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UK edition **December** 1994 £three ^{¥2100}_{\$ten}

EDGE

Sony ■ Sega ■ Nintendo ■ 3DO ■ PC ■ Amiga ■ Atari ■ SNK ■ Arcade ■ NEC ■ CD-i



Neo-Geo CD

The world's most powerful cartridge arcade system has been reinvented

(and now you can actually afford the games)

Voted
**Magazine
of the year**



Industry awards

SNK's new CD-ROM machine is coming to the UK. For the first time, the Neo-Geo's superb arcade games will be within the reach of most players. Edge tests the first machine to hit these shores

future
PUBLISHING

Issue **fifteen**

15



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pre**screen**

Return Fire

The battle to produce dazzling 3DO software is hotting up. **Edge** is blown away by a title that marries classic gameplay with 32bit visuals



Your tank has just been destroyed by hostile fire from a roving helicopter and one of the many gun towers that defend the enemy base. The smooth 3D scrolling perspective in *Return Fire* is incredibly well achieved giving the buildings real substance and helping to create a believable 3D world

Format: **3DO**

Publisher: **Silent Software**

Developer: **In-house**

Release date: **November**

Origin: **US**

Some of the best 3DO games started life on other formats. EA's *John Madden Football* and *Road Rash* are probably the two best games on the 3DO, yet most of their gameplay is pure Mega Drive. Similarly, although Silent Software's *Return Fire* is technically an original 3DO game, it owes a large debt to *Firepower*, a twoplayer tank battle game developed by Silent for the Amiga way back in 1988. According

to the game's associate producer, **Alex Kasperavicius**, 'The design has been on the table for almost ten years, but we didn't start working on it until about a year ago.'

The premise of *Return Fire* is straightforward. The game is set on a desert island off the coast of Australia. To claim the island for yourself, you have to find and capture your enemy's flag, hidden inside a building on his base. To aid you in this mission you have four different military vehicles: a tank, an armoured support vehicle (ASV), a helicopter and a jeep, each of which has its own attributes. For example, the relatively vulnerable jeep is the only vehicle that can collect and carry the flag. The splitscreen twoplayer game is rather more complex: you have to protect your own flag from a foe with the same objective and hardware as you.



Select from the four vehicles before the start of each game



You can only find the flag by blowing up enemy buildings

The twoplayer game uses a splitscreen format – one side plays green, the other red. The red helicopter attacks (left)



The game 'camera' lowers from a top-down to a closer, side-on view

'The camera zooms into the action and zooms out when you're travelling. We want to make it as cinematic as possible'

Senior programmer **Will Ware** concedes that many of the ideas in *Return Fire* first surfaced in *Firepower*: 'The concepts are very similar. We wanted to keep the look and the feel the same but add 3D and a new interface as well as new strategies. As you have all these different vehicles, there's a lot of strategies you can pull. You have to know which vehicle you need at that time.' The subtle differences between the abilities of the vehicles certainly give *Return Fire* considerable depth.

Graphically, *Return Fire* is outstanding. In both fullscreen and splitscreen mode, Silent's attention to detail has resulted in a compelling gameworld. Blow up a building and tiny figures run out of the ruins. Chase them and they run away, even diving into the sea to escape. Trap them in a corner and they turn on you and start throwing grenades. Every object, even the tiny figures, is fully light-sourced, with individual shadowing, and the buildings explode in a brilliant white flash which contracts to a red fireball.

The buildings and landscapes were created using a combination of polygons and bitmapped graphics. Will and Alex are reluctant to give much

away, but they do say that there are 'hundreds of thousands of polygons onscreen at once'.

Your viewpoint changes according to what you're doing. 'The camera zooms into the action and zooms out when you're travelling,' explains Alex. 'We want to make it as cinematic and movie-like as possible.' Also helping to create a filmic atmosphere is a multi-layered Dolby Surround soundtrack comprising both effects and music, including classical pieces like Wagner's *Ride Of The Valkyries*.

Alex is convinced that *Return Fire* will keep 3D owners playing for months. With its delightful graphics, compulsive gameplay and wonderful twoplayer mode, it deserves great success. The full review will follow next month.



Credits

Director: Baron Reichart Kurt Von Wolfshild
Audio/associate producer: Alex Kasperavicius
Senior Programmer: William Ware
Programmer: Edgar Tolentino
Programmer: James Host
Artist: Van Arno
Layout: David Pascal