



MAXIMUM REVIEWS

# SONY PLAYSTATION

## PlayStation for £249

Very strong rumours are indicating a price cut on the way for the PlayStation. The hardware is already competitively priced at £299, but Sony has plans of making the PlayStation far more accessible to the mass market and it would appear that a £50 price drop will occur by the Christmas season at the very latest. Sony doesn't really need to worry about Nintendo 64 just yet (at least not over here), but Sega could preempt the PlayStation producers with their internally redesigned Saturn system which could well end up on UK shelves priced at an incredible £99... Watch this space for more details.

**After all** of the hype and the initially brilliant games, the PlayStation scene has calmed down significantly, with only Acclaim managing to make some waves this month with the impressive Alien Trilogy. At the same time, the Saturn seems to be gaining momentum with Gun Griffon and Panzer Dragon being two examples of incredible videogames exclusive to the system. The news of an integrated 200 Sega Saturn system must also be making Sony nervous (they have plans to drop PlayStation to 250 by Christmas). It all comes down to software and once again Sony have the third parties to thank: coming soon officially we should have Resident Evil and Ridge Racer Revolution... And hopefully Tekken 2 will be brought forward from its current projected September release to join Psygnosis' incredible Formula One this summer.

## ALIEN TRILOGY

### Does Acclaim's monster PlayStation title deliver?

**One of** the most eagerly awaited videogames of the year has been Acclaim's Alien Trilogy, licensed from Fox Interactive (who have the Die Hard game up and coming) and coded by Probe. The game takes the basic premise of Doom, adds the Alien theme to great effect and introduces a variety of mission objectives - the aim being to create game that surpasses Doom's gameplay and playability. Have they succeeded? Well, it depends who you ask, as opinion on this particular game seems distinctly divided. Some say it's better than Doom because it's Alien-based whilst others point to the still unparalleled playability that made it the multi-millionaires that they are today.

Alien Trilogy puts you directly into the combat fatigues of Ellen Ripley, the shaven ex-navigation officer who has been chosen by the Company to investigate the mysterious disappearance of the human colony on LV-426. There are 33 levels in all, split into three distinct sections (hence the Trilogy of the title) and each stage gives you a certain mission to perform. These range from banal tasks like blowing up barrels and (believe it or not) turning on lights right through to all-out Alien extermination. The other sections of the game are set on Alien's prison planet and the "bone ship" from Alien. The basic action involves carrying out the specified task, shooting everything that moves and then finding (and opening) the door that takes you back to your ship and on to the next level.

Although the game is being compared to Doom by everyone, it's clear that the Alien graphics engine is far

### A GRAPHICALLY SUPERIOR DOOM CLONE, WITH SLIGHTLY MORE INVOLVED GAMEPLAY

closer to Kileak the Blood 2's. In an effort to generate a more claustrophobic atmosphere than Doom (and probably to keep the frame rate up), Probe have opted for super-detailed environs with only a limited field of vision open to the player. The misting out effect, for the most





detectors adding to the suspense). What is disappointing are the actual Aliens themselves, which look anorexic - tall and thin, not large and powerful. Sprite-scaling is used for the meemies (as in Doom), resulting in close-range battles with vast collections of enormous pixels.

A bone worth picking at this point is the absence of motion capture. Acclaim have been going on about how great their motion capture studios in the States are, so we should have expected some phenomenal in-game sprite movement. Although adequate, this is nowhere near to the quality of the demos Acclaim have released and certainly not in the same league as Trilog's FMV

titles. Probe have obviously done their research and although some liberties have been taken with Alien continuity (Alien now occurs after Aliens and Aliens3), the overall theme is extremely close to the Trilogy. Settings, scenarios and Alien lore have been followed closely, with the game effectively capturing the look and feel of the films remarkably well. Thanks to this the game has a background and atmosphere that takes it above Doom - so, yes the slogans about this being the best movie tie-in to date are indeed justified.

But as a game, Alien Trilogy is lacking a certain something. The game plays at a very sedate pace and it certainly isn't the hectic blasting frenzy that is Doom. Perhaps some of the blame can be laid at the weapons selection, which seems to lack a real feeling of power. Also irritating is the fact that Alien Trilogy is just too dark. It's all very well mirroring the movie like this, but on some of the twisting corridors, it's near impossible to see what you are doing. Shoulder Lamps can be selected, but in the end MAXIMUM reached for the slightly

AN EXCELLENT VIDEOGAME TRANSLATION, DISTILLING THE BEST OF THE MOVIES, BUT WHERE'S THIS MUCH-VAUNTED MOTION CAPTURE THEN?



(which does look motion captured). After all the hype, watching these Aliens in motion is a bit of a let-down.

Making up for this, and increasing the atmosphere sizeably is the superb sound. Alien purists will recognise more of the samples as being taken directly from the movies and the music successfully adds to the ambience of the game. Only two sounds disappoint: Facehuggers run about with an almost clockwork noise, while Ripley runs about with what sounds like high-heel shoes! The entire aural aspect of the game is boosted by the inclusion of Surround Sound mixing. Although it isn't officially recognised as Dolby Pro-Logic as such, putting Alien Trilogy through such a system gives excellent results. Even basic stereo producing an excellent effect.

For an Alien fan, this game more than meets expecta-

more conventional brightness setting on the TV, which lessened the effect when the area was slightly better lit.

Overall, despite its faults, Alien Trilogy is destined to go down well with the gaming community at large. In terms of overall polish, the game is far more impressive than the mediocre offerings PlayStation owners have had to put up with over the last few months, with a depth of gameplay and audio-visual quality which is sure to impress just about everyone who buys it. Also in its favour is the fact that although Doom-like in appearance, the game plays nothing like Williams' conversion of the seminal id classic. The basic premise may be the same but the execution is sufficiently different enough to ensure that this game would sit comfortably next to Doom in your PlayStation collection.

It doesn't take a genius to figure out that the output of truly classic PlayStation titles has dried up in recent months (aside from Street Fighter Alpha, what five-star games have there been for the Sony machine?) and compared to those titles, Alien Trilogy is by far and away the best purchase you could make for your machine at the moment. It also signals a reverse in trends for the PlayStation, with a wealth of superlative titles on the way, such as Formula One, Tekken 2, Ridge Racer Revolution and Resident Evil. In the meantime, Alien Trilogy is probably the best official purchase you can make right now.

DATTEL ADAPTOR IMMINENT?

At the moment, the PlayStation isn't a particularly friendly machine. The only way to run Import discs on an official machine (and vice versa) is a rather dodgy procedure that involves CD swapping and potential drive motor burn-out. All eyes are on Datel (the adaptor masters) to produce one of their much-vaunted Universal Adaptors. MAXIMUM spoke to the company who confirmed that they are indeed deep in development on the project and would hopefully have something up and running in about "four to six weeks". We'll keep you posted.



★★★★