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## News

### Bill's Got A Buddy In Dolby

20 Apr 2001 09:01 GMT

**Xbox will be the first console to deliver real-time Dolby Digital 5.1. Huh?**



Xbox: Super-duper multichannel audio

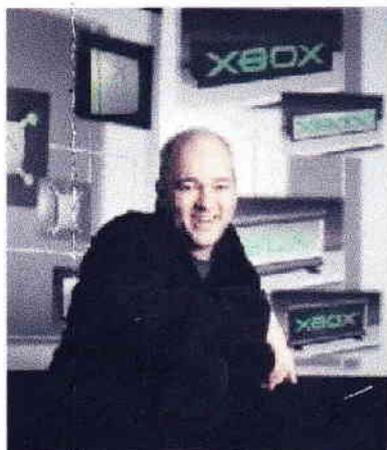
Dolby Labs, the home of everybody's favorite audio boffins, has announced the Xbox will be the first games machine to feature the new Dolby Interactive Content Encoder. This little gizmo dynamically encodes multichannel audio into Dolby Digital 5.1.

But what is DD 5.1? Basically, Dolby Digital is a compression technique the Dolby digital signal processing wizards developed which lets them squash as many as six channels of digital audio into a single bitstream, thereby saving lots of space. Which is good, right?

The 5.1 refers to the channel configuration. You get left, right and center in front of you, precisely localizing the important stuff like dialogue, two channels to the rear delivering the immersive ambient sounds, and a subwoofer/effects channel for that high-impact punch during action sequences. This sounds very good, apparently.

But, swiftly sidestepping any further techno-babble, what this all means is the Xbox will have top-notch audio. The new encoder works its digital wonders in real-time so that, while in the past Dolby 5.1 has only been possible during cut scenes, the Xbox will be delivering it when it matters most, during gameplay. This is also good.

Microsoft's Mr Xbox, J Allard, seems understandably happy with this audio coup. He said: "We're delighted the Xbox is the first gaming platform to be able to incorporate real-time



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Which of the Xbox launch titles will the system's kill app?

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Dolby Digital effects into gameplay.'

The other breaking Xbox news right now is responsibility for European marketing of Bill's little black beauty has fallen to UK-based ad agency Bartle Bogle Hegarty. The account is thought to be worth in the region of US\$75 million.



Allard: Audibly smug

These are the folks who previously had responsibility for marketing the Dreamcast. This doesn't bode too well. Let's hope they fare better this time.

- *Simon Makin*

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