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Special 11-page feature!

# FINAL FANTASY EVERYTHING

New screens and info on:

- Final Fantasy X-2
- Final Fantasy XI
- Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles

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NFL STREET



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007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING



- Max Payne 2 ■ Viewtiful Joe ■ Need for Speed Underground
- Wrestlemania XIX ■ Starsky & Hutch ■ Super Mario Advance 4
- Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon ■ Mega Man X7 ■ Kirby's Air Ride

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Nov. 2003 Issue 172  
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PlayStation 2



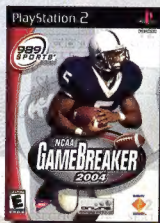
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"This game will own your soul.  
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—IGN

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game studios



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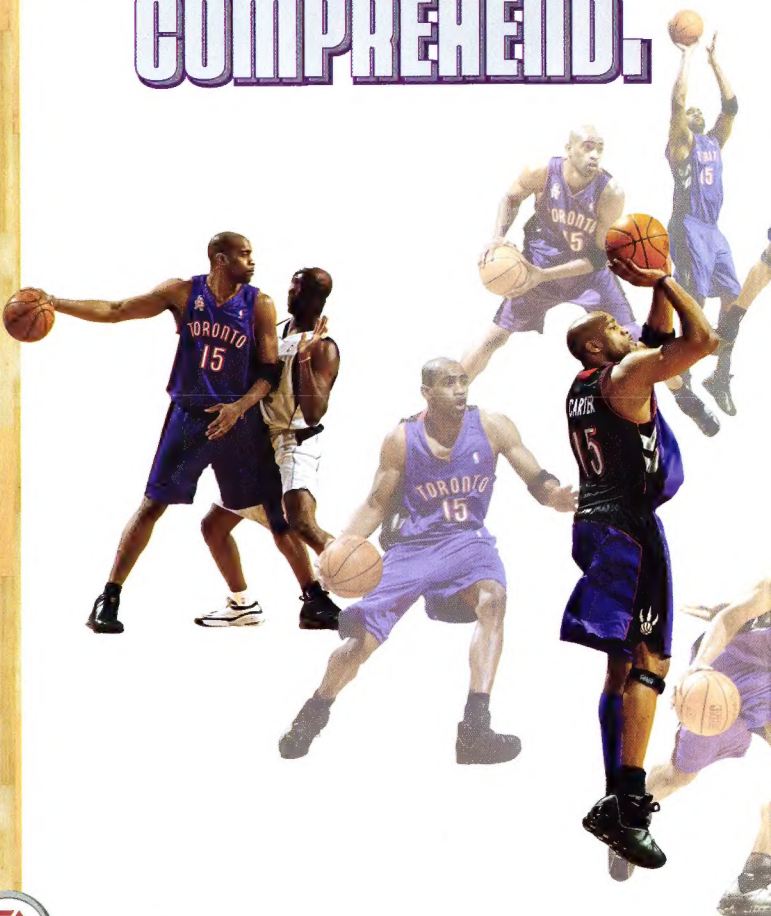
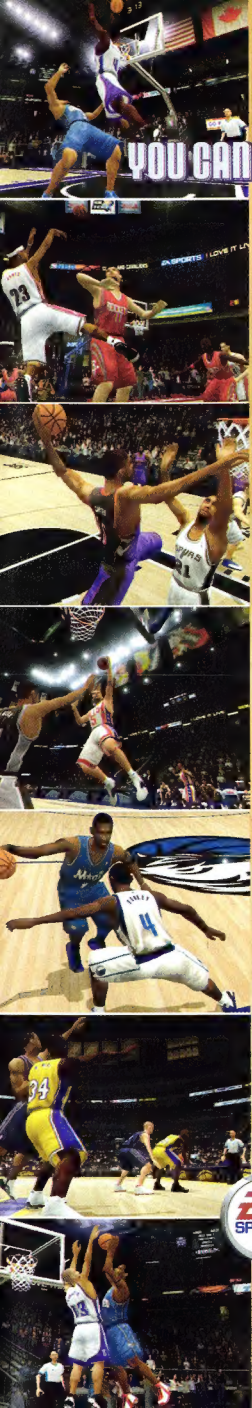
it's good to play together

[xbox.com/nflfever2004](http://xbox.com/nflfever2004)

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## LETTERS

**24** **Warning:** Requests for one of us to be your pen pal will be ignored

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The Master Chief holds back Solid Snake's advances

### 106 **COMING SOON**

...to a game store near you!

# 138

## COVER STORY: **FINAL FANTASY EVERYTHING**

One franchise, three games, 11 pages—hop on the chocobo express and read our exclusive report on *Final Fantasy X-2* and *Final Fantasy XI: Online* for PlayStation 2, as well as GameCube's *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles*. Plus, check out all of the upcoming role-playing games that *don't* have the *Final Fantasy* name, beginning on page 156.

Illustration by eBay

### PLATFORM GAMES PREVIEW

**110** In the genre that Mario built, very few platform games have come close to attaining the success of the Nintendo plumber. We check out the next batch of hopstutts—which includes the likes of *Jak II*, *Voodoo Vines*, *Whiplash*, *Sphinx* and *The Cursed Mummy*, and *Ninja*. Also, we go one-on-one with several of their creators.



**120** RICHARD I. CRANK: GOING COMMANDO



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## FREE CONSOLES!

What console don't you own? Go to <http://giveaway.egmmag.com> and fill out the entry form for a chance to win your choice of an Xbox, PlayStation 2, or GameCuba, plus three games picked by the *Electronic Gaming Monthly* staff!

## REVIEW CREW

Not one, not two, but three reviews for each game

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**N-GAGE LAUNCH REPORT**  
We tell you whether Nokia's all-in-wonder portable device sinks or swims



50

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**GRAND THEFT AUTO VIOLATES XBOX**  
It was only a matter of time

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## editorial



*Final Fantasy* fans are the worst. They bitch when we don't review *FF* games the way they want them reviewed (meaning, giving "their" games the highest score of 10 out of 10). They get dressed up in ridiculous costumes (try checking out <http://images.cosplay.com> without losing your lunch). And they won't shut the heck up about wanting to see a certain flower girl get revived. (Might it ever happen? Check out page 142 for what we've heard so far about a sequel to *Final Fantasy VII*.)

But we actually love the ones we complain about the most, so we're giving you *Final Fanatics* a special treat: our biggest, most ambitious *Final Fantasy* issue yet. We've got everything you need to know about *Final Fantasy X-2*, *Final Fantasy XI*, and *Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles* (and don't forget the rereleased *FFVII-2*). We have lots of hints, screenshots, and art for you to drool over, so make sure you're not wearing your favorite Squall outfit when flipping through these pages.

Because I wasn't kidding when I said we love you, we asked famed *Final Fantasy* artist Yoshinaka Amano to create a special limited-edition cover just for *EGM*. You won't find this place anywhere else, but on our cover—so check your favorite magazine rack and look for one of these.

—Dan "Shoe" Hsu, Editor-in-Chief



Look for this newsmag-only cover at your local...well, newsstand.





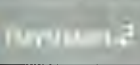
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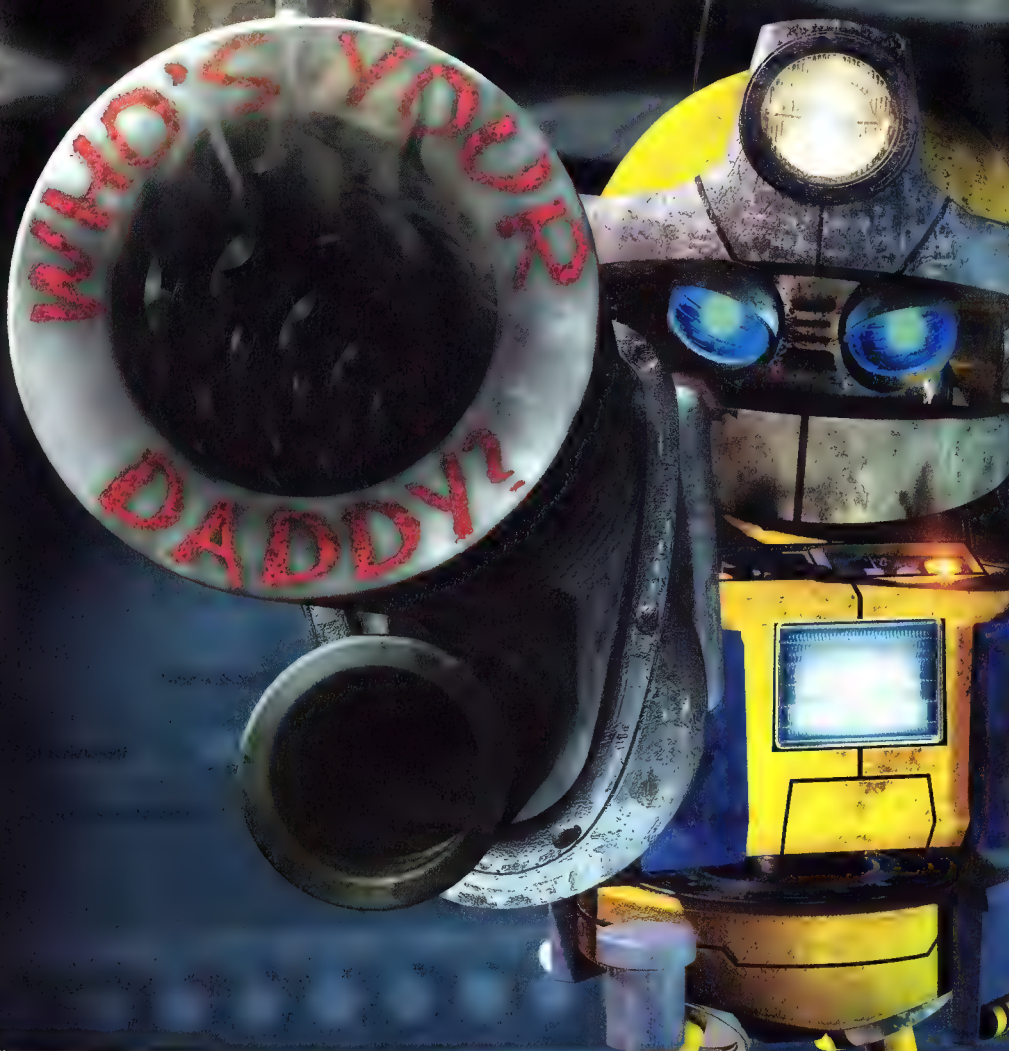
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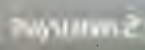


CLEANER



TOASTER

**TEEN T**  
 CONTENT RATED BY ESRB  
 Strong Language  
 Violence





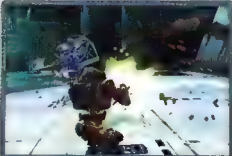
# METAL ARMS

GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM

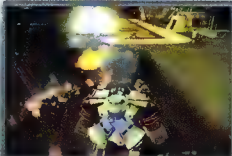
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He's delivering a warm welcome  
to evil bots everywhere.

WEAPONRY



HIJACKING



MULTIPLAYER



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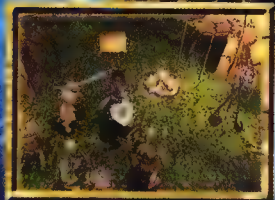
FORGOTTEN REALMS

Baldur's Gate

# DARK ALLIANCE III



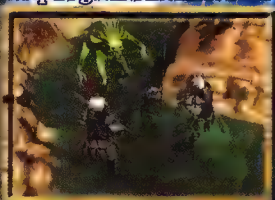
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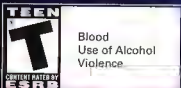
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PlayStation 2

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■ **Zeldamobile:** If Link were a muleet-sporting high school senior, this would be his fly ride.

► you sure that wasn't an issue of *American Lawyer*?

**Hy-rollin'**

Back in the day, before I could afford toll calls to Nintendo's game counselors, I'd slip across the street with a flashlight to consult the Hyrulian world map painstakingly painted on the hood of my neighbor's Ford. One night, however, in a fit of envy, I retouched the *Legend of Zelda* mural with false directions through the Lost Woods. Ever since, I've been guilt-wracked and listless. I'm ashamed of myself and come to you for public penance. Please reveal my misdeeds to the vehicle's owner so that once again I might sleep the sleep of the

righteous. Actually, I'm lying. I found pics of this jalopy at [http://www.testciv.com/kathy/kathy\\_main.htm](http://www.testciv.com/kathy/kathy_main.htm) and had to share.

—Thomas Weeks

**That's some sweet set of wheels.**

**My Tommy's a good boy**

As a lifelong *Zelda* fan, I've noticed a disturbing fact about the games that I have grown to love so much. Almost every *Zelda* game includes terrorizing innocent farm animals and poking enemies in the eye to kill them. What sort of crazy, sadistic person would do these kinds of things? The deceptively kindhearted Link, that's who! If you ask me, those sneaky

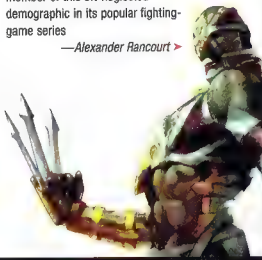
politicians should be pointing their fingers at him, and away from the sweet, misunderstood Tommy Vercetti.

—Devin Norris

**In appreciation of Voldo**

Voldo, the beloved character from the *Soul Calibur* series, is one of the most brave, courageous, and awe-inspiring human beings to ever walk the (digital) earth. He has accomplished so much, despite being a visually impaired, mentally ill, sadomasochistic 17th century pirate. Namco should be commended for including a member of this oft-neglected demographic in its popular fighting-game series

—Alexander Rancourt ►



■ **Shredder:** Hates him same turtles.

**OOOPS!**

In our "Retro-Active" feature in *EGM* #171, we said that *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* villains Rocksteady the rhino, Bebop the warhog, and brain-alien Krang would terrorize the turtles in the upcoming *TMNT* game. They won't. *TMNT* will be based on the new, altogether darker cartoon series rather than the lock-tested, mother-approved story lines of the original show, so expect plenty of Foot Clan ninja scrubs, arch-bad-guy Shredder, and a significantly lower lame quotient. All the other stuff we said was true.

**GAME DESIGN-O-RAMA**

Like some kind of Letter Art contest for the new millennium, our Game Design-O-Rama is bringing out the very best—and worst—of our readership. Although we've probably got enough quality material for the next six months already...don't stop! Keep those masterpieces comin' to *EGM* at [ziffdavis.com](mailto:ziffdavis.com), subject: design-o-rama.

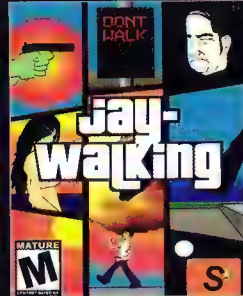
**WARHOL'S PRETENTIOUS KARTS**

Are you on the forefront of postmodernism, but can't find a game that's weird just for the sake of weird? Do you also love kart-racing games? Then *Warhol's Pretentious Karts* is the game for you!

Choose from your favorite '70s icons, such as John Lennon, Kermit the Frog, Harrison Ford, Gerald Ford, Richard Nixon, or The Village People. Race around surreal tracks like a big can of Campbell's soup or Chairman Mao's forehead, and then debate whether the tracks actually exist or are creations of a society that has gone down the tubes. Battle your way to Studio 54, and Andy Warhol will either give you a final race or challenge you to an art exhibition! It's all the fun of the '70s, including the mind-expanding drugs!



—Craig Blair



**JAYWALKING**

*Jaywalking* is set in boring Spokane, WA, where the authorities have nothing better to do than write up jaywalking tickets. You play as a drug dealer named Gilbert Gilton, and you have to deal, work for gangs, pick up and drop off "shipments," and whack people, all while watching out for the cops when you jaywalk! There are over 600 crossable streets (you must cross every one to get 100 percent completion), and also 200 undrivable cars, plus ones you can download weekly.

—Jared Johnson

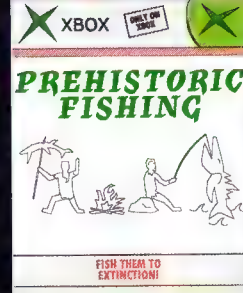
**PIMPOKÉMON**

Your goal as an aspiring Pimpologist is to journey around the world, collecting as many STDs as you can from the millions of unique people that you will no doubt encounter on your adventure. Your dream has always been to become the Master Pimpologist, as you believe in the age-old legend that once one has acquired all of the STDs known to man, they will obviously cancel each other out, and, as a bonus, gift the Master Pimpologist with bizarre but wondrous sexual powers. Television's Mickey Rooney is attached to do the voice of Gonorrhea.



they were after something in VAGINA TOWN, too?

—Stacey Akins



**PREHISTORIC FISHING**

The object of *Prehistoric Fishing* is to catch fish that, these days, are long extinct. You start as a caveman, but after finishing the main parts of the game, maybe you could get a space-alien guy as a fisherman, just to be wacky. But seriously, folks, the game would have realistic graphics and cutting-edge fishing physics. It'd also have a great two-player competitive mode, like a fish-off or something. Add in some minigames and new items to unlock and you have a unique, quality fishing game.

—Brian Mulhern



*Back... in black.*



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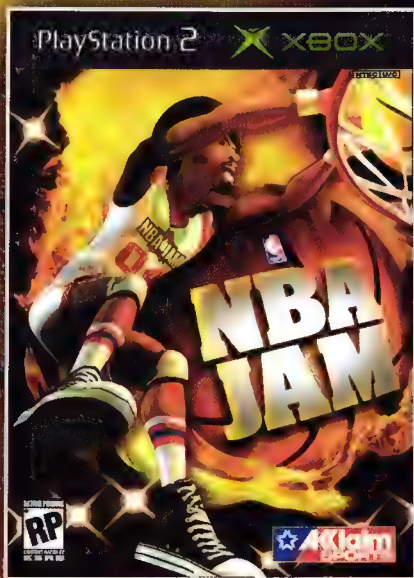


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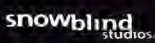
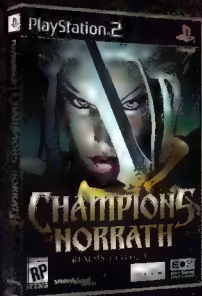
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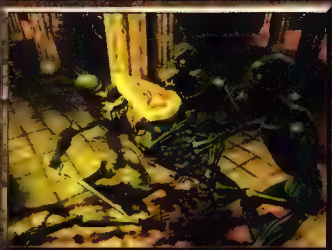


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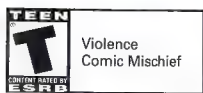


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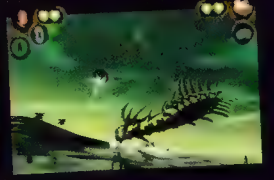
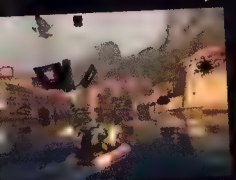
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▶ 05

▶ 06

▶ 07



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# 555-LAME

Did Nokia make a bad call with its cell-phone game system? We review **N-Gage**...

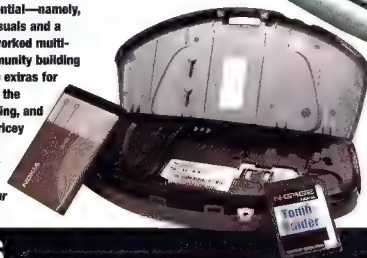
**I**n the annals of gizmology, it's the first of its kind: a phone-slash-MP3-player-slash-mobile-gaming device. Yep, Nokia's N-Gage—due in stores Oct. 7—is one perky piece of technology, but it also comes with a sticker-shocking \$300 price tag that seemingly pops it into a different league than Nintendo's \$100 Game Boy Advance SP. *Nokia doesn't see things that way.* "Gamers have limited entertainment dollars that they're spreading among movies and sports and games, so we think this is a solid three-in-one solution," says Nada Usina, general manager of Nokia's Entertainment and Media Business Unit.

N-Gage ships with stereo headphones and a battery charger that gives six hours of game time with each jolting. The games themselves come on tiny cards that sell for about \$30.

Trouble is, none of the 11 launch titles has us flipping to call mode and phoning in our N-Gage preorderers. (Although more games are on the way—at least 20 by year's end, including EA Sports titles. Let's hope they're better.) The system suffers from mondo design flaws, too: You need to take off the unit's rear cover and pop out the battery just to change games, for one.

Sure, N-Gage has potential—namely, nearly PS1-quality 3D visuals and a heavy emphasis on networked multiplayer gaming and community building (as well as lots of online extras for most games). But so far, the library just isn't compelling, and we don't see how this pricey gizmo can compete with GBA and Sony's portable system due next year.

—Crispin Boyer



■ Swapping N-Gage games—a process that requires removing the back cover and battery—is as easy as one, two, three...four, five, six...

## THE LAUNCH GAMES: REVIEWS

Our take on the titles that will ship with N-Gage on Oct. 7 (scores are out of 10):

### SUPER MONKEY BALL

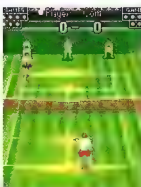
**C.J.:** *Monkey Ball* (basically an electronic version of the old wooden-maze ball-balancing game) is quite possibly N-Gage's best launch game: It looks good and plays well, the visuals are smooth, and it has most of the features of its home-console pappy. Its only real shortcoming: the fact that you have to move your monkey precisely with the D-pad instead of the analog stick of its GC big brother—a problem that afflicted the GBA version too and just takes a little time getting used to. But if you've already got an N-Gage and are looking for an addictive little puzzler (and haven't already played it to death elsewhere), check it out.



**SCORE: 7.0** Simple fun once you adjust to the controls

### VIRTUA TENNIS

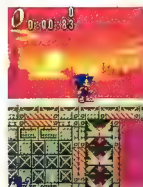
**BRYAN:** After checking out the facilities at Nokia's portable country club, I've decided not to apply for a membership. Despite its easy-to-master controls, *Virtua Tennis* has issues. Take chasing down well-hit balls, for instance; moving your preppy butt across the court is equivalent to running through quicksand. Plus, you won't get much use outta lobs because CPU opponents rarely play near the net, which essentially handicaps those (like me) who prefer to mix up their shots. Factor in a total lack of doubles matches and minigame challenges, and I'll stick to volleying on the GBA version of Sega's tennis franchise.



**SCORE: 5.0** "Tennis anyone?" "Uh, no thanks."

### SONIC N

**SHANE:** What better way to christen your spanking new \$300 N-Gage than with a standard port of a nearly 2-year-old GBA game? That's right—*N* is just Sega's decent run-and-jump platformer *Sonic Advance* for GBA, problematically squeezed on to the inversely proportioned N-Gage screen. The game offers two viewing options, but both suck—one is a squashed, postage-stamp-sized letterbox mode that mimics GBA, the other a narrow full-screen mode that makes pits and enemies nearly unavoidable. Ugh. Chunky scrolling, thin, garbled music, and no multiplayer options. Don't bother.



**SCORE: 4.0** A fuzzy, awkward, slow port of an old *Sonic*



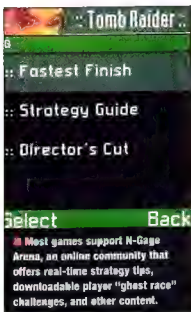


#### PROS:

- A phone, MP3 player, and game system in one (games pause automatically when you get a call)
- Bluetooth adds wireless multiplayer to most games
- Capable of 3D visuals

#### CONS:

- High \$300 price
- Weak launch library
- Changing games is a huge pain
- Confusing interface makes simple tasks like adjusting volume tricky



#### SIZE COMPARISON:



#### PUYO POP

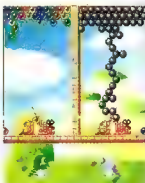
**SHOE:** Imagine a one- or two-player puzzle game in which you have to match up pieces of the same color. Now imagine those pieces come in five flavors: red, yellow, green, blue, and blue. Yep, that's no typo. Technically, one of those "blues" should be "purple," but it ain't to the human eye (which I'm guessing most of you will be using). The blue and purple pieces are slightly different shapes to help tell them apart. But that's a very slight "slighty," so you'll be frustrated only when you're constantly lining up four "blue" pieces, only to find out it's not really a match upon much-closer inspection.



**SCORE: 3.0** Ignore this pie; the real-life eaters are busted

#### PUZZLE BOBBLE VS

**SHANE:** If N-Gage can run *Tomb Raider*, you'd think perfecting a simple, one-screen 2D puzzle game matching up colored bubbles would be a snap, but fundamental aspects of *Puzzle Bobble* fail miserably here. Several colors are indistinguishable on the small screen (overheard around the office: "Is this bubble dark gray, light gray, blue, violet, or grayish-greenish-black?"), the single-player game offers a paltry six stages, and the game has only one sound effect. The three-player Bluetooth Versus matches are conceptually cool, but with all of the other problems, they are no fun in practice.



**SCORE: 2.0** So broken you wonder if anyone playedtest it

#### MOTO GP

**DEMIAN:** This portable version of THQ's first *Moto GP* game (PlayStation 2, Xbox) has been downsized in more ways than one. Just four verticals are allowed in a race, and although N-Gage's entrant display works fine for games like these, the graphics are decidedly plain. With controls limited to accelerate, brake, turn left, and turn right, there isn't much depth to gameplay (fancy wheelies are a no-go), but the biggest problem is that you can cut across huge swathes of grass and hardly lose any speed—expect some of those Bluetooth multiplayer races to end in a real-world four-person rumble.



**SCORE: 4.0** Want to switch gears manually? You can't.





# YO, J.R.

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I've maled 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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Didn't Max Payne teach you ain't no cop? Well, you ain't no cop, and you ain't a loaded firearm!

## LOVE KILLS

### A kinder, gentler Max in **Max Payne 2**

It's been two years since a little PC title called *Max Payne* battered down our doors with both guns blazing, and in a New York minute, we were in love. Soon after, PS2 and Xbox ports introduced console gamers to the hard-hitting, heavy-handed tale of crooked cops and criminals in the Big Apple, earning high marks for its singular (albeit grossly gratifying) thrill: peppering Payne's enemies with bullets in glorious *Matrix*-inspired slow motion.

Armed with the support of Rockstar's New York studios, a professional stunt crew, voice talent, and artists, the sequel—dubbed *Max Payne 2: The Rise*

and *Fall of Max Payne*—goes gunning for the top with more-realistic visuals, a deeper story, an expanded single-player game, and lots more guns. Character models, enemy (and partner!) AI, and the already snappy physics engine have all been given a firm kick in the ass, which ought to make for more dynamic, unpredictable gunplay. Publisher Rockstar is playing up the plot's "love story" angle, but don't let that faze you; when you've got a name like Payne, all of your valentines are bloody. PS2 and Xbox ports of this trigger-happy shooter (due for the PC in October) will hit early next year. —David Chen



■ Yeah! Woof! Let's hear it for slow-motion, guns-blazing dives and huge van explosions!

## GRUDGE MATCH

"A long time ago" battles "A long, long time ago"

STAR WARS:  
KOTOR

VS.

STAR WARS:  
THE MOVIES

Lots of things get better with age—wina, cheese, Soleil Moon Frye—but we had to wonder if the same rule applies in the *Star Wars* universe. Xbox RPG *Knights of the Old Republic* takes place 4,000 years before the movies, but is elder always wiser? Find out in our special small-screen versus big-screen match-up.

### BREATHY BAD GUY WITH A DELAYED FACE



**Darth Malak:** lives in fear of Revan; major inferiority complex

**Darth Vader:** lives in fear of no one; countless illegitimate children



**Advantage:** Movies

### BIKINI-CLAD HOTTIE



**Bastila as Karath's prisoner:** in electro-shock torture chamber

**Leia as Jabba the Hutt's sex slave:** in bondage-queen outfit



**Advantage:** Movies

### CHATTY MULTILINGUAL DROID



**HK-47:** angry dark-sider; calls people "meatbags"

**C3-PO:** easily frightened; windy British mannerisms



**Advantage:** KOTOR

### INEXPLICABLE ACCENT



**Juhani:** seemingly Slavic with a sexy feline lilt

**Jar-Jar Binks:** Gungan? Genohardan? Jamaican? We neither know nor care.



**Advantage:** KOTOR

### NEFARIOUS SPACE STATION NAME



**Star Forge:** frou-frou name masks underlying evil

**Death Star:** cards on the table, not afraid to tell it like it is



**Advantage:** Movies

### THE WINNER: THE STAR WARS MOVIES

We could go on, but our sentimentality would get the best of us. Nothing can trump fanicles about slave Leia. Close but no death stick, *KOTOR*!

## BIG NINTENDO NEWS FROM JAPAN STUFFED INTO SMALL BOXES



### Donkey and Wario go Cube

Nintendo has announced *Donkey Konga*, a Namco-developed GC rhythm-action title due out in Japan later this year. Also on the Cube slate for Japanese release in October: a home version of GBA hit *WarioWare*. No word yet from Nintendo of America on U.S. releases of either title.



### New Nintendo system in 2004?

Nintendo says it will make a big announcement next spring, something to compete with Sony's upcoming portable? The successor to GameCube? A special Game Boy Advance-GameCube four-player link-up version of *Space Invaders*? Nintendo Prez Satoru Iwata (let's) knows, but he ain't sayin'.



# BEAT-DOWNS SO GREAT YOU'LL DIE LAUGHING



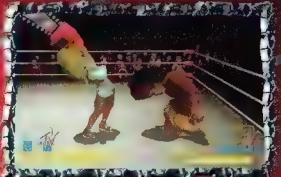
Based on the hit show, MTV's *Celebrity Deathmatch* allows you to play and dismember 15 of showbiz's most beloved and hated personalities, or design your own victim of fame with Create-A-Celebrity. It's time for the stars to stop being polite, and start getting destroyed.



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Use outrageous weapons and power-ups to become the master of the Deathmatch Arena!

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DENNIS RODMAN  
ANNA NICOLE SMITH  
JERRY SPRINGER  
MR. T

\*NSYNC MEMBERS:  
LANCE BASS  
JOSHUA "JC" CHASEZ  
JOEY FATONE, JR.  
CHRIS KIRKPATRICK  
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Blond and Gore  
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Never heard of  
radioactivity? All you  
need to know is that  
it makes *GTA3*'s fire  
look better on Xbox.

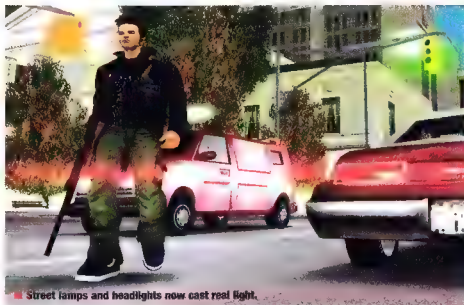
# XBOX JACKS GRAND THEFT AUTO

This fall, Xbox owners can join in the crime spree with a *GTA3* and *Vice City* 2-in-1 pack

**X**box has long suffered from a dearth of quality titles in which it's possible to carjack a sedan, use it to pick up a hooker and drive her to a secluded spot (say, to discuss politics), then beat her like a bass drum and steal her hard-earned ducats when she attempts to leave. The drought ends shortly. Spokesmen for Rockstar Games have confirmed the news that's been rumored for months—on November 4, *Grand Theft Auto III* and *Vice City* for Xbox will be released together in a single (currently unnamed) pack for \$49.99

(On October 22, the same pack will also arrive for PS2—for \$39.99. Ouch.) While Rockstar can't confirm any embellishments to the Xbox version of *Vice City*, representatives say that the *GTA3* edition contains graphical updates and small cosmetic changes, though there are no alterations to the game's mature-rated story, missions, or basic play. "Developing for Xbox has allowed us to add some technical enhancements," says Rockstar's Public Relations Director Jeff Castaneda. "But ultimately, this is about being immersed into

the experience that is *Grand Theft Auto III*." Screenshots demonstrate the graphical tweaks. "Perhaps the biggest addition to the title is the use of specular lighting," Castaneda says. "[It] enables us to cast light from every street lamp and headlight in real time." In-game characters and vehicles have been upgraded with higher-detail models, according to Rockstar's list of enhancements, to give them a more seamless look. "The Xbox version has allowed us to fully skin the characters as in *Vice City*," Castaneda says. "Each major character >



Street lamps and headlights now cast real light.

## grand theft enemies



Because of its high profile and controversial gameplay, *GTA3* aroused the ire of such political groups as the National Organization for Women (whose Web site proclaimed, "Ugly" is too kind a word for this product). It also drew fire from U.S. legislators, who sought to make it illegal to sell the game to minors, and the continent of Australia, whose government banned the game until its sexual content was excised.



MIDWAY

THE HUNT BEGINS AGAIN...



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PlayStation 2



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↳ Unless at night, it probably wasn't a good idea to drink of him.



↳ On the way from Johnny's, Kirk's trip to Black...!

► model has been updated, including new features like independent fingers."

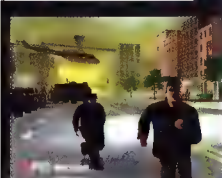
Reflection-mapping techniques serve to illustrate the differences between the game's cars, trucks, trains, and boats. "We now cast real-time reflections of varying degrees on each vehicle," says Castaneda. "You'll notice the cars range from glossy-looking high-end sports cars to the more run-down, low-end station wagons."—Other improved effects are sprinkled about—rain now adheres to the game's camera, and radiosity (a light-modeling technique) has been augmented to make flames appear more realistic.

If independent fingers and new rain

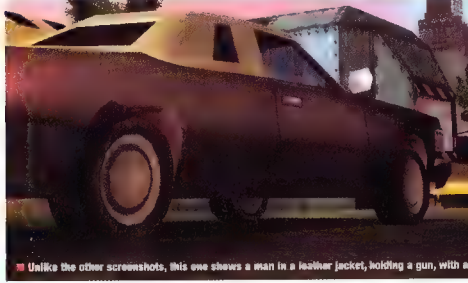
effects don't get you excited, maybe this will: To keep up with the times, high-definition TV (HDTV) 720P support has been added, as well as a 16:9 aspect ratio for widescreen televisions. The game also supports Dolby 5.1 surround sound, as well as Xbox's custom soundtrack capabilities; players can rip their own CDs to the Xbox hard drive and use them in-game. To accommodate this, *GTA3* includes a new in-game "CD changer" that sorts through custom soundtracks. Topping off the features list is a set of controls that come pre-set in two separate styles (Classic or Xbox) and are also fully customizable. 🎮

—Greg Orlando

## for those who just joined us...



Maybe you've been in prison, or researching on some remote Alaskan base for the last two years, and you don't really know why there's such a hubbub about this game. Here's the scoop: *GTA3*, released in 2001 for PS2 and later on the PC, won accolades for its open-ended play, sweeping crime-based story arcs, and huge environments. As an anonymous thug, players can perform all sorts of criminal mischief on foot or while driving, including but not limited to: robberies, carjackings, assassinations, bombings, and vehicular homicides. Also included are electronic women of the night who, when picked up and driven to a private spot...restore your health.



↳ Unlike the other screenshots, this one shows a man in a leather jacket, holding a gun, with a car and city in the background.



# PLAY BIG



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# AFTERTHOUGHTS: SOUL CALIBUR II

## Namco's swordsmith answers our burning questions



**F**or the past month, you've been practicing to the detriment of your studies, social lives, and work schedules. But then, games this good come 'round as often as Halley's Comet, right? We spoke with *Soul Calibur II* Producer Hiroaki Yotoryama about the challenges his team faced in returning to the stage of history and creating another game of the highest, uh, caliber.



■ We'd love to meet the guy responsible for designing Ringing Bros. reject Voldo.

**EGM:** Which fighter is most improved from the last *Calibur*?

**HY:** I felt that Ivy was the one character whose fighting style wasn't perfectly expressed in the last installment, so from the beginning of *SC2*'s development, I put my efforts into making her more uniquely lethal. As a result, I think Ivy stands out more, and I think her increased popularity among the fan base proves that

**EGM:** Fighting-game fans love to complain about characters with a greater chance of winning due to their overpowered or cheap moves. Are some *SC2* characters stronger than others?



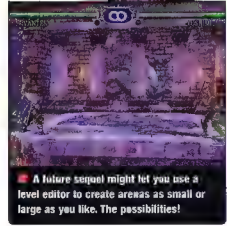
■ Merial doesn't spoil *SC2*'s otherwise perfect balance, but with moves from every character, he's certainly powerful.

**HY:** One of our greatest concerns was to avoid creating any superpowerful characters. Balance adjustment continued until right before we completed the game. If you find that a character is legitimately unbalanced, please let us know immediately. We'll be sure to fix the problems in the sequel, should there be a *Soul Calibur III*.

**EGM:** Is there a secret development version of the game in which Spawn, Link, and Heihachi can square off?

**HY:** Unfortunately, such a dream game isn't

**HY:** We considered it. I can easily imagine gamers' excitement if they could develop their own arenas and environments. We'd really like to pursue this concept in any future sequels if there's time in the development process.



■ A future sequel might let you use a level editor to create arenas as small or large as you like. The possibilities!

**EGM:** What do you think the next innovation in fighting games will be?

**HY:** In my personal opinion, developing online play is the key element for any future fighting game. Of course, I speak without referring to any technological or business restrictions, which may make such features difficult to develop or play.

**EGM:** *SC2* brings out our competitive sides—every other round, someone storms away from the television in a violent rage. Any staff members lose their cool in high-stakes matches?

**HY:** The game gets our staff members' blood boiling even though

## "Online play is the key element for future fighting games"

—Soul Calibur II Producer Hiroaki Yotoryama

even available in our lab. I wish there was, but it didn't turn out that way.

**EGM:** Did you ever consider including a simple ring editor, something gamers could use to create their own arenas?

they're testing game elements as part of their job. I think that's one of the keys to the success of *SC2*: the strong emotions that get tied into play. ★

—Shawn Elliott

## interview with a weapon master

If Producer Yotoryama is the hardworking smithy forging *SC2*'s fierce weapons, then undefeated national taekwondo champion Jason "WCMX" Arney is the shogun who wields 'em. On his website, [www.soulcalibur.com](http://www.soulcalibur.com), he studies the game with a sort of convoluted calculus that would confuse casual button-masters. We picked his brain about the characters he favors and the foes he fears.

**EGM:** Who are your favorite characters and why?  
**Jason Arney:** Primarily Yoshimitsu. Deception is a huge part of my game, so I tend to do well with characters that provide rewards for deceptive play.

**EGM:** Which characters do you most fear?  
**JA:** In *Soul Calibur II* I would have to say Astaroth, Klík, and Cervantes. Overall, mostly Astaroth—you really can't make many mistakes against him and still win. He's not the best fighter in the game, but he's extremely powerful at punishing mistakes.

**EGM:** Who's the most fun? Which character do you play as when you really want to win?  
**JA:** For me, Yoshimitsu, Talim, and Nightmare are the most fun; however, if I'm just in it to win I'd lean on Yoshimitsu, Cervantes, and Mitsurugi.

■ Talk about wearing your heart on the outside...








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*- Electronic Gaming Monthly*

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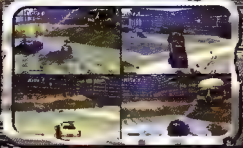
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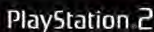


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# INSTANT EXPERT: CHEATING

## Hack your way to gaming heaven



■ Cheating makes it link cry.



■ Cheat devices can open access to developer-only areas like this secret world in *Zelda: Wind Waker*.

Whether you've forked over \$50 for a game you're crap at and just wanna finish it, or you want to squeeze every last ounce of fun out of something you've already beaten, cheat devices and Easter eggs are your saviors. So let's bring you up to speed on this "secret world" of gaming. We'll start with a little history lesson.

### In the beginning...

Programmer Warren Robinett added a secret area to his 1978 Atari 2600 game *Adventure* that showed his name when you accessed it, and lo, the "Easter egg" was born. Now this all-encompassing term refers to any unnecessary or cool item, mode, or area that a developer's hidden somewhere in a game.

In the '80s, "button-press codes" broke onto the scene, due in part to the infamous Konami code (Up, Down, Several, Game, like *Contra*): Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, B, A. This code has become so well known that it appears on T-shirts, is the name of a ska band, and even occasionally pops up in non-Konami games.

### Cheating today

Of course, button-press codes like Konami's are still around today (that particular one, with 0 and X replacing A and B, allows you to...um...remove the pants from key characters in *Silent Hill 3*). You can find many of them in our Tricks section and in strategy-oriented magazines like our sister publication *GameNOW*.

Devices like the Action Replay and GameShark are also popular with the cheating-inclined. They'll set you back a little less than the price of a game and are designed to let you crack open your favorite titles and use codes to achieve an almost infinite set of effects. Invincibility, access to all weapons, the chance to play developer test levels that no one can normally see—cheat devices give you the key to it all. They're available for most major systems and are easy to use, but they often involve CD



swapping and some tedious code inputting (usually multiple lines of 13 characters).

Sound like too much commitment for you? You can also buy game-specific discs for about \$10 each for high-profile titles (like *Zelda: Wind Waker*, *Animal Crossing*, *Metroid Prime*, and *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*) that contain hundreds of codes that help you ruin the creators' intended vision. Publisher Ubi Soft even allowed MadCatz to release an officially licensed *Spinter Cell* cheat disc (though some of the included codes didn't work).

### The internet:

#### A cheater's paradise

It's 2 a.m. and you're stuck in that *Final Fantasy* you bought three years ago but never finished. You won't be able to run out and get a guide or buy a cheat device till morning, so let us recommend these stopovers on the info superhighway to satisfy your cheatin' heart.

**www.gamefags.com** — A handy site that houses complete walkthroughs and loads of codes for games both new and old.

**www.cheatcc.com** — A simple (and unfortunately pop-up-ad-clogged) database of codes and cheats.

**www.gameshark.com** — The official GameShark site holds the passport to thousands of the latest Shark codes.

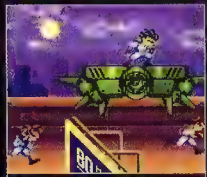
**www.codejunkies.com** — The official Action Replay site also lists thousands of codes for the device

—David S. J. Hodgson

## OLD SCHOOL 10 years ago in EGM

### On the Cover: Sonic the Hedgehog

Sega's fleet-footed blue hedgetog mascot landed coverside this month to promote a trifecta of releases—*Sonic CD* (Sega CD), *Sonic Spinball* (Genesis), and *Sonic Chaos* (Game Gear).



### Game of the Month: Gunstar Heroes (Genesis)

Japanese developer Treasure is known as the master of sleeper hits (like the GC's *Warrio World*). Ten years ago, its excellent Genesis shoot-'em-up *Gunstar Heroes* nabbed *EGM*'s Game of the Month, scoring straight 9s (out of 10).

### Nintendo Retools NES

On Oct. 15, 1993, Nintendo shipped a \$50 redesigned NES console to stores. The major alterations on the smaller machine were a top-loading cartridge slot and thin, dog-bone-shaped controller.



### Kick Some Clay

The digitized-claymation brawler *ClayFighter* was also reviewed this issue. While *Fighter* wasn't "good," its maker, Visual Concepts, moved on to bigger things—VC now handles Sega's *ESPN* sports titles. We hear *ClayFighter* character Blue Suede Goo has a new career in the motion-capture department...

## BY THE NUMBERS

Raw game data for you

- 256** Most common number of levels in a game
- 255** Most common number of bosses in a game
- 254** Most common number of items in a game

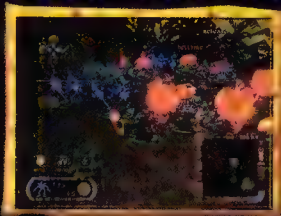
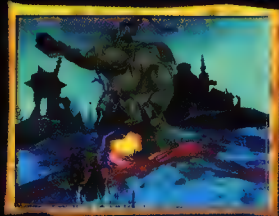
- 10.5** Most common average rating
- 40** Most common number of levels in a game
- 80** Most common number of bosses in a game
- 3.24** Most common average rating



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# CHILD'S PLAY

Could today's tykes tolerate the classic games you grew up with? Kids *do* say the darndest things....

**Y**our average gamers these days are in their late 20s—young enough to still find new ways to destroy brain cells, old enough to worry about bills and 401ks, and wise enough to reminisce about the good ol' days of videogames. But was the age of *Pong*, *Atari*, *Mattel* handheld *Football*, and *Dankey Kong* really all that great, or are we just blinded by luzzy, warm nostalgia?

There's only one way to find out: subject

today's kids to the games we played when we were their age. So we rounded up nine children of the PlayStation generation—ages 10 to 13—and forced them to play titles from the '70s and '80s. We wanted to strap the kids to brain scanners and whatnot, but...you know, child-safety laws and stuff. Instead, we just recorded their reactions. If you grew up with these classics, prepare to feel old....

—Crispin Boyer and Shawn Elliott



## Meet the kids...



NAME: Tim Burke  
AGE: 11



NAME: Becky Cooper  
AGE: 12



NAME: Brian Cooper  
AGE: 10



NAME: John Burke  
AGE: 11



NAME: Gordon Wong  
AGE: 11



NAME: Kirk Ireland  
AGE: 12



NAME: Andrew Nizamian  
AGE: 12



NAME: Sheldon Wong  
AGE: 13



NAME: Nico Liczanski  
AGE: 13

>> FOR THE 25th ANNIVERSARY OF SPACE INVADERS ON SEPT. 21, AT&T WILL RELEASE A PACKAGE FOR PS2 IN JAPAN THAT INCLUDES EVERY VERSION OF THE TITLE EVER MADE, STARTING





## PONG

Atari • 1975

**A**tari's home version of its simple ball-and-paddle coin-op became the first smash-hit console and made videogames a new pastime in the swinging '70s.

**Niko:** Hey—Pong. My parents played this game.

**Brian:** It takes this whole console just to do Pong?

**Kirk:** What is this? [Picks up and twists the paddle controller] Am I controlling the volume?

**John:** I'm just going to do this [twists

the paddle controller as rapidly as possible].

**Tim:** John, don't do that. You'll die.

**Andrew:** This is a lot like that game. Um, whatchamacallit—air hockey.

**Sheldon:** Except worse.

**Andrew:** Blip. Blip. Blip. Blip.

**Becky:** I don't even see the point of having sound on this.

**Andrew:** Wow. The score is tied. It's so exhilarating.

**Kirk:** I saw a documentary on this. The game was so popular in arcades that it got jammed up with quarters.

**John:** Is this thing? [Points to the Pong game console]

**Tim:** I would never pay to play some-

thing like this.

**John:** I'd sooner jump up and down on one foot. By the way, is this supposed to be tennis or Ping-Pong?

**Becky:** Ping-Pong.

**Gordon:** It doesn't even go over the net. It goes through it. I don't even think that thing in the middle is a net.

**Tim:** My line is so beating the heck out of your stupid line. Fear my pink line. You have no chance. I am the undisputed lord of virtual tennis. [Misses ball] Whoops.

**John:** Tim, how could you miss that? It was going like 1 m.p.h.

Actually, I've never been in there.

**EGM:** Guess how much this thing cost when it came out.

**Kirk:** Twenty bucks?

**EGM:** Higher.

**Brian:** \$50?

**EGM:** Higher.

**Brian:** \$100?

**EGM:** Yep.

**Niko:** My God—I could almost buy a PS2 for that. I'm sure when this came out, it was better than whatever else was out. I want to play chess with me, son? No way, Dad.

**John:** I want to play Pong!

# "I'd sooner jump up and down on one foot."

—11-year-old John Burke on playing Pong

**Sheldon:** Hey, why does it say Sears on the controller?

**EGM:** Sears sold it for Atari.

**Andrew:** Isn't Sears, like, a clothing company?

**Becky:** Sears makes everything.

**Tim:** Oh, I'm starting to suck. John, you drained my skill.

**John:** Yes, I used a power-up.

**Tim:** What? There's no power-ups in Pong. The concept of a power-up hadn't been invented yet.

## DONKEY KONG

Arcade • 1981



**I**t's the first breakout hit from master game designer Shigeru Miyamoto. Donkey Kong debuted mustachioed hero Mario.

**Becky:** It looks like a Mario that got run over by a car.

**Andrew:** Really. I mean the man is almost flat.

**Gordon:** He's a funny color.

**Sheldon:** His face looks pink.

**Becky:** What color is he supposed to be? Green? And why can't we get past this first level?

**Andrew:** Someone take over before I lose my dignity. [Mario picks up the hammer power-up]

**Andrew and Niko:** Hey, that's from Super Smash Bros.

**Andrew:** So that's where they got the idea from.

**Gordon:** Naoo!

**Andrew:** You got the hammer and you still got killed.

**Tim:** Mario dies way too easy. Oh, grab the umbrella. Those are cool.

**John:** Unfashionable, gay, but cool. Oh, 300 points. That's it? All you get is points?

**Tim:** That's lame. Can't you do something with the umbrella?

**Tim:** They just put totally random stuff

here for points. Oh, you've got an umbrella. You've got a purse.

**John:** Watch out, Tim—fire. It's smarter than you think.

**Tim:** It's strange that fire moves in this and has eyes. Oh no, the fire's coming. It's going to eat you. Are these barrels alive, too? Everything's alive. And Donkey Kong's mouth is made of pluses. Look: Plus, plus, plus, minus.

**Brian:** How can you die from a fall of a whopping 3 inches?

**Kirk:** He's only an inch tall. He's a little short fat guy who eats way too much pizza.



**EGM:** Who's that chick? Mario is running up there?

**Brian:** It's Princess Peach.

**Kirk:** It's a hooker.

**Niko:** She looks out in half.

**Tim:** Oh wow—she's one of those pole dancers.

## HANDHELD FOOTBALL

Mattel • 1977

**I**f everyone who grew up in the '70s owned one of these portable two-player pigskin sims, which used red LED lights to represent players.

**Brian:** What's this supposed to be?

**EGM:** Football. It's one of the first great portable games.

**Brian:** I thought it was Run Away From the Bots.

**John:** I don't see how this has anything remotely to do with football.

**EGM:** Which team are you playing?

**Kirk:** The red lines.

**Tim:** They could've just as easily called this game anything—Baseball, Bowling, Escape From the Monsters.

**EGM:** Did you score?

**Kirk:** I bumped into a dot.



## TETRIS

Arcade • 1988

**I**nspired in Russia and the target of hundreds of imitators, Tetris is the original superaddictive puzzle game.

**Tim:** Which button do I press to make the blocks explode?

**EGM:** Sorry, they don't explode.

**Becky:** This is boring. Maybe if it had characters and stuff and different levels, it would be OK. If things blew up or something or—

**Sheldon:** If there were bombs.

**Becky:** Yeah, or special bricks. Like, if a yellow brick touched a red brick it would blow up and you'd have to start over.

**John:** Why haven't I won yet? I've paired up so many of the same color.

**EGM:** Don't worry about colors.

**John:** I just lined up six of the same color. Why didn't they blow up?

**EGM:** Nothing blows up.





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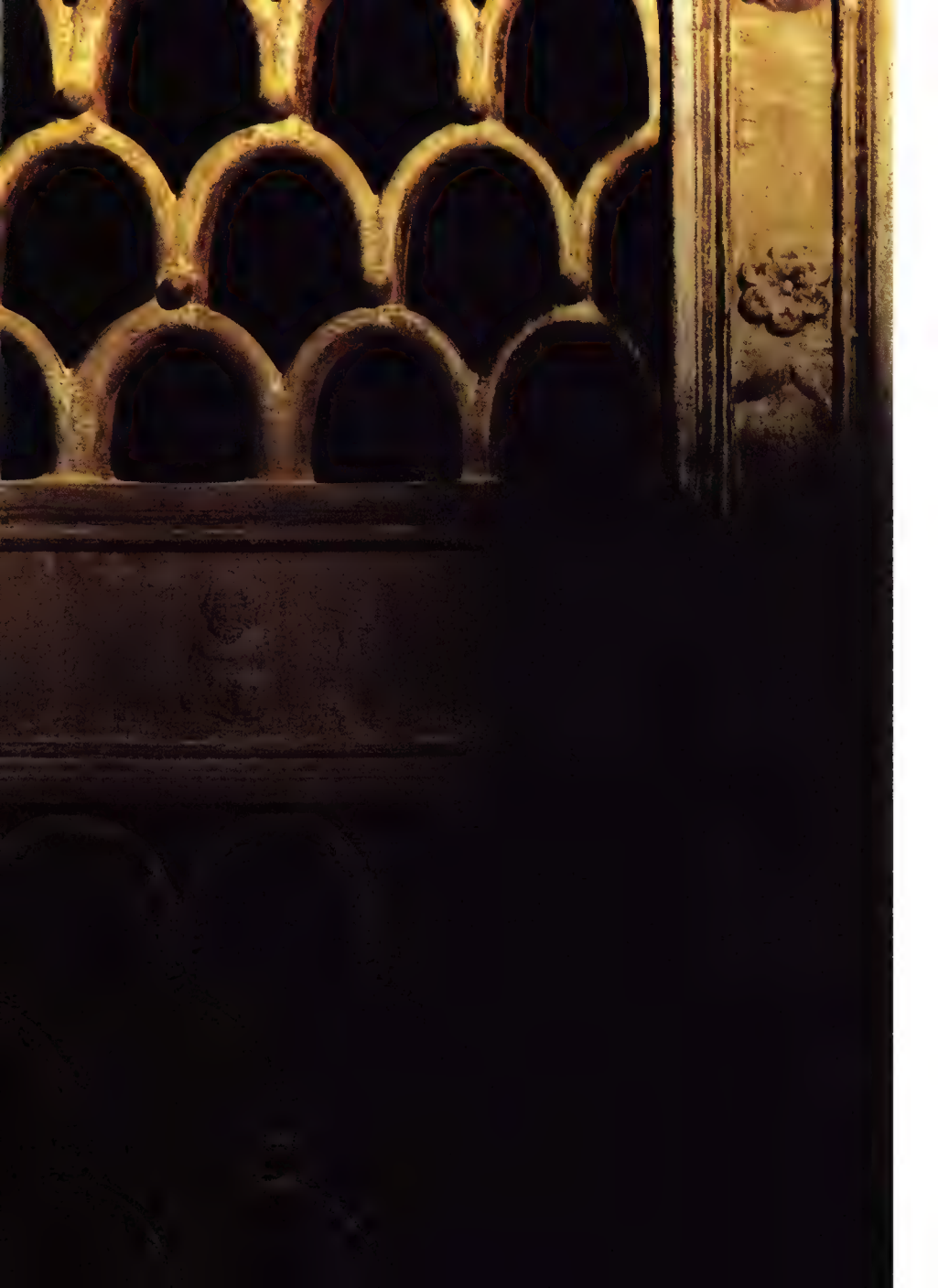
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## E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRRESTRIAL

Atari 2600 • 1983

**T**he original lousy licensed game, *E.T.* had players fishing phone parts and Reese's Pieces from holes in the ground. *EGM* voted it the worst game of all time. We forced the kids to play it because...well, we had to when we were little. Why shouldn't they suffer, as well?

[E.T. falls into a pit]

**Tim:** What just happened?

**John:** Ah, you're trapped forever!

**Brian:** This is sad.

**Tim:** Why did my head just get farther away? I can't get out.

**Kirk:** Maybe you should try to go over those dark green things.

**Tim:** I'm trying, I don't know how.

**John:** He's using his E.T. powers! What does this have to do with the movie? I don't remember the parts where E.T. falls into pits and makes his neck

longer.

**Kirk:** Quit falling into the stupid pit, you piece of s\*\*\*!

**Tim:** Can I stop now?

**Brian:** This controller's crap; you need to sit on top of the TV to play.

[An icon appears in the pit]

**John:** Yay! You got a...thing.

**EGM:** What did you get?

**John:** A backwards C?

**Brian:** Reese's Pieces? Am I in a different pit this time? [Ten minutes later, Brian escapes the pit]

**Tim:** Whoa, someone has you!

**John:** It's a lady.

**Tim:** No it's not. Her hair is E.T.

**Sheldon:** No! No! Not E.T.! Kill! Kill! Kill E.T.! Glock E.T.!

**John:** This game is so confusing.

**Kirk:** No wonder it's the worst ever.

**Brian:** A flower grew!

**Kirk:** Piss on it.

and less predictable.

**Tim:** *E.T.* is unpredictable: You never know when you'll fall into a pit or when a kid is gonna enter your body...I mean use your skin as his own.

**Nico:** Didn't they bury this game in Mexico or something?

**Gordon:** Is that a woman?

**Becky:** It's Zeus. He's taking you away to the Acropolis.

**Andrew:** The point of *E.T.* is to see how bad they can piss you off...

**Nico:** ...before you turn it off.

**Becky:** Maybe another movie company that didn't want you to like *E.T.* made this game.



**"No! No! Not E.T. Kill! Kill! Kill E.T.!**  
**Glock E.T.!"**

—13-year-old Sheldon Wong

**Tim:** Oh look—it's a dork! [Points to Elliott on the screen]

**John:** He put himself inside your body.

**Tim:** He's using his life force upon you.

**Tim:** [Points to lava lamp on TV stand]

That thing's more interesting.

**John:** Yeah, let's watch the lamp. It's

**Andrew:** Yeah, it was some sort of corporate sabotage.

**Sheldon:** Hurry, make him die!

**Gordon:** Please.

[E.T. finally dies—general clapping and hurrahs]

**Andrew:** Eeeeee phone home.



## SPACE INVADERS

Arcade • 1978

**T**his 25-year-old shooter was the first arcade game to become a national sensation.

**EGM:** This game was so popular in Japan that—

**John:** They made it into a TV show?  
**EGM:** Well, no, it was so popular that they ran out—



**John:** Oh, did they make collectible trading cards for it?

**EGM:** Um, no, it was so popular that there was a shortage of the coins used to play it.

**John:** But you can get this game on a cell phone. Why would you want to play for it in an arcade?

**Andrew:** I've seen a game like this in the arcade, but it's tons faster.

**Sheldon:** ...and it's in color.

**Andrew:** ...and your spaceship looks more like a spaceship.

play it on your cell phone, then you might play it pretty long.

**Nico:** There's nothing else to do.

**Andrew:** Except look at nature.

**EGM:** Would you rather play this or play outside?

**Andrew:** Outside.

**Nico:** This game needs a super bomb or something.

**Tim:** This is nothing compared to *Grand Theft Auto III*, because you can't steal a taxi cab, pick up somebody, then drive into the ocean with him.

**"I'm sure everyone who made this game is dead by now."**

—12-year-old Kill Ireland

**Nico:** ...and not like a little box.

**Santoku:** It looks like food.

**Andrew:** Where's my rapid fire?

**Nico:** The aliens look like spiders...

**Becky:** ...and squids and crabs.

**John:** Maybe this is what seafood will do in a thousand years.

**EGM:** How long could you play this game before you get bored?

**Sheldon:** About 15 minutes.

**Andrew:** If you take it on the road and

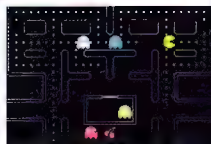
**Kirk:** And you can't pick up an AK-47 and go kill—hey, those aliens on the top row, you use them in *EGM* for stuff.

**EGM:** Yeah, we use them to end our articles. They do kinda look like they're from *Space Invaders*, don't they?

**Tim:** They're going to sue you.

**Kirk:** I'm sure everyone who made this game is dead by now. ☹

## Lightning round



### PAC-MAN

Arcade • 1980

**Becky:** This game's fun, but you get tired of it.



### PITFALL

Atari 2600 • 1980

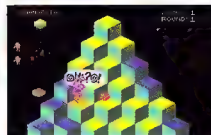
**Andrew:** This looks 10,000 years old.

Why does he fart when he falls down?

**Becky:** He's like an 18th-century

Tarzan in green tights...

**Andrew:** ...but with a really bad digestive system.



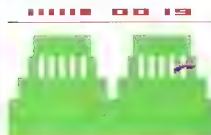
### Q\*BERT

Arcade • 1982

**John:** Is that little guy swearing?  
**Kirk:** Coof! But I'd be swearing, too, if I wasted a quarter on this crap.

**Tim:** Oh! A...thing!

**John:** I swore myself to death. What do I do now?



### SUPERMAN

Atari 2600 • 1982

**Tim:** [Superman starts flying] What's that sound?

**John:** The bad guy has a leaf blower?

Why does the world keep changing?

**Brian:** You can see through walls.

**John:** No, it's because this game has a hidden message: We live in a changing world.

**EGM:** That's deep, kid.



# from conception to reality

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■ Medusa dishes out the latest gossip on all the other minibosses. "Bitch!"

# THRICE BITTEN

## Castlevania returns to 3D with Lament of Innocence—but is it still Castlevania?

**1** Designing a next-generation *Castlevania* title has to be the most perilous job in the game industry. Just ask the developers of the Nintendo 64 games, who made two not-at-all-awful 3D adventures and were then stoned to death by old-school fans when they dared to call them *Castlevania*.

The newest developer to go slambanging in that particular minefield is Koji Igarashi, whose team revitalized the series years ago with the PS1 classic *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* and kept it alive with recent GBA gems *Aria of Sorrow* and *Harmony of Dissonance*. Despite his credentials, reception to the unveiling of the new PS2 *Castlevania: Lament of Innocence*

(due late October) was mixed. It seemed pretty enough, but its 3D visuals, splashy moves, and combo counters bore a strong resemblance to those of Capcom's *Devil May Cry* (the stylish 3D action series that recently lost credibility with a disappointing sequel).

In this case, looks are definitely deceiving. After a few hours of investigating *Lament*, the only games it'll remind you of are Igarashi's other *Castlevania* masterworks. The game's structure is distinctively *Castlevania*; you're given free run of a massive castle, and when you're stuck in one area, you can find a variety of solutions by exploring the others. Hero Leon Belmont may not earn experience points to level up

in the series' traditional style, but he can learn a wide variety of skills from combat experience, pick up armaments that boost his stats, and acquire subweapon abilities and powerful relics. Even late in the game, new powers and items tick in every 20 minutes or so.

While Leon is a worthy successor to his family name, the Belmont-of-the-century isn't the only star of a good *Castlevania* game. In the series' best installments, the chilling atmosphere and bizarre architecture of Dracula's castle often steals the show. From what we've seen so far in *Lament*, the castle may be phoning this one in. There are a handful of cool rooms in each area, but the ones in between feel a little too similar at times, differing only in their textures and enemy assortment.

The play mechanics, however, develop beautifully. A few minutes of shattering skeletons with Leon's beautifully animated whip should put the fears of old fans to rest while catching the eyes of those who may have been turned off by the slightly dated 2D action of past installments.

The transition has been made considerably smoother by a gorgeous soundtrack from *Castlevania*'s finest composer, Michiru Yamane, and characters from *Symphony's* Ayami Kojima. But such details won't be necessary for winning over *Castlevania* aficionados; Igarashi knows what made his recent titles great, and the formula works like a charm here. While we wait until next month for the final version of the game, we can definitely say this *Lament* is worthy of the *Castlevania* name. **A** —Casey Lee



■ Trade hair-care secrets in Rinaldo's shop.

### concept overLoad

For a game that's supposed to be all about action, *Lament* sure does have a lot of different things you can equip. Among the categories:

**Armaments:** Spend your hard-earned cash on armor or collect rings and other accessories that bolster Leon's other defenses.

**Subweapons:** The traditional knife, ax, cross, and holy water, as well as the not-so-traditional crystal.

**Orbs:** When equipped, these colored spheres power up subweapons, often drastically altering their capabilities.

**Relics:** These ancient artifacts give Leon superhuman abilities such as superspeed, a trail of fire, etc.

**Skills:** As Leon defeats certain enemies, he'll gain more than 15 new moves and combo attacks.

So let's do the math: Five subweapons multiplied by seven orbs, 10 relics, and 15 combos...which means Leon has about 60 distinct abilities. Damn.



FOR A SHORT TIME AFTER OCTOBER 13, GAMERS WHO BUY THE INDIGO OR GLACIER GAME BOY ADVANCE WILL GET AN E-READER SAMPLE PACK (INCLUDING DONKEY KONG JR.)



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



**TEEN**  
**T** Mild Violence  
CONTENT RATED BY  
**ESRB**



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](http://xbox.com/voodoovince)

# HOW TO BUILD A HOME ARCADE

We turn an old PC into the ultimate coin-op simulator

**V**intage coin-op aficionados who want to collect the oldies the old-fashioned way—i.e., by buying one behemoth arcade cabinet at a time—will run out of money and room lickety-split. A *Ms. Pac-Man* machine alone runs about \$1,200 and weighs 300 pounds! But replicating an arcade setup at home is easier (and cheaper) than you think. All you need is a bare-bones PC, a few programs, and a heavy-duty joystick to complete the experience. It all shouldn't cost more than \$400.

## The brains

Almost any laptop or desktop PC—even a first-generation Pentium class (166MHz or faster)—is spunky enough to power most games in your home arcade. You can dig out that dusty old PC tower or buy a used one for cheap. We recommend that you have a standard SVGA monitor, a soundcard, any version of the Windows operating system, and a non-USB keyboard port for the arcade stick (see sidebar). Don't worry about RAM or hard-drive size—you won't need much. *Centipede*, for example, is a mere 32KB download (about .00001 percent the size of *Metrod Prime*). *Asteroids?* 19KB! Of course, a mightier system will yield better results with games from later than the early '90s, some of which require up to 256MB of RAM.

## The games

Now it's talk software. You can find reliable emulators—programs that trick your PC into thinking it's a coin-op—on the Net, and they play thousands of arcade games from the late '70s to today. The best choice is MAME, or the Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator

(see [mame.net](http://mame.net) for info). Windows gamers should download the easiest-to-use MAME32 port ([classicgaming.com/mame32qa](http://classicgaming.com/mame32qa)), while Mac users should get MacMAME ([macmame.org](http://macmame.org)). Both are free.

Once you have the emulator, you'll also need to find and download the individual games, called ROMs. Keep in mind, though, that while the emulators are perfectly legal, ROMs are not since the copyright owners aren't being compensated for their games. It is possible to obtain legal ROMs by buying software packages such as Microsoft's *Return of Arcade* or a controller bundled with games (such as the Capcom titles included with the Hot Rod stick). If you insist on downloading ROMs, however, we can't stop you from using your favorite search engine or arcade emulator website, such as [classicgaming.com](http://classicgaming.com) or [arcadeathome.com](http://arcadeathome.com).

## Go play

Don't be afraid to tweak the many options in MAME. Those with a decent videocard, for instance, can enable buffering options for enhanced visuals. If you crave high-quality sound samples, artwork, or cheat files, go grab them at [mame.net](http://mame.net). And for maximum performance, don't run other programs in the background when playing MAME. Above all, experiment with your settings and have a blast getting your *Zaxxon* on. **A**

—Marc Saltzman

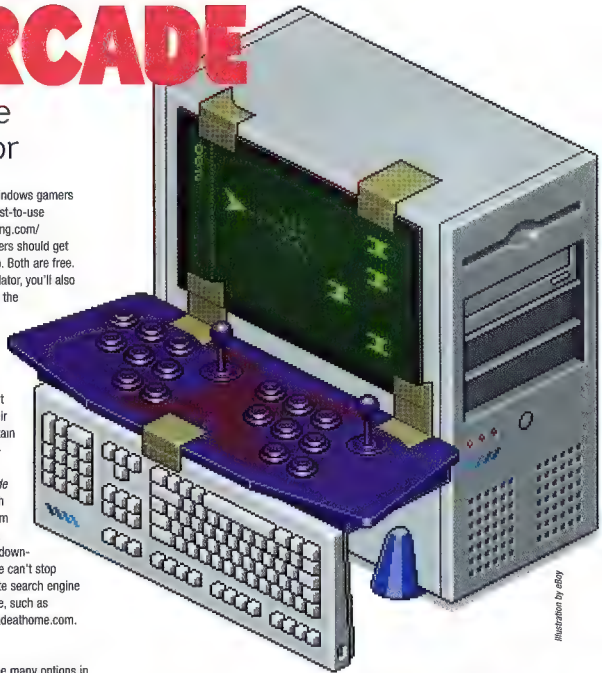


Illustration by eBay

## in control

Sure, it's possible to play arcade classics with a mouse and keyboard, but who wants to slap out *Street Fighter II* moves on arrow keys? Hook up one of these arcade-style PC joysticks instead. We even pick the best one.

	The X-Arcade ( <a href="http://x-arcade.com">x-arcade.com</a> ; \$100 for one-player, \$150 for two)	Hot Rod SE ( <a href="http://banaha.com">banaha.com</a> ; \$200)	Hot Rod SE ( <a href="http://banaha.com">banaha.com</a> ; \$200)
Pros:	Preset configuration already in MAME; fast delivery; button layout programmable; optional adapters for your consoles	Basically the same board layout as X-Arcade, so it's easy to set up in MAME and feels good; 14 free Capcom classics	14 free Capcom classics; 14 free Capcom classics; 14 free Capcom classics; 14 free Capcom classics
Cons:	Sticks on two-player board too close together; no games included	No console hook-ups; not programmable; one button less than X-Arcade	No console hook-ups; not programmable; one button less than X-Arcade

## Going legit

Don't settle for anything less than an authentic arcade cabinet? Several manufacturers ship exact replicas, often with a monitor, extra coin slot, and marquee lights. Some even include the PC, such as the Pentium III version in Hamaker's \$4,000 ArcadePC Deluxe ([banaha.com](http://banaha.com)). If you have the PC and stick already, the address: X-Arcade ([x-arcade.com](http://x-arcade.com)) has a joystick dock (left) for under \$350. Or build your own like handy reader's *Hot Rod SE* ([banaha.com](http://banaha.com)).

■ The X-Arcade cabinet costs \$1,000 if you add in joysticks.

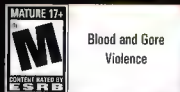
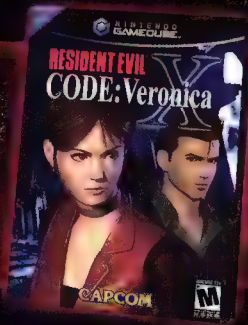
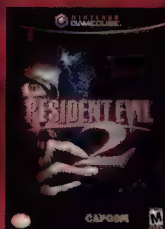
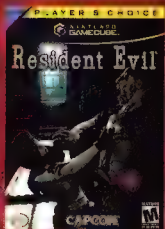
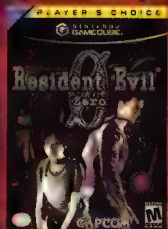


# RESIDENT EVIL CODE: Veronica

**EVIL IS JUST AROUND  
THE CORNER.**

Your worst nightmare is staring you in the face. You have defeated the relentless Nemesis of Resident Evil 3, now play the blood-chilling sequel Code:Veronica X. Seeking clues in search of her missing brother, Claire Redfield discovers the insidious Umbrella Corporation's horrific conspiracy is not isolated to the small mid-western town of Raccoon City. flesh-eating zombies and blood-thirsty beasts always one step behind, the nightmare is more horrifying than you imagine.

**Own the Entire Resident Evil® Saga on the Nintendo GameCube™.**

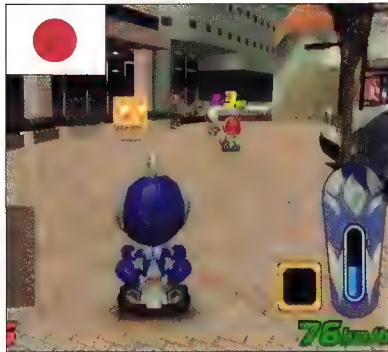


[RESIDENTEVIL.COM](http://RESIDENTEVIL.COM)

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# EGM INTERNATIONAL

Men on trikes and men in tights



## PEDALIN' POWER RANGERS

Japan's greatest superheroes jump on their bikes in **Charinko Hero**. High atop the list of games that you won't see in the States anytime soon is Banpresto's GameCube kart racer *Charinko Hero*. The Japanese word *charinko* is usually used to describe a piece-of-crap bicycle, but in the case of *Hero*, it represents the superdeformed trikes on which the game's characters ride. Featuring a collection of famous action-heroes from the *Ultraman* and *Masked Rider* series, *Hero* allows up to four players to tool around a dozen themed tracks, each with their own unique properties and hazards. Characters have a special move to augment the array of weapons they can pick up à la *Mario Kart*, but the Nintendo 64-esque graphics will only impress *Ultraman* and *Rider* nuts.



## IT'S RAINING MEN

The boys of **Chohaniki** are cocked, loaded, and ready to rock. Meet Adon and Samson, two muscle-bound, don't-ask-don't-tell male bodybuilders and the stars of the upcoming Japanese PS2 side-scrolling shooter *Chohaniki: Legend of Holy Protein*. These manly men have a most mantastic predicament: They've found a legendary potion that will grant anyone the perfect body. Naturally, these workout buddies don't want to cheat—they're content to pump up the old-fashioned way. But to stop the forces of evil from achieving perfect pumpitude, the pair set out to deliver the protein to safer hands. Think old-school shoot-'em-up combined with over-the-top homoerotic visuals, then write "not destined for export" all over it.

## OVERHEARD

"We are preparing a new product [for 2004] which will be surprising & unique"

—Nintendo president Satoru Iwata tenses the muscles at a press conference in Tokyo. He did not specify if this "product" would be new hardware or software

"When we were first planning what job outfits to include, there were some that didn't make it past brainstorming, like **blitzball player, ninja, and French mail...**"

—Final Fantasy X-2 Director Motomu Toriyama fantasizes about costume ideas for his game's three female leads

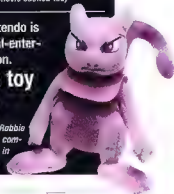


"The only thing we can attribute [poor ticket sales] to is that the **gamers were not happy with the latest version of the Tomb Raider videogame, which is our core audience.**"

—Paramount Distribution President Wayne Lawless discussing the low box office receipts for *Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life* (in all fairness to the new game, the movie sucked too)

"I don't think Nintendo is here for the digital-entertainment revolution. They are a toy company."

—Xbox Office Rubick Rich comments on the competition in an article in *BusinessWeek*, last June



## L1! PREVIEWS: GUNS, SHARKS, AND CARS FOR THE MAN IN YOUR LIFE

### GHOST RECON: JUNGLE STORM

PS2 • Ubi Soft • November 2003 — *Jungle Storm* includes everything from *Ghost Recon: Island*, *Thunder* (Xbox), plus a lot more single-player and some three new multiplayer modes, online co-op.

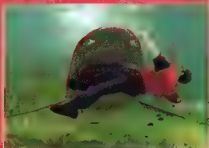
(For more on guns, grunts, and other Spideys, both online and off, see your A1, Squally.)



### SOLE PREDATOR

PS2, Xbox • TBA • Release date 2004 — Well, when we thought it was time to go back in the water, *Epic* (the *Dominion* developer) Appaltesh (uh, you'll pardon us) a great white shark-driven multi-

(For more on sharks, see your A1, Sharknado.)



### FORD RACING EVOLUTION

PS2, Xbox • EA GAMES • November 2003 — It's rough with the P-160, '53 Thunderbolt, '76 Bronco, and '890 Bronco—our built-in gentleman like the Fordor grandma's Crown Vic. This \$29

budget title will give you a 90-foot race and a 100-foot race, plus a 100-foot race, like-spooly (ghost drive).





# GET STOKED!

"Arcade gaming doesn't get much better than Robotron: 2084."

ANDREW REINER - EXECUTIVE EDITOR - GAME INFORMER

"Smash TV is one of my favorite games of all-time."

JEFF GERSTMANN - SENIOR EDITOR - GAMESPOT.COM

"Almost every title in the lineup brings a nostalgic smile to my face."

CHRIS CARLE - EDITOR IN CHIEF IGN GUIDES/IGN CODES - IGN.COM

"I'm a huge fan of Rampart. It's one of my favorite old arcade games."

JOE FIELDER - PREVIEWS EDITOR - ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

"Combining established classics like Joust, Spy Hunter and Defender with gems like Toobin' and Blaster, this is a must-have collection of classic arcade games."

Eric Bratcher - Associate Editor

PSM: 100% Unofficial PlayStation Magazine

Find your FAVORITE in Midway Arcade Treasures!

Midway Arcade Treasures is jam-packed with over 20 arcade classics including:

- |               |                  |                |                    |
|---------------|------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| • SpyHunter   | • Paperboy       | • RoadBlasters | • Toobin'          |
| • Defender    | • Rampage        | • Blaster      | • KLAX             |
| • Defender II | • Marble Madness | • Rampart      | • SPLATI           |
| • Gauntlet    | • Robotron 2084  | • Sinistar     | • Satan's Hollow   |
| • Joust       | • Smash TV       | • Super Sprint | • Vindicators      |
| • Joust 2     | • Bubbles        | • 720°         | • Root Beer Tapper |



[midwayarcadetreasures.midway.com](http://midwayarcadetreasures.midway.com)

**MIDWAY**

RATING PENDING



Visit [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org) or call 1-800-771-3772 for Rating Information.

PlayStation.2







# BACKYARD

## WRESTLING

DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

OUT  
NOW!

Over 40 songs from:

Andrew WK, Sum 41, Insane Clown Posse, Rancid,  
CKY, American Hi Fi, Chimaira, Bowling For Soup,  
Anthrax, Injected, Dropkick Murphy's, Sepultura,  
Spineshank, Shadow's Fall, Motion Man and more...

# The fate of humanity rests with Homer J. Simpson.

"Best. Simpsons Game. Ever."

- Electronic Gaming Monthly



Explore Springfield on foot

Play as your favorite Simpsons character

56 story-based missions; 7 challenging levels

Over 40 unique vehicles



PlayStation.2



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**HIT & RUN**

Save Springfield  
By car. By foot. By the seat of your pants.

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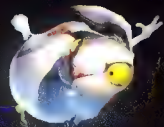


## CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

Flaming Fur Ball or Radioactive Rabbit? Choose your weapon wisely or you and your fellow fugitive will be forever subjected to a life of twisted animal testing. Shackled together, Spanx must use the indestructible Redmond as a weapon of mass destruction and tool for escape from an evil corporation.



BUNNY CANNON



HELIUM BUNNY



HARE-SICLE



HARE CLOG

- Flaming Fur Ball
- Bunny Grinder
- Radioactive Rabbit
- Bunny Fuse
- Hare-sicle
- Electro Static Rabbit
- Hungry Bunny
- Hare Clog
- Tug-O-Rabbit
- 10 Ton Bunny
- Bunny Cannon
- Helium Bunny
- Hyper Hare
- Stuffed Rabbit
- Chocolate Bunny

# BUST



RATING PENDING

RP

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org) or call 1-800-771-3772 for Rating Information.

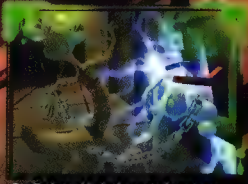
WhiplashGame.com

CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

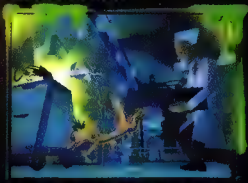
eidos



# IT UP!



Dip Redmond in toxic waste to poison enemies, electro-charge him to zap attackers and more!



Demolish everything in the lab from security cameras to test equipment.



Knock out the evil lab staff with loads of attack combos.



"Side-splitting and hysterical. Whiplash is a blast to play!" — PSE2

PlayStation 2



# Whiplash

OCTOBER 2003

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# 20 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

Already played through the game? You'll still be wowed by these

**A** role-playing game as deep as Xbox hit *Star Wars: KOTOR* is bound to contain loads of hidden tricks, Easter eggs, and arcane tactics. But how do you find out about them? It's not like you can just sit down with the developers at BioWare and ask for all their little secrets. Well, you can't—but we can, and that's exactly what we did.

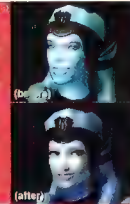
**!** Caution! Spoilers are marked with this symbol—you've been warned!

**17** *Gizka*, the little critters you find in your ship on Tatooine, are based on the famous *Star Trek* episode *The Trouble With Tribbles*. "We're inspired by a whole bunch of pop-culture references," says Lead Designer James Ohlen. "The [family] feud on Dantooine is inspired by *Romeo and Juliet*. And the Leviathan levels are inspired by the Bespinn city sequences in *The Empire Strikes Back*."

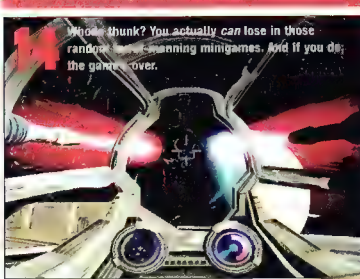


**13** The BioWare world records in swoop racing are... Tatooine: 22.35 seconds; Manaan: 21.76 seconds; Tarris: 25:30. "If you can do better," Muzyka says, "drop us a line on the official *KOTOR* forums [at [swforums.bioware.com/](http://swforums.bioware.com/)]."

**20** Mission *Map* got prettier in later stages of development. "Originally, players would have to look at the map to see what the hell was going on," says Lead Designer David Gaeremynck. "We had to make sure that the map was as clear as possible, and that it was as easy to use as possible. Mission *Map* is a great example of what you will have to deal with in your menu."



**16** The game's most expensive item is *Carth's Golden Armor* at 15,000 credits. "It's the best armor in the game," says Ohlen, "and gives a 4-10 bonus to defense as well as resistance against DMG, fire, and lightning damage." It's also the most expensive item in the game, and you should be able to afford it.



**14** Would you think? You actually can lose in those random, seemingly minigames. And if you do, the game's over.

**19** Downloadable content planned for Xbox Live this winter includes...

"Some cool new items like weapons, armor, and other things to make characters more powerful, plus a new location where those items are sold," says Joint-CEO/Co-Executive Producer Ray Muzyka. Stay tuned for more info as it becomes available.

**18** The lead writer has seen *The Empire Strikes Back* at least 80 times. The lead producer has seen it even more.

**15** Certain dialogue choices can turn *KOTOR* into a love story involving your character and either Carth or Bastila.

**!** Depending on whether your character is male or female, if you start working it early on (talking to your party members when you first board the Ebon Hawk), you'll trigger optional romance quests. "Once you've talked to them enough times," Ohlen says, "Carth will tell you about his son. Dustil and Bastila will talk about her mother. All you have to do now is leave the Ebon Hawk [with Carth or Bastila in your party]. You have to complete these personal quests in order to get to the end of Carth or Bastila's romance."

You are easy, the camera never stopped me. I don't see you. Bastila, I know you can't be serious, she's / was probably just standing in your direction.





Some tips courtesy of David Hodgson and Prima's Official Strategy Guide for *Star Wars: Knight of the Old Republic*. Booyakasha!

**12** The **main underrated feat** is...  
Master and Jedi are combined with dual-wielded lightsabers. It's not the normal combat, according to Prima's Hodgson, senior technical editor and resident BioWare strategy expert.

**10** Those many hours of splendidly voice-acted dialogue were way cool the first time through, but on your second pass, you might want to listen to the entire game in chipmunk voices. This is one of BioWare's Easter eggs. Using a second controller plugged into port four, press the white button to speed up and raise the pitch of all in-game voices. Hit black to stop the insanity and put things back to normal. (The default setting also kicks in if you restart the Xbox.)

**8** Rakia has both...  
Eating her solid blue robes makes her able to find and reveal a hidden mine that Padawan training. If you take the clothes off her, you'll be wearing her horrid evil underwear.

**7** The Upari crystal is the most powerful upgrade crystal in the game. It can be found with the Sith master in the temple on the Unknown World.

**5** The best strategy for the final battle is...  
"Be a Jedi, a Sith, and a Jedi Sith." In other words, use your Force powers before the battle starts. During the fight, you'll use your Force powers to control the battle. Each attack uses a different Force power. Master and Jedi are combined with dual-wielded lightsabers. It's not the normal combat, according to Prima's Hodgson, senior technical editor and resident BioWare strategy expert.

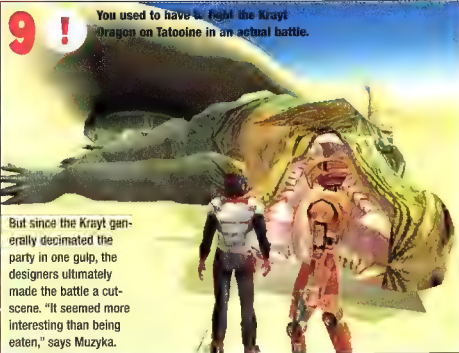
**4** At some point, if you play your cards right, you have the option to do away with your annoying party members.  
That's right! You can execute Mission and other companions if you make the choices of a true dark-side Jedi.



**2** The ideal path through the planets is...  
"Dantooine, Korriban, Manaan, and then... (Korriban) By going to Korriban first, you'll be able to get the Force power that makes you able to do the hardest part of the game. It's not the normal combat, according to Prima's Hodgson, senior technical editor and resident BioWare strategy expert.

**1** The "Dance, Malak, Dance!" Ending  
Another goofy Easter egg: If you cast a Force power on Darth Malak during your final showdown, he'll turn into a Twi'lek Dancer. You and he will then dance for a little while before the game comes to an end. To rig this one up, have a second controller plugged into port four. Before you open the door to the final battle against Darth Malak, pull both triggers on both controllers and press Y at the same time. —Jennifer Tsao

**11** Early versions of the game had even tougher math puzzles.  
"Luckily, before we shipped," jokes Muzyka, "we realized not all players are fans of math, and our designers wisely [converted the story] from the original plan of a small math competition and chess club set on Tatooine to the more epic story of an all-out battle between the Republic and the Sith set 4,000 years before the movies. Er...that's to say, we allow you to fight your way through."



**6** The scale model of the Leviathan was stolen during development and held hostage by a Canadian survivalist group.  
OK, so that one's not true. But the Leviathan was modeled after the jawbone of a whale, and though that's not quite as exciting as the hostage story, at least it actually happened. Other real-life source material included a clubhouse at an Austrian golf course (the Dantooine estate) and a building in Cornwall, England (the Rakata camp interiors on the Unknown World).



**3** HK-47 was once owned by a high-profile character in the game.  
Make sure your repair droids are...  
Dark (Revan) you can...  
link...  
story: 11; Third story: 14; Fourth story: 17.1



# NO HELMET REQUIRED

EA delivers football with an attitude in **NFL Street**

**B**-ball fans have totally bought into the *NBA Street* series' rules-out-the-window take on the sport, so it's no surprise that Electronic Arts is now preparing a similar experience for armchair quarterbacks: *NFL Street*, due in January for all three major consoles. Developing this extreme version of the gridiron is EA Tiburon, the maker of *Madden*, so we're expecting a lot outta this one. Here's our exclusive scouting report.

## Only Iron Men need apply

Instead of the standard 11-on-11 action, *NFL Street* is 7-on-7 "iron man" football in which



the entire squad plays both offense and defense—anyone can line up in any position. Your choices are limitless—go ahead and make Oakland Raiders quarterback Rich Gannon a pass-rushing fool, or have the Baltimore Ravens' hard-hitting linebacker Ray Lewis take the snap. "[I] focus some tough decisions and interesting strategies when it comes to assembling rosters," says Designer Jason Barnes.

## Let's celebrate

Showboating is a big no-no in the stodgy, pipe-smoking National Football League—but in *NFL Street*'s fields, the more flamboyant the play, the better. Performing such

moves as behind-the-back passes or spinning the ball on your finger while heading toward the end zone help fill your GameBreaker meter. "Once you get a GameBreaker, your players go 'in the zone' for the entire drive," Barnes tells us. "If you're on offense, you're going to plow

over defenders. While on defense, your players will be a menace, wrecking blockers and forcing fumbles."

## Size matters

In addition to choosing your team based on player attributes, you'll have to take into account a field's characteristics. Each of the eight environments vary in length, width, first-down yardage, and playing surface, and you must adjust your lineup accordingly. For example, on the beach of the West Coast field, it's best not to load up on tubby linemen because you'll need as much speed as possible while in the sand.

## Challenge accepted

Leave the dreams of hosting the Vince Lombardi trophy to your time spent playing *Madden*. The main draw here is the NFL Challenge mode: Create a team from scratch and attempt to complete more than 150 tasks. Challenges are as routine as coming out on top in sudden-death overtime, or as demanding as springing a defensive touchdown and winning by 20 points in the same game. But the rewards are worth the effort. One set of unlockable prizes is retired NFL legends (see sidebar). Others include new plays, development points that increase player attributes, and gear to outfit your team. **BT** —Bryan Iltis



■ **The pressure is always on**—a game in *NFL Street* ends only when one team reaches a set score or number of Showboat points.



■ **Don't be a wimp**: Attempting to run out of bounds on this muddy field will only lead to you smacking headfirst into a building.



■ **Just like with Madden**, online play is limited to those with a PlayStation 2.

### Legendary Line Runners

EA Tiburon has chosen to honor some of the NFL's greatest players in the game's Hall of Fame. These players are available as unlockable prizes in the game's Challenge mode. To earn them, you'll need to complete a series of challenges. The first challenge is to complete a 70-yard punt. The second is to complete a 70-yard punt. The third is to complete a 70-yard punt. The fourth is to complete a 70-yard punt. The fifth is to complete a 70-yard punt. The sixth is to complete a 70-yard punt. The seventh is to complete a 70-yard punt. The eighth is to complete a 70-yard punt. The ninth is to complete a 70-yard punt. The tenth is to complete a 70-yard punt.



■ **L.T. goes hunting** for quarterback livestock.



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Madden NFL 2004

# HUG ME, I'M A GAME-AHOLIC

Comedian David Cross comes out loud and proud. As a gamer

**D**avid Cross is a man with a lot of love to give, and he's dishing it out with an industrial-sized ladle. The cocreator of the surreal sketch-comedy experiment *Mr. Show* also has a solo comedy CD (entitled "Shut Up, You F\*\*\*ing Baby!") under his belt and a DVD based on his current stand-up tour due in November, so you'd think the busy guy's love—or at least fleeting spare time—might not extend to videogames. But it does.

**EGM:** According to our well-placed sources in the federal government, you're a gamer?

**David Cross:** Not a fanatical one, but there are certain games that I really, really like and anxiously await. Let's call it a strong interest. Games cost 20 to 50 bucks a pop. I'll spring for about two a month, and I do a lot of trade-ins. I've got a coffee table at home that flips open, and I store my library there.

**EGM:** You've got a secret stash, huh? Trying to keep your habit in the closet?

**DC:** Yeah, I have all three systems, but it's not like I ran out and got them at the same time. It's the same with games. I'm the type of guy who trades in six old ones at the shop for two new titles. I don't keep a huge collection on hand. But if I had to pick a favorite system, it'd be the PlayStation 2. It has the largest library.

**EGM:** What's your biggest vice?

**DC:** Either *Grand Theft Auto* or *GoldenEye 007* (Nintendo 64). *GoldenEye* is amazing. That was the title that got me into gaming. Shooting people is fun. Playing with four players is great, because even if you're just watching people play, it rocks.

**EGM:** What's the best way to get your gal interested in the videogames?

**DC:** You're asking the wrong guy. I've had quite a few spats when it comes to relationships. But one game every girlfriend I've ever had could agree on was *Mario Kart*. So, I'd say introduce her to that. Girls like it. It's an insidious way to get a girl to play with you and into gaming in general if she's never touched a controller. It's

almost ruined more relationships than I can remember, though—the breakups afterward can be expensive...I buy myself chocolate roses dipped in gold to cool off, then draw a bath and light Yankee candles.

They're doing (*Mario Kart: Double Dash!!* for GameCube), and I'm really looking forward to it.

**EGM:** Anybody ever tell you that with a pointy elf hat and some tights, you'd be a dead ringer for Tingle from *Zelda: Wind Waker*? Think about it. Cosplay is so hot right now.

**DC:** Nah, I'd rather play Tommy (Veretti) from *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*. I like the idea of having dexterity and being able to punch a biker in his face, steal his bike, ride it around, and fly over buildings on it. It's also cool how you could go into bars where there's nothing but porn stars and drugs. As you can see, political correctness isn't my strong suit.

**EGM:** How do you keep up on the latest happenings in the videogame world?

**DC:** I read gaming magazines, check out the latest news from (the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo), and listen to what the press is raving about.

**EGM:** So, you're a loyal *Electronic Gaming Monthly* reader then? Got every issue back to *EGM* #1?

**DC:** Can't say I've ever heard of it. Is it a skin mag? **✶**  
—Scott Steinberg

**SWM, 39,** Likes: walks on the beach, hugs on the beach, moonlit walks and hugs on the beach, videogames. No fatties.



**Mr. Show** creators Bob Odenkirk (left) and David Cross (right) play *Super Smash Bros.* **Melee** seconds before the *Kool-Aid Man* bursts through the wall behind them.

Illustration: Jeff Mordant



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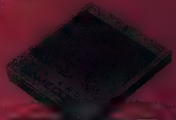
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# PRINCE OF PERSIA

## THE SANDS OF TIME

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PlayStation 2



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GAME BOY ADVANCE



Challenge Everything™

# COMIC BOOM!

A blitz of game-based comics will nourish your inner dork

**S**ure, we could stereotype comic-book geeks as tubby, sweaty, pasty, female-repulsing recluses, but frankly, we're just too busy play-

ing *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* for the third time to throw stones (or even skewer).

Besides, the panel-bound world of comics—er, we mean “graphic

novels”—has a lot of crossover appeal with the interactive realm, especially when you consider the new wave of game-inspired fare arriving at your local comics

emporium right now and into next year. Just don't forget to carefully tuck these surefire classics into mylar bags and never touch or even read them. —*Jan M. Gibson*



► Downward Capcom splatters: Street fighters, blue bombers, and devil slayers dominate the games-to-comics scene.

>> KIRBY CREATOR AND SUPER SMASH BROS. DIRECTOR MASASHIRO SAKURAI HAS LEFT NINTENDO SECOND-PARTY DEVELOPER HAL LABS TO PURSUE OTHER INTERESTS



# REMEMBER



★ PEARL HARBOR ★





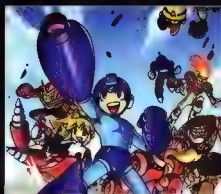


### Street Fighter

Available: Now

Read it: with a fanboy glaze over your eyes. Publisher Udon Comics is intent on appeasing the demands of hardcore *Street Fighters* everywhere. Each issue packs multiple backgrounders on fave brawlers like Ryu, Chun Li, and more.

**10-Word Pitch:** "Grade A quality 'shoryukens' that mere quarters just can't buy." —Artist Andrew Hou

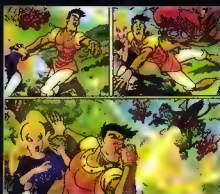


### Mega Man

Available: Now

Read it: because the Hong Kong-style art breathes new life into the Blue Bomber's teenage years as a not-so-ordinary Junior High student. As alter ego Rocky Light, he'll battle bullies and killer robots alike.

**10-Word Pitch:** "Saving the world and getting to first period on time!" —Writer Brian Augustyn

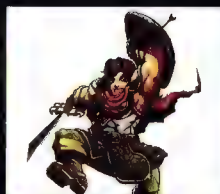


### Dragon's Lair: Singe's Revenge

Available: Now

Read it: to celebrate the 20th birthday of the arcade classic. It's a familiar yarn: Fire-breathing Singe once again abducts distressed-damsel Daphne, forcing Dirk the Daring to do his thing.

**10-Word Pitch:** "It's candy for your eyes, brain, and...er, uh, nosal!" —Writer Andy Mangels



### Maximo

Available: January 2004

Read it: or die, like Max at the hands of arch nemesis Achilles. After striking a deal with Death, he's back from the Underworld, slashing a path to busty gal-pai Sophia. Just in time for the PS2 sequel, *Maximo vs. Army of Zin*.

**10-Word Pitch:** "Witty stabs, dirty skabbs, undead magic, loved tragic, and mullets!" —Artist Alan Wang

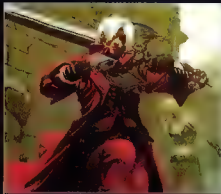


### Silent Hill

Available: February 2004

Read it: for psychological tension that'll make your brain jitter. The gritty covers alone (witness issue #1's, above) perfectly capture the pitch-black creepiness of the franchise.

**12-Word Pitch:** "[*Se7en* Director] David Fincher getting Scooby-Doo drunk, convincing Velma to lose the glasses." —Artist Ashley Wood



### Devil May Cry

Available: February 2004

Read it: because the game's frenzied gunplay pretty much negated any kind of cohesive story. This first three-issue miniseries delves deeper into the events surrounding Dante's epic demon slaughtering.

**10-Word Pitch:** "His painted art will knock your Grandmother's knitted panties off!" —Artist Pat Lee



### Darkstalkers

Available: July 2004

Read it: to witness sexy Morrigan stealing a book and orb from the Doma Clan to open The Bloodgate, a portal bridging the human and demon worlds together. Yeah, there's plenty of ass-kickery, too.

**10-Word Pitch:** "Story with heart...that's been ripped out of your chest." —Writer Akira Yoshida



### Wait, there's more:

- + Tomb Raider (Top Cow, available now)
- + Hack (TokyoPop, available now)
- + Sonic the Hedgehog (Archie, available now)
- + Space Ace (CrossGen, available now)
- + Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Marvel, coming soon)
- + Rival Schools (Dreamwave, April 2004)

## the flipside: games based on comics

You've seen all the titles starring standard superdudes like *Spider-Man*, *X-Men*, *The Hulk*, and even the less-than-super *Aquaman*, but did you know these upcoming games are based on comics, too?



Acclaim's *The Red Star* could be the first in a series if you buy it, true believers.

**XIII** (PS2, Xbox, GC • November 2003 • Based on the French comic) This cartoon-shaded shooter hails from a French spy series.

**100 BULLETS** (Systems TBA • 2004 • Based on the Vertigo comic) — A rogue member of a superscret organization paddles revenge as a commodity. And business is good.

**THE RED STAR** (Systems TBA • 2004 • Based on the Image comic) A cocktail of Soviet style, flashy wizardry, and futuristic technology.

**SPAWN** (PS2, Xbox, GC • November 2003 • Based on the Image comic) Couldn't get enough of this hell-raiser in the Xbox version of *Soul Calibur II*? Buckle up. *Spawn* creator Todd McFarlane is helping Namco craft the plot and gameplay for a bloody third-person brawler.



**LOBO** (PS2, Xbox • 2004 • Based on the DC comic) — A gritty, ultraviolet tale of an intergalactic bounty hunter on a rampage.



# A VIEW TO A KILL

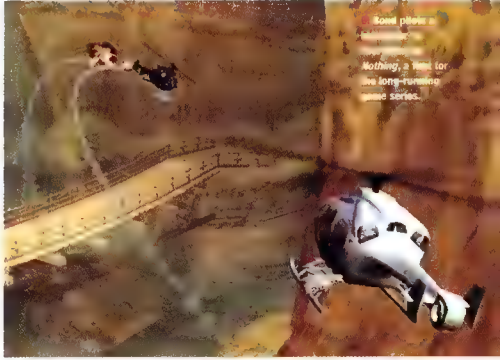
007: *Everything or Nothing's* new look leaves the Bond series shaken (not stirred)

**T**here's a lot that Bond does in the films that isn't about shooting a bad guy," says Scot Bayless, executive producer of EA's new *007* adventure—due this November for PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube. "He's agile, clever, and stealthy. He's a hell of an in-fighter." Thanks to its third-person perspective, *007: Everything or Nothing* portrays these traits

as no first-person shooter ever could. Bond can rappel up and down nearly every vertical surface, and he sneaks like *Metal Gear's* Solid Snake. Plus, he has a variety of punishing melee moves, including stealth takedowns. Bond's surroundings can often be used to disable or distract foes, and, oh yeah, sometimes he shoots bad guys.

Armed with all these options, we can do what 007 does best: improvise. In the game's opening scene alone, you can defeat enemies by creeping up like a ninja and eliminating them one by one by scaling a wall to find a sniper perch (complete with rifle) or by opening a steam valve and stunning them all.

"We're trying to create something very cinematic in presentation," Bayless says, and he doesn't mean cut-scenes—he means gameplay. For instance, fighting classic Bond villain Jaws in *Everything* >



### Double Up On 00

In addition to its snappy four-player free-for-all mode, *Everything or Nothing* features a deep two-player cooperative campaign whose story leads into the game's single-player plot. In order to succeed, you and a friend must coordinate your efforts as two of Bond's fellow M16 operatives. For instance, one agent might be required to stand on a lift while the other activates it with a distant switch. And naturally, you'll have to cover each other (especially when rappelling) and share weapons. (One particularly noteworthy touch: A yellow reticule will appear over the enemy your partner is targeting, letting you know not to waste your bullets.) We've played it, and it's a blast. *Golden-who?!*



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MEETS THE AGONY OF DEFEAT.



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Sing along with 35 hit songs, including chart-toppers popularized by Michelle Branch, R.E.M., Avril Lavigne, Nickelback, Barenaked Ladies and more. It's the ultimate party game with multiplayer for up to 8 of your friends, so step up to the mic and discover how well you carry a tune. And just how much fun agony can be.



PlayStation 2

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Always a gentleman,  
Bond waits for his turn to fire.

"We're trying to create something  
very cinematic."

► *or Nothing* feels wholly authentic. As in the films, James' punches to the gut stun Jaws, but they don't really hurt him. 007 must use nearby hazards to take down the steel-mouthed, tree-tail monster.

In another filmlike scene, Bond girl Serena St. Germain (voiced by actress Shannon Elizabeth) is thrown out of a helicopter as James looks on. What would Bond do in a situation like this? "He has only one choice: He jumps," says Bayless. You'll have to figure out how to save her (and yourself) while free-falling before gravity turns you into gravy. "We've tried to take those great Bond moments and turn them into gameplay, not just something you observe. We want you to participate." That's what we want, too. **A**  
—Paul Byrnes

### for your eyes only



Besides providing a pint-sized thriller for spies-on-the-go, the Game Boy Advance version of 007: *Everything or Nothing* can be connected to a GameCube to act as a Q-Gadget that gives you pop-up communiqué hints.



► If you're quick, you can counter Jaws' attacks and wriggle out of his meaty grasp.



### Bring on the **Mad Cows**

Our Q-spies have recently uncovered new information on 007: *Everything or Nothing*'s main Bond villain, Nikelai Diavolo. Played by veteran actor Willem Dafoe (*Spider-Man*, *Wild at Heart*), Diavolo is an ex-KGB agent considered so dangerous that the KGB tried to kill him while he was in their service. They failed—so now he's *your* problem.

"Now he's stolen previously benign nanotech technology from an Oxford

lab and modified it to become a powerful weapon," says Producer Joel Wade. "Using the nanotech as an advantage, Diavolo plans on taking over Russia, restoring its former glory, and using it as a launching pad for world domination." Bah. Sounds like a harmless enough character to us. We're frankly much more concerned about Bond bad girl Heidi Klum's character... Mrrowr.







Red eyes are always a clear sign of one thing: evil!

# IN THE ZONE

Say Halo to Sony's hot new shooter, **Killzone**

**D**espite a lack of concrete information, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe's *Killzone* (PS2) recently became the subject of feverish gossip on the Internet, with some going so far as to call it Sony's "Halo killer." Yes, the Hype is strong with this one—but

one look at these screenshots and you'll understand why. In this sci-fi, squad-based first-person shooter, each member of your four-soldier group has his own speciality, like stealth or the ability to use heavy weapons. You play as the team's leader, while the computer

controls the other three, helping flank enemies or providing covering fire as your intrepid squad blasts its way out of a trap set—and sprung—deep behind enemy lines. (Your troops are part of a colonist force named the ISA, while your foes are a separatist faction called the Helghast.)

Freshman developer Guerrilla Games promises dozens of memorable combat set pieces inspired by both real and imagined sources: Vietnam-like jungle warfare, harried street battles reminiscent of the Battle of Stalingrad, and unrelenting swarms of enemies à la films such as *Aliens* and *Starship Troopers*.

As you can see above, the overexposed lighting effects—reminiscent of Sony's stylish PS2 adventure game, *Ico*—look amazing. But there's another reason we want to get our hands on *Killzone*: Sony Europe has announced online playability for the game.

Though Sony has yet to announce the game for the U.S. market, we'll likely hear word about a 2004 release soon. Will it be a "Halo killer"? Who cares—we just hope it's killer.

—Thomas Puha and Paul Byrnes



■ We've told each one of *Killzone*'s 20-plus weapons will have two different firing modes.

## CHARTS

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES FOR JULY 2003

- 1** *NCAA Football 2004*  
Xbox, EA Sports
- 2** *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*  
Xbox, LucasArts
- 3** *NCAA Football 2004*  
Xbox, EA Sports
- 4** *Dragon Ball Z: The Legacy of Goku II*  
GBA, Atari
- 5** *Donkey Kong Country*  
GBA, Nintendo
- 6** *Pokémon Ruby*  
GBA, Nintendo
- 7** *Grand Theft Auto III*  
PS2, Rockstar
- 8** *Pokémon Sapphire*  
GBA, Nintendo
- 9** *Yu-Gi-Oh! Worldwide Edition*  
PS2, Konami
- 10** *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*  
PS2, Rockstar

TOP 10 GAME RENTALS FOR THE WEEK ENDING 8/19/03



- 1** *Madden NFL 2004*  
PS2, EA Sports
- 2** *Madden NFL 2004*  
Xbox, EA Sports
- 3** *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*  
Xbox, LucasArts
- 4** *NCAA Football 2004*  
PS2, EA Sports
- 5** *Ghost Recon: Island Thunder*  
Xbox, Ubi Soft
- 6** *Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour*  
GC, Nintendo
- 7** *Midnight Club II*  
PS2, Rockstar
- 8** *Enter the Matrix*  
PS2, Atari
- 9** *Chaos Legion*  
PS2, Capcom
- 10** *The Great Escape*  
PS2, Gotham Games

## L'I' PREVIEWS: TWO EXOTIC TALES OF ADVENTURE!

**BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON**  
PS2, Xbox • Adventure • Company • November 2003

You're a part of the old-style adventure genre (*Monkey Island* anyone?), and this is the best. *Broken Sword* is the only (video) game in town these days. You play as two daredevils who travel around the world, solve intriguing puzzles, and uncover a secret conspiracy.

**SHANTAE ADVANCE**  
GBA • TBA • Late 2003

Shantae, the only character from last year's *Shantae* who's still around, is back for a sequel: the pre-teen girl can fly, transform, and attack her way into various animal forms, tapping into their powers to defeat evil lady-pirate Risky Boots and his gang. They can blow up Sequin Land.

Source: NPD INTERACTIVE Media Services. Call (616) 624-6100 for questions regarding this list. Just don't talk about "the incident."



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Suggestive Themes  
Violence



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.



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[xbox.com/crimsonskies](http://xbox.com/crimsonskies)

# GIRLS ON FILM

Fight the power with your zoom lens in **Beyond Good & Evil**

Everything is suspect, everyone is for sale, and nothing is at all what it seems in *Rayman* creator Michel Ancel's latest opus in *Beyond Good & Evil*—due this November for PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube—plucky photographer Jade and her pig pal Pey'j must sort through secrecy and political deception on Hyllis, a world where propaganda is the chief medium and a planetary government dictates what's good and what's evil.

"As an investigative reporter," says Ancel, "you must get beyond these ready-made ideas." Ultimately, Jade's shutterbuggy captures evidence of a conspiracy involving human trafficking—evidence that can spark a revolution. So don your berets, grab your cameras, and join us, would-be guerrillas, for an off-the-record, on-the-QT, and very hush-hush glimpse at some of the staggering truth behind Ubi Soft's upcoming, secret-laden adventure.

—Shawn Elliott

## A hand in need

Adventurers rarely seem to work alone in today's games, and Jade is no exception. "Pey'j has his own button assigned to the control pad, so you can ask him to perform parallel tasks," Ancel explains. "It's useful for puzzles and fighting sequences, where he can throw enemies your way for you to attack. Of course, friendship is never one-sided, and you'll have to save Pey's bacon on more than one occasion.

## The big picture

*BG&E* offers cooperative climb-bat, puzzle solving, and platforming, as well as stealth scenarios and driving sections. But games with seven playing styles often suffer from the "all-you-can-eat-but-let syndrome": plenty to choose from, but no particular item is especially appealing. Ancel promises this won't be the case with *BG&E*. "We made sure that the gameplay fits together logically," he says. "It's one big, compelling game, not several insignificant games." 🐷

## Hyllis Confidential

Jade's photographs serve as the evidence needed to uncover the conspiracy, Ancel tells us. "Your goal is to convince the population to rise up against the martial government." Snapping the really scandalous shots, of course, will mean infiltrating highly secured locations. "You can also photograph all living animals on the planet Hyllis to earn money for purchasing camera upgrades, food, and various other helpful items."

Which games did *Beyond Good & Evil* head *homme* Michel Ancel look to while crafting his multifaceted fantasy?



**Stellar stealth:** "*Splinter Cell's* camera immerses players so well that we just had to use it."



**Camera obscura:** "When we started the project, even *Pokémon Snap* had not been released."



**Need for speed:** "Even if [the] control is different, [the hovercraft was inspired by] *Sega Rally*."



**Quantum leaps:** "*BG&E* doesn't use jump buttons. The system is [like] *Zelda: The Wind Waker's*."



# THINK YOU KNOW NFL BLITZ? THINK AGAIN...



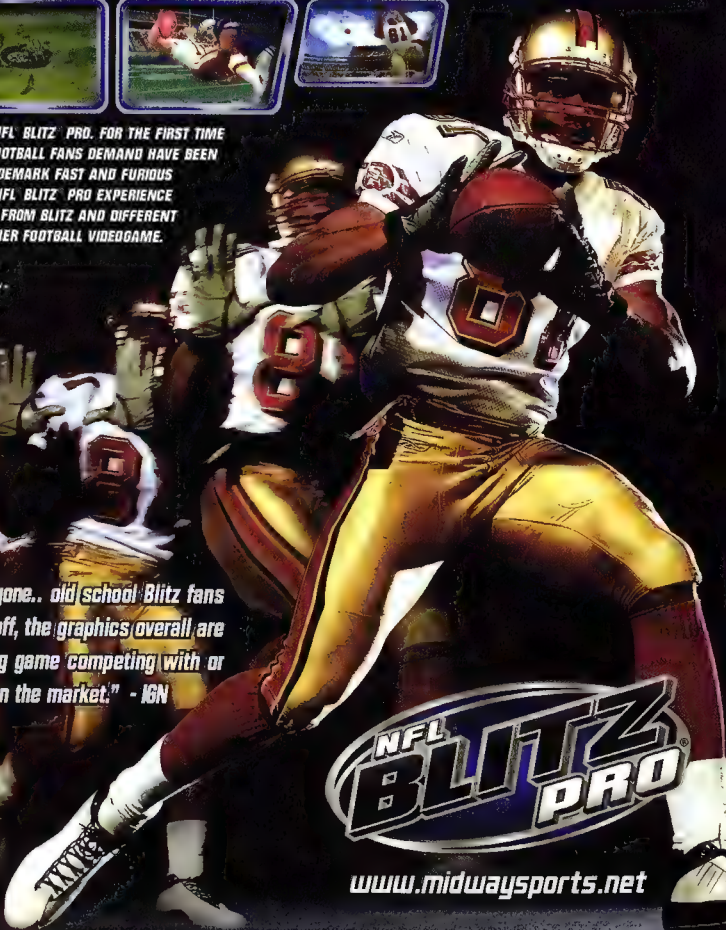
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Mild Language  
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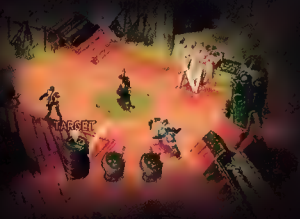
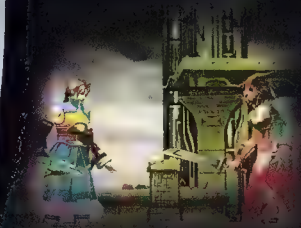




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PlayStation 2



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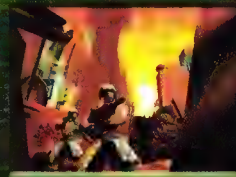
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40,000

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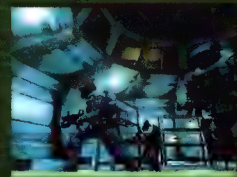
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Violence  
Blood and Gore

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NAME: IRWIN FINKLE

SCREEN NAME: THE EXTERMINATOR

PROFESSION: HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

SPECS: HUSBAND, FATHER OF FOUR

WEAPON OF CHOICE:



NOTES: COLD-BLOODED KILLER WHO WON'T THINK TWICE ABOUT PUTTING ONE IN THE BACK OF THE HEAD OF HIS ENEMIES.

TURN-ONS: "PREYING ON YOU AND OTHERS WITH WEAK SCREEN NAMES."

FAVORITE PREY: CHAGS RAPTOR



MANTRA: ONLY IN DEATH DOES DUTY END.

*Own the night. 12 seconds at a time.*

*Feel the unholy, addictive rush of pure speed like never before. Rip through drift, circuit and drag races gettars and add authentic, aftermarket upgrades: turbos, suspension, body kits, and, of course, nitrous.*



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\* INTERNET CONNECTIVITY REQUIRED FOR PLAYSTATION 2 AND PCGB. PlayStation2 online play requires Internet connection and Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 (sold separately).  
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GAME BOY ADVANCE

PC  
CD-ROM  
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PlayStation 2



# NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

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Challenge Everything

# LIGHTS, EYE TOY, ACTION!

Sony's new PS2 camera makes you a star

**I**t's little, sits on top of your TV set, and watches you while you play games. No, we don't mean your cat, TiVo, or imaginary friend Harvey. We're talking about the Eye Toy, a \$49.95 camera that plugs into your PlayStation 2's USB port. The Eye Toy comes out this October with 12 minigames, videomessaging capabilities, and assorted random bells and whistles geared, it seems, toward hyperactive children and/or bored college students. Sounds gimmicky, doesn't it? That's what we thought, so we sat down and spent several hours waving our arms in front of the TV set to discover whether there's more to it than meets the Eye Toy.

—Jennifer Tsao

## MINIGAMES

These thoroughly pointless little activities are amusing (with the Eye Toy filming you, you use your own body to affect the action onscreen). They can get repetitive, though, and they're much more fun when thought of not as "games," but as excuses to get your friends to act like idiots, flapping their arms around the room while you sit back on the couch and chuckle.

### Mirror Time:



You stand in the middle of the screen and hit the targets. It sounds easy enough, but when the image keeps flipping and rotating—constantly shifting what's left, right, up, and down—you'll feel like a total dork in the end. And that's always fun.

### Kung Foo:



Fight off little invading bad guys with your sassy kung-fu moves (or, rather, wild flailing of the arms). A surprising cardio workout that, again, is likely to be more entertaining for the people watching you.

### Wishi Wash:



The look on your face during this minigame will be one of utter confusion, as if to say, "What the f\*\*\* am I washing windows for? Did someone out here think this was fun?" So just wave your arms around, try not to look too confused, and (trust us) you'll get an awesome score.

### Keep Ups:



This one's perfect for your kid sister's slumber party or any other event where people like to spin themselves around until they're dizzy and feel like puking. 'Cause that's exactly how you'll feel after swinging your head, trying to keep the dang soccer ball in the air. (And cheating by using your hands doesn't work, too well—we tried.)



"Get your friends to act like idiots, flapping their arms around the room."

## VIDEOMESSAGING

Send a picture or short video clip to your friends via email or instant messenger. It's a neat trick, but it's not a game. The only way to use it is to send a message to a friend with a message, like a video of you waving your arms.



## ASSORTED INTERACTIVE MODES

These are basically screen savers that create visual effects around the images the camera sees. Our faves are shown here, but they're all kinda cool or kinda boring, depending on your frame of mind (which, we imagine, improves when altered or ADD-impaired).

### UFO Juggler:



All those times we wondered what it would be like to juggle UFOs, honestly we never thought it would be this difficult. Aren't they supposed to be some advanced race's supertech-nology? Then how come they can't stay up in the air on their own? We pondered this for a few rounds and eventually discovered the secret those wacky aliens have always known: The wave is what gets 'em.

### BOTTOM LINE:

Thumbs up—with a huge caveat. The current set of demo games and activities, while amusing trifles, are probably not worth the purchase price. But if Sony delivers true games—karaoke, rhythm-action, even fighting—that use this device as a controller, the Eye Toy will offer futuristic fun for the party crowd. ☹



# CROUCHING TIGER HIDDEN DRAGON

WARRIORS OF LEGEND.  
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CRUSADE OF A LIFETIME.

REDISCOVER THE LEGEND.

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Violence



Ubi Soft



PlayStation 2

GAME BOY ADVANCE





# YOU ARE HERE

Dream of being a singing sensation? Xbox Music Mixer and Karaoke Revolution provide the rock 'n' roll—the sex and drugs are up to you.

**I**nternet pornography. The George Foreman grill. Sodas with lemon flavoring included right in the can. Technology has blessed us with some wonderful things lately, but these feats—and, in fact, most of man's achievements up until this point—pale in comparison with the modern miracle coming this fall: karaoke videogames.

Why would anyone want to karaoke at home when they could go out to a smoky, crowded bar and belt one out in front of a big group of total strangers? Exactly. Less embarrassment, less money, less time waiting in line for the bathroom (to say nothing of the general state of your average bar bathroom once you get there)—the benefits of do-it-yourself karaoke go on and on.

With that in mind, we sat down with five guys, four girls, and three bottles of vodka to put two very different karaoke titles, both shipping this November, to the test: Konami's *Karaoke Revolution* for PS2 and Microsoft's *Xbox Music Mixer* for...Xbox. We came, we sang, we embarrassed the hell out of ourselves, but all of our meticulous research did pay off in the end: what follows is an edited transcript of that fateful night. Which one of these marvels of modern engineering will rock your world? Tune in, turn on, and find out.

## XBOX MUSIC MIXER

Xbox • Microsoft • November 2003  
Karaoke is just one facet of this multi-media tool kit; *Music Mixer* also lets you connect your Xbox to your PC to download MP3 music files and photos and then use them to make your own music videos. As for karaoke, it includes 15 songs out of the box. Or you can insert your own CDs and suppress the vocals to sing over them. But how well does it all work?

**EGM:** It comes with this microphone. Plug it into the memory-card slot on the controller.

**Hamilton:** It's a pretty nice mic...has some heft to it.

[Everyone looks at the list of songs to choose from.]

**Freddy:** Fourteen...15...that's it? Fifteen, measly songs?

**J.J.:** The selection is really, really lacking. No Elvis?

**EGM:** You can download more songs from Xbox Live, but Microsoft isn't sure how many yet.

**Freddy:** It does have "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow."

**Hamilton:** [Laughing] "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow"?

**Freddy:** Is that Alicia Keys ["Fallin'"]? That's a recent song.

**Hamilton:** What person under 50 will ever sing "Amazing Grace"?

**Betty:** Well, at some point, we're going to have to sing it—there are only 15 songs.

## SONG 1: "LOVE SHACK" BY THE B-52'S

**Danna:** I like how the lyrics are colored pink [for the female vocals] and blue [for the male parts].

**Freddy:** It's too bad they don't have those Xbox Live voice masks on there. You could have girls do the guys' parts and vice versa. Or robots do both parts.

**Hamilton:** Look, there's a little console you can bring up while they sing to tweak all these little settings, like an equalizer.

**Betty:** What does that lever do?

**Hamilton:** I have no idea.

**EGM:** Next, let's try a song from a regular CD and have *Music Mixer* suppress the vocal track.

## SONG 2: "THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST" BY IRON MAIDEN

**J.J.:** This is hard with no lyrics onscreen...I keep losing my place.

**Hamilton:** This [press release] says "Digital lyric-stripping technology...lets you remove the vocals from your >

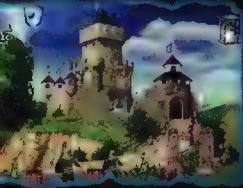


In Karaoke mode, *Music Mixer* looks like your standard bar setup, with the lyrics changing color to help you along.





# Outlaw. Renegade. Hero.



*From daring archery ambushes to swashbuckling swordfights, from the battlefield to the jousting field, live the*

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*legend of Robin Hood. Use every ounce of cunning, strategy and wit to bring the tyranny of Prince John to an end!*



Suggestive Themes  
Violence



PlayStation 2



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Our troop of seasoned karaoke testers (names have been changed to protect the tone deaf).

**"It works well. I just wish it came with more songs."**

favorite CDs," but I can still hear the lyrics. They're just a little quieter.

**Freddy:** It's doing it a little bit. [Tries a few other songs on the CD] Sometimes it changes how the song itself sounds...wait, it works really good on that song.

**J.J.:** Yeah, it works great...I just don't know the lyrics to this one.

**Hamilton:** You can look up the lyrics on the Net and print 'em out, but that's kind of a pain.

**Freddy:** Well, when there are only those 15 s\*\*\*y-ass songs on there, you're going to want to branch out.

**THE VERDICT:**

**Hamilton:** I like that you can use your own CDs.

**Dee Dee:** But unless you have the lyrics there for you, you really, really have to know the songs by heart.

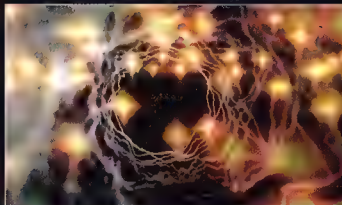
**Hamilton:** It works pretty well on the songs that are included. I just wish it came with more songs.

**Freddy:** *Music Mixer* doesn't do much karaoke-wise that you can't do just by playing a CD and singing along to it with a microphone. It's not a game—you're just singing along to your CDs.

**Dee Dee:** With the vocal tracks ripped out.

**Freddy:** Sort of.

**J.J.:** And there's no Elvis.



*Music Mixer* puts on a freaky light show when you play your own CDs and even lets you make your own videos.

**KARAOKE REVOLUTION**

PS2 • Konami • November 2003 — Unlike *Music Mixer*, *Revolution* is karaoke as a game: You are constantly judged and scored based on pitch and rhythm. Instead of a regular microphone, you can use any PS2 headset mic, sold separately (like the mic that comes with *SOCOM*). *Revolution* comes with 36 songs, but it cannot play regular CDs.



*Revolution* lets you choose and dress your male or female star.

**Downs:** Oh, it has "Like a Virgin."  
**Betty:** "Bizarre Love Triangle," "Waiting for Tonight" by J. Lo.  
**Freddy:** This has a huge list of songs, and they're all pretty good ones. Some funny ones, some '80s, some Michael Jackson. They got a good crop of songs here for sure.  
**Hamilton:** What, no "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow"?

**SONG 1: "COMPLICATED" BY AVRIL LAVIGNE**

**Freddy:** OK, you're 14 and you're pissed off.  
**Hamilton:** You totally hate the mall.  
**Betty:** I like that you can see the crowd react.  
**Freddy:** Yeah, they cheer when you do really well.  
**J.J.:** It's easier 'cause it helps you hit the right pitch.  
**Denna:** You can choose your character and outfit and stuff. It's more personalized. I wish I had this at home. I'd play for hours.

**SONG 2: "THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT" BY R.E.M.**

[Freddy tries to sing the song but fails. It ends abruptly].  
**Everyone:** Awwwww.  
**Downs:** Aww, [your character] was crying. She was throwing up.  
**Dee Dee:** It's easier with songs where you have to hold words longer, 'cause you can [see your pitch onscreen] and adjust.  
**Roger:** I have a secret technique for "The End of the World".... [Roger sets up the game to play the same song again.]  
**Roger:** [Sings.] *That's great! It starts with an earthquake, birds and snakes and airplanes, basic-ally sing as far as you know...AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA* [Holds the note for about 30 seconds; everyone applauds.]  
**J.J.:** Whoa, you got a seven comb 33,000 points! Holy s\*\*\*! You should write a strategy guide.  
**Freddy:** It doesn't know if you're singing the right words or not, just the right pitch.

**THE VERDICT:**

**Freddy:** *Revolution* is really fun. I like being graded.  
**J.J.:** Yeah, and you don't have to care about your score.  
**Hamilton:** That [*SOCOM*] headset is kinda flimsy, though. Not like Madonna's.  
**Denna:** But the game works well. When it tells you to sing lower, you really should be singing lower.  
**Hamilton:** Yeah, and maybe later they'll release an add-on disc with "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow."  
**—Mark MacDonald**

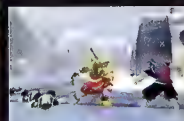


*Revolution's* audience reacts in real-time to the quality of your performance.

**DESERT ISLAND GAMES: GARY COLEMAN**



**Question:** If you were stranded on a deserted island, which three games would you want with you? **This month, we ship spunky former *Diff'rent Strokes* star Gary Coleman ("Whatchoo talkin' 'bout, scurvy?") but to sea....**  
**—Marc Saltzman**



**The Mark of Kri (PS2)**  
"I can use this action game to pound out my frustrations at being deserted with only three games out of my collection of 77 at home."



**The Sims (PS2, Xbox, GC)**  
"I'll need this game for when I get lonely and want some female companionship."



**Postal 2 (PC)**  
"I want this to remind myself of why I'm deserted in the first place—the 85 percent of those idiotic, self-absorbed, biped sheep called people!" **Editor's note:** Coleman has a cameo in this controversial PC shooter, which Computer Gaming World called "a humorless romp through an infected colon."



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It's Xbox Live, now with 110 percent more Xbox-loving propaganda on the screen. Tell your friends...or else! [evil laughter]

# ONLINE THIS MONTH

## New features make Xbox Live livelier



Hop on [www.xbox.com](http://www.xbox.com) when you're away from home and watch as friends invite you to games you can't join (above).



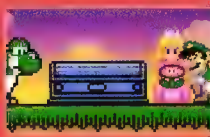
### must-hit websites



[heavengallery.com/fensterfilms](http://heavengallery.com/fensterfilms)  
Take a *Cl Joe* public service announcement, change the dialogue, make a few edits to the video, and you've got certified A1 comedy gold. "Hey kid! I'm a computer! Stop all the downloadin'!"



[www.capcom.com/v-joe/](http://www.capcom.com/v-joe/)  
Wackiness abounds at Capcom's official site for GC actioner *Viewtiful Joe*. Be sure to check out the wallpaper for your PC's desktop and the muser: videos (in cartoon-shaerd splendor), Henshin-A-Go-go indeed!



[flashplayer.com/animation/mustinombankington.html](http://flashplayer.com/animation/mustinombankington.html) — Pull up a seat and see an army of loads and the entire Muststream Kingdom kick some ass when Mario is assassinated by Bullet Bills in this fan-made Flash movie.

If you've never logged onto Xbox Live, or just haven't jumped online in a while (and who could blame you—the flow of fresh games definitely slowed over the summer), you're missing out on some sweet new features that might make your decision to re-up for another year, or sign on for the first time, a bit easier.

#### Live Now

Imagine this: You turn on your Xbox and can instantly see which of your friends are on and what they're playing, or view announcements about new content downloads, tournaments, and game releases on the system's dashboard. Mid-September's update, which takes just a few minutes to download, makes it all happen. You can even voice chat with your buddies right from the dashboard—no game required.

#### Live-Aware Games

So-called Live-Aware titles let you log onto Live while playing the offline single-player part of a game. Then, when your friends get on, they can invite you to an online match—no more twiddling your thumbs in the *MechAssault* lounge, waiting for STON3N1NJA69 to show up! A handful of games are Live-Aware already (*Midtown Madness 3*, *Ghost Recon* and *Ghost Recon: Island Thunder*, *Moto GP2*), but many more are on the way.

#### Live Web

Using your PC, you can log onto [xbox.com](http://xbox.com) and find out which of your live friends are online, see what they're playing, and view stats and scoreboards (starting with *Ghost Recon: Island Thunder*, and coming soon to many more, including all of Microsoft's XSN sports titles).

## PC GAMING UPDATE

### Tron 2.0: Even better than Space Paranoids

See *Summer Lovers*



When I tried to see *Tron* in a movie theater back in '82, it was sold out, so I saw *Summer Lovers* instead, which, while not all that fantastic, featured a lot of bare naked females. Years later, I rented *Tron* in an effort to finally see this "ground-breaking special effects landmark"—and promptly fell asleep. I should have rented *Summer Lovers* instead.

The moral of this story is twofold: Naked girls beat computer geeks every time, and I was better off waiting a couple decades to experience *Tron* via the outstanding *Tron 2.0* game on PC. This shooter takes everything from the movie and makes it cool—the signature *Tron* glowing circuitry-style graphics are incredible, and the potentially fatally geeky "warriors in the computer" concept is pulled off with surprising wit. *Tron 2.0* also adds a nice side of RPG and strategy game-play to the traditional first-person shooter mix: Throughout the game, you collect and upgrade "subroutines"—nifty little programs that improve your weapons, virus protection, stealth abilities, and more. Picking and choosing subroutines adds a layer of depth behind the "which gun do I use here?" quandaries of most shooters. The only thing *Tron 2.0* gets wrong are the famous light cycles, which suck and suck hard, thanks to a horrible camera system and cheating-ass A.I. Nevertheless, the game is a blast.

Who would've thought that the year's best movie-licensed game would be based on a 20-year-old G-rated Disney nerdfest and not the friggin' *Matrix*? It fills my heart with hope that the inevitable *Summer Lovers* game will be the best game in history.

—Robert Coffey, Computer Gaming World



This is where  
I tried my best moves  
on Rebecca.

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Tony Hawk's Pro Skater® now on N-Gage. Skate like Tony Hawk and nine top pros through vert courses full of half-pipes and street courses full of rails and perils. Engage in head-to-head online competition. [n-gage.com](http://n-gage.com)

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# ONE HAND ON THE WHEEL

Getting auto erotic with **Need for Speed Underground**

**C**hoosing a good driving game is a major life decision. How do you know which is the best for you? We kick the tires of upcoming

racer *Need for Speed Underground*—due on all three consoles in November—with a little help from smooth-talking salesman (and

*Underground* executive producer at Electronic Arts Canada) **Chuck Osieja**. It's a peppy little number, you bet. —*Demian Linn*

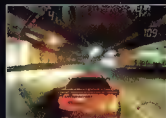
### Tweaker's Paradise

It's not a street-racing game if you can't mod the hell out of your car. Aside from cosmetic add-ons like decals, neon lights, and body kits, there's also a variety of go-faster tweaks, including nitrous injectors—all real, licensed parts. "The performance upgrades not only change the way the car drives, but can also have an effect on how the car looks," says Osieja. "If you swap out your suspension, you'll see your car's [ground] clearance lower!" Drop an HKS turbo kit in there and you can show it off when you pop the hood. "If you can change it out on a real tuner car then you'll be able to swap it out in *Underground*," says Osieja.



### Through the Windshield

*Underground* is the most visually distinctive racer to come along since Capcom's *Auto Modellista*. Wet-look road surfaces reflect the neon-infused cityscape, and passing lights blur and squirm like a kinetic Van Gogh painting. And the camera shudder at high speeds helps trick your brain into thinking you're going way, way too fast. "In most games, 100 mph feels like 50" says Osieja. "[But] we put a major emphasis on creating a believable sensation of speed. Mathematics, science, and classic art techniques are married to produce the effect."



### Monster Garage

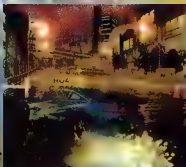
In *Underground*'s Career mode, you'll never have more than one car in your garage, although you can trade it in for a different model at any time. Here's the roster—expect a few late additions to make the final release:

- Acura Integra Type R (2000)
- Acura RSX Type S (2003)
- Dodge Neon (1999)
- Ford Focus ZX3 (2003)
- Honda Civic Coupe ST (2000)
- Honda S2000 (2003)
- Hyundai Tiburon GT (2003)
- Mazda Miata MX5 (1999)
- Mazda RX7 (1995)
- Mitsubishi Eclipse GSX (1999)
- Mitsubishi Lancer (2003)
- Nissan 240SX Fastback (1992)
- Nissan 350Z (2003)
- Nissan Sentra SE-R Spec V (2004)
- Nissan Skyline R34-GTR (1999)
- Subaru Impreza 2.5 RS (2003)
- Toyota Celica GT-S (2003)
- Toyota Supra (1998)



### online ENIGMS

PlayStation 2 owners will get to take *Underground* online, racing with up to three other players in the quick-race modes—Circuit, Sprint, Drag, and Drift racing—complete with stat tracking and leaderboards. No online love for Xbox or GameCube, alas.



### Protect Your Rep

Earning style points and increasing your reputation are key to clocking the big checks in *Underground*. "Powerlifting around a corner is much more stylish than just driving the perfect line," says Osieja—and exuberant driving will garner a fatter payout when the race is over. Maintaining a high-profile rep by having an ultracool ride also increases the cash-

flow, because your reputation acts as a multiplier for your style points. "If you want to drive a 'sleeper,' go ahead; your reputation will be lower and you won't score style points as fast," Osieja says. "There will also be certain events that you won't be able to participate in because some drivers don't want to risk losing to your 'beater' car." ☛

>> *F-ZERO: FALCON'S LEGEND*, AN ANIME TV SHOW BASED ON NINTENDO'S *F-ZERO* RACER, WILL BEGIN AIRING IN JAPAN IN OCTOBER. CAN'T BE LONG BEFORE IT COMES STATESIDE.



# THE RUMOR MILL

Part of a balanced gossip breakfast



q-mann



## SHAKE IT UP

Hey there, call-phonic buddies! The Q-Man, aka-sid-salicki, has sent into your hearts and minds with a special full of gaming rumors ready to be shaken into a blender and poured into a vitamin-enriched, medicinal snack. Yum. But enough about food—on to the rumors. Send any comments you have for me to [qmanman@2005ew.com](mailto:qmanman@2005ew.com). See you in 30...glideyup!

—The Q



■ Maybe next year, Live will get EA lovin'.

## Sony goes half and half

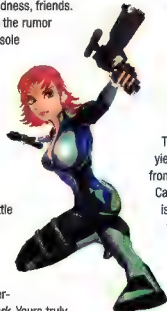
Just how much does the PlayStation Portable (aka PSP) mean to Sony? A lot. The Q's informants have caught word that the company has split its development resources straight down the middle—half is going to consoles and half to PSP. That's some serious bizness, friends. Of course, there's also the rumor that half of Sony's console development group has left the world of PS2 behind and is already hard at work on the first batch of PS3 titles.

## Perfect Dark waits for Halo

We may be waitin' a little while for a good look at Rare's prequel/sequel/whatchamacallit to its Nintendo 64 first-person shooter *Perfect Dark*. Yours truly hears that Microsoft is waiting for *Halo 2* hype to pass before unleashing *Perfect Dark Zero* on an unsuspecting public. But those who've seen it say it's absolutely awesome. Do I believe them? Hmm...well, I did like *PD* on the 64....

## EA Sports closer to Live than ever before?

While EA has been slow to hop on the Xbox Live wagon train, there's more than a sporting chance that the company will soon change its tune, beginning with its [insert sport here] 2005 games.



## Square Enix prepares onslaught

The drought of Square Enix releases it about to come to an end. The Q's well-placed spies in the land of the rising sun have learned that fewer than 20 but more than 18 titles are in the pipeline for U.S. translation work, including the few that we know about (like *Final Fantasy XI* and *Sword of Mana*).

## Online Star Wars heads for PS2

The Q's Jedi mind tricks have yielded this tasty nugget of info from deep in Marin County, California. Seems that LucasArts is working on a new online title for PS2, set in the *Star Wars* universe, that will play similar to the PC hit *Battlefield 1942* (i.e., lots of troops, vehicles, all "real" people playing online). Online gaming and *Star Wars*...wow, you know, I never thought of it before, but that's, like, a perfect combination.

## KOTOR sequel online

What? *Knights of the Old Republic*...? And I'm not even halfway through the first *Star Wars*-filled funfest! Guess I better get crackin'. While the sequel is still reportedly a ways off, there is one detail being banded about that just might interest you: It may include co-op online play. Now that's usin' your Force powers for good....

## DIGITAL DUSTBIN

In 1985, the 8-bit Nintendo Entertainment System shipped with its very own Robotic Operating Buddy (aka R.O.B., as seen in a track background of GameCube's *F-Zero GX*). After receiving several commands, R.O.B. would take his sweet mechanical time, lethargically dropping spinning gyros on the second controller's buttons to open color-coded doors in *Gyromite*, or helping solve rudimentary puzzles in *Stack-Up*. Nanoseconds out of the box, however, R.O.B. became obsolete as non-glue-squiffing kids everywhere figured out that pushing the buttons themselves was exponentially quicker.



■ Mega-R.O.B., as seen in *F-Zero GX* (GC)



■ R.O.B., prior to landing in dumpster

## STEALTHY FREEBIE

To ensure complete infiltration this fall, Ubi Soft is gonna bribe people to pre-order the squad-based shooter *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3* (Xbox, November 2003). Starting September 22, gamers who plow down cash in advance for *R63* will receive a bonus Xbox disc containing a bunch of exclusive stealthy content. To whet your appetite for destruction, here's a look at what the disc offers:



■ The Ghoshs and *Splinter Cell*'s Sam Fisher get to do all kinds of cool, tough-guy stuff in this 117 bonus disc. Above right: Fisher gets sneaky in a submarine while looking for nuclear warheads.

- Four standalone demos (*Rainbow Six 3*, *Ghost Recon: Island Thunder*, *Ghost Recon*, and *Splinter Cell*)
- Three new *Splinter Cell* missions (Kola Cell, which is available now via Xbox Live download, and two new ones: *Vsleka* and *Vsleka Infiltration*)
- Four new *Island Thunder* maps

Playing *Splinter Cell* and *Island Thunder* content will require the original games. Both will eventually be available for free download over Live, though not until after *Rainbow Six 3* is released (to encourage you to pre-order the game and get this disc earlier, natch). And if you're a Clancy fan who doesn't have Live, this is your only course of action.

# STILL TONY FROM THE BLOCK

## Skating gets back to its roots in Tony Hawk's Underground

**W**o know what you're thinking: "Oh great, another *Tony Hawk* game. If I've done one 366" *Flip* skateboard revert to the wheel

reematerial to Russian homeless, Fre are a million." Maybe you have. But changes are coming to the next *Hawk*, and we're not just talking about new

levels and a couple different moves. Can *Hawk's Underground* pull off a miracle comeback and get everyone excited about the *Hawk* again? —*Dominic Lim*



your mug in the game



all-new Story mode



### That guy looks familiar...

Unless you're cursed with a superfluous third nipple, it's always been easy to create your own doppelgänger in a *Tony Hawk* game. But in *Underground*, the resemblance is about to get a lot more uncanny. Any PlayStation 2 owner—sorry, Xbox and GameCube fans—can e-mail a headshot to *Hawk* developer Neversoft (via PC) and then download his or her face into the game using the PS2's Network Adaptor. Slap on an eye patch, pirate hat, and pantaloons and you're ready to shred

### Tony Hawk's Amateur Skater

This *Hawk* isn't just about the pros anymore. Once you've created a character, you'll start out as a lowly skating scrub in New Jersey. Accomplish certain goals, like impressing Chad Muska as he drives by in his Escalade, and cut-scenes starring your character will advance the story and open up new tasks. In the above example, Muska gives you his board after he sees the duct-taped two-by-four you've been getting by on. Your ultimate objective: get the hell outta Jersey and go pro.

Sound like the old *Tony*, except with an

extra helping of cut-scenes? Well, kinda, but some of the mischief you get into just wouldn't fly in a normal *Hawk* game. "[Neversoft can] do things they couldn't do when you were skating as Tony," says Activision Producer Stacey Drellishak.

"[Before], you couldn't get arrested by the cops or steal cars, because that's not the kind of stuff that he does." Tony also doesn't get chased by crack dealers, but in *Underground*, you will. "This is the game that, secretly, Neversoft always wanted to make," says Drellishak

Photo: Neversoft



### If you build it, they will come

In previous *Hawks*, the Create-a-Park option always sounded better than it actually was. But this time, you won't be cobbling together some crappy little skate ghetto—you'll build environments that look more like levels in the game, with freeway overpasses and actual buildings. Big buildings. And with the new Create-a-Goal feature, gamers can add missions to their parks, in effect designing entirely new levels, which can then be shared online (again, PS2 only) or via a memory card.

Then there's the new Create-a-Trick option. The Trick Builder looks like simplified video-editing software—you can combine moves from a basic palette to make new tricks of your own devise. (Finally! The 180° crotchgrab spien donor is a reality.) "[Nevsoft] is trying to make *Underground* the most customizable game ever," says Producer Stacey Drellishak.



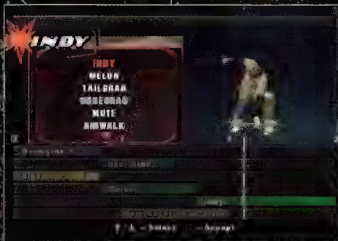
Create-a-Park/Goal/Trick



the wacky X-factor



1,000,000 point combo!



### Where no Hawk has gone before

Would you call bulls\*\*\* if we said you could drive cars in *Underground*? Well, it's true, and we're not sure how we feel about it yet. You can't just go up to a car and jack it à la *Grand Theft Auto*, (thank God)—it's got to be part of a particular goal. We're lukewarm so far, but tentatively optimistic.

Another controversial addition: You can now dismount the skateboard and run around on foot. You can climb ladders to reach rooftops and even jump off the board midcombo, quickly hop on a nearby rail, and keep the points rolling. And though you can only be on your feet for a few seconds before the combo ends, running around does seem to reset your rail balance, making near-infinite combo strings a very real possibility.

ONLY ON  
XBOX

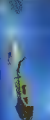
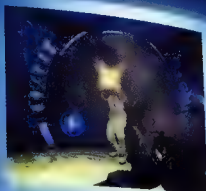
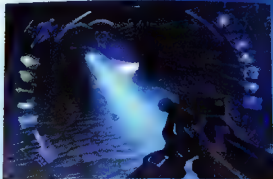


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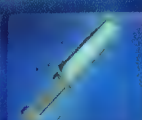
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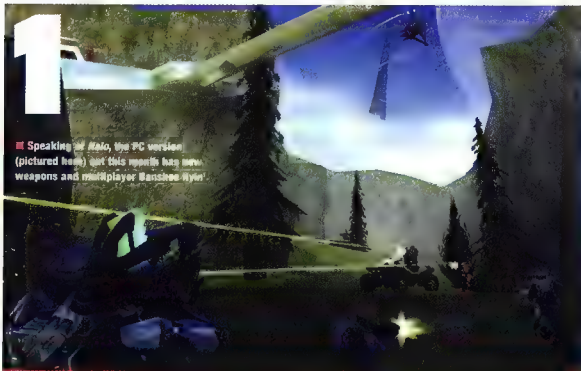
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ESRB CONTENT RATING [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org)

# THE HOT FIVE

Tender morsels of new info on the games you crave the most

To vote for the games you simply *must* see more coverage of, go to [www.egmmag.com](http://www.egmmag.com) between the 1st and 15th of each month.



## 1 HALO 2

**Xbox • Microsoft • Early 2004** — Speaking of *Halo*, the PC version (pictured here) got this month's top vote. Weapons and multiplayer. Banchoe Ryan!

**Xbox • Microsoft • Early 2004** — Speaking of *Halo*, the PC version (pictured here) got this month's top vote. Weapons and multiplayer. Banchoe Ryan!



## 2 METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

**PS2 • Konami • Late 2004** — Dedicated *Snake Eater* fans just missed overtaking *Halo 2* in our voting this month, but they did uncover yet another semisecret: The newest *Metal Gear* mech is a two-piece transforming tank with a nuclear missile (of course), found in the Electronic Entertainment Expo promotional kit we showed you right here in Issue #169. Confused yet? Get used to it! It's *Metal Gear*.



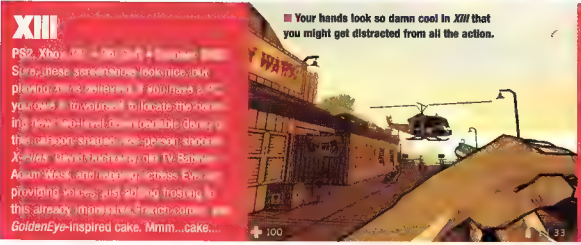
## 3 MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!

**GC • Nintendo • November 2003** — "Slow" is the operative word this month for *Mario Kart*. Nintendo's been slow to release new details or shots on *Double Dash!!*, which was looking a little sluggish itself when we last saw it. We hear it's changed dramatically since then, though—more next month...we hope.



## 4 NINJA GAIDEN

**Xbox • Tecmo • November 2003** — We discovered that after beginning to cover *Ninja Gaiden*, the game's lead infiltrator was caught by the cops and sent to a mental hospital. How did Master defeat him in battle? He was so fast he disappeared from reality! He'll be back in the next issue. We'll race toward *Gaiden*'s November release.



## XIII

**PS2, Xbox • EA • Late 2003** — Sure, these screenshots look nice, but playing *XIII* is a different experience. You're a PC yourself. In your quest to locate the bomb, you'll have to level down (possibly during the car-pool-shattered, sci-gierson-shocked *X-Men* David Duchovny on TV. Banned. Adam West, and negative actress Eye) and providing money just adding frosty to this already impressive franchise some GoldenEye-inspired cake. Mmm...cake...



## 5 GOLDENEYE 007

**GC • EA • Late 2003** — You'll never look at a gun the same way again.

NAMCO HAS SNATCHED THE PUBLISHING RIGHTS TO STREET RACING SYNDICATE FROM THE NOW-DEFUNCT 3DO. EXPECT IT TO ARRIVE FOR PS2, XBOX, AND GC IN SUMMER 2004.



A full-page advertisement for Milk featuring a skateboarder in mid-air. The skateboarder is wearing a green long-sleeved shirt, black shorts, a black helmet with a white circular logo, and black knee pads with yellow accents. He is wearing glasses and has a determined expression. The background is a clear blue sky above a suburban neighborhood with houses and trees, and hills in the distance. The text "Strong bones. Weak gravity." is in the upper left, and "got milk?" is at the bottom center. A small vertical text "LORDS OF THE SKATE" is on the left edge.

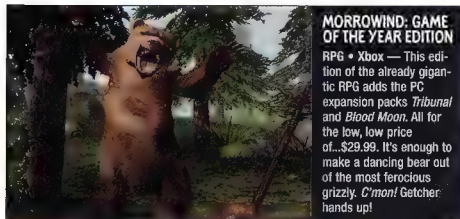
Strong bones. Weak gravity.

Milk can help prevent stress fractures and broken bones.

got milk?

# COMING SOON

Better start saving up for all these friggig games!



**MORROWIND: GAME OF THE YEAR EDITION**  
RPG • Xbox — This edition of the already gigantic RPG adds the PC expansion packs *Tribunal* and *Blood Moon*. All for the low, low price of... \$29.99. It's enough to make a dancing bear out of the most ferocious grizzly. *C'mon! Getcher hands up!*

## OCTOBER 2003

### Back Part 3: Outbreak (RPG) PS2

...hack's high-concept game-within-a-game saga (you play within a faux massively multiplayer RPG on the fritz) continues.

### Amped 2 (Sports) Xbox

No racing takes place on this hill. Instead, it's about impressing the fans, media, and sponsors with your high-flying trickery.

### Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II (Action-RPG) PS2, Xbox

The sequel packs five customizable characters, 40 levels, and co-op play, plus both dungeons and dragons.

### Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu (Action) PS2, Xbox, GC

Don't expect *Batman Vengeance 2*, but fans. Instead, of a stealth/action game, this latest Dark Knight caper is a 3D beat-em-up.

### Castlevania: Lament of Innocence (Action) PS2

According to the producer, this is the first 3D *Castlevania*. (Did he have a Nintendo 64?)

### Confict Desert Storm 2: Back to Baghdad (Action) PS2, Xbox

The *Back to Baghdad* subtitle makes this squad-based shooter sound like a low-budget *National Lampoon* movie.



### HARRY POTTER: QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP

Sports • PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA — JK Rowling's despatched hero takes to the skies in a game that's soccer meets basketball meets hockey—on brooms.

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

Bogeys on your six? No problem: Fancy evasive maneuvers are a snap in this game.

### Dragon Ball Z: Taiketsu (Fighting) GBA

Psst... *Dragon Ball Z* is for babies. (Don't tell us you didn't know.)

### ESPN NBA Basketball (Sports) PS2, Xbox

The new 24/7 mode is synced to your console's internal clock to open up 1-on-1 matchups with NBA legends.

### Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel (Action-RPG) PS2, Xbox

The wasteland is full of mutants. Your guns are full of bullets. You do the math.

### Fast and the Furious, The (Driving) PS2

It takes more than a tricked-out ride to earn a credible rep on these city streets.

### FIFA Soccer 2004 (Sports) PS2, Xbox, GC, PS1, GBA

Enjoying a good game of "foote" online is exclusive to those owning a PS2.

### Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance (Action) PS2, Xbox

Undead warrior Thrax must draw on the power of the gods to restore Rome.

### Hunter: The Reckoning Redeemer (Action) Xbox

More *Smash TV*-style monster-mashing for one to four players.

### Jak II (Platform) PS2

Jak relocates to a dark industrialized world where guns complement his spin attacks.

### kill.switch (Action) PS2, Xbox

The third-person shooter hopes to prove the ancient equation "run + gun = fun."

### Kirby's Air Ride (Racing) GC

*Kirby* must be simulating a ride on the short bus, with all the automatic acceleration and simplistic single-button controls.

### Links 2004 (Sports) Xbox

Microsoft hopes its long-running (and much-loved) PC golf franchise proves a *Tiger* killer on its console.

### Manhunt (Action) PS2

The latest experiment in controversy—a stealth game about killer reality TV programming—from the makers of *Grand Theft Auto*.

### Mega Man X7 (Platform) PS2

Why's Mega Man known as Rockman in Japan, when he's neither rock nor man? Discuss amongst yourselves.

### Monster Rancher 4 (RPG) PS2

The name of the game is animal husbandry... with monsters.

### NBA Inside Drive 2004 (Sports) Xbox

Take advantage of those lurches inside the paint with all-new low-post moves.

### NBA Live 2004 (Sports) PS2, Xbox, GC

EA's new "Pro-Hop" move makes driving through the lane an easier maneuver.

### Outlaw Golf 2 (Sports) Xbox

Sluffy country clubs get another smeared lipstick and mascara makeover.

### Pikmin 2 (Strategy) GC

Does anyone else think the googly eyes on Pikmin are kinda creepy?

### Resident Evil Code: Veronica X (Adventure) GC

Word has it there's zombies in this one.

### RoadKill (Action) PS2, Xbox, GC

Blends *Tinhead* *Metal Black*'s vehicular combat with the freedom of *GTA*.

### RPG Maker 2 (RPG) PS2

Creating the next *Final Fantasy* won't be easy, but you can give it a shot.



### BLACK & WHITE

Action • Xbox — Develop your character in this third-person shooter, then (re)turn to cohabitate with a friend in split-screen mode or go online and play with complete strangers.

### SSX 3 (Sports) PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA

You'll need mad skills to survive this three-peak monstrosity, ride with hazards like avalanches, storms, and rival snowboarders.

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

Relive many of your favorite moments from "the good trilogy."

### Super Mario Advance 4: Super Mario Bros. 3 (Platform) GBA

On perhaps his most successful cosplay adventure, Mario dresses up as a raccoon, a frog, and more.

### SWAT: Global Strike Team (First-Person Shooter) PS2, Xbox

Question: Since when did SWAT start policing the entire planet? Answer: in *the future*.

### Tak and the Power of Juju (Platform) PS2, GC, GBA

Nickelodeon helped develop the Tak character, but THQ promises this isn't just for the kiddies. Let's just say the jury's still out.

### Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (Action) PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA

It's really more like Middle-Aged Mutant Ninja Turtles, since they were teens almost 20 years ago.

### Time Crisis 3 (Shooting) PS2

Think *Virtua Tennis* with slicker visuals and toggle between shotguns, grenades, and more.

### Tony Hawk's Underground (Sports) PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA

He is? Someone should dig him up! Bwah.

### Top Spin (Sports) Xbox

Think *Virtua Tennis* with slicker visuals and Xbox Live functionality.

### Viewtiful Joe (Action) GC

What if Ahnuld's *Last Action Hero* were a Japanese videogame...and it kicked ass?

### Whiplash (Platform) PS2, Xbox

Another platformer with mismatched partners. In this case, a weasel-thing and a bunny escape from an animal-testing lab.

### Wrath Unleashed (Strategy/Fighting) PS2, Xbox

Turn-based strategy meets 3D fighting in this quirky hybrid.

### WWE Smackdown! Here Comes the Pain (Wrestling) PS2

This year's lineup features wasslers from the good of days, including the Million Dollar Man and the Iron Sheik. ▶



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and the Giant Egg™



Introducing the big new hero in a little kid's body. Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg pits a boy and his magical rooster suit against the forces of evil. Battle

He May Wear  
A Rooster Suit,  
But Nobody Calls Him  
Chicken.

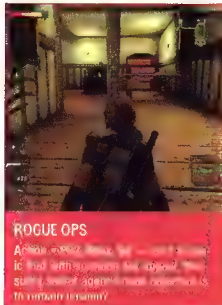
big barnyard bosses and solve puzzles as you navigate through huge, colorful environments.



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**ROGUE OPS**  
Action-Adventure PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA  
It's not with a sword, but with a gun, you'll be slaying some of the most vicious creatures in the human domain.

**EverQuest Online Adventures: Frontiers (RPG) PS2**  
Additional character classes, double the acreage, and more dorks—*Frontiers* improves the original *EQOA* in every area.

**Fire Emblem (Strategy-RPG) GBA**  
These military forces are a departure from the strategy norm; you'll utilize both wizards and dragons during turn-based battles.

**Hobbit, The (Action-Adventure) PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA**  
Frodo isn't the only Baggins who enjoys to explore outside the Shire.

**I-Ninja (Action) PS2, GC**  
This cute, hydrocephalic ninja has more in common with *Sonic* than *Shinobi*.

**Karaoke Revolution (Rhythm) PS2**  
Try and hit Jacko's high notes (as if watching you imitate his footwork on *Dance Dance Revolution* wasn't torture enough).

**Kya: Dark Lineage (Action) PS2, Xbox**  
Rescue your brother or lead a rebellion? Kya says yes to both...talk about girl power.

**Lord of the Rings: Treason of Isengard (Adventure) PS2, Xbox**  
Without the film license (it's based on the books), it might be more *Peasant* than *Lord*.

**Mario and Luigi (Action-RPG)**  
Save Princess Peach, this time with aid from a most unlikely source—Bowser!

**Mario Kart: Double Dash!! (Racing) GC**  
Two riders per kart adds strategy to the battle-racing formula.

**Medal of Honor: Rising Sun (First-Person Shooter) PS2, Xbox, GC**  
Watch your buddy die yet again, except this time you're in the Pacific theater.

**SEGA GT ONLINE**  
Racing = Xbox. Not a true sequel, but you can expect new cars, tracks, and online racing, all for \$20.

► **XIII (First-Person Shooter) PS2, Xbox, GC**  
Agent XIII loves to snipe. He'll snipe anything. He sniped your mama.

**NOVEMBER 2003**  
**007: Everything or Nothing (Action) PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA**  
Wherever Bond goes, hot babes and property damage are sure to follow.

**Armed & Dangerous (Action) Xbox**  
Weapons abound in this squad-based shooter, including the Topsy-Turvy gun, which turns the world upside-down, literally.

**Beyond Good & Evil (Adventure) PS2, Xbox, GC**  
Look for the sequel, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, sometime next year. Or never.

**Bloody Rear 4 (Fighting) PS2**  
What big teeth you have, Grandma! Now, have at you! Fight!

**Champions of Norrath: Realms of EverQuest (Action-RPG) PS2**  
Venture through enormous dungeons with buddies online, vanquishing evil in this action-oriented *EverQuest* offshoot.

**Counter-Strike (First-Person Shooter) Xbox**  
Stop terrorism in Microsoft's take on the world's most popular PC online shooter.

**Crash Nitro Kart (Racing) PS2, Xbox, GC**  
Hopefully, the sequel to *Crash Kart Racing* (PS1) will be as tight as the original.

**Dance Dance Revolution (Rhythm) Xbox**  
Ever seen a really fat kid totally kick ass at *DDR*? We have, and we were speechless.

**ESPN College Hoops (Sports) PS2, Xbox**  
Sega's play on the university hardwood is looking just as stylish as its pro game.

**LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE**  
Adventure = PS2, Xbox — Let's see...a power-mad vampire lord bent on destruction and a wizened wraith with the weakest chin ever...yep, it's another *Legacy of Kain* game. This one focuses more on killer action than brainy puzzles.

**Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes (Action) GC**  
Konami remakes the PS1 classic *Metal Gear Solid* with help from *Eternal Darkness* developer Silicon Knights

**Midway Arcade Treasures (Misc.) PS2, Xbox, GC**  
This 20-game collection includes classics like *Spy Hunter*, *Gauntlet*, *Smash TV*, *Sinistar*, *720*, and *Vindicators*. We hunger.

**Mission Impossible: Operation Surma (Action) PS2, Xbox, GC**  
Hopefully, this *M* game won't make us wanna self-destruct in five seconds like the last one did.

**NCAA March Madness 2004 (Sports) PS2, Xbox**  
EA's b-ball scholarship comes with an added incentive—online play. On PS2, at least.

**Need for Speed Underground (Racing) PS2, Xbox, GC**  
EA's arcade racer enters the illicit world of illegal street racing. (That's almost a double negative, isn't it?)

**NHL Rivals 2004 (Sports) Xbox**  
It's the only hockey game on the market where up to six people on six separate consoles can drop the puck online.

**Ninja Gaiden (Action) Xbox**  
Ryu Hayabusa parts ways with the gals of *Dead or Alive* to take center stage and revisit his roots.

**Prince of Persia: Sands of Time (Adventure) PS2, Xbox, GC, GBA**  
The middle-aged prince returns to the mythical Land of the East with the power to stall, stop, and reverse time.

**Project Gotham Racing 2 (Racing) Xbox**  
It'll be kudos all around when the sequel to one of Xbox's top racers finally hits the streets, with online play this time.

**Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando (Platform) PS2**  
The addition of RPG-like elements has piqued our interest for this upcoming sequel. Plus more weapons!

**Secret Weapons Over Normandy (Air Combat) PS2, Xbox**  
Fancy flyboys pilot Allied aircraft in a number of famous WWII settings

**Silent Scope Complete (Shooting) Xbox**  
The sniper games that revived a dozen political careers, now in one package

**SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs II (Action) PS2**  
New maps, more online multiplayer modes, better single-player A.I., controllable turrets, enemy vehicles...is it November yet?

**Spy Hunter 2 (Driving) PS2, Xbox, GC**  
Why don't criminal masterminds build their lairs someplace a car can't go, like on top of a tall building? Stupid criminal masterminds.

**Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy (Action) Xbox**  
Ah, the high jinks those young Jedi get into! Shaving Ewoks, exchanging your nice blue lightsaber with a red one—it's outrageous!

**Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines (First-Person Shooter) PS2, Xbox, GC**  
Yet another of Arnold Schwarzenegger's clandestine campaign tools in the actor's plot to become governor.

**Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3 (First-Person Shooter) Xbox**  
The latest in Clancy's longest running series swaps tactical pre-planning for simple controls and gorgeous *Splinter Cell* graphics.

**True Crime: Streets of L.A. (Action) PS2, Xbox, GC**  
Detective Nick Kang might not play by the book, what with the beatings and general hotheadedness, but damnit, commissioner, he gets results! 🐾



"I dreamt I was robbing banks on lowrider bikes with Mobb Deep...then I woke up."

-Mobb Deep

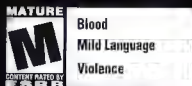
Dreamnasium Series featuring Mobb Deep and Max Glazer



© 1999 Dreamnasium



*She has her sights set on revenge.*

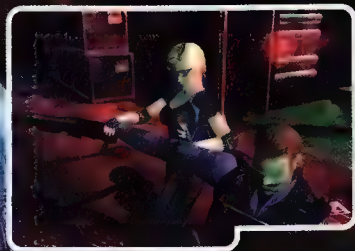


PlayStation 2



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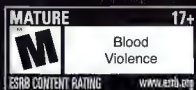
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PlayStation 2





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# CHANGE OR DIE!

Platform games fight off extinction as developers attempt to give an aging genre an extra life



Illustration by Henry Davis / GMT

**0** And, finally, platform games... **1** ...and, finally, platform games... **2** ...and, finally, platform games... **3** ...and, finally, platform games... **4** ...and, finally, platform games... **5** ...and, finally, platform games...

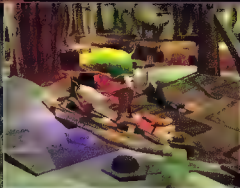
### KEY: Spot the Cliché

We've marked the platform-game conventions you should look out for in each of the featured titles (at least the ones we know about in these preview stages).

- |   |  |   |  |  |
|---|--|---|--|--|
|  Double Jump    |  Crates           |  Racing Stages |  Spin Attack            |  Sassy Hero |
|  Collect-a-thon |  Countdown Timers |  Tag-Team      |  Blow Darts (new trend) |  Floss      |



Escort missions, hoverboarding, gun turrets, and mech suits? Yup. There's some variety in *Jak II*.



# JAK II



**PS2 • Sony CEA • October 2003** — Those of us with ADD are glad to hear that developer Naughty Dog is giving us many new tricks to play with in *Jak II*. "We looked at *Tony Hawk*," Naughty Dog President

Jason Rubin explains of *Jak II*'s new game-play inspiration, "and the feeling of freedom in a world away from what you'd conventionally do, and we added our hoverboard. We looked at *Grand Theft Auto* and the freedom that comes with having multiple ways of doing something."

Mostly, it seems, *Jak II* is about freedom from the outset. Jak and Daxter begin the game trying to liberate themselves and an oppressed slum-town from an evil overlord. Then there's the merciful freedom from random item collection and from the linear confines of most 3D platformers. (Unfortunately, this doesn't include freedom from smashing open wooden crates to get at weapons and items. Some traditions never die.)

Jak also gets the freedom of speech in this sequel, which should help balance out the still-mouthy Daxter, if not here. But the biggest gameplay change you'll pick up on here? Jak can flip out and change into Dark Jak—a taunted, contorted version of the clean-cut original—thanks to having been experimented on with magical Eco goo by some new enemies. Dark Jak comes equipped with loads more strength and his own special set of attack skills, which should help break up the regularity of combat as normal Jak. "Every time you change modes, your abilities and controls change completely," says Rubin. "You might be able to go Dark Jak in some levels and get through without fighting anyone." >

## "Jak II is about freedom from the outset."

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### New Jak City



If you think "platform" games like *Jak II* are for the chronologically challenged (you know, kids), you might want to check out the first several missions of the game. It's a page right out of the *Grand Theft Auto III* book of games

design. Run missions for dirty arms dealers; steal any hover-car or -bike on the street and dodge local law enforcement as they try to gun you down; earn the respect of a local resistance movement by performing both violent

and heroic acts...we thought platform games were supposed to involve a lot of tricky jumps and collecting fruit for extra lives? Maybe we misinterpreted this one a little bit too early.... See our final word on *Jak II* on page 182.

### Sequel Opportunity

**Ted Price**, CEO of *Innocent* (*Ratchet & Clank*) and **Jason Rubin**, President of *Naughty Dog* (*Jak and Daxter*) talk encores.

**EGM:** How has developing platform games changed in the past seven or eight years?

**Ted Price:** Jason and I were both designing pretty straightforward platformers on the PlayStation 1. Now



we're responding to a shift in the market by moving away from the traditional platformer. To do that, we had to play [games in] a lot of other types of genres—first-person shooters, games with lots of gunplay...trying to figure out how more intelligent enemies and greater numbers of foes could create better gameplay.

**Jason Rubin:**

I think there are still games out there that are following a much more classic character-action procedure.

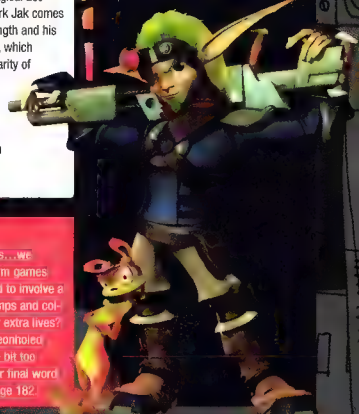


**EGM:** Are you just using "classic" as a nice word for "dated"? "Cause we've played a ton of those...."

**JR:** Nah, for real. A perfect example of a good one is *Sly Cooper*—it's a successful, classic character-action game. But Ted's group has gone in one direction away from "classic" and we've gone another one.

**EGM:** Does "classic" ever get really, really old?

**JR:** I'm not sure it gets old—it's just not what inspires Naughty Dog. It's exactly the opposite of what we >





► would have done with *Crash*.  
[Editor's note: Naughty Dog created the PS1 *Crash Bandicoot* titles, while Travellers' Tales handles the series now.] Not having to do the same thing over and over is a freedom that's more than just a positive trade off.

**"We're responding to a shift in the market by moving away from the traditional platformer."**

—Insomniac Games CEO Ted Price

**EGM:** How do you explain the sheer numbers of platform games that are popping up nowadays? They must be profitable or we wouldn't see so damn many.

**JR:** I don't know if some of them are profitable. *Dr. Muto* could not have been profitable...

**TP:** This isn't a new phenomenon, though. There were plenty of games in the last generation that tanked badly—that just happens in this business. Are there more out there losing money? Possibly. But it doesn't feel like the market is significantly more crowded now.

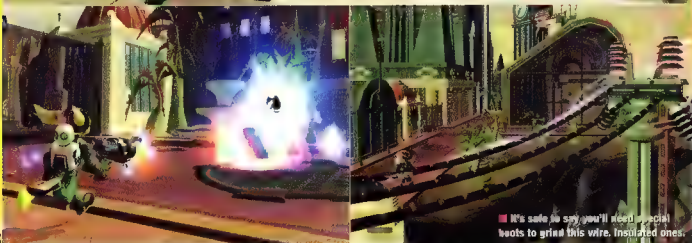
**EGM:** Finish this sentence and we'll let you go: "One thing I can't stand about platform games is..."

**JR:** I was surprised at the success of the *Crash* PS2 title because it was so similar to what we've done on the PS1. So, "redundancy," I suppose.

**TP:** Agreed. But as a developer, it helps us stand out from our competitors. So in some respects, it's a good thing.



► Ratchet has a gun, does travel.



► It's safe to say we'll need a special boots to grin this wire. Insulated ones.

## RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO



**PS2 • Sony CEA • November 2003** — Could be that Ted Price, CEO of developer Insomniac Games, knows something we don't. "People in the industry seem excited about revitalizing the platform genre," he tells us. Looking at the derivative platform games that have popped up over the past several years, we're guessing this is a fairly recent trend. But that's good news for bucking platformer stagnation, and Insomniac is doing its part—in fact, if it weren't for some basic platforming elements in the game, we might call this one an RPG-shooter. "Where we wanted to move away from traditional plat-

forming," Price says of the sequel to the not-quite-a-year-old *Ratchet & Clank*, "was in giving you the chance to really build your character." Price is talking about *Going Commando*'s experience system, which helps her Ratchet beef up as he progresses. Killing enemies forces them to drop experience points (nothing new for an RPG, but novel as platformers go) presented in the form of highly collectible nuts, for those of you who feel like you've got to collect something or it ain't a platformer. The more you get, the more your health rating increases, which means Ratchet can go from four to 80 hit points in the span of one

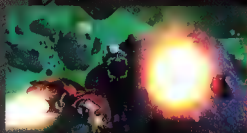
game. Ultimately, your stamina depends on how proactive you are with your harvests.

Weapons, too, are upgradeable, but at a cost (guns and mods are the primary expenditures in this land. No, it's not Texas). Ratchet can modify the weapons he obtains for several times more firepower. Upgrades are significantly stronger and alter the accuracy, range, and ammunition of some base guns. And you'll need them later as enemy difficulty ramps up. "We put a lot of emphasis on making enemies that are tougher, so that they'd kick your ass in greater numbers," says Price. "The firefights are a lot more intense than in the original." ►

### Maxigames

Instead of the traditional "minigames," most platformers have, *Going Commando* introduces "maxigames." Actually, they're just minigames with a different name (we've seen hovercar racing and battle arenas before), so don't get too excited.

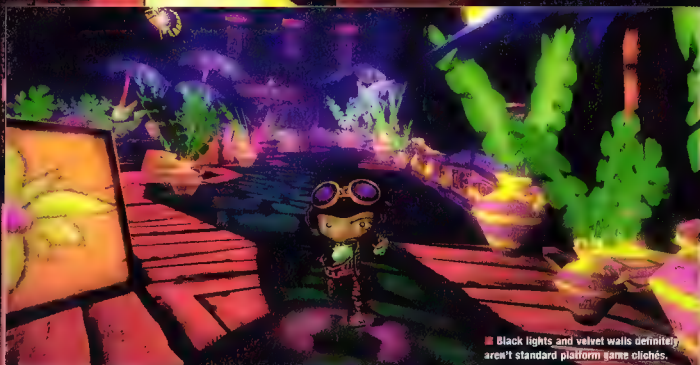
But unlike most minigames, your performance within them will impact the Story Mode, you can go back and play them again to improve your performance and add to your experience, which will carry over to the main game to up your stats.







TWISTED  
GOTTA HAVE ~ SWEET?



■ Black lights and velvet walls definitely aren't standard platform game clichés.



■ Mess with the ball, you get the horns.



## PSYCHONAUTS



**Xbox • Microsoft • Late 2004** — No one likes boring, collection-driven platformers. But no one doesn't like them as much as *Psychonauts* lead designer (and founder of developer Double Fine) Tim Schafer. "We're all sick of being told, 'There are 100 THINGS scattered throughout this level—collect them all and the level's complete!'" Schafer says. "What happens on the next level? How is it different and surprising? Well, there are 100 MORE THINGS, but this time they're in the SNOW. Zzzzz."

As a veteran PC developer, Schafer was involved in a handful of LucasArts' most

creative games (not a one had an X-Wing in it) before going solo to try his hand at console work with *Psychonauts* for Microsoft. If it's anything like his past efforts, gamers can expect an offbeat story and gameplay approach, with "crazy mental worlds where your psychic abilities have big effects on your environment, and where there's multiple paths and solutions to your goals," says Schafer.

In the game, you play the agile Raz, whose acrobat training and honed psyche help him maneuver around the 3D world and its characters' minds with equal skill.

That is, he can do everything from walking on walls to fighting boss battles inside the skulls of troubled in-game individuals. Raz will also experience his own brand of item collection, but with a different approach. "Done poorly, collectibles provide a very accurate simulation of the thrills of picking up litter," Schafer explains. "But collectibles can also be used well. You can make the player excited to see them by giving them a real function and purpose, having them mean something in the game world, and making them physically satisfying to collect." >

### A Beautiful Mind

Getting psycho with Tim Schafer, lead designer on *Psychonauts* and founder of Double Fine Studios

**EGM:** Hi, Tim. What is *Psychonauts*?

**Tim Schafer:** An action-adventure where you explore the fantastic mental worlds of bizarre characters. It's a game where you



meet a guy in a straitjacket who thinks he's Napoleon Bonaparte, and when you jump into his head you find out that in there, he actually IS

**"[Mascots] give these cold, black boxes a face you can relate to."**

—*Psychonauts* lead designer Tim Schafer

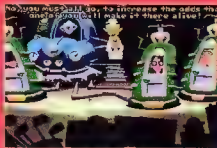
Napoleon Bonaparte on the field of the Battle of Waterloo. In another mind you might be sharing in someone's nightmare, or literally fighting one of his or her personal demons.

**EEM:** Zesty. So, as an acrobat, is Raz able to do anything beyond the standard double jumps and flips of most platform characters?

**TS:** Raz can do a ton of physical moves that are based on his circus upbringing (lightrope walking, trapezes, etc.), but he also uses his thoughts to move around in unique ways. We use Raz's thought bubble as our interface for "PSI"-power and inventory selection. Since Raz has power over his thoughts, he can grab the bubble, climb on top, bounce around, roll on it, use it as a parachute, and throw it at enemies. It's like that movie *The Red Balloon*, but imagine the red balloon kicked ass.

### Tim Schafer: Soup to 'Nauts

*Psychonauts* is a word on EGM that had been the best for a while. It's a word that's been used to describe a game that's been a success for a long time. It's a word that's been used to describe a game that's been a success for a long time. It's a word that's been used to describe a game that's been a success for a long time.



#### DAY OF THE TENTACLE

(1993) — Sequel to the 8-bit NES's *Maniac Mansion* involving time travel and sentient appendages. How completely predictable.



#### FULL THROTTLE

(1996) — As a biker-gang leader framed for murder, you need to clear your name by tracking the real killer. It has dated graphics, but it's worth it.



#### GRIM FANDANGO

(1998) — Manny Calavera is a travel agent for the dead in the limbo of the afterlife. *Fandango* has some tough puzzles, but it's incredibly witty.

**EGM:** You're saying it didn't? Whatever. Could Raz be the Xbox's new mascot? Do consoles even need mascots anymore?

**TS:** People may be down on mascots because the old ones are all "kid stuff," but there will always be a need to give these cold, black boxes a face you can relate to. I would like to suggest mine; it's non-threatening, and I rent it out cheap.

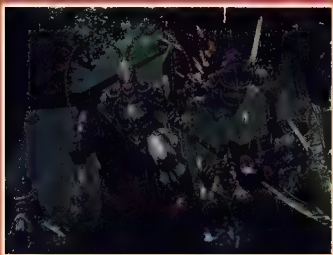




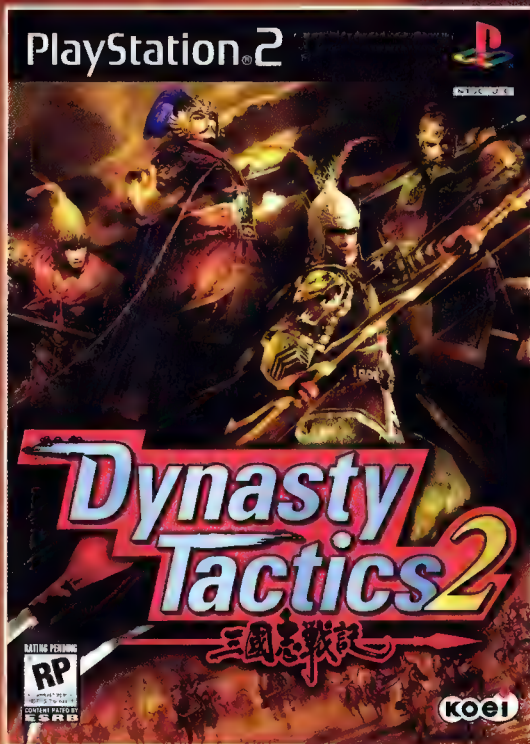
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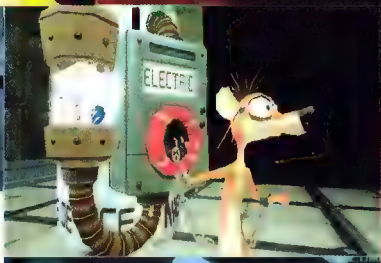


## WHIPLASH

PS2, Xbox • Eidos • October 2003 —

If the movies have taught us anything, it's that two dissimilar convicts getting chained together can make for some kooky hijinks. That's the idea in *Whiplash*, anyway, except we're talking about a weasel and a bunny escaping from an animal testing lab prior to a fusing of their genetic material (no, that doesn't mean they were gonna "do it").

"Our reward structure is based on destruction of the company's property," says Producer Alex Jones, "rather than irrelevant scavenger hunts that are largely peripheral to the main game." Jones also maintains that combat and environmental interaction are accentuated by the duo's unique pairing: "Spanx (weasel) uses the chained Redmond (rabbit) as a weapon, a grappling hook, and a hug-o-war tool [and more]." Never fear—after all of the cosmetic testing Redmond's gone through, it doesn't even phase him.



## Odd Coupling

How Producer Alex Jones shirks the food chain with *Whiplash*.

**EGM:** Tell us about the relationship between the two heroes in *Whiplash*.

**Alex Jones:** You're a weasel who's about to become fused with a rabbit—unless, of course, you can get out of the facility. Instead of making a convoluted story with a ton of plot twists, we decided to have a strong premise drive a relatively straightforward story. Freedom from oppression is a universally understandable motivation and one that people can instantly connect with. And pairing off a weasel with a rabbit—weasels and rabbits are natural enemies in the wild—seemed like an innately funny match.



**EGM:** What are two or three features unique to *Whiplash* that set it apart from other 3D action-platformers?

**AJ:** Number one: combat. Our combat system is not an afterthought tacked on to give a diversion from jumping setups. It requires mastery, and that makes it rewarding and meaningful. Second is the fact that we have made a sincere effort to present a logically consistent fiction that does not require arbitrary collectibles and platforms to move the gameplay along. Everything in *Whiplash* is somehow relevant to the game world.

## Doing the 'Doo

Probing the vivid gray matter of Clayton Kaulzaric, creative director for *Voodoo Vince*.

**EGM:** Where did the inspiration for this character, the game, and its premise come from?

**Clayton Kaulzaric:** Vince came from the depths of my fevered brain. I've been filling a steady stream of sketchbooks and notepads (and napkins and the backs of envelopes) since I could hold a pencil. I was mulling over some misfortune and ended up drawing a voodoo doll. Next to that, I wrote the phrase "Vince The Voodoo Doll: A game where getting hurt = good." That started me down a path that would lead to a finished game more than three years later. The name was changed to *Voodoo Vince*, but he's still basically the same craggy one-eyed little guy I drew back in 2000.



**EGM:** Vince is going to debut opposite *Jak II* and the new *Ratchet & Clank*. Do you think Vince has their number?

**CK:** *Voodoo Vince* has some very cool, unique gameplay, a lot of atmosphere, and a very likeable main character who I've grown pretty attached to over the last few years. But I made this game because I'm a huge fan of this genre. The games from Naughty Dog and Insomniac are great. It's safe to say they're why I wanted to make Vince in the first place. If *Voodoo Vince* is compared favorably to their stuff, I'll know we did something right.



Vince is such a doll, you'll want to stick a pin in him.

## VOODOO VINCE



**Xbox • Microsoft • September 2003** — We can safely say that *Voodoo Vince* is only the second game here (see *Sphinx* and *The Cursed Mummy*) that rewards you for beating the barley out of yourself. As the third-string voodoo doll of your kidnapped master, it's your random opportunity to find and save her. Don't stay for the plot, though—what the game can offer you is a dose of creative action-intensive puzzles built around protagonist

Vince's self-destructive destiny. "Vince's voodoo powers are strange and epic," says Clayton Kaulzaric, founder of developer Beep "An angry saucer comes down and disintegrates Vince, an angry god crushes him with his foot, we dip Vince in acid, and we turn him into a piñata and beat him with a stick. Fun stuff." Not only are these scenes to die for, they wipe your toes off the face of the world. Masochistic and handy. ▶



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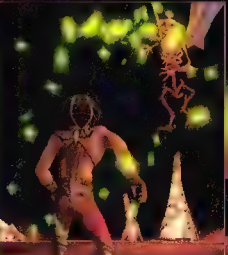
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Sphinx ditches out the pain while the Mummy takes it.

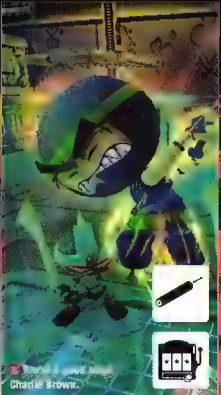
## SPHINX AND THE CURSED MUMMY



**PS2, GC • THQ • November 2003** — We've had sufficient time to recover from those movie-inspired *Mummy* games, but will *Sphinx* prove a treasure or curse? Mat Sneap, director at developer Eurocom, says switching between two heroes with very different skills helps to preserve the

action deep in the bowels of this adventure. "The player," Sneap says, "will have to abuse the Mummy (that of King Tut himself, no less. You were wondering what he's been up to...) to solve his puzzles. You'll do things like light him on fire, electrocute him, vaporize him...even smash

him so he's 2D." Counterpart hero Sphinx is the muscle to the Mummy's clumsy puzzling, bringing what Sneap describes as a "visceral arcade action" to the game. Oh, and in keeping with apparent platformer trends of late, Sphinx also has a blowgun to shoot enemies and puzzle targets with.



Charlie Brown.



## I-NINJA

**PS2, Xbox, GC • Namco • November 2003** — Yeah, the name sounds like some karate minigame for your cell phone, but *I-Ninja* is actually more of a platformer party game for one. It snuck onto our list because of its platformish leanings, but it's poised to be that "something for everyone" title that will either annoy or that we'll enjoy. "You can box a 150-foot-tall robot, grind on rails and run up half pipes, fight underwater in a submarine, and guide remote control rockets," says Namco Producer Jon Kromrey, "to name but a few."

This pleasing popartism gets props for bucking the crate-busting, run-n-jump monotony that weighs down most 3D platformers. It's got its share of clichés (coin collection being the most glaring), but a cleverly borrowed design that hearkens back to *Sonic*, *Marble Madness*, *Ape Escape*, and *Tony Hawk* should at least make *I-Ninja* a melting pot of ideas taken from other quality games. ▶



Tak flies through the air, after being thrown by a smart-alec orangutan.

## TAK & THE POWER OF JUJU



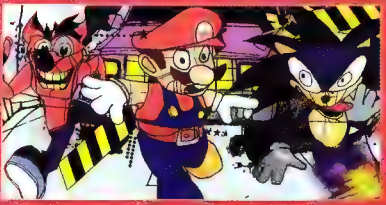
**PS2, GC • THQ • October 2003** — Not to be confused with Voodoo Vince, Tak is an actual dude in a loincloth coming to grips with his magic-infused lifestyle. His abilities are fairly pedestrian at first; swinging a stick and double jumping will have to satisfy you when you start off. But later,

he'll master magic spells that help his attack power, defenses, and navigation, to name a few. The main gameplay, however, "centers around the environment and animal interaction," Tak's Lead Designer John Blackburn explains. "For example, if you bring a sheep close to an orangutan,

it'll pick up him up, bend down a banana tree, and catapult the sheep to a new location. Tak can use this hatred to transport sheep, which are used to power machinery, to new locations." Plus, you might get to see a ram try to get it on with one of 'em, which would be awesome.

## Where Are Mario, Sonic, and Crash???

What ever happened to those guys? We pondered the absence of Nintendo's Super Mario Bros., Sega's Sonic the Hedgehog, and Naughty Dog's Crash Bandicoot from the next couple of years. Their absence is due to a variety of reasons, including the fact that they're all still around.



**1,000 MARIOS**  
GC • Nintendo • TBA — We don't even think the folks at the Big N know anything about this one yet, it's so secret. We're not sure what's cooped up inside super designer Shigeru Miyamoto's mind for the titled *1,000 Marios*, but we've heard it might be his exclusive baby this time. (He hasn't acted as producer for awhile now.)

**SONIC HEROES**  
PS2, Xbox, GC • Sega • Early 2004 — In this team-based action-platformer—covered fully in our huge feature in *EGM* #189—you play using a group of Sonic's friends, enemies, or...weird relations from obscure past *Sonic* games. It's the first simultaneous multiplatform *Sonic* release. Can we get a hallelujah in the house?

**CRASH 6**  
TBA • VU Games • Late 2004  
Yes, that's a completely original working title, isn't it, folks? Our sources say that the next *Crash* is currently in the works at Traveller's Tales, the developer responsible for *Crash Bandicoot: The Wrath of Cortex* and the upcoming *Crash Nitro Kart*. Expect to run and jump with your mouth open a lot.



ORDINARY?  
NOT  
INTERESTED.



## TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

The most popular extreme sports series of all time, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater is undergoing a massive overhaul as the developers have decided to cross it with...Grand Theft Auto? Tony Hawk's Underground (the latest game in the series) is redefining what it means to be a sports title. In Underground, players can get off their board and can go anywhere—exploring eight expansive levels on foot or in a vehicle. Go for a joyride or climb to the tops of buildings, all to find new lines to skate or places to drop in from.

Instead of playing as a sponsored skater with legions of fans, players can import a picture of their own face into the game and start literally from scratch. Gamers can create not only their own parks to skate in, but they can even create their own tricks and trade 'em with friends. Tony Hawk was a trailblazer the first time he ever set foot on a skateboard, and Tony Hawk's Underground continues the trend. (Helmet not included.)

BREAK OUT OF

Nestle  
**Butterfinger**  
bar

THE ORDINARY



SWEET  
CODES

**SSX TRICKY**  
PS2, XBOX, DC



**SUPER BOOST**  
Do Uber tricks until the letters (T-R-I-C-K-Y) on top of your Adrenaline Bar are filled in red and your meter will stay full giving you unlimited boost and let you do Uber tricks with no time limit.

appear, but all players, outfits, boards and levels will be unlocked.

**FULL STAT POINTS**  
At the title screen, hold L1 + R1 and press Triangle(2), Down, X(2), Left, X(2), Up. Release L1 + R1 and if you entered the code correctly, you will hear a sound. All the boards will now have full stat points.

**CHEAT MODE**  
At the title screen, hold L1 + R1 and press X, Triangle, Down, Triangle, Square, Left, Circle, X, Up. Release L1 + R1 and if you entered the code correctly, you will hear a sound. Note: A cheat menu will not



**VIRTUA FIGHTER 4  
EVOLUTION**

### VF1 MODELS

In Quest Mode, go to the Shop and look in the Other category to buy the VF1 models. After you select your character on the Character Select screen, press and hold P+K to use the old character models in Arcade or VS mode.

### RANKINGS

While your rank is still a "kyu," you will earn experience for each of your matches, and will earn a promotion with each 100 experience points.

### GAIN ITEM (VARIOUS)

With any character, let your opponent perform reversals on you, and lose the match. If you get hit by more than twice the number of reversals than the number of rounds, you'll pick up some interesting items!

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美夫美

Your prince has platforming moves that put Lara Croft's to shame.



**PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME**

PS2, GC, Xbox • Ubi Soft • November 2003 — The platform acrobatics of the original PC game translate to fancy swordplay and the ability to walk on walls in 3D. Plus, POP has decided to borrow the time-shifting feature from *Blinx* (Xbox) to help you turn back time to fix less-than-favorable enemy encounters. Easily more action game than platformer now....

**KYA: THE DARK LINEAGE**

PS2 • Atari • November 2003 — An organic backdrop supporting Euro Disney-cartoonish looks and plot lines define *Kya's* place amidst a pool of more tech-y platformers. The complex topography is the key to setting off stunts like high-altitude jumps-turned-skdives and enemy evasion using natural obstacles.



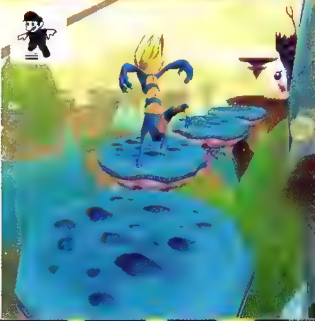
**WALLACE & GROMIT IN PROJECT ZOO**

PS2, Xbox, GC • Bam • September 2003 — Gumby never made a killer videogame, but Aardman Animation's cheeky duo is much less lame. No leaps and bounds in gameplay here, but this one's for the fans, yo. Enjoy the characters, cut-scenes, and humor, despite less-than-"cracking" gameplay.



**SCALER**

PS2, Xbox, GC • TDK Mediative • Late 2004 — This shape-changing chameleon may normally resemble a Smurf in a wind tunnel, but his sneekz come from taking the forms of the more elegant animals in his neighborhood. A quick lick of the tongue gives Scaler access to the lickee's most useful abilities. We can dig it now, but let's check back in a year.

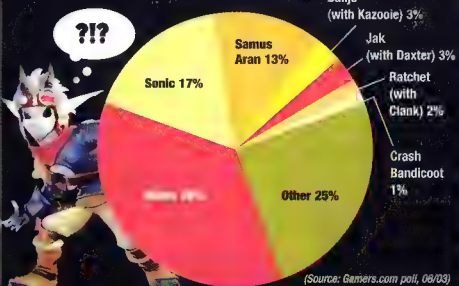


**SKRATCH: A MAGICAL TALE**

PS2, Xbox • TDK Mediative • Late 2004 — Scaring humans provides power to feed your hero's netherworld-dwelling sidekick, Skcratch. It's got potential for some good messin' around with Skcratch's tail (controlled independently with the right-analog stick), but this one sounds a shade shy of "magical." Let's call it "special." for now. 🐾

**Who's your favorite platform-game character?**

We polled our readers to find out which mascot they like best. Here's what they had to say.





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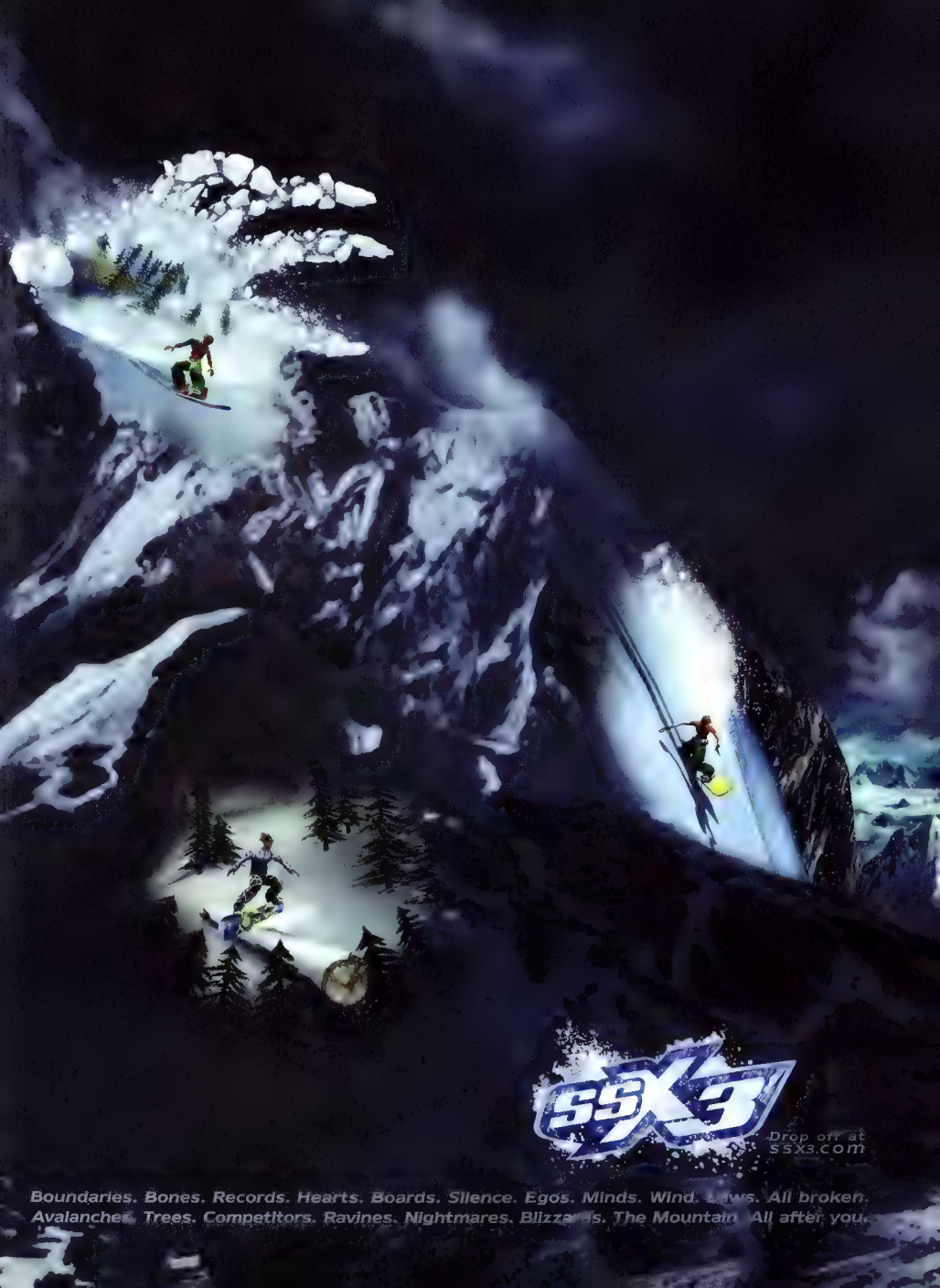
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**SSX3**

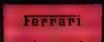
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# Foreign Ambassadors Report Peaceful Face-to-Face Negotiations with Terrorists in Venezuela

By Michael Golden  
OF OUR DRESS NETWORK

was relieved that the situation did not turn  
violent despite the heightened tensions between  
the two sides. As of yet, no  
formal negotiations

Venezuela - A negotiator official from



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# FINAL FANTASY EVERYTHING

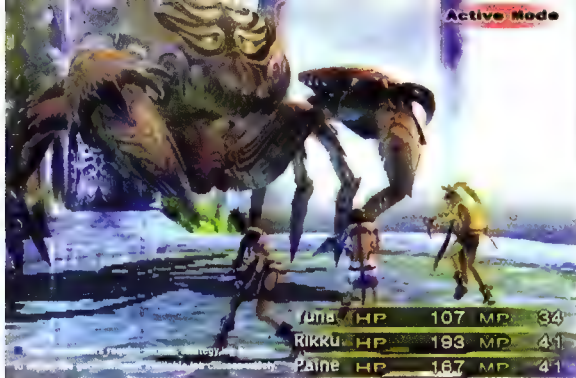
The world's hottest RPG series is everywhere—on your PS2, GameCube, even online!

By Shane Bettenhausen

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FF: Crystal Chronicles	page 150
12 Other RPGs	page 156

**T**he title *Final Fantasy* has never been more ironic—each successive installment of this landmark RPG series grabs new fans, and a deluge of upcoming sequels and offshoots proves there's no end in sight. Of course, simply churning out a ton of games isn't always the best way to sustain a franchise (just ask the disgruntled *Army Men* clogging gaming's unemployment line). Thankfully, Square Enix isn't afraid to take chances with its most valued property. Each of the next three *FF* titles offers something unexpected: *Final Fantasy X-2* directly continues the plot of its predecessor (a first for the series), *Final Fantasy XI* bravely takes the series online, and *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles* brings four-player action-packed *FF* gameplay to a somewhat unlikely place—GameCube. Do all of these daring endeavors do justice to their legendary namesake? Read on to discover the straight dope on all three games...and a few surprises about the future of *Final Fantasy*.





■ PS2 • Square Enix • December 2003

## FINAL FANTASY X-2



**Chocobo Quotient:** Fairly low. They still roam the open fields, but most people would rather ride robotic motor scooters.



**Airship Sighting:** These girls travel in style—the luxurious Celsius airship provides a comfy, skywardly mobile base.



**Moogle Magnitude:** Real mooglees seem to be extinct, but Yuna pays them homage with her moogle Mascot outfit.



**Crystal Method:** No mystic crystal revelations per se, but the gals are after spheres that are technically crystalline.



■ Although he doesn't join Yuna's party, *FFX*'s lovable turball Kimahri does play a role in the sequel's plot.

### What's the deal?

It's *Final Fantasy X*...part two. Despite the fact that they're up to number *XII* in the main series, no *Final Fantasy* game has ever continued the plot of a previous chapter. But now, all bets are off. "When we were making *FFX*, we hadn't considered making a sequel," explains Producer Yoshinori Kitase. "When we were putting together *FFX: International* (a Japanese re-release of the English version) we decided to create *The Eternal Calm* (an epilogue depicting what happened two years after the game's end...scope it up on the December *Official PlayStation Magazine* disc) to gauge whether the fans wanted more of Yuna's story to be told." As expected, the response was overwhelmingly positive, so Kitase and Co. went ahead with the unprecedented follow-up.

Since there's never been a true *FF* sequel, the development team had free reign on how to approach *X-2*. "When creating *FFX-2*, we wanted to show that Square was able to create a sequel from a different perspective," says Kitase, "with a different style, different gameplay...different everything. We really want to surprise players." Fans of *FFX* will assuredly be surprised, because nearly every facet of that game has been altered for this sequel. It still offers the same blend of lush visuals, catchy tunes, and gorgeous CG cinemas that have come to define the series, but the meat of the game has radically changed. The characters you've gotten to know have all moved on with their lives, the gameplay has been totally reworked, and the central mood of the game feels very different from that of its predecessor.

For starters, the plot probably isn't what most gamers expect. "It's always less likely that drama is going to >

■ Two years can really change a girl—Yuna's bustin' out with a spunky hairdo, sexy new wardrobe, and croopy 5-foot-long ponytail.





■ Many of the enemies are leftovers from *FFX*, but the battles are so damn fast, you won't care.

happen in a peaceful world," says Director Motomu Toriyama. "We wanted to challenge ourselves to do that. We didn't just want something trite like 'Sin [*FFX*'s final boss] comes back!" The adventure begins when *FFX* heroine Yuna finds an image Sphere (the fantasy equivalent of a VHS tape) that seems to show her lost love, Tidus. If you've finished *FFX*, you understand just how unlikely that might seem, and she's skeptical herself. Regardless, she sets out on a journey with a group called the Gullwings to find more Spheres... and, if she's lucky, the truth about Tidus.

Don't be misled by the serious tone of the premise, though—Yuna's journey is a carefree, happy one. The events of the first game have indelibly changed her, and she's not pining for the past. On the contrary—she's shaping the future. "We never want to do the same thing twice," says Toriyama, laughing. "The atmosphere of *FFX-2* is much more aggressive and active because Yuna is on a determined quest to truly discover herself."

### What's your role?

Square Enix deliberately disobeyed genre conventions when designing *FFX-2*'s characters. Not only does the game limit your total number of playable characters to three, but it also lets you use them all from the outset. Oh, and did we mention that they're all female? "In films like *Charlie's Angels* and *Tomb Raider*, female characters play lead roles," remarks Kitase. "So, I think that most people can easily sympathize with the ladies of *FFX-2* as central heroes." Previous *FF* games have

connected with a huge number of female gamers, so the ramped-up girl power of *X-2* should bring even more into the *Final Fantasy* fold. And from the male gamer's perspective, who doesn't like to watch three athletic ladies kicking ass?

The central theme of "change" visibly carries over into the game's starring character: One look at Yuna's new outfit reveals that an epic journey of self-discovery apparently requires hoochie-mama hotpants. "She's basically still the same person underneath," explains Toriyama. "But after sacrificing so much to defeat Sin, she has newfound freedom to do whatever she wants." This brave new spirit means that Yuna is far more daring, playful, and unpredictable than ever before. Don't be surprised to see her pulling silly pranks with her gootball cousin, Rikku, or betting out an impromptu pop concert on the deck of an airship—Yuna's really loosened up since her days as High Summoner.

Rikku hasn't changed as much, besides from losing about 50 percent of her clothing. She's still a spunky, strong-willed brat who's too damned endearing to stay angry at for long. Although she's now 18 years old, Rikku really hasn't matured much. "We really don't want Rikku to grow up," jokes Toriyama, "A lot of her fans would be disappointed." ►

■ Rikku is two years older in *FFX-2*, and her jailbait wardrobe will make her myriad fans more hot and bothered than ever.



■ After tossing aside her prim summoner's robes, Yuna does what any gal would do...she becomes a pop diva.







Wait Mode

■ Paine shows a bikini skin with her thief outfit, actually, she shows a whole lotta skin with every one of her outfits.



Yona! You must stop!

■ It's not over until the skanky stank sings. We kid, we kid.



■ Mesmorized with eyes on the prize—Yuna finds a sparkly Sphere.

➤ Thankfully, the Gullwings have one member who can offset the combined preciousness of Yuna and Rikku: newcomer Paine. “The other girls tend to joke around too much, so nothing gets done,” says Toriyama. “Paine will interact and get the story moving again—she’s kind of a shadow leader for the group.” Paine is cool, reserved, and mature, and her biting sarcasm is a much-needed tonic for the syrupy sweetness the other girls constantly effuse. Her sexy, leather-clad look also helps to fill the S&M fashion void left by FFX’s well-endowed sorceress, Lulu.

On the subject of Lulu, many gamers might wonder where the other stars of FFX have gone. You’ll run into several familiar faces—including lion-man Kimahri, now the leader of his tribe, and Blitzball-jock-turned-proud-dad Wakka—as you travel the world of Spira. Unfortunately, none of them has time to join your quest.

#### How does it feel?

If you’re still on board after checking out Yuna’s new outfit, you’re probably ready to swallow the earth-shattering gameplay changes. For starters, the game is now mission-based. Since the crux of Yuna’s quest involves locating Spheres, the act of acquiring each one constitutes a mission. You choose your mission from a map screen, get dropped off by the Celsius airship, and “Mission Start!” flashes across the screen. It’s definitely a huge shift from the exploration-based gameplay of FFX, but dividing the gameplay up like this has its appeal. You can now turn on FFX-2, complete a mission in an hour, and turn it off. “It seems like gamers nowadays play in shorter sessions and spend less time on games,” Toriyama says, “so we took that into consideration with

X-2.” Sure, some players still prefer marathon sessions trudging through dungeons and interrogating townsfolk, but being able to easily jump in and out of the story is much easier when you’ve gotta run to work or class.

The game flow is also extremely open-ended, which is shocking for the historically uberlinear *Final Fantasy* series. Dozens of quests are entirely optional, and you can generally tackle missions in whatever order you choose. As you complete key missions, your “Story Level” increases and the plot progresses, but how you go about reaching the conclusion is largely up to you. “The amount of freedom that we included in X-2 is intentional—and experimental in a sense,” adds Toriyama. “It’s the kind of thing that we couldn’t do in a normal, numbered FF game.”

Although a strategic battle system worked admirably in FFX, such a complex scheme wouldn’t gel well with X-2’s jaunty missions and lighthearted tone, so the designers forged a new engine that runs like quicksilver. Fights happen in manic real time. At first, it’s slightly overwhelming, as enemies constantly pummel the gals while you make combat decisions. Once you’ve acclimated to the frenzied pace, though, battles are a breeze—a few quick hits and most minor enemies are handily vanquished.

Combat isn’t devoid of strategy, however, thanks to the new dress change job system. It might seem like a glorified take on playing dress-up (or a shameless excuse to watch the ladies change into something a little sexier), but the system actually blends elements of FFX’s sphere grid ability system with the well-received job change concepts from *Final Fantasy V* and *Final Fantasy Tactics*. “The job system first seems simple,” explains Kitase. “But it actually gets very complicated as you get farther into the game.” Things start slowly: You can transform the girls into gunners, thieves, warriors, or songstresses. You can switch between these jobs on the fly during battles, and a stunning transformation sequence accompanies each job change.



■ Pick a side: Aid either New Yevon or the Youth League.







You can eventually amass 16 different jobs, and each girl has a classy costume to suit that profession's look. Don't write it off as footloose fashion crap, though—each job learns special skills, so there's a definite strategic advantage to planning ahead how you want each of your party members to develop. For example, white mage robes, although hardly sexy, offer healing skills you'll want to master as soon as possible. Setting up various garment grids adds further complexity to changing jobs. Throughout the game you'll find these map-like grids (basically diagrams that lay out

Spira. Culturally, the fall of Sin has ushered in a seemingly happy existence "It's a world in transition. Everything on the surface is peaceful, but problems are brewing underneath," Kitase elaborates. So, while these social problems are intriguing, revisiting all of the exact same locations from the previous game, feels, well...like a quick cash-in sequel. Sure, it's poignant to hear Yuna reminiscing about the past and commenting on how much the world has changed, but fans might find many of the game's environments to be something of a retread.

## "We wanted to show that Square is able to create a sequel from a different perspective"

—FFX-2 Producer Yoshinori Kitase

sequences of costume changes), which offer customizable stat bonuses via rapid-fire switching from one job to another during battle.

The traditionally dull act of traversing fields and dungeons also benefits from a fresh infusion of action. Now, Yuna can leap over chasms, pull herself up ledges, and interact with the backgrounds in all sorts of clever ways. Don't worry about *X-2* feeling like *Tomb Raider*, however, as all of the action is fairly simple and 100 percent safe—you can't send Yuna plummeting to her death simply by missing a jump.

Amid all this rampant change, one facet of *FFX-2* hasn't really evolved that much—the physical world of

Luckily, one final (and crucial) new feature will likely balance out the lameness of recycled environments.

*FFX-2* has multiple endings. Depending on how you play the game (and how you react to some key story line events), you'll reach wildly different outcomes, so this might be the first *Final Fantasy* game most people will play through multiple times: Is any one of the endings truer than the others? The developers aren't saying (in fact, they clam up at the mere mention of endings). But regardless, it sounds like Yuna won't be going on any more globe-trotting adventures after *FFX-2*. "We're no longer concerned about how Yuna's doing," says Toriyama. "She's living peacefully in Spira." ▶



■ Like its predecessor, nearly all of *FFX-2*'s dialogue is delivered via spoken voices...and the acting is excellent.



■ "Her look is inspired by New York City punk style," says Director Motomu Toriyama of newcomer Paine. "But even we don't know how she keeps all those buckles on."





■ Don't be a hero—bring some friends if you want to stand a chance against *FFXI*'s nastier enemies.

■ PS2 • Sony CEA • February 2004 ■ PC • Square Enix • Oct. 26, 2003

# FINAL FANTASY XI: ONLINE

## FINAL FANTASY XI



**Chocobo Quotient:** Extremely high. Rent one from a stable and you've got a stylish ride for exploring the vast land.



**Airship Sighting:** *FFXI* lets you purchase a ticket for an airship ride to travel from kingdom to kingdom.



**Moogle Magnitude:** Head to the Mog House to heal your wounds, change classes, or check your mail.



**Crystal Method:** You'll find eight different types of elemental crystals—use them on equipment to forge new items.

### What's the deal?

It's *Final Fantasy*... with a few thousand of your closest friends. *XI* invites gamers to enter the sprawling world of Van'diel, a constantly changing realm where they can lose themselves in a living society of fellow *Final Fantasy* players. You can assemble your friends to slay dragons, sell wares in street bazaars, or hook up with a cute catgirl and plan virtual nuptials—the immense freedom of massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) utterly eschews the linearity generally associated with console RPGs.

*Final Fantasy* creator Hironobu Sakaguchi thought it was time for an online *FF* game back in 1999. "Since there was no precedent for a massively multiplayer console RPG at the time, we had to build everything from the ground up," says Director Hiromichi Tanaka. The *FFXI* team looked to PC games for inspiration. "We played a lot of *Ultima Online* and *EverQuest* and realized the main thing that could be improved in those games is the balance between making it accessible to new players and keeping it interesting and engaging for veterans," says Producer Koichi Ishii.

Creating this hybrid of classic *FF* sensibilities and real-world community was truly an ambitious task. In fact, the scope of the game required a little help from a pricey PS2 add-on peripheral—the Hard Disk Drive (HDD). "*FFXI* might have been possible without the HDD," muses Ishii, "but the game's quality would have suffered, as much of the data is being streamed from the HDD as you play." So, while the admission fee might shock you—a bundle with the game and HDD will cost around \$99 (an analyst's prediction, as Sony wouldn't give us the final price at press time), you'll need \$39 for the network adapter, and don't forget \$13 a month for an *FFXI* account—it's ultimately a fair asking price for immersion in a world of such mammoth scale.

### What's my role?

Defining precisely *whom* you play as in a MMORPG carries great importance—you'll be meeting tons of >

■ The male Hume fits in well with the heroes of recent *FF* games for a good reason—they're designed by Tetsuya Nomura, the guy behind *FFX*'s Tidas and *FFVII*'s Squall.



■ You don't have to think up much strategy to deal with most random battles—just gang up and beat 'em down.





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

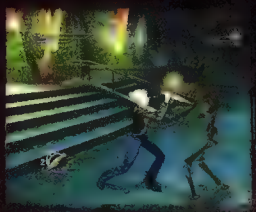


## Buffy the Vampire Slayer

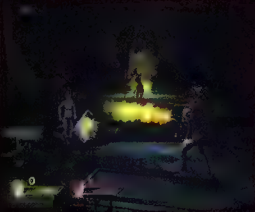
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PlayStation 2



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The mystical land of Yvottal offers plenty of prime picnic spots.

▶ other players who will immediately judge you based solely on your appearance, so you'd better look suave. Your first big decision? Choosing your race. Most gamers will play it safe with a fairly standard Hume and Elvaan character, but some more adventurous types might dare to try a beastly Galka, sultry Mithra, or saccharine-sweet Tarutaru hero. "I knew that each player would play in different ways," says *FFXI* Art Director Ryoosuke Aiba. "Some would want to act all sweet and cute, and others would rather be more macho and brutish—we wanted something for everybody." You then choose your character's gender (bear in mind that only female Mithra are available for play, and Galka are asexual) and customize your face and hairstyle options.

Next, you pick your basic job class from these six options: Warrior, Thief, Monk, Black Mage, White Mage, and Red Mage. Pick carefully, because this choice will decide whether you'll be a fighter slashing up monsters on the front lines or a mage hanging back to offer spell-casting support. (You can take on a secondary job to augment your skills, but you'll master only your base field of study.) There aren't any racial job limitations, but certain races are better suited to certain jobs. "Each race has its own strengths and weaknesses," Ishi explains. "Tarutaru are adept at magic, Galka are very strong, Mithra are agile, and so on. So, if you want a serious challenge, you can make a unique character who plays a job that isn't best for his race, like a Tarutaru Warrior."

Many advance job classes become available later in the game by completing specific quests. Depending on your basic job, you may be able to transform your character into a Bard, Beastmaster, Dark Knight, Paladin,

or Ranger. Since this U.S. *FFXI* also includes the content from the Japanese *Rise of Ziraat* expansion pack, you'll be able to explore four additional advance jobs: Summoner, Ninja, Samurai, and Dragon Knight. Meeting the stringent requirements for these bonus jobs can be a chore, but the payoff is worthy. If you're one of these supercool classes, you'll have no problem finding people who want to group with you.

#### How does it feel?

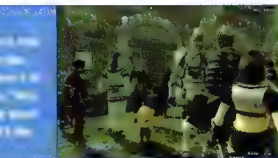
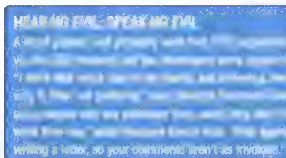
No matter how ambitious and complex an online RPG might be, its success ultimately depends on whether it's fun, engaging, and addictive. And in order to be fun, RPGs must offer a solid battle system. At first, loyal *Final Fantasy* fans might not be so keen on *FFXI*'s take on combat—you move your character in real time, automatically attacking at a constant rate. The only way you halt your attacks is by backing off, using an item, or selecting a spell. The overall feel of combat is much closer to that of *EverQuest* than that of past *FF* games. "During development, we tried all different types of combat to see what flew and what didn't," says programmer Yasuhiro Yamamoto. "We tried turn-based combat, and we tried making it so you couldn't move during battles, and through experimentation, we settled on the current setup as the best option." Fighting definitely takes some getting used to, but it offers a balanced mix of action and strategy that works remarkably well when you and a group of friends are pounding the bejesus out of a giant behemoth.

While *FFXI*'s combat has much in common with PC online RPGs, its narrative, thankfully, does not. In fact, ▶

Female characters (like this Hume) aren't just for gals to play. The designers say that lots of male Japanese players role-play as ladies...even some Square Enix staffers.



■ (Left) If only the massive Gaika could accidentally step on the cuddly Tarutaru. (Right) Hope you brought your map.









■ The PC version of *FFXI* (pictured here) is functionally identical, but its visuals definitely have a slight edge over the PS2 one.

► *FFXI* offers more plot than your average go-kill-random-monsters online adventure. (Localization Director Richard Honeywood jokes that *FFXI*'s total in-game text is two-thirds as long as the Bible.) But since everyone is experiencing the game's world simultaneously, getting the plot across is tricky. "We decided not to reveal the story to everyone all at once—it's different based on the country your character is in," reveals Plot Director Nobuaki Koumoto. "We wanted the players to communicate with each other to discover the full story." You'll uncover most of the plot via quests available in the world's various towns. The overall narrative hasn't even been fully revealed yet—Square Enix plans to unveil fur-

ther chapters through future expansion packs. "It's the relationships that players forge with other players that keep them coming back for more," he says. And in Japan, they really have kept coming back. "Some of the players in Japan would have to play at least 20 hours a day," explains Koumoto, "because some players have over 4,000 hours of gameplay and the game's been out for only a little over a year." These dedicated Japanese gamers will be in for an eye-opening experience when the American players arrive, since gamers from both ends of the globe will be playing on the same servers. The two sides will be able to communicate using a set of predetermined, autotranslated dialogue choices, not

**"It's the relationships that players forge with other players that keep them coming back."** —*FFXI* Producer Koichi Ishii

ther chapters through future expansion packs.

In an MMORPG, the experience of exploring the world can seem just as compelling as fighting monsters or completing a quest. The physical world of Van'diel is fantastically vast and diverse: As you traverse the game's forests, deserts, swamps, and icy tundra, you'll gawk at some spectacular sightseeing vistas. There's a high probability of getting lost while wandering—in fact, members of the development team happily admit that they still get lost while playing.

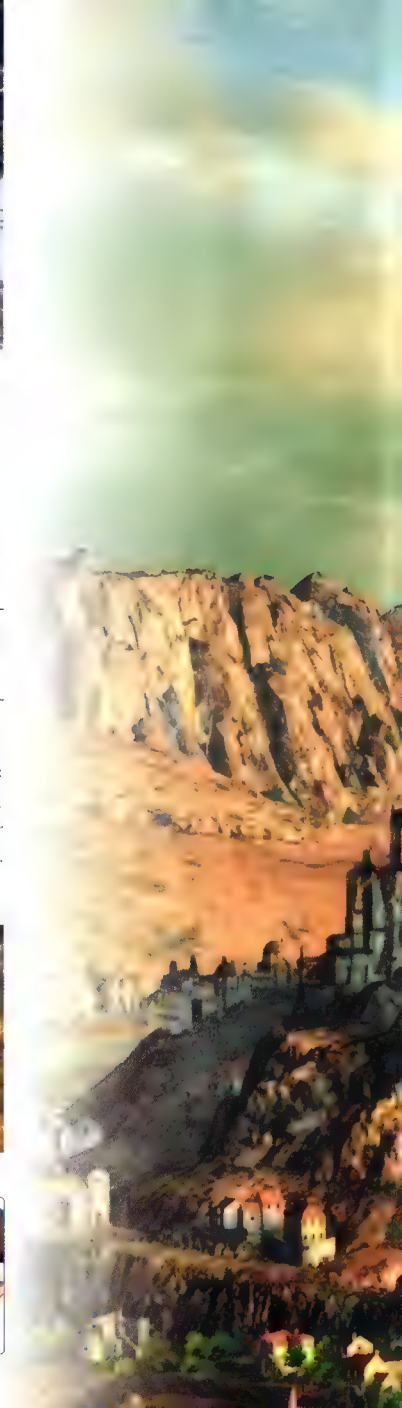
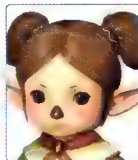
All of these elements add to *FFXI*'s appeal, but Ishii

unlike the system in *Phantasy Star Online*.

Hopefully, everyone will get along nicely and *FFXI* will promote a greater mutual understanding of the two cultures. The guys at Square Enix look forward to the influx of Western players. "We're expecting the huge number of Japanese Tarutaru characters to balance out the sensuous, burly characters U.S. gamers will make," adds Aiba. Maybe we'll even see transcontinental love connections... just be sure to plan your wedding far in advance. "We currently have a waiting list of two months for official wedding ceremonies," laughs Ishii. >



■ *FFXI* would get booted from the modern RPG club if it didn't offer absurdly pretty CG cut-scenes like this.





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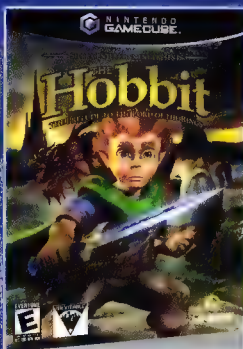
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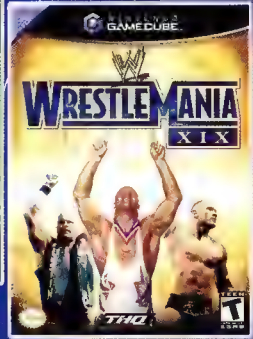
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The characters might look kiddie, but the starling cinematic are wonderfully sophisticated.

GC • Nintendo • Feb. 9, 2004

# FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES

	<b>Chocobo Quotient:</b> Zero. "FF:CC has a wagon, so we didn't need chocobos," explains Director Akitoshi Kawazu.
	<b>Airship Sighting:</b> CC's world is a little lacking in technological development, so airships haven't been invented yet.
	<b>Moogle Magnitude:</b> High—a moogle assists you in single-player games, and you can paint designs on his fur. Really.
	<b>Crystal Method:</b> It's your goal to re-energize the giant crystals that protect the world's towns.

## What's the deal?

It's *Final Fantasy*... on GameCube. Well, kind of. For the past seven years, no *Final Fantasy* title has graced a Nintendo home console, so this is a homecoming of sorts for a franchise that was born on the original Nintendo Entertainment System back in the '80s. *Crystal Chronicles*, however, isn't your ordinary *Final Fantasy*—here the emphasis is squarely on frantic four-player sword-swinging action. *Chronicles* offers a slick *Final Fantasy*-meets-*Gauntlet* feel that's pick-up-and-play friendly, provided you're ready to pick up and play with a Game Boy Advance and GB-to-GC Link cable.

Yep, Nintendo's bizarre "connectivity" concept has officially landed: If you want to play *Crystal Chronicles* in multiplayer mode, every player must use a linked-up GBA to control the action. (It's interesting to note that an early version of the game allowed all players to use standard controllers—that option has been scrapped in the final game.) "From the very beginning, we always

intended it to be a multiplayer game using GBA connectivity," explains Akitoshi Kawazu, director of *Crystal Chronicles*. "We really wanted to make something fun that used the small screen and the large screen together." So, while you're still moving your character around and whacking monsters on the TV screen, you'll often be looking down at your GBA screen to perform various functions, such as choosing spells, checking the map, and equipping items. This concept allows everyone to work independently, as the action doesn't stop when a player decides to fiddle with his or her inventory. Note that you can use a regular controller in the single-player game, since pausing the action to wade through menus won't hamper anyone's progress.

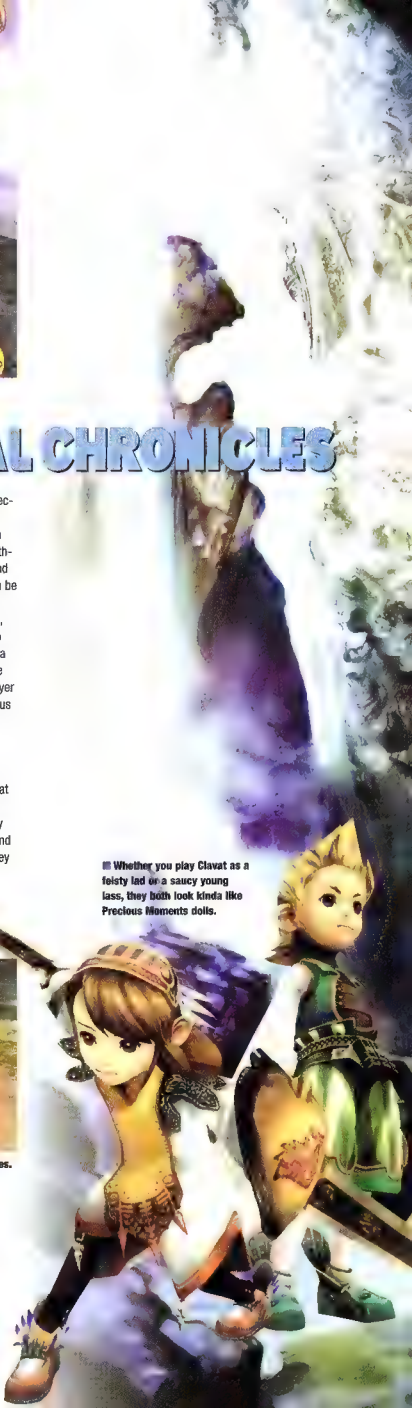
## What's my role?

*Crystal Chronicles'* story line also departs from the established FF norm. "There's no set straight story that goes from beginning to end," says planner Kazuhiko Aoki. "In a multiplayer game, it's hard to make a story that everyone could understand, as people come in and out of the game—we had to make it in a way that they could join in at a later time and not lose track of the story." So, in lieu of a detailed narrative, the game presents a simple quest: Dark, poison->

■ Whether you play Clavat as a feisty lad or a saucy young lass, they both look kinda like Precious Moments dolls.



■ A trusty moogle carries the Crystal Cage in solo games.

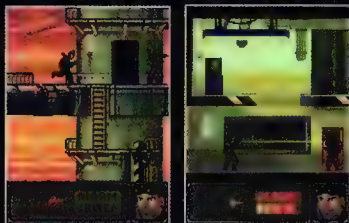




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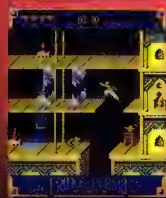


Tom Clancy's  
**SPLINTER  
CELL**

"Best console-to-mobile port yet"  
Rating : 9/10  
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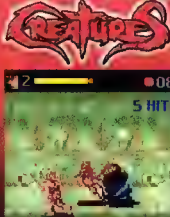
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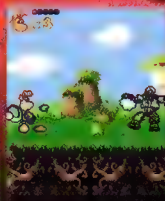
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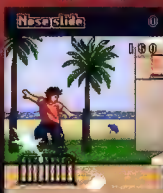
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RAYMAN 3

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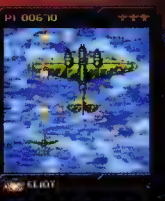
skate  
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SKATE & SLAM

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SIBERIAN  
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SIBERIAN STRIKE

Will you be fast enough  
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**gameloft**

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■ Convenient boiler-coding minimizes multiplayer confusion.

nous cloud called Miasma have polluted the world, and each village is protected by a magic crystal that creates a pollution-free bubble. These crystals are weakening, though, so a group of children sets out on a pilgrimage to restore them before it's too late.

That's right—we said "children." These heroes are distinctively of the kindergarten variety. When you're creating your character, you have four different punk kids to choose from: Clavat, Yuke, Seikie, and Lily. "Some of the characters are better-suited to magic or fighting than others, but you can build them up and progress them in many ways," says Aoki. "You might be going it alone, or you might have a full party, so if you were limited to one set of skills, it might be difficult to make it through a certain situation." You also choose a job class at the game's outset, but it's not for you—it's for your parents, whose profession affects what kinds of gifts they'll mail you during your quest. For example, if mom and pop are cow herders, you'll get some free milk. If they're blacksmiths, you can send them raw ore to forge into weapons.

You also choose whether to play each kid as either a boy or a girl, with four appearance variations for each type/gender combination. "Playing as a male or a female doesn't change the basic elements of the game-play," says Aoki, "but there are minor differences that do come into effect depending on your choice." Obviously, since the gender of your characters doesn't have any bearing on the plot or gameplay, that leaves little room for some *FFVII*-style interparty nookie.

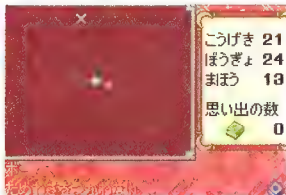


"Romance would happen only if a boy and girl playing decided to roleplay that way and actually fall in love," laughs Kawazu. Awzu, yea—oh, wait, he's talking about little kids.

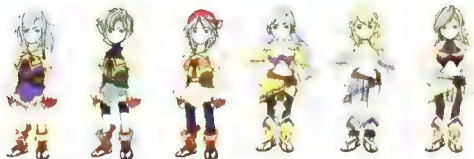
#### How does it feel?

As expected, the action-oriented gameplay feels nothing like a traditional turn-based *Final Fantasy* RPG. Instead, it's more like Square's Super NES classic, *Secret of Mana*—you run around charging up strong sword swipes, casting spells, and solving simple puzzles. There are a few key differences, though: Because of the lung-searing Miasma blighting the world, you must always remain under the protective dome of the Crystal Cage. This item creates a zone of safe movement onscreen, and you have to carry it with you. In multiplayer games, one of the players has to lug it around. Luckily, in single-player mode, you have a pet moogle who handles >

■ Seikie's male version (the one on the left) might be the least masculine *FF* hero to date...and that's saying an awful lot.



■ (Left) Break out the crayons and customize your moogle's body...if you must. (Right) A glimpse of the GBA radar map.





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Four players, five systems, and a mess of wires...connectivity achieved!

► the cage (although he sometimes gets tickered out and drops it for a bit).

Also, to keep the game episodic enough for anyone to jump in before any area, you don't retain your accumulated magic spells after a mission. It's a mad dash to pick up attack and healing spells every time you play, but they're generally plentiful enough for everyone to score some. Spellcasting in multiplayer games is especially noteworthy: You can time simultaneous spell combos to create new effects. For example, if you cast a

replayability. "It's not so much about getting to the end of the game—it's more about how you get there," says Aoki. "Even after you've beaten the game, you can join in another game at any point and have fun."

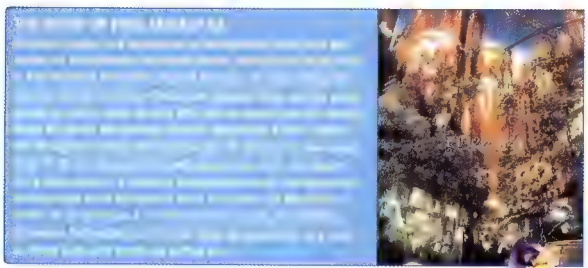
*Crystal Chronicles* looks much better than most gamers probably expected. "Since our team was new to the GameCube, we actually wanted to see how far we could take it," explains Aoki. "The characters are very detailed, and we had background artists working very hard to try to emulate natural things like water and

**"[Connectivity] is so fundamental to the gameplay of FF:CC that people will do it."**  
—FF:CC Director Akitoshi Kawazu

fire spell at the same time a teammate lets a Thunder spell fly, they'll combine to form a powerful Gravity spell. Cool stuff indeed.

If you don't want to commit to a single- or multiplayer game, no worries: You can transfer characters between one-player games and multiplayer quests on the fly. You can easily join into anyone's *Crystal Chronicles* game, as long as you've brought your memory card. The developers claim that it'll take around 30 hours to finish the game, but they also promise serious

clouds." And beyond being beautiful, *Chronicles* feels like a well-crafted, polished multiplayer action-RPG that really is simple enough for anyone to play, yet engaging enough to keep you coming back. Actually convincing people to pony up for the whole connectivity setup may prove to be tricky, but the developers are hopeful. "The concept of connectivity might seem like a marketing gimmick," says Kawazu. "But it's so fundamental to the gameplay of *Crystal Chronicles* that people will do it." We'll see. ▶



■ There's no two ways about it: Yuke isn't a normal kid. Designer Yoshiyuki Iihana calls him/her "a transient spirit!" We call it scary.



# Halo Invades PC



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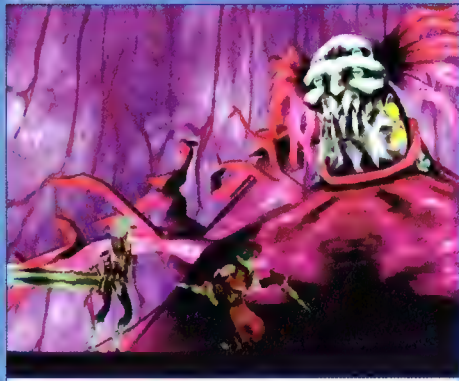
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# EVERYTHING ELSE

12 epic role-playing games that don't have the words **Final Fantasy** in their titles

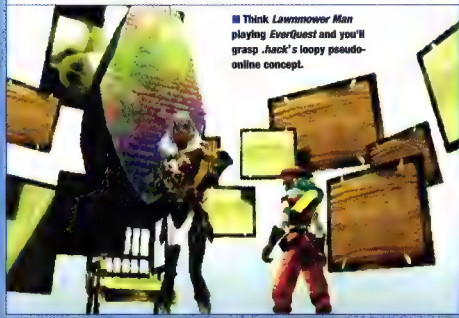


PS2 • Bandai • February 2004

## .hack//QUARANTINE

**B**andai's serial RPG series (released in delicious bite-size chunks) is drawing to a close, and it's a bold experiment that has evolved into a sleeper success. Although even the series' staunchest fans concede that its battle system is no-frills, the dungeons quickly grow tedious, and the graphics are underwhelming, few players have thrown up their arms and quit the saga midway through. The game's virtual depiction of a massively multiplayer online world (.hack isn't really online—it just *thinks* it is) is so compelling, the characters are so appealing, and the story is so rich and twisty that you just can't wait to see what happens next.

In *Quarantine*, what happens next is the finale of the series, the close of the *.hack//liminality* anime (included, as always, as a bonus DVD), and a bunch of conclusive tie-ins with the TV show. Play-mechanic tweaks will be subtle, but since you'll be playing with maxed-out characters with the highest-level skills and the best equipment—and against the game's strongest enemies—you can expect the battles to be splashier than before, and with a touch more strategic depth. Who's really behind the game's phony realm, and why is it infecting the real world like a virus? Find out early next year.



Think *Lawnmower Man* playing *EverQuest* and you'll grasp *.hack*'s loopy pseudo-online concept.



*Symphonia*'s plot involves two planets, and saving one will doom the other. Saving one with the anime babes.



GC • Namco • April 2004

## TALES OF SYMPHONIA

**N**amco's *Tales* series has never made a big splash in the United States, and when the publisher's U.S. branch passed on the recent PlayStation 2 *Tales of Destiny* sequel and *Tales of Phantasia* remake for Game Boy Advance, we just assumed the series was dead on these shores.

Fortunately, Namco has tossed *Tales* a Phoenix Down (or, in non-RPG-geek-speak, it has resurrected the series)—the game hits GameCube next year with a new world and a modernized look. All the past *Tales* are 2D, even on PS2, but *Symphonia* is entirely 3D, with crisp cartoony environments and a perky cast of characters that borders on nauseatingly cute. The play mechanics, however, remain largely unchanged. The battles may look 3D, but thanks to the new Multiline Linear Motion Battle System (ML-LMBS to its friends), they still play out in 2D. You simply lock onto a single foe, then engage in vaguely *Street Fighter*-esque button-combo fighting while shouting orders to your computer-controlled comrades.







PS2 • Square Enix • April 2004

## STAR OCEAN: TILL THE END OF TIME

**A**fter crafting such under-the-radar role-playing classics as *Star Ocean: The Second Story* and *Valkyrie Profile*, developer tri-Ace was finally given the moolah to mold *Star Ocean* into a series worthy of joining *Final Fantasy* in the RPG big leagues. This lavish PS2 installment is a stunning epic that crams together the cinematic style of *Final Fantasy X* with raw gameplay depth rarely seen in modern RPGs. You

can make the game as complex or as simple as you like—the unconventional battle system lets you handle battles strategically or go for pure hack-n-slash.

Unlike the past two *Star Ocean* games (only the second came stateside, to the PS1), this chapter brings the series' far-future motif front and center. In fact, this game's planet-hopping quest is so rich with heady ideas and moral dilemmas that it feels like a

lost voyage of the *Starship Enterprise*, but with less preaching and more ass kicking. When your heroes crash on a Victorian-era planet mired in civil war, they must decide whether to uphold a Prime Directive-like code of noninterference or to give military technology to the side that saved them. Yeah, we know that actually was an episode of *Star Trek*, but it's way cooler when the planet is full of hot ninjas chicks.



PS2 • Square Enix • Spring 2004

## DRAKENGARD

**P**roducer Takamasa Shiba mined the fantasy mother lode when he wrought the twisted and tragic world of action-heavy RPG *Drakengard*. A strange fusion of Celtic mythology, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and anime like *Evangelion* and *Berserk* served as inspiration, he tells us. It makes for a surprisingly dark alternative to *Final Fantasy* from publisher Square Enix. You play as Kyme, a fallen prince keen on saving his sister and avenging his murdered family. He gives his voice to a dragon in exchange for the beast's help, and along the way he finds other heroes who have made similar trading pacts: vision for a fairy's power, youth for a giant's strength, sanity for a spirit's magic. "Dragons are higher races than humans," says Shiba, "and borrowing their strength can't be free." >

■ Xbox • Microsoft • Spring 2004

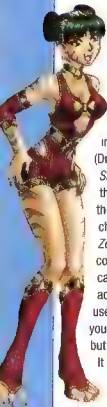
## SUDEKI

The recently delayed (for "extra polish") *Sudeki* is the first job of Microsoft Game Studio's one-two punch for Xbox role-playing fans. But while *Fable*—the clobbering round-

house finisher—promises to reinvent the

RPG genre with a flurry of novel ideas, *Sudeki* sticks to time-tested fundamentals and looks more like a conventional made-in-Japan role-playing game. The areas unveiled by UK-based developer Climax are impressive, with lushly detailed environments and multileveled structures pleasantly reminiscent of Sega's *Skies of Arcadia* (Dreamcast, GameCube).

*Sudeki* uses a combat system similar to the one found in most of the games in this RPG round-up: You control a single character who can unleash real-time *Zelda*-style attacks while the computer controls the rest of your party (though you can jump into the shoes of the other characters at any time). It takes a little getting used to if you're still hot on micromanaging your party as in traditional turn-based RPGs, but you better give this new system a shot. It seems to be the hot role-playing combat style of the new millennium. >



In battle, jump to any character you want by tapping the D-pad. The computer controls everyone else.



## SLAY WITH YOUR FRIENDS

Take the party online with three networked RPGs

### EVERQUEST ONLINE ADVENTURES: FRONTIERS

PS2 • Sony Online Entertainment • Winter 2003 — Sony is marching a duo of *EverQuest* titles to PS2, but one—

*Champions of Norrath* (see chart on next

page)—is actually a four-player action-RPG rather than the massively multiplayer

online quest you're used to. To keep up

with your army of pals online, you'll

need *EverQuest Online Adventures: Frontiers*,

an expansion pack that

sports a completely redesigned

look (the graphics will suck 50

percent less!), plus a new race

(Ogre, left), a new class

(Alchemist), a whole new con-

tinant, and a new level cap of 60.



### TRUE FANTASY LIVE ONLINE

Xbox • Microsoft • Summer 2004 — Xbox

Live's first massively multiplayer online

RPG—dubbed the redundant *True Fantasy*

*Live Online*—is being crafted by Level-5,

the swamped developer of PS2 RPGs *Dark*,

*Cloud 2* and the upcoming *Dragon Warrior*

*VIII* (which it's programming for Square

Enix). The team has given *True Fantasy* a

vivid look that stands out in a world of dull

and blocky online RPGs. Besides offering

standard quests, the game lets characters

pursue trades as tailors, blacksmiths, and

more, while letting them ride beasts and

vehicles (from broomsticks to dragons). A

*Fable*-esque character development system

changes your hero's appearance based on

your behaviors and occupation.



### PHANTASY STAR ONLINE: EPISODE III

GC • Sega • February 2004 — "I felt it was time to suggest another

style of network game," says *PSO: Episode III* Director Yojuo Ogawa,

"rather than continue to develop a merely extended version of *Episodes*

*I and II*." His new twist: The series' action-based combat has been

replaced with card-style battles. Players will find more than 500 cards

(including special EGM cards) to construct 30 decks, and these cards

are played in turn order, as in traditional card games like *Magic: The*

*Gathering*. In addition to Item and Enemy cards, players can play Action

cards that let them temporarily "download" skills (just like in *The*

*Matrix*). Assist cards that make mighty combos when used in coopera-

tion with other players' Assist cards, and Story Character cards that

summon powerful allies.

Developer Sonic Team has high hopes *Episode III* will foster a

tourament scene (it modified the lobby to display tourney results and

world rankings, plus added a Spectator mode). Still, some fans—

including us—are skeptical of the series' new direction. "In Japan, we

have a phrase called 'kuwazai-giri,'" says Ogawa. "It means 'one who

turns up his or her nose at food without trying it.' We would definitely

like you to play *Episode III* at least once."







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

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## SPINX AND THE CURSED MUMMY

PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, GAMECLUBE

### SURVIVAL SKILLS

- Standard jumps can get you across most chasms in the game. When the distance looks too far, however, don't forget the Bleed of Osiris. If you press the jump button, then the attack button, Spinx leaps higher and farther.
- Once you earn Capture Beelzebub, stick up on its many slim bulge monsters as you can find. You can release them to blow up barricades like gates, fences and even huge boulders blocking your way.
- "Slam" is your most defensive combat maneuver. When you need to push enemies back or when you want to deliver damage to multiple targets, somersault up into the air and press the attack button. You land with a sword-slaming bount!

## GHOST RECON: ISLAND THUNDER

XBOX

### HOT TIPS!

- Your target does more than drop a battle with a hotly between the eyes; he's the eyes in your operation. As soon as the sniper can pinpoint exact enemy locations, he sets for cross hairs to avoid alerting enemies altogether.
- Unless you have an other code, the enemy heavy artillery (like this mounted grenade launcher) should be your primary target. Left alone for too long, a grenade launcher will quickly tear into a killing machine.
- When the high ground wins you out, it's a big advantage to strategy. Use it to your advantage to take advantage to fire down on an enemy scrambling up a
- Demolition experts can clear out heavy resistance, like a tank. You should include a down expert on every team—you never know when you'll be up against enemy armor—let keep him in the row with the bullets, calm down.

## SSX 3

PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX, GAMECLUBE

### TRICKY SKILLS

- For lots of points, perform lots of combos. Build up your speed, hit a nice ramp to get some air, and have it. String multiple tricks together in one jump to get maximum points. Also, link tricks and combos together by doing tandem tricks.
- Getting a good start out of the starting line is key to succeeding. If you're too slow off the start, the competition will be hard or impossible to catch later. To prevent this, use the left analog stick to rock your donator back and forth as the liner ticks down. Time the rocking so it coincides with the countdown. When you're able to go, you already have that forward momentum.
- Press forward on the analog stick or the D-pad to rock forward for some extra speed. This technique also prepares the boarder for forward flips while flying through the air. Pressing down gets your boarder ready for a backward flip.

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 really get into the game.

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## TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

### MUTANT TIPS

• Unlock the database by finding the Medusa power-ups hidden throughout the levels. They can be found in boxes just like Mahimono with all four characters to unlock the entire database.

• Make good use of the environment. Barrels and cars explode when hit and can damage entire groups of enemies. The powerful blast of water from a broken fire hydrant will put enemies on their backs.

• Use "dash" to move quickly and avoid being surrounded by enemies or caught in a trap. It can also be used to zip between groups of enemies while attacking and makes it easier to create combos for insane bonus points.



GAME BOY ADVANCE

## FREEDOM FIGHTERS

### SURVIVAL SKILLS

Acquisition of Moverel  
Take some CA before blowing up  
libertines.  
Freedom fighters are equipped primarily with weapons found or created, so missions calling for military-grade supplies require a harder and team to show the explosives from the Soviets. Therefore, if your libertines tempt you to blow up something, locate a better first objective.

Use a Cover  
The shield on a mounted machine gun provides some cover against attacks coming from your front.  
Running down the middle of the street is the safest way to get yourself killed. Instead, crawl down and take behind allies, dumpsters, low walls, etc. Avoid being cars and trucks as going to they take enough damage they explode, killing or wounding anyone nearby.



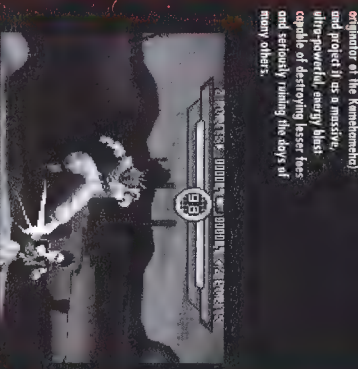
PLAYSTATION 2, XBOX

## DRAGON BALL Z: TENKAITSU

### GOKU'S ATTACKS

• Goku's trademark attack is the Kamehameha wave, which he can be found firing (and blowing out) in nearly every single episode of Dragon Ball Z in which he returns. He learned to channel his Chi via Master Roshi (the originator of the Kamehameha) and protect it as a master, ultra-powerful, energy blast capable of destroying lesser foes and seriously ruining the days of many others.

• Goku is one of the better characters in the game. He has a good collection of speed, power and stamina and doesn't particularly excel heavily in any one area (of course you'll be finding a different line if you're on the receiving end of a Spirit Bomb).



GAME BOY ADVANCE



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■ Xbox • Microsoft • 2004

# FABLE

**A**fter four years of high-profile development—including claims from creator Peter Molyneux that this title will be “the greatest role-playing game of all time”—*Fable* is finally nearing completion. Molyneux assures us that the game is basically done and the team is merely “looking at balance and adding polish” (although he hasn’t nailed down a solid release date). Developer Big Blue Box has spent the better part of this year tweaking *Fable*’s combat system. Players can switch between up-close melee attacks, ranged combat, and spellcasting, but now, three buttons control the action: Attack, Block, and Flourish, which unleashes over-the-top moves you gain as your experience grows.

While the battles look great, the heart of *Fable* was always supposed to be its character development. Instead of choosing options from menus, players develop their hero simply by behaving in certain ways in the game world. Those who focus on spellcasting will grow old and wizened. Night-stalking thieves will become pale and shifty. Hardcore brawlers will grow buff and earn scars when they take a life-threatening blow. Your actions also determine how the world views you. Win friends and influence others by playing the noble hero and helping all in need, or earn infamy by preying on the characters others have chosen to protect.

You can even develop a lifestyle. Your character, for example, might play as a sulking lone-wolf drifter or travel with an entourage of fawning townsfolk (who could easily become a liability in combat). You can flirt, date, get married, and get it on, although don’t expect the honeymoon to last forever. “I don’t want to give too much away,” says Molyneux, “but if you do have a family, they may be used by the story to [encourage] you to find your adversary.” In other words, he says, “yes, we might kill them.” Who wants domestic bliss in an RPG anyway? **A-**

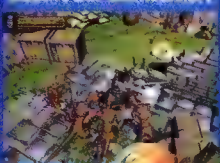
“The primary goal was to make sure you could journey with Molyneux from the start. The day should feel like you were born with these friends—only you’re controlling them. The starting control of the world is yours. Each plus that.”



## ACTION!

Which soon-to-ship hack-n-slash RPG is your kind of adventure?

### HEROES' GATE: DARK ALLIANCE 2



### BLACKHEART & DRAGONHEART: HEROES




### CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH



Platforms:	PC, Xbox	PC, Xbox	PC
Release date:	October	October	November
Best D&D:	Yes, grows into a great game.	Mind Player.	Sorry—no D&D license! This game's set in EverQuest's world.
Most obscure D&D creature:	Rust Monster	Rage Golem	Again, no dice.
Online?	No	No	Yes
TD saving throw:	This title's strengths are its D&D license and an involved story line that continues the plot threads left hanging in the first <i>Dark Alliance</i> —although it's from a different developer.	<i>Heroes'</i> four-player gameplay could make it <i>Gunfire</i> with D&D critters and booty. See our review on page 100.	<i>Norrath</i> 's four-player online mode makes it the action-RPG to own for PS2—plus, it's from the developers behind the original <i>Dark Alliance</i> . It looks way sicker than the other <i>EverQuest</i> games. 100.

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Violence

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**PlayStation 2**



**NINTENDO**  
**GAMECUBE**

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# RECRUIT ACCORDINGLY.

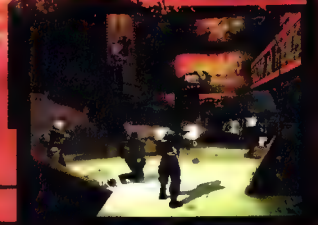
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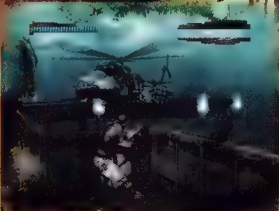
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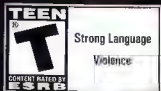
Stay out of harm's way while unleashing a barrage of blindfire.



Confront relentlessly, fiercely intelligent enemies.



Objects are your only allies. Cover is your only saving grace.

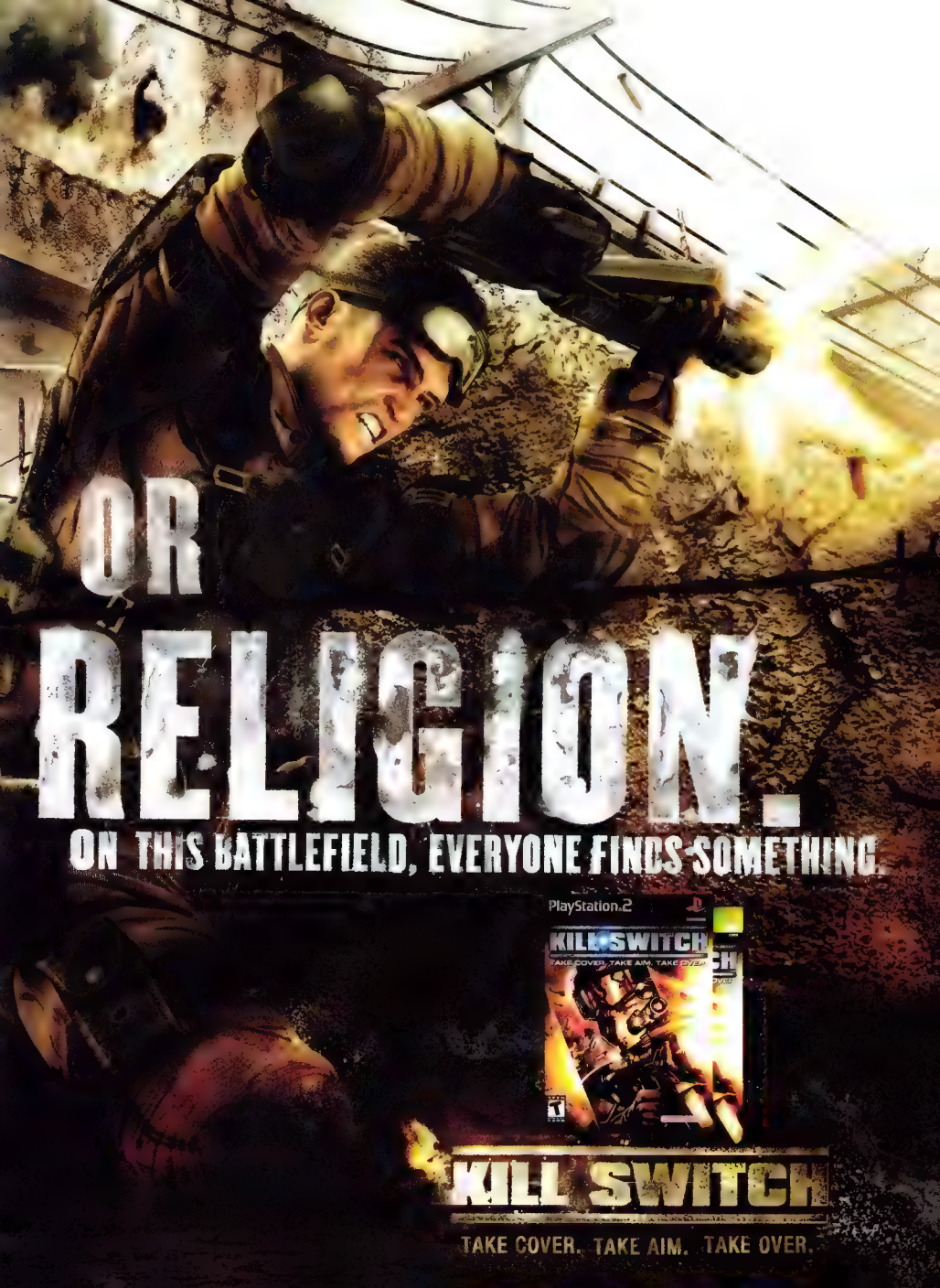


PlayStation 2

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OR  
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ON THIS BATTLEFIELD, EVERYONE FINDS SOMETHING.



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TAKE COVER. TAKE AIM. TAKE OVER.

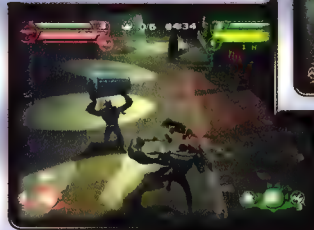
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
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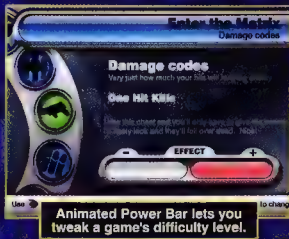
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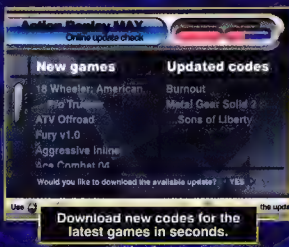
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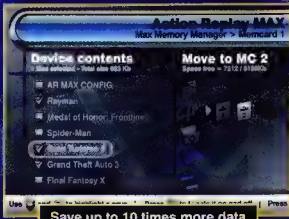


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# review crew

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 is 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, which means 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 got 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-rated game each month. A worthy buy.



**Shame of the Month** This dishonor goes to the worst game each month that gets unanimously bad scores.

## ESRB KEY (Also check out [www.esrb.com](http://www.esrb.com))

**EC-Early Childhood:** Games bearing this mark are suitable for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

**E-Everyone:** Suitable for all ages.

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

**M-Mature:** Whereas video games offer all the guns, sex, drugs, and language of rated films.

**AO-Adults Only:** A rare find. We haven't seen an AO game since *Age of Mankind* on 3DO.

## GAME OF THE MONTH



■ PAGE 200

## SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 4: SUPER MARIO BROS. 3

SMB3 first won the Crew's favor back in *EGM* #9, besting mighty classics such as *Xoxyz* (NES) and *Kiwirk the Tomato* (GB). This time, it narrowly beat out some real contenders—*Viewtiful Joe* and *Jak II*.

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■ *Dija* see how I ran over that old guy? Good times, good times.







No football stadium is complete without its very own pirate ship.

PS2, Xbox, GC **ONLINE** (PS2 ONLY)

# NFL BLITZ PRO

Not your standard Blitz package

**Good:** Ultrafast gameplay  
**Bad:** Sucky ground game  
**Annoying:** Online trash-talking with just a soft keyboard



**BRYAN:** *Pro* introduces alterations to the trusty *Blitz* uniform that we these days...you look just like your big-brother sim games now. But hey, change can be good. This reworking of the *Blitz* formula offers a fresh take on football—it's incredibly fast, great looking, and totally fun to play, and it sports some amusing unlockables. Granted, with 22 guys onscreen the action gets really chaotic—it might turn off players weaned on the old *Blitz* games' simpler play. But it's hard not to have a great time wasting the weekend away playin' *Blitz* with some pals.

**G. FORD:** *Blitz*, what happened? I barely recognize you these days...you look just like your big-brother sim games now. But hey, change can be good. This reworking of the *Blitz* formula offers a fresh take on football—it's incredibly fast, great looking, and totally fun to play, and it sports some amusing unlockables. Granted, with 22 guys onscreen the action gets really chaotic—it might turn off players weaned on the old *Blitz* games' simpler play. But it's hard not to have a great time wasting the weekend away playin' *Blitz* with some pals.

**OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAG—CHRIS B:** *Blitz*'s strongest suit? Wacky options like Buttaffingaz, a gameplay mode that causes any ball carrier to fumble when hit—it's frenetic, intense stuff. I just wish I could say the same about *Blitz*'s normal game of football. Midway has stripped away too much of the outlandish offense I've always loved—and with it goes much of the fun. The not-quite-sim-yet-not-really-arcade action of *Blitz Pro* prompted me to pop in the original *Blitz* for PS1...and I proceeded to enjoy it a whole lot more.



THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	7.0	7.0	6.0
	BRYAN	G. FORD	CHRIS B.

Publisher: Midway Sports  
 Developer: Midway  
 Players: 1-4 (PS2); 2-4 w/  
 Multiplay, 2-4 (Online)  
 ESRB: Everyone  
[www.midway.com](http://www.midway.com)

PS2, Xbox, GC

# BATMAN: RISE OF SIN TZU

Holy hell, this is hard, Batman



The Dynamic Duo makes these thugs into the ravenous Trio.

**Good:** Boffo boss fights against rarely seen Bat-villains  
**Bad:** So damn hard, it'll crush your will in its iron fist  
**Much, Much Better Than:** *Batman: Dark Tomorrow*



**JOB:** Unlike Ubi Soft's adventurey *Batman Vengeance*, *Rise of Sin Tzu* is a 3D *Final Fight*-style beat-em-up—one that strives to be more than standard fare through a wide variety of upgradeable moves, a sharp visual style, and great production values. Unfortunately, an unforgiving difficulty level and harsh time limits severely undercut the fun.

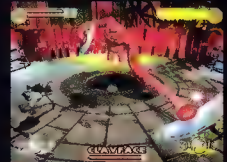
You'd be amazed how tough a game intended for a mainstream audience can be...it's so hard that the easy difficulty is the only playable setting. You'll brawl wave after unending wave of enemies who are completely proficient at doling out cheap shots and dogpiling you, all while you're laboring under time limits so short that you'll barely have a moment to block. The controls also take some time to master, as Batman and his Bat-friends (Robin, Batgirl, and Nightwing are also playable) rush forward like runaway trains once they start a combo string. Even with its bevy of attacks and great graphics, the game gets old—barr-powling hordes of goons becomes achingly repetitive over time. Bat-fans should Bat-rent this one.

game's style and story are faithful to the cartoons, although head baddie Sin Tzu is kinda lame. Where's the Joker?

**DEMIAN:** Who will stop Batman from inflicting his mediocre games on the unsuspecting public? The guy's a menace. I'm with Paul in that the upgradeable combos are *Sin Tzu*'s best feature, but, for me at least, they don't begin to compensate for all the bad stuff. Beating up an almost never-ending cavalcade of henchmen gets boring before the end of the first stage, and that hellish countdown timer only makes the experience less enjoyable. Take my *Batman*. I don't want it.



**PAUL:** *Sin Tzu* finds the Dark Knight in fine form—as Batman and company introduce fists 'n' feet of fury to Gotham's mobs of minions, they earn points toward buying cooler, stronger attacks. This rewarding kung fu customization carries the game, despite the ballast that drags it down. An arbitrary countdown timer constantly rushes you, for example, and playing with a friend means you'll unintentionally interrupt each other's combos. Happily, the



Batman runs away while Clayface slices Batgirl. Chivalry is dead.

THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	5.5	7.0	6.0
	JOE	PAUL	DEMIAN

Publisher: Ubi Soft  
 Developer: Ubi Soft  
 Players: 1-2  
 ESRB: Teen  
[www.ubi.com](http://www.ubi.com)





Prepare to watch a Gran Torino race away from countless slow-mo explosions.

PS2, Xbox

# STARSKY & HUTCH

Pimping out the past



(Right) At the climactic final moment, E.T. lifts the car into the air using the magic of love.

**Good:** Groovy '70s atmosphere.  
**Bad:** Very repetitive missions.  
**Coming Soon:** An *S&H* movie with Ben Stiller and Owen Wilson



**GREG S:** You'd think shootin' jive turkeys and driving the Striped Tomato (that's Stargate's car, for those who ain't hip) would get old after a few levels. But you (and my lame cohorts here) would be dead wrong. Chasing perps through Bay City amid a constant barrage of fire stays interesting, stage after stage.

No, variety isn't *S&H*'s strong suit. Pure, visceral gameplay is. Driving dangerously while taking wild shortcuts is the key to taking out your targets, not to mention triggering spectacular slow-motion jumps and explosions that help boost your ratings (which cleverly act as your life bar).

But as much fun as I had with *Stargate* in single-player mode, hooking up a steering wheel and light gun controller for a little two-player action really sold me on the whole thing. It's like *Time Crisis* meets *Driver*...a delicious recipe indeed.

This is one short, easy game, though. It's probably not worth the bread unless you're really into retro stuff or simply love driving games with a twist. Most people should probably rent first.

**SHAWN:** *Stargate & Hutch* might very well be a tax shelter for Huggie Bear's prostitution racket, 'cause it certainly isn't much of a game. The whole package amounts to a single *Ice City* car mission in which you tail jalopies along rigidly scripted trails, but without the room for improvisation you'd find in *GTA*. Here, whittling away at your target's health with your peashooter is the only way you'll ever take anybody down. There's just not enough to do, and what little you can do fails to deliver even frivolous enjoyment.

**DEMIAN:** While my memories of the TV show are a bit hazy, I'm pretty sure the episode plots involve a little more than just driving around and shooting other cars. Too bad the game doesn't. Shawn already pointed out *Stargate*'s many problems, so I'll just cover the good bit: two-player mode, which supports a steering wheel and a light gun. With the proper equipment, a penchant for bell-bottoms, and an indulgent pal, shootin' up cars and tearing assing around town can be kinda fun.

THE VERDICTS  
 YOURS TO  
**7.0**  
 GREG S. SHAWN DEMIAN

Publisher: Gotham  
 Developer: Minds Eye  
 Players: 1-2  
 ESRB: Teen

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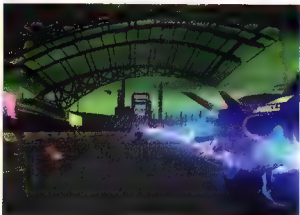
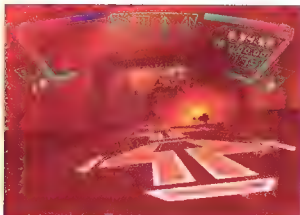
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Snatching the lead position in XGRA is an easy affair—even if you wipe out you can easily regain first place.



PS2, Xbox, GC

# XGRA

## Ex-grah! Ex-grah! Read all about it!

**JOE:** In *XGRA*, you drive futuristic supercrafts at breakneck velocity through lush, interplanetary courses, rolling over turbo-boost pads and picking up killer weapon upgrades. Sound like every other futuristic racer you've ever played? It should. The series has always mimicked Sony's *Wipeout* pretty heavily, and this one is no different. There are a few differences between *XGRA* and *Extreme G 3* (the last game in the line), but nothing big. You're now given a contract—or side mission—at the start of each race. Goals like "beat three bikes" or "destroy the racer called Vixen" are sometimes fun, but they're mostly a distraction from what you're there to do: race. Your competitors also have personalities this time, and they hold grudges or help you. This rival/ally aspect of *XGRA* makes racing a little more interesting, but it's a shame your opponents chatter incessantly.

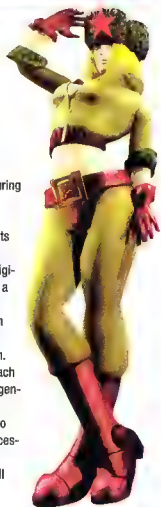
Even with these changes, *XGRA* isn't as

impressive as *Extreme G 3* was when it first hit PS2 and Cube. The graphics look roughly the same, it plays similarly, and it has the same main drawback: not enough tracks. And the one thing that could have made this game stand apart from its competitors—online play—is missing. All in all, you could pick up a used copy of the last game cheap and have just as much fun. Or more.

**BRYAN:** *XGRA* is insanely fast—vehicles haul ass at unsafe speeds across exotic tracks to create an adrenaline-pumpin' spectacle. Each of these supersonic highways is full of crazy twists, turns, and weather effects—I only wish there were more of 'em to race on. Bigger problems exist, though, like secondary objectives that call for the destruction of other vehicles yet continually force you to relinquish the lead to target enemies. Also, the game is too easy—even rookies can complete the

Season one and unlock nearly everything during one day of extended play.

**SHAWN:** When the *Extreme G* series first hit, its unscrupulous aping of other futuristic racers epitomized genoc. And while it's no more original in this present incarnation, it has become a consummate, competitive copycat. *XGRA*'s intense speed truly tests your reflexes—chain together a string of boost strips, and your unchecked acceleration will distort the screen. The many corkscrews and vertical drops in each course amplify the insanity. Commendably, a gentle difficulty curve eases you into the more cutthroat circuits, giving you the opportunity to learn the expedient lines well before it's a necessity. Other than wretched voice work, too few tracks, and the general lack of creativity, you'll find little fault with this jet-propelled joyride.



### Dangerous Assignment

Remaining in good standing with your racing team requires fulfilling contracts. Some call on you to destroy the advertising of another team's sponsors, while other colder-blooded agreements ask you to assassinate opposing riders. Too bad targeting billboards and tracking down rivals while fighting to keep your lead is usually more trouble than it's worth.



Nuke 'em till they glow. Then shoot 'em in the dark.



THE VERDICTS  
out of 10

6.5 6.5 7.5

JOE

BRYAN

SHAWN

Publisher: Acclaim  
Developer: Acclaim Cheltenham  
Players: 1-4 (2-4 requires  
Multiplay on PS2)  
ESRB: Teen

www.extremegm.com





■ The Renaissance Faire takes a turn for the tragic.

■ PS2, Xbox

## ROBIN HOOD: DEFENDER OF THE CROWN

Royal nonsense

**Good:** The soundtrack features some jaunty fife.  
**Bad:** Incomprehensible strategies.  
**Wen:** Shouldn't wear tights



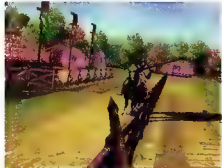
**SHAWN:** Combining *Risk*'s simple yet engrossing gameplay with what, at the time, passed for gorgeous graphics, *Defender of the Crown* was a decent diversion when it debuted on the Amiga computer over a decade ago. This reincarnation, however, looks like Friar Tuck naked and reminds me more of another electronic lesson in territorial expansion, *Dragon Trail*. Like that fixture of sixth-grade computer labs, *Crown* is entertaining only if your other option is taking an algebra test.

Most of the game has you slogging through text and moving icons on a map, but when disputes arise, *Crown* serves up five impoverished minigames. Sword fighting and jousting ought to excite, but they're so simplistic, it's silly. The archery diversion might be fun...if you could move. And shoddy controls for the siege warfare segments (you twirl the analog sticks in opposite directions) convert the Dual Shock into the most agonizing medieval torture device since thumb-screws. These action modes add nothing to the overarching strategy game, and the whole mess isn't worth your time.

**CRISPIN:** I thought this novel strategy remake was downright regal at first. Conquering kingdoms and bulking up my armies gave me a genuine sense of accomplishment. But as the game wore on, *Crown*'s conquest started to feel canned. It was like playing a game of *Risk* in which you always die halfway through until you figure out the exact combination of resources that carry the day. Investing hours only to get into hopeless checkmate scenarios—with no alternative but to revert to a much earlier save file—is a royal pain in the ass.

**OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAG—JOE R:**

Playing *Crown*, I felt like there was some grand plan that I just wasn't getting. I thought, maybe if I spend a little more time fortifying my castle...no? OK, well, what if I build up this devastating force and attack any neighbor who looks at me cross-eyed...no? Oh, I know, I'll split my resources between the two, spending half my cash on my castle and the other half on annexing territory...oh darn, that doesn't work either. You know, maybe I'll grab some pals and play *Risk* instead.



THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	3.0	6.0	4.5
	SHAWN	CRISPIN	JOE R.

Publisher: Capcom  
 Developer: Cinemaware  
 Players: 1  
 ESRB: Teen

www.capcom.com

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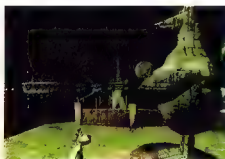


Kids like the banana gun now, but they'll turn to heavier weapons as their tastes mature.

PS2, Xbox, GC

# WALLACE & GROMIT IN PROJECT ZOO

Less fun than a barrel of monkeys



(Right) Collect coins throughout the game to unlock Wallace & Gromit movie clips.

**Good:** Graphics really look like the cartoon.

**Bad:** Wallace. He's annoying, isn't he?

**If You're Not a Fan of the Series:** Don't even go there.



**JENNIFER:** At first, Wallace & Gromit doesn't seem half-bad as a kiddie platformer. Fun environments, a cute story, and clever puzzles all draw you into the world even if you're not a fan of the claymation series. But play on, and you'll discover it's glitchy in ways that make the game difficult to play—much less enjoy. Wallace sometimes disappears when you need him to complete a puzzle, forcing you to restart. The camera, while not terrible, is far from "spotless," as Shawn would have you believe. But the worst problem is that certain jumps are damn high impossible—it's not even a question of skill.

One classic moment forced all three reviewers—usually barred from discussing a game during play—to seek counsel from each other. "You're stuck in the mines? Me too!" Then we huddled around to try (and fail repeatedly) at the offending jump. Eventually, Shawn figured out that you have to jump through the platform (that's right: through it), then off to the side, rather than straight ahead. It doesn't make sense! Why would anyone struggle through this with so many other great platforms around?

**SHAWN:** Although W&G is aimed at the younger set, its vibrant visuals offer more than run-of-the-mill kiddie quaintness. The platforming, however, is tried and truly pedestrian. Aside from the odd wink to action flicks (such as *Star Wars*' trash compactor escape), old hands will find few surprises among the stock fire and ice worlds. The controls and camera are generally spotless, but my only concern is that W&G may prove too challenging for some tykes. Then again, we all remember the kid on a milk crate who served us at *Street Fighter*.

**OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAG—SCOOTER:** Wallace and Gromit aren't going to end up in the hog-n-top hall of fame alongside Mario and Sonic, but they could've done much worse than starring in this solid, innocuous game. Besides some obtuse, annoying puzzles, the game does nothing that's really horrendous, nor anything really praiseworthy. For me, the overall charm and faithfulness to the animated shorts (especially in the oddball gadgets Wallace makes) kept me going, and really, it's just fun to hit mechanical penguins.

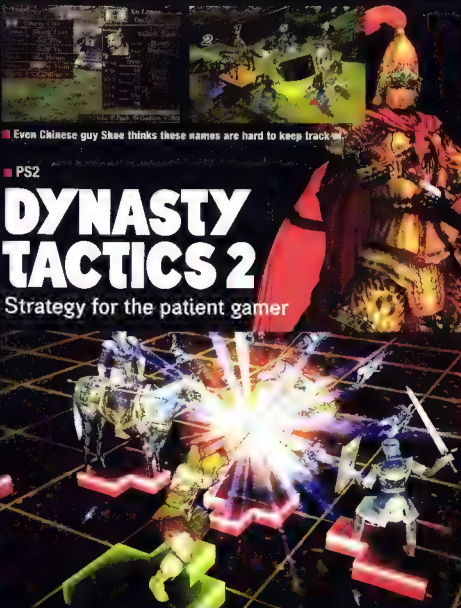
THE VERDICT'S  
OUT OF 10

6.5 6.5

JENNIFER SHAWN SCOOTER

Publisher: Bam  
Developer: Frontier Dev.  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Everyone

www.bam4.com



Even Chinese guy Shue thinks these names are hard to keep track of.

PS2

# DYNASTY TACTICS 2

Strategy for the patient gamer

You'd think that fighting in 3D-land would scare the bejeesus out of ancient Chinese dudes.

**Good:** Exciting combo system...

**Bad:** ...Well, "exciting" for a slow-paced strategy game, that is

**Much Easter Than:** Any *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* game



**SHOE:** *Dynasty Tactics 2* skips the colorful magic, squatty characters, and barfy melodrama you see in most tactics-style games. Instead, it emphasizes real-world soldiers and strategies like flanking and drawing out enemies. The result is a game that focuses less on visual thrills and frills, and more on headcore, heady planning.

In each skirmish, you have to think through every action your armies will take, because one move can start a chain reaction of linked attacks. Because of this system, you're constantly wading through menus and checking out what each unit can or can't do. It's terribly boring to watch, and if you're an immediate-gratification kind of gamer, you'll definitely want to sit this war out, especially since the gameplay doesn't really change further into the game (even after you gain new moves). If you're the steeple-finger, master-general, planning type, however, you'll love putting your schemes in motion and watching the combos come together. It's so much deeper and more satisfying than just leveling up your characters and sending them out to hack or cast magic until the other side dies.

**JOHN R.:** At first glance, *Dynasty Tactics 2* seems overwhelmingly complex. Despite an excellent tutorial that carefully explains every aspect of the game's multilayered Tactics system, I still found myself scratching my head after the first few battles. It gets better, though. Once you get the hang of getting your troops in position to pull off huge combos, the game becomes surprisingly fun and addictive. Still, getting to that point takes a lot of time and patience—if that doesn't scare you away, you'll find plenty to like here.

**OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAG—CHRIS B.:** As far as my most memorable gaming moments go, commanding my ultimate ancient Chinese badass to victory over an enemy general in a single turn ranks near the top. More than 17,000 soldiers fell to Lu Bu's awesome Raid II Tactic, capping off a devastating seven-string combo. It's the type of moment that makes *DT2*'s slow, chesslike pace all worthwhile. I'm just sorry disappointed at the lack of innovation in *DT2* as a sequel—*Dynasty Tactics: Special Edition* is more like it.

THE VERDICT'S  
OUT OF 10

7.5 7.5 7.5

SHOE JOHN R. CHRIS B.

Publisher: Koei  
Developer: Koei  
Players: 1-2  
ESRB: Teen

www.koei.com



# WHO MAKES A BETTER HERO? SPONGEBOB OR A GUY NAMED BOB?



"I have square pants!"



"I'm not wearing pants."



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SquarePants**

**Battle for Bikini Bottom**



PlayStation 2  
GAME BOY ADVANCE





I'm serious, now. Stop making fun of my haircut.

PS2

## CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON

Curiously lacking in tangy kung-fu sauce



**Good:** Nice use of the film's atmospheric soundtrack

**Bad:** Infuriating, out-of-place jumping puzzles

**Now With:** About a million generic goons



**PAUL:** While watching this movie, did you wish you could participate in the characters' search for the mystical Green Destiny sword and take revenge on the villain Jade Fox, all while dishing out superstylish flying fistcuffs? Now you can—except for the flying fistcuffs. The game does an admirable job re-creating characters and locations from the movie, but it captures none of the film's grace.

The heroes' fantastic moves (running up walls, floating over water, diving from rooftop to rooftop) have all been replaced with a platformer's standard double-jump, and even that doesn't work too smoothly. Combat feels stiff, rote, and only semi-interactive: dodge an enemy's flurry, then press the correct sequence of buttons (ad nauseam) to counterattack.

On the upside, the game's story cleaves closely to the flick's, the few boss battles are well done, and finishing the game unlocks a wealth of extras, including a new chapter of the game starring desert bandit Lo, plus minigames and new costumes. Nice treats, sure, but what I really wanted was high-flying kung-fu action.

**DEMIAN:** Another great action movie, another blah game that doesn't begin to do its source material justice. *Crouching Tiger* tries to follow the plot of the film fairly closely, so its linear level structure is no big surprise; unfortunately, the nonstop combat starts out as an exercise in repetition...and stays there. It's not a good sign when your coolest moves—acrobatic evade sequences that do manage to capture some of the film's fighting flavor—are triggered by just tapping the block button over and over.

**JON D:** Somehow, it took someone almost three years to turn *CTHD* into a cruddy videogame composed mainly of movie clips. In its defense, the game follows the plot well, and it's nice to see experience-based character building in an otherwise shallow action game. Severely redundant combat poisons the mix, though. Busting up legions of braided Asians who are poking you with wood and metal feels woefully unoriginal—I'm pretty sure some of the game is actually *Dynasty Warriors 2*. Sadly, *CTHD* brings great dishonor to even the bargain bin.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

5.0	5.0	5.0
PAUL	DEMIAN	JON D

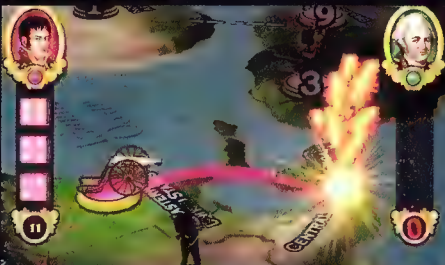
Publisher: Ubi Soft  
Developer: Genki  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Teen

www.ubi.com

PS2 ONLINE

## RISK: GLOBAL DOMINATION

Historical friction



Try this with a real Risk board game and you'll lose a finger.

**Good:** No more messy dice!

**Bad:** Lots of waiting around

**Next Stop:** Candy Land Online



**SHAWN:** Risk, to briefly explain for those not in the know, is a finely balanced board game in which players vie for global domination. Its slow-paced wars of attrition are best enjoyed with buddies and beer; but even then, someone's bound to lose interest when no one's seized complete power after an hour of play.

Against A.I. conquerors, however, remaining conscious becomes the real challenge. Even on the speediest setting, you'll have to sit through their every move—as if simulated dice rolling weren't already as dull as watching virtual paint dry. Adding some of the PC *Risk*'s more sophisticated options (such as mixing up simultaneous reinforcement and attacking phases with diplomacy and alliance forming) would've fortified the package.

Facing friends is better, but even with the fancy animation and sound effects, why not just clear the kitchen table and play the original? Of course, if you're a Risk nut like Scooter, you'll love the ability to live out your Napoleonic fantasies online. I'll just forfeit my turn, thanks.

**CRISPIN:** Finally, a PS2 game that delivers all the geohistoric entertainment of classic board game Risk without the slavish toil of rolling dice or shoving those play pieces. In other words, this game delivers exactly what you expect: bare-bones-but-functional presentation, capable computer-controlled opponents (although you'll stick fiddling your thumbs during their slow-ass turns), and enough variations and tweaking options to keep campaigns fresh for a while. Nothing about the overall pack-

age is snazzy enough to captivate non-Risk fans—you'll find many more exciting strategy games out there.

**OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAG—SCOOTER:**

A review of *Risk* hinges entirely on the reviewer's opinion of, well, playing *Risk*. I really dig the classic board game, and *Risk* on PS2 is just as deep and rewarding as the real thing. I say go for it. Sure, it's pricier than the put-it-on-your-carpet deal, but online play sweetens the deal. Seizing China from underneath the nose of someone in Paris, Texas, is awfully gratifying. But if you have neither Risk-loving friends nor a Network Adaptor, you might want to stick with the dice-rolling oldie, 'cause the single-player game is a tad dull.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

5.5	6.0	8.0
SHAWN	CRISPIN	SCOOTER

Publisher: Atari  
Developer: Cyberlore  
Players: 1-6  
ESRB: Everyone

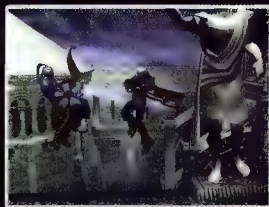
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PlayStation.2



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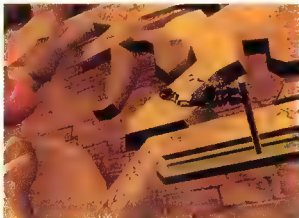
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With pressure-sensitive controls, you can do it all. Stop on a dime or turn on the jets. Juke lightly or fake a defender out of his pants. Drop the hammer or hit like a water boy. Play on your own or see what you're made of online. So, what's it going to be? Also available on PlayStation®





■ Jak has a whole lot more 'tafe these days, as evidenced by his soul patch and blitkin' beaverboard.



**Multifaceted**  
**Languages**  
*Jak II* features full voice and subtitles for seven languages. So if you speak English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, or Korean (or are curious as to what Daxter sounds like in these foreign languages), you can give 'em a try. We like the Japanese and French tracks the best.

■ PS2

# JAK II



## City life can be grueling

**CJ:** *Jak and Daxter* proved that developer Naughty Dog had more platforming potential than just *Crash Bandicoot*. And this sequel proves it's taking the genre where it's never been before.

Here's the brave new frontier: a huge helping of *Grand Theft Auto*-inspired gameplay added to offing the never-sweet action. These new free-roaming, carjacking Haven City segments are both *Jak II*'s triumph and biggest failing. They're a triumph because they add variety and give you some control over what you tackle next, yet they fail because they're punch-you-in-the-gut difficult. And the missions are hard by design—you can't get extra health in the city, and replenishing your ammo in the bustling burg means killing guards, which puts you directly in harm's way and often ends in you starting the mission over again for the Nth time.

As a more general problem, the city is too damn big. Just getting around takes too long, and it's

incredibly boring. Moreover, while the place appears to be bustling with crowds of people, you can't really interact with them, and the endlessly winding streets make you wonder what crackpots built this city without a subway system (or at the very least, some warp spots). Once I got the Jet Board, I was hoping I'd be able to grind over buildings and take shortcuts, but no dice—Jak can't go all Tony Hawk in Haven City.

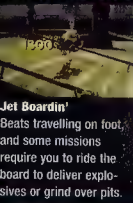
But don't think I'm hatin' on ol' *Jak*—there's plenty to love. This is PS2's best-looking platformer yet, and its top-shelf story and dialogue impress. Adding gunplay spices up *Jak*'s jump-and-spin routine, and the new Dark *Jak* powers will save your butt (and look cool in the process). Plus, despite having only four boss battles over the 20 hours of play, they're all extremely memorable. While *Jak II* is a surprisingly difficult game, it's also highly rewarding when you finally succeed. Now, if

they could just make the city more fun next time...

**JOE:** The original *Jak and Daxter* is an easy, fairly straightforward platformer you can leisurely beat over the course of a three-day rental period, but that's definitely not the way you'd describe its platformer/racer/adventure/shooter sequel, *Jak II*. It's a very challenging game with respawn points so few and far between you'll probably forget they exist at all. Parts of *Jak II* are so tough that you'll have to play them over again nearly a dozen times before you can beat them, leaving you so frustrated that you'll holler out loud that you never want to touch the game ever again. But chances are, half an hour later you'll be yelling, "This game is fantastic!"

Why the change? Once you understand what you're supposed to do to beat a mission, you'll have an incredible time completing it. A level will seem impossible, then the clouds will magically

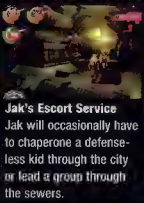
**Variety is the Spice of Jak:** *Jak II*'s appeal lies in the fact that it isn't only about jumping on your foes' heads. Oh, the things you'll do...



**Jet Boardin'**  
 Beats travelling on foot, and some missions require you to ride the board to deliver explosives or grind over pits.



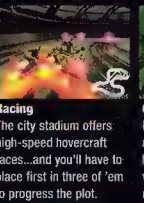
**Gunplay**  
 Unlike the first game, in *Jak II* you can ditch the spinning in favor of a more lethal method—using four different guns.



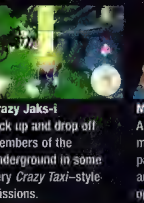
**Jak's Escort Service**  
 Jak will occasionally have to chaperone a defenseless kid through the city or lead a group through the sewers.



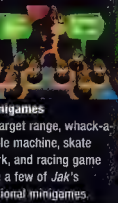
**GTA-style driving**  
 When The Man is bustin' up your crew, take down a few menacing vehicles or prisoner-filled paddy wagons.



**Racing**  
 The city stadium offers high-speed hovercraft races...and you'll have to place first in three of 'em to progress the plot.



**Crazy Jaks-I**  
 Pick up and drop off members of the Underground in some very *Crazy Taxi*-style missions.



**Minigames**  
 A target range, whack-a-mole machine, skate park, and racing game are a few of *Jak II*'s optional minigames.

**Good:** Huge mission variety  
**Bad:** The sprawling city is too darn big  
**Separated at Birth:** *Phantom Menace's* Watto and *Jak II*'s Krow



THE VERDICTS  
 (out of 10)

8.5 8.5 7.5  
 CJ JOE SHANE

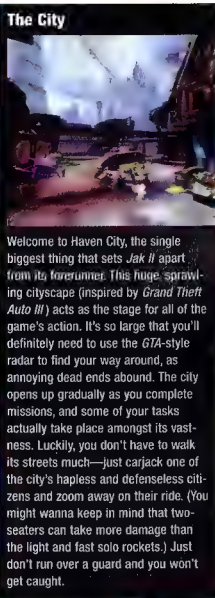
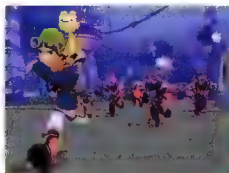
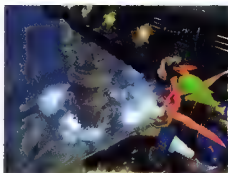
Publisher: Sony CEAA  
 Developer: Naughty Dog  
 Players: 1  
 ESRB: Teen

www.jakii.com





Jak II's bleak, bombed-out world stands in stark contrast to Jak and Daxter's colorful, cuddly style.



### The City

Welcome to Haven City, the single biggest thing that sets *Jak II* apart from its forerunner. This huge, sprawling cityscape (inspired by *Grand Theft Auto III*) acts as the stage for all of the game's action. It's so large that you'll definitely need to use the *GTA*-style radar to find your way around, as annoying dead ends abound. The city opens up gradually as you complete missions, and some of your tasks actually take place amongst its vastness. Luckily, you don't have to walk its streets much—just carjack one of the city's hapless and defenseless citizens and zoom away on their ride. (You might wanna keep in mind that two-seaters can take more damage than the light and fast solo rockets.) Just don't run over a guard and you won't get caught.

part and you'll suddenly get it. If only *Jak II* had more respawn points to help smooth out each stage's learning curve (and if driving from mission to mission didn't take so long), it'd be significantly more fun. As it stands, it's like having a friendship with someone who's bipolar: Bad Jak is absolutely maddening, while Good Jak is a blast to be around. Get used to hanging with both of 'em.

The payoff for all of *Jak II*'s moments of frustration is huge, though. There's an amazing variety within the missions, from manning a mech suit to grinding heavy machinery to blasting your way through a gauntlet of enemy soldiers. It's also a gorgeous-looking game, with excellent story sequences and a plot so compelling, you'll keep on playing "just one more mission" to find out what happens next. Tough but worth it, *Jak II* is definitely not for casual gamers, but those who stick to their guns will find it rewarding.

**SHANE:** If you tuned into a late-night infomercial for *Jak II*, that Oxi-Clean spokesman would be screaming, "Throw out all those messy PS2 games like *GTA: Vice City*, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*, *Wipeout Fusion*, and *Ratchet & Clank—Jak II* has it all!" Seriously, *Jak II* throws the entire contents of gaming's pantry into the pot in an attempt to create some kind of genre-obliterating supergame. The resulting mix definitely has something for everybody, but the recipe could use a little revision.

At its core, *Jak II* offers up excellent old-school platforming fun. Any of the game's hopping, bopping, spinning, and punching levels are instantly fun and engaging, and the addition of weaponry adds another layer of depth to the gameplay. Problems arise, however, in between these wondrous run-and-jump bits. CJ already detailed everything that's wrong with Haven City, and I agree 100 percent. Transplanting *GTA*'s free-roam-

ing concept just doesn't work here—getting from place to place is a chore once the initial zing of jacking hoverbikes wears off, and the in-city missions are wildly frustrating. I actually had more fun in *Mario Sunshine*'s (GC) sunny piazza. I swear. Furthermore, while all of the game's various missions and minigames are polished (especially the skate park and futuristic racing bits), you won't find many all-new ideas in *Jak II*. Being derivative of everything doesn't equal originality.

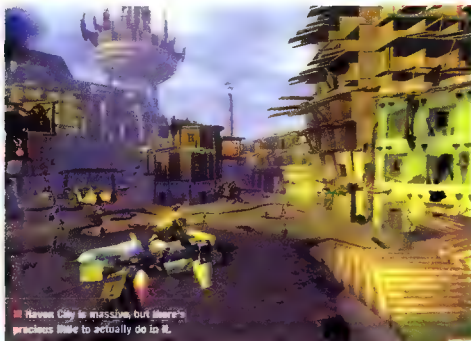
Creativity might not be *Jak II*'s strong suit, but the game sure looks pretty. Props to Naughty Dog for dishing up such excellent audiovisual trappings—the colossal environments, fluid animations, and spot-on acting outclass anything seen in competing PS2 platformers. Still, I hope the inevitable *Jak III* addresses two glaring presentation snafus: sudden bouts of bizarre graphical chopiness and a lack of sufficiently varied tuneage.

### Egg Hunt

Throughout the game's levels, Precursor eggs hidden throughout the game's levels. Had enough, and you'll gain the cool secrets, like big- and small-head modes, production-art slide shows, and the ability to turn off that dumb goatie.



Daxter isn't exactly useful...he mostly just chills on Jak's shoulder and whines.



Haven City is massive, but there's precious little to actually do in it.



Take this generator and totally ruin the bad guys' Sex and the City party.

PS2

# LETHAL SKIES II

Miss this flight

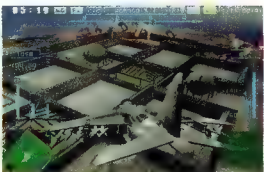
**Good:** A few nasty enemy types and novel rescue missions.  
**Bad:** Too much aim dogfighting  
**Annoying:** That damn incoming-missile buzzer



**CRISPIN:** Wait, they're charging a business-class price for this strictly coach sequel? *Skies'* fog-sacked visuals (you can only spy about 10 miles in any direction) and no-frills gameplay (all that lame dogfighting made me airsick) had me convinced this was a budget title. And don't get me started on the nonsensical story set in some silly not-too-distant future when tyrants powered their empires with volcano-mounted generators that look like titanic air-conditioning units. Of course you have to blow all this crap up. And atypical targets like these structures—along with spybots, lumbering mechs, and oil-rig fires you actually need to extinguish—are the only things that give this arcadey flight-combat experience any lift. Otherwise, you spend too much time trudging through uninspired missions with wildly out-of-balance difficulty levels. Some sorties throw so many missiles at your six that the nagging warning buzzer never goes off. It doesn't help that aircraft control goes all screwy every time you get pelted with enemy bullets. Not even the dull new two-player modes earn *Skies* any frequent-flier mileage.

**G. FORD:** I think Crispin is being a little hard on these not-so-friendly skies. Admittedly, I'm no top gun, but for awhile, the game had me believing that I was. After some training missions, I felt like a hotshot rookie ready to tackle the world and any air-related problems it could throw at me. The dogfights prove entertaining, if repetitive. But it's the wanky difficulty that sucks out the fun like air from a main-cabin breach. Who enjoys replaying missions a dozen times in order to progress? Good for limited flights only.

**GREG S:** It's times like these I find it useful to turn to *Top Gun* for guidance. What would Goose do? I mean, besides ejecting into the canopy like a bonehead and leaving a hot-n-horny Meg Ryan to mourn. He'd realize that *Lethal Skies II* offers some decent (yet uninspired) missions to fly, but that true thrills are in short supply. He'd also wonder why his wingmen fly like America West pilots after happy hour. And why the difficulty curve is so terribly screwed up. Then he'd read Crispin's review and give him a big thumbs-up—that kid's got moxie.



THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	5.5		
	CRISPIN	G. FORD	GREG S.

Publisher: Sammy  
 Developer: Asmik Ace  
 Players: 1-2  
 ESRB: Teen

www.lethalskies.com

PS2

ONLINE

# NFL GAMEDAY 2004

Is it time for retirement?



**Good:** Bountiful online features  
**Bad:** Clunky playcalling menu  
**Needs:** Improved visuals...badly



**BRYAN:** Although this year's edition demonstrates strides in the right direction, victory is still a long way off for 989's struggling series. What does *GameDay 2004* get right? Online play, for starters. It boasts a feature set (tournaments, user mail, score ticker, message boards, stat tracking) superior to any of the competition's. *GameDay* also lets you take advantage of the USB headset to hike the ball or call plays via voice commands—cool. And on the field, the action feels fluid thanks to hard-hitting tackling animations.

But this isn't enough to convince me to choose *GameDay* over the likes of *Madden* or *ESPN*. Mediocre graphics and scant franchise options are the game's obvious flaws, but tons of little oversights rot the game from within. For example, on running plays, the fullback inexplicably moves before anybody else, thus tipping off the defense. Also, no play call for motion, infrequent penalties drain realism, and ref calls can't be challenged. Likewise, the Playcall menu is a mess—it's difficult to navigate and downright ugly.

**G. FORD:** Well, *GameDay* certainly has problems: open receivers inexplicably missing (not dropping—just missing) the ball, vague announcers, refs falling over—basically, head-scratching stuff that lets you know you're playing a bad game. At least the graphics are OK—notably some nice tackling animations—although sterile (the grass looks like turf). *GameDay* isn't broken, though; you can play a game that resembles football and have some fun. But, like Bryan says, why would you both-

er with its blundering ways with *Madden* and *ESPN* around?

**OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAC—CHRIS B:**

Bryan and Greg are being kinda harsh. For the first time in years, you can't have fun with *GameDay*—fun that doesn't center around laughing at its mistakes. Don't get me wrong—this certainly rivals *NFL Fever* (Xbox) as the least impressive NFL game of the year, and you'd be foolish not to splurge the extra 10 bucks for *Madden* or *ESPN NFL Football*. But thanks to solid online options and functional gameplay, *GameDay* provides a serviceable game of football. Nothing more, nothing less.



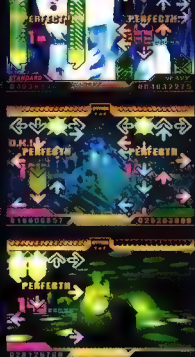
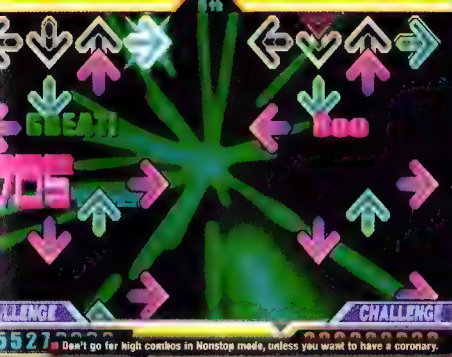
It's only Raiders wideout Tim Brown had been this open against the Bucs in the Super Bowl.

THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	5.5		
	BRYAN	G. FORD	CHRIS B.

Publisher: Sony CEA  
 Developer: SBB Sports  
 Players: 1-6 w/multiplay,  
 1-4 Online  
 ESRB: Everyone

www.989sports.com





PS2

# DDRMAX2

Same old DDR, 40 more bucks

**Good:** The more you play, the faster that put'll go away...  
**Bad:** ...and the quicker you'll get sick of the song list  
**Only Lazy People:** Play DDR with a control pad



Though I may be an admitted *Dance Dance Revolution* fanatic (with the battle scars to prove it), I just can't go as crazy over *MAX2*'s dance-along rhythmic action. Sure, the licensed songs in this one are great, including infectious ditties from the likes of Dirty Vegas and Kylie Minogue. But those peppy, stuck-in-your-head tunes account for a mere handful of the rhythm-action game's massive song list. The game's mostly filled with total snoozers lifted from the list-cumbe U.S. DDRs. Unfortunately, this makes for a very drab experience for all but the complete novice. At the very least, if you're going to include songs from previous *DDRs*, make them the *good* ones, not just the crap. On the positive side, a few of *MAX2*'s best songs have accompa-

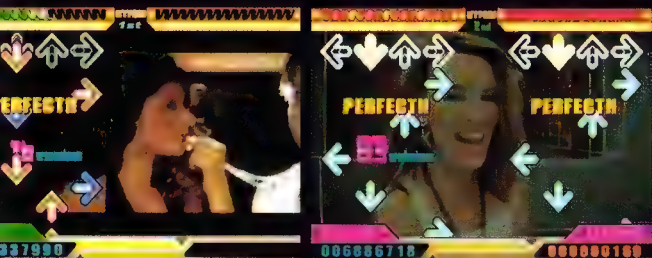
nying videos in the background instead of dippy animated clip art (big ups to the laughably innuendo-filled "Whistle Song" clip), and unlocking an option to bring back the old characters gives it an old-school flavor for longtime fans.

Overall, *MAX2* is OK, but the series is getting limp quickly. Maybe someone should blow its whistle.

**JENNIFER:** I agree with CJ. The song selection needs improvement here. Unless you really love the mind-numbing trash-techno played on those "Party!" radio stations, you'll get bored pretty quickly with this deluge of synthesized beats. Still, two-player is so much fun it makes *MAX2* a worthwhile investment for anyone looking for a shallow but thrilling party diversion. And Workout

mode is a blast if you're at all concerned with weight loss (and who isn't, really?); it's almost addictive seeing how many calories you can burn before you get tired. Try it—it's about time you worked up a sweat.

**GAMENOW—CARRIE:** As the *DDR* newbie of the group, I don't have any criticisms of "been there, done that" or songs repeated from other versions of the game. As far as I'm concerned, I've repeated my addiction, and all I want to do is play more *DDR*. Don't be afraid to enter the fold—even a klutz like me can play on Beginner mode against a Master of the Dance like CJ. I don't know if I'll eventually tire of trying to step to the beat, but I'm on my way to becoming the next Paula Abdul of the dance clubs.



(Left) Actual sang lyrics: "Blow my whistle, baby. Open up, put it in." Pure genius. (Right) Kylie is dangerously happy.

THE VERDICTS  
 OUT OF 10

**6.5** **7.5** **9.0**

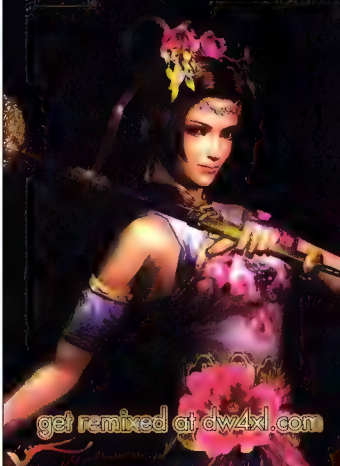
CJ JENNIFER CARRIE

Publisher: Konami  
 Developer: Konami Tokyo  
 Players: 1-2  
 ESRB: Everyone

www.konami.com



PlayStation 2

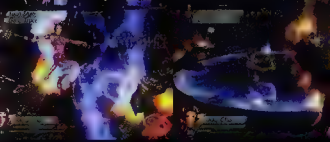


get remixed at [dw4xl.com](http://dw4xl.com)

# Xtreme Legends

Dynamic Warriors 4

- Legend Mode: 42 New Stages
- New Arena Challenge: Duel to the Death



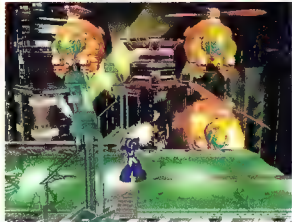
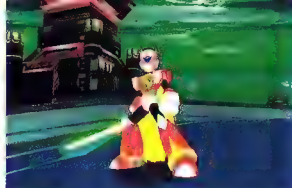
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 www.koel.com

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thanks!  
**25th Anniversary**  
 10th 25th Anniversary



Zero faces off against a robotic samurai inside a confusing futuristic kaleidoscope gone berserk.



PS2

# MEGA MAN X7

## Maybe it's time for a break, guys

**JON D:** I'm so over the tired *Mega Man X* formula: Running and shooting through stages, rescuing Replids, and building my character's stats to beat the dumb bosses (one of which, this time, is a giant onion) was thoroughly played out by *X5*.

That's not to say I didn't have some good times with *X7*. Zero's steel-reflecting sword and newcomer Axel's ability to steal enemy skills make combat a lot more creative. And the new 2.5D perspective works great—it feels comfortable, like original *Mega Man* gameplay with a twist.

I only wish the whole game had taken a more classic approach...it's just a mess whenever it thrusts you into confusing fully 3D levels. Here, the ugly, high-contrast backdrops look like a Lite-Brite maling underwear, and I had no idea what the hell was going on during boss battles, overhead segments, or times when I was running into and out of the screen. One level had me walking on a 3D translucent ceiling with inverted controls, which is at least seven times more frustrating than it

sounds. But nothing prepared me for the game's absolute low point—a hoverbike stage visually reminiscent of *F-Zero...for Super NES*. Must-hit targets and friendly Replids to rescue turned the already garbled track into an unplayable disaster.

I think X himself says it best at the start of the game: "Why must Replids continue this accursed cycle of aggression?" Why indeed.

**G. FORD:** Yep, it's true. *X7* features a spinning onion as a boss...who trash-talks with an Eastern European accent as he tosses deadly leaves. Not since *Kung Food* on Atari Lynx have vegetables been portrayed so negatively. Unfortunately, Tornado Tonion is the least of the game's problems. How do insanely tough boss fights, unimaginative levels, unskippable cut-scenes, and the series' worst boss collection ever sound? Or the 3D stages' horrible camera control and walking on transparent system? At least the side-scrolling 2D levels are solid, and the dual-character swapping system

works beautifully. Also, *X7* gets better in the second playthrough, since you start powered-up and with X available from the get-go. The series has always been about replayability, after all. It just hasn't always been about mediocrity. Or onions.

**GMR—MILKMAN:** As someone who hasn't cared much for *Mega Man*'s recent exploits, *X7*'s quality shocked me. The new character-switching feature works remarkably well. But to be honest, you'll really only want to spend your upgrades on trigger-happy newcomer Axel (why get beat on with melec-minded Zero when you can shoot foes from afar?). Plus, the cartoony graphics suit the material, and the characters look great running and gunning through the detailed levels. The main problems I had with *X7* were the uneven voice acting (Zero and Axel = good, everyone else = bad), and the fact that although *Mega Man*'s signature difficulty level remains intact, it's now the result of poor camera angles, not just brutally challenging level design.



### Embarrassing Bosses in Mega Man X History

Over the years, the *X* series has had more than its share of goofy-ass bosses. Here are a few of the worst offenders.



■ For some reason, Capcom named the *X5* bosses after members of Guns 'n' Roses. Pictured here: Duff McWhalea.

■ Meet *X6*'s Infinity Mijjalton. What the hell is a "mijjalton"? And how can it be infinite?



■ *X6*'s Metal Shark Player actually looks cool, but his name blows. Capcom just didn't care.



■ It's official—Capcom has run out of ideas for *Mega Man* bosses. Witness *X7*'s Tornado Tonion, the robot onion. We eagerly await lightning Roetigen Radish in *Mega Man X8*.



THE VERDICTS (out of 10)

10 5.0 7.0

JON D.

G. FORD

MILKMAN

Publisher: Capcom  
Developer: Capcom  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Everyone

www.capcom.com



+1288



PlayStation 2

PS2

# TIME CRISIS 3

Shoot your television

**Good:** New selectable weapons  
**Bad:** Two-player mode on a single console is a joke  
**Remember, Kids:** Don't point the light gun at coqs

**JON D:** I wish I lived in the *Time Crisis* world—danger around every turn, a beautiful woman to cart me around in a jeep, unlimited pistol ammo...alas, I can only write about it, but *TC3* isn't a bad subject.

Namco's latest iteration of its popular lightgun shooter coughs up enough interesting enemies in equally dynamic environments to keep it fun (whereas normally, I think of *Time Crisis* as just lagging jumpsuit-clad enemies who are crouched behind crates). And the new on-the-fly weapon-selection system helps me overlook *TC3*'s inherent brevity and outdated graphics. There's usually a "best" gun for every enemy encounter, but you can play it your own way and you won't get burned by, say, taking out a submarine with a pistol. Plus, acquiring and conserv-

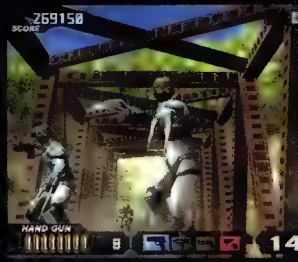
ing ammo for premium weapons adds much-needed complexity to an on-rails game like *TC3*.

A word of warning, though: The squashed two-player splitscreen mode is just atrocious. Unless you have a movie theater in your home, or a second, independent *TC3* setup (PS2, game, television, and all) to link to, don't count on a lot of good times with another actual human.

**SHAWN:** On one hand, *TC3* remains an uncollected crackshot among lightgun shooters. Its patented hide-and-peek approach, color-coded targets, and overlapping perspectives for two-person play put it on the top and, for the most part, keep it there. On the other hand, this third installment feels phoned in. The expanded arsenal is an excellent addition, but

reloading the same low-caliber visuals from the last game is inexcusable. And why not offer fully interactive environments like those in its older arcade cousin *Crisis Zone*?

**JOE:** *TC3* is the most fun I've had with a lightgun game since Sega's arcade classic, *House of the Dead 2*. Being able to flip between different weapons injects some actual strategy into the genre's normally rote gunplay. For instance, while the handgun is good for single shots, the shotgun mows down groups of enemies and the machine gun quickly takes out tough targets like gun emplacements. Drawbacks? The game doesn't have enough unlockable modes and its graphics are a little ho-hum. Those complaints aside, you'll play *TC3* until you can't hold your arms up.



(Night) Synchronized claw dances might seem impressive at first, but they're really no match for a full arsenal of guns.

THE VERDICTS

**7.0** **7.0** **8.5**

JON D.      SHAWN      JOE

Publisher: Namco  
Developer: Namco  
Players: 1-2 (Splitscreen or System Link)  
ESRB: Teen  
[www.namco.com](http://www.namco.com)

get remixed at [dw4xl.com](http://dw4xl.com)

## Xtreme Legends

### DYNASTY WARRIORS 4

Level 11 Weapons and New Items      Never Before Seen Gameplay



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25th Anniversary  
25

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Talk to the magical, laser-shooting, undead-repelling hawk.

Xbox ONLINE  
**HUNTER: THE RECKONING REDEEMER**  
 It was a graveyard smash

**Good:** Splattering 300 zombies per level.  
**Bad:** Wandering around lost... again.  
**Dressed to Jump Out of a Cake:** Kayle 'Redeemer' Winter

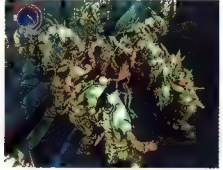
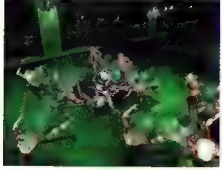


**PAUL:** How many zombies does it take to screw in a light bulb? 3,723. One to screw in the light bulb, and 3,722 to be terminated—with prejudice—by yours truly. Yes, I've destroyed almost four thousand critters, zombies, and ghouls, and it's still entertaining. *Redeemer* keeps hack-n-slash gameplay interesting with a new enemy, boss, weapon, or spell around every other corner. And its level-up system rules: Your character's melee, ranged, and magic abilities improve based on how often they're used, growing to suit your playing style automatically.

A few scratches mar the game's overall polish. Its overly aggressive autoaim will alter your bullets' trajectory up to 45 degrees so that you hit a closer enemy rather than the more dangerous monster you were actually aiming at. And it's easy to get lost in *Redeemer*'s larger levels; some indication of where to go next (or a map) would help its pacing. But it's hard to hold a grudge against this stylish, fun brawler. And don't confuse *Redeemer* with its lackluster PS2 cousin, *Wayward*. (Oh, and I executed the zombie who screwed in the light bulb, too.)

**G. FORD:** Light-bulb-induced killing sprees or not, I wanted to enjoy *Redeemer* more than I ever did. It's a solid game with lots of good stuff: cnsnp, gory graphics; a creepy atmosphere; and the dangling carrot that is the excellent stat-building system (much improved from the original). But its slow, repetitive pace keeps the thrills in check, and the bosses are either pitifully easy or painstakingly annoying. That said, *Redeemer* is above average, and you'll enjoy playing through it with some friends—it's just not the keeper I hoped for.

**BRYAN:** Another trip to the creepy town of Ashcroft has come and gone, and I can't help but walk away with a sense of déjà vu. Paul and G. Ford already mentioned the one innovative aspect of *Redeemer*—the wonderfully deep character customization. Otherwise, this installment is much like the original: The visuals impress and four-player monster huntin' is a blast, but it's over very quickly, and limited camera control (you can only zoom in and out) makes some of the scavenger-hunt missions tedious.



THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	<b>7.5</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>
	PAUL	G. FORD	BRYAN
	www.vugames.com		

Publisher: VU Games  
 Developer: High Voltage  
 Players: 1-4  
 ESRB: Mature

Xbox  
**DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: HEROES**

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You can join or leave Heroes multiplayer at any time.

**Good:** Frenzied multiplayer action  
**Bad:** Crummy graphics, repetitive hacking  
**Never Trust:** Shoppe merchants who disappear suddenly



**MARK:** You don't need to completely shut off your brain for this *Gauntlet*-style hack-n-slash, but it helps. I love how you can build up your character (wizard, cleric, fighter, or rogue), choosing which attributes, attacks, or spells to boost as you level up. But regardless of how you customize your alter ego, your strategy for barreling through enemies—and even some bosses—hardly needs to vary from one to the next, and the endless switch-flipping "puzzles" ain't exactly chess. Plus, *Heroes* isn't much to look at. Monsters, environments, and effects range from decent to embarrassingly simple but never come close to what Xbox is capable of.

So why is a game that asks you to leave your eyes and brains at the start-up screen fun anyway? Grab two or three friends and find out. The chaos that erupts in multiplayer—traps springing, arrows flying, fireballs, enemies, and spells filling the screen—may not always be conducive to teamwork (hell, sometimes it's hard just to find your guy on-screen), but it makes for a frantic, button-mashin' good time.

**BRYAN:** If a Dungeon Master created a pencil-and-paper D&D campaign similar to *Heroes*, most of the nerd herd would call it an early night. Serious roleplayers wouldn't stand for the repetitive gameplay, so-so graphics, and extremely shallow plot. Sure, customizing characters with almighty weapons and slaying creatures in the company of friends help *Heroes*' case, but you can easily eke out all its potential fun during one weekend rental. If you're looking for something more substantial,

wait for the beefier *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance 2*.

**SHAWN:** Like swimming, dungeon crawling in this story-free sort shouldn't be done alone. Play solo, and you'll find scant motivation to hew through hundreds of drooling monsters. Forming a party, on the other hand, changes everything. Suddenly, my dwarf, once a laughingstock to the lowliest orc, became a spellcasting savior, enabling my brawlier consort to tackle the entire *Monster Manual*. In the end, my level-26 cleric became a source of pride rather than exhibit A in the case for my social ineptitude.



Yo, Araadin, little help ever here?™

THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	<b>6.0</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>6.5</b>
	MARK	BRYAN	SHAWN
	www.atlri.com		

Publisher: Atari  
 Developer: Atari  
 Hunt Valley  
 Players: 1-4  
 ESRB: Teen



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# THE ESRB VIDEO & COMPUTER GAME RATINGS

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## RATING PENDING

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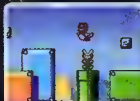
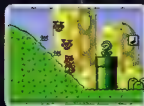




who are you?

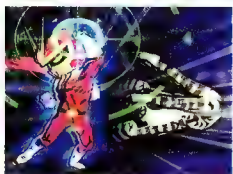


The sky's the limit in Super Mario Advance 4: Super Mario Bros. 3. There's Tanooki Suits, fire flowers and if that's not enough, each game pak comes with 2 cards for your e-Reader. One power-up card and one Level card. Leap for yours today.





Joe's plot never takes itself too seriously. Television and movie references (like the Star Wars homage here) are everywhere.



Play it Again, Joe

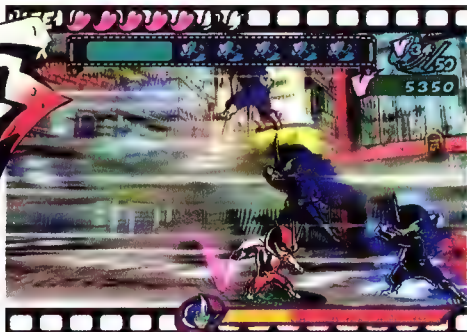


*Viewtiful Joe* includes plenty of reasons to keep playing after you beat it the first time, such as:

- Three extra unlockable characters, (like Silvia and Captain Blue, pictured above), each with their own unique moves, powers, and even altered story sequences.
- The game ranks you several times in each stage based on speed, defense, and points. Get the ultimate rank for every level and earn something special....
- Two difficulty modes from the start (Kids or Adult) and two tougher ones you can earn later (V-Rated and Ultra V-Rated).

► **SHOE:** Some games are cool. Some games are geeky. This game is not only cool and geeky, but it'll also make you look cool (though only to geeky people). *Viewtiful Joe* lets you bust out sick kung fu that out-Matrixes *The Matrix*—after you play for a bit, you'll wish all fighting and action games had its incredibly stylish slow/fast/zoom gameplay. The puzzle elements Mark mentioned add a nice touch to the constant chop-sockery, but they're way underutilized here. I could've done with more variety, too. Once you've played through the first world, you'll know how 90 percent of the game's enemies will attack (which kills some of the fun, because *Viewtiful Joe* is all about the fight).

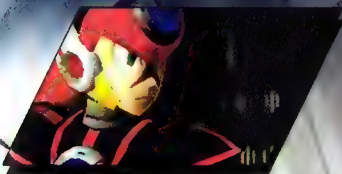
But my complaints are few and my praises many. *Viewtiful Joe* is cool, cool...way cool, and there's nothing like it. Don't miss out on this awesome, unique experience.



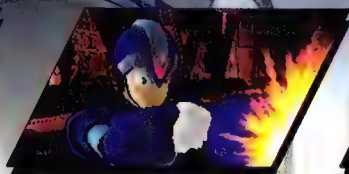
One level puts Joe in a side-scrolling shooter of sorts.



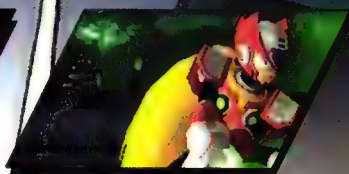




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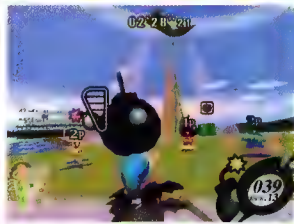
**CAPCOM** PlayStation 2



[capcom.com/megaman](http://capcom.com/megaman)



■ Can Tony Hawk grind interstellar fun-rails on a jet-powered star board? Think not!



GC

# KIRBY AIR RIDE

Instructions: Push "A"

**JOHN R:** The unfortunately titled *Kirby Air Ride* (nice English, guys) is a tough game to review. It seems like the developers really put a lot of effort into making it a polished, complete racer, which is definitely a good thing. In typical HAL fashion (these are the guys behind *Super Smash Bros. Melee*), each of *Air Ride's* three main modes features a load of challenges for you to try completing in order to unlock hidden goodies. This is lovely, the problem is, I just can't manage to keep myself interested enough to bother completing many of them.

See, *Air Ride's* one-button gameplay was designed to be simple, but unfortunately, anyone over the age of 7 will likely find it to be way too simple. Yes, there's a little strategy involved in knowing when and how to use the A button to take sharp turns and to boost effectively, but the truth is, you can complete most of the races without ever even touching it. Some kind of structured game progression or even a Story mode would go

a long way toward making players feel like trying to improve is worth their time. As it stands now, I found myself getting bored after about five hours of too-easy play.

*Air Ride's* one redeeming factor is its multiplayer, but even so, it's more likely to appeal to a younger crowd than anyone interested in serious racing. It's really a perfect game for kids, but if you're looking for anything even remotely deep or challenging, you'll want to look elsewhere.

**CJ:** At first, *Air Ride* seems like a short-bus pile of trash. Then, after a few races, you get used to the one-button-does-everything concept of braking and boosting. (Hmm, that's not so bad.) Then you notice multiple paths, warp pads, and shortcut activators. (Well, that's cool, huh?) Then you head into the two other game types—a wacky versus deathmatch mode and a top-down *Super Sprint*-style race—and see what a blast those are. Once you start unlocking more ships and

secrets, the addiction snowballs. Just like with *Super Smash Bros. Melee*. (F\*\*\*in' A!) And you realize, hey, *Air Ride's* a lot of fun (especially multiplayer) and it's got a crapload to offer if you give it the chance.

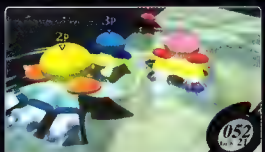
**JENNIFER:** I'm well over the age of 7, John (surprise!), but I like *Air Ride's* utterly basic gameplay—perhaps my maturity has taught me to appreciate simplicity.... Sure, you don't have a ton of options—just press the big green A button and try to keep up. But this game is so supremely easy for anyone to pick up and play that what initially seems one-dimensional and lame ends up leading to awesome multiplayer. Total novices can jump in and stay competitive on fairly fast-n-furious tracks—an unusual feat for a racing game. Sadly, though, *Air Ride* isn't really noteworthy in any other way. The wacky unlockable challenges will keep the hardcore coming back for more, but I wasn't inspired to jump through them hoops.



**Our Verdict:** *Air Ride* is a decent game, but its one-button, 1980s-style Nintendo racing game play is a little stale. The unlockable challenges aren't what *Super Smash Bros. Melee* believes in, and the music doesn't do it. It's a decent game, but it's not what you need to buy if you're looking for a challenge.

## Secrets Aplenty

Each of *Air Ride's* three main modes features a whopping 120 secret challenges, many of which lead to unlockable hidden characters, music tracks, and more. Challenges range from simple goals like finishing in first place or sucking up X number of enemies to more advanced (and in some cases, bizarre) objectives like running a lap without letting your speed drop below a certain point or crashing into a flaming dragon. You can track your progress on the nifty Clear Check grid in the Records menu.



■ Complete challenges to unlock new rides (like the bird and bat flyers shown here) for the Kirbster.



Secrets: Beautiful graphics  
Gameplay: Simple but fun  
Secrets: Will unlock plenty of goodies



THE VERDICTS  
OUT OF 100

6.0 8.0 7.0

JOHN R.

CJ

JENNIFER

Publisher: Nintendo  
Developer: HAL  
Players: 1-4 (split-screen or LAN)  
ESRB: Everyone

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• The Rock informs Undertaker that he's the next guest on the TV show *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*.

■ GC

# WWE WRESTLEMANIA XIX

## Almost ready for a title shot

**BRYAN:** Last year's *Wrestlemania X8* was like a midcard draw compared to THQ's top-flight Nintendo 64 *WWE* contenders of old. Thankfully, *XIX* enters the ring with a host of improvements. The control setup hearkens back to the classics (like *Mo Mercy*), but with a larger selection of moves and a new emphasis on counters/reversals that allows for some rewarding comebacks. Plus, being able to attack specific body parts adds much-needed strategy, and speedy pacing nixes the drawn-out, boring matches that plague most wasslin' games.

*XIX* also addresses its forerunner's biggest weakness: the painfully limited Create-a-Superstar mode. This year, the developers wisely offer detailed facial and body customization, allowing twisted gamers to design downright frightening wrestlers. Although the visuals aren't quite up to *Raw 2* (Xbox) standards, the characters and environments look impressive nonetheless.

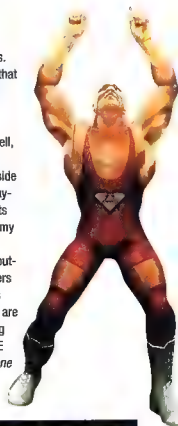
Yet, the single-player modes hold *XIX* back from being the ultimate grappler. King of the Ring

(where you vie for championship belts) is nothing more than a generic tournament setting devoid of story elements. And *Revenge* (in which battles take place at outside-the-ring venues) turns what's supposed to be a wrestling game into an irritating 3D beat-em-up (see sidebar). Still, there are enough changes in this edition for me to label *XIX* the top GC wrestler to date. But it needs another year before the series reaches main event status.

**SHAWN:** *XIX*'s much-improved character creation system atomic-drops you into the WWE. Build a bruiser and enroll him in training sessions with taskmaster Al Snow, and you'll feel like a contender on MTV's *Tough Enough* (just be prepared to accept that your underdeveloped athlete is gonna get stomped before rising to superstardom). *XIX*'s reversal-heavy brand of brawling also makes for deep and flexible bouts. Those controls, however, don't translate well to *Revenge* mode's open arenas, where the thrill of hurling men in hard hats off

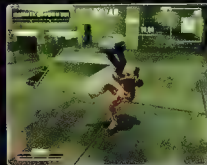
of high-rises fizzles after a few repetitive rounds. Of course, it'd hardly be worth bitching about if that portion of the game were a mere bonus and not the main event it's obviously intended to be.

**CJ:** I commend *XIX* for trying something new. Well, two somethings—an extensive tutorial and the good-idea-poorly-executed *Revenge* mode. Outside of that, *XIX* is pretty lifeless, especially when playing solo. Most fans will be left high and dry by its lack of a "path of a champion" story mode. But my biggest problem with *XIX* stems from moving "switch focus" controls from the C stick to the out-of-the-way Z button. Why not at least give gamers the C stick option? I agree with Bryan that *XIX*'s improvements in speed and Create-a-Superstar are great, but they should've been made a long, long time ago. Instead of making each system's *WWE* game with a completely different focus, make one that incorporates *XIX*'s *Revenge*, *SmackDown*'s story, and *Raw*'s look—but really step it up.



### You're Fired!

*Revenge* mode begins with WWE head honcho Vince McMahon terminating your contract. Get back at your former boss by causing havoc at a number of his properties, such as a construction site, shopping mall, and parking lot. But prepare yourself for repetition and frustration—almost every mission requires you to either Irish-whip security guards off ledges or bludgeen gangs of buddies, even though there's no guarantee that nailing them repeatedly in the noggin with a sledgehammer will have them seeing red.



■ Money earned in *Revenge* mode can be used to buy extra moves, ability points, and even entrance themes for your created wrestler.



THE VERDICTS  
(OUT OF 10)

7.5

BRYAN

7.5

SHAWN

6.5

CJ

Publisher: THQ  
Developer: Yuke's  
Players: 1-4  
ESRB: Teen

www.thq.com



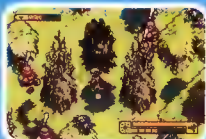


# boktai

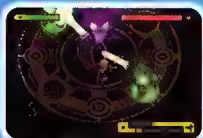
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■ Ah, simpler times. Back when *SMB3* first hit the scene, we were too young to realize that Mario is a total furry fetishist.

■ GBA

# SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 4: SUPER MARIO BROS. 3



Still super after all these years

**JOHN R:** At long last, the best of the old-school Mario games has arrived in portable form. *Super Mario Bros. 3* doesn't quite compare to *Super Mario World* (its direct sequel) in overall depth and playability, but it does stand tall in one area that's always been extremely important to me: originality. *Mario 3* is the last Mario game that truly felt "magical"; the bizarre, colorful worlds of the mushroom kingdom evoke levels of creativity that, once upon a time, only Nintendo could deliver. The power-ups are far and away the best the series has to offer—where else can you don a full-body frog suit or bounce around inside a giant shoe?—and the stages are overloaded with secrets to discover.

Interestingly enough, Nintendo went a lot further with this port than it did with previous Mario Advance games. Playing in conjunction with an e-Reader and SMA4 e-Cards allows you to unlock a host of new levels, some of which are really cool. My only issue with this is that you're forced to shell out extra cash for an almost useless peripheral and

cards just to unlock stuff that's already on the cartridge. Is it worth the extra cost? Not really, but that doesn't detract from what is otherwise one of the best platformers ever made. If you own a GBA, consider this a must-buy. You won't regret it.

**SHANE:** Nintendo's sure milking Mario for all he's worth—remember *Super Mario All-Stars* on Super Nintendo? That game contains remakes of four classic Mario titles, while GBA owners have to dole out \$30 a pop for these tasty chestnuts. Pricing rants aside, *Super Mario Bros. 3* undoubtedly stands the test of time as one of history's greatest platformers. Ingenuity abounds, in both the level designs (the colossal scale of World 4 is insanely clever) and the power-ups (gotta love the Hammer Bros. suit). What strikes me most while playing through this again, however, is how absurdly tough and/or short some of the stages are. *Super Mario Advance 2: Super Mario World* offers a much longer, more balanced quest overall, but John's

right—*SMB3* benefits from a wilder touch of creativity. Oh, and the amazing e-Card unlockables would raise my score...If the setup required to harvest them weren't stupidly complex.

**SHOE:** *SMB3* is one of the best games of all time. Not just on a Nintendo system. Not just for a Mario game. Not just when it first came out many moons and mushrooms ago. OF ALL TIME. I really can't say much that these two reviewers haven't already covered—or that you don't already know. Perfect controls. Perfectly constructed stages. Perfect graphics (for an old, trippy 2D game, that is). Perfect game design that delicately balances anyone-can-pick-it-up gameplay with hardcore platforming action that'll make your palms sweat and your stomach churn when you go for those death-defying leaps. I'd score it a 10, 'cept this isn't anything new or innovative—it's the same game from years ago. And that money-milking e-Card BS? Well, you read what the other two wrote...

**Game of the Month**  
 To unlock *SMB3*'s coolest secrets, you're going to need one of these absurd e-Card reader accessories and Mario e-Cards (all of a piece). Normally, we wouldn't categorize such a gimmicky peripheral, but the rewards are tangible here. Some cards offer hints, others (depending on how you play) even give Mario explosive power-ups (see the vegetable-tossing ability seen above.)



### Best Mario Game...Ever?

We asked our gmmag.com message board buds which Mario game they thought was the best of all time, not counting the *Golfs*, *Partys*, *Cement Factories*, *RPGs*, etc. What we learned: We're not alone in loving Mario's third adventure, lots of people represent for *Super Mario World* and *Super Mario 64*, and nine percent of the voters are total smashrases (that's what we get for putting the repulsive Mario in *Missing* edutainment game in as a joke).

Game	Votes
Super Mario Bros. 3	32%
	20%
	20%
	9%
	7%
Super Mario Bros.	5%
Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island	4%
Super Mario Bros. 2	2%



THE VERDICTS  
OUT OF 10

9.5 9.0 9.5

JOHN R. SHANE SHOE

Publisher: Nintendo  
 Developer: Nintendo  
 Players: 1 (2-4 w/Link cable)  
 ESRB: Everyone

www.nintendo.com



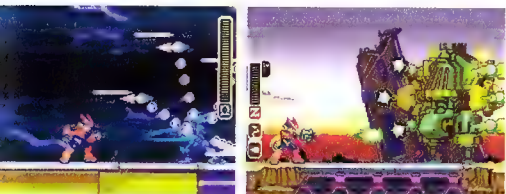


Note how much smaller Zero's life bar (on the left) is compared to the boss'. Fair, huh?

■ GBA

## MEGA MAN ZERO 2

The best Mega Man game on GBA this month



■ MMZ2 offers customizable skills—you'll power up the weapons that you use most often.

**Good:** Classic *Mega Man* feel with modern touches, fun boss battles

**Bad:** Cramped boss-battle design

**Better Than:** *Mega Man X7* (PS2)



**JON D:** Zero's second starring role on GBA is superior to any home-console *Mega Man X* title of late—probably because *MMZ2* actually echoes the spirit of the classic *MM* games. It's pretty, easy to control, and suitably arduous to complete (*MM* games are supposed to be hard). Also, its straightforward run-and-jump gameplay isn't smothered by too many RPG elements.

But it could still use some work—I'd much prefer a ton of cooler, longer stages to the current model, which has you replaying a small set of levels. And while I'm used to dying a lot in *Mega Man* games, I prefer for it to be my own damned fault. For example, in *MMZ2*'s boss battles, it's not uncommon to see a huge flaming projectile coming at you from out of nowhere. Plus, not being able to select a different stage upon continuing is just evil. It's like: "You died! Well, you can keep struggling on this stage or reset your game. Welcome to hell." If you can stomach the serious difficulty, *MMZ2* is good, plain fun.

**GAMENOW—PHIL:** As much as I like the

*Battle Network* series, I'll always prefer the "classic" *Mega Man* games. The original *Mega Man Zero* helped bring some of that old-school *Mega*-goodness (challenging stages, cool bosses) into the new generation, and *MMZ2* adds to that nostalgic rebirth even further. New features, like weapons and armor that power up depending on how you play, add a level of depth previously absent. As long as Capcom keeps adding innovation to this long-running series, I'll keep playing.

**SHANE:** This series' well of inspiration ran dry a decade ago, back when Capcom decided that Flame Man was different enough from Fire Man and Heat Man to warrant creation. So, although *MMZ2* fails to deliver anything substantially new (sorry, Phil, powering up a blaster isn't exactly innovation), at least it serves up a solid action romp. All the series' hallmarks are here: nice visuals, snappy tunes, tight control, and insanely tough bosses. *Mega*-fans won't be let down, and even casual players will get their money's worth.

THE USERS' CHOICE

6.5	8.5	7.0
JON D.	PHIL	SHANE

Publisher: Capcom  
Developer: Capcom  
Players: 1 (1-2 Linked)  
ESRB: Everyone

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THE INDEPENDENT GUIDE TO TECHNOLOGY



Raphael shows Casey Jones his totally tubular jumping spits-kick.

GBA  
**TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES**

One shell of a game

**Good:** Excellent graphics.  
**Bad:** Hack, slash, rinse, repeat.  
**Rad Song:** Partners in Kryme's "FU-B-L-E Power"

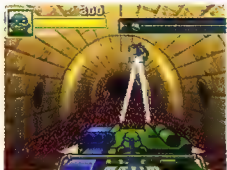
**REG S:** Haters begone: *TMNT* on GBA offers a gnarly (read: good) throwback to the bygone days of brawl-em-up classics like *Final Fight*—or, even better, a throwback to Konami's old *Turtles* arcade games, albeit without 3D movement (each mean green bro is limited to action on two 2D planes).

Since the *Turtles* are all about kicking butt anyway, why not give 'em a good, simple action game? Especially one that has superb animation, colorful levels, and tight control. And actually, it's like four games in one—each of the four turtles has his own unique moves, story line, and levels to fight through. Plus, each duo also tackles his own minigame—Raph goes motorcycle racing against Casey Jones, Leo's got a mouser shooting gallery, and so on.

Ultimately, though, *TMNT*'s very nature as an old-school brawler might turn off potential fans. Some finicky modern gamers (ahem...Crispin) won't dig taking on wave after wave of mousers and Foot ninjas. Personally, I'll be taking on ol' Shred-head every time I take my GBA on a trip. Bodacious!

**CRISPIN:** As if the *Turtles* license here wasn't enough to suck you into a time warp, wait until you play the game. This side-scrolling, button-smacking 2D brawler looks and plays like a Super NES title Konami has been sitting on since 1992. Levels work trusty: You traipse through sewers/laboratories/alleys and whomp ninjas/robots/punks with your katana/nunchaku/staff. Clear an area and you move on to the next—unless you fall asleep first. Vehicle levels break up the monotony but aren't that exciting, either. Surely GBA can do more than this?

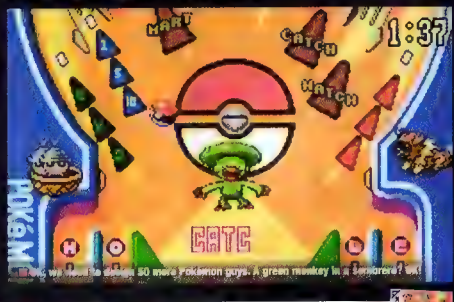
**SHANE:** Let me be the voice of reason—Greg and Crispin are both overreacting here. *TMNT* is neither the rebirth of brawling brilliance nor the pinnacle of boring game design. In fact, it's a perfectly average beat-em-up that will likely keep fans of the cartoon enthralled. Smooth graphics and precise control make it easy on the eyes and thumbs, and the driving bits offset face-smashing monotony. Your mutagenic enjoyment won't go beyond a mild simmer, but I promise totally OK action throughout.



THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	<b>7.5</b>	<b>5.0</b>	
	GREG S.	CRISPIN	SHANE
	www.konami.com		

Publisher: Konami  
Developer: Konami Studios  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Everyone

GBA  
**POKEMON PINBALL: RUBY & SAPPHIRE**  
Pikachu + Balls = Pleasure



**Good:** Excellent table design  
**Bad:** Only two tables  
**Pinball Lovers:** Try *Sonic Pinball Party*, too

**JOHN R:** As sick as I am of all things *Pokémon*, I have to admit—*Pokémon Pinball* was one of my most anticipated games this summer. The original was, until now, my favorite handheld pinball game ever, and this visually upgraded sequel is an excellent follow-up that improves upon the first game in just about every way.

*Pinball* features only two main tables, but the pacing is superb, which is what makes the game so much fun to play. You're always working on trying to hit some lane or flick some switch to keep progressing, which keeps things fresh throughout. From catching new *Pokémon* and evolving existing ones to trying to open up bonus stages, you can lose yourself for hours at a time. The bonus stages are fun, but a little more variety would've been nice. The same can be said for the two main tables; as well designed as they are, their basic templates are a bit too similar for my tastes. Even so, *PP* offers up a superb experience for both flipper-happy pinball fans and total novices alike.

hard to imagine not having this in my on-the-go library.

**MARK:** Whether you'd sooner hug Pikachu or wring his little yellow neck, *Pinball: R&S* belongs in your GBA. It offers instant gratification for quickie gaming fixes (complete with the essential save-anytime feature), but with enough depth to last through the hours of longer trips or dedicated play sessions. Both tables are expertly balanced with skill shots to learn, bonus games to master, and plenty of secrets and hidden techniques to uncover. The lack of multiball is the only disappointment in this otherwise polished and addictive game.

**CJ:** Real pinball may be dead and buried, but *Pokémon Pinball* is still fighting the good fight on Nintendo's portable. Every orifice oozes *Pokémon* quality—everything but the flippers themselves have some kind of link to the Pokéverse. And even if *Pokémon* isn't your thing, the gameplay is fast, furious, and incredibly satisfying, and the quick-save feature makes it insanely easy to play a little, stop, and start back up another time. It's



Bonus stages (above) can be tough, but they are where the big points lie.

THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	<b>8.0</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>9.0</b>
	JOHN R.	CJ	MARK
	www.pokemon.com		

Publisher: Nintendo  
Developer: Jupiter  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Everyone



## REVIEWS WRAP-UP

### Slipping away



■ *SSX 3* jumps into next month.



Generally, the Wrap-up provides a caring home for games that didn't quite warrant inclusion in the proper Review Crew. Think of it as a cramped, drafty shed out back, crammed full of wayward pets left out in the cold. This month, however, we had to let most of the strays (cut to: stern glance toward *Risk* and *Wallace & Gromit!*) into the grand manor...there just weren't enough high-profile games to go around. We still passed on a few games, though: *GameBreaker* showed up far too late for us deliver a timely review, and two GBA RPGs crept in beneath most gamers' radar.

#### NCAA GameBreaker 2003

PS2 • 999 Sports • ESRB: Everyone — Luckily, *GameBreaker* comes out several months after EA Sports' excellent *NCAA Football 2004*, so unwitting consumers won't be tricked into buying it by mistake. Although it's definitely an improvement over last year's model (thanks to smooth online play and some quality play-by-play announcing), you'd still be foolish to take this over the nicer-looking, better-playing EA offering.

#### Cima: The Enemy

GBA • Natsume • ESRB: Everyone — The 14 people who've heard of this game can skip ahead, but everyone else, listen up: This no-name action-RPG is worth a look. It's an epic little quest from the same team behind the classic *Lufia* games for Super Nintendo. *Cima* sports solid graphics, haunting tunes, a passable story line, and a crazy feature that lets you recruit everyday townsfolk to do your bidding. Who doesn't like indentured servitude?

#### Demikids: Light and Dark Versions

GBA • Atlus • ESRB: Everyone — The publisher probably wouldn't like for us to mention this game's Japanese title, *Devil Children*, but hey, it's a cute name for this wild hybrid of *Pokémon* and Satanic worship. OK, it's not really that demonic—in fact, it's wholesome monster collection/role-playing fun for the whole family...but the kids do carry guns. As expected, you'll have to hook up with a pal if you want to collect the entire menagerie of diabolical monstrosities.

#### Other Notable News

First off, you might notice that two of our reviews—NFL *GameDay 2004* and NFL *Blitz Pro*—might seem a tad late. Well, they are, but with good reason: The so-called "reviewable" discs that we got last month were simply too buggy, so we didn't feel comfortable passing judgment until more complete versions became available.

Hammering out last-minute bugs must be the hip thing to do, "cause a ton of expected review games succumbed to untimely delays. *Conflict Desert Storm II*, *Backyard Wrestling*, *True Crime: Streets of L.A.*, *Warhammer 40K: Fire Warrior*, *NBA Live 2004*, *ESPN Basketball*, *NBA Jam*, *NBA Inside Drive 2004*, *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II*, *Pikmin 2*, *Top Spin Tennis*, *WWE Raw 2*, *Star Wars: Rebel Strike: Rogue Leader*, *Gladius*, *SSX 3*, *Voodoo Vince*, and *XIII* all slipped into the next issue. You know what this means? Next issue's Review Crew is going to *own*.

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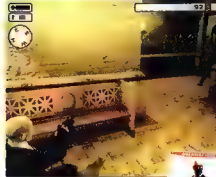
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# REVIEWS ARCHIVE

Fresh or foul? Scope the scores of recent games

greatest hit  
or miss?



## HITMAN 2

- PS2, Xbox, GC
- Released: November 2002
- Original Scores: 9.0 (PS2)  
7.0, 8.0, 8.5 (GC)

Fulfilling contracts with bullets, piano wire, and arsenic-spiked champagne, this hairless assassin-for-hire is as cold-blooded and resourceful as killers come. The A.I. is sketchy, but otherwise *Hitman 2* is the perfect canvas to paint red with your sick creativity.

Legacy: **madden**

## JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL

- Genesis
- Released: 1990
- Original Scores: 9.0, 9.0, 9.0, 9.0

Mr. Madden insisted that his game feature 11-on-11 play. Ultimately, this led to the most accurate representation of "real-life football" yet on a home console.



## MADDEN NFL 2004

- PS2, Xbox, GC, PS1
- Released: August 2003
- Original Scores: 9.5, 9.0, 9.5

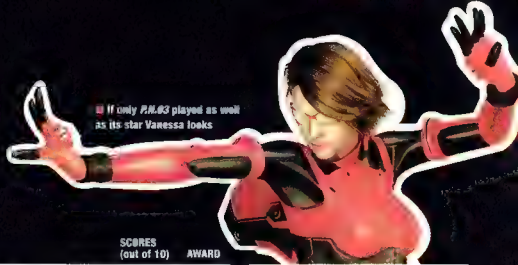
This edition of *Madden* buries the competition with its Owner mode, where players not only can relocate NFL teams, but also set ticket and concession prices at the stadium.



GAME	SYSTEMS	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
<i>Jack Part 3: Outbreak</i>	PS2	■ The intriguing narrative will keep <i>Jack</i> vets coming back for more	6.0 6.5 8.0	
<i>Aliens Versus Predator: Extinction</i>	PS2	■ Commanding your idiotic troops can be quite frustrating	6.5 8.0 8.5	
<i>Alter Echo</i>	PS2	■ More pink and purple than a prom's worth of dresses	6.5 6.5 4.0	
<i>Ape Escape 2</i>	PS2	■ Similar to its PS1 forerunner, but this sequel's still a top platforming banana	8.5 6.0 7.5	
<i>Auto Modellista</i>	PS2	■ Crappy handling runs a gorgeous-looking online racer	5.0 5.5 7.0	
<i>Batman: Dark Tomorrow</i>	GC	■ Gaming's answer to the box office hemorrhoid <i>Batman and Robin</i>	2.0 1.5 1.0	Shame
<i>Big Mutha Truckers</i>	PS2	■ The lowbrow redneck angle belies some big-rig shipping economics	6.0 7.0 4.5	
<i>Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg</i>	GC	■ The egg-pushing gameplay helps <i>Hatcher</i> feel wonderfully unique	7.0 8.0 8.5	
<i>Boktai: The Sun is in Your Hand</i>	GBA	■ A portable gem where playing in the sun is an enjoyable requirement	9.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
<i>Bombastic</i>	PS2	■ An addictive, unconventional shooter...even if it involves some math	8.0 7.5 8.5	Silver
<i>Brute Force</i>	XB	■ This lizard-filled squad shooter gets the job done, but not without casualties	6.5 6.0 7.5	
<i>Buffy: Chaos Bleeds</i>	XB	■ A brain-dead <i>Buffy</i> fan's dream and a decent beat-em-up for the unbrutal	4.5 6.5 7.5	
<i>Burnout 2: Point of Impact</i>	PS2	■ This version fixes a lot of the issues we had with the original	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
<i>Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow</i>	GBA	■ With its excellent soul-stealing system, <i>Aria</i> outclasses its forerunners	9.5 9.0 9.5	Gold
<i>Chaos Legion</i>	PS2	■ Allies that grow with experience add RPG-ish depth	8.5 6.5 8.5	
<i>Dark Cloud 2</i>	PS2	■ An addictive action-RPG that lets you rebuild the world as you save it	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
<i>Def Jam Vendetta</i>	PS2	■ Hip-hop stars and wrestling actually works <i>Word</i> to ya, mutha, yo	7.0 7.5 7.5	
<i>Devil May Cry 2</i>	PS2	■ Dante and Lucia blast through a cruddy plot in this too-easy sequel	7.0 7.0 8.0	
<i>Dino Crisis 3</i>	XB	■ The vestigial remains of a genre that needed to evolve or die a long time ago	6.5 6.0 6.5	
<i>Disgaea: Hour of Darkness</i>	PS2	■ So creative and challenging that it totally deserves RPG gamers' attention	8.5 8.0 7.5	Silver
<i>DOA: Xtreme Beach Volleyball</i>	XB	■ Scientists are working to invent a nude code for these bouncing ste-ninjas	7.5 7.0 6.0	
<i>Downhill Domination</i>	PS2	■ Deftly mixes <i>Road Rash</i> 's combat with <i>SSX</i> 's crazy downhill drops	8.5 8.0 7.0	
<i>Dragon Ball Z: Budokai</i>	PS2	■ Stands above any of the previous attempts to turn the series into a fighter	8.0 7.5 7.0	
<i>Dragon Ball Z: Ultimate Battle 22</i>	PS1	■ Someone crapped in a jewel case and passed it off as a <i>DBZ</i> game	2.0 1.5 2.0	
<i>Dynasty Warriors 4</i>	PS2	■ Obese warriors snacking on dim sum and severing heads	7.5 7.0 8.5	
<i>Enter the Matrix</i>	PS2, XB, GC	■ More bugs than a slice of month-old street pizza	6.0 3.5 3.5	
<i>ESPN NFL Football</i>	PS2	■ First-person football isn't as revolutionary as Sega hoped	8.0 7.5 8.5	Silver
<i>ESPN NHL Hockey</i>	PS2, XB	■ Solid gameplay and slick visuals make Sega's puck offering the year's best	8.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
<i>EverQuest Online Adventures</i>	PS2	■ Ugly visuals hampered our online quest for fun	7.5 5.0 6.0	
<i>Final Fantasy Tactics Advance</i>	GBA	■ Unparalleled character customization and on-field tactical arrangement	9.0 9.0 8.0	Gold
<i>Freaky Flyers</i>	PS2	■ No self-respecting pilot would put <i>Freaky Flyers</i> on his or her flight plan	5.0 3.0 4.0	
<i>Freedom Fighters</i>	PS2, XB, GC	■ Liberating the Land of the Free from Russian invaders is historically fun	7.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
<i>Freestyle Metal X</i>	PS2	■ X's average motocross action can't overcome its trailer-park trappings	5.0 4.5 5.0	
<i>Futurama</i>	PS2	■ A kleptomaniac alcoholic robot from the future deserves better	4.5 5.0 5.0	
<i>F-Zero GX</i>	GC	■ Fast? Yes? Stylish? Yes. Frustratingly difficult? Oh hell yes	9.0 7.5 7.0	
<i>The Getaway</i>	PS2	■ Plays like a Guy Ritchie flick, complete with naughty words	7.5 6.0 8.0	
<i>Ghost Recon: Island Thunder</i>	XB	■ The single-player mode is an appetizer to the multiplayer's heartier mea.	7.5 7.0 7.0	
<i>Grand Theft Auto: Vice City</i>	PS2	■ A useful tool for upstart real-world carjackers. Here's a hint—press Triangle	10 10 10	Platinum
<i>The Great Escape</i>	PS2, XB	■ Rent the movie instead	4.5 4.0 6.5	
<i>Group S Challenge</i>	XB	■ An uneven, seemingly thrown-together <i>Gran Turismo</i> pretender	5.0 6.0 5.0	
<i>High Heat Baseball 2004</i>	PS2	■ The most realistic baseball sim on the market	9.0	
<i>The Hulk</i>	PS2	■ Does a marvelous job capturing this dark hero's destructive essence	6.5 6.5 7.5	
<i>Hunter: The Reckoning Wayward</i>	PS2	■ Searching for meaningless items makes this one more frustrating than fun	6.0 5.0 6.0	
<i>Ikaruga</i>	GC	■ One incredibly innovative, wickedly addictive shooter	8.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
<i>Indiana Jones &amp; the Emperor's Tomb</i>	XB	■ Looks like Ms. Croft has some competition raiding tombs	5.5 8.5 8.5	
<i>K-1 World Grand Prix</i>	PS2	■ This bare-bones fighter will ring your bell only if you're a real K-1 fan	4.5 6.0 8.0	
<i>Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker</i>	GC	■ You can't go wrong with the gorgeous cartoon visuals and classic gameplay	9.5 10 10	Gold
<i>Madden NFL 2004</i>	PS2	■ Several effective gameplay enhancements keep <i>Madden</i> king of the gridiron	9.5 9.0 9.5	Gold



■ If only *P.N.03* played as well as its star Vanessa looks



GAME	SYSTEMS	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Magic Pencil: The Quest for Color	PS2	■ Homemade monsters add color to mundane battles	7.5 8.0 7.5	
Mario Golf: Tee-to-stool Tour	GC	■ Clinch-to-learn controls, funky minigames, and all-around ball-whacking fun	8.0 8.0 7.5	
Midnight Club II	PS2	■ An unrelenting sense of speed and total disregard for realistic physics	9.0 8.0 9.5	<b>Silver</b>
Midtown Madness 3	XB	■ A wacky, thrilling auto jaunt across Paris and Washington, D.C.	7.0 7.5 7.5	
MotoGP 2	XB	■ An intense, unforgiving, but ultimately satisfying crotch-rocket arm	8.5 8.0 8.0	<b>Silver</b>
NBA Street Vol. 2	PS2	■ A mix of new- and old-school flava makes this baller a rockin' saquel	9.5 8.5 8.5	<b>Silver</b>
NFL Fever 2004	XB	■ A shallow Dynasty mode tackles <i>Fever's</i> shot at greatness	6.5 6.5 6.0	
NHL 2004	PS2, XB, GC	■ EA skates on the ice with too much force and not enough finesse	8.5 6.5 7.0	
NHL Hitz Pro	PS2, XB, GC	■ Not the most realistic game of hockey, but among the most enjoyable	7.5 8.5 8.0	<b>Silver</b>
Outlaw Volleyball	XB	■ Much naughtier than <i>DCA: Xtreme Beach Volleyball</i> , plus it's online	7.0 7.0 6.5	
Panzer Dragon Orta	XB	■ Most beautiful shooter imaginable, with a vast trove of amazing secrets	9.0 8.5 9.0	<b>Silver</b>
Phantasy Star Online: Episode I & II	XB	■ Still addictive, now with voices in your head	9.0 9.0 9.0	<b>Gold</b>
Pirates of the Caribbean	XB	■ Barely shipshape Arr-PG won't keep your interest aloft	6.0 5.5 4.5	
P.N.03	GC	■ One truly badass character design is all <i>P.N.03</i> has to offer	6.0 5.0 4.0	
Pokémon Ruby and Sapphire	GBA	■ Pikachu and pals are back, but precious little has improved since <i>Gold/Silver</i>	7.5 6.5 7.5	
Real Reaction II	PS2	■ A rocket ride with airflight controls and quick-salver pacing	8.0 7.5 7.0	
Rent A Hero No.1	XB	■ Ever wished you could deliver Chinese take-out food? Then this is for you	6.5 6.0 4.0	
Return to Castle Wolfenstein: TOW	XB	■ Online play is not only an utter blast—it's what you bought Xbox Live for	8.5 9.5 8.5	<b>Silver</b>
Return to Castle Wolfenstein: OR	PS2	■ Xbox's multiplayer modes have gone AWOL, and that's a capital offense	7.0 6.0 7.0	
Silent Hill 3	PS2	■ So scary it'll have you stocking up on those adult-sized diapers	8.5 8.5 9.0	<b>Silver</b>
The Simpsons: Hit & Run	PS2	■ A family-friendly <i>Grand Theft Auto: Springfield</i>	8.0 6.5 7.0	
The Sims	PS2	■ Virtual soap opera teems with innovation and freedom	9.5 8.5 8.0	<b>Silver</b>
Skies of Arcadia Legends	GC	■ This phenomenal skyfaring quest is GC's role-playing savior	9.0 9.5 9.0	<b>Gold</b>
Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix	XB	■ A dull parade of enemies too stupid to put up any real challenge in a fight	6.5 7.0 3.5	
Soul Calibur II	PS2, XB, GC	■ Our souls, at least, still burn. Can't speak for yours	10 9.0 10	<b>Gold</b>
Splashtown: Rides Gone Wild	PS2	■ Responsive handling and cool tracks compensate for convoluted trick controls	7.0 8.0 6.5	
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Rep.	XB	■ Follow either side of the Force in the best Xbox role-playing game to date	9.0 9.5 10	<b>Gold</b>
Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo	GBA	■ A pixel-perfect port of the genre's crown jewel...and it's portable, to boot	8.0 9.0 7.5	<b>Silver</b>
Tao Feng: Fist of the Lotus	XB	■ Ineffective blocking and generic characters do not a quality fighter make	4.0 6.0 3.5	
Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	PS2	■ Ninja rock, but somehow, a lackluster story and horribly stupid A.I. snuck in	7.5 7.0 7.5	
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	PS2, XB, GC	■ An accurate sim that's more fun to play than other less serious golf games	9.0 9.0 9.5	<b>Gold</b>
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	XB	■ Team-based online squad combat and Xbox Live's first nearly killer app	8.0 7.5 8.0	
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	GC	■ The GBA radar is a nice addition, but Sam Fisher isn't as pretty on GC	8.5 9.5 9.0	<b>Gold</b>
Tombs Raider: The Angel of Darkness	PS2	■ Lara's back, but her gameplay's never been jankier	6.0 3.0 7.0	
UFC: Tapout 2	XB	■ Mixed martial-arts action will excite serious fans but bore everyone else	8.5 6.0 6.0	
Ultimate Muscle	GC	■ Proves the WWE's meatheads aren't essential for videogame grappling	8.5 7.5 7.5	
Unlimited Saga	PS2	■ Weird RPG that breaks so many rules, it just ends up feeling busted	2.0 4.0 4.0	
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution	PS2	■ As fleshed-out, complicated, and utterly addictive as fighters come	10 9.0 9.5	<b>Gold</b>
Wakeboarding Unleashed	PS2	■ Don't hate—investigate the wonderful world of wakeboarding	9.0 8.5 7.5	<b>Silver</b>
Warlo Ware: Mega Microgames	GBA	■ The most fun you can have in three-second bursts	9.5 9.0 9.0	<b>Gold</b>
Warlo World	GC	■ A perous journey only the most seasoned jumping-puzzle zealots will enjoy	7.5 7.0 6.0	
War of the Monsters	PS2	■ Manages to make the woefully underrepresented monster genre fun	9.5 6.5 7.0	
World Series Baseball 2K3	XB	■ Countess customization options and first-rate player models	8.0 8.0 8.0	<b>Silver</b>
World Soccer Winning Eleven 6 Int.	PS2	■ Can this natural-feeling soccer sim take 2003 Sports Game of the Year?	9.0	<b>Gold</b>
X2: Wolverine's Revenge	PS2	■ A slight cut above most steaming coils of comic-book-based crap	6.5 5.5 4.0	
Xenosaga: Episode I	PS2	■ You don't so much play this RPG as watch its plot unfold in cut-scenes	8.0 8.0 6.5	
Yu-Gi-Oh! Duelists of the Roses	PS2	■ Fans will love this confusing card battler. Everyone else will abhor it	6.0 4.5 4.5	
Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner	PS2	■ Eye-popping pandemonium with a hairy-balled hero—no whiners this time	7.5 9.0 8.5	<b>Silver</b>

## FEEDING FRENZY



Why settle for 30-second television spots when you can pay to play junk food ads? The early '90s was a crazy time—platformers

hawking 7-Up, Chee-tos, and Domino's Pizza weaseled their way onto store shelves. Sadly, *Captain Twinkie's Intestinal Trek* never saw release.

	<b>Cool Spot (Sega Genesis, Super NES) • Silver</b>
9.0 9.0	8.0 8.0

	<b>Chester Cheato: Top Cool to Fool (Genesis, SNES)</b>
8.0 7.0	9.0 8.0

	<b>Yo! Noid (NES)</b>
8.0 7.0	7.0

## greatest hit or miss?



## FINAL FANTASY X

- PlayStation 2
- Released: December 2001
- Original Scores: 9.0, 9.5, 9.5

*Final Fantasy X* has everything RPG fans could want: beautiful graphics, top-notch voice acting, and a gripping story that even makes some of the *EGM* staff members teary-eyed. Such praise has even led to the first-ever sequel in this legendary role-playing series. Check out *FFX-2* in this issue's cover story (page 138).

# tricks of the trade

you know, like, secret stuff

## trickster



Jaunderice is a condition produced when excess bilirubin in the bloodstream dissolves in subcutaneous fat. In adults, this usually indicates liver problems. In my case, it indicates a judicious use of color-wash techniques in Photoshop. Check back next issue when my physician lets me know if I'm suffering any long-term health effects from being polarized in Photoshop, too.

—David S. J. Hodgson  
tricks@ziffdavis.com

## TRICKS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIMA GAMES

*Buffy: Chaos Bleeds.*

*Stargate: Hatch. Hunter:*

*The Reckoning Wayward. Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior.* Classic games of our time, now with luxurious coffee-table text accoutrements, courtesy of their official Prima strategy guides. Skedaddle down to your closest game-or bookstore and peruse them gently.



■ PS2, Xbox, GC

## BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER: CHAOS BLEEDS

Classic fist-pounding, vampire-dusting, "high-stakes" combat doesn't get any more titillating than this; ask anyone who's taken Faith around the quarry level in her skin-tight shirt. True, Willow's voice-over artiste makes the witch sound partially retarded, and Xander's been gobbling down one too many Big Macs, but the magic's still there, and the game's still difficult—unless you know the 10 best ways to bust and dust:

### 10. Remember to Block

In the heat of combat, undead horrors attack you from all sides. What to do? Use the Block button to stop attackers from harming you. Once they've finished their offensive moves, they're vulnerable for a split second as they recover. Retaliate immediately. Try fighting with your back near a wall to stop attacks from behind—blocking fends off only frontal assaults.

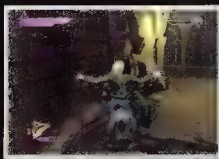
### 9. Inventory Management

Selecting items from your inventory may be confusing, so keep the following in mind: Pressing Left and Right scrolls through your items, and pressing Up selects them. You only need to select some items, like weapons. Keys and unique single-use items are used automatically. Stakes can be readied with the Quick Stake button. Inventory is mainly used for checking

Slayer handbooks and spell books (where applicable) and equipping weapons you've already picked up and stored.

### 8. Buffed-up Buffy

Check the screen for available health bars. Those on the left of the screen belong to characters on the side of good (you and your allies). This includes the Buffy-Doo gang and citizens you should protect. Health bars on the right side belong to enemies. Whenever you encounter boss monsters, be sure to check their health bars. Be aware of which bars refer to which characters, because some battles require you to keep a friend alive.



### 7. "Thank you for saving me!"

On more than one occasion, you're running through a mission only to see a hapless victim about to be devoured by demons. These are souls plucked from reality by an ancient evil known as The First. You can defend them if you wish or let them succumb to enemy strikes. Rescued citizens give you health, holy water, or a hell-fire bottle.

### 6. Camera Control

To control the action while moving and ensure that the camera stays behind your character, use the camera analog stick to steer the character, pressing the movement analog stick forward to head in a straight line. This way, you can scan your surroundings for points of interest (or enemies) by tapping left and right on the right stick.



### 5. Tactical Scene Stealing

If a cut-scene begins, you can skip it. Usually this doesn't affect the game, but in certain instances, it'll keep you out of combat. For example, when Xander uses a lighter in Blood Factory to jam a gas pipe, skip the scene and vampires on the

other side of the hole are destroyed. The same goes for Faith when she sets dynamite against the second support strut in the quarry. You are encouraged to watch the cut-scenes the first time you play, then skip them the next time through.



### 4. Overusing the Action Button

Press the Action/Use button to search for unlocked doors or items to pick up, especially if you are stuck. You must be unarmed when looking for doors to open or a place to use, activate, or set down items, so stow all weapons in your inventory before searching an area.

### 3. Destroy All Targets!

Always try to find every enemy in a level. You are awarded a higher ranking for doing so. Take your time and make sure each area is enemy-free before you continue. In zones where you can explore (such as the high school), search thoroughly before moving on. The only good vampire is a dead vampire. Well, except Angel. And Spike. But kill the rest.

### 2. Goody Gumdrops

This game offers three types of extras to unlock, depending on your ranking at the end of each mission: multiplayer characters, multiplayer arenas, and cast interviews and behind-the-scenes movies. Obtain the highest rating (kill all enemies!) to unlock them all.

### 1. Preferred Routes

Although most missions rely on moving through specific areas to continue, you can plan your own route in a few levels (such as Downtown Sunnydale). If an area seems too difficult, try taking another route. Oftentimes, more powerful weapons are available nearby. Obtain some more effective armaments, then head back to the tough part of town.



■ Ooh, vampire dust makes Willow's allergies flare up something fierce.



■ Xbox

## HUNTER: THE RECKONING WAYWARD

These aren't your regular "instant gratification" codes. No, no. You've got to put some effort into this action extravaganza (or buy a GameShark) to get these codes to work. First, finish the game. That will earn you the Nephrock Trophy, which unlocks the Cheat menu. As you play through the game a second time, look for various trophies in the levels, some of which unlock the following cheats. You've never worked so hard for button codes in your life!

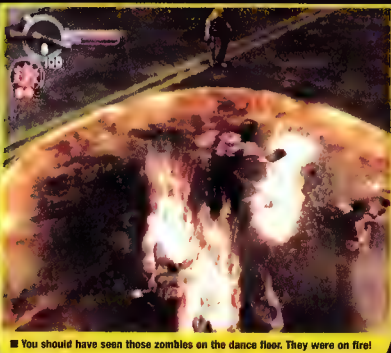


### Enable Cheats

(Requires Nephrock Trophy)  
Circle, Square, Triangle, X, L1, L2, Left, Left

### Monster Spawning On/Off

(Requires Werewolf Trophy)  
Square, Square, Circle, Circle, Triangle, L1, L1



■ You should have seen those zombies on the dance floor. They were on fire!



■ It's called personal space, you cretins. R-E-S-P-E-C-T-I-L.

### Improve Edges

(Requires Witch Trophy)  
L1, L1, Circle, Circle, Down, Down, Up, Down

### Unlimited Ammo

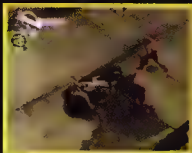
(Requires Rogue Hunter Trophy)  
X, Triangle, Circle, Square, Triangle, Up, Down, Down

### Mega Melee Damage

(Requires Machine Boss Trophy)  
Down, Down, R1, R1, Up, X, Up, Circle

### Gain All Weapons

(Requires Looter Trophy. Enter this code first, then press Circle in the Weapon Select screen to see your new firepower.)  
Square, X, Circle, X, Up, Down, Up, Down



### Unlimited Life

(Requires Warfighter Trophy)  
Right, Right, Right, X, Up, Triangle, Up, Square

### Max Health

(Requires Pitfighter Trophy)  
Triangle, Triangle, Circle, Circle, Square, L1, Square, R1

### No Conviction Cost for Edges

(Requires Life Saver Trophy)  
L2, Up, X, Up, Square, Square, Down, Down

### Max Ammo

(Requires Gun Bunny Trophy)  
Right, Right, Right, Right, Up, Down, Up, Down

### Tougher Monsters

(Requires Team Up Trophy)  
Square, Square, Triangle, Square, L2, L2, Up, Down >



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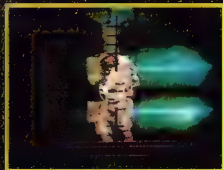
[www.videorocker.com](http://www.videorocker.com)



■ PS2

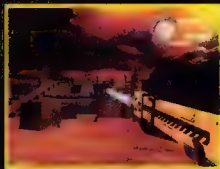
## WARHAMMER 40,000: FIRE WARRIOR

Combat 38,000 years from now is surprisingly unevolved. It features no gelatinous hyperbeings thought-fighting in the ether. Instead, we see humans with plasma guns and pistols, and marines dressed in armor with shoulder pads. Spikes seem to be this millennium's accessory of choice. Are you ready to survive madcap multiplayer warfare in the future? Thought not. That's why we're here in brief for you.



### 10. Choose Your Weapon

In multiplayer, your default gun isn't a Tau weapon; it's the Imperial autogun. Plasma weapons are quite desirable in multiplayer games because they drain an enemy player's shields in one hit. On the other hand, unfortunately, plasma weapons are useful only at close- or medium range because plasma bolts travel comparatively slowly. With instant-hit weapons (like the shotgun and rail rifle), when you squeeze the trigger, the enemy player is hit right away; there is no delay. Be aware of your circumstances and choose a weapon accordingly (rail rifle for long-range sniping, autogun for long- or mid-range, and plasma for up close).



### 9. Splish Splash, I Was Taking Heavy Fire

Skilled opponents are constantly on the move and thus very difficult to hit. Increase your chance of dealing damage by using a weapon with a large splash radius. Splash-damage weapons are also excellent to take into large battles. If you see two or more players duking it out in deathmatch, shoot a rocket into their midst—you could end up killing all of them with just one rocket.

### 8. Railing on Your Enemy

The rail rifle is the perfect weapon for sniping, since it kills anyone with one shot to the head. It hands out heavy hurt at shorter ranges, too, although it can be difficult to hit an opponent with a rail during a dogfight. It deals the second-most damage of any weapon, behind only the rocket launcher. And its 10-round clip is larger than the rocket launcher's. Don't get too close to shotgun- or meltagun-wielding players if you're sportin' rails: During the cooldown between your shots, either weapon can kill you before you can get off another shot.

### 7. He Ain't Heavy, He's My Key To Victory

Know where the rail rifle, rocket launcher, meltagun, burst cannon, plasma gun, and bolters are located. These are the heavy-hitting weapons, and if you can take them for yourself and deny other players the opportunity to use them, you will be halfway to winning the game. Make sure



■ According to our leas, we're not supposed to have plasma bonfires indoors....

you are the one camping over the rail rifle, and rocket launcher respawn sites.

### 6. Movement! What's the Position? Can't Lock In...

It is more important than ever in multiplayer games to keep moving around, dodging, and circle strafing. When taking evasive action, consider jumping to make yourself even harder to hit. It could mean the difference between getting shot in the head and shot in the arm. Also learn how to run backwards so that you can retreat from battle and still take down anyone following you. Pursuing players will often just run straight after you, making them surprisingly easy to hit. And a frag is a frag, even if you're running away.

### 5. Decap Attack!

Always target the head. As you become more proficient, this will always be the place you aim first. It might present a smaller profile than the torso, but you'll do more damage with a head shot than a body shot. In fact, with the right gun, a

single head shot will bring down your foe.

### 4. The Dream Team

Work with your team and coordinate your strategies. If you go running off without your teammates, you could end up getting jumped by the other team and not have any backup. Or you might leave your teammates in a lurch. Work together.

### 3. Egomaniacs Need Not Apply

Don't be afraid to get your butt kicked by more experienced players. You learn only by playing better players. Watch others, ask for tips, keep practicing, and take on better players. Always practice. Follow these rules, and eventually, new players will be asking for your advice.

### Bonus! Two Tips Direct from Fire Warrior Developer Kujū

#### 2. Weapons Detail

**A.** When you swap a weapon, do not remain in the area. Your old weapon will quickly detonate, and you can be killed in



■ You'd think open-heart surgery in the year 40,000 would be...less messy.





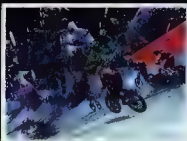
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▶ Digital Media
▶ Film
▶ Game Design & Development
▶ Recording Arts
▶ Show Production & Touring



■ PS2  
**DOWNHILL DOMINATION**

How do you combine mountains, bikes, and a desire to make every sports videogame "extreme"? *Downhill Domination* does just that, with a dash of towbar humor for flavor. We've uncovered some cheat codes for your perusal and enjoyment, including one that gives you more time to beat up on your opponents after the race. Tap the Enable Cheat code in the Main menu to engage these unfair advantages!



the explosion.

**B.** Never forget that the missile launcher and the Imperial bolter cause large amounts of splash damage. Aiming for the ground near your opponent can be very effective because it's easier to hit the nonmoving ground than your (hopefully) moving target.

**C.** Always keep an eye on your weapon's ammo and reload whenever it is safe to do so. Think ahead so you won't run out of juice in the middle of a firefight.

**D.** Avoid staying in one part of the map for too long. Respawned enemies will remember where you last were, load up on weapons, and come to kill you.

**E.** When using the sniper- or rail rifle, find an inconspicuous spot to camp; you will be vulnerable to enemy attack while peering through your scope.

**F.** Using explosive weapons at close quarters may kill you as well as your enemy, negating any point you may score.

**1. Flag-Waving Exercises**

**A.** Don't forget to taunt your enemy in online games. Taunting may enrage your foe, causing them to make rash decisions and silly mistakes. Additionally, the Taunt menu can be used to issue simple commands to your team.

**B.** In Capture the Flag matches, if you return to base with the enemy team's flag and your own flag is missing, try to hide somewhere while your teammates attempt to retrieve your flag.

**C.** In Capture the Flag matches, attacking is not always the best option. Splitting your team between attacking the enemy's base and defending your own can really boost your chances of scoring.

**D.** When creating the game, remember to use an appropriate score and time limit.

**Unlock All Fantasy Bios:** Left, Right, Right, Up, X

**Unlock All DH Video Clips:** Left, Right, Right, Down

**Super Bounce:** Left, Square, X, Up, Triangle



**Energy Restore:** Down, Right, Right, Left, Left

**Stoke Trick Meter:** Down, Left, Left, Right, Right

■ PS2  
**SILENT HILL 3**

More costumes! Check out these magazine- and website-themed T-shirts, including shirts for *EGM*, *Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine*, and *GMR*. Because we love you, we've included codes for our competitors' T-shirts, too. To wear 'em, first finish the game. Then go into the Extra Costume option (press R1 or L1 at the Main menu) and type in these case-sensitive passwords.



**Electronic Gaming Monthly:** EGMpretaporter

**GMR:** GMRownzjo0

**Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine:** SH3\_OPIUM

**Game Informer:** gameinformer

**GamePro:** ProTri

**GameSpy.com:** iam133t

**IGN.com:** IGN\_pickelbooy

**PlayStation 2 Magazine (PSM):** BADICAL

**13ème Rue (France):** Suspense

**Game Reactor (Norway, Sweden, Denmark):** SH3\_Wrestlarn

**Game Network (Italy):** iwannabesGJ

**Official PlayStation 2 Magazine (U.K.):** extra\_thumbs

**Play the PlayStation (Germany):** sLmLdGHSmKBfH

**PlayStation 2 Revista Oficial de España (Spain):** MATADOR ▶



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To most Americans, fall means two things: football and Halloween. And conveniently, these Action Replay codes fall directly into those two categories!

### Madden 2004 (PS2)

*Madden 2004* is all about hard-hitting football action, but looking at the lovely ladies on the sidelines isn't too bad either. First, load up a new profile which has no cards. Then, use these codes to unlock all the cheerleader cards and get your ogle on. Each card that you buy with your 10,000 Madden Card Points will be a different lovely cheerleader.

#### Enable Cheats (enter this first)

0E37DF2 183E59E  
EE4ECF02 BC9CA12

#### 10,000 Madden Card Points

D1C3BF6 BCA9C93

#### Custom Cheerleader Pack 1

D1C3CE7E BCC8AC2  
D1C3CE7A BCC8AC52  
D1C3CE08 BCC8AC42  
D1C3CE02 BCC8AC32  
D1C3CE0E BCC8AC22  
D1C3CE0A BCC8AC12  
D1C3CE16 BCC8AC02  
D1C3CE12 BCC8ACF2  
D1C3CE1E BCC8ACE2  
D1C3CE1A BCC8ACD2  
D1C3CE28 BCC8ACC2  
D1C3CE22 BCC8ACB2  
D1C3CE2E BCC8ACA2  
D1C3CE2A BCC8AC92  
D1C3CE36 BCC8AB82

#### Custom Cheerleader Pack 2

D1C3CE32 BCC8AB72  
D1C3CE3E BCC8AB62

D1C3CE3E BCC8AB52  
D1C3CE3E BCC8AB42  
D1C3CE3E BCC8AB32  
D1C3CE3E BCC8AB22  
D1C3CE3E BCC8AB12  
D1C3CE3E BCC8AB02  
D1C3CE3E BCC8ABF2  
D1C3CE3E BCC8ABE2  
D1C3CE3E BCC8ABD2  
D1C3CE3E BCC8ABC2  
D1C3CE3E BCC8ABB2  
D1C3CE3E BCC8ABA2  
D1C3CE3E BCC8AB92

### Silent Hill 3 (PS2)

Because it's so superbly creepy, *Silent Hill 3* is the perfect game to play during October's chilly evenings. If you want to finish this game by Halloween, however, you may need some help from our Action Replay codes. Just punch them in and have all the game's items. (Free stuff!) Or if you're really desperate, just jump to the ending and belt out some karaoke, alien style.

#### Enable Cheats (enter this first)

0E37DF2 183E59E  
EE8DAGE BCA99C80

#### All Items, Weapons, Keys, Shirts, & Supplies

D1C8DA92 E3B8C292  
D1C8DBEE BB98A81  
D1C8DA9E E3B8C292  
D1C8DBEA BB98A82  
D1C8DA9A E3B8C292  
D1C8DBF6 BB98A82  
C1C8DAA6 BC9AC92  
D1C8DBF2 BB98A82

Watch the Central Square Mall TV  
To See the Alien Karaoke Ending  
DEA51BA6 BCE27563

#278 GAL - CHEERLEADER

Bronze	0
Silver	0
Gold	0

PROF 1 PAGE 31 OF 32

COMPLETE SET 3847500

TOKENS REMAINING 10000

Use these codes to collect all of Madden's cheerleader cards...if you dare!



GameShark again comes through for gamers on the go, with codes for the pint-sized version of *Splinter Cell*, including a couple EGM exclusives. Meanwhile, fans of virtual fistcluffs can cheat their way to glorious victory with these *Virtua Fighter 4* codes.

### Splinter Cell (GBA)

All right, we know that the GBA version of *Splinter Cell* is nowhere near as good as its big brothers on Xbox and PS2. But hey, even crappy versions of megapopular hit games can benefit from a little bit of GameShark's cheatin' magic.

#### Enable Cheats (enter this first)

993E41C6E209  
6B99426D5504  
BE7598C8EEB9

#### Infinite Pistol Ammo

B6B6F086697

#### Unlock All Levels

FD55340EC933

#### Exclusive! No Alarms

446F40FE952C

#### Exclusive! Total Access Security Card

B9503403CA73



Sneaky fellow that he is, Sam Fisher has no objection to cheating.

### Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution (PS2)

You might be able to punch in these codes while your friend is in the kitchen making a snack, if (a) you're a very quick code-puncher or (b) your friend is a very slow snack-maker.

#### Enable Cheats (enter this first)

F451B632 FE7CA516

#### Player 1 Infinite Health

14003E2A 3430518C

#### Player 1 50% Health

D4003E2A 3430518C  
14003628 3C30518E

#### Player 1 One-Hit Kill

D4003E2A 3430518C  
14903628 3430518E

#### Player 2 Infinite Health

14003F2A 3430414C

#### Player 2 50% Health

D4003F2A 3430414C  
14003728 3C30414E

#### Player 2 One-Hit Kill

D4003F2A 3430414C  
14903728 3430414E

#### Infinite Time

24D01560 34B043CC

#### Exclusive! Sudden Death Player 1

D4C2157C 34B043CC  
14103628 3430518C

#### Exclusive! Sudden Death Player 2

D4C2157C 34B043CC  
14103728 3430414C



■ PS2, Xbox  
**STARSKY & HUTCH**

Deciding which version of *Starksy & Hutch* to play is like pondering which pair of 70s flares and platform sandals to wobble around Haight-Ashbury in. Kinda. Well, we tricksters recommend the classic PS2 ensemble, as it features a load of cheat codes that the less hip, more square Xbox version doesn't include. Check out the infinite points cheat, too. This is one of the few "legitimate" tricks out there. It exploits a loophole in the game's programming (and the general lack of social activity on the part of this writer) rather than relying on a cheat device or code.

**Unlock Everything**  
 (PS2, Xbox)

To completely unlock everything in the game (all seasons and episodes in Story mode with a gold badge, all free-roam areas, all TV specials, all locker items), enter your name as **WADKRAM** on your license plate. When you reload this profile, it will have everything unlocked. The name will be changed to *Starksy*.

**Infinite Points**  
 (PS2, Xbox)

Here's a laborious—but ultimately rewarding—way to obtain an infinite number of points in certain episodes of the Story mode. This trick works only if you are chasing more than one enemy car. Start by



■ Know your demographic: These 18- to 25-year-olds love demolition derbies.

destroying the first car. Leave it to smolder, but remember where it is. Now attack the second car and take its armor down almost all the way so that it will explode if you fire at it again. All right. Return to the first car and ram it. You'll see your Viewer rating go up 10 points. Continue to ram the vehicle, and you'll be able to continuously build up your Rating points faster than they decrease. It takes around half an hour to reach 10,000 points (as shown above). Once you've built up a sizable nest egg of Nielsen karma, go back to the first car and finish it off. Then claim the phenomenal points total. Best season ever!

**Cheat Codes**  
 (PS2 only)

Activate these codes during gameplay. Their effects last 30 seconds. What gives? Thirty

seconds can't possibly satisfy our desire to cruise around town in a Gran Torino low rider.

**Invisible Car:** Up, Right, Down, Left, Left Analog Stick Click, Left, Right, Left

**Low Rider:** Up, Up, Down, Down, X, Circle, Triangle, Square

**Monster Truck:** L1, L1, Left, Right, Left Analog Stick Click x4

**Big Heads:** Triangle, Square, X, Circle, Circle, X, Square, Triangle

**Funny Car:** Up, X, Down, Triangle, Left, Circle, Right, Square

**Trippy Camera:** L1, L2, R1, R2, Left, Left, Up, Up

**Trike Cam:** Up, Up, Left, Left, R1, R2, L1, L2,



■ Wonder Woman called. She wants her invisible jet back...in 30 seconds!

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**Big Video Game HUNTING**

**CNN** **HeadlineNews**

**HOTWIRED's**  
 Big Video Game Hunting  
 hosted by Erica Hill  
 on CNN Headline News.



# THE REST OF THE CRAP

Seanbaby reviews bad games for our sick pleasure

## sound off



### MY TRAGIC FATE

With all the suffering in the world, forcing a man to play bad video-games might not strike you as very cruel, but you're not that poor, tortured man—I am. And I understand that playing a game about Aquaman can't compare to many of the world's horrors, like the baby-launching catapults of Tazakistan. But since I live in a magical country blessed with free speech, bountiful Twinkie harvests, and computers that offer unlimited pictures of barnyard-lovin' teens every single day, *Battlebots on the Game Boy* is like a nine or a 10 on the tragedy scale.

—Seanbaby

### AQUAMAN: BATTLE FOR ATLANTIS



Xbox, GC • TDK Mediactive — Make no mistake about it—if I were to walk into my house and see a man speaking to my goldfish with waves of glowing fish energy, it would blow my mind. I'd probably say, "Hey, who the hell are you... wait, you can speak fish?" But I seriously doubt I'd consider making a game about him. This is a man who sleeps in the same building with the Super Friends, so it takes a miracle for him to seem remotely cool or heroic. It's very rare to run into a menace that Superman or Green Lantern can't handle—especially one that might be thwarted by, say, a school of electrical eels. Even Marvin and Wendy (the two Junior Super Friends) solve more crime than Aquaman just by bumping over it on their bicycles. Hell,

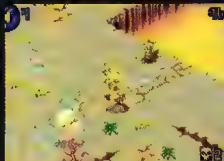
Aquaman's main enemy, Black Manta, is usually too busy driving his submarine into rocks to even hurt a dolphin's feelings, which is really the only problem.

Aquaman's properly equipped to deal with.

All this suckage flows naturally into a hideously sucky game. Here, Aquaman controls like you're riding a torpedo and trying to steer it with sign language, and once you see how mind-meltingly bad the combat is, you'll be happy that it's so hard to steer yourself into a fight.

**Bottom Line:** Aquaman sucks.

### HE-MAN: POWER OF GRAYSKULL



GBA • TDK — Like all superheroes, He-Man had a secret identity. He started out as a festive man named Prince Adam who wore a pink shirt and owned a green tiger. Then, one day, when he held his sword up and screamed some magic words, he turned into a somewhat more festive man in fetish gear, and his tiger donned a mask. Sure, the mystical land of Eternia may have been a kind of a backwater kingdom, but it seems unlikely that not one person there was able to see through that flimsy (and homoerotic) deception. Conversations like this must have been commonplace:

"What's Prince Adam doing fighting that skeleton magician?"

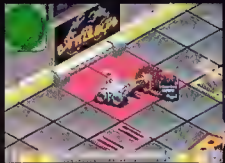
"Dude, there's no way that's Prince Adam. Prince Adam's giant green cat doesn't wear a mask."

In this game, which is awful by the way, the monsters are just as observant as He-Man's friends. Unless you are literally rubbing He-Man's face against theirs, they won't recognize you. You can even hit them in the head a few times and they'll usually just wander away, evidently mistaking an open field for the man who recently cut chunks of them off.

**Bottom Line:** Fans of the *Masters of the Universe* movie won't be disappointed. Then again, nobody can really compare to the disappointment that is their pathetically squandered lives.

### BATTLEBOTS: BEYOND THE BATTLEBOX

GBA • THQ — Every day, a Chuck E. Cheese singbot goes haywire and tears the arms off an innocent birthday party



attende. Humanity is forced to permit this sacrifice to the animatronic gods in exchange for plztime fun, but I simply can't support the concept of *Battlebots*. Not as if robots don't hate us enough for putting them in charge of flushing our public toilets and beeping out the comic relief on our space missions, now we're attaching chainsaws to them and forcing them to maim each other for our amusement? Are we trying to start the robopocalypse?

I consider myself lucky every time my Game Boy doesn't try to kill me, and I don't want this game giving it ideas like, "pick up hydraulic ax and ram human target into spinning floor blades." There's no need to worry, though. No one's going to try this clumsy simulation of an already boring event that plays like two in-patients weakly charging each other from their wheelchairs.

**Bottom Line:** The exciting robot action of this game can be re-created for free by watching an automatic door open itself a few hundred times.

### HELLBOY: ASYLUM SEEKER



PST • Dreamcatcher — Here's a quick walkthrough to help you get started in this horrible *Resident Evil* ripoff: Bring something to read. The game opens with a four-line conversation between Hellboy and his friend. Since you can't skip it, and because the 50-word exchange takes about 20 minutes, you'll probably get about three chapters into your novel. After the loading screen appears, Hellboy will spend a few minutes picking up a lighter.



You can randomly hit buttons at this point if you'd like this scene to be accompanied by a cacophony of weird clicking sounds.

Shocking, you're actually given control of Hellboy at some point. Try to open any of the doors in the area to begin a lengthy (but engrossing) sequence of Hellboy trying a door, pausing, assuring you it's locked, then pausing again. When you do find the door that works, use the loading screen to reflect on what *Hellboy* means to you. Before you know it, you'll find yourself in a tiny room with nothing except four walls and a giant button, but what you do next...is up to you!

**Bottom Line:** If you have a job, or even just a hobby, you probably don't have the free time required to find the game hidden between all the loading screens and cut-scenes.

## classic crap

### TABOO: THE SIXTH SENSE

Way before developer Rare was grabbing your ghoulies or hawking hillbilly bears in *Banjo-Kazooie*, it divined your future in a crappy NES fortune-telling "game" called *Taboo*. It's like a Magic Eight Ball crossed with a tainted fortune cookie, only much, much dumber.





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# FATAL FRAME II

## CRIMSON BUTTERFLY



TECMO PRESENTS 'FATAL FRAME II: CRIMSON BUTTERFLY' CO-DESIGNERS HITOSHI HASEGAWA RIE UJIMA DAISUKE INARI AKIRA COISHI  
PLANNER TSUYOSHI UCHI PROGRAMMERS TSUNEHIRO YOKOTA KATSUYUKI OKURA SOUND DESIGNER SHIGEKIYO OKUDA  
MOTION DESIGNER YOSHIKATSU YOSHIZAWA PRODUCED BY KEISUKE KIKUCHI DIRECTED BY MAKOTO SHIBATA

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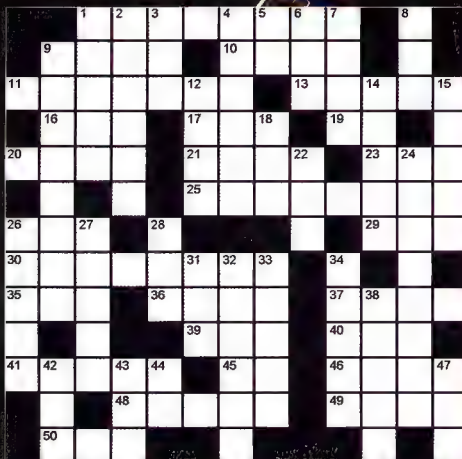
PlayStation 2

TECMO | NAMCO GAMES



# FANTASY STARS

(Solution on page 216)



## ACROSS

- Steiner's line of work in *Final Fantasy IX*
- Yimid *FFIX* mage
- X, Y, or Z in 3D games
- Cecil's character class (*FFII*)
- Mario transporters
- Command & Conquer* (PS1) GDI opponents
- Possible *FFXI* broadband hookup
- The first SNES *Final Fantasy* in America
- Headquarters
- Cynical (like some *EGM* staffers)
- One of the oldest *Virtua* fighters
- Halo* pistol refill (2 words)
- Super Nintendo *Final Fantasy* remembered for its opera scene
- Like PS2's *Cooper*
- Used white and black magic equally in *FFI*
- Multiple-target spells can potentially affect these *FF* party members
- Pitch a tent in *FFIII*?
- What a player does to RPG items
- Like Gail Sith in *FFVIII*
- Heading that shows how many of an item your party has in some *FF* games
- Simpsons Wrestling* Apu's homeland
- Xbox DVD remote-control medium (abbrv.)
- You can take one in the back of some game manuals
- FFIII* sasquatch
- All-Star Baseball 2004* slugger
- Burnout 2* booster



## DOWN

- StarCraft* (N64) storage tanks
- Dodges an attack
- One of him appears in every *Final Fantasy*
- River City* kidnapping demand
- Last original PS1 *Final Fantasy*
- Trick or cheat
- Early '90s RPG sequel
- Phoenix Down will help if you do this in *FF*
- FFXI*'s fantasy world
- The Entertainment Software Association's former name (abbrv.)
- Dr. Mario's weapons
- Like *Silent Hill* fog
- Rayman 3* collectible
- Can be CD- or DVD-
- FF* status effects
- This group of people is a target in *Conflict: Desert Storm*
- Remained inactive for a period of time in online games
- Title partner to Super NES *Joe*
- Aka the accelerator in *GTS*
- Strikes back on Atari 2600 and Super Nintendo
- Fire-breathing, platform-jumping dragon
- Obscure, now-defunct DVD-gaming consoles
- Condition listed for a dead party member in *FFII* (SNES)
- Quake* composer's industrial band (abbrv.)
- Shooters *Grad*\_\_ (NES) or *G Dar*\_\_ (PS1)
- Vice City* radio doesn't cover this modulation band
- Sonic hasn't yet collected this type of ring

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- Fill out the entry form and tell us which console you don't own.

All entries received by December 7, 2003 will then be entered into a drawing for the prizes. Only one entry per person is accepted.

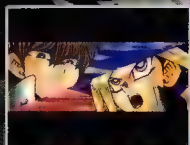
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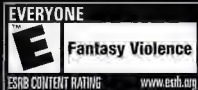
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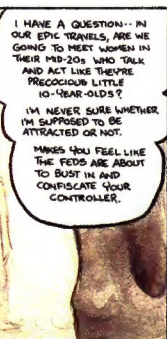
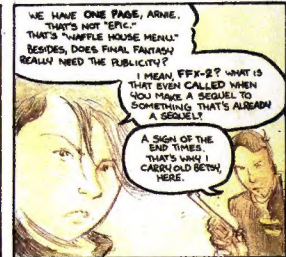
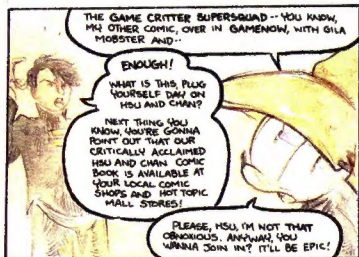
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