



# Buck Bumble

What's that you say? **Mutated insects** with **robotic limbs** going to war with each other? It could only happen **on the N64...**

## TAKING CONTROL

After a few minutes playing time, it seemed that I was playing a game that was very awkward to control and didn't really have a lot going for it. But it quickly grew on me, and before long I was hooked on this hugely addictive shoot-'em-up.

## INFORMATION

|               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| PUBLISHER     | Ubisoft         |
| DEVELOPER     | Argonaut        |
| STYLE         | 3D Shoot-'em-up |
| RELEASE       | November        |
| PRICE         | £49.99          |
| PLAYERS       | 1-2             |
| RUMBLE PAK    | Yes             |
| MEMORY PAK    | Yes             |
| EXPANSION PAK | No              |

**T**he plot that accompanies *Buck Bumble* won't take long to explain, so bear with me just one moment. After a very nasty chemical spillage caused by us nasty humans, the nearby insects somehow mutate into intelligent beings. With the aid of this new-found intelligence, some of the bugs begin to get very aggressive and set out to conquer all of the surrounding neighbouring bugs. Not willing to give in to their rule, you set out to put things right once again.

You play *Buck Bumble*, a heroic bumblebee (about as heroic as any bee could get) on his quest to vanquish the enemy threat. Oddly enough, you and all of the insects in the game have advanced sufficiently enough to be able to develop artificial replacements for various body parts. Your cyborg body comes in handy, because it allows you to take much more of a battering than your everyday honeybee.

## Everybody bee cool

The game is normally played in a third-person viewpoint, though there is an option to play in a first-person view if you prefer. You fly into the screen and make your way to the end of the level,

## TARGETING BECOMES MUCH MORE INSTINCTIVE AS YOU PLAY THE GAME, AND EVENTUALLY YOU'LL BE ABLE TO HIT A SPEEDY WASP FROM A FULL METRE AWAY

completing any mission objectives that you may have along the way. The closest thing that the N64 has to this would be the all-range mode in *Lylat Wars*, but *Buck Bumble* works much better, giving you far more control than you had in that game.

Making a playable flight model for a bumblebee can't be easy,

but the one on show here works just fine. The trigger button accelerates you forward and the stick points you in the right direction. One of the initial problems is that the targeting can be very difficult to start with; you can't actually hover without losing altitude, so you have to constantly be on the move. Strangely, the targeting becomes much more instinctive as you play the game, and eventually you'll be able to hit a speedy wasp from a full metre away (a long way if you're a bee). If you are having trouble shooting some of the ground-based items then you can always land and take them out from a more stable position.

## Bee the best

All of the levels are fairly linear, echoing the apparent trend for the game to revert back to the more traditional shoot-'em-up. Each 3D world is very big, but they are split up into a number of smaller 'rooms' connected by what are effectively doorways. To move through the door you'll either have to destroy all of the enemies in that room or find the power supply for the door. Shooting that will send a power surge through the cable connecting the two structures and blow a hole through to the next stage of the level. There are five separate environments to

explore, starting off in the garden and moving on through the house, swamps, rubbish dumps and – eventually – the

enemy hive, with each environment made up of five different levels. In each level you may have a couple of mission objectives, such as destroying the enemy radar installations – sometimes it may merely be to take out a graphically impressive enemy boss character.



**Considering** the amazing level of detail in the game and the number of objects on screen, it's impressive that *Buck Bumble* hardly ever suffers from slow-down



**Take** control of the coolest bee on the planet. It's a shame that you spend most of the game looking at his butt

The enemies in *Buck Bumble* are variations on your typical insects. Dragonflies pose little threat, neither do many of the ground-based beetles, but a swam of wasps can prove troublesome because of their speed, often forcing you to dive low and take them out in the grasses where your manoeuvrability gives you the upper hand.

One advantage Buck does have is his rather large arsenal of weaponry. Starting off with a poxy gun, you'll later get some much more interesting weapons, including a self-guided rocket launcher and scatter mines. But the biggest guns usually have limited ammo, so it's best to conserve their use.

### Bumbling around

Graphically *Buck Bumble* is very accomplished. The worlds are impressively big, though they do suffer from some heavy fogging. There's a very nice sense of scale here, evidenced by the enormous wheelbarrow on one of the early missions – a lot of the enemies are also impressively big. Even with the level of detail on show, the frame rate is always very high (over 30 f.p.s.), making the game very smooth. The sound is also of a very high quality – something the N64 has fallen down on in the past.

There are a few faults, though, the main one being that the white targeting cursor becomes invisible when you steer up because of the bright sky (as does your radar, which is also far too light). However, this minor drawback doesn't completely spoil your enjoyment, because as you get used to the game you come to rely on them less anyway. Gaining altitude is also very difficult – you'll have to spiral up quite a lot, which can often make you lose your bearings... but then a bee with vertical take-off might be a bit too much to ask.

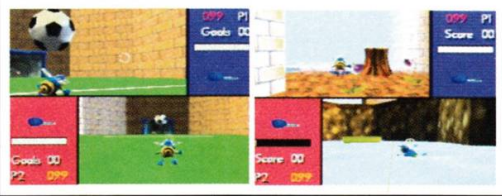
*Buck Bumble* is a very good game that successfully takes some of the tried and tested formulas of many early 90s shoot-'em-ups and combines them with the graphical technology we have today. There isn't too much that is ground-breaking or fantastically original about it, but that shouldn't stop you from enjoying this highly entertaining, if slightly difficult shooter. **Will**



The enemies are well-drawn and can be absolutely huge

### BUSY BEE

Sadly there is no four player mode, but along with the two player deathmatch there's an excellent version of Buck Ball. Basically it throws two players onto a rectangular pitch with two goals and a very large ball. The objective is to ram into the ball, forcing it into the other player's net. It's a lot more difficult than it looks. It's one of the best multiplayer concepts you could have for this type of game, and you'll find yourself playing it long after you've given up on the single player mode.



### OTHER FORMATS?

**PC** ○○○○○

Ubisoft are currently converting a lot of their games onto different platforms. *Buck Bumble* could well follow the trend, although it's unlikely to surface until after Christmas.

**PlayStation** ○○○○○

As with the PC, *Buck Bumble* might be converted to the PlayStation in the new year. It has yet to be confirmed, but we're sure it will be discussed at some point.



### VERDICT

|             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| GAME NAME   | Buck Bumble |
| GRAPHICS    | 78%         |
| SOUND       | 72%         |
| PLAYABILITY | 75%         |
| OVERALL     | <b>74</b>   |
| Out of 100  |             |