

REVIEW CREW



STARFOX 64

GAME OF THE MONTH

SYSTEM: N64

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO

CATEGORY: SHOOTER

BACK-UP: BATTERY

BEST FEATURE: KICKIN' BOSSES

WORST FEATURE: PERSPECTIVES

ALSO TRY: SOTC



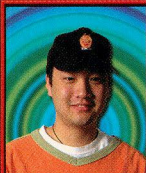
SHAWN

When StarFox 64 came to the office, Shawn couldn't believe how cool it was. Will this push him over the edge to give a Nintendo 64? Only if more quality games start coming through on a regular schedule. He was surprised by Overblood and couldn't help but enjoy playing it—hmm...he does have a beard like Raz.

CURRENT FAVORITES

StarFox 64
Mega Man 8
Command & Conquer
Overblood

FAVORITE GENRE:
Action/Adventure



DAN

Originality can be a double-edged sword. Just look at this month's reviews for two very unique games: Harvest Moon and Tail of the Sun! Still, originality is what "Shoe" loves to see. And what's with all these polyagonal fighting games lately? Shoe's been playing them all, but he still feels that they don't hold a candle to SF Alpha 2.

CURRENT FAVORITES

Mega Man 8
Dracula X (PS)
Worldwide Soccer '97
Final Fantasy VII

FAVORITE GENRE:
Strategy/Puzzle



CRISPIN

All of this month's fighting games got Cris a little worked up, so the rest of the Crew sat him down and forced him to raise cattle in Harvest Moon till he calmed down. It worked, sort of. It took Cris a good fifteen minutes to figure out he couldn't perform a fatality on poor of Bessie. So he went and ate a Big Mac instead.

CURRENT FAVORITES

Harvest Moon
StarFox 64
Duke Nukem 3D
Fighters Megamix

FAVORITE GENRE:
Role-Playing



SUSHI-X

Sushi's gearing up for his Street Fighter Collection CD, and he is crossing his fingers for a perfect translation of Street Fighter 1 one day. Disgruntled with the story of SF3, he has been getting into the vs. gameplay. He's also been chuckling over his Sheng Long trick, happy to see the cool comments. Send your thoughts to Sushi_X@zd.com.

CURRENT FAVORITES

Street Fighter III
Duke Nukem 3D
Tekken III
StarFox 64

FAVORITE GENRE:
Fighting

It took me about 10 minutes of wild teetering and tottering in my seat to figure out that StarFox 64 is an even better game than its 16-bit predecessor. What we have here is the ultimate twitch shooter. Its screenfuls of enemies and onrushing obstacles never cut you and the rest of the McCloud clan any slack. OK, so the original StarFox was relentless, too, but this sequel gives you a hell of a lot more to worry about. For starters, your wingmen (yes, that would be the cloyingly cute trio of Peppy, Falco and Slippy, as well as a few new furry faces) are no longer expendable; each contributes something to the mission and is worth protecting—even if they do get in trouble way too often. Let Slippy buy the farm, for instance, and you won't be able to see the life gauge of Bosses (a real shame, since it'll probably be every gamer's fantasy to whack Slippy, who sounds as if he's voiced by a 6-year-old girl). And only Falco can lead you to the secret areas scattered throughout each level. StarFox fans wanting a little more freedom this time around may be disappointed that most of the game's 15 levels still stick your Arwing on rails, but at least now the track is wider, giving you more room to maneuver. And a few

levels—namely the Boss stages—do switch to a fly-anywhere mode. While these stages are OK, they're not as exciting as the railed levels, which toss more enemies and obstacles in your path. Graphically, the game looks as good as we expected, although large enemies look pixelated when they're far away. StarFox 64's \$80 price tag is steep (at least for a first-party N64 game), but don't forget that the Rumble Pak is included, and this little ticker is worth the extra bean. The Pak's varying vibrations add more than you'd expect to the game's already excellent control (I was skeptical myself until the first time the pad started humming along in tune with my ship's afterburners). I only wished the Pak worked with Blast Corps. The game's only let-down is its Multiplayer Modes, which divide the screen into fourths even if only two people are playing. If you thought following the action in Mario Kart 64's four tiny screens was hard, try spotting targets—many smaller than a dime—in four-player StarFox 64. Yet I consider the Multiplayer Modes more of a bonus than a true part of the game. And besides, at least Battle Mode gives you an excuse to blast Slippy into slimy green pieces.

—CRISPIN

I'm starting to see a pattern with games released by Nintendo for the N64—a nice pattern. StarFox 64 is close to the best N64 game I've played thus far—almost as good as Mario 64. Why? Simply because StarFox 64 not only has the same awesome control and play the original had, but it also adds so many things (like graphic effects, number

of enemies, etc.) that make this version so much better. The graphics and gameplay are simply stunning. Problems? I wouldn't like to see different choosable views for the tank. Also, when big enemies came close to your R-wing, it was often hard to judge where you were. If only Nintendo would release 20 more games real soon.

—SHAWN

StarFox 64 is a shooting fan's dream come true. Each of the game's 15-plus stages is jam-packed with incredible graphics, huge enemies (and hundreds of them), and best of all, challenging gameplay. Two of the coolest enhancements are the addition of real voices to the characters (all of which sound very good, though after an hour or so of listening to

Slippy whine, I was ready to shoot him down myself just to shut him up), and of course, the ability to man different vehicles (such as a tank and a submarine) on certain stages. The Rumble Pak adds a nice touch, but the novelty does wear thin rather quickly. Otherwise, StarFox 64 is probably one of the best N64 games yet, and well worth the wait.

—DAN

RATING SCALE:	10—PERFECTION	5—AVERAGE
	9—VIRTUALLY FLAWLESS	4—RENT FIRST
	8—SPLENDID	3—TIME-WASTER
	7—WORTHY	2—DON'T EVEN RENT
	6—GOOD, NOT GREAT	1—FLUSH IT

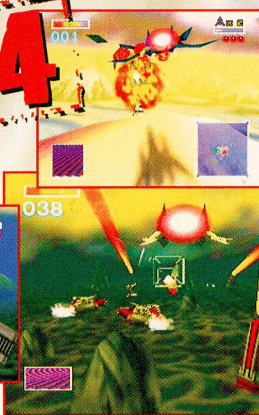
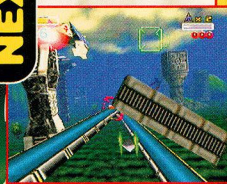
The Review Crew rates each game in several categories: visuals, sound, ingenuity and replay value. The averages of the four members' scores in these categories are listed at the bottom. These averages are independent of the overall scores, which are displayed behind each review and based on how the games compare to other titles on the same system.

EDITOR'S CHOICE Silver Awards are granted to games with a total average score of eight, while games that average nine or above receive Gold Awards.

StarFox 64 is an awesome sequel, worthy of Nintendo's name. The graphics are superbly done, with little breakup. The Bosses are huge and shockingly detailed, sometimes spanning the entire screen. You get treated to multiple paths, based on skill, so it will take one hot blaster to get through Section Z, the hardest road to victory. The Battle Mode is a

little tarnished, needing more options, but it was still fun to fight against real people. The other disappointment was the inability to play with others in the Normal Mode. Sorry, everyone, that's for one player only. The background music wasn't very inspiring, but with all the action going on in the missions, it was hardly missed.

—SUSHI-X



STAR FOX⁶⁴

The 25th Century Fox Flies Again

Call it a case of better late than never. More than two years after Super NES owners were supposed to get a sequel to Star Fox, Nintendo has finally delivered: for a new system and with nary a Super FX Chip in sight. But is this 64-Bit update to the classic 3-D shooter worth the wait?

Well, fans of the original need not fear (and critics need not applaud). Star Fox 64, like the N64 version of Mario Kart, stays true to the first game, except—to use an apt industry cliché—with more of everything. The game throws more enemies at you than just about any other shooter. And when you're not dodging enemy fire, you're zigging and zagging through caves, around asteroids and beneath crumbling buildings. The Bosses are as

huge and outrageous as before (not the least of which is the giant head of Andross you face at game's end).

Star Fox 64 packs 15 levels in all, and most have your Arwing battling along a predetermined path (although it was previously believed that your ship could turn around and fly back to the beginning of each level, this is not the case). Yet a few stages—the Boss levels especially—let you cruise around in 3-D freedom, sort of like the snowspeeder level from Shadows of the Empire.



As in the first game, you'll traverse the entire Lyat Star System, starting in Corneria's capital city, moving on to an asteroid belt, then battling on through a variety of other interplanetary locales. But you'll have more than the Arwing at your disposal. One level has you driving the



Kaboom! Fox's Super Bombs come in handy when things get rough.

Landmaster, a hefty, high-speed tank whose jumpjets can rocket you into the air for brief, chasm-crossing spurts. Another level sends you on a deep-sea search-and-destroy mission in a one-man (er...one-fox) attack sub.

All three vehicles share the same basic capabilities. Kick on turbo for a boost of speed or slam on the brakes to avoid collisions. As in the original, the Arwing can perform barrel rolls to dodge enemy fire, but now it can fly

Gamer's EDGE

Arwings For Everybody

Fox McCloud has apparently taken a cue from his kart-drivin' buddy Mario. Star Fox 64 packs several Multiplayer Modes, which let between two and four players prove their Arwing-piloting prowess. The three modes are:

Point Match

Players compete to see who can be the first to destroy five enemy ships.

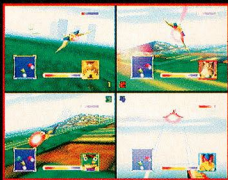
Battle Royal

Think of it as an airborne version of the Mario Kart Battle Mode. The last man flying wins.

Time Trial

Victory goes to the pilot who scores the most kills before the timer runs out.

Players can fly together in one of three sprawling arenas, which offer the same freedom of movement as the Boss levels.



Multiplayer Mode's fun—even if the tiny screens are hard on the eyes.



When zigging and zagging just aren't enough, Fox can perform a barrel roll or loop to dodge fire.

Behind The SCREENS

Shake it up, baby

Here's the good news: Star Fox 64 comes packed with the Rumble Pak. Nintendo's new vibrating peripheral. The catch? The pack-in pumps the game's price up to \$80, making it the most expensive first-party N64 title to date. And despite rumors that the Pak would be compatible with Mario Kart 64 and Blast Corps, only Star Fox 64 takes advantage of its palm-shaking capabilities.



True to its name, the Rumble Pak shakes whenever you get baked by enemy fire, making it sort of a poor man's force-feedback device. The harder you get hit, the stronger the vibration. The Pak also hums to life when you punch your Arwing's afterburners. Sure, a vibrating joystick may sound lame—even a little naughty—but trust us: it's cool. The Pak's only drawback is that it slips into your analog stick's memory cartridge port and doesn't offer a through port. Rumble Pak-using games, therefore, cannot access memory cartridges (fortunately, Star Fox 64 saves your stats to the cartridge).

At present, Nintendo has no plans to sell Rumble Paks separately in stores, although you will be able to order them directly from Nintendo (they're expected to sell for around \$20). Two triple-A batteries power the Pak.



Star Fox 64's two new vehicles—the tank and attack sub—make Fox lethal in the air, sea and on land.



Although it makes the game harder, you can switch to a Cockpit View.

loops and U-turns, too. The Arwing's guns have also been supercharged. By holding down the Fire button and sweeping your crosshairs across a wave of enemies, you can lock onto them and unleash ultrapowerful guided laser blasts.

Story-wise, Star Fox 64 isn't so much a direct sequel as it is a variation of the original game's theme. As before, the evil scientist Andross is besieging planet Corneria—home to millions of talking animals with weird metal feet. General Pepper, Corneria's canine head honcho, once again sends the Star Fox team out to battle Andross's minions. All the first

game's familiar furry faces are along for the ride, including wing-leader Fox McCloud (whom you control), Slippy Toad, Falco Lombardi and Peppy Hare.

The McCloud crew is much chattier than they were in the first game. According to Nintendo, a third of the cartridge's memory is used to store digitized voice. So you can expect to hear your wingmen shoot their mouths off throughout the game. They'll call for help when under attack, for instance, or give advice when the heat gets extra thick.

You'd better keep a close eye on your wingmen, too. Each one brings a certain ability to the battle—an ability that's lost if he should be shot down. Slippy, for example, will analyze the Bosses and display their health meter when you engage them in combat. Peppy gives you advice during normal combat, telling you when to barrel roll or fly a loop. And Falco will lead you to the secret mission areas.

Each level has one of these hidden areas, which open when you complete certain objectives (and when Falco leads you to the area's entrance). For instance, to reach level one's hidden area—where you'll battle the Boss from the Super NES game's first level—you have to fly under several



Each level has a hidden area. Some—like this one—are surreal.

archways, then protect Falco from an enemy squadron. In addition to these secret missions, you can also earn access to an ultra-tough Expert Mode, if you destroy enough enemies in each level.

Whatever secret missions you accomplish determine your path through Star Fox 64. Discover no secrets and you'll take the easiest, most direct route through the Lyat System. But once you complete a hidden mission, other, more difficult levels become available. And it's a good thing the game's so full of hidden stuff. Seeing as how it'll be a while until Nintendo's next N64 title (possibly Yoshi's Island 64, not due until at least the fall), Star Fox 64 will have to last. ■



Your route to Andross is determined by how many secret areas you find.



And then there are the Bosses, now bigger than the original's. Learn their attack patterns to topple 'em.



PUBLISHER	Nintendo
DEVELOPER	NCL
THEME	Shooter
PLAYERS	1-4
% DONE	95%
RELEASE DATE	June
ALSO ON	None