we were able to bring a great sense of environment, speed and scale to WipeOut using Softimage."

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FULL SPEED ANIMATION

How do you make a game that players feel they're actually "in" instead of just controlling? Animate in real time using realistic, three-dimensional graphics. Sound complicated? Not if you have the right tools. On assignment to create a new breed of "super" game for the Playstation, the Sony Psygnosis development team used Softimage 3D to help them produce their futuristic racing adventure, WipeOut. The result? Imagery so dynamic, you could swear you're behind the wheel. Even after hours of testing his own product, Producer Dominic Mallinson, still says WipeOut is "a game you just can't put down."

SOFTIMAGE MEETS THE 3D CHALLENGE

After a search for the best production software, the design team at Sony Psygnosis unanimously choose Softimage. "We looked at other packages," says Mallinson, "But Softimage had the most to offer." Sony Psygnosis leveraged the flexibility of Softimage's integrated modules and extensive tool palette to increase production speed and create what designer Nick Burcombe describes as "cyberpunky, aggressive" animations.

3D Animation Puts Players "In" the Driver's Seat

SONY PSYGNOSIS

A renowned developer/distributor in the 16-bit realm, Psygnosis caught the interest of Sony in 1993. Recognizing the company's dedication to both technological and artistic innovation, Sony asked Psygnosis to join their team. Now a wholly owned subsidiary, Sony Psygnosis is pushing the boundaries of the new Playstation 64-bit technology by producing games the likes of which have never been seen, or played, before.

WHEN ONLY THE BEST WILL DO

Creating a master game that moves at 30 fps isn't child's play. In order to build the extraordinary components necessary for aggressive play, Sony Psygnosis relied on Softimage. Initial diagrams of game play and models were sketched by hand and handed over to computer artists. The new polygonal modeling tool was used to create the ships for the games "anti-gravity" racing league and provide reusable models of trees and other along-the-road-way objects. Six race tracks were built using Softimage's spline-based modeling tool, creating tracks in segments that were then blocked together. Based on fast screen feedback, animators then seamlessly modified timing or models. Using the local texture mapping tool, Psygnosis animators maintained the integrity of the game's graphics. Futuristic racing logos were quickly mapped or "localized" onto individual sections of fuselage. And to further enhance the dynamic look of the game, Softimage provided designers with an array of lighting capabilities. Artists were able to create bottom lit tracks filters for dramatic highlights and shadows and even effects that lit the scene for nighttime racing.

THE ART OF THE GAME

When designer Nick Burcombe sat down to create WipeOut he decided to build a game that would not only test sheer gamer skill but also look like an alternative universe. With barely six months turn around time, Burcombe relied heavily on Softimage to keep the artists free from the hazards of programming. "If you chose a tool that is oriented to a programmer, your artists won't be able to design elements that look and feel good to a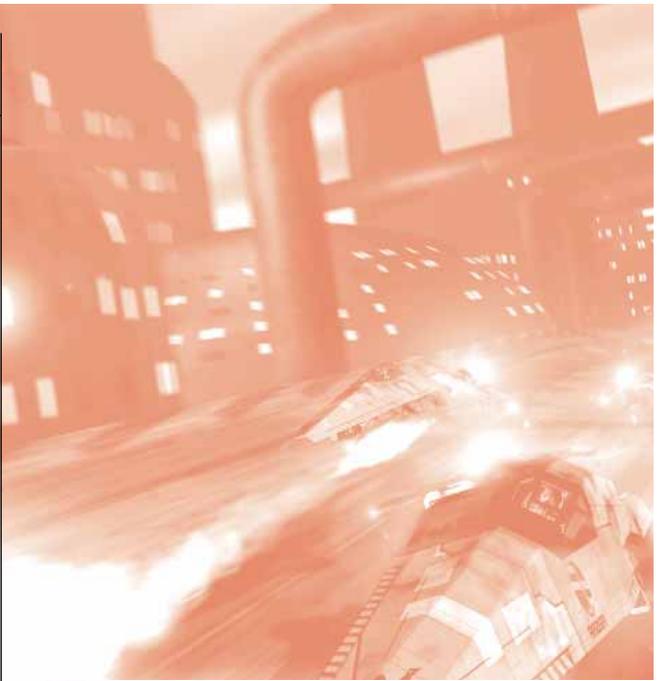 player," admits Burcombe. Team Leader and lead animator for the project, Nicky Carus-Westcott agrees that not only did Softimage payoff in sheer beauty of the graphics but it also helped to build a free flowing creative environment that captivated both pro and novice animators.

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