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HyperBlade on the PC challenges PlayStation, Sega Saturn, and 3DO

Console-style hockey action from Activision's *Hyperblade* leads the PC's attack on 32-bit videogames

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15

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14 PAGE BONUS
The essential videogame dictionary, starting on page 28

Hyperblade from Activision combines the pace and style of hockey with arcade-style fighting action. Fans of the Bitmap Bros.' *Speedball* will enjoy the mix. But will PC gamers embrace this direct challenge to Sony and Sega?

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Pinball takes full advantage of these and other possibilities.

Unfortunately, all the clever tricks can't hide the fact that the game just doesn't play that well. And without the basics right, the rest is merely superfluous.
Rating: ★★



Let's just say *Ruiner Pinball* is basically a lot of lights, bells, whistles, and (small silver)...

Virtual Boy

Panic Bomber
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Hudson Soft
The Virtual Boy is meant to be a 3D machine and therefore is best-suited for 3D games. *Panic Bomber* is a decent 2D game that would have worked many times better on 2D hardware.

So why are they here together? Even if you set aside the fact that *Panic Bomber* takes zero advantage of Virtual Boy's 3D abilities, the game's lack of distinguishing colors makes playing this fast-paced puzzle game a tedious process at best.

This *Tetris*-ish game has all the addictive elements of the original portable phenomenon, but spending an extended amount of time with your face stuck in the Virtual Boy is simply not an option for most folks.
Rating: ★★

Vertical Force
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Hudson Soft
The back of the *Vertical Force* box claims "Actual Game Play is 3D!" but the truth is far less dramatic.

The definition of 3D employed in this overhead shooter is one in which two separate planes (one foreground and one background) of gameplay co-exist within a completely confusing environment of mindless enemy ships and constant red gunfire.

If this were a regular game, then it may have been a far less troublesome ordeal, but it's not. Beyond the very unsuccessful 3D elements in *Vertical Force*, this game is totally uninspired.
Rating: ★

PC

Ecco the Dolphin
Developer: Sega
Publisher: Sega PC
Ecco the Dolphin is the only PC game to ever feature a dolphin as a main character and that novelty alone counts for a lot. No, really.

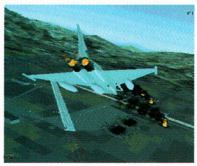
The great thing about this title is its smooth graphics and control response, even when running with Windows. These things said, the game is still little more than a conversion from the yesteryears of the 16-bit Sega Genesis. Except for a few video cut-scenes, there is little attempt to make this game look or play better for the PC. As a result, the graphics look somewhat dated. Control, while very responsive, still remains difficult, since many puzzles require the use of a shell or other object, and trying to move things using only your snout can be an exercise in futility.

For what it is, a simple arcade/action game, *Ecco* is a great change of pace from *Doom*. Helping a dolphin find its lost family can be a fun experience, even on a PC.
Rating: ★★★

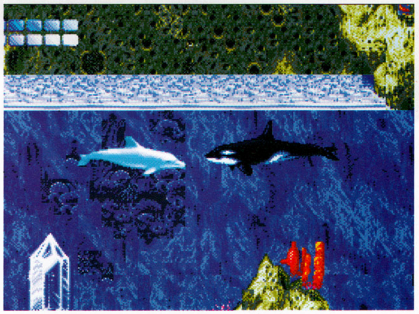
EF2000
Developer: Digital Image Design
Publisher: Ocean of America
The *EF2000* fighter plane is part of the Eurofighter program, started in 1983 as a collaboration between Germany, Italy, Spain, and the UK. While the superior fighter won't be in active service until the year 2000, Digital Image Design has created a flight simulator around it that will knock your socks off.

The game has astoundingly beautiful graphics. The 4 million square kilometers of terrain are completely texture-mapped and true to their geography, meaning you can expect thick snow on the ground of Norway, and acres of marshy lowland in Finland.

The interface is so simple to use that within a few minutes you can be up and blowing MiG-29s out of the air. Even so, there's enough realism to please even the most fanatical flight sim fan. A/I pilots, programmed with information taken from experienced combat veterans, constantly adjust to your actions, and react accordingly. Throw in the title's networking options for up to eight virtual pilots, and you've got one of the best flight sims on the market. If you're a fan of flying, pick this one up!
Rating: ★★★★



Flight sims regularly set new standards as new PC power is utilized. *EF2000* is no exception



Sure it's simply a port from the Genesis, but it's cute. This orca whale will give you the first clue you'll need to find your lost pod in *Ecco the Dolphin*

