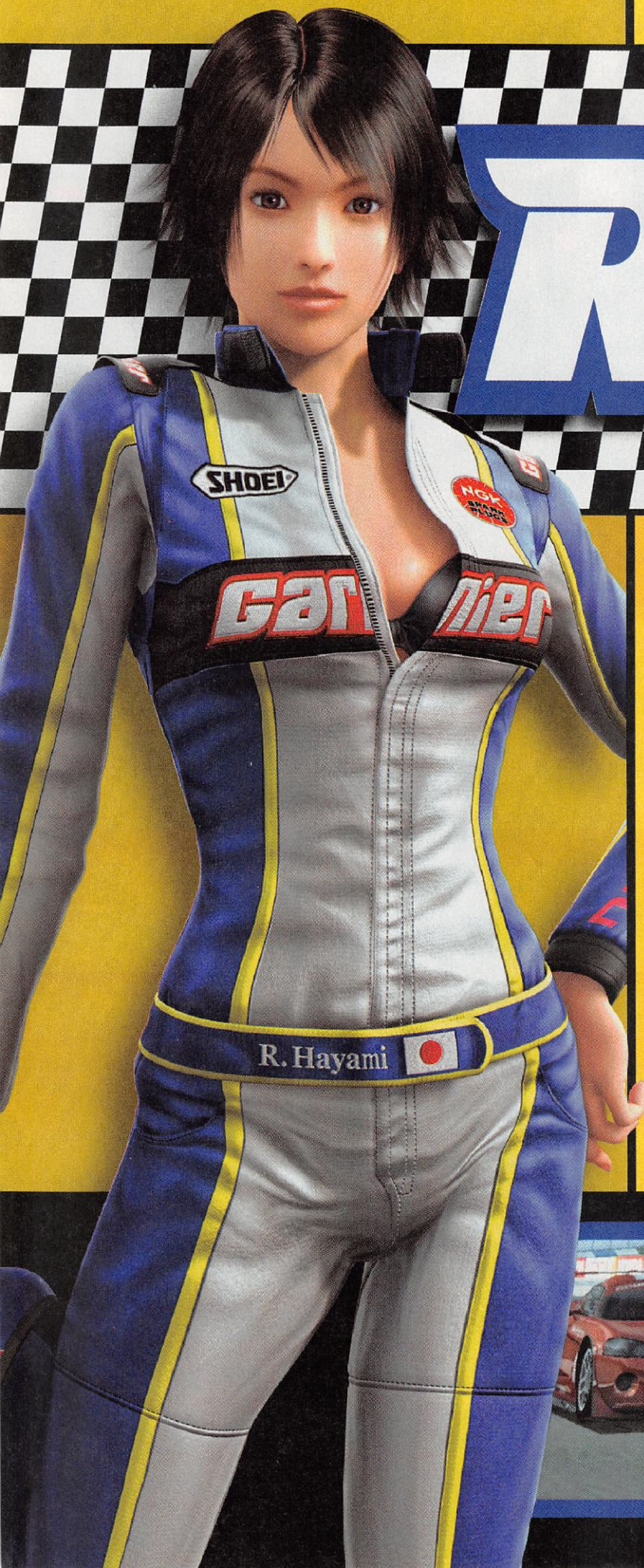


The Next

Ridge



**The Creators of Ridge
redefine the genre of**

E

verybody knows that, when it comes to kick-ass arcade racing, the *Ridge Racer* series is at the top of the list.

So why, then, would Namco ditch the brand for its latest addition to the series, *R: Racing Evolution*? And what's this about using real cars and racing as hot girls? We sat down with Isao Nakamura, the game's producer, to get the answers to these questions and many more.



eRacer

Racer want to racing. Can they?

ISAO NAKAMURA, PRODUCER

Can you explain the ambition behind this game, and tell us why it doesn't carry the *Ridge Racer* brand in its title?

It's been about 20 years since the release of Namco's first racing game: *Pole Position*. To mark this occasion, we wanted to go to the next level and create a racing game that combined the arcade-like enjoyment of *Ridge Racer* and the realistic excitement of *MotoGP*. By introducing this in *R: Racing Evolution*, we are attempting to redefine the racing game genre. That is why we believe that this title should not be considered [just another sequel] in the *Ridge Racer* series.

We've seen attractive ladies in past *Ridge Racer* titles, but this is the first game where we'll get to race as one, right?

When designing the game, we realized that it was an excellent opportunity for us to show off the great physical and mental strengths that a woman racer can possess. After all, there are a number of female racers and we believe that they deserve more attention. Wouldn't you agree?

Sounds good to us! *R4: Ridge Racer Type 4* added some nice



"I promise that players will be lured into an exciting story while enjoying [the racing] to the max."

story elements to the racing. Will a storyline play an even bigger role in R: Racing Evolution?

The storyline here is different than in *R4: Ridge Racer Type 4*, and will comprise the main mode in the game. I promise that players will be lured into an exciting story while enjoying various courses and vehicles to their maximum.

How would you describe the mix of arcade and realistic controls?

We are planning to simplify the

handling/controls just enough so that the player will not have difficulties or stress out. Unfortunately, I cannot say too much about these details at the moment.

Which car manufacturers will participate? Will there still be fantasy cars?

We, (the project team & I), really love cars, so we've hand-picked exclusive vehicles to satisfy any car buff or age group. Furthermore, the selection of cars is not limited by a particular manu-

facturer or country. Unfortunately, I can't announce the number of vehicles or comment on fantasy cars.

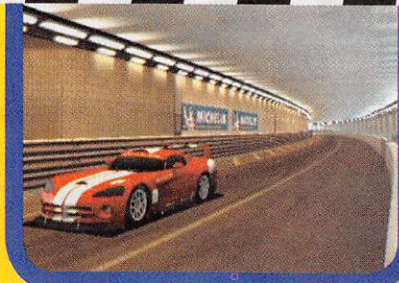
Will the game support any special peripherals? Yes, we're planning to make the game compatible with the Logitech driving wheel.

How is the game structured?

The game will have the Story Mode and a number of others. Courses will not be focused on one single race. The shape of the course, its surface quality, and its type of usage will all differ. There will be a mix of realistic and fantasy courses.

Can you talk about online play?

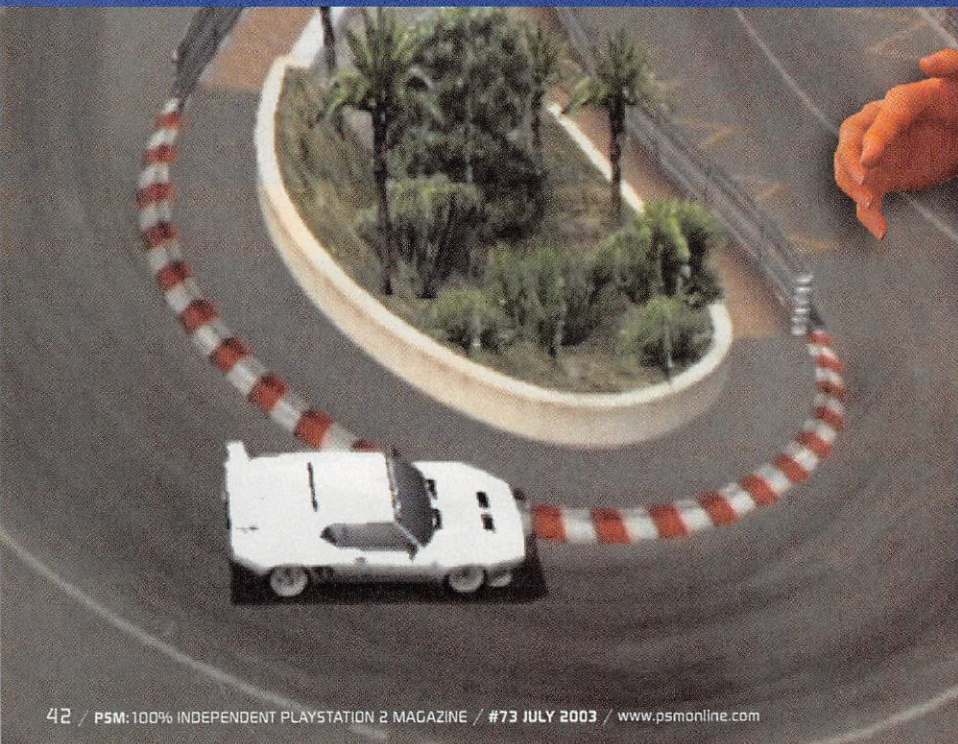
Unfortunately I cannot, but kudos to you for asking :-)



▲ Here's a somewhat familiar scene to Ridge Racer veterans—doesn't this look like the tunnel from the first RR?



► Namco still may include fantasy cars (such as the classic *Ridge Racer* Pac-Man and Mappy cars), but for now the big focus is on the game's many real-world car licenses. We can currently confirm that the following cars are in the game: the De Tomaso Pantera GT55, Dodge Viper, Calsonic Skyline GT-R (JGTC), and Subaru Impreza WRX. Expect tons more, as well.

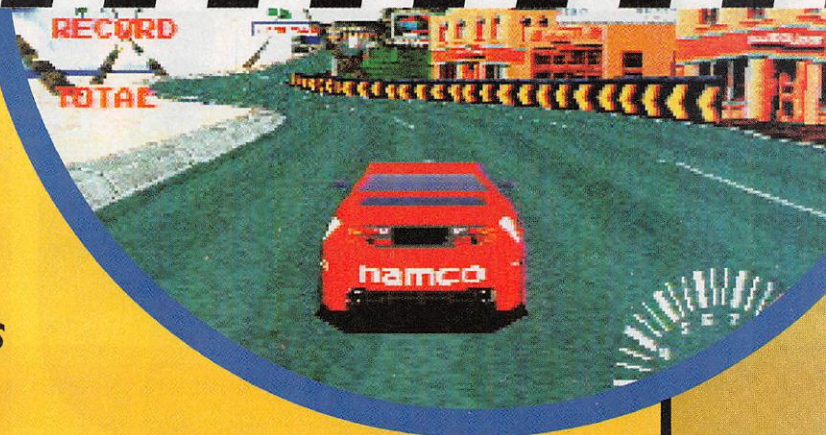


► Your rival in the game is just as beautiful as the main character, and she'll make it her personal mission to make your life hell.

Racing Legacy

The Ridge Racer series has always set the standard for racing games

► RIDGE RACER is the game that started it all, and is one of the titles that helped sell a lot of original PlayStation back in the day.



▼ RAGE RACER, the third installment, was set in Europe and introduced cool new features, such as being able to design your own logos.

▼ RIDGE RACER V is still the only PS2 title in the series so far. Although the track and car totals were small, the action was top-notch.



▲ RIDGE RACER REVOLUTION came second, adding new tracks and cleaning up some of the glitches from the original RR.

▲ R4: RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 is still our personal favorite here at PSM. The story mode is nice, and it has the best tracks by far.

POLE POSITION

A team of some of Namco's top game designers are hard at work creating the ultimate racing game. Here are the titles they would have to beat to succeed...



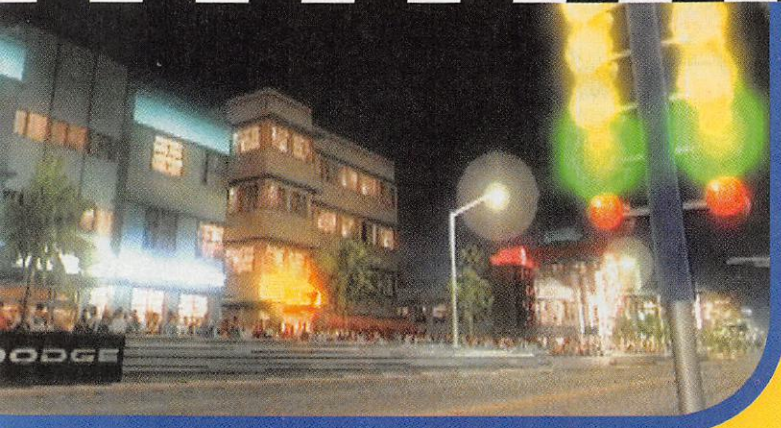
GRAN TURISMO 3 The first big PlayStation 2 racer has held up really well over time, and is still arguably the best racing experience available anywhere. This real-world racing simulation is a car fanatic's dream come true, with hundreds of licensed cars, dozens of licensed tracks and a control scheme that is as deep as it gets. For gamers that prefer their racing action to be as realistic as possible, GT3 is tops.



NEED FOR SPEED: HOT PURSUIT 2 Kicks tailpipe on a totally different level, with full on white-knuckle gameplay that set a new standard for arcade-style racers. What could be more thrilling than gunning over a mountain pass at 130mph, with three cop cars trying to knock you off the road? Whether you prefer point-to-point or closed-circuit tracks, this game's got you covered with its long list of racing options.



MIDNIGHT CLUB II is the newest addition to this elite group, bringing Rockstar's edgy *Grand Theft Auto* feel to the genre. The arcade-style control is just about up there with *NFS: Hot Pursuit*, with blazing speeds and turn-on-a-dime drifting. *Midnight Club II* is, by far, our favorite online racer, and online is where this game's real action is. We're hopelessly addicted... in fact, we should probably fire up a game right now!



▲ While Namco has confirmed that there will be real-world race courses (and most likely, fantasy tracks as well), they're keeping the exact details secret. Nice graphics, though.

What exactly is the "Pressure Meter", and how does it work?

You'll have to find out for yourself, if you can handle it... All I can say is that this concept will provide much more realism than ever before.

Will players be able to customize their cars? Though I can't mention how, at this time yes, players will be able to customize their cars.

Will the cars show damage?

Unfortunately, no. Why would you want to drive a damaged car that handles bad, anyway?

Good point, I guess. Is there any chance that we'll be able to race motorcycles in the game?

That's a cool idea, but unfortunately, no. Don't you think it's dangerous

▼ The new car models should put Ridge Racer V's amazing graphics to shame.



for cars and bikes to race on the same course? :-)

Will you include a "cockpit view" from inside the car? At this point, there are plans for this.

What is the most important aspect of making a great racing game? The key concept for this title is "an entry model for racing games." This does not simply mean a pick-up-and-play, easy-to-clear racing game. It is for both newcomers and veterans alike. It re-acknowledges what is at the core of this genre's gameplay. The player should be able to control their vehicle as freely and easily as they choose to. Furthermore, I think there should be an added stimulating factor intertwined within the game system that provides a more in-depth experience.

Will the Ridge Racer brand return?

We're not denying Ridge Racer with the development of this game. There's always a possibility [the brand] will return.

Okay, enough about the racing — tell us more about the girl!

So you noticed her? She's quite attractive. You'll get to know her better when you play the game... if you know what I mean...

Any last words for our speed-hungry readers? This new racing game is the culmination of Namco's 20-year racing history. Players tend to think that games featuring actual car models are somewhat simulator-like and therefore, difficult. However, we've always worked towards providing players with an enjoyable and satisfying gaming experience... you'll be glad you checked out this title. [P]

GIRL ON GIRL RACING

R: Racing Evolution promises more of a story element than in the past Ridge Racer games. The drama should stay hot and heavy as you compete against your beautiful rival.



▼ Namco's Ridge Racer and MotoGP series are both known for their beautiful race queens. This time you'll get to race as one!

