

HURRY UP & DIE, SO I CAN PLAY

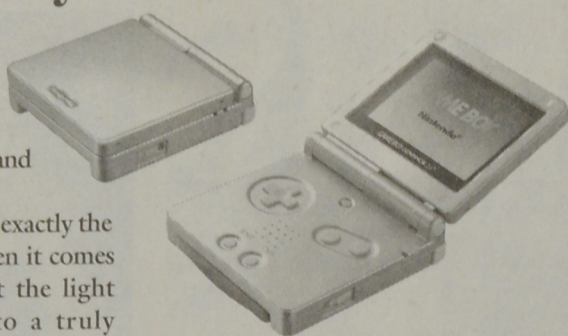
 video
game
reviews

New Game Boy hits stores in March

Nintendo have finally announced the release of a new Game Boy Advance which will feature a backlit screen, a rechargeable lithium battery and an innovative folding design.

The new system's screen is exactly the same as the existing one when it comes to resolution and size, but the light option will turn this into a truly portable system.

Until now, Nintendo always stated that a backlight would reduce battery life to an unacceptable level, but the included lithium battery will last for a full ten hours after being fully charged.



This is extended to 18 hours when the light is switched off.

The Game Boy Advance SP will be available in stores on Saturday March 22nd, and will retail for \$149.95.

Microsoft wins race for second place

One year after the release of the Xbox and the GameCube, it appears that Microsoft's console is pulling away into a clear second place.

According to sales figures for November 2002, there were 2.3 Xbox consoles sold for every GameCube sold. This translates into Microsoft capturing

32% of the console market in Canada. The Sony PlayStation2 still has a healthy lead over all the competition.

Much of the success can be attributed to the launch of Microsoft's online service, Xbox Live, which is currently outselling the Sony Online Adapter five to one.

PlayStation2

Summoner 2

THQ

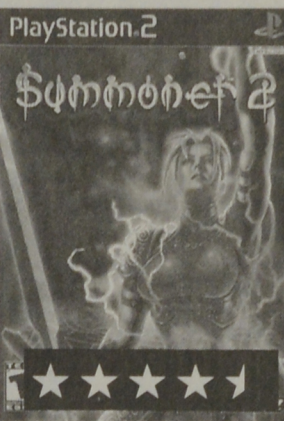
While I best remember *Summoner* for the Dungeons and Dragons sketch found in the first game, I never actually had the opportunity to play the first and really didn't think much of it. Which is a shame because if it were anything like this, it would mean that it is a fun RPG/Adventure hybrid game, which is a genre that's becoming quite popular these days. The opening cutscene for *Summoner 2* is an awesome sight alone, as a mysterious woman summons a paradise in the middle of the desert, only to have it washed away by a tidal wave that seems to come out of nowhere. It's just amazing.

Fighting in this game is fast and furious, and the enemies, even when easily defeated, are a little tougher than most cannon fodder baddies. Players may use magic and such, but it won't be easy because players will have to defend themselves as well from the onslaught of foes. Players may also take control of other characters mid-battle without having to stop any of the action. Each character plays a little differently and no player has to feel stuck playing one guy when he can easily switch. Meanwhile, players can also control the AI of other members by putting them in different modes of battle (unfortunately, these guys have very little sense of self defense in healer mode for some reason).

The character designs aren't bad, if a bit too familiar, and levels are rather well designed. The story for the game is incredible complex and intriguing. The game is also incredibly huge and has a lot of lasting appeal to it. The voice work isn't bad (which is nice for a change) and the music is just perfect. The makers put a lot of blood, sweat and tears in this game and it definitely shows in the finished product. Unfortunately getting around some of the levels can be a chore, and finding a good place to heal can be frustrating, especially when one of your allies is dead and you can get him/her to a place to get healed.

Summoner 2 is definitely a game that will keep players busy over the Holidays, and it'll be time well spent. There are a few frustrating aspects, but the pros far outweigh the cons. With high marks in all departments from game play, to story to all that other stuff, there's no doubt in my mind that there will come another *Summoner* game. Let's just hope they wait awhile: players will still be spending a lot of time on this one!

- Stefan Robak



PlayStation2

Wipeout Fusion

BAM! Entertainment

In Europe, the *Wipeout* franchise is legendary. Every single installment has sold incredibly well, and when *Wipeout Fusion* was announced for the PlayStation2 (before the system even launched), people got very, very excited. Yet in North America, people don't care quite so much and Sony decided against even releasing the game. Thankfully Bam! Entertainment has snapped this game up because it is everything it was supposed to be and more.

If you haven't seen *Wipeout* before, it is a futuristic driving game where vehicles float above tracks that have more in common with roller coasters than conventional raceways. There is also a huge number of power-ups and weapons available to help you get ahead of the opposition, making for a frantic race for the finish line.

Wipeout Fusion takes the best parts from the three previous games and makes them look a whole lot nicer as well. The graphics are just wonderful what with the tracks winding their way through the industrial landscape featuring factories and towering office blocks. The animation stays fast and smooth for the most part - so much so, some folks might even feel a bit nauseous from hurtling along at top speed.

The gameplay has been refined too, with many more options from which to choose. The standard Arcade Mode and League Mode are just what you'd expect, as is Challenge Mode. Zone Mode is a little different, demanding players to fly along at ever increasing speeds until your shields finally run out. The multi-player options are slightly disappointing because only two people can race, but considering the more frequent slowdown, that might not be a bad thing.

Wipeout Fusion just oozes quality. The presentation is stunning, from the menus and loading screens to the funky soundtracks that features Orbital, Future Sounds Of London, Nightmares On Wax and so on. The difficulty level starts off forgivingly enough but there is enough challenge here to keep you coming back.

There is absolutely no reason not to have a *Wipeout* title in your game library, and *Wipeout Fusion* is the best one yet. Miss it at your own peril.


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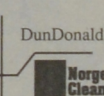
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Exchange abroad information session

Information sessions on exchange abroad will be held on Wednesday, January 15th from 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. and Thursday, January 16th from 12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. in the Alumni Memorial Building lounge. Plan to attend one of the two sessions.

Exchanges are open to University of New Brunswick students in their 2nd or 3rd year of study. Students pay their tuition at UNB and attend the exchange university abroad.

Application Deadline: Friday, February 7th, 2003

- 1: Sweden, Umea University
- 2: Swansea, Wales: University College of Swansea

Further information is available in the International Student Advisor's Office Room 18, Alumni Memorial Building. Telephone: 453-4860