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Are The Lad

Twilight of the Spirit



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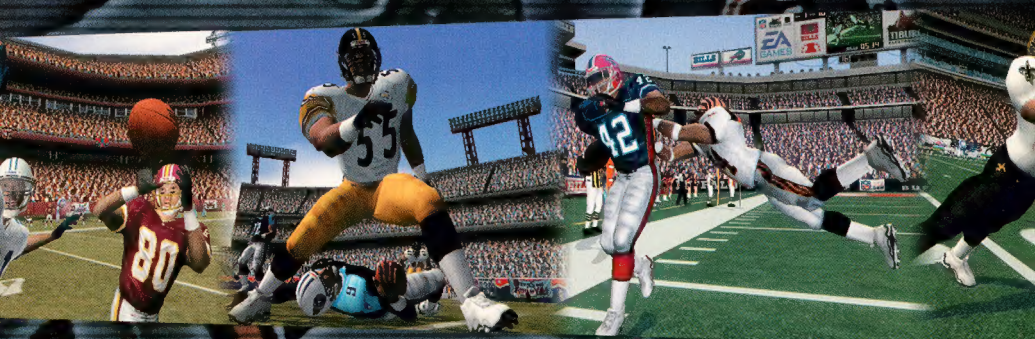
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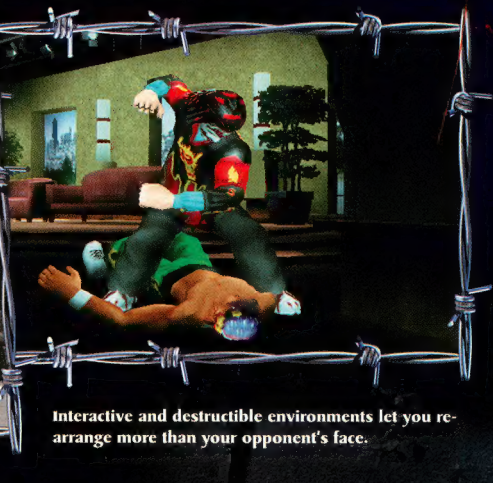
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designed by
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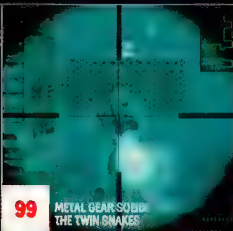
The Master Chief reestablishes camp at the top of our list

86 COMING SOON

So many games, so little time

30 GAMES YOU MUST PLAY THIS FALL

94 The dog days of summer are behind us, and now it's time for the true gaming season to begin. The *EGM* crew has painstakingly gone through this fall's extensive catalog and selected 30 games to keep on your radar, including *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!*, *Legacy of Kain: Defiance, 007: Everything or Nothing*, *Castlevania: Lament of Innocence*, and *Ninja Gaiden*.



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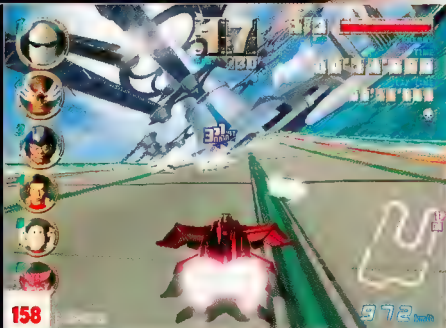
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RETRO-ACTIVE
The '80s return to the gaming scene





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COVER STORY: **SOCOM: U.S. NAVY SEALS II**

The sequel to Sony's squad-based tactical shooter infiltrated its way to the No. 1 slot on our top fall games, so we decided it deserved our cover. In our exclusive hands-on report, we brief you on how *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs II* has made the necessary adjustments both off- and online.

editorial



I want your money. I'm not talking for subscriptions*, either. I want you to support great, unlicensed, undermarketed games.

We all know it: Gamers are spending too much money on subpar products, and that's not necessarily good news. "When the mainstream buys games like *Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness* and *Enter the Matrix*, developers will continue to pump out crap titles because they know people will buy

them regardless of their quality," says SenFunkernickel on the egmmag.com message boards. "What better way to let developers know we're begging for more crap than giving up \$50 for it?" adds goldryu2002.

Besides the love of the word "crap," these guys have something else in

common with a lot of gamers these days: They're worried about the state of the industry. If we're supporting bad games with our dollars, we're gonna continue to get bad games. That's why we need to pay attention to the underdogs that would love a bigger piece of the bone, like *Viewtiful Joe*, *Ikaruga*, *Ico*, *Otagi*, or *Panzer Dragoon Orta*—awkward names but quality games that unfortunately will never sell as well as something tied to a major franchise or license.

Don't forget about these little guys, OK? Without our dough, you won't see too many of them in the future. Look beyond the cover stories, and check your favorite magazine or website's reviews to make sure you don't miss out on something special. Then spread the word. —Dan "Shoe" Hsu, Editor-in-Chief

* Though we do have some great deals for you! Slako the magazine open and watch the offers come flying out. Just watch your eyes, please.

staff

an army of one, times 15

the review crew

 <p>DAN "SHOE" HSU Editor-in-Chief Someone's hair is writing checks his butt can't cash—Shane B. owes Shoe \$30 from <i>Soul Collector II</i> and <i>Nintendo Puzzle Collection</i> bits. Now, the hip boss plans on collecting this debt... Now Playing: <i>Dog</i>, <i>Final Fantasy Tactics Advance</i>, <i>Soul Cal II</i> Fave Genres: All of 'em</p>	 <p>MARK MACDONALD Executive Editor In a Martin Brando-esque move, Mark sent Poohi here to the staff photo shoot in protest to Peul and Damian's <i>F-Zero GX</i> scores. "Way too low, Peul!" he said in a written statement. Now Playing: <i>F-Zero GX</i>, <i>Viewtiful Joe</i>, <i>Fave Genres:</i> Action, Adventure, Shooters</p>	 <p>JENNIFER TSAO Managing Editor While reviewing <i>Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour</i>, Jennifer actually found herself taking breaks to watch tournament reruns on the Golf Channel. "What's so sexy is that site played it." Now Playing: <i>Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic</i>, <i>SSX 3</i> Fave Genres: Action, Sports, Adventure, RPG</p>	 <p>CRISPIN BOYER Features Editor Before he rides coast to America, Crispin had to pay many turps and potato to play just one videogame. Now magazine pay Crispin many turps and potato to play videogame. What a country! Now Playing: <i>Star Wars: KOTOR</i>, <i>Boktai</i> Fave Genres: Adventure, RPG</p>	 <p>CHRIS "CJ" JOHNSTON News Editor CJ hung out in SoCal at the outdoor ground zero—Anime Expo—over July 4th weekend. At least he's not the biggest otaku in the digg, and with Florida and Akame! Now Playing: <i>Mario Golf: TT</i>, <i>F-Zero GX</i> Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, Puzzle</p>
 <p>SHANE BETTENHAUSEN Reviews Editor If Shoe thinks he's ever gonna see a little cash, he's got another thing coming. Two, actually: A wooden cutlass to the groin and a ninja star in the eye. We think we can't save you now, little man! Now Playing: <i>Boktai</i>, <i>Disgaea</i>, <i>FF</i> Fave Genres: Action, RPG, Fighting</p>	 <p>JOE FIELDER Reviews Editor Driven mad by low-games coverage, Joe began devouring every game that got in his way this month. Unable to stop moving, eating, or playing, he's the most feared game player on earth. Now Playing: <i>Jak II</i> Fave Genres: Action, Shooters, Adventure</p>	 <p>DEMIAN LINN Editor-at-Large The middle crisis came a little easier. But one cool crying jag, a haircut, and an electric-blue 1988 Camaro IRC-Z later, and everything was so totally cool again. Now Playing: <i>ESPN NHL Hockey</i>, <i>Soul Cal II</i>, <i>WarCraft 3 (PC)</i> Fave Genres: Action, Hockey, Racing</p>	 <p>PAUL BYRNES Associate Editor [Force Persuade] You want to buy <i>Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic</i>. You will enjoy playing as a light or dark Jedi, staying up well past your bedtime to gain one more level! Now Playing: <i>Star Wars: KOTOR</i>, <i>SSX 3</i> Fave Genres: RPG, Fighting, Adventure</p>	 <p>BRYAN INTIHR Associate Editor Dwyn had the lastest look of shock on his face when fellow editor Shane handed him a <i>MASCAR</i> game for review this month. To his amazement, it wasn't half bad. Now Playing: <i>F-Zero GX</i>, <i>Freedom Fighters</i>, <i>SSX 3</i> Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, Sports</p>
 <p>SHAWN ELLIOTT Associate Editor The big boss declined Shawn's offers to play <i>Soul Collector II</i> for cash, prompting him to reply, "I don't mean to brag or boast, but you know my Talk bit was the only one to get the most." Recognizing <i>Soul Cal II</i>, <i>Viewtiful Joe</i>, <i>SSX 3</i> Fave Genres: Fighting, Shooters</p>	 <p>JON DUDLAK Contributing Reviewer Having finally owned <i>Rings</i>, Jon decided to get a call for his own time-shifting needs. Unfortunately, he's not much of a time sweeper. But Iraq 'im to a pole and he's a decent floor sweeper! Now Playing: <i>Chrono Trigger</i>, <i>Fulcrum</i> Fave Genres: Action, Fighting, Racing</p>	 <p>GREG FORD Contributing Reviewer After reviewing <i>Crash: The Simpsons: Hit & Run</i> this month, Ford wondered what he'd look like as an animated character. So Grooming does he make the cut? Now Playing: <i>Madden 2004</i>, <i>NFL Blitz Pro</i> Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, Sports</p>	 <p>JOHN RICCIARDI Contributing Reviewer After five nights of playing <i>F-Zero GX</i> until four in the morning, Ricciardi finally fell asleep at the wheel. Not pictured: Captain Falcon putting John's hand in warm water. Now Playing: <i>Mario Golf: TT</i>, <i>F-Zero GX</i>, <i>F-Zero AM</i>, <i>Soul Cal II</i> Fave Genres: Action, RPG, Sports</p>	 <p>GREG SEWART Contributing Reviewer Sewart says that the first hockey game developer to land Don Cherry as its color guy will have the support of an entire nation of rowdy, drunken Canadians. Now Playing: <i>MASCAR Thunder 2004</i>, <i>War</i> Fave Genres: RPG, Racing, Action</p>

the contributors

- ◆ Despite taking a peripheral for the pen-powered game in our "Sneaky Staff" story, **LAUREN BOSKEL** still investigates accounts...
- ◆ **MIKE HUNTER** (*IGN*) and **ANDREW HUNTER** (*IGN*) also work across the pages of *Esquire*, get to draw the childhood heroes of our "Retro-Action" article...
- ◆ We hired **Ryan Heston** (*IGN*) to compare to *Shogun* as an internet expert on *Warcraft 3*... and **MIKE HUNTER** (*IGN*) snuggled around the shiny world of *Warcraft 3*... the next game from the makers of *StarCraft*...
- ◆ **ANDREW HUNTER** (*IGN*) is the "Dropper" reporter...
- ◆ **STEVEN MACDONALD** (*IGN*) is the latest for our fall pairing feature...
- ◆ Although one Contribution short of forming a **CONTRIBUTOR**, **SEAN BROWN** still managed to get our "Retro-Action" article...
- ◆ Veteran Interviewer **JUSTIN SPIER** helped dig up the "30 Games You Must Play This Fall" feature...
- ◆ Regular contributor **BOB STINE** (*IGN*) brought magnificent mounts to our snowboarding special...
- ◆ **GEORGE KENNEDY** got to the bottom of the special "Where's My Intention?" or "Dropper" report...
- ◆ **JACK HARRIS**' (*IGN*) friends convinced him to lend us helping to review *Crashy* games while his colorist and former Editor *Chi* Chou tested himself to *Crashy*...
- ◆ We owed for help on our sister mag for the positionist, **BARNEYS**, sent us to Miguel Lopez, Chris Shepard, and Ethan Elhorn...
- ◆ **OFFICIAL MS. PLAYTESTER** **EMERSON** (*IGN*) and **CHRIS** (*IGN*) used *Crashy* to get their own magazine done while floating around our site...
- ◆ And finally, **GRAN**'s courageous cover story... they're instead in four separate games.

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DESIGN
Art Director: Menoche Martinez
Creative Art Director: Stefan Belenky

CONTRIBUTORS
Jason Balden, Chris Baker, David Chen, Chi Chow, Robert Coffey, John Davidson, Ron Dutt, Erik Heston, Jon Gibson, Jason Lancaster, Stephen Hancock, David Hedgeson, Jeremy Henner, Scott Koberly, Sam Kennedy, Miguel Lopez, James Minko, Greg Orlando, Andrew Prisco, Tom Price, Joe Russell, Norm Scott, Seanbaby, Nik Schum, Game Slaughter, Jason Spier, Gary Steinman, Jimmy Turrell

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SALES AND MARKETING
Group Publisher: Les Unsack
Group Editor: Dan "Shoe" Hsu
Group Associate Publisher: Stan Tapani
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Advertising Director: Mari Yamaguchi
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By Area
District Sales Manager: Mary Gray
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Account Executive: Amy Almbra
415-547-8780, fax: 415-547-8777
Online
Marketing Account Manager: Bill Young
415-547-8945, fax: 415-547-8777
Internet Director: Ray Ledda 415-547-8775
Assoc. Research Director: May Tong 415-547-8540
Marketing Coordinator: Wayne Shu 415-547-8540
Senior Advertising Coordinator: Tyler Ubbelsahle 415-547-8530
Senior Online Assistant: Kristian Lee 415-547-8778
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Senior Director, Manufacturing: Chris Lago
IT West Coast
Senior Technical Analyst: Bill Schneider
Technical Support: Steve Bitt
Contact anyone in this magazine via e-mail using lrshamne@ziffdavis.com

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• Hare Clog

• Tug-O-Rabbit

• 10 Ton Bunny

• Bunny Cannon

• Helium Bunny

• Hyper Hare

• Stuffed Rabbit

• Chocolate Bunny



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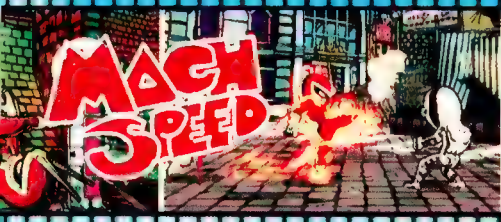
PlayStation 2



Whiplash

OCTOBER 2003

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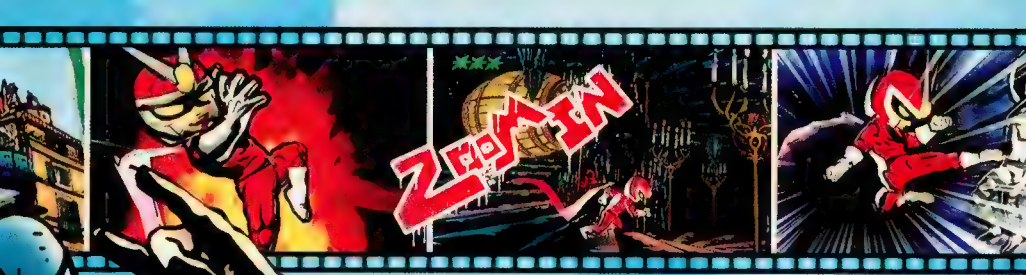


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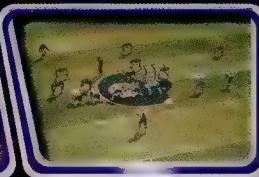
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PlayStation 2



Letters

ranting, raving, and the alligator guy from brute force



■ Jeff Beck: not a whole lot going on.

Cloud's Civic

Hi, my name is Jeff Beck and I have way too much time on my hands. I just had to get a *Final Fantasy VII* plate for my car.

—Jeff Beck

Anyone else declaring his or her rabid love of a game to the general public? Let us know.

Good evening, Dave

I'm in favor of the relentless march of technology and all, but I'm completely against all the fancy stuff my next gaming console may be able to do. I don't need my console to be a "media center." It doesn't need to record TV shows, play MP3s, browse the Web, or do any of the other wondrous things that my computer does. That's why I have a computer in the first place. I think Sony and Microsoft are going to make a huge mistake—the purpose of a console is to play games, not run my household or possibly take over the world and subjugate all humanity. It seems like Nintendo is the only company that wants to stay focused on games. I don't think I'm alone in not wanting to buy multiple "set-top boxes" to play all the games I want in the near future.

—Alan McFann

Coping with the Madden curse

As I was enjoying your magazine as usual, I came across something that upset me like never before. Michael Vick is on the cover of *Madden 2004* (EGM #170, page 124). Why, what did he ever do? Who

Letter of the month



■ We'll say one thing for the guy with the mustache—he liked his currency psychedelically.

Doing our bit for the troops

I'm in the Army's 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, and we're currently deployed at an Iraqi airbase (OK, a former Iraqi airbase) about 100 miles from the Syrian border. I was wondering if you guys could send me a copy of *Enter the Matrix*. If you do, we'll find some way to play it—we're

in the Army for Bin Laden's sake. I'll figure something out. The prime objective is getting the game to Iraq. Consider the mission given to you by Uncle Sam himself, to boost the morale of the soldiers over here. I've enclosed a 2004 Iraqi dirr note, complete with a picture of everybody's favorite ex-brutal dictator

in it, as partial payment. It's worth maybe 50 cents, but hey, it'll be a collector's item soon (trust me, they will) 'ceptin' his ugly mug on Iraqi money. Peace from the Middle East.

—Sgt. Howard, Brandon
ADA Btry 1-3 ACR
Unit #91488
APO AE 09320-1488

Actually, troop morale would be better served if we don't send you *Enter the Matrix*. So we're going to send you our patriotic duty and not send it. If any readers have an extra copy lying around, well, that address up there should work. But wait! As our Letter of the Month winner, we're sending you a copy of *Summer Heat Beach Volleyball* (PS2). Not like you don't have enough sand and sweltering heat over there already, but we're willing to bet this'll greatly increase the thong quotient.

did he offend at EA Sports to possibly bring this curse upon him and my beloved Falcons? Year after year, Falcons fans haven't had much to look forward to. Now we finally see the light at the end of the tunnel, and it turns out to be the EA Sports train coming to run down our dreams of a Super Bowl and another great season for Vick. Is it too late to contact EA Sports and have them put Daunte

Culpepper back on the cover? That worked out well for everyone two years ago. Well, except for Vikings fans.

—Jay Staebler

They should have put the entire Detroit Lions team on the cover. That Lions bad juju is the only thing powerful enough to finally break the "Madden curse."

Running numbers

I've been a subscriber for less than a year now and I've always trusted and relied on EGM for my videogame needs. But in EGM #169 (page 28), you said Microsoft had sold 13 million Xboxes—that figure is wrong, considering Microsoft just recently announced that they had sold 9.4 million consoles worldwide. How could you screw this up?

—Serpisworld@aol.com

The console manufacturers only release their sales numbers



back away slowly



First off, I totally respect what you guys and gals do, and I respect the videogame industry as a whole; after all, wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for games (admittedly, where I am today is at home sitting on my arse). Anyway, I recently returned

from one of the most mind-blowing experiences of my life—five days at "nerd camp," basically living the art form that is the RPG, but in real life. There isn't a single videogame that could

have been more entertaining or totally enthralling. Games are cool and all, but nothing beats actually giving a monster a good old-fashioned womping with a sword. I could go on for ages about how cool it was, but I'll cut it short and just say that playing capture the flag in a fantasy reality is so much cooler than playing in virtual reality. This is one gamer who knows the joys and wonders of getting up off his arse and doing something in life, and I encourage the rest of you out there to do the same.

—Hillary Bisenioks

'They had real monsters at this camp? That you could wump? You and Hung M. Diep (page 27) should kick it some time.

CONTACT EGM

Are you shocked and outraged at something you read somewhere? Of course you are. Drop us a line. EGM@ziffdavis.com works every time, but you can also try this:

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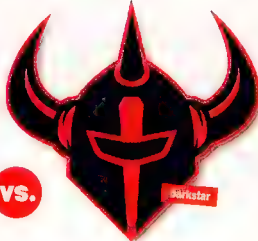
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Infinium Phantom



Darkstar

VS.

► when we told them we would be running them before we went to print.) Unfortunately—and this is the part where we did screw up—those numbers were for consoles *shipped* rather than consoles sold. (Shipped units can be sitting on store shelves, unsold.) For the record, it should have been: 51.2 million PlayStation 2s shipped, 13 million Xboxes shipped, 9.4 million GameCubes shipped. We regret the error.

Two companies, one big helmet
Skateboarding and videogames have united again (in a non-*Tony Hawk* way). The viking helmet used for Infinium's Phantom console

is strikingly similar to the viking helmet used by Darkstar, a skateboard company. Check it.

—Pete Battaglia

Shhh. Hear that? Does it sound like manila folders and wingtip shoes? The lawyers may be limbering up.

Walk, my son!

A little over a year ago I became the father of a bouncing baby boy. Naturally, my gaming and magazine-reading time was cut dramatically. In its place I became a parent, which I will never regret, of course. But something great happened because of your

magazine and its ability to keep me gaming. One recent afternoon I picked up my PS2 controller to see how pitiful my reflexes had become, when to and behold, my son, who at the time had been eyeing me from across the room, took his *first* four steps, came over, and grabbed the controller from my hand!

I thought you and your staff would like to know that because your magazine has helped me keep up my gaming interest, I got to witness one of my son's firsts. You have two *EGM* readers (my son and me) for as long as you and your staff keep churning out this mag.

—Timothy and Gabriel Eberl

Awwwwwww. There's nothing cuter than a toddler playing *Vice City!* Warsms the cockles.

Ours is longer

What's the longest title of any game? My guess is *Yu-Gi-Oh! World Wide Edition: Stairway to the Destined Duel*. That's seven words; nine if you count "to" and "the." That's my guess—can you beat it?

—Cody (no relation to Jean-Claude) VanDamme ►

OOPS!

I have found a mistake in *EGM* #170, on page 75. Chicago's Brian Urlacher is a linebacker, not a QB as you claimed. Hat! Keep up the "good" work.

—Rebel0401@aol.com

Go ahead, laugh it up. You didn't hear about Urlacher changing positions in the off-season and then, uh, changing back real quick? Blame crop circles and a conspiracy by Major League Baseball—we do.



► That dang Yu-Gi-Oh! game

GAME DESIGN-O-RAMA

Our Design-a-Game contest is starting to bear sweet, delicious, almost overripe fruit. Think you can do a better job than the pros? E-mail or send us a mocked-up screenshot or box art with a short description of your brainwave and you might win the grand prize—which is, er, having your work appear in this box.



Sesame Street Fighter

"Can you tell me how to get to Sesame Street?" That's easy: Just follow the trail of bloody puppet limbs to this year's hottest game—*Sesame Street Fighter!* No longer content with helping little children learn the valuable lessons of sharing and citizenship, these monsters are reclaiming the

streets. To hell with skipping rope and playing hopscotch: Let your rage meter build and watch Bert unleash a bottle-cap bitch slap, or Oscar deliver a devastating trash-can slam. Bitter after years of having a puppeteer's hand shoved up their furry little cavities, the diminutive hellions are ready to unleash the dragon. This game is brought to you by the letters R, I, and P.

—Matthew Lawrence



Grand Theft Auto 4: Onett

Forget Las Vegas. *Grand Theft Auto 4* takes place in *Earthbound*'s city of Onett. As Ness, you go around Onett doing random jobs for gangs. There's Don Giygassoni, who has you kill people with the Mani Mani statue, and the Andonuts gang, led by Jeff, who try to take over the town with technology. Or you can just destroy crap with your psychic powers. Coming to GBA this Christmas.

—Ayan Ghosh



Mr. T vs. Gamesphere: Extreme Racing, Milk Drinking Smackdown

Tobias Bruckner, King of the evil planet Gamesphere, is sending his army of heartless mascots to destroy all the youth centers on Earth. Take control of Mr. T as you race through eight wacky levels, chasing down mascots and giving them a whuppin', T-style.

- Fight Tobias and his army of mascots: Sonic, Mario, that little s*** from *Pokémon*, Ty the Tasmanian Tiger, Link, and many more
- Run over three of your friends with Mr. T's van in multiplayer mode
- Collect milk to buy van upgrades like the super heavy gold-chain gun
- Pity the fools and save the youth centers before the kids stop eating their veggies.

—Alex Said



G-Seven: Extreme Bingo

G-Seven is a high-intensity Bingo game, in which rivalries are made, people get hurt, and the action is nonstop. You take on the role of a bounty hunter named (insert your name here) who has just joined the G-Seven circuit. Play large-scale tournaments with up to forty other competitors, earning points for double bingos, fastest bingo, and most bingos. The pace only slows when victory is declared, and even then not by much!

—Ssuarts@aol.com

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Blond
Intense Violence

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Letters

cosplay corner



I never knew anything about the phenomenon of cosplay until you mentioned it in your recent issues. Well, I've got something that might tickle your fancy: How about the entire EGM staff dresses up and acts (cosplays) like his or her favorite game character for a day? Then write about what each person did and have people vote on who dressed the best, with the winner getting something special. I don't know, you people can think up what that will be. Hey, you don't have to take my advice, but it would be pretty funny.

—Gabe Baker

You're so totally right, Gabe, we don't have to take your advice. There will be no contest. There will be no dress-up tea party with voting prizes, and crumpets. Our fancy is not tickled; in fact, it's angry.

And yet...one of us has been harboring a dark secret that has only recently come to light, thanks to the power of Google Image search. Behold! Reviews Editor Shane Bettenhausen as PaRappa the Rappa, circa 1998! The intricate costume obviously took weeks to craft. Shame wins! And losses!

► The best we've got is *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons: Warriors of Ravenloft: Iron & Blood*, which also makes a strong case for most colons and ampersands in a game title.

Uh...does being a "huge fan" of *Zelda* mean you played the first 10 minutes of *Wind Waker* and then quit? Because if you'd bother to get a little further you'd know that

"As a huge fan of the *Zelda* series, what you wrote offends me."

—Ryan Nolte

Anybody else want to weigh in on this riveting topic?

Some *Zelda* expert

I have a problem with your character bio for Link in the *Soul Calibur II* roster [EGM #170, page 110]. Link wouldn't be making "sweet, sweet love to *Zelda*," seeing as how *Zelda* is Link's sister (you would know this had you played all the *Zelda* games ever made)! As a huge fan of the *Zelda* series, what you wrote offends me.

—Ryan Nolte

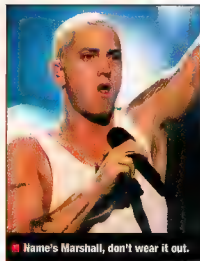
Link's sister was *mistaken* for *Zelda*. Our description of Link's private life still stands—he's making sweet love to *Zelda* as you read this.

Jerky jerk

The gameboy player is dumb. 240x160 pixels may look all right on a 3-inch screen...but a 30-inch screen? No way!

—John Craft

Turns out you're dumb. The Game Boy Player is great.



■ Name's Marshall, don't wear it out.

Shady deal

Yo, EGM! Where is my Eminem game? I went to Hollybuster Video to rent this game and they said it wasn't out! I've got to battle a kid in my talent show in two weeks and I have a feeling this game will give me the edge I need. I tried to rent it because my mom says he's a bad influence and she won't even buy me an Eminem poster! So also tell her that games don't kill people but she's killing me!

—Ronald J. Basul

Bad luck, Ron—Eminem's puzzle game is in limbo pending a \$5 million lawsuit filed against the star by the game's publisher, Conspiracy Entertainment. Am allegedly tried to sign a more lucrative deal with another game maker and withdraw his name from *Mix TV Presents: Eminem*. But Associate Editor Shawn Elliott will be damned if you're gonna lose that talent show, so he's got some freestyle words of wisdom to bestow:

Why polish the nickel plating of my gun muzzle when I can solve tile puzzles? Sure, you can score 'em at the dime store but Shady's rhyme more and it ain't a game, yo, it's fan

word on the street

■ WHAT'S THE WORST GLITCH YOU'VE FOUND IN A RECENT CONSOLE GAME?



Morrowind for Xbox is one of the buggiest games I have seen in a while. I used to watch my friend play it at the time, and on two separate occasions the game froze up and emitted this loud-ass buzzing noise. Then again, he had summoned five familiars, while levitating and simultaneously throwing a fireball spell inside of a house that already had two people in it. I'm surprised his Xbox didn't blow up.

—Michelle Kasper



One of the most random glitches I've ever encountered was in *Madden 92* (Sega Genesis). It was fourth down and I was punting. After the punt, the ball proceeded to drop down through the field, then appear at the top of the screen and drop through again. It did this about four or five times, doubling the distance on each trip through the field. I had a 400-yard punt when it was finally out.

—Donny Carlson

■ If you'd like to participate in Word on the Street, check our message boards at www.egmmag.com.

ASK ALLIGATOR GUY

(And get a completely fabricated answer from us. Because he's not real.)

Who better to answer your questions about love and relationships than that alligator guy from *Brute Force*?

I'm writing in regards to the fact that I have a meanie for a girlfriend. I'm currently stationed in Kuwait, and as I finished my night shift last Friday, I called my girl at home. Expecting support and the usual statements such as "I miss you," I get, "Hey hon, I was talking to my girlfriend the other day and she introduced me to her boyfriend. We talked afterwards about how much of a dork he was and I told her that you were a dork, too. I guess I have a soft spot for dorks."

My question is this: Just because I like *Star Trek*, anime, and videogames, does that make me a dork? I have to admit I wasn't the coolest guy in high school, but I haven't had my milk money stolen from me in college. I did try picking up girls at DragonCon in Atlanta, but come on... girls in tight leather... can you blame me?

Since I read your interview with Angelica Bridges

[EGM #168, page 51], I feel confident I'm not a dork. Can you ask Angelica to be my pen pal while I'm over here in Kuwait? Thanks.

—Hung M. Diep



Alligator Guy responds: Merely attending a convention like DragonCon officially qualifies you for dorkdom, silly man-child, regardless of any ancillary and alleged chick-picking-up activity.

But hey, at least you're not an a--hole. Right? Or maybe you are, since you want to express impure thoughts to Angelica Bridges via written correspondence. You humans make me so angry! To think I let you join my clan.

services
but before mom purchases you'll
have to calm her nervousness
tell her it kills you diss fools and
shove blocks
not miss school and love clocks
it tests your skill at games of
memory

Ain't no slang 'bout bushes and
mammaries

Bumblebee guy

Because of my infatuation with bees and the games that involve them, I was just about sold on the Pro 200 handheld [EGM #170, page 155]. Then I remembered that GBA does have a bee game, *Pinabee: Wings of Adventure*. It's a not-at-all-generic platformer, and you failed to include it in your comparison table—you claimed GBA had no bee games! Bee game fans, don't eBay your Game Boys just yet! I'm going to start a petition for seven re-releases of the game, each with a slightly altered color scheme. In your face, *Pro 200*!

—Justin Mullins

You may have won this round, Justin Mullins, but what about gamers who demand their *Frog* or *Super Brick* games? Huh?

The Pro 200's lead in those categories is insurmountable.

Revenge of the nerds

Josh Nelson was on to something [Letters, EGM #170]. It's reasonable that he was confused about the Shame of the Month award—hell, so was I. One minute we're swimming through a sea of phallic references and boob shots and the next we're expected to de-program the tedious, fine print rules for the Shame of the Month award?

You guys also have a habit of responding to letters in a vindictive and smug manner, which doesn't help. It's not like your nerd-o-meter isn't already in code red or anything. You write intricate rules and recall obscure lines to a degree that would leave lawyers (or *Dungeons & Dragons* players) in awe. "In the Reviews Wrap-up [EGM #168, page 123] we mentioned the fact..." Hey, turbo nerds, you forgot subsection F, article 3170-B4, star date 4009 with the 20-sided dice! This is a videogame magazine, not the O.J. Simpson trial, and we're your loyal readers, not your Klinton enemies. Lighten up already.

—Raven_crow77@hotmail.com

Now you've made us cry. Happy? ☹️

■ Pro 200:
Packs a
whopping
eight Bee
games



So, here I was walking down the streets in *Vice City*, my badass-ly off

the charts, when I see some thug across the street. I head over to sort him out when suddenly a disastrous step off the sidewalk, and into the street causes me to lose a point of health! What, did I stub my toe? Don't try to tell me that isn't a glitch.

—Nick Garboden



When I tried bailing from my car during a cinematic in *Vice City*, the car got stuck in midair

with me standing on top of it. Poor Tommy Vercetti... he was standing on the car for hours when he realized the Fire Department wouldn't come and rescue him, so he jumped into the water and ended it all.

—Randy Skaggs



in *Star Wars: Obi Wan* I opened an elaborate set of doors and on the other side was a gray void. So I

closed the doors. Then I opened them again, and there was a room. Apparently my Xbox likes to reconstruct Nabooian palaces. Oh, and another time the breasts stopped bouncing in my copy of *DOA3*. Now that was really scary.

—Aaron Davidson

caring wife?
jealous lover?
criminal mastermind?



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YOUR NUMBER IS UP.



Blood
Intense Violence

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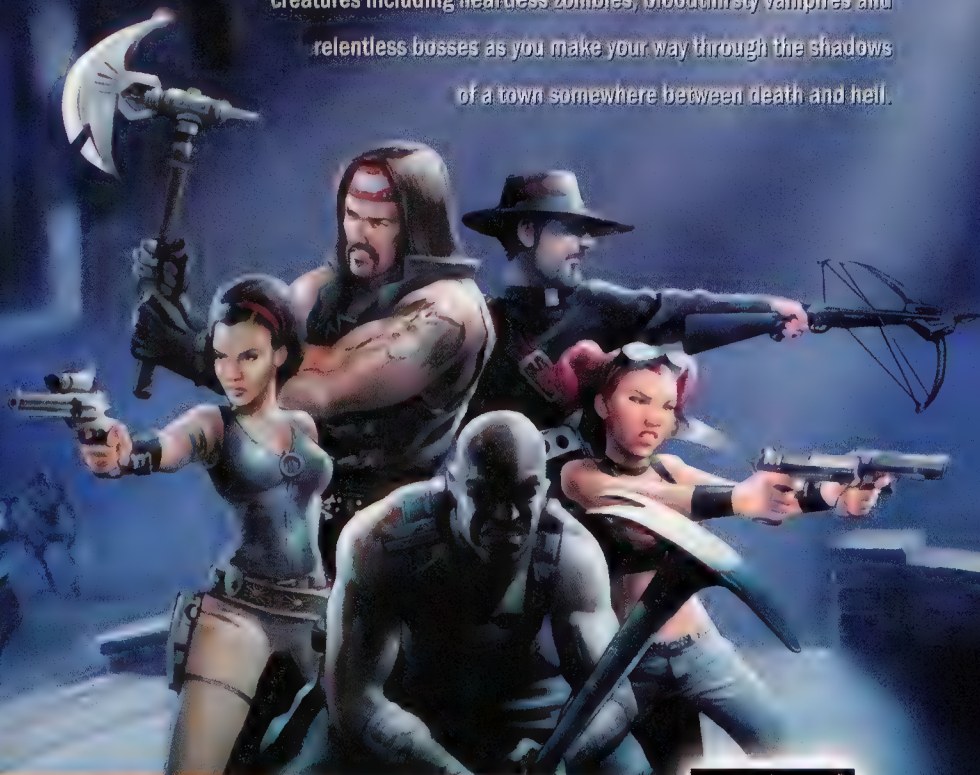
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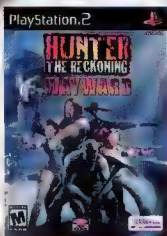
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Violence

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PlayStation 2

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Violence



PlayStation 2



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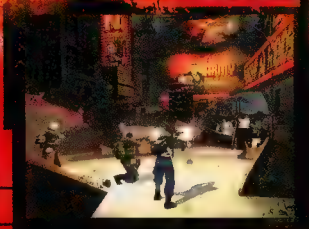
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gaming news, interviews, urine control, and other stuff



BUSTED!

Game-crashing bugs in big-ticket titles have players wondering: What happened to quality control in the gaming industry?

It was just last year that *Eternal Darkness* for GameCube won raves for its ability to toy with a player's sanity by pretending to crash and erase saved games. Little did gamers know, however, that a number of high-profile titles would soon replicate *Eternal Darkness*'s nifty tricks in a very real way. Whether it's the crashes in *Enter the Matrix* (play too long on the Xbox and you face random lock-ups) or the unpolished feel of *Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness* (in which key items can suddenly disappear), some of today's biggest games seem to have more bugs in them than a *Fear Factor* gross-out stunt.

Why all the glitches? Blame it on a few troubling trends. First, today's games are

getting more complicated—and pricey—to produce. "In many instances, budgets do not allow for a final round of polish, and a product can go out the door with significant problems," admits one well-known developer who spoke on condition of anonymity. But that's just the beginning. The pressures behind releasing a game on a specific date (e.g., for a movie tie-in)—not to mention the challenge of putting a game out on three platforms simultaneously—don't help the quality-control process. It's no wonder that console games are bugger than ever.

That's not to say game glitches are anything new. As far back as 1988, *Impossible Mission* for the Atari 7800 suffered a classic bug that made the game's name a self-ful-

filling prophecy. Players were supposed to collect pieces of a puzzle to stop a nuthall scientist from creating his own nuke arsenal. A bug in the code, however, meant that players couldn't pick up certain pieces. The result: Evil won and gamers lost. Early copies of last year's Game Boy Advance RPG *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* from VU Games suffered a similarly catastrophic glitch: Gamers couldn't finish the quest if they entered a certain room. The only solution was to jab a button at just the right time—a trick that the developer admits is "likely to take several attempts."

Quality-control experts have a name for these most serious types of glitches—A Bugs—a term that applies to any potentially

game-halting fault which players have a reasonable chance of finding during normal play. Fortunately, A Bugs are much more rare than lesser-offense glitches such as screwy sound or wonky animation. That's partially because each of the three console manufacturers extensively tests games before they're approved for release on their systems. QA departments at Sony, Microsoft, and Nintendo spend a bare minimum of 200 hours checking a third-party game before it gets the seal of approval. If A Bugs are found or if the game can't be completed, the console company will reject the product and have the publisher fix the errors. The console companies have less sway when it comes to more subjective

DON'T GO BIG WITHOUT 'EM: EXTREME HUMANS TONY HAWK, DAVE MIRRA, AND SHAUN PALMER HAVE CO-DESIGNED EXTRA-STURDY GAME BOY CASES (\$10 EACH) FOR CASE LOGIC.

We shine the light on three recent glitch infestations.

ENTER THE MATRIX • PS2, XBOX, GC

Frequent faults: We know anything goes in the phony world of the Matrix, but this is ridiculous: Characters jammed inside walls? Unsnatchable items? Scenes that lock up unless you fiddle with sound options? It's enough to make Neo revert to his *Bill and Ted* days and go, "Bogus!" Of the three versions, the Xbox incarnation has the most snafus, including random crashes if you play it too long. "We recommend taking a break after every couple of hours of play, both to avoid potential problems like this and to reduce eyestrain," suggests the extensive technical-support page on publisher Atari's Web site. How considerate.

Why it went awry: Atari and developer Shiny won't comment on *Enter the Matrix's* "negative" aspects, but we think the culprit here is obvious: Blame it on Neo (or, rather, his movie). This game needed to launch—finished or not—the same day *Matrix: Reloaded* hit theaters back in May.



Enter the beautiful, tough scene, wait in the game's final chase level and you get jammed inside that.



Don't go there: Bethesda's *Wolf* got the Xbox version of *Matrix* in a power-washing job-up for the Xbox version.

TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS • PS2

Frequent faults: We've seen Lara Croft float into the air, stutter along in slow motion, lose key items—even her game's instructions are screwy, giving the wrong button for switching targets. "A better name for the game would be *Tomb Raider: Escape from the Virtual Digitized Land of Bugs*," says one participant in a 12-page online discussion of the game's problems.

Why it went awry: Representatives from developer Core and publisher Eidos declined to comment on the rampant glitches in *Darkness*, which—ironically enough—went through numerous delays to ensure the game was "polished," according to Core. We figure the title finally experienced one delay too many for publicly traded Eidos—it's no coincidence that *Darkness* shipped in the 11th hour of the publisher's fiscal year. The game has been the target of widespread negative publicity for its sloppiness (and was even blamed for the poor performance of this summer's *Tomb Raider* flick). In late July, Eidos announced that it was taking the series' reins away from Core and handing them to *Legacy of Kain* developer Crystal Dynamics "to best maximize the great potential we see for the game," explains an Eidos rep. "[We] are evaluating Core's ongoing direction and contribution as part of [our] overall development capabilities."



PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN • XBOX

Frequent faults: We hope someone at developer Bethesda is walking the plank for this high-seas RPG's many leaks.

Aside from in-your-face anomalies such as save-file corruptions and a lock-up that actually turned our Xbox's green power light red (we slowly backed away), *Pirates of the Caribbean* wobbles in mysterious ways. Merchants sometimes forget about cargo, leaving unfinishable quests in your logbook. Doorways deep inside buildings inexplicably lead outside. Some objectives are so mystifying that we're unsure if we've hit a bug or just can't figure out what to do next. Players are filling online message boards with elaborate workarounds—everything from frequent saving tricks to letting the game sit for an hour the first time they turn it on.

Why it went awry: Bethesda has much more experience in the PC market, where faulty games can be patched post-release, but it's getting a reputation for releasing buggy console titles. Last year's Xbox epic *Morrowind*, for example, shipped with problems. *Pirates* is so much flakier, we figure, because it switched gears in development and went from being a generic ocean-going RPG to a title tied to this summer's blockbuster Disney movie. That meant the developers needed to get the game out the door in time for the flick, and we already saw how such a strict deadline affected *Enter the Matrix*.



That she shows: *Pirates* looks beautiful and has enormous potential, but it suffers glitches ahooy.

—Crispin Boyer

issues like frustrating control schemes or rough-around-the-edges visuals. But even with this testing in place, why are there more major bugs slipping through the cracks these days? While no one would talk on the record, insiders admit a few things. Besides games being produced on tighter schedules, game publishers are also putting pressure on the console makers to approve titles even if they aren't 100 percent ready for prime time. "If you're Microsoft or Nintendo, it's in your interest to make sure the Xbox and GameCube versions of *Enter the Matrix* come out alongside the PlayStation 2 version," says one gaming industry insider. The implication: A console company may, for competitive reasons,

approve a less-than-perfect game so it can be on store shelves at the same time as the leading platform's version. There's also the issue of publishers wanting to ship a game to take advantage of a movie tie-in or to meet the end of a company's financial quarter (as was the case with *Tomb Raider*). No console company is going to approve a game with huge errors, but sources say much backroom bargaining goes on between the console makers and game publishers when it comes to minor bugs. That bargaining, though, doesn't always work out in the publisher's favor. Just this summer, it was rumored that the PS2 version of *Charlie's Angels* was cancelled because Sony did not approve the game in

time for the film's late-June debut, even though the GameCube version came out as scheduled. Publisher Ubi Soft wouldn't comment on the specific reasons for the abrupt cancellation of the PS2 version). Going forward, pre-release game testing may become less important as broadband access and hard drives introduce the possibility of "patching" up a console game's problems—a process common with PC titles, some of which have a patch waiting the day the game ships. In the past, a major bug in a console release might result in an expensive recall and lots of irate customers. But when patching becomes a viable option (and it's already been done once—to thwart online cheating in *Unreal Championship* on

Xbox), publishers may be willing to take more risks and put out games that have been less rigorously tested. "[The patch for a console game] will just be disguised as [online] 'product updates,'" suggests one developer, who jokingly adds, "it's not fixing bugs—it's 'enhancing your experience!'" If game publishers aren't careful, patching console games might enhance something else: the likelihood that more gamers will wait for reviews and word of mouth before blindly buying a game. After all, no one wants to pay 50 bucks for the pleasure of beta testing a shrink-wrapped game. Just ask the folks who bought *Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness*.

—Geoff Keighley

GRUDGE MATCH

A very special three-way rumble between *Soul Calibur II*'s guest stars



LINK vs. SPAWN vs. HEIHACHI

Unless you're planning to buy all three versions of Namco's fighting game *Soul Calibur II*, you'll only get to play as one of these three gentlemen—Link on GameCube, Spawn on Xbox, or Heihachi on PS2. Don't know which to buy? Maybe this month's Grudge Match—apalooza will make up your mind.

SPECIAL ABILITIES:

Swordplay, elfin speed, capri pants

Spear-headed chains, designer cloak of mystery
Advantage: Spawn

Karate, supernatural powers, half-nakedness

EXPERIENCE:

Shrub and boulder landscaping, rafting, fairy relations

Handful of crappy action titles

Regular *Tekken* appearances make 'Hachi the only seasoned fighting-game veteran
Advantage: Heihachi

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS:

Saved Hyrule an embarrassing number of times; didn't stab annoying princess in their short-lived animated TV series
Advantage: Link

Has been to Hell and back (literally)

Hosted the King of Iron Fist tournament an embarrassing number of times

WORST DISGRACE:

Able to command the elements with a wooden wand, yet unable to jump at will

The Eternal (PS1), winner of several worst-of-the-year awards
Advantage: Spawn

Donned sumo diaper in *Tekken 4*

TOURNAMENT-WINNING AFTERPARTY:

Lemonade, Skittles, possibly an Otorok piñata

Hoedown in the flames of Hell featuring caged strippers drinking Colt 45
Advantage: Spawn

Organizes yet another tournament

ULTIMATE CHAMPION: SPAWN

Let's face it: He's not exactly the kind of guy you'd bring home to Mom, but Spawn can cut these whelps up like so much cheesecake. Let's just hope he doesn't get too many more games of his own. 'Cuz that rarely turns out well.

TIDBITS IN MIRROR ARE CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR



XIII gets it more celebs

Ex-*X-Files* star David Duchovny and ex-man-in-tights Adam West join the cast of Ubi Soft's comics-styled first-person shooter *XIII*, coming this fall for all platforms. Duchovny plays lead character XIII, while West plays hard-nosed military man General Carrington.

No Tokens Necessary

Re-create the '80s arcade experience at home with Midway's *Midway Arcade Treasures*, coming in November to PS2, Xbox, and GC. More than 20 games are promised, like *Smash TV*, *Spy Hunter*, *Gauntlet*, *Rampage*, *Robotron 2084*, *Rampart*, *KLAX*, *Toobin'*, and *720°*. Smoky smell and scary middle-aged men not included.



DESERT ISLAND GAMES: JASON RUBIN



Every month, we ask a celeb or game designer: If you were stranded on a deserted island, what three games would you want with you? Naughty Dog's Jason Rubin (*Jak & Daxter*) adds fun to his sun. —Marc Saltzman



Grand Theft

Auto: Vice City (PS2)

"Yeah, yeah, I know—it's the hottest current game so you think I'm just being trendy. But I can defend this choice with one word: 'replayability.'"



Gran Turismo 3 (PS2)

"I'm a car guy, and I'm assuming that I would not be stranded with cars, or any usable road, so this is my fix. Plus, time trial creates an endless challenge."



Half-Life (PC, PS2)

"The sand. The sun. The time. I haven't showered in three years. What's that itching? Life as a castaway could get frustrating—and nothing gets frustration out like shootin' stuff."



0740 HOURS
DECEMBER 7, 1941

AFTERTHOUGHTS: STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

BioWare's Jedi masters discuss the new hope for Star Wars videogames

Before *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*, it didn't seem like there were any good *Star Wars* games that didn't involve trolling about in an X-Wing fighter. But ever since developer BioWare's stellar Xbox RPG hit this summer, those days seem long, long ago in a galaxy far, far away.

We spoke with BioWare co-founder Dr. Ray Muzyka and *Knights* Producer and Project Director Casey Hudson about the making of what stands as not only one of the finest games on Xbox, but also the best *Star Wars* tale in years. We sure hope George Lucas is taking notes....

EGM: Choosing the light or dark side was definitely a dilemma for us. Which side of the Force do most people at BioWare play as?

Ray Muzyka: I think most of them played as the light side first, and then the second pass, a lot of them tried the dark side. It was like you wanted to be Luke Skywalker the first time, then Darth Vader the second time. Some people did a mixture, [but] once you start the dark side, it's just so tempting. I found it was like a metagame in itself just to get all the dark-side points I could. It was like, you wanted to be as dark as you could be and see what all the effects would be on your face. And by the end of the game, it was all gray and full of veins and stuff. That was kind of fun.

EGM: There are so many side quests to choose from in *Knights*. Which of them should gamers be sure to complete?

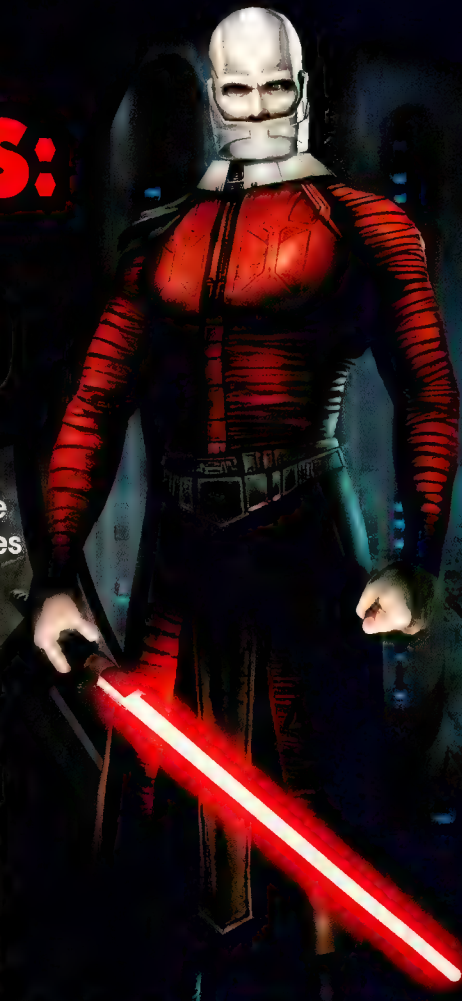
RM: There's the GenoHaradan, the secret society that you find only later in the game. It's a bit of work to uncover it all, but it's kind of a cool, sinister dark society that you have to infiltrate to find out what's going on. One of the things I recommend is to talk to each of your party members multiple times to fully develop all of their plots, because they each have a subplot and some of them are actually really cool. Like [human-hating attack droid] HK-47's quest to repair him and unlock his memory, which is quite hilarious. And even Bastila finding her mother and Mission, her brother—they all have really cool subplots.

Casey Hudson: One of the neat ones is, if you're evil and you want to raise a lot of trouble, there's the Matate family plot on Dantooine. If you're on the dark side, you can really mess up the two families there. Some of my other favorites span several planets. There are some that cause you to return to planets you've been to already.

EGM: What's the best way of making sure you see everything?

CH: You'd have to see everything on the light side and then everything on the dark side. Even then, you'd have to see it with different combinations of party members. [Some] will do different things depending on who else is in your party. [For example,] if you have both Mission and Bastila in your party, they'll do different things than if just one or the other was in your party. Sometimes they'll talk to each other.

RM: I remember one time on Dantooine, I had Canderous and Carth in my party, and I was talking to the guy who wanted you >



before there was **darth vader**...



If you dig deep enough into *Knights of the Old Republic*, you'll find numerous references to a dark Jedi named Exar Kun—the main villain in several Dark Horse Comics' series set in *Star Wars'* Old Republic timeline. For instance, get your Jedi party member Jolee Bindo talking about his past, and he'll eventually tell you how he lived through the events in those books and even comment that Exar Kun might still be alive. We asked BioWare's Ray Muzyka if we might see more of this fallen Jedi in a *Knights* follow-up. "That'd be an interesting idea," he said, laughing, the faint of the dark side palpably affecting his voice.

A tropical scene with palm leaves and a blue sky with birds. The image is a low-angle shot looking up through the fronds of palm trees. The sky is a vibrant blue, and several birds are visible in flight. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day. The overall mood is serene and tropical.

0753 HOURS
DECEMBER 7, 1941



0755 HOURS

DECEMBER 7, 1941

SPRAY STATION

Egghead students turn gaming into a pissing contest

Call it a golden opportunity: Pressed to create a class project, Massachusetts Institute of Technology graduate students Dan Maynes-Aminzade and Hayes Solos Raffle combined their computer-science and toilet-humor skills to craft the world's first pee-powered videogame. Called *You're In Control* (think about the name for a sec...OK, continue), it combines an LCD monitor with a urinal-mounted sensor pad and circuitry encased in waterproof (naturally) housing.

Players aim and fire their biological "weapons" and trigger the onscreen action by hitting the urinal's target sensors. The point? "We wanted to reintroduce some fun into the act of peeing," says Maynes-Aminzade. "It provides a refreshing release." He notes there are other perks, such as digital territory marking to satisfy those male primal urges. (Women can satisfy their urges, too—the students

devised a squirt-gun-like peripheral).

The pair hopes the device will be picked up by chain restaurants, bars—any place that provides players with lots of ammunition. You will have to pee to play, after all, but hopefully you won't have to pay. Though the prototype cost about \$2,000 to make, the price of the game could drop to \$500 with some reengineering.

Maynes-Aminzade acknowledges that biological constraints—namely, the finite size of the male bladder—are a basic game-design flaw. That's why he made three games that are simple enough to play in 20 seconds, including a shooter in which players douse a running Vice President Dick Cheney (think about his name for a sec...OK, continue). Multiplayer "tag teaming" is a possible strategy, too. And as for aggressive players, Maynes-Aminzade hopes they "won't abuse their joysticks too much." Hi-ho! ☘

—Lauren Gonzalez



■ **Water sport:** One of *You're In Control*'s three games—a variation of *Whack-a-Mole*—has you blasting hamsters. Each hit scores 10 points...and turns the critter yellow.



you play games where?

We deliver more proof that videogames have left the living room. Why, now you can even find them...

...in the dentist's office

Drs. James Poco and Joseph Buchanan (mybraces.com) put PlayStation 2s in their lobbies to keep their California patients "entertained and comfortable," says financial manager Christina Daly.



...on the road

A new line of road-ready monitors—branded G2G (www.g2ggear.com)—let you continue that game of *Grand Theft Auto* in your actual auto. The basic \$200 screen has all the hooks needed to plug in and juice up your console.



...at 30,000 feet

Virgin airlines has a Super Nintendo at every seat, while six of its Asian routes—from New York, L.A., and San Francisco—offer *Battlemail Kung-Fu*, a game played with other passengers. "It's really taken off," says a Virgin rep.



INSTANT EXPERT: SURROUND SOUND

Audio bliss in a minute or less

"Immersive" isn't just a buzzword for a game's story or visuals; it takes wrap-around audio to truly attain interactive nirvana. With more and more titles tapping surround-sound power, here's a 60-second primer to open your ears.

Don't fear decimal points...

The most pervasive kind of surround sound is Dolby 5.1, which breaks the audio signal into five different channels that each go to their own speaker (left, center, right, rear left, and rear right) and one low-frequency bass channel (that's the .1, since it only takes up a portion of one channel) handled by a special speaker called the subwoofer.

Nice rig. Audio rig, that is...

The easiest way to get the most out of your games is to buy a "home theater in a box" kit (see below). Many major manufacturers offer these all-in-one rigs, which come with

five speakers, a subwoofer for floor-thumping bass, and a Dolby Digital receiver (like a central hub) to jack in all your game consoles, DVD player, etc. Panasonic, Sony, Phillips, and others make excellent, affordable models, while Interact and Midland dominate the lower-end market with so-so systems for under \$200.

Choose your console...

Both PlayStation 2 and GameCube support Dolby Pro Logic II, which takes two-channel stereo (sound that comes from two speakers) and approximates five-channel audio. All you need is a game that offers Dolby Surround or Pro Logic II; check the back of the game box for the surround-sound logo. Xbox and PS2 also support the higher

■ **Setting it all up:** Your center speaker (1) should go right above your television, the left and right speakers (2) should be an equal distance from the tube, and the rear speakers (3) should rest just behind you.



Illustration by Peter Quaters

sound quality of Dolby Digital 5.1 (PS2 for DVD playback and some in-game cutscenes only) as long as you connect to your receiver via the Advance A/V Pack (Xbox, \$20) or a digital optical cable (PS2, about \$8). For a comprehensive list of games with surround sound, head to www.dolby.com/games. —Jon M. Gibson

play them loud

Test your rig with these eargasmic hits:



■ For \$300, Panasonic's SC-HT700 is the perfect entry-level home-theater kit. It even has a five-disc DVD/CD changer. Bonus!

BY THE NUMBERS

Playing the percentage

19 Percentage of PlayStation 2 owners who bought *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*

32 Percentage of Xbox owners who bought *Halo*

12 Percentage of GameCube owners who bought *Zelda: Wind Waker*

500+ Playable cars expected in *Gran Turismo 4*

250 New car models available in the U.S. market (2003)

29 Age of the average gamer in 2003

1:4 Ratio of M-rated to E-rated games published in 2002



OLD SCHOOL 10 years ago in EGM

On the Cover: Street Fighter II (arcade)

Take a Bruce Lee clone, a few ethnic stereotypes, a sexy member of the British special forces, and then make 'em fight—and you had Capcom's gazillionth installment of *Street Fighter*, *Super Street Fighter II*.

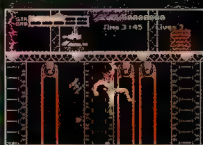


Game of the Month: Super Bomberman (SNES)

Before there was a whole genre dedicated to party games, there was *Bomberman*. And 10 years ago, *Super Bomberman*—a multiplayer blastfest where players blow each other up—nabbed four nines (out of 10) from our Crew.

Nintendo Announces Project Reality

Nintendo and partner Silicon Graphics (makers of *Jurassic Park*'s dino effects) announced Project Reality—the console that, three years later, would be called Nintendo 64.



Strider Returns

Original old schoolers probably remember Capcom's arcade actioner *Strider*. In 1993, third-party publisher U.S. Gold released a sequel (not developed by Capcom) for Sega Genesis called *Strider Returns*. It wasn't as good as the first and scored all sevens from our Review Crew.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS... WHICH DEMON-KILLER WILL YOU BE?



Buffy the Vampire Slayer CHAOS BLEDS



BATTLE AS BUFFY & 5 OTHER
FAVORITE CHARACTERS.



STORY BASED ON A LOST EPISODE
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Suggestive Themes



PlayStation 2



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We Can't Keep Him
Cooped Up Much Longer.



RATING PENDING

RP

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org
or call 1-800-771-3772
for more ratings
information.





Coming This Fall.

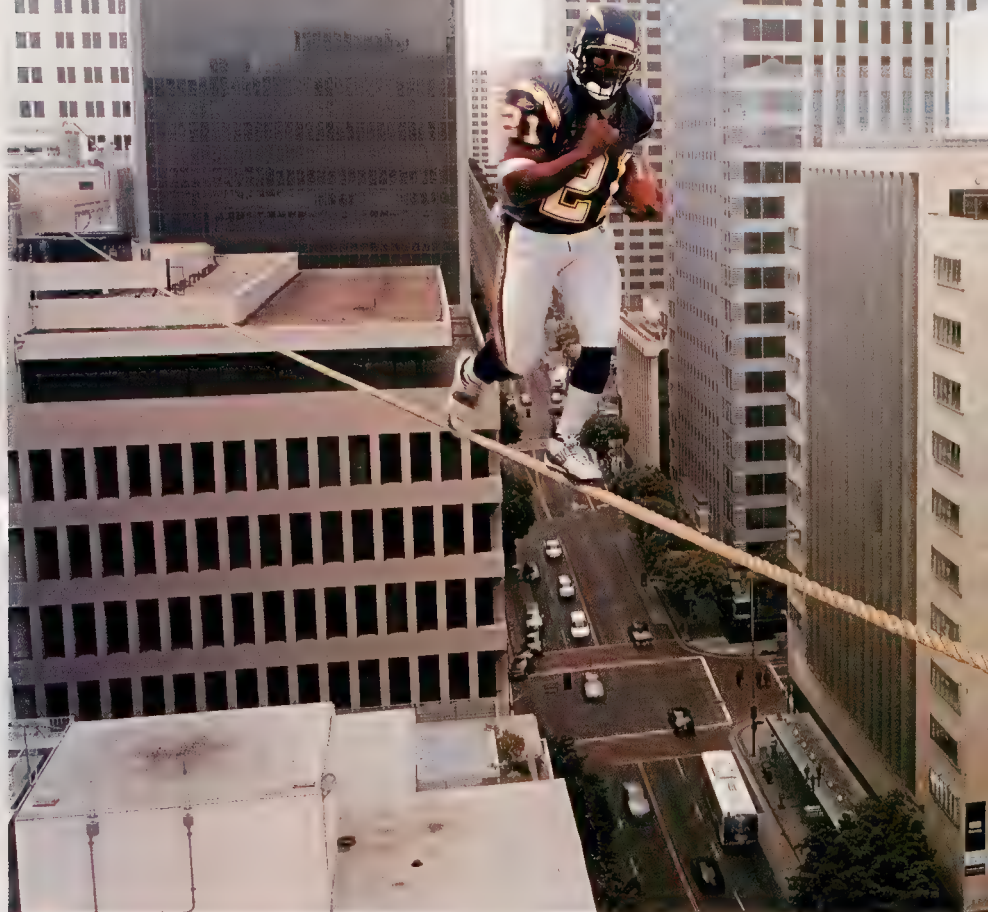


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EITHER YOU GOT IT
OR YOU DON'T.



PlayStation.2



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RETURN OF THE KING OF FIGHTERS

The fall and rise of 2D powerhouse SNK

Years ago, SNK was one of those big names—like Capcom, EA, or Konami—that most gamers took for granted. For over two decades, from early classics like *Ikari Warriors* and *Baseball Stars*, to its Neo-Geo arcade system (which eventually made its way into just about every arcade, bowling alley, and 7-Eleven in America), and the Neo-Geo Pocket Color handheld, the company established its reputation with high-quality 2D action and fighting games like *Metal Slug*, *Samurai Shodown*, and the *King of Fighters* series. SNK, it seemed, had always been around and always would be.

Then, suddenly in early 2001—poof. It was gone. SNK had pulled out of America.

"We didn't leave because we wanted to," says Ben Herman, then vice president of sales and the "last guy to turn out the lights" when the company closed its doors.

"Things were going really well. We

[had] asked a Japanese company

to invest with us, and they agreed, but they had a different agenda. Unfortunately, they were in control and they had us withdraw from the U.S."

Fans were stunned. Grief-stricken gamers weaned on the company's titles posted Internet testimonials about how SNK had changed their lives. Fighting-game aficionados wondered where they would get their next fix. Many cited it as the end of the 2D era in videogames. Game-clothing web-

"We're back, and we want to celebrate with the fans."

—SNK Neo-Geo USA President Ben Herman

site game-skins.com said it all with its "Tribute" T-shirt: "SNK 1978-2001" it read, along with an epitaph, "2D forever."

But, it seems, reports of SNK's death had been greatly exaggerated. After two years of legal battles, a happy ending has emerged.

"We're back, simple as that," says Herman, now president of the newly formed SNK Neo-Geo USA Consumer Corp., "[and] we want to celebrate with the fans."

The party kicks off this October (pending approval) with a special PS2 *King of Fighters* two-in-one pack (including both *KOF 2000* and *2001*), and continues in

November with a new addition to the *Metal Slug* shooter series for Game Boy Advance and a PS2 port of *Metal Slug 3*. The eagerly awaited home version of *SNK vs. Capcom: Chaos* is expected early in 2004 for Sony's machine (the arcade version debuts this fall). Future plans include \$9.99 PS1 versions of old Neo-Geo hits, arcade classic compilations, and even online, Xbox, and (gasp!) 3D games. That's right—Herman confirms 3D titles are in

development, including *King of Fighters*. But don't burn your "2D forever" T-shirts just yet. "We're not turning off 2D and going to 3D exclusively," he says. "We're going to let our fans tell us what they think. If they like it, we'll continue."

Oh, and speaking of those T-shirts, there is one change Herman would like to make. "I want to get somebody to put a comma [after 2001]," he says, laughing, "and add '2003-forever.'" —Mark MacDonald



■ Top to bottom: *King of Fighters 2001*, the SNK "Tribute" T-shirt, SNK vs. Capcom: Chaos, and *Metal Slug 3* (*Metal Slug Advance* inset).





VIDEO GAME GUIDE

**LOOK INSIDE FOR ALL THE INFO
ON THIS YEAR'S HARD-HITTING
LINEUP OF GAMES**

FOR NFL PLAYERS AND
CELEBRITIES, PLAYING NFL
VIDEO GAMES IS A PASSION.
LOOK INSIDE TO SEE HOW
THEY'VE BEEN SPENDING
THE OFFSEASON.



SEE BACK PAGE
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WHAT DO YOU DO IN THE OFFSEASON?

For some NFL players the Super Bowl is not the only championship worth pursuing. The competition playing NFL video games can be just as fierce and the rewards just as sweet. Even celebrities get in on the action.



Charlie Garner throws in the towel against Keenan McCardell at GameDay's Game Before the Game.



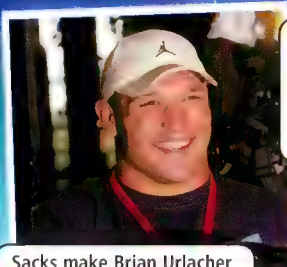
Marcellus Wiley leads his Chargers to victory against Shaun Alexander on NFL Fever.



Dwight Freeney celebrates his victory at EA Sports Madden Bowl.



Lance and Chris from *NSYNC kicking back with a friendly game of Madden.



Sacks make Brian Urlacher smile almost as much as playing ESPN NFL Football.

Brooks is bringin' the Blitz to T.O. at the Blitz Pro Bowl event.



Ray Lewis intimidates even while playing video games at EA Sports Madden Challenge.



8-0! GameDay predicts the Super Bowl Champ once again!

Peyton declares: Your defense is offensive while playing NFL Fever.





EA
SPORTS
MADDEN
NFL 2004



OFFICIAL GAME OF PLAYMAKERS

PLAYMAKER CONTROL:

Revolutionary new feature lets you control players off the ball. Change receiver routes pre-snap and mid-play, direct blocking downfield during a run and more.

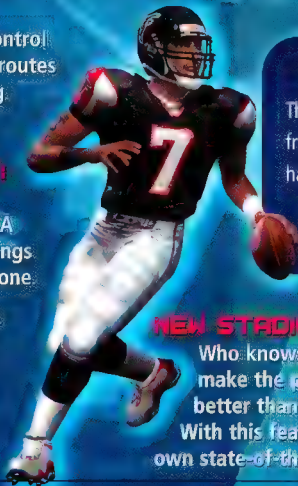
ENHANCED ONLINE PLAY*:

Compete in EA-sponsored Online Tournaments and chat in-game with EA Sports(tm) Talk**. New fair-play settings create an even playing field for everyone. *PS2 and PC Only.

**Headset and broadband connection required.

NEW OWNER MODE:

Here's your key to the Owner's Box. Hire staff, set ticket and concession prices, add luxury boxes and anything else you want to generate team revenue and fan loyalty.



HINTS & TIPS

STRATEGIC SUBS

At the playcall screen, make quick substitutions to exploit mismatches.

USE MOTION:

Sending a receiver in motion lets you determine if the defense is playing zone or man-to-man.

FUN FACT

This is the 14th year of this storied franchise and more than 25 million copies have been sold in its lifetime. It's the #1 selling video game football franchise*.

*Based on total franchise sales in 2002 from TRS.

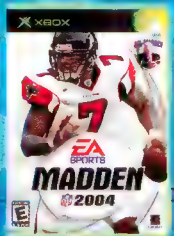
NEW STADIUM BUILDER:

Who knows what would make the perfect stadium better than the NFL fan? With this feature, design your own state-of-the-art stadium.

madden2004.com



PLAYMERS



GAME BOY ADVANCE



PlayStation 2





NFL FEVER 2004

TAKING THE GAME TO A FEVER PITCH.

XBOX LIVE:

With the all-new "cheater beater" you can take advantage of those less-than-honest players and win the right way.

NEW COACH'S FEATURE:

An animated coach roams the sidelines, offering situational advice. It's like having Barry Switzer on your team.

NEW DEFENSE:

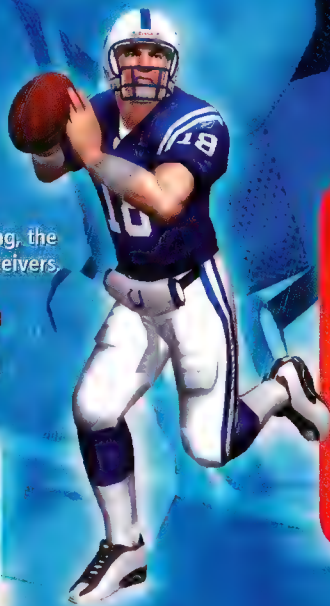
Unlike the Vikings, NFL Fever improved it's secondary with on-the-fly adjustments and adaptive players to slow the vertical game.

NEW OFFENSE:

With the "read and lead" passing, the quarterback can look off his receivers.

IMPROVED GRAPHICS:

NFL Fever's already impressive graphics get a facelift with real player models.



FUN FACT

For player chatter in this year's game, Seahawk players (to remain nameless) were

solicited to scream into the microphone what they say on the field; needless to say we got some very interesting content.





IGNITE YOUR GAME.

NEW FORMAT:

Blitz, while still holding to its smash-mouth roots, has evolved to include 11-on-11 action, featuring every team, every player, and every position.

ONLINE PLAY:

Along with downloadable rosters and statistics, you can compete against other players in bubble-style tournament play.

NEW RUNNING GAME:

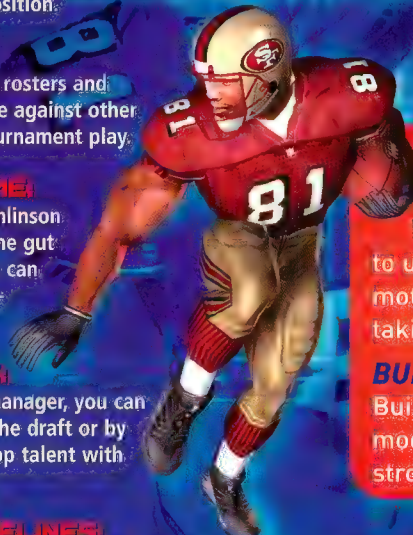
You can run LaDainian Tomlinson off-tackle or straight up the gut with this new feature. You can also call reverses and flea-flickers.

FRANCHISE MODE:

Just like an NFL general manager, you can mold your team through the draft or by trading. Or you can develop talent with in-game upgrades.

INTERACTIVE SIDELINES:

This new feature includes coaches, players, and cheerleaders on the sidelines. Just don't run too far, you might tip over the Gatorade table.



HINTS & TIPS

RUN EFFECTIVELY:

The key to running inside is to utilize a tight end running in motion to clear the hole by taking on the linebacker.

BUILD A DYNASTY:

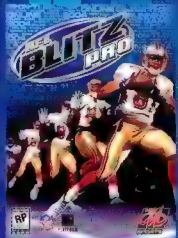
Building credits in franchise mode makes your players stronger and faster.

FUN FACT

Using the Impact Player not only changes the assignment of a key player but also changes that player's artificial intelligence for that play.



PlayStation 2



ESPN NFL FOOTBALL



COULD...GO... ALL...THE...WAY...

ESPN PERSONALITIES:

Strikingly real sounds of the game include commentary from voices you'll recognize.

REVAMPED PLAY CALLING:

New play calling system is easy to master, making play more fun than ever.

MORE MOVES:

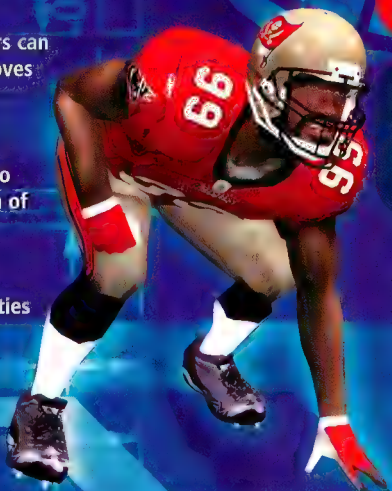
With improved control, gamers can execute finessed and fluid moves in the open field.

FANTASY MODE:

This new feature allows you to create your own fantasy team of NFL All-Stars.

ONLINE PLAY:

Online and voicechat capabilities for both the PS2 and XBOX.



HINTS & TIPS

A SIXTH SENSE:

With **FIRST PERSON FOOTBALL**, quarterbacks can sense impending pressure. Stay a step ahead of the rush.

UNLOCK THE SECRETS:

Winning isn't everything, it just unlocks hidden games such as air hockey, trivia and tutorials.

FUN FACT

Chris Berman recorded more than 40 hours of analysis and pre-game commentary for ESPN NFL Football.



2K4
SEGA



PlayStation.2





ARE YOU PREPARED TO PLAY ON GAMEDAY?

NEW PLAYER MODELS:

There's a strict attention to detail, including player accessories, that make the game lifelike.

ONLINE MODE:

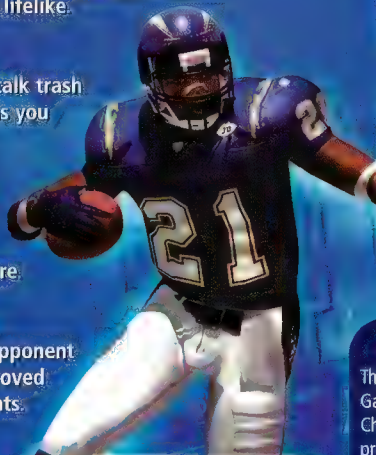
Using the USB headset, you can talk trash to opponents over the internet as you run up the score.

REALISTIC CONTROL:

If your quarterback is getting banged up, call max and super max protection in this new feature.

FILM ROOM REALISM:

No more routing the computer opponent in single-player games with improved offensive and defensive opponents.



HINTS & TIPS

BARK AUDIBLES FOR REAL:

Using a USB headset, the voice recognition system allows you to call hot routes without using a button.

SPIN MOVES:

New pressure sensitive controls allow you to adjust the severity of your moves, giving the gamer more control.

FUN FACT

The annual 989 Sports "Game Before the Game" pits a player from the AFC and NFC Championship teams in a Super Bowl preview, playing NFL GameDay. The winner of this game is an amazing 8-0 in predicting the actual outcome for the Super Bowl.



PlayStation PlayStation 2



The Circuit City logo, featuring the words "circuit" in a smaller font above "City" in a larger, bold font, both in white with a black outline, set against a red circular background with a white glow.

GO TO CIRCUIT CITY FOR ALL THE LATEST NFL VIDEO GAMES

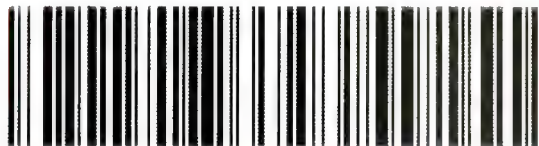
Circuit City, with more than 600 convenient locations nationwide, is your NFL headquarters for all the latest titles. With "no hassle" returns and their "price match plus" policy, all gamers should make a play for the nearest Circuit City for unmatched prices and selections.



\$5 OFF

ANY OF THESE 5 NFL LICENSED
VIDEO GAMES: MADDEN 2004,
NFL FEVER 2004, NFL BLITZ PRO,
ESPN FOOTBALL, GAMEDAY 2004

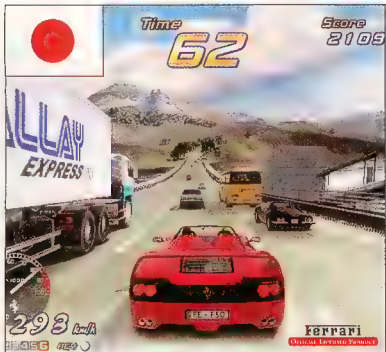
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EGM INTERNATIONAL

The good kind of number twos



FASTER AND FURIOUSER

Sega brings OutRun out of retirement for newfangled sequel

After numerous pseudosequels, a true successor to Sega's seminal driving game *OutRun* is finally on the way. With the Ferrari license available for the ride, *OutRun 2* (in Japanese arcades later this year) updates *OutRun*'s classic formula with modern touches: slick 3D graphics, no more sudden pop-in, and selectable Ferraris that can be tweaked for easier drifting. You'll bolt through more than a dozen branching stages, avoiding accidents as best you can along the way. Crash your car often enough and your female passenger won't compliment you on your driving skills at the end of your run. (In fact, she'll be pissed off.) Powered by Xbox-compatible Chihiro arcade hardware, *OutRun 2*'s a likely 2004 console contender.



STAR WHORES

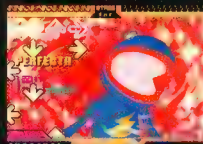
Xenosaga Episode II is unveiled across the Pacific

Get ready to set down the controller and break out the popcorn—developer Monolith Soft has revealed the next chapter in its cut-scene-heavy five-part space epic RPG, *Xenosaga Episode II: Jenseits von Gut und Bose* ("Beyond Good and Evil") for those who don't sprechen the Deutsch). Although it's a direct continuation of its predecessor, changes abound. Foremost, scope the visual overhaul—characters now look far more realistic, less like the saucer-eyed anime avatars in the first chapter. Also, the developers promise faster combat with a greater emphasis on using mechs. No release date was announced (even for Japan), but we expect the game here late next year.

OVERHEARD

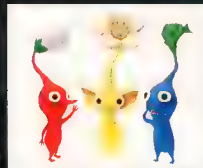
"Nintendo should be quaking in their boots."

—Electronic Arts CEO Larry Probst on Sony entering the portableNintendo market with its PSP handheld system in fall 2004



"It's really, really boring, actually."

—Arcade gamer Aaron Sprow weighs in on Namco's Dance Dance Revolution, after attempting to get into the Guinness Book of World Records by playing the game for 24 hours straight



"I've already got the basic idea for *Pikmin 3* in my mind."

—Pikmin and Mario creator Shigeru Miyamoto during a guest lecture on game design theory at Tokyo University

L'I PREVIOUS: THREE GAMES THAT PACK A LOTTA PUNCH

TENCHU: RETURN FROM DARKNESS

Xbox • Activision • Early 2004 — If the PS2 *Tenchu* escaped your notice (it is a stealth game, after all), keep your eyes peeled for *Return from Darkness*. Improvements include two new levels, plus online co-op and competitive live play (with un-pjaja-like voice chat) over Xbox Live.



BREAKDOWN

Xbox • Namco • Release TBA — Forget the guns; *Breakdown*'s protagonist prefers to use his fists in this first-person puncher. He bears mysterious glowing marks on his arms (an infection? Mania? Oh energy? Highlighter doodling?) which power his gymmelling plus a sexy supersoldier sidekick.



DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI 2

PS2 • Atari • December 2003 — With a new single-player Dragon World mode (where you try to collect all the dragon balls before your foes do), more fusion characters (including ones not seen in the show), and 34 fighters to pick from, *Budokai 2* looks like it could be a kick-ass DBZ game.



>>> TAP WAVE'S \$299 HANDHELD PDA/GAME MACHINE (CODE-NAMED HELIX WHEN WE COVERED IT IN EGM #170) HAS A NEW NAME—ZODIAC—AND IT GOES ON SALE IN OCTOBER.....>>>

RETRO-ACTIVE



Think your '80s heroes are dead? There's more than meets the eye

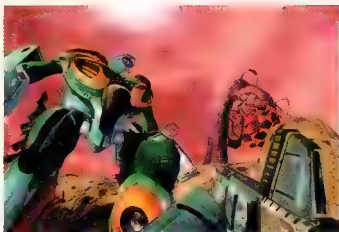
The Transformers, He-Man, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, G.I. Joe—these are heroes of geek mythology, after-school icons who clashed with squads of maniacal (and, for some reason, often hooded) haddies in the 1980s. They were the *Dragon Ball Z* and *WWE* superstars of their time.

So, of course, modern-day game makers now plan on capitalizing on console owners' warm, fuzzy feelings for these Reagan-era playthings. Your favorite '80s characters have reemerged in a bid for retro-gaming greatness, and their story starts—or restarts—here. Let's roll out.



Illustrations by Jeremy Travell

EA'S *Madden NFL Football* series, which has sold over 30 million copies, has been honored with an exhibit at the Football Hall of Fame in Canton, OH...



■ PS2, Xbox, GC

ROBOTECH: INVASION

■ TDK Mediactive ■ Late 2004

It sure wasn't junior-high health class that taught us of the perils of postapocalyptic living or that singing transvestites can help save the world. Those mid-'80s lessons came from *Robotech*, the animated sci-fi serial whose soap-opera plotlines—episodes mixed love triangles with giant-robot battles—earned it a for-life fan base.

So, it's kind of a shocker that last year's nifty *Robotech: Battlecry* from TDK is one of the few U.S. games based on the hit series. It focuses on transformable Veritech aircraft taken from the *Macross* Saga, the famous first chapter of the three-part *Robotech* saga. (Games based on the much different *Macross* series, *Robotech's* Japanese source material, are common in Japan—even Sega's AM2 team is working on a new *Macross* title.) Now, TDK is following up *Battlecry* with *Robotech: Invasion*, and a TDK rep says, "Everything about the game will be different." Set in *Robotech's* less-famous third chapter—in which a motley crew of humans battles lobster-armored

space invaders—*Invasion* is still a shooter, but this time in first-person rather than third-person perspective. Ready for a bigger change? You won't be stuck flying transforming planes. Futuristic Cyclone motorcycles, which convert into weapon-bristling body armor around their riders, will play a major role in *Invasion*, providing limited flight capability only when switched into Battoid armor form. And *Battlecry's* cartoony cel-shaded graphics have been dumped in favor of a new look, including detailed textures, reflections, and shading.

Most significantly, *Invasion* will be the first *Robotech* title you can play online. TDK is planning both local-area network and online support for 16-player simultaneous campaigns (presumably for PS2 and Xbox only). Eight-on-eight teams and free-for-all are in the plans, surely thrilling for *Robotech* aficionados. And if your memory of the show is a bit hazy from all that "experimenting" in college, why not buy the third series on DVD and bone up. ▶



HEY, D'YA REMEMBER THE '80S? HERE'S THE BEEF...

Game makers tried everything to make a buck in the '80s. Got any of this crap mint-in-box?



Maybe you waka-waka'ed to Buckner & Garcia's "Pac-Man Fever" tune, seen the *Pac-Man* cartoon, or even played that obscure old game (its name slips our minds) that spanned all the licensed nuttiness. But have you eaten *Pac-Man* cereal or drank from a cool *Pac-Man* mug? Then you haven't lived, my friend.



Atari and Hartec USA co-developed some of the first credit-card-sized solar calculators. Although supremely cool looking, they'd easily snap and spill brain-frying liquid-crystal juice. Which explains what happened to Corey Feldman.



In '83, back before Mario even became a plumber, this Game & Watch portable title, *Mario's Bombs Away*, featured our hero as a bomb courier helping to blow up enemy soldiers. Mushroom of mass destruction were never uncovered.

UBI SOFT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3 WILL BE XBOX-EXCLUSIVE FOR 2003 (KINDA LIKE HOW SPLITTER CELL WAS XBOX-EXCLUSIVE LAST YEAR).....

■ Poor Hotshot. He can't even manage to look butch holding a gun bigger than his head.



TRANSFORMERS ARMADA: PRELUDE TO ENERGON

■ Atari ■ Spring 2004

"Er-ah-ee-oo," went the Mack Trucks and Datsuns and Camaros that quick-changed into three-story droids in *Transformers*, the mid-'80s cartoon series that really was more than meets the eye (psst, it was actually a half-hour Hasbro toy commercial disguised as a cartoon). Money-grubbing tactics aside, the show hooked us all and grew into an empire of comics, movies, and—of course—hundreds of robots that could be twisted into vehicles, weapons, and, well, ghetto blasters. Funny thing: As with *Robotech*, only a few *Transformers* games were released in the United States, and none were very fun. But that could...change.

Atari's *Transformers Armada* for PS2 is, thankfully, unrelated to the disappointing earlier *Transformers* games. Based on the recent cartoon series, *Armada* puts you in control of Autobots Optimus Prime, Hotshot, and Red Alert, each of which have unique skills you'll need for different situations. For instance, Hotshot—who transforms into a sports car—is zipper than the others and can jump over

chasms to reach new areas. Meanwhile, midsize SUV Red Alert has more shielding, while Mack-Truck-daddy Optimus Prime's size allows him to hold the most Minicon upgrades—small droids you collect to boost your Autobots' offensive and defensive capabilities. You'll find more than 40 Minicons within *Armada*, thus earning such performance boosts as heavier lasers, a stealth mode, enhanced shielding, rocket launchers, and a larger energy bar.

You'll need all the help you can get to tackle such series mainstays as Megatron, Starscream, and Cyclonus—plus Tidal Wave, a new aircraft carrier Decepticon due out in the next update to the toy line. And, if that group wasn't enough, Megatron's army of Decepticon henchmen awaits you as well. No doubt you'll eventually find these guys in the toy store, too. ▶



■ Don't trust the Decepticons farther than you can throw 'em.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

These '80s properties have hugely popular comic books right now, but where are the games? Knowing is half the battle...so we hunted down the facts.



G.I. Joe

These real American heroes went AWOL after decent NES and arcade games, but—good news!—our spies say

that Atari is working on a *Joe* action game for PlayStation 2. Stay tuned for more in an upcoming episode of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*.



Thundercats

The show's rocking theme may have belted that the "Thundercats are on the loose," but nowadays the feline superteam is kept

on a short leash. The only new projects in the works are a film and direct-to-video show, and there are no plans to bring the *Cats* to consoles.



Battle of the Planets

Even if you know this series by its Japanese names *Gatchaman* or

G-Force, you're probably not as big a fan of its classic teenage space defenders as we are. Sadly, the only *Planets* game is an import-only PlayStation 1 fighter from Japan.



Voltron

Another fan-favorite robot series—this one featuring five mecha-lions who collide to form a giant super robot—will go digital

soon. License-holder World Events and developer Veil Interactive plan new *Voltron* toys that will...interact with television broadcasts. Um. Uh huh....



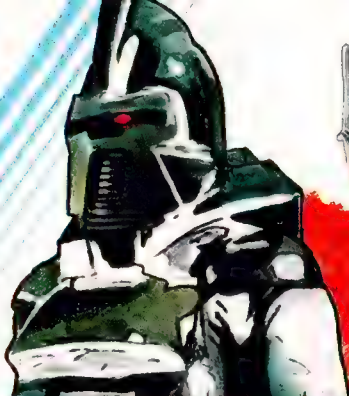
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VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT WWW.DCSHOES.COM

 **BRUCE IRONS**
SEAN DAVEY PHOTO

MODEL FEATURED
the FURY





TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA • Konami • October 2003
Back in 1989, the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*

coin-op successfully translated the chop-socky action and antics of the *Turtles* TV show (which itself was loosely based on the comic book) into the slickest four-player arcade game since the venerable *Gauntlet*. And now that the goo-mutated *Turtles* have crawled from the sewers into a new Fox Kids cartoon, Konami is bringing back the heroes in a half shell, this time in a vivid cartoon-rendered beat-em-up. As before, the *Turtles* stomp Foot Clan ninjas and team up to take down familiar villains from the cartoons, such as Rocksteady the rhino, Bebop the warhog, Krang the brain-alien from another dimension, and—of course—hōncho ninja Shredder. The current cartoon's actors provide the voices of Raphael, Donatello, Leonardo, Michelangelo, and other major characters.

Unfortunately, the console editions support only two players. If we could just play cooperatively with four players like in the old coin-op, our trip down memory lane would be a bit more, like, radical, dude.



HE-MAN: DEFENDER OF GREYSKULL

PS2, Xbox, GC • TDK Mediatrice • November 2003 — When it comes to games, the power of Greyskull blew it fuse ages ago: *Masters of the Universe* titles, including last year's poor GBA *Gauntlet* knockoff, have always stunk worse than He-Man's gym leotard. Now, TDK is hoping to right these evils with a single-player action game to accompany the new Cartoon Network *He-Man* series. The never-ending struggle continues between our favorite sexually ambiguous musclehead and his slightly meatter-than-Callista Flockhart nemesis, Skeletor. Ol' skullface has such baddies on his side as Shadowbeast, Skeleton Warrior, the Doomseekers, and a host of horned, purple apes.

Although we're skeptical about the gameplay, TDK has suggested that some story treats await *He-Man* fans, who may even glimpse what happens when Skeletor gets his hands on Greyskull's power. (Take that, *He-Man* fan-fiction community!) Anyone who had hoped to play as She-Ra or Man-at-Arms will be disappointed—you only control He-Man. But at least you are able to ride the laser-toting Battle Cat, just as Skeletor rides Panther. (No word yet on being able to pummel Orko, though.)

■ Cash in on today's special two-for-one sale on Cylon Raiders in *Battlestar Galactica*.



BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

PS2, Xbox • VU Games • November 2003 — It was like *Star Wars* on the wee screen... except without the supernatural effects or that quasi-mystical Force business. But this celluloid chronicle of a wayward starship's quest for Earth—admittedly a late '70s show, but one watched by the '80s generation—did have a cute dog droid. And *Bonanza* star Lorne Greene. And it has appeal so enduring that the Sci-Fi Network is readying a new, sexed-up *Galactica* miniseries for this December.

Vivendi Universal is launching its own *Battlestar* for PS2 and Xbox, and this game is based on the original show rather than the Sci-Fi Network's reimagining. It puts you in the cockpit of a Colonial Viper piloted by first-tour ensign Adams just as a deep-space war with the chrome-domed Cylon Raiders is heating up. Although it includes ship models, sound effects, and music from the original TV show, *Galactica*'s look, missions, and interface are similar to those of developer Warthog's previous *Star Trek: Invasion* and *Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter* space-combat efforts. The action in *Galactica*, however, has you engaging in fighter-ship battles and bombing missions to protect your ragtag group of colony ships from Cylon-flown Raiders. Impressive film-quality movie sequences break up the action. Now, how about a hidden, playable Starbuck? By our command? 🐾

—Jeremy Horwitz, Crispin Boyer, Paul Byrnes, and Joe Fielder

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ALL PUNKED UP

Talking Mario and Monkey Ball with Good Charlotte



Since punk's merger with the mainstream, many punk bands have scored places on game soundtracks. And Good Charlotte is no stranger to that scene, having contributed their single "The Anthem" to last year's *Madden NFL 2003*. Though Good Charlotte's now an MTV and radio staple, fame and fortune haven't dulled the band's passion for gaming. We caught up with the lads (Joel, Benji, Billy, and Paul) on tour to hear their little song and dance....

EGM: What have videogames done for Good Charlotte's career?
Good Charlotte: Before our last record came out, people would come up and be like, "Who...? Good Charlotte! You guys were in *Madden*!" More people recognized

us from the game than anything else.
EGM: As a punk band, don't you think licensing music for promotional purposes is selling out?
GC: Screw that. Nobody knows what "selling out" means anymore. We love games and play them every single day. To have a song in one is an honor, period.

EGM: Any of your peeps share your passion for gaming?
GC: Yeah, the band New Found Glory. A lot of musicians do it...it's the best way to kill time on a tour bus.

EGM: So just how long do you spend going at it daily instead of getting blitzed or hooking up with random buxom coeds?
GC: Probably three hours, every day. But, you know, multiplayer games can go on forever.

EGM: System of choice?
GC: GameCube. We grew up playing *Mario*, *Zelda*, and *Donkey Kong*.

EGM: What's currently on the official Good Charlotte playlist?
GC: The best game ever is *Super Monkey Ball*. We just got *Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis* for Xbox, too. That's the s***, tearing down and rebuilding attractions. But fantasy role-players like *Kingdom Hearts* are cool as well.

EGM: What upcoming games are most likely to keep you busy when you really should be working in the studio?
GC: *Spider-Man 2*. The first one was really great. And *Mario Kart: Double Dash*. Pretty much any Nintendo title based on old characters works wonders for us.

EGM: Not to jinx it or anything, but let's say your career goes belly up. Might there be a possible future for you in game design?
GC: Don't think we haven't thought about designing our own game. It'd be something cartoonish, but scary: a cross between *Zelda* and *Resident Evil*.

EGM: It wouldn't be an interview without one cringe-worthy question, so: What's more fun, games or groupies?
GC: The games. When you have girlfriends, screwing around with an Xbox is safer.

—Scott Steinberg

>>> SEGA'S AM2 DIVISION IS WORKING ON A MACROSS GAME (BASED ON THE FIRST THIRD OF ACTION TOON SERIES ROBOTCH) FOR BANDAI TO RELEASE ON PLAYSTATION 2 IN JAPAN.



MIDWAY

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"Twisted Metal: Black meets Grand Theft Auto..."

- Electronic Gaming Monthly June 2003

"If you're a fan of car combat... this is the only game in town."

- GameSpy 2003

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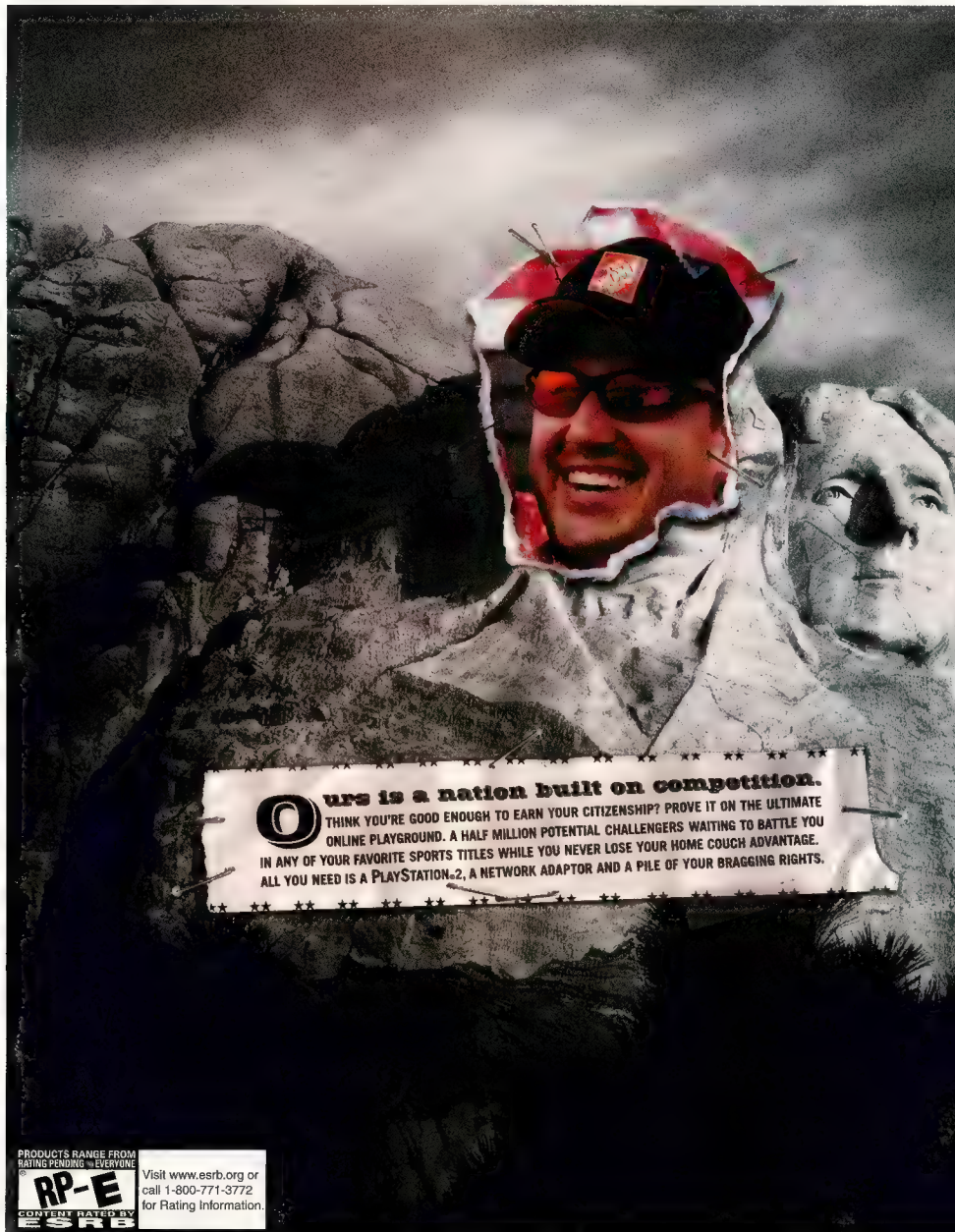
PlayStation 2



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A LONG TIME AGO...

We chart how GameCube shooter *Star Wars Rogue Squadron III: Rebel Strike* fits into that galaxy far, far away

You all know the gist: A whiny farm boy smooches his sister, levitates some rocks, laser-duels his old man, saves the galaxy, yada, yada, yada. But while most *EGM* readers have seen the classic *Star Wars* trilogy so many times they can

recite Yoda's backward-speak forward, no one has actually gotten to learn the Force from the Jedi Muppet in a game.

Until this October. That's when LucasArts unleashes GameCube sequel *Star Wars Rogue Squadron III: Rebel Strike*, which mixes the series' top-

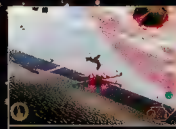
notch flight-combat sorties with new on-foot missions (although weesa got a bad feeling about them). Everyone in the galaxy knows this hot sequel will let you relive the film trilogy's greatest moments. But it turns out those are bonus missions—the game's two main

campaigns, which star Rebel aces Luke and Wedge, pit you against the Empire in ways the flicks never showed. Our timeline shows how it all fits together (including a few spoilers, but we're not revealing every level). Begun, these *Star Wars* have.... —Crispin Boyer



Bye-bye, Death Star

Rebel Strike's single-player game doesn't hurt you down the trench of the Empire's big battle station. Fortunately, the first level of Cube prequel *Rogue Leader* did. And since all that game's stages return in two-player co-op form, you get to blow up the Death Star again—with a pal. Another option: Preorder *Rebel Strike* in stores (not online) and you'll get a bonus disk packed with the 1982 *Star Wars* arcade game, which lets you vaporize a vectorized version of the moon-size megawespaan.



Varmousing Yavin

The game's story actually fires up here, with the Rebels fleeing Yavin's jungle moon—from which they launched their raid on the Death Star—and spiriting away to a new base on ice-ball Hoth. "You're trying to delay the Empire so that the Rebel remnants can escape," says Producer Brett Tostel. You spend half the mission blasting invading Imperial craft from the sky, then land with Wedge and take out invading stormtroopers on foot. Afterward, *Strike* splits into two paths, with specific levels for Luke and Wedge.



Luke will eventually hop into an Imperial AT-AT and burn it up against the Empire.

The siege of Rallitir

The Empire has been bombarding this dustball planet for weeks, laying siege until renegade scientists turn themselves in. Luke swoops to the rescue to topple AT-ATs with his speeder's tow cables. He can even "grab bombs with the cable, drag them through the streets, and blow up the bridge," says Factor 5 President Julian Eggbrecht. "We really wanted to do something else with the stupid tow cable this time."



Saving the girl

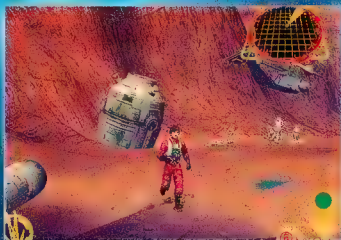
Rebel Strike's first bonus mission sends Luke, Han, and Chewie into the Death Star's slate-gray innards, where they blast through a scene-for-scene redo of Cinnabon-haired Leia's *Star Wars* escape.



Everyone gets a medal for nuking the Death Star except Chewie. He carries on the injustice.



C-3PO and R2-D2 hold beautiful commitment ceremony in Oahu.



Return to Geonosis

Episode III's first 40 minutes unfolded on this rocky red planet, and now Wedge is paying a visit—unwillingly—40 years after the fact. He zips there in his X-wing to escort a convoy of scientists, only to fall into a trap set by an armada of Imperial capital ships. After crashing on the planet's surface, Wedge battles stormtroopers and old Trade Federation droids, then finds a bashed-up but functional Jedi starfighter, with which he soars to freedom.

THE STAR WARS TIMELINE

STAR WARS: A NEW HOPE

The Empire Strikes Hoth

We're back in familiar territory, in a mission that begins right after Luke's shot-down snowspeeder hits the tundra in *Empire*. He has to topple lumbering AT-AT walkers the hard way—by sabering open their bellies and chucking in explosives—and then cover the Rebels' retreat as they shuttle off of Hoth.



■ That AT-AT is, like, so close to stepping in someone's nasty.



Full throttle

The Endor forest becomes a blur as Luke whizzes through the foliage on an Imperial speeder bike, dodging trees and targeting scout troopers. He'll take the last speeder apart with his saber while on foot. Remember this scene from *Return of the Jedi*?



■ Four out of five Saracc dentists recommend sugarless Lando for their patients who chew Lando.

Smoking the boy

Lia's attempt to rescue Han from the clutches of safe-size slug Jabba the Hutt has gone awry—she's a slave girl and Han's about to swoon dive into the Saracc pit. It's up to Luke and Lando to save the gang in this from-the-flick mission.



Grand Theft Chickenwalker

You, as Chewie, steal an Imperial AT-ST and turn its cannons against Imperial ground forces, as chronicled in the forest battle at the end of *Return of the Jedi*. Then comes *Rebel Strike*'s final mission, which has Han detonating the Death Star's shield generator on Endor's moon. Much Ewok rejoicing ensues, along with a music/rhythm minigame that'll have you singing along with the Ewok chorus. OK, not really.



Yoda schools Luke

Dagobah's swamps serve as the backdrop for the bonus level, where Luke masters the trickiest Force power: double-jumping.



Darth Vader asks Luke, "Who's your daddy?" then tells him, Luke whines, loses hand.



Luke becomes Jedi badass, makes his own lightsaber.



Luke returns to Dagobah just in time to see Yoda strivel into thin air.



Luke fights Vader in a title bout rematch and hacks off the old guy's hand. Unfortunately, none of this saber-dueling stuff is in *Rebel Strike*.

THE STAR WARS TIMELINE

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

WELCOME TO
ATL



(404) Classic.

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LICE CITY

The makers of Grand Theft Auto get dirty with Manhunt

Rockstar's next game could hardly be more different from *Grand Theft Auto*. While the company's flagship series is all about freedom, open-ended gameplay, and good humor, *Manhunt* (due this fall for PS2) is claustrophobic, dark, and dead serious—and aptly so, since it's Rockstar's entry into the survival-horror genre. But, as Rockstar's PR Director Jeff Castaneda explains, "It's about real-world horror, not zombies or monsters."

At least, not monsters in the traditional sense. You play James Earl Cash, a convicted murderer turned over to an ominous figure named The Director after a faked execution. The good news is that The Director wants to make you a star. The bad part is that the show he wants to do it with is a combination of reality television...and snuff films. Cut to the next scene: You're loose in the dingy buildings and back alleys of Carcer City, where gangs of street thugs vie to kill

you live on camera.

To survive, you can either confront your pursuers (more on that later) or sneak past them by staying out of sight and, most important, keeping quiet. "Sound is the primary tool the hunters use to track you down," says Castaneda, "and that you use to track down the hunters." The game's on-screen radar is entirely based on audio clues: it shows the position of enemies if they're causing a ruckus, and flashes when

you are. Just walking around will make noise, and different surfaces are more audible than others. Sometimes you can use sound to your advantage—like by raising a racket and then hiding, bringing the hunters nearby and within striking range. The radar shows what direction your foes are facing, allowing you to sneak up behind and eliminate them, as in Activision's *Tenchu* series. Luckily for you, the hunters make a lot of noise as they search, taunting you and

the gangs of carcer city



"The artificial intelligence of the army of thugs chasing you will improve as the game progresses," says Product Manager Devin Winterbottom. Over time, they'll follow you farther and stay on alert for longer. Each group has distinct costumes, too. For example, The Hoods wear executioner-style hoods, while The Smilies wear menacing happy-face masks. Sounds like a nod to another upcoming game from Rockstar, *The Warriors*.



Every day is apparently Halloween in *Manhunt*. Watch out for razor blades in the apples.

■ A stealth game with meat cleavers in it? Yep, it's definitely from the people who brought you the GTA series.

■ Sometimes stealth just won't work and you'll have to put your sawed-off shotgun to good use.




mumbling random obscenities (every snippet of their dialogue seems to refer to one biological function or another). If the hunters actually see you, though, they'll give chase until you can find a shadowy area to hide.

Silent weapons are the most effective, since they won't alert other hunters to your whereabouts. Luckily, the game carries a full arsenal of them, such as baseball bats, meat cleavers, glass shards, and even plastic bags that can be used—in direct violation of

warning labels—to strangle adversaries.

Of the two levels we've seen so far, the first was straightforward, requiring you to sneak your way through an abandoned building and the alleys surrounding it. The second was more action-packed, with you "following the white rabbit" (actually a chubby man in a bunny suit) through a series of rooms filled with hunters. Not surprisingly, stealth was less of an issue, with shotgun blasts employed liberally.

Of course, it's too early to tell if Rockstar has another big hit on its hands, but *Manhunt*'s timely reality-TV presentation and violent content seem sure to follow *GTA* in at least one respect: controversy. Each time you execute an enemy, the game switches to a fuzzy video shot of the graphic action, to the delight of *The Director*. As Castaneda explains, "*Manhunt* is a brutal sport, and it's all about the money shot." 

—Ron Dulin



■ Evening strolls in the park can turn ugly when thugs are tracking your every move.



homage to the hunted

Manhunt's aesthetic was inspired by dark films like *BMM* and *Seven*—an influence apparent in the murky colors, dilapidated locales, and scary hooded adversaries. But the films that (we're guessing) inspired *Manhunt*'s story? Let's just say that most of them probably involved a gravelly-voiced movie-trailer narrator spouting lines like, "In a deadly game of cat-and-mouse...the hunter will become the hunted...."



The Running Man

Schwarzenegger plays an unwilling star in a futuristic TV show in which chainsaw-wielding maniacs pursue participants and every line spoken culminates in a heavily accented, barely-understandable pun. "Kehilliaamn!"



Surviving the Game

Perhaps the best-known rule of filmmaking is that if Ice-T is in your movie, it has to suck. In *Game, T* accepts a job as an assistant to a party of rich hunters intent on pursuing the deadliest species...man!



Hard Target

In this 1993 John Woo embarrassment, Jean-Claude Van Damme plays Chance Bourdeaux, a bayou drifter who runs afoul of an organization that sells hunting permits for human prey. Why's he called Chance? "My mama took one." Oh, heh—wait, what?

MEGA MILESTONE

Capcom's blue hero celebrates his 15th b-day with Mega Man X7

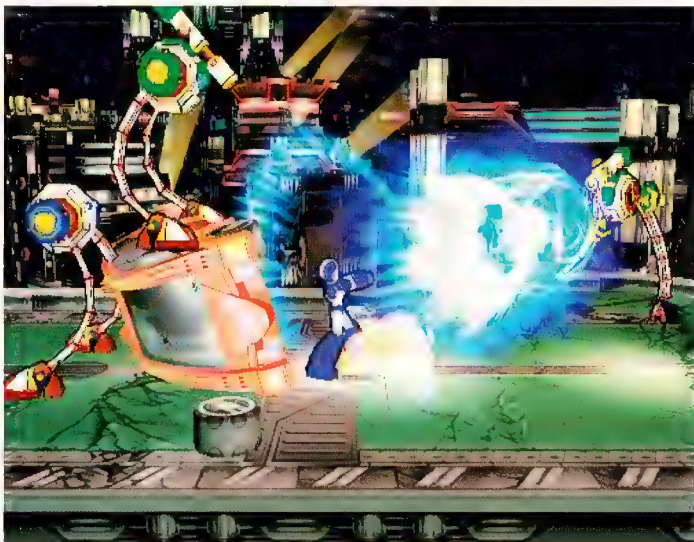
Hard to believe, but it's been 15 years since Capcom debuted its iconic robo-boy with the impossibly large novelty boots. And it wouldn't be a proper celebration without a new game to kick it off, which is where *Mega Man X7* comes in, due this October for PlayStation 2.

X7 opens just like past *X* titles, with Mega warping onto a nearly demolished freeway overpass, running his little heart out while lanky metal walkers and pesky robot bees block his path. After he blasts a few baddies, the perspective switches from classic side-scrolling 2D to a 360-degree frenzy of cap "busting" (his pea-shooter gun/hand is called the X Buster), but not without a few tweaks to the combat mechanics. Auto-targeting via the R2 trigger allows you to toggle between enemies, and the camera also falls under manual control (with the L1 and R1 buttons). Getting a good perspective was a sometimes janky process in the unfinished version we played, though, especially while trying to dodge a hail of enemy fire.

But the real kicker isn't the marriage of 2D and 3D—it's a new feature dubbed "Scramble Change," which allows you to swap between characters in the heat of battle. No matter how deep into a level or boss battle you are, old Mega sidekick Zero and newcomer Axl (who packs a laser pistol and a nifty jetpack for hovering) await your tag ringside. Having each character's unique traits and weaponry at your disposal allows for ass kicking with the most extreme of prejudice—Axl's gun, for example, is perfect for taking out certain enemies, while Zero's plasma sword delivers massive close-range damage.

Add in a cartoon-graphics style, sick new visual effects, and the typical *Mega Man* array of tricky bosses, and it's obvious: Capcom's Blue Bomber won't be hanging up his mega-sized boots anytime soon. 🎮

—Jon M. Gibson



■ New 3D gameplay sections break up the more classic side-scrolling bits.



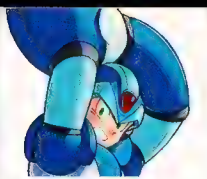
■ *Mega Man* series newcomer Axl brings the guns, but not the roses (or the drug addiction).

mega evolution

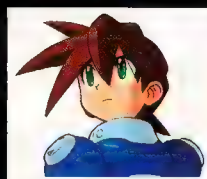
Over the last 15 years, the blue guy has had a few makeovers. Witness the evolution from adolescent to cyberspace warrior.



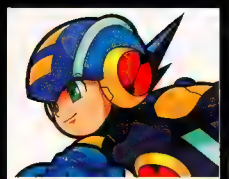
■ 1988 • *Mega Man* (NES)



■ 1993 • *Mega Man X* (SNES)



■ 1998 • *Mega Man Legends* (PS1)



■ 2001 • *Mega Man: Battle Network* (GBA)

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CONFLICT: DESERT STORM II

BACK TO BAGHDAD

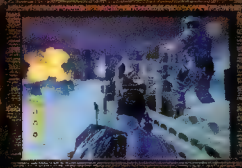
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PlayStation 2



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LIFT TICKET

EGM maps out this year's snowboarding games

Last snowboarding season was rough on the bodies of the EGM staff (no kidding: aching backs, bloody shins, and bruised ribs)... Perhaps it's a better idea for us

to take a break from our kamikaze-like antics on the slopes and spend time with one of these three games. Here's a guide to help you decide which one's right for you. —Bryan Intihar



1080°: AVALANCHE

GC • Nintendo • December 2003 — Sequel to the Nintendo 64 hit from more than five years ago, *Avalanche* focuses on superior rider control—especially for landing, where correctly rotating the analog stick helps you avoid smacking headfirst into those ice patches. You also have to keep a watchful eye out for obstacles during runs, including rickety bridges, rock slides, animals, and other boarders. And now, multiplayer supports up to four competitors (the original had two-player spitscreen).



SSX 3

PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA • EA Sports Big • October 2003 — Forget about gallivanting across the globe to exotic snow parks. All the action here is on one huge mountain with three peaks of varying difficulty. *SSX 3* is more of an open-ended boarding experience than past installments, enabling you to enjoy this towering portion of earth whether you specialize in racing or tricks. PS2 owners even have the option to challenge a fellow rider online in events such as Big Air and Slope Style.



AMPED 2

Xbox • Microsoft • November 2003 — Realism is the name of the game in *Amped 2*, with 16 pro boarders, mountains from around the world, the option to use skateboard-sized snowskates, and an even truer-to-life trick repertoire than before. Once again, the goal is to become an extreme-sports icon by impressing fans, media, and sponsors with stylish runs. But new to the series is online play (up to eight riders) and the ability to check rankings, view player stats, and create leagues through Microsoft's Internet sports hub. Plus, you can race in sponsored tourneys to win cash prizes. Cha-ching!

Illustrations by Mik Schultz

People tend to look at you differently
when you stuff a voodoo doll full of laxatives.



TEEN
T
Mild Violence



Microsoft
game Studios

You and Vince, the third best voodoo doll in Madam Charmaine's shop, are charged with rescuing his maker from the evil Kosmo the Inscrutable. To get by pit frogs, imps, killadillos and more on the exotic streets of New Orleans, Vince must use his best weapon, himself. See Vince jump into a blender, stick himself with a pitchfork, step into a beartrap and over 25 ways in which Vince can hurt himself, which means he's really helping himself. So don't feel bad for Vince. It's what he does best.



it's good to play together

xbox.com/voodoovince

MONDAY, BLOODY MONDAY

Ten years ago, "Mortal Monday" brought us controversy, game ratings, and Mortal Kombat

Before there was *GTA* or even *Doom*, there was *Mortal Kombat*. On September 13, 1993, aka *Mortal Monday*, the home versions of Midway's infamous arcade fighter were released to the delight of gore-hungry gamers and the chagrin of anxious politicians. We celebrate the 10th birthday of one of the best-known names in gaming by taking a look back with *Mortal Kombat* co-creators Ed Boon and John Tobias at where it all started.

Mortal Konzept

Few console videogames debut to the kind of hysterical fervor that *Midway's* bloody fighter enjoyed in the early '90s. But it began modestly...

John Tobias: The basic idea was to have big, digitized characters beating the crap out of each other, and a story line entrenched in Chinese mysticism.

Ed Boon: The ironic thing is, *Mortal Kombat* was intended [as] just something quick that

we did in eight months to fill a hole in our production line that was coming up. We said let's do something like [Capcom's] *Street Fighter II*, using digitized graphics and a way harder edge. Let's try and get this kind of over-the-top, cheesy feel to it. *Street Fighter II* was so cartoonish that we wanted to be the anti-*Street Fighter*. I think [the Jean-Claude Van Damme action flick] *Bloodsport* had just come out and we'd watched [Bruce Lee's kung-fu epic] *Enter the Dragon* a few times and a whole bunch of other martial arts movies.

Tobias: Ed and I were the primary team members, but the entire team consisted of four people total.

Recipe for success

When the completed game hit arcades in 1992, it was an instant success. Eager gamers lined up and traded tips and secrets as they awaited their turn.

Boon: I think [*Kombat's*] success was due to a combination of things. Digitized graphics

were state of the art at the time, so that got a lot of attention. We wrote [deep and involving] stories to support the characters, which was another first for a fighting game. **Tobias:** We set out to make players feel like they were doing damage. Every hit was

Tobias: Fatalities weren't [even] a part of the original design. Our first idea was to use them as a finishing move for final boss Shang Tsung, who was going to pull out his sword and behead his opponent. Then we thought, "What if the player could do that to

"It started as something quick to fill a hole in our production line." —MK co-creator John Tobias

intentionally as loud [as possible], with as much impact as we could deliver. We didn't want the cartoonish "snap snap" of hit impacts that other games had going.

Fatality!

That desire to up the ante in the visceral feel of fighting games led to *Kombat's* brutal Fatality finishing moves, setting a new precedent for videogame violence.

his opponent?" When we watched players react to the Fatalities, we knew we had no choice but to give them more. And so came Kano's heart-rip fatality, Sub-Zero's spine-rip, etc.

Boon: There were definitely times where someone would suggest something and we'd say, "No, we can't do that." We knew we were definitely treading on this area that would possibly be perceived as a problem. [The reaction] was just so enthusiastic ▶

behind the characters

Co-creators Ed Boon and John Tobias give up the goods on...



The Ninjas: Scorpion and Sub Zero

Boon: Because of technical limitations, we only had a certain amount of memory.

We had to make the most use of our image space—that was the whole inspiration for Scorpion and Sub Zero [looking identical, aside from differently colored outfits].

Tobias: We had a ninja as part of the original roster but we wanted to get some mileage out of the fact that his face was going to be covered, and we could get away with a palette swap and a few special moves to differentiate them.



The Chick: Sonya Blade

Boon: Sonya wasn't even in the original version. When we tested [*MK*] in Chicago and it did really well, our CEO said, "Hey, you guys gotta add a female character to this game because we've

got something big on our hands," so we took another six weeks and added the Sonya character.

Tobias: I remember considering different approaches to the addition of a female. One thing we knew is that we didn't want her to be this dainty, cute little girl. So we used a story line from an unused male character I created earlier [that would become Jax in *Mortal Kombat II*] for Sonya.



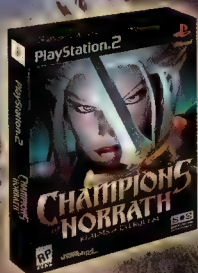
The Monster: Goro

Tobias: I had this idea to utilize stop-motion puppetry as a means of creating a big, hulking monster. We knew we could get away with it, considering the [low] quality of graphics.

Boon: For the longest time we considered having him be a character that you play, but we realized [Goro] was this big clumsy guy and we didn't have time to give him the same attributes as the main characters. So we just said, let's make him this boss guy—something to be scared of at the top of the hill as you're going up the ladder, so to speak.

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► and positive that we knew there was something we had hit on.

I wasn't that surprised [at the media spotlight on the game's violence] since it did have some pretty shocking stuff. But I found it a little peculiar because, since *Mortal Kombat* had come out, other games had been released that were more violent. But *MK* was the one that sold six million units of violence as opposed to some game with a ton more objectionable content that just came and went.

Bringing it home

When it was time to bring the game to consoles, third-party publisher Acclaim—not Midway, who did arcade games at the time—nabbed the rights for the home versions for Super Nintendo, Genesis, Game Boy, and Game Gear.

Tobias: Our involvement [in the home versions] was to make sure that the translations were as accurate as possible, given the limitations of the platforms at the time.

Boon: I remember being a real pain in the ass to them about the gameplay; for the first one, I never felt that they quite hit it right, especially the Super Nintendo version, and [I] actually held up their submission process for a while.

Tobias: I'm not sure what the motivation was, but I remember that at some point, Acclaim wanted to change the look of the *Mortal Kombat* dragon symbol. We were like, "Uh, no." For us that was like changing Superman's "S"—you just don't do that.

Boon: I clearly remember it was a store like a Wal-Mart or Venture opening at midnight [on *Mortal Monday*] to sell the game

and there were lines. That just blew my mind. I couldn't believe that people were convincing their parents that "I can't wait and buy the game tomorrow—I need to buy it tonight."

Tobias: At that time we were hard at work on the arcade version of *Mortal Kombat II*. Knowing that players were that fanatical about the first game made us work that much harder on the sequel.

Current projects

Six million units later, the series is a bona fide hit that has produced comic books, animated and live-action television shows, feature films, spin-off games, and sequels that continue even today. After parting ways, what are *Mortal Kombat*'s original two creators working on now? Surprise—new fighting games.

Tobias: Now I'm running Studio Gigante, Inc. [whose first title, the 3D Xbox fighter *Tao Feng*, was released by Microsoft this past spring].

Boon: I'm working on a follow-up to [PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube fighter] *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance*. Our big thing that we're researching now is [playing] online. A lot of the magic of *Mortal Kombat* was the whole arcade social scenario, where you're playing strangers, and how many wins in a row can you get, king of the hill, and all that stuff. That was a really huge part of the game's success. So we really feel that online is the potential next way to re-create that whole phenomenon. We don't have a ship date yet, but we're shooting for [sometime in] 2004. 🐉

—Chris Johnston



■ Acclaim launched an advertising blitz to prepare gamers for *Mortal Monday*.



■ Memorable *Kombat* moment: The first time you hit someone with Scorpion's harpoon-like spear. "C'more!"

look at all the...sweat?



Fans of the arcade game had a major bone to pick with the Super Nintendo version of *Mortal Kombat*—the game's blood was turned to whitish "sweat" and the more violent Fatalities were changed, like Sub-Zero's spine rip (arcade, left; SNES, right). "That was something that was presented to us as 'this is Nintendo,'" Boon says. "It's not like we had any sort of con-

vincing ability. They choose not to do it. They have the bottom-line final word [on] the content in their games." "My initial reaction to the sweat was laughter," Tobias adds. "I think in hindsight you could make an argument that that decision by Nintendo helped Sega gain an upper hand in the console wars between the Super NES and the Genesis."

L'I'L PREVIEWS: GAMES FOR GUYS WHO LIKE GAMES

NFL STREET

PS2, Xbox, GC • EA Sports Big • Spring 2004 — Ever get seven football where everybody, even those pansy-ass quarterbacks, plays both sides of the ball. Expect a playbook full of trickery, and unlike the real game, showboating is rewarded with onfield power-ups. The best news yet? No John Madden commentary.

MONSTER 4X4: MASTERS OF METAL

PS2, GC • Ubi Soft • November (PS2), December (GC) — Climb into the high cab of a hulking monster truck (like Grave Digger, Madusa, or Wolverine) and roll over/through locales like Alcatraz, Central Park, and the Louisiana bayou. Beef jersey, light beer, and a seat (of which you will need only the edge!), sold separately.

CHARTS

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES FOR JUNE 2003



- 1 **The Matrix: Reloaded** PS2, Xbox, GC
- 2 **Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness** PS2, Eidos
- 3 **Donkey Kong Country** GBA, Nintendo
- 4 **The Hulk** PS2, Vivendi Universal
- 5 **NBA Street Vol. 2** PS2, EA Sports Big
- 6 **Pokémon Ruby** GBA, Nintendo
- 7 **Pokémon Sapphire** GBA, Nintendo
- 8 **Disney's Finding Nemo** GBA, THQ
- 9 **Dragon Ball Z: The Legacy of Goku II** GBA, Atari
- 10 **Yu-Gi-Oh! Worldwide Edition** GBA, Konami

TOP 10 GAME RENTALS FOR THE WEEK ENDING 7/20/03



- 1 **NCAA Football 2004** PS2, EA Sports
- 2 **Enter the Matrix** PS2, Atari
- 3 **Midnight Club II** PS2, Rockstar
- 4 **The Hulk** PS2, Vivendi Universal
- 5 **Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness** PS2, Eidos
- 6 **NBA Street Vol. 2** PS2, EA Sports Big
- 7 **Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic** Xbox, LucasArts
- 8 **Warlo World** GC, Nintendo
- 9 **Midnight Club II** Xbox, Rockstar
- 10 **NCAA Football 2004** Xbox, EA Sports

THINK YOU KNOW NHL HITZ? THINK AGAIN...



-NICKLAS LIDSTROM

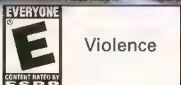
IT'S TIME TO GO PRO WITH THE NEW NHL® HITZ® PRO. FOR THE FIRST TIME AUTHENTIC NHL FEATURES DIE-HARD HOCKEY FANS DEMAND HAVE BEEN COMBINED WITH MIDWAY SPORTS TRADEMARK FAST AND FURIOUS GAMEPLAY, DELIVERING AN ALL-NEW NHL HITZ PRO EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT YOU'D EXPECT FROM HITZ AND DIFFERENT FROM WHAT YOU'LL GET WITH ANY OTHER HOCKEY VIDEOGAME.

- NEW 5-ON-5 AUTHENTIC NHL ACTION
- NEW TOURNAMENT STYLE ONLINE PLAY*
- NEW WRAPAROUNDS AND DEFLECTIONS
- REALISTIC 3D REACTIVE CROWDS
- NEW PRO-STYLE ANIMATIONS
- ALL-NEW PRO-STYLE A.I.

"Long story short, this game looks great...now five-on-five, and committed to being the most entertaining hockey game on the market, hockey fans need to sit up and take note. NHL Hitz Pro is a serious contender in the NHL arena." -IGN



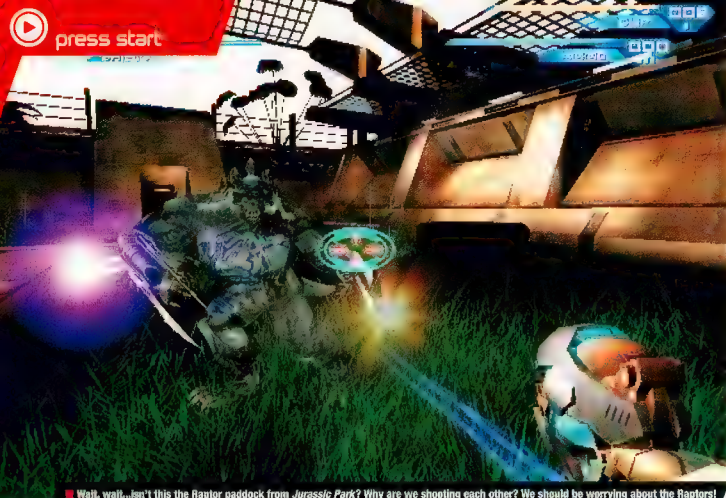
www.midwaysports.net



PlayStation 2



*Online feature available only on the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system.
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Well, well... isn't this the Raptor paddock from *Jurassic Park*? Why are we shooting each other? We should be worrying about the Raptors!

PC GAMING UPDATE

Star Bores



LucasArts' new massively multiplayer online role-playing game *Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided* isn't as bad as *Attack of the Clones*...but it's not much better than *The Phantom Menace*. So while it's not so horrible it'll make your brain bleed, it is kinda lousy. PC jockeys will have to wait for *Knights of the Old Republic* (Xbox) to hit PC if they want a decent *Star Wars* game this year.

The chief problem with *Galaxies* is its stavis, literalist fanboy adherence to the arbitrary rules of the *Star Wars* universe. Online games are all about free-form exploration and possibilities, yet for all its sweeping epicsness, this is quite possibly the most rigid online game ever. Players seeking "enjoyment" are constantly confronted with a "you can't do that in real life" design philosophy, which overlooks a little point that there is nothing "real life" about an online game with robots, Wookiees, and Lightsabers.

Not that there actually are any lightsabers, because how you become a Jedi is still a total mystery. In theory, something will trigger "Force sensitivity" for a lucky few, but this riddle wrapped in an enigma cloaked in swagness is just one of many frustrations. Painfully slow level advancement, cookie-cutter FedEx-style courier missions, and a heavy reliance on noncombative character classes (who will become increasingly scarce as players realize how monumentally dull it is to blow \$14.99 a month to be a chef on Naboo) round out the tepid *Galaxies* experience.

—Robert Coffey,
Computer Gaming World



ONLINE THIS MONTH

Unreal sequel gets a boost on Xbox



U2's flamethrower lets you spray down walls with fluid, then light them on fire.



If you're looking for more *Unreal* after last year's *Championship* (which just joined Xbox's \$20 Platinum Hits line, by the way)? Good news: This month, Atari announced that *Unreal II: The Awakening*, the newest installment of the famed first-person shooter series, is on its way to Xbox this December.

If you've played the PC version of *Unreal II*, you're probably wondering what this game is doing in our online section since you know it only has solo missions. More good news—Atari is adding the soon-to-be-released PC online multiplayer pack to the Xbox version of *The Awakening*. New maps, your standard deathmatch games, and a mode Atari describes as "an all new class-based, team-oriented" affair will be included, in addition to a new splitscreen co-op game and control and graphical tweaks.

But unlike *Championship's* focus on deathmatch on- or offline, *The Awakening* also promises a meatier single-player game. You play ex-space marine John Dalton, who responds to a distress signal from the far reaches of space and finds himself smack in the middle of a full-scale war over ancient artifacts. Basically, that means plenty of opportunities to give alien scum a kick in the junk—including the dreaded Skaarj from the first *Unreal* and new enemy races like the Drakk and the Izarians.

Although the PC version of *U2* has thus far failed to repeat the blockbuster success of the genre-defining original, it might find a warmer welcome on Microsoft's black box this Christmas, with Xbox Live players jonesing for a sci-fi shooter fix to tide them over until *Halo 2* ships early next year.

must-hit websites



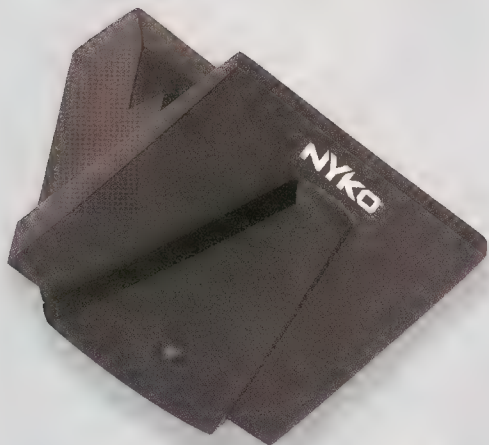
kidfenix.com/stridercover.html
There's bad box art, and then there's *bad* box art. The Gallery of Hideous Box Art is dedicated to collectors so bad they're good—like comic-staliped, middle-aged *Strider* here, for example.



shynola.com/_s/_a_download.html
Fans of old-school pixelated game graphics should make haste to this site that houses the video for Junior Senor's club hit "Move Your Feet" in beautiful low-tech glory. Oh yeah. Don't stop that beat.



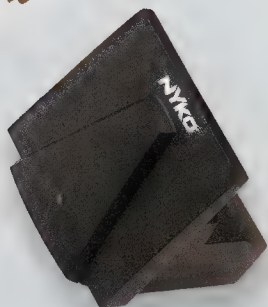
retardisco.com —And speaking of music, if the term Nintendo Punk tickles your curiosity, head to this site and order yourself a copy of the 14 Year Old Girls' debut CD, *Zombies in Robots Out*; it's filled with short gaming-fueled power-punk.



*INTRODUCING THE EASIEST ON-LINE HOOK UP
SINCE THAT GIRL FROM THE CHAT ROOM.*

WIRELESS
NET^SEXTENDER™

Introducing The Wireless Net Extender. The easiest way to wirelessly connect your Playstation®2 or Xbox® to your internet connection. Plug and play, secure encryption, no annoying software installation, or latency. You will be up and running in no time, playing online from any room without messy wires. Find out more at nyko.com/netextender.

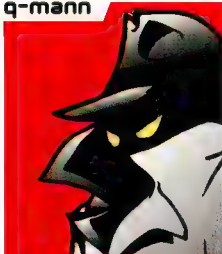


NYKO
INNOVATION FIRST

THE RUMOR MILL

Cold-filtered gossip, never heat pasteurized

q-mann



LABOR DAZED

Summer came and went quickly this year, and The Q almost missed out on enjoying his favorite hot-weather sport—jetting down water slides, splashin' in the wave pool, and ending the day with a float down the lazy river. Good times, bub. But enough about me—you came for the rumors. Send your comments to quartermann@uffdavis.com. Catch ya in another 30. —The Q



■ Banjo sends much love to all his homies.

Kart remake with Double Dash

Last winter, Nintendo's prepurchase program with *Wind Waker* (the one where you got *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* and *Master Quest* as a bonus disc) was so successful that we hear they're thinking of doing it again. But this time, it'll be with the upcoming *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!*... and the bonus? The Nintendo 64's version of *Kart*. I dunno about you, but my appetite's whetted.



F-Zero portable sequel?

And since we're talking Nintendo, how about this little—and I do mean little—rumor. While *F-Zero* rips up the track on the Cube, a new portable installment of the futuristic racing series is reportedly already being crafted in Japan.

Rare's next: Banjo Pilot

It seems like it was years ago when Rare announced its plane racer *Diddy Kong Pilot* for GBA. And since Rare's split with Nintendo, *Pilot* has languished. Until now. Word on the street is that Rare has refashioned the title into a game starring that big burly oaf of a bear, Banjo, and retitled it *Banjo Pilot*. You're excited, right? I can tell. It's still for GBA, but the question is, when will we see Rare's batch of portable titles that include a full-scale *Banjo* adventure and

a puzzle game once referred to as *Donkey Kong Coconut Crackers*?

Multiple Turismo

The Q's been hearing plenty of rumors about Sony's plans for *Gran Turismo* (including the one that I've mentioned before about *GT4* featuring certain two-wheeled vehicles), but here's a new one I thought I'd pass along: Word has it that there'll be not one, but two *GT*s in the near future: *GT4*, and a separate game for online play that is more akin to Microsoft's stylish Xbox racer *Project Gotham Racing*.

Bebop crew ready for action

Spike Spiegel and the crew of bounty hunters from the animated TV show (and recent movie) *Cowboy Bebop* have long since retired in Japan, but their anime exploits have just recently caught fire Stateside. So with such a hit on their hands, what's Bandal to do? Start developing a *Bebop* PS2 title so U.S. boosters can live out their wildest of fanboy dreams. No word yet on what type of game *Bebop* will be, but The Q suggests a picture-taking challenge with buxom huntress Faye Valentine. You listening developers? Yowzers...



NEWS BITS

Famicom-colored

Nintendo will produce 1,000 GBA SPs in the red, white, and gold colors of the Famicom (the Japanese version of the 8-bit Nintendo Entertainment System). The SPs will be prizes in a Japan-only contest commemorating Famicom's 20th anniversary. Hey, one might show up on eBay—for like a zillion yen.



SEPARATED AT BIRTH



■ The *Weekly World News'* Bat Boy, said to have recently fought Saddam Hussein.



■ The mutant baby from *Mr. Nerve*—the '70s "classic" about toothy killer tots.



■ The Seers, a race of alien psychics you killed about a zillion of in *Brute Force*.

PIECES OF PLAYSTATION PORTABLE INFO

Sony lets a few more details about PSP out the door, but still no picture



Unless you've taken up domicile in a cave recently, you've heard of Sony's PlayStation Portable (aka PSP, original EGM artist's rendering at left), an on-the-go game and entertainment machine that Sony plans to release in late 2004. In July at its annual PlayStation developer's meeting, Sony let slip a few new details about the device. Here are the ones that matter:

One analog to rule them all — PSP's control layout will mimic that of the DualShock controller, but with just one analog stick. It'll sport a digital control pad and Square, Circle, Triangle, X, L1 and R1 (just one of each), Start, and

Select buttons for all your gaming needs.

Plug in, tune out — It's confirmed that PSP will include a headphone jack, so you can game without disturbing any uppity neighbors who may lurk nearby.

No wires to bind it — No cables will be required to hook your PSP up with other nearby players, thanks to its embedded wireless (802.11, for all the nerds out there) capability.

A long wait ahead — Sony plans to show prototype machines at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles next May, then have a lineup of games ready in time for the 2004 Fall Tokyo Game Show, leading into its release in late 2004.

Certain death at your
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12 o'clock



RATING PENDING

RP

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org
or call 1-800-771-3772
for more ratings
information.



Microsoft
game studios



Buckle up because *Crimson Skies*® is a deadly ride. Play single player as an air pirate at the helm of a tricked-out 1930s warplane. Because you're fueled by revenge, anyone foolish enough to enter your airspace is an enemy. Play on Xbox Live™ to pick a dogfight with up to 15 friends and strangers. Just remember, as you enjoy sending opponents into a fiery death spiral, someone probably has you in their crosshairs. Good luck, you are cleared to rule the skies.



it's good to play together

xbox.com/crimsonskies

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THE HOT FIVE

Updated looks at the games you most want in 2004

Vote for your most-anticipated games between the 1st and 15th of each month at www.egmmag.com.



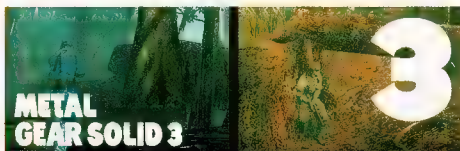
1 HALO 2

Xbox • Microsoft • Early 2004 — After selling three million copies in less than two years, *Halo*'s a certified blockbuster with legs. While you're waiting for *Halo 2*, try Microsoft's newly enhanced PC version (due out in mid-September) for a preview of some features we expect to see in its Xbox sequel next year: higher-resolution graphics, juiced-up weapons like the Fuel Rod Gun, full 16-player online support, and six brand-new maps (including the Timberland forest). And if you still really have a jones for more *Halo*, Joyride Studios should have 17 action figures and Warbros on store shelves by the time you read this.



2 GRAN TURISMO 4

PS2 • Sony CEA • Early 2004 — With every new *Gran Turismo*, we hear the same question: "Hey, are those actual screens?" For *GT4*, the answer is yes, it really looks that good (at least in Replay mode). On the surface, the big changes are its 3D animated crowds and cleaner (but still not jaggie-free) backgrounds. How will it play? At this point, *GT4* still feels very much like *GT3* with online modes and new cars. But will you notice the deeper changes to competitor A.I. and vehicle handling?



3 METAL GEAR SOLID 3

PS2 • Konami • Late 2004 — Wink wink, nudge nudge. Hey, have you noticed that Konami won't confirm the true identity of *MGS3*'s main character? Catch any oblique references to Big Boss, the guy Solid Snake toppled in the very first *Metal Gear* game? Consider the following: Old bios say Boss was once regarded as the Greatest Soldier Ever, and worked in Asia during the Cold War before creating Fox Hound, the unit Solid Snake later joined. *MGS3* takes place in 1966's Asian jungles. And Solid Snake's too young to have served back then. Hmmmmmm...



4 GEIST

GC • Nintendo • TBD 2004 — *Geist* is the secret Nintendo game formerly known as *Fear*, and fearful it were when we learned that the developers of *Mary-Kate and Ashley* games are working on Nintendo's only straight post-*GoldenEye/Perfect Dark* first-person shooter. Mercifully, *Geist* is spiritually closer to N-Space's earlier *Duke Nukem: Time to Kill*, and allows you to shift your ghostly character temporarily between enemies while searching for a permanent body.



5 STARCRIFT: GHOST

PS2, Xbox, GC • VII Games • Early 2004 — Third-person shooters (particularly those with first-person Sniper modes) succeed or fail on the strength of their level designs and controls. It's clear from early versions we've played that developer Nihilistic has nailed *StarCraft: Ghost*'s control scheme. Now, it's churning out tons of new stages full of cool tricks. This month's backstage tidbit: See how the developer is perfecting the art of thermal-vision snooping and sniping? Guess what the yellow and red parts mean.



P.N.03
PRODUCT NUMBER

P.N.03

DANGER AROUND EVERY CURVE.

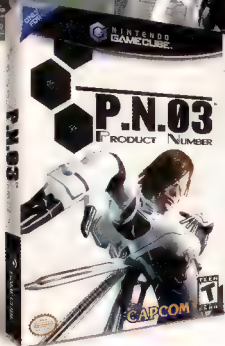
EXHILARATE YOUR SENSES in this all-new, all-out fast action frenzy created exclusively for the Nintendo GameCube™. A Computer Arms Management System has gone haywire on a distant planet. The hopes of an entire civilization rest with Vanessa Schneider, a mercenary robot killer with a personal grudge to settle. With moves that amaze and an attitude to match, only she can demolish the mechanical menace.

YOU'VE NEVER SEEN ACTION LIKE THIS.

demolish robots, machines, mega weapons and transforming enemies with your bare hands

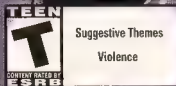


master stylish moves and powerful attacks for enhanced choreographed gameplay



CAPCOM
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BRADY GAMES
Strategy Guide
AVAILABLE



COMING SOON

When game release dates attack!



BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE 2
(Action-RPG) PS2, Xbox • October — This combat-heavy dungeon-crawler gets more magic, character classes, and melee attacks. And D&D monsters like mind flayers, owl bears, and dragons will leave you quaking in your plate mail.

SEPTEMBER

Auto Modellista (Racing) GC

All the control problems of Capcom's critically panned racer arrive on Nintendo's console, but without the online content.

Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg (Platform) GC

Billy crushes enemies under giant rolling eggs and hatches helper animals in this platformer from *Sonic* creator Yuji Naka.

Black 9 (Action-RPG) Xbox

Not to be confused with the porn film of the same name... although the stealthy gameplay still centers on slipping in and out.

Boktai: The Sun Is in Your Hand (Action) GBA

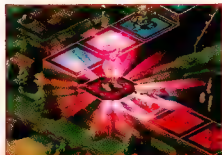
Charge up your arsenal of antivampire weaponry by playing this game in actual sunlight. Yeah, we mean outside.

Dino Crisis 3 (Action-Adventure) Xbox

Capcom's second-string survival-horror series gets stranger yet as dinosaurs run rampant on a derelict starship.

Disgaea: Hour of Darkness (Strategy-RPG) PS2

The Netherworld is in shambles, and it's your duty to reclaim your birthright as king and restore order.



CULDCEPT

(Strategy) PS2 • October — This videogame version of the popular Japanese board/card game plays like *Monopoly* meets *Magic: The Gathering*. Yeah, you'd be hard pressed to think of a more unlikely pairing, wouldn't you?

Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure (Sports) PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA

Isn't putting the words "Disney" and "extreme" together an oxymoron?

ESPN NFL Football (Sports) PS2, Xbox

Sega digs deep into its playbook and hopes first-person football is the answer to defeating Madden.

ESPN NHL Hockey (Sports) PS2, Xbox

One look at Mario Lemieux's mug and you'll think this hockey series has received one helluva graphical facelift.

Fatal Frame 2 (Adventure) PS2

Why fill ghoulis with lead when you can kill 'em with a camera?

Final Fantasy Tactics Advance (Strategy-RPG) GBA

The 100-plus missions and the ability to battle or trade items/dan members with friends will surely drain your GBA batteries.

Freedom Fighters (Action) PS2, Xbox

Recruit civilians to help send the commies back to the Kremlin.

Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance (Action) PS2, Xbox

Rise through the ranks of your fellow fighters by cutting them to bits, then settle a score with the dishonorable emperor.

Ice Nine (First-Person Shooter) PS2

Forget about going into these battles with guns a-blazin'. The name of the game here is stealth.

Lethal Skies II (Air Combat) PS2

Leavin' on a jet plane. Not sure when we'll be back again....

NBA ShootOut 2004 (Sports) PS2

989 expects flashier player models to attract additional b-ball fans this year.

NFL Blitz Pro (Sports) PS2, Xbox, GC

Looks like PS2 owners are the lucky ones—they get the option to play online.

NHL Hitz Pro (Sports) PS2, Xbox, GC

Additional hits and fewer teeth are expected this year, thanks to Midway upping the number of players on ice.

P.N. 03 (Action) GC

With a million-dollar exoskeleton, you'd imagine she could at least strafe....

Resident Evil Code: Veronica X (Adventure) GC

Claire Redfield searches for her brother Chris in this final RE port for Nintendo's gaming lunchbox.

Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown (Adventure) PS2, Xbox

Fencing! Adventure! Men in tights! There's never a dull moment among the Merry Men in Sherwood Forest.

Shining Soul (Action-RPG) GBA

Sega takes a page from the *Gauntlet* series, enabling you and three friends to play simultaneously.

Sphinx and the Curse of the Mummy (Adventure) PS2, GC

A young, fey Egyptian and his mummified sidekick face puzzles aplenty in this platformer once subtitled *The Shadow of Set*.

Star Wars Rogue Squadron II: Rebel Strike (Action) GC

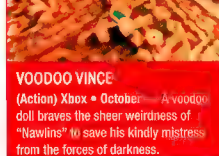
New on-foot missions and co-op play have us feelin' the Force.

Starksy and Hutch (Driving-Shooting) PS2, Xbox

Put the pedal to the metal and the slugs to the thugs, consecutively or concurrently.

The Hobbit (Adventure) PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA

Bilbo Baggins, Gandalf, and a bunch of dwarves set out to slay a dragon and claim his treasure. Read the book, if you can tear yourself away from *Harry Potter*.



VOODOO VENGEANCE

(Action) Xbox • October — A voodoo doll braves the sheer weirdness of "Navvins" to save his kindly mistress from the forces of darkness.



DDRMAX2

(Rhythm) PS2 • September — The latest version of *Dance Dance Revolution* sports songs from artists like Kylie Minogue and Dirty Vegas to get you up on the dance floor... er, dance mat.

Tiger Woods PGA Golf 2004 (Sports) PS2, Xbox, GC

The fantastically rich and talented Mr. Woods lends his likeness to an actual golf-related product. Take that, Buick!

True Crime: Streets of L.A. (Rhythm) PS2, Xbox, GC

Very soon, we'll know whether all the hype was true or just a crime.

Warhammer 40,000 Firewarrior (First-Person Shooter) PS2

No need to paint pewter when you can play with other putzes online.

WWE Raw 2 (Wrestling) Xbox

Four-player Story mode lets you interfere with your friends' matches.

WWE Wrestlemania XIX (Wrestling) GC

Set out to destroy Vince McMahon's wrestling empire in an all-new Story mode. (Yeah, you read that right.)

WWE SmackDown! (Wrestling) PS2

Hands-down the most realistic-looking snowboarding title, but also possibly the most difficult to master.

Armed & Dangerous (Action) Xbox

More big explosions from the boys who brought us MDK.

Blowout (Action) PS2, Xbox

Looks and controls like the classic side-scroller *Contra*.

Conflict: Desert Storm II (Action) PS2, Xbox

Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saed al-Sahaf makes spittle on the infidel dogs who make squeals from scraps!

Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge (Air Combat) Xbox

As the leader of a cadre of airborne >

HEY SAPP YOU'RE SOFT.

In the First Person Football™ mode, I'm on the field, staring you down. I can see you coming. You got nothing. No matter what the play, I own you. C'mon, tough guy, line up. You and me. Let's do this.

AVAILABLE SEPTEMBER 4TH.



PlayStation 2



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NFL FOOTBALL



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FALLOUT: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL
(Action) PS2, Xbox • October
You're up against mutants, giant sea-plions, lots of guns, and bad hygiene in the desolate world of this post-WWII combat-fest. Long live the new flesh.

▶ pirates, you'll shoot your way to vengeance and glory. Plus: zepplins!

Demikids: Light and Dark Version
(RPG) GBA
Because you can never have enough of an unknown franchise....

Dungeons & Dragons: Heroes
(RPG) Xbox
Happiness is executing an orc with a level-6 Magic Missile and then taking all his stuff. Yes, we completely missed our saving throw against geekiness.

ESPN NBA Basketball
(Sports) PS2, Xbox
This year's installment of b-ball receives a healthy injection of adrenaline to help speed up the pace.

FIFA Soccer 2004
(Sports) PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA
Can this year's FIFA top the excellent *Winning Eleven 6*? How many of you care?

Grabbed by the Ghoules (Action) Xbox
After moving out of Nintendo's house and into Microsoft's, Rare cooked up this kiddie beat-em-up.

Hunter: The Reckoning Redeemer
(Action) Xbox
Can the Xbox version redeem the PS2's mediocre *Hunter: The Reckoning Wayward*?

Jak II (Action) PS2
In the sequel, Jak decides to show off the darker side of his personality. Trust us, you won't like him when he's angry.

kill.switch (Action) PS2, Xbox
Namco is tight-lipped about this game's story, but we know it involves shooting at bad guys, an innovative cover system, and more shooting at bad guys.

Kirby's Air Ride (Racing) GC
The makers of *Super Smash Bros. Melee* promise that controlling this pink marshmallow all the way to the finish line is as easy as 1-2-3.

Links 2004 (Sports) Xbox
Microsoft's mega-popular PC golf series debuts on Xbox fairways this fall. Now if it only had miniature golf in it, too....

Lowrider (Rhythm) PS2
This car-dancing game (yes, really) must feature the song "Lowrider" by War, not any of the lame cover versions. Please.

Mega Man X7 (Action) PS2
Mega Man and Zero welcome a new member to their crew, Axel, who has the unique ability to transform into enemies.

NBA Inside Drive 2004 (Sports) Xbox
Microsoft's b-ball franchise joins the rest of the XSN Sports lineup, adding a spiffy new online mode.

NBA Live 2004 (Sports) PS2, Xbox, GC
Here's a first: EA motion-captured 10 players at once to simulate a truer roundball experience.

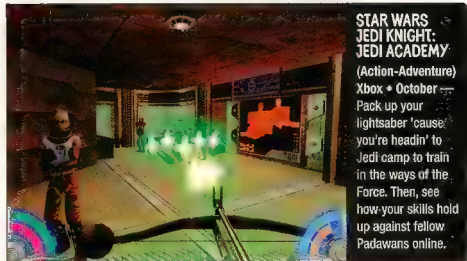
Pikmin 2 (Action) GC
Looks like *Mario* creator Shigeru Miyamoto's garden has provided him with enough ideas for a sequel.

RoadKill (Action) PS2, Xbox, GC
Think *Grand Theft Auto's* Tommy Vercetti jacking Sweet Tooth's Popsicle truck from *Twisted Metal*.

SSX 3 (Sports) PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA
EA's snowboarding franchise enters unmarked territory—online play—but only on the PS2 slopes.



WWE SMACKDOWN! HERE COMES THE PAIN
(Wrestling) PS2 • October
Here comes the pain! Well, you can hardly say you weren't warned, right?



STAR WARS JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACADEMY
(Action-Adventure) Xbox • October
Pack up your lightsaber 'cause you're headin' to Jedi camp to train in the ways of the Force. Then, see how your skills hold up against fellow Padawans online.

Steel Battalion: Line of Contact
(Mech Combat) Xbox
You might want to save any mention of this ultrahardcore mech simulation for the second date.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
(Action) PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA
Let's hope this beat-em-up doesn't bring "cowabunga!" back into common usage.

Sudeki (RPG) Xbox
We've replaced this Japanese-style RPG's development team with a gaggle of Brits. Let's see what happens.

Tony Hawk's Underground
(Sports) PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA
This time, it's all about you creating your very own extreme-sports legend.

Suffering, The
(Adventure) PS2, Xbox, GC
Dropping the soap is the least of your worries in this freaky creature-infested prison.

Top Spin (Sports) Xbox
This online tennis game is lookin' hotter than Koumikoiva in a fur coat.

Super Mario Bros. 3: Super Mario Advance 4 (Platform) GBA
Sure, the name is a mouthful, but you know you're anxiously awaiting the handheld version of this plumber's (arguably) greatest 2D adventure.

Whiplash (Action-Adventure) PS2, Xbox
Escaped lab animals flee their former captors. Platforming hilarity ensues.

SWAT: Global Strike Team
(First-Person Shooter) Xbox
Controlling your squad just got a lot easier with the option to issue commands via the Xbox Live headset.

Wrath Unleashed
(Action-Strategy) PS2, Xbox
Take turns plotting your monsters' moves, then pit 'em against each other in bloody real-time battles.

Tak and the Power of Juju
(Platform) PS2, GC
Can a character wielding a spirit rattle in one hand and an exploding coconut in the other be intimidating? Doubt it.

X-Files: The Resist or Serve
(Adventure) PS2, Xbox
How this one's just now landing on consoles, years after the series' cancellation, is a case worthy of Scully and Mulder.



BATMAN: RISE OF SIN TZU
(Action) PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA • October
After *Batman: Dark Tomorrow*, mere mention of the Caped Crusader in game form sears the crap out of us. But this 3D beat-em-up looks better than that guano.

YO, J.R.

YOUR SKILLS NEED WORK.

I pummeled you in the skills competition. My slapshot's been clocked at 99mph. I've hit four targets in four attempts. I got speed. I got moves. And I'm ready to take you on. Three periods. Hockey the way it should be. You and me. Let's dance.

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A hail of bullets from a Tommy gun or a shotgun stuck in your face over linguine at lunch. You choose a life with the Salieri family, the cops and feds will be the least of your problems.

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Mafia has received universal acclaim across the world with its blend of action and plot driven narrative. With Mafia living out your wise guy ambitions could not be easier.

Arriving on both PlayStation®2 and Xbox™, Mafia has been enhanced to deliver an awesome console experience that will make the Cosa Nostra look like a bunch of choirboys.



PlayStation®2



30 GAMES YOU MUST PLAY THIS FALL

Autumn is nearly upon us. For some, that means it'll soon be time for light jackets, pumpkin pie, and candy corn. For the rest of us, though, the change of seasons signifies something else entirely—namely, the impending release of more games than we'll likely be able to afford or find time to play.

To help you plan both your expenses and social calendar, the *EGM* staff discussed, debated, and fought before ultimately deciding on the games most worth playing over the next several months.

So get ready to brush the leaves from your hair, forget about that stringy-looking bird in the oven, and count down this impressive roster of titles sure to take up all of your time this fall.







Raziel shows off his much-improved combat moves.



Soul-Reaver 2's Janis Aurdmn returns in *Defiance*.

30 LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE

PS2, Xbox • Eidos • November 2003 — Even if you're turned off by the impossibly dense myths of the *Legacy of Kain* series, you may still want to get your vampiric antics on this fall with *Defiance*, the latest game in the long-running gothic line. Foregoing the more tiresome, inconsistent exploration aspects of its predecessors, *Defiance* focuses more on pure action à la Capcom's *Devil May Cry*. Plus, the ability to play as both Kain and Raziel means you not only get to suck blood, but also to reap souls. Take that, Dante!



29 PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2
Xbox • Microsoft • November 2003 — If you've ever daydreamed about being an international playboy street racer, well, your problems are beyond the scope of this publication. But at least you'll soon have *Project Gotham Racing 2*, and that's no small solace. Like the last *Gotham*, this Xbox-exclusive sequel rewards stylish driving with Kudos points, discouraging wall-bouncers and the "rubbin' racin'" set. From what we've played, it'll be a serious challenger to Xbox's best arcade-style speedsters—and it'll be online.



28 TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND
PS2, Xbox, GC • Activision • October 2003 — Señor Hawk calls the board of education back into session for *Underground*, a potentially great new twist on a familiar formula. *Underground* lets players build their own skater and take him or her from peon to prince in the series' first-ever Story mode. A Create-a-Trick feature, new moves (like being able to climb up the sides of buildings), online play for PS2, and cool gimmicks (PS2 players can put their own face in the game, per ejemplo) could propel this *Tony* to the head of the class.

27 SUDEKI

Xbox • Microsoft • November 2003 — If an Xbox owner's diet consisted solely of role-playing games, he'd be pushing up daisies by now. But Microsoft will help fill that gut void with *Sudeki*'s release. Developer Climax has set the stage for a sorceress, gunslinger, huntress, and swordsman to come together and restore order to the world. Along the way your band of heroes will run into the usual assortment of baddies, plus gargantuan boss creatures such as a massive, incredible-looking mechanical spider. But how you slay these sources of evil is a departure from the genre norm: The combat is in real-time, and you can slow down the action with a simple button press and issue traditional RPG commands like summoning spells. With epic battles and gorgeous graphics (resembling *Phantasy Star Online*), *Sudeki* should make for a hearty meal.



Swordsman Tai: Either executing a special move or performing karaoke for an increasingly tough

What's in a Name?
You've probably asked your self "What the hell's a *Sudeki*, anyway?!" It's actually the name of the game world, which is split up into two areas, Haskilia and the Realm of Shadows. Natch.



When not lazing about, your fellow sentinels of liberty rush 'n' attack.

26 FREEDOM FIGHTERS

PS2, Xbox, GC • EA Games •

September 2003 — EA's sharp new action game sounds like an update to the classic cold-war paranoia flick *Red Dawn*: Rusks—this time invading New York City—fight against rag-tag U.S. rebels with you as their leader (admit it, you've always wanted to be Patrick Swayze). *Freedom* takes *Brute Force*-like third-person squad combat and ups your troop capacity to a dozen, simplifies your commands (scout ahead, stay put, follow me) to one button each, and adds meaningful A.I. (your buddies will man turrets, cover doorways, etc.). Potential recruits should file off to page 131 for a further briefing (read: review).

25 THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT

PS2, Xbox, GC • EA/Maxis • Late

Fall 2003 — Finally, a game *scientifically proven* to appeal to the ladies! We're not quite sure whether they prefer decorating houses with matching furniture sets or feeding unfortunate Sims to carnivorous Venus flytraps. But we do know that this follow-up to last year's life simulator (and game-of-the-month winner) offers two-player co-op in Story mode, so you and your sweetheart can fall in love all over again playing it together. You'll also get more career paths, objects, and levels—plus... more ways to kill your Sims! "We received lots of requests for that," says Maxis COO Sinjin Bain. We're not surprised.



The Sims Bustin' Out is a game playing a game...

WHICH SYSTEM WILL HAVE THE BEST GAME LINEUP THIS FALL?

We polled our readers to find out which of the current consoles they think will get the greatest hits this season. Here are the results.

38.9%
Playstation 2

32.8%
Gamecube

28.3%
Xbox



24 BOKTAI: THE SUN IS IN YOUR HANDS

GBA • Konami • September 2003 — For

those of you still in the dark about *Boktai*, this nifty little action-RPG features a built-in solar sensor that'll force you to get your ass outside if you want to properly stick it to Dracula and his cronies. Gorgeous and packed with impressive touches, *Boktai* features fewer giant robots and paranoid conspiratorial thrills than you'd expect from the maker of *Metal Gear Solid*, but don't fret—this is a Kojima game through and through. Turn your gaze (though not directly) at our review on page 164 for more.

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■ Slow time to make this hell-platform fall...



■ You'd hide from a 400-pound Cylon Raider, too.

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

PS2, Xbox, GC • Ubi Soft • November 2003 — Life as an investigative reporter can be dangerous. Just ask Jade, the sparty-spice character creation of *Rayman* mastermind Michel Ancel. The people of Jade's home planet Hyllis have been mysteriously disappearing and this tough girl's had quite enough. With her trusty camera, our heroine joins an underground organization to help gather evidence against a possible government conspiracy. But she'll have help along the way: A wisecracking swine named Pey'j and fellow rebel Double H aid Jade during combat, exploration, and puzzle solving. *BG&E*'s style of play is similar to *Zelda*'s (always II plus), including *Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*'s stealth section, as Jade employs moves like crouching or leaning against walls to sneak past enemy guards and security cameras.



■ Even determined French space glits know that sometimes, you have to run from a fight.

VIEWTIFUL JOE

GC • Capcom • October

2003 — "I want to take the time here to apologize," Capcom Producer Atsushi Inaba posted to the official *Viewtiful Joe* website just days after the game's Japanese debut. "I'm sorry." Not that there was ever any problem with his new action/platformer—quite the opposite, in fact. *Viewtiful Joe* sold so well in Japan, stores couldn't keep it in stock. And now that we've had hands-on time with the final game, we can understand why.

Viewtiful Joe starts with the standard beat-em-up formula but adds brilliant abilities—like slow-mo, speed-up, and zoom-in functions—and seamlessly integrates them into enemy patterns and puzzles (e.g., slow down a helicopter's machine gun so you can punch the individual bullets back at it). With its good-natured humor, comic book art style, and simply fun controls, *Joe* is looking quite viewtiful indeed.



NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

PS2, Xbox, GC • EA Games • November

2003 — If you're completely tired of the unattainable beauty of the cars found in previous *Need for Speed* games, you'll be pleased that the next game in the series is aimed squarely at you. Well, sort of. The Ferraris and Porsches are gone, and in their place are Toyotas, Hondas, Mitsubishis, and other midsize bastions of automotive normality. The street-racing theme is the same, but it's now less *Cannonball Run* and more *The Fast and the Furious*. Win races, earn cash, and buy mods for your car to turn it into that 10-second rice rocket that can eat Porsche 911s for frigg'n' breakfast.

If you think the concept sounds neat and/or keen, wait until you see the graphics. With heart-stopping special effects managed by movie-visuals guru Habib Zargarpour (run his name through IMDb.com...he's been nominated for Oscars and everything), the game gives an amazing sensation of speed using tricks Zargarpour learned making the pod-racing scene in the *Episode One* flick. When we say that *Underground* literally has to be seen to be believed, we recommend you don't take it lightly.



■ The special visual effects in *NFS: Underground* will make you a turbo-lover.

The latest *Need for Speed* is even prettier than *Midnight Club II*.



20 SSX 3

PS2, Xbox, GC • EA Sports Big

• **October 2003** — Only a single lift ticket is required for this snowboarding trip, since *SSX 3* takes place entirely on one massive mountain—but buckle those bindings extra tight because you're in for one hell of a wild ride. Earning medals in both race and freestyle events will open new areas on the mountain where you can rip through fresh powder. Plus, the game's packed with an abundance of minichallenges to test your skills, like grinding a fallen tree to reach an uncharted cave. As before, you'll face rival boarders, but now you'll also contend with a slew of environmental hazards, such as thunderous avalanches and raging windstorms powerful enough to blow you clear off course. Surviving this three-peak monotony is one thing, but conquering it is no easy feat. We advise stocking up on ice packs...lots of them.

■ Online play is exclusive to the PS2 version of *SSX 3*.



METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES

GC • Konami • November 2003 — The adventures of Konami's sneaky Solid Snake are legendary, but his greatest journey inarguably took place back on the first PlayStation. Famed *Metal Gear Solid* creator Hideo Kojima has entrusted Nintendo's second-party development studio, Silicon Knights (*Eternal Darkness*), with updating that stealth-action classic for GameCube. Besides slicker visuals, *Twin Snakes* includes a number of gameplay techniques introduced in *MGS2*, such as shooting from a first-person view, stuffing bodies into lockers, and dangling from ledges. The story remains the same but will unfold in a more dramatic fashion thanks to Japanese film director and writer Ryuhei Kitamura. He and his team reshot all the cut-scenes, and Kojima professes, "When you see the cinemas in *Twin Snakes*, it'll be totally different from what you saw in the original *Metal Gear*." After witnessing a blood-soaked cyborg ninja make chop suey out of several guards, we have to agree.



Want some details on *Twin Snakes*' GC-GBA connectivity feature? So do we.

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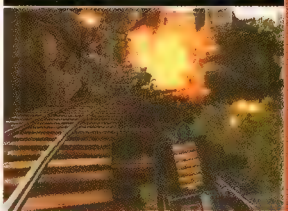
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■ The fight-for-your-life beginning of *Rising Sun*'s dramatic Pearl Harbor opening level.



World War II Online
In *Rising Sun*, two players can battle through the entire Pacific War. In split-screen co-op, players can own a flight instructor, a capture-the-flag competition boss, or an anti-airight. So you can fight against each other online as in voice chat, or as in Steam chat.



■ Your scope is handy for spotting pesky hidden foes.

18 MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

PS2, Xbox, GC • EA Games • November 2003

Fighting the good fight across the war-torn European countryside will seem like a pleasant vacation memory once you've visited the rotting, pestilent jungle settings found in *Medal of Honor: Rising Sun*. The latest game in EA's World War II-based first-person shooter series begins with a spectacular re-creation of the attack on Pearl Harbor before leading you into the war-is-green-hell found in Singapore, the Philippines, and Burma, stopping in such notorious locations as the bridge on the river Kwai.

The change in *Rising Sun*'s scenery is an important distinction between it and the last game in the series, but it's just the start. While *Medal of Honor: Frontline*'s levels were straightforward tours through even terrain, *Rising Sun* boasts contoured trails and branching pathways through each stage, complete with enemies that pop out of camouflaged pits and from behind trees to keep you on your toes. More than 300 scripted events add to *Rising Sun*'s cinematic feel (by com-

parison, *Frontline* had only 30), as should the game's backstory: You play marine Joe Griffin, who must search for his lost brother Donny (whose perspective on these events will be shown in *Rising Sun*'s sequel).

But your narrative is only part of the tale the game has to tell—it also includes the hunt for Yamashita's Gold, the fabled clutch of treasures Japan amassed from all the Asian countries it conquered. "In traditional *Medal of Honor* fashion, we wanted to have the player discover and chase an element of mystery beyond simply 'going to war,'" says Producer Tarnie Williams. "When doing research on the Pacific Theater, we were looking for an interesting story that was not mainstream, but well-known enough and documented so we could wrap a central game plot around it."

All of these elements make *Rising Sun* worth keeping an eye on, even to those growing increasingly wary of the upcoming onslaught of war-themed first-person shooters.



17 SUPER MARIO BROS. 3: SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 4

GBA • Nintendo • October 2003

— We would've been happy enough with just a portable version of the classic platform-jumping, turtle-stopping, brick-busting *Mario 3*, but Nintendo had to go and improve it on us. Not only will the latest handheld *Mario* get the usual *Advance* treatment (small gameplay tweaks, an added multiplayer game, Luigi's floaty jump), but users can also unlock extra items and even whole levels via the eReader peripheral. (It's not just for *Animal Crossing* anymore...)

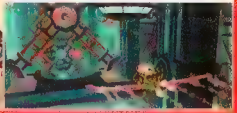


16 RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO

PS2 • Sony CEA • November 2003

— Don't judge this mega platforming sequel by its similar-to-the-original looks.

Developer Insomniac has added and changed a lot, including a new experience system, upgradeable weapons, and a hit-point scheme to make the game play more like an RPG. You can also expect an entirely new galaxy setting with more racing minigames, more Ratchet, and more big Clank—it's an extravaganza. All that and you can use your save game from the first adventure to unlock some special extras in the sequel.





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Let's start already!



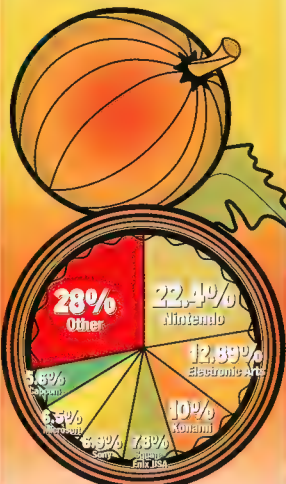
Expect a better translation than the original *Tactics*!

FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE

GBA • Nintendo • September 2003 — Don't be fooled by the fanciful story line, rosy-cheeked heroes, and cute anthropomorphic bunny women; *FFT Advance* is a deep and impressive strategy title no pocket tactician should pass up. As in the original PlayStation classic, creating skilled hybrid characters by mastering abilities from different "jobs" (such as the classic White Mage or deadly new Sniper) is as enjoyable as executing brilliant battle plans on the field. Time to put away *Advance Wars 2*... See page 166 for our final word on it.

WHICH PUBLISHER WILL HAVE THE BEST GAMES THIS FALL?

Besides asking our favorite web surfers which system will have the best lineup this season (see page 97), we polled them about publishers, too.



(Source: Gamers.com poll, 07/03)



CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH

PS2 • Sony Online Entertainment • November 2003 — Although it shares its setting with *EverQuest*, you won't find any basket weaving or online weddings in *Champions of Norrath*. Instead, this action-RPG focuses on what makes dungeon crawling great: killing wicked monsters and collecting ever more powerful weapons and armor. *Norrath* is full of goblins, giant spiders, and other ne'er-do-wells in need of a violent end, as well as thousands of weapons you can customize with fire, lightning, or cold powers to deliver your wrath. If whacking monsters on the head isn't your style, use the visually impressive spells to clear out foes and take their valuables. Up to four players can go adventuring cooperatively, online or off. Play *Norrath* on the Internet (there's no monthly fee) or save your character on a memory card and tote it over to a friend's house. *Baldur's Gate*, what?





■ *Everything or Nothing* actually has us excited about playing a 007 again: It's the most promising Bond game since *GoldenEye 007* (1997).



Machine-gun-laden helicopters flock to 007 like bees to a hive.



007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

PS2, Xbox, GC • EA Games • November 2003

— You've just pressed Start. Before you can prop up your feet or pour a beer, you're rappelling down a burning building, flames bursting behind you, reducing concrete and steel to a shower of hot ember and glass shards. It's only when you escape the inferno by ending your controlled fall with an Olympic landing that you get your first clear shot of Pierce Brosnan's photorealistic face, and what's more, hear the actor's voice. *007: Everything or Nothing* is James Bond like you've never played him before. And drawing on the likenesses and voice talents of an all-star cast that also includes Willem Dafoe, Shannon Elizabeth, and Dame Judy Dench is only part of the picture.

"If you want to be Bond, you have to be Bond," explains Executive Producer Scot Bayless. "The first-person perspective that was standard in previous *Bond* games made for a kind of anonymous experience, but here you have constant reinforcement that you are Bond. It also radically changes the gameplay. Shooting is still obviously a part of what happens, but there's a lot more to *007* now." Case in point: That dramatic entry we described isn't a cut-scene—it's entirely under your control. And that's but a taste of the explosive scenarios Bond must survive over the course of his

upcoming cinematic adventure.

Thanks to the help of EA's *Need for Speed: Underground* team, vehicles have never looked or handled so well in a title not dedicated exclusively to racing. And, of course, 007's Aston Martin and Triumph Daytona superbike come equipped with dealer packages unlike any other. The latter is not only outfitted with the requisite machine guns and rocket launchers, it can also spew flames from either sides of its fairing. In another scene, you get to slide the Daytona beneath a jackknifed fuel tanker and ignite it the instant you pass underneath. "Remember those excellent moments in our other games that you wanted to play, not just watch?" asks Bayless. "Here you get to play 'em."

Everything or Nothing also emphasizes the more subdued yet equally effective tools of the superspy trade. Optic camouflage renders the stationary agent virtually invisible (although the illusion's fidelity degrades as Bond moves), while another gizmo lets him call on Q for tactical advice. The most amazing thing about EA's fresh perspective on the dashing Brit, however, is that the game has so much diversity, and yet no one part sticks out as being half-assed. Rather, 007's latest videogame incarnation looks to match his movie blockbusters pour for explosive pound.



Two agents work together in Co-op mode.



Four Bond villains compete in a trap-filled arena.

Maximum Bondage

In Co-op mode, two agents-in-training collaborate over a series of unique missions that overlap with Bond's. To succeed, you and a friend need to pool ammunition, provide cover fire, and coordinate to solve puzzles. In the Arena mode, you and up to three pals square off in small enclosures on a single screen. It plays much like Capcom's *Power Stone* (Dreamcast), but each stage is littered with turrets and switches that trigger environmental attacks. So much for tacked-on multiplayer modes.

12

DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

Xbox • Eidos • October 2003 — Like the critically acclaimed *Deus Ex*, this first-person action-RPG sequel gives you decisions to make at every turn. Moreover, each choice begets logical consequences, for better or worse (usually a bit of both).

For example, say you need to steal a weapon prototype from a top-secret lab. You could snipe the guards from afar, charge right up and kill them, sneak around the back way, or sweet-talk another character to get you inside. It's up to you to weigh the pros and cons, make your choice, and live with it.

Set 20 years after the last game, *Invisible War* follows Alex D., a nanotech-enhanced agent similar to the original *Deus Ex*'s main characters JC and Paul Denton—both of whom return here as nonplayer characters. Are they friends or foes? Well...that's for you to decide.

Mod Your Boss

As we noted in our October 2003 issue, *Deus Ex* is an amazing system for modding. In *Deus Ex: Invisible War*, you can use these new tools to create your own mods. Says Harvey Smith, Eidos' *Invisible War* producer: "It's a great way to extend the life of the game." For example, you can create your own mods for the game's AI system. You can also create your own mods for the game's AI system. You can also create your own mods for the game's AI system.



Among the many choices presented to you in the game, the option for simply blowing @%@ up always remains.

Tell this little guy to take you to his leader or else fill his scrawny body with lead.



The latest *Jak* is more of a third-person shooter than platform game. Really. No lie.



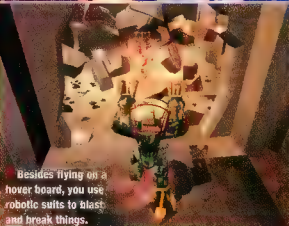
JAK II

PS2 • Sony CEA • October 2003 — If *Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy* is developer Naughty Dog's love letter to *Super Mario 64*, then *Jak II* must be the group's wedding proposal to *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*. *GTA*'s influence on this game is undeniable: You explore a large, open city; steal hovercrafts from unsuspecting drivers; and take missions from scruffy denizens of the underworld. Heck, you're even given a handy circular map on the bottom right of your screen to help get you from place to place. (Sorry, no pointy-eared hookers.)

This criminal activity may sound out of place in Jak's sun-drenched world, but apparently it's the norm in the land's distant future. After Jak hits ground in this nightmarish landscape (via a mishap with a teleportation device), he's taken into captivity and turned into a mad doctor's plaything. Two years pass before Jak's smart-mouthed sidekick Daxter manages to rescue him, and incessant torture has made Jak a little cranky. (It's also endowed him with a new morphing power that'd make Bruce Banner proud.) Throw hover boarding and heavy use of firearms into the mix, and you have an improved sequel that barely resembles its predecessor. In a good way.

Friendly Competition

Since Naughty Dog's *Jak II* and Insomniac's *Hatchet & Clank: Going Commando* are PS2 platform/action games, come from developers who share technology, and have release dates within a month of one another, you might be wondering, why play both? "Both offer very different and very deep gameplay experiences that haven't been seen in platformers before," says Insomniac President Ted Price. "*Going Commando* has its [RPG-like] character-growth system, and *Jak II* has the ability to hijack vehicles. [They're] moving away from the typical definition of what a platformer is."



Besides flying on a hover board, you use robotic suits to blast and break things.



Jak keeps strange company...

INTENSE?
TO PUT
IT KINDLY.



I-NINJA

If attention to medieval detail, stealth kills and gore aren't your idea of a good time, give Namco's new I-Ninja a try. Instead of trying to best the traditional ninja game, Namco just has fun with it. Your ninja (named "Ninja") must avenge the murderer of his beloved ninja teacher...who just happens to be himself. What can we say? These things happen.

The gameplay of I-Ninja is fast, hip, clever and tons of fun. Instead of a dark tale of vengeance, Ninja happily cuts enemies in half with his giant sword, throws shuriken and blows darts at them, all the while performing stunts that you'd expect to see in a game starring Tony Hawk. He can slide down rails, act like a human bowling ball, out-box Mike Tyson and even jump over deadly traps with the skill of a certain Italian plumber. Not even Jackie Chan has moves like his.



BREAK OUT OF

Nestle
Butterfinger
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TRICKS



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PS2, XBOX, G

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- OHNNYE**

- unlocks all costumes for all riders
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- IWANTITALL** unlocks everything



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To get a ton of points on The Boardwalk, go to the tunnel with the skull and grind the side of it. Then, when your multiplier gets to 60 you jump off and watch your points rack up big time.

Get Power Skates
Successfully complete all challenges (normal and hidden) on every level to unlock the Power Skates. The Power Skates give you one blue stat point for every attribute.

Ultra Skates
Successfully complete all the levels with 100% to unlock the Ultra Skates. The Ultra Skates give you another blue stat point for every attribute.

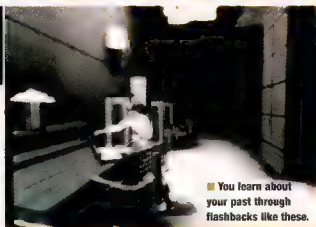
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From the Page to the Screen

Considering the "cartoon cop" theme, both first-person shooters can be a shading technique used to make games look like animated cartoons. The surprise here haven't been a floor slamer before. But in XIII the graphic element gimmicky (the James-based comic book series) is a French comic book series, resulting in a game with comic-style panels, visual effects, and a game play. For instance, you'll see a character showing the "lap-lap" guards approaching footsteps.



10 XIII

PS2, Xbox, GC - Ubi Soft - October 2003

Act 1, Scene 1: You wake up in a beach house in New England with no memory. A beautiful life guard has just enough time to say that you were found with a safe-detonate box key and ask about the "XIII" tattoo on your collarbone before she's mowed down in a hail of bullets by armed men sent to kill you. Equipped with these two meager clues, you must keep yourself alive and figure out what the hell is going on. Unfortunately, things soon get worse as you discover that the president of the United States has been assassinated—and you're the prime suspect.

You'll have to fight your way to the truth using a variety of weapons—throwing knives, pistols, grenades, assault rifles, and sniper crossbows, to name just a few. Your arsenal is pretty crowded, but there's still room for smacking soldiers with a wine bottle, stabbing them with a shard of

broken glass, or knocking them on the noggin with a fire extinguisher. (We'd bet our lunch money that you're captured and divested of firearms at least once during the course of the game, and that you'll have to use improvised weapons like these to squeak by.)

Even aside from its unique look (see sidebar), XIII is gearing up to be a highly polished production. Ubi Soft recently announced that David Duchovny (of *X-Files* fame) will voice the title character, while Adam West (TV's *Batman*) and actress/musician Eve lend their voices to supporting roles. And XIII's lounge/tank soundtrack is progressively perfect for a spy-versus-spies adventure.

If you've already read the original comic this game is based on, do us a huge favor and don't spoil the end for us. We're looking forward to discovering all of XIII's many surprises for ourselves.



REMEMBERING SUMMER DAYS

Dear Readers,

It's sad but true: Sometimes games that look promising before their release don't ultimately deliver in the end. Case in point: Our *20 Hottest Games of the Summer* preview feature (found back in *EGM* #163) listed a number of titles that ended up getting a lukewarm reception from our reviewers when the final games arrived.

While picks like *Soul Calibur II* (which garnered 10, 10, and 9.0 ratings out of ten), *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* (10, 9.5, 9.0), and *Silent Hill 3* (9.0, 8.5, 8.5) scored well, titles such as *Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness* (7.0, 5.0, 3.0) and *Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix* (7.0, 6.5, 3.0) didn't. Meanwhile, *Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try This at Home* hasn't shipped yet—but it wasn't looking too hot the last time we saw it.

Just a friendly reminder from *EGM* to wait for our final reviews before plunking down your hard-earned dollars. If you don't, then buyer beware.

XOXO,

The Management



Includes Soundtrack CD



Haunting new tale



Hideous new creatures



Disturbingly detailed graphics



Brutal new weapons



EVERY THING YOU nEver waNted tO See.

Don't bother closing your eyes.

Because what you see isn't half as disturbing as what you don't.

SILENT HILL 3



Blood and Gore
Violence



PlayStation 2

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■ Leadership has its perks—like, oh say, human shields.



Action Figure

Rainbow Six 3's Tom Clancy prefixes more than an empty marketing ploy: protagonist Domingo "Ding" Chavez hails from the book and film *Clear and Present Danger*.



Your squad members are super smart and easy to command.



The girl or your head: You call, Fonzie.



9 TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3

Xbox • Ubi Soft • November 2003 — There's no overstating the pluses of fusing *Splinter Cell*'s gorgeous game engine with a first-person tactical shooter. Just look at the result: *Rainbow Six 3*, which gains all the technological ingenuity of Sam Fisher's game, while losing the tedious premission planning that plagues the previous entries in this counterterrorism series. In short, it's sharp looking and sharper shooting.

All the fluttering cloth, clanking chains, and striking light and shadows from *Splinter Cell* carry over. And rather than robbing you of the rush you'd get from wielding an assault rifle (your weapons aren't even visible in previous *Sixes*), *RS3* treats you to an arsenal of painstakingly rendered firearms. And not only do these higher-caliber peacemakers look accurate, they quake in your hand convincingly as their muzzles flash white heat.

You also get immediate access to a black bag of nonlethal yet still vital gadgets, such as extrasensory goggles and special-use grenades. Here again like *Splinter Cell*, *RS3* rewards

tactical improvisation. For instance, in a multiplayer shoot-out (yes, Xbox Live support for eight players is part of the package), it's possible to hunker down in an apartment, pop several smoke canisters, put on your thermal goggles, and squeeze off a few rounds to draw the opposition's attention. When they open the door on an opaque wall of white smoke, you'll see their silhouettes illuminated by body heat before you blow them away with impunity.

But the *Rainbow* games have always been about your squad. You're still spearheading a small unit, except now a streamlined command interface lets you manage your men on the fly. Radically changing your strategy is now never more than a few button presses away. Better yet, you can replace your computer-controlled cohorts with flesh-and-blood comrades. And the idea of tackling terrorists in the online Cooperative Campaign mode is reason enough to train our sights on *Rainbow Six 3's* fall release date.

■ The latest splinter on American idol or the next *Final Fantasy*? You decide.

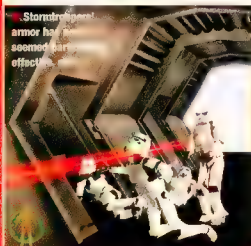


FINAL FANTASY X-2

PS2 • Square-Enix USA • November 2003 — What's a gal to do after vanquishing a world-eating menace? Our heroine Yuna discovers exactly how to cope with instant RPG stardom in this surprise sequel to *Final Fantasy X*. Her method? She grabs some guns, strips off half her clothes, and sets off on a globe-trotting adventure with her girlfriends. Series fans might find the game's fun-loving, more action-oriented vibe off-putting at first, but there's actually dramatic depth beneath the bubbly surface. Check out next issue's cover story to discover precisely what to expect.

STAR WARS ROGUE SQUADRON III: REBEL STRIKE

GC • LucasArts • October 2003 — "This is how *Star Wars* will look if they ever release the movies on DVD," says Factor 5 President Julian Eggebrecht, cuing up one scene from the 25 minutes of film footage found within *Rebel Strike*. But while watching the pristine video will be a thrill for DVD fetishists, we're more jazzed about the chance to actually play through all the *Star Wars* trilogy's classic moments. From taking on Imperial Walkers with just a lightsaber and a grappling hook to blowing up the Death Star, it's all there within *Rebel Strike*—which we run down completely on page 66.

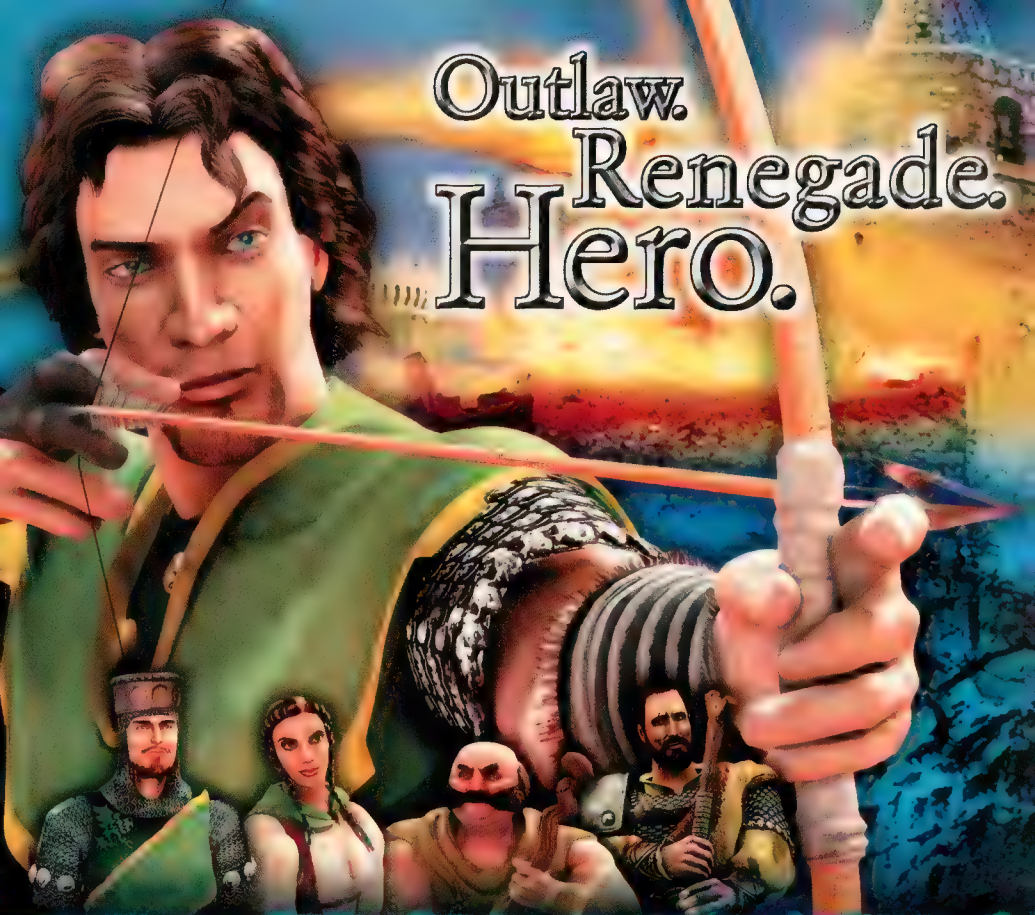


Starline's armor has some serious effects.



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Suggestive Themes
Violence



PlayStation 2



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Nothing unites a group of strangers like pure contempt for the guy



Microsoft
game studios

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in first place.



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After a finishing slice from your scimitar, your opponents are just so much dust in the wind.



6 PRINCE OF PERSIA: SANDS OF TIME

PS2, Xbox, GC • Ubi Soft • November 2003

Maybe it's magic. From the moment you lay your eyes on *Prince of Persia: Sands of Time*, something intangible transfixes you to the screen. It could be the stylish motion-blurred camera movements as they sweep past intentionally soft-focused backgrounds. Or perhaps it's the near ideal blending of sword fighting and platform jumping, all accomplished from perfect camera angles. Whatever it is, you'll recognize it as the work of Ubi Soft's Montreal studio when you see *Splinter Cell*-style lighting and shadows mixed with the Arabian settings and the special effects of Disney's *Aladdin*.

Prince of Persia's 14-year pedigree began with strategic jumping and sword fighting games that gave PC gamers their first console-style platformers and later heavily inspired Lara Croft's 3D *Tomb Raider* adventures. But while Lara's become

sluggish and frustrating, the Prince has become faster and more nimble. He runs up walls and dispatches enemies with style that we wished we'd seen in *Enter The Matrix*, switching from single to double sabers with the ease of a Jedi Knight. Dynamic loading even eliminates in-game interruptions, making the game's planned 70-plus stages feel like a single gargantuan Persian palace.

And then there's our hero's five magic powers. Having unleashed the titular *Sands of Time*, the Prince is endowed with *Blinx* (Xbox)-style TiVo tricks: stop, rewind, fast-forward, and slo-mo, clearly useful for pulling a sword out of the Prince's chest or preventing his untimely fall from a high ledge. Add to that the Prince's ability to peer briefly into the future, seeing solutions to the obstacles he's about to overcome, and you'll begin to understand why we're so spellbound.

The Making of a Dynasty

Karakas (1984, Jordan Mechner's first action game) introduced PC gamers with smooth animation, detailed graphics, and plenty of martial arts.

Prince of Persia (Released in 1989, after four years of on/in development, the Mechner hit's 20 titles boasted gameplay and animation that stunned computer gamers before appearing in shops).

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time (The 1983 sequel *Saber NES* PC hooked readers and wasn't as popular as its predecessor).

Prince of Persia 3D (The Prince's cinematic at 30 FPS came out for Dreamcast and PC, however, promise you barely hinted at the world-beating design of *Sands of Time*).



Yes, Prince's moves are so impressive that you'll often slow down time to get a better look at them.



Not even the Prince's most powerful magic powers can slow down time.

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have a threesome in
the back of a cab?



Approximate size

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MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!

GC • Nintendo • November 2003 — It's been mimicked plenty of times, but *Mario Kart* remains king of the power-sliding, speed-boosting, pick-up-a-power-up-and-knock-your-friends-on-their-asses road. This time, Mario and company team up for some hot two-on-car action. Pick two characters, select a vehicle, and then go after your opponents in races or arena battles. One guy drives, while the other picks up power-ups and launches attacks. At any point, you can switch the two, so if Bowser grabs a homing-missile red turtle shell, but you don't want to use it yet, just put him in the driver's seat and have empty-handed Donkey Kong ride shotgun instead.

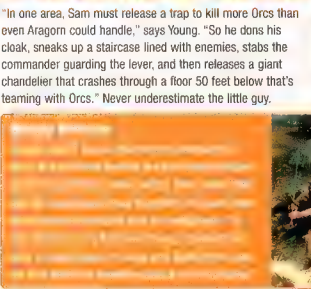
A multiplayer game like this just screams for online play, but alas, *Double Dash!!* is a local-network game for eight televisions, eight GameCubes, eight discs, eight broadband adapters, a couple of hubs, and a whole lotta wiring. If your name ain't Daddy Warbucks, you can always play four-player splitscreen, like in the good ol' days.



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING

PS2, Xbox, GC • EA Games • November 2003 Gimli swings a mean ax, Legolas has eagle-eyed aim, and Aragorn ain't too shabby with his two-handed Ginsu blades—we learned all that from last year's gloriously action-packed *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*. And, yep, you still get to hack through Orc armies in EA's equally well forged follow-up, *Return of the King*, which again is hewn from the cinematic source material of Director Peter Jackson's flick.

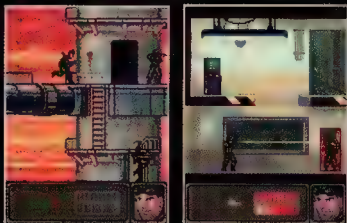
But while new playable Middle-earthling Gandalf (and several others) ensures that *King's* combat will be as royal as ever, you'll finally get a little quiet time—thanks to stealth-based levels played with Hobbit pals Frodo and Sam. "A location like Cirith Ungol, where there are hundreds of Orcs engaged in a civil war, is an inhospitable place for a Hobbit," says Executive Producer Neil Young. Fortunately, the fuzzy-toed heroes can slip on their camouflaging Elven cloaks and get sneaky. That's how Hobbits take care of business in this game.



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★ Tom Clancy's
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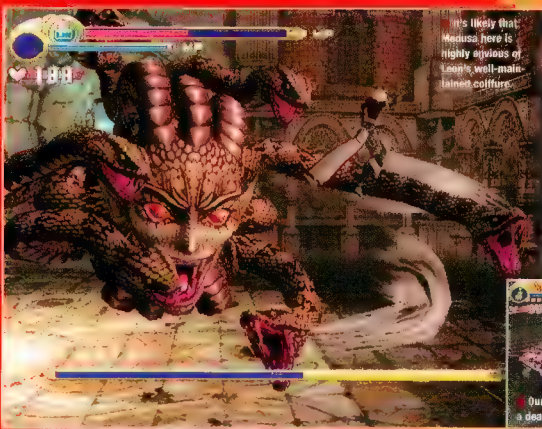


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It's likely that Madusa here is highly opinionated on long, well-maintained coliffers.

3 CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE

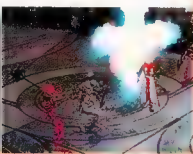
PS2 • Konami • October 2003

Ever since we blew the lid off *Castlevania*'s crypt a few months back, it's been tough to exhume fresh details on Konami's first next-gen *Castlevania* adventure. The secretive development team (the same souls behind the cult-classic *Symphony of the Night* for PS1) has been working around the clock to spruce up Dracula's timeless abode, and the diligence has paid off—although originally expected in November, the game will now hit shelves by Halloween.

For those who require a vampire-hunting refresher course, here's the lowdown: *Lament* thrusts you into the 11th-century origin of the *Castlevania* series, climaxing with the first meeting between a hero from the Belmont clan (flaxen-haired pretty-boy Leon) and the fiancée-snatching undead fiend, Count Dracula. Along the way, you'll explore Drac's massive castle, flagellate hordes of beasts with your trusty whip, and discover a trove of magic weapons and artifacts.



Our hero casts a deadly spell.



Ayane takes Part-Time Messenger Job. Film at 11

Senrōtōri in *Dead or Alive* and best in *Drive Xtreme Beach Volleyball*, Ayane will make her appearance in *Ninja Gaiden* messenger Hayabusa. Will she be a playable character? Well, Ryuji is a very eminent individual. *Ninja Gaiden* Director Tomonobu Itokazu says, "A super ninja doesn't require much sleep."



If man were meant to fly, we'd have all been made ninjas.

3 NINJA GAIDEN

Xbox • Tecmo

November 2003 — When you were younger, you didn't want to be a doctor, lawyer, or fireman. You wanted to be a ninja—a black-clad ass-kicker able to scale walls, disappear into darkness, and topple the forces of evil. See how well we know you?

Now that you've grown up, Tecmo's *Ninja Gaiden* is one of your few chances to fulfill that childhood dream. In it, you must reclaim your clan's magic sword from the Vigor Empire and exact vengeance on them for slaughtering the members of your clan.

Those who remember *Ninja Gaiden* from the days when it was a simple 8-bit Nintendo tale of ninja versus the world might be somewhat disappointed to learn that this

new installment isn't directly related to those classics. "This game has an entirely new story line," *Gaiden* Director Tomonobu Itakazu tells us. "With the trilogy complete on the NES, we felt it was necessary to give gamers a brand new Ryu Hayabusa adventure. During this quest, you'll encounter a number of friends and foes—all very intriguing, very cool and some even very sexy."

One element that *Ninja Gaiden* fans can expect to see carried over to the latest game is the series' trademark flair for the cinematic (c'mon, just look at these screenshots). But even better, the game doesn't simply have jaw-dropping visuals, its action-game feel is the smoothest we've felt in years. November can't come soon enough.



DOH 侵食汚染 hack Part 3 OUTBREAK™

In the 3rd chapter of the .hack saga, "The World" continues to deteriorate as the virus spreads out of control, and crosses the increasingly transient line separating "The World" and reality. As Kite, you must battle your way through "The World" before it implodes. In fact, you're faced with the possibility that this virus might be unstoppable.

Luckily for us, the .hack series is a simulated MMORPG, so at least the virus can't spread to this world!

publisher Bandai//developer Cyber Connect 2
genre Simulated MMORPG//release date Fall 2003

In OUTBREAK, you'll fight your way through contaminated servers and eliminate enemies. The plot thickens, and the story draws you in further as you try to uncover the cause of this debilitating virus and rescue your friend Orca, who's still in a coma.

I love part 3 and am addicted to the completely original gaming experience that .hack offers. I enjoyed part 1, and became addicted with part 2. The battles and story intensified, and the cast grew to include online/offline players. Moreover, the simulation of playing an online game



A great story and addictive gameplay.



Encounter characters from the animated TV series.

deepened with emails and news items that drew me further into "The World".

This series keeps getting better and better, plus you also get a new episode of the original video animation of ".hack//LIMINALITY" in the same box.

Bring on .hack 4! Keep your eye on www.dothack.com for more details.

—Orca, Web News, Altimit.

Abrasive False Tragedy



.hack//SIGN

As seen on
CARTOON NETWORK

PlayStation 2



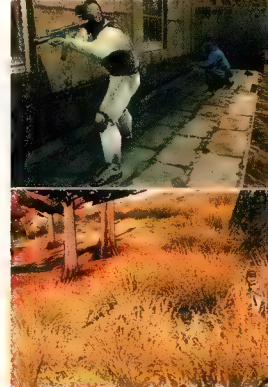


■ Developer Zipper tweaked the controls, adding a dive-for-cover move and fixing the rate-of-fire switch so that you no longer trip it in the heat of battle. But that puny bullets will do much against this tank.

SPECIAL
JESTER

WARDOG

Snappy-dressing British SAS or Russian special agents played by the Bravo team in some missions.



■ Where's Waldo: Can you spot all four SEALs in SOCOM II's improved shrubbery above? Well OK, but can you do it before they shoot you?

realistic and authentic scenarios." These include a raid on a Brazilian hydroelectric plant taken over by terrorists who'll nuke it if their demands aren't met. Take your team in guns blazing, and you'll find the going nearly impossible, with the enemy hunkered into defensive positions and the terrorist leader's finger on the button boom. Go stealthy, on the other hand, and you'll catch the leader much earlier in the level. Perform well in one mission and you can make the rest of the war less hellish. For instance, if

■ PS2 ■ Sony CEA ■ November 2003

SOCOM: U.S. NAVY SEALs II

It's a scary world out there. Stay inside and pretend to save it with this fall's hottest sequel

Your average bad guy with a gun takes three seconds to get ready, aim, and fire on a moving target. Our military knows this and drills the so-called three-second rule—a tactic of zagging and zigging every three seconds while beating feet through a war zone—into its troops. And if the military knows it, so does Zipper Interactive, the gung-ho developers (they once coded simulations for Uncle Sam) of last year's lethally realistic PlayStation 2 online shooter *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs*. Now they're teaching the three-second rule to the terrorists in the game's follow-up, *U.S. Navy SEALs II*, due in November.

And when we spied all the other training routines that Zipper is imposing on the sequel's terrorists and SEAL allies to make them meaner, smarter, and faster than before, it took us three seconds to target the game as this fall's number-one must-play title. "After *SOCOM 1*, we were look-

ing at doing more of an expansion pack for the follow-up," says Producer Seth Luisi, "but marketing and sales were just going to bill it as a sequel anyway. So we wanted to make sure it really is the next iteration of the game. We've really had to dig in and add all the stuff we wanted."

Aside from the brainier allies and enemies, that "stuff" includes rocket launchers and mountable turrets, more-complex missions, LAN support, voice masking, new multiplayer games, and fun little touches sure to make the Navy brass who endorse this game grumble. (You can now bust into a celebratory breackdance on the corpses of thine enemies, for instance.)

Depending on which way you like to wage war—either solo or against the world—we've broken down this sequel's specs into single-player and online-multiplayer (page 122) sections. Whichever route you take, keep moving. Remember that three-second thing?

What's new in single-player

"I'm sure we're on a government watch list for all the research we're doing," says Zipper Creative Director David Sears, referring to the hundreds of hours the Zipper team has spent studying terrorists, their tactics, and their haunts. "We certainly haven't run out of bad places in the world to send your SEALs." *SOCOM II*'s 12 single-player missions globe-trot your team of four SEALs to don't-go-there hotspots in Albania, Algeria, Brazil, Russia, and a level at sea. "It gives us a pretty wide range of enemy types," Sears says. "We'll have 40 unique new characters in single-player."

Just don't expect to target hot-topic outfits like the Taliban in Afghanistan or Iraqi dissidents. "*SOCOM II* is a worldwide product," says Luisi. "Iraq missions would definitely have an impact when we try to sell the game in France or Germany. Plus, we don't want to just capitalize on real-world events. We'd rather create our own



Now you can see exactly how your teammates are doing from the health bars next to their names. Damn—Reaver and Rajah were just one week from retirement...



you take out all the snipers in one level, you'll actually deplete the terrorists' roster of sharpshooters, making follow-up missions less harrowing. Finding a bomb schematic in another level increases your troopers' bomb-defusing speed later on.

Although these secondary objectives are optional, you'll probably want to complete them just to make life easier. Like we said, Zipper claims that terrorists will be craftier this time. "They react much, much faster than in *SOCOM 1*," Luisi says. "It used to take them a little while to do the calculations to find cover. Now they find it and get there much quicker." They also hide in foliage, mount nearby turrets to really pour on the lead, and peek from behind doorways and overturned tables. They'll even start chucking grenades to smoke you out

of the underbrush. "They play just like you should," says Sears.

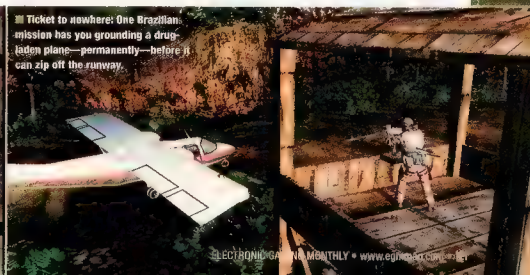
That makes sense—after all, Zipper modeled the terrorist behavior after the tactics of flesh-and-blood *SOCOM 1* online warriors. "We watched a lot of players team up and work together," says Software Director Mike Gutmann. "It not only looked cool but was also very effective, so we're making our enemies pair up or work in groups of three." *SOCOM 1*'s terrorists will communicate with each other, too, whether they holler your last position or just meet up on patrol to shoot the bull. Zipper is adding thousands of lines of dialogue and new animations to make the scumbags seem more human. "They'll do everything from appearing totally surprised that you're in their base to walking with their weapons

up, challenging you to come out of the underbrush," Sears says.

Fortunately, your team of three SEAL computer-controlled players—to whom you once again give spoken orders via the USB headset-mic (see next page)—have boosted smarts, too. They even sound meaner: Hulking *Daredevil* star Michael Clarke Duncan provides the voice for one of them. But the best news is that Boomer, your nitwitted wingman who blundered through the jungle like a very special Special Forces member in the original *SOCOM*, has been deep-sixed. "We gave him a desk job," says Gutmann, "and we brought in somebody else. Our new guy is much more keen on following orders." This backup trooper will even follow many of the same orders as your secondary two-

man Bravo team, the only guys you could boss around in the first game. "The difference between him and Bravo is that he's on a leash," Gutmann says. "Tell the Bravo team to get down and hold position, and you can sneak off a little way, but he'll start to follow again."

It's a huge improvement upon *SOCOM 1*, in which our first order of business was to take care of the bumbling Boomer with a "friendly fire" incident. "You won't want to do that this time," Sears says. "The rest of your team no longer takes it lightly when you kill one of their buddies. And besides, you really need to keep your teammates alive as long as possible to deal with the smarter enemies. You're not going to finish missions lone-wolf-style anymore." >



Tip Ticket to nowhere: One Brazilian jetliner has you grounding a drug-laden plane—permanently—before it can zip off the runway.



"You never get to ride in any of SOCOM II's new vehicles—tanks, helicopters, the AA gun you see here—but your enemies sure will. "They will crush you and shoot you and bomb you," says Creative Director David Sears.

What's new in multiplayer

Hostilities may have simmered down in the real world, but war still rages in SOCOM online. About 14,000 gamers are locked in networked SEALs-versus-terrorists combat at any given time, and nearly 400,000 of the 1.3 million PS2 owners who bought the game play online on a regular basis. None of these armchair warriors needs to worry about losing the battlefield when SOCOM II launches in September. Sony says they'll maintain servers for the original game "as long as there's demand," says Producer Seth Luisi.

But we figure steely-eyed vets of SOCOM online will want to re-up for part deux, which bulges with new features and tweaks. For starters, the game packs all 10 of SOCOM 1's multiplayer maps, now made cheat resistant (more on that later) and "remixed" with extra foliage, plus the new gun turrets and enhanced graphics of

the sequel. Players also get 12 all-original maps, along with two new multiplayer modes: Escort and Breach. (Flip to page 124 for a breakdown of a Breach battle.) The new Escort levels have the SEAL team starting out with several nearby VIPs, who must be shepherded to one of several extraction zones and plucked to safety by a Black Hawk chopper. "The Escort maps are very large," Luisi says, "with rolling hills and hiding spots where the SEALs can stash the escortees while fighting the enemy." The terrorist team's goal is simple: kill the VIPs. It's a tricky mission for the SEALs—if they don't communicate and coordinate care for the escortees, the terrorists will pick them off pronto. "We've worked in longer alternate routes that are safer and provide more cover," says Creative Director David Sears.

The old online games (beyond up to the enemy, save the hostages, and deathmatch)

return, except now with multiple objectives and more depth. Players get points for breaching walls with explosives, calling in successful airstrikes with a radio, blowing up the radio tower so that opponents can't summon air support—goals above and beyond just capping the enemy. You can further tweak the online games by enabling new options like a respawn capability for deathmatch games, as well as specific-weapons modes (sniper-rifles only, shot-guns only, pistols only, etc.).

In fact, Zipper has tweaked and upgraded every component of the online experience. Points go toward boosting players' military rank, from raw Ensign to grizzled Admiral. High-ranking warriors will be barred from entering Ensign-only games and basically clubbing by-level SEALs. The entire ladder-ranks system has been retooled, letting players not only monitor where they stand in the SOCOM community, >

Talk the talk...again

Since SOCOM II won't ship with a headset microphone, you can either raise the mic's setting in the game, or use a first-party or third-party headset.



Sony's fancier new \$30 model, available in September. Logitech's \$40 unit, shown here, is available now. Either way, you'll definitely want to look out for enabling with other soldiers online. But also for giving commands to your computer-controlled teammates in single-player. Although orders from the original SOCOM won't still work, in addition, a few new ones that Creative Director David Sears tells us about right now.

■ "Get down!"

"Cause your entire team (or you) can shove themselves into the prone position immediately and stay there! Sounds useful for when the stuff is about to get hot, right?"

■ "Intimidate"

"Your character and your teammates will try to bully enemies into submission and restrain them. They will yell at you, yell at yourself, get down, drop your weapons! What kind of thing?"

■ "Overwatch"

"Your buddy will be the call-out guy, and you're the sniper. He'll take a good position behind you and call out enemies like 'Target 12 o'clock until you take that target out. Then he'll switch to the next target.' As Sears says, you can do this anytime you want, but there will be a couple of places, like a hill, a quilt that are false-madness Overwatch.

■ "Stealth to..."

This command—which orders your troops to carefully move to a certain position—was included in the first SOCOM, but the sequel's sneakiness factor has been jacked way up. (Now they move very slowly and meticulously, from cover to cover, shadow to shadow. It's not the optimum path for speed, but it's the optimum path for not getting seen.)

■ Secret commands

Sears promises some eight hidden orders you won't find in the instruction booklet, like "Team Report," which has each member of your team radiating its status. Et, did we just give one away? Better make that five to seven secret commands.

■ A new graphics trick, called the fris effect, models the way your eyes adjust to light. Light from a dark room into the sun's shine, and it takes a sec to see properly—and vice versa. "If you're coming in from a dark room and someone rushes in, he has a disadvantage," says Zipper's Brian Soderberg.





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 trick, punch in these codes and readily get into the game.

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ESPN NFL FOOTBALL



PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX

PIGSKIN PLAYS

GOING FOR TWO
If you have a speedy, quarterback, roll him out to the left or right—it gives you the opportunity to sidestep the oncoming defense. When you get to the end zone, you can flip the coin receiver to set up the goal line.

BUTZ-TYPE GATLING
One of the most important weapons is the blitz. Use it to flood the backfield when multiple receivers get set, or to hide defenses in your defense. Overload one side of the offensive formation and overwhelm them with numbers.

GANG JACKING
Sometimes (you're funny) it takes a crowd to beat down a running back. Get your team in front of the crowd and stand him up while a teammate or two finishes him off.



STAR WARS KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC



XBOX

USE THE FORCE

Upgrade items: whenever possible. Non-lightsaber weapons, armor, and skills increase your power from on to player. Upgrade your lightsaber for a beam splitter that targets by force. You'll have to upgrade to have your lightsaber work in a combat situation.

Light sabers: Lightsabers have three upgrade slots: one older crystal and two power crystals. The crystal beam allows you to strike an opponent with each strike, which makes it a particularly potent power crystal.

If you're playing an opponent: Use a crystal that holds your health longer and increases the number of critical strikes.



SOUL CALIBUR 2



PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, GAMECUBE

SURVIVAL SKILLS

Blocking: Blocking is a sure way to win. If you're able to block, you can prevent your opponent from attacking you. Practice these and create your opponents.

Repeating: Repeating techniques allow a player to deal an incoming attack with a weapon and simultaneously with the attacking character's backward.

Parrying: Parrying is similar to repelling. When performed correctly you deflect your opponent's attack slightly to the side and deflects the incoming weapon off at an angle.



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undiscovered worlds are all at your fingertips. Cut out the cards, slip them into the game's case for a quick trick.

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MADDEN NFL 2004

WWW.WRESTLEMANIA XIX

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM

PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, GAMECUBE

TWO-MINUTE OFFENSE

The following list contains guidelines for designing and implementing your two-minute offense.

- Never, never, never take a sack. It's better to lose a fave with an incomplete pass than to lose yardage. If you take a sack, use a linebacker to stop the clock.
- Unless you are down to a hail mary pass, your goal should be to gain 57 yards on every play. If you're getting a first down every two plays, you'll drive the length of the field in less than two minutes.
- Run inside only for a first down. Otherwise, keep your runs to the outside where the ball carrier can step out of bounds.
- If you've cut off three outs and you just made a first down inbound, spike the ball to stop the clock.
- Bend the blitz immediately and roll away from the pressure before it arrives in your quarterback's face.

SN-50085

KURT ANGLE'S MOVES

SPECIAL A: Arm Grapple (Baited Standing Opponent)

Push A and B buttons while in Special A mode.

SPECIAL B: Front Grapple (Facing Opponent Standing in Turntable). Push A and B while in Special State and B. **SPECIAL C:** Grapple Freebrow (Opponent's Lower Back). Push A and B while in Special State



PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, GAMECUBE

SURVIVAL SKILLS

- They prone: This is your stealthiest stance, lowering your profile to your ground level. You can also crawl while prone. Side-stepping while left and right-calling is actually faster than crawling.
- Once you have a target in your sights, steady the rifle and squeeze off a round. Due to the rifle's extreme recoil, you won't be able to immediately call if you hit your intended target.
- There are two different types of LAW rocket launchers: the LAW 80 and the smaller LAW 60. The LAW 80 can be used to take out tanks, but the LAW 60 is best reserved for light armored vehicles like APCs and soft skin vehicles like trucks.
- Once an air strike is called in you do not have to continue pointing the target with the laser. In fact, it's best to take cover so you're not hit by enemy fire or injured by the incoming air strike. You'll probably miss the fireworks, but at least you'll live.
- Switch to aim mode to bring up the rifle's scope view, making it easier to accurately aim and fire your weapons.
- Once you have a target in your sights, steady the rifle and squeeze off a round. Due to the rifle's extreme recoil, you won't be able to immediately call if you





but also where their clan ranks. A new Friends List helps you keep track of and send messages to frequent comrades-in-arms (while an Ignore List keeps *SOCOM* stalkers from even talking to you via the headset). Players can create up to three identities for their online account—which is still free, by the way—and save custom loadouts for particular maps.

That should cut down on all the time wasted in the armory before battle. But if you do dick around, expect to hear about it—*SOCOM II* will support voice chat in the pre-game lobbies. "It's a great place to taunt each other before a match or just holler to ready up," says Multiplayer Designer C.J. Heine. Zipper hired the same company behind Xbox Live's communication system to optimize *SOCOM II*'s voice chat. Now you'll be able to mute annoying loudmouths and even mask your voice. "If you select a character that's a big guy," says Luisi, "you'll have a deeper-sounding voice. Select a female character, and you'll

have a female voice mask." Zipper confirms the game will even have a "manly sounding woman." You'll finally be able to see who's talking, too: The chatting player's name appears at the bottom of the screen, while an icon appears above his or her character model.

couldn't hook to the Internet," Luisi says.

Online maps still support the same max number of players: two teams of eight versus eight. But now an additional eight players can join in and observe the battle via a new Spectator Mode. These just-like-to-watch kinda folks can pan the camera



"We have multiple ways to find out who's cheating. Sony can then decide what they'll do to them."

—Zipper Chief Technology Officer Brian Soderberg

SOCOM II will once again be a broadband-only game (you'll need the PS2 network adapter and a cable-modem or DSL Ethernet connection to battle online).

Zipper has also added the option for LAN play, so now you can get a game going on your network at the office, dorm—even at sea. "We actually got quite a few guys from submarines who wanted to play *SOCOM* online but couldn't because they

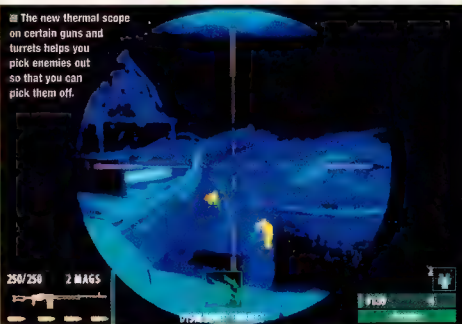
across the battlefield, tag it to particular players, and chat with other spectators on the headset. It's a great way for clans to monitor their tournaments for foul play.

Not that cheating should be a problem this time—or so Zipper promises. The out-of-boundary bugs that let dirty *SOCOM I* players slip into walls and snipe with impunity have been crushed in the sequel. "We have a complete fix for that now,"

find out who's cheating," says Chief Technology Officer Brian Soderberg. "Sony can then decide what they'll do to them." There's talk of banning first-time cheaters for a day and second-timers for a week. And for you third-strike cheaters? Given Zipper's close ties to real Navy SEALs, don't be surprised if a squad of troopers breaks down your front door. Not even the three-second rule will save you then. >



Inspired by the impromptu online victory "dances" players invented in the original, *SOCOM II* includes back flips, breakdancing, and, yes, even the Macarena to celebrate kills.



The new thermal scope on certain guns and turrets helps you pick enemies out so that you can pick them off.

Breach Blanket Bingo

We take you live to SOCOM II's new online Breach battle

The idea behind *SOCOM II*'s Breach mode is simple: "Lots of explosions," says Creative Director David Sears. "We wanted to give people more things to blow up." One team tries to blast its way into the other's base, then destroy a particular target before time runs out. The other team tries to stop them. Whoever succeeds (or kills all of their enemies), wins. Of course, there's more to it than that—for a more detailed briefing, check out our intel for this new Sandstorm map.



Say hello to your little friends

My behind was of *SOCOM II* there, and use them unlimited amount to help protect the base. It's no coincidence these are the same limited field of fire—you can see them 360 degrees. It's more like a 30-degree arc. And water out—snipers. You're a sitting duck in there.



Call in the cavalry

The defending team can only use attack helicopters, low-altitude and carpet-bomb selected sections of the map. In this case, either A, the bases outside, the wall, or the mountain path leading to (from the east). Since their aid is always located in an enclosed area, you'll need to work together with your teammate's spotter to know when enemies are in a target zone.



Go for the big one

Use explosives (just as you did in the original *SOCOM II*) in any of these points in the wall to the runway into an enemy base. The demolition man is rewarded with points toward a higher rank for his character (you don't want to be a fresh-from-university Ensign forever, do you?).



X SEAL START

ORIST
T

THE BOMB
The bomb is a key item in the game. It is used to destroy obstacles and enemies. The bomb is found in the cave and is used to destroy the bridge. The bomb is also used to destroy the enemy's base.

B

THE BOMB
The bomb is a key item in the game. It is used to destroy obstacles and enemies. The bomb is found in the cave and is used to destroy the bridge. The bomb is also used to destroy the enemy's base.





It's in the Game.™

DEFEND YOUR ICE



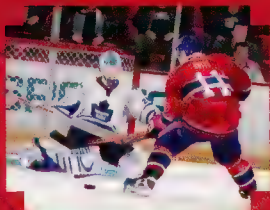
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PlayStation 2

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AOL KEYWORD: NHL 2004

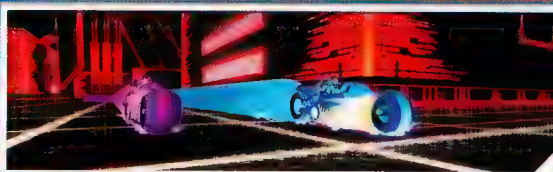
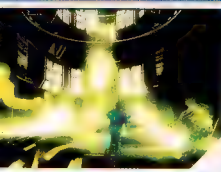
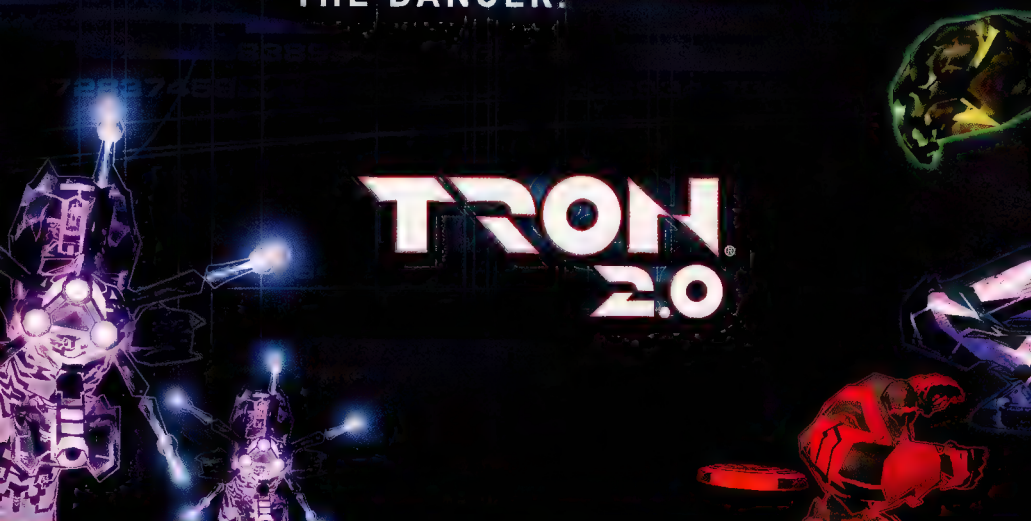
UPGRADE

THE ACTION.

DOWNLOAD

THE DANGER.

TRON 2.0

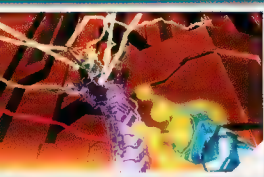


Violence



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NVIDIA GeForce FX
The GPU of TRON 2.0





review crew

Your monthly guide to gaming's winners and losers

THE RATING SYSTEM

Each reviewer assigns an overall grade to each game, on a scale from 0 to 10. When a game receives a 10, you can rest assured that it's one of the best games ever made, a classic that will endure throughout the ages. Conversely, when a game gets a 0.0, it's complete and utter crap and should be treated like a deadly biohazard. We utilize the entire scale, so a game that gets a 5.0 is average, not bad. **We repeat: 5.0 IS AVERAGE.** The scores are color-coded, so the brighter the reds, the better the game.

5.0-6.5
FAIR

7.0-10
GOOD

OUR AWARDS



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



Gold
Awards go to games with an average score of 9.0 or higher. Quality stuff.



Silver
Awards go to games that average at least an 8.0 (but are lower than 9.0).



GAME OF THE MONTH
This honor is bestowed upon the highest-reviewed game each month. A worthy buy.



SCOOP OF THE MONTH
This dishonor goes to the worst game each month that gets unimpressively bad scores.

ESRB KEY (Also check out www.esrb.com)

EC-Early Childhood: Games bearing this mark are suited for infants, toddlers and Seanbaby.

E-Everyone: Wholesome fun for the whole family, devoid of violence, head shots, or heroin use.

T-Teen: Like PG-13 movies, Teen games feature mild violence and "comic mischief."

M-Mature: Whereas these games offer all the gore, sex, drugs and fun of E-rated fare.

AO-Adults Only: A rare find. We haven't seen an AO game since *Harold & Kumar* on ZDTV.

GAME OF THE MONTH



■ PAGE 136

TIGER WOODS PGA 2004

We're not sure what the hell happened, but the golf whiz kid somehow managed to clench the coveted top spot with amazing realism, fun gameplay, and the best character-creation system ever.

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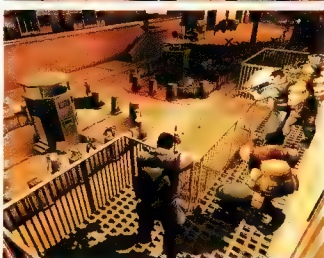
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■ Regrouping with pockets of fellow reneegades amid the chaos only adds to the epic, freedom-fighting excitement.



■ First the Muppets take Manhattan, and now the Russians move in...geez.

■ PS2, Xbox, GC

FREEDOM FIGHTERS

You say you want a revolution?

JOE: I feel like *Freedom Fighters* doesn't quite fulfill its immense promise. It's missing the sort of polish that would make it a truly exceptional game, although it can largely get by on the fact that its core gameplay mechanic is so damn fun to play. Running through the war-torn streets of New York with a ragtag group of soldiers that follow your every order is just a blast. It's an eminently playable game—one that actually requires fewer button commands to direct troops than to use a health pack. The firefights are exciting and your squad members are smart enough to take care of themselves, although they aren't so self-sufficient that your presence on the battlefield is unnecessary.

On the downside, *Freedom Fighters'* story is about as well-developed as an episode of *Go-Bots*, and its cinema sequences are eye-bleedingly painful to watch. (You'll be embarrassed as any pop up while a roommate or girlfriend is around.) That's not an incredibly big deal, but anything that keeps you from being completely

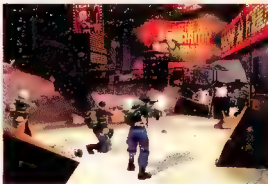
immersed in the game detracts from the experience. Most importantly, you come away from *Freedom Fighters* wanting more. Just when the game really hits its stride, it's over—and neither playing its underutilized multiplayer mode nor beginning the whole affair over again on a harder difficulty setting will quite satisfy your need.

SHAWN: What's most striking about *Freedom Fighters* is its unsurpassed sense of scale. Down several city blocks, you see St. Patrick's cathedral burning in the twilight and Hind gunships hunting rebels amid famous skyscrapers—yet you can tackle levels from any of several routes without getting lost. And what's not to love about running with a pack of capable resistance fighters who will clear rooms, cover your advance, and even sacrifice their very lives to keep you safe? Controlling them is simple and intuitive, so you genuinely feel like you're leading an intelligent team of fighters. Your enemies are smart, too: The commie bastards flee or take cover from

inbound grenades and will scale walls to reach your sniping roosts. Easily one of the best all-out action games I've played all year.

BRYAN: My fellow urban guerrillas Joe and Shawn are right—liberating the Land of the Free from Russian invaders feels almost historically fun. Eliminating enemy forces and hoisting our country's colors high above Manhattan rooftops never feels repetitive, thanks to an assortment of secondary objectives like rescuing POWs or turning Soviet helpids into rubble with C4.

Plus, *Freedom Fighters* looks simply gorgeous. The areas are massive and superdetailed—I hope the next *GTA* cityscape is as visually stunning. And with the exception of touchy first-person shooting, the controls are totally responsive, with simple troop commands and precise third-person auto-aiming. Sadly, *Freedom Fighters* is over too quickly—it's easily completed during a weekend sitting, and the ho-hum multiplayer action probably won't keep you coming back.



Citizen Soldiers Remember that Cold War fever-dream in which a group of Midwestern high-school chums led by letterman Jed (Patrick Swayze) save the local gun shack and set off to repel Russian invaders? In light of its obvious debt to the film *Red Dawn*, *Freedom Fighters* really could've poured on even more paranoid patriotism by letting you, say, piss in radiators or guzzle some deer blood. Talk about serious missed opportunities, man.

Good: Commanding troops is easy and fun
Bad: Too short and overly serious
Wish We Could Play As: Patrick Swayze



THE HEROIC'S RATES

7.5 8.5 8.0
JOE SHAWN BRYAN

Publisher: EA Games
Developer: Io Interactive
Players: 1-4
ESRB: Teen

www.eagames.com

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PS2, Xbox, GC

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NASCAR THUNDER 2004

Race the pack, not the track



After 40 laps, your car will sport that "broken-in" look.

Good: Grudge/Alliance system adds loads of strategy.
Bad: Occasionally choppy visuals.
Rubbins': Racin'!



GREG S: Being a NASCAR fan isn't easy. Uppy football and basketball fans are constantly telling you that it isn't really a sport. "Buncha rednecks driving in circles," they say. Well, screw them. Not only is it the best sport, but it also gets the best sports sim every year, courtesy of EA. This year's model is no different.

The new Grudge/Alliance system in *Thunder 2004* perfectly illustrates why millions (yes, millions—we checked) of Americans sit their asses in front of the television and watch a four-hour race every Sunday. Now, you can't just muscle your way to the front of the pack; you have to drive safely and strategically, 'cause if you ram someone in one race, they'll likely return the favor in the next one. And the rest of the game is just as polished. Every mode from last year's game has been updated with a smoother interface and better graphics. And of course, racing online with guys across the country (PS2 only) just seals the deal for me. Finally, a sports game I can beat Bryan at....

BRYAN: *Thunder* is a hillbilly's wet dream with its amazingly deep Career mode, tricky skill challenges, and even the chance to re-enact classic NASCAR moments (like...when such-and-such clenched that big last-minute finish that one time). To my surprise, taking the checkered flag involves strategy, which the Grudge/Alliance feature exemplifies perfectly. Still, the controls are a bit too unforgiving for the casual racing fan, especially when jockeying for position in the middle of the pack and recovering from drivers

rubbin'. NASCAR junkies will go hog wild for *Thunder*, but others should think about renting first.

GMR—TOM: *Thunder* is as realistic a representation of the complex sport of stock car racing (it ain't just turnin' left, Cletus) as you're going to find. Near-photorealistic graphics, thunderous sound, finely tuned physics, and detailed A.I. make for a vivid racing experience. If only they could make a controller that spewed out the smell of burning rubber, the illusion would be complete. Overall, it's a must have for enthusiasts, but its painstaking attention to detail makes it daunting for average Joses.



NASCAR isn't just about turning left...it's what you do while turning left that matters.

THE
VERDICTS
GAMING

9.5 8.0 8.0

GREG S.

BRYAN

TOM

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Tiburon
Players: PS2: 1-2 (2-4 w/MultiTap, 2 online); XB, GC: 1-4
ESRB: Everyone

www.easports.com

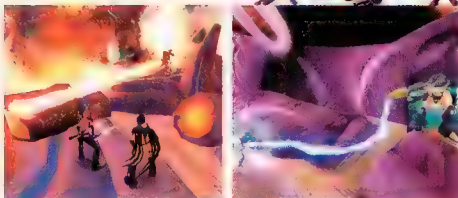


■ Nevin's elaborate combos compensate for drab level design.

■ PS2, Xbox

ALTER ECHO

Rhapsody in purple



■ Partners will periodically accompany you on your trek across planet Colon.

Good: Shape-shifting gemenley
Bad: Corny characters
Inspired by: *The Color Purple*



SHAWN: At a glance, *Alter Echo* seems like the sort of platformer any discerning buyer knows to bypass—more pink and purple than a prom's worth of dresses with a cast of unevenly animated characters. As I embarked across pastel acid-scapes that resembled the evaporated residue of a dried-up design pool more than innovative visions of an alien world, that assessment seemed dead-on. But eventually, it dawned on me that I was kind of enjoying myself.

Clever puzzles put each of shape-shifting hero Nevin's three forms (Sword, Gun, and Stealth) through its paces, and switching on the fly to exploit his foes' mixed weaknesses is too cool to dismiss—you can start a combo in one form and press the attack in another. The game also suffers few of the pratfalls that typically plague adventure games. You'll never get lost, instantly die from misjudged jumps, or have to play through difficult parts ten times over. Consequently, it's also a little too easy. *Alter Echo* isn't for everyone, but variety-starved adventurers will dig the day-trip.

JENNIFER: I, too, hated this game at first. Something about its dorky-looking hero and cheesy, pseudo-sci-fi story just immediately enraged me. Eventually, though, *Alter Echo* strangely redeemed itself. It's super-eclectic—part platformer, part fighter, with bizarre rhythm-action minigames and RPG elements thrown in for weird measure. The annoying camera problems are mostly balanced out by the mechanics Shawn mentioned: Save points happen every few minutes, and it's easy to restart when you fall or die. A decent, easy rental.

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAG—JASON: Ugh, this promising concept has been totally mishandled. The interesting morph suits and bizarre enemy designs will draw you in initially, but the fun quickly deflates when derivative puzzles, dismal dialogue, lurching difficulty, and dull level designs transform something refreshing into a lilac-hued letdown. Plus, the hero is a big wuss—maybe if the game didn't explain every obstacle and boss battle beforehand, I wouldn't feel so spoon-fed and bored.

THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	6.5	6.5	4.0
	SHAWN	JENNIFER	JASON

Publisher: THQ
 Developer: Outrage
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Everyone

www.thq.com

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■ Punching and kicking are all well and good, but only wood turns vamps to dust.



PS2, Xbox, GC

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER: CHAOS BLEEDS

About as good as season six

JON D: I once thought I'd love any *Buffy* game that let me play as (or with) crimson-haired hottie Alyson Hannigan. But it turns out vampire slaying kinda sucks ass no matter who you are. It's not that the working conditions are poor—every stage is a unique, new setting with its own set of vaguely *Resident Evil*-ish puzzles (I once used a severed head to unlock a door), the acting and voices are dead-on, and you get a chance to portray all the important cast members. But the meat of the gameplay—the actual slaying—makes you want to turn that stake around and fall on it yourself (though it doesn't work—I tried).

Buffy and company have move lists to rival those of most *Tekken* fighters, but only a percentage are really useful, which means stage after stage of mundane pugilism. And I wouldn't expect the undead to fight fair, but their standard plan of attack is an especially frustrating double- or triple-team assault—they take shots while you're awkwardly trying to drop their friends or fiddle with your equip-

ment (once again, not quite the threesome or four-some I had envisioned when it comes to Willow, Faith, and Buffy, but...). I hoped to find extra medical kits and more of the useful polearm weapons in the item boxes scattered about, but instead, I was supplied with about 18 million more stakes than I could ever possibly use. It's a brain-dead *Buffy* fan's dream, but if you're looking for fun, take a pass.

JENNIFER: This game is like a mediocre *Buffy* episode: Decent plot, predictable Scooby-gang hijinks, and lots of fighting action and bad vampire puns ("Stake: A vampire's last meal"). It also throws in some stuff that, thankfully, even bad *Buffy* episodes don't—like the iffy graphics engine that produces lifeless character movement and collision issues. Then there's the lame inventory control—I try to get fancy with holy water or hellfire, and, as Jon detailed, the tag-team vamps will often destroy you while you shuffle through your items. Even so, for a die-hard *Buffy* fan like me (who you

callin' brain-dead?), it was way more fun than Jon would have you believe. I loved casting spells as Willow—too bad you don't really play as her until the game's almost over.

GMR—ANDREW: As a dedicated *Buffy* fan since the very first season, and at the severe risk of sounding like a massive dork, I have no problem saying that *Chaos Bleeds* does an admirable job of representing the "Buffyverse" in videogame form. Incorporating characters and plot elements from all seven seasons of the series, the story serves as a fitting memorial to *Buffy's* overall story arc. I have only a few gripes regarding the voice acting (some of the actors abstained) and trying to target multiple vamps (they tend to unfairly gang up on you). Even if you're not a *Buffy* fan, this is still an entertaining beat-em-up with pretty environments, myriad weapons and moves, and an interesting plot with multiple playable characters. But you still have poor taste in TV programs.



The Creator Speaks. *Chaos Bleeds* offers unlockable outtakes and interviews with *Buffy* cast members and show creator Joss Whedon, who says he loves the idea of *Buffy* videogames: "Buffy was designed to be an icon, a hero who lived outside her TV show [and] entered people's subconscious lives—and their videogames and comic books and books and anything else we could think of."



Slayerette Sound Bites
The most redeeming aspect of *Chaos Bleeds* is that you can play as different Slayer pals. Faith, Xander, Willow, Spike, and Buffy not only have their own moves, but also their own silly quips. Everyone loves innuendo, and this game's crazy with it. From Willow finding a mad kit ("Now I can be Nurse Willow. Tara's gonna love that") to Buffy picking up a stake ("Just what a girl needs—a nice, long shaft"), everything's funnier when put in a sexual context. There's even a Howdy Doody puppet making wood jokes. Priced.



■ Looking for hot lesbian love scenes? Don't look here.

Good: Excellent tie-ins to TV series
Bad: Droning beat-em-up gameplay
Why Even Bother: Tackling on fussy multiplayer modes?



THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10

JON D.	JENNIFER	ANDREW
6.5	7.5	

Publisher: Vi Games
Developer: Eurocom
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.vugames.com

CROUCHING TIGER HIDDEN DRAGON

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SWORD OF DESTINY.
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Violence



Ubi Soft



PlayStation 2

GAME BOY ADVANCE



EGM editor Bryan "Sporto" Intihar grips the shaft and prepares to stroke.

PS2, Xbox, GC
@NLINE
PS2 ONLY

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004

Well under par



Use EA's GameFace technology to create hideous baasts (left) and uh, EGM's Shawn (right).

Good: Incredible Create-a-Golfer mode
Bad: Cardboard cutout trees
Scary: EGM editor Shawn trying to create Michael Jackson



BRYAN: Admittedly, I'm not the kind of guy who watches the Golf Channel. Does that mean I can't enjoy EA's latest links offering? No way—it's totally accessible to both casual and hardcore players. The analog swing controls are easy to pick up yet challenging to master, and while enthusiasts will dig the new Season mode, players like me can have fun with the abundant zany minigames. Plus, the character creation system is the most impressive I've ever seen in any game, golf or otherwise: You control complete facial and body structure customization, your golfer's apparel, and celebration animations.

Also, all three versions of *Tiger* vary, but the differences balance each other out: Slickest visuals go to Xbox; PS2 owners can play online; and a GBA connectivity feature (used for unlocking tournaments or extra cash) is available on the Cube. Whichever console you call home, playing on such high-quality greens is a rare treat.

SHAWN: *Tiger* finishes several strokes below the competition, once again offering an accurate sim that's more fun to play

than other golf games that take themselves less seriously. The secret is in the club control—the robotic consistency of meter-based interfaces can't match the subtle physics of *Woods'* analog swinging. Combine that with superb spin and putting setups and you'll never feel like you're passively tapping buttons while watching the PGA on television. Arcade modes such as *Battle Golf*, in which the winner of each hole gets to gank a club from his rival's bag, also keep things interesting, and the new *Create-a-Golfer* options make 2004 worth getting even if you own 2003.

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAG—JOE R: Yes, it is indeed all about that genre-redefining analog swing. No longer is video golf a matter of timing—now it's a matter of skill. The flip side is that, just like in real golf, you can have your "on" days and your "off" days. And the "off" days make you want to smash your controller into a wall, or, you know, your head. EA's improved everything in this game, from graphics to putting to new arcade modes that help pass the time. There's just no better golf game out there.

THE VERDICTS BY THE CRITICS	9.0	9.0	9.5
	BRYAN	SHAWN	JOE R.

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Redwood Shores
Players: 1-8 (1-2 online)
ESRB: Everyone

www.easports.com



(Center) Detroit's Brendan Shanahan knocks a Boston Bruin into the front row.

PS2, Xbox, GC
@NLINE
PS2 ONLY

NHL HITZ PRO

And now, the old-time hockey



Players can now perform wraparound shots from behind the goal in *Hitz Pro*.

Good: Mindless, merciless fun
Bad: Not as rewarding as, say, *NBA Street Vol. 2*
Least Likely Cover Athlete: Nicklas Lidstrom

DEMIAN: I wasn't sold at first. The *NHL Hitz* series has always been about all-out helmet-popping mayhem, but this year, Midway decided to take the series in a more realistic direction—with five players per side instead of the traditional three and the choice to make gameplay more simile (with penalties and line changes, for example). Though I wish 3-on-3 were at least an option, the new *Hitz* is as much fun as ever—hard hits, wild goals, and an incredibly deep Franchise mode definitely impress—assuming you're playing the over-the-top *Hitz* mode. The wannabe sim Pro setting is less enjoyable: The series' simple controls and heavy checking just feel too arcadey here.

Hitz is also going online for the first time. Unfortunately, Net play is available only in the PS2 version, and the lack of voice chat support makes me sad. Performance-wise, Greg S. and I had some very noticeable lag in our games, but we were on opposite sides of the continent, so it's not that surprising. Let's hope Midway has everything running as well as possible by the time *Hitz* is in stores.

GREG S: Yeah, the lag was a drag, but I've seen worse. Anyway, I'll definitely be picking up *Hitz* for the 'ol game collection. Most hockey games serve up similarly snazzy visuals, tight control, and expansive options, but none of 'em focus on purely wild-and-fun gameplay like this. I only wish the developers had gone a bit more over-the-top with the not-quite-funny commentary in *Hitz* mode. They should look to EA Big's *NBA Street* series for inspiration next year.

GMP—MILKMAN: While not, perhaps, the most realistic game of hockey, *Hitz* remains among the most enjoyable. This year's *Hitz* is just as fast and playable as it's ever been, with unrealistically high scores (20-2 anyone?) and over-the-top, teeth-rattling hits. Thankfully, Midway tweaked the fighting engine to make *Hitz* more of a reflex-based game than a button-masher, and it's better for it. Oh, and I don't know what Greg is yammering about—announcer Tim Kitzrow is a stellar talent. His energetic, frenetic play-calling adds tons of personality to the game.

THE VERDICTS BY THE CRITICS	7.5	8.5	8.0
	DEMIAN	GREG S.	MILKMAN

Publisher: Midway
Developer: Next Level
Players: PS2: 1-2 (2-4 w/MultiTap, ? online), XB, GC: 1-4
ESRB: Everyone

www.midway.com

Halo Invades PC



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Yet another puck gets past Greg Sewart's beloved Toronto Maple Leafs.

PS2, Xbox ONLINE

ESPN NHL HOCKEY

In which we compare big dekes



(Left) ESPN now includes All-Star Game-style skill competitions like this statom challenge.

Good: Realism, endlessly tweakable options

Bad: Can't switch to right guy...ARRGH!

Team You'll Never Play As: Latvia

DEMIAN: The hockey series formerly known as *2K* may have a new name, but for the second consecutive year, it leaves the competition slack-jawed and two steps behind with its finesse game. Aside from being the best looking of the latest hockey titles, it's also the most realistic—skaters will kick the puck back up to their stick if a defender knocks it off and execute diving one-timers to reach rebounds. More casual fans might even find the realism a bit frustrating, defenders are so adept at stripping the puck that it can be tough to get the offense going. But like last year, you can tweak almost every aspect of gameplay to suit your taste.

Of course, I've got some gripes. On defense, you can't always switch to the player closest to the puck; slap shots hardly ever make it through traffic, let alone score; and players regularly and inexplicably whiff easy one-timers. Sega's all-new Franchise mode isn't as comprehensive as *NHL 2004*'s Dynasty mode, either.

When we tested it, online play for both versions was comparably smooth. So see you online, chummin'—!

GREG S: *ESPN NHL Hockey* is one sweet game. Now that the checking's been toned down from last year, the game flows beautifully, and only smart play and legit skills will get you anywhere. About the only things that need to be improved are the chintzy Franchise mode and the eye-watering indicators under the players—it's kind of hard to tell who's got the puck. Oh, and they need to fix the online mode, 'cause Demian and Bryan were obviously cheating all those times they beat me.

BRYAN: "Better graphics and more entertaining commentary" are all Greg requested after reviewing Sega's previous stint on the frozen pond (*EGM #162*). Ask and you shall receive, Mr. Sewart. Now, in addition to the rock-solid gameplay, you'll find models that look identical to their toothless real-life counterparts and a broadcast duo that actually provides insightful observations. Also, the new skill challenge minigames are an addictive deviation from standard play—the accuracy shooting is my personal fave. Overall, puck fans can't go wrong with *ESPN*.

THE VERDICTS (out of 10)	8.5 9.0 9.0		
	DEMIAN	GREG S.	BRYAN

Publisher: Sega Sports
Developer: Visual Concepts
Players: PS2: 1-2 (2-10 w/
Multiplay or Online)
Xbox: 1-4 (2-8 Xbox Live)
ESRB: Everyone
www.segasports.com



NHL vets will have to get acquainted with an all-new control scheme.

PS2, Xbox, GC ONLINE

NHL 2004

Once again the bridesmaid



Got used to this image—heavy checks are commonplace in EA's offense-heavy sim.

Good: Incredible Dynasty mode

Bad: You'll wear out the Hit button

God Bless Those: Toothless Canadians

GREG S: Two key enhancements really make the difference in the newest installment of EA's long-running hockey sim. First, player control has been fully fleshed out—adding a Modifier button and the ability to shoot and check using the right analog stick seriously deepens gameplay.

It's the brilliant new Dynasty mode that garners most of my praise, though. My American counterparts inform me that it resembles *Madden*'s much-wanted setup, which means you do everything from managing player rosters to hipping up the price of the soft pretzels in the concession booths. I love the fact that good management nets your team things like a training gym, practice ice, or a nicer team plane, which directly affects your players' morale, abilities, and so on. Such detail!

The other guys are gonna moan about *2004*'s overly rough physical game. Yeah, the checking sometimes reaches ridiculous proportions, but hey, who doesn't like a few hard hits in hockey?

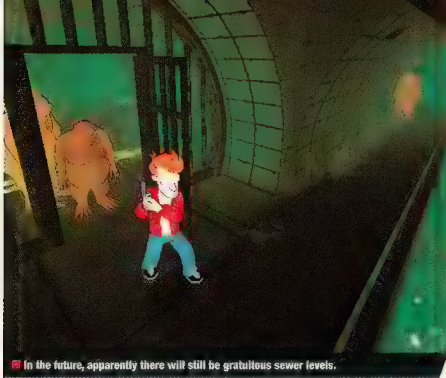
DEMIAN: The *NHL* series is in a rebuilding phase. This year's revamped controls and

new moves (like board pins) definitely take a page from Sega's *ESPN Hockey* playbook, and though it's an improvement over last year, the only real innovation is that you can use the right analog stick to deke and shoot (by pressing it in). There are few opportunities to use such subtle maneuvers, unfortunately, because the checking is so unbelievably overpowered that most games look more like rugby matches than hockey. The new Dynasty mode is ace, but it's not enough to lure me away from *ESPN* or *NHL Hitz*.

BRYAN: Too much force and not enough finesse—that's the problem with EA's puck offering. Don't get me wrong, I'm all for gettin' physical, but not when it comes at the cost of disrupting the natural flow of hockey. Plus, *NHL 2004* suffers from some nasty slowdown and just doesn't look as slick as *ESPN*. I do enjoy the beefy Dynasty mode (controlling absurdly minuscule details seriously adds to the "I'm in total control" vibe) and headin' online is a nice bonus for PS2 players. But I still favor Sega's rink when it's time to lace up the skates.

THE VERDICTS (out of 10)	8.5 6.5 7.0		
	GREG S.	DEMIAN	BRYAN

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Black Box
Players: PS2: 1-2 (2-8 w/
Multiplay or Online)
Xbox, GC: 1-4
ESRB: Everyone
www.easports.com



In the future, apparently there will still be gratuitous sewer levels.

■ PS2, Xbox, GC

FUTURAMA

Underrated series begets underwhelming game

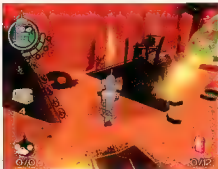
Good: Great cut-scenes
Bad: Annoying camera
In Memoriam: *Futurama*, the show (say it ain't so, Fox)



G. FORD: Played it, beat it, forgot it. *Futurama* is at best a pedestrian platformer based on a great show. If you dug the cartoon, you'll get a kick out of controlling nicely rendered versions of Fry, Leela, Bender, and Dr. Zoidberg, all voiced by the TV show's actors. Their witty in-game quips prove highly amusing, as do the hilarious, well-written cut-scenes—you're basically watching an episode of the show between levels. But that's all that kept me going. For such a futuristic game, the camera sure is archaic, often getting caught behind walls. Also, there's lots of dull fetch-questing, weak puzzles (some inexplicably requiring intense math skills), and mindless, one-dimensional enemies that aren't particularly fun to fight. Some of the bonus-type missions are fun—like Bender running from a boulder à la Indiana Jones or Fry piloting the AT-ST-esque Chicken Walker—but there's not much you haven't seen before. Oh, and it has the worst unlockable secret ever—an art gallery of the load screens...that's right, the ones burned into your memory during the long load times. Gee, thanks.

DEMIAN: Damn you, America, for not loving *Futurama* (the show) as much as *The Simpsons*. But if you don't love the videogame, I can relate. I'm with G. Ford: The cut-scenes are hilarious, but the action/platformer bits sandwiched between the funny parts are just bleh. Sometimes finicky jumping controls, basic, repetitive combat, and nonstop power-up collecting (I haven't seen this much crate- and vase-smashing since that night I broke into Pier 1) are the main offenders. A kleptomaniac alcoholic robot from the future deserves better.

JON D: *Futurama* certainly services its fans: For diehards, tracking down Nibblers and healing Bender with bottles of Old Fortran malt liquor might be enough entertainment to justify a purchase. But you'll have to get by on the ambience alone ('cause there's not a single original gameplay idea here. The developers know it; characters even poke fun at the abundant clichés, and the game's obviously geared toward folks who are too enamored with the concept of playing as Zoidberg to care about the woefully average action.



THE VERDICTS OUT OF 100	5.0 5.0		
	G. FORD	DEMIAN	JON D.

Publisher: Fox Interactive
 Developer: UDS
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Teen

www.vugames.com

OCTOBER 2003.
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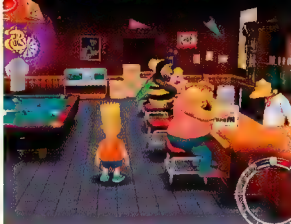
FINAL FANTASY:
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Normally, we wouldn't suggest driving a station wagon through a nuclear power plant. But in Springfield, it's all good.



PS2, Xbox, GC

THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN

Best. Simpsons game. Ever.

GREG S: Most *Simpsons* games have sucked. They just plain sucked! I've seen games suck before, but they were the suckiest bunch of sucks that ever sucked! That's not the case with *Hit & Run*, though. I won't give it any points for creativity, but the developers set out to craft a family-friendly *Grand Theft Auto: Springfield*, and they've completely succeeded. The borrowed *GTA* concept works wonderfully. Here, you tour Springfield in fun-to-control *Simpsons*-related vehicles (such as Homer's station wagon, Barney's Plow King, and Bart's Honor Roller), meet your fave characters (who all sport their real voices from the show), and experience a variety of wacky vehicular misadventures.

Although it's a linear affair—you take on a specific number of missions with one character and then move on to a different Simpson and new challenges—you can also go exploring the cartoony back streets at your leisure. The city looks great, too, with plenty of bizarre buildings and candy-colored attractions to crash into. The characters,

however, still seem wrong when rendered in three dimensions—no *Simpsons* game yet has made our four-fingered friends look less than scary.

My one gripe about *Hit & Run* is that the town should've been opened up a bit more—each of the characters scout specific parts of the city. But this is still the best *Simpsons* game since, well, ever.

G. FORD: I must say, I'm surprised. This game is fun. Not a "go out and buy this now" fun like Greg S. seems to think, but more of a "hardcore fans should get this to complement the *Simpsons* third-season DVD" kind of fun. It's a smooth-drivin' *GTA* offspring, complete with oodles of neat driving missions, cool unlockable bonuses (such as vehicles, outfits, and a dippy R/C car multiplayer minigame), and funny *Simpsons* in-jokes aplenty.

Unfortunately, the on-foot controls aren't very precise, usually requiring manual camera adjustments and repeated jumps to get somewhere. I also wish there were a few more levels—it's

definitely on the short side compared with the epic scope of the *GTA* titles. But hey, you get to play as Apu and open up his B-sharps costume. And that's gotta count for something.

PAUL: Is this a shameless *GTA* clone and a licensed *Simpsons* game? Yes. It certainly is. That's two strikes against it, right? Actually, those are the game's strengths. *Hit & Run* is so good at capturing the show's spirit and copying a great game that it turns out to be real, honest-to-God fun for anyone who digs the show. *H&R*'s genuinely funny dialogue and seamless driving controls make cruising around Springfield plenty entertaining, even without gunfire and prostitution. I agree with G. Ford that the on-foot platforming sections aren't as fun, but at least they involve appropriate *Simpsons*-themed goals, like when Homer has to round up and return a bunch of stuff he had "borrowed" from Flanders. If you still laugh at your friends' non sequitur *Simpsons* quotations, play this game.



The Simpsons did it! Thanks to a bevy of unlockable outfits, you can recreate many of the beloved moments from your favorite episodes. Whether you want to relive Bart's statue vandalism from "The Tailgate Head" or Homer's hilarious quest for extreme obesity in "King-Size Homer," this game's got ya covered.



Better Than Bonestorm

Feast your eyes on the only other *Simpsons* game most of us care to remember. Released in arcades by Konami in 1991, *The Simpsons* is a one-to-four-player action beat-em-up in which you can play as Bart, Lisa, Marge, or Homer. The gameplay is lifted directly from Konami's popular *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* game, but punching giant donuts with Homer beats slicing up mutant rhinos any day. Unfortunately, Konami never released a home-console version.



Good: A *Simpsons* game that doesn't suck.
Bad: Homer and family look ridiculous in 3D.
A Noble Spirit: Embiggers the smallest new



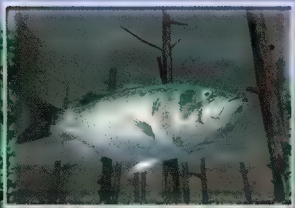
THE VERDICT (out of 10)

8.0	6.5	7.0
GREG S.	G. FORD	PAUL

Publisher: VU Games
Developer: Radical
Players: 1 (bonus minigame: 2-4)
ESRB: Teen

www.vugames.com

"...the best game of its type this year." -- PS2.IGN



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PlayStation 2

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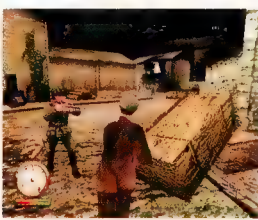


Steve McQueen's infamous motorcycle chase makes up the last couple missions.

PS2, Xbox

THE GREAT ESCAPE

Rent the movie instead



Only a few levels feature all-out combat like above; most of the game is focused on stealth.

Good: A few exciting stealth moments
Bad: Loose controls, terrible graphics
The Movie's Ending: Not quite as upbeat as the game's

MARK: The irony with the 1963 feature film *The Great Escape* is with the word "escape"; after all, most of the freed POWs are eventually recaptured or killed. The irony with the new videogame *The Great Escape* is with the word "great," although I suppose *The Fail-to-Poor Escape* doesn't have quite the same ring to it.

First off, the blocky graphics and confusing plot (levels jump back and forth between characters with little background) scream "HALT!" to anyone who's not already a fan of the film. WWII film buffs who dig in anyway will find imprecise, clunky controls; a lot of frustrating trial-and-error stealth sequences (an effective warning system or map à la *Splinter Cell* or *Metal Gear Solid* could have worked wonders); and missions that progress by checking your journal every two minutes.

The game has its moments—like when you, disguised as a German officer, pick-pocket keys from a commander or fight a rooftop battle on a speeding train—but more often *Escape* has a cobbled-together feel that can't do justice to the film or stand on its own as a worthwhile game.

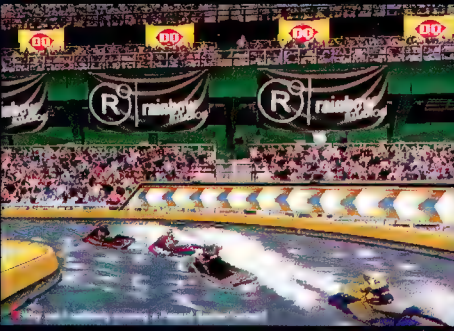
CRISPIN: The Nazi guards aren't what scared me most in this disjointed and sloppy reimagining of the classic Steve McQueen escape flick (and you'd be hard pressed to even tell that the blank-faced hero here is supposed to be the late actor). It was the mission objectives that put fear in my heart. Many are downright illogical to the point where I could only figure out what to do by screwing up over and over. It makes for a clunky game that will turn off fans of the film (like my grandma) and frustrate everyone else.

XBN—GREG O: Unlike my colleagues, I find that this escape is somewhat great, though it invariably comes after much trial and error. Busting out of Nazi prison camps isn't easy, as the slightest misstep forces your captors into a chorus of "Achtungs!" and "Sound the alarms," with the shooting, gun-butting, and whatnot. Luckily, gameplay is forgiving—a botched flight only means you'll be tossed into the clink for another try. Imprecise control, though, ensures frustration during your time in the Germans' revolving-door prisoner-of-war system.

THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	MARK	CRISPIN	GREG O.
			6.5

Publisher: Gotham Games
 Developer: Pivotal Games/SCI
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Teen

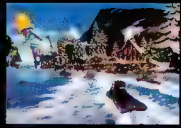
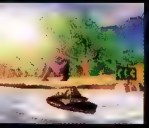
www.gothamgames.com



PS2 / Also On: None

SPLASHDOWN: RIDES GONE WILD

Five-minute wait from this point in line



Good: Spectacular tracks
Bad: Convoluted trick controls
Buzzkill: Interminable loading times

SHAWN: Like the theme-park diversions its levels mimic, *Rides Gone Wild* is all spectacle and sensory overload. Around every turn, there's something to gawk at, be it an animatronic brontosaurus or a sea battle between pirate ships. And it's more than empty window dressing as events in each lap can radically change a course's contours. Plus, you can challenge a solid selection of technical tracks if you're not feeling the feature attractions (I almost prefer the shorter circuits of the former). Still, if you've been to Disneyland, you know that there's always an atrocious wait between rides, and *Splashdown* is no different—I've never seen a game with such intolerable loading times.

Fortunately, when your turn to ride does arrive, it's generally worth the wait. Your high-performance watercraft handles well: Submarining and hydroplaning are a snap even if performing show-stopping stunts on an enormous SeaDoo is intrinsically sketchy (visualize someone dancing an Irish jig in the bed of an airborne pickup truck and hold that thought). Worth a visit but not the season pass.

GREG S: Yeah, the stunts are a bit out there, but that over-the-top insanity just adds to *Splashdown's* charm. Besides, the stunts are so easy to do. If I'm gonna have to concentrate on pulling stunts to keep my speed up, at least I'm not wrestling with the controls every time I catch some air. And you can really tell this is from the same dudes who made the excellent *ATV Offroad Fury*—it plays almost exactly the same, right down to the spot-on weight transfer and responsive handling. I just wish I could play online.

EJ: As a big fan of the first *Splashdown*, I had my wet suit cleaned and ready for this follow-up. *Rides Gone Wild* offers more of the thrilling, beautiful jetski action I loved in the first game, but sadly, it's not quite the same. *Rides* focuses more on chaining together crazy stunts than on racing—disappointing for me, since I wanna race, not constantly jam on Trick buttons. Also, while the imaginative tracks are much flashier than those in the first outing, it's too easy to hit parts of the scenery during jumps, totally ruining your lap time.

THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	7.0	8.0	6.5
	SHAWN	GREG S.	CJ

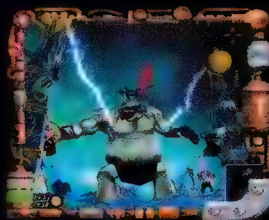
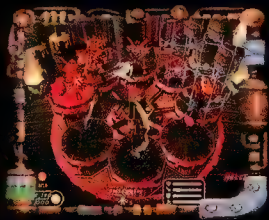
Publisher: THQ
 Developer: Rainbow Studios
 Players: 1-2
 ESRB: Everyone

www.thq.com

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RATING PENDING



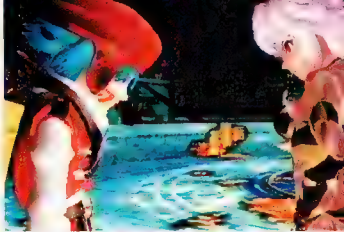
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PlayStation 2



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PS2 Alan Oko Haseo

.HACK PART 3: OUTBREAK

RPG action in four easy installments

SHANE: Back when Dickens released his novels in one-chapter-a-week fashion, the 19th-century masses eagerly devoured each successive snippet of Victorian class struggle. Now, 150 years later, the same serialization that made Pip a star in *Great Expectations* has also spelled commercial success for Bandai's *.hack* Lemme tell it to you straight, though—splitting the game into four too-short, too-similar parts has turned out to be a rip-off.

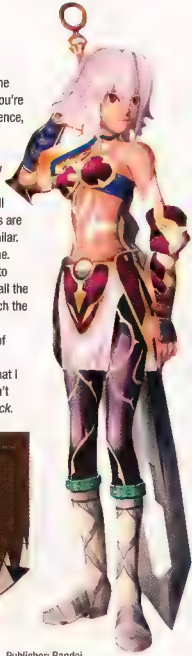
This high-concept saga (in which you play within a faux massively multiplayer RPG on the Iritz) is really starting to wear thin. It's an average dungeon crawler at best, and even the most ardent role-players can only hack it for so long. The mediocre graphics, overly simplistic dungeons, and repetitive combat (in which you're alternately mashing buttons or baby-sitting your A.I.-deprived party members) haven't changed one bit since the first volume. I even experienced disturbing déjà vu about 10 hours in: I was forced to trudge through a cave I swear I'd been through two *.hacks* prior.

It would be easy for me to simply write this series off, but here's the rub—I'm still intrigued by the narrative. As *.hack*'s malfunctioning game-within-a-game world continues to degrade, the plot gets better and better. I've spent a lot of time slogging through faceless labyrinths with these characters, and now I want to see this whole ordeal through. So, if you've played the past two versions, you'll probably want to tackle this one, too... just don't expect any improvements. But if you're new to the series, don't even attempt this—*Outbreak* is impossibly difficult unless you transfer your experience and items over from *Mutation*.

CJ: If you're an anime fan like me, it's hard to avoid *.hack*. Since I got hooked on the successful TV series, I've simply gotta play the game component, too. There's a lot here to appease our demanding otaku tastes, like a choice between full Japanese or English voiceovers and a free supplement anime DVD (see sidebar). On the downside, *.hack*'s flaws

are many—dull visuals, annoying battles, and characters that couldn't hold their own with the likes of *Final Fantasy*'s Tidus or Yuna. But if you're looking for an extension of your anime experience, you won't be completely disappointed.

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAG—GARY: The key to enjoying *.hack*? Ignore CJ and completely disregard Shane. They just don't get it. Sure, I'll grant them a lot of their gripes—the dungeons are repetitive and the battles are definitely too similar. But for me, it's all about how you play the game. *.hack* offers so much to anyone who's willing to plumb its depths. You gotta be willing to read all the e-mails, peruse the message boards, and watch the extra anime DVD to grasp the scope of *.hack*'s refreshingly unique narrative. Plus, the range of combat strategy is simply astounding. With *Outbreak*, I found myself using battle tactics that I didn't even consider in the last go-round. I can't wait for *Part 4*—I'm still utterly hooked on *.hack*.



Liminality Continues
Like the two volumes that came before it, *Outbreak* comes with an anime DVD, *Liminality: In the Case of Kyoko Tohno*. This is completely different than the popular *.hack/SIGN* series that's running on television—*Liminality* shows what's going on in the real world when the players aren't logged into *The World*, the massively multiplayer RPG you're "playing" in *.hack*. Confused yet? If not, you will be when a third anime series, *.hack/DUSK*, hits next year.



Good: The story line continues to impress.
Bad: Looks and feels exactly like the previous two chapters.
Prerequisites: *.hack Part 1: Infection* and *.hack Part 2: Mutation*



THE VERDICTS BEST OF 2004	6.0	6.5	8.0
	SHANE	CJ	GARY

Publisher: Bandai
Developer: Cyber Connect 2
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

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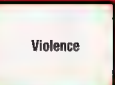


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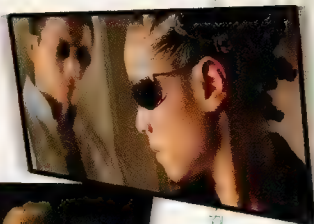


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—Game Informer



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—PlayStation Magazine

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—Tribune Media Services



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—Electronic Gaming Monthly

"Explosive and stunning – Atari's Enter the Matrix revolutionizes 3-D adventure gaming with blockbuster bravado."

—Nintendo Power

"...dodging bullets and pulling off mad kung fu in Enter the Matrix is exactly what I hoped it would be...**awesome.**"

—Official Xbox Magazine

"Setting a new standard for game and movie studios working together."

—Detroit News



PlayStation.2



VILLAGE ROADSHOW PICTURES

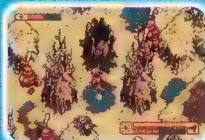




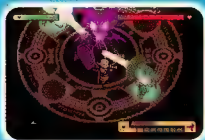
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Halitosis Rex could use a plasma-charged breath mint.

Xbox / Also On: None

DINO CRISIS 3

Jurassic Park: A Space Oddity

SHAWN: Spacefaring dinosaurs may sound like the premise for a bad Sci-Fi Channel original movie, but Capcom's latest foray into the spooky survival-horror realm feels more like a big-budget blockbuster. In fact, pretend the prehistoric terrors are proper aliens, and the strange, mesmerizing setting will help you suspend what remains of your disbelief. With its sterling surfaces and carefully rendered corridors, the derelict starship *Ozymandias* looks fantastic enough to sustain any number of absurd plots (including crap about a rogue computer replacing its crew with reptiles). Even backtracking yields surprises—revisit a familiar room after engaging a shipwide transformation, for example, and you may find it's been turned upside-down and deprived of gravity.

Venturing through this stunning ship would've been a phenomenal experience if it weren't for some serious technical problems. Capcom has often kept camera control out of gamers' hands, but *Resident Evil* never asked you to maneuver

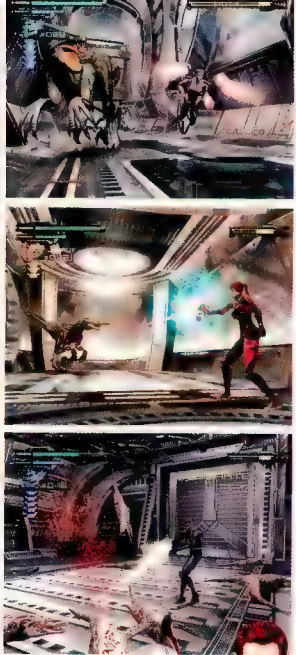
between floating platforms. It's hard enough sizing up jet-propelled jumps from perverse perspectives without the view shifting middle. Crappy camera angles also tend to block your view of whatever dimwitted menace you're autotargeting, but blindly firing your thrusters usually keeps you out of harm's way.

Count *Dino Crisis 3* among those potentially kick-ass titles compromised by an easily correctable issue. Still, despite its shortcomings, it deserves to be seen through to the end, provided you're playing on borrowed (i.e., rented) time.

JOE: *Dino Crisis 3* is an absolutely gorgeous game, but all of Shawn's gripes about the camera are spot-on. I so wish it used a 3D camera more like the one found in *Resident Evil Code: Veronica* (PS2, DC). Playing from a series of static perspectives seems like a hearkening back to the days of clunky, older PS1 titles, and it's completely unsuitable for a game that requires so much fast action.

Vertigo-inducing viewpoints aside, the gameplay's solid—the addition of the jetpack is a neat, new gimmick for the series (as is your ability to buy additional saves). But still, this *Crisis* feels like the vestigial remains of a genre that needed to evolve or die a long time ago.

BRYAN: These guys have pretty much covered it (in painful detail): The real crisis here isn't a crazed breed of dinos, but a debilitating camera system. Utter frustration is unavoidable, which is a shame because so much of *Dino Crisis 3* is award-worthy. Blissful presentation and wonderfully terrifying CG out-scenes—witnessing hundreds of critters burrow into a T-Rex made my skin crawl—propel you to play despite the seizure-inducing perspectives. Plus, the ever-morphing spaceship is a fresh approach to level design and brings a unique dimension to puzzle solving. And yes, the story line is a far departure from the standard *Crisis* formula, but it works well all the same.



Entomology 101

You'll need more than your plasma rifle to purge *Ozymandias'* dinosaur infestation. Good thing you're also packing personal search-and-destroy drones to sort through any stragglers. These so-called WASPs can also unlock secured doors, so resupplying a dozen or so of each will save you the hassle of backtracking to supply terminals. Still, none of them rocks as hard as the '80s hair band of the same name.



Fires energy bolts

Explodes in flames

Rams enemies



Dinosaurs, airships, and a boy's head

Good: Spectacular environments.
Bad: Spacey camera
Next Step for the Franchise: Upgrade '90s Bioscience



THE VERDICTS
LOOK UP!

6.5	6.0	6.5
SHAWN	JOE	BRYAN

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.capcom.com

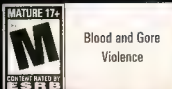
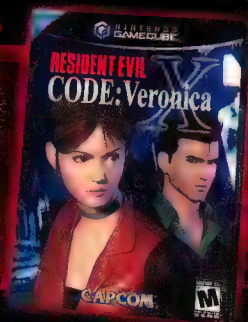
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■ After you hack-n-slash your way through *Otagi* the first time, you can replay it with all your existing equipment and spells.



■ The folk would be green with envy if the saw these very beautiful and very destructible environments.

■ Xbox / Also On: None

OTOGI: MYTH OF DEMONS

Xbox's answer to Devil May Cry

SHOE: I hate *Otagi*. It sets such an impossibly high standard that it may have ruined me on most other games. How can I fathom playing a generic action title now? I've delved into *Otagi*'s beautiful, surreal lands steeped in Japanese medieval fantasy. I've listened to its deeply haunting tunes and incredible voice acting. I've experienced its perfect controls complemented by a near-flawless camera.

You may find something to complain about in its combat system, which tries to be a bit of PS2's *Devil May Cry* with high-flying big-sword action, only without the variety. (You'll get many different weapons with unique properties, but you'll be doing the same four-button combo for 90 percent of the game.) You may also dislike how difficult *Otagi* can get—I've exhausted hours trying to kill the final boss, for example. But even while I was shouting some colorful language at the sonuvaw%#@\$, I was still enjoying every minute of the challenge.

What you won't complain about, however, is how much game you get for your yen. Not counting that

final 82.5% boss, I spent more than 20 hours lost in *Otagi*'s dreamy—and sometimes nightmarish—world. It's home to plenty of stages, and you'll want to go back and finish destroying everything to find secret weapons and to earn experience that'll power-up your silent warrior.

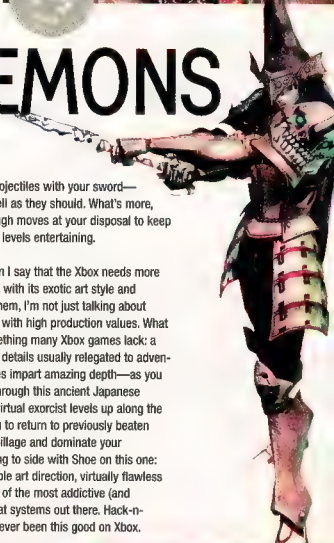
Don't let the odd name or lack of hype dissuade you from playing *Otagi*. You may be so utterly impressed that you'll hate it, too.

SHAWN: Although it's not as gorgeous as these other guys would have you believe, this is a good-looking game set in an atmospheric dreamworld where demons lie in wait among stone shrines and shivering bamboo forests. The sarcery and sword-play, however, don't live up to the striking setting, even if the exotic environments let you bring pagodas to the ground and demolish most anything that comes between you and your targets.

The combat isn't exactly sloppy, but it sure is loose. Your two defensive options—dashing and

swatting back projectiles with your sword—don't work as well as they should. What's more, there aren't enough moves at your disposal to keep *Otagi*'s 28 trying levels entertaining.

XBN—CHE: When I say that the Xbox needs more games like *Otagi*, with its exotic art style and anime-slick mayhem, I'm not just talking about solid action titles with high production values. What *Otagi* has is something many Xbox games lack: a soul. Painstaking details usually relegated to adventure and RPG titles impart amazing depth—as you slash your way through this ancient Japanese nightmare, your virtual exorcist levels up along the way, allowing you to return to previously beaten areas to further pillage and dominate your enemies. I'm going to side with Shoe on this one: *Otagi* has incredible art direction, virtually flawless controls, and one of the most addictive (and rewarding) combat systems out there. Hack-n-slash in 3D has never been this good on Xbox.



Once Upon a Time

Surprisingly, *Otagi*'s grade-A tale of demons, spirits, and undead warriors didn't spawn from an anime. "*Otagi* draws its influences from the Hei'an era, a period in Japanese history more than 1,000 years ago," says Sega Localization Manager Osamu Shibamiya. "[Back then,] Buddhist sects who promised power and wealth [to nobles] in this life (versus the usual 'happiness in the afterlife') became popular, as did ones promising to curse one's rival. This gave rise to

an extremely spiritual and superstitious culture [that] definitely believed in the supernatural."

Of course, the developers toughened up some Hei'an legends for *Otagi*. Final boss Michizane, for example, is very loosely based on an emperor/scholar who wasn't even evil. "Today, Michizane's memory is kept alive as the god of education," says Shibamiya. "Every year, Japanese students flock to his shrines to pray that they can get into the school of their choice."



■ Hero Raihok is based on a famous demon slayer.

Good: Unimpressive graphics and smoother.
Bad: Megahard bosses will destroy lesser players.
Practice Tip: B, B, B—It's the combo you'll use a lot.



THE VERDICT'S
OUT OF IT

9.0 7.0 9.0

SHOE

SHAWN

CHE

Publisher: Sega
Developer: From Software
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

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For PlayStation 2

16

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A man in cycling gear stands on a rocky ridge. He is wearing a white and olive green long-sleeved shirt, khaki shorts, sunglasses, and gloves. He has a yellow and black helmet hanging from his left hand. A red mountain bike is partially visible behind him. The background is a clear blue sky with some light clouds.

**Downhill Domination. Are you
equipped for the challenge?**

TEEN
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CONTENT RATED BY
THE FCC AS
Mild Language
Violence

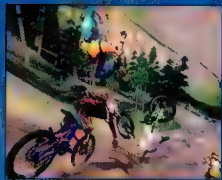
by **MTN**

www.mtn.com

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PlayStation 2

Downhill DOMINATION



Sack up, gentlemen. The first downhill mountain bike racing game for PlayStation 2 is here. Introducing Downhill Domination, where to get to the top you have to get to the bottom first. That means bombing down wickedly steep mountains. Busting tricks off 100-foot cliffs. And brawling your way past opponents with a combat system that lets you punch, kick and even hurl water bottles. The prize? The latest high-tech bike parts and sponsorships from real-world manufacturers. And the most admired *cojones* on the mountain.



LIVE IN YOUR WORLD
PLAY IN OURS



GC / Also On: None

F-ZERO GX

In the future, nobody can drive 55



Choose Your Camp: Race as a pink troll, a boxy robot, a skeletal titan (seriously), an obese samurai, the spandex-clad Captain Falcon, or his nemesis Black Shadow. *GX*'s roster is totally lame. We're laughing so hard we're crying.

JOHN R: Whoa. That about sums up my feelings on *F-Zero GX*. If you thought *F-Zero X* was fast on N64, you haven't seen the half of it. *GX* takes the sensation of speed to previously unheard of levels, with mind-numbingly fast gameplay that'll have those of you with weak stomachs hurling on your controllers before you know what hit you.

Of course, this is the kind of play experience I live for, so I had no problem getting completely immersed in *GX* from the get-go. For starters, the game sports some of the prettiest graphics the Cube has ever seen. Bright lights and colorful effects abound, and the backgrounds are simply beautiful, making for some truly stunning eye candy as you tear along the tracks. More important, though, *GX* delivers rock-solid gameplay that really gets your adrenaline pumping. Racing against 29 opponents at once is invigorating, especially on the tougher difficulty levels where things

start getting personal. Playing on Master mode isn't just about winning the race—it's about surviving, which adds a deeper level of immersion to an already intense experience. "Hunt or be hunted" takes on a whole new meaning when you're blazing along at 1,200 mph, let me tell you.

For the most part, *GX* feels a lot like its predecessor, but it's not all the same. The new Story mode is challenging and cool, even if the plot itself is forgettable. Each Story mode event has a clever concept, like dodging falling boulders in a canyon rally or ramming a rival (and his henchmen) off the track. Racing against multiple ghost racers at once in Time Attack mode and designing custom hovercrafts from a palette of unlockable parts are novel new ideas, too. Still, perhaps the best new feature is one most players won't even get to try: arcade connectivity. I spent almost \$20 in two days playing the arcade *F-Zero AX* in Tokyo to unlock new

tracks and racers, and it was worth every penny. It's a shame Nintendo isn't concerned about promoting this feature outside of Japan.

Overall, my complaints are few. The music isn't as good as past games, and I miss the Death Race mode from *F-Zero X*, but otherwise, I'm extremely satisfied—*GX* is far and away the best Cube racer.

DEMIAN: I've got no beef with hard games. Really, I don't—as long as I'm still having fun. But when the difficulty level gets to the point where I'd rather be doing something else, maybe some nice vacuuming, that's a problem. A few of *F-Zero GX*'s later race classes and story missions give me that vacuuming urge something powerful.

Some of you, especially diehard fans of the series (like John R.), won't mind the difficulty, though. That crowd probably wouldn't have it any other way, and they'll be glad to see that the usual

The AX Connection

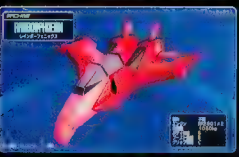
If you're one of the 37 remaining Americans who live near an arcade, you might want to stroll over to see if they've got an *F-Zero AX* machine on hand. The arcade counterpart to *GX* features six exclusive tracks, 10 exclusive racers, and a bunch of custom machine parts that can be transferred over to the home version if you're good enough to unlock them.



First, purchase an *F-Zero License Card*—it'll record your stats and allow you to purchase arcade-exclusive racers and custom parts in the *AX* shop.



Next, pop in a handful (or two) of change and start hauling ass in the giant, glowing *F-Zero AX* cabinet. You might want to bring a barf bag, just to be safe.



Finally, transfer your save over to a GC memory card. Anything unlocked in *AX* will now be for sale in *GX*, including the tracks you mastered in the arcade and this secret craft.

Good: Amazing speed, challenging play.
Bad: Steep difficulty will be too much for many.
Good Luck: Finding an arcade machine to link with.



THE VERDICT
WHAT IS IT?

9.0 **7.5** **7.0**

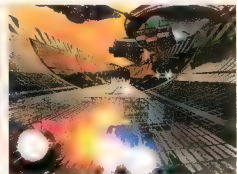
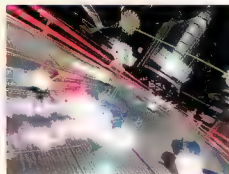
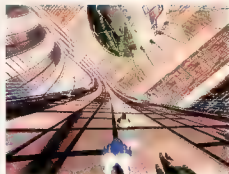
JOHN R. DEMIAN PAUL

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Amusement Vision
Players: 1-4
ESRB: Teen

www.fzero.com



When this baby gets up to 4,800 mph, you're going to see some serious stuff.



F-Zero trademarks are still in effect: solid, extremely fast racing; excellent track design; and the 30-strong roster of ships and pilots from the N64's *F-Zero X*. But improved graphics aside, I really wish Nintendo had done more to update the series. The new Story mode is a nice diversion from the Grand Prix races, but a more fleshed-out Career mode (following the ups and downs of your chosen pilots) would have added a lot of replayability. And I know it's like a broken record at this point, but man, if there was ever a Nintendo title that was crying out to be online! Obligatory four-player splitscreen play (and I mean *only* four racers...where are the AI cars?) doesn't cut it.

PAUL: If you're a fiend for futuristic racing, buy *F-Zero GX*, clear your schedule, and enjoy. Its tracks are awesome, packed with loops and swoops, zigs and zags, curves and swerves. Success requires

thorough knowledge of the tracks and finesse on the controls. If you can appreciate a brutally challenging racing game, it'll do you right.

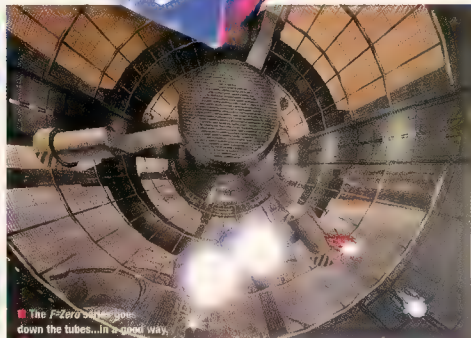
But if you're not a hardcore fan of the genre, *GX* will fast make you furious. The game's punishing difficulty will push many gamers past single-expletive exclamations and into an extended rant of DEFCON 1-level profanity.

For example, check out this recipe for antilun: You're at the top of the standings after the first four races in a Grand Prix series. Piece of cake. But the final track is riddled with jumps—and if you fall off the track, you immediately lose the race. After just two retries, it's game over. So three tiny mistakes on the final course completely negate your success (and time and effort) on the first four tracks. As O'Bert would say, "0!?!?!!"

But hey, like Demian says, a lot of you are looking for an ultradifficult racing challenge. Here it is.



That Star Fox decal is sweet! (Not pictured: Calvin peeing on the *Wipeout* logo.)



The *F-Zero* will take you down the tubes...in a good way.



■ Holy s***, my friends back home are never gonna believe I just saved this talking pirate chicken!

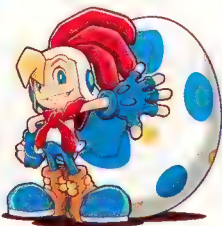


■ When you hatch the egg you've been powering up, you get either helpful Items or little creature sidkicks.

■ GC / Also On: Tron

BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG

You gotta break a few eggs to save humanity



CJ: *Hatcher* proves once again that Sonic Team can make a good platformer. But being good isn't quite enough to topple the genre's stiff competition. (Sorry *Carrie*, better than *Sunshine* it's not.) Maybe it should've left *Billy* in the incubator a few months longer, because the game's little annoyances soil an otherwise fun experience.

For starters, if you've got an egg in your grubby lil' mitts, you have to run at full speed—and it's 0-60 in .2 seconds. That's fine early on when the areas are huge, but it becomes troublesome when they get tighter later on. It's also too easy to accidentally let go of the egg while running around. A button or power-up to magnetize it to your hand would've been helpful. The other problem with the eggs is that they're not incorporated into the gameplay enough. It's almost too easy to ignore their powers and simply get one to full power and use it for an entire level so you can kill the bigger foe in one hit. That is, if you want to confront them at all—you can just run past almost any

enemy you encounter. Lastly, the straightforward level design and formulaic "boy gets special power, vanquishes evil" story lack surprises.

But I don't want to sound like I'm trying to rip *Billy* a new one. This is a *Sonic* fan will get a lot of enjoyment out of this. I just wanna see Sonic Team break some ground. Maybe next time.

SHANE: I liked *Billy Hatcher* a little better the first time I played it...when it was called *Super Mario 64* for N64. OK, I'm being a little cruel, but seriously, consider this Sonic Team's lovingly crafted homage to Nintendo's iconic plumber: Billy's quest for emblems mirrors Mario's jaunt for stars in terms of level flow, challenge, and graphical style. Hell, he even races a penguin, for crissakes! Luckily, the fundamental egg-pushing gameplay is wonderfully unique. And unlike *CJ*, I had no problems with the rolling mechanics: Once I passed the initial learning curve, I was careening eggs around corners with reckless abandon. Overall, it's

just really enjoyable, cute, and suitably long, provided you find all the eggs, unlock all the playable bonus characters, and download all the neat Game Boy Advance minigames.

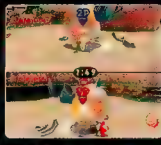
GAMENOW—CARRIE: As someone who tends to get bored during even the most lauded platformers, I find *Billy Hatcher* surprisingly addictive. It offers enough innovation to make it stand out from the crowd, and I find it way more fun than, say, *Super Mario Sunshine*. Initially, I was attracted to the wacky premise of controlling a cuddly character wearing a chicken suit in a surreal land filled with giant Easter eggs. I soon found that the mechanic of rolling eggs to wipe out enemies and flip switches and the like works incredibly well. Who'd have thunk running around behind a giant egg would feel so natural? Hatching eggs into helpful critters to solve puzzles and defeat enemies adds a clever, refreshing touch of strategy as well. Cube owners should definitely try it out.



Billy's Secret Weapons: Whenever you spot a new type of egg, be sure to investigate its contents. In the *Hatcher*-verse, lovable helpers, animals aren't the only things that emerge from giant eggshells. Some yelp! power-up combos that give your eggs the power of fire and water, hats that allow Billy to bounce on top of rolling eggs, a chameleon charm that turns your Billy invisible.

Believe It or Not...

Deathmatch action takes on a yolk-filled new dimension in *Billy Hatcher*'s multiplayer modes.



Billy Hatcher and its bulbous eggs actually began life as a multiplayer game based upon the concept of four characters battling with eggs. So, it's only fitting that the game includes several multiplayer modes for 2-4 players: Time, where you

race to defeat as many enemies as possible; Hatch, where you race to hatch the most animals; and Survival, which is (duh) deathmatch, *Hatcher*-style. These modes are nice diversions, but we actually got bored fairly quickly....



■ Emblem, check. Lovable penguin helper, check. Egg...he man, where'd I put my freakin' egg?

Good: Bright, colorful graphics
Bad: Keeping hold of your egg in later levels
Billy's Happy-Time Wake-up Call: Goo Mornings



THE VERDICT

7.0 8.0 8.5

CJ

SHANE

CARRIE

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sonic Team
Players: 1-4
ESRB: Everyone

www.sega.com

Speed redefined.



TEEN
T
Content Rating
ES ESRB

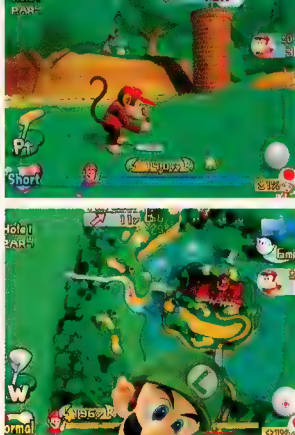
Comic Mischief
Mild Violence
Suggestive Themes

F-ZERO GX





■ When *Wario Ware* gets to be too much, our author unwinds with a slightly less-insane pastime.



■ GC / *Game Boy Advance*

MARIO GOLF: TOADSTOOL TOUR

Hole lotta fun



JENNIFER: This might sound cheesy, but it's true—*Toadstool Tour* is virtual-golfing fun for the whole family. Its pretty courses, simple-to-grasp controls, and newbie-friendly auto-swing make it instantly likable. The usual unlockable characters and goofy play modes are here, too. The best part? Like any good golf game, amidst all the cartoony graphics, silly sound bites, and tropical-themed songs, somehow it makes you feel like you're a real golfer. And if that sounds ridiculous to you, well, lighten up. This game has accurate physics, with wind, weather, and surface conditions that affect every stroke. You'll also find practice makes a difference—if you don't learn exactly when to use top- or backspin, which clubs work best, and the shortest path to every hole, you'll double- and triple-bogey your way to a resounding last place. The game strikes an awesome balance that fosters great multiplayer action: Serious golfers can play with their dilettantish friends, and everyone's satisfied.

What I really want in this kind of golf game,

though, is a more compelling single-player mode. Maybe a build-the-perfect-game feature that lets me retry each stroke before committing it to my scorecard, or a golf pro who coaches me based on my swings. And please, let me skip the animations so that I don't have to watch every damn ball fly through the air. Sure, multiplayer might be a blast. But to get any good, most gamers will have to play the single-player to death, and that gets tedious.

CJ: It should come as no surprise to anyone who played *Mario Golf* on Nintendo 64 that the Cube incarnation is a helluva lot of fun. This incredibly easy-to-learn depiction of the world's most yawning-inducing sport is refreshing, and you'll dig it even if you've never touched a club in real life. While going through and unlocking the huge variety of courses and Mario-related secret junk by yourself is fun, multiplayer games offer the pinnacle of golfing glee. It's the rush of beating your friends to a bloody pulp (I mean figuratively, of course) in

Stroke Play or one of *Golf*'s inventive minigames where this moves from good to great. Word to the wise, though: Don't play against Jen. She hits.

CRISPIN: Anyone who thinks golf is for country-club geezers hasn't played a *Mario Golf* game (or the PlayStation *Hot Shots Golf* series, begad by the same developer). This Cube installment carries on the tradition of cinch-to-learn controls, fun and funky minigames, and all-around ball-whacking fun best experienced with a couple of buds on lazy weekend afternoons. The game's later courses are more Nintendo-centric than ever—you'll find warp pipes and holes that look like levels from Mario's past hits (not to mention an addictive new coin-collecting mode). I just wish *Toadstool Tour*'s golf bag packed more viewing options and a few fresh gameplay tricks. And no, the new so-simple-it-must-be-for-infants swing option doesn't count. With only minor tweaks to the old-but-fun formula, *Toadstool* merely makes par.



Sticks and Stones
The onscreen taunt system splices up multiplayer games plenty. Players toss visual bars while their opponent cues up a shot, and it can be more than a little distracting, even with *Toadstool Tour*'s super-easy swing meter. You can say encouraging things, too, but since that nukes up the screen just as much as the taunts, you can truly kill 'em with kindness.

Goofy Golfing

Golf pro Annika Sorenstam might hold her own on the Ladies PGA, but who knows how she'd fare on such traditional videogame challenges as those featured on the *Toadstool Tour*? Some of these modes are fun, others merely wacky—but they all add up to a decent amount of replay.



■ **Speed Golf:** Just when you thought you'd mastered the precision game...



■ **Club Slots:** Spin for clubs—not quite as compelling as a real slot machine.



■ **Ring Attack:** Aim the ball through the rings... Um, yeah.

Good: Taunting your buddies onscreen (and only)
Bad: Miserably unforgetting putting
GRA Connectivity: Could be cool when itroduces

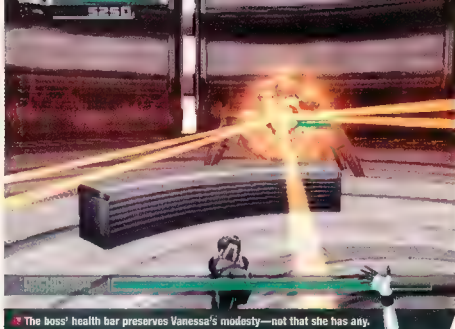


THE VERDICT
SCORED BY

8.0 8.0 7.5
JENNIFER CJ CRISPIN

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Camelot
Players: 1-4
ESRB: Everyone

www.mario-golf.com



■ The boss' health bar preserves Vanessa's modesty—not that she has any.

■ GC

P.N.03

Raise your hand if you're bored



■ The polycarbon bestler is nice, but the plasma feather boa gives the ensemble flair.

Good: Vanessa looks hot in her robo-fingies.

Bad: Extremely repetitive.

Vanessa's Toe Tapping: Rhythmic or nervous tic?



PAUL: *P.N.03's* Vanessa Z. Schneider strikes poses, struts her sexy stuff, and stands stock still as she stylishly shoots robots. She racks up big points with combo kills, then exchanges points for upgrades and new form-fitting battle suits. It's a fun system, but the combo timer frequently runs out while you desperately try to cover the vast empty spaces between foes.

Don't expect plot or puzzles from *P.N.03*. It has neither. Aside from her cosmetic assets, Vanessa has more in common with the *Vic Viper* (the ship from classic laser *Gradius*) than with Lara Croft. But if this is just a shooter, it needs more varied targets and more ways to blast 'em. As it stands, a half-dozen enemies and a handful of bosses are recycled again and again, and Ms. Schneider's ballyhooed battle suits are more alike than different (color notwithstanding). In the end, one truly badass character design is all *P.N.03* has to offer. Gamers deserve more for their 50 bucks.

MARK: *P.N.03* is the perfect name for Capcom's new shooter—it's as awkward

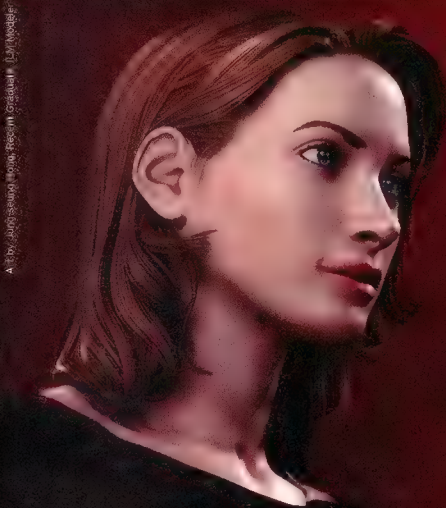
and underwhelming as the game it represents. The simple shoot-and-dodge gameplay, minimal story, and points-based power-up system all seem geared toward flat arcade action, but a frustratingly stiff control scheme constantly pulls on the emergency brake. Not being able to strafe or shoot while moving limits the fun you can have racking up high-scoring combos and buying (or upgrading) Vanessa's different power suits. And there's just no excuse for the boring robot enemies and sparse, flat environments.

GAMENOW—ETHAN: At least *P.N.03* gets off to a strong start: Vanessa looks great and moves with elegant grace. So during the first 20 minutes of play, you'd be forgiven for thinking this review is way off base. But just wait: That excitement wears thin when you realize you're fighting the same enemies and running down the same corridors over and over. There's not even a real story to cling to, so players are left with little more than a few hours of tedious button mashing.



Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.capcom.com



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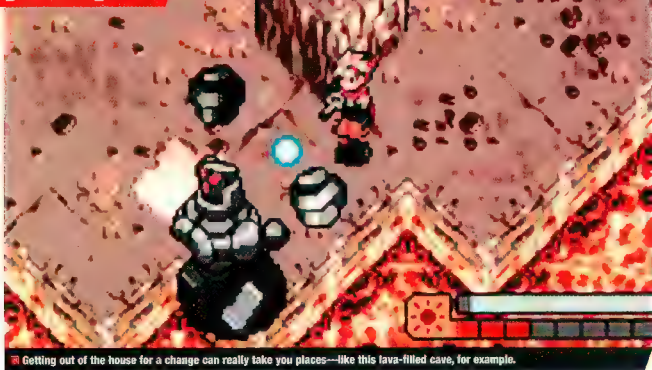
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Getting out of the house for a change can really take you places—like this lava-filled cave, for example.



Black-clothed Boy: "I am the Dark Boy. [Sabata]."

Solar Powered
You're probably wondering if you really have to play in the sun, right? In a word: Yes. Django's gun requires light for ammo, and you can't even begin boss battles unless the sensor registers a modicum of sunlight. If this all sounds like a bit of a bother, fear not—Django can store sunlight or borrow it from the bank, so you can at least keep playing when the lights are out. You'll just have to tackle the big vamps when the sun rises.

■ GBA

BOKTAI: THE SUN IS IN YOUR HAND

The light...it burns!

SHANE: Talk about subversive—*Metal Gear Solid* creator Hideo Kojima has successfully forged a game that will trick gamers into going outside, where the life-replenishing sunbeams will fill their cells with Vitamin D and give their lives newfound hope...or something. Well, it worked on me: I repeatedly ventured into reality's overworld in order to maximize my enjoyment of this incredible game.

The premise is simple yet effective: You're Django, a brave lad who's carrying on his father's vampire-slaying heritage in a monster-filled fantasyland. Gameplay deftly mixes equal parts of *The Legend of Zelda* (massive dungeons, weapon and health power-ups, and tricky bosses) and Kojima's own *Metal Gear* (wall-hugging stealth and gratuitous gunplay), which creates an addictive, challenging action-RPG that's completely commendable even without its solar gimmick. The whole sun-sensor deal actually annoyed me at first—having

to wait for a cloud to pass before I could tackle a boss just felt so...random. But that's actually the whole idea: The chaos of nature guarantees that everyone's experience with *Boktai* will be fundamentally different every time they play.

I was slightly disappointed by the short length (you can barrel through it in eight hours), but secrets and unlockable items, plus the sheer solar unpredictability, warrant multiple playthroughs.

JOHN R: Despite the silly name, *Boktai* (which translates to "Our Sun" in Japanese—not much better) is a surprisingly captivating little adventure. Its main selling point—the sun sensor—is one of the most original ideas to come along in years, although it's not always practical. I usually play games during the darkest depths of night or on the subway...which made sealing away bosses difficult. Aside from that one sticking point, I found the

rest of the game thoroughly enjoyable. The dungeons are vast and well-designed, combat is fun and intuitive, and replayability abounds. But perhaps the best thing about *Boktai* is that it actually encourages players to get out and get some sun. Who can argue with that?

GMR—DAVE: Kojima's many fans can breathe easy: Despite the limitations of developing for GBA, Mr. *Metal Gear*'s deft eye for detail can be found in every aspect of this charming game. The solar sensor concept is ingenious, and *Boktai*'s basic building blocks (diabolical monsters, treasure-bearing chests, elemental-themed worlds, and an epic quest) stay mostly true to standard RPG conventions, with a bit of action and ample exploration. The graphics are crisp, the soundtrack impressive—but all you really need to know is that this portable gem is a pleasure to play.



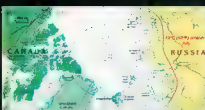
Enemies of Boktai: Potential pitfalls to your success



UV-treated Windows — Watch out for seemingly innocuous windows that filter out the sun's ultraviolet rays...like those in our office. Lame!



Weather — The EGM offices are located in San Francisco, the foggiest damn place outside of Silent Hill. Finding a sunbeam can be murder.



Darkness — We feel especially sorry for gamers living near the Arctic Circle, where winter brings two months without sun.



Attractive watercolor-hued visuals point Django's world with surprising subtlety, and legitimately haunting tunes reveal that GBA games can have good music.

Good: Great game backs up the sun gimmick.
Bad: Low light makes gameplay insanely hard.
Sorry: Gamers who live in Alaska, Scandinavia, or Seattle.



THE EDITOR'S

9.0 8.0 8.5
SHANE JOHN R. DAVE

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami Japan
Players: 1
ESRB: Everyone

www.konami.com

"They sent me to summer school again, only this time, when I got there, the teacher was naked...It was an ill dream."

-Mia Farrow

Dreamnasium Series featuring: Asia Argento, Skilz, Michael Rapaport, Pharoahe Monch and David LaChapelle



NAKED



■ Sure, other Final Fantasy games have offered snazzier l'frit summons, but you couldn't play them in the bathroom, could you?

■ GBA / ALSO ON: 30000

FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE

A war in your pocket

SHANE: As a seasoned veteran who fought 96 hours of turn-based combat in the PS1 *FF Tactics*, I came into this miniaturized pseudo-sequel with a giant isometric chip on my shoulder. How could a GBA game possibly capture the boundless depth, beauty, and charm of its forerunner? Thankfully, my skepticism was unfounded—*FFTA* makes the grade, actually besting its big bro in a few aspects.

First off, it's approachable for newbies, which is key for an intimidating RPG like this. Forget about the PS1 game's infinitely convoluted narrative (in fact, I'd forgotten it even while playing it); *FFTA*'s story is simple and engaging—a group of normal kids are forced to contend with monsters when a magic book transforms Earth into uh, *Final Fantasy-land*. Seriously, *FFTA* even cleverly prepays players for the intense battles ahead by introducing the mechanics via an innocent snowball fight.

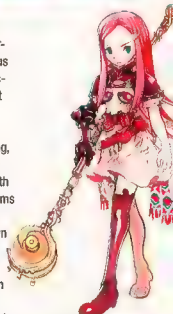
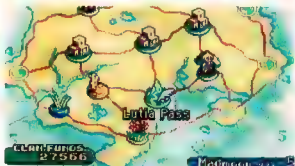
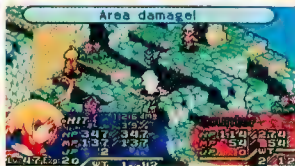
The developers wisely rethought the flow of gameplay to make it easier to play on GBA. The game unfolds in a series of missions, with occa-

sional random battles for variety. The missions are fairly short, but with over 300 to complete, you won't be finishing *FFTA* for a good 50-60 hours, guaranteed. And those hours are packed with goodness—attractive graphics, catchy tunes, and an excellent translation make it damned tough to put your GBA down at all. If not for one incredibly annoying oversight—equipping items is largely guesswork—this would be nearly perfect.

SHOE: Yup, this is better than *Tactics* for PS1, one of the best games of all time (No. 43 in our Top 100, *EGM* #150), and fans will dig the improvements. Laws and restrictions in battles, for example, encourage you to try different techniques each time you enter a fray. And the horde of new character classes and the deeper skills system (which gives party members abilities based on the items they equip) mean you get to do a lot of strategic planning. You'd have to seriously want to play this game, though, to enjoy it. If you're not a tactics-

game freak, I highly doubt you'll get into *FFTA*. The cumbersome interface makes it totally user-unfriendly—hope you enjoy menus within menus within menus. If you get your kicks from character-raising strategy games, however, *FFTA* won't steer you wrong.

GMR—MILKMAN: After five long years of waiting, I can once again sink my tactical teeth into the chess-like world of *FF Tactics*, and it's been worth the wait. *FFTA* features unparalleled depth in terms of character customization and on-field tactical arrangement. Plus, *FFTA* doesn't drown in its own complexity and impenetrable plot. Everything is surprisingly easy to follow, with the only drawbacks to this beautifully designed game being an inefficient menu system, occasionally cluttered battlefields, and mysteriously long loading times in the otherwise rockin' two-player link-up games. These quibbles shouldn't deter you, though; the quality offered here is ultimately irresistible.



■ The feisty Ritz has endured a lifetime of annoying cracker jokes.



■ Tons of cascading menus make equipping your characters and choosing the right skills rather daunting.

Laws of the Land

FFTA's world is governed by laws...tons of 'em. In fact. At the start of every battle, you can scope a list of actions that are forbidden in that particular fight. If you (or your opponents) break the laws, a judge hits the offending character with either a yellow card warning or a red card jail sentence, depending on the severity. The laws start simply—it's easy to remember not to cast Fire spells. But some are tough—like, say, "No Fighting," or "No Hit Point Replenishment." These rules toss a major spike of pleasant randomness into the game.

Welcome to prison, where "law is master & justice is served."



Good: Deeper than the deepest ocean.
Bad: Confusing equipment screen.
Shinest New Job: Juggler.



THE VERDICTS
DATE OF: 10/01

9.0 9.0 9.0

SHANE

SHOE

MILKMAN

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Square Enix
Players: 1 (1-2 Linked)
ESRB: Everyone

www.nintendo.com

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WWW.NAMCO.COM

SOULCALIBUR II

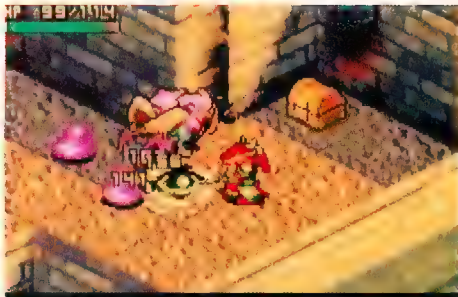


REFLECTIONS OF MAGIC Exclusively on the Nintendo GameCube. The Legend of Zelda's Link brings his own brand of weapons play into the Soulcalibur II arena. The battle will be hard fought with old Soulcalibur favorites and new masters ready to battle anyone with the guts. And the fighting continues with over 100 modes of play including the new Weapon Master Mode, giving you the chance to unlock hundreds of weapons, costumes, arenas and hidden characters.

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Violence
Suggestive Themes

NINTENDO
GAMECUBE

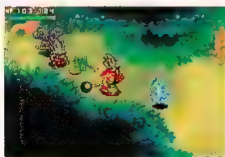


It's kind of like a portable *Diablo*, only much, much cuter.

■ GBA / Also On: Xbox

SHINING SOUL

A fun action RPG that forgets it's a GBA game



■ Don't be fooled by this shot of quaint town life—most of the game takes place in dungeons.

Good: Sharp graphics, character-building aspects
Bad: Can't pause or save progress in dungeons
Trust Us: Turn off the background music in the Options menu



MARK: Think of *Shining Soul* as a dumbed-down 2D *Phantasy Star Online*: One to four players explore a series of dungeons, beating up monsters and bosses in between trips to town for healing and supplies. The real-time combat is solid but repetitive—attack, run back a bit, repeat; requiring some kind of strategy variation for different enemies would've been nice. Luckily, the ability to "charge up" your attacks and build different skills for your character, not to mention the chance to find a good deal of unique weapons and armor, will keep you fighting. Plus, for the few who will ever experience it, playing linked with some pals speeds things up and adds the thrill of simple *Gauntlet*-style teamwork.

Unfortunately, *Soul* tarnishes the *Shine* with a couple big portable-game no-no's: You can't pause in dungeons, and the game forces you to quit to save and always starts you back in town, causing you to lose whatever progress you've made in any of the lengthy dungeons—very annoying when the flight attendant is handing you a drink or the bus reaches your stop.

GMR—MILKMAN: If you've ever wondered what PC hit *Diablo* might play like if it were handheld, and a lot cuter, then look no further than *Shining Soul*. With four distinct playable character classes, a massive collection of uniquely cool items to find, and four-player link action at the ready, the game is eminently playable, and more importantly, replayable. All the hacking and slashing *should* get old after a while, but the infamous "quest for stuff" kept me going for the long haul.

JOHN R: I'm not sure I'd be so kind as to stick *Shining Soul* in the same league as *Diablo*, but it's definitely one of the better portable dungeon hacks I've played. As a single-player game, *Soul* gets rather tedious after only a few hours of play, but when you link up with three friends, the action remains fresh and fun throughout. The level-up system is unique, and the game's got a zillion different items to find and use, but the dungeons are a bit on the dull side and the story is weak. Give it a whirl if you can play with friends.

THE VERDICTS out of 10	7.0	7.5	6.5
	MARK	MILKMAN	JOHN R

Publisher: Atlus
Developer: Sega
Players: 1 (2-4 w/ Link cable)
ESRB: Everyone

www.atlus.com

REVIEWS WRAP-UP

This month's supporting players



Disney's *Extreme Skate Adventure*



Scooby-Doo! Night of 100 Frights



Romance of the Three Kingdoms VII



EA Sports *Rugby 2004*

Not every game has the broad appeal of a *Halo* or a *Final Fantasy*, and since we have finite manpower and space, some smaller games simply can't make it into the Review Crew. But then again, just because a game is a little "niche" doesn't mean we should group it with *Seababy's* (see pg. 176) thoughts on *Barbie's Outer Space Pancake Factory*, either. So here in the Wrap-Up we give you a quick glance at titles you might have otherwise missed out on.

Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure: PS2, Xbox, GC • Activision • ESRB: Everyone — Kids today can't relate to an older like Tony Hawk—he's nearly 40. Luckily, our nation's youth can now pull off wicked ollies with the likes of

Buzz Lightyear, Simba, and Tarzan in *Extreme Skate Adventure*. Normally, Disney-related sports games offer nothing but pain, but this one's actually quite solid, thanks to the underlying *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* technology. Your little bro or sis will dig it.

Scooby-Doo! Night of 100 Frights: Xbox • THQ • ESRB: Everyone — Having already marked his territory on PS2 and GameCubes, the famously hapless hound brings his licensed escapade to Xbox. As infensed hop-n-boppers go, it's not bad—tons of funny voice clips, silly cut-scenes, and cameos from some of the cartoon's most famous villains (although our personal favorites, the chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry ice cream ghosts, are tragically absent) make it worth a look.

Romance of the Three Kingdoms VII: PS2 • Koei • ESRB: Everyone — Koei's long-running historical-simulation series returns...again. If you've never unified the warring states of ancient China before, you'll probably be too intimidated to try this time: *ROTK7* immerses you in a morass of menus, options, characters, and mind-boggling details about rice paddies...and you may never escape. If you do finish the game, however, you might be able to qualify for some sort of collage credit.

EA Sports Rugby 2004: PS2 • EA Sports • ESRB: Everyone — Scrum, line out, goal kick...if you already grasp the meaning of these terms, you'll probably wanna check out EA's next edition of *Rugby*. Problem is, most of you out there probably don't

have the faintest clue about the sport. We guess it's cool that EA cares about the rugby lovers out there, but to us, it looks like a bunch of guys fighting over an inflatable hamburger squeeze toy.

Other Notable News

We would have really liked to include *Rogue Squadron 3: Rebel Strike* (GC) and *Backyard Wrestling* (PS2, Xbox) in the Review Crew this month, but last-minute release-date shifts pushed them both into next month's issue. We actually had the chance to cover *NFL GameDay 2004* (PS2), but the "reviewable" build supplied by 989 Studios featured an unfathomable number of gameplay-crippling bugs. We certainly hope that the final retail version isn't like this, so we're waiting until next month to be sure.

A fantasy for wherever reality takes you.



Welcome to the fantasy world of Ivalice. Use swords, magic, spells or whatever tactics you can to return to reality. It'll take strategy and time. Good thing you can take it with you.



Alcohol Reference
Mild Violence

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REVIEW ARCHIVE

Good games, bad games—just not new games



- Aliens Versus Predator: Extinction** PS2 (Also On: XB) 6.5, 8.0, 6.5
- A ton of mission variety, but commanding your idiotic troops can be quite frustrating
- Ape Escape 2** PS2 (Also On: None) 8.5, 6.0, 7.5
- Sure, it's a lot like its PS1 forerunner, but this sequel's still a top platforming banana
- Auto Modellista** PS2 (Also On: None) 5.0, 5.5, 7.0
- Crappy handling ruins a gorgeous-looking online racer
- Batman: Dark Tomorrow** GC (Also On: XB) 2.0, 1.5, 1.0 **Shame**
- Gaming's answer to the box office hemorrhoid *Batman and Robin*
- Big Mutha Truckers** PS2 (Also On: XB, GC) 6.0, 7.0, 4.5
- The lowbrow redneck angle belies some big-rig shipping economics
- Bombastic** PS2 (Also On: None) 8.0, 7.5, 8.5 **Silver**
- An addictive, unconventional puzzler... even if it involves some math
- Brute Force** XB (Also On: None) 6.5, 6.0, 7.5
- Microsoft's lizard-filled squad shooter gets the job done, but not without casualties
- Burnout 2: Point of Impact** PS2 (Also On: XB, GC) 8.5, 8.0, 8.5 **Silver**
- This version fixes a lot of the issues we had with the original
- Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow** GBA (Also On: None) 9.5, 9.0, 9.5 **Gold**
- With its excellent soul-stealing system, *Aria* outclasses its forerunners
- Chaos Legion** PS2 (Also On: None) 8.5, 6.5, 8.5
- More than mindless melees—allies that grow with experience add RPG-ish depth
- Dark Cloud 2** PS2 (Also On: None) 8.0, 8.0, 9.5 **Silver**
- An addictive action-RPG that lets you rebuild the world as you save it
- Def Jam: Fight for NY** PS2 (Also On: GC) 7.0, 8.5, 7.5
- Hip-hop stars and wrestling actually works. Word to ya mutha, yo
- Devil May Cry 2** PS2 (Also On: None) 7.0, 7.0, 8.0
- Dante and hottie-in-need Lucia blast through a cruddy plot in this too-easy sequel
- DOA: Xtreme Beach Volleyball** X2 (Also On: None) 7.5, 8.0, 6.0
- Scientists are working to invent a nude code for these bouncing sex-ninjas
- Downhill Domination** PS2 (Also On: None) 8.5, 8.0, 7.0
- Deftly mixes *Road Rash*'s two-wheeled combat with *SSX*'s crazy downhill drops
- Dragon Ball Z: Budokai** PS2 (Also On: None) 8.0, 7.5, 7.0
- *Budokai* stands above any of the previous attempts to turn the series into a fighter
- Dragon Ball Z: Ultimate Battle 22** PS1 (Also On: None) 2.0, 1.5, 2.0
- Someone crapped in a jewel case and passed it off as a *DBZ* game
- Dynasty Warriors 4** PS2 (Also On: None) 7.5, 7.0, 8.5
- Obese warriors in obscure settings snacking on dim sum and severing heads
- Enter the Matrix** PS2, XB, GC 6.0, 3.5, 3.5
- More bugs than a slice of month-old pizza left on the street

greatest hit or miss?

STAR WARS: OBI-WAN

Publisher: LucasArts
 Developer: LucasArts
 Originally Released: December 2001

Original Scores: 5.5, 3.5, 3.5

As if Jar Jar and midi-chlorians hadn't already tarnished all that was holy about *Star Wars*, this clunky third-person slasher further degraded the franchise. Imagine slowly jumping around your least favorite *Phantom Menace* locales while clumsily swinging a lightsaber at countless members of Greedo's family. Fun II is not.

LEGACY: F-ZERO

Captain Falcon's been pulling on the spandex bodysuit for well over a decade now. In honor of *F-Zero GX*'s release, here's a look back at how Nintendo's influential futuristic racing franchise fared in *EGM*'s of yore.

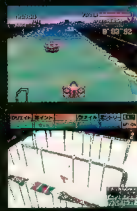
F-Zero (Super Nintendo) 1991 9.0, 9.0, 8.0, 8.0
This rollicking launch title birthed the entire futuristic racing genre, wowing us with whiz-bang "Mode 7" visual effects.

F-Zero X (Nintendo 64) 1998 9.0, 9.0, 9.0, 9.0
The addition of four-player action, tube-sliding mayhem, and crunchily heavy metal riffs propelled this sequel to Gold status.

F-Zero: Maximum Velocity (GBA) 2001 9.0, 7.5, 7.0
Rather than a port of the SNES classic, *Maximum Velocity* was an original version with new tracks, racers, and vehicles.

F-Zero Esoteric: Japanese gamers got two extra *F-Zero* games that never made it stateside: *BS F-Zero 2 Grand Prix* and *F-Zero X Expansion Kit*. *F-Zero 2* was a direct follow-up to the 16-bit original, but it was only available to gamers via Nintendo's Japan-only Satellaview download network. We didn't miss much really—this "sequel" offers only five new tracks and four vehicles.

It's a shame that U.S. gamers never had the chance to play with the *F-Zero X Expansion Kit*, though: This creation tool for the ill-fated Japanese Nintendo 64DD add-on allowed total customization of both vehicles and courses for *F-Zero X*.



- ESPN NFL Football** PS2 (Also On: XB) 8.0, 7.5, 8.5 **Silver**
- A quality pigskin game, but first-person football isn't as revolutionary as Sega hoped
- Freaky Flyers** PS2 (Also On: XB, GC) 5.0, 3.0, 4.0
- No self-respecting pilot would put *Freaky Flyers* on his or her flight plan
- Freestyle Metal X** PS2 (Also On: XB, GC) 5.0, 4.5, 5.0
- Regrettably, X's average motocross action can't overcome its trailer-park trappings
- The Getaway** PS2 (Also On: None) 7.5, 6.0, 8.0
- Looks like a GTA clone but plays like a Guy Ritchie flick, complete with naughty words
- Ghost Recon: Island Thunder** XB (Also On: None) 7.5, 7.0, 7.0
- The eight-mission single-player mode is an appetizer to multiplayer's hearter meal
- Grand Theft Auto: Vice City** PS2 (Also On: None) 10, 10, 10 **Platinum**
- A useful tool for upstart real-world carjackers. Here's a hint—press Triangle
- Group 5 Challenge** XB (Also On: None) 5.0, 6.0, 5.0
- An uneven, seemingly thrown-together *Gran Turismo* pretender
- Hitman 2: Silent Assassin** GC (Also On: PS2, XB) 7.0, 8.0, 8.5
- Agent "Hairless Antihero" 47's contract kills are ingenious
- The Hulk** PS2 (Also On: XB, GC) 6.5, 6.5, 7.5
- Does a marvelous job capturing this dark hero's destructive essence
- Hunter: The Reckoning Wayward** PS2 (Also On: None) 6.0, 5.0, 6.0
- Searching for meaningless items makes this slash-em-up more frustrating than fun
- Indiana Jones & the Emperor's Tomb** XB (Also On: PS2) 5.5, 8.5, 8.5
- Looks like Ms. Croft has some competition raiding tombs
- K-1 World Grand Prix** PS2 (Also On: None) 4.5, 6.0, 8.0
- This bare-knoses fighter will only ring your bell if you're a real K-1 fan
- Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker** GC (Also On: None) 9.5, 10, 10 **Gold**
- You can't go wrong with *Zelda*'s gorgeous cartoon visuals and classic gameplay
- Madden NFL 2004** PS2 (Also On: All) 9.5, 9.0, 9.5 **Gold**
- Several effective gameplay enhancements keep *Madden* king of the gridiron
- Magic Pengel: The Quest for Color** PS2 (Also On: None) 7.5, 8.0, 7.5
- Homemade monsters add color to mundane battles

greatest hit or miss?



Original Scores: 8.0, 8.0, 8.5

Nintendo's offbeat mix of real-time strategy and agriculture debuted shortly after the GameCube's launch to rave reviews, yet many gamers have never sampled its addictive crop. At its new low price, it's worth a look—awesome visuals, lovable characters, and surprising depth flourish in this garden of delights.

- Midnight Club II** PS2 (Also On: XB) 9.0, 8.0, 9.5 **Silver**
 ■ An unrelenting sense of speed and total disregard for realistic physics
- Midtown Madness 3** XB (Also On: None) 7.0, 7.5, 7.5
 ■ A wacky, thrilling auto jaunt across Paris and Washington, D.C.
- MotoGP 2** XB (Also On: None) 8.5, 8.0, 8.0 **Silver**
 ■ An intense, unforgiving, but ultimately satisfying crotch-rocket sim
- NBA Street Vol. 2** PS2 (Also On: XB, GC) 9.5, 8.5, 8.5 **Silver**
 ■ A mix of both new- and old-school flava makes this baller a rockin' sequel
- NFL Fever 2004** XB (Also On: None) 6.5, 6.5, 6.0
 ■ A shallow Dynasty mode and irritating announcers tackle *Fever's* shot at greatness
- Outlaw Volleyball** XB (Also On: None) 7.0, 7.0, 6.5
 ■ Much naughtier than *DOA: Xtreme Beach Volleyball*, plus it's online
- Panzer Dragon Orta** XB (Also On: None) 9.0, 8.5, 9.0 **Silver**
 ■ Most beautiful on-rails shooter imaginable, with a vast trove of amazing secrets
- Pirates of the Caribbean** XB (Also On: None) 6.0, 5.5, 4.5
 ■ Barely shipshape Ar-PG won't keep your interest afloat
- Pokémon Ruby and Sapphire** GBA (Also On: None) 7.5, 6.5, 7.5
 ■ Pikachu and pals are back, but precious little has improved since *Gold/Silver*
- Rent A Hero No. 1** XB (Also On: None) 6.5, 6.0, 4.0
 ■ Ever wished you could deliver Chinese take-out food? This is the game for you
- Return to Castle Wolfenstein: TOW** XB (Also On: None) 8.5, 9.5, 8.5 **Silver**
 ■ Online play is not only an utter blast—it's what you bought Xbox Live for
- Return to Castle Wolfenstein: OR** PS2 (Also On: None) 7.0, 6.0, 7.0
 ■ Xbox's multiplayer modes have gone AWOL, and that's a capital offense
- Silent Hill 3** PS2 (Also On: None) 8.5, 8.5, 9.0 **Silver**
 ■ This third trip is so scary, it'll have you stocking up on those adult-sized diapers
- The Sims** PS2 (Also On: XB, GC) 9.5, 8.5, 8.0 **Silver**
 ■ Virtual soap opera teems with innovation and freedom
- Skies of Arcadia Legends** GC (Also On: None) 9.0, 9.5, 9.0 **Gold**
 ■ This phenomenal skyfaring quest is GC's role-playing savior
- Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix** XB (Also On: None) 6.5, 7.0, 3.5
 ■ A dull parade of enemies too stupid to put up any real challenge in a fight
- Soul Calibur II** PS2, XB, GC 10, 9.0, 10 **Gold**
 ■ Our souls, at least, still burn. Can't speak for yours
- Star Wars: KOTOR** XB (Also On: None) 9.0, 9.5, 10 **Gold**
 ■ Follow the light or dark side of the Force in the best Xbox role-playing game to date
- Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo** GBA (Also On: PS1) 9.0, 9.0, 7.5 **Silver**
 ■ A pixel-perfect part of the genre's crown jewel...and it's portable, to boot
- Tao Feng: Fist of the Lotus** XB (Also On: None) 4.0, 6.0, 3.5
 ■ Ineffective blocking and generic characters do not a quality fighter make
- Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven** PS2 (Also On: None) 7.5, 7.0, 7.0
 ■ Ninjas rock, but somehow, a lackluster story and horribly stupid AI snuck in
- Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon** XB (Also On: PS2, GC) 8.0, 7.5, 8.0
 ■ Team-based online squad combat and Xbox Live's first nearly killer app
- Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell** GC (Also On: PS2, XB) 8.5, 9.5, 9.0 **Gold**
 ■ The GBA radar is a nice addition, but Sam Fisher isn't as pretty on the purple purse
- Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness PS2** (Also On: None) 5.0, 3.0, 7.0
 ■ Lara's back, but her gameplay's never been jankier
- UFC: Tapout 2** XB (Also On: None) 6.5, 6.0, 5.0
 ■ Mixed martial-arts action will excite serious fans but bore everyone else

- Ultimate Muscle** GC (Also On: None) 8.5, 7.5, 7.5
 ■ *Muscle* proves the WWE's meatheads aren't essential for videogame grappling
- Unleashed Saga** PS2 (Also On: None) 2.0, 4.0, 4.0
 ■ Weird RPG that breaks on many rules, it just ends up feeling busted
- Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution** PS2 (Also On: None) 10, 9.0, 9.5 **Gold**
 ■ As fleshed-out, complicated, and utterly addictive as fighters come
- Wakeboarding Unleashed** PS2 (Also On: XB) 9.0, 8.5, 7.5 **Silver**
 ■ Don't hate—investigate the wonderful world of wakeboarding
- Wario Ware: Mega Microgames** GBA (Also On: None) 9.5, 9.0, 9.0 **Gold**
 ■ The most fun most people can have in 3-second bursts
- Wario World** GC (Also On: None) 7.5, 7.0, 6.0
 ■ A perilous journey only the most seasoned jumping-puzzle zealots will enjoy
- War of the Monsters** PS2 (Also On: None) 9.5, 8.5, 7.0
 ■ Manages to make the woefully underrepresented monster genre fun
- World Series Baseball 2K3** XB (Also On: PS2) 8.0, 8.0, 8.0 **Silver**
 ■ WSB stands out with countless customization options and first-rate player models
- World Soccer Winning Eleven 6 Int.** PS2 (Also On: None) 9.0 **Gold**
 ■ Can this natural-feeling soccer sim take 2003 Sports Game of the Year?
- X2: Wolverine's Revenge** PS2 (Also On: XB, GC) 5.5, 5.5, 4.0
 ■ A slight cut above most steaming coils of comic-book-based crap
- Xenosaga: Episode 1** PS2 (Also On: None) 8.0, 8.0, 6.5
 ■ You don't so much play this RPG as watch its plot unfold in hours of cut-scenes
- Yu-Gi-Oh!: Duelists of the Roses** PS2 (Also On: None) 6.0, 4.5, 4.5
 ■ Fans will love this confusing card battler. Everyone else, however, will abhor it
- Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner** PS2 (Also On: None) 7.5, 9.0, 8.5 **Silver**
 ■ Eye-popping pandemonium with a hairy-balled hero—no whiners this time

DEVELOPER TRACK RECORD: SHINY ENTERTAINMENT

Under the guidance of charismatic president Dave Perry, Shiny Entertainment created a string of memorable platforming titles in the 16-bit era. Recently, though, Shiny's console offerings have been sparse, and the seemingly slapped-together *Enter the Matrix* wasn't up to this company's usual standards. Here's a quick look at how it fares in past issues of *EGM*.



	Cool Spot (Sega Genesis, Super Nintendo) 1993 Silver	9.0	9.0	8.0	8.0
	Aladdin (Sega Genesis) 1993 Silver	9.0	9.0	8.0	8.0
	Earthworm Jim (Sega Genesis, Super Nintendo) 1994 Silver	9.0	9.0	9.0	8.0
	Earthworm Jim 2 (Sega Genesis, Super Nintendo) 1995	8.5	8.5	7.0	6.5
	MDK (PlayStation) 1997	8.0	7.0	6.5	6.0
	R/C Stunt Copter (PlayStation) 1998	8.0	7.5	7.0	7.0
	Enter the Matrix (PS2, Xbox, GC) 2003	6.0			



tricks of the trade

the strategies and codes that have been making games tastier since 1984

trickster



Autumnal winds are howling, whipping up a dance of browning leaves. Seasons change, but *Tricks of the Trade* stays the same: I still look jaundiced, volleyball games feature huge boobs, and we have a big head code for you—plus, plenty of plegkin practicing and a poster full of *Soul Calibur II* tips.

—David S. J. Hodgson
tricks@ziffdavis.com

are you a cheat?

Do you enjoy being an invincible (not to mention invisible) *SOCOM* soldier? Are you excited by the thought of creating a level 200 *Phantasy Star Online* character in a couple of minutes? Then you're probably one of the countless gamers who abuse the power of cheat devices. We asked readers on *Gamers.com*, "Which cheat device do you use?"

7% Other device

8% Action Replay

15% GameShark

70% Cheaters never prosper! **WINNER!**

Source: *Gamers.com*, poll, June 2003

TRICKS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIMA GAMES

Effective football strategy and *Ghost Recon* reconnaissance come courtesy of Prima games. Look for your own copy of the official *NFL Fever*, *Madden 2004*, or *Ghost Recon: Island Thunder* strategy guides at any games store.



■ Xbox

GHOST RECON: ISLAND THUNDER

Island hopping takes on a whole new meaning if you're an elite special-forces squad charged with keeping Tom Clancy's bank account fat with constant cash infusions. Although Clancy knows how to remove the spine of an enemy soldier using only a toothpick and karaoke techniques, the rest of us are going to need these 10 hints for thriving in the jungle.

1. Hit the Deck

The most important rule in combat: When you see your threat indicator turn red, go prone. This makes you a harder target to hit and increases your accuracy because you can steady your weapon on the ground. From a prone position, try to spot enemies before they spot you (if they're standing or crouching, you'll have a big advantage). If you're in a vulnerable position—say, in the middle of an open field—crawl to the nearest piece of cover first, then scan for the enemy. If you're a sniper parked in one place for a prolonged period, stay prone to keep patrols from spotting you.

2. Peekaboo!

Limit your exposure to possible enemy fire at all times—basically, cover your ass. There's no reason to stay out in the open. Master the art of peeking—leaning around a corner to see what's there without exposing your body. You can even shoot around corners. Just peek until your reticule is on the enemy, then squeeze the

trigger. With practice, your peeking can take hostiles by surprise. This works well whether you're leaning around trees in the jungle or buildings' corners in the city.

3. Control Your Fire

Avoid using your weapon's full-auto setting except in extreme situations when the enemy is overwhelming you. You can get a high rate of fire and still maintain accuracy by setting your gun to single shot and pulling the trigger rapidly and repeatedly. This advice goes double for support troops with their machine guns. When controlling a support soldier, fire in short bursts of two or three seconds. Full-auto is usually wasteful and inaccurate. Switch to full-auto only for laying down covering fire. Otherwise, leave your gun on single shot or three-shot burst to maintain accuracy.

4. Throw a Fragtest

When in doubt, take a frag grenade as your extra weapon. Heaving a frag grenade into an enemy-occupied building can clear a room. Don't forget your rifleman's M203 grenade launcher, either. If enemy snipers pop up in bunkers, doorways, or windows, cork them (and anyone else inside) by shooting off a grenade. It takes time to learn how to throw a grenade and hit the spot you're aiming at, but it's worth the investment.



■ Peeking is a great way to minimize your exposure to enemy fire.

Watch out for nearby obstacles and don't throw it short—hold the trigger for a few seconds for maximum distance.

5. Know Your Squad

You can cycle through your soldiers, starting with the first Alpha member and ending with the third Bravo member (it wraps around if you keep going). Under pressure, you'll want to be able to switch to a particular soldier quickly, so remember who you're currently controlling and how many button presses it takes to get to the guy you want.

6. Pinned Down? Flank 'Em

A bullet whizzes by your head—a second, a third—and you can't figure out where the enemy is. After dropping prone, what do you do? If your teammates aren't firing, that means they can't see the hostiles



VS.

GAMESHARK

Ape Escape 2 (PS2)

Those crazy Replayers score major kudos points this month by enabling the highest leaping seen in videogaming since *Jumping Flash* (PS1).

Enable Cheats (enter this first)

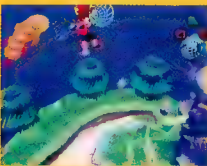
0E3C7DF2 1853E59E
EEA4A106 BCA99C80

Moon Jump Jimmy

0E4B1492 BCA992B2
DEB1AB3A FB299B83

Psycho Moon Jump Jimmy

0E4B1492 BCA992B2
DEB1AB3A FEA99B83



■ Your ethereal princess in *Ico* now comes with a handy set of optical lasers.

Ico (PS2)

For all you sensitive, princess-saving adventurers, we revisit *Ico*, a brilliant game not nearly enough people bought. (Find it used for about 15 of your U.S. dollars. You'll thank us later.) Check out its bizarre FiberOptikz mode, complete with spikes coming out of everyone's eyes. Mommy, I'm scared....

Enable Cheats (enter this first)

ECB7A648 143ACAF4

FiberOptikz Mode (Wireframe mode)

1CF6AFF0 1CF6AFF0

Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness (PS2)

GameShark battles back this month with comedic jumping routines of its own. It does the impossible by making *Tomb Raider: AOD* almost fun to play. Exaggerated jumping is great, but it can't hold a candle to the level skip code. Now you can see the levels you couldn't reach before because the game kept crashing.

Enable Cheats (enter this first)

F443B62E B77C451E

Mega Running Jump

24D18EB8 16F652BD



■ Use level skip to get from one level to the next with 100 percent fewer cheap deaths.

Mega Sideways Jump

2491AFB8 16F6520D

Infinite Health

24818EFA 347650DD
249196E8 247551FC
248094CC A5541165
24D0B168 34F4471C
24D0B168 34F4478C

Infinite Money

2415153E BAE0005E

Unlock Level Select/Skip

04501528 3670D3CC

either. At this point, don't get into a prolonged shootout. It will end with someone on your team biting it. Take the best cover possible and switch teams. If Alpha is pinned, switch to a Bravo team member and identify the enemy's position. Most likely, the hostiles will be intent on putting holes in your Alpha team members. While they're occupied, move in and unload with Bravo's weaponry. After your threat indicator goes blue, switch back to an Alpha member and carry on.

7. Take Charge

Don't send an A.I. team into an enemy nest and expect to clear it out. If you operate this way, you'll suffer far too many casualties. The computer-controlled team is great at covering your advance and defending a position, but you should handle anything more complicated. Take



charge of the key team when you need to find good cover, engage the enemy, or even run across open territory.

8. Clear the Extraction Zone

Your first priority on a mission is to clear out the extraction zone if it's near the insertion zone. This way, if you need to vamoose in a hurry, you'll have a clear path ahead of you. You don't want one group of hostiles chasing you toward more enemies at the extraction zone. Getting caught in the middle like that is a recipe for casualties, and dying a few steps away from the finish line is frustrating. Save yourself the aggravation with a little planning ahead.

9. Look for the Red X

It's impossible to see through all your soldiers' eyes at once—or is it?

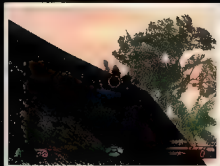


■ Hey man, no offense, but you look a little like Beetle Bailey when you wear that hat.

Sometimes enemies are shooting at you, and you have no idea where the bullets are coming from. Usually, if one of your team members spots the enemy, he'll return fire, but sometimes a pinned-down team member spots an enemy and can't shoot back because of terrain or weapon range. If you have a spare second, toggle on the map and scan for a red X in the area. That X is your unseen foe.

10. Pursue Bonus Goals

You might be too competent for your own good. If you kill all hostiles in a mission before you complete a bonus objective, the mission will end and you won't earn the extra credit. To avoid this, accomplish the bonus task before you finish the primary and secondary objectives. Just don't botch the main mission by chasing the least important objective.



■ PS2, Xbox, GC

MADDEN 2004

EA's football game has got more juice than Madden's ampmis. Here's a list of all five levels of Challenge Tasks in *Madden 2004*. Complete these to earn tokens. Harder challenges give more tokens. And what are tokens good for? Cards. Gotta collect 'em all!

Level 1

- Make a 40-plus-yard field goal
- Punt the ball 50-plus yards
- Hold the CPU to under 7 points (min quarter=4)
- Score 21 points in a game* (max quarter=6)
- Complete three receptions with three different players
- Throw two touchdown passes with one player
- Gain 200 yards of total offense* (max quarter=6)
- Break a 20-yard run
- Complete five consecutive passes
- Complete a 30-yard pass
- No dropped passes all game (min quarter=4)
- No offensive fumbles all game (min quarter=4)
- Throw no interceptions all game (min quarter=4)
- Allow no sacks all game (min quarter=4)
- Score 35 points on the Bucs at Tampa Bay (max quarter=6)
- Hold Raiders to 21 points in Oakland
- Recover a fumble on defense
- Intercept a pass on defense
- Sack the opposing quarterback
- Record three tackles with one player

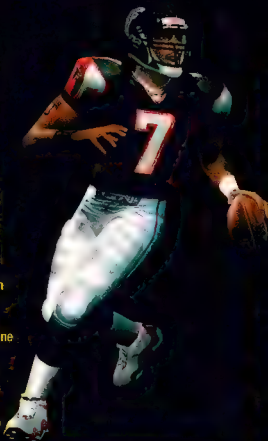
Level 2

- 30-yard kickoff-return average for one player (min returns=2)
- 30-yard punt-return average for one player (min returns=2)

- Score 42 points in a game (max quarter=6)
- Defeat the CPU by 28 points (max quarter=6)
- 10-yard rushing average for one player (min attempts=5)
- Gain 100 receiving yards with one player
- Catch two touchdown passes with one player
- 20-yard reception average for one player (min receptions=3)
- Score three rushing touchdowns with one player
- Throw for 300 yards with one player
- Throw four touchdown passes with one player
- Complete 80 percent of your passes (min attempts=5)
- Complete 10 consecutive passes
- Commit no penalties (min quarter=4)
- Defeat the '90 Giants with a regular team
- Record two sacks with one player
- Force three turnovers in one game on defense
- Record five tackles each with two different players
- Hold CPU under 150 offensive yards (min quarter=4)
- Gain 100 rushing yards with one player

Level 3

- Kick and recover an onside kick
- Punt the ball out of bounds inside the 5-yard line
- Score 63 points in a game (max quarter=6)
- Shut out the CPU (min quarter=4)
- Make 10 receptions with one player
- Make 10 rushing attempts each by two different players
- Gain 100 rushing and 50 receiving yards with one player
- Gain 150 receiving yards with one player
- Gain 150 rushing yards with one player
- Gain 400 offensive yards (max quarter=6)



- Run the ball for 40-plus yards
- Complete 15 consecutive passes
- Complete a 60-yard pass
- Gain 450 offensive yards against the Eagles
- Gain 150 rushing yards vs. '75 Vikings (max quarter=6)
- Recover two fumbles on defense with one player
- Intercept two passes with one player
- Record three sacks with one player
- Deflect four passes with one player
- Record eight tackles with one player

Level 4

- Score a 50-yard field goal
- Punt the ball 65-plus yards
- Make six two-point conversions in one game
- Defeat the CPU by 55 points (max quarter=6)
- Gain 100 rushing yards each with two different players
- Gain 100 receiving yards each with two different players
- Gain 200 receiving yards with one player

- Gain 200 rushing yards with one player
- Complete 25 passes with one player
- 40 rushing attempts by one player (max quarter=6)
- Throw for 500 yards with one player
- Gain 650 offensive yards (max quarter=6)
- Achieve 20 first downs (max quarter=6)
- Complete passes to seven different receivers
- Return a fumble for a touchdown on defense
- Run the ball 60-plus yards
- Force six turnovers on defense
- Record seven sacks with one player
- Record a safety on defense
- Return an interception for a touchdown

Level 5

- Gain 200 kickoff-return yards with one player
- Gain 200 punt-return yards with one player
- Return a Kickoff for a touchdown
- Return a punt for a touchdown
- Score 84 points in a game (max quarter=6)
- Complete 100 percent of your passes (min attempts=5)
- Gain 100 receiving yards each by three different players
- Gain 100 rushing and 100 passing yards with one player
- Gain 100 rushing and 150 passing yards with one player
- 20 yard rushing average for one player (min attempts=3)
- Gain 200 passing yards each with two different players
- Gain 250 rushing yards with one player
- Record 10 tackles with one player
- Run the ball 80-plus yards
- Complete 20 consecutive passes
- Play injured and score a touchdown
- Complete a 90-yard pass
- Intercept five passes on defense
- Hold CPU under 0 total offensive yards (min quarter=4)
- Record two safeties in one game



■ Xbox

OUTLAW VOLLEYBALL

It's a few years behind in the cheat-codes race, but Simon & Schuster has finally released a videogame with a Big Head mode in it. Not that you'll care—you'll be too busy playing one-handed volleyball thanks to the other code. You want the huge boobs? You can't handle the huge boobs! Input both these signs of the coming apocalypse during gameplay.

Big heads: Hold the L trigger and press B, A, B, Y.

Big boobs: Hold the L trigger and press B, Up, Up, B, Y.



■ We can think of one likely player reaction. Wink wink, nudge nudge, etc.

■ Xbox

NFL FEVER 2004

'Tis the season for football games. As two Refrigerator Perry-sized pigs-in kin offerings get ready to ram their shoulder pads into each other, we thought we'd take a tip trip through Microsoft's *NFL Fever 2004*. Exactly what does it take to beat that damn computer opponent? These tips'll help.

1. Find Your Strong Plays

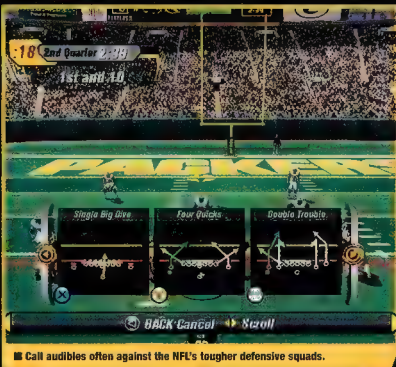
You won't find many money plays in this game, but some standard plays work well against the computer. For instance, Indianapolis can use "IND Four Quicks" successfully because it has a speedy number-one wide receiver in Marvin Harrison. Other teams have equally effective plays. Pick your team and then find your set of five or six well-designed plays.

2. Mix Your Plays

If you pass again and again, the computer will eventually adjust and shut down the air attack. Run the ball every few plays to keep the computer honest. If you concentrate mostly on passing or running, go the other way every third play or so. You'll be surprised how well even a marginal runner can do against a CPU defense that expects a pass.

3. Scramble With Your QB

To give the computer fits, use your quarterback to scramble. The defense will struggle to stop the run, and when it does, you'll likely find open passing lanes. Even if your QB isn't a Michael Vick-like superathlete, you can still roll out



■ Call audibles often against the NFL's tougher defensive squads.

and make short blasts up the field. Remember to use the QB slide to avoid injuries and fumbles.

4. Play Pass Defense First

Force the CPU to run the ball. Start off in Dime and Nickel packages and see if you can shut down the passing game. If the offense starts making big runs, drop into 4-3 and 3-4 defenses. In most cases, however, concentrate on stopping the pass before worrying about the running game.

5. Control the Clock

If you can hold the computer on defense, slow down the game and run down the clock. This gives you an advantage, because you're always thinking tactically, but the computer waits until the end of the second and fourth quarters to play clock management. You can easily waste an entire quarter (when playing 5-minute quarters). Yes, it's cheap, but it's a good way to get a win against the tough CPU.

6. Diversify Passing

Rather than throwing to one or two main receivers, spread the ball around. Keep the CPU guessing, or else its defense focuses on your top receiver and shuts him down.

7. Use Audibles

Learn to read the defense (shown in Prima's official *NFL Fever 2004* strategy guide) and call audibles on every play if you have to. If you develop a good eye for reading defenses, you can quickly assess your opposition and call a quick play that's extra hard to stop.

8. Use Hot Routes

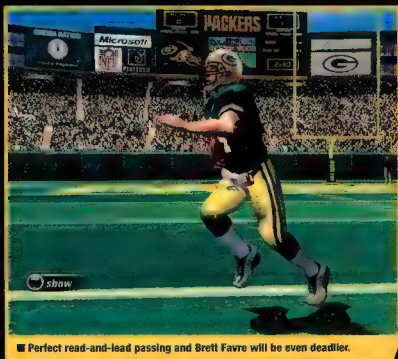
Before each snap, look for opportunities to use hot routes to your advantage. In the passing game, check the cornerbacks to see how they're covering your wide receivers. In the running game, take every opportunity to hot-route your runner and your lead blocker to the weakest part of the defense.

9. Read-and-Lead Passing

This strategy is especially useful against computer opponents. Send your receiver on his route, but keep an eye peeled for open spots in man-to-man coverage or in zone defenses (both are ripe for exploitation by a good read-and-lead pass). If you can hit your receivers on the fly, your after-the-catch yardage gains will skyrocket.

10. Adjust on Defense

The defensive adjustments in *Fever* aren't just for looks. They're very effective against a top offense. Practice using adjustments against weaker teams. When you're comfortable, start using them against the tougher teams. Before long, it'll be difficult for the CPU to score on you with regularity.



■ Perfect read-and-lead passing and Brett Favre will be even deadlier.

OUTTA THE SEWER.

INTTA YOUR GAME CONSOLE.

FALL 2003

TWNT

THE REST OF THE CRAP

Seanbaby plays "special" games...and hates them

sound off



KEEPING SCORE

Reviewing games isn't easy—I've seen other game journalists wrestle over how many points to dock a game because the animation slows down whenever their Jedi kills 35 Chewbacas at once. My plight is unique: I get handed a pile of unwanted games that come with their own perfume and mermaid makeover kits, yet I'm given strict instructions not to give them scores. There are two reasons for this. One, mermaid makeover kits are notorious for making me unfairly biased, and two, some things are numerically impossible to grade. With what I'm given, there are only two conceivable ratings: Someone made a game about roller-skating ponies or someone didn't.

—Seanbaby

GUBBLE



PS1 • Mud Duck — I can explain this game quickly by saying that it's a mind-numbing outspace screwdriving simulator and then by assuring you that I am serious. No, really. But that would be doing an injustice to the intriguing backstory told on page four of the manual: "Gubble D. Gleep is suddenly transported in front of a robot!" (Time for a brief warning: Due to the shocking nature of this upcoming plot twist, pregnant women should not read the following unless a professional baby catcher is nearby to ensure the safety of the infant or infants about to be shocked out of them.) Ahem. It continues, "While Gubble has very big ears, this robot has none!" This leads to

the following exchange: "Where are your ears, stupid?" said Gubble. The robot, perhaps because it had not been programmed to deal with such rude language, spouted smoke as he retorted to Gubble: "Forget about my ears."

What fascinates so many scholars about Gubble's story is that the robot, vividly described as "a strange robot," is so mysterious that even from an omniscient narrator's position, the storyteller can only speculate about the cause of its smoke spouting. I found that this bold defiance of an established literary device challenged my views on both artistic framework and robot ears. **Bottom Line:** The unscrewing-of-screws gameplay is so dull that even Gubble's enemies have lost interest. They don't seem to care one way or the other if you're unfastening their space screws, and if they happen to wander into you, it's usually by accident.

EQUESTRIAN SHOWCASE

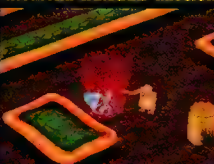


PS1 • Mud Duck — During the next Summer Olympics, sandwiched between the synchronized-swimming showdown and rhythmic-gymnastics ribbon dance, you may catch a 30-second highlight reel of horse-related activities deemed too lame for broadcast, called "equestrian events." If you still want to play a videogame version of what you see, then you are somehow reading this from deep within a coma.

Here, you'll find stables full of "stunningly realistic" horses, three different variations of a horse jumping over a stick, and plenty of authentic equestrian stars. Of course, given the crossover demographics between PlayStation gamers and whatever you call someone who can name an equestrian star, this might have been a waste of time. In fact, I think most players might have gotten more use out of an equestrian game that included light-gun support and authentic treatments for bigfoot bites.

Bottom Line: Zzzz... Oh, when you wake from the coma and gleefully compete in the thrilling dressage event, don't try to leap the boundaries and charge the spectators at full speed like I did—you'll get disqualified.

E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL: THE INTERPLANETARY MISSION



PS1 • NewKidCo — I refuse to believe that this game exists. We can all agree that it shouldn't have been made, but that's not what I mean. I mean that according to the laws of our universe, this game simply can't be real. As I'm about to prove, every aspect of this game is impossibly bad.

Plot: E.T. must save the universe by healing about a dozen houseplants with his creepy glowing finger. But since his last videogame (for the Atari 2600) was so overproduced and underwrote, hundreds of thousands of copies ended up rotting in a landfill. So if E.T. really wanted to save us with ecology, the last thing he'd do is star in more videogames. **Graphics:** When graphics artists can take a slimy brown tortoise monster made up of wrinkled manure and somehow manage to make it uglier, that's a little something I like to call impossible. Trust me, visuals this life-endingly putrid cannot happen on purpose.

Control: Trying to tell E.T. which way to hobble is like trying to pilot a hot-air balloon and being Christopher Reeve at the same time. Which, if you know anything about hot-air balloon safety, no one would ever allow.

Fun: The fact that E.T. and fun just appeared on the same line has already torn open several holes in our universe with its impossible illogicality.

Bottom Line: Gentlemen, according to these findings...my God...this game cannot be of this dimension. If you see it, do not touch it.

BARBIE EXPLORER



PS1 • Knowledge Adventure — *Barbie Explorer* is a 3D adventure game that really makes the player think. For example, when Barbie gets close to an

elephant charging back and forth across her path, she shouts to no one in particular, "Hey, an elephant!" When I witnessed this, I thought, "Wouldn't it be funny if she suddenly forgot that she noticed that elephant and wandered in front of it to get trampled?" Sadly, it's virtually impossible to kill Barbie in any of her games, this one included. Overall, although the game does have some value as a tool for teaching children to hate Barbie, it's really not much fun to play. Would you want to be stuck in a cave with Barbie? Didn't think so.

Oh, and I've got a quick *Barbie Explorer* anecdote. Two years ago at the massive Electronic Entertainment Expo, I saw a 400-pound man in a *Dungeons & Dragons* T-shirt, happily playing a demo of *Barbie Explorer* for 15 minutes...in public. When he could have been playing, say, *Halo*. This brazen display conveyed an important message: "I've given up all hope for human interaction, and I don't care who knows it," along with this implied subtext: "My mom sometimes helps me pee." **Bottom Line:** It's kind of like *Indiana Jones*, but it fixes the problem I've always had with *Indiana Jones*, which, and I'm sure you'll all agree, is that he didn't come with Dreamy Touches fashion pajamas. 🐘

Classic Crap

CHASE THE CHUCK WAGON

You might assume that a game based on dog food would automatically be awful, and well...you'd be right. Never trust an Atari 2600 game that's available for purchase only directly from Ralston Purina.



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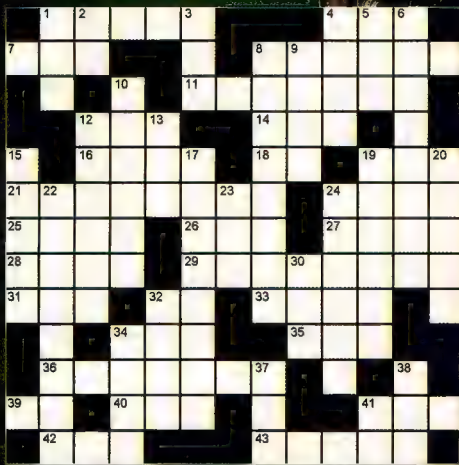
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*Warning: May cause mild addiction

CROSSWORD: OOH, NAVY SEALS!

(Continued on page 180)


ACROSS

- Type of grenade used by SEALs
- Points on 8 across
- First person or third person (abbrv.)
- SOCOM navigation screen
- Affects offense/defense in *Final Fantasy Tactics Advance*
- SEAL hostage?
- Who you might call if you're stuck in *Gran Turismo 3*
- Early LucasArts CD-ROM title, was released for the TurboDuo
- 18-Wheeler radio
- Madden 2004* crowd mantra
- Most important skill in *SOCOM* online
- Like Leon Belmont's complexion
- Crazy Taxi* street guide
- In other words, to lose a life
- Panzer Dragoon Saga* (Sega Saturn) Japanese title
- GUI stands for graphical... interface
- Red Faction* goings-on
- GTA3*'s suttler citizens might have one
- GameCube controller's shoulder buttons
- Area 51* pseudosequel in the arcade, _ 4
- Fighting game that shares name with aged punk band
- Console game, Indy car organization (abbrv.)
- Like *Stretch Panic* (PS2) enemies?
- Two-player mode for one (abbrv.)
- Starting point in *Outlaw Golf*
- You'll get tired if you do it too long in *GTA: Vice City*
- Common yet indefinite game release date (abbrv.)
- SOCOM* support team

DOWN

- Advance Wars* (GBA) "___ of war"
- Character stat that increases with experience (abbrv.)
- SOCOM* shack
- College football titles are usually authorized by this organization
- Friend of *X-Men vs. Street Fighter*'s Gambit
- Wakeboarding Unleashed* soundtrack contributor
- Upcoming *Zelda* party/connectivity game *Tetra's* _
- Like some *SOCOM* enemies
- Your dimwit partner on *SOCOM's* Able Team
- If you've skidded on water in *GT3*, you've hydro_
- Sega studio that crafted *The House of the Dead 3* and *Sega GT*
- Disgaea* (PS2) publisher
- What an RF adapter does to your video-to-TV signal frequency
- He's the soul reaver
- Clay Fighter* (Super NES) Viking gal
- Nathan Street runs this direction in *Silent Hill*
- Ghosts 'N' Ghosts* grave inscription?
- Atari's (2600) *Fast Food* edible?
- Last in a trilogy?
- What Dudley throws in *Street Fighter III*
- The info that's saved on your memory card
- Can be driven to earn cash in *GTA: Vice City*
- NEC's short-lived HiCard/CD console
- GTA2* has a park for this type of vehicle

GAME OVER...DUDE?

A target demographic is you

Place cyanide caplets firmly between molars—UPN has announced a new videogame-inspired show called *Game Over*, debuting this September. Here's its description of the can't-miss-hit/licensing opportunity:

"*Game Over* is UPN's new family comedy series featuring the adventures of the suburban Smashburn family, who just happen to live in an alternate videogame universe...."

"As head of the Smashburn household, Rip is a hotshot Grand Prix racecar driver who rides and wrecks daily. His feisty and attractive wife, Raquel, is a modern working woman, juggling family and her exhilarating job as gun-toting, monster-fighting Agent Smashburn. Their son, Billy, is a 13-year-old shallow but trendy wannabe hip-hopster, who often argues with his

14-year-old sister, Alice, a cynical yet socially conscious teen. [Their pet,] Turbo, [is] a 300-pound talking creature whose favorite past times [sic] are robbing pawn shops, smoking stogies, and creating mayhem—all with an attitude. The friendly next-door neighbors are the Changs, a family of kung fu fighting Shaolin monks...."

While our intelligence has already been smacked with a dueling glove by those two paragraphs (it's possible to be shallow—but still trendy?), the potential for this show to affront all of humanity is limited only by the imagination of the morons at UPN. To help those fools realize their crappy dream, we've come up with a few story ideas that will make *Game Over* the totally outrageous extreme sitcom it deserves to be—all with an attitude. Of sucking. —Demian Linn



egm's fantasy episode guide

Pilot: Pac-Attack!!!

The Smashburns are so totally psyched when vidgame celeb Pac-Man moves in next door—except Rip, whose racecar-driver salary can't keep up with the well-to-do Pac-Man's penchant for expensive lawn-grooming equipment. Trouble in paradise! Then Turbo makes a lame joke, everyone laughs, the end.

Death to Poochie

Turbo's snout is outta joint when the Changs get a new pet. Craving attention, Turbo resorts to over-the-top antics that ultimately land Billy in the hospital with a shattered clavicle. Raquel then vaporizes the interloping pet with her rail gun. Turbo makes a lame joke, everyone laughs, the end. Special guest star: Poochie.

Clip Show: Remember When...

Rip, Turbo, and the rest get stuck in a meat locker and pass the time reminiscing about favorite scenes from the past two episodes. Remember when Billy broke his clavicle? Roll clip! Moments before the oxygen expires, it turns out the door was unlocked all along. Turbo makes a lame joke, everyone laughs, the end.

Series Finale: R.I.P. Rip

Rip dies in a freak *NASCAR Thunder* pit-row accident involving one of those pneumatic lug nut wrenches and a lug nut that was just *too damn big*, goddammit! Later that day, Raquel runs off with Pac-Man, leaving Billy, Alice, and Turbo on the streets. Turbo makes a lame joke, everyone bursts into hysterical tears, the end.

namco®

To celebrate the launch of Namco's SOULCALIBUR® II, we are giving you the chance to win a version for your home console and one lucky winner will receive a SOULCALIBUR® II arcade machine

THE SOULCALIBUR® II

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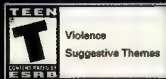


PlayStation 2

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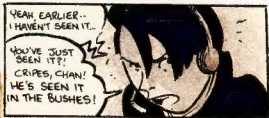
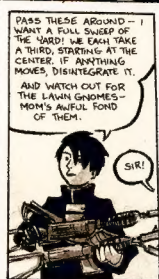
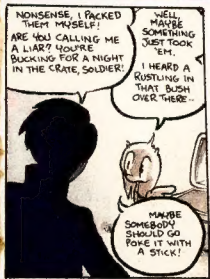
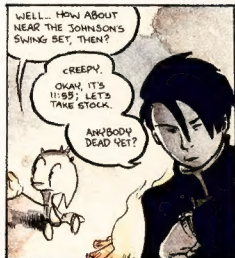
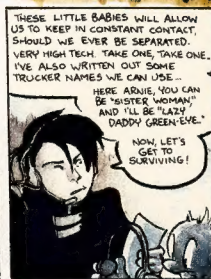
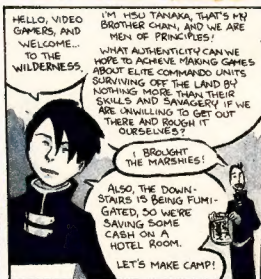
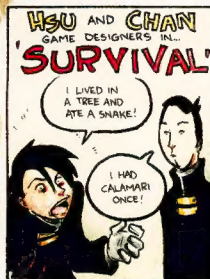
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