The year is 2098. Crime oozes through the streets of Los Angeles. A new hero is needed to clean it all up, one that's bigger and badder than some namby-pamby robocop. From the glory days of Atari comes the X1-Alpha, a transforming police vehicle with plenty of jumping power. Nevermind dodging cars and jumping from log to log. This Frogger wears a badge, and he's packing heat.

Future Cop comes in two flavors. The first is scenario mode, where you battle your way through successive stages. Your goal is to find and eliminate the end-of-level boss, blowing up everything from crazed civilians to mutant slugs along the way. They're all just begging for an introduction to your three firepower options, which improve as you progress through the game. You can also mix and match them at the start of each new level, so accessorizing is never a problem.

he third-person overhead navigation is adequate in most circumstances, but occasionally you'll find yourself destroying targets you can't even see. They're there all right, because the thin red line of your targeting sighter tells you so. It automatically finds the nearest target based on where you're standing, leaving you free to concentrate on destroying it, blowing it up, or some combination thereof.

As you make your way through the maze-like terrain of each stage, your Lara Croft-like dispatcher offers poignant tips to clue you in on what you need to do and how you need to do it. Initially this is a big help. After the fifth or sixth run through a level, being told "That looks like a door switch" loses its novelty. Fortunately, a newly released patch (in beta) allows you to adjust the dispatcher's volume independently from the rest of the audio. It's available from the Mac Gamer's Ledge Hotline Server at 207.245.14.170:1000.

The best part of the X1-Alpha is its ability to morph from walker mode into hover-craft mode. Gameplay usually isn't dependent on one or the other, so you're free to be what you want whenever you want. At least in single player mode, though, most of your time will be spent in walker mode since it offers the most precise control over movement and weaponry. The option to transform is a nice one to have, but sometimes it can feel entirely superfluous.

Things change considerably when you enter one of the multiplayer modes. If you decide to share your keyboard and run through the levels with another player to back you up, the screen splits in half vertically and you've suddenly lost half your viewing area. If the second player is at another computer, though, all is well.

When pure competition is what you crave, FutureCop's second playing mode will keep you more than occupied. The goal is now to defend your base from the oncoming onslaught of Sky Captain's forces (or those of a second player) while you try to make your way into his base. Being the computerized genius that he is, Sky Captain is a force to be reckoned with. You've got gun turrets?   He's got gun turrets, too. And he knows how to steal yours. Game play revolves around a point system—the more you blow up, the more points you can use to fatten your ranks with drones, tanks, and other fun stuff.

Hey, watch the paint job—someone should teach Sky Captain some manners

Network play suffers from a slight lag, but gameplay isn't crippled. Unfortunately, you can't play with more than two people, nor can you communicate with the second player while a game is in session.

Where graphics are concerned, Electronic Arts has managed to please Voodoo-ready G3s and iMacs without leaving the regular PowerPCs in the cold. If you've got the hardware to appreciate it, FutureCop's graphics approach those of Unreal. If not, this is still a finely detailed game with hardly a polygon out of place.

ven without 3D acceleration, the X1-Alpha can still bring down the thunder

It's easy to nitpick over Future Cop's minor flaws, to harp on the fact that when you're stuck at a certain point on one of the levels and just going through the motions to reach it, the game is little more than a series of conditioned responses to the same set of preprogrammed events. But that's true of any game. At least Future Cop gives you a hefty amount of action to quench your thirst for explosion. What makes Future Cop a great is its smooth graphics, a storyline well woven into game play, and best of all, a cheap sticker price. Long live the X1-Alpha Frogger.