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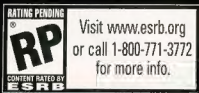


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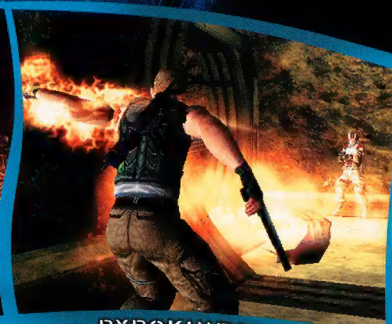


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Advertorial



S I R E N



Blood and Gore
Intense Violence



PlayStation®2

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ANSWER THE CALL

CAN YOU RESIST THE CALL OF THE SIREN?

WELCOME TO HANUDA

Somewhere in Japan lies the small town of Hanuda. Well, at least it was once there. Before a terrible force enveloped the mountainous village. Before a blood-red sea inexplicably surrounded its borders. Before the Siren called and vanished Hanuda from the face of the earth.

Yet the village still exists.

And trust us—you don't wanna be there. If the eerie force behind this mysterious turn of events hasn't yet transformed you into a bloody-eyed shibito, then you're on the run from these undead creatures fueled by evil and hate.

Either way, in *Siren* from Sony Computer Entertainment America, there is no hope.

NO SINGLE HERO

What better way to illustrate the sheer terror of Hanuda's plight than to tell its tale through multiple perspectives? For *Siren*, the Japan-based developers at Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. offer no less than 10 playable characters—anyone from a local teenaged blind girl to a 34-year-old professor of folklore who's visiting town to solve the unexplained disappearance of his parents. As if finding out what's going on around him won't be hard enough!

INNOVATIVE STORYTELLING

Nearly 80 episodes compose

the blood-curdling adventure—all of which occur out of sequence adding to the intrigue and suspense.

The first scene you play may actually occur near the end. A dead (rather, *undead*) character in an early sequence of events could turn out to be a great ally when his earlier, living incarnation helps you later on. Don't worry—with the help of the Scenario Link Navigator, it'll all make sense at the end of the three horrific days.

CHILLING ATMOSPHERE

Darkness. It permeates each setting of *Siren*, but provides only the basis for the incessant spooked-out feeling you'll experience throughout your entire visit to Hanuda. Fog, rain, and dew combine to create an almost palpable sense of dampness, and haunting sound effects—wind, footsteps, screams, and more—mix with bone-chilling music to further the creepiness. Enjoy the brief respites offered by occasional light. But don't think for a minute it means you're safe.

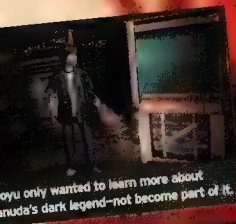
SECOND SIGHT

Despite the terrible results of the inexplicable events at Hanuda, one benefit to the living has emerged. With a little thought, any given character has the ability to "sightjack." Using this gift, one can overtake another being's line of sight both to see what lies ahead and to try to discern where

one is on the game's vague maps. Be careful, though. Using this power leaves you vulnerable to attack. Sometimes it's wiser to examine your immediate vicinity than to check out what lies hundreds of feet ahead.

SHIBITO INTELLIGENCE

Don't be surprised to see enemies that exhibit group behavior—a shibito is known to call upon comrades when it senses danger. Such scenarios might make you want to stop for a moment to admire *Siren*'s great A.I. But more likely, you'll be too busy screaming.



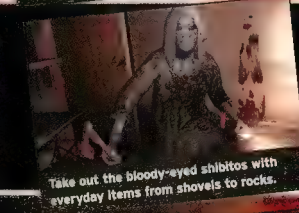
You only wanted to learn more about Hanuda's dark legend—not become part of it.



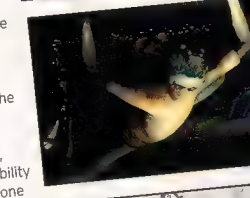
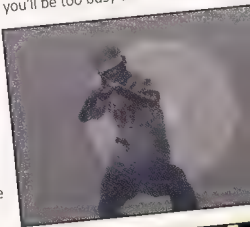
Photographs of actual abandoned towns and mines provide the basis for each setting.

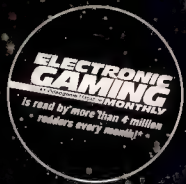


To ensure realism, actors were motion-captured, facial scanned, and voice recorded.



Take out the bloody-eyed shibitos with everyday items from shovels to rocks.





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COVER STORY:

STAR WARS:

KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC—THE SITH LORDS

We unveil *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic—The Sith Lords*, the super Xbox sequel to the role-playing game that made *Star Wars* good again. You'll find new planets, new Force powers, new bad guys—even new Jedi classes (let's just say Darth Maul has met his match).

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PRIVATE SCREENING

Movie games for guys who like movie games: Van Helsing, Spider-Man 2, Call of Duty, and more



editorial



For years we've been telling you how great online gaming is. Yet a lot of you aren't doing it. Why is that? It can't be accessibility. After all, it's easier than ever to set up, and 45 percent of internet-connected households in the U.S. have broadband access*—perfect for gaming. It has to be something else, so I identified a few remaining potholes in the experience that Microsoft and Sony have yet to fill and ideas on how to do it.

Problem No. 1: It's hard to find players worth playing with.

Solution: Copy eBay's user rating system and

let people view and submit game-specific feedback. This will give players a better idea of what to expect from their opponents and teammates, while at the same time encouraging fair play.

Problem No. 2: You join a 1-on-1 game, the other player disconnects, and you're kicked back out to the lobby.

Solution: More titles should take a cue from games like Sega's recent *Phantasy Star Online Episode III* (GameCube), which subs in an A.I. opponent to finish a deserter's side. And lastly,

Problem No. 3: You log on, get schooled, curse

a little bit, and never want try it again.

Solution: Provide newbie-friendly areas and encourage players to make that their first stop.

On another note, this is my last issue of *Electronic Gaming Monthly* after nearly 10 years. I've spent a lot of good times and hard deadlines with these guys and wouldn't trade that experience for anything. I completely trust this crew's opinions on games, and so should you. Farewell!

—Chris Johnston, News Editor

*According to a March 2004 Nielsen//NetRatings report.

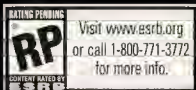
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PlayStation 2



Letters

ranting, raving, and self-mutilation



■ "Anger itself," says the samurai maxim, "does more harm than whatever aroused it."



it ain't a game no more
After dying for the umpteenth time in *Ninja Gaiden*, I hauled off and [smashed] the closest thing at hand: this empty CD case I sprained my thumb a few years back after punching my futon over *Virtua Fighter 4*, too. Enjoy the photos.

—Shannon Mooney

Uh, right

In hopes that they won't slap another suffix onto the old one, I'd like to suggest a name for Nintendo's new handheld: 'Pocket Man! Isn't it better to have a little Man in your pocket than a Boy in your pants?

—Blackmuse

We need another hero

While reading Seanbaby's hilarious *Playing Dress-Up* story (*EGM* #177), I thought to myself, "Hey, I want to be a cosplayer, too." But there's one slight problem: All the

characters that I could come up with are either Asian or white. Can you help me find a cool-looking black character who isn't muscle-bound? I'm not feeling *Final Fantasy VII*'s Barret.

—Robert Mennefee Jr.

Not only are 86 percent of game heroes white males, but according to the study *Fair Play? Violence, Gender, and Race in Videogames*, eight out of 10 African American males are portrayed as competitors in sports games. On that note, we put our heads together and came up with *Street Fighter II*'s Deejay. Someone around the office also offered Drizzt, the dark elf from *Baldur's Gate*, but we wouldn't recommend that, even to a cosplayer.

What of it?

What if Railroad Tycoon ripped out Princess

Letter of the month

Let the kid play

Your recent complaints about punks ruining online games might lead people to believe that all kids are disrespectful brats. I'm 13, and while many gamers my age act stupid online, I'm not one of them. I play mature games and want to be treated like an adult when it comes to gaming. I don't play *Yu-Gi-Oh!* and don't mess with *Mario*. I solved *Doom* in kindergarten and finished *Half-Life* in second grade, yes, when I walk into EB Games I'm treated with less respect than guys taller than I am, schmucks sporting sweatpants and mustaches. But on the level online playing field, I know I'm just as good. So I guess what I'm saying is, but us kids, some adults.

Like fart jokes and watermelons smashed with sledgehammers, prepubescent pipes are just naturally funny to older folks. Of course, that laughter turns to shame when pipequeaks waste us online. But trust us, Chris, we know that jackasses come in all shapes and sizes.



Congrats, Chris Wasser! As our Letter of the Month writer, you've got a game from *EGM*'s secret stash coming your way. You said something about *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, right?

Peach's spine to get me track? What if John Madden coached a mutant league in the Tecmo Bowl?

—Giuseppe Contelli

Oh yeah? What if Tommy Vercetti flew the dodo into a *SimCity* building and Virtua Cop had to rescue *Oldworld*'s Munch from the stairwell? And what if Bonk drags Yuna by her hair, because if he dragged her by her ankles he'd crack would fill with Pikmin?

For shame

What happened to your Shame of the Month award? Both *Lifeline* and *Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel* warranted the dishonor but didn't get it. What gives?

—Daniel Taveras

We flubbed, plain and simple (same goes for *Seven Samurai 20XX*). For the record, the lowest-scoring game that gets all 4.5s or less wins the coldest-crap icon. >

POST OFFICE

Random reader noise from our message boards, www.boards.1UP.com. (Look for *Electronic Gaming Monthly*'s forums.)



Ninja rap

Here's what a few of our less determined posters are saying about the notoriously maddening *Ninja Gaiden* (Xbox): Atomic_Derbitt: "I'm insuring my controller." Wiblewozzer: "I find myself questioning if I'm genuinely enjoying it or just pushing through it to claim that I've beaten a game that others can't." XenoBach: "It's kicking my ass, and I haven't even played it yet." Chixidigit: "I've never had so much fun getting mine kicked."

TheLastMoogle: "Tecmo can take all 50 golden scarabs and cram 'em. I can't remember the last time I played something so frustrating. I could bite my controller just thinking about it."

Portable picks

The next hardware war won't be waged in your living room—it'll rage in the palm of your hand. With a pocketful of portable consoles (namely, Nintendo's DS and Sony's PSP) coming down the pike, some gamers are already playing favorites....

TrueCamerMatthew sides with Sony's all-in-one wonder: "The PSP can play games, movies, and music. All Nintendo's DS offers is eye strain and two screens." Drummerboyoff adds, "Plus, the PSP has that *Lord of the Rings* race." (We don't have the heart to tell him that phony game was our April Fools' joke.) "But the DS," argues Firestar46, "isn't assailing my face with hype and promising to do everything short of fixing

me pancakes." "Yep," agrees Pistikus, "I liked that device more back when they called it a laptop."

General theft idea

Gamers are split over what they want from the forthcoming *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*. Dead_in_Red is quick to find fault: "Give me a game that doesn't use the same graphics, targeting system, and story—something that doesn't get old after an hour." Viewtiful_Joe is having super-size California dreams of "morbidly obese people to run over." NIH clearly hopes *San Andreas* runs through San Francisco and is gunning for "hippies, protesters, and panhandlers." "Recruiting a gang would be cool," adds Erdricks_Boxers, "plus a prison to spring 'em from." "But how sweet would it be to pull a heist or rampage through town with four other real gamers online?" BubbleWrapNinja asks.

CONTACT EGM

E-mail us at EGM@ziffdavis.com. Stuck in boot camp, the Big House, or one of the 10 American homes without Internet access? Scribble on a slice of tree and send it to:

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- WorthPlaying.com



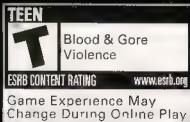
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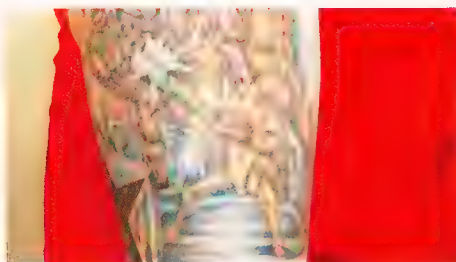


PlayStation 2



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■ These colors don't run, but we're running from these colors.

➤ He'd give an arm for that

Phil's NES-controller tattoo (EGM #177) is classic, but I think I have it beat. Peep my piece of *Metroid's* Samus fighting Ridley in the Choze ruins.

—Travis Fincaryk

Uh...nice. Too bad you don't have a laser on your other arm to remove it with.

He feels like chicken tonight

I thought I'd practice writing again. Today I ate Lee's Chicken's Wednesday special, three pieces, two sides, and a biscuit for \$3.19. It sure was good chicken. Lee's Chicken has an interesting story: The KFC guy and Lee were once partners, so their chicken tastes almost the same. I found that out by reading a board hanging in the store. They should make a *Colonel Sanders vs. Billy Hatcher* game. Also, did you know Wendy's designer, Dave Thomas, used to

work for Sanders? He got the Columbus, Ohio, KFCs up in sales and left a millionaire. —Jarod Thorbahn

We're not going to respond to him. Watch us. We're totally not responding.

Let's get physical

You don't have to be a physical education teacher (which I am) to see that this country is obese. Rather than add pounds to our collective ass, videogames could help fight the epidemic with a new Power Pad. (I'm aware of *Dance Dance Revolution*, but it's a dancing game, and dancing is for sissies.) Imagine the possibilities: a *Crash Bandicoot* in which you actually run from the giant polar bear or a simple side-scrolling *Mario* sequel. Sign the petition at www.expage.com/powerpad and make an impact on the industry.

—Jason Folland

Know a chublet in need of a cardiovascular ass-kicking? Look no further than *Ultimate Kickboxing Arena*. On shelves now for PS2, Naki's device promises to turn your flabby body into a fighting-game controller. Once you've shed enough cellulite to fit into the screen, try admiring and maintaining your new figure with Sony's *EyeToy*.



■ No, really, someone made this.

Unprincipally welcome

It's terribly unfair, but I think world events have conspired to make people avoid *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*. Persia and Arabia aren't exotic nowadays. The media saturates society with so many negative images of modern-day Arabia that much of the public wants nothing to do the region or its culture. Innocent, apolitical fantasy though it may be, *Sands* is a reflection of Middle Eastern myths, and some people are too disenchanted to want to bring it into their recreation time. Poor Prince. He deserves a better reception than this

—Nikola Mishaw

Good theory on *Prince of Persia's* low sales, Nikola. But then shouldn't *Fugitive Hunter's* (see page 118) shoot-first-ask-nothing-later take on the Middle East >



GAME DESIGN-O-RAMA

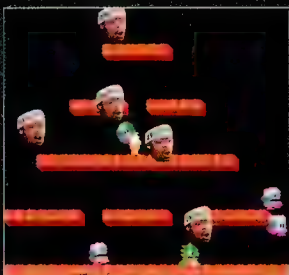
Got proof that game design is best left to the pros? Send your concept (with art) to EGM@ziffdavis.com, subject: design-o-rama.



SQUARE EYE FOR THE GAMING GUY: FAB FANTASIES

Square Enix and Fox Entertainment team up to bring you a fabulous *Final Fantasy* spin-off! Transform the characters of your choice into complete pansies with the prissy guidance of the series' sensitive types. Learn to whine like Tidus, trade cross-dressing tips with Vaan, study the art of chest waxing with Seymour, and oh so much more!

—Marl



BUBB RUBBLE BOBBLE

Woo wool Whistle-tip enthusiast Bubbl Rubb brings "da flows" in this revamp of the classic puzzler! Grab LI'Sis and run up the score before the whistle blows and wakes the neighbors. As an added bonus, *Bubb Rubble Bobble* is priced to sell at \$15. *Electronic Gaming Monthly* raves, "You'll never want to stop—even when you should be up cooking breakfast or something!"

—Mac Johnson



GRAIN TURISMO 4: THE REAL COMBINE SIMULATOR

Leave all other harvesting games on the threshing-room floor with *Grain Turismo 4!* Choose from a variety of models, including the classic '20s Claas self-propelled combine and the rugged '71 John Deere 4400. From the vast Saskatchewan wheat fields to Vermont co-ops, farm your way through litelike rural locales at an incredible 15 mph!

—Gerald Jacobs

HUNGRY FOR SOME CHEESE?

Remember *Metal Gear Solid 2*'s morbidly obese, bomb-loving, Rollerblader? We held an impromptu contest on our message boards, asking you to whip up ideas for the bosses you're hoping you won't have to battle in the sequel, *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*.



■ Exclusive *Metal Gear Solid 3* art courtesy of Rory Manion.

Unfortunate Plot Twist Ardvark

Annoying villain with an asinine backstory. Excels at sucking. Ardvark uses the phrase, "Turns out we're cousins!" to drive Snake into a boring, 20-minute-long internal monologue, then proceeds to poke him to death with a shiv created from sheer player apathy.

—Rory Manion

Screech Owl

Amplifies his grating voice to lethal levels, causing the Codec to rupture in Snake's inner ear. Shoot Screech in his voice box before he before he can attack with awful one-liners like, "You're not going to be saved by the bell on this mission Solid Snake!"

—Michael Bach

Postmodern Snake

Cloned from blood snake left on the battlefield, but with the Y chromosome removed, this female assassin goes by the codename Postmodern Snake (PMS for short). Approach PMS with caution, as she'll quickly use your every word and action against you.

—Erdrick's Boxes

The Lawyer

Slaps Snake with lawsuits on behalf of the families of slain bosses. Actually, if Snake so much as injures someone, The Lawyer's hot on the trail with talk of settlements and restitution. Moving the trial to another location is Snake's only hope for defeating this shyster.

—Audio0fBeing

► have helped it sell like plastic antenna flags?

Better gaming through science

We recently covered momentum/impulse relationships in my high school physics class. By using a simple formula ($F \times T = M \times V$), it's possible to figure out how much force you'll impact the ground with after a fall. Basically, extended contact with the ground lessens the force of an impact.

What's this got to do with gaming, you ask? Well, when Link tucks and rolls, he's increasing his time of contact, thus minimizing the force that he hits the ground with, and saving him a much-needed heart. Who knew that I was actually learning while trying to avoid damage in *Zelda: The Wind Waker*?

—Justin Biller

Out of the closet

In Playing Dress-Up (*EGM* #177), you ran a picture of a green-haired guy in a tiger-striped costume. Just wanted to let you know that he's decked out as Lum's father from the '80s anime *Urusei Yatsura*. Now if you'll excuse me, I'd like to crawl back into my mom's basement for a sob

—Matt Engelhardt

Dry those tears, Matt. It's not like that as you dressed as a space tiger. (Or was it?)

Game over

I'm hanging up my controllers for good. The same game and again just don't

offer enough incentive to keep playing. Platforms? Dead Adventure games? Run, shoot, jump on this, collect that—they're all the same.

What happened to *Chrono Trigger*, a game I'd gladly play over and over? What about the stuff that broke the rules and set the trends—stuff like *Mario 64*? Sometimes I think that gaming died with the 16-bit era. It's sad really. I once loved gaming, but nowadays everyone's out to make more instead of something new. I'm sorry, but I'm pulling the plug, this time for good. So long and thanks for the memories.

—Richard Davis

We won't beg you to stay, Richard, but we wonder what's changed more: you or the industry? Derivation has always been the name of the game, be it movies, books, or music. For every *Star Wars*, you'll find a galaxy full of

Battlestars, for the Beatles, a barrelful of Monkees. Even *Different Strokes* had its *Webster*. And as the readers who're thinking to themselves, "Hey, some of those ain't half bad," might tell you, not all

copycats are total crap. Still, if you're a stickler for true innovation, you could always come out of retirement now and then for the really good stuff.

You don't say?

Ultimate Game Room (*EGM* #178) was a real eye-opener. What, I can



"Favorite gaming position? ...I let my hands do most of the work."

—Ken Cauley

"gasp" put my videogames on shelves? And here I was sticking them to the wall with chewing gum! Thanks, *EGM*

—Christian O'Brien

No problem, smartass.

Magic numbers

Last issue, you asked why so many RPGs cap health and experience points at 9,999, why 255 is the maximum number of rupees you can hold at one time in the original *Zelda*, and why 999,950 is *Super Mario Bros.*' max score. Well, Mr. Programmer is here with answers.

RPG point caps are all mines because it's easy to program extra digits. It's a waste of space from a design perspective. If you add the digit, you might as well make use of it by allowing it to go as high as possible, which brings you back to the same problem. *The Legend of Zelda*'s rupee limit is simple: 255 is the biggest number storable in one byte of data (eight ones or zeroes), and it's likely someone wanted to save memory on the NES. Finally, 50 is the smallest amount of points you can earn at a time in *Super Mario Bros.* Combine this knowledge with what you now know about the digit problem, and you'll have your answer.

—David Schneider

Gaming girls need love, too

You infantile, lonely little boys, I think I deserve to see Mr. Sexiest Gamer, seeing as I subscribe to your magazine, same as any of your male readers. Two, count 'em, two entire grid-filled pages and zlich on guys. There's something wrong here. I

demand to see some Mr. Sexiest Gamer. And don't forget to ask *him* what position he likes to play games in!

—Holly Austell

Sexy gaming prince Colin McGannon never got back to us, but we tracked down a runner-up who swears the crown was rightfully his. So Holly, meet Ken Cauley:

"Favorite gaming position? I'll get to that, but first let me enlighten the rest of *EGM*'s female readership about who the real sexiest male gamer is! Peep the rest of my contest pics at www.gcdvanced.com/article.php?articleid=792 and judge for yourself. As for your question, the position doesn't matter so much, as I let my hands do most of the work." 🐾



■ Is that a joystick in your pocket, or are you just happy to see us?

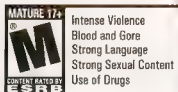
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PlayStation 2

IO Interactive



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CONFLICT
HAS BEGUN

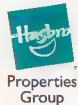


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press start

gaming news, interviews, medicated powders, and other stuff



PRIMED AND READY

Nintendo powers-up its big franchises with a bevy of sequels

Yes, it's been a long, cold winter for GameCube owners. Players have been huddled together around games of *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles* to keep warm, with so few major releases from Nintendo to keep them occupied.

But finally, it seems spring is about to...spring. Nintendo released shots of and details on a handful of its big franchises, all due by the end of the year. And there's more, much more, to come. The company promised not to reveal its new dual-screen handheld, the Nintendo DS, until the E3 Industry trade show in May, when all these games and more will also be playable on the show floor. Expect to hear about a new GameCube *Zelda* title, another *Mario* platformer, and a few new surprises very soon. Here's what we have so far to get you warmed up:

METROID PRIME 2

GameCube • Late 2004

Of course, the one game we all want the most, the one game we're all waiting for, the one game that haunts our thoughts day and night...is the one game Nintendo has absolutely nothing to say about. Sorry, no solid info on the sequel to Retro Studios' brilliant first-person shooter/adventure *Metroid Prime*. Yet.

What can we tell from these few screens? Obviously, the big new feature is spitscreen multiplayer. Question is, how well would death-match work with the original *Prime*'s e-z lock-on targeting and "unique" control setup? We've got our fingers crossed that the option for a more conventional dual analog stick control scheme will be added this time around, but from these screens, it looks like the old cross-happed menus for the different scanners and guns will return instead. Please, Nintendo?



Hot girl-on-girl-as-girl-on-girl action: *Prime 2*'s new spitscreen multiplayer mode.

ALSO COMING FROM NINTENDO: A NEW MEMORY CARD, THE 1001 FOR \$30, A WIRELESS ADAPTER FOR GBA FOR LINK UP PLAY TO BE PACKAGED WITH THE SEPTEMBER RELEASE OF

PAPER MARIO 2

GameCube • Late 2004

If you missed the original *Paper Mario* years ago on Nintendo 64, imagine the recent GBA adventure *Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga*—RPG elements, a lighthearted story, minigames—and photocopy it. The 3D graphics here are made up of layers of flat 2D characters and objects, giving the game a unique yet retro feel (hence the “Paper” moniker). And this

time, Mario is taking full advantage of his two dimensions: He can roll himself into an airplane to fly, roll up into a tube and bounce to out-of-reach areas, or turn sideways and slide through tight passages. Combat is once again focused on quick reflexes, with

players timing button taps for special attacks, defensive moves, or extra damage. The focus on the sequel is audience participation—if Mario impresses the crowd watching him fight, he gains power for stronger attacks



It's so easy to level with different skills. Moves, make with the new abilities.

Nintendo in-jokes abound—recognize world 1-1 of *Super Mario Bros.* here?



Feelin' feisty? Take on your fellow players in the multiplayer shadow battle combat mode.



The *Super Paper Mario* minigame *Tap Tap* is a real gem.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS ADVENTURES

GameCube • June 7, 2004

It's perfectly natural to be skeptical about *The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures*. After all, it seems like a devious money-making scam: Nintendo slaps an old GBA game on a GameCube disc, forces players to control it with link-cabled Game Boys, then frolics in a giant pile of money. Your wariness will fade, however, as soon as you (and, if you're lucky, three GBA-bearing comrades) give it a shot—*Zelda* works shockingly well as a multiplayer game.

Four Swords' gameplay offers all the familiar *Zelda* staples, like tossing boomerangs, bombing walls, exploring labyrinths, felling bosses, and thwacking innocent chickens with swords; only now, you've got four Links in on the action (you can play solo, but expect diminished thrills). Surprisingly, the old-fashioned graphics actually look pretty sharp. While the basic look mimics that of *Zelda: A Link to the Past* for Super Nintendo, a cavalcade of wild special effects tilt, ripple, zoom in on, and explode the familiar

world of Hyrule. The visuals are a product of style and functionality. “We really think that each new *Zelda* game needs a unique look to distinguish it,” explains Producer Eiji Aonuma, “and it's very difficult to show multiple players onscreen in three dimensions.”

And even though you and your linked-up buddies are all working toward the same ultimate goal, a little friendly competition tends to break out. “We try to balance elements that force players to cooperate with chances for them to compete,” says Aonuma. “For example, all four players might have to stand on a switch to activate it, but doing so causes one huge [treasure] to drop, so suddenly everyone scrambles to grab it.” If *EGM*'s *Four Swords* experience is any indication, the infighting can get a bit out of hand, with several Links charged beyond recognition and/or tossed into chasms. Perhaps we should take Aonuma's stern advice: “Heroes must not fight amongst themselves—they are allies of justice!”

BACK TO THE FUTURE

The GBA is going totally '80s. On June 7, Nintendo will release a limited-edition GBA SP patterned after its old 8-bit NES system controller. The retro portable will cost the same as any other SP—100 bucks. And what better way to break in your old-new system than with eight classic NES games, also on sale that same day (for \$20 each), including *Xenious*, *Bomberman*, *Pac-Man*, and these four classics (oh, and *Ice Climber*):



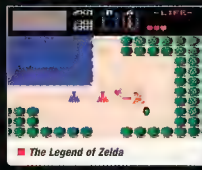
■ Donkey Kong



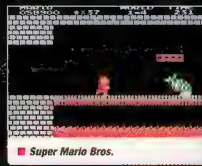
■ Excitebike



■ Ice Climber



■ The Legend of Zelda



■ Super Mario Bros.

PIKMIN 2

GameCube • August 2004

The astro-bug stars of *Pikmin 2* are a lot of things—thumbie tall, in tune with flora, at odds with fauna—but right now, more than anything, they're late. Captain Olimar, the original game's wee protagonist, and his new assistant were originally supposed to touch down on GameCube in fall 2003.

So if you're foggy on this sequel's setup, here's a refresher: *Pikmin 2* takes the grow-a-plant-army concept and adds two-player splitscreen play and nixes a time limit, so you can explore the randomly generated dungeons and hunt down treasure all the living day. You get two new Pikmin plant creatures to wrangle—a burly purple guy and a poisonous white one—plus, more than 60 different enemy critters to beat to death with your flower-powered army.



FIRE EMBLEM

GameCube • Late 2004

Tired of squinting at your GBA, trying to tell if those pixels you're about to attack are a brigand or a mercenary? Give your weary eyes a rest—*Fire Emblem* is on its way to the (relatively) big screen.

This Cube version of the handheld strategy RPG has the same basic setup as its little brother—turn-based movement, advantages given based on terrain, and a rock/paper/scissors-like weapon hierarchy. Nintendo promises flashier battle effects (natch), and you can now watch your characters fight on the usual separate combat screen or right on the map itself. Also expect added complexity from expanded stats for each character in your army, including the weight of their items. Let's just hope the graphics improve before release.

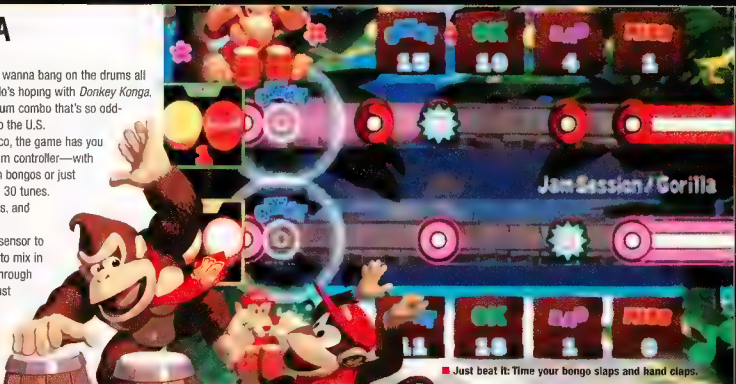
DONKEY KONGA

GameCube • September 2004

You don't wanna work—you just wanna bang on the drums all day. At least that's what Nintendo's hoping with *Donkey Konga*, a made-in-Japan game-and-bongo-drum combo that's so odd-ball, we figured it would never come to the U.S.

But here it is. Codeveloped by Namco, the game has you hammering on the included bongo-drum controller—with up to three other players, via their own bongos or just regular joypads—in time to more than 30 tunes. You'll jam to pop hits, kid-stuff medleys, and familiar riffs from Nintendo games.

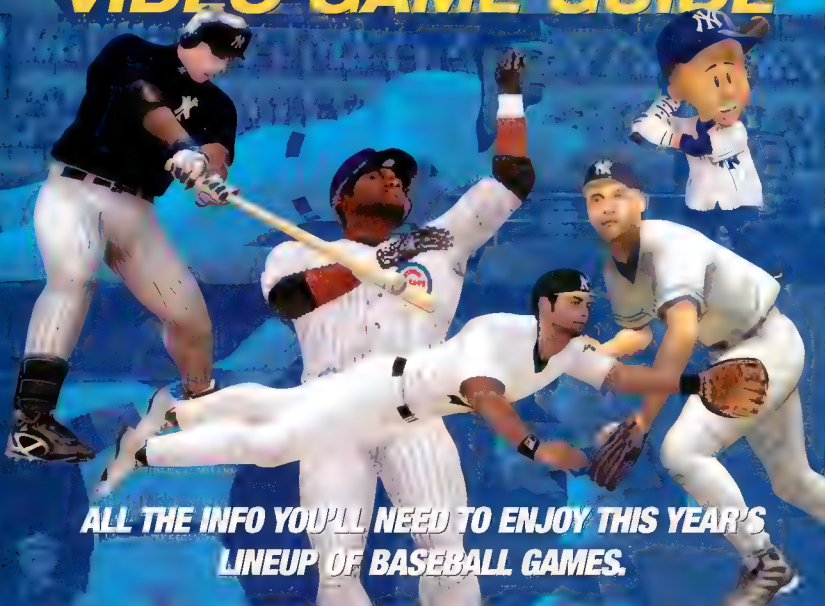
The drum gizmo even has a sound sensor to register hand claps, which you'll have to mix in with your bongo bashing to progress through the game's three modes. Or you can just forget the rules and choose free mode if you want to go all Matthew McConaughey on the thing. Just put on some damn clothes when the cops show up.



■ Just beat it: Time your bongo slaps and hand claps.



VIDEO GAME GUIDE



**ALL THE INFO YOU'LL NEED TO ENJOY THIS YEAR'S
LINEUP OF BASEBALL GAMES.**

Atari ASB05

ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2005
FEATURING DEREK JETER



FUN FACT ASB05 features two commentary options: Steve Lyons and Thom Brennaman handle the English, while Oscar Soria offers fans Spanish play-by-play.

HINTS + TIPS

KEEP UP

Too many trades to keep track of? You can download roster updates to save yourself the hassle.

KNOW THE SITUATIONS

If you have your best hitter on deck, don't swing for the fences. Get on base and let him drive you in.

ARE YOU AN ALL-STAR SLUGGER?

SEE IT ALL

FielderCam sets the camera behind the fielder, making your perspective just like a real outfielder's.

TAKE OVER

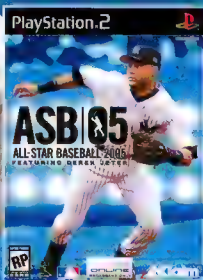
Tons of batting options let you handle your swing like never before — you can take full control of your hacks!

YOU'RE THE BOSS

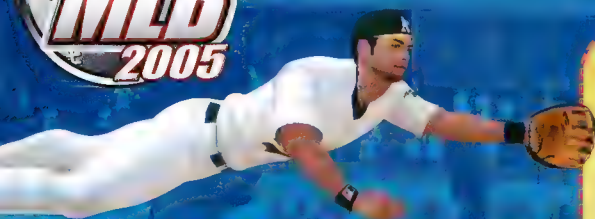
Deepest Franchise Mode available includes Spring Training, Expansion Mode and Create-A-Team.

HISTORY REPEATS

Relive historic moments from 2003 — like Game 6 of the NLCS — and unlock media extras with the TWIB (This Week In Baseball) Challenge.



PLATFORMS: XBOX, PS2



SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT

TOTAL CONTROL
Pressure-sensitive pitching and throwing let you put something extra on the ball.

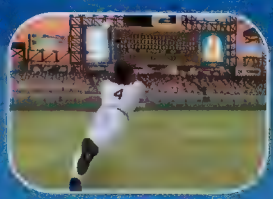
FACE OFF
With EyeToy, you can create a player with your own mug. Take a snapshot of yourself and you'll be inside the game!



PLATFORM: PS2

REALISTIC ANALYSIS
The game's commentary, from Vin Scully, Dave Campbell and Matt Vasgersian, adapts to reflect your season's results.

LOOKING GOOD
New fluid animations make this year's edition look great. A homer has never looked better!



PREPARED BY THE PUBLISHING DEPARTMENT OF MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL PROPERTIES

FUN FACT Amazingly realistic ballparks feature city-specific details like haze and fireworks, plus real-time scoreboards, JumboTrons and authentic signs.

HINTS + TIPS

IN THE ZONES
Opponents learn your tendencies, so keep track of Hot and Cold zones, and keep them guessing.

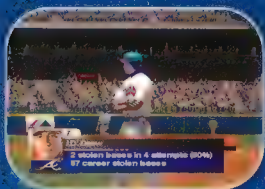
MIGHTY MO
Set your fielder before he has the ball. He'll carry his momentum into his throw.





ESPN BASEBALL

FUN-FACT If you play on GM mode, it's up to you to make wise decisions. You're answering to the owners now, and they'll run you out of town if you fail.



HINTS + TIPS

TROPHY ROOM

If you can reach in-game goals, you'll be able to earn and display trophies.

MIND GAMES

Keep an eye on your players' confidence. It could mean the difference between a win or a loss.

EVERY NIGHT BASEBALL

WORLD BEATER

Go online and match up against the best the world has to offer. Voice chat capabilities let you rub it in, too.

ESPN PRESENTATION

Jon Miller and Karl Ravech deliver the insightful analysis you'd expect from an actual ESPN broadcast, and the game looks straight out of *Sunday Night Baseball*, too.

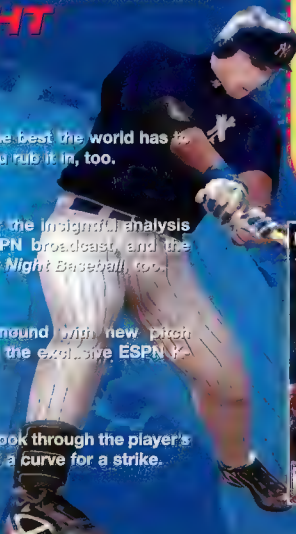
POWER PITCHING

Take complete control on the mound with new pitch speeds, animations, interface and the exclusive ESPN X-Zone analysis.

FIRST PERSON BASEBALL

See the game like never before — look through the player's eyes as he cracks a homer or fires a curve for a strike.

PLATFORMS: XBOX, PS2



Backyard BASEBALL



BE A KID AGAIN

DAY CARE

Play with 30 Backyard Kids and Backyard Teams, as well as a lineup of MLB All-Stars playing as kids.

ANY WAY YOU WANT

Tons of different modes, including mini-games like Baseball Darts and a full Tutorial Mode.



OVER THE WALL

They may look small, but these kids have power to all fields. Showcase your skills in a Home Run Derby.

CHILD'S PLAY

With outrageous power-ups and surprises, smash long-balls, throw clutch strikeouts and unlock six bonus pros.

FUN FACT Although it's a very popular title among younger gamers, this is *Backyard Baseball's* first appearance on the PlayStation 2.

HINTS + TIPS

INSIDE LOOK

Explore loads of stats and options so that you can figure out how to unlock hidden items and players.

KEEP IT DOWN

If you're confident in your infield's ability to field grounders, then keep your pitches down in the strike zone.

PLATFORM: PS2

MLB SLUGFEST LOADED

FUN FACT *MLB Slugfest: Loaded* has two different gameplay options, allowing fans to play in Pro Mode, which simulates the Majors, or stick with the name of the game, which features enough monster homers and trick pitches to keep anyone entertained.



SLUG IT LIKE SAMMY

JUST LIKE THE REAL THING

Simulated on-field competition includes up-and-in pitching, hard tags and intense plate collisions.

ONLINE ACTION

Deep online capabilities allow you to go online with PlayStation2 and Xbox Live for head-to-head play.

FRANCHISE MODE

Franchise mode couldn't be deeper with the addition of the Baseball Mogul engine. Fans can now guide Sammy Sosa and the Cubs to the World Series.

PURE ENTERTAINMENT

Incredibly easy to play, *MLB Slugfest: Loaded* provides a humorous commentary team of Tim Kitzrow — the voice of Midway Sports — and Jim Shorts.

PLATFORMS: XBOX, PS2

HINTS + TIPS

A LONG SEASON

Remember that in franchise mode you're playing a full season, so use players wisely.

IT'S YOUR CALL

With the options available, don't be afraid to take chances. Risks pay off huge for smart managers.

N-GAGE REDUX

Forget the first one ever happened



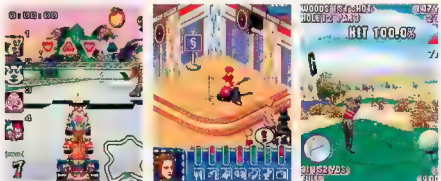
Since time travel's not an option, Nokia's doing the next best thing to repair the tarnished image of its N-Gage Swiss-army cell phone—it's releasing a slightly smaller, slightly cheaper model that addresses the criticisms that plagued the first one. The N-Gage QD—Nokia says the QD doesn't stand for anything—launches in early June. Though an exact price has yet to be announced, Nokia says it will be less than the original's \$300 debut.

Just by picking it up, you can tell the QD's a more practical game machine. A dedicated cartridge slot at the bottom of the unit (covered by a rubber hatch) means you'll never touch the battery case again when switching between *Tomb Raider* and *Tony Hawk*. And when you do

swap cartridges, the QD will load the new game automatically. The keypad's been tweaked, too, to make it easier to use, and the machine's still got the platform's promising Bluetooth and online multiplayer features.

Naturally, it's still a phone—but sidetalkin' is a thing of the past. You hold the QD as you would a normal cell phone (scope the earpiece right above the keypad). The original's MP3 player and radio functions and compatibility with foreign cellular networks (a Euro version will be available after the Atlantic) didn't make the cut this time around, but the QD's superior design should make up for that. All N-Gage needs now are more games we wanna play.

■ New with cartridge slot



■ Coming this summer: *Crash Nitro Kart*, *The Sims: Bustlin' Out*, and *Tiger Woods Golf*.

GRUDGE MATCH

Battle of the Bonds



JAMES BOND

GOLD BOND

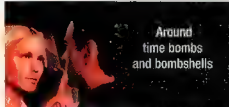
007 has nifty gadgets and looks great in a tux, but can he relieve your jock itch in just one application? When the cornstarch settles only one will remain standing; will it be the secret agent or the anti-fungal agent? We're itchin' to find out!

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

"...feels even more like a Bond adventure than some lesser chapters in the film series."—*EGM*
Advantage: James Bond

"All the guys in my fraternity use Triple Action Gold Bond Medicated Powder—it's a daily experience!"
—Actual testimonial!

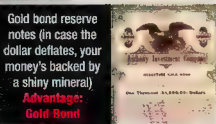
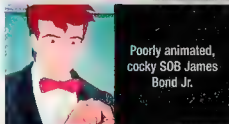
WORKS BEST...



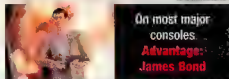
Where your generously proportioned thighs keep rubbing each other raw
Advantage: Gold Bond



SOMETIMES MISTAKEN FOR...



COMMONLY FOUND...



TOUGHEST ADVERSARY



Though the *Swainston* bottle of anti-rubbing powder gave him a run for his Euro (and scored the endorsement of old-folks here Paul Harvey), James Bond cheats his own untarnish denise once again to win.

DS DETAILS DISCLOSED?

A list of specs for Nintendo's upcoming dual-screen portable system, the Nintendo DS, appears to have leaked onto the Internet. Nintendo would not confirm or deny the specs, but they did admit that the "Nitro" name for the system listed on the supposed spec sheet was an internal codename for the DS. Among the more exciting bits of info: evidence that the DS' second screen might be used as a touch-sensitive pad, it can handle 3D graphics, and it will apparently include a microphone input and wireless functionality. Controls listed are a D-pad, L, R, A, and B buttons, with additional X and Y buttons still being considered.



■ We'll know soon enough whether these fan-made creations from the Internet look anything like the real DS.

I HAVE THE POWER TO TAKE EVERYTHING FROM YOU.
INCLUDING YOUR LIFE.

"THIEF LOOKS ONCE AGAIN
TO REWRITE THE RULEBOOKS
FOR STEALTH GAMING."

"THE ORIGINAL STEALTH GAME
IS BACK AND BETTER THAN EVER"

XBOX MAGAZINE



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COMING
THIS SPRING



THIEF

DEADLY SHADOWS

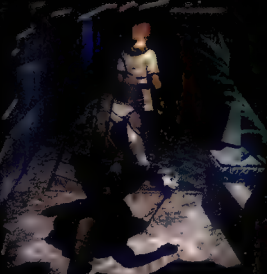
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AMBUSH

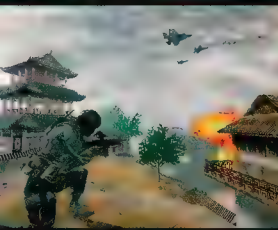


KILL



FIRST LOOK:
**TOM CLANCY'S
GHOST RECON 2**

This time it's war for Ubisoft's guys in green



Ask the guys in cammies and combat boots: *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon* will make you a virtual veteran. "One U.S. Army Special Forces soldier told me the game's tension and lethality blew him away. I've also had the privilege of playing cooperatively with Marines," brags Designer Christian Allen, himself a former leatherneck. "They break into fire teams, use their actual formations, positions, and assigned weapons to tackle the scenarios." The sequel, set to deploy on Xbox this fall (and possibly

assault PlayStation 2 sometime after), aims to immerse couch commandos in even more convincing combat.

Until now, novelist Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon unit hasn't seemed all that different from his Rainbow Six squad. Sure, Rainbows specialize in counterterrorism and hostage situations while Ghosts combine infantry tactics with cutting-edge military technology on the battlefield. But so far, the guys in green have been restricted to covert skirmishes with tin-pot generals and third-world guerrillas.

"This time it's all-out war," says Allen. He and the other higher-ups aren't saying who's involved just yet (apparently, intel is on a need-to-know basis, and we don't need to know), but when world powers butt heads, it's the Ghosts who make sure it's not Uncle Sam's noggin that buckles from the blow.

You are an army of one, but you're not the only one. "Your squadmates will support you with crucial information and suppressing fire," says A.I. Engineer David Hamm. "They'll flank enemy positions and



Reboot Camp

The original *Ghost Recon* is getting on in years. To maintain operational readiness and meet tomorrow's standards, it'll take more than routine rifle cleaning. "Our new graphics features take full advantage of Xbox's power and allow us to make gorgeous, natural-looking characters and environments," Lead Artist Brian Tate explains. "On top of that, we're improving special effects and adding destructible elements like collapsing buildings and crashing helicopters." Say good-bye to the simple, blocky scenery of *Ghost Recon's* past (above).



Meet the Elite

Ghost Recon 2's new Infantry and airstrike features will shock and awe the enemy, but it's still your squadmates who'll save your ass in the thick of combat. Get to know the guys who've got your back:



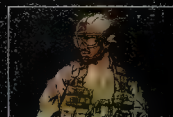
Name: Nick M. Salvatore
Rank: Sergeant
Class: Gunner

Armed with the M249 Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW), Salvatore provides a high volume of fire, pinning enemies down as the Ghosts advance.



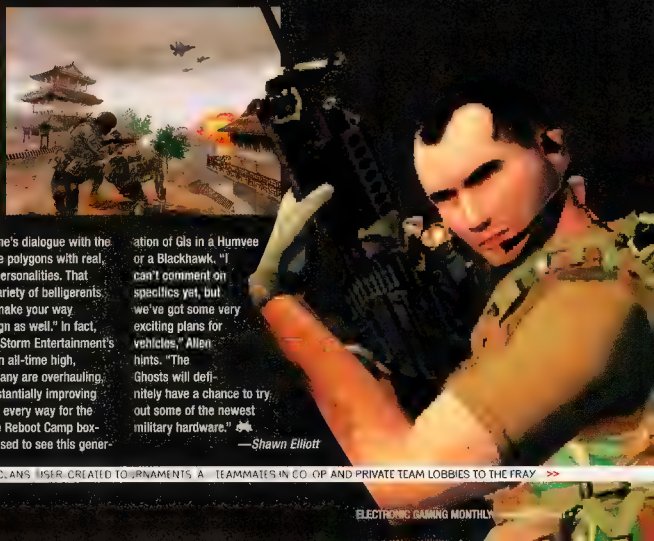
Name: Mike Kim
Rank: Staff Sergeant
Class: Marksman

A specialist in accurate long-range fire, Kim eliminates targets from afar. Unlike a solitary sniper, however, Kim's an integrated part of the team.



Name: Derrick Parker
Rank: Master Sergeant
Class: Grenadier

Parker brings heavy indirect fire against large concentrations of enemies and dug-in hostiles with his M16A4 and mounted grenade launcher.



take out Tango's tanks." Your targets won't be soft, either, and they will "coordinate to stop the Ghosts, analyzing the terrain for advantages and making use of available cover."

A streamlined Squad-command interface lets you be all that you can be even amid the confusion and chaos, but Lead Sound Programmer Jeff Wesevich is quick to point out that gamers will have more reason to care about their fellow Ghosts than their willingness to follow orders: "We're completely revamping our

approach to the game's dialogue with the goal of filling out the polygons with real, three-dimensional personalities. That goes for the wide variety of belligerents: you'll meet as you make your way through the campaign as well." In fact, with developer Red Storm Entertainment's military budget at an all-time high, Wesevich and company are overhauling, upgrading, and substantially improving their armed force in every way for the coming conflict (see Reboot Camp box-out). Don't be surprised to see this gener-

ation of GIs in a Humvee or a Blackhawk. "I can't comment on specifics yet, but we've got some very exciting plans for vehicles," Allen hints. "The Ghosts will definitely have a chance to try out some of the newest military hardware." —Shawn Elliott

EGM INTERNATIONAL

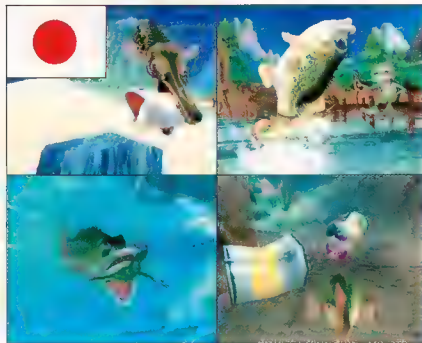
Two weird games, one weird country



WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

Vib Ribbon explores the darker side of photography

Dark, nasty, yet oh-so-cute gremlins inhabit every photo you've ever taken. But fear not—there is a way to exterminate this menace from your Kodak moments: Buy Sony's Japanese PS2 release *Vib Ribbon*, import your digital pictures, and have Vibri the doodle-art bunny (star of Japan-only PS1 oddity *Vib Ribbon*) hop on them trampolene style. You see, *Ribbon* takes whatever picture you give it—from your mom lounging poolside to you in the bathtub (or worse)—and turns it into a level for Vibri to jump about on, picking up gremlins and avoiding other baddies. What's more, some gremlins appear only in certain types of photos (black-and-white pics, for example), making gathering a complete photo-critter collection a formidable challenge.



NAUTICAL NONSENSE

There's something fishy going on within *Uo*

Uo (pronounced "whoa") is the latest PS2 project coming to Japan this summer from the maker of the *Sega Bass Fishing* series. You'd expect some kind of angling sim then, right? Wrong! *Uo* puts you in the fish's role, running errands for the local "water spirits" in a quest to save sea life everywhere. You'll also get to munch on the game's 100 types of wildlife—locking on with the L1 button, lurching with O, and using the analog sticks to thrash your prey around for the kill. If you've got a death wish, you can even nibble on the lures at the end of those nasty land-walkers' fishing lines. Snap the wire, and you'll earn unlockable bonuses and prove that once and for all that evolution is *highly* overrated.

OLD SCHOOL

10 years ago in EGM

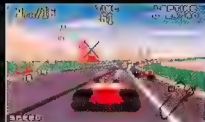
■ On the Cover: Virtua Fighter

Sure, it doesn't look like anything special now. But back in '94 when we were all drowning in a sea of *Street Fighter* knockoffs, Sega's groundbreaking 3D arcade fighter was the bee's knees. Do bees even *have* knees?



Game of the Month: Super Metroid

Nintendo's Super NES classic walked home with the prize this issue, scoring four nines (out of 10) from our crew. Reviewer Al Manuel called *Super Metroid* "quite possibly the greatest action-adventure game ever created." Ten years later, many argue that this is still true.



3D Graphics = \$100

Sega's 3D-enabling SVP chip spilled up the graphics for the Genesis version of *Virtua Racing*, but it also doubled its price. *Racing* hit stores in late spring '94 with a \$99.99 price tag.

L1! PREVIEWS: SWITCH ON THE GROUND EFFECTS

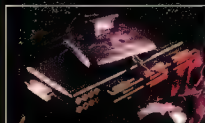
JUICED

PS2/XB • Acclaim • September 2004 — Prep out your rifle and put your pink slip on the line in Acclaim's new racing franchise (replacing the smash-em-up fan favorite *Burnout*, which recently jumped ship to EA Games). With 50 licensed cars, online play, unique clan-style racing clubs, and thousands of killer mods, you'll be too busy burning rubber to miss the crashing.



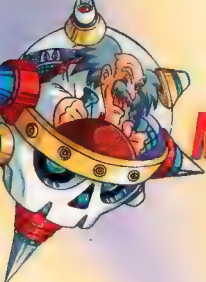
STREET RACING SYNDICATE

PS2/XB • Namco • June 2004 — Plucked from the shores of 3D0's bankruptcy, *Street Racing Syndicate* (or *SRS*, if you're into cool-sounding abbreviations) serves up fast and the furious—slope, underground racing, money, art, and bootytits (your friends' (great, apparently they're a transferable commodity here) are on the line as you race tricked-out rice rockets while listening to the juzz.

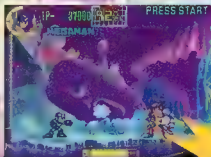


It Makes So Much Sense

Genius. That's all we have to say about the Video Jukebox Pure genius. Stick six carts in this baby and switch between them with the touch of a button. No more cartridge mess!



THE ULTIMATE COLLECTION OF MEGA MAN'S FINEST ADVENTURES!



10 GAMES IN 1
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Go back to Mega Man's beginning with these special game compilations. Save the planet from 15 years worth of evil villains! Mega fun awaits with 10 action-packed games for the Nintendo GameCube™ and PlayStation®2 computer entertainment systems and 5 infectious games on Game Boy® Advance.



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5 GAMES IN 1

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PlayStation.2



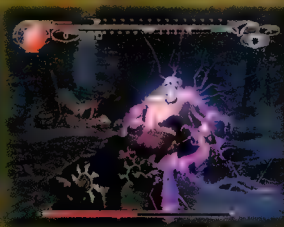
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VAN HELSING

EVIL HAS ONE NAME TO FEAR

THE GAME

IN STORES MAY 7, 2004



Battle Dracula, The Frankenstein Monster, The Wolf Man and 22 villainous creatures

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Blood and Gore
Violence

PlayStation 2



GAME BOY ADVANCE



SEE THE MOVIE
VAN HELSING
IN THEATRES MAY 7, 2004



www.vanhelsinggame.com

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THIS YEAR'S MODELS

Sony gambles on a massive mascot trifecta

This fall, your PlayStation 2 will be hopping and bopping itself into a frenzy when Sony deploys a deadly platforming pay-

load—three colossal sequels to best-selling franchises—in a whirlwind three-month span. Yikes. First, prepare for the wallet onslaught with our

handy chart, which compares *Sly Cooper 2*, *Jak 3*, and the third *Ratchet & Clank* outing. Then try your best to work through those copies of *Sly*

Cooper, *Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando*, and *Jak II* that you kept meaning to finish.
—Shane Bettenhausen



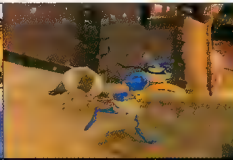
The Game:



SLY 2: BAND OF THIEVES

September 2004

The Hero:



The world's greatest thief returns to hijack more valuables at various globetrotting locales. But he's not the same cuddly furball you knew in 2002: "Sly is more in control," explains Madan. "He's also a little more buff, a little more angular...he's grown into his skin now."

Obligatory Sidekick(s):



In *Band of Thieves*, Sly's previously non-playable buds no longer stand idly by in the face of crime...instead, they join in the thrill of larceny. You'll get to control both demolitions expert Bentley (a curmudgeonly turtle) and headstrong brawler Murray (a large pink hippo).

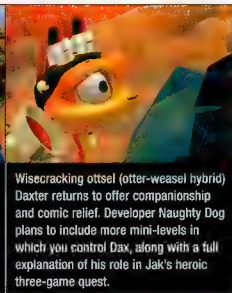


JAK 3

October 2004



Poor, beleaguered Jak never catches a break. After saving Haven City at the end of *Jak II*, the ungrateful citizens blame him for rising civil unrest and banish him to a parched desert wasteland. He counters with a snazzy haircut, thuggish threads, and a new surly attitude.



Wisecracking ottsel (otter-weasel hybrid) Daxter returns to offer companionship and comic relief. Developer Naughty Dog plans to include more mini-levels in which you control Dax, along with a full explanation of his role in Jak's heroic three-game quest.



RATCHET & CLANK: UP YOUR ARSENAL

November 2004



Lovable lombax (some sort of furry thing) Ratchet must once again protect the galaxy from evil. Unlike the other heroes here, Ratchet hasn't really changed much—other than donning some new clothes, he's the same vaguely innocuous nice-guy hero he's always been.



R&C creator Ted Price proudly proclaims, "Clank is finally stepping out of Ratchet's shadow." While he hasn't gotten his own game...yet, Ratchet's erstwhile robotic backpack Clank now stars in a popular TV spy drama, where Ratchet plays his bumbling sidekick. Sweet, sweet irony.



and find new worlds with these sweet cheats, tips and tricks. Cut out the cards, and stash them in the game case so you can really get into the game. Check out www.Geimothegame.com to download a coupon for \$5 off any game shown here and check out more codes for the latest hot titles.

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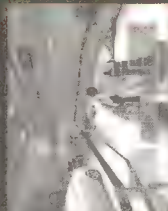
TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 2



PS2

SECRET TIPS!

- Weapons equipped with reflex sights (M4 & G36C) are great for moving while zoomed in. Unlike the scoped weapons, the reflex sight doesn't obscure your peripheral vision. Plus, the 2x zoom is less distracting while moving using these weapons ideal for clearing rooms.
- When stealth is essential, always drop to a crouch before moving out. Crouched movement reduces the amount of noise produced in addition to lowering your visible profile.
- Thermal vision can be used to see through smoke as well as through layers. Soon for enemy heat signatures to gather intel on if those layers stopping an assault.



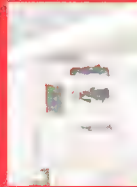
MISSION HIGHLIGHT



GC

CATCH THEM ALL!

- When you attempt to leave Phoenix City, three trainers guard the exit with Shadow Pokémon. Boss guarding the exit, but Quilava, Blastoise, and the rest of the trainers are easy to defeat. You can only battle one of the three trainers, so consider which Pokémon you really want before picking your fight.
- Shadow Pokémon are purified only through battle, so be sure to accept every challenge you can find. The three squares in Pyrite Town is full of trainers looking for a good scrap.
- Explore every corner of Agate Village, the forest paradise. Check behind bushes and down ramps for winding secret passages that reveal item boxes full of helpful goodies.



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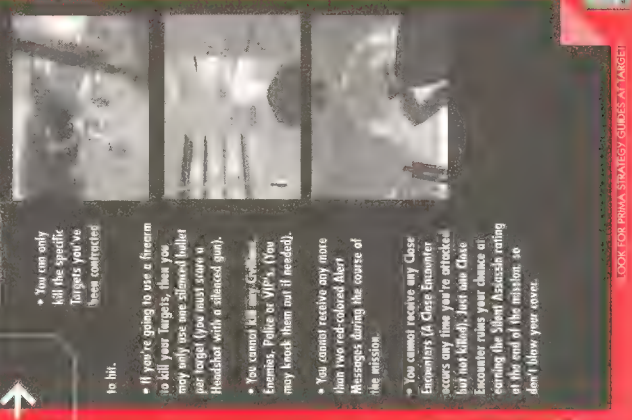
HITMAN: CONTRACTS



PS2, XBOX

ASSASSIN SKILLS

- You can only kill the specific targets you've been contracted to hit.
- If you're going to use a firearm to kill your targets, then you may only use one silenced bullet per target (you must swap a Headshot with a silenced gun).
- You cannot kill any Civilians, Enemies, Police or VIP's. (You may knock them out if needed).
- You cannot receive any more Messages during the course of the mission.
- You cannot receive any Chase Encounters (A Chase Encounter occurs any time you're attacked but not killed), just your Chase Encounter raises your chance at earning the Silent Assassin rating at the end of this mission: so don't blow your cover.



→ and find new worlds with these sweet cheats, tips and tricks. Call out the cards, and slash them in the game case so you can really get into the game. Check out www.getintothegame.com to download a coupon for \$5 off any game shown here and check out more codes for the latest hot titles.

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NINJA GRIDEN



NINJA TIPS

→ Soften up your attacking foes using your bow. This tactic is especially useful against unarmored foes as you don't have to aim very accurately to have the desired effect.

• Watch Kyra. He will automatically look toward soundstages, giving you a heads up of an impending assault.

• To speed through sequences like Kyu opening doors and such, press [X] to keep the game moving along.

• Be sure and tap [X] every time you spot a Kwon Scroll menu. Important gameplay tips and information are contained within.

XBOX

SURVIVAL SKILLS

→ You'll need to be a little more than a little bit sneaky to get past the guards in this game. You'll need to use a pistol or your night vision.

No, it's a trick, but you can learn from the game case that follows. Some of the most important tips:

• When you come to a new corner or open doorway, and don't want to risk harm or detection, press close to the edge and "peek," your camera will view the other side.

• Most of the time you can snipe, but the camera angle is key on a certain one that you really should try to be sure to see from your camera position, which means special surveillance. Then you will get through any legal methods of execution.

XBOX

MONSTER MASH

→ **PIZZLE PUZZLES**
The puzzles in this game are not too hard, but they can be a little tricky. Here are some tips to help you solve them.

• When you see a puzzle, take a moment to look at it from all angles. You may find a clue that you missed.

• If you get stuck, try to think of the puzzle as a series of small steps. You may find a way to solve it that you didn't think of.

• If you're having trouble, try to look at the puzzle from a different perspective. You may find a way to solve it that you didn't think of.

PS2, XBOX

YAN HESING



BEAT THE BOSS

→ The boss in this game is a real challenge. Here are some tips to help you beat him.

• When you see the boss, take a moment to look at him from all angles. You may find a clue that you missed.

• If you get stuck, try to think of the boss as a series of small steps. You may find a way to beat him that you didn't think of.

XBOX

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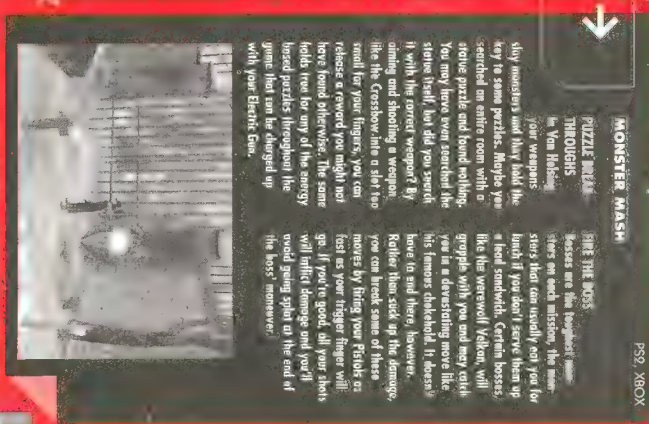
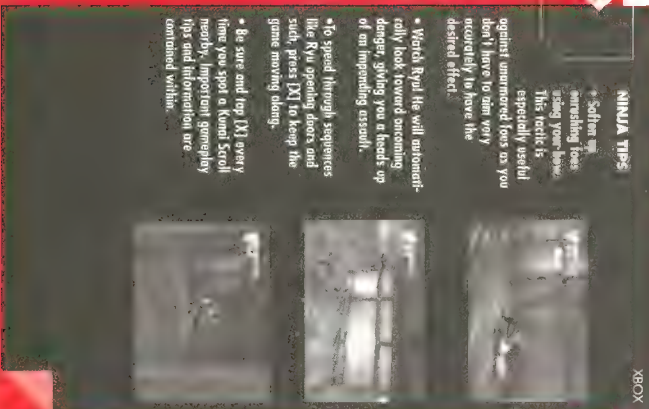
• If you're having trouble, try to look at the puzzle from a different perspective. You may find a way to solve it that you didn't think of.

PS2, XBOX

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The Look:

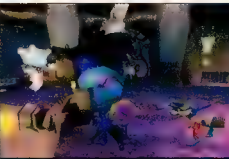
Weapon of Choice:

Biggest Innovation:

Proof That the Developers Listened to Criticism:



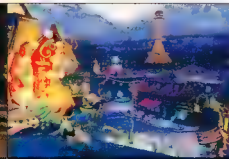
Sly 2 sports the same hip look as its predecessor, but be careful about how you describe it. "I don't think I'd be fair to call it toon shaded," says Designer Dev Madan. "We're going for a more illustrated, painterly look." Expect some truly arty visuals from the rebuilt engine.



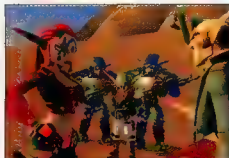
Sly gently taps foes with a vaguely fop-ish cane. Luckily, his comrades help increase the group's street cred: Bentley sows mayhem with a bevy of powerful explosives, while Murray causes hurt with fierce punches and a bone-shattering belly flop.



Band of Thieves offers a slew of brain-busting multiplatform puzzles for breaking up all that tense platform-hopping action. You'll have to use all three heroes' different abilities in tandem to successfully pull off awe-inspiring "Ocean's Eleven meets *Shirt Tales*" heists.



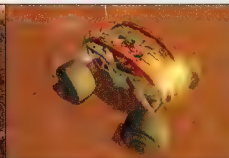
Everyone loved the original *Sly Cooper*...for the four hours it lasted! Developer Sucker Punch took all the nasty comments about the game's brevity to heart: Expect *Sly 2* to be at least twice as long, thanks to sprawling environments like the Paris level (shown here).



Jak spends the first two-thirds of the game exited to Spartus City, a low-tech burg deep in a vast wasteland. This massive area (four times larger than *Jak II*'s Haven City) lends the game a bleak, desolate feel, setting it apart from the comparatively lush worlds of past games.



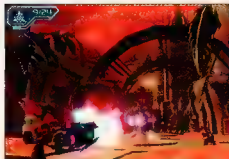
Jak's gun rack expands with a plethora of new modifications to the four basic gun types from *Jak II*: You'll be emitting homing lasers, lighting blasts, and ricocheting bullets with reckless abandon. Of course, if you are protesting the NRA, you've still got your trusty spin-and-punch maneuvers.



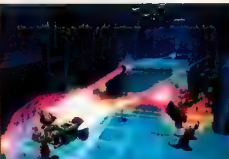
The random carjackings of *Jak II* are history—now, you steer souped-up dune buggies across the desert while avoiding Mad Max-style hooligans. Also, expect some additional Dark Jak moves, along with a full set of defensive moves for Light Jak, a new wild, winged transformation.



Design Director Amy Henning knows everything that was wrong with *Jak II*. "Many people said that backtracking through Haven City just wasn't much fun and that the difficulty spiked too erratically, causing tons of frustration," she explains. "We're fixing all of that."



Up Your Arsenal's visual style doesn't stray far from the previous games' winning formula: You hop across more complex, candy-colored worlds rife with wacky architecture. Don't be surprised if a few stages from the previous games reappear in multiplayer mode.



This series has always delivered a fantastic array of weaponry, and this third installment truly ups the arsenal with more than 20 new guns, 14 of which can be upgraded four times each. Notable standouts include the Infector (which causes enemies to kill one another) and the searing Plasma Whip.



Would you believe...full online play? Yep, get ready for intense eight-player team warfare packed with head shots, controllable land and air vehicles, full voice-chat support, and plenty of good-natured mascot fragging. It's oddly like *Halo*—just much, much cuter.



Many gamers complained about the repetitive, overly long spaceship-piloting sequences in the last *Ratchet* game, so Insomniac scrapped 'em. Look for all-new spaceflight bits here as you take control of a gargantuan *USS Enterprise*-style craft. 🚀

AFTERTHOUGHTS: NINJA GAIDEN

Talking the ways of the warrior with Tecmo's ninja master

I'm not a controller thrower, never have been," writes jungleroom_x from the 1UP.com message boards. "But my [Xbox pad] hit the wall a few times and the television once...really hard!" Yep, Tecmo's Xbox epic *Ninja Gaiden* and its legion of unrelenting foes can send even the most tranquil gamer off the deep end. In fact, it seems like just about the only guy who doesn't think the game is too tough is *Gaiden* director and developer Team Ninja headmaster Tomonobu Itagaki (what a surprise—he made the darn thing). Never afraid to speak his mind, Tecmo's resident assassin had this to say about the game's stiff challenge, a sequel, and more:

EGM: Just for the record: The game's main character, Ryu Hayabusa, dies at the beginning, right? How'd he come back to life after being cleaved in half?

"[The game's] difficulty is a reflection of my own sense and taste."
—Team Ninja's Tomonobu Itagaki

Tomonobu Itagaki: Yes, he died. Do you remember the falcon staring at his dead body? That falcon's spiritual power resurrected him as a soldier of revenge.

EGM: OK, that clears that up. Now let's talk about how tough this game is. Did you make *Ninja Gaiden* difficult because you see most action games today as too easy?

Ti: [No.] I don't care what other games are doing. I personally directed the A.I. programming, so its difficulty is a reflection of my own sense and taste.

EGM: We got the feeling you wanted players constantly moving forward and discouraged backtracking to get more health or get to an earlier save point. Is that the case?

Ti: Charging forward [in *Ninja Gaiden*] is not the only courageous way to play. If you have to backtrack, I would not call you a coward. Only if your skill level is high enough will you be able to [forge onward] without backtracking.

EGM: What percentage of players do you think can complete hard mode or, to go even further, very hard?

Ti: I'm hoping that everyone can clear *Ninja Gaiden* in the normal mode, 50 percent in hard mode, and less than 10 percent in very hard mode.

EGM: What do players need to know before tackling *Ninja Gaiden* on the higher difficulties?

Ti: You need to extend the life gauge, and to do that, you have to find all the items. The game has eight battles where the enemies seem to spawn endlessly. Fight to the end—through 80 enemies in hard mode and 100 in very hard mode—and you'll get some very important items. I hope you'll challenge yourself.

EGM: How about some pointers for people competing in the online Master Ninja Tournament?

Ti: Try pushing down the left stick after pressing down the white button. A timer will pop up, and it shows how much time you have left to fight the enemies. You should practice beating all the enemies within the given time.

EGM: One complaint most players seem to have with *Ninja Gaiden* is the camera. Why not give the player more control over it?

Ti: Feedback and requests from players will be reflected in the next [*Ninja Gaiden* game]. However, you need to understand that in order to implement more control into the camera system, we would have to cut the speed of the game in half or change it to a more static camera. Don't forget—you're addicted to *Ninja Gaiden* because of the dynamic high-speed action, possibly because we did *not* slow the camera speed and did *not* create a static camera. Do you get my point?

EGM: Yes, but we still >



■ It's true—wearing black really does make Ryu look slimmer.





■ Right behind in Color...
...mless... of oport...
...the leading... from...
...more p...



► wrestled with it in a few spots. So do you think PlayStation 2 could handle *Ninja Gaiden*?

T: Why even ask a question that you know will disappoint PS2 fanboys? [grins]

EGM: We'll take that as a "no." What's the coolest feature you considered implementing but, for whatever reason, didn't?

T: There are tons of things [we wanted to

do]. One of them is a battle on water. This was an interesting idea, but it was too difficult from the strategic standpoint, so we removed it at the end. This [sequence can't] be explained in words. If enough people are interested in it, I'll consider implementing this feature in the next [*Ninja Gaiden*] game.

EGM: Why not let Hayabusa switch weapons in midcombo?



is pretty "raining"

T: If we were not limited to the Xbox's 64 megabytes of memory, we could do that as early as tomorrow. But if we were given additional memory capacity, we might end up using it in other ways. [grins]

EGM: Is it just us, or is Alma (the creepy demon lady at the end of Chapter 7) the hardest boss ever?

T: Alma is an important character that symbolizes *Ninja Gaiden*. I put three times as much effort into designing and tuning her than I did the other bosses. I'm very happy with the result.

EGM: We were happy, too—after she stopped kicking our ass. Speaking of ass-kickin' women, Alma's sister, Rachel, has the right assets to be a *Dead or Alive* gal. Might we see her in a future installment of the fighter?

T: Hmm, I wonder. Even if I did what you're suggesting, a female character that's in love with another male character (Ryu) would not be popular, you know?

EGM: Now that *Ninja Gaiden*'s out the door and *DOA: Ultimate* (the online Xbox fighter) is soon to follow, what's next for Team Ninja?

T: *Dead or Alive: Code Cronus* [for Xbox].

EGM: And a *Ninja Gaiden* sequel?

T: Yes, I am planning a sequel. But first, I'm implementing some of the requests from the fans into the game program of the Master Ninja Tournament. 🍣

—Chris Johnston



is pretty "raining"

Itagaki's Playlist

So which games does *Gaiden* Director Tomonobu Itagaki respect in terms of visuals and gameplay? "*Zone of the Enders: The Second Runner* (PlayStation 2) by [Metal Gear Solid creator] Hideo Kojima really stirs my soul," he tells us. "I must have watched the trailer for *ZOE* more than 100 times, and I'm still not tired of it. After I told Kojima about it, he asked me to make a sequel to *ZOE*. But I would want to enjoy it as a player, so I turned down the offer. Another one is *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles* (GameCube). Its stage and character design is great, and it's a game the entire family can enjoy."



Retro Gaiden

No, that empty arcade machine in Han's bar isn't just for show. You can use it to play the original 2D *Ninja Gaiden* games—1, 2, and 3. First, give shopkeeper Muramasa 50 scarabs to open up the original *Ninja Gaiden*. To play the second game, shoot the clock face in Tairon near Muramasa's shop. And lastly, in Chapter 10's ceremonial room, triangle-jump your way to the golden scarab on top of the broken pillar for *Ninja Gaiden 3*. To play these old-school titles from the main menu, beat the game with them in your inventory.



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PlayStation 2



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ATARI

REALITY CHECK

Experts explain what happens when videogames get real

In games we are giants. We are thugs and hit men and cybernetic killing machines. We blast through thousands of enemies, leap 20 stories, and carry

weapons twice our size. Herbs restore our health. So do prostitutes.

In reality, though, we're not so plucky or lucky. We die from the flu, trip while walking down the sidewalk,

and scream about spiders a fraction of our size. But we're curious. So we rounded up experts—an NFL quarterback, a fighter pilot, and a female beach volleyball pro among them—to

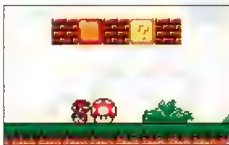
explain what would happen if we tried this stuff in real life. The short answer: nothing pretty. The long answer: Well, you can ready for yourself below....

—Lauren Gonzalez

THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON POWER-UPS



Q: What are the medicinal properties of mushrooms, and would any let us grow to twice our normal size—like 'shroom-popping plumber Mario—in real life?



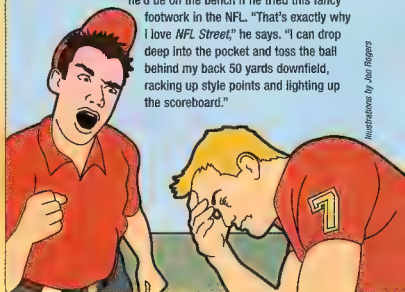
A: Paraphysical voyagers, take note: "Eating a mushroom will not affect your physical size," says David Bienenstock, tech and Web editor for recreational-pharmaceuticals mag *High Times*. It may, however, "spark a growth in consciousness." Bienenstock notes that a Mario-like adventurer under the spell of certain mushrooms may "see the obstacles around him—fireballs, rotating maces—with a fresh perspective, which could help him encounter [the obstacles] in a new way." Of course, experimenting with any recreational substance might deep fry your noggin in a new way, too, so just say, no, Mario.

FANTASY FOOTBALL

Q: Is it even possible for quarterbacks to nail a 50-yard pass while backpedaling, as in extreme football series like *NFL Blitz* and *NFL Street*?



A: Not only does such a feat defy physics—a move this desperate would get you on the coach's bad side faster than high-stepping out your best Super Bowl Shuffle. Duante Cuipepper, quarterback for the Minnesota Vikings, says he'd be on the bench if he tried this fancy footwork in the NFL. "That's exactly why I love *NFL Street*," he says. "I can drop deep into the pocket and toss the ball behind my back 50 yards downfield, racking up style points and lighting up the scoreboard."



Illustrations by Jon Rogers

PAINT THE TOWN BROWN

Q: What if a radioactive spider really did sink its fangs into you? Would you go all superhero, like Peter Parker's Spider-Man?

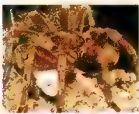


A: "I suspect you'd have the [squirts] and an upset stomach for weeks," says arachnologist (uh, that's "spider expert" to you) Rick C. West of www.birdspiders.com. "The last thing I'd want to see is a guy in skin-tight red-and-blue Danskins swinging around the city with upset bowels!" On a less scatological tack, West adds, "I am curious, though: After Peter Parker changes to have spider qualities, does he mate with his hand? All male spiders do."

Q: Speaking of eight-legged freaks, the mutant arachnids of the *Resident Evil* series are so big, they step on you. An exaggeration? And how would you escape such a menace?



A: Arachnologist West says the world's largest spider is *Theraphosa blondi* (below), a Birdeater Tarantula from South America. "It has an 11-inch leg span," he says, "and the [heft] of a McDonald's Quarter Pounder." A mega-spider, sure, but not mega enough to make a Happy Meal out of you. In fact, West ate one of these monsters. "They taste like smoky prawns," he says, suggesting that the best way to escape a monster spider is to "get the best flame thrower money can buy, then invite your friends over and tell them it's an all-you-can-eat prawn feast."



THONG ATTIRE

Q: The ripped-abs stars of *Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball* compete in some of the skimpiest bikinis—one of them's even bejeweled—known to butt-floss science. Is this officially sanctioned pro-volleyball attire? And could real athletes even compete in wee outfits?

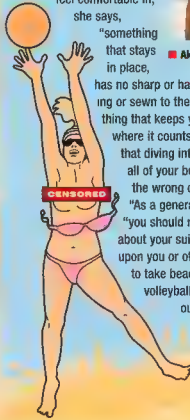


A: Not unless they plan on not moving, says AVP Pro Beach Volleyball player Angie Akers. "When you play beach volleyball at the level we do, you want to wear something you feel comfortable in," she says,



■ Akers in action

"something that stays in place, has no sharp or hard objects hanging or sewn to the suit, and something that keeps you covered where it counts." Akers adds that diving into the sand with all of your body weight makes the wrong outfit dangerous. "As a general rule," she says, "you should not have to worry about your suit inflicting injury upon you or others." Blah...time to take beach volleyball off our TVs.

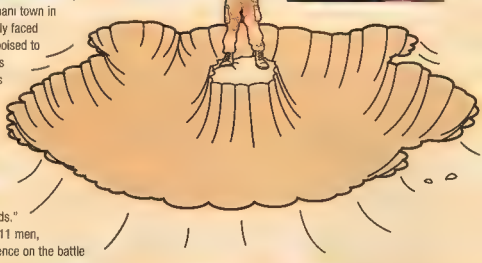


ARMY OF ONE

Q: Games like *Halo* and the *Medal of Honor* series often have you taking on regiments of enemies all by your lonesome. Has that ever happened?

A: Let's ask a guy who's been there, done that. Captain Jason L. Amerine's 11-man special-forces team was protecting an Afghan town in

November 2001 when he suddenly faced between 500 and 1,000 Taliban poised to "retake the town and slaughter its inhabitants in retribution," he tells us. With no time to organize support from the locals, his unit called for backup. "Within minutes, the sky was swarming with F-18s and F-14s," he says, "with every pilot in the air trying to get to our location to help us put warheads on foreheads." So while the town was saved by 11 men, "and one man can make a difference on the battle field," Capt Amerine says, "it's teamwork that wins the day."



WING AND A PRAYER

Q: Could a dude fly with a bird strapped to his back, like in that cartoony Nintendo 64 hit *Banjo-Kazooie*?

A: Sure—you'd just need a feathered friend that makes Big Bird look like Chicken Little. Aeronautical engineer and USAF pilot Don Thoman crunches the numbers, saying a full-grown eagle with a wingspan of about 80 inches can carry a 15-pound rabbit in the air. "Proportioning that out, you'd need a wingspan of 73 feet to carry a 160-pound person," Thoman says. His research on personal helicopters reveals that you'd need an even longer wingspan: 84 feet per 160 lbs. "Maybe your game bird is of a futuristic mutation that has wings that are inflatable, like life rafts," he says, "so he can be carried in a backpack."



INVENTORY CHECK: FOUR IN-GAME GIZMOS MEET THEIR REAL-WORLD COUNTERPARTS

By Damon Brown

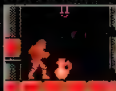
Super Joe's bionic arm from NES classic *Bionic Commando*

Last year Jesse Sullivan, a Tennessee-based survivor of a limb-destroying electrical accident, received the first brain-controlled bionic arm, which will let him handle complex tasks like fishing again. "New nerve-induction techniques," reports the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, "allow a full-arm prosthesis to be driven by the user's own thought-driven nerve impulses."



Simon Belmont's invisibility potion from *Castlevania*

Gerina Dunwich's book *Magick Potions* will help you cook up an invisibility potion made from wine and poppy seeds. But brewers beware: "There is no potion to reverse the effects of this spell," says online group Garden of Witchery. "Whether the invisibility effect wears off on its own accord or after a period of time, [if it is] permanent or can be controlled by the magician's will is not known."



Cybernetically enhanced soldiers from *Halo*

The University of Southern California has been working on brain-implanted chips to assist Alzheimer's disease and stroke survivors, essentially turning people into cyborgs. "[They see] potential commercial and military applications for the brain chip, which is partially funded by the [U.S. government's] Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency," quotes *Popular Science* magazine. Oh boy.



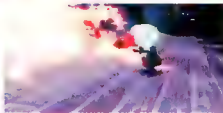
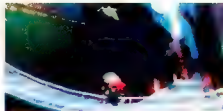
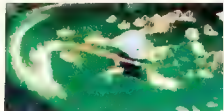
Ghost cameras from the *Fatal Frame* series

You don't need a special camera to capture ghosts on film. *A Field Guide to Spirit Photography* author Dale David Kaczmarek suggests, however, that budding ghost busters use infrared film—since ghosts are "associated, with heat, [not vision], so you won't necessarily see anything." When asked if a camera exists that, like the one in *Fatal Frame*, will actually capture spirits, Kaczmarek says, "Nope."



FIRST PSP GAME REVEALED

Plus other news and notes from the 2004 Game Developers Conference



The wait is officially over. After nearly a year of keeping gamers in the dark about PlayStation Portable (PSP) software, Sony unveiled the first-ever title for its eagerly awaited handheld—*Death, Jr.*, a cartoony 3D action-platformer from developer Backbone Entertainment (formerly Digital Eclipse, maker of *Spider-Man: The Movie* and the *Soyra the Dragon* series on Game Boy Advance). The video, shown at the annual Game Developers Conference, featured the game's main character, the son of the Grim Reaper, running and jumping in vast indoor and outdoor environments, as well as hunting down fiendish creatures with his trusty scythe and pint-sized rocket launcher (Head to our website, 1UP.com, to check out the minute-long *Death, Jr* gameplay video for yourself.) Unfortunately, Sony didn't bring an actual model of PSP to the conference.

And in other GDC news:

■ PSP will connect to your PlayStation 2 and computer, enabling you to exchange data such as music and movies. According to Sony, 89 developers are already working on PSP games.

■ On the *Zelda* front, *Wind Waker* Director Eiji Aonuma hinted that the franchise is coming to Nintendo's upcoming dual-screen portable, Nintendo DS.

■ Sony is working on five new titles for its EyeToy camera peripheral, including a yet-to-be-named racing game in which players control with their body movements a character grinding on rails.

■ Sony CEA Vice President Andrew House told attendees that "competitive movement will not be a factor in when we release our next-generation console." Translation: Sony doesn't care when Xbox 2 and Nintendo's next system come out—PS3 can wait.

■ The next *Oddworld* Xbox game (a Western-themed shooter of sorts) should arrive on store shelves before the end of the year, but Microsoft will no longer be publishing the title.

■ Remove the word "Xbox" from your vocabulary. Peter Moore, Microsoft's corporate vice president, reiterated that the company has no plans to compete with Nintendo and Sony in the portable-gaming sector. Shucks.

■ Tetsuya Mizuguchi, the man behind *Space Channel 5* and *Rez*, wants to create his next game for PSP or Nintendo DS. He mentioned it would be similar in style to the PS2 musical shooter *Rez*.

■ At the fourth annual Game Developers Choice Awards (held during GDC), LucasArts' Xbox role-playing game *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* won three awards, including Game of the Year honors.

BY THE NUMBERS

SOCOM II's first 100 days

992,700

Number of active SOCOM II accounts

128,864

Unique users during peak hours (twice that of the first SOCOM)

36,285

Simultaneous users during peak hours (three times that of the first game)

100

Percent chance of a SOCOM III



■ Shouldn't the people without the guns be the ones running away?

CHARTS

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES FOR FEBRUARY 2004



1 **Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles** GC • Nintendo

2 **NFL Street** PS2 • EA Sports Big

3 **Metroid: Zero Mission** GBA • Nintendo

4 **Need for Speed Underground** PS2 • EA Games

5 **James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing** PS2 • EA Games

6 **Rise to Honor** PS2 • Sony CEA

7 **Champions of Norrath** PS2 • Sony Online Entertainment

8 **Halo** XB • Microsoft

9 **Mafia** PS2 • Take-Two Interactive

10 **James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing** PS2 • EA Games

TOP 10 GAME RENTALS

FOR THE WEEK ENDING 03/21/04



1 **Rise to Honor** PS2 • Sony CEA

2 **Mafia** XB • Take-Two Interactive

3 **Mafia** PS2 • Take-Two Interactive

4 **James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing** PS2 • EA Games

5 **NFL Street** XB • EA Sports Big

6 **Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm** PS2 • Ubisoft

7 **Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes** GC • Konami

8 **Ninja Gaiden** XB • Tecmo

9 **The Suffering** PS2 • Midway

10 **True Crime: Streets of L.A.** PS2 • Activision

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Mild Fantasy Violence

CUSTOM ROBO



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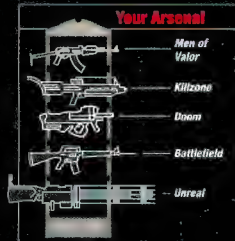


Get YOUR GameFace on.



FIRING SQUAD

We set our sights on five sharp-looking shooters



UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP II: THE LIANDRI CONFLICT

Xbox • Microsoft • Fall 2004 — "We're bringing a sword to a gunfight," says *Unreal Championship II* Lead Designer Cliff Bleszinski. "Whether you prefer dual pistols or a pointy object, it's about freedom of choice, and *UC II* gives players plenty of options." The ability to pop from first- to third-person perspective at

the push of a button spices up marksmanship with mobility and melee moves. Out of ammo and wondering what to do about the guy launching rockets at you? Don't write your last will just yet; now you can close the gap with a cartwheel and top off his head. Each character has his or her own arsenal of

hand-to-hand combos, complete with trademark adrenaline attacks, new defensive options (you can block or bat bullets back at foes), and gore-splattering, *Mortal Kombat*-worthy finishing moves. Fraggin' season opens this fall on Xbox with splitscreen, LAN, and Xbox Live online play.

Reinforcements

Enjoy the calm before the firestorm while you can. The first-person shootout kicks into full auto this holiday season with *Cold Winter* (see the beautiful mess above), *Far Cry*, *Halo 2*, *TimeSplitters 3*, *Shellshock: Nam '67*, *Call of Duty: Finest Hour*, and a still-unnamed *Metal of Honor* sequel.



DOOM 3

Xbox • Activision • Fall 2004 — Set a course for hell, space marine—the Satan-obsessed shooter that started it all is about to plunge back into the pit. *Doom 3* ditches the pentagrams and tacky bogymen of past installments for a date with true terror. This time, the tension is palpable as you confront critters in claustrophobic corridors—walking cadavers clutching their exposed bowels and burst eyeballs, imps skittering through ventilation shafts, and hulking hellknights out to tear you in two are among the game's demonic menagerie. Along with more gruesome monsters, slower, less-predictable pacing heightens *Doom's* fear factor. In the dark, sometimes your own shadow is all it takes to scare you.



BATTLEFIELD MODERN COMBAT

PlayStation 2 • EA Games • Fall 2004
The drone of aircraft and the thunder of guns and exploding bombs are deafening. A Soviet-made T-72 roars toward your outpost as the men in your company hammer on mounted fifities and prep the antitank missiles. In every cockpit, at every turret, and behind every pair of eyes is a human player desperate to make it out of the maelstrom in one

piece. *Battlefield Modern Combat* is not so much a first-person shooter as a blitzkrieg on the point-and-shoot status quo. From flyboys to sharpshooters to mine-laying mechanics, there's a spot in EA's army for soldiers of all stripes, and while the final player count is still up in the air, we expect to wage 21st century war over land, sea, and air with 16 or more online hard cases.

Private Cream Soda earns his stripes.



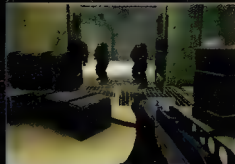
Take cover or no more boom boom for Private Jager.



MEN OF VALOR

Xbox • VU Games • Fall 2004 — The jungle got fun and games, but it's also enough to bring you to your sha-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na-knees. Set in 1960s-era Vietnam, *Men of Valor* (made by some ex-*Medal of Honor* staffers) follows raw private Dean Shepard through three years of first-person Commie blasting, from water buffalo-ridden Da Nang to the bombed-out brothels of

Saigon. It's Xbox only, but for a reason—the amount of stuff happening at once, from planes buzzing to soldiers shouting at each other to lines of napalm lazily flaming off in the distance, taxes the big black box to its limits. Expect 16-player matches online, too, in arenas where *Metal Gear Solid*-style stealth and strategic use of environmental cover win out over *Rambo*-style bravado.



KILLZONE

PlayStation 2 • Sony CEA • Fall 2004
Expectations for *Killzone* continue to balloon to astronomical levels—if you listen to the hype, this game's already obliterated *Halo* for the best-shooter-ever crown. Can it possibly live up to its buzz? Maybe. Developer Guerrilla promises a dazzling single-player adventure with four selectable characters (each with different weapons and

abilities), a bevy of teammates to fight alongside (and protect—if they die, your missions will be much, much harder), and spectacular CG cut-scenes to advance the plot between levels. All that might be enough to snatch the PS2 shooter throne, but *Killzone* ups the ante with full online multiplayer support (with real-time voice chat) for up to 12 players over broadband.



SHOW AND TELL: PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

Midway explains how mission success requires more brains than brawn

A mind is a terrible thing to waste, but telling that to gaming's latest stealth-action stud Nick Stryker is like preaching to the choir. The secret agent in Midway's *Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy* (scheduled for release on PS2 & Xbox this June) is equipped with psychic abilities that would even make sneak-n-shoot vets like *Metal Gear's* Solid Snake and

Splinter Cell's Sam Fisher jealous. And if Stryker expects to successfully infiltrate and stop a power-hungry terrorist organization, he's gonna need to put his noggin into overdrive. We've called upon the game's project lead, Brian Eddy, to illustrate how *Psi-Ops's* brainiac will save the day.



A Burning Sensation

BE: "Via Nick's pyrokinesis psi-power, he clears this hallway with a wall of fire, leaving behind only the toasty remains of his enemies."



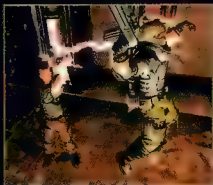
No Strings Attached

BE: "On nice days, Nick loves to head outside and fly a human kite, only he uses telekinesis instead of string and makes sure this enemy has a crash landing."



Puppet Master

BE: "Locked in a gas chamber and choking to death, Nick notices a guard outside and uses mind control to take over the poor sap's body, then proceeds to let himself out."



Your Brain is Mine

BE: "After quietly snaking up behind the enemy, Nick drains the psi-power out of him to recharge his own. The guard will also lose his head in the process."



Catch a Sneak Peek

BE: "Thanks to his remote-view psi-power, Nick temporarily travels out of his body and through a locked door to recon the ambush awaiting him on the other side."

PC GAMING UPDATE

Into the blood pool!



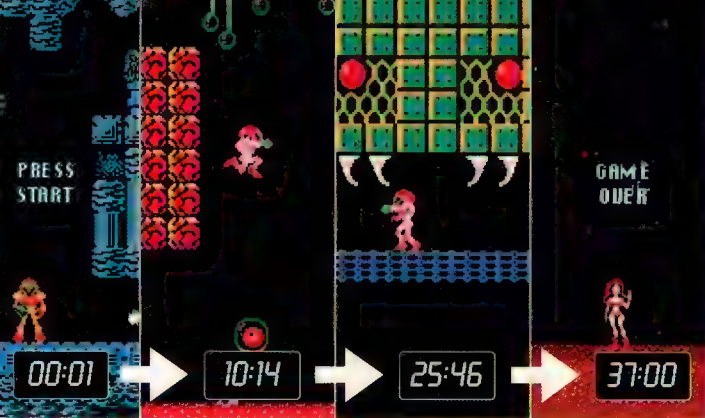
Just in time to save PC gamers from the brain-melting drought of quality games come two of the biggest titles of the year, games that both excel in one of the things the PC does best: gi-frigin-normous online multiplayer action.

Battlefield Vietnam isn't a full-on sequel to the digitized crack that is *Battlefield 1942*—that will be released late this year or early next. No, *Vietnam* is a "brand extension," but unlike most of these aberrations it actually enhances instead of cheapens the brand. The sprawling, foliage-cloaked maps of *Vietnam* are some of this budding franchise's best, including a ruined temple and, my favorite, a bombed-out town the North Vietnamese have to hold against an onslaught of enemy armor crossing a bridge. Interface enhancements and play tweaking (including about a gazillion new air, sea, and land vehicles) make this team-based shooter and its huge online battles practically mandatory for any serious gamer.

But how to find enough time for the gritty *Vietnam* when the muscular, adrenaline-drenched glory that is *Unreal Tournament 2004* has finally, finally been unleashed? This year's model rocks so hard it threatens to open up a slew of new fault lines. There are 10 modes of combat in the game, including the triumphant return of the beloved assault mode. There are vehicles, insanely balanced weapons and maps, and more eye candy than the rods and cones in your orbs can handle. It makes *Halo* seem like a *Blue's Clues* Java game. If you've got a PC, you owe it to yourself—and probably to mankind—to buy this game.

—Robert Coffey, Computer Gaming World





SPEED FREAKS

Enter the play-for-speed underground, where the fastest gamers get the glory

Nolan Plügg has made *Metrod Prime* star Samus Aran his backyard. The Pennsylvania-based gamer—who goes by the nickname Radix—beat the GameCube game with 100 percent completion in one hour and 37 minutes, a world record (few of us finished in less than 10 hours, let alone reached 100 percent). Radix is a speed gamer, one of a breed of players who snoop out how to beat games pronto, then record their feats online for others to try to top.

The concept of speed gaming has been around for years, zipping back to 8-bit NES classics such as *Mega Man* and *Super Mario Bros. 3*. But the Internet gave rise to a new global community. “People love to compete against each other,” says Jonathan Coley, who runs nintendonsider.com. His site hosts public speed runs, which have

helped build a tighter online community. Metroid2002.com also lets speed gamers connect to swap strategies and videos.

Today’s speed runners prefer PlayStation 2 and GameCube to classic systems, but any game with a time-completion rating—such as *Prince of Persia: Sands of Time* (PS2/XB/GC) and *Viewtiful Joe* (GC)—is a likely candidate for speed play. Participants dedicate several hours per week to their “craft.” Watching videos of speed freaks in action offers a new perspective on how we play our games. *A Contra. Shattered Soldier* (PS2) speed run at www.rouven-rutt.de, for example, reveals how precise pattern recognition and perfect timing are required to get through the game in just 28 minutes.

You can peep Plügg’s *Prime* performance at www.planetquake.com/sda/mp in a QuickTime video that shows him bouncing

■ **Smell my feat: A simple video-capture device like the Dazzle Video Creator 80 (\$70) will let you connect your console to a PC to record your speed run and post it online.**

through the levels like a speed demon on crack, dodging the most difficult enemies and felling boss monsters faster than developer Retro Studios ever dreamed. But be warned that while speed gaming may be fascinating to watch, it takes an obsessive personality in addition to quick reflexes. Plügg practiced his speed run for several months before recording the video files. He pinged second-place finisher Nathan Jahnke and former record holder Henru Wang for ideas, then practiced his moves. “My 100 percent in 1:37 probably took over 100 hours to make,” says Plügg. Not as easy as it looks, is it? —*John Brandon*

DESERT ISLAND GAMES: PETER MOLYNEUX



Each issue, we ship game designers to sea on a rickety boat, then make ‘em pick the three console games they’d want on their desert island. Now, we pester Peter Molyneux, whose Lionhead Studios is redefining Stone Age adventure *B.C.* and epic RPG *Fable*. He cheats with one pick, but we let it slide. —*Marc Saltzman*



Advance Wars (GBA)

“This [strategy] game would remind me of my last holiday when I spent all of the time on the beach playing it, occasionally glancing up to stare out to sea.”



The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time (Nintendo 64)

“I would also have to take Nintendo’s *Ocarina of Time*—as opposed to *Wind Waker*—as I think it still remains one of the most complete games ever made.”



“These things... I am going to destroy!!”

Final Fantasy series

“Lastly and most cheekily, I’d have to take the entire Square *Final Fantasy* series, which I think would keep me going until either I was rescued or dead.”

top these: four records cruising for a bruising

<p>Metroid (NES)</p> <p>TIME: 37 minutes</p> <p>WHERE TO SEE IT: planetquake.com/sda/other/metroid.html</p>	<p>Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past (Super NES)</p> <p>TIME: 1 hour, 51 minutes</p> <p>WHERE TO SEE IT: planetquake.com/sda/other/ttp.html</p>	<p>Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes (GC)</p> <p>TIME: 1 hour, 10 minutes</p> <p>WHERE TO SEE IT: planetquake.com/sda/other/mgs2ts.html</p>	<p>Prince of Persia: Sands of Time (PS2/XB/GC)</p> <p>TIME: 2 hours, 10 minutes</p> <p>WHERE TO SEE IT: planetquake.com/sda/other/popost.html</p>
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SILENT BUT DEADLY

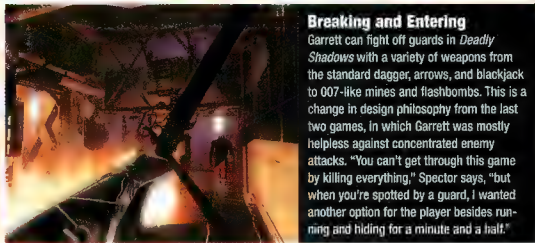
Thief: Deadly Shadows delivers cat burglary with a murderous twist

You can have your Sam Fishers, your Solid Snakes—they're all charlatans in the eyes of Garrett, the O.G. medieval felon who's been reigning king of the stealth-action genre since 1998. If you owned a PC, that is. Otherwise, it's unlikely you've even heard of the *Thief* games he stars in, something creator Warren Spector (of *Deus Ex* fame) wants to change when *Thief: Deadly Shadows* hits Xbox in early summer.

Basic gameplay in *Deadly Shadows* remains unchanged from the PC titles—Garrett infiltrates buildings solo, sneaks past or dispatches any guards he runs into, uses assorted thieving tools to bypass security, and gathers other peoples' loot. So what's new? The viewpoint: You can switch between first-person view (ideal for making pinpoint archery headshots) and a more Sam Fisher-y (*Splinter Cell*) behind-the-back perspective at any time. Spector resisted the change at first. "Third person was a little hard for me to swallow," he says, "but once the development team hacked that view into the game and made me play it, it felt like I was really grounded in the game world."

As Garrett, you'll need to flip between the two views frequently to one-up the guards, which are far smarter than anything encountered in other sneak-em-ups. Everything from missing valuables to doors left ajar could put them on your trail, making the ol' blackjack-to-the-head sthick harder to pull off. Killing a sentry and dragging his corpse elsewhere won't work, either: someone else could notice the grisly blood stains on the floor. Solution: Do what O.J. shoulda done—wash away the gore with special "water arrows."

—Kevin Gifford



Breaking and Entering

Garrett can fight off guards in *Deadly Shadows* with a variety of weapons from the standard dagger, arrows, and blackjack to 007-like mines and flashbombs. This is a change in design philosophy from the last two games, in which Garrett was mostly helpless against concentrated enemy attacks. "You can't get through this game by killing everything," Spector says, "but when you're spotted by a guard, I wanted another option for the player besides running and hiding for a minute and a half."

L'I'L PREVIEWS: IT'S HARD TO BE A SAINT IN THE CITY

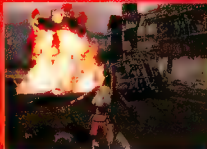
NARC

PS2/XB • Midway • Fall 2004 — The original *NARC* arcade game issued a stern "fitness don't use drugs!" FBI warning. Times change. In this new, reimagining, you control his undercover cop waging a drug war, with sniffling and sniffing and sniffing a few caffeinated substances along the way.



MERCENARIES

PS2/XB • LucasArts • Fall 2004 — Trade into a worn North Korean metropolis to rescue trapped journalists in this modern-day shooter. Open-ended mission structure allows you to fully explore the city. Mission, cover, counter-attack only, and you can pilot over a different vehicles including helicopters and tanks.



THE SIMS 2004

PS2/XB/GC/GBA • EA Games • Fall 2004 — The Sims are movin' on up—ditching the suburbs and heading to the concrete jungle in their new as-yet-unlabeled game. This year's version will include passive social moves, a streamlined motives system, plus new careers and city locations like the subway and your high-rise crib.



GOOAAALLL!!!!

BE A TRUE WORLD CHAMPION IN WORLD TOUR SOCCER 2005

Soccer. Football. Fútbol. Whatever you call the world's most popular sport, no other videogame offers a deeper simulation than *World Tour Soccer 2005* from 989 Sports.

With twice as many teams as competing soccer franchises—that's over 900 total!—you might find it hard to choose just which club to choose. Do you select a powerhouse like France, Brazil, or Germany? Or is taking an underdog such as Tunisia, Angola, or Uzbekistan more your speed? Then again, maybe you'd rather just create your own club, then evolve it from a team of nobodies to the one dominant force in the world. You can even play as the greatest teams in the history of the sport with classics like 90's Barcelona, 80's Milan, and 70's Liverpool.

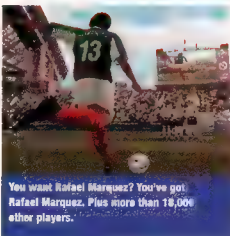
But what good is a plethora of teams without soccer's trademark atmosphere? *World Tour Soccer 2005* delivers, not only with obvious touches like loud, impassioned crowds, but also such subtleties as commentary in four different languages. Fans chant as they cheer you on, waving your country's flag with vehement pride.



Part of the 2005 game's magic was added as it Zinedine Zidane and his teammates led goals from France.



Show us other North American countries who's boss in the America's Cup. U.S.A! U.S.A!



You want Rafael Marquez? You've got. Rafael Marquez. Plus more than 18,000 other players.



The game's motion-captured animations will stun you. Every move is incredibly realistic.



Things aren't any tamer down on the field. Players fight for ball possession in any way they can. They kick. They head. They tackle. Sometimes their aggression might even net them a yellow or red card—to which they argue profusely. You'll see joyous melees after scoring a goal, as well as looks of disgust after blowing a golden opportunity (maybe even some angry teammates to deal with in such occasions).

In short, there's a Cup to be won—one of nine to shoot for in *World Tour Soccer 2005*—and all 18,000 players in the game will do whatever it takes to get it. Do you have what it takes to lead them there? **Ole!**



PlayStation 2

CELEBRITY GAMER: MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ

She **Driv3rs** us crazy



Photograph by Jeff Fitzpatrick Images

Ever since she came out swinging in 2000's *Girlfight*, we've seen a lot of actress Michelle Rodriguez—in *Blue Crush*, *Resident Evil*, and *The Fast and the Furious*, to name a few of her films. But recently, we've been hearing a lot of her too, as a character in Atari's *Driv3r* and Activision's *True Crime: Streets of L.A.* But does this tough chick really know her games? We decided to sit down with her and find out....

EGM: What attracted you to *Driv3r*?

Michelle Rodriguez: Well, when I get asked to be a character in a videogame, all I ever get is a gist of the story line. I have no idea what the graphics will look like, what features the game will have.... They really don't fill you in on much. But I liked [the original PS1] *Driver*, I trust Atari, and I liked the *Donnie Brasco*-ish story of *Driv3r*, so I really just went on that.

EGM: You had only a supporting role in *True Crime*. Do you get any real action in *Driv3r*?

MR: Nope. But I really don't care—I just wanted to be in these games. I can smell when a game is going to be good.

EGM: Are you any good at fast and furious-style driving games?

MR: I love driving games. I even have a steering wheel for my PlayStation. But my favorites are tactical games like *Rainbow Six* and *Splinter Cell*. I used to love role-

playing games, but the stories got so bad that I'm over it. That's why I'm getting into game development.

EGM: Wait, wha...? You're starting your own videogame company?

MR: Nah, I'm going to do it through my production company. We're already working on a game that's like *Contra*, but in 3D, with motion-captured characters. It's called *Dream Fighters*...for now. But it won't be out for a while because I want to take my time and make it kick ass.

EGM: As in a lot of your movies, you play the tough chick in *Driv3r* and *True Crime*. Do you ever worry about being typecast?

MR: Not really. I already am. But if I'm not doing that, I'd have to spread my legs for some twit in some movie about romance or be the girl who gets captured and she's saved by some guy. I'm really not missing it at all.

EGM: So are there any games you'd like to be in the movie version of?

MR: Did you ever play *Parasite Eve*? There was a Japanese movie, but I'd love to be in a Hollywood version. I liked that game.

EGM: Is that why you starred in the *Resident Evil* movie?

MR: Yeah. What a dork, eh?

EGM: Nah. Besides, you got to be a zombie....

MR: Yeah, that was pretty cool. ☛

—Paul Semel



In *Driv3r*, Rodriguez plays Callie, the leader of a Miami car-theft ring.



Great for dunking.

My friends told me, "T-Mac, you're gonna be big some day." Must've been the milk. About 15% of your height is added as a teen and the calcium and vitamin D can help. Will drinking a cool glass of milk make you the hottest scorer in town? Hey, it couldn't hurt.

got milk?

CAP'N CRUNK

Two rappers enter, one rapper leaves in Def Jam's new fight club

Last we heard, the sequel to *Def Jam Fight for NY* was going to take a page from *Grand Theft Auto*'s much-caped book and get us free roamin' on us. Not so, says the man on the inside at Electronic Arts—

Vendetta 2 will remain a story-driven brawl, but it's moving away from wrestling and turning into more of a fighting game.

The #OS% goes down when gangster D. Molt (the guy you ultimately poked

in the first game—this time you're on his side) busts outta jail and has to take down Grow, a new guy who's moving in on the action. Bare-knuckled retribution awaits. Characters can now master one of five fighting styles (kickboxing, street

fighting, the ambiguously named "martial arts," wrestling, and submission) or combine two or three into a hybrid fighting technique. Drunken Dogg, perhaps. (Oh, and the big image here is a screenshot, for real.) —*Damian Lee*



Protect Your Neck

If bustin' fools with your bare fists gets old, you can knock over a toolbox and pick up a wrench, then commence "fixing" your foe's skull. *Vendetta 2* will have dozens of weapons, including single-use items like a bottle you can grab off the top of a speaker and more devastating armament like a two-by-four. Although those are so WWE.

Mad Accessorizin'

It's not *Def Jam* without powder blue tracksuits. *Vendetta 2* promises a whole crapload of unlockable licensed gear from the likes of Rocawear, Sean Jean, Phat Farm, and Fila, to name a few. Minorly famous "Jacob the Jeweler" will also be on hand to peddle iced-out baubles.

Guess Who's Back

Vendetta 2 digs even closer to the heart of hip-hop than its predecessor. More than 35 artists will be in the game, including newcomers Snoop, Lil' Kim, Busta Rhymes, and old-schoolers Flava Flav and Slick Rick. Slick! Rick!

There'll be a large roster of non-rhyming characters as well, although Carmen Electra and Kimora Lee Simmons are the only names EA Big has dropped so far. Ah, catfights.



Where You At?

Forget wrestling rings; *Vendetta 2*'s altercations take place in more impromptu venues. And the environments often play a key role in the battle—on the subway platform stage (above), you'll need to knock Joe Budden into the path of an oncoming train to stun him. Rappers have hard heads, apparently. 🐶

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A Perilous Quest... for Adventure and Survival.

In a dying world called Sylvarant, legend has it that one day a Chosen One will appear from amongst the people and the land will be reborn. After a fierce attack by a mysterious race leaves their town in ruin, the Chosen One and her friends set out on a perilous journey to unlock the seals between two interlocked worlds and restore the mana that flows between them.

Tales of Symphonia features one of the fiercest, most action-packed battle systems ever created. An exclusive real-time combat engine puts you in full control of your characters to wage war using hundreds of special attacks, spells, and combos. Experience this epic adventure with lush 3D scaling and custom anime cut scenes by renowned artist Kosuke Fujishima.

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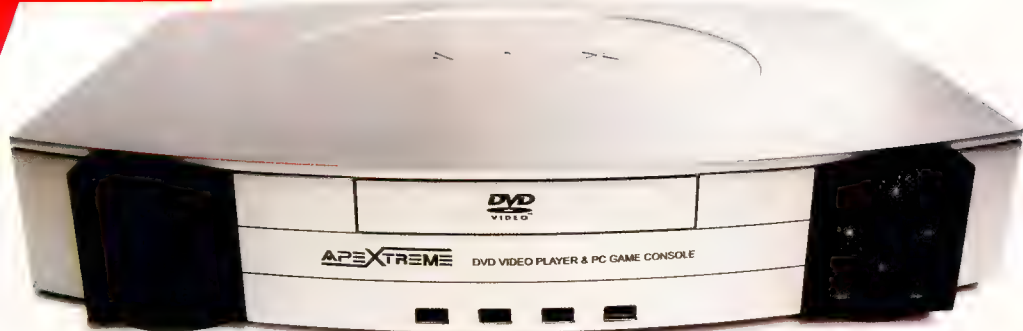
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■ The unit, which ships with an "Xbox-like" joystick, can also record TV on its hard drive.

TV, MEET PC

Upstart console **ApeXtreme's** got games—lots and lots of games—but should you care?

We don't feel like we need to beat the big three to succeed," says Curtis Kaiser, whose company is powering a new console to compete with Sony, Microsoft, and Nintendo. "Sony's dominating, but there's room for others—the only way in is with a big library of games."

And that's the kicker about new console ApeXtreme (say it "apeX extreme," although gorilla mascots are in the works should the obvious pronunciation take hold). When it hits this summer for \$399, this system—built by DVD-player maker Apex Digital—will have a launch library of more than 2,000 titles. No, these aren't hundreds of versions of *Tetra* like you'll find on junk-mail "computer game" systems. ApeXtreme plays off-the-shelf PC games, which it installs automatically to its



■ ApeXtreme too wussy? Monitor-PC rigger Alienware is using DISCover's drop-and-play tech in its high-end Media Centers, which hit in early summer. The catch: Prices start at \$1,800.

hard drive the first time you pop them in. Coding created by Digital Interactive Systems Corporation (DISCover for short) powers the process, guided by installation scripts the system downloads at night via its built-in broadband and dial-up/Net connections. "There's no human interaction—no hitting a 'next' button—when you install a game,"

Nvidia GeForce4 graphics chip—are peppy enough for now, and games we tried ran fine (we'll review the system next issue). But what about upcoming tech-pushing titles like *Doom 3* and *Half-Life 2*? "If you want a quality PC gaming experience you can play on your TV at a good price, look at Apex," says Kaiser. "If you want *Doom 3* in all its intricate

"Our goal is to open the PC to a broader audience."

—DISCover Marketing Director Curtis Kaiser

says Kaiser, DISCover's marketing director.

Once installed and automatically configured for optimal play, games load whenever you insert their disc. "You can even pop them out in mid-play and the unit resets," Kaiser says. "It's a very console-like experience." DISCover will have more than 2,000 installation scripts—for everything from new PC hits to budget titles—ready when the system launches. "There won't be any top PC games that aren't on [the system]," Kaiser says.

The big question, then, is how will the games play? The ApeXtreme's specs—which include a 2 gigahertz processor with an

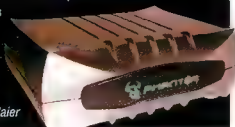
glory, you should be looking at Alienware." (That company is making a pricier, peppier DISCover-powered system.)

Ultimately, Kaiser hopes that PC-game makers will code their titles to run smoothly on mid-level machines like the ApeXtreme and other DISCover-enabled consoles (more are in the works). "Our goal is to open the PC to a broader audience," says Kaiser. "If the [DISC-enabled] consoles are as successful as we think they will be, game publishers will look and say, 'Hey, we have several hundred thousand Apex systems out there. Do we want to leave them out?'" —Crispin Boyer

Phantom Mosaic: The Other "Other" Console

Infinium Labs, creators of the Phantom gaming system, wants some damn respect. Dismissed as hucksters for a hoax system, the Florida-based company is set to show off a very real prototype this May and has landed Kevin Bachus, one of the founding members of Microsoft's Xbox team, to run the unit's fall launch. So what makes the Phantom a contender? "It's all about the distribution," says Bachus. The plan is to apply the pay-per-view model to gaming. Forget pesky game CDs or surly GameStop clerks—the Phantom lets you download games directly via broadband. Infinium promises a huge library—most of them PC titles, but exclusive content is also supposedly in the works—available for download at launch, all for a \$15 monthly subscription fee, plus an initial outlay of "no more than \$300" for the console.

—Matt Maier

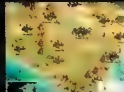


Your First Four?

Of the 2,000 PC games available for ApeXtreme on day one, try these for a gaming experience you won't find on consoles. (Fear the unknown? You can always stick with PC versions of familiar hits such as *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* or *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*).

Divination III (Atari)

You oughta invest in a third-party wireless mouse for this strategy epic that has you guiding your tribe from the Stone Age to the space race.



Samurai (Whiplash)

Think of this strategy game as a thinking man's Grand Theft Auto.

Play with a cutthroat business sense, and the Sicilian mob will like your moxie.



Ball of Fire (Activision)

See why all the snooty PC gamers are raving about this squad-based WWII shooter now instead of waiting for the console version—which'll be a different game—to hit this fall.



WarCraft 3: Reign of Chaos (VU Games)

You won't find a strategy experience this deep on the consoles. You can challenge players online, too. Again, just be sure you spurge for a mouse.



"UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004 IS THE NEW KING OF ONLINE SHOOTERS."

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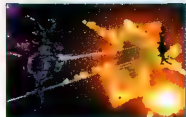


NVIDIA

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MAKE SOMETHING
Unreal
CONTEST



Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Mild Language



Download the demo at

www.unrealtournament.com



press start



Check out the special extra-large-print edition of *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, popular among the elder residents of Pioneer 2.

ONLINE THIS MONTH

EGM arrives on Pioneer 2, film at 11

We'd be lying if we said we weren't addicted as hell to Sonic Team's GameCube card battler *Phantasy Star Online Episode III: C.A.R.D Revolution*, and it's not just cuz it's got the longest game name of the year. Now, Sonic Team's giving a little bit of the love back. Starting May 15, you can download an EGM-themed card that'll score you a special rare card.

The story of the quest goes like this. EGM editors Shane and CJ have been mysteriously missing for days. The maga-

zine won't get done without them, so valiant columnist Seanbaby sends a brave warrior (aka you, cuz who else would save our magazine?) down to the planet to recover them. Finish the quest, and your reward is—a special EGM card!

Now, you're probably wondering just what that does for you. Playing this card (it costs just one point, so why not?) gives you a timed EXP boost, which means after eight turns, your EXP will increase by nine points. Naturally, if the card is destroyed before that point, you don't get any boost (and you may as well just forfeit, cuz you suck). Keep in mind our card's got only one hit point, so be sure to put some shields up to protect it. And if you're strapping in for a long battle in which gaining dice points is going to be key (i.e., you've got weapons that are gonna cost a lot to cast), then you'll want us in your deck. Should we help you win any particularly decisive battles, be sure 'n' tell us about 'em, eh?



Your opponent will get more than paper cuts when you use the EGM card.

On 1UP.com

Be sure to hit our website the week of May 10 for all the news and hands-on impressions of games you won't be playing for months from the annual **Electronic Entertainment Expo** trade show. And stick around to check out 1UP.com's continuing Essential 50 feature, this month looking back on classics *Larry Bird vs. Dr. J One-on-One* (Commodore 64), *Super Mario Bros.* (NES), and *Gauntlet* (arcade).



must-hit websites: Japan edition



chokochi.com/mdchokochi/pizza.html — Ordering a pizza in Japan could put you in the middle of a war in miniature. Scope this site's menus from real Japanese pizza joints and be thankful that mayonnaise is not a common U.S. pizza topping.



japaneserest.com — Watch and laugh as American celebrities hawk products in Japan they wouldn't be caught dead promoting in the United States (like Sylvester Stallone as a ham pickman). And you thought *Love in Translation* was an exaggeration.



origami4boulder.com — The ancient Japanese art of folded paper isn't just about cranes and fish. It's also about boulders with the power to crush other origami creations. Of course we aren't suggesting you play one. We appreciate it as art.



Xbox
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic
So that Xbox Live logo on the *KOTOR* box wasn't just a clever ruse after all. Nab the recently released free download, and you'll gain access to a new area, Yavin Station. There, you'll meet a new race, the Trandoshans, and be able to purchase additional previously unavailable weapons and items, like an advanced bio-stabilizer mask that makes you immune to poison.

Rainbow Six 3
We turn our backs for five minutes and bang—three new maps and a host of bug fixes for Ubisoft's tactical shooter show up. The major fix is the elimination of a bug that allowed cheaters to peek through walls. New maps include a multiplayer version of the Meat Packing Plant level, plus Scharins and Close Quarter. All are free, so you have no excuse not to download them.



PlayStation 2
SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs
If you haven't logged on to *SOCOM II* in a while because of rampant cheating, you might wanna give it another shot. In early March, Sony released a patch that fixes a lot of the game's major glitches (walking through walls, double mines, wall jumps, etc.).

LOOKS LIKE YOU WON'T HAVE TO BUY THAT REPLICA OF THE GENERAL LEE AFTER ALL—UBISOFT IS MAKING A *DUKES OF HAZZARD* GAME FOR PS2 AND XBOX. DUE THIS OCTOBER.



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mail got you this excited?

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GF GAMEFLY™
rent smart. play harder.

THE ODD COUPLE

An unlikely duo takes center stage in **Onimusha 3: Demon Siege**

Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker...Eddie Murphy and Nick Nolte...the unforgettable *Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot's* Sly Stallone and Estelle Getty—bizarre team-ups often equal equal action gold. But you haven't seen anything yet.

Coming to PlayStation 2 this May, *Onimusha 3: Demon Siege* stars two heroes who couldn't be more different. Samanosuke (of *Onimusha 1* fame) returns as the soul-sucking samurai from feudal Japan,

whereas newcomer Jacques Blanc wields the long arm of the law in modern-day Paris

The protagonists of the slice-n-dice series finale do have a common enemy. Nobunaga Oda, *Onimusha's* resident baddie invades both heroes' respective hometowns,

and before the two can eliminate Nobunaga's hellspawn, a wacky time warp transports Sammy and Jacques to each other's zip code. So to prepare you for the escapee, here's the 411 on this radically alternative tag team. —*Bryan Intihar*

SAMANOSUKE

Series Debut: *Onimusha 1*

Nationality: Japanese

From: The 16th century

Profession: Samurai-for-hire

Character Cloned From the Genes of: Japanese actor Takeshi Kaneshiro

Weapons of Choice: An oversized katana, a bow and arrow, a battle-ax, and dual swords

Places He'll Visit: The Arc de Triomphe, Notre Dame Cathedral, and several other French landmarks

Incentive For Returning Home: The sushi (a samurai can't stay a lean, mean fighting machine munching on France's fine breads and cheeses every day, now, can he?)

When *Onimusha 3* Is Over: Will probably start a petition for yet another *Onimusha* game...starring him, of course



JACQUES BLANC

Series Debut: *Onimusha 3*

Nationality: French

From: The 21st century

Profession: Army officer

Character Cloned From the Genes of: French actor Jean Reno (*The Professional*, *Mission: Impossible*, *Rollerball*)

Weapons of Choice: An assault rifle, a pistol, an electric whip, a double-bladed staff, and a nasty, whiplike sword similar to Ivy's from *Soul Calibur II*

Places He'll Visit: Japan's beautiful temples, villages, and backcountry

Incentive For Returning Home: Reunite with his son Anil and fiancée Michelle (*Onimusha 3's* third playable character)

When *Onimusha 3* Is Over: All signs point to Jacques leaving the military Jean Reno, however, will begin filming a supervisory sequel to *The Professional*. Really. 🐶



LOOKING TO IMPRESS THE LADIES WITH YOUR BLADE? DROP A COOL \$160 ON HORI'S ONIMUSHA 3 SOUL CONTROLLER, A FULL-SIZED SWORD THAT YOU ACTUALLY SWING TO USE.

THE RUMOR MILL

Gossip that runs with scissors

q-mann

DANGER



Caution: The following rumors have not yet been tested on human eyes. After reading them, you may experience dizziness, shortness of breath, spontaneous muscle twitching and/or relaxing, and nausea. But do not be alarmed, for these are the common psychosomatic side effects of The Q just reeking your world with the hottest gossip and talk title side of the globe. No need to thank me for your illness—I do it for you, for free. Send me your love if you're 'trollin' words—the address to quartermann@ziffdavis.com.
Bull-by, C.B.

—The Q



50 Cent to dodge digital bullets

So maybe 50 Cent isn't gonna be in the next *Grand Theft Auto* (as I may've told you a few issues ago), but he'll apparently be landing in a game this year nonetheless. On a recent fact-finding mission, yours truly learned that a publisher has indeed looked to the chart-topping rapper to headline a new game for all the major systems. Ho-ye.

Xbox 2: Wait for it

OK, so Xbox 2 was a no-show at the recent Game Developers Conference. Now The Q is hearing a lot of "wait 'til E3 2005." A debut at the annual trade show next year makes sense—in this biz, you don't want to tip your hand too early; your competition could trump you with newer tech. So in the end, this delay of game isn't really that big of a setback after all. It also gives Quartermann a little sumpin'-sumpin' to look forward to in '05.

Metal Gear Smallish

Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater isn't the only place you'll see Solid Snake in the near future. At least, it won't be if The Q's sources are passing on correct information. A PSP game based on the megapopular stealth-action franchise is supposedly sneaking onto the scene in time for the handheld's launch. Now, wouldn't it be cool to see *MGS3* and *MGS PSP* pioneer some kind of PS2/PSP connectivity features? I think I could really dig on that.



■ This Joe is anything but average.

A sequel so Viewtiful

If you loved *Viewtiful Joe* (and why wouldn't you? Capcom + cartoony visuals + arcade action = love), then you'll be happy to hear what of Q is gonna impart upon you next. Word is that Capcom's got a sequel in the works. Will *Viewtiful Joe 2* be another GameCube-exclusive title, or will it make the multiplatform leap? Well, I dunno yet. But either way, it puts a smile on my face.

Sega's dragon not grounded

Despite a recent internet hoax and *Panzer Dragoon Orta*'s less-than-stellar sales on Xbox, The Q hears that, yes, the dragon will fly again. A new title, allegedly much closer in style and tone to Saturn's cult hit *Panzer Dragoon Saga*, is expected to surface soon.



■ Expect some role-playing elements in the next *Panzer Dragoon*.

OVERHEARD

■ Rare don't fear the reaper.



"We're not blind to the fact that the Rare name lost some of its lustre to many people after the move to Xbox, and while that's sad, it doesn't automatically make us a sinking ship."

—Response to a letter on www.4matnews.com by Rare's website, [rareware.com](http://www.rareware.com)

"When I picked that thing up, I knew it was a dog—it just feels stupid."

—John Riccitiello, president and chief operating officer of Electronic Arts, apparently not a big fan of the *N-Gage* handheld



"I love playing

Xbox games and

believe that the system's cultural influence as a social entertainment brand has only just begun."

—Rapper, producer, and social-entertainment-brand-cultural-influence watchdog R. Kelly

FINALLY!

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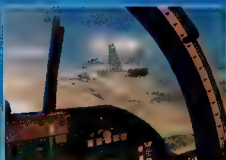
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WAITING FOR NFL FEVER 2005? SORRY, BUT MICROSOFT HAS CANNED ITS ENTIRE FALL XBOX SPORTS LINEUP...

HIGH AND MIGHTY

Flight or fight—both look stunning in *Ace Combat 5*

Wannabe jet jocks who get their Mach 1 kicks with Namco's *Ace Combat* series will ogle its most realistic visuals yet in the fifth chapter, due for PS2 this fall. Plus, they'll radio orders to four fellow jets. "Wingmates will cover you six, disperse from the formation to attack on their own, or go after the same target to assist with extra firepower," says Localization Producer Hiroshi Tanaka.



■ No online pilots here; wingmen are all A.I.

■ "[Slicker visuals] add more realism to the jets and their surroundings, particularly landscape when viewed up close," says Namco's Hiroshi Tanaka.

L'I' PREVIEWS: SEQUELS, SEQUELS, AND...OH YEAH, MORE SEQUELS

KARAOKE REVOLUTION VOLUME 2

PS2 • Konami • July 2004 — Would-be American idols, take note: Konami's planned *Revolution* add-on disc has been scrapped in favor of a full-featured sequel. Expect fresh characters and arenas, a mic-passing multiplayer medley mode, and 35 new songs, including "I Will Survive."



PAC-MAN 25TH ANNIVERSARY

PS2/GC • Namco • Fall 2004 — It's official: Pac-Man can now rent a car. He's also too old to be cast on MTV's *The Real World: Still*, he's taking his age in stride—in this *Pac-Man World*-style platforming romp, you'll team up with the ghosts to chomp pellets, collect doobads, and hup around.



ULTIMATE MUSCLE: GALACTIC WRESTLING

PS2 • Bandai • June 2004 — The wacky wrasslin' high jinks of the Fox Box Saturday-morning cartoon invade your PS2 in this enhanced update to last fall's *GameCube* hit. Bandai ups the ante with new characters, enhanced visuals, and a deeper grappling system, but leaves the booball humor mercifully untouched.



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THE HOT TEN

The biggest, prettiest blips on your gaming radar

Disagree with the list? You're the ones who created it. Rock your vote at www.egmmag.com.



■ Fable's enigmatic hero doesn't have a name or personality of his own—you define him.

- 1** Halo 2
XB • Fall 2004
- 
- 2** Resident Evil 4
GC • Fall 2004
- 3** Fable
XB • August 2004
- 4** Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater
PS2 • Fall 2004
- 5** Final Fantasy XII
PS2 • Spring 2005
- 
- 6** Jade Empire
XB • Fall 2004
- 7** Star Fox II
GC • Fall 2004
- 8** Kingdom Hearts II
PS2 • Spring 2005
- 
- 9** StarCraft: Ghost
PS2/XB/GC • Fall 2004
- 10** Geist
GC • Fall 2004



■ Sorry, little boy: He tackle his beast 'n'...

FABLE

XB • Microsoft • August 2004 — Once upon a time, the main character of Microsoft's wildly ambitious RPG was to be aided in his quest by other players in the form of "alter egos." Alas, when the time drew near for the hero to depart,

his friends had dallied and were not prepared for the journey. Instantly, they were struck down by thunderbolts from the heavens. The moral of the story? Due to time constraints, Fable's planned multiplayer options had to be axed. Pity.



FINAL FANTASY XII

PS2 • Square Enix • Spring 2005 — Buck up for some ill tidings: Rumor has it that *FFXII* won't hit Japan until late 2004 or even early 2005, possibly pushing back a U.S. release as far as late 2005. Yeah, not exactly the best of news ... To cheer yourself up, head over to Gamertrailers.com and watch some fresh, sweet footage of the epic roleplayer in motion. (Although watching the clip might just make the wait even more excruciating....)



STAR FOX II

GC • Nintendo • Fall 2004 — In previous *Star Fox* titles, Slippy, a giant talking frog with a voice like that of an 8-year-old girl, spent most of his time whining and getting plugged in the rear by enemy fire. The Slipster may finally be of some real use in Nintendo's upcoming flying/third-person-shooting hybrid *Star Fox II*—you'll be able to stick your buddies outside your ship or tank to provide extra firepower, or go split-screen for co-op missions

COMING SOON

What better way to beat the heat?



Driv3r's wheel man wants you to free Willy.

<p>JUNE 2004</p>	<p>Combat Elite: WWII Paratroopers PS2/XB • Acclaim — Drop behind enemy lines and give it to the goose-steppers <i>Gauntlet</i> style. Green Beret is about to die.</p>	<p>Crash Bandicoot Purple: Ripto's Rampage GBA • VU Games — Crash smashes crates on the purple dragon's turf.</p>	<p>DRIVEN PS2/XB • Atari — The latest carjacking simulator has you burnin' rubber on the streets of Miami, Istanbul, and Nice.</p>
<p>Front Mission 4 PS2 • Square Enix — Wage mechanized war one turn at a time in this sequel to the PS1 sci-fi strategy classic.</p>	<p>Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban PS2/XB/GBA • EA Games — Help young Harry as both Ron and Hermione.</p>	<p>Full Spectrum Warrior XB • THQ — Just because you're not a member of the U.S. Army doesn't mean you can't train like one. The modified military simulator puts you in charge of two four-man squads, and mission success involves more strategy than itchy trigger fingers.</p>	
<p>MLB SlugFest: Loaded PS2/XB • Midway — Loaded injects online play into the <i>SlugFest</i> series. Who says steroids aren't good for the game?</p>	<p>MTV Music Generator 3 PS2/XB • Codemasters — Whip up Cher's next club hit with a few key presses. Vocorder not included.</p>	<p>Shadow Ops: Red Mercury XB • Atari — Track down a stolen nuke as the leader of a counterterrorism unit. Don't forget your passport.</p>	
<p>ShellShock: Nam '67 PS2/XB • Eidos — Visit the heart of darkness and see why war is hell in the grisi-est of this season's Vietnam shooters.</p>	<p>Shining Force: Resurrection of the Dark Dragon GBA • Atlus — ...and this tactical role-playing series' cult celebrates.</p>	<p>Showdown: Legends of Wrestling PS2/XB • Acclaim — Snap into old-school wrestling with beefeater-turned-rapper Randy "Macho Man" Savage and more.</p>	<p>Sonic Advance 3 GBA • THQ — Sega's blue blur returns to the portable scene with a partner system similar to <i>Sonic Heroes</i>.</p>
<p>Spider-Man 2 PS2/XB/GBA/N-Gage • Activision — Our spidery sense detects open-ended, <i>Grand Theft Auto</i>-like gameplay.</p>	<p>Spyro Orange: The Cortex Conspiracy GBA • VU Games — Spyro crashes the bandicoot's party. Just the thing to hang over baby bro's crib.</p>	<p>The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay XB • VU Games — A convict who can see in pitch black? That's ridiculous.</p>	

Staff Sergeant Donald Washington, 11B Infantry.

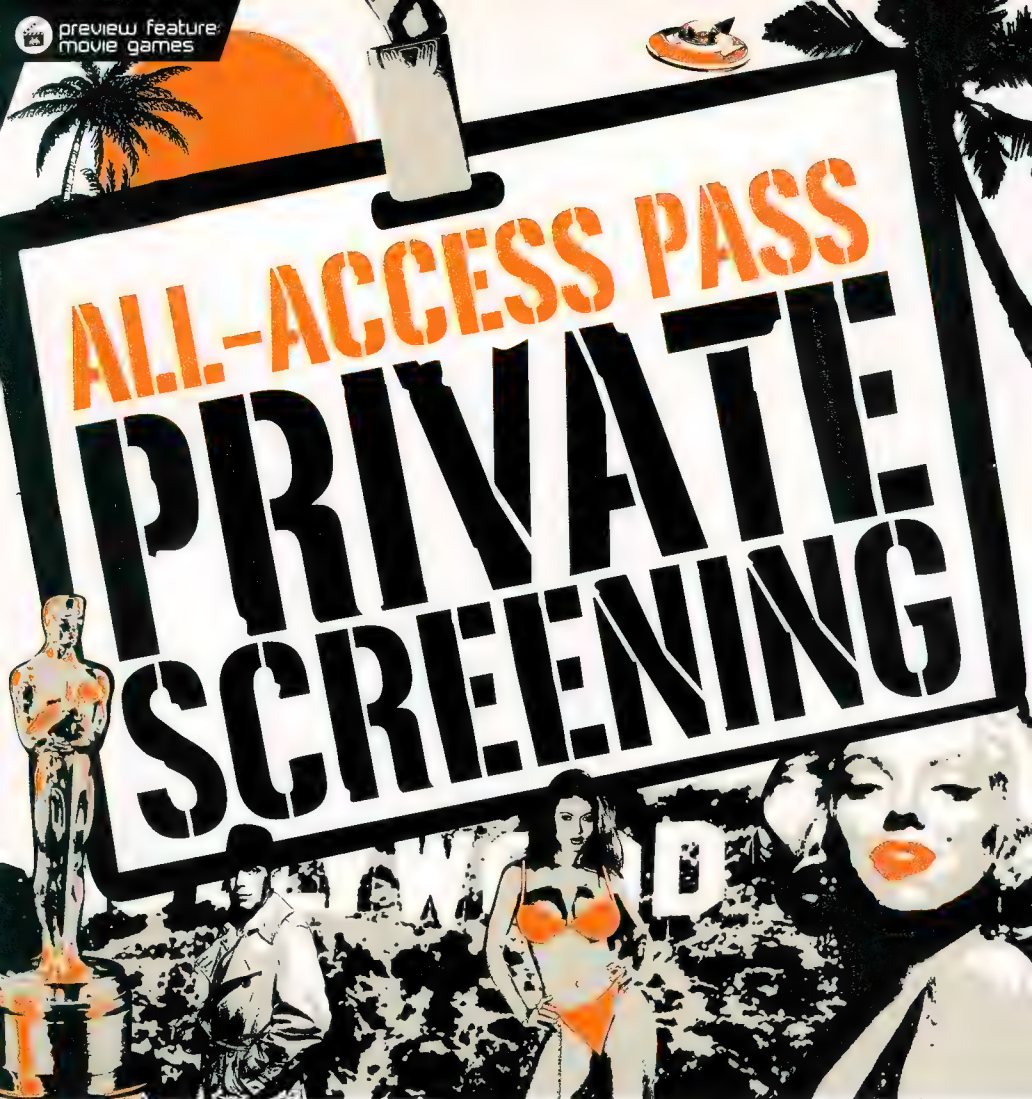
WHAT'S SO COOL ABOUT WORKING ON COMPUTERS IN THE ARMY? SOME OF THEM CAN DO SIXTY.



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Dodge the paparazzi, rent a tux, and inject some Botox, 'cause you're invited to *EGM's* star-studded movie-game extravaganza

Let's pause to celebrate the passing of an era. Aside from the occasional ugly exception (cough, *Enter the Matrix*), nearly all of today's movie-licensed games are resoundingly nonlethal. Back in the day, you'd gleefully return from the opening-day screening of, say, *Tinacop*, only to discover that the game based on your new favorite flick is

utter trash. These days, titles like *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* and *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* are taking home awards—change is definitely good.

So step up and buy your overpriced ticket to the year's biggest tie-in games. Some are based on this summer's blockbusters, others on films hitting next year, and a few on classic properties. Enjoy the show...

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■ Summer Games ■ Retro Games ■ Future Games

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <i>Sahara</i> ■ <i>The Incredibles</i> ■ <i>Shark Tale</i> ■ <i>LeMory Select</i> | |



This Summer: Psychic convicts, magic nerds, and a dude in spandex



SPIDER-MAN 2

PS2/XB/GC • Activision • June 2004

On the Silver Screen: In a world where spider and octopus battle for supremacy, the world's fate hangs by a gooey, sticky thread. That thread belongs to Spider-Man, aka Peter Parker (Tobey Maguire). With funding from Peter's longtime friend Harry Osborn, Dr. Otto

Octavius (Alfred Molina) has inadvertently transformed himself into a diabolical madman with metallic tentacles. To make things worse, Pete's sweetheart, Mary Jane. Is dating the son of his boss, J. Jonah Jameson. That's one tangled web.

Spider 2 offers open-ended, open-logged gameplay.

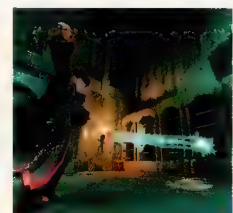


CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY

Xbox • VU Games • June 2004

On the Silver Screen: Sometimes you've got to break the rules to free your heart. You might also have to break a few faces. Anthero Richard B. Riddick (Vin Diesel) goes up against the despotic Lord Marshal and his army of necromancers in the sequel to *Pitch Black*.

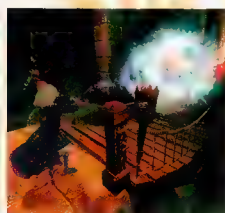
On Your TV: This movie-pretzel action game has you brawling, bribing, sneaking, and shooting your way out of prison. The first-person fistcuffs look like they could be uniquely satisfying, and the whole thing looks freaking amazing. You may never have seen corpses look so thoroughly dead



HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN

PS2/XB/GC • EA Games • June 2004

On the Silver Screen: The hottest boy wizard's third year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry isn't nearly as happy as his previous two—an escaped serial killer, mysterious werewolf, and countless soul-sucking monstrosities all hinder his homework. Plus, our heroes shirk their school robes in favor of street clothes. Shocking!



guy loose in Vice City. In addition to fangling with his firm nemesis, Dr. Octopus, Spidey also goes toe-to-toe with comic book baddies like Electro and the Lizard. On the celeb front, Tobey didn't have time to record voice work, but luckily, the lovely Kirsten Dunst did.

On Your TV: The basic concept hasn't changed much since the last game, *Chamber of Secrets*—you still scurry about Hogwarts, solving puzzles, exploring catacombs, and engaging in a little *Zelda*-esque combat. This time, though, it's not just Harry's game: You can also play as his best pals, headsfirst Ron and kinda-hot-for-14 Hermione.



This Summer: Skintight leather and a monsterpalooza

CATWOMAN

PS2/XB/GC • EA Games • July 2004

On the Silver Screen: They say dog is man's best friend. But for a woman named Patience Prince (Halle Berry), a cat turned out to be a real lifesaver. After discovering a cosmetic company scandal and being bumped off by her boss, it's good-bye to mousy Patience and hello to feral sexpot crime-fighter Catwoman. Oh, and this isn't the Catwoman from *Batman*...just some other Catwoman. Really.

On Your TV: As a healthy, active feline, this kitty craves action—and lots of it. Expect sexy stalking and all manner of catlike acrobatics. "Catwoman is quite special in the way she uses her special abilities to move and hunt like a cat," explains Executive Producer Richard Leinfellner "[There are] more than 100 moves, and she fights in a low-down capoeira style, just as she does in the movie." You'll scratch up the bad guys using your time-slowing cat sense, whip flicks, and high-heeled groin kicks. Me-ow!

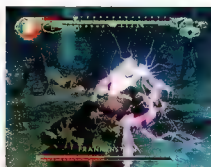


VAN HELSING

PS2/XB • VU Games • June 2004

On the Silver Screen: In the year 2004... Hugh Jackman...will...kill...Dracula And Frankenstein. And the Wolf Man. While Uma Thurman needed two separate movies to take down some dude named Bill, badass monster hunter Van Helsing (Hugh Jackman) hunts down Universal's three famous movie monsters in one fell swoop.

On Your TV: Taking a few cues from the "stylish hard action" genre, Helsing snuffs the walking dead and shoots down swarms of vampire babies with weapons like a rapid-fire crossbow, handheld buzz saws, and his trusty grappling gun while unearthing the mysterious backstory involving him and Dracula.



Also Playing

That's not all: Cue the highlight reel....

Star Wars: Yoda's well of licensing never runs dry: Look forward to squad-based *Episode II* action in *Republic Commando* (XB), epic online multiplayer combat in *Battlefronts* (PS2/XB), and a slew of *Episode III* titles in 2005.

Lord of the Rings: Prepare for the most ambitious *LOTR* game to date—a colossal role-playing affair in the vein of *Knights of the Old Republic*, complete with customizable characters, variable alignments, and apocalyptic battles. Look for first screens of this PS2/XB/GC effort in next month's issue.

Everything Else: Also look for games based on *King Kong*, *Batman Begins*, *Pixar's Cars*, *The Punisher*, *Alien vs. Predator*, *King Arthur*, and *Blade: Trinity*.

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Revisiting the Past: Once a good license, always a good license

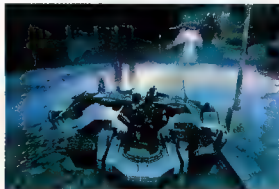


TRON 2.0: KILLER APP

Xbox • Buena Vista • Fall 2004

On the Silver Screen: Disney's oddball epic famously captured the zeitgeist of early '80s arcade fever with its programmer-sucked-into-game plot and trippy CG effects.

On Your TV: A rogue interloper threatens to destroy the computer world in *Killer App's* all-new, 20-years-after-*Tron* plot. Expect first-person shooting, disc tossing, and lightcycle riding in wild neon environs, along with Xbox Live multi-player support for deathmatches and cycle racing.



T3: REDEMPTION

PS2/XB/GC • Atari • Summer 2004

On the Silver Screen: He's a middle-aged man with an Austrian accent. She's a young, sexy blonde with a serious thing for machines. They've got only one thing in common: They're both deadly cyborgs from the future.

On Your TV: The first *T3* game was actually a plot from the future to ruin gamers' lives...and it almost worked. Thankfully, this appropriately titled third-person shooter lets you fight back with cool Cyberdyne vehicles.



FIGHT CLUB

PS2/XB • VU Games • Fall 2004

On the Silver Screen: Underground boxing, schizophrenic masochism, and soap rendered from human fat collide in this, the only Brad Pitt movie your girlfriend probably hates.

On Your TV: The *Fight Club* game zeroes in on one aspect of the film—the fighting. A handful of the film's main characters (and somewhat less-memorable ones like, uh, some guy named Raymond) will beat each other to bloody pulps using street boxing, wrestling, and martial arts moves.

LIGHTS...CAMERA...REACTION!

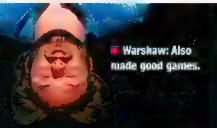
The man behind the worst movie game ever rates recent flick-based hits and releases.

Let's see Spielberg throw together a masterpiece in six weeks. No less was asked of Howard Scott Warshaw, designer of

much-maligned *E.T. The Extra Terrestrial* (Atari 2600), the world's crappiest movie-based game. Are today's titles any better?

The ever-colorful Warshaw (find his game documentary at www.onceuponatari.com) weighs in....

—Scott Steinberg



Warshaw: Also made good games.



Charlie's Angels
Ubisoft • GameCube

SW: "Arggh! Atrocious cut-scenes don't capture the stupid action and cheese-ake feel of the flick. Simple button mashing lies at the heart of this stinker. Given that all the real action takes place during cinematics, you can think of it as a poor man's *Mortal Kombat*. As a movie conversion, the game's quality is on par with the crappy movie that spawned it. Thumbs up...Charlie's butt!"



Enter the Matrix
Atari • PS2/XB/GC

SW: "Focus commands and other abilities reflect the films. Extra video footage is a cool bonus, although people aren't paying 50 bucks to watch another movie. Still, the program borrows both liberally and sensibly from its source material. The elaborate hint system used in place of a tutorial is clever, too. Although once you discover the best way to blaze through a level, the title loses some charm."



Lord of the Rings: Return of the King
EA • PS2/XB/GC

SW: "Like the [movie], it conveys a sense of being involved in a compelling quest. It's hard to keep track of your character, and the difficulty ramp-up can be frustrating at times. I'm not fond of the restrictive camera model, either. However, the balanced story structure and beautiful graphics really do hook you in. It's hard to stop playing this title, and as gamers surely know, that's most important."



Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines
Atari • PS2/XB

SW: "Forget the movie tie-in: This is essentially just a licensed twist on [first-person shooter] *Red Faction*. Controls are irritating and actually prove more fearsome than adversaries in certain places. The system feels particularly cumbersome during battle. Seeing as the visual payoff's poor at best and environmental interaction's on par with first-generation PS2 titles, why should anyone bother?"



The Future: Hollywood gaming from the semidistant future



SAHARA

PS2/XB • TKO • Summer 2005

On the Silver Screen: Since Indiana Jones seems unable to stage a comeback, Paramount has another dashing young hero to fill his shoes—*Sahara's* Dirk Pitt (Matthew McConaughey). He's less of a whip-cracking scholar and more a skull-cracking brawler, but Dirk's adventures through Africa's arid expanses should capture that same washbuckling *Indy* spirit

On Your TV: Upstart developer TKO (founded by ex-*Medal of Honor* veterans) is already hard at work crafting next summer's blockbuster tie-in. Expect a jaw-droppingly handsome brawler that lets you pummel foes with environmental objects (for instance, a stuffed martin hanging on a wall) and smash punks through tables



THE INCREDIBLES

PS2/XB/GC • THQ • Fall 2004

On the Silver Screen: Pixar's *Finding Nemo* follow-up busts out in a much darker direction, focusing on a family of superheroes who must balance their will to do good against a desire to remain anonymous while fitting into normal society. Expect the usual spark of Pixar humor, but also some killer fights—enough to warrant a shocking PG rating. Gasp!

On Your TV: The game expands upon the events of the film, serving up a cavalcade of platforming levels heavy on the variety. You'll take control of the entire family: Mr. Incredible, a somewhat out-of-shape Superman wannabe; Elastigirl, his superstretchy wife; ultraspeedy son Buddy and daughter Violet, a moody teen who creates impenetrable force fields.



SHARK TALES

PS2/XB/GC • Activision • Fall 2004

On the Silver Screen: This CG-animated fish story is less *Finding Nemo* and more...finding Nemo's head in your bed 'cause you wronged the Don. OK, this light-hearted gangland fable isn't actually that violent, but voice work from Robert De Niro, Will Smith, Jack Black, and most of the *Sopranos* cast should make it adult friendly

On Your TV: You control Oscar, a spirited young fish (voiced by Will Smith) working his way up the food chain in the gritty, underwater world of organized crime in Reef City. While *Shark Tales* is not quite as brutal as, say, *Vice City*, you'll still careen around corners in aquatic cars and bust up some fools with expert fish fu.



LEMONY SNICKET

PS2/XB/GC • Activision • November 2004

On the Silver Screen: *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events* holds the distinction of being the most popular kids' fiction series that isn't *Harry Potter*. The movie adaptation of the first three *Snicket* tomes (book 11 hits this fall) stars Jim Carrey as Count Olaf, a greedy miser eyeing the fortune willed to his nieces and nephews

On Your TV: You assume the roles of the tragically unfortunate Baudelaire kids—Violet, Klaus, and Sunny—who must combat their dastardly uncle's schemes to murder them and collect their inheritance. The youngsters battle Olaf's henchmen with bizarre inventions, solve puzzles, and try their damndest to avoid getting offed. ☹️



KNIGHT STALKERS

Evildoing Jedi strike back in **Knights of the Old Republic: The Sith Lords**. Feel the Force flow in our world-exclusive story...

by Jennifer Tsao

Not everyone had a good feeling about *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*, last year's superb Xbox role-playing game that came along just in time to wipe our memory banks of the blah *Episode I* and *II* flicks and bantha-poodoo *Wars* games like *Super Bombad Racing*. "I threw my controller down," Chris Avellone says of the first time he tried the RPG, set 4,000 years before Anakin Skywalker donned a dark helmet. But now's a good time to qualify why

this guy's seemingly dising a title that we declared Xbox Game of the Year and that sold more than 400,000 copies. Avellone is lead designer for its sequel, *Knights of the Old Republic: The Sith Lords*, due on Xbox and PC in February 2005. The original was built by a dream team: publisher (and keeper of all things *Star Wars*) LucasArts and developer (and PC RPG heavyweight) BioWare. It was a match made...oh, somewhere between Tatooine and Korriban. But with BioWare too swamped with Chinese-

mythology RPG *Jade Empire* and a sequel, LucasArts tapped *Knights of the Old Republic* developers Obsidian Entertainment to develop before the first sequel was even announced. "The idea was to have a BioWare sequel on Xbox, but then *Avatar* and there's the war," says Avellone. "They just got their hands on the game. They knew that making an impressive follow-up would be a Death Star-size challenge." "We had a huge list of features," Chief Development Officer Chris

Avellone says. "Then we played it and we were like, 'Son of a b****!' They did that game, and after Avellone tossed his joystick in frustration, he asked, 'How are we supposed to do a sequel?'" Six months later, he has his answer: "We don't want to reinvent the wheel just to reinvent the wheel," Avellone says. "We want to concentrate on what made the first game great—story, characters, an epic *Star Wars* feel—and expand and improve wherever possible." >



The Force Runneth Over...

Once you've learned the ways of *The Sith Lords* from our cover story, grab a copy (use that Jedi-mind thing if you have to) of sister mag *Computer Gaming World*, in stores now. Their cover story exposes the PC version of *KOTOR: The Sith Lords*, with exclusive info and screens we don't got (don't worry—we have just as much exclusive stuff). The only way to get the whole picture is to read both cover stories. Sneaky bastards, ain't we.





"The lightsaber's the thing. You should have to work for it."

—Lead Designer Chris Avellone

3,995 years ago

Sith Lords picks up five years after the end of the first *KOTOR*. (If you haven't beaten that game, you might want to skip to the next section to avoid minor spoilers.) The Republic is in shambles, reeling from the aftermath of the Jedi civil war and the scourge of Darth Malak. The Jedi

Order has been disbanded, and you—a veteran of the Mandalorian war who was conveniently in exile during the recent civil war—are the last known Jedi, left to piece together a future for yourself and the Jedi Order. Since the story is such a crucial part of an RPG like this, the team doesn't want to reveal too much more. "If we start

giving away too much stuff too early," says LucasArts Producer Michael Gallo, "it could ruin the experience for people."

But we do know that you won't play the same character and that the story does not pick up where the last game left off. This was a tough but necessary design choice, according to Avellone, because the first game gave players such freedom in developing the story. "I didn't want to stomp all over anyone's decisions from the first game," he says. "Whatever resolution you chose in that game should factor into this one." So whether you played a valiant Jedi pursuing the light side or a dark lord

IF YOU'RE A RABID FAN OF...

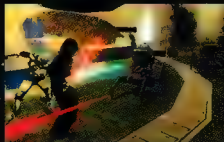
...*Star Wars*

Fear not. The Force is strong with these guys. Even as they booted up the game for us and sat back to watch the signature introductory text crawl across the screen, *Star Wars* music blaring in the background, the developers kinda lost their cool (but in a good way). "That music is so inspiring," says Lead Designer Chris Avellone. "I feel like I'm 7 again."

...RPG giant BioWare

Fear not, again. Chris Parker, Chris Avellone, Feargus Urquhart, and a few others founded Obsidian after toiling away on illustrious RPG after illustrious RPG (*Planescape: Torment*, *Icewind Dale*, *Baldur's Gate*, and *Fallout* to name just the big guns) at Black Isle Studios. In other words, they've done this BioWare spin-off thing before. In fact, the team came recommended by BioWare joint CEOs Ray Muzyka and Greg Zeschuk.

"We've known Feargus and the crew for a long time," Muzyka says. "They know RPGs." Zeschuk concurs: "From everything we've seen, things are going extremely well."



Combat will look much like it did in the original game—which isn't a bad thing.

LucasArts Producer Michael Gallo promises there'll be new lightsaber colors in the game (although they're not shown here).





■ The team is hoping you'll get some use out of all your weapons this time, not just the lightsaber.

wreaking havoc all around (or even if you didn't play the first game at all), this one will make sense to you. Early in *The Sith Lords*, you'll have various conversations that explain and address key plot issues from the last game—you'll tell the game how you believe things went down—and the dialogue choices you make will affect story development in the rest of the game. "We tried to slip it in subtly," Avellone says, but clearly, the freedom to customize the story—such as a beloved and important aspect of the first game—will be alive and well in this follow-up.

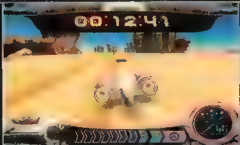
Though you're not the same character, somehow you pilot the same ship as in the first game, the *Ebon Hawk*, which finds itself on the mysteriously deserted asteroid mining facility of Peragus at the beginning of the game. You start out as a Jedi—no more training with Yoda look-alikes, as in the original—but that doesn't mean you'll have all your powers (being in exile tends to put you out of touch with the Force) or even a lightsaber right away. "The lightsaber's *the thing*," says Avellone. "You should have to work for it—it makes you feel that much better once you actually

■ Why is this Jedi so angry? She probably had a crappy childhood like the rest of 'em.



IT AIN'T WARIOWARE, BUT...

The gambling card game Pazaak, swoop racing, and (unfortunately) turret-manning minigames will return in *The Sith Lords*—but they'll be completely optional this time, and the team is working on improving all of them. "Swoop racing was good for a while, but it got a little one-dimensional," admits Producer Chris Parker, "so we're trying to add things in to make it more interesting." Also, arriving just in time for Valentine's Day 2005—new Pazaak cards!



have it." Jedi classes in this game will be the same as in the last, but you'll find new Prestige classes you can choose at higher levels—Sith Lord, Sith Marauder, Sith Assassin, Jedi Master, Jedi Watchman, and Jedi Weapon Master (see page 81).

The Sith Lords will, as expected, have different endings depending on whether you choose the dark- or light-side path. But this time the choice won't rest solely on your shoulders. "You're not the only one getting dark-side and light-side

points," says Avellone. "Some companions idolize you, and if you start falling to the dark side, they start falling to the dark side, too. Or if they don't like you, the opposite happens." So treat that droid buddy nicely if you want him to do your bidding. The fate of the universe could depend on it.

Across the galaxy

Structurally, the game is similar to the first *KOTOR*. *The Sith Lords* is mostly linear but

with a lot of freedom to choose what specifically you do next. In all, you'll visit seven worlds (most of which have lots of separate game areas within), including Dantooine from the first game. But don't expect Dantooine to look like the peaceful grasslands where you killed kith hounds of yore. Remember, the planet was ravaged by Malak's army and the Jedi Academy was destroyed, so this Dantooine looks a lot different. "We don't want *KOTOR 1* players to think we're re-using

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO...

Darth Revan?

Lead Designer Chris Avellone knows, but he ain't tellin'. "About a year after the end of the first game, Revan took off to the Unknown regions and hasn't been heard from since," he says. "Revan does have a specific fate, and it will be revealed," he says... just not until you play *The Sith Lords*.



■ You won't see the planet shown here until much later in the game. *The Sith Lords* has seven worlds in all, and each contains dozens of unique missions.





How can any villain be better-oss than *KOTOR*'s Malak? "There's a reason [the game is called] *The Sith Lords*," says Producer Michael Gallo. "We have plural bad guys."



The Sith soter fighting alongside a Jedi here isn't an unexpected new alliance; the team [who hasn't created new costumes yet.

stuff," says Gallo (a veteran of the original *KOTOR* team). "We want to hearken back to the first game...but we want it to be a different experience for them." The other worlds will be totally new; the team, however, is keeping the identities of these worlds under wraps for now. We do know, though, that you'll visit Telos, home planet to the first *KOTOR*'s Carth character.

What ain't broke

LucasArts and Obsidian know the design of the first game was pretty impeccable, so you won't see any huge interface or combat differences. You'll still control up to three characters, and the controls will work basically the same. Inventory- and character-management screens will also look familiar. "We don't want to mess with

functionality too much," Gallo says, "because we felt it was pretty good." Instead, the theme here is refining what's in the game and making better use of everything that's there.

For example, you'll now have quick-key slots for two different weapon configurations. "In the first game, certain weapons worked really well against certain opponents," says Avellone, "but the effort of going to the Equip screen and switching to the right weapon meant most players probably just didn't bother. If you just had a quick button, you'd see a lot more mileage out of certain weapons that were really cool."

Upgrading equipment, a fun but underdeveloped aspect of the first *KOTOR*, will also be redesigned so people will get to do more of it. "In the first game," Gallo adds, "you wound up with a ton of items you might not ever use." Now, the workbenches where you upgrade items have many more options. You'll be able to deconstruct existing items, then use components to build up

new, more powerful ones. You'll even have more upgrades for your lightsaber and more lightsaber colors. Your character's unique balance of skills will also affect your upgrade options. If you have a really high Repair skill, for example, you'll see more armor types, or if a character in your party has a high Security skill, suddenly your workbench options will go sky-high. The intention is that you'll end up using the many options available to you instead of sticking to a few weapons, pieces of armor, and party members for most of the game.

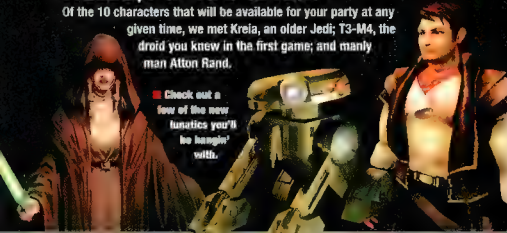
What needs fixin'

If you were expecting a totally new graphics engine and knock-your-socks-off visuals that many say the first game lacked, you can keep waiting. "Technically, this is the first *KOTOR*," says Gallo. But he promises that the visuals will be optimized and says the team has actually learned how to do more with the same graphics engine—especially with lighting. "We're trying to improve the graphics as

HELLO, MY NAME IS...

Of the 10 characters that will be available for your party at any given time, we met Kreia, an older Jedi; T3-M4, the droid you know in the first game; and manly man Alton Rand.

Check out a few of the new beauties you'll be hanging out with.



WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO...

Your Lightsaber?

You don't start off the game with it, because apparently Jedi aren't allowed to keep their lightsabers once they've been exiled (who'da thunk?). Recovering your lightsaber is one of the optional quests in the game.



■ You won't be able to import your character from your *KOTOR 1* save game. (So you better just go write more fan fiction about your guy at www.kotorfanfic.com.)

"We don't want *KOTOR 1* players to think we're reusing stuff."

—Producer Michael Gallo

much as possible," says Parker, "but our focus is really more content driven than technology driven."

Weather effects and slicker attack animations are a couple examples of the visual content Parker hopes will bring the environments to life. "I played the first game using [the] Critical Strike [feat] basically the whole way through," he says. "So by the end of the game, I was pretty sick of that animation." Now, as your character gets higher-level feats, the accompanying animations will become more complex, giving players a more visually satisfying sense of progress.

A whole new crew

Many characters you knew from the first *KOTOR* will make appearances (if only

cameos) in this game. But don't expect to see everyone (Gallo says they "had to be careful about who died and who lived"), and don't expect them all to play major roles. The only recurring characters we know for sure will have sizeable roles are the R2-D2-esque droid T3-M4 and another "bot who bears a suspicious resemblance to the original's irascible "meatbag"-loathing HK-47. Gallo says that's inspired by the movies, where "the droids are the common element."

But here, too, the team is focusing on enhancing what you have instead of going for a wholesale redesign. They want to make sure you get up close and personal with your buddies, rather than just letting some of them hang out on the *Ebon Hawk* soldering lightsaber hilts. >

HIGHER LEARNING

These high-level prestige classes are new in *The Sith Lords*.

LIGHT SIDE

Jedi Refugee: Much like Yoda, you know your Jedi s***, recovering Force points faster and inspiring those around you.



Jedi Watchman: Watching over a specific planet or space sector is a tough job, but if old Ben could do it, so can you.



Jedi Weapon Master: Better pain tolerance, lightsaber deflection, and all-around asking: "You'll make Mace Windu proud."



DARK SIDE

Sith Lord: What they call you after you graduate from Darth. Like the Emperor, you crush enemies' wills and corrupt minions.



Sith Marauder: If rage is your middle name (as, clearly, Darth Maul's was), channel it to become the ultimate warrior.



Sith Assassin: You'll strike from the shadows like Mara Jade. She was so stealthy, she didn't even show up in the movies.



Three against one? That monkey thing must have some mad Force powers.

THE FUTURE OF ONLINE

"We will be taking more advantage of Xbox Live," says Producer Gallo (though that wouldn't be difficult, seeing as the first game didn't have Xbox Live content until a good eight months after its release). Next time, the team promises, you'll have to wait only a couple weeks for downloadable goodies. You'll likely see new armor and weapons—the same sort of stuff that's been added for the first *KOTOR*. Sadly, you'll get no multiplayer co-op options ("The *Sith Lords* will never, ever have multiplayer," insists Gallo) or whole 'n new planets and missions—the team claims that continuing the story online is too tricky. "[But] the fact that we have Xbox Live on our minds now means the experience for *KOTOR 2* will be that much more exciting," Gallo says. "Frankly we added [online content] very late in the schedule for *KOTOR 1*."

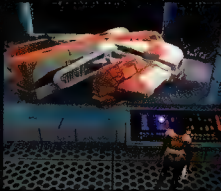
"In the first game, we had all these cool characters," says Gallo, "but some of them were underutilized." Besides each character's optional personal quests (something Avellone "loved" about the first game), the designers promise more sub-missions in which you choose one particular party member to help you (as in the first game's Leviathan level). Each party member will also have a unique special ability, and the team is working on more quests that can be fulfilled only by one particular member of your group. When in doubt, the team looks—of course—to the movies for inspiration. "In the *Star Wars* movies, your friends all split up and do various things," Avellone

says, and he wants this game to create a similar experience.

KOTOR's Cool Force Powers

One thing all players loved in the original *KOTOR* was how they developed their own Force powers and used them when and how they wanted. *The Sith Lords* will give you more to work with, though we learned of only a few new powers: Dark Sider, Rage and Battle Meditation. Force Sight is a new stealth ability that will let you see through walls, plus assess a character's alignment (dark siders show up as red; light siders are blue). Force Clairvoyance will help you see other parts of a level without being near them (à la *Prince of Persia's* glimpse-of-the-future visions).

Unfortunately (as these screenshots show, they're using the art from the first game), new armor, weapons, and other cool loot wasn't part of our three-hour tour. The designers recognize that these items are a high point of the game, but they didn't have a lot to show. What's their excuse? That the game is still a year away. In fact, Avellone jokes, they reserve the right to change anything that they showed us. "There's like a little asterisk next to everything we've said that says, 'Year away from launch,'" Avellone says. **AK**



Your first mission will be to repair your ship, the *Ebon Hawk* from the original game.

SAVE THE GALAXY ON OUR DIME

Don't get your Jedi panties in a bunch—we know *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic: The Sith Lords*' arrival is a long way off. But that doesn't mean we can't have a *Sith Lords* giveaway. *Electronic Gaming Monthly* and *Computer Gaming World* (did you read their *Sith Lords* cover story? Do it!) are teaming up to offer you the chance to win a copy of the sequel as soon as it's available. Just go to <http://www.TUP.com/kotor2contest> and tell us which version you'd prefer to own.

Twenty lucky winners will be randomly selected to receive *The Sith Lords*—for free!



HOW TO PLAY

1. Point your browser to <http://www.TUP.com/kotor2contest>.
2. Fill out the form and tell us which version of the game you want.

We will enter all correct entries into a drawing for the prizes. Only one entry per person is accepted. Don't believe us? Send multiple entries and we'll disqualify your ass. No game for you!

Full legal rules at <http://www.TUP.com/kotor2contest>

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A copy of LucasArts' *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic: The Sith Lords* for either Xbox or PC.

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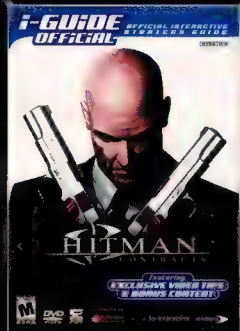
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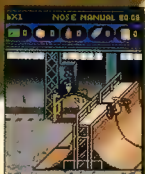
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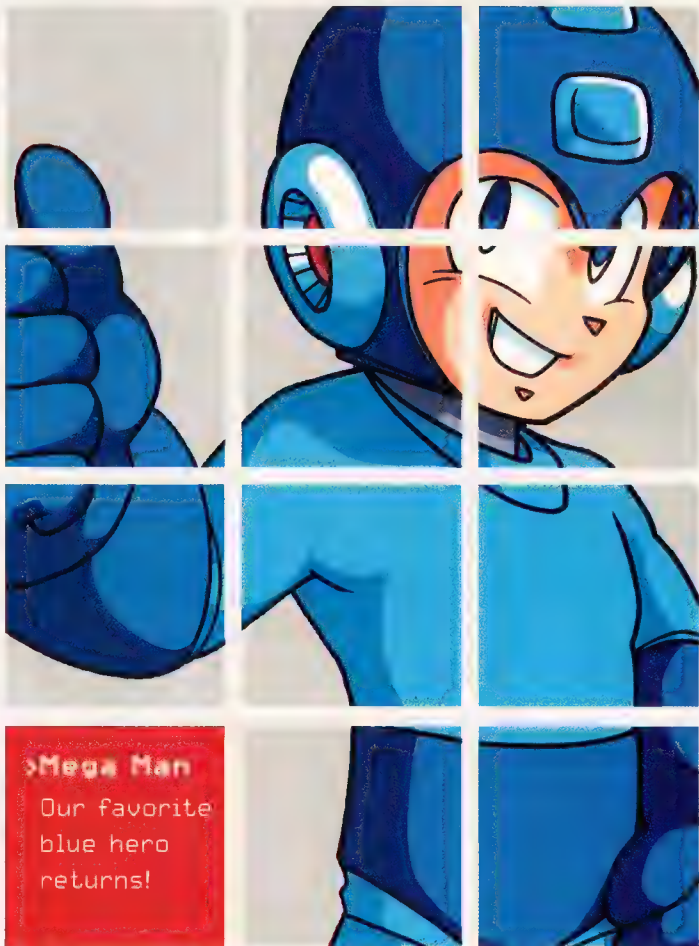
A bonus supplement to
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CLASSICS ON THE GO

Did you
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Mega Man,
Castlevania,
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- >N-Gage tries
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N-GAGE TRIES AGAIN >>

With a redesigned system and a better lineup of games, Nokia takes another stab at the Nintendo play

1UP: Nokia's redesigned N-Gage QD is, by any measure, a much improved system—it's got a stronger battery, buttons you can actually press, and (gasp!) a freely accessible cartridge port. All this effort, though, is useless without better games, something the Finns have faced problems with ever since the portable game deck launched last year.

This situation could be turned on its side once Nokia launches the QD this summer alongside a wave of new, original games that take advantage of N-Gage's natural strengths. Top among them is *Pocket Kingdom: Own the World*, a strategy title from Sega that will unfold before players on a truly global scale. You use your forces to invade other players'

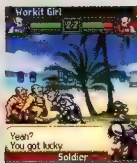


pocket kingdoms via wireless Internet, waging war against their army and raising your rank with each victory. The ultimate object: to be on top of the worldwide heap.

If Sega can make *Pocket Kingdom's* battles addictive enough, it may just have the N-Gage killer app Nokia's been waiting for. That's not all N-Gage

has coming out this summer, though—EA is porting over *The Sims: Bustin' Out*, and Nokia is working on *Ashen*, a horror-themed shooter with four-player deathmatches via Bluetooth wireless connection.

Will Nokia turn N-Gage around this year? That's up in the air, but at least the company is trying harder.



5 QUESTIONS WITH TRIP HAWKINS >>

LG VX6000

Electronic Arts founder sees wireless as gaming's new frontier

1UP: He was there in the early days of Apple. He founded EA. He launched the 3DO game console and later the publishing company. Now, Trip Hawkins sees the wireless games market as the future and recently founded his own wireless studio, Digital Chocolate. We sat down with the man to see why he's so excited by the wireless medium.

1UP: Why the move into the mobile market?
 Trip: It's the computing frontier. Entrepreneurs need to be on the frontier, where there is opportunity to blaze some new trails. It is early

enough in this industry to pioneer many new ideas and to work hard to improve quality standards.

1UP: You've compared the mobile market to your early days at Apple and EA. How is this so?
 Trip: When I founded EA, there were over 100 small game publishers in a cottage industry.

Technology was very primitive, and development costs were low. There was room in the market for experiments and innovation. Prior to that, I was at Apple in the early days when the industry view was that only data-entry clerks and IT professionals could use computers in an office, that the general public was incapable of using a computer, and that there was no way anyone would ever buy computers or software in a retail store. These kinds of issues are typical in new media, which is what makes it so much fun to pioneer and change the world. All of these syndromes apply to the mobile space, where the prevailing view is on the device

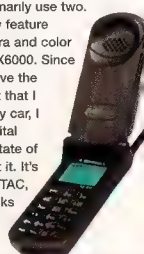
as a phone, not as a mobile computer. As such, the best is very much yet to come.

1UP: How did you come up with the name Digital Chocolate?
 Trip: The thinking is that names like Apple Computer and Electronic Arts are memorable and can define new categories because they combine words that do not initially appear to belong together. Words like "apple," "art," and "chocolate" have a lot of emotional brand value, and the concept of their digital versions intrigues people and makes them more approachable. And in the case of Digital Chocolate, we view the mobile consumer as someone who has a slice of time to indulge in a moment of indulgence with a digital snack. Chocolate is the champagne of snacks!

1UP: What do you see as the future of mobile gaming?
 Trip: Mobile networked communities. Stand-alone applications like games and ringtones will be a

growing market, but we have to focus on the fact that the primary reason that people carry a mobile phone is to be socially connected. Most mobile computing applications that are interesting in the future—including future games—will have significant server-side components and social interaction

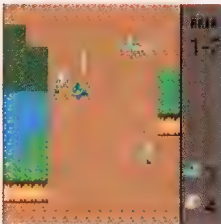
1UP: Which phone do you carry?
 Trip: Of course, I now have many of them, but I primarily use two. One is a nice new feature phone with camera and color display, the LG VX6000. Since it does not yet have the hands-free car kit that I want for use in my car, I have an older digital phone that was state of the art when I got it. It's the Motorola StarTAC, which already looks like a dinosaur!



CLASSIC GAMING ON THE GO >>

We're taking it back to the old school

Ah yes, the classics. They never get old. They're easy to pick up, fun to play in brief spurts—why not carry them with you at all times? 1UP takes a look at some of the best vintage titles currently and soon-to-be available on your mobile phone. For info on availability, which phones support them, as well as where to download them, check out our expanded guide on wireless.1UP.com.



COMMANDO

Capcom's top-down shooter comes to the BREW mobile platform courtesy of Upstart Games. The mobile experience of throwing grenades and shooting your way through enemy forces is available now to Verizon subscribers.



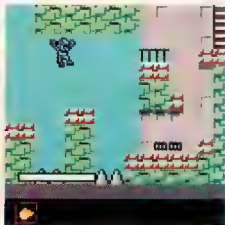
1942

The coolest thing about this mobile port of Capcom's WWII plane shooter? The still-intact inverted rolls. Also carried over from the original are the weapon power-ups and accuracy counters. It's available on BREW handsets.



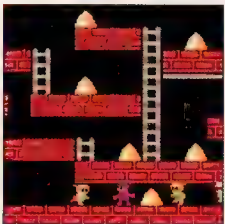
FROGGER

Both the original arcade mode and a new mode with enhanced graphics are available in Upstart Games' mobile port of *Frogger*. AT&T mMode subscribers with Nokia handsets can try this out, but not in traffic, please.



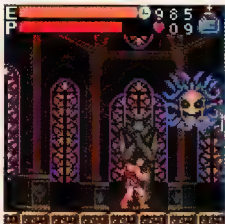
MEGA MAN

The Blue Bomber is back! All six of the original levels and weapons are present in miniature here for *Mega Man* fans with nothing to entertain them but their phone. Our big question: Will it still have the Elec Beam pause trick?



LODE RUNNER

Since this game has shown up on every platform ever conceived, a mobile port was bound to come out at some point. Good thing, as it's tons of fun. Drill and fill an unending series of mazes to trap pursuing monsters and gather treasure.



CASTLEVANIA

Take control of Simon Belmont and venture into Dracula's castle once again in Upstart's port of the NES classic. Unlike recent *Castlevania* installments that have relied heavily on RPG elements, this one is all about good ol' whip-em-up action.



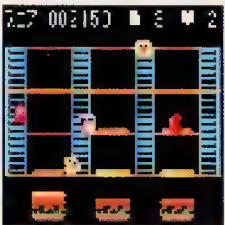
BOMBERMAN

It's the classic, totally addictive, simple 8-bit *Bomberman*—sans multiplayer, but without many complicated extras either. Blast down walls, bomb a maze of monsters, and collect power-ups to build a better Bomberman.



ADVENTURE ISLAND

Master Higgins lives, and the jungles of *Adventure Island* don't look half bad on the mobile platform. This remake features eight areas, sizable bosses, and the Master's powered-up fireball attacks. Only you can save Higgins' girl, Tina.



BURGER TIME

The greatest food-themed maze chase ever. Why animated fried eggs and hot dogs are chasing this chef across a *Donkey Kong* ladder rack isn't quite clear, but why argue with a good time? One burger to go, please.

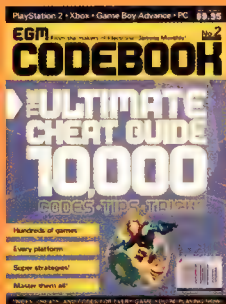


FINAL FANTASY

Square Enix hasn't formally announced much for the States yet, but it just bought mobile developer UIEvolution, and they'll be showing off the Japanese versions of *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Quest* at E3. 2 + 2 = ...?

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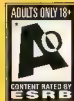
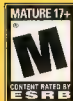
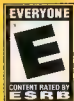
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RATING BOARD

www.esrb.org



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review crew

Picking the best and spotting the lemons



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Someone's got a case of the Mondays.



PISTOL 1/23

PS2/XB

HITMAN: CONTRACTS



Silent but violent



Captain Hook
Agent 47 likes to think outside the (game) box when it comes to weaponry. Death by pool cue and fire poker doesn't really push the envelope, but the meat hook is pretty cringe-worthy. Once you've skewered your foe, you then flip him over your shoulder. That'll leave a mark.

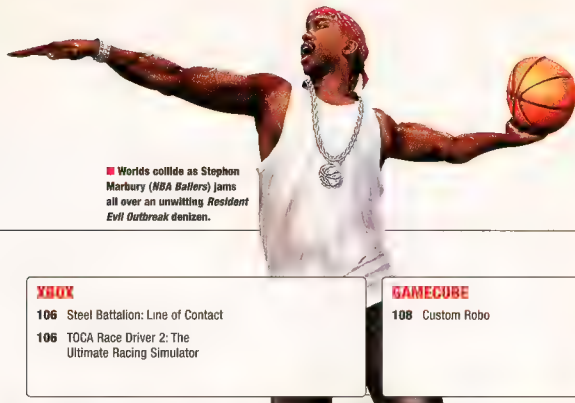
FORD: Agent 47's first console foray, *Hitman 2*, grabbed our attention with its third-person stealth/shooting gameplay, creative assassinations, and the importance of the right outfit for every situation—long before the clotheshorse gals of *Final Fantasy X-2* made it trendy. *Hitman: Contracts* feels similar to its predecessor, which, while disappointing on the innovation front, still means we've got a whole lot of assassinatin' to do, for both fun and profit.

Contracts starts with ol' baldy in a dingy apartment with some lead in his gut. During his recovery, he has flashbacks of his most memorable hits, which is when you take over. You're given objectives, as well as the freedom to accomplish them as you see fit. Want to bump

a guy off the old-fashioned way and poison his drink? Or steal a guard's uniform and walk right past security? You can do it. And if you choose to play through that mission again, you can pick none of the above and do something totally different. Decisions, decisions.

As amazing as this open-ended gameplay is, the poor enemy A.I. quells the thrill somewhat. CPU characters often do strange things like ignore gunfire in the next room or give up on a chase far too quickly. Also, as brilliant as the first seven levels are, the last five—some of which are remakes of original (and PC-only) *Hitman* missions—seem much less inspired. But the good stuff more than outweighs the bad; *Contracts* is clever, brutal, and ultimately satisfying.

SMAYN: Not much has changed since they gave Agent 47 a number and took away his name, but committing the unconscionable for cold hard compensation ain't quite the crapshoot it was in the last *Hitman*. The A.I. is still iffy, mind you—you're cover remains blown even after you blow away your only witness, and whether they're spotted or not, bodies left in the open automatically alert guards—but you won't scratch your bald head as much after inadvertently tipping off a target. And even though it's easier than before to bail yourself out with plan B and a submachine gun if you do get caught, the subtler assassinations are usually worth the trying and dying. Anyone can put a bullet in his quarry, but it takes a true artist to drop a gas can down a fireplace and into a kidnapper's face.



Worlds collide as Stephon Marbury (*NBA Ballers*) jams all over an unwitting *Resident Evil Outbreak* denizen.

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THE RATING SYSTEM



At EGM, we evaluate only games that have been deemed final and reviewable by their publishers. Three editors rate each game independently, and we use the whole scale: **5.0 IS AVERAGE.**

AWARDS



Platinum — straight 10s. For games that are life-changing.

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

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The lowest-rated game with unambiguously bad scores.

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

E-Everyone: Suitable for the whole family; dancing shoes, rampant sharing, and possibly Smurfs.

T-Teen: Like PG-13 movies; teen games often feature fistfuffs, mild violence, and mascot antics.

M-Mature: For the 18-and-over crowd; intense violence, gore, pillaged cars, drugs; parents risk-averse.



Greatest Hit

Hitman: Contracts' best mission has to be Beldingford Manor. It's set on a large estate complete with mansion, stables, and wine cellar, and your job is to take out Lord Winston Beldingford and his son, Alistair, and rescue some punk kid. Hmm, what to do? You can toss a gasoline tank down the chimney, suffocate the napping Winston with a pillow, poison Alistair's whiskey, dose the horses' water supply so that they aren't alarmed by your presence...and, well, lots more. It's open-ended gameplay at its best.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—SCOOTER: For those who haven't skulked a mile in Agent 47's bloodstained shoes, this is probably the best place to start. But for experienced assassins, *Contracts* feels more like a coolly refined expansion rather than a wholly new game. Super old-school fans may or may not be excited to see larger and more open-ended versions of classic missions (such as Traditions of the Trade and The Lee Hong Assassination) recycled here.

And though these reworked levels vary in quality, *Contracts* is still filled with some excellent assassinations (Deadly Cargo, Rendezvous in Rotterdam, and the awesome Beldingford Manor stand out). Even with occasional A.I. goofs and graphics glitches, as well as not too much revolution over the previous games in the series, *Contracts* is well worth the time if you fancy yourself a "professional," à la Jean Reno.

Good: Open-ended mission structure
Bad: Dumb A.I. enemies
Mostest Assassination Tool: Industrial-strength laxative



THE VERDICTS
 (OUT OF 10)

8.0 **7.5** **8.5**

G.FORD SHAWN SCOOTER

Publisher: Eidos
 Developer: IO Interactive
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Mature

www.eidos.com



PS2/XB

ALIAS

Clever disguises can't conceal crap gameplay



Good: Nifty voiceovers by the real actors
Bad: Brutally ineffectual combat
Better Than: That *WCW* game for PS1



SHANE: *Alias* is one of those rare TV shows that treads a delicate line between melodramatic soap opera and over-the-top action-thriller: Guys and gals can both watch it...even if they're secretly a little embarrassed (like me). Fellow fans of ABC's guilty pleasure will be thrilled that Acclaim lined up nearly all of the voice talent (and the show's composer) for this game—hearing the real voices lends the game starting legitimacy. Likewise, Agent Brinstow's superspy in-game disguises and cool opt-tech gizmos wouldn't be out of place on the show.

Unfortunately, *Alias* completely fails to impress from a gameplay standpoint. The concept is fine—you explore massive levels looking for intel, utilizing all manner of cool spy doochnicks to avoid detection. Disaster hits, though, when you actually attempt to be stealthy. With no *Metal Gear*-style radar or *Splinter Cell*-ish shadow meter, it's impossible to discern if you're visible...and you usually are. So missions degrade into mindless, clunky combat, in which imprecise fistcuffs and useless, fragile weapons abound. Don't bother.

JENNIFER: I don't watch the spy show *Alias*, but I'm willing to bet it's a whole lot more action-packed than this game. Janky fighting, opt-out stealth segments (it's easier to run past guards than sneak), and dim-witted missions wouldn't go down well with the Nielsen, and they don't with me. There is one little redeeming factor, though: The game has way more save points than you could possibly need. It's as if the designers knew the game was kinda lame and added those in so it wouldn't be both lame and annoying.

GMR—ANDREW: To my great shock, *Alias* the game manages to successfully capture the feel of *Alias* the TV show. Almost all of the principle characters appear, mission locations and situations could have been lifted right from the show, the plot and script are well written, and even the voice acting is spot on—right down to Marshall's pointless rambling. Sadly, the combat is completely fumbled up—Sydney kicking ass in a fluid, ballet-like manner is one of the biggest draws of the show, but in the game her herky-jerky, button-mashing kung fu is the biggest repellent.



THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	5.0 5.5		
	SHANE	JENNIFER	ANDREW
	www.aliasgame.com		

Publisher: Acclaim
 Developer: Acclaim Chatham
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Teen

www.aliasgame.com

PS2/XB

ONLINE
 (PS2 ONLY)

NBA BALLERS

Calling all ball hogs



Good: Robust single-player experience
Bad: The long load times (even on Xbox) will put you to sleep
Missing: His Airness, Michael Jordan

Good: Robust single-player experience
Bad: The long load times (even on Xbox) will put you to sleep
Missing: His Airness, Michael Jordan



BRYAN: Man oh man is the virtual basketball court crowded these days (*Live*, *ESPN*, and *Street*, just to name a few). And now here comes *NBA Ballers*, the tricked-out Escalade (with dubs and spinners, of course) of basketball games.

Midway's visually striking b-ball title doesn't follow the norm of arcade-style sports games—and that's a good thing. For starters, the 1-on-1 (and sometimes 1-on-1-on-1) gameplay is surprisingly deep. Seasoned sports will welcome the challenge of mastering special moves like gravity-defying alley oops, as well as learning the precise timing for defensive counters. Secondly, *Ballers* offers a wealth of options to the lone gamer. The addictive rags-to-riches mode enables you to build an *MTV Cribs*-worthy residence, while competing in tournaments unlocks NBA superstars and other sweet pads. There's more than 30 hours of action for the guy or gal who prefers playing solo.

Ballers does shoot a few air balls, though: Computer opponents perform irritating catch-up antics on occasion, and the game suffers from ridiculously long load times. Still, no true fan should miss out on Midway's all-new hoopster.

PATRICK: It's nearly impossible to review *NBA Ballers* without using the term "bling," so I'm just going to get it out of the way now. *Ballers*' fairly basic gameplay means just about anyone can pick up a controller and go, while the three-player 1-on-1-on-1 provides a nice variation of your standard 1-on-1. The player

models—especially the detailed faces—look amazing, right down to Allen Iverson's tats and Larry Bird's disturbingly light shorts. The deep-no-dope rags-to-riches mode is where you'll spend most of your time, starting as a playground scrub and hopin' your way to worthwhile rewards: chromed-out cars, new clothes, and your own grossly ostentatious Xanadu. A cool b-ball single-player experience like this is truly a rare treat.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—GIANCARLO:

Midway's latest arcade b-ball game includes everything that made the *NBA Jam* games entertaining—like over-the-top dunks and getting "on fire"—along with new (and counterintuitive) dribbling moves, upping the strategic element of 1-on-1 basketball just enough to make it interesting. There's also a great career-type mode where you can earn some serious bling for your player. Unfortunately, like *Ballers*' predecessors, the A.I. can be ruthlessly cheap late in the game, but not till a little challenge scare you away from the court.



Only PS2 owners can hoop it up online, but gameplay options are limited to 1-on-1.

THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	8.0 8.0 8.0		
	BRYAN	PATRICK	GIANCARLO
	www.midway.com		

Publisher: Midway
 Developer: Midway
 Players: 1-3 (PS2: 2 online)
 ESRB: Everyone

www.midway.com



What, knife-wielding circus monkeys and toasting green blobs again?

PS2/GC



SERIOUS SAM: NEXT ENCOUNTER

It's a no-brainer



Good: Lots of slick shooting
Bad: Not much else
Also Known As: The Pride of Croatia



G. FORD: Oh Sam, the memories we have. Who can forget our epic battle against the roomful of lightning-shooting cacodemons or our after-school visits to the strip club? Oh, wait, wrong here. But not by much—Sam's latest console adventure seriously smacks of classic shooters such as *Doom* and *Duke Nukem*. Is that bad? Well, how's this sound to you: Every time you enter a room, you'll need to dispense of a wave of enemies. Every time you pick up a shiny object, another wave appears. Every time you grab a cannonball gun, oh you better believe that's another wave.

Don't get me wrong, this can be fun with the fast action, simple yet smooth graphics, responsive controls, some multiplayer and online shenanigans, and big, tough bosses. But things certainly get repetitive, and while the first half of a level may elicit that corridor-shooting thrill you first experienced in 1994, the second half will undoubtedly drag. *Serious Sam: Next Encounter* isn't a great game—it's a homage to the games we thought were great a decade ago.

CRISPIN: Boogers with legs? Awesome! Exploding nerds? Haha! Gameplay creakier than 10-year-old *Doom* clones? Brilliant! *Serious Sam*—a shooter as cutting edge as a calculator wrist-watch—has all those things. But it's still fun in that I-hope-no-one-sees-me-playing-this kinda way. It's just a dumb, colorful, hyperactive experience that lulls you into a never-stop-shooting stupor with its goofball enemies that swarm from every direction, even dropping from the sky. And it's only 20 bucks—you get exactly what you pay for.

C.J.: *Serious Sam* tosses atmosphere and ambience out the window in favor of a simple rule: Shoot anything that moves. It won't take long for more cannon fodder to arrive, either. Hordes of ill-conceived enemies seem to spawn every 20 packs, locking on to your jack like mice to a buffet of delicious cheeses. Ten years ago this balls-out approach might've been considered fresh, but today it feels like an empty stereotype of the genre's past. Some might dig its old-school vibe, but I'll take a pass.

THE EDITOR'S PICK	6.5	7.0	5.0
G. FORD	CRISPIN	CJ	

Publisher: Global Star
Developer: Croteam
Players: PS2: 1-2 (2-8 online);
GC: 1-4
ESRB: Mature

www.globalstarsoftware.com

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PlayStation 2

ONLINE

SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN

Straining to keep up with the times



Just Rewards
Like taking down targets with a shot to the head? Or is hoisting the place down with hit lead while screaming "Get some!" more your style? Depending on your strategy, *Syphon Filter* rewards you with different gear and guns. Sharpshooting, for instance, will earn sniper rifles, whereas playing the wild man is more likely to get you sub-machine guns.

PAUL: In videogames, terrorism is the new kid-napping. Used to be, when game developers needed to whip up an antagonist in a hurry, they just had a couple of beefy thugs sucker-punch the main character's girlfriend and carry her away. These days, they have some militia-like organization to try to blow stuff up. *Syphon Filter* doesn't dress up the cliché—the game is full of bombs to disarm and villains with silly accents to shoot, and that's just fine. Straightforward run-and-gun action gets the blood pumping.

...Until you have to stop to check the map, which is all the time. That's a problem, because looking at the map doesn't suspend the action. Bad guys will shoot you dead while you figure out whether your objective is on the second floor or the third. (Poor sportsmanship!) As irritating as that is, it's manageable; just be sure you've killed all the enemies in the area before you plan a

route to the next goal.

But what's with all the busywork? Every level has at least one painfully repetitive tacked-on objective. Set five C4 charges. Collect six data samples. On one mission you're asked to lock the four entrances of a terrorist-held building so that the local police don't wander inside and get killed. Is that a job for a superspacer agent? The game would have been stronger without so much pointless padding. Thankfully, once you've accomplished any part of an objective, it stays done even if you die.

In fact, dying is hardly a setback in *Omega Strain*. Kicking the bucket hurts your score (which unlocks optional levels and better weaponry), but it doesn't slow your progress through the story. It's a pretty clever setup, actually. Casual gamers can blast through this adventure in a weekend, while more serious players will want to hone their

skills and improve their score in order to see everything the game has to offer.

SHAWN: *Omega Strain* displays all the initial symptoms of a smart shoot-em-up but degenerates into a low-lever game of good guy/bad guy. After lying dormant for years, the series should show visible signs of improvement, and in that respect, *Strain* doesn't disappoint. Around the world in 17 scenic and exciting missions, you'll visit (and violate) the palaces of tin-pot generalissimos, slip through dusty Middle Eastern marketplaces in disguise, and duel snipers in Russian snowfields. A few too many missions ask you to play errand boy—plant explosives here, and here, and, oh yeah, over here too—but you'll have some say over your itinerary and can see the story through even after scrapping several of the less interesting objectives.

Multiplayer Remix

All of *Omega Strain's* required missions can be played cooperatively online with up to four players. Level layouts and most objectives are the same as in the single-player game, but bringing friends along does allow for a few new tricks. For instance, in the first stage, your teammate can boost you on top of a parked truck (pull him up afterwards), letting you reach the second story of a nearby building—a wicked shortcut into the terrorists' stronghold.



■ A lock-on targeting system helps you work around *Omega Strain's* outdated control schemes, but it's useless against the tougher enemies later in the game.

Good: Cooperative online play
Bad: Tons of pointless mission objectives
The Cold War is Over: Why are so many villains still Russian?



THE CRITICS' CHOICE

6.5 6.5 5.0
PAUL SHAWN SHOE

Publisher: Sony CEA
Developer: Sony CEA
Players: 1 (2-4 online)
ESRB: Mature

www.us.playstation.com

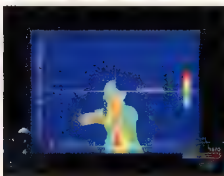


Iran's vodka-infused and highly destructive joyride finally comes to an end.

Where's Gabe Logan AI?



The hero of past *Syphon Filter* titles ain't your avatar this time out, although he is an unlockable character. Instead, you create your own agent, setting parameters for skin tone, hair color, body type, etc. There are just two problems: No matter which settings you choose, your agent will be ugly with a capital F, and they all look nearly identical in-game. (But everyone gets a name tag on the display, so you can tell your teammates apart.)



It's the controls, however, that'll get under your skin. Auto-lock is so useless that enemies might ask for seconds even when it looks like you're force-feeding 'em whole magazines. The rest works, just not very well. For instance, *Strain* maps aiming and movement to the same analog stick, so you can't shoot accurately without stopping to bring up your scope. Splitting up your duties with three other germ warriors in co-op quadruples the strategy and takes the sting out of backtracking, but sickly controls still contaminate the online experience.

SHOE: This game feels so piecemeal, and I mean that in the most flattering way possible. I imagine part of the development process went something like this:

"Hey, how come some of the levels are full of extra paths and real estate that don't necessarily

make sense?"

"We had extra memory."

"What about controls? We do have this archaic control scheme leftover from pre-dual-analog-stick days..."

"Done and done."

"Oh crap, we ran out of buttons on the controller. How will the players change weapons? Ooh! Light-bulb moment! How about the weapon-select on...the Select button! But that would be very awkward for players. Plus, if they run out of ammo and

have to switch weapons in the middle of a fire-fight, they'll have to let go of the analog stick and become immobile—a total sitting duck."

"Hey, then God shouldn't have named that button 'Select.' Do it...do it."

I abuse because I care. *The Omega Strain* had so much potential, with a great rewards system that gives you lots of stuff to unlock and four-player cooperative online play (which, by the way, gives us yet another button that creates a sitting-duck situation: Up on the D-pad to voice chat, so forget about talking to your human teammates while the action's hot). But sloppy game design and cumbersome controls filter out almost all of the fun.





First time of soccer club, FIFA, tour, trophies

Good: Easy to play, with tons of club and international teams.
Bad: Luggy controls, no online multiplayer.
Best Team Names: Al-Ansar Chronic



PATRICK: 2004 is for babies, according to 989 Sports—it's decided to leap straight from *World Tour Soccer 2003* to *World Tour Soccer 2005*. Unfortunately, despite the time warp into the far-flung future, *World Tour* hasn't changed enough to take a serious run at the competition (*Winning Eleven* and *FIFA*). While the other guys make significant gameplay and graphical improvements, *World Tour* pretty much stays the course and even moves a bit more to the arcade end of the simulation/arcade spectrum. *World Tour* may be easy to play, but you won't feel the same elation when you score a goal, nor will it look as nice.

World Tour does pack in an astounding 900-plus club and international teams, hailing from all around the globe (Iraq versus Bahamas? Let's get it on!), including MLS squads (unlike last season). I just wish 989 had implemented some of the same features it added to *MLB* and *GameDay*, like online tournaments and USB headset voice commands to direct players and change strategies. Oh, and another thing: Why do all soccer coaches sport mustaches? Is that some kind of rule I don't know about?

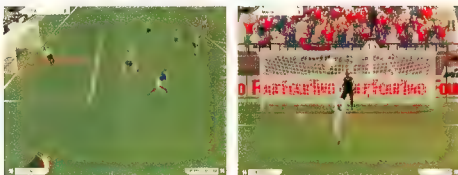
BRYAN: Patrick's right; *World Tour* simply can't compete with soccer behemoths *Winning Eleven* and *FIFA*. The game comes up short in several areas (it has lackluster visuals, a recycled career mode, no online play), but these inadequacies aren't the real problem. That dishonor goes to *World Tour's* unresponsive controls: Passes and shots occur long after you've pushed the appropriate button, which in turn severely handicaps your ability to score and shut down the opposition. You're better off leaving this soccer match on the store shelf.

DEMIAN: If I didn't know much about soccer, I'd like *World Tour* all right. It's very easy to pick up and play, and even score—unlike some of the more hardcore competition. But *Winning Eleven 7* and *FIFA* are tough at first because they're so deep. *World Tour* is easy because it's ultimately a pretty shallow version of soccer. Sadly, that's not even the biggest problem; as Bryan noted, there's way too much lag between button presses and actual onscreen action. Rabid soccer fans whistle instead of boo, so here it is: pfweeeeet.

PlayStation 2

WORLD TOUR SOCCER 2005

Shanks one off the crossbar



THE VERDICTS
GIVE IT UP

6.5	5.0	5.5
PATRICK	BRYAN	DEMIAN

Publisher: Sony CEA
Developer: 989 Sports
Players: 1-2 (2-8 w/MultiTap)
ESRB: Everyone

www.989sports.com



In a perfect world, this would be NASCAR and we could watch it instead of play it.

Good: 20-player online matches
Bad: You can beat the single-player game in about an hour
We'd Rather Play: *Twisted Metal Black*



PlayStation 2

ONLINE

DESTRUCTION DERBY ARENAS

Driving for dummies



With next to no offensive weaponry involved, strategy equates hitting the other guy but good.

DEMIAN: I like smacking into other cars. Sure I do. But *Destruction Derby Arenas* takes an exciting Sunday-driving pastime and turns it into a thoroughly unexciting game. It's easy to beat the 16-event single-player championship on your first try, and then all that's left is to go through it over and over again with different cars. I did, and now I'd kinda like those hours of my life back. Unlocking a handful of new vehicles and making out my upgrades isn't much payoff, even if they are a cake-walk to earn.

The 20-player online (broadband only) battles are fun at first, but human opponents, even a whole lot of 'em, can't make up for *Arenas's* unfortunately shallow gameplay and dated graphics. (By the way, there's voice chat in the game lobby, but not while playing. Bleh.) The *Destruction Derby* franchise may have had a good rep in the PS1 days, but now it's a rusted-out beater best left up on blocks.

BRYAN: People attend demolition derby events for one reason—to catch a glimpse of highlight-worthy fender ben-

ders. But don't expect any spectacular pileups in *Arenas*; even crash-test dummies would yawn at this wreckage. And that's not the only problem here: The game's visuals are circa PS1, and the bare-bones championship mode offers little challenge (you'll unlock the majority of the cars and tracks during your first sitting). Now I give *Arenas* props for heading online, but c'mon, do you really wanna drive around in Jalopies that resemble your little bro's Matchbox collection? I sure don't.

BMR—ANDREW: If not for the online play, *Destruction Derby's* lasting appeal would clock in at a little over an hour. It's far too easy, due to the odd balance of the championship mode: The early courses are ripe for both high placement and destruction points, while the latter events are so fast, they present little opportunity to smash and crash. But scoring tens of thousands of points in the final arena level—a task easily accomplished—often makes up the difference and renders the previous races irrelevant.

THE VERDICTS
GIVE IT UP

6.0	6.0	6.0
DEMIAN	BRYAN	ANDREW

Publisher: Gathering
Developer: Studio 33
Players: 1-2 (2-20 online)
ESRB: Teen

www.godgames.com



PlayStation 2

LA PUCELLE: TACTICS

A religious experience for strat buffs

Good: Rewarding, complex combat

Bad: Sadly outdated visuals

Tangentially Related To: *Disgaea: Hour of Darkness*

SHAME: If you played last fall's cult hit *Disgaea: Hour of Darkness*, you'll experience an odd bout of déjà vu with *La Pucelle*. Both games hail from the same developer and feature similar-looking characters, enemies, items, and battles. And tragically, in this case, "similar-looking" translates to "looks like a Game Boy Advance game." Just as with *Disgaea*, however, it's worth the effort to look beyond the antiquated exterior to discover a surprisingly rewarding strategy-RPG.

La Pucelle's story line can't quite measure up to the devious hilarity of its acid-tongued cousin, but it's still pretty easy to get wrapped up in this anime-influenced tale of ass-kicking holy crusaders battling a rival church. While the narrative's great, combat provides the game's true source of addiction—coordinating team attacks, monster recruitment, and a wild series of Dark Energy

summons makes every tactical melee a blast. Plus, this seemingly 'little game belies massive depth: Questing after each chapter's "good ending" and exploring the entirely optional Dark World stages will keep completists in the fray for eons.

SMOKE: Just as I was doubted over, puking because of this game's sickly sweet, made-for-idiot-toddlers dialogue and characters, the story line jammed an ice pick in my back with terrifying plot twists, including murder victims with their hearts torn out. Is this a kid's game or not? No matter—the gameplay will keep hardcore gamers satiated for weeks, long after the sugar-and-spice candy coating has numbed their brains to death. This game has it all: monsters to capture and raise, upgradeable items and spells, and incredibly rich character customization. I got sucked in to this as badly

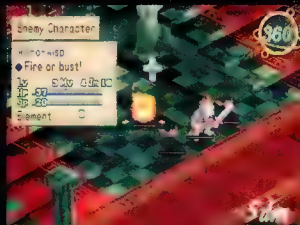
as I did with both *Final Fantasy Tactics*, so that's saying a lot: 50-some great hours, lots.

KEYWORD: Developer Nippon Ichi has found its calling: wacky-lobaccy strategy-RPGs for hardcore gamers. *La Pucelle* is no exception—despite its age (it was released in Japan in 2002) and goofy story, it's every bit as cute and addictive as *Disgaea*.

Really, it's hard to find a game in which the normally tedious process of raising your party's stats is such unbridled fun. What's the secret? A mixture of innovative game rules (the "dark files," like *Disgaea's* geo panels, turn some battles into miniature puzzles) and nearly endless army customization. Of course, you'll be completely befuddled for the first hour or two, but once it all clicks, you'll find *La Pucelle* difficult to put down.



Magic power increases with use, so don't be overly frugal.



Publisher: Masliff
Developer: Nippon Ichi
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

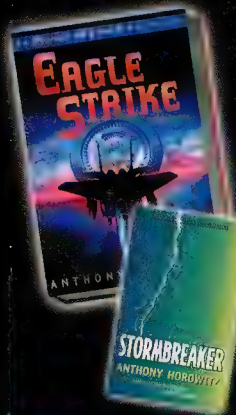
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Yep, it's kinda cute. Now kill it.

■ Bug exterminator: It's a sensible career choice.



PlayStation 2 @ONLINE

FINAL FANTASY XI ONLINE

★
GAME OF THE MONTH

Hold on to your moogles—it's finally here

MIGUEL: *Final Fantasy XI* is finally here, and damn, is it a 10,000 hit-point monster. But be warned: This isn't your little bro's *Final Fantasy*. Chocobo trappings aside, it shares more similarities with massively multiplayer online role-playing games like *EverQuest Online Adventures* and *Asheron's Call* (PC) than it does with classic *Final Fantasy* titles. And that means it may not only threaten to take over your life, but also frustrate the heck out of you.

Yet, you'll find few games as rewarding (and addictive), provided you're the kind of person willing to put in the time. Just don't expect to hit the ground running. You ain't gonna save the world from Armageddon (or Sephiroth), fight three-story-tall hell spawns, or pilot a state-of-the-art flying galloon—at least not at first. Rather, you'll perform the occasional delivery mission for a

beleaguered townsfolk, kill dozens upon dozens of lowly (and often cute) critters, and hawk animal parts in the game's virtual auction house. Sound like fun?

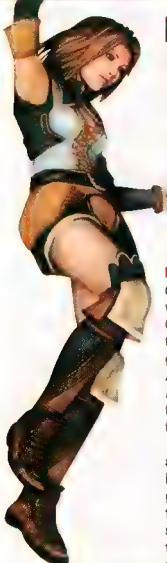
Well, it is. Every tiny success in *Final Fantasy XI*—be it selling a valuable item at the auction house or completing a mission you've been gnawing at for days—brings with it an immense feeling of accomplishment. And soon enough, your character stops being a total clump, and you're able to explore the enormous, beautiful world of Vana'diel at your leisure.

Two factors keep *FFXI* from being the online RPG of my dreams. First, after about 15 hours of play, it becomes basically impossible to get anything done without a big group, which usually takes some time to assemble (though usually less time than in *EverQuest*). And second,

it's a pain in the ass to play with your friends. You have to buy an expensive in-game item called a World Pass and give your pals the pass number, and then they have to create all-new characters on your server. Ouch!

Still, I've been playing *FFXI* since it came out on PC last year, and I picked up the PS2 version just so I could play it on my couch. Call it psychosis, call it true love, call it whatever. Now if you'll excuse me, I have a chocobo to ride.

JENNIFER: Ever since *EverQuest Online Adventures* tried (and failed) to do it on PS2, I've wondered whether it's possible to create a vibrant, massively multiplayer role-playing community on consoles. With the State-Side PS2 release of *Final Fantasy XI*, I see clearly now that the answer is yes. *FFXI* does something brilliant:



● Amazingly immersive world
● Enormous time-sink
● An expansion pack is due real fast



THE VERDICT
GIVE IT UP

8.5 8.5 8.5

MIGUEL JENNIFER KEVIN

Publisher: Sony CEA
Developer: Square Enix
Players: 1-∞ (online only)
ESRB: Teen

www.square-enix-usa.com



Anti Up
Final Fantasy XI will put a \$100 hurt on your wallet, because it comes bundled with a 4GB hard drive for your PS2. The HDD takes only about five minutes to install; the painful part is downloading *FFXI's* patches, which can take over an hour, depending on your network speed. While away the time by creating a chocolate-thighed and cozy for your PlayStation 2.

It throws console gamers right into the mix with a community that's been brewing now for over a year in Japan and many months on PC. The results are astonishing. I was never at a loss for a good group—in fact, I had to fend off eager role-players (it's in to score with me [lost and experience, I mean]). Whenever I had a question, veteran players were always willing to take a minute to show me the ropes.

Even beyond the community aspect, *FFXI* is awesome. Exploring the huge, beautiful world (with the help of an excellent map system) is exciting by itself. Tons of quests make it easy to find your next goal, and the immersion into the *Final Fantasy* world is complete, from classes and races down to the nonplayer-character dialogue and music. I just worry that nonfans won't make the time-consuming leap. After weeks on the

bumblebee-slayin' treadmill (have I lost weight?), I'm finally getting to dig in. But why does it have to take so damn long?

KEVIN: Readers with long memories and even longer back-issue collections may remember that EGM called *FFXI* "Final Fantasy...with a few thousand of your closest friends" half a year ago. This statement, while nice and snappy, isn't completely accurate—you'll need a lot of friends, yes, but this game will cause serious culture shock in die-hard *Final Fantasy* fanatics.

If you aren't familiar with large-scale online RPGs, your first few hours with *FFXI* will be more than a little daunting. There's lingo to learn, a new and alien battle system to master, and a game world almost the size of real-life Earth to explore. Trouble is, as a level 1 questing, there's not much

you can do besides hug the outskirts of town and whap away at butterflies all day. In other words, *FFXI* starts out very, very slowly and stays slow for hours—that's where the culture shock comes from.

Join a party, though, and the world suddenly becomes far more accessible. Grouping up is the only way to build your character rapidly in *FFXI*, and high-level heroes gain access to powerful jobs and items, exotic missions, and, well, more ways to earn experience points. But you won't mind the minor hassle of joining (or starting) a group, for some reason. That's what makes *FFXI* seem special in a way *EverQuest Online Adventures* isn't: While there's a learning curve so steep you need a pickaxe to climb it, the "we're all in this together" play mentality is unique and, yes, terribly addictive.

Final Fantasy XI Newbie Handbook

So you're dying to be a real-deal, stone-cold player, but right now you're a green, whiny n00b-burger. We're here to help.

DOs

Read the manual: God knows the installation time is long enough. Use it to learn the basics: movement, chatting, and NPC interaction.

Fiddle around: As soon as you land in the world, screw with all the menus and figure out what they do. It's not like you can die in your starting city. And if you somehow do, you'll make a little bit of history.

Explore: Learn the lay of the land. Find the auction houses and shops, and talk to every NPC you see. You'll have a log full of quests in no time. And ask questions—everybody was a newbie once.

The Internet is your friend: Use online resources to help you make the most of *FFXI*. Start here: www.somepage.com/ffxi.



■ Moogle sez:
 Don't be a jerk

DOYTs

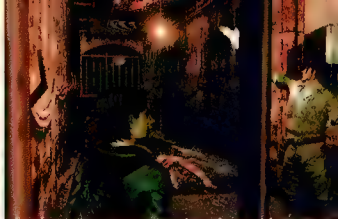
Don't beg for money: This is the quickest way to be branded an undesirable by 99 percent of the playing population. Instead, ask people politely how they got so filthy stinkin' rich, and if they aren't tools, they'll share their wisdom. As long as you...

Don't let your mouth run: If you have question, use a private /tell. Sure, the occasional /shout is easy enough to ignore, but it's more considerate (and productive) to converse in private. Hot tip: Nobody cares about your thoughts on today's geopolitical climate.

Don't spoil the party: Word travels fast on Vana'diel, and if you're a jerk to others, you'll get a bad rep. When that happens, good luck finding a party. Or someone to sit with at the lunch table.



■ Black shotgun netted briefs—what all the tyrant monsters will be wearing this season.



■ Bits of levels from previous Resident Evil games pop up now and then in Outbreak. Remember this scene from RE2?

PlayStation 2

RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK

I Have No Chat, and I Must Scream

MARK: One thing I'll say for *Outbreak*—it is absolutely gorgeous. Its fully 3D environments are still for dramatic camera pans and zooms, yet still somehow pack in all the detail of *RE*'s traditional flat, prerendered backgrounds. In terms of gameplay, this is classic *RE*—grab keys, mix chemicals, conserve ammo, solve puzzles—with the story line removed and multiplayer added. Branching paths, tons of unlockables, and secrets galore encourage replay—so what's the problem?

Communication. Or rather, a lack thereof. The stiff difficulty, branching levels, and especially your severely limited inventory (most characters have only four slots for items) make cooperation among players essential, but the inexplicable lack of voice (or even keyboard) chat completely destroys all hope of real teamwork. Once the game starts, the only way to communicate is with 10 preset phrases ("Go!" "Help!" etc.). Even after you master this convoluted system, deciding simple things like which floor everyone will take an elevator to, much less

implementing real strategy like "Let's split up, you do this, we'll do that," is impossible. So instead of fostering the teamwork and camaraderie that makes online gaming special, *Outbreak* has everyone quietly going about their own business, only occasionally working together in the most obvious ways. Single player is nearly as frustrating, thanks to A.I.-controlled teammates who have a talent for doing exactly the wrong thing.

JON D.: I don't think Amencans have proven they can handle an online game that demands teamwork (anyone get 'd in *Phantasy Star Online*?). But even if we did learn to play nice, *Outbreak* still wouldn't be that fun. It has familiar enemies, weapons, and locales reworked into a handful of cool-but-predictable *RE* adventures that are actually quite good offline, but fraught with logistical issues on the Net (finding lost teammates without chat, battling zombies with lag). I also much prefer the old control style—the new 3D-style move-

ment is much more confusing. And though the large cast is nice, only a few characters are invaluable (big-sack Yoko), while others are a novelty at best (fix-it man David, doctor George).

OFFICIAL PS MAG—CHRIS: The greatest evil residing in *Outbreak* isn't the hordes of zombies out to go all *Dawn of the Dead* on you ass—it's the shoddy online play structure. Capcom claims that not being able to speak or type to others makes the game scarier, but this and things like having to wait minutes—maybe even hours!—for others in the lobby after you die really just make it less fun to play. Single-player action redeems the faulty online setup with five unrelated scenarios (would it have been that hard to link them somehow?) in which you really have to work with the A.I. characters to succeed. Whether offline or on, facing zombies with some backup adds an interesting gameplay mechanic to the *RE* formula. If only the online setup weren't so disappointing...



Trade Deficit

Since most characters have only four slots for holding weapons, ammo, healing items, keys, etc., you'll need to trade items often in *Outbreak*. Trouble is, the game was built for online play, so it doesn't pause when you bring up your inventory to trade or use items (even in single player). What's worse, the Item menu closes if you take damage. Imagine trying to hand a dying player a healing herb over and over, only to get attacked over and over, eventually ending up dead yourself. It happens! A lot!



■ Now 'bout a little fire, scarecrow?



What a Load
Outbreak got some serious load times. On average, you'll wait about 15 seconds every time you open a door, and as any *RE* player knows, you open a lot of doors. Even bringing up the map or Item screen or hitting attacked can trigger more loading. Lucky owners of the PS2 HDD hard drive can install the game to reduce the delays—look for "HDD" next to server names online to take advantage.

Sneak: Maybe the best-looking PS2 game yet.
Walk: Frustrating beyond belief, long load times.
Wart: Timer: Give us voice (or at least keyboard) chat.



THE EDITORS' CHOICE	5.5	6.5	7.0
MARK	JON D.	CHRIS	

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Players: 1 (1-4 online)
ESRB: Mature

www.capcom.com



- Castlevania: Lament of Innocence—cool move
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The action hasn't been there (Japan), but it's definitely done that (skewer swordsmen by the thousands).



Samurai Warriors' primitive graphics offer a better history lesson than its subject matter.

PlayStation 2

SAMURAI WARRIORS

You and what army

SHAWN: Sushi replaces dim sum, and Samurai, rather than Chinese swordsmen, spill blood by the gallon. *Dynasty Warriors*' cast of thousands may be got up in different garb, but the song remains the same in *Samurai Warriors*.

On the surface, the series is simple: If it moves, stab it, and when it stops, find something else to skewer. Each of the game's 15 or so playable fighters specializes in a specific pointy object and wades through rivals with a repertoire of puns. But it's the behind-the-scenes strategy that puts the art in *Samurai's* otherwise mindlessly fun war. To thwart a warlord, you'll have to maintain your army's morale, know when to attack and retreat, and work in concert with allied commanders.

While the Sun-Tzu slant gives *Samurai Warriors* an edge over most slashers, so little has changed since the series' inception that its shortcomings—namely, repetitiveness and choppy performance—are startling to show. Interior stages aren't cutting it; set in booby-trapped castles,

they take away the trademark tactics, the cavalry charges and clashing armies, and go back to the genre's grindstone with mazes and monotony. A few made-in-Japan heroes—like the ninja Hanzo, who swings a sickle and chain—put a faster spin on the bloodletting, but most of the cast aren't much different from their cousins in China's Three Kingdoms. Of course, diehards won't care—they'll be content maxing the stats of each officer in their entourage, collecting every last weapon and power-up in the warring states.

SHOE: I've hacked and slashed so many Asian people in these *Warriors* games that I'm developing a guilty conscience. You know, what with me being Asian and a non-mass-murderer and all. I'm also growing numb to all the killing—which means *Samurai Warriors* doesn't provide any big-time thrills but still satisfies my occasional need for a mindless action game.

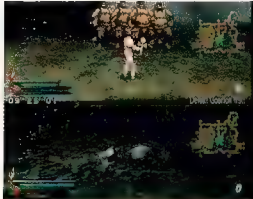
In a way, I'm surprised that I like this game. It's

really not that different from the hundred *Dynasty Warrior* games before it. Character development (skill and stat raising, leveling up, etc.) is improved, and the new ninjas and samurai styles of fighting are cool. The sense of déjà vu here, however, will smack you black and blue. Die-hard *Warriors* will enjoy *Samurai*, but only haltheartedly, knowing revolutionary new gameplay is still MIA.

PAUL: Taking out 500 enemies or more in a single battle could've become dreadfully repetitive, but *Samurai Warriors* stays sharp, thanks mostly to RPG-ish character advancement (including lots of new moves to master). This war won't be over in a weekend, either—five branching campaigns provide plenty of opportunities to earn honor in battle. A somewhat confusing interface and disjointed midbattle cut-scenes make keeping track of allies and major enemies a chore, occasionally shrouding the path to victory, but otherwise, *Samurai Warriors* slices and dices.



Historically inaccurate As befitting master of deception, truth behind real-life ninja and *Samurai Warriors* star Hanzo Hattori (1541-1596) is hazy. A member of the ninja community Iga Province, Hanzo supposedly trained at the age of eight and became a full-fledged ninja at age 12. It's said that he could sit behind a fan, bow, and then vanish, only to reappear in the next room. Believe it...or not.



Sashimi for Two

Split the screen, and two can slice through *Samurai Warriors*' story mode together or compete in several challenges. To claim victory in showdown mode, simply slay your opponent and his army. Strike mode's object is to slaughter 1,000 enemies, while pursuit pits players in a race to capture the lard-assed Goemon, who's hiding in a fortress full of look-alikes. Finding fatty is the most fun, but in all cases, the action slows to a crawl with too many characters onscreen.



Repetitive work is best performed with a pal.

Sonic: Serious replay value.
Rad: ...if you don't mind the repetitiveness.
Dynasty Warriors: Is Turning Japanese.



THE WARRIORS 2003.03.05

7.0	6.5	7.5
SHAWN	SHOE	PAUL

Publisher: Koei
 Developer: Omega Force
 Players: 1-2
 ESRB: Teen

www.koei.com



Quick-change artist: Tap Triangle to transform anytime. Vehicle mode is best for razing down enemies (left) or long road trips across the huge levels.



PlayStation 2

TRANSFORMERS

Optimally Primed

Good: Fun-to-explore levels, robo-customization

Bad: Ify control, some bosses fight dirty

Nostalgic? The game's based on the new show, not the old 'toon

CRISPIN: First things first: Yes, this game's robo-heroes do make that "er-ah-ee" noise from the old cartoon when they quickly change from autos to battlebots. But even if you never spent after-school hours zonked in front of the show (musta been one of those PBS kids), *Transformers* is still a supercharged, Halo-inspired shooter with slick exploration and custom-robot tinkering elements boted on.

Credit goes to the Mini-Cons, little-buddy 'bots strewn across the sprawling levels. You snap them to your Autobot hero four at a time to gain new weapons and abilities (shielding, invisibility, yadda, yadda). And since later-level enemies and bosses—especially a maddeningly frustrating aircraft carrier that morphs into a robot bigger than the Mall of America—require experimentation to topple, you'll need to revisit

earlier stages to find as many Mini-Cons as you can to improve your combat skills. It's not as tedious as it sounds, especially once you find glider wings that let you reach previously inaccessible areas.

Unfortunately, you only get three Autobot heroes to choose from, and they all handle awkwardly as robots. But if you're a *Transformers* fan, I had you at the er-ah-ee part anyway.

SHAWN: Fun toys—like machines that transform into trucks, meeting your robot and Tonka needs with one purchase—don't guarantee a good game, but *Transformers* taps the franchise without feeling forced. Granted, I still don't know what business a big rig has in the Amazon basin or any of the other gigantic, way-too-good-looking-for-a-licensed-game levels, but who's complaining when you can roll out

and roll over other robots? (Never mind Crispin's fuss about the controls; a little clunkiness is excusable when you're a walking car.) Plus, the collectible Mini-Cons are actually cooler here than the cheap-soo-poor-kids-can-play-too Transformers are in real life.

DEMIAN: Kinda like last year's *Metal Arms*, this over-the-shoulder robo-shooter totally ambushed me with how unexpectedly awesome it is. Though I wish more Autobots were playable—Optimus, Red Alert, and Hot Shot are so vanilla, robot-wise—the Mini-Con collecting and upgrade system encourages exploration and keeps combat interesting. The unlockable '80s public service announcements are gold, too. Fans of transformable robots, your ship (which also turns into a robot) has come in.



Clevelandbitch: Don't make it angry.

THE VERDICTS
OUT OF 10

8.0	7.5	7.5
CRISPIN	SHAWN	DEMIAN

Publisher: Atari
Developer: Melbourne House
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

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PlayStation 2

SIREN

Scared stupid

Good: Innovative brains-over-brrawn approach

Bad: Boring trial-and-error gameplay

Even Worse Combat Controls Than: *Resident Evil*

PAUL: While *Siren's* story and voice acting are well above par for a survival-horror game, it commits many of the genre's classic mistakes—difficult controls, boring enemies—and invents a spectacular blunder all its own.

The game's most interesting feature turns out to be its biggest problem. The characters you control can "sightjack" zombies, telepathically seeing what they see. From that, you're supposed to guess where they are, then avoid them while you figure out how to reach the level's exit. To that I say: *fat chance*. Locating enemies by sightjacking is like trying to draw a map of Hawaii using only strangers' vacation photos. There's no way to corroborate your guesses, since zombies don't appear on the game's map (neither do your characters, incidentally), and by the time you make visual contact, they've already popped out of the dense fog, eaten your heart, and paid the check.

After being killed 15 times or more on many of *Siren's* levels, I wasn't

afraid of zombies anymore. I was afraid I was wasting my time.

JON D.: As with *Silent Hill*, the elegant, haunting atmosphere in *Siren* makes it a hell of an interactive horror show. But *Siren* strips your defenses and puts you constantly on the run—with virtually nothing to steer you on the right path. So you're actually supposed to ignore that combination lock, find a bucket to stand on, and climb a nearby shack? Sure thing. Piecing together the correct tasks while treading water in a sea of red herrings means running recon a couple of times through every stage before you'll find success. It's a promising start, but I'm hopeful a *Siren 2* will emerge to work out some of the title's annoying kinks.

CRISPIN: *Siren* is an experiment gone awry—a confusing fog-sacked combination of stealth and survival-horror that'll drive you batty with frustration before it can creep you out. What the hell does a phone card, old nurse's shoes, and a power line have in common? Why, you use all this crap to escape zombified hayseeds, of course. *Siren's* mission-based levels are full of such random junk that you must mix nonsensically. Don't worry about pesky logic; if trying to solve puzzles the smart way doesn't kill you, the crackshot undead rifeman will.



"I could have sworn I left the old nurse's shoes around here somewhere...."

THE VIDEOS
RATED
5.0 7.0

PAUL JON D. CRISPIN

Publisher: Sony CE
Developer: Sony CEI
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

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Capcom is adding to the *Line of Contact* experience every week, unlocking new mechs and maps as the war rages on.

Xbox @NLIVE
**STEEL BATTALION:
 LINE OF CONTACT**

We're sorry, your line has been disconnected

Good: Gritty realism, ultrapead robo-combat
Bad: Aggravating connection problems
Find Mech-Saving Tips Online At: shb.biphen.us

CRISPIN: *Line of Contact's* target audience—mech obsessives who lived on ramen for a month to afford the required 200-buck controller—will find lots to like in this online-only follow-up. Survival in the evolving campaign requires militant commitment, exactly what you want from a simulator that demands as much hand-eye savvy as driving a stick shift while programming your VCR.

Do you pick a featherweight robot and play recon? Should you lock on to enemies—thus alerting them to your presence—or play stealthily and use trickier manual aiming? Is powering down your electrical system to spoof pursuers worth the risk of running out of air? We're talking a fighter-jet level of complexity.

But it's all a big cockpit tease, because online play is busted. You'll twiddle your sticks for half an hour waiting for enough players to start a match, and hefty connection-speed requirements make for laggy play in games with more than six people. It's a shame, because when this game works, it works. Capcom insists it's still tweaking—we'll let you know if this jolopy gets fixed up and files right.



Customize your bot with legos. Recognize ours by its totally sweet airbrushed unicorn.

MARK: To paraphrase the saying, *Line of Contact* is long periods of intense boredom interrupted by moments of sheer excitement. Maybe 10 percent of the game is actual combat. The rest is spent finding a good server (a frustrating trial-and-error process, thanks to an awful interface), waiting for others to join, outitting your mech, and moving into position. The actual fighting is thrilling—both overall strategy and reflexes on the 40-button controller are important—and the campaign mode is brilliant. But when you've fought only three battles in two hours, you start to wonder if it's worth it.

XBM—CHE: *Line of Contact* is a poorly conceived, terribly executed piece of crap—but those who already own the original 2000 game have almost no choice but to buy this full-priced addendum. Anybody who isn't a member of the decadent gaming elite, steer clear. If you can even establish a game on Xbox Live, barring connection issues, you'll have to contend with an appalling online user interface, mountainous learning curves, and impenetrable lag. Spare yourself the pain.



You've already spent \$250 on the controller and game, so what's another \$350 for this custom cockpit? Burn that money at www.fareastgaming.com.

THE VERDICT'S OUT OF US	5.0	5.5	4.5
	CRISPIN	MARK	CHE

Publisher: Capcom
 Developer: Capcom
 Players: 2-10 (online only)
 ESRB: Teen

www.capcom.com

Xbox @NLIVE

**TOCA RACE DRIVER 2:
 THE ULTIMATE RACING SIMULATOR**

Oh! In your face, *Gran Turismo*! In your face!



Good: Huge variety of racing types all done well
Bad: Career mode follows a rather linear path
Secret Joy: Inflicting six-figure damage on a six-figure car

JON D.: I'd call *TOCA* a 30-car pileup if cars were racing genres and massive accidents got me really hot. It's a smooth, sexy sampler of every driving type and terrain imaginable—from open-wheel racing to rally to big rigs in Africa (no foolin'). Online or offline, it's much more diverse and organic than the sterile *Gotham* or redundant *RailSport*, though not as deep as either. Details like the turbo whining as they spooled volumes of boost through my Skyline's engine until I let up to a satisfying chuff from the blow-off valve, as well as keen physics—exaggerated just a touch to make the skids, flips, and spectacular piece-by-piece damage more dynamic—sucked me right in. It's a great title for beginners and seasoned vets looking for a not-too-serious commitment.

I found the linear progression pretty limiting—I couldn't stray much from the beaten path—but nothing else really turned up to crash my *TOCA* party. Sorry, folks, but here's yet another Xbox racer you may have to buy this year.

DEMIAN: *TOCA* delivers the ultimate in hardcore gearhead bragging rights: a clutch button. You don't have to use it, but it's there. This is Codemasters' *Gran Turismo*, with less tinkering, garage puttering, and a little less polish, but far more diverse race classes (from Formula Ford to...semitrucks?) and a career mode that, while silly at times, actually tells a story. It's tough but rewarding if you have the skill and patience. *TOCA* also offers 12-player online racing (with optional CPU cars to round out the field), though it lacks

the extra Live features that made *Project Gotham Racing 2* so great.

XBM—CHE: *TOCA* differentiates itself from a crowded genre by covering, quite literally, the gamut of motorsport competitions. For a jack-of-all-trades-style racer, *TOCA* plays surprisingly well in all categories, mostly due to the game's brutal, yet additively realistic physics and collision system. Whether you're driving a Subaru WRX on ice in a rallycross face-off or doing laps in a NASCAR-like oval, *TOCA* feels, on a gameplay level, fundamentally consistent within its own automotive reality—on and off Xbox Live.



This ornery-but-heart-of-gold Scottish stereotype is your pit boss in career mode.

THE VERDICT'S OUT OF US	8.5	8.5	8.0
	JON D.	DEMIAN	CHE

Publisher: Codemasters
 Developer: Codemasters
 Players: 1-4 (2-12 online)
 ESRB: Everyone

www.codemasters.com

DEFINING A CULTURE,
CREATING A NATION



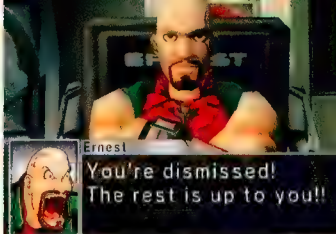
XBN
XBOX NATION

THE **ADVANCED** XBOX MAGAZINE

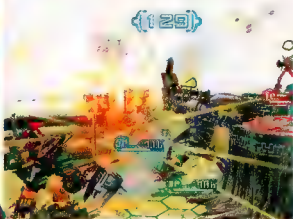


OFF LINE

PICK ONE UP ON NEWSSTANDS EVERYWHERE.



■ Your boss would rather show his feelings in pictures.



GameCube

CUSTOM ROBO

Hot robo-on-robo action...for kids

CJ: Call it *Roboman* or *Pokébot*; I do. *Custom Robo* is similar to Nintendo's monster-training game, except you've got a robot and an ever-growing collection of unique parts instead of a roster of fire-breathing puffballs. The bit where you vanquish evil (bots, in this case) in the name of truth and justice (cue victory pose) is about the same.

This simple, no-frills approach to mechanized wraaaaaasin' works: The battles are fast, the action is packed, and there's just the right amount of strategy, thanks to each holossum's (your virtual battle-grounds) varied terrain. Customizing your bot with new weapons to fit your particular combat style is easily the best part, and the game is balanced well enough so that no one robo is all-powerful.

But like Capcom's recent robo-fighter *Gatcha Force* (GC), *Custom Robo* is a single-player snooze-fest. The story mode feels like it's just there to keep you busy while you're unlocking new parts—it is well written and has a few laughs, but it never breaks from its boring, formulaic nature. You'll spot

the obvious plot twists a mile away, and it's not even exciting to watch, since the story's told through talking heads and text bubbles.

I had hoped *Custom Robo* would set a high-water mark for robo-combat games, but it's hoped for too much. Though the fighting's great (even when it's of the slightly confusing four-player variety), I can't help but be disappointed by the rest.

SHANE: Nintendo finally brings this Japanese robo-battling series Stateside, and, well, it's pretty much OK. But don't be fooled by the role-playing vibe. *Custom Robo* follows the same pseudo-RPG archetype seen in *Pokémon Colosseum*—you explore a limited overworld and talk to townsfolk, but it's all just meaningless window dressing for spacing out the combat. Some of the dialogue is cute and clever, but the plot redefines predictability, and the quest ends far earlier than you'd expect.

Thankfully, solid robot-on-robot combat helps redeem the game. As the name implies, it's all

about deep customization: Different weapons, bodies, and legs alter your bot's performance tremendously. Even so, battles tend to be extremely intense, short, and easy. Multiplayer delivers the game's fiercest thrills...too bad you have to suffer through the talky RPG to unlock all the goodies.

GM—MILKMAN: CJ and Shane can dog *Robo* all they want on account of its story, but I thought we'd settled this: It's all about the gameplay. *Virtual On*'s frantic robo-combat mixed with two parts *Pokémon* does it for me. The controls take a little getting used to, but in the long run, they prove to be even better than *Virtual On*'s, and the number of customizable parts available is second only to the amount found in the mechanically fetishistic *Armored Core* series. The presentation skews a bit young in a schoolbook sort of way, but not nearly so much as *Gatcha Force*. *Robo*'s an amalgamation of oddly similar themes that, in practice, gels as a fun and unique action-RPG.



Robo Originals
Custom Robo is new to the U.S., but the series originally debuted in Japan for Nintendo's Game Boy Advance in 1999 (and spawned a sequel released a year later). Japanese gamers also recently indulged in a 4th *Robo* connectivity between the GC game and *Custom Robo GX* for GBA. Sadly, Nintendo has no plans to bring *CX* here.

Homemade Robot Grudge Match

CUSTOM ROBO

vs.

BATTLEBOT

100+ different guns, bombs, and missile pods
With the right pair of custom legs...really damn fast
A spunky, spiky-haired anime kid from the future
A death-dealing metallic kitten from hell

WEAPONRY

TOP SPEED

OPERATOR

LOOKS LIKE

Colorful spinning blades and chin-battering ram
About 15 mph on a fresh set of batteries
Two middle-aged dudes from Austin, Texas
The late-night talk show wars' heavy-armor brigade



Reads: Robot fights to the virtual death with a sword.
Read: Boring, chatty solo game
Love Child: *Pokémon* and *Sonic*'s *Invincible*



THE METACRITIC SCORES

6.5 6.0 8.0
CJ SHANE MILKMAN

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Noise
Players: 1-4
ESRB: Teen

www.custom-robo.com

REVIEWS WRAP-UP

Beneath the radar, in under the wire

Catch quick looks at the games that didn't make the cut this month or won't show until next issue.

The X-Files: Resistor or Blister?



■ **Play as Mulder (for shootin') or Scully (for more puzzles...and autopsies).**

PS2/XB • VU Games — It's billed as an "original" episode of the controversial conspiracy TV show, and *Resistor or Serve* delivers with all the series' stars providing voices, a clever script, and appearances from every major character—including the Lone Gunmen and that nefarious cigarette-smoking old guy. But there's nothing original about the gameplay, cloned from *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill*, complete with zombies and crummy control.

Red Dead Revolver

PS2/XB • Rockstar — After languishing in development for years, Western-themed shooter *Red Dead Revolver* eluded our review posse (on account of the varmints at



■ **You cowboys are so transparent...**

Rockstar not giving it to us on time) and rode into stores. Our impressions, based on a half hour or so with a near-final version? We noticed the aiming system was mercifully simplified from the spazzy controls of previous versions, giving the game a faster, more arcade-like feel. The sweat-stained Old West vibe is definitely in full effect, with music, environments, and even the game's menus carrying the theme well. We got the sense the gunplay could get repetitive (many enemies behaved like shooting-gallery cutouts), but some gameplay variety (including a unique quick-draw mechanic using the analog stick and a level in which you ride a horse alongside an armored train) gave us hope.

Manhunt

Xbox • Rockstar — Just so's you know, *Manhunt* is out for Xbox, so if you want slightly better graphics when decapitating dudes with garrotes and baseball bats, go for it.



■ **A rare scene devoid of decapitation.**

Otherwise, there's little to differentiate it from the PS2 version. Mark our words: When politicians catch wind of this game in about eight years, it'll finally bump *Mortal Kombat* and *Doom* as the premier malevolent force corrupting our children.

Future Tactics: The Uprising



■ **Yeah, they're supposed to look dumb.**

PS2/XB/GC • Crave — Humans fight cartoon ore monsters in this silly take on *Final Fantasy Tactics*. It's not cutting-edge, but the gameplay's impressive for a \$15 title. Though we ran out of space in this issue, we aim to shoehorn a full look at *Tactics* in next month's Review Crew. ☹

REVIEW CREW SURVIVOR

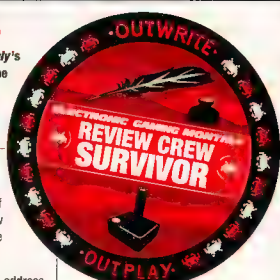
Think you got the goods to join *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* Review Crew? Let us take you down a notch, hotshot. One lucky writer will join the Review Crew on a contributing basis...if he or she can make it through *Review Crew Survivor*. The rest of you get public humiliation.

Send This:

■ **A VHS tape**—two minutes with you on camera, telling us why you belong on the Review Crew, and five minutes of you playing a videogame of your choice, demonstrating how hardcore you are. We want to see you playing the game, the action on the screen, and that cheat devices were used.

■ **Writing samples**—two 200-word reviews of two different videogames of your choice (don't forget to include scores using our review scale—see pg. 91)

■ **Your name, mailing address, and phone number to: EGM Review Crew Survivor 101 Second St, 8th Floor San Francisco, CA 94105**



Entries due in our hands by **Wednesday, June 30, 2004**

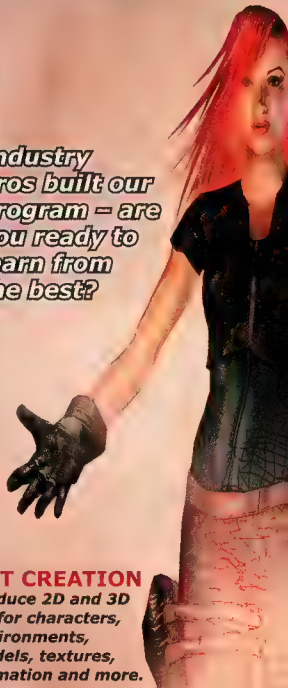
In an upcoming issue, we'll select 15 candidates to participate in a series of writing challenges. Your work will be put up for the world to see in EGM and on egmsurvivor.1up.com, and that same world will vote to decide who gets kicked off each month. We'll ask the last survivor to be an official reviewer for one issue (or more). Now get writing!

*Subject to terms and conditions, of course. Each month, the surviving candidates will have to turn in a new writing sample for publication and judging. Failure to submit by the given deadline will result in automatic disqualification. After reader votes, we will inform the survivors what they are to do next and when. We will continue this until one person is left. The winner will be paid one penny. Everyone else for one dollar. No exceptions for at least one issue. Must be 18 or older. Please don't. We reserve all rights to stop the program at any time. Winner may contribute to the main Review Crew section of Future Review Wrap-up depending on logistics like time access to update accounts hardware used to print reviewable discs. Full rules and legal notices available at <http://www.egm.com>

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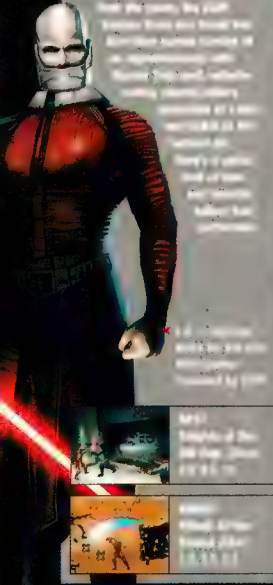
Who needs an oracle when you can just ask the archive?

greatest hit or miss?



RALLISPORT CHALLENGE

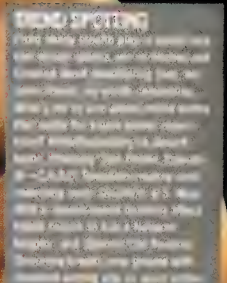
■ Xbox
 ■ Released: March 2002
 ■ Original Scores: 8.5, 8.5, 8.0
 In the United States, rally racing receives about as much attention as a soda vendor at a NASCAR event. Luckily, you don't have to be a fan to enjoy Microsoft's off-road ride. *RC* sports lush visuals, tight handling, and a newbie-friendly learning curve.



GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
1080° Avalanche	GC	■ It's snowboarding on game: more <i>Speed Racer</i> than <i>Tony Hawk</i>	7.5 7.0 5.5	
Aliforce Delta Strike	PS2	■ Slow-moving flight sim starts before it reaches the danger zone	3.5 3.5 6.0	
All-Star Baseball 2005	PS2/XB	■ Take us to the ball game... just not this one	5.5 4.5 6.0	
American Idol	PS2	■ In our best Simon Cowell voice: "Bloody awful!"	1.5 2.0 1.0	
Amped 2	XB	■ An eye-pleasing boarder with very few patches of yellow snow	8.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
Armed and Dangerous	XB	■ Looks like butt, but plays better than blasé blasters like <i>Brute Force</i>	6.5 7.0 8.0	
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II	PS2/XB	■ Painted with dated graphics and rife with dull level design	7.0 4.5 5.0	
Battlestar Galactica	PS2/XB	■ Launched before all systems were go	6.0 6.0 5.5	
Beyond Good & Evil	PS2/XB/GC	■ Shutter-bug Jade's picture-perfect adventure was underexposed. Snap it up	8.5 9.0 8.0	Silver
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
Breakdown	XB	■ You can practically feel the impacts in this first-person brawler	8.5 7.5 7.0	
Champions of Norrath: Realms of EQ	PS2	■ A <i>Dark Alliance</i> -style take on <i>EverQuest</i> , complete with online co-op	8.5 8.0 8.5	
Colin McRae Rally 04	XB	■ Rev your engines for 04's top-notch handling and wicked terrain	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
Counter-Strike	XB	■ A bare-bones first-person shooter that's 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 Sea 2	PS2	■ Space rans nau with bug blood when <i>Dynasty Warriors</i> goes sci-fi	8.0 7.0 6.5	
Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge	GC	■ 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
City Girls	PS2	■ Progress-mirroring puzzles will make you feel like the butt of a bad blonde joke	7.0 5.0 5.0	
Dance Dance Revolution Ultramix	XB	■ Perfect your gimpy step and build a pimp rap	8.0 8.5 7.0	
Dead Man's Hand	XB	■ Find out how the West was dumb in this cowboy first-person shooting gallery	6.5 5.0 4.5	
Daus Ex: Invisible War	XB	■ Invisible War's captivating story compensates for its technical shortcomings	8.0 9.0 7.0	Silver
Dragon Ball Z: Taktika	GBA	■ Sucks balls!	5.5 4.0 3.5	
Dragon	XB	■ A shooter so horribly busted that it's almost funny. It's mostly sad, though	2.0 0.5 2.5	
Drakengard	PS2	■ <i>Dynasty Warriors</i> meets <i>Plunder Dragon</i> , only not as good as either one	7.0 7.0 3.5	
Dynasty Tactics 2	PS2	■ Medieval Chinese generals put on their wisest headgear before going to war	7.5 7.5 7.5	
EA Sports Fight Night 2004	PS2/XB	■ EA returns to the ring under a new name and registers a knockout	8.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
ESPN College Hoops	PS2/XB	■ Our own NCAA investigation reveals that <i>ESPN</i> plays too much like a pro game	6.5 7.5 6.5	
ESPN Major League Baseball	PS2/XB	■ If <i>MLP</i> is this season's <i>Tankies</i> , then sadly, <i>ESPN</i> is its <i>Boxer</i>	8.0 8.5 7.5	Silver
ESPN NBA Basketball	PS2/XB	■ Even Kobe Bryant's star-studded team slugged stumbling finding fault with this one	8.5 9.5 9.0	Gold
ESPN NHL Hockey	PS2/XB	■ If we were in Detroit, we'd be throwing an octopus into the ice. Goal!	8.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
EverQuest Online Adventures: Frontiers	PS2	■ Doesn't the front lawn constitute a new frontier to <i>Evercrack</i> -heads?	6.5 6.0 7.0	
EyeToy: Groove	PS2	■ Don't let looking like a displaying ape stop you	8.0 8.0 7.0	
Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel	PS2/XB	■ Repetitive crotch hurling in a watered-down wasteland	7.0 4.5 4.5	
Fatal Frame II: Crimson Butterfly	PS2	■ Combating porterguests with a Polaroid is scarier than it sounds	4.5 7.5 6.5	
FIFA Soccer 2004	PS2/XB/GC	■ Responsive on-field controls make it a breeze to band it like Beckham	7.5 9.0 8.0	Silver
Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles	GC	■ Charming action-RPG so cute that it could give Hello Kitty a heart attack	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	GBA	■ Deep strategy for the on-the-go tactician. Comp set with androgynous heroes	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Final Fantasy X-2	PS2	■ Yuna and her female friends rock Spira like never before, and we like it	8.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Fire Emblem	PS2	■ Deep tactical strategy, but your trip through fantasyland ends too quickly	7.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
Firefighter F.I. 18	GBA	■ Fight fires, fireman-hating robots, and trial-and-error gameplay	6.5 6.0 4.0	
Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde	PS2/XB/GC	■ Off the leash real-time strategy with a few warts	8.0 6.0 4.5	
Grabbed by the Ghoules	XB	■ Something seriously stupid this way comes	6.5 4.0 4.5	
Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup	PS2/XB/GC	■ Rugby, basketball, and nerds on broomsticks collide with thrilling results	7.5 7.5 6.5	
Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life	GC	■ Would you really have more fun watching the grass grow? Find out	6.5 6.5 7.0	
The Hobbit	PS2/XB/GC	■ Bilbo Baggins' journey just isn't as appealing as his young nephew's	6.5 5.0 7.0	
James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing	PS2/XB/GC	■ With brains, brawn, bullets, and balls, Bond saves the world again. Splendid	8.0 8.5 8.5	Silver
Karaoke Revolution	PS2	■ Like real karaoke, except the audience actually boos you offstage for bad singing	8.5 8.5 7.5	Silver
King of Fighters 2000 & 2001	PS2	■ Deep and responsive, but only dieters will choose it over Capcom's 2D fighters	5.5 5.0 7.5	
Kyr: Dark Lineage	PS2	■ Profoundly mediocre platformer with aspirations of greatness	6.5 6.0 5.0	
Legacy of Kain: Defiance	PS2/XB	■ Stunniingly gorgeous. Let the blood sucking and soul reaving commence	7.5 8.0 7.0	
Lethal Skies II	PS2	■ Not even the two-player modes earn <i>Skies</i> any frequent-flier mileage	3.0 5.5 4.0	
Links 2004	XB	■ A shallow create-a-golfer mode keeps <i>Links</i> a few strokes behind <i>Tiger</i>	6.5 7.5 6.5	
LifeLine	PS2	■ Wanna play <i>Resident Evil</i> again, using speech recognition that doesn't really work?	4.5 4.5 4.0	
Lowlander	PS2	■ Multiplayer mode is the stuff drinking games are made of	5.0 5.5 2.0	
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	PS2/XB/GC	■ Stick an orc in it, it's fun! Stick a thousand orcs in it, it's...er...funner	8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	GBA	■ Legolas gets shrunk to Kiebler size and your girlfriend still thinks he's hot	7.0 6.0 7.5	
Lupin the 3rd	PS2	■ Fanatically true to the anime, but fiddly controls and lame puzzles steal the fun	6.5 5.0 7.5	
Mafia	PS2/XB	■ Jack jaiopsies and outdrives thugs in this gillythy 1930s gangster game	8.0 6.0 7.5	
Magic the Gathering: Battlegrounds	XB	■ The cards say you need a life	4.0 5.5 4.5	
Manhunt	PS2	■ 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>	9.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
Mario Kart: Double Dash!!	GC	■ Cooperative driving spells pure, unfiltered fun	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
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	■ Bul it time in your back pocket	7.0 7.0 8.0	
Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne	PS2/XB	■ Snow-mo bloodshed at its hard-boiled best	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver

■ **Fight Night 2004—**
what a knockout

GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	REMARKS
Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	PS2/XB/GC	■ A few stunning set pieces can't save this rough-edged shooter from mediocrity	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 2003	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes	GC	■ The stealth-action classic is still solid enough to make this remake a must-play	9.0 9.0 8.5	Silver
Metroid Zero Mission	WIIA	■ Samus blasts back to her first adventure in this surprise-filled remake	9.5 9.0 9.0	Gold
Midway Arcade Treasures	PS2/XB/GC	■ With 20 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 Summit	PS2/XB	■ Mr. Inuit could use less-ambersome controls and quicker-witted fess	6.5 6.5 6.0	
MLB 2005	PS2	■ A cack trip to the minors has made <i>MLB</i> a title contender again	7.0 7.0 7.0	
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 repetitive dungeons don't bother all of our reviewers	5.5 7.0 6.5	
MTX: Mototrax	PS2/XB	■ Poor handling has our bike stuck in the mud. Wait, that doesn't smell like mud	6.0 6.5 5.5	
MX Unleashed	PS2/XB	■ Riding <i>Unleashed's</i> off-road crotch rockets is worth the sore coccyx	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
MVP Baseball 2004	PS2/XB/GC	■ Like the Bronx Bombers, <i>MVP's</i> new additions will excite all baseball fans	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
NBA Live 2004	PS2/XB/GC	■ Not even the Laker Girls can compete with <i>Live's</i> stylish on-court moves	8.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
NCAA March Madness 2004	PS2/WII	■ It's awesome, baby, with a capital <i>A!</i>	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
NFL Blitz Pro	PS2/XB/GC	■ A Madden-like face-lift puts <i>Blitz</i> firmly back in the pay-off race	7.0 7.0 6.0	
NFL Fever 2004	XB	■ Scant franchise options keep <i>Fever</i> warming the bench	6.5 6.5 6.0	
NFL Street	PS2/XB/GC	■ The gridiron gods have <i>Street</i> -fied football, and, boy, is it good	8.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
NHL 2004	PS2/XB/GC	■ Beefy dynasty mode, but plays and looks as ugly as a hockey player's smile	8.5 6.5 7.0	
NHL Hitz Pro	PS2/XB/GC	■ Like a porn star's assets, <i>Hitz</i> isn't exactly realistic, but it's sure fun to play with	7.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
NHL Rivals 2004	XII	■ Our referees slap <i>Rivals</i> with a five-minute major for sucking	3.5 4.0 8.5	
Nightshade	PS2	■ 3 <i>Ninja Kick Back</i> on a scale of nms-tude	8.0 5.5 5.0	
Ninja Gaiden	PS2	■ Swordplay so sweet you'll break out the igiri-tai step-one	9.5 9.5 8.5	Gold
Onimusha Blade Warriors	XB	■ Think <i>Super Smash Bros. (GC)</i> with Bushido instead of butt slomping	7.0 7.0 7.5	
Pao-Man Vs.	GC	■ Excellent multiplayer makes <i>GBA</i> connectivity worthwhile. Wooka wooka!	8.0 7.5 9.0	Silver
Phantasy Star Online: Episode III	GC	■ The infectious fun card game got us hooked on <i>PSO's</i> world for a third time	9.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
Pirates of the Caribbean	XB	■ Suffers more glitches than the <i>Dance</i> ride in a thunderstorm	6.0 6.5 4.5	
Pitfall: The Lost Expedition	PS2/XB/GC	■ Maybe—just maybe—I should have stayed east	6.5 5.0 5.5	
Pokémon Channel	GC	■ Good God, change the channel!	3.5 2.0 8.0	
Pokémon Colosseum	GC	■ Story mode injects some life into this otherwise mediocre Poké-battler	7.0 5.0 7.0	
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	Pokémon	■ An open-minded vision in which time moves at the speed of your imagination	9.5 9.0 9.5	Gold
Project Gotham Racing 2	XB	■ Buckle up for the best racer since <i>Gran Turismo 3</i>	9.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
R: Racing Evolution	PS2/XB/GC	■ Looks fantastic, but it feels like you're driving on ice	6.5 6.0 4.5	
Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando	PS2	■ Everything you've ever wanted from an action game. And an absolute must-buy	8.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Rise to Honor	PS2	■ Look, it's Jet Li...in a kinda repetitive brawler with cheap enemies in <i>FUBU</i> gear	6.5 6.5 6.0	Silver
RPG Maker 2	PS2	■ No matter how cool the concept, your RPG will look like crap	5.5 3.5 6.5	
R-Type Final	PS2	■ Pure side-scrolling shooter bliss. Plus, it's only 30 bucks	8.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
Samurai Jack: The Shadow of Aku	PS2/XB/GC	■ This samurai's game is better than expected...but still can't beat the cartoon	6.0 7.0 5.5	
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
Seven Samurai 20XX	PS2	■ See har-kan	3.5 3.5 4.0	
Silent Scope Complete	XII	■ There's no better way to freak out America's politicians than with this sniper game	6.5 5.0 6.0	
The Sims: Bustle! Out	PS2/XB/GC	■ Even your lady friend will bust out a controller and play	9.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
The Sims: Bustle! In	GBA	■ Surprisingly rewarding for an errand-running simulator	8.0 6.0 8.0	
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	XB	■ Sam's solo missions take few chances, but the multiplayer mode is revolutionary	1.0 9.5 9.5	
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	WIIA	■ Packs the stealth gameplay of the big-console version but none of the fun	4.5 5.0 4.5	
SODCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs	PS2	■ This is one online war we hope never sees a cease in hostilities	9.0 9.0 9.5	Gold
Sonic Battle	WIIA	■ Sonic and pals come to fistfights in this love-it-or-hate-it pseudo-3D brawler	7.0 5.0 4.5	
Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy	XB	■ Another bland <i>Star Wars</i> tri- <i>rd</i> -person action game? Time to drop out	6.0 6.0 3.0	
The Suffering	PS2	■ Midway's minime could've benefited from a few more months of rehabilitation	6.5 6.0 6.5	
Super Mario Advance 4	GBA	■ Undoubtedly stands the test of time as one of history's greatest platformers	9.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Sword of Mana	GBA	■ Managing your weapons requires a master's degree in metallurgy	6.5 6.5 5.0	
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	■ As hot as Tiger's bride-to-be. Well, almost	8.0 9.0 8.5	Gold
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm	PS2	■ One play is OK, but good God, these graphics are uglier than a colon polyp	4.5 5.0 8.5	
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3	XB	■ Of <i>Clancy's Rainbow</i> is one of Xbox's sharpest shooters	10.0 7.5 9.0	Silver
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3	PS2	■ Too bad the dumbed-down PS2 version misses the mark	9.0 6.0 8.0	
Tony Hawk's Underground	PS2/XB/GC	■ Good Lord...he is? Samaras get h'm it!	9.0 9.0 1.0	Gold
Top Spin	XB	■ Here's your only chance to ever score with tennis bambahe! Anna Kournikova	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
True Crime: Streets of L.A.	PS2/XB/GC	■ A spot-on re-creation of Los Angeles. Top bad the ride is over so quickly	6.5 9.5 9.5	
Unreal II: The Awakening	XB	■ Blast a molley assortment of aliens with a molley assortment of weaponry	7.0 6.5 6.5	
Warrio Wars, Inc.: Mega Party Game\$	GBA	■ Single-player stinks of a quick cash-in—gotta bill with four friends	6.0 6.5 7.0	
Wrath: Unleashed	PS2/XB	■ A half-assed strategy game plus a half-assed fighter make...well, you do the math	7.0 4.0 7.5	
Winning Eleven 7	PS2	■ Soccer action more intense than a David Beckham-Pooh Spice embrace	9.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
WWE Raw 2: Ruthless Aggression	XB	■ We will rip you out	3.0 5.5 4.5	
WWE SmackDown! Here Comes the Pain	PS2	■ 'Cause it doesn't tell you that the pain won't subside for 4 to 6 weeks	7.5 7.0 7.0	
WWE WrestleMania XIX	GC	■ Better than years past, but a steroid injection or two away from main-event status	7.5 7.5 6.5	
Worms 3D	PS2/XB/GC	■ That's an entire extra dimension of concurred carnage! Great multiplayer fun	7.5 7.5 6.5	



XENOSAGA: EPISODE I

■ **PlayStation 2**
 ■ **Released: February 2003**
 ■ **Original Scores: 8.0, 8.0, 6.5**

You'll never have so much fun not playing a game. Long cut-scenes could've had us counting sheep, but *Xenosaga* scored with a story too big, too bold, and too far out there to wrap up in a few words. A deep battle system brings the spacey plot back down to earth.

tricks of the trade

Tasty tips and cheats to satisfy your hearty gaming appetite

trickster

You can stop mailing flaming poop to my door; the Trickery department wasn't responsible for last issue's April fool. So yes, that N-Gage code really does exist.



Meanwhile, this month's tip-based cup rummeh over with gargantuan dollops of *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow* multiplayer fun, more male Bonding than an episode of *Straight Plan for the Gay Man*, and some timely combat for the horribly out-classed assassin sobbing through *Ninja Gaiden*. Finally! A game to induce weeping in grown men (*American Idol* not included).

—David S. J. Hodgson
egm@ziffdavis.com

■ Xbox

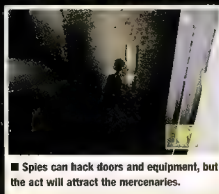
SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW

When you think "tactical espionage action," there's one gameplay element that's usually missing: taking your lone operative online with friends. Forget what you've previously learned about multiplayer battles. When *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow*'s spies and mercenaries go head-to-head, kiss the standard rules of engagement goodbye.

Here you will join one of two teams: Shadownet (the spies) or ARGUS (the mercenaries). Like a high-tech game of hide-and-seek, Shadownet coordinates an elaborate plan to destroy or steal highly dangerous research material, while ARGUS (Armed Guardian Services) hunts down the trespassers with a combination of deadly bullets and specialized surveillance equipment.

Shadownet strategies

As a Shadownet player, you can use shadows and hiding spots to your advantage, but remember that you're dealing with human opponents, not



■ Spies can hack doors and equipment, but the act will attract the mercenaries.



■ You can rely on stealth as the Shadownet spies, or dip into firepower as the ARGUS mercenaries.

preprogrammed artificial intelligence. When you hide in the shadows, it should be only for a few moments, or you might as well paint a large bull's-eye on your chest for the mercenaries.

Initial tactics



■ Flick on night vision for short bursts to see more clearly in darkness.

Call a powwow with your fellow teammates at the start of a mission to define your plan of attack. If at all possible, you want to work in tandem with another spy. When you reach an objective point, one spy should neutralize the ND133 canister while the second spy knocks out security measures or provides cover fire against any incoming mercs.

While out in the field, it's OK to flip on night vision to clear up the gloom, but don't leave it on. As the spy providing cover fire, you want to stay as invisible a

target as possible while assaulting the enemy, and night vision shows up like a bonfire on the merc's electromagnetic mode. This goes double for the spy neutralizing the ND133; you're only helping the mercenaries zero in as a stationary target with night vision on.

Best equipment

There are a bunch of options for a spy's initial setup, but the tried-and-true blueprint involves smoke grenades, flashbang grenades, sticky cameras, and spy bullets. Link your smoke and flashbang grenades to your hotkeys for quick access when the mercenaries suddenly appear, and use them to get out of trouble. Smoke grenades usually work best: If you're being fired at, it's a good idea to drop a smoke grenade and disappear in the commotion. The mercenary may charge into the smoke after you, but prolonged exposure will knock him out. Otherwise, you can slip through while the enemy is blinded by the smoke—or throw a flashbang to opt for a "flashier" escape.

Tip

Gain valuable extra seconds while neutralizing an ND133 by dropping a smoke grenade to stall approaching mercs. The sticky camera is less about intelligence and more about incapacitation.

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■ Game Boy Advance

METROID: ZERO MISSION

You mean I can play the entire original 8-bit *Metroid* (NES) on this mini-cartridge, too? That's all well and good, but have you seen my impressive collection of Neo-Geo giant carts? Anyone?

Fusion Gallery

Link with *Metroid Fusion*.

Gallery

Complete the game and different images will be added depending on your time and the percentage of items collected.

Hard Mode

Complete the game once.

Original Metroid

Complete the game once.

Sound Test

Complete hard mode.

Time Attack

Once you complete the game, start a new game at that save spot and a timer will appear on the Map screen.

Ending 1

Complete the game on normal in under two hours with 100%.

Ending 2

Complete the game on normal or hard in over two hours with 100%.

Ending 3

Complete the game on easy, or on

normal or hard in over four hours with more than 15%.

Ending 4

Complete the game on normal or hard in under two hours with more than 15%.

Ending 5

Complete the game on hard in under two hours with 100%.

Ending 6

Complete the game on normal with less than 15%.

Ending 7

Complete the game on hard with less than 15%.



Ending 8

Complete the game on either normal or hard in around three hours with more than 15%.

TRICKS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIMA GAMES

Craving more from your American special agent/British special agent/Japanese special agent/bald special agent? Then be sure to pick up Prima's official strategy guides for *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow*, *James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing*, *Ninja Gaiden*, and *Hitman: Contracts*. That's where we nabbed these juicy tidbits.



■ For a quick escape from enemies, simply drop a smoke grenade.

You can shoot if near a camping mercenary and spray him with gas, knocking him out without risking yourself in the process. The spy bullet does provide intel, letting you listen in on mercs' headset communications and pointing them out on your radar. Just don't be fooled by any misleading chats: Smart merc players may purposely throw you off by saying the wrong things if they suspect someone is listening to them.

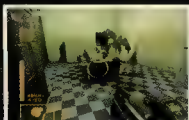
As far as your gun goes, don't think you can pull a Jesse James and out-duel a mercenary. You can't kill the enemy with your gun; it should only be used in desperate situations to stun a mercenary and make a run for it. Keep your gun holstered and worry about completing your team objectives.

Head games

When all is said and done, your most important tactic is subterfuge. Send one spy to trigger an alarm at a main entrance, especially one close to an ND133 canister, and force the mercenaries to counter with some armed security. While they're busy in that section, a second spy can mount a quick in-and-out assault on another building's ND133. Operate in a timely manner and you'll have the mercenaries pulling out their collective hair.

ARGUS Corporation Strategies

Named after the 100-eyed giant guarding the Golden Fleece in "Jason and the Argonauts," this private military organization



■ Don't let the spies trick you into abandoning an ND133 canister.



■ While your partner distracts the mercs, you grab the ND133 and run.

specializes in contravention and security consultation. ARGUS mercenaries wield the heavy firepower in multiplayer and rack up kill totals quickly.

Initial tactics



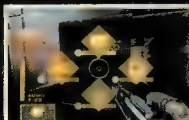
■ Use electromagnetic and motion-tracking modes to hunt down spies.

The mercenaries go into each level with built-in advantages. Not only do they have guns that kill, but each merc comes with a special ability—pupil adaptation—that simulates the human ability to gradually see better in the dark. If a mercenary remains motionless or moves very slowly, eventually he'll be able to discern shapes, including that spy in the corner who thinks he's pulling a fast one.

Memorize each map until you can run through the whole thing in electromagnetic or motion-tracking modes. Once you know all the stairs, corners, and ND133 locations by heart, you can increase your odds of catching spies without running into walls.

Best equipment

Your gun blows away the Shadownet spy gun by a mile. You can switch between burst and full auto, and your rifle comes loaded with a powerful grenade launcher to

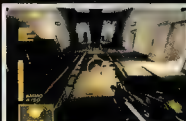


■ Load up on grenades, spy traps, and mines to deter the crafty spies.

scatter multiple opponents with a single pump.

To complement the rifle, your starting equipment setup should be frag grenades, taser, spy traps, and mines. Choose a fragmentation grenade over the phosphorus variety. Phosphorus grenades look cool and sound great in theory (you can track your opponent's glowing footsteps wherever he goes), but you may confuse friendly footsteps with enemy ones, and if you can hit a spy with a grenade, why not stun him with a deadly frag instead? Lastly, use the taser to stun that elusive spy, especially the one running around trying to break your neck from behind. Try double tapping left or right, then hitting the taser, for a quick 180 degree attack.

Trapped!



■ Plant your spy traps near entries you know the spies will cross.

Looking for the ideal place for a spy trap? Load up near entries close to the spy's spawn points. You know the sneaky buggers will come through there, and this will give you even more time to prepare. Hide the traps near cameras and motion detectors to maximize camouflage. Sure, spies will be ready to deactivate the standard security measures, but you'll probably catch them off guard with a backup trap.

Don't bother with traps near the ND133 canisters. Once the spy begins to neutralize the canister, you'll detect the attack, so it's better to plant a mine near the ND133 to blow the spies to pieces.

Resort to laser mines only to cover large areas. In most cases, proximity mines will be more effective since they don't have lasers that can be detected in the spy's infrared vision.

Tip

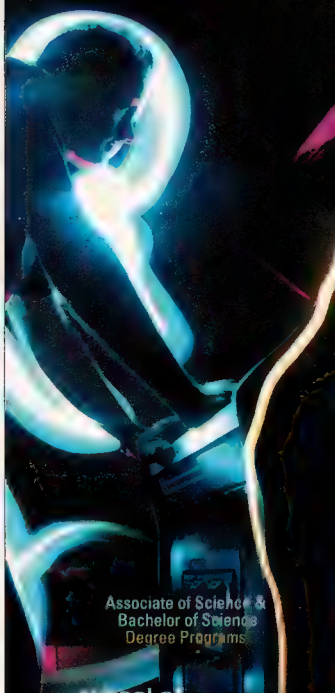
One final trick: Kill your teammate. When you have enough team lives and time's running short, whack your partner so he can restock on mines and spy traps and seed the level even more in your favor.

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■ Xbox

NINJA GAIDEN

If you've uttered any expletives during your *Ninja Gaiden* battling, then you need a little help. Head back to your local game shop, re-purchase the game, and try again with some sort of commitment this time. This is how difficult gaming used to be, you namby-pamby urchins! Ask your strange-smelling uncle who runs that retro-gaming website...he'll tell you.

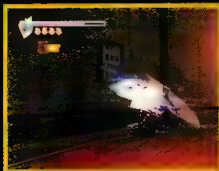
Secrets of the Ninja

Herein you'll uncover a wealth of information that will help you deal most righteously with any unwitting foe who stumbles across the path of Ryu's unerring blade.

Dragon Sword: The Dragon Sword will be the weapon you spend the most time with simply because it is the most versatile weapon in your copious arsenal (the others are more specialized implements of persuasion). Therefore, these techniques will become the mainstay of your adventure throughout the Victorian Empire.

Essential techniques

The Final Solution: For lower-level enemies of any stripe, the Final Solution equates to instant death. All it requires is combining the Guillotine Throw (press Y while near an enemy) with a follow-up Flying Sparrow (press Y while jumping toward an enemy) while your enemy's flat on his back. This one-two punch will decapitate just about any low-level enemy in the game and should be a



mainstay in your arsenal even at higher levels of play. **Note:** You must first find the Guillotine Throw technique scroll, as well as upgrade the Dragon Sword to level 2 before you can access this ability.

Deadly Orbit: By itself, the Flying Swallow is one of the most powerful and useful moves in the game. Flying through the air like a self-propelled missile, Ryu can bring a world of hurt on anyone he smites. However, the one thing better than a single Flying Sparrow is multiples thereof—the more the merrier. To that end, the Deadly Orbit merely requires that the moment you complete one Flying Sparrow, you immediately begin another. This is a key technique for dealing with many of the bosses in the game, so learn it well. **Note:** You'll need to upgrade the Dragon Sword to level 2 before enjoying the benefits this mode of attack conveys.

Secret weapons

Dabiharo: This massive sword, with its 100-pound heft, makes the War Hammer seem like a child's toy. In addition to shattering walls and barriers just as well as the Hammer, it's also a much more powerful weapon. **Note:** You'll need to collect 20 golden scarabs to get your hands on this one.

Kittetsu: This is Doku's cursed sword, which you'll claim from his fallen (corporeal) form after bringing him down with your "natural" weapons. Equipping this weapon, however, comes with a terrible price: Ryu's life will be slowly drained for as long as he carries this enchanted blade. To nullify the curse, you'll need something more.... **Note:** You



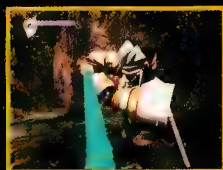
■ Fly, what big weaguens you have!

must defeat Doku at the end of Chapter 11 to get his sword.

Unlabeled Flawlessness: Perhaps you've noticed the wooden sword available at the ship. You'll also note that it has far more levels than any other weapon in the game—Unlabeled Flawlessness is why. This massive, ornate weapon is deadly in the extreme. Though it lacks a blade's keen edge, the sheer bludgeoning power of this weapon is more than a match for any foe in the game. Beware, though: Due to its extreme size, it makes for a very unwieldy weapon. **Note:** You must upgrade the wooden sword to its maximum level to get this weapon.

Windmill Throwing Star (plus, Y marks the spot): *Ninja Gaiden*'s massive, boomerang-like throwing star can be used as many times as you want (like the standard shuriken). The difference is that it's much larger and can be used to mow down even powerful foes who would laugh off the stinging barbs your base shuriken delivers. **Note:** You must go down the street from Han's bar into a narrow alleyway. Use the narrow blue-striped area to venture into the back corner where this weapon awaits.

Lightsaber-toothed Ninja: Once you've beaten the game on normal difficulty, hold the left trigger while beginning another game; you'll gain access to an entirely new costume and sword with which to face the enemy again. Though the Plasma Sword doesn't seem to be any more powerful than the Dragon Sword, it does make a nice whooshing sound when swung. ▶



■ PS2/XB

MX UNLEASHED

Crave the smell of both burning gasoline and mud, but wanting teensy bikes or all the bonuses unlocked? Then you've come to the right arena. Simply enter the following *MX Unleashed* codes at the Character Completion part of the cheats section.

Cheat	Code
All Bonuses	clappedout
50cc Bikes	squirreldog
Professional physics	swappin

■ PlayStation 2

NIGHTSHADE

In the other ninja-based action romp, we've set out the weepingly difficult plan to squeeze every last

katana slash out of this title. This is officially the month of shurting, weeping, and gnashing of teeth at Japanese stealth assassins.



EX Mission Stage 1

3 Clan Coins

EX Mission Stage 2

14 Clan Coins

EX Mission Stage 3

24 Clan Coins

EX Mission Stage 4

35 Clan Coins

EX Mission Stage 5

45 Clan Coins

EX Mission Stage 6

56 Clan Coins

EX Mission Stage 7

68 Clan Coins

EX Mission Stage 8

80 Clan Coins

Survival Stage 1

10 Clan Coins

Survival Stage 2

21 Clan Coins

Survival Stage 3

31 Clan Coins

Survival Stage 4

42 Clan Coins

Survival Stage 5

52 Clan Coins

Survival Stage 6

64 Clan Coins

Survival Stage 7

76 Clan Coins

Survival Stage 8

88 Clan Coins

Time Attack Stage 1

7 Clan Coins

Time Attack Stage 2

17 Clan Coins

Time Attack Stage 3

28 Clan Coins

Time Attack Stage 4

38 Clan Coins

Time Attack Stage 5

49 Clan Coins

Time Attack Stage 6

60 Clan Coins

Time Attack Stage 7

72 Clan Coins

Time Attack Stage 8

84 Clan Coins



vs.



Horr Replay unleashes *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles* codes and finishes the chamber with a *Drakengard* discharge...

Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles (GC)

7PK2-E5AY-6V1MA
ETH4-U7W2-CUH81

Drakengard (PS2)

[M] PWPW-6TFO-5YHWB
VR7W-88GB-PYX1Q

[M] JF2W-MWU3-VPWA5
17AEK-66ZY-X458X

Infinite Health: Single Player

21HN-7POZ-W5Z50
TET3-JX34-E856H
UQCZ-R9U8-M8GMH
W1ZK-K8M8-6YW17

Exclusive!

100 Chain
JDCG-XU2G-TC1K5
T2U7-8DEC-YRDF0

Able To Name Character Anything
TGCS-CW71-PHAC5
YQ8B-MB29-B5W2N

Exclusive!

Quick EXP Level Up
CPTG-T4P7-8P6C7
DOMD-KVKQ-2FRV7

Max Hearts
F698-9WNW-YG2MR
CMGB-MVE9-KG06J

Infinite HP

KUY3-QDCC-0J4W7
8CV1-2HF6-Z8BPK

Super Max Strength
14F3-4U3A-MGNTP
EJJD-ECGT-EQ76F
PLJK-2QCF-0808Z

Max HP

HJHW-4HX8-23R5Y
OKEA-439X-JYUCF

Super Max Defense
64VX-E9QZ-V7ZXW
DY71-C04F-WXEN2
Z73B-E56A-MXBXP

Infinite MP

N35Z-9MWQ-J6UAM
MMX9-18YD-3667F

Super Max Magic
W8UE-WDDY-74RUN
GR64-J2BG-WY8U2
D4X9-1MAE-R4BBU

Max MP

UXPC-TQR8-EANCF
6YMT-JGWR-KHVTT

Able To Leave Challenge Area
9REX-REMT-BX57E

9999 Kills

T1EC-2UQJ-X34G1
JUFJ-V5QZ-QGD7P



...while Monsieur Shark unleashes *Lupin the Third* character costume changes and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms IX* codes.

Romance of the Three Kingdoms IX (PS2)

[M] Must Be On
94D0B8E0 B4EE1064

Create Officer: Infinite TacitP
24129408 3E3C475A

All Cities: Max Trust
245005F2 937413EF
24C01DEC 125713DD

All Cities: Max Trade
241004F2 937413EF
24801FEE 1257138D

All Cities: Max Farm
241004F2 93F4136F
24801CEE 92D713ED

Lupin the Third: Treasure of the Sorcerer King (PS2)

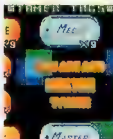
Infinite Amm
2440382E BC74558A

Infinite Dummy Dolls
24003E2E BE74434A

Infinite Escape Time
24909068 3634C338

Infinite Stamina
2480B97A 3EB49598

Security Manual
0450B269 3634D728



Disposition Document
0450B269 3634D788

Exclusive!

Police Disguise
0450B069 3634D7A8

Exclusive!

Inspector Zenigata's Disguise
0450B369 3634D708

Exclusive!

Traveler's Disguise
0450B369 3634D738

Exclusive!

Guest Disguise
0450B369 36B4D728

Exclusive!

Guard Disguise
0410B069 3634D728

Exclusive!

Riot Police Disguise
0410B069 3634D788

Exclusive!

Raven Kreuz Disguise
0410B369 3634D718

Digimon Battle Spirit 2 (GBA)

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■ PS2/XB/GC

JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING



TOP TEN BOND MOMENTS

Bond moment 10

Level: A Long Way Down

Sure, Bond could kill a man with precision and tact, but why settle for normal convention when you can get the same results with a little panache? The No. 10 Bond moment brings the house down, dropping the ceiling onto unsuspecting foes.

Near that second steam valve is a large, burned-out room. Use Bond sense to find weak ceiling points. Shoot the ceiling when soldiers run underneath—incapacitate at least one enemy using this method to achieve a Bond moment.

Bond moment 9

Level: The Platinum War

Driving the most technically advanced and suave vehicles has always been a staple for 007. The No. 9 Bond moment follows suit, with Mr. Bond at the helm of a heavy artillery tank with the firepower to crumble archways.

After destroying the wall as you begin the mission, look for a tank lying underneath an arch ahead. Shoot a nano shell at the arch so it collapses, crushing the tank below.

Bond moment 8

Level: Death's Door

Gadgets are just plain cool. The No. 8 Bond moment uses the insect-like Q-Spider gadget to access a much-needed armor vest.

Upon entering the hotel at the start of the level, head to the right where you'll find a stack of boxes. Near the boxes is a Q-Spider hole. Send in your six-legged gadget and you will discover a small nook with an armor vest.

Bond moment 7

Level: Everything or Nothing

Ammo conservation often plays a key role. The No. 7 Bond moment finds James able to do the job of a whole clip with a single shot.

When navigating through the large warehouse filled with metal freight containers, look for one suspended in the air. When enemies appear underneath, use Bond sense to shoot the glowing switch that holds the container to crush the enemies below.

Bond moment 6

Level: Death of an Agent

Even when faced with saving the life of a fellow agent, James Bond makes a statement with one of Q's gadgets before leaping into the arms of danger. The Q-Spider makes quite the explosion when falling to the ground in Bond moment No. 6. Danger averted.

At the start of the mission, deploy a Q-Spider. Take it down the hallway to find a



spider hole. Navigate that hole upward, then have the Q-Spider fall to detonate over unsuspecting guards.

Bond moment 5

Level: Dangerous Descent

The Q-Spiders sure do come in handy. The No. 5 Bond moment uses the gadget

once more, only this time to blow up a security system, preventing Mr. Bond from unneeded laser surgery.

Before rappelling down, make sure to disable the security lasers with a Q-Spider bomb. Send the Q-Spider into the room with the red flashing computer and destroy the machine.

Bond moment 4

Level: Death's Door

Bond has faced many a nemesis throughout his career, but has never seemed to miss a step. With no signs of slowing down, Agent 007 once again delivers in the duel with Le Rouge by taking some focus off of his weaponry and using the environment to heat things up.

While fighting Le Rouge, use Bond sense to target the gas-vent switches on the walls and ceiling of the room. If Le Rouge takes damage from the flames, you'll earn a Bond moment. There are four switches to target: two in the ceiling and two on the back wall.

Bond moment 3

Level: Vertigo

Once again our favorite gadget, the Q-Spider, finds its way into the top Bond moments at No. 3. The fun-to-control little gadget gains access to a cache of weapons and armor, not to mention it opens the door for a little surprise on a couple of guards. Can you ever get enough of the Q-Spider?

When you reach the enemy that carries a rocket launcher (where you have to

push a train cart forward to get within range), look for a side alcove that appears walled off but is accessible using a Q-Spider. Navigate the spider through a hole and up a series of wooden planks to reach a supply room with armor, a battery, and weapons. Open the blue door nearby to surprise the guards and trigger a Bond moment.

Bond moment 2

Level: Mardi Gras Mayhem

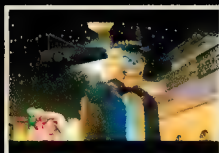
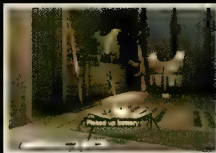
Anyone can drive and drive well, but only the great James Bond can pull off moves like in No. 2. Not only does the unparalleled agent cause high-flying mayhem through the Mardi Gras celebration, he manages to keep the car in one piece (sort of). You are a hero to us all, Mr. Bond.

After talking to Mya on the phone, head toward the van by exiting the park to the right. Once you reach the brick walkway, you'll find a ramp that sends you over the pretty Mardi Gras floats and into a building.

Bond moment 1

Level: Kiss Kiss Club

The No. 1 Bond moment also happens to be the easiest to accomplish; simply let England's most eligible bachelor be himself. As 007 rappels into the club, a lovely female awaits and is in need of a hand (or two). Let Bond do his thing and soothe her needs. Ever the ladies' man, James proves there is always time to stop and smell the roses.



■ PS2/XB

HITMAN: CONTRACTS

Being a hitman **is** no easy job. Being a **bad** hitman whose last assassination outing had the Sixths up in arms makes matters even worse. Brutally murdering people—even the scum of humanity—has a way of taking its toll on the body and mind. But the hits must be carried out, and the following tips help make your job easier.

Unlocking normal weapons

Upon completing a mission, all of the weapons in your possession are automatically unlocked and stored in your weapons cache. When replaying a mission you've already cleared, you're able to access the weapons cache and choose from the list of weapons you've collected up to this point. You can bring as many weapons as you wish into the mission to help you attain a higher rating.

Unlocking secret weapons

There are also hidden weapons for you to unlock in each of the 12 missions in the game. You automatically unlock a mission's secret weapon if you're able to achieve the Silent Assassin rating at the end of the level.

Becoming a silent assassin

No matter which mission you're playing, earning the Silent Assassin rating is always a challenge. To achieve this coveted rating, you must fulfill all mission objectives without killing anyone except the specific target(s) you've been hired to assassinate. You're also restricted to one silenced bullet per



target. (Of course, you may also use stealth-kill weapons, like the classic fiber wire.) Furthermore, you cannot earn the Silent Assassin rating if you receive too many alerts during a mission. They don't call it "Silent Assassin" for nothing!

Most missions don't start you off with a silenced gun, but one can usually be found somewhere in the level. Even if you never have the option, there's always a way for a silent assassin to make the hit.

Using the environment

Some hits are best made using no weapons. For example, in Traditions of the Trade, one of your targets occasionally steps into a sauna to enjoy the steam. You can get close to him if you're wearing the proper disguise and trap him inside the sauna, which suffocates him. The hit is easily carried out without firing a shot or raising suspicions.

Environmental objects can be useful as well. If you stumble across a package of rat poison, for example, then you know you're able to somehow poison at least one of your targets. A bit more

recon, and you'll know how the hit should be made.

Stealth and deception

Stealth kills aren't always easy, but they're often necessary when attempting to earn the Silent Assassin rating. To perform a stealth kill, you've got to sneak up behind an inattentive target when no one's looking and make the hit with a close-combat weapon, like a kitchen knife, meat cleaver, meat hook, or O' Reliable (the fiber wire).

You begin each mission with the fiber wire and never need to drop it, so stealth kills are always an option—provided you're able to get close enough to the target without raising suspicions. This task can often be simplified by disguising yourself as somebody else—a police officer, a bodyguard, or anyone who's allowed access to the areas surrounding the target. Once you're in disguise, there's nothing stopping you from moving in for the kill.

Syringes are your friends

While a change of clothes can be found in several of the missions, you sometimes need to locate a person and steal his clothing in order to disguise yourself. You can't kill anyone except for your contracted target(s) if you want to achieve the Silent Assassin rating, but you can use a syringe to silently disable others.

Syringes can be used only in a stealth-kill fashion. Sneak up behind a person, pump him full of drugs, then hide the unconscious body.

Your path to a target is often complicated by some sort of human obstacle, be it a watchful bodyguard or whomever. Syringes are ideal for these situations as well. Try knocking out the guard with one to make your approach easier. ☛

Here's what you get for earning the Silent Assassin rating on each mission:

Mission	Reward
Sanitarium Aftermath	CZ 2000 Dual Pistols
Slaughterhouse Two	Micro Uzis
Snow Job in Siberia	Silverballers Silenced Pistols
Beldingford Manor	Magnum 500 Dual
Ruckus in Rotterdam	Saved-off Shotgun Dual
Gunrunners Amok	M4 Carbine Assault Rifle
Knovions of the Trade	SG220 .S Dual
Tradition Triads in Gang War	MP5 Submachine Gun Silenced
Ambush at the Wang Fou Restaurant	AK47 Assault Rifle
Massacre at Cheung Chau Restaurant	GK 17 Dual
Lee Hong Assassination	Micro Uzis Silenced
Fourtier's Folly	PGM Sniper Rifle Silenced

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THE REST OF THE CRAP

The glass is half full, but it sure ain't water

help me

When men are subjected to enough horrors, they sometimes give in to the darkness.

Others do exactly the opposite and become pure beacons of hope, like me. You see, this month, when I was handed *Peter Pan* for GBA, something inside me snapped, then spread its wings, then declared me a rainbow. That's why, despite the vile, hateful crappiness of these games, I'm going to focus only on their positive aspects. I'm not an expert in theology, but I believe this is exactly what Jesus would do if he weren't busy done bugging on the moon, granting wishes with his Miracle Hat.

—Seanbaby



find it, and lot the magical wonder of *Peter Pan* explain it to you.

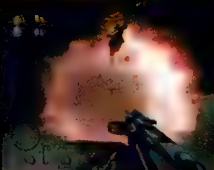
NANCY DREW: MESSAGE IN A HAUNTED MANSION



■ *Haunted Mansion* is kind of like an old-time text adventure, but with twice the dorks.

Game Boy Advance • Dreamcatcher — This has got to be the most realistic mystery game marketed to nostalgic 60-year-old women I've ever played. Most mystery titles tend to get bogged down with puzzle solving, even though real spooky investigations rarely require a detective to yank levers until a birdbath spits out a blue key. In this groundbreaking game, the developers strip the detective work down to its essence: wandering empty hallways and calling Nancy's friends on the phone. **Intense stimulation:** You'll sometimes come across items you can actually interact with, and what's great is that these moments are so far apart that even a simple lamp you can switch on and off might blow your mind with sleuthy excitement.

FUGITIVE HUNTER: WAR ON TERROR



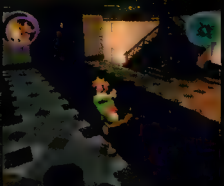
■ Dance for Uncle Sam, bey!

PlayStation 2 • Encore — I sometimes wish that I played good videogames, so it would actually mean something when I say this: Holy crap, this is the best game

I've ever played. In fact, calling it a game isn't fair. This is more of a tiny Special Forces squad parachuting into your skull on a covert mission to kick its ass. It's like your basest adolescent revenge fantasy gets locked in a tool shed with the A-Team and they build a fleet of combat bikes. And when you meet the boss terrorists, everyone drops their weapons and you solve it the way God intended—with karate. I LOVE this game.

Wow, awesome! In the special features, there's a video of a guy dancing like a robot and freestyle rapping about killing Osama bin Laden. I'd normally use an adjective here, but I wouldn't dare try to describe how rad this is without screaming it from a back-flipping dirt bike.

SCOOBY-DOO: MYSTERY MAYHEM



■ We apologize if this scene of a dog carrying a human is too outrageously funny for some readers.

GameCube • THQ — I was scared away from this mystery almost immediately. Look, Velma might want to stick around to find the bad of flour reflecting off the lava lamp that created the illusion of the phantom train robbers, but I'm controlling Scooby and Shaggy, and we're willing to accept that train robbers rose from the grave and want us to leave them alone. It sounds a lot less ridiculous than someone creating an elaborate system of pulleys to trick high school kids and a damn dog into believing in ghosts.

Let's remember Fugitive Hunter for a second: This Scooby-Doo game is about hiding from ghosts, but more important, in *Fugitive Hunter*, the rapper is all robotic and going, "Osama bin Laden! Where you been hiding!?"

SHREK: HASSLE AT THE CASTLE

Game Boy Advance • TDK — I already reviewed a *Shrek* game that was identical to this called *Shrek: Reekin' Havoc*, and if I could remember anything about it, I'd regret the hurtful things I must have said, only because they couldn't have been hurtful enough. *Reekin' Havoc* is more than awful: It's awful from beyond the stars. The



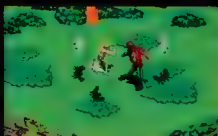
■ *Fugitive Hunter's* subtle geopolitical commentary should appeal to the Cabotla's crew.



■ Shrek proves he's ugly on the inside, too, by slaughtering children and bearded men.

fact that it got published *twice*, however, proves that even if you never learn from your mistakes, you can still make a good living selling videogames to stupid children. **Revisiting an old inane:** If you loved the other *Shrek* game and wish you could play through it again with all the enemies slightly moved around, you... you know what? I'm going to stop right there, because you don't exist.

PETER PAN: THE MOTION PICTURE EVENT



■ Manly Red Riding Hood beats up Gollum?

Game Boy Advance • Atari — In recent years, movies have been so bad that their merchandising has overshadowed the films themselves. For example, remember when *Star Wars: Episode I* came out and the R2-D2 Taco Bell cup was four times more entertaining than the film? Well there's no chance of that happening here. Even if the new *Peter Pan* movie is 90 minutes of colonoscopy bloopers, this game will make it look like a compelling masterpiece.

What really makes this game special: Young men, if you're having trouble coming out to your parents, just leave this game lying around where they can

classic crap



JURASSIC PARK (GAME BOY)

A game about exterminating dinosaurs with a slow-motion grapefruit gun would be an affront to both dinosaurs and dinosaur-hating humans. And though that's exactly what this is, the programmers were nice enough to make the controls so unresponsive that you'll feel like you're not even playing.

great moments in bad box art

BLACK BELT (SEGA MASTER SYSTEM)

You've got to admit that while it fails in every aspect of graphic design, a little karate foot drawn in the corner of a box makes it clear to shoppers that the game inside probably has something to do with karate.

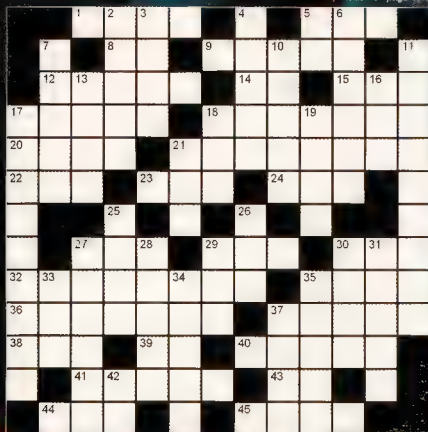
Black Belt
The Mega Cartridge™



SEGA

KOTORious

(Solution on page 72)



ACROSS

1. *WarCraft II* grunts
5. Like a *Zelda* -force or *PSO* -fluid
8. Yankees' *World Series* Baseball league (abbrv.)
9. *Silent Hill*'s audible radar
12. Primary *Castlemania* soundtrack instrument?
14. Like *Metal Gear* goggles (abbrv.)
15. *Tekken*'s Kuma, south of the border
17. *KOTOR* racing
18. *Real Pool 2* billiard game
20. Like Tom Clancy's *Splinter*
21. *KOTOR: Sith Lords* developer
22. *Starcraft* (NG4) commodity
23. Jack Skellington's new game, for short
24. *D&D* decision maker
27. *Renegade*'s (NES) main dude
29. 1/8,000,000 of a megabyte
30. Like *Mortal Kombat*'s Quan
32. Dreamcast *Wyrn*-cult game
33. The body part you'll often find *Virtua Fighter 2*'s Lion kicking
36. *KOTOR* squiddy alien race
37. *Pitfall: Lost Expedition* rock launcher
38. In Japan, Mega Man is to Rockman as *Battle Network* is to
39. On the sidelines in *Madden NFL 2004* (abbrv.)
40. *Wrath Unleashed* Frost or Fire behemoth
41. Missing emulator software (two words), or backwards dimwit
43. Console gamer's must-have
44. Level-up criterion (abbrv.)
46. Quina's *Final Fantasy IX* occupation

DOWN

2. *Phantasy Star Online* planet
3. Like GameCube Hulk's "Sonic" attack
4. What it does on the deck of the *Metal Gear Solid 2* tanker
6. Famed calculator company; once made a home/gaming computer (abbrv.)
8. *MLB 2005* Newbie
7. Energy or remaining life
10. *KOTOR* character class
11. *Gran Turismo* handling specific
13. What you're playing in a game like *KOTOR*
16. Recent *Crimson* sequel
17. *KOTOR* character attribute (Han Solo would be mixed out)
18. ISP, for one
19. *FFVIII* Guardian Force, for one
21. Kenobi, for W/iii
25. One of dolphin Ecco's pals
28. *NARC*, *State of Emergency* developer
27. Dreamcast first-person slasher
28. *EGM*'s Xbox Game of the Year in 2003, for short
29. *GTA3* mass-transit target
30. *Double Dragon* (NES) mop-top
31. If you're not lookin' for a job, you're looking for these
33. *Eternal Champions*' (Sega CD) robotic dude
34. *Star Wars: Phantom Menace* planet featured in an N64 title
35. Boba Fett's ship -1
37. *KOTOR*'s Jedi opposition
42. Like *Spec*- or *Psi*-, but singular

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GAMERSCOPES

Blame Uranus! Gaming-inclined predictions by EGM's Clitoria Van Buren

AQUARIUS

(Jan. 21-Feb. 19)

Like Mario scrubbed the equid Isle Delfino in *Mario Sunshine*, it's time for you to whip out a high-powered nozzle and apply it to your own self. But the cleaning you crave is more spiritual: Are you sure *King of Fighters* is the only brawler worth playing? That *Virtual Boy* was just misunderstanding, not fundamentally crap? Alone for your thought crimes on the nearest game-related message board.



PISCES

(Feb. 20-Mar. 20)

In true *Scream* spirit: "Pisces, I think you could be dropping a whole heck of a lot more double entendres (don't know that term? Ask a clergyman) in your gaming discourse. Possible jumping-off points: *Growlanser*, Solid Snake, *Bar's Tale*, *Front Mission*, Jigglypuff, *Dragon Ball*. Just imagine the winces and dry heaves you can induce with allusions to *Kirby's Mustache Ride*. Ruly with it.



ARIES

(Mar. 21-Apr. 20)

Big-boned but rock-solid *Final Fantasy* summon limit is cock of the walk since he started taking Cialis. You, however, have been kind of droopy lately. You need a confidence boost, but you won't find happiness in a bottle—you'll find it in the biopic that will be made about you after you shatter the world record for *Missile Command*. Specifically, in the Peter Cetera-scored training montage.



TAURUS

(Apr. 21-May 21)

You may have a bad, bald, bullheaded rep, Taurus, but I know that inside you're plagued by doubt. It's OK, Clitoria doesn't judge. If you really think *Mario Party* is the worst game ever made, go ahead and say so. If you'd rather collect leg warmers and headbands in *Virtua Fighter 4* than play *Soul Calibur II*, then go accessorize. I'm giving you permission to be completely, utterly, laughably wrong, and I promise to only ridicule you in private.



GEMINI

(May 22-June 21)

Anger management is not the movie—the concept. Get to know it. I've had trouble with you, Gemini, in the past, what with your controller-throwing antics and serial pouting. It's not my fault, Lester Hayes picks off every pass you send his way in *NFL Street*. Why don't you try throwing to the other side of the field? Trust me, it's all about the ground attack and not so silly. Go start a support group for your fellow moody, crappy gamers, before this gal embarrasses you again.



CANCER

(June 22-July 22)

Sinful Gear's Snaker can't stay in that box-forever, you know. One day he'll have to pop out and slaughter the legions of guards hunting him, then hide their bodies in conveniently located lockers. While I don't want you to follow his example literally, you should face your problems head-on: Girlfriend be damned, you need that \$200 *Steel Battalion* controller. Because without it, you're half a man. The end halt.



LEO

(July 23-Aug. 21)

When Bob Barkin yaps about neutering housecats, he's sending you a message: Crank the shower to icy cold. Just because those jiggy fighting-game catfights—Chun Li versus Cammy, Ivy versus Taki, Hilmi versus Tina versus Leifang in a royal rumble of 38-22-36 double-D proportions—get you all hot to trot doesn't mean every chick will appreciate an impromptu flying elbow. Try spiking your Red Bull with saltpeper.



VIRGO

(Aug. 22-Sept. 23)

While I'm not into rarer stock talk, I've got some sizzling-hot investment tips for you, Virgo. Don't get too excited—they're the kind nobody goes to jail for. Gold, pork futures, and hedge-what-ever-the-hells are a mug's game; the smart money is in old *Rampart* arcade machines. Buy every last one you can get your filthy hands on. I heard this straight from the cosmos itself—suck on that, *Barron's!*



LIBRA

(Sept. 24-Oct. 23)

Oh, romantic flouting: Does how I know, no guess. Venus, angles, lunar crap, it's all very scientific. Anyway, you've heard that line, "The couple that plays together stays together"? Total lie (see Gemini) propagated by non-astrology-knowing armchair psychologists. It should be, "The couple that plays games in separate rooms or at least on separate televisions stays together," though I admit that's not very catchy.



SCORPIO

(Oct. 24-Nov. 22)

"Come up around over here!" was Scorpion's (*Mortal Kombat*, original catchphrase, until I suggested he shorten it. Not to fool my own horn, but I've been doing this star thing longer than you know. Like Scorpion way back when, you need to simplify. Ideally, you should sell all your possessions—besides a chair, games, and your TV, but I can see how that might be problematic. I'll leave the details up to you.



SAGITTARIUS

(Nov. 23-Dec. 22)

Never trust an altar: a man with two first names. Also, don't wear tight-fits in a rainforest. I'm gonna run with this theme of stern admonishment and let you find your own way out of the rainforest, so...never play Dr. B in *Tekken 3*; Gule (*Street Fighter*) is also ultrascrubby. Ignore princesses; they ain't worth rescuin'. And leave all iterations of *Magic: The Gathering* to the pros; sorcery otherwise paralyzes.



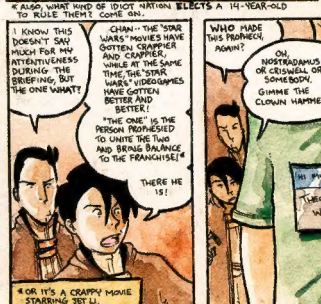
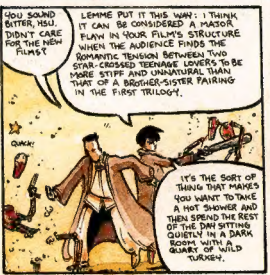
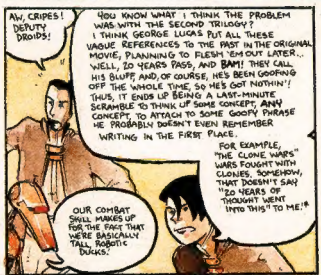
CAPRICORN

(Dec. 23-Jan. 20)

It's a very big fish of the capri as long it's; other people doing the cosplaying, Gap, and that's where you come in. If you're a COS (customer of size—a little airline lingo for ya), I like to suggest something, anything, involving hot pants, although cosplay offers you nothing if not possibilities. Leatherette vests, ripped fishnets, whatever—it's a look that only a mother, Capricorn representative Mumpkin (*Mumpkin's Koolhaas*, or) could love.



HSU AND CHAN GAME DESIGNERS ARE... "FAR, FAR AWAY"





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EVERYONE



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JEAN RENO AND TAKESHI KANESHIRO

TWO HEROES, ONE DESTINY

500 BC

1000 AD

2100 AD

00 BC

500 AD

1500 AD



THE FINAL BATTLE BEGINS.

Starring international acting sensations, Jean Reno as Jacques Blanc and Takeshi Kaneshiro as Samanosuke, Onimusha 3 Demon Siege is the final chapter in the Onimusha Trilogy. Two heroes from different lands, travel through time and space to defeat the evil

Nobunaga and his hordes of darkness. Control the fate of both men as you journey from 16th Century Japan to modern day Paris and back. The final chapter in the Onimusha trilogy begins.



Blood and Gore
Intense Violence



PlayStation 2

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