



# R: RACING EVOLUTION

**N**amco made their name in the racing genre based largely on the strength of the superb Ridge Racer series. While fans may be desperate for a super slick sequel after the somewhat disappointing Ridge Racer V, they'll have to wait because Namco are just putting the finishing touches to a far more simulation orientated experience that goes by the rather perplexing name R: Racing Evolution. Perhaps they tacked the extra R on the front to distinguish the title further from Racing Evoluzione, but who knows? Those zany Namconians!

## TWISTS AND TURNS

In any case, R: Racing Evolution (RRE) has more in common with the Gran Turismo games than Ridge Racer, thanks to more realistic physics and a far more conservative driving model. If this sounds like your kind of thing then the good news is that RRE is coming to Xbox, PS2 and GameCube, so no matter what console you own there's gameplay to go around. Better still, Namco have really focused on giving the single player game some depth.

Taking their cue from V8 Supercars, Namco have given R: Racing Evolution

a story mode, complete with sexy cutscenes. Sexy you say? Yep, no oily-overall-trucker-cap-wearing-grease-monkey for you! Instead, your character is the sassy Rena. Once upon a time an ambulance driver, Rena has made the move to race car driving and it's up to you to guide her to fame and fortune in her new career. The story mode takes place across fourteen chapters and you can expect many twists and turns, and probably even a couple of catfights before it's done. Oh please let there be catfights! You can also expect to feel like a bona fide member of a racing team, with your manager talking to you throughout the races, letting you know when he's pleased and criticising you when you take a corner poorly. The other racers will also chatter in your ear, hopefully spurring a sense of competition and not simply resulting in a hurried search for the mute option.

Perhaps the most interesting touch in RRE, however, is the Interactive Driver AI System, which elegantly attempts to recreate the pressures of real world racing. Basically, if you're sitting on someone's tail - putting real pressure on them, the meter at

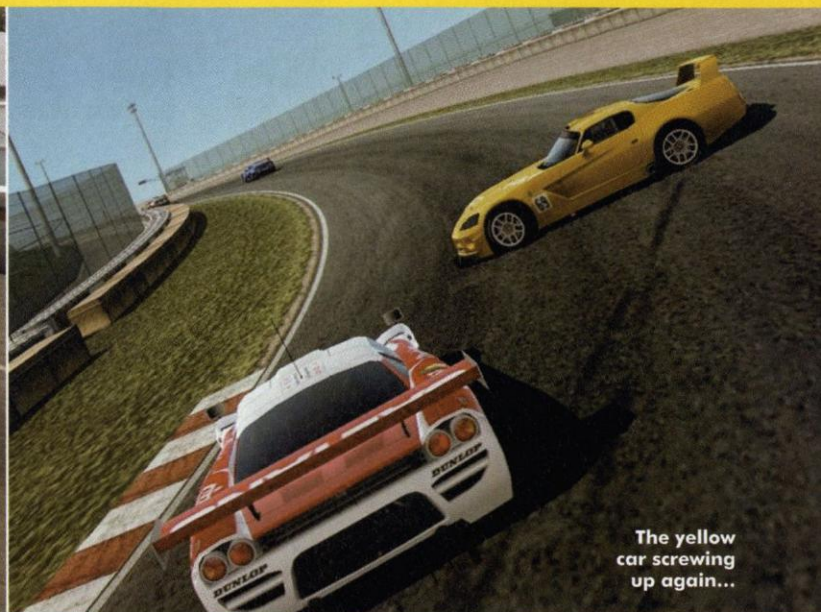
the bottom of the screen will fill up to reflect this. Once it's full the driver in front will be more likely to make a mistake, allowing you to pass him. Cool idea huh? Of course, it also applies to you, so if an AI driver has tailed you for long enough you'll notice a slip in your handling precision. This system should make for some interesting dogfighting and tactical decisions during races, and it's nice to see something genuinely fresh brought to the racing genre.

## JUST ENOUGH VARIETY

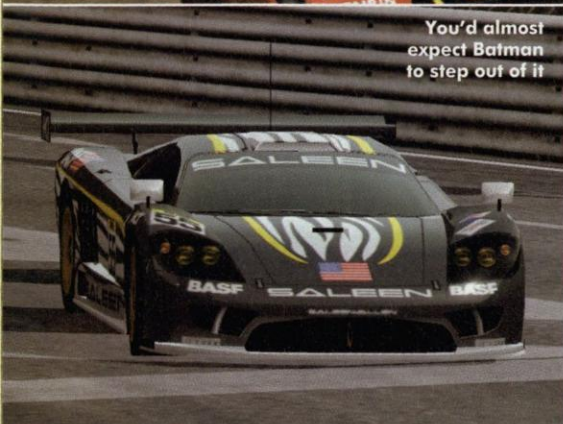
In addition to the story mode (and the obligatory time trial, arcade and versus modes), the other mode of note is the challenge mode. This houses a vast number of time and

objective-based challenges, and will be the place to sample the various driving styles that R: Racing Evolution has to offer. These cover GT style races as well as rally racing and drag racing, and from our time with the game offer just enough variety in handling and style to ensure you won't be putting the game down any time soon. Mind you, RRE isn't





The yellow car screwing up again...



You'd almost expect Batman to step out of it

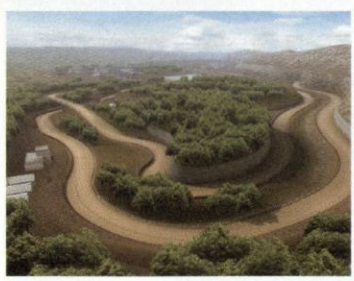


AVAILABLE ON:  
**PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC**

DETAILS  
**CATEGORY:** Racing / **PLAYERS:** 1-4 /  
**DEVELOPER:** Namco /  
**AVAILABLE:** Early 2004 /



**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:**  
Namco answer Burnout's challenge with an awesome new arcade racer.



as comprehensive as it should be. One feature conspicuous by its absence across all three platforms is online play. Bad Namco, bad!

Racing fans should also be forewarned that Namco aren't attempting to compete with the Gran Turismo series with RRE's car lineup. Instead, they're focusing on quality over quantity, with a healthy selection of cars to choose from and unlock, spread across GT1, GT2, GT3, Rally 1, Rally 2, Drag Racing, Privateer and Prototype classes.

We haven't seen all three versions running yet, but we're confident that the visuals will be comparable across the systems — although the jaggies that are present (and unfortunately expected) on PS2 should be ironed out on GameCube and Xbox. Overall, we'd say that RRE is about on par with GT3 in terms of visual quality, with some great high-poly, reflective surfaced car models, and detailed environments that range from hicksville racing

courses to real life circuits like Suzuka and Monaco. Fingers crossed there are some of Namco's trademark city and beach runs too.

We should also mention that gamers who purchase the GameCube version of R: Racing Evolution (or Pac-Man World 2 — but who'd buy that?) in the U.S. will actually get Nintendo and Namco's four player update to Pac-Man (see Hyper 118, page 39) as a free bonus disc. We haven't heard whether we'll get the same deal here, but we certainly hope so. Full review soon. <<



**>> THE JAGGIES THAT ARE PRESENT ON PS2 SHOULD BE IRONED OUT ON GAMECUBE & XBOX**

