

SPYRO THE DRAGON

DRAGONS HAVE ALWAYS HAD A ROUGH RIDE SINCE ST GEORGE STUCK HIS LANCE IN ONE. BUT NOW SPYRO IS HERE TO CHANGE ALL THAT...

What a little

stunner! If *Metal Gear Solid* impressed last month with its technical brilliance, *Spyro The Dragon*, Sony's battering ram for the Christmas thrust, impresses on a straightforward graphical plain. There's no two ways about it, this game is one of the most graphically brilliant and visually polished products to grace the PlayStation. Which isn't bad for a game featuring a poncey dragon!

The game is a straightforward platform affair that emulates *Mario 64* and steals from a few other platform greats along the way. You step into the camp little trotters of Spyro, a young dragon who has become separated from his immense clan of wise old fire-breathers. This is just as well really because all 80 of Spyro's family were incarcerated in ice whilst the

frisky, horned youngster frolicked – the culprit, one Gnasty Gnorc. This malicious goblin geezer took it upon himself to rid the six dragon worlds of inhabitants and appoint himself as dictator, installing his own fanged cohorts.

DRAGON BREATH

Spyro must not only defrost his relatives, but also retrieve the dragon treasure that was stolen by the enemy. And so a typical platform adventure begins as Spyro

PLAY
information



Publisher: Sony
Customer support:
0171 505505
Price: £39.99
Release date: Out now



ONE PLAYER



MEMORY CARD



DUAL ANALOGUE



[ABOVE] All was fine in dragon-land before Spyro's family was incarcerated in ice by Gnasty Gnorc.



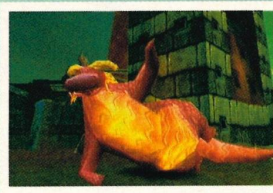
[ABOVE] The huge bulky guards taunted Spyro in Medieval ways: "Scaredy cat, scaredy cat, what dost thou think thou art looking at!" It's more than a fragile dragon can take!



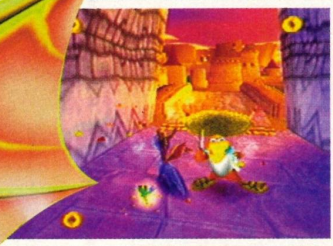
[ABOVE] Spyro's in for a right treat if he finds the Fire Fairies! These hovering maidens will plant a scorching smacker on the dragon's lips, causing him to blush and turn red. This also enhances the power of his flames.



[Above] Obscured by the smoke from his own fiery breath, Spyro torches the chests, revealing treasure that must all be collected if the game is to be completed properly.



[Above] Oops! Has Spyro come to a dead end? The gormless expression on his face would suggest such, but there are numerous hidden areas to find. [INSET] The centrefold from a discarded copy of 'Dragon-balls Monthly'!



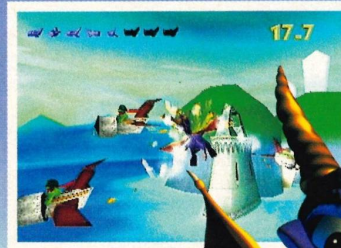
“Spyro isn’t a game for the hard-core elite...”

must bound through six worlds, each with various sub-levels that need to be explored and emptied of imprisoned dragons, dastardly henchmen and the odd gem. It's all fairly simple stuff really, but something the younger gamers can get stuck into.

As a challenge, *Spyro* doesn't quite get out of the starting blocks until you progress to the second of the six worlds. But it can be argued that the first world is merely a vehicle to enable players to get accustomed to *Spyro's* abilities. For a nipper, he's quite well equipped to take on Gnorc's army. His wings may be lame compared to his bigger forefathers, but these can be used to glide over great



[Above] By walking into the dragon statues, you'll free your fellow dragons. They'll then give you hints.



[Above] Spyro can use a charging headbutt attack to vanquish tricky enemies. Fast and fun.

distances, he also possesses the sort of fiery breath not seen since one of the *PLAY* annual garlic-gargling championships – ideal fodder for torching bulky bothers to a cinder.

For the record, *Spyro* can also roll sideways, but you'll probably not find yourself

utilising this feature on the grounds of sheer uselessness.

The basic mechanics behind *Spyro* are very much like *Crash Bandicoot*. You've got a certain amount of things to find, some are straightforward and some aren't, and it's the ones that aren't that



[Above] This is one of the big boss characters. All of these need to be defeated to complete the game, but thankfully, in most cases, their bark is much worse than their bite. Frothy Lard is harder than these guys!

review Spyro the dragon



DRAGNET...

Spyro may be more camp than a row of tents, but he is a dragon after all, and dragons have a kind of reputation for being fierce creatures. Here are some of the more famous horned fire-breathers that have appeared over the years.

Pete's Dragon

POT-BELLIED, BEATLE HAIRCUT-SPORTING GREEN GOON WITH A FONDNESS FOR SMALL CHILDREN.

SCARE FACTOR ★★★★★



The Soup Dragon

GUZZLER OF HOT-BROTH THAT FEATURED REGULARLY IN THE KIDDIE'S TV SHOW, *THE CLANGERS*.

SCARE FACTOR ★★★★★



Draco

BIG FIRE-BREATHING PHILOSOPHER WITH A SCOTTISH ACCENT, STARRING IN THE FILM, *DRAGONHEART*.

SCARE FACTOR ★★★★★



Godzilla

GENETICALLY MUTATED LIZARD THAT WENT ON THE RAMPAGE IN NEW YORK AND THEN HATCHED LOADS OF GODZOOKIS.

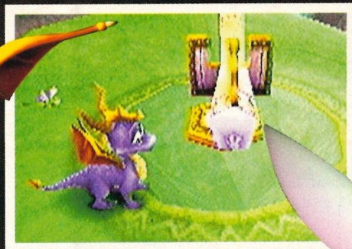
SCARE FACTOR ★★★★★



Ivy Tilsley

NOTORIOUS 'DRAGON' OF THE STREET, NOW CURRENTLY GOING ON THE RAMPAGE ON ANY TALK SHOW THAT'LL HAVE HER! [RIGHT, THAT'S ENOUGH FAMOUS DRAGONS! - Ed]

SCARE FACTOR ★★★★★



"Spyro's squeaky-clean, and rather sickly cute..."

give the game its depth. There are cunningly hidden secret areas and distant platforms, the scaling of which requires great patience and skill (we haven't actually done those bits yet!) Apart from these few tricky bits, the rest of the game can be breezed through with little effort... so you get the picture, this isn't a game for the hard-core elite.

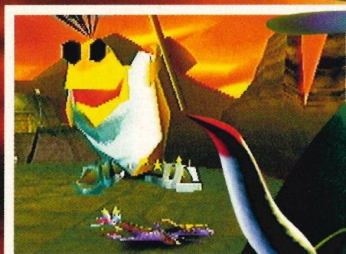
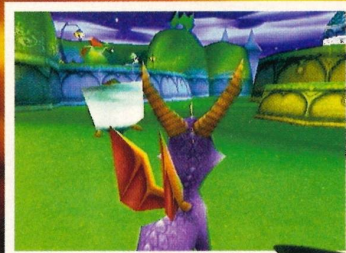
DRAGON HEART

Shortcomings in the gameplay aside, *Spyro* does seem like an irresistible package, especially the lavish looks. The game looks so polished and spangly that you can't help but feel humbled in its presence. All of the worlds are colourful and intricately detailed and you can gaze for miles around thanks to a function that zooms in on Spyro's head and allows you to manipulate his field of vision. The landscapes blend beautifully into the horizon, and everything looks so seamless – a truly magnificent feat by Insomniac Games.

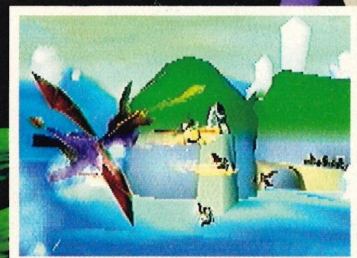
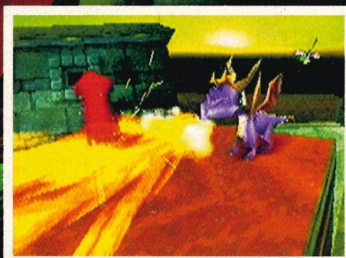
There are plenty of neat little touches as well, such as your little dragonfly chum who acts as your energy bar. It starts off glowing gold, but whenever you take a hit, it will change colour until after three it disappears completely. Without the matey



[ABOVE] Another dead-end has Spyro snorting fire in frustration. [INSET] Beware of any enemy that smiles at you! They ain't nice!



[ABOVE] Spyro is interviewed about his adventure. Hopefully, this won't be the beginning of a glittering career in show business. Perish the thought!

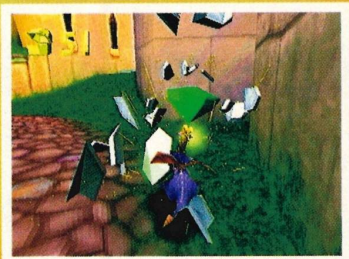




[Above] Spyro collects more hidden treasure. The thing flying next to him is his dragonfly mate that doubles up as an energy bar. Get hit several times and he's off, leaving you weak.



[Above] The game contains a hidden Crash 3 demo. Splendid!



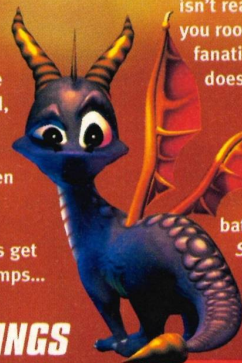
dragonfly, Spyro is doomed if he suffers another blow, so he'll have to take time out from his adventure and hunt down some of the wildlife to coax back the buzzing thing. Other nice touches include the fireworks that can be lit with Spyro's fire and used to break distant crates. There are also cannons that can be aimed at enemies far in the distance. The in-game music is



[Above] Certain enemies are invulnerable to flame attacks, so you'll have to ram them off of ledges to kill them. [INSET] "Release the hounds!" Some folk don't take too kindly to camp dragons on private property.

passable, but doesn't really enhance the gameplay much. This is probably why we took to turning down the volume and blasting out the latest Marilyn Manson album, which was quite a stark contrast, we can tell you. Watching Spyro prancing around to "I'm not in love, but I'm gonna **** you until something better comes along" generated much amusement and ironic chortles in the office! Some of the spot-effects are good, especially the squeaky grunting noises omitted from the goblin hordes when you headbutt them into oblivion, although Spyro's voice does get on one's lady-lumps...

have also been a good idea to have Spyro growing and maturing as the game goes on. So extra areas could be reached when his useless excuses for wings grow in size and his fiery breath becomes more intense. The action is broken down nicely with the *Pilot Wings* style bonus flying stages, but there just isn't really enough variety to keep you rooted for very long. Platform fanatics will lap it all up, but it does seem that *Spyro* just undoes all the hard work that *Abe* put in to remove the platform genre from the squeaky-clean, sickly cute cliché it has been bathing in for so long. Buy *Spyro* for your kids, have a go and pass it on. Just don't tell any of your mates about it!



DROPPINGS

Despite being aimed at youngsters, *Spyro* still poses a decent enough challenge for more experienced gamers - especially when it comes to collecting the last of the tricky treasure or hunting down that last elusive imprisoned dragon. What brings it down though is the lack of enemies. It might



PLAY

LOOKS	●●●●●●●●
SOUNDS	●●●●●●●●
GAMEPLAY	●●●●●●●●
VALUE	●●●●●●●●
HORNS	●●●●●●●●

88%

A polished platformer devoid of real challenge

Alternatively:
 Crash Bandicoot 2 86%
 Croc: Legend Of The Gobbos 78%