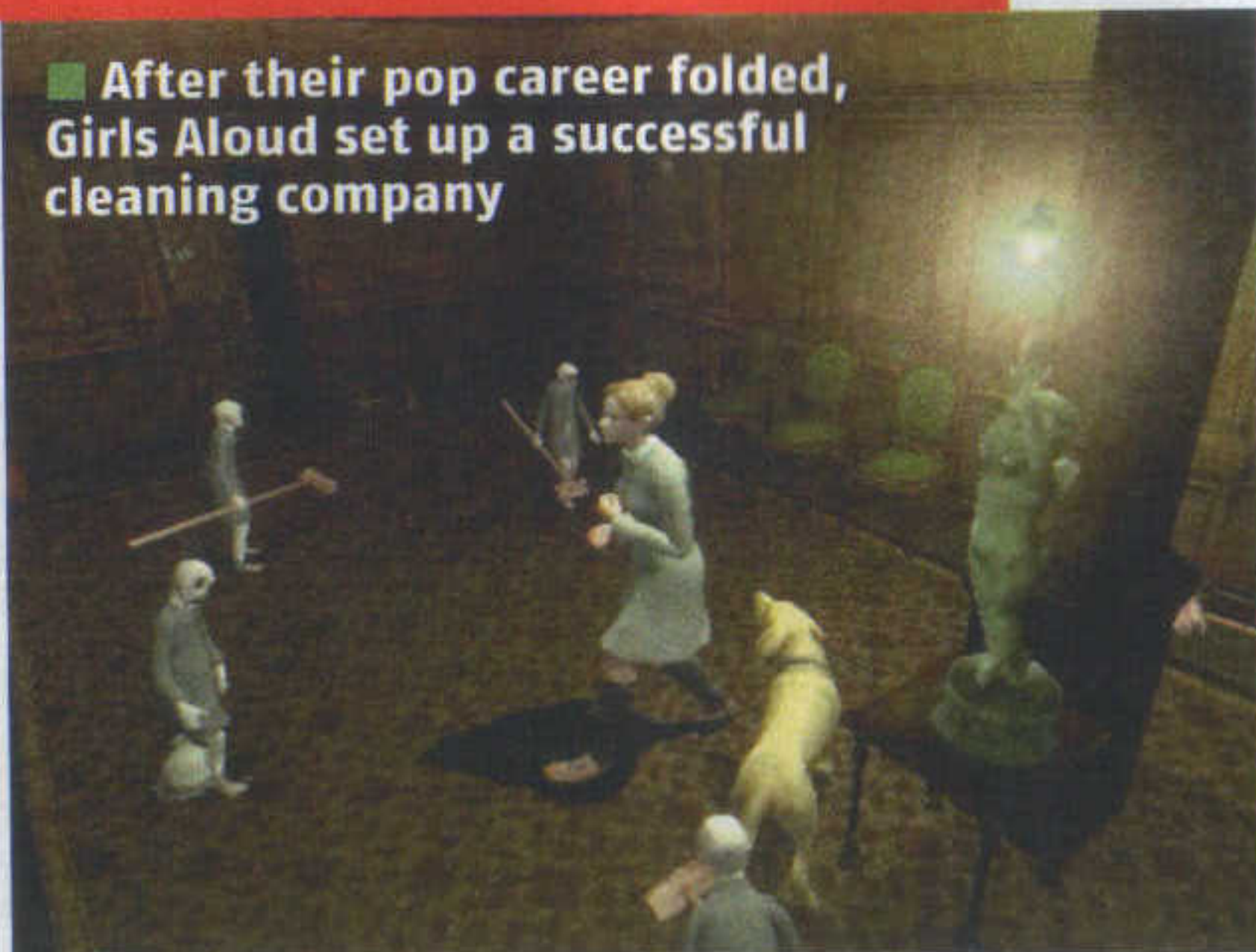


■ After their pop career folded, Girls Aloud set up a successful cleaning company



■ We reckon those candles aren't there for Jennifer's birthday...



PlayStation 2



DETAILS

PUBLISHER 505 GAMES

DEVELOPER PUNCHLINE

PRICE £29.99

PLAYERS 1

OUT 3 NOVEMBER

WEBSITE
WWW.ATLUS.COM/
RULEOFROSE

60HZ MODE NO

WIDESCREEN NO

SURROUND SOUND NO

ONLINE NO

RULE OF ROSE

This is no fairy tale...

It's fair to say that *Rule Of Rose* is not your normal horror game; half-an-hour in and the heroine – poor, unlucky English rose, Jennifer – is being buried alive by a clique of sadistic children. Despite its Japanese roots, the game is set, surprisingly, in 1930's England, and focuses on a mysterious group known as the Red Crayon Aristocrats and their demanding ruler, the Prince.

After a freak airship accident robs her of her parents, Jennifer finds herself at an orphanage, becoming embroiled in the workings of the disturbing Aristocracy and forced to fulfil its demands or face painful reprisals. Isolated and out of her depth, Jen has to make sense of her bizarre surroundings with only a loyal canine companion, Brown, to help her discover what sort of mess she's fallen into.

Indeed, Brown the mutt is a smartly designed survival horror accessory. While he

can't fight the game's legion of monstrosities and pasty-faced junior psychos, he rapidly becomes invaluable, 'sniffing' out not only danger, but also useful items.

Rule Of Rose has justly gained acclaim for its stunning cut-scenes, compelling plot and spooky music. However, when it comes to

gameplay, *ROR* fails spectacularly to match like with like. This is vanilla horror exploration at its most anonymous, with ponderous loading times between rooms and surprisingly insipid combat. So while the game's unique 'kids gone wrong' premise is a winner, the execution falls several notches short. ■ **Lesley Smith**



■ "Excuse me, I think my rat's underdone"

PlayStation 2 VERDICT

Graphics	07	Gorgeous cut-scenes, atmospheric graphics
Sound	08	Eerie music and effects heighten the terror
Gameplay	05	Canine partner aside, deeply predictable
Lifespan	06	An intriguing plot but no replay value

Rule of Rose blends the stuff of nightmares with stylish sound and graphics. Sadly, the developer should have spent longer on the gameplay

6/10