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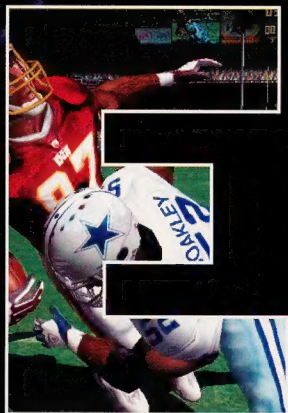
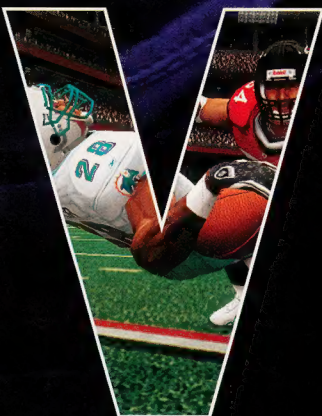
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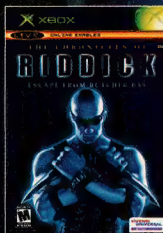
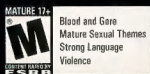
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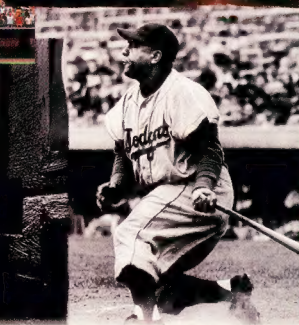
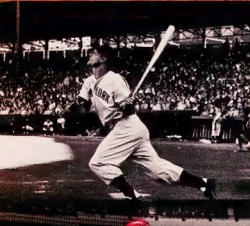
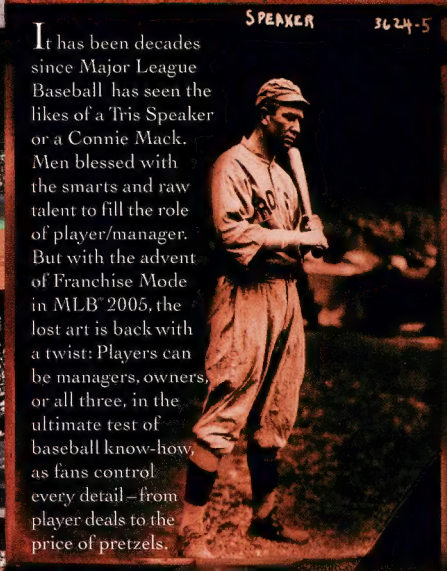
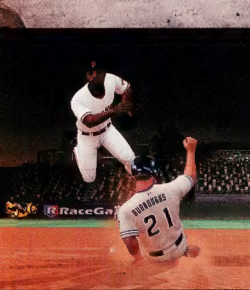
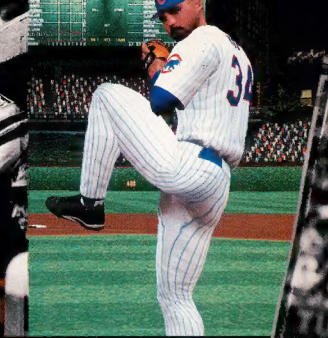
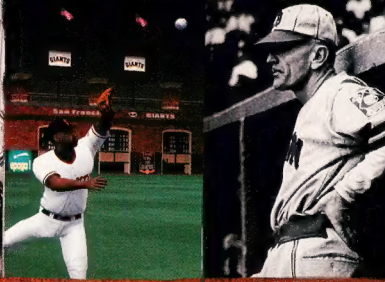




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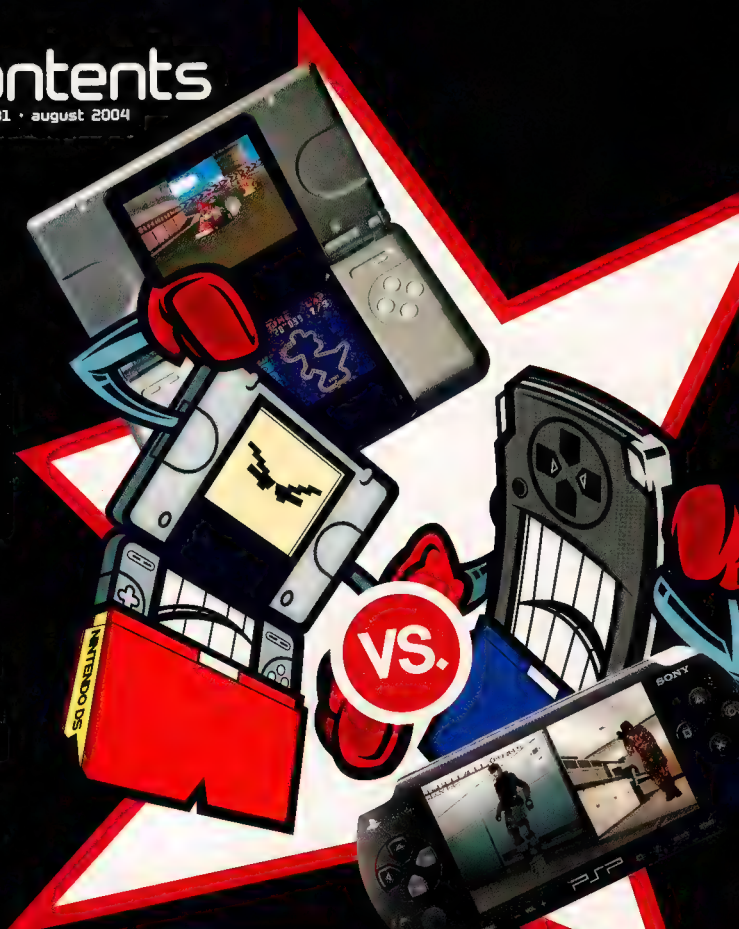
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SONY PSP VS. NINTENDO DS

Nintendo's and Sony's new handhelds go head-to-head in our 10-round ruckus, complete with ringside commentary



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EGM'S OPINIONATED GUIDE TO WHAT'S NEXT

Good, bland, or bad—we pull no punches in our massive preview feature



editorial



It's not hard to remember the huge sense of accomplishment that was the only portable player on the playground: Game Gear? No. Game Boy? What're those? Nintendo's Nintendo's boy kicked them in the battery compartment. It's hard to think of the last old man away from Nintendo's bullying, but the fact that for over a decade, doing so well that the Game Boy platform has consistently outsold every console like the PlayStation 2.

challenger to arrive—one with plenty of balls and a few dollar signs in its eyes. That challenger—and it sounds funny to call them underdogs here—is Sony, which debuted a working PSP (PlayStation Portable) this past May at a videogame trade show. Even though we haven't seen PSP's full arsenal yet, the cool, sophisticated design really impressed. Nintendo responded in kind by showing off its Nintendo DS at the same show. If the PSP is the sick new Fonz, then the DS is *The Matrix's*

hep, full of exciting powers and potential, but none fully realized just yet.

They're both really different machines, and even though the companies would like to tell you that they're not in direct competition, let's get real: They're gathering up their troops for a schoolyard brawl unlike any we've ever seen in that market. Who's gonna win? Who's the most potential? Which machine are we most excited about? To be continued on pg. 86...

—Dan "Shoe" Hsu, Editor-in-Chief

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The all-new 1UP is here, and it's exploding with new features! We've still got all of that great daily content you've come to know and love, but we're now the first-ever destination for gamers to meet, play, get informed, and show off.

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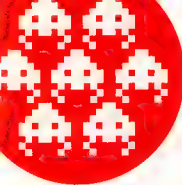


YOUR GAMES




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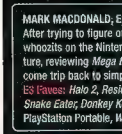


the review crew


DAN "SHOE" HSU, Editor-in-Chief
You've probably heard of the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), where every major game company tries to wow press, retailers, and analysts with early looks at upcoming goods. For Shoe, it's hell on earth 'cause there are too many games to cover, but there are some of his personal favorites...
E3 Faves: *Destroy All Humans!*, *Halo 2*, the new *Legend of Zelda*, *Burnout 3*, *Unreal Championship 3*, *Splinter Cell 3*



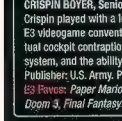
MARK MACDONALD, Executive Editor
After trying to figure out all the fancy doodads and space-age whoozles on the Nintendo DS and Sony PSP for the cover feature, reviewing *Mega Man Anniversary Collection* was a welcome trip back to simpler times for Mark.
E3 Faves: *Halo 2*, *Resident Evil 4*, *Odama*, *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*, *Donkey Kong Jungle Beat*, *Okami*, *Paper Mario 2*, *PlayStation Portable*, *Wario Ware DS*, *Metroid Prime 2*




JENNIFER TSAO, Managing Editor
As always, there were plenty of pseudocelebs floating around this year's E3 (watermelon-smashing Gallagher, has been little guy Gary Coleman, he's so hot-right-now little guy Wes Montgomery, to name just a few). Yet Jennifer somehow managed to leave the show with only a picture of herself and two Playbys boys.
E3 Faves: *Jade Empire*, *Animal Crossing DS*, *Final Fantasy XII*, *Donkey Kong Jungle Beat*, *LOTR: Battle for Middle-earth (PC)*



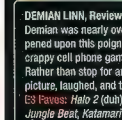
CHRISPIN BOYER, Senior Editor
Origin played with a lot of over-the-top peripherals all the big E3 videogame convention, but nothing came close to this virtual cockpit collection, complete with seat belts, navigation system, and the ability to actually fly 300 miles in 130 mph. Publisher: U.S. Army. Price: \$2.4 million. Release: Fall.
E3 Faves: *Paper Mario 2*, *Prince of Persia 2*, *Fable*, *Halo 2*, *Doom 3*, *Final Fantasy XII*, *Metal Gear Solid 3*, *Resident Evil 4*




SHAMIE BETTENHAUSEN, Previews Editor
If there's a karaoke game in need of reviewin', Shamie's your man. He's not a particularly talented singer, but he still belts out Bowie's "Modern Love" (or, if you're lucky, the Bangles' "Eternal Flame") with rockstar abandon. Seen here on a two-day in-person phone bender in Tokyo with E3M contributor Andrew Vestal.
E3 Faves: *MGSS*, *Final Fantasy XII*, *DK Jungle Beat*, *Odama*, *Rumble Roses*, *Xenosaga II*, *Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne*



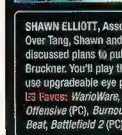
DEMIAN LINN, Reviews Editor
Demian was nearly overcome with emotion when he happened upon this poignant case at E3. Oh, poor lady and your crapy old phone games, one day you'll find happiness. Rather than stop for an illuminating chat, though, he took a picture, laughed, and then bought a \$14 grilled cheese.
E3 Faves: *Halo 2* (duh), *Half-Life 2*, *Burnout 3*, *Donkey Kong Jungle Beat*, *Katamari Damacy*, *Rumble Roses* mud wrestling



BRYAN INTIHAR, News Editor
Some people bitch about the E3 hoopla, but not Bryan. For him, the annual extravaganza is the gaming equivalent of a grand tour through Willy Wonka's chocolate factory...minus the scary Oompa Loompas. It also gives him a chance to meet and greet fans—the you see here. In all cases that's what he tells himself.
E3 Faves: *Halo 2*, *Final Fantasy XII*, *Destroy All Humans!*, *Burnout 3*, *Metal Gear Solid 3*, *Donkey Kong Jungle Beat*




SHAWN ELLIOTT, Associate Editor
Over Tom Shannon and prospective business partner Steve O'Beckus plans to publish a game based on *Turk's Tablas* discusser you'll play the part of the cyborg cavaly captain and use upgradeable eye patches to...well, wam, tam, please.
E3 Faves: *WarriorWare, Inc. DS*, *Halo 2*, *Call of Duty: United Offensive* (PC), *Burnout 3*, *Half-Life 2*, *Donkey Kong Jungle Beat*, *Battlefield 2* (PC), *Metal Gear Solid 3*



Guest Reviewers

JON DUBALK
Last month, Jon threatened grave action if he had to review "one more samurai game." We love Jon, but we had to push.



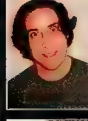
GREG FORD
All of E3's games, parties, and babes once again managed to wear Ford out. Oh, the humanity...




KEVIN GIFFORD
Seeing *Whiplash* on sale for \$4.99 made Kevin gruffer than usual this month. Doesn't anyone like mad weasels?



PATRICK MAURO
This man isn't on drugs. He's been up four nights straight playing *Rock Band*! 2005. Now he can taste color.



JOHN RICCIARDI
Feeling the swarms of purrant fans he'd no doubt meet at E3, John went this year disguised as a jungle butterfly.



■ Sure, they know their games. They're totally committed in the industry, and they're all terribly, terribly good looking. But we like the artists of **GMB, OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE, XBOX NATION, and UPURCOM** because they really rock the E3 party scene.

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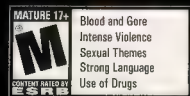


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NAM '67



PlayStation 2



Letters

ranting, raving, and a grudge match reconsidered



■ You'll find a poster-sized version of this here pic on every EGM editor's ceiling.

Loveless

Where's the love in your letters column? Everyone has a question to ask, a complaint to make, or something to show off and tell us about, but no one stops to thank you for making the finest mag in the business.

—Javier Delgado

Would you believe that we edit out effusive praise from almost every letter on these pages? Tootin' our own horn is kind of tacky, and letting readers do it for us isn't that much different. But if it makes you happy, check out the pic Hayato and his *Phantasy Star Online Episode III* pals sent us (above).

Down for the Count

EGM #180's Grudge Match got it wrong. Van Helsing didn't come from a long line of other vampire hunters who couldn't kill Dracula—he's the archangel Gabriel. I wouldn't complain if Count Chocula legitimately won the contest, but even with Frankenberry and



POST OFFICE

Babbling and bad-mouthing from our message boards, www.boards.iup.com (look for *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* forums)



■ Game Design-0-Rama? Nope, it's real.

Bling sells but who's buying? Ghetto fabulous or god-awful—what's your take on forthcoming urban-inspired games like *25 to Life* and *Notorious: Die to Drive*? Our board

members break it down:

PontDuJour: "They're no more 'gangsta' than the obligatory thugged-out animal mascot with sunglasses and chain that sells Xtreme Danimals yogurt to kids." Soapy5: "Makes me wanna bust a cap in whoever's responsible. Recognize." XCOBRA_CLUTCHx: "Blacksploitation, I say." MarioFan420: "I dunno. I think they're fine as long as they depict what they intend to depict fairly. I know I wouldn't want to see a stereotypical representation of the rural community I grew up in." Jigsaw_madman: "I say the time is right to give rednecks some respect. Just imagine the side quests: cow tipping, mailbox baseball..." Flame_zeroX: "It's been done."

Letter of the month

Lend him an ear

Several of my deaf friends and I enjoy playing games like *Halo* but can't understand what its characters are saying (by reading digital lips sometime). So while we assume that the Captain, for example, is giving orders, we also miss out on part of the overall experience that most folks take for granted. Perhaps that's why subtitled games such as *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* and *True Crime* are so popular among the people in my community.

There are some 21 million deaf citizens in the U.S. alone. That includes everyone from infants to the elderly, and everything from profound deafness to minor hearing loss, but if even 10,000 of us are serious gamers, companies could profit by serving the demographic. People with perfect hearing who want to play with the sound turned down at night stand to benefit from subtitles, too. Plus, reading subtitles might increase their vocabulary and improve their comprehension skills. In any case, Hollywood labels the movies subtitles, and videogame makers should do the same.

—Samuel Carriger



Congrats Sam Carriger! As our Letter of the Month writer and one of five gamers who hasn't heard Robi Zombie's "Dracula," you've scored a subtitled game from EGM's secret stash.

Boobery on his side he couldn't and didn't. At least not when Van Helsing is aligned with our Lord.

—Chris

Dazed and confused

What's with the useless red herb in every *Resident Evil* game?

—Brent Myers

Man bites dog

Why do you print such hurtful things? In EGM #179 you quoted EA President John Riccitiello as saying the N-Gage "is a dog." I'd like to see him sniff down a smuggler from a quarter-mile away or devote his entire life to aiding the blind. Dogs have proven their status as both intelligent and loving beings. That said, I feel reluctant to even think about buying another EA game.

—Kurtis Metcalfe

Seeing how your missive arrived via snail mail, we're inclined to think you're serious, Brent. But even though the answer to your question is all over the Internet, we'll give you a hint: Look for the lighter.

Scarred for life

After seeing other readers' gaming-inspired tattoos in previous issues, I figured I'd share mine too: *Final Fantasy IX's* Vivi and Mega Man X personalized.

CONTACT EGM

Because we want to know what goes through your head when you're falling asleep with a controller in one hand and a jar of pickled pig's feet in the other, Hit us up at EGM@ziffdavis.com or:

EGM Letters

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THEY
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MANKIND.



■ Don't worry, it'll wash off. No wait...

➤ With my face and a flamethrower.
—Patrick Fee

Cool, now have the black mage cast an Invisibility spell on one and have Mega Man burn off the other.

Extra life

In *EGM* #178 you claimed to have a story in the works that could save my life (or at least prolong my life as a gamer). You can't imagine how hard it was waiting for you to "run down a full doc-approved program that'll preserve [my] digits, eyesight, and reflexes," yet when the next issue arrived, the article was missing. I guess it just goes to show that you guys couldn't care less if I went blind. Come on, what do I do? Eat greens? Get out more?

—David Lane

We hope your peepers are still functional enough to read this, David. We decided to hold back our health feature until this fall on account of the deluge of new-game announcements and other news

broadsiding us now. In the meantime, go easy on the junk food and don't sit too close to the TV.

Moral guardian in the machine

Most new television sets come with V-chips (technology that blocks programming based on its rating). So why not include similar protective services in future consoles: a feature that reads a game's ESRB info and plays only those approved by user-established settings? It'd be completely transparent—those with no need for protection don't have to turn it on. Seems like a win-win situation and something that might keep politicians off our backs for a while longer.

—Josh Puckett

Xbox already offers something of the sort. "We planned ahead to help parents protect their children against games that are not age-appropriate," a Microsoft representative explains. "Xbox is the only console on the market that has a built-in parental control feature that allows

parents to limit their children's access to those games that carry ratings appropriate for their child." Sounds good, assuming if I Johnny's parents are tech-savvy enough to tweak the settings on his Xbox. We're betting the whippersnapper would work his way around the block before you can say "brave new world."

Massive multiplayer

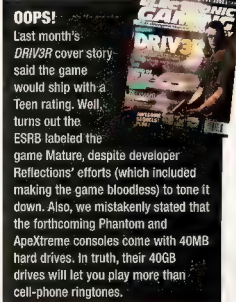
I was tipping a few back with some friends at a local Pittsburgh tavern, discussing my plans to rent a movie theater and play *Halo* on the big screen, when the guy sitting behind us leans over and says he couldn't help but overhear our conversation. Apparently, he runs the IMAX theater at the local science center and has already battled in Blood Gulch on a four-story screen. Better yet, he sweetened the deal by linking up a second Xbox in the adjacent planetarium.

—Anthony Neff

We hope his manager doesn't read this, but the man's a genius.

Final fanatics

Final Fantasy XI seems interesting, but I'm still skeptical. What sort of people can I expect to play with online? Guys without jobs or lives who waste whole weeks learning the game inside and out and then look down on those of us who don't? Or are they willing to lend a hand to people like me who can only dedicate an hour or so a day? I just don't want to invest time and money in the game if I have no hope of ever being



OOPS!
Last month's *DRIVE3R* cover story said the game would ship with a Teen rating. Well, turns out the ESRB labeled the game Mature, despite developer Reflections' efforts (which included making the game bloodless) to tone it down. Also, we mistakenly stated that the forthcoming Phantom and ApexXtreme consoles come with 40MB hard drives. In truth, their 40GB drives will let you play more than cell-phone ringtones.

anything more than a little fish in a huge pond full of people who're afraid of social lives and the sun.

—Richard A. Wright

It's true, making significant progress in *FFXI* requires sinking an ungodly amount of time into the game, and some people do this by sacrificing the silly things you mention (nickets, anyone?). But the *FFXI* community is rife with it not diverse: At any time day or night, you'll find loads of gamers—from the power leveler on a PC in Topeka to the level 8 dilettante on a PS2 in Tokyo. If *FFXI* sounds like fun to you, give it a try. Right now you might think you have only one hour a day, but see how many long walks on the beach you take once you hit level 20 and take your first chocobo ride... ☹

GAME DESIGN-O-RAMA

Sick of the status quo? Scheme up the game of your dreams and send it (with art) to EGM@ziffdavis.com, subject: design-o-rama.



MARY-KATE AND ASHLEY— SWEET 21: LICENSED TO DRINK

Put the car keys down and join the twins for a night of televised debauchery. Switch between Mary-Kate and Ashley while looking out for your overprotective, party-crashing parents. Build your flirting skills and sweet talk your way into exclusive clubs where unsavory pervs will put your wang-blocking talents to the test. Slip up, and they'll slip you a roo!

—Michael LeGere



THE LORD OF THE RINGS

Whoever possesses the one doughnut baked long ago gains the power to quadruple his weight. As the carb-hating hobbit, you must return this deep-fried thing of the devil to Krispy Kreme, where it will remain for all eternity, safe from sausage fingers, medically obese fast-food addicts, and law-enforcement officials everywhere. But beware: There are people who wish to abuse its formidable power.

—Aaron Harper



MADDEN 2020

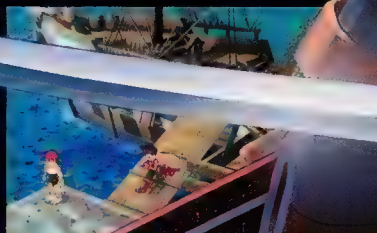
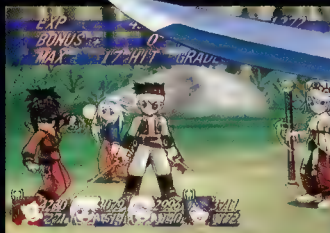
2019: Better graphics aren't possible, and there's no improving on this pigskin sim's patented PlayItatin' controls. It's the man himself who makes this year's *Madden* worthwhile. John kicks this season's commentary through the posts with lines like, "Score the most points to win the game!" And don't worry about the cover curse—the man's almost dead anyway. Also available on GameTrapezoid.

—Timothy Bowker

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KOSUKE FUJISHIMA

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TALES OF SYMPHONIA



press start

gaming news, previews, dishwasher-unsafe games, and other stuff

ALTERED STATE

Commence your California dreamin'—one town is just too small for Vice City sequel **Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas**

Egghead geologists have predicted for years that the Big One would rock the San Andreas sooner or later, and it looks like they're finally right...almost. Turns out San Andreas isn't a quake-rattled fault line—it's a fictional smog-choked state based on California. And the Big One isn't a city-leveling 10.5 tumbler—it's monster sequel *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, which'll shake up your PlayStation 2 on October 19.

Set in the early '90s, the game packs an all-new story steeped in Southern California gangland culture (developer Rockstar North is working with rap-video director D.J. Pooh to capture the decade's grim feel). Players guide Carl Johnson, a streetwise gold-capped hombre forced into a life of breaking and entering, drug running, deadly turf wars, and—of course—grand theft anything-that-moves.

New vehicles? Of course. Tweaked aiming controls? Naturally. But the biggest news about the new *GTA* is...well, just how big it is. Unlike previous installments, which focus only on one town each, this sequel spans three cities in the state of San Andreas. Hey, did somebody say roooooad trip?

—Crispin Boyer



■ New vehicle numero uno: The bicycle—rapid-tap joypad buttons to pedal (plus melt unsightly flab if you supersize your character with fast food).



San Fierro (based on San Francisco)

Day-Glo metropolis Vice City sprawled in every direction but one (hint: look up). It was one flat town. *San Andreas* will not be so vertically challenged. The city of San Fierro is every bit as hilly as the real-life San Francisco (which has slopes so steep they can't be climbed by street-cleaning vehicles). That means you're in for wild car chases up hills that'll launch you into the bay if you're not careful, and down winding streets that could ruin the upholstery if you're prone to carsickness. That's OK—you can always steal a clean car if you need to.

Think: The famous chase scene from Steve McQueen flick *Bullitt*.



Illustration by L. Stone

5

99

Los Santos (based on Los Angeles)

You'll find swimming pools and movie stars in *San Andreas*' take on the City of Angels, but this ain't *Melrose Place*.

Los Santos has more smog, less glamour. Main man Carl's story starts here, right after he returns to town and finds his mom murdered and his family and friends in a world of hurt. But life gets worse: Dirty cops frame him for the homicide. He can't beat the rap, so Carl joins the gangland underworld, planning elaborate burglaries (this sequel will pack more internal environments), protecting his turf, and building a crew—all while hunting his mother's killer.

Think: The tragic cycle of vicious gang violence from *Boyz n the Hood*.



GET US BY THE BALLZ: ATARI ANNOUNCED THREE NEW DRAGON BALL Z TITLES, STARTING WITH DRAGON BALL Z: SUPERSONIC WARRIORS, A FIGHTING GAME THAT SHOULD BE OUT FOR

Streetwise guy: *San Andreas'* star Carl Johnson comes with moose antlers, piles more hand-to-hand Righteous returns, and dual-pistol mania.



Party of four: *San Andreas'* gang members join you on drive-by joyrides.



Las Venturas (based on Las Vegas)

Whozzat? Vegas isn't actually in the state of California? Zip it, Rand McNally—developer Rockstar North is sticking its version of Sin City in *San Andreas* anyway. Yes, it'll have casinos (the team certainly snapped enough research photos in Vegas), and it's been reported that players will even be able to gamble in them (Rockstar won't confirm that aspect). The whole goal of buying property and building a criminal empire—introduced in *Vice City*—will play a larger role this time, too, but whether you can actually buy and run your own casino remains to be seen.

Think: All that dirty dealing from the Robert De Niro movie *Casino*.



WHAT ABOUT...

...the soundtrack? Prequel *Vice City's* radio stations whipped cut enough '60s tunes to fill seven CDs, and this sequel's soundtrack should be no less rockin'. Rockstar hasn't confirmed any artists yet, but they've told us we'll get way more than just rap tunes. Expect as much musical variety as *Vice City* has.

...50 Cent? Bullet-riddled rapper 50 Cent said in an interview that he'd be involved in the next *GTA*. Sorry, 50 Cent, but it's not your birthday—Rockstar tells us you have nothing to do with this sequel.



...earthquakes? The game's makers won't say if *San Andreas* will rattle the Richter scale. But c'mon—it's based on California and named after the United States' most famous fault line. We are ready to rumble.



...Stuckey's? The human body won't last more than 100 miles on a road trip without a quick carb-bombing from this old-limey chain of roadside restaurants. And while *San Andreas'* highways won't be dotted with this exact chain (pecan logs aren't quite on the cutting edge of gang culture), the game will feature fast-food joints that'll keep your character's new stamina bar topped off. Pig out and you'll even develop a spare-tire gut.

Everything in Between

As if *San Andreas'* three cities don't pack enough raw mileage, you'll have all the open countryside in betwixt to explore, too. You'll cruise through lush forests and stark deserts, visit backwater hick towns, and wind along sky-high mountain roads. And if you happen to pass a lake along the way, why not take a dip. For the first time in a *GTA* game, your character can swim. No more sleeping with the fishes for you, aquadude.

Think: Any back-roads chase scene from *Smokey and the Bandit*.





Ubisoft says an Xbox version should look as good as the PC one shown here.

SPLINTER CELL 3

No rest for the stealthy

Those sneaky bastards. We're not even done playing all the versions of *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow*, and Ubisoft's already slipping in a sequel for us to think about. Well, ready or not, *Splinter Cell 3* is on its way for release this holiday season. This announcement is so early, Ubisoft hasn't even said which console the stealth-action sequel will appear on, but the inside word is that we'll see it on Xbox first, followed by PS2 and maybe GameCube later, just like previous editions.

Gameplay improvements in *Splinter Cell 3* are a given. "Environments are less linear," says Mathieu Ferland, producer. "You can decide what you want to do." You also get some new moves (as do your enemies). For example:

Situation: The enemy is on the other side of a paper wall or door.

Solution: Tear through the wall and choke him or bash down the door and knock him out with it.

Situation: You shoot out a light or blow out a candle so you can sneak around in the dark.

Solution: The enemy lights up a flare or fires the candle back up to see in the dark.

Situation: The ledge is too tall.

Solution: Boost your teammate up, then he can pull you up after him.

Situation: You need to climb up the side of a building, but people inside will see you through the windows.

Solution: Have your teammate (who's already on the roof) drop a rope down. While you're climbing up, communicate with him (via voice chat) whether to slide you left or right to avoid the peeping eyes.

A final piece of good news: The developers (who are a different team from the one that made *Pandora Tomorrow*—each crew is working on every other *Splinter Cell*) hinted to us that *Pandora Tomorrow's* revolutionary two-spies-versus-two-mercenaries multiplayer will make it into *Splinter Cell 3*.



■ New move No. 20: You can pull this guy off the ledge to his 40-foot doom. If another enemy is underneath him, he'll bite it, too.

In multiplayer, you can cooperate on two-player missions:

GRUDGE MATCH

Hands at 10 and 2, people!



DRIV3R vs. **DRIVER'S ED**

What's really the true test of a wheelman's skills—Atari's undercover-cop carjacker or driving that queer little Cavalier with the extra brake on the instructor's side at age 15? Buckle the hell up and let's find out.

VEHICLES

<p>Forklifts, boats, and mullet-powered muscle machines Advantage: DRIV3R</p>	<p>Sub-base-model compact featuring demaning roof placard</p>
--	---

LOCATIONS

<p>Istanbul, Miami, and Nice Advantage: DRIV3R</p>	<p>The school parking lot, cul-de-sacs</p>
---	--

LESSONS LEARNED

<p>Hit a big enough bump and you can land that 18-wheeler on the roof</p>	<p>Don't drink and drive. Drive just after drinking, like your instructor Advantage: Driver's Ed</p>
---	---

ADVERSARIES

<p>Guys with guns Advantage: DRIV3R</p>	<p>Parallel parking</p>
--	-------------------------

RIDING SHOTGUN

<p>A streetwise mutha fuzzaz named Jones Advantage: DRIV3R</p>	<p>That kid who came from gym class and got back sweat all over the vinyl seat</p>
---	--

MISSION

<p>Destroy lots of stuff as you infiltrate a ring of international car thieves</p>	<p>Get license, borrow Mom's wagon, and make it with Betty at The Point Advantage: Driver's Ed</p>
--	---

WINNER: DRIV3R

It's true: In today's world of motor mayhem, learning to drive recklessly is far more useful than driving defensively. Plus, you never even get a handgrip in *Driver's Ed*—how realistic can it be?

MIDNIGHT CLUB 3: DUB EDITION

After listening to *Midnight Club 3* Producer Jay Pamek go on and on about how the *Club* series has always blazed new trails and set the standard, etc., we were a little surprised to see that *MC3* is full of rain-slicked roads and motion-blurring street lights—just like arch-rival upstart *Need for Speed Underground*. So where's the trail blazing? Well...expect *MC3* to focus on higher-end rides like Benzes and Escalades, which you can now tweak and trick out, from engine mods to spinner wheels (the subtitle alludes to a partnership with *Dub*, a hip aftermarket-modification mag). It'll also include custom choppers and an all-American focus—you'll be raising hell (or at least eyebrows) in Detroit, Atlanta, and San Diego. Coming to PS2 and Xbox in time for Santa, yo.



■ Eight players can take the urban motorsports online in both the PS2 and Xbox versions.

WILL SMITH

i,ROBOT

ONE MAN SAW IT COMING

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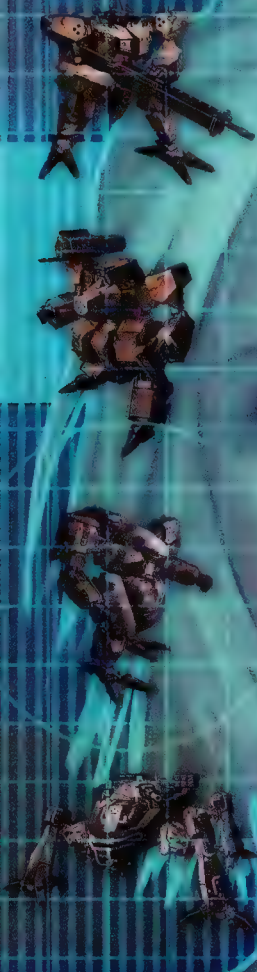
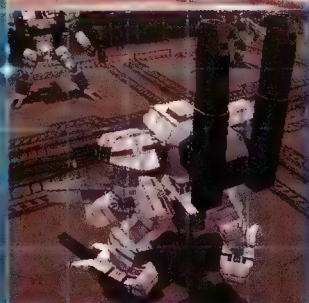
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MECHANIZED CUSTOMIZE

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PlayStation 2



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PLAN POWERFUL OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE TACTICS




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TEEN

 Mild Language
Violence

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THE BIG ONE



Lock up your booth babes! EGM invades videogame megashow E3

Swooping Army gunships, genetically engineered show booth babes gussied up as vampires, supersized dudes weighed down by garish tchotchkes.... "Oh gawd," said the Los Angeles locals as they rolled up their Hummer windows. "The gamers are back in town."

That's right, L.A. looky-loos—fear the Electronic Entertainment Expo, the annual game-biz trade show/cybercircuitous known less clumsily as E3 (which is what we'll call it henceforth). And if you weren't one of the 65,000 industry pros who trekked to this year's 10th anniversary show at the sprawling Los Angeles Convention Center in mid-May, you didn't miss anything—because we're about to reveal all that was important.

More dazzling than last year's expo, E3

2004 came alive with megagames—a mature-looking *Zelda* for GameCube, a playable *Halo 2* (and news of its Nov. 9 release date) for Xbox, a polished *Metal Gear Solid 3* for PlayStation 2, plus about 60 more hot titles you'll read about later in the issue. But the biggest news came in the smallest packages: Sony's PSP and Nintendo's DS portable game systems, both of which were unveiled and ready for play (see our hands-on cover story on page 86).

The only topic not under open discussion was the next generation of hardware from Sony, Microsoft, and Nintendo. But guess what? We got them to talk about their next systems anyway: Flip the page for that info, full access to the show, and our rating for each system's performance at the expo....



YOU LIKE THEM; YOU REALLY LIKE THEM: SIX FIRST-PARTY GAMECUBE GAMES HAVE SOLD AT LEAST ONE MILLION COPIES. HOW MANY OF THESE BLOCKBUSTERS DID YOU BUY? SUPER



4

5

6

7

8

9

10

KILLZONE

Nintendo

XBOX

SHOW AND TELL...

1) "I came all the way from Middle-earth, and all I got was this lousy ring," says hardcore gamer Elijah "Fredo" Wood. 2) TV's Tom Green once jumped a dead moose. EGM's Seanbaby had to review *Barbie's Horse Adventures*. State-mate! 3) UN Secretary General Kofi Annan confers with General Assembly President Julian Hunte. 4) Not pictured: This cosplay couple's first child, who will dress as *Final Fantasy* until suspended from school for inappropriate attire. "I learned it from you!" he will shout at his parents. 5) *Resident Evil's* Jill Valentine: Surprisingly perky...has kind of a cruise-director thing happenin'. 6) Two screens for the price of one? Boss! Flip to page 86 to see Nintendo's newly unveiled DS portable and its competition, Sony's PSP. Note to readers of last year's E3 wrap-up: Microprocessor co-inventor Stan Mazor (is back and hotter than ever. 7) Homemade stormtroopers enforce evil will of make-believe galaxy-spinning empires, chase under hot lights. 8) Playboy bunnies apply body-butter power-up in *Playboy Mansion* for PlayStation 2 and Xbox. 9) The Annan family, as mandated by Nintendo when it rules world in 2074.

"Where's the humor in online gaming?
Where's the farm animals?"

—Ted Price, president of Ratchet & Clank, developer Insomniac



■ PlayStation 2 is the go-to system for super sequels such as *Metal Gear Solid 3* (left), *Final Fantasy XII* (above), and *GTA: San Andreas*. But it has several slick all-new games, too, such as *God of War* (below).



PLAYSTATION 2

Monster sequels, slick all-new games, and glitzy online enhancements put Sony on top



Hours before the union guys plug in E3's 1.21-gigawatt bass woofers and animatronic mascots, the game industry's three major players attempt to outdo each other with their respective press conferences. And while Nintendo's and Microsoft's pre-

show events rely on fanboy service and celebrity splash to sell their respective systems' sizzle, Sony's perennially bland conference sells the steak—a dry cut of beef that kinda tastes like pie charts. Sony President Kaz Hirai bombards the audience with facts and figures—interspersed with game demos projected on three-story video screens—that back up Sony's dominance in the hardware war.

But even if Hirai's glorified PowerPoint presentations have us reaching for the snooze button every year, we can't deny the raw data: The PlayStation 2 has more exclusive megagames and a greater variety of them on the way—including *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, *Final Fantasy XII*, *Metal Gear Solid 3*, and *Gran Turismo 4*—than any other system. "Content is king," Hirai says. "We're trying to push the envelope in terms of innovation. Take the EyeToy, for example." Combine all that with a system price drop to \$150 and a renewed commitment to online gaming (see sidebar), and it's clear that Sony isn't going to abandon the system's base of 71 million worldwide users to focus on new hardware (well, except the PSP portable—see cover story, page 86) anytime soon. "We have created the first 10-year-plus hardware life cycle," Hirai says of the original PlayStation. It's a life cycle Sony hopes PS2 will follow.



■ Future in his hand: Sony's Kaz Hirai palms the new PSP portable (see page 86), which stole some of PS2's thunder.

PS2: BY THE NUMBERS

20

Percentage of U.S. households with a PlayStation 2

150

PS2's new retail price, in dollars, as of May 11

3.8
million

Number of PlayStation 2 EyeToy camera peripherals shipped worldwide

100

Number of online-enabled PS2 games available by year's end

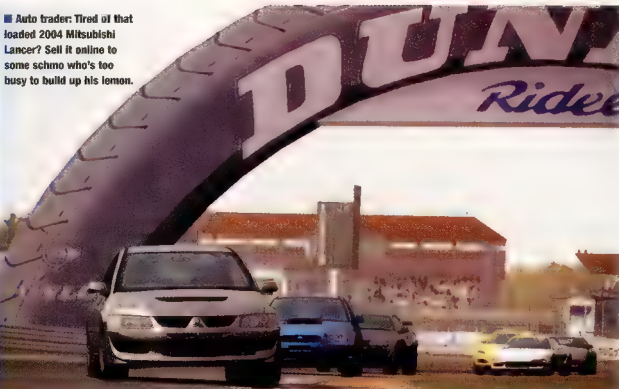
— AT E3, XENOSAGA EPISODE II DEVELOPER MONOLITH SOFT SAID THAT THOSE WHO PRE-ORDER ITS CINEMA-HEAVY ROLE-PLAYING GAME (ARRIVING ON PLAYSTATION 2 NEXT YEAR)

PLAYSTATION 2 LIVE?

Is the console juggernaut taking a page from Bill Gates' gang? It sure sounds like it. Though no official timetable was set, Sony plans to create a central online hub for all PS2 owners, thus doing away with today's multiple game logins and passwords. "We must evolve the [online gaming] experience," says Sony President Kaz Hirai. "Being part of a larger PlayStation 2 online community and moving seamlessly between game lobbies is something we want to establish."

Community? Easy access to different game lobbies? Microsoft's Xbox Live service already offers that and much more. But Sony is talking about adding its own little online hook—transactions between gamers. Hirai thinks of it as "an eBay model, where you are reaping the benefits of something you've done [in an online game]." For example, you could take your tweaked-out custom vehicle from *Gran Turismo 4* and sell it to another gamer, someone who doesn't have the time to pimp his or her own ride.

Auto trader: Tired of that loaded 2004 Mitsubishi Lancer? Sell it online to some schmoe who's too busy to build up his lemon.



NOTABLE GAMES

Your at-a-glance gander at some of the big PlayStation 2 titles shown at E3. (Games noted with an asterisk are confirmed to have online features.)

August

*Madden NFL 2005

September

*Def Jam: Fight for NY
Silent Hill 4
 Sly 2: Band of Thieves

October

Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas
Jak 3

November

*GoldenEye: Rogue Agent
*Gran Turismo 4
*Killzone
*Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater
*Need for Speed Underground 2
Neo Contra
Prince of Persia 2
*Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal ▼



Rumble Roses
The Getaway: Black Monday
The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age
The Urbz: Sims in the City

Fall 2004

Ace Combat 5: The Unsung War
*Battlefield: Modern Combat
*Burnout 3

*Final Fantasy XI: Chains of Promathia (expansion pack)
Mercenaries
*Mortal Kombat: Deception
Playboy Mansion
*Star Wars: Battlefront
*Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2
*Tony Hawk's Underground 2: World Destruction Tour
Viewtiful Joe 2
Virtua Quest

Winter 2004/2005

*Champions of Norrath: Return to Arms
Devil May Cry 3
Samurai Legend Musashi
StarCraft: Ghost
X-Men: Legends
*Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition

2005

*25 to Life
Destroy All Humans
Final Fantasy XII
Kingdom Hearts II ▼



God of War
*Rise of the Kasai
*TimeSplitters: Future Perfect
Xenosaga Episode II: Jenseits von Gut und Bose
Tekken 5

Here's Looking at You, Kids

Sony President Kaz Hirai boasts that "the success of EyeToy demonstrates the insatiable appetite [of gamers] for something new and something different." He ain't kidding—the PS2's camera peripheral is the bee's knees, with the U.S. and European crowds (not so much in Japan, though). Expect many more EyeToy games in the months to come, including the hoverboard-style racer *AntiGrav* and the minigame-filled *Sega Superstars*.



MIA: Tomb Raider and Nico

Despite preshow whispers, this year's gaming extravaganza didn't mark the return of Lady Lara. A rep from Eidos—the publisher of the troubled *Tomb Raider* series—will only say that Ms. Croft's next adventure is "a ways off." As for the sequel to the cult-hit adventure *ico*, Sony's U.S. branch still won't confirm a Stateside release. Shucks.

System Check: Sony's Next Console

"It's hard to say at this point," says Sony's main man Kaz Hirai on the timetable for PlayStation 3 (or whatever they'll call it). "If anything, we want to make sure we're offering a quantum leap in the user's experience." Just what constitutes a quantum leap? "Just compare [the original] PlayStation with PlayStation 2," says Hirai. "I would say that is a quantum leap. If we don't see as big or bigger jump [with the next system], then my question is, why would you wanna do something like that? This means we don't necessarily stick to a five-year life cycle." ▶

PLAYSTATION 2'S E3 REPORT CARD

Strengths:

- Larger and more varied library of games than the competition's
- Hot exclusives such as *Metal Gear Solid 3*, the new *Grand Theft Auto*, and *Final Fantasy XII*
- Sony's promising to put more effort into its PS2 online network, enhancing its features

Weaknesses:

- Price drop to \$150 not as low as we'd hoped for
- Although top-tier games still dazzle, lesser titles show system's age compared to Xbox
- Online network still not as cohesive as Xbox Live

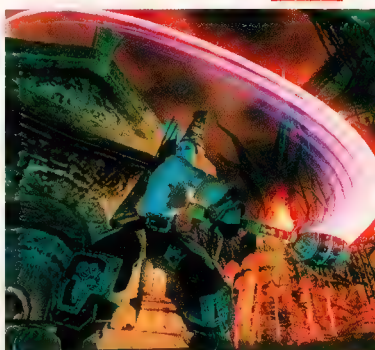
Overall:

Spectacular third-party exclusives power an unbeatable lineup of titles—both online and off—for every flavor of gamer.

A

"You finally threw us the ball."

—Chief Xbox Officer Robbie Bach, responding to EA execs who announced Xbox Live support



Xbox's fall exclusives, including *Halo 2* (left) and *Fable* (above), are solid, but early 2005 holds few big names besides *Jade Empire* (below).



XBOX

Scores the best shooters and online service, but where are the new games?

Oh, snap! Microsoft, at its pre-E3 press conference, burned Sony good with a pretaped parody of *The Apprentice*, which starred the real Donald Trump giving the ax to actors playing Sony execs who bungled their system's online strategy. The Donald



EA Sports unleashed Mohammad "I am the greatest" Ali and other pro athletes to hype its Xbox Live support.

has a point: Compare the features and content of Sony's and Microsoft's online services, and Xbox has a clear edge—one that will continue to sharpen. Just look at Electronic Arts' announced commitment to online Xbox gaming (see sidebar). "Xbox Live serves as the very foundation of our platform leadership," says Chief Xbox Officer Robbie Bach. "We're closing in on 1 million subscribers. [HBO and AOL] took five years to reach [that goal]. We're doing it in less than half that time."

Robust online growth is fine, but Microsoft really had us at *Halo 2*, now pegged for a November 9 release (see page 46). "Our expectations are tremendous," says Microsoft Games Studios General Manager Shane Kim. "But I know [developer] Bungie will deliver." *Halo 2* is the biggest gun in an arsenal of fall games that includes gloomy shooter *Doom 3*, monster RPG *Fable*, and out-of-nowhere racer *Forza Motorsport*. Still, we walked away from Microsoft's booth with heavy feelings of déjà vu. Where have we seen many of these games before? Oh yeah—at last year's E3. Why didn't the Donald tell Microsoft it needed more new games? >



XBOX: BY THE NUMBERS

4
Million

Copies of *Halo: Combat Evolved* sold worldwide

55

Price, in dollars, of the *Halo 2* collectors' edition (featuring a metal game box and bonus DVD)

24

Number of countries that play games through Xbox Live

150

Number of online-enabled Xbox games available by year's end

CNNMONEY.COM REPORTS THAT MICROSOFT HAS BEEN CONSIDERING A NEW \$700 CONSOLE THAT WILL PLAY PC, XBOX, AND NEXT-GENERATION XBOX GAMES.

I think we're in for another
genre-defining moment for survival horror.
Most Anticipated of 2004 award - IGN

Call of Cthulhu filled us with awe and dread.
Best of E3 award - Gamespy

Bethesda once again **blazes a trail**
in the gaming world!
ActionTrip

CALL OF CTHULHU

Dark Corners of the Earth

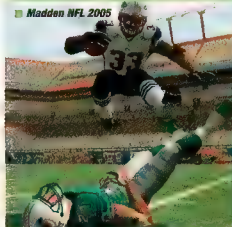




XBOX LIVE: IT'S IN THE GAME

Microsoft's Xbox Live online service is the centerpiece of the Xbox 360 console. It's a free-to-play service that allows you to play online with up to 16 other players. The service is available on all Xbox 360 consoles, and it's also available on the Xbox 360 S and Xbox 360 SLIM. The service is available on all Xbox 360 consoles, and it's also available on the Xbox 360 S and Xbox 360 SLIM. The service is available on all Xbox 360 consoles, and it's also available on the Xbox 360 S and Xbox 360 SLIM.

Madden NFL 2005



TimeSplitters Future Perfect



Need for Speed Underground 2



NOTABLE GAMES

Your monthly planner to some of the biggest Xbox titles at the show. (Games noted with an asterisk are confirmed to have online features.)

August

- *Madden NFL 2005
- *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow

September

- *Dead or Alive: Ultimate
- Def Jam: Fight for NY
- Fable
- Silent Hill 4

November

- *Halo 2
- Prince of Persia 2
- The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age
- The URbz: Sims in the City
- *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent
- *Need for Speed Underground 2

Fall 2004

- *Battlefield: Modern Combat
- *Doom 3
- Mercenaries
- *Mortal Kombat: Deception
- Playboy: The Mansion
- *Star Wars Battlefront
- *Star Wars Republic Commando
- *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2
- Tony Hawk's Underground 2: World Destruction Tour
- *Unreal Championship 2: The Liandri Conflict Y



Winter 2004/2005

- *Forza Motorsport Y



- Otogi 2
- *OutRun 2
- StarCraft: Ghost
- X-Men: Legends
- *Midnight Club: DUB Edition

2005

- *25 to Life
- B.C.
- *Conker: Live & Reloaded
- Destroy All Humans!
- Jade Empire
- Kameo: Elements of Power
- Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic—The Sith Lords
- *TimeSplitters Future Perfect
- *MechAssault 2: Lone Wolf Y



Save Your Quarters

The Xbox Live upgrades just keep on coming. This fall, Microsoft will launch Xbox Live Arcade—a collection of trivia, board, puzzle, and classic arcade games like *Dig Dug* (right) and *Galaxian* that you can download for a small, as yet undetermined fee. Also due by the end of the year: live online video chat. Via camera peripherals, you and five of your Xbox Live buddies can see each other's mugs while yapping.



MA: True Fantasy Live Online

Xbox's first massively multiplayer online role-playing game, from developer Level 5 (of *Dark Cloud* fame), was noticeably absent from the show. Will *True Fantasy*—originally due this summer—make it to reality? "It's a very challenging game from a design standpoint," says Microsoft Game Studios General Manager Shane Kim. "We won't rush it out. We're working hard, and we'll have a lot more to say about it pretty soon."



System Check: Microsoft's Next Console

While it's of popular opinion that Microsoft will be the first out of the next-gen gates (some say as early as 2005), the company's lips are zipped about Xbox's successor. But when it comes to XNA—Microsoft's new software development tool—company reps will talk your ear off. "All gamers need to know about XNA is that they're gonna be floored with incredible next-generation graphics, next-generation sound, next-generation [Xbox] Live play," says Corporate Vice President J. Allard, "and best part is, it's gonna play on next-generation devices." ▶

XBOX'S E3 REPORT CARD

Strengths:

- The most robust online network—now with content from former fence-sitter Electronic Arts
- A killer lineup of first-person shooters and role-playing games
- Continued strong support from third-party publishers

Weaknesses:

- *Halo 2*, *Fable*, *Doom 3*—all top-tier titles... from last year! Where are the surprises?
- The roster of big games starts to taper off once you get into early 2005
- Sony's PS2 price drop takes away Xbox's price advantage

Overall:

Xbox is set for its best fall yet based on *Halo 2* alone. Still, despite its superior online service, Xbox can't match the breadth of PS2's library.

B

- Claws
- Whip
- Stilettoes
- Mercy

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Unleash her feline fury on anyone who crosses her path. This cat's not just out for the night. She's out for revenge.



Violence
Mild Language



GAME BOY ADVANCE

PlayStation 2



Challenge Everything

"I want another Mario—I want a Mario that's relevant to today's teens."

—Nintendo Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing Reggie Fils-Aime



Not a boy, not yet a man: Teen Link matures in *Legend of Zelda* (left). Other showstoppers: *Resident Evil 4* (above) and *Paper Mario 2* (below).



GAMECUBE

"Kicking ass and taking names," but needs a few more big games

Violence in videogames? Booring! But what about violence in videogame press conferences? "My name is Reggie, and I'm about kicking ass; I'm about taking names," roared Reginald Fils-Aime—a former VH1 spin doctor who's built like a linebacker and is now head of Nintendo's sales and marketing—at the company's opening E3 ceremony. Later, Mario creator Shigeru Miyamoto stormed the stage brandishing a sword and shield from his *Legend of Zelda* series.

What gives? Is Nintendo suddenly dropping its kiddie



■ Sword and the sorcerer: *Zelda* papa Shigeru Miyamoto rattles his saber at the Nintendo press conference.

image in favor of something more bloodthirsty?

Not quite. All the inspired theatrics served to obliterate memories of last year's girly-man E3 showing and hype a roster of upcoming steroid-enhanced GameCube titles, chief among them *Metroid Prime 2* and a surprisingly all-grown-up *Legend of Zelda* (see page 50). Oh, and Nintendo also wheeled out a certain dual-screened portable system (see our cover story on page 86). The audience's assortment of Nintendo fans—even prone to impassioned reactions—swoned.

And while we were certainly caught up in the moment, we spied a few weaknesses in Nintendo's GameCube battle charge. The company is **not** stubborn as ever about embracing online gaming. "We believe in the power of community," Fils-Aime says. "We just don't believe that doing it online through a pay-to-play mechanism is the way that the consumer wants it." And GameCube's upcoming roster could use a few more megaton games—especially third-party exclusives (Capcom's *Resident Evil 4*, while spectacular, isn't enough). Even Fils-Aime sees the need. "If I could wave a magic wand, I'd want more franchise characters," he says. Fils-Aime says Nintendo has several secret new franchises in the works. Just thought we should point that out. The guy knows where we live. >

GC: BY THE NUMBERS

20
Million

Total number of GameCubes Nintendo expects to sell by the end of this console cycle

400

Number of games available for GC by year's end

12.8

Average number of games in a GC owner's software library

2

Number of online-enabled GC games, which is only one more than a year ago

BARTONE ACTORS PATRICK STEWART AND MICHAEL CLARKE DUNCAN WILL VOICE CHARACTERS IN *FORGOTTEN REALMS: DEMON STONE*, AN RPG FOR PS2 DUE OUT THIS FALL...

PLAYS FOR THE FRAME



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JUST BEAT IT

Crazy controllers are not new for the Big N (remember the Power Glove for NES? As we learned from Nintendo-funded flick *The Wizard*, "it's so bad!"). Nintendo is again breaking the funky barrier of gaming normalcy with its latest creation: the DK Bongo controller. This GC peripheral features sensors and microphones that let

you and your friends drum and clap to the rhythm of the music in *Donkey Konga* or guide Nintendo's famous ape across the screen in the side-scrolling adventure *Donkey Kong Jungle Beat* (below). Even the wacky military-pinball game *Odama* (below left) supports the off-the-wall controller: While one player uses the standard-issued



Spank the left or right bongos to move your monkey in *Donkey Kong Jungle Beat*, which requires the controller.



Surprisingly sturdy, the \$50 DK Bongo controller (which comes with *Donkey Konga*) can survive days of spanking.

gamepad to maneuver the giant pinball, the other bangs on the bongos to supercharge soldiers' morale.

One DK Bongo controller comes packed with every copy of *Donkey Konga* (coming this September for \$50). If you want a separate controller for *Jungle Beat* or for multiplayer *Donkey Konga* pals, Nintendo will sell stand-alone bongos. No price has been announced.

NOTABLE GAMES

Your handy guide to some of the biggest GameCube titles at E3.

August

Madden NFL 2005
Pikmin 2
WWE: Day of Reckoning ▼



September

Def Jam: Fight for NY
Donkey Konga

October

Paper Mario 2

November

GoldenEye: Rogue Agent
King Arthur
Metroid Prime 2: Echoes
Need for Speed Underground 2
Prince of Persia 2
The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age
The Urbz: Sims in the City
Star Fox ▼



Fall 2004

Amazing Island
Street Racing Syndicate
Virtua Quest
Burnout 3
THUG 2: World Destruction Tour
Viewtiful Joe 2 ▼



Winter 2004/2005

Geist
Resident Evil 4
StarCraft: Ghost
X-Men: Legends
Killer 7

2005

Advance Wars: Under Fire
Donkey Kong Jungle Beat
Fire Emblem
Odama
The Legend of Zelda
TimeSplitters Future Perfect
Mario Tennis ▼



Diss-connected

What a difference a year makes. During Nintendo's last trip to E3, the company couldn't shut up about GBA-to-GC connectivity, showcasing close to 10 high-profile titles that supported the much-ballyhooed feature. This year, on the other hand, saw the number drop to less than a handful of games, with only one from Nintendo—the recently released *Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures*. Perhaps the whole connectivity thing was a gimmick after all...



MIA: Mario 128

Nintendo's creative whiz Shigeru Miyamoto told us last year, "If I don't show something of [the next Mario platformer] at the next E3, I'll feel like I haven't fulfilled my responsibilities." What happened, Shiggy? E3 2004 came and went without a mere mention of the code-named *Mario 128*. But we should've known better than to believe him—during the same conversation, Miyamoto said the next *Zelda* game wouldn't star a realistic-looking Link. The truth is on page 50.

System Check: Nintendo's Next Console

Nintendo President Satoru Iwata confirmed that a GameCube follow-up is in the works and may be unveiled at next year's E3, and he boldly predicted it would be "a game revolution." Nintendo's Reggie Fils-Aime says, "Today's current console experience is a player tethered to a machine tethered to a television. We believe that is old technology." So when will this revolution be televised? "The [console] cycle typically is every five years," he says. "Is it going to be 2006? I'm not saying that, but is it going to be around that time period? Absolutely, but not before then." ▶

GAMECUBE'S E3 REPORT CARD

Strengths:

- Several outstanding first-party titles
- Novel games such as *Donkey Kong Jungle Beat* and *Odama* show that Nintendo continues to innovate
- The company is finally getting over the whole GBA-to-GC connectivity gimmick

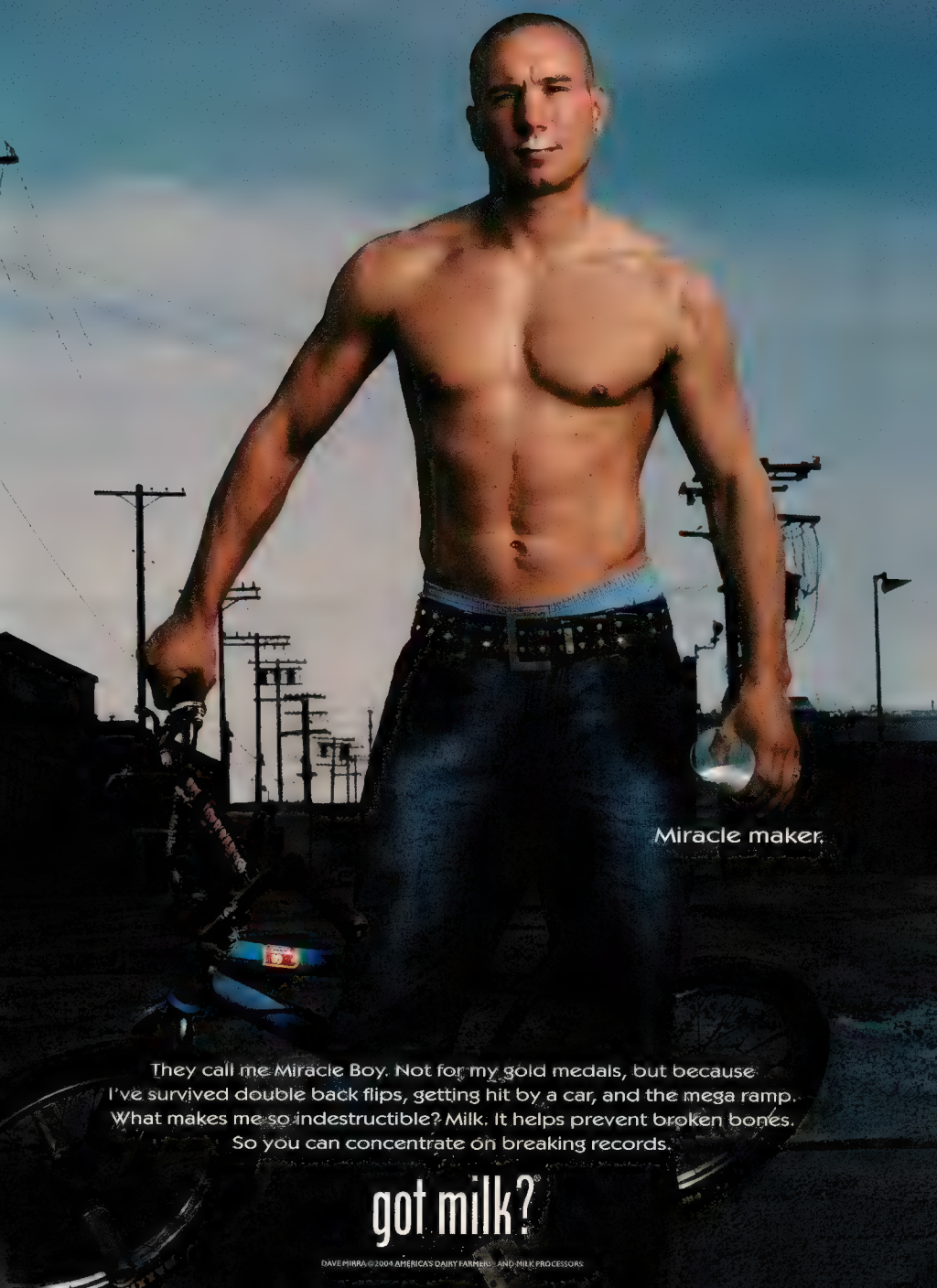
Weaknesses:

- Not as many triple-A games as the competition
- Nintendo still has no love for online gaming—and likely won't until its next generation of hardware
- Third-party support at an all-time low, with next to no exclusives

Overall:

Powerhouse first-party games (realistic *Zelda*) have us psyched, even as third-party support continues to slip and Nintendo focuses on DS.

B



Miracle maker.

They call me Miracle Boy. Not for my gold medals, but because I've survived double back flips, getting hit by a car, and the mega ramp. What makes me so indestructible? Milk. It helps prevent broken bones. So you can concentrate on breaking records.

got milk?[®]

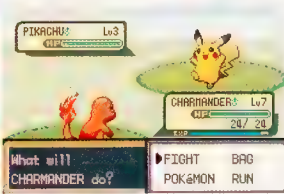


■ From the makers of *Oracle of Ages/Seasons*, *The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap* packs two worlds to explore.



WRAP-UP

■ Square Enix and Disney heroes team up in *Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories* (left), a lavish role-player with a deep card-battling system. The new *Pokémon* adventure (right) is based on old games.



NOTABLE GAMES

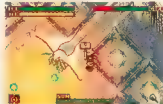
A list of some of the big Game Boy Advance games at E3.

August

Astro Boy: Omega Factor
Metal Slug Advance
Ms. Pac-Man: Maze Madness

September

Boktai 2: Solar Boy Django ▼



Dragon Ball Z: Buu's Fury
F-Zero GP Legend
Pokémon FireRed
Pokémon LeafGreen

October

SD Gundam Force
Kirby & The Amazing Mirror
Mario Pinball
The Incredibles
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger 2
Mega Man Anniversary Collection

November

Donkey Kong Country 2
Gundam Seed: Battle Assault
The Urbz: Sims in the City

December

Mario Party Advance

Fall 2004

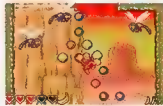
Banjo Pilot
Final Fantasy I & II Advance
Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories

Winter 2004/2005

Mega Man Zero 3

2005

Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap
DK: King of Swing ▼



GAME BOY ADVANCE

Taking a backseat to Nintendo's DS

Nintendo's top brass insist they won't abandon development on Game Boy Advance games to focus on the newer, shinier, dual-screener DS system (which, by the way, is backward compatible with GBA). But after wandering the company's E3 booth, we're not so sure. Just where was Nintendo hiding all the big new GBA games?

The company's lineup of first-party GBA titles—typically the only things worth playing on the system—was far weaker than at past E3s. Take away the nifty-looking *Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap* (named after a magic

hat that shrinks hero Link to micro-size), the funky *Donkey Kong: King of Swing*, and a new Kirby sidescroller, and what's left to get excited about? Certainly not the recycled monster collecting of *Pokémon FireRed* and *LeafGreen*. We liked these games more when they debuted as *Pokémon Red* and *Blue* back in 1998.

Square Enix and Konami added some third-party pizzazz with *Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories*, *Final Fantasy* remakes, and *Boktai 2*, but we can't help wondering if we're seeing the beginning of the end of top-quality GBA support now that the DS is in plain view.

Wire Less

Since cabling two GBAs together is about as convenient as a soup-can telephone, Nintendo has decided to cut the cord. Its new GBA Wireless Adapter (bundled with *Pokémon FireRed* and *LeafGreen*, due September 7) lets users chat, locate nearby users, and play about a dozen new titles currently in development.



■ Cut the cord with this gizmo.

Video Killed the Invincibility Star

Nothing good on the boob tube? Did you check your GBA? Nintendo and Majesco think you should. Their GBA video carts plug in and load up like any GBA game and hold up to four episodes of *Pokémon*, *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, *Ninja Turtles*, or *SpongeBob*, to name a few. GBA video carts are out now and run about 20 buckeroos.



GBA: BY THE NUMBERS

7

Number of new first-party GBA games announced at E3

8

Number of first-party Nintendo DS games announced at E3

25

Percent of the world's gaming dollar spent on GBA-related products

GBA'S E3 REPORT CARD

Strengths:

+ DS backward compatibility means that developers won't abandon GBA development anytime soon

Weaknesses:

- Nintendo's new focus on DS games may leave GBA owners stuck with more and more third-party games
- Most third-party games are crap

Overall:

A weak showing of games compared to previous years. Could GBA be on the way out? 🐛



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"...THIS ONE LEVITATES ABOVE THE PACK." -PSM

"...ONE OF THE MOST INNOVATIVE ACTION GAMES OF THE CURRENT GENERATION." -XBN

Featuring **COLD's**
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MATURE 17+
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Strong Language



PlayStation 2



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420 X 2
No Comply • Spine Transfer

When you wipe out in THUG2, you have a shot to recoup some of your lost points by hitting the right buttons.

PS2/XB/GC

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2: WORLD DESTRUCTION TOUR

Viva la Thug

Last year, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* benefited from a massive makeover—adding a story line, offering free-form goals, and blowing levels to monstrous proportions made *Tony Hawk's Underground* the freshest grindfest revision in years. Due on all three platforms this November, *Underground 2* continues the series' tuggish descent into gleeful insanity with

a dangerous new co-star, MTV's gross-out bad boy Bam Margera.

He heads up Team Bam, a rival group of skate punks (all based on Bam's real pals) who challenge your heroic Team Hawk to a bizarre world skating tournament in which destruction is the goal. In keeping with the demolition theme, you're able to mark up levels with stickers and graffiti tags (which you can design with

the included graffiti editor), throw objects at passersby, and cause larger-scale destruction—in one level, you'll ignite a cannon and blow apart a construction site to open another area of the level. Die-hard fans of the original *Tony Hawk* games will be happy to know that an old-school classic mode will also be included, offering more than 100 different timed goals.

—Dana Jangewaard



Playstation 2

TEKKEN 5

Five for fighting

Many gamers regarded *Tekken 4* as a sideways step for the series—its shallow features list and been-there, done-that gameplay put it squarely behind Namco's other fighting heavyweight, *Soul Calibur II*. But the recently revealed *Tekken 5* might put the Iron Fist Tournament back on top. A slick new graphics engine provides the immediate draw, with lifelike characters and inventive fighting arenas. Stages in a burning building (complete with destructible timber) and secret treasure cove (it coughs up change every time you slain your oppo-



nent to the ground) inject some ingenuity into the staid genre. On the character front, expect at least three new pugilists: Japanese martial artist Asuka Kazama, Chinese monk Feng Wei, and, uh, an African-American ninja named Raven.

Scheduled for arcades in late 2004 and for consoles (PlayStation 2 at least, but possibly more, given SC2's multipatform success) in 2005, *Tekken 5* seems poised to put the punch back in this popular series.

—James Mielke

PC GAMING UPDATE

From the E3 front lines

The biggest highlight of this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo? Getting on the plane home with some infinitesimal portion of my hearing still intact. OK, so the three-day march through the Los Angeles Convention Center isn't exactly the Trail of Tears, but holding game demos in a running jet turbine would be about as efficient (and pleasant). That said, there was a lot to be happy about on the PC side of things, and not just with the expected titles, like the very impressive *Half-Life 2* or *Rome: Total War*. For instance:

S.T.A.L.K.E.R.



With *Half-Life 2* and *Doom 3* dominating the first-person-shooter landscape, this musclebound little gem has been flying well below the radar. Not anymore. The visually striking *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* takes place after a second Chernobyl disaster, but the devastated landscape isn't entirely abandoned—hideous mutants now roam the wasteland. Instead of relying on scripted events, *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* uses A.I. to drive the monsters, creating a living world that should never deliver the same horrifying experience twice.

Guild Wars



Free online play? What kind of lunatics would design a game like that? Lunatics with a Blizzard Battle.net pedigree, that's who. This game features satisfying hack-n-slash gameplay à la *Diablo II*, only it's much slicker and prettier. Unlike other online RPGs, *Guild Wars* rewards skill over time invested, granting players new abilities and talents as they finish missions. This could be the next great online addition.

—Robert Coffey
Computer Gaming World

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A routine disturbance unit. A startling discovery. A catastrophe of supernatural proportions.

Now, trusting only in his paranormal abilities and a phenomenal array of weapons, Lazarus Jones is out to capture hordes of tortured souls who seek vengeance on the world of the living.

RATING READING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
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PlayStation 2



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Xbox

HALO 2

Multiplayer details! 16 things you should know.

Please don't hate us—we recently got to play multiplayer *Halo 2*. If it helps any, we can tell you that the game is damn good and that your long wait until its November 9 release will be well worth suffering through. We played and made (one-sided capture the flag) on one map (Zanzibar, an African beach) for hours, and we would've kept on going if we weren't told to leave by the people working the demo. Jerkstores.

We learned a few interesting things along the way, which we're passing along to you here. Bottom line: It's really just "more and better *Halo*" rather than anything revolutionary, but heck, that's fine by us.

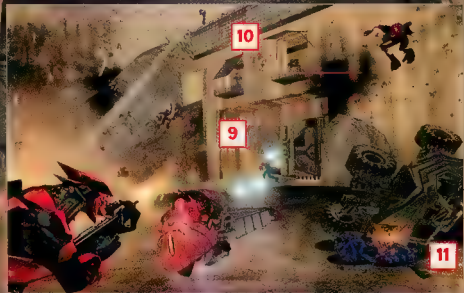
—Dan "Shoe" Niu

"And yes, that's 2004."

Xbox Corporate Vice President Peter Moore, joking about the latest (and oft-delayed) release date of *Halo 2*. It's now set for November 9, 2004, that is. Moore was so confident, he was willing to eat the date in skin. He appeared at a press conference with "November 9" tattooed on his arm.



If this ill' guy (6) can make it to the upstairs control panel, he can open up the main gate (7) to make it much easier for his invading teammates to get in and out of this base. These barrels (8) can be blown up, too. OK, so not everything's so innovative....



Here's what the outside looks like with that gate open (9). Other interactive bits include these shutters (10), which defenders can close but still poke through for a protective vantage point. (11) A crushed Johnson is not an honorable way to die.



We know: Halo 2 will support at least 16 players (1), including combinations of four teams of four or even eight teams of two.

We wonder: How eight-team (not player, but team) capture the flag could work. Bungie is actually working on this—trying to make every mode work with every possible combination of players and teams, including capture the flag for eight groups at once.

We know: That's a rocket launcher mounted on the back of this Warthog jeep (2), not a machine gun like in the last game. We also know it's a lot more fun to blow stuff up than to put a bunch of bullets in said stuff.

We were told: Enemy players may be able to pull you off of this turret to use it for themselves. This should lead to some interesting road-rage moments when players work out who gets to use this ride. Remember, a Warthog has room for three: driver, passenger, and gunner.

We know: You can play as the alien Covenant or the human Spartans, the badass space marine unit of which tough-guy protagonist Master Chief is a member. You can also jump higher than in the first game (3). It feels too floaty at first, but we quickly got used to it.

We're not sure: If Covenant players will have different physical characteristics (jumping height, speed, etc.) than Spartans. We asked three different people working on the game—and got three totally different responses. Guess we'll have to wait and see. But we did get a hint that the Covenant may be playable in the single-player campaign mode! When we pushed for more details, one product manager would only smile and say, "Bungie has a lot of tricks up its sleeve for Halo 2!"

We know: Like in the Quake series, some of the more powerful power-ups will be just out of reach. Past the hub of this giant windmill (4) is an Energy Sword. To get to it, you'll have to find and destroy a metal pin to lower a bridge to this spot, then climb through a small opening.

We also know: The sword is one helluva weapon. It's worth the effort to get it, but it takes valuable seconds away during the timed capture the flag matches.

We know: You can hold two one-handed guns at the same time (5), which is called "dual-wielding." You lose the ability to throw grenades, but you can always drop a gun if you have to. You can double up the firepower with two submachine guns (one of the new weapons in Halo 2) or try a smart combo, like a needler pistol for long-range tracking and an SMG for short-range business. By the way, the new assault rifle has a scope now.

"Dual-wielding"? Sure, it doesn't roll off your tongue, but as associate editor Shawn Elliott says, "Better than calling it 'double-listing.'"



These Ghosts (12) can now boost for superspeed, but you sacrifice lasers and mobility when doing so. Vehicles also take location-specific damage (13), which can affect handling. If the driver's going slow enough, try hopping on and kicking them off (14).



Bungie calls 'em "the ultimate son-of-a-bitch stick." (15) OK, we'll call them that, too. You can wield these Energy Swords for one-hit kills if you get close enough to lock on. Also, check out the logo on the personalized armor (16)—perfect for clans.

1-800-CONFESS

The guys on the other end of those videogame hint lines call out their silliest, stupidest callers

Got lost in *Legend of Zelda*? Frustrated by *Final Fantasy*? Back before stymied players turned to the Internet for instant tips, game-solving salvation came solely

from phone-in hint services such as Nintendo's Game Counselor Hotline. Not surprisingly, those embattled counselors have heard it all—from angry parental gripes to too-

stupid-to-be-real questions. We've tracked down ex-counselors who recount their favorite calls. Now it's your turn to listen....

—Ryan Payton



MR. CLEAN

Counselor James Tang: Thank you for calling Nintendo. How can I help you?

Caller: I think there's something wrong with my Super Nintendo.

Counselor: What seems to be the problem?

Caller: Well, I tried playing it the other night and I couldn't get any of my games to work, so I decided to clean them because I thought they might be dirty.

Counselor: And that didn't work?

Caller: No, and in fact I think *all* of my games are ruined.

Counselor: How did you clean your games?

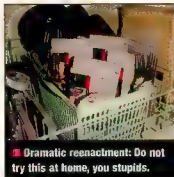
Caller: I put them in the dishwasher on normal cycle.

Counselor: ...

Caller: Do you think you can fix them?

Counselor: At this point, it may be a good idea to upgrade to a newer system. I'd also recommend using a cleaning kit in the future instead of using your dishwasher for your games.

Caller: I wish someone had told me that before.



► Dramatic reenactment: Do not try this at home, you stupid.

THE CLUELESS CALLER

Counselor Aapo Borelani: Nintendo hotline—how can we help you?

Caller: How do I get the key from the skeleton standing in the pond?

Counselor: Uh, I'm guessing your game is *Shadowgate*?

Caller: Naw, I don't think so.

Counselor: Trust me—it's *Shadowgate*.

Caller: No, I think it's something else.

Counselor: Fed up with arguing, gives out pertinent *Shadowgate* tip.]

Caller: OK, thanks. I have another game I'm having problems with. Hold on, I'll get it. **Counselor:** Actually, the phone lines are really crowded as this is a toll-free number. Maybe you could call back when you have the game?

Caller: No, it's too hard to get through.

Counselor: I'm sure you understand that we would like to serve everyone.

Caller: Yeah, but never mind. I'll go get the game.



THE MATH WIZ

Counselor James Tang: Nintendo hotline—how can I help?

Caller: In *Spyro*, how many fairies do I need to get to have 20 fairies?

Counselor: Well, um, how many fairies do you have now?

Caller: Sixteen.

Counselor: Sooo...there's 20 fairies and you only have 16, meaning you needeed... [Pauses, hoping the caller will figure this out himself.]

Caller: I dunno. You tell me.

Counselor: ...

Caller: ...

Counselor: Four. The answer is four fairies.

Caller: Oh. [Click.]



THE TRACK STAR

Counselor James Tang: Thanks for calling Nintendo. How can I help you?

Caller: I just got *Track & Field* for my Game Boy and I think something's wrong with it.

Counselor: What seems to be the problem?

Caller: Well, it's missing the table tennis event.

Counselor: ...

Caller: What do I do?

Counselor: Actually, the *Track & Field* game doesn't have a table tennis event in it.

Caller: Why not?

Counselor: Well...I think it's called *Track & Field* because all of the events take place either on a track or on a field.

Caller: Oh. Thanks.



Tales from the Hint Line Front Lines...

Oldies but Goodies

"I got a lot of elderly callers who loved the *Dragon Warrior* series because they didn't need fast reflexes and it was a great time killer for folks in retirement homes. They'd chat for hours: 'Remember me? The guy who beat *Dragon Warrior II* with no weapons? It took me over 200 hours!' Old people are truly hardcore."

—Enix Counselor Jake Kazdal

Most-wanted Callers

"We got a lot of angry calls about *Animal Crossing*. A skin-colored hydrant in the game caused a stir with parents, who thought it looked like a wiggling penis. Our database even had a special page on dealing with the call. I waited every day to take this call, but it was always routed to hotline veterans."

—Nintendo Counselor Rick Sandborn

Most Culturally Intolerant Caller

"I had a woman who was livid about the dino language in *Starfox Adventures*. She told me she doesn't buy games to listen to other languages. I told her it was a language the designers created for the dinosaurs, who only speak it at the beginning. She was convinced it was Spanish, called me a 'retard,' and hung up."

—Nintendo Counselor Kyle Green



YOU CALL IT "NINTENDO," BUT MOST TIP LINE CALLERS SAY "NINTENDO" OR JUST "TENDO," ACCORDING TO GAME COUNSELORS...

filed under: **Pothead**

Kids these days **are just**

Wrong. a bunch of pot-smoking slackers, right?
I'm a writer, a halfback,

and the last thing I smoked

was an **entire** defense.

Drugs aren't me. My life. **My decision.**

i a m

Kid Link would have
sollod his IP! green jerkin
at the sight of this.

GameCube

FIRST LOOK: THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

Our little baby is all grown up

When Nintendo unveiled the latest GameCube iteration of *The Legend of Zelda* at its 2004 Electronic Entertainment Expo press conference, the crowd went absolutely berserk—grown men wept openly, mid-proper businessmen squealed like schoolgirls, overweight nerds in Hot Topic T-shirts leapt up and down uncontrollably. Someone was probably carried out on a stretcher, like at a Michael Jackson concert. Why? Contrary to what Nintendo had previously told us, the new *Zelda* game isn't a

direct follow-up to the cute, cartoony *Wind Waker*—instead, it's a startlingly realistic, mature take on the classic franchise. The new game has no official title yet, nor a release date, but we expect it to hit in late 2005. "There were very, very, very, very, many people out there who wanted Link to change," laughs series creator Shigeru Miyamoto. "We feel that [cartoon style] was the best option for expressing Link as a young, energetic boy in *Wind Waker*, but now we've made him a teenager again."



He's not kidding: Link has assuredly grown up, leaving behind all his boyish charms—no more ultraexpressive doe eyes, friendly talking boat, or Dennis the Menace-style slingshot. The new Link echoes the lanky, grown-up version in Nintendo 64's *Ocarina of Time* but is a lot tougher, with a more rugged tunic and angular features. In fact, he's not too dissimilar from the ass-kicking elf seen in last year's *Soul Calibur II* for Cuba. Now, all he has to do is ditch that prudish *Zelda*, hook up with sultry dominatrix Ivy, and then he'll be really mature....



»» WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT FROM ZELDA FOR NINTENDO DS? PRODUCER EJI AONUMA PROMISES MULTIPLAYER ACTION LIKE THAT IN ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS ADVENTURES (CC)...»»



You scan me:

You think I'm just another pot-smoking teenager.

Well, you're **Wrong.**

I'm an artist, a therapist, and the **last time** I took a hit was in kickboxing.

Drugs aren't me. My life. **My decision.**

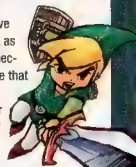
i am

A LEGEND IN THE MAKING

Although Nintendo showed a full two minutes of in-game footage, details concerning the story line and gameplay remain largely off-limits. Still, we've grilled the developers with questions and managed to extract some hints as to what to expect.

What Ever Happened to Baby Link?

Does this mean we've seen the last of Link as a cuddly runt? Not necessarily. "I do believe that if we go back and decide to do another story in the realm of Child Link, then we may return toon-shading style that we used in *Wind Waker*," says series producer Aonuma.



Equestrian Action

"One of the big differences between this and *Wind Waker* is that here, you ride on horseback," explains Producer Eiji Aonuma. "In *Ocarina of Time*, Link also rode the horse, but here, you can actually engage in combat on horseback." Footage showed Link chopping down boar-riding fools from saddleback.



Combat

"As far as the underlying engine is concerned, what we've shown here is actually the exact same engine as *Wind Waker*," explains Aonuma. "We've only placed a different look over the top of it." That's good news from a swordplay perspective—*Wind Waker*'s excellent combat system never felt fully utilized, but here, it should get room to shine, thanks to an increased number of enemy encounters. We saw Link battling large groups of enemies at once, parrying, dodging, and slashing like a pro.



Dungeons

This game's labyrinths appear to be a throwback to the older games in the series—the dungeon we saw featured a camera from an angled overhead perspective, kind of like in *A Link to the Past* (SNES). When Link engaged in combat or pushed a block to solve a puzzle, the view shifted to a close-up *Ocarina of Time*-type angle.



The World

After the last game's radically waterlogged world map transformed Hyrule into a menagerie of tiny islands, how will the geography be organized this time? Sadly, that's still classified info. "It may be suitable to the story to have a central Hyrule field with multiple branches off it," says Aonuma. "But, it may also make sense to have more diverse, geographically distant locations that you must travel between." Either way, expect to get saddle-sore along the way. —Shane Bettenhausen



Labeled:

Just another drugged out loser.

But your little tag's **way off.**

I'm a thinker, an uncle,
and the last thing I lit up was a rugby scoreboard.

Drugs aren't me. My life. **My decision.**

i am

EGM INTERNATIONAL

Building friendships via...uh, social intercourse



■ PS2
UNO

Oh please, another card game? Yes, but it's America's No. 1 card game turned into something resembling the film *Battle Royale*, minus the sickles and machine guns. As a student at the prestigious Uno Academy, you must survive a series of five-player matches against every anime stereotype in the book, including the karate guy, the nerdy loser, and the mysterious American with the blonde Afro.

Could Uno make its way to our shores?

Why not? It's hard to think of another card sim that takes its subject so seriously. For instance, developer Success has even implemented the "You didn't say 'Uno!' Ha ha ha!" rule—you've got to press a separate button when you're down to your last card, or else the computer players penalize you.



■ PS2
THE FRIENDSHIP ADVENTURE

What's with all the sweaty, half-naked Japanese dudes? According to the front of the game box, *The Friendship Adventure* is "a story of beautiful, intense friendship in a world of men who live for their work." You play as an up-and-coming TV announcer at a struggling network, and, using your gift of gab, you'll build relationships with your male coworkers to help produce successful programs.

Any chance this male-bonding sim will arrive Stateside? Probably not, especially if someone tells the ESRB the game's backstory. *The Friendship Adventure* is a bowlerized port of a Japanese PC game where you and your male friends did stuff that exceeded the bounds of your typical friendship. Yes, onscreen.

OLD SCHOOL

10 years ago in EGM

On the Cover:
Super Return of the Jedi

The summer of '94 included an exclusive look at the Super Nintendo *Star Wars* side-scroller. The thought of controlling a bikini-clad Princess Leia still puts a smile on our faces.



Game of the Month:
Donkey Kong (Game Boy)

Fighting games were all the rage during the mid-'90s, but not this month. The Review Crew went bananas for Nintendo's slightly upgraded remake of the arcade classic starring the big bad ape.



"Project Reality" No More

The Big N revealed a new name for its next console—Ultra 64 (it would later change again to Nintendo 64). Nintendo also released the first pics of Ultra 64 games, which included images of a *Killer Instinct* title.

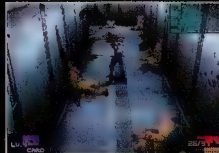
DESERT ISLAND GAMES: MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ

Not only does this month's castaway play games religiously (she was engaged in a *SOCOM 2* battle during our phone interview), but *Fast and the Furious* star Michelle Rodriguez also lends her voice to *DRIV3N* (PS2/XB) and is even into making games. We'll look at her first title, *Dream Fighters*, in an upcoming EGM, after we ship her to sea and see which three console games she would want to add fun to her sun.



Grand Theft Auto: Vice City (PS2/XB)

"I love this game—it's so fun and unpredictable, plus it will remind me of Miami while I'm on my island."



Metal Gear Solid (PS1)

"*Metal Gear Solid* does a good job making you believe you are Snake with its great graphics and sound—it's just so fierce."



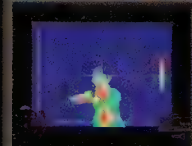
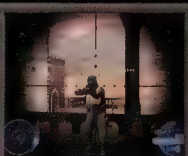
Namco Museum (PS2/XB/GC)

"I'd find the biggest compilation of old-school games like *Dig Dug* and *Pole Position*. A compilation is allowed, right? Right?"

syphon filter.
THE OMEGA STRAIN



▲ PLACE HAND HERE ▲



YOU HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS THE AGENT WE ARE LOOKING FOR.

REPORT TO: GABE LOGAN, P.O. #66, COMMANDER IN CHIEF.

OBJECTIVE: STOP OMEGA STRAIN VIRUS AND STOP TERRORISTS WHO CONTROL IT.

ARSENAL: 100% HIGHLY LETHAL WEAPONS INCLUDING: SILENCED SUBMACHINE GUN, DSC-1 THE AMP, SNIPER RIFLE, CH-9 MACHINE PISTOL, BLASTER, GRENADE.

MISSION DIRECTIVES: ELIMINATE ALL ENEMY AGENTS AND PREVENT OUTBREAK OF DEADLY MUTATING VIRUS. ANY INFORMATION RECEIVED WILL BE HIGHLY CLASSIFIED AS YOU WILL BE ENGAGING LETHAL INTERNATIONAL ASSASSINATIONS. SUCCESS OF THIS GLOBAL COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE OPERATION IS CRUCIAL.

PRIORITY: URGENT.

THE BEST WEAPON WE HAVE IS YOU.



PlayStation 2



LIVE IN YOUR WORLD.
PLAY IN OURS.

CELEBRITY GAMER: XZIBIT

The hip-hop heavyweight schools us on getting in the game

Screw Xzibit's groupies and sold-out tour dates—it's the rapper's penchant for the hack-n-slash *Gauntlet* series that has us intrigued. VII Games has caught the vapors, too, having recently cast the performer and host of MTV's *Pimp My Ride* as notorious prison guard Abbott in the Xbox sleeper hit *The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay*. Also, Xzibit will make a cameo in Electronic Arts' upcoming *Def Jam: Fight for NY*. We checked in with Dr. Dre's protégé to see why companies are getting X to plump their games.

EGM: What gives with the side jobs? You looking for a second career in gaming like Vin Diesel?

Xzibit: Nah, it's just a natural progression for any artist. As a musician, anytime you can get yourself out there in something besides a music video, you've gotta seize the opportunity.

EGM: Yeah, that and the free consoles and games, right?

X: Well, I won't lie. Xbox does strike a dear note to my heart. And PlayStation 2's got some serious game, too.

EGM: Any titles you want to give a special shout-out to?

X: *Grand Theft Auto 3*, *Max Payne*, the *Gauntlet* titles, and *Halo 2*—I'm waiting for that joint.

EGM: How's dropping science on a videogame compare to doing it on one of your records?

X: It's a piece of cake, man. Voiceovers for *Chronicles of Riddick* took me two or three 20- to 30-minute sessions tops. But for albums you really gotta practice.

EGM: Speaking of *Chronicles of Riddick*, do you share much in common with your character, Abbott?

X: Only that we both don't stand for any s***. The same way he handles his business, I handle mine.

EGM: What about your *Def Jam: Fight for NY* character? You feelin' your digital double there, too?

X: That game's crazy. They got all kinds of

wild stuff going on with my character. I play myself, only meaner. My dude's going to have some sick moves on him. [EA] asked me what type of skills I should be busting out with, so I told 'em I should be all that with some extra s*** on top.

EGM: So what's with the connection between hip-hop and gaming, anyway?

X: Hip-hop's just in everything now, you know? It's like how rock 'n' roll was back in its day. We've got the car culture, game culture—it's a generation thing.

EGM: We know you can bust rhymes and pimp out rides—think you have the skills to make games?

X: Yeah, but whatever the game's about, it'd have to take a long time for the player to finish. I hate simple games. That's why I dig *Gauntlet*; its tour-player mode is off the chain. And I love to crack codes and find secrets. I'm so about that, it's frightening sometimes.

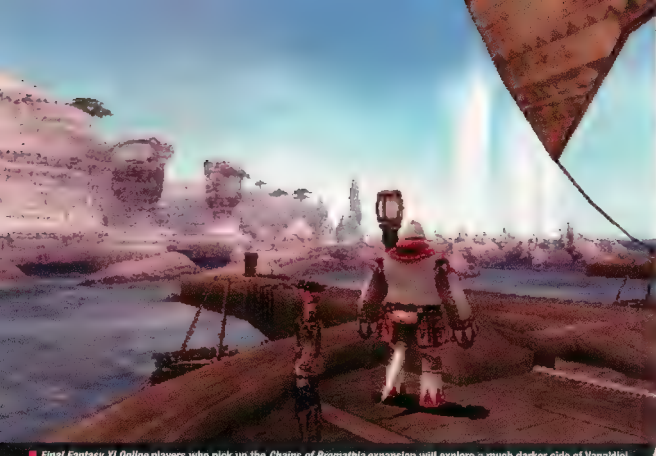
—Scott Steinberg

X: This is one man Jamie Kennedy should never...



X: Butcher Bay inmates know better than to mess with a guard wearing shades.

Illustration by Guillaume Arfouche



Final Fantasy XI Online players who pick up the *Chains of Promathia* expansion will explore a much darker side of Vana'diel.

ONLINE THIS MONTH

The world of **Final Fantasy XI** is expanding

Better rest your chocobos, people. Come this fall on PlayStation 2, your yellow friends are gonna need fresh legs when traveling the new lands of *Final Fantasy XI Online's* upcoming expansion, *Chains of Promathia*. We recently cornered two of the many minds behind *Chains*—Localization Specialist M.C. Koji Fox and Producer Hiromichi Tanaka—and grilled them on how Square Enix's massively multiplayer online role-playing world is changing.

EGM: What can we expect from this expansion? Inquiring moogle lovers wanna know....

M.C. Koji Fox: Adding 40 new areas is our main focus. Also, the new story: *FFXI* is a world based on what we think is a great story, so we're going to show players a different side of the history of

Vana'diel. There will also be a ton of new weapons, items, armor, monsters, and battle systems.

EGM: Any new missions?

MF: As with *Zilart* [the expansion included with the U.S. copy], there will be new *Promathia* missions—about 20 or so that tell the story.

EGM: What about additional jobs and races?

MF: As for new jobs and races, we can't comment on that at this time. You're not going to get it out of me!

EGM: Ugh. We will accept this reticence. Can we look forward to any

new player-versus-player events?

MF: Ballista [available now] was our first PVP event, and we're going to use it to get lots of feedback from players in order to balance it. We want to make it a game that the players will love—it's going to be a continuing thing. We're also exploring new ideas for future PVP gameplay.

EGM: Is *Chains of Promathia* the last major *FFXI* upgrade?

Hiromichi Tanaka: Right now, we don't have an end in sight. We plan to release expansions every year to a year and a half. As long as players want to stay in the world, we'll keep supporting them and keep things interesting.

—Miguel Lopez

On egmextras.1UP.com — Make sure to stop by our website for a rather humorous chat with the developers of the sexy wasslin' game *Rumble Roses*, plus our full Q&A with the folks behind the next *Legend of Zelda* for GameCUBE.

ONLINE NOW

Serving up a fresh dish of new content

Xbox

Project Gotham Racing 2

Forget the jet-set lifestyle (and stomach-curdling airline food), because the Eiffel Tower is just a few megabytes away. *Project Gotham Racing 2's* Paris booster pack is crammed with eight new cars—from the Ferrari 250TR to the Porsche 356 A Carrera Speedster—and seven fresh tracks to skid out on. But squealing your tires under



Project Gotham Racing 2

the Arc de Triomphe isn't free—this extra content will cost you \$4.99.

Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow

Ubisoft recently squashed a few pesky problems in *Pandora's* multiplayer mode. The Xbox Live auto-update features a new ranking sys-



Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow

tem, which simplifies the point system (100 points = one level) and dishes out harsher penalties for dropping out of games. Other fixes include arrows that now indicate whether an object is above or below a player's location, plus annoying in-game freezes. —Jan M. Gibson

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SONY PICTURES HAS ANNOUNCED THAT A FILM BASED ON THE GETAWAY SERIES IS CURRENTLY IN DEVELOPMENT.

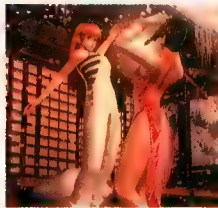
THE RUMOR MILL

Gossip that's too hot to handle

Howdy ho, buckaroos—**Quartermann is my name and spreading gossip is my game. I've survived another trip to the city of angels for the annual gamingpalooza known as the Electronic Entertainment Expo, and boy, did I come back with some scuttlebutt that'll surely rock your world (wouldn't be much of a gossip monger if I didn't, now would I?). So until we meet again, feel free to drop me a line at quartermann@ziffdavis.com. Catch you in 30....** —*The Q*

Dead or Alive's next arena

For the last three years, the bouncy beauties of Tecmo's *Dead or Alive* fighting series have battled only on Xbox. But times, they are a changin'.... One of the Q's most trusted spies hooked me up with this vital info: The long-awaited *Dead or*



■ We hear gals kick even higher on Xbox 2.

Alive 4 is coming to—wait for it—Xbox 2. And here's more mind-blowing news, free of charge—you'll be kicking some DDA booty on Microsoft's Xbox successor as soon as next year. No way? Way.

A game of epic proportions

People in the know are telling me that Tecmo isn't the only one jumping on the Xbox 2 bandwagon. Epic Games (of *Unreal* fame) is currently pending the development pavement on an Xbox 2 launch title, supposedly of the third-person-action variety. Want a sneak peek? Apparently, the pics posted on Epic's developer site, unrealtechnology.com, are early work from the game. Wicked.

Sega makes some new friends

You've probably heard by now that acclaimed GameCube developer Silicon Knights (*Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem*, *Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes*) recently left the Nintendo round table. So what are they up to these days? Word around town is that Silicon Knights is joining forces with the house that Sonic built. And get this—their top-secret project for Sega is an Xbox game. Talk about giving the big N the stink eye....

Compatibility issues

Roly hot tamales—have you seen the new *Legend of Zelda* for GameCube yet? (Peep it on page 50.) This baby looks good



■ A look at Epic's rumored Xbox 2 project.

enough for the next wave of consoles. I can assure you it ain't, but that doesn't necessarily mean you can't play the game on Nintendo's future system. That's right, dudes and dudettes; I've gotten wind that the company's next console will also run GameCube software. Remember that you read it here first....

More RPG goodness from BioWare

Canada may be the land of bitter, cold winters, but it's currently none to the hottest role-playing-game developer this side of the Pacific—BioWare. The 0-inator hears that the creator of the Xbox blockbuster *Stars Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* and next year's *Jade Empire* have another console project well on its way—an RPG with a sci-fi theme. Sorry, folks, but that's all the info I could squeeze outta my sources on this subject...for now.

REALITY CHECK

Experts explain what happens when videogames get real....

Q: The *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* series is packed with tricks that seem flat-out impossible in couch-potato skaters. Like, can real-life pro skaters actually jump off five-story buildings or bust a McTwist—basically a rotating forward flip—over a hovering helicopter?

A: "Impossible," says pro skater Patty Segovia, founder of the All Girl Skate Jam skate camp (www.allgirlskatejam.com). "[Pro skater] Jamie Thomas 'Leap of Faith' goes down in history for a skater dropping a two-story building—approximately 17 feet! That's as realistic as it gets." And as far as McTwisting over a helicopter, Segovia says *Tony Hawk's Underground* has it all wrong. "[The skator] busts out a McTwist off a miniramp," she says, "but because there is no vert on the ramp, it wouldn't give the skater enough [height] to pull into the flip." Toss the helicopter into that equation and you get "yuck," says Segovia.



Submit game scenarios you'd like to see tested in real life to EGM@ziffdavis.com. Write "Reality Check" in the e-mail's subject line.

Illustration: Ty Erwin

CHARTS

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES FOR APRIL 2004

1	EA Sports Fight Night 2004 PS2 • EA Sports
2	NBA Ballers PS2 • Midway
3	EA Sports Fight Night 2004 XB • EA Sports
4	MVP Baseball 2004 PS2 • EA Sports
5	Pokémon Colosseum GC • Nintendo
6	Resident Evil: Outbreak PS2 • Capcom
7	Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow XB • Ubisoft
8	NBA Ballers XB • Midway
9	Halo: Combat Evolved XB • Microsoft
10	Hitman: Contracts PS2 • Eidos

TOP 10 GAME RENTALS FOR THE WEEK ENDING 05/16/04

1	New Dead & Shredder PS2 • Midway	BLOCKBUSTER
2	Red Dead Revolver XB • Rockstar	
3	Van Helsing PS2 • VU Games	
4	NBA Ballers PS2 • Midway	
5	Hitman: Contracts PS2 • Eidos	
6	Transformers PS2 • Atari	
7	Spyton Filter: The Omega Strain PS2 • Sony CEA	
8	Van Helsing XB • VU Games	
9	EA Sports Fight Night 2004 PS2 • EA Sports	
10	Hitman: Contracts XB • Eidos	

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PlayStation 2



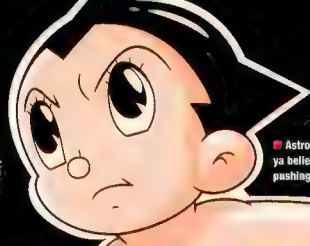
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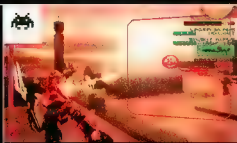
COMING SOON

16 reasons to stay inside



• Astro Boy—would ya believe he's pushing 50?

AUGUST 2004



Armored Core: Nexus
AgeTec • PS2 — Mech obsessives can build the perfect two-story battlebot and pit it against others via System Link.



Astro Boy
Sega • PS2/GBA — Slick jet-baby-powered action based on a new cartoon that's based on an old cartoon.



ESPN NFL 2005
ESPN Videogames • PS2/XB — ESPN hits the gridiron with customizable celebrations. Don't forget your pom-poms.



Ghosthunter
AgeTec • PS2 — Play a Brad Pitt-look-alike ghostbuster who wields silly gizmos to batter and capture goofball specters.



Headhunter: Redemption
Sega • PS2/XB — Another third-person action-adventure in the same run-and-gun vein as *Syphon Filter*.



Kuon
AgeTec • PS2 — Perv ghosts pick on yet another Japanese girl in a training bra. Now that's scary in more ways than one.



Mega Man X: Command Mission
Capcom • PS2/GC — The Blue Bomber stars in his first console RPG. Bless his battery-powered heart.



Madden NFL 2005
EA Sports • PS2/XB/GC — Defense is the name of the game in the 15th edition of *Madden*. This year's title features brainier defensive A.I. (especially in the secondary), and the all-new Hit Stick tackle system really lets you knock the snot outta ballcarriers.



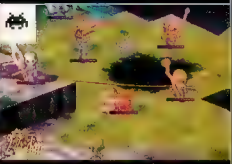
Monster Hunter
Capcom • PS2 — Dino-hunting is hard work. Repay your troubles with a health-replenishing stegosaurus launch.



NASCAR 2005: Chase the Cup
EA Sports • PS2/XB/GC — Learn to speed with production cars on city streets, then work your way into the oval.



NHL FaceOff 2005
989 Sports • PS2 — After a year away from the ice, *FaceOff* returns with a robust franchise mode and online play.



Phantom Brave
Atlus • PS2 — More strategic battles (and offbeat comedy) from the makers of *Disgaea* and *La Pucelle*.



Pikmin 2
Nintendo • GC — You and a pal raise a micro-army of flora to battle fauna and collect Nintendo-themed doodads.



Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow
Ubisoft • XB — Tom Clancy's counter-terrorism team returns with a new single-player campaign and multiplayer modes.



Star Ocean: Till the End of Time
Square Enix • PS2 — This long-delayed galaxy-spanning role-playing epic finally disembarks. Clear your schedule.



Street Racing Syndicate
Namco • PS2/XB/GC — Racing for pink slips is so PC. Put your gal pal's ass on the line and drive like you mean it.

WHAT IS LOCKED, CAN BE OPENED. WHAT IS HIDDEN, CAN BE FOUND.
WHAT IS YOURS, CAN BE MINE.

THIEF

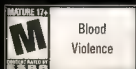
DEADLY SHADOWS

8.6/10 - OXM

4/5 - GameSpy

8.6/10 - IGN

5 out of 5 - GamePro



OUT NOW



eidos

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EGM'S OPINIONATED GUIDE TO WHAT'S NEXT

Will that next-big-thing videogame live up to its near-mountable hype? Should you pay attention to some weird niche title lurking under the radar? EGM is here to help. Instead of blathering candy-coated praise on these upcoming releases, we're here to give you the honest low-down—our intrepid editors have played the most anticipated games of the upcoming months and are ready to deliver an early prognosis. Keep in mind, however, that these aren't finished products; we're judging, and even classics like *Halo* and *Mario Kart: Double Dash!* didn't exactly blow us away in their prerelease forms. Hope always springs eternal.

How to use this guide

Too busy to read all those words? These icons will give you the bottom line.



Fantastic



Good



So-So



Bad

MULTIPLATFORM

■ Nothing's more fearsome than a troll's bombastic drum solo.



THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE THIRD AGE

PS2/XB/GC • EA Games • November 2004

The Basics: EA might be in danger of milking *The Lord of the Rings* dry with post-movie tie-ins (can *LOTR* kart racing be far behind?), but a turn-based role-playing game in Middle-earth seems a perfectly fair extension of the franchise. "This

is the game they've wanted to build for the last three years," says Senior Product Manager Lincoln Hershenberger of the internal studio creating *The Third Age* (the same team responsible for the previous two *LOTR* games). Now, he says, they can

"cherry-pick" the best moments and characters from all three movies with no worries about following an established story line. "It's the best of both worlds," he says.

How Was It? The movie footage might get

old at some point, but I'm not there yet. This *Final Fantasy*-meets-*LOTR* experience gave me shivers all over again with its beautiful spell effects and attack animations, deep character customization, and free-roaming camera. —Jennifer Tsao



MORTAL KOMBAT: DECEPTION

PS2/XB • Midway • Fall 2004

The Basics: The flesh-flaying, corpse-dismembering fighting game is back with a couple of new modes, including a cheap *Puzzle Fighter* rip-off and a chesslike game where you fight out the conflicts *MK*-style.

How Was It? These sluggish warriors need a little more spring in their steps to make the hodgepodge combat more exciting. The puzzle game didn't do jack for me, but I really like the chess mode. It's a completely fresh idea that works well here—after you try it, you won't want to go back to boring ol' versus mode for any fighting game. —Shoe



THE URBZ: SIMS IN THE CITY

PS2/XB/GC • EA Games • November 2004

The Basics: Before you get up in arms about the cheesy title of EA's latest life simulator, hear out one of *The Urbz*'s producers: "We're making fun of ourselves, and having a really good time doing it," says EA's Virginia McArthur. "We're a total parody of street life." More than your suburban digs have changed: Skill-based microgames now determine your Sim's success.

How Was It? I wasn't initially convinced *The Sims* could further evolve on a console, but the microgames add a welcome skill component. Plus, it's about time I could pierce my Sim's belly button. —Jennifer Tsao



STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT

PS2/XB • LucasArts • Fall 2004

The Basics: *Battlefront* brings PC hit *Battlefield* 1942's formula of vehicles and vast environments to a galaxy far, far away. Sixteen players and an additional 48 computer-controlled drones battle online across planets from both the classic films and the crappy prequels.

How Was It? The Force seems strong with this one. Stringing up Imperial walkers with low cables is more rewarding when you know that half the enemy team is swearing over their headsets. And while some of the sluggish starfighters feel like they're burning Bantha poodoo, LucasArts has time to fix 'em. —Shawn Elliott

few time in the field radically
changes depending on whether
you play as a heavy artillery
support, sniper, or command



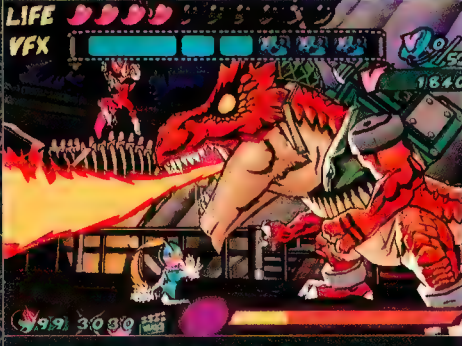
BATTLEFIELD: MODERN COMBAT

PS2/XB • EA Games • Fall 2004

The Basics: Two online armies of 12 wage war on foot and in vehicles.

How Was It? *Battlefield's* war machines hit hard and fast—wait till you parachute from a burning Apache into a tank turret

or joyride a bomb-laden jeep into the enemy's base. Plus, strong clan support (stat tracking, rank promotions, and customizable team logos) encourages you armchair-infantry types to be all that you can be. —*Shawn Elliott*



VIEWTIFUL JOE 2

PS2/GC • Capcom • Winter 2004

The Basics: Part platformer, part beat-em-up, *Joe* is all freaky fun. Join the titular hero or his pistol-packing cheerleader girlfriend, Silvia, using their superpowers to speed up, slow down, or replay time.

How Was It? For a series that began with such wild innovation, so far *Joe's* sequel seems like more of the same. But, as anyone who played the awesome original will tell you, that's not necessarily such a bad thing. —*Mark MacDonald*



VIRTUA QUEST

PS2/GC • Sega • Fall 2004

The Basics: Call it *Virtua Fighter Babes*—Sega reimagines its hardcore arcade fighting franchise as an action-packed run-and-jump romp aimed squarely at 'ykes. Experience with the series is entirely optional. You don't play as any of the established *V* characters, although you will spar against them and learn their signature moves.

How Was It? Dare I call it...shockingly decent? While *Quest* won't make the arcade faithful stop demanding a fifth *Virtua Fighter* game, its blend of tight fighting controls, complex combos, and solid visuals should appease old-school fans while roping in impressionable series newcomers. —*Shane Bettenhausen*



TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON 2

PS2/XB • Ubisoft • Fall 2004

The Basics: "Clunky but good" is how most couch commandos describe hyperrealistic squad-based shooter *Ghost Recon*. The sequel ramps up the visuals and engagements (now with air strikes!) to match the realism. "Everything's bigger," says Producer Heather Chandler. "The maps, the objectives—it just feels more like full-scale war."

How Was It? Your trooper controls more naturally this time, and I got to grips with the command interface pretty quickly. Now I just can't wait for some cooperative online play. —*Crispin Boyer*



PLAYBOY: THE MANSION

PS2/XB • Arush • Fall 2004

The Basics: It's your dream job: You play as publishing icon and legendary ladies' man Hugh Hefner. You'll set up photo shoots for the magazine, design your very own mansion, and, more important, conduct "business" with your female houseguests.

How Was It? Entertaining...for now. Hopefully, the developer won't mix planned features like topless nudity and sexual acts, both of which make *The Mansion* Playmate of the Year material. Otherwise, this one could end up as a ho-hum virtual dollhouse straggling in the shadow of *The Sims*. —*Bryan Iltis*



BURNOUT 3

PS2/XB • EA Games • Fall 2004



The Basics: Criterion's Senior Programmer Hamish Young needs only three words to describe the next edition of his team's high-octane, crash-happy racer: "Online, bigger, faster!" *Burnout 3* boasts online play (a series first) with up to six drivers,

40 tracks, and vastly improved visuals. Plus, the all-important Burnout meter receives some cool tweaks—you can unleash the boost at any time (it doesn't have to be full) and continued reckless driving yields an unlimited superspeed boost.

How Was It? I put off playing *Burnout 2* for too long, and after getting a short test drive behind 3's wheel, I won't make that mistake again. Flooring the pedal while weaving in and out of oncoming traffic looks and feels even better than before. And the sense of speed blew me away: The high-end cars warp down streets with eye-searing quickness...until, of course, they collide in brutally devastating crashes.

—*Bryan Intihar*



• Pff, you're a cold-blooded villain. Kill 'em both!

GOLDENEYE: ROGUE AGENT

PS2/XB/GC • EA Games • November 2004



The Basics: EA hopes to outdo the genre-defining Nintendo 64 first-person shooter *GoldenEye* with this pseudo-follow-up, but sans James Bond—*Rogue Agent* casts you as a whacked-out, evil cyborg agent working for one of Bond's

most diabolical foes, Goldfinger.

Unlike EA's recent *Bond* games, this one doesn't shake driving, stealth, and flying into your cocktail: Expect nothing but unadulterated first-person gunplay in both the single and multi-player modes.

How Was It? *Rogue Agent* promises a full-fledged single-player campaign and a robust multiplayer experience, but so far it's delivering on only one of those goals. A solo mission through a bombed-out Fort Knox offers plenty of thrills, impres-

sive visual effects, and clever enemy A.I., but the one multiplayer level I tried suffered from dire slowdown and annoying one-hit death traps—randomly biting it over and over because someone keeps pressing an instant-death switch isn't much fun.

Ditch the death traps, get the game up to speed, and then we'll see if this game truly lives up to its namesake.

—*Shane Bettenhausen*



AREA 51

PS2/XB • Midway • Fall 2004



The Basics: Midway transforms the classic arcade gun game into a dark and gritty shooter set in infamous Area 51, where you (and occasionally fellow hazmat-suited soldiers) are charged with clearing out an alien menace. The game's hook: The aliens have infected you, allowing you to mutate into a slimy E.T.

How Was It? The game's spooky atmosphere meshes well with standard first-person-shooting action, but the story line seems kinda like uninspired *Half-Life* fan fiction. I'm most excited about the whole mutation-into-an-alien-beastie angle, although it remains to be seen whether using parasites to suck energy from enemies is more innovative than gimmicky. —Greg Ford



SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM

PS2/XB • Konami • September 2004



The Basics: Henry Townsend finds himself trapped in his apartment. Problematic. Then he finds a creepy hole in his bathroom wall. Like any well-meaning character in a horror movie, he climbs on in. Obscene freak-outs, brain-bending puzzles, and brutal battles ensue.

How Was It? Can *Silent Hill* still be scary after four games? Yes. (Oh God yes. New tricks like first-person-perspective segments, a golf-swing-style power meter for weapons, a helpful sidekick named Eileen, multiple endings, and the series' most horrifying creatures yet have me staying up nights already. —Andrew Vestal



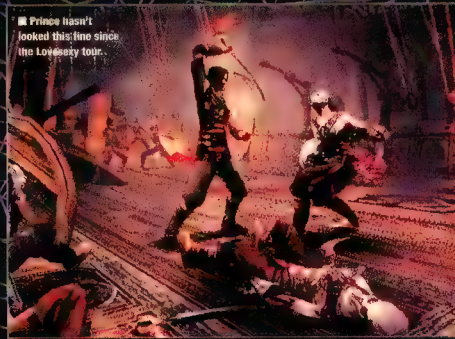
DEAD TO RIGHTS II: HELL TO PAY

PS2/XB • Namco • Fall 2004



The Basics: The gritty *Max Payne*-meets-*Lassie* basketball returns with a revamped graphics engine, 30 new disarm moves, more melee combat, smarter enemies, and all-new exotic dancers to ogle.

How Was It? *Dead (o) Rights II* played fine, but nothing about the three levels I tried made it stand out from the other good-guy-gone-bad games—it involved a lot of slow-mo diving, locking on, and shooting. But it certainly has a chance to win us over with its lovable canine sidekick, Shadow (he wasn't implemented yet), and more than 40 levels of action. —Greg Ford



■ Prince hasn't looked this fine since the Lovelace tour.

PRINCE OF PERSIA 2

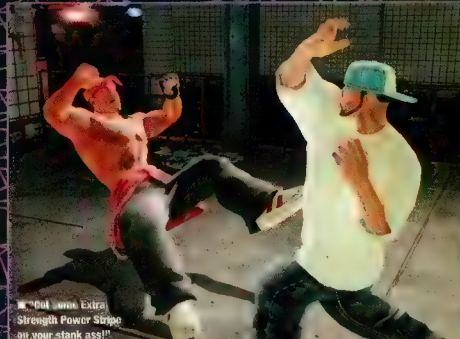
PS2/XB/GC • Ubisoft • November 2004



The Basics: The sequel to *EGM's* 2003 Game of the Year triumph redefines the action-platformer standard.

How Was It? As expected, *POP2* played nigh flawlessly. The revamped, combo-

heavy combat feels divine. The Prince can now brandish his enemies' weapons, use his sword to slide down curtains, and slow down enemies while he slices in real time. All that, plus he ditched the MC Hammer pants. —Greg Ford



■ "Got some extra Strength Power Surge on your stank ass!"

DEF JAM: FIGHT FOR NEW YORK

PS2/XB/GC • EA Big • September 2004



The Basics: Hip-hoppers settle their considerable differences out of the ring this time as you help former adversary D-Mob back to the top of the NYC underworld.

How Was It? Our limited stick time

meant we couldn't get a feel for the five different fighting styles players will mix and match in the final version: The combat felt good but not great. Let's hope the story, create-a-character, and extras can tie it all together. —Dimitan Llan



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EXPERIENCE COUNTS

PLAYSTATION 2



XENOSAGA EPISODE II

Namco • Spring 2005

The Basics: The second chapter in developer Monolith's planned five-part space-opera epic sports a different look—the anime-style characters all got realistic eye-reduction makeovers. “We felt that *Xenosaga 1*'s characters had limited facial

expressions,” explains Producer Tomohiro Hagiwara. “With *Episode II*, we want to express emotions better and appeal to a wider audience.” In addition to changing the game's visual style, Monolith plans to cut back on the number of CG cut-scenes

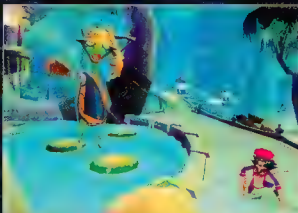
(the company wanted to up the gameplay quotient), add at least one new playable character, and actually make the game longer than its predecessor.

How Was It? The newly remodeled characters serve their purpose—regal, realistic beauties imbue the action with a gravity that I felt was lacking in the first game. (Plus, you'll feel less creepy about finding the previously girlish Shion and KOS-MOS

attractive.) Subtly reworked battles also add to the appeal: Shorter animations mean that combat gets resolved more quickly, and expect to climb into your giant robots from the very outset.

Namco has another cool bonus waiting for *Xeno* fans. Preordering *Episode II* nets you a director's cut DVD of *Episode I*: You can relive all the nifty cut-scenes in this four-hour-long digest version.

—Shane Bettenhausen



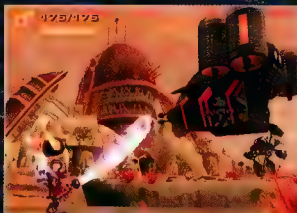
SLY 2: BAND OF THIEVES

Sony CEA • September 2004

The Basics: Sly's stealth-platforming sequel ditches the petty thievery in favor of huge *Ocean's Eleven*-style heists. Other additions include an actual life bar—say good-bye to one-hit deaths—and new playable characters: brawler Murray and brainiac Bentley.

How Was It? Like other *Sly 2* pockets like a fine-tuned version of the original. Picking pockets with Sly is simple, and each new character has his own easy-to-learn styles. Sleek graphics, catchy tunes, and larger levels all impress. Plus, the developers promise *Sly 2* will be much longer than the all-too-short original.

—Greg Ford



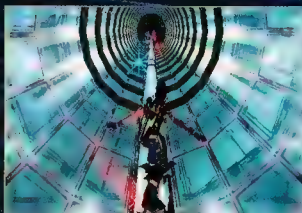
RATCHET AND CLANK: UP YOUR ARSENAL

Sony CEA • November 2004

The Basics: Last year's *R&C: Going Commando* was stuffed to the gills with things to see and do, but the third game is so big that a single PS2 can't hold it all. Joining the single-player game are online multiplayer modes so full-featured that developer Insomniac's prez Ted Price says, “I consider them their own game.”

How Was It? Accessible, fast, and fun. Gamers put off by hardcore military shooters may find *R&C*'s colorful blasting more their style. Deathmatch and capture-the-flag are both fun, but siege mode simply rules—it's like *Risk*, only with bazookas.

—Andrew Vestal



EYETOY: ANTIGRAV

Sony CEA • Fall 2004

The Basics: It may look a lot like developer Harmonix's other rhythm-action games, *Frequency* and *Amplitude*, but this one's got unique futuristic cred: You control your onscreen character by moving your arms to hit targets and jumping to do tricks.

How Was It? Like other EyeToy games, *AntiGrav* won't exactly win awards for depth—the gameplay is admittedly simple. The technology could also be a limiting factor; right now, properly aligning your body with the camera is tricky. But any videogame that makes me feel we're closer to the kind of virtual reality we've seen in the movies for years now gets my arms waving with enthusiasm.

—Jennifer Tsao

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■ It might look like an FF battle, but it sure doesn't feel like one.

FINAL FANTASY XII



Square Enix • Summer 2006

The Basics: We knew *FFXII* would be different take on the RPG series—it's the first installment directed by maverick *Final Fantasy Tactics* creator Yasumi Matsuno—but we didn't expect it to be *this* different.

How Was It? After playing a good 45 minutes of *FFXII*, I was blown away not only by its remarkable production values (the graphics and music are gorgeous, as expected), but also by how much the gameplay doesn't feel like any other *Final Fantasy*...well, ever.

"I think that many players will be confused at first," Matsuno says of his epic creation. "They'll feel that they're out of control due to the drastic changes to the system, but I've included a lot of tutorials to prepare them." Trust me, you'll need them. Every aspect of *Final Fantasy*

you've come to expect has been radically altered, from the intricacies of battle to the simple act of opening a door. The new combat system is especially notable, combining traditional menu-based FF battle elements with active, real-time movement akin to that of *Final Fantasy XI*. Now, encounters take place on the same maps you explore, and you run around, positioning yourself for the strike while avoiding getting hit. Matsuno's even ditched the established FF victory fanfare after each battle. Has he no heart?

Looking beyond all the shocking gameplay alterations, the story line seems downright manageable. "*FFXII* is a coming-of-age tale," says Matsuno. "You play Vaan, a 17-year-old who gets swept up in a massive conflict through a chance meeting." He'll encounter a vast roster of other



party characters, like the fair cutie pictured right, Penelo.

Sadly, you'll have time to prepare for all these changes: *FFXII* will land Stateside in mid-2006.

■ Penelo's packin' serious boots... and booty.

—Shane Bettenhausen





TWISTED
GOTTA HAVE ~ SWEET?





RUMBLE ROSES

Konami • November 2004

The Basics: Konami delivers hot girl-on-girl wrasslin' with luscious ladies who make the WWE divas look like trannies.

How Was It? Shockingly, *Rumble Roses'* lovely ladies play as good as they look.

Each gal comes equipped with special moves and counters that would make even the high-flying Mexican *luchadores* stand up and cheer. I only hope the story mode is as deep as the developers are advertising. —*Bryan Iltihar*



■ For slightly easier wrestling, look left!

GOD OF WAR

Sony CEA • Spring 2005

The Basics: Greek mythology comes to life via a combination of *Devil May Cry's* action and *ICO's* environmental puzzles.

How Was It? Fast, fun, and extremely playable. This game features over-the-top

violence (fancy ripping off Medusa's head and using it to turn enemies to stone?) and some innovative play mechanics, like optional button-pressing minigames incorporated into certain enemy fights. Keep your eye on this one. —*Greg Ford*



ACE COMBAT 5: THE UNSUNG WAR

Namco • Fall 2004

The Basics: "They're smart, but not smart enough to win the war on their own," Producer Hiroyuki Ichiyanagi says of the new wingmen who cover your keister in *AC5*. Issuing simple commands injects some strategy into the aerial fray.

How Was It? Wingmen add a nifty dynamic, but I was really craving online dogfights. "We're certainly looking at [that] in a future version," says Ichiyanagi, "but for now we're just focusing on the single-player game." —*Crispin Boyer*



KILLZONE

Sony CEA • November 2004

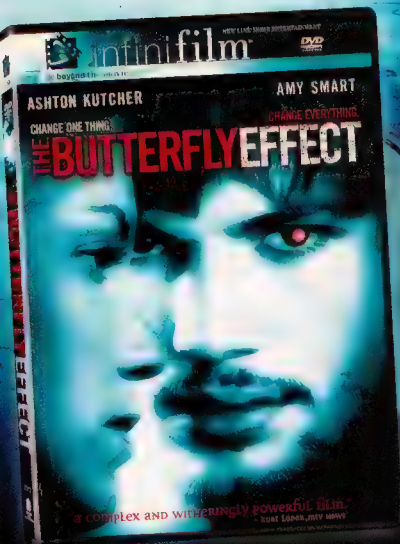
The Basics: It's been hyped as a "Halo Killer," but "*Killzone* is a very different kind of game," says Producer Alastair Burns. It's a squad-based shooter that lets you strap on the Kevlar of four different commandos (assassin, heavy gunner,

etc.) who don't give peace a chance.

How Was It? Scripted sequences and gritty war zones reminded me of EA's *Medal of Honor* series, except with trainier squadmates. —*Crispin Boyer*



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OWN IT JULY 6



GRAN TURISMO 4

Sony CEA • November 2004

The Basics: Screw the basics. Here's the advanced stuff: *GT* helmer Kazunori Yamauchi unveiled an all-new photo mode that will allow players to pose and print (assuming you cough up the cash for a compatible USB photo printer, of

course) cars in a variety of high-res environments. You'll never have to buy postcards again.

Yamauchi also confirmed that *GT4* will feature drift racing, and that flea market, travel agent, and bank modes are in the

works—though when asked to expand, all he said was “Use your imagination.”

How Was It? The photo mode is a cool idea, but I'd rather spend my time on the track. Specifically, the new Nürburgring course, which is the most detailed version of the ‘Ring I've ever seen (it's in *Enthusia* and *Forza Motorsport*, too), down to the surprisingly bumpy tarmac. The HUD also changed slightly—

there are now meters to indicate gas and brake input and lateral G-forces, so you can see as well as feel when you're about to lose control. Which is nice.

Trackside spectators look way, way better than in *GT4 Prologue* (the Japan- and Europe-only *Turismo* demo), and cars finally have visible drivers who will lean into corners and react to braking and acceleration. Just as long as there's no big-head mode... —*Damian Linn*



ENTHUSIA

Konami • Spring 2005

The Basics: *Ridge Racer* vet Manabu Akita is helming this *Gran Turismo* wannabe, which he says will feature “around 50 tracks in total, and several hundred cars.”

How Was It? Far from finished. The game's only stab at innovation, the “Visual Gravity System,” alerts players to impending spinouts via an onscreen indicator. The VGS also uses a gray frame around the screen to simulate the driver's viewpoint...which kind of works using the in-car cam, but just looks weird from the above-car angle. Luckily, another year or so in development should guarantee a more polished final product. —*Damian Linn*



DEATH BY DEGREES

Namco • October 2004

The Basics: *Tekken* vixen Nina Williams turns action-adventure heroine, putting her trademark bad-girl moves on several opponents at once with a super-simplified control scheme. Who needs all those pesky moves, anyway?

How Was It? Using the analog stick to send Nina's long legs flying in all directions, pull off behind-the-back blocks with a katana, and shatter bones with “critical strikes” would have been more satisfying if the enemies actually reacted. An awful sniper sequence and inane “the crank seems to be missing” puzzle have us hoping this work makes some serious progress before release. —*Justin Speer*



JAK 3

Sony CEA • November 2004

The Basics: Platform heroes Jak and Daxter once again attempt to be all things to all people, blending shooting, jumping, racing, flying, and, hell, probably even golf in this new desert-themed adventure.

How Was It? More. Bigger. Bolder. Boring? I ran, jumped, shot things, rode a lizard that ate smaller lizards, climbed into a turret, drove a dune buggy, and flew. Sure, it looked great and played well the whole time, but it gave me about 763 simultaneous feelings of déjà vu—minus one. I didn't jack any cars. But to make up for it, Jak now has bullet time. Still, if the developers can minimize the frustration factor, it'll be a step up from *Jak II*. —*Justin Speer*

Unlock hidden characters, upgrade your weapons and find new worlds with these sweet deals, 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.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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DRIVER

DRIVER'S ED

• To slay your crime, keep a count of how many criminals you've tagged so you know how many you have left to take out and can quicken your pace. Study the map to learn the route so you aren't surprised by targets popping out.

• Tragic happiness is bestowed upon by the Miami PD. You can show your weapon—in fact, Miami's finest are wearing now-vests that allow you to "accidentally" tag them a couple of times with your Beretta. But dispatch an officer or two for the head, and you go down in a hail of bullets, ending your mission.

• To move quickly up and down stairwells, don't turn all your corners. Instead, lean the interior doors and walk backward up the stairs. Side-step across them, walk forward up the stairs to the next floor, and sidestep across the other way. Repeat. It saves time.

PS2, XBOX



DRAGONBALL Z SUPERSONIC WARRIORS

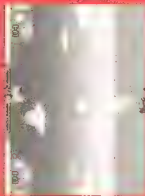
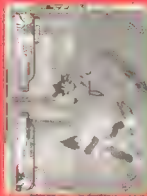
GAME BOY ADVANCE

SUPER TIPS:

• The best way to avoid being trapped by Attacks (Kamehameha, Spirit Bomb, etc.) is to step capable: tapping is essential to its execution. As you approach, however, be aware of the general direction of the assault so that you can fly away from the blast.

• Some of the best strategies in the game tend to be those that focus on enemy Krillin's Deadly Disc. Spirit Bomb's Genocide Attack and Genocide's Super Kamikaze Ghost Attacks are not only exceedingly difficult to dodge, but also inflict another damage on the vital fall to block.

• After creating an enemy's guard, it's always a good idea to reward on them with a series of weak weak attacks capped off with a strong attack to send them reeling.



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NCAA FOOTBALL 2005

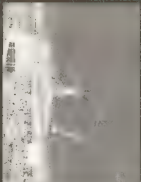
PS2, XBOX, GAMECUBE

PIGSKIN SKILLS

• With a little patience you can turn a short pigskin into a big gain. Ball in the direction of your halfback or wide receiver as he drifts toward the sideline. A linebacker or cornerback will stick to the receiver like glue while he is in the flat. However, the defender will lose a step when your back abandons the flare route and turns up field. Wait until he makes his move and then lob the ball over the defender for a big gain. You must wait enough time to make this play work, so watch the pass rush. To improve your chances for success, select a play that clears out the side of the field where your halfback is flaring, like the WR Flare or WR Posts.

• When the offense comes out in a normal set (no tight ends), look for opportunities to shoot the gap left by a pulling offensive lineman. Take control of the defensive end on either side and

make a baseline for the quarterback if the tackle pulls or slants. You'll either get a sack, or stop the running back behind the line for a substantial loss.





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



SUDEKI

HOT TIPS

Which's Kiss It's best to get Spirit Blue and/or Essence Brew when choosing which to use. Runes to endure one of Akilish's weapons. These Runes return a small amount of the damage caused by a weapon to Akilish in the form of Spirit Points. Try enchanting her Royal Scaper with two Spirit Blue Runes and she'll be able to use Wrath's Kiss to heal the party regularly without ever running out of Skill Points or having to see vulnerable items.

Extended Combos

Al and Bolt can perform long combos that cause incredible amounts of damage. [L3], [R3], [L1], [L1], [L1] is a jungle combo that knocks most opponents off of their feet. When the [L1], [L1], [L1], [L3], [R3], [L3], [L3] combo is used, Al performs a long series of sword swings, but Bolt adds a series of jump kicks to the end of her combo. If the opponent is defeated before the combo is finished, try turning toward a

second opponent and finishing the attack. Just be cautious when using these combos against groups of enemies. They may leave the character's back open to attack.

Buy Low, Sell High

Runes's prices are over inflated and he pays less for things than they're actually worth. Avoid shopping at his stores unless the item you want can't be purchased anywhere else. Try to buy and sell only at the trader that are found scattered around Heraklia. They offer items for less and pay well for the items found. Throughout your adventure, each trader also has favorite items and will pay a premium price for them.

BOX



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YU-GI-OH! WORLD OF CHAMPIONS

MASTER DECK

Don't underestimate the opponent playing weaker cards. If you ignore these cards, deciding to perform after actions on your turn, the opponent may bring out a monster that can't be summoned. As a result, the worst card in "Infinite Power" (one of the opponent's top weapons) may not be activated when the opportunity arises.

Long isn't difficult to deal with the right deck. Right from the start of the game's first 10 seconds, summons and sets your early power-ups. Starting cards will be "Milly Deagon" and "Sword Summoner." Don't be surprised if you've played a level of first.

Use Cards The "Fetters" and other four cards are a great way to control the opponent. All you need are a few cards from the opponent's deck.



MADDEN NFL 2005

GRIDIRON MADNESS

Ultimate Quarterback
Team

If you create a player with the worst possible statistics, then sign him to a team cheaply, you can then bump up his statistics, making him a great cheap player and a good trade prospect. Do this multiple times to create the ultimate farm team.

Make the Fans Pay Multiple Times in Owners Mode

If you save a home game and game, then quit, and then restart your game, the fans will pay you

twice to watch the game. You can do this multiple times to really rake in the cash during one game.

Monday Night Football

If you bump your ad budget up for a Monday Night Football game that you are not in, and then play through the week, great advertising, you will be able to lower your ad budget right before the Monday game and get a lot of expensive advertising through the week without paying for it.

ESRB: BOX GAME/TEEN



ESRB: BOX GAME/TEEN/ESRB: M/ADVER



RISE OF THE KASAI



Sony CEA • January 2005

The Basics: If you missed critical hit but commercial dud *The Mark of Kri*, no worries—part of this sequel is set 10 years before the original, giving ample backstory for brawny hero Rau. Now he's joined by new brutes that another player can control online, letting pals hack through the entire adventure cooperatively. (A.I. controls secondary characters in offline mode.)

How Was It? The innovative dual-analog-stick combat is more fun with a teammate. Even better: Rau's psycho-babe sister Tati joins up and "likes to go to bars, get into fights, and sleep around," says Jay Beard, president of developer Bottle Rocket. Sounds like our kind of she-warrior. —Crispin Boyer



NANOBREAKER



Konami • Spring 2005

The Basics: Koji Igarashi, the producer of the *Castlevania* series, takes a break from vampirism to deliver this megaviolent action-adventure starring a pissed-off cyborg. *Nanobreaker* wears its thirst for carnage on its sleeve, offering a mode where it's your goal to spill thousands of gallons of gore. "That's not blood, that's just gallons of red oil," laughs Igarashi. "We know we're getting a Mature rating."

How Was It? *Nanobreaker* offers a bloody good time—tense, combo-heavy combat feels a lot like that of *Castlevania: Lament of Innocence* (PS2), and the creative level design (*Lament's* big flaw) here seems to be on the up-and-up. —Shane Bettenhausen



NEO CONTRA



Konami • November 2004

The Basics: The second PS2 installment in Konami's classic run-and-gun shooting series in as many years—only this time, the viewpoint switches from 2D to 3D.

How Was It? Old-school *Contra* fans balked upon hearing about *Neo Contra's* shift to a 3D perspective, but the level 1 tried turned out to be much better than expected. The classic *Contra* feel remains intact, and the constantly changing viewpoint adds a new layer of excitement to the action. With more weapons, more stages, and more insane screen-filling bosses, this one's got me seriously pumped. —Johú Ricciardi



Dante busts out his finest moves at the gritty discotheque.



DEVIL MAY CRY 3



Capcom • Winter 2004

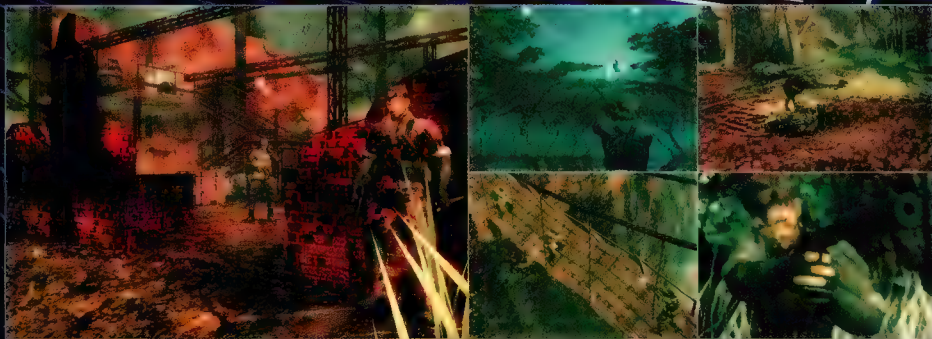
The Basics: Producer Tsuyoshi Tanaka is well aware that some fans of the sword-swingin', gun-slingin' demon slayer were disappointed with the last game. "This is no *Devil May Cry 2*," professes Tanaka. "This is a new Dante and he rocks."

Actually, this is a new, fully customizable Dante; the game includes multiple (expect more than four) upgradeable fighting styles. Tanaka also promises that this prequel will have stronger foes and improved camera perspectives (it shifts

to a *Resident Evil* 4-style over-the-shoulder view at times).

How Was It? So far, Tanaka's right; the short demo features much fiercer enemies, and the fighting styles are surprisingly varied. "I'm also jazzed about *Devil May Cry 3's* added emphasis on story development, which is exemplified through the game's cut-scenes totaling over one hour. —Bryan Iltis





METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

Konami • November 2004

The Basics: This stealth espionage prequel may be set in the '60s, but don't expect much peace, love, or happiness. When our boy Snake parachutes into the jungle on a mission to escort a defector scientist, head shots, broken necks, and

explosions are sure to follow. Even the animals aren't safe, since you can capture and feed on the local wildlife to keep your energy up.

How Was It? Just as good as we'd hoped.

Metal Gear's versatile and intuitive controls felt immediately familiar, with a few welcome tweaks, like using the D-pad to move extra quietly in "sneak mode."

The highly touted camouflage feature seemed a bit superfluous, but only

because of the impressive arsenal of weapons and gadgets available for demo purposes. Otherwise, this early version displayed the graphical and gameplay polish one expects from *MGS: War*. This is what it's good for. —Mark MacDonald



MUSASHI: SAMURAI LEGEND

Square Enix • Winter 2004

The Basics: No one expected Square's big-haired action-RPG star to return on the PS2, but no one's complaining, either.

How Was It? The camera has moved behind-the-character, *Kingdom Hearts*

style, and the gameplay is now identical to other action-RPGs. But the two-sword slashing style, stolen enemy techniques, and wacky dialogue are keen, and the sharp manga-style graphics should give the game an edge. —Andrew Vestal



GETAWAY: BLACK MONDAY

Sony CEA • November 2004

The Basics: Head back to the streets of London for what Director Maresh Hirani calls "a much darker" cinematic thriller. *Black Monday* features three playable characters and multiple endings depending on moral choices made along the way.

How Was It? *Black Monday*, like the original *Getaway*, suffers from some annoying technical problems: A lazy camera plagues the on-foot missions (locating enemies is a chore), and the driving controls are too sensitive. —Bryan Intihar

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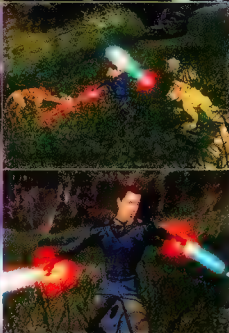
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XBOX

■ We met one new character, a female bounty hunter named Mira.



STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC—THE SITH LORDS



LucasArts • February 2005

The Basics: Take the first *Knights of the Old Republic* RPG hit and add a brand-new cast of characters, seven unexplored worlds, a fresh story line, more than 60 new feats and Force powers,

and...um...weather effects, and you've got *The Sith Lords* in a nutshell. "Rain, lightning, and waves...really help establish a sense of mood and motion in the levels," says Rachel Hardwick, LucasArts associ-

ate producer, of the graphical updates to the sequel. Stormy times ahead, Jedi.

How Was It? LucasArts may be touting the new weather effects in *The Sith Lords*, but a few raindrops and ripples in the water didn't seal the deal for me. The lack of truly sizzling visuals could keep this sequel from greatness; compared with many games at E3 (especially those alongside *The Sith Lords* in LucasArts'

own stable), the game's two new environments—a Sith tomb and the planet Telos—looked downright forgettable. Still, the freedom to experience the light and dark sides of the story is what made the first game so gripping, and this one takes that to a new level: Your actions will now influence your party members' alignment as well. Forty more hours of awesome story-based roleplaying in the *Star Wars* universe? I'll take it. —Jennifer Tsao



■ "It's going to be suitably epic," says designer Michael Laidlaw, "and 'epic' means 'long!'"



JADE EMPIRE



Microsoft • Spring 2005

The Basics: Ancient Chinese secret? Pausing is for babies. Fans of developer BioWare's virtually patented pauseable combat system (in which players can stop the action at any time to queue up a chain of attacks) will find the developer's

upcoming action-RPG remarkably fast paced. You can still pause to evaluate whom you're up against, but you'll switch fighting styles on the fly and execute all attacks in real time. Make no mistake, though: Story and character development

are still king—you'll have to decide whether you're a good guy, a bad guy, or something in between, and the story will develop accordingly. Is *Jade Empire* more an RPG or an action game? "We're trying to make it an ideal combo of both," says designer Michael Laidlaw.

How Was It? So far, *Jade Empire* delivers interesting characters and dialogue, truly gorgeous environments, and a wide vari-

ety of cool fighting styles. I messed around with a bunch of them, from classic martial-arts attacks like Paralyzing Palm and Legendary Fist to a magical spell that summoned a fiery dragon at my fingertips. Strategy also looks to be important—though this game requires more button-pounding than a usual BioWare RPG, your fists of fury won't automatically win you every battle. I can't wait to see more. —Jennifer Tsao



■ "Could you please point me in the direction of the Burning Man festival?"

DOOM 3

Activision • Fall 2004

The Basics: It's black as space. You can cut the shadows with a flashlight, searching corners for armor and ammo at the risk of running into a hellknight, or unholster your gun and lighting the way with hot lead. Whether you arm yourself against the dark or the demons hiding in it, *Doom 3* is seriously unsettling.

Like a director's cut of the decade-old shooter that politicians claimed cracked the nutcases at Columbine, it retells the original game's tale with graphics so good you'd swear developer Vicarious Visions cut a deal with the devil. The old bit about bogeymen overrunning a Martian marine base is so much scarier when state-of-the-art lighting and physics let fiends skitter around in half-lit rooms and a demonic presence hurt chairs through windows without warning.

How Was It? Graphics only go so far, but *Doom 3* wouldn't be half as terrifying if it didn't look so terrific. And even if its gameplay does boil down to more of the same blast-it-before-it-disembowels-you stuff of days gone by, the trade-off between firing and holding the flashlight turns up the tension.

Better yet, co-op play via Xbox Live or System Link (sorry, no splitscreen) lets you and a friend alternate on illumination duty (he finds critters, you cap 'em). Plus, misery has more company to love in online multiplayer. Only four can frag, but again, it's about waiting for your quarry to lose his wits in a world without light, not shooting the fastest and surviving a few seconds longer in a clusterfrag of crossfire.

—Shawn Elliott

■ Because normal everyday skeletons just aren't scary anymore.





UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2: THE LIANDRI CONFLICT

Microsoft • Fall 2004

The Basics: "Remember when Indy simply shoots the big bad swordsman in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*?" asks lead designer Cliff Bleszinski. "What if that guy deflected the fire, sending it back into Dr. Jones' face? Here, he can." *UC2* flips the first-person-shooter series' script by hand-to-hand fighting (or is that blade to barrel?), graphics to rival *Halo 2*'s, and 50 multiplayer maps.

How Was It? Fast paced and instantly playable. I battled one rocket back with a pair of blades, somersaulted over another in third-person perspective, then zoomed in for a head shot at the height of my jump.

—Shawn Elliott



BROTHERS IN ARMS

Ubisoft • Fall 2004

The Basics: *Brothers* is all authenticity as your squad crosses the French countryside, killing Krauts according to proper Army procedure. It's a first-person shooter all right, but you'll have to command one squad to find and fix the enemy with suppressing fire while the other out-flanks and finishes him. Or, as General Patton put it, "Grab 'em by the nose and kick 'em in the ass."

How Was It? Yes, we've already won the war a dozen times, but if *Brothers* manages to mix *Medal of Honor*'s scale and scripting—think bombers overhead and tanks battling through the hedgerows—with *Full Spectrum Warrior*'s two fire-team strategy, no one will mind going back to the front.

—Shawn Elliott



STAR WARS REPUBLIC COMMANDO

LucasArts • Fall 2004

The Basics: Lead a squad of three Jango Fett clones—identical brothers in arms with their own combat specialties—into *Episode II* and *III* battles. "You can send them to run ahead and act as the quarterback," says assistant producer Matt Fillbrandt, "or you can take the lead and they'll back you up."

How Was It? Although I really liked *Commando*'s contextual squad-command system (point in the direction of a good sniper perch, tap a button, and your sniper will go do his thing), the missions seemed to deliver the same bland stuff we've done in so many shooters.

—Crispin Boyer



DEAD OR ALIVE: ULTIMATE

Tecmo • September 2004

The Basics: After an extended (and Xtreme) beach volleyball vacation, the *Dead or Alive* gals return to their true calling—catfighting. *Ultimate* bundles the antiquated Sega Saturn version of *Dead or Alive* with a reworked and gussied-up

iteration of the PlayStation 2's *Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore*, infusing both with full Xbox Live action.

How Was It? "It's more hardcore than *Hardcore*," the game's creator, Tomonobu

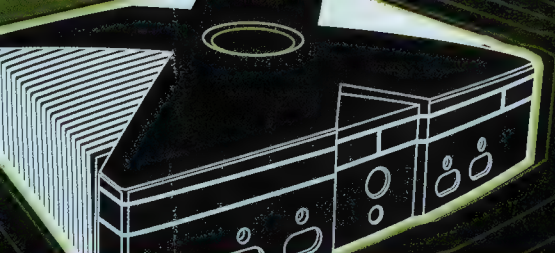


■ The gals can mix it up in their *DOAX* duads.

Itagaki, says about the Xbox's take on *Dead or Alive 2*. A hands-on online fistfest revealed Itagaki to be telling the truth. With four players brawling online (two fighting and two watching the action), the game ran beautifully. Hiccups and stutters were damned—there were none, and all of the fighters competed on brand-new stages and performed cool never-before-seen attacks. Ultimately, it was online joy.

—Greg Orlando





KAMEO: ELEMENTS OF POWER



Microsoft • January 2005

The Basics: Hotshot developer Rare's first Xbox title since the very silly *Grabbed by the Ghoulies*, *Kameo* has you donning fairy wings and assuming the forms of various monsters in an ultracolorful adventure. Oh, it's also very silly.

How Was It? I wasn't crazy about the stridently kiddie-stuff visuals (the game began years ago as a GameCube project), but *Kameo* grew on me with its unique character-morphing gameplay—you swap forms every few seconds to fight enemies, clear chasms, grapple surfaces, etc.

—Crispin Boyer



FAR CRY: INSTINCTS



Ubisoft • Fall 2004

The Basics: Get ready for a tropical vacation where sunburn is the least of your worries—*Far Cry* attempts to bring the PC stealth-survival-shooter hit home with online action and a multiplayer map editor (maps can be traded via Xbox Live).

How Was It? Something tragic must have happened on the way from PC to Xbox, because at its core, *Instincts* is rotting: Sluggish play, cardboard cutout vegetation (the game doesn't look nearly as good as the screenshots would indicate), and dim-witted enemy A.I. make this island anything but gaming paradise. Ubisoft, give this one some immediate attention.

—Bryan Intihar



FORZA MOTORSPORT



Microsoft • Winter 2004

The Basics: Microsoft's entry in the crowded racing-simulator field has secretly been in development for more than two years. And its 60-plus carmaker list has serious triple-A talent, starting with Ferrari, BMW, and traditionally difficult-to-license Porsche.

How Was It? What I played felt very promising, and I'll be surprised if its online options don't leave *Gran Turismo 4*'s in the dust. Like *GT*, it'll also feature a mixture of real-world and fantasy tracks (including the Nürburgring), although judging from my time on the wheel, I hope Microsoft cranks up the sense of speed. To 10, if not 11.

—Demian Linn



CONKER: LIVE & RELOADED



Microsoft • March 2005

The Basics: Multiplayer murder gets silly—leddy bear Nazis and freedom-fighting squirrels wage goofy war on Xbox Live with blood, tears, and stuffing. No friends? Traipse through the cornball single-player platforming bits, previously seen on Nintendo 64.

How Was It? We love cartoon violence and humor as much as the next guy, but squirrel giblets aside, *Conker* doesn't stand out in the crowded trenches of online multiplayer shooters. Everything from the soldier classes to the obligatory vehicles screams standard-issue combat ratoon.

—Justin Speer



MEN OF VALOR



VU Games • Winter 2004

The Basics: Vietnam-themed first-person shooters aren't exactly uncommon these days, but this one hails from the guys behind the well-received *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault*. Expect 16-man Xbox Live mayhem, brutal A.I., and both jungle and urban combat.

How Was It? *Valor* succeeds at conveying the maddening chaos of combat with sharp visuals and booming sound: Wading through a rice paddy while a hail of bullets whizzes past your ears was enough to make me consider deserting. The profane chatter of your comrades is all but lost beneath mortar explosions and the sharp crack of assault rifles; the atmosphere makes you ache for cover.

—Justin Speer



OUTRUN 2



Microsoft • Fall 2004

The Basics: Old-school arcade veterans will feel right at home with the fast cars, exotic locations, branching paths, and an easily scared hottie riding shotgun.

How Was It? Personally, I'd rather cruise by the beach in my candy-apple-red Ferrari than tweak gear ratios in *Gran Turismo*. Crisp, lovely visuals, rockin' remixed *OutRun* tunes, and precise (but still arcadey) controls make this a winner. Sure, some more innovation besides online play and a mission mode would have been appreciated, but the thrill of hitting 150 mph to impress your lady friend should be enough to appease arcade speed freaks.

—Greg Ford

GAMECUBE



■ Shoot an enemy in the arm and he'll drop his torch.



● STAND UP LADDER



RESIDENT EVIL 4

Capcom • Winter 2004

The Basics: Survival-horror gets a shot in the arm...or the shoulder, or the face—anywhere you want in this radical shooter-based rethinking of the *Resident Evil* formula. Precision aiming is a snap thanks to a new over-the-shoulder cam-

era view (similar to when you draw your weapon in *Splitter Cell*), which should come in handy since you aren't fighting those same ol' slow, stupid zombies anymore. These new enemies run, carry weapons (chain saws, knives, sickles),

and even dodge attacks. Also, look for all that combat to get even tougher, since you'll be busy protecting the president's defenseless daughter during the second half of the game. It's an intense baby-sitting gig—she's constantly in danger of being recaptured, unable to get over obstacles without your help, and often in the way of your bullets.

How Was It? Frighteningly good. Though

it sticks to the series' outdated "tank" controls (no strafing; push Left or Right to turn, forward to move ahead), *RE4* plays remarkably well. I had no problem—and quite a bit of fun—pulling off head shots and nailing bad guys in the hand to disarm them. It doesn't hurt that this is one of the best-looking games I've ever seen for any system. The gritty graphics are crisp and realistic but always smooth. —Mark MacDonald



■ That giant OK at the bottom left helps teach you how your drum beats affect gameplay.

DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT

Nintendo • Spring 2005

The Basics: Playing Nintendo's *Donkey Konga* music game with bongo drums makes sense, but brave beatniks can use the power of percussion to run, jump, punch, and swing in this wacky romp starring Nintendo's archetypal ape.

How Was It? Crazy but true: Slapping drums to run and jump while clapping to punch transforms platforming into giddy performance art. Stylish visuals and creative level design further draw you in to this bizarre fun. —Shane Bettenhausen



■ This is an epic, epic battle. The strategy involved in taking down the boss? Memorize his moves.

ODAMA

Nintendo • Spring 2005

The Basics: Oh man, where to begin... See, here are these two Japanese warlords clashing on the battlefield, which just happens to be, um, a pinball table.

How Was It? Mixing real-time strategy

and pinball seems insane, but the offset blend actually works—once you get a handle on the complex controls, it's a heluva pinball game. Plus, a friend can bang the *Donkey Konga* bongos to inspire your troops. Really. —Shane Bettenhausen

DRAGON BALL GT

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DRAGON BALL Z MOVIE **BOJACK UNBOUND**
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STAR FOX

Nintendo • November 2004

The Basics: Namco takes a crack at this storied space-shooting franchise as the series returns to its arcade-style roots after 2002's *Adventures* spin-off.

How Was It? Much better than it looked

a year ago, but we're still a bit skeptical. The single-player mode now features on-foot stages, but these seem out of place for a *Star Fox* game. Space combat is much more enjoyable but not quite up to *Star Fox 64* quality yet. —*John Ricciard*



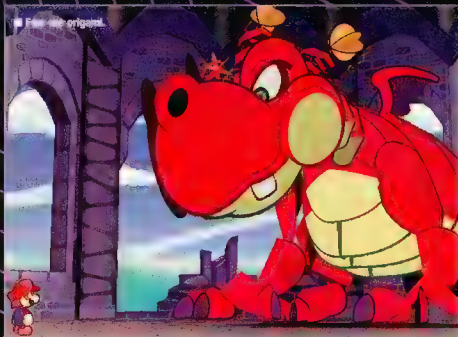
GEIST

Nintendo • Fall 2004

The Basics: Get all possessive as a spooky ghost soldier out for revenge in this puzzle-packed first-person shooter.

How Was It? The visuals and control still need work, but the concept is stellar. Our

favorite moment: haunting a bowl of dog food and exploding in a very downtrodden-looking canine's face. Once a victim is scared, you can take control of its body, leaping into mice, men, and even security cameras. —*Justin Speer*



PAPER MARIO 2

Nintendo • October 2004

The Basics: Mario and co. return in this goofball sequel to the hilarious N64 RPG.

How Was It? *PM2* feels an awful lot like the first game, just with much better graphics and a new twist to the battle

system—audience participation. Battles take place on a stage, with your performance affecting whether the crowd tries to help you or hurt you. If the final script is as funny as last time, this'll be another must-buy for sure. —*John Ricciard*

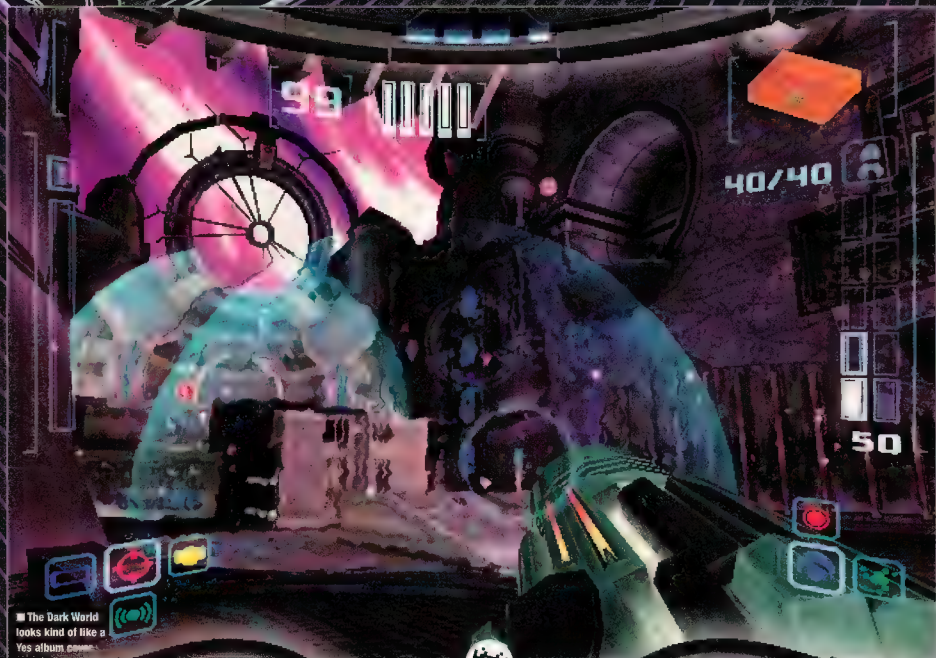


ADVANCE WARS: UNDER FIRE

Nintendo • Spring 2005

The Basics: Nintendo's venerable turn-based strategy-RPG comes to GameCube...as a real-time-strategy action game? The name's the same, but the genre, developer, and look are all startlingly new.

How Was It? It plays more like *Pikmin* than a traditional RTS, which is good. And the ability to control units directly while ordering others adds some welcome spice. About that character art, though...ugh. —*Andrew Vestal*



■ The Dark World looks kind of like a *Yes* album cover.

METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES

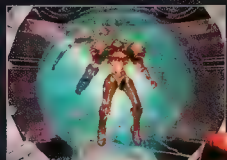
Nintendo • November 2004

The Basics: Gamers may wonder how anything could be better than the first *Metroid Prime*; fortunately, developer Retro Studios has a few ideas. First, this first-person-adventure sequel introduces a new planet, Aether, split into light and dark worlds—each an echo of the other. If you think that sounds similar to *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* (Super NES), you're more right than you know; Kensuke Tanabe, who invented the mechanic for that game, is producing this one. The Phazon-fueled Dark World is no mere palette swap; instead, the smooth technical lines of a laboratory give way to a dark, biomechanical hive. Expect plenty of switching between the worlds as you solve puzzles.

The Dark World features a new character: Dark Samus. Possibly connected to the

first game's lost Phazon suit, Dark Samus is more than just an enemy "boss"—she is a true adversary for Samus, with a complex relationship revealed as the game progresses. The dualistic motif continues with the weaponry: Samus can get the Dark Beam and Light Beam, and vice versa. Samus can also find an echo visor that lets her "see" sound and go all spinnaz with the return of her Screw Attack.

How Was It? Single player was much like the first game. Trust me, this is not a bad thing. The four-player deathmatch was straightforward enough, except for one thing—ball mode. Retro sees the ability to roll into a ball as the multiplayer mode's unique characteristic. Players can't fire



from ball mode, but they can use it to break another player's lock-on, make a fast getaway, and use otherwise inaccessible pathways and launch pads. Rumors have it Retro has more Versus modes

planned for the final game.... 
—Andrew Vestal

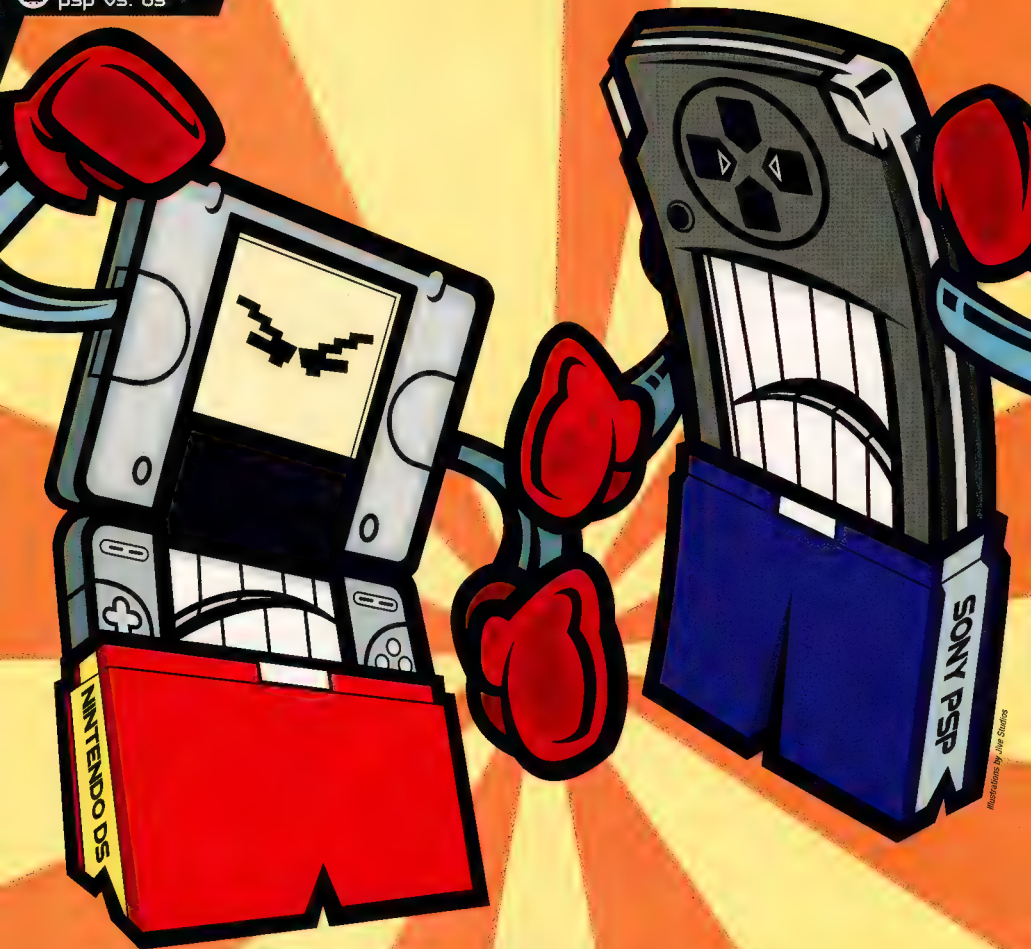


Illustration by John Sherry

MANO-A-MANO

Two new portable powerhouses, the Nintendo DS and the Sony PSP, prepare for hand-to-hand combat

by Mark MacDonald & the EGM All-Stars

As Don King might say, it's a fight of epicurean proportionality: Nintendo, the seasoned veteran and 15-year reigning champion of handheld videogames, versus scrappy up-and-comer Sony, the unquestioned leader of the home console market. Both have new handheld systems on the way—Nintendo's DS this fall, Sony's PSP early next year—

and, outside of similar wireless-networking abilities, the two machines could hardly be more different. The DS uses carts, the PSP uses optical discs. The DS has a touch pad, the PSP has an analog stick. The DS has two screens, the PSP plays movies and music. The DS is all about innovation, while the PSP is about making the home experience portable.

Some people point to these differences and say the two machines won't really compete with each other. And in some respects, they have a point—whatever happens, the audience for portable games is bound to grow far beyond the typical Game Boy crowd. But then again, A-list developers have only so much time and money to spend making portable games,

and gamers have only so much time and money to spend playing them (not to mention only so much space in their backpacks and carry-on bags). In other words, most of us will be buying only one handheld system in the next year. "There've been many boxers to enter the ring," quoth Don King, "but there's only one king." So, which will it be? ►

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(Actual Size)

Dual Screens

The DS's most obvious unique feature is its two three-inch backlit (thank goodness) LCD screens. Most of the demo games we saw had one screen doing 3D graphics while the other displayed a 2D map or menu, but Nintendo says the two can be combined into one giant display as well.



In this corner...

NINTENDO DS

Boldly going where no handheld has gone before

Two screens, one of which is also a touch-sensitive pad. A built-in microphone. Two cartridge slots. Wireless capabilities. Though some joke about its resemblance to Nintendo's own ancient line of Game & Watch handhelds, the DS is like nothing gaming—portable or not—has ever seen. Which, as *Mario* creator Shigeru Miyamoto explains, is precisely the point.

"With all of these features and capabilities, the DS [isn't] a system that just takes games we've seen before and adds new technologies or better graphics. It's a system

where we can bring new styles of games that we've never seen before."
Of course, Miyamoto is quick to add, every DS title doesn't need to completely redefine gaming. After all, the system also includes the standbys: regular ol' buttons (four on the front, one on each shoulder, plus Select and Start) and a familiar square-shaped D-pad.

of gameplay that's going to be possible on [Sony's PSP] is going to be possible on the DS, while the reverse is not true."
Speaking of the PSP, what does Nintendo think of the competition? Apparently, they don't. "We haven't paid [the PSP] much thought, to tell you the truth," says Tezuka. "We don't expect it to compete with the DS,

Fightin' words: "Any style of gameplay possible on [Sony's PSP] is possible on the DS, while the reverse is not true."

—Nintendo General Manager Takashi Tezuka

"Just because there are two screens doesn't mean [all games] have to use two screens," says Miyamoto. "And every game [doesn't] need to be wireless compatible, [or] use voice recognition, [or even] the touch pad." The idea, stresses Nintendo General Manager Takashi Tezuka, is that developers have plenty of options to innovate if they want to—options the other guys can't offer. "Any style

because they represent two very different styles of gameplay."
Besides, Nintendo's got enough to think about in the few months leading up to the DS's release at the end of the year. Like how much its new system will cost. Or what date it'll go on sale. Or the exact final hardware design (still being tweaked, with only minor alterations like an added slot to hold

Touch Pad

The lower screen offers PDA-like touch-pad capabilities. Some uses we saw included grabbing and moving cards or different items around in your inventory, steering and shooting in a first-person shooter, choosing from different playable characters by tapping on them, and typing on a virtual keyboard. You can use your finger or (for greater accuracy) a stylus to interact with the screen.

Microphone

The small mic built into the front of the DS could be used to talk to your friends over wireless multiplayer games or for voice-recognition-based titles like *Hey You, Pikachu!* (Nintendo 64) and *Seaman* (Dreamcast).

GBA Compatibility

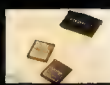
The DS features two cartridge slots: one on top for the smaller DS carts and one on the bottom for Game Boy Advance games. Though you can play all GBA games on the DS, older Game Boy and Game Boy Color games will not work on it.

VITAL STATS

Release Date:
Official: By the end of 2004
Our guess: November 2004
Price:
Official: "Over \$99, less than \$300"
Our guess: \$150

Media:
• DS carts are roughly half the physical size of GBA games—they can hold 1 gigabit (1/14 the capacity of the PSP's media)
• Plays DS and GBA games

Other:
• Up to 16 players can network within a range of at least 30 feet (or more, depending on location) or connect to the Internet via Wi-Fi
• Includes a standard headphone jack (woo hoo) and rechargeable battery
• Won't work with GBA-GameCube link cable for "connectivity!"



■ Many noticed the DS's resemblance to Nintendo's old Game & Watch handhelds.

the touch-screen stylus expected). Even the system's real name hasn't been announced; Nintendo DS, like Nitro before it, is merely an internal code name. The new moniker will be announced soon, but you can cross one famous brand name off your list of possibilities. "We're not going to call it Game Boy Something," says Tezuka. "[Because] the DS is not an expansion of the Game Boy. It's an entirely new system with entirely new capabilities."

NINTENDO DS GAMES

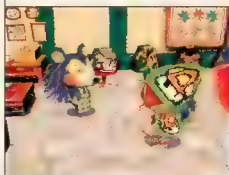
Nintendo has shown just a handful of actual DS games, and many of them only in video form. In addition to the following titles, however, they did show a dozen or so tech-

nical demos, each demonstrating different ideas for how developers might use the DS. In one, you could carve a spinning piece of wood by using the stylus on

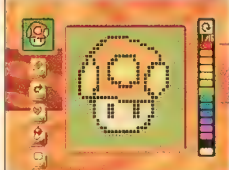
the touch screen; in another, you controlled various levers and gauges on a submarine by grabbing and sliding them. A particularly interesting demo from Namco had the play-

er use the stylus to sketch a Pac-Man, which would then come to life and chomp its way across the screen. Here are the few games we got to see:

ANIMAL CROSSING DS



"...yeah, no, that's a cool hat. Really."



Just admit you loved *Animal Crossing*. We all did. The bizarre, unclassifiable GameCube adventure of friendship, insect collecting, house decorating, and wiggling phallic music boxes kept even the most testosterone-filled gamers entranced for months—no joke. What we saw of this new DS version didn't display any new gameplay elements, but the simple addition of a touch screen opens up a lot of exciting possibilities. Use it to type out messages on a virtual keyboard, design fabric patterns, or act as an inventory screen for a quick 'n' easy way to drag items onto your character.

The DS's wireless multiplayer capabilities should promote multiplayer happiness, too. Imagine jumping online and downloading new outfits or songs, visiting your friends' villages, or trading letters or cute collectible crap without all that messy memory-card swapping.



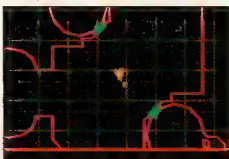
The DS's touch screen can be used to type letters or draw patterns for your clothes.



METROID PRIME HUNTERS

Although it may sound like the most exciting DS game announcement on paper, our hands-on time with a very early demo of this new *Metroid* left us with a bittersweet aftertaste. It definitely has the most impressive graphics we've seen on the DS—surprisingly smooth, with sharp environments that effectively mimic those of the Cube's *Metroid Prime*. The problem is the ridiculous control scheme: You slide on the touch screen to look around, tapping where you want to shoot (your other hand uses the D-pad to move and the shoulder button to look onto targets).

The simplistic multiplayer mode left us a bit cold as well, and we hear the single-player game will be closer to it (à la the solo mode in shooters like *Unreal Championship*) than a typical *Metroid* adventure. Let's hope *Hunters* changes dramatically before release.



The top screen is used for a simple map that displays opponents and power-ups.



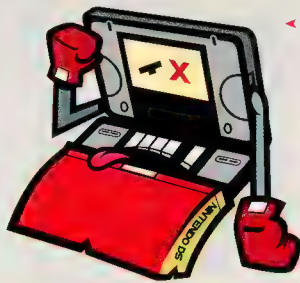
Hunters looks great, but the control scheme desperately needs a complete overhaul.



NINTENDO DS: TALE OF THE TAPE

Strengths:

- Plays all old GBA games, which gives it a huge library of favorites right out of the gate
- Cart-based games mean no loading times and a long battery life
- Nintendo has ruled the handheld market for more than 15 years, so they know it better than anyone
- Nintendo makes the best first-party games in the business, and a few million people will buy anything to play a new *Pokémon* game
- It's possible to play multiplayer games across multiple DSes with only one cart of the game

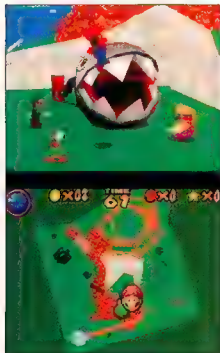


Weaknesses:

- Front and shoulder buttons are too small (and they don't have the same satisfying give of the GBA's buttons), and the lack of an analog stick is a step backward for 3D gaming
- Cart-based games also mean worse sound and less storage space for things like speech and video
- Big and, well, pretty damn ugly—won't win any beauty contests, unless those "minor tweaks" become major
- The touch screen seems prone to scratches, especially when you're rubbing a stylus over it all day (Nintendo says it is working on a solution) ▶



NINTENDO DS GAMES (CONT.)



SUPER MARIO 64X4

Look familiar? This update of the innovative N64 platformer doesn't appear to deviate much from the original, except for two new twists: You can switch between four characters on the fly (each with different abilities) or race and fight your way to collect the most stars in the added multiplayer mode. The demo felt solid, but we missed controlling via an analog stick.



MARIO KART DS

Forget the double-team antics of the Cube's *Double Dash!*—this DS Kart powerslides back to a time of simpler racing, à la the old N64 game. The only difference here is that the map, positions, and other info is displayed on the second screen, plus the lure of eight-player wireless multiplayer. Anything else new that we noticed? Nope. But that doesn't make us want it any less.



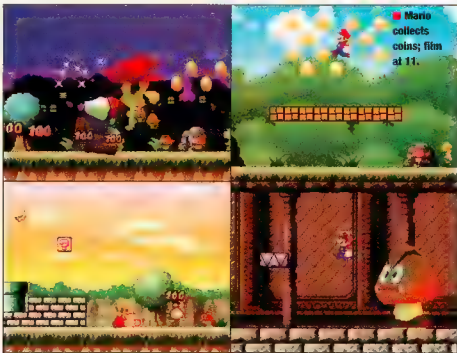
PICTOCHAT

Voted Most Likely to Be Confiscated by the Teacher, *PictoChat* is more of a high-tech way of passing notes than a game. Use the stylus to type on the mini-keyboard or draw freehand, then beam your vulgar scribbles to a pal or pals via Wi-Fi. Messages from other "players" (up to 16) appear on the top screen, and you can then modify their missives and send 'em right back.



WARIOWARE DS

It's simple. It's sweet. It's a gaggle of timing and twitch tests for the gamer with a short attention span. *WarioWare DS*'s micro-diversions were the best use of the DS's stylus we saw—wave it like a sword against the touch screen and slash through falling veggies before they hit the floor, put loose change in a coin purse, or give that itch on Wario's back a good scratchin'.



NEW SUPER MARIO BROS.

Mario: Italian, works a blue-collar job, into mushrooms, yada, yada—not such a mysterious guy. This new DS adventure, however, is one game *Mario* maker Shigeru Miyamoto isn't saying much about. We're not even sure when it's coming out (though since it wasn't even playable, being a DS launch title seems unlikely). It looks like a classic 2D side-scroller—warp pipes, coins, fireballs, all the old favorites. Except this time, Mario and his enemies are in 3D, he knows moves from newer adventures (such as a quick-reverse superjump), and enemies can consume 'shrooms to live large. No problem: Mario can grow as titanic as the screen and rampage through entire levels. The DS's second screen wasn't used in the video we saw, but then Miyamoto did tell us some games wouldn't use all of the handheld's fancy special features.

RINGSIDE COMMENTARY

First Impressions of the Nintendo DS from the EGM staff:

Mark: I get the feeling most people here are hyped on the DS. What I want to know is, where are the games that really make use of the dual displays? They need to show why a touch screen is such a brilliant idea.

Shane: I'll admit that the functionality of the double screen and touch panel hasn't been fully fleshed out yet, but nearly every developer I spoke with can't wait to experiment on it, and it's going to be cheaper than PSP. Plus, wanna bet that nearly every Nintendo first-party game on it is fantastic?

Shoe: It's all about the potential. The DS's design is fundamentally unique, which means it'll give us new gaming experiences we've never seen or even thought of before.

Dentlan: Yeah, but touch screens aren't exactly new. How many good PDA games have you played? The only really new thing here is the twin screens, and though it's early, I haven't seen them used to mint-blowing effect yet. So I don't have to hit Start to check out the map? Thanks for that. I'm more excited about the Wi-Fi, so far.

Shoe: That's a horrible example—true career game designers aren't busy thinking of ways to take advantage of a PDA's functions. But get a DS in the hands of someone like Hideo Kojima (*Boktai*) or Shigeru Miyamoto (*Mario*), and we'll see some innovative magic.

Dentlan: Oh! The dreaded Miyamoto card, like a punch to the gut.

Mark: Launch is just a few months away and everyone is still talking about "potential" and not actual games—that's a bad sign. Also, DS has no price, no release date, barely any games—it doesn't even have a name or final hardware design. Anyone else think it's going to be delayed?

Shane: I think it will make it out by Christmas. Nintendo isn't afraid to launch a system with two games. See: Nintendo 64.

Shoe: Look at the PlayStation 1. It didn't launch with anything innovative, but it had enough potential to make it one of the most successful systems ever. The DS doesn't have to show its hand now. It has plenty of time before it's released, and it has years after that to show us what it's made of.

Crispin: The DS sure looks clunky, though. Now the PSP—that's a sexy-looking system.

Jan: You know Nintendo made it huge and clunky now so a year after it comes out they can make us buy the sleeker DS-SP at only twice the price! ▶

OTHER DS GAMES:

- **Dragon Ball Z** (Banpresto)
- **Dynasty Warriors** (Koei)
- **Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles** (Square Enix)
- **The Legend of Zelda** (Nintendo)
- **Mega Man Battle Network** (Capcom)
- **Need for Speed Underground** (EA)
- **Nintendogs** (Nintendo)
- **Sonic DS** (Sega)

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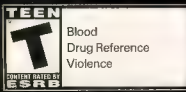
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■ The UMD drive is on the back.

VITAL STATS

Release Date:

Official: Spring 2005
Our guess: March 2005

Price:

Official: "For what we offer, it'll be a good price"
Our guess: \$300

Media:

- New UMDs (Universal Media Discs) are about 2.5 inches in diameter. They can hold up to 1.8GB (14 times the DS' media) and will be used for games, movies, and music



Other:

- Wi-Fi functionality will allow PSP users to network with other PSPs and connect to the Internet for online gaming or other applications at Wi-Fi hot spots
- USB 2.0 port, infrared data port, and Memory Stick slot
- Planned accessories include an external battery pack and headphones with remote commander and microphone
- Switches include brightness control, sound mode, and wireless on/off

Control

All the standard PlayStation buttons are here (only two shoulder buttons, though), plus a D-pad and a single analog stick underneath it. Opinions on the analog stick ranged from excellent to merely decent, with a few people complaining that it didn't have the range of motion of PS2's DualShock controller.

Big Screen

The first thing you notice about the PSP is just how huge its 4.3-inch screen is. The picture quality looked great on the demo units we saw playing video, and the 16:9 ratio means that movies won't need to be cropped or converted to pan and scan.

Expansion

A USB 2.0 port allows the PSP to connect to all kinds of other devices—digital cameras, computers, even your PS2. Sony was already showing prototype devices that would interface through the port, including keyboards, cameras, and a GPS. Game saves and other data can be stored and transferred on Memory Sticks that fit into a slot on the side.

And in this corner...

SONY PSP

Can Sony do for portables what they've done for home consoles?

If there is indeed a handheld title fit for brewing, someone forgot to tell Kaz Hirai. Ask the CEO of Sony Computer Entertainment America if he's worried about launching his company's new PlayStation Portable (PSP) early next year, months after Nintendo's new DS handheld, and he shrugs. "They can [launch the DS] before us, after us, on the same day—that's a decision for Nintendo. But we've seen all kinds of permutations in the past: Saturn was out before [the PlayStation], Nintendo 64 after, Dreamcast before [the PS2], Xbox after... whatever they like." Hirai may be talking about release dates, but his list of defeated home systems has a clear implication: We've beat 'em before, and we'll beat 'em again.

The philosophy behind the PSP isn't to redefine gaming like the Nintendo DS; it's to re-create it, only this time on the go—to "bring the modern 3D console experience to a mobile platform," as Hirai puts it. The system's design reflects this goal, sticking close to Sony's home controllers (with Triangle, Circle, Square, X, and two shoulder buttons, a D-pad, and even a small analog stick) to ease the transition between PS2 and PSP games

for both game developers and players. The system can also take advantage of online gaming, with Wi-Fi wireless support that lets the system connect to the Internet or network with other PSPs for multiplayer.

And even though Hirai acknowledges that

devices besides the PSP.

Plus, Sony is already hinting at "other entertainment applications" for the PSP, including online music downloads. Other possibilities include Web browsing, PDA-like functions (appointment book, calendar, etc.).

Fightin' words: "[The Nintendo DS] seems like an extension of what they've done—Game Boy, Game Boy Advance, then DS—which tells me it's more for a lower age demographic"

—Sony CEA CEO Kaz Hirai

"games—great games—are the most important application [for the PSP]." Sony's new handheld is about much more than playing *Metal Gear* on the bus. The PSP's disc-based UMD media can hold high-quality audio or movies at near-DVD quality. Sony is anticipating that this new format will become a standard, eventually incorporated into other

and connecting the PSP to your PSP or PC to swap data. Who knows? With the PSP's infrared data port, perhaps you could even use it as a programmable universal remote for your home-theater system. "I would call the PSP a handheld videogame system first," Hirai says, "but with a lot of different capabilities to expand it beyond gaming."

PSP GAMES

Although we've seen plenty of video of different PSP games in motion, Sony would reportedly not allow screens of any games (except, interestingly enough, those for

Metal Gear AcId) to be released. Hence the poor quality of the screenshots you see here, which were captured from a recording of a display monitor. It's also worth not-

ing that while some games were running on PSP development hardware, other games were actually modified or straight PS2 footage, or "approximations" of what

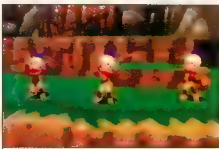
the games will look like on PSP. So take the images on the next couple pages with a grain of salt (as if they weren't already grainy enough).



METAL GEAR ACID

To be honest, when we realized the PSP edition of our favorite stealth-espionage series wouldn't be an action game, we started to wonder if *AcId* was a reference to all the drugs they were doing over at Konami. "It's more like a command-based, turn-based [strategy] game," says *Metal Gear* creator Hideo Kojima, who in only working on the project in a supervisory producer role. As we wept openly at this disappointing news, Kojima attempted to reassure us. "There'll definitely be a story, weapons, items, and stuff like that [in *AcId*]. Probably most of the characters from *MGS 1, 2, and 3* will be in it." We continued crying. "The guys working on *AcId* are a young team, so it's going to be a stylish *Metal Gear* game, unlike my games [laughs]. We weren't laughing, but Kojima did give us at least something to look forward to. "Visually, it's going to look as good as *Metal Gear* on the PS2."

■ Hit the deck: is no game safe from hard-battle-style gameplay?



APE ESCAPE



ATV OFFROAD FURY



MEDIEVAL



TALES OF ETERNIA



SONY PSP: TALE OF THE TAPE

Strengths:

- Disc-based media can hold entire movies or excellent-quality audio and costs a fraction of the price of cartridges. This also means better audio and video for use in games
- Analog stick is a must for many 3D games, as experience with the very first PlayStation controller taught us all
- Gorgeous design: Sleek and sexy, the PSP will be an easy sell to the gadget fetishists
- Wide third-party support—as with their consoles, Sony isn't trying to make all the games themselves. Some big-name third-party game makers are already on board, including EA and Konami with a *Metal Gear* game

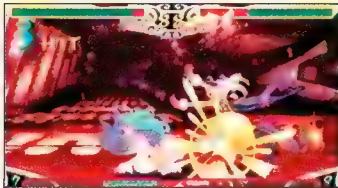


Weaknesses:

- Disc-based media also means shorter battery life, although Sony claims the system will last around 10 hours when playing games, eight hours playing music, or two-and-a-half hours playing movies
- Will it break? Sony doesn't have the best track record as far as dependable hardware, and optical disc drives tend to bust easily
- Cost: Although Sony hasn't mentioned anything about price, most analysts are expecting it to come in at around \$300 when it first goes on sale, with the price then decreasing gradually ▶



PSP GAMES (CONT.)



DARKSTALKERS CHRONICLES



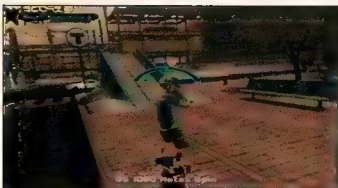
DYNASTY WARRIORS



RIDGE RACER



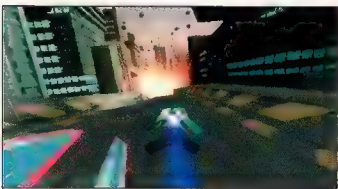
SPIDER-MAN 2



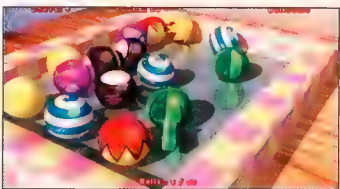
TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2



TWISTED METAL WORLD TOUR



WIPEOUT PURE



STICKY BALLS

OTHER PSP GAMES:

- **Armored Core: Formula Front** (From Software)
- **Devil May Cry** (Capcom)
- **Fighting Spirits** (Sony)
- **Gran Turismo 4: Mobile** (Sony)
- **Hot Shots Golf** (Sony)
- **Need for Speed Underground** (EA)
- **NFL Street** (EA)
- **NBA Street** (EA)
- **NHL FaceOff 2005** (Sony) ➤
- **Syphon Filter: Logan's Shadow** (Sony)
- **Tales of Eternia** (Namco)
- **Tiger Woods PGA Tour** (EA)
- **Viewtiful Joe** (Capcom)



RINGSIDE COMMENTARY

First impressions of the Sony PSP from the EGM staff:

Mark: I've heard people dis the PSP as "just more power," like that's a bad thing. The GBA was "just more power." Besides, there has never been a popular handheld that could do 3D games justice, much less also play movies and music. That's more than enough to get me excited.

Shane: You would get excited at just that? Sounds like the PS1, when things started going 3D and everyone was all geeked about it. I think in the beginning, we'll see a lot of games designed more to show off that a portable can do 3D. We won't see the really good stuff until later on. I'm more hyped on the PSP's physical design—it's a beaut, with a nice, large, clear screen, Shane; it's definitely a beautiful machine, but I fully expect all this snazziness to come at a hefty price: \$300. And that price will sting even more when the thing starts skipping and/or locking up after six months.

Mark: True, we've all been through our share of shoddy Sony game hardware. **Shane:** Still, I'm sure PSP will be a success, although I wish we'd seen some killer original apps. Turn-based *Metal Gear* looked dumb, and newish versions of *Medieval*, *Twisted Metal*, and *Ridge Racer* had me feeling like I was trapped back in 1997.

Crispin: Shane's got a point. Think of all the good handheld games you've played—Nintendo made most of 'em. Will developers who've never worked on portable gaming suddenly give it its due on the PSP?

Mark: Actually, I think that's a big plus for the PSP. Nintendo handhelds have always offered only Nintendo games or kids' licenses because of the way they do business and the cart format. With the PSP, we might finally get some games for the *Vice City*—and *Madden*—playing wider audience.

Shawn: Back to the whole movies and music bit. Who's gonna buy an extra copy of their favorite film on an odd-ball format like UMD? Plus, the battery will die long before the One Ring falls into Mount Doom.

Damian: Not if you cart around the external battery pack, but I'm with you on the UMD—what is Sony's fascination with trying to start up new media formats? Looks like PSP will have some other, cooler peripherals, too, like the GPS attachment. For when you get lost in the woods.

Crispin: Or a damn cover for the screen. Meantime, I'm gonna have to keep mine wrapped in a sock. ➤

GOT GAME?

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SPORTS™

NCAA
FOOTBALL
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MADDEN
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EXPERT OPINION

The biggest names in game development share their thoughts and plans for the **DS** and **PSP**

"Nintendo has asked me to make [Super Monkey Ball] for the Nintendo DS, and I'm interested in making it."

—Super Monkey Ball's Yoshinori Kamekura



"I'm really impressed with the DS touch panel technology—I hope I can do something with it. But I'm not sure if the PSP and DS are apt for Silent Hill. The ideal gameplay environment for playing Silent Hill is in your room, alone, in the dark. If you were playing it on a portable, your friends might interrupt you. If it were a game like Silent Hill Shooting, then it might be a different story."

—Silent Hill's Akira Yamaoka



"My first impression of PSP was that it had really awesome graphics and that users would love to have [GameCube RPG] *Baten Kaitos* on it, but I fear two issues: battery life and the price. With the DS, the double screen and touch panel are very unique. A card-based game like *Baten Kaitos* [would work well with] the touch panel."

—Baten Kaitos' Shinji Nagasaki



"I see a lot of potential in the Nintendo DS, but I'm not sure if I know how to get all those features to work!"

—Neo Contra's Nobuya Nakazato



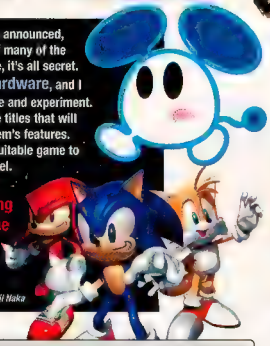
"I'm interested in both [PSP and Nintendo DS], since they are two totally different systems. With the DS, I believe that it would be very hard to utilize the touch panel as part of the game. It might serve as the interface for typing, but it would be difficult to use it for gameplay."

—Final Fantasy XIII's Yusaku Kawauchi



"I would like [the Nintendo DS game we announced, called Project Rabi] to take advantage of many of the DS features. It's a new genre...otherwise, it's all secret. [The PSP] is very interesting hardware, and I love all platforms. I like to innovate and experiment. So, I'm thinking of creating more titles that will be exclusive and use that system's features. *Chu Chu Rocket* would be a suitable game to play with the [DS]'s touch panel. Nintendo has actually asked me about making a *Chu Chu Rocket* for the DS, so that would be a nice project. But I can't say whether or not I will do it."

—Sonic's Yuji Naka



"[My current challenge is] to make the best portable game. I asked myself which was better: PSP or Nintendo DS? Everyone is talking about that. I automatically judged, based on my past playing history: Nintendo. There is no other way. It will be Nintendo DS. I don't know yet [if I will use the touch panel and both screens], but I will give you secret information: There is a big fan of Nintendo working with me...my daughter!"

—Dead or Alive and Ninja Gaiden's Tomonobu Itagaki



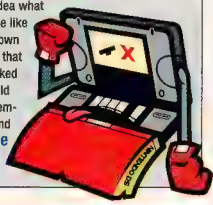
"With the PSP, you can listen to music, watch movies, play games—I think it's going to be a very stylish thing that young people will enjoy. It'll be the next Walkman. I think the young people now will buy it and enjoy it, because young people now are into cell phones. With the DS, it introduces a new [input device], the touch sensor, and two screens. I think it'll provide enjoyment and fun that only a video game console can. And [the two systems are] targeted toward totally different audiences, so I think that's good. [I probably won't make] a *Metal Gear Solid* game for DS, because I think the DS is for a younger audience. With the PSP, I think it's the perfect audience—that's why we're making *Metal Gear Ac!d!*"

—Metal Gear Solid's Hideo Kojima



JUDGES TABLE

Too early to pick a winner? Of course. Any system lives and dies by the games it plays, and we still have no idea what the DS and PSP launch line-ups will be like (much less the quality of their titles down the road). But we weren't about to let that stop us from forming our own half-baked opinions. Asked to vote which handheld they were more excited to own for themselves, based on what they've seen and heard so far, the eight members of the **EGM** staff responded five to three in favor of the **PSP**.





review crew

trained in yie ar kung fu



DIRECTORY

MULTIPLATFORM

- 98 DRIV3R
- 100 MLB SlugFest: Loaded
- 100 NCAA Football 2005
- 101 Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban
- 101 Mega Man Anniversary Collection
- 102 Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy

PLAYSTATION 2

- 102 Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow
- 103 Karaoke Revolution Volume 2
- 104 Smash Court Tennis Pro Tournament 2
- 104 Way of the Samurai 2



■ Don't let the Mature rating fool you—*DRIV3R* is bloodless and hookerless.



■ PS2/XB

DRIV3R

But you can call it Driv-three-er

KEVIN: So far, most attempts to tell a serious story within a *Grand Theft Auto*-style play mechanic have fallen flat on their faces. *True Crime* came the closest, but then it got all goofy near the end; *The Getaway* stayed on target plotwise, but the game was akin to watching the paint dry on your Geo Metro. That's why *DRIV3R*, even after the long wait, is a remarkable surprise—it adds a big pinch of *GTA* to the proven *Driver* formula, but avoids all the potholes its brethren hit full on.

As a road-mayhem sim, *DRIV3R* is decent. The cities of Miami, Nice, and Istanbul are immaculately re-created, and developer Reflections threw a trunkload of cute details into the driving scenes, like realistic shadows and cars that rip apart upon, er, detonation. Though both console

versions slow down during busy moments, *DRIV3R* is still the best-looking game in the genre. Reflections also included a story mode with a weird plot (why is protagonist Tanner killing hundreds of people—including cops—just to catch some car thieves?) but some incredible production values: Every cut-scene drips with style, and every action scene is backed up with an intense movie-like soundtrack.

The fact that *DRIV3R* is such a frustration-free game ultimately makes it a short-lived one—the story's over quickly, and there's little incentive to play for much longer. Even so, this is the first game to successfully mix death-on-the-freeway antics with a plot you might actually care about, and it's worth a shot for that alone.

FORD: *DRIV3R* is solid, and as Kevin said, it's certainly better than previous *GTA*-inspired efforts. It works mostly because of its great driving—each car handles beautifully, and the impressive physics engine makes accidental crashes worth the insurance hit. The on-foot missions aren't as hot, although it doesn't take too long to get the hang of the stiff control style.

But really, I was hoping for more. The three cities are mighty impressive, yet they feel so empty. You've got to select a separate mode in order to drive around without worrying about the linear (but solid) missions and idiotic enemies, but when you do, there's not much going on—no street racing or pizza delivering, just a couple secret cars and characters to find. Granted, no

■ **The Karaoke Revolution USD** tour didn't really impress the *Full Spectrum* Warrior grunts....



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



XBOX

- 106 Full Spectrum Warrior
- 108 Thief: Deadly Shadows
- 110 Shadow Ops: Red Mercury

GAMECUBE

- 110 Tales of Symphonia

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

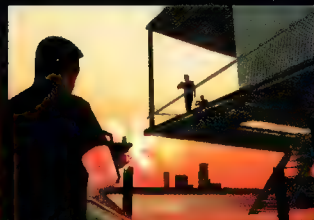
E-Everyone: Suitable for all ages.
T-Teen: Like PG-13 movies, teen games often feature fisticuffs, mild violence, and mudcap antics.
M-Mature: For ages 17-and-over crowd; intense violence, gore, piliated sex, drugs; parents not likely.



Highway Hijinx

DRIV3R's film editor allows would-be John Woos the chance to piece together their own action filmette and upload it online (that online part being Xbox only). This may be our one chance

to see *Police Academy 8* in our lifetimes. Roll 'em! Then imagine a vocal track with these *Police Academy* quotes, and maybe that guy who made the funny noises doing his helicopter impression....



one wants a blatant rip-off, but if a game hopes to challenge the best, it should at least offer comparable goods. A great ride while it lasts, though.

DEMIAN: Wow, if only the folks at Reflections had put half as much effort into gameplay as they did in replicating Miami, Nice, and Istanbul. *DRIV3R* would be phenomenal. But they didn't, and it's not. Kevin! It's totally not!

The *Grand Theft Auto* connection has already been made, but here's the vital Cliffs Notes version: *DRIV3R* has way better graphics but fewer missions, a fraction of the replay value, and probably even more bugs. The cities are meticulously, amazingly crafted, but you won't even visit huge chunks of them, unless you're in Take a Ride mode, and then, as G. Ford noted, there's not much to do but marvel at the scenery. Ford's right about the driving parts being

the best bits, too (the pair of on-rails shooter missions are also ace), but to call any part of *DRIV3R* frustration-free—Kevin! I'm giving you the stink eye!—my blood pressure's on the rise just thinking about it. How's this: I can see the car I've been chasing for five minutes about a block ahead of me—it's right there—but, oops, the game says I lost it. Start over. Again.

Oh well, at least I can cross off "visit Istanbul" from my life's to-do list. ☹

- Good:** Undeniably stylish; hair-raising driving missions
- Bad:** Ends too soon; janky on-foot combat
- Fun With Grenades:** Blow up a car while you're in it. Good times.



THE EDITOR'S CHOICE

8.5 7.5 6.5
 KEVIN G. FORD DEMIAN

Publisher: Atari
 Developer: Reflections
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Mature

www.driv3r.com

review: multiplatform
3rd and 11



ONLINE
PS2/XBOX ONLY



GAME OF THE MONTH

PS2/XB/GC

NCAA FOOTBALL 2005

The Gipper would be proud

Good: Authentic college gameplay and atmosphere.
Bad: It's time to spruce up the visuals.
Finally a Reality: EA Sports on Xbox Live



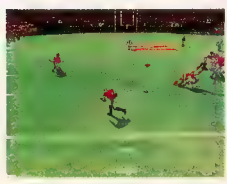
BRYAN: To pinch a phrase from renowned college gridiron announcer Keith Jackson, "Whoa, Nellie! Do we have ourselves a ball game here!" Yep, *NCAA* splits the uprights with premiere pigskin play that's worthy of any armchair QB's attention.

NCAA's winning formula hasn't changed: Subtle but oh-so-effective gameplay enhancements make for unmatched realism on the field. With a simple button press you can now pump up fans to a decibel level that causes opponents to miss audibles or, say, rattles a wet-behind-the-ears QB who isn't used to playing in deafening stadiums like Florida's Swamp. *NCAA* also caters to those who don't tivo *SportsCenter*—the new match-up stick provides instant pre-snap access to both team's strengths and weaknesses. Other upgrades include stinger secondaries and a blow-out dynasty mode where you'll discipline players for bad grades and skipping classes (how much more real can you get?).

But being the picky SOB that I am, I do have one complaint: The graphics are starting to look dated. Hey, gotta work on something during the off-season, right?

PATRICK: I'm addicted! Inching ever closer to perfection, EA Sports made a great game better with the addition of home field advantage. Deafening crowd noise makes audibles dicey for the road team—you call an out, audible in, your receiver doesn't hear you, and bam, you've thrown a pick that's run back for six. Rosters have expanded to 70 players, and you can now offer incentives like scholarships (not Escalades or girls) to keep athletes happy, or they may transfer. This game should come with a 12-step program on how to stop playing it.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—CHRIS B: When asked to identify my favorite game ever, I have a quick answer: "Whatever the latest edition of *NCAA Football* is." It's still true for 2005—the gameplay remains every bit as real (well, except for the new physics-defying tipped balls), and the considerable depth has only deepened. Still, most of the new stuff just seems kind of "nice" to me—only the option to equalize the stats of both teams in an online contest stands out as particularly brilliant. Not that most of it isn't already brilliant. Because it is.



THE VERDICT'S OUT
9.0 9.5 9.0
 BRYAN PATRICK CHRIS B.

PUBLISHER: EA Sports
 DEVELOPER: EA Tiburon
 PLAYERS: PS2 1-2 (3-8 w/MultiTap, 2 online), XB 1-4 (2 online), GC 1-4
 ESRB: Everyone
 www.easports.com

PS2/XB

ONLINE

MLB SLUGFEST: LOADED

Bobbleheads for everyone



Good: Great arcade baseball action, good sim options
Bad: Isn't baseball season half-way over?
Typical SlugFest Matchup: Rodeo clowns vs. Minotaurs

G FORD: Much like the class clown who surprises everyone by landing a job, getting married, and having kids, *SlugFest: Loaded* has thrown a curveball: It's now part simulation. But don't go thinking you'll need to be a number-crunching fantasy-baseball jock to own the diamond this year. *Loaded*'s still mostly about fast-paced arcade action combined with brawling ballers—and this season it's all finally online (on both PS2 and XB).

But if, perhaps, you fancy a franchise deep enough to satisfy the stat-heads, with fantasy drafts, trades, and roster tweaking, well, you've got that, too. The optional MLB mode, which takes away the series' trademark fistcuffs, fire, and other tomfoolery, plays fine as well. Admittedly, I would rather go through a season of the deep-pitching *MVP Baseball* or option-heavy *ESPN* over this, but if you don't have someone to play alongside you, *SlugFest* ain't a bad consolation. It's a solid game of baseball and the King of arcade gameplay.

BRYAN: These baseball junkies are a little too kind here (must be all the ball-park franks and cold brewskies clouding their judgment). *Loaded*'s diamond—the arcade one, not the new simmy version—is almost a carbon copy of last season's. Which isn't necessarily bad, but I expected more wackiness (this series is screaming for a create-a-special-pitch feature). Oh well, at least now I can head online and humiliate whiny BoSox fans like Mr. Ford with the all-mighty Bronx Bombers. But overall, this

slugger falls shy of clearing the fences.

PATRICK: Midway's latest season of all-out-action baseball plays a lot like last year's *SlugFest*. New game modes allow for a choice of arcade gameplay, simulation, or a little of both, while the brand-new pitching interface gives gamers more control while on the mound, thanks to the (optional) pitch meter. Batters now have a chance to duck those stat-training, head-hunting beanballs, too. I'm also a big fan of the new franchise mode—especially the news section with real-time headlines about games played throughout a season.



■ *SlugFest* supports Xbox Live 3.0, so tournaments will be much easier to set up.

THE VERDICT'S OUT
8.0 7.0 8.0
 G. FORD BRYAN PATRICK

Publisher: Midway
 Developer: Midway
 Players: PS2 1-2 (2 online), XB 1-4 (2 online)
 ESRB: Teen
 www.midway.com



Harry skipping intermediate card tricks class again.

PS2/XB/GC

HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN

Hogwarts day care



Good: Slick visuals, some clever puzzles
Bad: Too easy for older players
PS2 Owners: Bring an EyeToy



SHANE: *Azkaban* continues EA's string of tyke-friendly adventures based on the ubiquitous *Harry Potter* film/book empire. Like *Sorcerer's Stone* and *Chamber of Secrets* before it, this one rips off Nintendo's classic *Legend of Zelda: The Ocarina of Time* (Nintendo 64) in just about every conceivable way: Lock-on combat, customizable action buttons, semiautomatic platforming, tricky boss battles, and puzzle-packed dungeons all feel awfully familiar. But hey, at least the developers cribbed their notes from a winner—all that *Zelda*-ish gameplay feels instinctive and fun, whether it's in Hyrule or Hogwarts.

Azkaban's creepier vibe—think serial killers, werewolves, and soul-sucking ghouls—comes through clearly, and the series' maturation extends to the gameplay as well. You now control all three magical brats, switching between Harry, Ron, and Hermione on the fly to solve clever puzzles and dish out spells. But newfound complexity aside, this is still a kids' game, both easy and a little short. Young *Potter*-heads will lap it up, especially the bonus EyeToy minigames in the PS2 version.

CRISPIN: Authoress J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series can claim "100 million readers served" for a reason: Kids and adults alike fall under its spell. This game, on the other hand, will charm kids and...their kid brothers. *Azkaban* is a simple, solid adventure with smart puzzles and high production values, but it leads its junior wizards through every baby step. Meanwhile, the story gets the short end of the broomstick in favor of minigames and power-walking jaunts through an authentic Hogwarts. Of-age *Potter* fanatics would be better off reading the book again.

JENNIFER: I want to believe in the children. Global warming? Cure for cancer? I trust future generations to figure it out. But if tykes of today are dumb enough to need this game's rampant hand-holding and overbearing hints, then we're all freakin' doomed. Gone are the pleasantly challenging puzzles of previous *Potters*, replaced by fill-in-the-dots missions that require little thought. It's still fun to explore Hogwarts, but even the great story gets lost amid frequent loading screens and unrelated tasks.

THE VERDICTS look for	7.0	6.5	6.0
	SHANE	CRISPIN	JENNIFER

Publisher: EA Games
 Developer: EA UK
 Players: 1 (2-4 in minigames)
 ESRB: Everyone

www.eagames.com

PS2/GC

MEGA MAN ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION



Good news, ladies—he's legal in three years



Any *Mega Man 2*—the greatest game in the series. Some fools will argue that 3 deserves that honor, but they're wrong.



Good: *Mega Man 1-4, 7, 8*
Bad: *Mega Man 5, 6*
Worst: *Mega Man Boss: Dust Man...no, wait—Plant Man*



SHANE: It's hard to argue with the sheer value of this package. It's a veritable *Mega Man* mother lode—10 games (two of 'em must be unlocked, though), remixed soundtracks, and a cavalcade of making-of bonus materials. Sure, most of the games here look like rusty antiques to modern gamers weaned on Dual Shocks, but it's a nostalgic trip worth taking. *Mega Man's* gameplay conceit of tackling various robots in order to snatch their distinctive special weapons remains enjoyable to this day. Figuring out whose gun works best on which evil bot is half the fun.

Don't come to *Collection* expecting consistency, however. The first few *Mega Man* games bubbled with creativity, but by *Mega Man 5*, Capcom had lost most of the plot. The boss robots became increasingly laughable and derivative, and the level designs felt recycled. The two execrable *Mega Man* fighting games, available here for the first time on a home console, sink even lower. Thankfully, the oft overlooked but stellar *Mega Man 8* provides a potent tonic to all that swill. If you missed it on PS1, you're in for a treat.

MARK: Newcomers should stay away ("I can't duck? Or shoot up?!"), but for those of us who grew up with Capcom's blue bomber, 30 bucks for this high-quality collection of old-school favorites is a steal. Timing jumps, learning boss fight patterns, figuring out how to get to that special item just out of reach—*Mega Man* is all about the simple pleasures. Sure, a few of the games suck (*The Power Battle*, I'm looking at you), but it's still nice to have them all in one package.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—GIANCARLO: It's scary to think that *Mega Man* is older than a large portion of the gaming populace, but it's a perfect opportunity for those people to find out why the series has been around so long. As this *Collection* shows, almost every one of the 10 *Mega Man* games offers an action experience that still holds up to this day, thanks to some great level design and gameplay mechanics. The only problem is that Capcom stuck to the basic *Mega Man* formula too closely—newcomers expecting drastically varied gameplay between each title are in for a surprise.

THE VERDICTS look for	8.0	8.0	7.0
	SHANE	MARK	GIANCARLO

Publisher: Capcom
 Developer: Capcom/Atomic Planet
 Players: 1-2
 Rating: Everyone

www.capcom.com



PS2/XB

PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

Go mental

Good: Mind-blowing action.
Bad: So much potential curbed by problems.
Beware of: Evil garden games.



SHAWN: It's all in your mind—the power to move matter, to hitch a ride in someone's head, to set foes on fire and siphon their spirits like no much food for thought. *Psi-Ops* is so much about another numbskull shooter, and when the brain-storm breaks, only your imagination and a few slip-ups limit the action. Nothing beats wondering whether something will work—can I possess that sniper in the watchtower, make him shoot the other sentries, then dive to his own death—and discovering that it does. Nick Scryer's mental maneuvers are instantly accessible (no pausing to select between 'em), so while you'll have to think about what you want to do, you won't have to worry about how you're gonna do it.

As it is, everyone's gonna steal *Psi-Ops* ideas. Still, the game could've been better. After a series of imaginative levels, the last few succumb to generic game mentality (switch puzzles, respawning enemies, and instant deaths are so passé), and the comedy skit of a story is laughable long before you reach its brain-farting conclusion. If only its creators had thought a little harder...

BRYAN: My brain aches when I think of all the sequels and clones these days. But I've found the gaming equivalent to swallowing aspirin—playing *Psi-Ops*. Like Shawn says, Nick Scryer's super-duper psychic abilities are the real draw here; it never gets old levitating, scorching, and entering the minds of foes. And with these powers, there are usually two or three different ways to resolve a given situation. But *Psi-Ops* does suffer a few lapses: The story is quite cliché, and most boss battles play out the same way (quick tip: Master the art of telekinisis).

XEN—GREG: Seldom in the history of electronic entertainment has one game presented such new and exciting ideas—in this case, spooky mental powers—in an overwhelmingly fun package. Then having enthralled and entertained, its fun fueled by the protagonist's ability to wield these powers with great creativity, the game potholes itself entirely, forcing players to run through a screen-warping altered reality, shoot cheap "psi-beasts," and hunt for colored objects to place on similarly colored pedestals. What happen?



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	8.0	7.5	7.5
	SHAWN	BRYAN	GREG

PUBLISHER: Midway
DEVELOPER: Midway
PLAYERS: 1-2
ESRB: Mature

www.ps2opsgame.com

PlayStation 2

ONLINE

SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW

Online ain't just for SOCOM anymore...



Good: The most revolutionary multiplayer you've ever played...
Bad: ...is great here but better on Xbox version, but hey, at least you're not paying \$50 a year to play online.

Good: The most revolutionary multiplayer you've ever played...
Bad: ...is great here but better on Xbox version, but hey, at least you're not paying \$50 a year to play online.
Extra Bad: The voice acting from the secondary characters



SHOE: If you ran into me on the street, chances are, I'd bring up stealth-action hit *Pandora Tomorrow* in any gaming-related conversation. "You have to play it," I'll say. "It's revolutionary." If you don't dismiss me as a hardcore kook and give it a try, you'll be hooked, guaranteed. The two spies (hunter) versus two mercenaries (hunters) dynamic is different from anything you've ever played and is unbelievably addictive with a multitude of gadgets and weapons, all unique to each team but delicately balanced against each other. Almost all of its genius is intact from the Xbox version, except Ubisoft yanked some graphical effects and real estate from the levels to fit on PS2. It's disappointing, but if you never saw the Xbox game, you wouldn't even notice or care—this edition is still amazing.

Single-player-wise, PS2 gets a new level, but it's no big deal since it lasts only about 10 minutes. As a whole, though, the one-player game rocks. It's easy to overlook next to the great multiplayer stuff, but the beautiful stages and intense stealth situations are well worth playing through.

MARK: Though it suffers a bit in comparison with its Xbox cousin, PS2 *Pandora* is still one gorgeous game. Fancy effects such as rippling water, real-time flashlights, and realistic shadows push Sony's black box to new heights (you can literally hear it straining to keep up). Single player is basically more of the same solid *Cell* formula: sometimes frustrating

but solid stealth/shooting, with a few break-out moments when you're let outdoors and off the trip-one-alarm-and-its-over leash.

As for multiplayer...oh multiplayer, sweet, sweet multiplayer. Put it this way: We're still playing the Xbox version four months after release, with no end in sight. The PS2 online game is missing some of the fine details, but in the end, it delivers that same tension and addictive quality you just gotta experience.

OFFICIAL PS BIRD—JOHN D: The single-player game is a perfectly adequate sequel to the original, but the multiplayer stuff may well be the best online experience on PS2 right now. It requires a concerted effort to get into, and it forces you to socialize with all the other freaks out there—but the controls are so perfect that they're transparent, and the whole thing will get under your skin to the point that it'll permeate every facet of your normal life. You'll never look at a CCTV camera the same way ever again.



■ Frequent checkpoints mean less tearing your hair out.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	9.0	9.0	9.5
	SHOE	MARK	JOHN D.

PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
DEVELOPER: Ubisoft
PLAYERS: 1 (2-4 System Link or broadband-only online)
ESRB: Teen

www.splintercell.com/us

*Pandora previously earned Game of the Month honors on Xbox, so we're disqualifying it from competition this issue.



Good: Silliness like this just never gets old.
Bad: 35 songs seems like a lot, but it's not; also sold separately.
Bel You Can't: Wing it through Jessica Simpson's "Irresistible"



JENNIFER: Unless you've been living under a petrified Vectrex for the past few years, you know karaoke has overtaken bowling, cow tipping, and getting Tasmanian Devil tattoos as Most Beloved Stupid Drunken Pastime. It still works surprisingly well here in videogame form: The game's pitch-detecting technology never ceases to amaze by accurately determining how well (or badly, in Shane's case) you're singing.

SHANE: Although I'm steamed at the serious lack of new stages and characters—this is a full-price game, after all—I still consider this a worthy purchase for *American Idol* hopefuls and lipsy crooners alike. As my fellow reviewers point out, the new modes help to streamline group play, and the radically diverse song selection rules. Whether you're getting a little bit country with Garth Brooks, losing 10 points with Jessica Simpson, or warbling along with the Darkness, there's something for every occasion and taste.

PlayStation 2

KARAOKE REVOLUTION VOLUME 2

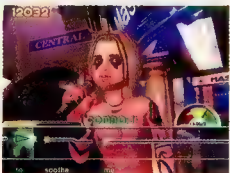
Pump up the volume



Volume 2 isn't just a 35-song add-on to last year's model; it couple subtle but important adjustments have been made.

You can now jump right into songs in quick play mode without going through the long (and potentially party-killing) process of setting everyone up for competition mode. Truth is, the karaoke dilettantes who'll have fun playing this at a party don't really want to compete. The low-commitment "short song" option, which allows you to sing an abbreviated version of your selection, is another nice new touch—the perfect way to coax shy, unmusical (even sober) people into singing. But I still want duets and song-only expansion discs, dang it!

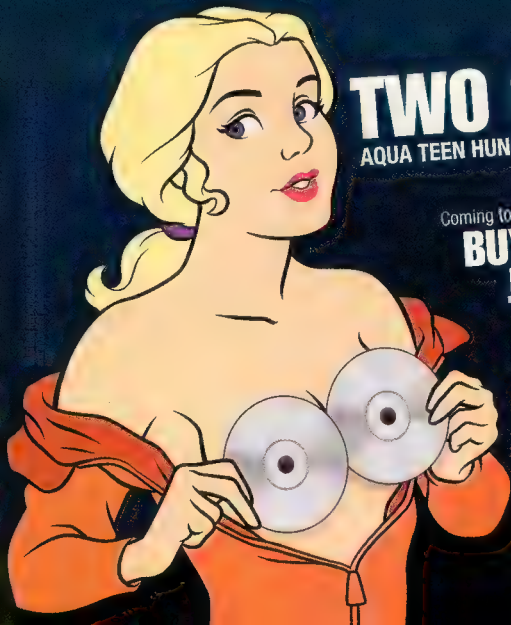
GMR—CARRIE: On the surface, *Volume 2* is just *Karaoke Revolution* with new songs and mostly the same old characters and venues. But the simple addition of the quick play mode makes this game much better suited for the brief attention spans of party players. The medley mode is cool, too, because you can try out three to five songs in one short sitting—another big plus for those who don't want to sit around all night waiting for their turn to sing. These simple tweaks make *Volume 2* far superior.



THE VERDICTS
8.5 8.5 8.5
 JENNIFER SHANE CARRIE

Publisher: Konami
 Developer: Harmonix
 Players: 1-8
 ESRB: Everyone

www.konami.com



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PlayStation 2

WAY OF THE SAMURAI 2

Battle of branching paths

Good: Multiple story paths offer plenty of replay

Bad: Rough around the edges

Why Can't We All: Just meditate in our rock gardens?

SHAWN: Help assassinate an allegedly corrupt official or intercept his attackers' swords? "A warrior," according to the old maxim, "must make decisions in the space of five breaths"; and in *Way of the Samurai*, your choices are never without consequence. Every opportunity you gain by siding with crooks comes with hidden costs (is going for the five-finger discount worth the risk of shopkeepers shutting you out?), and playing the game over just to see what happens when you betray your friends and befriended foes in half the fun.

Maybe I should say "more than half," as *Samurai's* swordplay, though not rusty, isn't as sharp as it should be. It's definitely deep—the more thought you put into fights, the faster you'll pick up new techniques—but programming glitches abound. The camera gets confused and characters vanish (hijra magic?), stupid bystanders stumble into your bloodbaths, reducing your honor rating; and the targeting system makes it too easy to puncture the man you intended to protect, taking away the whole choice thing that's supposed to give the game its edge.



JON D: Unlike the recent glut of samurai games, *Way* focuses on character interaction and the player's own decisions rather than straight-up action. "As a roamin' ronin, you'll explore several similar villages across the land, and figure out basic gameplay rules for yourself along the way. So expect trial-and-error sessions that can get you penalized or killed, booted back to the title screen, and forced to muddle through another 10-minute intro before reattempting your previous folly. Though highly replayable, this *Samurai's* swordplay is reproachable—you might want to try before you buy.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—DANA: While Shawn's right about the different endings being the most interesting aspect of *Samurai*, they also introduce a whole pile of tedium, as you're forced to sit through the same lengthy cut-scenes over and over. The plot is glacially paced, too, and I found myself killing time (or peasants) while waiting for scripted events to occur. Add in dreary levels and lackluster dueling, and you've got a game that is slightly inferior to its mediocre predecessor.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

6.0	5.5	5.0
SHAWN	JON	DANA

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Acquire
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.capcom.com

PlayStation 2

SMASH COURT TENNIS PRO TOURNAMENT 2

Just give us the highlights...



Muste, ya pansy! This guy's overbearing dad should have yelled at him more as a kid.

Good: Nice variety of strokes with realistic effects

Bad: Hardcore enthusiasts might lament the shorter tournaments

Wonder Twin Powers Deactivate: Serena's in...Venus isn't

JON D: Videogame tennis can be as boring as real-life golf for folks who don't follow Andy Roddick's every move.

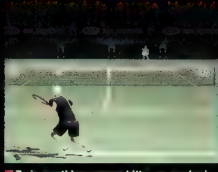
Fortunately, the faster-paced *Smash Court* is a good quick fix for those of us who still serve underhand. I'd rather play to six games on several different lawns than go a full five sets against one sweaty Frenchman, and now I can.

Controls and timing are easy to master with a quick tutorial, and give you a full array of shots from slicing drops to top-spin crosscourtters. The game also offers a decent secondary viewing option when you're on the far side of the court—putting you back in the foreground, where depth perception is a heck of a lot easier to gauge. Where *Smash Court* doesn't deliver: Dreamcast-quality graphics and some pretty unrealistic AI—who almost never hit the ball wide, into the net, or to my computer-controlled teammate in doubles. I spent about a minute crushing baseline forehands cross-corner with one dude while our teammates had a nice chat at the net. Maybe he's smarter than I think—he knew where the weak spot was....

JOHN R: *Smash Court 2* ain't the best tennis game (that'd be Xbox's *Top Spin*), but it's at least the best to hit PS2 since 2002's *Sega Sports Tennis*. The game's main draw is definitely its pro tour mode: building up a player from scratch, RPG style, is surprisingly fun and addictive, and having the option to tackle it "mission-style" (just the important parts) is a very cool feature. But why no online

mode? C'mon, Namco, get with the times!

OFFICIAL PS MAG—GIANCARLO: *Smash Court 2* deserves credit for being a fun tennis game that isn't just a *Virtua Tennis* (Dreamcast) knockoff. Greater emphasis is placed on timing and position to execute effective shots on the court, which makes it a little more difficult to get into than *Virtua Tennis*-style games, but ultimately more rewarding. *Smash's* crazy-addictive career mode, in which you build a character from scratch and buff up individual statistics as you participate in minigames or tournaments, also scores an ace.



Train a ruthless power hitter or cerebral finesse player in pro tour mode.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

7.0	8.0	8.0
JON	JOHN R.	GIANCARLO

Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco
Players: 1-2 (3-4 w/multiplay)
ESRB: Everyone

www.namco.com

EGM PRESENTS

WAY OF THE SAMURAI 2

侍道2

BE ONE OF THE FIRST 10 PEOPLE TO
WIN THIS GAME.

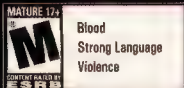
LOG ON TO www.wots2.egmmag.com
AND ENTER YOUR NAME TO WIN*

Each winner will receive a copy of Way of the Samurai 2 for the PlayStation®2 Computer Entertainment System, Strategy Guide from BradyGames, Way of the Samurai 2 poster and a game T-shirt.

*Must be 17 or older to enter. See website for full contest rules, terms and conditions.



BRADYGAMES
Strategy Guide
AVAILABLE



PlayStation 2

CAPCOM

www.capcom.com/wots2



Bad guys have big green arrows above their heads, which is handy.



Carry your gut-shot team member back to the caesaree (Army-speak for a doctor and supply truck) and he'll be fixed up good as new, rarin' to fight. Just like real life.



Xbox

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

Shock inducing, awe inspiring

SHAWN: One hostile with a machine gun and a stack of sandbags can chew up your whole squad like so much mincemeat, but for all the shootin', *Full Spectrum Warrior* isn't a shooter. Call it an infantry-tactics sim, a fresh clip for a war genre in need of new ammo. Just like the real troops who train on their own Army-authentic version, you'll learn to lay down cover fire with one team while bounding into a flanking position with the other. But instead of shoving around game pieces from a general's-eye view, you're in the middle of it with your men, plotting the attack while under fire.

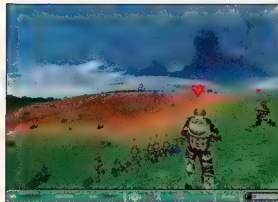
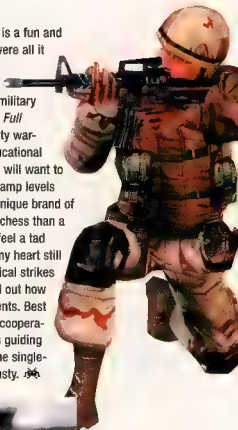
Friendly AI is first-rate (each soldier is seasoned enough to know when to hit the dirt and cover his sector), and issuing tactical direction is easy. Some might argue that it's *too* easy once you've mastered the essential maneuvers, but fierce scripted sequences keep you frosty. Matter of fact, when your boys start screaming as RPG rounds streak by, you'll feel silly for assuming you'd miss being the one pulling the trigger. Thanks to its

war-winning coalition of graphics and gameplay, *Warrior* is actually more gripping than most soldier games. It lets go only on the predictable second playthrough, when you're aware of sniper positions and know when to expect ambushes.

DEMIAN: I'm pretty gung ho on *Warrior*—the grunt's-eye view of tactical urban combat is visually gripping and, I can only assume, fairly accurate for armchair sergeants, considering the game's roots as a real military-training sim. But I don't quite share Shawn's battle lust. The game's arbitrary rule set is frustratingly flawed: An enemy can step out from around a corner and be completely exposed, but he's still considered behind cover and, therefore, invulnerable to gunfire. What's the point of putting the player on the ground, right in the s***, if the game reverts to pen-and-paper war-game rules when the bullets start to fly? I might as well be issuing orders to army ants from the bridge of my zeppelin.

Still, as a strategy game *Warrior* is a fun and unique experience—I just wish it were all it could be.

CRISPIN: History Channel-TiVoing military groupies will snap a crisp salute to *Full Spectrum Warrior*, what with its salty war-movie dialogue and so-real-it's-educational warfare. But even peacenik players will want to stroke their war barrels. The boot camp levels ease greenhorns into this game's unique brand of warfare, which plays out more like chess than a typical shooter. Although missions feel a tad canned once you figure them out, my heart still raced as I planned impromptu surgical strikes against dug-in enemies and figured out how to spoof heavy-weapon emplacements. Best of all, I always had the slick online cooperative option—which has two players guiding one squad each—lo turn to once the single-player campaign started getting musty. **A-**



War Games For Real Warriors

While *Full Spectrum Warrior* lets civvies steep on chevrons for a slint at virtual soldiering, developer Pandemic's other war child, *Full Spectrum Command*, trains the real brass at Fort Benning in company-level battlefield coordination. Don't feel bad about missing out on the authentic action, though; the real deal is more about book-learnin' and moving symbols on a map than engaging gameplay. Besides, it's got lousy graphics.



Warrior is short, but with the promise of more downloadable missions, the matter might not warrant a court-martial

Good: Groundbreaking gameplay

Bad: Once in a while soldiers won't follow orders

TPR: Third-season real-time strategy



THE VERDICT'S
OUT OF

8.0 7.0 8.0

SHAWN

DEMIAN

CRISPIN

Publisher: THQ
Developer: Pandemic
Players: 1-2 (2 online)
ESRB: Mature

www.fullspectrumwarrior.com

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RED MERCURY

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Xbox Magazine

"...one summer blockbuster that you'll want to be part of..."

TeamXbox.com

"The Xbox's first-person shooter lineup will be one game stronger this summer..."

GameSpot.com

"...sure to fill the needs of *Rainbow Six* and *Medal of Honor* fans alike."

UGO.com

"...will capture the hearts of gamers everywhere."

Gamers-Depot.com

"...intense action and cinematic flair in every square inch of the game."

GameInformer.com

"...rises above the glut of first-person shooters..."

GameSpot.com

"...fast, exciting and certainly has hit potential..."

Official Xbox Magazine

"I can honestly say that I have never said 'Wow' or 'Gosh' that many times in 10 minutes before in my life."

GameZone.com

T H E T H R E A T I S R E A L

www.shadowopsgame.com



Violence



Xbox
LIVE
ON-LINE PLAY

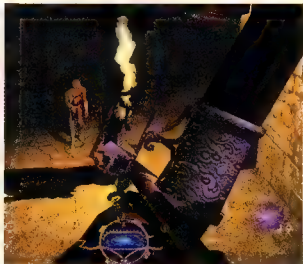
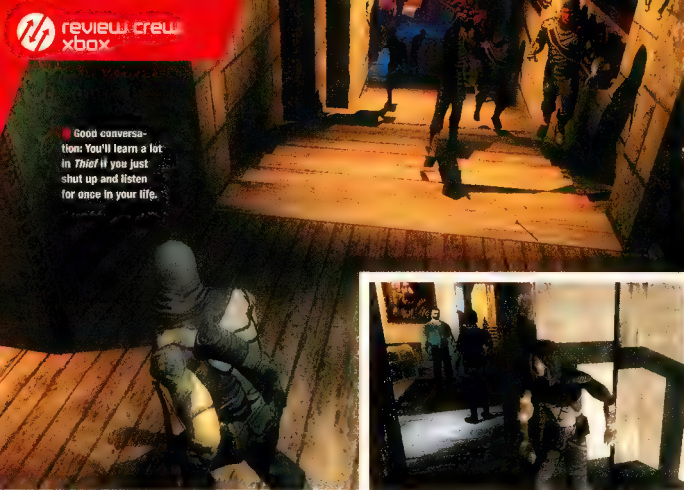


THX
CERTIFIED GAME

ATARI

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Good conversation: You'll learn a lot in *Thief* if you just shut up and listen for once in your life.



Xbox

THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS

Puts the dark in Dark Ages

CRISPIN: If you take for granted all the radar and communications gizmos you get in most stealth games, get ready for a rude welcome to medieval times. *Thief*—set in a fortress city seemingly at perpetual midnight—sends gruff main felon Garret on missions of grand theft bauble with no more intel than a shoddy map. And that's both good and bad. It makes for immersive exploration of castles, docks, dungeons, and factories that look so authentic you can nearly feel the rough-hewn stone. Your only guidance in tracking down important loot comes from eavesdropping on conversations or scanning scattered books.

And that's the downside. *Thief's* visuals are so nearly pitch black that it's easy to get lost in the shadows, making mapping out new environments a plodding process. Meanwhile, chatty guards and townies tend to step on the dialogue of important characters you're trying to overhear. It makes figuring out what to do and where to go next more challenging than it should be.

Thief's city grows as the story

unfolds, and it packs lots of side quests. Unfortunately, the shops that buy your loot and the ones that sell supplies are on opposite ends of town, forcing you to backtrack and sit through lengthy load screens just to gear up for the next mission. But I persevered—mainly to see what medieval environment I'd explore next, not because of the story. I stopped following *Thief's* convoluted plot when I started fighting the medieval robots.

DEMIAN: Think of *Thief* as a poor man's, Ren Faire *Splinter Cell*. Master pickpocket Garret is flush with old-world gadgets (moss arrows, flashbang grenades?), but he rarely needs to use them. It's far easier—though not very thiefy—to kill everyone between you and whatever treasure you're after, rather than slink in and slink out undetected. It's fun to backstab your way to infamy and fortune, don't get me wrong, but I wish the consequences for going medieval on everyone were more severe.

Crispin's also right to pillory *Thief's* map system. The game's environments are huge and

complex, which is definitely a plus, but without a "thou art here" indicator, navigation is needlessly difficult. *Thief* is a long, enjoyable game, but this potential gem could use a bit more polish.

KEVIN: *Thief* is from the studio that gave us *Deus Ex: Invisible War* last year, and it inherits more than a few of that game's problems—strange bouts of random slowdown, some characters animate all wobbly, and your Xbox'll take all afternoon to load up the game's moody locales. Go with it, though, and you'll find a game that's a small beacon of originality in an ocean of me-too "stealth" jobs.

What makes *Thief* different? There's no particular secret—you've got the freedom to tackle a heist any way you want, either by sneaking around ninjalike or killing everyone you run across. This design approach actually makes hiding in shadow corners fun instead of mind-numbing. It may sound hard to get your head around, but the laid-back difficulty level makes this dark, medieval experience surprisingly frustration-free.



Busted! So you get plinched by the guards—it's not game over. They'll toss you in the clink and threaten to lop off your head at sunrise, so you'll just have to bust out—and free the other prisoners while you're at it. There is honor among thieves.

Working stiffs: Thief's guards versus the goons of Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow...

	Weapons	Tenacity	Weaknesses	Idle banter	Most brain-dead moment
Thief guard	Swords, big hammers, and spells	Will hunt for you for 15 seconds if they hear you	Knock 'em out with a blackjack to the cranium	Discuss rashes, leeching, and other matters of medieval medicine	Don't notice when you jump on their heads from above
Splinter Cell goon	Guns. Lots of guns	Will hunt for you for 30 seconds if they hear you	Knock 'em out with a gun butt to the cranium	Talk politics, plan to get loaded in a field of chronic	Gladly stand in pools of water for easy stickys shocking

Good: Moody, medieval atmosphere.
Bad: Blah story, lots of backtracking.

Run With Physics: Drop a body on a trapdoor, like, open it.



THE VERDICTS
OUT OF 10

7.0 7.0 8.5

CRISPIN

DEMIAN

KEVIN

Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Ion Storm
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.thief3.com

Pray for a full frontal assault.



You're going to love her killer moves. When her world is threatened by the awakening of ancient evil, Ailish and three other great heroes must unite to defeat it. Now this enchanting princess, a brave warrior, a high-flying gunslinger, and a dark huntress will battle through the Realm of Shadows on a quest to reclaim their world. Rotate between each character and use all their powers to prevail in one of the most intense action RPGs. Sudeki will leave you breathless.

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MATURE 17+



Violence
Blood and Gore

CLIMAX

Microsoft
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Terrorist No. 17 eats it courtesy of exploding barrels.

Xbox

ONLINE



SHADOW OPS: RED MERCURY

Dirty bomb



Left: Terrorists Nos. 88 and 89 take up defensive positions near exploding barrels. Nos. 59 and 63.

Good: Well, let's see...It sounds pretty decent!
Bad: More generic than Sam's Club Soda
Multplayer: DVD extras didn't make *Gigli* better, either.



SHAWN: The first things you see in *Shadow Ops* say it all. There they are, Nos. 1 and 2 on the checklist of shooter clichés: crates and exploding barrels. And the terrorists—surprise, surprise—take cover behind 'em. See, these are well-trained evildoers, the kind disciplined to run right into your rifle muzzle and jerk around like they're auditioning for *American Idol: Al-Jazeera Edition*. It's unwise, for sure, but seeing as how a new batch of foes will spawn right in front of your face, maybe they're a little overconfident. Then again, it could be their certainty of reappearing in the requisite tropical and arctic missions where they'll wait for you to hop on a mounted machine gun before attacking that comforts them—is that No. 4 or No. 5 on the checklist, I forget? Nah, they're probably just happy to have found work as Men Who Fight Like Morons in a game that's all wrong and just as generic as it was the last 10 times you played it.

ly), with intense action that makes the *Black Hawk Down* movie look like *Army Men*. That was just at the start, though—the game quickly devolves into average shooter fare after that. This includes multi-player, which is a joke: dull levels, instant respawns in capture the flag (try invading a base when downed enemies just reappear right away, with full health), and a horrible interface that leaves online soldiers more confused than eagerly anticipating the action.

SHOE: At first, I was willing to overlook the clichés 'cause the game starts off with a nuclear bang (both literally and figurative-

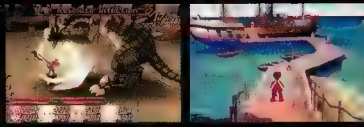
XBN—GREG: Only a series of straightforward yet fun and somewhat graphically glitchy multiplayer and Xbox Live options prevent this reviewer from recommending *Shadow Ops: Red Mercury* be sent off to a new home, perhaps on the surface of planet Mercury. As a single-player game, it's filled with dumb enemies who eschew cover—even when they're supposedly highly trained fighters—friendly forces who are generous enough to let you, the player, clear out huge courtyards without aid, and run-and-gun firefights surprising-ly devoid of intensity.

THE VERDICT'S OUT OF 'EM

8.5	8.5	8.0
SHAWN	SHOE	GREG

Publisher: Atari
Developer: Zombie Studios
Players: 1-2 (2-8 online)
ESRB: Teen

www.shadowopsgame.com



Boss battles are brutal. Prepare to do lots of preemptive leveling up.

GameCube

TALES OF SYMPHONIA

Hot-n-heavy RPG action in an unlikely place



Symphonia's battles seem to erupt with chaos, but they're actually simple to control.

Good: Exciting battles, stylized visuals
Bad: Painful difficulty spikes, dull cut-scenes
Previous Tales Experience: Not required



SHANE: For the past two years, Cube owners looking for traditional role-playing fare were outta luck—apart from the ported-from-Dreamcast *Skies of Arcadia Legends*, GC's selection has been a desolate wasteland. For them, *Symphonia* is a godsend.

flesh out the plot, but they're a total drag to sit through.

This game follows the established rules of RPG-dom: You've got your band of ragtag kids bent on saving the world, myriad locations to explore, and thousands of enemies to splatter. While the story line, characters, and puzzle-packed dungeons don't offer any real surprises, everything's very well presented—attractive visuals spring to life like a watercolor storybook in 3D, and quality voice acting lends the narrative weight and levity. Surprisingly, though, it's the battle system that holds everything together. Since you're actually swinging your sword and linking combos in real time, the chaotic encounters never get dull.

JENNIFER: Unless you're a connoisseur of Japanese RPGs with a circle of like-minded friends and a long list of bookmarked websites full of walkthroughs, you'll need real perseverance for *Symphonia*. It throws you into its complex, multilayered combat system headfirst; three hours in, I still felt like I needed a tutorial. Don't be fooled by the clunky skills—decent voice acting propels the sappy but cute story. It's a rewarding, rich, and addictive game, but the stinky save system makes it a tad too hardcore.

Symphonia isn't without a few flat notes: Boss fights skew too difficult, forcing you to bash random enemies for a while to level up first. Also, you're constantly bombarded with "skills"—optional bits of text-only party chitchat. These overlong sequences

GMP—CHRISTIAN: What makes this game addictive is its battle system. The story is drippy and predictable, though the skills aren't nearly as bad as Shane and Jen claim. But the battles—so much fun, so speedy, so deep. Like *Dithella*, the mantra here is "a moment to learn, a lifetime to master." The game's gorgeous graphics will work your eyes just as hard as the battles work your thumb, too. Finally, the *Tales* series has a title with a shot at stardom.

THE VERDICT'S OUT OF 'EM

8.5	7.5	8.5
SHANE	JENNIFER	CHRISTIAN

Publisher: Namco
Developer: Tales Studio
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

tales.namco.com

REVIEWS WRAP-UP

The stragglers and the no-shows

Jaws were not quite literally picked up off the floor when a copy of the oft-delayed one-time Xbox launch title *Malice* actually showed up at our office just as we were going to press. Man, that's some powerful bad box art. Might want to hold off on any purchase plans until next month's review....

Review Crew Survivor hopefuls: We're no longer requiring you to mail in a videotape to enter (see egmsurvivor.1up.com). No one has VHS technology anymore, turns out.



■ Bad box art: Responsible for 238 deaths a year.

UEFA Euro 2004
PS2 • EA Sports — EA Sports started with the outstanding *NBA* game engine, added some right-analog-stick gameplay tweaks, then slapped on the UEFA badge. Though you may not care unless you're a soccer-mad Euro, you won't find a deeper championship mode in a footy game. It's almost *Winning Eleven Seven* good. But not quite. Let's not get crazy here.



QUICK HITS

Xbox RPG *Sudak* has been pushed back to a July release, and we expect it to make our next issue....Reviewer Jon Dudlak has called for a world-wide three-month moratorium on samurai games; developers take note....Publisher Bethesda refused to send us a copy of *PowerDrome Racing* (PS2/XB), so that's a pretty bad sign....Similarly, our guy at Konami kept changing the subject every time we tried to get *McFarlane's Monsters: Evil Prophecy* (PS2) in, so unless your name's Seanbaby, avoid it....We did get our hands on *IndyCar Series 2005* (XB), but it's one of those rare Code-masters racing games we just don't care about. It's nice to turn right every once in a while, y'know?



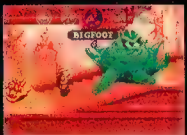
■ McFarlane: loves pirates.

GAME BOY ADVANCE EXTRAVAGANZA

Space was awfully tight this month, and some good GBA games were squeezed out. Dang it.

Sabre Wolf

GBA • THQ — Rare, the revered Brits behind *Dankey Kong Country* (Super Nintendo Entertainment System), resurrect an ancient franchise with this new hop-n-bop platformer starring a bumbling explorer and lots of silly animals. It's actually quite decent, assuming you can stomach the endless gobbledeyook voice samples.



■ Bigger monsters up the ying-yang.

Sonic Advance 2

GBA • Sega — It's classic side-scrolling *Sonic* action, well-tailored to GBA. The graphics are crisp and the hedgehog's trademark speed is suitably dizzying. The action does get repetitive, though, and some cheaply placed enemies prove annoying, but that's been a knock on *Sonic* since the get-go.



■ Hedgehogs in love.

Mega Man Battle Network 4

Red Sun and Blue Moon
GBA • Capcom — This *Pokémon*-esque strategy/battle/collect-em-up still seems innovative after four games, though the last title felt far more complete. But the fact that this rapid story doesn't "end" until you beat it three times could be the last straw for *Network* series followers. ☹



■ Mega Man in Saturday Night Fever.

“★★★★★”

—The People Who Own This Shop

“A truly admirable anime collection.”

—Student from O-Chem Class

“A Japanese marvel.”

—Old Kid on the Block

“Two thumbs up.”

—Smith and Tanaka from Gym

“A delightful anime resource”

—Video Store Manager

“The must-visit site of the year.”

—Guy Who Surfs a Lot

“Anime toys, books, figures...you name it!”

—The Die Hard Collector



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REVIEWS ARCHIVE

The hit list...and the @%\$! list

greatest hit or miss?



CRIMSON SKIES: HIGH ROAD TO REVENGE

■ **Xbox**
 ■ **Released:** October 2003
 ■ **Original Scores:** 9.0, 9.0, 8.5
 Where other dogfighters stall, *Crimson Skies* hits mach speed with the snap of the analog flight stick and lets you live out your *Top Gun* fantasies with 15 other online flyboys.

THE RISE AND FALL OF LARA CROFT

Probably every kid in elementary school was gaga over anything that looked like Tomb Raider's Lara. Now she's back, and you'd better believe she's got the goods. Here's a list of her best games, from the original to the latest, and how they stack up. (Scores below are for PS3.)

■ **PS1 (1996)**
 ■ **PS2 (1999)**
 ■ **PS3 (2003)**
 ■ **PS3 (2004)**
 ■ **PS3 (2005)**
 ■ **PS3 (2006)**
 ■ **PS3 (2007)**
 ■ **PS3 (2008)**
 ■ **PS3 (2009)**
 ■ **PS3 (2010)**
 ■ **PS3 (2011)**
 ■ **PS3 (2012)**
 ■ **PS3 (2013)**
 ■ **PS3 (2014)**
 ■ **PS3 (2015)**
 ■ **PS3 (2016)**
 ■ **PS3 (2017)**
 ■ **PS3 (2018)**
 ■ **PS3 (2019)**
 ■ **PS3 (2020)**
 ■ **PS3 (2021)**
 ■ **PS3 (2022)**



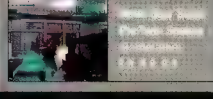
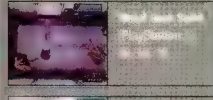
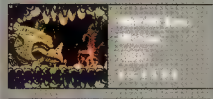
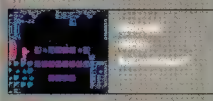
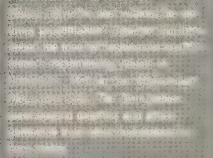
GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Atlas	PS2/XB	■ Clever disputes can't conceal crappy gameplay	5.0 5.5 4.5	
All-Star Baseball 2005	PS2/XB	■ Take us all to the ballpark... just not this one	5.5 4.5 6.0	
American Idol	PS2	■ The only button you need to press is on your console	1.5 2.0 1.0	
Amped 2	XB	■ The <i>Tony Hawk</i> of snowboarding, complete with snow skating	8.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II	PS2/XB	■ Ho-hum hack-n-slash. Now that's a role you don't wanna play	7.0 4.5 5.0	
Breakdown	XB	■ You can practically feel the impacts in this first-person brawler	8.5 8.5 7.0	Silver
Bujingai: The Forsaken City	PS2	■ Your average martial arts action, but with 100 percent more Japanese rock stars	4.5 6.0 7.5	
Champions of Norrath: Realm of EQ	PS2	■ A <i>Dark Alliance</i> -style take on <i>EverQuest</i> , complete with online co-op	8.5 8.0 9.5	Silver
The Chronicles of Riddick	XB	■ With gameplay this good, a life sentence isn't long enough	8.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
Colin McRae Rally 04	PS2/XB/GC	■ Rev your engines for '04's top-notch handling and wicked terrain	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
Crash Nitro Kart	PS2/XB/GC	■ For roadside assistance, call 1-800-BUY-MARIO-KART	5.5 6.0 5.5	
Crimson Sea 2	PS2	■ Space runs red with bug blood when <i>Dynasty Warriors</i> goes sci-fi	8.0 7.0 8.5	
Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge	XB	■ Single-player saors, but it's the online dogfighting that keeps us strapped in	9.0 9.0 8.5	Silver
Custom Robo	GC	■ Robo-battling is solid, but what's with the shallow pseudo-RPG stuff?	6.5 6.0 8.0	
Cy Girls	PS2	■ Progress-impeding 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 rep	8.5 8.0 7.0	
Dead Man's Hand	XB	■ Find out how the West was dumb in this oddball first-person shooting gallery	6.5 5.0 4.5	
Destruction Derby Arenas	PS2	■ Even crash-test dummies would yawn at this wreckage	4.5 3.5 6.0	
Daus Ex: Invisible War	XB	■ <i>Invisible War</i> 's captivating story compensates for its technical shortcomings	8.0 9.0 7.0	Silver
Drake	XII	■ One of our reviewers gave it a 0.5. What do you think?	2.0 0.5 2.5	
Drakensang	PS2	■ <i>Dynasty Warriors</i> meets <i>Panzer Dragoon</i> , only not as good as either one	7.5 7.0 3.5	
Dynasty Tactics II	PS2	■ Think <i>Dynasty Warriors</i> with complex strategy and none of the hack-n-slash action	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	■ Focuses out for playing too much like a pro baller	6.5 7.5 6.5	
ESPN Major League Baseball	PS2/XB	■ If MVP in this season's Yankees, then sadly, ESPN's is <i>BroSox</i>	8.0 8.5 7.5	Silver
ESPN NBA Basketball	PS2/XB	■ Even Kobe Bryant's star-studded legal team struggled finding fault with this one	8.5 9.5 9.0	Gold
ESPN NHL Hockey	PS2/XB	■ The reigning Cup champ	8.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
EverQuest Online Adventures: Frontiers	PS2	■ Doesn't the front lawn constitute a new frontier for <i>Evercrack</i> -heads?	6.5 6.0 7.0	
EyeToy: Groove	PS2	■ Don't let looking like a displaying eye stop you	8.0 8.0 7.0	
Fallout: Brotherhood III Steel	PS2/XB	■ Repetitive critter hunting in a watered-down wasteland	4.0 4.5 4.0	
Fatal Frame II: Crimson Butterfly	PS2	■ Combating poltergeists with a Polaroid is scarier than it sounds	7.5 7.5 6.5	
FIFA Soccer 2004	PS2/XB/GC	■ Responsive, intuitive controls, but FIFA's our second fave after <i>Winning Eleven</i>	7.5 9.0 8.0	Silver
Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles	GC	■ Charming RPG romps work best with three friends along for the GBA-linked up ride	8.0 8.0 8.0	Gold
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	GBA	■ Deep strategy on the on-the-go tacticians. Complete with androgynous heroes	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Final Fantasy XI	PS2	■ A moribund MMORPG that'll consume your life. ADD types need not apply	8.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
Firefighter F.D. 18	PS2	■ Fight fires, fireman-hating robots, and trial-and-error gameplay	6.5 6.0 4.0	
Front Mission 4	PS2	■ You'll need to be smart to figure out this deep mech-strategy game	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Future Tactics: The Uprising	PS2/XB/GC	■ Unattractive, uninspired, and woefully unfunny bargain-basement strategy trifle	4.0 4.5 6.0	
Galactic Wrestling: Feat. Ultimate Muscle	PS2	■ A bare-bones feature set makes this <i>Muscle</i> world flexing only in a rental	5.5 5.5 5.0	
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 Ghoulies	XB	■ Something seriously stupid this way comes	5.5 4.0 4.5	
Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup	PS2/XB/GC	■ Schoolboys get aboard broomsticks to play whizzing, wizardly full-contact rugby	7.5 7.5 8.5	
Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life	GC	■ Would you really have more fun watching the grass grow? Find out.	6.5 6.5 7.0	
Hillman: Contracts	PS2/XB	■ Money grows on trees when you cut throats to rake leaves	8.0 7.5 8.5	Silver
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
Lara Croft: Tactics	PS2	■ Deep strategy-RPG gameplay you'll love, with childish characters you'll despise	7.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords	GC	■ Zelda teaches Link a little somethin' about four-play in this old-school adventure	8.5 8.0 9.0	Silver
Lethal Skies II	PS2	■ Crashes and burns	3.0 5.5 4.0	
Links 2004	XB	■ The rest of the PGA can't compete with <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	
Lowrider	PS2	■ Won't make you wanna bounce	5.0 5.5 2.0	
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	PS2/XB/GC	■ Get hackin' in this beautiful beat-em-up	8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	GBA	■ Legolas gets shrunk to Koolhaier size, and your girlfriends still think he's hot	7.0 6.0 7.5	
Mafia	PS2/XB	■ Jack Japicaps and oddtime thrills in this glibly 1930s gangster game	6.0 5.0 7.5	
Magic: the Gathering—Battlegrounds	XII	■ The cards say you need a life	4.0 5.5 4.5	
Manhunt	PS2	■ Rockstar's latest effort to keep the ESRB around	7.0 6.5 7.0	
Mario Golf Advance Tour	GBA	■ A play with your putter on the bus—and not get arrested for once	9.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
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	GBA	■ Nintendo's pair of plumpers are no party crashers	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Mario vs. Donkey Kong	GBA	■ The plumber and big ape clash again in this good, but not great, platformer/puzler	7.0 7.5 7.5	
Maximo vs. Army of Zin	PS2	■ Despite the clean underwear, it's not as zesty as the original	6.0 6.0 7.0	
Max Payne	GBA	■ Bullet time in your back pocket	7.0 7.0 8.0	
Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne	PS2/XB	■ Slow-mo bloodshed at its hard-boiled best	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	PS2/XB/GC	■ Pro tip: Don't touch that lamping, mounted machine gun	5.5 5.0 5.5	
Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes	GC	■ The stealth-action classic is still solid enough to make this remake a must-play	8.0 9.0 8.5	Silver



Red Dead Revolver
—now with 50 percent
more bad and ugly.

GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Metal Slug 3	XB	■ Fantastic but frustrating 2D side-scroller for the nimble fingered	7.5 6.5 8.0	
Metroid Zero Mission	GBA	■ Own this souped-up remake of star-warrior Samus Aran's first mission or face idleness	8.5 9.0 9.0	
MLB 2005	PS2	■ A quick trip to the minors has made MLB a title contender again	7.0 7.0 7.0	
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 crowd rockets is worth the sore coccyx	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
MVP Baseball 2004	PS2/XB/GC	■ Like the Bronx Bombers', MVP's new additions will excite ill baseball fans	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
NBA Ballers	PS2/XB	■ Midway's one-on-one baller has the skillz to pay the billz (or something like that)	8.0 8.0 8.0	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/XB	■ Only thing missing from this college hoopster is rioting co-eds	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 playoff race	7.0 7.0 6.0	
NFL Fever 2004	XB	■ Scant franchise options keep <i>Fever</i> warming the bench	5.5 6.5 6.0	
NFL Street	PS2/XB/GC	■ Playground for is it prison? rules football; best played with friends	8.5 8.0 9.0	Silver
NHL 2004	PS2/XB/GC	■ Wild checking makes hockey look like a bar fight; dynasty mode scores a hat trick	8.5 6.5 7.0	
NHL Hits Pro	PS2/XB/GC	■ Like a porn star's assets, <i>Hits</i> isn't exactly realistic, but it's sure fun to play with	7.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
NHL Rivals 2004	XB	■ Our referees stay <i>Rivals</i> with a five-minute major for sucking	3.5 4.0 5.5	
Nightshade	PS2	■ 3 Ninjas Kick Back on a scale of nija-tude	8.0 5.5 5.0	
Ninja Gaiden	XB	■ Sweetplay so sweet that you'll break out the spit-toe slip-ons	9.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Onimusha 3: Demon Siege	PS2	■ The snail-sucking series finale has us screaming " <i>Vive le Francon!</i> "	8.5 7.0 9.0	Silver
Onimusha Blade Warriors	PS2	■ Think <i>Super Smash Bros.</i> (GC) with Busuico instead of burt stomping	7.0 7.0 7.5	
Phantasy Star Online: Episode III	GC	■ This infelicitously fun card game got us hooked on PSO's world for a third time	9.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
Pitfall: The Lost Expedition	PS2/XB/GC	■ Maybe—just maybe—it should have stayed lost	6.5 5.0 5.5	
Pokémon Channel	GC	■ Good God, change the channel!	3.5 2.0 6.0	
Pokémon Colosseum	GC	■ Story mode injects some life into this otherwise mediocre Poké-batter	7.0 5.0 7.0	
Project Gotham Racing II	XB	■ Xbox's best and most fun racer (well, along with <i>RailSport 2</i>)	9.5 9.5 9.5	Silver
R: Racing Evolution	PS2/XB/GC	■ Not much of a racer, but the ladies look lovely	6.5 6.0 4.5	
RailSport Challenge 2	XB	■ Who knew driving in Sweden could be so much fun?	9.0 9.0 9.0	
Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando	PS2	■ A veritable cavalcade of platforming, shooting, space faring, and comic hijinks	8.8 9.5 9.5	Gold
Red Dead Revolver	PS2/XB	■ Guess we skipped the history lesson about the fat cowboy in a dynamic suit	6.0 4.5 4.0	
Resident Evil Outbreak	PS2	■ Raccoon City is more like Silent Hill: when you can't speak with other players	5.5 6.5 7.0	
Rise to Honor	PS2	■ Tap-top your right analog stick in this repetitive brawler with 360-degree combat	6.5 6.5 6.0	
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 5.8	
Samurai Warriors	PS2	■ The series hasn't been here (Japan), but it's done that (ekaver odies of swordsmen)	7.0 6.5 7.5	
Sega GT Online	XB	■ Rants a good race, but can't keep pace with <i>RailSport</i> and <i>Project Gotham Racing 2</i>	8.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
Seven Sam: Next Encounter	PS2/GC	■ Never take your finger off the trigger in this dumb-but-fun first-person shooter	6.5 7.0 5.0	
Sevens Samurai 200X	PS2	■ See hari-kari!	3.5 3.5 4.0	
Shining Force: Res. of the Dark Dragon	GBA	■ Addictive tactical RPG, but still a few steps shy of <i>Final Fantasy Tactics Advance</i>	8.0 8.0 7.5	
Shrek 2	PS2/XB/GC	■ Made for the kiddies, but a fun four-player fairy tale all the same	7.5 6.0 5.0	
Siren	PS2	■ Battle hysped zombies in this <i>Silent Hill</i> clone that's more convoluted than creepy	5.0 7.0 4.0	
The Sims: Bustle! Out	PS2/XB/GC	■ Personal hygiene and bodily functions have never been so much fun	8.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	XB	■ Sam's solo missions take few chances, but the multiplayer mode is revolutionary	10 9.5 9.5	Silver
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	GBA	■ Packs the stealth gameplay of the PC-console version but none of the fun	4.5 5.0 4.5	
SODOM II: Icy Navy SEALs	PS2	■ This is one online war we hope never sees a cease in hostilities	9.0 9.0 9.5	
Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy	XB	■ Another bland <i>Star Wars</i> third-person action game? Time to drop out	6.5 6.5 3.8	
Steel Battalion: Line of Contact	XB	■ This ultrafaded rube sim's horrible interface and laggy play need an overhaul	5.0 5.5 4.5	
The Suffering	PS2/XB	■ Midway's inmate could've benefited from a few more months of rehabilitation	6.5 6.0 6.5	
Syrphon Filter: The Omega Strain	PS2	■ Low-fever shoot-em-up contaminated by a few micro-organisms	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	
Timber Woods PGA Tour 2004	PS2/XB/GC	■ As hot as Tiger's bride-to-be. Well, almost	9.0 9.0 9.5	Silver
TODD Race Driver 2	XB	■ Every form of racing devised by man...what? No mud bogging? #50! this noise	8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm	PS2	■ Online play is OK, but God, these graphics are uglier than a colon polyp	4.5 5.0 6.5	
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3	XB	■ Of <i>Clancy's Rainbow</i> or Tom's Xbox's sharpest shooters	9.0 7.5 9.0	Silver
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3	PS2	■ Too bad the dumbed-down PS2 version smashes the mark	5.0 5.0 6.0	
Top Spin	XB	■ Microsoft steps up to the service line and nails an ace with <i>Top Spin</i>	8.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Transformers	PS2	■ Carriers that change into like high mood robots? Doesn't get much cooler than that	8.0 7.5 7.5	
UFC: Sudden Impact	PS2	■ There comes a point in every fighter's career when it's time to hang it up	6.0 4.5 4.0	
Unreal II: The Awakening	XB	■ Blast a motley assortment of aliens with a motley assortment of weaponry	7.0 6.5 6.5	
Van Helsing	PS2/XB	■ Van doesn't mind killing <i>Devil May Cry</i> so long as he can stick it to the court	7.0 8.5 6.0	
WarWare, Inc.: Mega Party Game\$	GC	■ Single-player stacks of a quick cash-in—split the bill with your friends	8.5 6.5 7.0	
Winning Eleven 7	PS2	■ Soccer action more intense than a David Beckham-Pooh Spice embrace	9.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
World Tour Soccer 2005	PS2	■ Receives a yellow card for its unresponsive controls and shallow gameplay options	6.5 5.0 4.5	
Wrath Unleashed	PS2/XB	■ A half-assed strategy game plus a half-assed fighter make...well, you do the math	4.0 7.0 4.5	
WWE Raw 2: Ruthless Aggression	XB	■ We will pay tap out	3.0 5.5 4.5	
WWE SmackDown! Here Comes the Pain	GC	■ Of course it doesn't tell you that the pain won't subside for four to six weeks	7.5 8.0 7.0	
WWE Wrestlemania XIX	PS2	■ A tedious story mode keeps McMahon's bunch outta the main event	7.5 7.5 6.5	
Worms 3D	PS2/XB/GC	■ That's an entire extra dimension of caricatured carnage! Great multiplayer fun	7.5 7.5 6.5	

RENO SPOTTING



greatest hit or miss?



MARIO GOLF: TOADSTOOL TOUR

- GameCube
- Released: July 2003
- Original Scores: 8.0, 8.0, 7.5
- With cinch-to-learn controls, minigames galore, and accurate physics that affect every stroke, *Mario Golf* proves the greens aren't just for country-clubbing geezers.



tricks of the trade

superjuicy secrets to your success

trickster

We've filled this issue with the best of the best, including *DRIV3R* Timmy-tagging tidbits, how to score sweet rewards in *The Chronicles of Riddick*, as well as all the cheats you could ever want for *The Suffering*. And we've gone through the pain of nailing down one of the worst codes our button-mashing fingers have ever come across. Why do we subject ourselves to this torment? Because we love you, of course. We just hope you appreciate it.



—David S. J. Hodgson
egm@ziffdavis.com

■ PS2/XB

DRIV3R



► Miami's secrets: Hunt cars, tag Timmys, and arm your yourself as you roam.

GAME DIRECTORY

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Breakdown114

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Worst Code Ever117

■ Xbox

BREAKDOWN

Complete this beast of an adventure for some cool extras.

Gallery

Complete the game.

Music Player

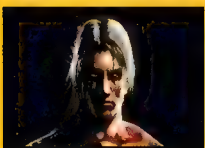
Complete the game.

Trailer

Complete the game.

Extreme Mode

Complete the game.



Tagging Timmies: advice city
Top of the "retaliation for the nasty *Driver* remarks in *GT4*" are *DRIV3R*'s version of the hidden packages. Be sure to give Timmy Vermicelli and his nine cloned friends a warm and hearty hello when you come across them in free ride mode. Tag all 10 (it doesn't matter if you gun down all 10 at once or in multiple sittings) if you want to open the Armory and then instantly unlock a barking mad minigame.

Timmy #1

Pulling some weeds in the back garden of the house opposite Tanner's apartment.

Timmy #2

Hiding out inside the plank-off section of the northeast floating home in Stittsville.

Timmy #3

Planning his next set of swimming lessons on a balcony inside a boathouse known as "Dirty Dick's."

Timmy #4

Inside an open garage at the end of an alley in the southwest area of downtown, near the river.

Timmy #5

Inside a garage marked "A1" on the upper area of a building in Coral Gables.

Timmy #6

Looking out over the construction yard of Tico's site, on the upper level of a half-built home.

Timmy #7

Guarding the gate switch to access the secret go-kart track in the Water Treatment Facility.

Timmy #8

Outside a house, on the grass, just south of the running track, near the road under construction.

Timmy #9

Sipping on a delicious energy drink near an overturned vending machine in the Orange Bowl alcove under the upper stands. You get to him via the tunnel and main access path.

Timmy #10

In the elevator at the top of the Gold Coast Hotel that leads to the underground parking lot, which is accessed via the roof.



Gunning for the Armory

Once you tag your tenth Timmy, head on over to Coral Gables and look for the ranch home marked on the map near the corner of the road heading to the Billmore Hotel, opposite the water tower.

Inspect the backyard and you'll find a bunker entrance behind the shrubbery. Open the door and climb down into the lair of a freakish gun-nut, where ammunition, posters of babes firing assault rifles, and much more can be stolen!

Minigame mayhem: 18-wheel anarchy mode!

Emerg from the bunker and you'll discover that all the cops' Police Prowlers have been exchanged for large and extremely tough big-rigs. The fun continues as normal, except when you're

TRICKS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIMA GAMES

For the Timmy locations in Nice and Istanbul, not to mention dozens of maps covering every alley, ramp, and interior building in the game, checklists of all the cars, a complete weapons detail, and mission strategy to boggle your mind, check Prima's official *DRIV3R* strategy guide.



■ PS2/XB

EA SPORTS FIGHT NIGHT 2004



chased, expect much more of a buffeting from these huge vehicles, and don't forget to steal one for yourself!

Secret cars

Locate one of these, and it's instantly added to the motors you can tool around in, in free ride mode. How could you possibly ask for a sweeter prize?

Car A: Go-Kart

Press the switch inside the Water Treatment Facility (Timmy #7 is guarding it), follow the map to the go-kart track, and the vehicle is parked at the pits.



Car B: Velocity Turbo

In an alleyway between two warehouse buildings overlooking the river (and boat moorings) is the Velocity Turbo roadster, a sweet soft-top ride with exceptional handling.

Car C: TT Cuatro SuperPower

Over on Star Island, follow the road to the luxury home at the end and wait for the garage door to open. Get out of your present perambulator and get to grips with the insanely powerful TT Cuatro SuperPower—a car without equal. Watch its width, though!



Fight this night with mini fighters at any venue you want.

PlayStation 2

All Venues

Main menu: Highlight My Corner and press Left, Left, Left, Right, Right, Left, Right, Right.

Big Heads

Main menu: Highlight My Corner and press Left, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left.

Big Tigger

Record Book menu: Go to Most Wins and press Up twice.

Xbox

All Venues

Main menu: Highlight My Corner and press Left, Left, Left, Right, Right, Left, Right, Right. Miniature Fighters

Main menu: Highlight Play Now and press Left, Left, Left, Right, Right, Left, A.

Big Tigger

Record Book menu: Go to Most Wins and press Up twice.

■ PS2/XB/GC

DISNEY'S XTREME SKATING ADVENTURE

Enter all codes in the Cheat menu.

PlayStation 2

All Create-A-Skater Items

sweetthreeds

All Skaters

friendsoftob

Constant Special Meter

supercharger

Level Select

extremepassport

Lion King Music Video

savannah

Tarzan Music Video

nugget

Toy Story Music Video

marin

Xbox

All Create-A-Skater Items

gethotgear

All Skaters

xtremebuddies

Constant Special Meter

happyfeet



Level Select

frequentflyer

Lion King Music Video

savannah

Tarzan Music Video

nugget

Toy Story Music Video

marin

GameCube

All Create-A-Skater Items

trendytrickster

All Skaters

entourage

Level Select

ambassador

Lion King Music Video

savannah

Tarzan Music Video

nugget

Toy Story Music Video

marin >

Archer Maclean Presents

POOL PARADISE

DAYLIGHT
COME AND
YOU WANNA
PLAY POOL!

Go ahead - play pool
in a panoramic
paradise! It's 6 Ball,
7 Ball, 8 Ball, bunch...
a whole bunch
more in Pool Paradise.

COMING REAL SOON!



PlayStation 2



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■ Xbox

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY

Multiple Riddick Rewards

Some of the side quests complement one another, allowing you to take in multiple rewards for completing a single task. As a rule, always take on side quests. There's no penalty for not completing them, and most of the time you'll end up walking right by quest items while finding your way out of the prison. You've got nothing to lose and plenty to gain!

Waman and Shabby

After you take out Molina for Waman and receive pack #25, search the halls for Shabby—you can find him near the cellblock's main gate. Apparently, he had a few problems with Molina, too, so he'll give you the key code to one of the Infirmary's doors. Be sure to grab this key code—it allows you to access a side room (to the left of the entrance) where you can pick up a scalpel and pack #12.

Rust fallout

It's no secret that Rust is a major pain in the butt to just about everyone in cellblock A. Once you defeat him, several inmates will show their gratitude. Start with Moondog in cell A11, not far from where you downed Rust. He'll turn over pack #59 in exchange for not pummeling him to death. On your way out of Aquila territory, look for Blueboy to receive pack #57. Return to the courtyard and speak with Red to grab a few UDs. Finally, talk to Booger in the gated-off entryway of the courtyard. While he didn't speak to



you before, he'll now sell you pack #26 for 20 UDs.

Booze for Chancellor

Assuming you grabbed a uniform back in the Showers level, you can walk around the Guard Quarters without drawing suspicion. In fact, you can interact with the guards and grab some loot for your troubles. In the promenade near the level's start, speak with Jenkins. Apparently, he's depressed about something and gives you a bottle of booze. Take the elevator to the next floor and hang a right to find Chancellor. He'll give you 50 UDs as well as pack #31 for the bottle.

Twotongue, Gulag, and Nurse

Before setting foot in the Feed Ward, talk to Gulag, Nurse, and Twotongue in the recreation area. If you take all three of these quests, you should be able to complete them with one trip to the Feed Ward. After you speak with them, stop by section A and buy the shiv from Cricket. He gives Asif the money and tells him to stash it. Follow Asif into the Feed Ward, but be ready to take out Motor—he wants revenge for Harman. Down Motor to get a bottle of poison. Keep an eye on Asif and follow him to the back of the Feed Ward. Watch where he stashes the money and then wait for him to leave before opening the loose panel. Inside you can grab Gulag's red tube, Twotongue's injector, and the 30 UDs you paid for that overpriced shiv. On the way out of the Feed Ward, stop by Binks' food tray and sprinkle it with poison.

Now return to the rec area to get your rewards. Gulag gives you pack #3 and Nurse reciprocates with pack #32. Twotongue is a bit less generous, requiring you to defeat Bassim and collect a moth before he'll reward you. But once these relatively minor tasks are completed, Twotongue will give you pack



■ While you're in the Feed Ward, sprinkle the poison on Binks' food to complete Harman's quest.

#55. This also opens the door to do business with Twotongue, allowing you to buy drugs as well as packs #22 and #23.

Moth hunter

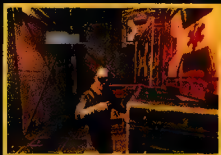
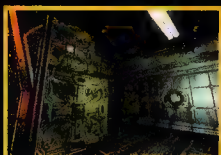
As the resident drug dealer, Twotongue is more interested in attaining moths than UDs. As it turns out, the moths flying around the Double Max area have certain hallucinogenic properties, making them ideal for manufacturing "special" packs of smokes. If you want packs #22 and #23 you'll have to do some serious moth hunting.

You can grab a moth in flight by simply looking at it and pressing X. The required 10 moths for pack #22 can all be collected in the rec area. But you'll have to look elsewhere to grab the 20 needed for pack #23. You'll have your best luck in the Upper Mines and Mining Core levels. But keep watch for guards while chasing the moths. Once you have all 20, return to Twotongue on your way to Tower 19 and collect pack #23.

Valya's code

In the Mine Entrance level, there's a Health Station and a pack of smokes (#37) located behind a keypad-locked door—the one with the lift in front of it. A somewhat delusional inmate named Valya is the only one with the code to this door, and getting to him isn't very easy.

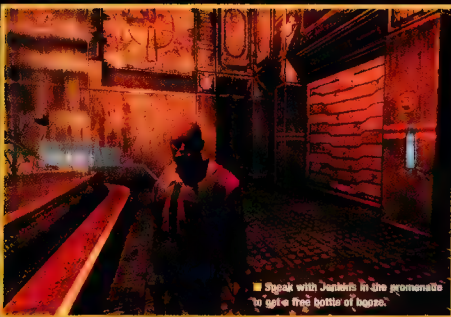
After hooking up with Jagger Valance in the Mining Core, return to the cargo transport and ride it to the third floor. Take the next hall until you spot a ventilation hatch on the wall ahead. Instead of using the hatch, turn to the left and climb on top of the stack of crates. From the crates, jump across to the duct running along the ceiling—you'll have to hit X in midair to grab on. Walk along the top of the duct until you can enter through a broken junction. The duct leads to a set of two small rooms. In the second room you'll find Valya, watched by a guard.



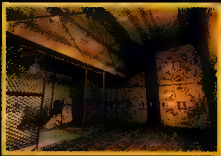
Sneak up behind the guard and break his neck, then speak with Valya. He'll give you the code to the locked door.

Now backtrack the way you entered, returning to the room with the wall-mounted ventilation hatch. Enter this hatch and follow the adjoining duct to the Lift elevator—be careful jumping that gap between the two ducts. Drop through the ceiling of the elevator and make your way across the bridge.

If you haven't already, deal with the two guards near the keypad-locked door, preferably using the tranquilizer gun. Now you can enter the locked room and use the Health Station. Don't forget to grab that pack of smokes on the left crate at the back of the room, too.



■ Speak with Jenkins in the promenade to get the bottle of booze.



■ PS2/XB

THE SUFFERING

Like a good DVD, this game gives you a director's commentary, followed by a bevy of great codes. Oh, how we suffer.



Prelude Level

Complete the game.

Director Commentary

In the Prelude level, wait for a crow to land next to the three inmates, then stand on top of the crow.

NOTE: Enter these codes during gameplay.

Xbox

Full Health

Hold L + R + X and press Down, A, Up, Down, Up, A

Full Kambium Bottle

Hold L + R + X and press Right, Up, A, Left, Right, A, Right, Up, Right, A

Reload Ammunition for Current Gun

Hold L + R + X and press Right, Down, Up, Left, Right, Left, A

Refill Ranged Weapon Ammunition

Hold L + R + X and press Left, Up, Down, Right, Left, Right, A

Shotgun with Full Ammunition

Hold L + R + X and press Left, Down

All Items and Weapons Except for Gonzo Gun

Hold L + R + X and press Down, Up, Down, Left, Right, Left, A, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up, Right, Down, Left, A, Down, A

Gonzo Gun

Hold L + R + X and press Left, A, Right, Left, Right, Left, Up, A, Down, Up, Down, Up, A

Grenades

Hold L + R + X and press Right, Left

Molotov Cocktails

Hold L + R + X and press Down, Up

Increase Negative Karma

Hold L + R + X and press Left, Down, Up, A

Overcome Insanity

Hold L + R + X and press Right, A,

Left, Right, Left, A

Bloody Torque

Hold L + R + X and press Up, Down, Left, Right

Clean Torque

Hold L + R + X and press Down, Up, Right, Left

Old Movie Mode

Hold L + R + X and press Up, A, Left, A, Down, A, Right, Press Start to disable this effect.

Psychedelic Mode

Hold L + R + X and press Left, A, Right, A, Up, A, Down, A

New Family Picture

Hold L + R + X and press Right, Up, Right, Up, Right, A

Wrinkled Family Picture

Hold L + R + X and press Up, Right, Up

Dirty Family Picture

Hold L + R + X and press Left, Down, Left, Down, Left, Down, A

Suicide

Hold L + R + X and press Down.

PlayStation 2

Full Health

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Down, R2, Up, Down, Up, R2

Full Kambium Bottle

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Right, Up, R2, Left, Right, R2, Right, Up, Right, R2

Reload Ammunition for Current Gun

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Right, Down, Up, Left, Right, Left, R2

Refill Ranged Weapon Ammunition

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Left, Up, Down, Right, Left, Right, R2

Shotgun with Full Ammunition

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Left, Down

All Items and Weapons Except for Gonzo Gun

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Down, Up, Down, Left, Right, Left, R2, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up, Right, Down, Left, R2, Down, R2

Gonzo Gun

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Left, R2, Right, Left, Right, Left, R2, Down, Up, Down, Up, R2

Grenades

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Right, Left

Molotov Cocktails

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Down, Up

Increase Negative Karma

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Left, Down, Up, Down, Up, R2

Overcome Insanity

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Right, R2, Left, Right, Left, R2

Bloody Torque

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Up, Down, Left, Right

Clean Torque

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Down, Up, Right, Left

Old Movie Mode

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Up, R2, Left, R2, Down, R2, Right, R2

Psychedelic Mode

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Left, R2, Right, R2, Up, R2, Down, R2

New Family Picture

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Up, Right, Up, Right, Up, Right, R2

Wrinkled Family Picture

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Up, Right, Up

Dirty Family Picture

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Left, Down, Left, Down, Left, Down, R2

Suicide

Hold L1 + R1 + X and press Down

■ XB/GC

WORST CODE EVER: THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN



Developers spend hours upon hours refining beautiful scenery. This code shows Springfield as a development mess and only makes us ask: why?

Grid Wire Mode

During the game, pause, then go into the Option menu, hold the shoulder buttons, and press

B, A, B, Y.

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E3'S CRAPPIEST CRAP

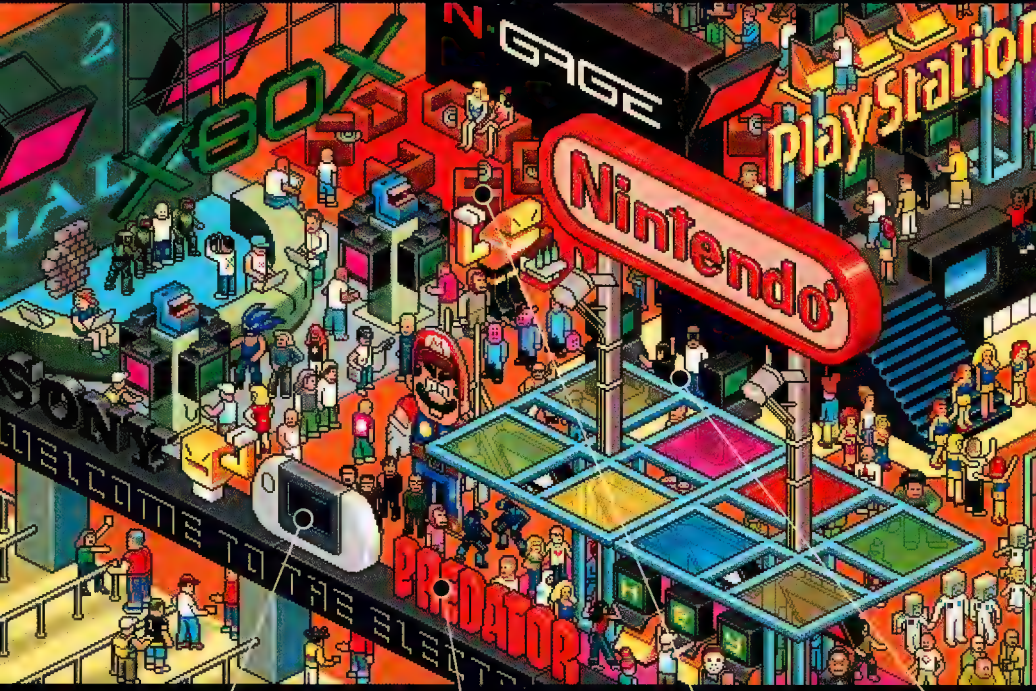
Seanbaby's worst of the best of the worst

For the normal gamer, the Electronic Entertainment Expo is a wonderland of the hottest upcoming titles. For the normal game journalist, it's eight hours of meetings jammed between 16-hour drinking binges. Given

that game developers hate me on sight, I was lucky enough to escape these duties. For me, E3 was 30 minutes of looking for terrible games surrounded by 23-and-a-half-hour drinking binges. I left E3 with a hangover and vague memories of Power

Rangers. Plus, I think I laid Donkey Kong. From what I do remember, the mainstream videogame market still has no problem generating crap. The crap in E3's off-Broadway dungeon—called Kentia Hall—though: Wow. These lunatics in a basement

outdid themselves again. Their third-world PC peripherals and games about ballroom dancing and pretending to be a dragon were the work of madmen—madmen who will not rest until all entertainment is controlled with jumping jacks. —Seanbaby



Gizmondo
Besides what are almost assuredly going to be crappy games, new handheld Gizmondo has GPRS, MMS, GSM, WAP, and dozens of other letter combinations that meant nothing to me. My personal favorite feature was "stop gameplay when battery near empty." Look for more Gizmondo info in a few tiny sidebars in upcoming videogame magazines, followed by an interview with the creator blaming poor marketing for its spectacular failure.



Predator: Concrete Jungle
I credit mankind with a handful of genius-caliber accomplishments: democracy, space travel, breast implants. This *Predator* game for PlayStation 2 and Xbox is the culmination of human achievement in one perfect thing that isn't a gigantic breast. As the Predator, you use invisible killing powers to stop 1920s bootleggers. Why? Maybe because it's way more awesome than any other possible idea for a game.



N-Gage
The redesigned N-Gage QD portable system/phone has all the features of the original: every single number from 0 to 9, and it plays bad games. But if anyone had bothered to visit the N-Gage booth, QD's new enhancements would have blown their minds! You now hold it in a less stupid way, and you no longer need power tools to swap games. Say all the mean things you want because this time, around...OK, you're right. It still sucks.



The Butticker
The Butticker attaches to your seat and sends sound waves directly up in you. Good thing E3 took place in California, because after what the Butticker and I did during my rigorous testing in the hotel, many states in the Union would have declared us legally married. It's great for players who need help loosening their bowels but seems specifically designed for those interested in making sweet love to their game's audio track.



That's So Raven!

The buzz starts here for *That's So Raven*, a GBA title based on a kids' show I know nothing about but which caught my attention due to the player's ability to move left to right and chat with school faculty members. Does the gym teacher really think Raven can achieve her dreams if she believes in herself? I dunno; I ran away once their PR people spotted me.



Flight of Fancy

Russians took two of our language's fruitiest words and combined them with dragon simulation...you know what? Unless you're reading this leashed to Fabio's bed, this PC game is too fanciful for you to cope with. To play, you stand in front of a camera and flap your arms until you reach the final boss or your little brother beats you up. Whichever comes first.



For Dummies

It's not just for English-speaking dummies anymore! Now we've got *Ponto de Cruz por Totós*, *Tippen für Dummies*, and my favorite, *Invitations, Thank-You Notes, and Announcements for Dummies*. If you're so low that you'd take money from someone who can't write a thank-you note, just sell the moron some magic beans and be done with it, Richard.



Ballroom Dancing

In Xbox ballroom-dancing game *X Tango*, players compete in a showdown of twirling romance. It might be the worst game idea I've ever heard, and I've played 19 *Barbie* titles, including three about dressing ponies. But the tango's passion is a powerful seductress in this tangled web of thirsty longing, where desire is your only weapon.



Action Stick

"Action Stick is future of all videogame. Action Stick provides full motion with real action yourself playing martial arts games." So reads the info sheet for this peripheral, which has you waving your hands in front of sensors instead of pressing buttons. But what Action Stick's broken English doesn't tell you is that when attach to martial arts game for try action go, your attacks don't go much beyond hopping like silly ass.



Kickboxing Game

Never wanted to attack your TV while wearing gloves and ankle sensors? **BOXING** says you do. Unfortunately, the punches in this game (which hooks right to your TV) and the ones I was actually throwing didn't sync. To prove it was my fault, the exhibitor took over and was savagely beaten by the computer while his game ignored his every frantic punch. My theory: An eccentric supervillain set this booth up to laugh at spastic idiots.



Nerf Sword

Kentia Hall exhibitors are the bravest people in the world. This booth had nothing more than a Nerf sword and a sensor. No silly extras like, say, a game. To his credit, the exhibitor seemed apologetic about how this was just a Nintendo Power Glove without the fun. But when you can travel thousands of miles to show off 1983 technology attached to Nerf while *Halo 2* is upstairs, congrats on your huge, huge balls.



Robospapen

Robospapen are tiny robots that dance, sing, rap, and fart—it was the revolutionary robotfarting ability that almost distracted me from my journalistic duty to find out how many cats these were likely to tear apart before their eventual recall. A number which, according to the robots' human representative was, "Ha. Very funny." Later, the Robospapen performed their finale with a third-grade dance troupe. There were no survivors.



WHATEVER A SPIDER CAN



ACROSS

1. Seminal first-person shooter
8. *Driv3* May Day collectibles
9. *Castlevania* theme instrument
10. Like using a known software glitch to win
11. Original *Tomb Raider* developer
12. *The Italian Job*'s featured car
13. *Spider-Man*'s main squeeze, for short
14. Peter Parker's editor, for short
16. *House of the Dead* 2 ax-welding boss
20. Give your *SOCOM* unit a task
24. You do this when you press B in *Rush 'N' Attack* (NES)
26. Can't use *Final Fantasy* Phoenix Down on this
27. Old-school baller brawler: *Rivals*
28. *Metal Slug* engorged slate
29. *Silent Hill* climatic feature
31. Dreamcast platformer: *Super Magnetic*
32. *DRIV3R* mass transit vehicle
33. Like Sony's PS2 *Mark*
35. Simions of *Spawm*
36. Peter Parker's friend Harry
40. *Madden 2004* goal (abbrv.)
41. West-Asian region of PS2 *Risk*
42. Like Xbox Live headset chat
44. *Zelda: Wind Waker* spandexed sprite
45. Indigenous person of *Pitfall* (PS2)

DOWN

1. *Spider-Man 2* nemesis
2. Double-jumping old man of *Street Fighter III*
3. *Battle or Tactics*
4. Uncle Ben's *Spider-Man* widow
8. RF adapter unit of resistance
13. *SlugFest* affiliated organization
15. Capcom's *Viewtiful* creation
17. *Resident Evil* search deterrent: "Nothing"
18. *Military Madness* long-range artillery
19. Perennial platformer rivercraft
21. Nyquist of *Dave Mirra: Freestyle BMX*
22. Jeter of *MLB 2004*
23. First-person shooter protection mission
29. Highly anticipated Xbox RPG
30. Rock eaters of N64 *Zelda*
32. Star of early *Simpsons* games
34. Online, but not playing
36. ESRB Web suffix, for one
37. *BurgerTime* weapon, en Español
38. Real-life club for shooter fans
39. Kirby does it all the time
41. *Rainbow Six 3* multinational organization (abbrv.)
43. Alien Area, to a Roman

FINALLY!

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console & PC
tournament



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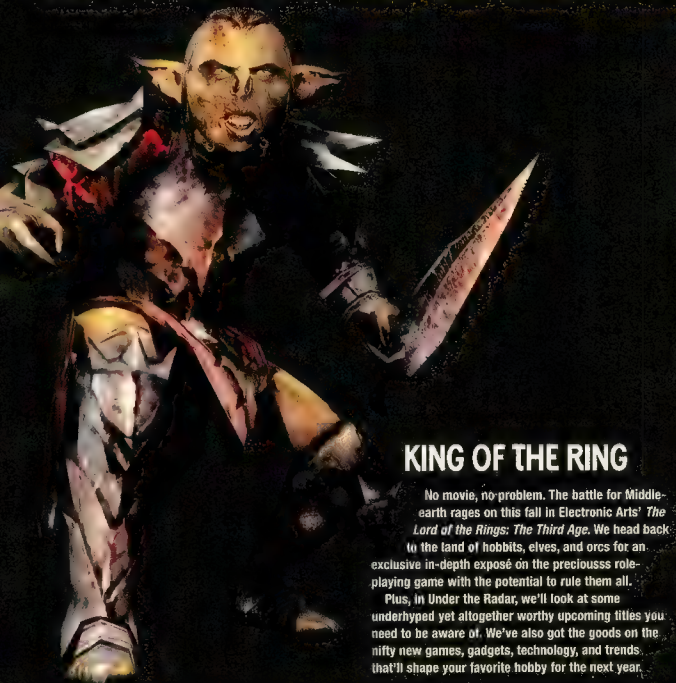
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NEXT MONTH: SEPTEMBER 2004 • ISSUE #182

ON SALE AUGUST 3



KING OF THE RING

No movie, no problem. The battle for Middle-earth rages on this fall in Electronic Arts' *The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age*. We head back to the land of hobbits, elves, and orcs for an exclusive in-depth exposé on the preciouss role-playing game with the potential to rule them all. Plus, in Under the Radar, we'll look at some underhyphen yet altogether worthy upcoming titles you need to be aware of. We've also got the goods on the nifty new games, gadgets, technology, and trends that'll shape your favorite hobby for the next year.

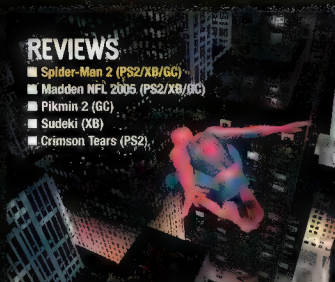


PREVIEWS

- **Hollywood Invasion** (PS2/XB/GC)
- **WWE Smackdown! vs. Raw** (PS2)
- **Playboy: The Mansion** (PS2/XB)
- **Def Jam: Fight for NY** (PS2/XB/GC)
- **Advent Rising** (XB)

REVIEWS

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- **Pikmin 2** (GC)
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(All planned editorial content is subject to change.)

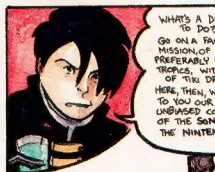
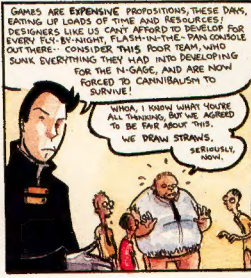
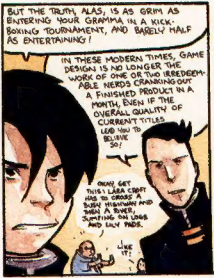
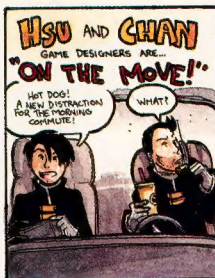
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ANSWERS TO SPIDER

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5	C		M	J	J					E			
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13	T	I	N	G	L	E		N	A	T	I	V	E



The PSP is Sony's entry into the world of game machines that could potentially be sewn into your abdomen by accident during major surgery. The PSP boasts stunning graphics, extensive third-party support, and so many extra features that the spreading warmth you're feeling around your misanthrope is actually your wallet peeing itself in mortal terror.

APPEARANCE: The PSP was built around the bold design concept of "What if an Atari Lynx mated with your dad's universal remote?" Also note the large, unprotected screen, which will afford you many opportunities to scratch and flity it up, thus showing your friends how hardcore you are.

TARGET AUDIENCE: Hardcore gamers ages 18 to 35 who are already skilled in negotiating major tech-gadget purchases with their spouses.

PERFORMANCE: The PSP is a high-performance portable, displaying graphics somewhere between the standards of the PS1 and PS2 and increasing in quality exponentially the further you are from the screen. Some developers initially complained about the PSP's insufficient memory, but they should be pleased to learn that Sony President Kaz Hirai, in a bold move, personally sneaked backstage mere moments before the PSP's unveiling and, using a pair of tweezers and a Q-tip, crammed a few extra megabytes in. Everything's cool.

BEST EXTRA FEATURE: Sony is pleased to announce that the PSP will be able to play movies and more from the tiny-yet-versatile High-density Universal Media Disc, which Sony just happens to make.

...heeeeeeeyyy...

THE GAMES: A robust mix of sequels, ports, and spin-offs.

THE TASTE: Crunchy, almost to the point of acher pain. Otherwise bland, but can be made substantially saltier if used vigorously before consumption.

THE VERDICT:



The DS is Nintendo's next foray into the world of portable gaming. Nintendo wants it made perfectly clear to all parties that the DS is NOT a successor to the Game Boy Advance, even though it obviously is. The DS features wireless connectivity, a touch-sensitive screen, a microphone, and, of course, the feature for which it was named: two screens, a design that will come in very handy the day the human eye finally gains the ability to focus in two directions at once.

APPEARANCE: The DS's unique clamshell design has won over even its harshest critics, who now agree that it can be reasonably passed off as a cosmetics case, or possibly a digital Spanish-English dictionary, when you inevitably attempt to sneak it into work.

TARGET AUDIENCE: Casual gamers of all ages. Nintendo's stated philosophy is that it is looking for people who don't care if a game has flashy graphics or not, who aren't drawn in by the promise of complex gameplay, and most importantly, who don't care that they're gonna be dropping 150-plus bones on a machine that they're apparently just gonna be using to play the next version of *Zelda* on.

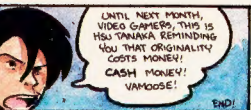
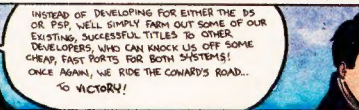
PERFORMANCE: The Nintendo DS offers a gaming experience comparable to what you would find on the Nintendo 64, had Rube Goldberg designed it while living on the Planet of the Vertically Biopic Mutant Gamers. Nintendo stays true to its philosophy of keeping the gameplay simple by presenting game developers with the tools necessary to create control systems more convoluted than could even be dreamed up by Satan himself. To be fair, however, even a cursory glance at the demos on display at the Electronic Entertainment Expo reveals that Nintendo has made bold and decisive strides in virtual pinching, stretching, zoking, and dragging technologies.

BEST EXTRA FEATURE: The Nintendo DS features complete backwards compatibility with all Game Boy Advance games.

But it's NOT a successor to that system. No, seriously, Nintendo means it.

THE GAMES: A robust mix of sequels, ports, and spin-offs.

THE TASTE: The Nintendo DS tastes EXACTLY like a delicious honey-baked ham.



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JUAN RENO AND TAKESHI KANESHIRO

TWO HEROES, ONE DESTINY

500 BC

1000 AD

2100 AD

100 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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