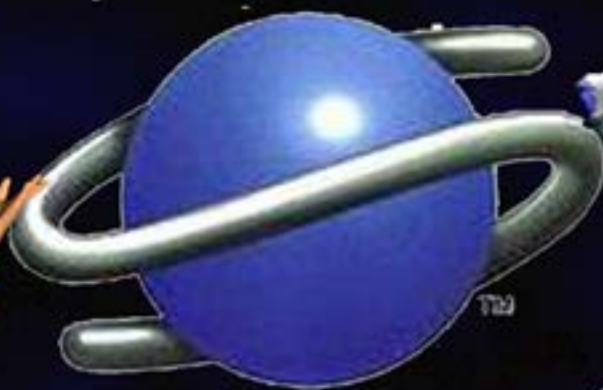




THE TOP 20 PAL



**SEGA
SATURN™**

GAMES

1995 - 2015





2015 marks the 20th anniversary of the Saturn's launch in PAL territories. To celebrate, this article draws on SEGA SATURN MAGAZINE'S enthusiasm and my gaming experience, to create a modern list of the best 20 PAL Saturn games.

SATURNDOM ASSEMBLE!

A GAMING GENESIS

Back in 1994, SEGA announced a solar system worth of new systems – the Mars (32X), Saturn, and Neptune – while Nintendo, Atari, and Sony announced the impending launch of their new systems. As an avid thirteen year-old SEGA gamer, I decided to sit out this new wave of hardware because I still enjoyed my Mega Drive. So I missed Sony shaming SEGA at E3 1995, the botched Saturn launch, the rapid rise of the Playstation, and the onslaught of awesome games throughout 1996.

Come mid-1997, however, I decided to splash out on one of the new systems. Although the PS1 looked interesting with its broad selection of games, I didn't like its control pad. And being a die-hard SEGA fan, I wasn't about to consider Nintendo's N64. Besides, the Saturn had awesome looking games like *Daytona USA* and *Sonic 3D* (I was a die-hard *Sonic* fan during the 16-bit era). So on 20 June 1997, I purchased a SEGA Saturn, *Daytona USA Championship Circuit Edition*, *Doom*, and *Tomb Raider* (*Sonic 3D* was still too expensive at the time).



Despite the ravid Saturn bashing at high school and the ridicule from uninformed friends (who soon warmed to the machine after long bouts of *Street Fighter Alpha 2* and *Puzzle Fighter*), I've stuck with the system all these years. While superior systems have come and gone, I've always returned to the Saturn. From it's awesome selection of arcade conversions in an era where arcade gaming was at its peak, to innovative games like *NIGHTS* and *Burning Rangers*, nothing else has captured the same magic as SEGA's 32-bit console.

STALWART SUPPORTERS

While gamerdom enmass spelled doom for the Saturn from its very beginning, a growing legion of dedicated gamers have stuck with the system over the last 20 years. Perhaps that's why, out of all the systems I collect for, the Saturn games are the most elusive in the wild; those who own the system know how good it and its games are. Saturndom, it seems, are a loyal, dedicated lot.

During the Saturn's lifespan, SEGA SATURN MAGAZINE (SSM) championed the Saturn, even after the majority of



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gamers had given up on it. In Issue #28, SSM ran a SEGA Saturn Top 50 Games feature that ranked the, up to February 1998, best 50 PAL Saturn games. It was an accurate and comprehensive representation of the best PAL games at the time. 20 years later, some of their top-rated games haven't aged well, while unmentioned titles have gained more appeal as they became more affordable, and several at-the-time unreleased games deserve to be on the list.

This Top 20 is a homage to SSM. I've tried to emulate the magazine's design and its enthusiasm for the Saturn, while drawing on their knowledge-base.

20 YEARS OF TOP 20 GAMING

20 years has been plenty of time to acquaint myself with the Saturn's PAL library and while I haven't played all 240 releases (meaning certain high-priced, rare games that perhaps should be included, such as *Deep Fear* and *Dragon Force*, aren't on the list), I've played enough to make informed choices about which games do and don't belong on it. I've tried to be objective, obsessively weighing each game's merits against another's and their relevancy today. Yet, in the end, it comes down to my opinion. I'm probably going to upset some people with some of my choices, but that's the nature of opinions.

I've tried to be thorough in my

representation of each game. 20 years is a long time to test these games, and so they, and you, deserve that wealth of experience.

Few Playstation and PC conversions, such as *Tomb Raider*, *Resident Evil*, and *Command & Conquer*, appear, since, despite being great Saturn games, more often than not, those other versions are superior. Poor PAL conversions also affected my choices given the ease with which the superior NTSC versions can be purchased these days.

While the Saturn's best games arguably remain in Japan, I've limited the selection to games available in PAL territories. Thus, few beat 'em ups, such as *X-Men*, *Darkstalkers*, and *Marvel Super Heroes*, make the list, because, despite being great games, the NTSC versions run at full speed and resolution without needing to mod your Saturn. And they play better this way.

Is this list perfect? No. But the games selected are fantastic, superbly fun, and well worth playing. My hope is that this article will re-enthuse existing Saturn stalwarts, inform new Saturn owners, and inspire unenlightened gamers to give the system a well-deserved play.

So sit back, enjoy the list, and then go play the best 20 PAL Saturn games money can buy (and the 12 runner-ups). 20 years has been a long time for Saturn gamers to explore and enjoy the Saturn's amazing and underrated catalogue. Here's to another 20 years of Saturn gaming.



THE LOST VIKINGS 2: NORSE BY NORSEWEST

Genre: Puzzle / Platformer
Players: 1-2 (co-op)
By: Beam Software / Interplay
Hardware: – **Memory:** passwords
Released: 26 May 1997
Rarity: Rare



SSM Top 50 Ranking –
SSM Rating 89% **Issue** #18
 “Look beyond the 16-bit graphics and there’s a whole lot of gameplay just waiting to be discovered. Recommended for action puzzle fanatics.” – Lee Nutter

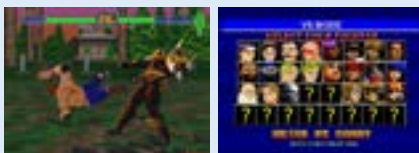
My Comments

A unique puzzle-platformer beyond compare. The game starts out easy, but becomes gradually more difficult, delivering many head-hitting moments when you realise how simple the solution to a level was after being stuck on it for hours. An underrated classic.

FIGHTERS MEGAMIX

Genre: 3D Beat ‘em Up **Players:** 1-2
By: AM2 / SEGA
Hardware: Virtua Stick **Memory:** 23
Released: June 1997
Rarity: Common

SSM Top 50 Ranking #5
SSM Rating 95% **Issue** #20
 “A staggering 32 characters, *Vipers* armour-breakers, *VF3* moves, enclosed arenas, and secrets galore make this a premier Saturn title... Loads of depth and playability make *Fighters MegaMix* one game you can’t live without!” – Matt Yeo



My Comments

With a huge assortment of characters, stages, modes, and fighting tiers, *FMM* should, in theory, be the ultimate fighting game. Unfortunately, the unbalanced fighting system, cheap A.I., and truncated music mean it’s more of a novelty. Also, the PAL version runs slower than the NTSC versions. Fighting game fans will enjoy it.

VIRTUA COP



Genre: Lightgun Shooter
Players: 1-2 **By:** AM2 / SEGA
Hardware: Virtua Gun
Released: 8 December 1995
Memory: 10 **Rarity:** Common

SSM Top 50 Ranking #11
SSM Rating 96% **Issue** #2
 “After the appalling *Lethal Enforcer* games, *Virtua Cop* breathed fresh air into the dying genre...It’s an absolute classic.” – Lee Nutter

My Comments

One of the most accurate arcade-to-Saturn conversions, *Virtua Cop* is a blast (sorry), especially with two players and two Virtua Guns. Not only is it challenging, but its Saturn specific training mode really helps players get to grips with the game.

BAKU BAKU ANIMAL

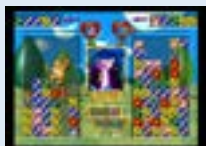
Genre: Puzzle **Players:** 1-2
By: AM3 / SEGA
Hardware: – **Memory:** 9
Released: March 1996
Rarity: Uncommon



SSM Top 50 Ranking #34
SSM Rating 90% **Issue** #5
 “A brilliantly light-hearted game that will appeal to puzzle and action fans alike.” – Sam Hickman

My Comments

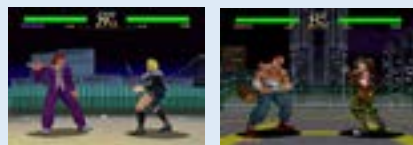
While the cutesy single player story might turn some people off, *Baku Baku*’s unique take on the puzzle genre offers incredibly addictive gameplay. Like most puzzle games, multiplayer is where the true fun lies.



LAST BRONX

Genre: 3D Beat ‘em Up **Players:** 1-2
By: AM3 / SEGA
Hardware: Virtua Stick **Memory:** 20
Released: 23 October 1997
Rarity: Uncommon

SSM Top 50 Ranking #29
SSM Rating 92% **Issue** #24
 “Excellent hi-res visuals, 60 fps update and unequivocally violent gameplay culminates in one of the best 3D beat ‘em ups to grace the Saturn to date.” – Lee Nutter



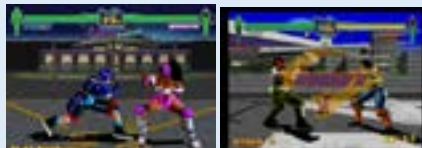
My Comments

A weapons-based fighter with stylised characters, each possessing interesting backstories revealed through brilliant anime cut-scenes. While it lacks *FV*’s accessibility and *VF2*’s depth, *Last Bronx*’ HUGE assortment of Saturn-specific modes, some of the system’s best graphics, and brutal gameplay make it a highly enjoyable brawler in its own right.

FIGHTING VIPERS

Genre: 3D Beat ‘em Up **Players:** 1-2
By: AM2 / SEGA
Hardware: Virtua Stick
Memory: 49 (data), 8-20 (replay)
Released: October 1996
Rarity: Common

SSM Top 50 Ranking #32
SSM Rating 94% **Issue** #12
 “Adding weapons, barriers, and armor to the established *VF* formula, AM2’s incredible *Fighting Vipers* conversion is a speedier and more brutal beat ‘em up... [Y]et another top Saturn beat ‘em up.” – Lee Nutter



My Comments

While *Fighting Vipers* lacks *VF2*’s precision gameplay, it’s faster, more brutal action makes it much more accessible. The removable armour and destructible barriers add new strategic elements and the aggressive characters are very appealing. You can save and watch replays of your matches too!



QUAKE

Genre: First-person Shooter
Players: 1
By: id / Lobotomy / SEGA
Hardware: Analogue Pad
Memory: 23
Released: December 1997
Rarity: Uncommon



SSM Top 50 Ranking #19
SSM Rating 92% Issue #26

"There may be no DeathMatch... but Lobotomy's tweaks to the single-player game have made it a highly entertaining, challenging experience." – Rich Leadbetter

My Comments

Saturn *Quake* is a fantastic conversion of the astounding PC game. While it lacks multiplayer, Lobotomy have faithfully converted the single-player game over, along with Trent Reznor's creepy soundtrack, and included some Saturn specific levels.

PANZER DRAGON

Genre: Rail Shooter **Players:** 1
By: Team Andromeda / SEGA
Hardware: Virtua Stick **Memory:** –
Released: 30 August 1995
Rarity: Uncommon



SSM Top 50 Ranking –
SSM Rating 86% Issue #1

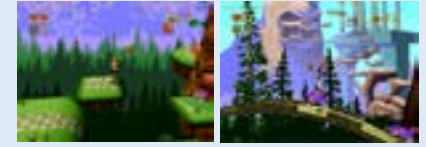
"Arriving with [the] second batch of releases for Saturn, *Panzer Dragoon* is easily the most impressive in both graphical and gameplay terms." – Sam Hickman

My Comments

After an epic introduction, players ride atop a blue dragon, blasting their way through seven hostile alien landscapes in pursuit of the Dark Dragon. Early levels set the pace, while later levels really ramp up the difficulty. Lacking a save feature, the game relies on hardened player skills and memorisation to beat it. While not as smooth or polished as later titles in the series, *Panzer Dragoon* is a very challenging and appealing game.

PANDEMONIUM

Genre: 2.5D Platformer **Players:** 1
By: Toys for Bob / Crystal Dynamics
Hardware: – **Memory:** passwords
Released: 17 November 1997
Rarity: Uncommon



SSM Top 50 Ranking #45
SSM Rating 90% Issue #20

"Despite being quite linear, *Pandemonium* excels in terms of graphics and gameplay and is by some way the best platformer on the Saturn." – Lee Nutter

My Comments

It lacks some of the Playstation version's effects and fluidity, but *Pandemonium* plays extremely well and features some imaginative designs. The beautifully imagined 3D environments and 2D playing fields, two uniquely-playing characters, and some challenging sections will keep players entertained for hours.



SATURN BOMBERMAN

Genre: Puzzle **Players:** 1-10
By: Hudsonsoft / SEGA
Hardware: Multi-tap **Memory:** 1 (normal), 5 (master), 11 (battle)
Released: May 1997
Rarity: Uncommon

SSM Top 50 Ranking #37
SSM Rating 90% Issue #19

"Although Saturn *Bomberman* is let down by a weak one-player game variation, this is still an essential purchase and a great party game." – Matt Yeo



My Comments

While single-player offers a decent challenge, multi-player really shines. With up to ten players, matches become utter mayhem as each player tries to bomb each other first. You MUST experience this game.

SONIC R

Genre: Racing **Players:** 1-2
By: Traveller's Tales / SEGA
Hardware: Analogue Pad **Memory:** 6
Released: 21 November 1997
Rarity: Uncommon



SSM Top 50 Ranking #18
SSM Rating 93% Issue #26

"Rather than being just a graphical showcase for the Saturn, *Sonic R* is an awesome game to play. There is a massive exploration element to it, secret routes to discover, hidden items to find...[T]his is fine Saturn gaming." – Lee Nutter

My Comments

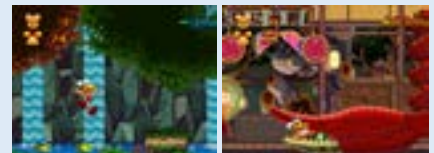
A stunning and very charming racing game containing that appealing Sonic gameplay. While it's short and overly easy, the variety of tracks, playable characters, and side missions really add to this brilliant game.

KEIO FLYING SQUADRON 2

Genre: 2D Platformer **Players:** 1
By: Victor Entertainment / JVC
Hardware: – **Memory:** 1
Released: September 1996
Rarity: Very Rare

SSM Top 50 Ranking –
SSM Rating 78% Issue #11

"By no means a classic, but it's still fun to play, although its probably too cute from most peoples' taste." – Sam Hickman



My Comments

A unique gem maligned for eschewing its 2D scrolling shmup heritage. Get past this and you have a beautiful and fun platformer with some scrolling shmup stages. The game doesn't take itself seriously, including a very cheesy story, interesting level-designs, and some challenging sections. It's not for everyone, but platformer fans will enjoy its solid gameplay.



20 DAYTONA USA CHAMPIONSHIP CIRCUIT EDITION



Genre: Racing **Players:** 1-2
By: AM7 / SEGA
Hardware: Arcade Racer, Analogue Pad, Virtua Stick
Memory: 59 (records), 965 (ghost)
Released: 21 November 1996
Rarity: Common

SSM Top 50 Ranking #42

The Rally conversion team try their hand at recreating the awesome *Daytona USA* coin-op on the Saturn with mixed results.

"The highly anticipated update of the often maligned *Daytona* conversion is a mixed bag really. The myriad of improvements (two-player mode, new tracks, and improved graphics) is commendable, but somehow the superlative gameplay has been lost in the conversion. It's not really *Daytona* anymore, but a cool arcade racer nevertheless." – Lee Nutter



SSM Rating 90% Issue #14

"The version of *Daytona* the Saturn deserves? Not at all. Get over that disappointment and enjoy what the CS Team have produced – a graphically excellent, fine-playing racing game that's far superior to the average driving game." – Rich Leadbetter

My Comments

A title that is often mistakenly maligned. While it doesn't play like the coin-op, it's still a very enjoyable racing game in it's own right. Add the two new tracks, the two-player mode, the variety of vehicles, and a rockin' soundtrack, and you have a fantastic racing game.



19 RAYMAN

Genre: 2D Platformer **Players:** 1
By: Ubisoft
Hardware: – **Memory:** 20
Released: 30 October 1995
Rarity: Uncommon



SSM Top 50 Ranking –

Rayman ... seems like a nice enough platforming affair – everything works just fine and at times you'll even find yourself having a bit of fun.

"[T]he graphics have had a lot of effort put into them – and there's plenty of variety between stages too...For people who just want something nice (and I mean nice) to play through, it could be just the ticket." – Sam Hickman



SSM Rating 78% Issue #1

"Looks good on the surface, and plays fairly well, but too samey throughout and downright irritating in places." – Sam Hickman

My Comments

Overlooked on release because of its 2D nature in an era fixated with 3D games, *Rayman* is absolutely gorgeous. Full of imaginative gameplay ideas and a wide variety of levels, the game offers a hefty challenge. While it can be frustrating at times, it offers a lot of fun and its wonderful soundtrack sets the perfect atmosphere for each level. And it's better than the PS version!



18 GUARDIAN HEROES

Genre: 2D Scrolling Beat 'em Up
Players: 1-6 **By:** Treasure / SEGA
Hardware: Multitap **Memory:** 19
Released: May 1996
Rarity: Uncommon

SSM Top 50 Ranking #21

Platform kings Treasure combine classic RPG elements with some hard-hitting, side-scrolling beat 'em up action. Explore mystical lands inhabited by fair maidens and bizarre monsters.



"Only rivalling Capcom in terms of 2D mastery, Treasure's epic adventure is an innovative and challenging game. The fact that *Guardian Heroes* manages to breath new life into the stale scrolling beat 'em up genre can't be a bad thing either. A truly ace game." – Matt Yeo

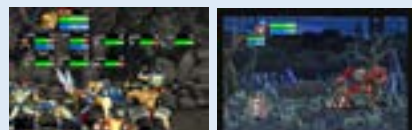
SSM Rating 95% Issue #8

"Innovative, challenging, exciting and tough, *Guardian Heroes* is a classic in every way. Buy it or we'll burn down your house." – Radion Automatic



My Comments

Guardian Heroes innovates the scrolling beat 'em up genre: the three gameplay fields add strategy, the RPG mechanics allow character building, the computer-controlled companion fighter aids solo players, and the branching storylines and different fighting styles add variety. With friends, it's very enjoyable, however, it can be repetative and has become overhyped.



17 DARK SAVIOR

Genre: Role Playing **Players:** 1
By: Climax / SEGA **Memory:** 32
Hardware: Analogue Pad
Released: February 1997
Rarity: Uncommon

**SSM Top 50 Ranking #43**

Years in the making, this adventure has the same class and style as the epochal *LandStalker* on Megadrive. Stunning adventuring, although RPG masters may find it too easy...

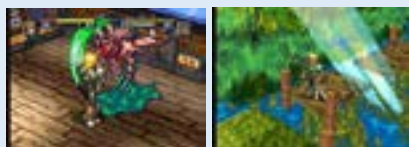
"The sheer quest in *Dark Savior* is one that all die-hard adventurers will savour – it's quality. I completed the Japanese import, then played it through again when it came out here. Excellent." – Rich Leadbetter

SSM Rating 92% Issue #16

"One of the largest, most exciting RPGs ever seen anywhere. A brilliantly original and well-executed adventure that's without compare. Extremely enjoyable indeed." – Rich Leadbetter

**My Comments**

Part RPG, part beat 'em up, part platformer, *Dark Savior* offers players five different timelines through its complex story based on their performance. Viewed from an isometric perspective, it's innovative turns-based beat 'em up combat and platforming sections suffer from clunky controls and frustrating camera angles, respectively. Despite this, *Dark Savior* is a charismatic and unique game that comes recommended for Saturn RPG fans.

**16 DAYTONA USA**

Genre: Racing **Players:** 1
By: AM2 / SEGA
Hardware: Arcade Racer
Memory: 39
Released: 8 July 1995
Rarity: Very Common

**SSM Top 50 Ranking #22**

The first conversion of AM2's classic coin-op and arguably one of the finest racers on the Saturn.

"Yeah, the graphics are looking a bit crap now and the PAL conversion is quite poor. But the fact remains that AM2's *Daytona* conversion looks, sounds, feels, and plays like the coin-op, not something we could say about the more recent conversion." – Lee Nutter

SSM Rating 92% Issue #1

"All three tracks from the arcade version have been faithfully converted along with the (decidedly dodgy) music, some excellent graphics, and loads of brilliant cheats...[I]t does suffer somewhat from the trees-appearing-out-of-nowhere syndrome...this is the game's one and only downfall. The good thing is that it doesn't affect the gameplay." – Sam Hickman

**My Comments**

Beneath the sub-par frame-rate and excessive pop-up lies an extremely fun and playable racing game. The play mechanics replicate the coin-op's across three of the most memorable and challenging courses in any racing game. This version contains the best mixes of the love-it-or-hate-it soundtrack too.

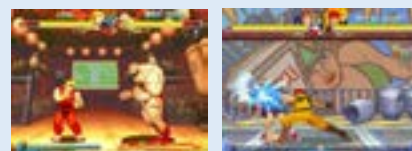
**15 STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 2**

Genre: 2D Beat 'em Up **Players:** 1-2
By: Capcom / Virgin Interactive
Hardware: - **Memory:** 8
Released: 16 November 1996
Rarity: Uncommon

**SSM Top 50 Ranking –**

Everything about this classic game screams quality...Truly this is the most technically accomplished and supremely playable fighting game out there.

"[A] product polished to the point of perfection. Whilst it's easy to get into and accessible it also features unparalleled depth...Of course, as with all fighting titles it's LOADS better with two human players...[A]nyone with more than the merest inkling for the series will love this. It's fast, tricky, addictive and just generally all-round awesome." – Radion Automatic

**SSM Rating 95% Issue #13**

"Once again the Saturn demonstrates its unassailable command over all things 2D with another corking beat 'em up. In terms of audio-visuals and all-out action there's no 2D fighting game to complete with this Saturn translation of SFA2. On any system." – Radion Automatic

My Comments

Marred only by an unoptimised PAL conversion (which upping the turbo setting fixes) *Alpha 2* is a technically accomplished and well-balanced brawler, offering new survival and training modes. The new characters add depth and freshness to the standard formula. Highly recommended.



14 SONIC JAM

Genre: Platformer **Players:** 1-2
By: Sonic Team / SEGA
Hardware: Analogue Pad
Memory: 23
Released: 28 August 1997
Rarity: Uncommon



SSM Top 50 Ranking #24

Dubbed as "the ultimate retro pack" in issue #22 of SSM, *Sonic Jam* shows the Sonic Team at their very best.

"The Megadrive *Sonic* series was the main reason that many people (myself included) first got into games. Putting all four games on one disc was a masterstroke for the Sonic Team, and with the mind-blowing *Sonic World* – this is an essential slice of the retro cake." – Lee Nutter

SSM Rating 92% Issue #22

"Quite simply the best series in videogames history on one disc! Coupled with the awesome front end and the low price point, you can't go far wrong with *Sonic Jam*." – Lee Nutter

My Comments

Although recent compilations boast superior emulation, graphical filters, and more games, *Sonic Jam* includes the series' four best titles along with plenty of features to get the most gameplay out of these classics. Coupled with the impressive *Sonic World*, which boast graphics that rival those of *Super Mario 64*, and a host of cool features, and you have one of the best retro compilations money can buy, even to this day.



13 VIRTUA COP 2

Genre: Lightgun Shooter
Players: 1-2 **By:** AM2 / SEGA
Hardware: Virtua Gun **Memory:** 10
Released: November 1996
Rarity: Common

SSM Top 50 Ranking #6

Following the unprecedented success of the seminal *Virtua Cop* conversion, AM2 reaffirm their position as the greatest coders of Sega's machine with a stunning sequel. Time Crisis? HA!



"The most important thing to mention about *Virtua Cop 2* is that it is huge – approximately twice the size of its predecessor in fact. Each of the three levels feature multiple routes about halfway through, making the sequel a less linear affair than VC1. Each of these levels are densely packed with destructible scenery and of course, hod-loads of bad guys. There is also some stunning set-pieces in there – the car chase sequence in particular stands out in my mind...Everyone must own this game." – Lee Nutter

SSM Rating 95% Issue #14

"Another classic AM2 release, defying the so-called "limitations" of the Saturn. *Virtua Cop 2* is absolutely stunning and simply MUST be brought. Now." – Rich Leadbetter



My Comments

While it lacks the home-specific modes of its predecessor, *Virtua Cop 2* is a more action packed game, offering players more gameplay variety, with stunning set-pieces that enhance the gunplay, much larger levels, multiple routes (including an all-new Saturn-specific one), and lots of level interactivity. This is Saturn light-gun gaming at it's best.

12 STORY OF THOR 2

Genre: Role Playing **Players:** 1
By: Ancient / SEGA
Hardware: –
Memory: 12(data), 3 (config)
Released: August 1996
Rarity: Rare



SSM Top 50 Ranking –

Thor is pretty much equal mix of platformer, beat 'em up, and RPG. You'll need to converse with villagers and villains along your travels to find out where to go next, you'll also need to solve numerous puzzles AND, as if that isn't enough, hack the bejabbers out of hundreds of evil monsters.

"[I]f you like to see value-for-money from your games, *Thor* is definitely a game you should check out. Anyone interested in some depth of gameplay and a challenge to last longer than a weekend should certainly get off on it." – Radion Automatic

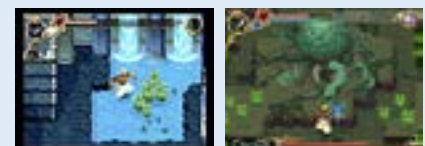
SSM Rating 89% Issue #11

"A superb blend of action and puzzle solving, *Thor* walks a well-trodden path, but in far nicer shoes than most of its contemporaries." – Radion Automatic



My Comments

Reminiscent of 2D *Zelda* games, *Thor* sets players on a quest to find mystical stones. Although not original, the game features some breathtaking 2D graphics and a superb soundtrack. Add in a great real-time combat system and you have an enjoyable RPG.



11 DUKE NUKEM 3D

Genre: First-person Shooter
Players: 1
By: 3D Realms / Lobotomy / SEGA
Hardware: Analogue Pad
Memory: 14
Released: October 1997
Rarity: Uncommon

SSM Top 50 Ranking #4

One of the most action-packed, politically incorrect 3D blasting games imaginable. Lobotomy promised us an excellent translation but the final product defies belief.



"The speed and the action contained in Saturn *Duke Nukem* just blew me away. Couple the playability with Lobotomy's incredible 3D engine and you have a game that's just as cool as the PC games – and sometimes superior. And it hoses down the Playstation game. Completely. I honestly don't think I've played a game quite as satisfying as Saturn *Duke* for ages, but on the higher difficulty levels the sense of carnage you get is almost intoxicating. Awesome!" – Rich Leadbetter



SSM Rating 97% Issue #24

"One of the greatest PC games ever hits the Saturn – and it's awesome. A feast of ground-breaking graphics and untouchable gameplay makes this game an ESSENTIAL Saturn title that MUST be brought immediately! One of the best games ever!" – Rich Leadbetter

My Comments

Although it isn't perfect, Lobotomy performed a small miracle with this conversion because it captures the essence of the awesome PC game and plays brilliantly, especially when coupled with the Jevons control method.

10 BURNING RANGERS

Genre: 3D Platformer **Players:** 1
By: Sonic Team / SEGA
Hardware: Analogue Pad
Memory: 30
Released: 16 June 1998
Rarity: Rare



SSM Top 50 Ranking –

[E]xplore massive 3D environments, extinguish the raging fires, and rescue the terrified civilians.

"*Burning Rangers* receives an inevitable thumbs up from the SEGA SATURN MAGAZINE posse. It's certainly not without its faults and doesn't really attain must-have status. But get past the scrappy graphics and the initial shortcomings and you'll discover yet another innovative and unique gaming experience. Kool and the Gang." – Lee Nutter



SSM Rating 90% Issue #31

"An ambitious and innovative game, *Burning Rangers* is let down only by the hardware limitations of the Saturn." – Lee Nutter

My Comments

Many moan about the sporadically glitchy graphics and short length (four HUGE levels with 3,125 variations!). Get past this and *Burning Rangers* becomes a distinctive, fun, and occasionally frustrating, experience. The Voice-Navigation System is unique and extremely useful for traversing the complex levels, while the cheesy theme song and anime cut-scenes add to its manga style. Recommended!



09 SHINING THE HOLY ARK



Genre: Role Playing **Players:** 1
By: Sonic Software Planning / SEGA
Hardware: – **Memory:** 65
Released: 14 June 1997
Rarity: Rare

SSM Top 50 Ranking #18

It's a new *Shining* game on the Saturn from Team Sonic. It's 3D and its quality. Enough said.

"I didn't want to review this because it started out so dull. Regardless I battled through the early stages and discovered what ranks as one of the single most compelling RPG's I've ever played. I have happy memories of this title – I love it loads." – Rich Leadbetter



SSM Rating 93% Issue #20

"The most advanced *Shining* game yet and a thoroughly enjoyable adventure in its own right, hours, and DAYS slip away when you play this amazing game!" – Rich Leadbetter

My Comments

Viewed from first-person perspective, *Shining the Holy Ark* is a unique turns-based RPG with an engaging and deep quest, stunning visuals, and a great soundtrack. Annoyingly, characters squeak when speaking and there's many repetitive battles. Still, it's an involving, enjoyable, and atmospheric adventure. Highly recommended!



08 SHINING FORCE III

Genre: Role Playing **Players:** 1
By: Camelot / SEGA
Hardware: – **Memory:** 203
Released: June 1998
Rarity: Rare



SSM Top 50 Ranking –

The game merges elements of the best RPGs seen on the Saturn. The vast majority of the game is spent in what are the best strategic battle sequences yet seen on the machine.

“I can really find little fault in anything to do with *Shining Force 3*. Despite only being Part One of Three, there's ruck-loads of game for your money...[E]njoy this spectacular Battle RPG.” – Rich Leadbetter

SSM Rating 93% Issue #33

“A worthy successor to *Shining the Holy Ark* and a brilliant adventure in its own right. Impressive. Most impressive.” – Rich Leadbetter



My Comments

A large-scale RPG that puts players in command of a military force, who set out to return peace between two warring republics. Filled with plot twists, the story keeps players riveted. Battles are lengthy affairs as your growing squad of elite warriors take on opposing armies, with every battle requiring much strategy and forethought. Each character's battle moves are accompanied by some of the best 3D graphics seen on the Saturn. Players will need huge amounts of time to invest in the game's lengthy battles, which can become frustrating when several are strung together. Nonetheless, the game is EPIC, and could only have been improved if the second and third scenarios had been translated for PAL territories. Recommended.

07 SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER II TURBO

Genre: Puzzle **Players:** 1-2
By: Capcom / Virgin Interactive
Hardware: – **Memory:** 6
Released: March 1997
Rarity: Rare



SSM Top 50 Ranking #35

Miniaturising their cool *Street Fight[er]* characters (and others from *DarkStalkers*) and sticking them in a puzzle game make Capcom sound like they've gone mad...

“Fortunately Capcom's masterful coding skills ensured that another gameplay classic emerged. Super-cute versions of Ryu, Chun Li, and the gang battle it out for 2D supremacy, and the gem-dropping gameplay makes for one of the best puzzle games this side of *Buckaroo* and *Connect Four*.” – Gary Cutlack



SSM Rating 86% Issue #19

“Let down by the reliance on trigger gems, *Puzzle Fighter* is still a worthy alternative to *Bust-a-Move 2* and shouldn't be ignored by puzzle fans and *Street Fighter* die-hards.” – Stephen Fulljames

My Comments

One of the most addictive multiplayer games the Saturn has to offer, hours drift away as players try to out-puzzle and taunt each other with their characters' catch-phrases. And single-player is fun too! ESSENTIAL!



06 VIRTUA FIGHTER 2

Genre: 3D Beat 'em Up **Players:** 1-2
By: AM2 / SEGA
Hardware: Virtua Stick
Memory: 180
Released: 26 January 1996
Rarity: Very Common



SSM Top 50 Ranking #1

Virtua Fighter 2 remains the Saturn's finest hour...The Saturn's high resolution mode is used to create the most life-like fighters yet seen on the system, and the super-smooth 60 frames per second movement is uncannily realistic. But for all its technical competence, the real joy with this game is its playability. Each of the characters battle away with REAL fighting techniques, they move and react just like real fighters would. And the possibilities with the 2,000 moves in the game make it virtually limitless in terms of lastability.

“To see VF2 on the Saturn with all the techniques, characters, and in hi-res was a revelation. Plain and simple. But technical issues aside, VF2 is more than a game, it is an art...And that's why I think it's the best Saturn game money can buy.” – Rich Leadbetter

SSM Rating 98% Issue #2

“The best audio-visuals ever seen on any home machine, coupled with the most in-depth beat 'em up gameplay witnessed in any combat game – *Virtua Fighter 2* is quite frankly too good to be true.” – Rich Leadbetter



My Comments

A near-perfect conversion, coupling some of the Saturn's best graphics with gameplay based on real fighting techniques. Like martial arts, this creates life-long learning. It's also inexpensive and easy to find. Even non-fighting game fans NEED this in their collection.

05 PANZER DRAGOON II ZWEI



Genre: Rail Shooter **Players:** 1
By: Team Andromeda / SEGA
Hardware: Virtua Stick **Memory:** 8
Released: May 1996
Rarity: Uncommon

SSM Top 50 Ranking #16

A brilliant blasting game [that] features astounding 3D effects that no Saturn or indeed PlayStation title has managed to match. Despite being easy to complete, there's tons of lastability in it too.

"We all knew that this one was going to be awesome, but when we first played the finished article, *Panzer Zwei* was like a gift from the gods. The graphics redefined our expectations of what the Saturn was capable of – suddenly anything was possible. The different routes, morphing dragon, and vast amount of hidden stuff add immensely

to the appeal." – Rich Leadbetter

SSM Rating 95% Issue #7

"A truly mesmerising game that builds on the achievements of its predecessor. Both beautiful and tough, this belongs up there with *VF2* and *SEGA Rally* as the standard bearer for its genre." – Rob Bright

**My Comments**

A near-perfect melding of arcade gameplay with an emotionally-driven narrative, *Panzer Dragoon II Zwei* builds on the first game's epicness by expanding its world and revealing the dragon's origin. During the game, Lagi (the dragon) transforms at the end of each level based on the player's performance. This and the ongoing

story create an bond between rider and steed, so that the dragon's cries from being hit make players want to perform better. Few games, even today, achieve such emotional player involvement. Team Andromeda vastly improved the graphics engine, so the game runs at a much more fluid frame-rate and at a higher resolution. The special effects are amazing too. The controls are also much smoother, and the addition of a beserker attack adds a new layer of strategy. Add in some amazing set-pieces, unique boss and enemy designs, vast levels with branching paths, a vast array of play options in Pandora's Box, and a soundtrack that reflects the on-screen action, and you have a brilliant game. While *PDZ* is a little easy, its an amazing experience that no Saturn owner should be without.



04 EXHUMED

Genre: First-person Adventure
Players: 1
By: Lobotomy / BMG Interactive
Hardware: – **Memory:** 11
Released: October 1996
Rarity: Common

SSM Top 50 Ranking #8

Lobotomy's initial adventure was unfairly dubbed "*Doom* in Egypt". In truth, it's one of the deepest, action-packed adventures money can buy. One of the most criminally under-rated games of all time.



"It took the whining and moaning of our own "Manual" Daniel Jevons to convince me to take this game seriously. When I started playing – and playing it properly – I realised that this

adventure is a work of genius. SSM got behind Lobotomy in a big way and our prayers for them to convert *Duke Nukem* and *Quake* were answered. It's also extremely cheap...so there's no excuse not to own this classic." – Rich Leadbetter

**SSM Rating 92% Issue #11**

"This is the game to set the standard for the first-person shoot 'em up genre. If you thought that *Doom* was the game for you, *Exhumed* will make you think again." – Rob Bright

My Comments

Most think *Exhumed* is a first-person shooter. To label it thus overlooks so many of its other elements. While first-person shooting forms a large part of the action, collecting artefacts to level



up your character adds RPG elements, navigating perilous platforms mirrors platformer gameplay, and backtracking to earlier levels to access previously unreachable areas and items as part of the quest resembles an adventure game. Released six years before *Metroid Prime*, *Exhumed* is a first-person adventure. Even if viewed as an FPS, its Egyptian theme and unique selection of levels, enemies, and weapons make it distinctive enough from the average shooter. Add some solid graphics, spectacular lighting effects, a silky-smooth frame-rate, and an atmospheric soundtrack, and *Exhumed* has all the qualities that make it an essential purchase.



03 PANZER DRAGOON SAGA

Genre: Role Playing **Players:** 1
By: Team Andromeda / SEGA
Hardware: Analogue Pad **Memory:** 21
Released: 5 June 1998
Rarity: Rare

SSM Top 50 Ranking –

Over two years in the making, *Panzer Dragoon Saga* wraps up the events from the first two games and turns this rail-shooter series into an RPG.

“[I]t’s clear that this is the Finished Article – a game that gleams under the vast amounts of polish and attention Team Andromeda have given it. It’s a monumental effort, a work of art, and quite clearly a labour of love...The bottom line is that this game is very special. It’s just wonderful in every conceivable sense.” – Rich Leadbetter



SSM Rating 96% Issue #30

“Quite simply the best looking, best playing adventure UK Saturn owners will ever experience. Buy it or consider yourself foolish.” – Rich Leadbetter



My Comments

Criminally released in small numbers, *Panzer Dragoon Saga* holds a legendary status because it’s a solid adventure with an emotional and thought provoking story, innovative gameplay, awesome graphics, and an atmospheric soundtrack. Following the events of *Panzer Dragoon*, the story delves deeper into the foreign, monster-ravaged world as a familiar dragon rescues mercenary Edge after he is attacked by a rogue Empire faction. The ensuing adventure is filled with intrigue,



deceit, and existential revelations. The story alone, presented through gorgeous FMV sequences, is worth the game’s high price. Fortunately, the gameplay is just as good. Battles turn the series’ rail-shooting action into turns-based combat that, with the ability to manoeuvre 360 degrees around your foe, plays like its real-time. The jaw-dropping special attacks and the ability to morph your dragon in real-time add more depth. Few Saturn games match the graphical prowess of *PDS*, which contains some stunning special effects, while the atmospheric soundtrack combines orchestral, tribal, and electronic music styles to create an otherworldly atmosphere. Even to this day, few games match the splendor of this amazing experience. An essential purchase whether you like RPGs or not.

02 NiGHTS INTO DREAMS...

Genre: 3D Platformer **Players:** 1-2
By: Sonic Team / SEGA
Hardware: Analogue Pad
Memory: 30 (data), 197 (A-life)
Released: 7 October 1996
Rarity: Common



SSM Top 50 Ranking #3

Quite simply the most unique, innovative, and beautifully crafted videogame of all time, from the crack development team that brought you *Sonic the Hedgehog*.

“Whilst many were quick to criticise the Sonic Team’s creation for being a tad short and easy, what they consummately failed to appreciate was the true nature of the game. Whilst the sumptuous 3D visuals are enough to draw most gamers in, its

the superlative retro style of gameplay which keeps them engrossed. Pulling off massive links, racking up huge scores, performing a diverse range of aerial stunts, and watching the artificial life system evolve as you play is only a minuscule part of what *NiGHTS* has to offer. Admittedly, the game concept may appear bizarre at first and ‘immature’ even, but *NiGHTS* is a unique and lasting experience which simply must be owned by everyone who is serious about games.” – Lee Nutter

SSM Rating 96% Issue #10

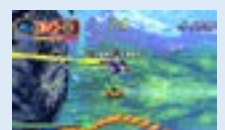
“Destined to be the flagship title for the Saturn, *NiGHTS* combines classic gameplay qualities with all-new possibilities opened up by 32-BIT technology. Awe inspiring.” – Radion Automatic

My Comments

NiGHTS is a difficult game to define. The on-foot sections and chip collection suggest platformer. Evolving the A-Life hints at a life sim. The flight and acrobatics propose a stunt-based game. Truthfully, *NiGHTS* is all of these things and more. The core experience lies in score attack - after players deposit 20 blue chips into the Ideya Capture of each course, bonus time begins, where each item linked is worth



double. Levels are cleverly designed so infinite links are possible. The bosses, too, are imaginative, allowing players to double their score. *NiGHTS* also contains amazing charm - levels are beautifully imagined with the most surreal graphics on the Saturn. The charming soundtrack adds a dreamlike quality to each level and evolves depending on how players treat the A-Life. The controls, too, are sublime, hugely benefitting from the analogue pad. From the sheer imagination, to Eliot and Claris’ touching stories, the Jungian psychology the game draws upon, and the compelling gameplay - *NiGHTS* is a classic videogame all Saturn owners must experience.



01 SEGA RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP



Genre: Racing **Players:** 1-2
By: AM3 / SEGA
Hardware: Arcade Racer
Memory: 80 (records), 977 (ghost)
Released: 26 January 1996
Rarity: Very Common

SSM Top 50 Ranking #2

Since its release in early 1996, *SEGA Rally* has gone on to become the best-selling Saturn game ever and the benchmark by which all other racers are judged. And rightly so, in SSM's opinion.



"It's difficult to pin-point exactly why *SEGA Rally* is such an incredible game. Maybe it's because it's such a flawless conversion of the twenty-times as expensive coin-op. Maybe it's the feeling of gritty realism the programmers manage to convey, making you think you are actually driving a rally car, but there's never so much realism that you'd have to know how to drive one yourself to play the game properly. Or could it be the decent smattering of Saturn-specific modes, from the awesome split-screen two-player mode, to the ghost mode and custom car option. Who knows? The point is, two years on from its release and *SEGA Rally* is still the best racer on any console bar none. Whilst other racers may boast superior graphics



(and only just), none have surpassed *Rally* in terms of sheer playability. It's a classic videogame of our time." – Lee Nutter

SSM Rating 97% Issue #3

"As a game, *Rally* might not have the immediate appeal of *Daytona* with its hordes of opposing drivers, punchy courses, and bodywork-defying gameplay, but it's a deeper challenge and a more absorbing driving sim. As a conversion *Rally* beats the crayola out of *Daytona*, with far sharper graphics, more detail, faster scrolling, and much less clipping trauma...A rally-raging classic-beano of a game. Buy twelve copies." – Radion Automatic



"Quite simply the best racing game on any console to date. Whilst similar titles on rival platforms may boast superior graphics (and only just), they fail spectacularly in attempting to emulate *Rally's* incredible gameplay. Beating SSM's Gary in *Rally's* awesome two-player mode is the most fun to be had with your clothes on. Everyone MUST own this game!" – Lee Nutter

My Comments

In the last 20 years, myriad racing games have come and gone, yet few have conveyed the sheer depth and playability of *SEGA Rally*. Despite its comparatively meagre offering of just three cars and four courses, *Rally's* sublime playability and gritty realism present the perfect balance of arcade and simulation racing. Whether it's the muddy mayhem of Desert, the fast freeways of Forest, the tight twists of Mountain, or the claustrophobic corners of Lakeside, each circuit is nuanced to perfection. Each car, too, offers a unique driving experience: the Celica offers power, the Delta acceleration, and the Stratos a deadly combination of power and sensitive

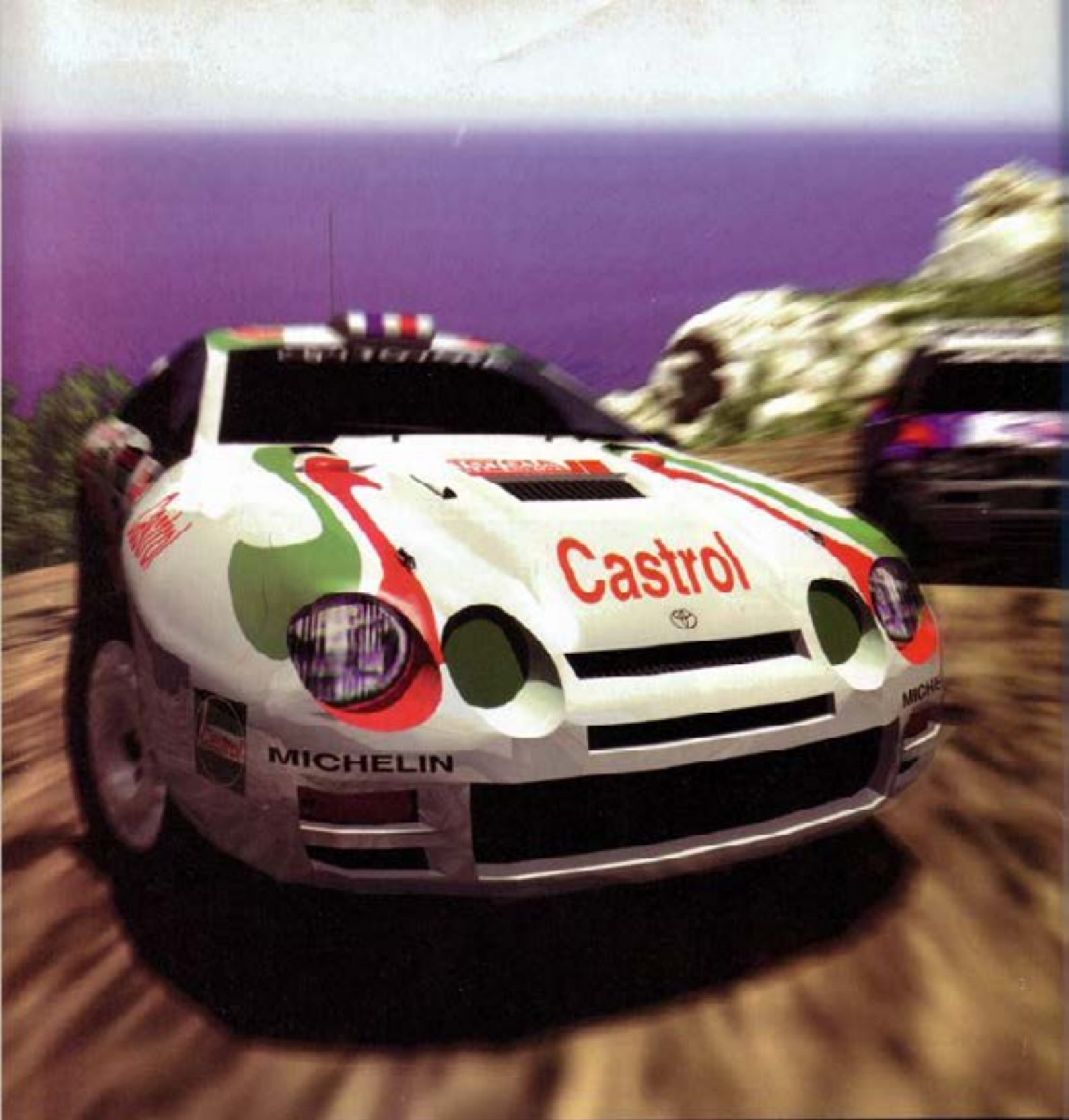


handling. *Rally's* smattering of modes – a championship, time attack, two-player split-screen racing, and the ability to tweak each car's performance – offer just the right amount of variety. And the diversity of options allows players to fine-tune their gaming experience to perfection. Graphically, few Saturn racers touch *SEGA Rally*, with its crisp, clear, detailed, and solid visuals running at a silky smooth 30 frames-per-second and minimal pop-up. Roaring sound effects and a rockin' soundtrack accompany this, creating the perfect atmosphere to emulate the intensity of rally driving. More than that, each race is different. Shedding tenths of a second off previous records as you find just the right amount of nuance in a difficult corner makes or breaks a race. This has never been so enjoyable as it is in *SEGA Rally*. Meanwhile, the computer-controlled opponents set just the right amount of challenge.



And once the main championship is completed, players are justly rewarded with new components that offer an even greater challenge. Add to this that *SEGA Rally* is one of the most common Saturn games and can be purchased very cheaply, and you have a game that every Saturn gamer MUST own. And that's why I believe it's the best PAL Saturn game you can purchase.





Game Over
Yeah!!!