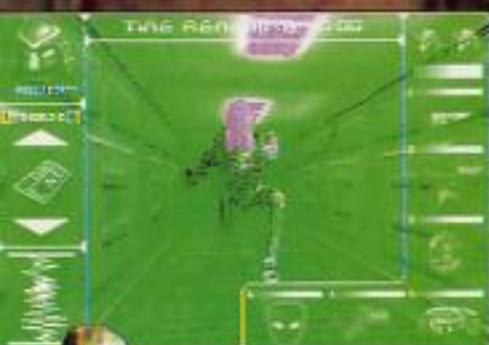# JAGUAR'S DOMAIN


One of the most anxiously awaited Jaguar titles has got to be Aliens Vs. Predator. This 64-bit, first person search and destroy is the first game to really show of the system's potential. The shots you're looking at here are early so a lot of the sprites aren't final, but what we can tell you is that the frame rate is unbelievable. It is at least twice as fast and smooth as the 3DO's 'Monster Manor' (which has no floor or ceiling), especially when you play as the Alien-those Xenomorphs can really fly! The objective changes as you assume the role of either the Alien, Predator or Colonial Marine. As the Marine, you must wipe out the Aliens and the Predators including their home bases. As the Alien or the Predator, you must make it back to your ship...alive. The complex is fourteen levels and you start right in the middle! As the marine, you can use the computers but as the Alien or Predator it will take speed or power to get you through. As soon as we can get a final on this one we'll bring you a full-on gnarler review. The street date for AVP is set for April. We met the head of Rebellion (the team responsible for this and the upcoming Checkered Flag 2) at the CES and were very impressed at how dedicated they are to not only the Jag but to you and I! Everything they do for the Jag will surely be an event in itself! Enjoy Tempest and I'll see you soon in the halls of AVP!
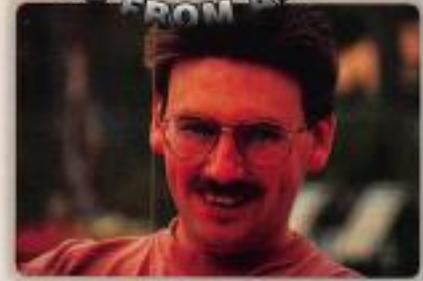
ALIEN

VS

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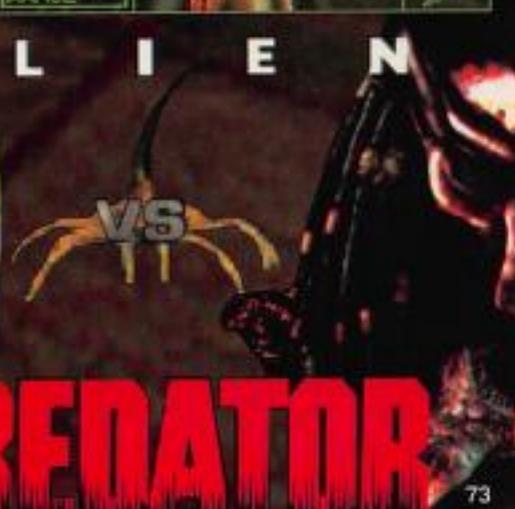
HEY, I DID ALL THE WORK!

AT LAST!!! A good excuse to use my portable PC! Since a week after I had shown it off to everyone, it has been lying under my bed gathering dust! I picked it up, wiped off the dust with my hand and the damn "U" key ripped off and flew back under my bed. Beneath the bed, I went courageously fighting my way through endless computer print-outs, smelly socks, rancid coffee cups an un-cashed check (if only!). By the time I found it, what looked like a man eating spider had laid claim to it. So, as far as this diary goes, if there are any missing "U"s, TOUGH!

Alien 3 was to be my greatest challenge yet. After writing cupboard-fulls of Commodore 64 games, I was commissioned in England to produce-QUOTE- "The greatest video game ever" on a machine that I had never seen. For that matter it was to be based on a movie that was but a twinkle in its director's eye...

NO PROBLEM!

To pull this feat of programming off, I was going to need some major hired guns. For the best graphics around, who else but the one and only Nick "Map Boy" Bruty (Who has recently completed Aladdin and Terminator CD on the Genesis and Sega CD). It must be said that his career soared after the first year when someone told him that he didn't need to use "White Out" on the screen. He is really a frustrated programmer at heart and has loads of bug-ridden sprite routines to show off his wonderful graphics (crawl, crawl!).

THE PLOT

So, off we went to a dark, wet, rainy corner of England, to a dingy castle. Our sole task; to 'CREATE'. Actually, it was quite fun really. The corridors gave us some neat ideas. However, soon the week was over so we had to quickly 'CREATE' some stuff so the guy paying the bills wouldn't freak. Namely, Fergus "Black Belt Karate, Kick Boxing, etc...is great to get programmers to sign on the dotted line" McGovern.

THE BEGINNING

When I got back, there it was on my porch; a Super

Famicom. Great name (yawn). I prefer SNES. Ripping apart the box, I revealed my SNES. By far, the best, shiniest console on the market (actually, it was a rotten, matte, dull gray with yucky purple switches). The guys at Lamborghini would have reached for their sick bags! But, I didn't care. Rushing up the stairs, I plugged it in...AHHH! NOOOO! They didn't send me a cartridge!!!

Rushing back to the box, I pulled out a copy of its programming manual. HA! What a joke; a fifteenth generation, ultra-faded, unreadable photocopy that was written in what we 'in da business' term as 'Jap-lish'. If you've ever read the manual of a Japanese toaster, you'll know exactly what I mean. On top of all of that, the machine was crammed with so many features and concepts that I was literally overwhelmed by it all.

My friends came around to check out my Super Famicom, then cleared off home again when they realized I didn't have any games for it.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

It was many weeks of struggling-trying things over and over. Before, finally, I came to terms with the hardware enough to be able to start programming the game. Nick Bruty and myself would work through the night designing the look and feel. The SNES lived up to its hype. Nick had more colors than ever before-I had more space than ever before. But I wish I could play a game on it...ARGHH! My most compelling force to get all of it working was the thought of not having to listen to Nick's Blade Runner CD for the two millionth time!

The first ultra-complex tool I had to write contained artificially intelligent, interactive compression. I called it "Toast" as I'm into really meaningful names. It did most of the top secret stuff that makes the magic appear on screen...or maybe its just cuz I like beer.

First, we started creating the Alien corridors with the floating mist, then the corridors with the air ducts, where the screen fades away near the edges (you can see the aliens crawling around in the shadows). Soon, we added the ability to fire in all directions simultaneously. Finally, the infamous flame thrower.

One of the main problems was that, during the project, Nick regressed into a moon worshipper and, when he WAS actually up in the day time, he would watch TV, go shopping, do ironing-ANYTHING actually to avoid having do to any work! Issuing statements like "I am a creative person, I need my inspiration. Rome wasn't built in a day, bug off, etc., I figured, in order to make sure that he did NY work, we better arrange for him to work at my house. Problems; he has two cars-the invalid blue one is permanently on the operating table and the other amazing, Turbo-V8, 3.5 liter trunk, electric hood, power assisted gas cap, anti-skid seat covers (for those difficult bends), designed by computers, built by robots and wrecked by Nick...so now the train takes the strain. He also has an insatiable appetite for food. My wife used to reach for the frying pan whenever she heard Nick open the front gate. He is on a diet now that the game is finished.

ALL WORK AND NO PLAY!

Our only means of escape from the frantic hours of programming (when Nick gets here at a decent hour) is to go water skiing. It does my heart good to see Nick hit the surface of the lake at 30 MPH as he, yet again, failed to negotiate the buoys. Personally, I reckon it's the extra weight of the air tanks and his mask steaming up that does it!

Programming a game like this is not difficult, however sometimes things go wrong. You can get a mysterious 'Crash Bug', these can evade you for days. It usually turns out to be something totally obvious and so you feel obliged to consume copious amounts of

NICK, DAVID & NICK

beer. This works really well. However, as I have been writing games since I was 14, root beer didn't quite do the trick.

ALIEN 3 PROGRAMMERS TIPS FOR WIMPS

For all you dedicated game players out there who haven't been able to complete Alien 3 yet, I'd like to give some inside tips on how to play the game.

When dropping down long air ducts, press the jump button to make Ripley fall down even faster.

Only use the flame thrower in very short spurts. Red is the weakest, followed by the green flame and then the ultra-deadly blue flame. However, always pick up the red flame thrower canisters because they last the longest.

If walking through a Face-Hugger or Chest-Burster Zone, it is best to fire grenades along the floor periodically to clear the way. If you have no grenades, then get down on your hands and knees and crawl along, taking the aliens out with your pulse rifle.

The higher levels of the game are extremely demanding and the aliens will sap your energy very quickly. However, there is a simple way to boost your energy. Locate the Medic bay on your level, collect all of the energy pods and then leave via the nearest door. Wait outside the door for around two minutes, then re-enter. You should find that the energy pods have reappeared. Likewise, look for all of the ammo pick-ups.

To kill the mother aliens that jump from wall to wall, toast 'em with the blue flame throwers or grenades.

BEST PLEASE

I hope you like the game. For my next game, I am interviewing with software publishing companies in the United States. That's where most of my LIMEY friends now live and I could use a tan anyway. I might even be able to stop saying stupid things like 'GOLLY'.
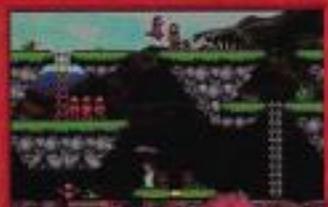
CHEERIO!

SHINY ENTERTAINMENT

GOLLY, I LOVE CALIFORNIA

DINO DUDES

Dino Dudes came in just in time for the close of the issue, so we squeeezed it in at the last minute. After just an hour or so of playing, I can tell you that this is about asgood as puzzle/action games get. The rendered backgrounds look fantastic and the characters animate perfectly. Great music and good voice also help enhance the experience. Look for a full review on Dino Dudes and hopefully (c'mon Bob) Tempest 2000 next month. See you then. E Storm
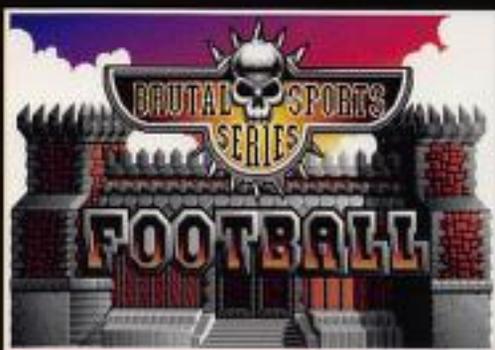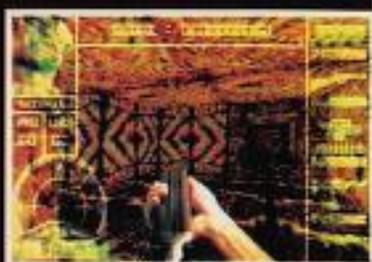
ATARI JAGUAR PREVIEWS

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Club Drive

AVP

Loaded. According to Shinichi Ikawa, president of Jaleco USA, "Atari has developed the most advanced video game hardware available, but is coming into the market slowly. Jaleco will bring to Atari the kind of software experience and expertise that such a fine piece of hardware deserves". In addition to cartridge-based games, Jaleco plans to release CD-ROM games for the Jaguar shortly after Atari's add-on becomes available later this year. Still more news (am I Dan Rather or what), Tengen has signed on to develop, and you know what that means, Steel Talons, Stun-Runner etc...joy. Virgin is bringing out Demolition Man, Dragon, and Creature Shock, Eclipse is working on an awesome first person Battletech like shooter (in real time 3D) called 'Iron Soldier', Interplay may release Clayfighter (can you imagine?) along with Battle Chess, Trimark is bringing out White Men Can't Jump and perhaps Warlock, and Sculptured, JVC, and Imagineer are all close to signing. The third party list is at over 95 and growing! Holy consoles Batman, they're jammin'! In the near future; Club Drive, AVP, and Wolfenstein 3D (which is pictured here and moves brilliantly) are set for May, Checkered Flag (now called Red Line Racers) is set for June and Doom is set for July. After July all you know what breaks loose, as a flood of titles is bound to explode onto the scene. On a sadder note, Atari wasn't happy with Tiny Toons and is re-coding the whole game, so it won't come out until September. I know you're all frothing at the mouth, but be patient, the staff at Atari is very dedicated to this project and is being very picky about future releases. They may come slow at first, but when it comes, it's gonna' be awesome. See ya' next month. Oh ya, I almost forgot to mention, AVP is coming out on the Lynx simultaneously with the Jag version! For some truly brilliant new pic's of AVP check out Europa. - E Storm
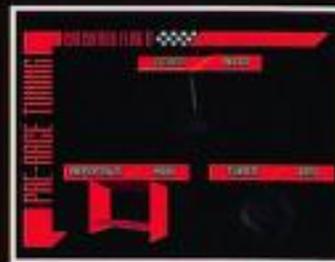
Checkered Flag
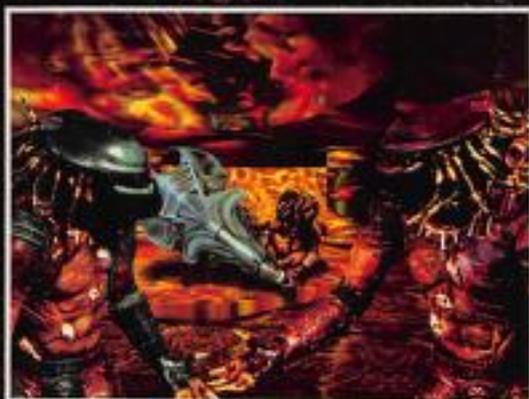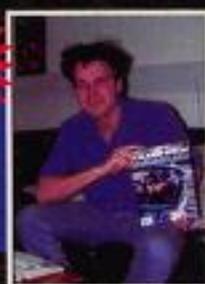
Legions of the Undead

There are a few companies betting solely on the Atari Jaguar, but Oxford-based developers Rebellion Software have positioned themselves neatly as the UK's leading 64bit game designers. Alien Vs. Predator has already had extensive coverage in Gamefan, and if the almost-finished version is anything to go by, it should be one title not to be missed. To extend our coverage of this great title, and to bring you an exclusive look at Rebellion's next wave of Jag games, I recently paid a visit to the 9-man team, knee-deep in the AVP deadline, needless to say!

At the time of writing, AVP is almost finished and is due to go on sale in the middle/end of April. I spoke to Jason Kingsley the Creative Director of Rebellion, about their commitment to the Jaguar and their first games to come out for the machine:

GF: When was the company started?
JK: About 18 months ago. It came as a result of me being freelance, and having problems getting paid by other publishers after producing games! Getting the Jaguar contract meant that I needed to set up a proper operation.

GF: How come you got involved with the Jaguar so early?
JK: Atari contacted us about our previous game, Eye of the Storm on the PC, because they were impressed with the speed of its 3D engine. They asked us if we could work on their new machine and at first we thought they might mean the Falcon. Luckily, it proved to be the Jaguar! I'd done Star Raiders on the Atari 800 ages ago, and some stuff for the Atari ST, but the Jaguar was naturally a much more exciting proposition.

GF: How did AVP evolve?
JK: It started about a year ago when Atari told us they had the license from Twentieth Century Fox. Originally we drew 256 color graphics from scratch and then decided these simply weren't realistic enough-it's very hard to draw graphics in 16bit or 24bit color that are good enough to make small models of all the scenery and characters, before photographing them and digitizing them into the game. This approach has saved us an awful lot of time, and the results

are far better.

GF: What's been the hardest aspect of the game in its development?
JK: Ensuring that the game isn't just a blood-fest-trying to make sure there's balance between action and strategy. Also, despite the Jag-peg compression, memory has still been a problem. Trying to make the levels interesting and varied and trying to cram in sampled sound effects hasn't been easy given the restrictions of a 16 meg cart.

GF: So what do you think of the Jaguar's hardware? Is the machine only really suited to 3D scrolling?
JK: Oh no, not at all, it's very much a multifaceted machine. Personally, I think it's a great machine, especially when you consider it's doing more impressive things than £1000 PC, for a fraction of the cost. We're only just scratching the surface of what it can do with AVP, and I'm sure we'll be looking back in a couple of years and laughing at how we're doing things here. It's been a very fast learning process.

GF: What do you think of the Jaguar CD Drive?
JK: Well, Atari still haven't decided on its specifications yet. I'd like to see at least 2 megabytes (16 megabits) of RAM in the drive to act as a buffer to spool graphics into. The current crop of CD games technology is all so slow, and extra Ram would certainly help. Basically, the more hardware Atari can fit on the CD Drive the better the games can be!

GF: What do you hope to achieve with the dungeon game?
JK: Legions of the Undead (working title) will be using a significantly enhanced version of the AVP engine, and the gameplay will be changed to make it more like an Action RPG or adventure. They'll be weapons to collect, puzzles to solve, and traditional RPG elements to give the game depth. It basically follows on from the old text adventures, but obviously you'll be able to see exactly what you're doing! We're hoping to do a 24meg version and also a CD version.

GF: How would the CD version be different?
JK: Size, mainly. I want it to be absolutely huge-hundreds of levels, endless new graphics, and above all a massive, massive chal

lenge. I think it's a con how so many CD games these days are just sonically enhanced, with some video bunged on the beginning. Game players want so much more than that, but it all takes time and money.

GF: Can you tell us briefly about the other Jaguar project you have in the works?
JK: We got a game called Hammerhead (previously called Cyberpunk City) and it's very much a game that's been at the back of my mind for around six years now. It's a strategic combat flight simulator set in a futuristic city and we're trying to make the flight dynamics quite original for this one. I think the Jaguar is the first console that can do it justice. This one won't be out until next year.

GF: What about multi-player games on the Jaguar? Any thoughts?
JK: Well, AVP would have made a great multi-player game, and there was even a discussion about the possibility of using a Lynx as a motion tracker! To be honest, I'm not really sure about Atari's plans for multi-player link-up just yet, but it has to be something to be given serious attention.

GF: What games do you like playing?
JK: At the moment we simply don't have any time to play anything, but I like things like Civilization. Things with a bit of depth, generally. The kind of games I'm really beginning to hate are the so-called interactive movies. They're all so linear. Even the old text adventures offered loads more interactivity than these can. Talk about B movies, these wouldn't even be classed as C movies!

GF: What's your opinion on 16bit versus 32 and 64bit?
JK: It's certainly true that the current crop of 16bit games look very sad next to what's running on 32bit and, ahem, 64bit technology. We like working on new technology because it gives us the freedom to do ambitious projects-I mean we just couldn't do AVP on the SNES, could we? Of course the perfect machine isn't here yet, but some of the new RISC-based machines are looking very sexy indeed...

GF: And will you be developing for any of these, by any chance?
JK: Er. I can't really say at the moment (whispers some interesting stuff I can't divulge!)

GF: Cheers, Jason.

Alien Vs Predator

The graphics in AVP were actually digitized from models rather than being drawn from scratch. The texture on the walls was formed by making panels (see photo of Justin Rae) and these were digitized and then turned into bitmapped graphics. These aren't scaling texture-mapped polygons, but scaling bitmaps-the Jag's hardware is just fast enough to shift them. I spoke to Mike Beaton, the game's programmer, about how the Jaguar handles the graphics.

It's similar technique to Doom,' programmer Mike Beaton explains, 'but we're using over 32,000 colors compared to Doom's 256, and we're drawing the walls and ceilings separately. The Jaguar's bitter draws the panels while the calculations are handled by the GPU.' And around 10-15 frames per second it's certainly smooth enough.

The latest enhancements include a 24bit (16.7 million) color intro sequence and the graphics are so memory hungry that the actual uncompressed size of AVP is close to128 megs!!! Atari's Jag-peg (their version of J-peg) is used to compress the graphics at a ratio of about 8:1 without any loss of quality! Compared to the compression routines used on the Mega Drive and SNES (usually 2:1), Jag-peg means the Jaguar can handle games with about 4 times the memory in the same size cartridge. And with all those colors it sure needs it.

Checkered Flag 2

Rebellion's 'tribute' to Virtua Racing is also coming along in leaps and bounds for a May release. The game (which may be retitled Ray Hall's Redline Racer) is being handled by Rob Dibley and some serious recoding has meant that the frame rate has been doubled since we last showed it to you-it's now running at between 15 and 20 frames per second, showing what a difference the Jag's GPU can make to a game's speed. Other enhancements include, some great new roadside graphics, reflecting the different countries the tracks are based in, and fog, too. This was very effective, but unfortunately Rob's development hardware was playing up and we couldn't manage any grabs!

Legions of the Undead

Rebellion's third Jaguar title uses an enhanced version of the AVP engine, and from the demo I saw, it looks like a stunning Action RPG (hurray!). At the moment, all they have is an early graphic demo but already it looks absolutely superb, even surpassing AVP for pure atmosphere! The frame rate looks even smoother than AVP and the detail on the walls and ceilings is just phenomenal.

LOTU isn't just your standard PC-type RPG, though. A lot of attention is being paid to the character design, bringing in elements from Hellraiser rather than the more familiar RPG characters. Over 4 months work has gone into the game. So far, Justin Rae has been working on sprites and panels for the game, in exactly the same way as AVP and most of the graphics have been finished. Expect a brilliant role playing game with great graphics. lots of gore (well, Atari wants it be gory!) and, best of all, a great depth of gameplay. Legions of the Undead will be out later on this year, but the plan is to release a vastly enhanced CD version, too! Things are looking extremely promising for the Jag CD, and it isn't even out yet! I can't wait!

It was so encouraging visiting Rebellion. While so many developers are shy about committing themselves to new platforms, these chaps are really going for it. Above all, they care about what they do, and want the Atari and the Jaguar to succeed. Having seen what they're capable of, I can only say it deserves to. Cheers guys! Gamefan wishes you the best of luck for the future.