

The PC Engine has been an unceasing subject of amazement for the last year, with a string of incredible games and arcade conversions to its name. But, in the words of Al Jolson, you ain't seen nothing yet (baby). The sound of jaws dropping was heard for miles around when the PC Engine CD-ROM player was brought into the C+VG offices. What is this wonder-widget? Julian Rignall has the story...



▲ See — it is small.

MACHINES

CD-ROM ANTICS

▼ The Rom Unit and games

The pint-sized CD-ROM player is no bigger than a Sony Discman, yet has more memory than 1096 Amigas or 11416 Spectrums put together — a massive 548 megabytes!

Games come on conventional CD's, and are loaded in the same fashion as a computer disk — but these CD's are also capable of storing hi-fi sound which can be played while the game is running. The unit has outputs for headphones and a hi-fi link, so you can listen to your games in glorious stereo — and with the two games we've seen, the effect is nothing short of stunning.

Since the CD discs store so much information, there's plenty of disc accessing during the game, but the scanning system is very rapid, and pauses are kept to a minimum.

Now to the games themselves. The two we've played are a conversion of Capcom's *Street Fighter* coin-op, and a very unusual Japanese role-playing-style game that translates something like *Hitsuku Mano* (apologies to Japanese readers — we could be wrong!).

Like all PC Engine conversions, *Street Fighter* looks and plays identically to the coin-op — but there's loads of extra speech and some incredible tunes that aren't featured in the original machine. The sound effects are brilliant, with digitised yells and thumps, and five amazing soundtracks for



AW MACHINES



▲ *Street Fighting in China.* each part of the world where you fight. *Street Fighter* is noisy, tough and addictive — but apart from the superlative graphics and sound, doesn't otherwise offer anything that hasn't already been seen in a beat 'em up.

The other title is far more interesting, and really shows what can be done on CD. It's a strange type of role-playing game and has more speech and music than any other computer game we've seen! The story unfolds in a long series of animated cameo screens, each accompanied by dialogue and pieces of music — and I mean real music, with vocals, drums guitars and all!!

At regular intervals you have to partake in a Japanese trivia-style quiz. Hosting this

▼ *Street Fighter*

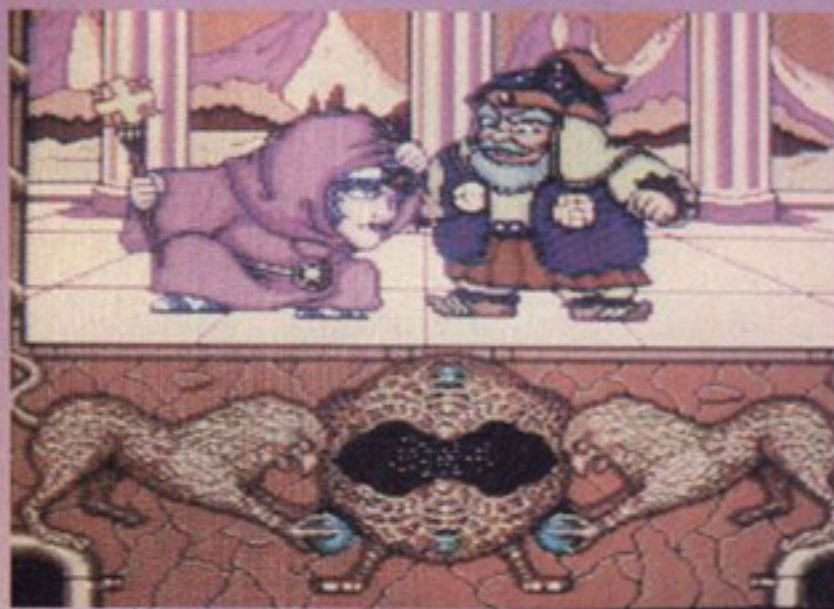


▲ *Go for it.* section is a very surly questionmaster — but you have support in the form of a tiny cherubic female; both talk while you answer the questions, and berate you if you answer incorrectly. And if you answer three questions incorrectly you're thrown out of the game — get one right and you continue (after being congratulated by the cherub, who leaps up and down with excitement).

The graphics are great; very unusual oriental characters are to the fore, and some of the backdrops are outstanding. The game is absolutely huge — it's a shame it's all in Japanese. Hopefully, with the PC Engine being released in America, we'll see English translations.

We hope so — the PC Engine CD-ROM is definitely THE most exciting development in the game market since the advent of 16-bit.

▼ *CD-ROM — outstanding.*



▲ *One of the Cameos.*

