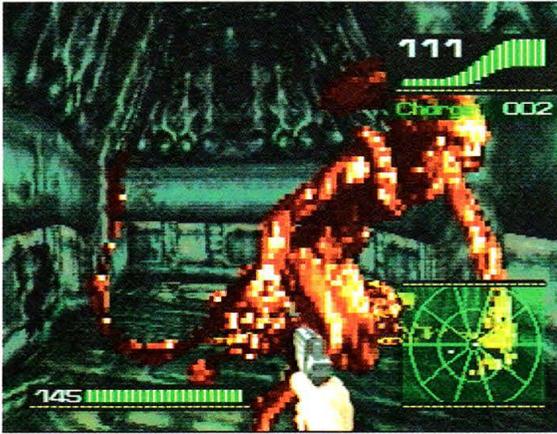


PlayStation



It may not be the first *Doom*-style shooter to feature H.R. Giger's aliens, but *Alien Trilogy* is easily the best

RIPLEY, BELIEVE IT OR NOT...

Alien Trilogy

Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Probe

Back in the day, Acclaim and Probe released *Alien 3* for Super NES, one of the better side-scrolling, licensed games Acclaim ever published. Now here we are, three years later, and the team of Acclaim and Probe (which is now a wholly-owned development house of Acclaim) have come up with *Alien Trilogy* — and to no surprise, the game is one of the better *Doom*-style, first-person shooters available.

First, you'll need to get by the intro sequence's excellent prerendered 3D animation. Though we've seen it at every trade show for two years, Acclaim's motion-capture work smooths out the transition from intro to game, and is one of the best intros we've seen. You're then dropped straight into the heart of a xenomorph-infested colony of the Weyland-Yutani corporation to blast alien critters (and infected colonists — not sure about the morality of this, but hey), get the various facilities up and running again, and generally make the place safe for mankind.

The game's mechanics are, if anything, overly familiar, and if you've played one first-person shooter you can jump right in. The details, however, are what make this come alive: face huggers scuttle away, full grown aliens drop down from above, alien queens are *not* easy to kill, glass shatters, barrels explode, and, for the most part, the way it controls is so smooth and intuitive that the experience is very close to finding yourself in the middle of the film. Even the music cues kick in at the right moments, and there are times when the game generates real suspense and a genuine moodiness, a rare achievement.

Which doesn't mean it's perfect. Like PlayStation's other *Doom*-style game this month, *PO'ed*, *Alien Trilogy* suffers a little from being overdesigned. Many of the level layouts are mildly confusing, and the map screen is too sketchy on details to be much help. It's possible this was deliberately done to extend the life of the game because compared to, say, *Doom* for PlayStation (or even *PO'ed*), there aren't many stages here.

These are relatively minor problems though. The fact is that the *Alien* movies are just about the perfect scenario for a first-person shooter like this, and the designers have done their job extremely well. The 3D engine is first rate, the action is intense, and the control couldn't be much smoother. Nicely done.

Rating: ★★★★★

The game is amazingly complex and requires varied and long-range strategies, and in order to figure out how all of the commands work, it's guaranteed to steal hundreds of hours of your life. Koei's latest is as good or better than anything it's ever done, it's just not surprising or new. You can slide into this game like a well-worn pair of gloves, but you've seen this before.

Rating: ★★★



Sidewinder may be the best flight game for PlayStation to feature authentic craft, but it's not great

Sidewinder

Publisher: Asmik (Japan)
Developer: Pegasus

When you consider that the only other flight sim-ish games available for PlayStation are the so-so *Air Combat* and the less-than-so-so *Agile Warrior*, it's tempting to give *Sidewinder* more praise than it deserves. Somehow though, that doesn't seem like a good enough reason, especially when compared to *Warhawk*, which wasn't this style of game but flew like a dream.

Still, *Sidewinder* has a lot going for it. The missions are plentiful and varied (the briefings all have voice-overs in Japanese, but the graphic representation makes everything clear enough so you don't need to know what's being said), incorporating a nice mix of air-to-air and air-to-ground assaults. The graphics are impressive with just a little draw-in (the game is structured so you rarely notice it unless you're attacking a large ground target). And the game is challenging without being too frustrating.

The flight engine, however, doesn't respond like a real plane at all. It doesn't even follow arcade style flight characteristics — you can't roll the plane, and you can't even dip the nose unless the wings are nearly level, which means it's difficult to slow a turn, or lower your aim during a turn. After a few missions you get used to it, sort of, but it's counter-intuitive and annoying.

If the game had just controlled better it might have rated a star higher. As it is, it just doesn't suck.

Rating: ★★★

Saturn

Earthworm Jim 2

Publisher: Playmates
Developer: Shiny Entertainment

The popular side-, vertical-, and isometric-scrolling action game from the world of 16 bit has finally made it to 32 bit. *Earthworm Jim 2* was released a few months ago on Genesis and Super NES, and when rumors started flying about a Saturn version of the game, most people willing to speculate hoped for a 3D mutation of this hilarious platformer. What Saturn owners will get is a close translation of the 16-bit game.

The fact of the matter remains that *EJ 2* is a great 2D game, and though it's fashionable to dismiss 2D as yesterday's development constraint, the title is amazingly fun even on a machine designed for 3D gaming.

There are some enhancements over the 16-bit versions of *EJ 2*. Most of these, however, come by way of an expanded color palette, and an added sense of background depth through the use of extensive parallax scrolling. The solid scrolling gameplay and rollicking humor, on the other hand, has been left very much intact, and outside of playing just a touch smoother, it feels nearly identical to the original.

If you've spent your eagerness over *EJ 2* on a 16-bit console, the Saturn version is not likely to do much for the life of the game. If you've not played this wild and quirky little action title, it's well worth checking out.

Rating: ★★★



Outside of a few graphic upgrades, *Earthworm Jim 2* for Saturn is like the 16-bit versions

Night Warriors: Dark Stalker's Revenge

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom

In case you didn't know it already, Capcom makes the best 2D fighters in the industry. And despite the advance and growth in popularity of 3D fighters, gamers just can't get enough of Capcom's games. Nonetheless, the downside of Capcom's