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JUNE 1995 ISSUE NO 163

ULTRA 64

Hard info and game pics!



# COMPUTER AND VIDEO GAMES

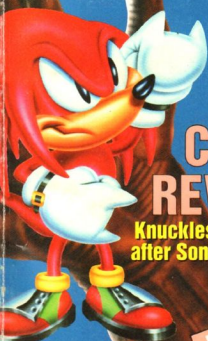
## BE AMAZED, BE VERY AMAZED

ALIEN TRILOGY invades the home - you have to see it to believe it. - P44

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STARING AT?

### TEKKEN

- stamping on the 'nads of other beat-'em-ups - P26



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Knuckles proves there is life after Sonic for Sega - P64

REVIEWED!

### DAYTONA

Yes, it is better than Ridge Racer! - P15

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MAJOR GAME  
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AND  
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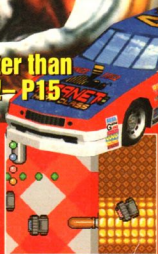


FIRST ENCOUNTERS - Well warped - P86



FULL THROTTLE - LucasArts return with their best game yet! P76


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The face of games is changing. Graphics which used to take an animator weeks to draw can be produced in a matter of hours – and the results are more realistic. And the one title that shows just what is



possible is set to revolutionise gameplay is Alien Trilogi. Just cop a load of this...



# ALIEN TRILOGY

# ALIEN TRILOGY

**F**act: actors and games don't mix well. Interactive movies just don't work, but letting actors loose in a motion capture studio to create proper in-game graphics, well that's a different prospect.

Comparing motion capture to normal computer game graphics is like comparing movies to a zootrope - there's more than a world of difference. When CVG visited Acclaim's headquarters in up-state New York, we found out just how far this technology had come.

20 minutes was the key figure. That's all the time it took to produce a perfect 10-second animation using one actor and two production staff - one of whom spent most of the time explaining to us how it all worked. More than just the static character, they'd actually dropped him into a fully scalable backdrop and had the finished article running on an SGI machine through a PlayStation and Ultra 64 emulator simultaneously. Interestingly enough, it

looks best on the Ultra, but then all the emulator does is switch off various elements of the workstation so it runs at a similar specification.

It's also an expensive prospect. So far Acclaim have had to relocate their headquarters into a building with a custom-built studio in the basement and buy up a medical company, Biomechanics, who were working on specialist software for limb injuries.

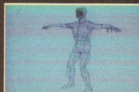
But the investment looks like it's going to pay off. So far Acclaim make more money than almost any other software house, something which they're looking to double next year.

The question is, what does all this mean for us? Well, looking at the kind of stuff they're developing at the moment, we're in for some great games. No more so than Alien Trilogy...

## Construco-marine

The process of taking an actor, motion capturing him and showing the finished product into the game is ludicrously simple. An actor dressed in a black suit with around 65 reflectors attached, goes through his paces in the studio, where the film is automatically transferred to a Silicon Graphic Onyx workstation. Here it maps all the reflector points and then connects a rough frame around them.

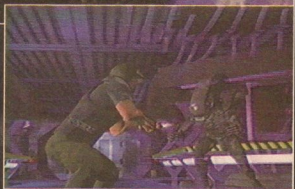
The next stage brings the bone rotation software into play, which calculates exactly how the character should move. Once that's done all that remains is to wrap a texture over them and bingo, one set of character animations ready to drop into a game. The same applies for the aliens, although, for obvious reasons, the human actors have to have various appendages strapped to them, otherwise they wouldn't look much like aliens, would they?



## THE ALIENS ARE COMING

By far the most impressive use of motion capture so far is going into Acclaim's forthcoming Alien Trilogy. The game's based on all three movies, and combines Doom-style action with remarkable 3D graphics.

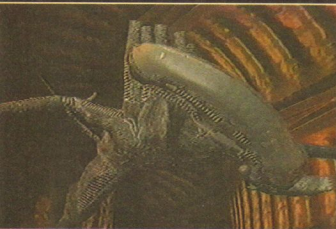
Currently the game's been in development for nearly three years now, and this is where some of the problems with the technology come into play. The motion capture studios themselves are

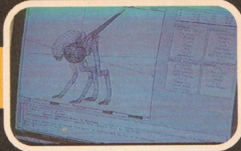
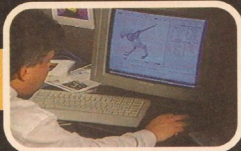


actually based at Acclaim's HQ in New York, while most of the game is being programmed by Probe Software, who are based in sunny Croydon.

Because Alien Trilogy

is based loosely on all three films, the game designers have plenty of material to work with. Basically what they're trying to do is combine the atmosphere from the first film, with the action





and suspense of the second. Hopefully they'll give up trying to incorporate anything from the third.

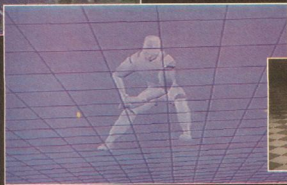
The static screenshots on their own look impressive enough, but when you actually see the graphics running, they're nothing short of mindblowing. Naturally, this restricts the game to CD formats, with Saturn, PlayStation and PC CD-ROM versions of the game currently planned.

From a developer's point of view it can't be the easiest thing in the world when your graphics team are based halfway around the world, but everything's starting to come together at last and it looks as though we could be seeing the game before the year's out.

This technology is so powerful and flexible, and the results so impressive, that it's attracted interest from film producers. In fact, some of *Batman Forever's* special effects were produced at the motion capture studios, although Acclaim won't let on as to which

scenes use it. It's conceivable that, for some of the stunts at least, it was used to replace a stuntman's features with those of one of the actors. From Acclaim's point of view, this is excellent, as they hold the complete rights to this form of motion capture technology. However, there is potential for them to licence it out to other developers, but you can bet they'll only do that after making a killing from it themselves.

Because of the quality and detail motion capture graphics gives, Acclaim are sticking firm-



*The finished graphics are nothing short of astounding - and take up less memory than sprites!*



ly with big name licences. This gives them access to a huge amount of resources when it comes to producing the game and also let's them cash in on what hype-wagon has been rolled out. From a business point of view it all makes sense, but somehow it's disturbing when a company openly

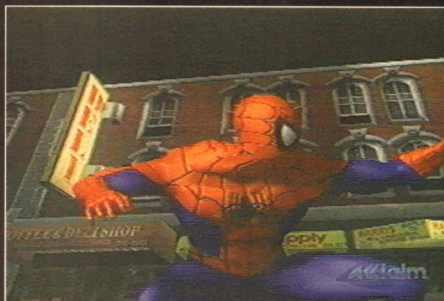
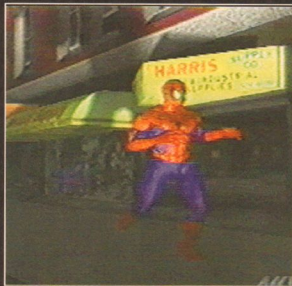
admits that they go for a big-name licence over original product. As Acclaim's chairman Greg Fishbach admits "We won't touch a product, regardless of quality, if we don't think we can sell it."

It's a bullish attitude which has so far been responsible for some of

the biggest, and worst games of the last couple of years. But with a current portfolio boasting *Judge Dredd*, *Batman For Ever*, *Alien Trilog* and forthcoming swashbuckler *Cutthroat Island*, who's going to be against Acclaim being anything less than massive in '96?



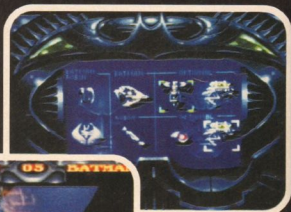
# ALIEN TRILOGY



*This brief Spiderman demo shows the potential for producing full animated productions using motion capture.*



*Batman Forever looks like it's going to be very good. These pics are taken from the SNES version.*

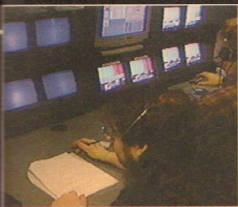


*Once a face is scanned it's a relatively simple process to map it over a pre-captured shape.*

## Batman Forever

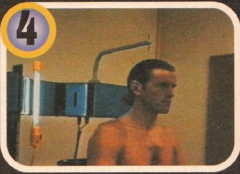
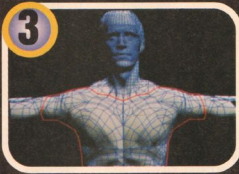
Making use of the more conventional green-screen character digitising technology is Acclaim's forthcoming *Batman Forever*. Licensed from the up-coming movie, Acclaim have put the platform engine that powered *Stargate* and *Judge Dredd* behind them and opted for something more akin to *Mortal Kombat II*. The graphics have all been digitised using green screen technology, where the actors are filmed against a single colour background, cut out and dropped into the game.



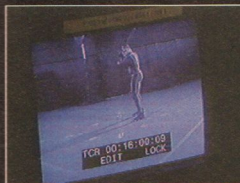
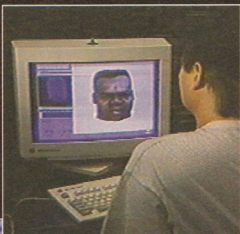


## The Duel

This was actually the first demo Acclaim showed of the potential of their motion capture system. All it is, simply, is a bundle between a demon and a rather muscly looking bloke. It wasn't so much the detail of the graphics that made people's jaws drop, but the faultless animation.



A full 3D scan of a face takes just under 20 seconds.



The guy on the screen on the left is Frank Thomas, baseball hero and star of Acclaim's forthcoming Frank Thomas 'Big Hurt' Baseball.

Below: The computer detects the light given off by the 60 or so sensors attached to the actor.

