

SHOWCASE



THE GREATEST FIGHTING GAME EVER?



The demand for fighting games on the Megadrive reached fever pitch during 1993 - the main reason being that this one genre was totally unexploited on the 16-bit system. What releases were available could only be bought on the grey import market, and although some of them were good - Fighting Masters in particular - none of them could match the awesome nature of Street Fighter II.

Sega had recognised this oversight a long time ago. During the autumn of 1992, a new fighting game project was initiated in the Redwood City headquarters of Sega of America. That project was tentatively titled *Eternal Champions*.

Sega of America's Michael Latham produced a sizeable product guideline document some 800 pages long during November/December 1992. Basically, the document covered every single aspect of the beat 'em up genre, how *Eternal Champions* would operate and why it would be superior. Part of his research included a detailed study of *Street Fighter II*. His goal was simple: "To build the most comprehensive and best playing fighting game available on any home system".

Almost a year of intensive programming followed before the game was considered in any way complete. The game, originally slated for a 16-meg cartridge configuration proved inadequate for the concepts suggested. By the summer Chicago CES show of 1993, the cartridge was updated to 24-megabits - Sega of America were so excited by the project they had no problem in committing to this massive investment.

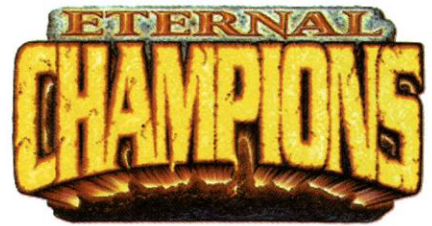
Some of the other ideas suggested for the game evolved - the interactive backdrops suggested became superlative "overkill" scenes - we'll leave these as a surprise for you to uncover when you buy the game. The main objective of the product was accomplished. As you will learn in this showcase and in the review later on in the magazine, *Eternal Champions* is a landmark game and one hell of a beat 'em up.

SHOWCASE FEATURE

Designed by Michael Latham and programmed by one of Sega Interactive, the aim was simply to create the best fighting game ever devised. Richard Leadbetter examines the results of their labour - the superb *Eternal Champions*.

INITIAL OBJECTIVES

The *Eternal Champions* design team attempted to create the ultimate beat 'em up and concentrated on every single aspect of the fighting genre in their efforts. Their aim was to create a product that would meet the needs of any fighting fan. As well as an intriguing storyline and wild characters, Michael Latham came up with all manner of ideas - a lot of which were totally original. The actual *Eternal Champions* contest became an aspirational aspect of the game. First of all, the player would have to learn their characters back to front. Dynamic training modes (covered later) were added, allowing the player to learn their characters thoroughly before entering the real contest. The team also wanted to make the player have to fight the environment he's playing in as well as the opposing player. It hadn't been done before on a combat game of this ilk and would introduce new facets to the gameplay. Therefore, in the finished game there is the daunting Battle Room - a contained chamber that puts the player up against over 20 different hazards as well as the opponent! From the documentation surrounding *Eternal Champions*, it's clear that the team have a great respect for what Capcom achieved with



▲ Expect to see a lot more of the *Eternal Champions*. Sega have an extensive licensing campaign lined up for these characters,



▲ Each character has a distinctive salute to perform before battle commences - adding an extra veneer of personality to the game,



▲ Slash's fighting moves are some of the most entertaining. Based on the "pain" technique, all sorts of down and dirty attacks are used.

their ground-breaking Street Fighter II. However, they felt confident that they could actually improve on it, with better tournament play and superior solo fights. The intelligence of the computer was greatly improved, with sophisticated AI routines that actually learn new offensive and defensive tactics during play!

THE ART OF TRAINING

Training is very important in all forms of martial arts and the programmers wanted to incorporate this into their game. A detailed training program was created, designed to let the player test out the strengths of the Champions and conquer any weaknesses.

DEXTERITY SPHERES

The first form of training allows the player to get to grips with speed and agility of their chosen character. Spheres appear on-screen and the player simply has to hit them. If you're hit by a sphere you lose some energy. When all your energy is gone, you're rated on your performance.

HOLO-TRAINER

The Holo-Trainer is basically a practice mode that enables you to play against the character of your choicer. However, you can change the difficulty level to suit your current stage of development. The speed of the game, special moves, as well as the skill levels of the characters can all be altered with ease. You are graded on your performance, depending on your technique as well as the options you've selected.

PRACTICE SPHERE

Learning to use your moves precisely is very important, hence the inclusion of the Practice Sphere. Here, you choose the area of offense you want to brush up on: jump range, head range, mid range, foot range and moving range. Spheres appear within the chosen range and you have to hit them. Easy.

ENVIRONMENTALLY UNFRIENDLY

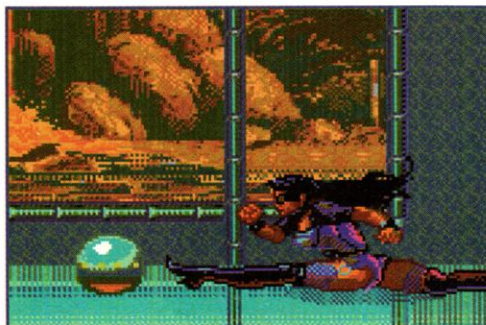
Eternal Champions' designers didn't want to miss a trick when they set about creating this game. One of their initial aims was to have the player fighting the environment as well as the opposition. This did make it into the actual contest part of the game in a few small ways, however it really came into its own when the coders created the Battle Room.

This part of the game incorporates all of the practice options of the holo-trainer, but also introduces 20 new environmental hazards for the player to deal with. Five hazards can only appear at once and these are chosen before battle commences (you can allow the computer to make a random choice if you so desire).

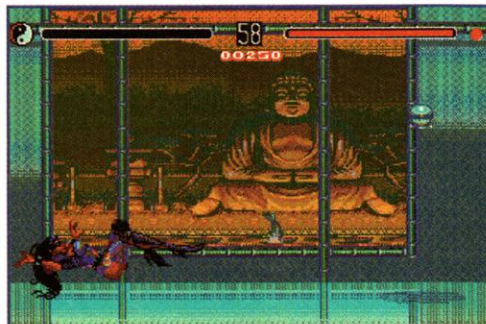
Included in the line-up are scatter grenades, spiked balls, slow motion bolts, life extenders and drainers, transporters and seismic charges! This part of the game is a welcome addition to the standard scenario and very original indeed. ➔



▲ Eternal Champions caters for just about every single fighting option you could possibly think of - including both players using the same character.



▲ The training modes offer plenty of opportunity to hone your skills. Practice targetting your blows with these dexterity spheres.



▲ The Battle Room offers a lot of potential to customise your duels. Taking on the backdrops as well as the opponents is the order of the day.



▲ Here it is - the complete list of options available to add to the basic Battle Room - up to five hazards can be added to the room at once.



▲ A sample of the action on offer in the training mode. The holographic opponents can be programmed to be super intelligent or rather stupid.

THE ETERNAL CHAMPIONS

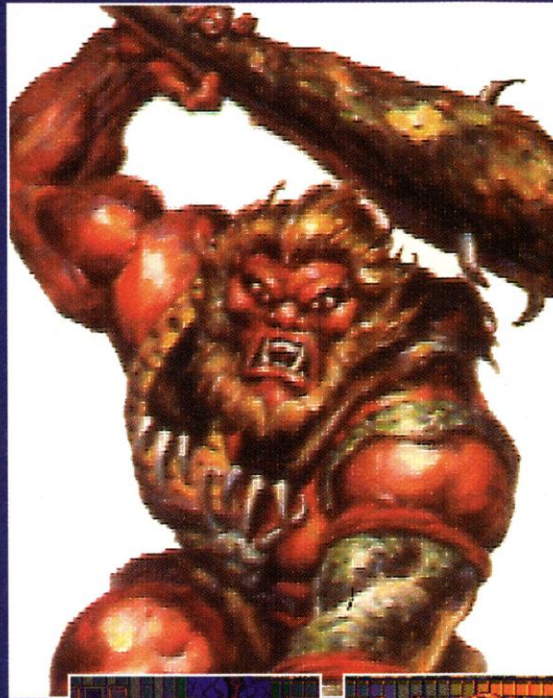
Sega were very keen on creating the best characters for the ultimate combat game. The team began with 55 character archetypes, with game testers voting for their favourite 20. Pictures of the most popular characters were drawn up with interesting biographies and a diversity of combat techniques. In the end, the suggestions were whittled down to the best nine characters. Then the game designers got to work in establishing each character's fighting techniques and special moves. Every move in Eternal Champions is graphically unique (SFII uses the same frames for different moves - Eternal doesn't repeat any). Examine these established biographies of all the contenders. The final character - the Eternal Champion himself - we're going to leave as a mystery for you to unravel when you buy the game.

NAME: JONATHAN BLADE
OCCUPATION: Bounty Hunter
TIME PERIOD: 2030 AD

FIGHTING STYLE: Kenpo
 Known as the "fist" method. Linear as well as circular moves of intermittent power are used, interspersed with major and minor moves that flow with continuity. A very flexible martial art.

BIOGRAPHY: Very dedicated, Blade worked some of the meanest areas of New Chicago in his role as a police officer. However, his propensity for anger caused Blade to brutally assault one his criminal enemies. The result legal action caused Blade to be fired from the police. Moving to Syria he became a bounty hunter - his first case being to stop an evil scientist who possessed a vial that could destroy 95% of the Earth's population. Due to government interference, Blade's attempt to stop the scientist went wrong and the last thing he saw before he died was a smashed vial...

ETERNAL CHAMPIONS



▲ Slash relies more on technique than on flashy special moves - a great starting character.



▲ Slash's spinning club attack in action.



▲ Slash is one of the most athletic characters.

NAME: SLASH
OCCUPATION: Early Man Hunter
TIME PERIOD: 699 BC

FIGHTING STYLE: Pain
 An intriguing form of combat that generally involves dispensing maximum pain on the opposition. Eye poking, ear-drum popping, neck throttling and hair pulling are part of this customised fighting style. Slash carries a large club with which to dispense pain.

BIOGRAPHY: Slash was one of the most advanced members of early human society - he was also the greatest hunter and the best fighter of his generation. Early signs of rational intelligence enabled Slash to out-think his opponents - but it also got him into trouble. He sought to radically alter his peoples' way of life by introducing far-reaching agricultural plans. The elders of his people were resistant to change and had Slash stoned to death for being an "evil force".

SPECIAL MOVES: Slash can chuck opponents into the air and bat them away with his club! The club is also handy for batting away projectiles fired at him. Slash also has a terrifying "spinal crush" move.



▲ Blade has technology on his side.



▲ Blade in the mist - an intriguing picture.

SPECIAL MOVES: Blade has special tracking that follow a target before locking on tacking. He also has a power drain that siphons off an opponent's inner th.



▲ Jetta unleashes a projectile special move on Blade.



▲ Jetta unleashes her true power on an unprepared Blade.

NAME: JETTA MAXX
OCCUPATION: Circus Acrobat
TIME PERIOD: 1899 AD

FIGHTING STYLES: Savate, Pencak Silat
 Jetta employs the use of two martial arts. Savate is the art of French hand and foot fighting, noted for its flamboyant kicking techniques. Pencak Silat is the national fighting art of Indonesia. Many of its moves are based on evasion and the warding off of attacks. Its offensive moves involving upsetting the opponent's balance.

BIOGRAPHY: A born rebel, Jetta broke away from her Russian aristocratic upbringing to be a circus performer. During shows in France and Indonesia she learned gymnastics and martial arts. In 1899, the circus visited China during the Boxer Rebellion - where innocent Chinese protected their homes from foreigners. Seeking to find a peaceful solution to the problems, Jetta infiltrated a major Chinese organisation and worked undercover. However, she was found out. During her command performance for the Emperor of China, her tension wire and safety net were sabotaged, causing her to plummet to an untimely death.

SPECIAL MOVES: Jetta's flying choke involves the throttling of an opponent through the use of her bracelets! Her phase attack enables her to double her speed and pile on the attacks.

NAME: SHADOW YAMOTO
OCCUPATION: Corporate Assassin
TIME PERIOD: 1993 AD

FIGHTING STYLE: Taijutsu (ninjitsu)
 Taijutsu is a form of unarmed combat similar to jujitsu - a forerunner to today's judo. Shadow mixes this technique with ninjitsu - the art of invisibility. The techniques of the ninja involve the use of dirks, darts, daggers, throwing stars, smoke bombs and various poisons.

BIOGRAPHY: Shadow was the best corporate assassin in the Black Orchid organisation. Her "elimination jobs" were performed in the interests of big business - ending large company takeovers and suchlike. However, when she learned that she would be "eliminated" if she ever failed, she learned the value of mortality and would not kill again. Because the Black Orchid organisation does not allow resignations, they arranged her fall from the 101st floor of the office building.

SPECIAL MOVES: Shadow can enter the twilight world of shadow for a short while enabling her to attack with no fear of being hurt. Her twirling fan attack involves flipping over on her feet and lunging forward with a razor-sharp fan. Devastating.



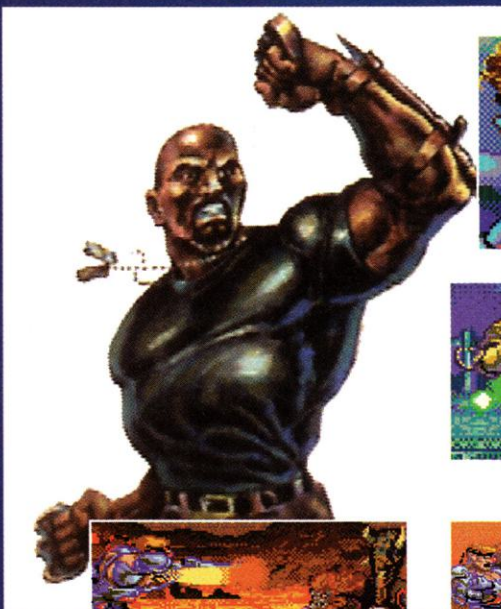
▲ Shadow mode - totally invulnerability to absolutely any form of attack!



▲ The final move of the combination fan attack.



▲ Shadow's superb hybrid martial arts are pitted against the power of cyborg kick boxing!



▲ Rax unleashes his full power.



▲ Taking on the savage might of the powerful Slash!



▲ Rax locks on to the enemy with aid of his laser sight.

NAME: RAX COSWELL
OCCUPATION: Cyber-Fighter
TIME PERIOD: 2345 AD

FIGHTING STYLE: Muay Thai Kickboxing
 The "sport of kings" in Thailand, kickboxing is a mixture of powerful kicks and devastating body blows with both fists and elbows. One of the bloodiest fighting styles ever witnessed by the all-seeing Eternal Champion.

BIOGRAPHY: RAX (Robotic Artificial Xoskeleton) is a cyborg - part man and part machine. Once, Coswell was one of the best human kickboxers, but the emergence of cyber-fighting caused attendance in human kickboxing to disappear. He underwent painful surgery in order to become a cyborg. During a world title fight, RAX was killed by his promoter, who implanted a virus in his computer subsystems in order to win a bet.

SPECIAL MOVES: RAX's jet knee smash is quite interesting. He kicks in the afterburners and smashes his opponents into the wall! By causing a controlled overload of his sub-processors, RAX can project a devastating pulsing power orb at the enemy.

NAME: XAVIER
OCCUPATION: Warlock/Alchemist
TIME PERIOD: 1692 AD

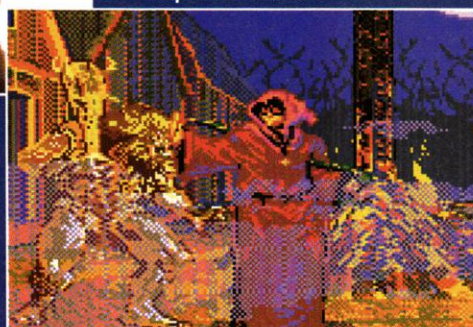
FIGHTING STYLE: Hapkido Cane Fighting
 Interestingly, Hapkido emphasises a code of non-violent counter-defence. If the force of an attacker's blow is strong, it must be met with a soft reception and counter-move. If the force is soft, it should be met with a powerful defence. This approach leads to the fluid and circular motion and constant mobility of the art. The cane is used in place of the limbs. Almost all hits and defenses are performed with it.

BIOGRAPHY: Xavier's career choices were very strange and all met with failure. He attempted to be a blacksmith, but nailed hot shoes onto the mayor's prize horse! Therefore, he decided to take up science - specifically alchemy - the hidden art of turning base metals into gold. After intense study, Xavier still could not find the formula, but instead created a limitless, clean power source. However, before he could document it, he was tried as a warlock and burned on the stake.

SPECIAL MOVES: Xavier's dragon trap moves causes his cane to ensnare the opponent, holding them for the ensuing attack. However, his most powerful move is the identity change - a move that morphs the opponent into another entity entirely, thus creating mass confusion.



▲ Xavier's staff is his primary weapon of attack.



▲ Xavier's celebration moves are as dark and sinister as the character himself. Behind him is the stake on which he was burned to death.



NAME: LARCEN TYLER
OCCUPATION: Ex-Cat Burglar
TIME PERIOD: 1920 AD

FIGHTING STYLE: Preying Mantis Kung Fu
 Preying Mantis Kung Fu originated in a shaolin temple and is characterised by fierce grasping movements, clawing attacks and punches. The shaolin priests used these techniques to defend against larger and stronger attackers. They developed it by studying the moves of two fighting mantises, designing this brutal specialised art.

BIOGRAPHY: As a youth, Larcen became embroiled with a Chicago crime boss and under his tutelage, he became a master cat burglar. He performed many illegal jobs like planting incriminating evidence, but he would not kill. Instead he used martial arts to drop his opponents. One day, the crime boss asked Larcen to plant a package on another mafia boss recovering in hospital. However, when he got there all he could find was the crusading police chief. Realising he was probably carrying a bomb, Larcen tried to chuck it out of the window. He was too late and succeeded in killing himself, the chief - and everyone in the hospital.

SPECIAL MOVES: Larcen crawls across the ceiling and drops at speed on his opponents. The grappling hook he carries enables him to swing across the screen. His swinging hammer fists enable him to inflict multiple hits on his opponents.



▲ The grappling hook is Larcen's most useful tool.



▲ Larcen's charging attack is one of his most deadly special moves - a real killer.



▲ Larcen reels from a kick to the face courtesy of Shadow. The female warrior has engaged the shadow mode - making her invulnerable!



▲ Xavier's character has been draped in sinister mystery. His personality is an enigma, as is his range of mystical special moves.



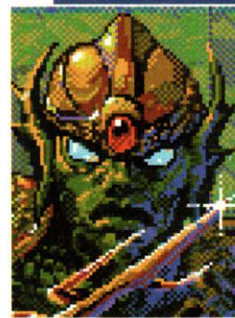
▲ Jetta uses her speedy skills to corner Shadow - one of the Russian's special moves makes her move at twice her normal speed.

NAME: TRIDENT
OCCUPATION: Gladiator
TIME PERIOD: 110 BC

FIGHTING STYLE: Capoeira
 A Brazilian form of combat, adapted by African slaves to fight oppression, in which the foot is considered the strongest weapon and the head the weakest part of the body. Thus, the core of this art's strategy involves bringing the strongest force to the weakest point. Somersaults, handsprings as well as kicks are used.

BIOGRAPHY: Trident lost a battle against a shark, resulting in the placement of a trident on his arm. During the age of Atlantis, he was genetically engineered to be the perfect warrior. During this time, the Atlanteans lived above water and competed against the Romans for mastery of the globe - although they sought a peaceful end to the conflict. The Romans disagreed and suggested a battle of champions. They rigged the fight and killed Trident, forcing the Atlanteans to seek refuge beneath the waves.

SPECIAL MOVES: Trident is one of the most powerful champions in the game. His plasma bolt is one of the largest and deadliest projectiles in the game. His bizarre liquid mode enables him to become a wall of water and avoid enemy attacks!



▲ The blue aura slows down an opponent on contact. A decent attack.



▲ Trident has several "auras" - each have a different effect.



▲ The bio-drain aura diminishes the impact of enemies' blows.



▲ An airborne clash between Xavier and Midnight. Painstaking attention has been paid to every single frame of animation in the game.



▲ Two contenders from our future battle it out. Blade the bounty hunter takes on the airborne might of RAX - the fearsome cyber-fighter.



▲ Xavier reels after being struck by Trident. The Atlantean is one of the most deadly fighters in the game. The computer uses him particularly well.



ETERNAL CHAMPIONS

▲ Larcen and Slash have two completely different fighting styles. The Chicagoan prefers long range strikes - Slash is more of a close quarters fighter.

▲ Midnight is another of the game's more sinister opponents. A virtual vampire, his refusal to kill has led to the decomposition of his body.



NAME: MIDKNIGHT
OCCUPATION: Bio-Chemical Scientist
TIME PERIOD: 1967 AD

FIGHTING STYLE: Jeet Kune Do
 A martial art developed by the late Bruce Lee - literally translated it means the "way of the intercepting fist". Jeet Kune Do is a collection of basic mental and physical concepts, observations of combat manoeuvres and philosophies of attitude.

BIOGRAPHY: Midnight was a scientist developing a specialised virus aimed at bringing an end to the Vietnam conflict. However, he couldn't bear to see his formula actually used and fled to London with it. In the ensuing chase, Midnight fell into a vat of chemicals. The formula interacted with the chemicals, turning him into a super-strong vampire creature. Refusing to kill another, his body began to rot away, causing Midnight to seek a solution to his curse. Just as he was about to administer the antidote, he was killed by a government agent who drove a magnesium stake through his heart.

SPECIAL MOVES: His unearthly powers give him strange special moves, including the ability to become a vapor which attacks the enemy. He can also siphon off some of his opponent's life force.



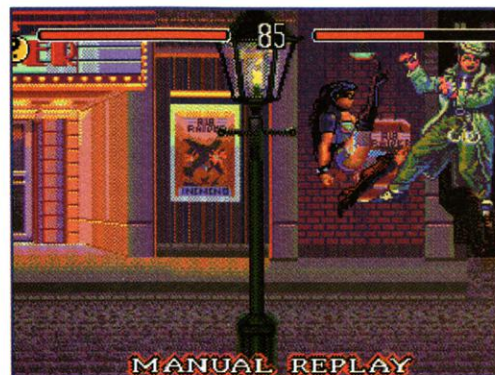
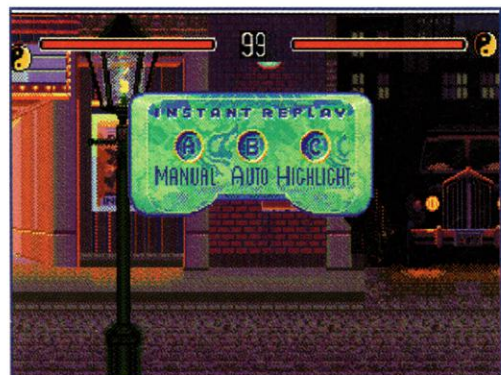
▲ Midnight has many mysterious mind powers at his disposal.



▲ Midnight can partially drain a foe's energy bar.



▲ Midnight's powerful special moves, coupled with his basic attacks make him a strong fighter.



INSTANT REPLAY!

One of the most intriguing new features in Eternal Champions is the replay mode. Using this mode it's possible to review the round at different speeds. It's an excellent addition to the game and allows players the chance to replay and show off their best attacks - a very good feature that isn't present in Street Fighter II. The two screenshots to the left investigate this mode in a bit more detail. The only other game with this feature is Konami's Tournament Fighters - however, the implementation in Eternal Champions is far superior.

▲ Flick on the replays and this selection appears after every round. HIGHLIGHT shows off the best parts of the round, AUTO shows the final blows.

▲ MANUAL replay mode is the best! Using the joy-pad buttons you're able to advance the action frame-by-frame - or a bit faster if you want.