





Treasure can be found all over the place, in a variety of boxes and caskets



REVIEW

Spyro The Dragon

Sony's latest hero cooks up chaos as his flame-throwing antics surpass anything Burger King has sizzling on its griddle



With the success of *Mario 64* on the *Nintendo*, the PlayStation has been crying out for a similar 3D adventure game, but one with its own original quirky character. OK, so we've had *Croc*, but he was far too cute for his own good, and the game itself was far from expansive.

We've even had *Gex* parading around in all his 3D splendour, but even the allure of his cheesy charms can start to wear off after a while. However, these two will be graciously bowing down from the 'successful character' platform with the arrival of *Spyro*, the intrepid little dragon whose heroic exploits are finally making their PlayStation debut.

Spyro's mission in the game is to free his fire-breathing family from the evil spell of Gnorc the Nasty, who has turned them all into crystal statues. By wandering through a vast array of worlds and freeing all his draconic relations, *Spyro* can make his way to meet Gnorc for a showdown.

BREATH OF FIRE

So what's *Spyro* got that *Croc*, *Gex* and the like haven't? For a start, *Spyro* himself has the ability to scamper around the 3D

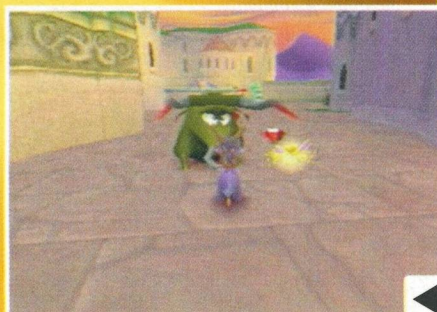
environment like a bat out of hell at times, as well as performing such stunts as flying, charging, and of course, breathing fire. These qualities were important to *Spyro's* designers, so the guys at *Insomniac* (those responsible for the little tyke) consulted with Charles Zembillas of *Universal Interactive* (the man who gave birth to manic marsupial *Crash Bandicoot*) to get a good idea of what to incorporate into *Spyro*.

This collaboration seems to have been a great success, as not only is *Spyro* a talented little tyke, but is also set to capture the hearts of gamers young and old with his rebellious attitude and the mischievous look in his eye.

However, it's not just *Spyro* himself that's appealing – the game is the first release on the PlayStation to feature totally free-roaming environments. This means that you can pretty much wander about at your leisure, coming and going from the 36 levels as you wish. The only exception with this comes when passing between each of the seven worlds, where you need to free a certain amount of dragons (or gather enough jewels) before you can be transported to a new world.

WANDERING STAR

The first thing that strikes you when you begin to play *Spyro* is how overwhelmingly large the game is, and even when you've played the ▶



Running headlong into a raging bull isn't advisable, particularly as he's liable to headbutt you. Give him a quick blast of your napalm breath to see him off

► game for hours, it comes as a shock to realise you've only completed around 13% of the game.

As you wander about the home level of each world, you'll find that you have several choices as to which level to tackle first. However, if you are daunted by this prospect, and are worried about getting lost, then don't be, as a variety of landmarks will guide you and mark out the boundaries of the map.

If you do find yourself straying too far off the beaten track, you'll be stopped by an invisible wall. In the levels that are situated upon cliffs, the sea acts as both a barrier and a deterrent – one false move over the edge will often land you in the water, causing you to drown.

Although you're free to wander in and out of levels, there are some that require certain things before you can enter them. If you're not ready to enter a level, a friendly dragon will appear out of the scenery to tell you what you need before you can embark on your next quest.

Help also comes in the form of the dragons that you release from Gnorc's freeze spell, as they'll tell you what you need to do or look out for in a level in order to complete it properly. This also applies to entering other worlds, and as soon as you have performed the basic requirements for entry, a hot air balloon will appear to move you on. From then on, you're at liberty to return to each level as you please.

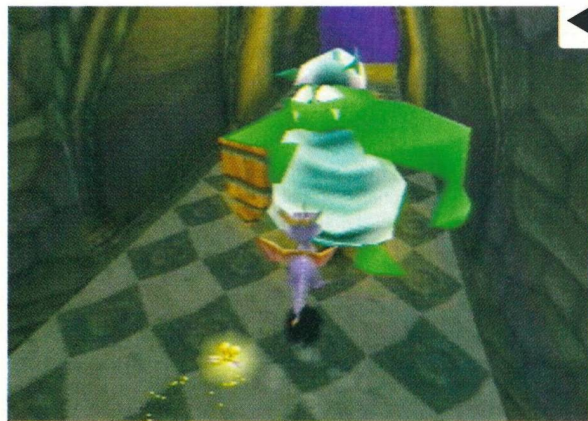
FLAMING GOOD

When playing any 3D adventure game, one of the most annoying things that can happen is being attacked from behind by some hard-hitting enemy. However, the developers of *Spyro* have thought of this, and so any nasties which are hungry for a pop at you will never attack when your back is turned, and will only make a move

Spyro is a Mario killer, without the moustache, dungarees and the horrible Italian accent

when you're facing them or coming their way. When you do find yourself in the path of an oncoming aggressor, several blasts with your demon breath or a well-timed headbutt will put paid to them.

When working your way through the game, it's likely that you'll need to replenish your health at



Flying is an essential skill to master, especially for getting to dragon statues and secret stashes of treasure



regular intervals. In order to keep *Spyro* sustained throughout his adventures, he's got his own 'guardian angel' in the form of Sparks the dragonfly, which follows him about everywhere and protects him from hits.

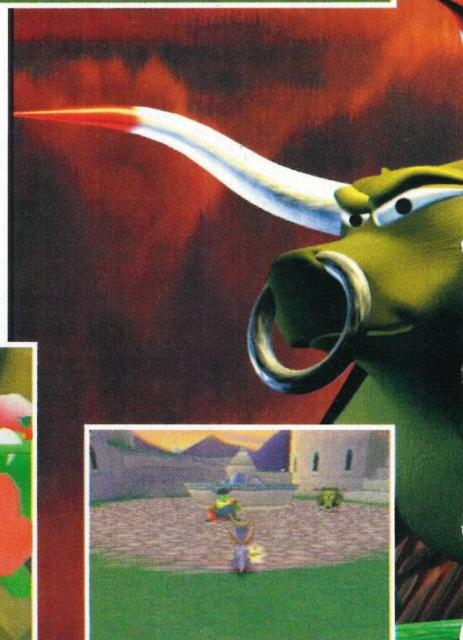
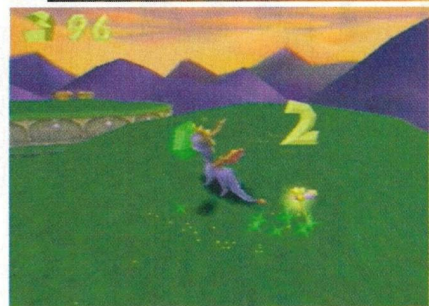
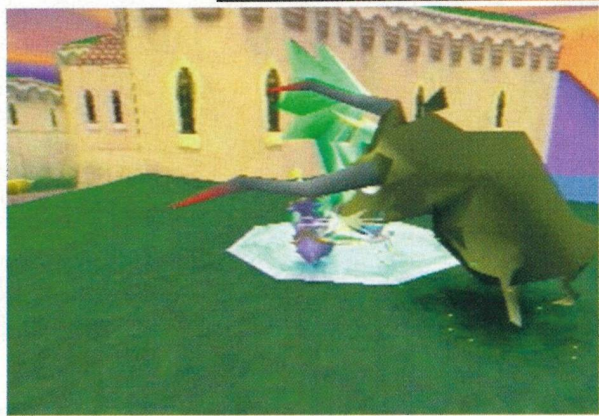
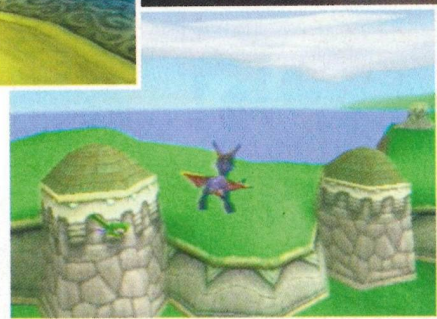
The dragonfly's health also needs to be maintained, and this is done by collecting the butterflies which the levels' small (and completely harmless) animals leave behind when you destroy them. When your dragonfly's aura glows green, that's when you know you're protected, and this decreases in colour the more damaged the dragonfly takes.

But in the end, no matter whether you're a demon at destroying devilish dudes or adept at uncovering secrets, there's all sorts of things to discover and marvel at in *Spyro*, that will keep you busy for ages. The relaxed, 'come and go as you please' attitude of the game is a welcome relief from the heart-stopping nightmares of platform games which have you jumping from place to place faster than a speeding bullet.

This also allows you to take in the beauty of the scenery, which not only flows smoothly as you pass between scenes, but is also highly detailed, and spectacularly colourful. The game's innovative environment engine allows you to see infinite distances, preventing objects from suddenly popping up out of nowhere and stopping the game from slowing down when there's a lot going on in a scene.

However, there will be some knockers of the game who will suggest that it's all been done before, but so what if *Spyro's* 3D adventures on the PlayStation are a backlash to the success of *Mario's* meanderings? At least *Spyro's* not got a moustache, dungarees and a horrible Italian accent, which is surely a massive relief to any respectable gamer **PRO**

◀ To add variety to your attacking methods, some monsters need special treatment in order for you to destroy them. Headbutting this fat frog won't work, but breathing on and burning his belly will sizzle his green butt





ENTER THE DRAGON



Walking up to a dragon statue will cause it to shake, starting up the rescue process



A massive flash of light warns Spyro to stand back and let nature take its course



The crystal coating will crumble into pieces, finally freeing the dragon from his prison



Many of the dragons will stick around long enough to give you a few handy game tips



After offering advice, the escapee will disappear and leave you with a green platform



These platforms allow you to save the game or hear the dragon's wise words once more



You'll find many weird and wonderful creatures lurking around the levels, from wicked wizards to big green monsters. However, not all of these are out to get you - you'll find that some are more scared of you than you are of them, and so they'll run away at the mere sight of you

PRO

SCORE

PRICE: £39.99

PUBLISHER: Sony

GENRE: Adventure

MUST BUY



Spyro is a visually gorgeous and thoroughly absorbing game, which manages to avoid the horrible cuteness which features so heavily in other games of this kind. With its gigantic levels, well-hidden passages and cunning pick-up puzzles, Spyro will keep even the most impatient of players amused for hours. However, if you prefer your 3D action to be a little more bloodthirsty, this will be as exciting as a backstage pass to an Aqua concert. But in my opinion, Spyro should go straight to No.1.

KAY ●

WHAT'S THE SCORE

GRAPHICS	9
SOUND	9
GAMEPLAY	9
LASTABILITY	9

9

PRO PANEL

LEWIS Mario finally gets his butt fried by a free-roaming PlayStation game that's addictive, gorgeous looking and has masses of playability. Italian spare ribs, anyone?

JAY Absolutely awesome. Smarter than your average cutesy platform-esque romp as Spyro delivers wads of addictive gameplay and oozes quality from every pore. A scorcher!

JAMES Spyro combines an amazing graphical engine with fantastically addictive gameplay and I simply can't recommend it enough. You won't get your fingers burnt with Spyro

SAM He may be sickeningly Disney-like, but this dragon still kicks ass. You haven't seen what the PlayStation is really capable of until you've met the fire-breathing brilliance of Spyro



REVIEW