

BYTES

Readers concerned that the number of games for PlayStation are going to dry up with the arrival of PlayStation2 should fear not. At its recent press conference at E3, Sony announced that there are currently 170 PlayStation titles in development for release before Christmas, with another 100-plus waiting in the wings for the early part of next year.

Human Head's spooky adventure *Rune* is expected to be arriving on PS2. The action-adventure title is based upon Norse mythology. Human Head is also working on the second game in the proposed *Blair Witch* trilogy that is being negotiated for a port onto PlayStation2.

Square is to begin testing its Play Online gaming network this Spring. It intends to start testing with the distribution of a playable *Final Fantasy X* demo, on both PC and PlayStation2, with online support ready to go. The game is due for full release in Japan mid-2001.

Ubi Soft is already working on the next *Rayman* title for PS2. It's described as *Rayman 2.5*. It'll have the same look and feel of *Rayman 2*, but with enhanced graphics, more sub-games, more non-player characters, advanced lighting effects and bigger levels.

GT Interactive in Australia has closed shop after merging with Ozisoft last month. Infogrames owns a 62 per cent stake in Ozisoft with an option to own 100 per cent in 2001, and after Infogrames bought GT in the US earlier in the year, a local merger was always on the cards.

Acclaim is to release *HBO Boxing*. The look and feel of HBO TV broadcasts will be recreated alongside real-life boxing venues and announcers. Acclaim plans to include 30 'past and present champions', but the majority of big-name boxers are already signed to EA. It is thought aging superchunk George Foreman will be heading HBO's pro pack.

Loving The Alien

THE FACE HUGGERS RESURRECTED

Any of the *Alien* films introduce Sigourney Weaver's nemesis as one of the most terrifying creatures you could ever not wish to meet. In the *Alien Resurrection* movie, scientists are attempting to control and breed this most ferocious of species, enjoying limited success until the inevitable happens and Hollywood's scariest space monster ever gets loose. Enjoying considerably more success controlling the aliens is Ben Tuszynski, senior producer of *Alien Resurrection* at Argonaut.

"*Alien Resurrection* is an attempt to create an environment that is reminiscent of all of the *Alien* movies, particularly *Resurrection*. It comes complete with the overwhelming terror that comes from such an iconic enemy, who could attack in many forms from any angle at any time," begins Ben inviting PSM to take the 90 per cent complete version for a spin. Within seconds, PSM is on-board the doomed USM Auriga surrounded by some of the best ambient sounds to grace the PlayStation.

Control is achieved using both of the analog sticks – one for

movement and one for looking around. As PSM negotiates the sparsely populated first level, it's immediately apparent that for the team at Argonaut this has been a labour of love. Steam rises from vents in the floor, water drips from the ceiling, but the minute you stop to admire these or any of the other gorgeous details that fill the levels, you just know that you'll be attacked from behind.

"These atmospheric effects help to create a world that is instantly familiar to any veteran of the movies," states Ben. There are 10 levels but each of these is made up of a number of large sections. "We have 79 sections in all and one level takes a minimum of two hours for the testers to play through."

Events in the game follow those of the film closely and you get to play four characters – Ripley, Call, Christie and DiStephano. Your main objectives are to destroy the clones, kill the alien queen and hunt down any newborn. Terrifyingly good.



"Steam rises from vents in the floor and water drips from the ceiling". No, not a tour of the PSM offices, this is *Alien Resurrection*.

BMX Bandits

NO, NOT NICOLE KIDMAN, IT'S MAT HOFFMAN



You'd have thought they'd be allowed a full size bike at their age...

Activision has unveiled *Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX*, a stunt bike game in the same mould as *Tony Hawk's Skateboarding*. Developed by Neversoft, *Pro BMX* utilises the now legendary *Tony Hawk's* engine and features 10 times World BMX Champion Mat 'Condor' Hoffman – a gentleman who won every bike event he entered last year. Featuring 10 of the world's most radical bikers, the game sees you vying for champion BMX status through a range of real-world locations and nine types of level design. Naturally you've got the vert ramp events (huge half-pipes from which you can pull big air) and the signature moves of the riders themselves, but there's also the challenge of pulling tricks in street events, downhill racing and off-road freestyle. Mud will fly...

Each level has secret areas, sly shortcuts enabling you to get the jump on your opponent and loads of obstacles to trick off. Expect suicidal leaps aplenty, as well as the more traditional grabs, grinds and maybe even a bunny-hop or two. There'll also be replays showing off your best tricks, which should be something special if the effects we've seen are any yardstick. Choose from skids, water reflections, lighting effects and the obligatory face-grazing, collarbone-crunching wipeouts. Naturally there will be a number of multi-player levels, plus Trick Attack modes similar to *Tony Hawk's* and racing events. There are also a couple of special modes. Mat's Vicious Vert Ramp Competition is a 60-second blast on a huge half-pipe and the Big A\$\$ Dirt Jump is a competition to see how many tricks you can pull off one jump. From the shots alone, *Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX* is looking wheelie good. (Sorry).

War Of The Mutants

SECOND X-MEN TITLE FROM ACTIVISION

Activision's *X-Men: Mutant Academy* is to be followed up by another game, *X-Men: Mutant Wars*. This 3D action-adventure, developed by Matrix Games, will see you taking on the role of Wolverine in a bid to save the world from a troupe of evil mutants led by arch villain, Magneto. The plot is taken from the upcoming *X-Men* film with *Star Trek's* Patrick Stewart as Professor X going head to head with Sir Ian McKellan who plays Magneto. Expect Storm, Rogue, Cyclops and all your fave mutie heroes to appear.

The X-Men are a team of mutants born with a chromosomal twist that gives them superhuman powers, including the ability to fly (Rogue), fire force beams from their eyes (Cyclops) and read people's minds (Jean Grey). Feared by the rest of humanity, the group of friendly mutants bond together under Xavier's tutelage to protect mankind from the machinations of Magneto and his merry band of bad guys, including Sabretooth and Mystique.

In the game you'll be playing mainly as Wolverine, but there's also the opportunity to switch between heroes to sample the full range of mutant powers, as well as honing your stealth skills. There are 12 levels to work through in your mission to rescue your fellow X-Men from Magneto's lair. Secret areas and hidden characters abound. The game is due to be released to coincide with the Bryan Singer-directed film, which will be out towards the end of the year.



The Uncanny X-Men: Almost as violent as English soccer fans.