from the *GameTV Celebrity Deathmatch* special, which aired on June 14, 1999

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In the 1999 NBA Playoffs, the Indiana Pacers, with their excellent nucleus of Reggie Miller,

Rik Smits, Steve Nash, and the two Davises, were hoping to repeat as NBA champions, while Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls were looking for revenge. When the Bulls grabbed the #2 seed and the Pacers took #3 in the East, Jordan would get his chance in a fierce Eastern Conference Semifinals series that went to seven games, and in the end, Michael Jordan would have his revenge when the Bulls spanked the Pacers, 110-85 in the deciding game. That would once again set up Jordan for a showdown with the Boston Celtics and Grant Hill, whom the Pacers had knocked off in the '98 Playoffs. This time, Grant Hill's Celtics would finally emerge victorious over Michael Jordan, punching their ticket to the NBA Finals at last.

Their opponents would be the Western Conference champions, who would emerge from a crowded field that included the excellent Golden State Warriors, led by rising star Kobe Bryant and perennial All-Star Mitch Richmond, David Robinson's consistent Spurs, Tim Duncan's rising Los Angeles Lakers, and the cagey Utah Jazz, led by Karl Malone and John Stockton. This time, the Jazz would have their day, emerging as the #3 seeds to fight off the Warriors in another tough best-of-7 series that would see the Jazz winning a close one on the Warriors' home floor.

This would set up a Finals match-up between Hill, Penny Hardway, and the Boston Celtics going up against Stockton, Malone, and the Jazz, and in the end, the Celtics won it in 5 games in a Finals that was more of a coronation for Grant Hill than a competitive series. Hill easily won Finals MVP with averages of 34.8 points, 10 rebounds, and 9 assists per game.

That year's free agency period was a big one, with Michael Jordan retiring and Scottie Pippen heading to Los Angeles to play with the Lakers. He would join big man Shaquille O'Neal, who'd demanded a trade from the troubled 31-51 Orlando Magic. The Lakers had to send several draft picks and a number of their key role players, but with a frontcourt nucleus of Tim Duncan, Shaquille O'Neal, and Scottie Pippen, they'd be instant championship contenders. In the NBA draft, the Philadelphia 76ers had the first pick, and used it to grab Duke's Elton Brand. An interesting trade occurred with the fifth pick, as the Toronto Raptors traded their veteran star Derrick Coleman to the Vancouver Grizzlies in order to grab prep star Jonathan Bender. Bender would hook up with Damon Stoudamire to complete a formidable pick-and-roll duo, while Coleman would form a fairly potent frontcourt duo with the Grizzlies' Raef LaFrentz (though the Raptors would end up as frequent foils to Grant Hill's Celtics in numerous playoff series to come).

-excerpted from a Bleacher Report article on the 1999 NBA season and offseason, posted on July 23, 2013

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*“While the Urza block might have stimulated interest in Magic: The Gathering, it very nearly led to the game's downfall after the Memory Jar card from the Urza's Legacy expansion dominated the tournament scene for nearly half a year before finally being banned in the summer of 1999. It was used in one of the most “broken” combos ever created, and use of the card was practically mandatory in the months that it spent on the tournament scene, as you would simply lose without it. Combo Winter and Combo Spring nearly destroyed the game forever, and Wizards spent the rest of 1999 picking up the pieces, starting with the severely weakened Mercadian Masques expansion. Many of MTG's top players fled the game, some joining the burgeoning Pokemon collectible card game scene, and others hopping on board with Sony's new collectible card game, Game Masters, starring characters*

*from Sony's various video games."*

-from an article on a *Magic: The Gathering* blog, posted on January 27, 2010

### **Sony: Master Of Card Games?**

Ever since hooking up with Nintendo to create the Super Nintendo CD peripheral, Sony has been a big player on the video game scene. Now the company is looking to get into the world of collectible card games, and they're banking on their own popular video game characters to do it. *Game Masters*, featuring characters from games like *Ballistic Limit*, *Tales of the Seven Seas*, and *Dog Dash*, has been one of the fastest growing collectible card games of the year, alongside Nintendo's hit *Pokemon* card game, based on the uber-popular video game franchise. Sony's CCG plays a bit differently from Nintendo's: you need two different decks to play, since heroic characters can only battle villains, and characters can serve either as primary characters or support characters, with different statistics based on what you choose as their role. After selecting two primary characters, you play support characters and items to support them, while deploying quests and treasures to keep your opponent's characters occupied. The first player to deplete their opponents' primary characters' life points wins, though the game is somewhat more complex than it sounds. Sony plans on releasing an additional expansion in December featuring characters from their new games *Emergency* and *The Longest Journey*, along with additional characters and items from their existing franchises.

-from an article in the August 1999 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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*"You know what, I don't really give a shit about Napster. If people wanna trade our music for free, who gives a fuck? I mean, it's gonna piss off some people when I say that. Probably some of my friends are gonna be pissed off, but who the hell cares?"*

-Kurt Cobain, in an October 19, 1999 interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine

*"Yes, yes, the Ultra Nintendo is Y2K-compliant! \*laughs\* We made very sure to prepare for the year 2000 when we were designing the system, so don't worry!"*

-Ken Kutaragi, whose quote about Y2K was posted in response to a *Nintendo Power* reader's concerns in an August 1999 letter

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### **June 29, 1999**

The anti-trust case was still churning its way through the courts, but that was currently the furthest thing from Bill Gates' mind as his eyes carefully scanned a document on his computer. Seated across from him was Steve Ballmer, who was waiting for a response from Gates.

"Well?" Ballmer was eager to hear what Gates thought of the team's results.

"It's good," said Gates, his eyes looking hard at the screen.

"Ed says it's damn good," said Ballmer, referring to Ed Fries, the head of Microsoft's game

development team.

“But that hasn't been good enough before,” Gates replied, leaning back in his chair.

“Well, the lawsuit's a no-go. Lawyers said back in February that Nintendo and Sony aren't doing anything remotely illegal. So if we're gonna go in on this, it's gotta be balls to the wall. It can't just be that thing, we gotta have the games.”

“We can leave that up to Ed,” said Gates. “But yeah...I mean... I think...”

Atari. 3DO. Bandai. Did Bill Gates think Microsoft would avoid joining them on the heap? His face didn't say.

“I think we're good. I think this 'Xbox' is good.”

“Marketing hates that name,” said Ballmer with a huff.

“Well,” said Gates, “let's hope that doesn't keep them from selling the hell out of this thing.”

Atari. 3DO. Bandai. And now Microsoft. The battle had once again been joined.

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After the smashing success of 1998's *X-Men*, the Marvel/Fox juggernaut (pun intended) was eager to return Marvel's first family to the silver screen. The Roger Corman version *Fantastic Four* enjoys a degree of infamy among the fanbase as a film meant to hold on to the film rights and up until the advent of the video sharing sites had been available exclusively through bootlegs. This time Fox wanted a big-budget blockbuster worthy of the name rather than a hastily pieced-together placeholder. As such, Fox brought *Home Alone* and *Mrs. Doubtfire* director Chris Columbus as both director and screenwriter. Fox auditioned several actors for the role of Reed Richards including A-List actors like Tom Hanks and Bill Pullman as well as science fiction veterans like Jonathan Frakes and John Wesley Shipp (Barry Allen/The Flash of the shorted lived television show.) Eventually, the casting directors chose George Clooney, whose biggest film credits at the time were *From Dusk Til Dawn* and *The Thin Red Line*, and believed he could carry the film. Shortly thereafter, the producers cast Christina Applegate and Neil Patrick Harris, both famous for their television work, as Susan and Johnny Storm. Rounding out the team for the role of Ben Grimm was Michael Chiklis, a big fan of the character that allegedly won the role because he was only actor who auditioned that would agree to wear the suit.

As for villains, it was obvious that Fox would use Doctor Doom as he was the team's most iconic adversary despite having first appeared in the fifth issue of the original comics series. This presented Columbus and the casting directors with a challenge; writers of the comic typically portrayed Doctor Doom as aristocratic, vain, and ruthless, but with his own code of honor. Ultimately, the role went to Gary Oldman whose own credentials with the Royal Shakespeare Company and history of portraying antagonists in films like *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, *the Fifth Element*, and *Air Force One* secured him the role. As for Doom's iconic armor, Columbus as Fox would turn to Stan Winston Studios to bring it to silver screen.

Gary Oldman would later remark how hellish it was to walk inside the armor while at the same time enjoyed playing the melodramatic, but equally threatening, Victor Von Doom. Many moviegoers compared the monarch of Latveria to Darth Vader because his movements and presence on screen, though comic fans were quick to point out that Doom was no subordinate like the feared Sith Lord.

However, after the success of *Independence Day*, the same film that humbled Superman in theatres three years prior, Fox wanted to throw in an alien invasion plot in the movie despite Columbus' own reservations. Thankfully the source material provided the perfect alien race to use; the Skrulls were the Fantastic Four's second oldest enemy and were shape-shifters that evoked secret invasion movies of decades past like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Warlord Morrat played by Oldman's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* co-star Tim Roth represented the Skrull threat as the commander of the Skrull forces who harbored ambitions to seize control of the Empire after conquering the strategically valuable Earth.

The film itself begins with Reed Richards and Ben Grimm in their days at Empire State University and Reed's attempts to befriend the arrogant and unsociable Victor Von Doom. He happens upon Victor's calculations for a machine that will allow him to communicate the "netherworld" and tries to warn him that his calculations are off, but Victor angrily rebukes him and casts him out. Victor later completes his machine, but it explodes when he activates and permanently scars him in the process. Blaming Reed for the mishap, a bandaged Victor Von Doom leaves Empire State University swearing revenge on Richards.

After the beginning credits, the story jumps twenty years later to Nick Fury of S.H.I.E.L.D. briefing Reed and Ben on unusual activity beyond lunar orbit. It is worth noting that David Hasselhoff received an uncredited cameo as Nick Fury, possibly a nod to the cancelled Nick Fury: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. telefilm for the FOX network that never materialized. S.H.I.E.L.D. believes it to be an extraterrestrial vessel and wants to use Richards' prototype as a scout ship to gather intelligence. Joining them would be Susan Storm, Richards' fiancé, as navigator and her brother Johnny as backup pilot. However, Richards and Grimm protest, as they had not yet tested the radiation shielding on the vessel. Johnny, much to Susan's chagrin, goads Ben to agreeing to the mission by calling him a coward.

While the launch is successful it occurs as solar activity is increasing and cosmic rays bombard their ship before they can even reach the moon. The irradiated vessel crashes back to Earth where the four discover that the accident gave them powers; Reed could stretch and reshape his body, Susan can turn invisible (and later create force fields,) Johnny becomes a "human torch," and Ben becomes the craggy and monstrous Thing. Most of the first act involves the four learning about their powers but also focuses on the rejection Ben receives from society and he ventures out from the military base and Reed's feelings of guilt over his condition. The first act ends with the arrival of an alien spacecraft at the United Nations where "Ambassador" Morrat of the Skrull Empire introduces himself to Earth's leaders with the regent of Latveria, Doctor Doom, to personally greet him. A terrorist attack and assassination attempt on Morrat mar the events until the Reed and his crew jump in to rescue the civilians. All the while, Doom watches silently with his arms haughtily crossed with his gaze on Reed Richards. One particularly poignant moment of this movie is where the Thing rushes in to save a girl when a falling construction crane threatens to crush her, but the girl is more terrified of him. Though the Thing suit Chiklis wore did not allow for much expression, the hurt in Grimm's eyes when he looked at his now four-digit hands was a testament to Chiklis' skill as an actor.

The "Fantastic Four" become instant celebrities in the wake of the attack, which Johnny relishes in while Reed, troubled by how an "anti-alien" terrorist cell knew of the Skrulls' arrival in advance, decides to investigate. Meanwhile, despite his newfound fame as the Thing, Ben still struggles with the fact that his appearance frightens people on the streets. Most avoid him, some jeer and mock him, and child throws a tomato at him, causing him to grow angry and bitter. The second act of Fantastic Four is incredibly compressed and often tries to do so much in fewer than two hours and time constraints forced Columbus to leave much crucial material, over a full hour, from the theatrical cut. In terms of character development, Ben takes the lion's share though Johnny gets a bit himself. The best way to describe him throughout the movie is wild and attention seeking as well as a womanizer (ironic, considering that NPH would reveal that he was gay a couple years later, which led to the infamous "flame on" Saturday Night Live sketch.) His obsession with publicity often brought him into conflict with Sue and his relentless pranks on Ben only created more tension within the team.

Meanwhile, the aftermath of the assassination attempt on Morrat creates more tension as he starts making demands on the world's governments to release the would-be assassin into his custody. Tim Roth channels the late Jonathan Harris's Doctor Smith in this role as a conniving (though cowardly when cornered) warlord. It is clear that he is in league with Doctor Doom, but he is almost painfully oblivious to the face Doom is playing him because his low opinions of human intelligence. He later declares war on Earth when Fury refuses to transfer the assassin. Reed also becomes to preoccupied by these developments that he forgets his promise to find a way restore Ben back to his human form, driving a wedge between them. Doom sees a potential rift to break apart the team before Richards uncovers the truth, that Morrat and Doom are in an alliance to subjugate the Earth, though one scene establishes that the two are using each other for that goal, Morrat being too arrogant to believe that a human could outsmart him. Doom uses a legion of Doombots to fight, subdue, and bring Ben to Castle Doom in Latveria where Doom presents him with an offer. He will change Ben back if he betrays Reed to him, leading to what many deem the defining character moment in the film.

Quote:

**DOOM**

So what is your answer Benjamin Grimm, will you choose your humanity, or your friend?

**THING**

You can take your offer an' cram it up your faceplate, Vicky. Ben Grimm will do many things but he'll never betray his friends.

**DOOM**

Very well. If you will not be my knight, then you will be my pawn!

Needless to say that Doom does not take no for an answer and brainwashes the Thing to do his bidding. Meanwhile, the 'Hoff makes one more appearance as Nick Fury to reveal that Morrat's "assassin" died and reverted to the green-skinned, reptilian form of a Skrull. Reed runs another test on the weapon to learn that it was Latverian in origin when the brainwashed Ben arrives at his and captures him after a brief scuffle. Susan arrives minutes later to discover that Reed is missing and learn that Ben flew the Fantasti-car to Latveria. She initially goes to Johnny for help but he is too absorbed in his own fame and thus refuses to help because "S.H.I.E.L.D. has it."

Sue finally gets her chance to shine in the third act where she gets to shine by infiltrating Castle

Doom to rescue her teammates. Johnny also gets scene where a blind woman he tries to flirt with on the street chastises him for not helping in fight and even goes as far to call him a coward. She comes across Doctor Doom who had frozen Reed and falls to the tried-but-true cliché of the villains monologue. Doom “invited” Morrat and the Skrulls to Earth so that they would eventually try to take the planet by force. However, he already mapped out the weaknesses of their war fleet and would strike at the opportune time so that the denizens of Earth would a) recognize them as their savior and b) accept him as ruler of Earth. Susan frees Reed but both of them run afoul of Ben and a brief fight ensue before the brainwashing wears off. Johnny joins the fray for the final confrontation with Doom. Through teamwork and Reed’s technical skills, they manage to goad Doom into revealing his plan for the Skrulls after Reed opens a line of communication to Morrat’s mothership.

Morrat does not take this betrayal lightly and begins his assault on Latveria itself. Once the Fantastic Four force Doctor Doom in the tactical retreat, they focus on Morrat’s flagship in a scene reminiscent of Independence Day and the Star Wars prequel of that year with the Human Torch melting down Skrull fighters and the Thing rampaging through the corridors of the Skrull mothership. Mr. Fantastic enacts Doom’s countermeasures and the team captures Morrat, ending the battle. The film ends with the team celebrating at the Baxter Building. Ben finally gains some acceptance as Reed proposes a toast in his honor. The girl who rebuked Johnny earlier in the film introduces herself as Alicia Masters and touches Ben’s face and tells him that he’s beautiful (much to Johnny’s shock and chagrin.) Before the two of them could kiss though, the team receives an alert: a giant creature from underground is attacking Midtown and so the four jump back in action. In keeping with the tradition set by *X-Men*, *Fantastic Four* contains a post-credits scene where an advisor to Skrull Emperor Dorrek VII (played by Ian McKellan) brings news of the fleet’s defeat at Earth. However, before the emperor can order a full-scale invasion, the planet itself begins to quake. A shadow falls shaped like Galactus’ helmet falls over the Skrull throneworld and the emperor and his advisor run to balcony to see a being of silver streak towards the capital.

*Fantastic Four* (at least in my opinion) was a better film than the first *X-Men*. Despite the compressed and crowded second act, almost every single character had chance to shine. Of the cast, critics and fans received Oldman’s melodramatic yet complex portrayal more favorably to Hauer’s one-dimensional Magneto, which helped propel the villain’s popularity to new heights where Doom himself became the face of the Fantastic Four in merchandising. Similarly, Michael Chiklis enjoyed a warm critical and fan reception, due in part to his own fandom of the character he played. Despite, getting top billing, audiences were lukewarm to George Clooney’s portrayal of Reed Richards. Critics said that his performance was adequate, but not as outstanding as Oldman and Chiklis. However, it was David Hasselhoff split fans down the middle with his portrayal of Nick Fury. Many fans saw it as something of a joke to see “the guy from Baywatch” play a grizzled badass in the vein of Snake Plisken or *Metal Gear Solid*’s Solid Snake. However, his performance was no worse than Clooney and did not bring down what was still a very solid film. It is interesting to note that Samuel L. Jackson did express interest in the role, but ultimately bowed out due to his commitment to Fox’s other sci-fi smash *The Phantom Menace* as Jedi Master Mace Windu. One could only imagine the possibilities (and profanity) of an eye patch-wearing Jackson as Nick Fury.

In any case, *Fantastic Four* was a victim of its own timing being released the same year as both DC/Warner Bros. *Batman Triumphant* and *Man of Tomorrow* to say nothing about *Star Wars*, *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged*, *Twister 2*, and *Pirates of the Caribbean* and thus grossed a respectable but not great \$166 million domestically. Fox/Marvel clearly lost this round of the Superhero Wars. However, ticket sales and mixed-to-positive reviews of the film were encouraging enough for Fox to green light a sequel for 2002. Curiously, Fox also dusted off the script for the *Nick Fury: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.* television film as a spin-off of *Fantastic Four* and ordered a pilot for a new television series starring Hasselhoff that aired in March 2000. Its ratings were not spectacular but enough for Fox green light a full season, though only six of the thirteen episodes aired (out of order as Fox was wont to do at the time) before the network cancelled it without much fanfare. The best way to describe the show is essentially a bizarre fusion of *Knight Rider* (except that the car flies, not talk) and Marvel lore that veers into “so bad it’s good” territory. Despite a slightly disappointing performance at the box office, Fox was determined to make Marvel’s first family succeed on the screen.

-*Tales From The Superhero Wars, sequentialhistory.net, July 29, 2010*

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(A shoutout to **Pyro** for his Sonic casting suggestion!)

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*“And maybe the biggest week in video game history kicks off on Monday, when the latest game in the hit Dog Dash series is released on the Ultra Nintendo. Then, one day later, it's Sonic the Hedgehog 5, the most anticipated game of the year for the Sega Saturn.”*

-from an update on CNN's technology news, July 16, 1999

*“Sonic 5 was the end of one era of Sonic games and the beginning of another, for better or for worse.”*

-excerpted from *The Chase: Sega's 20 Year Struggle To Take Down A Giant*

*“We were told simply to create the ultimate Sonic game... the same instructions we'd been given since we started working on Sonic 2!”*

-*Sonic the Hedgehog 5* director Yuji Naka, in an interview in the August 1999 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

*“Could we create a PC-quality RPG on a home console? Once the Ultra Nintendo was released, we found the answer to be yes. So Rise A Knight was a direct product of that power we had with the Ultra Nintendo.”*

-*Rise A Knight* lead programmer Martin Brenner, in a July 1999 interview with Gamespot.com

*“Mega Man Zero, it couldn't just be an update of the original series as X had been. We had to do something different, and seeing how beloved Super Metroid and Symphony of the Night were, making it an adventure game as opposed to an action game was a logical choice.”*

-Keiji Inafune, in an interview in the July 1999 issue of *Famitsu* magazine

*“Compared to Virtua Racing Reality? There is no comparison! F-Zero: Ultracharged is a masterpiece and literally better than VRR in every possible way, unless you have a problem with difficult games, in which case, practice more, newb.”*

-Sushi-X, in a roundtable discussion of July 1999's racing video games in the August 1999 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*“The Chaos Emeralds are mine, and no one will claim them! Not you, Sonic, and ESPECIALLY not some otherdimensional beast!”*

-Dr. Robotnik, *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*

*“Mewtwo? You captured a picture of Mewtwo, the most powerful Pokemon in existence? How incredible! I have no idea how you captured this shot, but it's amazing!”*

-Professor Oak, *Pokemon Safari*

*“I know Clark's gone, Woofle, it's just you and me now so let's finish this just like he would've wanted, okay boy?”*

-Selkie, *Dog Dash 3*

*“This is Sonic the Hedgehog. He's my best pal. He helps me feed my family!”*

-Tom Kalinske, joking around at a press event for *Sonic the Hedgehog 5* on July 20, 1999

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*Super Nintendo CD:*

### **Pokemon Super Adventure**

EGM: 7.8 (quote: “A fairly bare-bones variant of the original games, which is surprising considering the SNES-CD's abilities.”)

Gamespot: 7.4 (quote: “It's an adventure you can enjoy on your console, though we wish the content was more robust.”)

*Ultra Nintendo:*

### **Double Dragon: Four Fiends**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: “The four player mode is great fun at first, but the action of the game quickly gets repetitive.”)

Gamespot: 8.6 (quote: “A supremely fun beat-em-up with plenty to do.”)

### **F-Zero: Ultracharged**

EGM: 9.3 (quote: “A beautiful, challenging, engaging masterpiece of a racing game.”)

Gamespot: 8.9 (quote: “Painfully difficult but so rewarding to master.”)

### **Mega Man Zero**

EGM: 8.2 (quote: “Full of secrets and tricks, this game is different than typical Mega Man fare.”)

Gamespot: 8.5 (quote: "While some of the backtracking is monotonous, it's definitely a welcome change of pace for the series.")

### **NBA Showtime: NBA on NBC** (multiplatform release for Saturn)

EGM: 6.9 (quote: "Arcade perfect, but doesn't play as smooth as previous arcade-style basketball games.")

Gamespot: 6.4 (quote: "Some of the weird rules variants make this a step below games like NBA Hangtime.")

### **NHL Full Body Check** (multiplatform release for Saturn in August 1999)

EGM: 5.5 (quote: "Some spiffy graphics help, but the gameplay could definitely use some work.")

Gamespot: 7.9 (quote: "A really exciting arcade-style hockey experience.")

### **Pokemon Safari**

EGM: 8.7 (quote: "I wish all the Pokemon were in this game, but it's still a blast to snap 'em all.")

Gamespot: 8.0 (quote: "While it might've been nice to be able to explore freely instead of being stuck on rails, this is still a nifty game for Pokemaniacs everywhere.")

### **Race'n'Chase 2** (multiplatform release for Saturn)

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "There's more to do but it's still mostly more of the same.")

Gamespot: 4.0 (quote: "Hopelessly primitive graphics keep this controversial series stuck on neutral.")

### **Rayman 2: The Great Escape** (multiplatform release for Saturn in September 1999)

EGM: 8.8 (quote: "Rayman leaps into 3-D in this amazing adventure.")

Gamespot: 9.4 (quote: "This title is about as superb as an action game can be. It's platforming bliss.")

### **Ultra Command and Conquer**

EGM: 7.2 (quote: "A nifty upgrade of the first game, but if you've played the PC original, you're not missing much.")

Gamespot: 7.1 (quote: "The plot is changed up a bit to distinguish this game from the SNES-CD one, but it's largely still the same Command and Conquer.")

### **Ultra Micro Machines**

EGM: 5.5 (quote: "There's a good variety of cars, but for a racing game it's fairly basic.")

Gamespot: 7.3 (quote: "The graphics are a lot better than we would've expected.")

### **Dog Dash 3**

EGM: 9.2 (quote: "One of the year's best platformers, bar none.")

Gamespot: 9.0 (quote: "The series makes a largely flawless jump to 3-D with a surprisingly dramatic plot.")

### **Soulqueen 2: The Beyond**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "While the graphics leave a bit to be desired, this old-school shooter doesn't skip a beat when it comes to gameplay.")

Gamespot: 8.6 (quote: "Entertaining cutscenes and challenging but fun gameplay make this one of the best shooters on the Ultra Nintendo.")

### **Hacker Jack: Hack Attack!**

EGM: 4.8 (quote: "The graphics look really lousy, and the gameplay is mediocre at best.")

Gamespot: 3.2 (quote: "We had fun with the original game, but this is just a mess.")

### **Operation Zero 2** (multiplatform release for Saturn)

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "This game features fun stealth gameplay and an intriguing plot, but it is a bit short.")

Gamespot: 8.2 (quote: "A sneaky fun stealth title that tops the original in most aspects.")

### **Blinkin' Blocks**

EGM: 3.0 (quote: "This game is a clunky, frustrating mess.")

Gamespot: 2.7 (quote: "It's like trying to solve a Rubik's Cube while being beaten by a street gang. No thanks.")

### **Skater Street** (multiplatform release for Saturn)

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "Some of the racers are pretty funny but ultimately it's just a racing game on skateboards.")

Gamespot: 5.2 (quote: "Crummy graphics? No tricks? No thanks, we'll wait for Tony Hawk.")

### **Killsight**

EGM: 6.8 (quote: "If you're not willing to shell out for the exclusive sniper rifle accessory, don't bother. With the accessory, this does bring some arcade fun to the Ultra Nintendo.")

Gamespot: 6.1 (quote: "Why are the missions so short? We were left wanting more one time too many.")

### **Rise A Knight**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "This big open world makes becoming a knight really fun.")

Gamespot: 9.5 (quote: "Finally, a PC-style roleplaying game you can enjoy on your Ultra Nintendo. The Saturn had the excellent Ultima games and this tops them both.")

*Saturn:*

### **Sonic the Hedgehog 5**

EGM: 9.2 (quote: "Get the Ring for this game. It's fun on a barebones Saturn, but the Ring opens up a new world of adventure.")

Gamespot: 9.0 (quote: "While not as tightly structured as previous Sonic titles, it's still an amazingly fun game to play.")

### **Virtua Racing Reality**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "It's a gorgeous game, but a bit lacking in content compared to other racing hits.")

Gamespot: 7.3 (quote: "A graphical update of the original Virtua Racing, it doesn't necessarily take any major leaps forward.")

### **Tick and Tock Too**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "Cute and fun, this game will be a hit with families, but hardcore platform fans may want to look elsewhere.")

Gamespot: 8.3 (quote: "One of the most adorable and silly games I've had the pleasure of playing.")

### **Battleborn**

EGM: 9.5 (quote: "This game is filled with spectacular bosses and intense challenge.")

Gamespot: 8.4 (quote: "Some levels are a bit too short, but on the hole this is a fantastic on-rails adventure every bit as good as Squad Four: Eclipse on the SNES-CD.")

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### **F-Zero Ultracharged: The Basics**

*F-Zero Ultracharged* shares some similarities with its OTL counterpart, *F-Zero X*, but is in many ways different, owing to the somewhat increased focus on the game's individual characters. Unlike in OTL's game, which featured 30 vehicles, here, only 18 vehicles are selectable, but each is piloted by a racer with their own distinct personality, and Nintendo took pains to ensure that each car has its own distinct quirk in terms of driving style while also ensuring that no one car has an advantage over the others (though a few of them, particularly Captain Falcon's and Samurai Goroh's, are a bit easier to win with). There are 22 tracks in-game, which is less than were present in *F-Zero CD*, though there is also a stage creator mode and a circuit similar to *F-Zero X*'s X circuit. In this game, it's called Devil Circuit, and like in OTL's game, features procedurally generated tracks. Despite there only being 18 playable racers, races still feature 30 cars, with procedurally generated names and statistics to fill out the other 12 racers (cars can have better stats on higher difficulty levels). Among the 22 tracks are re-made versions of many of *F-Zero*'s original tracks, indeed 12 of the game's tracks are redone versions of tracks from previous games, including Mute City, Silence, Big Blue, Death Wind, Red Canyon, and Fire Field. The game features a single-player Grand Prix mode, a Time Trial mode, and a VS. Mode, though there isn't a Death Race equivalent mode as in *F-Zero X*. In Grand Prix mode, each of the game's eighteen racers has a very short motion-comic cutscene that plays before and after each circuit, telling the racer's story (all in all, the cutscenes range from 3-5 minutes total for each racer, with Captain Falcon and Samurai Goroh getting the longest ones). Events from *F-Zero: G-Force* are referenced, and events in *Ultracharged* would carry over to that game's

Ultra Nintendo sequel (which finally appears in 2001).

*F-Zero: Ultracharged* is a difficult game. Extremely difficult, one of the hardest racing games ever made, though it is highly praised for its quick framerate and excellent graphics (TTL's Ultra Nintendo is more than capable of producing great graphics while keeping the game at a high framerate, unlike OTL's *F-Zero X*). It gets excellent reviews and a fair amount of hype, and is a decent seller for Nintendo, though not anywhere near as big a hit as the recent *Mario* and *Zelda* games. With the larger number of more experienced gamers on the Ultra Nintendo as opposed to OTL's Nintendo 64, the game gets more sales in spite of its difficulty, and proves to be a fun, arcadey alternative to *Gran Turismo* (which is still selling like hotcakes, especially in Europe). It's compared extremely favorably to the much more bare-bones *Virtua Racing Reality*, which Sega would release just a week after *Ultracharged*'s July 5, 1999 release date.

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*Virtua Racing Reality* definitely delivers on its promise of being a next-generation racing title for Sega, and with the power of the Ring, the hit arcade game is replicated in all its glory here. Despite the presence of 16 fun tracks, however, the game is still somewhat plain compared to its competitors, especially given the limited collection of vehicles (only six). It's pure arcade racing fun, but those used to more realistic racing sims may become bored. Despite the game's flaws, it's really addictive, the music is great, and the racing action is hard to beat. It's a significant improvement over the first title, and we were addicted to *Virtua Racing* for a long time. *Virtua Racing* junkies will be hooked on this game for many months to come.

Score: 8/10

-excerpted from *Official Saturn Magazine*'s review of *Virtua Racing Reality* in the July 1999 issue

*"While Sega is loving the first sales numbers being reported for Sonic the Hedgehog 5 (which include the more than 400,000 preorders taken for the game), they've got to be a bit disappointed that Virtua Racing Reality has stumbled out of the gate a bit. Its opening week barely generated half as many sales as the opening week of Nintendo's F-Zero: Ultracharged, though the game was still the second best-selling new release last week after Pokemon Safari. Virtua Racing Reality was one of 1998's most profitable arcade titles, and Sega reported it to be the #4 most popular game at its arcade chain Sega Gameverse last year."*

-from an article posted on Gamespot.com on July 22, 1999

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*"So what do we call it, Metroidzerovania?"*

-from a post on the Gamefaqs.com message forum on December 10, 1999

*Mega Man Zero* was certainly different than the *Mega Man* games that came before it. In contrast with the *Mega Man* and *Mega Man X* series, *Zero* was a game that featured its protagonist exploring a huge, interconnected city that opened up gradually as the player collected power-ups and defeated certain boss enemies. As you explored through the game,

you got more and more bits and pieces of the story, which basically involved Zero going rogue in order to search for the pieces of his destroyed Maverick love interest Sclera (who sacrificed herself to stop Sigma's plans in *Mega Man X4*). As he searches, he stumbles upon a group of robotic freedom fighters who are somewhat like the Mavericks from the *Mega Man X* series, and must decide whether or not his allegiance to the humans (who are trying to stop him from finding the pieces of Sclera) is justified. The game plays out in 2-D, similar to the earlier *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*, though combat is a much bigger factor in this game, as is tight platform jumping. The game was one of the toughest Metroidvanias ever made (and the fact that the genre is called Metroidvania and not Metroidzerovania shows that this game isn't quite as well regarded as the two original pioneers of the genre), though people who played all the way through were rewarded with great boss fights and a really good story. The game sold well, and future *Zero* titles (which were released on about a biennial basis) would retain the formula. X's friend had certainly distinguished himself, and his games had branched off into a full-fledged spinoff series that continues to this day.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com, posted on February 17, 2010

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Lisa Foiles: Hello again, Lisa Foiles here and today I'd like to talk about a game that a lot of you people did not play. No, really! It only sold 18,000 copies in North America, and I have one! \*holds up the case for *Soulqueen 2*\* Today's Retro Minute is about *Soulqueen 2*! *Soulqueen 2* was a shooter. No, not the kind of shooter where you go around shooting people in the face. This was an old-school space shooter starring a badass green haired starfighter named Cleopatra.

\*A brief anime cutscene from the game showing Cleopatra jumping into her fighter and zooming off into space is shown\*

Lisa: It was the sequel to the first *Soulqueen* for the SNES-CD, another game that didn't really sell very well with only about 50,000 copies sold in North America, and most of them coming out of the bargain bin. Telenet Japan almost didn't release *Soulqueen 2* over here, but most of their games outside of the *Tale* series were flopping and they thought bringing over *Soulqueen* might help. It...didn't. The game was a fantastic space shooter! The graphics were incredibly detailed and colorful, and you basically went through 14 stages, blowing away enemy fighters as you went. In between stages, and sometimes right in the middle of stages, you were treated to scenes of Cleopatra being, well, Cleopatra. And no, I don't mean romancing Marc Antony and ruling over Egypt. This Cleopatra was a starfighter, and a damn good one at that. In *Soulqueen 2*, she's given the mission of hunting down and blowing up a team of rogue space pirates who have been terrorizing starfleets throughout the galaxy. The game had a lot of action, though it also had quite a bit of fanservice...

\*Cleopatra is seen stripping out of her robe, showing off tattoos on her back and also showing off a bit of her butt\*

Lisa: But the game was extremely tasteful compared to those hentai shooters on the Saturn that thankfully stayed in Japan. It came in at a Teen rating with only a few seconds of censored scenes, so yeah, the game largely stayed away from really gratuitous fanservice and concentrated on what we all came to see and play which is the shooting, and plenty of it.

\*Some gameplay of Cleopatra's ship shooting multi-pronged lasers at an enormous mechanical boss firing bullets and lasers all over the screen is shown.\*

Lisa: Of all the shooters on the Ultra Nintendo, it's definitely one of the toughest, maybe the toughest. By that time, the "bullet hell" genre was really ramping up in popularity on the PC and in the arcades, and while *Soulqueen 2* isn't QUITE as tough as those games, it's still a serious challenge for all but the most dedicated shooter vets. But hey, I beat it!

\*A brief home video is shown of a 13-year-old Lisa Foiles jumping up and down yelling victoriously after beating the final boss of *Soulqueen 2*\*

Lisa: For the record, my mom started filming AFTER I'd started celebrating. I think I was up cheering and pumping my fists for three minutes. Which is longer than this segment. *Soulqueen 2* was probably the BEST shooter on the Ultra Nintendo, but despite it being so thumb-numbingly good, NOBODY played it! But, thankfully, you can buy a download of the game right now.

\*A scene is shown of Cleopatra laying back on top of her starfighter and looking up at someone to talk to them.\*

Cleopatra: Mmm...what are you waiting for?

-from Lisa Foiles' "Retro Minute" segment on Gamesovermatter.com, posted on February 28, 2013

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### **Pick A Pair Of Pokemon Games Today!**

July marks the first month ever to see the release of two *Pokemon* games! (Unless you count *Red* and *Green* as two separate games, which we're not doing.)

The first is *Pokemon Safari* for the Ultra Nintendo, which has you tasked with riding around eight different areas in search of Pokemon to take pictures of. Yes, that's all you're doing, taking pictures of Pokemon...but there's a lot more to it than that! Professor Oak gives you items to throw at the Pokemon to perform various actions, including an apple to feed them and a special gas ball to make them irritated...and there's also a Pokemon Flute that can make certain Pokemon dance (including the sleeping Snorlax). Once you make it through the course, the professor will then evaluate the pictures you take (and some of the Pokemon can be pretty funny). There are 71 Pokemon in all to "capture" on film. We wish all 150 Pokemon had been included, but we suppose there's got to be something left for the sequel.

And if you're still rocking the Super Nintendo CD (and let's face it, we all go back to play the old games once in a while, being able to play them on the Ultra Nintendo makes it super easy), there's a brand new Pokemon game in *Super Pokemon Adventure*, which casts you as a young boy out on a somewhat abbreviated adventure through a new continent. You'll visit five gyms in all, you can catch up to 100 of the original game's Pokemon (again, what's with these spinoff games and not including all the species?!), and eventually you'll do battle with an evil villain who seeks to rule the entire Pokemon world. It's a fun way to play a

Pokemon journey on your TV (though there's also the Super Game Boy for that) and the graphics are nice, for a Super Nintendo CD game. It's probably the last SNES-CD game that we'll see here in North America, so not only is it a fun Pokemon quest, it's also a piece of history!

-excerpted from the August 1999 issue of *GamePro* magazine)

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### **The Long Journey To Completion Is Nearly Over**

Sony and Funcom's new point-and-click adventure, *The Longest Journey*, is nearly finished. The highly anticipated game, which Sony announced it was publishing late last year, will release on PC first in September before receiving an exclusive Ultra Nintendo console release before the end of the year. Sony's forays into PC gaming have been highly publicized as of late, with their *Pirate Quest* MMO one of the most popular new online titles of the year. With *The Longest Journey*, Sony continues its inclination toward publishing mature titles with high production values, though the company is taking somewhat of a chance on Norwegian developer Funcom. The company's highly lucrative partnership with Naughty Dog is well documented, with their new game *Dog Dash 3* set to fly off the shelves when it's released next week. Sony is keeping its hand somewhat close to its chest with *The Longest Journey*. The game wasn't mentioned in Nintendo's keynote address, and its section of Sony's E3 booth was rather small, with only a few kiosks set up for the PC and Ultra Nintendo versions of the game. Still, Sony seems to be expecting it to become a sleeper hit when it's released, and if it's a success, it will continue the company's winning streak.

-from an article on Gamespot.com, posted on July 15, 1999

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### **Dog Dash 3: The Basics**

*Dog Dash 3* is Naughty Dog's third *Dog Dash* game and the first to appear in full 3-D. The game is a fairly typical 3-D platformer with a heavy emphasis on collecting. However, despite the game's rather cookie-cutter formula, its variety of stages, creative puzzles, enemy lineup and fun combat make it a crowd-pleaser. The game features a good amount of cutscenes and voice acting. The main character Clark has a different voice actor, as Toran Caudell has gotten too old to read for the part. Instead, Alex D. Linz has taken over as Clark. Ashley Johnson remains the voice of Clark's friend Selkie, while R. Lee Ermey performs as the evil General Catsmeow, the game's villain who leads an enormous cat army called the Feline Front. Their army has taken over the new world that Selkie and her family were hoping to settle on, and it's up to Clark, Selkie, and Woofle to save the day. Much of the action takes place in the game's "hub world", from which five major sectors are accessed. You access these sectors by finding golden dog bones in each of the sectors and in the hub world. The more you collect, the more of the game you can access. Once 50 are found, the way opens up to battle Catsmeow himself. You're required to complete two story missions in each sector before moving on to the next one, no matter how many bones you've collected.

The game begins with a montage of Clark, Selkie, and Woofle playing together, set to the Smash Mouth song "All Star", which Naughty Dog licensed for use in the game. After a fun

day of play, Selkie leaves to join her family as they settle into their new home. But the next day, Selkie returns desperate for Clark and Woofle's help, as Catsmeow and his cat army have taken over. You'll need to explore every inch of Selkie's new world, rescuing prisoners and defeating Catsmeow's army all along the way.

### *Chapter One: Training Ground*

The first sector, opened up after collecting a single golden bone in the hub world, is Catsmeow's training ground, where new recruits are trained. The enemies and challenges found here are easy, but don't let down your guard. The story missions involve rescuing Selkie's parents and then helping a feline deserter escape. The deserter, named Fleas, knows of others who want to desert Catsmeow's army, and can help Clark and Woofle discover secrets that will help bring the army down.

### *Chapter Two: Sunny Town*

Clark, Selkie, and Woofle must infiltrate a town overrun by Catsmeow's army. You'll discover more friendly cats here, and also learn Catsmeow's motivations: his own planet was invaded by an alien army, and he used to be a beloved leader, but now has turned into a tyrant who's so desperate to find a new home he'll wipe out any planet he can get his hands on just to have it.

### *Chapter Three: The Great Caves*

Clark, Selkie, and Woofle infiltrate the planet's cave complexes, where its residents are being forced to mine for materials to build new weapons for Catsmeow's army. On the second story mission, Clark seemingly sacrifices himself to save Selkie and Woofle, and until completing chapter four, Selkie must ride Woofle on her own.

### *Chapter Four: Without Clark*

Clark is seemingly gone, but in reality, he's just been captured and seemingly transformed into a cat soldier in Catsmeow's army. Eventually, however, it's discovered that Catsmeow's flunkies simply zipped Clark up into a cat suit, and he could've taken the zipper off any time he wanted (Selkie finds it for him). Clark's all right, except that he has to pee very very badly and runs off to do so as soon as Selkie gets the suit off.

### *Chapter Five: Rallying The Forces*

In this chapter, which takes place in the last free territory left on the planet, Clark and Selkie must rally up an army to take back the planet. The second story mission involves battling Catsmeow in his personal tank, though after the tank is destroyed, Catsmeow flees back to the capital city to unleash his ultimate weapon.

### *Chapter Six: The Final Battle*

Clark, Selkie, and Woofle move in on the capital city to find and defeat General Catsmeow, eventually confronting him as he wields a giant alien battlemech that he managed to loot from the aliens who chased him and his people from their own. After being defeated, Catsmeow is convinced by the heroes that he's become just as bad as the aliens who chased him off his world, and Clark, Selkie, and Woofle offer to help him get his planet back

if he leaves other worlds alone. Catsmeow agrees, and there's a montage of Clark, Selkie, Woofle, and Catsmeow's army beating back the alien hordes from Catsmeow's planet. Selkie thanks Clark for saving her new home with a big kiss, and Clark and Woofle return home, with Clark totally pumped about saving two worlds from aliens in one adventure.

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\*The theme song of *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*, "Adventure At Lightspeed", plays all through the commercial. It's a driving rock anthem that has a lot in common with OTL's *Sonic Heroes* theme in terms of tempo and rhythm, though the lyrics and much of the melody is different.\*

\*Sonic is seen soaring through loops in a big city.\*

*The Biggest Sonic The Hedgehog Adventure Ever*

\*Sonic and Tails battle together against a big stone golem boss.\*

*Explore Unseen Worlds*

\*Sonic leaps down and punches and kicks monkey enemies in the middle of a huge jungle level.\*

*Team Up With Old Friends*

\*Sonic, Tails, Knuckles, Corona, Amy, and Big the Cat are seen\*

*And New Ones*

\*Dr. Scales is shown blasting a big bee enemy with a laser gun, then Rouge the Bat is shown swooping in in the night. Then Amy and Cream are shown taking care of a bunch of Chao.\*

*And Battle Evil...*

\*Dr. Robotnik laughs while sending a huge robot after Sonic and Knuckles.\*

*And Chaos Itself...*

\*Chaos is shown extending its reach over the universe. A rapid-fire montage of cutscenes and gameplay is shown.\*

## **SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 5**

*The World Of Sonic Is Finally Revealed...*

**JULY 20**

\*cue the Sega! scream\*

-the Sonic the Hedgehog 5 TV commercial, which began playing in late June (debuting during Game 3 of the NBA Finals between the Celtics and Jazz)

## **Sonic The Hedgehog 5: The Basics**

*Sonic the Hedgehog 5* is the latest (as of 1999) installment in the *Sonic* series. It's a 3-D platformer much like OTL's *Sonic Adventure*, with a number of key differences in terms of level structure and gameplay. Sonic's friends play a smaller role in this game compared to OTL's *Sonic Adventure*. In OTL *Sonic Adventure*, Sonic's friends were required to be used for large chunks of the game, but in TTL *Sonic 5*, Sonic is the playable character for a majority of the quest, with Sonic's friends only required for about a third of the levels (though they're optional in a few more levels). Indeed, most of Sonic's friends are spotlighted in only one each of the game's 22 Action Stages, though Tails, Knuckles, Amy, Cream, Corona, Big, and Rouge all make major appearances and are playable in several other levels (and Tails accompanies Sonic throughout most of the game). The game has several more playable characters than OTL's *Sonic Adventure*, with Tails, Knuckles, Amy, Corona, Big, Emerl, Cream, and Vector all playable at some point in the game, along with two characters new to the *Sonic* series IOTL: Rouge the Bat (who appears two years sooner than IOTL due to butterflies caused by the increased prominence of female characters) and Dr. Scales, a mad scientist salamander who uses high technology and was in fact Dr. Robotnik's college professor. The Pachacamac/Tikal storyline is butterflyed away, and Chaos becomes a sort of stand-in for Robotnik's lust for power and revenge going too far. The gameplay itself is structured much like previous Sonic games. There are seven Zones (like the Adventure Fields in OTL *Sonic Adventure*) that are open-ended and occasionally contain obstacles needed to be completed in order to advance. Then there are Action Stages, three to each Field. The goal in each Adventure Field is to obtain the Chaos Emerald contained there. In one Stage, Sonic works on his own to complete the level (though sometimes he has a friend's help, or has to rescue a friend). In the next Stage, one of Sonic's friends works on their own to complete the level. In the final Stage, Sonic and a friend team up, and the player can choose which hero to play as. Occasionally, a midboss will need to be fought in a Stage. At the end of the third Stage, a boss is encountered and must be defeated to gain the Chaos Emerald. The gameplay itself is somewhat more open-ended than previous *Sonic* titles, each character has their own individual combat moves and/or weapons to use on foes, and fighting itself is more complex than in previous *Sonic* titles. Rings and items are collected as in previous games, with rings again serving as a "life bar" of sorts for characters, when they're hit without a ring they lose a life, when all lives are lost, they're ejected from the stage. The production values of the game are considered superb even by Saturn standards, without the Ring it's considered the best looking non-Ring Saturn game. With the Ring, which opens up two bonus Adventure Fields and a variety of mini-games, including a special arena battle mode, the game is considered one of the best looking Saturn games overall and better than many contemporary Ultra Nintendo titles, pushing the Saturn and Ring to their technological limits. The voice cast has gotten somewhat of an overhaul, Jaleel White declined to reprise his role as Sonic and was replaced by Quinton Flynn, Tails is voiced by Adam Wylie, and Amy Rose is voiced by Cathy Cavadini. However, most of the cast, including Cree Summer as Corona and Jim Cummings as Dr. Robotnik, reprise their roles from previous games. Grey Delisle joins the cast as Rouge the Bat and Ernest Borgnine plays Dr. Scales. The game contains five lyrical songs, including Rouge's theme "Flying Freedom" and the OTL *Sonic Adventure* theme, "Open Your Heart", which is now used later on in the game as part of a determination montage for Sonic and his friends.

The game begins with Sonic and his friends, Tails, Knuckles, Amy, Corona, and Big enjoying a birthday party for Tails. Meanwhile, Dr. Robotnik is once again plotting to steal the Chaos

Emeralds, and he's devised an insidious plan in order to do it. Meanwhile, a character we'll later learn is Dr. Scales, is detecting some strange readings and he panics, realizing that something bad is about to happen. Robotnik summons forth the being Chaos in order to gather up the Emeralds, but Chaos is beyond Robotnik's control, and the very universe begins to shatter. As the party is finishing up, a terrible disaster occurs, and Sonic is separated from all of his friends except for Tails. He winds up by himself in the middle of a huge city, and that's where the quest begins. Sonic soon gets a call on a payphone from the mysterious Dr. Scales, who tells Sonic what's happened and that finding Robotnik is the key to preventing a universal catastrophe. As Sonic and his friends journey through the various stages, the Chaos fragments of Chaos that represent the "light" side of chaos (as opposed to the monster itself which represents the dark) appear throughout the game and assist the heroes on their adventure, serving as waypoints, giving hints, and granting special powers.

#### *Adventure Field 1: The Metropolis*

Sonic soon reunites with Tails, and the two battle Robotnik's robotic minions, who have invaded this massive city. At the end of the final stage, the two must do battle together against a huge robot lined with pods, one of which contains a trapped Cream and another containing a trapped Amy Rose.

#### *Adventure Field 2: The Plains*

The adventure field itself is deceptively tranquil, but hides a number of secrets, with its three stages patterned after an ancient temple tower filled with ninjas, a beach where huge crustaceans lurk, and finally, a battlefield on which a great centaur warrior roams. All the while, Sonic comes across Knuckles and teams up with him. Knuckles finds Corona, but he also encounters the mysterious bat woman Rouge, who seeks the Chaos Emeralds for herself and nearly swipes one out from under Sonic's nose. Knuckles and Corona vow to pursue Rouge, while Sonic gets another call from Dr. Scales, who wants to meet him in person.

#### *Adventure Field 3: The Jungle*

Dr. Scales meets up with Sonic and explains to him that Robotnik has unleashed a terrifying evil. The two adventure through an ancient jungle together, in search of a massive castle where Robotnik is hiding. After the second stage, Dr. Scales offers to stay behind to create a tool with which to capture Chaos, while Sonic reunites with Tails to mount an assault on Robotnik's castle. After battling the massive stone golem sent by Robotnik, the two heroes, joined by Knuckles, ask Robotnik to join them to battle Chaos together. Robotnik agrees to help, but only so that Robotnik can conquer the world before Chaos destroys it. Scales and Robotnik reunite, and Knuckles offers to babysit while Sonic follows up on a report that the mysterious thief Rouge has taken the fourth Chaos Emerald for herself.

#### *Adventure Field 4: The Night*

Sonic pursues reports of Rouge to another city, this one in perpetual night, lit up by bright lights. He meets up with Corona, and during the second stage, Corona pursues Rouge through a temple complex. Corona quickly catches up with Rouge, but Rouge is captured by the stage's mid-boss, and Corona has to save her. After Corona gets into a spot of trouble herself, Rouge helps her out, and the two battle the stage's mid-boss together. The player can then choose between Sonic, Corona, and Rouge for the third stage, which involves a

battle against a glimmering crystal boss that feeds on technology, a monster created by the energy of the fourth Chaos Emerald. After the boss is defeated, Rouge explains that she's swiping the Chaos Emeralds for Dr. Scales, who doesn't trust Sonic or his friends to defeat Chaos. Sonic discovers that Robotnik has taken Tails and Scales has knocked out Knuckles to collect the other Chaos Emeralds. Now he's going after the fifth.

#### *Adventure Field 5: The Laboratory*

Sonic pursues Dr. Scales with the help of Emerl, who battles robotic ninjas in the second stage. In fact, Scales' robot designs are improved versions of the robots created by Robotnik. After Scales deactivates Emerl, Vector the Crocodile teams up with Sonic for the third and final stage. At the end of the stage, Scales sends a hoard of robot versions of himself, each more powerful than the last, after Sonic and Vector, who defeat them. Scales is determined to stop Chaos on his own, though he reveals that he had nothing to do with Tails' abduction and that Robotnik is using Tails to create Scales' ultimate weapon, a powerful ray cannon that might destroy Chaos...or it might destroy the very fabric of the universe, and it can only be powered by all seven Chaos Emeralds. Rouge and Corona report that Dr. Robotnik has taken Tails to a massive sky fortress, and that's where Sonic needs to go next.

#### *Adventure Field 6: The Sky*

Sonic battles through a series of sky-themed stages with help from Amy Rose, who is also playable in the final stage of the field. They manage to free Tails and get the Chaos Emeralds back from Robotnik, who manages to set a massive dragon on Sonic and his friends before leaving. The dragon boss is a difficult, multi-part encounter, but Sonic and friends manage to defeat it.

#### *Adventure Field 7: The Egg*

Robotnik has captured the final Chaos Emerald, and is able to swipe the others as well. It's up to Sonic and friends to pursue Robotnik through three stages located in descending layers of a giant egg lair that Robotnik is residing in. The stages each have a variety of environments and are kind of a "best of" of the segments from previous Sonic games. In the second stage, Big the Cat takes over, and the end of the second stage is a sort of boss gauntlet that Big must conquer. In the final stage, any of the game's playable characters are selectable. The final boss of this stage is Robotnik, but even after he's defeated, he manages to use his Chaos Emerald-infused weapon to fire at Chaos. It seems to work, but in the end, Chaos absorbs the energy from the Emeralds and now has enough power to destroy the entire universe.

#### *Final Stage: Chaos Core*

Sonic and friends descend into the heart of Chaos itself to defeat the omniversal villain. You'll team up with each of them for a segment of the level, though it's Sonic and Tails who end up fighting the final boss of the game, Chaos. After Chaos is destroyed, the universe is pieced back together, with Robotnik seemingly falling into a black hole, ending his reign of terror for good (at least for now). Sonic and friends enjoy their victory, a victory they've certainly earned.

#### *Bonus Adventure Field 1: Champion City*

If you have the Ring, beating the game opens up Champion City, a new Adventure Field with three stages in which any character can be used. Beating the game also opens up the ability to use Super Sonic, though you can use Super Sonic in the game without the Ring as well. Either way, the boss of Champion City is a massive, multi-part robot, the fight taking place on top of an enormous skyscraper.

#### *Bonus Adventure Field 2: The Chaosverse*

Beating Champion City opens up the Chaosverse, where the true final boss of the game, Perfect Chaos, is fought. In order to reach him, you must navigate through three super tough stages which contain the game's most difficult challenges. Only after defeating Perfect Chaos does the game's true ending appear, which means that yes, you must have the Ring to get the true ending of the game (the ending confirms Robotnik's survival and also confirms that the Chao get new homes with Sonic and his friends). The default ending (without the Ring) is pretty good, but the true ending is significantly more satisfying.

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### **July 20, 1999**

*Sonic the Hedgehog 5* is released just one day after the launch of Naughty Dog's *Dog Dash 3* for the Ultra Nintendo, launching at midnight on July 20, 1999 (and to promote a simultaneous nationwide release, it launches at 9:01 PM on July 19 for those on the West Coast, 10:01 PM for those on Mountain Time, and 11:01 PM for those in the Central time zone). *Dog Dash 3* sold exceedingly well. It would achieve nearly half a million sales in its first week, with 200,000-300,000 sales reported on its first day alone. That would of course pale in comparison to the first day sales of *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*. With the game's enormous hype and the franchise's status as perhaps the most heavily promoted and visible franchise in video gaming, the game does enormous first day sales in North America. It tops *Ultra Mario Kart*'s record for the biggest first sales day for a non pack-in video game (the *Sonic 5* console bundles wouldn't be released until August), achieving 1,260,867 sales on its first day alone, and more than two million sales in the first week.

In terms of reviews, though some critics would show displeasure with the game's deviation from the familiar *Sonic* formula, most reviews praise the 3-D gameplay and the wide variety of characters and combat moves, along with the game's character-driven storyline. The game gets about the same amount of critical praise that *Sonic the Hedgehog 4* did, though reviews aren't quite as glowing as rival game *Super Mario Dimensions*. However, the other big platformer released that month, *Dog Dash 3*, is as highly praised as *Sonic 5* (and in some circles, even moreso). *Electronics Gaming Monthly* and *Gamespot* would give the two games identical scores, while some outlets (indeed, about 55% of them) would give slightly higher scores to *Dog Dash 3*. Most telling is the number of shoppers who reportedly purchased both games simultaneously, indicating ownership of both the Ultra Nintendo and the Sega Saturn. The Saturn does see a mild sales spike upon the release of *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*, but not nearly as much of one as the system saw upon the release of *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*, or indeed, any previous Sonic game since 2. Most of the people who were buying the *Sonic 5* already had a Sega Saturn, and the release of the game, while generating mainstream media buzz as every *Sonic* game had done, did very little to stop the Saturn's slow sales decline, a decline that would only accelerate after the *Sonic 5* hype had died down.

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For Saturn owners who thought *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*'s furry animal characters and fairly easy gameplay were a bit too childish, they had only wait a week before Treasure's rail-shooter *Battleborn* was released at the end of July 1999. The game had been heavily promoted by Sega beginning in the spring of that year, and was in fact the final game to have a Segata Sanshiro commercial produced for it in the United States, featuring a much more mature take on the legendary martial arts hero that saw Sanshiro standing alongside a pair of brave teenage Saturn players to take on an alien invasion. *Battleborn* featured a squad of four Japanese schoolchildren recruited by a futuristic military organization to battle alien hordes in a sort of "*Squad Four meets Neon Genesis Evangelion*" sort of situation. Across 19 increasingly difficult levels, the team does battle with increasingly powerful aliens with increasingly powerful weapons while gradually learning the truth of the invasion (the aliens are actually angels sent by a vengeful God, whom the heroes must fight in the final battle). A lot of the game's fun came from mixing and matching different weapon combinations. There were 12 bases and eight components, making for a total of 96 different combinations in all, and each of those combinations could then be leveled up twice over the course of a stage, for a total of 288 different weapons you could turn on foes (and of course, certain foes were weak against certain types of weapons). The game had a co-op multiplayer mode where up to four players could be blasting aliens at a time (with the number of aliens adjusted accordingly). In addition, if the player achieved certain goals across the course of the game, up to four different secret levels could be opened up. The secret levels were based off of four classic Enix action-RPGs: *Soulblazer*, *Illusion of Gaia*, *Terranigma*, and *ActRaiser*, and in each level, the player would battle various bosses from those games before engaging the game's final boss (Deathtoll, Chaos Comet, Dark Gaia, and Tanzra respectively) in a fierce and very difficult final boss fight. A player who could defeat Tanzra could definitely be considered a true rail shooter master.

*Battleborn* was highly praised by reviewers and sold quite well, especially for a Treasure game, showing that *Sonic the Hedgehog 5* hadn't burned away all the market for Sega software that month. The number of older male players who snapped up the game was a good sign for *NYPD: Narcotics Squad*, which was set to be released just a few short weeks later.

As well as, of course, a little game called *Soul Calibur*...

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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"Well, when Egosoft fell apart in 1997, certainly I was left very distraught and thinking that my career in this industry was just about over. But then, I was recruited into Vermillion Software, and tasked with creating a game with this new Ultra Nintendo development kit. It was a very promising company and we had found THQ to publish our game, so then that was when one of us, it was not me but it was Targa, very very creative person, he came up with this idea for a game where you would become a knight, a role-playing game, and he asked me if we could program such a thing. For a console, it would be difficult, even for the Ultra Nintendo it would be very difficult, but we got it done, and the reception was overwhelming."

-Martin Brenner, discussing *Rise a Knight* in the June 27, 2004 episode of G4's "Dev Stories"

*Rise a Knight* is a pioneering RPG, the first original console open-world RPG to achieve significant success, and paved the way for numerous games of its ilk, on the Ultra Nintendo and on future consoles.

You begin the game as Ben, a young teenage peasant who witnesses his village being overrun by an army of savage beastmen. Ben takes up his father's sword and leaves his ruined village, setting out on a quest to become a great knight. He soon meets a knight named McCather, who notices Ben's natural talent and takes him up as a squire. From there, the game opens up, and Ben can take one of several different paths to knighthood. He can stay on as McCather's squire, or leave McCather and forge his own path. The young queen Anna plays a significant role in Ben's story as well, she can become either his greatest friend (and eventual lover) or his sworn enemy, all depending on Ben's actions throughout the game. Though the combat is fairly simplistic, the sheer variety of missions to complete and the openness of the world (especially for an Ultra Nintendo game) made the game one of the most deeply engrossing to appear on the Ultra Nintendo.

*Rise a Knight* proved a critical and commercial success, topping one million copies sold in both North America and Europe. The game sold quite poorly in Japan (as was usually the case for Western RPGs), but with nearly 3 million copies sold worldwide over its lifespan, it became one of the Ultra Nintendo's greatest hits, and started one of the most acclaimed RPG franchises in video game history. It helped to put Vermillion Software on the map, and gave THQ something besides the *Nightsquad* and *WWF* (later *WWE*) franchises to hang its hat on.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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### **John F. Kennedy Jr. Rules Out Senate Run Next Year**

John F. Kennedy Jr. has announced that he won't be running for the vacated Senate seat of longtime senator Daniel Moynihan in next year's election, instead choosing to focus on his magazine *George*, which has seen its sales decline as of late. Though many, including members of Kennedy's own family, have encouraged the son of the late 35th president to run for office, Kennedy has thus far chosen a more private life, though he is a frequent target of the tabloid press. In addition to publishing *George*, Kennedy pursues a number of hobbies, including flying and horseback riding. He was also spotted by a New York Post photographer at the Times Square launch event for *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*, though he wasn't seen playing the game, and his appearance was likely related to the children's charity he started in 1997.

-from an article on Yahoo! News, posted on July 24, 1999

-

Alex Stansfield: Okay, here's what I gotta say about *Virtua Racing Reality*. It's the safeword that you say after *F-Zero* has completely whipped you into submission.

Brittany Saldita: \*cackling\*

Lyssa Fielding: \*makes whipping motions with her hand\*

Ted Crosley: *Virtua Racing Reality* is gorgeous, but even being the Sega junkie I am, I'm kind of disappointed with how easy it is compared with *F-Zero*.

Alex: *Ultracharged* is tough but fair, and that's the important thing.

Brittany: Right. If you (bleep) up, it's your own fault and you deserve to lose. But even if you play on easy mode, it's just a more fun game.

Adrian Fry: Now wait a minute guys, *Virtua Racing Reality* delivers on everything the series is known for, which is pure, adrenaline-pumping, balls to the wall arcade racing.

Lyssa: Which is exactly what *F-Zero* delivers, except WAY more of it!

Adrian: Again, *Virtua Racing's* genius is in its simplicity. It's way more fun to play because it isn't all over the place with complicated, long courses, tons of racers, all those different modes....*Virtua Racing Reality* is pure racing fun and it's brilliant.

Gary Westhouse: I'm of two minds here. I had a LOT of fun with *F-Zero* even if it was super hard. I had a lot of fun with *Virtua Racing*, but it left me wanting more.

Brittany: I think the consensus here is that *F-Zero* is better. Ted gave it a 4.5, I gave it a perfect score, it's more than deserving of that. As for *Virtua Racing*.... a 3.5 from Alex and a 3.5 from Gary. It's decent, but all of us except Adrian preferred *F-Zero*.

Ted: Even if it will beat you senseless and leave you begging for mercy.

Lyssa: Mmm, yeah but you're into it aren't you?

Brittany: I bet Adrian is into vanilla. ...ice cream.

(...)

Adrian: *Rayman 2* is just a really fun game. Not the most innovative platformer out there, but it's really well made and finding all the secrets is a blast.

Lyssa: I loved *Rayman 2*! Gosh I've been waiting for this game a long time!

Adrian: I can tell you really enjoyed it, you can't stop gushing!

Lyssa: There's so much to gush about! The bosses, the beautiful environments, all the adorable noises Rayman makes...

Adrian: Is that why you kept killing him when you were playing for the review?

Lyssa: I can't help it! His Rayman death rattles are just the cutest thing!

Adrian: That's more than a little morbid, but all righty then! *Rayman 2: The Great Escape* gets a 4 out of 5 from me.

Lyssa: Perfect 5 from me!

Adrian: The Rayman murderer.

Lyssa: Hmph!

-excerpted from the July 6, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany: \*keeps throwing an apple at Pikachu's head\* Come on, come on you little bastard, do something cute!

Alex: Pikachu's gotta be having a serious concussion by now. Does Professor Oak know about this?

Brittany: No, and you better not tell him!

\*The scene switches, now Alex is watching the Jigglypuff cave concert.\*

Alex: Do they know any other songs besides \*sings\* "Jiiiiiiiiiiiiigglyyyyypuuuuufff"?

Brittany: What, you think one of them's gonna start singing Britney Spears?

Alex: That would be more interesting than this.

\*The scene switches, now the vehicle is going through an abandoned lab in search of Mewtwo\*

Alex: Turn left, turn left!

Brittany: I know what I'm doing! \*turns left, finds a few Magnemites\* No, dammit!

Alex: There's a Mr. Mime skulking over there.

Brittany: \*throwing gas balls at it repeatedly\* Nobody likes mimes!

Alex: (bleep) you, Mr. Mime!

\*The scene switches to the beach where Pikachu is relaxing and yawning\*

Alex: \*doing a stoner voice\* I'm...I'm so high right now. Hanging out with Sato...he's such a buzzkill. Oh man the room's spinning.

Brittany: I think I hear the cops!

Alex: Oh (bleep), stash the weed!

\*Pikachu hops up and runs off as Alex and Brittany crack up laughing, later on they do the

actual review and give their scores\*

Brittany: *Pokemon Safari* does get repetitive, but it's a really good rental if you and your friends want to have a lot of fun.

Alex: Right, some of the things the Pokemon do in this game are downright hilarious, but once you've seen it all, you've seen it all.

Brittany: I'm giving this game a 3.5. Definitely rent it, but it's not a buy for me.

Alex: I'll give it a 4, some of the Pokemon downright crack me up and it can be fun to try and top your best scores.

Brittany: Or make your own shirt. \*shows off what she's wearing, a black shirt totally covered in stamp-sized Pokemon Safari screenshot stickers\*

-excerpted from the July 13, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

\*The hosts of *GameTV* are standing next to a screen in front of a massive crowd of people inside a Los Angeles-area Best Buy, it's 6:00 PM there and 9:00 PM on the East Coast.\*

Ted: I'm Ted...

Alex: I'm Alex...

Brittany: I'm Brittany!

Ted: And we're here tonight for a couple of firsts! It's our very first show on a Monday, and....

Alex: It's our very first LIVE show!

Lyssa: That's right, we're here at the jam-packed Best Buy in Los Angeles, just three hours away from the launch of *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*!

\*The crowd roars with approval, clearly that's what they're all there for.\*

Ted: And we'll be doing a special feature on the new *Sonic* game, you'll be getting our review and we'll show you everything you need to know to kick butt in Sonic's brand new world.

Adrian: Hey, but that's not all, we'll also be reviewing *Dog Dash 3...*

\*A massive amount of boos and jeers rain down from the crowd.\*

Ted: \*laughing\* Clearly, clearly this is a Sega crowd here tonight. \*the crowd hollers and cheers\*

Brittany: And we'll also be reviewing *NHL Full Body Check*. \*the crowd cheers mildly, somebody yells out "Go Kings!" which gets even more cheers than the mention of the game\*

Gary: And we'll be doing some retro reviews of the first three *Sonic the Hedgehog* games! \*the crowd cheers loudly at this as well\*

Ted: We've got previews, reviews, and news to help you choose...but mostly *Sonic* on this very special episode of *GameTV*!

\*The crowd cheers wildly again as the camera zooms out.\*

(...)

\*The crowd cheers as Ted and Alex finish discussing the different aspects of *Sonic the Hedgehog 5* and get ready for their review.\*

Ted: I gotta say...and please don't lynch me for this...this was probably my least favorite of the five main *Sonic* games.

\*The crowd reaction is a mix of gasps and jeers.\*

Ted: Don't, don't, don't get me wrong, PLEASE don't get me wrong...or kill me...

Brittany: \*starts a "Kill Ted!" chant\*

Gary: \*joins in quickly\*

Alex: \*laughing his ass off as the crowd starts a massive "Kill Ted" chant\*

Ted: But it's just...it's just....!!! \*ducking playfully for cover\* Okay, here's the thing. Opening up the Sonic world, yes, the stages are bigger and the characters are, for the most part, great, but...the gameplay just isn't as tight, the platforming just isn't as good. I think.... I think....that the platforming in *Super Mario Dimensions* is better.

\*The crowd boos again, very loudly\*

Alex: Can I just say that I loved this game?

\*The crowd cheers wildly\*

Alex: It has a few problems here and there, but for the most part, I thought it was really fresh, I thought it was really fun, but...I agree with Ted that it wasn't as good as some of the previous *Sonic* titles. \*the crowd starts to boo\* Which is...a testament, to how good the previous games were! I mean, we gave *Sonic 2* and *Sonic 3* perfect scores for God's sake! \*the crowd applauds and cheers at this\* And *Sonic 4* almost got one! So, you know, even though I'm giving *Sonic 5* a 4.5 out of 5... \*there's a mixed reaction from the crowd who clearly wants a 5\* I still think it's an excellent game and one of the best games so far this year. \*the crowd cheers wildly\*

Ted: And I liked the boss fights, and I liked all the characters except Rouge, who I thought, compared to Corona, Rouge is kind of silly. \*there's a mixed reaction from the crowd\* Dr. Scales was fantastic. I thought Knuckles was fantastic. I thought the villain Chaos was okay. This game was fun BUT I'm giving it a 4 out of 5 because of the problems I mentioned. \*the crowd boos but it's quieter than before\* It's still a GameTV recommended game!

\*Someone from the crowd yells out "We wanted guaranteed Blockbuster rental!" to which Brittany responds "You're here buying the game!", prompting a laugh from the crowd.\*

Lyssa: \*leans over and whispers something to Brittany, which Brittany laughs at so loudly she has to cover up her mouth to stifle it\*

Ted: That's it for *GameTV*, we're now just two hours away from the launch of *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*!

Alex: So what are you waiting for, go out and get your ass in line!

\*The crowd cheers one more time as *GameTV* goes off the air.\*

-excerpted from the July 19, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Gary: \*shaking his head\* I dunno, *Double Dragon's* not as good as I remember.

Alex: The ability to play with four different people in this game is a big plus. The competitive multiplayer is pretty fun, but the co-op is excellent, and I can see Brittany giving a big thumbs up at the addition of Jessica Lee.

Gary: There's also Kato Lee, who's about as boring a character as can be. Look, *Triple Trouble* was a pretty fun game, but *Four Fiends* is a bore, even with the added third dimension. Which, that's another thing, a beat-em-up should be a sidescroller! The clunky controls, the repetitive enemies, the boring new characters, this series has fallen a long way.

Alex: We'll have to agree to disagree, I found *Four Fiends* really exciting. I liked that each of the main characters had their own villainous rival, it added a lot to their personalities and stories and made the action of the game a lot more fun. The enemies weren't THAT repetitive considering that each of the four villains have their own army with different guys...

Gary: But how many different kinds of guys are in each army?

Alex: I enjoyed this game, I'm giving it a 4.

Gary: I can't give it more than a 2. Taito should stick to RPGs.

Alex: They are really good at those, you have a point.

(...)

Brittany: Literally the ONLY thing good about *Killsight* is this big honkin' sniper rifle. \*holds up the huge plastic lightgun accessory that comes packaged with the game's \$119.99 special edition\* This sniper rifle you have to pay out the ass for.

Ted: It looks really cool though, and I love how much it adds to the game. It's like a real futuristic sniper rifle, the scope has its own electronics and it's just badass. But yeah, the game by itself, bad. Baaaaaad.

Brittany: When they bring *Silent Scope* over here and port it, please...PLEASE make it compatible with this controller.

Ted: Oh yes, yes, SUCH a better game.

Brittany: Literally, you'll have more fun posing with this sniper rifle than you will playing *Killsight*. \*she crawls on the couch in a sniper position and points the gun at the door\* Think I can scare the crap outta the first person who comes in here?

Ted: Probably not. \*takes the sniper rifle and holds it up\* This thing's heavy too.

Brittany: I think it's almost eight pounds, isn't it?

Ted: It comes with a little stand.

Brittany: It better!

Ted: So yeah, I give *Killsight* a 1.5 out of 5.

Brittany: I'm giving it a 1. And that's for the gun.

(...)

Alex: Well, it's time to go but before we do, we have to say goodbye to one of our hosts...

Adrian: Yeah guys, sorry but this is my last episode, I really had a lot of fun here though.

Lyssa: You just got here though! \*hugs him\* Don't leave!

Adrian: I know, I know! It sucks because this is an amazing job, I mean, getting paid to play video games, that's every kid's dream right?

Ted: Well, we hate to see you go but we do wish you luck wherever you go.

Adrian: I had a LOT of fun, it was really amazing here and I'm gonna miss you guys a lot.

Brittany: Well we WILL be bringing in a new host next week...

Adrian: Replacing me? Already? \*looks hurt but then laughs\*

Ted: It's not like it's hard, I mean, "here's a lot of money to play video games all day".

Adrian: \*laughing\*

Lyssa: We don't want you to leave!

Alex: From everyone here at *GameTV*, including Adrian, we'll see you here same time next week!

-excerpted from the July 27, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

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### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: July 1999**

1. Super Smash Bros.
2. Doom: Inferno
3. Metal Gear Solid
4. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
5. Super Mario Dimensions
6. Final Fantasy VII
7. Andrekah: Witches Brew
8. Suikoden II
9. Tomb Raider III
10. The Darkest Night

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: July 1999**

1. Sonic the Hedgehog 5
2. Virtua Racing Reality
3. Battleborn
4. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
5. Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver
6. Soul Calibur
7. Virtua Fighter 3
8. NYPD: Narcotics Squad
9. Hakendo
10. Operation Zero 2

-

*“Kurt Cobain Prevents Gang Rape At Woodstock, Can't Prevent Disaster At Concert – 14 Injured, Riots Reported, Concert Called Early”*

*“Nirvana Frontman Leaps From Stage And Charges Crowd To Pull Attackers Off Of Woman”*

*“Cobain Left Bloodied After Punch From Would-Be Rapist”*

-headlines from various music news websites, the last of which is shown above a picture of Cobain with a bloody nose being embraced by the woman he saved from being attacked

*“Surviving a huge explosion and now saving a woman from being assaulted? I think Fox is gonna be announcing a Kurt Cobain movie sooner or later.”*

-from Jay Leno's monologue on July 26, 1999

*“I'm fuckin' done with music after that bullshit.”*

-Kurt Cobain, to Dave Grohl, backstage at Woodstock 1999 while being treated for a broken nose

-

*“A fully arcade-perfect Soul Calibur would've been impossible, but with the help of the Ring, the Saturn port got damn close. It was easily the best looking game on the Sega Saturn, making Tekken 3 look primitive by comparison and even showing up Virtua Fighter 3 somewhat. It looked gorgeous, and did more than any other game to justify the Ring's existence.”*

-excerpted from “Games That Pushed The Limits (Saturn): Soul Calibur” on racketboy.com (based on this OTL webpage: <http://www.racketboy.com/retro/games...-limits-part-1> )

*“Killer Instinct Ultra might have struck a blow for Nintendo's claims at being the fighter lovers' console, but Soul Calibur brought the title back to the Sega Saturn, and the Saturn never relinquished it for the remainder of the generation.”*

-from “Console Wars: Analysis Of The Fifth Generation”, an article posted on Greenmangaming.com, July 23, 2013

*“I've always wanted to work on a video game, but this is the first time that the technology's really been there to capture the real skateboarding experience.”*

-Tony Hawk, discussing *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* in the August 16, 1999 issue of *Sports Illustrated*

*“The success of Suikoden proved that Konami could create fantastic role-playing games, and so I was given the opportunity to make one of my own. They told me to make something that could challenge Final Fantasy VIII, which was certainly a lot of pressure to be under. I wanted to make the kind of game that I would play, and my friend Kojima-san was extremely supportive as well.”*

-Shuyo Murata, director of *Primrose Soldier*, in a June 1999 interview with *Famitsu* magazine

*“Most cops never have to fire a single shot. Most cops never see somebody die. Bein' a cop is like playing the lottery, but backwards. Most cops win. The ones that lose, lose real big.”*

-Fred Kroenin, *NYPD: Narcotics Squad*

*“I didn't ask to BE the living embodiment of magic!”*

-Flora, *Primrose Soldier*

*“Stars? MWAHAHA! By the time I'm done with you, you'll be seein' stars!”*

-Bowser, *Mario Party*

-

*Ultra Nintendo:*

### **Mario Party**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "This game is a ton of fun. Some of the minigames can be frustrating, but it's a blast, especially with friends.")

Gamespot: 7.6 (quote: "The randomness takes away from the experience a bit, but it's definitely fun with three other people.")

### **Madden NFL 2000** (multi-platform, also released on Saturn)

EGM: 7.2 (quote: "While not the quantum leap that last year's game was, it's still solid football fun.")

Gamespot: 7.7 (quote: "The changes to the franchise mode are welcome, and make playing a multi-decade franchise a rewarding experience.")

### **NBA Live 2000** (multi-platform, also released on Saturn)

EGM: 8.2 (quote: "An outstanding and realistic basketball experience.")

Gamespot: 7.9 (quote: "EA has stepped it up with this year's game, adding lots of great commentary and boosting the presentation.")

### **NCAA Football 2000** (multi-platform, also released on Saturn)

EGM: 8.7 (quote: "The stadiums look great and the crowd animation is spot on.")

Gamespot: 7.2 (quote: "I enjoyed creating my own plays, but certain plays were far too foolproof even on the highest difficulties.")

### **NFL Blitz 2000**

EGM: 6.8 (quote: "Not much more than a roster update to be found here.")

Gamespot: 6.0 (quote: "Practically nothing new or novel was added to this year's game.")

### **Tom Clancy: Secret War** (multi-platform, also released on Saturn)

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "The graphics could've been better but I loved how realistic this game is.")

Gamespot: 8.3 (quote: "The PC version definitely trumps the Ultra or Saturn versions, but all three capture the great FPS gameplay quite well.")

### **Tomorrow Never Dies**

EGM: 7.3 (quote: "Goldeneye this definitely isn't, but the later missions are a lot of fun.")

Gamespot: 8.0 (quote: "This game does maintain the series' excellent presentation, with Teri Hatcher and Michelle Yeoh reprising their roles from the film.")

### **Tony Hawk's Pro Skater** (multi-platform, also released on Saturn)

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "An exciting, polished, fun skateboarding title.")

Gamespot: 9.6 (quote: "One of the year's best games and worthy of the legendary skateboarder for which it's named.")

### **Twisted Metal 3**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "A bit of a step down in terms of gameplay variety, but it's still quite fun in multiplayer mode.")

Gamespot: 6.1 (quote: "What happened? The graphics actually look worse in parts than the previous game.")

### **Ultra Populous**

EGM: 4.0 (quote: "A boring slog that you should stay far away from.")

Gamespot: 5.1 (quote: "Why couldn't this have just been a straight port of 1997's *Populous: Elements*? Instead it tries to do its own thing and is largely mediocre.")

### **Ultra Road Rash 2**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "A wide variety of stages gives this game some staying power.")

Gamespot: 4.6 (quote: "The play controls are quite bad and the game's excellent visuals don't save it.")

### **Welcome To Magicka**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "I definitely enjoyed my stay in Magicka, which benefits greatly from rewarding exploration.")

Gamespot: 8.7 (quote: "Big worlds and worthwhile treasures make this one of the year's best action titles.")

### **Primrose Soldier**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "The story gets convoluted at times, but this battle system is excellent.")

Gamespot: 9.3 (quote: "A spectacularly fun and poignant RPG adventure.")

*Saturn:*

### **Soul Calibur**

EGM: 9.7 (quote: "The most innovative fighting game in ages and a quantum leap over anything else in its genre.")

Gamespot: 10 (quote: "A magnificent port of a brilliant arcade fighter.")

### **Dragon Quest IV-VI**

EGM: 7.3 (quote: "These are excellent games, but definitely dated by current standards.")

Gamespot: 9.0 (quote: "Three of the greatest RPGs of the last generation are lovingly brought to the Sega Saturn.")

## **Point Blank Adventure**

EGM: 8.7 (quote: "The tight shooter gameplay of Point Blank is even better in the context of an engrossing adventure.")

Gamespot: 7.8 (quote: "Not as pitch perfect as the original arcade title, but still an extremely fun game.")

## **Raigeki II**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "Not as well crafted as Soul Calibur, but the huge cast of hilarious characters makes this game just as fun.")

Gamespot: 7.9 (quote: "Soul Calibur might've spoiled us a bit. Nonetheless, this is an extremely rewarding game.")

## **NYPD: Narcotics Squad**

EGM: 8.7 (quote: "This game is a finely tuned masterpiece with a plot as good as any episode of *NYPD Blue*.")

Gamespot: 8.4 (quote: "If the shooting mechanic was more precise and not so frustrating, this might've been a Game of the Year contender. Nonetheless, it's still superb.")

-

*"Me and my buddies used to spend all day playin' that game, man. I mean, none of us could skateboard for real, but we could all do a hell of a lotta tricks on Tony Hawk. Second one was the best, but the first one blew us away too, and the graphics looked great."*

-Seth Rogen, discussing his favorite video games on the February 29, 2012 episode of *Late Night with Drew Barrymore*

*"Um, we had a Sega Saturn, and....oh, Tony Hawk. That was fun, I guess. I mean I would kinda just sit there and listen to the music until the timer went off. And then I figured out that the music would keep going when you paused the game? I mean, I'd be skating and doing real good, but then a really good song I liked would come on and I'd be like 'oh crap'....no, no, I liked the song. But...I'd HAVE to listen to it, you know? So I'd be pausing the game for like four minutes to hear the song. And then I'd press pause to turn the game back on and I'd forget what I was doing. ...I did that a lot."*

-Aubrey Plaza, talking about *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* on Northstar Satellite Radio's Geek Radio channel, in an October 16, 2008 interview by the nighttime host of the channel, Brittany Saldita

When Tony Hawk lent his name, image, and ideas to Neversoft for their 1999 skateboarding game, many in the industry knew the game would be something special, though few realized just how big of an impact the series would have on the video game landscape. Tony Hawk was the world's most renowned skateboarder at the time, his high flying antics a staple on the yearly X-Games competition and in skateboarding competitions around the world. Extreme sports in general were coming to the forefront, thanks in part to the X-Games and to the general societal trend toward "extreme" things in general. Snowboarding, BMX biking, and especially skateboarding were catching on in a major way, and the *Tony Hawk* video game series was at the crest of that wave.

*Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* would release in the summer of 1999 for both the Ultra Nintendo and the Sega Saturn. Versions for the PC and the new Game Boy Nova would follow in the year 2000. While the Ultra Nintendo version had slightly better graphics (and a 17 song soundtrack as opposed to the Saturn's 14), both versions had identical gameplay that enabled the player to rack up massive combos by chaining together impressive skateboard stunts. The game was an instant hit, both critically and commercially, easily selling over a million copies on both the Ultra and the Saturn. While August 1999 saw its fair share of big games, including classics such as *Soul Calibur*, *Primrose Soldier*, and *NYPD: Narcotics Squad*, it was arguably *Tony Hawk* that made the biggest impact from a general pop culture perspective. Gamers all over were loving *Soul Calibur* and *Primrose Soldier*, but it was *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* that celebrities were playing, and even today's celebrities have fond memories of playing the game in their childhood and teen years.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

*"In a world where Nintendo and Sony never teamed up, what game franchise would I guarantee still appears? Tony Hawk's Pro Skater. Barring butterflies causing him to get hit by a truck in 1993, or barring alien space bat Nazi sealions banning skateboarding in the 90s, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater endures in all realities."*

-from the "WI: Nintendo Sides With Phillips Instead Of Sony?" topic on Alternatehistory.net, posted on February 16, 2014

*"With production values far exceeding those of Suikoden II, it's clear that with Primrose Soldier, Konami is taking a shot across the bow at Squaresoft and their upcoming Final Fantasy VIII. While Square's position as the king of RPGs is still extremely secure (it's been fending off attacks from Enix for the better part of a decade), Konami's effort shows that Squaresoft is far from the only company willing to put massive amounts of time and money into producing a role playing game, and their efforts have clearly paid off with this one."*

-from the cover article of the September 1999 issue of *GameInformer*, which awarded *Primrose Soldier* a 9.5/10 in its review

Konami's *Primrose Soldier* was the second best selling Japanese role-playing game of 1999, behind *Final Fantasy VIII* by a significant margin but well ahead of its competitors. The company pulled no punches in creating a big and beautiful world and a cast of memorable characters, with a brave hero, a lovely heroine, and a truly wicked villain. The game took place in a modern world with some futuristic technology, not quite as futuristic as the tech found in *Final Fantasy VIII*, but definitely a cleaner world than the cyberpunk *Final Fantasy VII*. The game's battle system remains fairly unique among JRPGs. While not quite an action-RPG, *Primrose Soldier* employed a system that borrowed a bit from the company's own *Hybrid Heaven* and a bit from *Final Fantasy*'s patented ATB (though of course not enough to get themselves in trouble). The characters in the game could attack either with a ranged weapon (usually some sort of firearm), a melee weapon (usually bladed but some characters used blunt objects), or magic. For ranged weapons, a firing reticle would appear in multiple places, and you had to time when you fired your weapon to maximize damage (all the while, the enemy was free to attack you). Weapons could fire as little as one shot at a time or as many as 20 (though obviously damage per bullet was greatly reduced), and careful timing was key to landing a successful attack. With bladed objects, the enemy could dodge or block your attack, so timing and positioning your strike was key. And with magic,

incantations had to be timed as well. You could aim attacks at your enemies limbs to cripple them or their head for bonus damage, but usually aiming at their center of mass was most beneficial and provided the easiest hits. The game featured outstanding graphics easily comparable to those in *Metal Gear Solid*, and excellent voice acting, including Steve Cardenas as Exeter, Lex Lang as Zeta, and Julie Maddalena as Flora.

As for the game's plot, the main character was a young man named Exeter, training to be a soldier in his country's elite Exgenesis Force. Exeter's country, Salcrant, was the most powerful country in the world, and while it didn't control the entire world, it was influential enough that many of its laws became worldwide, most notably its ban on magic and magic users. Many centuries before, magic had flourished in the world, but after the war that saw Salcrant come into being, the rapidly growing country realized that it had to snuff out magic to solidify its power. After centuries of genocide, magic had seemingly died in the world, but Exeter has been having dreams involving a field of flowers and a mysterious, beautiful pink haired woman. After going on a training mission that becomes a bit more complicated after rebels cobble together a war machine that Exeter and his best friend and training partner Zeta have to defeat, Exeter has his most vivid dream yet, where the girl is begging him for his help. Exeter is out in a crowd the next day when he sees the girl. As he approaches her, she disappears in a cloud of flower petals, creating a commotion and sending the nearby magic detectors off the scale. Exeter discusses the girl with his superiors, who conclude that she is the first magician within the limits of Salcrant's capital in nearly 50 years. The next day, there's a red alert. An entire group of magicians have been spotted just outside the city. Exeter and Zeta are assigned to the squad sent to deal with them. The magicians are said to be dangerous, but they largely don't defend themselves, except for the leader, who's exceptionally powerful but still scared as the soldiers cut him down. Exeter, feeling sick after the massacre, wanders away to a secluded area, where he once again meets the mysterious girl. She introduces herself as Flora, and Exeter can't bring himself to attack her. He tells her about his dream, but Flora doesn't know what he's talking about. However, as the two talk, they're forced to flee when some soldiers, detecting Flora's magic, come looking for them. Exeter is able to keep the soldiers away, and eventually, Exeter promises Flora that he'll protect her, and he'll try to find a safe place for her. Flora tells Exeter of magic users outside the city and that they might be able to help. Flora finds a hiding place outside the city while Exeter returns for his debriefing. His superiors tell him that there have been more sightings of magic all over the world, indicating that something very serious is happening. Exeter decides that if he's going to keep Flora away from the soldiers, he'll need a spy, so he confesses everything to Zeta who agrees to spy for Exeter while he leaves the city to look for a place to stay with Flora. Over the next two-thirds of the game, the game basically consists of Exeter and Flora journeying out into the world, dodging Salcrant's armies and finding friendly people to help them. After the first few boss fights, Exeter is revealed as a traitor to Salcrant (though Zeta continues to be his inside man) and begins battling Salcrant's armies openly with Flora and their allies (which include two additional magic users and three non-magic using humans that Exeter and Flora manage to turn to their side). Though Zeta is a major character during this part of the game, he remains largely an NPC except for certain segments when Zeta has to team up with other soldiers to fight threats to the city, or covertly fight Salcrant's troops on his own. Exeter and Flora discover that Flora's presence can "awaken" the magical powers in seemingly non-magical people. At one point, an entire town gets magical powers after a visit from Flora...only to be slaughtered in horrific fashion by Salcrant's troops after the heroes leave. Exeter and Flora of course bond romantically over the course of the game. Salcrant's armies aren't the only villainous forces in the game, there are a few villains who use magic for unscrupulous ends, including an anti-human extremist who tortures Salcrant soldiers for fun and who Flora must personally put down.

Eventually, the events of the game come to a head after Salcrant and its mad scientist head of weapons technology (named Seishin, who eventually leads a coup to take over the country) develop an enormous giant robot with which to lead a war of extermination against all who possess magic. Flora must awaken a sleeping magical beast to combat the mech. As the two clash just outside the city, the heroes infiltrate the mech to find Seishin, who battles the heroes in his own personal mech. After he is defeated, the mech collapses and the war seems like it is over, but Seishin crawls to the controls and turns the mech on the city instead. It's then that the capital's magic users rise up and, led by Flora, destroy the mech once and for all. The people of Salcrant have now seen the good that magic can do, and Zeta, who led the way to infiltrate Seishin's giant terror machine, personally congratulates Exeter. Throughout the first two-thirds of the game, Zeta has been subtly acting to help Exeter, but he's also put the pieces in place for his own sinister takeover... researching magic and discovering, before Exeter and Flora did, that magic is reawakening in the world because of Flora's presence, and that magic can be taken and harnessed with the proper technology. Zeta has co-opted some of Seishin's research, and while the city celebrates victory, Zeta sets his plan into motion. With his machine, he drains the magic from everyone in the capital, killing them (and severely weakening Flora and the other two magic users in the party). Horrified, Seishin realizes he's been played, but he's no match for Zeta's power and is easily defeated. Zeta's power is now great, but the Salcrant military remains formidable, and they manage to chase him from the city. However, Zeta's goal is now revealed: to travel the world, draining all magic in order to become an all-powerful god. Seishin and Flora now have a new goal: to stop Zeta at all costs. The remaining third of the game involves the party trying to reach Zeta while battling the magical beasts unleashed by the imbalance of power Zeta has created through his activities. Zeta leaves many dead magic users in his wake, and Exeter and Flora realize that everyone in the world has dormant magical powers, making Zeta a threat to all humanity. The party finally confronts Zeta in his lair and defeats him, but he has drained so much magic from the world that its imminent destruction is assured. That is when Flora's purpose is truly revealed: she is the keeper of the world's magic. After the genocide, magic went into hiding, seeding a single soul: that soul came to be Flora, whose birth triggered the rebirth of magic as she gradually disseminated it throughout the world. But with so much of the world's magic laid to waste by Zeta, Flora must sacrifice herself to restore the world's magic and save it. Though Exeter and the rest of the party are reluctant, they know they must allow Flora to do this. Flora ascends into the sky and her soul is disseminated throughout the world, restoring its magic and saving humanity. After an ending sequence that shows life returning to normal throughout the world, there's an after-credits scene of Exeter visiting a monument to Flora, touching his heart and feeling her presence, indeed, her presence is in every living thing now. Her familiar flower petals begin to blow past him, and he seems to sense something. He turns and takes on an expression of surprise, but we don't see what he does as the screen goes black.

*Primrose Soldier* sold exceptionally well. When it was released in Japan in March 1999, it topped the charts for three weeks and eventually sold over a million copies there. It didn't sell quite as well in North America, but it was a major hit for its genre, nearly matching the sales of 1998's *Fairytail* and becoming one of that region's top selling JRPGs of the year. Despite the game's success, it never got a sequel. Murata said that the original game wrapped up the story well and that he desired to create other games for Konami rather than work on any sort of direct sequels to *Primrose Soldier* (it would have arguable spiritual successors, however, that took elements from the original's gameplay and applied them to new stories with new characters).

-from the article "When Konami Took On Square At Its Own Game" on RPGamer.net, posted on March 18, 2006

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And what *Welcome To Magicka* does is different from your typical 3-D platformer. While you do spend a lot of time running around big open spaces and collecting objects (including wands and spellbooks), very little of it is actually required to progress in the game. Instead, most of your collecting will be done to make your character, a young sorcerer's apprentice, stronger. In that sense, the game has a sort of *Jewels Of The Realm* or *Andreka* feel to it, and that's quite refreshing. You can choose to barrel through worlds (of which there are 24 in all) right to the finish (where there's usually a boss waiting). The boss will be extremely tough, but you have that choice available. Or you can go off the beaten path and complete the game's challenges for new items, which will make the end level required challenge a lot easier. Ubisoft has given the player a significant amount of choice in its new game, putting it on a different wavelength from the excellent but largely linear *Rayman 2*. In that sense, it's forging a new path forward for the genre, one that's a welcome bit of change from typical platformer fare.

Graphics: 4.5

Sound: 4.5

Play Control: 5.0

Fun Factor: 5.0

Challenge: Intermediate

-from *Gamepro's* review of *Welcome To Magicka*, in the September 1999 issue

*"While Rayman 2 was only a moderate success on consoles (it was bigger on PC), Welcome To Magicka was a sales success with more than a million and a half copies sold worldwide, mostly in North America and Europe. Players were engrossed by young Garry's tale of adventure and magic, and the game was the start of a successful franchise for its publisher Ubisoft (which contracted out to the company Mirasoft to develop the game, eventually purchasing the company in 2002). The series' fun cast of characters made it a staple franchise for fan artists and fanfic writers as well."*

-from Fandomguide.com's entry on *Welcome To Magicka*

*"The Darkest Night was emotionally heavy and depressing. Rayman was super happy but also super silly. With Welcome To Magicka, you got a cheerful tale with just a tiny bit of emotional gravitas, and fantastic gameplay to boot. It was the best of both worlds, and it's no wonder that it was Ubisoft's best selling game last year."*

-from a March 23, 2000 post on Gamefaqs.com's message boards

*"I haven't gotten any power-ups at all and now the final boss is kicking my ass! Am I screwed?"*

*"yes u are screwed, u gotta go all the way back and start over"*

*"You can just replay some earlier levels and collect what you need, don't listen to the troll."*

*"You made it all the way to the final boss without any power-ups? That's really good, you came this far, go all the way!"*

-from a topic posted on April 8, 2000 on Gamefaqs.com's *Welcome To Magicka* board

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“*PROTIP: Rotating the analog stick in certain minigames can be a bit annoying, but we recommend just using your palm instead of your thumb, the soft rubber of the Ultra Nintendo's joystick will protect your hand from any harm.*”

-from an article on *Mario Party* in the September 1999 issue of *GamePro*

*Mario Party's* eight boards all have their own tricks and traps, but all of them are quite fun! Each character has their own board, and at the end, you can unlock two special boards as well!

The boards are as follows:

DK's Jungle Adventure  
Peach's Birthday Cake  
Yoshi's Tropical Island  
Wario's Motorbike Trail  
Luigi's Ghost Palace  
Mario's Rainbow Castle  
Bowser's Mecha Koopa Factory  
Eternal Star

-from an article in the September 1999 issue of *ExpertGamer* (five of the boards are named identically to OTL, but Wario, Luigi, and Bowser's boards have seen the most changes, including their names)

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Tom Clancy: I just wanted to make a realistic game, that's the thing with me. All these video games where you shoot a guy and he just soaks up bullets like he's the Blob or something, nah, that takes me right out of it. One shot, one kill.

Ted Crosley: Well, what if you get shot \*imitating Forrest Gump\* directly in the buttocks? That's probably not gonna kill ya.

Tom Clancy: Granted, if you shoot a guy in the ass in *Secret War*, he's not gonna die right away. Usually. But a high-powered rifle bullet, that'd tear right through your butt cheek and into your inner thigh and you'd bleed out quick.

Alex Stansfield: \*laughing\* I love how this discussion has turned to the physics of getting shot in the ass.

Tom Clancy: Well, I wouldn't expect nothing less from the *Beavis and Butthead* channel.

-from an interview with Tom Clancy on the August 24, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

“*The plot of Secret War wasn't half as compelling as some of Clancy's military thrillers. The game revolved around the 'secret war' fought between an elite group of UN special ops agents and terrorist organizations around the world. But the realistic bullet physics and*

*gameplay mechanics were a big step forward from the genre, and while console gamers largely remained loyal to the Goldeneyes, Dooms, and Arbiter of Sins of the world, PC gamers were quite down with this new 'FPS realism' thing. It helped that the game looked significantly better on the PC than it did on any of the consoles, though Red Storm admitted to rushing the console port somewhat."*

-narration from the November 7, 2004 episode of "Dev Stories" on G4

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The recent North American release of *Dragon Quest IV-VI* for the Sega Saturn puts all the *Dragon Quest* games on the console for the first time, letting Saturn players experience one of the great classic role playing game series for themselves. Meanwhile, the company is hard at work on *Dragon Quest VII*. The game is on track for a spring 2000 release in Japan, and Enix is planning on doing a massive presentation for the game at next month's Tokyo Game Show. Meanwhile, their most recent game, *Laika's Journey*, has been a major hit in Japan, and it will see an early 2000 release stateside. The game focuses on the interplanetary journey of a Russian cosmonaut and her faithful dog, and is said to be somewhat of a spiritual successor to the SNES-CD RPG *Robotrek*.

Enix is also said to be collaborating with Sega on an RPG originally planned for Sega's Katana system, but now being fast-tracked for a Saturn release sometime late next year. The game was also originally intended to be a third installment in the *Lords of Skylein* series, but disappointing sequel sales have led Sega to retool the game as an entirely new RPG franchise. More details are sure to be revealed at the Tokyo Game Show, but the game has been given a working title of Project Arcadia. We hope to reveal more information to you when it's made available!

-from an RPGamer.net article published on August 26, 1999

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### **The X-Files Episodes Of M. Night Shyamalan**

When M. Night Shyamalan's movie concept was turned down by major Hollywood studios, he thought his career in screenwriting might be over. But Chris Carter saw promise in the intrepid young writer, and he was soon put to the test, given the task of writing several episodes of *The X-Files'* seventh season. The sixth season, which had seen the show somewhat retool itself from an alien conspiracy show to a show focused on alternate timelines, faltered a bit both critically and in the ratings. But the seventh season, which reconciled the alternate timeline plots with a new government conspiracy storyline, proved more popular than ever, and Shyamalan's episodes were a major contributing factor.

All in all, he penned four episodes for the seventh season, including the season finale (which incorporated some of the plotlines he'd originally intended for his movie concept). In "Prognosis", which sees Mulder and Scully grappling over whether or not to stop a man who, in an alternate timeline, stumbled upon the polio vaccine before Jonas Salk and attempts to profit from it, Mulder guns down the man in cold blood, creating immense conflict between the two agents that carries over for several episodes as Scully thinks him to be a renegade. In "Sarasvati", the two agents meet a mysterious young girl who seemingly knows everything, including the future, and must protect her from a government assassin. In "Role Playing Game" (which sees guest appearances from *GameTV's* Ted Crosley and Lyssa

Fielding), Mulder and Scully must battle against a powerful witch who was created as the villain of The Lone Gunmen's new hit PC RPG. And finally, in the acclaimed season finale "Sixth Sense", Scully comes to what seems like a shocking revelation: Mulder has been dead for the last two years, and she's the only one who's been able to see or talk to him. However, this turns out to have been caused by Scully accidentally slipping into an alternate timeline where Mulder has been dead, in order to cover up for Mulder's abduction by agents of a new secret government conspiracy. Scully remains trapped in this alternate universe at the end of the season, and doesn't reunite with Mulder until several episodes into season eight.

Shyamalan would continue writing *X-Files* episodes until the end of the series' run in 2002, forming a close friendship with fellow writer Vince Gilligan in the process...

-from an article posted on TVLookBack.com on September 30, 2014

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For all the praise that *NYPD: Narcotics Squad* received for its storyline, the gameplay wasn't much different from the average third-person shooter of the day. Essentially, the game was broken down into 17 levels, or "missions", and you controlled the main character, Fred Kroenin. There would be a cutscene at the beginning of the level and one at the end, and in-between, you'd be navigating a 3-D environment, usually a fairly small and restricting one, between segments of fighting bad guys from a third-person shooter perspective. You'd occasionally look for clues or find suspects or weapons, and sometimes a cutscene would break up the action. The game's story structure was somewhat like the original *Squad Four* game, though it wasn't a rail-shooter and you could freely move around and take cover during shooting sequences.

The plot itself was a dramatic cop story where you played veteran narcotics officer Fred Kroenin (voiced by character actor J.K. Simmons), who was in the process of training rookie cop Ethan Stone (voiced by Kevin Shinick, most well known at the time for hosting the *Where In Time Is Carmen Sandiego?* game show). While Kroenin was a divorcee, Stone lived with his young wife (voiced by Anna Gunn, who had also recently reprised her role as Ariel in *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*), who was currently pregnant with the couple's child. Kroenin's been on the trail of the 13th Street Blades, a violent street gang that's run most of the other narcotics gangs out of New York City, recently consolidating their power with a brutal series of assassinations on Mafia bosses. The Blades are led by a man who calls himself Carson (voiced by Greg Baldwin), who prides himself on being able to manipulate people, either through persuasion, or, if that fails, extortion.

The seventeen missions play out as follows:

*Mission 1- A Rookie Learns From His Mistakes:* A sort of "training" mission in which Fred and Ethan make a typical drug bust, though Ethan stumbles upon a clue that might lead to someone higher up the food chain.

*Mission 2- On The Waterfront:* Fred goes undercover to lure out some low-level drug dealers, but the mission goes south quickly.

*Mission 3- Never Trust A Typical Day:* Fred joins his longtime partner Jack McCracken on a case while Ethan works a normal beat, the case seems to end in a successful arrest but

tragedy soon strikes.

*Mission 4- Remembrance:* The Blades put a hit out on a number of officers attending McCracken's funeral, forcing Fred and Ethan to work together to save their fellow officers.

*Mission 5- Big Fish:* Fred and Ethan hunt down a high-profile member of the Blades at a penthouse suite.

*Mission 6- Misappropriation:* Fred and Ethan must find a crucial piece of evidence to make their catch talk. After the mission, Ethan comes home to find his wife being held hostage by Blades thugs and is "recruited" into their gang as a mole.

*Mission 7- Evidence Locker:* You play as Ethan for this mission, where you're forced to sabotage evidence at the police station in order to spring the captured Blades gang member. After he is freed, he and Ethan meet with Carson, who brutally executes the gang member and tells Ethan that if he ever tries to screw him, the next person to die like that will be Ethan's wife.

*Mission 8- In The Club:* Fred and Ethan venture to a nightclub that happens to be a hotbed of narcotics dealing. It's a typical mission, but once again Ethan is forced to sabotage it to protect his wife.

*Mission 9- Say Your Prayers:* Fred and Ethan meet a Blades leader at a church in a mission that soon turns into a shootout. After the mission ends, Fred gets his first suspicions that something isn't right with Ethan.

*Mission 10- The Night Shift:* Fred and Ethan find themselves on a midnight case that might lead to capturing Carson. Though Ethan again sabotages the mission, he does manage to get several high-ranking Blades men caught. After the mission, we see Fred drowning his sorrows with alcohol and prostitutes, while Ethan meets with Carson again. Carson knows that Ethan got the Blades men caught and plans to retaliate by raping Ethan's wife. Ethan responds by managing to get to one of Carson's homemade bombs and threatening to bring down the building on everyone, including himself and his own wife and unborn son, if Carson goes through with it. Carson laughs, tells Ethan "you've got a set of balls on you", and backs off.

*Mission 11- Shattered:* Fred and Ethan are pursuing another Blades gang member when they are run off the road and get into a serious car accident that leaves them both hurt and in the middle of an ambush. Fred ends up having to drag an unconscious Ethan through a set of buildings, fending off gang members all the way. After the mission, he finds evidence on Ethan that might connect him to the Blades, but doesn't want to believe it's true until he can properly confront him.

*Mission 12- Downtime:* After a routine drug bust, the precinct is targeted by a bomb, causing it to go up in a raging inferno. Fred believes Ethan planted the bomb, and confronts him. The two draw their weapons on each other, but Ethan can't fire the shot. Fred can, but only ends up wounding Ethan. Ethan, realizing that if he lets Fred take him into custody, his wife will be surely killed, is able to fight back, and after a brutal brawl, knocks Fred out. He's going to kill Fred until Carson drives up and tells Ethan to bring him to the car instead.

*Mission 13- In Hell:* The mission opens with a cutscene where Fred is being tortured by the

Blades for information. Carson has sent Ethan out on a mission to find and destroy any remaining evidence against the Blades. Fred manages to escape and fights his way through the warehouse where he's being held. At the end of the mission, Fred is ambushed and attacked, and it's shown that it's Ethan. This time, however, Ethan allows himself to be caught, and begs Fred to let him explain himself.

*Mission 14- The Harrowing:* Even after Ethan reveals the reason for his treachery (and swears that he wasn't the one who planted the bomb at the police station), Fred doesn't believe him, but he agrees to go with Ethan to rescue Ethan's wife before Carson catches wind of Ethan going behind his back. With Ethan's information, the two are able to sneak into where Ethan's wife is being held, and they manage to save her.

*Mission 15- Back On The Force:* With his wife freed from the Blades, Ethan is now free to help Fred, and after the two get their injuries patched up, they use a tip they found to pursue the man who is said to have put Carson in power. That man is Fred's old partner McCracken, who faked his own death. He's been feeding Carson the information that Carson's been using to conduct hits and push drugs around the city, and McCracken also gave Carson the tip about kidnapping Ethan's wife. Ethan is about to beat McCracken to death when Fred stops him. McCracken taunts Fred, who just slaps handcuffs on McCracken and begins reading him his rights.

*Mission 16- Twenty-Three Years On The Force And Nothing To Show For It:* As Fred and Ethan prepare to take McCracken in, they're pursued by Blades gang squads. The two cops fight them off, and manage to get out of danger, only for a massive explosion nearby to knock the three men to the ground. It's another ambush, with Carson firing at them from a helicopter. In the confusion, he picks up McCracken and takes off into the air as the two men are surrounded by another of Carson's hit squads. Inside the helicopter, Carson tells McCracken that his services won't be needed any longer. McCracken begs for his life, screaming "I made you!" but gets tossed from more than a thousand feet up for his trouble.

*Mission 17- A Good Day:* After fighting off Carson's hit squad, the men learn that Carson is planning to flee the country with the profits from his drug trade, which will make him untouchable while he continues running his gang from overseas. They pursue him to a remote airfield outside the city and battle their way through his men until they reach him. After a gunfight, Carson is wounded but he tries desperately to stumble his way onto a plane. A skillful shot by Fred enables Ethan to corner Carson for good. Ethan thinks about putting a bullet in Carson's head, but instead cuffs him and begins reading him his rights. As Carson is taken by paramedics, Ethan gets a call that his wife has gone into labor. As the doctors are delivering Ethan's baby, a hail of gunfire rings out through the room. Carson, badly wounded but seething and wanting revenge, is gunning for Ethan and his family. There's two more gunshots. Carson drops dead to the ground, and Ethan turns to see that Fred has killed Carson while taking a bullet for Ethan's wife and child. Fred slumps to the ground, fatally wounded. His last words are "It's been a good day..." as he succumbs to the gunshot. The ending is bittersweet. Ethan is now a full-fledged member of NYPD's narcotics squad, but the stress of the recent events has traumatized Ethan's wife, and she leaves him for the sake of their child. Ethan, like Fred, is left alone in the world, but he's still determined to keep the city safe and free from drugs and the brutal gangs that push them. The credits roll.

So how did the game do? Quite well. The pre-release hype generated a lot of buzz for the game and it even got some coverage in the mainstream media. While it wasn't the blockbuster that *Sonic 5* and *Soul Calibur* proved to be, it managed to become one of the

Saturn's top sellers of the year. The gameplay hasn't aged well, but the story remains highly praised and has even inspired television and film writers.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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### **Soul Calibur: The Basics**

Released on August 31, 1999 for the Sega Saturn, *Soul Calibur* is the sequel to *Soul Edge* and a port of the 1998 arcade hit. Gameplay and control wise, the game is nearly identical to OTL's *Soul Calibur*. Most of the minor changes to the game are aesthetic, and there are also a few characters changed as well. The game requires the use of the Ring to be played, and even with the Ring, the Saturn hardware is pushed very close to its limits, the game is widely regarded as the best looking on the Sega Saturn, and compares favorably to many Ultra Nintendo games from a technological perspective (there are even a few minor aspects in which the game looks better than *Killer Instinct Ultra*, said to be one of the Ultra Nintendo's most technologically advanced games). The game's character roster includes Cervantes, Mitsurugi, Hwang, Seong Mina, Voldo, Sophitia, Taki, Siegfried, Astaroth, Ivy, Kilik, Lizardman, Nightmare, Xianghua, and Yoshimitsu (from OTL's game), Seraph (an angelic character and original to TTL who also appeared in TTL's *Soul Edge*), along with characters brought over from other Saturn games, Lenneth Valkyrie and Turok. The main villain of the game is Nightmare, who comes into possession of the Soul Edge blade (as Siegfried) and is corrupted by its power. The heroes of the game gather together to stop it from unleashing its evil upon the world. The game doesn't include a "story mode" per se, but characters do get unique dialogue before matches depending on their opponent, and each character has a short ending after completing their arcade mode.

*Soul Calibur's* reception is nearly as good as IOTL, though it's not considered a completely transcendent game because of its release on a current-gen system, as opposed to being the Dreamcast's most impressive launch game IOTL. Nevertheless, the game achieves outstanding review scores and instantly becomes a top-flight contender for overall Game of the Year. With promotion and hype nearly exceeding even that of *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*, the game sells massively in its first week and continues to be a top seller for the Saturn throughout the year. The success of *Soul Calibur* solidifies the Sega Saturn's reputation as one of the greatest fighting game systems of all time, and despite the hits available on the Ultra Nintendo (including its most acclaimed fighting game to date, *Killer Instinct Ultra*, and the party game staple *Super Smash Bros.*), the fighting genre is one that most critics agree belongs to Sega's system.

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\*Lyssa and Brittany are standing on the *GameTV* set, looking through reader mail.\*

Lyssa Fielding: \*picks a letter and opens it up, reading it silently\* We get a lot of reader mail here at *GameTV*, and there's one request that people keep sending me! I mean I get this request from people ALL the time. \*she reads the letter\* Dear Lyssa... show us your boobs.

Brittany Saldita: It seems like every week you get people asking you that!

Lyssa: I know, right? Well, you know what? Because you guys have been such great fans... I'm gonna do it!

Brittany: \*stunned\* What?

Lyssa: That's right, I'm showing all of you my boobs!

Brittany: Lyssa, no! \*tries to grab her\*

Lyssa: It's for the fans! \*she turns around and then walks over to the couch, where Ted and Alex are playing a game together\* Here you go! \*points to Ted and Alex\* These two are boobs, and they're totally mine! \*leans in and kisses both of them on the cheek, giggling\*

Ted Crosley: Hey!

Alex Stansfield: We're not boobs!

Lyssa: Yes you are!

Brittany: Go back to your game, boobs. \*laughs\* In the meantime, we get the honor of introducing a brand new host to the show. \*she and Lyssa walk over to a huge crate with air holes cut inside and dance music coming from it\*

Lyssa: A mail order host?

Brittany: I think he shipped himself here like this. \*grabs a crowbar and pries the box open\* Let's just...get this.... \*the box opens\* There!

\*A bunch of balloons and confetti spill out of the box as the new host steps out of it, a boombox blaring party music behind him.\*

Steve Horton: Hey everybody, I'm your new host, Steve Horton!

Lyssa: From *MTV's Real Spring Break*!

Steve: And I'm here to party!

Brittany: Well, you've come to the right place because we're about to review some *Mario Party*.

Lyssa: Whoooo! \*cheering and pumping her fists\*

-excerpted from the August 3, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

*“Of all the GameTV hosts, the last new host, Steve Horton, is probably the least favorite among fans. He certainly wasn't a bad guy, he got along well with the other hosts and like them, was a legitimate video game fan. But he was somewhat symbolic of the 'new' MTV. He was loud, somewhat crass, and seemed to be forcing his enthusiasm. Adrian Fry was loud and crass too, but with Adrian, nothing seemed forced. He stuck out among the show's hosts and wasn't too terribly entertaining either.”*

-from an article on Kotaku.com ranking the hosts of *GameTV*, posted on January 23, 2015

(...)

Alex: *NYPD: Narcotics Squad*, as a game, I thought it was excellent.

Ted: It was a hell of a lot better than *Virtua Cop*, and I actually really liked *Virtua Cop*. This game, the shooting works great, I appreciated that the clue hunting was contextual...like, the dialogue tells you where to look, so it's not a pixel hunt.

Alex: Right, I got that feeling too, that the game didn't want you to spend too long messing around looking for clues. It wanted to get you through the plot quickly. The plot, though, I was expecting maybe something a bit more. Without spoiling, it is...kind of predictable.

Ted: There were enough twists and turns to keep me hooked the whole time. Look, you know what you're playing if you play this game and I had a blast with it. The whole time, I had a blast.

Alex: The gameplay's fantastic, it's just the plot I had some problems with.

Ted: Well, we can disagree.

Alex: Of course.

Ted: The voice acting is great.

Alex: Oh, definitely yeah. I'm gonna go ahead and give it a 4.5 because aside from some problems with the plot, it's an outstanding game.

Ted: I'm giving it a perfect 5. I thought it was transcendent.

Alex: That's a really strong word for a shooter game, even a really good shooter game. Transcendent should be like, a game that transcends a 5. Like any *Zelda* game.

Ted: It was transcendent, I'm sticking to my word.

(...)

Steve: *Twisted Metal 3*, like the last two *Twisted Metal* games, kicked ass.

Brittany: They were going through the motions here. *Twisted Metal 2* came out three years after the first. This one came out a year later! That should tell you something.

Steve: Everything from the ground up, the multiplayer-

Brittany: Stop, stop, stop, the multiplayer in 2 was so much better. The arenas, the weapons, even the graphics. How do you make a new game and have the graphics get WORSE than the last one? How?

Steve: It's the same great *Twisted Metal* experience, if you liked the last two-

Brittany: If you liked the last two, play the last two.

Steve: The SNES-CD one was better than this one?

Brittany: The levels were more creative.

Steve: And the frame rate was awful.

Brittany: It was okay, considering. I could play the original *Twisted Metal* right now.

Steve: You'd really rather play it over 3?

Brittany: Hell yeah!

Steve: Well, in my opinion this game is fantastic and I'm giving it a 4.5.

Brittany: Absolutely not, it gets a 1.5 from me. It's really bad and a big step down from the last game.

-excerpted from the August 10, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Gary: There's a lot to like about *Tomorrow Never Dies*, but I really wish Rare had decided to take it. I just hope *Velvet Dark* is a bit better, this one plays a lot more like a generic FPS with James Bond in it.

Steve: And where's the multiplayer?

Gary: Exactly!

Steve: I don't know why an FPS these days wouldn't have multiplayer. It's no fun shooting bad guys who grunt and yell, you gotta shoot your friends so they can bitch at you!

Gary: \*laughing\* Do you bitch at your friends when they shoot you?

Steve: Well obviously, they cheat when they manage to hit me. Ted and Alex tell me you get killed a lot.

Gary: They're lying!

Steve: And Brittany tells me she's gotten you 24 times in a row in *Goldeneye* before.

Gary: \*shaking his head in dismay\*

Steve: \*laughing\*

Gary: If this game had multiplayer I'd kick your ass! And if it had multiplayer I'd give it a 4. Without it, it's just a 3.

Steve: It's not a bad game. It's got all the voices, it's pretty fun. I'm giving it a 3.5, but I agree, losing that multiplayer really sucks.

-excerpted from the August 17, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany: So what's your verdict on *Point Blank Adventure*?

Lyssa: It's really REALLY fun.

Brittany: The original *Point Blank* was an excellent shooting game. This one, same thing, for the most part, although I liked the variety of the original *Point Blank* as opposed to this one which is more of a straight-up lightgun shooter where you progress from level to level.

Lyssa: Any kind of well made lightgun shooter is a fun game, I thought the adventure elements added a much needed dimension to it. It wasn't perfect, though.

Brittany: No, it had some flaws. Repetitive enemies...I mean how many bug-bugs do you have to kill?

\*A quick montage showing the same type of bug as an enemy in literally every single level\*

Brittany: They changed...colors, I guess?

Lyssa: Right, we needed more enemy varieties and give them more attack patterns!

Brittany: In the original *Point Blank*, you spelled words, you shot cars, it was a rapid-fire. This, it gets kind of ho hum after a while. But...that said, I literally couldn't stop playing until I'd finished, which took just a little more than two hours.

Lyssa: Was it a fun two hours?

Brittany: .....ehhhh..... \*biting him lip\*

Lyssa: \*playfully pokes Brittany\* Cooooooooooooome on.

Brittany: ...yeah it was. 4 out of 5.

Lyssa: Same here, I'm giving it a 4 out of 5!

-excerpted from the August 24, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted: *Soul Calibur* is the best fighting game I've ever played. Hands down. Better than *Street Fighter 2* or *Tekken 3*.

Alex: Well I knew YOU'D love it, but you know what? ....\*laughs\* I love it too. It's not the

toughest fighting game but that's a big part of its appeal. It's forgiving. It's beginner friendly but it still has a deep strategic core.

Ted: The story, you know, simple but good. It's a compelling reason for them to be fighting each other and each character at least has a reaction to each other character. My personal favorite is Turok.

\*A quick Turok montage is shown.\*

Turok: \*reacting to Cervantes\* I've fought guys like you before.

Turok: \*reacting to Ivy, looking her body up and down\* I'm not impressed.

Turok: \*reacting to Voldo\* They've gone too far this time.

Turok: \*reacting to Lizardman\* I took down a hundred of your buddies before you woke up this morning.

Alex: I liked Lenneth. Hell, it's more fun to play through with other games' characters than it is to play with this game's!

Ted: I WANTED Sonic to show up...

Alex: No! No! That would be like Mario showing up!

Ted: \*laughing\*

Alex: You seriously wanted Sonic to show up?

Ted: Yeah, what Sega fan wouldn't?

Alex: If Sonic had shown up I'd have dinged this game half a point.

Ted: Oh you're no fun.

Alex: Well, I'm giving it a 5. It's easily one of the best games of the year and I'll concede, it's better than *Killer Instinct*.

Ted: Well I'm giving it a 5. A transcendent 5!

Alex: This time, I think the term fits.

-excerpted from the August 31, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

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## **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: August 1999**

1. Super Smash Bros.

2. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
3. Metal Gear Solid
4. Doom: Inferno
5. Super Mario Dimensions
6. Final Fantasy VII
7. Sailor Moon: Another Story Retold
8. Dino Crisis
9. Andrekah: Witches Brew
10. Tomb Raider III

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: August 1999**

1. Soul Calibur
2. Sonic The Hedgehog 5
3. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater
4. NYPD: Narcotics Squad
5. Battleborn
6. Raigeki II
7. Virtua Racing Reality
8. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
9. Virtua Fighter 3
10. Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver

-

### **September 1, 1999**

The official sales figures wouldn't be in until at least the following week, but reports from *Soul Calibur's* launch were good. Extremely good. In many stores, particularly EB Games and Gamestop stores, *Soul Calibur* was selling even faster than *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*, and Tom Kalinske couldn't have been happier at the news.

But there was a cloud to go with that silver lining. *Soul Calibur* was selling plenty of software, but from the early reports, Saturns weren't flying off the shelves any faster than before. Though the \$249.99 combo pack containing the Saturn, the Ring, the *Soul Calibur* game, a controller, and a fight stick was a popular buy, and even though Saturn owners WERE buying lots of Rings to play the new game, the Saturn base console itself hadn't seen its sales tick up even a tiny bit. The layoffs were continuing, though they'd slowed, and Kalinske hadn't had to fire any of his friends in a while. Sega's profits had stabilized.

And later in the month, Sega was planning to have a major presence at the Tokyo Game Show. They were finally going to formally unveil the Katana and the first wave of games for the new console. A number of upcoming Saturn games would be shown off as well. One of which, *Dragon Quest VII*, was sure to be a hit with the Japanese crowds. But in North America, the Saturn's market share had eroded significantly. The Ultra Nintendo was still selling extremely well, more than tripling Saturn sales in most months.

“Hey John, how's it going?” asked Kalinske. He was talking on the phone to John Antioco, Blockbuster's current CEO. “Oh really? That's awesome, thanks for letting us know.”

Antioco had just revealed to Kalinske that *Soul Calibur* had set a record for release date rentals from Blockbuster, and that the Ring had smashed a record for single-day peripheral rentals, a record that had previously been set by the Super Nintendo CD on the day that *Doom* had launched for the SNES-CD in 1995.

“The Saturn and its games have really been successful for us at Blockbuster and it's a partnership we'd like to keep going,” said Antioco. “Which brings me to my next request, is there anything you can let me know about the new thing you guys are coming out with? I think the Katana is what it's called? We'd love to be in position to have lots of units available for rental when it's released.”

“Sorry, John, not much I can tell you...” said Kalinske, and it wasn't just because he wasn't authorized to tell his Blockbuster friend anything...it was because he'd been left out of the loop on it as well, at least about certain aspects of the Katana's particulars. “You're welcome to come down to Tokyo in a couple weeks, we'll be showing it off to everybody there.”

“Ah, corporate secrets, huh?” replied Antioco with a laugh. “All right, all right, don't want to get you in trouble. “Hey, great work on the Saturn, it's really been a massive hit with all our customers. Remember, if Nintendo had their way, we wouldn't be able to rent out games at all!”

“You know, I wouldn't mind if all you guys carried were Sega games,” joked Kalinske. “But I've always been glad to have Blockbuster's support. I promise to let you know whatever I can as soon as I can and if you come to Tokyo, we can hang out together.”

“That'd be awesome, Tom. I'll see you there, buddy.”

Kalinske set the phone back on the receiver and sighed. The phone call with Antioco reminded him just how much was slipping out of his fingers. He had Blockbuster's support, but as for Sega's, he could no longer be certain.

He was hoping to meet with company brass in Tokyo and get some things straightened out. In the meantime, he had a few more phone calls to make, more *Soul Calibur* early sales reports to confirm.

Good news always helped calm his nerves.

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*August 23, 1999 – The last SNES-CD game is released in North America*

What began with Soyo Oka's upbeat *Super Mario Kart* soundtrack ended with one of Ludacris' raps set to bone-crushing football tackles. On August 23, 1999, *Madden NFL 2000* released for the Super Nintendo CD in North America and ended the illustrious run of the most successful video game peripheral ever released. Of course, it only began its life as a peripheral before becoming the successor to the Super Nintendo itself, eventually releasing a stand-alone version in 1995. When combined with sales of the Ultra Nintendo, which could also play SNES-CD games, then by some measures, more devices have been released that are capable of playing Super Nintendo CD games than any other console standard. Here's a breakdown of system sales.

Super Nintendo (cartridge system): 35.6 million (Japan: 10 million, North America: 19.5 million, Other: 6.1 million)

SNES-CD (peripheral): 15 million (Japan, 5.2 million, North America: 7.8 million, Other: 2 million)

Super Nintendo Playstation Combo Set: 25.4 million (Japan: 8.5 million, North America: 14 million, Other: 2.9 million)

SNES-CD (stand-alone): 11.8 million (Japan, 3.4 million, North America, 6.5 million, Other: 1.9 million)

-excerpted from a segment of "An Interactive Timeline Of Video Game History" on IGN.com, posted on December 31, 2015

*"One of the SNES-CD's launch games in North America was Dragon's Lair. Can you imagine? The Super Nintendo CD began with Don Bluth and ended with Ludacris. It might've lasted less than seven years, but that's a pop culture eternity."*

-Tonight Show host Jimmy Fallon, discussing the Super Nintendo CD in his opening monologue on the 25th anniversary of its North American launch, December 4, 2017

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*"The thing about Sony is, they've had that mentality from the start. The cutting-edge mentality. They've had to drag Nintendo along kicking and screaming at times, but they've made a good game device."*

-Gabe Newell, as part of an interview on the Ultra Nintendo *Half-Life* port in the September 1999 issue of *Next Generation* magazine

*"It plays like crap. Plays like crap!"*

-a post on the Gaming Age Forums by ProudPCGamer, giving his opinion on the Ultra Nintendo *Half-Life* port, posted on October 17, 1999

*"If you're a first-person shooter fan and you own an Ultra Nintendo, you're ruining your pants this month."*

-from the Review Crew editorial in the October 1999 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"While she lives, no one in this entire realm is going to be happy, do I make myself understood?!"*

-Magris, *Fire Emblem: The False Princess*

*"I know what she's done. I know what she deserves. But...she's my sister. That's the only reason I need to save her."*

-Shirei (Peasant Woman/Player Avatar), *Fire Emblem: The False Princess*

*"The first and only time I ever broke a game controller was when I was playing Fire Emblem: The False Princess and I failed Mission 14 for the fifth straight time because Blonde Bishoujo Hitler got herself killed again."*

-from a post on NeoGAF, December 28, 2013

*"Meanwhile, in Tokyo, Sega had exactly the kind of show they should've had at E3... and I still came away from it thinking they're in trouble."*

-John Davison, editor-in-chief, *Official Saturn Magazine*, in an article on the *OSM* website, October 1, 1999

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*Ultra Nintendo:*

### **Armored Core 2:**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "The new single player campaign is fun, but a bit short, and the gameplay is only marginally better than the previous game.")

Gamespot: 7.8 (quote: "Slick graphical updates and brand new mechs make this a must buy for fans of the original.")

### **Bahamut Lagoon 2:**

EGM: 7.3 (quote: "The FMV cutscenes might be the best part of this game, which ditches the fun tactical based gameplay of the SNES-CD title for a straight-forward RPG that isn't for everyone.")

Gamespot: 6.5 (quote: "A fresh coat of paint can't make this play-by-numbers sequel stand out from the crowd or pose any threat to the upcoming monster that is Final Fantasy VIII.")

### **Dragonball Z: Dragon Brawl!**

EGM: 5.0 (quote: "Where's the high flying action of the TV show? This is a mediocre fighting game at best.")

Gamespot: 3.6 (quote: "The small selection of characters really left us unimpressed.")

### **Fire Emblem: The False Princess**

EGM: 8.3 (quote: "The campaign doesn't feel quite as epic as the SNES-era classics, but it's still a magnificent tactical RPG.")

Gamespot: 8.1 (quote: "There's a massive difficulty spike, you'll know when you hit it.")

### **Half-Life**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "The translation from PC to console wasn't perfect, but this is still an innovative and fun FPS.")

Gamespot: 9.5 (quote: "Maybe the shooter of the year, console gamers are getting one of the best PC games of all time.")

### **Medal of Honor**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "A longer campaign might have made this a true classic, but it's nearly flawlessly made regardless.")

Gamespot: 8.3 (quote: "It's like getting to play through Saving Private Ryan. Not a surprise, considering Spielberg's pedigree.")

### **NFL Quarterback Club 2000**

EGM: 5.2 (quote: "Last year's game was excellent, but this is a real step back.")  
Gamespot: 6.2 (quote: "It's a decent NFL title, but there's little more here than a roster update.")

### **NHL 2000**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "The always excellent EA NHL series gets another great new installment.")  
Gamespot: 7.7 (quote: "The new presentation improvements bring this game closer to a real TV broadcast than ever.")

### **Syphon Filter**

EGM: 8.7 (quote: "A superb shooter with a great plot and fantastic gameplay.")  
Gamespot: 9.1 (quote: "It might just be the best stealth game since Metal Gear Solid.")

### **Ultra Kirby: Dreamland Friends**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "This game is cute, but it's not quite the classic Kirby game we were hoping for.")  
Gamespot: 8.1 (quote: "Mixing and matching friends and abilities couldn't be more fun.")

### **Trapmine**

EGM: 5.5 (quote: "It's not nearly as fun as the SNES-CD titles, and the graphics glitch quite often.")  
Gamespot: 8.2 (quote: "This is a really fun update of the SNES-CD games, with slick graphics despite a few hiccups.")

### **Brawl Balls** (port from Sega Saturn)

EGM: 7.3 (quote: "The updated graphics and addition of several new teams make this like a whole new game.")  
Gamespot: N/A

### **Night Of The Bats**

EGM: 4.0 (quote: "Holy crap, Batman! This game is boring!")  
Gamespot: 5.7 (quote: "For a game where all you do is go around exterminating bats from buildings, it has its moments. Unfortunately, those are few and far between.")

*Saturn:*

### **Blue Stinger**

EGM: 6.8 (quote: "The plot is a bit convoluted, but the gameplay is solid.")  
Gamespot: 7.3 (quote: "The excellent camera angles really help this game feel like a true horror experience.")

### **Imprisoned**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "The moral dilemmas in this game make for a constant struggle, not only against the environment but against your own conscience.")  
Gamespot: 8.9 (quote: "Unlike the cliched Blue Stinger, this game could be the beginning of a paradigm shift in the horror genre.")

### **Phoenix Run**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "While it is a bit derivative of F-Zero, it still has some really fun stages and the graphics are excellent.")  
Gamespot: 7.0 (quote: "It's a bit of an 'F-Zero For Beginners' type game, but the graphics and soundtrack are excellent.")

### **They Call Him Mr. Frog**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "It features some of the best jumping physics we've yet seen in a platformer.")  
Gamespot: 6.0 (quote: "It's way too derivative to be a truly great platformer.")

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### **Fire Emblem: The False Princess – The Basics**

*Fire Emblem: The False Princess* is the first *Fire Emblem* game for the Ultra Nintendo. While it retains many elements from previous titles, including tactical combat, mission-based gameplay, and party member permadeath, it adds a number of graphical and presentation upgrades, including CGI cutscenes, voice acting (done by Los Angeles-area voice actors, but fairly obscure ones compared to those featured in games like *Final Fantasy* and *Squad Four*), and much more graphically intense battles (somewhat similar to those featured in OTL's *Fire Emblem: Awakening*).

The game features five main characters, three of them are main player characters. They are:

**Shirei/Peasant Woman/Avatar:** One of the main players character of the game, a young peasant woman who survives by robbery and mugging. A pariah throughout the realm, she is in reality the princess of Obscura, the realm featured in the game. Her birthright was stolen from her and she was cast out and forced to live as a peasant. When she tries to mug Ralke, the rebel leader, he inspires her to lead his army to retake Obscura. She wields a sword and powerful dark magic in combat.

**Ralke:** Another of the three main characters, a young hotshot and leader of the rebels, who finds and recruits Shirei. Brave and loyal nearly to a fault, he is nonetheless a steadfast companion to Shirei and will do anything to gain freedom for the people. Can be romanced by Shirei or another female PC.

**Zebulon:** Ralke's bodyguard and a fierce fighter in his own right, he has been like a father to Ralke after Ralke's parents died.

**Magris:** The false princess of Obscura, she is a powerful light magic wielder. Beautiful and a master manipulator, she is loved by her people, but deep down she's a sadistic, selfish witch who uses fear and violence to rule her people. She later becomes the third main character.

Purefoy: Magris' advisor and chief of staff, he comes to work with the rebels as their army grows in power and is a valuable ally.

NOTE: If Zebulon is at any point killed in battle, he remains among the living but is unable to fight in any more battles, his role continues in the story. If Shirei, Ralke, or later Magris are killed, it's an automatic game over.

The game is divided into eight chapters, each containing a few missions each.

*Chapter One: The Rebel Lord-* The game begins with the rebel lord Ralke and his loyal companions, including his bodyguard Zebulon, fighting their way through a large forest over the course of a few missions. Eventually the army emerges from the forest, and after the soldiers fight their way out of an ambush, Ralke enters a city, where he meets Shirei.

*Chapter Two: The Dark Peasant-* After Ralke convinces Shirei to join the army, she cuts her teeth on a few easy battles before the real meat of the story begins: Magris is aware of Shirei seeking to usurp her, and sheds her normally good public image in order to form a vicious army of destruction to conquer the remainder of the realm and root out Shirei.

*Chapter Three: Shirei's Destiny-* Ralke is grievously wounded after throwing himself in the way of a powerful magical attack from Magris. Shirei and the army must continue fighting without him for a time. Shirei soon gains the confidence of the rebels and becomes their leader, and eventually Ralke recovers and joins her for the final push to the capital.

*Chapter Four: Battle For Freedom-* After a few more battles, Magris is cornered in her castle, and the final battle comes down to a one-on-one fight between Shirei and Magris. After winning that battle, Magris is captured and the war is at an end. Purefoy, who has been assisting the rebel army throughout the game, recommends execution for Magris, and Shirei and Ralke agree to this. As Magris awaits her execution, Shirei accesses the castle library, and finds a secret room within. She finds the royal family vault, and learns several truths. Magris is her younger sister. There was a great prophecy that stated that a princess of darkness would lead Obscura to ruin. This prophecy was taken to mean Shirei, and Shirei was to be cast off a cliff, but her mother took pity on her and instead delivered her to an orphanage. Magris was then groomed as the future ruler, but it was indeed Magris who was prophesized to lead the kingdom to ruin, despite her powers being those of light. Shirei also learns of the ancient draconic ancestry that she and Magris share, and that there is another born from the line of an evil dragon that will rise to threaten the kingdom after the princess has been deposed. Upon learning that Magris is her sister (and thus the only remaining family Shirei has left), Shirei decides to save her from execution. She demands, as the new princess of the realm, that Magris' sentence be commuted, but Purefoy refuses, and has the people's will behind him. It's then that Shirei realizes that Purefoy has been the cause of much of the terrible events, from the misreading of the prophecy (it was really supposed to read "a child of evil" and not "a child of darkness") to the murder of the girls' parents, to subtly nurturing Magris' evil, and that Purefoy is descended from the evil dragon. When Shirei goes to free Magris herself, Purefoy turns the people against her, calling her a traitor.

*Chapter Five: Sisters-* After a battle to escape the castle, Shirei, Ralke, Zebulon, what's left of their army, and the captive Magris (whose powers have been mostly drained by Purefoy) regroup outside of the city. Shirei wants to try and redeem her sister, but Magris seems too far gone (and is still spouting venomous hatred and threatening to kill Shirei). Still, when

Purefoy's armies give pursuit, Magris must help defend her sister with what's left of her powers. Slowly, over the course of the rest of the game, Magris' powers must be built back up (and if Magris dies in battle, it's an automatic Game Over, same as Shirei...the first few battles when Magris is at a low level rank among the toughest in the *Fire Emblem* series, and a lot of players HATE that they have to defend a really nasty villain in a series of glorified escort missions). Gradually, though, Magris gets stronger, and she also gets kinder...she slowly realizes the error of her ways and when she understands fully the gravity of what she's done (many, many murders, torture, etc.), she breaks down sobbing. As much as the first half of the game is about Shirei going from an angry, spiteful robber to the leader of a grand army, the second half is about Magris' redemption from a truly hideous villain to a heroine, while reconciling with her long-lost sister in the process.

*Chapter Six: The Lost Tribe-* After Magris has come to terms with her cruelty and has recovered a good amount of her power, she has become a trusted lieutenant in the rebel army. But the army is ambushed, and Magris is taken captive. Her captors are a tribe of nomads decimated by Magris' purges, and all but one of them, the nomadic leader, Veyo, wants her executed. However, Veyo can sense that Magris is truly atoning, and offers to protect her, in return for helping them defeat their pursuers, a group of mercenaries sent by Purefoy to wipe out the remainder of the tribe. Eventually, Magris gains the trust of the remainder of the tribe, and she dons a mask as a symbol of her atonement. Her new squad arrives just in time to save Shirei and Ralke's army from an ambush, and the sisters reunite to prepare for the final battle.

*Chapter Seven: The Magic Blades-* Shirei and Magris learn of a set of swords that the two of them are destined to wield, and must journey to an abandoned castle to retrieve them, with Purefoy's armies hot on their tail. After defeating one of Purefoy's top lieutenants and gaining the weapons, Magris finally fully reconciles with Shirei and removes her mask. Meanwhile, Purefoy, having lost his chance to gain the blades for himself, resorts to forbidden magic to regain his full powers, and ends up slowly transforming into a mindless beast as a result.

*Chapter Eight: Beast Of Evil-* Finally, the two sisters and their army confront Purefoy together, and defeat him in one final grand battle for the fate of the kingdom. In the end, Shirei becomes queen, while Magris willingly gives up her powers (she's still somewhat selfish and sadistic, and knows that she'll always been tempted to use her magic for evil if she keeps it) and goes into self-exile as a peasant to atone for her sins, with Veyo and his tribe as her companions. The realm of Obscura begins a new age as a peaceful, free kingdom.

*Fire Emblem: The False Princess* sells extremely well in Japan and moderately well in the States (though its North American sales pale in comparison to those of *Half-Life* and *Medal of Honor*, the two majorly hyped FPS games released in the same month). It's released in Europe in 2000 and sells decently well there despite not very many copies being made available (making it quite a rare game there and making the North American version a popular import). Its reviews are generally positive, though it's not quite as well received as the two SNES-CD *Fire Emblem* games because of its slightly shorter length and difficult (and annoying) battles toward the beginning of the second half. Its themes of duality and of "light is not always good and dark is not always bad" are highly praised, and Shirei, Magris, and Zebulon rank among the series' most popular characters, with massive flame wars erupting over whether or not Magris (nicknamed "Blonde Bishoujo Hitler" by her detractors in the fanbase) deserved redemption or execution for her crimes.

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“So now we have our sixth named storm of the season, and this is Tropical Storm Floyd. Packing winds of 45 miles an hour right now and entering an environment which looks to be favorable for potential development, we'll have to keep an eye on this system as it remains heading due west at about 12 miles an hour.”

-John Hope, Weather Channel meteorologist, on the Tropical Update segment at 1:50 PM on September 12, 1999

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“Kirby finally arrives on the Ultra Nintendo, and this time, he's brought friends. Join Kirby and his old pals Rick, Meta Knight, King Dedede, Girby, Lolo, and Waddle Dee, along with his new friends Adeleine and Packder, as you explore the magical realm of Dreamland in search of the hidden Crystal Shards. It's a big world out there, and you'll need all the help you can get.”

-from the magazine advertisement for *Ultra Kirby: Dreamland Friends*

*Kirby's Dreamland Friends*, while not as long or as epic as *Kirby's Super Deluxe*, was still a very fun and cute adventure, and brought the series into 3-D for the first time, while also making such villains as Meta Knight and King Dedede playable for the first time. The unlikely crew is brought together by the invasion of an evil alien race called the Dark Matter. These creatures are capable of corrupting and destroying anything they touch, and they use their powers to shatter the mighty Ribbon Star Crystal into several shards (four in all) that are scattered to the four corners of Dreamland through an interdimensional vortex, causing the Dark Matter to invade Dreamland in search of it. When King Dedede realizes that even his kingdom isn't safe, he reluctantly teams up with Kirby, bringing a Waddle Dee along for the ride. Kirby also meets Adeleide, a cute girl with a magical paintbrush, and Packder, a playful elephant. In this game, there are only eight different abilities to copy (Fire, Ice, Stone, Cutter, Bomb, Needle, Spark, and Hammer), but Kirby AND each of his friends can use these abilities, making for 72 different combinations in all, as each character uses each ability a little bit differently. The game has four different worlds broken into 3-6 levels each, with a mid-boss at the end of some levels and a boss at the end of each world. Once the four Shards are collected, Kirby and his friends do battle with the powerful Miracle Matter to free Dreamland and Ribbon Star once and for all. Defeating Miracle Matter opens up a boss rush mode, and if that is cleared (with any character), a final world opens up, at the end of which lies the Queen of Darkness herself, ruler of the Dark Matter and the true evil behind the game's events.

*Ultra Kirby* was a cute, fun, enjoyable platformer. It wasn't the best game on the Ultra Nintendo, and certainly wasn't the best Kirby game, but for what it was, it was quite fun, and sold more copies than any *Kirby* game to date, save for the Game Boy original.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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PCGamer: So what do you think the problem was with the Ultra Nintendo port of *Half-Life*?

Gabe Newell: There weren't any problems with it. The graphics were a tad downgraded, certainly, but the port itself was perfect. The problem was, and I've ran into this a lot with

console gamers, is that *Half-Life* wasn't the kind of game that Ultra Nintendo players wanted. It wasn't *Goldeneye*.

PCGamer: *Doom* did incredibly well on the SNES-CD. It was one of the top ten best selling SNES-CD games. So what did *Doom* have that *Half-Life* didn't?

Newell: It's more like what *Half-Life* had that *Doom* didn't, and also what *Goldeneye* didn't, and that's room to breathe, and time to think. It's just a slower paced game, and I think people who play FPSes on consoles want a bit more "action". They want to sit down, they want to kill some stuff, and turn off the console, and *Half-Life* isn't that kind of game.

PCGamer: Were you expecting it to do as well as *Goldeneye*?

Newell: No. We thought we'd sell two, three million copies, and that's what ended up happening. It was a big deal on the Ultra Nintendo, it just wasn't a game-changer like *Doom* was. Plus, *Medal of Honor* was released around the same time and that took some of our business away.

PCGamer: Did you give any thought to delaying *Half-Life* into November of that year, to get away from *Medal of Honor* and maybe position the game as a big holiday title.

Newell: No, absolutely not, no. We would've been going right into *Squad Four: Rebellion* then, and that would've hurt us even worse. *Squad Four*, that was a fantastic game and I knew that one was going to be huge. I mean, we were even influenced by it a little bit making *Half-Life*. A couple of the *Half-Life* aliens, those were inspired by the designs from *Squad Four: Eclipse*. I was more scared of that than I was of *Medal of Honor*.

PCGamer: At this point, are there any plans to release *Half-Life 2* for consoles?

Newell: We'll see. I mean, never say never.

-from an interview in the November 2004 issue of *PCGamer*

## **September 13, 1999**

*Half-Life* is released for the Ultra Nintendo. It's the most hyped PC port since the SNES-CD port of *Doom*, and sells extremely well on its first day release, having the biggest launch day sales of any Ultra Nintendo game since *Doom: Inferno*. The game receives excellent reviews from most media outlets, though there are a few (largely Nintendo-leaning publications) that claim that the game is "boring" compared to games like *Doom: Inferno* and *Goldeneye*. Even these publications tend to give the game positive scores, and overall critical reception settles in the high-8s/low-9s. Though it's not an absolute smash hit like *Doom* was, *Half-Life* is easily the best selling video game of the month in North America, challenged only by the launch of *Medal of Honor* and continued *Sonic the Hedgehog 5* and *Soul Calibur* sales. Despite the game's Mature rating (considered a very "soft" Mature rating), it's praised in some circles for not being as egregiously violent as other first-person shooters, and its success is considered a positive step forward for the genre as a whole.

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"Floyd is a hurricane, category 1 with 75 mile per hour winds, and it continues to move just

*to the north of due west as it makes its way past the Leeward Islands. Right now as you can see, the southeastern United States is in that cone right now but we're going to continue to watch as this hurricane churns toward the Bahamas. Still not a...not a terrifically well organized storm, but it is starting to get itself together and what I'm going to be looking for over the next couple of days is to see if it can close its eyewall off and block some of that dry air from coming in. If it can do that, I certainly think it has a chance to strengthen and might then pose some problems for the southeastern United States down the road, but right now it's a Category 1 with winds of 75 miles an hour."*

-John Hope, Weather Channel meteorologist, on the Tropical Update segment at 4:50 PM on September 14, 1999

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*It's a shooter showdown! The sci-fi FPS Half-Life throws down with the realistic World War II FPS Medal of Honor, and we'll be telling you which one deserves your playtime this month!*

So what release could be bigger than Steven Spielberg, Dreamworks, EA, and Sony all teaming up together on a World War II game? Why, last year's PC game of the year, of course. Valve's **Half-Life** finally comes to consoles, and it's landed on the Ultra Nintendo. *Half-Life* is as good as you remember the original PC version being. Some of the graphics are a bit less detailed (unless your computer was a bit old, in which case the Ultra version might look even better), and all the great shooting and puzzle solving gameplay is still intact. For those of you who've never played this game before, you're in for a treat. The puzzles are incredibly tricky but quite fun to solve, and the game's plot (we won't spoil it here) will blow your mind. Gordon Freeman is silent but deadly (not in THAT way, grow up) and his journey through a devastated lab is one to remember. This is a great FPS, even better than *Doom: Inferno* (which was designed with the Ultra in mind) and will keep you having fun for quite some time.

**Medal of Honor** features a story penned by Steven Spielberg himself, and takes place in the final year of World War II. You're Bobby Patterson, an Air Force soldier who's just dropped down on occupied France, and your squad has to fight its way through the Nazi forces to liberate Europe and win the war. Though some of the missions are a bit repetitive, the game features excellent gameplay and an outstanding musical score by Michael Giacchino (indeed, the musical score is the one aspect of the game that utterly blows *Half-Life* out of the water).

While we thoroughly enjoyed *Medal of Honor*, and it's hard to beat Spielberg for sheer storytelling, the missions themselves were somewhat cookie-cutter in nature, compared to the puzzles and exploration of *Half-Life*. In *Half-Life*, we never knew what to expect, while in *Medal of Honor*, we're pretty sure what we're doing next and it usually involves killing Nazis. It's not like killing Nazis isn't awesome, but even though Bobby's story kept us entertained throughout, for sheer gameplay innovation it's really, really, REALLY hard to beat *Half-Life*. If you can only get one Ultra Nintendo FPS this month, make it *Half-Life* (unless you already own it on the PC, in which case get *Medal of Honor*). It's a great month to be a shooter fan.

-excerpted from an article posted on Gamespot.com on September 18, 1999

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*"It's the moment you've all been waiting for, Dragonball Z fans. Z-Day is here, September*

13, and we're about to air an hour of brand new Dragonball Z. The wait is finally over.”  
-TOM, on Cartoon Network's Toonami block, September 13, 1999

“Ocean had just started working on Sailor Moon again, and were still pretty flush with cash from the series' run on Fox Kids, so I was able to get them to cut me a deal as far as voice acting was concerned. We were able to keep the old voice actors, but as far as the music, we had to bring in our own in-house guy since Saban was no longer funding the show. So we brought in Bruce Faulconer and he did a fantastic job.”

-Gen Fukunaga, discussing the dub of *Dragonball Z* at an anime convention in Fort Worth, Texas on December 14, 2012

“Well, they'd decided to stick with the old voice actors for Dragonball Z. Meanwhile, here's this company, Squaresoft, I think you guys have heard of them. They're bringing over all these games, and they needed, I guess you'd call it a 'B team' for dubbing some of their games. Since they didn't want to pay union scale for all their video games, they needed some non-union actors for some of the smaller games. And they weren't happy with the one group up in northern California that was doing some of their games, so instead, they start shopping around, and low and behold they find some voice actors in Texas with nothing to do. And so my first job for Funimation was voicing the main bad guy of Bahamut Lagoon 2. And, you know, five other guys in that game. Because back then there weren't very many of us.”

-Christopher Sabat, in a panel at the 2010 San Diego Comic-Con

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“Hurricane Floyd is now a massive category 3 hurricane with 130 mile an hour winds, and it's going to be in Florida probably 24 hours from now. Right now it's absolutely pounding the Bahamas and if you're anywhere along the southeastern coast of Florida, you probably should have already evacuated because right now I have to imagine the roads are a complete mess of cars trying to get out of this thing's way. This hurricane has just finished an eyewall replacement cycle and I think it could be a category 4 again before it makes landfall.”

-John Hope, Weather Channel meteorologist, on the Tropical Update segment at 6:50 PM on September 17, 1999

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The Sega Saturn's most notable game of September 1999 was *Imprisoned*, a horror title driven largely by story, which differentiated itself from the *Resident Evil* series somewhat. You began your tale as one of five protagonists, chosen by the player at the outset: Jeff, a 20-something everyguy who's just started out as a welder and who has a young wife, Kimmy, a 19-year-old college student and daughter of a rich lawyer, Petra, a 22-year-old woman who's about to start graduate school biochemistry, Bill, a 26-year-old movie star, and Anson, a 51-year-old Vietnam veteran and widower. The five have been kidnapped by a mysterious villain and are trapped in five different cells. While the killer talks to them through an intercom system, your chosen protagonist must figure out both how to escape and how to rescue the others (or if you should rescue them at all). Rescuing the others is difficult, since each cell is guarded with traps and puzzles, but everyone that you rescue can help you throughout the game in some way, and certainly there is a moral component to rescuing the other captives, as every one of the five protagonists has both good and bad qualities. Jeff is a hardworking family man but is a former juvenile delinquent and still has

criminal tendencies, Kimmy is extremely stuck up and shallow but has a hidden heart of gold, Petra is brilliant but misanthropic, Bill is charismatic but somewhat of a misogynist, and Anson is a war hero but deeply traumatized and may have killed his wife. *Imprisoned* is a fairly short game, it usually only takes 1-4 hours to complete the main story depending on how many people you save and what routes you take, but death is highly risky, as dying three times will send you all the way back to the very beginning of the game, so you have to be extremely careful about who you save and what escape route you take. Achieving the best ending (where the five of you all team up to defeat the killer) is extremely difficult, and so most players either escape on their own (usually without defeating the killer) or save one or two other people and get away (again, usually without defeating the killer). Defeating the killer doesn't guarantee the others' freedom, as he has a dead man's switch on him that when activated will kill everyone who hasn't yet been freed from their cell. Also, when anyone besides the player character dies, they're gone for the rest of the playthrough (even if the player character dies and comes back), so keeping all five characters alive is another difficult task.

*Imprisoned* followed somewhat in the steps of *Shenmue*, in that it emphasized story and used it to drive the gameplay. It won accolades from critics and was one of the Saturn's top sellers of fall '99. While it wouldn't change the horror genre nearly as much as *Silent Hill*, which was released the very next month, would do, it threw a meaty bone to players who wanted something different than the usual survivor horror games.

-excerpted from the article "Sega Saturn: 1999" on Segaretro.com, posted on July 17, 2007

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*"These winds are the most powerful... I'm having trouble standing up, these winds are certainly...stronger than Hurricane Andrew was when it passed south of here seven years ago! I'm going to move behind this pillar because these winds are so powerful and you can hear them...I'm having to scream at the top of my lungs just so you can hear me! We're...we're definitely in the most powerful part of the eyewall right now...these are the loudest winds I've ever heard, just absolutely incredible and I have to imagine these winds are going to do just incredible damage....! I'm hearing now that we had a wind gust of.... 191 miles an hour...191 mile an hour wind gust at Miami Beach...! 191 miles an hour, just unreal!"*

-Dennis Smith, reporting live for The Weather Channel on Hurricane Floyd's landfall in Miami, Florida on September 18, 1999 at 6:14 PM

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Gary Westhouse: *Syphon Filter* is really fun, it's a lot more faster-paced than *Metal Gear Solid*, which might be a good thing if you're looking for a bit more action in a stealth game.

Alex Stansfield: The plot's not quite as good but it's solid, while the shooting was just so accurate and you have so many weapons in this game.

Gary: Did you run into the problem of some of the weapons being useless?

Alex: I did, but you know, that's not always a problem.

Gary: It IS a pain in the ass to pick up a bunch of useless guns in late levels.

Alex: Right, it could've done a better job of evening out the weapon distribution. And I wanted a flamethrower! They gave one to that one boss!

Gary: Considering how that boss gets defeated, you probably DON'T want a flamethrower. The AI's really smart in this game.

Alex: Sometimes too smart! I don't know whether it's a refreshing change of pace or just frustrating. Honestly though, I'm just nitpicking for stuff not to like. It's a great game, 4.5 out of 5.

Gary: Yeah, definitely a 4.5 from me too. *Syphon Filter*, it's fantastic.

-excerpted from the September 7, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted Crosley: Well Alex, what did you think of *Half-Life* on the Ultra Nintendo?

Alex: Exactly the same thing I thought of it when we reviewed it for the PC. It's just a really, REALLY great game. I'm glad that I'm finally getting the chance to play it on my Ultra. All the puzzles are there, the weird enemies are there...

Ted: So your 5 out of 5 is unchanged?

Alex: Look, the graphics suffered a little bit in translation, but that's par for the course. I'm absolutely still giving this a 5. You gonna bump up your 4.5?

Ted: Well, I wish this was on the Sega Saturn.

Alex: \*rolls his eyes\*

Ted: With the Ring, the Saturn could totally handle this game!

Alex: You're not gonna dock points for that are you?

Ted: No, of course not. It's still an incredible game. Not as good as *Goldeneye*, but it's a different kind of game and some of the puzzles were real mind-benders. A 4.5 from me, unchanged from my PC rating. Look, if you've got an Ultra Nintendo and you love first-person shooters, don't miss out on this.

Alex: Even with *Medal of Honor* coming out next week?

Ted: Right, even then, I'd get *Half-Life*. The hype is real.

-excerpted from the September 14, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany Saldita: *Bahamut Lagoon 2* is a really good RPG. It's not a tactical RPG anymore, BUT it's still fun, you still have to manage your dragons, and I thought the voice acting was

a bit better than the last one.

Ted: Even if it's the same guys doing five or six different voices?

Brittany: These guys weren't bad. Especially the villain, he was excellent.

Ted: This game, I mean...I wasn't even much of a fan of the first. The first game was a strategy RPG with dragons. This game was an RPG with dragons.

Brittany: You like dragons!

Ted: I do, and the CGI cutscenes were really well done. That was the best part of the game. The one and a half minute cutscene at the beginning and then all the little ten second cutscenes that pop up once in a while. The rest of it was just your standard "hero gets a team together and saves the world from a dastardly bastard" formula and I figure you of all people should be criticizing that.

Brittany: I liked feeding the dragons. Again, the character management stands out in this game and I could forgive the somewhat cliched plot because of that. Managing my dragons and my party members turned this game from a fairly mediocre one to a really good one.

Ted: And like the original, managing dragons was a pain in the ass. I want to ride them, not try to figure out what kind of food they like!

Brittany: You'd be a terrible pet owner.

Ted: Dogs eat anything! Dogs aren't finicky like dragons!

Brittany: Dragons are majestic and beautiful creatures, they have a higher standard.

Ted: I prefer my dog. I'm giving this game a 3 out of 5.

Brittany: And I'm giving it a 4.

-excerpted from the September 21, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Lyssa Fielding: We're back to our world premiere first look at *Disavowed*, we're at Acclaim Entertainment and we've just seen this game's gritty single-player storyline mode.

Ted: You got to meet Kevin Straborg, the guy whose shoes you'll be filling when you start up this killer campaign. Now Lyssa and I are getting a chance to take a look at this game's four-player multiplayer mode and for that we'll be talking to Marc Pacini.

Marc Pacini: Hey guys, welcome to our multiplayer testing facility! \*laughs and shakes Ted's hand and then Lyssa's\* So here we're going to be trying our new asymmetrical deathmatch mode, and how this works is that one of you will be by yourself, and three of us will be trying to take you down.

Lyssa: \*laughing\* Let's gang up on Ted!

Ted: Isn't that how it always is?

\*So Ted teams up against Lyssa, Marc, and an unnamed Acclaim staffer as the game begins.\*

Pacini: And in this mode, Ted here will be controlling a general-type character. But he won't be alone.

Ted: Oh?

Pacini: Ted will also be in charge of some army units and hazards that he can deploy, and our job will be to assassinate him but first we have to get past his obstacles.

Ted: Oh, this is nice. \*he uses up one of his airstrikes\*

Lyssa: Aahhhhh crap crap crap! \*barely rolls behind a car in time but the staffer's character is killed\* Wow...!

Pacini: Basically this is done in rounds, if we kill Ted or he kills all of us, the next round begins, and first person to win a set number of rounds wins. \*takes out two of Ted's flunkies\*

Ted: The AI's not very good on those guys.

Pacini: Well, you have a limited number you can deploy. You have a bunch of minor guys you can summon, and their AI is not very good, they're kind of like cannon fodder. You have a few mid-level guys who are a bit better, and then you can also deploy your personal bodyguard and his AI is extremely good.

Ted: Oh, fantastic! \*he deploys his bodyguard who takes out Lyssa in a hurry\*

Lyssa: What....?!

Pacini: \*gets his character up behind Ted's, but before he can take the killing shot Ted triggers a proximity mine and kills him\* Ohhhhhhhhhh!

Ted: Yeah! \*pumping his fists\*

Pacini: So you see? You can sort of create your own level for your opponents to have to navigate through.

Lyssa: That guy killed me so fast, wow!

Ted: That was a blast!

Lyssa: You wouldn't be saying that if you didn't win!

-excerpted from the September 28, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

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### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: September 1999**

1. Super Smash Bros.
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
3. Outfoxed
4. Doom: Inferno
5. Metal Gear Solid
6. Hakendo
7. Mario Golf
8. Super Mario Dimensions
9. Final Fantasy VII
10. Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: September 1999**

1. Soul Calibur
2. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater
3. Sonic the Hedgehog 5
4. NYPD: Narcotics Squad
5. Commander Keen: When Universes Collide
6. Silent Hill
7. Sonic the Hedgehog 4
8. Imprisoned
9. Virtua Fighter 3
10. Shenmue

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Hurricane Floyd was a Category 4 storm packing 150 mile per hour winds when it made landfall on September 18, 1999. It made landfall directly on the city of Miami, just north of the downtown area. The storm's winds ravaged the city, leaving shattered windows all up and down the city's skyline and leaving tens of thousands of flattened houses, but thanks to the evacuation, the largest to that point in American history, many lives were saved. The storm had just begun a northward turn when it made its landfall, and the powerful hurricane raked the entire state of Florida, curving upward to strike Orlando as a Category 2 storm with 105 mile per hour winds. The hurricane severely damaged both Disney World and Universal Studios Florida, along with many homes in the city itself. It continued to curve to the north and east, exiting the state at Daytona Beach as a high-end Category 1 as it went back out over the waters of the Atlantic.

Floyd hugged the coast, dumping huge amounts of rain and sending big waves up the Georgia and South Carolina coasts before making landfall once again in North Carolina's Outer Banks, having regained Category 2 strength. After that, it turned slightly to the east again and set its sights on Long Island, making its final landfall just to the east of New York City as a category 1 hurricane with 85 mile per hour winds. Floyd's path was nearly identical to that of 1960's devastating Hurricane Donna, and it left \$60 billion in damage in its wake, making it the costliest natural disaster to that point in United States history (and second costliest worldwide, just behind the 1995 Kobe earthquake). It killed 128 people in the United States, which, considering the massive destruction left by the storm, was somewhat

of a miracle, attributed to the widespread evacuations which took place ahead of the hurricane's landfall.

The relief effort was extremely instrumental in helping to get people back on their feet, and President Bill Clinton received great praise for the response to the storm. Clinton's response and his ability to empathize with those who'd lost homes and loved ones to the hurricane, likely completed his "bounce back" from the Monica Lewinsky scandal that had nearly led to his impeachment the year before. Clinton's popularity ratings surged after Floyd, and when his vice president Al Gore began his own presidential campaign, Clinton's popularity surely played a heavy part in helping Gore to secure the Democratic nomination. The hurricane itself, which was the latest in what was now a four-year trend in stronger hurricanes that began with the historic 1995 hurricane season, had led to rumblings about if perhaps global warming caused by manmade fossil fuels was contributing to the seeming increase in the number and strength of hurricanes. Gore would make global warming a crucial part of his Presidential campaign.

-from the article "Hurricanes And Politics: A Primer", from Samuel Balthasar's Political Blog, posted on February 20, 2011

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*"Hello. It is my most humble honor to introduce to the world our newest interactive entertainment technology, the product of several years of research and development. Today, I introduce to you... the Sega Katana."*

-Hayao Nakayama, introducing the Sega Katana at the Fall 1999 Tokyo Game Show on September 16, 1999

The Tokyo Game Show, Japan's biggest annual video game trade show, has come and gone, and a number of big announcements were made, while a number of highly anticipated video games were exhibited.

The biggest news coming from the show came from Sega, which finally formally revealed their next video game console after months of rumors. Officially named the Sega Katana, the system was announced for a fall 2000 release in Japan and a 2001 release elsewhere, with more details, including price, set to be revealed in the coming months. Sega had five games available for demonstration at the show, while video footage showed several more games, including an *Ecco* game that looked absolutely beautiful and some *Sonic the Hedgehog* demo footage that didn't appear to be from any upcoming games but definitely outclassed *Sonic the Hedgehog 5* in terms of fidelity and detail. The most impressive displays of graphical might, however, came from the video demonstration of the new *Daytona* game and the playable demo of *Tekken Tag Tournament*. *Daytona's* cars and tracks popped in beautiful clarity that easily blew Nintendo's *Gran Turismo* completely out of the water, while *Tekken Tag's* fighters moved fluidly and quickly, in what was easily the most realistic looking fighting game I've ever seen. We also got a first look at *Way of the Samurai*, a new title from Treasure. It's a sidescrolling weapon-based beat-em-up that features graphics resembling a beautifully illustrated cartoon, like something out of an anime film. The combat was highly complex, featuring gorgeously choreographed combos that even an amateur player was able to pull off quite nicely, racking up massive combos on enemies before a huge boss enemy showed up and thrashed the player in typical Treasure fashion. There were also demonstrations of *Sailor Moon* and *Super Sentai* games. The *Sailor Moon* game in particular looked quite promising, showing off characters from all five

seasons of the show. The Katana also promises to incorporate online gameplay into its strategy, and there was a playable demonstration of an online *Phantasy Star* game set up on a server so that everyone at the event kiosk could play together. There was also a fast-paced puzzle game called *Chu Chu Rocket* that will also include online play. There was no announcement made about whether or not DVD movies would be playable on the Katana, though Sega did announce the use of DVD technology for the games themselves. Of course, Sega wasn't only showing off the Katana at the Tokyo Game Show. Plenty of Saturn games were exhibited, proving that the system's not quite dead just yet. Perhaps the most popular booth of the show, even moreso than the one showing off the Katana, was the *Dragon Quest VII* booth. The highly anticipated RPG is from a series that's an enormous hit in Japan, and the line to play was probably longer than any other line I was in. It looks significantly better than any previous *Dragon Quest* game from a graphical standpoint, though the gameplay is the same standard RPG fare that appeals so greatly to the series' legions of loyal fans. Enix also showed off some footage of a *Planetary Probe* sequel, and leaked some more information about their collaboration with Sega on a game now being called *Skies of Arcadia*. A bit of video footage from the game, depicting heroes soaring in airships high above the clouds, looked very promising, and we can't wait for more information. We were also intrigued by a game called *Space Channel Ulala*, based on the side character from the popular *Spice World* game. The game appears to be a rhythm based adventure similar to *Spice World*, and it, along with *Samba de Amigo*, another rhythm game, were quite popular at the show. The latest game in the *DonPachi* series, *Pachi Pachi Panic!* made an appearance as well. It appears to be a spinoff of the classic shooter series, with cutesy characters but still the same crazy gameplay with bullets flying all over the screen. RPG lovers will be happy to note that *Windborn* is getting a sequel that appears to take place in a completely different world from the original, starring a brand new cast of characters but featuring a similar battle system. They'll also be happy to hear that *Panzer Dragoon Saga 2* is coming. Only the game's logo was revealed, but it's being announced as a 2001 Saturn release, and should prove to be a nice swan song for the system.

Of course, Nintendo was no slouch either, and had plenty of games of its own to show off. Most notably, a new *Legend of Zelda* game was revealed to be about halfway complete, much to the shock and pleasant surprise of many gathered there at Nintendo's booth. Called *The Legend Of Zelda: Majora's Mask*, the game takes place in the land of Termina, which is in the midst of an apocalyptic crisis caused by a mysterious mask-wielding villain. Link must don several masks of his own to save Termina from destruction. The game seems to play much like *Temple of Time*, though the graphics appear to have gotten a nice upgrade. A new trailer for *Metroid: Darkness* was played, depicting Samus defending a little girl from a swarm of insect-like monsters. There was also a gameplay demo, and the gameplay is much like *Super Metroid*, though the graphics have clearly gotten a major boost. Samus was able to use her familiar beam weapon, along with her Missiles and Super Missiles, and we also got a look at one of her new weapons, the Refractor Beam, which can bounce off of walls to hit distant foes or switches. Telenet Japan showed off *Tale Illumina* and showed a woman running across a desolate ice landscape as troops gave pursuit. Konami then showed off *Metal Gear Solid Integral*, an enhanced re-release of *Metal Gear Solid* with extra missions. Speaking of extra missions, *Metal Gear Solid VR Missions* was also demonstrated, and it seems to focus on Snake using his stealth abilities to complete various tasks. Konami also showed off a new Castlevania game, *The Occulted Circle*, in which a vampire hunter and his young apprentice must battle twelve vampire lords who are looking to divide up the world under their rule. Squaresoft was on hand to show off several games, including *Saga Frontier 2*, which picks up where the first game left off with a set of five new characters and quests, *Mystic Creature*, which is a Pokemon-inspired RPG, a *Final Fantasy* spinoff game for the Game Boy Nova, and finally, a brand new *Mana* game. Called *Legend of Mana*, the game

puts the player in the shoes of a young boy who must decide what type of hero he's going to be. The game features what Squaresoft calls the "Dynamic Quest System" in which you build the game's world as you explore it, deciding your own path through the game. Sony was also making a big deal about next year's *Gran Turismo* sequel, which looked better in terms of graphics than any other game at the show, with the obvious exception of Sega's Katana games. In addition to the big Ultra Nintendo announcements, Nintendo also showed off a number of Game Boy Nova games in anticipation of the system's upcoming launch in December. *Pokemon Sun and Moon* was displayed, with several more Pokemon, including a bonsai tree and a set of three powerful elemental cat-like beasts similar to the legendary birds from *Pokemon Red and Green*. Nintendo revealed a new *Mario Kart* title, Capcom showed off more *Street Fighter III* and *Resident Evil* footage, and Konami announced that a version of *Metal Gear Solid* would be coming to the Nova, though it would be more of an adaptation than a straight-up port. Maybe the two most intriguing Nova games were a couple of original titles: a role-playing game by Camelot, developers of the Ultra Nintendo's *Ultra Adventures*, that appears to be a solar-system spanning space adventure, and a platform game by *Capcom* called *Triple Orb* that appears to combine the quick shooting action of *Mega Man* with the brawling action of *Street Fighter*, all the while sporting impressive 3D graphics.

While Sega definitely seemed to win the show, with the bigger and more enthusiastic crowds at their booths (especially at the Katana and *Dragon Quest VII* booths), Nintendo boasted its fair share of quality games, and the announcement of a new *Zelda* game for next year was maybe the biggest surprise of the show. Whether you're a fan of Sega or Nintendo, the future of gaming is certainly bright, and it's never been brighter than what we've seen this week in Tokyo.

-from a Gamespot.com article posted on September 20, 1999

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*(With permission from Ry and Nivek, I'm posting this entry Commander Keen: When Universes Collide early. Man of Tomorrow is coming after the November update.)*

The massive success of *Commander Keen: Mars' Most Wanted* propelled Billy Blaze into was of the Saturn's biggest hits of 1998, and many fans (new and old alike) wondered what Tom Hall had planned for an encore. One only had to look to the bonus worlds from *Mars' Most Wanted* to see what the possibilities were. The appearances of Alex Kidd, Joe Musashi, the cast of *Streets of Rage*, and even Sonic the Hedgehog set the rumor mill on fire on whether or not Sega would release a crossover game for 1999. "Tom [Kalinske] and the brass at Sega of Japan wanted one [a crossover game], but did not feel that the time was right then." Tom Hall said in an interview with IGN shortly after the release of the twelfth installment, *Worlds United*. "For them it was a matter saving it for their next console. For me, it was a matter of getting all the pieces of the story into place as well as refining some of the other gameplay elements."

Among those elements was the game's surprisingly robust multiplayer mode, which included the game's outlandish weapons and cartoonish animation. Although it was not as widely

praised as, let's say, *Goldeneye* or *Quake*, many reviewers and critics noted it in their reviews. So Ion Storm worked tirelessly to polish the rough edges like the slowdown that plagued it in *Mars' Most Wanted*. The addition of Princess Lindsay as a playable character also proved to be another factor. Despite what the gaming magazines and media of the time claimed, Princess Lindsay was a part of the games since *Keen 4* but appeared in only two levels to give hints to Keen. She stood as an interesting contrast to Princesses Peach and Zelda (at least at the time) where she took a more active role in moving the plot forward. While Brittany Saldina did raise a valid point over whether her subversion of the "distressed princess" trope was too on the nose during GameTV's *Mars' Most Wanted* review, I believe that it was only too obvious because audiences were expecting it for years.

Despite what many cultural critics say about Billy Blaze's initial childish sexism towards Lindsay in *Mars' Most Wanted*, I believe that it gave the game a bit of emotional grounding in an otherwise absurdist plot. Sometimes as adults we tend to forget that children of both sexes saw the opposite as "gross." In terms of how the developers treated Princess Lindsay, she was Keen's equal in terms of gameplay and their playful schoolyard banter did demonstrate the depth of their friendship. The future seen in 2003's *Back To Last Tuesday* even suggests that the two will eventually marry. It is probably for that reason that Ion Storm added a 2-player co-operative mode where their bantering would become part of the gameplay experience.

*When Universes Collide* picks up a couple days after *Mars' Most Wanted* ends after Billy Blaze's parents ground him for skipping school. That means an earlier bedtime, no inventing, and worst of all, having to eat his vegetables. We also meet Billy's annoying five-year-old sister, Rebecca "Becky" Blaze, who loves to remind him that, "You gotta eat your vegetables" in singsong. The game begins with one of the portals from the previous game opens in the Blaze's backyard and Becky falls into it before it closes. Billy and Becky's parents are out visiting a sick relative so their babysitter so Molly McMire (Mortimer's sister, who Keen saved in *Aliens Ate My Babysitter*) covers for him while he mounts a rescue mission to the Nega-Verse.

Keen travels to Gnosticus IV to recruit Princess Lindsay and the Page (Eddie the Yeti is unavailable due to him becoming Grunda's consort). The Oracle from the fourth game warns Keen that a large portal just open at the center of the universe and threatens to consume it, hence Keen and his crew dive into it where they come face to face with a Voritcat (the Nega-Verse's feline version of the Vorticons) battle cruiser CSS Prowl. As such, the first world of the acts as the "tutorial" for the new game mechanics, notably the Star Fox-like mission to disable the cruiser's weapons while fending off its contingent of fighters. The second part introduces the optional two-player co-op mode and the boss fight with Commander Tabby.

All of the weapons from *Mars' Most Wanted* return in this game with the addition of four more:

- **Black Hole Bazooka** – As one would expect, it launches a miniaturized black hole at enemies and pulls them into the event horizon before dissipating. Great for clearing out rooms but has an extremely low rate of fire.
- **Yarn Launcher** – Introduced in the first mission; wraps enemies into a ball of yarn, and then roll away.
- **Shrink Ray** – Shrinks opponents to micro size where you can crush them under your foot.

- **Wedgie Gun** – A rather embarrassing weapon that pulls your drawers up to your chest (Keen has little rockets on his.) It also briefly (pun intended) decreases your mobility.

While Keen and Princess Lindsay keep their attributes from the previous game, Ion Storm tweaked the Page's game mechanics. He is no longer invulnerable nor does he have unlimited ammo but he can still take more hits, but is slow and cannot jump as high as Keen or Lindsay. Being the chew toy he is, Keen, Lindsay, and the yet-to-be-revealed fourth character, will constantly berate and mock him in co-op mode.

Once the crew defeats Commander Tabby, they learn that this universe's version of Billy Blaze, Captain Chaos, had conquered the universe but refuses to tell them where he is holding Becky. The arrival of the Vorticat Armada cuts their interrogation short; Keen and his compatriots flee and the game transitions to the first of six "interlude" levels. These levels function as the stealth levels of the game where Becky continually escapes confinement and playfully delays Captain Chaos' master plan through inadvertent sabotage. The guards catch her at the end of each level and throw her back in the brig. The game even pokes fun at Metal Gear Solid during a segment where Becky sneaks around under a cardboard box:

Quote:

**Vorticat Guard 1:** Hey! That box shouldn't be there!

**Vorticat Guard 2:** Do you think we should look under it? A spy could be hiding under it.

**Vorticat Guard 1:** Who would be stupid enough to infiltrate this place using THAT as a disguise?

**Vorticat Guard 2:** It's pretty obvious, isn't it? Should me move it?

**Vorticat Guard 1:** Nah! The captain told us to find the girl, pronto.

**Captain Chaos:** \*Over the speakers\* Keep your eyes sharp, you peons! She could be hiding in front of you!

**Vorticat Guard 1:** Yeesh! What a grouch. Better get a move on.

\*The pair resumes their patrol\*

Meanwhile, Keen and crew flees through hyperspace with the Vorticat Armada on their heels when Tabby's cruiser shoots the Page's Megarocket down. It crashes on the nearest planet populated by French-speaking, cheese-throwing simians. Keen (at the behest of Princess Lindsay) reluctantly lands to rescue the Page. This level contains some puzzle elements where Keen and the Princess must talk to the townsfolk to learn the Page's location. These conversations also mention "La Reistance" led by "Le Grand Cerveau." Eventually, they learn that the Page is a prisoner of a beret-wearing orangutan named Philipe, who speaks with an inexplicable Scottish accent (provided by Dan Castellaneta, no less.) It is after a boss fight with Phillip, that the resistance arrives with Le Grand Cerveau who is none other than: **Mortimer McMire**

It seems that Mortimer McMire survived the explosion of the Universal Toaster Cannon in *The Universe is Toast*, when he fell into a Genesis Portal into the Nega-Verse. He became a prisoner of Captain Chaos, but eventually escaped to become the leader of the La Resistance. When a skeptical Keen asks about his desire to eliminate those less intelligent than himself, his reason for wanting to destroy the Posi-Verse, McMire explains that Chaos has an IQ of 413. Chaos “eliminated” those smarter than himself in this universe, including McMire’s Nega-Verse counterpart (IQ 513.) Mortimer still wants revenge on Keen but will settle for it by proxy and joins their party “temporarily” (it won’t be) to that end.

And so the team gets to work on breaking Captain Chaos’ grip on the Nega-Verse. As with the previous game, *When Universe Collide* allows you to choose your order of levels (albeit with the mandatory “Becky” interludes.) Some of them being mirror images of worlds from previous games.

- **Land of Candyeria** –Based roughly on the Land of Tuberia from *Keen Dreams* (known as “Keen 3.5” to Keen fans) inhabited by malevolent sweets like gummy bears with candy cane bayonets. **Lady Éclair Bonbon** is the boss of this world armed with licorice whips and exploding pop rocks.
- **Galactic Games Channel** – Oh boy, this is the world many reviewers called “platforming hell” because of the insane *Super Mario Bros. Lost Levels* difficulty. Many of the levels of this world take inspiration from Nickelodeon game shows and *American Gladiators*. Most of the levels involve “challenges” through deadly (and messy) obstacle courses where the slightest error means instant (and even messier) death. The co-op mode also becomes a competitive mode, where the loser instantly loses a life. Good thing you have unlimited continues. Double Dare host Marc Summers even lends his voice as the host/boss of this sadistic game show, **Sheldon Springer** who forces you to run through a fatal gauntlet that would make Indiana Jones hang up his hat.
- **Planet McQueen** – It appears that people in the Nega-Verse pop out of the ground as seniors and age in reverse though they have the mental faculties of toddlers. Captain Chaos keeps them in prison-like nurseries. Keen and crew meets his parents’ counterparts and stage a great escape. This is a series of mission-based levels with specific objectives and requires stealth rather than brute force. The final mission is an escort mission out of the nursery and the boss being Princess Lindsay’s counterpart, the tyrannical **Commandant Lindsay**, whose screeching would remind players of the stereotypical “evil German sidekick.”
- **Gnostic VI** - This universe’s version of the Shadowlands is a massive factory complex that Keen must infiltrate and destroy. Various hazards include pools of molten slag, security drones, and walking Dopefish (despite being a mirror universe, some things never change.) The boss of this area is **the Almighty Janitor**, the Nega-verse counterpart of the council janitor Keen rescued in *Keen 4’s* secret level. This trope-namer attacks Keen in a semi-functional mech suit that is only open to attack when it malfunctions.
- **Vorticat Armada** - It is now up to the player to cripple Captain Chaos’ main fleet. Most of these missions employ Star Fox-like gameplay with one infiltration level. Commander Tabby returns with his own team of fighters for a dog--er, catfight worthy of the competition.

Once the player completes the five worlds and six Becky interludes, Keen and his friends head to Captain Chaos' fortress, a hollowed-out planetoid with Chao's visage carved onto it. (Something Mortimer ribs Keen over.) The opening cinematic then reveals Captain Chaos endgame, only hinted at in the interludes, he wants to destroy both the Nega and Posi-verses and use the energy to ascend to godhood. He would have succeeded earlier if Becky's escapes and unintentional sabotage bought Keen enough time to find her and saved both universes, got to love annoying little sisters.

Chaos' Fortress employs many of the gameplay elements from the other levels, the opening fighter level where you must breach its ring of defenses. However, Ion Storm changes it up a little with a sequence where Princess Lindsay sings to distract the guards with a song (using the rhythm-based gameplay from the Mr. Satin battle from *Mars' Most Wanted*) while Keen and the others use the fortress' surveillance system to find Becky. I suspect the developers put this sequence into the game showcase Cree Summer's singing chops. It is particularly memorable because how it includes a quick time event where Lindsay draws her Neural Stunner and zaps the guards into paralysis. Most of the level is otherwise the usual gauntlet of traps and tricky platforming. After rescuing Becky, the team confronts Captain Chaos at the Multiversal Annihilator Engine. The final boss is divided by a death race to the control platform ripped Galactic Games Channel with a stampede of irate Gargs on your tail and the standard boss battle.

The game (seemingly) ends with Chaos defeated, but escapes to fight another day by jumping through a Genesis Portal, and Keen heading back to their home. However, the game is not over. Much like *Mars' Most Wanted*, the player must collect a total of 70 data disks to access the true ending of the game. Collecting all the data disks is no easy task since some of them require certain conditions met in a certain level. For example, time trials in the Galactic Games Network where Sheldon Springer offers them as prize for clearing his new deathtrap-laden courses. They are very hard, but not impossible, and you must race Mr. Hiller (Napoleon in the German version of the game) who will often run into traps and curse in German. Personally, one of the most satisfying elements of the game is when you let Mr. Hiller take the lead, zap him, and let the trap crush/electrocute/burn/etc. him so even if you screw up, you can still get a laugh from tormenting the ersatz dictator.

Once you collect all the data disks in a world, the game unlocks an animated short that chronicles Captain Chaos' adventures, which resemble Keen's previous games, except that Chaos' conquered the Martians and Vorticats as well as turn the Shadowlands into a wasteland. Collecting very data disk in the game opens a sequence, where the game reveals that the Genesis Portal took Chaos back in time to the beginning of the final level where he vaporizes his past counterpart after a comical argument and takes his place for the final battle. However, you play as Captain Chaos in the final race and must defeat Keen to get the game's true ending. Chaos bests Keen in combat and activates the Multiversal Annihilator Engine where absorbs the energy to transform into an Eldritch Abomination and opens a rip space and several worlds are now hurdling towards each other.

Now facing armageddon, the cowering Page asks, "What will we do now?" Keen looks to Lindsay as he pulls his trusty Neural Disruptor from his holster and then to the planets coming

through the tear.

“We’re going to save the multiverse.”

And the game ends with three words that would keep the fandom hanging, to be continued.

Depending on who you ask, Commander Keen fans regard *When Universes Collide* as the best game of the Multiverse Trilogy (personally *Mars’ Most Wanted* will always be my favorite.) Part of that is because a vocal contingent of fans argue that *Worlds United* was not a proper Keen title. An assertion I will explore in the future. There is a strong case that *When Universes Collide* because Ion Storm definitely refined the rougher edges evident in the previous title, and the humor and irreverence are still there. However, my issue with the game is that it packed a bit too much into the system and the frame rate would dip in some parts unless you had the Ring. The game runs flawlessly with it and nearly matches some of the Ultra’s most stunning platformers.

Critically, the game was as successful if not more its predecessor because of its refined gameplay and multiplayer, but pulled in lower sales than *Mars’ Most Wanted* at release. One reason for *Mars’ Most Wanted* unexpected success was because of the disappointing performance of *Kid Icarus: Guardian* whereas *When Universes Collide* released in the shadow of *Squad Four: Rebellion*, and to a lesser extent, *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*. Some commentators, notably Jirard “The Completionist” Khalil also say that the completion bonuses were not as rewarding as the previous game’s, which I personally agree because the Sonic/Keen team-up episode was one of the reasons why I played the game until the analogue stick became a nub. However, it is interesting to note that sales of the game spiked after the announcement that *Keen 12: Worlds United* would be a launch title for the Sega’s sixth generation console at E3 2000

Though *When Universes Collide* initially failed to live up to the lofty expectations of Sega and Ion Storm. Commander Keen was still incredibly successful as a brand, especially after Sega’s acquisition of Bandai. The animated series aired on Kids’ WB for two seasons and fifty-two episodes produced by Animaniacs (and Tiny Toons, and Pinky and the Brain, and Freakzaoid, and so forth) showrunner Tom Ruegger from 1999 to 2001 with memorable songs written by Randy Rogel of “Yakko’s World” fame. [1] Not only was it popular with children and adults (because of the adult jokes they slipped under the radar) but also won two Daytime Emmys and became a meme factory for the Internet in later years. Similarly Sega/Ion Storm licensed the property to Archie Comics, which is still in publication to this day, as well as release action figures and other merchandise. Commander Keen was nowhere as big as Pokemon, which was a marketing juggernaut at the time, but it did gain a sizeable and extremely loyal following regardless.

In the end, *When Universes Collide* was a victim of poor timing. If the game released earlier, Sega and Ion Storm would have given the fans a rushed and incomplete game that would have burned up the goodwill generated from *Mars’ Most Wanted*. In hindsight, it was better to release a polished game against stiff competition and keep the new fans happy. Even Tom Kalinske and Tom Hall admit it was the better decision and in the long run, Keen’s visibility in other media kept him in the public’s eye long enough to build up hype for his next adventure. An adventure so massive and epic in scope, it garnered the attention of Sega of America’s mother branch in

Tokyo. While Keen's sales in Japan were anemic compared to the United States and Europe, Sega of Japan was hungry for ideas and asked Hall to formally pitch his idea for a crossover game with Kalinske.

*Super Smash Bros.* was a roaring success for Nintendo and Sega wanted a piece of that pie. Strictly speaking, Commander Keen pioneered the concept of a "canon" franchise crossover with Mars' Most Wanted, but that was an added feature and the crossover would become the crux of the next game. "We needed to make it more than our characters beating the crap out of each other," Hall recalled, "My trip to Japan back in 1999 brought me into contact with such legends as Yuji Naka and Yu Suzuki. We all knew we needed to make this this project more than a game. It needed to be an epic."

Indeed, Hall would stake his career on what would be the most ambitious project ever. Sega had all the right ingredients: a stable of venerable characters, experienced creators, and a sixth generation platform. However, it would not be until 2001 to see if *Worlds United* would fizzle out, or become a planet shattering kaboom.

*-from the blog "The Musing Platypus" by B. Ronning, March 17, 2013*

[1] Though I have not written a synopsis yet, one of the episodes from the first season will be called "The Fatal Frontier," which will feature the voices of the *Star Trek: TOS* cast. (Including DeForest Kelley, who recorded his lines before he passed away.) The plot is similar to *Galaxy Quest* with Shatner voicing an Up to Eleven version of himself and it's Keen's job to keep him from getting killed. There is also a parody of the Gorn fight scene at "Kirk's Rock" where a flabby, out-of-shape, and shirtless Bill Shattered gets into a fight with a lizard alien.

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So what do you guys think? Looks like the Commander Keen franchise is becoming rather meme-tastic. Now I want to go to TTL and see if I can pick up a DVD set of the Commander Keen animated series... though I wonder if "The Fatal Frontier" will have butterflies for Futurama.

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*"It was at times difficult to reconcile my Final Fantasy concept with the existing idea of what made a Final Fantasy game. Reconciliation, of course, meant that both needed to change. Final Fantasy VIII, for me, was the beginning of my evolution as a video game creator."*  
-Tetsuya Takahashi, project director for *Final Fantasy VIII*, *Final Fantasy XII*, and *Final Fantasy XIII*, in a July 2015 interview with Destructoid

*"No doubt Final Fantasy VIII was polarizing. It had to live up to Final Fantasy VII, which had been by far the most popular game in the series. It took the series into the far future in*

*technological terms, and it introduced the Guardian mechs, which fundamentally changed a major aspect of the series. It was universally acclaimed by critics, but certain fans weren't exactly embracing what they believed to be the new direction of the series."*

-from the "Final Fantasy Retrospective" video on Gametrailers.com, posted on December 1, 2011

*"We went through so many concepts because the world of video games was changing so rapidly around us. What did people like? What would they respond to emotionally? Who would play our game? The answers to all of these questions changed more than once over the three years we spent creating Silent Hill."*

-Keiichiro Toyama, director of *Silent Hill*, in an interview in the October 1999 issue of *Famitsu*

*"So why didn't we go with the Super Mario Dimensions formula for Ultra Donkey Kong Country? Well, we wanted a change of pace, for one thing. There were so many 3D games at the time, many of them by us, that we thought the Donkey Kong Country series should have a retro feel to it. And second, we just had a lot of good ideas for a retro-styled game, like a multiplayer mode. There'd never been anything like it in a sidescroller before, even Shigeru Miyamoto complimented us. He said it's something he'd wanted to try with Mario."*

-Gregg Mayles, director of *Ultra Donkey Kong Country*, in an interview with Kotaku.com posted on December 11, 2009

*"The sorceress power, it's born from humanity's connection to its creator...and those who bear that 'gift' will all become vessels in time. She knew it even when she was a child."*

-Cid Uzuki, *Final Fantasy VIII*

*"No, NO! You dumb monkeys, you can't destroy my beautiful Kremworld! You can't, you can't, you can't you can't you CAN'T!"*

-King K. Rool, *Ultra Donkey Kong Country*

*"A million Gargs vs. a million Zergs, who wins?"*

-the very first post on the Gamefaqs.com message boards, posted on October 23, 1999

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*Ultra Nintendo:*

### **Battle Arena Toshinden 2**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "The graphics look all right, but the gameplay itself isn't as smooth as some of the better fighters out there.")

Gamespot: 6.8 (quote: "It's a decent fighter, but blocky character models look out of place on the Ultra Nintendo.")

### **Final Fantasy VIII**

EGM: 9.5 (quote: "Another beautiful masterpiece by Squaresoft, full of amazing visuals and featuring a compelling plot.")

Gamespot: 9.7 (quote: "It's different, but it's unquestionably Final Fantasy, and the best RPG of the year.")

### **Jade Cocoon**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "It's cute, and will appeal to younger players.")

Gamespot: 7.6 (quote: "Those turned off by the darker Final Fantasy VIII should check this game out.")

### **Lethal Enforcers: Emergency Situation** (also appeared on the Sega Saturn)

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "One of the best lightgun franchises is back and in style.")

Gamespot: 4.6 (quote: "A short and frustrating mess, with terrible pacing.")

### **NBA Jam 2000**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "Far better arcade-style basketball games have come out for the Ultra Nintendo.")

Gamespot: 5.7 (quote: "It's basically NBA on NBC from earlier this year with updated rosters and cleaner presentation. In other words, a rehash.")

### **Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "Another beautiful platformer that will likely go underappreciated.")

Gamespot: 9.2 (quote: "With welcome pacing improvements, this is one fantastic platformer.")

### **Silent Hill** (also appeared on the Sega Saturn)

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "It's terrifying and a definite thriller of a game.")

Gamespot: 8.8 (quote: "Deeper than Resident Evil, it's as much an emotional rollercoaster as it is a horror game.")

### **Spider-Man**

EGM: 7.3 (quote: "A fun, if short, webslinging adventure.")

Gamespot: 7.9 (quote: "The controls are great, and New York City looks beautiful on the Ultra Nintendo.")

### **Starcraft**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "Without the ability to play online matches, it's somewhat limited in replay value, but is still an extremely well made game.")

Gamespot: 9.1 (quote: "A near perfect PC adaptation, and the three bonus missions are almost worth double dipping for.")

### **Ultra Donkey Kong Country**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "No monkey shines here, Ultra Donkey Kong Country lives up to the SNES-CD classics.")

Gamespot: 8.6 (quote: "Gameplay is a bit hit or miss compared to the pitch perfect platformers, but the sidescrolling levels really shine.")

### **Umjammer Lammy**

EGM: 7.7 (quote: "As quirky as Parappa, and just as addictive.")

Gamespot: 7.5 (quote: "While there's more here to play, it's still a bit short.")

### **Wheelman**

EGM: 8.3 (quote: "The graphics are just a step below Gran Turismo, and the gameplay is superb.")

Gamespot: 6.9 (quote: "Repetitive missions mar what is an otherwise great driving game.")

### **Screampuff**

EGM: N/A

Gamespot: 5.7 (quote: "This kiddy horror game won't scare anybody, but the whimsical graphics will please its intended audience.")

### **Starblade**

EGM: 3.0 (quote: "The translation is the worst for an RPG since Secret Of The Stars.")

Gamespot: 2.1 (quote: "Just an ugly, ugly game that should've stayed in Japan.")

**Codename: Siren** (also ported to the Sega Saturn in January 2000)

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "The stealth isn't always great, but the plot gets a lot better deeper into the game.")

Gamespot: 8.4 (quote: "This game and these characters will grow on you.")

*Saturn:*

### **Commander Keen: When Universes Collide**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "Get three of your friends together and this game is a blast. Or when you play by yourself, it's still a blast.")

Gamespot: 7.9 (quote: "It does retread some ground from Mars' Most Wanted, but make no mistake, this is still a really fun game.")

### **Song Of Summer**

EGM: 6.2 (quote: "This RPG sequel seems to be going through the motions, but the new characters are pretty creative.")

Gamespot: 7.6 (quote: "Beats the original in pretty much every way and is a wonderful continuation to the story of Song of Spring.")

### **Chaos City**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "The beat-em-up format is a lot better than Rockstar's car games, and the humor had us in stitches.")

Gamespot: 6.6 (quote: "It's definitely one of the funniest games of the year, but it's also repetitive after the first few missions.")

### **Rhythmstar**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "A fun little dancing game, but it could've used a few more songs.")

Gamespot: 7.4 (quote: "Rhythm titles are a growing trend, and until DDR makes it to

consoles, this is as good as it gets.”)

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## **Final Fantasy VIII: The Basics**

*Final Fantasy VIII* is the latest game in the *Final Fantasy* series, directed by Tetsuya Takahashi (who created *Xenogears* IOTL), and written by him in collaboration with Yoshinori Kitase, Kazushige Nojima, and Tetsuya Nomura. TTL's *Final Fantasy VIII* is thus a mashup of sorts of OTL *Final Fantasy VIII* and OTL *Xenogears*, incorporating many of the plotlines, characters, psychological and religious themes of *Xenogears* with the story of OTL *Final Fantasy VIII*. The result is a game that, while darker than OTL's *Final Fantasy VIII*, is somewhat lighter and less controversial than OTL *Xenogears*. It re-frames Deus as the Great Sorcerer Hyne, putting Hyne in the position of God that Deus occupied in OTL *Xenogears* (indeed, Hyne is referred to as God for most of the game, similarly to how Bhunivelze was referred to as God for most of *Final Fantasy XIII: Lightning Returns* IOTL), and using the character of Miang/Myah as an expy for the "sorceress power", putting her largely in the role that Ultimecia played in OTL's game. Other character parallels include portions of Citan Uzuki's character being rolled into Cid Kramer, Bart Fatima being substituted for Zell Dincht (and somewhat less obnoxious than OTL Zell), Kahran Ramsus and Seifer Almas's characters being combined somewhat (with Seifer becoming much less impetuous as a result), and most notably, Elly Van Houten's character replacing Rinoa Heartilly (Selphie Tilmitt remains on as the sort of "excitable" character that she and Rinoa both were IOTL). The plotline of Edea being the surrogate mother for many of the main characters is dropped, as is the Guardian Force amnesia plotline (though Squall's amnesia remains, for other reasons). The battle system is mostly taken from OTL's *Xenogears*, with combination attacks taking the place of normal attacks. Squall still has his Gunblade, and it still utilizes timed hits, making his battle combinations doubly complex, as not only do you have to pick the right combinations of moves for him, but they have to be properly timed as well. As in OTL *Xenogears*, characters can learn Deathblows after using a certain move a certain number of times, but Deathblows are also tied to weapons, which are acquired normally in this game (as opposed to gathering materials as in IOTL's game). Leveling up is done fairly normally, with statistics gained from leveling up and equipping better equipment. Drawing magic is still performed as IOTL, but that magic is used in battle, and not to power up characters. Taking the place of *Final Fantasy VIII*'s GFs are giant mechs called Guardians, which serve the same role as Gears do in OTL *Xenogears*. Guardians are somewhat different from Gears in that many of them can be assigned to different characters. For instance, Shiva, Ifrit, Titan, Leviathan, and eight other Guardians can be assigned to any character. Each character also has their own specific Guardian and a powered-up version of that Guardian called an Omniguardian. With Squall, Elly, Bart, Cid, Quistis, Selphie, Irvine (who is somewhat of a *Xenogears* Billy expy), Rico (from OTL *Xenogears*) and Edea (who becomes a permanent character) all playable in this game, that makes a total of 30 Guardians in all. Some of the more powerful non-character specific Guardians (such as Eden) are sometimes preferable even to a character's Omniguardian, though Squall's Omniguardian *Xenogears* (which appears in the game's logo) is the most powerful Guardian in the game by far. The Guardians can be improved by purchasing parts, but can also equip custom parts made from materials that are either found or won through playing Triple Triad, which plays pretty much exactly as it does IOTL (only with fifteen cards in each tier, so there are significantly more cards available in the game, Tier 8, 9, and 10 cards only have one copy as in OTL). The game comes on three discs and features graphics that rival any Ultra Nintendo game thus far, especially in the cutscenes which are fully CGI (unlike the anime cutscenes IOTL's *Xenogears*). Voice acting returns, with most major

characters fully voiced. The soundtrack is a collaboration between Nobuo Uematsu and Yasunori Mitsuda, with about ¼ of the soundtrack being songs from OTL's *Xenogears*, ¼ being songs from OTL's *Final Fantasy VIII*, and half of the songs being entirely new TTL.

After the opening cutscene, which involves "Liberi Fatali" playing over a great battle between Galbadian and Estharian mechs, interspersed with scenes from the game itself involving the main characters, the story begins in Balamb. After a quick introduction of Squall and his caretaker Cid Uzuki, Squall is forced to board the mysterious Guardian mech Quezacotl to repel an attack by the Galbadian army, heavily damaging Balamb in the process. Cid takes him to Balamb Garden and fast-tracks him toward becoming a SeeD, here we meet Quistis Trepe, Selphie Tilmitt, and Kahran Ramsus, who is accompanied by an entourage that includes Fujin, Raijin, and a mysterious purple-haired woman named Miang who Fujin seems to be jealous of. Squall goes with Quistis to retrieve the Guardian mech Ifrit as a test before going on his SeeD final exam mission: an expedition across the ocean to defend the border city of Dollet from an attack by Galbadian forces. The mission goes south due to Ramsus' actions (influenced by Miang), and Squall, Quistis, Selphie, and their new ally, Bartholomew Fatima, whose kingdom of Aveh is being occupied by Galbadian forces under the leadership of the mysterious sorceress Edea. Squall is separated from the others and must journey alone for a time, though he does meet Elly in the forest, who points a gun at him and threatens to kill him. He manages to pacify her by saving her from a monster, but Elly has to separate from Squall soon after. Meanwhile, Bart and Selphie meet up in the forest and go on a journey of their own. Eventually, Squall and Quistis reunite with Selphie and Bart and Cid in the city of Timber, and are given a mission to go to the Aveh capital of Bledavik, where they are to rescue Bart's cousin Marguerite. Squall, Bart, and Selphie infiltrate Bledavik (the first Laguna flashback is here, Laguna largely plays the same role as IOTL but we see that for some reason, Miang appears in his past as well, despite it being 20 years before the main story) and save Margie after having to battle against Ramsus (who has been allured to serve Edea by the machinations of Miang, who as it turns out are one in the same, Edea has been disguising herself as Miang to infiltrate Balamb Garden and spy on Cid and the SeeDs). Squall and the others take Margie back to Balamb Garden, and are given a mission by Cid to take her back to her home in the Holy City of Nisan, which for the moment is independent from Galbadia. Cid accompanies them there, and Squall seems to have another flashback, especially once he sees that the original Holy Mother of Nisan resembles Elly. The city comes under attack by a Galbadian mech, but the heroes beat it back with their own Guardians. They are then given a mission to assassinate Edea, and a sniper named Billy Lee Black is introduced to them. While in Galbadia, Squall comes across Elly once more, and pursues her, wanting to know the truth about her and why she attacked him in the forest. She begins to explain to him the truth about where she's from, a place called Esthar and how it was nearly destroyed in a war with the rest of the world, and how her society had to separate itself from the world for protection. Before she can explain anything else, Galbadian troops accost them and the two have to flee, eventually getting separated. Edea notices Elly's presence and hypnotizes Elly to come before her, while Squall reunites with the rest of his group to complete the mission. After they save Elly from some mutants created by Edea, they try to assassinate her. It fails and they have to battle Edea directly, but soon, she grievously injures Squall and the group is taken into custody, ending disc one.

The beginning of Disc Two takes place in a huge desert prison complex far outside the Galbadian capital. This complex is a combination of Nortune's D Block from OTL *Xenogears* and the Desert Prison from OTL's *Final Fantasy VIII*. Rico is met here, and the group not only has to rescue Squall, but once he's rescued, they have to help Rico stop a series of murders that have been committed by a strange creature. After finally breaking out of

prison, the group learns that Balamb and Selphie's home Garden of Trabia are being attacked as punishment for the assassination attempt on Edea. The missiles destroy Trabia Garden, but Balamb is able to escape just in time by activating its flight capabilities. After a brief stopover in Fisherman's Horizon, the game begins to play out somewhat more like OTL *Xenogears* than OTL *Final Fantasy VIII*. Dominia and the elements are introduced as antagonists here, and instead of NORG sponsoring the Garden, it's the Ethos church. The group reunites with Elly, who joins them for good over the course of the next few missions, and more truths are learned about Esthar, whose primary purpose in attacking Galbadia and the surface world is to prevent the evil sorceress Edea from getting revenge, as Edea was once the sorceress Adel, who ruled Esthar before the war. Cid, who is revealed as Edea's wife, tells the group that her sorceress power rendered her capable of becoming Miang, an ancient entity who is reborn in powerful sorceresses for the purposes of bringing back the Great Hyne, the creator god who seeded Earth with life and who, 10,000 years before, gave up half of his power to the beings of Earth so that he could rest. There are two Laguna flashbacks explaining more of his life, how he met a woman named Raine and her daughter Ellone, who seems to hold a great and mysterious power of her own. After most of the events of the second disc are completed, the decision is made by Cid and Squall (who is becoming more comfortable with fighting now that he realizes the world is at stake, but still has unease about it from remembering his violent deeds at the beginning of the game) to attack Galbadia Garden and take out Edea once and for all. A massive battle begins between the Gardens, involving many Guardian mechs, and several Guardian mech battles are required just to get access to the Garden (including a battle with Ramsus' Guardian mech, Vendetta). Eventually, the group infiltrates the Garden itself and finds Edea and Ramsus. They are defeated in battle, and Edea's heart stops, but the heroes are able to save her life. However, just as victory is seemingly declared, Galbadia Garden is bombarded with fire from Esthar. The heroes escape with an unconscious Edea just before it is destroyed. Disc two ends here.

At the start of disc three, Edea has awoken back in Balamb Garden. Cid suggests going to Esthar, and reveals that he once lived there with Edea, so he knows a way to get in. However, in order to reach Esthar, the party must venture across the great eastern continent which the city now hovers over. During this time, Squall and Elly grow even closer, and they eventually discover that they are reborn from Lacan and the first Nisan Holy Mother Sophie. Once inside Esthar, the party learns that a man named Krelion (who takes on a few characteristics from *Final Fantasy VIII*'s Dr. Odine, but is mostly like OTL Krelion) is the leader of the city. Edea is introduced to him, and Krelion expresses surprise that Miang was so easily purged from her. Cid asks Krelion if he will stop his persecution of the surface world now that the threat of the sorceress is destroyed. Krelion assures them that he will, but then an alert from the surface comes in that Galbadia is leading an all-out assault on the city of Bledavik. After the destruction of the Garden, Ramsus has assumed control of Galbadia and he is furious about Edea's presumed death, launching all-out war in response. Squall and the other SeeDs volunteer to neutralize the threat. They go down to Bledavik, where a fierce series of battles ensues. Ramsus is seemingly defeated, but during the end of the fighting, Elly falls into a coma and is unable to be revived. The group returns to Esthar, but the Estharians turn hostile, and it seems that Krelion had been working with Miang all along. Dominia and the Elements try to prevent the group's escape by engaging them in combat in their mechs, but they are defeated and the group flees in a space ship, making their way up to a space station where Ellone has been kept. Ellone reveals to the group that her adoptive father Laguna, who helped to defeat Adel and save Esthar, was soon overthrown by Krelion, who has been assisting in Miang/Edea's plan to prepare the world for the return of the Great Hyne. No one has seen Laguna since then, and Ellone has been using her powers to try and find him by having Squall and his companions relive

Laguna's memories. As Squall and the others try to figure out a way to get back to Esthar and overthrow Krelan, Elly finally reawakens...as Miang. Miang believes she'll be able to use Elly to contact Hyne, but Elly is fighting her, and Miang decides to settle for regaining control of Adel's body instead. Miang takes control of the ship and pilots it toward Adel's prison, gaining control of Adel before abandoning Elly's body in space. Squall retrieves Elly's body as the remainder of the group returns to the planet in escape pods. Elly awakens, and she and Squall share a brief romantic moment. He gets to an old ship, which, after clearing it of monsters, pilots it back down to the planet, only for Elly to be captured by Esthar soldiers upon their arrival. Squall is taken as well. Cid and the others lead a rescue mission (and manage to defeat the Elements again, which combine into one giant mech for a final battle), but as they are about to reach Elly, Squall reawakens as Id and destroys most of Esthar. After Squall wakes back up in Balamb Garden, more truths are revealed, including the fact that after Adel was placed in stasis, Miang awoke in the body of Raine (who had latent sorceress powers and passed them onto Ellone, who manifested them openly), Laguna's lover and Squall's mother, who took Squall and performed experiments on him (which caused him to suppress his fighting instincts, forming Id within his psyche). Laguna was eventually forced to kill Raine, and after doing so, he went into exile from the guilt, which allowed Krelan to take power in the city. Ellone discovers where Laguna is (he has been assisting Squall secretly the entire game in the guise of the Wiseman), and Laguna and Cid help Squall finally come to peace with his psyche, putting Id to rest and unlocking Squall's latent power. Meanwhile, with Esthar mostly destroyed, Adel instead seeks out Ramsus, who is still in charge of the Galbadian army, and shows him the way to Merkava, raising it from the ground (Merkava is TTL's equivalent of the Lunatic Pandora) in order to resurrect Hyne. The group raids Merkava, doing battle with a multitude of bosses along the way, including Ramsus (in his Omniguardian Amphysvena) and finally Adel, first as Adel herself to rescue Elly, and then Adel/Miang's Omniguardian Opimorph (which is just as difficult to defeat as it is IOTL). After Adel is defeated, Miang is seemingly defeated as well, but Krelan shows up and throws Elly toward Adel. Miang gets control of Elly once again. The heroes escape just before Miang can initiate Time Compression, which collapses all of time together, restoring Hyne to his full power. Thanks to Ellone, the group can survive Time Compression and reach Hyne's castle at the center of the Garden of Eden. After fighting many bosses and solving many puzzles, the heroes reach Miang and Hyne. They battle Miang first, outside of their Guardians, but after Miang calls forth the Guardian Griever, the heroes don their mechs and do battle. After Griever is defeated, Hyne is next. The heroes defeat Hyne, who reveals that he chose to give power freely to humanity because he believed that humanity should be free to choose its own destiny. But Krelan, who has seen the evils that humanity is capable of, refuses to accept that, and says that humanity must be destroyed and the world started anew. With Krelan's help, Miang is able to assume Hyne's power, and assume her final form as Uroborus (which is a much more difficult battle in this game than it was in OTL *Xenogears*). After Uroborus is defeated, Miang is finally destroyed, and Elly is finally freed, The Time Compression is reversed, and the world is restored. Squall and Ramsus reconcile (with the help of Ramsus' old friends Fujin and Raijin), while Squall and Elly share a kiss under the moonlight at Balamb Garden as a dance is held in the ballroom.

## **October 18, 1999**

*Final Fantasy VIII* is released in North America to widespread critical acclaim, which proclaims it one of the year's best games (even if fan reaction is a bit more tepid due to the somewhat confusing plot and complex battle system). The game sells nearly 700,000 units

on its first day in North America (though many of those are pre-order sales taken months and in some cases more than a year in advance), and sales remain strong throughout the remainder of the year despite some controversy over the game's religious and psychological themes (toned down heavily from OTL's *Xenogears*) and not being as good as its predecessor in the eyes of some fans. Though ultimately its historical reputation wouldn't quite match up to *Final Fantasy VII*'s, it's known as an exceptionally good game in its own right, and cements Tetsuya Takahashi as an important member of Squaresoft's creative team. Though he would go on to work on other series after *Final Fantasy VIII*'s release, he would remain with the company and would eventually make his grand return to writing for the series with *Final Fantasy XII*.

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"He's Donkey Kong and he's got your back! Jumps into action when the Kremlings attack!"  
-from the chorus to the *Ultra Donkey Kong Country* theme song, an upbeat, Latin-inspired music track

### **Ultra Donkey Kong Country: The Basics**

*Ultra Donkey Kong Country* is the fifth *Donkey Kong Country* game, and while it shares some elements with OTL *Donkey Kong 64*, including the character Lanky Kong and several of the worlds, it has many significant differences, most notably the fact that its worlds are a lot more linear, divided into levels like the SNES-CD games with many of them as straight sidescrolling levels. Rareware's expanded work on TTL's *Conker* game, as well as their work on *The Dreamers* and what would become *The Dreamers 2* lead the company to make *Ultra Donkey Kong* less of a 3D platformer and stick to a more retro style for the game, though it has modern graphics and a lot of modern gameplay tropes. In addition, about half of the levels remain open world 3D levels, though they're more linear, like in OTL *Super Mario 3D Land*. The multiplayer aspect of the game is also emphasized. All of the levels are playable with four players. Four players can play on the sidescrolling levels in a similar fashion to OTL *New Super Mario Bros. Wii*, and in the open world levels, there is a split-screen. In addition, one level in each world is designed specifically for four player play, with puzzles intended to be solved by four players playing together (though individual players can play them as well, with commands issued to AI partners or even by switching back and forth). The game has voice acting, though only for the villains and side characters, the four main monkeys (Donkey, Diddy, Dixie, and Lanky) remain silent, only making monkey noises for their lines. As for gameplay, in the 3-D stages, the gameplay is much like OTL *Donkey Kong 64*. The monkeys not only have melee moves, they also have their own weapons, with Donkey Kong wielding a coconut gun, Diddy wielding a peanut pistol, Dixie wielding twin pistols, and Lanky wielding a big automatic peashooter. Unlike in previous games, you can't switch Kongs in mid-level, you have to pick one of the four Kongs to use and then you get up to six hearts to represent your life (some hazards can take more than one heart at a time). The game has a multiplayer mode that's fairly simple, a lot like OTL *Donkey Kong 64*'s multiplayer, with weapon-based combat across a variety of stages. It's considered a weak part of the game while the cooperative multiplayer in the adventure mode is considered a lot more fun.

As for the basic plot, it's fairly simple. King K. Rool has piloted a massive Kremling fleet alongside Donkey Kong Island. The Kongs must island hop across various islands to stop K. Rool and his Kremlings once and for all. The game is divided into nine worlds, with one world as a secret world, accessed by collecting all 50 Golden Bananas hidden throughout the

worlds. Unlike in previous games, you must not only get through the worlds and defeat the boss, but must have enough Golden Bananas to access the next world to continue through the game.

*World One: Jungle Japes*

A basic jungle world, similar to OTL's Jungle Japes, complete with the armadillo boss from OTL at the end.

*World Two: Angry Aztec*

Another world from OTL, this is a desert world with many ancient temples. The boss of this world is a giant sphinx, which is different from OTL's boss.

*World Three: Monkey Sea*

A water-based world with many sea monsters and underwater mazes, the boss of this world is a gigantic octopus.

*World Four: Forest Haven*

A forested world with treetop habitats similar to those found in the Tree Top Town level in *Donkey Kong Country*. The boss of this world is a voodoo-styled warrior.

*World Five: Frantic Factory*

Another world taken directly from OTL, this world contains many factories and mechanical obstacles, and at the end of the level, King K. Rool fights the monkeys in a giant robot, but escapes after he's beaten.

*World Six: Stormy Skies*

A sky-based world under constant thunder and lightning. Lightning and wind are hazards in this world's levels, at the end of the world, a cloud-based boss is fought.

*World Seven: Mount Kremamanjaro*

A giant mountain-based level that turns into a fiery volcano world at the end, the boss is a huge fire dragon fought in the mountain's crater.

*World Eight: Wasted Lands*

A wasteland area with lots of creepy baddies hidden within. The boss is a Mad Max-style motorcycle Kremling.

*World Nine: K. Rool's Fleet*

A pirate/battleship themed world in which K. Rool is fought at the end, contains some of the game's toughest hazards and has many throwbacks to the SNES-CD era *Donkey Kong Country* games.

*World Ten: The Unknown Realm*

The secret world, accessed once all 50 Golden Bananas are collected. Home to the ancient Banana God and the game's most difficult trials. At the end of the game, K. Rool returns for one final battle with the Kongs. After they win, the Banana God bestows limitless bananas on Donkey Kong, causing him to do a very happy dance.

## **October 25, 1999**

*Ultra Donkey Kong Country* is released for the Ultra Nintendo. While not a record-smashing hit like *Final Fantasy VIII*, it still sells quite well in its first week and sustains its sales

strength throughout the holiday season despite fierce competition from fellow Nintendo franchise hit *Squad Four: Rebellion*. The game is particularly well praised, even if it's not groundbreaking like the original SNES-CD game, and the adventure mode multiplayer becomes perhaps the game's most well praised feature, with tales of multiplayer hilarity appearing both online and in various publications.

Between *Final Fantasy VIII* and *Ultra Donkey Kong Country*, Ultra Nintendo sales, which had been slowly declining throughout 1999, begin to increase again, and with the advent of the holidays (and the Ultra Nintendo's first price drop) to come, it's the beginning of a very strong sales trend for the last two months of the year. It's now clear that the Ultra Nintendo is just beginning to hit its peak, while the Sega Saturn is on its final decline. Lost in all the news stories about *Final Fantasy VIII* and *Donkey Kong Country* is a story about another round of layoffs at Sega. Tom Kalinske is not among them, but speculation about his future with the company is now beginning to make the rounds on the internet rumor sites.

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During the long development time of *Silent Hill*, the game underwent many changes, partially to reflect changing trends in the survival horror genre and in media in general. The game's focus on psychological horror and emotionally grounded characters, along with the essential character of the game's protagonist Harry, never changed. In *Silent Hill*, Harry and his young daughter Cheryl enter the town of Silent Hill, hoping to enjoy a nice vacation. The two of them check into a bed and breakfast, but on their first night in the town, there is a series of very loud knocks on the door. A mysterious intruder breaches the door and lunges at Harry, who is knocked out before he can defend himself. When Harry wakes up, he's in the lobby of the bed and breakfast being interviewed by a police officer named Cybil. His daughter is missing, and the two set out to find her, while the town is being slowly infested by monsters. *Silent Hill* differs from other games in its genre in that the monsters themselves rarely appear in the game, and there is a distinct lack of combat. Instead, Harry and Cybil confront increasingly disturbing occurrences in the town, while also coming across several allies (and sometimes enemies posing as allies) who help and hinder them on their search. Harry later discovers that a woman named Alessa used her powers to manipulate Cybil into breaking into Harry's room and abducting Cheryl for the purpose of reuniting and combining her with Alessa to form a godlike being known as the Incubator. When Harry learns that Cybil was responsible for the abduction of his daughter, the player (who does not yet know that Alessa was really the one responsible) must decide whether or not to kill Cybil. Either way, whatever happens, the final battle has Harry confronting the Incubus itself in order to save Silent Hill from the darkness that's overwhelming it and the people of the town.

*Silent Hill* has a heavy focus on Harry's relationship with the characters he meets on his journey, and the game has up to six endings, depending on how he chooses to handle each individual character. The best ending sees him and Cybil adopting a newborn reincarnation of Cheryl, while the worst ending sees Harry consumed by the madness engulfing the town. The game is the latest and perhaps the most notable in a trend of survivor horror games refocusing on character relationships as opposed to mere survival. Keiichiro Toyama explained it thusly in an interview with *Electronic Gaming Monthly* in 2000: "The earliest survival horror games were only about protecting yourself, and that was certainly a fine goal, after all, *survival* is in the title of the genre. But what if I can make you care about certain characters and feel afraid for their survival? Make you take risks that decrease your chances of surviving in order to protect them? If I can do that, I have succeeded as a game

creator. If I hear a player tell me how much he wanted to protect a certain character, I feel quite happy and fulfilled." Combined with the game's proclivity for psychological horror with all the strange and disturbing occurrences in the town, from unsettling environments, to characters who used to be kind and trustworthy behaving in extremely bizarre and unexpected ways, to monsters who have something viscerally WRONG with them, *Silent Hill* proved to be one of the most unique and terrifying horror games of its day, and players generally agreed it was well worth the multiple delays that the game underwent along the way to its release. It was one of the top selling games of a VERY crowded fall of 1999, and one of the year's most acclaimed games, as well as being the beginning of one of the greatest video game horror franchises ever made.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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### **Keen's Sales Slightly Lower Than Expected But Still Strong**

October's sales figures are trickling in, and it seems that *Commander Keen: When Universes Collide* is poised to be the #3 selling new game of the month, behind the Ultra Nintendo's *Final Fantasy VIII* and *Ultra Donkey Kong Country* respectively. *Keen* also finishes behind the new release *Silent Hill*, but only if sales from both the Ultra Nintendo and Saturn versions of the game are combined. Despite sales being slightly less than Sega's initial opening week estimates, the game remains one of Sega's strongest launches of the year, with review scores about even with those of last year's *Mars' Most Wanted*, including a 9.0 from IGN, a 9/10 from Edge, a 9/10 from *GameTV*, and an 8.5 from *Electronic Gaming Monthly*.

*Commander Keen* is one of Sega's marquee franchises, and it's rumored that the next installment of the series will be released for the Sega Katana, though nothing about the next *Keen* game has been officially reported as of yet. The game should remain a top-seller for Sega throughout the holiday season, though competition looks to be stiff with some of the Ultra Nintendo and Sega Saturn's biggest hits of the year yet to be released.

-from an article on Gaming-Age.com, posted on November 8, 1999

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Rockstar's *Chaos City* was released on the Sega Saturn on October 14, 1999, to a mixed-to-positive reaction from the gaming press and strong initial sales that faded out fairly rapidly over the remainder of the year. Developed by Rockstar Games, *Chaos City* was the company's first attempt at the beat-em-up genre, and it took place in a city where the player could immediately go anywhere he chose (though certain areas of the city were closed off at first). The protagonist of the game was a neurotic, violent ne'er-do-well named Elvis McCracken, who has a talent for fighting (because he does it all the time). After being hired as the enforcer for the mob boss Big Billy Balls, McCracken is sent around the city doing jobs for him, most of which involve beating the crap out of people. Basically, that's all *Chaos City* was. You could beat up people as part of missions, or beat them up just for the hell of it. McCracken had a ton of one-liners he could say as he was pummeling people, depending on the context of the situation. There were dozens of different kinds of people to beat up, though some were of course tougher than others. Ultimately, the plot involved taking out Big Billy Balls and becoming the crime boss of the city, but many players eschewed the story missions simply for the fun of running around and beating on people.

Though its open world and tongue-in-cheek humor won *Chaos City* a number of fans, it also courted controversy, both from the right (for being such a violent, irreverent game, and for letting you beat up priests) and from the left (there were gay construction workers you could beat up, and McCracken would sometimes spout mildly homophobic comments as he did it). Like previous Rockstar games, the controversy was good for business, but this time around it didn't generate as much buzz as *Race'n'Chase* had done, and sales were softer than expected. *Chaos City* was expected to be one of the Saturn's biggest hits of the year, but Rockstar had to settle for having a merely mildly successful game.

-excerpted from the article "Rockstar: The Early Years", posted on IGN.com on October 27, 2011

### **Rockstar's Latest Game Draws Fire**

*Chaos City*, the latest violent video game by controversial developer Rockstar Games, is drawing the usual fire from critics of violent games. With the 2000 presidential election coming up, politicians have remained mostly silent on the game, but Republican candidate Pat Buchanan has said "This is just the latest example of these game makers pushing their violence into our children's homes". Buchanan has also recently commented on the games *Final Fantasy VIII* and *Silent Hill*, criticizing the first game's "anti-religion" message and the second game's "occult material". Parents are also speaking out against *Chaos City*'s violent content, but Rockstar lead Dan Houser says that "the rating's right on the box, don't buy games that are too violent for your kids".

-from an article posted on Yahoo! News, October 27, 1999

### **Next Race'n'Chase Fully 3D, Katana-bound?**

While *Chaos City* is the latest Rockstar hit, the company is already at work on the third *Race'n'Chase* game, tentatively titled *Race'n'Chase 3*. The game is said to feature the same violent car chase gameplay of the first two games, but instead of having a top-down perspective, is said to introduce a fully 3D world to the series for the first time. It's also tentatively scheduled for an Ultra Nintendo release, and Rockstar has said that while the game is "too advanced" for Saturn hardware, it might make an appearance on the upcoming Sega Katana system in 2001.

-from an article posted on Gamespot.com, October 27, 1999

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So is *Wheelman* "Race'n'Chase done right"? Of course, the two games aren't completely similar. *Wheelman*, with its focus on precision driving, is far less violent than *Race'n'Chase*, you can't run over people even if you try (they'll just leap out of the way). But its open world, mission-based gameplay does share elements with Rockstar's infamous series. The presentation, however, is significantly better. Your cars look beautiful on the Ultra Nintendo, and the cities (Miami, San Francisco, and New York) share elements with the same cities from real life. The hero John Tanner is a cop, but he does occasionally venture to the wrong side of the law (even moreso if you're a particularly naughty player). *Wheelman* is arguably more well put together than any game in the *Race'n'Chase* series, and significantly better than the mess that is *Chaos City*. The driving is so good in *Wheelman* that at times, it feels like *Gran Turismo* filtered through a classic Steve McQueen movie. If you love open world games OR you love driving games, do yourself a favor and check out *Wheelman*. It's a

stealthy pick for our favorite game of the month.

-from *Next Generation* magazine's review of *Wheelman* in its November 1999 issue

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*"Where Half-Life largely succeeded, Starcraft largely failed, though it wasn't for lack of trying. The game was a faithful port of the original title's well-crafted campaign mode, and players who wanted to take on the conquering Overmind but didn't want to play the game on their PC were in luck: the game was quite intact on the Ultra Nintendo, and with a few bonus missions to boot. But Starcraft's main attraction, its robust online multiplayer, was missing completely, and that's what cost the Ultra Nintendo port of StarCraft much of its sales. It wasn't quite a flop, but it wasn't the hit that Half-Life was, and after some initial strong sales, the game's commercial performance largely fizzled out."*

-from the book *PC Gaming Is Dead, Long Live PC Gaming*, published in December 2014

### **Starcraft Criticism: A Preview Of Things To Come?**

The Ultra Nintendo *Starcraft* port was acclaimed by critics (including our own review which awarded it a 9.1/10), but fans weren't so happy that the Ultra Nintendo lacks the online capabilities to play matches against players from around the world. These criticisms about the Ultra Nintendo's lack of online play are largely from PC gamers used to being able to hook up their modems and engage in matches across thousands of miles, but they make an interesting point: is online console gaming the wave of the future?

While Nintendo and Sony have been largely mum about online play for the Ultra Nintendo or any future consoles, Sega is looking to make online play a key feature of their upcoming Katana system, with both *Phantasy Star Online* and the competitive puzzle game *Chu Chu Rocket* being heavily promoted. Is online play about to become a required console feature, or is it just a nice but ultimately unnecessary bonus? Only time will tell, but one thing's for certain: you won't be hopping online on the Ultra Nintendo's version of *Starcraft* any time soon.

-from an article on Gamespot.com, posted on October 23, 1999

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Cait Sith awoke to a burning sensation all over his body. He sat up and looked around...there were flames everywhere.

"Nooooo! Smokey the Bear was right, I shouldn't have left that campfire going!" Cait Sith screamed in horror.

"Relax," came a voice from behind Cait Sith. He turned, and could see a huge, red figure standing before him, complete with horns and a big, swinging tail. "You're just in Hell."

"That's even worse!" Cait Sith cried, stumbling back away from Satan. "How'd I end up here?"

Cait Sith turned and could see several new arrivals. There was Squall Leonhart, Becky Blaze, Rush Limbaugh, and Lammy.

"You," said Satan, pointing to Cait Sith, "caused eleven billion dollars in property damage with that insane stunt you just pulled a few hours ago."

"I was trying to impress Luna! You gotta believe me!"

"SILENCE!" Satan bellowed, causing Cait Sith to cower. He turned to Squall. "You killed God. I mean, that's pretty much the most evil thing you can do, besides, I dunno, singing some annoying song about vegetables or something." He turned to Becky. "You sang some annoying song about vegetables or something."

"You gotta eat your veget-" Becky began, before being incinerated in a blaze of flames.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!" Cait Sith and the others shrieked in horror, before Satan turned to Rush Limbaugh.

"You have fomented discord with your controversial political talk show. Also, you were late to our weekly poker game."

"It's those damn liberals, with their traffic laws!" Limbaugh replied indignantly.

"Yes, yes, it's always those damn liberals," said Satan, turning to Lammy. "And you....uh....um.... how did you end up here, anyway?"

"I have no idea! I thought it was goats that go to hell!" Lammy protested, holding up her guitar. "I want out, I'll challenge you to a music contest!"

"The last time I did that I lost my beautiful golden fiddle..." said Satan, starting to sniffle and get very sad. "No more music contests! ...I guess I'll just let you out. This once."

"All right!" Lammy cheered, leaping into the air.

"Hey!" Cait Sith protested. "How come she gets to leave?"

-excerpted from the fanfic "The Death Of Cait Sith", posted by Fritz Fraundorf on RPGamer.net on December 18, 1999

*"The Hell level, I thought that would get censored in the States for sure. I knew the attitudes there had been getting a bit more lax in terms of censorship but I thought Sony would make us change it for the North American release. Fortunately, we got to leave Level 7 in intact, which was really gratifying for us. And with Final Fantasy VIII deflecting all the controversy, it ended up being a complete non-issue. Sometimes you just get lucky, I guess."*

-Rodney Greenblat, discussing *Umjammer Lammy* in an October 2004 interview with UGO.com

-

*"PROTIP: When Siren is crouched above an enemy, look for something either sitting nearby or in your inventory to drop on their head for an easy knockout. Just beware that you don't make too much noise!"*

-from the strategy article for *Codename: Siren* in the November 1999 issue of *GamePro*

What *Syphon Filter* did in big, bombastic fashion, *Codename: Siren* does a lot more subtly. The game's protagonist, an amnesiac special agent codenamed, you guessed it, Siren, must carefully piece together her past while completing her mission, a mission she must also piece together, but its importance gradually is revealed over the course of the story. The plot starts in fairly clichéd fashion, but as the game goes on, and the plot seems to go off the rails, it all comes back together in such a way that makes the player think back to tiny little clues from several seconds ago. Unlike *Syphon Filter*, which featured dramatic and action-packed boss fights, *Codename: Siren* has puzzles and mazes and mysteries. There are only three boss fights in the game, and no "final boss" to speak of. Instead, the game hearkens back to some of the detective games from the SNES-CD, particularly the *Daughter of Pearl* series (which makes sense, since both were designed by Neversoft).

*Codename: Siren* appeals to a different sort of fan than *Syphon Filter* will, but if you're into stealth games at all and don't mind solving some difficult puzzles along the way, *Codename: Siren* could be right up your alley.

Graphics: 4.0  
Sound: 4.5  
Play Control: 4.5  
Fun Factor: 4.0  
Difficulty: Advanced

-from the review of *Codename: Siren* in the November 1999 issue of *GamePro*

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### **Yankees Sweep Cubs In Historic World Series**

It's been a wild ride for the Chicago Cubs, who won their first National League pennant since 1945 behind the powerful bat of NL MVP Sammy Sosa. But that ride ended last night in Chicago as the New York Yankees won their first World Series championship in nearly a quarter of a century. The Cubs' unlikely road to the World Series went through the defending champion St. Louis Cardinals in a seven game thriller, while the Yankees easily dispatched the Seattle Mariners in an opening round sweep before besting their rivals the Boston Red Sox in five to reach the October Classic. The Yankees were dominant all year long, and seemed to be the team of destiny from the very beginning. The Curse of the Billy Goat continues for the Cubs, whose fans will once again have to "wait until next year". Winning the pennant is certainly a huge step forward, but a World Series win still eludes the Cubbies, and their nearly century-long streak without a world championship continues.

-from an article posted on Yahoo! News, October 28, 1999

### **Presidential Race Begins To Take Shape**

The race for the White House in 2000 is beginning to take shape, with strong front-runners emerging in both major parties. For the Republicans, it's George W. Bush in first place, though trailing fairly close behind him is businessman Steve Forbes, and in a fairly distant third is Elizabeth Dole, wife of 1996 Republican nominee Bob Dole. Trailing further behind in the pack are Pat Buchanan and Arizona senator and Vietnam war hero John McCain, though at this point, the nomination is seen as being Bush's to lose, with only Forbes having a good chance to catch up. On the Democratic side, Al Gore is way out in front with only Senator Bill Bradley even putting up respectable numbers otherwise. Gore's connection to popular

president Bill Clinton and his recent advocacy of the issue of global warming, which has been pushed forward into the spotlight due to the devastation wrought by the recent Hurricane Floyd, makes him the presumptive Democratic nominee, though it's still a few months until the Iowa caucuses begin. Perhaps the most interesting nomination race is in the little-known Reform party, where businessman Donald Trump and former professional wrestler and candidate for Minnesota governor Jesse Ventura are squaring off in a fierce war of words and in the polls. Though the winner has little chance in the general election, the Reform race is proving to be an interesting sideshow on the road to the 2000 election.

-from an article posted on Yahoo! News, October 29, 1999

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Ted Crosley: The scary, scary town of *Silent Hill* holds many secrets, but how does the game hold up?

Brittany Saldita: I thought it was fantastic. It didn't rely on cheap jump scares, it gives you a sense of general unease the entire time. It's a really smartly made horror game, and it's way different from a lot of the other games that have come before it.

Ted: It does a ton of things different. You still have a gun, there's still weird monsters to shoot, but most of the time you're just looking for your daughter, or sometimes another character when something's happening to them.

Brittany: Right, the game actually makes you give a crap about what happens to other people, which is more than I could say about the supporting cast in a lot of these horror games.

Ted: There were some parts of it that I was a bit bored in, some of the lulls between action scenes can be a bit long, and there's a bit of backtracking as well.

Brittany: Right, some scenes I got the feeling that the game was lulling me into a false sense of security so that it could scare me later, but an hour later I was like "so...is something gonna happen?" Then again, there are other times when the game really WAS lulling me into a false sense of security only to scare the crap outta me!

\*Brittany is shown playing the game in the dark, during a seemingly boring scene, as Harry is walking around, suddenly the entire room changes color and a pair of hands reach out of the floor and begin pulling Harry under, Brittany gasps in fright\*

Ted: That scene didn't scare me.

\*The same scene is shown with Ted playing it, it happens and Ted lets out a loud yell and a beeped swear\*

Brittany: \*smirks\* You were saying?

Ted: Well, anyway, *Silent Hill* is a unique, definitely frightening horror game that will make you think while it makes you scream. I'm giving it a 4 out of 5.

Brittany: It's one of the best horror games in a long time, and worth playing more than once to see all the different endings. I'm giving it a 4.5.

(...)

\*Ted and Alex are reviewing the *Spider-Man* Ultra Nintendo game as a costumed Spider-Man stands between them.\*

Ted: Spider-Man, I gotta be honest...your game sucks.

Spider-Man: What?

Alex Stansfield: Don't be so harsh, Ted. *Spider-Man's* pretty fun. It's got a nice big open world and the combat is some of the best I've seen in a superhero game. I liked it more than the recent *Superman* game and I'm giving it a 3.5.

Ted: It's the same cliched crap we see in every superhero game. Yeah, New York is nice and big but there's nothing to do, so that leads to long periods of time where you're swinging around like a complete idiot looking for the next mission.

Spider-Man: \*looks very offended\*

Alex: Ted, not in front of Spider-Man!

Ted: "Does whatever a spider can"... crawl around, creep people out, and make spider webs?

Spider-Man: \*starting to cry\*

Alex: Ted, you're making Spider-Man cry now! You need to apologize!

Ted: No apologies, 1 out of 5!

Spider-Man: \*runs away crying\*

Alex: What if we need him to save us someday?

Ted: From what, a giant fly?

-excerpted from the October 5, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Gary Westhouse: *Commander Keen: When Universes Collide* is a sometimes frustrating but mostly fun action game with plenty to do and lots of fun characters.

Lyssa Fielding: Personally, it's one of my favorite games of the year. There's tons of stuff to do and lots of hilarious jokes, and Becky Blaze is one of my favorite characters in any video game in quite a while.

Gary: She's kind of annoying!

Lyssa: She's supposed to be! But she's also really endearing, and you'll definitely grow to love her. In fact, her stealth segments are my favorite parts of the game!

Gary: I agree with you there, the game's take on *Metal Gear Solid* is pretty hilarious.

Lyssa: And...\*sing-song\* you gotta eat your vegetables!

Gary: Ugh, please don't do that again!

Lyssa: You gotta eat your vegetables, you gotta eat your vegetables! \*doing it over and over again, much to Gary's displeasure\*

Gary: Aaaaaaahhhhhh quit it quit it quit it!

Lyssa: *Commander Keen: When Universes Collide* is the series' best game yet and I give it a 5 out of 5.

Gary: I had too many problems with it to give it a 5, but I'll still give it a 4. It's incredibly fun and if you can endure a bit of frustration, you'll get a real kick out of it.

Lyssa: You gotta eat your vegetables!

-excerpted from the October 12, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Alex: This game does giant robots better than any game has ever done giant robots. I never thought I'd be saying that about a *Final Fantasy* game.

Ted: *Final Fantasy VIII* is beyond good. It's downright fantastic, and I'd say it's better than *Final Fantasy VII*.

Alex: Ehshhhhhhhhhhhhhhh.....I wouldn't go quite THAT far, but it's still amazing. The massive world, the complicated but ultimately fascinating mythology, the brilliantly written characters...

Ted: This game will give you a crash course in the Kabbalah, unlike Madonna, who will just rant at you for six hours until you want to jump out the window.

\*a brief snippet is played from Madonna's 1997 MTV interview with Kurt Loder about the Kabbalah Center\*

Alex: Yeah, *Final Fantasy VIII* is nothing like that.

Ted: We should have had Madonna on here to play this game though, wouldn't that have been something?

Alex: Imagine if Madonna had written this game.

Ted: Well, actually, that might not have been half bad considering how hot some of the girls in this game are. I mean, can you imagine Quistis....you know, doing Madonna stuff?

Alex: You're a Quistis man, huh?

Ted: There's something about a girl with glasses and a whip!

Alex: \*laughs\*

Ted: But yeah, this is easily one of the best games of the year. 5 out of 5.

Alex: I whole-heartedly agree, *Final Fantasy VIII* gets a 5 out of 5!

\*A siren goes off\*

Ted: Madonna's here! Wait, no, that's just the *GameTV* Hall of Fame siren!

\*Alex and Ted head to the wall to put up a framed copy of *Final Fantasy VIII*\*

Lyssa: Did you guys say Madonna was here?

Alex: Madonna is NOT here!

Lyssa: Awww... \*looks disappointed\*

-excerpted from the October 19, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Steve Horton: \*dressed as Max Headroom for the *GameTV* Halloween special\* I got two things to say about *Ultra Donkey Kong Country*. Coconut. Gun. Coconut gun!

\*Donkey Kong is shown wildly firing his coconut gun at enemies\*

Steve: If there's one thing *Donkey Kong Country* needed, it's weapons!

Ted: \*dressed as Doc Brown\* This game has plenty of those, and plenty of different worlds to explore. I think it combines the best of both worlds, great precision platforming sidescrolling gameplay with open world exploration. It's not a perfect game, but it's the best *DKC* since 2 for me.

Steve: And I had a blast in the multiplayer mode. Not just the adventure mode, but the arenas as well.

Ted: Those I thought were a bit weak, but yeah, that adventure mode multiplayer is a ton of fun. Brings back a lot of fond memories of killing my friends in *Battletoads*...over...and over...and over again.

Steve: Just when you think you're at the goal.... boom!

\*A snippet of Diddy Kong jumping on Donkey Kong's head and knocking him into a pit is shown.\*

Steve: You can turn off the ability to knock into your friends and send them flying, but where's the fun in that?

Ted: I agree, this is definitely a game best played with your friends, trying to screw them

over at every opportunity. I give *Ultra Donkey Kong Country* a 4.5 out of 5.

Steve: And I'm giving it a perfect 5!

(...)

\*Lyssa and Brittany are standing on dance pads for the Sega Saturn game *Rhythmostar*, Lyssa is dressed as Sophitia from *Soul Calibur* and Brittany is dressed as Edea from *Final Fantasy VIII*.\*

Lyssa: I enjoyed *Rhythmostar* and gave it a 4, but Brittany, you weren't all that thrilled with *Rhythmostar*... you gave it a 3.

Brittany: Too few songs, repetitive patterns, it was mediocre.

Lyssa: Or maybe you just can't dance. \*smirks\*

Brittany: Oh, you're on, Lyssa!

\*The two begin dancing to one of the game's tougher songs, Brittany is doing quite well but Lyssa is giving a flawless performance, being very talented at rhythm games\*

Lyssa: \*laughing\* Admit it, I'm a better dancer than you!

Brittany: Dancing ability has nothing to do with it, it's pattern memorization!

Lyssa: Mmm, well I seem to have the patterns down pretty well...

Brittany: \*still keeping up with Lyssa\* *Dance Dance Revolution*... is way better!

Lyssa: Oh, I agree whole-heartedly, and I kick your butt at that too! \*laughs and keeps going, eventually beating Brittany by a fairly significant margin\*

Brittany: \*glaring\* I can still whip you at *Soul Calibur*...

-excerped from the October 26, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

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### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: October 1999**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
2. Dog Dash 3
3. F-Zero: Ultracharged
4. Super Smash Bros.
5. Metal Gear Solid
6. Outfoxed
7. Rise A Knight
8. Super Mario Dimensions
9. Doom: Inferno
10. Pokemon Safari

## The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: October 1999

1. Soul Calibur
2. Commander Keen: When Universes Collide
3. Sonic The Hedgehog 5
4. Silent Hill
5. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater
6. NYPD: Narcotics Squad
7. Resident Evil: Code Veronica
8. Chaos City
9. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
10. Virtua Fighter 3

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## November 1, 1999

At a meeting of Sega executives in Japan, the latest sales figures from North America are a subject of discussion, particularly the first figures for the opening day sales of *Ultra Donkey Kong Country*. Its performance was nowhere near that of *Sonic the Hedgehog 5*, but its opening day sales dwarfed those of *Commander Keen* and nearly every other Saturn game released that year.

"Saturn sales are nearing their all time low," said one of the men at the table, as Hayao Nakayama placed the file holding the sales figures back down on the table. "A change clearly needs to be made."

"I agree," said Nakayama, "but Tom Kalinske had done extremely well for us and there's no guarantee that his replacement would be able to match what he has done. We'll need to look long and hard for the right person before moving to relieve him."

"Actually," said one of the other men at the table, "I may have someone in mind."

The man who had just offered a suggestion was fairly new to Sega. He was Shoichiro Irimajiri, a close friend of Nakayama's who'd joined Sega at his behest after turning down a high-level executive position at General Motors.

"There is a man working with one of Nintendo's software companies, Rareware. He has acute business sense and is very talented at promoting games and may be just what we need to get people excited about the Katana. Under his leadership, Rareware's games have been extremely profitable."

"Do you think this man would leave Rare and Nintendo to come and work for Sega?" asked Nakayama.

"The position of chairman at Sega of America is far more lucrative than what he's making at Rare," said Irimajiri. "A generous offer would easily prompt him to jump ship."

"His contract with Rare doesn't expire until the end of March 2000," said Nakayama.

"Which is only a few weeks before we'll be unveiling the Katana to North America at the E3 trade show."

The other executives seemed open to Irimajiri's suggestion, and Nakayama agreed to consider it. Irimajiri handed him a folder with information about the man who he hoped would soon be succeeding Tom Kalinske.

"Reggie Fils-Aime."

-

A couple of quick things I wanted to include in this post. First, the cast list of major *Final Fantasy VIII* characters...

Squall Leonhart: Wil Wheaton  
Elly Van Houten: Moira Quirk  
Cid Uzuki: Daran Norris  
Bartholomew Fatima: Jeff Nimoy  
Quistis Trepe: Tiffany Grant  
Selphie Tilmitt: Larisa Oleynik  
Billy Lee Black: Steve Staley  
Rico Banderas: Robert Axelrod  
Edea Uzuki: Mary Elizabeth McGlynn  
Laguna Loire: Michael Reisz  
Miang: Wendee Lee  
Kahran Ramsus: Nolan North  
Krelian: Bryan Cranston  
Ellone: Bridget Hoffman  
Margie: Olivia Hack

And the list of 1999 Nintendo Power covers...

January 1999: Ultra Harvest Moon  
February 1999: Metal Gear Solid  
March 1999: Ape Escape  
April 1999: Super Smash Bros.  
May 1999: Star Wars: Episode I Racer  
June 1999: Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete  
July 1999: E3 Coverage (Game Boy Nova)  
August 1999: Welcome To Magicka  
September 1999: Fire Emblem: The False Princess  
October 1999: Final Fantasy VIII/Ultra Donkey Kong Country/Starcraft/Pokemon Yellow  
(four collectible covers)  
November 1999: Squad Four: Rebellion  
December 1999: Resident Evil: Operation Stormwind

-

\*A cheesy soap opera is playing on the screen. There's a blue-skinned woman making overly romantic eyes at a handsome looking young man.\*

Alien Woman: Thomas, we cannot be together... I am from another world, our people would never allow such a thing!

Thomas: We can make it work, Avalon! We can be together always, I-

\*The screen flashes red as Lockstar's national crest appears on the screen.\*

Voice: This is an announcement from the Lockstar Security Authority. Please stand by for this important message.

\*An official-looking news anchor appears on screen.\*

Anchor: The Lockstar Security Authority has declared that the curfew for all Lockstar citizens will remain in effect indefinitely. Any citizen caught on the streets after eight will be immediately taken into custody. We appreciate your cooperation-

\*Static begins to cut in on the screen, causing the message to become intermittent.\*

Anchor: ....this....matter....thank.....Security....

\*The newsroom is replaced on screen by a dark looking room with a dim red light and a few television monitors. A young redheaded woman is looking behind her.\*

Woman: Lane, are we in? Are we broadcasting? \*looks at the screen\* I don't know if anyone can hear me, but if you can....my name is Rebecca. I'm a member of Squad Four. I know the propaganda from Vasher and the LSA would have you believing we're traitors, but in reality we're fighting for the freedom of everyone on Lockstar. Vasher's been lying to you, and I'm here to give you the real story.

\*Rebecca points to one of the monitors, which is showing footage from *Squad Four* and *Squad Four: Eclipse*.\*

Rebecca: Over the past couple years, Squad Four's been fighting to protect the innocent, not just on Lockstar but all across the galaxy. We've done battle with a force of dangerous aliens who were seeking to enslave the friendly people of Velna. Then, when those aliens came to planet Lockstar looking for revenge, we helped fight them here and liberated the

planet from their evil ambitions.

\*Rebecca breathes a deep sigh.\*

Rebecca: I know the lies General Vasher....I refuse to refer to him by his new title, "Grand Protector"... as if he's ever protected anything in his life \*rolls her eyes\*... has told all of you. I know he says that we had an alliance with the Krills, the aliens who invaded Lockstar just months ago. That we helped bring them to this planet, that we created the entire invasion to make heroes of ourselves... we never wanted to be heroes. We just wanted to protect those who couldn't fight for themselves.

\*The monitor shows more scenes from *Squad Four: Eclipse*.\*

Rebecca: We thought General Vasher was our friend. And it's true, he played an instrumental role in helping to repel the evil Krills from Lockstar.

\*A few quick scenes from *Squad Four: Eclipse* are shown, demonstrating Vasher's heroics.\*

*Vasher: I'll take that warlord down with my own bare hands if I have to!*

\*Another scene, showing Vasher helping Shad to aim a large energy cannon, is shown.\*

*Vasher: You got a lot of guts, kid, firing a big thing like this. The recoil alone is enough to blow some of my best soldiers right outta their shoes!*

\*The scenes stop playing, and Rebecca is shown on screen again.\*

Rebecca: But even while he was helping us fight the evil Krills, Vasher was working behind the scenes to prepare for his coup. He was making deals, secretly funding a mercenary army...that Security Force Vasher claims will protect all of you? He really put it together to keep the people of Lockstar in line and to eliminate his enemies.

\*As Rebecca is talking, scenes of Vasher talking with shadowy figures, making double deals, and assembling his secret army are shown on screen. When Rebecca starts talking about the Security Force, a clip is shown of them attacking a base of loyal Lockstar soldiers, and another clip is shown of them arresting Squad Four.\*

Rebecca: And he had us dragged out of our beds in the middle of the night. We were arrested on charges of high treason, but all we'd been doing was enjoying a well-deserved rest between missions. Without any warning, all of us were hauled before some kangaroo

court to stand trial for crimes we'd never commit in a million years. We love the people of Lockstar, and tried to say as much in our "trial"... \*makes quotation marks with her fingers\*

*Shad: Treason? We've trained and worked hard to protect Lockstar and all of its people!*

*Marcus: We'd never dream of hurting any of the people of Lockstar!*

*Rebecca: You're making a mistake, please listen to us!*

*Lane: Oh man, this can't be happening!*

*Inquisitor Zanus: SILENCE! You traitors will not speak unless addressed by the court!*

Rebecca: And so it went that we were found guilty and taken to prison... Lockstar District Seven Prison, said to be inescapable.

\*As Rebecca talks, scenes from the prison are shown, showing its security measures, multiple walls, and dozens of guard towers. There are laser grids, killer security robots, and prisoners are kept in tightly locked cells.\*

Rebecca: \*smirks\* Inescapable until Squad Four got there, anyway...

\*Brief scenes are shown of Squad Four's escape from the prison, and the first footage from the game's combat are shown.\*

Rebecca: And that's where you come in. See, we've escaped prison, and now we've joined the rebellion...a rebellion to free Lockstar from the oppression of Vasher and the LSA. We're not trying to take over the planet, we just want to find the former president Hagan and return him to his office, the office the people of Lockstar elected him to fill. Lockstar was free under Hagan, and it WAS safe, no matter what Vasher is trying to tell you. With Squad Four and the other brave fighters of the Lockstar Defense Force free to do their jobs, Lockstar and its people have nothing to fear. But Vasher has promised a campaign of extermination against any alien world that opposes him, and that's a recipe for war and destruction.

\*Rebecca folds her hands in front of her.\*

Rebecca: Squad Four needs your help. And I know you might be wondering just how you can help us. Well, I guess it's time to show you just who Squad Four really is.

\*More gameplay scenes begin to play as Rebecca tells the viewers about Squad Four's abilities and shows off their new ones.\*

Rebecca: Each of the members of Squad Four, myself included, have skills that we can bring into battle and outside of it as well. Let's start with our squad leader, Shad. He's brave, and fast...maybe a little bit naïve, but we love him all the more for it. Shad fights enemies with his trusty laser pistol, but when push comes to shove, he's got a mighty sword he can use at close range.

\*Shad's fighting moves are demonstrated on screen.\*

Rebecca: See that cursor? Shad can lock onto enemies from afar. In fact, any of us can. When in battle, we'll automatically lock onto a foe, though you can go into the menu and change how we lock onto enemies however you like. We can lock onto the closest enemy, or the strongest, or the last enemy who targeted one of us. Of course, if you want us to fight with a more freeform style, we don't have to lock onto enemies at all. You can fix the camera and use the right analog stick to move the cursor and target enemies however you like. Try for a headshot for extra damage!

\*Shad is shown manually targeting an enemy's head and blasting him, taking him out easily.\*

Rebecca: We can also lock on in melee mode, so that we'll automatically move toward an enemy and strike with our weapon.

\*Shad is shown targeting an enemy, running toward it, and slashing it with his sword.\*

Rebecca: And while we're roaming around, we can pick up these little glowing orbs to build up our Special meter. It also builds up whenever we do damage to an enemy. Once it's full, press the right trigger button to unleash a massive special attack!

\*Shad's targeting reticles are now locked onto every enemy on the screen.\*

Rebecca: You see that? Every enemy is in Shad's sights. Time to unleash a Blaster Array!

\*Shad's pistol fires multiple laser shots at every enemy on screen, taking them all out.\*

Rebecca: So that's our fearless leader. And now here's our resident scientist, Lane.

\*Lane is shown running around on screen, firing his taser at enemies.\*

Rebecca: He's a little bit of a nerd sometimes, but he's really sweet and he's an important member of our team.

\*A quick scene is shown of Lane awkwardly flirting with Rebecca.\*

*Lane: Hey Rebecca, did you....see that trap I laid for the robot? I took out like three of them at once!*

*Rebecca: You did a really good job, Lane. \*smiles\**

*Lane: Wow...good enough to maybe, um...get a kiss?*

*Rebecca: Ermmm....*

\*Rebecca is rolling her eyes again, but she's smiling too.\*

Rebecca: We'd be lost without Lane's tech skills, and he's not a bad fighter either. He's got a taser that he can use to stun enemies from up close, and he also carries around a long range bolt thrower for blasting the baddies with bursts of lightning!

\*Lane zaps several enemies at once.\*

Rebecca: Lane can collect parts to build traps that can take down even the biggest foes...

\*A massive robot is crippled by one of Lane's EMP traps.\*

Rebecca: And don't forget his Special, the powerful Stunbolt.

\*Lane's taser goes into overdrive, stunning nearly every enemy on screen. He then takes out his bolt thrower and blows them away.\*

Rebecca: Then there's Marcus. He's tough and he's a great fighter, but don't tell him that... he might actually believe it.

*Marcus: \*slaps Shad on the back\** I'm the best on this team and you know it, buddy!

Rebecca: He can get himself into trouble with his recklessness, and he and Shad tend to fight... a lot. But he's a fierce fighter all the same, with his big spear from up close...

*\*Marcus stabs a big armored guard with his spear...\**

Rebecca: And his shotgun from somewhat further back.

*\*Marcus unleashes his shotgun on a group of small drone robots, scrapping them all. He then turns around and blasts a bigger robot, knocking it back.\**

Rebecca: When his Special builds up, he's a forced to be reckoned with! His shotgun goes fully automatic, and then watch out!

*\*Marcus unleashes hell with some powerful shotgun bursts, taking out every enemy in a wide radius with multiple shots in succession.\**

Rebecca: Of course, if he could fight as well as he could run his mouth, this rebellion might already have succeeded! And...then there's me. I don't like to toot my own horn or anything, but I am pretty good with a sniper rifle...

*\*Rebecca is shown zooming in on an enemy in a guard tower, taking him out with a burst from her laser powered sniper rifle.\**

Rebecca: And I've got a pair of twin energy blades that are pretty handy from up close....

*\*Rebecca is shown twirling around, taking out a pair of tough looking enemies with her twin energy swords.\**

Rebecca: And when I get REALLY riled up, my Whirlwind Rush special can take down just about any foe...

*\*Rebecca rolls toward a giant boss monster and uses her Whirlwind Rush to deplete the last third of its life bar in a single attack, taking it down.\**

Rebecca: Honestly, I'd say we're all pretty good. Of course, there's plenty of things all of us can do, and not just in a fight. Check out these new moves.

\*A quick music montage, demonstrating the game's new control scheme, is shown. Where *Eclipse* was fully on-rails, *Rebellion* is a 3-D adventure, like a proto hack-and-slash. Characters can now jump, sprint, dive, roll, guard, and crawl, right from the beginning of the game. Shad is shown climbing up the side of a guard tower, waiting for a guard to come by, and then pulling him out of the tower before vaulting up into it. Marcus can be seen using a robot as a shield to absorb enemy fire while shooting from behind the robot. Rebecca is grabbed from behind by an enemy, only to throw them over her shoulder, pin them with her foot, and then take them out with a quick button prompt. Lane is shown luring an LSA soldier down a corridor, then diving out of the way as a big monster comes out and attacks them.\*

Rebecca: As you can see, we've got a lot of new tricks up our sleeve, and we'll need all of them if we're going to free Lockstar and its people. And we need your help. We need strong, brave fighters for this rebellion, and the stakes have never-

\*The screen begins to fade out again as Rebecca keeps talking.\*

Rebecca: Higher.....talking.....life....death....vital....

\*A man in full military regalia appears on screen, standing in front of a banner with the new emblem of the Lockstar Security Authority.\*

Vasher: This is Grand Protector Vasher, reminding all citizens of Lockstar to stand firm in our resolve as a strong and secure planetary society. We will never again be invaded by the alien hordes, and we want to remind all of you that any attempt to aid or cooperate with the rebels, including the traitors of Squad Four, is a crime punishable by death. We cannot tolerate-

\*Vasher's message becomes staticy as Rebecca tries to cut back in.\*

Rebecca: Lane, get us back on!

Voice: I'm trying....! ...has anyone ever told you you're cute when you're mad?

Rebecca: This is serious, I'm trying to tell the people that we- \*the connection is clear now\* ...there....it's back. We're back. \*she sighs\* Well, I guess you saw that message from Vasher. And so you know how high the stakes are in this fight. I'll be honest, it's not going to be easy. We won't just be going up against robot drones and poorly trained guards...we'll be going up against some of Lockstar's elites. Not all members of the Lockstar Defense Force have joined the rebellion....in fact, most of them have sided with Vasher. It's not their fault, they've been taken in by his lies and scheming...but they're some of the toughest fighters in the galaxy, and we might have to fight a few of them along the way.

\*A montage is shown of some of the various enemies Squad Four will be facing, from minor foot soldiers, to big bulky robots, to huge indigenous monsters...it also shows a one-on-one fight between Shad and a Lockstar Defense Force soldier loyal to the LSA.\*

Rebecca: But without your help, we can't win this fight. The rebellion WILL fail. But...we're not going it alone, either. We've found help from some...very unlikely sources.

\*A scene is shown from inside the prison.\*

*Raquel: Oh, it's you guys again. Well? You gonna take me up on my offer? We can help each other get out of here.*

Rebecca: That's Raquel. She's a bit...rough around the edges.

\*Raquel is shown slamming Marcus up against the wall.\*

*Raquel: You care to say that to my face instead of behind my back, you punk?*

Rebecca: But she's the leader of the rebellion, and we'd follow her to the ends of Lockstar. ...and we will. She's a fighter, as good as any of us, and a loyal friend, if you can earn her trust.

\*Raquel is shown assisting Marcus in battle against a boss monster, then is shown hugging Rebecca tightly.\*

*Raquel: You guys have given me a reason to turn my life around...I'll never forget that. Any of it.*

Rebecca: And Froggo...he's half-man, half-frog. Not really, but sometimes it seems like he is.

\*Froggo is shown diving into the ocean toward an undersea building complex of some sort. Squad Four is following him.\*

*Froggo: \*surfacing from the water with a big black pipe of some sort\* I think you guys can hook this up and get your big robot working again!*

*\*An old man gives Froggo a thumbs up.\**

*Old Man: You're the best, Froggo!*

Rebecca: And Jack...he's crazy!

*\*Jack is shown swinging from a metal wire, giving a war cry as he fires grenades down into a massive open area full of robots and soldiers. Then a tall, blue-haired woman is shown, holding a large syringe.\**

Rebecca: That's Karen, the rebellion's official medic. ...okay, we have more than one doctor, but Karen's the best at what she does, and even follows us into battle to patch up our wounds on the fly!

*\*A scene from a firefight is shown, Karen is running from cover to cover, kneeling down beside Shad and fixing him up, Shad's health bar goes up somewhat as Karen works on him.\**

*Karen: Don't get yourself hurt again, or you'll end up like Lane here! \*pushes Lane forward, who's covered in bandages all over his body\**

*Lane: I'm okay, she's just practicing on me!*

*Rebecca: Sure you wouldn't want to practice on some real injuries? \*smirks and advances on Lane\**

*Karen: Ooh, simulated battlefield conditions!*

*Lane: No, no, it's okay, we're good!*

Voice: Awww, I know you'd never REALLY hurt me!

Rebecca: As long as you keep us on this time... *\*looks into the screen\** So...that's our rebellion. It's not the biggest army, or the strongest....but we're brave, and we're smart, and we're tough. But we can always use new recruits, and well... we believe in you. I believe in you. *\*she smiles\** We need your help. Lockstar needs your help. *\*a communicator beeping is heard\** What's that...? *\*presses a button, and a wild-haired man appears on one of the monitors\** Galactic News Reporter Jack Winkell?

Winkell: I'm sorry, Rebecca, but...are you asking people for help with the rebellion?

Rebecca: Yes, and it's very important-

Winkell: Well, while you're talking with them, can you maybe let me patch in for a minute?

Rebecca: Jack, please! This is for rebellion use only!

Winkell: But there's other heroes in other dimensions who need their help as well! Maybe not right away, but in the very near future!

Rebecca: \*sighing\* I guess it's only the right thing to do...

Winkell: Great! Check this out! \*takes over the feed\*

\*Another piece of stock music, an upbeat rock theme, begins to play as footage is shown from various future Ultra Nintendo games.\*

### **RESIDENT EVIL: OPERATION STORMWIND**

\*Chris is shown being tackled by a licker as he frantically tries to fire his weapon.\*

### **DAVE MIRRA'S FREESTYLE BMX**

\*A BMX bike does a leap off of a ramp and spins around twice before hitting the ground.\*

### **LEGEND OF MANA**

\*A pair of heroes are shown running around fighting Rabites in front of a giant, smiling tree.\*

### **SKULLS**

\*A girl in Day of the Dead garb rides down a long zip line before coming to a stop at the bottom and doing a twirl to collect some feathers.\*

## **WORLD OF COLOR: MILLENNIUM**

\*A massive multicolor combo is racked up, then footage from four-player mode is shown.\*

## **VELVET DARK**

\*Velvet is shown shooting some bad guys, then another scene shows her sitting down at a computer terminal.\*

## **POKEMON STADIUM**

\*Charizard roars, then Pikachu unleashes a Thunderbolt attack.\*

## **STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT**

\*A speeder is shown trying to evade an AT-AT, then a Storm Trooper is shown firing at Obi-Wan Kenobi, who returns the shots with his lightsaber.\*

## **TALES OF THE SEVEN SEAS: THE VICTORIAN LEGACY**

\*Creel is shown running from some Imperial guards, Erick opens a treasure chest, then Victoria is shown riding on the top of a massive sailing ship.\*

## **METROID: DARKNESS**

\*Samus' new Refraction Beam is shown in action, then a cutscene where the camera pans around a helmetless Samus.\*

Rebecca: That's all really impressive, but I really need to get back to-

Winkell: Of course, of course! Over and out! \*his monitor shuts off\*

Rebecca: \*she sighs, then smiles\* Of course, there are lots of heroes out there who probably need your help... but we're counting on you to come to our aid, and soon. The battle begins on November 15th.

\*Rebecca holds up the *Squad Four: Rebellion* game case, as "November 15" appears on the

bottom of the screen.\*

Rebecca: You'll help free the people of Lockstar, and maybe the whole galaxy, from Vasher and his oppressive rule. And hey, you might even have some fun too. Remember, you won't be alone. We'll be with you every step along the way, and you're sure to meet many allies as well. And if you really need help, and want to unlock some of Lockstar's most heavily guarded secrets, there's always this... \*she holds up the Official *Squad Four: Rebellion* Nintendo Player's Guide\* This is a comprehensive guide to unlocking our full potential, and seeing everything Lockstar has to offer. It's top-secret, for your eyes only, and cannot fall into enemy hands.

\*Rebecca puts down the guide and looks into the screen.\*

Rebecca: I can't stress this enough. The fate of Lockstar, the fate of the galaxy, maybe even the fate of the universe...are in your hands. It's a big burden to bear, but we know you can do it. I know you can do it.

\*The screen begins to get staticy again.\*

Lane: Rebecca, I think they've found us!

Rebecca: \*still looking into the screen\* I'll be waiting for you. Please...you're our only hope.

\*Rebecca looks behind her as loud noises are heard. She stands up and unsheathes her energy swords, looking back toward the camera one last time.\*

Rebecca: Squad Four, over and out.

\*The screen goes black. The Ultra Nintendo logo appears, followed by the *Squad Four: Rebellion* logo and the game's release date, November 15.\*

\*A brief credits sequence rolls. Then, something else plays.\*

\*Thunder...dark skies.\*

\*Epona galloping as a frantic-looking Young Link looks behind his back.\*

\*An image of the moon and its hideous face.\*

\*A strange child, doing a strange dance before putting on a mask.\*

\*Link in his Deku Mask letting out a loud, anguished scream.\*

\*The logo for *The Legend Of Zelda: Majora's Mask* appears on the screen.\*

\*The video ends.\*

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*“Squad Four: Rebellion was extremely influential on my approach to gameplay later on. It was the first game that really perfected combat in a 3-D environment. I'd already begun conceiving the idea for Devil May Cry, but when Squad Four: Rebellion came out, it showed me more than any other game about how we could best design the game's combat system.”*  
-Hideki Kamiya, in an October 2002 interview with *Famitsu* magazine

*“The holy trinity of 2-D to 3-D gameplay is Super Mario Dimensions, The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time, and Squad Four: Rebellion. No franchises made the transition as perfectly as those three.”*  
-Dan “Shoe” Hsu, quoted in a 2014 Gametrailers.com video series about the 2-D/3-D video game transition

*“And even though Squad Four did stick to that 'three guys, one girl' formula that I've pointed out so many times, it's always been a series that's featured very strong, well developed female characters. Never was that more evident than in Squad Four: Rebellion, which introduced probably my favorite character in the series, Raquel. Even though she wasn't playable, she had to have been the most well developed woman in the entire series with the exception of Rebecca. Raquel's leadership held the rebellion together, her motivations were extraordinarily realistic, and the nature of her relationship with Rebecca not only makes this game pass the Bechdel test with flying colors, but it shows that the character dynamic between two very strong and determined women can drive the narrative of a game, in this case a game that I believe, and many many critics agree, is one of the greatest video games of all time. It's a shame that Squad Four: Upheaval in 2003 reversed many of these encouraging trends, but it proves my point that the period between 1998 and 2000 may have been a high-water point for female characters in games overall.”*  
-Anita Sarkeesian, “Tropes vs. Women In Video Games Part 3”

*“The Horror! The Horror!”*

-from the cover of the November 1999 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, which proclaimed 1999 the “Year Of The Horror Game” and featured detailed coverage of *Emergency*, *Silent Hill*, and both *Resident Evil* titles

*“Resident Evil made you jump. Silent Hill made you think. And Emergency made you cheer.”*

-Ryan Davis, on the October 30, 2012 Giant Bombcast

*“Who needs cutting edge graphics? Code Veronica is the best Resident Evil game ever made, hands down.”*

-from the 9.5/10 GameInformer review of Resident Evil: Code Veronica

*“If we really are traitors, then let the people of Planet Lockstar decide our fate! Not a tribunal, and especially not you!”*

-Shad, Squad Four: Rebellion

*“I messed up, okay? I've messed up in my life too many times to count. Let me have this. Please. Let me die doing something to help people. Don't you dare try to stop me, damn it!”*

-Raquel, Squad Four: Rebellion

*“Abby, no, NO! ....Wesker, you bastard...I'm gonna make you pay for this.... I'll make you wish you'd never been born you son of a bitch!”*

-Claire Redfield, Resident Evil: Code Veronica

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*Ultra Nintendo:*

### **Arc The Lad II**

EGM: 6.5 (quote: “A mostly solid RPG that recycles lots of old cliches. If you're really into RPGs, you'll probably have fun, but if you're looking for something unique, look elsewhere.”)

Gamespot: 7.4 (quote: “The voice acting and gameplay are great, though the graphics are definitely primitive for the Ultra Nintendo.”)

### **Dungeons And Dragons: Wrath of The Minotaur**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: “Could this be the best Dungeons and Dragons game ever made? We think so.”)

Gamespot: 5.9 (quote: “A confusing power-up system and tough to navigate menus make a slog out of what would otherwise be a competent fantasy adventure.”)

### **Star Wars: Battlefront**

EGM: 7.2 (quote: “There's a lot going on in this exciting game. Star Wars fans will love it, but it's not without flaws.”)

Gamespot: 7.0 (quote: “Finally, we get to be a Stormtrooper! The Stormtrooper path is fun, but the Jedi path is pretty generic.”)

### **Tamagotchi Adventure**

EGM: 6.2 (quote: “It's a lot more complex than the digital pet, but that complexity lies at the heart of a fairly by the numbers RPG.”)

Gamespot: 7.0 (quote: “As far as monster games go, it's all right. It's no Pokemon, but it's

entertaining even if it's a bit short.")

### **Toy Story 2** (a version of *Toy Story 2* also appeared on the Saturn)

EGM: 4.0 (quote: "Another lame Disney movie tie-in game? Why am I not surprised.")

Gamespot: 7.1 (quote: "The graphics are outstanding, though some of the later levels can be frustrating due to the controls.")

### **Squad Four: Rebellion**

EGM: 10 (quote: "There's not a single part of this game that isn't fun. The combat, the exploration, the story, this series has achieved nirvana.")

Gamespot: 10 (quote: "A revolutionary adventure that in time will be remembered as the start of a brand new genre.")

### **Five For Fighting Hockey '99**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "It's the same old song and dance pretty much, but the presentation is all right.")

Gamespot: 6.3 (quote: "Throw down your gloves and throw some punches in this decent but hardly memorable hockey title.")

### **Steam Agent II**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "One of my favorite obscure RPGs gets a really fun sequel.")

Gamespot: 5.1 (quote: "Has the RPG genre gotten stale? I think this sequel proves that it has.")

### **Extreme Go-Karting 2**

EGM: 3.5 (quote: "It's a shame, because I loved the original on the SNES-CD. It's too bad this series hasn't evolved like Mario Kart.")

Gamespot: 4.7 (quote: "For all its quirks, it still can't compare to Mario Kart, the king of karts.")

### **Supermarket Survival**

EGM: N/A

Gamespot: 1.8 (quote: "One of the worst platformers since Bubsy 3D, this game makes me never want to set foot in a grocery store again.")

### **The Shining Stones**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "Decent swordplay makes this action-RPG hardly a total waste.")

Gamespot: 6.7 (quote: "It's all right, but it's no Secret of Mana.")

### **Silverwing**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "I was pleased with this game from start to finish. The dungeons are creative, and the hero is endearing.")

Gamespot: 7.4 (quote: "If you're looking for the next Legend of Zelda, look elsewhere, but if you're looking for a fun adventure game and don't mind the flaws, it's worth your time.")

### **House Of Five Leaves**

EGM: 6.8 (quote: "There are better fighting games out there, but it's worth a look.")

Gamespot: 6.3 (quote: "It's pretty much your typical 2-D fighter.")

**Slamfist** (was also ported to the Saturn)

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "The graphics are great, and there's no slowdown at all.")

Gamespot: 4.0 (quote: "How could they let some of the glitches in this game slip by?

Throws ending randomly, character faces not appearing? They could've called this game Fist of the Faceless and it would've been more accurate.")

### **Emergency**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "A thrill ride from start to finish, with one of the best plots I've ever experienced in a horror game.")

Gamespot: 7.2 (quote: "There are some major flaws here, but Sony has put together a very fun survival horror game.")

### **In The Dust**

EGM: 5.8 (quote: "This is one of my most disappointing titles of the year. What seemed in the previews like it might be the dirt track Gran Turismo is just another generic racing game.")

Gamespot: 7.0 (quote: "The controls need some work, but there's the framework of a good game here.")

### **Lorelai: Glorious Reminiscence**

EGM: 8.3 (quote: "Glorious doesn't even begin to describe how beautiful some of the levels are.")

Gamespot: 9.4 (quote: "Koei has fired a shot across Squaresoft and Enix's bows, and they'd do wise to take notes from this brilliant tactical role-playing game.")

*Saturn:*

### **Resident Evil: Code Veronica**

EGM: 8.8 (quote: "I wasn't thrilled with everything this game had to offer, but it's definitely a scary good time.")

Gamespot: 9.0 (quote: "One of the best horror games of the year, it's everything Emergency should've been.")

### **House Of The Dead III**

EGM: 7.4 (quote: "Thanks to the new enemies, this franchise hasn't quite gotten old.")

Gamespot: 5.0 (quote: "What happened? Level after level of repetitive, boring enemies, this series has grown very stale.")

## **Crazy Taxi**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "The city looks beautiful and you'll have a great time driving around the city for fares.")

Gamespot: 8.3 (quote: "What a wild title! You'll love playing this game over and over.")

## **Spinaround**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "It's a very creative shooter, but I wanted it to go on a bit longer.")

Gamespot: 7.8 (quote: "You'll actually get dizzy playing this game. I don't know if that's a strike against it or not.")

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## **Emergency: The Basics**

*Emergency* is a survival horror/action title both developed and produced by Sony and released for the Ultra Nintendo on November 1, 1999. The game is a collaboration between Sony's American and Japanese developers, and a large amount of time and resources went into the development of the game, which is one of the most heavily cinematic games to date. It's more action oriented than Resident Evil, ammo and weaponry is plentiful and the protagonist is able to use melee attacks in battle as well, including punches, kicks, and an assortment of sharp and blunt instruments. The game is structured like a Metroidvania and takes place almost entirely inside a large hospital complex that is ground zero for an outbreak of a mysterious disease that warps the bodies of some and the minds of others. As the protagonist explores the hospital, he must unblock certain areas that the recent deadly events have caused to be blocked. He can also find and rescue survivors, and there are two in particular who become important over the course of the game: Anessa Latimer, and Sarah Klausterman. Anessa is a young college student who was visiting her brother in the cancer ward when the outbreak struck, while Sarah is a fellow doctor who may hold the key to solving the outbreak. The game features a great deal of voice acting, with the protagonist, Rick O'Reilly, voiced by Jeff Bennett, Anessa voiced by Lana Parrilla, and Sarah voiced by Salli Richardson.

The game begins as Rick is making his rounds in the intensive care unit. His superiors have been getting word about strange behavior in a certain wing of the hospital. Rick visits the patient, a young man named Elson Gary. Gary has been restrained because of his attacks on the various doctors and nurses that have been coming to see him. Rick notices a strange symbol carved into Gary's wrist. As he is leaving the room, there is an explosion that blows Rick into a nearby wall and knocks him unconscious. Rick wakes up restrained to Gary's bed, with Gary nowhere in sight and all the hospital's lights extinguished. A doctor with terrifying physical deformities comes into the room to "operate" on Rick, Rick manages to break free and must now begin navigating the hospital in search of survivors. Rick soon finds Anessa, and the two begin to navigate the hospital together, rescuing survivors, dodging strange and disturbing creatures, and piecing together what might have happened. Rick begins stumbling upon the notes of Sarah Klausterman, and occasional scenes of her are shown throughout the first parts of the game, though she's not playable, she appears in cutscenes and occasionally has to evade danger herself. Eventually, Rick and Anessa befriend a scared teenage boy, and they lead him through a section of the hospital. However, the boy is under the influence of the outbreak as well, though Rick and Anessa

don't learn this until it's too late, the boy fatally stabs Anessa. As Anessa dies in Rick's arms, Rick realizes that the disease isn't just mutating people's bodies, it's mutating their behavior, and that it's evolving. The next part of the game eventually ends with Rick blowing up one hospital building and dramatically escaping across a skybridge to another part, being knocked unconscious in the process. He once again wakes up restrained, but this time it's by Sarah, who thinks Rick is infected. When she learns that he isn't, she frees him and explains what she knows about the virus. It's a bioweapon, designed to modify enemy behavior to make them turn on one another. It was developed by the USSR at their Vector labs in the late 80s to be deployed in Afghanistan, but a secret United States spy mission stole the bioweapon and smuggled it to the United States to be used in American operations. Sarah was a scientist in charge of researching the weapon, but when she realized what it could do, she stole it herself and tried to have it destroyed. However, a test subject, Elson Gary, still had a sample of the infection within him, and managed to escape the lab with the bioweapon dormant inside of him. Eventually he fell ill due to its side effects and came to the hospital. Sarah infiltrated the hospital in an attempt to contain the bioweapon before it spread, but Gary had deliberately began spreading it throughout the hospital. Now that the bioweapon has spread, Sarah wants to call in a government airstrike to destroy the hospital and the bioweapon, however, the bioweapon is now active in numerous patients, many of them now showing no outward physical symptoms. The bioweapon has become a sort of hive with a mind of its own, and its only desire is to spread to as many victims as it can. Sarah has managed to seal up the hospital, but if the bioweapon finds a way out, it will spread to the surrounding city and then the world. The next part of the game is focused on hunting down and terminating the infected people. But even after they are all defeated, Gary still remains. It becomes apparent that the virus is no longer acting on its own, Gary is instead controlling the virus and he intends to spread it throughout the world in order to get control of the world and all its people. This leads to a final confrontation between Rick and Gary at the hospital's control center, with Sarah as Gary's captive. Rick manages to kill Gary, but Sarah has been infected and begs Rick to kill her to destroy the last of the bioweapon. She is unable to control the infection within her own body, and attacks Rick, but Rick is able to administer an antibody (developed by him over the course of the game, hinted at by various cutscenes in which we see Rick using Sarah's notes to cultivate it), and Sarah is saved. The two evacuate the hospital with any survivors just before a government strike force annihilates the remainder of the hospital in a fiery explosion. The game's ending features a cliffhanger, with several mutated survivors skulking through the sewer system below the hospital...

One of the most heavily promoted games of the year, *Emergency* is praised for its action packed, exploration based gameplay and its production values, including its voice acting. The storyline gets criticism for being somewhat derivative and implausible, but considering that it's a survival horror game, most fans forgive it and *Emergency* becomes one of the biggest critical and commercial successes of the year, its North American sales surpassing one million by the end of November.

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### **Resident Evil: Code Veronica – The Basics**

Released exclusively for the Saturn (at least initially), *Resident Evil: Code Veronica* is one of two *Resident Evil* games released for consoles in 1999. In terms of gameplay, the game isn't all that much different from *Resident Evil 2*, with some minor gameplay improvements including the ability to dual wield weapons and the ability to use healing herbs right from the gameplay screen. Instead, the major improvements in *Code Veronica* are in terms of

presentation. It requires the use of the Ring peripheral, and the graphics are massively overhauled from previous games, including the addition of fully rendered 3-D backgrounds. The game in fact looks better even than the Ultra Nintendo ports of *Resident Evil* and *Resident Evil 2*, and is said to be one of the best looking Saturn games ever released.

The plot also receives major changes from OTL's game. While it still stars Claire Redfield and still begins with her being captured by Umbrella after looking for Chris at a secret Umbrella facility, Chris himself does not appear in this game. Instead, Claire remains the primary main character for the game's duration, and is joined by two major supporting characters: Abigail Chambers and Steve Burnside. Early in the game, Claire discovers Abigail being held captive and experimented on by Umbrella. She frees Abigail and the two explore the facility together, looking for clues about Chris (throughout the game, various bits of information are discovered about Chris' whereabouts, alluding to his role in the Ultra Nintendo's *Operation Stormwind*, which takes place concurrently with the events of this game). While Claire and Abigail explore the island, we learn that Wesker is headed to the facility as well, in order to retrieve a viral sample being grown within a human specimen. Claire and Abigail are separated after an attack from a fierce mutated creature, but Claire then meets Steve Burnside, whose family has been experimented on at the facility. Instead of the Alfred/Alexia plotline featured in OTL's *Code Veronica*, Alexia Ashford is the island's director, and also, as we later find out, secretly the host for the viral sample Wesker is looking to collect. Over the next third or so of the game, Claire and Steve explore the island in search of Abigail and an escape route, battling mutants and slowly bonding. Eventually, Claire and Steve confront Alexia, who is beginning to mutate herself due to the effects of the viral host. There is a fierce battle, but while Claire and Steve are victorious, Steve himself is mutated by a virus that had been implanted in him while he was being used as an experimental subject, and Claire is forced to battle him. Steve sacrifices himself, killing Alexia to save Claire, and dies in her arms after confessing his love for her. Claire resolves to find Abigail and escape the island, but sometime later, Wesker retrieves the still-living and incomplete viral sample from Alexia's body. Eventually, Claire reunites with Abigail, and the two battle their way through more deadly mutations and monsters. However, Wesker is able to ambush Claire and capture Abigail, and as Claire is forced to watch, Wesker injects Abigail with the viral sample. It mutates inside of her, achieving its complete evolution. Claire swears revenge and frees herself, but has to flee from the creature Abigail instead of pursuing Wesker. She manages to escape and the creature is seemingly killed. Claire then confronts Wesker and the two engage in a fierce fight, which seemingly results in Wesker's death. As Claire goes to escape, the creature Abigail returns, and the final boss fight occurs. Claire defeats the creature and is able to save Abigail with a vaccine created from the T-Veronica sample inside Steve's body. Claire discovers the final clue as to Chris' whereabouts, and she and Abigail escape the island to go find him. Meanwhile, after the credits, we see Wesker with a sample of a new virus, making his way into a large, official looking building, presumably to make some kind of deal.

*Resident Evil: Code Veronica* is as acclaimed as the original two *Resident Evil* games, releasing on November 4, 1999 to some of the biggest Saturn software sales of the year. By all accounts, the game sets an extremely high bar for the Ultra Nintendo title being released just a month later. It leaves a legacy as one of the year's best Sega Saturn games, and, at the time, one of the best Saturn exclusives.

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But where the latest Bond film succeeds is in its choice of supporting characters. Robert Carlyle is an excellent villain as the dangerous and slightly deranged assassin Renard, and

the film's two Bond girls, Sophie Marceau (playing oil heiress Electra King) and Nicole Kidman (playing UN nuclear inspector Moon Rivers) are particularly inspired casting. Kidman actually turned down the role once, and actresses such as Denise Richards were considered for the part, but producers persisted, and eventually Kidman agreed to the role. The film is all the better for it, Kidman is one of the most intelligent and fierce Bond girls in ages, easily able to hold her own with Pierce Brosnan. The plot is a little convoluted, especially toward the end, but the smart casting saves what could have been a mess of a film.

*The World Is Not Enough* debuts in theaters on November 19th.

-excerpted from a review of *The World is Not Enough* in the *Portland Press Herald* on November 17, 1999

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Fans of the hit Fox Kids TV show won't find too much to love about *Tamagotchi Adventure*. It's a fairly straight-forward game, with none of the heart and charm of the animated series, and while your player avatar resembles the main character of the show, that's where the similarities largely end. You'll traverse the game, raising your virtual pet to raise its stats as you battle increasingly powerful monsters. The world of *Tamagotchi Adventure* is big and colorful, and the monsters you encounter are quite diverse in their design (assuredly to sell even more toys), but *Pokemon* this definitely ain't, and if you're expecting an adventure with heart and soul, you'll want to try another game.

*Pokemon* has many imitators (though it is worth noting that Tamagotchi did show up on American soil first), and *Tamagotchi* is the most famous of all of them. Hasbro's latest cash cow has plenty of appeal for people looking for a bit more of a complex story than *Pokemon's*, with its heavy focus on human characters as opposed to the oh-so-collectible digital pets. That's why *Tamagotchi Adventure* is so disappointing. It regresses to the tried-and-true *Pokemon* formula, with little of what made that franchise so fun and addictive in the first place. *Tamagotchi* should stick to what it does best, and what's made it a worthy competitor to *Pokemon* for the title of "most sickeningly lucrative monster franchise".

Graphics: 4.0

Sound: 3.0

Play Control: 3.5

Fun Factor: 2.5

Challenge: Intermediate

-excerpted from *GamePro's* review of *Tamagotchi Adventure* in the December 1999 issue

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Sega's latest arcade hit lands on the Sega Saturn, and while *Crazy Taxi* isn't a perfect port (it was admittedly rushed to consoles for the 1999 holiday season), it still plays almost as well as the original arcade game, especially if your Saturn is equipped with a Ring.

(...)

Whether or not you're playing with a Ring, the core gameplay of racing customers to their destinations while exploring a massive city remains the same across the board. While there

is some slowdown if you're not packing the Ring peripheral, you can still have almost as much fun without it as you can with it. Still, *Crazy Taxi* is one of the best reasons to pick up a Ring, because with it, the game is a visual treat.

Score: 8/10 (without Ring), 9/10 (with Ring)

-excerpted from the review of *Crazy Taxi* in the November 1999 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

*It had been more than half a year since the Sega Sanshiro ad campaign had ended. Kalinske had discussed bringing back an ad campaign focused on the Saturn's lineup of arcade hits, and with exclusives like Virtua Racing Reality, Soul Calibur, and now Crazy Taxi, it seemed like a viable strategy. But in the end, it was decided to feature a more generic advertising campaign, showing off the Saturn's lineup and letting the games speak for themselves.*

*During the latter part of the year, you couldn't walk around SoA headquarters without seeing something having to do with Crazy Taxi. The game was everywhere, and Sega was promoting it more extensively than any other new release that year.*

*"I don't know if we're going to beat Nintendo with a taxi driving game," Kalinske once remarked to a passing colleague. "I mean, they've got Squad Four, and we've got a taxi."*

*"But people loved it in the arcades. It's been called one of the most addictive games of the year."*

*"Sure, once you sit down to play it, you're hooked. But we gotta hook people before they get a controller in their hand or we'll never get 'em to play it."*

*Some of the higher-ups at Sega agreed with Kalinske, which was a welcome respite from the usual chatter that they were getting ready to show him the door. Kalinske wanted to focus Sega's advertising that fall on Resident Evil: Code Veronica, but with Nintendo's new Resident Evil game looking much more visually impressive, it was thought to be too much of a risk. Nintendo could just show off how much better Operation Stormwind looked than Code Veronica, and that their new game didn't require the purchase of a separate peripheral. Crazy Taxi was said to be the easier sell, and so Kalinske was overruled for what wasn't the first time.*

*Crazy Taxi did end up selling well, but Nintendo's biggest game of the year was looming, and Sega had absolutely no response for it. Commander Keen was said to be the closest thing Sega had to anything like Squad Four: Rebellion, but it had been a commercial disappointment thus far.*

*"So instead, they're pushing a taxi."*

*"A crazy taxi," Kalinske's colleague pointed out.*

*"It's not the only crazy thing around here."*

-excerpted from *The Chase: Sega's 20 Year Struggle To Take Down A Giant*

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Telling the story of an ancient kingdom besieged by enemies on all sides, and using modern day scholars as a framing device, *Lorelai: Glorious Reminiscence* is not only Koei's best game of the year, it's quite possibly one of the best tactical role playing games ever made. Unlike other tactical RPGs, where you're sent on a campaign of expansion, in *Lorelai*, you're tasked with playing defense, your main fighting force never leaving its starting kingdom (though you do occasionally have to send out small scout squads for recruitment or supplies). While the struggle at times seems hopeless, the game keeps a fairly light tone and even has moments of comic relief. It also uses its framing devices exceptionally well, implying things about the modern characters that relate heavily to the heroes of the past (though elaborating more would spoil many of the game's best twists). *Lorelai* succeeds in many ways that *Final Fantasy Tactics* fails. Does that make it the superior game? Perhaps, perhaps not. But one thing is certain: *Lorelai* is a well made, beautifully crafted, and wonderfully poignant tactical RPG that pushes the genre in an exciting new direction while paying homage to the games of the past. The game itself is a reminiscence, and one that more than lives up to everything it sets out to be.

Score: 9.5/10

-excerpted from a review posted on RPGamer.net on November 29, 1999

*“Hopelessly underappreciated even in its day, Lorelai remains a true gem. It sold terribly few copies here in the States, barely 50,000, and even in Japan it was considered a disappointment. Its squad-based units and real-time segments brought elements from Koei's brilliant real time strategy games to a genre that's been considered painfully slow by its critics. It should have heralded a new age of strategic role-playing games, but ended up being a small diversion for a company that would soon be known primarily for its Dynasty Warriors series. Koei has to be lauded for trying something new, and perhaps gamers of the day deserve chastisement for rejecting it.*

*The fact that you can now download this game for merely 10 dollars as opposed to buying a copy from an Ebay scalper for upwards of 120 dollars is a blessing, and if you pass up this game, you're truly missing out. Lorelai: Glorious Reminiscence is not to be missed.”*

-excerpted from a Kotaku retro review of *Lorelai: Glorious Reminiscence*, posted on February 14, 2012

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In a year packed with two *Resident Evils* and brand new IPs like *Emergency* and *Silent Hill*, *Junction Point* may top them all for sheer terror and creepiness. Your journey through this ship takes you through the literal heart of darkness, with shadow and lighting used to brilliant effect. You never know who your friends or your enemies are, adding to the general unease you feel as you traverse the sometimes very narrow hallways and corridors. *Junction Point* brilliantly combines elements from a number of genres, including the first-person shooter, the RPG, and the survival horror game, creating a game that can't be pigeon-holed into any one genre.

In short, *Junction Point* is the game of the year, on PC or otherwise. It's a devilishly clever and addictive experience that will leave you both terrified and begging for more. Let Ultra

Nintendo players have their *Squad Four*, let Saturn players have their *Code Veronica*. *Junction Point* is a game unlike any of those or any other, and Ken Levine and his team have created a masterpiece that won't be forgotten for many years to come.

Score: 100%

-excerpted from the *PCGamer* review of *Junction Point*, featured in the January 2000 issue

PCGamer: There's no doubt that *Junction Point* was a pioneering game. It won multiple Game of the Year awards and its influence is being felt to this day. Sales, though, were disappointing.

Ken Levine: Part of that is on me. Obviously *Colony* was the biggest PC game release of that holiday season, and Peter Molyneux always hyped his games a lot more than we did. Even as disappointing as *Colony* was, it ended up selling way more copies than we did and at the time was considered the bigger success. But I think a lot of that is also, it's got to be attributed to the fact that computer games weren't really afforded much mainstream respect back in those days. I mean, PC games weren't featured at the MTV Video Game Awards until like 2003, but when *Junction Point* was reviewed on *GameTV*, they loved it. They gave it a perfect score. I remember Ted Crosley coming up to me at a party a few months after *Junction Point* was released and shaking my hand.

PCGamer: It was their PC game of the year, if I recall correctly.

Levine: It was!

PCGamer: And I remember, when we interviewed Alex Stansfield a few years back, he said that if they'd had PC games in the MTV Game Awards, there's no doubt it would've been nominated for Game of the Year. That they'd have replaced *Sonic the Hedgehog 5* in a heartbeat.

Levine: I doubt it would've won, though. They had fan voting and PC games would've stood no chance against console games. Which was a shame, but just the way things worked, back then and even now.

PCGamer: You think on an even playing field, you could've beaten games like *Metal Gear Solid* and *Squad Four: Rebellion*?

Levine: We did! Several times, in fact. When they combined the PC and console games into one category, we came out on top more than once. So *Junction Point* definitely could've done better if more mainstream publications had given it its due. But, you know, eventually Bill Gates did come calling.

-excerpted from an interview in the April 2005 issue of *PCGamer*

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“In *Star Wars: Battlefront*, you'll pick your side: the Rebel Alliance, or the Galactic Empire, as you re-enact famous battles from the original *Star Wars* trilogy and participate in battles exclusive to the game! You'll be able to fill the shoes of characters ranging from a lowly

*Stormtrooper to Darth Vader himself, along with Luke Skywalker, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Han Solo, and even the bounty hunter Boba Fett. With more than 30 missions in all, this is the perfect game for anyone who wants to know what it's like to fight on some of the fiercest battlefields in the galaxy!"*

-from *Nintendo Power's* coverage of *Star Wars: Battlefront* in the November 1999 issue

## **Upcoming Lineup Packed With Star Wars Titles**

In life, there are only three things that are certain: death, taxes, and new *Star Wars* video games, and in the year 2000, assuming Y2K doesn't send us back to the Stone Age, we'll have plenty of *Star Wars* games to keep us busy for ages to come.

Rare's hit game *Star Wars: Masters of Juyo* finally gets a sequel, but it looks to be arcade-only. *Star Wars: Grandmasters* is set to release in arcades everywhere during the summer of 2000, and will feature a lineup studded with new characters, including Qui-Gon Jinn and Darth Maul from *Star Wars: Episode I*. It's likely that if successful, the game will receive a home console port, but we likely won't see it until 2001.

Coming to the Ultra Nintendo next year is *Star Wars: Rebel Fighter*, a space combat-based game that puts you in the cockpit of an X-Wing, flying some of the most dangerous missions in the galaxy. It promises to faithfully re-enact battles like the classic Death Star trench run, and the graphics look amazing. We should see *Rebel Fighter* sometime next fall.

The Sega Saturn doesn't feature any new *Star Wars* games next year, but Lucasarts has let slip that they're developing a future title for the Katana, said to be a third-person lightsaber based action game. Information is scarce, but more info is likely to be revealed at Sega's E3 presentation next spring.

Finally, the PC is playing host to several new *Star Wars* games, including a new sequel to the classic *X-Wing/TIE Fighter* series that introduces a brand new class of space fighter and is said to feature some of the biggest aerial battles ever depicted in a video game.

-excerpted from a Gamespot article posted on November 17, 1999

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## **Ayrton Senna Wins Winston Cup In Thrilling Final Race**

Ayrton Senna, the F-1 superstar and last year's rookie sensation who finished a close second behind Dale Earnhardt in the Winston Cup standings has achieved victory in his sophomore season, taking the checkered flag at the season's final race in Atlanta to win the points victory by just three points over second place Mark Martin. Martin came into the race nearly assured a Winston Cup victory, but a major crash in the Lap 5 that took Martin's car out for the remainder of the day opened the door for Senna, and he capitalized, taking the lead in a dramatic final lap as he passed Jeff Gordon at turn two.

Senna has become one of NASCAR's most electrifying stars, and his rivalry with Dale Earnhardt has developed into one of the sport's most compelling stories. Senna has also brought new international viewers into the NASCAR fold, and there's even been talk of holding one or two races overseas, though the idea remains extremely controversial and isn't likely to be implemented in the near future. Still, Senna's ascent to the top of stock car

racing will surely bring the sport even more fans from around the world, and while some diehard fans have claimed that his entry into the circuit is the worst thing that ever happened to the sport, others have claimed that it's the best. If Senna can repeat in 2000, talk about NASCAR going international is sure to gain even more traction, even on one of the steepest slopes imaginable.

-from a Yahoo! News report posted on November 22, 1999

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\*Scenes from *Squad Four: Rebellion* are shown as dramatic music plays over them.\*

Narrator (Don LaFontaine): Traitors.

\*Squad Four is shown being hauled away by guards.\*

Narrator: Escapees.

\*Squad Four is shown breaking out of prison.\*

Narrator: Fugitives.

\*Battle footage is shown of Squad Four battling enemy guards.\*

Narrator: Rebels.

\*A cutscene is shown depicting Raquel giving a speech as Squad Four rallies a band of rebels to the cause.\*

Narrator: Warriors.

\*Squad Four is shown battling a massive boss, followed by several other rapid-fire scenes of the game's combat. The screen goes black and the music pauses.\*

Narrator: ...Heroes.

\*More scenes play and the music intensifies.\*

Shad: We're not about to give up, not now, not ever!

Lane: If I place the charges here, you'll have more time to escape, but...

Raquel: Don't worry about us.

Rebecca: Yaaaaaaaaaaaah! \*slashes down two guards with her swords\*

\*Shad is shown leaping from a tall guard tower. Lane sets off a large explosion. Marcus, Raquel, and Froggo try to keep a huge tank at bay.\*

Vasher: I want them found, I want them dead!

Rebecca: \*hugging Raquel, then another scene is shown of her tending to a rebel's wounds, before her voice is heard over more scenes\* If we can't win this battle, all is lost. Freedom will die forever in the galaxy.

Shad: I never asked to be a traitor. I took an oath to fight for Lockstar.

Raquel: You still are.

\*Rebecca is shown horrified as she stands over a burning city.\*

Marcus: They'll pay. They'll all pay.

Narrator: The biggest action game of the year has arrived, and it's only on Ultra Nintendo.  
***Squad Four: Rebellion***.

*The Rebellion Begins – November 15*

\*The Ultra Nintendo logo is shown, along with Nintendo's slogan, "Ultimate Fun".\*

-the North American commercial for *Squad Four: Rebellion*, which began playing in late October 1999

### **Squad Four: Rebellion – The Basics**

*Squad Four: Rebellion* is the third game in the *Squad Four* series, the first and only *Squad Four* title for the Ultra Nintendo, and the first game to take the series into full 3D. Developed by Argonaut and produced by Nintendo, it completely ditches the series' on-rails roots (though there are a couple of short on-rails segments in certain missions) in favor of a fully 3D style that can be compared to a much faster-paced OTL *Jet Force Gemini*, or even closer to a proto hack-and-slash type game. Exploration is heavily emphasized, while the game features a generous amount of combat, there are also large segments of levels that you can explore to gather power-ups and even secret collectible items (these collectibles are unnecessary to progress in the game, but earn the player more points and a higher overall mission grade). *Squad Four: Rebellion* features the same four playable characters as previous installments: Shad, Rebecca, Marcus, and Lane, all with similar moves as in the earlier on-rails games, but now with a vastly expanded moveset including the ability to jump, run, roll, dodge, throw, use explosives, swim, climb, lock onto enemies, and more. If grabbed by an enemy, for example, a quick-time prompt will appear that the player can use to perform one of several counters. Responding to these quick-time events is never necessary and failing them only causes a minor loss of health (of course, if you're very low on health you still need to activate the quick time event). For the first time, the player character is joined by one of several companions, including Raquel (who uses a knife and automatic pistol), Froggo (an aquatic based character who uses a speargun and trident), Jack (who specializes in big explosive weapons) and Karen (who is mostly a healer). These support characters can be injured in battle, but protecting them is never necessary, when knocked out in battle you merely lose their services for the remainder of that segment. The game's mission structure has a heavy emphasis on player freedom. Sixteen of the game's 26 missions allow you to select which character you wish to use, and the characters all occupy a diverse range of skillsets, which basically boils down to Shad being a "fast ranged" character, Rebecca being a "fast melee" character, Marcus being a "slow melee" character,

and Lane being a "slow ranged" character. Despite these distinctions, each of the four characters can succeed with ranged/melee styles if the player is skilled enough. The individual levels themselves have a set path, but players can usually go off the beaten path to collect power-ups or discover secrets. Not every mission has to be beaten the same way, either, there are multiple routes through most missions, and some scenes are particularly difficult to activate, encouraging experimentation and exploration. Missions themselves aren't all combat. Missions are divided into segments, with some segments involving dialogue and exploration. Power-ups collected in one mission don't carry over to the next, and depending on what power-ups you collect, a particular boss fight can be either extremely easy or extremely hard. However, if the player sticks to the obvious path, most of the time boss fights are at a difficult but manageable difficulty (again emphasizing player freedom). Missions can be replayed to achieve a higher score, when replayed, a player can choose whether to skip the dialogue/exploration segments or not. There are a wide variety of enemies to battle in the game, ranging from mook level robots and foot soldiers, to various degrees of indigenous life, to massive battle machines, to battles with dangerous assassins, mercenaries, and even fellow Lockstar Defense Force members. Nearly every mission ends with some type of boss fight, several missions have more than one. There are puzzles to solve in the game, though few are terribly tricky and hardly any are time consuming, the game seems to want to allow players to play at their own pace, if they slow down it's because they want to slow down, not because the game tries to get them stuck.

In terms of production values, the game is exceptionally high quality. The graphics are superb, considered the best of any Ultra Nintendo game to date. The soundtrack, created by Koji Kondo and containing both atmospheric and futuristic/techno tracks, is considered among his best work. All four of Squad Four's voice actors (Charles Martinet, Michael Reisz, Deedee Magno, and Tom Kenny) reprise their roles. Nika Futterman joins the cast as the voice of Raquel, while General Vasher is played by Keith David (who takes over the role from the fairly obscure actor who played him in *Squad Four: Eclipse*). The conflicted Lockstar Defense Force-turned-Lockstar Security Authority captain Saraz is played by Oded Fehr, who had recently received fame for playing the character Ardeth Bay in *The Mummy*.

The plot of the game is that General Vasher, an ally of Squad Four in *Eclipse* who helped them fight against the invading Krill army, has been secretly plotting a coup of democratically elected President Hagan. Using the Krill invasion as pretext by claiming that Hagan is too soft to keep Lockstar safe, Vasher takes over, and installs his Lockstar Security Authority as both the military and his secret police. As part of the coup, he's had Squad Four arrested and imprisoned. A few Lockstar Defense Force members managed to learn of Vasher's coup before it could be implemented fully, and have cobbled together a team of loosely-bound rebels. In addition, they've made alliances with various criminals who might be useful, including Raquel, who's been serving a sentence in the prison that Squad Four has been taken to.

The game's story structure goes somewhat like this:

#### *Part One: Mission 1*

An opening/training mission taking place before the implementation of the coup, where Squad Four has been deployed to a nearby planet to stop a group of dangerous smugglers. Introduces the mechanics of the game and at the end of the mission you battle a robot that the smugglers have managed to cobble together.

#### *Part Two: Missions 2-6*

The next five missions concern Squad Four's escape from prison. Mission 2 is largely a dialogue/exploration mission, though you do have to also secretly take out some guards, including a particularly skilled guard leader, without giving your identities away. Squad Four meets Raquel here, and also meets Jack, a slightly unhinged weapons maker who's extremely skilled with explosives. The big escape begins in Mission 5 and carries over to Mission 6, where at the end of the mission, a giant guard mech must be defeated before you can escape.

### *Part Three: Missions 7-9*

Part three involves reaching the rebellion's base, and involves evading pursuing guards and various indigenous wild creatures. During this time you meet Froggo, and in fact, Mission 8 has large water-based segments where Froggo's skills come in handy. Mission 9 involves reaching the rebel base itself and defending it from a heavy attack by LSA forces. After Mission 9, Raquel is revealed as the rebellion's leader, and the group's relationship with her grows closer.

### *Part Four: Missions 10-13*

This segment of the game largely consists of rescue missions where you have to save various rebels from prison camps, or in one case from an occupied town. Mission 10 has you rescuing the medic Karen, while in Mission 13, Raquel herself must be rescued after a raid on the rebel base led to her capture after Mission 12. During this time, the character Saraz is met, and his role as a loyal LDF soldier now loyal to the LSA has him in conflict over his duties. He and Marcus were close friends during their basic training, though the two frequently clashed because of Marcus' rebellious nature and Saraz's loyalty to authority figures.

### *Part Five: Missions 14-18*

The rebels are expanding their territory and during this part, the city of Heartfin is the site of a fierce battle between Lockstar and the rebels. You must liberate this city from LSA forces, battling both on the streets of the city and also down below (Mission 16 sees Lane going into the sewers to rescue Rebecca and battling a giant sewer monster). At the end of Mission 18, however, a revelation about Raquel's past leaves Squad Four stunned and leaves Raquel to step down as the leader of the rebellion. The rest of the rebel forces want to press on, but Squad Four leaves them to pursue her.

### *Part Six: Missions 19-22*

The hunt for Raquel, which takes Squad Four into some of the most dangerous environments on the planet, is the focus of this part of the game. Raquel, as it turns out, was in prison for committing some extremely serious crimes, including an assassination attempt on President Hagan. The search for Raquel leads to the heroes learning that President Hagan isn't the benevolent leader that he was made out to be by the rebels and Squad Four, and that even though Vasher committed the coup to gain power for himself, many of his co-conspirators, along with Saraz, had good reason to turn on Hagan. It was Hagan who had been pursuing an expansionist Lockstar military campaign, and many LDF squads had been used not to liberate oppressed worlds but to become the oppressors themselves. When Squad Four finally finds Raquel after defeating the boss of Mission 22,

she is in a deeply depressed state. When Rebecca asks her why she would support a rebellion to restore President Hagan after she'd been put in jail for trying to kill him, Raquel admits that she was hoping the rebellion would bring a state of anarchy to Lockstar, but after seeing Squad Four in action, realized that anarchy would be just as bad as Vasher's totalitarian state would be and that now she just wants to live in isolation where she can't hurt anyone else. Squad Four manages to talk Raquel back into leading the rebellion, and that once Vasher is out of power, they'll figure out what to do.

### *Part Seven: Missions 23-26*

The rebels prepare for an assault on the capital of Lockstar to remove Vasher. Led by Raquel and Squad Four, and having rallied a significant portion of the populace to their cause, the rebellion initiates a great battle for the city. At the end of Mission 23, the heroes save President Hagan, though when he recognizes Raquel, he turns on the heroes and steals a mech to fight them, though the heroes try to restrain themselves and protect his life, Hagan is eventually destroyed by Vasher's LSA forces after charging them. At the end of Mission 24, Raquel sacrifices herself to gain Squad Four access to the Presidential Palace compound. At the end of Mission 25, there's an emotional one-on-one battle between Saraz and your chosen Squad Four member, and Saraz finally realizes the error of his ways, though he too dies to protect Squad Four as they make their way into the innermost reaches of the palace. Mission 26 pits Squad Four against Vasher's most loyal soldiers and his best defenses. At one point, it seems that Squad Four is about to be destroyed, but at the very last moment, Raquel, who survived her heroic "sacrifice" at the end of Mission 24, takes out some of the bad guys and re-joins the squad for the final battles. The final battle itself is a three-part fight, first against Vasher who is wearing a combat enhancement suit, then on the roof of the presidential palace against a bunch of flying mechs and assault vehicles, and finally against Vasher once more in a giant mech suit in the streets of the city. Vasher's defeat leads to the end of his oppressive rule over Planet Lockstar. A democratic election is promised, but in the meantime, the rebellion's main sponsor, former Defense Minister Alice Stroma, is appointed interim president. She was the first to realize the error of Hagan's ways, but refused to participate in the coup and was attempting to introduce reforms when the coup was begun, she vows to only use the Lockstar Defense Force for just that, defense, and in the meantime, the LDF's interplanetary missions are suspended, with the sole exception of Squad Four, who will continue to enforce peace and justice in the galaxy while Lockstar gets its own house in order. There is still work to be done, the civil war has opened up wounds among the people that will take years to heal, the capital city is heavily damaged, and the prison break that Squad Four used to escape has also led to the escape of many dangerous criminals who will have to be hunted down. Among them is Raquel, who technically has the remainder of a life sentence to serve...but has been granted a pardon by Stroma and is now free to do whatever she wants. Squad Four, particularly Rebecca, wants Raquel to join them, but she declines their offer and instead climbs into a single-person spacecraft, saying that she's always wanted to see the stars before taking off into space. Squad Four is given a mission of their own to embark on, and they too head out into space to fight for peace and justice once more.

### **November 15, 1999**

*Squad Four: Rebellion* is released worldwide for the Ultra Nintendo. It sells over a million copies on its first day in North America alone, making it the third best release day for a video game to date, behind *Sonic the Hedgehog 5* and *Ultra Mario Kart*. Holiday sales for the game are extremely robust, and it would eventually become one of the Ultra Nintendo's

top sellers, with over ten million copies sold worldwide over its lifetime. It is considered a pioneer in the hack-and-slash genre and would come to be influential in the creation of many acclaimed games in later years. It is immediately considered one of the year's best games upon its release, and would compete with *Metal Gear Solid*, *Soul Calibur*, and *Final Fantasy VIII* for Game of the Year honors in multiple publications and websites.

With the release of *Rebellion*, *Squad Four* cements its place as one of Nintendo's premiere franchises, surpassing *Star Fox* for good and possibly even topping *Metroid* as the company's third most popular franchise behind *Mario* and *Zelda*. It also marks an interesting milestone in the ongoing console wars. Every *Squad Four* game had been released in the same year as a main series *Sonic the Hedgehog* game, with the original competing against *Sonic 3* and *Eclipse* competing against *Sonic 4*. *Squad Four: Rebellion* is the first game in the series to be considered by most critics to be superior to that year's *Sonic* title, striking yet another decisive blow for Nintendo.

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*“The tragic images of young Elian Gonzales' mother on a fishing boat holding her dead son's body have led to renewed calls for human rights improvement in Cuba. The images, of Elizabeth Gonzales screaming in anguish as she clutches her son's body, have been seen around the world, and now President Bill Clinton has called upon Fidel Castro to grant more freedom to the Cuban people. It is not yet known whether or not Elizabeth Gonzales, the only survivor of the ill-fated emigration attempt, will be allowed to apply for asylum.”*

-from the November 22, 1999 broadcast of the NBC Nightly News

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Ted Crosley: And *Emergency* checks every one of those boxes.

Brittany Saldita: Normally I'd just ignore those fire hydrants sitting around in games, but *Emergency* actually lets you pick them up and swing them! Or you can spray that foam on bad guys to slow them down. You get to be creative in this game.

Ted: I'll never run out of ways to set fires.

\*Rick throws a molotov cocktail onto a bunch of file cabinets filled with papers, setting them ablaze as a soundbite of Beavis yelling “Fire! Fire!” is played\*

Ted: *Emergency* is scary, it's funny, it's a ton of fun, the characters are great, did I mention it's a ton of fun?

Brittany: The only thing missing from it is some kind of co-op mode. I feel like it might've been fun to let a second person join in since you're almost always with a second character, but I guess that would've been too much for the Ultra to handle?

Ted: Hey, there's always sequels. *Emergency* just has too many great moments to count, from the fun boss fights against crazed nurses and giant blob monsters, to running down a darkened hallway with no idea who's going to jump out of one of those hospital rooms at you.

Brittany: Usually going to the hospital sucks, but in *Emergency*, it's awesome. I give this game a 4.5 out of 5.

Ted: I'm giving it a 5, and....wouldn't going to this hospital suck if you had to do it in real life? I mean, "all I had was the flu and now I'm getting my face ripped off!"

Brittany: True, but you could start all the fires you wanted. \*smirks\*

(...)

Alex Stansfield: Did the plot of *Code Veronica* seem a bit like a ripoff of *Emergency* to you?

Lyssa Fielding: There are definite similarities, but I felt the storyline in *Code Veronica* was way better.

Alex: That's true, *Emergency*'s plot was more of an excuse to run around a hospital blowing up monsters. Not that that's a BAD thing, but the storyline and characters of *Code Veronica* were developed a lot better in my opinion.

Lyssa: They're both awesome games.

Alex: Definitely.

Lyssa: How awesome was Claire in this game though?

Alex: You know, she's grown up a lot since the last game.

Lyssa: Yeah, and seeing her dual-wielding pistols like Lara Croft is just awesome.

Alex: This game had a lot to love. For me, it was one of my favorites of the year. Hands down. I'm not sure if I liked it better than the other two *Resident Evil* games, but it definitely wasn't WORSE than them.

Lyssa: It's my favorite for sure. It looks better, it's got better controls, it's more accessible, and Claire rules. I'm giving it a perfect 5.

Alex: And so am I.

\*The siren goes off\*

Alex: And that siren means it's time to go back to the Hall of Fame wall!

\*Alex and Lyssa put *Resident Evil: Code Veronica* up on the wall while the other hosts watch.\*

Ted: To think, we almost put TWO survival horror games up on the wall in one episode.

Brittany: Yeah, sorry I ruined that, everybody.

Lyssa: You liked *Code Veronica* better too, right?

Brittany: Oh, hell yeah, without a doubt.

-excerpted from the November 2, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Gary Westhouse: There's no question, *Spinaround* is one of the best shooters on the Saturn.

Alex: While I don't agree that it's a GREAT game, it's definitely an original and a fun game. The idea of rotating the playfield as you're shooting is something I wish more games would explore.

Gary: It didn't make you dizzy, did it?

Alex: No.

Ted: \*pretending to puke behind the TV\*

Alex: Ted, it was not THAT bad!

Gary: The rotation isn't really fast enough to get dizzy, and it's never been more fun to rack up combos and shoot down bad guys than it is in the awesome game *Spinaround*. It's a brilliant take on old school arcade shooters and I'm giving it a 4.5.

Alex: It only gets a 3.5 from me, it's a bit too simplistic and the story mode is painfully short, I know that's not the main attraction of the game but if you get bored of the endless shooting mode there's really nothing else to fall back on. Still plenty of fun though.

-excerpted from the November 9, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Alex: *Squad Four: Rebellion*...wow. Just, wow. What else is there to say?

Ted: I COULD whine about the lack of a multiplayer mode, but honestly, this game doesn't need one, you'll spend so much time repeating the missions to get a higher score that you won't have time to play with your friends. The storyline itself, while just a bit cliched, still featured some really strong characters, including newbies like Raquel and Saraz, and it'll keep you hooked the whole way through.

Alex: I've never had more fun playing a single player game. The lock-on system is absolutely perfect, I had no problems with targeting the wrong enemy since you can switch through it so fast. You can move really quickly through the levels or slow down and just admire how beautiful everything looks. It really is that good of a game.

Ted: Yeah, I've got nothing else to say. This is easily one of the best games of the year, right up there with *Metal Gear Solid* as being groundbreaking, revolutionary, and really just plain fun. 5 out of 5.

Alex: Same here, easiest one I've given since *Temple of Time*.

\*The Hall of Fame siren sounds\*

Alex: And that is the Foregone Conclusion alarm!

\*Alex and Ted walk a framed copy of *Squad Four: Rebellion* to the wall, putting it up next to *Junction Point*\*

Alex: And this wall's getting a bit crowded, that's the third Hall of Fame game this month!

Steve Horton: You guys, we've GOT to be more picky about what games we give perfect scores to!

Ted: \*shrugs\* Can't help it if there are so many great games being released.

Steve: You're right about that! \*looks into the camera\* Hey, great job, video game makers! We'd buy you a beer, but we need you sober to make more awesome games!

Ted: Although, I tell you, some games had to have been designed by people who were drunk.

Alex: Like *House of the Dead III*, I have no idea what they were drinking when they pushed that game out.

-excerpted from the November 16, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Brittany: \*after giving the new Ultra Nintendo *Dungeons and Dragons* game a 3.5 while Steve gave it a 3.0\* So while *Dungeons and Dragons: Wrath of the Minotaur* is a lot of fun, it's not quite as fun as sitting down and hosting your own session of *Dungeons and Dragons*.

Steve: Wait, you've done that before?

Brittany: You haven't?

Steve: It always seemed boring to me.

Brittany: ....\*growls and takes out a 20-sided die\*

Steve: What are you doing?

Brittany: I'm rolling a temper check, if it fails it it means I kill you. \*she rolls a 14\* ...you got lucky.

Steve: Do you really have to roll for everything in that game?

Brittany: That's part of the fun!

Steve: So if I were to go to the bathroom, and I roll a 1 on my piss check, I go all over the seat?

Brittany: If you roll a 1 with a d20 while peeing in D+D, I think you get a fatal urinary tract infection.

Steve: \*winces\* No wonder I don't play!

(...)

Ted: Okay, we're heading out for Thanksgiving, but before we go, the producers dug up some old pictures of you guys playing *Dungeons and Dragons*.

Brittany: *Ay dios mio*, I was such a dork back then...

Alex: \*laughing\* Let's see them!

\*Old pictures of Alex, Brittany, Lyssa, and Gary playing *Dungeons and Dragons* are shown on the screen, Alex as a glasses-wearing 15-year-old, Brittany as a 12-year-old with her older brothers, a pigtailed Lyssa at age 8 with her older brother and some relatives with her hands up on the sides of her face looking at the gameboard in dismay, and Gary at 11 sitting at a long table at a game store with some of his friends.\*

Brittany: Okay, I wasn't that bad I guess but why did you never play, Ted?

Ted: I could never get into it! It just never struck my fancy at all.

Steve: \*laughing\* Oh my god, Lyssa, you were adorable!

Brittany: And you looked like you weren't having a very good time!

Lyssa: I was but I think I just died in that picture! I was eight, gimme a break!

Brittany: Okay, I know Ted HAS played before with us but we have to make Steve play a game. By force if necessary.

Steve: Fine, as long as I don't have to roll to pee!

Alex: Well, lay off the mead and you wouldn't have to roll so damn much. \*rolls his eyes\*

-excerpted from the November 23, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

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### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: November 1999**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
2. Super Smash Bros.
3. Dog Dash 3
4. Primrose Soldier

5. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater
6. Metal Gear Solid
7. Welcome To Magicka
8. Super Mario Dimensions
9. F-Zero: Ultracharged
10. Doom: Inferno

### **Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Charts: November 1999**

1. Soul Calibur
2. Resident Evil: Code Veronica
3. Sonic The Hedgehog 5
4. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater
5. Commander Keen: When Universes Collide
6. Silent Hill
7. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
8. Crazy Taxi
9. NYPD: Narcotics Squad
10. Virtua Fighter 3

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*“The season's hottest games at here at Best Buy! Insane deals!*

*Squad Four: Rebellion - \$42.99*

*Resident Evil: Code Veronica - \$36.99*

*Emergency - \$42.99*

*Star Wars: Battlefront - \$42.99*

*Sonic The Hedgehog 5 - \$34.99*

*Soul Calibur - \$34.99*

*Commander Keen: When Universes Collide - \$34.99*

*Ultra Nintendo (w/Super Mario Dimensions and Squad Four: Rebellion)- \$249.99*

*Ultra Nintendo (w/Super Mario Dimensions, The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time, and Squad Four: Rebellion) - \$299.99*

*Sega Saturn (w/Sonic the Hedgehog 5) - \$99.99*

*Sega Saturn (w/Sonic the Hedgehog 5 and Soul Calibur)- \$129.99*

*Sega Saturn (w/Virtua Fighter 3, Tekken 3, Soul Calibur, and limited edition fight stick)- \$199.99”*

-excerpted from Best Buy's 1999 Black Friday advertisement

### **Price Drops, Hot Games Draw Crowds On Black Friday**

*Black Friday 1999 has come and gone, and once again, video games were some of the fastest-selling items. Deals were plentiful, even on brand new games like Squad Four: Rebellion and Crazy Taxi. Deals on consoles were also frequently featured in advertisements. While the Ultra Nintendo has just seen a recent MSRP price drop to \$249.99, and the Sega Saturn is officially listed at \$129.99, multiple retailers had the Saturn and a pack-in game on sale for just 100 dollars, while the Ultra Nintendo was*

frequently paired with bundles including some of its hottest games. While official sales figures won't be released for several weeks, shopper surveys indicated that the biggest seller of this Black Friday was *Squad Four: Rebellion on the Ultra Nintendo*, with the Sega Saturn's *Sonic the Hedgehog 5* and Nintendo's *Pokemon* games, especially the new *Pokemon Yellow*, close behind. Ultra Nintendo units were flying off the shelves, with fights breaking out in numerous locations over particularly appealing bundles, while Saturns were reported to have sold much more modestly even with its lower price tag. Video game sales should remain strong throughout December, as several new games including the Ultra Nintendo's new *Resident Evil* title *Operation Stormwind* are set to debut."

-excerpted from a Gamespot.com article posted on November 27, 1999

(OOC: It's not quite Gotham, but will Metropolis do? ;))

Knowing that the summer of 1999 was going to be crowded when it came to film releases, their own *Batman Triumphant* and Fox/Marvel's *Fantastic Four* included, Warner Bros. chose November 24, 1999 as the release date for *Man of Tomorrow*. Warner Bros. chose to emphasize the "Death of Superman" in the marketing campaign since the 1992 storyline of the same name made *Superman (vol. 2) #75* one of the highest selling comic books of all time. Similarly, *Variety* magazine also mentioned a casting call "for tall and muscular African-American men" for an unspecified role in the film and Shaquille O'Neal very public lobbying to play John Henry Irons (AKA Steel) also seemed to indicate that *Man of Tomorrow* and its sister film/sequel *Man of Steel* would also adapt "Reign of the Supermen." Posters depicting the iconic Superman insignia dripping blood over a stark black background appeared in theatres across the world, and even the trailer seen with *Batman Triumphant*, which used footage from both films, seemed to lament "the end of Superman." After the comparatively light-hearted *Last Son of Krypton*, comic book fans and moviegoers alike were curious about the breakneck change of tone.

Of all publications, only the comic book-focused *Wizard* magazine paid attention to the film's other inspiration, *Kingdom Come*. In fact, Raimi brought James Robinson and to lesser extent, Grant Morrison and Mark Waid, on board as "creative consultants." Similarly, Alex Ross contributed production designs and sketches, which ultimately culminated in his hiring as a full-time production artist (to many comic fans' lament) with a sizable input in 2003's *The Flash* and 2004's *Justice League* films. Indeed, in the wake of the critically lauded Burton/Schumacher *Batman* quintology, Raimi wanted to make *Man of Tomorrow* a "serious" superhero film in the vein of Richard Donner's *Superman* from 1978. As such, Shaq lost his bid to be in a Superman film and the role of John Henry Irons would go to a then-largely unknown actor named Michael Clarke Duncan.

*Man of Tomorrow* begins with a seemingly irrelevant cold open of a militia in central Africa razing a village, admittedly Raimi had to tone down the violence to keep a PG-13 rating. The same militia is also holding an American aid worker, played by Vin Diesel, hostage who then escapes into the jungle. After a chase sequence, the ground below the worker's feet collapses and he finds himself in what appears to be a temple. Eagle-eyed comic fans would notice the Jack Kirby-esque design and see that was, in fact, a petrified survivor of DC's Third World (a predecessor of the New Gods) named "Gog." Gog transforms the human into a demi-god with extraterrestrial armor and a lance that fires energy blasts. The newly-rechristened "Magog" then slaughters his pursuers.

Months pass and Superman is battling Parasite, played by the late Philip Seymour Hoffman, in downtown Metropolis (filmed in Toronto, where Superman co-creator Joe Shuster was born) and tricks the villain into absorbing enough of his power to make him weak to a kryptonite weapon used by the Metropolis Special Crimes Unit. He returns to the Daily Planet to learn that the paper published an editorial called "Must There Be A Superman?" and barges into Perry White's office as Clark Kent to see that Lois Lane beat him to the punch. Perry provides exposition of Magog's exploits of toppling dictators, executing warlords and terrorists, and generally "cleaning up the garbage." Perry explains that public opinion is on Magog's side his approval ratings are in the sixteth percentile though Lois (in her own "subtle" way) points out that Magog's activities only destabilized these regions further, to which Perry could only shrug saying that Magog is only giving what the public wants and it seems that they want vigilantes, "and not the kind that come out of Gotham."

Magog makes his debut in the hostage situation at the end of the first act where a band of Kasnian terrorists threaten to destroy Metropolis with a stolen nuclear warhead. Superman finds himself with the moral dilemma of either letting the lead terrorist go, or he will set off the warhead with Lois Lane as his personal hostage. Superman moves in to disarm the warhead while Magog arrives to brutally execute the terrorist moments after Superman disarms it. Magog publicly calls Superman out on his "weakness" towards supervillains and promises to clean up Metropolis. John Henry Irons also becomes something of the film's deuteragonist when Lex Luthor, himself troubled by Magog's attitude, orders him hurry up with his work on the "warsuit" the Army contracted Lexcorp to build. However, it comes to light that Lex plans to sell the suit to an arms dealer. With encouragement from his niece and Super-fanatic, Natasha, he quits Lexcorp and destroys his prototype and the files. It does not stop Lex, as he copied Irons designs and built his own prototype as a contingency. Though many fans like to point out this sub-plot's plot holes it is relevant to the overall plot of the film.

Magog's brutal methods gain more public approval, much to the dismay of Superman though he avoids a direct confrontation. However, by the second act, Parasite escapes from confinement and begins his rampage again. Superman tries to stop him again, but Parasite drains most of his power and would have killed him had Magog not intervened. Magog's own fight with Parasite is more one-sided as he somehow can't absorb his power and Magog viciously beats him. It is interesting to note that throughout the battle, bony protrusions begin to grow from Magog's forearm, which led to the most controversial part of the film "Magog's transformation into "Doomsday." Many longtime fans cried foul that Raimi and Warner Bros. would "pervert" a central character to one of DC's most highly regarded stories. Magog from the comics showed the character expressing remorse for his crimes and demanding punishment. The transformation of Magog into Doomsday was studio edict that Raimi opposed, but tried to make lemons into lemonade.

Many critics noted that it thematically worked with the film. Philip Seymour Hoffman's Parasite was a deformed, almost pitiful, monster that preyed on the powerful. Magog's transformation was in fact an anti-hero transforming into the monster he himself preyed on. Despite Parasite's pleas for mercy, Magog makes an example out of the villain and impales him with his staff in front of a horrified Superman. The Man of Steel gets into a physical altercation with Magog, but Magog easily overpowers and publically humiliates a weakened Superman.

Quote:

**MAGOG**

Do you see this, Metropolis? Your so-called "hero" at my feet. (Laughs)

**SUPERMAN**

Damn you, Magog! You crossed a line today...

**MAGOG**

At least I had the courage to cross it unlike you--so soft and pathetic. How many people have suffered because you let creatures like him live. I have the courage to make the calls you won't and the people love for it. Admit it, Superman, you're not the Man of Tomorrow, I AM.

A dejected Superman flies off, but reporters from WGBS caught Magog speech and transmit it across the world. With some help from Joel Schumacher and Richard Donner, Raimi was able to sneak in appearances by "Batman" (the actor behind the cowl remained uncredited for years) and Billy Zane, who were watching it from their home cities as well as Lois Lane. This would be a prelude to the full-fledged cameos to follow in *Man of Steel*, though it slightly detracted from what was the most powerful scene in the film and probably one of the most powerful where Superman meets with Lois under the Daily Planet globe.

Quote:

**SUPERMAN**

Do you think he's right, Lois?

**LOIS**

Of course not, he's just another superpowered thug.

**SUPERMAN**

The public thinks he is. He says that we need to become monsters in order to fight them. That might be right and I can't stand for that.

**LOIS**

Then don't. Your greatest power isn't super strength, speed, or x-ray vision. It's your compassion for everyone, even scumbags like Luthor. It's easy to see how dangerous you could be whenever you lift mountains, but harder to see the strength it takes to not use that power in anger and take the easy path of violence. That's what makes you stronger than Magog, might for right.

Her words echo immediately in the third act where the John Henry Irons subplot dovetails with the main plot when Lex Luthor meets with the arms dealer to demonstrate the power of his Lexosuit. In a fitting bit of irony, the arms dealer was one of the militia men who chase the future Magog through the jungle where he found the Old God. Magog arrives to kill the arms dealer and Luthor; after he makes short work of the Lexosuit, Magog completes his mutation into "Doomsday" and is about to kill Luthor until Superman intervenes. What follows is quite possibly one of the most involved and expensive fight scenes in cinematic history. Sam Raimi used practical effects for the most part, depending on computer-generated effects for Superman's heat vision and Magog's ocular blasts. It is a chaotic fight with police frantically evacuating the scene and paramedics moving the injured where Superman shields them and takes the worst of Magog's blows to the point where the Man of Steel bleeds.

Eventually the battle comes to its conclusion in midtown Metropolis, where a mortally injured Superman, having exhausted every non-lethal option, faces an impossible choice: kill Magog or

let millions die in his rampage. With the last of his solar power reserves he uses a combination of super strength, speed, and heat vision, he kills Magog but succumbs to his injuries as Magog falls. The film ends with Lois Lane holding Superman's bloodied and lifeless body, her eyes awash with tears as the rain begins to fall and the overhead shot zooms out.

Though fans would have to wait a year see the conclusion, *Man of Tomorrow* opened in theaters to record-breaking \$83 million and garnered both critical and fan acclaim. Among its biggest fans were President Bill Clinton and then-Vice President and future candidate Al Gore, who both praised the film as an "inspired work." Similarly former *Superman* and then-current *Green Lantern 2* director, Richard Donner and Christopher Reeve also praised their counterparts as well. Donner himself even called it "almost Biblical in scope" which is ironic considering that he directed *the Omen* before he started on *Superman*. It appeared that the only person who openly condemned the film was Jerry Falwell, and the religious right, who compared Magog to the devil owing to the Book of Revelations and openly called Superman a "false messiah." Very few people took Falwell's criticisms seriously (the Conservative Right was at its nadir as a meaningful force in popular culture); comedian and noted Superman fan, Jerry Seinfeld even joked, "Superman died for your sins, Jerry" during a stand-up routine. What was originally a throwaway comment spawned "What Would Superman Do?" among comic book fans as a counter to the "What Would Jesus Do?" motto that was popular among Evangelical Christians in the nineties. While not officially endorsed by DC Comics at its initiation, *WWSD* became something of a pop cultural mantra in the late nineties and early aughts. With *WWSD* shirts and other unlicensed merchandise appearing at conventions, DC trademarked the phrase and began selling official *WWSD* merchandise.

*Man of Tomorrow* proved two (and a half) things. Despite the prominence of Lex Luthor in the film, it proved that Superman didn't need to rely solely on Luthor, Brainiac, and General Zod as villains. Parasite's strong showing and Magog proved that point. Similarly, the prominence of John Henry Irons and the path to heroism the film set for him showed the richness of the Superman mythos and the appearance of the Cyborg Superman in *Man of Steel* furthered that point. Finally, *Man of Tomorrow* proved that Superman was still a relevant part of popular culture. For the first time in decades, Superman comics and merchandise, especially "What Would Superman Do?", was beginning to outsell Batman by the narrowest of margins. It was not uncommon to see small children don the iconic red cape. Despite the false start of *Last Son of Krypton*, it seemed that the Superman franchise was finally ready to take flight again.

-*Tales From The Superhero Wars, sequentialhistory.net, August 5, 2010*

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If Ry and Nivek don't mind, (and I think it was approved), I would prefer to get this out now, although it's a bit too late:

"Immediately after the world-changing events of Endgame, the comic slowed down for an

issue or two to really sink the death in. As I said, Issue 51 "Funeral for a Freedom Fighter" followed Princess Sally's tragic funeral. I mentioned Knuckles and Sonic's fight, but I neglected to mention the other parts, including the other Freedom Fighters examining Robotropolis, while the Renegades search for Drago Wolf, the traitor who stole the Master Emerald from Angel Island. Issue 53 saw the first appearance of SatAM's Ixis Naugus, who very briefly became the main villain of the series, following in the footsteps of his animation counterpart. In this case, he claimed the Acorn Throne, due to King Maxwell's time in the Zone of Silence, his inability to move due to his crystallization, and his heir, Sally's death. He is thwarted by the Freedom Fighters, and is forced to flee, his minions captured by the Freedom Fighters. Snively finds out about this, and tries to capture Naugus. However, Naugus manages to allude them all, and takes control of the now completely crystallized King Acorn. However, he then encountered his old master, minor villain Mammoth Mogul, who was busy over in Knuckles stories. I need to explain that in detail. See, that Knuckles miniseries I mentioned last time ended with Knuckles rediscovering Echidnapolis. He meets, among other figures, his father Locke, the organization their descended from, the Brotherhood of Guardians, and the ultra-powerful villain Enerjak, who was an echidna scientist named Dmitri, the brother of the first Guardian, Edmund. In the last issue before Issue #56, Mogul had stolen all the power from Enerjak, reducing him to the very aged Dmitri. He then begins to expand his power. Naugus assists him by giving him the Sword of Acorn. He seems to be unstoppable. However, surprisingly, Tails, of all the characters, is able to stop Mogul, by adopting the super form of Turbo Tails, and trapping him inside the Master Emerald. Naugus saves himself, by taking the Sword of Acorn, which was the only thing that could heal the King. Sonic and Tails begin their pursuit of Ixis Naugus. Throughout, encountering characters like the Iron Queen and King (Neither of them appeared again after this), Monkey Khan, a former cyborg monkey under Robotnik, who was brainwashed by the former two, and Horizont-AI and Verti-Cal (two beings who appeared in the early days, now violent interdimensional beings.) Eventually, they catch up to Naugus in Issue #64, , whom they defeat using their super forms in #66, and retrieve the Sword, and heal the King. However, there is also the issue of the time-displacement of Knothole. Sonic is forced to move at super- ahem- sonic speeds around the globe to restore its position in Issue #74. However, this changes with the supposed return of Robotnik in Issue #75, who retakes Mobotropolis. However, this is actually a roboticized version of Robotnik from a parallel universe. That is simply to begin the adaptation of Sonic 4 arc, which lasted from #79 to #84 (December, 1999 to May, 2000.) After the events ended, things slow down. We get the return of Metal Sonic in issue 86, and.... Okay not much else in Sonic stories. It was only in Issue 95, that we get the adaptation of Sonic 5, which adapts the game fairly well. They give more of a backstory to Chaos and the Chao as connected to the very early history of Mobius (the first hint in the series about Mobius being a future Earth), and Dr. Salamander was changed to one of the early prisoners of the Zone of Silence. In fact, Issue 95 itself starts with him being rescued. Issue 100 ends with Chaos being destroyed, though not without damage to various places across the world. [...]

The parallel Knuckles storyline is also very fascinating. After coming back to the restored Echidnapolis, Knuckles finds a very dynamic society around him. There is a conflict between the reigning Guardians and Dmitri's descendants, the technophilic Dark Legion. There is also the growing discrimination of Dingoes (of all animals). Knuckles encounters characters like Constable Remington, the Dark Legion head Kragok (later revealed to be Remington's father), Kragok's sister Julie-Su, Dingo head General von Stryker, and, as said previously, the Brotherhood of Guardians. Despite being the descendents of the mega villain Enerjak, the Dark Legion aren't necessarily portrayed as villains. Rather, they are portrayed as social reformers, who want to integrate more technology into Echidna society. In fact, they

disavow Enerjak upon learning his true intentions (taking over, and subjugating echidna society. The Dingoes are also not portrayed as evil, but more as a disadvantaged minority. Knuckle's and Corona's relationship also blossoms in these stories. However, he experiences flak for dating an "insect". The Renegades more or less relocate to Echidnopolis. Dmitri, somehow, survived, and later became a vegetable, forcibly attached to the Dark Legion system. One very interesting arc is "Chaos Knuckles" When Knuckles was young, Locke dosed his mother's womb with radiation from the Master Emerald. This power started to appear with issue #85, and he began to slowly display the power of a god. He uses these powers to try to reform Echidna society.

[....]

One notable thing I suppose I should bring up is the crossover with the Commander Keen, shortly after the introduction of the latter, in "Sonic Super Special" #8 (January 1999), written by Commander Keen regular Dan Slott. If you recall, in Mars Most Wanted, Sonic makes a very brief appearance at the secret level at the end, helping Keen defeat Robotnik. The comic is basically an adaptation of that. Keen arrives, shortly after the events of Mars Most Wanted, and helps Sonic prevent Robotnik from taking control of the portal back to Keen's world. The story was the start of several crossovers, primarily in spin-off titles. "

- Excerpt from "Sonic Boom: A Blog About a Hedgehog", Entry entitled, "Archie's Sonic the Hedgehog: Issues 51-100", Published January 8th, 2012

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*"We loved the Nova, which brings a new age of technology to the palm of your hand. The gap between what your home video game device can do and what a handheld device can do has closed significantly. Our favorite launch title was the new Pokemon, but Super Mario Nova is outstanding as well."*

-translated from an article in the January 2000 issue of *Famitsu*

*"Operation Stormwind is what happens when you focus on graphics over gameplay. Capcom spent so much time trying to get the most out of the Ultra Nintendo that they forgot what makes Resident Evil games so great in the first place."*

-excerpted from *Edge* magazine's 4/10 review of *Resident Evil: Operation Stormwind*

*"Oh, Operation Stormwind was fun. But compared to Code Veronica? It's no contest. Veronica was brilliantly paced and told a thrilling story. Operation Stormwind played like an action movie, and that's not how a Resident Evil should play."*

-a post by user PirateErick on the Gamefaqs.com message boards, March 28, 2000

*"How would I like to write a what? I thought my agent was kidding me."*

-Dan Brown, recalling his reaction to being contacted about writing the script for the video game *Runner Mike* in a 2001 interview with Gamespot.com

*"A point and click? Really? Ah, but this was different! This was a MUCH different kind of game from anything I'd seen before. When I saw what Funcom was doing, I knew we had to*

*try and publish this game."*

-Olafur Johann Olafsson, on Sony's decision to partially fund and publish *The Longest Journey*

*"On This Mountain, Only The Extreme Survive"*

-the tagline for *White Mountain Extreme Snowboarding*

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*Ultra Nintendo:*

### **Blast Corps: Ultra Destruction**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "Everything has completely been revamped from the SNES-CD game. There's so much more to do.")

Gamespot: 9.1 (quote: "The latter challenges are unforgiving, but give you a real sense of accomplishment once they're completed.")

### **Final Fantasy Collection**

EGM: 9.8 (quote: "This is a near-perfect compilation of some of the greatest role playing games of all time.")

Gamespot: 8.6 (quote: "While there's not much here for those who've already played all six games, if you've never played Final Fantasy before, you need to get this set.")

### **Marvel vs. Capcom** (also appeared on the Sega Saturn)

EGM: 8.3 (quote: "An outstanding port of an outstanding fighting game.")

Gamespot: 8.8 (quote: "Some of the most popular video game characters of all time are included here.")

### **Mega Man 8**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "It's another great Mega Man title, though the basic formula hasn't changed much.")

Gamespot: 7.6 (quote: "It almost seems like blasphemy for such an old-school series to feature such polished graphics, but the new stages really do shine.")

### **Resident Evil: Operation Stormwind**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "There are some great thrills here, but it has some real problems too.")

Gamespot: 7.4 (quote: "I wasn't impressed with the middle segments of the game, which alternated between unfortunately rushed and painfully slow.")

### **System Shock**

EGM: 6.8 (quote: "The game was innovative in its day, but it doesn't hold up as well on the Ultra Nintendo.")

Gamespot: 8.7 (quote: "It was a classic then and it's still incredibly fun now. It does things even modern FPS games wouldn't dream of doing, and you can see why the recent Junction

Point is seen as the spiritual successor.”)

### **The Longest Journey**

EGM: 8.3 (quote: “This game is incredibly deep and makes Myst: Legacy look primitive.”)

Gamespot: 9.6 (quote: “Just a magnificent, wonderfully paced and beautifully written game.”)

### **WWF Wrestlemania 2000**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: “The create a wrestler mode is a big lacking, but the improvements to grappling are quite welcome.”)

Gamespot: 6.3 (quote: “It just doesn't make many strides from previous WWF titles.”)

### **Runner Mike**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: “This game's puzzles are even trickier than Tomb Raider's, which in this case is a very good thing.”)

Gamespot: 8.2 (quote: “Really smart writing makes what would be an ordinary Tomb Raider clone into something appreciably more.”)

### **Samurai Buster II**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: “Apart from the fairly humdrum boss fights, this is a really fun action game.”)

Gamespot: 7.1 (quote: “It doesn't live up to the first, but the combat is still fun and exciting.”)

### **Return To Serratopia**

EGM: 7.8 (quote: “It's definitely not for everyone, but if you love difficult precision platforming, you'll love this one.”)

Gamespot: 8.4 (quote: “They don't make platformers like this anymore, which is a shame since this game is so good.”)

### **Construct-It: Demolition**

EGM: 7.2 (quote: “Blowing stuff up is more fun than building it, and this game features plenty of explosions.”)

Gamespot: 7.0 (quote: “It'll invariably be compared to Blast Corps, which is a shame because it stands decently enough on its own.”)

### **Ultra Spinout 2**

EGM: 6.5 (quote: “It's ultimately more of the same. The music has improved from the previous game.”)

Gamespot: 7.5 (quote: “For arcade style racing on the Ultra Nintendo, it doesn't get much better than Spinout.”)

### **Deathblow II**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "It's a solid fighter, with plenty of the ultraviolence that made the original such a hit.")

Gamespot: 8.6 (quote: "The improved combo system rewards mastery of the game's mechanics.")

### **Syrielle Soul**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "As visual novels go, Syrielle Soul is a gem. It's much less of a 'game' than the previous title, though.")

Gamespot: 8.1 (quote: "The storytelling is still this game's strongest point, and with improved interactions between characters, Syrielle Soul lets you tell whatever story you want.")

### **Super Sphere Soldier**

EGM: 9.5 (quote: "With some of the most gorgeous animation I've ever seen, Super Sphere Soldier is absolutely not to be missed.")

Gamespot: 8.9 (quote: "The boss fights...the boss fights! Super Sphere Soldier improves on the original, which is no mean feat.")

### **Black Rogue**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "This had all the makings of a good game, but graphical and gameplay glitches do drag it down somewhat.")

Gamespot: 4.7 (quote: "The few things Black Rogue does right make the many things it does wrong all the more disappointing.")

### **White Mountain Extreme Snowboarding** (receives a Sega Saturn port in 2000)

EGM: 8.8 (quote: "It'll definitely challenge 1080 Snowboarding for the best snowboarding game out there.")

Gamespot: 8.5 (quote: "It goes a little bit too far into the 'way extreme, dude!' cliches, but the gameplay can't be faulted.")

### **Brigadier** (also appears on the Sega Saturn)

EGM: 7.7 (quote: "The multiplayer's where it's at, the campaign gets old pretty quickly.")

Gamespot: 8.5 (quote: "World War I is a subject rarely addressed by first-person shooters, and this game captures the horror of trench warfare incredibly well.")

### **Academy**

EGM: 8.3 (quote: "Squaresoft's latest RPG takes lots of inspiration from anime.")

Gamespot: 7.2 (quote: "The battle system is a bit too complex for my tastes. Still, it gets points for originality.")

### **Tarot**

EGM: 5.5 (quote: "While this RPG is a bit of a throwback to the older classics, it doesn't hold

up its end of the bargain in terms of gameplay.”)

Gamespot: 6.9 (quote: “Tarot will definitely thrill long time RPG fans, but fans of other genres won’t want to touch this with a ten foot pole.”)

### **Kabuki Ballerina**

EGM: 5.0 (quote: “The only redeeming factor in this game is all those cutscenes of sexy girls.”)

Gamespot: 3.0 (quote: “One of the worst RPGs I’ve played in a long time. It doesn’t make any sense to play this when there are so many other great games out there.”)

### **Motorcycle GT**

EGM: 3.8 (quote: “I thought this game would be great, but instead it’s just a big flameout.”)

Gamespot: 4.5 (quote: “Even without all the hype, this game would have been really disappointing.”)

### **Second Nature**

EGM: 6.2 (quote: “The slow paced combat makes exploring a bit less fun, but at least the world is big enough to explore.”)

Gamespot: 6.1 (quote: “It doesn’t do anything that Rise a Knight didn’t do a lot better a few months ago.”)

*Saturn:*

### **Ready 2 Rumble Boxing** (ported to the Ultra Nintendo in 2000)

EGM: 8.7 (quote: “A wacky, crazy, but super fun boxing title.”)

Gamespot: 8.0 (quote: “Beneath all the style and laughs, there’s a really good boxing game here.”)

### **Phaedra: Resurrection**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: “Decidedly old-school, and definitely not for everyone.”)

Gamespot: 9.2 (quote: “I never imagined we’d be getting this game over here after Phaedra’s Heart was a commercial flop. Please, buy this game. It’s one of the best RPGs on the Saturn.”)

### **Solitary Kiss**

EGM: 7.7 (quote: “This RPG is one of the quirkiest games I’ve ever played. That said, it’s also a lot of fun.”)

Gamespot: 7.5 (quote: “The dating sim elements can get a bit boring, but thankfully they’re really not necessary to enjoy Solitary Kiss.”)

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### **Resident Evil: Operation Stormwind – The Basics**

*Resident Evil: Operation Stormwind* is an Ultra Nintendo-exclusive game in the *Resident Evil* series that takes place concurrently with *Code Veronica*. In it, Chris and Jill are sent on a secret mission to infiltrate a military base that serves as the center of Umbrella's covert operations after the events of *Resident Evil 2*. Umbrella has commandeered the base and is seeking to engineer a weapon of mass destruction, and the United States government has sent Chris Redfield and Jill Valentine in to stop them. The game represents somewhat of a departure from previous titles in the series, being somewhat more action oriented than previous games. It's not an action game to the degree that OTL *Resident Evil 4* is, but it features considerably more bullets and enemies than any previous game in the series, including Leon's portion of *Resident Evil 2*. You'll spend about 70 percent of the game playing as Chris and about 30 percent playing as Jill, you don't get to choose who you control, as story events dictate which one you are at any given time. Being that this is more of an action oriented game, it features the ability to dive, crouch, and roll, though your character still can't move while firing their weapon.

The game begins as Chris and Jill are stowed away aboard a plane headed into the Umbrella military compound on an island in the Pacific Ocean. The first part of the game involves the pair navigating their way through the base in order to discover what sort of experiments Umbrella is conducting. As this is going on, the people at the base are shown taking orders from a man clad in heavy military garb who comes to be known as Hellstrom. There is also a lab technician named Kolger who is in charge of performing Umbrella's bio-experiments. As it turns out, Umbrella is testing an experimental mutagen that can be aerosolized in order to turn an entire legion of soldiers into mindless, homicidal freaks. The mutagen is being tested on American soldiers captured when the base was taken. Chris and Jill manage to save one of the soldiers, a young man named Verne, who tells them that his comrades were all mutated right before his eyes. As Chris and Jill try to escape with Verne, they are surrounded by Umbrella soldiers, but sirens alert everyone to the fact that one of the experiments has broken out and has caused an incident at the lab, which has ruptured a series of tanks and has led to most of the Umbrella personnel in the lab areas being mutated into various beasts. Chris and Jill now have to escape the labs while dodging both mutants and Umbrella soldiers, while also trying to catch Dr. Kolger who is escaping with a sample of the virus to deploy in an American city as a demonstration of Umbrella's might. Chris and Jill come to learn that the virus doesn't instantly transform people, but a person of sufficient willpower can stave off the transformation. Unfortunately, when the transformation inevitably wins, that mutant will be much more dangerous than if they transformed right away. Chris and Jill find this out firsthand when they have to battle with Verne later on in the game. Eventually, they manage to defeat Kolger and destroy his sample of the virus, but it's then revealed that Hellstrom has one more sample, and he eventually kidnaps Jill in order to inject her, believing that as strong as she is, her mutation would have incredible power. At the end of the game, Chris does battle with Hellstrom, both as a human and then as a mutant, and saves Jill before she can be infected. The two of them return to the mainland, and in the after-credits scene, Chris gets a call from Claire who tells him she's all right.

While *Operation Stormwind* is a very well produced game, with excellent graphics, the gameplay and story are considered inferior to *Code Veronica*'s. The game receives mixed-to-positive reviews from critics, with some outright HATING the game, though for the most part, the game is quite popular and indeed manages to sell even better than *Code Veronica* (except in Japan). It's considered to be the first *Resident Evil* game that isn't "great" on some level, and would come to be regarded as one of the worst games in the series despite not being a particularly bad game on its own.

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## December 5, 1999

The Game Boy Nova is launched in Japan, to excellent sales and a favorable reception. It launches with six games, including three major ones: *Pokemon Sun and Moon*, *Super Mario Nova*, and *Street Fighter III: The New Age*. *Pokemon Sun and Moon* breaks the opening day sales record for a video game in Japan, while *Super Mario Nova*, despite selling only a fifth as many copies, is still considered a major success, and *Street Fighter III: The New Age* also has a good launch. Famitsu lauds the system as "ahead of its time, a marvel of computer engineering" and the system, which is region free, is imported by many in North America and Europe who can't wait to play the new games.

### Import Watch: Game Boy Nova

The Game Boy Nova is here, and so are a slew of brand new handheld games! First things first, how does it play? The screen is big and clear, with a wonderful backlight that allows you to fully appreciate the fantastic new graphics. In terms of graphical prowess, the new *Street Fighter* game is probably most impressive, though the 3-D graphics of *Tatama Tiger* are also notable. *Pokemon Sun and Moon* features some fantastic animation along with 3-D graphics for certain buildings, though it's a somewhat subtle use of 3-D. The game is a quantum leap from *Pokemon Red and Green*, and all 257 Pokemon can be used in the game (though not all of them can be obtained in game, some do require trading with the other cartridge). The best launch game? Probably *Super Mario Nova*, which reminds us of all the fun we had playing *Super Mario World 2*. It's a bit smaller in scope than that game, with only six worlds instead of nine, but the graphics are at times even better than the SNES-CD classic, and the music (which can be heard perfectly through the Nova's quality speakers) is some of the best in the series.

The Nova retails for 20,000 yen, which is around 180 US dollars, and don't forget to factor in shipping and the cost of the games you want. It's pretty expensive for a handheld, but this state-of-the-art portable gaming machine is definitely worth the price!

-from the February 2000 issue of *GameFan* magazine

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*"Comparatively, the Ultra Nintendo version of Marvel vs. Capcom is the superior version. It runs almost identically to the arcade version of the game, with just a bit of graphical detail lost in translation. The animation and fighting are as smooth as can be, and this is the best home console port of the game. With that said, the Sega Saturn port of Marvel vs. Capcom is still a more than acceptable version of the game. Tag team mode is retained even without the Ring (early rumors were that the tag team element of the game would have been removed in the base Saturn version, but those rumors were only just that) and the game runs without much slowdown, the only thing that's really lost is graphical detail, and with the Ring, the game looks almost identical to the Ultra Nintendo version. Whether you have an Ultra Nintendo or a Sega Saturn, you'll definitely be satisfied with how this game plays on your home console."*

-from the Gamespot.com review of *Marvel vs. Capcom* for consoles

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## **Olaf Olafsson Leaving Sony, Calls New Adventure Game His "Parting Gift"**

With a new millennium comes many changes, and one of the biggest will be taking place at Sony, as Olafur Olafsson is stepping down from his position as CEO of Sony Interactive Entertainment, a division of the Sony Corporation that has been responsible for publishing and developing a number of software titles, most of them for Nintendo systems under the company's partnership with Sony. According to Olafsson, he'd been contemplating this move for more than a year, but wanted to ensure that the company would be in good hands before leaving. In addition, he also wanted to oversee the publishing of *The Longest Journey*, an interactive adventure game currently considered to be one of the best video games of the year. Developed by Funcom and released for both the PC and the Ultra Nintendo, the game was partially funded and published by Sony, and Olafsson refers to the game as his "parting gift" to the company. Said Olafsson, "The talented artists and creative minds at Funcom have created a game and a story that I feel need to be experienced by everyone who's truly serious about playing video games. I'm proud that I was able to help make this amazing game a reality, and I couldn't think of a better legacy to leave as I transition into the next phase of my career."

Numerous people from throughout the video game world have offered words of praise for Olafsson. Sony's Ken Kutaragi said in a brief statement, "I've considered Mr. Olafsson a friend and a partner, and will miss working with him to make Sony the best company it can be." Nintendo of America CEO Howard Lincoln had this to say: "Mr. Olafsson was a key part of making our partnership with Sony a reality, and working with him has been a tremendous privilege."

There's no word yet on who Olafsson's replacement will be, though several names have been pushed forward as potential candidates.

-from an article on Gamespot.com, posted on December 12, 1999

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It's a big month for RPG lovers, and while there aren't any big hits to tell you about this month, we do have three very interesting games you'll want to play, two for the Saturn and one for the Ultra Nintendo.

We'll start with *Academy*, the newest Ultra Nintendo RPG from the folks at Squaresoft. In *Academy*, you're put into the shoes of Lowen, a young man attending a magic school. The similarities with the popular *Harry Potter* series largely end there, Lowen's academy exists as a key part of the world it's in, and magic users frequently join the army or the government to help protect the realm from existential threats. You'll befriend five other students as you go through the game, and together, the six students will have to learn lots of magic if they wish to stand against the threat posed by the Dark Nebula, a group of ancient wizards who have been lurking within books hidden within the academy's extensive library. As members of the Dark Nebula awaken and begin wreaking havoc, Lowen and his friends must unite to take them down. Those who've played the SNES-CD classic *Live A Live* via importing will be somewhat familiar with the game's quirky battle system, your characters (you can have a total of three in your party at a time) move and attack based on a grid. Certain spells affect different portions of the grid and also have different charge times (which are clearly listed). You can even have certain spells sync up for a deadly

combination affect! *Academy* features some extensive anime-styled cutscenes and an excellent soundtrack by Yoko Shimomura. It may not be as big a production as *Final Fantasy VIII*, but it's pure RPG fun all the same.

The sequel to Enix's cult classic RPG *Phaedra's Heart* finally makes it to North American shores this month, nearly two years after it's Japanese release. Called *Phaedra: Resurrection*, the game is another traditional RPG, this one putting you in the shoes of Oleria, an acolyte of Phaedra (the fallen goddess in the first game). Phaedra now serves a role similar to the Master in Enix's classic *Soul Blazer* game, guiding Oleria on her journey to save humanity, which has fallen astray from Phaedra's guidance. In fact, plotwise the game holds many similarities to *Soul Blazer*, though Oleria is a human and not a heavenly being like *Soul Blazer's* hero was. Oleria will meet and befriend many good humans while battling evil ones who are carrying out the will of the demonic Shadowheart. Shadowheart's evil machinations threaten to spread to the realm of the goddess Phaedra herself, and Oleria must stand tall and defeat him before Phaedra's light can be snuffed out. It's one of the better RPGs to come to the Saturn in quite some time, though Enix is only doing a limited print run of the game. The game's dialogue has not been dubbed in English, instead, English subtitles accompany the Japanese voice acting.

*Solitary Kiss* is another Japanese role-playing game making its way to North America. Published and developed by Atlus, the game follows five high school girls seeking love, who stumble upon an ancient realm filled with monsters. If it sounds a bit like *Sailor Moon*, you're probably right, though the heroines of *Solitary Kiss* don't transform into superheroines. Instead, they wield powerful weapons and learn powerful magic, while also occasionally dating men from both their own world and from the opposite realm. The game contains a number of dating sim elements where your characters can earn bonuses depending on how well they do with certain guys (you can even date the prince of the monster realm, who looks surprisingly human for living in a realm full of monsters). The game is as strange as it gets, and those looking for a unique RPG experience this month will definitely find it in *Solitary Kiss*.

If you've got both consoles and are looking for a recommendation, you really can't go wrong with Squaresoft, and their *Academy* game has both an engaging plotline and a fun battle system. Of course, if you were a fan of *Phaedra's Heart*, *Phaedra: Resurrection* is a worthy sequel.

And of course, if you've only played one or two (or none!) of the *Final Fantasy* games before, we definitely recommend Squaresoft's *Final Fantasy Collection* over all of these games.

-from the "RPG Report" on Gamespy.com, posted on December 14, 1999

*"The Final Fantasy Collection brings you the first six Final Fantasy games in a stunning, four-disc package contained in a limited edition collector's box. In addition to Final Fantasy I-VI, which come on two Ultra Nintendo Gigadiscs and contain the original games plus more than a half hour's worth of new CGI animated cutscenes and interactive digital guides, you get a two-disc, 51-track CD soundtrack containing a selection of the best musical tracks from all six games. Also included is a 96-page artbook with brand new concept art drawings from Final Fantasy character designer Yoshitaka Amano. This collection will only be available for a limited time, so don't miss your chance to own a piece of video game history."*  
-part of Squaresoft's official press release for the North American release of the *Final Fantasy Collection* compilation

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Activision created the *Runner Mike* series in response to the runaway success of *Tomb Raider*, and in an attempt to create an adventure game that featured smart writing as a key selling point of the game, they chose author Dan Brown to create the game's story. Brown had released the novel *Digital Fortress* in 1998, a cyber-thriller about a new cryptographic code unable to be cracked by the government. Brown's story for *Runner Mike* focused on a professor, Michael Shannon, who is researching a strange archeological ruin. After making a breakthrough discovery, Mike is targeted by a mysterious assassin, and must discover the ruin's secrets while evading the assassin with the help of a Peruvian-American woman named Maritza. The game's action moves at a significantly faster pace than the *Tomb Raider* games, with big action setpieces occasionally interrupted by puzzle solving. *Runner Mike*'s puzzles rely less on manipulation of the environment and more on pure brain power, similar to the puzzles featured in certain point and click titles. The game received the biggest budget to date for an Activision game, with actor Rob Lowe brought on to voice Mike. While Brown's story received some criticism for being fairly "hokey", it also received praise for being thrilling enough to keep players on the edge of their seats and invested in the action. Gameplay itself, while not quite as tight as the carefully controlled platforming and gunplay of *Tomb Raider*, was generally well received, and the game, which got an extensive advertising campaign in both print and on television, was a top seller over the holiday season. As for Dan Brown, he would go on to publish the controversial novel *Angels and Demons*, which remains his best known literary work, before returning to work on the series for *Runner Mike 2*.

-excerpted from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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By the time *Syrielle Soul* was nearing release in December 1999, the original 1997 game had already spawned a series of children's novels, with an animated series scheduled for release in the fall of 2000. The little spider girl that could was ready to make a splash on a next generation console, though *Syrielle Soul* was arguably a less technologically-inclined game than the original. Where *Syrielle* was riddled with numerous platforming segments between visual novel-like portions of gameplay, *Syrielle Soul* had a much heavier focus on visual novel elements, with action segments now playing out more like an action-RPG than a platformer. *Syrielle Soul* allowed you to use a save file from your SNES-CD *Syrielle* game to carry over character relationships from that title, if you so chose, or you could play through an interactive comic-like segment at the start of the game. You also had the option to start totally clean with no relationships at all with characters from the previous title, which had a major impact on how events in *Syrielle Soul* played out. For example, Syrielle's relationship with Stacy played a huge role in the original game. Stacy started as a caustic, spoiled bully, and in most playthroughs, remained as such, antagonistic to Syrielle to an extreme degree. However, the player had the option to befriend Stacy and become very close with her if a number of actions were taken over the course of the game. In *Syrielle Soul*, if Syrielle and Stacy befriended each other in the original title, the two will be BFFs at the start of the game. However, if the player chooses to start a clean playthrough, Stacy will be as bullying and antagonistic as ever (though the player then has the option to befriend her in *Soul*, and she's somewhat more sympathetic from the start of the game). *Syrielle Soul* follows its titular protagonist into high school, and most of the major characters from the original game no longer remain, opening the way for a new group of characters for Syrielle to interact with. Now that Syrielle's in high school, her spider qualities are manifesting in new

and often-times embarrassing ways, and she must navigate the typical high school pitfalls while also coming to terms with the part of her that's half-spider. *Syrielle Soul* has a real villain, in this case the school's chemistry teacher, who is secretly performing experiments on human-arthropod hybrids like Syrielle. Depending on Syrielle's choices throughout the game, this teacher can either remain at the level of a fairly harmless joke villain, or can manifest as a cruel, sadistic monster who even kills one or more of Syrielle's friends over the course of the game. Indeed, while *Soul* never gets overly violent or scary, there are real stakes involved over the course of the story, and Syrielle's choices and friendships become more important than ever.

While the game, like the series in general, was polarizing among the mainstream gaming crowd, series fans responded highly positively to *Syrielle Soul*, and propelled it to strong sales upon its release. Once the animated series was released the following fall, the game's sales got a noticeable bump, and *Soul* is considered the game that brought *Syrielle* to a wide audience.

-excerpted from an article on the website Pop Culture Wave, posted on January 14, 2015

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*"If Tony Hawk showed the gaming world how a skateboarding game should be made, then White Mountain showed the gaming world how a snowboarding game should be made."*  
-Stephen Totilo, editor-in-chief of Kotaku.com, commenting on *White Mountain Extreme Snowboarding* in an article about extreme sports games posted on March 19, 2013

*"Ha ha, no, they didn't name White Mountain after me, I was like 13 when that game came out! I remember playing the crap out of it though."*  
-professional snowboarder Shaun White, in an interview in the March 2008 issue of *ESPN the Magazine*

But while *1080 Snowboarding* was certainly a fun game, it was bare-bones and white bread compared to the revolution that was *White Mountain Extreme Snowboarding*. The game featured a soundtrack of 21 contemporary rock songs, which played as you slid down a mountain full of hazardous trails and bone-jarring obstacles. It featured a bevy of modes, from challenge modes, to trick modes where you tried to accumulate points, to white-knuckle race modes featuring a selection of reckless, daredevil snowboarding junkies from all over the world. We had a particular fondness from Svetlana, the Scandinavian beauty who looked like a supermodel in the lodge but raced like a daredevil on the mountain, gleefully taunting players if they wiped out anywhere near her. *White Mountain* was even most robust in its features than the recently released *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*, and was undoubtedly an influence on the game's sequel. Forget a 1080, *White Mountain's* ultimate trick was a physics-defying 1440, though you could only pull it off if you were a complete master of the game's complex physics. The mountain was lethal, races featured a life meter and if you ran out, you got airlifted off the mountain. The game eased in beginners (though the game's "instructors" leveled plenty of barbs at you if you stayed on easy mode too long), and rewarded masters with plenty of unlockables and secrets. It let you compete against three friends, either in races or in contests to see who could do the most tricks in the shortest amount of time. In short, *White Mountain* was a snowboarding lover's dream, and one of the most heavily acclaimed games of 1999. It sold more than two million copies and spawned a franchise that continues to this day. It remains one of the most beloved extreme sports games of all time.

-excerpted from IGN.com's article "The Top 10 Extreme Sports Video Games", posted on April 15, 2015, which ranked *White Mountain Extreme Snowboarding* at #2

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Alex Stansfield: You know, and it's a real shame because it's clear Capcom tried really hard to make *Operation Stormwind* the definitive *Resident Evil* game.

Brittany Saldita: And it's not that bad of a game! The fights are really fun, it actually has fun bosses, which I don't think the *Resident Evil* series has many of, and the graphics are amazing. It looks better than any Ultra Nintendo game so far with the exception of maybe *Final Fantasy VIII*.

Alex: I was bored to tears slogging through the middle of this game. It started well, it ends pretty well, but getting to the end, for me, was a chore.

Brittany: You know, I thought the beginning was worse than the middle. I mean, I hope this isn't much of a spoiler, but you spend the first couple hours fighting humans instead of monsters. And the humans are dumb.

\*A scene of an Umbrella mercenary looking for Jill is shown. The game's AI is fairly bad, the mercenary makes a number of dumb mistakes, looking right at Jill at two different times but not noticing her.\*

Brittany: I guess it's nice that Umbrella is hiring the blind? For an evil corporation, they're awfully progressive in terms of equal opportunity hiring.

Alex: Well, if things don't work out for him at Umbrella he can always try being a pro wrestling referee.

Brittany: Bad AI aside, *Operation Stormwind* is still pretty fun and I'll go ahead and give it a 3.5.

Alex: I'm giving it a 3, it's definitely not up to the high standards that this series has set. It's got some things going for it, but it's not the groundbreaking *Resident Evil* I was hoping it'd be.

(...)

\*A tall, bald fighter hammers his opponent with a flurry of powerful punches and uppercuts that eventually render the unfortunate guy on the receiving end of those blows a bloody mess.\*

Ted Crosley: I can't stop pulling off combos, this game is amazing!

Steve Horton: I'm gonna be honest, I wasn't a fan of the first *Deathblow*, I thought it focused on the violence way more than the fighting. And I'm a fan of violent games, *Mortal Kombat* blew my mind back in the day, but too much of a good thing can be bad if that's all the game is about. But here? Hell yeah, bring it on! This game's got the best combo system outside of *Killer Instinct Ultra*.

Ted: Yep, it really does reward waiting for the right moment to strike.

Steve: That said, both *Deathblow* games are kinda slow, and the fighters aren't diverse enough to add a lot of strategy to the game. There's 14 fighters total, but only about three or four different fighting styles to pick from!

Ted: Hey, I think the game's a little more diverse than that. You've got a guy with a propeller for a face!

\*The propeller-faced fighter headbutts his opponent, sending a blood shower all over the screen.\*

Steve: \*laughing\* Actually that guy's kind of a sucky fighter! He takes low blows like a complete wimp!

Ted: I think anybody with functional parts down there is gonna take a low blow like a wimp, but I get your point.

\*One of the game's three female fighters gives the propeller-faced guy a repeated series of low blows.\*

Ted: But I've gotta say, *Deathblow II* is right behind *Soul Calibur* as my top fighting game of the year. 5 out of 5.

Steve: I'm giving it a 4. It's a great game, definitely.

(...)

Alex: And thankfully you don't spend much time in the trenches, because that would be a really boring game.

Ted: I know you liked *Brigadier* a lot, and I agree it's a pretty well made game, but a lot of the missions are still pretty repetitive. It's basically, "go here, kill these guys, rinse, repeat".

Alex: As a bit of a history buff, I enjoyed hearing 'Over There' in the game.

Ted: Was that seriously a hit song back in the day? Like Macarena huge?

Alex: Well, I don't think there was a hideously annoying dance that went with it.

Ted: I didn't think you could make World War I into a decent game, I'm pleasantly surprised that I was wrong. And the multiplayer, I thought was the best part, especially the mode where you have to hunt the other players down inside a trench.

Alex: On the whole, I still think World War II is a lot more favorable toward making games, and I'm sure we'll see a lot more World War II games in the future. That said, *Brigadier* is about as good of a World War I game as there can possibly be, and I'm giving it a 4.5.

Ted: I'm giving it a 3.5, just a bit more variety in the missions and it could've been really

great.

-excerpted from the December 7, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Lyssa: \*wincing as her character is taking punch after punch from Gary's character in *Ready 2 Rumble Boxing*\* Oh my god, I'm getting my ass beat!

Gary: \*delivers a Rumble Flurry which knocks Lyssa out from the count\* Yes! Yes! Down goes Lyssa! Down goes Lyssa!

Lyssa: \*pouting as she stares at her badly bruised character\*

Gary: And you can definitely see just how badly you got your ass kicked.

Lyssa: \*whimpering\* Don't rub it in! \*puts the Saturn controller down\* You know, this is so much better than the multiplayer in *Super Punch-Out CD*. Honestly it's probably the best multiplayer boxing game ever made, it's really a lot of fun.

Gary: Fun seems to be the name of the game in this one, I think it's a lot more accessible than *Super Punch-Out* too.

Lyssa: Right, easier for a new player to get into it...

Gary: And easier for me to kick your butt!

Lyssa: I said don't rub it in! \*angrily glares at him\*

Gary: Somebody's being a very poor sport.

Lyssa: You made my boxer ugly! He's gonna have to go back to his girlfriend and explain the buttkicking he just got!

Gary: "Sorry honey, I suck at boxing!"

Lyssa: I'm giving *Ready 2 Rumble Boxing* a 4.5 out of 5.

Gary: And I'm giving it a 4, it's a great game and make sure you play with a friend so you can show him just how much you rule.

Lyssa: Hmph! \*turns away from him\*

(...)

\*A montage of crashes from *Motorcycle GT* is shown, most of them caused by terrible glitches in the game's programming.\*

Brittany: \*as each crash plays\* Ugh! Really? You gotta be kidding me! Unbelievable. Oh come on! \*bleep\*! Bull\*bleep\*! \*bleep\* dammit!

\*The montage ends and Brittany looks ready to snap her controller in two, but thinks better of it and sets it down.\*

Brittany: When we saw this game at E3, we were told it would do for motorcycle games what *Gran Turismo* did for car games. \*puts her head in her hands\* Unbelievable.

Ted: Yeah, I wouldn't have blamed you for taking it out on the controller. This game is just bad. From the track selection which consists of cookie cutter courses, plain backgrounds, and unnecessary obstacles, to the gameplay itself, which even if it wasn't a glitch-filled mess is still some of the worst controls we've experienced in a racing game, *Motorcycle GT* is an absolute failure on every level.

Brittany: Infogrames, you should be ashamed of yourself that this game made it anywhere near release. It must have been rushed for Christmas, but I'd rather get coal than this game in my stocking. At least I can use the coal for warmth.

Ted: If you wanna race motorcycles on the Ultra Nintendo, stick to *Road Storm* or *Road Rage*, basically anything with Road in the title is worth your time. I'm giving this game a 0.5 out of 5.

Brittany: A .5?

Ted: For the music, a few of the tracks were all right.

Brittany: I'm giving it a big fat \*writes a 0 with marker on a dry erase board and holds it up to the screen\* ZERO.

Ted: You didn't like any of the music?

Brittany: The music from this game will haunt me in my nightmares.

-excerpted from the December 14, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted: *Blast Corps: Ultra Destruction* is a hell of a good time, even when you're going for all those tougher medals.

Alex: Yeah, prepare for frustration if you're trying to get everything, but if you're just messing around, *Ultra Destruction* is really fun and this game definitely tops the first.

Ted: I feel like when the original *Blast Corps* came out, there was so much they wanted to do but couldn't do because the SNES-CD by that time was getting pretty dated. This feels like an actual complete game.

Alex: Well, *Blast Corps* was a fine game, but yeah, there's so much more in this one. There's robots, there's a freaking trike with an RPG on it...

\*A tricycle is shown clearing out a bunch of debris with a missile barrage.\*

Alex: \*laughing\* I crack up every time I see that!

Ted: The only thing that's missing in this game is Donkey Kong.

\*A scene from the game is shown of Donkey Kong climbing a skyscraper as some of the Blast Corps machines try to shoot him down.\*

Ted: I stand corrected. Holy crap this game is awesome!

Alex: I whole-heartedly agree and I'm giving it a 4.5 out of 5.

Ted: It gets a 4.5 from me too.

(...)

\*The hosts in their pajamas are sitting in front of Santa Claus as he hands out gifts near a Christmas tree.\*

Santa Claus: Ho, ho, ho, who's first?

Ted: \*sits down on Santa's lap\* I'm a Sega fan, I want to play some awesome new Sega games!

Santa: Well here you go, little boy! \*hands Ted a wrapped present\*

Ted: Oh boy! \*he unwraps it...it's an empty Katana box\* The Sega Katana! ...wait, there's nothing in here.

Santa: You'll have to wait, it's not coming out for at least another year! But I'm sure it'll be awesome when it does!

Ted: \*looks disappointed as he sits back down, next is Alex wearing a Solid Snake bandanna and a Konami t-shirt\*

Alex: I'm Konami, I've been good this year!

Santa: Ho, ho, ho! Yes, you've been VERY good this year! *Metal Gear Solid, Primrose Soldier, Silent Hill*...why, you even put out a VERY good soccer game on the Game Boy Color! Here you go! \*hands Alex a wrapped present\*

Alex: Wow, what is it? \*he opens it up, it's a slew of trophies and awards\*

Santa: That's all the Game of the Year awards your games are going to take home this year! Ho, ho, ho!

Alex: All right! \*excitedly shows off his awards as Lyssa dances her way over to Santa before sitting on his lap\*

Lyssa: \*singing\* Santa baby, I really... \*stops singing\* really REALLY like dancing games!

\*gets up and does another dance\*

Santa: Well, you've got some nice gifts coming to you! \*hands Lyssa a present\*

Lyssa: \*opens it up, it's a pair of maracas and a disco ball\* What's this?

Santa: Why, it's *Dance Dance Revolution* and *Samba de Amigo*! And don't forget *Space Channel Ulala*! Next year is going to be a wonderful year for dancing games, ho ho ho!

Lyssa: \*happily dances back to her seat as Steve comes up and sits on Santa's lap, wearing a Colony t-shirt\*

Steve: I'm Peter Molyneux, and I'm going to be better than any other kid this year!

Santa: \*looks sternly at Steve\* Peter, you've been a VERY naughty boy! Promising things you failed to deliver on, lying to excited players!

Steve: But Santa, *Colony* wasn't that bad of a game!

Santa: You promised it would be the best game ever made! \*hands him a present\* Here!

Steve: Is it coal? \*opens it up, it's a pie\*

Santa: It's humble pie, and you should eat it before you start talking about any more of your games again!

Steve: \*begins eating the pie...there's a stuffed toy crow baked inside\*

Santa: Eat that crow, too!

Gary: \*comes up wearing a replica of Sato's outfit from *Pokemon*\* Hey Santa, got anything new for a Pokefreak like me?

Santa: I sure do! \*hands Gary a BIG box that he has trouble holding\*

Gary: Wow, I wonder what's inside? \*he opens up the box and a bunch of toy Pokeballs spill out\* Whoa! \*is practically buried by them as he collapses to the floor\*

Santa: Those are all the new Pokemon you'll be catching when *Pokemon Sun and Moon* comes out next year! Over 100 new Pokemon in all! I hope you don't plan on doing anything else any time soon, like going to work!

Gary: \*sticks his arm out of the Pokeball pile and gives a thumbs up as Brittany walks over and sits down on Santa's lap\*

Santa: Well, little girl, tell Santa what you want for Christmas this year?

Brittany: Oh....well....I kind of got everything I wanted already. \*smiles\*

Santa: Is that so?

Brittany: Yeah, I mean...the Ultra Nintendo had an amazing year, the Saturn is still going really strong...some of the best games of the year feature some really kickbutt women, like Raquel and Rebecca in *Squad Four: Rebellion* and Quistis and Elly in *Final Fantasy VIII*... next year there's a new *Zelda* and a new *Metroid* coming... the Game Boy Nova looks awesome...video games are getting REALLY popular in the mainstream, not just with hardcore gamers but with celebrities...

Lyssa: Like when you and me played DDR with Robin Williams and his daughter Zelda at the arcade last week?

Brittany: Well, to be fair Robin Williams has liked video games for a really long-

Lyssa: And we found out that Zelda's a better DDR player than you even though she's like ten?

Brittany: \*glares at Lyssa\*

Santa: Well, Brittany, are you sure that you don't want anything from old Santa Claus?

Brittany: Nope! I have everything I could ever want. I have great friends and video games have never been better.

Santa: Well, I have this Game Boy Nova from Japan but if you don't want it-

Brittany: \*shrieks like a little girl and snatches it out of Santa's hands\* GIMME GIMME GIMME GIMME!!!

Gary: Hey, I want to play that thing! \*leaps out of the Pokeballs and tackles Brittany\*

Ted: Does that have the new *Street Fighter*? \*leaps into the melee\*

\*Soon all six hosts are fighting over the Game Boy Nova as Santa just laughs\*

Santa: Ho, ho, ho! HO, HO, HO! \*holding his belly as he laughs\* Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good session of *White Mountain Extreme Snowboarding*! \*begins playing the game as the hosts continue to fight over the Game Boy Nova\*

-excerpted from the December 21, 1999 episode of *GameTV*

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### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: December 1999**

1. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
2. Half-Life
3. Super Smash Bros.
4. Fire Emblem: The False Princess
5. Dog Dash 3
6. Primrose Soldier

7. Metal Gear Solid
8. Ultra Kirby: Dreamland Friends
9. Welcome To Magicka
10. Super Mario Dimensions

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: December 1999**

1. Soul Calibur
2. Resident Evil: Code Veronica
3. Sonic the Hedgehog 5
4. Silent Hill
5. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater
6. Marvel vs. Capcom
7. Commander Keen: When Universes Collide
8. Ready 2 Rumble Boxing
9. Virtua Fighter 3
10. Turok III: Generation War

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### **December 31, 1999**

Polly Klaas rested her head against her pillow as the New Year's Eve festivities played out on her television screen. 1999 had been a catastrophic year. She'd lost her best friend, and had spent most of the summer in a daze, trying her best to get ready for her college life at Stanford University. Though her family and friends helped her cope, and she'd gotten a timely assist from *The Darkest Night*, Polly hadn't truly gotten over Caitlyn's death until she'd gotten to Stanford. She'd bonded instantly with her new roommate, and though she struggled with classes at first, due to the residual effects of what had happened back at Columbine, she made a quick recovery and by the end of the semester was doing quite well, with good grades and good memories of her first semester of college.

But as she watched the clock on screen tick past 11:00 PM on the East Coast, her mind drifted back to Caitlyn. How Caitlyn's family had to spend their first Christmas without their sweet, optimistic daughter. How Caitlyn had never gotten to attend Stanford with her. How Caitlyn was about to miss the start of a new millennium.

*"I'm sorry...I'm sorry you died because of me,"* Polly thought to herself, fighting back a tear. She sniffled and shook her head, fighting back those thoughts. *"No...it wasn't because of me. It was Eric...all of it was Eric. I did nothing wrong by trying to help him... if I couldn't have helped him, if Caitlyn couldn't have helped him, nobody could have helped him."*

During her first semester at Stanford, Polly had met the president's daughter, Chelsea. It was during one of their classes, and Polly hadn't even been trying to approach her, but Chelsea had noticed Polly looking sad on her way out of the classroom and had reached out to her. Chelsea had recognized Polly from the news stories she'd seen about the incident at Columbine, and Polly had certainly recognized Chelsea, but neither one of them addressed either of those issues with the other. Instead, the two had a brief conversation about what was going on in their lives, and Chelsea had said something to Polly before the two parted ways.

Polly still remembered it.

*“You're in a really good place right now.”*

Polly couldn't disagree with that. She was going to *Stanford*, for goodness sakes! Twice in her life she'd stared death in the face, but now? Now the rest of her life was wide-open, with so many possibilities. If Caitlyn couldn't be here, Polly knew she'd have to seize those opportunities for both of them.

*“I'll never forget you, Caitlyn. And...I know right now you're in a good place too.”*

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## **January 1, 2000**

“Damn.”

Tom Kalinske watched as the clock on the screen hit 12:00:00, as confetti rained down on Times Square, and as the world celebrated the coming of a new millennium.

“What?” said Kalinske's wife, looking over at her husband with a perplexed expression.

“The Y2K bug was the only thing that could've stopped Nintendo. It's the year 2000, and the world's still here. Guess nothing's gonna stop them now.”

Ashley Kalinske looked at her father for less than a second before breaking out into loud laughter at his joke. Kalinske's wife just rolled her eyes and shook her head.

“Honey, it's not the end of the world that it's not the end of the world.”

“I guess you're right. They're probably gonna fire me though.”

Kalinske knew his days at Sega were pretty much numbered. Nintendo had had another record year of holiday sales, both for their console and for their games. Meanwhile, the Saturn's sales had declined from last year's despite a price drop, and now Nintendo's market share was above 80 percent. The Katana was still a year away in North America. Sega was in its most dire straits since the 90s began.

“It'll be nice, though....you'll have more time with the girls....we can go on a really nice vacation this summer, anywhere you want.”

It wasn't being fired that bothered him, though. He was totally secure financially and he'd be able to secure a job with any number of profitable companies. His future was secure. It was the failure that got to him, the failure of having lost to Nintendo after working so hard and accomplishing so much. He'd seen such promise in the Katana and he would've liked a chance to finish the job... but on the other hand, the odds he'd faced were insurmountable. Just keeping Sega alive and giving them a chance to even release the Katana against the combined might of Nintendo and Sony was an accomplishment. And his wife and daughters would always be proud of him.

Tom Kalinske couldn't help but smile. He'd failed to beat Nintendo, but he was no failure. And he'd be able to enjoy that vacation without a care in the world.

"It'll be the best vacation ever," he said, before giving his wife a kiss on the lips. "And I pity the poor guy who's gotta take over after me!"

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"Happy New Year, everybody," said Reggie Fils-Aime, toasting the new year with his family as they watched the New Year's celebrations.

He hadn't told his employees at Rare about the job offer he'd just gotten...the job offer he was almost certainly going to accept.

*"From first mate on a luxury yacht to captain of the Titanic," he mused to himself. "Well, I'm about to kick that iceberg's ass."*

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*"Technology has come so incredibly far in just ten years. We've gone from most households not even having a computer to computers being in nearly every American household, computers capable of displaying beautiful three-dimensional images, computers capable of communicating with other computers all over the world. The 1990s are going to be remembered as the decade of the information revolution, and it's an entirely different world from the one we lived in at the end of the 80s."*

-Bill Nye, in an interview with Anderson Cooper on a December 30, 1999 ABC News broadcast

*"The Microsoft Xbox is the most developer-friendly game console ever made. We're going to change the way that people make video games, and the Xbox will be at the forefront of a revolution."*

-Bill Gates, in a January 2000 interview with *Wired* magazine

*"Ten years ago, I was waiting for Super Mario Bros. 3. Look where I'm at now! Look where video games are at now! Look at how pretty the new Resident Evil game is! We've come a long way in terms of video game graphics. And yet... Super Mario Bros. 3 is still the better game. Maybe in the next decade we can work on the gameplay, okay?"*

-Brittany Saldita, discussing the 90s on the January 4, 2000 episode of *GameTV*

*"Well, violence in video games has been an issue I've confronted numerous times during my presidency. And it's true, games are getting more violent. But I think the industry is doing a really good job keeping these violent video games out of children's hands. Violence in this country has gone down since the start of the 90s, so I think...I mean, there are a lot of positive games. Sonic the Hedgehog and Mario, they're wholesome characters and kids love them. And Pokemon... I did a speech at an elementary school, and so many kids were playing with these Pokemon things. I have no clue what any of them are, to be honest. I*

*asked Chelsea, but...I think she's too old for them because she didn't know anything either! Um...the violent games, a lot of adults play those. I have interns who play those. I think the companies do a pretty good job of saying which games are for adults and which games are for kids. I don't think it's that much of a problem right now."*

-President Bill Clinton, in a *60 Minutes* interview on January 9, 2000

*"Majora's Mask is another game that I am quite proud of. I'm very happy with the direction Nintendo's been going and I certainly hope we continue to be successful well into the future."*

-Shigeru Miyamoto

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**Top Selling Ultra Nintendo Games Of 1999** (North American sales only, pack-in sales included)

1. Super Mario Dimensions
2. Metal Gear Solid
3. Squad Four: Rebellion
4. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
5. Final Fantasy VIII
6. Doom: Inferno
7. Ultra Mario Kart
8. Ultra Donkey Kong Country
9. Gran Turismo
10. Killer Instinct Ultra

**Top Selling Sega Saturn Games Of 1999** (North American sales only, pack-in sales included)

1. Sonic The Hedgehog 5
2. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
3. Soul Calibur
4. Tekken 3
5. Virtua Fighter 3
6. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater
7. Zodiac World
8. Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver
9. Commander Keen: When Universes Collide
10. Resident Evil: Code Veronica

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\*Carson Daly and Owen Wilson are on stage to present the award for the Ultra Nintendo Game of the Year.\*

Carson Daly: The Ultra Nintendo is the number one game console in the world right now, and these five games have all sold over a million-

Owen Wilson: \*points at a box that's up on stage\* Was that box up here when we got here?

Carson Daly: Yeah, I'm pretty sure it was.

Owen Wilson: Because I coulda sworn-

Carson Daly: It's cool, it's cool, that box was already there.

Owen Wilson: Okay, but I'm pretty sure it wasn't there.

Carson Daly: The nominees for Ultra Nintendo Game of the Year are...

Owen Wilson: \*jumps\* Geez! That box just moved!

\*The box is now right next to the podium\*

Carson Daly: Dude, that box was always here. You gotta relax.

Owen Wilson: \*is freaking out\* There's something under that box!

Carson Daly: The nominees for Ultra Nintendo Game of the Year are...

*Doom: Inferno* \*Doomguy blasts a horde of demons, then is seen running through a crumbling city\*

*Final Fantasy VIII* \*Quistis whips an enemy for 863 damage, then the Titan Guardian mech is seen lowering onto the screen\*

*Half-Life* \*Gordon Freeman picks up some items\*

*Metal Gear Solid* \*Solid Snake comes out of a box from behind a guard and chokes him out\*

*Squad Four: Rebellion* \*Shad and Marcus team up to take out a huge King Kong-like giant gorilla\*

Carson Daly: And the MTV Video Game Award goes to....

Solid Snake: *Metal Gear Solid*. \*leans into the podium to talk into the microphone, Owen Wilson is lying unconscious next to the upturned box at his feet\*

Carson Daly: Wait, you're Solid Snake, how'd you get here?

Solid Snake: Does it matter? I want my award.

Carson Daly: Well, I have to read the card and... well the card says *Metal Gear Solid*, I guess you won!

\*The audience applauds\*

Carson Daly: But what's with all the sneaking around and knocking out Owen Wilson? If you were just gonna win anyway, I mean-

Solid Snake: It's a matter of national security. \*runs off the stage\*

(...)

\*Austin Powers (actually played by Mike Myers for the sketch) is sitting in a bar with Brittany Saldita and Lyssa Fielding, who are both playing a video game.\*

Austin Powers: You know, we didn't have these games back where I came from. We had to make our own fun.

Lyssa: Oh? Is that right?

Austin: Yeah, come back to my pad and I can show you something way more fun than a video game, baby...

Brittany: I don't think it's more fun than this video game. \*she hands Austin a controller\* This is *World of Color: Millennium* and it's the best puzzle game of, well, the millennium.

Austin: Well, the millennium's still pretty young.

Brittany: Oh, just play it!

\*The three play the video game, with Austin getting his butt kicked\*

Lyssa: Ha! \*she lands a massive combo, wiping out Austin's board and even freezing his controls for a few seconds\*

Austin: Oh, behave, baby!

\*The game ends pretty quickly after that, with Lyssa finishing in first, Brittany in a very close second, and Austin taking dead last\*

Lyssa: Sorry we kicked your butt so badly, did you have fun anyway?

Austin: Well, it wouldn't be the first time I've gotten whipped by two foxy ladies! \*laughs and winks at the camera\* That game was pretty groovy, now you mind taking me up on my offer?

Brittany: I don't see why not. \*smiling, the two get up to leave with Austin\* And while we're having fun, Tony Hawk and Dave Mirra are gonna present the Babe of the Year award!

Austin: Oooh, smashing!

(...)

\*So later on, Austin, Brittany, and Lyssa are seen in Austin's room...playing a game of *Clue*\*

Brittany: Professor Plum did it with the candlestick in the kitchen!

Austin: And Austin did it with Felicity Shagwell in every room in the house, baby! Oh, yeah!

Lyssa: \*laughing\* Wrong, and VERY wrong.

\*There's a knock on the door\*

Lyssa: I wonder who that is?

Austin: Oh, I invited this year's Babe of the Year winner up to my room for some private fun! \*he opens the door and Lara Croft comes in\*

Lara Croft: So this is the famous Austin Powers. \*smirks\* I was expecting someone a bit more mysterious.

Austin: Well if you want to solve a mystery, take a look under here... \*rips open his shirt to reveal his very hairy chest\*

Lara: Not bad, I suppose, but I was wondering if you could come along with me on a journey...

Austin: I could come along with you on lots of journeys... \*winks at the camera\*

Lara: ...right. Anyway, I leave tomorrow morning...

Austin: Well, why don't we stay here tonight, play some more *Clue*?

Lyssa: Or *Twister*! \*holds up the game which she fished out from under the bed\*

Brittany: \*nervously\* Eheheheh.... \*she gets up\* I think I'll be leaving now, you three have fun. \*she walks to the door\*

Austin: Well, it's been nice playing with you!

Brittany: Right. \*smiles as he lifts her hand up to his lips and kisses it\* Well, good night. \*she starts to leave...then stops and grabs Austin, passionately kissing him as the crowd oohs and cheers\* Mmm... \*smiling as she leaves\*

Austin: Still got my mojo, baby! Yeah, baby, yeah! \*closes the door as we see Lara and Lyssa setting up the *Twister* game\*

-from the *MTV Video Game Awards*, which aired on February 29, 2000

### **MTV Video Game Awards 1999:**

Game Of The Year:

Final Fantasy VIII

**Metal Gear Solid**

Sonic the Hedgehog 5

Soul Calibur

Squad Four: Rebellion

Ultra Nintendo Game Of The Year:

Doom: Inferno

Final Fantasy VIII

Half-Life

**Metal Gear Solid**

Squad Four: Rebellion

Saturn Game Of The Year:

Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver

NYPD: Narcotics Squad

Resident Evil: Code Veronica

Sonic the Hedgehog 5

**Soul Calibur**

Handheld Game Of The Year:

Final Fantasy Soldier

International Superstar Soccer

**Pokemon Yellow**

Submariner

The Uncanny X-Men

Sports Game Of The Year:

Madden NFL 2000

NFL Blitz 2000

NHL '00

**Tony Hawk's Pro Skater**

White Mountain Extreme Snowboarding

Racing Game Of The Year:

Beetle Adventure Racing

**Crazy Taxi**

Ultra Road Rash 2

Ultra Spinout 2

Virtua Racing Reality

RPG Of The Year:

ActRaiser Valkyrie

**Final Fantasy VIII**

Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete

Pokemon Yellow

Primrose Soldier

Fighting Game Of The Year:

Deathblow II  
Hakendo  
Marvel vs. Capcom  
Raigeki II  
**Soul Calibur**

Shooter Of The Year:

Brigadier  
**Doom: Inferno**  
Duke Nukem Forever  
Half-Life  
Lethal Enforcers: Emergency Situation

Scariest Game Of The Year:

Dino Crisis  
Emergency  
Resident Evil: Code Veronica  
Resident Evil: Operation Stormwind  
**Silent Hill**

Best Soundtrack:

Final Fantasy VIII  
Metal Gear Solid  
**Soul Calibur**  
Umjammer Lammy  
Ultra Donkey Kong Country

New Character Of The Year

Fred Kroenin (NYPD: Narcotics Squad)  
Nightmare (Soul Calibur)  
Raquel Elizondo (Squad Four: Rebellion)  
**Revolver Ocelot (Metal Gear Solid)**  
Squall Leonhart (Final Fantasy VIII)

Villain Of The Year

Captain Chaos (Commander Keen: When Universes Collide)  
Kahran Ramsus (Final Fantasy VIII)  
Kain (Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver)  
Liquid Snake (Metal Gear Solid)  
**Nightmare (Soul Calibur)**

Babe Of The Year

### **Lara Croft (Tomb Raider III)**

Meryl Silverburgh (Metal Gear Solid)

Quistis Trepe (Final Fantasy VIII)

Rebecca (Squad Four: Rebellion)

Sarah Klausterman (Emergency)

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### **Billboard Number One Songs Of 1999:**

January 2: "I'm Your Angel" by R. Kelly and Selena  
January 9: "I'm Your Angel" by R. Kelly and Selena  
January 16: "I'm Your Angel" by R. Kelly and Selena  
January 23: "Have You Ever?" by Brandy  
January 30: "Have You Ever?" by Brandy  
February 6: "...Baby One More Time" by Britney Spears  
February 13: "The Boy Is Mine" by Brandy and Monica  
February 20: "The Boy Is Mine" by Brandy and Monica  
February 27: "The Boy Is Mine" by Brandy and Monica  
March 6: "The Boy Is Mine" by Brandy and Monica  
March 13: "The Boy Is Mine" by Brandy and Monica  
March 20: "The Boy Is Mine" by Brandy and Monica  
March 27: "The Boy Is Mine" by Brandy and Monica  
April 3: "The Boy Is Mine" by Brandy and Monica  
April 10: "The Boy Is Mine" by Brandy and Monica  
April 17: "The Boy Is Mine" by Brandy and Monica  
April 24: "The Boy Is Mine" by Brandy and Monica  
May 1: "Believe" by Cher  
May 8: "Believe" by Cher  
May 15: "Livin' La Vida Loca" by Ricky Martin  
May 22: "Livin' La Vida Loca" by Ricky Martin  
May 29: "Livin' La Vida Loca" by Ricky Martin  
June 5: "Livin' La Vida Loca" by Ricky Martin  
June 12: "Livin' La Vida Loca" by Ricky Martin  
June 19: "Livin' La Vida Loca" by Ricky Martin  
June 26: "Livin' La Vida Loca" by Ricky Martin  
July 3: "Livin' La Vida Loca" by Ricky Martin  
July 10: "Way No Way" by Nirvana  
July 17: "Bills, Bills, Bills" by Destiny's Child  
July 24: "Way No Way" by Nirvana  
July 31: "Way No Way" by Nirvana  
August 7: "Genie In A Bottle" by Christina Aguilera  
August 14: "Genie In A Bottle" by Christina Aguilera  
August 21: "Corazon" by Santana and Selena  
August 28: "Corazon" by Santana and Selena  
September 4: "Corazon" by Santana and Selena  
September 11: "Corazon" by Santana and Selena  
September 18: "Corazon" by Santana and Selena  
September 25: "Corazon" by Santana and Selena  
October 2: "Corazon" by Santana and Selena  
October 9: "Corazon" by Santana and Selena  
October 16: "Corazon" by Santana and Selena

October 23: "Corazon" by Santana and Selena  
October 30: "Corazon" by Santana and Selena  
November 6: "Corazon" by Santana and Selena  
November 13: "Corazon" by Santana and Selena  
November 20: "Smooth" by Santana and Rob Thomas  
November 27: "Smooth" by Santana and Rob Thomas  
December 4: "Smooth" by Santana and Rob Thomas  
December 11: "Smooth" by Santana and Rob Thomas  
December 18: "Smooth" by Santana and Rob Thomas  
December 25: "Smooth" by Santana and Rob Thomas

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### **Electronic Gaming Monthly Editors' Choice Awards 1999:**

Game of the Year: Squad Four: Rebellion  
Runners-up: Metal Gear Solid, Soul Calibur

*In one of the most divisive debates we've ever had, Squad Four: Rebellion eked out the narrowest of victories over Metal Gear Solid. In the end, we just found it to be a bit more fun than Solid Snake's stealth adventure, though both games (and our third place choice, Soul Calibur) were worthy of this honor.*

Ultra Nintendo Game Of The Year: Squad Four: Rebellion  
Runners-up: Metal Gear Solid, Final Fantasy VIII

*It was a banner year for the Ultra Nintendo, and though Metal Gear Solid and Final Fantasy VIII made extremely good cases, we couldn't deny Squad Four: Rebellion.*

Sega Saturn Game Of The Year: Soul Calibur  
Runner-up: Sonic the Hedgehog 5, Resident Evil: Code Veronica

*Soul Calibur was one of the best fighting games we've ever played, and was a real showcase for what the Saturn can do. All three of these games utilized the Ring to its true potential.*

Handheld Game Of The Year: Pokemon Yellow  
Runners-up: The Uncanny X-Men, Submariner

*X-Men might be the best portable superhero game we've ever played, but Pokemon Yellow gave us hours more fun in the exciting world of Pokemon, with some upgrades that make it worth playing.*

Best RPG: Final Fantasy VIII  
Runner-up: Lunar: Silver Star Story Complete, ActRaiser Valkyrie

*Final Fantasy VIII was an astonishing feat of storytelling and RPG gameplay. It blew our minds from the opening cutscene, and it really wasn't much of a debate in this category.*

Best Fighting Game: Soul Calibur

Runner-up: Hakendo, Marvel vs. Capcom

*Soul Calibur might just be the best fighting game of all time, and was an easy pick for the best one of the year.*

Best Graphics: Squad Four: Rebellion  
Runners-up: Half-Life, Metal Gear Solid

*Half-Life wasn't a completely faithful PC port but was still one of the Ultra Nintendo's most impressive games. It couldn't quite match up to the beautiful environments and realistic character designs of Squad Four: Rebellion, which brought the world of Lockstar to life like never before.*

Best Music: Final Fantasy VIII  
Runner-up: Metal Gear Solid, Umjammer Lammy

*Nobuo Uematsu is a musical genius, and his collaboration with young Yasunori Mitsuda brought a huge variety of musical stylings to the amazing Final Fantasy VIII soundtrack.*

### **Electronic Gaming Monthly Readers' Choice Awards 1999:**

Game Of The Year: Metal Gear Solid  
Runners-up: Final Fantasy VIII, Squad Four: Rebellion

Ultra Nintendo Game Of The Year: Metal Gear Solid  
Runners-up: Final Fantasy VIII, Squad Four: Rebellion

Sega Saturn Game Of The Year: Soul Calibur  
Runner-up: NYPD: Narcotics Squad, Sonic the Hedgehog 5

Handheld Game Of The Year: Pokemon Yellow  
Runners-up: The Uncanny X-Men, Final Fantasy Soldier

Best RPG: Final Fantasy VIII  
Runner-up: Primrose Soldier, ActRaiser Valkyrie

Best Fighting Game: Soul Calibur  
Runner-up: Deathblow II, Hakendo

Best Graphics: Metal Gear Solid  
Runners-up: Half-Life, Final Fantasy VIII

Best Music: Metal Gear Solid  
Runner-up: Final Fantasy VIII, ActRaiser Valkyrie

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### **Gamespot Awards 1999:**

Game Of The Year (Console): *Soul Calibur*

Game Of The Year (Computer): *Junction Point*  
Game Of The Year (Readers' Choice): *Metal Gear Solid*  
Best Graphics, Artistic (Console): *ActRaiser Valkyrie*  
Best Graphics, Technical (Console): *Squad Four: Rebellion*  
Best Original Music: *ActRaiser Valkyrie*  
Best Sound Effects/Design (Console): *Squad Four: Rebellion*  
Best Story (Console): *Final Fantasy VIII*  
Best Game No One Played: *ActRaiser Valkyrie*  
Most Disappointing Game (Console): *Aliens vs. Predator*  
Best Action/Adventure: *Squad Four: Rebellion*  
Best Driving Game: *Wheelman*  
Best Fighting Game: *Soul Calibur*  
Best Puzzle Game: *Umjammer Lammy*  
Best Role-Playing Game: *ActRaiser Valkyrie*  
Best Shooter: *Doom: Inferno*  
Best Traditional Sports Game: *Madden NFL 2000*  
Best Alternative Sports Game: *White Mountain Extreme Snowboarding*  
Best Ultra Nintendo Game: *Squad Four: Rebellion*  
Best Saturn Game: *Soul Calibur*  
Best Game Boy Color Game: *Submariner*

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*This year brought a supremely impressive lineup of PC games in a huge variety of genres. While many of these games are either already on consoles or will eventually end up on one or more of them, many more will remain exclusive to PC users indefinitely, showing the incredible value in playing games on PC. Here is a brief countdown of our top 10.*

### **#10: Ultima IX: Ascension**

*Ultima IX had a rocky road to release, but was ultimately a rich tale of virtue and heroism that carried on the series' storyline while incorporating elements from the popular recent console titles.*

### **#9: Pirate Quest**

*Sony's online tale of swashbuckling and thievery proved quite popular, becoming one of the most widely populated MMOs.*

### **#8: The Longest Journey**

*This challenging and mature puzzle adventure featured impressive voice acting and a mystery that rewards players who can sniff out all the clues.*

### **#7: Half-Life: Opposing Force**

*You wanted more Half-Life, and you got it in this thrilling expansion pack that puts you in the shoes of a Marine on a mission.*

### **#6: Roller Coaster Tycoon**

*This surprisingly addictive theme park simulator let us unleash our creativity, but also held the potential for some hilarious designs.*

#### **#5: Zap! Alien Conquest**

*In another of the year's funniest games, this deep space war game never took itself too seriously but was still a challenging and engrossing sim.*

#### **#4: Counter-Strike**

*The little mod that could has become a worldwide phenomenon and one of the most popular software hacks ever devised. It takes Half-Life's fantastic FPS gameplay and adapts it for a thrilling multiplayer challenge, forcing even Valve to take notice. The game has been announced for an official release sometime later this year.*

#### **#3: Heroes Of Might And Magic III**

*One of the best strategy games we've seen, and a game that continues this series' excellent reputation, Heroes of Might and Magic III depicts massive clashes of armies in a thrilling battle for the fate of a realm.*

#### **#2: Homeworld**

*Sierra's brilliant space sim is a masterpiece of amazing visuals and complex gameplay, delivering one of the best and most complete games we've ever played. The deep storyline brings real meaning to every battle, and you'll find yourself determined to claim victory.*

#### **#1: Junction Point**

*The perfect mix of survival horror, FPS, and RPG gameplay, this title takes you on an Apocalypse Now-like descent into madness onboard a seemingly abandoned spaceship. As a spiritual successor to the classic System Shock, it succeeds on just about every level.*

-excerpted from an article in the February 2000 issue of *Wired* magazine

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And we're finding out more and more about the Katana, Sega's newest game system set to be released this year in Japan and sometime early next year here in the States. It's now been confirmed that the next *Commander Keen* game will be revealed as a launch game for the Katana, and is likely being positioned as the key launch game for the system, which will be lacking a *Sonic* game at release (similarly to the Saturn, which didn't get *Sonic the Hedgehog 4* until the year after the console launched in North America).

It is rumored that Sega will be working with Sun Microsystems on the Katana's internals, though no official confirmation has been given. The system's graphics will likely be powered by a Real 3D GPU that looks to be significantly more powerful than the Ultra Nintendo's Artemis chip, and all the screenshots and videos we've seen confirm that the Katana's capabilities will significantly outpace the Ultra Nintendo's in every way, from performance to memory. Whether or not the system will be capable of running many of the latest PC hits is yet to be determined, but a version of *Half-Life* has been confirmed for the console, and an

early rumor is that the game may even include a version of *Counter-Strike* to take advantage of the Katana's online capabilities.

Online looks to be Sega's secret weapon in its ongoing battle with Nintendo. *Phantasy Star Online* is expected to be pushed heavily and will feature cross-country play, so that players in North America can play alongside Japanese players. Were *Counter-Strike* to appear on the Katana, it would be another coup for FPS fans, and would strike a blow against the hit *Half-Life* port on the Ultra Nintendo.

Again, everything at this early stage is speculation. We expect Sega to reveal much more about the Katana at this May's E3 trade show, where it will certainly be the centerpiece of Sega's presentation.

-from *Next Generation* magazine's Year 2000 preview in the January 2000 issue

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More Katana Details: Commander Keen 12 First Screenshots! (27 posts)

*The first screenshots of Commander Keen 12 just showed up in my new EGM. The game looks amazing. I don't know if these are real or just cutscenes but...*

You guys, saturn is NOT next gen (8 posts)

*saturn was released like 5 years ago. Its graphics lok like crap and even w/the ring nintendo still looks way better, i will b marking all saturn related topics for off topic from now on...*

The Legend Of Zelda: Majora's Mask (170 posts)

*Famitsu just had an article about the game and it looks really cool. Graphics seem to be a bit better than Temple of Time and the game looks like it'll play very similarly...*

i heard counter-strike is coming to x box (6 posts)

*Just a rumor but valve and Microsoft seem to be getting closer and the half-life katana port will have opposing forces while the x box port will have opposing forces AND counter-strike according...*

X-Box is going to bankrupt Microsoft. (34 posts)

*Remember the Bandai Solaris? Microsoft is facing a huge lawsuit and it's trying to compete with Nintendo and Sega. Nobody thinks Microsoft's new X-Box will actually succeed...*

No Final Fantasy IX til next year :( (5 posts)

*An interview with Hiranobu Sakaguchi said that it looks like FF9 will be delayed to next year, the company spent too long working on VIII and IX looks to be even bigger...*

New Castlevania game for Ultra looks like teh best ever (19 posts)

*U get to hunt like 12 vampires, how sweet is that? And the castle looks way bigger than in Symphony of the Night.*

How much do you think the Katana will cost? (106 posts)

*Do you think Sega will try to go cheap on it and make it like 200 dollars or will it be 400 like the Saturn was? Or somewhere in between? I think it'll be 349, all that technology...*

I sure hope we get that new sailor moon katana game (30 posts)

*That new Sailor Moon game coming out for the Katana looks really cool, it's supposed to have all the sailor guardians and villains in it but they said it's only coming in Japan so...*

Why buy an X Box when you can just buy a computer? (44 posts)

*I mean they're gonna be the same thing, right?*

Squad Four Rebellion Discussion Thread (457 posts)

*Welcome to the discussion for all things Squad Four: Rebellion! It just came out and it got a Platinum Award from EGM, only their fourth ever! Discuss how awesome the game is and share hints...*

NFL 2K1 vs. Nintendo's New Football Game (30 posts)

*Sega's new NFL game looks pretty sweet, but Nintendo's working on their own football series like how they have baseball and basketball games. I wonder if they'll get Deion Sanders to...*

if u buy a kitana u r seriously dum (174 posts)

*i mean come on, nintendo will just com out w/someting way better so ur just wasting ur \$\$\$.* *i mean i wont tell u wut 2 do but come on*

-from posts on GameFAQs.com's Next-Gen Gaming board, taken on January 1, 2000

Ted Crosley: And once again, we'll be counting down 25 games.

Alex Stansfield: That's right, sit back and watch us as we count down our top 25 games of the year.

Brittany Saldita: This year was maybe the best year ever for video games and we had a hell of a time picking just 25, there were so many worthy games this year but we FINALLY managed to settle on a list.

Steve Horton: And at number 25, we've got **Commander Keen: When Universes Collide!** The kid hero returned in a game with lots of awesome weapons and annoying little sisters. We laughed until we cried!

Gary Westhouse: At number 24, it's **Blast Corps: Ultra Destruction**. Smashing stuff to pieces has never been more fun, and this game had plenty of that and plenty of sweet machines for us to do the wrecking.

Ted: **White Mountain Extreme Snowboarding** comes in at #23. Doing sweet tricks and racing down a killer mountain are fun enough, but when you combine that with awesome tunes and one of the strangest casts of characters in video game history, you've got a true classic.

Brittany: Our number 22 was **NYPD: Narcotics Squad**. This game about two NYPD officers battling a corrupt criminal organization featured one of the best storylines ever, which made up for its somewhat repetitive combat.

Lyssa Fielding: And at number 21, it was **Syrielle Soul**, a game even Ted found fun this time around! Our favorite characters returned with some new friends as this quirky high school half-spider girl went through all the typical high school problems and did battle against her evil science teacher!

Alex: We had **Legacy Of Kain: Soul Reaver** at #20. While it wasn't quite as fun to explore this huge world, the gameplay and plot still had us on the edge of our seats, and it was a real beauty of a game.

Ted: At #19 was the strange but really fun platformer **Outfoxed**. We traveled through strange lands, rescuing our friends from a real jerk of a hunter, and had lots of hilarious fun in the process.

Steve: All right, #18 was **Ultra Donkey Kong Country**! Another killer platformer, this fantastic game had us going all over the world, battling evil Kremplings and kicking butt with four Kongs at once! Playing by yourself is fun, but playing with friends is more fun than a barrel of monkeys!

Brittany: The epic Konami RPG **Primrose Soldier** was our #17 game. Beautiful and poignant, it was the tale of a young soldier who had to defy his country to protect a girl who could be the key to saving the world from extinction.

Alex: And in #16, **Super Smash Bros.** brought all of our favorite Nintendo characters to life and let us force them to beat the hell out of each other. Yes, you heard that right.

Gary: Number 15 was the spooky **Silent Hill**. This town held a lot of secrets and let us scared to go to sleep at night, the mark of a truly good horror game.

Steve: The awesome **Half-Life** port for the Ultra Nintendo was our #14 game, it brought Gordon Freeman's terrifying adventure to the home console and proved to be one of the best FPS titles we've ever seen.

Lyssa: And at number 13, **ActRaiser Valkyrie** took one of the best classic action RPGs and added Norse mythology to make one delicious casserole of role-playing goodness!

Ted: **Tony Hawk's Pro Skater** did a big 900 right into the number 12 spot on our list. With awesome tricks and super addictive gameplay, it was almost as fun as learning to

skateboard for real.

Brittany: We loved **Grim Fandango** on PC last year and we loved it just as much on the Ultra Nintendo. This challenging mystery comes in at #11 on our list, and those willing to put in the time will be rewarded with one of the best point and click games ever made.

Alex: So that leaves us with our top 10, and when we come back, we'll count 'em all down. Stay tuned!

(...)

Ted: We're back, counting down our top ten games of the year.

Lyssa: Every single one of these games gave us hours of fun and are considered must plays for any gamer looking to have a really good time!

Gary: We'll start with number 10, **Emergency**. This thrilling horror title was packed with scares and excitement, along with some of the best survival horror gameplay of the year.

Brittany: It was a fast-paced game that constantly had us on the edge of our seats, and even gave us plenty of comic relief between all the scary moments.

Alex: It definitely focused more on action than horror, and that's part of the reason it was such a unique and exciting game.

Lyssa: At number nine we have **The Longest Journey**, which told the story of April Ryan, who goes on a journey to discover her mysterious past.

Ted: And in the process, discovers more about her world than she ever could've imagined.

Gary: It's an incredible game, full of mystery and wonder and a LOT of angst, but by the end of the story you definitely feel deeply for April and have a deep connection to her.

Steve: **Dino Crisis** is our number eight game. It's got dinosaurs, and games with dinosaurs tend to be EXTREMELY good.

Ted: Yeah, see the *Turok* series for a big example of that. Beyond the dinosaurs, *Dino Crisis* was just a really deep survival horror game.

Brittany: It had several different story paths to explore, all the while leaving you vulnerable to a deadly attack.

Ted: We LOVED **Sonic the Hedgehog 5**, and it comes in at #7.

Alex: Sonic goes full 3D for the very first time, and his beautiful world was a joy to explore.

Steve: With big bosses and lots of pals to help you out along the way, *Sonic 5* was the most epic *Sonic the Hedgehog* game yet.

Gary: It wasn't as tight of a platforming experience as previous games in the series, but never has a *Sonic* game featured such diverse and exciting gameplay.

Lyssa: And the voice acting was top notch, even legends like Ernest Borgnine showed up to lend their voices to the game's unique cast.

Alex: **F-Zero: Ultracharged** was our number 6.

Brittany: This game was damn tough, but we've never seen such a thrilling racer.

Lyssa: Super fast cars racing through amazing futuristic environments, this game definitely gave us our money's worth and then some!

Gary: Working to master this game's tracks is totally worth it, that feeling you get when you cross the finish line of the final course on the hardest difficulty setting is impossible to beat.

Ted: The best *Resident Evil* game to date might have been released in November. **Resident Evil: Code Veronica** starts off our top five at #5.

Brittany: Claire Redfield and her friend Abigail Chambers must navigate a terrifying prison while some of the most horrifying monsters ever seen in a video game chase them every step of the way.

Steve: This game was pants-wettingly scary at times, and it never, ever, ever let up!

Alex: Just when you think you're safe, something comes out from the walls and kills you, and that can happen at any time. This game showed no mercy to its beleaguered ladies.

Lyssa: And it featured one of the most rewarding endings of any *Resident Evil* game yet, if you can make it that far! And now our #4 game features lots of kickin' and punchin'...

Alex: Don't forget slashing with swords. It's **Soul Calibur**!

Ted: This was easily one of the best fighting games we've played in quite a while. The gorgeous graphics and intuitive play controls were only the tip of the iceberg, this game featured a variety of characters and fighting styles, making it one of the most strategic fighting games ever.

Gary: This game required the Ring and from the moment you boot it up, you can see why. The backgrounds are gorgeous, this game looks nearly arcade perfect.

Brittany: In other years this game might've been #1, and even at #4, it's definitely a worthy pick for Game of the Year.

Ted: And speaking of Game of the Year, we're down to just three games vying for that title. Find out our top pick when we return!

(...)

Ted: Hey guys, we're back with the top three games of the year, and what a year it was. Number three is **Final Fantasy VIII**, one of the best RPGs ever made. This gorgeous epic featured a cast of characters with plenty of heart and soul, and once they climbed into their giant Guardian mechs, the battles took on a whole new level of epic.

Brittany: Yeah, this game perfectly pulled off giant mech combat in a brilliant way. While you couldn't use your mechs every battle because they had to eventually be refueled, you could climb aboard them when you needed to and use up your remaining fuel to unleash a devastating attack.

Alex: The deep plotline might have confused some, but for those who could follow it, it was one of the best ever featured in a video game.

Steve: It even featured an expansive card game that let you melt down the cards for scrap to build up your mechs! Weird, but effective!

Lyssa: We loved *Final Fantasy VIII* from start to finish, and it's worth playing more than once to learn all of the game's many secrets.

Ted: As much as it pains me to say it, the Saturn had a bit of an off year. Even though it featured some great games like *Soul Calibur* and *Sonic 5*, the top three games were all Ultra Nintendo. And these two games, *Metal Gear Solid* and *Squad Four: Rebellion*, topped them all.

Alex: Both of them were revolutionary, *Metal Gear Solid* in its approach to stealth and storytelling, and *Squad Four: Rebellion* in its approach to combat and presentation.

Brittany: You can't really go wrong with either one of them, and when it came to Game of the Year, we were, well...split down the middle.

Gary: Half of us, Ted, Steve, and myself, picked *Metal Gear Solid* as our favorite, while Alex, Brittany, and Lyssa picked *Squad Four: Rebellion*.

Lyssa: And so Game of the Year was decided by who put the other game higher on their lists. Both games were runner-up on one other person's list and were #3 on yet another person's.

Steve: That's right, Ted had *Squad Four: Rebellion* as his #2, and Brittany had *Metal Gear Solid* as hers. Alex had *Metal Gear Solid* as his #3, and Gary had *Squad Four: Rebellion* as his.

Ted: And so, the Game of the Year. Somebody had one of these two games at #4 on their list, and someone else had the other one at #5. And that game is our overall #2.

Lyssa: The #2 game of 1999 is... **Metal Gear Solid**. I had it at #5 on my list, but I loved it all the same for its thrilling storyline and fun espionage action.

Alex: Yeah, we gushed all over this game when we reviewed it back in February and we still love it today. Solid Snake is one badass action hero, and even though the first two *Metal Gear* games are classics, this is the one that put the series on the map for good.

Ted: *Metal Gear Solid* is an incredible game. It plays out like a movie. It's full of awesome action scenes and the stealth is incredibly complex, letting you choose whether to go in guns blazing or to try and sneak around. Sneaking is easier, but if you REALLY want to kill every enemy, you're welcome to try.

Steve: *Metal Gear Solid* is the best example of a game that's just as thrilling to watch as it is to play. Every character has a motivation, every action means something, and when Snake is charging an enemy base, the game kicks it up even further.

Brittany: *Metal Gear Solid* is damn close to perfect, and shows just how far games have come in the last decade. We loved every second of its thrilling action, and we can't wait to play another.

Alex: And there can only be one #1, and that #1 is... **Squad Four: Rebellion**.

Ted: What more can be said that hasn't been said already? The combat is nearly perfect, from its wide variety of potential strategies to its lock-on system that leaves the game working for you and doesn't force you to fight the game.

Brittany: It features some of the most well-developed characters in gaming history, particularly the rebel leader Raquel.

Gary: And its missions let you choose your own path, letting you take the game at any pace you choose.

Alex: Nintendo's done so much to bring its best franchises smoothly into the world of 3D, from Mario's pitch-perfect platforming, to Zelda's challenging exploration, and now with Squad Four's open world action gameplay, Nintendo has done it once more. This game is another masterpiece and not a single one of us had it lower than #4 on our lists. It was incredibly close, but *Squad Four: Rebellion* is our Game of the Year.

(...)

Ted: Hey, real quick, before we go, what's everybody's favorite game of the 90s? For me, it's a close pick between *Sonic the Hedgehog 2* and *Street Fighter II*, but I think for me it's *Street Fighter II* because I spent so much time with that game learning every little thing about it that there is.

Alex: Man...that's a tough one...so many great games but I'll say *The Legend Of Zelda: Temple of Time*.

Steve: I agree with Alex, *Temple of Time* was just an awesome game.

Brittany: Well, for me it's still *Tale Phantasia*, it was so much fun exploring every inch of that game.

Lyssa: Oh man...that's hard...uh....umm...*Secret of Mana*! So much to love about it, the music, the great characters, I fell in love with that game.

Gary: I almost want to say *Samurai Shodown* for the Neo-Geo but *Super Metroid* for the cartridge SNES just barely ekes it out. It was the closest thing I've ever played to a truly perfect game.

Ted: By the way, we spent a little bit of time compiling our top 25 list for the entire decade...

Brittany: What do you mean a little bit, it was REALLY hard making that list!

Ted: And if you want to see that list and some of our thoughts on the past decade in gaming, just go online to GameTV.com and check that out.

Alex: Thanks again for tuning in to *GameTV*, it's been a fantastic decade and we can't wait to share the next one with you! We'll see you next time!

-excerpted from the January 4, 2000 episode of *GameTV*

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## **Game Watch**

### *Ultra Nintendo:*

Armorines: Project S.W.A.R.M.- Winter '00  
Bass Masters 2000- Winter '00  
Brunswick Pro Circuit Bowling- Winter '00  
Crusaders Of Might And Magic- Winter '00  
Disavowed- Winter '00  
ECW Hardcore Revolution- Winter '00  
Kydia: Invading Armies- Winter '00  
Mystical Ninja Goemon II- Winter '00  
NASCAR: Daytona Thunder- Winter '00  
Road Storm: Rampage- Winter '00  
Transformers: Beast Wars- Winter '00  
Ultra Formula One- Winter '00  
Ultra Frederico- Winter '00  
Wipeout 2- Winter '00  
World Of Color: Millennium- Winter '00  
Xena: Warrior Princess- Winter '00  
Animastar- Spring '00  
Breakers- Spring '00  
Breath Of Fire IV- Spring '00  
Chokeout- Spring '00  
Covert Ops: Nuclear Dawn- Spring '00  
FIFA 2001- Spring '00  
Fluid Fighters- Spring '00  
Future Fear: Escape The Arena- Spring '00  
Ken Griffey Jr's Ultra Slugfest- Spring '00  
Mark Of The Wolves- Spring '00  
Mega Man X6- Spring '00  
Need For Speed: Unleashed- Spring '00  
Ninja Gaiden Fury- Spring '00  
Pokemon Stadium- Spring '00  
Praxis Gold- Spring '00  
Rage: The Revenge- Spring '00  
RPG Maker- Spring '00  
SaGa Frontier II- Spring '00

San Francisco Rush 2- Spring '00  
Seventh Cross Evolution- Spring '00  
Shujinko- Spring '00  
Skulls- Spring '00  
Soldier Of Misfortune- Spring '00  
Stone: Slayers Of Rugal- Spring '00  
The Ring: Terror's Realm- Spring '00  
Top Gear: Hyper Bikes- Spring '00  
Triple Play 2001- Spring '00  
Ultra Excitebike- Spring '00  
Ultra Road Rash 2- Spring '00  
Ultra Storm Guardians- Spring '00  
Velvet Dark- Spring '00  
Wave Race: Ultramarine- Spring '00  
Castlevania: The Occulted Circle- Summer '00  
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX- Summer '00  
Glyph: Heart Of Adventure- Summer '00  
Legacy Of Kain- Summer '00  
Legend Of Mana- Summer '00  
Mega Man Legends 2- Summer '00  
Nightsquad: City Of Angels- Summer '00  
Quixsters 2- Summer '00  
Tales Of The Seven Seas: The Victorian Legacy- Summer '00  
Ultra King Of Fighters- Summer '00  
Wrath And Ruin- Summer '00  
Conker's Twelve Tales- Fall '00  
Dance Dance Revolution- Fall '00  
Gran Turismo 2- Fall '00  
Jewels Of The Realm: Aqua Regia- Fall '00  
Metroid: Darkness- Fall '00  
Mystic Creature- Fall '00  
Super Mario RPG 2: A Plumber Beginning- Fall '00  
The Legend Of Zelda: Majora's Mask- Fall '00  
Unreal Tournament- Fall '00

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### **Interactive Entertainment Awards 1999:**

Game Of The Year: *Metal Gear Solid*  
Console Game Of The Year: *Metal Gear Solid*  
Computer Game Of The Year: *Junction Point*  
Action Game Of The Year: *Metal Gear Solid*  
Adventure Game Of The Year: *Final Fantasy VIII*  
Family Game Of The Year: *Ultra Donkey Kong Country*  
Massively Multiplayer Game Of The Year: *Pirate Quest*  
Racing Game Of The Year: *Virtua Racing Reality*  
Role Playing Game Of The Year: *Final Fantasy VIII*  
Shooter Game Of The Year: *Doom: Inferno*  
Strategy/Simulation Game Of The Year: *Ultra SimCity (Simulation), Campaign(Strategy)*  
Sports Game Of The Year: *White Mountain Extreme Snowboarding*  
Fighting Game Of The Year: *Soul Calibur*

Outstanding Art Direction: *The Longest Journey*  
Outstanding Vocal Performance: David Hayter as Solid Snake in *Metal Gear Solid*(Male), Sarah Hamilton as April Ryan in *The Longest Journey*(Female)  
Outstanding Animation: *The Longest Journey*  
Outstanding Game Design: *Metal Gear Solid*  
Outstanding Gameplay Engineering: *Squad Four: Rebellion*  
Outstanding Online Gameplay: *Pirate Quest*  
Outstanding Original Music: *Final Fantasy VIII*  
Outstanding Sound Design: *Squad Four: Rebellion*  
Outstanding Story: *NYPD: Narcotics Squad*  
Outstanding Visual Engineering: *Squad Four: Rebellion*

(based on the real-life Interactive Achievement Awards, OTL winners listed here:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academ...s\\_%26\\_Sciences](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academ...s_%26_Sciences))

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*“By 1999, the Ultra Nintendo was reaching its apex, while the Sega Saturn had begun its final decline. Sega's fortunes had taken a turn for the worse, and despite some successful titles like Soul Calibur, Resident Evil: Code Veronica, the surprise hit NYPD: Narcotics Squad, and of course Sonic the Hedgehog 5, Sega couldn't reverse the Saturn's fortunes enough to put a dent in Nintendo's rapidly growing market share. The Ultra Nintendo was rapidly becoming not just the most successful game console of its day, but of all time, and by the end of the year had even surpassed the worldwide sales total of the SNES-CD peripheral that had given rise to one of the most successful partnerships in gaming. Nintendo and Sony were on cloud nine, and had even collaborated on the Game Boy Nova, which launched in Japan at the end of the year to more accolades and record-breaking sales. But even though Sega's present looked bleak, its future looked bright. The Katana was on the horizon, and was poised to take advantage of two of the Ultra Nintendo's biggest shortcomings: its lack of a robust online multiplayer system, and its lack of DVD playback. And Sega of America was in the midst of a restructuring, one that would eventually bring in the energetic Reggie Fils-Aime to head the company's North American branch. Tom Kalinske, the man arguably most responsible for Sega even being able to challenge Nintendo in the first place, was about to be kicked to the curb. And it was amidst all of this that Microsoft was finally preparing to enter the fray with its Xbox gaming console that promised to bring the best features of PC gaming to the living room. Numerous other consoles had made such promises and had failed, but Microsoft had brainpower and money on its side, and was looking to muscle its way into the race, either to become a legitimate third competitor or even to push out Sega during a time of transition. The king of gaming was still on its throne, but as the new millennium began, Nintendo would face a most unexpected challenge, one that would permanently alter its creative direction and one that would change the course of video game history forever.”*

*-“The History Of Console Gaming: Year-By-Year (Part 7)”, Wired.com, June 26, 2012*

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### **Gamespot's Top 50 Games Of The 90s**

- 50. Squad Four: Eclipse
- 49. Fairytale
- 48. Terranigma

47. Sonic The Hedgehog 4
46. Ultra Mario Kart
45. Tales Of The Seven Seas
44. Command And Conquer
43. World Of Color
42. Tale Phantasia
41. Spare Parts
40. Virtua Fighter 2
39. Final Fantasy VI
38. Snatcher
37. Myst
36. F-Zero
35. Ogre Battle: Princes Of The Universe
34. Gran Turismo
33. Ys I and II
32. The Legend Of Zelda: Link's Awakening
31. Yoshi's Island
30. Quake
29. Strider
28. The Secret Of Monkey Island
27. Super Mario World
26. Star Wars: TIE Fighter
25. Goldeneye 007
24. NiGHTS Into Dreams...
23. Street Fighter II: The World Warrior
22. Final Fantasy VII
21. Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night
20. Metal Gear Solid
19. Half-Life
18. Chrono Trigger
17. Tekken 3
16. Super Mario World 2
15. Secret Of Mana
14. Junction Point
13. Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
12. The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past
11. Shenmue
10. Civilization II
9. Squad Four: Rebellion
8. Doom
7. Super Mario Bros. 3
6. Soul Calibur
5. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
4. Super Mario Dimensions
3. Sonic The Hedgehog 3
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
1. Super Metroid

### **Top 25 Games Of The 90s (GameTV Hosts)**

25. Super Bomberman CD
24. Phantasy Star II

23. The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past
22. Grim Fandango
21. Resident Evil
20. Soul Calibur
19. Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest
18. Goldeneye 007
17. Junction Point
16. Metal Gear Solid
15. Super Mario World 2
14. Doom
13. Final Fantasy VII
12. Sonic The Hedgehog 3
11. Chrono Trigger
10. Squad Four: Rebellion
9. Super Metroid
8. Civilization II
7. Sonic The Hedgehog 2
6. Tale Phantasia
5. Secret Of Mana
4. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Super Mario Dimensions
2. Street Fighter II: Arcade Edition
1. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time

#### **Top 10 Games Of The 90s Voted On By GameTV Fans**

10. Resident Evil
9. Super Mario Dimensions
8. Mortal Kombat
7. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
6. Doom
5. Final Fantasy VII
4. Sonic The Hedgehog 3
3. Goldeneye 007
2. Metal Gear Solid
1. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time

#### **Top 10 Games Of The 90s Voted On By GameFAQs Users**

10. Secret Of Mana
9. Super Metroid
8. Final Fantasy VIII
7. The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past
6. Metal Gear Solid
5. Super Mario Dimensions
4. The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Dreams
3. Chrono Trigger
2. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
1. Final Fantasy VII

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*“The decade of the 90s forever changed gaming, certainly more than any decade before and likely more than any decade will until the Holodeck becomes a thing. We went from cartridges that couldn't even hold a megabyte of information, to optical discs that could hold gigabytes, from sidescrolling quests about rescuing a princess to fully-fleshed out worlds with stories rivaling those of the greatest screen epics. And it's impossible to underestimate the degree to which the Super Nintendo CD was the catalyst for all of this. It wasn't just a multimedia device, it used the advantages of the added power and memory to create bigger worlds, better characters, more interesting stories. It's impossible to say whether 2000 without the SNES-CD would've been compared to the 2000 that we got with it. Would we still have been blowing on cartridges, would the massive 3D worlds made possible by the optical disc stay limited to PC power users until 2002 or so? Would gaming have gone mainstream so quickly? Would I have ever gotten to be on MTV? The gaming revolution that the 1990s is now known for was probably inevitable, but without the SNES-CD to push it along, it would've rolled out far more slowly, and it's likely Sega would've been at the forefront. Maybe there'd still have been a Saturn, maybe it would've been the Saturn to make all those things happen. When I look back on the 90s, I see the greatest thing that ever happened to gaming. It was the decade when everything changed, and everything that happened after was a direct result of that. I'm so grateful to have been a part of it. I hope I get to see another decade like it. For those who were born too late to appreciate it, you guys really, really missed out.”*

-Alex Stansfield, in a blog entry posted on January 22, 2016

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#### *Ultra Nintendo:*

Dog Dash 3: Clark, Woofle, and Selkie return in this fully 3-D action platformer. Selkie's family has found a new home, but they soon discover that this world is ruled by a cat army led by the evil conqueror General Catsmeow. The heroes must work together to stop him as they traverse eight huge worlds, completing missions and defeating Catsmeow's soldiers. The leap to 3-D is well received, and this is one of the most acclaimed and lucrative sequels of the year.

Squad Four: Rebellion: Squad Four is living a peaceful life on Lockstar, going on the occasional mission, but their world is thrown upside down after a military coup sees the four of them thrown in prison as traitors! The squad must escape from prison and then lead the rebellion to liberate Lockstar before the entire system's civilization falls under a terrible dictatorship. This game is considered by many to be the best in the series and one of the top games of the year.

The Darkest Night: Etienne and Kris return, teaming up with a mysterious new girl named Sephora to find an artifact containing incredible power. The game's transition to the next generation comes with fully voiced cutscenes and is generally better received than the first game.

Samurai Buster II: Matsuhito returns in a new quest, seeking revenge for the death of his beloved wife. While this game is good, it's not as good as the previous game, the plot is rather cookie cutter and the bosses aren't as creative. Unlike the first, which was a cult classic, this is remembered as just a decent game.

Boom Island 2: In this sequel, the young pirate from the original game returns to explore a mysterious new continent. This game gets below average to average reviews, it's considered a major disappointment compared to the first game, not innovating and looking stale next to other, more well regarded 3D platformers.

Return To Serratopia: This sequel sees Serratopia's heroes returning for a new quest through 32 new levels. This game is even more difficult than the original, which makes it one of the Ultra Nintendo's toughest games. It's a polarizing game, but there are many who love it and overall it's only slightly lower in review scores than the original game.

Construct-It: Demolition: In this sequel to Construct-It, you're now up against a rival crew who specializes in demolishing your structures, this game features a multiplayer mode where you can knock down your opponents' buildings after spending a certain amount of time building up your own. It's a good game, though not quite as good as the original.

Ultra Spinout 2: This quickie sequel to 1998's Ultra Spinout is more of the same, arcade style racing with creative tracks and good music. It's not groundbreaking in any way, but fans of the first game aren't disappointed.

Deathblow II: The highly anticipated, ultra violent sequel to 1997's launch title. It's one of the most anticipated fighting games of the year, and though it's no Soul Caliber, it's still pretty well reviewed and gets a lot of sales.

Ultra Klepto: The thieving puzzle franchise comes to the Ultra with a brand new multiplayer mode and 3-D stages. It's not a huge step up from the SNES-CD titles but it's a pretty decent game.

Syrielle Soul: The sequel to 1997's Syrielle, this game continues Syrielle's story with all new friends and more of a simulation feel, there are less action parts, and those that remain play out more like an action RPG than an action platformer. It's a bit polarizing, but fans of the original Syrielle are very pleased and it gets high reviews.

Ultra Deadman Sam: Deadman Sam comes to the Ultra Nintendo with a brand new adventure in full 3-D. The transition to 3-D is fairly rough for this series, this game receives only mediocre reviews, though future series installments find their footing.

Andrekah: Witches Brew: The first proper Andrekah sequel since 1995's game, this plays a bit like the Mega Man Legends to Andrekah's Mega Man, with full 3-D exploration and RPG-

like adventuring and character advancement. The game follows Andrekah as she tries to become a Master Witch, and she gets a dangerous, bratty rival. It's considered a very good game, possibly even better than the original, though sales are only average.

Five For Fighting Hockey '99: The brawler/hockey series comes to the Ultra with this arcade-style game. It's decent, but true hockey fans look elsewhere.

Soulqueen 2: The Beyond: The SNES cult classic gets a sequel, this one released in 1998 in Japan and was an ordeal for fans to get ported over finally in 1999. Despite this being an excellent game, sales are VERY poor.

Ultra Naval Guns: The naval battle series comes to the Ultra and despite some nice graphics, the gameplay isn't as good as the original and the poor sales of this game kill the series.

Steam Agent II: The sequel to the SNES-CD steampunk RPG is fairly primitive in terms of graphics and features an all new hero, this is sort of a mystery-based adventure and though retro style RPG fans enjoy it, it's only a mediocre game.

Hacker Jack: Hack Attack!: Hacker Jack goes futuristic in this Ultra Nintendo game that puts the young hero in a fully 3-D cyberspace world. This is another series that doesn't really handle the transition to 3D very well, even the graphics are lousy and sales and reviews are fairly poor.

Operation Zero 2: This sequel to the Saturn/Ultra game is also ported to both systems. It stars an ex-military mercenary who must save hostages from a brutal prison camp, but things aren't what they seem at first. In a year where Metal Gear Solid is the overwhelming champion in the genre, this game slips under the radar a bit but is quite good and manages to get a decent amount of sales, especially on the Saturn.

Ultra World Championship Boxing: This boxing game gets its first next-generation installment, keeping a very robust creation mode and also featuring a Rocky-like story mode. In the absence of Punch-Out for the Ultra, this game achieves a lot of success and some pretty good reviews as well.

Super Sphere Soldier: The sequel to one of 1998's best SNES-CD games, this retains the great 2-D platforming gameplay of the original, with challenging bosses and a huge variety of weapons and attacks. Though it doesn't sell many copies, those who buy it love it and it's considered one of the Ultra's best 2-D platformers.

Extreme Go-Karting 2: The sequel to the SNES-CD's wacky go karting title, this game again draws lots of comparisons to Ultra Mario Kart, none of them good. This game sells very poorly.

Trapmine: An Ultra Nintendo sequel to the SNES-CD game of laying hidden traps to blow up your opponents, it's considered to be a decent game and the 3-D arenas are a welcome touch.

Runner Mike: Created by Dan Brown (yes, THAT Dan Brown, of Da Vinci Code fame) this is a Tomb Raider-like mystery adventure game that's almost comparable to a proto-Uncharted, with plenty of mysteries, high quality cutscenes, and lots of action. Though it's not one of the year's BEST games, reviews and sales are both quite good and this becomes a franchise.

Cyringe: An anime-styled 2D platformer about a nurse who wields an oversized syringe. The game is full of tongue-in-cheek humor and lots of fanservice, but it's really fun and becomes an instant cult classic. It's way more popular in Japan than it is here though.

Outfoxed: A 3D platformer by Konami about a tall anthropomorphic fox who explores a series of worlds in order to collect magical orbs and save his friends. A lighthearted game in contrast to Konami's gritty Metal Gear Solid, it becomes one of the year's top action games and a new franchise for the company.

Welcome To Magicka: A fantasy-based 3D platformer with a collection element that powers up your character rather than opens up new worlds, it's a sort of platformer/adventure game hybrid and is compared with games like *The Dreamers* and *Andreka*. It's developed by a new company and published by Ubisoft, becoming probably their biggest game of the year, even topping Rayman 2.

Undefeated: This 3D platformer is about a boxer who has to avoid some comical gangsters after he refuses to throw a match. It's a parody of boxing and mob movies as much as it is a platformer, and becomes known for some really quirky humor. It's not the best action game of the year but it's really enjoyable to play.

Screampuff: A horror-based 3D platformer about a cute bunny rabbit exploring a world of comical horror monsters like evil pumpkins and skeletons. A fairly average game but sells decently amongst kids.

Goat Gruff Bluff: A 3D platformer taking place on a series of mountains, you're a goat who has to rescue his friends and fight enemies along the way. Certainly not a BAD game but there's not much to distinguish it from others in its genre.

Candyworld: A lighthearted 3D platformer taking place in a world full of candy and sweets. It's an extremely kiddy game but the gameplay is solid.

**Bill's Escape:** A really glitchy platformer about a very skinny man named Bill who has to avoid monsters and prison guards. Designed by a startup game company, it's their first and only game for the Ultra Nintendo.

**Supermarket Survival:** A 3D platformer taking place in a supermarket. It's the equivalent to video games what the movie Foodfight was IOTL. Extremely bad.

**Night Of The Bats:** You play as an exterminator in this 3D platformer, clearing out enormous swarms of bats from various buildings. While the game is intended to start a new franchise and features some decent production values, the gameplay is extremely monotonous and reviews are poor to average.

**Dead Midnight:** A third-person shooter somewhat similar to Syphon Filter, Dead Midnight centers around a group of special operations agents who are trying to hunt down a rogue cell of foreign operatives conducting secret missions in American cities. The game gets good reviews for its tight gameplay and complex storyline.

**Black Rogue:** A stylish third person shooter featuring a young female agent. While the action is rather fast-paced, the graphics are somewhat poor and there are numerous glitches, condemning the game to mediocre reviews.

**Rock:** A third person shooter set in a desolate mountain area, about a tourist caught up in a bad situation where he ends up dodging gunfire and terrorists and must protect his girlfriend. The game is known for its rather poor gameplay and cliched storyline, and is poorly received with mediocre sales.

**The Shining Stones:** A fairly cliché action-RPG with two young protagonists hunting down five stones across six different lands. Not a terrible game but really not a standout in its genre.

**Weyricht:** A medieval themed Squaresoft action-RPG about a holy warrior who discovers an ancient conspiracy. Contains numerous real life locations, many of them in medieval Germany. The game is hyped a bit just for being a Squaresoft game and while reviews are good, it's more of a cult classic than anything.

**Silverwing:** An adventure game about a young boy with a magical set of wings that allow him to fly from place to place, he must find ancient treasures while avoiding the evil people who want to steal his wings. With good reviews, it's compared somewhat to Temple of Time, it's nowhere near as good as that game but is viewed favorably by players.

**White Mountain Extreme Snowboarding:** A snowboarding game that's somewhat more realistic than 1080 snowboarding, it follows up the late 90s snowboarding craze with tricks and races, it plays somewhat similarly to the Tony Hawk Skateboarding game and is

considered by some to be the best snowboarding game ever made.

Hakendo: A 2-D fighting game made by Konami, featuring a fairly large cast and some great graphics, it's one of the most popular arcade games of the year and the port to the Ultra gets a very good reception.

House Of Five Leaves: A fighting game that's about as average as can be, no characters really stand out and the gameplay is extremely generic.

Slamfist: A fighting game known for its glitchy gameplay and cheap AI, while the graphics are decent, it's mostly ignored in favor of the year's other fighting game hits.

Brigadier: A World War I-era FPS about an American doughboy in the latter stages of the war. The game is compared in many ways to Medal of Honor and though it becomes fairly obscure later on, it's a well reviewed game with decent sales.

Under The Earth: An FPS about a man caught in a war with demonic forces, it's seen as largely another Doom clone and with bad graphics and lots of glitches, it gets trashed in reviews.

Emergency: A big-budget horror game from Sony, it takes place in a huge hospital under siege from a mysterious infection. You play as a doctor who must help as many survivors as he can and survive to escape the hospital. It competes with Silent Hill for the title of best horror game of the year and also with Metal Gear Solid and Squad Four: Rebellion as one of the best Ultra Nintendo exclusives.

When The Sun Sets: A horror/shooter hybrid about a teenager who is caught in town during an outbreak of vampirism. Gleaning a lot of its humor from Buffy, it's not a very serious game by any means, and becomes somewhat of a cult classic for its fast-paced gameplay and tongue-in-cheek dialogue.

Felidae: A game about a worldwide mutation that causes cats to turn into terrible monsters. It's a way over the top horror game and it's not considered to be very good, though some of the cat monsters have very creative designs.

Rise A Knight: A Western-style RPG somewhat inspired by The Witcher and also a counter to Saturn's Ultima series, it's the first console-exclusive original western RPG to be a major hit. It takes place in medieval times as your protagonist seeks to become a knight by saving the kingdom from a variety of foes and monsters. With a big world to explore and a fun combat system, it gets great reviews and sells lots of copies.

Second Nature: Second Nature is this TL's version of Aidyn Chronicles, with a completely

different plot and more of a western-style exploration/combat system. It's considered a completely average game and does poorly compared to Rise A Knight.

Primrose Soldier: An RPG by Konami that is probably their second or third most hyped game of 1999 behind Metal Gear Solid and maybe Silent Hill. The game is a modern day RPG somewhat like Final Fantasy VII, about a young special ops soldier in training who meets a woman who is able to transform herself into flower petals and move freely into and out of buildings. The game revolves around the clash between technology and magic and is a top contender for RPG of the year behind Final Fantasy VIII, the game is the best-selling non-Final Fantasy RPG since Parasite Eve.

Academy: A Squaresoft RPG about six students at a prestigious magic academy, though the game isn't a sequel to Live-a-Live it shares some similarities and is arguably a spiritual successor. It's considered a good game but it's not nearly as big as Final Fantasy VIII.

Tarot: An RPG revolving around the mythology of tarot cards, it's a strange RPG featuring a weird fighting system and some rather primitive graphics. A somewhat polarizing game, it gets slightly above average reviews, is loved by a few players but disliked by many more.

Kabuki Ballerina: A very quirky JRPG revolving around dancing girls, it's really fanservicey and isn't all that popular, even among anime fans. It gets average reviews and has very low sales.

Explorers Of Badun: An American-made JRPG, it's an extremely basic game with simple graphics, somewhat like the launch game Ultra Adventurers. It's decent enough, but most RPG fans stay away from it as there's not much special to note about the game.

Multiplicator: A puzzle game where you have to multiply your character avatar as much as you can by collecting items. You can have hundreds of guys on screen at once, though they all respond to your controls at the same time and you have to protect them from hazards. Most notable for its four player competitive mode, it's a fairly fun game and praised for its fast paced gameplay and zany, hilarious graphics.

Blinkin' Blocks: A puzzle game where you have to push a variety of blocks into position depending on how they're lit up at the time. The controls are really clunky, as the game is basically a 3-D action game with this puzzle element and floating enemies make it really tough. The game is poorly reviewed.

Skater Street: A skateboard racing game on a variety of street courses. The controls are pretty good but there aren't many skaters or courses and it's considered just an average game.

In The Dust: A dirt track racing game with tricked out cars. This game gets a bit of hype

before release, but is a bit of a disappointment due to rather loose controls and some shoddy presentation.

Motocycle GT: A motorcycle racing game that initially claims to do for motorcycle racing what Gran Turismo did for car racing. In reality, the game is a hideous mess and one of the worst games of the year, plagued by technical glitches and cookie cutter courses, and becomes a notable flop.

Supercar World Circuit: A sort of Gran Turismo-rival game that revolves less around collectibles and more around racing leagues, including a massive 18-race season involving tracks around the world and a variety of true to life cars. Though it's not the transcendent game that Gran Turismo was, it's considered one of the best racing titles of the year.

Starblade: An RPG about a group of heroes attempting to find the legendary sword, Starblade. It's a very bad translation of an already mediocre JRPG and is a complete sales flop.

Campaign: An RTS where you select one of ten nations and conduct a huge military campaign, the maps and units are procedurally generated, making for a different experience every time. Though the gameplay itself isn't good enough to make this a truly great title like Starcraft, it does get lots of praise for innovation.

Invasion: 2031: An RTS where you have to repel an alien invasion. Though the plot is fairly uninspired, there are some aspects to the gameplay that get some praise, and at the very least, it sells decently.

Hell Freezes Over: An RTS about a battle between ice golems and fire demons that is widely bashed for unimaginative gameplay, crappy maps, and technical glitches.

Codename: Siren: A third person stealth game about an amnesiac special agent trying to protect her country while trying to piece together her past. Though the plot starts out as somewhat cliché, it takes some very big twists and turns later on and the game ends up becoming known as one of the best stealth titles of the year.

Days Of War: A stealth title about an army spy who has to infiltrate the enemy bases and assassinate their leaders, he begins to have second thoughts about his mission and ends up being pursued by his own army. Though the storyline is praised, the gameplay itself drags the game down somewhat.

Killsight: A stealth game revolving around sniping, the game optionally comes with a sniper rifle lightgun in a VERY expensive pack-in package, the deluxe package and the vanilla game both do underwhelmingly in sales due to short missions and rather clunky gameplay.

Lorelai: Glorious Reminiscence: A tactical RPG by Koei, chronicling an ancient kingdom forced to battle enemies on all sides. Known for its unique battle system that sets it apart from games like Tactics Ogre and Final Fantasy Tactics, it's very well received among fans of the genre and is probably Koei's best game of 1999.

#### *Sega Saturn:*

Zodiac World: A 3-D platformer/adventure game about a young hero who must traverse the world, gathering up 12 Zodiac Stones to battle an ancient evil. This is one of the bigger Sega releases of the year and sells better than any Saturn platformer since Sonic 4.

Duelists: Swift Strike: A fighting game where young brawlers battle for honor and glory. Made by Sega, the game features somewhat smoother fighting than Virtua Fighter and is intended to be a more stylistic, story-focused game. It doesn't reach the popularity of Virtua Fighter but it's still quite well received.

Imprisoned: A horror game where your character, one of five possible protagonists, wakes up in a cell, held captive by a sadistic mastermind, and must find their way out, either escaping on their own or choosing to rescue others along the way. One of the year's most brutal games, but is well reviewed.

Chaos City: A Rockstar beat-em-up with some open exploration, it's not nearly as freeform as the Race'n'Chase games but is considered a breath of fresh air in the genre and gets some notoriety for its violence and humor.

Solitary Kiss: A VERY anime-styled JRPG featuring mostly female protagonists and lots of cutscenes, it's one of the most otaku-friendly RPGs ever made, and is quite a difficult game, but very rewarding once the player learns its mechanics. The very definition of a niche cult classic, it sells a bit better than expected in North America and is an enormous hit in Japan.

Infernal: Dark Reality: A gothic-styled JRPG where you're a priest out to slay a myriad of demonic beasts, it has an action-based battle system and is another popular niche title.

Antopolis: A 3D platformer where you're an anthropomorphic ant, you start out as a lowly drone but when a terrible threat comes to your colony, you rise above your station to defend your friends and the queen. Quite a popular game among younger players, especially with A Bug's Life having been released the year before.

Fleet: A Dancing Adventure: An RPG where you perform your moves by timing your button presses and then your characters dance before striking the enemy. A quirky game known for having outstanding music, it's not the best RPG but it does have plenty of fans for its unique battle system.

Rhythmstar: A more conventional rhythm/dancing game somewhat like Spice World but much more robust, the game even includes a dance pad and is the precursor to games like Dance Dance Revolution and Samba De Amigo, both of which appear in 2000 on the system.

Spirit Of Exploration: An adventure game where the protagonist explores deeper and deeper into a series of mysterious games, the game's puzzles and graphics receive particular praise.

Phoenix Run: A futuristic racing game that takes place on extremely fast, hovering cars, while the game is compared to the Ultra's F-Zero game, it's somewhat of a more serious, straight-forward racer with very little in the way of plot, the game is also somewhat easier.

NYPD: Narcotics Squad: This game puts you in the shoes of an NYPD officer who has to hunt down a dangerous drug lord while training a young rookie. The gritty storyline of the game and its excellent gameplay make it one of the more popular games of the year on the Saturn and a much more realistic and complex take on Virtua Cop.

The Wilderness: This is a horror game about a girl who is lost in the woods with her friends and must survive as one by one, her friends are picked off by the terrifying creatures dwelling there. Though the game is a bit cliché, it does have some camp factor that makes it a bit of a cult classic.

They Call Him Mr. Frog: A platformer about an anthropomorphic tuxedo wearing frog who gets into all sorts of antics, the leaping physics are really good even though the game is mostly a play by numbers platformer.

Spinaround: A strange shooter game where the player rotates the field of play in order to fire at enemies and objects to build up combos. Has both a story mode, a high score mode, and a competitive multiplayer mode and is considered one of the better shooter games on the Saturn.

Battleborn: A third person shooter about a futuristic war against a terrifying alien foe, developed jointly by Sega and Treasure. A sort of more gritty version of OTL's Sin and Punishment, it does extremely well in both reviews and sales.

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*“We certainly wanted to go back to Ridge Racer, but Sega wanted our energies concentrated elsewhere, mostly on fighting games which were doing extremely well in both*

*the arcades and on the Sega Saturn. Racing games went on the backburner, so to speak, but when given the chance to finally work on a sequel to Ridge Racer, of course I jumped at the opportunity!"*

-Fumihiko Tanaka, discussing *Ridge Racer 2* in the January 1998 issue of *Famitsu* magazine

*"These new Pokemon, I haven't seen any of them in this part of the world, or even on my Pokedex!"*

*"Not only that, but Team Shrapnel is trying to catch them!"*

*"I'll stop them...I'm gonna catch 'em all first!"*

-a dialogue between Sato Ketchum and Whitney in episode 105 of the *Pokemon* anime, part of the 26-episode saga *Pokemon: The New Land*

*"His work has inspired the imaginations of millions, and his characters are beloved by many more. There's no doubt that many here at Sega were inspired by his work as well."*

-Tom Kalinske on the death of Charles Schulz, January 27, 2000

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*Ultra Nintendo:*

### **Bass Masters 2000**

EGM: 4.7 (quote: "Even the Ultra Nintendo's polished graphics can't really make this game interesting.")

Gamespot: 7.0 (quote: "It's a really good fishing sim with some beautiful scenery.")

### **Clock Tower III**

EGM: 6.5 (quote: "It's scary enough at times, but monotonous gameplay makes some parts a slog.")

Gamespot: 6.1 (quote: "The beautiful graphics make the repetitive levels a bit more fun to get through.")

### **Crusaders Of Might And Magic**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "The voicework is excellent and overall the presentation is quite good.")

Gamespot: 5.8 (quote: "There's definitely the framework of a good game here, but there are a lot of flaws.")

### **ECW Hardcore Revolution**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "It's brutally good fun and features a nice selection of wrestlers.")

Gamespot: 3.8 (quote: "The mechanics are deeply flawed and this pales in comparison to the WWF and WCW games.")

### **Jeremy McGrath Supercross 2000**

EGM: 6.3 (quote: "There could be more tracks, but we did enjoy the realistic graphics.")

Gamespot: 7.6 (quote: "This is a pretty fun game, featuring superb controls and a nice selection of racers and vehicles.")

## **Railroad Tycoon** (also ported to the Sega Saturn later in the year)

EGM: N/A

Gamespot: 8.0 (quote: "There are a lot of options to dig into here, and it definitely has the quality that Sid Meier's games are known for.")

## **Ultra Dune**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "While the space sim portions of the game are outstanding, it does get a bit dicey once you actually land.")

Gamespot: 8.4 (quote: "It's definitely the best space shooter on the Ultra Nintendo outside of Starfox 2. We also appreciated that the on-foot sequences were short and sweet.")

## **Ultra Formula One**

EGM: 6.8 (quote: "It's your standard racing game. It'll satisfy Formula One junkies, but fans of other racers might want to look elsewhere.")

Gamespot: 4.9 (quote: "It's disappointing. Racing games don't get more generic than Ultra Formula One.")

## **Road Storm: Rampage**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "It delivers the pure, fun, motorcycle bliss that the series is known for.")

Gamespot: 7.8 (quote: "Why introduce new characters if you're not going to flesh them out? Still, the gameplay is more than solid.")

## **World Of Color: Millennium**

EGM: 9.5 (quote: "Third time's a charm, this really is the best one yet.")

Gamespot: 9.5 (quote: "How could this game have gotten so much better in barely a year? As much as I loved Ultra World of Color, this makes it look outdated.")

## **Lode Syren**

EGM: 6.3 (quote: "An RPG that takes place in a mine seems like a bit of a bore, but fans of the genre will find things to love.")

Gamespot: 6.3 (quote: "The best thing about this game? It avoids repeating monster designs. That said, generic combat makes battles somewhat repetitive.")

## **Winter Rush**

EGM: 5.0 (quote: "There are much better winter sports games out there.")

Gamespot: 4.0 (quote: "The skiing controls are really messed up.")

*Saturn:*

## **Ridge Racer 2**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "Ridge Racer is back and it's as good as we remember, with tight controls

and beautiful tracks made even prettier with the Ring.”)

Gamespot: 9.2 (quote: “A splendid arcade port that should get starving Saturn racing fans revved up again.”)

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It was the beginning of a new millennium. *Pokemon Sun and Moon* had just launched in Japan, and those of us with internet connections who knew where to look were drooling over all the new Pokemon that had just been revealed. There were 106 of them in all, and the revelations instantly quashed all those silly “Pokegods” rumors that had been passed around the playground for the last year. Meanwhile, on the TV front, Cartoon Network was dutifully re-running all 104 episodes of the original series, depicting Sato's victory in the Pokemon League and his conquest of the Elite Four. Many of us had seen the Pokemon movie, which depicted Mewtwo and Mew, the powerful Psychic Pokemon who'd nearly ripped the world asunder.

And Japan had seen those episodes too...way back in 1998. In the year-long gap between the end of the original Indigo seasons and the launch of *Sun and Moon*, the powers that be needed to come up with a way to keep running the show on television. Sony, which owned Game Freak and shared Pokemon as a joint venture with Nintendo, suggested a series of episodes to promote the upcoming games, using some of the new Pokemon that were due to appear. Nintendo agreed, and 26 additional episodes were commissioned to bridge the gap between the Indigo League season and the *Sun and Moon* seasons. When these episodes arrived on Toonami in the spring of 2000, they were called *Pokemon: The New Land*.

After defeating the Indigo League's Elite Four, Sato had set out on his quest to catch all the Pokemon in order to become a Pokemon Master. Still accompanied by Misty and Brock, Sato was now three years older and noticeably more mature. He'd come a long way, catching more than half of the original 150 Pokemon, but now Pokemon were becoming increasingly hard to find, and he was visiting more and more hazardous areas. A major plot point for this arc was the introduction of Team Shrapnel, built from the remnants of Team Rocket (which was disbanded after Sato defeated the League Champion and Team Rocket's leader, Giovanni). Though Shrapnel's leader is never seen in these new episodes, he's constantly alluded to by the Shrapnel members who show up. Unlike Team Rocket, these guys are deadly serious, and rarely do the same members show up each time, with the exception of Tracker, who seems to be a high-ranking member and is usually the leader of the squad that shows up in any given episode. During these episodes, Sato meets several characters who would later be met by the *Sun and Moon* protagonist, including future Gym Leaders Whitney and Josh, and Professor Elm as well.

A number of new Pokemon were introduced during this saga, including all three Johto starters (Chikorita, Cyndaquil, and Totodile), the electric sheep Mareep, the miniature elephant Phanpy, the lightning fast Water type Skateray, and the mechanically-adept Steel type Rivitor, among several others. One of the main storylines involved Team Shrapnel trying to poach them, while Sato did his best to stop them at every turn. As the saga went on, Sato became increasingly determined, and started to become emotionally distant from his friends Misty and Brock, to the point where he eventually confessed to Misty that he thought his friends were holding him back. In the end, Sato defeated Tracker in a fierce Pokemon battle, and then decided to explore Johto alone, leaving Misty and Brock to return to Kanto to assume their roles as Gym Leaders once more. The saga not only introduced a decent crop of new Pokemon, it also set the tone for the more serious Johto episodes that

would begin airing in Japan in November 1999 and in North America in July 2000. *Pokemon: The New Land* was more than just filler, it bridged the gap between the original games and the new Nova titles, and remains extremely popular with fans to this day.

-excerpted from the Pokemon Memories blog, from a post written on July 14, 2013

*This is Professor Jay, with the latest scoop on all things Pokemon! I've been playing through the brand new Pokemon Sun and Moon games, and so far, here are my top ten favorite new Pokemon.*

#### *10. Natio*

A really neat looking psychic bird, like you'd see on a totem pole! I just love the design for this one.

#### *9. Tezaru*

This is a weird electric type creature who deploys his arms like a tazer to shock opposing Pokemon!

#### *8. Porygon2*

I love what they did with Porygon's evolution, much smoother and sleeker.

#### *7. Eifie*

This is straight-up a psychic evolution for Eevee and it's really powerful, I love using it.

#### *6. Menisuru*

One of the strangest Pokemon ever, it walks around with a tiny little sphere for a head and then suddenly just pops out this HUGE face/head and blasts the enemy with psychic energy. Such a crazy design on this one!

#### *5. Hikaoria*

A beautiful floating bird and one of three legendary bird-like creatures in the game, this is another psychic type and uses brilliant beams of light to strike its opponents.

#### *4. Odairu*

Just an alligator. The fully-evolved water starter, he looks so vicious!

#### *3. Bangiras*

This is a REALLY powerful rock/dark type Pokemon, like a standing dinosaur or some such thing.

#### *2. Tekiisis*

This is a VERY powerful bug Pokemon (yep, there are actually powerful Bug-types in this game!) resembling the tarantula wasp from the American Southwest. One of the scariest and meanest things I've ever seen.

#### *1. Kapoerer*

Believe it or not, there's another "Hitmon"-esque fighting Pokemon! This guy has dreads and fights like Eddy Gordo. Super cool!

-excerpted from a January 30, 2000 post on "Professor Jay's Pokemon Lab" on Geocities.com

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Sega's biggest game of the month, however, is easily *Ridge Racer 2*, a game originally conceived by Namco nearly six years ago! That's right, originally a *Ridge Racer* sequel was to be released in 1994, but the company decided instead to concentrate on creating new arcade hardware and a new generation of games to utilize that hardware. What followed was a series of delays until the game was finally eventually released for arcades in 1998, becoming one of Japan's biggest hits of the year and immediately justifying a port to the Sega Saturn. So here we are with *Ridge Racer 2* finally, and how does it play? Well, unless your racing games have to be uber-realistic (we're looking at you, *Gran Turismo*), it's one of the best racing games to come out in a long time, easily beating Sega's *Virtua Racing Reality* for realism and variety of cars and tracks. The controls are superb, power sliding has never been so fun and easy to learn, and once you've mastered the technique, you'll blaze past your opponents (though opponents on the tougher difficulty levels will have even drift masters tearing out their hair). The graphics are gorgeous, and with the Ring are practically arcade perfect, it's clear that the Ring was designed with games like this in mind.

(...)

*Ridge Racer 2* proves that the racing genre, which has served Sega fantastically throughout the years, is something they need to concentrate on, particularly once the *Katana* is released. They've sort of let Nintendo eat their lunch in recent years, especially Nintendo and Sony's *Gran Turismo*, and it's time for the racing king to come back to his throne. Some of the most popular Saturn bundles have featured steering wheels, and some of today's most popular arcade titles are racing games. Sega seems to be focusing more heavily on arcade games with the Ring, and if *Ridge Racer 2* is any indication, racing titles should be a major focus going forward.

Score: 9/10

-excerpted from the January 2000 issue of *Official Saturn Magazine*

### **Namco "Not Ruling Out Publishing Titles For The Ultra Nintendo In The Future", Says Company President**

Namco and Sega have been inextricably linked since the release of the Saturn. The two companies have collaborated on a number of games, and most of Namco's biggest arcade hits over the last five years have appeared on the Sega Saturn. And though Sega has contractual "dibs" on many of Namco's biggest series, some, including the arcade hits *Tekken* and *Ridge Racer*, could theoretically be released on the Ultra Nintendo if the company desired to do so. In a recent article published in a Japanese business journal, Namco founder and president Masaya Nakamura stated that the Ultra Nintendo's recent sales successes were impossible for Namco to ignore, and that, in certain circumstances, the company might consider porting certain games over to the Ultra Nintendo.

Though Namco has not announced any such ports thus far, and though the company maintains a strong relationship with Sega that could still preclude any Namco games appearing on any of Nintendo's systems, such a move would certainly add to Sega's recent woes, at a time of great turbulence for the company. Rumors of a shake-up at Sega of America involving president Tom Kalinske potentially resigning are gaining steam, and were

companies such as Namco (and possibly Enix, which would be free to publish games for Nintendo systems starting in 2001) to jump ship, Sega could be thrown into even more turmoil.

-from an article published on Gamespot on January 13, 2000

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\*People all over the world are counting down to the year 2000.\*

Crowds: 10! 9! 8! 7! 6! 5! 4! 3! 2! 1! HAPPY-

\*The lights all begin to go out. The crowd looks worried, thinking it's the Y2K bug, but then when the lights return, they're in beautiful arrays of colors. Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, all colors of the rainbow, all over the world. On TV screens across the globe, the characters from *World of Color* appear. People's faces light up as strange shapes in all different colors float in the sky. People begin pointing at them, causing them to disappear or to chain together for combos. On the big TV in Times Square, footage from *World Of Color: Millennium* begins to play.\*

Narrator: New millennium, new world.

\*Footage from the game is now shown on screen, from the single-player adventure battle mode, the various puzzle and high score modes (with huge combos appearing on screen), and the game's four-player multiplayer mode as well.\*

Narrator: The best puzzle game is back, and it's only on Ultra Nintendo. In *World Of Color: Millennium*, make quick moves to mix and match colors for big points and big combos. Meet new friends and battle powerful enemies in the adventure mode, or go for a new high score in endless puzzle mode.

\*Four people are shown in Times Square, holding Ultra Nintendo controllers and battling it out on one of the big electronic screens.\*

Narrator: Or grab three of your friends and battle it out in a high stakes clash of color and light.

\*People all over the world are shown playing the game now, bathed in all kinds of beautiful colors.\*

Narrator: It's a brand new game for a brand new millennium. *World Of Color: Millennium*. Only for the Ultra Nintendo.

### *Ultimate Fun*

-from the *World Of Color: Millennium* commercial, which began playing in late December 1999 and continued to play throughout the month of January, including during Super Bowl XXXIV

The first *World of Color* was a showcase for the Game Boy Color when it was released in

1996. A fairly simple but very colorful (if you had the GBC) puzzle game that scored high marks when it launched with the system, it was almost inevitable that it would receive some kind of sequel. That sequel appeared on the Ultra Nintendo in 1998 as *Ultra World Of Color*, which took the Game Boy classic, spruced it up with fancy graphics, tweaked gameplay, additional modes and fantastic multiplayer, and launched to great sales and great reviews. So why did Nintendo go back to the drawing board so quickly with *World Of Color: Millennium*, released just 15 months after *Ultra World Of Color* in North America (and a 17 month gap in Japan)? Whatever the reason, *World Of Color: Millennium* was a significantly more complete game than its 1998 predecessor. The game's single-player mode now came in four flavors: Adventure, Puzzle, Endless, or Challenge. Adventure mode featured a massive campaign complete with levels, worlds, and cutscenes, with battles played out on *World of Color's* familiar puzzle board. The adventure mode levels themselves contained various gimmicks designed to make battling opponents more interesting or challenging, and the colorful cast (both visually and personality-wise) helped to keep things interesting between rounds of play. Puzzle mode had a variety of pre-determined board layouts that you had to solve in a particular way. The beginning puzzles were a piece of cake, but by the end (there were 100 in all), things got brain-bustingly hard, with Levels 97 and 99 considered among the toughest challenges in Nintendo history. Endless mode was just that, racking up points by trying to keep the board cleared as long as possible, making combos as huge as you can to get your score up higher. And Challenge mode imposed challenges on the player, such as speeding things up, removing certain types of blocks, even making the stage invisible! Again, some of the toughest challenges in the game were found in this mode, and clearing both Puzzle and Challenge modes made you a true *World of Color* master. Of course, no discussion of an Ultra Nintendo *World of Color* game was complete without discussion of multiplayer mode. *Millennium* added literally dozens of new items to make battling your friends extremely fun. From the Blockade Grenade, which put up walls around certain parts of your opponent's playing field, to the Rude Rocket, which laughed and taunted you as it blew up pieces you needed to make combos, *World of Color: Millennium's* multiplayer mode had friendship-destruction potential, and there are some legendary anecdotes about player rage associated with this game.

*World of Color: Millennium* is considered by some to be among the greatest games of all time. It certainly ranks among the greatest puzzle games of all time, and also as one of the Ultra Nintendo's top selling games. This particular game helped to spawn an animated series based on the game's Adventure Mode characters that debuted on Disney Channel's Animagic block in 2000, joining fellow Nintendo show *The Legend Of Zelda*. Perhaps it was Alexey Pajitnov, creator of *Tetris*, who gave the game some of its highest praise: "*It is beautiful. It is beautiful to play, it is beautiful to watch. World of Color: Millennium is the game I most wish I had created.*" Coming from the man who created perhaps the only game to top *World of Color: Millennium* on rankings of puzzle video games, the original *Tetris*, it's one hell of a compliment.

-excerpted from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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Though *Tales Of The Seven Seas* isn't as popular a series in Japan as it is in North America and Europe, *One Piece* undoubtedly draws inspiration from it, with series creator Eiichiro Oda admitting to designing the character Nami somewhat after *Tales' Dona*, particularly after playing *Tales Of The Seven Seas 2* which featured her as the lead. He also includes a drunken brawler character who is quite a bit like the boisterous Creel. *One Piece's* setting is significantly more fantastical than its more realistic video game inspiration, but the

character resemblances do show just how much of an impact Sony's game has had on pirate-themed media throughout the world.

*One Piece's* main competition in the shonen genre comes from *Naruto*, a manga based on the antics of a young, energetic and highly determined ninja. Created by Masashi Kishimoto, *Naruto* is a fierce fighter who trains hard in hopes of becoming the Hokage, the strongest ninja in his village. He is accompanied by his somewhat detached rival Sasuke and his crush Sakura, a pink-haired beauty who is as fierce and determined as *Naruto*, and somewhat more skilled (at least so far).

A dark horse in the shonen genre, and one increasingly gaining in popularity, is *Bullheart*, a manga about a young man named Soba who has trained to become a champion bullfighter, only to form a companionship with the bull he is scheduled to kill during his first fight. In *Bullheart*, bullfighting is a rite of passage in his society, with fighters slaying bulls in order to absorb their souls and gain their power. Because Soba refuses to slaughter bulls, it seems that he will remain weak, but through friendship with his bull companion (who does not talk, but communicates through a series of comical expressions and exaggerated noises), Soba gains spiritual energy and is able to defend himself against those who seek to uphold the current ways. *Bullheart* is gaining in popularity, and though it trails behind *Naruto* in popularity polls, it has a very vocal and active fanbase, and is becoming one of *Shonen Jump's* most popular series.

-excerpted from an article on Mangamania.com, posted on January 27, 2000

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*Road Storm: Rampage introduces five new racers to the series' large cast! We'll tell you all about them.*

*Asuka- A Japanese foreign exchange student who rides a powerful and sleek motorcycle, she has a friendly personality when she's not on her bike, but once she hits the track, watch out! She specializes in speed, but has a disadvantage in durability.*

*Thugsy- A classic mobster who will make you an offer you can't refuse. Thugsy takes no prisoners, unless he needs to hold someone for ransom! Thugsy's bike is a fairly balanced one, and attack items get a bonus when he uses them.*

*Stock- A retail stocker who's fed up with his low paying job, he takes to the track so he can win enough money to quit! His bike seems like a cheap piece of junk, which means his durability is suspect, but he can corner exceptionally well.*

*Johnny- A cowboy who doesn't need anybody, he loves to ride in the wide open country. His bike is pretty fast, but he's not very good at cornering since he's used to riding such wide roads.*

*Chanele- A posh makeup magnate who has purchased one of the best bikes in the world with her vast fortune, but isn't all that good at riding it... her bike runs fairly average in every category due to her inexperience, but she gets pretty good acceleration.*

-excerpted from the article on *Road Storm: Rampage* in the January 2000 issue of *Nintendo Power*

*“Road Storm used to be a series that focused really heavily on the characters, giving them interesting backstories and motivations, and fun interactions...but as the series went on, the new characters (and even many of the old ones) descended somewhat into caricature and stereotypes. Take Road Storm: Rampage. Only Asuka and Stock out of the new characters were all that interesting. Thugsy was an over-the-top gangster and pretty much a ripoff of Bugsy from the Looney Tunes, and Johnny was an obvious John Wayne expy.*

*That said, the racing seemed to get better and better with every game. None of the Road Storm games have really been 'bad', though a couple could probably be classified as being 'on the right side of mediocre'. That wasn't the case with Rampage, probably the best of the fifth-gen games. There were some awesome tracks and the play controls were fantastic. Chanele might've been predictable and lame in the cutscenes, but controlling her motorcycle on the track was a lot of fun, it really gave you the sense that this stuck-up rich French woman was learning to race as she went. Road Storm: Rampage was a lot of fun, and it probably would've been the Ultra Nintendo's best game that month were it not for the flawless World of Color: Millennium.”*

-from a Kotaku.com commenter, posted in reply to Kotaku's review of *Road Storm: Route 66* on April 15, 2014

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>>The video game fuckin sucks tho, i mean geez i thought an ECW game would be awesome but man it blows pretty bad  
>>>Yeah, I'd rather just watch ECW on TV.  
>>>> i still cant believe there airing ECW on the dolly parton channel lol  
>>>>> Isn't it like their highest rated show?  
>>>>> Last week's match between Tommy Dreamer and Balls Mahoney kicked ass, Balls was bleeding all over the place  
>>>>> He took a hell of a sick bump didn't he? When he fell right on that trash can on his head?  
>>>>> balls mahoney kicks ass  
>>> I still wanna play it but all I have is a Sega Saturn  
>>>> i think there makin a ecw game for the saturn  
>>>>> It's called ECW: No Rulez. It's coming in June I think.  
>>>>>> Oh really? I hope it's better than they're saying Hardcore Revolution is.

-taken from a series of posts on an InsideTheWeb.com wrestling message board on January 21, 2000

### **The Rock Wins Royal Rumble, Will Be In Main Event At Wrestlemania**

The 30-man Royal Rumble was won by The Rock, who tossed Stone Cold Steve Austin over the top rope to claim victory in the main event match. The two men had previously teamed up to eliminate the massive Big Show, before engaging in a brutal three minute brawl that eventually saw The Rock counter a Stone Cold Stunner and reverse it into a flip that sent Austin out of the ring.

Both men had plenty of reasons to want to win the Rumble, as the prize, a title shot at Wrestlemania, would allow them to face off against the current champion Triple H. Triple H, who beat Mick Foley's alter ego Cactus Jack to retain his title in the other main event, has been ruling the WWF with an iron fist as part of the “McMahon-Helmsley Organization”,

which formed after Triple H married the daughter of WWF's CEO Vince McMahon. The Organization's first target was Stone Cold Steve Austin, who'd been holding the championship since winning it off of Owen Hart at Summerslam 1999. Triple H gave himself a title match against Austin on the Monday Night Raw after Armageddon, and with the aid of a number of wrestlers and Stephanie McMahon, managed to screw Austin out of the title, leaving the Rattlesnake itching for revenge. The Organization then colluded to prevent Austin from getting a rematch, instead forcing him to earn it in the Royal Rumble. Meanwhile, the Rock and Triple H have been taking a number of verbal shots at each other over the past several months, and Triple H's wrath has recently come down on Mick Foley, one of the Rock's best friends. Now, it seems, The Rock will face Triple H at Wrestlemania 2000, though Stone Cold Steve Austin certainly looks to factor into the equation somehow, and likely won't take being denied a rematch for his title lying down. He looks to be on the warpath on tonight's Raw, and it'll be interesting to see whether he goes after the Organization first, or The Rock.

-update from a wrestling news site, January 24, 2000

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Alex Stansfield: *Ridge Racer 2* is really good. The drifting is really fun, the levels all look great, I had a blast playing through this game.

Ted Crosley: You know, this game's such a big improvement over the original, and the original's a classic! For me, everything clicked. The sound effects, all the little voices...

Alex: That's how you do voices in an arcade racing game. Not too much, but just enough so that it keeps you in the game and keeps you excited. And yes, whenever I hear the voices saying "final lap!" or "great drift!" I get really excited. It just feels like I'm in an arcade, even if I'm just at home with a big racing wheel in my lap and a half-eaten pizza on the coffee table in front of me.

Ted: The home IS the best arcade.

Alex: True. At home you can eat whatever you want, the chairs are a lot more comfortable, and there's a bathroom nearby.

Ted: And you don't have to keep putting in quarters!

Alex: *Ridge Racer 2* delivered on everything. Also, even though I recommend using a racing wheel, the Saturn controller works just fine. I'm giving *Ridge Racer 2* a 4.5 out of 5.

Ted: I agree with you, it gets a 4.5 from me. *Ridge Racer 2* is a hell of a lot of fun.

-excerpted from the January 11, 2000 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Lyssa Fielding: \*singing\* Come on, baby, do the locomotion! \*as a huge train is slamming into another huge train on screen\*

Brittany Saldita: Is that all you did, try to make trains crash into each other?

Lyssa: Maybe.

Brittany: On a more serious note, *Railroad Tycoon* is a pretty deep sim. There's a lot to take in when you're playing, and if this kind of game isn't your thing, *Railroad Tycoon* won't be your thing. With that said, it's an excellently designed game and once you know what you're doing, you can have a lot of fun. And...even if you don't know what you're doing and just want to cause horrible train accidents...

Lyssa: \*making train whistle noises as another accident plays out on the screen\* Okay, you know what, I did have a lot of fun playing *Railroad Tycoon*. There is SO much to do, from building your own trains to buying stock in your rivals' companies, Brittany's absolutely right about there being a lot to take in and even hardcore sim players might be intimidated by this one. You are going to be balls deep in menus by the time you're really into the game.

Brittany: And the soundtrack really gets you into the feel of being an old-timey train magnate.

\*A sampling of the game's classic early-20th century style bluegrass music is played.\*

Lyssa: \*wincing a bit\*

Brittany: No, it's not something I'd listen to on my CD player, but it's appropriate for the game.

Lyssa: They couldn't have put Locomotion in there somewhere?

Brittany: Nope, I'm afraid not. Anyway, I give *Railroad Tycoon* a 4 out of 5.

Lyssa: And I give it a 3.5!

\*A montage of train crashes from the game plays over Kylie Minogue's cover of "The Locomotion" as the show goes to commercial break\*

(...)

\*The hosts are sitting on the couch discussing the recent PC release *Omikron*, and the conversation shifts to David Bowie.\*

Brittany: I just really really wish we could have him on here!

Ted: I think MTV asked him, but he had to turn them down.

Gary Westhouse: What would we even have talked with him about?

Brittany: Are...are you kidding me?

Alex: ANYTHING! "Space Oddity", freaking *Labyrinth*, we could've just done a whole show talking to David Bowie about stuff.

Gary: I dunno if he even plays video games.

Steve Horton: I'm sure he plays something. I mean, dressing in outfits like that?

Brittany: \*smirking\* Where do you think video games with weird outfits got their ideas from?

Alex: Yeah, look at Edea \*shows a picture of Edea from *Final Fantasy VIII*\* I'm pretty sure Bowie's worn something like that outfit more than once.

Ted: The guy's a genius. The guy has influenced more video games... I mean the guy's influence is in everything.

Lyssa: \*biting her lip\* He was so hot in *Labyrinth*...

Alex: He was a freaky goblin king!

Lyssa: I wanted him to take me to his magical palace and keep me locked up in a tower like Rapunzel!

Ted: Ziggy Stardust is one of the greatest albums of all time. Ever.

Brittany: Agreed.

Alex: I listened to his music so much as a kid. I played *Omikron* just because he was in it. It was a decent game, but the only reason I played it, because, remember, Ted and Gary reviewed it...but I played it anyway just for Bowie.

Lyssa: He's the guy who taught me that it was okay to be both beautiful and weird. Like, when I was in beauty pageants, they said I could only be one or the other. David Bowie taught me I could be both.

Ted: ...we have to get him on here.

Alex: Yep. Yep.

Brittany: Oh yeah, for sure.

-excerpted from the January 18, 2000 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

\*Martin Hollis from Rare has visited the *GameTV* studio to promote the upcoming *Velvet Dark* and to preview the game. Ted, Alex, Brittany, and Lyssa are trying out *Velvet Dark*'s face mapping mode, using the camera on the Game Boy Nova to import their faces in the game. They get a first look at their characters on the screen.\*

Brittany: \*laughing her ass off\*

Alex: That's us! That's us!

Ted: I'm gonna kill all of you guys.

Lyssa: I look weird!

\*They enter multiplayer mode, and it's a four-player free-for-all. They go right at each other with multiple kills scored quickly, having a blast of wiping each other's custom characters out.\*

Alex: Looks like you're dead again, Lyssa!

Brittany: I GOT you, I got you Ted! God, this is satisfying.

Ted: \*groaning\* Okay, okay, you got lucky on that one. \*he gets up behind Alex and Brittany and wipes them out with a grenade\* In your faces! Yeah!

Lyssa: Oh, oh, oh! \*she tries to avoid Ted as he's coming after her\*

Alex: Can you take pictures of anything and stick them in the game?

Hollis: Yes, you can!

Ted: So I can take pictures of famous people I don't like?

Alex: \*laughing\*

Hollis: We actually were kind of worried about something like that, but, you know, it's a private game, we didn't think there was much of a problem with it.

Ted: So somebody could take a picture of their junk and stick it on here?

Hollis: \*laughing\* I suppose so!

Brittany: That's like, the first thing you guys go to... \*shoots Ted again\* I swear, I'm working with a couple of 12-year-olds.

Ted: Somebody had to say it.

Brittany: No, dammit, nobody has to say \*gets blown up by one of Lyssa's remote mines\* (bleep)!

Lyssa: \*giggling and kicking her legs\*

Alex: I was thinking of using it to take pictures of Mario and put him in there and have him killing Sonic the Hedgehog. \*shoots Lyssa and then Brittany, putting him back in the lead\*

Hollis: Well, it is a Nintendo game so I guess that would be appropriate!

Alex: This is so much fun...

Lyssa: Yeah!

-excerpted from the January 25, 2000 episode of *GameTV*

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### **Nebraska Upsets Florida State In Second BCS Championship Game**

In the second year of college football's BCS championship series, Nebraska hoped to settle some of the controversy circling around their berth in the game, and may have gone a long way in doing so by beating undefeated Florida State 25-23 after kicker Josh Brown's 53 yard field goal won it for the Cornhuskers in dramatic fashion. Though Nebraska's win did prove that they could compete with the best, fans of the Virginia Tech Hokies, who finished the season at 12-1 after beating Oklahoma in the Fiesta Bowl, may have something else to say. The Hokies started out the season a red-hot 8-0, but after the arrest of star quarterback Michael Vick for assault and battery, the team dropped their next game and were forced to rally behind their backup quarterback to win their remaining games. Virginia Tech's courageous play won them accolades from sportswriters and fans across the nation and made them the sentimental favorite, but the BCS computers picked Nebraska, and now Hokies fans wonder what might have been.

-from an article on Yahoo! News, January 5, 2000

Super Bowl XXXIV featured the Tennessee Titans and the New Orleans Saints. The Titans, who'd recently relocated from Houston and who'd changed their nickname from the Oilers, had a fantastic 1999 campaign behind quarterback Steve McNair, going 14-2 and becoming the overall top seed in the AFC. The New Orleans Saints, led by quarterback Peyton Manning, had been equally impressive, with a powerful offensive that became known as the "Greatest Show On Turf" that year, setting an NFL record for points in a single season. Saints fans were especially energetic that season, borrowing the old New Orleans expression "Who Dat?", which grew in popularity after the Saints defeated the defending champion Minnesota Vikings in the divisional round. The Saints' NFC championship opponents were the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, led by their volatile but talented quarterback Ryan Leaf. In a fierce back-and-forth game, the two quarterbacks drafted 1 and 2 in 1998 traded touchdowns, but in the end, the Saints pulled away to win by a final score of 45-42. After the game, Leaf created controversy when he nearly attacked a reporter trying to interview him in the locker room, yelling out "Get the fuck away from me, all right?" on live television. Meanwhile, in the AFC, the Titans had to battle the Indianapolis Colts in the conference championship. Led by Jim Harbaugh, who had announced before the season began that this would be his last year in the league, the upstart Colts led a valiant effort, but ultimately fell to the Titans, 28-18. With Selena singing the national anthem and Kid Rock performing at halftime, the Super Bowl musical lineup was arguably more entertaining than most of the game, a defensive struggle that pitted the Titans' potent defense against the Saints' usually potent offense. In the end, the Titans won the day by a final score of 13-6, after Kevin Dyson scored the game-winning touchdown on a 71-yard reception with just under a minute to go in the game. Dyson was named the Super Bowl MVP.

2000's NFL draft saw the St. Louis Rams, who finished worst in the league with a 1-15 record, pick offensive tackle Chris Samuels with their pick in hopes of building a better offensive line for the on-again off-again Ricky Williams. The hapless Cleveland Browns

snapped up Courtney Brown at #2, while running back Jamal Lewis was picked by the New England Patriots at #3.

Notably, the Indianapolis Colts, who were expected to pick quarterback Chad Pennington to replace Jim Harbaugh, instead waited until the fifth round to select Michigan's Tom Brady. The Colts already had a capable backup in Trent Dilfer, whom the Colts expected to compete with Tom Brady for the starting spot during preseason.

-excerpted from the article "NFL Recap: 2000" on Bleacherreport.com

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### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: January 2000**

1. Final Fantasy VIII
2. Ultra Donkey Kong Country
3. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
4. Silent Hill
5. Super Smash Bros.
6. Half-Life
7. Fire Emblem: The False Princess
8. Dog Dash 3
9. Metal Gear Solid
10. Super Mario Dimensions

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: January 2000**

1. Resident Evil: Code Veronica
2. Soul Calibur
3. Sonic the Hedgehog 5
4. Turok III: Generation War
5. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater
6. Ridge Racer 2
7. Silent Hill
8. Commander Keen: When Universes Collide
9. Marvel vs. Capcom
10. Virtua Fighter 3

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*"AOL To Purchase Time Warner For \$175 Billion: Biggest Corporate Merger Ever"*

*"Microsoft Stock Prices Inch Upward On Video Game Console Rumors"*

*"Sega To Lay Off More Employees, Market Share Lowest Since 1991"*

-headlines on AOL.com's business news webpage, January 24, 2000

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As something of an aside to the Commander Keen "Multiverse Saga," I thought I would touch on the *Commander Keen* animated series that ran from 1999 to 2001. Many fans such as myself consider it one of the best animated shows based on a video game alongside Greg Weisman's *Legend of Zelda* and the SatAM incarnation of *Sonic the Hedgehog*. I can attribute this to Tom Ruegger as executive producer of the series, giving it a similar tone to *Animaniacs* and *Freakazoid*. He admittedly knew little of the series beforehand except what he saw when his three sons play *The Universe is Toast* on their Sega Saturn.

The format, for the most part, was similar to his previous work with an average of three shorts focusing on Keen's exploits as "Defender of the Earth" and how it contrasted with his mundane terrestrial existence as 8-year-old boy genius. It was also chock full of pop cultural references and subversively adult humor that Ruegger and the writers could get past the radar of network censors. However, the series gained some notoriety with one of its rare full-length episodes known as "The Fatal Frontier."

The episode itself was a thinly-veiled parody of *Star Trek* fandom and was originally written with voice actors impersonating the original cast. It was only fortuitous timing that casting and voice director, Andrea Romano cast Leonard Nimoy as the devil in all-but-name Mr. Satin for both *Mars' Most Wanted* and the animated series. Nimoy happened upon a draft of "The Fatal Frontier" and suggested bringing in the cast of the Original Series. To everyone's surprise William Shatner and DeForest Kelly agreed to lend their vocal talents to the show (Kelly recorded his lines months before his passing in June 1999). Nichelle Nichols, Walter Koenig, George Takei, and James Doohan also returned to "reprise" their roles.

As for the plot, it bears many similarities to *Galaxy Quest* released a two months after its original airdate. The actors from Keen's favourite television, *Quasar Quest*, find themselves abducted by aliens (voiced by Next Generation alumni Brent Spiner, Dwight Schultz, as well as series regular Rob Paulsen) to fight an alien warlord voiced by Michael Dorn. As a parody of Star Trek fandom, these aliens, called the Dwibs, resemble the principal cast of *Revenge of the Nerds* complete with homemade uniforms, poor hygiene, and aversion to sunlight. Keen calls them a planet of basement dwellers.

Most of the comedy comes from William Shatner's performance an exaggerated version of himself called Bill Shattered, whose ego dwarfs the Milky Way and despised by his co-stars. He honestly believes that the very real danger they face is a reenactment of one their episodes and takes credit for Keen's efforts to keep him from getting killed. Meanwhile, the other *Quasar Quest* cast members of the struggle to play the roles of their characters on the show, notably Kelly's character (Kelsey Meadows), who is implied to be alcoholic, and Nimoy's burnt-out and cynical counterpart.

Despite Keen's warnings, flabby and barechested Shattered fights and loses to a lizard alien in a brief scene parodying the Gorn fight from "Arena," which reveals the fact they are actors. Thus the rest of episode focuses on Keen and the casts' (minus a traumatized Shattered) efforts to teach the Dwibs how to fight back. However, the problem with the original broadcast version was that time constraints forced the producers to truncate the episode to fit into 24 minutes. That meant that many of the actors outside that Kirk/Spock/McCoy trifecta didn't receive as much attention, though they did get some memorable lines like Keen prodding Koenig's character into using a Russian accent ("Say

Nuclear Wessels!") or getting Takei to repeat his famous, albeit from *Third Rock From the Sun*, "Oh my!"

Personally, my favourite is Michael Dorn's Warlord shouting, "DWIIIIIIBS!" right out of *Revenge of the Nerds*.

Despite this, "The Fatal Frontier" became one of the series' highest-rated episodes. As with *Galaxy Quest*, it became popular with Trekkers disappointed with the direction of the series after *Rubicon*, the sudden cancellation of *Voyager*, and the tone of *Nemesis*. Ruegger later revealed in 2000 that they had originally recorded over an hour's worth of dialogue, and even storyboarded an hour-long special just in case the studio was interested. Demand from both Commander Keen and Star Trek fans ultimately led to a rare collaboration between Warner Bros. and Paramount to co-produce a feature-length version of the episode to release for the 35th anniversary of Star Trek.

*Commander Keen: The Fatal Frontier* saw a limited theatrical release on September 7, 2001 followed by a tremendously successful home release on VHS and DVD. With the release of *Commander Keen: Worlds United* as a launch title for the Katana in March, Keen was at the apex of his popularity. Though its run was comparatively brief at two seasons and fifty-two episodes total, "The Fatal Frontier" (both broadcast and feature-length version) and its sheer amount of Star Trek references helped cement the series' place in popular culture. Not only among video game fans, but also among animation fans and science fiction aficionados.

-from the blog "The Musing Platypus" by B. Ronning, March 17, 2013

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"Acclaim vs. Acclaim? Dueling FPS Blockbusters Launch On The Same Day, We'll Tell You Which One Outguns The Other!"

-The headline of the March 2000 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, which reviewed the games *Disavowed* and *Turok III: Rage Wars*

"There's no rivalry here, we hope they both sell great. Of course, I am a BIT partial to *Disavowed*."

-Marc Pacini, when asked by ZDTV's Adam Sessler about the fact that Acclaim is launching two major FPSes in February 2000, one for each major console

"It was a huge honor, being asked to score a game for a Japanese company. Of course I jumped, especially after I learned someone else would be composing for *The Resurrection Stone*."

-Jeremy Soule in a May 2003 interview with GameSymphonies.com, discussing his work on Enix and Quintet's *Laika's Journey*

"*Laika's Journey* was a brilliant game. And it tanked. Utterly tanked. Enix's games were still doing well in Japan, but in North America they were floundering, and Enix's American brass

*blamed Sega. They wanted to go back to doing games for Nintendo, and when that contract was up in 2001, the second most popular RPG makers in the world would have a big decision to make."*

-from "The Chase: Sega's 20-Year Struggle To Take Down A Giant"

*"That's it. End of the road. Drop your gun and come back with me or I'll put a bullet through your skull. I don't give a damn about our friendship. You turned your back on that when you killed Annie."*

-Kevin Straborg, *Disavowed*

*"I just said to him, 'Kurt, I know this is the last thing you ever want to hear, especially from me, but the world needs you to make music again.'"*

-Kathleen Hanna, in a 2004 interview with MTV News

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*Ultra Nintendo:*

### **Armorines: Project S.W.A.R.M.**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "This is a nifty shooter with interesting protagonists and excellent play controls.")

Gamespot: 4.7 (quote: "Incredibly derivative, it ultimately pales in comparison to other shooters on the market.")

### **Brunswick Pro Circuit Bowling**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "If bowling doesn't appeal to you, this game won't change your mind. With that said, it's very realistic.")

Gamespot: 7.3 (quote: "A supremely good bowling game with several real-life pros.")

### **CyberTiger**

EGM: 4.0 (quote: "An exceedingly silly golfing title, and definitely not in a good way.")

Gamespot: 3.0 (quote: "Just a really hideous golfing game.")

### **Dynasty Warriors 2**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "An addictive and fun tactical hack-and-slash.")

Gamespot: 7.6 (quote: "It gets repetitive after a while, but the action is fantastic.")

### **Mystical Ninja Goemon II**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "Some creative boss fights help to break up the monotony in parts of the game.")

Gamespot: 6.3 (quote: "The combat is improved, but the level structure could use some work.")

**NASCAR: Daytona Thunder** (also released for the Sega Saturn)

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "Excellent graphics make this the best NASCAR game to date.")  
Gamespot: 8.5 (quote: "White-knuckle racing action and lifelike tracks highlight this superb EA title.")

### **NBA In The Zone 2000** (also released for the Sega Saturn)

EGM: 5.5 (quote: "Mediocre graphics and gameplay drag this game down.")  
Gamespot: 5.9 (quote: "A lack of modes and customization are disappointing for what is a fairly solid basketball sim.")

### **Panzer Front**

EGM: 6.8 (quote: "I liked the addition of realistic tanks, though some missions can be very dull.")  
Gamespot: 7.2 (quote: "Finally, a good tank combat game on the Ultra Nintendo. X: Tactics doesn't count, those aren't real tanks.")

### **Plasma Sword: Nightmare of Bilstein** (also released for the Sega Saturn)

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "A weird but ultimately really fun fighting game.")  
Gamespot: 7.3 (quote: "A big assortment of characters highlight a pretty good weapon-based fighter.")

### **Transformers: Beast Wars**

EGM: 5.0 (quote: "A shame that this game based on such an interesting property is ultimately really dull.")  
Gamespot: 7.1 (quote: "A bit short for my tastes, but the graphics and rocking soundtrack brought up the quality of this game.")

### **Ultra Choro Q**

EGM: 6.3 (quote: "A really weird little racer that's fun in short bursts.")  
Gamespot: 5.6 (quote: "The presentation could use a lot of work.")

### **Wipeout 2**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "This game features some splendid track design.")  
Gamespot: 7.3 (quote: "It's not the best futuristic racer on the console, but it has a lot of good qualities.")

### **Xena: Warrior Princess**

EGM: 3.8 (quote: "Was there any doubt a Xena game would be a disaster?")  
Gamespot: 4.6 (quote: "It's a shame this game is so mediocre, because done right, a Xena video game could be amazing. The problem is doing it right.")

### **Ultra Frederico**

EGM: 8.2 (quote: "While it isn't the most original platformer, it's packed with classic

Frederico fun.”)

Gamespot: 8.8 (quote: “Colorful and full of life, Ultra Frederico is fun from start to finish.”)

### **Disavowed**

EGM: 8.7 (quote: “One of the smartest shooters I've played in a long time.”)

Gamespot: 9.4 (quote: “The best thing about this FPS isn't its shooting mechanics (though they're fantastic). It's the fleshed out characters.”)

### **Rapidfire**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: “The gameplay is easy to pick up, but this game doesn't have much going for it otherwise.”)

Gamespot: 5.4 (quote: “Most great puzzle games are addictive immediately. This one never really hooks you.”)

### **Kydia: Invading Armies**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: “But even if battling itself isn't all that innovative, the character customization system is deep and rewarding.”)

Gamespot: 5.9 (quote: “Menus, menus, and more menus! It's easy to spend way more time in your menus than you do on the battlefield.”)

*Saturn:*

### **Turok III: Generation War**

EGM: 8.2 (quote: “Even with a new character, it's still the same old Turok, for better or worse.”)

Gamespot: 8.1 (quote: “With less weapons to use, it's a more simple, streamlined Turok.”)

### **Laika's Journey**

EGM: 9.2 (quote: “At times, this game is positively brilliant.”)

Gamespot: 8.2 (quote: “For all its quirks, Laika's Journey maintains Quintet's record of RPG excellence.”)

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### **Disavowed: The Basics**

*Disavowed* is a first-person shooter developed by Acclaim exclusively for the Ultra Nintendo. The game is a combination FPS/stealth title that plays somewhat like a cross between Activision's *Call of Duty* series and *Goldeneye 007*, it rewards and for certain missions outright requires stealth, but most of the time plays like a standard FPS. The game contains a variety of guns, based on real-life firearms, with an assortment of realistic stealth gadgets as well (there's very little in the way of futuristic tech in this game). Like in the *Turok* games, your character can jump, though there isn't any real “platforming” in the game per se. You can also perform stealth melee takedowns, and even use your weapon to this effect (i.e., if you shoot an enemy in the throat and he survives, he still won't be able to call for help). Most of the enemies are ordinary humans, though a few of them are wearing body

armor and are tougher to take down. For the most part, one good well-placed shot kills an enemy, though your character can't take much damage either, and health does not regenerate. You'll need to either pick up health packs to survive, or have some in your (limited) inventory. Though the game features a highly lauded (if a bit short) single player campaign, it is most well known for its multiplayer mode, which rivals *Goldeneye* in terms of quality and popularity. The game contains the usual options (deathmatch, capture-the-flag, etc.) along with an asymmetrical mode that gives one player the ability to battle three players on even footing by serving as a sort of "boss" for a level that the three opponents have to go through. The single player can set traps, deploy hazards, and call in help. This mode is one of the most popular and fun multiplayer variants, and it is highly praised in reviews, with gaming journalists regaling readers with tales of their battles in this mode all throughout 2000, spreading more awareness of the game. The graphics themselves are very good, though not groundbreaking, with a lot of stage detail at the cost of reducing character detail somewhat. The musical soundtrack is also considered to be good, though not a masterpiece, and the voice acting is solid, performed mostly by a cast of cheap unknowns.

The plot of *Disavowed* revolves around a squad of black-ops soldiers deployed by the United States on secret missions around the world. These are above top-secret missions that would create a scandal if ever exposed, and the members of the squad all have mixed feelings about doing America's dirtiest work. The name of the game refers to the fact that if any of the squad's missions are ever compromised, every member of the squad will be completely disavowed by the United States, with a lifetime burn notice and revocation of their citizenship. The squad is led by Kevin Straborg, a young but very gifted man who, between missions, shoots up drugs in order to forget about the terrible things he's done. His best friend on the squad is Eddie Gest, an extremely competent but somewhat troubled man who seems to have no problem executing the missions. The squad is assisted by a woman named Annie who gives them their missions and who seems to have a romance with Eddie, though she also has a close relationship with Kevin. The first mission involves the assassination of a United Nations negotiator and seems to go off without a hitch, but when Kevin goes to report the success to his superiors, he finds two members of the squad dead. Kevin soon discovers that Eddie has betrayed him, and after a chase that leads to a lethal explosion that kills dozens of people, Eddie gets away and the squad is left in shambles, with its dirty deeds exposed for all to see. Kevin is immediately branded a terrorist and targeted by the United States government, and must now hunt down Eddie in the hopes of finding out what Eddie's up to while at the same time looking for any possibility of getting his persona non grata status in the United States revoked. The game contains through 14 levels, with the first half of the game involving Kevin attempting to find the four remaining living members of his squad. Of those four, one of them (Mishka) is working with Eddie, one of them (Savage) becomes an ally, another (Trent) is killed by Kevin, and the final one (Bail) is killed by Eddie). Kevin also reunites with Annie, who begins covertly helping him, gleaning whatever information she can to help track Eddie down. As the game continues, Kevin, separated from his drugs, begins undergoing symptoms of withdrawal. He also pieces together Eddie's motives for betraying the squad: through the squad's missions, Eddie has discovered what makes the wheels of power turn in the world, and hopes to position himself to take control over world affairs. However, he is trying to trick Kevin, Annie, and Mishka into believing he has a more noble purpose of preventing America from using black ops teams to conduct secret missions around the world. At first, Kevin wants to believe that Eddie really might still be his friend, and at the end of Mission 10, Annie goes to try and talk Eddie into surrendering. However, Eddie's words were a trick, and he leaves Annie as a trap to try and take Kevin out. Annie sacrifices herself to save Kevin's life, but now Kevin knows that Eddie only seeks power, and no longer has any qualms about killing him. The last three

missions involve Kevin finally tracking down and killing Eddie. Mission 13 involves Kevin trying to stop Mishka, only for Eddie to kill her when she realizes how evil he truly is. In Mission 14, there's a huge three-way confrontation between Kevin, the US government, and Eddie. And in the final mission, Kevin and Eddie have their final showdown. After stopping Eddie, Kevin and Savage are privately acknowledged by the government for their heroism, but there is no indication that the US government will cease its shady black ops missions, and is indeed seen putting together a new squad at the end of the game. Kevin and Savage are forced to go totally off the grid, deciding to work as mercenaries as they continue to elude the forces sent to apprehend them.

*Disavowed* is considered to be one of 2000's best games, both critically and commercially, and is accompanied by a huge marketing campaign. Though developed by Acclaim and not Activision, it's considered later on to be the proto-*Call of Duty* type FPS, with numerous people who worked on the original *Disavowed* later working for Activision to produce some of the *Call of Duty* games later on. It's considered exceptionally popular among young male players, though women take issues with the game's fairly brutal "fridgings" of Annie and Mishka. When *Velvet Dark* is released later in the year, featuring numerous prominent female characters, this contributes heavily to the fandom rivalry between the two games.

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### **Turok III: Generation War- The Basics**

Acclaim's other FPS released in the month of February, *Turok III: Generation War* is the latest game in the *Turok* series, the last to appear on the Saturn and the last to be console-exclusive at release. Its plot is a mix of original elements, *OTL Shadow of Oblivion*, and *OTL Rage Wars*. The game's weapon selection is vastly streamlined from earlier *Turok* games, with less than half of the weapon selection of the previous game (and some of those weapons exclusive to Turok/Joshua or his sister Danielle). The game features ten levels in all, two of which must be explored by Joshua, two which must be explored by Danielle, and the remaining six which can be explored by either one. All ten levels can also be explored by both players in the game's co-op mode, which spawns more and more difficult enemies for two players to deal with. This game, unlike the previous two games, requires the use of the Ring, though graphically it isn't really a major step up from *Turok 2*. It also includes a multiplayer mode, though there aren't many more additional options from the previous game.

The plot of the game eschews OTL's *Oblivion* in favor of a new villain called the Lord of Ages, who has the power to tear holes in space and time. Along with his vast army, he uses these holes to call forth creatures from all eras. In addition to aliens and dinosaurs, the Lord of Ages can call forth Roman centurions, futuristic soldiers, cyborgs, and even mysterious eidritch abominations (toward the end of the game). Across the ten levels of the game, Joshua and Danielle can traverse space and time through the portals, and must do so to smash the Age Stones, artifacts that the Lord of Ages is using to exert his control. Once all ten Stones are smashed, the Lord of Ages can no longer escape through the warp holes and can be fought on an even footing. The final battle takes place in the Roman Coliseum in front of a massive crowd of ancient Romans (though the final battle is so violent and explosive that it kills many of them and sends the others fleeing). If Danielle is the one to defeat the Lord of Ages (either by the player choosing to control her in single-player mode or Danielle landing the finishing blow in co-op mode), there is a special ending where Joshua hands down the mantle of Turok to Danielle.

Though *Generation War* is criticized by some for being a somewhat more derivative FPS than the first two games, and cutting down the weapon selection significantly, it's still reviewed quite well and becomes one of the Saturn's best sellers of the year. The game completes what is known as the Original Trilogy of Turok games before the series' reboot in 2002 (as a multiplatform series), and the trilogy is ultimately regarded as one of the Saturn's very best franchises.

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*Ultra Frederico* was the series' first outing in full 3D, and like other sidescrollers of the day that made the transition, the results were mixed but for the most part quite good. Frederico was once again called upon to rescue his beautiful girlfriend Madelina, who has been kidnapped by a masked rider known as the Bandolero. *Frederico* pursues the Bandolero through a number of colorful, Western-themed stages, where he is required to assist a certain number of people before moving on. *Frederico* is packing a pair of pistols in this game, and can also deploy his sombrero for a number of purposes, both as a weapon and as a utility item that can flip switches, hold treasures, and even be used as a mobile disguise closet (Frederico's silly, obvious, but effective disguises are a running joke throughout the game). *Ultra Frederico* even came with its own multiplayer mode, though instead of being combat-focused, it was all about which player could gather the most treasures.

The game's ending came with a major twist: Madelina had arranged her own kidnapping! She set herself up to be taken by the Bandolero so that she could force him to do her bidding by performing various acts of kindness in the towns he passed through. She wanted to see if he could be as much of a hero as Frederico, but in the end, she decided that Frederico was the better hero, and sent the Bandolero packing! *Ultra Frederico* scored great reviews and strong sales from the usual fans of the series, who made the game one of the Ultra Nintendo's top sellers of the month. Frederico wasn't about to replace Mario on the pantheon of video game heroes, but he's always had his own particular brand of charm, and had become one of those ubiquitous video game mascots who made us smile whenever he showed up.

-excerpted from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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Reporter: And at this year's Grammy Awards gifting booth, Selena seemed especially happy to be getting an Ultra Nintendo, the world's hottest gaming system.

Selena: Finally, I got my hands on one of these! \*laughing\*

Reporter: When asked what game she'd be playing first, Selena didn't hesitate to answer.

Selena: *Frederico*! \*laughing again\* I promised a friend I'd play, so that's the first thing I'm gonna do.

Reporter: Of course, many recording artists at the Grammys already own an Ultra Nintendo, including Moby, who's up for Song of the Year, and Christina Aguilera, who looks to be the favorite for Best New Artist. Aguilera said she'd give her Grammy gift to a friend.

\*Another reporter is holding a microphone up to Selena as she carries around her new Ultra Nintendo.\*

Reporter: Is there a reason you didn't buy one of these before?

Selena: I've been so busy! I just finished working on my new album, I've been on tour, I mean...finally I get a chance to sit down and relax! I wouldn't have even had the time to play before.

-from the February 21, 2000 episode of *Entertainment Tonight*

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*Laika's Journey*, at times, defies explanation. At times it plays like somewhat of a *Secret of Mana* or *Terranigma* clone, letting you control either the girl Minka or the dog Laika in combat with typical action-RPG type enemies. At other times, you're taking control of Laika as she absorbs one of eight "soul essences" to solve some of the weirdest puzzles we've ever seen in a video game. As you traverse the solar system, traveling from planet to planet to conquer the challenges on each one, the game gets more and more complicated, and stranger at that. The amazing musical score by Jeremy Soule fits perfectly in nearly every scene, and songs rarely get repetitive or boring, even when you're stumped for the better part of an hour on a tricky puzzle. By the time you unravel the game's mysteries and reach the final showdown, you've bonded with these two characters more than you ever expected to, and there's absolutely no fatigue as the game races toward its incredible and poignant conclusion.

I feel like this game is what *Granstream* should have been. It gets back to Quintet's roots, while laying the groundwork for future games. It's a superb and at times mind-blowing game. *Laika's Journey* is a winner, and all RPG-loving Saturn owners should play it.

Score: 10

-from the RPGamer.net review of *Laika's Journey*, posted on February 10, 2000

### **Enix Announces First Katana Game, Japanese Release Dates For Dragon Quest VII And Planetary Probe**

In a brief press statement released yesterday, the software company Enix announced that *Revolution Alpha*, a fantasy-based role-playing game, would be the company's first game for the new Sega Katana system, and that it would release in Japan sometime in 2001. The first screenshots reveal a vast world, where three young characters are exploring the ruins of a destroyed castle and collecting pieces of a jeweled tablet. Rumors are that Enix may begin developing games for the Ultra Nintendo once their contract with Sega expires next year, but so far, those rumors have been unconfirmed.

The company also announced release dates for their upcoming games *Dragon Quest VII* and *Planetary Probe II*. *Dragon Quest VII* is set to launch in Japan on May 7, 2000, while *Planetary Probe II* is scheduled for release on August 28, 2000. *Planetary Probe II* has already been announced for a North American release, while nothing official has been said about *Dragon Quest VII*'s localization. It's likely that the game will see a North American

release sometime in 2001.

-excerpted from an article posted on Gamespot.com on February 12, 2000

Interviewer: Are you disappointed that *Dragon Quest VII* will only be released for the Sega Saturn?

Shigeru Miyamoto: I did enjoy the previous games greatly, so when I found out that the seventh game was only coming to the Saturn...well, yes, that was a bit disheartening to me.

Interviewer: Are you planning to play it anyway?

Miyamoto: Uhhhh....errr....well.....\*laughs\* Some of us have enjoyed certain Sega Saturn games! So, I don't think it would cause a big problem. \*laughs again\*

-from an interview on a Japanese television program, February 14, 2000

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*It's hard to imagine a better start to the year for Psygnosis than releasing the sequel to one of the first hit racing titles for the Ultra Nintendo, Wipeout. Wipeout 2 is a critical hit, taking everything folks loved about the first game and adding more. More tracks, more racers, more custom parts for vehicles... it's one of the hottest games of the month and looking to be a sales success for the company. Now, they're getting set to release a second game. In Future Fear: Escape The Arena, you're thrust into a Thunderdome-like battlefield to fight for your life, and must not only survive, but win your freedom.*

We got an early look at *Future Fear* when we visited the company's studios in Liverpool, England, and the game definitely has a "you against the world" type of feel. Indeed, when you begin the game, everyone is an enemy.

"You'll have to resist the urge to kill everybody you see," said Gavin Whitlock, one of the game's lead programmers. He advised us to avoid shooting all but the most hostile opponents, as we would have the opportunity to recruit some of the survivors later, and this would not only help us against foes down the road, but would also affect the game's ending. "Only kill when you're cornered, and even then, look for a way out."

It seems counterintuitive not to think about killing everything in a game packed with rapid-fire energy weapons and powerful melee combos. The game's combat system is one of the best we've experienced, and it seemed like a waste to let it go unused, but Whitlock promised our restraint would pay off down the road.

*Future Fear* puts you in the shoes of Adaline, a woman captured along with about thirty others by a mercenary squad hired to capture human slaves that are then given to the organizers of a battle tournament that pits these slaves against one another in a massive combat arena, with only one survivor allowed. It paints a picture of a ruined world, one where might makes right and power is the only currency. It's as dark a future as you can possibly imagine, and Whitlock warns us that this game isn't for the faint of heart.

"You're gonna see some nasty stuff as you play," said Whitlock, who anticipates an M rating

from the ESRB for this game. "Human trafficking, armed gangs of violent thugs, people starving to death in the streets...it ain't a pretty picture, but Adaline represents a ray of hope in the darkness."

As we played through an early level where Adaline had to find a weapon and either fight or flee from an organized gang of ruffians, we got the sense that sparing some of these people would not be the easy path. Indeed, most of this gang you will eventually have to kill, with the exception of a teenage boy whom you can choose to spare as long as you kill the other gang members first.

Eventually, promises Whitlock (and the game's subtitle), Adaline will escape the arena and take her fight to the merciless, sadistic warlords who set up these horrifying combat tournaments. Of course, these people are rich and armed to the teeth, and it'll take every ounce of courage Adaline has, and every ally she can scrounge up, in order to defeat them.

"If you kill everybody in that arena, you're gonna have a rough time. Believe me, without at least one good ally, you'll have a very difficult second half of the game."

*Future Fear: Escape The Arena* is scheduled for an April release.

-excerpted from the March 2000 issue of *Game Informer* magazine

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Going into the 42nd annual Grammy Awards, nobody knew who was going to win Album of the Year. It seemed to be a two-way race between Santana's *Supernatural* and Nirvana's *Waste Of Time*, but The Backstreet Boys' *Millennium*, The Dixie Chicks' *Fly*, and Alison Pipitone's *The Lifting Tree* were all considered strong contenders with a dark horse shot. Alison Pipitone took home Best New Artist in an upset over pop princesses Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera. Throughout the night, Nirvana and Santana swept the awards in their own categories, and even split Record of the Year and Song of the Year, with the former going to "Smooth" from *Supernatural*, and the latter going to "Floating Down The Columbia River" from *Waste Of Time*. When Nirvana was announced as the winner for Album of the Year, the crowd went wild, and Kurt Cobain, who hadn't been seen up at the podium the whole night, took the stage. Instead of talking about his album, Kurt addressed a variety of issues relating to his advocacy of minority rights, and also spoke about suicide prevention. The speech is considered to be one of the greatest award speeches ever given at the Grammys, and drew a massive standing ovation from the crowd.

The night was highlighted by a number of performances, especially from Santana, who took the stage with Christina Aguilera, Rob Thomas, and Selena, the latter of whom remained on stage afterward to perform a song from her upcoming album, *Rio Grande*, scheduled to release that spring. Other performers included the Backstreet Boys, Ricky Martin, and Marc Anthony.

-from a 2000 Grammy Awards recap posted on a music history blog on January 16, 2013

"And Cobain's angry Woodstock declaration has apparently turned out to be a ten-minute retirement, as he's already announced plans to make music again sometime in the future. However, that music may not necessarily be with Nirvana. Sources close to the band say that members Dave Grohl and Krist Novoselic are looking into working on their own project,

*while Kurt seems to be spending much of his time with new girlfriend Kathleen Hanna. While Nirvana hasn't formally broken up, the three band members have all expressed a desire to explore their own musical pursuits, away from the crowds and glitz that typically accompany anything having to do with the band. As for Kurt's on-again, off-again relationship with Courtney Love, the two broke up early last year after reconciling in 1997, and Kurt seems to be done with Courtney for good, though the two do take turns raising the couple's daughter Frances."*

-from "Music Minute" on the syndicated celebrity news show *Thirty Minutes Of Fame*, February 25, 2000

*"So now I've said my piece, and I'm gonna thank one person, and she's sitting right over there in the fourth row. Kathleen, you said to me, that the world needs me to make music. And that's not true. The world doesn't need Nirvana. The world needs to feed everybody. The world needs to make sure that everybody is treated with the same amount of respect. The world needs to make sure that people who shoot up heroin like I used to do can get medical treatment. But... I guess, what you were trying to say is that the world needs me to talk about shit like this because a lot of people won't listen to nobody else. And that's kinda fucked up, you know, when you got a guy, who it's his job to talk about this kinda stuff says this stuff and people don't listen to him, but they'll listen to me because I play a guitar or whatever. And I guess, until the world starts listening to the right people, I gotta tell 'em. Everybody out there who gets it, thanks for getting it. I still like playing music, don't worry about that. Kathleen, I love you. Okay then."*

-the end of Kurt Cobain's Album of the Year acceptance speech, which, despite containing multiple uses of profanity, did not get the network into trouble for broadcasting it because Kurt warned a network technician beforehand that 'if I win, you might have to bleep me or whatever', and the network was able to put his speech on a five-second tape delay and censor the strongest profanities

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\*Alex Stansfield and Brittany Saldita are standing in front of a screen displaying footage from *Pokemon Yellow*, the two of them are talking about various advanced strategies in the game.\*

Alex: Now, this is something that Nintendo likes to keep hidden. Fortunately, we here at *GameTV* are in the business of spilling all these little secrets for our viewers!

Brittany: Did you know that every single Pokemon, without exception, has hidden stats that determine just how powerful the Pokemon will be? From the moment you catch it, these stats determine just how strong their other stats will become!

Alex: That's right. So, for example, if you catch a Rattata, and you catch another Rattata, they can be the same level but have completely different strengths! You might have noticed how one Rattata can have 12 hit points but then the next Rattata you find has 11. That's because of something called Initial Values!

Brittany: There's a complicated algebra formula that determines how these values effect your Pokemon.

Alex: This is why you need to pay attention in math class! You actually CAN use that stupid crap in real life!

\*The two go on to explain how the IV system works, with numbers from 0-15 that determine your Pokemon's stats\*

Brittany: If you want to know EXACTLY what your Pokemon's initial values are, there's a handy calculator on the *GameTV* website. Just plug in some numbers from your game and it'll spit out the Initial Value!

\*They then explain effort values\*

Alex: What it all basically means is that by defeating stronger Pokemon, you can make your own Pokemon stronger.

Brittany: In fact, even after you reach level 100, you can still defeat Pokemon to earn effort points even though you can no longer level up!

\*Alex demonstrates this with a level 100 Farfetch'd\*

Brittany: Really? You raised a Farfetch'd all the way to level 100?

Alex: It's not mine, it's MTV's!

Brittany: ...really, MTV? You raised a Farfetch'd all the way to level 100?

Alex: Just put the Pokemon back in the PC, take them out, and voila! You've just raised your Pokemon's stats without having to level up!

Brittany: We asked Nintendo why they keep IVs and EVs a secret. They replied back, saying that they want players to think of Pokemon as true-to-life friends and not just data on a screen.

Alex: So that means whenever you delete your saved game, you're a murderer!

Brittany: Hooray!

(...)

Lyssa Fielding: *Laika's Journey* is another gorgeous RPG, full of mystical worlds to explore and featuring a beautiful relationship between a young girl and her faithful dog. This game's puzzles will stump you, its environments will wow you, and its storyline will touch you.

Gary Westhouse: I'm afraid to say I wasn't as impressed with it as you were, Lyssa, and here's why. This game grinds to a screeching halt on multiple occasions. The puzzles are tough, yes, but also time-consuming, even if you know what you're doing, and there's way too much backtracking for my tastes.

Lyssa: I didn't get the sense that the backtracking was all that bad.

Gary: Okay, here's an example from early on in the game. You're on Mercury and you have to reflect the Sun's light to a series of mirrors set up all over this temple. The mirrors are

spaced WAY too far apart, and in order to turn the mirrors you need to go to the individual mirrors and adjust them. If you're wrong, it takes a long time to figure out what you just messed up. Meanwhile, the game's sending tons of enemies to get in your way!

Lyssa: That's one example, and there were very few puzzles in the game that were that time-consuming. I breezed through most of it, I only got stumped a couple times on Jupiter-

Gary: Jupiter was bad too.

Lyssa: And then on Uranus, there was a pretty tricky puzzle but there was a shortcut to it.

Gary: I liked certain parts of this game. I LOVED certain parts of this game. But I thought the pacing got messed up by the puzzles and also from needing to swap power-ups too often. I'm giving it a 3.5.

Lyssa: Apart from a few really minor flaws, *Laika's Journey* is a masterpiece. You're going to LOVE the dog by the time the game is over! I'm giving it a 5, and Gary, I think you need to give it another chance.

Gary: And struggle through those puzzles again?

Lyssa: You'll do better now that you know how to solve them! C'mon!

Gary: I'm surprised you had the patience to get through them.

Lyssa: A comfy couch helps.

-excerpted from the February 8, 2000 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Alex: I gotta say, I'm almost sorry I was too old for Transformers as a kid. The original show seems really awesome.

Steve Horton: I didn't play with them things.

Alex: They looked pretty cool on the commercials. So anyway, what did you think of *Beast Wars*?

Steve: It's terrible!

Alex: You gotta admit, the transformation sequences are pretty cool.

Steve: Yeah, but fights are repetitive, level objectives are confusing...

Alex: That was a problem I had with the game too. It barely tells you where you need to go or what you need to kill and so you end up wandering around for a while. Levels are usually too small to get lost, but it's still pretty annoying. The multiplayer mode is pretty neat.

\*The screen quickly shows off the game's multiplayer mode, with two Maximals fighting each other in 2-D fighting game-style combat\*

Steve: \*shrugs\* It's no *Tekken*.

Alex: But seeing Optimus Primal punch the head off the other robots is neat. You know, I'm giving this game a 3.

Steve: I gotta give it a 2, the music's not bad and the graphics are okay, but gameplay wise it's really just your basic action game. You'd have more fun playing with the toys.

Alex: The toys look awesome, don't they?

(...)

Ted: The one problem I have with this game is it's short. There's 15 missions in all, but a lot of them are really short and it feels like...it feels like they knew people would have so much fun with the multiplayer that they wouldn't have time for the single player mode!

Alex: Yeah, and that works for people who have friends, but people who don't have friends, or people who are living WAY across the country from their friends, are gonna have trouble. BUT, all that said, the single player mode is still great. The storyline's fantastic, the characters are great, it's fine. The multiplayer mode is just there for replay value.

Ted: This game's got the best multiplayer mode I've ever seen. It's just addictive! Especially 3-on-1 mode, I could play that for days on end.

Alex: So the bottom line is....?

Ted: If you're JUST getting it for the single player mode, maybe wait for a sale?

Alex: And if you've got three friends who love first person shooters...

Ted: It's a must buy. I'm giving it a 4.5 out of 5.

Alex: I'm also giving it a 4.5. *Disavowed*, lives up to the hype, most definitely.

-excerpted from the February 15, 2000 episode of *GameTV*

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### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: February 2000**

1. Squad Four: Rebellion
2. Final Fantasy VIII
3. Emergency
4. Ultra Donkey Kong Country
5. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
6. Super Smash Bros.
7. Silent Hill

8. Star Wars: Battlefront
9. Half-Life
10. Fire Emblem: The False Princess

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: February 2000**

1. Soul Calibur
2. Turok III: Generation War
3. Resident Evil: Code Veronica
4. Sonic The Hedgehog 5
5. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater
6. Silent Hill
7. Ridge Racer 2
8. Phantasy Star VI
9. Commander Keen: When Universes Collide
10. Klonoa 2

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\*A bunch of kids are on the playground with their Game Boys and Game Boy Colors. They're paying attention to their screens, but in the sky, something is shining...\*

\*One by one, the kids look up to see the shining light as it gets brighter and brighter. Then, it bursts forth in a bright supernova. The energy from the supernova rains down on the playground.\*

Narrator: A supernova is the most powerful force in the universe. Now, the power of a supernova...

\*The kids are jolted as the energy is absorbed into their Game Boys, transforming them into Game Boy Novas with bright flashes of light.\*

Narrator: Is in the palm of your hand.

\*Footage from *Super Mario Nova*, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*, *Dodgeball*, *Street Fighter III: The New Age*, and various other games is shown on screen as the kids excitedly play.\*

Narrator: Enter the world of the Game Boy Nova, the most powerful handheld gaming device ever. Enjoy console-quality graphics and lifelike sound as you play games like *Super Mario Nova* and *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*.

\*Around the city, more people are shown with their Game Boys being hit by the mysterious energy and transforming into Game Boy Novas.\*

Narrator: Capture your world with the built-in camera.

\*People are shown taking pictures and then editing them in the internal software.\*

Narrator: Take your memories anywhere you go with the built-in memory chip.

\*People are shown scrolling through old Game Boy save files (*Pokemon* is notably absent, certain games, including *Pokemon*, don't allow this feature to be used)\*

Narrator: And connect to the Ultra Nintendo to unlock incredible secrets.

\*Footage from a *Pokemon* save file being used to import *Pokemon* into the new *Pokemon Stadium* game is shown (this is one feature that is allowed to be used, though again, you can't use it to have more than one save file)\*

Narrator: Unstoppable power, unleashed! The Game Boy Nova is here.

\*The kids on the playground are shown playing with Game Boy Novas as their hair stands up from the force of the supernova energy\*

\*The Game Boy Nova logo is shown.\*

## ***Handheld Gaming Reborn***

*March 26*

-the North American advertisement for the Game Boy Nova, which began airing in March 2000

*"High Stakes sold well, but I thought it was an incomplete game. I thought, 'let's do this again, let's make a true next-generation Need For Speed game'. And we were already working on Porsche Unleashed. We already had the base right there."*

-Tony Parkes, producer of *Need For Speed: Unleashed*

*"That couldn't have been better timing for us. Everybody was playing that game. So by the time The Fast and the Furious came out, people were already familiar with that world. Everybody always asks about a Fast and the Furious video game, but if you ask me, it's Need For Speed: Unleashed."*

-Vin Diesel, in an interview in the June 2003 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"They're both compatible! It takes an extra accessory to connect your Game Boy to your Pokemon Stadium game, but whether you have the new Nova or the original Game Boy, you can import your Pokemon into the game!"*

-from the March 2000 issue of *Nintendo Power*

*"Hey hey! I'm not gonna... wait up, slow down...!!! Oh man...where did that annoying little bird go?"*

-Lupe, *Skulls*

*"Alone...not another human for miles. I won't get anywhere just staying here. I need to start moving. ....it's so cold! I won't survive long without shelter..."*

-Doran, *Phantasy Star VI: Mystery In The Wilds*

*"Everyone could tell a new era was beginning. Microsoft was going all-in on a console. The*

*Saturn was winding down. Nintendo's new handheld looked amazing. Things were changing so rapidly in the gaming world, and for a time, it seemed like all the news was overtaking the games!"*

-Adam Sessler

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*Ultra Nintendo:*

### **Battlezone: Rise Of The Black Dogs**

EGM: 5.5 (quote: "The graphics are lackluster, so it's hard getting immersed in the game even in its better moments.")

Gamespot: 6.8 (quote: "There are certainly better tank games out there, but the multiplayer is pretty solid and is a good way to pass a long night.")

### **Breath Of Fire IV**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "This series has always been just good enough to be satisfying, and that remains true here.")

Gamespot: 6.4 (quote: "While a capable game, it does lack the epic feel of previous series entries.")

### **Galerians**

EGM: 4.0 (quote: "Shoddy graphics and clunky controls make this one a horror dud.")

Gamespot: 6.1 (quote: "When it tries to innovate, it shows promise, but it does look a bit blocky.")

### **Mega Man X6** (also ported to the Sega Saturn)

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "Another exciting effort for the Blue Bomber.")

Gamespot: 7.1 (quote: "It feels somewhat hastily made, and while it retreads familiar ground, it has just enough creativity to keep you entertained.")

### **Need For Speed: Unleashed** (eventually released for the Sega Katana)

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "A fast and exciting racer that hits all the right notes.")

Gamespot: 9.2 (quote: "Gran Turismo meets Cannonball Run in this brilliant racing tour-de-force.")

### **Pokemon Stadium**

EGM: 8.3 (quote: "If you loved Pokemon battles, this one is definitely for you.")

Gamespot: 8.5 (quote: "All 151 original Pokemon look fantastic in full 3-D.")

### **Top Gear: Hyper Bikes**

EGM: 3.0 (quote: "A real mess of a game.")

Gamespot: 2.7 (quote: "This game just looks ugly. It might even be as bad as Motorcycle GT.")

### **Triple Play 2001**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "About as mediocre as baseball games get.")

Gamespot: 5.6 (quote: "Decent graphics can't make up for this game's lack of features.")

### **Twinkle Star Adventure**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "A surprisingly cute and addictive shooter.")

Gamespot: 7.6 (quote: "Is it girly as hell? Yes. Is it difficult as hell? Definitely yes.")

### **Ultra Le Mans: 24 Hours Of Fury**

EGM: 6.5 (quote: "At times, it's exhilarating, though I wish there were more variety in cars.")

Gamespot: 7.2 (quote: "A serviceable racing game that is as much a tribute to the classic French marathon race than it is a racing game in and of itself.")

### **Rage: The Revenge** (also ported to the Sega Saturn)

EGM: 7.3 (quote: "While the series' storylines take a back seat to the brawling, there's plenty of that to go around.")

Gamespot: 8.1 (quote: "An excellent beat 'em up that doesn't spend too much time trying to tell a story.")

### **Skulls**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "A wonderful and colorful platformer that features a memorable protagonist.")

Gamespot: 8.3 (quote: "More than just Frederico for girls, it has a wicked aesthetic all its own and a killer soundtrack.")

### **Cluck Cluck Luck**

EGM: 5.5 (quote: "Running around like a chicken with its head off is fun for a while, though eventually you'll wish this chicken really would get beheaded.")

Gamespot: 5.2 (quote: "When will game companies learn chicken games don't work? There hasn't been a good one since Alfred Chicken.")

### **Breakers**

EGM: 4.0 (quote: "This is like a candy commercial turned into a game, and not in a good way.")

Gamespot: 2.3 (quote: "Riddled with cringe-worthy slang and unlikable characters, not to mention awful platforming, Breakers has a shot at killing all the good will built up by games like Tony Hawk and White Mountain.")

### **Shift Nine**

EGM: 7.2 (quote: "The complex controls make this a racing game for experts only.")

Gamespot: 8.0 (quote: "If you take the time to master this game's precise timing, Shift Nine is one of the best racing games you'll play all year.")

## **Chokeout**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "We've been craving a UFC-like fighting game, but Chokeout doesn't quite go the distance.")

Gamespot: 4.6 (quote: "It's bloody and brutal, but it doesn't succeed where it counts: the gameplay.")

## **Praxis Gold** (also ported to the Sega Saturn)

EGM: 5.0 (quote: "The play controls really left me disappointed.")

Gamespot: 5.2 (quote: "Play controls mean everything in a shooter, and it's almost impossible to consistently target enemies in this game.")

*Saturn:*

## **Phantasy Star VI**

EGM: 7.7 (quote: "It falls just short of greatness, but Phantasy Star VI is still worth playing for its massive world and lovely visuals.")

Gamespot: 7.4 (quote: "Sega's flagship RPG series is still going strong. Phantasy Star VI is flawed, but it still delivers some memorable moments.")

## **Klonoa 2: The Wind Rider**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "Klonoa's back and while this game isn't the most original platformer, it still brings all the beautiful and familiar Klonoa flair.")

Gamespot: 9.1 (quote: "Klonoa was one of the best platformers of the generation, and Klonoa 2 tops it in almost every way.")

## **Pacific Fleet: Great Air Battles**

EGM: 9.3 (quote: "There are some spectacularly good missions, and the incredibly realistic planes make this a must play for history buffs.")

Gamespot: 8.9 (quote: "One of the best World War II games ever made. Not only does it recreate classic naval battles perfectly, it creates all new scenarios to experience.")

## **Mori-sama Adventure**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "It's fun, it's cute, it's not your typical RPG, but Nippon Ichi has created something fairly special.")

Gamespot: 7.8 (quote: "The Saturn is becoming the go-to system for anime-esque RPGs, and this might be the best one yet.")

*Game Boy Nova:*

## **Super Mario Nova**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "While shorter than a typical Mario game, it plays just as good and looks gorgeous.")

Gamespot: 8.2 (quote: "A few more secrets would've been nice.")

## **Street Fighter III: The New Age**

EGM: 8.2 (quote: "It's nice to have Street Fighter III in the palm of your hand.")  
Gamespot: 8.6 (quote: "It's not a straight-up port, but the handheld exclusive characters definitely distinguish this game.")

### **Tony Hawk's Pro Skater**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "An almost perfect port of one of the most addictive games in years.")  
Gamespot: 8.3 (quote: "I'm not going to dock any points for not having all the songs, it's an 8MB cartridge for goodness sakes!")

### **Rayman**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "The quirky visuals of this game are perfectly carried over on the Game Boy Nova.")  
Gamespot: 7.9 (quote: "A supremely fun platformer, though it seems a bit dated these days.")

### **Dodgeball**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "Clumsy and slow controls mar what's otherwise a cute and original game.")  
Gamespot: 7.1 (quote: "Dodgeball is bite-sized fun, even if it's hard to get a handle on the controls.")

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The first proper Pokemon battling game to be released for the Ultra Nintendo was *Pokemon Stadium* (*Pokemon Stadium 2* in Japan). It allowed players to play out 3-D battles with all 151 original *Red and Green* Pokemon in several different modes.

In Stadium mode, the normal single-player mode in the game, players could challenge a gauntlet of trainers in four different cups: the Pika Cup, the Petit Cup, the Poke Cup, and the Prime Cup, with difficulty and Pokemon levels increasing with each one. Players could use either their own Pokemon imported from *Red and Green* (provided they met the level requirements), or could use "rental" Pokemon from the game itself. Battles were 3-on-3, players used a six Pokemon team and then selected three of those Pokemon to compete in battle.

In Adventure mode, battles progressed in a bare-bones, battle-only version of Kanto, where players would move between individual locations and battle several trainers there. With each change of location, players would select a new team of Pokemon from a randomized selection of Pokemon leveled to approximately the same levels as the trainers they were facing. As you progressed through Adventure mode, you won prizes in the form of special Pokemon that could then be transferred back to your *Red and Green* game. Eventually, you battled the Elite Four and the league Champion, and once that was complete, if you had also beaten Stadium mode you were treated to a battle against Mewtwo, the "final boss" of the game.

In Versus mode, you could battle another trainer, either a human trainer or a trainer controlled by the CPU. Players could customize their CPU opponent with any Pokemon they wished, allowing players to train in a variety of battle situations. This customization option

was a late addition to the game, but became one of *Pokemon Stadium*'s most popular and enduring features, even if the computer AI couldn't entirely simulate a human opponent.

Then there's the Fun Park, which included a variety of side modes like mini-games and a mode to let you play your *Red and Green* cartridge on the Ultra Nintendo with optional speed boosts.

*Pokemon Stadium* was one of the year's most highly anticipated games, and sold quite well upon its release, as Pokemon fever continued in the run-up to the North American release of *Pokemon Sun and Moon*. With Pokemon now a household name, every release in the series was considered an event, and *Pokemon Stadium* continued that tradition. Within weeks of its release, a sequel covering the upcoming *Sun and Moon* games was announced for 2001.

-from "A History Of Pokemon On The Ultra Nintendo", posted on the Nintendo Rewind blog, October 8, 2009

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Sega's *Phantasy Star VI* was the last game in the series to be released for the Sega Saturn. A follow-up to the critically and commercially successful *Phantasy Star V*, the game's subtitle, *Mystery In The Wilds*, refers to the mysterious occurrences on the seemingly uninhabited planet of Norsia, located in the farthest reaches of the galaxy. Ships that pass anywhere near the Norsian system disappear, and over the last millennium, the occurrences have become somewhat of a legend. In another star system, a young man named Doran and his friend Elise train to become star pilots, and are recruited by Captain Winstrong, whom Doran views like an older brother, onto his ship after helping Winstrong out of trouble. When Winstrong's ship is attacked by pirates, Doran is forced to take control of the ship, but he steers it way off course and into the Norsian system. The ship's transporters go haywire and Doran finds himself awake and alone on the planet of Norsia with only the local monsters to battle. The game is actually somewhat open-ended here, when Doran reaches one of four set points he'll trigger an event that kicks off the rest of the game. Eventually, Doran reunites with Elise and another crewmember, and it's discovered that Norsia harbors a hidden civilization, completely invisible to the primary dimension. It seems that a technological accident on Norsia separated its civilization from the rest of the universe, and the Norsians capture any ships that stray too close in order to harvest their technology to keep their own civilization alive. However, the Norsians are being hunted by an extra-dimensional being that is manipulating their leaders, it seeks force them to build a technology that will allow it to enter into the physical world. Through manipulation, this being, named Atmos, succeeds in bringing itself into the primary dimension, and immediately launches an assault on all surrounding systems. Doran and his allies must destroy Atmos before its power threatens all of the universe.

Like most *Phantasy Star* games, *Phantasy Star VI* was a major hit in Japan. However, sales were quite low in North America, certainly far lower than those of *Phantasy Star V*. Whether it was the Saturn's fading fortunes or simply a lack of interest in Sega's RPGs in America, the game was a low point for the series' North American fortunes, and was considered to be a sales disappointment.

-excerpted from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

"I'd been a champion for localizing RPGs for the Saturn, from day one. RPGs were a successful genre. When *Phantasy Star VI*'s first sales numbers came in, it's like the universe

*was mocking me."*

-Tom Kalinske

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*"Skulls is the latest game in a genre I like to call 'darklight'. Light-hearted games with LOTS of dark elements, games that have a sense of humor but aren't afraid to shock and horrify you. Games in this genre tend to be really good, from the Oddworld series, to the two Darkest games, and now comes Skulls, one of the most innovative platformers to hit a console in a long time."*

-from the 9/10 review of *Skulls* in the April 2000 issue of *Game Informer* magazine

*"The object of Skulls is really simple. You're dropped into a big wide open level, and your goal is to find the key that will open the door that will move you on to the next level. No collecting 100 coins or 50 tokens or 25 stones or whatever. It's one door, one key, in every level you're in. Now, in order to reach that key, that's the hard part! Sometimes it's just follow the arrows or the signs, kill or dodge everything in your way, there's the key. Sometimes the key is hidden really well, and the clues are really subtle. And sometimes the game throws you for a loop and you've got to trade a bunch of objects in a chain until you trade with someone who has the key, or you have to catch the little girl who has the key in a pendant around her neck, or you've got to let the giant monster swallow you and grab the key out of its stomach... you get the idea."*

-Brittany Saldita, from *GameTV's* coverage of *Skulls* on the March 7, 2000 episode

*"As soon as I was done recording for Lammy, my agent got a call and said, 'Sara, you did a great job and they want you to come back and do another game'. And I was so busy, I was doing Broadway and everything but my agent said 'they really want you to do this game'. So I told my agent, 'okay, tell me what it's about first and if I like it I'll see if I can squeeze it in'. As soon as I heard what the game was about, I said immediately, sign me up, let's do this. And that's how I came to play Lupe."*

-Sara Ramirez, discussing *Skulls* on G4's *The Interview* show, December 2, 2004

One of the quirkier platformers of 2000 was *Skulls*, which came out for the Ultra Nintendo. The game centered around a teenage girl named Lupe, who lived in Mexico and could communicate with the dead. Every year on the Day of the Dead, Lupe's "gift" becomes overwhelmingly powerful, her mind is flooded with the thoughts and wishes of the dead and she experiences incredibly powerful phenomenon. One year, the voice of a young man cuts through the fog in Lupe's mind. He pulls Lupe through a mysterious otherworldly door and shares a dance with her, and it's the only time Lupe has ever experienced the holiday without nearly going completely insane. The young man offers Lupe his hand in marriage, but she declines it and wishes to go back to her own world, sending the man into a rage and causing him to cast Lupe into the depths of the world of the dead. She's able to find a door leading herself away from his wrath, but this draws her into a world from which there's seemingly no escape and from which she must find a series of doors in order to return to her own world. As Lupe navigates the world of the dead, she encounters all sorts of environments, from cities, to mountains, to forests, and everything in-between, and meets a variety of creatures, both friendly and unfriendly.

*Skulls* didn't play like the typical collectathon platformer of the day. Lupe's basic controls were fairly simple, and advanced actions relied on contextual environmental cues to activate. You hunted down keys to move between worlds, and the game's stylistic graphics and Latin-inspired soundtrack were vivid and festive, but with a hint of darkness behind

them. *Skulls* never found a mainstream audience, but became an enormous hit among certain groups of players, especially among girls. The game was ultimately successful enough to spawn a franchise, and Lupe is perhaps the most popular Latina character in video game history.

-From "2000's Top Ten Platformers- #3: *Skulls*", a top ten list posted on GameFAQs.com, June 18, 2012

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Two years later, and after *Klonoa* has become somewhat of a phenomenon, the highly anticipated sequel finally drops for the Sega Saturn. Does it succeed? For the most part, yes. *Klonoa 2: The Wind Rider* has everything fans loved about the original *Klonoa*. The tight platforming gameplay. The big, beautiful worlds. The gorgeous soundtrack. The challenging bosses. It keeps the formula largely the same. The one big change is the new "glider mode", where Klonoa takes to the skies in gameplay somewhat similar to that of *NiGHTS Into Dreams...* It mostly takes place during boss battles (nearly every boss battle in the game is fought in this mode), and occasionally certain levels send you into this mode as well to traverse large areas. It's somewhat of a mixed bag, as the controls are a bit difficult to master, and especially during tough boss fights can be frustrating.

(...)

*Klonoa 2* will certainly please fans of the original game, and will likely bring new *Klonoa* fans along for the ride as well. It's one of the Saturn's few bright spots in a year that sees the system's lineup thinning out somewhat, and it's pleasing to see such a beautiful, whimsical game that really does push the system quite hard in one of its later years. There's a reason fans fell in love with *Klonoa*, and the sequel, though it has a few bumps, should go equally far.

Score: 8/10

-from the *Official Saturn Magazine* review of *Klonoa 2: The Wind Rider*, in the March 2000 issue

### **Klonoa Still A Marketing Force**

*Klonoa: Door To Phantomile* made a big splash when it launched for the Sega Saturn in late 1997 in Japan and early 1998 in North America and Europe. A line of toys soon followed, and though the animated TV series plan ultimately fell through (likely because of the launch of the *Commander Keen* animated series), *Klonoa* is still one of Sega's most popular mascots, with a presence already ensured on the upcoming Katana system (*Klonoa 3* is planned for the Katana sometime in 2001). Early *Klonoa 2* sales have been strong (it should easily be the Saturn's top selling game of the month), and a new line of merchandise featuring characters from the new game should start hitting stores this summer. In a year that hasn't seen much in the way of good news for Sega, *Klonoa* continues to be one of the Saturn's premier franchises, and a light in the darkness for the company.

-posted on GamesUpdate.com, April 5, 2000

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*"Need For Speed: Unleashed builds significantly on High Stakes. Its graphical engine is a vast improvement over the previous game, and it nearly doubles the amount of available cars for the player to collect. It also contains a significantly improved career mode, giving the player many more options about how they wish to progress through the game. Unlike in High Stakes, you're no longer required to compete in any all or nothing "pinks" races to advance, preventing the player from needing to risk a beloved, expensive car in order to progress through the game. While racing for 'pinks' is no longer required, it's a significantly larger optional component of the game, with many of the game's best cars only available by risking your own, and opposing racers given their own personalities and spoken dialogue, making races a lot more intense."*

-excerpted from IGN's 10/10 review of *Need For Speed: Unleashed*

### **Fight Breaks Out At Need For Speed Midnight Release**

An *EBGames* location in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida reported a fight after two shoppers got into an altercation over what was apparently the last copy of *Need For Speed: Unleashed* available for purchase. The store claims to have oversold its pre-orders, significantly overestimating the number of copies it would have available. When a store manager reported that the store's pre-order allotment was gone, the next person waiting in line got into an argument with another individual who'd received their copy of the game, and a fight began. The two men, both of whom had sustained minor cuts and bruises in the brawl, were arrested by police.

-excerpted from an article posted on Gamestop.com, March 13, 2000

*"A fight over Need For Speed? A fight over Gran Turismo 2 I could understand, but Need For Speed? Really?"*

-a comment posted on GameFAQs.com on March 13, 2000

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*"One of the most unnecessary sequels of all time was Mega Man X6. After the masterpiece that was Mega Man X5 exceeded sales expectations and seemed to revitalize the series, X6 brought back Mega Man X for a largely paint-by-numbers affair. Since X5 had killed off Sigma, X6 introduced a new villain, Count Argus, who was basically Sigma with a vaguely European accent and a goofy costume. You fought eight new animal-themed robot minions, got their powers, assaulted Argus' castle (which, okay, I'll admit, was a damn cool looking place, even niftier than any of Wily's lairs), and took down the bad guy in the most generic Mega Man X game to date.*

*It wasn't a BAD game. There weren't any real glitches, it wasn't terribly boring, some of the boss designs were cool, and I'll even admit that the final boss battle, which saw Argus turning into a wicked looking bat because hey, vampire robots are cool, was one of the best in the whole series. But the whole damn thing was an obvious cash grab by Capcom and as cookie cutter a Mega Man X game as it possibly gets. And considering the Mega Man series in general, that's saying something! Fans didn't buy it. No, they literally didn't buy it, sales weren't even a third of what Mega Man X5 got. It showed Capcom that just because you can do a new Mega Man X game doesn't mean you should, and the series was shelved in favor*

of the *Mega Man Zero* series, while Capcom went back to the drawing board. *Mega Man* would once again be back and in a new form, but that's gonna have to wait for next time.”  
-from Sazebot's "Mega Man Retrospective" series, posted on Youtube.com on July 23, 2011

### **Is Capcom Losing Its Originality?**

*Breath of Fire IV* and *Mega Man X6* were supposed to be big hits for Capcom. New installments of series that have been popular since the Super Nintendo days, these games launched amidst a wave of magazine articles and internet hype, but critical reaction for both has been mixed, fans have been even crueler, and early sales figures for both games are extremely disappointing. You know it's a bad month for you when your handheld game (in this case *Street Fighter III* for the Game Boy Nova) is getting a much better reception than either of your console titles. So what gives? The negativity for both games largely stems from the games being considered unoriginal, *Breath Of Fire IV* is considered a "generic" RPG and *Mega Man X6* is considered to be rushed and not nearly as creative or exciting as *X5*. Is this a trend for Capcom, or will the company bounce back?

Longtime Capcom fans shouldn't fear. Its recent *Resident Evil: Code Veronica* was one of last year's best reviewed games, and the company has a slew of upcoming titles, both original and sequels, that are already stirring plenty of fan anticipation. As far as sequels go, Capcom is releasing *Iron Battalion*, a sequel to 1996's *Iron Combatant* that showcases a massive (and expensive) new controller that replicates the controls of an actual giant mech cockpit. The company just finished showing off the game at the 2000 Game Developers' Conference, and early reviews of the controller are stellar. It's also releasing the futuristic racing title *Booststream*, which showcases futuristic neon versions of famous Japanese cities and is said to be a more accessible take on *F-Zero*. And for the Saturn, Capcom is launching *The Sateur*, a brawler that takes place in 19th century Paris. Capcom is also said to be planning games for Sega's upcoming *Katana* and possibly for Microsoft's Xbox system as well, ensuring the company will continue to release a steady stream of games well into the future.

-excerpted from an article posted on March 28, 2000 at Gamespot.com

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### **American Beauty Sweeps Oscars**

As was expected, the film *American Beauty* won every Oscar it was nominated for, including Best Picture, Best Director (Sam Mendes), Best Actor (Kevin Spacey), Best Actress (Annette Bening), Best Supporting Actress (Thora Birch), Best Original Screenplay, Best Original Score, Best Film Editing, and Best Cinematography. One of the more intriguing storylines of the night was the animated film *The Iron Giant*, which was nominated for Best Picture and which some analysts predicted may have had an outside shot at taking down the juggernaut, but it ultimately wasn't to be. *American Beauty* becomes one of the biggest Oscar winners of the past decade, winning a total of nine awards, the first film to do so since *The Last Emperor* in 1987. Another of the night's most intriguing storylines involved the creators of *South Park*, Matt Stone and Trey Parker, coming up to the podium to accept their Oscar for Best Original Song ("Up There" from *South Park: Bigger, Longer, and Uncut*) in a pair of dresses.

-from a Yahoo! News report on March 27, 2000

"Matt and Trey wanted me to show up to the Oscars in a dress too. I thought it was a hilarious idea, and I would've done it, but my friend John Lasseter said to me 'Brad, you've got a legitimate shot at winning Best Picture, are you really going to go up to get your Best Picture award in a dress?' If I'd known *American Beauty* was going to do so well I probably would've done it!"

-Brad Bird

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### *Game Boy Nova Technical Specifications*

The Game Boy Nova looks very similar to an OTL Nintendo DS, with a wide, clamshell design. There's a screen on the top of the device, while the bottom houses a speaker and the buttons, a standard D-pad on one side and A/B/X/Y buttons on the other, a pair of shoulder buttons with additional Start/Select buttons as well. It comes in blue and red originally, with other colors available later on. The device has built-in memory storage (8MB, mostly used for saving Game Boy Camera pictures and old Game Boy saves) with space for a small 1MB memory card that can be used to move data back and forth. The system also has hook-ups for multiplayer link cables and for accessories (such as a connector cable to the Ultra Nintendo, this will also be compatible with the Ultra Nintendo's successor).

Internally, the system is quite similar to OTL's PSX console, with a 38 Mhz MIPS unified processor powering both the system and its graphics. Its sound chip, designed by Ken Kutaragi, is far better than the one in OTL's Game Boy Advance, and games sound exceptionally good through the system's fairly large speaker. It has 4MB of RAM, and houses a rechargeable battery capable of going 4-6 hours on a single charge, with a fully backlit screen. Games are stored on cartridges similar to those of the original Game Boy only a bit bigger, cartridges range from 8-128 megabytes. The system is somewhat bulky (similar to OTL's "phat" DS) due to the need for a large internal battery, later on the system would get a smaller redesign but at the time of its release the size is considered a necessary concession.

The system is quite powerful, more powerful than the SNES-CD (though because it uses cartridges as opposed to CDs, SNES-CD games trump Nova games in many areas, most notably FMV and voice acting). It's somewhere in-between OTL's Game Boy Advance and OTL's Nintendo DS. It's capable of running ports of SNES-CD games and even many Saturn games when memory isn't a concern. Compression is used to achieve much of what has been achieved in CD versions of ported games, developers become quite adept at using compression tricks by the end of the system's run.

### **March 26, 2000**

The Game Boy Nova is released in North America, at \$169.99. It is released alongside eight launch titles: *Super Mario Nova*, *Street Fighter III: The New Age*, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*, *Rayman*, *Dodgeball*, *The Iron Giant*, *Madden 2000*, and *Tika In Trouble* (an original TTL platformer that gets mixed-to-negative reviews). Despite the expensive price tag, the Nova sells briskly upon release (partially due to anticipation for the upcoming *Pokemon Sun and Moon*). It's not an instant sellout like the Ultra Nintendo was, but it's definitely the best launch week ever for a gaming handheld, and excellent reviews from game publications (and a steady stream of good games) keep the Nova's sales strong throughout the rest of the year. The best seller of the launch titles is *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*, with *Street Fighter*

*III* in second and *Rayman* a respectable third. *Madden 2000* is also a decent seller, though *The Iron Giant*, *Dodgeball*, and *Tika In Trouble* report poor sales (*Iron Giant* is your typical bad movie-to-game adaptation, *Dodgeball* is just a tough sell in general, and *Tika In Trouble* is a mediocre game).

### **Game Boy Nova Launch Titles: The Basics**

*Super Mario Nova*- The first real side-scrolling *Mario* game since *Super Mario World 2*, it plays much like that game did, with the addition of a special fireball upgrade that makes Mario temporarily invincible and lets him shoot bigger fireballs (It's called, appropriately, Nova Mario). It contains six levels in all: a grass world, a desert world, an ice world, a jungle world, a cave world, and a fire world where Bowser lives, it features the option to play as Luigi right from the start (similarly to *The Lost Levels*), and it also includes Yoshi in a number of levels. The plot is typical "rescue Peach from Bowser"-type fare. It's Mario comfort food, but it's a good game and probably the best received of the launch titles.

*Street Fighter III: The New Age*- A streamlined *Street Fighter III* game (with only eleven of the characters retained from the console version of the game), it's not quite a port, as it features, in addition to a bunch of new musical tracks and stages, the addition of three entirely new characters in addition to the already existing 11: a Catholic schoolgirl-type character named Grace, a wildman/beast tamer character named Bearclaw, and a new villain character named Kastor, who drives the plot of the game itself. Grace and Bearclaw appear on the cover of the game along with Ryu, Guile, Ken, and Chun-Li, and the game features some subtle control changes as well to optimize it for the handheld system. It's considered to be a good game and, because of the major changes to *Street Fighter III*, worth playing even for those familiar with the arcade/console original.

*Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*- A port of the original console game. The biggest downgrade from the console original is the removal of most of the songs (for memory capacity reasons), other than that it's a nearly perfect port, its graphics actually compared favorably to the Saturn version of the game.

*Dodgeball*- This is essentially OTL's *Super Dodgeball Advance*, though with some butterfly-induced changes and slightly better graphics, along with more precise controls due to the presence of additional buttons.

*Rayman*- A perfect port of the original *Rayman*. Michel Ancel is so impressed by the Nova's capabilities that the success of the *Rayman* port inspires him not only to create a Nova-exclusive series of *Rayman* games for the device, but to port *The Darkest Ritual* to the Nova as well.

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Ted Crosley: I hate to say it, but I found myself enjoying *Pokemon Stadium* a lot more than I should've.

Alex Stansfield: You can never enjoy *Pokemon Stadium* enough!

Ted: Playing through the Adventure mode is a blast since you've constantly got to build a new team, you can be trying out new Pokemon, new strategies, you'll find yourself using Pokemon you never thought you'd use... I blitzed through Koga's gym with a level 37 Tauros. Just obliterated it, it was a really fun time.

Alex: And the mini-games are a lot of fun too.

Ted: Don't push your luck, there's only so much I can take of making a Pikachu run on a treadmill.

Alex: It's a good break from the intense battling, though!

Ted: No it's not, it's boring! I'd rather see this-

\*Footage is shown of Pikachu unleashing a Thunderbolt\*

Ted: Than this...

\*Footage is shown of the Pikachu treadmill minigame\*

Alex: Well, *Pokemon Stadium* is a really fun package all the way around and I'm giving it a 4.5 out of 5.

Ted: I'll give it a 4, but just barely.

Alex: You're starting to come around on the whole *Pokemon* thing!

Ted: Remind me not to come to work once *Sun and Moon* are out.

-excerpted from the March 7, 2000 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Steve Horton: I welcomed the changes. *Rage: The Revenge* is all about fighting and that's what it needs to be, screw the story, I'm punchin' stuff!

Gary Westhouse: The main attraction of the *Rage* series for me has ALWAYS been the story. Without it, it's just another brawler. The story's just your standard "somebody close to me is dead, it's time for revenge" plotline and that's gotten so old in these types of games.

Steve: It's as good a reason as any to beat somebody up though!

Gary: The original *Rage* game, everybody had their own motivation, everybody was fighting for a reason besides just revenge.

Steve: Really? Because I played it and pretty much everybody was fighting for revenge even in that game.

\*A brief series of snippets from the original *Rage* is shown and despite the vastly larger number of available fighters, it's true that nearly all of them were motivated by revenge\*

Gary: ...hunh.

Steve: Uh-huh, told you so!

Gary: My point stands, it's still just a generic brawler!

Steve: No love for the new 360 bodyslam?

Gary: Not when it's the only damn move you use in a level. Don't you get tired of watching that animation?

Steve: Nope!

Gary: \*sighs\* *Rage: The Revenge* is a real disappointment, I'm giving it a 3.

Steve: It's an excellent brawler and I'm giving it a 4.5.

(...)

Lyssa: Nippon Ichi has done something really creative with *Mori-sama Adventure*. It's the type of game that almost NEVER sees the light of day here in America, but if you're an RPG fan, do yourself a favor and check it out!

Alex: A fair warning, the battle system is really tough to master.

Lyssa: It's pretty simple actually, the more Mori-sama clones you have, the more damage you'll do! Also, the more you'll get hurt, but if you can kill the enemy before they kill you, who cares?!

Alex: The storyline's overly sugary and saccharine...

Lyssa: Even for me!

Alex: But with that said, it's a really unique game and I'll go ahead and give it a 3.5.

Lyssa: If you like games like *Andrekah*, *Thousand Arms*, it's right up your alley.

Alex: *Andrekah's* not an RPG.

Lyssa: True, but you do play a hyperactive little waif who goes around helping lots of people and getting into lots of trouble. She's a BIT more annoying than *Andrekah* but you'll fall in love just the same. I'm giving it a 4!

(...)

Brittany Saldita: *Pacific Fleet* is just a brilliant game. I mean, air combat is one of my least favorite genres but I was sucked into this one from the opening battle.

Ted: Yeah, it's hard to beat the Battle of Midway for excitement and action. Look, um... there's not much I can say that's really bad about this one. It's an incredible game and even if you've never touched the genre before, give this one a chance, it will change your perception of the genre tremendously.

Brittany: It's historically accurate...when it needs to be. When it doesn't, when the game decides it would be more fun to throw the history book out the window, out the window it goes!

Ted: But it's a VIDEO GAME.

Brittany: Right, and even when it gets serious and educational, *Pacific Fleet* never ever forgets that it's a video game. Not in the 'oh look it's a UFO!' kind of way that some games do, but just in really really subtle ways. It stays serious, it stays historical, but it never gets boring.

Ted: Flying a World War II plane in real life...not fun. Flying one in this game...LOTS of fun! I saw you playing this in your dressing room, AFTER you'd turned in your review, I'm assuming it's because you couldn't get enough?

Brittany: I really want to go back and play it right now, my hand feels empty without that controller in it...

Ted: Isn't that how we all feel though?

Brittany: Most of the time yeah.

Ted: So yeah, a clear 5 out of 5 from me.

Brittany: I'm giving *Pacific Fleet* a 5 out of 5 also.

\*An air raid siren goes off\*

Ted: Duck and cover!

\*Ted and Brittany throw themselves to the floor\*

Brittany: Wait...I think that's just the Hall of Fame siren.

Ted: Oh, right!

\*Ted and Brittany take a framed copy of *Pacific Fleet: Great Air Battles* up to the Hall of Fame wall.\*

Ted: And up we go! It's been a while since we put a Saturn game up- oh wait no it hasn't! \*points to *Resident Evil: Code Veronica*\*

Brittany: \*smirks\* Okay, gloaty.

-excerpted from the March 14, 2000 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Alex: I'm bummed. *Breath of Fire IV* bummed me out.

Brittany: Yeeeeeeeah... the graphics were...okay. The music was...okay.

Alex: Every time I expected the game to throw me for a loop, it didn't! Oh look, here's Ryu again. Oh look, he can turn into a dragon...again.

Brittany: Nothing new, nothing surprising...it's an RPG and it's just a perfectly average one.

Their RPGs are starting to become like their *Mega Man* games.

Alex: Whoa whoa whoa whoa WHOA WHOA WHOA WHOA. WHOA. No. \*shaking his head angrily\*

Brittany: What, it's true!

Alex: No, Mega Man is still awesome! *Mega Man X6* was great!

Brittany: \*cocking her head to the side\* Really?

Alex: It's DIFFERENT for action games.

Brittany: How is it different?! Like, okay, here's the deal. *Final Fantasy*. The basic elements stay the same, but they change everything else between titles. EVERYTHING. But *Breath of Fire* is basically the same game from one to the next. Okay, *II* had religious themes. That was the only thing that stood out from any of them. *Mega Man*, same deal.

Alex: But *X6* still feels different! Different weapons, different bosses... ugh, why are we even talking about *Mega Man X6* again?

Brittany: I have no idea. But the point's the same. *Breath Of Fire IV*, way too derivative, way too plain, 2 out of 5.

Alex: 2 out of 5 here too. And *Mega Man X6* is still awesome.

Brittany: When's the next *Legends* coming out, those are good games...

(...)

Ted: All right guys, before we go, I want from each of you: last word on the Game Boy Nova, and best launch game. Alex, go.

Alex: Game Boy Nova is awesome. It looks awesome, it feels awesome, it's just awesome to have that much power in my hands. And *Super Mario Nova* is the best launch game, brings back all my good *Super Mario World 2* memories. Only drawback, the Nova needs more RPGs.

Brittany: Agreed. And yeah, I felt like this thing has a ton of potential. I could have done with a bit more battery life, but I guess I can just keep it plugged in at home. And my favorite launch game was probably *Street Fighter III: The New Age*. Grace kicks ass!

Steve: This thing's sweet. It's got the extra buttons I need to play great games like *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*, which, by the way, is my favorite launch game.

Gary: It's more powerful than the damn Neo Geo! Can you believe it? I paid out the ass for a Neo Geo back in the day, and now this little thing that fits in my pocket-

Lyssa: Not my pocket...

Gary: Get bigger pockets. But yeah, it's just an amazing little device.

Lyssa: It's not little!

Gary: \*snickers\* I loved *Street Fighter III*.

Lyssa: It's too big, I have these tiny little hands...

Brittany: \*puts one of her hands on Lyssa's, it's barely bigger\* My hands are small too and I did just fine.

Lyssa: I got sore holding it. \*Brittany goes "Awww..." and starts rubbing one of Lyssa's hands\* But when I wasn't sore, I had a lot of fun playing *Super Mario Nova* on it.

Ted: Well, I also thought it was a bit bulky, but it's still a pretty kickass little system and I had a ton of fun with *Super Mario Nova*, and *Street Fighter*, and *Rayman*.... *Super Mario's* my fave but any of those three. Oh, *Tony Hawk* too.

-excerpted from the March 21, 2000 episode of *GameTV*

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### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: March 2000**

1. Squad Four: Rebellion
2. Final Fantasy VIII
3. Resident Evil: Operation Stormwind
4. Deathblow II
5. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
6. Ultra Donkey Kong Country
7. Emergency
8. Final Fantasy Collection
9. Super Smash Bros.
10. WWF Wrestlemania 2000

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: March 2000**

1. Soul Calibur
2. Klonoa 2: The Wind Rider
3. Turok III: Generation War
4. Phantasy Star VI
5. Resident Evil: Code Veronica
6. Sonic The Hedgehog 5
7. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater
8. Rage: The Revenge
9. Pacific Fleet: Great Air Battles
10. Silent Hill

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### **Gore All But Clinches Nomination, McCain Surges Ahead On Super Tuesday**

Al Gore is now almost certain to be the Democratic presidential nominee after sweeping Super Tuesday's slate of primaries and caucuses, including the all-important California

primary. Though Bradley initially looked like he might provide a strong challenge to Gore in early polls, once the actual contests began, Bradley's perceived support withered, and now Al Gore has a commanding lead in delegates and appears ready to clinch the Democratic presidential nomination.

There's a much more exciting race going on in the Republican field, as John McCain has survived a fierce round of attack ads by his rival George W. Bush, and has emerged from Super Tuesday with a very slight lead in delegates after winning several key states, including California by a tight margin. McCain's success can be attributed to going on the offensive against Bush, attacking Bush's record as governor of Texas, and also attacking Bush's service in the Air National Guard during the Vietnam War. While Bush has reacted strongly against the attacks, they've been largely effective. McCain has not only performed strongly amongst veterans, he's also managed to pull over Democratic voters who have chosen to sit out their party's primary. While McCain currently leads by only 37 delegates, he's polling strongly in Colorado and Florida, which look to be key battleground states going forward.

Also making headlines is Donald Trump, who looks to be the Reform Party nominee after his rival, former professional wrestler Jesse Ventura, announced the suspension of his campaign.

-excerpted from a Yahoo! News report on March 8, 2000

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While the 2000 Game Developers Conference lacked the glitz and glam of this year's upcoming E3 event, a number of blockbuster announcements and major presentations were given, setting the tone for the upcoming year in video games and beyond.

Bill Gates himself was on hand to formally unveil the Microsoft Xbox, which now has a presumptive release window of sometime during the second half of 2001. Gates showed off the new console and, in his presentation, stated how he hopes to "bring the worlds of cyberspace and the living room together like never before", promising cutting-edge online capabilities, along with the latest and best in graphics and realism. Early preview footage looked somewhat similar to that of Sega's Katana system, though a promising tech demo hinted that the Xbox might have slightly better graphical capabilities. The only game promised for the new Xbox was a port of the 1997 PC hit *The Witcher*, and Gates claimed that the Xbox was the "only console capable of conveying the game's massive open world".

Sega also had an impressive showing, demonstrating both their new Katana system and several new games, including a demonstration of *Phantasy Star Online* that showed how the game's interactive network would function. Players from all over the world will be able to team up and embark on quests together, and the game looked both technologically impressive and, from a gameplay standpoint, quite entertaining. They also teased a Katana *Shenmue* sequel, though no in-game footage was shown. A pair of Saturn games were shown off as well: *Vintage Speed Series*, a racing game where players can choose from dozens of vintage race cars, and *Extremis*, Sega's highly anticipated horror title. *Extremis* showed gameplay footage of the main character fleeing from a hideously mutated bull as he explored a massive farm complex, and looked both terrifying and exciting.

While Nintendo itself was a no-show, Sony showed off a few upcoming titles, including *Gran Turismo 2*, *Tales Of The Seven Seas: The Victorian Legacy*, and its new RPG, *Wrath and*

*Ruin. Gran Turismo 2* looked incredibly impressive, with graphics that looked amazing even for the Ultra Nintendo, and the *Tales Of The Seven Seas* presentation even featured an appearance from Victoria's voice actress, Olivia D'Abo.

Microsoft's Xbox was definitely the talk of the town, and Bill Gates looked all too happy to field questions from reporters. Indeed, it was probably the happiest and most excited we've seen him in a great long while. Microsoft might be treading on dangerous ground stepping into the ring with the titans Nintendo and Sega, but if enthusiasm could translate into sales, the Xbox is poised to have an Ultra Nintendo-like run of success.

-from the May 2000 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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*"I'd be lying if I said Velvet Dark hasn't been influenced by a lot of the sci-fi material that's come out over the past decade... including some video games."*

-Martin Hollis, in an interview in the April 2000 issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

*"The controversial feature allows you to put the face of anyone you want into the game. Some parents say it's a recipe for trouble."*

-from a local news broadcast on April 19, 2000, discussing *Velvet Dark's* controversial face-mapping feature

*"LOL I put that dumb mom's picture on a meat sim and went to town"*

-a comment on GameFAQs' *Velvet Dark* message board, discussing the local news broadcast about the face-mapping controversy

*"We were lucky to lose him at a time we didn't really need to heavily promote the game."*

-Tim Stamper, speaking about Reggie Fils-Aime's departure from Rare right around the time of *Velvet Dark's* release

*"Anime's influence is in everything now, isn't it? I remember when I first started on Sci-Fi and hardly anybody watched, but now everybody's watching anime and I can't wait to see what this decade brings."*

-"Live Action Anime Girl" Apollo Smile, discussing anime and her role as Ulala in *Space Channel Ulala* in an interview on the April 25, 2000 episode of *GameTV*

*"(Dive) Into Adventure"*

-the new Nintendo slogan, rolled out for commercials and advertisements beginning in April 2000, what proceeded "into adventure" would change depending upon the game, the above slogan was used for *Wave Race: Ultramarine*

*"I've spent a decade at Sega, and I've had the privilege of seeing this company go from an upstart competitor in the electronic gaming business to a titan of the industry. It would not have been possible without the hard work of thousands of diligent programmers, marketers, designers, developers, and countless others. As Sega transitions into a new millennium, I sincerely hope I've left this company better than when I joined it. My time here has been filled with challenges,*

*but also with opportunities. That is what Sega gave me a decade ago: an opportunity, and I've gained more here than I can possibly relate in this letter. "*

-from Tom Kalinske's letter of resignation from Sega of America

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*Ultra Nintendo:*

**Animastar** (also released on Sega Saturn)

EGM: N/A

Gamespot: 6.0 (quote: "It's another Pokemon clone, but there are some unique aspects that set it apart from typical monster games.")

**Ken Griffey Jr.'s Ultra Slugfest**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "An excellent baseball sim and probably the best baseball game available for the Ultra Nintendo.")

Gamespot: 8.9 (quote: "The graphics and presentation are both superb. This game definitely brings the heat.")

**Ninja Gaiden Fury**

EGM: 6.5 (quote: "Crippling difficulty I can handle, but poorly designed stages really hampered my enjoyment of this one.")

Gamespot: 7.7 (quote: "The transition to 3-D isn't a perfect one for Ninja Gaiden, but it's still a really satisfying game.")

**San Francisco Rush 2** (later ported to Sega Saturn)

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "A great year for racing games gets even better with this excellent arcade style racer.")

Gamespot: 7.3 (quote: "The single-player mode is a bit short, but there's some decent replay value.")

**The Ring: Terror's Realm**

EGM: 4.0 (quote: "The book was way, way better.")

Gamespot: 3.8 (quote: "A majorly disappointing game, with a completely uninspired story.")

**Ultra Bomberman 3**

EGM: 7.3 (quote: "Another solid entry in the Bomberman series.")

Gamespot: 7.1 (quote: "It doesn't improve much on previous Bomberman titles but it's still plenty of fun.")

## **Ultra Bust-A-Move 2**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "An exciting puzzler with some fantastic new modes, Ultra Bust-a-Move 2 starts out fun and stays that way.")

Gamespot: 5.5 (quote: "And 3-D mode is one of the most frustrating parts of this game, with really tricky controls.")

## **Velvet Dark**

EGM: 10 (quote: "A masterpiece and the perfect successor to the incredible Goldeneye 007.")

Gamespot: 9.5 (quote: "The plot occasionally gets convoluted, but the gameplay overrides that flaw.")

## **Wave Race: Ultramarine**

EGM: 8.3 (quote: "It sure looks pretty, and plays as good as it looks.")

Gamespot: 8.7 (quote: "Thank goodness they included more courses. Still, the gameplay, though still fun, could have done with a few more updates.")

## **Ultra Storm Guardians**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "It falls flat in a number of ways, but when it works, it can be quite fun.")

Gamespot: 7.3 (quote: "It's a fun beat-em-up with some really likable characters, but isn't anything special.")

## **Future Fear: Escape The Arena**

EGM: 8.7 (quote: "It's such a fun game, especially when you find yourself against a hoard of pursuers.")

Gamespot: 7.8 (quote: "Is the plot of this game the best? No, but the voice actors do sell it really well.")

## **Booststream**

EGM: 7.8 (quote: "Definitely easier than Ultracharged, so those of you looking for a fast paced racing game but find F-Zero frustrating should give it a try.")

Gamespot: 7.7 (quote: "The futuristic graphics show incredible creativity on the part of the designers.")

## **Shujinko**

EGM: 6.7 (quote: "With some of the most interesting characters you'll ever meet in an RPG, it tries its best to distinguish itself from the crowd.")

Gamespot: 5.3 (quote: "There's just not much creative about this other than the character design.")

## **Paws Out**

EGM: 4.5 (quote: "Could this platformer BE a bigger rip-off of Dog Dash?")

Gamespot: 5.1 (quote: "So yes, Paws Out is basically Dog Dash with a girl. If it had any charm, it might be worth playing, but the level design is really uninspired.")

## **The Highlands**

EGM: 7.5 (quote: "A fascinating adventure game with a really exciting setting, The Highlands could stand a graphical makeover, but it plays extremely well.")

Gamespot: 6.8 (quote: "Poorly detailed graphics and a lack of good music do hurt it, but The Highlands' plot calls back memories of Braveheart.")

*Saturn:*

## **Space Channel Ulala**

EGM: 6.5 (quote: "It's definitely creative, but a bit too simple for my tastes.")

Gamespot: 7.2 (quote: "The concept is so unique, and the characters so fun that it's worth at least a rental.")

## **King Crab 2**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "A step up from the original, this series hits its stride in its second game.")

Gamespot: 8.6 (quote: "It takes much needed risks and distinguishes itself from the original. I hope it does even more on the Sega Katana.")

## **Virtua Quest 3**

EGM: 7.8 (quote: "Another fun installment in what's becoming one of my favorite RPG franchises.")

Gamespot: 7.9 (quote: "The plot really thickens in this game, and the battle system never gets old.")

*Game Boy Nova:*

## **Bomberman Nova**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "Portable Bomberman is always nice, but it doesn't do enough to please players who might not have another friend with a Nova handy.")

Gamespot: 8.3 (quote: "All the fun of Bomberman in the palm of your hand! It definitely beats the pants off the Game Boy's Wario Blast.")

## **Pocket World Of Color**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "But what's with that name? The original World of Color was handheld too!")

Gamespot: 9.0 (quote: "While not all the great upgrades of Millennium can be found here, it has many of the best.")

## **Mistlandia**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "A fantastic effort from Camelot. The music is a highlight.")

Gamespot: 7.0 (quote: "The game looks gorgeous, but certain aspects will leave players scratching their heads.")

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## **Velvet Dark: The Basics**

Created by Rareware, *Velvet Dark* is the spiritual successor to the 1998 FPS *Goldeneye 007*. The game is a first person shooter containing a variety of both realistic and futuristic weapons. The gameplay is very similar to both *Goldeneye* and OTL's *Perfect Dark*, though there are some subtle differences. Melee combat is a bit more developed in the game, there are alternate melee strikes both Joanna and Velvet can perform on enemies, and even melee weapons like blunt instruments and swords are included in the game. The game's stealth mechanics are a bit more developed, and there are some alternate weapons, like an EMP Cannon that fires magnetic pulses for use on computers and robotic enemies. Weapons such as OTL's Farsight remain in the game and are as functional as they were in OTL. *Velvet Dark's* graphics are improved from OTL's game, with graphical detail on par with the OTL PS2 version of *Half-Life*, making it easily one of the Ultra Nintendo's best looking games, not just to date but overall, even impressive compared to games released years later. The game's cutscenes look even better, the game has both rendered and fully FMV cutscenes, with the FMV cutscenes nearly as good as those seen in *Final Fantasy VIII*. For this reason, the single-player campaign is split among two discs. The audio utilizes Dolby as OTL's game did, with full voice acting (utilizing a staff of fairly obscure British actors similar to *The Dreamers*, the voice acting is still highly praised). The multiplayer options from OTL all appear, including computer-controlled sims and Counter-Operative mode, which allows one player to play through the missions while another player controls an enemy from the level and attempts to stop them. The biggest change to the multiplayer mode is the "face mapping" option, which allows players to use the Nova's built-in camera to take a picture of their face (or any object) and scan it into the game to use in multiplayer mode, either on human controlled characters or on sims. The face-mapping feature, which was scrapped IOTL due to technological limitations but largely due to potential political controversy, remains in TTL's game mostly due to the lack of a large-scale incident at Columbine. The feature still draws controversy from some members of the gaming press after a number of incidents, largely stemming from kids taking pictures of their schoolmates and putting them into the game, then killing them. Despite the controversy, it remains one of the game's most popular features and is talked about positively by most.

The game's plot is nearly fully changed from IOTL. IOTL's *Perfect Dark* involved two rival corporations secretly controlled by rival alien factions bent on destroying one another, with Joanna Dark, the protagonist, working as an agent for the Carrington Institute. In *Velvet Dark*, the player once again starts out with Joanna as the protagonist. The game takes place in 2031

(not 2023 like IOTL), and Joanna works for the dataDyne corporation. In *Velvet Dark*, she starts out on a more ambiguous side of the moral compass, working as a secret corporate spy for dataDyne, a company that presumes to be the cutting-edge leader in AI technology. Joanna comes to discover that dataDyne's rival, the Genesis Institute, has discovered a way to create perfect AI, AI that can perfectly replicate human behavior. Joanna is eventually captured by the Genesis Institute, and then the perspective switches to Joanna's sister Velvet, who is given her own set of missions to complete. Velvet is tasked with protecting Senator Allen, an influential and idealistic politician who is the front runner to become the President of the United States. Velvet is protecting him from mercenaries sent by dataDyne. She manages to save Senator Allen's life, but as she is heading back to be debriefed, she is captured. Joanna awakens in the Genesis Institute, where she is greeted by a scientist named Daniel Carrington. Carrington tries to get Joanna to stay calm, but she has visions telling her not to trust him, and she breaks out of the institute, killing several scientists as she does so. Joanna returns to dataDyne, and is congratulated for returning safely. dataDyne then tasks Joanna with retrieving files from a government computer. She gets the files, but not before meeting a woman named Andrea Anders, who tries to get Joanna to analyze the files before returning them. Joanna threatens to kill Anders, but has a change of heart and flees. She is pursued by a number of mercenaries and gets sidetracked. Eventually, she ends up in a data center and decides to analyze the files she took. Those files contain information about a woman who Joanna notices looks exactly like her, but has done things Joanna doesn't remember doing. After evading more pursuers, Joanna is eventually confronted by a woman who looks exactly like her. After a brief skirmish, Joanna is knocked out. When she wakes up, she is staring straight at the face of her double, who identifies herself as Velvet. Carrington and Anders are with her. Joanna is told that five years ago, dataDyne captured Velvet and performed experiments on her. Eventually Velvet managed to escape, but it's believed that Joanna was hired on because she and Velvet are twins. Neither Velvet nor Joanna can remember anything from before five years ago (though Velvet has regained much of her memory after escaping thanks to Carrington, and Carrington speculates that Joanna's mind must have been wiped so that dataDyne could brainwash her. They convince Joanna that dataDyne is the enemy, and propose that Velvet infiltrates dataDyne as Joanna, since they don't yet trust Joanna to do so. Velvet successfully infiltrates dataDyne, while Joanna bonds with Carrington and Anders. Velvet discovers that dataDyne has stolen Carrington's secrets and has begun work on an AI, not just a perfect human AI but a superintelligent AI that will allow them to have control over the entire planet, an AI known as Scintilla. After a couple of missions, there is a crucial series of scenes: Velvet is discovered as a spy, but manages to escape with some crucial dataDyne data...while Joanna escapes her holding cell and discovers the same bit of information. We don't see what she learns but Joanna reacts poorly, taking Carrington hostage and demanding that Anders tell her the truth. Meanwhile, Velvet analyzes the information and is shocked and horrified to discover that Joanna is an AI. Anders begs Joanna to forgive her and it looks like Joanna will kill Carrington, but she decides instead to just flee into the night as Disc 1 comes to a close.

Disc 2 begins with Velvet undertaking a series of missions to try and stop dataDyne from activating Scintilla. These are interspersed with bits and pieces of information about Joanna's whereabouts. Eventually, during a seemingly normal mission, Joanna finds Velvet and after a brief scuffle subdues her. Joanna demands to know what Velvet knows, and Velvet insists that she knew nothing about Joanna being an AI. The two are forced to work together to complete the

mission, and several missions afterward. Velvet and Joanna begin to bond, which Joanna expresses skepticism at, wondering if anyone could ever truly care for an AI. Velvet asks Joanna if she feels any emotions at all, to which Joanna has to concede that of course she does. Meanwhile, dataDyne is on the verge of activating Scintilla. The Genesis Institute launches one more desperate mission to try and stop Scintilla, and almost manages to do so, but Joanna's "programming" is activated by the awakening machine, and she wounds Velvet before activating Scintilla. The AI immediately infiltrates all aspects of the world's systems. dataDyne's president attempts to stop it, but is himself terminated when Scintilla infects dataDyne's robotic security systems. Velvet is horrified to see that the AI now has total control over the world, and there's nothing anyone can do to stop it. However, Joanna is able to fight off Scintilla's control and gets out of the building with Velvet just in time. Joanna tells Velvet that she was able to see inside Scintilla's code, and knows what it knows, thus making her the only one capable of stopping it now. She says that Senator, now President Allen, has a secret kill-switch that can shut off America's power grid, crippling the country for months but also deactivating Scintilla. Allen was ushered into a bunker as a precaution and his AI security is disconnected from the main grid, but Scintilla is now trying to reach him and it's only a matter of time before Scintilla reaches him. Joanna and Velvet work together to infiltrate the president's bunker, evading Scintilla's defense mechanisms as they do. They reach the president, but Joanna tells him not to activate the switch, as Scintilla has made a leap off the grid and it would not take it out. Velvet has doubts about this, thinking Scintilla might be talking through Joanna again, and wants Allen to press the switch. Joanna insists that she's fine, but Velvet doesn't believe her, and she tries to force Allen to press it. Joanna knocks out Velvet and smashes the switch just as Scintilla's defense mechs breach the doors. The president sacrifices himself to save Joanna and Velvet, but Joanna appears to be cornered with no hope until the mechs suddenly all deactivate themselves at once, saving both sisters. Joanna tries to revive her sister, but Velvet appears to be dead. That's when Anders contacts Joanna and tells her to come to the Genesis Institute immediately. Joanna takes Velvet's lifeless body with her. In an exposition scene, many truths are revealed. Anders tells Joanna that it was not Joanna who was the AI this entire time, but Velvet, and that Anders' real last name isn't Anders, but Dark. Andrea Dark was Daniel Carrington's best student, and the most brilliant software engineer who ever lived. While working under Carrington as a graduate student, the two fell in love and had Joanna. Joanna was even more brilliant and talented than her parents, and Andrea wanted to test some cybernetic implants on her to see if it would enhance her even further. The implants allowed Joanna to access the worldwide computer network from anywhere she was, but at the cost of her own memories, including, eventually, those of her parents. Joanna retained just enough of her memories to become bitter and resentful, and she rejected her parents and left them. Heartbroken, Andrea and Carrington decided to continue their experimentation into AI, and their first project would be to create a perfect AI replica of their daughter Joanna. This AI replica was Velvet, and when she was born, she was placed into a perfect bionic replica of Joanna. Meanwhile, dataDyne was able to hack into Joanna's implants, gradually manipulating her into joining them as a spy. It seems that Velvet has been able to leap out of her body and into the computer grid in an attempt to stop Scintilla. Velvet is able to prevent Scintilla from taking total control, but doesn't have much time before Scintilla finds her and erases her like a computer virus. Joanna must raid the building housing Scintilla's mainframe, but physically destroying it won't be enough, the two sisters have to go into the cyberworld together and delete every trace of Scintilla's code. The final mission is a two-part one, the physical invasion of Scintilla's mainframe building (fighting through guards and robots all along the way) and then the journey

into cyberspace, battling rogue programs before battling Scintilla itself. Scintilla is destroyed, but in the process, Joanna and Velvet realize that because Velvet's code is now intertwined with Scintilla's, Velvet must also be destroyed to kill Scintilla for good. They reluctantly agree to do this, and Velvet sacrifices herself...but Joanna is able to find a single bit of untouched Velvet code and she saves it to an old floppy disc before leaving the self-destructing mainframe building. The ending of the game involves the Genesis Institute announcing that it will continue research into benevolent AI, interspersed with scenes of most of Joanna's cybernetic implants being removed (the ones that were affecting her memories), Joanna reconciling with her parents, and Velvet's code being reconstructed and uploaded into a new body. Joanna and Velvet briefly have a conversation alluding to the one from before, about whether AI can have emotions and feel love, and then the two embrace, accepting one another as twin sisters.

### **April 17, 2000**

*Velvet Dark* is released for the Ultra Nintendo to universal critical acclaim and an enormous first week of sales in both North America and Europe (where it was simultaneously released). The game's single-player campaign and multiplayer are equally praised, the single-player mode is lauded for its handling of the AI issue, and compared to the *Terminator* films and the works of Isaac Asimov, and the multiplayer mode is praised for being even more fun and customizable than *Goldeneye*. It is recognized by many critics as the best console FPS to date, and perhaps even the best FPS overall, topping the likes of games such as *Half-Life* and *Doom*. A sequel would be confirmed as being in the works just a few months later, scheduled for a 2002 release.

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Not buying into all the *Velvet Dark* hype and looking for something else for your Ultra Nintendo? *Wave Race: Ultramarine* is Nintendo's *other* big game of the month, and while Rare's new FPS soaks up all the love, *Wave Race* is ready to cruise right into your console's disc slot. If you've played the original *Wave Race*, picking up *Ultramarine* is a no-brainer. It greatly expands on the original's course selection, featuring a total of 12 courses divided amongst four circuits: Guppy, Grouper, Shark, and Whale. You'll actually race some of the courses more than once, Grouper, Shark, and Whale all feature harder versions of courses found on previous circuits. There are ten racers to choose from, four returning from *Wave Race* and six newbies, including a pair of cameos from other Ultra Nintendo games: Otakon from *Metal Gear Solid* and Rebecca from *Squad Four*. (We have no clue what they're doing on watercraft, but they're surely welcome!)

Another big change from *Wave Race* is the addition of weather. Weather plays a big role in how you'll race the course, big storms generate big waves, and of course, you'll see adverse weather more often on later circuits. Certain racers handle certain weather conditions better than others as well! You'll need a lot more strategy to win races in *Ultramarine*, but winning a race is plenty satisfying. And of course, you can eschew racing the AI all together in favor of racing your friends, or just ditch racing all together and do stunts for points. *Wave Race: Ultramarine* is a vast improvement over the original game and one of our favorite racing games of the year.

Graphics: 5.0

Sound: 4.5  
Play Control: 5.0  
Fun Factor: 5.0  
Challenge: Advanced

-excerpted from a review of *Wave Race: Ultramarine* in the May 2000 issue of *GamePro*

-

\*A TV psychic who looks and sounds a lot like the old TV psychic Miss Cleo is sitting at a table reading from various tarot cards.\*

Psychic: Welcome to the Fabulous Miss Chloe's Psychic Hotline! I'm here to read your fortunes and I'm about to take another caller right now. \*picks up the phone\* Who is this?

Caller: Miss Chloe, I've got a problem!

Psychic: Mmm, let me see now. \*picking up cards\* Can ya tell me what's troublin' ya?

Caller: There's an invasion of weird creeps in my neighborhood!

Psychic: Weird creeps, ya say?

Caller: They're coming up the driveway!

Psychic: Oooh, that's a pickle, let's see what the cards have ta say...\*picks up a card\* I see the king o' claws in your future!

Caller: The king of claws?

\*Scenes from *King Crab 2* are shown on the screen as Miss Chloe talks.\*

Psychic: That's right, the king' o claws, Crust himself! He's bringin' his spin moves, his power jumps, his all new weapons... \*a scene of Crust wielding a giant pair of tongs to pick up one of the enemies, which looks like a big shuffling blob of darkness, is shown here\* He's gotta save da seven seas from the evil Darkwater before all the world is swallowed up by the abyss!

Caller: Well that's great, but who's gonna save me?!

Psychic: Well let's see... \*picks up a tarot card, it's the Death card, she has a worried look on her face as a scream sounds over the phone\* Hello? Are ya there, caller? \*nothing\* Well, I suppose that's it for the Fabulous Miss Chloe's Psychic Hotline for today! And if ya want your own psychic readings done, call me at this number for only \$5.99 per minute! \*a fake "555" number is shown on screen\*

\*The *King Crab 2* logo is shown\*

\*cue the Sega! Scream\*

-from the *King Crab 2* commercial, which began airing during March 2000

*King Crab 2* played it mostly safe, sticking to the familiar platformer formula while making a few changes, such as the addition of weapons to the game. Instead of battling Lord Cartilage, Crust battled a wave of mysterious beings from the deep ocean abyss called the Darkwater, commanded by Queen Mariana, an evil being who lived in the undersea Marianas Trench. Crust once again had to save the beautiful Princess Elisha, who was being held in a crystal in Mariana's palace, which Crust had to reach after defeating Mariana's minions throughout the adventure. As a fun, visually pleasing platformer, *King Crab 2* maintained the series' good reputation and pleased fans itching for another adventure.

-from a retro review of *King Crab 2* on SegaRetro.com

On its surface, *King Crab 2* appeared to be much like its predecessor. But where the game *really* shined was the underwater levels. Though some series such as *The Legend Of Zelda* have a reputation for excellent underwater levels, others make swimming a difficult chore. But in *King Crab 2*, the underwater control scheme actually becomes a lot more fun, giving your character an extremely wide range of underwater mobility and making his attacks much more effective. By keeping the land levels relatively small and opening up the underwater gameplay, *King Crab 2* was able to conquer a lot of the problems that water levels typically encounter, and by the time the player reaches Mariana's Palace, which is a perfect mix of both types of environments, the player will be having a ton of fun. It was a huge risk for *King Crab 2* to spend so much more time in the water, but players soon learned to relax: the water really was fine.

-from a retro review of *King Crab 2* on Kotaku.com

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(Authors' Note: The following *Virtua Quest 3* info was given to us by our reader and contributor **Roger Redux!** Thanks for the contribution!)

### **Virtua Quest 3: Pai Chan & Kage-Maru:**

[Released in Japan as *Virtua Fighter RPG: Pai Chan and Kage-Maru's Quests*]

Once again all voice actors whose characters appear in the game return.

#### **Pai Chan's Quest:**

Prologue: A cinematic flashback shows us Pai's childhood. Her father, Lau Chan, is obsessed with his training to the exclusion of almost all else; he also oversees Pai's training from a young age. While they're training, her mother is working so hard to try to support the family that she dies of exhaustion and overwork. Pai blames her father and doesn't speak to him for many years, swearing that one she'll surpass his skill and beat him.

Flash forward to 1991: the tutorial level cold opens with Pai being chased by thugs, grabbing a low rung of a fire escape ladder, swinging around behind the them (QTEs), and promptly handing them their collective asses (normal fight). After the fight, a voice yells "Cut! Print! Perfect! In fact, that's wrap!" Our view pulls out to reveal that we're on a movie set, Pai Chan is

currently the biggest female star in the Hong Kong action movie scene, so big that her popularity even extends overseas. [She's just finished filming on 'Daughter of the Dragon 3' if anyone was curious. (and yes the series is a sort-of sequel to the Bruce Lee film 'Enter the Dragon')] She does all of her own stunts and choreographs her own fight scenes (like Lee himself), giving her films a more visceral realism. After making sure the stuntmen from the scene are alright, she talks to the director who congratulates her on her best film to date. [The player can explore the film set, Pai's dressing room, and part of the studio lot.] In her dressing room she receives a phone call, her father is dying of a rare, incurable disease.

Chapter 1: She's the Best, Aroooooound: The bombshell that her father is dying has driven her to recommit herself to her training. This chapter follows the basic 'travel around the world and train at various dojos' format from VQ1 and turns it up to 11. Naturally she digresses along the way to help people with their problems (wouldn't be much of an RPG heroine if she didn't). Halfway through the chapter she starts being followed by actual thugs, whom she dispatches as easily as she did the stuntmen at the beginning. After about 5 progressively more challenging encounters with the thugs, she's given an invitation to The Tournament and informed that her father will also be competing.

Chapter 2: Hit me...If you can: The Tournament, she meets Akira, Jacky, and Wolf; her father wins. [During her fight with her father there are QTE combos that allow her to pull off some slightly better special moves.] Her performance in the Tournament as a whole revealed that she's weaker than she thought.

Chapter 3: She's got the Eye of the Tiger, She's the Cream of the Fight...: She redoubles her training over the next year, while adventuring with her new friends, and planning the rescue of Jacky's sister from the mysterious shadowy group running the Tournaments.

Chapter 4: ...Rising-up to the Challenge of Her Rivals!: She does markedly better this time, though she still loses to her father. [This time the QTE combos allow you to almost win.] This time though, her defeat allows her some new insight into and perspective on her father.

Epilogue: She keeps in touch with her new friends, especially Akira, and starts work on her newest world-spanning epic action film: "Tekken: The World Fighting Championship".

#### Kage-Maru's Quest:

Prologue: In the secret ninja village of Hagakure, Kage-Maru and Tsukikage are the names given to their leaders. One day the current Tsukikage is abducted by an unknown mysterious figure, nothing is ever heard of her fate. The Kage-Maru and his son were out fishing several years later, they return to find the village burning while the unknown attackers flee. To add insult to injury, the attackers fired guns at them while they fled, and the Kage-Maru was killed. His son took a keepsake and his father's uniform, taking the name Kage-Maru for himself and swearing vengeance for the death of his father and the slaughter of his village.

[His game plays much like the Bryant's with a focus on investigation, trying to determine who's responsible for murder of all he held dear. The biggest difference is that he's more of an anti-hero, so he conducts his investigations in less savory places; and also that having no ties to 'mainstream society', he's quicker to believe in secret cabals and such, so he actually hears the

name "Judgement 6" sooner than even Sarah. At the end of his Prologue.]

Chapter 1: Hunting Judgement: Now that he knows the name of his quarry, he stops at nothing to find out all he can about them. He does still get stopped by NPCs in need of help, but it's entirely up to the player whether or not to actually help them most of the time. There are only a few that Kage-Maru will by default decide are worthy of his help. (The game does give extra rewards for some of the optional ones: a new fighting move, some money, a shortcut to another story element, etc. A selling point for the game's strategy guide would be that it'll tell you which ones will give you an extra reward, and which ones you can skip entirely.) As a highly skilled ninja, Kage-Maru naturally spots the J6 thugs trailing him the very first time they try; he interrogates them, but they're just goons, they know nothing. There are still six different encounters with J6 thugs, each group knows slightly less nothing; the 4th is able to tell him why his village had to die: J6 tried to recruit the Hagakure into their private army, but Kage-Maru's father refused them; and the 6th gives him the information about The Tournament.

Chapter 2: And the Man in the Back said Everyone Attack, and it turned into a Virtua Blitz: Kage-Maru takes an instant dislike of most of his competitors in the World Fighting Tournament, but especially of Akira who he views an undisciplined child unworthy of his family's legacy (and whom he takes particular pleasure in knocking down a peg when he defeats him). He is unsurprised by Pai Chan's weakness, having not expected much from a 'mere actor'; and he has a similar opinion of 'the race car driver'. The only one to truly earn his respect is Lau Chan, who is clearly a dedicated martial artist. Dural on the other hand, Kage-Maru has no idea what she is until the end of their fight. At first he thinks of her as just being a robot designed to mimic human fighters, but her finishing move is one that he'd only ever seen his mother execute correctly.

Chapter 3: What is Dural?: In this chapter, his curiosity and suspicion aroused by his encounter with Dural (who was proudly shown off as the latest creation of Xavier D. & Viceroy Arms and Robotics Company), Kage-Maru launches a full investigation of the company called "The Devil". He actually succeeds in breaking into their headquarters building and goes through their files on 'Project Dural', discovering that Dural isn't a robot, she's a cyborg, and that J6 was behind his mother's disappearance.

Chapter 4: No, I am your mother: Kage-Maru's sole motivation for entering the Second Tournament is to try to rescue his mother...Dural. His second fight against Dural has the (now familiar) QTE element to try and talk past the programming, with the twist that Kage-Maru *isn't* pulling any of his punches, knowing that his mother would rather be destroyed than live as a puppet.

Epilogue: Kage-Maru has succeeded in rescuing his mother, though she's still a cyborg, and they now live in a small secluded village not far from where Hagakure used to be.

After the Player finishes both main quests, a third option appears on the character select screen: a greyed out box with a question mark instead of a portrait. When the third option is selected the VF "Round 1/FIGHT!/K.O." narrator voice says "Bonus Round!" and the post-selection splash screen reveals:

### Dural's Quest:

Prologue: Tsukikage is the co-leader of the Hagakure ninja clan with her husband Kage-Maru. Both of their names are passed down generation to generation and taken by all of the clan's leaders; so one day her son will be Kage-Maru, and his wife will be Tsukikage. One day while on a walk around the outskirts of the village, she's attacked by a man with a tranq. gun. She awakes in a place she's never seen, surrounded by strange equipment and people in lab coats.

Chapter 1: Tsukikage is physically disassembled and turned into a cyborg, while being brainwashed with false memories and selective memory erasure, becoming Dural.

Chapter 2: Round 1- FIGHT!: Dural crushes all who come before her in the First Tournament.

Chapter 3: Upgrades: More torture/brainwashing/cybernetic enhancements.

Chapter 4: Total Recall: During the fight with Kage-Maru, QTEs to break free of the programming.

Epilogue: Mother and son reunited and living in the forrest, trying to figure out how to reverse her 'Cyborgification'.

Pai Chan's gameplay is very similar to Akira's in VQ1, though in chapters 3 & 4 the controls become gradually more responsive to emphasize that she's getting better.

Kage-Maru's gameplay is blend of Akira's and the Bryants', with a lot of fight training and investigation.

Dural's gameplay is very much like Sarah Bryant's, though her fighting skill is greater than anyone else's.

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While Tomonobu Itagaki continued to work on *Dead or Alive 2* (which would finally make it to arcades in November 2000), he had tasked a team within Tecmo of producing a *Ninja Gaiden* game for the Ultra Nintendo. While he contributed to the game in an advisory role (mostly to approve the game's story and to ensure it maintained the same gameplay integrity of previous titles in the series), the game's creation was largely the work of this small team (which Itagaki would later use as the basis for Team Ninja starting in 2002). *Fury* was a prequel to the earlier games, which saw Ryu Hayabusa hunting down members of a rival ninja clan which had assassinated his friend and sparring partner Kotonube. Hayabusa must infiltrate six fortresses over the course of the game to hunt down and kill the clan leaders, battling their minions all along the way. While *Ninja Gaiden Fury* introduced a complex and intuitive battle system to the series that won praise from reviewers, many criticized the game's environments, which consisted of repetitive and confusing corridors and were considered not very fun to navigate. At first, Itagaki addressed these criticisms by claiming that the point of *Ninja Gaiden Fury* was its combat and battle system, but would later express regret that he had not more closely overseen the creation of individual levels, and would make it a point to ensure more well designed

environments in future games. Despite the mixed reviews, *Ninja Gaiden Fury* sold well enough to be Tecmo's most successful console game of the year, and the series would continue on next-generation systems starting with Microsoft's Xbox in 2002.

-from a Tomonobu Itagaki career retrospective on Gamesovermatter.com

-

*Storm Guardians* was remembered as one of the best late-generation games for the cartridge SNES, and sold quite well, but fans had to wait nearly five years before a sequel finally appeared on the Ultra Nintendo. *Ultra Storm Guardians* was in some way worth the wait. It continued the story of the five protagonists (Alex, Elite, Zera, Lee, and Fury), and added an additional sixth Storm Guardian, a girl named Lita, who started out as evil before eventually joining the heroes. The graphics and soundtrack were considered quite good, and the game added voice acting, a welcome touch. The combat, however, praised on the original game as a shoot-em-up reminiscent of *Gunstar Heroes*, was simplified into a fairly by-the-book beat-em-up, which earned derision from critics and some fans. The game featured open area exploration like other 3-D games of its day, but you were restricted to just a small area until you'd completed an objective (and some of those objectives could be difficult to find). This made for a sometimes frustrating and poorly paced experience. Despite the game's flaws, it sold well, and fans wouldn't have to wait another five years for the series' third game: it was released in 2001 for the Game Boy Nova as the much better received *Storm Guardians Team Delta*, which brought back the familiar side-scrolling shoot-em-up combat.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

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Game Boy Nova early adopters waiting for an RPG are in luck: Camelot's *Mistlandia* makes its debut on the handheld later this week. We played a review copy, and for those wary about the company's RPG making prowess for the Nintendo after the bland Ultra Nintendo launch title *Ultra Adventurers*: your fears are mostly unwarranted, this game is quite good, even when compared to the company's Sega RPGs such as the *Shining Force* series. *Mistlandia* takes place in a realm very reminiscent of medieval Scotland, it features an appropriate soundtrack of Celtic-style music, and there are numerous puzzles scattered about that are solved with items the player picks up along the way, in a matter not too dissimilar from games like *Zelda* or even *Lufia II*. The game features four protagonists who explore a land of wonder, where an ancient enemy known as Seros threatens the land and has deployed minions to enforce his will by menacing towns that the heroes must liberate. The plot is somewhat cliché, but there are enough twists along the way that players will be surprised on occasion, and the game itself is quite adept at not letting things get too stale. Where *Ultra Adventurers* featured four forgettable protagonists, *Mistlandia*'s main characters each have their own motivations and complex personalities that will endear them to players immediately. Battles show off the Game Boy Nova's capabilities exceptionally well, with battle animations that call back memories of the very best SNES-CD RPGs, or even some Saturn titles. The game's not quite as good looking as *Final Fantasy VII*, but its style works well for what the Nova is capable of, and it's probably prettier than any SNES-CD

game, including groundbreaking (for the time) titles like *Tale Phantasia*.

(...)

*Mistlandia* is an RPG worth playing, though it's probably not quite good enough to buy a Nova exclusively for. However, with a new *Pokemon* game on the way and Squaresoft having announced both an original *Final Fantasy* title and remakes of some of its classic games for the device, *Mistlandia* might just be a good excuse to pick one up.

-excerpted from RPGamer.com's 8.5/10 review of *Mistlandia*, posted on April 18, 2000

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### **Kurt Cobain Criticizes Metallica Over Napster Lawsuit**

Metallica recently filed a lawsuit against the peer-to-peer file sharing company Napster, claiming that the company's technology, which allows internet users to trade songs with one another, is tantamount to theft. While most music artists have stayed silent over the issue, Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain has spoken out against Metallica and the lawsuit.

“Metallica, they're showing that they're all about money and not about music,” said Cobain in an interview with a Seattle-area television station. “A lot of fans, they can't always afford to buy all the CDs they wanna listen to. If it wasn't for people listening to the radio and swapping tapes, bands like us wouldn't have even gotten started.”

Ulrich fired back, calling Cobain a “hypocrite”, and also reminding critics that fans were trading songs that hadn't yet been released and that Metallica didn't intend for anyone to listen to yet.

-excerpted from an article posted on Yahoo! News, April 22, 2000

“*And now I guess they're suing colleges for letting kids download music? Lars Ulrich is a dick.*”

-Kurt Cobain, in a statement on the Nirvana website, April 25, 2000

“*I'd kill him he was standing here in front of me right now. I swear to God, I'd wring his scrawny little fuckin' neck.*”

-Lars Ulrich, in an April 27, 2000 interview after a reporter read to him some of the comments made by Cobain on the Nirvana website

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Brittany Saldita: So first *Wipeout 2* and now *Booststream*, I've gotta wonder, is there a backlash against difficulty in racing games since *F-Zero: Ultracharged*?

Alex Stansfield: I don't really think so, I think *F-Zero* is probably at the top of the scale, so if you've played it a ton, like we have, other games just seem a lot easier.

Brittany: I have to kind of remind myself of that when I'm playing these games, just because I personally found it easy doesn't mean our average viewer might.

Alex: ...what are you saying?

Brittany: Hmm?

Alex: That our average viewer isn't that good at games?

Brittany: What? No! No! \*blushing and shaking her head\*

Alex: You're the one that said it!

Brittany: No, you are, you just said it!

Alex: I think you did!

Brittany: Okay, so put yourself in the shoes of someone who didn't play *F-Zero* a ton last year, is *Booststream* too easy?

Alex: No, it's a challenging game! I think someone who doesn't play racing games all that much would find *Booststream* a decent challenge, and it's really really fun. I'm giving it a 4.

Brittany: Keeping in mind that I personally found it easier than the average person might, I gave it a 3.5. It's just so beautiful, all the neon cities and the scenery, it IS easy to get distracted. The Kyoto level, I crashed a few times just because the scenery blew me away.

Alex: Are you sure it's because of that and not because you had a rough time? \*smirks\*

Brittany: Watch it, you!

(...)

Steve Horton: This game kind of makes killing stuff get old, and a video game shouldn't make killing stuff get old!

Gary Westhouse: I absolutely agree.

Steve: I wanted to have fun with *Future Fear*. I thought, you know, after I got out of the arena, there'd be more stuff to do. But instead, it's the same old "hunt down these guys and kill them" level structure. Occasionally the game would send waves of guys at you and you'd be all \*makes gun noises\* and at first THAT was kind of fun, but by the end, I was worn out, man!

Gary: The main character, she was pretty interesting.

Steve: Not really, she bored the crap outta me.

Gary: How many people in the arena did you save?

Steve: The first time I played? Not a single one. I laid waste to everything that moved!

Gary: See, the plot does improve if you leave more people alive.

Steve: I did go back and try to save everyone but that really wasn't fun. I'm giving this game a 2.5.

Gary: I'll be a bit more generous and give it a 3, but yeah, *Future Fear: Escape The Arena* isn't all that great.

-excerpted from the April 11, 2000 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Ted Crosley: I'm giving *Velvet Dark* a 4.5 out of 5.

Alex: Really?

Ted: I told you, I thought the plot went off the rails toward the end and I thought that the multiplayer wasn't as good as *Goldeneye's*.

Alex: I will give you the plot, even though I thought it was fine. But the multiplayer? Really?

Ted: The Farsight breaks it, for one.

Alex: Then don't use the Farsight!

Ted: The sims, they're kinda stupid, even the best ones...the Dark ones cheat their asses off. The Counter-Op mode was fun as hell but I couldn't get into the multiplayer, even with three other people I don't think it plays as well as *Goldeneye*. For all its options, I think the level design is pretty poor compared to *Goldeneye's*, they don't even bring over the best stages...I just think this game has too many little flaws to justify a 5.

Alex: Well, I'm giving it a 5 and I think you're wrong.

Ted: I gave it a 4.5, that's a great score! Any other game would LOVE to get that score. And I know Nintendo fans are going to be pissed at me, and I'm probably going to get a mutilated Sonic the Hedgehog doll in the mail...which, by the way, is REALLY uncalled for, don't take out your anger on Sonic, he had nothing to do with *Velvet Dark's* mediocre plot.

Alex: I thought the plot was fine.

Ted: Once you've played the game, check out my review about the plot on the website, I'll break

down everything I thought was stupid about it.

Alex: *Velvet Dark* is a brilliant game, it should be up on the wall right now.

Ted: Well, too bad.

-excerpted from the April 18, 2000 episode of *GameTV*

(...)

Lyssa: Can you blame me for being at least a little disappointed in this game?

Brittany: No, I mean, *Space Channel 5* has some catchy music and a really fun main character, but as far as rhythm games go it's really nothing special.

Lyssa: I didn't even think the music was all that catchy! There's only so much you can listen to "left shoot shoot shoot" and "right shoot shoot shoot" before you think "enough already, shoot shoot me!"

Brittany: \*laughing\* Well, I know you were really excited for this one, what's your final verdict?

Lyssa: I gotta give it a 3, I mean, it really isn't all that great of a game! It has some cute graphics and it's a fun enough first time playthrough but I can't see myself replaying it very many times afterward.

Brittany: Yeah, I give it a 3 too. It's a nifty little game but when you're done playing it you'll say to yourself "well, that was nice" and put it away, probably never to be played again.

Lyssa: If you wanna see more of *Ulala*, go back and play *Spice World*, that's a much better game!

Brittany: ...not really.

-excerpted from the April 25, 2000 episode of *GameTV*

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### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: April 2000**

1. Squad Four: Rebellion
2. Final Fantasy VIII
3. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
4. World Of Color: Millennium
5. Ultra Donkey Kong Country
6. Super Smash Bros.
7. Resident Evil: Operation Stormwind
8. Road Storm: Rampage

9. Final Fantasy VII
10. Deathblow II

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: April 2000**

1. Soul Calibur
2. Sonic The Hedgehog 5
3. Phantasy Star VI
4. Klonoa 2: The Wind Rider
5. King Crab 2
6. Turok III: Generation War
7. Resident Evil: Code Veronica
8. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater
9. Silent Hill
10. Virtua Quest 3

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### **April 26, 2000**

Tom Kalinske sighed as he held the letter of resignation in his hands, ready to place it on the desk of his boss for the last decade, Hayao Nakayama. Kalinske's old friend Shinobu Toyoda had left the company three months ago, and just a few days earlier, Nakayama had personally met with Kalinske. After a long meeting, the two had mutually agreed that Kalinske would be allowed to resign with his head held high. It really was the least Sega could do for the man that had brought their company to prominence over the last ten years, though Kalinske wouldn't have argued if Nakayama had brought him into the office just to fire him.

Things were changing at Sega. Even Nakayama's job was rumored to not be entirely safe, and it was becoming increasingly possible that the company could see a near total restructuring of its corporate ladder before the release of the Katana.

*“After this, it'll all be over...I'll be unemployed. I could retire right now if I wanted to... do I want to retire?”*

For all its trials and tribulations, Tom Kalinske loved his job at Sega. It was challenging, it was fulfilling, it took him all over the world...

It took him away from his family. Though he'd made the effort to be there for his daughters as much as he could, he had missed a good amount of seeing them grow up. Now he was free to see them whenever he wanted, though already, other companies were courting him. Tom Kalinske could have a job the very next week if he wanted one.

He entered Nakayama's office and placed it on the man's desk. Nakayama looked up at Kalinske, and through the stoic businessman's expression, Kalinske could see a deep sadness in his boss' eyes.

“Thank you, Tom.” said Nakayama, picking up the letter. “It won't be the same here without you.”

“It's been a pleasure,” said Kalinske, extending his hand. “Thank you so much for the opportunity. You've done so much for me and my family.”

Nakayama graciously shook Kalinske's hand.

“Nowhere near as much as you've done for this company. If it was up to me, you'd have a place here forever.”

But both men knew it wasn't up to Nakayama. And...either way, Kalinske knew his time at Sega would have ended soon regardless. Even if the Saturn had trounced Nintendo...Tom Kalinske still missed his family. This wasn't a job he could've done forever.

“Sayonara, Kalinske-san.”

“Sayonara.”

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*“Kalinske Out, Former Rare Executive Reggie Fils-Aime In At Sega's American Division”*  
-headline from the May 1, 2000 *Wall Street Journal*

-

*“The Gods Must Be Angry”*

-the tagline for *Divine Wrath*, which appeared in TV and magazine advertisements for the game

*“There are some great RPGs coming out this month, but if you don't like any of them, you can always make your own!”*

-Ted Crosley, from the intro to the May 2, 2000 episode of *GameTV*, referring to the game *RPG Maker*

*“Legacy of Kain looks gorgeous on the Ultra Nintendo, far better than it did on the Sega Saturn even with both games crammed onto a single disc. This could be the biggest Saturn port yet.”*

-from a Gamespot.com article breaking the official news about the Ultra Nintendo *Legacy of Kain* port, posted on May 1, 2000

*“Dragon Quest VII looks to be the last gasp for the Sega Saturn in Japan, just seven months out from the release of the Katana.”*

-from the “Japan Update” segment of the June 2000 issue of *Game Informer* magazine

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*Ultra Nintendo:*

### **All Star Tennis 2000**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "A solid tennis title with really pretty graphics.")

Gamespot: 6.1 (quote: "The graphical detail is nice, but the bland selection of gameplay modes limits the replay value.")

### **Covert Ops: Nuclear Dawn**

EGM: 3.0 (quote: "A miserably flawed stealth title that you should stay away from.")

Gamespot: 5.4 (quote: "The gameplay could really use a lot more polish.")

### **FIFA 2001** (also released for the Saturn)

EGM: 8.7 (quote: "The latest installment of the world's favorite soccer title is a real winner.")

Gamespot: 8.4 (quote: "The field looks almost real and this game features an amazing selection of teams.")

### **Mark Of The Wolves**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "The best SNK fighting game since Samurai Showdown.")

Gamespot: 8.4 (quote: "Not only does this game feature great fighting and plenty of characters, it's also got a superb storyline.")

### **RPG Maker**

EGM: 7.0 (quote: "It's time consuming to make an RPG with this tool, but with plenty of patience, you can definitely make a great one.")

Gamespot: 6.5 (quote: "Primitive graphics and clunky menus keep this from being as fun as it should be, even for a hardcore RPG fan.")

### **SaGa Frontier 2**

EGM: 8.0 (quote: "Squaresoft's sequel hits all the right notes and ties up all the previous game's loose ends.")

Gamespot: 8.6 (quote: "An instant RPG classic.")

### **Seventh Cross: Evolution**

EGM: N/A

Gamespot: 5.6 (quote: "This game is just way too weird for an average player to get into. It's complex, but to a fault.")

## **Ultra Excitebike**

EGM: 9.0 (quote: "Nintendo brings back a classic with modern bikes and amazingly fun controls.")

Gamespot: 9.4 (quote: "One of the best motorcycle games ever made, it gave me hours of fun.")

## **Ultra Indy Racing** (also released for the Saturn as *Indy 500: Start Your Engines*)

EGM: 7.3 (quote: "An exciting and very fast Indycar racer.")

Gamespot: 7.6 (quote: "It's realistic, sure, but it's as fun as a great arcade racer.")

## **Ultra Road Rash 2**

EGM: 6.0 (quote: "Just falls flat compared to previous games in the series.")

Gamespot: 4.8 (quote: "A real disappointment, painfully short on tracks and with very dull graphics.")

## **Divine Wrath**

EGM: 9.5 (quote: "This game features one of the best selections of characters of any fighting game ever made.")

Gamespot: 9.4 (quote: "It plays so perfectly, the characters are incredibly well balanced.")

## **Fluid Fighters**

EGM: 5.0 (quote: "For a game called Fluid Fighters, the fighting isn't very fluid.")

Gamespot: 5.9 (quote: "The graphics were all right, but the fighting itself is fairly generic stuff.")

## **Stone: Slayers Of Rugal**

EGM: 6.8 (quote: "It's certainly not the worst fighting game, and some of the character designs are quite creative.")

Gamespot: 7.0 (quote: "One of the cheesiest fighting games ever...and yet, I had some fun with this one.")

## **The Gemini Project**

EGM: 5.5 (quote: "The combat reticle barely helps, leading to firefights that turn into guessing games.")

Gamespot: 6.1 (quote: "I wanted to like this a lot more for its fascinating storyline, but the gameplay was quite disappointing.")

## **Bad Noon Rising**

EGM: 7.2 (quote: "As far as Western games go, it's definitely one of the better ones I've played.")

Gamespot: 6.0 (quote: "The levels could've used a lot more variety. The music score is a strong point, it definitely reminded me of old Ennio Morricone.")

### **Escape From Laser City**

EGM: 6.7 (quote: "Beautiful neon-style graphics and a compelling plot kept me playing. It's just a shame the combat was so repetitive.")

Gamespot: 7.5 (quote: "You'll never play a more brutal brawler this year...and it's one of the best brawlers I've played in a while.")

### **Soldier Of Misfortune**

EGM: 7.7 (quote: "It's a callback to old school platformers with some really silly visuals, and ultimately, it works.")

Gamespot: 7.3 (quote: "You'll love this game's playful protagonist, though the gameplay itself isn't as creative as its visuals.")

*Saturn:*

### **Windborn II**

EGM: 8.7 (quote: "A gorgeous RPG, one of the Saturn's prettiest games.")

Gamespot: 9.0 (quote: "While it lacks the poignancy of the original game, it makes up for it with stellar gameplay and an amazing cast.")

### **Pachi Pachi Panic!!**

EGM: 8.5 (quote: "This is one of the most insane shooters you'll ever play.")

Gamespot: 5.7 (quote: "There's too much going on, and ultimately, this is a shooter that relies on luck more than skill, a fatal flaw.")

### **Wonder Project**

EGM: N/A

Gamespot: 6.5 (quote: "A strange sim that will either pull you in or push you far, far away.")

*Game Boy Nova:*

### **Little Andrekah**

EGM: 8.2 (quote: "It's cute, I'll give it that much!")

Gamespot: 7.3 (quote: "While Little Andrekah is a bit too small in scale to capture the original game's charm, it's still a really fun and cute action title.")

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Roger Ebert: And, I think I speak for everybody when I say, welcome back. This show hasn't been the same without you.

Gene Siskel: Well, it was touch and go for a while, but, you know, I couldn't let you have the theater to yourself.

Ebert: Couldn't let me win, huh?

Siskel: Could not let you win.

Ebert: Really good to have you back. And the first film we're gonna talk about after more than a year apart, it's a good one, it's *Gladiator*.

Siskel: Well, you might've thought it was a good one, but I've gotta disagree and I think you know why.

Ebert: So am I gonna be the one to defend the casting in this film?

Siskel: I thought the casting was great. Joaquin Phoenix is a fantastic Commodus. But the elephant in the room, the one thing that really dragged this film down was the casting of Maximus, and I will never for the life of me understand how Adam Sandler got this part. He was terrible.

Ebert: You know, he definitely wasn't the best actor in this movie.

Siskel: That is a tremendous understatement.

(...)

Siskel: This could've been a really good movie, but for me it all comes back to that lead role and I just can't accept Adam Sandler as Maximus.

Ebert: But he's-

Siskel: I know, I know, he's been doing some good work. He was good in *Saving Private Ryan* and I thought he was great in last year's *A Streetcar Named Desire*. I saw that movie right after my third brain surgery and it picked me right back up, he was a great Stanley. But he just cannot carry an epic film like this and it crashed and burned the whole thing. I wish they could've gotten Russell Crowe to do this movie because I know he wanted to do it.

Ebert: Right, right, and he and Ridley Scott just couldn't get along.

Siskel: Couldn't they have gotten anybody else but Adam Sandler? I think you could've made a better Maximus than Adam Sandler.

Ebert: \*laughs\* I highly doubt that. You know, for my money, this is a beautiful film, the visuals

are stunning and it tells a fantastic story of revenge and honor, and Adam Sandler, while not amazing, is still competent in the role. I give *Gladiator* a thumbs up, I think it's one of the best films of the year so far.

Siskel: I just can't give it a thumbs up. When you're the lead, you have to carry the film. Adam Sandler drove this movie into the ground, his acting was painful at times. I'm giving *Gladiator* a thumbs down.

Ebert: One guy, one guy ruined the movie for you?

Siskel: He's three years removed from singing the Hanukkah Song!

Ebert: I think this movie showed off his range.

Siskel: I think he was terrible.

-from *Siskel and Ebert At The Movies*, April 30, 2000

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(Authors' Note: The idea for *Divine Wrath* came from our reader **HonestAbe1809**! While we filled out most of the details, it was his idea to make Loki the villain of the game and to feature Medusa.)

Not only is *Divine Wrath* one of the best looking fighting games to date, with beautiful backgrounds and tremendously detailed character models, it's also jam-packed with characters, 26 in all. You only get 14 at the start, and must unlock the remaining 12 through completing the game's story mode and various other objectives. The fighters span the gamut of myths and legends, including gods from many pantheons across history.

They include:

Thor- Wields a hammer and powerful lightning attacks.

Odin- Also wields a hammer, attacks with divine energy and earth-based attacks.

Loki- Uses ice attacks and a variety of weapons.

Heimdall- Blasts enemies with sonic-based attacks from his horn.

Freyja- Attacks with swift strikes and a mighty spear.

Zeus- Utilizes lightning bolts and powerful strikes.

Hercules- A strictly melee fighter who specializes in grapples and throws.

Hades- Uses the spirits of the dead to strike foes.

Apollo- Plays his lyre and sometimes hits enemies with it.

Athena- Uses a sword to strike powerfully at her foes.

Medusa- Uses her snakes, can temporarily petrify enemies and ensorcell them.

Shiva- Can switch forms in battle to strike in a variety of ways.

Vishnu- Fights with his four limbs and a variety of weapons.

Brahma- Another melee-based fighter with powerful strikes.

Lakshmi- Also has four limbs, but instead of weapons, uses melee and energy-based strikes.  
Ra- Fire-based attacks that utilize the power of the sun.  
Set- Strikes with a powerful rod, surprisingly dextrous.  
Horus- Very speedy, can take flight over short distances to strike from above.  
Anubis- Utilizes dark energy, can also teleport.  
Sekhmet- Utilizes projectile weapons but can also strike with quick melee blows.  
Lucifer- Can transform from a quick striking human to a powerful demon.  
Gabriel- Wields a pair of swords and can float somewhat like Horus.  
Lilith- Specializes in lower body strikes to undermine her enemies.  
Amaterasu- Incredibly quick, maybe the fastest character in the game, utilizing powerful energy attacks.  
Izanagi- Utilizes a very long spear to strike foes but is vulnerable close up.  
Hachiman- Another powerful melee attacker who utilizes fire.

In story mode, Loki is the primary villain. He seeks to bring about Ragnarok, and finds a way to access all dimensions, bringing the war to all the sacred realms. Gods must unite from across many pantheons to stop Loki's plans and save their worlds. While Loki is the final boss in every story mode (except his own, where he battles Odin), the penultimate boss depends on who you select as your character (Gabriel and Lucifer battle each other, Ra and Anubis battle each other, etc.).

-excerpted from an article about *Divine Wrath* on a game review website which awarded the game 4.5/5

*Divine Wrath* was lauded as one of the best 2-D fighting games of 2000, and probably the best fighting game to be released since *Soul Calibur*. It wasn't without controversy, of course. The game included many gods from a number of religions both past and present, including beings from Shinto, Hindu, and Judeo-Christian tradition, and this led to criticism from a number of religious figures, particularly Christians who were none-too-happy to see players able to control the devil in a fighting game. The game's violence also courted controversy, rivaling some of Midway's other games, particularly the *Mortal Kombat* series. Ultimately though, most players loved *Divine Wrath*, seeing it as an enormous improvement on Midway's previous attempt to create a game involving religious deities (*War Gods*). The first half of 2000 was fairly sparse in terms of major games, with only *Disavowed* and *Velvet Dark* really moving the needle significantly in terms of sales. *Divine Wrath* took advantage of the sparse landscape and sold a ton of copies throughout the year, becoming one of the year's biggest sellers.

-from an article on Gamesovermatter.com

\*Loki is standing at the edge of a cliff, overlooking a massive sphere of glowing black energy.\*

Loki: It's time...it's time for the ultimate battle to bring all dimensions under my control!

Medusa: \*looking very visually pleasing in this game, somewhat like Medusa from OTL's *Kid Icarus: Uprising*\* Well well, someone's counting their chickens before they hatch...

Loki: Is that you, Medusa? I'm tempted to look at you but I know of your power.... \*he smirks and turns, looking her right in the eye\* But as a god, I am immune!

Medusa: You're not immune to being ripped limb from limb... \*she strokes one of her hair snakes and smiles\*

Loki: Do you not welcome Ragnarok as well? Do you not desire to see Olympus crumble? I know you've been dying for your revenge after being Athena's prisoner for so long...

Medusa: Athena is dead. \*referring to how she defeated Athena in her sub-boss fight\* And you soon will be...

Loki: If your wish is to die, I will grant it!

-from Medusa's pre-final boss cutscene in *Divine Wrath*

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### **Eidos Update: Unlucky Hexx, Lucky Nintendo**

In Eidos' *Soldier Of Misfortune*, you're a strange, jester-like character named Hexx with the power to cause bad luck wherever you go. Hexx can make enemies trip, make things fall on their heads, make the ground open up beneath them, or cause any number of bad luck-related mishaps toward his foes. The game is a fully 3-D platformer, where your goal is to collect pieces of a broken mirror in each world, in the hopes of restoring Hexx's good luck so that he can reunite with his friends. His only companion on his journey is Nightshade, a black cat that can transform into a human being. She too is affected by Hexx's bad luck (she gets into various mishaps over the course of the story), but sticks with him anyway, and keeps him encouraged as he goes from world to world. The game happens to be the curious product of the dispute between Eidos and Silicon Knights over the *Legacy of Kain* franchise, where Silicon Knights agreed to let Eidos have the full rights to the series in return for publishing and promoting *Soldier of Misfortune*. It's a quality game, though only time will tell whether or not it'll have the same legacy that *Kain* has had.

In the meantime, *Legacy Of Kain* is set to make its debut on the Ultra Nintendo, as a two-game bundle containing the original game as well as the sequel, *Soul Reaver*. The two games are package under one title and contained on one disc, with small graphical improvements made. While *Soul Reaver* is nearly identical to last year's Saturn hit, there's definitely a noticeable difference in the graphics between the Saturn *Blood Omen* and the game on the Ultra Nintendo, which features more detailed environments and smoother looking characters. *Legacy of Kain* releases on the Ultra Nintendo this summer, and judging from the stellar reception and sales the games received on the Saturn, the two-game compilation could be one of the Ultra Nintendo's biggest hits of the year.

-from an article in the June 2000 issue of *GamePro* magazine

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May 2000 is known as a pivotal month in gaming history, both for the events that took place behind the scenes and for a number of popular franchises that got their start (*Divine Wrath*, *Soldier Of Misfortune*, *Gemini*). Also during the month of May 2000 came two RPG sequels: *Windborn II*, the sequel to one of the best RPGs in the history of the Sega Saturn, and *SaGa Frontier 2*, the latest game in Square's *SaGa* series and the sequel to a somewhat obscure late-gen SNES-CD RPG. The two games had markedly different approaches to the classic turn-based RPG genre, and in comparing and contrasting them, we get a pretty good idea of where the genre was at the time.

*Windborn II* had a tough act to follow, but for the most part, it succeeded. Though it had very little to do with the previous game (it doesn't even take place in the same world, though Hane makes a cameo appearance, indicating that perhaps the games take place in the same universe), it shared the excellent battle system from the previous title and also featured the superb animation and music that's been a series hallmark. In *Windborn II*, you play as Fritz, a young tinkerer who stumbles upon an ancient music box. The music box seems to guide him to a temple outside the village, and in the temple, Fritz meets Loria, a beautiful but shy girl who can sing the songs that the music box plays. Loria tells Fritz he must follow the music box's songs to a number of locations throughout the world, which becomes the key to stopping an impending apocalypse. Along the way, Fritz and Loria befriend more adventurers, but also run afoul of Trevain, the leader of a dangerous and sadistic gang of thieves who seek the music box's secrets for themselves. The plot eventually grows into something far more complex, where characters aren't what they seem and the music box's true secrets are something the player never sees coming. *Windborn II* came on three Saturn discs, and got a stellar reception from critics. The plot itself was ultimately more light-hearted than the original game, though there are certainly some dark moments for Fritz as he travels on his journey. Ultimately, fans embraced the game, which lived up to its hype.

*SaGa Frontier 2* actually continued its story from where the original game left off, introducing the characters of Asellus, who is taken in as a concubine by an evil mystic lord named Orlogue after being struck by his carriage, and Lute, a young lad seeking adventure who eventually attempts to avenge his father's death at the hands of the gangster Mondo (who appeared as an ally in the original game, though he did seem to take on a darker role in the game's sixth quest). Though Mondo ends up being the game's primary villain, the game's plot eventually takes a deeper turn as characters discover relics left behind by ancient heroes of the past who once battled a powerful evil force known as the Egg. Mondo is only the latest would-be tyrant to seek the Egg's power, and Asellus, Lute, a multitude of heroes from the previous game, and a number of new heroes from both past and present must join forces to prevent Mondo from harnessing the power of the Egg before it's too late. *SaGa Frontier 2* follows a somewhat more linear storyline than the previous game, and instead of choosing from between five different shorter separate quests, the game has only one quest as the heroes struggle together to stop Mondo. It retains the familiar battle system of the previous game, with characters able to learn new skills in the midst of battle and utilize powerful (and spontaneous) combination attacks. While Asellus and Lute are introduced as the game's primary heroes, players could use whichever team they liked once they obtained enough party members (of which only ten were required and 18 were optional). *SaGa*

*Frontier 2* was much more positively received by critics than its predecessor, for its advanced graphics and long, epic quest.

Generally, *Windborn II* scored better amongst critics, averaging in the high 8s/low 9s from reviewers, while *SaGa Frontier 2* mostly scored in the mid-8s. However, *SaGa Frontier 2* sold better, both in North America and Japan. It was close, but Squaresoft's game came out on top likely due to company recognition and a higher install base for the Ultra Nintendo. Neither game did especially well in sales, with *SaGa Frontier 2* barely managing 150,000 sales in North America, and *Windborn II* around 125,000. Some fans preferred to make their own RPGs: Agetec's *RPG Maker* also came out that month, though it didn't sell very well at all. The biggest RPGs of 2000 were yet to come: *Legend Of Mana*, *Tale Illumina*, and of course, *Pokemon Gold and Silver*. Ultimately, May's big sequels were merely the RPG undercard, the main event was about to begin...

-from "The RPGs Of 2000", an article on GamesUltima.com, posted on November 14, 2011

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*"Ultra Excitebike smokes the competition with some of the best play controls ever featured in a sports game! The Ultra Nintendo's controller is perfect for controlling your bike, both for winning close races and pulling off amazing stunts. Nintendo continues its run of fantastic extreme sports games, first with the Wave Race series and now with this resurrection of an NES classic. Forget everything you've read about motorcycle games, Nintendo's Ultra Excitebike redeems the genre in an instant."*

-excerpted from IGN.com's 9.5/10 review of *Ultra Excitebike*

*Divine Wrath* is easily the most notable game of the month, but with its bloody violence and gratuitous use of contemporary religious deities, parents are likely to stay away from this excellent but controversial game. And what game stands to benefit? The equally excellent, yet far less controversial *Ultra Excitebike*. Nintendo's spring slate, with the exceptions of *Divine Wrath* and *Velvet Dark*, has been a bit of a dead zone, and *Ultra Excitebike* is a family-friendly game that Nintendo's been pushing more than any other over the past month. It's already #2 on the rental charts at Blockbuster, behind only *Divine Wrath*, and it's likely to maintain that position for weeks to come.

-from an article on Gamespot.com, May 20, 2000

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Remember *Princess Maker* on the Super Nintendo CD? Enix's *Wonder Project* for the Sega Saturn is like that, but perhaps a bit less weird. It's a virtual "parent sim" of sorts, where you interact with a young robot girl named Josie as she experiences daily life, but eventually stumbles onto something extraordinary. It doesn't play like a "normal" sim game, but more like an interactive storybook (which is somewhat appropriate, considering that part of the game's inspiration is the classic story *Pinocchio*). *Wonder Project* won't win many awards, but if you're looking for something different and maybe just a little bit heartwarming, give it a try (it's not like there are many other games on the Saturn these days).

-from the June 2000 issue of *Animerica*

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\*Ted is on stage with Alex, in a big muscle suit.\*

Alex Stansfield: I'm Alex...

Ted Crosley: And I'm the mighty Tedcules! \*flexes his arms\*

Alex: Just what do you think you're doing?

Ted: I'm getting ready to review *Divine Wrath!* The mighty Tedcules will do battle with the gods, and only one can come out as champion!

Alex: Ted, I think that's Hercules who's going to do battle with the gods, not you.

Ted: Who is this Ted you speak of? You should address the mighty Tedcules with a bit more respect!

Alex: All right, lunkhead, whatever you say. This week on GameTV, of course we'll be reviewing *Divine Wrath...* which I can see Ted's already ready for...

Ted: That's the mighty Tedcules!

Alex: We'll also be giving you lots of tips on which gods you should be using if you want to rise to the top of the pantheon. With 26 gods to choose from, it could take a LOT of holy punching to choose a favorite, we'll try to simplify things for you. We'll also be reviewing the "manic shooter" *Pachi Pachi Panic*, the brand new soccer game *FIFA 2001*, and we'll be reviewing a game that I've been waiting for a long time, *RPG Maker*. Unfortunately, Brittany and Lyssa are the ones who get to review that one, but they did make a couple of games for Ted...cules and me to try out, so we'll be reviewing those after they review Agatec's sweet new creator tool.

Ted: Don't forget "mighty"!

Alex: You're being a mighty pain in the ass right now.

Brittany Saldita: Since when has he ever not been one? \*waving in front of a screen\* Hey folks, it's Brittany here. We're heading to E3 in a couple of weeks, but why wait? We'll give you a scoop on all the sweet stuff we'll be showing you at the big event, including some info on a couple exclusives you'll only see here on *GameTV!*

Ted: It's going to be an hour full of power, courtesy of the mighty Tedcules! \*flexes again\*

Alex: We've got previews, reviews, and news you can use to help you choose...this is *GameTV!*

(...)

Ted: \*still in his Tedcules costume but acting much more normally now\* *Divine Wrath's* just a lot of fun.

Alex: The combat's about halfway between *Soul Calibur* and *Mortal Kombat*, it just strikes that perfect balance between being really strategic and really cool to look at, and I had a real blast playing it.

Ted: Pretty much every god you can imagine is in this game. You've got Vishnu with his four arms, you've got Anubis with his big dog head, even the freaking devil is in this game!

Alex: Yeah, this is the only game where you can have Zeus kicking the crap outta the devil.

Ted: And every character has their own finishing move, or in some cases two! Have you seen them all yet?

Alex: I'm really partial to Hercules'.

\*Hercules is shown walking up to a stunned Ra, ripping off his arms and beating him to a bloody pulp with them before choking him until his head explodes.\*

Ted: Hey kids, we're gonna ruin the movie *Hercules* for you forever...that is how Hercules killed Megara in the real myth.

Alex: I...I don't think he ripped her arms off in the real myths.

Ted: Look it up!

Alex: *GameTV*, ruining childhoods since 1995! So anyway, what's your score for this game?

Ted: The mighty Tedcules bestows a 5 on this game, may it live forever in Valhalla!

Alex: Yeah, I'm gonna give it a 5 too. Great graphics, amazing gameplay, and the best character selection of any fighting game ever made.

\*The Hall of Fame siren goes off\*

Ted: Valhalla, here we come!

\*Ted and Alex take a framed copy of *Divine Wrath* up to the wall and hangs it up, Brittany is glaring hard at Ted.\*

Ted: What? Normally you're happy to put a game up on the wall.

Brittany: That is NOT what happens to Megara, you jerk! Hercules loves her!

Ted: It's in the myth!

Brittany: Well...screw the myth, I prefer the happy Disney story!

Lyssa Fielding: Yeah, me too!

Alex: Guess you two don't want to find out what happens in the real *Little Mermaid*...

Brittany and Lyssa: \*covering up their ears and screaming the lyrics to "Part Of Your World" at the top of their lungs\*

Gary Westhouse: You know, it's called a 'myth' because it didn't really happen...

Alex: Shhh, this is fun.

(...)

Brittany: *Pachi Pachi Panic!* is a normal shooter game on speed.

Gary: Have you played the original *Donpachi*?

Brittany: Yes, and this makes even THAT game look sluggish by comparison. There is stuff EVERYWHERE in *Pachi Pachi Panic!* Hence the "Panic", hence the exclamation point.

Gary: It's one of those shooter games that's just...

Brittany: It's an acquired taste.

Gary: I liked it. I mean, I loved the original *Donpachi*, so this game's just that taken to its logical conclusion.

Brittany: I had too much trouble...I mean, I tried to master it and I beat it after a LOT of trial and error, but shooters like this, they're not very fun. The REALLY good bullet hell shooters, there's patterns to learn. This, it just seemed completely random.

Gary: It never puts you in a situation where you can't survive with enough skill. If it had done that, sure, but I felt like...

Brittany: I could never get the patterns down. It plays so much differently from other shooter games. And the graphics were too bright and cheerful, it seemed like they tried to make a really anime-ish *Donpachi* game but I liked the somewhat down-to-earth look of the originals as well. I don't think most players, even most shooter fans, will enjoy it and that's why I've gotta give it a 2.

Gary: It's a shame you didn't like it, but I can see where you're coming from. But me, I had plenty of fun and while it's not the best shooter, it stays true to the *Donpachi* formula. It's NOT for everyone, but if you've never played a game like this before, maybe give it a chance with a demo or rental. I give it a 3.5.

(...)

Brittany: *RPG Maker* is a really useful tool for creating great RPGs, and if you're willing to put in the time and effort, you can do great things with it. I give it a 4.

Lyssa: While it could've delivered more in terms of graphics, it still has everything you need to make a really great RPG and I give it a 4 also.

Brittany: Now, Lyssa and I didn't have enough time to create really HUGE RPGs with it, we only had about 20 hours to mess around with the game and make something as best we could.

Lyssa: But we did each make our own little RPGs, and we let Ted and Alex try them out!

Brittany: They've played both and now they're going to give their reviews of what we made!

\*Ted and Alex take the stage\*

Ted: Well, let's start with your RPG, Brittany. You made *The Skull Trials*, and....I gotta say, it lived up to its name.

Alex: Yeah, it was a trial and at times it made me want to bash out my skull.

Brittany: \*glares at him\*

\*Scenes from Brittany's RPG play out on screen, it's a rather gloomy little game taking place in a graveyard maze, with unforgivingly difficult enemies\*

Ted: This game was tough as hell!

Brittany: It's supposed to be!

Alex: Brittany said it'd only take about an hour to beat but with all the grinding I had to do it was more like three. That said though, I thought the dialogue was really great and it was appropriately creepy, with a real *Outer Limits*-style twist at the end.

Ted: It was an ordeal, I barely made it to the finish and by the time I beat it I was so exhausted I didn't even get to appreciate the ending. Sorry, Britt, I gotta give your game a 2.

Brittany: What? Oh, come on!

Alex: Well, I liked the creativity of the storyline, and it was a well made game, it was just way

too hard. I give it a 3. Now Lyssa's game, on the other hand...

\*Lyssa's game takes place in a high school, with a group of young people who get lost and have to go on an adventure to get back home.\*

Ted: Lyssa's game, *Saturday Story*, was really a lot of fun.

Alex: Yeah, it not only had great characters and witty dialogue, but was actually fun to play, enemies weren't too tough and there were even a couple neat little puzzles in there.

\*A scene of dialogue from Lyssa's game is shown, with the main character, a girl named Ashley, chiding one of her friends for not being able to solve the puzzle on his own.\*

Alex: And at the end there was a kind of cliffhanger that left us really wanting more, in a good way.

Lyssa: Well, I'd like to make it into a full game if I ever get the time...

Brittany: Okay, I'll admit that Lyssa's game was a LOT of fun.

Ted: I'm giving Lyssa's game a 4.

Alex: Yeah, same here, 4 outta 5 from me.

Lyssa: Yay! \*jumps up and down and claps her hands\* Brittany, my game's better than yours!

Brittany: Don't rub it in...

Ted: With two 4s, we recommend Lyssa's game, and if you have *RPG Maker* and want to try Lyssa's game, or Brittany's game out for yourselves, you can head to Blockbuster in a couple of weeks for their latest Blockbuster Ultra Nintendo Showcase disc, which is as always free with any Ultra Nintendo game rental. It has demos, it has a couple of *GameTV* reviews, and, on the next disc, it's got both *The Skull Trials* and *Saturday Story*, you can save those to your memory card and actually play them in *RPG Maker*!

(...)

\*The hosts of *GameTV* are sitting on couches as they discuss E3.\*

Ted: So next week, we'll be reporting from the floor of E3. We're sure there are lots of surprises in store but we can take some good guesses at what we'll probably be seeing. First up, we're sure that we'll be seeing a lot of Sega's upcoming system the Katana, and frankly, I can't wait for all the news on that front.

Lyssa: And we're pretty sure Microsoft will be there in some capacity to tell us more about their

new game console, the Xbox.

Alex: So far, we've liked what we've seen from Microsoft, and those of you who don't play PC games, it looks like Microsoft will be bringing a few of those to home consoles, so you can finally see what you've been missing.

Steve Horton: As for the games, Nintendo's DEFINITELY gonna be showing off plenty of their new *Legend of Zelda* game, *Majora's Mask*. And I've got a pretty good feeling that the PC hit *Unreal Tournament* will be shown off for the Ultra Nintendo too.

Gary: Definitely excited for that one.

Brittany: I'm excited to see more of *Tales of the Seven Seas: The Victorian Legacy*, which is looking more and more beautiful with every bit of preview footage I've seen of it. And there's also a fun little game called *Blackheart* that I'm eager to see.

Alex: It's another stealth game, but with a heavy focus on character development and storyline that make it very reminiscent of last year's incredible smash hit *Metal Gear Solid*.

Ted: Hey, don't forget Sega! The new *Commander Keen* is looking great and we're definitely gonna see what the Katana can really do when we see it in action. And I'd bet my house on seeing some *Sonic 6* footage as well.

Alex: Well, I'll take that bet, because if you can remember, Sega did NOT show off *Sonic 4* when the Saturn was first shown off.

Brittany: Doesn't Ted just live in the dumpster out behind the studio anyway?

Ted: Ha ha.

Alex: Well, Saturn's upcoming schedule is looking pretty good, I can't wait to check out some new *Extremis* footage, and *Skies Of Arcadia* which is looking like it might just be the RPG of the year. I've also heard some good things about a little game called *Onimusha*, we'll see if it can send the Saturn out on a really good note.

Lyssa: Everybody knows the RPG of the year is gonna be *Pokemon Sun and Moon*, E3 is no doubt going to be pushing this game REALLY heavily and will probably have a completed English version playable at E3, so we'll be able to give you the full scoop on all the new little critters you can catch on your Game Boy Nova!

Alex: The RPG of the year is heavily favored to be coming from Squaresoft, they've got *Legend of Mana*, *Mystic Creature*, AND *Super Mario RPG 2*, and they'll be showing all of them off at E3! And, for the first time, we can reveal that *GameTV* will be getting an EXCLUSIVE peek at.... wait for it...*Final Fantasy IX*! That's right, *GameTV* has been chosen as the only place in North America that you can get your news on *Final Fantasy IX* out of E3. We'll be allowed into a very small room with a very small amount of people and shown the very first footage of the

game. It's going to be incredible.

Brittany: So be sure to be here, for our live E3 coverage, starting May 11, here on *GameTV*!

-excerpted from the May 2, 2000 episode of *GameTV*

### **Ultra Nintendo Power Charts: May 2000**

1. Final Fantasy VIII
2. Squad Four: Rebellion
3. Disavowed
4. The Legend Of Zelda: Temple Of Time
5. World Of Color: Millennium
6. Ultra Donkey Kong Country
7. Super Smash Bros.
8. Final Fantasy VII
9. Ultra Frederico
10. Wipeout 2

### **The Official Saturn Magazine Buzz Chart: May 2000**

1. Soul Calibur
2. Sonic The Hedgehog 5
3. Phantasy Star VI
4. Resident Evil: Code Veronica
5. Klonoa 2: The Wind Rider
6. Windborn II
7. Turok III: Generation War
8. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater
9. Ultima: The Resurrection Stone
10. The Savateur

-

### **May 5, 2000**

Retirement was nice.

*"I could get used to this."*

Tom Kalinske was seated at a table with his family at one of the best pizza places in Los Angeles, enjoying his "retirement" as a waiter sprinkled parmesan on one of the two big pizzas sitting on the table. One of the televisions up by the bar was on, playing CNN's coverage of the presidential primaries, but Kalinske's mind was elsewhere...on his family, and on this delicious

pizza.

“So, who do you think's gonna win the election, dad?” asked Ashley, putting a slice of pizza on her plate.

“Uh...probably Gore, I guess?” Tom replied, glancing up at the screen. “He's pretty popular right now, isn't he?”

“He's kinda boring though,” said Kalinske's youngest daughter. “But then again, all politicians are boring!”

“You know, politics affects your life in a lot of ways, you won't think it's boring when you're older,” said Tom, before taking a bite from the slice of pizza. “Don't they do something at your school where they have you kids vote, just to kind of try it out?”

“Nope,” said Kalinske's youngest daughter, shaking her head. “Don't give them any ideas either, school's boring enough as it is!”

“My school does it,” said Ashley. “I think Gore's probably gonna win. I still remember what he said about *Secret of Mana*.”

“*Yeah, me too...*” thought Tom, eating another bite of his pizza. “*If we had more games like Secret of Mana, and less games like Mortal Kombat, maybe there wouldn't be so much controversy...*”

And he couldn't help but think that if Sega had more games like *Secret of Mana*, they might've beaten Nintendo. It was the only game he'd ever remembered directly trying to imitate on the Saturn...and he'd pretty much failed miserably in that regard. *Secret Of Mana, Mortal Kombat...* the two games that had put the nail in the Sega CD's coffin.. already the memories were flooding back.

“*I don't think I'll be able to hear somebody mention a game anymore without thinking about everything that's happened. ...retirement is nice, but damn, it would've been nice to win.*”

He had a bit of an epiphany, as he finished off that first slice of pizza. It wasn't that Nintendo made better systems than Sega... it wasn't that they did a better job marketing their games. It wasn't Tom Kalinske's fault that Sega was losing in the console wars.

“*Shigeru Miyamoto. We didn't have anyone like Shigeru Miyamoto. We could match them genius for genius, but as great as Yuji was, even he couldn't hold a candle to that guy.*”

Tom Kalinske smiled.

“*I wonder what he's up to right now?*”

**May 6, 2000**

Across the world in Kyoto, Japan, Shigeru Miyamoto was riding home on his bicycle, a basket in front of him holding a copy of *Dragon Quest VII*. It was the one Sega Saturn game he had any desire to play, besides *NiGHTS*, which he'd loved.

The day of a *Dragon Quest* release was always a huge event in Japan. Miyamoto had tried to duck in and out of the game store unnoticed, but the huge line had made it impossible, and many people had spotted him inside the store...a few even asking for his autograph, something which rattled the deeply humble man.

*"I've not seen such a large crowd for a game, not even for Temple of Time..."* thought Miyamoto. *"Of course, it is only appropriate...without Dragon Quest, I never would have thought of anything like The Legend of Zelda."*

His bicycle approached the crosswalk, and the light quickly turned green. He pedaled across the intersection.

*"That reminds me, I need to review the final beta for the new Super Mario RPG-"*

Miyamoto never saw the car as it slammed into him at 45 miles an hour. He was thrown from the bicycle, which shattered into pieces from the impact.

-

*"McCain's nomination for the presidency is now all but assured, and many expect George W. Bush to suspend his campaign sometime this week. It was a close race that saw fierce attacks on both sides, and now people are wondering if McCain will tap Bush for the vice presidency, despite the bitter feud they've had over the past few months. It's yet to be seen if Bush would even accept being McCain's running mate, or if he plans on preparing for a potential run in 2004 if McCain were to lose to Gore in the general election. Al Gore spoke to a group of supporters in Florida today, a state that's seen as a key battleground state this November. Gore discussed the need for further action to address global warming in the wake of last year's devastating hurricane, and has made the environment a key plank of his presidential platform. With the match-up now set, Gore vs. McCain, both candidates will look to fine-tune their strategies with the general election now just six months away."*

*...and we have a bit of breaking news, some tragic news out of the world of video games today. Shigeru Miyamoto, known the world over as the creator of Super Mario, perhaps the most well-known video game character ever, has died as a result of injuries sustained in an automobile accident earlier today. He's known as the brains behind Nintendo, the world's leading video game company, not only responsible for the Super Mario games, but The Legend Of Zelda and many others. Miyamoto was 47 years old."*

-Bernard Shaw, from a news report on CNN, May 5, 2000 (North American time)

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Tom Kalinske stared up at the screen in complete and utter shock. He looked down at his pizza, having just picked up a second slice. He placed the slice back down on the pan and leaned back in his chair, a sick feeling in his stomach.

“Dad...?” asked Ashley, leaning over in concern.

“I’m...I’m not hungry anymore.”

-

*“It is with deep sorrow that we mourn the loss of Shigeru Miyamoto earlier today. He has brought incredible joy to countless people through his work here at Nintendo, and was a dear friend to us all. I considered him one of my closest friends, and his death came as a monumental shock, one that it will take some time to recover from. His loss will be felt by his family, his friends, his colleagues, and all who have ever picked up a controller and have felt joy because of the work that Mr. Miyamoto has accomplished. We will continue his legacy of making fun and original games for many years to come.”*

-Hiroshi Yamauchi

*“He was an inspiration, the greatest inspiration I’ve ever known. He inspired me to create great things, and his loss has left me with a hole in my heart that is impossible to fill.”*

-Satoru Iwata

*“Shigeru Miyamoto was a visionary and a genius, but most of all, he was a friend. Even when he was teaching us, or giving suggestions, he always did so in a way that made us a part of his incredible dreams. I can’t overstate how much I’ll miss him.”*

-Masahiro Sakurai

*“When I first came to work with Nintendo, Mr. Miyamoto greeted me as he would an old friend. Even then, I was impressed by his creative vision, and as I got to know him over the years, I realized how lucky I was to be working with him. Though we were often an ocean apart, the impression he left on me made me feel like he was in the room even when I was working at the offices in Redmond. I’m proud to be a part of this company and I’m grateful to have gotten to know Mr. Shigeru Miyamoto.”*

-Howard Lincoln

*“He never failed to blow my mind. Without his vision, I would’ve just been making fancy toys with no batteries.”*

-Ken Kutaragi

*“You know, we could never get one up on those guys, and Shigeru Miyamoto was why. Every time we’d come up with a genius idea, he’d come up with something even better. Even though he was the number one reason we were losing, I could never bring myself to hate someone with that much humility and grace. He was a fun person to share the planet with and the world’s a lot*

*worse off now that he's gone."*

-Tom Kalinske

*"It's such a huge loss for the industry. I have nothing but respect for Shigeru Miyamoto, and it's an enormous loss that he's gone. It won't be the same without him."*

-Norio Ohga

*"He was a genius. I mean, that's all you can really say. The guy made...some of the greatest games ever, games I've spent a lot of time with. I admit, I shed a tear when I learned he'd passed away... my daughter wouldn't have her name without him!"*

-Robin Williams

*"You know, I heard about that, and it's such a tragedy...the level of creativity to create such amazing games...I mean, we get into the industry just as he goes....I don't think we can fill the hole he left. We can try, but nobody's gonna be able to do what he did."*

-Bill Gates

*"Oh, I played Super Mario Bros., I played Legend Of Zelda. Making movies and making games, they're two different things, I learned that first hand. Losing a creative mind like his is always a horrible tragedy, it's a loss for the world and...I met him once, he was a very humble man."*

-Steven Spielberg

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## **Video Game Industry Mourns The Death Of Shigeru Miyamoto**

Today, people from throughout the video game industry are paying their respects to Shigeru Miyamoto, who passed away yesterday when his bicycle was struck by an automobile. Miyamoto is known for creating the *Super Mario* series, perhaps the most famous video game franchise ever, among countless others including *The Legend Of Zelda* and *Star Fox*. Nintendo has already released a statement on Miyamoto's death. In a letter, Nintendo president Hiroshi Yamauchi called Miyamoto's death a "monumental shock" and vows that the company will "continue his legacy of making fun and original games for many years to come". Sony figure Ken Kutaragi also released a statement mourning the loss, and even Sega has issued a statement on Miyamoto's death, calling him a "titan in the industry" and stating that "the community of game makers has suffered a tremendous blow". The upcoming E3 conference, which starts in just a few days, will go on as scheduled, though its organizers state that the ceremonies will be somewhat muted and that there will be a memorial to Miyamoto, with tributes to his life and work throughout the event.

Even outside the gaming world, celebrities are expressing their condolences. Figures such as Robin Williams and Kirsten Dunst have commented, as have figures in the sports world like Ken Griffey Jr., whose likeness appears on numerous games for Nintendo systems. Griffey said in a statement, "Shigeru Miyamoto was a good friend, and losing him so young is a horrible tragedy. I'll miss him and I wish his family all the best."

-from an article posted on Gamespot.com, May 7, 2000

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\*The normally excited *GameTV* hosts are seated on the couch as the show begins, looking somewhat somber. John Walden, the old host who left the show in 1998, is there as well.\*

Ted Crosley: Hey guys, welcome to *GameTV*, we're normally a bit more upbeat but, as a lot of you have already heard, there's been a terrible tragedy in the world of video games.

Alex Stansfield: Shigeru Miyamoto, whose work spans more than 20 years with Nintendo, passed away earlier this week as he was riding home on his bicycle. He's created some of the most beloved characters in video game history, Mario, Luigi, Donkey Kong, Link, Zelda, so many legendary games have come from the mind of this man and his loss leaves some really big shoes to fill.

Gary Westhouse: So we're going to devote a good portion of this show to commemorating the life and legacy of Shigeru Miyamoto.

Brittany Saldita: We'll all be sharing our memories of Mr. Miyamoto's games, and we've asked some of our fans to tell us their best memories of him, which we'll be reading on the show also.

John Walden: I had...the enormous honor of being able to interview him back in 1998, we'll be replaying some of that interview and I'll also share what it was like just to get to meet him and shake his hand.

Lyssa Fielding: For those of you hoping for reviews and news about the newest games, don't worry because we'll still be doing those as well, but we'd be shirking our duty as hosts and as gamers if we didn't pay respect and homage to the man who really is the reason most of us are sitting here today.

Steve Horton: He's given us countless hours of fun and I'm sure he's done the same for many of you.

Ted: This is *GameTV*, and today we're going to be celebrating the life of the great Shigeru Miyamoto.

\*An alternate, more somber theme song plays over clips of Miyamoto's games and footage of him, including of his interview with John Walden, in lieu of the normal intro sequence.\*

(...)

Alex: So to end the show, we're going to do something we've never done before. We usually put games up here on the Hall of Famewall, but today is a little different, because today, for the one and only time, we're putting a person in the Hall of Fame.

\*The cast mounts a picture of Shigeru Miyamoto on the *GameTV* Hall of Fame wall.\*

Ted: I can't think of anyone who deserves it more than Shigeru Miyamoto. Truly, the greatest game creator of all time.

Brittany: I really couldn't agree more, I remember coming back home, playing *Super Mario Bros.* when I was 14, and being so blown away. I played so much *Donkey Kong* as a kid. I played *Legend of Zelda* until my fingers fell off. It just...it's such a shame to lose him.

Alex: Shigeru Miyamoto, you'll be missed by everyone who loves video games.

Lyssa: Oh, definitely.

Ted: That's it for this week's episode, we'll be reporting from E3 in a few days, so.... definitely be here for that, hopefully we'll see some good games at the show and have lots of fun.

Lyssa: It's what he would have wanted, I know it is.

-excerpted from the May 9, 2000 episode of *GameTV*

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### **The Show Must Go On, But Miyamoto's Death Casts A Pall Over E3**

Shigeru Miyamoto's tragic death, less than a week before the annual E3 expo in Los Angeles, has understandably added a somber element to the usually hectic and exciting trade show. Though postponing the event was never discussed (too many hotel rooms booked, the convention center already reserved for months), certain events have been changed and some have been completely scrapped in the wake of what has happened. Nintendo's presentation, in particular, has been dedicated to Miyamoto. Miyamoto was originally to help present *The Legend Of Zelda: Majora's Mask*, but that task will now fall to Eiji Aonuma, the game's director. Nintendo's presentation will include a Miyamoto memorial segment, and Nintendo's booth will include a box where attendees can leave their condolences. Sega's presentation is also said to be at least acknowledging Miyamoto, and the event itself will have a tribute to the Mario creator that attendees can watch if they so choose.

-from an article on Gamespot.com, May 10, 2000

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### **May 11, 2000**

\*The crowd cheers as Reggie Fils-Aime, the new president of Sega of America, takes the stage. A picture of the Sega Katana is on the display screen behind him.\*

*"Hello, everybody, and welcome to E3. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Reggie. I'm*

*about kicking ass, I'm about taking names, and I'm about making games.” \*The crowd cheers in wild applause at this\* “And I'm here to introduce the newest game console from Sega, a machine that will usher in a revolution in home entertainment. I give you, the Sega Katana.”*

\*A video begins to play on the screen. A young man is walking down the street. The camera pans up, and the man is revealed to be Ryo Hazuki. He is confronted by a group of thugs, and takes a fighting pose. The video is rendered with the Katana, and the graphics look significantly better than the previous *Shenmue* game, or anything that's ever been seen on the Ultra Nintendo. The thugs rush Hazuki, and he begins to fight them. Hazuki moves incredibly fluidly, and all the characters are shown with amazing detail. The video then switches over to show *Virtua Fighter 4*. The game looks awesome, the days of blocky characters are gone, it's a HUGE step up from *Virtua Fighter 3* and the characters perform some incredibly impressive moves. The crowd cheers this, and then continues to cheer as the video switches over to *Tekken Tag Tournament* to show off that game.\*

### ***FIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE***

\*More footage from *Tekken Tag Tournament* is shown, the game's graphics are a significant bump from *Tekken 3*. Next up, *Way Of The Samurai*. It's a beat-em-up by Treasure, and the character and graphical details are so good that the audience gasps during the trailer showing off the game. It's all in-game footage in real time, cherry blossom leaves fall as the main character executes a combo.\*

### ***GO ONLINE FOR THE ULTIMATE MULTIPLAYER CHALLENGE***

\*Footage is then shown from the Katana's online games. First off is *Phantasy Star Online*, which shows players teaming up, talking to one another in the in-game chat and then going to battle a huge looking boss. The next game that's shown is *Chu Chu Rocket*, followed up by a new *Daytona* game, *Daytona: International*, that shows an online lobby, followed by players racing against one another from across the globe, the game's graphics are significantly better than anything *Gran Turismo* has ever offered.\*

### ***BE AN ORIGINAL***

\*Footage from *Jet Set Radio* is shown, showing the player following another character through the city on their skateboard, before tagging a graffiti sign on the side of a building. Footage from *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* is then shown.\*

### ***GET INTO THE GAME***

\*Footage from the Katana's sports lineup, including *NFL* and *NHL 2K1* is shown off, showing the players and arenas in amazing detail. Footage from a new baseball game is also shown.\*

### ***AND EXPLORE NEW WORLDS***

\*Footage from Enix's *Revolution Alpha* is shown, depicting an enormous world ripe for

exploration. The character is travelling through a massive town, and then rolls out of the way of an attack by a vampire, drawing gasps and cheers from the crowd. Then, the night sky is shown, we see a shadow and then very briefly, the character NiGHTS, which draws loud applause as we see very brief footage of a new *NiGHTS* game with beautiful graphics that sends the crowd into a frenzy.\*

### **RELIVE THE PAST...**

\*A brief montage of Saturn game covers is shown before someone is seen opening up a copy of the Saturn's *Sonic the Hedgehog 4*, sticking it into the disc tray, and beginning to play.\*

### **OR WITNESS THE FUTURE.**

\*Someone briefly browses from a shelf before pulling down a DVD of *Superman: Man Of Tomorrow*, opening it up, putting it into the disc tray and sitting down to watch it, this draws enormous cheering, possibly even bigger than the cheers for *NiGHTS*.\*

### **SEGA KATANA**

\*A rapid-fire montage of Katana games is shown, followed by a young man sitting down, controller in hand, ready to play, a keyboard in his lap as he connects to his friend across the world. We see his friend, a Japanese girl, smiling and nodding her head before firing up her own game.\*

### **THE FUTURE IS YOURS.**

\*The Katana logo is shown, and the Sega scream is heard. The crowd applauds and cheers loudly.\*

*“As you can see, the Sega Katana is compatible with all Saturn games, and can play DVD movies as well. We hope to make the Sega Katana not just your go-to system for the hottest games available, but your complete entertainment world as well. The Katana has been designed with the future in mind. It contains a cutting edge processor that far outstrips anything else available, and will be state-of-the-art for many years to come. The Katana controller, which you can see right here... \*he holds up a controller much like OTL's Dreamcast controller, complete with VMU slot, the biggest difference is a second analog stick on the right side, inspired by the Ultra Nintendo's controller\* has been designed with the modern gamer in mind. You see this central slot? This is the space for the Katana VMU, the virtual memory unit that not only stores your saves and profiles, but also has a screen that opens up new gameplay possibilities.”*

\*Reggie elaborates on the VMU for a minute or two, showing off its features and how it can be used as a sort of second screen experience for certain games.\*

*“The Sega Katana will go on sale in North America on March 17, 2001. It comes with a controller and a VMU. It will retail for \$249.99.”* \*The crowd applauds loudly at the price, which is at least 50 dollars less than expected.\* *“We hope to launch the Sega Katana with at*

*least ten games on the very first day. Launch games will include Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2, Way Of The Samurai, Phantasy Star Online... and this game. Take a look."*

(Authors' Note: The following trailer was done by our reader and contributor **Pyro!**)

"It was supposed to be a simple mission: rescue Becky, beat the bad guy, and return home before dinner time... except that jerk, Captain Chaos, cheated and time travelled to beat us.

\*Clip of Captain Chaos activating the Multiversal Annihilation Engine from When Universes Collide. He begins transforming into an eldritch abomination of titanic proportions.\*

"We fought back as best we could..."

\*Keen, Lindsay, and Mortimer McMire open fire on the newly renamed Kayoz, but the creature swats them all into the abyss\*

"But we failed, and Kayoz destroyed the multiverse."

\*Clip of a cackling Kayoz taking the remnants of the destroyed worlds and fusing them into one planet\*

"But he didn't count on one thing."

\*Clip of Commander Keen waking up in a warzone where Robotnik's Badnik horde are fighting Wizeman's Nightmarean hordes from Nights Into Dreams. Keen avoids a crashing Buzzbomber.\*

"That we'd survive."

Keen: Yikes! What's happening...?

\*Dr. Robotnik descends from the sky on his Egg-O-Matic\*

Robotnik: I remember you. Welcome, "Commander" Keen, to Battleworld! You won't survive the experience!

Keen: \*Unsheathes his trusted Neural Disrupter and aims at Robotnik\* Oh yeah, Egghead?

Voiceover: Launching with the Katana in 2001...

\*Clips of Keen and Sonic the Hedgehog (along with Tails, Knuckles, and Amy Rose) fighting enemies creatures from Golden Axe. Lindsay and Nights flying side by side. Mortimer McMire and Vectorman surrounded by Warhead's forces. Becky busting moves with Toejam and Earl with an embarrassed Keen facepalming\*

Voiceover: An adventure too large for one universe!

\*More gameplay clips. Ax Battler swinging his sword. Joe Mushashi jumping from the shadows and throwing his kunai before using his ninjitsu skills from *Revenge of Shinobi*. Alex Kidd and Knuckles punching through a wave of enemies. It ends with the assembled heroes and villains confronting Kayoz in the Dark Abyss. The mad god is easily the size the skyscraper in comparison. A full shot reveals the full cast, save for three figures obscured by shadow.\*

Kayoz: HAHAAA! You ants think you have a shot at stopping me?

Becky: \*Whispers to Keen\* You know you still gotta eat your vegetables after this.

Keen: \*Dramatically aiming his disrupter at Kayoz\* Not NOW Becky!

Voiceover: **COMMANDER KEEN: WORLDS UNITED!**

\*The crowd wildly cheers the *Worlds United* trailer, as Reggie Fils-Aime claps as well.\*

*“And here's Tom Hall to share even more details about Commander Keen: Worlds United.”*

\*Tom Hall comes out and gives a presentation of several minutes about the basic idea and features of *Commander Keen: Worlds United*, which looks quite impressive visually on the Katana. Reggie returns to the stage.\*

*“Thank you for that incredible presentation, and remember, Commander Keen: Worlds United will be available only for the Sega Katana on launch day, March 17, 2001. Now, I'd like to introduce Mr. Yu Suzuki to talk about the upcoming sequel to the 1998 hit Shenmue.”*

\*Yu Suzuki takes the stage and shows off *Shenmue II*, which is still in fairly early stages of development. No release date is given for the game, but it still looks impressive enough to excite the crowd and get them talking. He remains on stage as *Virtua Fighter 4* is announced, drawing wild cheers from the crowd as a preview video for the game is shown. Reggie once again returns to the stage to talk about several more games, including *Phantasy Star Online*, *Way Of The Samurai*, and *Jet Set Radio*. *Tekken Tag Tournament* is then introduced, before Reggie then introduces Sega's line of new sports games for the Katana, including *NBA 2K1*, *NFL 2K1*, and *NHL 2K1*. After that, a series of beautiful screenshots are displayed on the screen.\*

*“For several years, the amazingly talented folks at Enix have created some truly epic games for the Sega Saturn. From the depths of space in *Planetary Probe* and *Laika's Journey*, to the realms of fantasy in next year's *Dragon Quest VII*, Enix's record of creating amazing adventures is without blemish. Now, on the Sega Katana, they'll do it again. Introducing *Revolution Alpha*.”*

\*Images are shown of three young teenaged heroes, two boys and one girl, exploring a massive temple ruin as the camera pans up to reveal a huge world beyond. Mountains, valleys, forests, and at the very edge of the screen, a glimmering city.\*

*“In *Revolution Alpha*, you'll guide three heroes on their quest to recover the Alpha Heritage, a*

*collection of artifacts that hold the key to overthrowing a powerful ruler and his mighty army.”*

\*The game's combat is shown. It's much like *Secret Of Mana*, but with elements of games like *Illusion of Gaia* as well.\*

*“Along the way, you'll explore dungeons and solve puzzles, battle huge monsters and find countless treasures. This game builds on Enix's classic action role playing titles for a brand new experience that's only possible on the Sega Katana. Revolution Alpha will be released in North America before the end of 2001.”*

\*Another trailer is shown, this one depicting a kitchy 60s-style spy motif as a woman sneaks around an enemy compound. The game's humor is somewhat like that of the *James Bond* films, and the entire trailer has somewhat of an *Austin Powers* feel to it while also showing off the game's stealthy, FPS gameplay.\*

*“In No One Lives Forever, you're Cate Archer, a spy who must travel the world and battle villains bent on world domination. No One Lives Forever is another Katana exclusive, set to land on the system sometime next year. And finally...”*

\*The same dark nighttime sky from the Katana trailer is shown once again. NiGHTS is shown flying through the sky, floating down toward a house. He lands on the roof and is suddenly captured in some kind of tractor beam, being pulled into the sky as a dimensional hole rips open. A boy rushes to the window, looking on in fear as NiGHTS is taken away. He reaches up to him, but the hole snaps shut, and NiGHTS is taken.\*

Boy: Noooooooooooooooooo!!!

\*NiGHTS awakens and is lying on the floor of a vast room. A voice calls out to him.\*

Voice: With your power, I will have control over the dreams of an entire world... you will never escape my castle, it is more vast than you can imagine.

\*NiGHTS is shown in a gameplay scene, roaming the halls of the castle and being attacked by vicious beasts. In the cramped corridors of the castle, he's unable to take flight. We see the boy from before, grabbing his friend the next day at school.\*

Boy: I saw him, NiGHTS is in trouble, we have to help him!

\*Several kids gather and join hands in a circle. They nod, and we see each of them falling asleep in their own beds. Inside the castle, one of the kids calls to NiGHTS. He leaps into the child's dream, just as a bunch of enemies dive at him.\*

Voice: You think you can escape me?

\*The child twists and turns in bed. Inside the dream, the child is trapped in a Nightmare Crystal.\*

Voice: You don't have much time, or else this child will be trapped in their nightmares forever!

Children: NiGHTS, help me!!!

\*The familiar *NiGHTS* gameplay is now seen, NiGHTS flies through the air, collecting items and performing tricks, battling bosses, fighting on the ground alongside a child. Several dreams are seen, each depicting a different landscape as NiGHTS fights to protect that child's dream. NiGHTS can be seen running through the castle again, dodging a massive hand as it bursts through a wall.\*

Voice: You have no hope! These children will have nightmares eternal, just like the rest of this world!

NiGHTS: \*looking up into the sky to see a sky full of stars, slowly blinking out\*

\*The boy from before is lying in his bed in a fetal position, sobbing in fear.\*

Boy: Help me, NiGHTS...

\*NiGHTS looks up at the sky and takes flight, disappearing in a flash of light. The game's logo appears.\*

## **NiGHTS INTO THE LABYRINTH...**

\*The crowd applauds wildly, Reggie once again takes the stage and smiles.\*

*“These are just some of the games we have planned for the Sega Katana. In fact...”*

\*A very brief video shows on the screen, depicting some Katana gameplay footage of a new *Sonic* game. It's just a tease, but it's enough to make the crowd go wild.\*

*“We're only just getting started. But just because the Sega Katana is being released next year doesn't mean that the Saturn's days are numbered. In fact, the Sega Saturn is set to see some of the year's best games, and now it's about to become easier than ever to hop on board the best system of the last generation, because as of right now, the Sega Saturn is getting a new MSRP..”*

\*”\$99” is displayed on the screen, drawing some applause.\*

*“For just \$99, you can experience games like Sonic the Hedgehog 4 and 5, the Tekken series, Resident Evil, Turok: Dinosaur Hunter, Virtua Fighter, Virtua Racing, NYPD: Narcotics Squad, and more. And for \$129, you can buy a Sega Saturn equipped with the Ring and packed with last year's Game of the Year, Soul Calibur. It's still topping charts around the world, and if you haven't played it yet, it's time to see just why millions of players have taken up their swords and leapt into the world of Soul Calibur. But we're not just here to talk about old games, we're here to talk about new games, and the Saturn has plenty of great new games on the way, including the horror title Extremis, developed by Sega both here in North America and across the ocean in*

*Japan. Extremis is a brand new concept, centered around a global pandemic that infects animals, turning them into vicious, mutated beasts. Check out this gameplay footage and see why Extremis is going to be the most terrifying game ever made.”*

\*The gameplay footage from an early level of the game shows a man creeping around inside of a large barn. The silence is broken only by the occasional sound of a low braying. As the man explores the darkness, he occasionally hears the braying and the sound of animals in pain. Finally, the man comes face to face with a massive, mutated bull, roaring in rage as its horns lower to gore him. The man is unable to dodge in time, and he is impaled through the stomach as the bull continues to roar and buck around like crazy. The man is lowered from the horn and tries to crawl away as the bull stays on him, goring him several times. The man tries desperately to shoot at it, but his wounds render the gun unstable. Eventually, the bull kills him, leading to a Game Over screen.\*

\*The next scene is from later in the game, at a zoo. Now the man is joined by a teenage girl, and they sneak around the zoo, staying out of sight of various mutated and dangerous animals. They hear a loud roar behind them, and turn to see a tiger ready to lunge. The tiger is about to strike but is taken down by a huge, bulky creature of indeterminate species as the crowd gasps and cheers. The protagonists sneak away, hoping the creature doesn't turn its eyes on them instead. The two duck into a zoo office, where they meet a middle-aged female scientist who tries to explain to them what's going on. As she does so, there's a very loud bang at the door, as a creature tries to break in. The player has to shoot at the creature before it can bust into the room. The man barely manages to shoot the creature dead after taking some damage, but it's a very close call. The footage ends, and the crowd claps and cheers.\*

*“Extremis is set to release on October 31, Halloween. Just don't show this game to the trick-or-treaters, or you'll give them nightmares. Next up is a racing game, and this is a throwback to a bygone era.”*

\*Footage from *Vintage Speed Series*, a racing title featuring all vintage cars, is shown, looking quite impressive and fun. Reggie briefly describes the game, then footage is shown of *The Savateur*, a beat-em-up taking place in the Victorian era and involving the martial art of savate. Next is *Arbiter of Sin 2*, drawing plenty of cheers from the crowd. The game depicts the protagonist's war against heaven itself, though it also shows him having doubts about Lucifer's intentions. A trailer is then shown for *Samba de Amigo*, then a trailer is shown for *Onimusha*, which is much like OTL's game, an action combat game taking place in ancient Japan. It looks less graphically impressive, obviously, but for the Saturn it's still quite good and is announced as a Ring exclusive, with Keiji Inafune appearing in the preview video to discuss the game. Reggie closes the show by discussing four RPGs, first *Planetary Probe II*, then *Dragon Quest VII*, and then the game *Skies of Arcadia*. Though it's developed in collaboration with the *Lords of Skyline* team, it's much closer to OTL's game than anything resembling *Skyline*. The trailer, which shows off the beautiful air combat and fierce aerial action, impresses the crowd and is probably the best looking Saturn game of the entire show. Finally, *Panzer Dragon Saga II* is announced, drawing an even bigger reaction from the crowd. It shares some plot elements with OTL's *Panzer Dragoon Orta*, but is ultimately an RPG the same as *Saga*, and is announced to be on five discs.\*

*“Panzer Dragon Saga II is set to be released next summer, exclusively for the Saturn Ring. It will also be compatible with the new Sega Katana, but if you choose not to upgrade right away, Panzer Dragoon Saga II is a clear demonstration of our intention to continue supporting the Sega Saturn well into the future. We want to thank all of our fans for enjoying Sega's great lineup of games, and there's one more person I'd like to personally thank before ending the presentation. Before coming to Sega, I did play a lot of Nintendo games, and some of my best memories as a young man come from playing games like Super Mario Bros. and The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past. Though we at Sega have been competing with Nintendo for many years, many of us wouldn't be here in this industry if it wasn't for the contributions of the great Shigeru Miyamoto, whose incredible works have inspired many of you to begin playing video games in the first place. I think everyone here owes Mr. Miyamoto a great debt of gratitude, and I speak for everyone at Sega when I say thank you, Mr. Miyamoto, for the games and for the memories.*

*Enjoy E3, everybody.”*

-Reggie Fils-Aime's keynote speech at E3 2000

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Brittany: And even though Microsoft isn't giving a big speech here at E3, they've got a big presence at their booth, where they're showing off the Microsoft Xbox, the new gaming system set to launch next year.

Ted: The new Xbox comes with a hard drive, something the Ultra Nintendo and the Sega Katana don't have, that hard drive is gonna store all your saves and we imagine it can store plenty of other things as well.

Brittany: And here is the big Microsoft Xbox game by developer Bungie, it's *The Covenant*, it's a fast-paced third person shooter very reminiscent of games like *Ballistic Limit* and *Squad Four: Rebellion*.

\*Footage of *The Covenant* is shown on screen, depicting a man in a green suit of armor, somewhat like Master Chief but without the helmet, charging into a crowd of enemies and firing wildly, blowing up the tank in the middle of the enemy crowd.\*

Ted: You can switch between a bunch of different weapons at once, you can take a stealthy approach or just go in shooting everything, we really like how this game looks and it's being shown off here at the Microsoft booth along with a port of *The Witcher*. Microsoft didn't have very many games here today, right now they're just showing off the console and all its features.

Brittany: I'll tell you right now, looking at the screen, this footage does look better than what we saw on the Katana. Ted, I know you're kinda biased, but you've seen what the Katana can do and you see here what the Xbox can do, what do you think?

Ted: The Xbox is really impressive, I'm not gonna lie. I have to see more games though, Sega

was here showing off a bunch of games, where are all the Xbox games?

Brittany: *Mechwarrior X* was also announced, but there's no gameplay footage yet.

Ted: There's no games!

Brittany: With the Xbox, right now it looks to be quantity over quality, and both *The Covenant* and *The Witcher* look like really fun and amazing games, I'm going to go back and play more of *The Covenant*, Ted, are you gonna join me for some multiplayer or just stand here looking for more games?

Ted: I'm gonna go kick your butt at *The Covenant*.

Brittany: You're on!

-excerpted from *GameTV's* live report from the floor of E3 2000

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\*Nintendo's E3 keynote begins with a montage of Shigeru Miyamoto and various Nintendo figures, including Hiroshi Yamauchi, Howard Lincoln, and Masahiro Sakurai discussing what Shigeru Miyamoto meant to them. It ends with a picture of Miyamoto at work on Super Mario Bros. in 1985, with a quote from him. The crowd cheers as Howard Lincoln takes the stage with Eiji Aonuma. Lincoln speaks.\*

*“Shigeru Miyamoto was an inspiration to all of us here at Nintendo, and we hope to honor his legacy today by showing how far video games have come as a result of his creativity and devotion to his work. And I can think of no better way to honor Mr. Miyamoto's legacy than the game you're about to see here today: The Legend Of Zelda: Majora's Mask.”*

\*The crowd applauds as a full trailer for *The Legend Of Zelda: Majora's Mask* is shown, introducing the land of Termina and the moon that is set to fall and bring destruction to the world. It depicts Link's various masks and some of his transformations, including the Deku, the Zora, and the Goron, and even shows footage of Link battling the massive Twinmold as a giant. The trailer ends with the moon falling on Termina and Link screaming as he dons the Deku Mask. The crowd cheers after the trailer ends, and then Eiji Aonuma, with a translator, takes the stage to talk about the game.\*

*“Majora's Mask takes place in a world full of mystery and danger. It is designed to play like Ocarina of Time, but with a fresh set of challenges to keep even the most seasoned Zelda players guessing. The game takes place over three days, and that is a strict time limit. If you fail to save the world in those three days, the moon will crash into Termina as you have seen. That means that you must plan carefully and manipulate time to accomplish everything you need to accomplish. There are six dungeons in all to explore, and each dungeon will require different items and masks to complete. These dungeons are home to guardian spirits that Link can befriend in order to protect the world and prevent the moon from falling.”*

\*More gameplay footage is shown, showing off more of how the various masks can be used. It's much like OTL's game, though a new transformation mask, the Gerudo Mask, allows Link to transform into a Gerudo hero somewhat like Ganondorf, which gives him both speed and strength and allows him to climb to very high areas easily.\*

*“Though you are on a time limit, there is still plenty of opportunity for exploration, which is required if you are to gain the necessary skills and items you'll need to explore the dungeons and save the world.”*

\*After a bit more description of the game, Aonuma cedes the stage to Lincoln, who gives the game's release date, November 16.\*

*“The Legend Of Zelda is surely one of Nintendo's greatest and most beloved series, and there's another series that's very near and dear to fans' hearts, one that we've neglected over the past few years and one that's long overdue for a brand new game. That series is Metroid, which last had a new game in 1994 with Super Metroid on the SNES. Many players have fond memories of Super Metroid, and so do we. And that's why we're bringing Super Metroid to the Game Boy Nova. Take a look.”*

\*A brief gameplay trailer is shown for *Super Metroid* for the Game Boy Nova. There are a few small graphical updates but the original game is fundamentally the same and looks excellent on the Nova's screen. The trailer ends.\*

*“But that's not the only Metroid game we're releasing this year.”* \*The crowd cheers\* *“Last year, you got the first look at Metroid: Darkness, Samus' new adventure. The game's release is rapidly approaching, and we've got lots of new things to show you about the game. Here's a look.”*

\*The full gameplay trailer for *Metroid: Darkness* is shown. The game plays very similarly to *Super Metroid* but with vastly superior graphics. Samus is running and jumping through corridors in a variety of environments, there are large, open areas to explore as well but the familiar side-scrolling gameplay is maintained. New weapons are revealed, such as the Cluster Bomb, the Spider Ball, the Quake Jump, and the Graviton Bomb, which crushes enemies across a large area. Samus has a new slide kick, both in her Zero Suit form and her suit, and speaking of her Zero Suit form, it is detailed fully in the trailer, Samus has both blaster weapons and melee weapons and can also kick, punch, and grapple her enemies, she's shown punching a Space Pirate across the screen in one scene and shown leaping up and blasting enemies with a flamethrower in another. Several bosses are shown, Samus is seen in her Zero Suit fighting some kind of armored bounty hunter, another boss is a crab-like beast that grabs Samus and tries to crush her, there's some kind of mechanized tank, and also a horrifying looking giant wasp creature that stings at Samus multiple times. Then a few brief cutscenes are shown, some rooms when Samus enters them start up cutscenes that then seamlessly transition back to gameplay, Samus is shown in one gameplay scene fighting oncoming enemies as civilians flee for their lives behind her. The gameplay can best be described as *Super Metroid* but with a LOT more going on, the game takes full advantage of the Ultra Nintendo's capabilities despite its retro

playstyle and fans cheer several times during the trailer before it ends and gives the game's release date as October 26. Lincoln then returns the stage and segues from the *Metroid* trailer to a preview of *Castlevania: The Occulted Circle*, using the term Metroidvania as the bridge. *The Occulted Circle* depicts a quest where two vampire hunters must go through a castle as 13 vampire lords are meeting, destroying the vampire lords will usher in a new century of peace, failing to destroy them will doom the world to 100 years of vampire terror. The game plays like an updated *Symphony of the Night* and draws more cheers from the crowd. Lincoln then cedes the stage to a couple of Rare employees (not the Stammers, just speakers for Rare) who preview the game *Conker's Twelve Tails*, which, unlike the vulgar game of OTL, is a fun looking but fairly plain family-friendly 3-D platformer. After that, this trailer begins.\*

\*Edison and Madera, now adults with a young son, look out the window of their London home, out across the city. A somewhat melancholy song is sung by a woman during the trailer as the scenes play out.\*

Edison: Fifteen years ago, my world changed forever...

\*Brief scenes from *The Dreamers*, including the storm that chased Edison and Ella from the island, Edison's animal friends, him meeting Madera, and Gruntilda, are shown.\*

Madera: We got our happy ending, and our son is as wonderful as we could have hoped for.

\*An eight-year-old boy plays with his school friends in a park as storm clouds gather.\*

\*Lightning streaks through the sky.\*

Edison: But for every dream, there is a nightmare...

Madera: And for every happy ending...

\*A massive black energy pillar opens up in the middle of the city. Edison and Madera cling their son tightly to them.\*

Madera: ...there is a story yet to be told.

\*A black wind emanates from the pillar, snatching the boy out of Edison and Madera's arms. They watch helplessly as the wind takes him away. They hear Gruntilda's laugh.\*

Edison: That witch!

Madera: But how?

\*A cloaked woman lands in front of Edison and Madera, she removes her cloak to reveal that she's a grown-up Ella, decked out in adventure garb.\*

Ella: Because you didn't listen to me!

\*The melancholy song continues to play as Edison, Madera, and Ella are shown exploring a new world full of beautiful landscapes. Meanwhile, Edison and Madera's son James is in a cage as Gruntilda stirs up something in a big pot.\*

James: Are you gonna eat me...?

Gruntilda: Why would I eat you when I'm trying to keep you as my son?

\*More cutscenes are shown, Ella seems to be much more keen of an adventurer than her brother or his wife, they are rusty while Ella hasn't stopped exploring in 15 years.\*

Madera: You ever...thought...maybe...you should...settle down....have kids?

Ella: After what's happened to yours I don't think I need the stress!

\*More scenes play, Gruntilda is shown with James who now looks to be totally under Gruntilda's control.\*

Edison: Snap out of it, James!

Gruntilda: Show them what mommy taught you!

James: \*blasts Edison and Madera with magic, knocking them to the ground\*

Madera: How...?

Gruntilda: \*laughing\*

\*A few more scenes play, finishing with Edison, Madera, and Ella standing together on the bow of an airship.\*

Edison: I will find you, no matter what...

## **DREAMSCAPE**

*2001*

\*The crowd applauds as the Rare reps discuss a bit more about *Dreamscape* before once again ceding the podium to Lincoln. Lincoln then talks for a bit about Sony before introducing Mark Cerny, who shows off a gameplay trailer for *Tales Of The Seven Seas: The Victorian Legacy*. The game has a 3-D hack and slash type feel to it, perhaps a bit slower paced than most hack-and-slash games, somewhat *Zelda*-like in its combat. It also shows off the game's branching quest paths, showing that the choices various characters make in the storyline affect what missions you'll be given, though this is to a lesser extent than previous games. It ends with another scene showing Victoria getting dressed for a wedding, with Dona as her maid of honor.

Victoria reveals that she's armed with a rapier sword, which Dona smiles at before the cutscene ends. The release date of the game is given, and then Cerny shows off *Wrath and Ruin*, a very *Legend Of Dragoon*-like RPG with a somewhat dark storyline about a young man who wages war against dueling gods. Then another game is shown off, a somewhat serious 3D platformer called Carpathia. The player controls a boy who must traverse a lonely desert landscape, solving puzzles to open up new paths. The stylistic graphics of the game and complicated puzzles earn it some applause from the crowd, and the serious storyline is a change of pace from the somewhat silly mascot platformers the audience is used to.\*

\*The next trailer shown is the one for *Ballistic Limit 3*, which is shown to massive applause throughout. It depicts Ash Beckland, Sara, and their fellow survivors still on the desolate planet from the previous game, when they receive a transmission from Earth begging them to come back. Their monitors show readings from Earth indicating that the planet is under massive attack. What's particularly disturbing about the readings is that they're live, despite the crew being light years from Earth. Something near the planet is bending space-time to allow them to see what's happening to Earth in real time. This is what convinces Ash that the team has to return to the planet, despite the risks of transmitting the alien pathogen to Earth. The game's logo is shown and receives massive applause.\*

*“Thank you and enjoy E3!”*

\*Cerny leaves the stage and Lincoln returns to the podium.\*

*“Over the past few years, the number of women and girls playing games has skyrocketed. Shows like GameTV, with its popular female hosts, have certainly contributed, but the presence of brave and well-rounded female heroes like Lara Croft, Claris, Claire Redfield, and Joanna and Velvet Dark have also altered the landscape of games forever. Our latest action heroes are taking girl power to a new level. Check out these trailers and you'll see that girls can kick plenty of butt on Nintendo.”*

\*The trailer for *Oni*, an action-shooter game fairly identical to the game from OTL is shown. It impresses the crowd, but not as much as the next game that's shown off, *Blackheart*, a *Metal Gear Solid*-esque stealth game with a female protagonist named Sadira Blackheart, a morally ambiguous assassin. The game's trailer shows off the gameplay, featuring somewhat more complex stealth and combat than *Metal Gear Solid*, and the somewhat dark humor of Sadira earns lots of laughs from the crowd, which applauds the game after the trailer is over. After the *Blackheart* trailer, Lincoln shares the stage with some Capcom reps to show off *Mega Man Legends 2*, before next demonstrating the controller for *Iron Battalion*, which impresses the crowd as Lincoln seems to have quite a bit of fun using the realistic controls to pilot the game's mech. Capcom then shows off the Game Boy Nova game *Triple Orb*, before showing off the first trailer for *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis*, which highlights the frightening creature pursuing the new protagonist, Eddie Noguera, through a sewer area. The crowd cheers after the logo is revealed, then Howard Lincoln begins to speak again.

*“Coming later this year is the newest RPG from Telenet Japan, Tale Illumina.”*

\*A brief trailer shows the protagonist, a young woman named Febria, traversing an icy landscape. It introduces the concept of the game's plot as an eternal clash between light and darkness, and when darkness is allowed to spread, the planet becomes colder and colder. Febria is the last of her line, a line of heroes who fight for the light, but who have gradually been snuffed out by the forces of darkness. She is pursued by these forces, and must find her courage and the ancient treasures of light if she is to succeed in her quest to bring light back to the world. The crowd cheers the impressive looking trailer, then Howard Lincoln begins a presentation about *Pokemon Sun and Moon*, showing off the game's full English trailer, introducing a preview for the new season of the anime, and showing off several new products due to become available, as well as announcing a new *Pokemon Stadium* game for the end of next year. He then introduces Ted Woolsey from Squaresoft, who introduces some of Square's upcoming games.

*“If you enjoy playing Pokemon, it's time to try Squaresoft's take on monster collecting. This is Mystic Creature.”*

\*A brief trailer showing a group of kids learning to befriend and train magical monsters is shown. The game has a very rustic art style, resembling OTL *Vagrant Story* somewhat, but is still fairly light-hearted, with the child protagonists having fun training their monsters even as they come across some very bad villains. In *Mystic Creature*, three children fight alongside three monsters in battle to create a six-character party. There are over 100 creatures in all, but these creatures are unique, there are only one of each in the world, though you do battle with lots of evil creatures that can't be caught as well, as well as human teams training their own monsters. The game features a soundtrack by Yoko Shimamura, and the crowd has quite a positive reaction to the trailer.\*

*“Mystic Creature comes to the Ultra Nintendo on November 2nd. Also coming to the Ultra Nintendo is Legend of Mana, the newest game in the critically acclaimed Mana series.”* \*the crowd cheers loudly\*

\*The trailer for the game depicts a somewhat more serious game than OTL's title, with fully CGI cutscenes showing three heroes swooping over the landscape riding Flammie-like dragons. Gameplay scenes are shown, featuring battles much like those in the first two *Mana* games, with damage points visible on screen (unlike in OTL's *Legend of Mana*). The plot of the game is revealed as being a battle for the fate of the world, a mighty Empire conquering all and the players as heroes trying to liberate it, largely like the original *Secret Of Mana*. The heroes are trying to plant Mana Seedlings in the hope that one will grow into a full-fledged Mana Tree, which will then shine its benevolence on the world and halt the advance of the evil Empire.\*

*“Legend Of Mana released in Japan earlier this year and topped the charts for a month, becoming the hottest selling new game of January. Now, it's set to launch in North America next month, only for the Ultra Nintendo.”*

\*A quick trailer is shown for *Final Fantasy: Nova Generation* for the Game Boy Nova. It's a bit like OTL's *4 Heroes Of Light*, with a bit of OTL *Mystic Quest* mixed in. With graphics quite good for even the Nova, it's an impressive looking game and gets a fair bit of applause from the crowd despite its somewhat basic gameplay. Next, Woolsey introduces the beat-em-up game *The*

*Bouncer*, which is nearly identical to its OTL PS2 counterpart with somewhat lesser graphics. After that, *Super Mario RPG 2: The Plumber Beginning* is shown off. The footage starts by introducing the game's plot, which shows the plumbers as babies being dropped off at their parents' home by the Yoshis, followed by the Mario family leaving their world through a portal to our own due to the continued threat from Kamek, first settling in Italy as children before moving to Brooklyn later on, the plumbers are investigating a sewer in the city when they discover a strange pipe that takes them to the Mushroom Kingdom, where they will reunite with those who protected them as infants and realize their ultimate destiny. The gameplay is then shown to be an advanced version of the gameplay of the original *Super Mario RPG*, with a much larger variety of commands (think *Paper Mario*'s attack repertoire, but in SMRPG style). The graphical style is full 3-D, and though cartoony, looks on par with or even better than the graphics in *Final Fantasy VIII*. The footage introduces a young woman named Lana who befriends the heroes, and shows the Mario brothers meeting Princess Peach for the first time before the video ends. The crowd applauds, then Ted Woolsey finishes up Squaresoft's presentation.\*

*"Before I give the stage back to Mr. Lincoln, I do want to let everyone know that we are showing off Final Fantasy IX-"* \*the crowd applauds loudly as the game's logo is shown\* *"At our booth, with an exclusive showing for a few very select and special guests, with a general showing for everyone in attendance on a later day. And finally, there's one more game I'd like to briefly preview, take a look at this..."*

\*A CGI cutscene shows the inside of a house on the beach as the camera pans around it. A familiar music box tune begins to play, and a picture is seen on a desk. The crowd cheers when they realize that the picture is showing the heroes of *Chrono Trigger*, while the music box song fades into Crono's theme. The picture begins to shake, and then the entire house, as the camera pans up to reveal a massive ship much like the Black Omen is passing over the beach. A time gate opens up and the ship goes into it, while a young man about Crono's age runs out onto the beach, sword in hand, looking up at the sky. He looks out over the ocean and can see that something is coming. He gets into a battle stance, sword in hand, and watches as whatever is out over the ocean comes his way, an all encompassing darkness that looks to swallow him up. He lets out a scream and raises his sword, bringing it down as the screen goes black. A game title is revealed.\*

**CHRONO INFINITE** \*The crowd continues to cheer as several very brief snippets of gameplay are shown, revealing the game's battle system (a hybrid between OTL's *Trigger* and *Cross* with many more combos) and finally, an anime cutscene of hand that appears to be female, reaching out of the darkness toward the screen, energy radiates around the hand and the hand appears to be wearing a single loose bracelet, somewhat like Queen Zeal's hand in official art, the hand prepares to fire a burst of energy before the cutscene ends. Ted Woolsey leaves the stage and Howard Lincoln returns.\*

*"We'd like to show a game that a lot of you might have already played, it's coming to the Ultra Nintendo for the first time."*

\*A trailer for *Unreal Tournament* for the Ultra Nintendo is shown, focusing on the game's

multiplayer modes and options, with the ability to link two Ultra Nintendos together across two televisions for eight player play, a system first and something that impresses the crowd. Several more brief preview videos for future Ultra Nintendo and Game Boy Nova games are shown before finally Lincoln seems ready to leave the stage.\*

*“But before we go...we began this show with Shigeru Miyamoto, and that's how we're going to end it. Mr. Miyamoto was working on one final game before he passed, and even though he's gone, his legacy will live on through this, his very last game.”*

\*The Lylat system and its collection of planets are shown. A distress call suddenly goes out, an alien being crying for help. Five Arwings swoop into battle formation.\*

Fox: Star Fox, get ready!

\*The Star Fox team: Fox, Peppy, Falco, Slippy, and Krystal, pilot their Arwings toward the planet where the cry for help came from. Gameplay footage is shown depicting Arwing combat, but then things are changed up.... there are ground based enemies repelling the Arwings' attacks. Fox descends toward the planet and lands, and the scene switches to Fox on land with a pistol, charging toward the enemy. This new feature, where Arwings can land and take off on certain terrain, is showcased. Then we see an Arwing on a water planet, it lands in the water and converts to an underwater craft with the same capabilities as the Blue Marine.\*

Fox: Engage underwater mode!

\*Underwater combat is shown, followed by scenes from various types of worlds, including desert worlds, jungle worlds, factory worlds, and others. Next, the Landmaster tank is shown off. We also see an Arwing landing and converting into a motorcycle that speeds across the planet's surface, firing shots at enemies.

Falco: Now that's what I'm talking about!

\*More gameplay scenes are shown, followed by a cutscene depicting the game's villain, a lobster-like warlord called Clawstorm, overseeing the construction of powerful mechs and a fleet of air fighters.\*

Clawstorm: I will get Star Fox in my clutches and I will crush them!

\*More scenes showing off the Arwing's new capabilities are shown.\*

*On land...*

\*The Landmaster tank is shown, followed by the motorcycle and then Falco and Krystal fighting on foot\*

*In the sea...*

\*The Bluemarine is shown\*

*And in the air...*

\*The Arwing launches a bomb\*

*Star Fox will always be there!*

Clawstorm: Just who do you think you are?!

Fox: We're Star Fox!

\*The game's theme plays before revealing the logo.\*

### **STAR FOX 3**

\*The crowd applauds, though not as loud as they did for *Metroid: Darkness* the previous year.\*

*“Thank you, and make sure you visit our booth, and all the booths of our software partners, and make sure you visit the Shigeru Miyamoto tribute if you haven't already!”*

-Howard Lincoln's keynote speech at E3 2000

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\*Ted, Alex, and Brittany are getting a crash course on *Final Fantasy IX* from Ted Woolsey. The game contains very small snippets of the plots of OTL *Final Fantasy IX* (the game takes place in a fantasy setting and involves crystals) and *Final Fantasy X* (it's postapocalyptic) but for the most part it's its own game, nearly completely original TTL. It shows a world decimated by a great war, and almost completely devoid of magic. It is discovered that the four crystals can revitalize the world, but only according to the will of the one who finds them, setting off a war between what remains of the world's civilizations for control of the crystals.\*

Ted Woolsey: So here we've got the game's protagonist, Scav, and this girl who travels with him, Emia. Scav finds Emia after she passed out trying to cross the Great Wasteland, which separates the small, backward kind of area where Scav lives from the world beyond, where the crystals lay. But Emia, she wasn't trying to leave this area, she was coming from the world beyond, and doesn't remember how she got there.

Ted Crosley: So another heroine with amnesia?

Brittany: Seems to be a common theme in these types of games.

Woolsey: \*laughs\* But yeah, Scav is a scavenger type, hunting for old treasures and the like, just trying to get by. Emia tells Scav that there's a crystal nearby and she was trying to find it and keep it safe so the bad guys can't get it.

Alex: And the bad guys, they are?

Woolsey: There are several groups of bad guys, but the most prominent is the Arc Remnant, what's left over from the civilization that started the war that destroyed the world. These guys are still trying to get power and they'll do whatever they have to to get it. Problem is, they're used to having technology, and now there's none left, so they've got to use ancient weapons like swords in order to carry out their will. But what they lack in terms of knowledge, they make up for in brutality. These guys are nasty.

\*Alex is playing one of the game's battles, Scav and Emia are battling some goblin enemies, the battle system is reminiscent of OTL *Final Fantasy IX*'s, complete with the Trance system.\*

Woolsey: So when you get hit enough times, you go into Trance mode.

Brittany: Like a Limit Break?

Woolsey: Right, and each character has their own skills they can use when in Trance.

Ted: So how far along is this game?

Woolsey: We're looking at 2001 for a release, but I can't give you an exact date.

Brittany: Man, I really want to play this thing! I mean, the whole thing anyway.

-excerpted from *GameTV*'s live report from the floor of E3 2000

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*“Microsoft's Xbox will be the true beginning of the next generation of console gaming. We're bringing the best of both worlds, console and PC, right into players' living rooms. Whether it's epic role-playing games, action-packed shooter titles, lifelike simulators, or family-friendly games, the Xbox will have more quality games than any other platform. It will have a robust online community where players can battle one another in their favorite multiplayer titles or simply chat about whatever they like. Players can also swap their creations, such as custom characters or designs, over our new online service, bringing gamers from around the world closer than ever before. The Xbox will play DVD movies right out of the box, enabling the console to be the one-stop shop for family entertainment. We're not just changing the home gaming landscape, we're hoping to change the system forever. I welcome everyone who visits this booth to try out the Xbox for yourself. I promise, it's like nothing you've ever played before.”*

-Bill Gates, at Microsoft's booth at E3 2000

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\*The hosts of *GameTV* are standing together near the front of the convention center.\*

Ted: And that's it for our live coverage of E3 2000, but as always, you can see plenty more coverage online at GameTV.com. We'll be bringing you even more reports from the show floor and letting you know which games you'll definitely want to play when they're released.

Alex: Once again, it's been a pleasure and a privilege to get to bring all the excitement of E3 into your homes.

Steve: Join us next week for another awesome episode of *GameTV*!

Lyssa: Mmm, before we go, our camera snapped this moment of a certain someone bumping into a certain former co-host of mine...

Brittany: \*blushing\* You're really gonna show it?

Lyssa: I have to!

\*Some earlier footage is shown of Brittany playing *Tekken Tag Tournament* at the Sega Katana booth, someone comes up next to her.\*

Brittany: \*engrossed in the game, doesn't see the person come up to her and gently turn her head before kissing her on the lips\* ...!!! Mm..! \*she goes to push him away but realizes who it is and she kind of moans a bit before leaning into the kiss, then parting from him\* Chris, you scared the crap outta me! You're covering E3 too?

Chris Hardwick: Yeah, mind if we team up for a bit? \*smiling, he picks up the player two controller\* How's it going?

Brittany: I'm totally getting paid to do this. \*we can clearly see the rings on both of their fingers (ITTL Chris Hardwick and Brittany Saldita got engaged in the fall of 1999, their wedding is set for June 2000)\* You better not suck at this game. \*smirks\*

Chris: I think I'm okay at it but if I suck you don't have to tag me in.

Brittany: Fair enough, good luck baby. \*gives him a quick smooch before returning to play the game\*

\*The footage ends, Brittany is blushing as Lyssa giggles\*

Lyssa: You two make an adorable couple, don't even act like you don't. And I totally introduced you, too!

Brittany: \*smirking\* Well I'm glad you did, you guys got anything to add?

Ted: Is there gonna be an open bar at the wedding?

Alex: You won't mind if I bring my Game Boy Nova, I think I might play some *Pokemon* during

the ceremony...

Brittany: \*glaring at both of them\*

Ted: For *GameTV*, I'm Ted Crosley...

Alex: And I'm Alex Stansfield and we'll see you next week for another awesome episode of *GameTV*!

-excerpted from *GameTV*'s live report from the floor of E3 2000

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Polly Klaas drove up the driveway to her parents' home, back from Stanford for the summer. It had been a year of ups and downs, but mostly ups, as she'd finally figured out what she wanted to do with the rest of her life. Her parents came out to greet her, and she got out of the car and ran over to them, embracing them both.

"I've missed you so much...."

"We missed you too, how did your finals go?" asked Polly's mother.

"They went pretty good, I think I did well on all of them..."

"That's good to hear, still undeclared or have you decided on a major yet?" asked Polly's father Marc.

"Well...I've been doing a lot of thinking...about...well, you know about how they say on the news, video games effect people?"

Marc nodded, having remembered all the news reports from endless sources about how games can hurt developing minds, about how they can cause violence....he still suspected that all the violent video games Eric played are what caused him to try and blow up Columbine and kill Polly's friend Caitlyn.

"Those games...the violent ones," said Polly's mother. "You think they make people violent? You think they might have made Eric violent?"

"Actually, no...games have....well they've helped some of my friends, one of them even helped me. I think I want to be a psychology major. I want to do more research on how games effect people...how the media effects people. And not in a bad way. I...I think games can help people. I think the messages they send can help people cope with the negative emotions in their lives. I just have to learn enough to prove it."

Polly's parents weren't sure about what their daughter was telling them, but they trusted her judgment. And Polly was right about one thing... a game console had saved her life, though not

in the way they ever imagined it would.

-

Games had saved Kurt Cobain's life. He'd been playing them when he was at his darkest moments, and they helped ease his pain just enough for him to stick with getting the professional help that saved his life. He'd recovered from his addiction, he'd extricated himself from the toxic relationships he'd had, and now, sitting in his living room with his bandmates and best friends Dave and Krist, he was ready to enter a new phase of his life.

“If you two wanna keep the band going...”

“Kurt,” said Dave, shaking his head and placing a hand on his friend's shoulder. “It's not Nirvana without you.”

“Besides, maybe you'll change your mind someday,” said Krist, leaning back on the sofa. “Then we can be Nirvana again.”

“I'm gonna do my own thing, at least for a while,” said Kurt, running his hand through his hair. “Believe me, I thought about this for a long time. I've got enough money I can do whatever I want, and me and Kathleen are gonna see the world together. Just go wherever we want.”

Kurt still didn't know exactly what he was going to do on his trip with Kathleen. He'd probably let her decide where to go, wherever she wanted to go was fine with him, and her ideas tended to be a lot better than his.

“We'll probably make some music if we feel like it too,” said Kurt, looking over at Dave. “So what's the name of the thing you guys are gonna do again?”

“Dave keeps telling me he wants to name it Foo Fighters.”

Dave snorted, shaking his head a couple times and looking down at the floor.

“It's just one idea, I dunno.”

“I think it's a good idea,” said Kurt. “I mean, you know, 'fighters', makes you guys sound badass.”

“But *Foo* Fighters?” replied Dave, thinking about it for a moment. “It's an old World War II term, I thought it sounded cool one day but the next day I'm like, ehhhh I dunno...”

“I think it sounds fine,” Krist said. “Anyway, whenever we figure it out, you'll be first to know.”

“Cool,” Kurt replied, nodding his head.

“And be sure to bring back plenty of awesome souvenirs. I mean, don't get arrested or anything,

but bring some cool stuff back.” Dave leaned over and gave Kurt a hug, and soon after, Krist did the same. “We're gonna miss you.”

“I'll have some sweet stories to tell,” said Kurt, leaning back in his chair again and looking up at the ceiling. “*Maybe we can be Nirvana again someday.*”

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Chris Perez held his wife Selena close as the two laid in bed together, holding each other tightly. Selena's new album had just released, and had topped the charts for two weeks straight. Selena was still the world's most popular musical superstar, but to Chris, she was just his angel.

“You're still beautiful...” Chris said to her, and kissed her passionately, his eyes locked on hers.

Selena was living a dream, and there were times she thought it was a miracle she was still alive at all. Every once in a while, she'd have a nightmare about that psychotic woman who'd pointed a gun at her, who might've killed her had Chris not been there to stop it. Chris had saved her life, but even if he hadn't, he'd still be her hero.

“*Mi amor...por siempre...*” Selena whispered softly. She kissed Chris again, arms locked tight around his body in a passionate embrace. Even if she lost all her money and fame, even if the stars fell out of the sky, she'd still have him. “*Te amo...mi amor...*”

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Bill Gates looked around, both at the Microsoft booth and at the rest of the convention center. His entourage of security guards kept reporters from approaching him...he'd already given enough interviews for the day. He was excited about the future, excited about the possibilities for the Xbox. So many had gone up against the Nintendo juggernaut, but none of them had the vision that Bill Gates had. None of them really knew what it would take to go up against the combined might of Nintendo and Sony.

And yet, as excited as he was, he was also nervous. He'd navigated the perilous minefield of the government's anti-trust lawsuit, and now was looking to bust a trust of his own. Not with the government's help, but with raw intellect and creativity. This might just be the biggest challenge of his career, but he welcomed it like he welcomed every other challenge in his life. Bill Gates was ready to take Nintendo down.

He saw someone approach his security staffers. They started to block the man's path, but Gates waved them away. This person he was very glad to see.

“Steve,” said Gates, smiling as he walked over to greet his business rival, Steve Jobs. “You're here at E3?”

“Believe it or not, I'm here. How's it going?”

“Well, the butterflies are still swimming in there,” said Gates, looking down at his stomach.  
“You?”

Jobs smiled and chuckled a bit, shaking his head. He wasn't nervous at all, he wasn't the one trying to launch a groundbreaking product. Not this time around, anyway.

“It's an amazing device,” said Jobs, looking over at the Xbox. “Easily more raw power than Sega's. You'll blow them out of the water.”

“It's not Sega I'm worried about.”

“Of course it isn't.”

“...the offer still stands,” said Gates, looking back at the Xbox before looking at Jobs. “You and me going in on this thing. Apple and Microsoft, teaming up to take Nintendo and Sony down.”

“Is that a serious offer?” Jobs replied, raising an eyebrow. “...or are you just fucking with me?”

The two men looked at each other for a moment, each of them trying to tell if the other one was honestly serious. Then Jobs broke the silence with a laugh, or rather a small snicker. He shook his head.

“You know I don't play well with others,” said Jobs, placing his hand on Gates' shoulder.

“Believe me, I know all too well.”

The two looked at each other again, and then Jobs leaned in.

“Besides... I'm playing my own game.”

Gates raised an eyebrow. Before he could say anything else, Jobs had already turned to walk away. He stopped for a moment.

“By the way... you seen anyone around here listening to an MP3 player?”

Gates nodded, having seen a few reporters with the devices. Crude, low memory things, some with removable disks, some without.

“...they're awful, aren't they?”

Jobs then walked away, leaving Gates with questions hanging in the air. Not just the one about the MP3 player, but...what did Steve Jobs mean when he said he was playing games of his own?

All the while, Steve Jobs took a stroll by some of the other booths. First Nintendo's, then Sega's. On his way to the front of the convention hall, he saw yet another person wearing an MP3 player

clipped to their jeans. He looked up and saw someone he thought he recognized from TV.

“Hey there, Mr. Jobs,” said Ted Crosley, waving at Jobs as he walked past. Jobs smiled at Crosley and waved back, before taking one more look at the MP3 player Crosley was wearing. It was a Rio 500. Jobs shook his head.

*“Someone should make a better one.”*

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The plane touched down in Orlando, and Tom Kalinske and his family stepped out onto the tarmac. It had been a few days since Shigeru Miyamoto had passed. Normally, Kalinske would be at E3, announcing the next generation of Saturn games, showing off the Katana...but instead, he was on vacation with his family, a vacation he sorely needed. He'd watched the *GameTV* coverage of E3 the previous day and had been quite impressed with Sega's lineup.

*“They're in good hands with that Reggie guy...”* thought Kalinske, who had laughed out loud at Reggie's brash introduction. *“I hope he does what he says and kicks ass and takes names. For Sega.”*

Kalinske and his family stepped into the airport and made their way to the baggage claim area. For the first time in a long time, Kalinske felt the burden of responsibility lift off his shoulders. The burden of pushing that rock, like Sisyphus up the hill. Gone. All of it. He was free now. And though he knew he'd miss working, and would probably take another job with another company down the road, for the moment, he was just going to enjoy his family and enjoy his vacation.

It wasn't every day that a loser got to go to Disney World.

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*“My friend Shigeru Miyamoto had a lot in common with my friend Jim Henson. Both of them were very humble, they had created things that made so many people very happy and had made them both quite famous, but whenever it was mentioned to either one of them how many people they'd impacted, they would both shy away and try to downplay it. Not all creative people are the same. Not everyone born with the gift of creativity is also blessed with the gift of humility. I'm glad I got to know them as a colleague. I'm glad I got to know Shigeru as a creative equal. Whenever we'd get together, you know, over lunch or that sort of thing, we'd just talk about whatever came to mind. It didn't have to be about work. The language barrier was there but that just made every word more important.*

*Both of them wanted more than anything else to make people happy. Jim was such a kind and gentle soul, and I saw that in Shigeru as well. Shigeru was always helping people to bring out their own creative energies, even when we were working on Star Fox together he'd always be trying to get ideas out of me, and first and foremost he wanted to make sure everything we came up with would be enjoyed by whoever picked up the controller to play this game. Shigeru had what I would call a 'quiet gratitude' about him, the way he designed his games was as if to say*

*'thank you for playing'. Everything he did was a 'thank you'. He was always thanking others, he didn't want to be thanked himself. I'm sure his last words were probably a thank you to the clerk who sold him that Dragon Quest game.*

*I'm so glad to have been able to call him my friend. And like Jim, we lost him far too soon. And like Jim...I hope he realized how grateful all of us are for the things he's created, and how grateful I am for the gift of his friendship, however temporary it was. I miss him. I'll always miss him."*

-Frank Oz, speaking on Shigeru Miyamoto's death on the May 19, 2000 episode of 20/20

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**END**

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(Authors' Note: And that is it for the *Player Two Start* timeline. While Nivek and I were the main authors, a timeline of this scope and breadth would not have been possible without many contributors along the way.

**Pyro** contributed virtually all the comics-related material. DC, Marvel, Wildstorm, you name it, he's the guy who wrote it. The only thing I worked on that was comics-related was the Batman films and that was it. He was also the one responsible for the *Commander Keen* material and much of the *Power Rangers* material as well.

**Roger Redux** contributed the *Virtua Quest* series among other things.

**CataquackWarrior** was responsible for the *Legend Of The Galactic Heroes* material, the *Galaxy Fraulein Yuna* material, and *The Three Caballeros* as well.

I believe all of the other contributors are listed next to their contributions within the TL, if you've contributed material and don't see your name either here or within the TL next to your contribution, feel free to let us know in the discussion thread or over PM, we want to make sure everyone is properly credited for material and ideas submitted, but with the TL posted all together, the original contributors' posts are mixed in with everything else. We'll make an effort to go back through within the next week or two and edit the posts to identify all the contributors we can next to their work within the TL!

Thanks again to all of our contributors and readers!)