HURRY UP AND DIE SO I CAN PLAY

video game reviews

GameCube

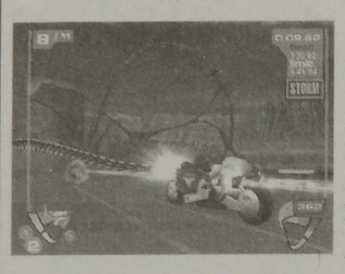
Extreme-G 3

Acclaim



The *Extreme-G* series started on the N64 back in 1997, with the second game is released one year later. It was a lightning fast, futuristic racer that proved to be popular enough to keep coming back for more installments. True to form, *Extreme-G 3*, the third installment in the series has been released on the Nintendo GameCube, and Acclaim have done a great job on this stylish racer.

You are put in the driver seat of super fast motorcycles that are equipped with turbo bursts, shields and guns to shoot at your opponents. *Extreme-G 3* is a fast and furious racer that has a lot to offer.



The graphics are good although not perfect. To give the game a real sense of speed the creators had to go a little lackluster on the backgrounds – but I did not find this to be a huge problem. The graphics get better as you progress through the game. You are really treated when you make it to the final stages and get to experience the Extreme-G speed ripples, which give a really cool feeling of what speed should be like. Sometimes rain drops will make it hard to see as they cling to your screen during the race- it looks similar to that of *Wave Race: Blue Storm*.



Techno music is a welcomed accompaniment to the game as you maneuver your way through the loopy racetracks. The sound effects are satisfactory, although I would say a lot of them are nothing out of the ordinary although the sound slowdown when you are in Extreme-G 3 mode is pretty cool.



This game is fun to play and is not too difficult to learn the controls and tricks to winning. There are lots of tracks to unlock. There is a two player mode that allows you to play the career mode together, therefore making it a great two player game.

I would recommend this racer for anyone who is a fan of fast motorcycle gaming action.

- Andrew Culberson

★★★★

PlayStation2

Soul Reaver 2

Eidos



The Legacy of Kain continues! In this latest installment, Raziel tracks Kain into the past to finally finish him off, but Kain warns Raziel that he may be being manipulated. Raziel knows this and realizes if he's not careful, he could invariantly tip the scales and lay way for some other creature to be the lord of Nosoth. But who are the people trying to control him? What are the motives of the ancient being that resurrected Raziel, Mobius, and Kain? Who's really pulling the strings? Raziel will have to figure that out as he does battle with the group he once admired and now despises: the Sarafan! Is there anyone left for Raziel to trust? And is Raziel changing his destiny or merely fulfilling it?

The *Soul Reaver* series seems to be a cross between *Zelda* and the animated TV series *Gargoyles* (in storytelling style) and it pulls it off extremely well. The characters and story are great: while Kain is cruel and merciless, he's not so much a villain as he is a corrupt ally for Raziel, even though Raziel wants him dead. The Sarafan are religious zealots who see themselves as righteous but are merely perpetrators of a massacre of vampires. This game tells of where vampires come from, shows the past of Nosgoth and shows that history abhors a paradox as Raziel's own history comes full circle.

The game play itself is wonderful. As players progress, they will obtain new elemental powers for the Soul Reaver and explore the history and possible future of Nosgoth. The puzzles that are to be solved before players can obtain the new powers are clever and challenging. The levels are nearly perfectly designed, which is important when designing levels based around solving puzzles. The controlling is great and unlike some games, there is little to no problems with confusing perspectives or camera angles. The battle system is well designed and the foes are pretty tough. Also, it is good seeing some of the same areas at different points in history, where each one has changed a bit (or in some cases a lot). It also affects which areas you can move onto.

While the game does finish quicker than a gamer would perhaps like, the only real downfall of the game is the final battle. At this time there is no tension because Raziel is invincible. However, the cliffhanger ending is good enough to make up for it and paves the way for a sequel. The only other problem is that people just starting on the Soul Reaver franchise might be a little (OK, very) lost and will need to either play the previous games or read the instruction manual. Also, it is interesting to see a game mix action and story so well, and the voice acting is quite good.

Soul Reaver 2 could (and should) easily upset *Tomb Raider* as Eidos' most popular franchise. It has all the makings of a cult favourite. While this chapter does answer some questions, there is little resolution, though a great and intriguing set-up for a sequel. And while the game may not feel long enough for some players, it is definitely a fantastic game worth your time.

- Stefan Robak

★★★★★

PlayStation

Twisted Metal Small Brawl

Sony Entertainment

The *Twisted Metal* franchise is a prime example of a game that's been done and redone, but this time round there a slight difference. Instead of real cars, the game uses remote-control cars.

The levels are areas that kids hang out at such as a mini-golf course. Unfortunately, although these are great locales, the amount of detail in each level is indistinguishable. There are some nice touches though, such as the lawn mower you have to avoid in the yard and the some of the weapons are more kid appropriate (if there is such a thing).

There were some major problems with the third and fourth titles in the series, and some of the worst ones have been addressed. However some new problems have emerged. The most notable problem is the graphics. Nobody expected the game to look as good as *Twisted Metal Black.*, but this looks bad even compared to earlier versions of the game.

I can't help but feel that most effort of Sony's efforts were focused elsewhere and therefore no time or effort was placed in the development of this game. It seems like it was more or less thrown together. Of course, it's nothing more than an assumption. If it is not the case, it sure feels that way.

The levels are quite large and well made in general. You get to play the typical game modes, alone, co-op or versus, and with yet another complaint, there is only 2 player capability, no 4 player combat.

Thank goodness this is the last *Twisted Metal* game for the PSOne.

- Marc Hostetler

★★

PlayStation

Men In Black: Crashdown

Infogrames

This game is based on the television series, rather than the movie, and finds you trying to rid the world of illegal aliens and other nasties who are up to no good. It is a first person shooter (FPS) which offers increasingly powerful super weapons, including the "Noisy Cricket" from the movie.

Gameplay isn't amazing, but it isn't awful either. The graphics are quite mediocre and they take on a cartoony kind of look. The environments are well made but there are problems with the usual graphical glitches.

Killing aliens usually takes quite a few shots and the controls are somewhat awkward, never really letting the game reach its full potential. The enemies are diverse; they walk, crawl, fly, or hang from the ceiling, keeping you on your toes at all times, never knowing from where you're being fired upon.

The game is made up of 26 levels, includes 25 different weapons and gadgets, as well as 15 unique alien races. Instead of having to go around collecting ammo for your weapons, you have to find charging stations to fill up you gun. Unfortunately, this game does not have multiplayer support.

This game would be best suited to the casual gamer who occasionally likes to blast some aliens into space, especially with all the cool super-weapons on offer.

- Marc Hostetler

★★½

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