



OUT: NOW (JAP, US) MARCH (UK) **FORMAT:** GC **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO **SPECIAL FEATURES:** NONE **CALL:** 01932 450 000
PRICE: IMPORT **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO **OTHER FORMATS:** PS2, XB **PLAYERS:** 1-2

Story Time

R: Racing comes with a rags-to-riches tale of young Rena, an ambulance driver who manages to become a top racing driver entirely by accident. As so often happens...



▲ Well, she's not exactly Reiko, but she's still fairly easy on the eye and she drives a mean ambulance.



▲ So much so that when she gives this bloke a ride he offers her a job. Look, just suspend your disbelief, okay?



▲ Naturally she has an equally lithe and lissom rival - Gina. What's the betting that she saves her life later on or something?



Could this really be *Gran Turismo* for the GameCube? Well, no...

R: Racing Evolution

Under Pressure

Tired of AI drivers who just won't get out of your way? This'll sort 'em out.



▲ One: Drive right up behind your opponent and note the pressure bar appear above him. Grin evilly.



▲ Two: Stay right on his tail. Swerve a bit to really put him off. Watch as the pressure bar starts to fill.



▲ Three: Laugh as the pressure bar tops out and he makes an idiot mistake. Race away, feeling slightly dirty.

Strange, isn't it? The plucky little GameCube's a dead cert for pretty much any type of game you care to mention, except for proper driving games. Poor little thing.

It's lucky enough to boast a couple of truly brilliant racers in the form of *Mario Kart* and *F-Zero GX*, but where's its *Gran Turismo*? Where's its *Project Gotham Racing 2*? Where's the fun for people who want to get behind the wheels of real (or at least,

pleasingly realistic) cars and fling them all over the shop at hopefully-illegal speeds, eh? Short of a few half-decent rally games, they ain't there.

and pretty) ambulance driver gets her lucky break in the world of motor racing and works her way through the ranks, blah blah blah.

MIX 'N' MATCH

So we had really high hopes for *R: Racing Evolution*. It looked as if Namco had taken *Ridge Racer*, taken a look at *Gran Turismo*, then gone and made *Ridge Racer*, y'know, a bit more *Gran Turismo*-y. And in a way that is what they've done. *R: Racing*'s a lot less arcadey than its *Ridge Racer* predecessors. Sadly it's also a lot less fun. It has a funny old story mode, reminiscent of Codies' *TOCA Race Driver* but even less believable, in which Rena, a plucky young (female

FRONT RUNNERS

The big twist is the pressure meter. Drive up behind an opponent, give 'em a good tailgating and the pressure meter above them starts to fill up. Once it starts to top out they're likely to make a mistake, enabling you to get past. Fab idea... except for the fact that it makes getting to the front of the pack far too easy, so much so that you'll stroll through most of the story mode's races, even when you find yourself in a souped-up Fiat 500 against a field of proper race cars.

Softography

These guys have also made...

Dead to Rights	76%
Pac-Man World 2	53%
Moto GP 3	80%
Tekken 4	85%

Drive Yourself Mad

Bless it, *R: Racing* tries to be all interesting by providing three whole different types of racing. Three! No-one tell it just how many you'll find in, say, *Project Gotham 2*, eh?



▲ Your actual racing. It's fun for a while until you've overtaken everyone. Usually within the first lap.



▲ Rallying. Quite a laugh, although things get a bit over-slidey. And the Aussie co-driver's annoying.



▲ Drag racing. Yes. Drag racing. The most stupid form of racing ever. People actually watch this. Tsk.



R: RACING EVOLUTION



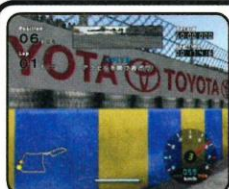
I Get Around

The Suzuka track in Japan makes a good few appearances. It has to, according to racing game law.



The city tracks feel a lot more like the old *Ridge Racer* we all know and love. If only the game did, too.

Like windmills? Then you're going to love some of the rally tracks. They've got loads of 'em flying around.



And until you suss the slightly strange steering you'll be seeing quite a bit of the crash barriers as well.

You also get rally and drag racing levels, but they're similarly non-threatening.

Which would be entirely forgivable if the actual driving was a laugh, but it's decidedly lacking. Even when you're thrashing along at full tilt there's little impression of speed, and the steering's all over the shop. One minute you're having trouble

ff ...one minute you're **having trouble** getting your car to go **round corners**, the next the **back end's sliding** right out...

The Best Bit



Tearing round in a souped-up Fiat 500's surprisingly entertaining.

Let's Motor-Vote!

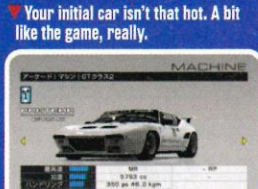
As you'd expect, *R: Racing* enables you to unlock loads of top cars. Well, we say loads. 35, more like. But some of them are really rather nice and shiny and fast.



These grand touring things are a bit tasty, aren't they?



Don't underestimate the Fiat 500. It's better than it looks.



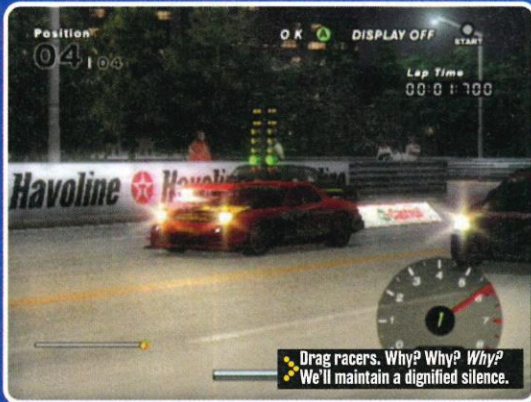
Your initial car isn't that hot. A bit like the game, really.



Everybody needs a Lotus Elise. Well, not needs, but, y'know.



The rally models are suitably slip-slidy. Sometimes too slip-slidy.



Drag racers. Why? Why? Why? We'll maintain a dignified silence.

convincing your car to go round corners, the next the back end's sliding right out and you're driving backwards. And there's a default brake assist that you'll be wanting to turn off within seconds of experiencing it.

YOUR SHOUT

Once you get used to the rather eccentric handling things become more bearable, but it's never a load of fun, especially with the added joy of a pit crew and rival drivers yelling in your ear the whole time in that special 'translated from Japanese' form of English.

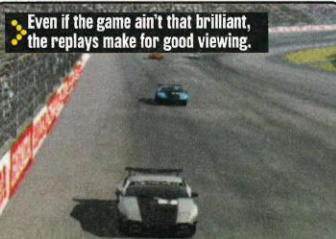
It looks pretty good in places – great car models, fab replays – but lumpy in others, and there's a fair bit in there with different race modes and plenty to unlock. But if you were hoping for a *Cubie GT* or *PGR2*, then you're in for something of a let-down.



Factpack

The stuff you need to know...

Cars	35
Tracks	14
Lithe lady racers	2
Top Speed	186mph+



Even if the game ain't that brilliant, the replays make for good viewing.



The story chunks are at least entertaining and look pretty good.

Judgement

GRAPHICS Pretty in places, pretty awful in others. Lovely replays, though.

GAMEPLAY A curious mix of arcade and realistic racing that doesn't really satisfy.

LIFESPAN All-too-easy story mode, but a fair bit to unlock – if you want to.

An updated *Ridge Racer* that succeeds in places, but mostly doesn't quite carry it off. Fun, but not as much as it should be.

Overall
71 %



Fighting through the pack's fun, but it's all over far too quickly.



Sort out the handling and this could be really good fun. But instead it's rather average.