Run for it!

WorldCup 99 brings the excitement of cricket to your PC

P laying cricket on the PC has never really been a favourite pastime. But the latest version of EA Sport's *Cricket World Cup 99* seems to be the breakthrough that cricket fans have been waiting for. With EA's interactive broadcasting style, you get the chance to go one step further than just watching cricket on TV. Star in it!

The game, which runs on a 233 MHz Pentium with 4x CD-ROM drive, 200 MB free hard disk space and Direct 3D supported graphics accelerator card, bowls you over with its amazing 3D graphics, highly detailed motion-capture techniques, and detailed commentaries from the legendary Richie Benaud and David Gower. Other noteworthy features include multiple camera angles, realistic reproductions of tournament stadia (Lords and The Oval) and extensive motion capture sessions with cricketing brothers Adam and Ben Hollioake. The highly charged emotions of the final over of a tense one-day international match have been captured well.

Batting has always been one of the most difficult aspects for cricket games to master, with games often pitching the difficulty curves far too steep, which leaves you reeling with ridiculous scores like 5/9, and little incentive to perfect your play. However, Cricket World Cup 99 presents a workable method that uses an arrow to set the general direction of your shot, while a simple tap governs the timing and power of your stroke.

A relatively new bowling system resembles the swingometer seen in many golf games. You select the pitch of the ball, the amount of seam, and the swing or spin you want to apply, and then hit a moving meter to determine your degree of accuracy. Fielding options are unparalleled too.

Not quite Cricket

However, the game does not support left-handed batsmen and bowlers, and also features squads which are either out-of-date or just plain wrong. For example, Shane Warne is profiled as a left-arm spinner, and England opening bowler Alan Mullally has been left out altogether. The developers have promised a subsequent patch that will correct both problems. Watching classic southpaw maestros like Brian Lara, Graham Thorpe and Michael Bevan bat right-handed is just not cricket; it upsets the balance of the game and mars an otherwise highly enjoyable experience.

Despite of these minor shortcomings, *Cricket World Cup 99* is undoubtedly the most playable cricket game ever released.
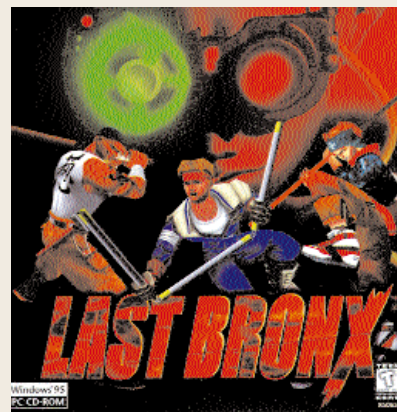
NITESH WADEKAR

Rating: HHHH

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Cricket World Cup 99
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Last Bronx

Biker gangs and Chinese mafia, loan-sharks and slave-traders, thieves, mad-

men, and for an extra bit of fun, believers in the doomsday cult. Sounds exciting, yes? Welcome to the mean streets of Tokyo—where the most vicious gang warriors are looking for blood. You can choose from eight toughs, who'll represent you in eight different locations, in what is billed as the "ultimate urban brawl." *Last Bronx* brings the gut-wrenching adrenaline-rush of streetfighting to your PC. The fighting, with authentic martial arts moves, is as real as it can get, without you ending up picking your teeth off the alleys of Tokyo. The settings are authentic Japanese, and the nicely rendered computer graphics enhance the gaming experience. The best part though, is the groovy, pulsating music to which you fight.

The game has been ported to the PC very well (the original version was played on Sega's coin-operated machines), and supports multi-player gaming over TCP/IP, and IPX, networks as well as on modem and serial links.

Play this one if you've got guts!

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Rating: HHHH
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