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• **REVIEWED!**
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• **REVEALED!**
SIMS FOR XBOX, GAMECUBE

EXCLUSIVE

LORD OF THE RINGS
THE OTHER TWO TOWERS GAME

SPECIAL REPORT

THE NEXT BIG THING

SEE PAGE 120

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ZIFF DAVIS Issue 163

February 2003 \$4.99/\$6.50 Canada 02



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REVIEWED:
■ War of the Monsters
■ Minority Report
■ BMX
■ Panzer Drag



PREVIEWED:
■ Tenchu 3
■ Def Jam: Vendetta
■ Devil May Cry 2
■ Xenosaga



PlayStation 2



Best Fighting Game
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Violence



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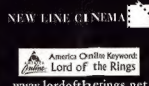


Middle-earth stands on the brink of destruction.
You will unite. Or you will fall.



Blood
Violence

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- *Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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- *Official PlayStation Magazine*



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Mild Lyrics

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Blood and Gore
Violence





"The best game on Xbox, period."

GameSpy.com ~ 95%

"9.6 Highest score ever."

Official Xbox Magazine ~ Editor's Choice Award

"Truly the next generation in Stealth Combat."

GamePro ~ 5/5

"Don't hesitate to buy this amazing game."

Electronic Gaming Monthly ~ Editor's Choice Gold Award

"The best Xbox game of 2002."

Entertainment Weekly ~ A-score

★ Tom Clancy's
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CELL™**

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THE GAME OF LIFE

One of the top-selling PC games ever, *The Sims*, is coming to your console. Let the hot-tub parties, competitive home improvement, and cheating on spouses begin! Get yourself to **page 110** for our behind-the-scenes look—it redefines the term "extravaganza." OK, maybe not.



The *EGM* crystal ball is in effect as we spot the biggest new trends in gaming. The title that'll make the network adapter a **must-buy**, the biggest Xbox game you've never heard of...read this article and become **instantly insufferable** to all your friends. The future starts on **page 120**.



We steal the first peek at *Driver 3*, gun it, and get the hell outta there. **Page 122** has the scoop.

Be the annoying guy playing games on his cell phone! Learn how on **page 42**.

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A close-up, high-angle shot of basketball player Jason Kidd. He is wearing a dark blue New Jersey Nets jersey with red and white trim. The jersey features the NBA logo, the Nets logo, and a patch with an American flag. He has a serious, intense expression and is looking slightly to the left. His arms are crossed, and his hands are resting on his chest. The background is dark with some white geometric shapes, possibly part of a gymnasium or arena.

Play big.

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got milk?

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EDITORIAL

One Man's Trash

Fifth. That's what one parent called last issue's "9 Naughtiest Games" feature, which showcased the...ahem, seedier side of videogaming throughout history. She didn't want her pre-teen daughter reading another copy of *Electronic Gaming Monthly* ever again.

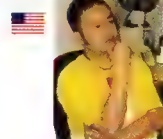
Garbage. That's where another parent said *Electronic Gaming Monthly* belonged, not in the hands of his 12-year-old son. That father didn't appreciate our kick-ass language.

Morality-corrupting. That's how another parent described *EGM*. She didn't want her 10-year-old exposed to it.

I'd like to say something to these parents: Thank you. If more people in the United States paid attention to what their kids were doing, reading, playing, seeing, or sticking up their nose, we'd all be better off—and we'd have a lot less controversy over adult content in videogames (or videogame magazines).

You see, what a lot of concerned Americans don't understand is, videogames have grown up. When I explain to parents that the average-age *EGM* reader is 21, the response is usually disbe-

By Dan "Shoe" Hsu



lief ("My god! Videogames are for *kids!* How can this be? Will someone please think of the children?") or denial (after all, how can you trust the editor-in-chief of a magazine out to eradicate American values?). You should see what happens when I tell these people that 21 is actually really young—that the average-age gamer in the United States is now 28 years old. I think some heads have exploded.

Believe it or not, adults are reading *EGM*. Our readers are college students, professionals, military personnel, business owners, prisoners (I probably could've done without mentioning that last one here)... It's no longer a kid's hobby, folks. Just because it's a videogame doesn't mean it's OK for children to play it, and just because we're a videogame magazine doesn't mean it's necessarily appropriate for kids to read. Be sure to check those ESRB ratings on the front of the game packaging (it's very similar to a movie rating). And if *EGM* is a bit "old" for your children, you may want to check out our sister publication, *GameNow*, or our friends at *GamePro*. —Shoe, Editor-in-Chief

Contributors



Patrick Klepek

We haven't actually confirmed that Patrick, also known as "The Hat," draws his immense physical strength from the 'fro, but it's the front-running theory.



John Brandon

John tells us he's writing a book about IT management, which has us more than a little scared. We like to think that writing for *EGM* helps keep him off the streets.



Jeanne Kim

Jeanne ambushes game-store customers and interviews them for our Man on the Street section. Most of them are just surprised there's a girl talking to them.



David Kushner

We sent David to an *Everquest* Fan Faire dressed up as a bard. But his banded mail wasn't historically accurate and his lrye was totally out of tune, so he was ridiculed.



Dan Leahy

Mr. Moh used to be *GameNow's* Editor in Chief. Now he stays at home and changes diapers all day. Whatta joy! He still works his sports-reviewin' magic for us, though.



Seanbaby

America's most tormented superhero (personal demons, general ennui) fights crime with his mohawk of Truth. You will know him by the Rascal-brand scooter he rides.



Scott Steinberg

Our man Steinberg interviewed *GTA: Vice City* tough guy Ray Liotta in this issue, barely escaping with his life. He's now enrolled in our contributor protection program.



Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine

John Davison leads. Chris Baker does machines. Joe Rybicki's a wisecracker party dude. Together, they battle ninjas (and create one fine PS2 mag).



GameNow

We're out of ways to make fun of our sister mag's name. They like to play games how? *GameNow!* See? Big ups to Ethan Einhorn, Phil Theobald, and Miguel Lopez.



Xbox Now

Che Chou worked for us until—citing "inappropriate physical contact"—he left for sister mag *XBM*. At least he and Greg Orlando still chip in from a safe distance.



Computer Gaming World

When they're not helping us, *CGW's* Thierry Nguyen and Darren Gladstone write about exciting floppy-disk games for IBM- and Tandy-compatible home computers.



Marc Saltzman

With his old haircut, Marc had a sorta shoulder-length thing happening that was uncannily similar to this mint-in-box AllPro Wrestling figure we picked up on eBay.



Josh Fruhling

Josh studies Goju-Ryu Karate, which saved his life more than once when he delved into the secret, dark world of fanboys this month. Check his stance!



Joe Fielder

Like some sort of prodigal son who isn't actually related to us, Joe is back in our pages once again. Where was he? Who was he with? He's not sayin', we're not askin'.

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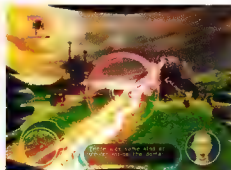
"Frenetic land assaults, overwhelming numbers, smooth, bright graphics, a ton of multiplayer options...quite simply, the greatest amount of "stuff" you've ever seen in a shooter... you may need a reminder to close your gaping jaw"

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PSM

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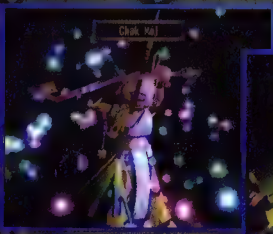
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PlayStation 2



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RALLY FUSION





Letters to the Editors

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Games For The Gals

Congratulations, Megan Benoit! You win an InterAct GameShark for PlayStation 2, PlayStation, Dreamcast, Game Boy Advance, or Game Boy Color. Hopefully, you'll put your GameShark to good use. Try entering the "fun" code!



Shame, shame, shame on all of you. Thanks for marginalizing female gamers with your excessively patronizing list of "relationship-bolstering games." Ohhh, girls love Disney characters, so they'll love *Kingdom Hearts*! And how about *Animal Crossing*? It's insanely cute, so the girls will go nuts for it! Why didn't you just go ahead and recommend some Barbie games?

My husband and I have spent the last two days pummeling the crap out of each other in *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance*. We haven't had this much fun since *Mario Party 4* came out. At our house, it's not, "Honey, can you put the game down and spend some time with me?" It's, "You cheap son-of-a-***&#!!" [furious button-mashing] "I'm gonna beat the living #\$%& out of you!!!"

If your girl isn't into gaming, don't assume she wants to mess with all that cutesy crap. My sister and a bunch of her girlfriends had an absolute blast playing *Super Smash Bros. Melee* with us. I doubt I could say the same if I had put them in front of *Monkey Ball 2* or *Animal Crossing*. My former roommate played *Counter-Strike* and *Diablo 2* [both PC games]

for hours on end—and she kicked some serious ass.

Maybe the real reason more girls aren't into gaming is because all the games geared toward them aren't half as fun as the real games. Put a girl in front of a decent fighting game and see what happens (go easy at first—no one likes getting the crap beat out of them when they're starting out). You might end up getting more than you bargained for.

And one last piece of advice: If you're a hardcore gamer and your girl (or guy) isn't, you might want to re-think the relationship. Do you really want to have an argument every time the latest greatest-game-ever comes out and your significant other doesn't understand why you have to spend so much time playing those silly games? Or would you rather have someone who understands why you need to stay up until 2 a.m. playing *Metroid Prime*? Sorry, guys, I'm already (happily) taken, but I know there are plenty more like me out there.

Now, if you'll excuse me, Princess Kitana is calling my name.

Megan Benoit
starla79@hotmail.com

So...what are your sister and her friends up to next Saturday?

I Saved Latin

Being the fantastic genius that I am, I noticed in your Holiday Buyer's Guide that you said the star of *Splinter Cell* was Max Fischer. Max Fischer is the protagonist from the film *Rushmore* (a movie that everyone should see and love). Now, what am I supposed to believe, that *Splinter Cell* is actually the unofficial sequel to *Rushmore*? You have caused great confusion in my life.

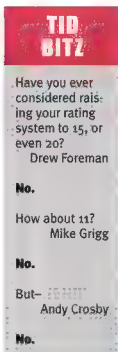
Read
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Uh, yeah. Sam Fisher, that's the guy. Chalk it up as an unconscious homage to *Rushmore*.

One-Gun Salute

We here at the 30th Adjutant General Reception Battalion's Rehab Unit have enjoyed your magazine for some time now. It's about the only fun we have since they took away our PS2 after someone stayed up after lights-out playing *Kingdom Hearts*. Well, my concern is about pg. 129 of *EGM* #161. I haven't played *StarCraft* in a while, but I'm pretty sure the picture of Nova "taking down a hydralisk, one on one..." is actually Nova taking down a zergling. Keep up the good work though—a buncha Joes down here are rooting for ya.

PFC D. Levy



Have you ever considered raising your rating system to 15, or even 20?
Drew Foreman

No.
How about 12?
Mike Grigg

No.
But...
Andy Crosby

No.

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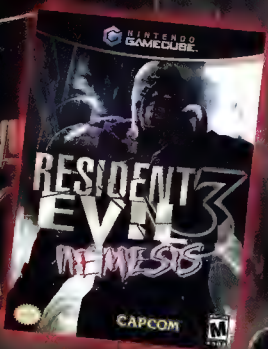
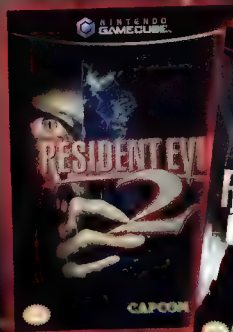
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MRGN (MN)
mrgn.net

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Cobaltnova (AZ)
cobaltnova.com/halo.htm
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wpdlanparty.home.attbi.com

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Also note: We just can't write back to everyone, but make your comments constructive—or at least humorous—and you might get sumpin' back!



Everything's comin' up DigiPen. Shortly after we moved westward, this guy (not Ben Mauro, see below) erected his sign and lawn chair outside our old office, seriously freaking out our skittish subscription people. But then they're easily spooked. When cautiously approached and engaged in conversation, he turned out to be all right. Sorry for not getting your name, guy—who's-going-to-DigiPen! Via con Mario.

Gamer Designer I

I just wanted to tell you guys that I really liked your article about game developing (EGM #162). I found *Adventure Maker* both fun and

easy to learn. But you left out one other free and really easy game-developing software engine called *Game Maker*. You can find it at www.cs.uu.nl/people/markov/gmaker. This site has a helpful and supportive community, tutorials, and games made with the program.

Bradén Moore

Gamer Designer II

I was recently accepted to DigiPen Institute of Technology. I've always known that I wanted to make videogames; I just never knew how. I would like to thank you for the articles on how to get into the industry and what schools are best for game development [EGM #162 and #152] they've helped me find my way to where I am now. I hope you will continue to publish articles like this and inspire others to reach their goals.

Ben Mauro

ImDpapee117@aol.com

Vice City Post Office



Gaming Degenerate

I recently found a website where you can play *Vice City's* Degenatron. You know, the arcade game you see in the pizza parlor? It's actually entertaining (if you're bored out of your mind). Go to www.degenatron.com/.

Jayd Saucedo

Hunter Helicopter Hijinks

After you complete the main story missions in *Vice City*, fly over to the *Vice City* Police Department and put a cop uniform on. Then fly to Fort Baxter Air Base, where you'll be able to take the Hunter helicopter without getting shot.

Mark Snyder

Short Bus

I've been playing *GTA: Vice City* a lot lately. So, one time I got the idea to launch a coach bus off those stairs down the street heading east as you're coming out of the hospital near the Hyman Condo. Well, check out what happened [above]. Instead of getting the insane stunt bonus, I go straight down into the Ammu-Nation. Just thought I'd share.

Actually, you can pull this off before you finish the story missions. It's possible to get the Hunter without the cop uniform, too, but it's risky, what with everybody shooting at you and all.

Sean

blinkkornfreak@aol.com

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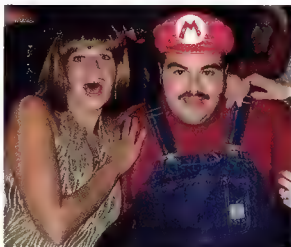
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LETTERS



You want the realistic Mario and Peach? You can't handle the realistic Mario and Peach!

Sartorial Slander

I think it's time Mario gave up his old, stupid cartoony look and got a more realistic look. I really think his hair is a big issue. Whenever you see him take off his hat, there's that stupid solid brown lump on his head, and his nose looks like a giant muffin. I think someone should tell Nintendo this before the next *Mario* game comes out. Hey, did you ever notice that Peach has sideburns? If the *Mario* people do start to look real, the side burns should be taken off.

JAD

Eyeballflump@aol.com

You've got big problems. Nevertheless, our Give Mario A Makeover Contest is officially a go. Prize? How about a *Kakuto Chojin*-themed medical kit, complete with antibiotic ointment? 'Cause we've got one to offer.

Impossible Dream

Hey, I've got an Xbox, and it's great. I love everything about it, except that the clock keeps resetting when I unplug it to store it in my room. Any way I could fix this?

Elliot Sharifi

Aside from rigging up some sort of portable battery pack, possibly connected to a stationary bike that you have to pedal furiously? No.

Clamdripping Won't Die

I just got the January 2003 issue and was reading the letters when I came across one pointing out that you said Gandalf's sword was called Clamdripping. I am a Tolkien fanboy and have searched and searched, but still

QUESTION of the Moment

Has *BMX XXX* gone too far, or will games get even more explicit?

They put a ratings system on videogames for a reason. Parents shouldn't just go out and buy their kids a game just because the kids say they want it. How many R-rated movies show nudity and have foul language? Parents, DO YOUR JOB!
falcons_fan@hotmail.com

Wait...those are supposed to be boobs? So, she's...oooh....

Peter Dovak

If you need a woman made of polygons to turn you on, then more power to you, but personally, I think it's sick and pathetic, all the while giving videogames a bad name.

Rob Pretau

The Japanese are way ahead of us in offensive gaming. We must catch up with some sort of poo-eating simulator or something. Time is of the essence! AWAY!

Steve Baird

As long as the words "Madden" and "XXX" stay the hell away from each other, I'm fine.

Tony C.

Gone too far? I'm still waiting for *The Devil in Princess Toadstool* and *Lara Does Dallas*.

Bob Frapples

I think that *BMX XXX* is just as guilty as *Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball*, and if you buy it, you must be pretty damn desperate.

Sajtrunks48237@aol.com

You kidding me?! I'm 21 years old, and I think this game is great. You can do bike tricks and see naked girls at the same time! Some people are just overreacting. Someone think of the adult gamers!

junichips2@yahoo.com

BMX XXX is trash that uses cheap, sick thrills to make up for lacking anything remotely original. Unfortunately, if it's easy money, they'll keep doing it.

Jon Ross

Next Month's Question of the Moment:

Is online console gaming living up to the hype?

Send your brief, coherent responses to:
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LETTERS

have not been able to find any reference to Gandalf's sword as "Clamdring" rather than Glamdring. I really hope that you were kidding when you said that it was supposed to be "Clamdring." I hope that you will clear this information up, and if you were serious about contacting the heirs, then please share with us their exact response.

Flinn Gillan

You're over-thinking this one, Flinn. Let it go.

Ants In Pants

I've been reading all I can about the new *Zelda* for GameCube, ever since hearing about the game in *EGM* #157. I thought the game was due in February, but *ebgames.com* shows the release date as March! I can't wait for that game to come so can you please tell me the correct date?

Dragonfist789@aol.com

Gird your loins—or something similar. Word is, the release date has been delayed to March 24th.

Delightfully Devilish

While gaming technology has made remarkable strides within the past decade, one thing has remained the same: the plot of RPGs. Few deviate from the time-honored "get the girl, save the world" scenario. Who wouldn't want to be the notorious Ketha in *Final Fantasy VI* or the infamous, cold-hearted Sephiroth in *FFVII*? Instead, Square and other gaming companies hand us this "prevent imminent doom" crap and give us main characters that almost always look way dorkier than the main boss in the game (*FFIX* is a prime example). Just once, I would love to be the purveyor of plight, the master of mayhem, the apex of evil, the...OK,

Democracy at Work



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I'll stop. Anyway, it's high time for RPG fanatics to unite and demand more! Perhaps together, we can bring about the change to this genre that it so rightfully deserves.

Tyler Anderson

Nice idea, but it won't work. If your nefarious plot to destroy the world succeeds and you win the game, what's left to do in the next five sequets?



Reviews Editor Bettenhausen claims he chose this shot because it was a good "action scene."

Hands Off!

So I'm flipping through *EGM* #162 reading the poignant, thought-provoking review of *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance* on pg. 178 when I notice not one, but TWO questionable screenshots involving Li Mei. The first is the top-left shot of Raiden going right for the well, gold. Then there's the bottom-left one of Kano going for, and getting, the silver (in keeping with my clever little "theme" here). Don't tell me I'm seeing what I want to see (even if it kinda is) because I know how you Yuna-Lara-Xtreme Beach Volleyball-BMX XXX types think. Give your photo editor either a raise or a stern talking-to.

Mandy Fraker

Uh...we didn't do it! Nobody saw us do it. ☹

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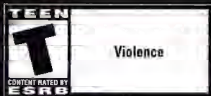
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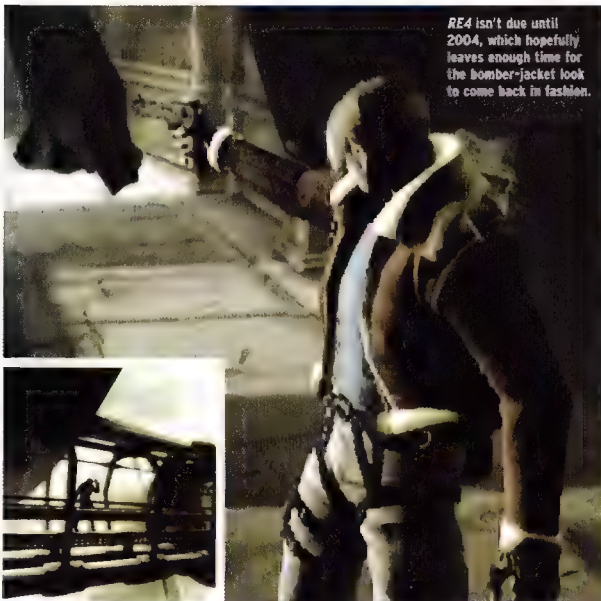


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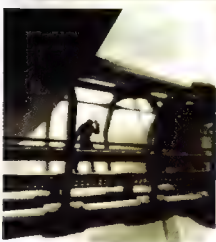
The Hottest Gaming News on the Planet

The Future of Evil

Capcom unveils *Resident Evil 4* amid a host of new GameCube titles



RE4 isn't due until 2004, which hopefully leaves enough time for the bomber-jacket look to come back in fashion.



Like *Code: Veronica*, *RE4* will include fully 3D backgrounds, plus a new optional first-person view.



While most major game publishers are shying away from GameCube, releasing only ports of titles created for other systems, Capcom recently demonstrated that it's betting big on Cube. Last November, in the dark confines of a steamy Tokyo nightclub, Capcom unveiled five—that's right, *five*—new GameCube titles, including the next big installment to the *Resident Evil* series and four all-new franchises.

Resident Evil 4 U.S. Release: 2004

It's been talked about for what seems like an eternity, but *Resident Evil 4*—originally planned for PlayStation 2—is finally on its way to GameCube. Capcom showed off a brief snippet of footage from the game, which producer Hiroyuki Kobayashi promises will reveal “the true origin of the *RE* series.”

The story stars Leon S. Kennedy, the rookie cop from *Resident Evil 2*, and takes place deep inside the heart of the evil Umbrella corporation. At this point, Capcom is being stingy with the details, but we do know that Umbrella is up to its old mutant-making tricks again, this time with something called the Progenitor virus (for some reason, every new *RE* needs its own new virus). We also hear that our old pal Leon is fighting for his life after contracting a mysterious illness (something to do with the virus? hmm...). Unlike the last two *REs*, which had prerendered backgrounds, the graphics will be entirely 3D, complete with an optional first-person viewpoint.

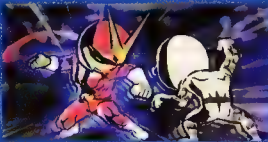
What we've seen of *RE4*, even in its early state, looks fantastic. But with an expected release sometime in 2004, don't look for it anytime soon.



According to *RE3*, the U.S. government offered Leon a mission—could that be what he's doing in *RE4*?

WILL THESE GAMES COME TO XBOX AND PS2?

No and yes...er, well, maybe. *RE4* will remain a GameCube exclusive, but *RE* director Shinji Mikami told us the other titles may come to other systems in the future. Cross your fingers!



Viewtiful Joe

Expected U.S. release: Summer 2003
This oddly named (it might change for America) side-scrolling beat-'em-up comes courtesy of Hideki Kamiya, creator of the PlayStation 2 hit *Devil May Cry*. It stars a munchkin-sized superhero named Joe, whose goal is not only to rid the streets of evil, but also to look good while doing it (guess that's where the *Viewtiful* part comes in). The game features a mixture of cartoony 2D and 3D cel-shaded graphics, complete with gorgeous comic-book-style backgrounds and intense special effects. In addition to the usual repertoire of kicks, punches, and combos, Joe has the ability to slow down or speed up time to make his attacks more dramatic and stylish.



Formerly known as *Red Hot Man*, Joe has a unique look and premise unlike anything we've seen before.



P.N. 03

Expected U.S. release: Summer 2003
P.N. 03 (Product Number 03) is the next project from *Resident Evil* director Shinji Mikami. Unlike his usually slow-paced adventure games, this sci-fi title looks like it's pure action. The protagonist is a woman named Vanessa Z. Schneider, a freelance mercenary with a dark past, an ultradestructive laser gun, and a silly name. Her parents were killed by a computer system known as CAMS, and she's out for revenge.

The footage shown for *P.N. 03* was brief but fast and stylish. Vanessa looks like a futuristic Lara Croft, guns blazing as she flips and rolls from wall to wall, blowing away giant, transforming robots and generally wreaking havoc.

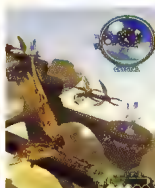


Footage of *P.N. 03's* gameplay looks similar to other action/shooters like *Tomb Raider* and *Devil May Cry*.



Dead Phoenix

Expected U.S. release: Summer 2003
Take the in-flight shooting elements of *Panzer Dragoon* and combine them with the action-packed, enemies-everywhere mayhem of *Dynasty Warriors*, and the result would be something like *Dead Phoenix*. You play a winged warrior named Phoenix who must fight to save an ancient floating city that exists beyond time and space. The developers are hoping to re-create the feeling of freedom that comes with flying, while offering tons of action and excitement for trigger-happy gamers. With the masses of enemies on the ground and in the air that we saw in the demo—not to mention truly epic bosses—Capcom seems well on its way to fulfilling that goal.



This phoenix looks a whole lot better than the lame animatronic one at the end of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*.



Killer 7

Expected U.S. release: Winter 2003
Killer 7 is easily the darkest of Capcom's new GameCube lineup. The main character, Harman Smith, is an old man in a wheelchair. Oh, and he's an evil assassin with seven different personalities. His opponent, also evil (but not in a wheelchair), is a crime lord named Kun Lan who goes by the nickname God's Hand. Your goal is to make use of all seven of Smith's personalities to hunt down and kill Lan. Think about that the next time you want to park in the handicapped spot.

Screenshots of 7's visuals just don't do it justice, so head to www.capcom.co.jp/gamecube/english.html to check out videos of it and the rest of Capcom's GC lineup for yourself. ♣

—John Ricciardi



Killer 7's super-stylized graphics are intriguing, but exactly what type of game this is remains a mystery.



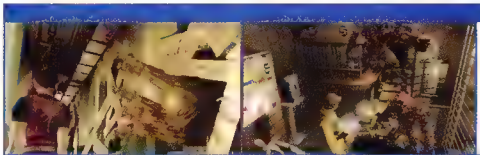


Resident Evil 2 Vs. 3

Anyone who's already survived the horror of *RE2* or *RE3* has little reason to pick up the GameCube re-releases due out in early January. These aren't rebuilt remakes like *RE4*; they're straight carbon copies of the original PlayStation titles (only slightly sharper, due to the increased resolution)

intended for those new to the series. But what if you *haven't* played them and you've only got the time and/or money for one—which should you choose? Like that fat dude with the beard in *Gladiator*, we pit the two games against one another for your amusement, O mighty Caesar. —Mark MacDonald

"You're going **DOWN** little girl!"
"Yeah, whatever. So, which way to the **Pokémon** coverage?"



	RESIDENT EVIL 2	RESIDENT EVIL 3	WINNER
 YOU PLAY AS:	Claire Redfield , sister of <i>RE1</i> hero Chris Redfield and star of <i>Resident Evil Code: Veronica</i> . Leon S. Kennedy , idealistic rookie cop; he also starred in <i>RE: Golden</i> for Game Boy Color and will appear in the upcoming <i>RE4</i> .	Jill Valentine , main character of <i>RE1</i> , master of unlocking, and all-around hot tomato. Carlos Oliveira , Umbrella gun-for-hire, almost love-interest of Jill, and owner of one horribly fake-y accent. ¡Ay Carumbal!	RE3 – Carlos is a pretty lame character (no wonder he hasn't appeared in any <i>RE</i> games since then), but Leon had a part in the atrocious <i>Resident Evil: Gaiden</i> , and for that he must be punished .
 GAMEPLAY FEATURES:	"Zapping" system lets you start as one of two main characters , each with two different games, then play as the other character, for a total of four different games.	Spotty dodge move, mix gunpowder to make your own ammo, slightly different story branches at certain points in the game, depending on your choices.	RE2 – Play as Claire, then Leon. Or start as Leon, then go to Claire. Each is different, and fills in parts of the other's story. OK, it's confusing , but it's cool . Trust us.
 COOLEST ENEMY:	Mr. X , a nine-foot-tall bald mutant freak in a trench coat sent by Umbrella to hunt you down, who chases you from room to room in the police station.	The Nemesis , a nine-foot-tall bald mutant freak in a trench coat sent by Umbrella to hunt you down, who chases you from room to room in the police station.	RE3 – A close one (both were spawned from the same experiment, after all), but the Nemesis has tentacles. Plus, <i>his</i> trench coat is shiny black leather. Kinky .
 MINIGAMES:	The 4th Survivor : Escape the police station before time runs out. The Tofu Survivor : Same as above, except you play as a hunk of Tofu named Hunk. Seriously. Extreme Battle Game : Find four bombs before time runs out.	The Mercenaries : You play as one of three Umbrella mercs trying to make their way out of Raccoon City alive. Killing enemies and saving hostages adds time to the clock. Do well and you can earn money to buy special weapons .	RE2 – The Mercenaries has a cool subtitle (Operation Mad Jackal) and a fun combo system, but how can you compete with a game that lets you play as a giant hunk of tofu? We're not making this up. He has little arms and everything.
 S.T.A.R.S. MEMBER BRAD VICKERS:	Found wandering outside the police station as a zombie , carrying a key to a costume-changing room.	Found by the Nemesis, punctured through the face by a bloody tentacle and tossed aside like so much garbage.	RE2 – Since he abandoned Jill and Chris in <i>RE1</i> , we never cared much for Brad. And RE2 lets you finish him off —personally.
 SUPPORTING CAST:	You play a short stint as helpless, whiny Sherry Birkin , daughter of evil Umbrella scientist William Birkin. She can't even attack anything—she just runs.	Cameo appearance by bearded fan favorite, gun nut, and family man, " Hairy " Barry Burton (Jill's partner in <i>RE1</i> , and Leon's in <i>RE Golden</i> ...but we'll overlook that).	RE3 – This one was no contest. We got a sickness, and more Barry is the only cure... in a purely heterosexual sense, mind you.

OVERALL WINNER:

DRAW: Well, who would've guessed that? Just so happens it worked out to be a tie, and we won't get a flood of e-mail from either camp saying "I can't believe you chose *RE(X)* over *RE(Y)*!!!" Wow, that was lucky.

Play Game Boy Advance Games on Your Television

Nintendo's Game Boy Player gives your Cube "Advance" capabilities

Nintendo surprised everyone by announcing a new peripheral for GameCube that will allow players to play portable Game Boy games on their not-so-portable televisions. Dubbed Game Boy Player, the inch-thick peripheral attaches to the underside of GameCube via the system's hi-speed port and accepts not only Game Boy Advance games, but also old-school Game Boy and Game Boy Color cartridges. Best of all, you won't need a GBA (or GB or GBC) to play—the hardware's built-in.



No more squinting to play *Metroid*.



GB Player has a link port to allow for multiplayer Game Boy Advance games (one player plays on the television while the others play on their GBAs). Games can be played with either a GameCube controller or an actual GBA unit, although in the latter case, a GC/GBA cable is required. Players will be able to choose from an assortment of borders and screen resolutions when playing on their television, just like they could with Super Game Boy (a similar peripheral released for Super Nintendo back in the day).

GB Player will be released in Japan in March, followed by a North American rollout in May. Although a U.S. price is still TBD, the Japanese version will cost about \$40.

If you suck, at least no one will know who you are.



Look for this icon on *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs* and other PlayStation 2 games with online capability.

www.playstation.com. Online play requires Internet connection and Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 (sold separately). "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logos are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. ©2002 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. "Live In Your World, Play In Ours" and the "Online" logo are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc.



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Network News Flash

What's next for PS2, GameCube, and Xbox online

If you like online gaming, you're probably too busy to tool around looking for details about what's on the horizon for your favorite games—so we went to work for you! Read on for answers to your most burning online-gaming questions for the console of your choice.



Phantasy Star Online Episodes I & II

GameCube Gossip

Are any Nintendo first-party games ever going to be online?

We've heard rumors that *Super Mario Kart* will be the first, but Nintendo won't utter a peep on the subject except to mysteriously say that "Nintendo has not announced when it will introduce its first online game." In our opinion, it would be a cosmic injustice not to make an online sequel to *Animal Crossing*.

Will any other games be online?

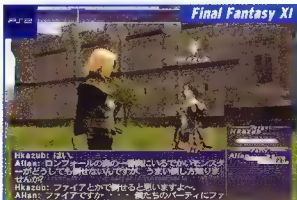
Yes, but don't expect to play anything other than *Phantasy Star Online Episodes I&II* in the near future. "There are other publishers and developers currently working on additional online games," says Nintendo spokesperson Chris Olmstead. "However, they have not announced titles at this point."

What about downloadable content for PS2?

Plenty of downloadable quests are indeed planned...for the future. But right now, content is only available online. "Our goal," says *PSO* Producer Richard Briggs, "is to make sure that there is a very regular stream of new online content, and we currently have several months worth of new content planned."

What if I can't find a GC broadband or modem adapter?

Olmstead says, "Nintendo will have additional adapters shipping to stores shortly"—so keep an eye on your local retailer. By the time you read this, they may already be sold out.



The PS2 scoop

When is the hard drive coming to the U.S.?

The PS2 hard drive (HDD) is out in Japan, and it's tentatively slated for a stateside release this year—but Sony won't make any promises. "We want to ensure that the consumer will have a need...before we make it available," says Sony rep Patrick Seybold. So, the hard drive won't come out until there are games to support it. A likely first candidate to do this is *Final Fantasy XI* (released only in Japan), which requires the drive. When that game is released here, we can only assume the HDD will come out, too.

Where can I find a network adapter?

Our sources say Sony is on target to have upwards of 500,000 network adapters shipped to stores by spring of 2003, so the best we can tell you is just keep checking your local Best Buy (and hope you get lucky).

Are any other games going to use the SOCOM headset?

"Content is really the driver here," says Seybold, "and if a title warrants it, I am sure that other developers and publishers will take advantage of the technology." We do know this: Peripheral manufacturer Logitech is releasing a higher-quality (i.e., neither flimsy nor easily breakable) version of the *SOCOM* headset in February.

Surely they wouldn't release a fancy-schmancy headset if they thought *SOCOM* was gonna be the only game to use it, would they?

What downloadable content is coming out?

Activision gets an avalanche of user-created skateparks every week for *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4*, so fans can look forward to hundreds of new parks for download. (Neversoft will post their own developer-created parks as well.) EA also promises downloadable rosters for *Madden NFL 2003*.



MechAssault

Xbox of Secrets

I want my PSO! When's it coming to Xbox?

You're in luck: The Xbox version of *PSO* will be arriving in the U.S. in March.

When am I going to have to pay for content?

Microsoft would only say, "We have not announced any information on premium content at this time." But we did find out that lots of new content (both free and possibly for pay) is planned for specific games.

New playable levels are planned for Splinter Cell

In March—but they may not all be free. A producer for the game revealed that at least the first new level will be free. Does that imply that later levels will not? Hmmmm...

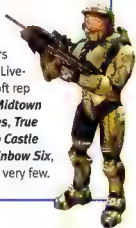
MechAssault will soon have eight new maps, four new mechs, and two new modes—Capture the Flag and Objective Raid—available for free download during the first three months of the new year. Some of these are online now.

NFL 2K3, *NBA 2K3*, *Toe Jam & Earl* and *MX Superfly* will have free downloadable rosters and characters.

Four new *Unreal Championship* maps should be available by the time you read this. "Offering free content to gamers has been a tradition with the *Unreal* franchise," says Digital Extremes' Meridith Braun, "so we're thrilled to have the opportunity to continue this tradition on a console system." Braun also said new game types and Mutators might become available, should the technology allow it.

What other Xbox games are going to be online?

"More than 60 game publishers are currently working on Xbox Live-enabled games," says Microsoft rep Jen Martin, including *Halo 2*, *Midtown Madness 3*, *Star Wars Galaxies*, *True Fantasy Live Online*, *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six*, *Counter-Strike*, to name just a very few.





J-LO KICKS SOME ASS-O

Fifty dollars is a lot of money, so when you wanna buy a friend a videogame gift, you're probably looking in the lame-budget-title section. But if you're director Kevin Smith, and your friends are Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck, you get them a game they can really get into...literally. Smith recently gave the couple *Jen Saves Ben*, a one-of-a-kind beat-em-up, as thanks for appearing in his new movie, *Jersey Girl*. To see more, go to www.powerhouseanimation.com.

Nintendo 64 Zeldas Are GameCube-bound

Ocarina of Time and its previously unreleased sequel head to GC in Japan

Japanese gamers awaiting the release of the new GameCube *Zelda* got an early Christmas present from Nintendo last November—the company announced that people who preordered the game would get an extra disc. Contained on the bonus disc are Cube versions of the Nintendo 64 hit *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* and its previously unreleased expansion, *Ura Zelda*. The two new games have slightly cleaner and smoother graphics than the original N64 title.

Never heard of *Ura Zelda*? You're not alone. *Ura* (pronounced "Oo-ra") means "other" in Japanese, and it's the name of the remixed version of *Ocarina of Time* created for Nintendo's ill-fated 64DD add-on. Ultimately, the DD *Ura* was left unreleased. The game is a lot like

the original 8-bit *Zelda*'s famous second quest. It features the same basic overworld and game structure as *Ocarina*, but with one important change: The dungeons are all reworked, with different puzzles, enemy locations, etc. We expect other tweaks and changes, too, though specific details are still unclear.



A few new enemies await Link in *Ura Zelda*.

As of press time, Nintendo hadn't announced a release of this special disc in the United States, but you can bet your Deku Nuts it will arrive here before the new *Zelda*'s March debut.

Now you can honestly say the whole world is against you.



Look for this icon on Tribes™ Aerial Assault and other PlayStation 2 games with online capability.



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A LIVE-ACTION PAC-MAN

Bad idea #97: According to movie-buzz rag *The Hollywood Reporter*, one of the next videogames to be made into a movie is *Pac-Man*. By itself, that's not bad news—*Pac* has been a gaming staple since the early '80s. But here's where it goes awry: It's planned as a live-action feature. As if it weren't bad enough seeing Mike Myers or Jim Carrey in silly Seuss makeup...



Liotta on Liotta

Actor Ray Liotta tells us about his role in GTA: Vice City

Celebrities are people, too—just incredibly rich ones. You like games; they like games. Each issue, we talk to a different celebrity who plays games, is involved in their creation, or is lucky enough to be in one. In addition to being the star of such controversial movies as *Goodfellas* and *Operation Dumbo Drop*, this month's gaming celeb, Ray Liotta, voices Tommy Vercetti, the main character in *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*. As you'll see in our interview, he's not such a tough guy after all. **Note:** No interviewer was actually harmed during the interview, and we embellished the questions a bit.

EGM: *Vice City*...how'd it happen?

Ray Liotta: It was a great opportunity to do something outside of Hollywood. I'd originally turned it down, though. But things turned out well in the end, eh?

EGM: We think so, yeah. You're such a tough guy—why so wary at first?

RL: I was hesitant because of the violence. Eventually, I figured, hey—there's worse s*** out there, so why not?

EGM: Yeah, you could've been in an *Army Men* game. So, who approached who first about the role, tough guy?

RL: My agent got a call. They asked if I wanted to be the voice and threw out this monetary figure that was like, "Holy smokes, that's a lot of friggin' money." Now I see why. Next time, I'm going to hit 'em up for even more.

EGM: Did you have to prep for the part by beating up defenseless old ladies?

RL: Nah, I just read the words. When I was doing the lines, I couldn't believe some of the s*** that was coming outta my mouth.

EGM: Are you pleased with the title's success, tough guy?

RL: Yeah. I've never seen anything like it. I can't believe the reviews we're getting. It's amazing. Rockstar tells me they can get like 10 million copies sold out of this one. They think they can make \$400 million off it. Do you think I'm good in it? [*Liotta removes crowsbar from jacket, brandishes it in front of us.*]

EGM: Oh, uh, yeah...you're the best, baby!

RL: No way! Get outta here! You really think the s*** I'm saying is cool?



believe all the names attached to this project, too. I'm glad I took the deal now. [*WHACK! Our intrepid interviewer gets his shins bashed with a crowsbar.*]

EGM: Ouch! That hurt! Bones...broken...but we must...continue...interview. So, you're pleased with fan reaction?

RL: You bet. We're getting reviews in *Time* magazine and other places saying *Vice City* has elevated gaming to an art form. I thought it was going to go under the radar. Guess it helps to have a goodfella on board. [*Liotta takes out brass knuckles.*]

EGM: We can see you want to end the interview a little early. Sorry we called you a tough guy all those times. That was uncalled for. We'll end it with this: Ever play a game like this before?

RL: Never seen anything like it. You play me. It's my voice. Play for hours, and I'm with you for hours. It's like when I was on a soap opera, people were comfortable seeing me. And now you can be comfortable with me kicking someone's ass. [*Cue Liotta giving our interviewer a well-deserved ass-kicking.*]

MAN ON THE STREET



Welcome to the Jungle

We love going to our local game store and freaking people out by asking them random questions about gaming. This month, we asked folks, "What's your favorite thing to do to just mess around in *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*?" Although folks freely admitted their crimes, none showed signs of remorse:



"Take the helicopters that don't have guns and fly down the street and hit people with the blades. And, of course, go on crazy rampages."
— Douglas Dinwoodie, Evanston, IL

"Running over people who are in the scooters. [laughs] Yeah, that's funny."
— Edwin Najarra, Chicago, IL



"Going on motorcycle rampages through the mall and taking jumps on the racing bikes is lots of fun."
— Josh Hinman, Chicago, IL

"I love to drive the taxi. I like driving so fast that I deliver the passenger at about the same time the car's so damaged it's ready to explode."
— Lisa Garland, Chicago, IL





GET READY FOR MARIO PARTY-E

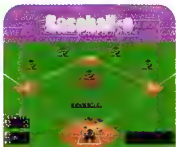
Nintendo's next card series puts the wild-party hijinks of *Mario Party* in your pocket. You'll play a deck of these like a traditional trading-card game, but when someone plays an Event card, you break out the e-Reader, scan in the card, and engage your opponents in a game of skill on your GBA screens. Also, be on the lookout for a series of *Kirby* e-Cards in the near future.

e-Card e-Valuation

Nintendo's released a new batch of games for their GBA e-Reader. Here's what we thought:



It's one of the beloved plumber's first appearances, but odds are you've already played this to death, since a superior version of this oldie has been crammed into all three *Super Mario Advance* games. This version still offers simple enemy-troouncing fun, but it's merely average for an e-Card game.



Like its similarly awful cousin *Tennis-64*, this rudimentary hardball sim proves that in 1985, it was scientifically impossible to make a decent sports game. The graphics are utter crap, the gameplay is laughable, and the fun factor is nil. Not worth the three minutes it'll take to swipe it in.



While this isn't arcade-perfect (it is the NES version, after all), it's still an excellent game of *Donkey Kong*. This is time-tested stuff, packed with good gameplay that's fun to return to again and again. The sound and visuals can't compare to modern games, but it doesn't matter. Pick this one up.



Another real e-winner, *Ice Climber* offers tons of levels, addictive gameplay, and quite possibly the best graphics of any e-Reader game. The unforgiving jump physics will take some getting used to, but once you've mastered the slick controls, you'll be hard-pressed to put this game down.



Try as we might, we can't actually name a Nintendo-published game that's worse than *Urban Champion*. *Donkey Kong Jr. Math?* It's educational. *Dance Aerobics?* At least it's healthy. Yep—*Champion* is the worst. It's unbelievably bad. You'll punch, you'll kick, you'll weep openly over the \$5 you lost.

—Shane Bettenhausen

“Best on the block” doesn't mean much anymore.



Look for this icon on My Street™ and other PlayStation 2 games with online capability.

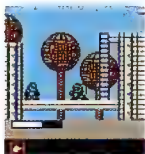
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DIG IN JAPAN

Gaming on cell phones may be new in the United States, but it's old hat in Japan, where the industry generates more than \$800 million a year. That's enough dough to attract companies like Sega, Capcom, Konami, Enix, and Namco, who are producing applications for mobile devices. And if the format takes off in the United States, we'll likely see Japanese releases like *Mega Man* (left) on our phones.

Call of the Wireless

We show you how to get started with the new generation of cell-phone games

Picture this scenario: It's this upcoming summer, and you're standing outside your local googolplex, waiting in line to see *The Hulk*. Your friends took off to grab a bite to eat and left you standing there as the designated place-holder. Since you're stuck between a tongue-wrestling couple and a shirtless, green-painted comic nerd who's repeatedly shouting "Hulk smash!", your entertainment options are severely limited.

But you could be playing *Pac-Man*, *Monkey Ball*, *Tony Hawk 4*, or a whole host of other games—all on something you'd probably have in your pocket anyway: a cell phone. But what do you really need to make this wonderful future come true? Let us show you....

Getting Started

The first step involves buying a new cell phone, because more than likely, your current one lacks the power to run these "high-tech" games. Maybe you're still sporting one of those "bag phones" from the '80s. Today's cell phones are sleek 'n' sexy. And if you really want to play decent stuff on one, prepare to spend a couple hundred dollars.

Before you enter the wild world of wireless, however, ask yourself these important questions. How often do you plan on using it, both for calls and gaming? That'll be important to determine what calling plan you're gonna pick. Second, what kind of screen do you want—bright, vibrant, and colorful or dull and dim? And lastly, how much are you willing to pay? If you ain't got the green, you'll be stuck playing *Snake* in black and white (and if you've played *Snake*, you know its long-term entertainment value is next to nil). Three major cell providers offer dedicated, downloadable games. To the right is a rundown of what you'll find in each:



Sprint PCS Vision

What you need: A PCS Vision-enabled phone (ranging in price from \$150-\$400) and Sprint PCS Vision service (starting at \$30/month). May we suggest you check out the Samsung A500 with its backlit screen—perfect for gaming.

Price to game: Ranges from freebies (which, as though we had to tell you this, aren't worth the download) to a couple bucks (most expensive is \$4.99).

Advantage: Offers classic games like *Pac-Man*, *Defender*, and a few Intellivision hits from the '80s that other cell-phone providers don't have. And if you wanna play mobile *Monkey Ball*, Sprint's one of the carriers that's got it (AT&T's the other).

Extras: Browse the Web and download other stuff to your phone, like extra ring tones (no man should be without "Baby Got Back"), screen savers, and more.



Verizon Get It Now

What you need: A Get It Now-compatible phone (ranging in price from \$50-\$300) and a Verizon Wireless service plan (starting at \$30/month).

Price to game: Varies. Get It Now offers several tiers of downloads—demo, subscription, and purchase (often with a timed expiration).

Advantage: Verizon offers mostly board and puzzle games, but if you dig EA Sports titles, Verizon has you covered. *FIFA Soccer* and *Tiger Woods PGA Tour Golf* are among the titles currently available for download.

Extras: Offers loads of other applications for your phone, like a Magic 8-Ball program, horoscopes, and a guide to mixing drinks (in case you're trying to impress the ladies and don't have time to reference a book on how to concoct a sex on the beach).



AT&T mMode

What you need: At press time,

AT&T supports one phone with a color screen suitable for these new-style games.

So to get your game on, you'll need the Motorola T720 (\$299) and an AT&T service plan (starting at \$20/month).

Price to game: New games cost a couple bucks per download.

Advantage: The library of available games is similar to Sprint's, although exact compatibility varies by phone model. And AT&T offers an exclusive (for now, anyway) cell version of *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4* that the other services don't.

Extras: Check e-mail, get music and concert news, find your friends, and browse the Web. Pretty standard stuff here—but the extended applications focus mostly on Web browsing and productivity.



The Pros & Cons of Cell Games

Are phones that also game right for you? Well, you have a lot of options to weigh. They are undoubtedly very cool, but consider these pros and cons.

Pros:

- The available games are simple, fun time-wasters.
- More convenient than carrying a Game Boy Advance everywhere.
- Ladies love *Monkey Ball*.

Cons:

- Cell phones don't make good game controllers.
- The storage memory on most phones limits you to holding a couple games at a time.
- Cell-phone Web browsing is slow and tedious, so getting new games and applications can be painful.



THE FUTURE OF CELLULAR GAMING

No, the image to the left is not a next-generation Game Boy Advance. It's Nokia's N-Gage mobile game deck planned for a 2003 release (more announcements scheduled for February). The new phone/game system is the first of the company's game-device lineup, sporting a color screen and GBA-style layout. Sega and other game publishers are reportedly at work on games that will take advantage of the device's game-friendly features. That leaves us with one question—which end do you talk into?

The Games You Can Play

OK, so you've bought a phone, and you're ready to game. But which titles should you buy with the money you have left (which we estimate to be exactly \$4.99)? We've logged

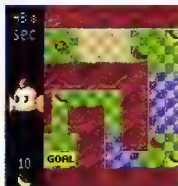
hours on the following mobile titles, and we're ready to give you our opinions and a score on our 0-10 scale. The good news: Once you've bought and downloaded them, the

programs reside on your phone, so you don't have to use your minutes to play. Prices listed below are based on Sprint's offerings.

Sega Monkey Ball

\$3.99, 30 days
Score: 8

This mini version of *Monkey Ball* is almost as addictive as its console brethren. The only thing that hurts it is the shoddy control thanks to the phone's keypad.



Kick Champion

\$3.00, 60 days
Score: 5

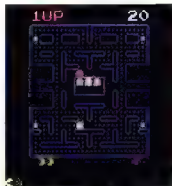
If soccer were more like *Pong*, it'd be *Kick Champion*. Pass and shoot as many balls as you can past two goalies before time runs out.



Pac-Man

\$4.99,
no expiration
Score: 7

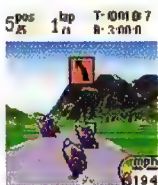
Namco's classic dot-gobbler returns, and he's feeling a bit sluggish on the cramped cell-phone screen. It features decent sound effects, though.



Moto GP

\$3.99,
no expiration
Score: 7

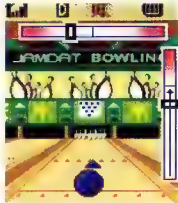
It's hard to believe a motorcycle racer that looks this good and moves this fast can be played on a phone. Just be sure to turn the sound down before playing.



JAMDAT Bowling

\$3.99, 60 days
Score: 9

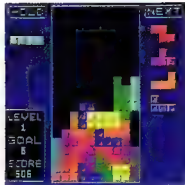
An amazingly fast-paced and easy-to-play bowling game. It's devoid of sound effects, but maybe that's a good thing, eh?



Tetris

\$3.00, 60 days
Score: 9

When you get a good version of *Tetris*, it's easy to sit there playing, letting the time melt away. And this mobile version is just that. A must-have. ♣



Sega Remakes, VF4 Evo Head to PS2

It was inevitable that Sega would rummage through its back catalog of games, and choose a few gems for the full-render treatment. And now, it's happening (at least in Japan). Remakes of the original *Phantasy Star*, *Space Harrier*, *Golden Axe*, and *Fantasy Zone* are headed to PlayStation 2 in summer 2003, thanks to a deal struck between Sega and Japanese value-game publisher D3. Each game will be sold separately at the low, low price of 2500 yen (\$20). More releases—including classics like *Alex Kidd in Miracle World*, *Streets of Rage*, and *Phantasy Stars II and IV*—will happen if the line is successful. All the games have been remixed to take advantage of the PS2, with improved

graphics and sound. In a separate announcement, Sega revealed that Dreamcast "hits" like *Illbleed*, *Dynamite Cop*, *Blue Stinger*, and the Japan-only *Rent-A-Hero No. 1* will be rereleased for Xbox under the CoolCool brand.

Showing even more PS2 love, Sega announced a Japanese release of *Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution* on the system, scheduled for March 2003. It features two new characters, reduced load times, improved graphics, and a new Quest mode, pitting you against the created fighter data from 500 opponents across Japan (some nationally ranked VF players among them). Sega of America would not comment on U.S. releases for any of these games.



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LOGITECH

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WAR OF THE MONSTERS



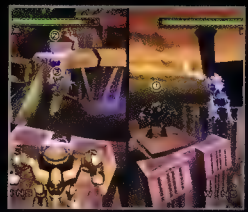
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Violence





PlayStation 2



LIVE IN YOUR WORLD.
PLAY IN OURS.



PRESS
START



Afterthoughts: **Metroid Prime**

The sheer quality of GameCube's *Metroid Prime* knocked us squarely on our asses, and we must admit that we weren't quite expecting it. Did these guys work directly with Miyamoto on every aspect? Was it tough to get the controls just right? Did they sign a contract with Satan? The guys behind the game have never come forward to speak about the magic, mystery, and Metroidity of their game...until now.

Via the magic of video teleconferencing, we spoke with the notoriously tight-lipped guys at developer Retro Studios (Executive Producer Steve Barcia, Lead Designer Mark Pacini, Senior Designer Karl Deckard, and Producer Michael Mann), along with Shigeru Miyamoto and Kensuke Tanabe of Nintendo, about the groundbreaking project.

EGM: Could you describe how development was split between Retro and Nintendo?

Steve Barcia: Actually, a lot of the overall design and direction was very much a cooperative effort on both sides. The implementation, engineering, and art were all done here at Retro, but the direction and a lot of choices in the game were decided together.

Kensuke Tanabe: The only thing that we handled ourselves was the music, which was done by a composer from Nintendo's R&D 1 team (and composer of all the music in the *Metroid* series), Mr. Kenji Yamamoto. Other than that, everything was handled by Retro.

EGM: We know that *Prime* started its life as an unnamed third-person action game. How far along was it when the decision was made to turn it into a *Metroid*?

SB: We had started our first project shortly after the company was founded, and then Mr.



Meta-Ridley provides an impressive nod to the *Metroid* games of yesteryear, and let's face it: Executive Producer Steve Barcia is a pretty good artist.

Miyamoto became involved and gave us some recommendations on how to change the game. But we really hadn't been working on the other game for that long. It was a matter of months. The *Metroid Prime* project began officially in August of 1999.

Shigeru Miyamoto: I'd been seeing test builds of different projects from Retro as long as four years ago, and at that time, I had the impression that these guys could really do a good *Metroid* game in the future. I know that American gamers have been waiting for a new *Metroid* for a long time, and the U.S. press asked about it *many*

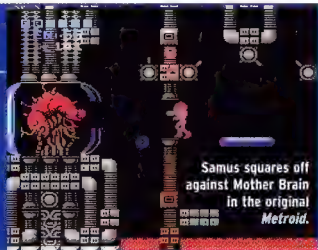
times. Even during the Nintendo 64 days, we were thinking of ways to do it and what type of game to make, but we just really couldn't come up with any concrete ideas.

EGM: At first, the announcement that an American team was developing *Metroid* was met with a lot of criticism. Were you fazed by the unfavorable public opinion when *Prime* was first unveiled?

SM: Well, maybe we should have listened. I don't know! (laughs) Really, we made it the way we wanted to make it; we really weren't concerned with what other people thought

Samus, Hit Me One More Time

"There are a lot of people who will want to find everything," says Executive Producer Steve Barcia, "and *Prime* offers them plenty of opportunity to play the game for a long time." Collecting every item and scanning every possible object will unlock three different endings and four art galleries, and after you've beaten the game once, you can challenge a harder difficulty level. Oh, and don't forget the link-up options with *Metroid Fusion*—beating *Prime* and linking up with the Game Boy Advance cart via the GC-GBA link cable lets you use Samus' new Fusion suit in *Prime*, and beating *Fusion* allows you to play the original *Metroid* on your GameCube.



Samus squares off against Mother Brain in the original *Metroid*.



MIYAMOTO SAYS PRIME GOES TO 12!

It's obvious from the Platinum Award we gave *Prime* last issue that we're really happy with the final product, but how does Mario and *Zelda* creator Shigeru Miyamoto feel about it? We asked him to assign a score (out of 50) that represents his overall take on the game's accomplishments in bringing the series to 3D, and he happily exclaimed, "12!" To which Retro's Steve Barcia responded, "I like his assessment."

A Lovable Rogues Gallery

Metroid Prime is crawling with innumerable alien beasts and bizarre monstrosities, but each guy on the design team has a soft spot for just one. Here's a look at their personal favorites.

Karl Deckard — Triclops

"He kind of makes me angry, because at first you don't know how to beat him, and he always wins. And then when you do know how to beat him—you still can't always do it. I like that in-game play—when you're constantly pushed to do better."

Mark Pacini — Chozo Ghost

"I just think it's a simple, effective enemy, with the added bonus that you have to use one of your visors to battle it, which kind of sums up a lot of very good elements about the game in one creature."

Michael Mann — Baby Sheegoths

"They're the bulldog of the game. Little grunts who like to attack you."

Steve Barcia — Meta-Ridley

"It's an extremely cool battle and a character from the past that players can really appreciate. I don't think there have been a lot of battles like that in any first-person games, so I think it really sets things apart."

Shigeru Miyamoto — Alpha Beetle

"It was the first enemy we saw up and running. I was like, 'We can build off this!' and it was a really good start."

Kansuke Tanabe — Auto-turrets

"I like the auto-turrets!"

at the time.

SB: I agree with Miyamoto, because at the time, the game was already coming together and was fun, so we knew we were going in the right direction. So, even if there were some opinions that it wasn't the right direction, we could see it was going to be fun.

EGM: Some people have complained about the nonstandard control setup. Did you ever consider allowing the game to be played like a standard first-person shooter?

SB: We really set out to make something that stands on its own, and above all else, the first-person view was an aspect of the game but not the main focus. Instead, we just wanted to make it really cool and take what we could from the original *Metroid*.

Karl Deckard: Originality and innovation are more important than fitting yourself into a certain genre just because you think that's what people want.

SM: That's right. Even amongst people making the game, sometimes we had the opinion: "Well, this is what it is in an FPS," and we really had to break down those stereotypes and toss them out the window to come up with things that are good for *Metroid*.

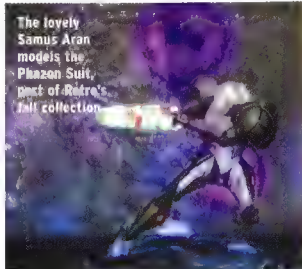
EGM: What was the hardest part of the game to get right?

SB: Probably the first-person jumping. From the outset, we realized that we'd have to pay a lot of attention to it, since we were creating a platformer. There aren't many games you can look at where first-person jumping is very fun at all. We wanted that to be an important part of the game, and from day one, it was one of the big parts that we continually had to spend a lot of effort and focus on.

EGM: At the end of *Prime* there's no timed escape, like there is in *Metroid* and *Super Metroid*. Did you consider adding that?

SB: There was a limited amount of things that we wanted to cross over. The intro level for one—it's very similar to *Super Metroid*. It was agreed on by both Nintendo and Retro that having a timed escape would be too similar, and that the way we have it now was the best way to end the game.

KT: I will say that when we first talked about it with Retro, they had a slightly stronger feeling



about wanting to put in a timed evacuation at the end, but I just had to say, "No." And if we'd have put something like that in, I don't think we would have been done with the game in time!

EGM: Speaking of being late...will we have to wait another eight years for another *Metroid*?

SM: Let's direct that to Retro!

SB: We were going to direct it your way! We'll enjoy the current one for now.

SM: No, we've been discussing future projects while this one was going on, so I think it'll be a little quicker than in the past.

EGM: In the credits, many Retro employees thank their friends and families for their understanding. Obviously, it was a ton of work, but do you feel that you'll reap the rewards when the public loves your game?

KT: We're reaping some sleep right now! (laughs) Yeah, we're all really happy with how it turned out, and we think that gamers will be, too. You guys have all played it—you said you liked it. We're just happy that all of our hard work paid off.

Mark Pacini: I completely agree. Everyone worked so hard because we saw the potential of the game, and

we knew that we were part of something really special. It was really hard work, and we put a tremendous amount of effort into it, and we're really proud and hope that everyone likes it.

KT: I'll always remember that while working on this game, in the middle of one of our *Metroid* conferences, my wife had her second baby. (laughs) But we did not name her Samus. (laughs) ♣





PRESS
START



Afterthoughts: Splinter Cell

If you're like us, you spent your holidays sneaking through embassies and clubbing guards with *Splinter Cell* superspy Sam Fisher. Or maybe you don't own an Xbox, and you're waiting for Ubi Soft's awesome stealth-action game to come to one of the other consoles, as we expect will happen early in 2003. Either way, you'll want to check out what Senior Producer Mathieu Ferland has to say about how to aim, what had to be cut, hidden secrets, and more, all in our Afterthoughts interview.

EGM: With all the cool weapons and items in *Splinter Cell*, why do you start the game with so little equipment?

Mathieu Ferland: We wanted this to be played as a stealth game, and if you provide people with all the equipment at the beginning, they will try all of it immediately. We also limited the amount of ammo. In the first level, [most] people run out of bullets. And during our playtest sessions, we learned that once you're out of bullets, you try to play more stealthily and you enjoy the game even more because you've tried different things.

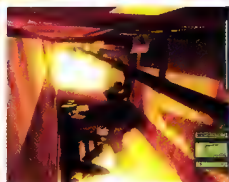
EGM: Do all the weapons and gadgets in the game really exist?

MF: Most of them have been taken from reality, like the shocker. The shocker is an adaptation of what S.W.A.T. teams use. The difference is that what the police use has a wire linked to their weapon, so they can knock someone down with an electric shock. We've adapted that and removed the wire so you have more freedom of movement and accuracy when firing at enemies.

Splinter Cell takes place in 2004, and Tom Clancy's all about the day after tomorrow—what's coming next. Another example: the [night-vision and thermal] goggles. Those goggles



After creating a graphics engine that allows lights to be shot out, the developers realized how powerful and cool the lighting effects could be in *Splinter Cell*.



exist in real life. The only difference is that there's no prototype with both thermal and night vision [in one]—they're separate. And we started out with that, but later in development, we had animation problems with Sam trying to switch visors. So, for gameplay purposes, we said, "OK, that might be believable [for 2004], and it'd be cool to make it all in one."

EGM: What's up with the aiming system? Sometimes we'd be standing right next to a guy and still wouldn't hit him.

MF: There are two things about the reticle—one that is known by the player and one that is unknown.

The thing that is known is when you move, your reticle expands, and you need to wait until it recovers for better precision. So, if you wait for two seconds or so, depending on how fast you were moving, your reticle will recover, and then you'll have much better precision. Depending on how far you are from the enemy, your shot should be quite precise, just like in real life. If the reticle's not recovered, you will randomly shoot within the boundaries of the reticle—your shot could go anywhere within that area.

The thing that players don't know is that you

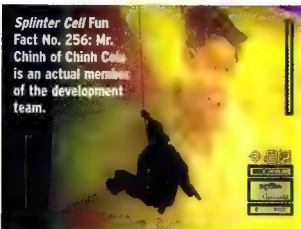
Ol' Ironside

Splinter Cell's main man Sam Fisher is voiced by accomplished character actor Michael Ironside. He's probably best known as the boat-owning jerk who gives



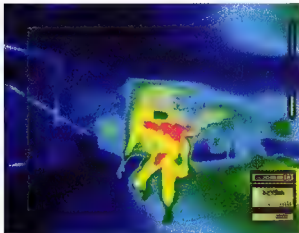
"See you at the party, Richter!"

George Clooney so much grief in *A Perfect Storm*, but we'll always remember him as Richter, the gun for hire who loses his arms in *Total Recall*. "We wanted Sam's voice to be deep and to use those low frequencies that make a character sound like he's speaking and whispering at the same time," Ferland tells us about the casting choice. "So when you're in the action and you hear the voice, it's still quiet and realistic. This was his first experience with game voiceover, and it turned out really well."



ENIX, SQUARE START LOVE TRAIN

The two companies synonymous with hit console RPGs, Square (*Final Fantasy*) and Enix (*Dragon Warrior*...well it's huge in Japan anyway), announced this past November that they will merge to form one powerhouse company come April 1, 2003 (and no, it's not an early April Fool's joke). The new company will be known as Square Enix.



get more accuracy when you're shooting objects [as opposed to people]. For instance, you can shoot a light from much farther away than you can shoot an enemy. We did that because we wanted to encourage players to adapt the environment to their way of playing, instead of just shooting all the enemies.

Another thing is that sometimes enemies are wearing helmets. So, it may happen that, even if you shoot them in the head, they won't die instantly—you might need an additional shot.

EGM: Why did you do away with the radar screen that other stealth games like *Metal Gear Solid* rely on?

MF: Two reasons. The first is that we wanted the game to be realistic and immersive. A radar screen gives you too much information and reduces the tension. You don't need to peek around the corner—you already know there's a guard there.

The second reason is that we've noticed by playing *MGS* that at a certain point, you're playing the game in 2D if you're looking only at the radar in that little corner of the screen. We didn't even want to give players that option because we wanted people to be in the environment, feeling the tension, and using the gadgets to figure things out. The game gives you plenty of hints to make your way through—you can hear voices, footsteps, etc.

EGM: Aside from a sequel, do you think we'll see Sam make a cameo in other Tom Clancy games? Maybe having a meeting with *Rainbow Six*?

MF: Yeah, that could be nice as long as it fits with the *Rainbow Six* series. A lot of fans spend time putting together the timelines from all the games. [laughs] So it forces us to be smart and make sure everything fits.

I don't know that it would be a good thing to mix these two series. But why not have little nods to them, eh?

EGM: Any moves or features that didn't make it into the game?

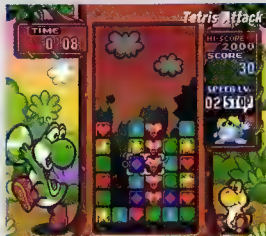
MF: Yes. When your guidelines are to focus on realism, the amount of things you'd like to do in a game are limited. There are many moves that were removed for different reasons. For example, at one point, Sam was able to run with his weapon drawn. This was removed because the aiming wasn't accurate at all and because it's not very stealthy to shoot while you're running. [Plus] the pace of the game would've been too fast compared to what we wanted.

Sam was also able to pick up enemies' weapons. We removed that for different reasons. First, it's not realistic, since no special agent of this kind would do that in real life—it would be too dangerous, since they wouldn't know how a weapon had been set up. Second, a new weapon means new ammo and more shooting, which is also not very stealthy. Finally, more ammo anytime [you take out an enemy] makes it a much bigger deal to balance the gameplay properly, and we did not want it to become a shooter type of game.

In terms of gadgets, we wanted to have another [screen] that would've shown Lambert and his team live while they're providing new orders. But it was too annoying on the screen; it needed to be big to provide enough detail, and since the game doesn't freeze during these conversations, we also had some sound issues.

TIDBITS

Nintendo Packs Puzzle Punch



One area Nintendo's neglected on GameCube is the once-mighty puzzle genre. But not anymore! The company revealed a special delivery to puzzle geeks everywhere in the form of *Nintendo Puzzle Collection*, coming to GC in Japan in January 2003. (Unfortunately, Nintendo hasn't confirmed a stateside release as of this writing.) The compilation includes *Panel de Pon* (aka *Pokémon Puzzle League* and *Tetris Attack* in the United States), *Dr. Mario*, and *Yoshi's Cookie*. All the games include four-player modes and can be downloaded to Game Boy Advance (or you can use a GBA as a controller) using the GC-GBA link cable.

Game Music...In Concert

Previously, live performances of game music by a full 90-piece symphony orchestra were limited to a few shows in Japan for big titles like *Final Fantasy*. U.S. gamers—unless they wanted to front the money for a plane ticket across the Pacific—were left out of the fun...until now. On May 16, America gets its first live performance of game music in "Videogames Live at the Hollywood Bowl," a two-and-a-half-hour show featuring "the finest composed music found in the greatest videogames of all time," according to the show's producers. If you're unable to make it to Los Angeles for the show (which coincides with the Electronic Entertainment Expo), you can see the event on pay-per-view, and it will be available later on DVD and CD.

Even More Splinter Cell Secrets

After he thought the interview was over, we sneaked behind Ferland, grabbed him by the neck, and, with our gun to his head, forced him to divulge more *Splinter Cell* secrets. Here's what he had to say before we knocked him out: "Another hidden trick is when you come out of the first training level, you see a door on your left as you face the hall at the very beginning. There's a way of picking the lock during the training, opening this door, and getting a keypad number. Then, go back to the beginning and go up on the left side. Know when you have the lights on the walls when you're first training with the camera? There is a small area where you can walk jump to access a higher level there. So, you can try that, and at the end, you can speak to Grimsdottir there..."

You can't fight
what you can't see.



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PlayStation 2



Blood and Gore
Violence



PRESS START



Attack of the Fanboys

Where do they come from, and just who the hell do they think they are? EGM celebrates the most annoying breed of gamer, the fanboy

Sticks vs. stones. Monarchy vs. democracy. *Star Wars* vs. *Star Trek*. Us vs. them. People pick sides. With videogames, it's no different. And on the front line of the console war—the raging battle of PlayStation 2 vs. Xbox vs. GameCube—you'll find the fanboy. He's stubborn. He's angry. He's redoubtable to his foes, frighteningly loyal to his system of choice. And he offers no apologies. "[A fanboy] is someone who has taken his passion for something to the level of obsession and has access to a database of information on the subject tucked away in his brain for easy and frequent reference," says Sonia Im. As a PR rep for *Final Fantasy* publisher Square EA, Im faces fanboys on a regular basis. "[The obsession] doesn't just have to be videogames. It could be comics, toys, or even fishing. The important thing is that they worship 'it.'"

Chances are, a few thousand fanboys are reading this article right now. And if you're one of them, well, you know who you are. You and your PlayStation 2 are an inseparable fighting team, battling the evils of Microsoft and Nintendo. Or, clutching your GameCube by its handle, you loiter countersides at the local game store and fire verbal missiles at would-be PS2 purchasers. Or, hunched before your computer monitor, you lurk on gaming message boards and wage a one-man information war to prove that Xbox is the *only* console for hardcore gamers, right?

Right?

Fanboys argue over which console is most powerful, which has the best games, which is cooler for some abstract reason only they comprehend. They unleash callous comments that ignite Internet message-board flame wars: those long threads of hateful posts where everyone has an answer and nobody agrees. Fanboys are willing to go down with

their console, and will claim victory before the war is even over. Just ask a Dreamcast fanboy.

This special breed of gamer is not new. It's just that nowadays, he can create a bigger ruckus thanks to the Internet, where anything goes and anyone's message can be heard. Since the creation of the very first consoles, fanboys have argued the relative merits of one system over another. "The biggest rivalry, naturally, was between the Atari 2600 camp and the Intellivision camp," says gaming historian Leonard Herman, author of *Phoenix: The Fall & Rise of Videogames*. Without the Net to vent their opinions, early fanboys battled each other on school playgrounds, around the office watercooler, or in the letters section of classic gaming mags. "Just because there are nearly

400 games for the [Atari VCS] doesn't mean they are any good," reads a letter from the March 1983 issue of *Electronic Fun With Computers & Games*.

Wars raged with each successive hardware generation: ColecoVision vs. Atari 5200, Nintendo Entertainment System vs. Sega Master System, Super NES vs. Genesis, PlayStation vs. Saturn. It all leads to the unprecedented scenario we have today: three strong hardware manufacturers fighting for market dominance. None appears ready to pack it in just yet. This is a fanboy's dream, and a nightmare for anyone caught in the crossfire. Our advice: Don't fan a fanboy's flame war. You'll only encourage him.

—Joshua Fruhlinger

The Biology of the Fanboy

Thought processes

The fanboy thinks he knows everything and has no problem letting you know that he knows more than you. In fact, he knows so much more than you that, should you disagree with him, you will only prove yourself to be the little noobie that you really are.

Habitat

The fanboy bleats with game-store clerks until he's asked if he's going to buy something. The fanboy then leaves and logs on to Internet discussion forums in an attempt to find an audience who will put up with his ranting.

Personality traits

The fanboy loves to argue. He'll argue about which system is better, which developer r00lz, and which controller feels best in his hands. He would rather argue than agree with you, even if he secretly agrees.

Spending habits

The fanboy has an unhealthy allegiance to a particular console brand. He will not buy another company's system, no matter how tempting it is. Were his enemies to know he was harboring a foreign console, a fanboy's legitimacy would be undermined. His followers would turn their heads in disgust, and his enemies would laugh maniacally.



Illustrations by Jeremy "Norm" Scott



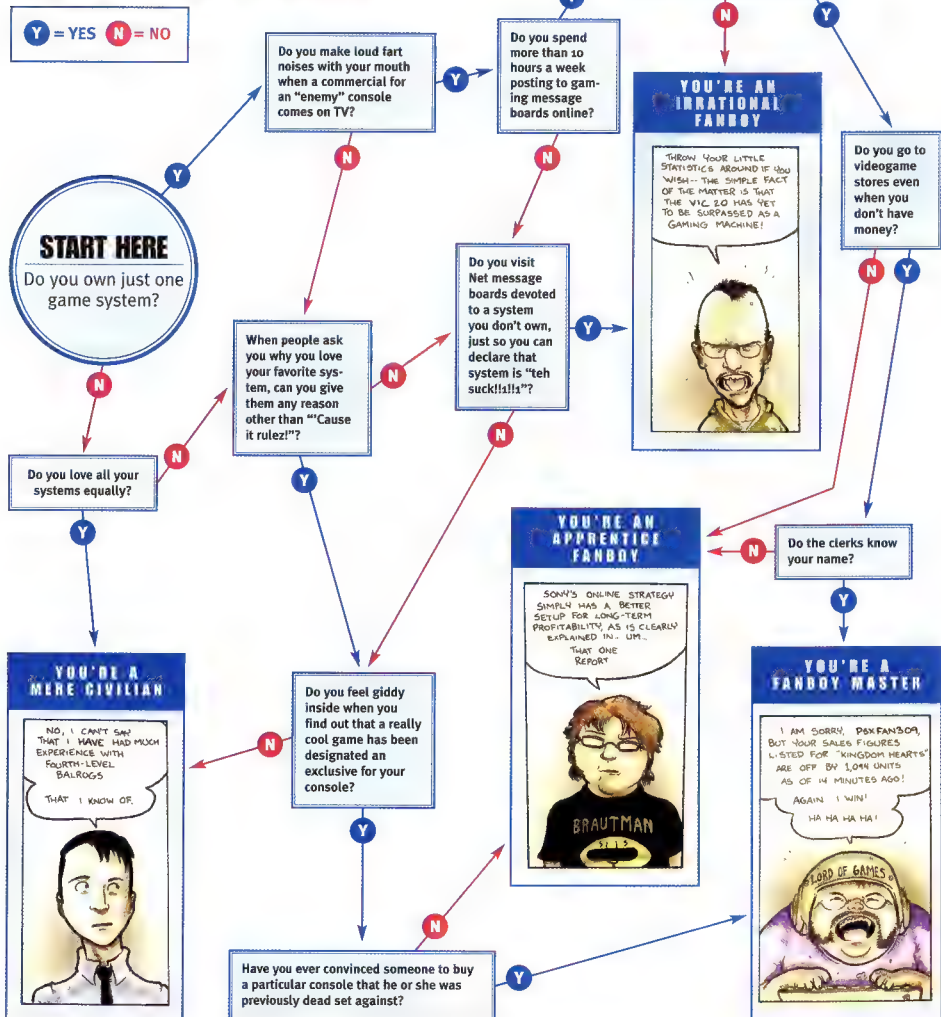
DRESS FOR THE OBSESSED

Videogame fanboymism isn't rooted only in the console war. Many fanboys specialize their expertise, focusing on particular genres or developers. Some play only SquareSoft RPGs—and even dress as Square characters in ritualistic “cosplay,” seen here. Others idolize industry personalities. If, say, Hideo Kojima, the master behind *Metal Gear Solid*, touches a particular game, his fanboys will be the first in line to sing its praises, whether it stinks or not.

What kind of fanboy are you?

Test your gaming geektitude

Y = YES N = NO





PRESS
START

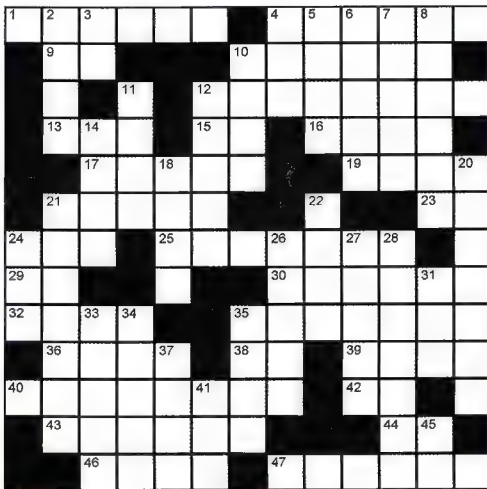


DIESEL GOES GAME DEVELOPER

XXX star Vin Diesel has (oh no, not...) announced plans to (please, don't let it be true...) start his own game-development house, Tigon Games (noooooo). The company will release its first title, *Perrone*, sometime in 2003 for an unspecified platform. The project is based on the life of a '70s-era police officer whose extraordinarily volatile dealings with both law enforcement and the Mafia won him media acclaim. According to Diesel, "When you seen the Tigon label on the box, you'll know it's off the hook!"

Sim-Sation

(Solution on page 167)



ACROSS

- Precocious *Super Mario Bros.* 2 baddie
- The Sims* Motive/vital stat
- GameCube's *Capcom* vs. *SNK*
- Burgerime* ('80s arcade) beefy baddie
- The Sims*: ___ (PC expansion)
- Acclaim's *XXX X-treme* sport
- Super Nintendo's *Castlevania*
- Sister to a *Crazy Taxi 3* knock-off Nevada city
- The "O" in the PS2's *N2O*
- Vice City*'s Tommy doesn't need to do this to get into parties
- Dragon Warrior* perennial foe
- GTA: Vice City* property, ___ Swanko Casa
- Drink of choice in most RPG taverns
- One of *Kain's Blood Omen II* dark gifts
- San Francisco Rush* setting (abbrv.)
- SSX* sequel
- Gives mature games an M
- Inventor of the spinning pile-driver
- PC-to-PS2 part ___Life
- Refers to *The Thing*?
- Lets you access game options
- Name of PS2 *The Sims*' finite main game
- ___ticipation (NES)
- Potential *Gauntlet* persona
- PS1 media format
- Pokémon #86
- If you're an EGM reader, you're one of this group

DOWN

- Heals RPG wounds
- Half of your weapon in *Goonies II* (NES)
- Shoe's EGM title (abbrv.)
- Like the ocean in *Vice City*
- Confirmation key on a keyboard
- Circus Maximus* (Xbox) horse controls
- PS1 dancing game has you bust one
- Nintendo's -race or -bird
- 1,021, in numbers *Eternal Darkness'* Pious Augustus could understand
- Yellow-cable signal from a composite A/V cable
- Monty of *Super Mario World* (SNES, GBA)
- Final Fantasy* (NES) introductory enemies
- The Sims* character trait opposite of shy
- Partner of a hacker in action games
- Decorative plant seen at the end of *Double Dragon* (NES)
- Dragon's Lair* follow-up *Space* ___
- 29 Across, for one
- Mega Man X* nemesis
- Dr. Muto's* (PS2) field of study
- Street Fighter's* Masters
- What 32 Across does to games
- PS1 vampire-killer
- Run, in a turn-based RPG
- Like *Kid*, for part of *Chrono Cross* (PS1)
- Mega Man's* Wily or Light (abbrv.)

13 Gaming Resolutions for 2K3



Last year, your New Year's resolution was, "Spend more time outside." And here it is, the dawn of 2003, and looking back, you spent more time slaughtering the virtual citizens of *Liberty/Vice City* than dancing with wolves. So, instead of that "good for you" resolution, here are a few you might consider that'll be more beneficial to your gaming life. You'll also feel much less guilty if you let 'em slip.

- Stop playing Time-Life operator with *SOCOM*/Xbox Live headsets
- Convince Acclaim to make *Mary Kate & Ashley's XXX*
- Move out of *Jurassic Park* arcade cabinet at the mall
- Save precious health potions for later use
- Write more nasty letters to my *Animal Crossing* friends
- Stop running over innocent beachgoers in *Vice City*
- Beat old *Adventures of Lolo 2* NES game tape, so you can finally move on to *Adventures of Lolo 3*
- Finish doctoral thesis on *Metal Gear Solid 2's* ending
- Lose some weight playing *Dance Dance Revolution: DDR Max*
- Gain it back by playing nothing but *The Legend of Zelda* (GC) for a few weeks
- Stop snickering whenever somebody says "Kok-toe Chojin"
- Start metal band called *Steel Battalion*
- Invent a new drinking game that revolves around *NFL Blitz*

Illustration: Jeremy "Norm" Scott

Overheard

"Nintendo is in the software business—to stay. Nintendo is in the handheld business—to stay. And Nintendo is most certainly in the home console business—to stay. Work is well under way on the successor technology to both Game Boy Advance and Nintendo GameCube."

—Nintendo Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing, *Paul MacDougall* squashes rumors of Nintendo leaving the hardware business in a speech to investment analysts.

"I also decided not to include any of the [e-mails] trying to make a serious comparison between Rare's acquisition and the September 11th terrorist attack...?"

—An employee at Rare, in a response on the company's website (www.rareware.com) to angry fans' letters about the developer leaving Nintendo and being acquired by Microsoft.



ENTER THE MATRIX

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY LARRY AND ANDY WACHOWSKI

5115103



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PlayStation 2



BATTING PENDING
RP
Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for Rating Information
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB



PRESS
START



Freddie Prince Jr., playing Live.

MS THROWS LIVE PARTY

Microsoft recently threw a party to celebrate the launch of Xbox Live and made sure celebrities were on hand at the Hollywood gala: Samuel L. Jackson, Shannon Elizabeth, and virtually the entire cast of *That '70s Show* were among those representing their love for (free) videogames. Rumors that an inebriated Fred Savage broke his wrist trying to woo Ms. Elizabeth with his *MechAssault* strafing proficiency are intriguing but, thus far, wholly unsubstantiated.

Quartermann — Game Gossip & Speculation

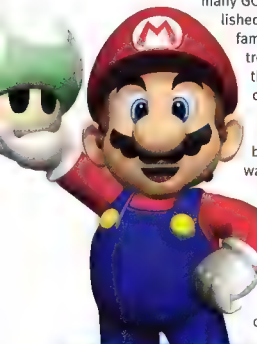
Hi-diddle-dee, Q-fans. Welcome to the first official Quartermann page o' gossip of the New Year. Gamers like you and me already have lots to look forward to this year, and it's only just begun.

Visual Concepts to Go 989

Rumor has it that **Visual Concepts**, purveyors of all sports Sega and *zKwhatever*, is headed to the **House of PlayStation**—possibly for good. Yours truly has caught wind that Sony is looking to recruit the developer to take over its ailing 989 Sports brand, which has earned a bad reputation among the biggest sports faction: pigskin players. Couple that with Sega's recent announcement that its sports games didn't perform as well this past year as predicted and Sega of Japan's alleged desire to dump the dev house off at the next stop, and you've got a volatile I'll piece of gossip. Whatever the case, let's hope that VC's sports games start getting the street cred The Q believes they rightly deserve....

GameCube to End Up Like Nintendo 64

If you're a Nintendo fan, take heart: GameCube will still be the place to get your N-fix, at least for a bit longer. But the buzz around the industry indicates that many publishers with planned GameCube support into 2003 have begun **systematically canceling titles** on the square system, in favor of Xbox and PS2 versions. Why, you ask? Because Cube owners are only buying the biggest titles, leaving the rest to languish on shelves. (Before you complain, ask yourself how many GC titles you've bought that *aren't* published by Nintendo.) All this should sound familiar to most N-loyalists: A similar trend happened (although much faster than with GC) back in the Nintendo 64 days.... This comes on the heels of rumors (and that's all they are) that Nintendo will leave the hardware behind and reap the profits on its software for other platforms; Either way, just enjoy GC games while you can....



Details on Next Oddworld

The third part of the **Oddworld quintology** (*Abe's Exoddus* on PS1 was merely a side story) is in development for **Xbox**. Details are scant,

but The Q-meister has dug up some startling facts about this next installment, which occurs after the events in *Munch's Oddysee*. Brace yourself, because it's a little...well, weird. Apparently, it involves a half-monkey, half-horse, centaurs, main character who's got a psychic connection to (get ready for it...) his boat. Yes, I said boat. Your job is to transport some "things" down a river in said boat. The **monkey-horse man and his talking-thinking sentient boat** have a gameplay relationship similar to Ico's (from Sony's *Ico*) relationship with the mute princess Yorda. (Or is it more of a Kitt/Michael Knight relationship? Hmm...) In fact, The Q hears that *Oddworld's* brainchild, Lorne Lanning, found the inspiration for this new direction from *Ico*.



New 3D Spatterhouse?

The Q's spies indicate that **Namco** is considering bringing back its **Spatterhouse** series of side-scrolling hack-em-ups for a 3D installment. Seems that Jason Vorhees-lookalike and main character Rick just can't move into a house without zombies knockin' at the door....

The Hot Q: Square and MMORPGs

Square's first online RPG, *Final Fantasy XI*, isn't burning up the charts in Japan, but it is getting closer to Square's magic break-even number. And now that its first experiment is almost a success (with a U.S. release of *FFXI* finally in the cards, too, which might show up later in 2003), the company has its sights set on doing a second massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG). But it's not a sequel to *FFXI*—it's a completely new, non-*FF* game. The first details should begin arriving in a few months.

And that's all for our visit this month, friends. Now, it's back to kicking innocent gamers' asses on Xbox Live (damn, I love online games!). If you feel like dropping me a line, send e-mail to quartermann@ziffdavis.com. Later, folks!

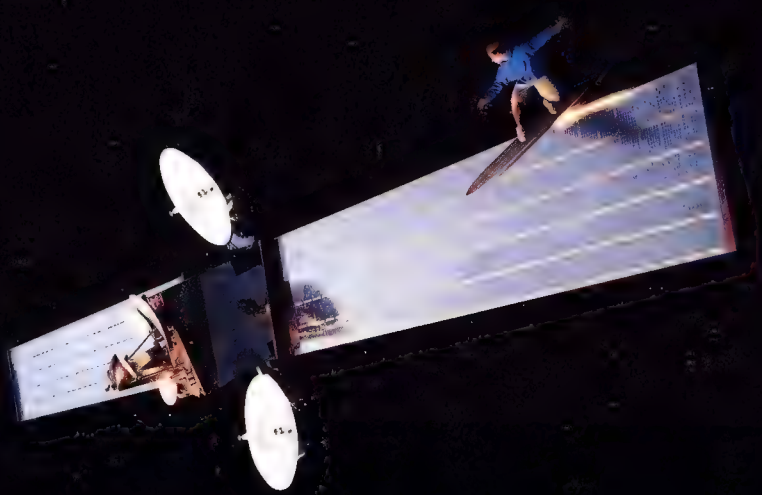
—The Q

Bits of Q



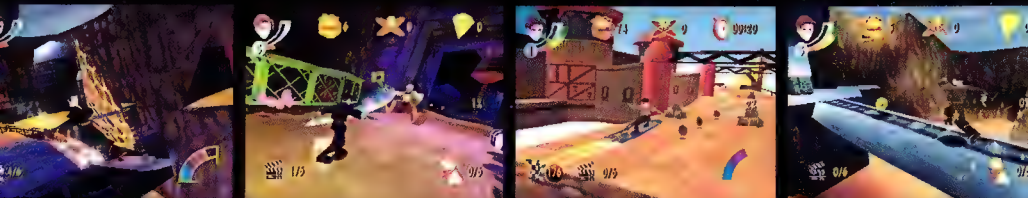
■ **Hardcore RPG freaks, start getting excited.** Enix's *Dragon Warrior VIII* is coming to PS2. But don't get too excited just yet. Japan may not even see it in 2003, considering the rate at which *DW* games get delayed there.
■ **And, speaking of news for the hardest of core, you can go ahead and buy the import now if you were waiting:**

Treasure's arcade-style, vertical-scrolling shooter *Ikuruga* is not coming to the United States (blame the unpopularity of third-party GC games and the shooter genre for that one).
■ **U.S. anime fans will want to keep an eye out for an *Inu Yasha* PS2 fighting game, coming to the states in March from Bandai.**



Space. The final boarding park.

Disney's TREASURE PLANET



Ride through portals into other universes and catch air a million miles up as you shred your way through an intergalactic treasure hunt in Disney's *Treasure Planet* for PlayStation. Based on the Walt Disney Pictures film *Treasure Planet*, in theatres now.



Mild Violence

PlayStation



PRESS
START

Charts - October 2002

TOP 20 BEST-SELLING GAMES						
1	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Rockstar	10 Che	10 Greg S	10 Milkman	PS2 NEW!	
2	NBA Live 2003 EA Sports	8.0 Dan L	7.5 Todd	9.0 Milkman	PS2 NEW!	
3	Kingdom Hearts Square Electronic Arts	8.5 Greg S	8.5 Milkman	8.5 Shane	PS2 NEW!	
4	Madden NFL 2003 EA Sports				PS2 NEW!	
5	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin Eidos				PS2 NEW!	
6	Yu-Gi-Oh! The Eternal Duelist Soul Konami				GAMEBOY ADVANCE NEW!	
7	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 Activision 02				PS2 NEW!	
8	Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers EA Games				PS2 NEW!	
9	Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2 EA Games				PS2 NEW!	
10	Tekken 4 Namco				PS2	
11	Super Mario Advance 3 Nintendo				GAMEBOY ADVANCE NEW!	
12	Hitman 2: Silent Assassin Eidos				X PS2 NEW!	
13	NBA 2K3 Sega Sports				PS2 NEW!	
14	Mario Party 4 Nintendo				GAMEBOY ADVANCE NEW!	
15	Yu-Gi-Oh! Forbidden Memories Konami				GAMEBOY ADVANCE NEW!	
16	Yu-Gi-Oh! Dark Duel Stories Konami				GAMEBOY COLOR NEW!	
17	NHL 2003 EA Sports				PS2 NEW!	
18	Star Fox Adventures Nintendo				GAMEBOY ADVANCE NEW!	
19	Red Faction II THQ				PS2 NEW!	
20	TimeSplitters 2 Eidos				PS2 NEW!	

TOP 10 RENEWALS		BLOCKBUSTER
1	Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2 EA Games	PS2
2	Madden NFL 2003 EA Sports	PS2
3	Conflict: Desert Storm Gotham Games	PS2
4	SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Sony CEA	PS2
5	Star Fox Adventures Nintendo	GAMEBOY ADVANCE
6	NBA Live 2003 EA Sports	PS2
7	NCAA Football 2003 EA Sports	PS2
8	Kingdom Hearts Square Electronic Arts	PS2
9	Medal of Honor: Frontline EA Games	PS2
10	Conflict: Desert Storm Gotham Games	X

Source: Blockbuster Video, October 2002

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES IN JAPAN		
1	Torneko's Great Adv. 3 Enix	PS2
2	One Piece: Treasure Battle Bandai	PS2
3	Kirby Nintendo	GAMEBOY ADVANCE
4	Final Fantasy II Square	PS2
5	Final Fantasy Square	PS2
6	Ultraman Fighting Evolution 2 Bandai	PS2
7	FF I/II Premium Pack Square	PS2
8	Tales: Narikiri Dungeon 2 Namco	GAMEBOY ADVANCE
9	Medal of Honor: Frontline Electronic Arts Square	PS2
10	Gundam Wing Bandai	PS2

Source: Weekly Famitsu, week ending 11/3/02

A couple of shockers on the Japanese chart this issue. First, four PS2 games are in the Top 10. Granted, three are Final Fantasy remakes, but it's still an amazing number considering the system's all but dead. Second, Medal of Honor: Frontline, a U.S.-developed game, has appeared on the Japanese Top 10. How often does that happen? Uh, let's see...never.

Source: NPD TRSIS Video Games Service. Call Kristin Barnett-von Korf at (310) 655-2481 for questions regarding this list.

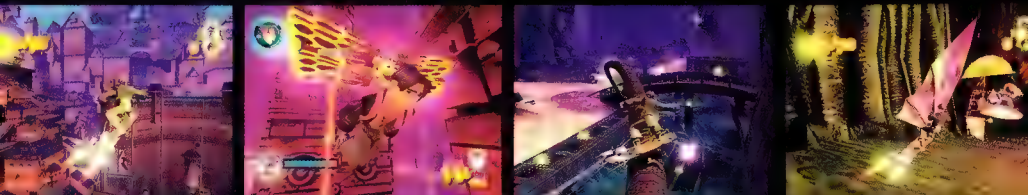


LIVE IN YOUR WORLD.
PLAY IN OURS.



Solar surfing. Beware of the locals.

Disney TREASURE PLANET



Space pirates. Alien robots. Not the kind of guys you want to drop in on while solar surfing the new frontier. Set sail on an intergalactic treasure hunt on *Treasure Planet*. Also available on PlayStation. Based on the Walt Disney Pictures film *Treasure Planet*, in theatres now.



EVERYONE



Mild Violence

PlayStation 2



PRESS
START

Coming Soon

January

- Armada 2: Star Command (Shooting) PS2, Xbox
- Battle Engine Aquila (Shooting) PS2, Xbox
- Black & Bruised (Boxing) PS2, GC
- Dark Cloud 2 (RPG) PS2
- DOA Xtreme Beach Volleyball (Sports) Xbox
- Devil May Cry 2 (Action) PS2
- Digimon: Battle Spirit (RPG) GBA
- Disney Sports: Basketball (Sports) GC
- Dynasty Warriors 3: Xtreme Legends (Action) PS2
- Everblue 2 (Action/Adventure) PS2
- Galerians: Ash (Adventure) PS2
- The Getaway (Action) PS2
- GT Advance 3: Pro Concept Racing (Racing) GBA
- Gully Gear X2: The Midnight Carnival (Fighting) PS2
- .hack Vol. 1 (RPG) PS2
- Haven: Call of the King (Action) GC, Xbox
- HSX: Hypersonic Xtreme (Racing) PS2
- Indiana Jones: Emp. Tomb (Adventure) PS2, Xbox
- Kung-Fu Chaos (Action) Xbox
- Malice (Action) PS2, Xbox
- Panzer Dragon Orta (Shooting) Xbox
- Primal (Adventure) PS2
- Resident Evil 2 (Adventure) GC
- Resident Evil 3 (Adventure) GC
- The Sims (Sim, duh) PS2
- Skies of Arcadia Legends (RPG) Xbox
- Summoner: The Prophecy (RPG) GC
- Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon (Action) GC
- War of the Monsters (Fighting) PS2
- Worms Blast (Strategy) PS2, GBA



- Midnight Club II (Racing) PS2, Xbox
- Midtown Madness 3 (Racing) Xbox
- Murakumo: Mech Hunter (Action) Xbox
- Pride FC: Fighting Championships (Fighting) PS2
- Pro Race Driver (Racing) Xbox
- State of Emergency (Action) Xbox
- Super Puzzle Fighter 2 Turbo (Puzzle) GBA
- Vexx (Action) PS2, GC, Xbox
- Yu-Gi-Oh! Dungeon Dice Monsters (RPG) GBA

March

- Aero Elite: Combat Academy (Flight) PS2
- Apex (Racing) PS2, Xbox
- Auto Modellista (Racing) PS2
- Batman: Dark Tomorrow (Action) PS2, GC, Xbox
- Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter (RPG) PS2
- GC Clock Tower 3 (Adventure) PS2
- Enclave (Action) GC
- Jet Grind Radio (Action) GBA
- Legend of Zelda, The (Action/RPG) GC
- Pokémon Ruby (RPG) GBA
- Pokémon Sapphire (RPG) GBA
- Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc (Action) PS2, GC, Xbox
- Red Faction II (Action) GC
- Return to Castle Wolfenstein (Action) PS2, Xbox
- RPG Maker 2 (RPG...maker) GBA
- Space Channel 5: Ulala's Cosmic Attack (Action) PS2
- Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic (RPG) Xbox
- Tao Feng (Fighting) Xbox
- Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven (Action) PS2
- Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness (Adventure) PS2
- Wheel of Fortune 2003 (Misc.) GC
- World Series Baseball 2K3 (Sports) PS2, GC, Xbox
- WWE Crush Hour (Action) GC
- WWE Raw 2 (Wrestling) Xbox
- Xenosaga: Episode I (RPG) PS2

Midtown Madness 3



Skies of Arcadia Legends



IMPORT CALENDAR

Mr. Driller Drill Land



Import Pick of the Month: Mr. Driller makes his GameCube debut in Namco's latest take on their ever-popular series of puzzlers: *Mr. Driller Drill Land*. This time, the action takes place in a giant theme park with a host of special attractions. Each one offers up a variation on the main *Driller* theme, and you can use the points you earn to purchase special items and power-ups at the park's shopping mall. Best of all, *Drill Land* features a four-player Battle mode as well as connectivity features when linked with the import-only *Mr. Driller Ace* for GBA.

PlayStation 2

- 12/26 *Kingdom Hearts Final Mix*, Square (Action-RPG)
- 1/30 *Devil May Cry 2*, Capcom (Action)
- Jan. *Armored Core 3: Silent Line*, From Software (Action)
- 2/13 *Anubis: Zone of the Enders*, Konami (Action)
- Feb. *Highway Battle*, Genki (Racing)
- Feb. *Sakura Taisen*, Sega (Simulation)
- Feb. *Venus & Braves*, Namco (RPG)

Game Boy Advance

- 12/20 *Elevator Action Old & New*, MediaKite (Action)
- Dec. *Darius R*, PCCW (Shooting)
- 1/1 *The King of Fighters EX 2*, Marvelous (Fighting)
- 2/14 *Final Fantasy Tactics Advance*, Square (RPG)

GameCube

- 12/20 *Mr. Driller Drill Land*, Namco (Puzzle)
- 12/26 *Eternal Arcadia Legends*, Sega (RPG)
- 1/16 *Ikaruga*, Infogrames (Shooting)
- 1/30 *Winning Eleven 6 Final Evolution*, Konami (Sports)

*Schedule subject to change without notice. Consult your local import-game store for the latest release info. It's a secret to everyone.

WINN POLL: WHY CLONE WHEN YOU CAN MORPH?

WORLD NEWS WATCH

WWW.MIDWAY.COM

NOVEMBER 2002

Dr. Muto Revealed!

Meet The Man Behind The Morph

www.drmutomorph.com



Burnitall Enterprises
Stock Soars On New World Domination Franchise

War Over The Worlds
Evil Geniuses Who Want To Rule It All



TEEN T ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS

Comic Mischief
Mild Language
Mild Violence
Suggestive Themes

Fall 2002

PlayStation®2



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MAD SCIENCE WATCH

The Doctor Is In

Are You A Clone Or A Muto?
Morph into six strange creatures (two
a reptile in a spider using
Dr. Muto's amazing
Splice Gun



Illustration from PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system

Dr. Muto, the genius mad scientist whose latest experiment accidentally destroyed his home planet, has been the center of a media frenzy with the unveiling of his amazing new "Splice Gun" technology. Muto's Splice Gun enables him to mutate and morph with any living organism in order to accomplish tasks no human could achieve alone.

According to Muto, the Splice Gun's mounding ability will be key in his attempts to rebuild his world. "I simply sample some DNA and 'BANG!' I morph into a mouse, spider, gonda or any other creature I see fit to become," Muto madly ranted in an exclusive World News Watch interview. "It's not that I am a megalomaniac, I just want to play God."

Muto's technology is receiving so much attention and interest that he will begin



Illustration from PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system



Use a wide variety of weapons only as usual to enter and prevent into at Recker Bots and the Super Mad!



selling the Splice Gun through TV infomercials

next month. Also, publisher Midway has exclusive deal with the doctor for the release of an action/adventure videogame and his Splice Gun technology. Information about Muto's videogame, simply titled, "Dr. Muto," is revealed on www.drmutomorph.com, which is a website devoted to Muto's universe of battling puzzles, mind-bending devices, freakish monstrosities and twisted humor.

Is Dr. Muto the 21st Century's Einstein, or just another madman? Judge for yourself this fall when "Dr. Muto" the videogame releases for the next generation videogame platforms.

4P

Defeat Muto!
against forty
Recker Bots,
and other
monsters of your
imagination!
PlayStation
2, Xbox

PROFITE ON...

As energy, mortgage and other markets continue to rise, the possibilities for profit are endless. Professor Burnitall, the author of *War Over The Worlds*, has built a place for himself in the energy sector. Burnitall has become a leading expert on the energy sector at the company that he founded, *War Over The Worlds*. Burnitall has become a leading expert on the energy sector at the company that he founded, *War Over The Worlds*. Burnitall has become a leading expert on the energy sector at the company that he founded, *War Over The Worlds*.



Coming Soon
GAME BOY ADVANCE

Coming Soon
NINTENDO GAMECUBE

XBOX



PRESS
START

HSU AND CHAN GAME DESIGNERS IN... 2002: THE YEAR WE MADE CONTRACTS

A HAZARD OF DANCING GIRLS, OUR OWN TROPICAL ISLAND, AND WIFELESS EVERY MORNING!

TERMS OF THINGS

NON-NEGOTIABLE!

WELL DRINK A GLASS OF BRUNY BEER IN DAAAYS OF AULD LANG...

HA HA, VIDEO GAMES? IN THE MIDDLE TANAKA, THAT'S MY BROTHER, CHAN, AND IN HONOR OF THE PASTORS OF YEARS, WE ABE BROTHER!

HOW DID YOU PUT IT, BROTHER?

COMPLETELY SLOTHED!

FINISH HAH! YOU STRET! I SAH!

THIS NIGHT GOES ON TILL IN FACEDOWN IN THE TOILET!

TRUE WORDS, BROTHER! MADE ANY RESOLUTIONS?

AM, THE USUAL, YOU?

TRAND A MIND FROM CONSUMERISM, WE TAKEN A LEAD TO RESOLVE NOTHING.

HA HA! HIGHLY GENERALIZED POLITICAL VIEWERS!

WE ABE SOME NEGOTIABLE CHARACTERS!

SO MUCH ABOUT THAT CONSUMERISM, HOODSTRIM, HEM!

AM, IT'S BEEN A BANNER YEAR FOR THE GAMING PUBLIC, MOSTLY DUE TO EXCITEMENT AND INNOVATION, FROM SHIRANO WEST AUTO VILE CTR! ALL THE WAY TO ALL THOSE OTHER GAMES, THAT WERE NOT GRAND WEST AUTO VILE CTR!

NONE IMMEDIATELY COME TO MIND, HOWEVER.

QUITE ALL RIGHT, BROTHER CHAN! AFTER ALL, TANAKA BROS GAME DEVELOPMENT IS AN FORWARD THINKING ORGANIZATION.

WE KEEP AN EYE ON THE FUTURE, AS WELL AS BEING MINDFUL OF WHAT HAS COME BEFORE!

HELPS WHEN FISHING ON TAKES, IF NOTHING ELSE!

AT THIS CHANGING OF YEARS, IT IS OUR DUTY TO ANALYZE THE TRENDS OF OUR RECENT PAST AND FROM THEM CREATE THE GAMES OF THE FUTURE!

I THOUGHT WE WERE SUPPOSED TO BE BRINGING THE CHIPS 'N' DIP!

OH, YEAH, THAT, TOO! IF ANYBODY ASKS, WE LEFT THEM 'IN THE CAR'!

SO... I'LL BITE, WHAT WERE SOME OF THEM TRENDS YOU SPEAK OF, BROTHER?

I'M GLAD YOU ASKED STEP INTO THIS MYSTICAL WANN EFFECT, WHICH MANY OR MAN NOT BE AN ALCOHOL-RELATED MALLUSSINATION!

AND WE WILL TAKE A SOURNLY THROUGH THE MAJOR GAMING TRENDS OF 2002!

HERE ARE PROTECTION!

2002 WAS THE YEAR FOR ANIMAL MASCOTS IN PLATFORM ADVENTURES! YOU COULDN'T BUYING A DEAD CAT WITHOUT WHITING A DOZEN SMALL, FURRY ANIMALS OUT TO MAKE A FRANCHISE OF THEMSELVES!

HECK, THE DEAD CAT WHO PROBABLY IN ON 'I, TOO!

THESE WERE HUNDREDS OF THEM!

HOW COULD PEOPLE TELL THEM APART? WELL, FRANKLY, THEIR COGNITIVE YOU TEN PICKING AN INDIVIDUAL OUT OF A THOUSAND COLORFUL LITTLE VERMIN WHO ALL HAVE ADJECTIVE OR SOUND EFFECTS FOR IDENTIFICATION!

IT'S HOPELESS, AND THEY'RE STILL SOLD PRETTY WELL!

OR THIS IS OFFICIALLY THE MOST DRUNK I'VE EVER BEEN!

WHISKEY! MICHISTLEPLANTS, THE BOWING BADGER!

WITH HIS ATTITUDE AND ENDEARING CATCHPHRASES, KIDS CAN'T HELP BUT EXPRESS THEIR MANIFEST AFFECTION TOWARD HIM!

I'M GOING TO KNOCK YOU 'N' YOUR BUTT OUT!

HEH, WHO, SAY, THESE WHISKEY!

2002 WAS ALSO A YEAR IN WHICH VIDEOGAMES BECAME MORE SUBTLE, DEVELOPING BEYOND THE PAST'S SOPHOMORIC OBSESSION WITH VIOLENCE INTO A SCHEMATIC OBSESSION WITH SEX!

YES, VIDEO GAMES, TO PUT IT IN FRANK, MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY, THIS PAST YEAR HAS BROUGHT BODIBODS TO OUR HOME CONSOLES!

WHICH YOU'D ALREADY KNOW, IF YOU KEPT ABRIST OF THE ISSUES.

YOU'RE SUCH A BOOB, HSO!

WHAT?

SHUT US!

ANALYSIS?

THE DUNNOH MGA AND CREATIV LOWER CROWDS REMAIN KEY MARKETING DEMOGRAPHICS!

ENTER OUR NEW GAME'S MASCOT! -LIM!

WHAT'S THIS OUTFIT MADE OUT OF?

TUNED?

FISHING LINE?

SPINNER IF YOU STAND AT A CERTAIN ANGLE!

LAST BUT NOT LEAST, 2002 CONTINUED THE TREND OF GAMES BASED ON LICENSED CONTENT SELLING WELL, DESPITE NOT BEING VERY GOOD.

AS WE EXPECT THIS TREND TO CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME, WE ARE CURRENTLY IN HEATED NEGOTIATIONS TO ACQUIRE GAME RIGHTS FOR... RUBIK THE AMAZING CUBE, THE GOOD THINGS GANG, AND "WELCOME BACK, KOTTER!"

SADLY OUR "DUNNOH MGA" DEAL FEELS THROUGH.

STILL, WE GOT SOLEIL MOON FIRE'S NUMBER.

GRRROWL!

SOFTWARE FEEDERS

"PLEASE HAVE GOT SOMETHING BETTER TO DO IN MY MALL."

AT ANY RATE, VIDEO GAMERS, I THINK IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT TANAKA BROS. GAME DEVELOPMENT IS NOT WANDERING SINGLY INTO THE UNKNOWN.

BUT MARCHING BOLDLY INTO A PLAN AND A SONG, INTO THE GREAT EXPANSE OF THE FUTURE!

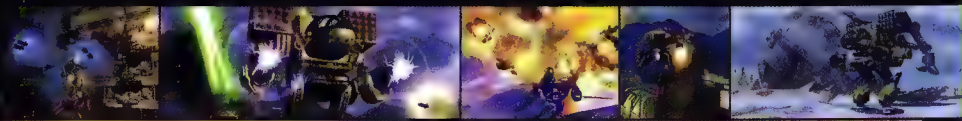
MAN, YOUR BE ALREADY BUT NOT QUITE AS CONSPIRACULAR!

CHAN?

I'M GOING TO NOMY!

DE SICKAH!

END.



GAVE PEACE A CHANCE.



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All else has failed. The lines between good and evil have been drawn: There's you and there's everybody else. Your weapon is a 40-foot-tall walking death machine. Your mission is destruction. Tanks, helicopters, buildings, the planet itself. Welcome to war in the 31st century, where peace is one of those things you read about.



For added destruction play online with Xbox Live. Engage others on a massive scale. Download new 'Mechs, new missions, even enemies. This is epic devastation taken to a whole new level and it's only available on Xbox Live.



Violence
Blood



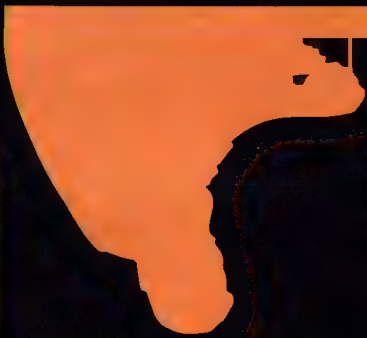
www.mechassault.com
www.mechassault.com



XBOX LIVE ONLINE ENABLED



***IN THIS ARENA, WARRIORS ARE CREATED,
BATTLES ARE FORGED, SMACK IS TALKED.***



The Xbox Live™ service is the world's first no-holds-barred, ultimate online arena dedicated to high-speed gaming. Jump from game to game and play thousands of other players using one GamerTag. You can't do that anywhere else.



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YOU AIN'T GONNA RULE THE ULTIMATE ARENA WITH A NAME LIKE BUNNY23

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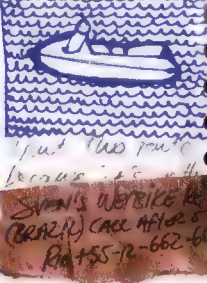
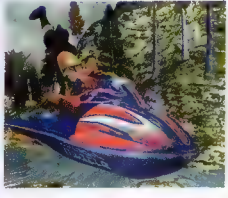
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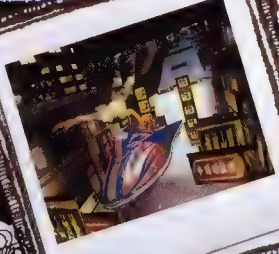
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1st to 1st
Jump - and was UNSTOPPABLE FROM THERE! (WATCH FOR CAR)



STAY LEFT OF FINAL FORK
HUGE AIR OFF
SIDESTREAM ABOVE DAM

Thank you

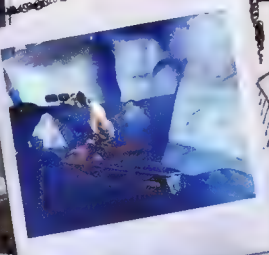


They call this "DEVIL'S FORN"
The devils caught me a few times.

INSANE
entire city destroyed & flooded, so I pulled a Tsunami off the



THING TO DO
A BAR HOP



1st jump. finished
3rd w/PR 3:55:42



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COLD


LAUNCHED SPINE -
Splitter off Glacier
Put on a Clinic
1st AGA

Previews

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Def Jam: Vendetta

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WARNING: Previews marked with international symbols may or may not be released in the United States. They are designed to run on Japanese or European PAL systems. Import at your own risk.

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1080° Avalanche

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Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic

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I hate it when people say, "the real winners are the gamers," or "this is the best time to be a gamer," or any other overused cliché about what a great time it is to be into videogames.

But I have to admit that lately, it's true. These past few months have been incredible. It's kind of ironic, actually. Just over a year ago, we were reveling in the release of GameCube and Xbox, not to mention games like *Metal Gear Solid 2*, *Grand Theft Auto III*, and *Halo*. We actually couldn't imagine a holiday season that would top 2001. Yet, here we are, fondly remembering the end of 2002 as the best time to be a gamer.

Just think about it. Have you been able to keep up with the sheer number of titles you want to play lately? Even Game Boy Advance is enjoying a quality-game overload with titles like *Zelda*, *Metroid Fusion*, and *Kirby*. EGM staffers are the type of people who spend way too much money on this stuff, and even we can't possibly afford—or have time to play—all the incredible products released in the final quarter of last year.

So, it's almost a blessing in disguise that the flow of awesome games is finally slowing as we head into 2003. You'll still find the odd hit on all three systems (*Panzer Dragoon Orta* on Xbox, *The Legend of Zelda* on GameCube, and *Devil*



We slice open the new *Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven* (PS2) for the first time on page 76.

May Cry 2 on PlayStation 2), but as you can see from the games in this month's previews section, the really heavy hitters remain a few months away.

Why's it a blessing? Well, if you're anything like me, you've got a stack of games sitting by your television that have yet to be played (heck, some have yet to be opened). I'm looking forward to having some time to get through them.

Oh, and I'm sure you've all got opinions about the best and brightest titles of 2002. Don't forget to hit *Gamers.com* sometime before January 10 to vote for your favorite games of the year. The ballots will be counted and winners revealed in *EGM's* April issue, along with our editors' picks. Now, if you'll excuse me, there's a stack of games here with my name on it. 🐜

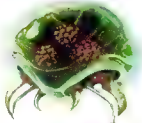
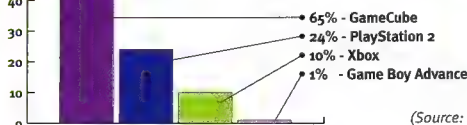
—Previews Editor Greg Sewart

TOP 5 Preview Picks

1. **Def Jam: Vendetta** PS2, March 2003
2. **F-Zero GC** GC, 2003
3. **Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven** PS2, March 2003
4. **Devil May Cry 2** PS2, January 2003
5. **Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic** Xbox, Spring 2003

Which console had the best games in 2002?

We posed this question to some of our favorite web surfers and found out that games like the *Resident Evils*, *Animal Crossing* and *Metroid Prime* put the GameCube over the top in their eyes. We were a bit surprised about the GBA's sad performance, though.



(Source: Gamers.com poll, 11/02)

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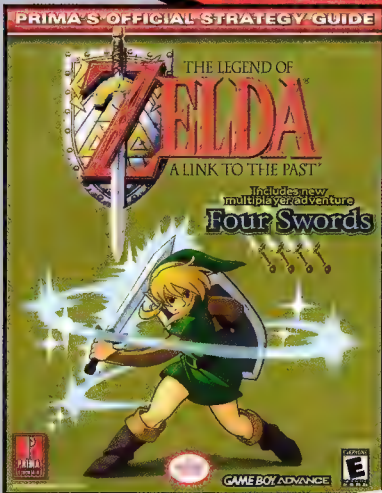
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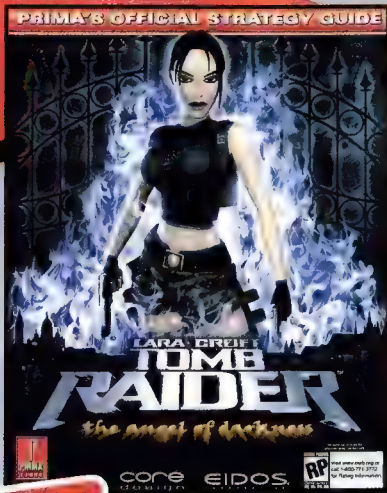
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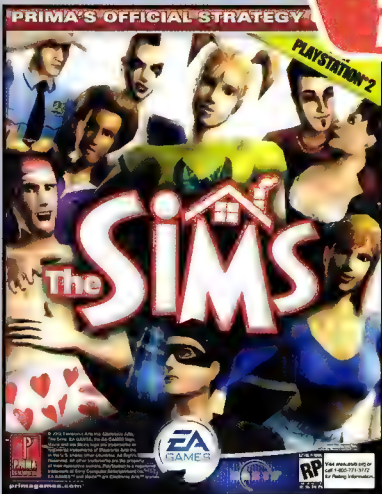


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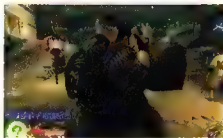
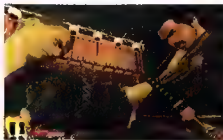
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Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven

Publisher:	Activision
Developer:	K2
Players:	1-2
Genre:	Action
% Done:	85%
Release:	March 2003
Also On:	None
Web Address:	www.activision.com
The Good:	The <i>Tenchu</i> series has finally arrived on PlayStation 2.
The Bad:	You can perform stealth kills on guard dogs, but those damn cats are still invulnerable!
And The Ugly:	Those creepy, dancing undead children from the original <i>Tenchu</i> are back....



Spectacular deaths are a mainstay of the *Tenchu* series, and this game is no exception.

Stealth games are all the rage these days, but recent games such as Ubi Soft's *Splinter Cell* and Sony's *Sly Cooper* owe more than a simple tip of the hat to *Tenchu*. It originally arrived on PlayStation back in the fall of '98, slightly predating even Konami's classic stealth-hit, *Metal Gear Solid*.

The first game in the series, *Tenchu: Stealth Assassins*, put you in the role of one of two ninjas: the ice-cold, prematurely gray-haired Rikimaru, or the La

Femme Nikita-like tomboy Ayame. In service to the honorable Lord Gohda, you peeked around corners, used your trusty grappling hook to scale walls, and padded along silently on rooftops with only one goal in mind: sneaking up behind enemies so you could snuff them out like a candle. A ninja-sense meter indicated your proximity to an enemy, as well as his state of awareness to your presence, and items such as throwing stars, poison rice cakes, foot spikes, and smoke

TENCHU TIMELINE

TENCHU



Platform: PlayStation
Release: 02/98 (Japan)
 Although originally conceived as a game set in the future starring a policeman who used ninja-like methods, *Tenchu* ended up taking place in feudal Japan.

TENCHU: STEALTH ASSASSINS



Platform: PlayStation
Release: 08/98 (U.S.)
 When *Tenchu* arrived in the United States, it featured two extra levels, new CG sequences, cleaner graphics, and improved enemy A.I. Oh, and it was in English.

TENCHU: SHINOBI GAISEN



Platform: PlayStation
Release: 02/99 (Japan)
 The enhanced U.S. version of *Tenchu* was later re-released in Japan with the added extras of a Time Attack mode and a level editor on top of all the original goodies.

TENCHU: SHINOBI HYAKUSEN



Platform: PlayStation
Release: 11/99 (Japan)
Tenchu: Shinobi Hyakusen was a compilation of 100 levels created for a contest, by Japanese gamers who used the level editor found in *Tenchu: Shinobi Gaisen*.

TENCHU 2: BIRTH OF THE STEALTH ASSASSINS

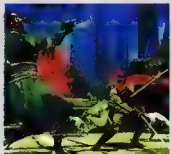


Platform: PlayStation
Release: 08/00 (U.S.)
 10/00 (Japan)
 This prequel featured sharper graphics, an additional playable character (Tatsumaru), and the ability to swim underwater.

NINJA RENAISSANCE

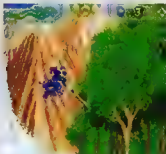
A number of ninja-themed games are popping up, now and in the near future. Here's a look at some of them.

SHINOBI



Platform: PS2
Release: 11/02
 Sega's hero recently returned on PS2 in full 3D...and it's as eye-blandingly tough as many of the old games!

REVENGE OF SHINOBI



Platform: GBA
Release: 11/02
 Developer 3D6 updated Sega's classic Genesis game for the GBA. It's pretty old-school, but still loads of fun.

NINJA ASSAULT



Platform: PS2
Release: 11/02
 Ninjas use guns, right? The history books are a bit fuzzy on it, but they do in Namco's latest Guncon game for PS2.

NINJA GAIDEN



Platform: Xbox
Release: 03/03
 The next game in Tecmo's *Ninja Gaiden* series (originally on the old Nintendo) is headed exclusively to Xbox.

THE LAST NINJA



Platform: Xbox
Release: 03/03
 Simon & Schuster Interactive is producing an Xbox game based on the classic *Last Ninja* trilogy for Commodore 64.

bombs aided you in your quest. One of the most satisfying aspects of the game was its signature stealth kills; if you attacked a guard before he noticed you, you were treated to one of several short, groovy animations of your character executing the foe.

The upcoming *Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven* retains all of these elements and is set a year after the events in the original *Tenchu*. Rikimaru (who appeared to be crushed under a large boulder at the end of the first game) and Ayame return and discover a plot by the mysterious Tenrai to conquer the country. On Lord Gohda's orders, the two set out to stop Tenrai's plans before they come to fruition, but they must first deal with his undead followers, an army of evil ninjas, and the formidable-sounding Six Lords of Darkness.

Besides the graphical enhancements you'd expect from the series' move to a next-generation platform, a number of improvements and new elements mark *Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven*. The most important changes are the game's control upgrades, which answer many previous complaints against the series. The camera now moves in whatever direction you push the analog stick. There's a Lock-On button that targets your closest enemy, and you can move diagonally. Fans of the series probably won't be able to pin down the exact changes at first, except to note that the game's controls somehow seem remarkably less frustrating.

Although the game's camera was at least partially to blame for it, one of the main criticisms of *Tenchu 2* was that its boss fights were far too hard to be fun. The developers of *Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven*—the newly formed K2—promise to redress that problem with boss fights that are more strategic in nature, making them less difficult, and not featuring a boss on every single level. But, though the bosses might be easier, the A.I. for the game's guards will be more advanced. "During

fights," says Masanori Kuwashi, K2's main game designer, "guards will step in range of the weapon they are holding, but will try to stay out of range of your weapon. For instance, spear guards will hold their distance to stay out of range of your sword, but will try to stay within range of the spear that they are holding." Enemies will now climb up on rooftops to chase after you much more often, as well.

But all these additions come with a few subtractions. The level editor (seen in *Tenchu 2* and unlocked by a code in the original U.S. version of *Tenchu*) doesn't appear in *Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven*. It's been replaced, however, by two-player Co-op and Competitive modes. In Cooperative mode, you and your friend must coordinate attacks so that neither one of you is seen—or else the level ends. In Competitive mode, players choose





Sneaking up on your enemies and slitting their throats might be overdone, but it's the most effective way to get through any *Tenchu* game.



from 16 *Tenchu* characters and try to rack up the most stealth kills before time runs out. Other elements missing in *Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven* include the swimming sections from *Tenchu 2*, and the ability to move bodies to keep them from being discovered, although it should be said that neither aspect felt conspicuously absent in the early version of the game we played.

The *Tenchu* series has always featured unlockable extras, and *Wrath of Heaven* offers even more. Every time you execute a difficult stealth kill, a kanji (a Chinese symbol) is added to the kanji meter above the health bar, and if you pull off a difficult one (such as a frontal attack), you'll get even more. Every time you're spotted, however, you lose kanji off the meter. If you gain all nine characters, you'll unlock a new special skill, such as shoulder-thrusting guards into pits, clinging to ceilings, using mind control to make enemies attack each other, or faking your own death in order to surprise a foe. As before, you will also win special items at the end of each level if you earn an



Exceptional rating. New items include fireworks to distract opponents, a grappling hook to pull enemies closer to you, and a binding spell to paralyze nearby foes.

As in *Tenchu 2*, there's a third playable character unlocked by beating the game as both Rikimaru and Ayame. This time, it's Teshshu, a doctor by day and hitman by night who fights with his hands. *Tenchu* aficionados will be pleased to hear that they can also open up a bonus stage that shows the mysterious time-traveling adventure Rikimaru went on between the end of the original *Tenchu* and now (thus explaining his reappearance, despite being "killed" at the end of the first game). Characters Onikage and Tatsumaru—two more who were presumed dead—will also make appearances in *Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven*.

While the game is due out exclusively for PlayStation 2 next spring, when asked if there was any chance that *Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven* might go multiplatform, K2's Kuwasashi says, "Definitely maybe, but that's up to the publisher." 🍄 —Joe Fielder

NINJAS ON FILM

THE OCTAGON (1980)



One of the first big ninja movies, *The Octagon* starred Chuck Norris as a martial artist out to stop a group of ninjas from creating terrorist training camps.

ENTER THE NINJA (1984)

Besides being credited for starting the ninja craze of the '80s,



Enter the Ninja was the first major film for action star Sho Kosugi (who provided the motion capture for Rikimaru in the original *Tenchu*).

THE MASTER (1984)

This TV series from the 1980s was so cheesy, it even had



one of the Van Patters in it (they were like the Baldwins, only earlier). It starred Lee "Fistful of Dollars" Van Cleef and *Enter the Ninja's* Sho Kosugi.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES (1990)

The live-action film based on the popular comic-book series was a huge hit that inspired two sequels, as well as some great arcade games. Corey Feldman (*The Goonies*) did the voice of Donatello, then got arrested for heroin possession.



NINJA SCROLL (1995)



Just about any fan of Japanese animation will tell you that *Ninja Scroll* simply shouldn't be missed—and that it's definitely, definitely not for kids.

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Midnight Club II

Publisher:	Rockstar
Developer:	Rockstar San Diego
Players:	1-4 (Online play planned)
Genre:	Racing
% Done:	85%
Release:	February 2003
Also On:	Xbox (Spring 2003)
Web Address:	midnightclub2.com
The Good:	Superfast racing through three real cities
The Bad:	No car customization options
And The Ugly:	Moses—the first character you meet—is one homely lookin' dude

MEET THE MAKERS

We sat down with *Midnight Club II*'s Designer **Maurio Fiore** and Lead Artist **Scott Stoabs** to discuss the game, the genre, and *The Fast and The Furious*.

EGM: Any of the staff involved in street racing?
Scott Stoabs: Yes, we have a few racing advocates on the team. One team member, who chooses to remain nameless, wrecked a brand-new Honda S2000.

EGM: What makes this better than the original *Midnight Club*?
Maurio Fiore: We learned a lot from the first *Midnight Club*, and we've improved every aspect for the sequel. The cities are denser, and our new lighting technology really makes everything lifelike. The driving mechanics have been overhauled. This time around, the player can perform all kinds of driving stunts that were impossible in *MC1*. The game is faster, more alive, and more fun.

(Continued on page B3)



This bad boy makes Vin Diesel's *Fast and Furious* RX-7 look like a child's toy.

Early adopters of the PlayStation 2 might remember the original *Midnight Club* as one of the few games actually worth playing during the system's launch. In it, you rose through the ranks of the underground street-racing circuit by taking on all comers in New York and London. *Midnight Club II* takes that same premise and runs with it through three new cities: Los Angeles, Paris, and Tokyo.

This is more than just the same game in a few new cities; *Midnight Club*'s undergone a complete overhaul. Everything—the graphics, the gameplay, the story—is new and improved. You still roam the streets and challenge other drivers to a race, but the characters in *Midnight Club II* are much more fleshed out. Looks like Rockstar's sharing the lessons it's learned about cohesive story lines on the *Grand Theft Auto*

"The game is faster, more alive, and more fun."

—Game Designer Maurio Fiore

series with its other development teams.

If you challenge other drivers, a quick game of catch-up follows, and you basically have to stay within sight of your competitor as they weave through traffic and back alleys. Once you've proven that you can hang, you take part in various street races, which range from simply following a set path to checkpoint races where you can hit the marks in any order. The latter event makes for some pretty spectacular crashes, especially if you have multiple drivers going for the same checkpoint from different directions. In other missions, you play as a cop chasing down



Racing venues range from suburbia to bustling downtown areas. Learn the lay of the land quickly, or you're toast.

RACING ANGELS

GINA



This sexy DJ moonlights as a street racer. You'll find her around the L.A. club scene. She's always ready for a race and has no qualms about using her female charms to distract opponents while she streaks by for the win.

MARIA



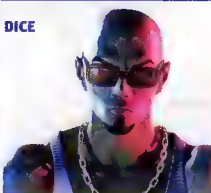
Maria's been racing cars since junior high. This sultry speedster might look like a pushover, but Maria backs down from no man (or woman). She grew up in L.A., so naturally, she's a formidable opponent when racing in the City of Angels.

MOSES



Moses introduces you to street racing in L.A. He looks tough, but he's surprisingly good natured. At least that's what he wants you to think. If you let your guard down, his true nature will show itself, and he'll leave you in the dust.

DICE



The man everyone's looking to beat in L.A. He's a sore loser, but since he wins all the time, it's not an issue. The only chance of beating him is with lightning-quick reflexes, loads of skill, and an intimate knowledge of the L.A. streets.

those rowdy kids in their rice rockets.

The first *Midnight Club* was impressive, but it was also pretty flat. You couldn't get a lot of air because there weren't many jumps. To fix that, developer Rockstar San Diego (formerly Angel Studios, the creators of the first game) made the cities in *Midnight Club II* very vertical. The jumps in this game are absolutely insane—we once clocked a hang time of 10 seconds. You'll find lots of uphill and downhill racing here.

Another problem with the original *Midnight Club* was that you could simply follow the leader in order to learn the best route, so all the racers were taking the same path on each course. Success depended only on running each race two or three times before you memorized the path from start to finish. In *MC2*, the driver A.I. has been tuned so that the leader never takes the same route twice, meaning it's up to you to find the fastest way around each track. It makes for a much more challenging experience.



MAKERS (CONT.)

EGM: What are the best racing games out now?

SS: *Gran Turismo 3* is the king for now. *Burnout 2* and *Need for Speed* are also very good. *RalliSport Challenge* is a slightly different genre than us but nonetheless a very solid racer—we are keeping a close eye on what the guys from [RalliSport developer] Digital Illusions churn out.

EGM: Would you say that *GT3* has had an impact on the *Midnight Club* series?

MF: *GT3* was great because it showed many people that open-ended, open-city gameplay is fresh and fun. Our game has the same philosophy [though the two are] very different. *GT3* is more about crime and minimeissions, while *MC2* is all about speed. Our cities are designed for racing, and we make all sorts of design decisions to reinforce that.

(continued on page 82)



THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

If *The Fast and The Furious* just doesn't satiate your need for speed, check out this compilation of real street-race footage (and lots of girls in bikinis). You can order it for \$60 at www.streetracing.com.

MAKERS (CONT.)

EGM: Which is your favorite city to race in?
MF: Paris is my favorite. It has the most jumps, tunnels, hills, rivers, and islands. The city is feature-rich, and you'll consistently be surprised by new places. It has elements for exploration, but they all appear at a lightning pace, so it's never stale.

EGM: Favorite vehicle?
SS: The bikes are insanely fun and provide completely new driving mechanics for the player. We've achieved the best motorcycle driving experience to date.

MF: I have a blast playing the motorcycles. We put a lot of effort into making these vehicles really fun. We devised a control scheme that allows people to weave through traffic and take sharp 90-degree turns. That's something that has never been done before. All motorcycles up until now have been raced on tracks. We don't have tracks. We are an open city. That means you can go anywhere, so the vehicles need control. There's nothing like throwing the camera into Point of View and diving into the apex of a turn. It's thrilling.

EGM: Did you like *The Fast and The Furious*?

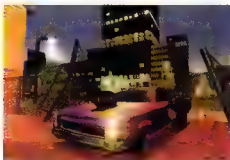
MF: It was a fun movie.
SS: Yes. The whole team went out to see it, and we were pleasantly surprised by it. It was inspirational because parts of the movie were very much what our game is about, and the popularity of street racing soared right after the movie came out.



Above: Some missions in *Midnight Club II* will have you runnin' from the cops. Some will put you in the cop car.

As with *Vice City* before it, one of the biggest improvements in this Rockstar sequel is the addition of motorcycles. The catch is that once you get on one of these two-wheeled crotch rockets, the control scheme of *Midnight Club II* completely changes. Now, you have to worry about things like balancing (especially when pulling wheelies) and leaning into turns. Plus, since you're not surrounded by a bunch of sheet metal, any major collisions will knock you off

the bike—quite a wake-up call if you're used to driving in a car. Riding the bikes does take a bit of practice, but once you master the controls, it opens up a whole new style of game that's very addictive. Rockstar had two big launch titles on the PS2. While *Smuggler's Run's* sequel didn't really measure up, you can bet *MC2* will meet expectations. This fast, pretty racing game will definitely appeal to fans of the genre when it releases next month. —Greg Sewart



Def Jam: Vendetta

Publisher: EA Sports Big
Developer: EA Canada/Aki
Players: 1-4
Genre: Wrestling
% Done: 85%
Release: March 2003
Also On: PS2
Web Address: defjamvendetta.com
The Good: Laying the smack down with rap's most notorious thugs.

The Bad: Trying to figure out what the hell they're doing in a wrestling game.

And The Ugly: The amount of air-time this sucker's going to clock in dorm rooms across America when it ships.



"Wassaaaaaaaap?"

Hip-hop and videogames go together like groupies and gangsta rap. No surprise, then, that both are featured in EA's upcoming *Def Jam: Vendetta*, the first street-fighting simulation-cum-wrestler with urban-culture undertones. It's already eliciting rave reviews from the featured artists. "I'm ecstatic to be in this game," says Method Man. "After that piece of s*** *Wu-Tang: Shaolin Style* (PS1), it's time to set the record straight."

Indeed. Even this early in its development, it's obvious *Vendetta* will do that. For one, EA's attempting something never tried before: grafting a significant story line onto no-holds-barred wrestling game-play. Combat takes place on the New York underground brawling circuit years after local kingpin D-Mob forced you into early retirement. Upon discovering your former fling Angel has hooked up with the

hoodlum and your friend Manny is deep in debt to the man, you're left with no options; you've got to drag your ass back into the ring.

"The basic premise is *Fight Club* meets hip-hop," explains Producer Josh Holmes. "We've married [developer] Aki's grappling system [seen in *WCW vs. nWo* on N64] with an open-ended fighting setup, then partnered this concept with the urban lifestyle."

Thus, you'll be privy to a world of seedy venues, shady characters, and shifty deals while exploring everything the Story mode offers. It's here that you'll gain all the unlockables (new characters, backdrops, costumes, etc.) or attempt sidequests while battling over 45 brawlers, including 12 Def Jam artists who serve as D-Mob's boss characters. The colorful roster includes such notables as DMX, Ludacris, Redman, Method Man, Scarface, Keith Murray, and more.

RAPPER'S DELIGHT

Cash rules everything around rap megastar Method Man. But so does a monstrous addiction to role-playing games. Presenting the world of videogaming according to the Wu-Tang alum:

EGM: What did you think of your PS1 fighting game, *Wu-Tang: Shaolin Style*?

Method Man: It was total crap. The game used to be about overkills—Activision scrapped that. They went with a gimmick and tried to rush a game and put our names on it, and it was whack.

EGM: What titles do you prefer playing?

MM: Role-playing games. I've got some in my bag, in fact. *Final Fantasy*, that's my joint. They need to come out with one about hip-hoppers or the music industry.

EGM: Genius. Your resources could be hookers and hot merchandise! Any other features you'd suggest?

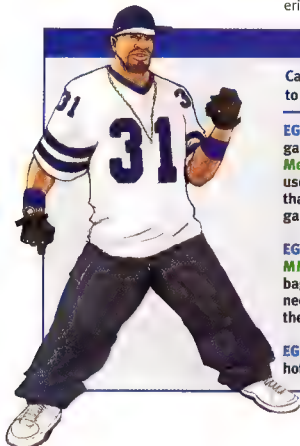
MM: You'd have to have yes-men involved in it. Dudes bitin' your s*** and stuff. Independent labels blowing up overnight. It'd be M-rated, for real.

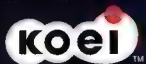
EGM: What consoles are you messin' with these days?

MM: All of the systems. PlayStation 2's my favorite, though. It has the most games.

EGM: If you had to go with one cheat code—big heads, invincibility, whatever—what would it have to be?

MM: Unlimited groupies. Duh.





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"These guys are huge gamers," says Holmes. "The artists have partnered with us closely to explicitly define each of their own identities."

And there's more fun to be had in Battle and Survival modes. Under the former option, up to four players can play in match types like free-for-all, two-on-two tag-team, and handicap. The latter choice plays much like any endurance mode, with you fighting a string of goons one at a time until you drop, although discovering new characters—who are then added to the gauntlet—extends its replay value.

So, how does it play? In a word, *fiercely*. "We've tried to make *Vendetta* a much faster experience than players are used to by infusing as many martial-art styles as possible into the game," says Holmes. "It also boasts EA Sports Big sensibilities for the finishers—they're incredibly over-the-top. That really sets it apart from the competition."

While *Vendetta* handles like any wrestling game, the move set is spastic. Alongside grapple-based wrestling moves such as clotheslines and piledrivers come kung-fu techniques, jeet kune do maneuvers, and the odd illegal chokehold. With more than 1,500 moves available, how you work an opponent over is simply a matter of preference.



Method Man gives the barbackles a well-earned pay-off

Likewise, there are numerous ways to win a fight:

- 1) pin your opponent,
- 2) work a specific body part until you can slap on a submission hold, or
- 3) explore the wonders of a special KO system that revolves around ridiculously gratuitous ending moves. Finishers, as they're referred to, are only accessible after whittling an adversary's health down and getting your momentum meter charged. Once that's done, however, you can toss opponents across the ring or really go for the gusto.

Take DMX, a real wild child. Apply the outspoken celebrity's finisher and he runs up the face of his foe to apply several kicks to his head, Jet Li-style. He then switches into a scissor hold, grabs the offender, and flips him into oblivion. It's not your average fatality, but this isn't your average game.

"*Vendetta* is a title that has the potential to bring hip-hop culture into the mainstream in an authentic way," says Holmes. That it should, since it exemplifies two things audiences love: violence and verbal abuse. And take Method Man's advice before jumping in: "Choose me. And work the finishers. With all due respect to the other artists involved, I'm gonna break some f**** heads." 🍌

—Scott Steinberg

CATFIGHT!

While working the circuit, you'll also get to meet lovely ladies who'll serve as your girlfriends. If another female approaches your woman, cat-fights may ensue. The best part? Afterward, you get to decide who walks off on your arm, and thus, which girl's image galleries you unlock.

FINISH HIM!



Of all the finishers, Redman's Nutbuster ranks among the most unique:

First, he holds you by the throat. The rowdy rapper then swiftly applies 5 to 10 shots to the family jewels. After that, he throws you down, takes a quick glance to see if anyone's looking, and delivers one last boot to your beloved body parts. Painful, yes, but also morbidly amusing.

JAM SESSION

LUDACRIS

Chances are, he wasn't speaking to hordes of unwashed gamers when he sang, "I want to lick you from your head to your toes."

But the former Atlanta radio-station personality and Pepsi pitchman is one of the wildest characters in the rap game today, and Def Jam South's premier artist. Word.



DMX

Y'all gon' make him lose his mind, up in he-ah. Def Jam:

Vendetta fans will find the self-proclaimed dog isn't just bark, but bite. We'd like to show him what's up, but after he sold more than 3 million copies of his last album, *The Great Depression*, it's hardly our place to playa hate.



SCARFACE

Founding member of pioneering gangsta rap act The Geto Boys. The portly poet, whose hits range from "Mind

Playing Tricks on Me" to "My Block," has survived over 10 years in hip-hop's top echelon. Now a Def Jam executive, he went from flipping verses to record deals. That's what we call upward mobility.



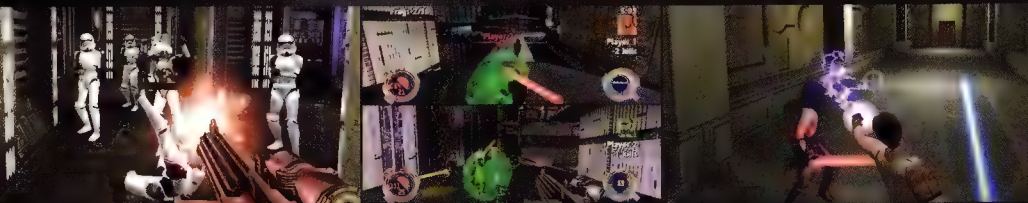


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The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers

Publisher:	Black Label Games
Developer:	Surreal Software
Players:	1
Genre:	Adventure
% Done:	80%
Release:	Fall 2003
Also on:	Xbox (and maybe GC)
Web Address:	www.lotr.com
The Good:	Surreal has big plans for the game—and the time to execute them.
The Bad:	You can't play as Gandalf.
And The Ugly:	One of the playable characters on the way to Mordor (wink, wink).



Missions with Aragorn (seen here), Gimli, and Legolas will be very combat heavy, while missions with Sam and Frodo will be very stealth oriented.



Given only seven months last year to port *The Fellowship of the Ring* to PS2 (it was formerly an Xbox exclusive), Surreal Software had one simple goal at the time: "To ship on time!" jokes company president Alan Patmore. Though developer WXP had laid the groundwork in its Xbox version, the short time-period just didn't allow Surreal to do everything it would have liked to improve the game, resulting in a title that failed to wow most *Lord of the Rings* fanatics. If all goes according to Surreal's plan, that won't happen again.

For *The Two Towers* (no, not the game EA released a few months back—this one's based on the book, not

the movie), Surreal fully controls development across all platforms. So forget everything you experienced in *Fellowship*. "We're designing *Towers* from scratch," says Patmore. "We started in March, so we've had a nice, long ramp-up of preproduction. The number-one goal is to make a game that, regardless of its Tolkien license, is able to stand on its own."

And given the source material (the second book has a much heavier emphasis on action), a quality game certainly seems doable. "[*The Fellowship* book] was basically about getting from point A to point B," says Patmore, who sees the first *LOTR* book as more of a travelogue. "But *Towers* totally changes the structure.

FAMILIAR RING

If *The Two Towers*' gameplay seems familiar, there's a reason: Surreal's president, Alan Patmore, cites several recent games as influences.

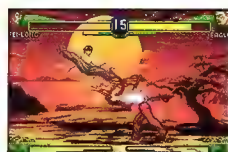
Medal of Honor: "It really inspired us in terms of epic battle—and that's one of the things we really wanted to accomplish, at least for the Helm's Deep sequence. [EA] did a terrific job of showing that sense of frantic battle."

Ico: "There's a lot of, say, Sam having to lead Frodo through the Dead Marshes. But instead of holding hands, it's more of a gamespeak thing—'stay here' or 'follow me.' This opens up a lot of opportunity for cool game design with some really cool 3D environmental puzzles."

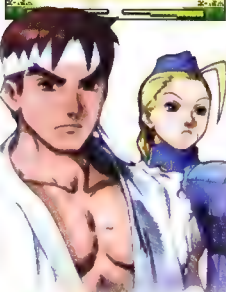
Devil May Cry: "You build up to a certain level, then you can release this special attack, which means you're kicking serious butt at that point in time."

The Mark of Kri: "Orcs don't mob you [like in *Fellowship*]. They stand, kind of in circles, and then several come in to attack at once. It makes it so you're trying to think about what you want to do. I like the *Mark of Kri* concept where you're targeting them up and really thinking about what you're going to do."





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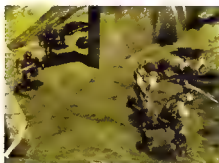


ARACHNOPHOBIA

If your only experience with *The Two Towers* is the movie or EA's game, the name Shelob probably means nothing to you. But for *Surreal's Towers*, Sam and Frodo's confrontation with this huge Hobbit-eating spider marks the climax of the game—because that's what happens at the end of the book. Director Peter Jackson opted to save Shelob for the third movie, *The Return of the King*, because otherwise, as he told *Entertainment Weekly*, “there'd be very little for Frodo and Sam to do.”



All of the environments have been built strictly to the measurements Tolkien gives in the books. Some of them aren't as big as you'd expect.



It's no longer “get to...”—it's much more mission based. We're painstakingly going through the book in terms of mission structure.”

Surreal is determined to incorporate as much of the action described in the book as possible. The company is at least doubling—maybe even tripling—the number of playable characters (a final number is still pending). So far, only Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, Frodo, and Sam have been confirmed, but we're promised even more—one or two of which may surprise you.

The sheer number of characters involved, however, presents Surreal with a potential quest-buster: How can they create the RPG element they feel the game needs? “If you play as Aragorn for just two hours throughout the entire game, how can you really build a character with stats or anything?” Patmore says. “And upgrading is another concern. I mean, Aragorn starts with [his legendary sword] Anduril—it's not like you can



“Towers just makes for a better game.”

—Surreal President Alan Patmore

get a better sword!” The solution: An Artifact system in which you find actual pieces of Tolkien lore to enhance a character's abilities or permanent status (an Elven brooch increases Aragorn's health meter, for example).

The Two Towers even promises to convey the book's emotional intensity. “You've got this cool contrast in gameplay,” Patmore says. “You've got the Helm's Deep section, which is very macro with massive battles, and you've got a very personal level when you're with Frodo going through the Dead Marshes.”

Actually, “macro” might be an understatement if Patmore's description of the Battle of Helm's Deep is any indication. Unlike EA, Surreal is rendering the entire fortress so that it's open for your exploration. “We built the walls according to the measurements described by Tolkien,” says Patmore. “We found out he was smokin' crack when he designed it, though, because there's no way you can fit that many people into the area he described! As you're running up, towers are exploding, walls are blowing up, guys are falling off the wall—all sorts of stuff is happening in your peripheral vision.” At times, you'll even see what appears to be as many as 4,000 warriors battling on the screen in the distance, Surreal claims. Throw in a vastly improved, combo-based combat system, and you've got battles that'll make your *Middle-earth* movie.

Meanwhile, the Hobbit half of the story is not ignored, with stealth once again playing a major role whenever you don virtual furry feet—only it's more in-depth this time. Not only does Surreal promise technical improvements over *Fellowship's* stealth-oriented parts, but the story also lends itself to more suspenseful gameplay. “There's a big difference between sneaking into [the entrance to Mordor at] Cirith Ungol versus hanging out in Hobbiton,” laughs Patmore. “*The Two Towers* just makes for a better game.”

—Chris Baker

KNIGHTS OF THE KITCHEN TABLE

In order to capture the realistic movements of medieval melee combat for *Towers*, Surreal called upon the assistance of a group of local experts. More than just a band of freaks in armor that attends Renaissance fairs, this band of freaks in armor actually knows what it's doing. “They really do whack each other with real weapons!” says Patmore, whose team is using the knights for motion-capture sessions. “They actually study and perform real combat moves.” And the best part? You can hire this group of ruffians for your very own party or gathering. Just don't forget the mead! Visit seattleknights.com for details...or a good laugh.



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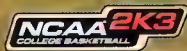
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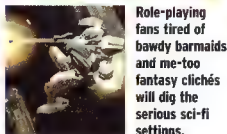
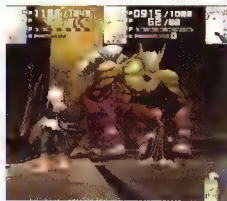
PlayStation 2



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Xenosaga: Episode I

Publisher:	Namco
Developer:	MonolithSoft
Players:	1
Genre:	RPG
% Done:	75%
Release:	Feb. 25, 2003
Also On:	None
Web Address:	www.namco.com
The Good:	It's a PS2 RPG that can hang with <i>Final Fantasy X</i> .
The Bad:	Too many cinemas might bore some players.
And The Ugly:	The innuendo-filled lesbian relationship between Shion and KOS-MOS. No wait, that's not ugly...that's rad!



Role-playing fans tired of bawdy barmaids and me-too fantasy clichés will dig the serious sci-fi settings.



Shortly after the rebirth of the RPG (in 1997, when *Final Fantasy VII* made it cool to talk about hit points), SquareSoft brought another epic role-playing bonanza to the U.S. PlayStation—a bizarre title called *Xenogears*. It didn't sell the truckloads of copies *FFVII* did, but it was a moderate hit that resonated with RPG fanatics. Well, at least with those who had 80 hours to kill and a deep understanding of comparative religion. It was truly heavy stuff, packed with philosophical undertones that made it more than just your average adventure. The guys behind *Xenogears* left Square and managed to take their concepts with them when they set up shop at Namco under the name MonolithSoft. Not unlike *Star Wars* guru George Lucas, *Xeno*-creator Tetsuya Takahashi envisioned a colossal tale told in six parts. *Xenogears* actually represents chapter five of the overall tale; this game, *Xenosaga Episode I*, is where it all begins.

Don't worry if you're new to the *Xeno* series, 'cause *Episode I* takes place roughly 10,000 years before the

events of its PS1 predecessor. In the world of *Saga*, space travel, synthetic humans, and technology-derived magic are all commonplace. You take control of Shion Uzuki, a perky young engineer working for Vector Corporation, and develop defenses against deadly aliens known as the Gnosis. You're joined by KOS-MOS, Shion's latest (and sexiest) defender—a superpowered android that does wonders with rail-guns. Of course, you'll amass a ragtag team of crazy characters over the course of the 60-hour quest. Battling the Gnosis constitutes much of the game's initial plot, but later, a conflict between the Vector Corp. and the Galactic Federation grabs the spotlight.

The gameplay borrows some of the best elements of *Final Fantasy*, *Chrono Cross* (PS1), and, of course, *Xenogears*. You'll traverse complex 3D dungeons à la *FFX*, but here you can use Shion's weapons to interact with the environment. For example, if you shoot an explosive canister near a wandering enemy, it'll significantly weaken your foe prior to battle. Since you can see enemies walking around the dungeons, you can avoid battles with some crafty sneaking or flat-out running. The actual battles play out a lot like those in *Chrono Cross*: turn-based combat where different buttons correspond to different attacks. Expect some impressive, flashy special effects for the heavy-duty attacks and blinding spells, as in any worthy RPG.

A heavy sci-fi mood and weighty religious references set *Xenosaga* apart from the RPG pack, but the surprising number of cinemas puts it firmly in a class unto itself. Yeah, lots of games have cut-scenes, but this one ups the ante with hours of noninteractive movies, many lasting over 30 minutes. Creator Tetsuya Takahashi proudly explains, "*Xenosaga* could be turned into a drama if you extracted all the story portions and put them on video." Sounds a little scary, right? Well, at least these cinemas feature quality voice acting and impressive visuals. Still, prepare to break out the popcorn between dungeons.

—Shane Bettenhausen

ADDING UP TO AN A.G.W.S.

Evangelion



+

Gundam



=

A.G.W.S.



Just like in *Xenogears*, the characters in *Saga* sometimes say to hell with hand-to-hand combat, and instead jump inside the comfy confines of skyscraper-sized robots. Meet the Anti-Gnosis Weapon Systems (A.G.W.S.), towering metal monstrosities that look like a cross between Evangelions and Gundams (two "bots" from popular anime shows). Battling inside these metallic monstrosities plays much like the normal fights, except bigger, and with lots of pretty explosions.

SHE PRESSED AGAINST HIM
HE COULD NOT RESIST HER NEEDS
HE WOULD DIE FOR HER



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Dark Cloud 2

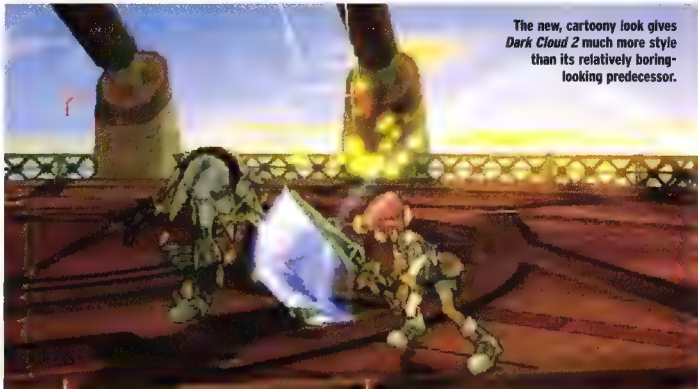
Publisher:	Sony CEA
Developer:	Level 5
Players:	1
Genre:	RPG
% Done:	90%
Release:	Feb. 18, 2003
Also On:	None
Web Address:	www.playstation.com
The Good:	Beautiful graphics and art style.
The Bad:	Battles are still a little repetitive.
And The Ugly:	Monica, after transforming into a giant rat.



Chocobo my ass. These guys know how to ride in style.



Monica can transform into monsters and use their abilities in battle.



The new, cartoony look gives *Dark Cloud 2* much more style than its relatively boring-looking predecessor.

The original *Dark Cloud* managed to successfully meld several types of gameplay together to make a unique and engaging RPG that, while a bit rough around the edges, was unlike anything that had come before it. This sequel can hardly be called revolutionary, but *DC2* does improve upon many of the things that made the first game great, while adding a host of new features and a completely new, cartoony look that gives the series some much-needed style.

Dark Cloud 2 brings back the first game's innovative Georama system, which allows you to build a town in real time by plopping down trees, roads, houses, and other objects, and then jump right in to explore your new surroundings. In *DC2*, the town-building process is more robust, thanks to a grid-free interface and a much wider range of customization features and town parts. Since an important part of the game involves traveling forward through time to see how your handiwork affects the future, you'll need to build carefully.

Dungeon exploration once again plays a key role in *Dark Cloud 2*. Combat in the original *DC* grew repetitive quickly, so this time, the two main characters have a wider variety of unique skills and abilities. For example, Max can utilize mechanical vehicles, while Monica can use magic and transform into monsters. Objects on the field can be picked up and thrown, and each character has more moves at their disposal (jumping attacks, back flips, etc.). As a result, the pacing is better, and fighting your way through level after level of randomly generated dungeons no longer feels like a chore.

We've barely touched upon everything *Dark Cloud 2* has to offer, but needless to say, if you were a fan of the original, you'll find plenty to like here. With its deep gameplay, multiple minigames and diversions, and truly beautiful graphics and sound (the jury's still out on the English voice acting, mind you), it should make for a great holdover until *Final Fantasy X-2* finally strolls along. 🍄

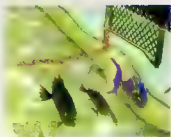
—John Ricciardi

DARK DIVERSIONS

FISHING

A favorite in the original, the fishing minigame is back. This time, not only can you catch fish, but

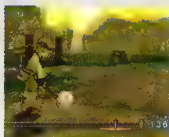
you can also have them race against each other in the aquarium. It's like *Gran Turismo*, only with fish. (OK, it's nothing like that at all.)



GOLF

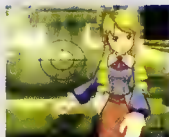
Who would've thought that playing golf in an RPG could be so much fun? The two go together like

chocolate and peanut butter, macaroni and cheese, Simon and Garfunkel! Next thing you know, they'll be summoning dragons in *Tiger Woods 2004*.



TAKING PICTURES

You won't find any posters of half-naked chicks in *Dark Cloud 2* (for that, you need *Metal Gear Solid 2*), but you will find that practically every character in the game will dish up a unique pose if you try to snap their photo. Say cheese!



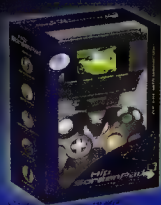
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Devil May Cry 2

Capcom • Jan. 28, 2003 • Also On: None

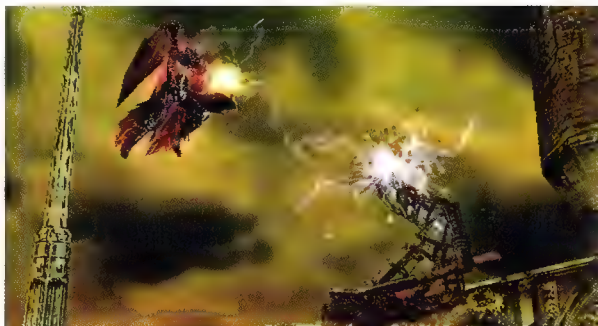
If the screens for this sequel to Capcom's best-selling action/adventure look familiar, it's not surprising: The basic *Devil May Cry* formula hasn't been tampered with in part 2. As half-man, half-demon, gun-for-hire Dante, you still run, jump, and fly through levels, cleaving evil demons up close with your giant sword or blasting them from a distance with a gun in each hand. And you still gather colored orbs from defeated foes in order to unlock new areas or acquire healing items and special moves.

As for what's new, if you played the original *Devil May Cry*, you can probably guess; most of the changes derive from fan feedback, both good and bad, about the original game.

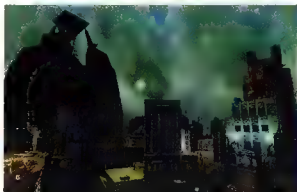
For example, we all loved the over-the-top, Hong-Kong-action-film style of Dante's attacks in *DMC1*. *DMC2* adds more outrageous moves, including a wall climb (Dante can run up and leap off any vertical surface, flipping around mid-flight to land behind enemies), independent targeting for his two guns (check out his behind-the-head, no-look blasting in the bottom-right pic), a roll maneuver when he gets knocked down, and a longer hang-time for aerial maneuvers. In the first game, we wanted to control Trish, Dante's non-playable, leather-clad sidekick and love interest. *DMC2* introduces Lucia, a knife-wielding bad mama-jamma, complete with her own weapons and moves, whom you can control. And finally, we all hoped for larger battlefields to fight in, without the camera troubles and combo-stifling walls that came with the close quarters of the first game. *DMC2* features more open and outdoor areas where the camera smoothly follows the action instead of cutting back and forth, as well as different paths to reach parts of levels.



We know three things* about this mystery man: 1) He is an evil boss character; 2) he is voiced by *Smokey and the Bandit* and *Cannonball Run* star, Burt Reynolds; and 3) he's got a sweet 'stache.



Dante's demon form returns; transform at any time (as long as you've combo-killed enough bad guys to fill up the juice on your meter) and unleash more powerful attacks from the air.



Since Lucia isn't packing heat like Dante is, she uses throwing knives to attack long-range enemies.

OK, OK, now he's just showing off.

*To be honest, No. 1 is an assumption based on how he looks and No. 2 is just our own wishful thinking. But we're 100-percent certain about No. 3.

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— PSM, October '02*



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PlayStation 2



ACTIVISION

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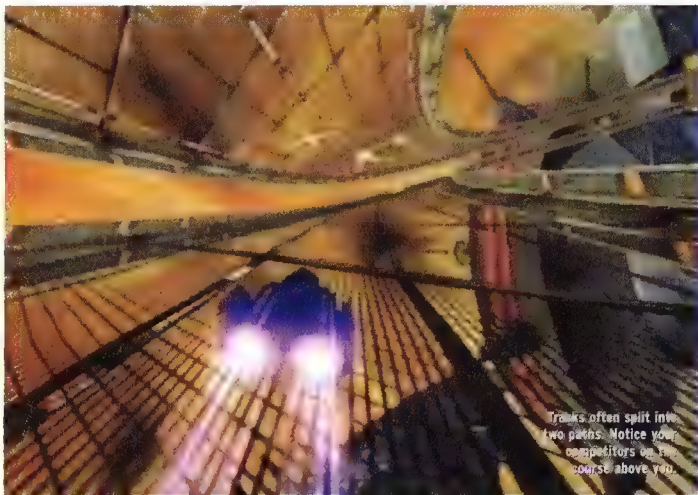
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PREVIEW
GALLERY

F-Zero GC

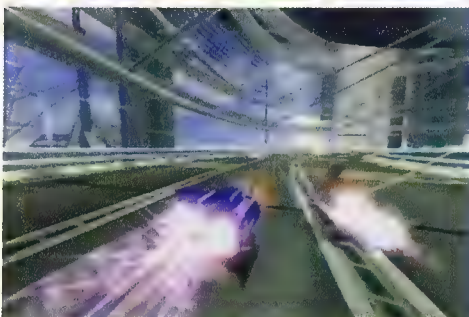
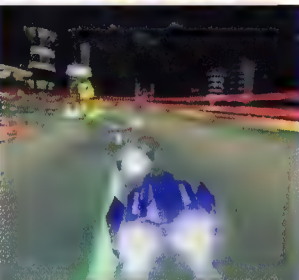
Nintendo • 2003 • Also On: None—*Wipeout* may have popularized futuristic hover racing, but *F-Zero* started the genre back on Super Nintendo. Sega's Amusement Vision team (known for the excellent *Daytona USA* on Dreamcast and *Super Monkey Ball* on GC) is developing this newest incarnation of the game simultaneously for GameCube and Nintendo's arcade board, Tri-Force. It's working hard to do the series justice by including massive, twisting tracks with plenty of speed boosters and huge (and we mean *huge*) jumps. *F-Zero* should be an intense racing experience as you trade paint with over 28 competitors at several hundred miles per hour. It also boasts detailed backgrounds and special effects that complement the graphics.



Tracks often split into two paths. Notice your competitors on the course above you.



Check out the giant A.O.B. on the right. Old Nintendo owners should recognize him.





Hidden characters, extra weapons and undiscovered worlds are all at your fingertips. Cut out the cards, slip them into the game's case for a quick trick. When you get the itch, punch in these codes and really get into the game.

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find out more about the new Zelda: The Wind Waker. It's the most powerful Zelda yet, and it's yours to enjoy.

VEXX



XBOX, PLAYSTATION 2, GAMECUBE SUIT UP FOR ACTION

Many of the challenges Vexx must overcome require him to use the Air Suit for flight and the Rock Suit to smash through barriers and enemies. While the flight launch pads and Rock Suit starting points are easy enough to find, the power-ups that enable these special abilities are very well hidden. Without these power-ups Vexx is doomed.

The Rock Suit power-up can be found right at the start. In the Hall of Heroes, find a way to the upper ledge. From there you'll be transported to one of the tapestries lining the room. In order to reach the upper ledge you're going to have to do a little "fire-walking."

The Air Suit power-up is located on a tall rock spire within Dragonsoch. Although it may seem impossible to reach, if you look to your left as you scale the dragon's backbone, you'll see a jump pad that will get you to your goal.

With flesh two valuable power-ups in-hand, there's no stopping Vexx and his crew to destroy the evil Dark Yobai!



YU-GI-OH DUELIST



ZELDA



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speed cards and monsters over

important to



the card is a wall type with a high

Life Points

to

to

to

to

WORD TIPS

A sword is Link's primary weapon, and his first upgrade to the

Master Sword sets him on his way to success. Defeat the boss of the following dungeons to get the Peddler's of Courage, Power, and Wisdom. You need all three to pick the Master Sword from its stone in the Lost Woods.

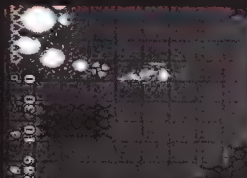
East Palace - Armos Knights
They attack in set formations. Use the Bow & Arrows as many times as possible to defeat individual Armos knights. When only one remains, it jumps around the room trying to land on Link. Hit it repeatedly with your sword to defeat it.

Desert Palace - Linnorms
The worm-like Linnorms creep from the ground, float through the air, and dive back into the ground. They spew visible venom they pop out of the ground, so don't stand too close. You must hit the Linnorms in the head repeatedly with your sword or Bow & Arrows to defeat

GAMEBOY ADVANCE

them individually.

Lower of Hero - Madodon
Madodon gets faster every time you hit him, and it's easy to get frustrated with the fight. Run directly away from him, so that it looks like he's chasing you. When he makes a U-turn, turn around quickly and strike his tail.



→ Hidden characters, extra weapons and undiscovered worlds are all at your fingertips. Cut out the cards, slip them into the game's case for a quick trick. When you get the hint, punch in these codes and really get into the game.

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007 NIGHTFIRE



BOX PLAYSTATION 2, PC

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Your wristwatch has a small laser device coded to it. This can be used to burn through locks and wires. It's not powerful enough to be an effective weapon.

Q-Grapple

Your wristwatch has a convenient grapple hook device attached to it. To use it, point the phone at a grapple point. Your hook will catch on and retract, carrying you up to your target.



GHOST REGON



BOX PLAYSTATION 2

BATTLE PLAN

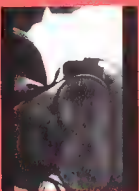
→ You've got your own combat points earned on your Mission Skill

→ If you are unlucky, and your the boss's lightning bolt, rather than the cannon and get a whole new set of equipment to destroy them.

→ After 3 minutes, right at 15 frames after your normal boss. Add the long range energy and the slow down the most important color in your arsenal.

→ Use the same border to your entire life. Enemies can't attack you from the out-of-bounds.

→ Remember, keep what you're doing and immediately after the end.



THE SIMS



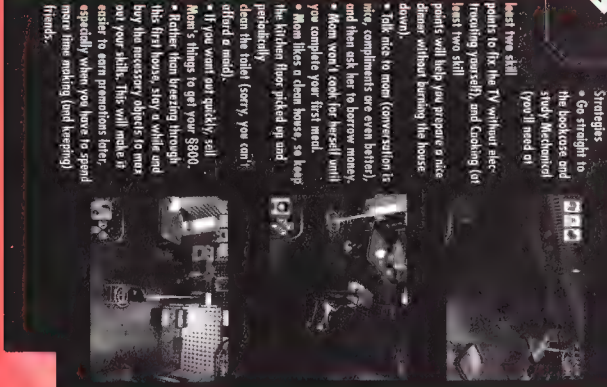
PLAYSTATION 2

LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

→ Strategies

- Go straight to the bookstore and study Mechanical (you'll need at least two skill points to fix the TV without re-inventing yourself), and cooking (at least two skill points will help you prepare a nice dinner without burning the house down).

- Talk nice to mom (conversations to nice, compliments are even better), and then ask her to borrow money.
- Mom won't cook for herself until you complete your 'I'm rich'.
- Mom likes a clean house, so keep the kitchen floor picked up and periodically clean the toilet (seriously, you can't afford a maid).
- If you want out quickly, sell Mom's things to get your \$800.
- Refuse them borrowing through the first house, stay a while and buy the necessary objects to enter on your skills. This will make it easier to earn penniless later, especially when you have to spend more than making (and keeping) friends.



1080° Avalanche

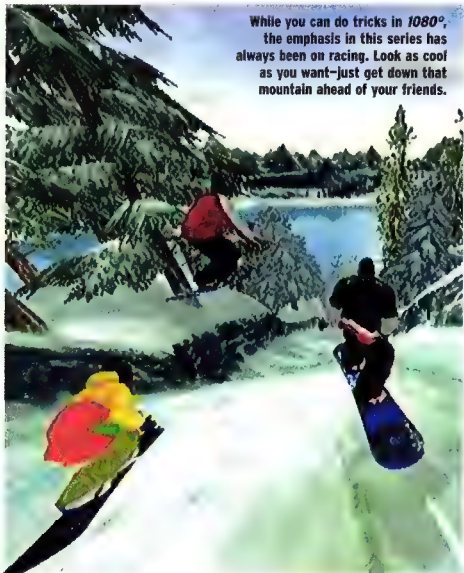
Nintendo • February 2003 • Also On:

None—Although skateboarding rules extreme sports, snowboarding has always been a close second when it comes to videogames. And since *1080°* on N64 was one of the last great snowboarding games, fans are pumped about this new GC version. As the title suggests, the game promises pounding hearts as avalanches bear down on boarders attempting sick tricks at top speeds. To avoid a face full of snow, players need to leap over giant chasms, duck and weave through mazes of falling trees and tumbling boulders, and smash through the windows of occasional houses and lodges.

The unique part, though, is the control scheme. Just jumping and jamming on the Trick buttons isn't enough. Players will need to use a Land button as they touch down on the powder after a big jump. If they screw up, a balance meter will appear (like when you grind in *Tony Hawk* games), giving the player a chance to right themselves before doing a header into the snow. This neat play mechanic helps *1080°* stand out from other games.

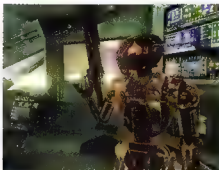


While you can do tricks in *1080°*, the emphasis in this series has always been on racing. Look as cool as you want—just get down that mountain ahead of your friends.



Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic

- Developer:** LucasArts
- Publisher:** BioWare
- Platform:** PC
- Genre:** RPG
- Rating:** 85%
- Release Date:** Spring 2003
- Age Rating:** None
- Website:** www.lucasarts.com
- What's New:** The total lack of Gungan characters
- The Good:** The total lack of any characters from the movies
- And The Ugly:** The total lack of good dialogue in *Episode II*



Six or one? No problem for a Jedi in training.

A long time ago, in a galaxy not so far away, LucasArts began creating *Star Wars* video-games to suit all kinds of players. Fans of racing games and simulations, of strategy titles and action/adventure hybrids, and 3D shooters have all been catered to. But so far, role-playing gamers have been left in the cold.

That was then—this is now. *Knights of the Old Republic* will be the first role-playing game set in the *Star Wars* universe.

LucasArts turned to Edmonton, Canada-based BioWare—makers of such critically acclaimed and successful RPGs as the *Baldur's Gate* series and, more recently, *Neverwinter Nights* on the PC—to create the ultimate *Star Wars* role-playing experience. *EGM* made the trek to the Great White North to spend some serious hands-on time with this ambitious *Star Wars* game, due out on Xbox some time this spring.

Knights of the Old Republic (KOTOR) occurs

roughly 200 generations, or about 4,000 years, before the events of the *Star Wars* films. It's a time of epic conflict between the Jedi and the Sith, and the good guys ain't winning.

That's where you come in. Since your actions dictate the path you follow, you pick which side to help. By the end of the game, you may be heroic and save the Republic, or become an evil force within the galaxy. Before you start your journey, though, you can spend time creating your custom character (see sidebar below), or you can simply jump into the game with a few button taps.

Since *KOTOR* is a party-based game, other allied characters—such as humans, aliens, or droids—will join your traveling troupe throughout this 50-plus hour adventure. In fact, the many subquests

CHARACTER CREATION

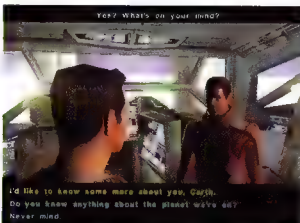
Hardcore RPG enthusiasts will be pleased to know it's possible to create and customize a *KOTOR* protagonist from scratch. Along with the ability to change a character's physical appearance, there are three screens devoted to his or her abilities. The Attributes page allows players to spread around points in six categories, such as Strength, Dexterity, and Charisma; the Skills screen features eight categories, including Stealth, Computer Use, and Persuasion; and the Feats screen handles combat abilities like Critical Strike and Flurry Attacks. Alternatively, players can tap the Recommend button to go with default choices.



Place bets here with the somewhat out-of-place Hutt.

MINIGAMES GALORE

As if the lengthy single-player adventure wasn't enough, BioWare has thrown in some minigames for good measure. One allows players to man the turrets in a first-person-perspective dogfight in space. A second is the old pod race on Tatooine (like in the *Episode I* movie and *Star Wars Racer*). Although we didn't see them, there's also *Gladiator* arena-style fights (*Episode II*, anyone?) and a gambling game in which players can use cards they've collected throughout the adventure to play against other characters.



The game features thousands of lines of dialogue, all voice-acted by professional talent.

will vary depending on your party members, as will the dialogue, story twists, and cut-scenes, adding up to a highly replayable RPG.

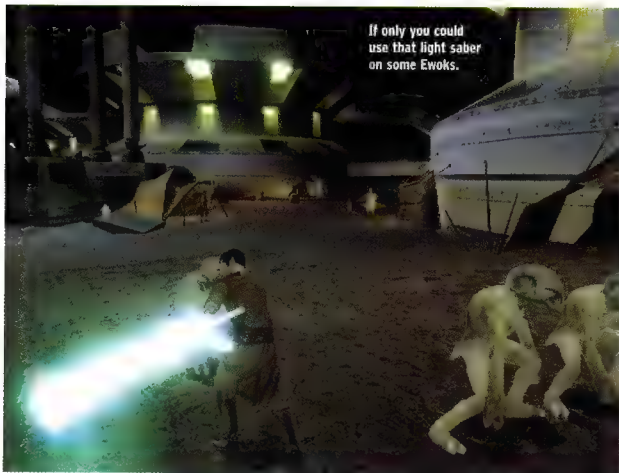
LucasArts says this is the biggest project it's ever been involved with in terms of size and scope. And from what we've seen, we believe it: There are 10 worlds to explore, more than 100 pre-rendered and in-game cut-scenes, over 12,000 lines of spoken dialogue (yes, spoken dialogue, with lip-syncing characters), and multiple minigames (see sidebar above). There's

even a significant love interest, but BioWare is mum on the details.

The central hub in *KOTOR* is Ebon Hawk, a huge spaceship where you meet other NPCs (non-player characters), swap party members, receive assignments, and begin traveling to the various planets. Some worlds will be familiar to *Star Wars* fans (such as sandy Tatooine), while others have been alluded to but never before seen (e.g., Chewbacca's home world, Kashyyyk).

While exploration and puzzle solving are integral to the gameplay, the combat will keep most players glued to the tube until the

You may be heroic and save the Republic, or become an evil force within the galaxy.



THE WRATH
OF HEAVEN...



PlayStation 2



PREVIEW GALLERY

Apex

Atari • March 2003 •

Also On: PS2—The racing genre is so crowded these days, if you don't have some sort of gimmick that makes your game stand out, you might as well load up the trailer and go home. In *Apex*, rather than buying a stable of cars to race, you actually help design vehicles from a collection of preexisting parts. Then, you play the role of test driver as you compete against rival companies in manufacturer races. It's the most unique idea we've seen in a racing game in a long time.



Tao Feng: Fist of the Lotus

Microsoft • March 2003 • Also On: None—Once upon a time, two pals (Ed Boon and John Tobias) shook up the world of fighting games by creating *Mortal Kombat*. Its digitized decapitation and murderous mayhem set the template for a decade of brawling. The two masterminds have since parted ways, but the fight lives on: Boon recently helmed *MK: Deadly Alliance*, and Tobias is finishing up *Tao Feng*. Not surprisingly, *Tao Feng* bears a passing resemblance to Midway's fatality-packed fighter. You'll find similar fantasy-meets-martial-arts characters, precise combos, and grisly special moves, but some all-important gameplay tweaks could propel it past its progenitor. For example, individual limbs can sustain damage, so if your opponent keeps blocking with his arm, it'll get bruised, bloody, and, eventually, broken. Also, the fighting arenas offer tons of space for combat and interactive elements. You can swing around poles and slam your foe against a wall—truly brutal stuff.



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Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb

- Publisher:** LucasArts
- Developer:** The Collective
- Platform:** 1
- Genre:** Action
- % Done:** 90%
- Release:** February 2003
- Also on:** PS2
- Web site:** www.lucasarts.com
- The Good:** It's the next-best thing to the oft-rumored fourth Indy movie.
- The Bad:** It forces you to solve too many bland puzzles.
- And The Why:** The thought of a 60-year-old Harrison Ford doing all of Indy's stunts



Above: Prague at night. Indy will have to use his powers of observation—or at least his powers of cracking a whip and shooting Nazis with a German luger.



Harrison Ford looks like a dried peach these days, but that's not stopping Lucas and Spielberg from considering a fourth movie starring the original Indiana Jones and his onscreen father, Sean Connery. It might actually come together for a 2005 release, but until then, the fedora-wearing hero will be whip-cracking his way onto Xbox and PS2 in an action game worthy of the license.

Indy's goals are to find the mysterious Heart of the Dragon artifact, stop the Nazis from interfering like they always do, and win the love of a gorgeous babe—not necessarily in that order. You'll visit places like Sri Lanka, China, Prague, and various Asian countries as you dispatch evil Germans by whippin', shootin', and smashin' beer bottles over their heads. And, just like in the movies, not all the violence takes place in caves and old temples. On one mission, ponytailed mobsters ambush a tuxedo-wearing Indy at the home of a local dignitary, then chase him through the streets of Hong Kong, guns blazing.

The scenery throughout the game looks wonderful. Colorful buildings adorned with neon signs, waterfalls roaring into stony caverns, dark and foreboding stat-

ues—it's as varied and exotic as anything you've ever seen in the films. And Indy's versatile, too. He can go toe-to-toe with comic-book Nazis, fighting them off with a shotgun and German lugers, or avoid confrontation by diving into a nearby well. During combat, he can grab just about any weapon, from machine guns to chair legs. Or, he can detonate explosives, man stationary guns, and, of course, mix it up with his trusty whip. It all adds up to some intense action.

The developers change up the action every now and then, too. Dr. Jones will take a break from basic combat once in a while to jump into a moving vehicle and shoot pursuing motorcycles—kind of like *007 NightFire*. In short, Indy will be the fully realized action star we all know from the flicks.

Of course, there's always a danger that tomb-raiding games will devolve into mindless puzzle-solving and nonstop combat, but this one looks different. Sarcastic Indy one-liners, jungle music that sounds vaguely like the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* soundtrack, Asian warriors screaming ferocious taunts...it's all here to give this license a decent videogame that's not just a *Tomb Raider* rip-off. **A** —John Brandon

BULLWHIP BASICS

You can get through most levels by splatting the bad guys with your shotgun, but fans know this is not Dr. Jones' style. If you really want to be like Indiana Jones, try using his bullwhip—it's the handiest item in the game.



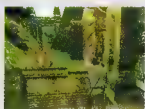
enemies. It doesn't deal out much damage, but it's a smart choice when you don't want to risk losing health in a fistfight.

Using the whip as a weapon allows you to keep a safe distance from



opponents' hands (just like in the opening to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*). It's a handy tool to have when you're outgunned.

If you swing the whip left to right, you can snap weapons out of your



jump over. An icon will pop up on the screen to let you know when a support beam is available to latch onto for swinging.

Good luck with
the game.

I can beat you
with my cord tied
behind my back.



Xbox: NBA Live 2003



Xbox: Madden 2003



Xbox: Tiger Woods
PGA Tour 2003



PS2: NCAA
March Madness 2003



PS2: Tiger Woods
PGA Tour 2003



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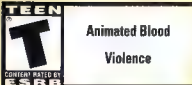
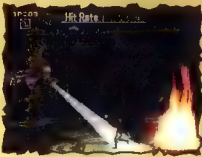
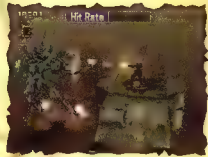
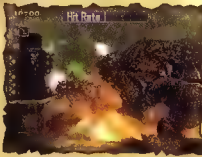
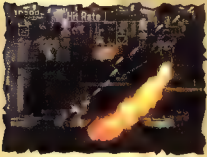


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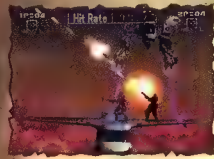
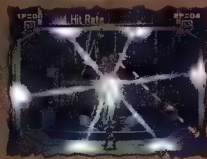
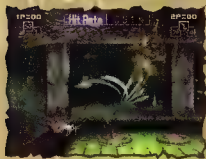
GAME BOY ADVANCE

PlayStation.2



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Blood
Strong Language
Violence



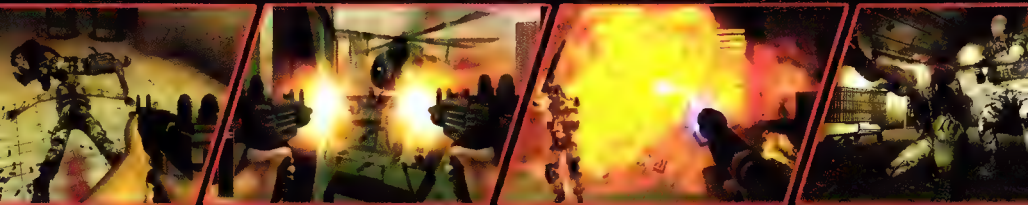
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NEIGHBOR

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ON TOILET

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FLOOR

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BUTLER
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TOO LATE
\$100

VISI
IN-LAW

TAKE OUT
TRASH

HAVE A
BABY



THE GAME OF LIFE



And we don't mean Milton Bradley. **The Sims** are coming to every console in your neighborhood. Let the twisted psychological experiments begin

By Demian Linn

They laughed at game designer Will Wright. OK, maybe they didn't actually laugh, but there were definitely some blank stares in the conference room as he explained his initial concept for a game called *The Sims*. You tell your character when to use the can? You scrimp and save for new kitchen appliances? Who's going to want to play a game based on the drudgery of everyday life? As it turned out, nearly everybody.

GET A LIFE

The Sims and its expansion packs have sold x8 million-plus units since the game hit the PC in 2000. It's been on the cover of *Newsweek*. Bringing the game to consoles seemed obvious, at least to the dollar-

signs-in-the-eyes business-types at publisher Electronic Arts. But transplanting this fairly complex life simulator into the living room took some doing—like adding a whole new control scheme, multiplayer games, and a revamped single-player mode.

For the uninitiated, the game puts you in control of a small chunk of suburbia populated by little folks called Sims. Your Sims go to work, pay bills, cook dinner, fall in love, have kids, move into nicer houses, and throw wild block parties, sometimes all in the same day. But, to keep them happy, you've got to make sure their eight basic needs—stuff like Comfort, Hygiene, and Fun—are fulfilled. Take care of them and life is good. Neglect your Sims and they'll have screaming fits,



Full house: Fans of *The Sims* on the PC will find lots of little touches from the game's expansion packs—but the two-player challenges (inset) are exclusive to the console versions.



forget to use the toilet, and get into fights with strangers.

Though the PS2 version required some significant changes, it contains just about everything the PC game has, plus a ton of extras. For the first time, the game's environments are fully 3D, so players can now view the action from just about any direction. And there are new, console-exclusive single-player and multiplayer games. "We gave it more of an obvious goal structure, while leaving in the 'Sandbox mode' from the PC version," says Wright, co-founder of game development house Maxis and godfather of all things *Sim* (*SimCity*, *SimAnt*, *SimGolf*—we could go on). "I think the multiplayer mode is going to have a big impact. It's really fun to be sitting there and playing alongside another player in the same house. Some play cooperatively, and some people play competitively."

The console versions incorporate the best bits and pieces of the PC game's expansion

(continued on page 114)



Serious Simoleans

Some *Sims* players like to spend their time doing warm, fuzzy tasks, like making new friends and keeping in touch with Mom every day. Others pursue the American dream more directly, accumulating and hoarding as much stuff as possible. Nothing impresses the Joneses like the latest Sonic shower or the Fuzzy Logic dishwasher.

If you're in it for the Simoleans (essentially Simdollars, indicated by the \$ symbol instead of \$), we've got two words for you: Screw work. Going to a job every day is a mug's game. Even if you rise to the very top of your career path, you're going to hit an earnings ceiling that's around \$1,400 a day at best. To make the real money, you gotta be an entrepreneur.

PAINTING FOR PROFIT

Average Daily Earnings: \$200

Max out your Creative skill, then use the Artist's Easel and get to paintin'. You should be able to sell your creations for about \$170 each. Sure, this cottage industry won't quite put you on easy street, but at least you can finally try out the life of friendly, happy-tree painter Bob Ross—complete with afro and ultra-wide lapel shirt, if you so desire.



LUCRATIVE STATUARY

Average Daily Earnings: \$2,500

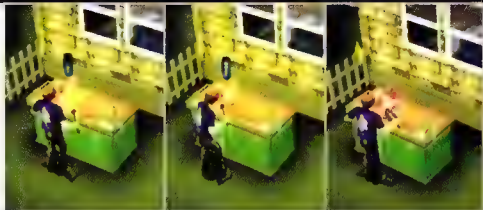
You'll also need to max your Creative skill to make the big money with this trick. Buy a carving block for \$500, carve it (Michelangelo's *David*, Rodin's *The Thinker*, and a statue of the Monkey Butler are just some of the "art" you may end up with), and sell your creation for two to three times the amount of cash you paid for the block.



GNOME MANIA

Average Daily Earnings: \$4,000

This is the mother lode. When your Mechanical skill is fully developed, you can crank out 40 or so garden gnomes per day, at \$100 a pop, using the KraftKing woodworking table. Get five, six, or more Sims working in your gnome sweatshop and you'll rake in a sick amount of money. Just sell the gnomes before your party guests come over, or they may get stomped. Some Sims are violently opposed to garden gnomes.



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Violence



PlayStation.2

Acclaim

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Picket fences: Your dream of owning the neighborhood's most spectacular topiary garden is within reach. Take that, Joneses.

(continued from page 112) packs—which enhanced the Sims' party-throwing and babe-smoochin' skills—and add the all-new Get A Life mode. Get A Life drops you right into the action, without making you sit through a tutorial (although being unemployed and living with yer mom may not qualify as "action" to everybody). You then have to

meet a series of goals to progress within the game, such as moving to a place of your own, throwing raging parties, gettin' with the hot Sims, starting a family, and climbing the career ladder. For the first time ever, you can actually "win" *The Sims*.

Depending on your performance, you'll also unlock new stuff as you travel down life's



Don't fear the reaper: Once Death does his dirty work and claims a fallen Sim's soul, he'll stick around and schmooze at your parties.



highways and byways, including the open-ended mode that is the PC game. "We have new objects made for the console version," says Sean Baity, a designer at Maxis. "It's a lit-



Consumer Lust

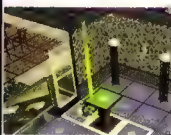
Console gamers get 14 new items to play around with. Here are five of the best.

MONKEY BUTLER



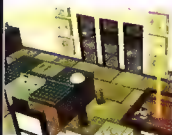
Cost: \$15,000
Everyone wants a helper monkey; it's just one of those basic human needs, like food or shelter. Now you can live the dream with the Monkey Butler. This mandrill-dressed-in-a-tux is a repairman, a maid, and the life of the party—simultaneously. Bring him out at bashes, and he'll entertain the guests, then clean up the mess.

STRIP-POKER TABLE



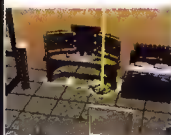
Cost: \$600 (bargain!)
Nothing will kick your shindigs up to the next level like some Sim-on-Sim action, complete with pixelated nudity. That's where the strip-poker table comes in. Say, what do you suppose happens if you play strip poker with the Monkey Butler? Well, aside from creating a rift in the space-time fabric, that is....

AROMASTER WHIFFERPUFF "GOLD"



Cost: \$2,500
Possibly the greatest invention in the history of Simsville, this aromatherapy machine boosts your Comfort, Fun, Energy, or Social rating for three hours. You can even buy multiple Aromasters and run them simultaneously. Suddenly, all-night parties—or all-night gnome production—are within your sweaty grasp.

CHARISMASTER VANITY TABLE



Cost: \$1,000
Having second thoughts about going for that balding look combined with nerd glasses and a mustache? Perhaps a mohawk is more your style. With the PC version of the game, you were stuck with the face you gave your Sim when you made it. The vanity table, however, lets you alter your ugly mug without starting over from scratch.

ANTIQUE ARMOIRE



Cost: \$1,200
The armoire allows you to change your Sim's outfits—another feature unavailable to players of the original PC version. It's like having the PC classic *Barbie Fashion Designer* bundled with your copy of *The Sims*. Plus, you can sound like a pretentious Frenchman (is that redundant?) when you say "armoire" out loud.



Sims like it hot: Your hot-and-heavy romantic entanglements in *The Sims* give new meaning to the videogame concept of "scoring."

tle kookier. We have a Monkey Butler, and a Bug Zapper that shocks you and gives you energy." Actually, the Monkey Butler caused Maxis a huge headache; when the developer submitted the game to the ESRB for rating, "they kept telling us it was a gimp mask and butt-less chaps," says Fred Dieckmann, a producer at Maxis. "We were like, 'No, it's not. It's a mandrill monkey!' They didn't believe us until I actually sent them a picture of a mandrill."

It's in the multiplayer modes that *The Sims*, a game based around social interaction, really



"You're constantly pulling people into bathrooms and dark areas...to make out with them."

—Maxis Associate Designer Sean Balty

comes into its own as a console title. You're not just huddled in front of a PC, playing in a little world of your creation. Instead, you're adding a bit of real social interaction to your simulated social interaction.

The multiplayer games are unlike any head-to-head videogame experience thus far. In the *Thief of Hearts* game, players loiter in a night-

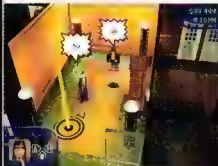
club, trying to hook up with as many Sims as possible. You can steal love interests from your opponent, but you've got to be careful when you bring out your mack game—if you're in the same room as other Sims that have already fallen for you, they'll get jealous and possibly slap you or your prospective conquest. We advise avoiding public displays



Simply Morbid

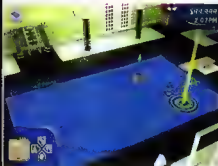
It takes some Sims players longer than others, but at some point, we all ask the question: How can I kill a Sim?

STARVATION



This one's easy. Three or so days without food will off even the heartiest Sim. Toward the end, there's quite a bit of screaming and general insanity. A particularly cruel variation on this technique involves isolating the doomed Sim in a walled- or fenced-in area, without a toilet or shower.

DROWNING



Pools are fun—until you remove the ladder. Then, any Sims taking a dip are doomed. You can even kill off the whole neighborhood by building a pool that surrounds your house, then throwing a party and removing the ladder before everyone tries to leave. You're going to Sim-hell for sure.

ELECTROCUTION



Sometimes, unfortunate household accidents happen. If an appliance breaks down and you direct your Sim to fix it rather than calling the repairman, there's a chance the Sim in question will get electrocuted. It's not the most efficient of killing tools, but it works in a pinch.

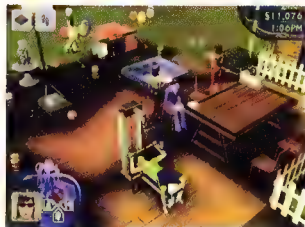
FIRE



Ah, fire. It's a classic—fill your house with area rugs and plants, throw a party, light the fireplace, and then delete all the doors so the Sims can't escape from your firetrap. The resulting inferno and disturbing human-torch animations may curb your Sim-killing ways once and for all.



Unnecessary zoom: Players can now control the camera. Here we see the government spy-satellite view.



of affection. "You're constantly pulling people into bathrooms and dark areas of the club to make out with them," Baity says.

THE SIM REAPER

The Sims is kind of like a videogame version of those Rorschach inkblot tests; watching the way someone plays can be revealing. "It's funny to see what they do in the game that



"Before [the game] was released...the first thing [players] would all ask is, 'Can you kill them?'"

—Sims creator Will Wright

they wouldn't do in real life, like flirting with the neighbor and having an affair," says Wright. "But, at the same time, a messy person [in real life] will generally have a really messy house in *The Sims*. Where they set their priorities is pretty evident after they've been playing for a while.... You can always tell initially whether they're heading toward social goals or toward monetary goals, whether they're playing the friendship/romance game or the career/make-money-get-rich game. A lot of people put themselves in the game, and maybe their family and their house. It's almost like they're making a spreadsheet for their real life, like a voodoo family."

Inevitably, players try to push the limits—and that's when things start to get a little morbid. Sims can die in many various and twisted ways (Death himself even makes a house call; you can play him at rock/paper/scissors for a second chance at life). Play the

game for a while and it's only a matter of time before you decide to find all the ways a Sim can bite it. For some of us, that point comes a lot sooner than for others.

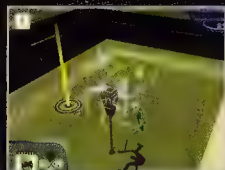
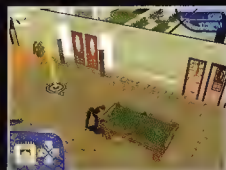
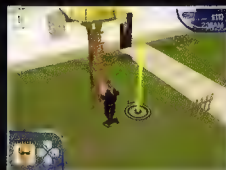
"Before [the game] was released, when I was talking about *The Sims* to a bunch of kids and teenagers, the first thing they would all ask is, 'Can you kill them?'" Wright says. "And I don't think it's that they wanted to go kill something; I think it's that they wanted to understand the range of possible states or behaviors—to figure out what the size of the envelope is."

With *The Sims* set to invade your living room, the size of the envelope is about to get bigger; Maxis is even exploring how to bring the next console version online. Will Wright's doing all the laughing now—maniacally we assume—rubbing his hands together in a vaguely sinister manner while we all slave away in his addicting little world. 🐾



Coming Attractions

The Sims debuts on the PS2 in January, followed by Xbox and GameCube variants in the spring. All three versions are identical, aside from minor control changes and graphics tweaks. We managed to get our hands on these exclusive screens of the Xbox version (note: some lighting effects haven't been added yet).





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Join Shoe and the rest of the Game Group editors as they invade your screen with the latest game news and releases that will jumpstart your weekend!

Tune in every Thursday 7:45 pm ET/ 4:45 pm PT to **HOTWIRED's** Big Video Game Hunting hosted by Renay San Miguel on CNN Headline News.

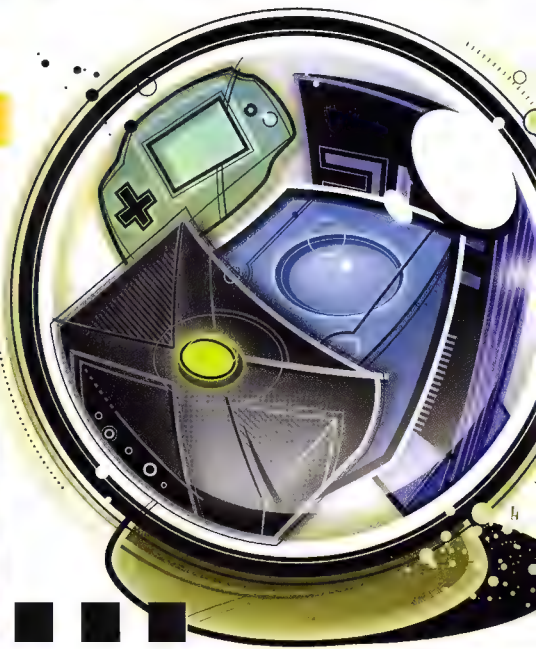
**Big Video Game
HUNTING**

**CNN
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Nostradamus smostradamus. Screw Ms. Cleo. Fire your fortune teller. EGM gazes into the misty, not-so-distant future to bring you

THE NEXT BIG...



Illustrations by Pixel Pushers Design

By the EGM staff, with contributions from David Kushner and Nick Walkland

Everything—that's all you *really* want to know about. Because while the holidays have (hopefully) left you with a hoard of gaming loot that'll keep you busy long after the yule log's set the curtains on fire, we figure that, sooner or later, those fresh-from-the-shrink-wrap PlayStation 2, GameCube, or

Xbox games will become as stale as last year's fruitcake. You're gonna want to know what's next. So we've rounded up the games, trends, genres, characters, under-the-radar projects, and other fun stuff that four out of five game scientists agree will be big, Big, BIG in 2K3.

■ PS2

... QUIRKY GAME: COLOR QUEST

Part RPG, part *Pokémon*-style critter battler, part Pablo Picasso, Agatec's ingeniously oddball *Color Quest* has you sketch your character as a 2D shape (a circle, a star, Britney Spears' thigh, etc.). Then it zaps your doodle to life as a wiggling 3D beast you unleash in arena battles. It's better than Crayola.



Rack up victories and you can add additional body parts.



■ PS2, GC, XBOX

... RETRO TREND: CLASSIC GAMES WITHIN GAMES

The original *Panzer Dragoon* in *Panzer Dragoon Orta*. The original *Metroid* in *Metroid Prime*. More and more often, publishers are including classic games as extras in new products, and we expect the trend to continue in 2003. "It's a great way to showcase the true roots of a franchise," says *Panzer Product* Manager Rich Briggs.

■ PS2, GC, XBOX

THE MATRIX

There's a reason the *Matrix* movie seemed like the world's most super-sized videogame: The Wachowski brothers, the filmmaking duo behind its cyber-mystical thrills, are avid game players. And that's why we're excited about *Enter the Matrix*, developer Shiny's action game due in early summer, the same time the *Matrix* sequel hits theaters. The brothers gave the developers gameplay and story ideas, as well as full access to the movie's actors (including Keanu Reeves). It's the same

Hollywood-meets-Silicon Valley partnership that made *Harry Potter* and *The Lord of the Rings* such great licensed games. Although *Enter the Matrix* isn't based on the first or second flicks (you don't even play as Neo), it's still filled with everything that made the *Matrix* so techno-tastic. You'll get the supernatural chop-socky combat, the explosive gun battles, the high-concept plot, and, of course, the slow-mo "Bullet Time" effect that's already become an action-game cliché.

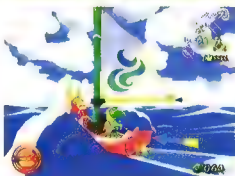


■ GC

... GAMECUBE GAME: THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

Lucky *Legend of Zelda* hero Link may have baby-brown eyes the size of bowling balls (the character's revamped cartoony look remains a source of controversy more than a year after its unveiling). But take one look at the world around him—the living, breathing wonder of color and animation—and you'll begin to realize that *Zelda* creator Shigeru Miyamoto's vision of a younger, more simplistic-looking Link wasn't such a bad idea after all.

Of course, the same classic gameplay that defined the two previous 3D *Zeldas*—*Ocarina of Time* and *Majora's Mask*, both for the Nintendo 64—is as solid as ever, but that was a given. It's that unmatched experience, combined with the beautiful, silky-smooth, toon-shaded graphics, that has us clearing our calendar for March, when *Zelda's* due to arrive. It's easily the first mega GameCube title of 2003.



■ PS2, GC, XBOX

... GENRE WE SUDDENLY CARE ABOUT: LICENSED GAMES

It was once a fact of gaming life writ in E.T.'s blood on a glowing slab of Kryptonite: Any game tied to a movie, toy, or comic-book license will suck ye olde ass. But hark, what's this? Standout titles like EA's *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* and the recent wave of superhero games (*Batman* and *Spider-Man*, to name a few) are better than bad—they're good. So now, we actually give a damn about licensed stuff such as *Enter the Matrix* above and Universal's game based on the Quentin Tarantino flick, *Kill Bill* (pictured, due this fall).

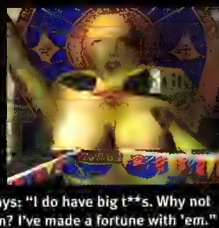


■ PS2, GC, XBOX

... VIDEOGAME BODY PART: BREASTS

Digitized bosoms are heating up new titles like *BMX XXX* and *The Getaway* (PS2), and why the hell not? It's like

Dolly Parton says: "I do have big t**s. Why not make fun of 'em? I've made a fortune with 'em."



■ PS2, GC, XBOX

...CRIME SPREE: **DRIVER 3**

You fought the law—and won—in *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*. You're about to make your high-speed getaway in, uh, *The Getaway*. So what gritty game will you break into next to fill your need for misdeeds? (Not Activision's *True Crime*—that game has you playing a good-guy cop.) Why not shoot back to the roots of urban hot pursuits with the latest in the *Driver* series, *Driver 3*, due in fall 2003? This time, the game's peeling rubber on PS2, Xbox, and GameCube, and U.K.-based developer Reflections plans on delivering the seat-of-your-pants action of a Hollywood-style car chase to your living room. Imagine the hard-driving moments of *Ronin* or *Gone in 60 Seconds* and you'll get some idea of the intended feel of *Driver 3*.

Many people were disappointed with *Driver 2* when it hit the original PlayStation two years ago, and Reflections is addressing their gripes with this sequel. The developer claims



Rent-a-wreck: The vehicles themselves look familiar but aren't real licensed cars. Nor are they shiny, *Gran Turismo*-style things of beauty. Instead, you'll often tool around in dirty, ramshackle heaps of junk.

that it bit off more than it (and the PS1) could chew with *Driver 2*. It's focused on ensuring this sequel will run smoothly and stream constantly off the DVD—so there's no chance of the game stalling for a few seconds when you're in the middle of a car chase.

The sequel sees the return of Tanner, who, despite being a cop, still engages in all manner of underworld evils. He's going undercover to once again infiltrate a global car-theft ring, earn their confidence, and eventually bring their crime empire crashing down. (You'd think the villains would know what he looks like by now.) Tanner takes this working vacation in three cities (unlike the typical four in previous *Driver* games), but in *Driver 3*, these cities are absolutely massive—you'll find more than twice as many miles of elevated road as in *The Getaway* and several times the square mileage of *Vice City*'s sprawling metropolis.

Driver 3 opens in Miami, Tanner's hometown and scene of the classic first level in the original game (and now *Vice City*, natch), before moving on to Nice, France, and Istanbul, Turkey. An unusual selection of venues, perhaps, but each offers great sightseeing with a near-photorealistic level of detail—unlike the cartoony feel of *GTA*, but also without the inch-perfect realism of *The Getaway*. *Driver 3* is still very much a driving game (cops once again cling annoyingly close to your bumper



through alleyways), rather than an adventure. It breaks down to about 70 percent driving and 30 percent wandering on foot. But now, Tanner can enter buildings, from elaborate



■ XBOX

...HARDCORE HIT: **NINJA GAIDEN**

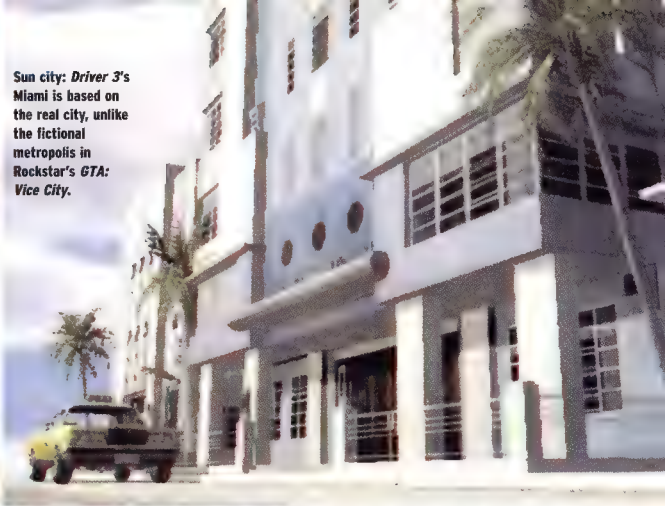
Shinobi on PS2 did for Sega's aging *ninja* what *Pulp Fiction* did for Travolta: It made him hot stuff again. Next up? Ryu from Tecmo's *Ninja Gaiden*, due this spring. He's been doing bit parts in the *Dead or Alive* games, but his upcoming Xbox action title will carry on the late-'80s, Nintendo Entertainment System legacy all hardcore gamers still get weepy about. Expect familiar characters, cool cinemas, and ninja magic, just like in the good ol' days.





Sun city: *Driver 3*'s Miami is based on the real city, unlike the fictional metropolis in Rockstar's *GTA: Vice City*.

Better use MapQuest: *Driver 3*'s three cities will have a total of 30,000 buildings.



mosques in Istanbul to old-world hovels in Nice. Reflections is crafting a structured story line that you must follow—without a lot of extra bonus missions like in *GTA*—but you'll still make a lot of your own decisions. "What we're trying to do is make it so you're not limited in the way the missions can be solved," says Martin Edmonson, Reflections' creative director. "So you may need to find alternative

solutions for a mission, thus making it easier to actually complete."

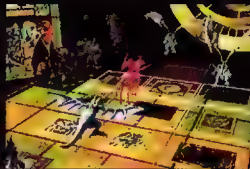
Tanner even packs heat this time, although gunplay takes a backseat to the realistic vehicle physics. Of course, you wouldn't expect anything less from Reflections, creators of the very true-to-life stunt sim, *Stuntman*. *Driver 3*'s autos come with accurate damage modeling—you can actually

wrap a car around a post here. The hyperrealistic physics extend even to the brand-new boat chases. But alas, the cops are hot on our tail, and we fear we've already told you too much. For full disclosure of *Driver 3*'s felonious gameplay—not to mention a load of exclusive screens—return next month for our cover story. Just try to stay out of trouble in the meantime.

■ PS2, PS2, GBA

... KIDDIE-GAME CRAZE: YU-GI-OH!

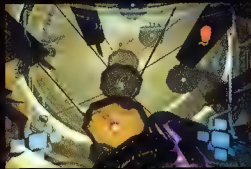
Never heard of this monster-mashing phenomenon? Ask your kid brother. He'll tell you *Yu-Gi-Oh!*'s a comic-turned-card-game-turned-cartoon-turned-videogame (it's already a hit on the PS1 and GBA). In February, Konami is bringing the card-battling sensation to the PS2, so watch for stampeding tykes.



■ PS2, GC, XBOX

... GENRE-BENDER: FIRST-PERSON ADVENTURES

There was a time when any game that let you see through the hero's eyes was all about shooting, killing, and...well, more killing. Finding the blue keycard is about as cerebral as it got. But a new breed of first-person games is incorporating elements from other genres (i.e., platforming in GC's *Metrod Prime*, adventure-y puzzles in *Deus Ex* for PS2, the full-blown RPG world of *Morrowind* on Xbox) to offer deeper experiences.



Navigating this type of room would be a buzzkill in most first-person games, but *Metrod Prime* makes it feel natural.

■ PS2

...PLAYSTATION 2 GAME: EVERQUEST ONLINE ADVENTURES

A young couple met inside the game and will soon be married in real life. A Navy lieutenant commander plays it via a satellite link from his battleship. Some participants barter virtual items collected in the game on eBay (a coveted sword went for \$1,500). *EverQuest* is not just a game—it's a lifestyle—and PS2 owners will get their chance to embrace it soon. The PC hit is coming to the PS2 this spring as *EverQuest Online Adventures*.

Since the game was released for the PC in 1999, *EverQuest* has become a phenomenon on par with *Star Trek* or *Harry Potter*. It's the

leading title in the genre of massively multiplayer online role-playing games, and it has spawned a cottage industry of sequels, merchandise, and spin-offs. Nearly 500,000 people (mostly adults) each pay \$10 a month to participate. PS2 players will pay the same subscription fee to dive into *EverQuest's* world via either the broadband or dial-up capability of the console's \$40 network adapter (they'll only be able to play with other PS2 owners, not PC *EverQuesters*). The PS2 version is a prequel of sorts. It's set in the same realm, five centuries before the PC game. But it still packs deep character customization, including multiple races and 13 character classes.

EverQuest's phenomenal success is a testament to the game's core appeal: its community. Players work together, build friendships, and achieve goals. Some subscribers spend up to eight hours a day playing the game (which has been nicknamed *EverCrack*). The community is so strong, in fact, that *EverQuest* has inspired

its own offline social event: the *EverQuest* Fan Faire. Held several times a year in cities across the country, these gatherings lure around 1,500 diehard players from Seattle to Scotland for a weekend of revelry and real-life quests that emulate the action of the game. James Moore, a 26-year-old fast-food restaurant manager from Michigan, once donned a metal headdress and a red-and-black checkered vest in order to recreate the ensemble of his online persona, Rendail of the Wildfyre Legion. "I drove exactly 666 miles to get to the Fan Faire," Moore said.



Stranger than fiction: No matter how lame your life is, these *EverQuest* Fan Faire goers'll make you feel better.

■ XBOX

... GAME YOU NEVER HEARD OF: KINGDOM UNDER FIRE

Just because war is hell doesn't mean it can't be hellishly fun, too. At least that's what we figure after watching swarms of Goblins and foot soldiers and Trolls clash on the battlefield in *Kingdom Under Fire: The Crusaders*, a barely hyped, late-summer, Xbox-only sequel to an obscure PC strategy game. "It's really a blend [of gameplay styles]," says Aaron Rigby, producer at developer Phantagram. "You have direct control

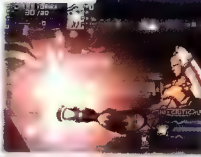
of the hero characters during battle, so you can get into heavy melee combat or use spells against the enemy troops. You also have command over different types of troops, which you recruit in towns to fight for you." Unlike these raw recruits, your main hero characters can level up in stats and abilities, as well as buy better weapons and armor to either keep or give to your soldiers. "These troops include footmen, archers, horsemen, Storm Riders (big armored birds), catapults, and whatever else we have time to add," Rigby says.



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EPISODE I

Der Wille zur Macht

TEEN
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CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Blood and Gore
Violence

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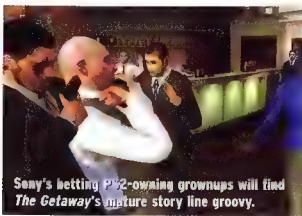
PlayStation.2



■ PS2, GC, XBOX

...TREND: ADULT GAMES

Face it: You're not getting any younger. Luckily, neither are your games—and we're not just talking *Grand Theft Auto* or *BMX XXX*. This past year, the percentage of Mature-rated titles on the market more than doubled, while gamers 18 or older made a third of all videogame



Sony's betting PS2-owning grownups will find *The Getaway's* mature story line groovy.

software purchases. There's clearly an audience—but Sam Houser, prez of *GTA* publisher Rockstar, says there's no simple formula for success: "Now there are people saying, 'Wow, I guess we should do mature titles. Let's add in X, Y, Z; now focus test and boom—here's the game!' And I just say, no, no, no. You can't make games like that."



■ XBOX

...SEQUEL: HALO 2

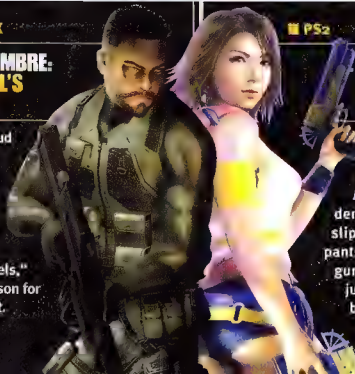
"Taking the war to the Covenant" is the six-word tagline that Jason Jones, head of developer Bungie Studios, slaps on the sequel to our 2003 Game of the Year. And, yep, walking-tank hero Master Chief does bring his battle with the alien Covenant to their neck of the universe in *Halo 2*, due late in 2003. But that's only part of the galaxy-spanning tale, which starts with the orbital bombardment of Earth before heading off to a low-g moon mission and a *deja-vu* rendezvous with another ring-shaped Halo world (or so the level concepts we've seen have led us to believe). On top of that, you'll get more vehicles, smarter enemies and allies, online play via Xbox Live, and graphics that Bungie says are 10 times better than the original's. Even Master Chief has been overhauled. "He's not like a comic-book superhero anymore," says Bungie Lead Designer Jaime Griesemer. "He's more like a real guy who can be in that suit."



■ PS2, GC, XBOX

...TOUGH HOMBRE: SPLINTER CELL'S SAM FISHER

This stealthy stud will not only have infiltrated all three major consoles by spring, "he'll be alive and well for many, many sequels," says a spokesperson for publisher Ubi Soft.



■ PS2

...TOUGH CHICA: FINAL FANTASY X-2'S YUNA

Gone are the magical gowns. *Final Fantasy X*'s once demure summoner has slipped on a pair of hot pants. Now she's got the guns and run-and-jump moves every bad girl needs.

■ XBOX

...VIDEOGAME MOVIE TO DREAD: THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

We're not sure who will groan louder: the undead stars of this zombified B flick or the folks in the audience who will pay \$10 to see it this spring.



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XBOX

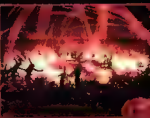
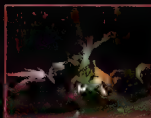
X
XBOX

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TEEN
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CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Suggestive Themes
Violence

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■ XBOX

...XBOX GAME: DEAD OR ALIVE XTREME BEACH VOLLEYBALL

We can't put our finger on why this perfectly innocent volleyball game—due in January and starring every she-warrior from Tecmo's *Dead or Alive* fighting series—has Xbox owners convulsing with desire. Hmm. Maybe it's the hundreds of bits of girl stuff (nail polish, flowers, cute little hats) you can buy for the gals. Maybe it's the suntan lotion you can apply to turn the athletes honey brown. Maybe it's that basketbrawler Dennis Rodman provides the voice for Zach, overseer of the game's island v-ball tournament. Or maybe it's the writhing, glistening, often suggestively posed beauties whose bikinis reveal much more than just their abs of steel. We suppose we'll never know.



■ PS2

...RPG: FINAL FANTASY X-2

A new *Final Fantasy* always qualifies as big news, but this one's a truly monumental event—it's an honest-to-God, bona-fide sequel to *Final Fantasy X* (until now, Square never made interconnected *FF* games). Due this fall, the game picks up two years after the climactic defeat of Sin by Tidus and Co., and it features an all-new story and a host of game-play changes. Without giving away too much, we'll tell you that it features Yuna and Rikku (who've both undergone super-sexy makeovers) and a few other *FFX* mainstays on an adventure to rescue Tidus.



I see London, I see France....

■ PS2, GC, XBOX

...GRAPHICS BOOSTER: PROGRESSIVE SCAN

Progressive scan is a video mode that makes games look super sharp. The trick: You must have a high-definition TV and play a progressive scan-enabled game. Nearly all Xbox titles support the mode (with sharper "720p" games due in 2K3), as do first-party GC titles. A handful of PS2 games, such as *Burnout 2* and *Star Wars: Bounty Hunter*, support it, too.



HD sets don't display horizontal scan lines like regular TVs do. Switch on progressive scan and your HD screen becomes even sharper.

■ GBA

...GAME BOY ADVANCE GAME: POKÉMON RUBY & SAPPHIRE

Four years ago, *Pokémon* was the *Thriller*-era Michael Jackson of videogames: unbeatable, often copied, and given a new face every six months. Since then, it's been a downhill slide for Pikachu and pals, but Nintendo's hoping to revive the series with two new versions, *Ruby* and *Sapphire*, due in early 2003.

Besides a graphical update, we'll get 100 new beasts to catch, a four-player battle system, and a new world. Since the kiddie hype is gone (youngsters are busy with *Yu-Gi-Oh!*), you can play this on the bus without fear of ridicule.



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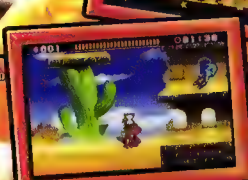
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■ PS2, XBOX

...GIZMO: **HEADSET IMMERSION**

Now that every console under the sun is going online, you'll need a doohickey for talkin' smack during those multiplayer games. Xbox Live users have it good, with voice chat on every title. And soon, voice chat on PS2 won't just be limited to fans of the gung-ho shooter *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs*. Logitech is releasing a deluxe version of the *SOCOM* headset in early 2003, so expect more games to take advantage of voice communication. "We're working very actively with a lot of game developers to take on the issues that arise with using the headset," says Logitech Marketing Director Fred Swan. "The goal is to make voice on PS2 easier to implement, while broadening and enriching experiences it can offer."



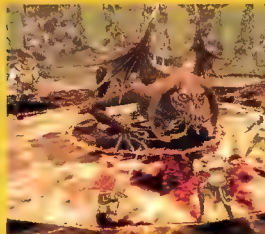
"Powder's my favorite movie, too!"



■ PS2, XBOX

...TITANIC **MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE RPGs**

It's the talk around town—around the globe, actually. Massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) have taken over the lives of millions of PC gamers, and will soon open up new worlds of fun for console owners by letting thousands of people adventure together in living, persistent worlds. Several PC titles are making the transition from desktop to living room, including *EverQuest Online Adventures* (PS2, February) and *Star Wars Galaxies* (PS2, Xbox, exact release date TBD but far, far away). You'll see plenty of old-fashioned console RPGs, too, massive-sized for the masses. *Final Fantasy XI* (PS2) and *True Fantasy Online* (Xbox) should appease fans of traditional Japanese-style RPGs.



True Fantasy Online for Xbox (left) and *Final Fantasy XI* for PS2 (right) will bring thousands of gamers together in monster-bashing harmony in late 2003.

■ XBOX

...TECHNOLOGY: **DOWNLOADABLE CONTENT**

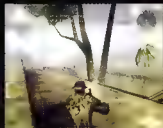
Your online console isn't just a tool to help you to frag faceless punks. It will also let you get more out of your games. "Downloadable content will provide gamers with fresh content and new experiences," says J. Allard, Xbox General Manager. "Imagine battling your friends in new *MechAssault* environments or [playing new stages] in *Splinter Cell*. Imagine that the trades and stats for every sports game are up to date."



■ PS2

...ONLINE TREND: **CLAN WARS**

More and more PS2 owners who enlist in the online warfare of Sony's smash shooter *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs* are discovering that soldiers who play together, slay together. The secret to their solidarity is clan designation, a team-building feature that lets weekend warriors from Sacramento to Miami band together in small, self-named teams, then challenge other clans for national supremacy. "Most *SOCOM* players are now associated with a clan," says Seth Luisi, the game's producer, "and they definitely understand the teamwork aspect we were aiming for."



SOCOM clans prove there's no "I" in "frag 'em all!" Now, it only Xbox Live supported clan designations....



IN YOU, THE WORLD'S GOT A FIGHTING CHANCE!

GUILTY GEAR X2

Guilty Gear X2, the sequel to the world's best 2D fighter - includes 8 new characters for a devastating 20 playable fighters! Each has 8 modes for you to master, with all-new Mission, Medal of Millionaires and Story Modes. Use explosive new moves like Psych Burst, Faultless Defense, Burst Gauge and more. Each fighter's jaw-dropping, eye-popping attacks are enhanced, including Guilty Gear trademarks Overdrive Attack, Gatling Combo, Roman Cancel, and signature Instant Kills. Guilty Gear X2 will floor you with mind-blowing graphics, brain-numbing speed, killer Rock & Metal music, outrageous movies and hidden extras.

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Blood
Mature Sexual Themes
Violence



PlayStation 2



 **Sammy Studios**

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Review Crew

Our Philosophy

EGM rates games based on how they compare with other titles on the same system. The highest score we'll give a game is a 10. When a game receives a 10, you can rest assured it's one of the best games ever made—a revolutionary title that truly stands above everything else in its genre for its time.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

At the other end of the spectrum sits the lowest score a game can receive: a 0.0. This is the kind of game you want to avoid at all costs. It's pure crap. In the middle lies the average grade, 5.0. We repeat: 5.0 IS AVERAGE. Simple, ain't it?

Our Awards



Platinum Awards go to games that get all 10s, the best and rarest review a game can get.



Gold Awards go to games whose average score equals 9.0 or higher.



Games that average at least an 8.0 (but lower than 9.0) receive **Silver Awards**.

Introduction

As usual, it was a month of cruel psychological experiments here at EGM—but at least all that pain was focused on one game: *The Sims*. We subjected our little computer people to savage trials we shan't ever speak of unless subpoenaed by a court of law. And when the *Sims* war-crimes tribunal does come calling, we'll just

bribe the judges with free copies of this month's Sega games. *Panzer Dragoon Orta* (Xbox), *Skies of Arcadia Legends* (GC), and *Phantasy Star Collection* (GBA) all earned awards from our crew. Meanwhile, all the fart jokes and big-boobed strippers in the world couldn't save Acclaim's adults-only *BMX XXX*.

The Crew



Shane Bettenhausen Reviews Editor

Finishing cool RPGs like *Skies of Arcadia* and the old *Phantasy Star* games is fun but oh-so-time-consuming. At this rate, Shane won't ever get around to opening the games he got for Xmas.

Favorite Genres: RPG, Action, Fighting

Current Faves: *SoA Legends*, *Phantasy Star Coll.*



Chris Johnston News Editor

After 12 straight hours of a certain *Super Party*, the expression on poor CJ's face was locked for good (artist rendering at left). Will he ever be able to experience the coolest driver's high again?

Favorite Genres: Action, Adventure, Music

Current Faves: *Unreal Champ.*, *Metroid Prime*



James "Milkman" Mielke Elvis has left the building

Ah, good things always come to an end. Yes, it's Mielke's final issue as a fully-fledged member of EGM. No, we haven't sent him to "sleep with the fishes." He's going off to start up our new sister magazine, *GMR*.

Favorite Genres: Action, Fighting, Role-playing

Current Faves: *War of the Monsters*, *Panzer Orta*



Crispin Boyer Reviews Editor

Crispin slipped deep undercover as a game-store clerk to fact check this month's Press Start story on fanboys (page 54). At least that's what he told us. We think he was really just in it for the employee discount.

Favorite Genres: Action, Adventure

Current Faves: *Metroid Prime*, *The Sims*



Demian Linn Editor-at-Large

Hoping to be "at-large" in a more literal sense, Demian has been pounding Weight Gainer 2200 Gold and reading *Testosterone Magazine*. Or the latest issue of *Successful Meetings*, whichever's closer.

Favorite Genres: Action, Racing, Hockey

Current Faves: *Tony Hawk 4*, *NHL 2K3*



Greg Sewart Previews Editor

Witness Sewart's audition photo for the upcoming *War of the Monsters* movie. Well...at least we wish it were a movie. Then he could stop trying to crush our toys and stopping around the office roasting.

Favorite Genres: Racing, Adventure, RPG

Current Faves: *Metroid Prime*, *Hot Pursuit 2*

Game of the Month

BEST CHOICE
AWARD
2007

EGM
GOLD

Main of Swords	14
Rirates Wrath	21
Counterstrike	1
Skull Shield	5

Skies of Arcadia Legends pg. 150

This month, Sega squeezes a lot of extra mileage out of its swashbuckling RPG, *Skies of Arcadia Legends*. When this game debuted in its un-*Legend*-ary, non-enhanced form on the Dreamcast it won our prestigious Game of the Month distinction. Amazingly, it's still so damn good that it won the coveted title all over again...two years later! RPG fans will go nuts for its interesting premise, cool characters, and gargantuan quest. It's brimming with high-flying adventure, a steamy love triangle, and giant flying gunships aplenty. The fact that's a GameCube game makes the deal all the sweeter.



Dan "Shoe" Hsu Editor in Chief

BMX XXX's adult language and frustrating game play have given Shoe a potty mouth that'll take five bars of Lava soap to clean out. Now the Staff's got human resources on speed dial when Shoe acts up.

Favorite Genres: *#@! everything!!

Current Faves: *Metroid Prime*, *Splinter Cell*



Mark MacDonald Executive Editor

Uh oh ladies! Looks like the rumors that Mark is off the market are true! Our cameras caught him coming out of Justin Timberlake's trendy new L.A. club, "Timberland," with this new mystery woman on his arm.

Favorite Genres: Action, Adventure, RPG

Current Faves: *Metroid Prime*, *Splinter Cell*, *PDO*



Jennifer Tsao Managing Editor

When she started *The Sims*, Jennifer intended to make a digital replica of the nice, normal girl she appears to be. She ended up as a flirty lesbian with almost no furniture in her house but a vibrating, heart-shaped bed.

Favorite Genres: Action Sports, Adventure

Current Faves: *The Sims*, *Animal Crossing*



ATV Offroad Fury 2

Publisher: Sony CEA **PS2**
Developer: Rainbow Studios
Players: 1-4 (2-4 online, LAN, or i.Link)
Also On: None
Featured In: EGM #161
Best Feature: Great control
Worst Feature: Clunky online match setup
Website: www.playstation.com

I was a big fan of the original *ATV Offroad Fury*. And while part of me wishes this sequel had gotten a graphical overhaul (it looks exactly the same as the original), *ATV2* is still one awesome racing experience. It has more ATVs, more tracks, minigames (including a neat four-player hockey game), and enough play modes to bring back fans of the first game. The reason I really like *ATV2*, though, is the cool jump-boosting technique you use to navigate the terrain on each course. As you approach a hill, you need to pull back on the stick and then push forward at the appropriate time in order to get a real push off the ground. The catch is, you don't always want to pull one of these superjumps—it depends on your ideal landing spot. It sounds complicated, but the move adds tons of depth to the game and makes mastering the longer tracks a blast. But if that still isn't enough, *ATV2's* online component should seal the deal. After all, the biggest problem in most racing games is opponent A.I. It's always either way too aggressive or simply asleep at the wheel. While the computer-controlled drivers in *ATV2* don't suck, **nothing beats competing against human opponents.** Online, the game runs smoothly with either broadband or 56k dialup. My only complaint is that there's no way to see who's online when you look up, so meeting your buds for a race is nearly impossible. Still, this is a quality racer from start to finish.

Greg S.

If you liked the first *ATV*, you're going to like the sequel—although, I wish Rainbow had fixed some of the original's minor issues in this version. What issues? How about that weird off-track sensor that penalizes you if you drift off the road, even if it's to no strategic advantage? Or the fact that you never seem to withstand significant contact with other riders? On top of that, the track design doesn't seem quite as imaginative this time, and the online-play setup is clunky as all get-out (though the racing runs smoothly). There are, however, a ton of extras to open up and a load of different modes to play, adding a lot of **replay value that the original lacked.**

Joe

With its bouncy hills and off-the-wall physics, *ATV* won't win any realism contests, but this modern-day *Excitebike* delivers enough wild action to please most thrillseekers. It's got a lot going for it—smooth graphics, a wide variety of tracks, and some clever minigames. Plus, kickin' up dust in the online arena adds near-infinite replay value. A few issues kept me from being really enthralled, though. It's way too easy to wipe out by simply touching other racers. Cruel, **unforgiving collision detection doesn't belong in this fanciful racer.** Also, tracks seem largely pointless, as they don't help you win and often cause you to wipe out needlessly. Fun yet frustrating.

Shane

VISUALS 8 **SOUND** 7 **INGENUITY** 6 **REPLAY** 9



Dead to Rights

Publisher: Namco **PS2**
Developer: Namco
Players: 1
Also On: GC, XB
Best Feature: Over-the-top stylish attacks
Worst Feature: Recycles levels and bosses
Best diversion: Bomb defusing
Website: www.deadtorigths.com

Of course, you can just shoot the bad guys in *Dead to Rights* or punch and kick them to death, but where's the joy in that? As you become comfortable with the solid controls and quirks of the lock-on targeting system, a larger selection of more stylish possibilities presents itself. What'll it be this time? Send your canine compadre out to maul the first thug and bring back his weapon so you can dispatch the rest of the guards? Disarm the enemy yourself using something from your arsenal of special moves (personal favorite: Sunny Side Up, where you grab the bad guy's weapon, kick him into the air, and empty a clip into him as he falls)? Or maybe dive headlong at your foes (activating a Bullet-Time slow-mo effect) and shoot them all before you land? Or use a guard as a human shield while you fight his buddies? Clearing each squad of dim-witted goons is rarely an intellectual challenge but always entertaining as an ultraviolet display of beauty and precision. **It's like a John Woo movie without the doves and opera music.** All this variety plus different weapon types and minigames, does a fair job of helping you forget you're basically slaughtering your way through room after room of bad guys, with a switch to find now and then. *DTR* is repetitive, especially in its second half as the same environments, enemies, and even bosses are reused, but action fans will want to see the game through to the end.

Mark

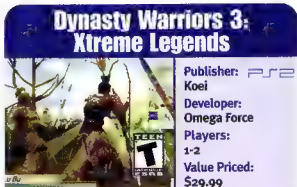
It's encouraging to know that a developer actually listens to feedback about a game. When *DTR* debuted on Xbox, a lot of players and reviewers (myself included) complained about the insane difficulty, mandatory minigames, and clunky targeting. All these gripes have been addressed—**this PS2 version is substantially easier**, some of the minigames are optional, and the aiming's been tweaked. Even with all these improvements, I still don't love the game—the hand-to-hand fighting is lame, the story is a heap of clichés, and graphic slowdowns cripple the action once in a while. Nonetheless, the shooting levels are really enjoyable. A solid rental.

Shane

Playing *DTR* unleashed a flood of repressed memories from my grueling days with the lackluster Xbox version. The same insipid story-line, terrible boss battles, and simplistic hand-to-hand combat from the Xbox version return on PS2—except this time, the whole damn thing is easier, making *DTR* more fun and infinitely less frustrating. Since the game's appeal still lies in its stylish gun battles, I wish *DTR* would stick to what it does well and ditch the extracurricular contrivances (Minigames: Come get yer silly minigames!). I commend Namco for tweaking the game balance for a better experience, but ***DTR* remains flawed.** A fine rental, but nothing more.

Che

VISUALS 7 **SOUND** 6 **INGENUITY** 6 **REPLAY** 5



Dynasty Warriors 3: Xtreme Legends

Publisher: PS2
Koei
Developer: Omega Force
Players: 1-2
Value Priced: \$29.99
Doesn't Require: *Dynasty Warriors 3*
Website: www.koegames.com

Best Feature: Good voice acting
Worst Feature: Dull battles

Basically, you could call this game *Dynasty Warriors 3: Substance*. If you got into *DW's* gang-rushing, hack-n-slash-through-ancient-China glory, you'll totally eat up *Xtreme Legends*. It adds a bunch of game modes (including cool ones like a footrace through a raging battlefield) and a gang of options that let you customize the look, moves, and equipment of your warriors—in other words, all the stuff that people who are already into *DW's* would want. Plus, those already into *Dynasty Warrior's* operatic take on ancient Chinese history will appreciate the new perspectives that the added characters bring to the old story line. Personally, though, I find the *DW* games pretty repetitive after a few hours—slash, slash, eat some elfin sum, reconquer slashing), so if that's the case for you, know that *Xtreme Legends* won't change your perception. **It's aimed at hardcore *Dynasty* aficionados** (which apparently number in the millions worldwide). Overall, it's more of the same *Dynasty* brawling, but its discount price makes it easy on the wallet.

Miguel

VISUALS 6 **SOUND** 4 **INGENUITY** 6 **REPLAY** 8



Pro Race Driver

Publisher: PS2
Codemasters
Developer: Codemasters
Players: 1-2
Also Coming To: Xbox
Featured In: EGM #159
Website: www.procedriver.com

Best Feature: Excellent control
Worst Feature: Race series are way too short

Despite yet another name change (the last one was *Jarrett & Labonte Racing*), Codemasters' classic *TOCA Touring Car Franchise* continues, this time with a new emphasis on story. *Pro Race* follows a young driver whose famous father (also a driver) was killed on the track. **The detailed plot adds an interesting twist to the genre**, but honestly, all the talking gets a little old after a while, especially since the main character's usually just whining. Shut up and drive, kiddo. Still, the racing itself is excellent. Near-perfect controls, a good sense of speed and very diverse races (everything from touring cars to NASCAR-style vehicles are utilized) make *Pro Race Driver* a pleasure to play. (The only problem? You move through each series so quickly (most are only six races, with less than seven laps each) that the season usually ends just as you're starting to enjoy yourself. The game offers some nice variety, since you get to drive so many different types of cars, but the extreme depth that serious racing fans desire just isn't here. It's fun, but everything else about this game makes me want to play more.

Greg S.

VISUALS 8 **SOUND** 7 **INGENUITY** 7 **REPLAY** 7

Dragon Ball Z: Budokai



Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: Dimps
Players: 1-2
Also On: None
Featured In: EGM #162
Best Feature: Stays true to the show in every way
Worst Feature: Cinema scenes are a little too long
Website: www.dragonballz.com



All the stuff you like from the show, from King Kai's monkey bud (above) to lightning-quick combo attacks (below) are in *Budokai*.



If every *DBZ* fan collected all seven Dragon Balls and wished for a good Z fighting game starring everyone's favorite monkey-boy, Goku, and an ever-increasing horde of powerful alien challengers. Its Story mode follows an abridged version of the Saiyan, Namekian, and Android sagas, pitting you against such memorable foes as Raditz, Frieza, Cell, and the Androids. (If you understood that last sentence, odds are this game's for you.) In *Budokai*, you'll be tossing giant fireballs through the air with ease, just like in the hit TV show.

GIMME A SENZU BEAN, QUICK!



Once you and your buddies have earned enough skills and mastered Z's Story and World Tournament modes, you can customize your fave fighter to be even more powerful. Some of the best strategies? If you're better at defense, give yourself a life-giving Senzu Bean. Then, when your life's been drained, bam—you can use the bean, and you'll have more energy and time to lay the smack down on your shocked opponent. Or, if you've gained the Viral Heart Disease, you can add it to your skills, and it'll gradually drain your opponent's life. But if you're gonna do that, make sure you also equip the antidote; otherwise, your life'll drain, too.

One of the mainstays of the *Dragon Ball* series is the projectile energy attack. And *Budokai* has no shortage of it, as you can see in these screenshots (below and left). But while this attack is powerful, it won't kill you in one hit—you've got multiple life bars that must be depleted before you're finished.



You might think that in order to enjoy *Budokai*, you'd have to know all the characters, their powers, and the whole convoluted mess of a story known as *DBZ*. But that's not the case. Even if you don't know Kakarot from Goku (hint: they're the same person), you'll appreciate *Budokai*'s surprisingly slick, intuitive, and customizable fighting system. At the very least, you'll be able to tolerate it for a few rounds with your *DBZ*-fanatic younger brother without hoping someone would just Kamehameha your ass already. Of course, if you've legally changed your name to Goku and plan to name your firstborn Gohan, you'll be in fanboy heaven from the moment you see the show's intro via the game's incredibly cool 3D engine. You can tell that the developers themselves are *DBZ* fans. From the attention to detail in rendering Akira Toriyama's character designs (including fan-favorite, the oddball Hercule, in his own Survival mode), to the long, episodic-style Story mode and its alternate paths, *Budokai* stands above any of the previous attempts to turn the series into a fighter. And it's not just good when playing solo. Customizing your attack repertoire by buying, trading, and earning skills gives the multiplayer Duel mode more replay value than most fighters could hope for. You can even collect the seven Dragon Balls to earn more ultrapowerful hire skills: As if it wasn't already obvious, *DBZ* fans, this is your game. **CJ**

I feel bad for *Dragon Ball Z* fans. For so long, if they wanted to play a good fighting game based on their favorite manga/anime, they had to fool themselves into thinking the PS's *Dragon Ball GT Final Bout* wasn't a steaming pile of dung. Lucky for them, *Budokai* is actually pretty good. As far as gameplay goes, it doesn't have the depth of technique of, say, Dreamcast's *Soul Calibur*, but the ability to upgrade your fighters with earned moves adds a bit of strategy to this game. Between the terrific cinemas, TV voice actors, and perfectly recreated story lines, you'll really feel like you're playing the show. And isn't that what you've wanted all along? **Phil**

Let the Kamehameha rejoicing commence. *DBZ* fans will devour this surprisingly solid fighting game. Personally, I'm not entranced by the insanely long cinemas of spiky-haired dudes questing to bring one another back to life, but for fans of the show, the episodic Story mode does the cartoon justice. This mode's difficulty is a bit uneven, though. The default Easy is a total cakewalk, but bumping it up to Normal makes the game surprisingly tough. Overall, *DBZ* fans will adore the game, and even gamers who don't dig the source material will have fun. *Budokai* offers coolies of unlockable characters and moves, and the fighting engine boasts unexpected depth. **Shane**

VISUALS 8 SOUND 7 INGENUITY 7 REPLAY 8

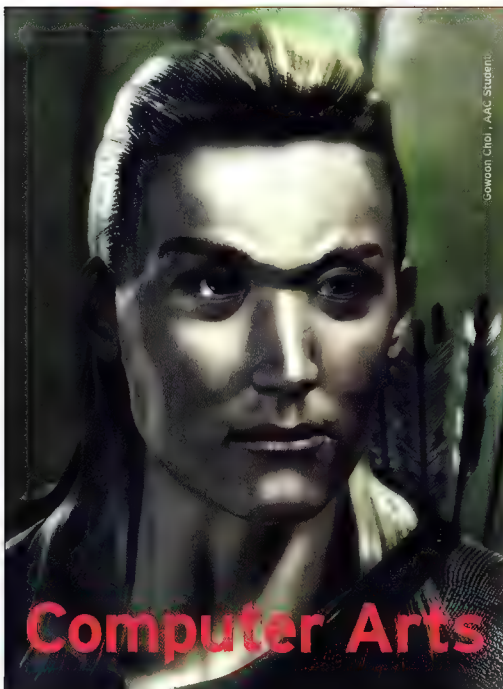


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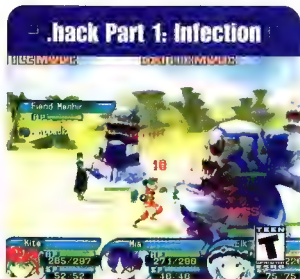
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hack Part 1: Infection

Publisher: Bandai
Developer: Cyber Connect 2
Players: 1
Also On: None
Watch for: The *hack* animated TV series
Best Feature: Great concept and execution
Worst Feature: A little short for a \$50 RPG
Website: www.dothack.com

For its concept alone, *hack* deserves an award. In a genre full of generic, me-too *Final Fantasy* wannabes, Bandai has stormed in with a game so fresh and unique, it just begs to be experienced despite its flaws. Here's the gist—you're playing a role-playing game...about an online role-playing game. You "log on," play alongside other simulated questers, and try to figure out if this addictive game is trying to kill you (not you, but rather the "you" whose playing the game that you're, uh...playing). The game succeeds at simulating the experience of playing a massively multiplayer online RPG without having to actually get on the Net. The supplied 45-minute anime disc adds value, too; even if you don't care for the story, you should watch it to look for hidden keywords that can be used to open up secret dungeons in the game. This kind of interaction is a key part of the whole *hack* experience, and I found it to be quite refreshing. As for the game itself, *The World* (the "online" RPG in *hack*) plays a lot like Sega's *Phantasy Star Online*, which is definitely a good thing. The battle camera isn't nearly as good, and the game balance is a bit off (prepare to spend countless hours leveling up in random dungeons), but overall, it's still fun. One thing to be aware of: For an RPG, *hack* is pretty short. It takes only about 20 hours to beat, but with the sequel right around the corner (it's due in May), can you really complain?

John R.

The good news is, *hack* executes its highfalutin concept—posing as a massively multiplayer online RPG—almost flawlessly. Believable dialogue, simulated players, and a fake network interface all add to the feeling that you're really online. The frantic real-time battles borrow fun elements from *Phantasy Star Online*'s action-packed brawl, but the fussy camera and uneven difficulty detract. Still, *hack* is enjoyable and clever, albeit short—more like a prologue than a full game. The story line is about 20 percent vague (foreshadowing and 80 percent outright padding, with very little meaningful plot in this 15-hour quest. Consider it a promising start to an ambitious series.

Dave

I'll agree that *hack*'s faux online-RPG concept is cool—you'll be sending virtual e-mail, browsing mad-up message boards, and even coping with bizarre server glitches, all within the context of a giant *EverQuest*-style world gone awry. Conceptually, it's awesome, but an ingenious setup doesn't make *hack* fun. Once you look past the novelty of the fake online community, the game's merely average. Repetitive dungeons, simplistic combat (PSO's is way better), wildly uneven difficulty, and a shortage of actual plot all tarnish the final product. Plus, you'll beat the game quickly, and the included anime DVD is awful, despite its hidden codes. A curiosity for hardcore RPG nuts only.

Shane

VISUALS	SOUND	INGENUITY	REPLAY
7	7	9	4



Minority Report

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Treyarch
Players: 1
Also On: GC, Xbox
Featured In: EGM #161
Best Feature: Solid fighting engine
Worst Feature: Frustrating camera
Website: www.activision.com

Movie-based games are finally turning the corner in terms of quality (e.g., EA's *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* games), and *Minority Report* continues this trend. Here we have a solid, straight-out action-brawler, with the hero, John Anderson, doing a lot more fighting than he ever did in the movie. With this setup comes both strengths and weaknesses. On the positive side, you get a number of combos to play with and tons of breakable environmental objects (you know, so you can feel like a real action hero). Plus, there are secrets abound, and you can open up unlockable goodies. As for the negatives, the action becomes repetitive as you spend level after level pummeling a wave of Precime officers, finding a health pick-up, and bustin' more heads. It's a common problem in this genre that's not remedied here. It doesn't help that your targeting cursor tends to jump around when you're trying to finish someone off. And although the camera means well, it's frustrating when it faces the wrong way during a fight or as you run down a hallway. Still, there's decent level variety and some cool cut-scenes to mix things up. And those levels—my word, there are a lot of them. Most of the 40 stages are long, but the game requires quite a commitment if you want to finish it. You certainly won't feel shortchanged if you conquer this beast. So, while *Report* has its share of flaws, it does enough right to provide an entertaining diversion.

G. Ford

For a game based on a movie, *Minority Report* doesn't have much to do with its big-screen cousin (the main character looks nothing like the film's Anderson). Instead, the game's a decent beat-em-up retelling of the movie, with somewhat different events—and long load times. As for the gameplay, two out of three Precogs agree: this game could've used a checkpoint system. Starting an entire level over because you die during the last bit turns more of *Report* into a frustrating mess. And the black market system for buying power-ups, instead of collecting them in the levels, feels tacked-on. *Report* may look snazzy, but this brawler doesn't have enough punch.

CJ

My report is in—this game is a mildly enjoyable brawler with mission objectives that rarely extend beyond the kill-everybody-and-unlock-the-doors dynamic. You've got a wide range of hand-to-hand combos, and you can buy even more, but plain old button-mashing seems to work well, too. Frustratingly, you can't pick up the guns of your fallen enemies; even though you're constantly short of ammo, flying around and wrecking havoc with the jetpack is fun, but other control issues (and intrusive loading times before each level) mar the *Minority Report* experience. It doesn't take a mutant psychic with precognition to figure out this one's a renter.

Demian

VISUALS	SOUND	INGENUITY	REPLAY
7	5	4	6



Star Wars Bounty Hunter

Publisher: LucasArts
Developer: LucasArts
Players: 1
Also On: GC
Featured In: EGM #160
Best Feature: Cool *Star Wars* story line
Worst Feature: Awkward controls
Website: www.starwarsbountyhunter.com

As a fan of all things *Star Wars*, I absolutely love *Bounty Hunter*'s overall premise and story. You are Boba Fett's but-kicking daddy, Jango, and you need to prove to Lord Tyrannus that you're worthy of being the template for the clone army (even if your sly employer has led you to believe that you're merely pursuing a rogue Jedi). Along the way, you'll take in miscellaneous bounties, meet and adventure with bounty-hottie Zam Wesell, and find and name the Fett family's stylish Slave I ship. It's also cool to know that you're playing a key role in Jabba the Hutt's rise to power. The catch to the *Star Wars* bliss? You have to actually play the game. It's fun to zoom through the air in a jetpack, and the game offers some great fast-paced, action-packed moments. But when it comes to overall gameplay...well, I've got a bad feeling about this. A horrible camera often shakes uncontrollably like a drunken Corellian, and sloppy controls tend to make you feel just as uncoordinated. Five continues per level—one or two of which typically result from a cheap death in missions that can take as long as an hour to complete—further deplete the fun factor. *Bounty Hunter*'s annoying gameplay quirks aren't so detrimental that *Star Wars* nuts won't want to play all the way through. More casual fans, however, would likely rather join Boba in the Sarlac pit.

Chris B.

You have to give *Star Wars Bounty Hunter* this: It has one of the coolest premises a *Star Wars* game could hope for. After all, playing as a ruthless mercenary who guns down his enemies with dual blasters sure beats controlling one of those (yawn) noble Jedi and their glorified laser pointers. Luckily, there's a decent game to back up the cool premise. Flying around with Jango Fett's jetpack and shooting-up intergalactic scoundrels is awesome, as are the Hunt Secondary Bounties submissions. Prepare to get lost, though, as some missions get dragged down with unclear objectives. Still, I did have a great deal of fun with *Bounty Hunter*.

Phil

I'll give 50,000 credits to anyone who brings me those responsible for *Bounty Hunter*—dead or alive. Well, actually, bring them alive, "cause I want to ask them what went wrong with this potentially cool game. The generic, repetitive combat and drab graphics are the very definition of mediocrity, while the jittery movement anytime you view swings around (which is all the time, thanks to an overexaggerated camera) is so jarring it literally gave me a headache. The only aspects that earn *Bounty Hunter* even an average score are its involving story and the *Star Wars* touches: character references, inside jokes, excellent music and voice acting, plus fun outtakes from the cut-scenes.

Mark

VISUALS	SOUND	INGENUITY	REPLAY
5	7	5	6

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The Sims

EGM
SILVER



The Sims on PS2 features two-player challenges that let you go head-to-head with a friend. In "The Popularity Contest" (below), the first Sim to make three friends wins. Turn on the charm, joke, dance, and, most importantly, spread rumors about your opponent so his friends ditch him and join you.



Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Maxis
Players: 1-2
Also on: GC, Xbox (later)
Featured In: EGM #161
Best Feature: Goal-based Get a Life mode
Worst Feature: Levels sometimes take too long
Website: www.thesims.com



between—are available to you in this highly innovative port of the hugely popular PC game.

The mission-based Get a Life mode is great for anyone who missed—or hated—the game on PC. You'll learn how to take care of your Sims in small, manageable doses, taking on more challenging problems only when you know how to handle them. The Play The Sims mode is the same open-ended game that's so popular on PC, in which you start with an existing family or customize one from scratch to star in your own virtual soap opera.

All modes utilize the same basic game mechanism, which requires you to keep your Sims...if not exactly happy, then at least functioning as you want them to. And that's the genius of this game: You really can play it any way you want. Try your hand at it and you just might be surprised with what you find.

I played *The Sims* on PC—for about an hour. Then I got fed up with my Sims' incessant whining and complaining. But on PS2, well, **I couldn't put the controller down.** The goal-based Story mode effectively gave me bite-sized lessons about how to succeed in the game, and, as I discovered, successful Sims have more fun. They have nicer houses, more comfortable furniture, better parties, and, consequently, more friends to mess with—which is when things get interesting. For me, it all started when my Sim got the cool career promotion to photojournalist. Only then did she finally earn enough money to buy the heart-shaped hot tub she'd been eyeing. Up to that point, my Sim's roommate, Betty, had been cool and indifferent. But the hot tub changed everything. In one night, Betty was transformed from "just a friend" into my Sim's infatuated lesbian lover. That's when I started to understand just how addictive this game—with its ridiculous, self-induced soap-opera story lines—can be. Soon enough, my sex-crazed Sim was flirting with random visitors who rang her doorbell, inviting them into her vibrating bed, and driving her helpless paramours into jealous fits. I never imagined I'd be involved in such twisted antics; but all I can say is that *The Sims* made me do it. It's so open-ended, offering vast freedom to experiment in your virtual dollhouse. There's just nothing like it ever to hit a console, and, a few graphical glitches notwithstanding, it's one game everyone should try. **Jennifer**

Sit down with your PS2 and *The Sims*, and you may learn more about yourself than you really wanted to know. Do you take care of your Sims, ensuring they live in nicely decorated houses, perform well at their jobs, and develop healthy social lives? Or are you a draconian dictator, demanding total subservience from your digital minions and punishing them on a whim just because you can? Both extremes—along with countless variants in

There's something kind of sick about tending to a virtual character's toilet and hygiene needs while neglecting my own. The pressure of making someone get enough sleep and go to work every day feels a little too much like real life. In fact, the amount of micromanagement needed in *The Sims* can be daunting—especially when compared to the cute-tastic *Animal Crossing* (GC). On the other hand, it's **oddly compelling** to discover the fine balance of satisfying your Sim's needs and desires, and the developers did a great job creating console-esque missions, moving your character through the ups and downs of life. No, please let me get on with my real one! **Carrie**

1001 WAYS TO TORTURE YOUR SIM

Even the most wholesome gamer can be driven to sadism by *The Sims*. Here are just a few of our favorite ways to make Sims suffer—but trust us, this list goes on and on....

BATHROOM ISSUES



Put the toilet in the living room. Your Sim doesn't like to go in front of others, but there'll come a point when he just can't hold it any longer. Then he'll pee on the floor in front of his friends, who'll walk away in utter disgust.

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT



Sims get lonely easily. Deprive yours of phone calls, meals with friends, social visits of any kind...and watch as she stands alone in a corner of her miserable room and whimpers like a sad little puppy.

INSOMNIA'S DELIGHT



Don't let your Sim sleep—instead, keep him going with continual shots of espresso. He'll beg for mercy and eventually just pass out on the kitchen floor. (An added bonus: The coffee might make him pee his pants, too!)

SLAVE LABOR

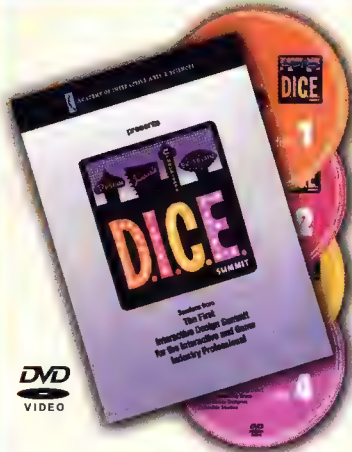


Force your Sim to sit at the workbench all day churning out garden gnomes, then sell the gnomes for a tidy profit. Yes, she'll cry and complain that she's having no fun, but you'll laugh all the way to the bank.

An hour in, I had my doubts. I have to tell my guy when to use the bathroom or he'll have an "accident"—and I have to tell him to flush? This is fun? But then I moved out of my mom's house and into the hot tub with the gals from across the street...and life was suddenly a lot better. **The more you play, the more you realize just how much freedom you have,** and with the Open mode, you're looking at almost limitless replay value. The game seems to have gained more than it lost in the transition from PC to console; Maxis has added multiplayer games, and you can import your Sims over to a friend's neighborhood via the magic of memory cards. **Demian**

VISUALS 6 SOUND 8 INGENUITY 9 REPLAY 10

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The Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences is pleased to present the D.I.C.E. Summit DVD Series. D.I.C.E. (Design, Innovate, Communicate and Entertain) is the Game Industries widely praised, exclusive interactive design conference held annually in Las Vegas. This 4 DVD set includes over 9 hours of the top tier creators and Legends in the Game industry explaining the in's and outs of the development process and the lessons learned while providing insight to the roadmap of the future of Interactive entertainment. This Unique "Master Class" of Game Design and Development is a crash course in the realities and issues affecting anyone interested in the Game industry.

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- **American McGee**, Creator of American McGee's Alice" and contributor to Doom, Quake and Quake II.
- **Richard "Lord British" Garriott**, author of the best selling Ultima series.
- **Sid Meier**, Creator of "Sid Meiers Civilization," "Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon" and "Sim Golf".
- **Will Wright** Creator of the "Sim City" and "The Sims"
- **Satoru Iwata**, President of Nintendo
- **Lorne Lanning**, Founder of Oddworld Inhabitants
- **Bruce Shelley**, Ensemble Studios, Game Designer of Age of Empires
- **Louis Castle**, founder of Westwood Studios
- **Cliff Bleszinski**, Epic Games, creator of Unreal
- **Larry Probst**, CEO of Electronic Arts
- **Bruno Bonnell**, Founder and CEO of Infogrames
- **Shigeru Miyamoto**, Game legend and creator of Zelda, Mario, Pikmin.



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War of the Monsters



Publisher: SCEA
Developer: Incog Inc.
Players: 1-2
Reminds us of: The old *King of the Monsters* game
Featured In: *EGM* #161
Best Feature: Easy to pick up and play
Worst Feature: Bosses are frustratingly tough
Website: www.playstation.com



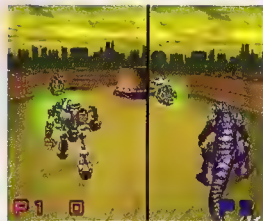
War of the Monsters is one of those games that's difficult to pigeonhole. Part *Power Stone*, part *SmackDown!*, part *King of the Monsters*, and part *Rampage*—it manages to do for the woefully underrepresented monster genre what others have failed to do: It makes it fun. A remarkably simple control scheme makes the complex process of picking up a monster, throwing it through a building, impaling it on a giant radio antenna, and then beating it over the head with a helicopter incredibly easy to pull off.

While many monster games have kept things

slow, plodding, and boring, *WotM* is actually as fast as the majority of 3D brawlers. If you had to compare it to anything, it's probably most similar to a wrestling game. Instead of a ring with a few chairs and a ladder to use as weapons, you have entire cities full of interesting goodies. Just about everything in the environment is breakable, and most things can be picked up and used as weapons. Smash up a building and toss the rubble, or pick up a car from the street and hurl it like a grenade. Snap the radio tower off the top of a building and impale your enemy with it, or swipe a plane from the sky and pound your opponent into the ground with it. You'll have as much fun working out what can be done as you will actually doing it.

Two things make the gameplay experience unique for an arena-style fighter. First, the camera system is incredibly innovative. It pans in and out of the action to frame the mon-

BUY STUFF!



Play the game, win tokens, and buy stuff. Whether it's new skins for your favorite monster or new arenas for the multiplayer game, there's plenty to keep you playing and earning. Our favorite unlockable is Dodgeball. Stomping around an arena while throwing a monster-sized ball at your opponent is damn-fine fun.

sters—and in two-player fights, it makes effective use of a splitscreen mode when opponents are far apart and switches to full-screen mode when the adversaries get close together. It's an intelligent system, and "Where am I?" frustration is kept to a minimum.

The second innovation is the control system. You essentially have five things to worry about aside from simply walking around: a light and a heavy attack, a block, a jump, and a grab. All these moves are context sensitive, though, and they change depending on where you are and what you're doing. Use the Grab button when you're near a building, and your monster will scale it. Use the same grab when you're standing near a highlighted object and he'll rip it out of the ground and use it as a weapon. Use it when you're near your opponent and your monster will pick him

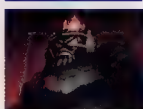
MONSTER PARTY

ULTRA V



V's an *EGM* favorite because he looks so damn cool. He has a rocket pack and a grappling hook, and he can shoot lasers from his eyes!!!

AGAMO



We liked Agamo the least. Just because the least of monster of rock doesn't mean he wails like Eddie Van Halen. It's just a sad fact—minerals aren't very interesting.

MAGMO



Our second favorite monster, Magmo, has four arms, moves fast, and can puke balls of lava at will. We wish we could do that. Then again, who doesn't?

TOGERA



Basically, Godzilla with a different face...but he has added nastiness in the shape of enormous spikes that poke out of his chest.

PREYTOR



The only creature that can properly fly...and the only female character in the game. Not exactly a babe, granted, but she's definitely a badass.

Whatever your taste in monster media, *War of the Monsters* covers pretty much all the beastly basics, whether it's massive Japanese fighting robots or sentient lava-puking rock beasts. Surely you'll find one creature to call your own.

MONSTERS OF ROCK



Dokken



Scorpions

Back in 1988, the Monsters of Rock tour was the first traveling festival of its kind in the United States. Each show was a bladder-bursting 10 hours of rawk that kicked off with Kingdom Come, followed by Metallica, Dokken, and the Scorpions, ending with Van Halen (post David Lee Roth, so they sucked). The festival paved the way for events like Ozzfest today. If you tire of *WotM's* soundtrack, pump this stuff up instead.

up. Each move changes depending on where you are in relation to your enemy, and all the moves fit into easy-to-develop combos that achieve startling results. When you're close to your opponent and you use a light attack, for example, you'll slap your enemy about the face and neck. Do the same combo from a distance and you'll make use of a ranged attack, like lasers or poisonous spit.

Once you learn the strategies of the complex arenas, things really get interesting. Levels are full of handy makeshift weapons and power-ups that are tactically vital if you're going to win quickly. There are two resources: health (duh...wonder what that does?) and energy. Energy is particularly important because it allows you to fire your ranged attacks and to charge up to perform special moves. These moves vary from monster to monster, but they're all fairly spectacular, both in terms of the damage they do and the visual effects they generate.

The Story mode's bosses took us by surprise, and not just because they look really cool. Tactics for the bosses are very different

from the usual monster battles, and it takes awhile to learn exactly what you need to do. It's mostly about patterns of behavior, though, and as with everything else in *WotM*, it pays to be creative in how you react to a situation. With the bosses, getting in close and trying to punch and kick your way to victory isn't the smartest strategy. Instead, you need to find something to throw or something to break in order to give yourself the upper hand. Once you realize this, things aren't as frustrating as they first seem.

War of the Monsters excels at multiplayer mayhem, but not all of our reviewers agree that an awesome two-player mode warrants an award. CJ and Demian both complain about the repetitive and sometimes frustrating single-player experience, even though they both dig the neat B-movie concept. Your personal enjoyment might depend on the depth of your combined *Twisted Metal* and *Mothra* fandom, but regardless, it's still a quality title that does a lot of interesting new things for the rubber-suited-monsters-goin-crazy genre.

The bosses really mean business in this game—not only do they require creative tactics to beat, but they've all been blessed with multiple forms. Just when you think you've won, they'll strike back for another round. Fair? Not really. Fun? Yep, and a good challenge to boot.



Ever had a fight in a two-player fighting game that took over an hour? Me neither—at least, not before I played *War of the Monsters*. After a few rounds spent mastering the controls, a fight between *Official PlayStation Mag's* Gary Steinman and myself lasted just shy of 60 minutes. Crap was exploding all over the place. Crowds were screaming. The military kept sending in planes, which we proceeded to swat out of the sky and use to beat on each other. We clobered each other with steel girders and shot each other with our laser eyes and electro-zappy cannons. It's the most fun I've had with a fighting game in a very long time, mostly thanks to the incredibly accessible design. **I defy anyone, whether they care about big monsters or not, to pick this game up and not experience two things.** First, they'll develop rudimentary skills within about a minute or two of play, and second, they'll have an enormous amount of fun. The two-player duels are a blast, but the real meat of the game is the single-player quest. Select your monster (most tastes are accounted for) and battle your way through the kitschy, 50s-style B-movie tale as you take on mutant insects, giant robots, and ultimately, a pulsating alien brain with tentacles. It can get tough, especially with the bosses, but it's always a lot of fun and very rewarding, thanks to the awesome credit system for buying bonus items.

John D.

I'm not a fan of Inco's flagship *Twisted Metal* series, but I do enjoy monster movies, especially the rubber-suited variety. That's why I'm torn on *War*. On one hand, it plays like *Metal* with the addition of hand-to-hand combat. That means the camera control is dodgy in a pinch, locked-on enemies are a pain to switch between, and the computer's attacks are relentless (excuse me, can I get a breath in, please?). But then the game's so chock-full of monster goodness that I almost forgot about these problems long enough to geek out on it. **The graphical style is awesome**, but there's so much going on at once that sometimes it's more overwhelming than enjoyable.

CJ

I'm a sucker for games featuring giant robots. Add giant monsters to the mix and I'm pretty much freaking out. *War of the Monsters* does a great job of mimicking the whole sci-fi B-movie feel, but as an action/fighting game, it's not as deep or compelling as I was hoping for. The massive, destructible environments are a strong point, but **the single-player game gets repetitive after a few hours.** The two- and three-versus-one solo missions get downright frustrating: land a flurry of hits, run away frantically to scarf power-ups, then attack again. And why no co-op mode? With a room full of friends, *WotM* can be a blast; if you're home alone, watch an old *Godzilla* movie instead.

Demian

CONGAR



Hmmm...King Kong perhaps? Why, yes! Now with an added sonic roar for knocking monsters down from great distances. Plus, damn dirty apes always seem to get all the blonde hotties.

ROBO-47



Who wants to play as a U.S. robot? Can you say "I am"? But wait! Robo-47 has the fastest gun in the game and sports a tactical nuke as a special weapon. Too bad he looks like an appliance from Sears.

KINETICLOPS



A huge eyeball floating in a ball of lightning. He moves fast, glows in the dark, and has some kick-ass lightning attacks. He's not quite as substantial as the other monsters, but he gets points for originality.

VISUALS SOUND INGENUITY REPLAY

8

8

7

6



Swingerz Golf

Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Telenet
Players: 1-4
Also On: None
Featured In: EGM #160
Best Feature: Multiplayer goodness
Worst Feature: Moments of clunky interface design
Website: www.eidosinteractive.com

If you've never played a golf game before, *Swingerz* is an excellent place to get started. It's packed with several cool courses, ranging from tropical islands and grassy knolls to wind-swept mountains and rocky panoramas. Personality isn't lacking either—the lively players and caddies do cute dances when you hit an eagle and utter harsh critiques when you triple bogey an easy shot. These likeable trappings complement the well-constructed golf mechanics that give you plenty of control over your game. If you need to whack the ball a certain way to get it out of a sand trap or up a steep incline, accurate onscreen meters guide your swing. Weather conditions, like wind and rain, also affect your swing appropriately. Just don't let the game's cuteness trick you into thinking it's easy. With tough competition from other golfers, you'll need to have a virtually perfect game in order to place in the money. Average players might spend an entire game in first place, then drop down to loser territory at the 17th hole—which can be a bit irritating, especially with unpredictable weather. The multiplayer, however, more than makes up for this. When you're playing against your friends (who probably won't be a whole lot better than you are), the competition tends to be more realistic—and a lot more fun.

Jennifer

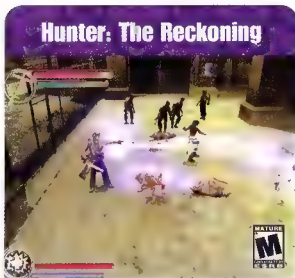
Nothing in *Swingerz Golf* will surprise gamers who've punted around with a virtual putter before. This game is almost a **tee-to-shining-tee rip-off of Sony's Hot Shots Golf series**, complete with jabbering caddies and "wacky" unlockable golfers. The swing meter is the only difference here; swiped from a few other golf games, it has you wiggling the C-stick to line up your shots—an annoyingly tricky task. The *Hot Shots* homage isn't a bad thing; it's the most pick-up-and-playable golf series around, after all. But *Swingerz* misses the hole when it comes to the putting green, where long-range shots seem more a matter of luck than skill.

Griffin

If you've gone copy a golf game, copying *Hot Shots Golf 3* (PS2) is about the smartest move you can make. In fact, *Swingerz* is so similar to *HS3*, I'm sure there must be lawsuit brewing somewhere. The only problem is that developer Telenet fudged with the swing meter. Rather than the classic three-click bar used in most golf games, here you're required to pull the C-stick back and flick it forward. It's kind of fun, but still not nearly as precise as the classic triple-tap. For this reason alone, this round of golf can't hang with the genre's best (the *Hot Shots* and *Mario Golf* series). Still, you won't find many golf options on GameCube, and *Swingerz* is solid.

Greg S.

VISUALS SOUND INGENUITY REPLAY
7 5 3 7



Hunter: The Reckoning

Publisher: Interplay
Developer: High Voltage Software
Players: 1-4
Also On: Xbox
Featured In: EGM #155
Best Feature: Creepy atmosphere and setting
Worst Feature: Annoying control scheme
Website: www.interplay.com

Taking cues from the likes of *Gauntlet* and *Smash TV*, *Hunter* is a blast-em-up action romp best played with friends. The game infuses straight-shooting with mild character-building elements (different classes, level raising), showing its pen 'n' paper role-playing roots. *Hunter* struggles a bit with this identity crisis: While the stat-building and ammo conservation would seem to push it toward strategic gameplay, the atmosphere (graveyards, sewers, etc.) and enemies (undead ghouls, werewolves, and a psychotic teddy bear) beg for a blast-a-thon. Some bad guys take a needlessly long time to defeat, not because your attack plan ever needs to change (it's always circle and shoot), but because you want to conserve your more powerful ammo for bigger enemies and bosses. This slower gameplay sometimes makes you think, but personally, I'd have liked more chances to just let loose. *Hunter's* solid dual-analog control scheme (one stick to move, the other to aim, and a button to fire) gets tripping on the trigger fire, too. But once you adjust to the game's pace, *Hunter* grows on you, especially as you add more people to the fray. (Also, multiplayer games move much quicker.) Couple some exciting bosses with a decent story and you've got the makings of a good time. Overall, *Hunter's* an above-average package **worth playing through with your buds**, but not necessarily a keeper.

G. Ford

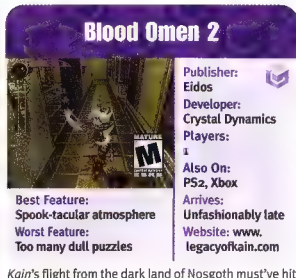
Hunter is based on a geeky pen-and-paper RPG, but it feels like anything but. Imagine a *Buffy*-ized version of *Gauntlet*, with an emphasis on viciously beating down never-ending throngs of enemies. The game offers a serious challenge, but this is due more to the sheer number of foes you face than any clever tactics from your enemies. Too bad an annoying emphasis on lock-and-key level objectives slows down the action. You'll often have to backtrack to find a key-carrying enemy—weak. Co-op play (with up to four players) saves the day, luckily, so if you have friends, there are fun (and gory) times to be had. **If you intend to play it solo, though, drop my score by two points.**

Miguel

Great story line, great source material...*The Hunter* universe could've made a fantastic role-playing or adventure game. So why is it a slow-paced, mindless shoot-em-up? Even within this genre, we should've gotten a bullet-packed, blow-everything-to-hell experience like the arcade classic *Smash TV*. Instead, we get Nick at Nite reruns of the *Golden Girls*. Get some four-player action going, though, and you'll find a decent shooter with an **interesting premise and solid graphics** that reinforce the horrific ambience of a town taken over by evil. *Hunter's* not the most exciting game, but it's put together well enough to deserve playing through with friends at least once.

Shoe

VISUALS SOUND INGENUITY REPLAY
7 6 5 6



Blood Omen 2

Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Crystal Dynamics
Players: 1
Also On: PS2, Xbox
Arrives: Unfashionably late
Website: www.legacyofkain.com

Kain's flight from the dark land of Nosgoth must've hit some killer delays on its way to GameCube. Hell, the PS2 and Xbox versions came out last March, so this belated port lands on shelves alongside the other consoles' discounted copies. Is *Blood Omen 2* for GC worth picking up if you missed the previous incarnation? If you're really hungry for a solid action-adventure title, go for it; it's packed with sprawling urban landscapes, an intriguing story, and several clever magical powers that add a lot to the otherwise rote gameplay. For example, sneaking up for a stealth decapitation while you're transformed into mist, or immobilizing bad guys with your mind offers grisly, gothic fun. It's not all blood and roses, though. **For an undead ruler, Kain sure has to flip a lot of switches and push around oodles of crates.** These simple, dull puzzles detract from an otherwise well-paced adventure. Also, just as in the PS2 and Xbox versions, you'll notice a distracting stutter whenever the game has to load a new part of a level. Still, Cube owners will find some enjoyment in this title.

Shane

VISUALS SOUND INGENUITY REPLAY
7 8 5 2



Evolution Worlds

Publisher: Ubi Soft
Developer: Sting
Players: 1
Also On: Dreamcast
Arrives: Isn't it already!
A new game
Website: www.ubisoft.com

When the first *Evolution* game debuted for Dreamcast, it was a charming (if flawed) game that managed to fill the RPG void in the early days of Sega's system. But now it's 2003, and this GameCube port doesn't show much...*Evolution Worlds* is nothing more than a repackaging of *Evolution 1* and 2, with no real improvements worth mentioning. Expect a **stale, low-tech dungeon crawl that feels like it fell out of 1999.** The graphics received a slight facelift, but they still fall below average for the Cube. *Worlds* has the same simplistic battle system, bland dungeons, and bare-bones plot we saw three years ago. Additional voice acting adds a bit more personality, but personality was never where *Evolution* was lacking. If the originals were classics, this collection might be worth picking up, but neither game has aged well, and bundling both together doesn't sweeten the deal. If you've never touched an *Evolution* game before and you're *hurting* for a GameCube RPG, you might be able to eke some fun out of *Worlds*. Everyone else should leave this living fossil on the shelf.

Dave

VISUALS SOUND INGENUITY REPLAY
4 5 1 3



Publisher: EA Games
Developer: EA/Stormfront Studios
Players: 1
Also On: PS2, Xbox
Also Try: Vegemite sandwiches
Best Feature: Looks just like the movie
Worst Feature: Total lack of a multiplayer mode
Web Site: lordoftherings.ea.com



A lot of *Rings* fans might like to see Tolkien's classic series made into an RPG rather than what appears to be a simplistic brawler. But those people need to give this movie-based game a chance. When they do, they'll find a **surprisingly deep action game that's simple to get into**, very pretty to look at, and packed with a ton of awesome, DVD-like extras (including making-of footage, interviews with the movie's actors, and production photos). And don't let the title fool you—*The Two Towers* actually covers both the first and second Peter Jackson *Rings* movies. Fight Orcs in Moria, battle Umuk'hai on the riverbank, and keep Saruman's army at bay at Amon Hen. It's more than just mindless hacking, too. As Aragorn, Gimli, and Legolas progress through the levels (you can pick which hero to use at the outset of each stage), you can purchase increasingly intricate moves and combos for them. Some of these flashy maneuvers require major dexterity to pull off, but the visual violence reward is worth it. If there's one thing that bugs me about *The Two Towers*, though, it's the lack of a multiplayer mode. I mean, in a good chunk of the missions, you have at least one other member of the Fellowship helping you out. Why not let a second player control him? In a story where teamwork and friendship are such important themes, it's too bad you can't team up with your buddies to kick a little Orc butt. **Greg S.**

This pure-action adaptation of the first two *Rings* movies will teach you Jack squat about Middle-earth mythology. But that's OK—the roaring musical score, spectacular scenery, and rapid-fire gameplay are all so engaging, you won't mind the absence of a cohesive story or neglect of the flicks' emotional elements. You won't even mind such minor flaws as tedious levels and battles so crowded that you end up losing your warrior in the throng. The combat is surprisingly deep, with Orc-crushing combos for players who want to go beyond random-but-jackhammering. In fact, you actually need to play smart—this game quickly gets tough. **Crispin**

I've never played a movie-based game that stays so true to its source material, yet remains so fun throughout. Granted, "throughout" lasts only five or six hours per character, but the bonuses and frenetic hack 'n' slash gameplay keep you coming back for more. While boss fights don't exactly require the wisdom of Elrond to figure out, some thought and experimentation are required. And the graphics? Amazing, with innovative production techniques that improve the aesthetics even more. *Towers* could have used a multiplayer option, more levels, and more playable characters (no Gandalf!), but even without them, it's still rather...precious. **Chris B.**



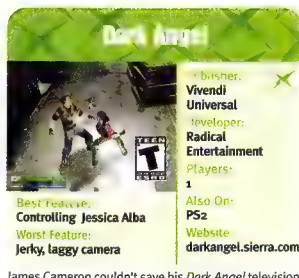
Publisher: Atari
Developer: Lost Toys
Players: 1-2
Also On: PS2
Explosions?: Several
Best Feature: Your quick-changing ship
Worst Feature: Objectives not always clear
Web Site: www.battleengine.com



The big idea behind this unfortunately named shooter (*Battle Engine Aquila*? Sounds like an alcoholic sports drink!) is that you're just a bit player in someone else's *Command & Conquer*-style real-time-strategy game. While allied tanks, fighters, and infantry clash with the enemy, you just focus on your own mission objectives, such as clearing a path for a beachhead or taking out antiaircraft defenses. Some missions get confusing, but you can never go wrong by just blasting everything that moves. The raging battles make for quite a spectacle. You'll see clouds of flak burst all around you, paratroopers drop into enemy bases, artillery blasts lobbed from offshore destroyers, and some of the biggest kabooms on Xbox. But the star of this explosive show is your ship, a crab-legged tank that can soar like a fighter plane for brief spurts (you must touch down on terra firma to recharge your jets)—a challenge during missions at sea. **Your craft's dual form makes for fun strategies.** See that enemy dropship up above? Why not zip up there as a jet, land on it, then pummel it with your tank's more potent weaponry? Missions become a blur of similar scenery (some city battles would be nice) and repeated objectives toward the end of the game. But a decent selection of nifty multiplayer modes—including cooperative play—will keep you busy after you beat the final boss. **Crispin**

Ah, how welcome is the effervescent feeling of originality. *Aquila* sneaks in outta nowhere with creative shooting action and crisp visuals. It's not just a standard flying-tank blaster—you're thrust into the middle of a much larger battle with supporting land, sea, and air-based forces. It's knowing that you're not alone on the battlefield that makes this game stand out. And, with a very action-oriented focus, the no-brainer controls let you focus on the thrilling combat. The single-player campaign gets a little tough, and I wish I could've given Crispin a bigger smackdown in the multiplayer Skirmish mode, but that's another story. Don't overlook this unique gem. **Barren**

Remember *Gunnmetal*? If you don't, good—it was weak. *Battle Engine Aquila* successfully does what that mech game attempted to do (i.e., lets you play out large-scale battles as a giant, transforming war machine). The action is hectic, and more importantly, every unit on the battlefield enacts its role very effectively, from the largest artillery carrier to the lowliest ground troop. Amid the chaos, you'll do lots of scurrying around, blasting tanks in one spot and then taking to the sky to waste squadrons of aircraft. Overall, it's a blast, although sometimes you'll get some hazy, hard-to-follow orders from HQ. But that's a small complaint. *Aquila* is pretty dope. **Miguel**



Best Feature: Controlling Jessica Alba
Worst Feature: Jerky, laggy camera
Publisher: Vivendi Universal
Developer: Radical Entertainment
Players: 1
Also On: PS2
Web Site: darkangel.sierra.com



James Cameron couldn't save his *Dark Angel* television show from cancellation, but six months after the final episode aired, this game ships as a digital eulogy to the forgettable series. *Dark Angel* isn't a terrible game; just an unremarkable one, outside a few flashes of cool fighting—much like the show itself. Max is one hellacious, fun-to-control hottie. Her fluid attacks and varied moves, including Speed Burst and Rage special attacks, make her combat style a fun pastiche of *Crouching Tiger*, *The Matrix*, and *Buffy*. While most of the game is focused on beating down government thugs and mutant man-beasts, the designers break up the monotony with the occasional stealth level or puzzle. But, as fun as it is being Max, **keeping up with the action is tricky.** The camera is erratic, especially during serious brawls, and the level design is uninspired and repetitive. And while both Alba and co-star/mus-band Michael Weatherly lend their voices to the game, only she feigns interest; he sounds totally bored. Fans of the show will appreciate the return of their heroine; for others, it's merely a curious rental. **Scotter**



Best Feature: Eerie sounds
build atmosphere
Worst Feature: Plain, drab graphics
Publisher: Tecmo
Developer: Tecmo
Players: 1
Also On: PS2
Featured In: EGM #61
Web Site: www.fatalframe.com



Outside of *Silent Hill 2* and the possibility of getting *Sneakers* as a Christmas gift, there's not much out there to scare Xbox owners. Luckily, *Fatal Frame* is on the way, a solid addition to the system's fright-adventure genre and the **perfect late-night rental.** As you might expect from a PS2 port, the graphics are rather subdued, but two big aspects lessen the impact of the game's simplistic look. First, you can't really see much anyway—like *Silent Hill*, the game uses darkness (you carry a flashlight) to great effect, building tension and paranoia. Second, *Fatal Frame* relies on audio, not realistic graphics, as the foundation of its spook-house thrills. Creaking floorboards, whispering voices, and cassette-tape diary entries that would give the Blair Witch chills (if only the voice acting wasn't so robotic at times) crawl into your ears and freak your brain right out. The combat method—taking photos of ghosts—may not excite, but the different ways to power-up your camera and special abilities you can earn give combat surprising depth. Fans of the genre should give this a shot (hah). **Mark**



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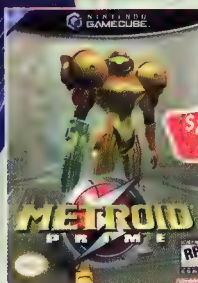


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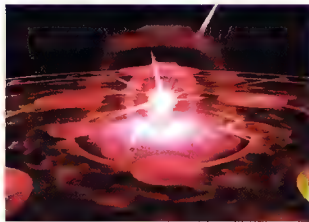
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Skies of Arcadia Legends



Publisher: Sega
Developer: Overworks
Players: 1
Also On: Dreamcast
Featured In: EGM #161
Best Feature: Stunningly creative game world
Worst Feature: Random battles get a little tiresome
Website: www.sega.com



epic adventure on the scale of *Final Fantasy* or *Dragon Warrior*? For the answer, look to the skies...the *Skies of Arcadia*, that is.

First, yes, this is basically a port of a 2-year-old game for Sega's defunct Dreamcast console. But, unlike most shovelware, it's not a quick-and-dirty transfer; think of it more as a director's cut. The developer has stuffed a lot of new content into the original adventure—check out the sidebar below to find out precisely what's fresh. The gameplay and graphics also received some much-needed tweaks. The character models now sport greater detail, allowing for more believable facial expressions, and the game includes

fewer random battles, with each melee worth more experience points. This balancing cut down on the monotony that plagued the DC version's combat.

Of course, most GC players will come into *Legends* without much prior knowledge of the previous version, so these changes will go unnoticed—which is fine, since rookies will be too wrapped up in the game's startlingly original world to care. *Skies* takes one of the coolest aspects of traditional RPG gaming—the airship—and runs with it; the entire world here is built upon the concept of skyfaring and swashbuckling. Majestic winged galleons and menacing ironclad

GameCube is really in need of a role-playing savior. RPG-starved Cubers exhausted by stale ports of mediocre games (see: *Evolution Worlds*) and weird trading card-strategy hybrids (read: *Lost Kingdoms*) haven't had much to celebrate. *Phantasy Star Online* offers amazing Net-enabled action, but where's an

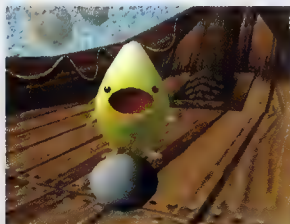
VYSE IN THE SKY WITH EXTRAS

You'll need to be observant and resourceful to find all the (entirely optional, often hidden) bonus content squirreled away in *Legends*.



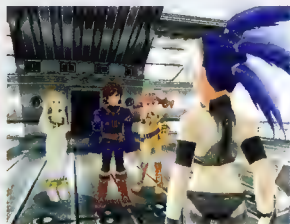
WANTED LIST

As you venture through the skies, be on the lookout for the extremely dangerous criminals on the wanted list. Bringing in one of these scoundrels nets you a huge reward—but be prepared for an insanely tough boss battle.



MOONFISH

Keep alert for these tasty treats buzzing around towns and dungeons. When you net some, hunt down Doc's ship and feed them to the mysterious bird there. The more Moonfish you bring him, the rarer the items he'll puke up.



PIASTOL

This vengeful (and oddly named) chick attempts to murder Vyse throughout the game, so you'll either have to steer clear of her or take her on. Be prepared for some tense fights and, eventually, some shocking revelations about her past.

Like any good RPG, *Legends* offers hugely long, screen-searing special attacks that rain fire, brimstone and sparkly lights onto your foes. Once you're sick of 'em, press Start to skip them.



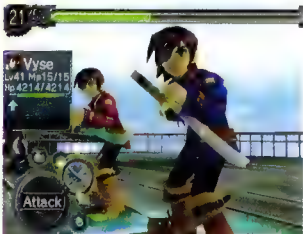
behemoths fly between floating islands in a world where terra firma has long since disappeared. Explore a richly textured, creative setting that's easy to lose yourself in for a good 40 hours. It's classic RPG stuff done incredibly well—colossal dungeons, secret-filled towns, and a villainous evil empire that must be thwarted.

Getting caught up in the world of *Skies* is made even easier by its immensely likeable cast. The core group of three heroes—Yuse, a junior pirate; Aika, his headstrong sidekick; and Fina, a mysterious girl who fell from the sky—form an unbreakable bond that's easy to relate

to. Unlike the disenchanting sourpusses who star in many modern RPGs (like *FFVII's* moody, misanthropic Squall), this crew is filled with wonder, happiness, and the desire to explore their world. They're so damn inspirational, they even convince downtrodden people in the game to do something meaningful with their lives.

So, don't let the slightly reheated vibe of a rerelease scare you off—*Skies* fills the GameCube RPG void better than anyone could have expected. It's a great game that holds up remarkably well in 2003. If you own a GC and have even the slightest interest in role-playing, pick this up.

One of the cleverest new battles in *Legends* pits Yuse, Aika, and Fina against a troupe of diabolical actors who impersonate our heroes. Triumphant over Vize, Anita, and Faina is unbelievably tough, since they command all of the same awesome special attacks that you do.



Honestly, I meant to play that copy of *Skies* I bought for my Dreamcast, but, uh, something suddenly came up...yeah. Actually, I'm glad that I waited, because I had an **absolutely phenomenal experience** with *Legends* on GC. Yeah, I know it's not the prettiest game around—the graphics can't hang with a lot of recent RPGs. The visuals do have a unique style, though, and they're not ugly, just dated. It also would've been nice if the silly voice events (Yuse's "uh-huh" followed by Aika chirping "OK!" often constitutes a conversation) had been scrapped in favor of full spoken dialogue. It doesn't really matter, though, because the game is so immensely engrossing and gratifying. From the journey's outset to the spectacular conclusion 40+ some hours later, everything falls into place perfectly. Wonderful pacing keeps the flow of combat, exploration, and plot flowing smoothly. Plus, the game's innovative world invites exploration like no other RPG. At any time, you're able to indulge your desire to sail into unexplored territories looking for rogue pirates and undiscovered treasure, so you don't feel as tied down to a linear narrative as you do in most RPGs. The combination of lovable characters, a thrilling story, and cool dungeons hearkens back to classic 26-bit role-playing classics like *Final Fantasy III*, and that's a very good thing. If you own a GameCube and hunger for adventure, buy this game; you won't be disappointed.

Shane

SHIP BATTLES



In addition to normal hand-to-hand combat, you'll oftentimes bring out the big guns for some cannonball-blasting ship-to-ship melees. These fights are 100 percent strategy—carefully balance offense, defense, and magic to succeed.

Skies is a perfect example of how far a solid plot, polished gameplay mechanics, and a beautifully imagined world can take you. Even if you're a veteran of the Dreamcast version, *Legends* offers fresh additions that make it worth playing all over again—extra boss encounters, a subplot featuring a mysterious new enemy, and a bunch of extra miniquests. Of course, RPG lovers who've never actually set eyes on the game before should rush out and scoop it up immediately. With skyfaring battleship encounters, an epic quest teetering on magnificence, and a small but vivid set of unforgettable characters, *Skies* is essential gaming.

Milkman

Skies of Arcadia plays out like an old-fashioned adventure novel—you get plenty of swashbuckling escapades, a wisecracking hero, a salty mentor, and a classic love triangle. There's nothing here that you haven't seen before, but rarely have these elements come together so seamlessly. *Legends* may not be as pretty as *Final Fantasy X*, but it's every bit as fun, and its story is more interesting. There's a lightness and humor here that you won't find in other RPGs, and I love it for that. As for the gameplay, the battle system, which seems average at first, opens up to be surprisingly deep and strategic. **GameCube desperately needed a title like this.**

Ethan

VISUALS	SOUND	INGENUITY	REPLAY
6	8	7	6



Publisher: AKA Acclaim
Developer: Z-Axis
Players: 1-2
Also On: PS2, GC
Best Feature: Easy tricks and combos
Worst Feature: Difficult and repetitive objectives
Boobies? Yes, unlike the PS2 version
Website: www.bmxxxx.com

I won't go into too much detail about *BMX XXX's* lame attempts to combine crude humor and action-sports, but let's just say that in my first six hours of play I chuckled only once—and it was to a joke ripped off from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. It's not that my sense of humor is so sophisticated—Dude, *Where's My Car?* is one of my favorite flicks. But the "comedy" here is just plain dumb. Instead, I'll discuss gameplay. If you strip away everything (and I mean everything) but the basic game engine, *BMX XXX* is quite good: easy-to-do combos, accommodating lip tricks for players who can't land in ramps on a straight line, etc. But **surrounding this good is nothing but pure bad.** You'll find glitches (I once scored a 2.5-million-point combo by spinning in place and mashing buttons while stuck in some girders) and the most uninspiring level designs around (too many flat areas, not enough linking rails). And the objectives... They're tedious and repetitive—you'll be doing the same things on the final levels that you did on the first. They're unintuitive—you'll have to experiment and re-experiment to figure some of them out. They're difficult—even the homeliest guy on earth could get laid before he could complete the ineane tasks required to unlock all the R-rated stripper videos (which aren't worth the effort, by the way). Only the most patient, hardcore, and masochistic will be able to play through *XXX*.

Shoe

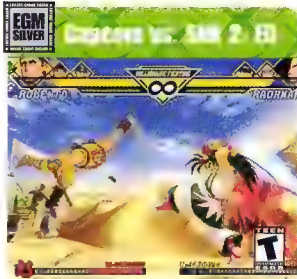
I wish this game were more about hot strippers and less about making me play a stripped-down *Dave Mirra* clone. **Simplistic controls, a complete lack of inertia, and little interaction with the environment** make the gameplay a joke. Plus, the game's mission goals are often confusing and just plain dumb. How's the raunch? Well, if poop jokes and some bare skin are up your alley, then *BMX XXX* will bowl you over. Personally, I can't endorse a game in which the highlight (for me) features peanut vendors loudly hawking their "hot salty nutsacks." If you want tricks, check out *Aggressive Inline* or *Tony Hawk 4*. If you want mature, hop over to your PS2 and play *Vice City*.

Dan L.

I admit it: I like *South Park*. I like *Jackass*. I even like poking fun at the crazy homeless guys on my bus ride to work. But this game's "humor" put me off so much, I wanted to stop playing. The potty jokes and hoer sounds ("You suck harder than I do!") aren't funny—they're just kind of...there. Gameplay-wise, the jerky camera and problematic goal structure bog everything down. I hate that you get no guidance how or where to complete the goals, and that I had no quick way to retry a goal like in *Tony Hawk 4*. As for nudity, well, even I was disappointed. **If you're just looking for some skin, you're better off with a (free) *Victoria's Secret* catalogue.**

Jennifer

VISUALS SOUND INGENUITY REPLAY



Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Players: 1-2
Also On: GC and PS2 (offline only, though)
EO Mode: Is for chumps
Best Feature: Brawling on Xbox Live
Worst Feature: Nasty lag can cripple fun
Website: www.capcom.com

Console fighting games have always lacked the magical capability to allow strangers to challenge you in your home as they would in arcades. If you've got friends or siblings who actually possess some skills, at-home brawling is a blast, but single-player street fighting isn't too rewarding. Thankfully, *CVS2* and *Xbox Live* bring you closer than ever to an arcade experience with online play—that is, if you don't run into too much lag. Unfortunately, **latency was an issue that just wouldn't go away.** It didn't make much sense: Sometimes, folks just a few miles away would turn up with a nasty connection, while other friends clear across the country would play smooth as butter. Still, when everything clicks and lag isn't an issue, *CVS2* is a 2D fighting fan's dream come true. Carrying over all the depth and versatility of its offline counterpart, *CVS2* takes 46 of the genre's toughest hombers and effortlessly blends their disparate fighting styles into a balanced whole. The game's online options (finding a quick match, searching for friends, or setting up special rules for your own server) are easy and straightforward. And as with nearly all *Live* games thus far, the addition of voice chat capability is invaluable to the psychological impact of *CVS2*: A screen-searing Super Dragon Punch packs extra "oomph" when you're talkin' trash about your opponent's mom.

Che

First off, forget about that Easy Operation crap—using the analog stick to execute special moves is a crutch that should be reserved for Special Olympics participants. Luckily, you can exclude EO players from the online matches you host. And that's a good thing, since **playing on Xbox Live is the real draw here.** Yeah, this is the same over-the-top brawfest that *PS2*, *GameCube*, and even *Dreamcast* fans have been playing for a while now, but delivering *Dragon Punches* to friends, enemies, and strangers is vicious fun. If not for the occasional Net lag and *Xbox* controllers' tragically flawed D-pads, this would truly rule. Still lots of fun, though.

Shane

I've wanted an online *Capcom* fighter for a long time now, and *CVS2* is more than I could've hoped for. **Online play is usually surprisingly smooth,** and all the classic match options are here—you can even set the weak EO controls off, forcing your opponents to play like real-deal warriors. (The EO setup lets newbies bust out cool moves, but it's like using training wheels—you won't experience the game at its best until you get your hands dirty.) Don't listen to the whiners—the chunky original *Xbox* pad isn't the best controller for *CVS2*, but it's far from the worst. Hold it right and you'll realize the button arrangement is actually on point.

Miguel

VISUALS SOUND INGENUITY REPLAY



Publisher: Koel
Developer: Koel
Players: 1
Also On: None
Feels like: *Dynasty Warriors* in space
Best Feature: Wildly fun and varied missions
Worst Feature: Goofy story and script
Website: www.koelgames.com

Young hero Sho, star of the high-voltage beat-em-up *Crimson Sea*, meets many strange and wonderful alien creatures and, as so often happens in videogames, gets to disembowel them. Frenetic fire-fights and harried melee combat against hundreds of onscreen creepy crawlies make up the bulk of play, but it's all done very prettily, and better still, with missions that often go far beyond simply storming in, killing everything, and moving on. For example, try holding off waves of Muton space invaders while Sho's young accomplice races frantically to patch a damaged spaceship. Or embark on the world's oddest rescue/escort mission with a lazy presidential type who must be pushed from point A to point B. The varied missions—40 or so of them—are a visceral blast, and even the simple waste-them-all-and-send-God-the-cleaning-bill slaughter sessions are wonderfully cathartic. There's even a story to go with the mayhem; the plot's fun, but in sort of a *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* nonsensical way. Sadly, some overly dark levels, unintentionally bad dialogue, and an imperfectly tuned camera do dampen the grandeur somewhat. But the good greatly outweighs the bad here: *Sea's* customizable weaponry, devastating psychic powers, genuinely likeable characters, and twisty-turny plot elevate this game well beyond the flotsam and jetsam.

Greg O.

If you love the hectic action and overwhelming odds of Koel's *Dynasty Warriors* series but crave a more RPG-like approach, *Crimson Sea* is the game for you. A spacefaring sci-fi universe replaces boring ancient China, and a plot has been added to all the slashing, further setting this game apart from the *DW* titles. What's more, *Crimson Sea* is highly addictive—you can't help but play the next mission, if only to discover newfound riches and purchase new weapon add-ons. Oh, and don't let the haters taint your love of bad dialogue; the voice acting here is so hilariously cheesy, it's good. Slightly jumpy controls aside, this is a solid *Xbox* adventure worth looking into.

Che

It's not hard to tell the same people responsible for *Dynasty Warriors* made *Crimson Sea*; both games pack the screen with enemies that swarm your team, giving battles an epic, against-all-odds feel. The characters in this silly space opera even look like their ancient Chinese counterparts, right down to the crazy hair. But, despite a variety of objectives (gather items in time, protect or escort, etc.), the odd unique mission, and ways to power-up your weapons, **most of *Crimson* comes down to bashing through wave after wave of a sea of enemies.** Decent controls mean that it's not necessarily a bad thing, depending on what you're into.

Mark

VISUALS SOUND INGENUITY REPLAY

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Platform: Microsoft Dream Publishing
Players: 1-2 (4-4 tag team)
Genre: None
ESRB Rating: EGM #160
Impressive visuals:
Totally generic gameplay:
www.kakutochojin.com

In reading the manual for *Choje* (my pet name for *Kakuto Chojin*), I discovered that I could have read the diary of a ditzy 10-year-old girl and walked away just as ready to fight. Instead of pertinent information on the fighters and modes, it's filled with woefully generic story text and weird, unfunny comments like "Cute haircut!" and "Delightfully vicious!" scrawled in the margins. Bizarre. Unfortunately, this flagrant disregard for quality extends to the severely lame-ass game itself. *Choje* is like one of those titles that comes in a 30-in-1 game pack you get with a new computer. It obviously borrows character and gameplay ideas directly from high-profile games (Tekken's silly characters, DOA's costumes and moves), but it's really just there as a showcase for what your hardware can do. Hell, yes, the game looks incredible—you can tell it started out as a jaw-dropping tech demo for the Xbox. But it's such a flop in all other regards: Dorky characters with mundane attacks won't impress anyone; fighting styles are truly unique in name only; and a few paltry, half-hearted extras choke off any potential replay value. *Choje* gets a couple points for looking pretty and a little something for the flawed but inexplicably entertaining Capture the Crown multiplayer game, but when it comes to my fighter roster, it's an easy first cut. Play DOA3 instead.

Jonathan

At first glance, *Chojin* appears to offer everything fighting fans look for in a game: sharp, detailed graphics; intuitive controls; and a wild assortment of characters, each with a unique style. But peel back the layers of technical competence and you discover that the core of *Chojin* is nothing but a disappointing concoction of fighting-game clichés. The gameplay, while essentially sound, is so watered down and masher-friendly, there's no incentive to master the system. To make matters worse, the four-player Versus mode—*Chojin*'s most original feature—is riddled with balancing issues. If you're looking for a fun, casual fighter, you'd have a better time with *Mortal Kombat*. **Che**

When I fired up *Kakuto Chojin*, I held hopes that the developer had somehow rediscovered the skills that helped it shape the cult-classic fighter *Tobal No.1*. But what I found was something more like the group's recent efforts, such as *The Bouncer*. This is unquestionably the worst fighting game I've played in years. Once you get past the plastic action figures posing as pugilists in *Chojin*, you run right into a brick wall of bad gameplay. Sluggishly simplistic controls even a hamster could manage, virtually zero background animation, jack s*** for extra features, and a lame four-player mode as all this game has to offer. I'll pass.

Milkman

VISUALS SOUND INGENUITY REPLAY



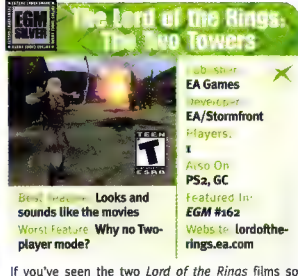
Platform: Atari
Genre: Circus Freak Studios
Players: 1
ESRB Rating: None
Impressive visuals: EGM #156
Great use of Superman's powers:
Numbing gameplay:
www.infogames.com

Up, up, and into the toilet. Once again, the legendary Superman, Man of Steel, soars directly into videogame infamy with this euphonous and unpeppably insulting game. It's not as mind-blowingly awful as the old Nintendo 64 *Superman* stinker, but it is outclassed by nearly every other comic-book game out there. Superman is sporting his cool super-powers: flight, superhuman strength, icy-cold breath, and telescopic, heat-, and X-ray visions. In this, the developers succeeded magnificently. Sadly, they did not succeed in putting their version of Superman into a game that's even remotely fun to play. The challenges were, of course, to create enemies able to hurt a Man of Steel, and to present obstacles worthy of someone who could, frankly, punch God in the mouth if he wanted to. What was the developer's answer? Robots. Lots of them. Robots, and the requirement of performing Superman-unworthy feats under severe time restrictions. Long after you've begun to wonder where the hell Metropolis' fire department is, Superman will be racing around like an extraordinary idiot, extinguishing blazes in 30 seconds or less. It's OK the first time, but its appeal decreases exponentially each time a fire appears. Things pick up a bit as Superman moves into outer space, but certainly not enough to be redeeming. This bird/plane/Superman sadly turned out to be a super-tryout. **Greg O.**

The Man of Steel is set partly in the Phantom Zone, an endless void where Krypton has eternally exiled the planet's most infamous criminals. Appropriately enough, that's exactly where every copy of this game belongs. While by no means the worst *Superman* console offering to date (see: *Superman for N64*), this Xbox debut nonetheless disappoints. Abysmal control (should 45-degree turns really be tricky?) team with repetitive, tedious level objectives to make this **more a chore than a pleasure to play through**, even for Super-freaks like me. Hokey-looking cut-scenes and campy dialogue ("Holy Krypton!") hamper even *Steel*'s cool story. Most unfortunate. **Chris B.**

Pity Superman—the guy can't seem to get a break in the videogame realm. *Man of Steel* isn't the worst game that's ever carried his name, but it's tragically close. Imagine *Zone of the Enders* (PS2), minus the cool anime style and plus a clunky dude in a red cape, and you'll get an idea of what this game plays like. Our hero—whose voice sounds suspiciously like Phil Hartman's *Blasto* (PS3)—has to fight hordes of robots, Bizarro Superman, and other flying baddies, using his powers in increasingly ridiculous ways. His mighty fists can't take down any "green-tinted" enemies, but a blast of cold breath will do 'em in every time. **Pass on this mess**, even if you're a fan of the comics. **Ethan**

VISUALS SOUND INGENUITY REPLAY



Platform: EA Games
Genre: EA/Stormfront Players.
Also On: PS2, GC
Impressive visuals: EGM #162
Works like a charm: Why no Two-player mode?

If you've seen the two *Lord of the Rings* films so many times that you doze off during the slow parts (enough with the Human-Elf love-dovey stuff already), EA's *Towers* is just the thing to make you wake up and smell the carnage. It brings the two movies' action sequences to life with soaring music and holy-moley visuals (just wait until you battle the Cave Troll or reach the rain-soaked Helm's Deep finale), along with lots of high-gloss, behind-the-scenes extras that are actually worth unlocking. **The Orc-hacking gameplay has you tapping more than just one button 90 times a minute;** you'll need to change up your combos and time your blocks if you want to storm past the fourth level (the difficulty here ramps up quickly). Play with style and you're awarded points you can spend to supercharge your character with new combos. Some levels get repetitive, and the chaotic battles would be even more rip-roarin' if you could slash through them with a pal, but the overall presentation is so slick that you really don't think about these flaws. **Crispin**

VISUALS SOUND INGENUITY REPLAY



Platform: Frenzied, action-filled battles
Works like a charm: Terrible control configuration
Publisher: Simon & Schuster Interactive
Free Developer: Free Radical Design
Players: 1-4
Also On: None
Website: www.seablade-thegame.com

Mediocrity, thy name is *SeaBlade*. Sporting an overly generic title, gameplay devoid of any sort of creativity, a poorly designed set of controls that was most likely an afterthought, and meager production values, *SeaBlade* is a bland dish indeed, whipped up by chefs who were asleep, or perhaps dead, when lessons on taste and flavor were being taught. For the uninitiated, *SeaBlades* possess some unique characteristics—chief among them is the fact that they're a chore to control in the skies and underwater. Acceleration can be accomplished only by pushing Up on one of the Xbox controller's analog sticks (and you can't reconfigure it). It's extremely taxing on the thumbs to do this continually, and *SeaBlade*'s rather unforgiving nature ensures that a static ship is a soon-to-be-exploded one. Dull power-ups anchor this game's middle-of-the-road sensibilities; uninspired blast-em-up missions make up the bulk of the action; and the bleary, nonanimated cut-scenes speak volumes about the effort put into this bland little tomató. **Greg O.**

VISUALS SOUND INGENUITY REPLAY

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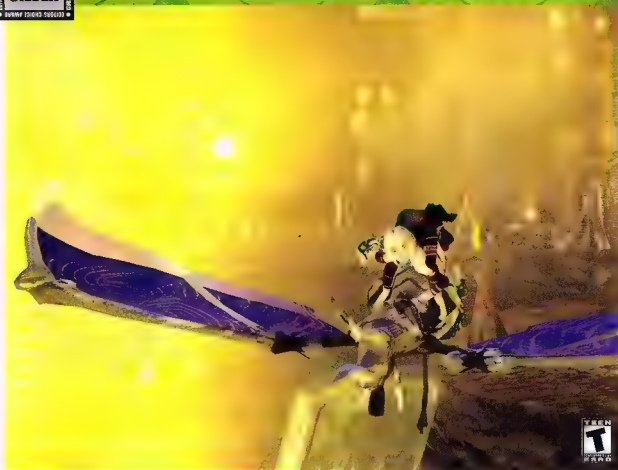
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Panzer Dragoon Orta



bring back memories of the older games, but newer delights, like the pirate ship-inspired boss, the flower-in-a-cage boss, and Abadd, your ultimate (and ultimately weird) nemesis all manage to push the envelope on this stunning-looking game. The environments are diverse and filled with life; dozens of enemies erupt from every side (à la PS2's *Sky Gunner*, minus the insane slowdown); gunfire sizzles through the air; and everything is polished to perfection. Of course Orta and her dragon don't look too shabby either. Very few games can match this game's visual splendor.

The gameplay has remained largely the same, save for a few significant additions. The dragon now boasts a speed burst to rocket forward past (or through) enemies, and can also "hit the brakes" to drop behind them—useful for targeting an enemy's weak spot. Your dragon can also switch between three different forms: Base Wing, Heavy Wing, and Glide Wing. The first is balanced, the second very powerful but slow (and

Publisher: **Sega**
 Developer: **Smilebit**
 Players: **1**
 Also On: **None**
 Featured In: **EGM #162**
 Best Feature: **Breathtaking visuals**
 Worst Feature: **Camera fails in the heat of battle**
 Website: **www.panzer-dragon.com**



oncoming opposition, locks on to a finite number of targets, and when let go, sends forth a lethal fusillade of dragon-powered homing-lasers. This simple formula has been tweaked and refined over the course of the series, and *Orta* is the near-perfect extension of this.

Imaginative, alien worlds and creatures have always been a crucial part of the *Panzer* experience. The games look so innately bizarre that it's hard to look away from the beautiful environments. *Orta* doesn't disappoint on the freaky-fresh artistry tip. Yes, flocks of bulbous plant-like things, flying manta rays, and a skeletal quadraped boss

The dragon is back. For the few Sega Saturn loyalists out there who recognize what a miracle this is, well, hurrah for us—a toast is in order. For the rest of the world (you know who you are), who found comfort in the arms of the PlayStation and are doomed to buying *Panzer Dragoon Saga* on eBay, here's a bit of what you missed out on.

The series centers on the concept of a powerful dragon, with a lone rider on its back, emerging in humanity's time of need, usually to topple an evil empire of one ilk or another. Gameplay comes in the form of on-rails (meaning you can't move around freely except to aim) shooting action. Pressing the Fire button causes the rider's gun to burst with effective, but less accurate rapid shots. Holding the Fire button down creates a targeting reticle that, when passed over the



Not sure exactly what's going on here, but it kinda looks like that Shinobi dude is flying by on a giant Dreamcast controller, don't it?



unable to use a speed burst), and the third is the most mobile, but lacks lock-on attacks. Knowing which to use at each point can make the game considerably easier on the player. Skillful elimination of the enemy earns the dragon special orbs that help it level-up, and a maxed-out dragon is a fearful thing to behold.

The game, although just 10 levels long, offers a much steeper challenge than any of the previous chapters. In fact, it may be too hard for some casual gamers to enjoy. Hardcore fans will delight in this, but even they will get their asses kicked the first few times through. You'll want to stick with it, though—significant payoff awaits the tenacious. *Orta* signals the return of Pandora's Box—a menu full of unlockable goodies instituted in *Panzer Zwei*. This time around, the Box holds myriad secrets, ranging from classic CG cinemas from previous titles to sub-scenarios that let you play as other characters in *Orta*, like a land-based tank or a young enemy soldier in training, to a wealth of stat-tracking, and happily, to



the original *Panzer Dragoon* (what, no *Saga*?) in its entirety.

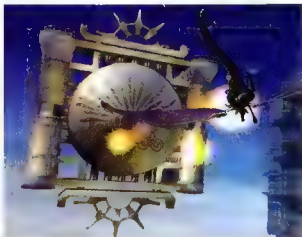
Will the modern world warm to the charms of a series it barely acknowledged in its past life? We can only hope. As Smilebit's Takayuki Kawagoe once told us, "We have a plan for the sequel to *Panzer Dragoon Saga*, but whether it happens depends on how people respond to *Orta*." Isn't that enough reason to run out and buy *Orta* now?



Several secret mini-games allow you to play as some of *Orta's* supporting cast.



Below: You could pound away at this shield until it cracks—but smart players will glide past this armored adversary, then do a quick 180 turn and shoot it in the back, where the armor's not so thick. Heck, if you get lucky, you may kill it with the boost attack that you do while gliding.



No one in the world is happier than me to be playing a new *Panzer Dragoon* game. Though the gameplay has always been, shall we say, streamlined, the atmosphere is what elevates this series. With *Orta*, developer Smilebit has gone back to the series' roots, resulting in the most beautiful on-rails shooter imaginable. Despite not letting you fly anywhere you want, *Orta* still offers some range of movement, creating a bit more sense of freedom. Also, the addition of the Speed Glide, which allows you to accelerate or slow down, adds an extra layer of technique to the classic *Panzer* gameplay. Zipping around to dodge attackers mixes up the standard blasting action—once you get the hang of changing dragon gears, you'll see a noticeable increase in your skill. The visual transformations your dragon receives with each level-up also inspire better performance, since expert dismantling of your enemies is required to achieve such results. The biggest problem with *Orta* is that the camera often has a hard time keeping up with your position on the radar in relation to the creatures you're fighting; losing sight of a target while making a breackneck speed-up maneuver near a towering boss monster is a pain. Still, hardcore gamers will savor every beautiful moment of *Orta*, and they'll keep playing it religiously to unlock the vast trove of amazing secrets—hidden stages, riders, cinemas, and an entire separate game.

Milkman

Ah *Orta*, how I've missed you. You left five long years ago, and never even called once. I thought you might be dead. Suddenly, you show up on my doorstep and ask if I own an Xbox. Thank God I do, because you are one incredible shooter. Your beautiful graphics, your gorgeous music—I must say, I'm impressed. And the gameplay...oh baby. Your new glide buttons make all the difference. They add a whole new level of depth to the action, which furthers the fun. Sure, you're kinda short, but hey, no one's perfect. And all the cool secret stuff you offer up (like a bunch of new missions and the original *Panzer Dragoon* from the Saturn) give you the staying power to satisfy any gamer.

Greg S.

Imagine a roller coaster ride so thrilling, you don't mind taking it over and over again. Now, imagine it in a fantastic new world, completely alien and yet totally believable, your senses overwhelmed by the breathtaking scenery and terrible monsters flying by. That's this game in a nutshell. *Orta* is blessed with the kind of gameplay that'll keep you coming back well past the six or so hours it takes to finish it your first time through. Different dragons, branching paths, experience levels, a ridiculously huge array of extras truly worth unlocking (unlike the little knickknacks some other games offer)—*Panzer's* so packed with features, I hesitate to label it "just" a shooter.

Mark

VISUALS	SOUND	INGENUITY	REPLAY
10	8	7	6

Shrek Super Party



Publisher: THQ Interactive
Developer: Mass Media
Players: 1-4
Also On: PS2

Try Instead: *Shrek on DVD*
Website: www.shrekgame.com

Best Features: Has some nice-looking visuals
Worst Feature: The most boring party game ever

It must be really hard to do a party game right, because no one outside Nintendo has been able to make a good one. *Super Party* might be the worst offender so far, and proves yet again that any game bearing the *Shrek* license stinks like the green Ogre's breath. Like the *Mario Party* series, it's a board game-like romp stuffed with a bunch of minigames. But where *Mario* has a fun, imaginative events, *Shrek* is full of dull, poorly constructed rip-offs that get recycled several times. You'll be utterly bored after a few minutes with these crappy diversions. Also, thanks to *Shrek*'s clunky system of interconnected paths, you'll barely see another living soul on your trek through the kingdom. It doesn't really matter where you are, though, since moving around the board is practically pointless—there's no goal-square to strive for. And, aside from rolling the die to move, not much is left to chance. If you suck at the minigames, you're going to lose—unlike *Mario Party*, which at least offers a fairly level playing field for gamers of all skill levels. Don't bother RSVPing for this party. **CJ**

VISUALS **SOUND** **INGENUITY** **REPLAY**

5 1 1 1

Altered Beast: Evolution of the Beast



Publisher: THQ
Developer: 3D6 Games
Players: 1 (2-4 Linked)
Also On: None
Rises: From Your Grave
Website: www.thq.com

Best Feature: Incredibly long quest
Worst Feature: Butt-ugly monster designs

If you're thinking to yourself, "*Altered who?*", odds are you weren't around in 1989, when Sega packed *Altered Beast* with the 16-bit Genesis console. The original *Beast* offered simplistic beat-em-up action with one crucial twist—you transform your average Joe into a different mutated beastman on every level. The game was neat but ultimately forgettable...until now. This belated sequel sticks surprisingly close to its forerunner in the gameplay arena. Your buff hero has the same arsenal of punches and kicks, and still gets all beastly by finding three power-ups. Some new items (like a shield, special punch attacks, and healing foods) help to spice up the action, but it's still basic brawling. Honestly, the gameplay is pure vanilla, but the game's extreme length makes it worthwhile—the original *Altered Beast* had five levels; this one's got 16. It also offers many new beast forms, but some of them look so unashably silly that you'll be laughing during the dramatic transformation scenes. If you can look past the ugly visuals, grab a friend and tackle this in Cooperative mode (but skip the dull four-man face-off). **Shane**

VISUALS **SOUND** **INGENUITY** **REPLAY**

5 4 4 3

Phantasy Star Collection



Publisher: THQ
Developer: Digital Eclipse
Players: 1
Also On: None
Nerdy Quibble: Slightly different sound
Best Feature: So much gaming for so little money
Worst Feature: No new enhancements
Website: www.thq.com

I'll admit it—I'm something of a *Phantasy Star* phanboy. Back in the olden days, I gladly fronted the \$69.99 for each of these classic RPGs and totally got my money's worth. RPGs were on the fringe back then, so odds are, you missed the *PS* games. Luckily, this franchise is getting a second shot on GBA, at a price that everyone can afford. You won't find any reworked graphics, faster walking speed, or new play modes here, but seriously, who needs 'em? In this case, the hands-off approach is a fine. These games are 99.9 percent perfect ports (the sound's a bit off) and, despite their age, still represent the finest role-playing available on GBA. Here's a quick rundown.

Phantasy Star—With three planets to explore, neat vehicles, cool music, and amazing 3D dungeons, this game rocked the RPG world in 1988. It's helihsly hard by modern standards, so be sure to boost the heroine up to level six before going to the second town.

Phantasy Star II—Another incredible title that broke new ground with its complex plot, dramatic cut-scenes, cool battle animations, and epic quest. It's also really difficult, but the struggle's well worth it. Stick with it.

Phantasy Star III—This tangential sequel wasn't made by the original *PS* guys; consequently, it's not quite as good. Still, the multi-generational concept is cool (your kids/grandkids carry on adventuring), and it's still worth your time and effort. **Shane**

I missed out on the *Phantasy Star* series up until now, but almost everything I'd heard was true. The first two games hold up surprisingly well—great characters, interesting stories, and lively, colorful graphics highlight these soul-crushingly difficult old-school quests. *PSIII* isn't nearly as bad as I'd heard, but it's still a mediocre RPG that fails to live up to its heritage. It would have been nice to see a few changes, like a faster walking speed and easier saving, to make the games more palatable to a modern audience. But it's hard to complain when you're getting two classics (and *PSIII*) at such a bargain price—just be prepared for a challenge. **Dave**

This is a tough game to review. On one hand, you have three of the finest old-school RPGs ever to grace a console. *Phantasy Star I* and *II* are among my favorite games of all time, easily comparable to the old *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Warrior* games in terms of depth and playability. *Phantasy Star III* isn't bad either, despite its reputation for being the black sheep of the series. In short, this is a very worthy compilation. On the other hand, THQ did absolutely nothing to enhance these games: No option to walk faster, no translation improvements, no nothing. It all boils down to a lazy-ass port of a truly classic trilogy. **John R.**

VISUALS **SOUND** **INGENUITY** **REPLAY**

5 5 5 5

Super Monkey Ball Jr.



Publisher: THQ/Sega
Developer: Realism
Players: 1 (2-4 Linked)
Also On: None
Also Try: *Super Monkey Ball 1, 2 (GC)*
Website: www.thq.com

Best Feature: Fun, addictive game play
Worst Feature: Controls aren't very intuitive

I have to admit, when I first heard that *Super Monkey Ball* was coming to Game Boy Advance, I scoffed. Who wouldn't? The original GameCube version is built around impressive 3D levels and pressure-sensitive analog control. How could Realism possibly hope to re-create the experience on a little 3D system with digital controls? Well, the fact of the matter is, the developers did, and they did a damn good job of it. *Monkey Ball Jr.* is as accurate a port as one could hope for on GBA—the 3D engine runs smoothly, mimicking the look and feel of the GC game while maintaining its tight controls. Granted, the lack of analog hurts a bit, but not as much as you'd expect, thanks to a smart control scheme that allows you to increase or decrease pressure with the A and B buttons. Just like its GC brethren, *Monkey Ball Jr.* features an assortment of surprisingly fun minigames, not to mention a bevy of "extra" levels that'll put your skills (and your patience) to the test. If you like simple, fun game play, *Jr.* comes highly recommended. **John R.**

VISUALS **SOUND** **INGENUITY** **REPLAY**

5 5 5 5

Tomb Raider: The Prophecy



Publisher: GIGAWATT
Developer: Ubi Soft
Players: 1
Also Try: *Playing Tomb Raider 2 again*
Lara Croft: Switch Flipper
Website: www.ubisoft.com

Best Feature: Smooth animation
Worst Feature: Same password save

After a side-scrolling outing on GBC, Lara Croft returns to handhells with this top-down adventure, but the change isn't for the better. The new view leeches all the tension out of the platforming elements, making death-defying leaps a breeze. I hoped the puzzles might pick up the slack, but *Prophecy* is little more than an endless procession of switches. By the end of the first location, I was begging for a few crates to push around. Don't expect combat to spice things up much, either—it's a simple matter of circle 'n' shoot to dispatch the standard baddies. All this is made even easier by the awful password save, which doesn't even keep track of your items. Instead, you'll find medkits and ammo around every corner, leaving you with little incentive to play carefully or search for secrets. Lara controls well and animates wonderfully, but the adventure she's been given is so bland that it hardly matters. Croft fanatics may want to give *Prophecy* a shot (maybe borrow it from some hapless Lara-lover who foolishly bought it), but their digital vixen has certainly seen better days. **Dave**

VISUALS **SOUND** **INGENUITY** **REPLAY**

5 4 4 3



The Rest of the Crap

Reviewing the games no one else bothered to

With marketing the way it is, a lot of us can get tricked into buying bad games. It's nothing to be ashamed of—marketing technology is just smarter than we are. That's why over 12 million of you are reading this with electric devices strapped to your gut, shocking your abs into a firm, luscious six-pack. The commercials for this product promise that you can grab a box of Twinkies and sit your way to fitness, but as soon as you strap one on, you see that all it really does is cover you with electrical burns and abruptly loosen your bowels. My point is, it's rare when people selling things are honest about how much their products suck, and that's what makes the games I'm forced to review so special. The people who make these things know they're bad, and they let you know by putting the words "Smurfs" or "Army Men" right in the titles. So remember—this column is not here to help you decide how to spend your Christmas money. It's here to thank these videogame developers for being so open with us about their ineptitude.

—Seanbaby



Papa Smurf exacts his own child-eating vengeance



▲ "Home base, we have an intruder; she's bouncing up and down in a pretty blue and pink jumpsuit." "My God. That's Secret Agent Barbie. Proceed with extreme fashion and fun!"

This game involves sneaking past guards by using stealth and Barbie's amazing knockout-gas-launching makeup case. I guess if I had to explain the gameplay, it's like a cross between *Metal Gear Solid* and teaming up with a group of talking kittens to reunite your divorced parents. The guards you have to sneak past are highly trained, and might even notice you if you bump into them with Barbie's plastic bod. If this happens, they won't try to escort you out, but they will talk excitedly about you on their walkie-talkies. This causes your Barbie stealth meter to go down, which means you only have about 20 minutes to walk several steps away from them before your cover is blown. I fully imagine it could take up to 20 minutes for a security guard to explain to his supervisor that a 6-foot blonde toy in a catsuit is jogging through the compound. Especially when you consider that sexy women make guys spurt out the names of body parts when they talk, it's likely he'd be saying, "Sir! There's an intruder in sector creamy thigh! I repeat: voluptuous, shapely breast!"



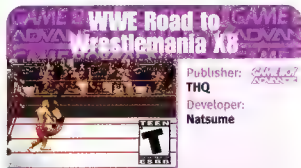
▲ You probably can't tell, but this is an army...you know what? We can't tell what this is supposed to be either.

Making a videogame requires a lot of people. Programmers, artists, designers, whatever... My point is, how do all these educated, professional people come together and decide to do this? How do you decide to take a franchise of games that was already bad and make one that's worse in every way? Is it hypnosis? Blackmail? Maybe it's some kind of practical joke or government program to integrate retarded people into society as videogame developers. Well, whatever it is, their secret is safe, because I can't figure out how this mess happened. You play the part of a tiny army man who needs to kill all the yellow army men. Good news for the yellow team: Getting the green guy to shoot in your direction is like trying to steer a blind man with sign language. And good news for you: Since your army man considers any buttons you press to be minor suggestions, you feel very little sense of responsibility when his body's impaled at the bottom of a spike pit.



▲ Holy Smurfs! Did you just throw a bucket of your own Smurf on me? (Note: This review covers a game that's so crappy, it's only available in Europe.)

Oh Smurf! Gargamel is preparing a Smurfical plan to kidnap all the Smurfs, and it's up to you to Smurf the Smurfs he's already Smurfed. I really wish I could tell you more, but that's how it was explained to me. Before you can even begin your mission, though, you have to get from one end of the Smurf Village to the other, and that's not as easy as it sounds. These horrible little creatures just throw their waste into the streets—sandbags, garbage, and buckets of liquid are constantly coming at you with deadly results. I might not have grown up in a mushroom, but I know that when a Smurf is throwing a bucket of blue fluid out of its window, it's probably not something you want touching your skin. And while you're slipping in a puddle of what most likely just came out of a Smurf's Smurhole, gardening Smurfs are absentmindedly flinging rocks at you, and hang-gilding Smurfs are falling out of the sky onto your head. Really, though, it's Smurfing awful. Pity the European gamers.



▲ "The Hulkster delivers a punishing body slam to Triple H, followed by a...a body slam! Now what's he doing? He's setting him up for the BODY SLAM!"

As you may know, the World Wrestling Federation lost a lawsuit to the World Wildlife Fund over the rights to the WWF abbreviation. Apparently, before, endangered species would get confused and hit each other in the head with steel chairs. And there was a paperwork mix-up that shipped Stone Cold Steve Austin to a zoo in an effort to impregnate his panda. Legal issues aside, X8 is like watching two insane puppeteers who, for reasons unknown, are staging a fight with man-nequins dressed in panties. The wrestlers are all stiff, grainy 3D renderings that move at the speed of erosion and have approximately one move each. This is scientific fact: There are *Mary-Kate* and *Ashley* games about singing to the elderly that have more wrestling moves than this game. Also, X8 is very faithful to every WWE Superstar's interminably long, zombie-like waddle into the ring. Other than catching a VD, buying this game is the most cost-effective way to inflict self-loathing. ☹



Tricks of the Trade

By David S J Hodgson

It's the section of the mag you forget to read when you're flicking from the reviews to the back page. Make a life-affirming decision to see the error of your ways. Why? We got *GTA: VC*, *pom*, *REØ*, *men* in tights, and *Samus*.

Tricks in Partnership with Prima Games

Tricks, strategies, and outrageous tomfoolery from *Star Wars Bounty Hunter*, *Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly*, *007 NightFire*, *Metrod Prime*, *Metrod Fusion*, *Splinter Cell*, *BMX XXX*, and *MechAssault* are taken from their respective guides.



Turning Tricks: Grand Finale

After literally *minutes* of counting (and recounting) the dozens of online opinions, *EGM* and *Games.com* are proud to say that the favorite trick of all time for every gamer in the world involves huge, wobbling jerkjacks on emaciated female game stars. Great.

63% The "female character huge breast augmentation or visible pants" code.

37% The "stiff kiddie where you'd never think to look" out of the way item.

WINNER!

Source: Games.com poll 10/10

LOSER!!

Top 5 Tricks of the Month

1 Resident Evil 0: Shockingly unexpected secrets!

I get to drop items all over the place, forget where they are, and lose sanity controlling two characters at once? While *RE* gameplay takes a turn for the demented, the game secrets are steadfastly refusing to evolve. You get a closet key when completing the game on **Normal** or **Hard** that unlocks a snazzy outfit (Billy) or leather getup (Becky) (1)? Next you'll be telling me there's a rocket launcher. Oh wait, there is (2). Get an S rank (3:30 or less) for the launcher, submarine gun, closet key, and the Leech Hunter minigame (3). Between 3:30 and 5 hours?

That's a crappy A rank, and you don't get the launcher. Collect the leeches and there's submarine gun bullets for Becky (1-29 leeches), unlimited handgun ammo (30-59), unlimited hunting gun ammo (60-89), a Magnum in room 202 (90-99), and all weapons with infinite ammo (100).

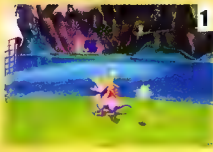


Bounty Hunter Unfettered 150

Gaining all 150 bounties? A feat too freakishly difficult to contemplate. Checking out the entire game and unlockables? A more manageable plan, by **Jango!** Tap these phases (no periods) in the Codes screen. For Chapter 1, try **SEETHETHEIRUN**. Chapter 2: **CITYPLANET**. Chapter 3: **LOCKDOWN**. Chapter 4: **DUGSOPLENTY**. Chapter 5: **BANTHAPOODOO**. Chapter 6: **MANDALORIANWAY**. All cards: **GO FISH**. All art: **R_ARTISTS_ROCK**.

2 Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly: some bright Sparx...

You know you love collecting coins. Or apples. Or shines. Or pieces of smoldering chicken hidden inside trash cans while Mike Haggar spins around with his arms outstretched. Ah, the joy of item collecting. Without items, all platform games would be like *Bubsy 3D*. Which is to say, unmitigated disasters. So thank your deity of choice that *Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly* is not. But it



does have far too many gems to locate. Until now. After you beat Ripto for the last time and try to collect your remaining gems,



press on both analog sticks until they click (1). That's click, not break. Sparx now points you to any unclaimed gems (2).



3 Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4: Spoon-bendin' & skaters!



Grind on the following unlockable skaters (PS2, GC, Xbox) and game tweaks (PS2 only). Matrix mode: **nospoon(1)**. **Superfly** is loony gravity. The

following are **premade skaters** (enter names): Aaron Skillman, Adam Lippman, Andrew Skates, Andy Marchal, Angus, Atiba Jefferson, Ben Scott Pye, Big Tex, Brian Jennings, Captain

Liberty, Chauwa Steel, Chris Peacock, ConMan, Danaconda, Dave Stohl, DDT, DeadEndRoad, Fakes the Clown, Fritz, Gary Jesdanun, grijost, Henry Ji, Jason Uyeda, Jim Jagger, Joe Favazza, John Rosser, Jow, Kenzo, Kevin Muhall, Kraken, Lindsey Hayes, Lisa G Davies, Little Man (2), Marilena Rixfor, Mat Hoffman, Matt Mcpherson, Maya's Daddy, Meek West, Mike Day, Mike Lashever, Mike Ward, Mr. Brad, Nolan Nelson. More next month!

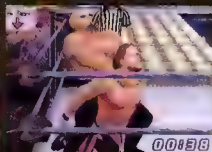
X-Men: N.D. Power Extreme!

All 8 spandex getups? All the characters? **Excelsior!** At the Main menu, hold down Lt and hit Ri, Ri, Le, Le, Do, Up, Cir (PS2). Hold down L and tap Ri, Ri, Le, Le, Do, Up, B (Xbox). Up, Up, Do, Do, Le, Ri, Le, Ri, A, B, Sta, Sta (GC). GC owners get even more! **One-hit kills:** Up, Up, Do, Do, X, Y, Y, X. **A.1. toggle:** Up, Up, Do, Do, A, B, B, X, X, Y, Y. **Super meter filled:** Up, Up, Do, Do, A, X, A, X.

One Bad Muthaf... **SMACKDOWN**

SHUT YOUR MOUTH

Forgotten Superstar #2 Scott Steiner



Shut Your Mouth lacking your favorite man-in-tights? Then use that handy Create a Superstar mode to put your favorite wrestlers back in the ring, where they belong. After the triumphant return of Tommy Dreamer, this month's created Superstar is Big Poppa Pump himself, Scott Steiner, a genetic freak who's suffered so many injuries and been through so many wars, that he officially qualifies as a disabled veteran.

Follow the simple instructions to add Scott Steiner to your WWE roster (if there are no directions for a particular Create mode option, leave it at default setting):

Appearance:
HEAD: Hair: #2(bleach/blond)
FACE: Mustache: #5 (bl/blond)
FACE: Mustache: #6 (dark brown, laid over mustache #5 with the Layer List)
FACE: Glasses: #10

LEGS: Tights: Blank: #1 (blk)
FEET: Shoes: Blank: #13 (blk)
BODY: Skin: #2
SKIN: Deep tan
FORM: Steiner is one of the most scarily overly muscled guys on the roster. Enlarge all of his body parts, especially the shoulders and arms. Make them thicker than they are wide.
FACE/HEEL: Neutral
CALL NAME: Big Daddy

ABILITY (Attack/Defense):
Powerful: 4/4
Speedy: 2/2
Technical: 2/2
Roughneck: 2/2
MOVE SET: Grappler
LOGIC 1: Grappler
LOGIC 2: Brawler
Moves: BASES: Taunt; Use Wrestling 1, Powerful, and Taunt Fighter 2 as taunts.
SMACKDOWNS: Super Camel Clutch
READY MOVES: Grapple; Give Steiner a wide variety of powerful moves, like slams, drops, and suplexes.
READY MOVES: Attack; Make sure that the Big Bad Booty Daddy has a good assortment of chops, kicks, and punches.
GROUND: Grapple; Steiner is from an amateur wrestling background, so several sleeper holds, chin locks, and leg locks are in order.
TURNBUCKLE: Grapple; The Frankensteiner must be in there; he invented it!



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Splinter Cell

A healthy amount of stealth. How to act professionally...



1 Three handy hints for not getting yourself killed: Feel the need to drop down from above? Then press the **Crouch** button in midair to perform a quiet landing. This prevents enemies from hearing you land regardless of the surface

2 **type (A).** Wall mines are good for ambushes; however, the delay in detonation sometimes allows foes to move outside its effective blast radius before it explodes. To expedite the detonation sequence, shoot it with one

of your weapons. Use the F2000's sniper view for increased accuracy **(2)**, finally, when possible, drop an adversaries from above **(3)**. Not only does this incapacitate a foe, but it also provides a soft and silent landing. And it feels nice.



TRICKS

007: NightFire

All the hidden features you can shake (but not stir) a stick at!



Replay missions four times for all the Bronze, Silver, Gold, and (yawn) Platinum 007 logos for the following goodies (cards, levels, MP skins, and weapon tweaks): **LEVEL 1:** Dominique (B), Jaws (A) (S), Racing Missile (B), Renard (A) (P), 2: Zoe (B), Oddjob (A) (S), Pistol (G), Baron Samedi (A) (P), 3: Military Snowmobile (B), Assassination

(S), Grapple (G), Zorin (S) (P), 4: Vanquish (B), Scaramanga (G) (S), Micro Camera Scope (G), May Day (7) (P), 5: Mayhew-Servant Girl (B), Uplink (S), Rifle (G), Xenia Onotopp (B) (P), 6: Kiko (G) (B), Team KDH (S), Pistol (G), Christmas Jones (A) (P), 7: Rook (B), Wai Lin (A) (S), Dart Gun (G), Goldfinger (A) (P), 8: Alura (B), Domitlon (S),

Pistol (G), Drake Suit (A) (P), 9: Vanquish Sub (B), Nik Nak (A) (S), Decryptor (G), Electra King (A) (P), 10: Ultralight Ultimate Laser (B), Protection (S), Stunner (G), Bond Tuxedo (A) (P), 11: Drake (A) (B), Explosive Scenery (S), Laser (G), Pussy Galore (A) (P), 12: Bond (B), Goldeneye Strike (S), Rifle (G), Bond Space (P).

Metroid Prime Meltdown!!

And we ain't talking about the game crashing. Here's the 411.



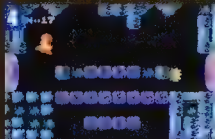
Let's reveal the endings first, shall we? There's three types: **worst, bad, and best.** You get these endings depending on the amount of items you pick up and scans. **Every item you take** (not including energy, ammo dropped by enemies or in crates) is your item percentage. Your scan per-



centage is **how complete your log book is.** Combine these totals into a percentage, and from 0-74% you get the worst ending. From 75-99%, you get the bad ending, 100%? Best ending. Then there's **Hard mode.** This is unlocked after you beat the game once. The foes are



tougher, and you're more vulnerable. Now comes the **Image galleries (1-3):** There's four. The first opens with 50% of scans. The second opens with 100% of scans. The third opens with 100% of pickups. The fourth is revealed when you steam through Hard mode. Finally!



Need even more cool stuff? Then nab both *Metroid Fusion* and *Prime* and finish them both. Once you complete *Fusion*, link your GBA to your GC and go to the Load screen in *Prime*. Select Fusion Connection Bonuses and follow the instructions for *NES Metroid*. Yes, **the complete**



game (A) on your GCI. Once you complete *Prime* and link-up, go to the Loading screen on *Prime*, and once GBA's loaded, claim **Samus' fusion suit** in *Prime!* Rockin'! Finally, here's a couple of tips for *Fusion (5-6):* in **tight quarters**, use Speed Booster to run over pit blocks without drop-



ping. Crouch to initiate the Shine Spark. Morph to the ball, jump to the next ledge, morph back, and use the Shine Spark (crouch) to pause Speed Booster. **Do this infinitely**, as long as you resume movement. In Shine Spark, jump to resume the Speed Booster.

CODEX

Hitman 2: Silent Assassin

Carnage-causing Cheat! Feel the need to pin your foe to walls, play in slo-mo, or muck about with the laws of physics? The correct answer is, "yes." Here's how:



In the game (no pause needed), quickly tap these inputs: **Slow Motion**
PS2: R2, L2, Up, Do, X, Up, L2
XB: R, L, Up, Do, A, Up, L
Full Health
PS2: R2, L2, Up, Do, X, Up, Do
XB: R, L, Up, Do, A, Up, Do

Punch Mode
PS2: R2, L2, Up, Do, X, Up, Up
XB: R, L, Up, Do, A, Up, Up
Gravity

PS2: R2, L2, Up, Do, X, L2, L2
XB: R, L, Up, Do, A, L, L
Lethal Charge

PS2: R2, L2, Up, Do, X, R1, R1
XB: R, L, Up, Do, A, B1, B1
Bomb Mode

PS2: R2, L2, Up, Do, X, Up, L1
XB: R, L, Up, Do, A, Up, Wh
Megaforce (restart removes)

PS2: R2, L2, Up, Do, X, R2, R2
XB: R, L, Up, Do, A, R, R

Nailgun Mode (above)
PS2: R2, L2, Up, Do, X, L1, L1
XB: R, L, Up, Do, A, Wh, Wh

Level Select (in Main menu)

PS2: R2, L2, Up, Do, Squ, Tri, Cir
XB: R, L, Up, Do, X, Y, B

God Mode (Xbox only)

R, L, Up, Do, A, R, L, B1, Wh
All Weapons (Xbox only)
R, L, Up, Do, A, Up, X, A

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In pro career, **CHACHING** as your name gets you all ATVs. In pro career, **WHATEXIT** as your name unlocks all levels.



ALIVE & Kickin'!

MechAssault Mech Mayhem & the Candy Monster!

 Making the most of mechs? Need an overly powerful suit or an insane online game variation? Good thing you're here.

Going online? Not until you've completed the Campaign mode. When you do, you'll unlock the Ragnarok (1) and Ymir (2) for multiplayer action. These two mechs are **insanely powerful**; the Ymir is a potent variant of the Ragnarok, you never saw in the single-player experience. It's got secret technology, the "you're having a lava gun, aren't you" power of its lava gun, and damn-line shields. Gauss rifles and LRMs handle long-range sniping, while the lava gun is fabulous at mid to short ranges. However, the Ragnarok isn't as armored as the Atlas, and the lava gun creates nasty splash damage and must be manually aimed. Try **knocking down your foes with the gauss rifles, then switch to the lava gun.** LRMs? Tanks and turret takedown. Master the shields system, too; flick them on just before a PPC or missile barrage. Choose the Ymir over the Ragnarok, and you lose a bit of sniping ability but gain the **quad autocannons'** superior firepower. The PPCs are awesome at long range, but don't alternate them with the lava gun or you'll be **hobbling in a heat haze**. Finally, try this insane online game experience: **The Candy Monster.** Suit up everyone in team 1 as Elementals with Brat voice mask. One other guy is a mech. Then let rip (3-5)!



Animal Crossing

Golden axes and top-notch clothing designs!

 This month: A crash-course in awesome game-character clothing, and how to unlock the three golden items....

Clockwise from left, a Goomba (palette 11), Kirby (7), Mario (16), and Mega Man (16). For a **golden shovel**, plant a shovel in the ground with gold light. Keep your town in best condition for a week for the **golden axe**. The **rod of gold**? Catch all 40 fish!



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Grand Theft Auto *Advice* city



Here in my car... I feel safest of all... with those cheats activated!



1 For most of the game, the only way to get rid of a car is to burn it. This is a great way to get rid of a car that's in your way, or a car that's blocking your path. To burn a car, simply shoot it with a fire weapon, or use a firebomb. The car will catch fire and eventually explode.



2 Every time you load a new game, you'll find a car in your garage. This car is usually a cheap, low-quality car. If you want a better car, you can buy a new one from the in-game car dealership. This is a great way to get a better car without having to steal one.



3 If you want to get a lot of money, you can steal a car and drive it to a bank. This is a great way to get a lot of money without having to steal a lot of money. To steal a car, simply drive it to a bank and park it in front of the bank. Then, go inside the bank and steal the money.



4 If you want to get a car that's not in your garage, you can steal a car from a car lot. This is a great way to get a car that's not in your garage. To steal a car, simply drive to a car lot and steal a car. This is a great way to get a car that's not in your garage.



5 If you want to get a car that's not in your garage, you can steal a car from a car lot. This is a great way to get a car that's not in your garage. To steal a car, simply drive to a car lot and steal a car. This is a great way to get a car that's not in your garage.



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ALL-POINTS MULLET-IN

Grand Plans Glitches and Gibbering



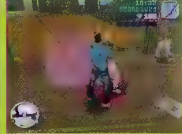
Sam's Hot Car Lot II
The infamous GTA3 method of parking a car halfway in your garage to stop the door from closing, then driving in more cars than your garage normally holds, works here.



Sam's Hot Bike Lot
This glitch is new and improved; you don't need a car to rest the garage door on; ride a bike in and park it near the door. Hop back on and zoom in before it closes. Cram it!



Cop a load of this
Spent an overly long amount of time battering policemen to death? Time to turn the tables. If you see a cop getting assaulted and help out, you're rewarded! Now mug him!



Mostly 'Armless
Locate a pink mission marker armed with a katana or dusters. Hold the Attack button so Tommy raises his hand up. Enter the mission for Tommy arm-crank hilarity.

**FROM THE VAULT
PANZER BONANZA!!**

Original Panzer Dragoon Cheats!



Why, Orta...
We're prepping for mad Pandora's Box revelations next issue, but until the release of *Panzer Dragoon Orta*, here's some oh-so-amusing codes for the original Saturn *Panzer*. One of the worst-kept secrets in videogaming is the inclusion of the **entire original Panzer game** inside *Orta*.

And yes, it does take 45 minutes to complete. Especially if you flick on the **invincibility code**. Below are tricks for the Saturn version of the game (at Main Menu screen). Want to try them on Xbox? Change C to Black and Z to White. Hey, some of them might even work....
Invincibility Mode: L, L, R, R, Up, Do, Le, Ri, Wizard Mode

(game runs twice as fast): L, R, L, R, Up, Do, Up, Do, Le, Ri
Stage Select (all seven stages selectable, plus the ending; last level shown below): Up, Up, Do, Do, Le, Ri, Le, Ri, X, Y, Z
Secret Stage Zero (shooting foes adds health, you lose health constantly): Up, Up, Up, Do, Do, Do, Le, Ri, Le, Ri, Le, Ri, L, R.



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Malice	Sierra	1/1/03
War of the Monsters	SCEA	1/5/03
The Sims	Electronic Arts	1/15/03
Primal	SCEA	1/17/03
Vexx	Acclaim	2/1/03
Starsky and Hutch	Empire Interactive	2/2/03
.hack: Infection	Bandai America	2/15/03

Xbox

Malice	Vivendi Universal	1/1/03
Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball	Tecmo	1/15/03
Panzer Dragoon ORTA	Sega	1/16/03
Kung Fu Chaos	Microsoft	2/1/03
Marvel vs. Capcom 2	Capcom	2/13/03
The Lost	Crave Entertainment	2/15/03

GameCube

Resident Evil 2	Capcom	1/9/03
Resident Evil 3: Nemesis	Capcom	1/9/03
Freaky Flyers	Midway	1/15/03
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Conflict: Desert Storm	Gotham Games	2/21/03
Wario World	Nintendo	2/27/03

Game Boy Advance

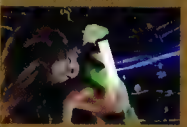
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	Midway	12/11/02
A Sound of Thunder	bami entertainment	12/15/02
Grand Theft Auto 3	Destination Software	12/19/02
Downforce	Titus	2/19/03
Samurai Jack: The Amulet of Time	bami entertainment	3/1/03
Wizardry: The Summoning	Crave Entertainment	3/7/03

BMX XXX: X-POSED!!

The speedy underbelly of BMX and soft-porn gaming. How!

Take BMX bikes. Add low-grade porn. Alternate between the two. You get BMX XXX. Not as embarrassing to own as *Turok: Evolution*? No.

All codes entered at the Cheat menu:
Stage select:
MASS_HYSTERIA
Level select:
XXX_RATED_CHEAT
Amish Boy:
ELECTRICITYBAD
All FMV movies:
CHAMPAGNE_ROOM



Bonus Movie 1 FMV:
THISISBMXX
Bonus Movie 2 FMV:
KEEPITDIRTY
Dam 1 FMV:
BOING
Final Movie FMV:
DDUULRRRLRSQUARE
Las Vegas 1 FMV:
HIGHBEAMS
Las Vegas 2 FMV:
TASSLE
Launch Pad 69 1 FMV:
FLINGPOO
Launch Pad 69 2 FMV:
PEACH
Rampage park 2 FMV:

BURLESQUE
Sheep Hills 1 FMV:
ONEDOLLAR
Sheep Hills 2 FMV:
59
Syracuse 1 FMV:
FUZZYKITTY
Syracuse 2 FMV:
MICHAELHUNT
The Bronx, NYC 1 FMV:
LAPDANCE
The Bronx, NYC 2 FMV:
STRIPTEASE
JGP Roots Jam 2 FMV:
BOOTYCALL
All bikes:
65 SWEET RIDES
Amish Boy's bikes:
AMISHBOY1699
Hellkitty's bikes:
HELLKITTYA87
Itch's bikes:
ITCH1594
Ioyride's bikes:
JOYRIDE18
Karma's bikes:
KARMA331
Lat'ey's bikes:
LATEY411
Manuel's bikes:
MANUEL415
Mika's bikes:
MIKA362436
Nutter's bikes:
NUTTE1290

Rave's bikes:
RAVE40
Skeeter's bikes:
SKETEER6666
TripleDut's bikes:
TRIPLE-DU8922
Twan's bikes:
TWAN18
Launch Pad 69:
SHOWMETHEMONKEY
Rampage Skatepark:
IOWARULES
The Dam:
THATDAMLEVEL
Las Vegas:
SHOWMETHEMONEY
Roots:
UNDERGROUND
Sheep Hills:
BAABAA
Syracuse:
BOYBANDSUUCK
Gap Location:
PARABOLIC
Night visions:
3RD SOG
Steer Ghost Bikes:
GHOSTCONTROL
Bouncing Crashes:
HEAVYPETTING
Happybunny (more air):
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Grand Theft Auto *Advice city*


**ALL-POINTS
MULLET-IN**

PS2

Ooh woh, L...I just died in your arms tonight. Without these codes!


Let's get this second page of codes off to rockin' start and go all "Roger Moore in the Esprit" with cars that work on **land and water**: R1, R2, Cir, R1, L2, Squ, R1, R2. Note the car wheels act as



flotation devices (1). This next code's completely bizarre. Change the **tire size** of your vehicle (R1, X, Tri, R1, R2, Squ, Up, Do, Squ). Some wheels get big (2), while others get small. Input the code



repeatedly to increase (or decrease) the dimensions. Some cars (like the Caddy or Bobcat) get speed increases, too! Now save your game, reload it (PS2 must remain on) to keep increas-



ing the speed. Stop the code by switching your PS2 off. Another effect of this code is that your wheels keep inflating. The more insane of you can keep this up until the vehicles are too high off the ground to enter. You lunatics.



Destroy all cars (3): R2, L2, R1, L1, L2, R2, Squ, Tri, Cir, Tri, L2, L1. Jump (using L3 or R3) while driving (Tri, R1, R1, Le, R1, L1, R2, L1). Want to relive *State of Emergency* in a game that isn't crap? Try the **riot** code: Do, Le, Up, Le, X, R2,



R1, L2, L1. Take it up a notch with Do, Up, Up, Up, X, R2, R1, L2, L2; **pedestrians attack!** Now, give **bystanders weapons (4)** with R2, R1, X, Tri, X, Tri, Up. Do these three codes can't be removed. For **undead Smokey** (police return



from the dead), try Cir, L1, Do, L2, Le, X, R1, L1, R1, X. How about some fun with the instant **clothing change (5)** (including a police costume): R1, R1, Le, Up, L1, L2, Le, Up, Do, R1. Repeat it to keep



changing. For the top-heavy **Candy Succx (6)**, tap Cir, R2, Do, R1, Le, R1, L1, L1, X, L2. **Hilary King** is R1, Cir, R2, L1, R1, R1, L1, X, R2. **Ken Rosenberg** is R1, L1, Up, L2, L1, R1, R1, L1, X, R1. **Lance**



Vance is Cir, L2, Le, X, R1, L1, X, L1. Two **Love Fist** band members? Do, L1, Do, L2, Le, X, R1, L1, X, X or R1, L2, R2, L1, R1, R2, Le, X, Squ, L1. **Mercedes (7)**: R2, L1, Up, L1, R1, R1, Up, Cir, Tri. **Phil**



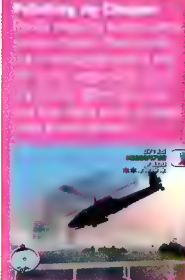
Cassidy: R1, R1, Up, R2, L1, R1, R1, L1, R1, Cir. **Ricardo Diaz (8)**: L1, L2, R1, R2, Do, L1, R2, L2. **Sonny Forelli (9)**: Cir, L1, Cir, L2, Le, X, R1, L1, X, X. Note the "skin" codes can cause your game to freeze. Instant **suicide**? R1, L2, Do, R1, Le,



Le, R1, L1, L2, L1 (this gets you back your original setup). **Slo-mo** mode: Tri, Up, R1, Do, Squ, R2, R1. **Fast-mo** mode: Tri, Up, R1, Do, L2, L1, Squ. The final round of codes? Weather and gun-toting chicks. **Normal**: R2, X, L1, L1, L2, L2, L2,



Do. **Sunny (10)**: R2, X, L1, L1, L2, L2, L2, Tri. **Rain (11)**: R2, X, L1, L1, L2, L2, L2, Cir. **Fog (12)**: R2, X, L1, L1, L2, L2, L2, X. **Overcast**: R2, X, L1, L1, L2, L2, L2, Squ. Now, add **bikini gals and guns**: R1, L1, Cir, L2, Le, X, R1, L1, L1, X.



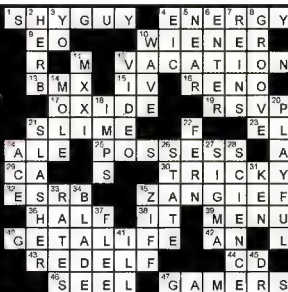
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ANSWERS TO "SIM-SATION" CROSSWORD PUZZLE



on page 56

From the Editors of
Electronic Gaming Monthly
Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine
Computer Gaming World
GameNOW and Xbox Nation





Adult Games: I Don't Wanna Grow Up!



Videogames: growing up, or just throwing up?

Jennifer: First of all, I want to go on record saying I'm a big Howard Stern fan—I have no problem with raunchy humor aimed at a mature audience as long as it's genuinely funny. But are "adult" games headed in the direction of *BMX*

up a tape where you wouldn't have to complete frivolous goals to see some action.

Shane: I'd love to see truly sophisticated games with mature themes gain popular acceptance as a legit pastime for adults, but then you'd probably have real enforcement, by law, of ESRB ratings...and then, I suspect, publishers would be discouraged from making M-rated games.

Chris: Not if the *BMX XXX*-perment ends up working—then we're going to see more and more of that kind of game.

Shoe: I actually think the industry has room for "immature" mature titles like *BMX XXX*. Hey, if movies like *American Pie* or *Not Another Teen Movie* can get away with sex and fart jokes, why can't games? If we want games to gain mainstream acceptance like music, film, or TV—that is, if we want Mr. Average Joe American not to get any more bent out of shape over a new *Grand Theft Auto* than he would over a new Martin Scorsese gangster flick—then we have to start treating this medi-

an audience larger than the twentysomething male demographic we talk about as the adult market today—I'm talkin' about the 30- to 45-year-old soccer moms. Think about it: They make all the buying decisions, they have free time during the day, the systems are already in their houses for their kids...*Days of Our Lives: The Game, Russell Crowe's Pro Stripper*—the possibilities are endless. The industry better get on the ball 'cause you can bet your bippy somewhere, deep in the bowels of Oprah's underground labs, someone's already working on it....

Demian: I give it about five years until there are games that appeal to soccer moms. Not that I'm counting the days or anything. But as a part of the first generation of kids to grow up with games, I can safely say we're getting old. Fast. The older we get, the more games will target the soon-to-be-lucrative grumpy codger market.



Pro Stripper: a future hit with the ladies?

Jennifer: Perhaps, but I think it'll take way longer than five years. I'm no soccer mom, but the games that really appeal to me the way a (gasp) romantic comedy or good novel would are as few and far between as to be nonexistent.

Demian: I think something like *The Sims Online* may appeal to soccer moms, and that's only a few years away from being on a console...but no, I don't think *Russell Crowe's Pro Stripper* will be here in five.

Jennifer: *The Sims* definitely scratches the surface, but even since its introduction almost three years ago, you haven't seen anything like it anywhere. And what about soccer dads or younger women?

Mark: Soccer dads? Oh, you mean pro soccer players? There's plenty of *FIFA* games for them....

Jennifer: Silly, silly.... I meant, what about all the different demographics? Movies and TV appeal to people from ages 2 to 200, it seems, and in every economic bracket. With videogames, you just don't get that variety of content.

Shane: Different demographics? Look at all the Barbie and Olsen twins games poor Seanbaby has to review! Those multiple demographics are takin' over!

If American Pie or Not Another Teen Movie can get away with the sex and fart jokes, why can't games?

XXX? I'm guessing grown-up gamers are actually looking for something a bit more, well, mature.

Chris: For the amount of time you waste trying to unlock the cinemas with nudity in *BMX XXX*, you could've run to an adult-video store to pick

um like the others. The more closely games mirror "normal" forms of entertainment, good or bad, the more people will realize games aren't just for pimply-faced kids anymore.

Crispin: But we've seen titles that rely on nudity and fart jokes before—remember last month's article on naughty games? Those odd-ball games just featured nudity for the sake of nudity. They wound up as nothing more than funny footnotes in gaming history—they sure didn't pioneer a new adult genre. I think only intelligent M-rated games like *Vice City* and *The Getaway* will do that.

Greg: I agree. Titles like *BMX XXX* simply prove that games still really are just for pimply-faced kids. They might have a place once games are a more widely accepted form of entertainment (like *American Pie* in the movie industry), but they certainly aren't trailblazing in any real way.

Mark: I'm wondering when games will appeal to



Games with mature themes, like *The Getaway*, may be the best way for the industry to grow.



NEXT MONTH

ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

March 2003

Issue #164, on sale Feb. 4

The Legend Returns

Link, Nintendo's tyke in tights, makes his doe-eyed debut on GameCUBE, and we dive into his Day-Glo world to see whether *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* is the next must-buy Cube game or just cartoony kid's stuff. But if Link's loony toon look turns you off, why not peel rubber to our world-exclusive *Driver 3* cover story to satisfy your need for misdeeds? This next installment in the megahit series is coming to all the major consoles, and we have exclusive new screens and all the road-raging info. Plus, we give non-blockbuster games their due with a look at the five niftiest titles you've never heard of.



Backyard Wrestling



The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker



Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball

Reviewed Next Month:

- **The Getaway** (PS2)
- **Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball** (Xbox)
- **Devil May Cry 2** (PS2)
- **Xenosaga: Episode I** (PS2)
- **Disaster Report** (PS2)

Previewed Next Month:

- **Backyard Wrestling** (PS2)
- **NBA Street Vol. 2** (PS2/Xbox)
- **Midnight Club II** (PS2/Xbox)
- **Return to Castle Wolfenstein** (PS2/Xbox)
- **Hitman 2** (GC)
- **Vexx** (PS2, GC, Xbox)

All editorial content is subject to change.

OFFICIAL U.S. PlayStation MAGAZINE

Feb. 2003
On sale Jan. 14

Demo Disc Playables

- **The Getaway**
- **Dark Cloud 2**
- **NBA ShootOut 2003**
- **Ratchet & Clank**
- **ATV: Quad Power Racing 2**
- **Madden NFL 2003**
- **Black & Bruised**
- **Run Like Hell: Hunt or be Hunted**
- **Shaun Murray's Pro Wakeboarder**
- **Def Jam Vendetta**

THE GETAWAY

It's not just a *GTA* clone—far from it. Read all about this gritty, dark, cinematic experience, then check out *OPM's* exclusive demo.



The Getaway



Dark Cloud 2

GAMENOW

Feb. 2003
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Reviews:

- **The Sims** (PS2)
- **Skies of Arcadia Legends** (GC)
- **Asheron's Call 2** (PC)
- **Panzer Dragoon Orta** (Xbox)

Previews:

- **Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic** (Xbox)
- **Command & Conquer: Generals** (PC)
- **The Getaway** (PS2)
- **Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb** (Xbox)

DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI

Dragon Ball Z: Budokai is here—and we've got everything you need to know to battle your way to Super Saiyan greatness. And now that you've been playing *Vice City* for a while, make sure you've gotten through every nook and cranny of the game with our 14-page strategy special.



Dragon Ball Z

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

Feb. 2003
On sale Jan. 7



Unreal 2



Splinter Cell

Reviews

- **Earth & Beyond**
- **Medal of Honor: Spearhead**
- **Civ III: Play The World**
- **MechWarrior 4: Mercenaries**
- **EverQuest: Planes of Power**

Previews

- **Unreal 2**
- **Rainbow Six: Raven Shield**

SPLINTER CELL

The best stealth game since *Thief* and *Metal Gear Solid* hits the PC, and our hands-on preview shows that you don't have to get an Xbox to enjoy this great game.



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a legend reawakens.*



Animated Blood
Violence





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