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The #1 Videogame Magazine

MONTHLY

Gamers' Choice

2003 GAME of the YEAR AWARDS

Check inside to see how you can win all the winners!

Bling Bling

GET RICH

Richie-Rich developers reveal their glitzy lifestyles and share their secrets to success

HE'S BACK...

SAM FISHER RETURNS IN

SPLINTER CELL

PANDORA TOMORROW

EXCLUSIVE SCREENS AND INFO • NEW MULTIPLAYER DETAILS!



242+ GAMES INSIDE

■ SILENT HILL 4 creeps to PS2 and Xbox. First screens inside!

NFL STREET



HITMAN 3



FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES



- Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes ■ Resident Evil Outbreak
- Final Fantasy XI ■ Driv3r ■ Metroid Zero Mission ■ Neo Contra
- Rise to Honor ■ 007: Everything or Nothing ■ Winning Eleven 7
- Full Spectrum Warrior ■ Champions of Norrath ■ R-Type Final

March 2004 ISSUE 176 \$4.99 U.S. / \$6.50 Canada

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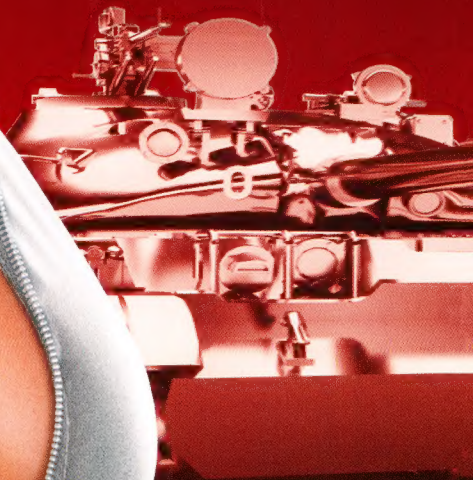


Good or Evil?

Shaken or Stirred?

Life or Death?

Heidi or Shannon?



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TEEN
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CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Violence
Suggestive Themes



PlayStation®2



GAME BOY ADVANCE



For Kit Yun, the
only way out of the
Hong Kong underworld
is to go back in.



Violence

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JET LI RISE TO HONOR 義氣



A dying man's last wish. An undercover cop who's running out of time. Jet Li is Kit Yun in Rise to Honor, the story of a cop sworn to fulfill his duty, yet bound by a promise to a powerful crime lord. Now Kit must enter a shadowy world where, to preserve his honor, he'll have to risk his life. But as his enemies will soon learn, sometimes the one who is most honorable... is also the most deadly.

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...stand before you. Weapons drawn. Crosshairs fixed on your temples. ...explode from their chambers. All is lost. ...waking dream. ...is the merchant that dispenses dreams. ...face was a port in the storm.



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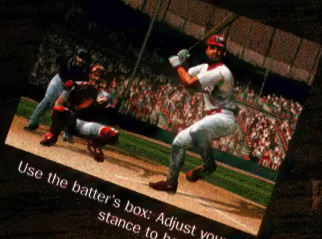
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WIND BLOWING OUT TO RIGHT.
WIND BLOWING OUT TO RIGHT.



Be patient: Time your swing to make contact with off-speed stuff.

SEEN TWO STRAIGHT CURVES.
SEEN TWO STRAIGHT CURVES.
SEEN TWO STRAIGHT CURVES.

THINK FASTBALL? NAH.
THINK FASTBALL? NAH.
THINK FASTBALL? NAH.



React to the pitch: Adjust your swing level to go after the ball.



Adjust your shoulders: Pull the ball or go opposite field.

THINK SLIDER.
THINK SLIDER.
THINK SLIDER.



Make contact. Swing for power, drag bunt, or slap at it to stay alive.

SEE IT.

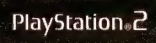


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SAY HELLO



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20 Where we pretend to care what you think. Easy there, tiger. It's a joke

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The words "underground bikini boxing" put a smile on our faces
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Castlevania's producer sends Dracula on hiatus and looks to the future
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A guided tour of duty from the game's commander-in-chief
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We inspect Mr. Bond's latest assortment of spy gadgets

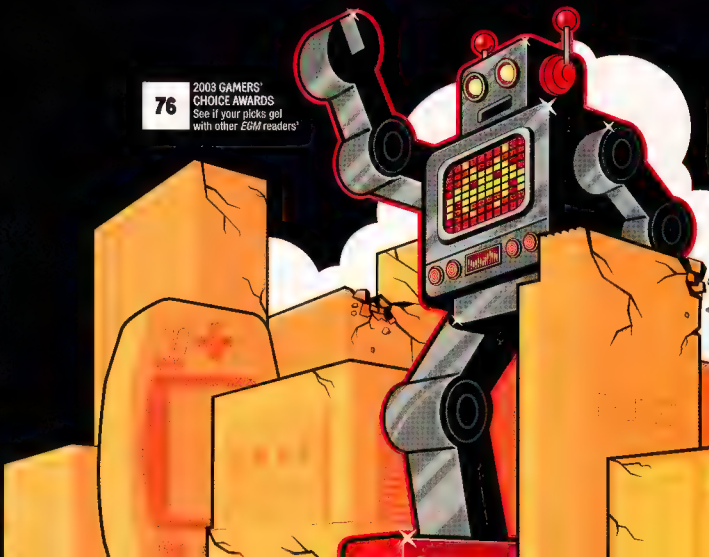
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A few newcomers, but the number-one slot remains the same
- 75 **COMING SOON**
Pocket monsters, she-ninjas, boxers, and more arrive in stores this March



COVER STORY: SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

For one *EGM* operative, it's mission complete. Read our superspy's exclusive hands-on report of the *Splinter Cell* sequel (PS2/XB/GC), featuring info on the improved single-player campaign, plus the brand-new multiplayer mode.

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See if your picks got with other *EGM* readers'



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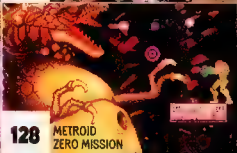
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A buncha stuff that don't fit anywhere else, ya dig?

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AFTERTHOUGHTS: SONIC HEROES

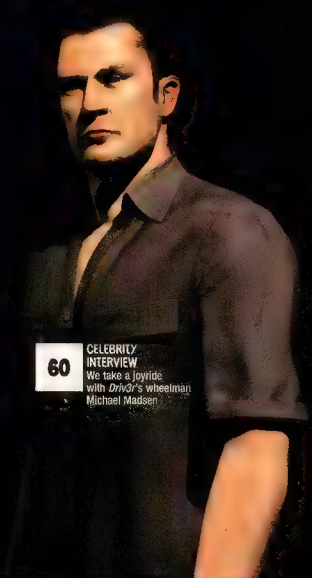
The game's director explains how you can be lord of the rings



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CELEBRITY INTERVIEW

We take a joyride with *Driver's* wheelman Michael Madsen



editorial



Screw invisibility or flight—if I could have any superpower, I'd ask for the ability to turn my body into data signals, beam through the Internet at warp speed, then come out the other end to put my fist into those jackass' mouth. I'm not talking about any Joe Schmoer Net surfer. I want to beat up those kids who think online anonymity is carte blanche to behave like a butthead in multiplayer games... the same kids who'd never have the guts to

act like that to anyone's face in real life.


I want to sock that punk who enjoys ruining everyone's session by killing his own teammates. I want to knock out that jerk who suddenly turns into a foul-mouthed racist on Xbox Live, just because mommy and daddy aren't within earshot. Most of all, I'd like to take out the idiot who gets online just to show off how drunk he is. "Dude, I'm so wasted!" Oh shut up, you dork. No one over

the age of 13 thinks you're cool just because you took a sip of Miller Lite.

Maybe I'm a bit too heated and should be asking for a less aggressive, see-through-women's-clothing X-ray vision instead. But if this editorial gets through to just one person and makes him change his ways, then my job here is done, and online gaming becomes a safer world for everyone to enjoy.

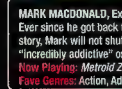
—Shoe, Editor-in-Chief

the review crew




DAN "SHOD" HSU, Editor-in-Chief
The snowy season means I'm now ready to try all the things he's learned in snowboarding videogames...for real. It also means we're looking for backup editors-in-chief.

Now Playing: *Rainbow Six 3, Prince of Persia, FF Tactics Adv.*
Fave Genres: Just about everything



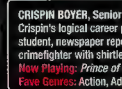
MARK MACDONALD, Executive Editor
Ever since he got back from his trip to France for our cover story, Mark will not shut up about *Pandora Tomorrow's* "incredibly addictive" online multiplayer mode.

Now Playing: *Metroid Zero Mission, B-Type Final, SOCOM II*
Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, Shooters




JENNIFER TSAO, Managing Editor
Being an *EGM* editor is cool, but Jennifer still has her rock-star dreams. So she started a band, learned three chords, and wrote a bunch of punk songs. Do news world tour!

Now Playing: *Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles, Deus Ex, guitar*
Fave Genres: Adventure, RPG, Action Sports, Music



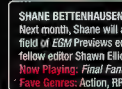
CRISPIN BOYER, Senior Editor
Crispin's logical career progression: game-store clerk, college student, newspaper reporter, game-magazine editor, costumed crimefighter with charless *EGM* contributor Scabbaly.

Now Playing: *Prince of Persia, Rainbow Six 3*
Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, RPG




CHRIS "CJ" JOHNSTON, News Editor
For CJ, the beginning few months of 2004 means playing and attempting to finish the hits of 2003, many of which he started out but never completed when they were "new releases."

Now Playing: *Rainbow Six 3, Ratchet & Clank: GC*
Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, Puzzle, Music



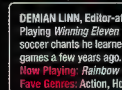
SHANE BETTENHAUSEN, Reviews Editor
Next month, Shane will abdicate his role to pursue the exciting field of *EGM* Previews editing. What he'll miss most: making fellow editor Shawn Elliott review games like *American Idol*.

Now Playing: *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles, Metroid ZM*
Fave Genres: Action, RPG, Fighting, Karaoke



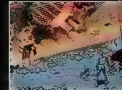
JOE FIELDER, Previews Editor
We're sad to say that Joe's heading to sunny L.A. to start a job as game design on a certain WWII first-person shooter series. If it's good, maybe he'll get a Congressional...

Now Playing: *Champions of Noise, SOCOM II*
Fave Genres: Shooters, Action, Strategy



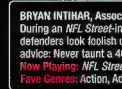
DEMIAN LINN, Editor-at-Large
Playing *Winning Eleven 7* reminded Damian of all those bowdy soccer chants he learned while attending English Premier League games a few years ago...most of which involved Posh.

Now Playing: *Rainbow Six 3, NFL Street, Winning Eleven 7*
Fave Genres: Action, Hockey, Racing, Fighting




PAUL BYRNES, Associate Editor
Reviewing *Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel* left a bad taste in Paul's mouth, so he's replacing the PC classics *Fallout 1 & 2* with the underrated strategy-RPG hybrid *Fallout Tactics*.

Also Playing: *Beyond Good & Evil, Armed and Dangerous*
Fave Genres: RPG, Adventure, Strategy, Fighting



BRYAN INTIHAR, Associate Editor
During an *NFL Street*-inspired pickup game, Bryan made defenders look foolish until he ran into Bubba. Quick piece of advice: Never hunt a 400 lb. man with your hands.

Now Playing: *NFL Street, Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles*
Fave Genres: Action, Adventure, Sports



SHAWN ELLIOTT, Associate Editor
After solving yet another game with misguided stealth segments, Shawn swears he's done sneaking around (until *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow*, at least).

Now Playing: *SOCOM II, Epic: Play, Halo: Zero Mission*
Fave Genres: Fighting, Shooters, Adventure, Racing

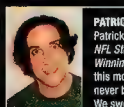
Guest Reviewers



GREG FORD
Last month I was *Sly Cooper*, this month I was *Wind Walker*. Ford's playing catch-up during these slow months.




JON DUDLAK
With a light load this month, Jon passed time by getting the *Dota* Pet speeds from an old holiday gift.



PATRICK MAURO
Patrick reviewed *NFL Street* and *Winning Eleven 7* this month, and never blinced once. We swear.



KEVIN GIFFORD
EGM's webguy (and writer for *UpCom*) turns 26 in February. All he wants is a sequel to *Whiplash*.



JOHN RIGGIARDI
John lives in Japan, where the first season of 24 just arrived. So that's why we haven't heard from him.

■ The object you're holding in your hands (and we really hope you're holding *EGM*) wouldn't be complete without aid from the editorial staff of sister mag (and website) **XBOX NATION, GAMEMOJO, OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE, GMR, and UP.COM.**

The Contributors

■ **SCOTT STEINBERG** looks into the glitzy lifestyles of game developers in part two of our *Play Money* feature...
 ■ **British broadcaster and BBC correspondent DANIEL BOUTROS** plays with silent assassin's toys in *Hittman: Contracts*...
 ■ **Former *GameSpot* editor DAVID HODGSON** tells you how to get *Loop* Ooga off the leash in *True Crime*...
 ■ **USA Today freelancer MARC SALTZMAN** shows you where all your loots go in game development...
 ■ **Former contributor JEFFREY SPEER** probes *Silent Hill 4's* panic room, then hooks up with *The Hot Chick*...
 ■ **Masters of Doom** author **DAVID KUSHNER** gives a quickie lesson on game schools in *Instant Expert*...
 ■ **Former *GameSpot* editor ETHAN EHORN** introduces the infamous Mr. Blonde about his role in *Dirt2*...
 ■ **And Miguel LOPEZ** logs more than 100 hours online to diagnose your future additions to *Final Fantasy XI*.

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Game Experience may change during online play.

Diplomacy Is Primary Weapon in America's Quest to End Indonesian Crisis.

By Eric C. Baldwin
GLOBAL PRESS NETWORK

was relieved that the situation had not turned into a full-scale war.

Indonesia - A government spokesman said that the international community should be aware of the

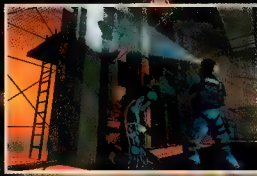
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GMR

Tom Clancy's
**SPLINTER
CELL**

PANDORA TOMORROW



UBISOFT

Letters

ranting, raving, and flatulent surms



There's a special 10th circle of hell reserved for online game cheaters.

Cheaters never prosper

Regarding Edward A. Picchi's letter in *EGM* #175 (page 22) about *SOCOM II* cheaters—I found out about a glitch (involving VIPs, but I'm not going to go into detail) while playing with some top 10 players who, I think, had been exploiting it for hours, if not weeks. I tried it once and it definitely works, but I

don't recommend it for players who have pride in their skills or want to avoid a ban, because it's pretty easy to spot an abuser by checking his or her stats.

—Joe Clemente

We forwarded this to Seth Luisi, *SOCOM II* senior producer, and here's what he had to say: "We are aware of this issue and we are working on an update to resolve it. We will also be looking for players who use this exploit and will be readjusting their score accordingly."

Over time, we will be rolling out more and more powerful cheat detection on the *SOCOM II* servers. Anyone who tries to cheat online in *SOCOM II* will learn that there are consequences."

Gonna need to see some ID

I just got a job at Target, and during orientation, they said that it is imperative we not sell M-rated



Boomer's new job: punishing *SOCOM II* cheaters.

Letter of the month

Not bossy enough

You have answered a great question for me in your *Persia* Afterthoughts article in *EGM* #175, page 64, you had a sidebar (entitled "Who's the Boss?") about the boss battles that ultimately weren't included in the final game. The *PS2* strategy guide (which I bought solely for the poster of the shirtless prince, which now hangs above my bed—shameful indeed!) has an art-concept section full of absolutely amazing creatures that were, sadly, not in the game. I now know why: these frightening beasts were not there to slaughter me and inhibit the speediness of my game conquests—
—a sad, sad discovery
but understandable

—Stacy Lewis



Congrats, Stacy Lewis! As our Letter of the Month writer, you've won a Nyko IType2 PS2 controller. It's especially suited for online games, so here's hoping you like those, eh?



videogames to minors. I asked if we had the same policy for R-rated movies; my supervisor said no. I'm not against the regulation of videogame sales—I think it's good to keep mature games from kids—but come on! At least have the same rules for R-rated movies. Videogames shoulder all the blame as the cause of our youth's problems, but R-rated movies are often more violent and disturbing than mature games. All those critics out there are hypocrites, sneering at

videogames while R-rated movies pass right under their noses.

—Josh Taylor

We asked Target to respond, but they just gave us a summary of their M-rated games policy and ignored your excellent point about R-rated movies. Incidentally, almost all major videogame retailers recently agreed to begin carrying M-rated-game buyers—check the Post Office box (below) for more on that ongoing controversy. >

POST OFFICE

They have no mouth, yet they must scream

Battle reports from the frontlines of EGM's message boards. Join the fracas at egmmag.com and weigh in on such topics as...

Carding underage gamers

When news broke that most videogame retailers will now refuse M-rated games to buyers under 17, there was more rejoicing than gnashing of teeth. "I don't have a problem asking those little punks for ID," says DaFro, ever the diplomat. Firestar46 thinks, "This'll be great for the industry, because [it'll] take heat off the developers that make M-rated games. Now, the parents are the only people to blame when s*** happens, rather than *Grand Theft Auto* or *Doom*." "I'm pro!" says UltraMaximus before mocking the ill-nippers. "It would be funny to ask a 10-year-old for ID and have him pull out his Mickey Mouse membership card." But nick_danger forecasts doom and gloom: "This is a risky move on the part of

retailers, because by having a policy in place, they can now be held accountable for breaking it."

Best (as in wars) box art

Associate Editor Shawn Elliott kicked off a thread about terrible box art with a pic of *Demon Attack* (Atari 2600), which features a silver half-dinosaur, half-fighter jet flying through outer space. hilariously enough, along with a shockingly bad *Pac-Man* (Atari 400/800) box from *Yehirut* and the disturbing *Tommy Lasorda Baseball* (Sega Genesis) from *JohnnyD19*, to name just a few.



Tommy Lasorda and Pac-Man, partners in evil.

Hardcore versus mainstream

Editor-in-Chief Dan "Shoe" Hsu unleashed hell with his editorial on this subject in *EGM* #175 (page 18). TheLastMoogler got his money on his mind with this cynical view: "I'd like to personally thank all the mainstream gamers for ignoring the obscure games so much that they drop in price within a month." Tifa's taking a more long-term outlook: "I think the growth of the industry is a good thing. I would like to think that this is a hobby I can enjoy for the rest of my life." LoneSage, like many board denizens, is on the fence: "Mainstreamers are bringing a lot of money into the industry (how many copies of *Enter the Matrix* were sold? Three million?), but at the same time, they're hurting the quality of games. If *Manhunt* and *True Crime* continue to sell well, who knows—Mario could be shooting a hooker one day."

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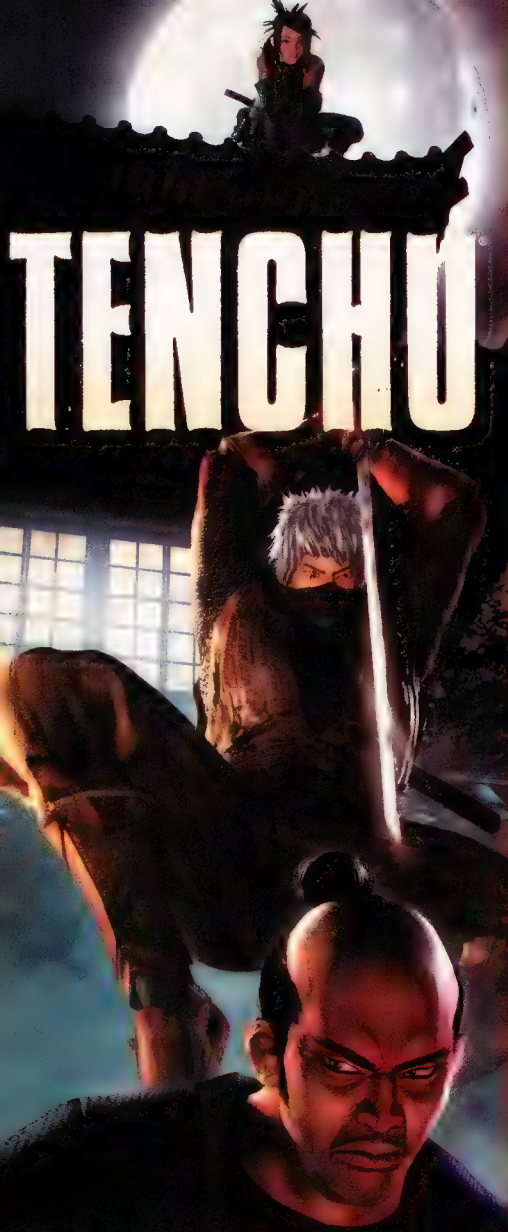
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■ **Reviews Editor Shane "Moneybags" Bettenhausen sleeps with his pricey Bee gun controllers.**

► **Thank you, come again**

I noticed in *EGM* #176, on page 94, you said that Ivy's Calamity Symphony throw is the most powerful move in *Soul Calibur II*, but after messing around in practice mode, I managed to do more damage with Astaroth's Demented Moon. Ha! I outredded you!

—Steve Furlong

Not so fast, Captain Poindexter. You were doing Calamity Symphony all wrong— if you "buffer" the move (rotate the D-pad wildly in hopes that you'll hit all the necessary directions), it does less damage than if you hit each D-pad input perfectly. Like we do. Every time. Blindfolded.

More big units, please

I have to agree with Sean Maloney's letter (*EGM* #174, page 2) about underdressed

female game characters. This oversexualization is annoying, though all media is guilty, not just videogames. Girl gamers need strong, intelligent, and beautiful heroines that they can relate to;

Beyond Good & Evil looks

interesting, but I'll pass on *Final Fantasy X-2*. You might be able to talk me into a beach volleyball game full of guys with big packs and pecks, though. Anyway, ladies, fill out those warranty and registration cards, and be sure to put an X beside "female."

If they realize we're paying, they'll



know we're playing, too.

—Marie LaRose

Gun nut

Where can I get Yuna's Tiny Bee guns that Reviews Editor Shane Bettenhausen is wielding menacingly on page 20 of *EGM* #174? Is that the limited-edition controller? Does it work only with the Japanese version of *Final Fantasy X-2*? I need answers! I'm going crazy looking for them!

—Nick Gordon

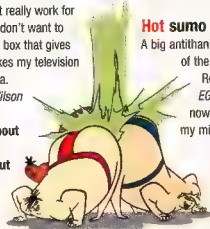
That is indeed the limited-edition FFX-2 controller, which we've seen on eBay at over \$400 (although toysnjoys.com has it listed for \$210), and it does work with the U.S. game. Try making Shane an offer—he's got a bad habit of betting on games of *Tetris Attack* and could use a little help out of the hole.

On the pot

In *EGM* #175, page 69, there's a blurb about the Virtual FX 2D-to-3D converter. According to the website, i-glassessstore.com, the FX can convert any 2D video signal to a 3D picture, but in the mag, you talk about using it only for games. Does it really work for regular television, too? I don't want to shell out \$300 and get a box that gives me a headache and makes my television look like it's on marijuana.

—David Wilson

Uh...don't know about the TV-on-marijuana part, but we tried it and it works fine. Wearing



goggles to watch television does get a little odd, though.

Hot sumo action

A big ant thanks for printing that picture of the sumos in Seanbaby's Rest of the Crap section in *EGM* #175, page 142. It's now permanently burned into my mind.

—Zuzzy

EGM: your source for disturbing sumo imagery. 🐘

GAME DESIGN-O-RAMA

Printing your game ideas and art since, oh, last September. Send 'em to EGM@ziffdavis.com, subject: design-o-rama

CATTLEVANIA
PlayStation-2

From the minds of two of the greatest game creators of this or any generation, Shigeru Miyamoto (*Mario*) and Koji Igarashi (*Castlevania*), comes an action-packed cattle-herding simulation that could never have been realized on previous consoles. Combining the real-time strategy of *Pikmin*, the character-building elements of *Castlevania*, and the methane-infused mayhem of actual cattle ranching, *Cattlevania* promises to be a beefy game the likes of which you have never seen before!

—BJ Shapiro

ROAD TRIP U.S.A.

In this awesome driving sim, players select a starting point and destination (within the 48 contiguous United States only) and then drive there in real time! Want to drive from New York to Boston? It'll take you about four hours of gameplay—if you don't hit traffic. But watch your pee and hunger meters carefully; you'll need to pull over every couple of hours. Plus, take the *Road Trip U.S.A.* GBA game (pictured) on the go and experience your life in real time!

—Matthew Schwartz

KEANU REEVES' PRO ACTOR
PlayStation-2

Journey through exciting locations—including your parents' basement and a McDonald's kitchen—while Keanu Reeves personally instructs you on important acting techniques, like saying "Whoa" or looking confused. Perform meaningless tasks as directed by perfect strangers offering ridiculous amounts of money! Remember, if your game doesn't have Keanu Reeves' personal thumbs up, you've probably been gyped by a company that didn't pay him hundreds of thousands of dollars to endorse it.

—Andrew Rueckert



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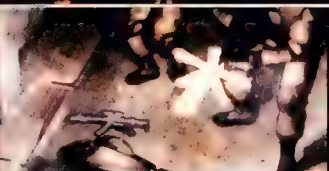
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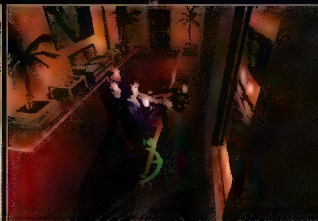
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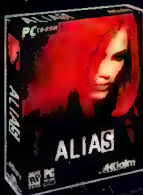
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DIRTY WORK

Time for some on-the-job training with the **Hitman** sequel's silent assassin...

Killing is Agent 47's business, and business is good in *Hitman: Contracts*, the PlayStation 2 and Xbox follow-up—due this spring—to the acclaimed *Hitman 2*. The silent-but-violent assassin starts the game wounded in Paris, trapped in what publisher Eidos describes as “a dangerous situation, even for him.”

Gee, we think our hairless hero will be all right—especially now that he's

learned some lethal new ways to do his job and tweaked his technique with fave weapons. He'll pull off more stylish choking animations with his deadly fiber wire, depending on how stealthily you approach bad guys. And a new briefcase lets him smuggle his sniper rifle into secure locations. But guns are no fun—not when you can use so many new toys in *Contracts*. We play with six.... —Daniel Boutros

Fire poker

Like roasting chestnuts on an open fire? Nah? Well then how about the nuts previously attached to various well-dressed criminals? Agent 47 can choose to skewer society's scummiest side à la shish, or simply beat them into permanent unconsciousness via a motion much like conducting an orchestra at 76 rpm.



■ **Psycho path:** The game's visuals will subtly and eerily reflect our disturbed hero's mood.

Taser

Watching people convulse is not funny. *Making* them convulse by zapping them with a stun gun in a videogame, however, is—especially when done on a walkway, causing the victim to fall off into some bins. Bonus!

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Pool cue

Although he won't go all Jackie Chan with this handy stick, Agent 47 will be able to choke victims by maneuvering the cue into their throat regions. Or he can just bludgeen enemies bloody. Your choice.

Shovel

It's the simple things in life that are the most treasured, and spanking people rigid with a shovel ranks up there with a nice walk on the beach and a sunny day—at least for a sicko pro like Agent 47. Experience awe as the perfect weight distribution of this solid instrument results in a solid “pling” upon collisions. Nay a bludgeon—’tis art!

■ **Meat and greet:** *Contract's* slaughterhouse level will make a vegetarian fain of ya—we swear.



Meat hook

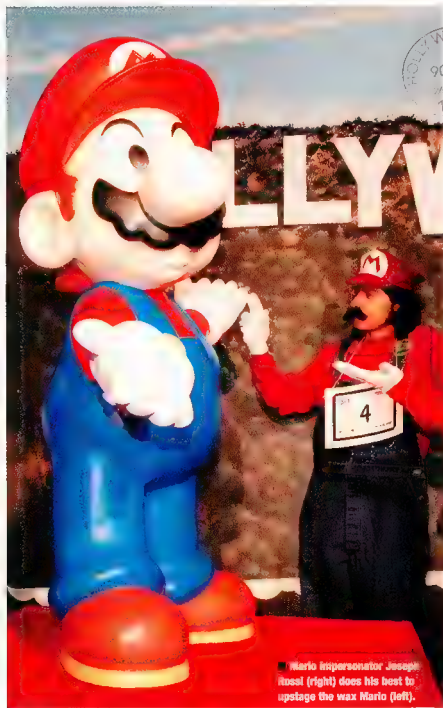
A horror-flick favorite, this gruesome weapon is used in close-quarters combat, or to grant dead bodies the ultimate posthumous wedgie and drag them to meat-conveyor-assisted disposal. The silent assassin will find the hook in the animal-rights-friendly Slaughterhouse Nightclub level, wherein we're betting he won't join a villain named the Meat King for pleasant tea-and-biscuits chatter.

Pillow

Seen *Gostard Park*? No? Neither have we. Apparently this period piece features a scene in which a napping chap gets killed by way of pillow-suffocation. *Hitman* developer IO Interactive cites the film as inspiration for similar smothering sequences in *Contracts*. Who says Merchant Ivory is for wussies? 🛏

WAX APPEAL

Tourists at Hollywood museum heard saying, "It's-a him, Mario!"



■ Mario impersonator Joseph Ross (right) does his best to upstage the wax Mario (left).

The Hollywood Wax Museum has a new face to greet patrons entering its halls: Mario. After nearly unveiling a botched version that had to be destroyed, the museum debuted

the mascot, replacing *The Matrix*'s Neo and Trinity at the coveted front-door spot. Mario will stay there for a few months, then become a permanent fixture. Find visitor info at www.hollywoodwax.com.

GRUDGE MATCH

Mind-blowing Ninja Showdown!



NINJA GAIDEN

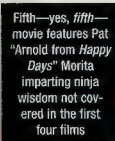
AMERICAN NINJA

By the end of the '80s, the two most prolific occupations were pantsuit retailer and professional ninja (in that order). These two ninja-rific franchises are proof of it. Can the resurrected *Ninja Gaiden* topple the five-time *American Ninja* of the silver screen? Can we work the word "ninja" into every sentence? Ninja yes.

NINJA STARS



Ryu Hayabusa, former 8-bit hero and DOA cast member, gets retooled once again
Advantage: Ninja Gaiden



Fifth—yes, fifth—movie features Pat "Arnold" from *Happy Days* Morita imparting ninja wisdom not covered in the first four films



NINJA WEAR



Batman meets Jacques Cousteau
Advantage: Ninja Tie!

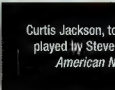


Pantsuits! (Didn't we tell you?)
Advantage: Ninja Tie!

NINJA COHORTS



Works alone
Advantage: Ninja Gaiden

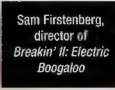


Curtis Jackson, tough-guy sidekick played by Steve James—star of *American Ninja 2 and 3*

NINJA ACTION BROUGHT TO YOU BY



Tecmo, purveyors of *DOA Volleyball*
Advantage: Ninja Gaiden



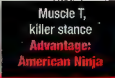
Sam Firstenberg, director of *Breakin' II: Electric Boogaloo*



NINJA WEAPONS



Nunchucks, katana, bow and arrow



Muscle T, killer stance
Advantage: American Ninja

NINJA MASTER: NINJA GAIDEN'S RYU HAYABUSA

Each—white man in a ninja suit takes a shuriken to the groin and falls before the mighty Hayabusa! There can be only one...ninja.

BURNING QUESTION: THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING

If you're like us, you finished EA's *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* (or read Tolkien's novel) and noticed the movie missing the Mouth of Sauron, a monstrous black knight who parleys with Aragorn and Gandalf outside the Black Gate of Mordor just before the final battle. He's a boss in the game, which is supposed to be strictly based on the film. Why didn't we see him in theaters? "I

can't really comment," says EA Producer Neil Young. "[Film director] Peter Jackson makes the call on what happens in the final edit, and I haven't spoken with him...about that sequence or where it's going to end up." New Line Cinema wouldn't say whether this scene will appear in the extended-edition DVD of the film due at the end of the year. We figure it's a sure thing.



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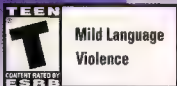


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PlayStation 2



FIRST LOOK: NEO CONTRA

Contra is going 3D again? Whoa...

Unless you remember the Iran-Contra scandal of the mid '80s, you were probably too young to really connect with Konami's old-school, phallic-alien-blasting *Contra* series until 2002's *Shattered Soldier* for PS2. But hey, that game was a great place to start—*Soldier* proved that Konami could still deliver a killer, side-scrolling *Contra* game in this age of 3D wonderment and that *Contra* games can still be hellishly (read: wonderfully) difficult. *Soldier*'s success, however, didn't inspire its developers to craft another side-scrolling shoot-'em-up—its PS2 follow-up, this fall's *Neo Contra*, bravely takes the franchise's gameplay into three dimensions...again.

That's right, *Contra*'s been down the 3D road before, and it wasn't pretty. *Contra: Legacy of War* and *C: The Contra Adventure* experimented with free-roaming action on PS1, but the resulting gameplay lacked the fun and intensity of past *Contra*s. In this case, though, the developers of *Neo Contra* are happy to learn from someone else's mistakes. "Those games...failed to provide players with simple, accessible gameplay," says

Producer Nobuya Nakazato. "Plus, it was difficult to judge enemy attack ranges, and the player simply didn't have the proper means of attack and defense." So, basically, the developers want *Neo Contra* to be nothing like those games.

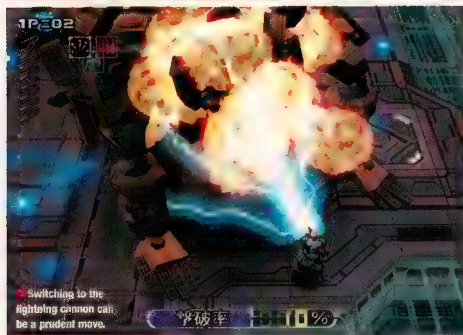
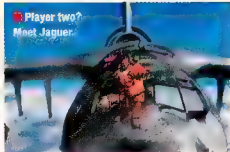
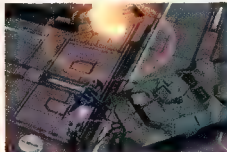
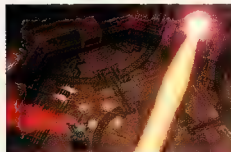
Although *Neo Contra* shifts the normal viewing perspective, the vintage games' beloved gameplay remains intact. "Fans should not worry that the feel of *Contra* will be gone," assures Nakazato. "It's a natural progression for the franchise that will deliver a great 3D *Contra* with 2D gameplay." So, although you'll have to cover a lot more ground while you do it, you'll still be switching between various huge guns, blasting copious icky aliens, and facing off against mammoth boss monstrosities. As expected, *Neo Contra* will be best enjoyed with two players: Player one controls grizzled series vet Bill Rizer, while player two controls the bizarrely out-of-place-yet-still-cool samurai, Genbei Jaguar Yagyu. "Jaguar is a very unique and interesting guy," explains Nakazato. "He's definitely something that

you have not seen before in a *Contra* game."

Despite making surprising changes to the series' formula, the developers know better than to mess with the established legacy of difficulty. "As a series, *Contra* has always been tougher than other games, but we feel that is part of its appeal," muses Director Takayuki Ando. "As we intensify the action to keep players riveted throughout the stages, the game itself becomes more difficult to clear." Don't worry, though. *Contra* can always tackle the easy mode...just don't expect to ever see the game's real ending. 🐾

—Shane Bettenhausen

■ Player one? Say hello to our last line of defense against alien scum: Bill Rizer.



Switching to the lightning cannon can be a prudent move.

uncanny resemblance



Maybe it's just a bizarre coincidence, but this creepy baby-headed boss looks remarkably similar to Tetsuo's final, freaked-out metamorphosis in the land-

mark anime film *Akira*. Except in *Neo Contra*, the blobby infant isn't actually your best friend undergone tragic psychic mutation...well, probably not.

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INSTANT EXPERT: GAME SCHOOLS

The ABC's of nabbing a game-design degree

Now that videogames are a multibillion-buck industry, higher education is taking notice. Universities around the country are offering a variety of courses—and even full-fledged degrees—in the art and science of game design. But it's not all fun and fragging: Game programming is more about calculus than *Castlevania*. Here's how to get schooled....

Where to go
There are two camps of game schools: ones that offer full-blown degrees and ones that offer nondegree courses in game programming and art. Nintendo-sponsored DigiPen in Redmond, WA; Full Sail in Winter Park, FL; and the Guildhall at Southern Methodist University in Dallas each offer a variety of programs—running from 18 months to four years—which grant you some kind of diploma in game making. Stanford University in Palo Alto, CA, the Academy of Art College in San Francisco, and the Art Institutes campuses located across the country (find loca-

tions at www.aii.edu) all offer some classes—from 3D animation to programming—in the field. Students can even pursue graduate degrees in game studies at Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta and Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA.

What you'll study
Most videogame courses focus on computer programming—and hardcore coding at that. Students enrolled in DigiPen, for example, have to master Introduction to Differential Equations and Discrete and Computational Geometry before they tackle making the next *Mario Party*. But more and more schools are offering a diverse menu for wannabe game makers. As part of Carnegie Mellon's master's program in entertainment technology, for example, students take courses in everything from screenwriting to improvisational acting.

What it costs
Learning the ropes of game design ain't cheap. At DigiPen, classes are \$345 per

credit—that's \$63,130 for a four-year degree or \$27,600 for a two-year program. Tuition at Southern Methodist University's Guildhall will set you back \$37,000 for three years. But hey, that includes a fully loaded laptop tailor-made for game making upon your arrival. The good news: Financial aid, based on your academic performance and need, is available at most schools. So spend more time hitting the books instead of sitting on the couch. A high score in *Karaoke Revolution* won't get you a free ride. —David Kushner



Students at DigiPen are expected to work 12 hours a day, six days a week.

BY THE NUMBERS

Clash of the titans

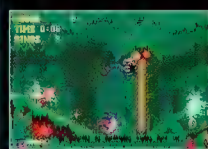
1970	Arnold Schwarzenegger makes his debut in <i>Hercules in New York</i> .
1981	Mario makes his first appearance in <i>Donkey Kong</i> (arcade).
46	Number of movies in which Arnold Schwarzenegger has starred.
67	Number of games in which Mario has starred.
0	Number of times Mario has been elected to political office.



OLD SCHOOL

10 years ago in EGM

On the cover:
Star Trek
Forget which *Trek* you think is best—the crew of *The Next Generation* is the only one that has scored an EGM cover. Inside this issue, we previewed new *Trek* games for SNES, Genesis, and 3DO.



Game of the Month:
Sonic 3 — Sonic the Hedgehog's third and arguably best adventure on Sega's Genesis took top honors from our Review Crew 10 years ago this month, scoring two 10s and two nines (out of 10).



Saturn in sight — Sega debuted its 32-bit Saturn game console at 1994's Winter Consumer Electronics Show, more than a year before the machine's surprise early release in America. Shown with the system's debut was early video of its first games: *Virtua Fighter*, *Daytona USA*, *Clockwork Knight*, and *Panzer Dragon*.

Early days of online
Even in 1994, a few companies tried to get online console gaming off the ground. Though none were successful, AT&T's Edge 16 Sega Genesis modem was the most promising, with ahead-of-its-time features such as simultaneous data and voice communication for talking to your opponent (much like you can with the Xbox/PS2 headsets today).



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WHEN ZOMBIES ATTACK

Notes from (still-living) inhabitants of *Resident Evil Outbreak*'s Raccoon City

When I made this game," says *Resident Evil Outbreak* Director Eiichiro Sasaki, "I didn't make it by *Resident Evil* rules." I just wanted to make it fun." And it shows. Picture a *Resident Evil* game without inventory boxes, with alternate analog controls similar to those in *Devil May Cry*, and with an almost reasonable amount of health and ammo. Now, imagine that you can play it online (over a broadband connection) with the help of up to three friends, or offline with the computer controlling the other characters, and you've got Capcom's *Resident Evil Outbreak*, due in March for PS2. In it, you play one of eight different characters, each with his or her own unique skills. In our research on the game, we came across several hand-written notes from one of these Raccoon City residents. Read on to see why this sleepy, creepy burg is a great place to visit, but you wouldn't want to die there....

—Joe Fielder



■ We had to fight using whatever we could lay our hands on in the bar.

(1a)

Whoever gets this, I just want them to know that I'm sorry... My name's Cindy. I'm... I was a waitress at Jack's in downtown Raccoon City. I was working tables Thursday night when a man stumbled in and stood inside the doorway, moaning. I was boss, Jack, headed over to throw him out, but when he got close, he saw that the man only had half a face, his eye was gouged out, and his neck was torn open... The... thing grabbed him and bit a chunk out of his throat, then stormed in and... they tore Jack apart. I helped a drunk patron out the back door while several

(1b)

other people fought the dead men back with brooms, pool sticks... anything they could find. I yelled for them to follow me, and we made it to a back office to hide. When I looked out a window, I could see the streets were full of dead things.... When I stopped breathing so loudly, I could hear the sound I thought was the wind outside was really their moans.

(2)

The people who'd joined me were a rent-a-cop (Mark, who's very strong), a student named Yoko, and a doctor from the hospital who was too stunned to talk. I never learned the drunk man's name. While Yoko climbed through an air duct to open a locked door for us, the creatures (zombies if that's what they're called?) attacked again and pulled the man away. The four of us left realized we'd have to work together if we were going to stay alive.





■ Mark and I searched the room for items before zombies bashed down the door.

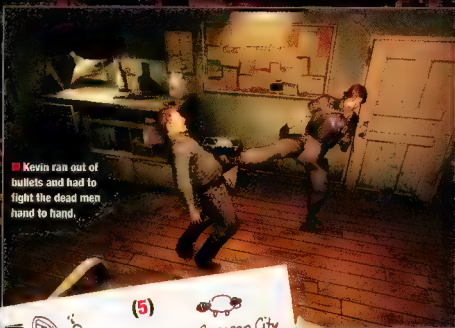
ROCKSTAR RECENTLY COMMENTED THAT THE LONG-DELAYED, UNDERPUBLICIZED VERSION OF *GRAND THEFT AUTO* FOR GBA IS STILL IN THE WORKS. IT'S UNCLEAR WHETHER THE



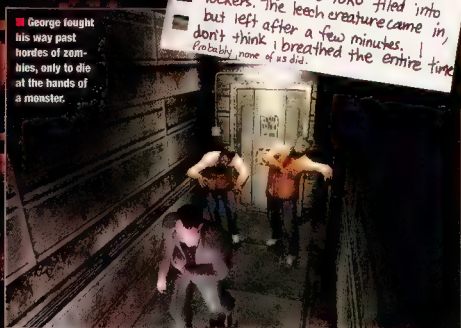
When we were on the roof, we could see other survivors on a nearby building.

(3)  we loaded up on items from a storeroom we wandered into — health sprays, bullets (I wish one of us had a gun), healing herbs, and a lighter. Yoko has a backpack, so we gave her more to carry. The doctor, David, came to his senses finally and said we should head to the hospital. To get there, we had to jump across a roof, and Yoko almost didn't make it. She was hanging from the ledge while George fought off these evil birds that tried to make Yoko fall, but I pulled her up.


(4)  Inside the hospital, David made medicine for us in a lab and George found a handgun. Right then, a vent in the ceiling burst open and a man fell to the floor right on top of David. The man was covered with thousands of squirming leeches (yuck!) and once I had a hold of David, there was no prying him free. George but it was no use. At the thing, we ran as fast as we could through a zombie-filled hallway and his again. I crawled under a bed while George and Yoko filed into lockers. The leech creature came in, but left after a few minutes. I don't think I breathed the entire time. Probably none of us did.

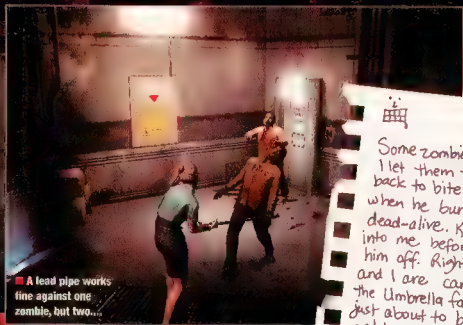


Kevin ran out of bullets and had to fight the dead man hand to hand.

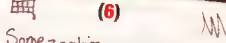


George fought his way past hordes of zombies, only to die at the hands of a monster.

(5)  We ran into Kevin, a Raccoon City cop. I swear, he looks just like Tom Cruise.... Every time he talks, he sounds breathless and annoyed, but he has a gun, so I don't care. Yoko suggested we head to a nearby laboratory that's run by a company called Umbrella. She interns there and says she knows all the security door codes and has a map. On the way there, Kevin got bit by one of the zombies, so I carried him into an office and cleaned his wound with some health spray. Later on, when a creature grabbed me, I called to him for help, but Kevin kept right on going. I'll never help him again....
Kevin = jerk @!@



A lead pipe works fine against one zombie, but two....

(6)  Some zombies overran Kevin, and I let them take him. That came back to bite me, literally, later when he burst through a door — dead-alive. Kevin sunk his teeth into me before I managed to shake him off. Right now, George, Yoko, and I are camped out in a lab in the Umbrella facility. Zombies are just about to bust down the door, and I... I itch all over. But especially where I got bit. It's strange, when I look over at Yoko, I swear she's staring sandwich to me.... Oh my god, I'm soooooo hungry....
yeah!

AFTERTHOUGHTS: SONIC HEROES

A candid chat with Sonic Team's lord of the rings

In 2003, Sega's hyperactive mascot was nearly as overexposed as Benifer: Sonic starred in two new GBA games, milked his back catalog with a GameCube rerelease of *Sonic Adventure*, headlined a hit cartoon on the Fox network, and even hawked McNuggets to tykes via a successful Happy Meal promotion. All that hoopla, however, paled in comparison to this January's

triple-console launch of *Sonic Heroes*—an all-new 3D platformer, and his first on both Xbox and PlayStation 2. We spoke with *Heroes* Director Takashi Iizuka (who's headed up nearly every *Sonic* game since *Sonic 3* on Genesis) about the 'hog's latest title.

EGM: *Heroes* offers some really amazing levels, such as the Casino Park and Haunted House areas. Were you consciously trying to be more creative and daring this time around than in the *Sonic Adventure* games?

Takashi Iizuka: The *Adventure* series was much more story driven, so I was limited to the types of level designs that would make sense in the context of the plot. But with *Heroes*, I had much more freedom to explore more action-packed, wild levels like in the old, side-scrolling *Sonic* games. I've secretly wanted to make a 3D pinball-themed *Sonic* stage for years.

EGM: *Sonic Heroes*' grading system seems pretty harsh—what's the

secret to getting A's? Is it even worth getting them?

Ti: [It's] very, very challenging to get an A grade. Getting A's isn't impossible, but you must practice playing the stages over and over until you can get through them quickly without dying. It's worth it, though: If you get all A's in all the stages with all the teams, you unlock a really cool, surprising mode that will please players looking for even more challenge.

EGM: The GameCube and Xbox versions run smoother than the PS2's. What's up with that?

Ti: Of course, as you know, the PlayStation 2 does not have the most favorable amount of memory...so *Sonic Team* created a basic ideal of how *Heroes* should play and then arranged it so that it would work on GC, XB, and PS2. So, I had to sacrifice a certain amount of technical performance in order to offer the same experience on PS2.

EGM: The boss battles in *Sonic Heroes* are really unique—you're usually fighting a boss while traveling through a stage or arena at the same time. Why the change from the norm?

Ti: We decided to experiment with a new concept for the bosses, because in most action games, you're moving quickly

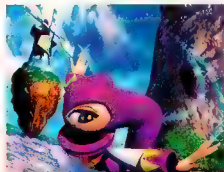


Iizuka names *Sonic 2* (Genesis) as his fave 'hog romp due to its fun, diverse levels.

through the regular stages, but your momentum completely stops when you reach the boss. It really disrupts the flow of the game. Here, we keep your adrenaline pumping while you fight the boss.

EGM: Nintendo's VP of marketing George Harrison once said that "Mario will never start shooting hookers." Would you ever make a game where *Sonic* caps some hos in order to appeal to older gamers?

Ti: [Laughs] I have no plans to do that! And I have a good reason: It's been 12 years since *Sonic* first came out, and people who experienced it back then are now old enough to have their own children. In a way, we've created a chain of *Sonic* fans, and if I changed *Sonic* to appeal to adults, it would cut the chain. 🐾 —Shane Bettenhausen



Will Nights Fly Again?

It's been eight years since *Heroes* director Iizuka created *Nights Into Dreams*, a Sega Saturn title that's legendary among hardcore gamers. Will its purple harlequin star ever return? "I know that there are very strong, loyal *Nights* fans out there," says Iizuka. "I promise that as long as I'm with Sega, I will create *Nights* again...the more I hear from the fans about their love for the game, the more reasons I have to consider it as my next project."



Getting all A's in *Heroes*' stages opens up an even greater challenge.

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MY SO-CALLED FANTASY LIFE

Charting your future online addiction to FFXI



Anyone who's played massively multiplayer online games will attest to the fact that, for all their fun, they sometimes involve work—tedious, carpal-tunnel-inducing work. *Final Fantasy XI Online*—due in March pre-installed on the PS2 Hard Disk Drive

and requiring a monthly \$12.95 subscription fee—is no different. Sure, you'll partake in your share of high adventure thrills like monster killing, treasure hunting, dungeon crawling, and interacting with other players from around the world, but that's only half

the story. The other half casts you in a number of exciting roles, including those of...um, pest controller and virtual junk collector. Here's a look at what to expect—for better or worse—from your first hundred hours of play. Yes, we said *hundred*...

Note: All screenshots are from the PC version of the game.



Don't expect to take on anyone this butcher-looking for awhile.



You just get loked by a bunch of funny nani, LOL!



Your players versus a single half-naked leech hardly seems nearly so scary.

Hours: 0-1

This ain't a pop-in-and-play deal—far from it, actually. While the game comes pre-installed on the PS2 Hard Disk Drive, you'll most likely have to download a series of updates and fixes before you play—and that can take pretty long. From there, you choose your character's sex, appearance, job, and race (this is the biggie—certain races are ideal for fighting, while others are best at magic. And, of course, some freakers simply demand to play as a sluty catgirl). Then you're ready for adventure.

Hours: 1-20

Starting out in the world of Vana'diel is relatively painless. You get a grip on the controls. Humility, however, will set in pretty quickly. In this phase of your virtual life, your enemies are some of the cutest, most harmless-looking critters you've ever seen, and you'll find it's hard to feel like a badass warrior with bunny rabbits, caterpillars, and birds frequently kicking the living crap out of you. Don't worry, though. The game gets more fun as you level up and become more powerful. We swear. Scout's honor.

Hours: 20-50

Now, things get interesting. You start seriously interacting with other players, which can be both exciting and scary (see sidebar below). You'll venture farther from town, fighting tougher, less harmless-looking creatures while busting out powerful team-combo attacks with your pals. The constant treadmill of killing wildlife and scavenging remains eventually gets dull, though, and this is when you need to take a break and get your pasty butt outside—FFXI is a lot more fun when you're not glued to it 24/7.

Hours: 50-100

Once you get this far, true virtual manhood (or womanhood) is in your grasp. You'll get to ride chocobos, fly on airships, and take on really powerful monsters—giants, various undead horrors, enormous reptiles, and the like. You also gain access to the game's coolest jobs—like ninja, samurai, and summoner—as well as take on the most intense missions. You've already dedicated several weeks of your precious life to get this far, so the rewards better be good...right?

—Miguel Lopez

meet the feebles

In case you haven't played online RPGs before, we thought we'd give you a feel for the types of people you'll meet and great. Prepare!



Casual Player

Likes: Getting items for free from benevolent hardcore players
Dislikes: Extended play sessions

Quote: "Um, how do I heal you again? Oh, you're already dead... Sorry, my mom's calling me for dinner..."



FF Fanboy

Likes: Talking to Cid, riding chocobos, fighting tonberries
Dislikes: That you can't make your character look like FFXI's Cloud Strife

Quote: "The Mission 4 ending cinematic was so beautiful."



"Female" Player

Likes: Getting free stuff, getting attention, getting hugs
Dislikes: Prying questions regarding "her" real-life gender

Quote: "O'mon! Of course I'm really a girl, hon! 'hugz"



Japanese Player

Likes: FFXI's auto-translation feature (so he or she can play with U.S. players)
Dislikes: Western emoticons :-P

Quote: "I do not understand many English ^^,"



Online Game Addict

Likes: Hunting unique monsters, hanging by the auction house, berating newbies
Dislikes: Anyone outside of his clan

Quote: "Lizzy was \$000 camped after she spawned, LOL!"

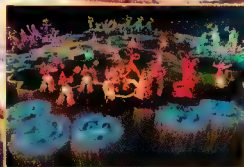


The Creep/Pervert

Likes: Mithra (FFXI's catgirl race) and tarutaru (FFXI's cute diminutive race)
Dislikes: Getting put on your banned list

Quote: "I just need your address to send you those comics..."

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PlayStation 2



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EGM INTERNATIONAL

Japan's Valentine's Day gifts to you



PUNCH-DRUNK LOVE

Love Upper! explores underground bikini boxing. As we all know, the rules of *Fight Club* don't allow us to talk about it. Luckily, the rules of the *Love Upper!* all-female underground fighting tournament have no such clause. Which is good, since we'd much rather join this club anyway. If this recent Japanese PS2 release is to be believed, then 12 of Japan's sauciest sex-pots are whipping away for glory every night, breasts jiggling like they were fighting on the moon. As the nubile warriors advance through the ranks of this misogynistic underworld, they unlock (what else?) new outfits for themselves—34 of 'em, from bikinis to private-school uniforms. Shame Darva Conger hung up her gloves after one *Celebrity Boxing* episode. She coulda been a contender.



YOUNG, DUMB, AND....

Don't ask, and the men of **Gakuen Heaven** won't tell. You don't need a keen mind to see that there's something odd about the Japanese PS2 release *Gakuen Heaven*. It may look like a normal adventure game at first. As high-school student Kelta Ito, you must make friends and build a social life at a boys-only private academy. However, this is no innocent point-and-click game. All the characters are very *handsome*—they've got girlish faces, wispy hair, and some "forget" to button their shirts for that classic Scott Baio look. And then there's the subtitle ("Boy's Love Scramble!") and the developer's name ("Spray"). Yes, it's that sort of game. Be glad this PS2 port's been bowdlerized—the PC version had enough heavy petting to merit an 18-and-over rating.

OVERHEARD

"Story in a game is like story in porn. It's expected to be there, but it's not important."

—H3 Software Programmer John Curmick, currently hard at work crafting the intricate plot of *Boom 3*



"I hate these Haitians. We'll take them out. We'll take these Haitians down."

—Grand Theft Auto: Vice City's Tommy Verocci; GTA publisher Take Two Interactive recently agreed to change parts of the game in response to public outcry against "racist" segments like this

"Children's access to these 'killographic' games, parents' lack of knowledge of ratings, and kids' game-playing habits are all major contributors to the increase in casual violence and the culture of disrespect among our children."



—President and founder of the National Institute on Media and the Family Dr. David Walsh invents a new word

L'I'L PREVIEWS: FOR THE SCI-FI AND/OR COMIC BOOK GEEK IN YOU!

VIRTUA FIGHTER CYBER GENERATION
PS2/GC • Sega • Summer 2004 — The "Virtual Fighter RPG" Sega's hinted at for months isn't quite what you'd expect: It stars a teenage hacker named Sai who uses "Virtual Souls" (fighting moves) to take a bite out of cyber-crime in the Internet of the future. Correlation to the original VF: hardly any at all.

THE RED STAR
PS2/XB • Acclaim • Fall 2004 — Based on a comic series, *The Red Star* is a bash-em-up set in alternate-reality Russia with co-op play, magic spells called "protokola," and a decided lack of progressive political reform. Freeing yourself from the chains of capitalism has never seemed so...mystical.

100 BULLETS
PS2/XB • Acclaim • Fall 2004 — Another comic-book-inspired action game, *100 Bullets* stars an agent who grants average Joes the right to kill on their enemies' best day. Your role? To help them do it. Gameplay details are slim, but Acclaim promises a new feature that "blows away bullet time."



Just tell your parents you were stoned. They'll understand.

responsibility

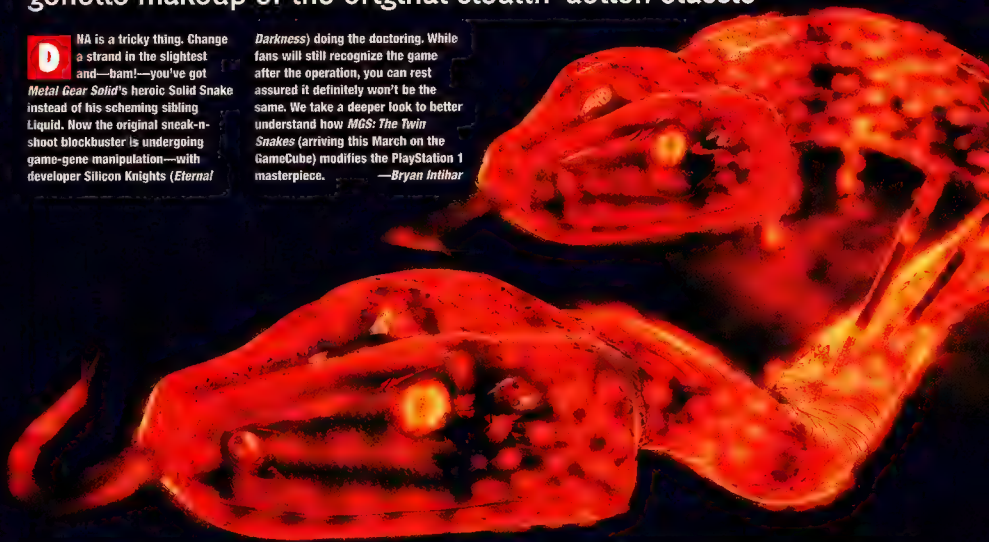
YOUR ANTI-DRUG.

GEAR SHIFTING

Learn how **Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes** alters the genetic makeup of the original stealth-action classic

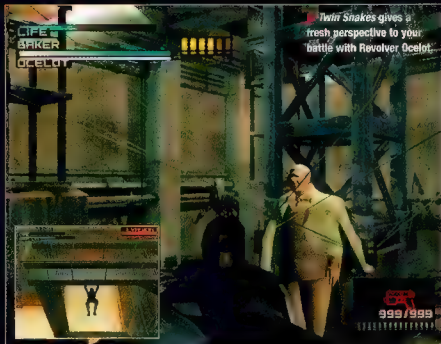
DNA is a tricky thing. Change a strand in the slightest and—bam!—you've got *Metal Gear Solid's* heroic Solid Snake instead of his scheming sibling Liquid. Now the original sneak-n-shoot blockbuster is undergoing game-gene manipulation—with developer Silicon Knights' (*Eternal*

Darkness) doing the doctoring. While fans will still recognize the game after the operation, you can rest assured it definitely won't be the same. We take a deeper look to better understand how *MGS: The Twin Snakes* (arriving this March on the GameCube) modifies the PlayStation 1 masterpiece. —*Bryan Iltihar*



Graphics

The most obvious upgrade in *Twin Snakes* is its visuals. "Technically, [this game] surpasses the PS2 version of *Metal Gear Solid 2* pretty much in every way," says President Denis Dyack of Silicon Knights. The developers are bringing every bit of eye-candy—from weather effects to character models—up to today's standards. Simply compare the above screenshots of the GameCube and PlayStation 1 versions if you need further proof.



Gameplay

Your stealth repertoire now consists of every technique introduced in *MGS2*, such as first-person shooting, hiding in lockers, and crawling along ledges. You can also expect significantly smarter foes. "[In the original game] when you reach the heliport," says Dyack, "if spotted, you could just hide in the truck. Now if you do that the enemies will start throwing grenades in there." And like their *MGS2* cousins, *Twin Snakes'* patrolling guards will follow clearing procedures.

DON'T I KNOW YOU?

Skipped over *Metal Gear Solid* and went straight to the sequel? Believe it or not, Liquid Snake's powers once went beyond putting Revolver Ocelot's arm-wrestling prowess over the top. Here's a look at some of the characters in the original's roster:



Solid Snake

Unlike in *MGS2*, Solid Snake doesn't take a backseat to any bleach-blond sissies.

Twin Snakes is 100 percent Raiden-free. We promise.



Revolver Ocelot

We can't ever seem to finish off this pistol-packin' Russian. Man, won't you and your stupid right hand just die, already!



Liquid Snake

If you thought Liquid's pimp hand was a strong force in the sequel, wait till you take on the whole enchilada in *Twin Snakes*.



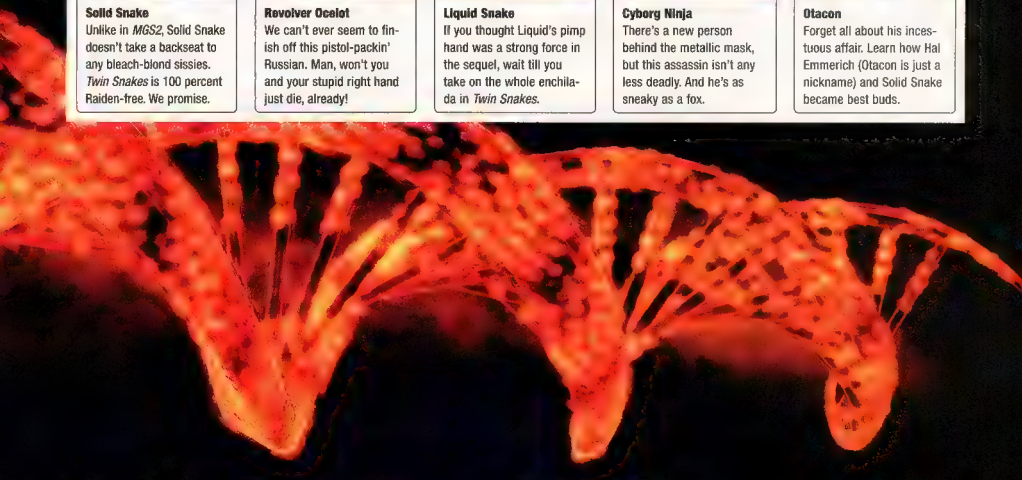
Cyborg Ninja

There's a new person behind the metallic mask, but this assassin isn't any less deadly. And he's as sneaky as a fox.



Otacon

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■ **Hiding unconscious guards in lockers wasn't possible in the original.**



Terrain

"We added lockers [and more railings] everywhere, and we had to rearrange and move rooms around to make sure it all worked," says Dyack. "[Since you're] able to do all the things from *MGS2* in the *MGS* environments, we had to make sure there are opportunities to do [all of] that." Those things include hiding yourself or tranquilizer-darted foes in those aforementioned lockers and throwing enemies over ledges, which Silicon Knights also had to attach to various spots in the game.



Story

The father of the *Metal Gear* series, Hideo Kojima, hired Japanese film director and writer Ryuhei Kitamura to redo every cut-scene and shoot brand-new footage. Only in the *Twin Snakes* version will you witness the cyborg ninja enter the room trailing a shower of sparks as he drags his katana along the metal floor, seconds before slicing off Revolver Ocelot's right hand. The game's cut-scenes total three hours, which is roughly 50 percent longer than in the original.

3D Screenshots by Justinian Schwaninger

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MONEY TRAIL

We show where all the cash goes in making a game

Gone are the days when a game cost only a few grand and required three dudes to

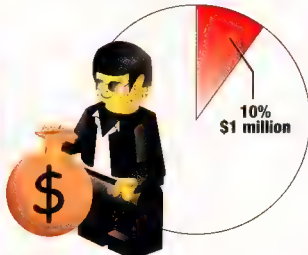
make. Today, big-name titles can run up to \$25 million to go from concept to your console. What are the steps in

between? Let's deconstruct the budget process of a typical \$10 million console game. —Marc Saltzman



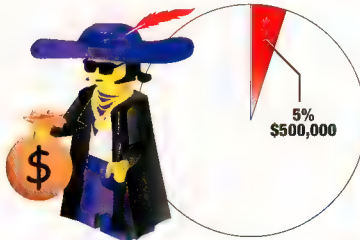
Development Budget

Creating the game—which entails the employment of designers, programmers, artists, sound engineers and musicians, voice actors, testers, and so forth—is easily the biggest chunk of change. This process also involves the creation or licensing of a graphics engine, tools and other middleware, and also general overhead concerns such as rent, electricity, and health insurance.



Marketing Budget

What's the point of making a great game if the world doesn't know about it? That's where marketing and public-relations departments come in, and getting the word out costs money. PR reps work with the press to get media exposure, while marketing people deal more directly with the consumer through advertising, packaging, promotions, and retailers.




Console-maker Royalty

To create a title for a particular console, a third-party game publisher must cough up a royalty fee to that console's manufacturer. Sony, for instance, may take \$7 to \$9 for every copy of a PlayStation 2 game made—but the better the title does, the lower this royalty rate becomes (as long as such deals are arranged beforehand). Also, royalties are less if it's a game made exclusively for that console.



Manufacturing, Sales, Distribution

It ain't cheap to create a few hundred thousand DVDs, with packaging, and then distribute them around the nation so they can appear at your local retailer. A publisher may also consider putting that game on other platforms, which means additional manufacturing, distribution, and other costs. Generally speaking, a publisher is looking at selling nearly half a million units before it sees a profit on its investment.



License to Bill

A major license—including such Hollywood tie-ins as *The Hulk*, *Matrix*, and *Lord of the Rings* movies—can greatly add to the cost of a product. Games based on well-known TV series can also cost a pretty penny, while sports games all have league and player licenses, which can be very expensive. Licensing costs have a broad range, adding potentially \$5 million to \$15 million (or higher) for a triple-A license (like *Harry Potter*), down to \$1 million for a B license (say, *Daredevil*). Licensing usually includes a certain percentage of revenues, too, which can range from 3 to 10 percent. But if the well-known name on the box attracts more casual gamers, publishers are happy to fork over the dough.

CHARTS

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES
FOR NOVEMBER 2003

- 1 **Mario Kart: Double Dash!!**
GC, Nintendo
- 2 **Medal of Honor: Rising Sun**
PS2, EA Games
- 3 **Final Fantasy X-2**
PS2, Square Enix
- 4 **Grand Theft Auto Double Pack**
XB, Rockstar
- 5 **SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALS**
PS2, Sony CEA
- 6 **Need for Speed: Underground**
PS2, EA Games
- 7 **Tony Hawk's Underground**
PS2, Activision
- 8 **True Crime: Streets of L.A.**
PS2, Activision
- 9 **Mario Advance 4: Super Mario Bros. 3** • GBA, Nintendo
- 10 **Madden NFL 2004**
PS2, EA Sports

TOP 10 GAME RENTALS
FOR THE WEEK ENDING 12/16/03

- 1 **Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2**
PS2, Bandai
- 2 **True Crime: Streets of L.A.**
PS2, Activision
- 3 **Need for Speed: Underground**
PS2, EA Games
- 4 **Tony Hawk's Underground**
PS2, Activision
- 5 **Grand Theft Auto III**
PS2, Rockstar
- 6 **SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALS**
PS2, Sony CEA
- 7 **Final Fantasy X-2**
PS2, Square Enix
- 8 **WWE SmackDown! Here Comes the Pain** • PS2, THQ
- 9 **The Simpsons: Hit & Run**
PS2, VU Games
- 10 **Madden NFL 2004**
PS2, EA Sports

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2835906



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2891406



GOODFELLAS
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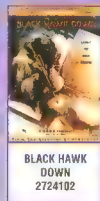
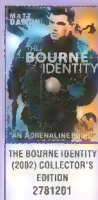
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FIRST LOOK NANOBREAKER

The dark prince behind *Castlevania* looks to the future

After feverishly cranking out three well-received *Castlevania* titles (*Lament of Innocence* for PS2 and two GBA adventures) in a little over a year, Producer Koji Igarashi needs a break from all the vamping. "I'm not Gothic all the time!" he says. Luckily, he's working on just the thing to beat the undead blues: next fall's *Nanobreaker* for PS2.

Although fundamentally similar to *Lament of Innocence* (they're both 3D action titles, after all), the games' characters, settings, and story lines couldn't be more different: *Nanobreaker* is set in a bleak cyberpunk dystopia where humanity and machinery have melded. "I decided to make a futuristic game this time," explains Igarashi, "and nanomachines and nanotechnology are often in the news these days. [so] I thought it would make a fun theme for a game." It's unclear whether

Nanobreaker's microscopic mechanisms should be considered fun, though—the baby robots here cause serious chaos, mixing with human DNA to create a limitless army of so-called Orgamech mutants relentlessly bent on global annihilation.

Of course, it's up to you to thwart this potential robotocalypse, but even your character (who remains mysteriously nameless at this point) isn't entirely human himself. "You play as the military's most powerful cyborg," explains Director Kenichiro Kato. "He's viewed as a weapon instead of a soldier...as a cyborg, he's still suffering from the dark side of human emotions; he doesn't want to continue killing, but he's still not human. He's caught between worlds." His muddled emotional state and troubled past will unravel as the game progresses, but thankfully, his internal strife doesn't keep him from unleashing

cybernetic beat downs.

Your primary weapon is the Plasma Blade, a glowing saber that conceals some stylish secrets. "It has two major attacks: slicing vertically and horizontally," Igarashi explains. "You can also thrust enemies into

visceral action laden with complex combos. Also, it sounds like *Nanobreaker* won't suffer from the same flaw that kept Igarashi's first 3D *Castlevania* from attaining perfection—repetitive level design. "With *Lament of Innocence*, the maps were divided into

"He doesn't want to continue killing, but he's still not human."

—Director Kenichiro Kato

the air to perform various combos that cause the Plasma Blade to change form. For example, after a certain combo, it transforms into a gigantic ax that cleaves enemies in two with one stroke."

So, despite a radically different setting and tone, *Nanobreaker*'s underlying gameplay sounds much like *Lament*'s: pure,

many small rooms," Kato says, "but with *Nanobreaker*, each area is much larger in scale...this will be the major difference." Exploring Orgamech-infested power plants and bombed-out buildings will hopefully feel much more organic and open than the endless kill-all-the-baddies rooms of *Dracula's* castle. **—Shane Bettenhausen**



reality check



In case you're not keeping up on the latest nano news, know that scientists are actually getting closer to developing self-replicating microscopic machines that could conceivably have far-reaching medical and chemical uses. In fact, President Bush signed a bill in late '03 pledging nearly \$4 billion toward nanotech research.

PLAY MONEY

We break into the glitzy pads of the game biz's highest scorers—and learn their secrets for success

Here's a shocker: Megahit games make megabucks. So we figured we'd show you where some of that moolah winds up. Once again, we invade the lavish homes of two captains of the gaming industry. (Miss the first half of this

two-part article last month? No soup for you!) Even better, these guys share the wealth, offering tips on making it big in the biz. Listen up and maybe one day you too can own your own observatory and/or walk-in wine closet.

—Scott Steinberg

KING OF HIS CASTLE

Ultima papa Richard "Lord British" Garriott is worth a king's ransom

Stop giving your neighborhood role-playing rejects swirlies: As Richard Garriott proves, they could crush you with the press of a key someday. A bored kid back in '79, he programmed a game known as *Akalabeth* in his spare time, which begat the blockbuster *Ultima* RPG series for PC and consoles. They say a man's home is his castle, but damn...who knew Richie Rich here would take it so literally with his Austin, Texas-based fortress.

EGM: What's the secret to your success, my liege?

Richard Garriott: Timing. Early on, I became a master of all trades (e.g., programming, art, design, sound). Today it's too much for one man to handle.

EGM: But surely timing wasn't entirely the reason for *Ultima's* popularity?

RG: Innovation was key. Instead of creating cheap sequels, I'd start from scratch each time. That habit of maximizing innovation was important to the franchise's staying power.

EGM: So to prosper and stay on the cutting edge, you have to keep reinventing yourself?

RG: Yes, definitely...you have to keep up with the times. There are lots of ways to be innovative—sadly, many [games] are simply what I describe as "Me too, plus one feature."

EGM: Roughly how much cash has the franchise generated?

RG: Right now, upwards of \$100 million. *Ultima Online* (PC) currently generates \$25 million a year to this day.

EGM: Of that, how much did you see? **RG:** Nowhere near that much, but several million, certainly.

EGM: What's the best thing the money bought you?

RG: The opportunity to explore the world. I've been to Antarctica and the South Pole twice, visited the threshold of space...it spawned a lot of creative energy that went into my games.

EGM: Biggest drawback of the loot?

RG: The expectations that build around you. People are always wondering what comes next. There's a lot of pressure...you can't back off...

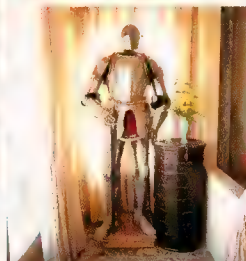
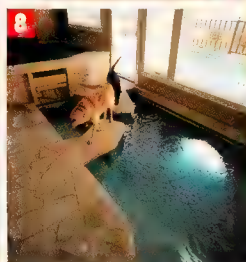
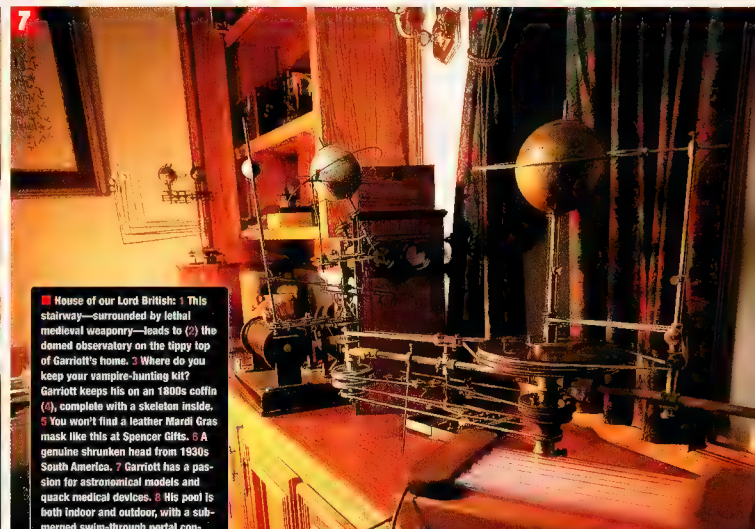
EGM: Did establishing a character like Lord British (Garriott's alter ego in the *Ultima* universe) play a major part in your success?

RG: It was a big part of it. It lent credence to the fact I want to live in these virtual worlds as much as anyone else. And the moniker sticks—it's helped me become more memorable than equally successful game creators.

EGM: Ever cause an identity crisis?

RG: Funny thing is, my father is a NASA astronaut. There's times we'll be in a science circle and people will recognize me ahead of him. But then there are times at game conventions when they'll recognize him ahead of me.



**1****2****3****4****5****6****7****8**

8 House of our Lord British: **1** This stairway—surrounded by lethal medieval weaponry—leads to **(2)** the domed observatory on the tippy top of Garriott's home. **3** Where do you keep your vampire-hunting kit? Garriott keeps his on an 1800s coffin **(4)**, complete with a skeleton inside. **5** You won't find a leather Mardi Gras mask like this at Spencer Gifts. **6** A genuine shrunken head from 1930s South America. **7** Garriott has a passion for astronomical models and quack medical devices. **8** His pool is both indoor and outdoor, with a submerged swim-through portal connecting both sides. Check out the hot tub in the back.

MUNCH MONEY

Lorne Lanning's odyssey through Oddworld led to greener pastures

Normally, calling a pair of individuals "Oddworld inhabitants" would get your ass kicked lickety-split, but not if that duo is Lorne Lanning and partner Sherry McKenna. After co-founding a company with said name, they went on to hook more than 4 million gamers across the globe with a uniquely bizarre yet equally endearing series set in a twisted alien universe: the *Oddworld* games (which includes *Abe's Oddysee* for PS1, *Munch's Oddysee* for Xbox, and an upcoming new Xbox installment). Like sneaky series hero Abe, we tiptoe into Lanning's sprawling California lodge for a look-see.

EGM: You guys came out of nowhere in the mid-'90s. Was the company a pipe dream, or...?

Lorne Lanning: Sherry and I were working for a special effects company, where we had no creative input. I wanted to be a storyteller and own my own intellectual property and knew videogames were the medium of the future. It's all about creative control.

EGM: And the money to do this came from where?

LL: Venture capital. We ran into a guy who saw how much money the publisher Rocket Science had raised. He wanted to write his own get-rich-quick story.

EGM: You must've been wishing on the right star, eh?

LL: It's all about who you know. And smart business negotiation...but there was some random, dumb chance to it.

EGM: So you attribute your breakout star power to luck?

LL: I think luck is something you create. Timing was everything for us, but we knew that money was going to be coming into the technology business in the coming years. Because we did our homework, setting out to get some of that money was much easier. You have to understand the market before you can master it.

EGM: Then we're guessing the *Oddworld* series' grand reception was no surprise to you?

LL: [Laughs] I always say it's pleasant to have success, but when you borrow a million dollars to make an entertainment product, you really have to plan on succeeding. We were even ready to walk away from our initial investment proposal if we didn't get what we wanted, because we were so confident in our capabilities.

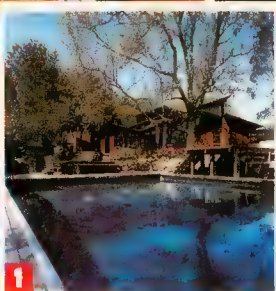
EGM: But not everyone can afford to be that ballsy.

LL: Hey, I believe being creative and innovative is safer than taking the "me too" route most game developers do.

EGM: Your best suggestion for anyone who'd care to follow in your footsteps, then?

LL: It has more to do with work ethic than any approach. You can't have low standards. If someone thinks they can do great work that'll blow people away on a 9 to 5 schedule, they're getting into the wrong business. It's like the Olympics—don't train your ass off, and you'll never win a gold medal. 🏆





■ Lanning's pad: 1 Tucked under old eaves and partly solar-powered, Lanning's custom-built wood-and-glass home feels more like a Native American lodge than a typical house. "My friends call it the sweat lodge," he says. 2 The old chest in Lanning's gaming/fitness-heater room is filled with videogame consoles. All the wires run under the hardwood floor. 3 The master bedroom features funky glowing paintings, including a *Kissing My* artist Alex Gray. 4 This guardian shaman sculpture is one of several "ghost chasers" found throughout the house. 5 An authentic submarine door seals the booze cellar.



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The Suffering is an all-new next-generation entry into the action horror genre, and the first game of its kind to probe into the very unsettling and seedy underbelly of a maximum-security penitentiary, which is haunted by horrific and grotesque apparitions, all represented by the unique and disturbing executions that previously befell them. Take on the role of Torque, an inmate who must face much more than his own inner demons and the harsh and gritty reality of death row, as he fights to escape the unleashing of the penitentiary's gruesome secrets in what amounts to be a challenging and terrifying journey through one of the most hellish environments ever imagined. The Suffering features ultra-mature content and three distinctly different endings depending upon how you choose to survive.

CREATURE DESIGN BY STAN WINSTON STUDIOS

"Midway's action/horror title could be the most gruesome videogame ever"

—IGN.COM

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—Game Informer



MATURE 17+



Blood and Gore
Drug Reference
Intense Violence
Strong Language



PlayStation 2





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SHOW AND TELL: FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

A guided tour of duty from the developer

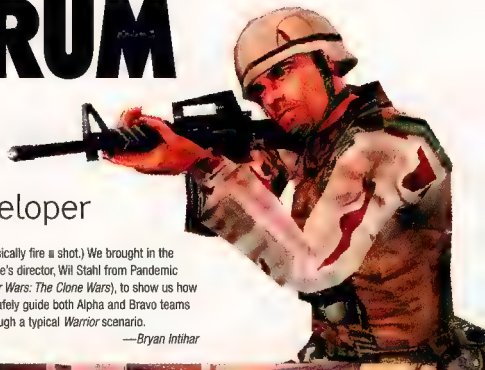
General Patton must be rolling over in his grave. Members of the U.S. Army playing videogames to learn squad-based survival skills? Yup, and this March a modified version of the simulator the Army trains with is coming to Xbox. *Full*

Spectrum Warrior.

But THQ's game isn't just another team-based military shooter like Tom Clancy's *Rainbow Six 3*. Your intellect, rather than your trigger finger, is the key to success here. (It's a third-person *plotter*—you never

physically fire a shot.) We brought in the game's director, Wil Stahl from Pandemic (*Star Wars: The Clone Wars*), to show us how to safely guide both Alpha and Bravo teams through a typical *Warrior* scenario.

—Bryan Iltner



STEP 1: LAYING DOWN COVER FIRE

Wil Stahl: "Here, I'm moving my squad [of nine, men divided into two teams] down an alley and into a central courtyard. Bravo team [in the foreground] is supplying cover fire while Alpha team bounds from the corner along the wall. Bounding is an advanced kind of movement that allows me to move a team to a location two soldiers at a time. [This maneuver] is slower but allows the soldiers to move and fire."



STEP 2: GETTING INTO POSITION

WS: "Using the Y button on the Xbox controller, I'm able to move the camera between both teams; using the directional pad, I can move the camera to any individual soldier of [either Alpha or Bravo] team. By switching to the Alpha team leader here, I'm able to get a look into the courtyard as an enemy [in the center of the screen] runs for cover behind the dumpster."



STEP 3: EVACUATING THE WOUNDED

WS: "[At this point] I've taken care of the first enemy but sustained a casualty in the process. I've also come under fire from a balcony to the upper right. By moving Alpha team behind this truck, they're able to put suppression fire on the balcony, so I can have the other team carry the wounded man into the garage on the left. Now I have to find a way to get Alpha team out from behind that truck."



STEP 4: TAKING OUT THE ENEMY

WS: "Alpha team uses the truck for cover from a sniper on a balcony of the adjacent high-rise. But before they can tackle that problem, they must clear the courtyard by outgunning the OP4 [military speak for opposing force] from two different vantage points. Then [Alpha team can] suppress the sniper with heavy fire from your squad's automatic weapons while Bravo flanks him for a better angle and takes him out."

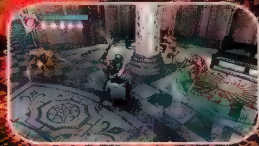
INTERPLAY HAS SOLD THE LONG-DELAYED XBOX ACTION-ADVENTURE GAME GALLEON TO SCI, WHO WILL RELEASE IT THIS SPRING IN EUROPE. NO WORD ON A U.S. DATE YET...

Vengeance... is a dish better served hot.



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CELEBRITY GAMER: MICHAEL MADSEN



Getting down with **Driv3r's** wheel man

H e cut off a cop's ear in *Reservoir Dogs*. He was the moralistic member of the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad in *Kill Bill*. And he was the stern (but caring) father in two *Free Willy* movies. In the *GTA*-like *Driv3r* (due in March for PS2, XB, and GC), Michael Madsen plays an undercover cop whose personality fits comfortably amidst all three extremes.

EGM: Tell us a bit about your character in the game. Is there any of your real personality in there?

Michael Madsen: I'm the wheel man—my character's name is Tanner. He's a very handsome, very strong individual. As a matter of fact, I have recently returned to weight training and boxing.... I think [this role has] inspired me.

EGM: How does this guy compare to tough characters like Bud from *Kill Bill* or Mr. Blonde from *Reservoir Dogs*?

MM: As violent as Tanner is, he's in fact a heroic individual who's trying to do something right. When I started off as an actor, to be honest with you, I thought of myself as the romantic leading man, not as the vicious killer. But unfortunately—or fortunately, depending on how you look at it—the roles that I'm most recognized for are the bad fellas. I'll blame that on Quentin Tarantino [laughs].

EGM: So...Tanner won't be cutting anybody's ears off.

MM: I don't think that's in his repertoire.

EGM: We didn't think so. Was there any room for improvisation when you were recording *Driv3r*?

MM: Yeah, it was very encouraged. There's a few times where I try to give Tanner some humor that wasn't on the page. I got a big kick out of it.

EGM: Are you planning to be involved in any games based on films you've been in? Like *Reservoir Dogs*?

MM: There's a company that's trying to make a *Reservoir Dogs* game based on the character of Mr. Blonde, and I'm really looking forward to that. I don't know if they're gonna be able to do it, though. You see, even though Artisan [Pictures] owns the rights to *Reservoir Dogs*, they don't own the rights to the characters. Those belong to Quentin. It's complicated, but I know they'd like to do some sort of a prequel to the film.

EGM: Do you know anything about the *Kill Bill* videogame that's supposedly in the works?

MM: I've heard Quentin talk about it, that he struck a deal with somebody for a videogame. But I don't really know the details of that.

EGM: Okay, last question: So, what's your poison?

MM: There's a drink that originated in a club in Miami called the "Mr. Blonde." It's half Jack Daniels and half lemonade. So I got a drink named after me, for goshakes, and it's not bad. ☺

—Justin Speer and Ethan Einhorn



Maximum OverDriv3r
After launching off a blocky PS1 ramp, the *Driver* series has hurtled through the air in poetic slow motion for more than three years. It's about to touch down with the jarring crash of its incredibly complex physics system. But that's not all that's new. There's a lot of ground to cover: three cities (Miami, Nice, and Istanbul), 156 square miles of pavement, and 35,000 buildings. This time Tanner's packing a variety of hand cannons—and a grenade launcher you'll likely want to nickname. Plus, *Driv3r* lets you get behind the wheel of a fully articulated 18-wheeler.

Check out the extended version of our interview with Michael Madsen at extra.egm.com.

THE MOST ACCLAIMED GAME OF THE YEAR

FIVE OUT OF FIVE STARS
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GameSpy

93%
EDITOR'S CHOICE

PC Gamer

90%

Gamers.com

94%

Gamerankings.com

FIVE OUT OF FIVE

GamePro.com

3 1/2 STARS OUT OF 4

The Associated Press

4 1/2 STARS OUT OF 5
EDITOR'S CHOICE

Computer Gaming World

9.3
EDITOR'S CHOICE

IGN

9.0
EDITOR'S CHOICE

Gamespot

A+

UGO

FIVE OUT OF FIVE STARS

Maxim

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ACTIVISION



Blood
Violence



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INSPECT YOUR GADGETS

Looking up Bond's arsenal for **007: Everything or Nothing**

You've heard about the unprecedented star power in James Bond's newest action game, *007: Everything or Nothing*: the golden pipes and chiseled likenesses of actors Pierce Brosnan and Willem Dafoe, the alluring theme song by Mya,

the snappy script penned by Bond scribe Bruce Fein...the list goes on and on. But all that, you could argue, is just a distraction—the gadgets are the real stars, saving Bond's skin time and time again. After all, what would 007 be without the ever-resourceful Q, the

gent responsible for all of Bond's spy gear? So we stopped by the engineering genius' workshop for a briefing on the lethal tools you'll use in Her Majesty's service this February on PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube.

—Shawn Elliott



Spider cam

Sure, James has an assortment of punishing melee moves and an arsenal of machine guns to match, but by keeping to the shadows and using nanospiders, he won't always need 'em. Spot a sniper, but don't want to risk a duel? Send one of these little buggers behind him and blow him out of his perch...although Q would prefer you returned all equipment in pristine condition.

PS2 Network Adapter

Bond may get all the latest gear, but agents Suggs and Lotus have got each other. Whether online (PS2 only) or splitting a screen, you and your accomplice must pool ammo, provide covering fire, and otherwise collaborate to survive co-op mode's 12 unique missions. Plus, puzzles go beyond releasing locks by standing on pressure plates. In one level, for instance, Suggs must deactivate a series of lasers as Lotus' life hangs in the balance. And since you share respawns, the life you save may be your own.



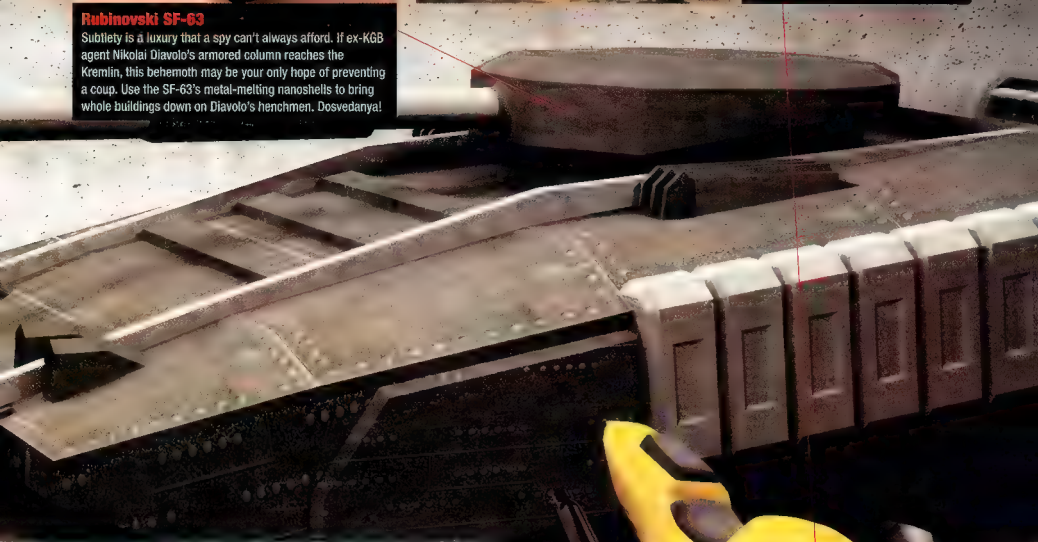
Rubinski SF-63

Subtlety is a luxury that a spy can't always afford. If ex-KGB agent Nikolai Diavolo's armored column reaches the Kremlin, this behemoth may be your only hope of preventing a coup. Use the SF-63's metal-melting nanoshells to bring whole buildings down on Diavolo's henchmen. Dosvedanya!



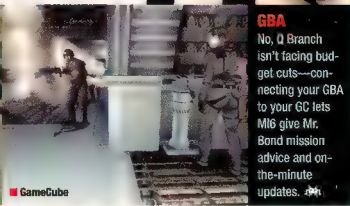
Triumph Daytona superbike

Sometimes two wheels are better than four—even when you happen to drive an Aston Martin Vanquish equipped with an acid slick that dissolves vulcanized rubber. When it comes to chasing runaway trains and racing over the rooftops of Peruvian villas, what could be better than a Daytona superbike that spews flames from either side of its fairing? Now you've got a license to kill *and* break traffic laws.



Game Boy Advance

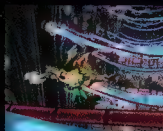
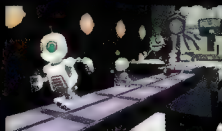
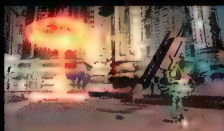
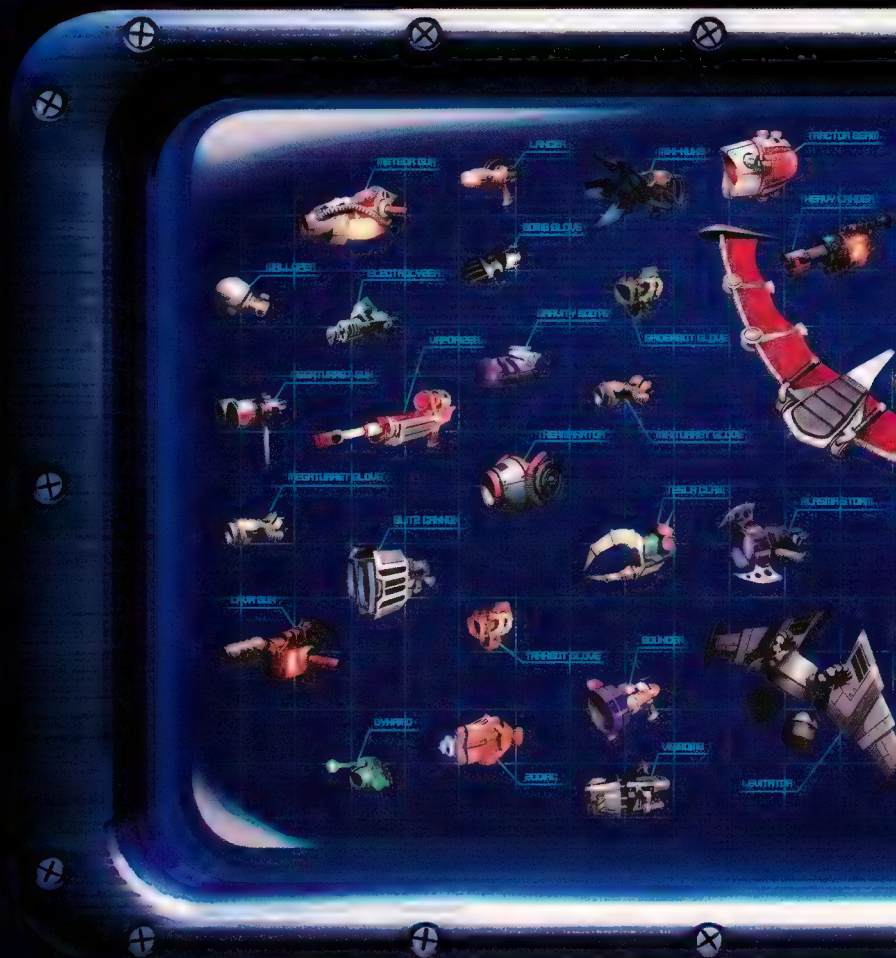
Pull steam valve



GameCube

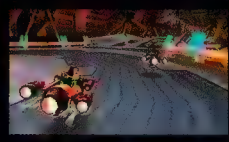
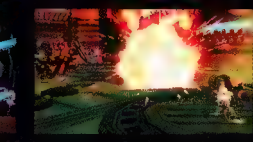
GBA

No. 0 Branch isn't facing budget cuts—connecting your GBA to your GC lets MIB give Mr. Bond mission advice and on-the-minute updates. *Mh*



EENIE, MEENIE, MINEY, BOOM.

They're back. And they're itching for action. With tons of planets to conquer in a whole new gigantic galaxy, you better believe Ratchet & Clank are gonna sink their teeth into some destruction. Ummm, destruction. With weapon upgrades, mods, armor and the ability for Ratchet to get stronger and smarter as the game goes on, this could get uglier than The Grandmas In Bikinis Calendar after-party. Speaking of parties, there's also hoverbike racing, space combat and gladiator arenas. As far as weapons and gadgets go, Ratchet & Clank are stacked with over 500 new ones, along with unlockable upgrades, so by the end of the journey, you'll go through more weapons and gadgets than a hungry fat man will go through chicken wings at lunch. Lock and load, baby, lock and load. www.us.playstation.com



LIVE IN YOUR WORLD.
PLAY IN OURS.



PlayStation.2



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1080° Avalanche



If you've got high-speed Net access, are halfway tech savvy, and have a thirst to play these Nintendo games online, you've got options...

ONLINE THIS MONTH

Getting your GameCube online

Aside from an occasional round of *Phantasy Star*, GameCube gets about as much online action as your 98-year-old grandpa. Thankfully, some part-time programmers/full-time fans have taken matters into their own hands.

By taking a trip to WarpPipe's web reservoir at warppipe.com, you'll be introduced to a process called tunneling, which tricks games playable via LAN (local area network) into thinking they're jacked into another GameCube in your living room. In reality, you'll be competing against players across the globe in *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!*, *Kirby Air Ride*, and *1080° Avalanche*.

All you need is a PC, a GameCube, a GC broadband adapter, a high-speed Net connection, and a router/hub to link it all together. (If you don't already have one set up, be sure to establish a network between all your machines, as your PC

has to be able to share data with the Cube.) There are a variety of hook-up options, but ultimately you'll need to download the WarpPipe beta software to your PC. The only catch is you'll have to find buddies on message boards by swapping IP addresses because there are no matchmaking options yet (though they're promised soon).

Since it's still in beta, WarpPipe isn't without a few hiccups. If your Net connection is slower than 128 kbps upstream bandwidth (or

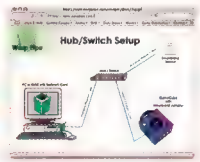
256 kbps for *Kirby*), you risk the chance of being randomly dumped from races. Firewalls also pose a threat to compatibility, so it's best to turn them off first.

—Jon M. Gibson

On egmmag.com

Drop by extra.egmmag.com to read our full *Prince of Persia* and *Sonic Heroes* Afterthoughts interviews, our chat with the developers of *Driv3r*, and full transcripts of our talks with the creators of Konami's *Neo-Contra* and *Nanobreaker*.

Head over to WarpPipe's website for the full how-to.



must-hit websites

arcadetones.emuonline.com — You know you want your Nokia cell phone to ring with the sweet, sweet sounds of *The Legend of Zelda*, *Pac-Man*, and *Tetris*. Hit this site, download the tunes, and relive classic gaming moments whenever you get a call.

theadvantageband.com — A lot of bands cover 8-bit Nintendo-era game music, but few do it with as much soul as the Advantage, a West Coast foursome that belts out soaring renditions of music from *Mega Man 2*, *Wizards & Warriors*, and *DuckTales*.

flashplayoc.com/games/supermario-rampage.html — Ever wonder just how unstoppable Mario would be if, well, he had a shotgun? Now you can test your killographic hypothesis, thanks to this rithmic, grisly web game.

PC GAMING UPDATE

Princes and Knights



Lots of things get lost in translation when console games are ported to PC—little niggling things like, oh, fun and enjoyment. Fortunately, two of the best parts of the year have just come out for PC, and not only was nothing lost, but things were actually gained.

Knights of the Old Republic fares the best. A lot of this success is due to the game's mouse-driven interface. While the character and inventory screens work well on Xbox, navigating all that information is an effortless breeze when you can just click on the thing you want and then jump right back into the action and story. The load times are insanely fast, and developer BioWare has also done a great job with the PC graphics by ratcheting up the texture detail and polygon count to something well over jaw-droppingly gorgeous. At standard resolutions, the game looks great. At higher resolutions, it's a marvel. And as an added bonus for PC gamers' patience, there's a brand-new PC-exclusive Rodian vendor selling high-end equipment (at high-end prices).

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time benefits from the graphical upgrades the PC offers, and somehow a game that is among the most beautiful console titles in years gets even richer on PC. This is also the rare platformer that survives the move to PC in terms of gameplay, with keyboard and mouse controls that actually work well. The only downside is that the first and second *Princes*, unlockable on the console versions, didn't make the jump. Then again, PC gamers could play those games years ago. —Robert Coffey, Computer Gaming World



KICK ASH.



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Blood
Mild Language
Violence

PlayStation 2



KONAMI

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ROOM WITHOUT A VIEW

The nightmare starts at home in **Silent Hill 4**

Henry Townsend hasn't set foot outside his small apartment for five days. It's not that he doesn't want to leave; it's that he can't. His windows won't open. He can't break through the walls. The phone's dead, and nobody seems to be able to hear him outside. The front door? It's bound by heavy chains and sealed with a series of huge locks. But there just might be a way out after all. Henry woke up this morning to find a huge, gaping hole in the back of his bathroom wall. God only knows how it got there, who made it, and what's on the other side—but chances are it's going to be bloody, loathsome, and disturbing beyond belief. After all, this is *Silent Hill*, the survival-horror series so fed up that it makes *Resident Evil* look like *Friggin' Scooby-Doo*.

Along with the surreal opening scenario, Konami has divulged the first cryptic details concerning the fourth episode of this psychotic series. Unlike the third chapter, which formed a concrete link with the original title, this fall's *Silent Hill 4* for PS2 and X3 will be another departure, a new plot turning unfamiliar characters to the twisted New England town. According

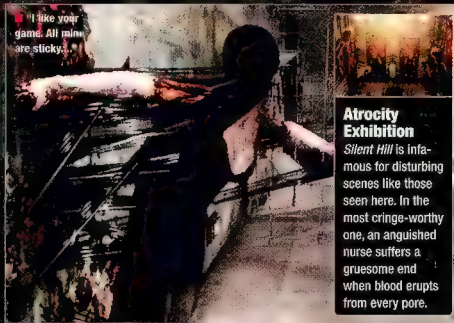
to Producer Akira Yamaoka, players can still expect familiar elements—maybe even a few unexpected revelations. "There's not a direct connection in terms of the story lines. You might, however, see some people that you would never expect. There's a common theme of the alternate world of *Silent Hill*."

Surprisingly, the producer has an even more shocking admission: "I can say that the story is darker than the past games."

Since *Silent Hill 2* contained a scene where a pyramid-headed beast violently raped a creature composed of adjoined sets of mannequin legs (it was, y'know, an embodiment of the protagonist's sexual frustration with his wife who was, um, crippled by illness before he ended her life), a darker story is a bold claim indeed. "Henry can't stop himself from climbing into the hole, as he badly wants to get out of his apartment," explains Yamaoka.

"The theme of the story lies in solving the connection between the room where you live and the alternate world. Why is the alternate world tied to your room? The real question remains: Do we really want to find out?"

—Justin Speer



SILENT HILL GUEST BOOK

The folks drawn to town in earlier games were ordinary people who ended up in a nightmare world that they helped shape with their darkest thoughts. Meet 'em here:



Harry Mason

After his wife passed away, Harry's adopted daughter begged to visit the town. If he only knew about her dark link to the place.



James Sunderland

JS received a letter in his dead wife's handwriting, inviting him to the place where they shared so many great memories. Bad idea....



Heather Morris

This 17-year-old mall rat was pulled into Silent Hill without warning. A dark secret dwelt within her, and it wanted out very badly.



ONIMUSHA

BLADE WARRIORS

**EVERY FIGHT IS A WAR...
EVERY WARRIOR IS A LEGEND.**

Command the noble universe of Onimusha in this hardcore 3-D action fighting game. Select your Warrior from 24 characters from the world of Onimusha and prepare to battle. Fight solo or with up to three others for lightning fast multi-player battles that show off your skills as the ultimate Warrior.



Violence
Suggestive Themes



PlayStation 2

CAPCOM

capcom.com

THE RUMOR MILL

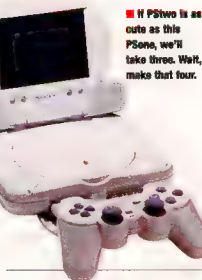
Gossip that sees its shadow

q-mann

GROUNDLED

Open the best doors, @-followers. 'Tis I, your rumer ringer like this tour: do speculation, The Quartermann, and I've got a fresh bounty of the finest conjecture and gossipitude in Gamingsberg. Best part is, it's yours for only \$19.95! So call now! Wait, what? I've gotta give this stuff away for free? Well, OK, I'll do it, but only because I like you. Don't go tellin' your friends that I did this. One per customer, ya hear! Oh, and if you wanna send off @ your comments, point 'em to quartermann@ziffdavis.com

—The Q



■ If PStwo is as cute as this PSone, we'll take three. Wait, make that four.

Nintendo goes mobile

While its luck with home consoles hasn't always been the best, Nintendo has done one thing right for over a decade—portable gaming. Facing competition this fall from Sony's PlayStation Portable (PSP), the company is taking measures to ensure it stays king of the hill. The Q's inner circle of gossip fiends are whispering that part of Nintendo's big plan for this May's Electronic Entertainment Expo is the introduction of a new mobile device. And describing it as mobile means it'll be more than just another Game Boy (anyone need a new cell phone?).

PSP games ready up

Think about it: Less than a year from now, you're going to be able to buy a PlayStation Portable that's somewhere between PS2 and Sega's Dreamcast in terms of power. And just a few of the titles The Q-meister hears are coming to the system are the next *SSX* and a version of *Madden NFL 2005* from Electronic Arts, a remake of Konami's *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*, a portable *Harvest Moon* courtesy of Natsume, and a few titles from Koel.

Get ready for PStwo

Just as PS1 morphed into a new monster when PS2 came along, rumor has it Sony is working on a smaller and cheaper version of PS2 called (naturally) PStwo. But a few features of its papa may end up missing in the name of cost savings, so you're not gonna want to sell off your original machine just yet.

New Deus Ex coming

It feels like *Deus Ex: Invisible War* just came out yesterday, but The Q hears there's another console *Deus Ex* in the works already. This time it's a PS2 multiplayer shooter entitled *Clan Wars*.



Sequel Watch 2004

That's right, squirrely gamers, new installments of your favorite games are so close, you'll soon be able to taste 'em. Right now, yours truly is monitoring the situation on *SOCOM III*, *Jak III*, *Sly Cooper 2*, a new *Need For Speed* (which I'm hearing is not a sequel to *Underground*), *Def Jam Vendetta 2* (which will probably include some GTA-inspired gameplay), and *Warhawk 2* (sequel to an early PS1 favorite).

Battlefield 1942 PS2 details

The Q admits, his addiction to online gaming is strong. Very strong. And the new installment of military shooter *Battlefield 1942* in development for PS2 will likely become a necessary fix. The hot rumor right now is that PS2 players will be able to play against PC gamers. Not since *Quake III* on Dreamcast has the feat been attempted (and even then, not to great success), but let's hope that feature stays in, eh?



■ PSP could use a little Castlevania.

DESERT ISLAND GAMES ED ROBERTSON



Every 30 days or so, we corner a celeb or game designer and ask, "If you were marooned on a deserted island, what three console games would you want to wash ashore?" This month, we strand Barenaked Ladies' co-frontman and guitarist Ed Robertson, whose tune "One Week" is featured in *Karaoke Revolution for PlayStation 2*. —Marc Saltzman



Soul Calibur II (PS2/XB/GC)

"You gotta have a good fighting game—and this is the best. Maybe I could teach some of the indigenous wildlife to hold a controller."



Parappa the Rapper (PS1)

"Because it allows me to (get more music into) my desert-island music collection. Great design, great music, thoroughly fun."



Gran Turismo 3 A-spec (PS2)

"You'd want a good, pure driving game. Plus, you'd likely be battling your own sanity after a while—this would help push it over the edge!"

* Robertson adds: "Oh, also, could *Rain 2* suddenly weigh up orphans when it comes out?"

TIDBITS FOR THE PORTABLE-MINDED PLAYER IN YOU



Square Offers Brave Shot

If you're a member of Verizon Wireless' Get It Now service, you can download Square Enix's first U.S. cell phone game, the space shooter *Brave Shot* (\$2 monthly or \$5 unlimited use). More titles will follow in the months to come.

Oops! Game Boy

We imagine Nintendo's new limited-edition, any/platinum Game Boy Advance SP color scheme is the result of a major factory screwup, like the one that led to those Oh! Oreo cookies, only not as deflatable. Should you actually like how this bastardization of science looks, you can pick one up beginning February 8 for 100 bucks.





TWISTED
GOTTA HAVE ~ SWEET?



FISTS OF FURY

Forewarned is forewarned in Namco's fisticuff-filled fantasy. **Breakdown**

Mind matters in Namco's first-person adventure *Breakdown*—due for Xbox in March. As amnesia-ass-kicker Derrick Cole, you must discover how you became imprisoned in a top-secret lookup, find the truth behind your emerging superpowers, and answer the most important question of all: Who the @#% are you?

Make no mistake, though; mind won't triumph over matter when it comes to the kiss of hot lead or the caress of a rock-hard fist. There will be brawls aplenty in *Breakdown*. Gunfights, too.

The game's plot unravels slowly, and Namco refuses to give details away; a 45-

minute playtest with *Breakdown* failed to pierce its veil of secrecy. Hirofumi Kami, the game's producer, won't even explain the significance of its title. "Sometimes, you have to break things down and build them back up in order to figure them out," he says cryptically. When asked about Cole's past, Kami responds, "If I told you, I'd have to kill you."

Expect weirdness. Cole's first major act in *Breakdown* is to puke a mickey-slipped meal into a toilet. While he flees down one of the game's gray metal hallways, the screen warps and flashes. Cole becomes momentarily disoriented, and just when it seems another lunch might be lost, he

raises his hand to reveal he's developed, at least temporarily, X-ray vision. Whether this is an illusion, an indication of his insanity, or what is uncertain, and Kami

defeated in first-person hand-to-hand combat. Before the mystery is solved, there will be plenty of opportunities to fight and flee, complete puzzles of the

"Sometimes, you have to break things down...to figure them out." —Producer Hirofumi Kami

won't comment about it.

Breakdown's physicality threatens to rival its mindgames; Cole can use any weapon against normal foes, but the enigmatic T'lan Warriors (seen above) must be

jumping and brain-teasing varieties, and more. Kami also promises "a very unpredictable plot twist during the second half of the game," which anchors this mystery won't easily be sleuthed. —Greg Orlando

L'I'L PREVIEWS: SOMEDAY THIS WAR'S GONNA END... OKAY, MAYBE NOT

CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR

PS2/XB/PC • Activision • Summer 2004 — Okay, it's slightly complicated. Activision has two WWII first-person shooters named *Call of Duty*: one recently released for PC, and one coming for consoles. And both are... *Medal of Honor*-ish titles sending you on a tour of European hot spots.



BEHIND ENEMY LINES

PS2/XB • Acclaim • June 2004 — Look familiar, RPG fans? It should: This WWII action game uses the same engine as *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance*. The only difference: instead of weird fantasy realms, you're stormin' Normandy and Market Garden. A gelatinous cube-free zone, in other words.



TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX

PS2 • Ubisoft • Spring 2004 — Clancyphiles worried about Ubi's hack-jobbing their Xbox tactical shooter to PS2 should put down the flashbang now. Not only are the graphics nearly unscathed, there are also new features like: original scripted events and a split-screen, co-op mode. Eight-player online is on hand, too.



SEGA HAS RELEASED TWO NEW FREE DOWNLOADABLE QUESTS FOR THE XBOX VERSION OF PHANTASY STAR ONLINE. ONE MAY EVEN HAVE A CHARACTER FROM NIGHTS (SATURN) IN IT.

who are you?



Embark on a journey of epic proportions to gather the precious myrrh. In a world where countless challenges stand in the way of your caravan. Face them alone, or for the first time ever, battle with friends by connecting up to four Game Boy Advance systems. Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles. Only on Nintendo GameCube.



THE HOT FIVE

The newest in new on the most popular games on the horizon

(Vote for your favorite games each month at egmmag.com. Why? Because you want to be heard! That's why.)



HALO 2

XB • Microsoft • 2004
Master Chief rocks the vote once more, landing in our top spot for the third month in a row. You guys can't seem to get enough of *Halo 2*, and sadly neither can we! The original has received its first price cut in more than two years, so everyone out there pop that sucker in and start imagining shiny new vehicles and weapons, destructible environments, altered gravity, re-educated A.I., and hot human-on-Covenant multiplayer action on Live. Mentally affix a '2' to the title and you're practically there. (Or head over to bungee.com and watch the latest "Making of Halo 2" video.)

■ The Master Chief suggests you play the original *Halo* again while you wait for the sequel.

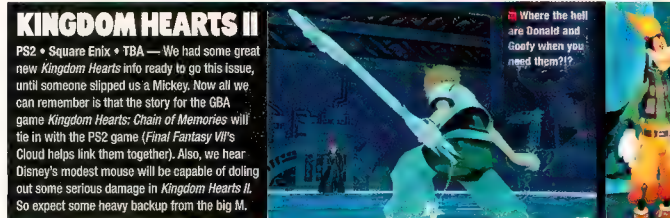


2

■ Want new shots of *MGS3*? Awwww, go climb up a tree.

METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

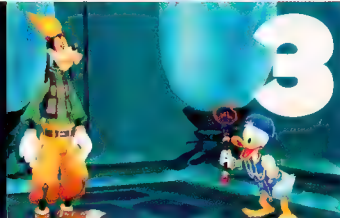
PS2 • Konami • Late 2004 — Still we continue our starvation death march toward *MGS3*'s release date. Konami hasn't even thrown a snack-size salamander of info our way, so this month it's come down to speculation—or hallucination. We might've licked the wrong tree frog. Everything's green....



KINGDOM HEARTS II

PS2 • Square Enix • TBA — We had some great new *Kingdom Hearts* info ready to go this issue, until someone slipped us a Mickey. Now all we can remember is that the story for the GBA game *Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories* will tie in with the PS2 game (*Final Fantasy VII's* Cloud helps link them together). Also, we hear Disney's modest mouse will be capable of doling out some serious damage in *Kingdom Hearts II*. So expect some heavy backup from the big M.

■ Where the hell are Donald and Goofy when you need them?!



3



RESIDENT EVIL 4

GC • Capcom • Late 2004 — While *Resident Evil 4* has a potentially infected Leon fighting swirling black clouds of vapor that form into phantom attackers and disappearing down the upcoming *Resident Evil: Apocalypse* movie pits a genetically altered Alice (Milla Jovovich) with superhuman strength and reflexes against the unstoppable Nemesis. Fans who can swallow this far-flung premise will be rewarded by glimpses of characters from *RE3*, a helicopter-versus-girl chase sequence straight out of the intro to *RE Code: Veronica*, and some really bitchin' S.T.A.R.S. vehicles. Maybe Milla'll kick a zombie frog in the face in slow motion again, too. There's always hope....

■ Stanna Guillory's Jill looks pixel-perfect in the next *RE* film foray.

■ Leon is probably peeing his pants right now.



5

METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES

GC • Konami • March 2004 — Want an additional bit of info that you won't find in the *Twin Snakes* preview on page 46? Well, the once-promised GC-GBA link feature has recently been canned. So much for connectivity being "the way of the future," eh?

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

Check out www.getintothegame.com to download a coupon for \$5 off any game on this card. While you're there, get the scoop on all the hottest games and accessories.

THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT



GBA, GC, PS2, XBOX



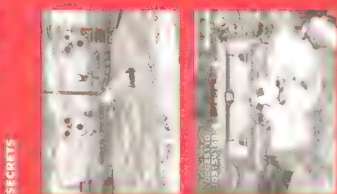
HOT TIPS

- Friendship occurs when both you and a fellow Sim have relationship scores of at least 50 with one another. Since relationship scores are not symmetrical, this might not happen at the same time for both Sims. Keep at it. At this point, the person officially counts as a family friend. This is important because actual friends are the only ones who matter for career promotion purposes.
- After 70 points, any romantic interaction (hug, kiss, backrub, etc.) can randomly result in love. You'll know it happens because a little heart appears next to the Sim's picture in the relationship panel.
- There are several ways to red in an interaction. In going well, if an interaction ends in relationship score, green plus signs appear on the Sim while benefits (two plus signs) if there's a big effect. On the other hand, if things don't go well, red minus signs appear.

SONIC HEROES



CC, PSP, XBOX



SUPER SONIC SECRETS

- Use the flying formation to dominate your friends in two-player battles.
- The Power Formation is a great way to take out groups of enemies. If you defeat groups of ten, you'll receive 10,000 points.
- Team Blast is the most powerful move in the game. Keep an eye on your gauges and be sure to activate this killer technique for bosses and tough enemies.



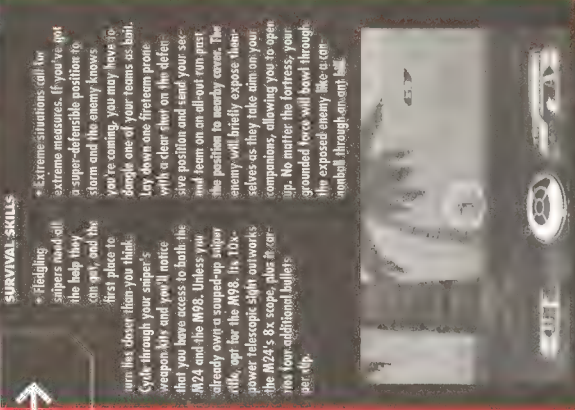
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TOM CLANGY'S GHOST RECON: JUNGLE STORM



PS2



SURVIVAL SKILLS

- Flagging snipers find all the help they can get, and the first place to turn has closer than you think. Sneak through your sniper's weapon bin and you'll notice that you have access to both the M24 and the M99. Unless you already own a sniper rifle, opt for the M99. Its 10X-power telescopic sight works the M24's 8X scope, plus it carries two additional bullets per clip.
- Extreme situations call for extreme measures. If you've got a super-defensible position to storm and the enemy knows you're coming, you may have to drop one of your teams as bait. Lay down one fireteam probe with a clear shot on the defense position and send your sniper team on an all-out run past the position to nearby cover. The enemy will briefly expose themselves as they take aim on your companions, allowing you to open grounded fire will blow through the exposed enemy like a cannonball through an ant hill.

SONIC HEROES: SONY; TOM CLANGY'S GHOST RECON: JUNGLE STORM: UBI



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.

Visit us www.getintothegame.com to download a coupon for \$5 off any game or DVD and, while you're here, get the scoop on all the hottest games and consoles.

MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!!



MAD DASHING

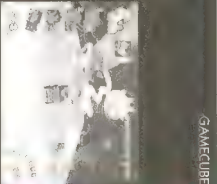
Leading your foe? If you're leading or top speed with another racer in front, stay slightly to one side of them, and not directly behind in case they have on them. They want to drop behind them, that way, if we pass to the side of your leader or you, we're big to avoid it.

Defensive Shielding

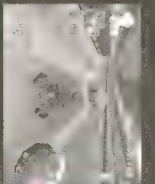
Think you're the big shot zooming into the lead? Not when you're shown down by incoming items or lasers of a mad group of racing. Instead, if you're in the lead, keep of feet one shell (red or green) behind to when behind you. You can deflect most (but not all) attacks.

Stay in Secret

When you play a lot of Mario Kart you'll realize that some of the power-ups (such as the Blue Shell) are specifically targeting the race leader, so stay back into the short radius of any attacks, and stand the lead when the leader gets down, towards the end of the final lap.



GAMECUBE



MARVIN



IDENTITY DISGUISE

Marvin's disguise game is a strategy game where you play as a character who can disguise as one of the other characters in the game. The goal is to outsmart your opponent by using your disguise to your advantage. You can disguise as any of the other characters in the game, and you can use your disguise to your advantage in a variety of ways. For example, you can disguise as a character who is known for being a good fighter, and then use that disguise to your advantage in a fight. You can also disguise as a character who is known for being a good strategist, and then use that disguise to your advantage in a strategy game.



NFL STREET



PIESKIN TIPS

*** Defensive Play.** When Up: With sets of seven players' up to the line. This formation is equally adept at stopping the run or short pass. However, pressure the quarterback, or he'll have a better way against the single zone coverage.

*** Offensive Play, QB Bump.** Don't even try this play if your quarterback lacks Speed, Agility or Run Power. It is best used to surprise a defense that likes to blitz or pressures you from the outside. Try it on the short yardage situation instead of going wide with your running back.

*** Offensive Play, Quick Kick.** This play has great comeback opportunities, because the defense has to let all time to another special as it responds to the pitch. At the time the first one of defenders reaches your running back, you can cut back to the middle of the field for big yardage.



GC, PS2, XBOX



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COMING SOON

Gaming gold at the end of the rainbow

MARCH 2004

Keep these hot hands turned in while playing *Firefighter F.D. 18*.



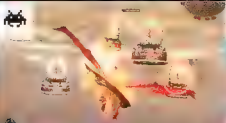
All-Star Baseball 2005
PS2/XB • Acclaim — Leading *All-Star's* charge for a pennant are an all-new fielder camera and deeper dynasty mode.



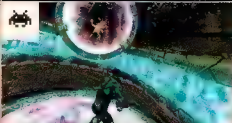
Blood Will Tell
PS2 • Sega — Limbless ronin Hyakkimaru must recover his humanity (or is that manhood?) from body-part-snatchin' demons.



Cy Girls
PS2 • Konami — Femme fatales Ice and Aska tackle terrorism in both the real and virtual world. Cyber-splendid.



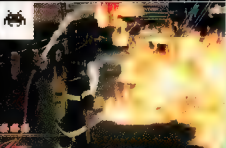
Drakengard
PS2 • Square Enix — Combines aerial combat à la *Panzer Dragoon* with *Dynasty Warriors'* swift swordplay.



DroneZ
XB • Metro3D — Defend cyberspace with the help of a real-world hacker. Sounds suspiciously like *Tron* to us....



EA Sports Fight Night 2004
PS2/XB • EA Sports — Bye-bye *Knockout Kings*, hello *Fight Night*. EA's brand-new boxing franchise enters the ring with 32 legendary boxers, including the likes of Roy Jones Jr. and Muhammad Ali. Plus, there's the extra treat of online play for PS2 owners.



Firefighter F.D. 18
PS2 • Konami — Rescue survivors from collapsing buildings and dangerous backdrafts while fighting out-of-control fires.



Ghost Master
XB • Empire — Build an army of unusual suspects and scare the bejesus outta every man, woman, and child in town.



Lifeline
PS2 • Konami — Only your voice (via USB headset) can save this beauty from alien beings.



Micro Mayhem
XB/GC • Jaleco — Take toy cars for a spin across the carpet in this wee racer (just keep 'em away from Ryan Dunn).



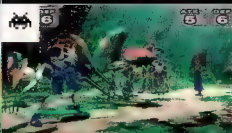
MLB 2005
PS2 • 989 Sports — *MLB's* starting lineup now features all-time greats such as Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, and Jackie Robinson.



MVP Baseball 2004
PS2/XB/GC • EA Sports — *MVP* steps up to the plate with improved batting mechanics and an online mode (PS2 only).



Nightshade
PS2 • Sega — Lady assassin Hibana takes a break from polishing her nails to rid Tokyo's streets of monstrous villains.



Phantasy Star Online Episode III: C.A.R.D. Revolution
GC • Sega — Strategic online card battles await.



Pokémon Colosseum
GC • Nintendo — Bring the pocket-monster arena outta GBA and into the Cube.



River City Ransom
GBA • Atlus — Free the students of River City High in this part of the much-loved RPG/fighting game for NES.

In the *Pokémon Colosseum*, you call 'em as you see 'em.

ATTACK OF THE 2003 GAMERS' CHOICE AWARDS

Run for your lives! Last year's top titles are locked in ground-quaking combat. We—and you—pick the victors

Oh the humanity! Why, year in and year out, must we pit our favorite games against one another in gruesome combat that only leads to severe property damage, acute stomach cramps, and a totally bitchin' confetti-drenched gala in which we dole out our nifty robot-shaped awards to the games that conquered?

Because you readers love this crap, that's why. Don't play like you don't:

You guys picked the mightiest of last year's mighty too, courtesy of an online ballot on www.TUP.com. Find out which way your vote rocked on page 88.

If our awards seem screwy compared to yours, that's because we categorized ours differently, breaking them into a multiplatform category, system-exclusive games of the year, and one overall game of the year. We also disqualified our Game of the Year from all

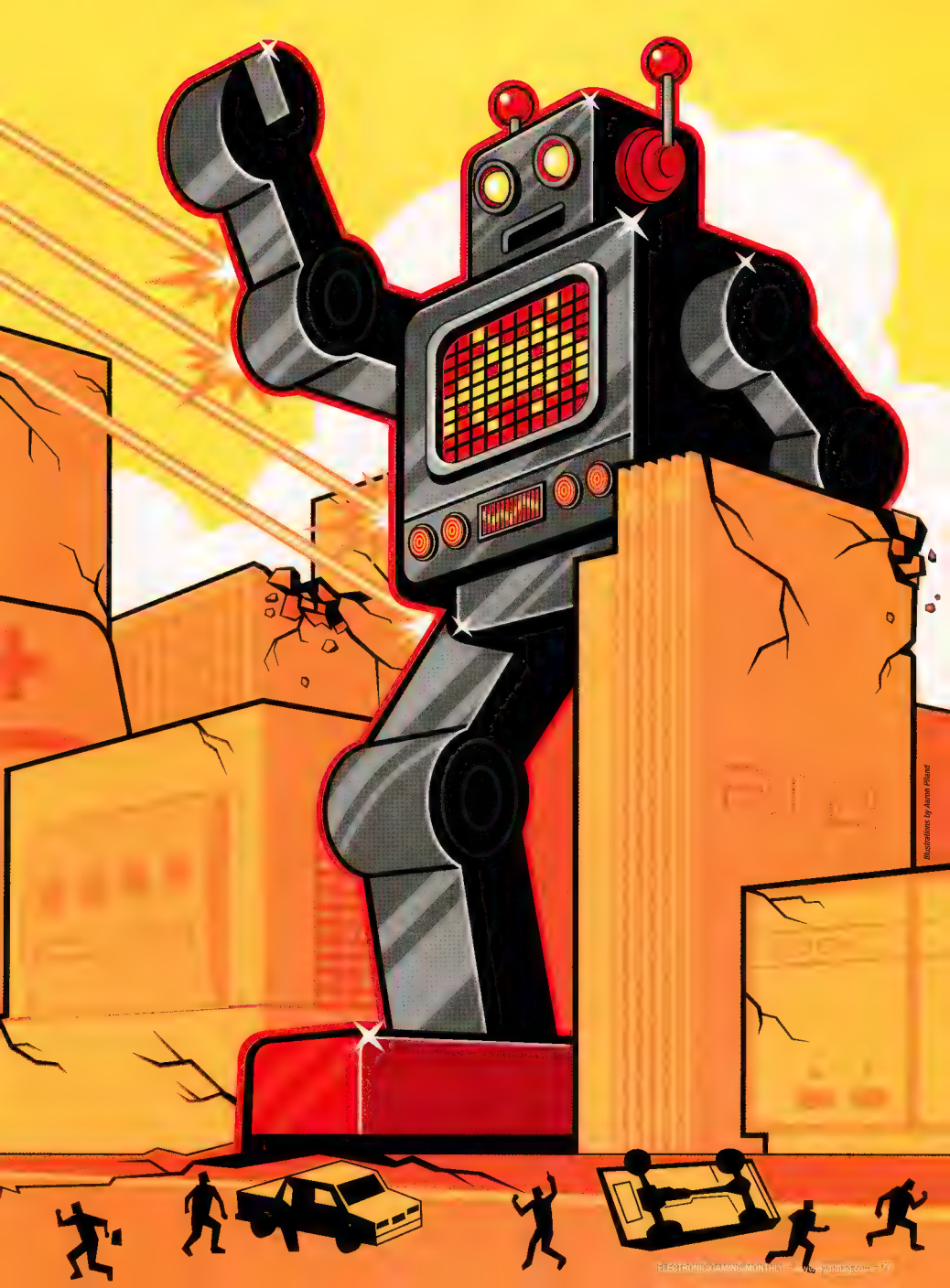
other categories to ensure one title doesn't tyrannically lord over the other games, forcing them to harvest plutonium for its atomic weaponry.

This year also sees the return of our Tobias Bruckner Memorial Awards for Excellence in the Field of Crapulence. Tobias who? Just know that he's a very bad man who represents very bad games. Find out how bad on page 86. The National Guard is on standby. >

Why all the robots?

Winners of our Gamers' Choice Awards each receive Robot the Awards Robot™, a fully functional robo-trophy suitable for bronzing and/or bomb defusal.

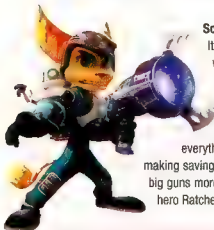




Illustrations by Aaron Plater

PLAYSTATION 2 GAME OF THE YEAR:

RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO



Sony CEA • **Runner-up:** SOCOM II

It seems like only yesterday that we first met Ratchet and Clank, but their second outing, *Going Commando*, is no quickie sequel. Developer Insomniac Games painstakingly fine-tuned everything we love about the original, making saving the universe with an arsenal of big guns more satisfying than ever (even if hero Ratchet is still kinda corny).



Accepted by Ted Price, president of developer Insomniac: "None of us can remember a year when so many great games were released, and therefore we are deeply honored to receive [this award]!"

■ **Attitude adjustment:** For the sequel, robo-bud Ratchet lost the snappy 'tude and gained a hero's sensibility. We actually like him now.



WHY IT CONQUERED...

1 Upgrade or Die
Using and upgrading Ratchet's arsenal of kick-ass weaponry adds a satisfying, more RPGish hook to the already great jumping-and-blasting action. Ratchet gains experience and hit points, making him an even match for tougher opponents later on.

2 Appetite for Destruction
We could—and do—spend hours formulating new ways to decimate Ratchet's foes. Is it better to run in guns blazing, toss out a few bombs, or sit back and send robotic spiderbots to do your bidding? The mind, it boggles.

3 It's a Big, Dangerous Universe Out There
Larger worlds with loads of gladiatorial arena challenges, microgames, and space shooting add maximum variety. If it had a racing game, it would have everything. Wait—it *does* have a racing game!



XBOX GAME OF THE YEAR:

STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

LucasArts • **Runner-up:** Project Gotham Racing 2

We'd almost given up hope that *Star Wars* games could be this good (or that RPGs could be this original). But then *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* energized

everything. Now Xbox owners have another game worth mentioning in the same sentence as *Halo*. (As in, "I can't believe you haven't played...") And *Knights'* story is full of so many cool twists, it's nearly as great as the original *Star Wars* trilogy.

Accepted by Dr. Greg Zeschuk and Dr. Ray Murtyko, joint CEO's of developer BioWare: "We'd like to thank all the fans, whose input and support were invaluable."



WHY IT CONQUERED...

1 It's Star Wars, Stupid!
You'll travel to such famous spots as Tatooine, train with the Jedi, let wookies win, take on rancors, and swing a mean lightsaber. Princess Leia's dual-Cinnabon is the only thing missing.

2 Have It Your Way
Knights of the Old Republic lets you

play on the light or dark side of the Force. You'll have frequent chances to crush the weak or save the innocent—and each path leads to a different ending.

3 It's Got Character
You take control of a party of three characters at once (from a pool of 10)—each has noteworthy side quests you'll want to explore. Completionists will spend a long time seeing everything. >

IT WAS A GOOD YEAR FOR...

...**fighting games**
Between *Soul Calibur II* and the budget-priced *Virtua Fighter: Evolution*, couch-potato brawlers got the pummel pals in the absolute best fighting games ever.



...**online gaming**
People who play with people really got to step up their game last year, thanks to killer online content and ramped-up clan and tournament support from Microsoft and EA.



...**the platforming genre**
This once-moldy genre is starting to smell fresh, thanks to bold new concepts in killer titles like *Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando*, *Prince of Persia*, and *Jak II*.



OFFICIAL
VIDEOGAME OF THE
2004 YU-GI-OH!
TOURNAMENT!



This Summer, the title of King of Games is up for grabs in the **2004 Yu-Gi-Oh! Videogame tournament!** Get the game, hone your dueling skills and see if you've got what it takes to be the #1 videogame duelist in the world. Find out more details at www.konami.com/yugiohtournament2004

GAME BOY ADVANCE

GAMECUBE GAME OF THE YEAR:

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

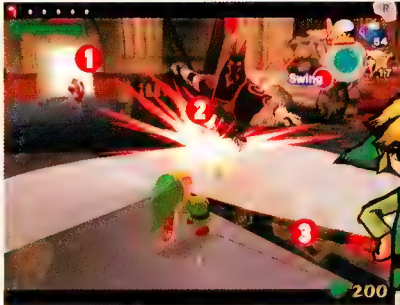
Nintendo • **Runner-up:**

Mario Kart: Double Dash!!

Sure, series hero Link looks a day out of day

care, and his world's got a total Saturday morning 'toon thing happening, but if you dismiss our GC Game of the Year's captivat-

ing high-seas adventure as kid's stuff, we'll kick your ass up and down the playground. Then we'll tell our mommies.



■ Link's got moxie written all over his saucer-eyed face. His changing expressions are one of *Wind Waker's* most endearing features.

Accepted by Nintendo of America translator Bill Trinen

"After all the uproar over the new look, it's great to see *Wind Waker* acknowledged for what it represents; another solid entry in the *Zelda* franchise..."

WHY IT CONQUERED...

1 Dungeon Master

Between long stretches at sea in a chatty boat (*Wind Waker* goes overboard on oceanic exploration), you'll spelunk some of the most puzzling dungeons in the series.

2 Good Fight

He may look like a toddler in tight, but Link knows how to handle himself with new moves that make all the combat fun. And boss battles are as spiffy as ever.

3 'Toon Up

Wind Waker's Disney-flick graphics and animation—once a cause for nervous grumbles from hardliner fans—take your breath away. It's like playing a cartoon.

MULTIPLATFORM
GAME OF THE YEAR:

**SOUL
CALIBUR II**

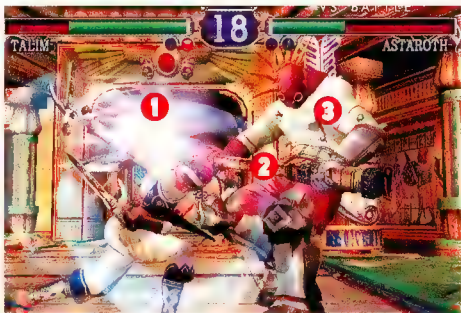
Namco • **Runner-up:** SSX 3

Soul Calibur II talks to our inner street fighter...then kidnaps it—forcing us to play this masterpiece of a fighting game for hours and even days at a time, forgoing food, sleep, and other basic needs that let us live and smell OK. Sorry—it's that good.

Accepted by SCE2 Producer

Hiroaki Yotoryama

"Thanks to this award, I think I can convince upper management to let us develop the ultimate multiplatform game [we've] been dreaming of. I'd love to tell you about it, but then I'd have to kill you ninja-style, like Taki."



WHY IT CONQUERED...

1 Hey Good Lookin'

Graphics aren't important... OK, that's bull—they are important, and *Soul Calibur II* has some of the best. When the sparks start flying around the motion-captured fighters and beautifully rendered arenas, you'll be a believer.

2 Hammer Time

Like *2001: A Space Odyssey* taught us, fisticuffs are sooo last era and weapons = evolution. Here, you'll find axes, swords, spears, and more. Play through the weapon master mode to get the really deadly stuff, like broomsticks and tambourines.

3 Circus of the Stars and Freaks

No other fighting game this side of *Street Fighter* has such an eclectic cast, from *Tekken* warrior Yoshimitsu to system-exclusive Spawn (XB) and Link (GC) to pirates and a dude in fetish gear and a codpiece. ▶

**IT WAS A BAD
YEAR FOR...**

...superheroes

Batman: Dark Tomorrow,
X2: Wolverine's Revenge,
Aquaman: Battle for Atlantis—all used their powers for lameness rather than good.



...the GameCubes

Despite a recent rally in sales, Nintendo's troubled console lags in the No. 3 spot behind Xbox and is seeing less and less support from third-party publishers.



...massively multiplayer

online role-playing games. Despite its on-fire cred in the PC realm, *EverQuest* fizzled when it hit PS2. Maybe *Final Fantasy XI* (PS2) and *True Fantasy Live Online* (XB) will get the party started.



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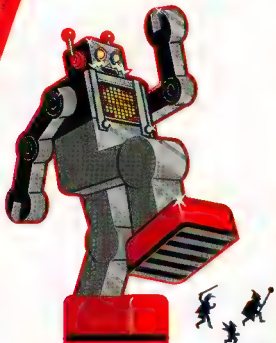
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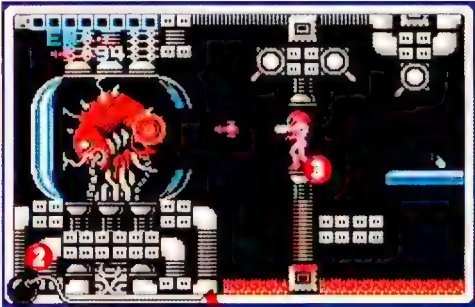
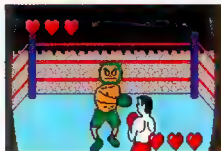


GAME BOY ADVANCE GAME OF THE YEAR: WARIO WARE INC.: MEGA MICROGAMES\$

Nintendo • **Runner-up:**
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance
Take-it-with-you masterpieces *Mario & Luigi:*

Superstar and *Final Fantasy Tactics Advance* top a lengthy list of absolutely top-notch 2003 GBA titles, but in the end we just

couldn't resist *Wario Ware's* hyperactive minigames, which deliver a zillion twitchy thrills for attention-deficit gamers.



Accepted by *WarioWare* President Wario (courtesy of Nintendo)

"Hey, it's about time I got some big-shot award. Everyone knows my game is the best. I'm just glad I'm not a loser like all you other guys."

WHY IT CONQUERED...

1 Small Wonders

Wario Ware doesn't skimp on its little-y-split minigames: You get more than 200 of the little suckers, from simple shooters to dental-hygiene simulators.

2 Think Fast

You get no time to think, so it's a good thing all the games are instantly decipherable. That's what makes 'em so charming—and perfect for the a.m. commute.

3 Good Ol' Games

Wario Ware even packs classic-themed minigames—based on everything from *Metroid* to *Punch Out!*—that'll give Nintendo dorks pangs of sweet nostalgia.

COMMENDATION FOR TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENT:

KARAOKE REVOLUTION

PS2 • Konami • **Runner-up:** Eye Toy (PS2)
A copy of *Karaoke Revolution*: \$60. A PS2: \$180. Mocking your male pals as they sing Madonna's "Like a Virgin": priceless.

Thanks to its nifty "voice analyzer" technology, *Karaoke Revolution* transforms your living room into a happenin' karaoke bar.

Accepted by *Karaoke Revolution* Producer Michael Michele

"We weren't sure how people were going to react to a singing game, and we certainly didn't expect any awards, [so this] is very exciting.... We hope the industry will continue to develop innovative and unique game products."



WHY IT CONQUERED...

1 You're an American Idol!

Well, here's your chance to prove it. Hit the correct notes and you'll send your score and the crowd into a tizzy. Stink up the joint and they'll boo you right off the stage.

2 Solid Gold

Revolution features more than 35 songs, and planned sequels will deliver many additional tunes.

3 Opposites Attract

Any game that helps balance a party's male-female ratio has a special place in our software library. Just look at that crowd: we didn't even have to bribe these ladies with (much) free booze.

4 Testing... 1, 2, 3

A USB headset (bundled with the special \$60 version of the game) acts as your microphone, leaving both hands free for those crucial air-guitar riffs. >

THE TOP 5 NEWS STORIES OF 2003...

5 **LITTLE-guy** game systems
Infinitum Labs, DISCover, Tapwave...never heard of them? That hasn't stopped these small-try companies from readying game hardware to challenge the big boys.

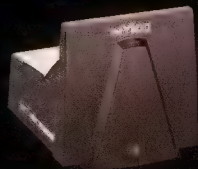


4 **Crystal catches Lara**
When Lara Croft's debut PS2 adventure, *Angel of Darkness* shipped late, bugs and blah, publisher Eidos swiped the series' reigns from developer Core and handed them to Crystal Dynamics. >



Expand Your Gaming Territory...

Wireless Online Gaming Made Easy
For PlayStation 2 or Xbox



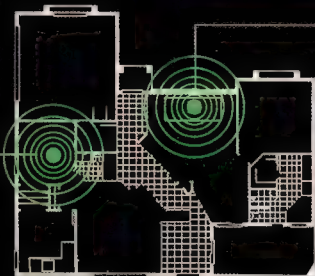
[Base Unit]

plug in here

broadband internet location:

[NW sector: Long Origin = 7.43958333,

Lat Origin = 46.95240556]



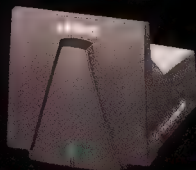
simple to use: no programming
or software installation required

play here

gaming console location:

[SE sector: Long Origin = 7.43922453,

Lat Origin = 46.95294523]



[Remote Unit]



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GAME OF THE YEAR:

PRINCE OF PERSIA

PS2/XB/GC • Ubisoft • **Runner-up:** Knights of the Old Republic (XB)
A prince among action-platformers, *Sands of Time* is spellbinding. You are the sultan's son, determined to fulfill your des-

tiny, even if that means fiddling with time in the process—and taking your phone off the hook. Unfortunately, the game isn't selling too hot. Buy it. You don't know what you're missing.

WHY IT CONQUERED...



1 Art of Fighting

With the ability to retrace every saber stroke—courtesy of a magic time-tripping dagger—there's no excuse for less-than-perfect swordplay. A fiend sneak in a hit while you were fletting one of his friends? Turn back the hands of time for a second chance.

2 Smooth as the Sultan's Silk

The prince's acrobatics wouldn't be half as amazing if it weren't for *Sands of Time's* lifelike animation. As he runs across walls, each footfall stirs up dust, and the tapestries sway gently as he glides past them.

3 With the Greatest of Ease

Combat is only part of the equation. Whether shimmying across crumbling ledges, using poles as makeshift trapezes, or walking heel-toe along narrow beams, the Prince uses every part of the environment to get where he's gotta go.

4 Splendors of Babylon

The lavish graphics and majestic scope of *Sands of Time's* levels don't just make the game look gorgeous, they give it a pulse. She's a beaut. ▶



Accepted by Jordan Mechner, creator of *POP* and creative consultant "It's an honor to accept this award on behalf of the entire team in Ubisoft Montreal—many of whom are [now] enjoying long-dreamed-of vacations!"

> THE TOP 5 NEWS STORIES OF 2003... (CONT.)

3 Square and Enix collide

When the world's two mightiest RPG powerhouses finally set aside their rivalry and joined forces, you'd better believe it was big news.



2 Nintendo shows us the light

In any other year, the debut of a hit-up version of Nintendo's mega-successful Game Boy—the GBA SP—would be the home shell news story. But...



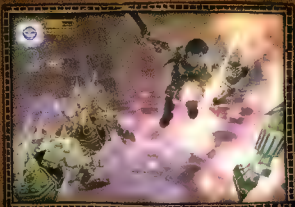
1 Sony announces the portable

...Sony stole Nintendo's thunder with its announcement of the PSP, a handheld system supposedly nearly as powerful as the PS2. Will it steal GBA's lunch? Find out when PSP hits this Christmas.



MAXIMO ARMY OF ZIN

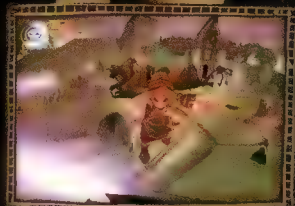
MAXIMO
IS BACK
AND THIS TIME
IT'S WAR.



Arsenal of devastating combos and attacks.



Army of Zin declare war on the living.



Unleash the terrifying power of Grin.

AVAILABLE JANUARY 2004



PlayStation.2

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EGM'S SECOND ANNUAL TOBIAS BRUCKNER MEMORIAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE FIELD OF CRAPULENCE

Tobias Bruckner, arch-villain of 2002's terrible *Turok: Evolution*, is EGM's Whoopi Goldberg—the only star bright, sparky, and insipid enough to head up

our awards for egregious crapulence in the field of game design for two years in a row. After all, it takes the worst to represent the worst, and Bruckner, a

time-traveling, racist, dinosaur-riding, cyborg cavalry captain, is the shining lighthouse on the craggy bluffs of god-awful. And this year's Tobies go to...



BEST WORST LOADING SCREEN: **LOWRIDER**



The Virgin Mary, Satan, and some snakeskin-coat-wearing chick with an American flag behind her all help make PS2 hopping-car simulator *Lowrider*'s loading screens an example to the videogame industry—an example of how to make something so horribly bad, it's kinda good.

TURD ROCK FROM THE SUN: RTX RED ROCK



Reminding us of GC adventure *Metroid Prime*—but in a bad way—this PS2 shooter sends its junior-astronaut hero to alien-besieged Mars, where he finds sci-fi clichés, crummy scenery, and busted boss battles while wearing an eyepiece that lets him chat with invisible turd-shaped rocks. No, really.

NO-TALENT AWARD: AMERICAN IDOL



Not even fork-tongued demon-spawn Simon Cowell himself could come up with a put-down devastating enough to suit the game version of *American Idol* (PS2). Don't buy it, don't rent it, and let us never speak of it again.

BEST WORST CONCEPT: CRUSH HOUR

Twisted Metal-style car combat starring WWE wrestlers makes for one terrible—and unintentionally funny—game. But on



paper, the idea...still sounds terrible and unintentionally funny. It takes a special kind of dollar-signs-in-his-eyes marketing whiz to come up with the concept behind *Crush Hour* (PS2/GC). And by special, we mean "very special."

THE "SAY THIS GAME ISN'T DONE!" AWARD: **ENTER THE MATRIX**



■ "Please don't crash. Please don't crash. Please don't..."

We'd probably get a lot more worked up about all the glitches, gameplay snafus, and other headaches in this mother of all movie-licensed games, but then, the flicks kinda sucked, too. So really, *Enter the Matrix* (PS2/XB/GC) is just being true to its source material. But it still gets a Tobie....

CHARACTER BUCKING TO UNSEAT TOBIAS BRUCKNER: **TAK**

The Moe Howard hairstyle, the spare-tire gut—and...what is that, eye shadow? Nice try, Avalanche Software. It's obvious you tried to outdo Captain Bruckner in ultra-lameness with the cave-baby star of *Tak and the Power of Jujitsu* (PS2/GC). But then, *Tak*'s platforming gameplay is pretty good, making it easy to overlook the hero's hideousness. Hence, Bruckner's job as master of our game-disaster ceremonies is safe for another year.



■ Don't look at it, Marlon!

TRAGICALLY CATCHY TUNES AWARD: ANYTHING FROM **FREAKY FLYERS**

If you ever wander within earshot of this mediocre multiplatform biplane racer (and that's really not a good idea to begin with),



immediately plug your ears and go "la-la-la-la," lest any one of its bubbly, silly jingles lodge in your noggin forevermore. Sample lyrics: "Boy, you're in the Navy now, so drop your pacifier and fly like a man / It's no time to suck your thumb / You don't need a note from mommy if you try to save the motherland." Great—now it's in our heads again.

MOST RIDICULOUS BOSS BATTLE: BIN LADEN IN FUGITIVE HUNTER

America's recent capture of Saddam Hussein went down with a surprising lack of Chuck Norris-style spinning kicks, round-house punches, or other general kung fu-ism. So we find it odd that bounty-



hunting simulation *Fugitive Hunter* (PS2) ends with a good ol' fashioned karate throwdown betwixt the game's gun ho hero and public enemy numero uno Osama bin Laden. Succeed in subduing terrorism's surprisingly limber final boss and you're treated to a thrice-repeated cinema of your character showing bin Laden to his seat—via a friendly kick to the head—in a U.S. helicopter. Let that be a lesson to the rest of you terrorists who want to keep your teeth.

WORST IDEA SINCE NEW COKE: THE N-GAGE



This \$200 cell-phone-plus-game-system-plus-MP3-player contraption is so poorly conceived—from the ridiculous way you must hold it to "side talk" to the crappy lineup of launch games to the cartridge-changing operation best left to a Radio Shack employee—we figure that manufacturer Nokia forgot to list its best function: paper weight. Click. >

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 WE WILL SUFFER FROM WITH
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As seen on
CARTOON NETWORK

PlayStation 2



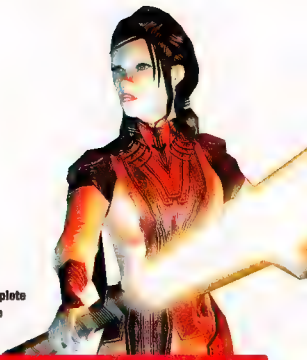
YOUR TURN

Didn't agree with our awards? Simmer down—you readers got to pick your tops of 2003, too

Power to the people—especially people who play games. That's the idea behind the poll we ran on www.1UP.com,

which lured tens of thousands of readers in to vote for the best games—including PC titles—of 2003. You have spe-

ken, and here are the results, complete with random commentary from the peanut gallery....



GAME OF THE YEAR:
STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC (XB/PC)

"Knights of the Old Republic: Best. Star Wars game. Ever."
 —Josh Read, Parkersburg, WV

Runner-up: The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker (GC)

SPORTS/EXTREME SPORTS GAME OF THE YEAR: TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND (PS2/XB/GC/PC)

"Also known as: Tony Hawk: How to Be a Cool Skater While Breaking the Law."
 —Aaron Rice, Lynchburg, VA

Runner-up: Madden NFL 2004 (PS2/XB/GC/PC)

ACTION GAME OF THE YEAR: SPLINTER CELL (PS2/GC)

"Splinter Cell, Splinter Cell, Sam will save the day / With a SOCOM to your head, you had better pray"
 —Ross Harrington, Westerly, RI

Runner-up: The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (PS2/XB/GC/PC)

ADVENTURE GAME OF THE YEAR: THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER (GC)

"I was a doubter about Link's new look, but after actually playing it, I can't believe how ignorant I was!"
 —Adam King, Los Angeles, CA

Runner-up: Prince of Persia: Sands of Time (PS2/XB/GC/PC)



RACING GAME OF THE YEAR: MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!! (GC)

"Co-op play is the single best addition to this series. You can spend days and days playing with your buds. Now let the trash-talking commence!"

—Patrick Bradley,
Amherst, VA

Runner-up: Need for Speed: Underground (PS2/XB/GC/PC)



FIGHTING GAME OF THE YEAR: SOUL CALIBUR II (PS2/XB/GC)

"A turning point for fighting games!"

—Eli Yudin,
Washington, DC

"Getting hit with Kilik's stick never felt better."

—Nickolas Coad,
Belmont, ME

Runner-up: SmackDown! Here Comes the Pain (PS2)



SHOOTER OF THE YEAR: HALO (PC)

"There's a certain joy in blowing away a Flood enemy in midair with the shotgun. Not the most satisfying part of the game but definitely fun when you're surrounded by them."

—Aaron Grono,
Forest Lake, MN

Runner-up: SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs (PS2)

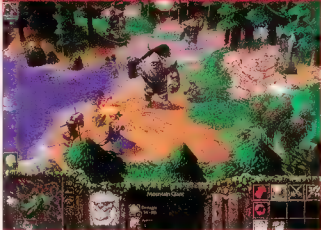


STRATEGY GAME OF THE YEAR: WARCRAFT III: THE FROZEN THRONE (PC)

"I'll be sitting in front of my PC with this for a good five years. I've played it over 2,000 times online, and it's still as fun as when I first popped it in."

—Dante Biasatti,
Colleyville, TX

Runner-up: Final Fantasy Tactics Advance (GBA)



ONLINE GAME OF THE YEAR: STAR WARS GALAXIES (PC)

"After the shaky first month, *Galaxies* has really grown on me—now that we're rocking vehicles, player cities, and creature mounts (all of which should've been in from day one)."

—Dustin Quillen,
Altoona, IA

Runner-up: SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs (PS2)



ROLE-PLAYING GAME OF THE YEAR: STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC (XB/PC)

"The game was excellent but also quite funny because you could run around in your undergarments and no one would care. Guess that's normal in that galaxy."

—Seth Row,
Upland, IN

Runner-up: Final Fantasy X-2 (PS2)



WIN THE AWARD WINNERS!

We've handed out all the robot statues, sat through each sappy acceptance speech, and drunk every last drop of celebratory bubbly. But the party isn't over yet. *Electronic Gaming Monthly* is giving seven lucky readers a copy of every game that won a 2003 Editors' Choice Award. Simply go to <http://awardscontest.egmmag.com>, fill out the entry form, and pray to the gaming gods that you'll be randomly chosen. Sorry, but bribing an EGM editor won't help your chances. Won't hurt 'em, neither.

GRAND PRIZE: SEVEN (7) WINNERS

A copy of every game that EGM honored with a 2003 Editors' Choice award. (Note: that doesn't include the readers' picks on these two pages.)

HOW TO ENTER:

Log on to the contest page at <http://awardscontest.egmmag.com>. Fill out the entry form. All entries received by March 9, 2004, will then be entered into a drawing for the prizes. Only one

entry per person is accepted. If you submit multiple entries, you'll be automatically disqualified.

Full legal rules—written by genuine New York lawyers—are available at <http://awardscontest.egmmag.com>.







WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Ubisoft takes the stealth action outside, and outside the box online, in *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow*

by Mark MacDonald

Good cheese? Yes. Fine wines? Sure. Berets with the little pointy thing in the middle? Definitely. But one thing the French are not known for is their willingness to jump into a fight.

"Going to war without France," Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld recently joked, "is like going duck hunting without an accordion." Missouri Congressman Roy Blount was less kind. "Do you know how many Frenchmen it

takes to defend Paris?" he asked. "It's not known. It's never been tried."

But what these men don't realize is that, for the last few months, brave French men and women have been dying by the hundreds in a battle being waged on their own soil. And yet, even after an estimated 700 hours of fighting and more than 30,000 casualties, so many volunteers show up every day that officials have to turn people away.

Then again, anyone reading this magazine would probably enlist too, since all of the carnage is taking place online at Ubisoft's development studios a few hours outside Paris, testing the unique new multiplayer mode of *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow*. For many, just the chance to glimpse the stealth-action sequel before its March release on PS2, Xbox, and PC (GC may see a slight delay) would be worth the price of a ticket across the Atlantic.

Luckily, we suffered through the 12-hour flight and questionable airplane food so that you wouldn't have to. Over the next few pages, you'll find our report from the front lines: exclusive screens, developer interviews, and a rundown of our hands-on time with both *Pandora Tomorrow's* improved single-player game and its wildly ambitious multiplayer component. So sit back, relax, and maybe enjoy some french fries as we open *Pandora's* box. >



■ Sam visits a "heroin farm" that the terrorists use to fund their activities.



■ Everything that fits at the...
...to...
...to...
...to...

SINGLE-PLAYER

After selling nearly 4 million copies of the first game, Ubisoft isn't fixing what ain't broke in *Splitter Cell's* single-player mode. Crouching, climbing, jumping, sneaking—Secret Agent Sam Fisher's comebacks in *Pandora Tomorrow* are just like before. Sticking to the shadows (again, aided by an onscreen light meter that lets you know how visible you are to the enemy) is still the best method of getting through each mission.

Instead of rethinking these basic building blocks, the team at Ubisoft is working on emphasizing the game's strengths. If the original *Splitter Cell* lived up to its tag line of "stealth action redefined," *Pandora Tomorrow* seems more like "stealth action refined."

"We were very, very happy with the gameplay for the first *Splitter Cell*," says Associate Producer Julian Gerighty, "but we wanted to look back at the game design and change little things that would make a significant impact." Take Sam's famous spy gadgets, for example. The optical cable he uses to peek under doors now incorporates the thermal- and night-vision options seen in the GC and PS2 *Splitter Cells*. His pistol packs a laser sight he can use for more precise aiming (just make sure the bad guys don't spot the little red dot), and his SC-20K rifle includes a quick zoom, à la *Halo*. Sam can also temporarily disable enemies with new flashbang charges or disrupt surveillance devices with charm grenades.

Nothing radical, but all welcome changes—as are the additions to his physical moves. A whistle to attract



■ Your binoculars now have the laser microscope built right in, so you can overhear conversations without having to swap gadgets.

LOS ANGELES



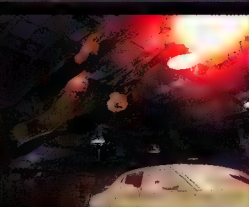
—Maxim.com

"BEST ACTION GAME"

Spike TV Video Game Awards

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PlayStation 2



SOUNDTRACK ON



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ACTIVISION

activision.com

■ The sun gets or rises in real time, changing the shadows. Sam can hide in



“We wanted to take Sam out of the typical dark industrial settings of the first game.”

—Animator James Green



■ Guards will get tougher each time you set off an alarm, arming themselves with better weapons, and later with bulletproof vests and helmets.

► guards, a new “SWAT turn” quick pivot that allows Sam to spin past open doorways without being seen, and a revised version of the famous split-jump (which allows Sam to wedge and boost himself up narrow vertical shafts) should all come in handy. We aren’t sure yet how useful Sam’s ability to hang upside down off pipes and fire at enemies will be, but hey, it looks cool.

Speaking of looks, though the first *Splinter Cell* is widely regarded as one of the best-looking games ever, adjusting the graphics was a priority for *Pandora*. “We [wanted to take] Sam out of the typical dark industrial settings of the original game,” says Animator James Green.

“*Pandora* features some beautifully lush outdoor environments that will really surprise fans who expect to see Sam crawling through air vents in some factory.” Exploring the great outdoors makes for more than just pretty pictures, too. In some open-air missions, the sun will slowly rise or set in the background as you play. And in a game where hiding in shadows is crucial, it should be obvious how this added time factor will affect gameplay.

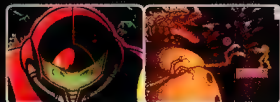
Other design tweaks focus on giving the player multiple ways to tackle a level. “There might be an easy way or a hard way [to get past parts of a mission],” says Green. “Like in [a level set at the Los >



who are you?



In the face of impossible odds, one warrior stood alone. Finally, the untold story behind the events that shaped Samus's destiny and forged her iron will is revealed in Metroid®: Zero Mission. Only for Game Boy Advance.

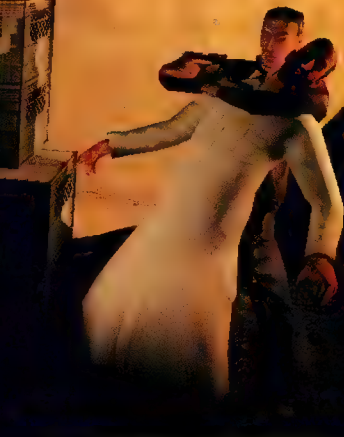


METROID
ZERO MISSION



"We're trying to add more of the feeling that you're making the story happen, instead of just connecting the dots."

—Animator James Green



Now your enemies can take hostages as well.

► Angeles airport], you have to get inside. And there's a couple of different ways you can do that. There's the easy way, the special way, where you sneak onto the back of a big trailer truck. But you can also sneak in [on foot], avoiding all the guards and dogs, which is a lot tougher. It's not like, "You didn't get on the truck—you failed." [Or in another level], you're supposed to meet an arms dealer, and you walk in and you're surprised to find he's being robbed by two men. So you can knock them both out or just leave 'em if you want. But the fun way is to grab one guy, and the other guy grabs the arms dealer. Then you have to shoot him over the shoulder and not hit [his hostage]."

Other choices, according to Green, can affect the story line. "At the end of this mission, after this agent has helped you, you both [are in] an elevator. And, just as you step inside, Lambert comes on your radio, which only you can hear, and says 'Kill her. Kill her now. Trust me. I just got some bad information, just do it, don't question me.' And you have no time to decide. You've been ordered to kill someone in cold blood. And you can kill the person or not—it's completely optional. And you see what happens based on that later." ►



Sam's actually under orders *not* to rescue the hostages here—he's to stop the terrorists from gaining crucial intel, and that's it.

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PlayStation 2

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It is as fun to track someone down
as it is to sneak.

—Creative Director, Hideo Kojima

Though we can't go into exactly how (for spoiler reasons), the story lines behind *Pandora's* single- and multiplayer games are cleverly connected.

A mercenary's charging melee attack knocks a spy clean off his feet.

MULTIPLAYER

Though we added them in this article for the sake of clarity, in real life, Gunther Galipot does not use commas or periods: The creative director speaks English in a low, quiet voice, but when he talks about *Pandora's* multiplayer mode, he spits out words like a machine gun, moving from one thought into the next without so much as a pause. It's obvious he's nervous and excited, but that's understandable. After all, the concept of *Pandora's* radically unique four-player online mode was his. And now his baby is finally being born, after a surprisingly long wait; it's been five years since Galipot was inspired by a certain other stealth-action game.

"I saw the first trailer for the original

Metal Gear Solid at [a videogame trade show]," he says. "[I started] to think what a multiplayer stealth game could be like. I thought it could be fun to track down someone—just as rewarding as infiltrating. I realized it could be very creepy looking for someone and not knowing where they are—a lot of tension, a lot of emotion." The idea behind letting players control both sides of the stealth formula (the spies trying to hide and the mercenary guards looking for them) was born.

The only problem was with the camera.

"We had to find some way to simulate the cone of vision [the guards have] on the radar in *Metal Gear*," says Galipot. The solution was simple: first-person perspective. While the spies' third-person view allows them to see more of their surroundings so that they can dodge, climb, and hide effectively, the mercenaries' first-person vantage point helps them aim but limits their field of vision. The idea is to have each side play completely differently, but be equally powerful. "What's interesting to me is offering two different kinds of gameplay that are wholly complementary," says Galipot.

Other differences between the two sides reinforce this idea. The mercs have rifles, complete with zoom scopes and ▶

Spies can tell by the color of the merc's goggles if they are using motion detection (red), EMF (blue), or normal vision (amber).

Though online play is four players max, players can choose to split the teams into either 2-on-2 or 3-on-1.

"Maybe you had a bad day, so you want to come home and kill some spies."

—Creative Director Gunther Gaijot

> semi- or fully automatic firing modes; the spies have only single-fire pistols loaded with nonlethal bullets that stun their target for a few seconds (the only way the spies can kill is by sneaking up behind an opponent and breaking their neck or by falling down on top of them). Spies have a weak punch from short range, while the meros have a charging attack with their rifle butt. Spies have low-light and heat vision; meros have flashlights, and views to detect motion, noise, or the electrical pulse (EMF) given off by the spies' goggles. Each side also has its own full set of other gadgets and gizmos.

Every feature feeds into Gaijot's larger philosophy about how each side should play. "The mercenary has the upper hand when face-to-face with his opponent," he says, "but his weaknesses are linked to what he can't see, whether it's behind

him, above him, or just a few feet away, hiding in the darkness. The spy is able to see without being seen. Shadow and surprise are his best allies. From the safety of darkness, he feels capable of anything—only to feel suddenly vulnerable when he is discovered."

But why limit multiplayer to 'only four' players? After all, *Pandora Tomorrow* requires a broadband connection (on PS2 and Xbox at least; whether or not the GameCube version will have online at all is still up in the air)—surely, it could handle more traffic. "We tried more than four people," says Gaijot, "and it just didn't work as well. The more players you have, the faster the action is...you don't have time for reflection, only reflexes, and that's not what we wanted. We limited the number of players in order to create tension at the highest level." Associate Producer Gerigty >

■ In addition to at least five multiplayer maps out of the box, we expect Ubisoft will offer extra downloadable levels for both Xbox and hard-drive-equipped PS2 owners down the line.



Here's the tool the developers use to test each multiplayer level. Each blue line represents the path a player took through the level. You can quickly tell which areas are high traffic and which are not.



AMMO
3/30

SMOKE GRENADE



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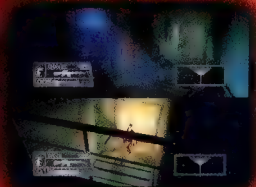
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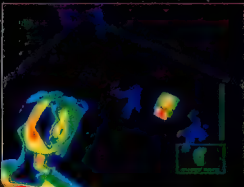
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OFFICIAL Xbox Magazine

TWO SIDES TO EVERY STORY

It can be hard to understand just how all the different factors of Pandora's multiplayer mode work together without seeing a game in action. So let's take a look at the first minute or so of a 2-on-2 online game (Spy A and B versus Merc 1 and 2) from both teams' perspectives:

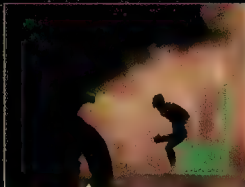
SPY TEAM



SPY: The two spies decide to split up. Nearing an objective, **Spy A switches to thermal vision** and looks through the ceiling tiles beneath him to spot the two mercs. He radios their position over his headset so that Spy B can head for a different objective as far away as possible.



SPY: Although he hasn't been spotted yet, Spy A cannot resist—he has a perfect shot at Merc 1. **He nails the merc with a sticky shocker** right in the head (which stuns the target for a bit longer than a normal body shot) and laughs so hard that he accidentally falls from his hiding spot.



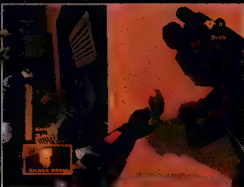
SPY: Crap, this is bad. Spy A decides to make the most of a bad situation by shooting the stunned merc with a spy bullet—now both spies can spot him on their radar *and* listen in to his headset communications. Then he quickly **drops a smoke grenade** and tries to escape in the confusion.

00:15

00:19

00:21

MERC TEAM



MERC: Mercs 1 and 2 decide to stick together for now so that they can cover each other's backs. They **place mines near an objective**—by holding the button when they place the charges, the mercs can set them to go off when someone gets close or breaks a laser tripwire...their choice.



MERC: Merc 1 was just suggesting that his teammate move on to the next objective when he thought he saw something up high. He turns on his flashlight and suddenly **his view goes all fuzzy—he's been hit!** He can't move, but he radios his partner, telling him where the spy shot him from.



MERC: Instead of losing the spy in the smoke, Merc 2 **switches his visor to motion detect** and spots his prey. He takes aim and kills the spy before he can escape. However, neither merc is aware that their communications can now be overheard, thanks to the spy bullet planted on Merc 1.



SPY: Meanwhile, **Spy B** approaches one of the safes that the spies are trying to break into. (Also note the new red merc dot on the radar.) But he sets off a laser tripwire alarm (thermal vision would have revealed it); he'll have to wait a few seconds for security to disarm before he can hack the safe.



SPY: Spy A has respawned and waits near Spy B to protect him from the incoming mercs. Seeing Merc 1 on his radar and hearing him talk about approaching over his headset, he waits in the shadows and sneaks up on the merc as he enters the area, **grabbing him from behind.**



agrees. "If you had 8-on-8, every dark spot there's going to be somebody, so it turns into a shooting game. The tension is dead, and that tension is the key for a stealth game."

But just as important as tension to *Pandora's* multiplayer game is communication. Online, the PS2 and, of course, Xbox versions will support voice chat. (GameCube...well, you starting to see a trend here?) "Communication encourages teamwork, as players can coordinate and strategize," says Galipot. "[But] also competition, [where it can] stimulate emotional reactions by allowing taunting. My favorite example is the feature that allows [the spy side] to grab [a mercenary] from behind—making it impossible for him to escape—and then whispering a message into his ear as he struggles (necessitating a break free)."

Luckily, since Galipot played as a mercenary for most of the few hours we spent trying out multiplayer *Pandora*, we avoided his favorite brand of online smack talk. But even so, the experience was intense enough that we had to be pried off the controller when it was finally time to go. Even in its unfinished state, the edge that the spies have in movement, stealth, and defense counterbalances the offensive and detection skills of the mercenaries amazingly well, like two oddly shaped puzzle pieces that fit snugly together. And the bond and teamwork you and your one partner develop, as you work together to outwit your foes, is totally unlike your typical deathmatch scenario.

Levels have all been designed with a ridiculous number of different paths—vents, pipes, ladders, stairways, doors—in and out of every area, so predictability and "camping" is tossed out the window. Plus, each environment has been, and continues to be, balanced and refined every day by a state-of-the-art program that compiles statistics based on the thousands and thousands of multiplayer test sessions. If there's a path being used too much, or not enough, the level designers might add or remove a door, lengthen or shorten a hallway, darken or brighten a room.

All of which should come as good news to the families of those brave 38,000 French volunteers who died over and over testing online for the greater good: If *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow* turns out as good as it looks, their loved ones will not have died in vain.

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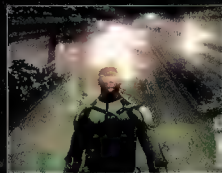
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MERC: Both mercs receive an alert that says where a tripwire has been crossed. On their way to the location, they see that the objective near the alert area is being hacked. A timer appears, showing how much time it will take until the spies will hack into the safe. They'll need to move fast.



MERC: Merc 2 has a choice: go after the spy hacking the safe and let his partner get killed or try to save his partner by shooting around him, but letting the spies complete the objective. Decisions, decisions. All that, and we haven't even reached the 1-minute mark of game time.

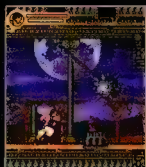


■ A better pic to end the feature than this melodramatic money shot? We'd like to see it.

Tom Clancy's SPLINTER CELL

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ALSO AVAILABLE:



Prince of Persia
The Sands of Time™



XIII



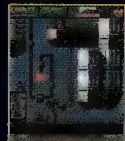
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WIRELESS GAMING REVIEW

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FEATURE

NWN MOBILE PREVIEW

THE BEST RPG EVER IS COMING TO MOBILE

ALSO PREVIEWED

NINJA GAIDEN

FROM TECMO

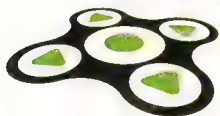
REVIEWED THIS ISSUE

PRINCE OF PERSIA
WORLD OF WARCRAFT
ACE YETI

SIGH...

PHONES IN JAPAN





WIRELESS GAMING REVIEW

PREVIEW

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

DEVELOPER: FLOODGATE PUBLISHER: JAMDAT MOBILE

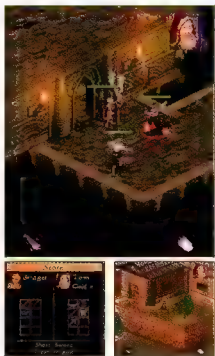
For many of us nerds, the first useful thing we could get a computer to do was roll saving throws in *Dungeons & Dragons*. BioWare's *Neverwinter Nights* garnered rave reviews and huge sales by taking that notion to the highest level.

In early 2004, JAMDAT and Floodgate will bring *Neverwinter Nights* to mobile phones, but it won't be the same as the PC version, let alone the pen-and-paper game. It can't be. It took PCs almost 30 years to properly represent AD&D electronically. But when this *NWN* comes out, it's going to revolutionize mobile RPGs.

We played betas of the game on an LG VX6000 and a Motorola MPx200 Smartphone. Both phones sport impressive graphics for their hardware, but it's hard to look at anything else once you savor the Moto's isometric perspective and detailed textures. If you are serious about mobile games, your next phone should run a Microsoft OS.

Before you play *NWN*, you've got to create a character. In the mobile version, your choices are drawn from AD&D 3.0 rules, and there are seven races and seven classes (barbarian, cleric, fighter, monk, paladin, rogue, and sorcerer). Character portraits and background music are pulled from (or heavily influenced by) BioWare's *NWN* game, and both add nice touches to the game.

But the story is the main thing. The members of the Floodgate and JAMDAT teams are longtime AD&D players (and environmentalists), and *NWN*'s narrative arc shows it. In the game's first chapter, your adopted father charges you with finding the cause of a blight threatening the Circle Grove. It turns out that displaced dwarves and their metallurgy are causing the blight, but they'll stop polluting if you complete several quests. These missions are nicely varied, and the characters you encounter along the way set a new



standard for mobile adventuring. Not all of the standard RPG problems are fixed, however. There are (and perhaps always will be) too many repetitious conversations with NPCs. There are scores of buildings to visit across dozens of towns in mobile *NWN*, but there's little variation beyond the "buy/sell" or "sleep here" options. It would have been nice to see more of the racial/alignment effects that appear in the PC version get translated to the mobile game.

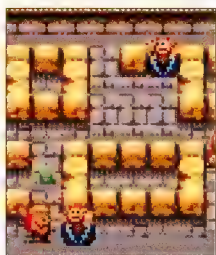
But these are minor points more associated with the RPG genre itself than this particular implementation. The version we played was only 80 percent complete, and the team is working on several improvements. Moreover, the architecture of the mobile platform makes adding new modules to *NWN* possible. Although JAMDAT has not committed to expanding the series beyond the three missions included in the download, the framework for doing so is built into the game engine. If all goes well, you might be playing *NWN* on mobile for as long as you've been playing it on your PC.

-MATTHEW BELLOWES

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by Gameloft

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by THQ



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ABOUT THIS SECTION

Wireless Gaming Review is a special feature of the magazine, providing you with the latest news and information on the world of mobile gaming. We cover a wide range of titles, from action and strategy games to puzzle and simulation titles. Our goal is to provide you with the most up-to-date and comprehensive coverage of the mobile gaming industry.

CONTRIBUTORS

Matthew Bellows is a freelance writer and editor who has contributed to various gaming magazines and websites. He has a passion for role-playing games and mobile gaming. He is currently working on a book about the history of role-playing games.

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WIRELESS GAMING REVIEW

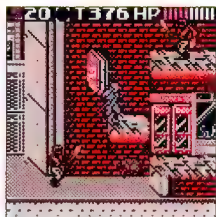
PREVIEW

NINJA GAIDEN CHAPTER 1: DESTINY

DEVELOPER: TECMO PUBLISHER: TECMO

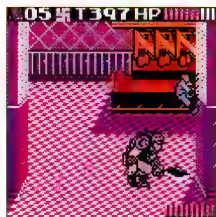


Ninjas and videogames were made for one another. Their torrid affair has now lasted almost two decades—it's not just a summer thing. Soon, on your phone, you'll be able to replay their honeymoon. Don't think you'll be relaxing on Caribbean beaches, though. This postnuptial outing features none other than Ryu Hayabusa, aka "The Super Ninja," kicking the pixelated snout out of hordes of hapless, anonymous



henchmen. Yes, that's right: *Ninja Gaiden*, the seminal NES classic, has gone mobile, and the result is shaping up to be a solid port that captures the fun, frenetic swordplay of the original.

For series veterans, there's nothing new here. The upswing of that is the fact that *Ninja Gaiden* is almost a console-perfect port. You climb walls, slash baddies, and wreak havoc with ninjitsu magic across five levels and against nine enemies. The graphics and



sound (on our J-Phone preview version, at least) seem on par with the NES version that so entranced us all.

My concerns for the U.S. release are twofold. First, the Japanese version I previewed has some control issues. The keypad is not always responsive enough to change Ryu's direction on the fly (for example, hitting a guy to your left, then throwing a ninja star at a baddy on your right). And this is the kind of game that really makes control

MOST ANTICIPATED MOBILE GAME

FROM A WGAMER.COM
READER POLL

Ninja Gaiden	4.29%
Call of Duty	20.95%
Neverwinter Nights	1.90%
Pathway to Glory	7.62%
Snowboard Lycoon	0.00%
Other	10.48%

issues stand out. Second, the handsets that Tecmo is porting to are not up to Japanese standards. I shudder with fear at the AV quality loss, which could result from the port to our generally inferior phones. Tune into *WGR* to see how the Stateside release shapes up. —ANEROY SCORE
<http://wgamer.com/game-3103>

REVIEW

ACE YETI TRAPPER

DEVELOPER: SUPER HAPPY FUN FUN PUBLISHER: BANDA! AVAILABLE ON: SPRINT

The *Ace Yeti Trapper* concept is simple: World-famous explorer Jack Bivouac has decided to try his yeti-finding skills in Nepal, the ultimate alpine arena. To get his shot at the Big Y, Jack must first practice his trapping skills on lesser beasts, outwitting them

and leading them into traps through a variety of mazelike levels.

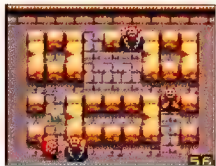
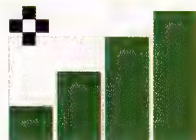
Jack maneuvers around each rock-strewn level with a nicely animated aplomb, swinging his arms like a manic Mario and laying traps with abandon. *AYT* runs smoothly, with no hiccupping

or slowdown even on a crowded level. The control scheme takes a little getting used to, especially the trap-laying command. It takes a whopping four button presses to set and prime a trap, and an additional four button presses to airlift a trapped creature off the level, so you'd better hope your keypad has a durable "5" button.

In summary, *AYT* isn't a fancy game, but it's addictive in an obsessive, *Dig Dug*-like fashion. Because trap-setting takes time, forethought is a must on the more advanced levels, which increase creature speed and maze difficulty. Before long, you'll find yourself muttering epithets at yaks and

yetis alike, garnering the extra bonus of increased breathing room on public transportation. —STEPHEN PALLEY
<http://wgamer.com/game-2725>

WGAMER RATING:



REVIEW: PRINCE OF PERSIA

DEVELOPER: GAMELOFT PUBLISHER: GAMELOFT
AVAILABLE ON: VERIZON



It's tough to find a more consistent mobile games publisher than Gameloft, and it's very tough indeed to find a better wireless action-adventure game than *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*. From controls to graphics, the game plays like it belongs on the top shelf in the Game Boy Advance section.

Like the previous POPs, *The Sands of Time* features a prince who has to climb, fence, and think his way out of a booby-trapped castle. The prince can find items that give him new techniques, such as short-term flight and forward rolls. The controls are

crisp, despite the game utilizing nearly every button for an action. And while the fighting is fun, solving the game requires more brains than brawn. Extra details (like a code in the Verizon version, which unlocks a big-head version of the PC game) make *Sands of Time* a mobile masterpiece.

My only complaint is that, like most Gameloft titles, the game feels too short. However, hidden items and level rankings will probably encourage you to play through it many times over. Another triumph for the Gameloft team.

—DAMON BROWN

http://wgamer.com/game_2911

WGAMER RATING:



REVIEW: WORMS WORLD PARTY

DEVELOPER: KIDRO PUBLISHER: THQ
AVAILABLE ON: NOKIA SERIES 60 PHONES



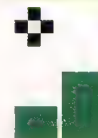
are there, if slightly pruned to fit on a phone. What is missing is the sense of nonstop fun that makes *Worms* such a great party game. It's surprisingly slow, and at times, it really starts to drag. The game's A.I. isn't very good, either, so you shouldn't have much trouble consistently beating it.

If I hadn't had such high hopes for *Worms* going mobile, I would have gotten a kick out of this one. But *Worms* should be a blast, and this is merely a thud.

—CASHMAN ANDROS

http://wgamer.com/game_1269

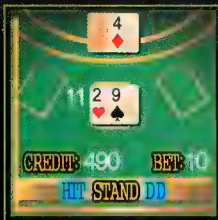
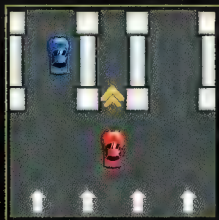
WGAMER RATING:



I love *Worms*. Pitting those feisty, squishy little guys against each other, unleashing fiery and explosive death on their hapless brethren—what a joy. Unfortunately, the J2ME version from THQ is rather disappointing.

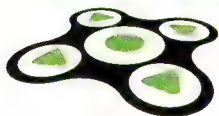
The basics of the *Worms* experience—fanciful destructible environments, an assortment of weapons and plaintive death cries—

www.dwango.com



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WIRELESS GAMING REVIEW

THE FUTURE IS UNEVENLY DISTRIBUTED

—CASHMAN ANDRUS

YES, IT'S TRUE—JAPAN HAS MUCH COOLER GADGETS THAN WE DO. THESE DAYS, THE BIGGEST GAP IS IN PHONES, WITH JAPANESE CONSUMERS BUYING ONES THAT ARE EASILY 12 TO 18 MONTHS AHEAD OF WHAT WE GET HERE. SO, HERE'S A GLIMPSE OF YOUR FUTURE:

For more on this phone, check out <http://wgamer.com/device-427>

FOMA F900i by Fujitsu

SCREEN:

262,000 pixels, 1280x800 resolution, 2.8" screen, 16.7 million colors, 100% screen-to-body ratio

GAMES:

100+ titles, including titles from the Japanese market, including titles from the Japanese market

COMPATIBILITY:

Works with all major carriers, including all major carriers, including all major carriers

NETWORK:

Supports all major carriers, including all major carriers, including all major carriers

FLASH:

Supports all major carriers, including all major carriers, including all major carriers

JAVA:

Supports all major carriers, including all major carriers, including all major carriers

HORSEPOWER:

Supports all major carriers, including all major carriers, including all major carriers

MEMORY CARD:

Supports all major carriers, including all major carriers, including all major carriers

CAMERA:

Supports all major carriers, including all major carriers, including all major carriers

DESIGN:

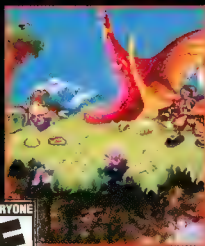
Supports all major carriers, including all major carriers, including all major carriers

pink, you can look at phone through you



This is where the games begin.

RAYMAN 3



A Tom Clancy's
SPLINTER
CELL
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Wireless multiplayer gaming
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EB GAMES **GameStop**

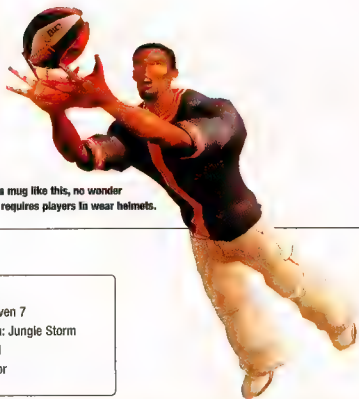
N-GAGE anyone
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Ubisoft
www.ubisoft.com



review crew

your monthly guide to gaming's winners and losers



■ With a mug like this, no wonder the NFL requires players to wear helmets.

DIRECTORY

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- 120 Rise to Honor



► Owens gives for a ball to the ex-Steelers backfield.



■ PS2/XB/GC



NFL STREET

Pigskin pimpin'

NFL Challenge
Build a team from scratch and take on the opposition in multiple ladder-style tournaments. This mode also features 150-plus tasks that earn you such bonuses as development points, new plays, and unlockable players. It's bound to keep you happily busy till next season.

BRYAN: I eat, drink, and sleep football. Most EGM editors don't. So why do so many of them keep challenging me to a game of *NFL Street*? Simply put, whether you pray to the football gods every Sunday or watch pigskin only around Super Bowl time, this game appeals to the quick-thrill, pick-up-and-play gamer in all of us.

Street perfectly blends the arcade feel of old-school *NFL Blitz* games with *NBA Street*'s flamboyant antics. Anything goes on these unconventional (and fantastic-looking) fields, and the gameplay reflects *Street*'s no-holds-barred attitude. Here's an example: A defender who's just intercepted the ball starts dribbling the pigskin like a basketball downfield. Soon thereafter, he pays the price for showboating and fumbles. The team that started the play picks the ball back up

and heads toward pay dirt. Before he can be slammed against the sideline wall, the ball carrier pulls a Matrix-style run up the concrete barrier, hops off like a jack rabbit, and registers six more points on the scoreboard. Yes, that was just one play in a single game, but giddy fun gameplay like this is so common that it's hard to put the controller down. These reelworthy moments (or, some might say, football follies) consistently keep the gameplay energized and unpredictable.

But the game isn't without faults: Cycling through the pint-sized play-call window is a chore, playing rock-solid defense is a struggle at times, and the create-a-player has limited facial options. Still, nitpicking won't change the fact that *Street* is one of the most accessible and, more important, entertaining sports titles to date.

DEMIAN: Point toward the sky and give it up for the Almighty, football has been *Street*-fied. And it is good.

As a big fan of the first few *NFL Blitz* games and the *NBA Street* series, I was hoping *NFL Street* would borrow (or steal, whatever it takes) the best bits from both. And it pretty much does—though *NFL Street* lacks some of the polish that makes *NBA Street Vol. 2* such a must-have, it easily stiff-arms *Blitz* as the top arcade take on football.

With the same seven players on offense and defense, the chess match (well, chess as played by hulking, non-Russian jocks) begins long before you hit the field. If you load up your team with good men, your rushing game should be unstoppable, but good luck defending the pass. If you know



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130 Sonic Battle

THE RATING SYSTEM



Here at *EGM*, we review only games that have been deemed final and reviewable by their publishers. Three editors review each game independently, and don't forget: 5.0 IS AVERAGE.

AWARDS



Platinum — for games that get all 10s. These games rule.



Gold — for games with an average score of 9.0 or higher.



Silver — for games with a mean score of 8.0 (but not 9.0).



This goes to the highest-reviewed game each month.



A rare dishonor for games with unanimously bad scores.

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

E-Everyone: Wholesome fun for the whole family, devoid of hookers, head shots, or harlot acts.

T-Teen: Like PG-13 movies, Teen gives violence and "comic mischief."

M-Mature: Whereas those games, typically offer all the gore, sex, drugs, and fun of R-rated fare.

Gridiron Greats

Here's the lowdown on some of *Street's* unlockable players:

William "The Refrigerator" Perry

We'd like to think that Weight Watchers hired The Fridge as a spokesperson soon after he retired his Super Bowl shuffle.



Lester Hayes: One of the best man-to-man cover guys in the NFL. He loved suiting up for the Raiders almost as much as he loved his Jeri curl.



Lawrence Taylor: LT was so intimidating that he'd make opposing teams whimper in fear. These days, he's shedding tears during TV confessionals. Wussy!



Larry Csonka: The Miami Dolphins' fullback played for the last undefeated NFL team (and the last to receive the memo about bushy mustaches bein' outta style).



■ NFL *Street* replaces the standard pat on the butt with masculine embraces.



your opponent likes to air it out, though, get a trio of good defensive backs. OK, so maybe it's more like checkers than chess, but I like it.

What I don't like is how near-impossible it is to force a turnover on downs; usually, a lucky fumble recovery or interception is the only way to stop a good offense. Everybody knows defense is supposed to win championships, dammit. I'd also like to see more plays and formations added on both sides of the ball. Now, if EA Big would just give the *Street* treatment to the NHL...

PATRICK: After *Midway* dropped the ball and changed its *Blitz* series from 7-on-7 adrenaline roughhousing to a more traditional *Madden* competitor, it looked like arcade pigskin might be extinct. Thankfully, EA Big picks up that cast-down gauntlet and runs with it. *NFL Street* completely reimagines football, injecting fun and flavor into the usually predictable genre.

Anything goes in *Street*—Joe Horn-type antics will earn you praise instead of fines. As my fellow reviewers pointed out, the game is slick, easy to

pick up (if you've ever touched *Madden*, you'll know exactly what to do), and a blast to play, but the various game modes are the biggest draw for me. For example, the pickup mode rocks: Here, you and an opponent assemble a seven-man team from among 40 randomly selected players; you and your opponent take turns picking guys (just like grade-school kickball) and then duke it out. These creative modes offer cool incentives, too—you'll spend hours hooked on NFL Challenge mode, trying to unlock all the zany stadiums.

PS2 Entry: Only the PS2 version of *Street* features online play. It's fast, fun, and supports the USB headset for trash-talking. **AAA**

Good: An entertaining brand of football for everyone

Bad: Inefficient play-call menu

No Sign of: John Madden



THE VERDICT

8.5 8.0 9.0

BRYAN

DEMIAN

PATRICK

Publisher: EA Sports Big
Developer: EA Tiburon
Players: 1-4 (1-2 online)
ESRB: Everyone

www.ign.com

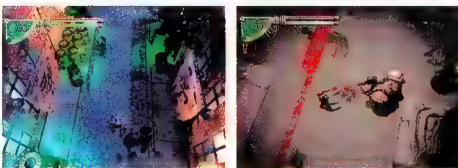


Fashion sense didn't survive the nuclear war, look at all the denim.

PS2/XB

FALLOUT: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL

Better left in the Vault



(Left) Man, someone caught a whole lot of fireflies! And stuffed 'em in barrels.

Good: Share the burden of boredom with two-player.co-op

Bad: Incredibly repetitive kill-a-thons.

PC Gamers: Track down the original *Fallout* for about \$10



PAUL: What a thermonuclear disappointment. To someone like me, who loved all three *Fallout* role-playing games on PC, this is a power fist to the face—an insult. *Brotherhood's* setting has neither the bleak, epic feel of *Fallout's* post-apocalyptic Wasteland, nor any of its characteristic '50s retro-futurism. Its mutants and ghouls are merely monsters, not the irradiated subcastes of humanity they were in previous games. Worst of all, its gameplay offers nothing but rote combat, nearly devoid of strategy, story, or purpose.

What's left is a tedious trek through a vapid version of *Mad Max*. You'll waste your first three hours wandering and hunting vermin. If you make it through that, you'll graduate to boring fetch quests and *more* extermination missions. The plot improves eventually, but even so it'll seem dumbed down to *Fallout* fans, while newcomers unfamiliar with the series' story will dismiss it as derivative and campy.

I suspect that, because of financial problems, Interplay had to ship this baby half done. But half-cooked babies just aren't palatable, even in the Wasteland.

THE VERDICTS
OUT OF 100

PAUL

SHAWN

KEVIN

SHAWN: Pest control sucks. So what I want to know is who thought "punch 60 radscorpions to death" would make for memorable mission objectives in a dungeon brawler? Sorry, the old stick-and-carrot rule of more powerful weapons to kill even stronger rats and roaches isn't sound enough incentive, what with no particular story, or sub-stance to support it. When ghouls with ray guns replace the critters, the going admittedly gets a bit better, even if the poor camera and crappy plot don't.

KEVIN: Recently, a rash of virtually identical action-RPGs invaded store shelves, each offering a top-down perspective, hordes of monsters to slay, and constipated-looking characters in the story scenes. *Fallout* was supposed to be a break from this monotony—not to mention a sequel to one of the best PC games ever made. So what happened here? This disgrace feels exactly like Interplay's own *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II*, except with unpolished visuals, soulless storytelling, and methodical hack-n-slash gameplay.

Publisher: VU Games
Developer: Interplay
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Mature

www.vugames.com

Good: Lots of customizable options

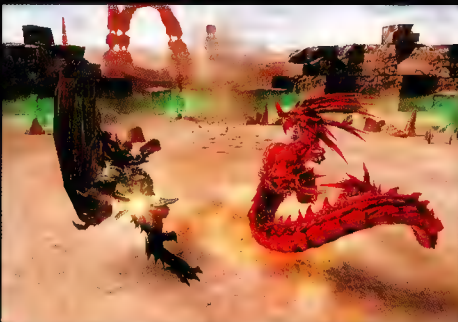
Bad: Silly story about four squabbling deities

Narrated by: The crazy old dude from *Conan the Barbarian*

PS2/XB

WRATH: UNLEASHED

Two blah tastes that taste blah together



In the immortal words of that *EverQuest* commercial: Time to slay the dragon!

PAUL: When attempting to create a cross-breed, whether a dog, a plant, or a game, you ought to begin with specimens of the highest pedigree. That's where *Wrath: Unleashed* sorely up—right at the start. It fuses a boring turn-based strategy game with a lackluster one-on-one fighter.

In the puzzle-like campaign mode, tactical progress is steady, although slow—but a fair versus game rarely escapes stalemate. Each player captures their share of strategically significant hexagons...and camps there. As long as no one screws up too badly, everyone can just keep using magic to replace their defeated creatures, more or less indefinitely. Shawn and I drugged through a tedious two-and-a-half-hour game that ended only because I got sick of it and committed suicide. That match could have dragged on for *days*.

Fighting is no better. You can randomly mash buttons or you can run around the arena spamming fireballs, wearing your opponent down in an admittedly cheap way. But you can't have a satisfying fight... No synergy here—*Wrath* is exactly the sum of these parts.

SHOE: Multiplayer's the titans. When Shawn's cheap single-button abuse and Paul's wimpy hit-and-run "techniques" are winning battles, you know some developer didn't put a lot of energy into making the action half of this action-strategy game very good. Single-player, however, can be quite fun for the casual strategist. Though the storyline and characters suffer under a good variety of hokeyness, the game gives you a good glaze of maps, terrain types, and monsters, and it offers plenty to strategize over without overly complicating things.

SHAWN: *Wrath* attempts to appeal to two distinct audiences...and fails. Tacticians won't take to its mash-happy battles, and combatants will want to dispense with the calculation and cut to the duels. Nor is either aspect of the game very good. The strategy segments are slow-paced and inclined to stalemate (a single campaign can drag on indefinitely) as the brawling bits are boring and easily abused. In short, two half-assed components combine to make...well, you do the math.

THE VERDICTS
OUT OF 100

PAUL

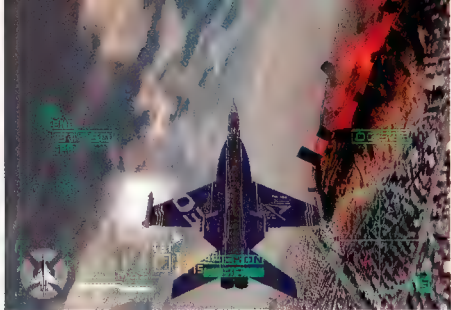
SHOE

SHAWN

7.0

Publisher: LucasArts
Developer: The Collective
Players: PS2 1-2 (2-4 w/
Multiplay); XB: 1-4
ESRB: Teen

www.lucasarts.com



From **CLAMP**, the superstars
who created **CHOBITS**
and **CARDCAPTORS!**

PlayStation 2

AIRFORCE DELTA STRIKE

How about a little radio silence?

Good: Massive variety of planes...
Bad: ...few of which seem to break the 30 mph barrier.
Tonight's Guest Star: Vic Viper from *Gradius*.



CRISPIN: I usually have a hard time falling asleep on long flights. But I really did conk out during one of *Delta Strike*'s many dull, virtual-lullaby cinema sequences. The game's makers added these sci-fi soap-opera interludes—which star 20 barely animated characters who fight, flirt, and ramble on about government factions—to spice up the series' air combat. But the plot takes tremendous effort to comprehend, and it doesn't help that characters continue to gossip like an old ladies' sewing circle while you're flying missions, when you're too busy busting targets and dodging missiles to pay attention.

Not that the missions do much to wake you up. Although you get 60 in all, ranging from canyon-skimming flights to outer-space dogfights (plus one ultrafrustrating iceberg battle), too many send you on emergency scrambles to down approaching fighters. Ace piloting leads to niftier planes—more than 100, including Willa-era fighters. But since most of these jets seemingly soar as fast as a garbage truck in reverse, it's hard to get the blood pumping. Or to keep those eyelids from getting heavier, and heavier, and heavi...zzzz.

SHAWN: Pilot a plane that couldn't keep pace with a power walker, let alone turn and burn. Scroll through text-heavy briefings in brutally long layovers between each and every flight. Return to *Delta Strike*'s not-so-wild blue yonder and listen to your wingmen shoot the breeze with mission control. Try your damndest not to nod off while creeping over barren, doo-doo-brown terrain, scanning the skies for the first sign of fun. Or simply remain seated, wedged between a slot and a screaming brat, reading your complimentary copy of *SkyMail*.

G. FORD: *Delta Strike* keeps you juggling responsibilities with its plethora of pilots, planes, and plots, and it all surrounds a decent-controlling flying engine. Problem is, the mission structure is poorly paced, with too many dull dogfighting missions wedged between the occasional inspired ones. And all that talking sure doesn't help—you will stop caring about which squeaky-voiced flyboy is getting revenge on whom after a few chatter-filled sorties. Ultimately, though, *Delta Strike*'s flying action isn't bad...just bland.



The land of Dairy Queen is in for some long-overdue napping.



THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	3.5	3.5	6.0
	CRISPIN	SHAWN	G. FORD

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami Studios
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.konami.com/airforcedeltastrike



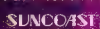
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PlayStation 2

CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH: REALMS OF EVERQUEST

When bad names happen to good action-RPGs

JOE: We took our pointy wizards' hats off to the excellent *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* for bringing Gauntlet-style hack-n-slash thrills back to consoles, and now, *Alliance's* original developers return with a fantastic action-RPG set in Sony's *EverQuest* universe. (The big difference? Um...well, the orcs look a little different, we guess.) *Champions* mimicks everything that we loved about *Alliance* but actually takes it all a step further, with extensive item customization, enhanced graphics, more variety to its straightforward all-monsters-must-die missions, a ton of levels, and up to four-player simultaneous play, both online and off.

The best part, though, is that the heart of the game—*Champions'* tight fight-or-flight gameplay—remains utterly engaging either alone or with friends helping you out. And luckily, *Champions* visuals are up to par with the gameplay. Cavernous dungeons and web-filled tombs have an almost photo-realistic look to them, and visual effects (like the light cast from a flaming sword) will have you

geeking out, looking for new weapons to ogle.

Great as it is, *Champions* still isn't perfect. Though it's much less pronounced than in *Alliance*, the constant sword swinging and spellcasting does still get repetitive over time—something that more monster variety and additional subquests could have alleviated. So although *Champions* clearly reigns as current king of the action-RPG hill, there's still room before it reaches the peak.

JENNIFER: Enough with the *BGDA* comparisons—this game stands on its own as a totally fun hack-n-slash ride. You don't have to follow the story too closely, but you'll still enjoy the rich environments, well-acted dialogue, and cool characters, from sexy undead villains (oh, Lord Vanarhost!) to pus-filled ant queens (eww!). What drew me in most, however, was the deep character customization. Adding an extra critical hit point or upgrading my helmet with a vampire fang to increase mana regeneration kept me playing, even through the repetitive

parts...which brings me to the game's only significant flaw. It doesn't require enough strategy in single- or multiplayer—you can almost always charge in, fire arrows or lightning hammers ablazing, and you'll beat your enemies just fine. But I can't complain too much about that, now, can I?

CJ: Based on how much I despise the massively dull massively multiplayer *EverQuest Online Adventures* for PS2, I fully expected to also hate *Champions*. But I can't! This game is too great.

Champions reminds me of the classic arcade action of *Gauntlet*, only with infinitely more depth. Fantastic visuals, fun combat, complex and superbly designed dungeons, and even an engaging story line combine to keep players enraptured. To top all that off, while it's plenty enjoyable solo, it's even better multiplayer or online with friends. I missed the boat on developer Snowblind's previous actioner, *Dark Alliance*. Maybe you did, too, but don't let this one get away.

Friend or Foe? Of course, finding the right folks to play with can radically change your experience with the multiplayer side of *Champions*. Some jerks you'll meet online will snitch all of the fallen special items, while you're busy administering a beat-down to a gaggle of orcs, while others might give you beefy magic weapons or load you up on health and mana potions in the store. Our advice? If they don't keep asking what you're wearing, play with 'em again.



Know Your Role

Each character class in *Champions* has its own unique set of abilities and spells. For instance, the wood-elf ranger can shoot flaming arrows, while the shadow knight can befriend the undead and emit a trail of pestilence. Since *EverQuest* is relatively unknown compared with *D&D*, it'll take you a while to discover which group possesses your favorite tricks. (We could barely stand looking at the gaudily dressed erudite wizards, so they remain an unknown quantity for us.)



■ That stag that is all the rage in Norrath this season.

Good: Tone or customization, lots to do, and online play.
Bad: Not enough monsters in the manual.
Still Somewhat Living in the Shadow of: *Baldur's Gate*



THE VERDICTS	8.5	8.0	8.5
OUT OF 10	JOE	JENNIFER	CJ

Publisher: Sony Online Ent.
Developer: Snowblind
Players: 1-2
(2-4 w/ Multiplay or Online)
ESRB: Teen
station.sony.com



▲ Lupin plays one of the Sorcerer King's thugs.



■ (Below) Hmm...hasn't anyone 'round here heard of using a key?

■ PlayStation 2

LUPIN THE THIRD: TREASURE OF THE SORCERER KING

This classic anime thief won't steal your heart

Good: Captures the look and feel of the show
Bad: Stiff, stilted controls don't do it any favors
Next Time, Lupin Should Steal: Better gameplay



CJ: As a fan of the *Lupin* anime for many years, I'm happy to see one of the illustrious thief's gaming romps make it Stateside...even if the game itself is a bit of a letdown. To its credit, *Treasure* offers a well-written (if typical) *Lupin* story, stars the TV show's English dub cast, and matches the visual style of the anime nicely. But I won't be blinded by fanboyism—this is an average adventure game that feels pretty dated by modern standards.

Stiff, robotic controls present the game's biggest hurdle. Most action sequences are a joke, as gun battles consist of standing still while firing at a bad guy who is five feet away. Even a few awkward attempts at stealth fail to add flavor to this bland gameplay stew. Also, the gameplay's

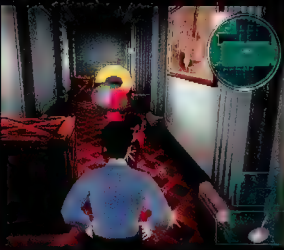
too reliant on naggin'-scratching puzzles—you'll often wander around until you eventually stumble on the right path w/ clue to progress.

Overall, *Treasure* is passable *Lupin* fare for diehard fans, but it probably won't win any new ones.

PAUL: Like its hero, this game wears many none-too-convincing disguises. There's a lot of faulty stealth gameplay, some shooting, and a dash of gadgeteering. But underneath that, it's an old-school adventure game, where everything is part of an extravagant puzzle—for example, a Cup-O-Noodle's expiration date is the code to unlock a door. *Lupin* would've been better if we were free to roam around in true adventure-game fashion, hunting for clues with-

out the headaches that tacked-on fighting and sneaking cause.

KEVIN: It's always nice to see an anime game that doesn't outright embarrass its source material. Someone out there was serious about pleasing *Lupin* fans: The script and music deliver 100 percent original anime quality, and every place you go brims with that authentic James Bond-gone-bad *Lupin* feel. The game itself (a mix of *Metal Gear Solid* and *Resident Evil*) is just above average—the controls are more fiddly than an Irish wedding—but the hide-and-shoot gameplay and fun puzzles are engaging enough to keep anime freaks playing. As a *Lupin* maniac, I feared the worst...and came out decently satisfied.



■ (Above) Lupin does his best Sam Fisher impression by hashing this guard on the head with a frying pan while wearing infrared goggles. Impressions aren't his forte.



SHE'S THE ARTISTIC TYPE. THOUGH HER ARTS ARE PURELY MARTIAL.

THE VERDICTS (out of 10)

5.5	6.5	7.0
CJ	PAUL	KEVIN

Publisher: Bandai
 Developer: Eia
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Teen

www.lupinofficial.com



09.27.06



PlayStation 2

WINNING ELEVEN 7

Best soccer franchise with the worst name



England's Michael Owen corrals a pass (left); Wayne Rooney prepares to miss the net (right).



Good: Amazingly accurate gameplay
Bad: Gameplay may be too accurate for nonfanatical fans
Known Across the Atlantic as: Pro Evolution



PATRICK: First, a warning: This game is for serious soccer fans. If a hard-fought 1-0 battle doesn't sound like edge-of-the-seat stuff to you, then fire up *Madden* and let us enjoy this beautiful game in peace.

For those still reading, *Winning Eleven 7* is as good as it gets. The *FIFA* series may have a bit more flash, but *Eleven* is top of the table when it comes to gameplay—and that's all that counts with soccer. You'll need a solid passing game to mount any sort of offensive attack, and even then goals are rare. Sky a ball over the crossbar after all the work it takes to set up a shot and you'll be more distraught than the suicidal players on the field. But when you do score, it's all the sweeter.

Although there are no MLS teams and most of the other national league squads are incorrectly named (due to Byzantine licensing rules), nearly all of the players do bear the right names. More importantly, the stars actually play like their real-life counterparts—Michael Owen's speed borders on the ridiculous, while David Beckham bends kicks like a mole. But perhaps the best news of all? *Eleven's* \$35 price tag.

BRYAN: I should be writing this review topless. Having just led my team to victory in sudden-death overtime, soccer etiquette practically demands sweaty-shirt removal to further stoke the already delirious fans. *WE7* brings this level of excitement to every nail-biting match, and the highly skilled A.I. helps preserve the series' reputation as the most true-to-life soccer sim. Cosmetic improvements such as spiffier player models and animations are just the icing on the, er, soccer cake. Next year, add online play and I'll drop trou.

DEMIAN: In Europe, the release of a new *Winning Eleven* game is a semi-religious event for soccer fans, possibly accompanied by red wine and fainting. Here, nobody notices. Too bad, because *WE7* is probably the best soccer game yet made, thanks to relatively simple but deep controls and pleasing gameplay. Minor gripes: I'd like to see a little more visual polish, and I think the menus are still atrociously complicated. Also, curious soccer game newbies, prepare your mind for bogging—the initial learning curve can be pretty steep.

THE VERDICTS out of 10:	9.5	8.5	8.5
	PATRICK	BRYAN	DEMIAN

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami Tokyo
Players: 1-2 (1-5 w/Multi)pt
ESRB: Everyone

www.konami.com

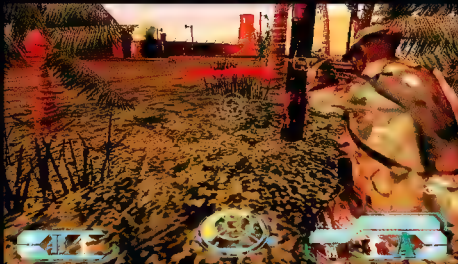


The lunar surface is postcard pretty compared to some of the levels in *Jungle Storm*.

PlayStation 2

GHOST RECON: JUNGLE STORM

Low caliber



Idiots one second, geniuses the next, enemies'll nail you with small arms from long range.

Good: Plentiful online modes
Bad: Appallingly bad graphics and A.I.
Gamer: Pyle



SHAWN: The year is 2009, and, according to Tom Clancy's latest infantry combat sim, trouble's breaking in Colombia. By now you know the drill: You're in charge of two three-soldier squads, and you can outfit each group as you see fit. Prefer to play it safe? Snoop around with a sniper before devising a plan of approach. And if you like your business risky, you can always just get the jungle ablaze with the big guns. Issuing commands is easy, provided you have a USB headset on hand (the controller's setup sports shortcuts, but you can't truly fine-tune the procedures without pausing).

Alongside online modes that are as abundant as they are mediocre (be sure to bring a tent and can of beans to the surest strategy), strategy is among *Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm's* few saving graces. War might be ugly, but good God, this looks like sin. Every level is an angular wasteland where Turok might very well have tracked dinosaurs in the Jurassic era of 3D gaming. Add to this a lack of visible weapons, soldiers who seem to be wearing cement boots, and alarmingly stupid A.I., and you'll see why I wish I'd dodged this draft.

CRISPIN: On paper, *Jungle Storm* is a steely-eyed *SOCOM* killer, reporting for duty with more single-player missions, a flexible squad-control interface, and a greater variety of online modes. But then you play it and—aaah!—is it ever ugly. The blah environments and goofy animation do little to draw you into what's supposed to be a realistic combat experience. Spotty A.I. and clunky controls make it even harder to maintain gung-ho enthusiasm. The co-op multiplayer modes (standard deathmatch is dull) rescue *Jungle Storm* from a dishonorable discharge. Just don't expect *SOCOM II's* atmosphere.

JOE: Last fall's *Ghost Recon: Island Thunder* doted on Xbox, so it's no surprise that *Jungle Storm* on PS2 is positively U-G-L-Y on PS2—but its mix of squad-based strategy and first-person shooting remains slowly paced, smartly thrilling fun. *SOCOM II* aficionados don't have to worry about this game knocking the crown off their king's noggin, although its ballistic intellectual gameplay (online or off) make *Storm* worth seeking out. Just barely.

THE VERDICTS out of 10:	5.0	6.5	6.5
	SHAWN	CRISPIN	JOE

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft
Players: 1-2 (2-16 Online)
ESRB: Teen

www.ubisoft.com



R-Type games move slower than your average shooter and require careful planning and execution over reflexes.

PlayStation 2

R-TYPE FINAL

The best Type of shooter

Good: Huge variety of ships, classic *R-Type* gameplay

Bad: Some excessive slowdown, interface problems

Weirdest Ship Name: The R-9AX "Delicatessen"

MARK: If you've played an *R-Type* shooter before, from the 15-year-old original arcade game right down to the recent PS1 *R-Type Delta*, you know what you're getting here. *Final* doesn't mess with the formula, it celebrates it: the force pod you can attach to your ship for extra defense or fire off to attack on its own, the different levels of three laser power-ups, the gigantic pattern-based bosses, even the "big-ship stage" where you spend a whole level attacking different parts of one gigantic craft. All that under a fresh coat of paint is fine with me; shooters have hardly improved upon the *R-Type* template in the last decade.

What *Final* does add is some variety. Along with five difficulty levels, the different characteristics of the 100 ships you can unlock—each with its own power-up effects, missiles, and other options to choose

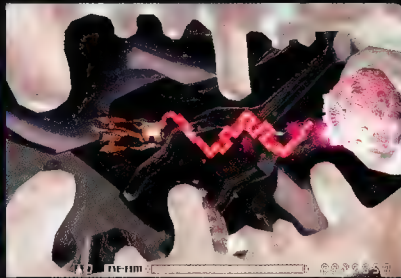
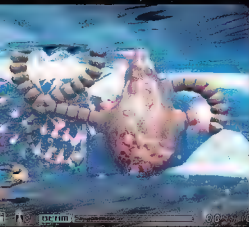
from—deepen and lengthen the game. You can customize your ships to fit the particular challenges of each level or even program their AI, and watch as they fight between each other in the odd versus mode. (Quite lame, actually, but a quirky bonus so I'll give Irem points for simply trying.) The \$30 price tag just seals the deal.

JOHN D: Underwater flying, several sweet detachable gun bits, a transitional stage-long battleship encounter...*Final* is an *R-Type* fanatic's dream and the best thing to happen to side-scrolling shooters since *G-Darius* (PS1). New ships and a somewhat awkward versus mode expand the genre and round out the satisfying solo game. *R-Type* only,

suffers on technical issues:

Slowdown often drags action to a crawl (an artificial aid—lasers are easier to dodge in slow-mo), even though the graphics are sometimes more PS1.5 than PS2. But whether you're an old *R-Type* fan or a total newbie, it's a must-buy.

JOHN R: It saddens me to think this may be the last new taste of *R-Type* we ever get. *Final* definitely takes the storied franchise out on a high note, with more than 100 ships to unlock and a solid dose of the classic, "thinking man's shooter" gameplay that *R-Type* fans love. Level designs are a bit weak compared to past *R-Types*, but the variety and replay value here more than make up for it. A must-own for shooter fans.



Battling the giant bosses is one of the best parts of *Final*—watch carefully to develop a pattern to beat 'em.

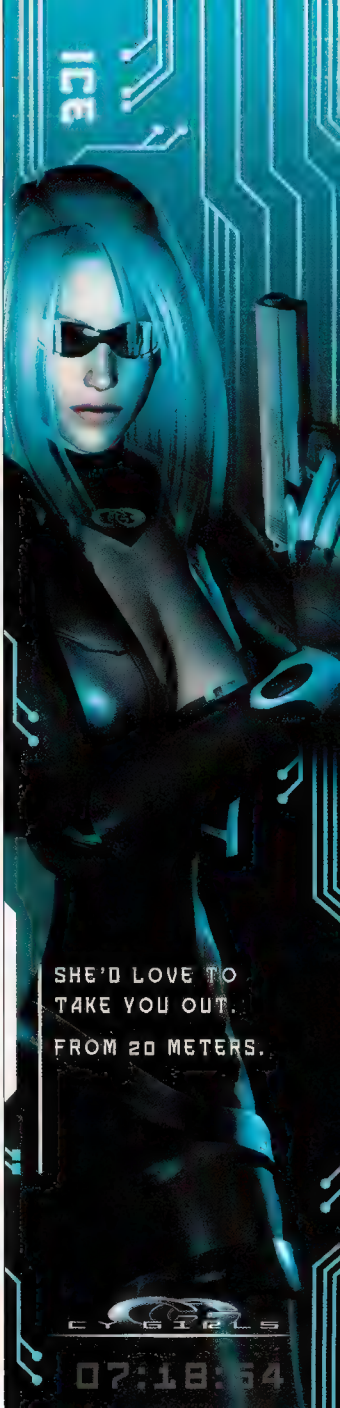
THE VERDICTS
OUT OF 10

8.5 8.0 8.0

MARK JON D. JOHN R.

Publisher: Fresh Games
Developer: Irem
Players: 1 (2 in versus mode)
ESRB: Everyone

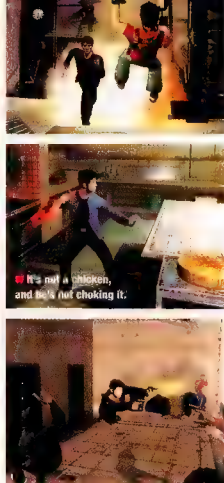
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SHE'D LOVE TO
TAKE YOU OUT.
FROM 20 METERS.

CYSGIRLS

07:18:54



PlayStation 2

RISE TO HONOR

Half jet set, half jet lag

SHAWN: *Rise to Honor* infuses the classic beat-em-up formula with cinematic flair. Kit (aka Hong Kong legend Jet Li) Yun's kung fu is so seamless it seems choreographed. Take, for instance, your typical restaurant ruckus—you know, the one where the cleaver-wielding chef chases crooks from his kitchen. Parry blows with whatever's at hand—that Peking duck should do nicely—then flip a goon onto the hot grill. Clever controls make ass kicking as easy as it is elegant (simply shove the right analog stick in the direction you want to attack), and counters keep you from feeling like you're on the martial arts treadmill—at least for a while.

It's not that there aren't other things to do: Scripted action sequences and sloppy but fun shootouts punctuate the fistfights. The former are adrenaline-fueled affairs that have Kit playing hide-and-seek with armed helicopters and staying out of a sniper's scope, while the twin pistol exchanges of the latter are comparatively low caliber.

As cool as they sometimes are, such sequences

are simply interludes—hardly enough to keep the slugfests that take center stage from becoming a chore. If the enemies weren't so cheap in the later levels, it wouldn't matter. But once wave after wave start evading your every move no matter how much you mix it up, forcing you to find and exploit the A.I.'s blind spots, *Rise's* martial artistry stops to lowbrow brawling. When the dust settles, it's worth checking out...once it hits matinee price.

SHOE: I didn't know the bell curve could apply to videogame difficulty. *Rise to Honor* gets crazy hard about halfway through (with cheap sub-bosses that have supermagnetic grabbing abilities), but then it peters off with the last few levels—and not just because I got enough fighting experience under my black belt. I still enjoyed pressing on, though, because a great control scheme and plentiful save and checkpoints keep the frustration down.

The gameplay variety helps, too. *Rise* doesn't excel in any individual area—the stealth/shoot-

ing/beat-em-up parts won't kung fu sweep anyone off his feet, but together, they combo for a mindless good time. Too bad you have the same moves set from start to finish, and the coolest Jet Li chop-socky stuff only happens in cut-scenes.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—SCOOTER: *Rise to Honor* might seem like revolutionary movie-star-in-gaming fusion, but it's basically just an excuse for Jet Li to star in a dumbed-down (yet beautiful) remake of the arcade classic *Final Fight*. Brawlin' vets can expect Metro City fistcuffs flashbacks—it seems that beating up five goons at a time is still the best way to reach the top of the criminal food chain. Luckily, the silly-sounding analog-stick fighting scheme actually works. If not for some serious balance issues (some bosses can easily kill you in two hits), stupidly out-of-place stealth levels, and finicky weapon controls (it's really hard, for some reason, to hit somebody with a stick), *Honor* might have been more than just a solid rental.



Put the moves on mob bossess Michelle Chang.



Costume Party

In addition to Jet Li's mug and moves, *Rise to Honor* features outfits from a few of the Wushu wizard's more famous flicks. Li uses gravity-defying kung fu to fight off foreigners with guns in *Once Upon a Time in China* (right) and settles a Sino-Japanese feud in the thinly veiled remake of Bruce Lee's *Fist of Fury*, *Fist of Legend* (far right).



Good: Stylish martial arts action.
Bad: Crushing difficulty curve.
Must-See: Jet Li Movie, Here

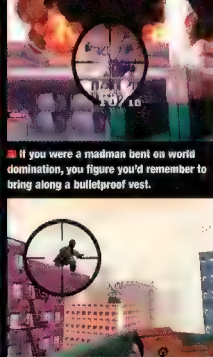


THE VERDICTS
 OUT OF 100

6.5	6.5	6.0
SHAWN	SHOE	SCOOTER

Publisher: Sony CEA
 Developer: SCEA Foster City
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Teen

www.playstation.com



If you were a madman bent on world domination, you figure you'd remember to bring along a bulletproof vest.

Xbox

SILENT SCOPE COMPLETE

Silent all these years

Good: Three *Silent Scopes* for the price of one
Bad: *Silent Scope 3* is the only one worth playing for long
Only in *Silent Scope*: Can the president be so easily kidnapped



CJ: The three (four, if you count the bonus *EX*) *Silent Scopes* bundled in *Complete* let you live out that childhood fantasy of protecting innocent civilians by shooting terrorists with a very large rifle from a great distance. But for some reason, in the world of *Silent Scope*, most of the situations you're put in are pretty ridiculous. I mean, really...what terrorist is going to carry the president's daughter across a football field during a game? But it's that kitschy over-the-top-ness, coupled with sharp (but slightly dated) graphics, that makes *Scope* such an enjoyable distraction.

It is a shame, however, that *Complete* doesn't do anything to upgrade the visuals or gameplay of these older games. And *Scope 7* and *2* can't hold a candle to the options and unlockables offered by the third installment. Still, it's not a terrible

package for the price, and it's definitely worth picking up if you've got an Xbox lightgun gathering dust next to *House of the Dead III*.

G. FORD: As thrilling (and controversial) as it is to be put in the role of a sniper, any positive feelings here are sufficiently dampened by the Xbox pad. Unless you're willing to pony up 40 bucks for a gun, *Scope* is bound to frustrate you. These games belong in the arcade with dedicated guns and scopes, because moving the cursor around with a pad, not to mention zooming in and out, just isn't pinpoint or quick enough.

Konami should be commended for including the entire series, with *Scope 3* being the jewel here, but it's hard to recommend a game that

you can beat in a weekend.

SHOE: My eyes aren't so good anymore. After extended playtime with *Silent Scope Complete*, sitting 3 feet away from the television, scanning for targets the size of dust mites, my peepers gave out before my thumbs did. Next went my mind—blown to smithereens by the execrably bad voice acting and absurd cinema-mas (which show their low-budget arcade roots all too well).

I actually enjoyed the gameplay, though. It has smooth controls and intense moments, and it's as solid as any sniping moment found in any other shooter. Just watch out for that crazy difficulty spike that happens about halfway through each title—and don't forget the *Visine*.

Silent Scope Light Rifle

If you take your sniping seriously, you'll want to check out this \$40 tricked-out rifle-sized lightgun from Pelican—it boasts a unique sensor that auto-zooms the in-game action when you put your face up to the scope. Info at www.pelicanperformance.com.



Catching an eyelid of the ladies refills your health, but what's she doing way up there?

THE VERDICTS (out of 10)	6.5	5.0	6.0
	CJ	G. FORD	SHOE

Publisher: Konami
 Developer: Konami
 Players: 1-2
 ESRB: Teen

www.konami.com

2 GIRLS.
 2 WORLDS.
 1 HARDCORE
 MISSION.



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CYBERSPACE GIRLS

PlayStation 2



MATURE
 Blood
 Strong Language
 Suggestive Themes
 Violence

KONAMI

www.konami.com/usa

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TEEN
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ESRB

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Mild Language
Mild Violence
Suggestive Themes

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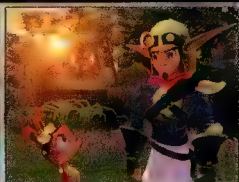
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JAK II™



THIS WORLD IS
BETTER LEFT TO JAK.

It ain't no namby-pamby fairyland, pal. It's a whole new kind of evil. Crawling with ruthless dictators, backstabbing allies and blood-thirsty freaks with an appetite for extra rare meat. All pانسies kindly tippy toe on out of here. This requires someone with serious ass-kicking savvy. And that someone, my friend, is Jak. This time he's pissed off and battle ready, with a frighteningly large gun, get-the-hell-outta-my-way hoverboard and a nasty case of mutant powers. So please, save yourself the detached appendages and let him handle it.



NAUGHTY DOG

PlayStation 2



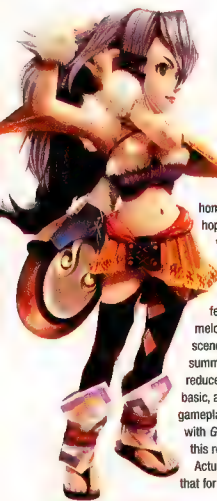
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GameCube

FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES

Because you need more cables in your life



SHANE: *Crystal Chronicles* isn't exactly the classic *Final Fantasy* homecoming that Nintendo fans may have hoped for. While it might lure in series vets with distinctive FF trappings—cuddly moogle malmen, elemental spellcraft, and familiar foes such as tonberries and cactuars—it's really a different beast altogether. You won't find any melodramatic love stories, lavish CG cut-scenes, turn-based battles, or over-the-top summon spells here; *Crystal Chronicles* reduces the *Final Fantasy* experience to a basic, action-packed concept that's all about gameplay and charm. Imagine *Zelda* crossed with *Gauntlet*, and you're close to figuring out this remarkable game's addictive formula.

Actually, the first (and most important) part of that formula involves finding three friends.

Nintendo has been preaching the gospel of connectivity (as opposed to, say, online play) for the last year, and *Chronicles* finally makes good on that promise: It truly is best when played with four players. Brave souls willing to fill their lives with cables (see sidebar) will reap fantastic rewards—teamwork factors into the gameplay at a fundamental level. You'll want to recruit your friends so one of you can carry the Crystal Chalice, a magic device that provides a protective shield from the poisonous gas infesting each dungeon. Also, combat rewards combos—both physical and magical attacks power up when executed simultaneously. Simple hack-n-slash gameplay magically transforms into something strategic, wild, and addictive.

Single-player action isn't quite as compelling (no combos, some puzzles are tough without friends, and your pet moogle isn't that adept at carrying the Chalice), but it's an acceptable alternative

when your pals aren't around. And since you can move your characters in and out of each other's games at any point, you'll want to play solo just to find new weapons and artifacts for your hero.

Gameplay isn't the only draw here. *Chronicles* is one visually arresting game—every location you explore harbors stunning details. Overhead torches sway in a mine, casting flickering shadows; rivulets of sand cascade down sun-bleached desert dunes; goony, mucouslike cobblestones glisten in a fungal forest. The graphics are so great that you'll actually start wondering what a realistic GC *Zelda* might have looked like. A haunting, subtle soundtrack matches the brilliance of the eye candy, and the evocative, folksy tunes provide a great score for all the monster thwacking.

Daunting as the setup might be, give *Chronicles* a chance and you'll likely get hooked. It's a simple, beautiful, and rewarding experience.

You Will Connect...or Else

It's integral that you understand the bizarre love/hate relationship you're bound to feel about *Chronicles*' multiplayer action. There's no denying that playing through this adventure with three of your pals offers giggly hijinks and boundless thrills...but that fun comes at a high price. Specifically, each player (regardless of whether you're playing with one, two, or three friends) must play using a GBA hooked to the Cube via a link cable. The realization of "Gee, I'm having a lot of fun...and all it required was nearly 600 dollars' worth of Nintendo hardware" might cause insanity. So, if the whole connectivity concept rubs you the wrong way, you might want to steer clear.



Why does the game force everyone to use GBAs? So that you can manage your equipment privately, of course.

Good: Stellar graphics, fun multiplayer action
Bad: Absurd GBA prerequisite, scant plot
Creepiest Character Class: Bustier-clad forest Nutsu



THE VERDICT
8.0 8.0 8.0
SHANE JENNIFER KEVIN

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Game Designers Studio
Players: 1
(2-4 w/ GBA-to-GC Link cables)
ESRB: Teen
www.nintendo.com



JENNIFER: For me, playing this game is sort of like walking by the Hello Kitty store. I know I'm supposed to be too cool/sophisticated/old to go inside, but the disgustingly cute characters, blindingly pretty colors, and shiny objects lure me in and keep me there for hours at a time until I guiltily emerge into the filthy, impure real world (which, it then seems, just doesn't offer enough glittering mushrooms in one day to keep me happy).

Lots of stereotypes work (this game's for kiddies, for girls, for *Final Fantasy*-lovin' fanboys), but none even hint at how deep this action-RPG goes. You can specialize your character in magic or melee, or you can keep your guy a jack-of-all-trades. You can meticulously beat every boss in every level, or you can skip around wherever your little heart takes you (though this can make the game more difficult, since your character won't have the proper skills to pay the billz). You can (in a

fantastic homage to *Animal Crossing*) write letters and send gifts to your family and friends to win their favor. It's both intensely frivolous and intensely rewarding—everyone should try it.

KEVIN: I'm sorry if this sounds blunt, but calling this game *Final Fantasy* probably wasn't the greatest idea. Despite the moogles and traditional magic-spell names, this really isn't *FF*—there are no experience points or leveling, and really not much of a story, either. Instead, you've got a fair-to-middlin' action-RPG that graduates to a must-play experience with two or three friends.

It's obvious that the developers concentrated most of their effort on the multiplayer game. Playing by yourself gets boring very quickly, even by the second "year" of in-game time, thanks to the repetitive dungeons and straightforward hack-n-slash gameplay. Your moogles are more

of a drag than a support, too. Some sort of AI-controlled fighting companion would have been nice—after all, you're in a "crystal caravan," right? That would imply traveling with more than one person, no?

The single-player roughness, though, is covered by two features: a superb graphic and sound package (the most beautiful on GameCube, I'd say), as well as a multiplayer mode that's actually worth the cost of multiple GBAs and cables. I know most gamers won't have the money and time required to fully enjoy *FFCC* with their pals, but the payoff in dorky couch-rocking fun is something unattainable anywhere else. Just make sure you're playing with evenly balanced characters—the monsters seem like they're tuned to the strongest party member, so very weak characters could get crushed in their wake.



Crystal Chronicles' extra-fluffy moogles are 200 percent cuter than those in any other *FF* game.



Everybody's Got Something to Hide Except for Me and My Moogles

Just about every recent *Final Fantasy* game has featured moogles, cuddly magical critters who fill various important roles in society. In *Crystal Chronicles*, moogles provide several important functions. If you're playing alone, your pet moogles will carry the Crystal Chalice and help fight once in a while. (Repay his kindness by washing, clipping, and coloring his fur during downtime.) Moogles also deliver letters, so players can send all correspondence via moogles mail. Finally, be sure to search every location in the game for a hidden moogles house. Each one houses a collectable stamp that unlocks a GBA minigame.

DEFINING A CULTURE,
CREATING A NATION

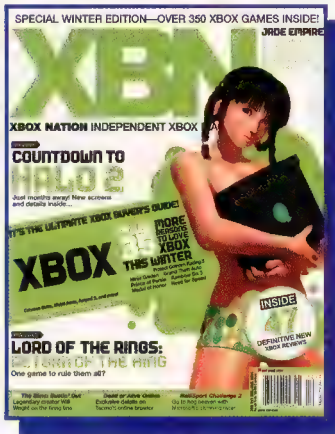


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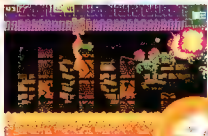
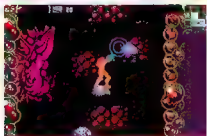
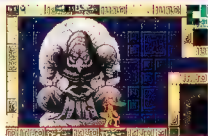
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The newfangled ability to shoot diagonally gives Samus the edge.



GBA

METROID ZERO MISSION

Fell in love with a girl

SHANE: GBA provides a fitting home for the original *Metroid*, considering it's the game that gave birth to the whole genre of exploration-based action-adventure (we'd never have the three great GBA *Castlevanias* without it). But *Zero Mission* isn't merely a portable replacement for that classic 8-bit *Metroid* cartridge you foolishly sold at a yard sale (though that's in here, too)—it's a remake that fleshes out every aspect of the landmark title.

Veterans of the old-school classic will feel instantly at home back on planet Zebes: You start out on the familiar pedestal in Brinstar, run to the left to grab the Morph Ball, and set out in search of the Long Beam. But don't think you know exactly what to expect—*Zero Mission*'s newly organic environments pack a ton of surprises: hundreds of tricky secrets, unexpected (and challenging) boss encounters, original areas to explore, and a stunning new final act that bravely eschews all normal *Metroid* conventions.

Gameplay is, as expected, perfect. The develop-

ers deftly fuse the rudimentary framework of the classic *Metroid* world with all the complex moves from *Super Metroid* (Super NES) to create a killer hybrid. Adding power-ups such as Super Missiles, Speed Boost, and Space Jump completely changes the scope of exploration, so you'll be navigating every cranny for hours in search of elusive objects.

But even newcomers who have no memory of trouncing Ridley back in '87 will fall in love here—you can't ignore *Zero Mission*'s artful graphics, haunting soundtrack, and brilliantly balanced gameplay. This is a must-have for all GBA owners.

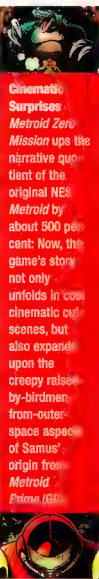
MARK: "Remake" almost doesn't seem like the right word for *Zero Mission*. Besides the basic structure and a few knowing winks, it's a very different game from the original *Metroid*. (The exciting stealth-action section, in particular, was a pleasant surprise.)

Even more than its famous 2D predecessors, *Zero* does a great job of working puzzles seam-

lessly into gameplay and giving you the general idea of what to do next while leaving you free to explore. Props for the moody soundtrack, sneaky hidden secrets, and spot-on controls carried over from *Metroid Fusion*—only the pathetically simple bosses disappoint.

CRISPIN: If you managed to dodge citrus-colored she-warrior Samus Aran's grapple-beam pull over the years and have never played a *Metroid* game, this is your chance to finally suit up and get sucked in. Everything that makes the series so classic—the killer weapons, spectacular bosses (don't listen to Mark), clever level design, moody music, perfect control—is here.

And if you're already a *Metroid* maniac, you'll love *Zero Mission* even more, regardless of whether you played the original NES game. It's certainly a more fleshed-out experience, with more bosses, new sticky spots (which will take you a while to figure out), and very cool surprises.



Givemate: Surprises *Metroid Zero Mission* ups the narrative quotient of the original NES *Metroid* by about 800 percent: Now, the game's story not only unfolds in cinematic cutscenes, but also expands upon the creepy raised-by-birdmen-from-outerspace aspect of Samus' origin from *Metroid Prime* (GBA).

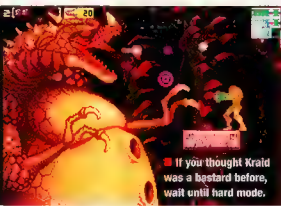


Kick it NES-style.

Samus' Secret Stash

Zero Mission's fun doesn't run dry once you've exterminated all the *Metroids*—unlockables abound.

- **Hard Mode:** Series vets won't find the easy or normal settings very tough...but they'll whimper when the first it'll critter takes 'em out on hard.
- **NES *Metroid*:** See how far Samus has come by playing the old-school (and liberalficult) original.
- **Art Gallery:** Hook *Zero Mission* up with *Metroid Fusion* (you'll need two GBAs and a cable) to access a special collection of Samus artwork.



If you thought Kraid was a beastard before, wait until hard mode.

Good: Visuals, gameplay, music, unlockables.
Bad: Samus' tacky, under-the-helmet hairdo.
NES Vets: Get ready for some surprises.



THE VERDICTS
OUT OF 10

9.5 9.0 9.0

SHANE

MARK

CRISPIN

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo
Players: 1
ESRB: Everyone

www.nintendo.com

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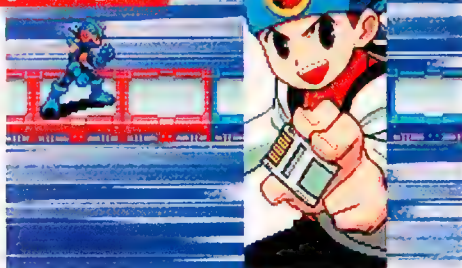
Miami, FL	Dallas, TX	Philadelphia, PA	Detroit, MI	Kansas City, MO	San Jose, CA
Jacksonville, FL	Atlanta, GA	New York, NY	Indianapolis, IN	Denver, CO	Las Vegas, NV
New Orleans, LA	Nashville, TN	Brooklyn, NY	Louisville, KY	Seattle, WA	Phoenix, AZ
Houston, TX	Charlotte, NC	Boston, MA	Chicago, IL	Portland, OR	San Diego, CA
San Antonio, TX	Baltimore, MD	Columbus, OH	Milwaukee, WI	San Francisco, CA	Los Angeles, CA

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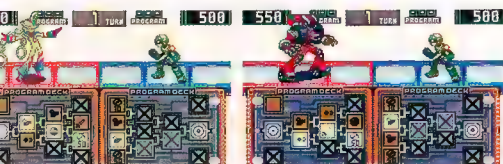
* Prize money based on total registrations.



GBA

MEGA MAN BATTLE CHIP CHALLENGE

Victory is in the chips...maybe



Each turn, the computer determines which circuit you'll run through your chipset.

Good: Fun to set up your deck using the myriad card combos.

Bad: Brain-dead battles

Will Title You Over: The next *Battle Network* game



CJ: Imagine any of the *Mega Man Battle Network* GBA games, minus the action and running around, plus a hefty helping of trading-card gameplay, and you've got *Battle Chip Challenge*—an interesting offshoot that branches off *Network's* story.

Fans will appreciate being able to play as a number of different characters, and the visuals and sounds are up to the series' high standards. But unfortunately, the actual battles aren't that great; they're a tedious exercise in repeatedly pressing the A button to advance dialog boxes. It's fun to set up your Battle Chip deck, but the strategy halts once a fight commences. You can't do much besides watch it play out as if you've set up a trail of dominoes, hoping they'll trigger the right way. You're not completely helpless—you have two customizable slots for chips you can plug in for backup anytime—but it doesn't make you feel like you have any more real control over the matches.

Kids who dig real-life card games will likely derive some strategic pleasure here, but their fingers won't appreciate the repetitive stress injuries.

KEVIN: *Battle Network* followers could be in for some major culture shock with this game. The peppy go-go music and pop-art visuals are still there, but the card-based gameplay is completely different—and, regrettably, not quite as engaging. The reason? Everything from using chips in battle to buying new ones is decided randomly for you, so it never seems like you're really in control. This design means that advancing in the tournament requires more patience than talent, since later battles drag on and on with no input required. Perhaps this would've been better as a real card game...

GAMENOW—PHIL: Let the broken record play on: The biggest problem with *Challenge* is that the battles just aren't all that fun. Since all the strategy takes place before the fight, the bouts themselves are long, boring sequences in which you do nothing but repeatedly tap A. Despite this, I found myself slowly becoming involved in the game, thanks to the cool characters. It's definitely not in the same league as the legendary *Card Fighter's Clash* for Neo-Geo Pocket, but it's not terrible, either.

THE VERDICTS
OUT OF 10



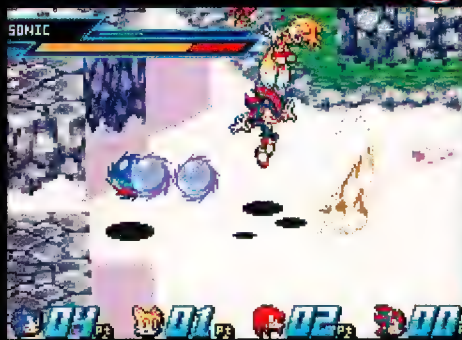
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Players: 1 (2+ w/ Link cable)
ESRB: Everyone

www.capcom.com

GBA

SONIC BATTLE

When hedgehogs attack



Four-player bouts get messy, but you can usually win by repeatedly abusing powerful moves.

Good: Fun four-player action

Bad: Simplistic levels

Thank God: Very few voice samples



JOHN R: Sega's latest GBA Sonic game is quite a departure from two previous *Advance* games, ditching the side-scrolling platform action in favor of an overhead-view 3D fighting engine. The gameplay is reminiscent of Capcom's *Power Stone* games for the old Dreamcast (God rest its soul), minus the environmental interaction and flashy special effects. You'd think a game like this wouldn't fare so well on a tiny handheld, but surprisingly, *Sonic Battle* holds up quite nicely. Four-player fights are especially fun, and since each character has multiple ways of setting up attacks (aerial, ground, and defense), the action manages to stay fresh. And if you get tired of the main cast, you can always build your own custom robot fighter in the single-player story mode.

My biggest beef with *Battle* is that the environments are too plain. Granted, it's nice to have 3D stages, but the fights would've been much more exciting if you could break walls, pick stuff up and throw it, fight in multilevel arenas, and so on. As it stands now, it's a bit too cut and dried, but it's a solid first effort nonetheless.

SHANE: From a purely technical standpoint, *Sonic Battle* astounds. 3D graphics have never looked this sharp on GBA before—these detailed (and smooth-moving) environments offer hope for future slabs at PS1-quality visuals. Shame about the gameplay, though. Combat ranges from dull (any time you have to fight as dimwitted robotic newcomer Emerl) to freakishly unbalanced (Amy Rose is a god character with her unstoppable mallet spin), and it all gets old very quickly. Multiplayer battles and unlockable minigames help the cause, some, but you're better off passing.

BRYAN: Too many speeding tickets have landed Sonic and pals in something worse than traffic school—a second-rate, no-thrills brawl. What a shame, because *Battle* was potentially a portable, story-driven *Super Smash Bros. Melee* (GC). Each character has a unique moves set, and equipping your robot with the most effective skills injects a small strategy element. Still, you can achieve most victories through mind-numbing button mashing, and, except for KO counts, bouts vary little.

THE VERDICTS
OUT OF 10



Publisher: THQ
Developer: Sonic Team
Players: 1 (2+ Link)
ESRB: Everyone

www.thq.com

REVIEWS WRAP-UP

A guide to what we skipped and what skipped us this month in reviews

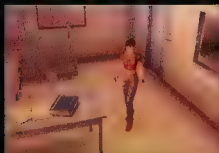
With the crippling avalanche of holiday releases now but a distant memory, we generally have enough room to cover every release in Review Crew. Random games that are either too late or marginal to cover still show up, so...enjoy.



Curse: This Eye of Isis

XB • DreamCatcher — When Victorians investigating the disappearance of a cursed statue run into mummies, it can mean only one thing: You're gonna have to kill fiends and find keys. Sure, with its confining camera and stiff controls, *Curse* could've come out a decade ago, but its

Egypt-flavored take on *Resident Evil*'s formula might feed your survival-horror need. And for 20 bucks, it still beats watching a Brendan Fraser flick.



Resident Evil Code: Veronica X

GC • Capcom — Sure, you could cough up the \$40 that Capcom's asking for this Sega Dreamcast port, but why would you ever want to? You could probably buy a used Dreamcast console and *Code: Veronica* for that price. Don't mistake our disdain for hatred, though—*Veronica* is one of the best *Resident Evil* games ever...but Capcom's rerelease pricing structure is just plain daft.



Didn't Quite Make it: Ninja Gaiden

We were really hoping to get our hands on a reviewable copy of Tecmo's *Ninja Gaiden* for Xbox, but it simply wasn't available. (Producer Tomonobu Itagaki is infamous for tweaking gameplay elements up until the very last moment.) Rest assured, from what we've seen, the wait should prove worthwhile. The fight-

ing prowess of black-clad Hayabusa is on par with his appearances in the *Dead or Alive* series, and, better yet, he's packing a bow, throwing stars, and Dabihahro, a 4-foot broadsword ideal for performing height-reduction surgery on demons. Barring any new delays, come back next month for the entrails-filled review.

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REVIEWS ARCHIVE

Our guide to the good, bad, and ugly

greatest hit or miss?

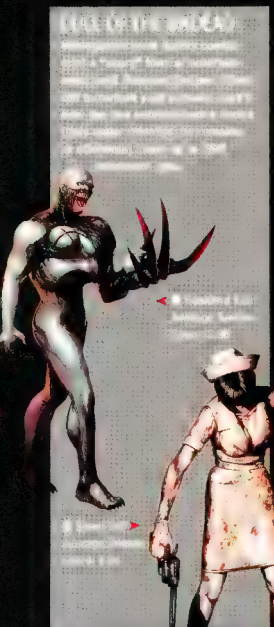


TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL

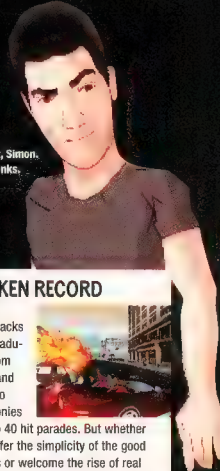
■ XB (Also on: PS2/GC)
 ■ Released: November 2002
 ■ Original Scores: 9.5, 8.5, 9.0

Splinter Cell star Sam Fisher fits the stealth-action profile perfectly: He's got sneaker moves than a testoster- fueled teenager, his bag of tricks in brimming with spy gadgets, he sports a five o'clock shadow, and he has the personality of a pet rock.

GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
1000° Avalanche	GC	■ The straightforward stopp riding is OK, but <i>Avalanche</i> can't compete with <i>SSX 3</i>	7.5 7.0 5.5	
American Idol	PS2	■ In our best Simon Cowell voice, "Bloody awful!"	1.5 2.0 1.0	
Amped 2	XB	■ A competitive, visually stunning snowboarding sim with plenty of flair	8.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
Armed and Dangerous	XII	■ Looks like fun, but plays better than blast blasters like <i>Brute Force</i>	6.5 7.0 8.0	
Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try at Home	PS2/XB	■ Trailer-trashy thrills with cheap opponents	7.0 8.0 2.0	
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II	PS2/XB	■ Painted with dated graphics and rife with dull level design	7.0 4.5 5.0	
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	PS2/XB/GC	■ Beating up caricatures of clones gets boring before the end of the first stage	5.5 7.0 4.0	
Battlestar Galactica	PS2/XB	■ Launched before all systems were go	6.0 6.0 5.5	
Beyond Good & Evil	PS2/XB/GC	■ The best action-adventure game since <i>Wind Walker</i> (GC)? We think so	8.5 9.0 8.0	Silver
Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg	GC	■ Egg-pushing gameplay helps <i>Hatcher</i> feel wonderfully unique	7.0 8.0 8.5	
Bloody Road 4	PS2	■ Once again, <i>Bloody Road's</i> call-of-the-wild concept is tamed by woeful execution	4.0 3.5 3.5	
Boktai: The Sun Is in Your Hand	GBA	■ A portable gem in which playing in the sun is an enjoyable requirement	9.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
Bombastic	PS2	■ An addictive, unconventional puzzler... even if it involves some math	8.0 7.5 8.5	Silver
Brute Force	XB	■ Repetitive squad-based shooter recycles too many levels and enemies	6.5 6.0 7.5	
Buffy: Chaos Bleeds	XB	■ A brain-bag <i>Buffy</i> fan's dream and a decent beat-em-up for the uninitiated	4.5 6.5 7.5	
Castlevania: Lament of Innocence	PS2	■ Comes close, but doesn't quite capture that classic <i>Castlevania</i> brilliance	8.0 7.5 7.5	
Conflict: Desert Storm II	PS2/XB	■ Another flawed operation with a few moments of valor	5.0 4.5 6.0	
Counter-Strike	XB	■ Bare-bones, online-only action makes it expendable in the war of the war games	5.0 5.0 7.0	
Crash Nitro Kart	PS2/XB/GC	■ This kart needs a tune-up	5.5 6.0 5.5	
Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge	XB	■ A stellar and stylish shooter, <i>Crimson Skies</i> kicks the genre's tires and lights its fires	9.0 9.0 8.5	Silver
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	PS2	■ Re-creates the movie's characters and locations, but none of its grace	5.0 4.0 3.0	
Dance Dance Revolution Ultramix	XB	■ Perfect your gimp step and build a gimp rap	8.5 8.0 7.0	
DDRMAX2	PS2	■ An overly familiar experience for all but the complete novice	6.5 7.5 9.0	
Deus Ex: Invisible War	XII	■ <i>Invisible War's</i> captivating story compensates for its technical shortcomings	8.0 9.0 7.0	Silver
Disgaea: Hour of Darkness	PS2	■ Creative, challenging, and totally deserving if RPG gamers' attention	8.5 8.0 7.5	
Dowhill Domination	PS2	■ Huge tracks boast intense attention to detail and gripping gameplay	8.5 8.0 7.0	
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2	PS2	■ This time around, <i>Budokai</i> is best left to the most loyal breed of DBZ fan	5.5 5.0 5.0	
Dragon Ball Z: Taiketsu	GBA	■ Sucks ballZ!	5.5 4.0 3.5	
Drake	XB	■ A shooter so horribly busted that it's almost funny. It's mostly sad, though	2.0 0.5 2.5	
Dungeons and Dragons: Heroes	XB	■ Like swimming, slary-free dungeon crawling shouldn't be done alone	6.0 5.5 6.5	
Dynasty Tactics 2	PS2	■ Focuses more on hardcore, heady planning than visual thrills and trills	7.5 7.5 7.5	
ESPN College Hoops	PS2/XB	■ Simply a pro game in college basketball clothing	6.5 7.5 6.5	
ESPN NBA Basketball	PS2/XB	■ No other baller matters ESPN's stellar graphics or innovative 24/7 mode	8.5 9.5 9.0	Gold
ESPN NHL Hockey	PS2/XB	■ Solid gameplay and slick visuals make ESPN's puck offering the year's best	8.0 9.0 9.0	Silver
EverQuest Online Adventures: Frontiers	PS2	■ Doesn't the front lawn constitute a new frontier to Evercrack-heads?	6.5 6.0 7.0	
Fatal Frame II: Crimson Butterfly	PS2	■ Scary games with a silly name	7.5 7.5 6.5	
FIFA Soccer 2004	PS2/XB/GC	■ Plays more like <i>Winning Eleven</i> and less like <i>FIFA</i> . That's a good thing	7.5 9.0 8.0	
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	GBA	■ Deep strategy for the on-the-go tactician. Complete with androgynous heroes	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Final Fantasy X-2	GBA	■ Yuna and her female friends rock Spira like never before, and we like it	8.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Fire Emblem	PS2/XB/GC	■ Like <i>Advance Wars</i> , but with a rich fantasy setting and intriguing plot	7.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
Freedom Fighters	PS2/XB/GC	■ Liberating the Land of the Free from Russian invaders is historically fun	7.5 8.5 8.0	
F-Zero GX	GC	■ Fast? Yes. Stylish? Yes. Frustratingly difficult? Oh hell yes	9.0 7.5 7.0	
Ghost Recon: Island Thunder	XB	■ The single-player mode is an appetizer to the multiplayer's heartier meal	7.5 7.0 7.0	
Gladus	PS2/XB/GC	■ Repetitive combat, but rich storytelling makes it worthwhile	6.0 8.5 7.0	
Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde	PS2/XB/GC	■ The best original real-time strategy game to grace a console	8.0 6.0 4.5	
Grabbed by the Ghoules	XB	■ Definitely more fun if someone grabs your ghoulies while playing	5.5 4.0 4.5	
Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup	PS2/XB/GC	■ Don't be a snitch. Catch it. It's a blast, especially for <i>Potter</i> -heads	7.5 7.5 6.5	
The Hobbit	PS2/XB/GC	■ <i>Bilbo Baggins'</i> journey just isn't as appealing as his young nephew's	6.5 5.0 7.0	
Hunter: The Reckoning—Redeemer	XII	■ Slow, repetitive pacing keeps the thrills in check	7.5 6.0 6.0	
Karaoke Revolution	PS2	■ Even the tone deaf will enjoy belting out these tunes	8.5 8.5 7.5	Silver
Kill Switch	PS2/XB	■ <i>Kill Switch's</i> run-and-gun gameplay is as gripping as it is one-dimensional	6.0 6.5 7.5	
King of Fighters 2000 & 2001	PS2	■ Deep and responsive, but only diehards will pick it up over <i>Capcom's 2D fighters</i>	8.5 5.0 7.0	
Kirby Air Ride	GC	■ Surprisingly easy for anyone to pick up and play, yet surprisingly deep	6.0 8.0 7.0	
Kyte: Dark Lineage	PS2	■ Profoundly mediocre platformer with aspirations of greatness	6.5 6.0 5.0	
Legacy of Kain: Defiance	PS2/XB	■ Stunningly gorgeous. Let the blood sucking and soul reaving commence	7.5 8.0 7.0	
Lethal Skies II	PS2	■ Not even the dull two-player modes earn <i>Skies</i> any frequent-flier mileage	3.0 5.5 4.0	
Links 2004	XB	■ A shal'win creates a golfer mode keeps <i>Links</i> a few strokes behind <i>Tiger</i>	6.5 7.5 6.5	
Lowerder	PS2	■ Multiplayer mode is the shuff drinking games are made of	5.0 5.5 2.0	
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	PS2/XB/GC	■ For another year, hell to the king of movie-based game franchises	8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	GBA	■ Doesn't quite nail the theme, but offers enjoyable hack-n-slash action nonetheless	7.0 8.0 7.5	
Magic the Gathering: Battlegrounds	PS2	■ The cards say you need a life	4.0 5.5 4.5	
Manhunt	XB	■ Videogame-hating Senator Joe Lieberman's dream come true	7.0 6.5 7.0	
Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga	GBA	■ A polished, thoroughly enjoyable adventure in the same vein as <i>Paper Mario</i>	8.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour	GBA	■ Cliché-to-learn controls, funky minigames, and all-around ball-wacking fun	8.0 8.0 7.5	
Mario Kart: Double Dash!!	GC	■ Smile. Now you have a reason to use your GameCube again	10 10 9.5	Gold
Mario Party 5	GC	■ Buy it, call some friends, and let chaos reign	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver



Guess what, Simon.
Your game wanks.



GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Maximo vs. Army of Zin	PS2	Despite the clean underwear, it's not as zesty as the original	6.0 6.0 7.0	
Max Payne	GBA	Bullet time in your back pocket	7.0 7.0 8.0	
Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne	PS2/XB	Slow-mo bloodshed III is his hard-boiled best	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	PS2/XB/GC	This tour of duty fit for serious war buffs only	5.5 5.0 5.5	
Metal Arms: Glitch in the System	PS2/XB/GC	A surprisingly good sci-fi shooter and contender for sleeper hit of the year	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Midway Arcade Treasures	PS2/XB/GC	With 100 timeless classics for a mere 20 bucks, there's no reason not to buy it	8.5 7.5 8.5	Silver
Mission: Impossible—Operation Surma	PS2/XB	Mr. Hunt could use less cumbersome controls and quicker-witted foes	6.5 6.5 6.0	
Monster 4x4: Masters of Metal	PS2/GC	Subpar driving won't save your hunger for mud-caked mayhem	4.5 4.5 6.0	
Monster Rancher 4	PS2	Vast, empty, and repetitive dungeons didn't bother all of our reviewers	5.5 7.0 6.5	
NBA Inside Drive 2004	XB	Another no-horn hoopster from Microsoft, but at least you can now play online	6.0 7.5 6.5	
NBA Jam	PS2/XB	Plays much like the original arcade game, which is both good and bad	6.0 7.0 5.0	
NBA Live 2004	PS2/XB/GC	Superior on-court control keeps Live steadily on the comeback trail	8.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
NCAA March Madness 2004	PS2/XB	Captures the essence of the collegiate game like no other	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
NFL Blitz Pro	PS2/XB/GC	Incredibly fast, great-looking, totally over-the-top football	7.0 7.0 6.0	
NFL Fever 2004	XB	Mr. Hunt could use less cumbersome controls and quicker-witted foes	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	Silver
NHL Rivals 2004	XB	Microsoft's first attempt at hockey fails through the ice	3.5 4.0 6.5	
Pac-Man Vs.	GC	Excellent multiplayer makes GBA connectivity worthwhile	8.0 7.5 9.0	Silver
Pirates of the Caribbean	XB	Barely shipshape Arr-PPG won't keep your interest afloat	6.0 5.5 4.5	
P.N.03	GC	One truly badass character design is all P.N.03 has to offer	4.0 5.0 4.0	
Pokémon Channel	GC	Good! God, change the channel!	3.5 2.0 8.0	
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	PS2/XB/GC	An opium-induced vision where time moves at the speed of your imagination	9.0 9.5 8.5	Gold
Project Gotham Racing 2	XB	Buckle up for the best racing sim since Gran Turismo 3	9.5 9.5 8.5	Gold
R: Racing Evolution	PS2/XB/GC	Watered down with twitches, frustrating controls and zero customization options	6.5 6.0 4.5	
Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando	PS2	Everything you've ever wanted from an action game, and an absolute must-play	8.5 9.5 8.5	Gold
RoadKill	PS2/XB/GC	Delivers violence and four-letter words in a playable format	5.5 5.0 8.0	
Rogue Ops	PS2/XB/GC	Nikki Cornara needs a few more stealth lessons from Sam Fisher (Splinter Cell)	7.0 6.0 4.5	
RPG Maker 2	PS2	No matter how cool the concept, your RPG will look like crap	5.5 3.5 6.5	
Sega GT Online	XB	The addition of online play and a \$20 price tag gets our motor running!	8.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
Shining Soul II	GBA	Prettier visuals and more character classes give Soul II just enough shine	7.5 7.0 7.0	
Silent Hill 3	PS2	Sho no story it'll have you stocking up on those adult-sized diapers	8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
The Simpsons: Hit & Run	PS2/XB/GC	A family-friendly Grand Theft Auto: Springfield	8.0 8.5 7.0	
The Sims Bustan' Out	PS2/XB/GC	Even your lady friend will bust out a controller and play	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
The Sims Bustan' Out 2	GBA	Surprisingly rewarding for an errand-running simulator	8.0 5.0 8.0	
SODOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs	PS2	Cool missions and great multiplayer make SODOM II the best game of its kind	9.0 9.5 8.5	Gold
Spoo Callibur II	PS2/XB	Our souls, at last, still burn. Can't speak for yours	10 9.0 10	Gold
Spore Channel 5: Special Edition	PS2	Sensational style and a swirly! soundtrack meet simple Simon Says gameplay	8.5 6.5 8.5	
Spawn: Armageddon	PS2/XB/GC	Among the better Spawn outings to date... which isn't saying much	5.0 6.0 3.5	
Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy	PS2/XB/GC	The masochistic mummy more than makes up for Sphinx's mediocrity	8.0 7.0 7.0	
SSX 3	PS2/XB/GC	Still the undisputed king of the mountain	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Star Trek: Shattered Universe	PS2/XB	We'd sooner play with the captain's log	3.0 3.0 3.0	
Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy	XB	Takin' Lightsabers 101 is cool, but we'd rather cut class and hang with Boba Fett	6.0 6.5 3.0	
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic	XB	Follow either side of the Force in the best Xbox role-playing game to date	9.0 9.5 10	Gold
Star Wars Rogue Squad. III: Rebel Strike	GC	Yoda says, "Stay in the air, you will. Heading out on foot leads to the dark side."	7.0 7.0 7.5	
Super Mario Advance 4	GBA	Undoubtedly stands the test of time as one of history's greatest platformers	9.5 9.0 8.5	Gold
SWAT: Global Strike Team	PS2/XB	Commanding your team via headset is cool, even with the atrocious enemy A.I.	4.0 5.0 6.0	
Sword of Mana	GBA	Managing your weapons requires a master's degree in metallurgy	6.5 6.5 6.0	
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	PS2/XB/GC	Looks great, but the action is as repetitive as the turtles' catchphrases	5.5 6.0 7.0	
Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines	PS2/XB	No need to come back, Arnold	3.5 3.5 2.0	
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	PS2/XB/GC	An accurate sim that's more fun to play than other less serious golf games	7.0 7.0 8.5	Gold
Time Crisis 3	PS2	TC3 remains an unshackled crack shot among light-gun shooters	9.0 9.0 8.5	
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3	XB	Squad-based shooting at its best	9.0 7.5 9.0	Silver
Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness	PS2	Lara's back, but her gameplay's never been jerkier	5.0 3.0 7.0	
Tony Hawk's Underground	PS2/XB/GC	Stony mode breathes new life into the venerable series	9.0 9.0 10	Gold
Top Spin	XB	You'll never want to play Virtua Tennis (DC, PS2) again	9.0 9.0 8.0	Gold
True Crime: Streets of L.A.	PS2/XB/GC	A spot-on re-creation of Las Angeles. Too bad the ride is over so quickly	6.5 8.5 5.5	
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution	PS2	As Refreshed-out, complicated, and utterly addictive as fighters come	11 8.0 8.5	Gold
Voodoo Vince	XB	Tedious jumping puzzles and pointless collecting plague the pathwork here	6.0 6.5 7.0	
Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior	PS2	A switch-flipping, key-finding, frag-em-all affair, odious to FPS innovation	5.5 6.0 6.0	
Whiplash	PS2/XB	Goody confection and humor compensate for crummy graphics and average gameplay	7.0 6.0 8.0	
WWE Raw 2: Rubens Aggression	XB	They couldn't even spell Goldberg's name correctly. We willingly tap out	3.0 3.5 4.5	
WWE SmackDown! Here Comes the Pain	PS2	Match types galore, improved story mode—pain never felt so good	7.5 7.0 7.0	
WWE WrestleMania XIX	GC	20% improved character-action system atomic-drops you into the WWE	7.5 7.5 6.5	
XIII	PS2/XB/GC	One stylish first-person shooter. Sadly, superhuman A.I. keeps this one unlicky	6.5 6.5 6.5	
Yu Yu Hakusho: Spirit Detectives	GBA	Shouldn't be allowed within 100 feet of anybody's GBA	2.0 1.5 3.0	

BROKEN RECORD

Game soundtracks have graduated from beeps and boops to symphonies and Top 40 hit parades. But whether you prefer the simplicity of the good ol' days or welcome the rise of real music, we're sure you'll agree on one thing: Songs that feature fools rapping or singing about a game you're playing suck. Here are a few offenders:



True Crime: Streets of L.A.
(PS2/XB/GC)
6.5, 9.5, 5.5

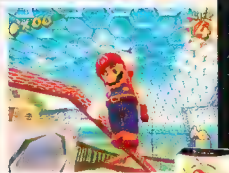


Madden NFL 2003
(PS2/XB/GC)
9.0, 9.5, 9.5



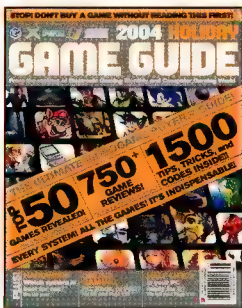
Freaky Flyers
(PS2/XB/GC)
5.0, 3.0, 4.0

greatest hit or miss?



SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE

GC
Released: September 2002
Original Scores: 9.5, 9.5, 9.5
 Someone's spoiled Delino's island scenery with sludge. Armed with a nifty new water-pumping backpack, Mario must clean up the town and find the culprit. With dozens of creative ways to collect coins, playing fetch has never been so much fun.



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tricks of the trade

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trickster

Feeling a little bleary in the midwinter? Then lose 50 pounds, audition and win a part on *The Real*

World, bitch about your housemates with a variety of insensitive or racially charged remarks, learn to "grow as a person," utterly fail at the straightforward job MTV producers set up for you, and while you're on television, mention how great *EGM's* Top 15 Games show was, OK? Alternately, you could cheat your way through the games you get sick of over the holidays.

—David S. J. Hodgson
egm@ziffdavis.com



■ PlayStation 2 MANHUNT

EGM reader Bobby Michael beat *Manhunt* on Fetish difficulty, then fiddled with the controller at the Title screen. When he held down all four shoulder buttons, he heard a strange message that, in true Black Sabbath tradition, is played backward. (Parental groups are no doubt already marshalling their hysteria.) Bobby recorded the sounds on his computer, reversed them, and heard this:

"Daddy didn't see what would happen if she left me. Mommy's supposed to care, but she was never there. Triangle, Left 1, Up, Up, Right 2, Square, Triangle, Square, Up, Circle, Down, Down"

Nearing total freak down, we tapped this in at the Title screen in reverse (Down, Down, Circle, Up, Square, Triangle, Square, R2, Up, Up, L1, Triangle). We were rewarded with god mode (invincibility). High praise to Bobby Michael for managing to finish this freaky game with all marbles present and accounted for, and for discovering and decoding this secret. (Rockstar is graciously sending him some limited-edition *Manhunt* tchotchkes.)

What does this message mean? Song lyrics? Searing diatribe on today's latchkey kids? Gibberish? Let us know!



■ This black van is crying out for some 4-Turn-style modification. Can't you hear it?

Unlockable Codes

Prepare for moral outrage. No, we're not talking about the snuff-film vignettes during each kill—we mean the effort required to unlock the game's cheat codes. *Manhunt's* button cheats will work only after you complete two specific stages with a five-star skill rating. Which is a *disgrace*. The whole point of cheat codes is to get something cool for free! (Input the codes at the Main menu.)

Helium Hunters (squeaky voices)

Beat Strapped for Cash, View of Innocence R1, R1, Triangle, Circle, Square, L2, L1, Down

Monkey Skin

Beat Press Coverage, Wrong Side of the Tracks
Square, Square, R2, Down, Triangle, Square, Circle, Down

Regeneration

Beat Fueled by Hate, Grounds for Assault R2, Right, Circle, R2, L2, Down, Circle, Left

Runner

Beat Born Aboard, Doorway Into Hell R2, R2, L1, R2, Left, Right, Left, Right

Super Punch

Beat Mouth of Madness, Doing Time L1, Triangle, Triangle, Triangle, Circle, Circle, Circle, R1

Bonus Levels

Can't get enough of that ultraviolence? (You sick puppy!) Well, lucky you—*Manhunt* has four unlockable bonus stages full of thugs to eviscerate and gang members to decapitate. Enjoy. If that's the right word.

Hard as Nails: Beat chapters 1-5 on Hardcore difficulty.

Brawl Game: Beat chapters 1-10 on Hardcore difficulty.

Monkey See, Monkey Die: Beat chapters 1-15 on Hardcore difficulty.

Time 2 Die: Finish levels 16-20 with at least a three-star skill rating.

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■ PS2/XB

LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE

We've learned of a bizarre button cheat that turns Kain's main weapon into a long cardboard tube. When you enter the code correctly, you'll hear Kain say, "Fear the tube."

What the heck is this all about? It's an homage to the cardboard Tube Samurai, an occasionally recurring character in the web comic *Penny Arcade*. Look, just go to penny-arcade.com and do a search for "tube" and you'll understand. Here's the code (pause the game, then punch it in):

PlayStation 2: Up, Down, Left, Right, R2, L2, Triangle, Down, Circle
Xbox: Up, Down, Left, Right, Black, White, Y, Down, B



■ Xbox

SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY

Ready for some *really* secret weapons over Normandy? We're talking vehicles from a galaxy far, far away. The creators of the *X-wing* series just wouldn't be upholding the LucasArts rule of adding *Star Wars* references to every single game the company releases if it weren't possible to pilot an X-wing and TIE fighter.

To unlock them, you must complete the entire game—every mission, every challenge. Then, just when you see the smoke billowing from the wreckage of Krieger's Daimler Benz C, you'll be notified of your *Star Wars*-themed reward. Note you cannot play through the regular single-player game with your new ships. They are strictly for instant action mode. It's fun to see the X-wing tear across the White Cliffs of Dover, blasting German aircraft out of the sky (led versus Nazis, baby!). Or you can engage a TIE fighter in a soi-fie dogfight in the 1940s, fully evoking the spirit of bizarre-world combat.



TRICKS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIMA GAMES

Yearning for complete guidance? Having problems with a tough enemy, stealth infiltration, key location, or other such videogame mainstay? Then grab a copy of Prima's official guides to *Armed and Dangerous*, *Deus Ex: Invisible War*, *Secret Weapons Over Normandy*, or *The Sims: Bustin' Out*. The answers to all your questions are revealed within.



■ PS2/XB/GC

THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN

"Best Simpsons game. Ever." Who said that? **Held on**—it was **us!** Well then. *Hit & Run* features codes you can activate at any time, rather than after tedious, labor-intensive activities, like finishing the game and digging in virtual dirt with a trickin' shovel (we're looking at you, *Medal of Honor: Rising Sun*).

Go to the Options menu (from the Main menu or the Pause screen), hold the Left and Right triggers (XB/GC) or L1 and R1 (PS2), and tap in the following:

■ Xbox

ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Here's a comprehensive list of unlockables you can earn by collecting tokens in this quirky, irreverent blast-em-up. We also reveal a handful of amusing and useful button codes.

Each of *Armed and Dangerous'* 21 missions features one hidden token, usually found off the beaten path. The tokens take different shapes depending on the mission. Sometimes the token looks like a painting, other times it looks like an egg or jar. In base-defense missions, the tokens take the form of crates dropped by the plane that swoops in to replenish your supply of powder kegs. (Keep your eyes peeled and blast the crates with your Gatling guns to collect these levels' tokens.)

Each token you snag puts you one step closer to unlocking a hidden feature. The number of tokens required varies according to the difficulty level you're playing. Generally speaking, the higher the difficulty level, the fewer tokens it takes to unlock each bonus feature. Take a look at this chart for a rundown of what you can expect to unlock as you blast your way through the game.



Cheat	XB/GC code	PS2 code
Different credits audio	A, X, X, Y	X, Square, Square, Triangle
Alternate views	B, B, B, A	Circle, Circle, Circle, X
Different camera angles	B, A, B, A	—
Easily destroyed traffic	Y, Y, X, X	Triangle, Triangle, Square, Square
Sound horn to jump	X, X, X, Y	Square, Square, Square, Triangle
Psychedelic DUI view	Y, B, Y, B	Triangle, Circle, Triangle, Circle
Red Box Racer	B, B, Y, X	Circle, Circle, Triangle, Square
Grid view	B, A, B, Y	—
Speedometer view	Y, Y, B, X	Triangle, Triangle, Circle, Square
Zippy cars	X, X, X, X	Square, Square, Square, Square
Even faster cars	Y, Y, Y, Y	Triangle, Triangle, Triangle, Triangle
Unlock all cars*	A, B, A, B	X, Circle, X, Circle
Indestructible jalopy	Y, A, Y, A	Triangle, X, Triangle, X

* Requires a loaded save file of a completed game.

How about some codes to make your killings all the more satisfying?

FBI Ammo: Black, B, A, Right, Right, A, Left, Black
Big Hands: Right, White, X, Left, White, Right, Right, Y
Big Heads: L, Black, B, White, White, B, Black, L
Big Boots: A, White, Y, A, L, B, White, X
Invincible: X, X, X, Right, A, Left, Left, Y



■ That shark was powerful hungry. That's why the feller got it.

Cheat	Easy	Medium	Over the Top	Insane
Replay Missions	1	1	1	1
Replay Cut-scene	2	2	1	1
Big Heads Mode	3	3	1	1
The Gauntlet Bonus Mission	4	4	1	1
Big Hands Mode	10	9	3	1
Big Boots Mode	14	10	4	2
Peasant a-go-go Bonus Mission	18	12	5	3
All Movies Unlocked	21	14	6	4
Shenanigans Bonus Mission	—	18	9	6
Full Ammo	—	21	11	7
Full Health	—	—	13	8
Infinite Ammo	—	—	15	9
Invincibility	—	—	17	11
All Levels Unlocked	—	—	19	15

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■ Xbox

GRAND THEFT AUTO: DOUBLE PACK

Many copies of these Xbox ports suffer from the "pedestrian problem" (foot-bound residents of Vice City suddenly become silent, including Tommy Vercetti), earning the *Double Pack* the unwanted nickname *Glitch Theft Auto*. While Rockstar quietly replaces these faulty copies of the game, we present a long list of the comedic cheats that PlayStation 2 owners have been using and abusing for years.

Please note that you should *never* save your game after using these codes, since they can corrupt your save file and prevent you from completing the game. So, put in the codes and goof around all you like, but be sure to reset the system and play fair if you intend to save your progress. You've been warned.

Enter codes at any time during gameplay. Enter codes that affect vehicle behavior while you're inside the vehicle.

Grand Theft Auto III

Floating Cars (cars behave like gliders if you catch air): Right, Black, B, R, White, Down, L, R

Explode Car: White, Black, L, R, White, Black, Y, X, B, Y, White, L

Precise Car Handling (you can press in the analog stick to jump): R, L, Black, L, Left, R, R, Y

Get a Tank Instantly: B, B, B, B, B, B, R, White, L, Y, B

Invisible Cars: L, L, X, Black, Y, L, Y

Raise Wanted Level: Black, Black, L, Black, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right

Lower Wanted Level: Black, Black, L, Black, Up, Down, Up, Down, Up, Down

Instant Cash: Black, Black, L, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

Crazy Pedestrians: Black, R, Y, A, White, L, Up, Down

Pedestrians Hate You: Down, Up, Left,

Up, A, R, Black, L, White

Pedestrian Amosity (boxing): Right, Black, B, R, White, Down, L, R

Pedestrian Amosity (fighting): Down, Up, Left, Up, A, B, Black, White, L

All Weapons: Black, Black, L, Black, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

Full Armor: Black, Black, L, White, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

Maximum Health: Black, Black, L, R, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

New Clothes (repeat as many times as desired): Right, Down, Left, Up, L, White, Up, Left, Down, Right

Faster Clock: B, B, X, X, X, X, L, Y, B, Y

Slow Down Gameplay: Y, Up, Right, Down, X, R, Black

Speed Up Gameplay: Y, Up, Right, Down, X, L, White

Clear Weather: L, White, R, Black, Black, R, White, Y

Cloudy Weather: L, White, R, Black, Black, R, White, X

Foggy Weather: L, White, R, Black, Black, R, White, A

Rainy Weather: L, White, R, Black, Black, R, White, B

Gore: X, L, B, Down, L, R, Y, Right, L, A

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

Aggressive Drivers: Black, B, R, White, Left, R, L, Black, White

Increase Armor: R, Black, L, A, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

Turn All Cars Black: B, White, Up, R, Left, A, R, L, Left, B

Make All Cars Explode: Black, White, R, L, White, Black, X, Y, B, Y, White, L

Aquatic Vehicles (use cars as boats): Right, Black, B, R, White, X, R, Black

New Clothes (repeat as many times as desired): Right, Right, Left, Up, L, White, Left, Up, Down, Right

Tire Inflation (repeat to increase size): R, A, Y, Right, Black, X, Up, Down, X



■ When driving the tank, you can turn the turret 180° and fire repeatedly to go really fast.

Flying Vehicles (makes vehicle behave like the Dodo airplane): Right, Black, B, R, White, Down, L, R

Health Increase: R, Black, L, B, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

Faster Top Speed (vehicle): Right, R, Up, White, White, Left, R, L, R, R

Ladies' Man (certain females pursue you): B, A, L, L, Black, A, A, B, Y

Lower Wanted Level: R, R, B, Black, Up, Down, Up, Down, Up, Down

Raise Wanted Level: R, R, B, Black, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right

Precise Vehicle Handling: Y, R, R, Left, R, L, Black, L

Make All Cars Turn Pink: B, L, Down, White, Left, A, R, L, Right, A

Play as Candy Suxxo: B, Black, Down, W, Left, Right, R, L, A, White

Play as Hilary King: R, B, Black, L, Right, R, L, A, Black

Play as Ken Rosenberg: Right, L, Up, White, L, Right, R, L, A, R

Play as Lance Vance: B, White, Left, A, R, L, A, L

Play as Love Fist Guy #1: Down, L, Down, White, Left, A, R, L, A, A

Play as Love Fist Guy #2: R, White, Black, L, Right, Black, Left, A, X, L

Play as Mercedes: Black, L, Up, L, Right, R, Right, Up, B, Y

Play as Phil Cassidy: Right, R, Up, Black, L, Right, R, L, Right, B

Play as Ricardo Diaz: L, White, R, Black, Down, L, Black, White

Play as Sonny Forelli: B, L, B, White, Left, A, R, L, A, A

Instant Bloodring Banger (car): Up, Right, Right, L, Right, Up, X, White

Instant Bloodring Racer: Down, R, B, White, White, A, R, L, Left, Left

Instant Caddie: B, L, Up, R, White, A, R, L, B, A

Instant Hotring Racer #1: R, B, Black, Right, L, White, A, X, R

Instant Hotring Racer #2: Black, L, R,

Right, L, R, Right, Up, B, Black

Instant Love Fist Limo: Black, Up, White, Left, Left, R, L, B, Right

Instant Rhino Tank: B, B, L, B, B, B, L, White, R, Y, B, Y

Instant Romero's Hearse: Down, Black, Down, R, White, Left, R, L, Left, Right

Instant Saber Turbo: Right, White, Down, White, White, A, R, L, B, Left

Instant Trashmaster: B, R, B, R, Left, Left, R, L, B, Right

Commit Suicide: Right, White, Down, R, Left, Left, R, L, White, L

Weapons Collection #1: R, Black, L, Black, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up

Weapons Collection #2: R, Black, L, Black, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Down, Left

Weapons Collection #3: R, Black, L, Black, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Down, Down

Bikini Girls Pack Heat: Right, L, B, White, Left, A, R, L, L, A

Pedestrians Hate You: Down, Up, Up, A, Black, R, White, White

Pedestrians Armed: Black, R, A, Y, A, Y, Up, Down

Police Return From Death: B, L, Down, White, Left, A, R, L, Right, A

Show Media Level: Black, B, Up, L, Right, R, Right, Up, X, Y

Speed Up Clock: Y, Up, Right, Down, X, Black, R

Speed Up Clock: B, L, X, L, X, X, L, Y, B, Y

Cloudy Weather: Black, A, L, L, White, White, White, Y

Completely Overcast: Black, A, L, L, White, White, White, X

Foggy Weather: Black, A, L, L, White, White, White, A

Stormy Weather: Black, A, L, L, White, White, White, B

Clear Weather: Black, A, L, L, White, White, White, Down



■ Mix and match cheat codes: Want to be Candy Suxxo while driving a tank? Voilà!



VS.



It's a good month for fans of cheatin'. Behold, more ways to cheat death and fiddle with time in *Prince of Persia*, plus some FF-2 tricks.

Prince of Persia: The Sands Of Time (PS2)

Enter This First
94D0BDF8 36EE4424

Exclusive! Game Speed:

Half Speed
249803E8 14B2D70D

Exclusive!
Game Speed: Double
24909368 04B0D70C

Exclusive!
Game Speed: Triple
24909348 04B0D70C

Exclusive!
Game Speed:
Quadruple
24909368 04B1D70C

Infinite Health
(Except Big Falls)
24D1B5F4 9D3CD7DD
24D1B4B4 8FB8C43D

Infinite Health
(Farah)
249013E8 B2B4D5A9

Infinite Sand Tanks
24D1B5F4 C0B8452D

Infinite Slow Motion
249836A8 24B4534C

Add New Sand Tank
24D030EC 92B553BD



Final Fantasy X-2 (PS2)

Enter This First
94C497AC B5260F5C

Max Gil
244C4D2E D8B71A57

All Garment Grids
44101628 1034537C
59B0493C 66250118

All Dresspheres
04101628 143473FC
14101628 143413FC
44111428 1034534C
390207E1 9FAB91E0
04101428 1434537C
04101428 143473CC

Yuna: Level 99 With
Massive Experience
24DB867E 45AC5D2D

Rikku: Level 99 With
Massive Experience
249B64E8 452C5DAD

Paine: Level 99 With
Massive Experience
249B64E8 45AC5D2D

All Accessories at
Maximum Capacity
44523668 1484470C
593CD3F9 CEA50100

All Items at
Maximum Capacity
44511768 5434450C
593CD3F9 CEA50100



Action Replay says, "I'll see your *Final Fantasy* codes, GameShark, and raise you *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*." High stakes, y'all.

Lord of the Rings: Return of the King (PS2)

Enter This First
3MB5-UBAC-CEPLJ
W94H-WJ3G-09U92

Exclusive!
Play as Aragorn
3PU6-YDX-XBCJW
6AW9-CK24-YVT4V
XB4R-ZG0F-TP8WH

Exclusive!
Play as Legolas
0ZMQ-YD0D-FRRYN
APR4-97Y8-UB3Z2
1D58-Q688-50Y2A

Exclusive!
Play as Gimli
RPY6-5ZF7-POWRM
95EP-CPMC-YXCJN
JZ9C-RB0X-AZC9A

Exclusive!
Play as Gandalf
K81W-1UTK-J349D
0399-26KX-Y2013
AMRK-KPAY-VFPPT

Exclusive!
Play as Sam
TMMG-HR17-5GN4W
QUWB-SYJQ-5FDTU
UJ8K-0PZH-9UN7R



Exclusive!
Play as Frodo
6K2X-R14M-KUBJJ
KA98-PNEG-ZDEVG
AOVN-3J1A-K9R8F

Exclusive!
Play as Pippin
KADU-6MGW-V786G
C7YA-C687-A7Q8B
MWWU-YFJ7-6J35U

Exclusive!
Play as Merry
9T4F-XUWE-V1TF7
56CA-KC69-3D1HE
F28Q-9W19-HX3NT

Exclusive!
Play as Faramir
5Z29-YDQ2-ZE25E
PJ28-CYBN-XC7Q3
KGWF-C9U8-Z8Y23

Final Fantasy X-2 (PS2)

Enter This First
YHFK-N75A-R881J
D47F-ZDVA-TDZVQ

All Key Items
KX5B-5YJ8-7KJRP
ADFY-M2D9-100XF
WS6A-J277-086TB
N9MJ-398Y-HCU3G

All Garment Grids
7VC6-65GM-VZD05
3MFM-F4G8-2QM1P
KEZW-5A6G-H6GFC

All Bhed Fully
Translated
F1QX-T4B7-23XQX
B3BF-9KWW-A534W

■ Ah, how sweet it is to enjoy ill-gotten gains. A simple code gives you all *Final Fantasy X-2*'s Garment Grids (above left) and all its Items (left).

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■ Xbox

DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

Have you battled through to the last portion of the game but aren't sure which ending to go after? Good thing we're here. Let's break down the options for you. **(SPOILERS ahead! Don't read any further if you don't want the game's endings ruined.)**

Ending #1: ApostleCorp Great Advance

What happens?

With the conflicts between JC and Helios resolved by an infusion of your DNA, and with help from you and his machine, JC/Helios is able to forge an unbreakable link among all humanity.

What do I have to do?

- Upload the Aquinas spec to JC
- Return to the statue and step into the machine
- JC must survive (it's all right if Paul is dead)

How does it turn out?

Universal biomodification makes everybody equal. Cybernetic consciousness creates perfect democracy. But is it ultimate freedom or universal slavery?

What's in it for me?

You become part of the new whole, just like everybody else.

Ending #2: Illuminati Age of Light

What happens?

You upload the Aquinas spec to the Illuminati's Ophelia A.I., which orbits Earth in a top-secret location. With the new data, Ophelia is at last able to take complete control of all the world's financial

markets and government institutions under the Illuminati.

What do I have to do?

- Upload Aquinas to the Illuminati
- Kill JC and Paul Denton
- Destroy JC's machine
- Chad Dumier or Nicolette DuClare (or both) must survive

How does it turn out?

Earth's future is very prosperous, very clean, and very, very controlled.

What's in it for me?

You become one of the new secret masters on the fast track to Prima Illuminatus status. If you want to be rich and powerful, this is the choice for you. Under some circumstances, when you kill JC and destroy or subvert his machine (as part of the Templar, Illuminati, or anarchy endgames), the dying Helios entity will be able to bring him back for one last fight against you. JC will no longer have the power of Helios, but he will have one big, honking rocket launcher. If JC is revived, you'll need to finish him off again before you can finish the game.

Ending #3: The Templar Flood

What happens?

You upload Aquinas to a secret Templar base, at which point it reprograms JC's machine to create a nanite swarm that divests you of your biomods and purges or destroys all other modified humans on the planet.

What do I have to do?

- Upload Aquinas to the Templars
- Kill JC and Paul (even if Paul is in Saman's custody, you still have to drop by and kill him with your own hands)
- Use JC's machine
- Saman must survive

How does it turn out?

Saman and the Templars take advantage of the chaos caused by their nanite flood to seize absolute control of the planet, ruling with strict religious totalitarianism.

What's in it for me?

You're now part of the inner circle of a paranoid, religious dictatorship, and you don't have your biomods to get you out of scrapes anymore. Good luck.

Ending #4: Scorched Earth

What happens?

Urged on by Leo, you decide that the world doesn't need any new gods, puppet masters, or kings. You decide to throw the world a fresh start free of external control.

What do I have to do?

- Kill JC, Paul, Chad, Nicolette, and Saman
- Destroy JC's machine
- It doesn't matter whether you upload Aquinas to anybody

How does it turn out?

Knowingly or not, Leo was being manipulated by the Omar the whole time. They begin to stamp out all other power groups and impose their brand of warlike Darwinian capitalism on the world, combining it with a program of universal biomodification and shared consciousness. When the human race has been toughened enough, they start to look to the stars....

What's in it for me?

One heck of a preferred-customer discount, plus the chance to apply for your own frog suit. After that, you're on your own, just like the rest of the planet.

■ Xbox

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

There's a simple but sweet Easter egg hidden in your garage. When you're in "walk" mode and inside your garage, mosey on over to the arcade machine and press A. You'll start the *Geometry Wars* minigame—the best and most viciously addictive secret diversion since a little game called *Death Tank* was hidden in *PowerSlave* on PS1.



■ Game Boy Advance

THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT

Cheats cost money in this game, and they're suitably difficult to get. Remember when cheat codes were simple button presses from the Main menu? That's old news: Work for those cheat codes, baby!

For two hours a week, you can purchase cheats from Heidi Shadows, the cheat ninja. You must be in the right place at the right time, and that's no easy feat. Heidi appears southwest of Imperial Estates on Mondays from 11:00 p.m. to midnight, and in the Park Maze on Fridays from 3:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m. The hard part about pulling this off is knowing what day of the week it is. The process is cumbersome but not difficult:

1. Press Select and save your game.
2. Press Select again and select Save Game from the menu.
3. Look at the file you just saved. It states the time and day in the game of the last save, with the day given as a number.
4. Divide the number by 7 and note the remainder: 1 means Monday, 5 means Friday. On all other days of the week, Heidi does not appear to sell cheats.

Once you have the correct day, you must be in the correct place at the correct time. To find the right places, consult the map in the Overview section. For best results, be in running distance of the location at the appointed hour, save your game, and enter as the clock strikes the correct time. When you find Heidi, buy cheats from her like you would buy items in any shop. She sells the following items:

- Rosebud: Adds 5,000 simoleons
- Slip of Paper: Contains the password "Bucket." Our cheat scientists do not yet know what this is good for.
- Silver Tongue Berry: Adds one Charisma point
- Gourmet Berry: Adds one Cooking point
- Clock Berry: Adds one Mechanical point
- Buff Berry: Adds one Body point
- Mind Berry: Adds one Logic point
- DaVinci Berry: Adds one Creative point

Zodiac Items

When you choose a zodiac sign at the start of the game, you unlock two items unique to your chosen star sign: a zodiac recliner and a zodiac statue. By hitting a floor switch in the steam tunnels, you are transported to a secret room that contains two recliners. The statue can be found very rarely at the stores, and it costs a bundle (use that Rosebud cheat to afford it). However, it fetches a nice price in a GBA Link auction and provides a hefty Room boost if you put it in your house.





IMAGINE A WORLD



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FOR GAMERS,
ABOUT GAMERS.

WE DO.

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GAMING
WORLD

THE MAGAZINE FOR
CORE COMPUTER GAMERS

 ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA
GAME GROUP

PICK ONE UP ON NEWSSTANDS EVERYWHERE.

THE REST OF THE CRAP

Seanbaby makes bad games pay

sound off

I'M A MARTYR

The power of journalism can bring governments to their knees and turn pop sensations into a preteen



boy's darkest nightmare. And this was never more evident than when the villains behind the videogame based on *The Cat in the Hat* movie refused to send EGM a copy of their crappy game because they "didn't want Seanbaby making fun of it." Like that's going to stop me. I'm the first to admit that the war isn't over, but this small victory might be the first step toward a world without bad games. Picture it: an age of enlightenment in which *The Cat in the Hat* remains safely away from your GBA not because game developers hate me, but because they hate the idea of ruining Christmas for our children. My monthly sacrifice shall lead you to a utopian gaming future. —Seanbaby

THE CAT IN THE HAT



CAT: WELL KIDS, HOW ABOUT I SHOW YOU HOW TO HAVE FUN WHEN MOM IS GONE

GBA • VU Games — *The Cat in the Hat* isn't the kind of depressing failure that stems from its developers'



inaptitude. No, this is an expertly calculated attack against happiness. Look at that screenshot—the word evil doesn't begin to describe it. Neither does the word plorkniblog, but to plorkniblog's credit, I just made it up, so it wouldn't be fair to judge it by the same descriptive standards as real words.

My point is this: Someone or something deliberately packaged fear and despair into a Game Boy cartridge. I don't care what anyone says, no matter how clumsily they screw things up during the design process, no group of Earth humans could accidentally program the 8th layer of hell into a game. That's the accident equivalent of eating 300 babies by mistake. I'm not saying it's impossible; it's just going to take one hell of an explanation when you get caught doing it, Satan.

Bottom Line: Am I the only one who noticed that Mike Myers in the *Cat in the Hat* makeup is a childhood vision of horror? Seriously, if this freakish man-cat were a howling scorpion with my father's face riding the blood-soaked ghost of Joseph Stalin, I wouldn't be more terrified of it.

THE FAIRLY ODD PARENTS! BREAKIN' DA RULES



PS2/XBOX • THQ — As young Timmy, you must find the dumbly filled *Da Rules* book in order to take away your baby-sitter's ability to control time and space with her wishes. And since anyone playing this game is either 6 years old, an idiot, or both, the developers knew you'd need serious guidance. That's why your fairy godparents show up to help you perform every single task. Advice like "Jump by pressing the Jump button! Try it now!" and "See this lone floating path surrounded by miles of nothing else? Try walking on it now!" really got me out of some tough jams. I thought they'd finally stop shouting what magical stars do after I'd picked up 70 or 80 of them, but you may be surprised to discover that they do not.

Bottom Line: If you enjoy mediocre platforming games and whatever crappy cartoon this is based on, give it a try. But be sure to also pick up the Mad Catz IcePick Ear Stabber to protect yourself from the obnoxious, ceaseless fairy commentary.



Justice League: Safeguarding the world's supply of Lyera from fallies since 1960.

SPY MUPPETS: LICENSE TO CROAK



GBA • TDK Mediactive — Compared to *The Cat in the Hat*, I give this game 70 Fantastrotrophies for Excellence out of a possible none. Do the math on that—it defies the laws of trophydom, and yet here we live in the twisted bizarro universe where it happened. The fact that *Spy Muppets* is not *The Cat in the Hat* makes it a tie with all the other games that are also not *The Cat in the Hat* as my favorite game ever. This scares me. Without my ability to possess different degrees of hatred, I figure my career as a game hater might be over.

But thanks to the Tite Boat 30XX, I was just visited by an alternate Seanbaby from a timeline in which *The Cat in the Hat* was destroyed before it could taint videogames as a whole. He let me know that *Spy Muppets: License to Croak* is an uninspired series of minigames that range from confrontationally boring to just regular boring. So, if you need something to help you sleep or always wished you could hate the Muppets a little bit more, try it out. **Bottom Line:** *Spy Muppets'* minigames actually offer a lot of variety, but then again, so does a handful of candy-colored prescription drugs.

JUSTICE LEAGUE CHRONICLES



GBA • Midway — When you're coming up

with a challenge for the Justice League, you need to think big. It has Superman, Wonder Woman, The Flash, and Green Lantern, who—I don't know if you've seen, the cartoon—can now actually fight the color yellow. That's why I was surprised that the first level pits them against evil Eskimos. I think they were shooting freeze rays at me, but aside from that, they were ordinary Eskimos. They weren't riding Igloo tanks or battle walrus or anything.

So to even the odds, *JLC* is very loose with its interpretation of in-game collisions. For example, simply because The Flash's fist is 9 inches deep into an Eskimo's face doesn't necessarily mean that you hit him. In fact, for every justice punch that hits an enemy, the game has about a 30 percent chance of nothing it. While there's a slight chance this is due to a mastermind plot by Lex Luthor, my money's on serious programming failure. **Bottom Line:** Although it is terrible, this game gets credit for having zero Aquaman sightings—which is the best accolade a superhero game can achieve. Of course, if the Earth's guppies and goldfish do take this opportunity to attack, you're screwed.

classic crap

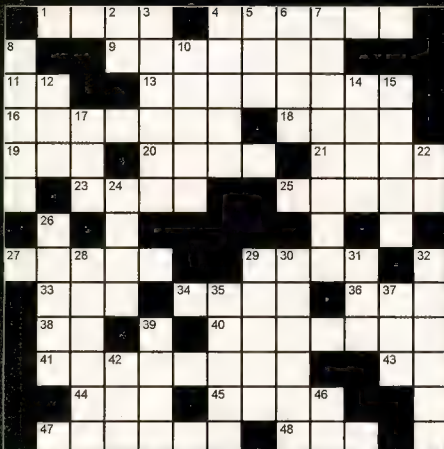
PLUMBERS DON'T WEAR TIES

No, this isn't a grainy still from some Skinemax flick: *Ties* really is a game for the 3DO console. And we use the term "game" loosely, as it's more of a lame porno with sporadic button-pressing bits. Still, we couldn't pass up a box promising "race cars, shower scenes, daddy's girls, and chickens."



SPLINTER CELL-EBRATION

(Solution on page 144)



ACROSS

1. *Project Gotham 2*'s Leon Cupra B maker
4. *Bomberman*'s PC prefix
9. *Splinter Cell*'s com-link Colonel
11. Like the Dole stickers in *Super Monkey Ball* or the KFC in *Crazy Taxi*
13. Early Atari/Midway 4-player coin-op
16. *Metal Gear* bad guy
19. *Rival Warriors* (NES) resurrection code and '70s disco import supergroup
19. *Tekken*'s kung fu cop
20. Not new
21. NCAA Football bowl game
23. Swing like this to hit to the opposite field in *All-Star Baseball*
25. Playboy playmate... Tenison of failed *Mortal Kombat* TV show
27. Worth 1,000 points in *Ms. Pac-Man*
29. *Dragon Ball Z* mainstay
33. Rack up the same score as your opponent
34. Like a *Max Payne* painkiller
35. Game Boy's *Intergalactic Ninja*
38. Like Sam Fisher's night-vision goggles (abbrv.)
40. Raced off-road?
41. *Mario Sunshine* cephalopod king
43. *Street Fighter*'s Chun-
44. *NBA Showtime* kickoff
45. Middle-of-the-road ESRB rating
47. One of Dr. Wily's sharpest robots in *Mega Man 3* (NES), man
48. Mead of *Terraforming* (TurboDuo)

DOWN

2. Spawn's alias, Simmons
3. Switch team members in *SmackDown!*
4. What Spanx does to Redmond in *Whiplash?*
5. Highest EGM review score
6. Successor to *Panzer Dragoon* Saga (Saturn)
7. Spell that lowers an enemy's magic defense in *Final Fantasy X* (abbrv.)
8. *Marvel vs. Capcom* burly gunslinger
10. *Splinter Cell* computer geek
12. One way to fail a *Splinter Cell* mission
14. *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*'s Hawk
15. *Splinter Cell* immobilizer
17. Best spent in *Final Fantasy VII*'s Golden Saucer
22. Hal Emmerich's sister's nickname in *Metal Gear Solid 2*
24. *Twisted Metal* wheelman
26. *Splinter Cell* camera cable
28. Like *Zelda: The Wind Waker*'s Tetra
29. GBA affiliation
30. *Tony Hawk* tricks
31. *State of Emergency* automatic weapon
32. Reward for game completion?
35. Angry version of 28 down?
37. Sega's *Ecco* ocean cohabitant
39. *True Crime* Nick's employer
42. *Mario Golf* lingo for ball location
46. Real-life inspiration for *GTA*'s Liberty City (abbrv.)

STEPPING OUT OF THESE PAGES AND INTO YOUR HOMES!



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

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Big Video GAME HUNTING

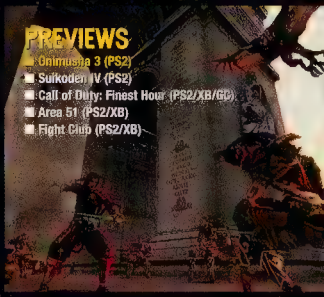
CNN HeadlineNews

HOTWIRED's Big Video Game Hunting hosted by Erica Hill on CNN Headline News.



NEXT MONTH: APRIL 2004 • ISSUE #177

ON SALE MARCH 2



PREVIEWS

- Onimusha 3 (PS2)
- Sukkoden IV (PS2)
- Call of Duty: Finest Hour (PS2/XB/GB)
- Area 51 (PS2/XB)
- Fight Club (PS2/XB)



THE NEWEST IN NEW, THE HOTTEST IN HOT

Sure, you're looking forward to the likes of *Halo 2*, *Resident Evil 4*, *Gran Turismo 4*, and *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*. You know that. We know that. Even your grandma knows that. But what about all of the *other* games coming out this year, including the ones you haven't even heard of yet? In our April issue, we preview new games like ----, ----, and ----. Want to know what these games are? Come back next month for them...and more.



REVIEWS

- Ninja Gaiden (XB)
- Steel Battalion: Line of Contact (GB)
- Drakengard (PS2)
- Nightshade (PS2)
- Phantasy Star Online Episode III: C.A.R.D. Revolution (GB)

(All planned editorial content is subject to change.)

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ANSWERS TO SPLINTER CELL-EBRATION

on page 143

Down

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6	L	11	C	13	I	G	B	15	A	16	B	B	A							
10	L	11	E	15	I	16	B	17	U	S	E	D	18	R	O	S	E			
12	E	17	T	18	I	19	O	20	S	21	E	22	R	23	E	N	E			
14	O	17	X	18	A	19	T	20	A	21	R									

Across

1	A	2	P	3	P	4	L	5	E	6		8	G	9	O	10	K	11	12	
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THAT WAS
THEN

see what's
NEXT



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HSU AND CHAN
 GAME DESIGNERS IN...
TANDORA
YO MOMMA!

WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE FIRST FREEDOM.

THAT'D BE YOU KNOW, LIKE, ESP, CREEPY?

HELLO, VIDEO GAMERS! I'M HSU TANAKA, THAT'S MY BROTHER CHAN, AND WHAT WE ASK YOU IS THE DEAL WITH TOM CLANCK? SINCE WHEN IS HE A GAME DESIGNER? THE CIA STOPS HIS NAME ON A FEW ACTION-STRATEGY TITLES, AND HE'S A LICENSE TO PRINT MONEY!

YOU DON'T SUPPOSE HE'S A POKEMON IN DISGUISE, DO YOU?

I'M PRETTY SURE THAT WOULD HAVE COME OUT AT SOME POINT IN HIS MIGHTY CAREER. HOBBY DEVELOPER?

OF COURSE! HIS MILITARY BACKGROUND, THAT'S THE KEY TO IT ALL! NOBODY WOULD HAVE EVER BOUGHT HIS SHUFFY IF HE HAD BEEN "TOM CLANCK! SHORT-ORDER COOK" OR "TOM CLANCK! DENTAL ASSISTANT!"

IT'S ALL BEEN ABOUT PUBLIC NOTICING OF GOVERNMENT DRAMA, WHICH HE'S BEEN FEEDING OFF OF LIKE A BUSHING SUCKING THE TEAT OF A BULL-RAT!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS, BUT LOOK WHAT I MADE—"STRUTTER COLLEGE!"

GOOD WITH THAT BUTTER!

TWO CAN PLAY AT THIS GAME! I'M SURE YOU'LL CLAMOR FOR OUR GAMES, TOO, ONE LINE WRITING MY OWN POLITICAL THRILLER, DRAWING UPON MY OWN WORK IN THE SERVICE OF MY COUNTRY!

HSU YOU HAD A WEEK-LONG JOB AT THE DTV, WHICH YOU NEVER SHOWED UP FOR.

I LEARNED ENOUGH TO GIMME SOME ROOM! AHM!

HSU TANAKA'S
The Hunt for the Sum of All Patriot Dangers
 A Patriotic Novel of Political Tension by
 ☆ **HSU TANAKA** ☆
 "Former Civil Servant"
 "Has watched Patton" a couple of times"

GOOD, CIA HEADQUARTERS

CIA AGENT JOHN REYNOLDS, IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU AS WE WALK IN THIS HALL, WAITING TO A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT!

"THANK YOU, MR. DIRECTOR OF THE CIA! DO YOU HAVE ANY SAGE ADVICE TO DISPENSE ABOUT SUCH MEETINGS, GIVEN THAT YOU ARE OLD AND WISE AND PROBABLY NEAR DEATH?"

YES—KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT AND YOUR EYES OPEN. POLITICAL PEOPLE DON'T LIKE TO BE SURPRISED. ALSO, THE PRESIDENT MIGHT BITE YOU IF STARTLED, HERE WE GO!

THE MEETING!

OUR INTELLIGENCE INDICATES THAT A RADICAL GROUP OF IRISH-CHINESE-RUSSIAN EXTREMISTS ARE IN HIDING IN THE SERVICE OF GUAN... AND IDEAS ON HOW TO FLUSH OUT THESE EVILDOERS? AGENT KRAMER?

SIR, I PROPOSE THAT WE SEND IN A SPECIAL TEAM OF UNDERCOVER OPERATIVES TO SUBSTITUTIONALLY BEAT UP ALL THE CREATS OF GUAN, THIS ELIMINATING THE THREAT ENTIRELY.

ANY OBJECTIONS?

I OBJECT! I FIND THE ACT OF HUNTING IN OUR OPERATIVES TO HARM INNOCENT GUANS TO BE PATENTLY UN-AMERICAN!

WELL, OH, NOT UN-AMERICAN, PER SE, BUT HINDA WOULD'VE BEEN THAT'S HOW I FEEL!

AFTER THE MEETING...

...AND THEN HE BIT ME!

PUT SOME ALCOHOL ON IT AND KEEP IT WRAPPED. I WANTED YOU, BOY, POLITICS ISN'T...

JOHN REYNOLDS!

YOU DON'T WANT TO GO MAKING THE WRONG SORT OF ENEMIES, JOHN, NOT HERE IN WASHINGTON! AFTER YOU LEFT THE MEETING, MY OTHER PLAN WAS APPROVED... A PLAN TO DROP NUCLEAR SUBMARINES FROM A PLANE INTO GUAN TO FLUSH OUT THE RADICALS!

WHAT? BUT... BUT...

WAIT—NUCLEAR SUBMARINES FROM A PLANE?

WE HAVE THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE, JOHN, YOU MUST GIVE US THAT.

GOOD DAN!

DID YOU HEAR THAT, SIR?

WE CAN'T LET THEM GO THROUGH WITH IT! GUAN MIGHT HAVE AN ARMY OR SOME TRAINED LIVESTOCK OR SOMETHING THAT'L RETALIATE!

I'D LOVE TO HELP, BUT AS YOU CAN SEE, GACK!

I HAVE TO STOP THIS! CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT OFFICES, WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT?

IT'S TIME FOR JOHN REYNOLDS TO PUT THINGS RIGHT!

HELLO! WHY THIS IS AGENT KRAMER, WITH THE BUREAU OF DANGEROUS, POORLY-THOUGHT-OUT OPERATIONS? HEY, WE PUT IN AN ORDER FOR A LOAD OF NUCLEAR SUBMARINES TO BE DROPPED ON GUANT! WELL, WE NEED TO CHANGE ON GUANT! WELL, WE NEED TO CHANGE THAT—DROP THEM IN TOWNTOWN! LO, ANOLES, INSTEAD. SURE, JUST PUT IT ON MY VISA, YOU'RE A PEACH. GOTTA GO.

THIS IS GOOD POOP!

DAILY NEWS THE END OF THE WORLD SAFE

IT WORKED! THE SUBS LANDED DIRECTLY IN THE HEART OF L.A., WHERE NOBODY NOTICED THEM! KRAMER'S PLAN FAILED, AND NEVER, SAFER PLANS OF RADICAL APPREHENSION ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED!

AND APPARENTLY I BECAME DIRECTOR OF THE CIA SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE! I CAN INVESTIGATE PEOPLE'S DOGS IF I WANT TO!

SO, IF I UNDERSTAND THE PROCESS CORRECTLY, WE JUST SIT BACK AND WAIT FOR THE CHECKS! CATCH YOU NEXT TIME, VIDEO GAMERS!

HEM... NEEDS MORE WANTED VIOLENCE.

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