

## ALIENS ONLINE

Platform: **Online**  
 Publisher: **Kesmai**  
 Developer: **Mythic Ent.**

**A**liens Online is an interesting mix of old technology and excellent design decisions. On the one hand, the game engine is fairly weak, consisting of a modified raycasting engine (think Doom with angled walls) and sprites for all of the enemies and player characters. On the other hand, Aliens Online is perhaps one of the scariest and most intense gaming experiences Next Generation has ever experienced.

Where Aliens Online excels brilliantly is in its atmosphere and excellent generation of suspense. The sound is awesome and puts everyone on edge almost immediately with little audible details that really make it feel as if you're participating in a movie. This game is meant to be played in the dark, but be careful not to play for extended



**The graphics may not be the greatest, but the action is straight out of the movies**

periods, as you will risk becoming a paranoid wreck — it's that good.

However, several things keep this from brilliance. First, it's actually inconvenient to talk to members of your team. Second is the lack of complete customizability — and why in the name of the goddess isn't it possible to use the mouse to look up and down, especially since it's so vital to the game? Finally, there's not a lot of variety to the maps. The level designs are very good, but all the textures are so similar that after a while, one place looks much like the next. After the initial rush of newness wears off, the sameness sets in, and a lot of the excitement goes away.

Overall, this is a wonderful addition to GameStorm. We just wish there was more variety so the thrill could last.

**Rating: ★★★**

## CALIFORNIA SPEED

Platform: **Arcade**  
 Publisher: **Atari Games**  
 Developer: **Atari Games**



**If you want ludicrous and light-hearted racing fun, California Speed is worth a few quarters**

**A**lthough it was developed by Atari, California Speed is more like Midway's Cruis'n series than Atari's San Francisco Rush, with the exact same interface, the same big-breasted chicks showing it in your face before and after races, four-person multiplayer, and a general hot-rods-and-muscle-cars look and feel.

Like the infamous road kills in Cruis'n, California Speed enables racers to pummel pedestrians in malls, cruise through military test sites, and experience other parts of the Golden State like never before. Graphically, the developers have tried to push the envelope, adding touches like transparent roads and giant waterfalls. However, they've had less success than those they seem to be trying to imitate (Super GT, to be specific). In fact, sometimes the game's sprites are as crude as those in Maximum Force.

The control is serviceable, with speed and an eye for wacky obstacles making up the majority of the gameplay. It's fun and lighthearted, and the cars are less weighty than those found in SF Rush.

However, in the end, California Speed is aimed directly at the middle of the gaming audience, and it plays that way too.

**Rating: ★★★**



**While it's nothing you haven't seen before, at least California Speed has some variety**

## TIME CRISIS 2

Platform: **Arcade**  
 Publisher: **Namco**  
 Developer: **Namco**

**N**amco's sequel to the next step in light-gun games takes the Time Crisis series to another level of highly enticing gameplay and visually stunning graphics.

In addition to full-on shooting action, the original Time Crisis brought players straight into the game with a foot pedal that reloaded the gun and enabled ducking or hiding behind corners. Time Crisis 2 starts up right where the previous game ended, except now players have the chance to play in tandem with another person who's standing at a second cabinet. In these scenarios, player one shows up as a character on player two's screen and might be in almost direct line with the enemy, or enemies may be running in front of the player, complicating quick-reaction shots.

Built on System 23, Namco's answer to Model 3, Time Crisis 2 is a highly refined game that relies on players' abilities to recognize different strategies. Each level (the European city and canal, the alpine forest and railway, and the satellite launch base) blends knee-jerk shooting responses with stealthy spy techniques, creating a beautiful balance of gameplay elements that raises the bar on shooting games to the next level. Indeed, it could be argued

that Time Crisis 2 really isn't a beginner's game, despite the fact that it's still easy to pick up and play.

Graphically, more polygons were used to build the characters, and more RAM and a faster processor enable this game to far outshine its predecessor. This should please picky fans who were bothered by split elbows and knees and funky, Dali-esque faces.

Not as big a milestone as the first, but definitely a superb game from Namco.

**Rating: ★★★★**



**Time Crisis 2 Isn't the huge leap in gameplay that the original was, but it's still a blast**