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ELECTRONIC GAMING

The #1 Videogame Magazine

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW!

LORD OF THE RINGS THE THIRD AGE

THE MOST EXCITING RPG SINCE FINAL FANTASY

Gridiron battle

MADDEN VS. ESPN

Two awesome football games... We compare them and pick a winner

Under the radar

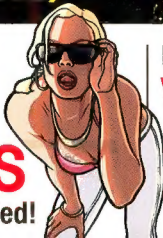
16 GAMES NO ONE CARES ABOUT (BUT SHOULD)

13-page feature

THE NEXT BIG...
TRENDS, FRANCHISES, DEVELOPERS, ONLINE ADDICTIONS, AND MORE

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

New screens and info revealed!



LET'S GET READY TO WRESTLE!

- Def Jam Fight for NY
- WWE Day of Reckoning
- Backyard Wrestling 2
- Rumble Roses

September 2004 ISSUE 182 \$4.99 U.S. / \$6.99 Canada

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Advertorial



SIREN



Blood and Gore
Intense Violence



PlayStation 2

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ANSWER THE CALL

CAN YOU RESIST THE CALL OF THE SIREN?

WELCOME TO HANUDA

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

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

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

NO SINGLE HERO

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

INNOVATIVE STORYTELLING

Nearly 80 episodes compose

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

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

CHILLING ATMOSPHERE

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


SECOND SIGHT

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


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

SHIBITO INTELLIGENCE


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




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



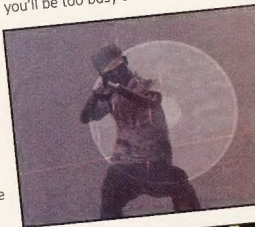
Photographs of actual abandoned towns and mines provide the basis for each setting.

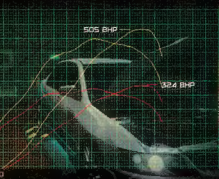


To ensure realism, actors were motion-captured, facial scanned, and voice recorded.



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





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THE GREATEST FIGHTERS
KNOW THAT STRENGTH COMES IN NUMBERS

WHEN WARRIORS LEARN TO WORK AS A UNIT
THEY ARE NOT SEPARATE AND STRONG
BUT UNITED AND UNSTOPPABLE.

MONSTER HUNTER

THIS SUMMER
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PlayStation.2





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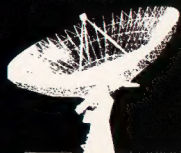
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Just 'cause the *Lord of the Rings* movie trilogy is kaput doesn't mean
you should hang up your homemade chain mail. EA's *Lord of the Rings*,
The Third Age is like a fourth *Rings* film melded with *Final Fantasy*



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We round up four of this fall's wrestling-ring masters



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Without hype or hubbub, these games are sneaking
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editorial



released with a clean bill of health in the
first place? Yes, but no.

It's an old argument for PC gamers: Is patching a good or bad thing? These downloaded files automatically fix problems in existing games—but shouldn't games be

Yes, because some games, particularly multiplayer online ones, are impossible to bug test for every gameplay situation. Developers can't know what every player

will do out there, so the only thing they can do is let all of us find some of those problems for them.

release dates and fix everything later. It happens all the time with PC games.

I'm a pro-patch guy. I don't want developers spending five years bug testing a game to death—just get it as close to perfect as it can be, then let the gaming community tell them what additional tweaks and balances need to be made.

—Dan "Shoe" Hsu, Editor-in-Chief

SPIDER-MAN 2

THE GAME

NOWHERE YOU CAN'T GO.
NOTHING YOU CAN'T DO.

Preview the game trailer on the
Spider-Man Deluxe Edition DVD.

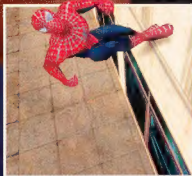
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GAME BOY ADVANCE

PlayStation 2



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YOUR GAMES



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WHO YOU ARE IS NOT ALWAYS...



Letters

ranting, raving, and a customer service curmudgeon



■ Heading for *Resident Evil 4*? You'll have to get a GameCube or go without.

Frightened fan

Resident Evil 4 Producer Hiroiyuki Kobayashi recently asked what he can do to "call gamers back again." Fully 3D graphics, a fresh view of the action, and faster foes sound sweet, but if Capcom really wants the fans of its flagship series to return, the company will need to rethink its current course of action. Enough with the GameCube exclusives already. It's as if they're going out of their way to slap those of us who first visited Raccoon City on the PlayStation in the face.

—Derek Oswald

Unsatisfied customer

My PS2 went kaput for the second time in two weeks, so I called the people at Sony for help. "Our records show you've complained about a disc-read error before," the old guy who answered says, "so you must be doing something wrong." I told him that I just bought the system, and that *EGM* has printed letters from readers complaining about the same problem. So he says, and I quote, "Do you believe everything you read? That isn't certified by Sony, and any ads not bearing the

Letter of the month



Between the lines

Last issue, you printed a letter from a guy with plans to play *Halo* in a movie theater, but check this: I strung 300 feet of Ethernet cable across a swamp to connect with my neighbor's house so that we could square off without leaving our sofas (we simply use the phone for smack talk). I had to

snake the line through some unknowing neighbors' yards and tack it to a few trees, but it was well worth the effort, and since talk is cheap, I decided to wade out into our swamp and take a few snapshots for ya. Enjoy!

—Jeff Rodny

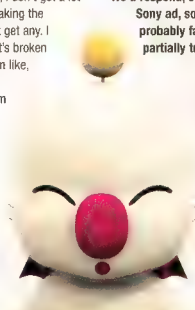
PlayStation logo are probably false or, at best, only partially true."

So, get this, I argued with the bozo for a bit, and then he goes, "Sir, I don't get a lot of calls thanking us for making the PlayStation. In fact, I don't get any. I only get calls about how it's broken and needs to be fixed." I'm like, "Dude, you work at the technical-support desk. I'm not gonna call you just to say how awesome I think my console is. Even then, I'm not gonna thank the guy who tells me it's broken—maybe the guy who fixes it, but not you."

After giving me the address to send my busted system to, he tells me I'm rude and says

something about not talking back to adults. —Jonny

We'd respond, Jonny, but we're not a Sony ad, so anything we say is probably false or, at best, only partially true.



Fantastic fabulousness

Is it really necessary to restrict gay marriages in *Final Fantasy XI*'s world of Vana'diel? My man pal and I went to the virtual chapel, only to discover that our union was invalid. Species as diverse as the tarutaru and elvan are allowed to interbreed, but we

can't? If only heterosexual couples can wed, that means 99 percent of Vana'diel's other residents must remain bachelors, and all five female players have already tied the knot.

—Richard Apodaca

Square Enix declined to comment, but there's hope for you yet, Dick. Don't hold us to the number, but we'd say that some 90 percent of *Final Fantasy XI*'s marriages are, in fact, of the gay variety. Of course, one of you will have to wear a dress, but that's a small price to pay for conjugal bliss.

Same old song

I recently broke out my Super Nintendo and, thanks to a sale at a nearby shop, picked up a bunch of games. While playing the classics, I came to the following conclusion: Contemporary >

POST OFFICE

Bull sessions from our message boards, boards.IUP.com (look for Electronic Gaming Monthly's forums)



■ "So this is that *Pokey Man* kids love so."

East vs. West

Metal Gear Solid creator Hideo Kojima's claim that game design in the West is "more passionate and energetic" than Japan sparked a pointed debate between our opinionated posters:

Klikk: "It's true. Every hot title that doesn't hail from the West is being aimed at it." MyDingling: "Whatever. I smell nothing but s*** on these shores."

Fowlwing: "We come up with some real winners, all right: ghetto sims, *World War II* shooters, beast women with counterfeit breasts...."

NeatoJinks: "Hey, at least we didn't create the finger-up-the-ass genre." Roasted Locust: "Kojima's right. The Japanese market is too focused on too few genres, and is to honest, RPGs and dating sims just don't cut it anymore."

High-scoring humor

Think Carrot Top is corny? Get a load of these gaming-related groaners. ArbTheRipper: "Yuna woke up one day

and saw that someone had written 'Yuna's a skank' in the snow. She called the authorities and they studied the scene. The detective told her the sad truth. It turns out the urine was Tidus's and the handwriting was Rikku's." Disappeared: "Why did *Counterpeda* need tweaking? It was full of bugs." Eightbitkidd: "What do Mario and George W. Bush have in common? Mission accomplished, but princesses Peach and Osama are in another castle."

"What's the difference between *Duke Hukem Forever* and *Ellen DeGeneres' Ellen* came out."

ShawnElliott: "How many fanboys does it take to change a lightbulb? Ten. One to screw it in and nine to argue about how the old one was so much better."

CONTACT EGM

So your lil' brother leans around the television hoping to get a better look while playing first-person shooters? Take a pic of the loser and tell us about it at EGM@iffdavis.com or:

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WHO YOU WILL BECOME.





Voices from the past
EGM answers old, old letters

I understand that there are a lot of great doors being opened at Sega. The Sega-CD has finally broken ice, and virtual reality is on everyone's lips, but Sega is

forgetting one thing: the Menacer. What happened? Talk about limited software. So far I have only two games for it. This shortage of games is too bad because I love the light-gun gameplay that the Menacer provides. Is Sega ever going to

make any new software that utilizes this unique and amazing peripheral?

—Cloyd Griffin Jr., October 1993

Well Cloyd, while Sega was indeed home to several mahogany doors, icebreakers, and lip balms, our old staff died to you. The company was not "taking its time to ensure that its Menacer games would be worth buying," but had concluded that you were, in fact, the one consumer stupid enough to buy the miserable piece of crap. Considering how many dents Pa Cloyd probably had to bang out of Pacers and Pinto station wagons to pay for it, we say you owe him an apology.

OOPSI!

Danimation's fan pic of Samurai Shodown ninja Hanzo was so slick that we assumed it belonged to publisher SNK when we printed it in EGM #180. Our apologies to the top-notch designer—peep his talent at www.dandojo.com.



gaming suffers from sequelitis. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater was the last series I got excited about, and even that kind of killed itself by releasing an update every year. What happened to the days when Sega and Nintendo would make us wait five years for a follow-up? Where's the innovation?

—Pat McLaughlin

Would you believe reader Tim Yanalunas bitched about the same thing back in '94 (EGM #65)? "Lately, people have been complaining about the number of unnecessary sequels on the market—games like *Street Fighter II*, *NHL Hockey*, and *John Madden Football*," he wrote. "Companies release them year after year with minor changes, wasting our money and time." Just goes to show

ya, Pat, one man's classic era is another man's collapsing empire.

Dawn of the brain-dead

I figured out what makes *Resident Evil 4*'s townsfolk so freaky: a mutated strain of mad cow disease! The game is set in the European countryside, and the infected are called ganado, which means "livestock" in Spanish. Remember that mad cow started in the old country when farmers began feeding cow parts to their cattle.

—Jared Thorbahn

Pat on the butt

Publisher ESPN Videogames' decision to price *ESPN NFL 2K5* at \$19.99 could be the best thing to happen to the gaming industry in ages. If ESPN continues to improve upon its fine franchise, and if

consumers support the product, we should see a fall in software prices for other series, too. *Madden*, for example, would have to ship at a lower price to compete. Cheaper software could also bring new customers into the home-console market. Stand up and support ESPN's bold move, and other companies might see that it's possible to make a profit by giving games what we truly want: a great product at a low price.

—Gregory M. Hall

We follow you, but hefty price drops pose huge risks for any videogame company. Remember, development costs are only rising, and ESPN will have to sell many, many, many more copies than in years past to make up the difference. We wish them luck.

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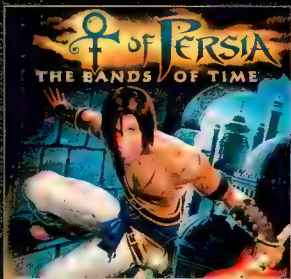
GAME DESIGN-O-RAMA

Send your cockamamie concepts (with art) to EGM@ziffdavis.com, subject: design-o-rama



MSC: SALT OF LIBERTY
Terrorist networks are waging an underground war, transforming fast-food chains into communistic, heart-friendly co-ops. As Salty Snake, you must restore America's restaurants to their former trans-fat glory. Force-feed run-of-the-mill terrorists massive doses of MSG in order to raise their blood pressure to lethal levels, then face off with more formidable foes like Tanga Ocelot and Grilled Octopus.

—Cyril Coombs



ARCANE SYMBOL OF PERSIA
Party like it's 999 in this all-new, ambiguously dressed installment of the smash series! Guide the platformer formerly known as Prince through an imposing diamond-and-pearl-filled palace in search of his vaguely astrological Guitar of Time, and team up with Princess Vanity to take down any hater with balls big enough to bag on your 5-foot-tall hero and his buttless pants!

—Jorgeeva



CUSTOM HOBO
Hell freezes over and Nintendo flies away on a pig with *Custom Hobo*, the company's first non-family-friendly fare. Maneuver your very own hobo on the mean streets of Manhattan, where you must fight for food, turf, and trash cans. Upgrade your bum with back-alley accessories and equipment including supersized change cups, swifter shopping carts, pig bull companions, and better panhandling props.

—PanamaJack

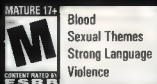


FABLE

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What if the choices you made had everlasting repercussions? Your every action would immediately affect your appearance and change the way people perceive you. Would you wield a sword in the name of virtue, create a path of evil with spells and treachery, or become something in-between? Before you create your destiny, know this: no two Fables are the same. What will yours be?

xbox.com/fable



Microsoft
game studios

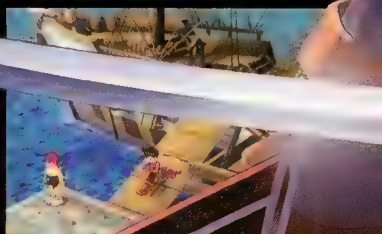


it's good to play together.

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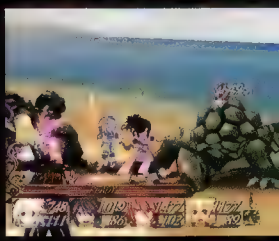
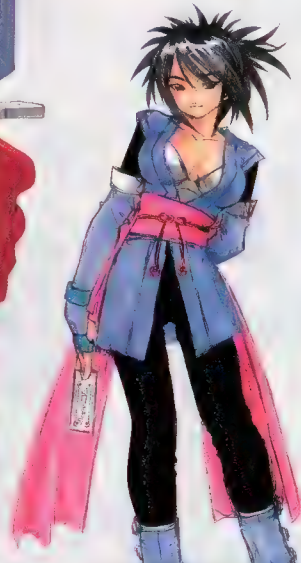


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TALES OF SYMPHONY

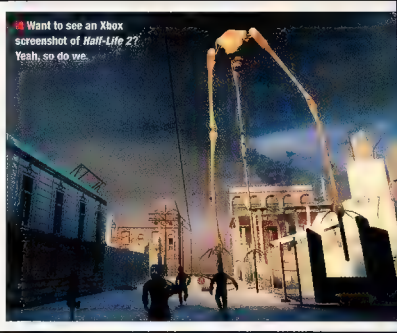


MISSING IN ACTION

OK, it's been 24 hours—time to file a report on these 13 MIA games

HALF-LIFE 2

• Xbox



Want to see an Xbox screenshot of *Half-Life 2*? Yeah, so do we.

Description: In terms of anticipation, this graphically stunning first-person shooter is the PC equivalent of *Halo 2*. The game was originally supposed to launch on computers last September with an Xbox port following shortly thereafter, but numerous obstacles, including a highly publicized theft of the game's development code (the FBI even investigated the matter), have delayed the PC release time and time again. Gabe Newell, managing director of developer Valve Software, says the studio hopes to finish the Xbox version of *Half-Life 2* this August.

Last Seen: Well, never really. We haven't seen so much as a single screenshot of the Xbox port, though the

PC version is reportedly in the final stages of development.

Update: The Xbox version remains in the works. "We have [*Half-Life 2*] running on Xbox right now," says Newell, noting that the console version "fits into the middle of our scalability goals for the PC product." (Translation: the Xbox port should be on par with the PC version running on today's average-powered computers.) Still, don't expect the first-person shooter anytime soon; Valve is notorious for delaying its games, and publisher VU Games refused to comment on the console release date.



Illustration by Julie Ward



TRUE FANTASY LIVE ONLINE

• Xbox

Description: Microsoft's first Xbox massively multiplayer online role-playing game, due this winter from developer Level 5 (makers of the *Dark Cloud* series).

Last Seen: Playable last September at the Tokyo Game Show and looking very good.

Update: Cancelled in June. MMORPGs need plenty of time to turn a profit through monthly subscription fees—*Final Fantasy XI*, for example, took a year and a half to start making

money, and that's considered fast. Numerous delays would've put *TFL*'s release too close to the end of Xbox's life cycle to make sense financially for Microsoft. "*TFL* took much more development time than we expected," explains Level 5 President Akihiro Hino, adding that Level 5 is discussing internally what to do with the game and the assets created for it.



STAR WARS GALAXIES

• PS2/XB

Description: A massively multiplayer online role-playing game set in lands where rancors, Wookiees, and whiny Jedi roam free. *Star Wars Galaxies* was initially billed as the next big thing in online gaming, but when the PC version hit last July, some referred to it as *Star Bores*. Our sister publication, *Computer Gaming World*, called the bug-ridden game "fundamentally inaccessible," even for MMORPG vets.

Last Seen: Console versions were announced along with the PC game at the 2002 Electronic Entertainment Expo but were never shown publicly.

Update: The PS2 and Xbox versions have gone off to a galaxy far, far away—and they ain't coming back. "*Star Wars Galaxies* won't reach consoles in its current incarnation," says a LucasArts representative.



KILL BILL

• PS2/XB/GC

Description: Based on Quentin Tarantino's two-part homage to Hong Kong action films, this action-adventure casts players in Uma Thurman's role as vengeance-seeking superassassin The Bride. The game was scheduled to launch this past spring and include original movie footage, à la *Enter the Matrix*.

Last Seen: Never. The only mention of it came courtesy of a press release from Black Label Games, a now-defunct VU Games brand, back in 2002.

Update: Dead as Bill and the rest of his assassins. "This game is not in development," a VU Games rep tells us. Apparently, contract disputes between the parties (surprise, surprise) killed the game even before Tarantino decided to split his film into two parts, so no real work was done on the project.



STRANGER

• PS2/XB

Description: A mix of third-person action and first-person shooting set in an *Oddworld* version of the Old West (complete with chicken farmers...that is, farmers who are actually giant chickens). *Stranger's* (working title) main character is a half-lion and half-moose bounty hunter, complete with Dirty Harry personality. When Microsoft reevaluated its first-party Xbox lineup earlier this year, it left this fourth game in the *Oddworld* series without a publisher.

Last Seen: In a video running at developer Oddworld Inhabitants' job-recruitment booth during the 2004 Game Developers Conference.

Update: Good news—killing powerhouse Electronic Arts has snatched up the rights to *Stranger* and will bring it to Xbox and PS2 some time next year.



missing games hotline

The 411 on some other titles you might be wondering about...



Stage Debut, the GameCube "game" that lets you take a digital picture of your face and map it onto a creepy body that could then sing and dance or...go to school, was officially removed from Nintendo's release list...

The U.S. version of the Cube-exclusive RPG **Atypia** was canned due to a poor reception at last year's trade show...



Vectorman, Sega's PS2 actioner, now rests six feet under...

Psychonauts, the mind-altering Xbox platformer, has found a new publisher (yet to be officially announced) and is on schedule for a February 2005 release.

Namco's third-person shooter **Fire Strike: Grant City Anti-Crime** was officially struck down several months ago...



Atlus will publish **Tomb Raider** co-creator Toby Gard's long-delayed swashbuckling platformer **Galloon** this fall for Xbox, five years after it was first announced...

The **Dynasty Warriors**-esque **Kingdom Under Fire: The Crusaders** also heads to Xbox this fall, now courtesy of Microsoft.

Both Microsoft and Rare swear that **Perfect Dark Zero** is still in development,

Joanna Dark likes to keep the boys waiting.

but rumors abound that the first-person shooter will be an Xbox 2 title by the time it is released.

—Kevin Gifford



Illustration by Mike Rossi

SOUL MATES

Xbox and PC make sweet technological love?

Back when Xbox was maturing inside Microsoft's womb, then Xbox Creative Director Horacio Luke professed that the company's first game system wouldn't be a computer in console clothing. "It's a straightforward game box. Period," Luke's words still hold true today, but that doesn't necessarily mean Bill Gates' matchmaking service has ruled out a blind date between the two pieces of hardware.

Microsoft recently hired an outside market research firm to measure consumer interest in an Xbox/PC hybrid machine. According to CNMMoney.com, the proposed system, dubbed Xbox Next PC, would feature all the applications of an everyday computer and play Xbox and Xbox 2 games. The souped-up machine—with a supposed \$600 sticker price—would also include a CD burner, DVD player with remote, hard drive, and the ability to play games via Xbox Live. Unfortunately, consumer feedback on the system is being kept confidential (peep the results of our

own study below).

Microsoft insists, however, that you shouldn't go preordering Xbox Next PC just yet. "This is the kind of research that Microsoft does on an ongoing basis," says a company spokesperson. "We research and test hundreds of ideas every year, and not all of them come to market or come to market in the way the research suggests."

An Xbox/PC hybrid machine—go or no go?



Source: IUPcom poll, 6/04

GRUDGE MATCH

Save your game or save your soul?



MEGA MAN BATTLE NETWORK TOTAL LIVING NETWORK

Mega Man's finished a fourth *BN* game, but God's been around for, like, forever. How's little boy blue supposed to make ratings against the evangelical stylings of Christian television? Barring divine intervention, we're about to find out!

MARKETING MUSCLE

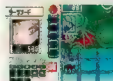


Red and Blue versions of *BN4* rehash a certain Pokémon play...



"Heaven: We get in—find out how!" Advantages: Total Living

DEFINING TRAITS

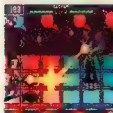


Role-playing game with collection elements and extensive customization
Adv: Mega Man



Little House on the Prairie reruns

SOURCE OF HIGH RATINGS



Interchangeable battle chips give you helpful bonuses in combat
Adv: Total Living



We'd pay to see evangelist Jerry Rose get drunk and proposition one of the *Aspiring Women* gals
Adv: Total Living

RELATED WORKS



Play classic NES *MM* games on today's consoles in *Anniversary Coll.*
Adv: Mega Man



Also available on VHS: *Can Anyone Have an Angel Encounter?*

FAMILY TREE



Computerized Mega Man and his real-life brother, Lan
Adv: Mega Man



Kirk Cameron joins forces with scary televangelist to save your soul

WINNER: MEGA MAN BATTLE NETWORK

As good as wholesome, mostly harmless television makes us feel, *BN* proves there's no substitute for a solid RPG—especially one you can sneak into church.

NEWS TIDBITS ARE COATED TO GO DOWN EASY

GameCube Successor to Debut in 2005

If you needed another reason to sneak into next year's Electronic Entertainment Expo, Nintendo President Satoru Iwata made one during a recent management meeting that the company has every intention of unveiling its next console, code-named Revolution, at the industry's annual trade show held in Las Vegas.

Relax, gamers. It's just an artist's concept.

PS3, PSP Pricing Predictions:

Analysts from Wedbush Morgan & Securities recently published a report that predicts Sony will launch PlayStation 3 at \$500 to \$700, with extras such as TV-like digital recording capabilities (we'll see about that) plus PlayStation Portable at \$250.



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PS2/XB/GC

FIRST LOOK: NBA STREET 3

The king of the playground court returns with mad game

Passes ricocheting off an opponent's bald head, ankle-breaking dribble moves, gravity-defying dippy-doo dunkaroses—Electronic Arts' *NBA Street* franchise hasn't just redefined the art of arcade-style basketball, the 3-on-3 hopster has shattered the genre's glass backboard. The series heads back to the PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCUBE courts next spring, and while you patiently wait for *NBA Street 3* (working title) to finish lacing up its Air Jordans, check out our exclusive sneak peek at EA's latest baller.

—Bryan Altshuler

Only in *Street* could 76ers' star Allen Iverson give TMac a facial.



The Look

Visually, *NBA Street 3* won't completely mimic its predecessor. "Vol. 2's bold look had a heavy influence from graffiti," says Senior Producer Will Mozell. "Going forward, the most important thing is to celebrate the athleticism of these players and hype that up. I want the visuals to be almost hyperreal." This translates into

player models that are more photo-realistic and sport animated jerseys and shorts, plus environmental effects like leaves falling onto the court during a windy day.

The Players

Vol. 2 brought playable NBA legends like Boston Celtics three-point artist Larry Bird and Philadelphia 76ers slam-dunk physi-

cian Julius Erving into the arcade round-ball series. Expect these all-time greats to have an even bigger role in *NBA Street 3*. "We want to bring out the actual history of star players like Wilt Chamberlain," explains Mozell. "We want those [legends] to be at the forefront, and they'll be supported by some cool cats that we've created." Sadly, exactly how the development

team plans on doing this is still being kept under wraps.

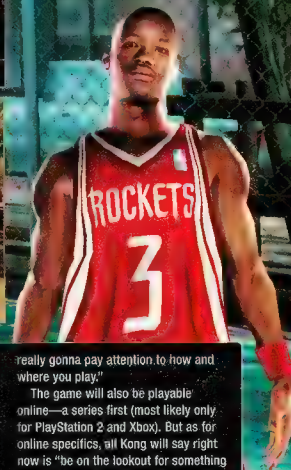
The Courts

Where you'll play these pickup games also differs from past *NBA Street* titles. This one will feature all authentic courts, including hot spots such as New York City's Rucker Park and The Cage, as well



NBA Street's Frontcourt Mates

Before you hoop it up on *NBA Street 3*'s courts, EA Sports will bring you two simulation ballers: *NBA Live 2005* (above) and *NCAA March Madness 2005* (below). Aside from the pro game's much-needed visual touch-ups, what really has us pumped for *Live* (coming your way this October for PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube) is the all-new Slam Dunk contest, featuring more than 15,000 different ways to soar above the rim. The university hoopster (arriving on PS2 and Xbox this November) also receives a graphical boost, plus a new play-calling system and crowd noise effects like in EA's college gridiron title.



as the oceanside playgrounds of Venice Beach. Associate Producer Shyang Kong says that *NBA Street 3* will also have "courts that some people have never seen before. These are the up-and-comers, the next-generation of Ruckers."

The Tricks

The ability to shake and bake with the

basketball and fake your opponents right out of their Nikes is what differentiates the *NBA Street* series from the rest of the b-ball pack. Mozeil tells us that next year's game will come to the playground with several new *SportsCenter*-worthy moves, and linking them together for high-scoring combos will be more important to gameplay than ever before.

The Modes

NBA Street 3's solo experience hopes to build upon what was started in *Vol. 2*. "The coolest thing about the single-player mode in *Vol. 2* was that after you played 10 or so games, the computer recognized you and gave you a nickname," explains Mozeil. "*NBA Street 3* is gonna do a lot more things like that. It's

really gonna pay attention to how and where you play."

The game will also be playable online—a series first (most likely only for PlayStation 2 and Xbox). But as for online specifics, all Kong will say right now is "be on the lookout for something very cool that hasn't been done with sports games." 🐼

■ Sephiroth is gone, but his lasting effect on youth fashion persists.

■ PSP/DVD

FFVII: ADVENT CHILDREN

Who needs gameplay? FFVII's DVD sequel looks damned sexy

Fans dying for a sequel to *Final Fantasy VII*, Square Enix's landmark 1997 PS1 role-playing behemoth, will finally get their wish. Well, kind of, anyway. *Advent*

Children is a full-length CG-animated motion picture that takes place two years after the game's conclusion. Look for it on DVD and Sony's PSP in 2005.



AC's creators keep a tight stranglehold on its plot details yet continue doing out-gorgeous stills just to tempt us. Here, Cloud and Vincent return to Aerith's resting place.



Seems that Reno and Rude, the surviving Turks (Shin-Ra's cronies from *FFVII*), are still causing trouble in Midgar. They're also getting their own cell phone game (page 76).

THEN AND NOW: TWO YEARS LATER

Like a fine wine, the stars of *Final Fantasy VII* get better with age



Barret Wallace: He's equipped with a stylin' robotic arm and connor hairdo.



Vincent Valentine: *FFVII*'s creepy-yet-gentle demonboy sports a softer look.



Tifa Lockheart: Cloud's main squeeze now actually looks her age (she's 22).



Cloud Strife: All the same tortured self-loathing, but now with better hair.

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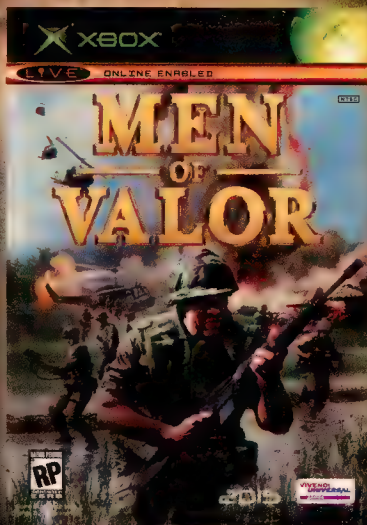
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SAN ANDREAS VISITOR'S GUIDE: LOS SANTOS

Your AAA traveler's guide to the first of three new towns in the latest Grand Theft Auto

Home to thugs, peaceniks, and trendsetters, smog-screened skies and chemical sunsets, movie stars' mansions, and the

grimmest ghettos, Los Santos is the irreverent reimagining of Los Angeles in the latest *Grand Theft Auto*, and the first of three cities in the

California-infused state of San Andreas. It's a swell place to visit...but, trust us, you don't want to die there. Get street-smart with this handy San

Andreas trip planner and look forward to future installments before tourist season opens October 19th on PlayStation 2. — Shawn Elliott



FASHION AND BEAUTY

Whether you're looking to crown main man Carl with dripping Jheri curls, a fashionable Afro, or a towering flattop, barber Reece can hook your head up for a small fee. An aerodynamic new 'do won't make you more agile (like a slim midsection will), but shorties will definitely take notice.



STORY OF LOS SANTOS

When crooks killed his 17-year-old brother, leading man Carl "CJ" Johnson left life in the traffic-choked fast lane and headed for Liberty City (the city in *GTA3*). Years later, another death in the family draws him back to his former delinquency and old digs on the seedier side of Los Santos' tracks. His street gang, the Orange Grove Families, has lost a bit of its

bang, however, and it'll take some ballsy behavior to help regain its rep.

Like *Vice City*'s Tommy Vercetti before him, CJ won't rest on his laurels as head honcho of a small 'hood, let alone settle for life as a penniless perp. A set of mandatory missions establish main points in *San Andreas*' larger plot and eventually take

Carl to the fog-sacked city of San Fierro (based on San Francisco) and glitzy Las Venturas (a fictional Las Vegas), where he'll expand his empire. But how he fills in the blanks in between is largely up to you.



Illustration: Bob Schuchman
Sunglasses: Ray-Ban
Lip: Dior
Hair: L'Oréal
© 2006

GETTING AROUND



What better way to enjoy Los Santos' sandy beaches than by bicycle? You won't set speed records, but pimped-out pedal power is a great way to manage your weight—you'll love the new you. And if you're all right with the fashionably-fat look that heavyweight rapper Big Pun pulled off, you can leisurely cruise in cars and trucks of all sizes or crisscross the state in planes and helicopters. Plus, it's now possible to pack your ride with three other thugs who'll lean out the windows and lock shots at any chickenhead wearing the wrong colors.



THINGS TO DO ON YOUR STAY



Before you can shoot the breeze about better days with your old bud Ryder (a dead ringer for Compton rapper Eazy-E), he's ready to put you to work. Some local pizza tossers have "disrespected" the Orange Grove posse by painting over its graffiti, and Ryder pegs you to settle the score at the restaurant in a scene inspired by '90s hood flicks *Friday* and *Do the Right Thing*.

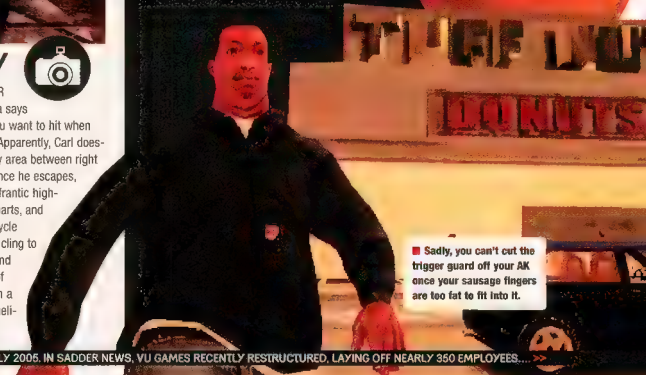
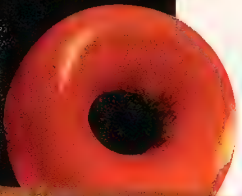
It's not until the law gets word that the local gang lords are meeting at the St. Brutus Motel, though, that the serious action starts. Carl's in the middle of it with nothing to save him from the SWAT team but a shotgun and the game's refined targeting sys-

tem, which Rockstar PR Director Jeff Castaneda says will "let you hit who you want to hit when you want to hit 'em." (Apparently, Carl doesn't hang out in the gray area between right and wrong for long.) Once he escapes, he'll man the gun in a frantic high-speed chase. Sparks, parts, and pedestrians fly, motorcycle police lose control and cling to the trunk of your car, and politicians find plenty of reason to cry foul when a ludicrously low-flying helicopter pures a cop.

WHERE TO EAT



Burgling homes, "borrowing" cars, and busting drive-bys (a thriving business—go too long without some good eats and you'll grow weak and lethargic in this *Grand Theft Auto*). Fortunately, food chains like Well-Stacked Pizza Co. and Turf Nut Donuts are here to help you keep that stamina bar bloated with a variety of serving sizes. Just don't overdo it: gobble too much grub too fast and your figure will balloon, slowing you down and costing you cred with the ladies (passersby will actually comment on your sorry condition).



Sadly, you can't cut the trigger guard off your AK once your sausage fingers are too fat to fit into it.



WORD ON THE STREET



► We know Carl gets tight with other would-be gangsters, but what about his game with the opposite sex?

Rockstar reps gave us the sort of smile that says "we know something we won't tell" when we asked "em if gym time would help CJ get girlfriends.

What with all the backcountry between *San Andreas'* three big cities, we're betting Carl's in store for a run-in with some good ol' boys.

PR director Castaneda wouldn't squeal, but he did laugh and mention the city-slickers-meet-locals movie *Deliverance*.

Any truth to the rumor that controversial comedian Dave Chappelle will lend his pipes to *San Andreas* star Carl Johnson?

"That certainly would be cool," says Castaneda.

San Andreas' makers won't confirm or deny speculation about online play or even the earthquakes suggested by a game named after the infamous California fault line. ☹



Nothing Easy-E looks like Ryder rolls hard.



BY THE NUMBERS

Game Boy turns 15

170
Million

Units sold worldwide of Game Boy hardware (including GBA) since its 1989 debut

2328

The year it would be if you played every unit sold for only 60 seconds without stopping

76
Million

Pokémon games sold worldwide for Nintendo handhelds—the best-selling franchise in the Game Boy family

13

Game Boy titles that have sold more than a million units worldwide during the handheld's 15-year life span



PC GAMING UPDATE

Sex, death, and the whole damn thing

In college I read *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and the only good part was an old snaggletooth hag preachingify on dead and saying, "You must kiss death full on the mouth." Now, 500 years later, I've been exposed to two games that together add up to something like giving the Grim Reaper a big, sloppy tongue kiss.

Singles: Flirt Up Your Life!



Here's the tongue. Imagine *The Sims* without all that annoying blurring covering up the naughty bits—that's *Singles* (downloadable now for \$30) in a nutshell...er, nutshell. You manage the lives of two swingin' singles to unlock menu options like "Do the wild thing"—but never has it been less wild. *Singles* is all about bad full-frontal nudity and a deep sense of shame for even thinking of playing it. Eidos has slung this albatross around its neck and is currently editing it down for a retail release later this year. Yuck—I said "release" while talking about this game.

Painkiller



Luckily, *Painkiller* provides the death for our Grim Reaper make-out session. There's some claptrap about being a hit man for heaven, but all you need to know about this deceptively deep first-person shooter is that you shoot things. *Painkiller* is as fast as *Serious Sam*, as creepy as *Doom*, and as addictive as chocolate crack. Yes, an Xbox version is coming, but you owe it to yourself to blast psychonans and sadocombats right now.

—Robert Coffey,
Computer Gaming World

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Professional Baseball Player 8/1/04 - 8/4/04
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U.S. Army Private First Class 8/4/04 - 8/6/04
Stormed the beach at Normandy as well as Guadalcanal. Disposed of 837 enemy soldiers
was fragged 38 times.

Grand Prix Race Car Driver 8/6/04 - 8/8/04
Drove 12 different cars and survived 132 crashes. Won races on 10 different courses
around the world.

Professional Volleyball Player 8/8/04 - 8/12/04
Won the Pro Beach Volleyball Championship as both man and woman.

Secret Agent 8/12/04 - 8/15/04
Infiltrated evil genius's compound. Neutralized 17 plutonium bombs. Saved world 7

Western Gunslinger 8/15/04 - 8/16/04
Defeated all young and old guns offering challenge. Died only 8 times.

Alien Menace 8/16/04 - 8/21/04
Crushed 5 galaxies and subjugated 29 separate intelligent life forms.

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PS2/XB

SHOW AND TELL: ROBOTECH: INVASION

Another dose of '80s anime nostalgia

Developer *Vicious Cycle's* previous *Robotech* game, *Battlecry*, tossed gamers into the comfy cockpits of the transformable Veritech Robots of our youth. With day-glow car-

toon visuals and voice work by the same '80s actors, it captured the spirit of the show remarkably well.

Battlecry's follow-up, *Invasion*, tackles the later portion of the *Robotech*

universe, the lesser-known *New Generation*. With new mecha (the morphing Cyclone motorcycles) and enemies (the creepy Invid insectoids), this installment trades in the anime look for

a grittier, more realistic style.

We enlisted Level Designer (and *EGM* alum) Greg Sewart to offer a guided tour of what to expect when *Invasion* lands this November. —Shane Bettenhausen



Bug Blasting

GS: "The Invid can come at you in a variety of ways. On foot, bursting up out of the ground, or flying in from a distance, as in this shot. So watch the ground, but always keep an eye to the sky."



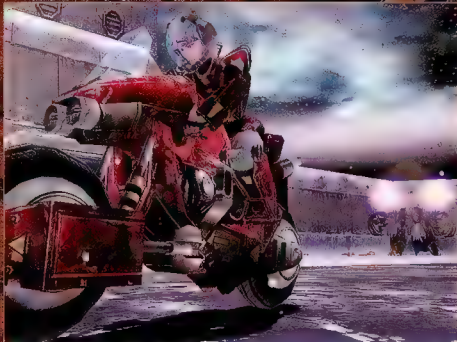
In a Pinch

GS: "The Pincher is the most elite of the regular Invid units. Its twin, shoulder-mounted laser cannons are formidable, to say the least. Luckily, it's possible to blow them off and cut this big bruiser down to size."



Shock and Awe

GS: "What you didn't notice is the Invid mortar scout stationed on that distant roof. While Tasha (the chick wearing the motorbike) is busy silencing this shock trooper, the scout is readying a little death from above."



One Bad Motor Scooter

GS: "The Cyclone body armor can conveniently transform into a badass bike. But be warned: While in rider mode, you lose that extra layer of armor, meaning you're just a few well-placed shots away from a bad case of death."

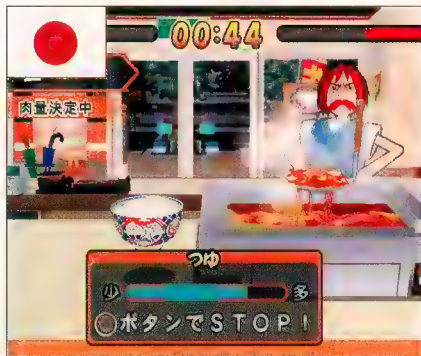


Advanced Arsenal

GS: "We're including lots of cool infantry weapons to pump up the ground-based combat. Here's the Destabilizer: When you absolutely, positively got to kill every mother in the room, accept no substitutes. Of the 12 guns in *Invasion*, this is the best of the best!"

EGM INTERNATIONAL

Two sims to go with your dried shrimp chips



PS2
YOSHINOYA

A game about beef? Why not? It's *really* good beef. Yoshinoya is a chain of fast-food joints popular in Japan that serve "beef bowl"—rice topped with grilled meat strips, onions, and a mysterious special sauce. The game lets you manage your own Yoshinoya, meaning you're responsible for seating customers, getting orders right, and fiddling with gauges to find the perfect mixture of beef juice and soy sauce.

Any chance American gamers can sample this meaty goodness? Perhaps. Yoshinoya isn't entirely alien to American culture, as the fast-food chain has 70 locations in the United States. Plus, the game's customers range from 40-year-olds with horrifying comb-overs to beef bowl-crazy robots—much more exciting than the flabbies who dine at McDonald's.



PS2
INGOT 79

Everybody loves gold diggers, right? Well, sort of. The game casts you as Riki, a guy with the power to detect underground gold deposits *with his mind*, and you have to find enough of the shiny yellow stuff to pay off your debts and save an orphanage. You'll do this three different ways: pan for gold flakes in streams, search for gold veins embedded in quartz rock, and break out the high-powered drill when you think you've hit the jackpot.

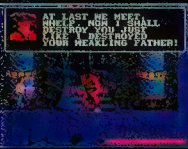
Any chance this gold rush'll hit America? Very doubtful. In fact, *Ingot 79* was such a flop in Japan that the game's publisher ended up giving away copies to schools for a tax break. So if you wanna play this one, either import or become a foreign exchange student.

OLD SCHOOL

10 years ago in EGM

On the Cover:
Primal Rage

The mag went prehistoric this month with a look at the arcade fighter. Until then, we never knew that blue-haired gorillas with freezing powers populated the Earth during the Jurassic period.



Game of the Month:
Blackthorne

— The Super Nintendo action game reviewer Al Manuel "a tingly feeling inside" thanks to its mind-bending puzzles and sadistic humor—seems killing prisoners after they provided essential info didn't get old for the Review Crew.



3DO Plans New Hardware

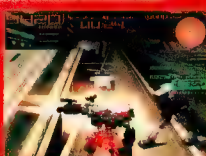
Inside this issue were the first details on then console maker 3DO's next system. What later became known as the M2 was initially supposed to launch by the end of 1995, but sadly, it never saw the light of day.

PREVIEW GALLERIES: IRON GIANTS

ARMORED CORE: NEXUS

PS2 • Ageton • August 2004 — The latest *core* creation offers two distinct robot-on-robot fighting games: One's an all-new, hyperfuturistic melee with completely redesigned bots, the other a reworked collection of the first three.

Armored Core PS1 games. Plus, for the first time ever, you'll be able to control your mechs with the DualShock controller's analog sticks. Now that's progress.



GUNGRIFFON

XB • Tecmo • November 2004 — Talk about unexpected revivals: This sequel to the fantastic (but little-known) Sega Saturn mech-combat sim brings back the same fast, action-packed combat as you pilot nimble antitank robots.

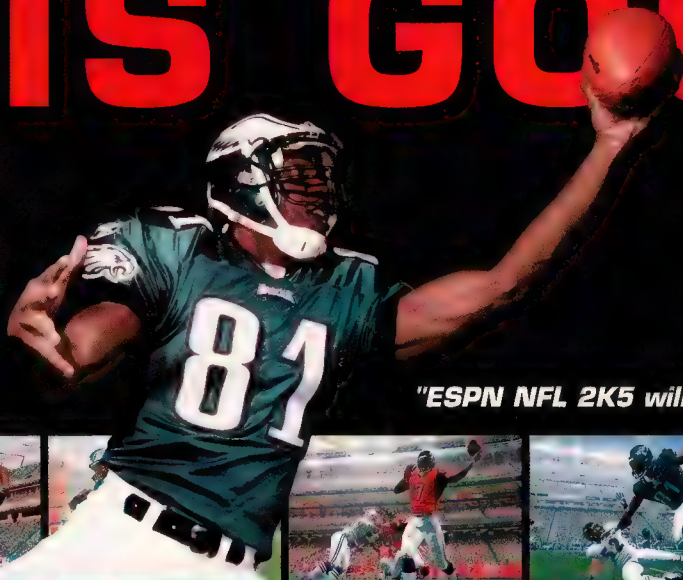
across massive futuristic battlefields. You'll also be able to scorch some earth in various cooperative and competitive Xbox Live multiplayer modes.



EGM Gets Sporty

Team EGM, the mag's on again, off again sports section, debuted a decade ago. The one-stop shop for all your sports needs featured news, previews, and reviews, courtesy of Iceman and The Rookie.

CHANGE IS GOOD.



"It's brilliant." - PSM

"ESPN NFL 2K5 will own your soul." - IGN.com



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PlayStation 2



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TOUGH STUFF

Essential selections for the macho gamer

Work hard, play hard; mainly men, we know that's your mantra. But given the kid-friendly fare clogging today's consoles, most titles are inherently incapable of triggering testosterone production. We've therefore compiled several recommendations that'd remedy the fiercest hormonal imbalance. Cop 'em, and watch your sperm count and score simultaneously climb....

—Scott Steinberg



BREAST IN SHOW

These titles put the T&A back in entertainment

Fat-bottomed girls make the rockin' world go round. Buxom ones? They're more gamers' speed. Look for both in the following soon-to-be-softer classics:



The Guy Game

PS2/XB • Globalstar • Fall 2004
Chance You'll See Nudity: 115%

Basic instinct: Pummel audiences with more than 1,000 pointless trivia questions...and the odd striptease. It's essentially a quiz show, spiked with minigames and M-rated banter. Correct answers yield topless footage and titillating still pictures. "We don't think the industry's ready for this title," says Matt Sadler, VP of the funny for developer Topheavy. Sen. Lieberman probably isn't, either.

Hot shots: Topless jump rope. A shirtless sack race. Unlockable videos of fat men dancing. Trust us, it's quality stuff. Our favorite scene thus far: when a winsome Asian stunner berates you for poor performance by taunting, "What's the matter...don't you want to see lattes?" Laughs Sadler, "We didn't want a game that had good taste; we wanted a game that tastes good." We'll drink to that.



Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude

PS2/XB • VU Games • October 2004
Chance You'll See Nudity: 100%

Basic instinct: Entertain those who "like to laugh and gawk at boobies," says Producer Josh VanVeld. Players help Larry Lovage—nephew of the title's legendary namesake—romance 15 saucy campus coeds. Play encompasses exploratory sequences and humorous diversions, such as dalliances with potential conquests or naked sprints across campus.

Hot shots: Casual sex. Clown porn. The masturbating monkey. And then, of course, there are the many hooters. Insiders estimate you'll glimpse at least 10 heating bosoms, and that's before you factor in the wet T-shirt contests. Plus, don't forget the 90,000 words of risqué dialogue. Confesses VanVeld, "The guys who wrote Larry's [script] haven't been laid in years. That's why we hired them!"



Playboy: The Mansion

PS2/XB • Arush • November 2004
Chance You'll See Nudity: 99.99%

Basic instinct: Emphasize entertainment that's more "sexy-fun than realistic," says Marketing Director Jay Adan. Accordingly, this *Sims*-style life simulation, which lets you manage the magazine, schmooze celebrities, and plot Playmate photo shoots "portrays the classy, artistic view of sexuality that *Playboy* stands for." A dozen campaign scenarios and a goal-driven Empire mode see you build the mansion, jostle for exclusive interviews, and play foosball with gorgeous models.

Hot shots: Luscious hooters. Polyamorous relationships. Real-time interaction with centerfolds from a first-person perspective. Anything goes around the pool, aviary, and grotto if you're a smooth talker, since by flirting with bodacious babes, you'll literally charm their pants off.



Outlaw Golf 2

PS2/XB • Globalstar • October 2004
Chance You'll See Nudity: 10%

Basic instinct: Introduce carnivorous caddies and semipornographic scenes to a lightweight simulation of the most boring of sports. Tasteless jokes abound when you tee off on eight outlandish courses with almost a dozen janky duffers. Unlock clubs, balls, tricked-out golf carts, and fresh new outfits as contests unfurl, but remember...you'll still wind up feeling dirty after relinquishing the controller.

Hot shots: Bits where foxy strippers swap spit. Watch as an Asian dominatrix beats her masochistic manservant. And did we mention the occasional breast whipping? Consider it done. Plus, the addition of Xbox Live multiplayer means that you and a partner can simultaneously stroke your shafts while enjoying myriad gratuitous panty shots.



LOUNGE LIZARDS

The kind of sports you see on ESPN3

Poker night all played out? Bowling alley seem staler than concession-stand nachos? Kick back and relax instead with the kitschiest coffee-break titles in town.



World Championship Poker

PS2/XB/GC • Crave • November 2004

Flush with 18 high-stakes diversions such as Texas Hold 'Em and Pineapple, this sucker's got several aces up its sleeve. The flop unfolds in smarmy settings such as a TV studio and Mississippi riverboat, and the action's even EyeToy compatible (PS2 only). Pile on text and voice-chat support, and we're convinced that victory's in the cards.

FIELD & SCREAM

Mother Nature never knew what hit her

Hunter/gatherers are, like, so Mesozoic. Hunter/gamers, well...that's another story. Feast on the following trophy picks, targeted at armchair anglers and outdoorers.



Savage Safari Hunt

PS2/XB • Crave • November 2004

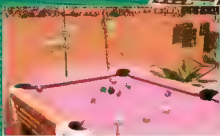
Go ahead, light the so-called dark continent up with small-arms fire—the natives won't mind. Why? Man becomes the endangered species when you set out seeking mythical crypto-zoological critters, beasts more dinosaur than dodo. Have you ever seen a man fight a triceratops with a machete? The results ain't pretty.



Strike Force Bowling

PS2/XB • Crave • Now

You know what bowling needs? Skeletons, aliens, and sexy school-girls tossin' balls on bizarre-themed lanes (pirate ships, castles). Sure, *Strike Force* is silly, but it's also less putrid—and only slightly pricier—than the typical shoe rental.



Pool Paradise

PS2/XB/GC • Ignition • Now

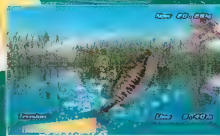
Quit breakin' our balls; bust Archer Maclean's instead. The renowned billiards king's latest simulation, set on a desert island, offers an impressive 11 match variants and 30 opponents for players' perusal. You can even play a quick game of darts between breaks.



Pro Fishing Challenge

Xbox • Atlus • September 2004

This game delivers dazzlingly rendered lakes, authentic weather and wave effects, a full-blown computerized fish ecology model, and Xbox Live online play. You bring the cooler full of beer and the ability to concoct elaborate tales of the ones that got away.



Pro Cast Sports Fishing

Xbox • Capcom • Now

Screw Red Lobster: If it's fresh seafood you crave, look no further. Mouth-watering bass proliferate this disc's virtual waterways. Three game modes set the stage for competition, as do exhaustive (well, by fishing standards) tournaments.

PS2/XB/GC

MEDAL OF HONOR EVOLVES

The sun rises on a new chapter of the WWII juggernaut

The Western front's about to be anything but quiet: EA's landmark first-person shooter *Medal of Honor* heads back to Europe for another campaign in spring 2005, and it's marching to the fray with an eye toward realism. First off, know that this isn't the promised sequel to 2003's disappointing *Rising Sun*. Rather, EA wisely cleans the slate here, starting anew with this (currently untitled) *Honor*. Senior Producer Tarnie Williams hopes to once again draw on both the history of the series and the lasting legacy of the great conflict: "It's very important that we pay homage to World War II and the great sacrifices made and create a tense and exciting experience that reflects the activities that actually went on."

So how is the team stepping up the war effort? For one thing, both friendly and enemy A.I. are going back to boot camp: Soldiers will learn more about teamwork and reacting to battlefield conditions. Williams also promises that players will have a greater influence on how missions transpire. "[The] situations are going to involve a lot more player choice and more options on how you want the battle to unfold—still emotionally gripping, but letting you take more control over the action."

EA promises a darker, grittier approach, and early art seems to indicate that a part of the game will take place in St. Nazaire. War buffs remember this as the site of a daring combined operations raid in which Allied forces rammed a ship loaded with explosives into Axis dry dock gates as commandos stormed ashore to destroy pumping stations. Seems like a perfect situation for this *Honor* to thrust you into....

The game wasn't quite ready for its close-up yet, so you'll have to look at these art concepts and use intense visualization techniques to construct a prototype...or you can just come back in a month for an exclusive first look. **—Justin Speer**

■ This battle in St. Nazaire (known as Operation *Chariot*) allows British troops to assault the Nazis.

■ Expect to detonate bomb-filled boats to damage this crucial Nazi port.

■ In classic *Honor* tradition, expect some cool scripted events, like this power station going kaboom.

EGM's Honor Scoreboard

Scope how EGM's Review Crew rated the previous *Honor* games. (Score is out of 10.)



THEY
DON'T WANT
TO DESTROY
OUR PLANET.

JUST
MANKIND.

THE RATINGS GAME

How can a crew of middle-aged nongamers decide if your games are naughty or nice? Play along at home and find out...

Hookers, carjackings, and flying limbs—they're all part of the game at the Entertainment Software Rating Board, the elusive

group responsible for evaluating the content of the titles you play. Every year, the ESRB—which was founded in 1994 after the U.S. government's first

hearings on violent videogames—rates more than 1,000 console and PC titles voluntarily submitted by game publishers. But is there a science to this sys-

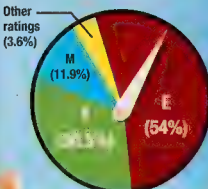
tem, or do these guys just spin a wheel to decide whether the latest *Metal Gear Solid* gets a Teen or Mature rating? Let the game begin.... —David Kushner

Start: The Raters

For a small, undisclosed fee, a team of 50 ordinary Americans—including teachers, accountants, lawyers, and parents—shlepps to the ESRB's New York City office to evaluate game content.

Spinning the Numbers

Violent games make headlines, even though M-rated titles are rare. Here's the breakdown for games sold in 2003.



3: The Raters Rate

The raters assign one of five ratings: E for Everyone, T for Teen, M for Mature (17 and older), or the rarely wielded AO for Adults Only and EC for Early Childhood. For game makers like Mark Cerny, a consultant on the hit *Ratchet & Clank* series, the challenge is to push the envelope without alienating the intended audience. "An M rating would have meant [retail] death for *Ratchet & Clank*," he says.

2: The Raters Watch

Before a game is released, a publisher will voluntarily send in video of the title's most extreme footage for review. The more sexual innuendo or gory effects, the harsher the rating. Raters don't play the games—they just watch. "[We're] about providing guidance for parents," says ESRB President Patricia Vance, "not gamers."

4: The Game Makers Freak (maybe)

Maybe. Once a game gets a rating, its publisher has the option of tweaking the title's content and resubmitting for a new verdict. This, however, is a rarely, Vance says. Why would publishers freak? An M rating limits the audience, thus cutting down on potential sales. And while monster M-rated hits like the *Grand Theft Auto* games do fine saleswise, publishers of lesser-known games want as large a market as possible.

Finish: The Game Ships

Potential sales aren't the only thing at stake. From Washington to Missouri, efforts are underway to ban the sale of M-rated games to anyone under 17. So far, the bans have yet to go into effect (although most game stores voluntarily adhere to the ratings guidelines). The industry contends that such a ban violates the First Amendment, but the battles wage on.

WHOSE GAME IS IT ANYWAY?

Match the title to its story line. Go ahead, give it a shot...

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A True Crime: Streets of L.A. (PS2/XB/GC) | 1 Intrepid, heavily armed anthhero jacks rides to get around town in the name of grit, glory, and '80s hair metal. |
| B DRIV3R (PS2/XB) | 2 Intrepid, heavily armed anthhero jacks rides to get around town in the name of grit, glory, and gangsta vengeance. |
| C Grand Theft Auto: Vice City (PS2/XB) | 3 Intrepid, heavily armed anthhero jacks rides to get around town in the name of grit, glory, and car chases. |
| D Jak II (PS2) | 4 Intrepid, heavily armed anthhero jacks rides to get around town in the name of grit, glory, and really annoying cartoon sidekicks. |





ON NOVEMBER 9th

EARTH WILL NEVER BE THE SAME



Visit www.esrb.org
for updated rating
information.

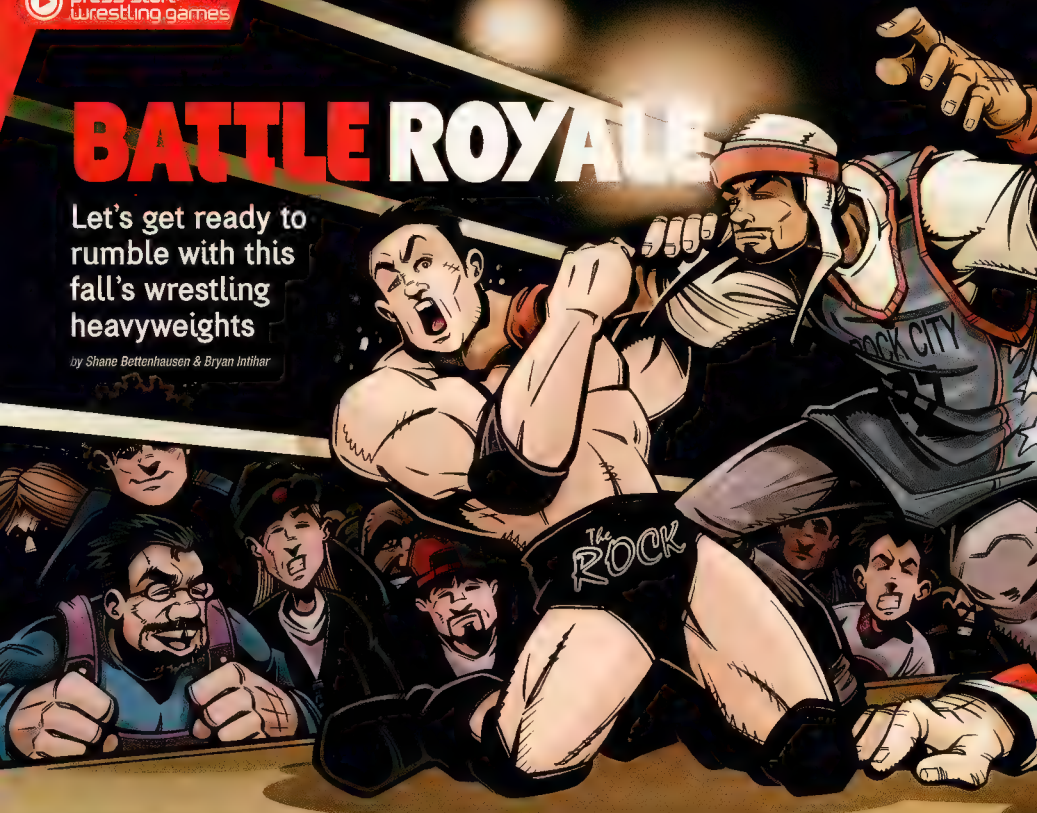
BUNGIE
XBOX
LIVE



BATTLE ROYALE

Let's get ready to rumble with this fall's wrestling heavyweights

by Shane Bettenhausen & Bryan Iltislar



PS2/XB

BACKYARD WRESTLING 2: THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Place of Birth: White Trash, USA

Signature Move: Swan dive off a rooftop into a bed of thumbtacks

Style: Hardcore

Likes: The taste of its own blood

Dislikes: Neighborhood curfews, concerned parents



Eidos' no-holds-barred wrassler starring WWE wannabes, silicone-filled porn starlets, and the Insane Clown Posse returns to the PS2 and Xbox this October. The previous *Backyard* may have offered two-by-fours wrapped in barbed wire, but it stumbled when it came to actual wrestling. This sequel hopes to flesh out the flesh-rendering with deep gameplay. For starters, *Neighborhood* features a brand-new grappling system, meaning your fighting repertoire will include more traditional moves, the ability to damage specific body parts,

and additional defensive counters. Also, the sequel's stages are much more interactive. For example, you can now destroy a fence, set the lumber on fire, and then wreak havoc in a custom-made Inferno match.

Eidos is also bringing its ultraviolent brand of wrestling online. *Neighborhood* supports two-player online matches with voice chat, to which Lead Designer Kevin Gill says, "You haven't truly experienced online gameplay until you've used a weed whacker on someone's torso from across the country."



>>> BACKYARD WRESTLING 2 WILL HAVE A MUCH MORE ROBUST CREATE-A-WRESTLER MODE, INCLUDING THE OPTION TO CREATE CUSTOM TATTOOS AND FACE-PAINT PATTERNS. >>>



GameCube

WWE DAY OF RECKONING

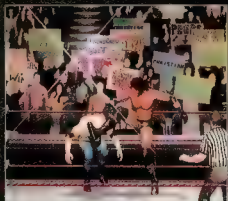
Place of Birth: Stamford, Connecticut (home of the WWE headquarters)

Signature Move: The People's Finisher

Style: Traditional

Likes: Championship belts, spandex, spousal abuse

Hates: People who say wrestling isn't real, steroid testing



This last year's *WWE Wrestlemania XIX* was more of a mid-card draw.

THQ hopes its next GameCube-exclusive wrestler (coming your way this

September) has enough muscle to make

it to the main event. The road to glory

begins in the gym with a complete visual

makeover. "Improving the graphical qual-

ity has been one of our most important

priorities," says *Day of Reckoning*

Associate Producer Cory Ledesma. "The

main areas of focus are the [WWE] super-

star models, crowds, environments, and

superstar entrances."

The game is also taking an in-ring les-

son from classic Nintendo 64 grapplers

like *WWF No Mercy* and adopting a simi-

lar control style so that any jabraoni can

pick it up and play. And thankfully, *Day of*

Reckoning is sticking with a more tradi-

tional story mode that has your custom

wrestler vying for championship gold

rather than bludgeoning countless secu-

rity guards with a sledgehammer, like in

XIX's out-of-place revenge mode.

Of course, if you tire of twisting oily

men into flesh-patzels, you can always

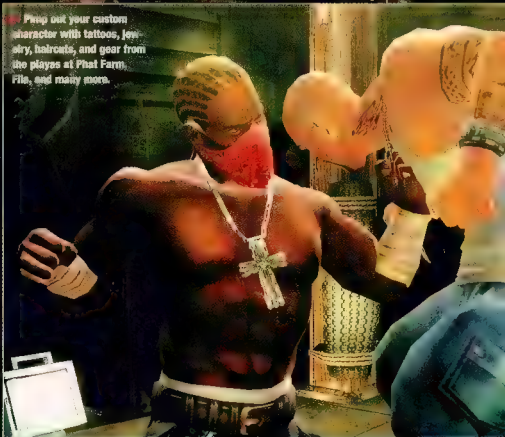
mix it up with the nearly nude WWE

divas in the newly added Bra & Panties

match. Yowza!



Pinp out your custom character with tattoos, jewelry, haircuts, and gear from the players at Flat Farm, FIB, and many more.



PS2/XB/GC

DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY

Place of Birth: Duh...the streets of New York City
Signature Moves: Repeated knuckle sandwiches to the family jewels
Style: Yo! MTV Raps meets *Fight Club*
Likes: Weapons, crowd involvement
Dislikes: Fighting to country and folk music

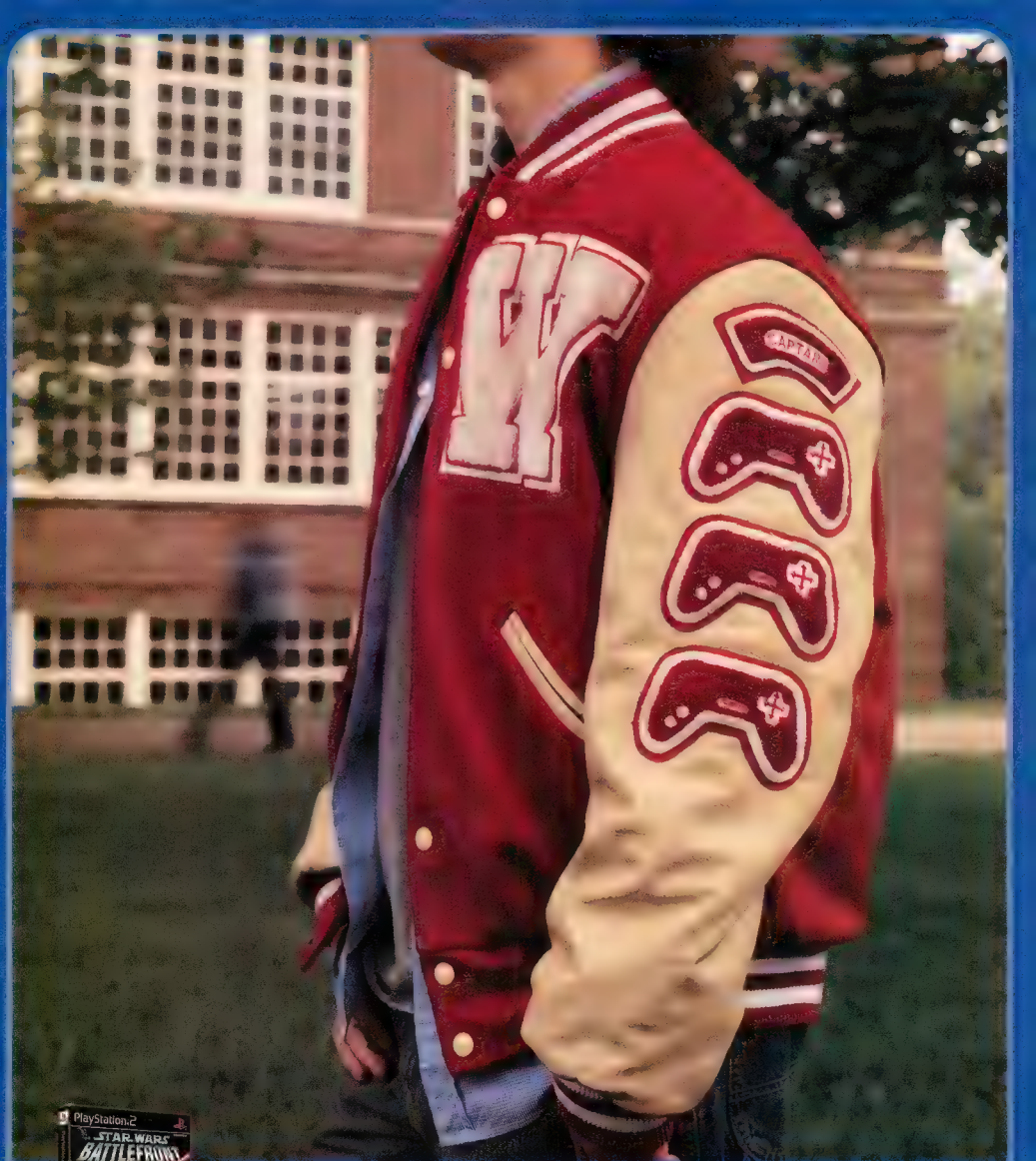


New to the wreslin' scene in *Fight for NY* are artists like Snoop Dogg, Busta Rhymes, and Ice T.

Def Jam Vendetta made even the most hardcore WWE addicts believe that hip-hop artists could be wrestlers, and come this September, Electronic Arts plans to bring the house down with *Fight for NY* on PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube. "This year's game is bigger, darker, and more authentic to the hip-hop experience," says Producer Josh Holmes. "The gameplay style has changed in dramatic fashion. It's definitely going to surprise some people." True dat. *Fight for NY* features five different fighting styles—street fighting, martial arts, submission, kickboxing, and wrestling—and you can

combine three of them to create your own unique brand of whoop ass. Expect major changes from the brawlin' venues, as well. Instead of trading blows in the squared circle, you'll be mixin' it up in real-world environments like an underground parking garage, subway platform, construction site, and nightclub. And crowds are no longer just innocent bystanders sipping on 40s while enjoying the action—they now provide weapons like bottles and crowbars. Plus if you get your opponent close enough to the crowd, they'll grab your foe, freeing you up to deliver a brutalizing beatdown.

>> UNFORTUNATELY, *FIGHT FOR NY*'S PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED ONLINE MODE HAS BEEN SCRAPPED DUE TO TIME CONSTRAINTS. LOOK FOR IT IN *DEF JAM FIGHT FOR COMPTON*...>>



Better dress up. The game's on. Star Wars Battlefront hits shelves September 21!
You can get a jump on them and other new releases in our video game pre-order section
in store and on BestBuy.com/VGpreorder. At Best Buy, gamers rule.





■ Dump what this move is called, but we like it.



■ Xtina would be so proud.



■ PlayStation 2

RUMBLE ROSES

Place of Birth: Tokyo, Japan

Signature Move: The mud-crusted girl-on-girl embrace

Style: Erotically charged

Likes: Fun in the sun, getting down and dirty, pajama parties, philosophy

Dislikes: Grappling with sweaty dudes, baggy clothes

\$ure, you might not know the names of the *Rumble Roses* girls yet...but really, what's in a name? The ladies in Konami's upcoming PS2 wrestlerfest (due in November) aren't based on real-life ring queens. But the developer considers that a good thing. "Our girls are cuter than any real female wrestlers," jokes Producer Akari Uchida. "But we're still going to offer hard-hitting wrestling with cool moves."

These lovely ladies are going to do for

grappling what Tecmo's *Dead or Alive* hotties did for beach volleyball, and that's no coincidence—the same CG studio, Polygon Graphics, designed the gals in both games. Glossy visuals only take a game so far, however, so Konami enlisted the pros at Yuke's (the programmers behind the *WWE SmackDown* series) to handle the game-play. "The guys at Yuke's are having a lot of fun with this game, because they usually only make games full of muscle-bound

guys," muses Uchida. Because *Roses* isn't tied to reality, many of the moves go a bit over the top—gals pull triple-somersault dives off the turnbuckle and whip out some borderline-obscene grapples.

If you can look beyond the burgeoning bag of eye candy, you'll find that *Roses*' complex story mode packs some serious depth. "Each girl has her own story, friends, and rivals," says Uchida. "Plus, you can play 'face' and 'heel' versions of each gal—

the evil versions tend to have even more revealing outfits."

Even so, we're guessing that it'll be the mad mud match mode that will rope in the most players. Here, the *Roses* chicks strip down to their bare essentials and writhe around in pits of filth. As the flesh-colored mud dries on their bodies...well, they look, uh...really nice. If he gets to make a sequel, Uchida plans to investigate duets set amid Jell-O or chocolate sauce. Really. **A+**





CHRIS DOYLE
TAIL WHIP



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CELEBRITY GAMER: STEVE-O

Shocker! Jackass alumnus drunk at party

In between regularly scheduled brushes with death on MTV's *Wildboyz*, professional roustabout Steve-O is dipping his tattooed toe into videogames. But after talking to us at a recent ESPN Videogames-sponsored bash about his surprise cameo in *ESPN Football 2K9* (PS2 and Xbox), the fun was over and it was back to serious business: dropping his pants and jumping into the hotel pool, right in the middle of the party's synchronized swimming performance.

EGM: Why are you in a football game?

Shouldn't there be a Jackass game?

Steve-O: There actually, I think, is gonna be one. I know there's gonna be one. But why football? When I was growing up, every Saturday and Sunday my parents had, like, six televisions in the living room—so they could try to watch every single game that they gambled on. Football was like a lifestyle.

What's cool about this game is that I had leeway to do just about anything I wanted. I'm doing skateboard stunts...

EGM: Running people down with shopping carts?

Steve-O: Yeah, there's so many different things; there's footage of stunts—they're digitized. You know, I wore the suit with the balls all over it. There's commentary...

EGM: How does the skateboarding mesh with the football?

Steve-O: This game, the more you win, you actually earn money, and you get to spend money. You can design your own house, you know, and pimp it all out. So in the crib section, I'm skating around and getting totally rad on the board. [laughs]

EGM: So does your character talk trash in ESPN NFL 2K9 if you're spanking somebody?

Steve-O: Oh yeah. Let's face it, videogames are s*** talking things. I talk trash the whole time. My team's called the Banana Tuggers, dude.

EGM: The Banana what?

Steve-O: In order to earn money [in the game], you have to beat the five celebrity teams, and my team is called the Banana

Tuggers.

It's my dream team.

EGM: All right. Who you got on that team?

Steve-O: Well, I personally have always been more of a fan of football players based on their criminal records; I wanted my team to play dirty—[yells to hors d'oeuvres-bearing waitress] Oh yeah, shrimp, baby!—so yeah, I wanted my team to play as dirty as possible.

EGM: So is the A.I. based on how you play the game?

Steve-O: What do you mean, A.I.?

EGM: Do the Banana Tuggers play football like you play the hard-hitting sport?

Steve-O: I'm in the room when you're playing. I'm in the room.

EGM: So I feel you when I'm playin' ya?

Steve-O: [laughs] Yeah.

EGM: But what do I get out of playing Steve-O?

Steve-O: Dude, you're playing the Banana Tuggers, dude. What do you want? If the simple fact that my team's called the Banana Tuggers doesn't give you an idea of my commentary...it's just a gooly-ass game. Of course you want to play the Banana Tuggers. And if you win [the game against my team], then there's a special filthy treat at the end of the game. It's the filthiest thing we could squeeze in. ☘

—Shawn Elliott and
Demian Linn



"Dude, my Banana Tuggers are gonna trounce you, dude."

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Authentic 1960s soundtrack including music from Iggy Pop and the Stooges, Deep Purple, the Standells and more...



19 missions in the single player campaign - 17 of the best from the PC version and 2 new missions exclusive for the console!



Command an elite squad of Special Forces troops for maximum tactical strategy.



Utilize any means necessary to gain control of key enemy territory - gather intelligence, call in air strikes.



Xbox version supports 8 players online in 9 multiplayer levels! Download new maps and missions!

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PlayStation 2



Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.

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press start



Halo 2 faces stiff competition from Xbox Live Arcade games like the much-anticipated action puzzlers *Zuma* and *Fuzzee Fever*.

ONLINE THIS MONTH

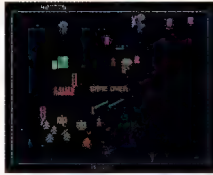
Finally, something for the rest of the family

Hardcore gamers already know there's no better place to frag fools online than Xbox Live. But Microsoft has a plan to get even Granny out of her rocker and into some online deathmatches, too. Thanks to Xbox Live Arcade, that wrinkly prune of a player will soon be able to spill blood on the backgammon table, show no mercy to fellow *Scrabble*-heads, and shout "You got served!" at her nursing home homies after an intense *Bejeweled* bout.

But the new service, which launches this fall, isn't just targeting your hip-hop gamers. Xbox Live Arcade is going after casual gamers as a whole. "I think that it has the potential to attract whole new types of users to console online gaming that aren't otherwise online today," boasts Greg Canessa, group manager for Xbox Casual Games. "People who like playing games online but can't commit the time to playing deeper retail titles, people who are

looking for quick games to play on Live between their matches of *Halo 2*, people who like playing casual games on their computer but would like to play in the living room on their big screen with their family and friends." Parents, wives, brothers, sisters, Johnny PunchClock—welcome to the gaming club.

While the service itself won't cost a penny (you'll be able to download it, get it on demo discs, etc.), the games will. "We haven't announced specific pricing yet, but suffice it to say, [they] will be inexpensive," Canessa promises. Of the 15 to 20 games being offered initially, every genre of casual button-mashing will be represented—retro arcade (*Dig Dog*, *Joust*), cardboard (*Hearts*, *Chess*), puzzle/trivia (*Zuma*, *MahJong Tiles*), action arcade (*Hamster Ball*, *Marble Blast*), and social sports (*Bowling*, *Pool*)—with several games to be added to the roster each month. So remember: When



Go retro with arcade games like *Robotron*.

"GeriatricJoe911" enters the Xbox Live lobby, but don't underestimate the old fart's puzzling prowess. —Jon M. Gibson

On egmextrax.1UP.com

Don't forget to head over to our website this month for additional *NBA Street 3* screenshots, plus the full transcripts of our interviews with the developers of *WWE Day of Reckoning*, *Backyard Wrestling 2*, and *Def Jam Fight for NY*.

ONLINE NOW

Summer lovin', it downloads so fast

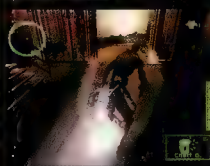
Xbox

Ninja Gaiden



Calling all wannabe assassins: The second round of the Master Ninja Tournament (in which you speed through the game and then post your score online) starts in early August. To participate you'll need to download the *Ninja Gaiden* update (don't worry, it's free), which introduces new costumes, weapons (like a fighting staff), and, if you can believe it, tougher foes. The patch even fixes the nagging camera problems and accelerates the action.

Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow



For a \$4.99 download fee, *Pandora Tomorrow* spies and mercenaries can have two more hotspots to fight over: RiverMall and Federal Bank.

RiverMall is an indoor mall with a three-story-tall waterfall, a variety of storefronts, and a large hi-fi store. The spies must sneak in to disarm the mercs' small-pox canisters while hacking into security systems to shut off nosy cameras, close security doors, or turn off spy-killing air-duct fans. The mercs have a lot of real estate to defend, but they get help from a holographic map that shows where in the mall the spies currently are.

The Federal Bank has two sectors. The spies can't get to the downstairs gold vault until they secure any canister on the upper floor (similar to the game's three-section Warehouse stage). The canisters on each floor are close together, so they're easy for the mercs to defend. But the spies can shut down almost every light and can even turn on a jamming effect to disable the mercenaries' EMP vision (which helps spot spies in the dark).

must-hit websites



vgombert.blogspot.com — Blogger Kyle Orland is the Bill O'Reilly of the videogame realm. He prods, he dissects, and he makes fun of the idiotic syncretisms of game journalism in a very savvy way...without the insider ego. Mostly, he's just antistupid.



half-life2.com — Taking a strain against the death of old-school gaming, a band of programmers devised a 2D spin-off of *Half-Life* titled *Codename: Gordon*. Even enemies made up of sprites aren't safe from the wrath of the scientist's crowbar.



ripplejunction.com — No need to buy a \$16 Von Dutch wristband to be hip. Represent retro chic with this company's brand of inexpensive quality tees, ranging from *Mega Man* to *Street Fighter* to Cartoon Network's *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*.

MUSIC ALL AGES

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Pete Dinklage: Still Writing In My Diary—2nd Entry (Live) # 46177

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Nas: I'llmatic 10th Anniversary Platinum Edition (Columbia) # 52508

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Enigma: The Slim Shady LP (Aftermath) # 28121

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Red Hot Chili Peppers: What Hits? (EMI) # 00144

Marilyn Manson: The Golden Age Of Grotesquery (Nothing/Interscope) # 46619

Bruce Springsteen: Born In The U.S.A. (Columbia) # 10063

Luther Vandross: Dance With My Father (J Records) # 49727

The Very Best Of The Beach Boys: Sounds Of Summer (Capitol) # 48744



Linkin Park: Reanimation (Warner Bros.) # 4954

The Essential Santana (Legacy) # 40997

OutKast: Aquemini (LaFace) # 26103

WOW Gospel 2004 (Verity) # 51735

James Brown: Motherlove (Polydor/Chronicles) # 48699



Hoobastank: The Reason (Island) # 51849

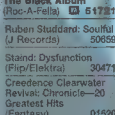


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Beyoncé: Dangerously In Love (Columbia) # 50215

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Jane's Addiction: Nothing's Shocking (Warner Bros.) # 01967



Ruben Studdard: Soulful (J Records) # 50656

Stand: Dysfunction (Flip/Elektra) # 30471

Creedence Clearwater Revival: Chronicle—20 Greatest Hits (Fantasy) # 01620

Brooks & Dunn: Red Dirt Road (Arista Nashville) # 50176

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Nickelback: The Long Road (Roadrunner) # 51229

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Nappy Roots: Wooden Leather (Atlantic) # 50747

Fogies: The Score (Rhino/A&M) # 21846

Fuddle O' Mud: Come Clean (Geffen) # 41188

Sean Paul: Dirty Rock (Rouge) (Atlantic) # 50903

Disturbed: Believe (Reprise) # 45582

Nickelback: Silver Side Up (Roadrunner) # 41322



Franz Ferdinand (Epic) 52786



N.E.R.D.: Fly or Die (Vergil) # 52621

The Diary Of Alicia Keys (J Records) 51650

LosProfetas: The Fake Sound Of Progress (Columbia) 42208

David Banner: MTA—Baptized In Dirty Water (Universal) # 51907

Damagummi: New Found Power (Elektra) # 51982

Phantom Planet (Epic) 51984

Harry Connick, Jr.: Only You (Columbia) 51996

Madonna: GHV2 (Warner Bros.) 42356

Alan Jackson: Drive (Arista Nashville) 42350

Pink: Try This (Arista) # 52173

Barnaked Ladies: Everything To Everyone (Reprise) 51551

The Thrills: So Much For The City (Verve) 51698

Hoobastank: Island (Atlantic) 41950

System Of A Down: Toxicity (Columbia) # 41700

G-Unit: Beg For Mercy (Interscope) # 51653

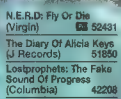
Missy Elliott: This Is Not A Test! (Elektra) # 51680

Honey/Sdtkr. (Elektra) 51682

Elephant Man: Good 2 Go (Atlantic) # 51623

Fefe Dobson (Def Jam) 51638

Korn: Take A Look In The Mirror (Epic) # 51631



Coltrane: A Rush Of Blood To The Head (Capitol) 45338

Cypress Hill: Trill Death Do Us Part (RCA) # 52596

Chris Canadian: Ragweed (Universal South) 52348

Ar-Talus Watkins (Astralwerks) 52385

Eamon: I Don't Want You Back (Jive) # 52413

Keith Urban: Golden Road (Capitol Nashville) 45714

Janelis Jackson: Damita Jo (Virgin) # 52530

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Ghostface Killah: The Pretty Thing Album (Def Jam) # 52796

Yo-Yo Ma: Vivaldini's Cello (Sony Classical) 52589

Good Charlotte: The Young And The Hopeless (Epic) 45704

Rid Stewart: I Had To Be You... The Great American Songbook (J Records) 45773

Justin Timberlake: Justified (Jive) 45779

Norah Jones: Come Away With Me (Blue Note) 43810

Philly Super Soul Hits (Legacy) # 44059

Soundgarden: Sides (A&M) 24937

Nirvana: Nevermind (Geffen) 15600

The Essential Steve Ray Vaughan And Double Trouble (Legacy) # 50567

Isaac Hayes: Shaft/Sdtkr. (Freak) 96101

Anastacia: Freak of Nature (Epic) 44822

Green Day: International Superhit! (Reprise) 41630



Godsmack: The Other Side (EP) (Republic) 51651

The Eminem Show (Intarscope) # 44644

Christina Aguilera: Stripped (RCA) 45790

Evie Presley: 30 #1 Hits (RCA) 45784

The Essential Miles Davis (Columbia/Legacy) # 40338

Disturbed: The Sickness (Giant) # 34229

Philly Super Soul Hits (Legacy) # 44059

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- () 45 CLASSIC Rock The Who, Fleetwood Mac
- () 46 METAL Ozzy Osbourne, Iron Maiden
- () 47 ALTERNATIVE Elvis Costello, Lucinda Williams
- () 48 COUNTRY Alan Jackson, Martina McBride
- () 49 R&B Luther Vandross, R. Kelly
- () 50 HIP-HOP Jay-Z, 50 Cent
- () 51 LIGHT & EASY Frank Sinatra, Barry Manilow
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THE RUMOR MILL

Gossip that can't beat the heat

All right, all right—the big man is back, and I've got the dirt on the games biz that you've been patiently waiting for all month. Just don't bother looking for me, as I'm phoning in this round of rumors (the summer rays aren't good for my pasty white complexion). Still, you can always send a message to this here e-mail address: quartermann@ziffdavis.com. I'll check ya later, foats. —The Q

Developers smile at Xbox 2

It wouldn't be a real rumor section if I didn't have some Xbox 2 gossip to report, so here goes: My sources tell me that Microsoft has already started sending out development kits for its next system, and so far, the people who make the games you play are mightily impressed with the machine's capabilities. And listen to this: Someone from a very, very large publisher was caught saying he believes that, when the dust settles, Microsoft will come out on top in the next console war. Didja hear that, Sony?

Old-school webcrawler

Hey, true believers, my spidey sense has been ringing like crazy these days. It can only mean one thing—a new *Spider-Man* game. Yup, it seems that your friendly neighborhood superhero will

be swinging back to your console (in addition to those titles planned for Nintendo DS and PlayStation Portable) some time next year. And he should be sporting more of a retro look, with the console game primarily based on the early days of the comic book series. (Don't forget to peep our *Spider-Man 2* review on page 98, too.)

Squarely next year

These days, the biggest problem for publisher Square Enix is deciding when to release all of its hotly anticipated role-playing games. Well, it appears that the corporate higher-ups have finally come to a decision—look for *Dragon Warrior VIII* to ship before *Final Fantasy XIII* in both Japan and the United States during '05. That means Square Enix could hit an RPG trifecta on PlayStation 2 next year, as *Kingdom Hearts 2* is also expected. News like this surely makes this old soul quite happy....

Tiger takes to the streets

You may have heard that yours truly is the Tiger Woods of the mingigol scene (Nike wants to sponsor me, too), so this next round of scutletbutt is a hole in



one for The Q. My caddy informs me that Electronic Arts intends to make a *Street* version of *Tiger Woods*, featuring off-the-wall courses wackier than the local putt-putt. Just don't expect it until the next wave of consoles.

A tale of another Cube RPG

Man, oh man, is Nintendo's console in desperate need of some RPG love. Luckily, I'm hearing at least one more in the works. The creators of the battle-happy *Tales of Symphonia* are supposedly cranking away on another roleplayer for GameCube that's also set in the *Tales* universe, but it probably won't be a direct sequel.



Look for Spidey spinning a new web on your console in '05.

OVERHEARD

"I respect girls! But when I was a kid, I wasn't very big, so the girls used to pick on me...so maybe it's a little bit of revenge now!"

—Akari Uchida, producer on Konami's *Survivor* wrestling title *Humble Boss*, on whether he believes the game is sexist

"It's an original story, and I'd like to be involved in the scenario myself in order to avoid a situation like where the main character goes to space to fight against aliens or something."

—Silent Hill 4: The Room Producer Akira Yamaoka, on the upcoming *Silent Hill* feature film

"We're thinking of an innovative idea for our next-generation console that's completely different from consoles in the past."

—Nintendo President Satoru Iwata on the successor to GameCube

CHARTS

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES FOR MAY 2004

1	Red Dead Revolver	PS2 • Rockstar
2	NBA Ballers	PS2 • Midway
3	EA Sports Fight Night 2004	PS2 • EA Sports
4	NFL Baseball 2004	PS2 • EA Sports
5	Shrek 2	PS2 • Activision
6	Red Dead Revolver	XB • Rockstar
7	Transformers	PS2 • Atari
8	Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain	PS2 • Sony CEA
9	Shrek 2	XB • Activision
10	Onimusha 3: Demon Siege	PS2 • Capcom

TOP 10 GAME RENTALS FOR THE WEEK ENDING 06/20/04

1	Red Dead Revolver	PS2 • Rockstar
2	The Chronicles of Riddick	XB • VU Games
3	NBA Ballers	PS2 • Midway
4	Red Dead Revolver	XB • Rockstar
5	Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	PS2 • Ubisoft
6	Shadows Ops: Red Mercury	XB • Atari
7	Hitman: Contracts	PS2 • Eidos
8	Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	PS2 • EA Games
9	Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	PS2 • Midway
10	All-Star Baseball 2005	PS2 • Acclaim



PlayStation 2

MONSTER HUNTER

Amass the weirdest trophy case in town



Resident Evil: Outbreak proved that online cooperative adventuring isn't easy to pull off—the game's utter lack of communication (players have neither voice nor keyboard chat) and pesky latency issues sent it to an early grave. Thankfully, Capcom's next foray into the PS2 multiplayer arena, an action-RPG called *Monster Hunter*, fixes what was broken. Keyboard chat support (hey, it's better than nothing) and surprisingly smooth Net play should make the game a quest worth undertaking when it hits this August.

Containing both a single-player offline mode and a four-person online mode, *Hunter* pits you against toothy dinosaurs in a series of objective-based missions. Your reward? The fangs, skin, and bones

of the magnificent beasts you've vanquished. This isn't Capcom's twisted idea of filling your medieval stocking with a bunch of lame crap. "You can use these materials to make thicker armor or special weapons," explains Producer Kenji Itano. "You start out in your underwear, and as you go through the game, you slowly build up cooler attire."

In many ways, *Monster Hunter* is the closest PS2 gamers can get to experiencing Sega's watershed *Phantasy Star Online* series. Both games share one basic concept—four heroes meet up online to thwack beasts and collect doodads—but *Hunter's* unique dual-analog controls impart a more actiony feel to the countless hours of nonstop critter slinging. —James Mielke



I'm too sexy for my bone
Hunter newbies run around in their skivvies. Check out the veterans, though: A high-level player might have distinctive ceremonial armor with flamboyant lizard-gill adornments and huge triceratops-sized horns protruding from the helmet.

REALITY CHECK

Experts explain what happens when videogames get real

Q: "Have butt, will stomp" is the motto of every platform-game hero from first-raters like Mario to third-stringers like Croc. So what would happen if you pounced ass-first on your nemesis for real?

A: All the back in the world won't save you, according to Chiropractic Doctor Timothy A. Peck. "You definitely would be a few inches shorter and likely paralyzed," he says, adding that your chiropractor bill

would include "compression fractures of the spinal vertebrae, a fractured pelvis, and internal-organ injury." Peck advises, "Avoid performing the butt-stomp unless your name is Mario." —Lauren Gonzalez

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 by Giovanni

DESERT ISLAND GAMES: CLIFF BLESZINSKI



Each month, *EGM* ships a celebrity or a famous game designer off to a desert island and asks what three console games he'd want waiting on the beach. On deck now: Epic Games' Cliff Bleszinski (aka Cliffy B), who's a bit of a celebrity himself—he hangs with starlet Jenna Jameson (pictured)—and the designer of the upcoming Xbox shooter *Unreal Championship 2* and an unnamed game for Xbox 2.

—Marc Saltzman



Animal Crossing (GC)

"For its innovation, unique multi-player gameplay, and the sense of discovery and surprises."



Silent Hill 3 (PS2)

"Short but sweet. It has the best 'jump out of your seat' moments."



God of War (PS2)

"It's not out yet [*God of War* is due in spring 2005.—Ed], but I'd take it anyway because it's the tightest-controlling game I've played in years. When you hit with a move that works, you 'feel' it. The controller melts away and the character does whatever the hell you want him to do."

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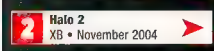
THE HOT TEN

If only these games were out now, you'd buy the hell outta 'em

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



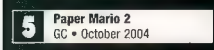
1 **The Legend of Zelda**
GC • Fall 2005



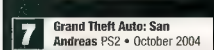
2 **Halo 2**
XB • November 2004



4 **Resident Evil 4**
GC • November 2004



5 **Paper Mario 2**
GC • October 2004



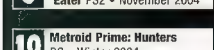
6 **Fable**
XB • September 2004



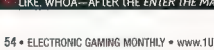
7 **Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas**
PS2 • October 2004



8 **Final Fantasy XII**
PS2 • Spring 2005



9 **Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater**
PS2 • November 2004



10 **Metroid Prime: Hunters**
DS • Winter 2004



■ If you think this screen looks cool here, imagine it in eye-searing 3D.

HALO 2

XB • November 2004 — Master Chief finally slips from his No. 1 spot, shoved into the runner-up position by a snarky elf in a green tunic. Head to your computer and console yourself with this bitchin' first-of-its-kind 3D *Halo 2* screenshot (it's not 3D here, silly—only

using QuickTime's media player). Behold the Covenant Elite, hideous mouth agape in triumph, standing in the midst of three simultaneously slain Spartans, frozen in time. Then behold it from a hundred different angles. You can find the download on 1UP.com.

8 FINAL FANTASY XII

PS2 • Spring 2005 — Forget the oh-so-cute, fluffy white, redesigned moogle. Square Enix has much more stunning changes in store for *FFXII*. Get ready to fall in love with a new gaming acronym: From the makers of ATB (active time battle), *Final Fantasy XII* brings you ADB (active dimension battle). As battle rages in the field, you can assign various attack strategies to your party people and toggle them on or off. You'll use the system to create your strategy and play to your enemy's weakness, be it fire magic or an old-fashioned beatdown.

■ And now for something completely different: *FFXII*'s combat.

	HP	MP
戦士	315	38
魔士	205	40
僧	438	438



This is the bar of a Second Lieutenant.
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COMING SOON

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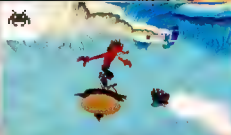


Lien dresses for maximum impact in the latest *King of Fighters*.

SEPTEMBER
2004



Doktai 2: Solar Boy Django
GBA • Konami — Scientists predict our sun will last another 500 billion years, so it's safe to buy this solar-powered sequel.



Crash Twinsanity
PS2/XB • VII Games — Golfball dialogue by the *Rer* & *Stimp* writing team might make endless crate-smashing bearable.



DDR Extreme
PS2 • Konami — *DDR* addicts already know about fancy dance-pad peripherals. Now they get to add EyeToy to the mix.



Def Jam Fight for NY
PS2/XB/GC/GBA • EA Sports Big — Hip-hopers settle their considerable differences with impromptu rumbles.



Dukes of Hazzard: Return of the Gen. Lee
PS2/XB • Ubisoft — Only one good thing came out of Hazzard county, and she's almost menopausal now.



ESPN NHL 2K5
PS2/XB • Sega — Last year's season MVP gets a revamped franchise mode and all-new "dirty moves."



Fable
XB • Microsoft — As George Michael once sang, this open-ended action-RPG is all about "freedom, freedom, freedom!"



Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone
PS2 • Atari — More swords and sorcery from the warriors and wizards behind *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*.



Gallop Racer 2004
PS2 • Tecmo — Giddyup through the final stretch, or it's off to the glue factory for your pretty little pony.



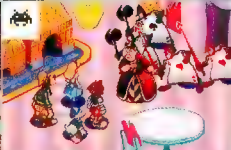
Gradius V
PS2 • Konami — The classic twitch shooter of yore returns, courtesy of 2D development god Treasure.



Gungrave: Over Dose
PS2 • Masliff — For those who dream of a guitar that's equipped to shoot lightning bolts. No, really.



Juiced
PS2/XB • Acclaim — The kids looove them some street racing. *Juiced* offers another chance to drive like a maniac in your tweaked-out, impossibility huge spoiled, neon-clad ride, although in this take on the genre, you'll also have a race team to manage.



Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories
GBA • Square Enix — When we say Mickey Mouse-meets-Final Fantasy RPG action, we're not being figurative.



King of Fighters: Maximum Impact
PS2 • SNK — The arcade classic takes on another dimension without sacrificing the speed and combo style of its 2D cousins.



Mega Man X Command Mission
GC • Capcom — If you've ever thought *Mega Man* games needed less jumping and lots of dialogue, this RPG fits the bill.



Metal Slug Advance
GBA • SNK — The superdetailed, side-scrolling shooter with cannon-tottin' camels comes to GBA.



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Tom Clancy's
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COMING SOON Continued



Devil May Cry's Dante joins Viewtiful Joe on PS2.

SEPTEMBER
2004



Rocky Legends

PS2/XB • Ubisoft — Punch fools in their pitiful faces with pugilists from Rocky's rogues gallery. Prediction: paaaliin...



Second Sight

PS2/XB • Codemasters — Like *Psi-Ops*' big-brained badass, John Vattic can possess people and telekinetically toss anything that isn't tied down, but of all the psychic phenomena at play in *Second Sight*, déjà vu might prove to be the most powerful.



Shadow Hearts: Covenant

PS2 • Midway — *Final Fantasy*-inspired gameplay collides with history books in this World War I-era role-playing sequel.



Shark Tale

PS2/XB/GC • Activision — It's *Grand Theft Auto* meets *The Godfather* meets *Finding Nemo*. Yup, you read that right.



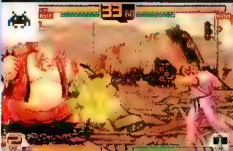
Silent Hill 4: The Room

PS2/XB • Konami — "Stay in your room" takes on a sinister slant when the only way out is a hole leading to hell.



Star Wars Battlefront

PS2/XB • LucasArts — Screw the Force. It's the grunt troopers who get the job done in this intergalactic multiplayer war.



SVC Chaos

PS2/XB • SNK — SNK's stable of characters square off for 2D supremacy with Capcom's street fighters.



Test Drive: Eve of Destruction

PS2 • Atari — The *Test Drive* series puts it in reverse and guns it in this *Destruction Derby*-style bash-em-up.



Sly 2: Band of Thieves

PS2 • Sony — Sneakier than Solid Snake—and more likely to catch rabies and root through your trash—raccoon thief Sly Cooper returns with new moves and multiple varmint partners you can now pick for missions. Sony insists they've all had their shots.



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005

PS2/XB/GC • EA Sports — Mr. Golf steps up to the tee with new PGA legends and fully customizable courses. Fore!



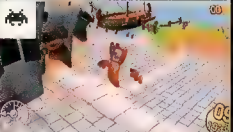
Time Crisis: Crisis Zone

PS2 • Namco — The arcade shooter series goes full auto. Pity the innocent drywall that gets in your way.



Viewtiful Joe

PS2 • Capcom — Now everyone can try this awesome combo of old-school platforming and *Matrix*-style fighting.



Worms Forts: Under Siege!

PS2/XB • Acclaim — Slaughter adorable worms in this cartoon-violent strategy game, now with fort building.

Syphon Filter
THE OMEGA STRAIN



▲ PLACE HAND HERE ▲



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

REPORT TO: GABRIEL GANNON, P.C.H. COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

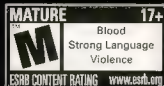
OBJECTIVE: STOP OMEGA STRAIN VIRUS AND THE LEADRIST WHO CONTROL IT

ARSENAL: 100+ HIGHLY LETHAL WEAPONS INCLUDING: SILENCED SUBMACHINE GUN, DSC-1 THERMAL SNIPER RIFLE, GHS 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 ASSASSINS. SUCCESS OF THIS GLOBAL COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE OPERATION IS CRUCIAL.

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UNDER THE RADAR

Looking out for the little guys

Squint your eyes and you might see them—offbeat, lesser-known games sneaking onto store shelves, destined to cower in the mammoth shadows of *Halo 2*, *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, and *Metroid Prime 2* this holiday season. These mysterious visitors from places unknown aren't necessarily doomed to failure, though. Sometimes sleeper hits invade the sales charts: Capcom's *Viewtiful Joe*, Atlas' *Resistor*, and Microsoft's *Criminals of Mankind* all attained well-deserved success. So let's look up to the great sky and identify some of the bizarre objects headed our way.



CONFLICT: VIETNAM

PS2/XB • Globalstar • October 2004

What's the Deal? After fighting for Bush senior in the popular *Desert Storm* games, the four-man *Conflict* crew gets drafted to fight in the bush. *Vietnam* reups all of the previous games' best bits and sends the rest back to boot camp—think smarter squadmates, more realistic enemy A.I., and tighter controls.

Of course, the new setting provides the biggest change. "The jungle environment does have a real effect on the gameplay," says Producer Stuart Poole. "The dense foliage reacts to explosions, people, wind—and of course, you'll have to be careful of booby traps." On this tour of dubious duty, you'll face hazards such as bouncing betties and punji sticks poisoned with feces, ride patrol boats through 'Nam's wicked waterways, and joyride tanks and Jeeps down Ho Chi Minh's inhospitable trails.

Closest Known Relative: Aside from the big-bro *Desert Storm* games, you could compare *Conflict* to the likes of *Ghost Recon*.

Prognosis: Crossover Success
It'll face competition from other 'Nam games this fall, but *Conflict* has built-in Wal-Mart mindshare.



CHULIP

PS2 • Natsume • October 2004

What's the Deal? *Chulip* is one of those really weird Japanese games that rarely make it here. Director Yoshirou Kimura made it because "There is a problem in Japan that students stop going to school and stay in their rooms. And schools, the society, and the whole environment are not making it easy for them to come out." This game hopes to fix that: In *Chulip*, players lure underground-dwellers out of their holes in order to kiss them, thereby making them happy and bringing peace to the town. It's terminally weird, yet oddly fun. Still, we can't imagine a huge audience for this one...

Closest Known Relative: GameCube's *Animal Crossing*, if *Animal Crossing* took place in the Outer Limits.

Prognosis: Bound for Obscurity
Its aim of creating a better society is a noble one, but we're afraid that most gamers will be too busy shooting hookers to notice.



Ratings Key

How will these games fare?



Crossover Success: Let the Wookiee win: These games aren't household names yet, but they will be soon.



Sleeper Hit: These games are definitely weird, but positive word of mouth can lead to respectable sales.



Bound for Obscurity: Artsy gamers in coffeehouses might debate its merits for years to come; everyone else will say, "Huh? What is that?"



■ We'll like to pull the scene. [Business takes out.]

SNOWBLIND

PS2/XB • Eidos • Winter 2004

What's 'nro Deal? In the future, videogame enemies are really f'ed. "Players will earn the ability to send a sentient bolt of lightning into enemy ranks, turn invisible, or slow down time to the point where you can pick incoming grenades out of the air," says *Snowblind* designer Zak McClendon. With those kinds of sci-fi powers, who needs guns? But plenty of guns you will

have on top of your bio-augmented abilities in this first-person shooter that has the same in-the-s*** futuristic wartime vibe as games like *Halo*. "We're proud of the sheer scale of the battles we've been able to recreate on the consoles," says McClendon. "We've got encounters with a half dozen friendly soldiers and nearly triple that number of enemies all running



■ Ever see *Blade Runner*? So have Halo developers.

around without any slowdown." Multiplayer war (for 16 online soldiers with voice-chat support) should be just as wild—all those powers and even alternative firing on weapons mean the possibilities are up to your imagination. "The shotgun's alternate fire is the sticky bomb," McClendon offers as an example. "It's great fun in capture the flag...when enemies run back to their team with a bunch of minibombs attached to them and then detonate. One set of sticky bombs can potentially wipe out an entire enemy team if done correctly...."

Closest Known Relative: *Deus Ex*. This game actually started out life as *Deus Ex: Clan Wars*, but after a bit, the game took on a whole new identity of its own.

Prognosis: Sleeper Hit
With over two dozen weapons, powers, and gadgets, this should prove to be a great shooter as long as the A.I. enemies are *Halo* smart. We do not want another shooter with dumb, pop-up shooting-gallery enemies who like to hide behind explosive barrels.



■ I see an advert rising; I see trouble on the way.



■ The universe sees humans as a mythological race, making Gideon (the main character) a living legend.

ADVENT RISING

Xbox • Majesco • September 2004

What's 'nro Deal? *Advent Rising* takes the third-person shooter genre on a heady, intellectual trip: It's up to you to discover mankind's latent psychic potential on a bizarre alien world. Expect an ambitious story line from Orson Scott Card, author of the genocidal sci-fi milestone *Ender's Game*. According to Lead Designer Donald "Colonel" Mustard, "[Card] really had no

idea about the limitations and constraints of [game] technology, so his approach is solely based on narrative and character." Combining telekinetic powers (à la *Psi-Ops*), two-listed gunplay, and vehicular mayhem, *Advent* offers serious variety. It also tackles serious moral choices—you might have to choose between dragging your war-hero brother or your beautiful

fiancée to safety—a watershed moment that will affect more than a few lines of dialogue. "It's really a game with multiple paths, story elements that greatly affect the last hour of the game, and substantially different endings," says Mustard.

Closest Known Relative: *Halo*, with a dash of *Psi-Ops* and an *Alter Echo* veneer.

Prognosis: Crossover Success
If the story lives up to the hype, sci-fi fans should rise en masse. >





GHOST IN THE SHELL: STAND ALONE COMPLEX

PS2 • Bandai • November 2004

What's the Deal? You are Major Makoto Kusanagi, a superspy cyborg police agent on the hunt for cyber-crime. Her kung fu is fierce, but her ability to hack into enemies' minds and control them is fiercer.

Closest Known Relative: This bears little resemblance to the PS1 *Shell* game—it's more like *Psi-Ops* meets *Cy Girls*.

Prognosis: Sleeper hit

Hardcore anime fans will buy it sight unseen, but weird controls will befuddle everybody else.



PHANTOM BRAVE

PS2 • Nippon Ichi • August 2004

What's the Deal? Armchair tacticians eager for conquest will dig this funky fantasy epic. You tackle various missions, felling foes on isometric battlefields and casting bombastic, screen-filling spells. Free movement in battles (you're not restricted to moving on a grid) and a huge number of monsters who can join your party set it apart from the strat-game pack.

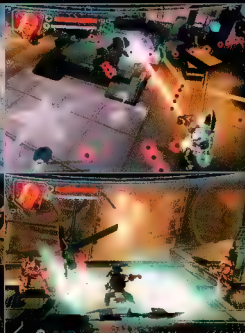
Closest Known Relative: This is the Kissin' cousin of both *Disgaea: Hour of Darkness* and *La Puçella: Tactics*.

Prognosis: Crossover Success

Brave should fare even better than *Disgaea*, thanks to better visuals and deepened gameplay.



■ When punching and kicking don't get the job done, unleash some magic.



THE RED STAR

PS2/XB • Acclaim • September 2004

What's the Deal? On the surface, *The Red Star* (based on a comic-book series set in alternate-history Russia) seems like just another obscure action game based on an even more obscure license. And then you actually play it—an intense mixture of fighting and shooting—and wonder why nobody ever tried this before. "We wanted to take the best aspects of fighters and shooters," says

Director Stephen Dupree, "and blend them into one cohesive experience."

The best aspects, in this case, mean an almost nonstop barrage of action—one moment you're bashing up half a dozen fur-hatted soldiers, the next you're firing away at an enor-

mous airship that just teleported in through a time-space window. (Things get even crazier in a chaotic two-player mode that lets you unleash tandem moves for extra destruction.) The result is a very arcadey experience, one that will appeal directly to hardcore gamers.

Closest Known Relative: Imagine the arcade classic *Final Fight* with bullet-ballet boss battles from *Ikaruga* (GC) thrown in just to keep you on your toes. Director Stephen Dupree lists *Samurai Shodown IV* and *Metal Slug* as top influences, and you can see elements of those here as well.

Prognosis: Sleeper hit

Despite the no-name license, *The Red Star* has more old-school charm than we've seen in any other recent game. The only question: How far can word of mouth alone take it? ▶





TWISTED
GOTTA HAVE ^ SWEET?



PREDATOR: CONCRETE JUNGLE

PS2 • VU Games • October 2004

What's the Deal? *Predator's* titular manhunter (and only cast member seemingly not cut out for a career in politics) sets his laser sights on Prohibition-era bootleggers, crooked cops, and crime bosses. The plot (by comic scribe Grant Morrison) sounds silly, but when the movie monster strings together combos with its signature cleavers, smart disc, and plasma casters, you can bet that blood will flow like booze in a speakeasy.

Closest Kinship Relative: It's kinda like *Mafia* (PS2/XB), but instead of a gangster you're the, um, Predator.

Prognosis: Bound for Obscurity

Fans will hunger for a game to go along with the new *Alien vs. Predator* film. This is not that game.



SHADOW HEARTS: COVENANT

PS2 • Midway • September 2004

What's the Deal? The *Shadow Hearts* series doesn't rock the boat of RPG design. In this sequel, you'll find turn-based battle systems, linear story lines, and handsome, angst-ridden young men. At least the setting is fairly unique—*Covenant* returns to the previous game's WWI-era tableau, adding a new combo system and a slew of new characters.

Closest Kinship Relative: The first *Shadow Hearts* and, if you're generous, *Final Fantasy X*.

Prognosis: Bound for Obscurity

Visually, *Covenant* looks a tad stale. It's tough to succeed on personality alone...



GET ON DA MIC

PS2/XB • Eidos • November 2004

What's the Deal? *Mic* injects some flava into the sing-along genre with cuts by urban artists including curve connoisseur Sir Mix-A-Lot and curvaceous MC Missy Elliott. Unlike *Karaoke Revolution*, which detects pitch to determine how well you're warbling, this cipher only requires you to keep time with its tunes. Perform well enough, and your candy rapper will go from playing street corners to headlining arenas.

Closest Kinship Relative: *Karaoke Revolution*, but with raw rhymes instead of poppy melodies.

Prognosis: Bound for Obscurity

12-year-old girls might rock the mic, but we're betting that legit rap fans will find it woefully unhip.



TAIKO DRUM MASTER

PS2 • Namco • October 2004

What's the Deal? There have been approximately five squillion rhythm games over the years covering everything from electric guitars to groovy space-alien synthesizers. So why has *Taiko Drum Master*, a game in which you beat a little plastic drum, sold over two million copies in Japan? Well, it's the sort of game anyone can play—just follow the moving dots onscreen and bash the drum to pieces—and the bouncy feel-good music and cutesy graphics are hard for anybody to hate on.

Closest Kinship Relative: Imagine *Dance Dance Revolution*, except you play it with your hands.

Prognosis: Sleeper Hit

Guaranteed to be the hit of any nerd's party. >





*The frenzied fight suddenly ceases
Death rushes to the back of the throat*



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オルトロス	MP 340	MP 129
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オニ	MP 264	MP 96

Let your demons do your dirty work.



謎の身
会えてうれしいぜ、おま
おまえもそう思うだろ?

謎の身
俺の名はダンテ、ちよつとした

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: NOCTURNE

PlayStation 2 • Atlus • September 2004

What's the Deal? This isn't your standard swords-and-sorcery role-playing romp: *Nocturne* delivers *Final Fantasy*-style dungeons and battles, but the action unfolds in a bizarre, postapocalyptic version of Earth. At the beginning of the game, Lucifer (yes, that Lucifer...as in the ruler of hell) grants you the ability to command demons.

Your quest through the ruins of Tokyo to

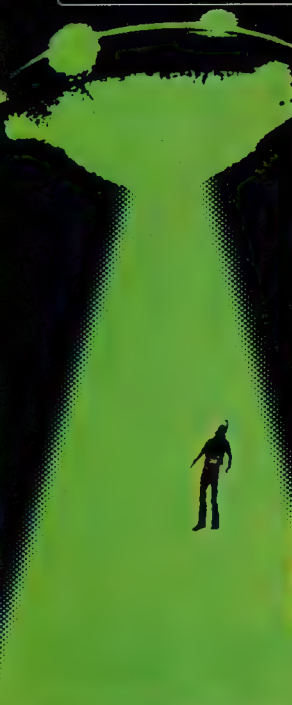
amass a party of otherworldly beasts (imagine *Pokémon* in hell) offers plenty of tricky moral decisions, and how you react to situations will affect how different demonic factions view you, eventually determining which of the game's many endings you'll see.

Closest Known Relative: It's similar only

to the *Persona* PS1 games (and the upcoming pseudosequel *Digital Devil Saga*). *Devil May Cry* fans will recognize a cool cameo by sword-swingin' hero Dante.

Prognosis: Sleeper Hit

Sure, *Nocturne* is all kinds of weird, but we hope that enough RPG players muster up the courage to try it—they won't be sorry.



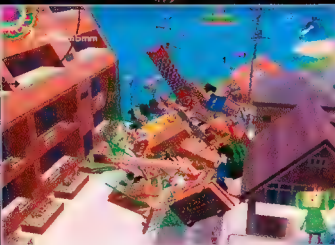
DIGITAL DEVIL SAGA

PlayStation 2 • Atlus • November 2004

What's the Deal? The same stylized visuals, creepy demons, and scorched-earth allure of *Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne* carries over into this sequel. *Saga* boasts a more realistic plot, a larger cast of characters, and a new gameplay concept—instead of recruiting demons to join your cause, here you consume their flesh to gain their powers. Lovely.

Closest Known Relatives: Atlus' *SMT: Nocturne* is the prequel to *Saga*, but the two games' story lines aren't related.

Prognosis: Sleeper Hit?
Depends on how *SMT: Nocturne* fares...if that succeeds, this will, too.



KATAMARI DAMACY

PlayStation 2 • Namco • November 2004

What's the Deal? We know what you're thinking: "Another game where you roll stuff into giant balls, starting small (pencils, paper clips) and eventually working your way up to trees, buildings, and sports stadiums?" The story behind it is just as cliché: You're grabbing all this stuff to rebuild the planets your alcoholic galaxy-ing father destroyed.

Closest Known Relative: It's like, uh...hmm. Well...er...yeah. Just...never mind.

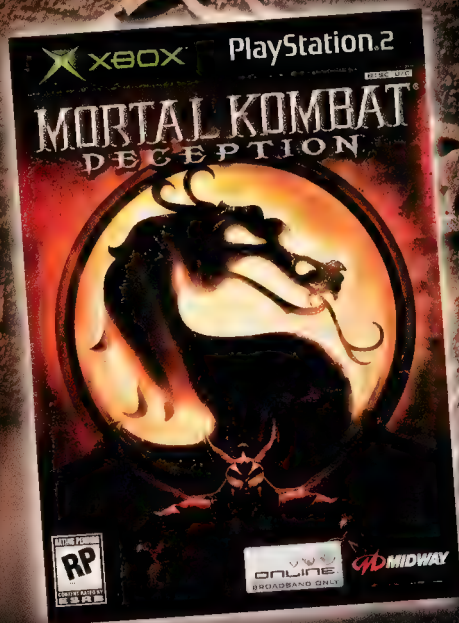
Prognosis: Sleeper Hit
Damacy's bizarre concept and elegant gameplay should make it a cult classic. >



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KUON

PS2 • AgeTec • October 2004

What's the Deal? Two weird sisters slink around ancient Japan tossing fireballs at ghostly zombies. The gameplay is a bit more combat-heavy than most puzzle-packed horror titles, and the plot's loaded with unexpected twists that put *The Ring* to shame.

Closest Known Relative: Two creepazoid sisters investigating ghosts in Japan? Sounds a lot like Tecmo's spook-snapshot thriller *Fatal Frame II*. Spellcasting should be a lot more exciting than adjusting your camera's shutter, though.

Prognosis: Sleeper Hit
Lush visuals and a tight story should help *Kuon* find an audience.



OTOGI 2: IMMORTAL WARRIORS

XB • Sega • October 2004

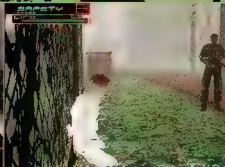
What's the Deal? *Otagi* is the most beautiful, dreamy beat-em-up you've never played. It's set in a mystical feudal Japan, with strange enemies, haunting music, and gorgeous levels that you can make a lot less gorgeous by destroying almost everything in them. *Otagi 2* ups the flashy combos and magic effects, and lets you play as one of five demon slayers.

Closest Known Relative: *Otagi*, of course. But since none of you actually played that one, we'll say *Ninja Gaiden*, but slower and more floaty—and presumably easier.

Prognosis: Bound for Obscurity
As great as it was, the first *Otagi* flopped. Is there any hope for this sequel? In a perfect world....



Not everything in *Spy Fiction* rips off *Metal Gear Solid*—some parts rip. **Mission: Improbable.**



SPY FICTION

PS2 • Sammy • August 2004

What's the Deal? Picture *Metal Gear Solid*. No, really picture it. Cause *Spy Fiction* blatantly jacks just about everything from the famous stealth-action series. We did a triple take when we saw our spy sneaking through air ducts, enemies reacting to the environment with tell-all icons above their heads, and a menu interface that might as well have been labeled "© the people who made

Metal Gear Solid."

Sammy's stealth-action game does offer some new ideas. For example, snap a photo of an enemy and you can take on his appearance from top to bottom. This—and tricked-out spy stuff like optical camouflage suits and the ability to hang from ceilings Spider-Man style—lets you infiltrate enemy bases with style and ease.

Closest Known Relative: Haven't we made this clear? *Spy Fiction* is Go-Bots to *Metal Gear Solid*'s Transformers. They're very similar, but *Spy* doesn't quite have the same high production values or top-notch graphics (on the other hand, it doesn't have the same insanity-inducing story lines, either).

Prognosis: Bound for Obscurity
You don't see any Go-Bots around nowadays, do you? This doesn't mean *Spy Fiction* is bad by any means—it can be rather fun once you accept the fact that it's an MGS rip-off. But even though

Sammy is sneaking this one in right before *MGS3: Snake Eater* comes out in November, the mighty hype of that sequel will destroy any and all challengers before they get a chance to go "IP."



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Romance!



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Take a deep whiff. Smell that? Kind of a mix of new-game shrink-wrap and burning skunks? That's the winds of change, my friend, raging at gale force across the gaming biz like never before. But then what would you expect from this

so-called transition period, when the current consoles are on the way out—thus getting their very best and most innovative games—and the new systems are just around the corner. No better time than this turbo-charged present to peek at the near future. >

SEE THE NEXT BIG...

- ...controller • page 72
- ...source of income • page 74
- ...online gamer • page 75
- ...role-playing game • page 78

Illustrations by Jan Rappert



■ PS2/GC

THE NEXT BIG CONTROLLER: YOUR BODY

So much for gamers being all thumbs. Picking up where *Dance Dance Revolution* floor mats left off, a new generation of controllers puts the rest of your body in command. Sony's motion-detecting EyeToy camera lets you kick, punch, and jump your way through games such as the upcoming *Eyeto AntiGrav*. And Nintendo's rolling out its own camera doohickey for use with a future *Mario Party* title, plus a pair of congas in September that let you control your ape hero by pounding the skins in *Donkey Kong Jungle Beat*. Meanwhile, the upcoming Nintendo DS handheld packs a touch screen, so you can tap, point, press, and let your fingertips do the gaming.

With new ways to interact with your machines, look for new kinds of games and fresh spins on old ones, such as fighting and skateboarding games you control with hyperactive connipions. But don't expect old-fashioned controllers to become landfill fillers, says Dr. Richard Marks, creator of the EyeToy. "The controller is still good for certain kinds of games," he says. "Some people don't want to get exercise when they play." —David Kushner

■ DS/PSP

THE NEXT BIG HANDHELD TREND: RECYCLED FRANCHISES

New handheld systems like the upcoming Nintendo DS and Sony PSP can only mean one thing: old-ass games. And that's perfectly fine by us. So far, we've seen remakes of relatively classic games like *Mario 64* (now *Super Mario 64+4* for DS) and *WipeOut* and *Twisted Metal* (updated for PSP), and more are on their way. "Nintendo has a rich heritage of unique characters, such as Mario, Donkey Kong, Link, and Samus," says Perrin Kaplan, Nintendo VP of marketing and corporate affairs. "We're certainly considering some of our classic games for the DS."



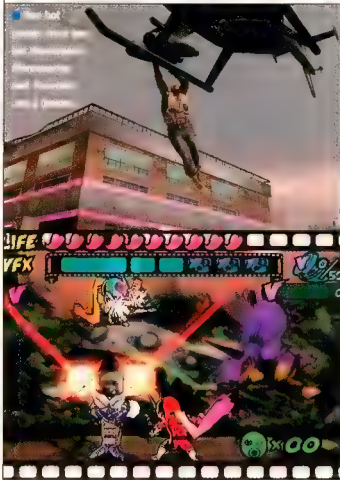
■ *WipeOut Pure* for PSP: While away that morning commute at the speed of sound.

■ PS2/XB/GC

THE NEXT BIG DEVELOPERS: PANDEMIC & CLOVER STUDIOS (TIE)

Meet two real-life splinter cells: Pandemic and Clover are independent developers that started by breaking off from established publishers. California- and Australia-based Pandemic, an offshoot of Activision, has grown into a 200-person megastudio that creates innovative games in multiple genres. It recently completed *Full Spectrum Warrior* (Xbox) and is now plugging away on *Star Wars Battlefront* and *Mercenaries*, not to mention alien-invasion tale *Destroy All Humans!* (all for PlayStation 2 and Xbox).

Japan-based Clover is a new spin-off of Capcom. With *Resident Evil* creator Shinji Mikami and *Devil May Cry* Director Hideki Kamiya in residence, this studio seems destined for big things. First, we get the trippy *Viewtiful Joe* for PS2 and *Viewtiful Joe 2* for PS2 and GameCube. Clover says its name means a "passion for creativity"—that passion is exactly why you should keep an eye on these two rising stars. —Geoff Keighley



■ PS2/XB

THE NEXT BIG ONLINE COMMUNICATOR: VIDEO CHAT

No more trash talking over your console's headset mic in your pizza-stained sweats—time to make yourself presentable. Microcoft is releasing a camera peripheral (right) by the end of the year for video chat over Xbox Live, letting up to five pals see your combination skin. And Sony has similar plans for its EyeToy camera with *Eyeto Chat*, a program that turns the gizmo into a videophone for face-to-face conversations—plus simple games like checkers—with pals across the globe. Sony has yet to announce a Stateside release for *Eyeto Chat*.



■ Xbox: ready for its close-up.

■ PlayStation 2

THE NEXT BIG FRANCHISE: GOD OF WAR

Creative Director Dave Jaffe, best known for the *Twisted Metal* franchise, says this Greeked-out PlayStation 2 action game is so ambitious that "the production team wants to murder me on a daily basis." Due in early 2005, the game promises over-the-top combat, innovative puzzles, incredibly tight con-



trol, and no load times. "Players can fully unleash their dark side," Jaffe says. "God of War really feels like an epic experience, not just a game."

—Marc Saltzman

GHOST IN THE SHELL

[STAND ALONE COMPLEX]

Imagine

No borders. No boundaries. No body.

Major Motoko Kusanagi and the officers of Section 9 are highly skilled and trained to deal with criminal activity in both the real and online worlds, but when the lines between two realities collide, a series of events will set in motion their most chilling and dangerous case of all. The fight for the future of humanity begins now.

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ACTUAL SIZE

Where we went right and oh-so-wrong with last year's slick picks

Big Hits

- **Adult games:** We sure haven't gotten any younger since last year, so we're all the more eager to grapple games—such as EA's upcoming *Godfather* title and anything on page 36—that don't treat us like babies.
- **First-person adventures:** *Metroid Prime* started this hybrid genre, which lives on with pseudo shooters like *Chronicles of Riddick* and *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes*.

Big Misses

- **The Matrix license:** Remember before the *Matrix* sequels when you thought the franchise could do no wrong? Someone go back in time and slap us.
- **Massively multiplayer online roleplayers:** EverQuest fizzled on PS2, Microsoft killed *True Fantasy Live Online*. Let's hope *Final Fantasy XI* can get cast-of-thousands RPGs going on consoles.



■ PlayStation 2

THE NEXT BIG SOURCE OF SECONDARY INCOME: SELLING GAME LOOT

■ *Gran Turismo 4*'s flea-market mode could make you a hundredaire.



EverQuest geeks have been pawning virtual weapons for real cash on eBay for years. Now, the big boys are finally getting into the game. At the Electronic Entertainment Expo this May, Kazuo Hirai, president of Sony's U.S. videogame division, announced that his company would begin selling downloadable game items for PS2 players. These so-called militranactions, as Hirai has described them, could range from badass swords to pimped-out rides. This new spin on personalization is expected to debut with *Gran Turismo 4* this November. "In the past, it has always been about the performance of the cars," says *Turismo* series helmer Kazunori Yamauchi, "but now it's as much about the human element." In other words: cha-ching! —D.K.

■ PlayStation 2

THE NEXT BIG ONLINE ADDICTION: PHANTASY STAR UNIVERSE

Ambitious online role-playing games like *Final Fantasy XI* owe a debt of gratitude to Sega's pioneering *Phantasy Star Online*—this addictive hack-n-slashathon brought online action (and embarrassing virtual weddings) to three systems: Dreamcast, GameCube, and Xbox. *Universe* expands on *PSO* in every way: Expect a persistent game world with thousands of simultaneous players, multiple planets to explore, and all-new races. Here's the catch—it won't hit until late 2005, and Sega won't say where it's gonna land...though PS2 looks likely.

■ *Phantasy Star Universe* won't look as snazzy as this opening movie, but you get the drift.



■ PS2/XB

THE NEXT BIG BATTLEFIELD: TOTAL-WAR GAMES

Yesterday we split a screen and fought in groups of four. Now, sofa soldiers enlist in squads of six to eight and do their duty online. But tomorrow we'll wage all-out war with twice as many virtual vets in army-on-army games like *Star Wars Battlefront* (September) and *Battlefield: Modern Combat* (November), both for PS2 and Xbox. "Battlefield" is so popular on PC because it delivers a kick-ass experience that's different every time you play," says *Modern Combat* Senior Producer Scott Evans.



■ Wage all-out war on Euron! (In *Battlefield: Modern Combat*, anyway.)

■ PS2/XB

THE NEXT BIG ABILITY: PSYCHIC POWERS

Leave your gat at home—your mind is becoming the weapon of choice. Leading the brain trust is *Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy* (PS2 and Xbox), starring a hero who uses his brain waves to levitate, singe, and take over enemies. And you don't need a call from Miss Cleo to know that more mind games are coming: *Second Sight*, due for PS2 and Xbox this fall, includes similar psychic snazziness.



■ I can see my car train up home.

■ PS2/XB/GC

THE NEXT BIG GRAPHICS BOOSTER: WIDESCREEN GAMING

Square is out and rectangle is in. So why settle for that boxy full-frame (4:3 aspect ratio) view when you can enjoy it in widescreen glory (16:9)? More and more games are offering an extended horizontal view, perfect for players with the right TV (such as Samsung's \$1,000 entry-level DynaFlat model, above right).



"Widescreen enhances your experience in games the same way it does for movies," says John Wendt, art lead for Microsoft's upcoming *Forza Motorsport*. "It can be critical with racing games.... A wide field of view [let's] you see not just where you are on the track, but where you're going at 200 mph." —M.S. >

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

Get it at www.getintotheGame.com
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 and more codes for the latest hot titles

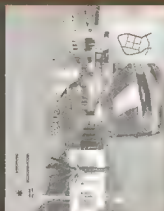
DRIVER



PS2, XBOX

DRIVER'S ED

- If you're on foot and you need to hit a nit or two to larger the driver use all available ordinance to plug the vehicle's hood, setting the engine on fire, if the car's engine is in the rear aim there instead. When the car's engine is burning, your job is done. That vehicle is going My-ight!
- Not all vehicles handle like cars. Bikes are more susceptible to oversteer, accelerate faster, and come off worse in a crash. However, they have amazing handling abilities (making the sharpest turns at speed), and can go anywhere (almost) can walk. They fly out on curbs and scenery more than cars.



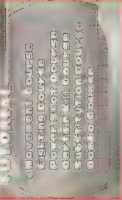
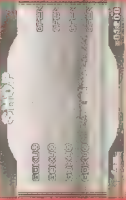
DRAGONBALL Z: SUPERNONIC WARRIORS



PS2, XBOX

STORY MODE

- If a mission requires a power-up, including the Super Saiyan, you can't get it until you've completed the mission. To get the power-up, you need to complete the mission a second time. This is a common occurrence in the game, so be prepared to replay a mission if you're stuck.



GET INTO THE GAME.COM

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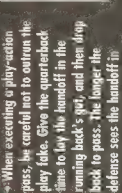
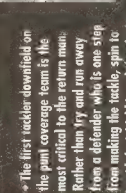
NBA FOOTBALL 2005



PS2, XBOX, GAMECUBE

PHISHIN' SKILLS

- Using the Big Hit button may not produce a fumble, but it will rag the receiver's heel. And, it will still be ringing when the next pass comes in his direction. Use the Manly Stick to see the effect of multiple big hits on a receiver's offense.





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

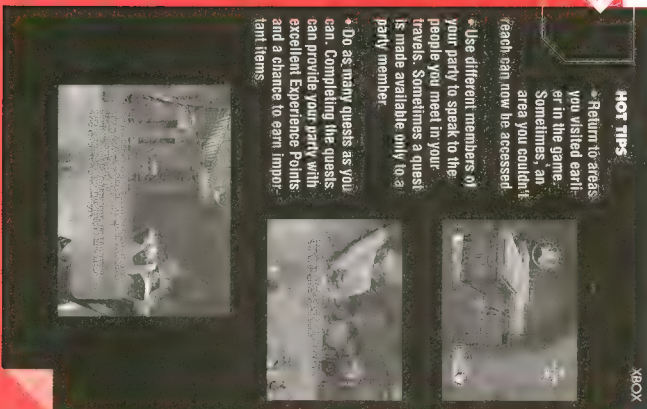
Check out www.getinthegame.com to download a coupon for \$5 off any game on this card. While you're there, get the scoop on all the hottest games and accessories.

SUDEKI



HOT TIPS

- Return to areas you visited earlier in the game. Sometimes, an area you couldn't reach can now be accessed.
- Use different members of your party to speak to the targets. Sometimes a quest is made available only to a party member.
- Do as many quests as you can. Completing the quests can provide your party with excellent Experience Points and a chance to earn important items.

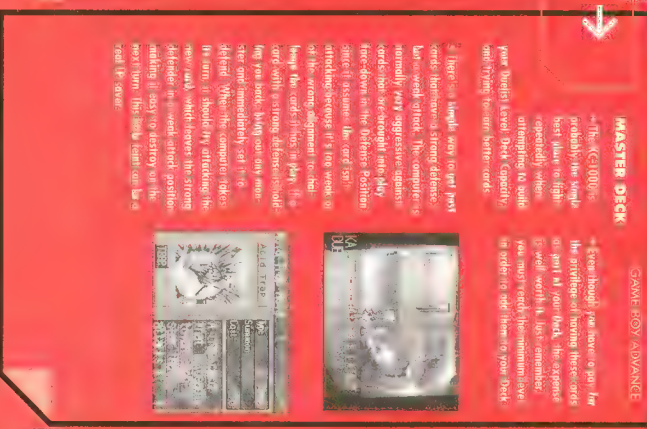


YU-GI-OH! RESHUFLE OF DESTRUCTION



MASTER DECK

- The 45,000+ cards in the game probably use single best play to fight repeatedly when attempting to build your Master Deck. Capably using "Traps" to win better cards.
- There is a simple way to get past cards that have a strong defense but no good effect. The computer normally puts aggressive aggressive cards in the deck. Face-down in the Defense Position. It assumes the card isn't attacking because it's not working on the wrong alignment (chain) and you can't attack it. Try to use a card with a strong defense and no effect immediately set it to defend. When the computer takes the turn, it should try attacking the new card, which leaves the strong defender in a weak position making it easy to destroy with the next turn. The key here is to be a real pro solver.

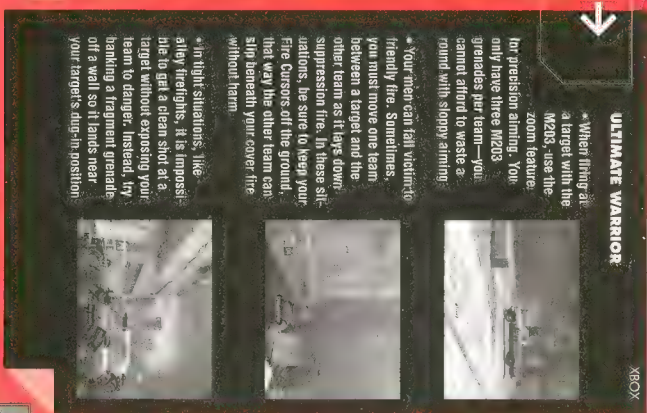


FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR



ULTIMATE WARRIOR

- When fighting a target with the M203, use the zoom feature for precision aiming. You only have five M203 grenades per team—you cannot afford to waste a round with sloppy aiming.
- Your team can fall victim to friendly fire. Sometimes, you must move one team between a target and the other team as it lays down suppression fire. In these situations, be sure to keep your fire outside of the ground, that way the other team can stay beneath your cover fire without harm.
- In tight situations, like enemy firefights, it is impossible to get a clean shot at a target without exposing your team to danger. Instead, try banking a fragment grenade off a wall so it lands near your target's eye-in-position.



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■ Xbox

THE NEXT BIG ONLINE GAMER: YO' MOMMA

And we mean that. Courtesy of supercasual games on Xbox Live Arcade (Microsoft's classic-gaming service coming this fall), this oh-so-not-hardcore demographic is heading online. Greg Canessa, group manager for Xbox Casual Games, uses his own mum as an example of what he calls the "hardcore casual player," someone who's addicted to puzzle and card games, pays for downloads, yet doesn't touch the shooters and racers now available on Xbox Live. But just you wait until Mom gets her Gamertag. "I can't wait to kick her butt in *Bejeweled*," Canessa says.



■ "Hardcore casual player"—not an oxymoron for everyman games like *Bejeweled*.

■ PS2/XB/GC

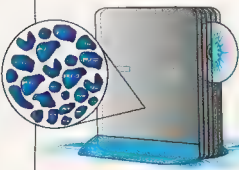
THE NEXT BIG NEWS STORY: DEBUT OF THE NEXT-GEN CONSOLES

Ready or not, it's nearly D-Day for the next round of console-hardware wars. Nintendo President Satoru Iwata says his company's next console, code-named Revolution, won't just be a punchier GameCube—it'll deliver radical "new ways of playing games." We'll find out exactly what he's talking about in May 2005, when Nintendo plans to take the wraps off the machine.

Microsoft meanwhile has spilled the innards of its code-named Xenon design to game developers. Notably

absent is the hard-disk drive that helped differentiate the original Xbox. "The hard drive was not a good business decision," says one high-level Microsoft executive, who noted it weighed down the machine with higher costs but did not help command any price premium. Included are three 64-bit PowerPC microprocessors from IBM and a high-end ATI Technologies graphics chip. Microsoft is expected to launch the system in fall 2005.

Sony is done or nearly done with initial designs of its Cell microprocessors (developed with IBM and Toshiba), which will be the brains of the PlayStation 3. But Sony is hoping to delay its launch until 2006. The odds are good that Sony's Cell chips, which have one PowerPC processor with eight "helper" vector processing units, will be tough to beat on performance, but game developers may also have difficulty mastering and developing games for them. —Dean Takahashi



■ The PS3: Read all about it soon.

■ GameCube

THE NEXT BIG MAD GENIUS: YOOT SAITO

Though the man behind Dreamcast's *Seaman*—a game about a humanoid fish you raise and have existential chats with—qualified for mad-genius status long ago, we're about to get another installment of his peculiar brand of outside-the-box thinking. Saito's upcoming *Odama* for GameCube combines feudal Japanese battles with... pinball. That's right: Use your big silver ball to take out enemy towers and smash troops, while a friend pounds out a war march on the *Donkey Konga* kit. If you're smacking your head and muttering "why didn't I think of that?" it's because you're not a mad genius, genius.



■ See man talk: Saito.

■ PS2/XB/GC

THE NEXT BIG CATCHPHRASE: EMERGENT GAMEPLAY

That's what developers call unscripted game events, something that pleasantly catches them off guard: "I saw a tester arrange a meeting in the forest with the mayor, who recently became his father-in-law," says Designer Peter Molyneux about his upcoming Xbox RPG *Fable*. "He killed the mayor, then went back to town and killed his wife. I found that puzzling until I realized he would inherit the mayor's property. It worked." —M.S.



■ Have it your way in *Fable*.

■ Xbox

THE NEXT BIG TOUGH HOMBRE: RIDDICK

Like a certain other lunkish action hero, *Escape from Butcher Bay's* star will be back. "We look forward to further exploring Riddick's enigmatic backstory with players in the future," says VU Games' Peter Wanat.



■ PlayStation 2

THE NEXT BIG TOUGH CHICAS: RUMBLE ROSES' TAG-TEAM LADIES

Part of us thinks that Dixie and Reiko, from PS2 catfighter *Rumble Roses*, might be a fad couple. But another part of us (guess which one) wants to see way, way more.

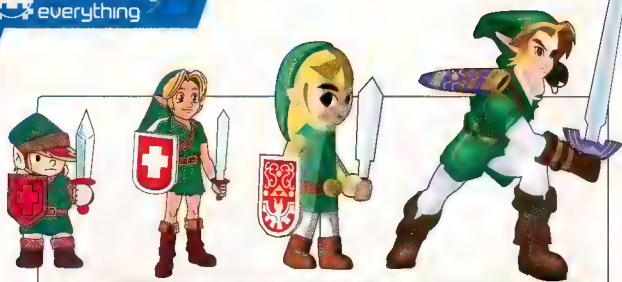


■ PS2/XB/GC

THE NEXT BIG VIDEOGAME HOOD: URBAN

West Coast, East Side—wherever the gangstas roam, their streets of rage are center stage in everything from shooter *25 to Life* (right) to the new *GTA*.





■ DS/PSP
**THE NEXT BIG
 HANDHELD
 TECHNOLOGY:
 WI-FI CONNECTIVITY**

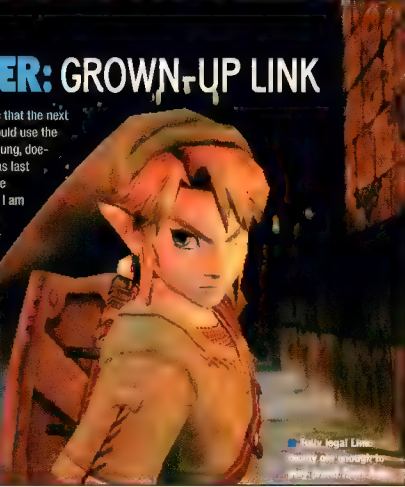
Gizmo-slave junior execs may not be impressed with the Wi-Fi tech crammed into the upcoming Nintendo DS and Sony PSP portables, but any red-blooded gamer oughta be. Both units let you link up wirelessly for multiplayer melees or connect to the Net via hotspots in airports and coffee shops. "Having units that detect each other could...be huge," says Chris Charia, senior producer on PSP launch game *Death, Jr.* "Maybe [you] have a fighting game, and when it detects you're near someone else with the game, a challenge could be issued." While PSP is part game system, part multimedia gizmo, the DS is all about Net play and interaction between users, letting gamers send instant messages up to 30 feet. But the possibilities for both systems go beyond passing notes in class. "Imagine going out into the world as a...dungeon master," Charia says, "placing monsters, treasures, etc., and configuring a rule set, then inviting your friends to play...through [Wi-Fi] connectivity to the Internet."
 —Shawn Smith



■ The new "connectivity": the DS.

■ GameCube
**THE NEXT BIG
 MAKEOVER: GROWN-UP LINK**

Over and over Nintendo told us that the next GameCube *Legend of Zelda* would use the same cartoony art style and young, doe-eyed version of its hero, Link, as last year's *The Wind Waker*. And like idiots, we believed them. "Yes, I am a liar!" joked *Zelda* Director Eiji Aonuma after revealing a completely different, more mature model of the pointy-eared star fighting his way through a world that looks less Disney and more *Lord of the Rings*. Why the sudden bout of puberty? "We felt we fully explored the world of a child Link, [so now] we wanted to go with the idea of an adult." Nintendo is promising the yet-to-be-named new *Zelda* later next year. If you trust what they say,

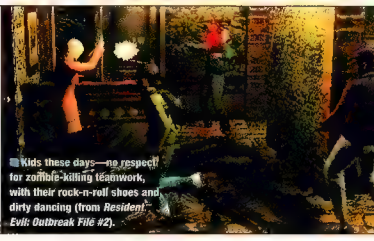


■ Hello, legal Link. Ready or not, here we go.

■ PS2/XB
**THE NEXT BIG
 MULTIPLAYER MODE: CO-OP 2.0**

Cooperative gameplay no longer means just plugging in your buddy's controller for him before you smoke him in *Madden*. Games like *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow* (the Xbox and PS2 versions) and *Resident Evil Outbreak* (PS2) are offering innovative ways for gamers to play together. The upcoming *Splinter Cell 3*, for example, has

two players working in tandem to overcome mutual obstacles. That wall too tall to climb over? Give your teammate a boost, then have him pull you up after him. "Our goal is to enhance the feeling of trust, where partnership and working together are keys to success," says *Splinter Cell 3* Producer Mathieu Ferland.



■ Kids these days—no respect for zombie-killing teamwork, with their rock-n-roll shoes and dirty dancing (from *Resident Evil: Outbreak File #2*).

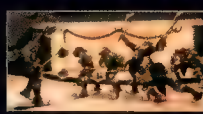
■ Mobiles
**THE NEXT BIG
 CELL PHONE GAME YOU ACTUALLY
 WANT TO PLAY: FINAL FANTASY**

Color screens, text messaging, built-in cameras—what's next, a gorgeous, turn-based multiplayer RPG? Actually, yes. In *Final Fantasy VII: Before Crisis*, you and your buds bend Haste spells and moogle attacks from phone to phone as evil agents of the Shinra Corporation in a story that precedes *FFVII*. Just don't expect to play it on your smokin' new clamshell; *Crisis* will only be playable on next-gen phones not out yet in the United States.



■ This battle is being played by three people on their own phones.

■ PS2/XB
**THE NEXT BIG
 PLOT TWISTER: FAMOUS AUTHORS
 CRAFTING GAME STORIES**



■ "I want you to feel like you're in a novel," says *Dawn of Mana*'s R.A. Salvatore.

Now that visuals are slick, game makers are hiring top writers such as Orson Scott Card (*Avatar Rising* for Xbox) and R.A. Salvatore (*Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone* for PS2 and Xbox) to punch up plots. "A franchise needs a continuing plot. That's what writers bring," says *Dawn of Mana* author David Fisher, who's writing an Acclaim game. —D.K.

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YOU MUST BECOME ONE**

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■ PS2/XB/GC/GBA

THE NEXT BIG

ROLE-PLAYING GAME:

THE LORD OF THE RINGS, THE THIRD AGE

Finally, a fantasy forged from the one franchise to rule them all

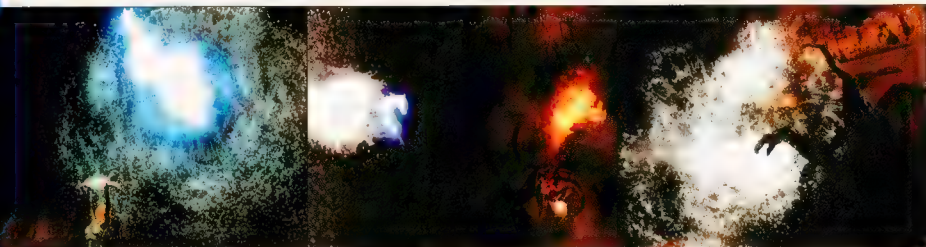
Funny thing about Rivendell, the sun-gilded elf haven seen in director Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* flicks: It's not that spectacular when you trek there in person. Sure, the chairs are comfy (from Ikea, we think). The place has every modern game system sprawled across a low-slung table along one wall. And we're certainly not complaining about the row of video monitors showing battles from *The Lord of the Rings, The Third Age*, EA Games' role-playing epic hit-

ting your PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube, and Game Boy Advance in November. It's not until you exit Rivendell—actually EA's code name for the game's demo room at the company's northern California compound—that you really start to ogle the wonders of Middle-earth. Near the elevator, a life-size reproduction of royal ranger Aragorn stands guard beneath its 20-foot map of the realm. Aisles between cubicles for the game's 100-plus staff bear names like Fanghorn Way and Helm's Deep Road.

Thousands of movie production photos line the walls, and hours of footage from the films—some of it not even included in the special extended editions—fill artists' hard drives (more on that later). Such treasures would go for a dwarfen king's ransom on eBay. "If you come back next year and all this stuff's gone," jokes Product Marketing Assistant David Silverman, "you'll know the game didn't do very well."

The team is mining this mountain of solid-milhril reference material—direct

from movie studio New Line Cinema—to construct your next big role-playing game, an accessible, tastes-like-*Final Fantasy* take on the genre that mixes things you've seen in the films with much that you haven't. "It's almost like Peter [Jackson] had made a bigger movie that had included all these characters and events, then decided while editing he would cut them out," says *Third Age* Executive Producer Steve Gray. "This is the film that would be on the cutting-room floor."



■ Spell check: Magic—unseen but implied in the books and barely glimpsed in the films—hits the game with all the subtlety of a nuke, as you can see from this water-stood summoning sequence.

Three rangers and a warrior
against three orcs and a Nazgûl?
Your dungeon master buddies
ain't gonna like this one.



“There’s enormous backstory around the movies that isn’t in them.”

—Executive Producer Steve Gray

Wizards, warriors

But the game’s party of not-ready-for-Hollywood heroes will still make eagle-eyed trilogy watchers go, “Wait a sec—where have I seen these guys before?” *Third Age* begins outside of Rivendell (the one from the films—not EA’s demo room), with players guiding BereThor. He’s a plate-mailed trooper from Minas Tirith, the white-washed mountain fortress under siege in *Return of the King*. Like all the characters who join your party, BereThor is a bit player in the films, glimpsed for a split second (see exactly where on page 80), but with a proper name and backstory from Peter Jackson’s production company. BereThor is sent to Rivendell by Gondor’s loony, sloppy-eating steward, Denethor, to find out what happened to his son, Boromir, who died valiantly while defending hobbits during the first film’s finale. Before players arrive in Rivendell, they’re joined by spell-casting elf maiden Idril. The duo sets out after the movie’s principal Fellowship characters, who are on their way to the dungeons of Moria. In the wild, they run into deadeye archer Elegost, one of Faramir’s rangers, and dwarf he-man Hadhod. “Very early in

the game your party has the classic RPG archetypes: the magic user, the warrior, and the long-range attacker,” says Gray.

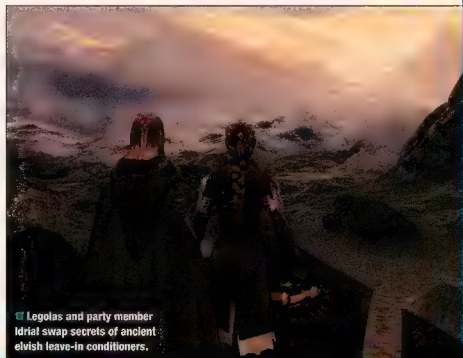
Your heroes begin in the wake of the movie’s Fellowship, but as things progress, you’ll cross their path or sometimes end up ahead of them as your party encounters its own challenges and side quests. Overall, the adventure is divided into three chapters, one for each film in the trilogy. “*Third Age* is part of the fabric of the films,” Gray says. “In the center of that fabric is what you actually saw in the movies, but what is lying all around it is this other stuff that’s going on, and these are the characters that participate in that world.”

The team worked with New Line to stitch this fabric, basing it on ideas that director Jackson and his production company created for the films. “There’s enormous backstory and structure around the movies that isn’t actually in them,” Gray says, “things that were cut from the first release or weren’t even in the extended versions, so there’s a treasure trove of ideas.” Your party members, of which you’ll eventually get six, have their own agendas, for instance. And much of the architecture

in the game is true to what you saw in the film—even if it was only onscreen for an eye blink. “Our version of Helm’s Deep is 100 percent accurate to the one that’s in the film,” Gray says. “It’s cool to be able to explore it. We weren’t able to do that for the past few years in our action games

because we’d wind up with spaces that were too narrow for fighting.”

You’ll spy other familiar places—rivers, villages, and terrain features from the films—as you explore *Third Age*’s realm, which is actually made of interconnecting levels and never switches to a



Legolas and party member Idril swap secrets of ancient elvish leave-in conditioners.

■ Gimli sets the table for romance.



■ Even simple attacks pack gear-whiz effects if you equip the right magic weapons and armor.



traditional overworld map. Of course, you'll find a lot of unfamiliar sites, too. In Moria, for instance, as your party pursues the Fellowship, they'll stumble across an orc altar to the flaming Balin, the titanic fire demon who goes hoof-to-tee with Gandalf.

The VIPs

And that brings us to what Gray calls *Third Age's* "guest star" characters. Once you reach Gandalf in Moria, ol' pointy hat joins your party for battle with the Balrog, thus coming under your control. Such guest appearances pop up frequently throughout the game: Aragorn, Legolas, Faramir, Gimli, and other principals all join your party at one time or another—sometimes for just one battle, sometimes for longer (and you

can even control evil characters—see page 88). But you're never able to alter the events of the film and keep these guys around for long. Beat the Balrog with Gandalf's help, for example, and he still tumbles into the abyss as he did in the first movie.

EA tapped talent from the films to bring these guest stars to life. Sir Ian McKellen recorded new Gandalf dialogue, much of which plays during re-edited movie footage you unlock by finding special story cards. "He changed our script based on what he thinks Gandalf would say," Gray tells us of McKellen's recording sessions, "which is difficult because we must get script changes approved by New Line. But it's Sir Ian McKellen—he's going to do

whatever he thinks is right. Maybe Peter Jackson can tell him what to do, but he ain't listening to us."

Christopher "Saruman" Lee and Andy "Gollum" Serkis spent quality time behind EA's microphones. No other cast members had time for the project, but the team had a backup plan. "We figured it was a pretty good chance that with the movies over and done, these guys wouldn't be available," says Gray, "but then we used maybe 25 percent of what we recorded last year [for action game *Return of the King*]. Fortunately, we kind of lost our minds a little bit when we wrote those scripts because now we have all this great stuff."

Amidst the guest-star characters, some major players are conspicuous by their

absence. Hobbits Frodo and Sam never join your party, meaning you never have to worry about that pesky ring doodad. *Third Age's* plot follows the story arc of Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli's adventures "because we wanted to take players to Helm's Deep and Minas Tirith and Osgiliath," says Gray. "If we added the whole branch where you could follow the hobbits, it started to feel too big. I think there's a game to be made there, but we didn't make it this year."

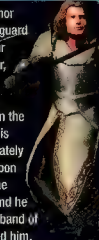

Royal rumbling

The beating, bloody heart of any RPG is its combat system, and the *Third Age* team is so stoked with the one they've created that they might release a card game based on its rules. Still, the game's turn-based

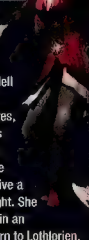

WHAT'S UP, PARTY PEOPLE?

Keep those 20-sided dice in your pocket—you don't create your party of *Third Age* heroes from scratch. Instead, you start with one plate-mailed male and gather other wizards and warriors—including, in quickie cameos, main movie characters—as you roll through the adventure. Let's meet the first four folks who join your party, and find out where you might spy them if you scan the sidelines of the trilogy's wide-angle shots....

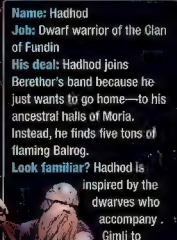

Name: Berethor
Job: Gondor guard
His deal: Your first character, Berethor is sent to seek out Boromir in the northlands. His journey ultimately places him upon the path of the Fellowship, and he assembles a band of warriors to aid him. **Look familiar?** Berethor is based on the warriors in the background of *The Two Towers'* Boromir scene (extended DVD version only).

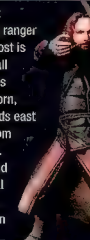

Name: Idril
Job: Hottie elf spellcaster
Her deal: En route to Rivendell on behalf of Lothlorien's elves, she encounters Berethor in the wild, where she helps him survive a Nazgul onslaught. She then joins him in an attempt to return to Lothlorien. **Look familiar?** Idril's based on the goldilocked elf maidens in Lothlorien, the golden forest seen toward the end of *The Fellowship of the Ring*.

Name: Hadhod
Job: Dwarf warrior of the Clan of Fundin
His deal: Hadhod joins Berethor's band because he just wants to go home—to his ancestral halls of Moria. Instead, he finds five tons of flaming Balrog. **Look familiar?** Hadhod is inspired by the dwarves who accompany Gimli to Rivendell in *Fellowship of the Ring*.

Name: Elegost
Job: Dunedain ranger
His deal: Elegost is one of the small band of rangers who, like Aragorn, defend the lands east of the Shire from troublemakers. Together he and Hadhod, his pal and traveling companion, join Berethor's band. **Look familiar?** Elegost is among Faramir's rangers who take Frodo and Sam into custody in *The Two Towers*.

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THE SECOND THIRD AGE

Due this fall alongside its console big brother, the Game Boy Advance version of *The Third Age* takes on an entirely different style of gameplay: turn-based strategy. After choosing one of several different light or dark side commanders, you can smite enemy armies in more than 30 different famous movie battles, such as the siege of Minas Tirith and the fall of Osgiliath.



battles—which pop up at scripted spots but default to random encounters after you've cleared an area—will look familiar to fans of traditional console RPGs. Your party of four sits on one side of the arena, unleashing whatever melee, ranged, or magic attacks you choose, from quick sword hits to screen-filling summons of talking-tree ents, firewoks dragons, fire

• Some battles feature special conditions for winning. Here, you must not only defeat the orcs but also attack the ladders they're using to scale the walls of Helm's Deep. Until you destroy the ladders, more orcs will just keep coming.

BATTLE BREAKDOWN

	HP:	AP:
Berethor	920/920	93/93
Idrial	920/920	10/53
Legolas	800/800	100/100

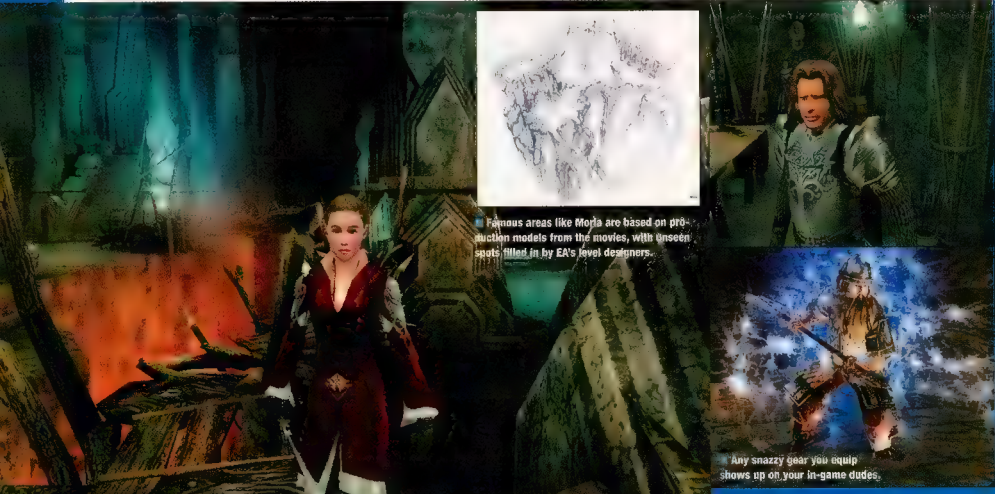
• The initiative bar tells you the order in which everyone—friends and foes—will attack. Certain spells can move you up or down the queue. Seem familiar? *Final Fantasy X* features a similar bar in the exact same spot.

• Any ailments or status effects (say, your dwarf's protective flame-shield spell) show up as little orbs above all affected characters' heads. Here, Berethor's Inspire skill is in effect, increasing everyone's attack and dodging abilities.

demons, and more. But the team tweaked the standard battle formula by adding two special combat formations: tank and protect. Call on a character—usually a hearty fighter such as the dwarf—to tank an enemy, and he'll get right up in the bad guy's grill, preventing the enemy from attacking anyone else. The protect command takes a member of your party and puts him behind another ally, thus shielding him from attacks. These moves are costly in terms of turn-wasting ability points, and they wear off after a few rounds, but you can imagine the strategic possibilities. "Say you have an enemy that's a really strong magic user and you're worried about getting blasted with area-effect spells," says Gray, "and

you have your elf who's really good at healing. So you have the dwarf tank the enemy magic user and put the elf behind your ranger. The elf takes turns healing the dwarf, who's getting smacked all the time, while the ranger uses his bow to take out the magic user." Nifty, huh? But don't get too cocky: Enemies can use tank and protect tactics, too. Although individual party members play particular combat roles as in any other RPG (the dwarf's handy with his ax, the elf prefers sword, etc.), you get a lot of leeway to tweak each hero's battle style. Successful fights grant experience points you then apply to a skill tree built of range, melee, magic, and leadership abilities. Boosting magic, for example, unlocks new

spells. High leadership lets you temporarily enhance the morale of the party, increasing attack damage and members' chances of dodging. A character with high leadership can even call for everyone-strikes-at-once group melee or magic attacks, or let you coordinate tank and protect tactics using fewer turns. Experience points aren't the only ability booster; weapons, armor, and items will enhance skills, too. Later in the game, once you reach the plains of Rohan, you'll find horses you can equip to bump up your leadership ability and battle from the saddle. You can build each character's abilities however you like and even turn your ax-swinging dwarf into a mighty magic user. "Everyone can acquire some level of all



Famous areas like Mordor are based on production models from the movies, with inset spots filled in by EA's level designers.

Any snazzy gear you equip shows up on your in-game clothes.

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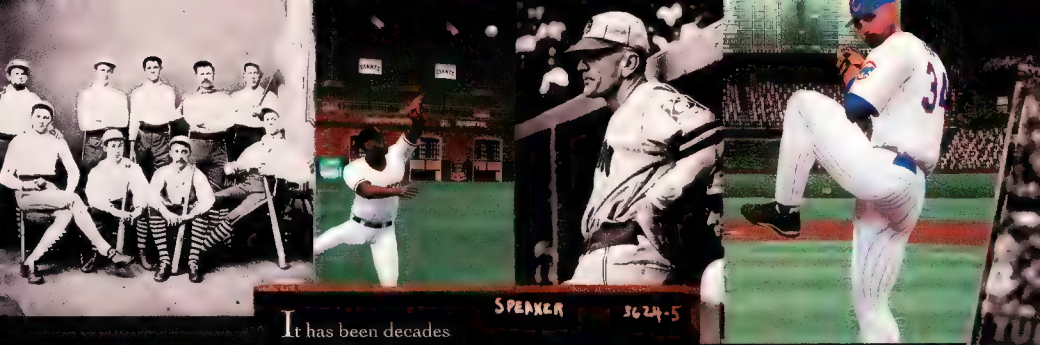
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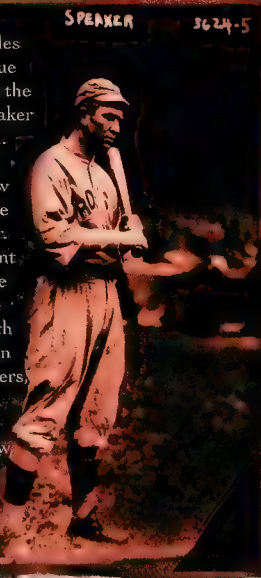
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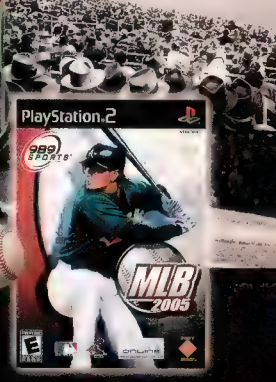


It has been decades since Major League Baseball has seen the likes of a Tris Speaker or a Connie Mack. Men blessed with the smarts and raw talent to fill the role of player/manager. But with the advent of Franchise Mode in MLB™ 2005, the lost art is back with a twist: Players can be managers, owners, or all three, in the ultimate test of baseball know-how as fans control every detail—from player deals to the price of pretzels.





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Orc needs two sattingisher, badly: Even rock-headed dwarves can learn the delicate arts of spellcasting.

"We don't want to leave behind people who loved the last two games."
—EAS's Steve Gray

the skills," says Gray. "Although, the different races have skills they can get to that others can't. The Gondorian (Berethor) has a knack for leadership, for example."

If you think character development is for D&D dweebs, however, you won't have to fiddle with it. *Third Age* will pack a mode that does all the dirty work automatically, equipping the most efficient gear and suggesting the best skills come level-up time. "We don't want to leave behind the people who loved the last two games," Gray says. "We want to have a mode for the mainstream gamer who's like, 'Hey man—I'm just hanging out and want to have fun for a few hours.'" Of course, hardcore players can ditch the easy way out and stick to the normal mode. "There is no auto-equip,"

Gray says of the standard game. "You really have to understand your stats and go on side quests to gain experience. If you just blast through the obvious path, you're just not going to make it. That's the core of this game: the 40- to 60-hour hardcore role-playing-game experience."

Familiar fantasy

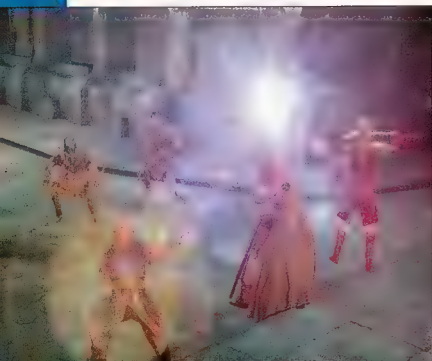
Dig through all the movie props, reference photos, and set models in EA's office and you'll unearth seemingly out-of-place pieces of inspiration: copies of new *Final Fantasy* games and compilations of old ones. That explains *Third Age's* familiar ring: its over-the-top monster-summoning spells, lavishly produced in-game cinema sequences (created using the films' stunt

people), largely linear quest, and tried-and-true battle system—all hallmarks of Square Enix's dynamo *Final Fantasy* series.

But before you go hollering, "They stole it! They stole it!" consider this: Author and Oxford scholar John Ronald Reuel Tolkien crafted the archetypes for modern fantasy—the p's and q's of orcs, elves, dwarves, wizards, and warriors—more than half a century ago with his books *The Hobbit* and, later, the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Role-playing games ripped off his ideas. So it's only fair that the franchise he created is getting a little payback with *Third Age*. "Final Fantasy is obviously the model that you have to take into account when doing a monster RPG," says *Third Age* Visual Editor Joe Estus. "But our goal

is to raise the bar."

In fact, the more we chat with the game's design staff, the more we detect some kind of East/West rivalry between U.S.-based EA and Japanese RPG giant Square Enix. After all, the RPG genre is the only one left that Japanese developers still dominate, making Square Enix a very big target. "My son plays *Final Fantasy X-2*. I listened to that game, and I just wanted to turn it off," says Don Veca, EA's award-winning ▶



When picking your four heroes for battle in pitch-black Moria, you could do a lot worse than the guy with the glowy sword.



EA's new Lord of the Rings game is a product of EA's partnership with Tolkien's estate.

golf

YOU ARE HERE

Think of your party in *The Third Age* as the Forrest Gump of Middle-earth. They somehow manage to show up at just about every major event from the three *Rings* films. "Throughout the whole game, your story keeps intersecting the story of the Fellowship," says Executive Producer Steve Gray. "You either meet up with them, or are someplace they just were, or are just ahead of them." For example...



RIVENDELL

Your quest begins with Berethor, a soldier from the human Kingdom of Gondor. He's been sent to locate his fellow countryman Boromir (the guy with the horn who gets it at the end of the first movie). Unfortunately, Berethor arrives at the elf palace Rivendell too late: Boromir has already left along with Gandalf and the rest of the Fellowship, but a couple of new friends (Idril the elf, Hadhod the dwarf and, Elegost the ranger) join his quest.



MORIA

In the huge caverns and twisty staircases of this mazelike mine, your party almost catches up with the movie Fellowship—they arrive at Balin's Tomb just after the Fellowship's big fight with the cave troll. After several close calls with the giant Balrog monster while exploring the mines, you catch up with Gandalf in time to fight the flame-spewing demon.



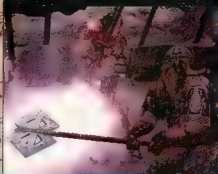
THE WATCHER IN THE WATER

Remember that tentacled beastie in the scummy lake just outside the mines of Moria? He's called The Watcher, and though he lost a few arms and gained a few arrows in his run-in with Frodo and company, he's alive and itching for another fight. But wait, didn't this monster collapse the entrance to Moria under a ton of rubble? "He conveniently damages the door some more so you can get in," says Producer Gray with a smile, "and then closes it again."



HELM'S DEEP

You arrive at this cliffside stronghold before the 10-zillion-strong orc army begins its assault, as seen in the second film's finale. Gather a few items and chat with the locals before the battle, then join up with elf-archer Legolas and start your own orc-killing contest while defending the walls.



OSGILIATH

While Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli trek through the ghastly paths of the dead, your party heads to this once-great rubble-strewn riverside city. You'll team up with Boromir's brother, Faramir, for a battle against a Nazgul and his ride, a winged fell beast.





Two Balin altars. Not in the movies. (UJ: 00/10)



audio director, who is building a much beefier sound and music system for *Third Age*—complete with roaring tunes from the movies. “Hold our graphics engine up against [Square’s] and we certainly come out a little ahead and way ahead when you compare the audio,” says Gray, who actually worked at Square in the late ’90s (he helmed the PlayStation 1 horror-themed role-playing game *Parasite Eve*). “I want to take the sensibility of what I picked up while working for [Final Fantasy series creator Hironobu] Sakaguchi, that commitment to game design, and marry that with what we already have at EA—a total commitment to quality of presentation,” Gray says. “Those two things together make an unstoppable combination.”

Lord of the rights

Unstoppable combo or not, development on *Third Age* came with some prickly rights that created a challenge for the team. EA Games owns only the rights to the *Lord of the Rings* movies—not Tolkien’s novels (those rights belong VU Games). “If it’s in the book, but not in the films, we can’t do it in the game,” says Gray. “Now, if it’s not in the books or the movies, we can do it as long as it can be reasonably derived from or based on something in the films.” Take the orcs’ altar to the Balin we mentioned earlier, for example. “Is there a Balin altar in the film? No,” Gray says. “But there are hints that he’s worshipped by the orcs, though, so we could add it.” Much of *Third Age*’s plot is the result of

months of give and take with New Line Cinema, which has the ultimate say in what nonmovie story elements the team can stick into the game. But even when the final product hits shelves in November, only New Line and EA will know which plot elements were created from scratch and which are based on actual footage Peter Jackson shot but still hasn’t seen the light of day. “They’re really protective of that footage,” Gray says, “because obviously, they want to make the extended extended versions someday—in a trilogy box set or whatever. They want to keep the franchise alive for years to come.”

As EA and New Line barter over what will and won’t make it into *Third Age*, we do know of one thing that will never make



You’ll find no shops in *Third Age*, since the movies don’t have them—no dwarfish industry.

the cut. “We are going to get rid of the six endings from *Return of the King*,” Gray says, laughing and leaning back in one of Rivendell’s springy Ikea chairs. “That seemed a little excessive.”

—Crispin Boyer and Mark MacDonald



If you can beat them, join them: *Third Age* lets you take control of the flaming Balin (that’s him from the game on the right) and charging Mumakil (inset).

“YOU SHALL NOT PASS.” EH? WELL, WE’LL JUST SEE ABOUT THAT

Tired of playing as humans with hearts of gold, goody-goody elves, and scruffy-yet-lovable dwarves? *The Third Age* lets you turn the tables and be the bad guys once in a while. “Think of it as a minigame,” says Executive Producer Steve Gray. “Every time you defeat an enemy [in the regular game], that encounter shows up on a list [of battles] that can be played from the evil side. Say you defeat the Balin—now you can go and choose it and play as the Balin against [your party].”

And, Gray stresses, that’s for every enemy, from the lowliest orc grunt to titanic boss monsters like Mumakil (those gigantic battle elephants) and fell beasts (the winged dinosaurs the ringwraiths ride). Winning these bad-guy battles unlocks special items, armor and weapons for your characters, or bonus story-card movie footage narrated by Gandalf himself, Sir Ian McKellen.

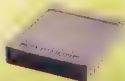
The developers even considered writing a story line for the evil characters to play through, but quickly realized it was a lose-lose situation. “What if you win [playing as the bad guys], Helm’s Deep falls to the dark side, and all those guys get killed?” asks Gray. “We realized we’d be [rewriting] the fiction and be competing with Tolkien, which is a really bad idea. [On the other hand], if there’s a story and the end result is every time you fight the good guys you lose, where’s the fun in that?”

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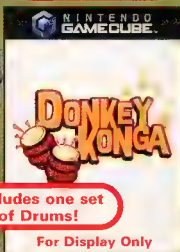
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LOW

LG UX6000

If you want a no-frills flip phone that has the power to play games, check out this stylish entry-level LG. A surprising choice with a decent camera but no Bluetooth, this LG boasts slick design, a good color screen, and a pleasantly compact size, all of which make the LG a fine and affordable starting point.

\$20-\$80 with activation
Available on Verizon

Runner-up:

Sony Ericsson T616

A Swiss Army knife among phones, this Sony Ericsson is cute and pocket sized. Don't let that fool you, though. It packs a full feature list into that tiny package, including infrared, Bluetooth, a camera, and one bright color screen (though it has a tendency to smudge too easily). Games that make use of the numeric keypad fare better than the ones that call upon the T616's directional pad. Instead of a normal pad, this model features a little toggling thumbstick. It works great for navigating the unit's colorful OS, but during the height of gaming, this little stick causes too many accidental presses.

\$50-\$100 with activation
Available on Cingular, T-Mobile



MID

N-Gage QD

Who would have ever thought that the much-maligned N-Gage would make its way on to a recommendation list? Among cell phones, the new N-Gage QD has a clear advantage for gaming, thanks to its shape and button design. The buttons are still hard and tiny, but the D-pad works much smoother than it did in the phone's previous incarnation. The original N-Gage's D-pad's center-press button has been surgically removed, reinvented as a new button, making games and phone operation much easier.

Plus, you no longer have to open the phone just to swap a game; the QD adds an easy-to-access MMC panel on the outside of the phone. Most important, there's no more side talking, which was only the most ill-conceived idea in all of cell-phone design-dom. The QD has lost the MP3 and radio functions, but they won't be missed. Much changed, much evolved, the QD paves an optimistic future for cell-phone gaming.

\$200 without service activation;
estimated \$100 with service activation
Available on Cingular, T-Mobile

HIGH

Sanyo SCP-5500

Sprint PCS is currently pushing two phones as the new multimedia poster children for its service: Sanyo's SCP-5500 and Samsung's SPH-A680. Both come loaded with bright screens and pack a decent CPU for gaming on the go. Sure, Sanyo's phone takes better pictures with its built-in digital camera, but this isn't a beauty contest—we want to be able to play games. The SCP-5500 is tops because of its bigger screen (which lets you better see what's going down) and a button layout that won't induce carpal-tunnel syndrome inside of five seconds. **\$349.99 without service activation;** **\$199.99-\$249.99 with activation**
Available on Sprint



FUN FACT:

Gaming is the number one reason phone owners are considering purchasing a new phone. Sixty percent of people surveyed said it was their top reason.

—Ziff Davis, Media Game Group Survey, June 2004



DRIV3R R3V13W>>

Better than the console game?

Finally, a cell-phone game that actually lives up to its console counterpart (or in this case, perhaps exceeds it). *DRIV3R* has plenty of story, action, and missions for a portable game, let alone one on a cell phone. It comes complete with a full-length single-player mode and some driving minigames, creating a package that could keep you entertained for weeks—a rare case for mobile games.

In single-player mode, you are

FBI agent Tanner. You go deep undercover to infiltrate a Miami gang profiting from stolen cars, and that's where the fun begins. What makes this game different from all other cell-phone titles is its *Grand Theft Auto* feel (the earlier *Grand Theft Auto* games, at least). Although you are in a car most of the time, there are a multitude of ways to use your vehicle. Missions include protecting a car, evading cops, and even crashing into enemies (these opportunities are also

accessible in the minigames section). There are cities to explore, gangs to penetrate, and cars to steal. (Yes, you can steal cars by blocking them and hopping in.)

Another valuable feature is that your progress is always saved, making it easy for you to just flip the cell phone open and start playing from where you left off. This beats having to start over every time you've got to power down to pay attention to whatever it is your teacher or boss is spouting on about.

The only bone to be picked with *DRIV3R* is its poor assortment of vehicles. Your choices are a sedan, truck, motorcycle, or muscle car. Each comes in different colors, but that's about it. More car models from different decades and more color variations would be great, but of

course, this isn't too big a deal, and it doesn't take away from the addictiveness of the game.

For those of you looking for a *GTA*-style experience on the go, *DRIV3R* likely won't disappoint.

SCORE

 9/10

CH3AT COD3S

Did you know? By playing the mobile version of *DRIV3R*, you can obtain codes to unlock things in the console version of the game. Unlocks include access to different weapons, all cities and missions available, invincibility, and the freedom of not having the cops on your back.



ARE YOU READY FOR SOME FOOTBALL?

Can't get enough Madden or NFL2K in your life? Try tackling this season's mobile games



With football season right around the corner, Sorrent and Jamdat are finalizing this year's installments in their flagship mobile football series for release this September. For those pigskin nuts that wish they could have a game like *Madden* or *NFL2K* on the go, these two picks may be just what the doctor ordered. For info on how to get these or any of the games mentioned in this *1UP Wireless Guide*, make sure you check out our expanded coverage at wireless.1UP.com.

FOX SPORTS FOOTBALL '05 PUBLISHER: SORRENT

Sorrent's football game delivers the look and feel of a Fox Sports football broadcast right on your phone, with menus just like those on Sunday's matches—it even features Fox's NFL theme music! Beyond the flashy stuff, *Fox Sports Football '05* has the largest playbook, with over 100 plays and dozens of formations based on down and yardage situations. There are also some *NFL* Street-style over-the-top moves, such as flaming smoke trails when you're

powered up and special zoomed-in animated tackles. And for those competitive types, online score posting will be available.

NFL FOOTBALL 2005 PUBLISHER: JAMDAT

Fully licensed by the NFL, Jamdat's game offers all 32 NFL teams, players, and rosters, making it the most realistic football title on the mobile market. It also features gameplay more akin to what you're used to with console football games like *Madden* and *NFL2K*. Seasons are set up for seven or 16 games, so

MOBILE FANTASY FOOTBALL

Your life as you know it will soon be over. Never mind checking your fantasy football stats on a PC, now you can play right on your phone in *Fox Sports Fantasy Football* from Sorrent.

Featuring an easy-to-navigate interface and community-driven content, you'll be able to join leagues and compete on a weekly basis. For more info, visit our *Fantasy Football* club at wireless.1UP.com.

you can dictate how long you want to play. And for those players obsessed with stats, *NFL 2005* keep close tabs on just about everything: passing yards, rushing yards, interceptions, tackles, total touchdowns, field goals, sacks, and more.



DIRECTORY

MULTIPLATFORM

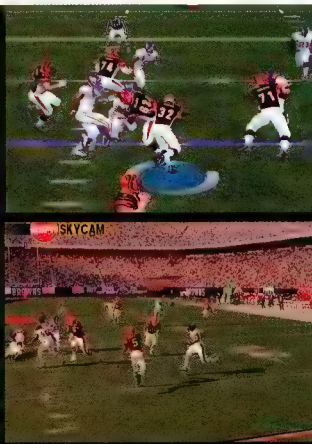
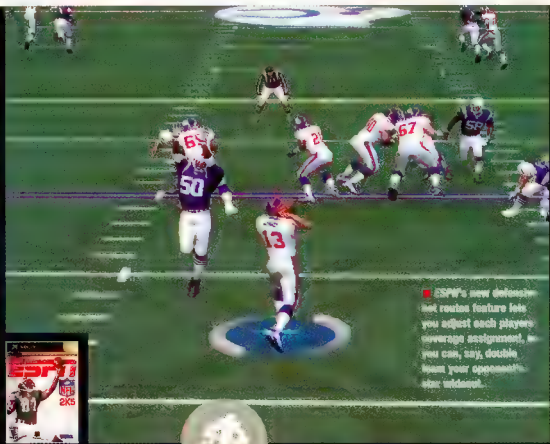
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- 99 Showdown: Legends of Wrestling
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PLAYSTATION 2

- 100 Crimson Tears
- 102 Athens 2004
- 102 Ghosthunter

- 104 Echo Night: Beyond
- 104 McFarlane's Evil Prophecy
- 105 Street Fighter Anniversary Collection



ESPN's new defensive line rotation feature lets you adjust each player's coverage assignment, so you can, say, double-team your opponent's star wideback.



ONLINE
(PS2/XB)

ESPN NFL 2K5 VERSUS...

Football's perennial David steps back in the pocket...

Online Domination

When it comes to Internet play, ESPN clearly runs over.

Madden: Aside from fourneys, you can set up 32-team leagues with your buds through your console (last year's required a PC in 60-90), plus check out stats, standings, boxscores, and more at the game's website.

Suff a snek in it, Hank Williams Jr.—of course we're ready for some football. And even though this season's pickings are slim (*GameDay*, *Fever*, and *Blitz* are all on injured reserve until next year), the perennial top contenders for your pro pigskin dollars—*Madden* and *ESPN*—are back. Which game came out victorious? It's closer than you may think. OK, Hank, finish your damn song....

BRYAN: We've got two Pro Bowlers here, definitely. *Madden* scores big points for its near-flawless gameplay and brutally accurate representation of the NFL, but *ESPN* stays right in it with features such as the new Virtual Identity Profile (VIP) and robust online leagues.

PATRICK: Yeah, VIP is one of the coolest features I've seen for a sports game. It tracks just about every gameplay tendency (how many times you blitz, run to the right, etc.). Plus, you can download other VIPs and then go against an A.I. opponent that plays with that person's style—genius!

OFFICIAL PS MAG—CHRIS B: Same here on VIP, but the thing is...*Madden* just plays better than *ESPN*. There. I said it.

BRYAN: No, Chris—it plays a lot better. And I'm not just talking about the improved defensive play (especially in the secondary) and, with a quick tap on the new Hit Stick, the bone-jarring tackles. It's how *Madden* replicates the style of play of actual

NFL squads. When you're matched against Indy, for example, quarterback Peyton Manning continually calls audibles at the line of scrimmage—just like he does every Sunday. In *ESPN*, you won't find that level of authenticity on the field.

CHRIS B: But you *do* get *Jackass*' Steve-O taunting you whenever you call an audible against his team, now that *ESPN* has added a few celebrity-coached squads. Who doesn't want that?

BRYAN: Most football fans.

CHRIS B: Actually, I think playing against the new celeb teams has a certain charm—and



■ **Legends of Wrestling:** Promoting a carb-free lifestyle since 1972.

XBOX

106 Rainbow Six X: Black Arrow

GAMECUBE

108 Puyo Pop Fever

108 Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow

GAME BOY ADVANCE

110 Astro Boy

THE RATING SYSTEM



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

AWARDS



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



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



Silver—for games with an average score of 8.0 or higher.



Game of the Month—The lowest-rated game each month gets a star.



Shame of the Month—The lowest-rated game with unambiguously bad scores.

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

E: Everyone—Sacrastino fun for the whole family; dancing elves, rampant sharing, and possibly Smurfs.

PG-13: Parents Strongly Cautioned—Like PG-13 movies, Teen games often feature fisticuffs, mild violence, and madcap antics.

M: Mature—For the 18-and-over crowd, intense violence, gore, pillaged sex, drugs, parents no Nifty.



Though *Madden's* online features are limited compared to *ESPN's*, at least the game's finally on Xbox Live.

■ PS2/XB/GC

ONLINE (PS2/XB)

MADDEN NFL 2005

and the Madden goliath calls a blitz

showcases the VIP feature, with Stove-O always going for two, just like I bet he would if I were really playing him. The smack talk does get annoying, though. At least David Arquette doesn't try to pitch 1-800-CALL-ATT.

FRITZKE: What about *Madden's* new look? I'm really digging how the stadium lighting changes with the time of day, and the players—from body sizes to the number of wristbands they wear—are spot on.

RYAN: *ESPN* doesn't look too shabby, either, but the player models are a bit stretched out and lack some of the finer

details (not in the face, but everywhere else) you'll find in *Madden*.

CHRIS B: Still, *ESPN* holds a slight edge in overall presentation. The overlays feel more TV-like, featuring cool graphics that show stats like ball distribution. But *Madden* is a better-looking game when in motion, even when it comes to ball physics. Bryan, you seemed to drop a lot of passes whenever we played *ESPN*—dunno if your receivers sucked or if it was just you. I'll admit there were some funny bounces, though.

RYAN: I hear you. Too many wideouts with stone hands, erratic passes, and a running

game that's still a bit too generous keep *ESPN* behind *Madden* on the depth chart.

FRITZKE: C'mon, Bryan. Receivers do drop balls in the NFL, and not all quarterbacks have Troy Aikman-like accuracy with every pass. And those problems you mention aren't as prevalent as in years past.

RYAN: Obviously it happens in the NFL, but not as much as it does in this game (and when you're that wide open). These guys are supposed to be pros.

CHRIS B: OK, boys, let's move on to something else—franchise modes. I still

Curses!

When asked about the so-called *Madden* curse, All-Pro linebacker and cover boy Ray Lewis says, "I don't believe in curses. What God has [planned] for you, man can't curse—and I truly believe that." So did last year's cover athlete and broken leg recoveree Michael Vick...



Madden 2001: Eddie George's Titans upset in playoffs



Madden 2002: Daunte Culpepper's stats nose-dive



Madden 2003: Marshall Faulk out six games, misses playoffs



Madden 2004: Michael Vick breaks leg, misses 11 games

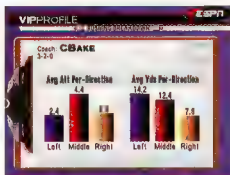


GAME OF THE MONTH



The ESPN VIP Treatment

Think of *ESPN NFL 2K5*'s new Virtual Identity Profile feature (or simply VIP) as the ultimate scouting report and practice tool. It's easily the most comprehensive stat-tracking system ever in a console sports game. How often do you run up the gut? What's your favorite hot route and offensive special moves? VIP knows all. Head online and download other VIPs to practice against A.I. opponents that mimic real peoples' tendencies. Or play against your own VIP and look for weaknesses in your game plan.



We've Got a Madden Caller on the Line...

If you don't already know Tony Bruno from his regular gig as a Fox Sports Radio host or his appearances on *The Best Damn Sports Show Period*, you're about to be very familiar with him. *Madden NFL 2005*'s Storyline Central feature has 30 hours of talk-show banter hosted by Bruno, delivering his trademark rants and tackling everything from NFL milestones to controversial trades. Though you wouldn't necessarily miss his commentary if it weren't there, the show provides a nice ambience while you muck around in franchise mode.



Madden cover Jack Ray Lewis is getting the best of *ESPN's* Terrill Owens here, but our money is on *ESPN's* main man to make it to the real Super Bowl.



Madden On... John Madden's take on keeping the *Madden* series fresh isn't what you think. Everything's OK...you're gonna slip; you always have to get better. Graphics have to get better, realism has to get better, speed has to get better, positioning plays... You can't stay the same! Madden on the *Madden* course: "I don't believe in those things...but you can make a case. I mean, Mike Vick did get hurt..."

find *Madden's* quite deep, but I wouldn't shed a tear if talking head Tony Bruno got axed next season—the all-new weekly ramblings of him and his guests are so generic that, for the most part, you realize just how cliché-ridden sports talk radio is these days.

PATRICK: I resent that. Chris (Patrick is also a host of a syndicated radio show. —Ed.) Sure, Bruno is kind of annoying, but the ability to monitor player morale via the radio show expands the experience for football junkies who truly want to immerse themselves in the NFL.

BRUAN: It's a shame that Bruno and company don't spout more off-the-cuff remarks. But the uptight NFL bigwigs would never allow that, would they?

PATRICK: If the No Fun League doesn't want Joe

Horn stashing celebratory cell phones in various areas of the playing field, your "off the cuff" hopes are a no-go.

BRUAN: *ESPN's* franchise mode is much improved, but I'm not entirely sold on its biggest addition, Weekly Prep, either. Allocating time before the big game for practices, weight training, and even motivational speeches is great in theory, but not when it takes the form of an almost never-ending list of menus. Gotta say I prefer the training drills in *Madden*...

CHRIS B: My thoughts exactly. A lot of potential is missed in Weekly Prep. Meanwhile, the drills in *Madden* have always been fun, but EA should work them into the regular season—that would rock.

BRUAN: So even though *ESPN* rings up at a

shockingly wallet-friendly \$20, would you rather slump up \$50 for *Madden*?

PATRICK: Yes. It's gameplay that keeps you coming back, and *Madden* is the king in that department.

CHRIS B: Yep. I think a casual football gamer who wants to play a game a week or so will be perfectly content with *ESPN*. It may well be the best \$20 game ever. But hardcore players (or rich people) who don't think twice about spending \$50 on the best should definitely spring for *Madden*.

BRUAN: Agreed. And if you're ultra hardcore, fork over another \$10 for the PS2-only Collector's Edition, which includes making-of documentaries (snore) and tweaked versions of *Madden 93*, *97*, and *99* with present-day rosters (score)... I'm on that like a lineman on a free buffet.



ESPN NFL 2K5

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)
8.5 8.5 8.0
BRYAN PATRICK CHRIS B.

Publisher: ESPN Videogames
Developer: ESPN Videogames
Players: PS2 1-4 w/Multiplay (2-16 online w/Multiplay), XB 1-4 (2-8 online)
ESRB: Everyone

www.espnvideogames.com

MADDEN NFL 2005

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)
9.0 9.5 9.0
BRYAN PATRICK CHRIS B.

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Tiburon
Players: PS2 1-2 (3-8 w/Multiplay), 2 online, XB 1-4 (2 online), G5 1-4
ESRB: Everyone

www.madden nfl2005.com

EGM PRESENTS

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2 CLASSIC FIGHTING GAMES



RATING PENDING



Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.

BRADYGAMES
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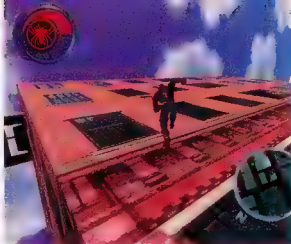
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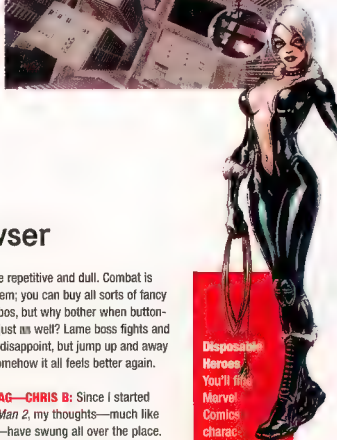
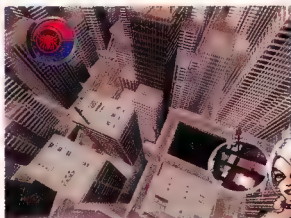
PlayStation.2



■ "Sorry to leave you guys hanging." Oh trust us, the game's dialog gets even worse than that.



■ Try this: Sprint up buildings (above), then swan drive from the top and swing to safety before going spilt (below).



PS2/XB/GC

SPIDER-MAN 2

See New York City with the ultimate web browser

CRISPIN: Although *Spider-Man 2* is tied to the movie sequel out now, the game's best bits bring to mind Peter Parker's holy-moly moments from the first film, when he was just figuring out his powers. You'll feel the same thrill because *Spider-Man 2* gives you absolute command over your hero's goo-shooters and turns him loose in a sprawling re-creation of New York City.

As in the *Tony Hawk* games, control is pick-up-and-play but offers lots of leeway to add your own panache as you launch web lines two at a time and loop-de-loop around lampposts. It's the closest any superdude title has come to translating its hero's powers into gameplay. As your skills ramp up, eventually just the thought of touching the street will set off more than your Spidey sense—it'll offend your Spidey sensibilities. This red-and-blue dude does *not* walk on sidewalks.

But while the swing thing soars, the rest of the game thinks into a building. Think of it as an anti-*Grand Theft Auto*—you zip wherever and stop whatever carjackings, purse snatchings, or other

misdeeds you see while completing objectives in an overall story. Sadly, combat feels like the spaz olympics: Spidey bounds from enemy to enemy while the camera goes kablooey (especially in indoor areas) and you try to remember a litany of button combos. Boss battles take that aggravation and multiply it by 11, but at least you can resume your sticky-string commute once the fight's over.

MARK: Your grandpa was right, and so is Crispin: Getting there is half the fun. Web-slinging your way from crime to crime in *Spider-Man* is un-freaking-believable thrilling right from the start, and it only gets better as you master the nuances. Eventually, you forget you're holding a controller—you just think about, say, zagging left, bouncing off a building, and zooming around a corner into a loop-de-loop, and then you do it. Incredible.

If only the game could maintain that excitement when you arrive at your destination. I give developer Treyarch credit for its ambitious *GTA*-style playground game design, but the errands *Spider-Man*

sends you on are repetitive and dull. Combat is part of the problem; you can buy all sorts of fancy moves and combos, but why bother when button-mashing works just as well? Lame boss fights and voice work also disappoint, but jump up and away on a web and somehow it all feels better again.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—CHRIS B: Since I started playing *Spider-Man 2*, my thoughts—much like Spidey himself—have swung all over the place.

Web-slinging has never been more fun—it's a total rust, and just having all of Manhattan there as your playground makes this game worth a look. But everything else about *Spider-Man* seems kind of thrown together. The combat system is janky, and an ultralame supporting cast of Rhino, Shocker (again!), and Mysterio (at least the game mocks him relentlessly) doesn't help either.

That said, I can't put this game down. The web-slinging is a blast even five hours after beating Doc Ock for good. Still, I can't deny that there's a lot of missed potential here.

Disposable Heroes: You'll find Marvel Comics characters Rhino, Mysterio, Shocker, and Black Cat in the game, but don't look for them in the movie's developer: Treyarch added them to fill out the story. But, only Black Cat is a worthwhile addition: the rest suffer from crappy voice acting (even most of Spidey star Tobey Maguire's lines fall flat) and ludicrous side plots.

Odd Jobs: Rating Spider-Man 2's extracurricular activities

When not fighting crime or completing story missions, players have free rein to pursue bonus duties for character-building hero points. But are they worth your crime-fightin' time?



Deliver Pizzas: The most fun time-waster—mainly for the manic tune that speeds up as time runs out.



Snag Pics: Take photos of buildings and get them back to the *Daily Bugle* before deadline. Gets old fast.



Be a Hero: Rescue kids' balloons, carry injured to hospitals, save sinking sailors—fun, but needs variety.

Good: Amazing, spectacular web-swinging fun
Bad: Herky-jerky combat, awkward boss battles
Except For: Your final bout with Mysterio—what a wretched idea



THE VERDICTS
 (OUT OF 10)

7.0 **7.0** **7.0**
 CRISPIN MARK CHRIS B.

Publisher: Activision
 Developer: Treyarch
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Teen

www.activision.com



■ In a freak skydiving accident, Smackly Smaka falls through the arena roof and onto a napping Jay Lawley.

PS2/XB

SHOWDOWN: LEGENDS OF WRESTLING

Can you hear the Hulkamaniacs crying?

Good: A grip (if) of classic grapplers.
Bad: ...whose likenesses are wasted on lousy gameplay.
Better Than: Randy Savage's rap album.



SHAWN: Hulk Hogan smacked down Soviets and sheikhs when the country wanted to see Cold Warriors eat canvas. No self-styled Samson was safe from Brutus "The Barber" Beefcake's mullet remover. They were legends worth their weight in Lyora, and *Showdown's* got 'em all—too bad the royalty checks weren't worth the coming out of retirement for.

Sure, the screenshots you see here look sweet, but it's all smoke machines and vanity mirrors masking old-man movement and the smell of Bengay.

Matches are slower than molasses on a flat surface and play out like blooper reels, with fighters facing the wrong way, refusing to pick up tables or pull off signature strikes. With so few attack options out of tie-ups and god-awful animation (one grappler sets up for a pile driver several seconds before his grounded opponent suddenly appears in his arms), these snags would've been better off selling snack meats and starring in B movies.

BRYAN: They say legends live forever, but please, let's keep 'em outta the wrestling ring. Shawn's laundry list of complaints is

only the start of *Showdown's* shortcomings. The atrocious A.I. means you can defeat any grappler—even the all-mighty Andre the Giant—by simply pounding on the Strike button. Where's the fun in that? Other trouble spots include bladder-challengingly long matches, a bare-bones story mode, and commentary so laughable, you'll swear you're listening to three hillbillies call the action from an all-male hotchency. These renowned wrasslers deserve better, and so do you.

XBN—GREG: Welcome to the legend of a wrestling game shoehorned into a putrid and glitchy engine. Acclaim "fixed" this series to include, among other horrors, atrocious, stiff, and laughable animations where wrestlers perform moves and countermoves on one another when not even in the same zip code as their competition. Ridiculous opponent A.I. allows players to repeatedly pull off successful leaping attacks from the top rope while idiotic enemies wait eagerly to be smashed. Forget the game's great wrestler lineup—in a showdown between this game and trash, trash wins.



THE VERDICTS (out of 10)	5.0	5.0	5.0
	SHAWN	BRYAN	GREG

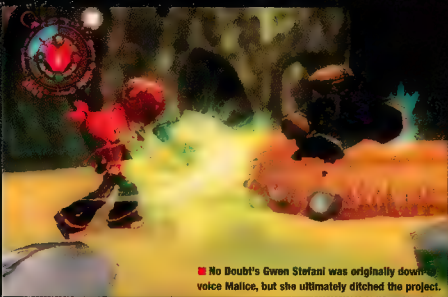
Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: Acclaim Austin
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Teen

www.legendsshowdown.com

PS2/XB

MALICE

Too late, too little, too boring.



■ No Doubt's Gwon Stefani was originally down to voice Malice, but she ultimately ditched the project.

Good: It's finally done after all these years. But "done" is relative.
Bad: You'd think saving the world would be, y'know, challenging?
At Least It Came Out Before: *Galleon*



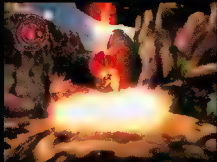
DEMIAN: *Malice*—both the main character and the game itself—is back from the dead. This one-time Xbox launch title has been through game-development hell, and it's still got the pitchfork marks.

Despite its long and bumpy history, *Malice* is still pretty good looking compared to the average action-platformer. The clockwork/steampunk-style environments are sometimes inventive (though packed with way too many "find the five gears to restart the machine" fetch quests), but the puzzles are simple and the combat doesn't get any deeper than tapping one of two buttons.

Malice feels like an amalgam of all the best bits of what was once a much larger game, because that's exactly what it is. Unfortunately, even the best bits aren't all that great, nor do they last long—though *Malice* has been in the works for five-plus years, you can beat it in a single sitting. Saving the world from Armageddon has never been easier...or more anticlimactic.

KEVIN: Even if you aren't familiar with the whole sordid story behind this almost-famous platformer, you'll notice that something's not quite right with *Malice* after just a few hours of play...when you defeat the last boss. Yes, really. Not that being short is a crime, of course, and some of the worlds our '90s grunge-rock heroine explores look just as sweet as the screenshots we all gaped at four years ago, but the gameplay is the equivalent of chewing a piece of gum all afternoon—inoffensive, but you just want to spit it out after a while.

JENIFER: I didn't get through *Malice* as quickly as these other two, but not because it was hard. No, I just got so bored and annoyed that I had to walk away from it and come back later—much, much later. Usually little breaks fix all my attitude problems, but not here. The lame missions, tedious boss battles, and clunky-to-the-point-of-being-useless power-ups kept me irritable. The graphics and environments didn't strike me as above ordinary, either. Even for \$30, I wouldn't recommend *Malice*. If you're looking for platforming on the cheap, try *Voodoo Vince* (XB) or even *Pitfall!* (PS2/XB) first.



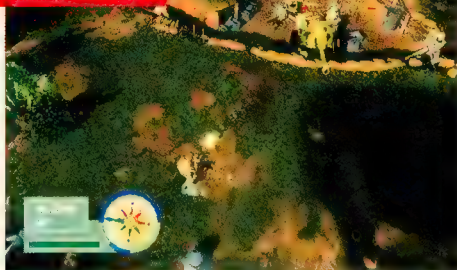
■ *Malice* learns an array of spells on her brief travels, but you'll rarely need to use 'em.

THE VERDICTS
(out of 10)

5.0	5.0	4.0
DEMIAN	KEVIN	JENIFER

Publisher: Mud Duck
Developer: Argonaut
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

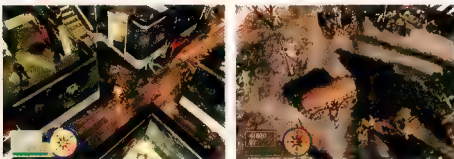
www.mudduckgames.com



PS2/XB

COMBAT ELITE: WWII PARATROOPERS

Soaring on the wings of seagulls



The game's interior environments (left) look good, but walls sometimes obscure the action.

Good: Training up your grunt from greenhorn to sharpshooter

Bad: Gut-shot by fundamentally flawed combat

At Least: It's not *Army Men: WWII Paratroopers*



DEMIAN: Imagine if your weird uncle decided to re-create key WWII scenarios within the spray-painted Styrofoam landscapes surrounding his model train set. Add in a bunch of annoying arbitrary rules (like invisible walls to keep you on the preset path), and you're left with a bird's eye view of war that, at times, is hellish for all the wrong reasons.

Elite's character-building skill system is easily its best feature. You choose one of three combatants, each with slightly different strengths and weapons proficiencies, and then win most of WWII's pivotal battles—occasionally with the help of a couple other soldiers, but often single-handedly. After each scenario, you earn points that you can spend to increase weapon skills and other abilities. Oddly, though, when you pick up a new weapon, you have to guess if it's better than what you've already got...or consult the History Channel.

KEVIN: I honestly and wholeheartedly want to like *Combat Elite*. The concept (*Medal of Honor* as seen by a passing swallow) is almost brilliant—unlike EA's series, which

plays more like a carnival ride than an honest portrayal of war, this game lays out a smorgasbord of tiny battle vignettes, gives you a lovingly detailed (never mind *Demian's* Styrofoam crack) full view of the area, and lets you carve out your own path to survival. The only snag: You spend most of *Combat Elite* shooting at offscreen Germans, placing you at a natural and frustrating disadvantage.

G. FORD: With *Combat Elite*, you get plenty of the bad: a lack of checkpoints or midlevel saves (though in some of the later, supershort levels, you'll hardly care), artificial boundaries, uncontrollable squad-mates, poor interior-environment camera angles, worthless stealth implementation, and moronic enemies.

Unfortunately, the list of good points isn't quite as robust: solid settings, decent graphics, and passable gameplay if the conditions are just right. Mosh it together, and you end up with a game that has you dodging the frustrations while waiting for your reticule to lock on to the next darn offscreen target.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	5.0	6.5	6.0
	DEMIAN	KEVIN	G. FORD

Publisher: Acclaim
Developer: BattleBorne
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Teen

www.acclaim.com



PlayStation 2

CRIMSON TEARS

Bored to tears



The magic disco bazooka delivers a Pink Floyd-caliber light show with every blast.

Good: Snazzy cut-scenes, responsive control

Bad: Repetitive as hell hell

Desperately Needs: Multiplayer action



SNMME: Blend the best aspects of a role-playing game (engrossing narrative, clever dungeons, unique characters) with the kick-assingest parts of a brawler (tight control, killer moves), and you'd have a truly delicious cocktail. Sadly, the bartenders attempting that mix with *Crimson Tears* serve severely watered-down drinks.

From the get-go, the story line limps: In 2049, three sassy cyborgs square off against some not-so-good cyborgs as something or other things in the balance. Lavishly animated cut-scenes belie how dull the plot really is, but at least you won't have much trouble overlooking the RPG window dressing—the entirety of futuristic Tokyo consists of a garage and three shops.

You'll spend 95 percent of your time exploring eight randomly generated dungeons packed with thugs to pummel, keys to find, and crates to smash. Tight control and unlockable combos keep you from falling asleep, but the rote, dungeon-hacking gameplay wears thin quickly...especially solo. Had Capcom included some multiplayer action—online or off—*Tears* wouldn't feel like such a waste of time.

JENNIFER: *Crimson Tears'* repetitive-by-design nature has a certain meditative quality—it's fun to keep going back and beating down enemies as you get stronger and stronger, and upgrading weapons and skills with found items is interesting. But as Shane says, it gets old fast—your weapons constantly break, and you never have nearly enough health points. I found myself pointlessly limping into boss battles, knowing I'd have to teleport out and start the level over...and over...and over again.... After a while, it was less like a game and more like work.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—SCOOTER: Stapling RPG mechanics onto beat-em-up gameplay is a damn good idea, but alas, while the fighting controls are totally smooth and the graphics even silkier, the overall *Tears* experience is way repetitive. Gathering the right components for item creation (which is cool in theory) and leveling up enough to fight bosses becomes mind numbing. While it's enjoyable to see a pantsless robogirl pull off a 22-hit combo, *Tears* itself could have used some leveling up before release.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	5.5	6.0	6.5
	SHANE	JENNIFER	SCOOTER

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Spike/Stream Factory
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.capcom.com



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PlayStation 2

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GF GAMEFLY



Ghosthunter has some surprisingly funny moments, usually courtesy of a salty, spectral English sea captain.

PlayStation 2

GHOSTHUNTER

We are only slightly 'fraid of ghosts

Good: Nice mix of creepy and funny; moody music
Bad: Nothing we haven't seen before
Scary: A ghost game with no *Ghostbusters* references



DEMIAN: Surviving won't be much of a problem in this action-heavy take on survival-horror; them ghosts won't scare you anywhere near to death until the last level or so. Not that *Ghosthunter* doesn't bring the freakiness—an abandoned high school (the site of an unsolved mass murder) and a haunted mansion may not sound very scream inducing, but there are enough "oh, s***!" moments to keep you going.

Though guns answer most questions in *Ghosthunter*, the game does pose a few spectral puzzles. Our hero's body plays host to a friendly ghost named Astral, and at times you'll let her loose to clear obstacles and pull switches via her spooky powers. The puzzles are never hard, but you won't mind a break from the often-repetitive combat. Speaking of combat, the fighting could be more fast paced—with his gun at the ready, your guy walks slower than normal, and when aiming in first-person he can't move at all. This is a bit of ghostbusting you may prefer to rent.

JON D: What starts as a sweet action-shooter concept with a capable plot doesn't take long to derail into a freshly

stocked puppy orphanage. Lots of great ideas are underdeveloped: The sexy spookette living within you can only be summoned to perform mental tasks at rare scripted points, while the ghost illusion is all but ruined when plain ol' bullets vaporize select ghouls shortly after the game claims Casper can't be killed (only captured). Still a step above your common shooter, *Ghosthunter* just fails to impress due to unspent potential.

DAN I: While the '80s produced a classic game in *Ghostbusters*, *Ghosthunter* is too recycled to be regarded in the same vein. Its Raccoon City veneer seems manufactured, and the camera system evokes all the charm (that is, none) of the original *Tomb Raider*. Puzzles and ghosts perform their respective functions in a matter-of-fact manner, but the gameplay is linear in a fashion only an algebra teacher could love.

Ghosthunter does nothing to confound expectations. It's your standard third-person action-adventure game, sans cool gameplay hook, distinctive protagonist, or over-the-top concept.



THE VERDICTS by IGN	6.5	6.0	6.0
	DEMIAN	JON D.	DAN I.

Publisher: Namco
 Developer: Sony CE
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Teen

ghosthunter.namco.com

PlayStation 2

ATHENS 2004

Takes home the copper



Good: Continues the tradition of track and field games of yore
Bad: By today's standards, those games sucked
Officially Fruity: The mascot for the 2004 Summer Olympics



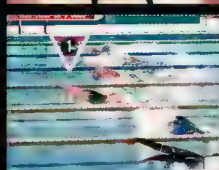
JENNIFER: Like the real Olympics, *Athens 2004* pushes the very limits of human endurance. But here, the only muscles tested are the ones in your forearm. Many events have you feverishly pressing the X and O buttons, sometimes continuously for an entire minute, until your arm burns with a strangely athletic (for a game) thrill. The 25 events all have passable graphics and Olympic ambience, but the character models are frightening (I thought at least the swimmers would be good looking—but no) and the overall game structure is repetitive and dull. Plus, to learn how to perform each event, you need to check the directions from the pause menu; what happened to just explaining the mechanics onscreen?

Multiplayer offers the chance to suffer together with up to three friends, which is unintentionally fun only because you all look so ridiculous jamming your fingers on the pad. Don't ever let a member of the opposite sex catch you getting good at this game; you'll never live it down.

CRISPIN: Somewhere between the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat you'll find *Athens 2004*, a no-frills Summer Games sim that's as limp as your fingers after playing its button-mashing events for too long. Oh, I suppose the license hamstringing the developers—we can't expect 'roid-boosted gameplay from something based on the real Summer Games (complete with its horrifying mascots). But *Athens*' presentation is downright clinical. And for every fun event—such as the field games and archery—you get stinkers you'd never

want to play again, even in the more addictive multiplayer modes.

SHAWN: The world's armchair athletes turn on the TV to see who can tap buttons the fastest. Talk about taking a 2,700-year-old tradition and dousing its torch. *Track and Field* (NES) only seemed fun because you were 10 at the time, and more than half of *Athens*' 25 events rely on that ancient Olympian's tried-and-true tiresome gameplay. Analog-based archery and gymnastic ring routines are easier on the thumbs, but they're hardly more than mediocre minigames with characters that look like melted mannequins.



Side effects of Olympic swimming: green hair, swimmer's ear, carpal tunnel syndrome

THE VERDICTS by IGN	5.0	5.5	5.0
	JENNIFER	CRISPIN	SHAWN

Publisher: 999 Sports
 Developer: Eurocom
 Players: 1-4
 Rating: Everyone

www.999sports.com

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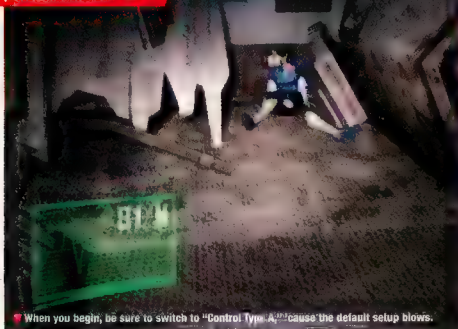
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THE METRODOME | 09.11 | BUFFALO
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When you begin, be sure to switch to "Control Type A" because the default setup blows.

PlayStation 2

ECHO NIGHT: BEYOND

Space oddity



PlayStation 2

MCFARLANE'S EVIL PROPHECY

Maybe he ought to stick to action figures.



Good: Wonderfully creepy atmosphere.
Bad: Difficult puzzles, clunky controls
Bargain Bin Find: The original *Echo Night* for PS1



SHANE: Man, I didn't think they made titles like this anymore. *Beyond* is an adventure game in the purest sense: exploration, conversation, and puzzle solving...combat, however, never enters the equation. That omission will turn off gamers hoping for a high body count, but I implore you to give this quest a rental—its unique brand of horror packs some legitimate chills.

Beyond thrusts you directly into an engaging sci-fi scenario: You're a marooned spacejerk searching for your fiancée after your shuttle crashes on the moon. As you navigate the corridors of the desolate lunar base (from an effectively claustrophobic first-person view), you quickly learn that the setting is the star. Antiseptic hallways and shadowy craters provide a nice change of pace from the creepy mansions and bloody asylums filling most horror games.

As slick as the visuals are, clunky controls and overly obscure puzzles dampen *Beyond*'s thrills. If you want to succeed, you'll have to survey every area with an eagle eye for details, as that seemingly innocuous chocolate coin or roll of duct tape becomes crucial later.

JON D: *Beyond* plays something like *Myst* meets *Resident Evil: Outbreak*, which means it features sometimes painfully slow-paced, low-action activity with a sufficiently creepy horror edge. The fact that a simple elevated heart rate can kill you, though, should tell you there's not a lot of excitement here. I found myself consistently frustrated as my spaceman slowly carried objects from one room to another to solve "puzzles," trying not to get scared by ghosts and fog. But if you can dig playing a small part in what's essentially an interactive film, try it as a rental.

KEVIN: *Beyond* isn't survival-horror, exactly...more like annoyance-horror. The creepy moonbase is spectacularly atmospheric, yes, but many of the puzzles are extremely difficult (I doubt anyone will finish this without some Internet assistance), and important items have a habit of hiding from you in dark, easily missed areas. The controls only exacerbate this frustration—if a wailing spirit popped up in front of you, you wouldn't spend five seconds turning 180 degrees in place and then run, would you?

THE VERDICTS
based on

6.0	5.5	5.0
SHANE	JON D.	KEVIN

Publisher: Agetec
Developer: From Software
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.agetec.com

Good: Switch to control any of your four fighters on the fly.
Bad: Story and gameplay are one giant ball of beat-em-up clichés.
File Under: Gauntlet meets Barbarian



MARK: I've got my own evil prophecy, and it's for McFarlane and Konami: Keep screwing over your fans with crap like this and they'll throw a parade when you go out of business. Some rudimentary puzzles and sadly limited ways of building up your heroes can't hide the fact that 99 percent of this half-assed beat-em-up is you mindlessly plowing through wade after wade, after wade after wave of bad guys.

You'd at least expect *Prophecy*'s characters to have some panache since they are based on Todd McFarlane's line of (I assume) popular action figures. Instead, you find a cast of clichés (Werewolves! Skeletons! A pirate with a peg leg! A girl with two guns!) given that oh-so-special "McFarlane touch" (i.e., sporting demon eyes and bondage gear). The completely screwed-up camera, noticeable lack of sound effects, and gameplay bugs make it obvious no one working on this game cared about it—why should you?

JON D: Between its clichéd cast of characters, played-out multiplayer modes, horrendous dialogue, and totally unimaginative

gameplay, *Prophecy* portends doom. The simple fighting concept, friendly controls, and basic objectives would make a great kids' game (if it weren't for the decapitations and what-not), but a frustrating difficulty will give even mature button-mashers a tough time. Unless all of your buddies are alive to help, you can get severely gang-banged in later levels. Team-up magic attacks and a handful of special moves are a nice effort, but their weak presentation just accents *Prophecy*'s subpar graphics.

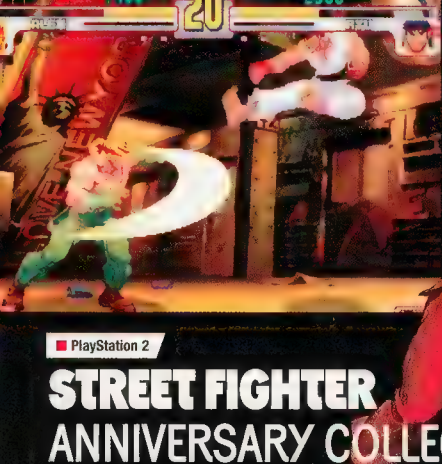
KEVIN: I think I understand what Konami was attempting here—*Dynasty Warriors* with characters that'd appeal to a U.S. audience. Unfortunately, *Prophecy* isn't fit to spit-shine the boots of Koel's series. With muddy visuals, bewildering controls, a "learn morale" system that serves no discernible purpose, and extended bouts of music-free silence (save for the repetitive ughs and arrrgs of your heroes), this game feels like a mediocre PS2 launch title. I don't care how cheap this is when you find it in the bargain bin—just don't touch it!

THE VERDICTS
based on

6.0	5.5	5.0
MARK	JON D.	KEVIN

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami
Players: 1-4
ESRB: Mature

www.konamiltwi.com



■ Fighting-game fans overlooked *3rd Strike* for newfangled 3D tournaments like *Tekken*. Now's the time to see what you missed.

PlayStation 2

STREET FIGHTER ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION

Here comes an old challenger!

Good: The definitive *Street Fighter* disc. So far

Bad: No online play

Censored: Chun Li's shower scene on the bonus movie clip

SHAWN: Over a decade since we started bruising egos on rooftops and boat docks, blistering thumbs in bathrooms and temples. A decade of hadokens (Ryu and Ken's fireball move, for the news out there)...how old does that make you feel? In addition to *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike, Anniversary* collects half of your youth along with every character from all five iterations of the second game in the series, and you'd better believe it's worth the 30 bucks.

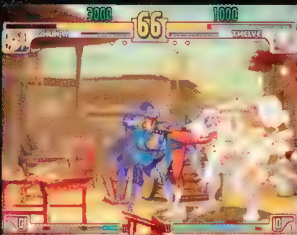
The free-for-all of old fighters (called *Hyper SF II Anniversary Edition* here, as if it weren't confusing enough) lets you pit, say, a stripped-down, original *SF2*-era Ken against powered-up comers from *Super*, or prove once and for all that Turbo's Chun Li is cheap. It's sock-you-in-the-shoulder fun, but it ain't online, meaning most of us

will have to book a flight to settle old scores. If *Hyper* is the series' supercard, a bit unfair but packed with classic faces, the beautifully animated *3rd Strike* is the fruition of the franchise. Perfectly balanced with a parrying system ideal for setting up and psyching out your opponent, it's also the reigning champ of 2D combat.

SHANE: How much would you pay for this disc? Don't answer! Not only do you get *Anniversary*, a crazy remix of every iteration of *Street Fighter II*, but you also snag a spot-on port of the vastly underrated *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*. It's easy to waste hundreds of hours with either of these games—no other 2D fighter offers the same weirdly perfect blend of tight controls, intuitive moves, and lovable characters. Invite some friends,

talk some trash, and develop some blisters. Just remember: *SF2*'s Dhalsim and E. Honda are off-limits in my house—those freaks are god characters.

SHOE: The underrated *Street Fighter III* came out past the series' prime, on dying platforms (arcades and Sega Dreamcast, which means relatively few people got to experience its greatness. But is it worth getting today? I suspect most people have moved on to flashier titles (*Guitar Hero* or Capcom/SNK/Marvel *Versus* games) or the third dimension (*Virtua Fighter*, *Tekken*, or *Soul Calibur*). But old-schoolers will appreciate this fantastic compilation. *SF3* alone is worth owning, and you get all the *SF2* variations to boot. Why is Capcom always chintzy with these collections, though? Where's *SF Alpha 3* or *EX2*? **A-**



THE VERDICTS
8.5 9.0 8.0

SHAWN SHANE SHOE

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Teen
Also On: Xbox (September)
www.capcom.com

Why does gaming professional Richard Gray recommend The Guildhall?

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In addition to counterterrorism specialists, "Team Rainbow" is looking for a few good construction workers, firemen, and cops.



Red, white, and blowing the crap out of everything, America style.

Xbox

RAINBOW SIX 3: BLACK ARROW

Not really black—more an angry red

SHOE: What words come to mind when you see that? Whatever your poison, you'll be saying plenty of it when you're saving the world from impossibly perceptive terrorists in the solo campaign mode of this first-person shooter. Even though you're assisted by three CPU-controlled squadmates, the enemies are so keen that often-times they'll nail you or your team before your mind can even register their presence (even on the baby difficulty setting). Some may argue that this is more realistic, but when you're reloading the same scene for the 30th time, you'll be making everyone within earshot cry with your harsh swears. At least the developers were kind enough to change up the locations of some bad guys upon reload. This unpredictability keeps the game frustrating, but at least it's more interesting this way. Multiplayer's a whole different story. Team-ver-

sus-team play is strategic and fun, without the chaos of more frantic frag-em-all affairs like *Quake* or *Unreal*. Of course, you will run into players who have a Rainman understanding of how to kill you before you can kill them—and they're certainly no more fun to play against than those A.I. opponents.

Some of you may notice this review text is just as applicable to the original *Rainbow Six 3*. That's intentional. Besides new maps and a few new modes, there's nothing different about *Black Arrow*'s gameplay. Is more of the same good enough for you? If you're totally new to this series, or if you can find the perfect online soldiers to play with/against, you may just turn those "##%&@&s" into "##%\$#@&ing awesomes."

MARK: I must admit, when I reviewed the first *RS3*, I didn't realize how addictive its hyperrealistic

online multiplayer eventually becomes. Once you get past several long, frustrating hours scaling its steep learning curve, the tension of one-shot kills and subtleties of team tactics make for many late nights on Xbox Live. *Black Arrow* lands even closer to the bull's-eye, with excellent new maps, clan options, and a pair of added modes (see box, right) I can't wait to waste far too much time playing.

Offline, the shooting-gallery gameplay returns; enemies often (but not always) pop out of the same spots, so survival is based more on memorization than skill. Luckily, the versatile controls never disappoint, and a new split-screen co-op option will allow a whole new audience to experience the best way to play *RS3*'s missions. If the cut were a bit lower, my score might be higher. For what amounts to a nice mission pack, \$40 is just a bit steep.

DEMIAN: Three out of three EGM reviewers agree: *Black Arrow* is almost indistinguishable from the original *Rainbow Six 3*. "Same try-until-you-finally-don't-die single player," says Shoe. "Same transcendental multiplayer," says Mark. "Same everything," says I, "but with different maps and one new gun." (The Dragunov sniper rifle replaces the overpowered .50 cal.) OK, so the two added multiplayer modes and split-screen co-op are nice, but otherwise *Black Arrow* is little more than a new set of missions. If you're a series newb or so hard-core that you still play every day, well, get on over here for arguably the second best game on Xbox Live (after *Splitter Cell*, of course). But if you're a more casual counterterrorism operative, acquiring *Black Arrow* isn't mission critical. ☞



What's New in Multiplayer? Two new modes, three what. First is Total Conquest. The maps have three control points. If your team can hold them for a brief period, you win. The other is retrieval, which is similar to capture the flag. Grab the stage's one common canister and bring it back to your base to score.



Community Center

Get in touch with your inner Rumsfeld and build your own elite army with *Black Arrow*'s awesome online clan features. After forming your squad, you can name it, provide a short motto, description, and website URL for potential recruits or enemies to check out, and even design a logo for your troops to wear into battle. Keep your soldiers in check by designating ranks for each (which limit privileges like who can invite or kick out players or schedule matches against other squads) and keep them in the know with intrasquad text or voice messages. It's all simple to use and handy as hell—the best example yet of an online game helping to build and support its own all-important community.

Good: The most-played Xbox Live game gets new modes.
Bad: Otherwise, this game is the same as the last.
Rated M: Gorge your gnomes, please.



THE VERDICT
OUT OF TEN

7.5 8.0 8.0

SHOE MARK DEMIAN

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Players: 1-2 (2-16 online)
ESRB: Mature

www.rainbowsix3.com

Pray for a full frontal assault.



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Violence
Blood and Gore



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■ Oddly shaped pieces and the new Fever mode put the Pop in this new Puyo.

GameCube

PUYO POP FEVER

Focus-tested better than Puyo Pop Influenza



Good: Fever mode makes gameplay wonderfully chaotic

Bad: Grating voice samples

MIA: The planned PS2 and XB versions of *Fever*



SHANE: This blob-dropping puzzler has come a long way since U.S. gamers first got their hands on it (disguised as *Kirby's Avalanche* on Super NES and *Mean Bean Machine* on Sega Genesis). Whereas the various attempts to "improve" *Tetris* only proved that tinkering with a winning formula can end in disaster—go play vintage stinker *Hatris* if you need proof—*Fever* shows that basic puzzling can be bettered.

At first, *Fever* appears to be just a slicker version of old-school *Puyo*. You pile multicolored blobs (some now in weird *Tetris*-like shapes) into like-colored chains, sending garbage blocks onto your opponent's side until one of you suffocates under a cascade of cuddly slimes. If the new *Fever* meter fills up along the way, all hell breaks loose: The computer automatically sets you up for massive combos—all you have to do is ignite the mayhem. Winning via *Fever* feels a little bit cheesy, but it adds an element of unpredictability to the matches that kept me comin' back for more. Sure, you can still play by the classic rules, too...but who would want to?

MARK: As the reviewer with the least prior *Puyo* experience, I was surprised by *Fever*. The new oddly shaped pieces lend themselves to deeper strategy or quicker gameplay—your choice—while at the same time making accidental combos a more frequent (and welcome) occurrence. It's nice that Sega included the classic older version, but after you experience the satisfying X factor of *Fever* mode, you won't want to go back. *Fever* does have one glaring flaw, though: a two-player limit. *Puyo* isn't much fun solo, so limiting multiplayer (especially on the Cube) is inexcusable.

SHOE: *Puyo Pop* is a fine puzzle series, but when you've played as many practically indistinguishable versions as I have over the years...well, the romance just isn't what it used to be. *Fever* doesn't exactly spark things up, but it's definitely the most improved version I've seen. The new block shapes add variety to the classic additive formula, and *Fever* mode tosses in some frantic excitement. Warning: You will absolutely loathe the characters and dialogue designed for brain-dead toddlers.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.0	7.0	7.0
	SHANE	MARK	SHOE

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sonic Team
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Everyone

www.sega.com



GameCube

SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW

Patience is a prerequisite



■ As before, Sam learns a few fresh moves you'll use once or twice, if ever.

Good: Cloak-and-dagger thrills
Bad: Too much trying and dying
We Sure Do Miss: Multiplayer

SHAWN: I creep behind a guard, and a spill-second before I grab him, he calls for backup. "Fisher," my contact at HQ hollers, "you can't afford to be caught." Nonexistent cameras catch me cold-cooking a terrorist in a coal-black tunnel—"Are you out of your mind, man? The mission's over." I stall, sneeze, or step on a crack—"Christ, Fisher, you're finished." At this point, I'm waiting for the plot twist that reveals that I've been tied to a chair in a cellar ever since I first screwed up, imagining how things might've turned out if those cheating bastards weren't so perceptive.

Play *Pandora Tomorrow* and the patient among you will wonder what kind of panty-waist spy I am. The pacing's methodical and the AI is overly perceptive, you'll say, but stowing away on a service truck, slipping into LAX airport, and slinking past baggage screeners on a carousel more than makes up for it. And you're right. Several equally tense scenarios in gorgeous settings around the globe encouraged me to try harder when I erred—even if I still wanted to shove those small-pox canisters up my anal-retentive taskmaster's ass.

SHOE: Shawn is a panty-waist. Apparently, his gun-ho gaming style doesn't sit well with the exacting, stealthy world of single-player *Splinter Cell*. This game does have its hair-pulling moments (made worse by poor lighting that makes hiding in shadows less intuitive), but it's redeemed by great level design and intensity. GameCubers, however, are deprived of *Pandora Tomorrow*'s revolutionary online multiplayer, seen on Xbox and PS2. (Horrible news, as the Cube-specific stuff [GABA-connected radar screen, rankings, and a new level] doesn't come anywhere close to making up for it.)

GWR—ANDREW: I could talk at length about Nintendo's reluctance to take the Cube online. But you've heard it all before, so instead, it's better to say the following: Both the Xbox and PS2 versions of *Pandora Tomorrow* have the brilliant spies vs. mercs online game; the Xbox version has superior graphics, sound, and control; and the features unique to the Cube are unremarkable. Without the multiplayer, *Pandora* goes from "must-buy" to "solid rental."

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.0	8.0	7.5
	SHAWN	SHOE	ANDREW

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Shanghai
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen
Also on: PS2/XB

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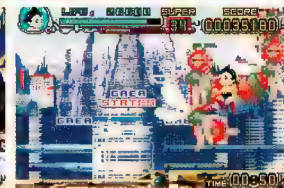
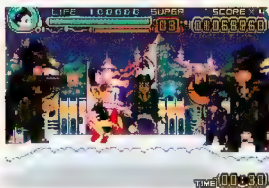
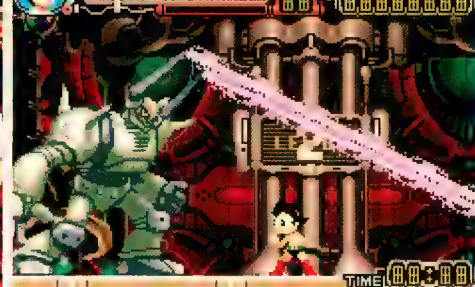


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ACTIVISION



Left: This boss takes up about 98 percent of the screen—and if you touch it, you're one dead Astro Boy.



GBA

ASTRO BOY: OMEGA FACTOR

Old-school treasure

KEVIN: There's something about winsome little boy robots that touches the Japanese soul deeply. Don't ask me to explain it, but do try to get your hands on *Omega Factor*, because much like its Baby Boomer-era protagonist, this GBA action game is among the few of its kind with real heart.

With the portable *Astro Boy*, Sega has finally managed to get Treasure (developer of *Ikaruga* and other cult hits) to produce a game that anyone—yes, even you—can enjoy. On the surface, it's a cutesy action romp with lovingly detailed visuals and boppy music...and if you want, you can take *Omega Factor* as nothing but that, enjoying the goofy '50s sci-fi plot and finishing it on Easy mode in a few days. Plumb *Astro*'s depths on a harder difficulty, though, and you'll find the work of master 2D-game craftsmen—you see it in the robust combo systems, the colossal bosses, and the sort of finely honed gameplay balance that went out of fashion with the Sega Genesis.

Speaking of the Genesis, you can expect tons

of graphical slowdown whenever the screen is filled with enemies, as well as a sense of action ennui after a while—you're asked to punch out thousands of little robots before the end arrives. Still, this didn't detract at all from the warm, fuzzy feeling I got after finishing *Omega Factor* on the Hard setting. It's something I wish I felt more often. Awww.

JOHN R: Fanboy-favorite developer Treasure has put together a masterful side-scroller in *Omega Factor*, packed with intense action, beautiful graphics, tons of cool cameos, and references from not only countless famous *Astro Boy* stories, but also other classics by old-school animator and *Astro Boy* creator Osamu Tezuka (see sidebar below). If you consider yourself even a small fan of his work, you'll have a blast playing this.

Astro Boy may seem a bit too easy at first (thanks to unlimited continues), but don't be fooled. Unlocking all of the hidden characters and stages (and the game's true ending) takes a lot of skill and effort.

SHANE: Unlike John and Kev, I've never seen the *Astro Boy* TV show, so the endless random cameos (will serious fans really get misty when Rainbow Parakeet leaps onscreen?) don't do much for me...but luckily, the blistering action does. Whether you're pummeling robots in *Mega Man*-esque platforming stages or blasting flying fish in surprisingly intense shooter bits, *Astro Boy* assaults you with old-school charm. Factor in snazzy visuals, tight controls, and demanding difficulty, and you get a solid purchase...and one that's not just for kids. 🐟



Once More, With Feeling: *Astro Boy* doesn't truly end until you finish it twice. This may sound like a cheapo way to extend the game's length, but the second time through is remarkably fresh—the story is completely different, and the challenge doesn't get that much more daunting. Hey, it's better than watching reruns...

The Ultimate Crossover

In *Omega Factor*, Astro powers up by finding friendly characters, all taken from the work of 'god of anime' Osamu Tezuka. The result reads like really ambitious fan fiction, and Tezuka's pseudo-Disney art style doesn't make things seem any saner.

warriors of justice, the Amazing Three?



The Amazing Three apparently had their own cartoon in 1967. Who knew?

I'm Atlas. And you must be Astro, eh?



Atlas wears a WWII undersa mine for a helmet. Don't make him angry.



I asked you first? You must work for Kinkankanku's! But I won't let you get away!

Judging by his outfit, Big X is the most faaaabulous superhero ever.

Good: Cute, accessible, engaging
Bad: Gets repetitive, suffers slowdown
Top Weapon: Astro's area-saturated machine gun



THE VERDICT'S
 HOT OR NO.

8.5 9.0 8.5

KEVIN

JOHN R.

SHANE

Publisher: Sega
 Developer: Hltmaker/Treasure
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Teen

www.sega.com

REVIEWS WRAP-UP

The games that left us at the altar...this month

The curious lack of Xbox role-player *Sudeki* has settled on our office like a bad smell. The oft-delayed

hack-n-slash T&A festival should be in stores by the time you read this, but we won't have a review until next issue, because

Microsoft wouldn't let us (or any one) near it. Funny...MS pulled the same thing with *Grabbed by the Ghoules*. Uh-oh.



Jury's still out on the game, but we give *Sudeki's* glowing card (right) a 3.5.



QUICK HITS

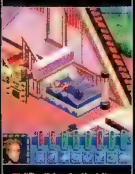
Eidos' *Shellshock: Nam '67* (PS2, XB) has been delayed a month; expect a review next issue, followed by flashbacks for the rest of your life...Electronic Arts decided not to send us a reviewable copy of *Catwoman* (PS2, XB, GC) until next issue shortly after *Official PlayStation Magazine* Editor-in-Chief John Davison posted unfavorable impressions about the game on his blog

(jwdavison.1UP.com). Coincidence?...Rumor in *Ten Pin Alley 2* (PS2) has been canceled. Too bad, because the first *Ten Pin* (PS1) is great—if you're totally 'faced...*Hamtaro: Ham Ham Games* is out. Try buying that without losing your dignity; you can't...We reviewed *Army Men: Sarge's War* (GC) over a year and a half ago, giving it 4.5, 4.0, and 5.0 out of 10, but it never hit stores because 3DO went bankrupt. Now, publisher Globalstar is releasing the game (PS2, XB, and GC this time). If you see it, hack away slowly, do not yell, do not show fear...

N-GAGE LI'L REVIEWS

The newly redesigned N-Gage QD looks a lot better...but do the games still suck? Yes and no.

The Sims: Rustin' Out • Nokia
What should be a decent part of the GBA game with better graphics ends up to be pretty much that...but with slightly worse control.



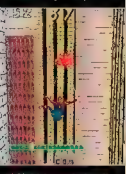
Do this, do that.

Askon • Nokia
Stare hard enough, and you'll eventually make sense of what you're seeing. Too bad this FPS run-n-gun gameplay isn't worth propping open your peepers for.



Pollack's latest work

Spider-Man 2 • Nokia
This game would blow people's minds—if this were 1975. By today's standards, it's just crap. The 3D stuff is slow, and the 2D stuff is old. Stay away.



Eight-legged atrocity

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004 • Nokia
Minus some putting issues, teeing up on Tiger's portable links is on par with the terrific console version...and that's saying something.



Just do it. No, really.

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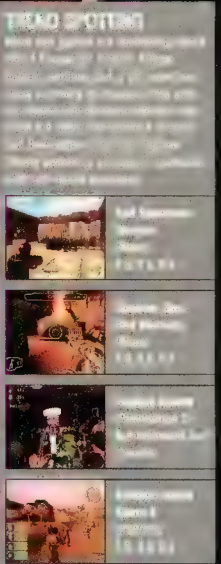
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■ **Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy**—completely mental.

GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
MLB SlugFest: Loaded	PS2/XB	■ Midway's slugger nearly clears the fences with his burning arcade play	8.0 7.0 8.0	
MTX: Motobrox	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	■ Realistic dirt racing minus the damn cleaning bills	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
MVP Baseball 2004	PS2/XB/GC	■ Like the Bronx Bombers', MVP's new additions will excite ML baseball fans	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
NBA Ballers	PS2/XB	■ Midway's one-on-one baller has the skills to pay the billz (or something like that)	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
NCAA Football 2005	PS2/XB/GC	■ Subtle but oh-so-effective improvements make NCAA Heisman worthy	8.0 9.5 9.0	Gold
NCAA March Madness 2004	PS2/XB	■ The only thing missing from this college hoopsier is rioting crowds	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	6.5 6.5 6.0	
NFL Street	PS2/XB/GC	■ Playground (or 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 8.5 7.0	
NHL Hitz Pro	PS2/XB/GC	■ Like a porn star's assets, <i>Hitz</i> isn't exactly realistic, but it's sure fun to play with	7.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
NHL Rivals 2004	XB	■ Our referees slap <i>Rivals</i> with a five-minute major for sucking	3.5 4.0 6.5	
Nightshade	PS2	■ 3 Ninjas Kick Back on a scale of ninj-tude	8.0 6.5 6.0	
Ninja Gaiden	XB	■ Swordsplay so sweet that you'll break out the split-tee slip-ons	9.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Onimusha 3: Demon Siege	PS2	■ The soul-sucking series finale has us screaming "Vive la France!"	8.0 7.0 9.0	Silver
Onimusha Blade Warriors	PS2	■ Think <i>Super Smash Bros</i> (GC) with bushido instead of butt stomping	7.5 7.0 7.5	
Phantasy Star Online: Episode III	GC	■ As deep and addictive as real-life card games, but without all that geeky cardboard	9.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
Pitfall: The Lost Expedition	PS2/XB/GC	■ Maybe—just maybe—it should have stayed lost	6.5 5.5 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-battler	7.0 5.0 7.0	
Project Gotham Racing 2	XB	■ Xbox's best and most fun racer (well, along with <i>RailSport 2</i>)	9.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	PS2/XB	■ Better than <i>Rail</i> time, <i>Psi-Ops</i> ' brain powers are mind blowing	8.0 6.0 7.5	
II: 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	Gold
Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando	PS2	■ A ventilable cavalcade of platforming, shooting, space taring, and comedic hijinks	8.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Red Dead Revolver	PS2/XB	■ Guess we skipped the history lesson about the fat cowboy in a dynamite 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	6.5 6.5 7.0	
Rise to Honor	PS2	■ Tap-tap your right analog stick in this repetitive brawler with 360-degree combat	6.5 6.5 6.0	
R-Type Final	PS2	■ Remind your thumbs of yesterday with this fun throwback to '80s shooters	8.5 8.0 8.0	
Samurai Jack: The Shadow of Aku	PS2/XB/GC	■ This samurai's game is better than expected...but still can't beat the cartoon	6.0 7.0 5.5	
Samurai Warriors	PS2	■ The series hasn't been there (Japan), but it's done that (awakened eyes of awesomeness)	7.0 6.5 7.5	
Sega GT Online	GC	■ Runs 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
Serious Sam: Next Encounter	PS2	■ Never take your finger off the trigger in this dumb but fun first-person shooter	8.0 7.0 5.0	
Seven Samurai 20XX	PS2	■ See han-kari	3.5 3.5 4.0	
Shadow Ops: Red Mercury	XB	■ War is hell—but still preferable to this modern-day, cliché-ridden first-person shooter	4.0 4.5 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	
Steak II	PS2/XB/GC	■ Made for the kiddies, but a fun four-player fairy tale III the same	7.5 6.0 5.0	
Siren	PS2	■ Battle heeased zombies in this <i>Silent Hill</i> clone that's more convoluted than <i>creaky</i>	5.0 7.0 4.0	
Smash Court Tennis Pro Tournament 2	PS2	■ Smash may not look as good as Kourmikovka, but hey, it plays better	7.0 8.0 8.0	
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	XB	■ The ultimate stealth game with revolutionary two-on-two online multiplayer...	10 9.5 9.5	Gold
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	PS2	■ ...gets a little chugged up on PS2, but non- <i>Xboxers</i> won't even notice	9.0 9.5 9.5	Gold
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	GBA	■ Packs the stealth gameplay of the big-console version but none of the fun	4.5 5.0 4.5	
SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs	PS2	■ This is an online war we hope never sees a cease in hostilities	9.0 9.0 9.5	Gold
Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy	XB	■ Another bland <i>Star Wars</i> third-person action game? Time to drop out	6.0 6.5 3.0	
Steel Battalion: Line of Contact	PS2	■ This ultradep robo 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	
Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain	PS2	■ Low-fever shoot-'em-up contaminated by foul controls	6.5 6.5 6.0	
Tales of Symphonia	GC	■ Solid adventure with a dippy plot, but RPG-averse Cube kids won't mind	8.5 7.5 8.5	Silver
Theif: Deadly Shadows	XB	■ Adjust your TV set in this too-dark game of grand theft bauble set in medieval times	7.0 7.0 8.0	
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	PS2/XB/GC	■ As hot as Tiger's bride-to-be. Well, almost	9.0 9.0 9.5	Silver
TOCA Race Driver 2	XB	■ Every form of racing devised by man...what? No mud bogging? #500! This noise	8.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3	XB	■ Of Clancy's <i>Rainbow</i> is one of Xbox's sharpest shooters...	8.0 7.5 9.0	Silver
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3	PS2	■ ...too bad the dumbed-down PS2 version misses the mark	5.0 6.0 6.0	
Top Spin	XB	■ Microsoft steps up to the service line and nails an ace with Top Spin	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Transformers	PS2	■ Characters that change into mile high robots? Doesn't get much cooler than that	8.0 7.0 7.5	
UFC: Sudden Impact	PS2	■ There comes a point in every fighter's career when it's time to hang it up	8.0 4.5 4.0	
Unreal III: The Awakening	XB	■ Bleat a mopey assortment of aliens with a mopey assortment of weaponry	7.0 6.5 6.5	
Van Helsing	PS2/XB	■ Van doesn't mind being <i>Devil May Cry</i> so long as he can stick it to the count	7.0 6.5 6.0	
WarHorns, Inc.: Mega Party Game	GC	■ Single player stinks of a quick cash in—spilt the bill with four friends	8.0 6.5 7.0	
Way of the Samurai 2	PS2	■ The way of the warrior presents plenty of branching paths, but they're all kinda boring	6.0 6.5 6.0	
Wimbling Eleven 7	PS2	■ Soccer action more intense than a Daniel Beckham-Pooh Spice embrace	8.5 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	
WWE SmackDown! Here Comes the Pain	PS2	■ Of course, a dodgy tell you that the pain won't subsist for four to six weeks	7.5 8.0 7.0	
WWE WrestleMania XIX	GC	■ 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	



greatest hit miss



SOUL CALIBUR II

■ **PS2/XB/GC**
 ■ **Released:** September 2003
 ■ **Original Scores:** 10, 9.0, 10
 ■ **Some games you play when you can find the time, others you rearrange your life around.** With its sweetly-palmed swordplay and crisp, detailed graphics, *Soul Calibur II* is clearly among the latter. Already own it? At 20 clams, now's your chance to try out the other console-specific characters like Spawn (Xbox) and Link (GC).

tricks of the trade

great goodies that will make you giggle with glee

trickster

The dog days of summer. I couldn't think of a more perfect opportunity to stay inside, close all the curtains, strap pieces of duct tape to any remaining light filtering in from "the outside," and fully cultivate that "sack of potatoes" physique you're working on. After all, why waste your time trying to get the babes at the beach to notice you when your imaginary game friends would never let you down? This month, we round up and rampage through the *DRIV3R* Timmies in Nico, throw down old school with masses of *Mega Man* codeage, and solve the annoying bits of *Thief: Deadly Shadows*.

—David S. J. Hodgson
egm@ziffdavis.com



■ Xbox

THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS



■ The view down into the dining hall. The Imberis Analects II is on the table to the left.

There's no need to smash your Xbox against the wall. These little secrets will get you through the toughest thieving parts.

The Keeper compound

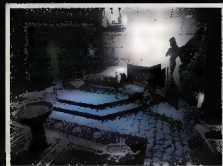
After visiting Artemus' chambers, go into the main room and up the stairs. Move south through this next passage until you pass the first statue, where you find a shallow, nondescript alcove.

Look carefully for a very small indentation. This is the secret lock to Orland's chambers. Activate the lock and watch the secret door open, then head up the stairs to the top landing. You see the

office door, Orland's balcony in the council chamber, and a staircase opposite leading down.

Get inside Orland's chambers and take the binding seat from the wall beside his bed. Pick it up and toss it down in the far corner of the room, then blast it with a fire arrow. If you don't have a fire arrow, toss it into any flame, such as a fireplace or a blue torch brazier. When that objective is complete, read Orland's journal and search the room for anything valuable.

Leave the room and go down the western staircase leading to a similar alcove. Now you're on the other side, and there is a similar lock. Use Artemus' ring



to open the door. When you come out on the balcony, you're above the dining hall.

Keep moving along the balcony in the shadows, because a Keeper priest overlooks the room below from the south end. Sneak up and knock her out, hide her body in the shadows, and proceed down the far staircase into the room below. Before you go downstairs, note the narrow walkway along the railing that leads to a platform above the stairway. Carefully make your way across to the platform. You'll find some equipment.

Jump onto the stonework next to the fireplace and climb down to the ground floor. Grab the valuable painting over the fireplace as you climb down or get it by jumping up from floor level.

There is a Keeper guard in the far southeast corner behind the pillars; deal with him before you do anything else. Knock him out and leave him where he falls. Any noise may bring in two Keeper priests from the hall outside. On the two large dining tables, you find a small fortune in loot, as well as the Imberis

GAME DIRECTORY

DRIV3R 114

Full Spectrum Warrior 116

Mega Man Anniversary Collection 116

Metal Slug 3 116

Thief: Deadly Shadows 114

■ PS2/XB

DRIV3R

Nice secrets: Tagging Timmies



Timmy #1

Find him in an open warehouse off Rue des Vespines, on an upstairs gantry, accessed via an open gate.

Timmy #2

Find him next to the outcrop on the river's north bank, to the airport's north.

Timmy #3

Find him at the very top of the airport tower. Use the ladder to reach him and prepare for fierce combat!

Timmy #4

Find him lurking near the southeast entrance of the Saint Nicholas Cathedral Russe, outside the steps.

Timmy #5

Find him on the lower mezzanine floor of the set of buildings you can drive across. Either drop in from the roof, using a vehicle, or open the door from the street.



Timmy #6

Find him on a standstand at the top of the Vieille Ville park hill. He is easily attacked from behind.

Timmy #7

Find him watching the boats from the Rauba Capeu lighthouse. Climb the ladder to reach him and use the light as cover.

Timmy #8

Find him standing below the west dirt ramp at the stunt land quarry, in the large dip.

Timmy #9

Find him checking for hidden doubloons inside the cave near Pt. Pionne. Use a boat, beckon Timmy into the water until he floats, then finish him.

Timmy #10

Find him inside the Transport Compound, hiding in a box by the corner hut in the southeast corner.

Gunning for the armory

When the 10th Timmy croaks, find the mountain road to Fort Alban, follow it to the fortress, and head up the steps at the



TRICKS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIMA GAMES

A polite round of applause to the hardcore gamers for tagging and bagging all those Timmies in *DRIV3R* and taking *Thief: Deadly Shadows* to task. For more strategy malarkey on these titles, check their respective Prima Strategy Guides, on sale now.



■ Be mindful of the Keepers in the hall just outside the dining hall.



safe to snipe them from there.

The furnace is full of fire arrows; pick them all up. Lauryl says that putting her nightgown into the furnace triggers the next objective, which is to put one of the toys from the patient's rooms into the furnace as well. You get to that in a moment. First, collect the loot.

Proceed south into the morgue, where there are drawers for bodies, but no bodies in them. Open all the closed doors until you find the bag of gold teeth (Special Loot #3). Now, go back upstairs to the patients' rooms and pick up one of the toys. Try the unlighted candle from the last patient room you opened. Bring it back to the furnace in the morgue and place it on the front of the table. Instantly, you are transported back in time to when the cradle wasn't so old.

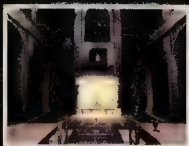


the room and scare the scribes.

When you're done, exit through the northeast door and down the stairs, back to the Elder Library and the Keeper Glyph that now allows access to the lower libraries.

The haunted house: inner and outer cradle

Take the elevator to the morgue. As you reach the floor of the morgue, immediately run and hide beneath the stairs. The puppets try to come after you, to no avail. Throw oil on the floor and then shoot it with a fire arrow when the puppets are standing in it and watch them go up in flames. Stand back before you do this, though. If they have you cornered, make a dash for one of the ladders to the platforms overlooking the furnace area. It's



Analects II (Special Loot #32)

Continue to the door in the southeast corner and open it, but wait and listen to the conversation between the two Keepers. When they finish and part, slip into the hallway when the first priest walks past the doorway and away from you. Follow the Glyphmaster (female Keeper) into the scribbery and deal with her there. Blind her with a flash bomb while you loot



front of the castle. Inside is a medieval great room with a more modern collection of firearms. Tool up and head out!

Minigame mayhem: fugitive mode

Grabbing armaments from the armory and exiting the castle instantly gives every pedestrian in town a weapon that they will use on you if you exhibit violent tendencies toward them. You're essentially a fugitive, hunted down by not only



the police, but also by every innocent you "accidentally" rammed, scraped, or shot earlier in your missions, plus everyone else!



Secret Cars

Car A: Camper van

Find this in a garage at the peak of the hill that Chateau Grimaldi sits on, near the overhanging ramp.

Car B: Deitch Schub

Find this in the left garage at the fire station at the Nice Airport.

Car C: Forklift

Find this inside the right garage on the flat grounds of the Chapel de St. Hospice. >



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► PS2/GC

MEGA MAN ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION

There is something special about the classics. There is something even more special when all the classics of a long-running franchise can be found in one game.

Mega Man 1

The original *Mega Man* had no need for passwords. You'd be cheating yourself by skipping through any part of this classic.

Mega Man 2

- Start game with four E-Tanks
- A5, B1, B3, C4, D2, D3, E1, E4, E5
- Air Man defeated with four E-Tanks
- A5, B1, B2, B3, C4, D2, D3, E4, E5
- Bubble Man defeated with four E-Tanks
- A5, B1, B3, C4, D3, D5, E1, E4, E5
- Crash Man defeated with four E-Tanks
- A5, B3, C4, D2, D3, D4, E1, E4, E5
- Flash Man defeated with four E-Tanks
- A5, B1, C4, C5, D2, D3, E1, E4, E5
- Heat Man defeated with four E-Tanks
- A5, B1, B3, C1, C4, D2, D3, E1, E5
- Metal Man defeated with four E-Tanks
- A5, B1, B3, B4, C4, D2, D3, E1, E4
- Quick Man defeated with four E-Tanks
- A5, B1, B3, C3, C4, D2, E1, E4, E5
- Wood Man defeated with four E-Tanks
- A5, B1, B3, D2, D3, E1, E2, E4, E5
- Half Complete: Air Man, Bubble Man, Crash Man, Flash Man defeated with four E-Tanks
- A5, B2, C4, C5, D3, D4, D5, E4, E5
- Half Complete: Heat Man, Metal Man, Quick Man, Wood Man defeated with four E-Tanks
- A5, B1, B3, B4, C1, C3, D2, E1, E2
- Dr. Willy's Skull Castle with four E-Tanks
- A5, B2, B4, C1, C3, C5, D4, D5, E2

Mega Man 3

- Start game with nine E-Tanks
- A6 red (or blue)
- Start game with five E-Tanks
- C1 red (or blue)

TOP 5 TRICKS

■ Xbox

Full Spectrum Warrior

Enter into the Cheat menu screen. Play the full version of *America's Army* HAZOP/PYRUSTLE

Big head mode

NICKWEST

Unlimited ammo

MERCENARIES

Play at a harder level with no HUD

SWEDISHARMY

■ Xbox

Metal Slug 3

Have a second controller plugged in for an easy continue. As soon as you die, press Start on controller two. You'll resume your place without having to restart the level.



Top Man defeated with nine E-Tanks

- A6 red, A3 red
- Snake Man defeated with nine E-Tanks
- A6 red, F6 red
- Magnet Man defeated with nine E-Tanks
- A6 red, F5 red
- Needle Man defeated with nine E-Tanks
- A6 red, D3 red
- Hard Man defeated with nine E-Tanks
- A6 red, C4 red
- Gemini Man defeated with nine E-Tanks
- A6 red, B5 red
- Spark Man defeated with nine E-Tanks
- A6 red, F4 red
- Shadow Man defeated with nine E-Tanks
- A6 red, D6 red
- Half Complete: Top Man, Snake Man, Magnet Man, Needle Man defeated with nine E-Tanks
- A3 blue, A6 red, D3 blue
- Half Complete: Hard Man, Gemini Man, Spark Man, Shadow Man defeated with nine E-Tanks
- A6 red, B5 blue, F4 blue
- Doc Robot Stages: All eight original stages defeated with nine E-Tanks
- A3 blue, A6 red, B5 blue, D3 blue, F4 blue
- Break Man Stage with nine E-Tanks
- A1 blue, A3 blue, A6 red, B2 blue, B5 blue, D3 blue, F4 blue
- Dr. Willy's Skull Castle with nine E-Tanks
- A1 blue, A3 blue, A6 red, B2 blue, B5 blue, D3 blue, E1 red, F4 blue

Mega Man 4

- Start game with Wire Adapter
- A2, A3, A5, A6, D1, D4
- Start game with Balloon Adapter
- A2, A3, A5, A6, D1, D3
- Start game with Balloon and Wire Adapter
- A2, A3, A5, B2, D1, F3
- Toad Man defeated with both Adapters
- A3, A5, B1, B3, D1, F3
- Bright Man defeated with both Adapters
- A3, A5, B3, C2, D1, F3

Pharaoh Man defeated with both Adapters

- A2, A5, B3, B4, D1, F3
- Drill Man defeated with both Adapters
- A2, A5, B3, C3, D1, F3
- Ring Man defeated with both Adapters
- A2, A3, B3, B6, D1, F3
- Dust Man defeated with both Adapters
- A2, A3, B3, C5, D1, F3
- Skull Man defeated with both Adapters
- A2, A3, A5, B3, F2, F3
- Dive Man defeated with both Adapters
- A2, A3, A5, B3, E1, F3
- Half Complete: Toad Man, Bright Man, Pharaoh Man, Drill Man defeated with both Adapters
- A1, A4, A5, C6, D1, F3
- Half Complete: Ring Man, Dust Man, Skull Man, Dive Man defeated with both Adapters
- A2, A3, B5, C6, E2, F3
- Cossack's Castle with both Adapters
- A1, A4, B5, E2, F1, F3

Mega Man 5

- Start game with Beat power (all letters found)
- B1 red, D3 red, F5 red, C1 blue, D4 blue, F6 blue
- Napalm Man defeated with Beat power
- E2 red, D3 red, F5 red, C1 blue, D4 blue, F6 blue
- Crystal Man defeated with Beat power
- D2 red, D3 red, F5 red, C1 blue, D4 blue, F6 blue
- Gyro Man defeated with Beat power
- B1 red, A4 red, F5 red, C1 blue, D4 blue, F6 blue
- Star Man defeated with Beat power
- B1 red, F4 red, F5 red, C1 blue, D4 blue, F6 blue
- Charge Man defeated with Beat power
- B1 red, F3 red, F5 red, C1 blue, D4 blue, F6 blue
- Gravity Man defeated with Beat power
- B1 red, D3 red, C6 red, C1 blue, D4 blue, F6 blue

- Wave Man defeated with Beat power
- B1 red, D3 red, B6 red, C1 blue, D4 blue, F6 blue
- Stone Man defeated with Beat power
- B1 red, D3 red, B5 red, C1 blue, D4 blue, F6 blue
- Half Complete: Napalm Man, Crystal Man, Gyro Man, Star Man defeated with Beat power
- C1 red, E3 red, F5 red, F1 blue, D4 blue, F6 blue
- Half Complete: Charge Man, Gravity Man, Wave Man, Stone Man defeated with Beat power
- B1 red, F3 red, F6 red, C1 blue, D4 blue, D6 blue
- Proto Man's Castle with Beat power
- C1 red, D4 red, F6 red, F1 blue, B4 blue, D6 blue

Mega Man 6

- Start game with Energy Balancer
- E5, A1, E1, A5, C3
- Blizzard Man defeated with Energy Balancer
- E5, A2, E1, A5, C3
- Tomahawk Man defeated with Energy Balancer
- E5, B1, E1, A5, C3
- Wind Man defeated with Energy Balancer
- E5, A1, E2, A5, C3
- Yamato Man defeated with Energy Balancer
- E5, A1, F1, A5, C3
- Plant Man defeated with Energy Balancer
- E5, A1, E1, A6, C3
- Knight Man defeated with Energy Balancer
- E5, A1, E1, B5, C3
- Flame Man defeated with Energy Balancer
- E5, A1, E1, A5, C4
- Centaur Man defeated with Energy Balancer
- E5, A1, E1, A5, D3
- Half Complete: Blizzard Man, Tomahawk Man, Wind Man, Yamato Man defeated with Energy Balancer
- E5, D2, B4, A5, C3
- Half Complete: Plant Man, Knight Man, Flame Man, Centaur Man defeated with Energy Balancer
- E5, A1, E1, D6, F4
- Mr. X's Castle with Energy Balancer and BEAT power
- E5, D2, B4, D6, F4

Mega Man 7

Dr. Willy's Castle



Mega Man 8

With the eventual advent of memory cards, there was no longer a need for passwords when the *Mega Man* franchise reached the PlayStation game console. Sorry, kids.



VS.



Herr Replay grabs a wand and casts a slew of Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban codes to get the party started...

■ PS2
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

(M)
QPD7-4EUG-87PRG
89GA-5F1F-CNVCQ

Exclusive!
Press L1 at Main menu for level select
TJBR-0019-T1N1VE
ZMWJ7-BEP4-UGMW7

Exclusive!
Enable room map
0ZRB-F5B7-V1GX3
0R2X-6XXA-4M08

99 girdling potions
JW71-P3JF-2HC3E
R3JQ-KXKR-EECTX
JZ96-QN9Y-7WK46
0575-06E2-04C7K
G71A-HVDQ-7CPOV

99 antidotes
FYU3-JA1D-4J51G
JZ96-QN9Y-7WK46
0575-06E2-04C7K
G71A-HVDQ-7CPOV
4CJ7-F5J7-A1B0M

99 Wiggensweld potions
3UX3-1GUA-MN8QJ
JZ96-QN9Y-7WK46
0575-06E2-04C7K
G71A-HVDQ-7CPOV
WTEC-ZZD2-5Y7QC

Have all spells
TF77-VMCK
3VX8CTHTV-ET5Z
QPC99ZCT-MKMKZ-
A2V5K

1,000 house points
GCGP-A7QM-
PNSWU
3VNG-R13C-3YKEM

250 beans
5KAU-MBZ2-5BXZV
NUU0-XCDE-1CR61

Max objects Capacity
H2QM-7VBW-YM066
725P-5HMB-97Y3U

Enable bonus Hippogriff flight
US6N-M92B-E97CJ
CM7X-EA9D-E0QRX

Enable bonus owl racing
E8YU-707M-XTXWX
4R0S-7FCR-067JM

■ GC
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

(M)
PWK0-21AF-BRA1N
FUX8-34XV-G4Q03

Exclusive!
Infinite health + debug menu
(Press L at Main menu)

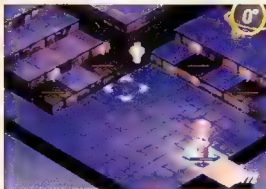
CAT3-DMWY-BW26H
0X0H-WBG1-G4JNG
7PD4-REKJ-Y08MU
Y9K3-JNV3-5N12E

Exclusive!
Have Hermione's story items
GA61-40AZ-V8X2J
VOUT-DYJF-VK7FT
T48D-W5XA-ZZ2N0
3133-AKWS-CDGQF
W72K-29RM-NBX4X

Have all spells
T74G-ZVD9-8982K
ESNY-NK1B-YW66G
2745-AXTY-TUB82

Unlock owl racing
7RM4-UQ7U-YC7JM
YMMY-02MI-DB6WV

Unlock Hippogriff challenge
9R1M-N31B-RBVPD
J8MT-8RD1-229C7



...Monsieur Shark fights magic with tons of Transformations codes and exclusive La Pucelle Tactics goodies.

■ PS2
Transformers

(M) Must be on
94903380 BE665C02

Infinite health
24D01528 1634470C

Infinite energy level (all slots)
249281C8 14A44319

Big head mode
05503729 14F4E738

Turbo mode
05503728 14F4C788

Unlock all extras
244FD0D6 EB8B0847
244FD0D6 EB8B0867

Press L1 for Mega jump
D5403B37 9C7C9802
24D03528 1470C5DC

Press L2 to return to ground
D5403B37 9D7C8D02
24C97DA8 8051CCD4

All levels/Minicons unlocked
05503729 14F4C708

Level complete: Amazon
2410376A 363041DC
2410376A B63041FC

Level complete: Antarctica
2490346A 36B041E6
2490346A 36B0415E

Level complete: Deep Amazon
2490356A 36B041CC
2490356A 36B041EC

Level complete: Mid-Antarctic
24501468 363041FC
24501768 3630414C

Level complete: Alaska
24501668 B6B0415C
2450166A 36B0417C

Level complete: Starship
24501768 36B041EC
24D0176A 36B041DE

Level complete: Pacific Island
24901468 B630414E
24D0176A B6B041DC

■ PS2
La Pucelle Tactics

Exclusive!
(M) Must be on
94801BE0 B63002AE

Exclusive!
Best customer rank
14101568 94B4511C

Exclusive!
Pier: move anywhere
1400B369 3C3441FE
1400B168 3C34414E

Exclusive!
Collette: move anywhere
14009068 3C84435E
14009068 3C84435E

Exclusive!
Alouette: move anywhere
1400B169 3C84537E
1400B168 3C84535E

Exclusive!
Alouette: move anywhere
1400B169 3C84537E
1400B168 3C84535E

■ GBA
Mega Man Battle Network 3:

(M) Must be on
993E4106E209
42B84EF52E5D
0849D5E35C59

Transparent
FEB49F4C0E9A

Infinite HP
8FA492DC3EB9

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THE REST OF THE CRAP

He knows 50 different words for "basura"

help me

In the Spanish version of *EGM*, my column is called "No Merecen Tu Dinero," which means "not worth your money."

I'm told it's because south of the border, "The Rest of the Crap" translates into "suck your mother's banana peel, donkey throat cancer," an insult they assured me was not taken lightly. That isn't the only change, though. The descriptive accounts of my Barbie pony fantasies don't translate well, either, so they're replaced with pictures of bikini girls throwing ice cream at each other. So to translate that back into English, I rule when I'm Mexican.

—Seanbaby



DINOTOPIA: THE TIMSTONE PIRATES



Harry Potter and the Dinosaur of Azkaban.

GBA • TDK — When I first started playing *Dinotopia*, the controls were doing what I wanted them to, and the graphics were competent. The horror—what if this were a decent game that happened to be based on the lamest thing ever only through sheer

chance? Thirty minutes later, I realized I'd fought only two enemies: Unarmed Fat Guy and Little Kid With Stick. On level two, they were assisted by their deadly friend, Anonymous Hands Throwing Trash Out Window, and I quit playing.

Just a tip: If you're making a game about dinosaurs, let me fight some dinosaurs. To hell with that—go ahead and let me fight dinosaurs in games in which it makes no sense. It seriously wouldn't break my heart if I were playing *Spintier Cali* and the story line didn't quite account for the sudden appearance of Dr. Pterodactyloid and his Karatesaurus.

PRYZM CHAPTER ONE: THE DARK UNICORN



When unicorns have Special Olympics, every one's a loser.

PS2 • TDK — Forgive me for not being impartial when reviewing this game. You see, my gnomish elf family was forced by mutant plague vines to flee for the Land of the Unicorns, and *Pryzm's* story hits a little too close to home. Plus, I hate it when fruity fairy crap replaces the letter "l" with a "y" and calls it "fantasy." So instead of reviewing the game, I've included my *Pryzm* gaming diary.

3:54 a.m.: Cut-scene informs me that unicorns can't fly when carrying trolls. Seems to be a point of contention between the two species.

3:57 a.m.: Oh good, training. Like this is going to be such a unique game that I'll

need a...oh, I see. Moving the control stick causes my unicorn to go that way. Also: The tutorial is unskippable.

4:09 a.m.: Power switch on PS2 out training short. Wrote a letter to the developers saying, "Next time you're making a game and you think someone wants to prance a unicorn through a series of hoops, stop. Take a look at yourself. Take a f***ing look at what you're doing."

Presumptuous spazzing: Notice how *Pryzm* labels itself as "Chapter One," as if it were only the first step on the grand rainbow journey of *Pryzm* sequels. Well, I just checked with the future, and I'll skip you ahead to the title of the next edition—*Pryzm Chapter Two: Legend of the Never Going to Happen*.

TEN PIN ALLEY 2



I see the bowling...where's the beer?

GBA • XS Games — "It's a pin-crashing, wall-shakin' party game! The greatest party game of the year, even if you're alone!" And with that claim, *Ten Pin Alley 2* might have committed a felony-level assault against the English language. This is the ugliest, most boring bowling game available; getting a normal person to pick up a bowling simulator is a hard enough sell when it *doesn't* suck.

Has the party started yet? I can't explain to you how fun it is to spend six minutes of every frame watching computer-controlled players slowly roll their balls down the lane, accompanied by the same four notes of music! Hey, *Ten Pin Alley 2*, just tell me how many damn pins they knocked down; I'll trust you. Better yet, forget that suggestion and replace it with this: Suck it.

POLLY! POCKET: SUPER SPLASH ISLAND

GBA • VU Games — The object of *Polly* is to play water-themed minigames until you earn enough tickets to ride the most

■ Polly houts another wake ordinance.



■ Like Albert Einstein, Polly wears the same outfit every day and is anorexic.

thrilling attraction, the Giant Water Slide. And at the risk of spoiling a significant plot twist, you also unlock fashion surprises. My biggest complaint with *Polly*—and finding one in such a fashiony funtivity was hard—is that the minigames last approximately 300 times longer than your patience for them.

You are enjoying yourself! *THAT WAS FUN! Polly informed me after I spent the better part of an hour trying to kill her friends with a water balloon gun in a sadistic Whack-a-Mole minigame. Don't tell me what makes me happy, Polly. I'll make my own decisions on how delightful aquatic infanticide can be.

great moments in bad box art

FINAL ZONE II (TURBOGRAFX 16)

Whoever thought they were so clever when they said "Don't judge a book by its cover" never saw this. It's like space marines and Easter eggs got together and made babies. After seeing the celebratory fireworks, the purple smoke machine, and their pastel-colored codpieces, I'm going to go ahead and judge it. And I judge it to be FABULOUS! **A++**



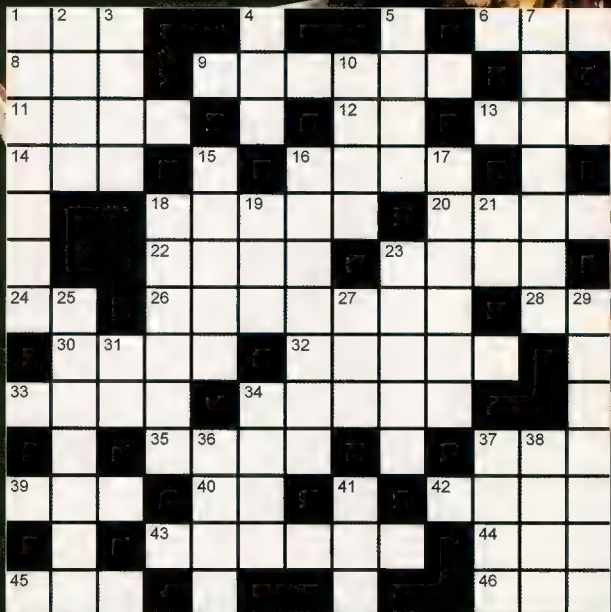
classic crap



LORD OF THE SWORD (SEGA MASTER SYSTEM)

Sometimes parents push kids too hard to participate in a certain activity, and it backfires with the kids hating it. That must have happened here, because the guy whose parents named him "Lord of the Sword" could not be less interested in sword swinging. You'll be lucky to kill anything with his little, clumsy sword bonk. To his credit, though, he's slightly deadlier than his brothers, Provocateur of the Ransaur and Master of the Scimitar, Jr.

MIDDLE-EARTH MANIA



ACROSS

- 9 ACROSS, for one
- Typically combats fire spells
- Like Tony Hawk, as a skater
- Shiro inhabitant
- Final Fantasy X* summoner assistant
- His Atari game was out-of-this-world bad
- Halo* multiplayer CTF team color
- Medal of Honor* subject matter
- Vehicle in *MGS* escape/ending battle
- Sega CD RPG series remade for the PS2
- Square's new partner
- Mr. Sects, driver in *Spy Hunter*
- LOTR* basic bad guys
- Nintendo's new portable
- Green Bay of *Madden NFL*
- Telekenesis in *Psi-Ops*, for short
- Level guides
- Final Fantasy III* martial art
- What PaRappa (PS1) has to bring to Sunny Funny's birthday party
- Where Gandalf fights the Balrog
- Firefighter ED*, 18 hero
- Wong of *Resident Evil 2*
- LOTR: Third Age* character race
- "Easy" to pronounce old RPG series name
- Pokémon Diglett evolves into Dug
- Namco fighter
- Fuels your stylus in upcoming DS title *Pac-Fix*
- Ms. Pac-Man, after the wedding
- PS2 real-time strategy game, for short

DOWN

- Suddenly appeared, as in first-person shooters
- Midway's 51*
- Boggy regions of Middle-earth
- Saga team that developed the *Crazy Taxi* games
- Resident Evil* dog attack
- Final Fantasy Tactics* character class
- Served in arcade's *Tapper*
- Dances like Lilo and Stitch?
- LOTR* movie director
- Where Ubisoft's *Prince* is from
- Led by a track length in *Indy Car Series*
- TurboGrafx-16 maker
- NCAA Tarheels state, for short
- 1978 Atari two-player space shooter
- Like the SP to the Game Boy Advance
- You technically only need one to use an Xbox Live headset
- Like PS2's *Revolution*
- Metal Gear Solid* guard gun
- Headgear in the second N64 *Zelda*
- Visionary portals in *LOTR's* Sauron and Saruman
- CBA *Castlevania* subtitle word
- Like a Capcom *Crisis*
- Gets your foot in the door with most RPGs

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DRAGON BALL Z

BOJACK™ UNBOUND™ THE MOVIE



"The DBZ movies always amp up the stakes, the animation quality, and the adrenaline, and 'Bojack' is no exception."

-- Anime Insider

BOJACK IS UNBOUND... THE UNIVERSE IS AT RISK
AVAILABLE AUGUST 17TH

VIEW THE TRAILER AT: www.dragonballz.com

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HSU AND CHAN IN... The Battle For Vendor Turf



WELL, VIDEOGAMERS! I'M HSU TANAKA, WALKING AT LABIES! WELCOME TO MY BANNER-UNDER-THE-HILL! YOU KNOW, WE HALLINGERS LEAD SIMPLE LIVES OF WANDERIN' GLUTTONY, FREE FROM THE FUSS AND BORER OF ADVENTURES, OR, FOR THAT MATTER, FOOT SHAVINGS.



AAACH! IT'S THE FUZZ! FLEE THE FUR-REEDY!
OH! HO HO HO!
OH! HO HO HO!
OH! HO HO HO!



SAY THAT RING! YOU'VE JUST GOT COMIN' DOWN IT FOR BOOIE LIKE YOU— DO YOU FULL, NAME IT?
HO HO HO!
WAND IT OVER, OR I BREAK YOUR KNEES.



SURE, I— WANT YOU'RE NOT JUST COMIN' DOWN IT FOR BOOIE LIKE YOU— DO YOU FULL, NAME IT?
SAY THAT ODD— IT'D NEVER NOTICED, BUT THERE'S WRITING ON THE BAND! I CAN'T MAKE IT OUT.



IT'S UPSIDE-DOWN, YOU DING-BOING! IT SAYS 'TONGUE BRAND EVIL RING— SO BEHOLD! SO IN NEBRASKA.'
THEN THIS— THIS IS THE MASTER RING THAT MUST BE DESTROYED! THE FIRES OF MOUNT OMINOUS!



YES, AND YOU MUST GO, AND GO QUICKLY! ILL WORTH THINGED HERE!
WHERE DO YOU NEED THE HODDIE?



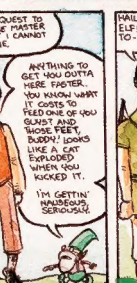
BLAS, MY SHIRE SMALL I EVER SEE YOU AGAIN?



HERE WE ARE, NONI— THE DWELLING PLACE OF THE LIVES! MAN, FRIENDS, I— SEEN YOUR COUNCIL!



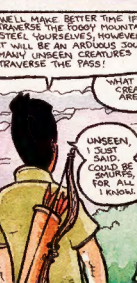
HEAH, HEAH, AND YOU JUST NEED A SOPS TO CASH ON FOR A FEW DANDS, RIGHT? FOLLOW ME, YOU FRIELANDER.



IT IS MY QUEST TO DESTROY THE MASTER RING— BUT I CANNOT DO IT ALONE.
ANYTHING TO GET YOU DUTTA HERE FIGHTER, YOU KNOW WHAT IT COSTS TO FLEE ONE OF YOU BLAST AND THOSE FEET GUMD? LOOKS LIKE A GAT EXPLODED WHEN YOU KICKED IT.
I'M GETTIN' MADISON SERIOUS!



MAIL FRIEND, I AM CHAN THE ELE! MASTER ARCHER, FUR-TO— WIDDLIN' DANCE!
AND I AM ABNIE THE DWARF! YOU CAN COME UPON MY AS— TO GRADUALLY WHITTLE DOWN THE RINKLES OF OUR POES!
ARR!
VAHOOSIE!



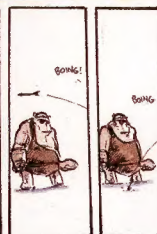
WE'LL MAKE BETTER TIME IF WE TRAVERSE THE FODDY MOUNTAINS! STEEL YOURSELVES, HOWEVER, FOR IT WILL BE AN ARDUOUS JOURNEY! WHAT SORTS OF CREATURES ARE THEY?



UNSEEN, 'T JEST SAID, COULD BE WURF, FOR ALL I KNOW!



CRIPES, AN ORC! I'LL DEAL WITH THIS VAGABOND!
ORC SMASH!



BONG!
BONG!
BONG!



BONG!
BONG!
BONG!



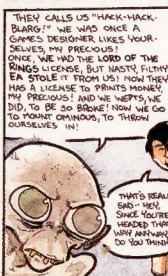
BONG!
BONG!
BONG!



CLEVER ELVES DEFEAT NASTY ORCES!
EGAD! WARRIED YOU COME FROM! STAY BACK!



AND PUT ON SOME PANTS!
WE ALSO USED TO SMOKE 'SIO PROCKES A DAY.



THEY CALL US THACK-HACK, BLARG! WE WADK ONCE A GAMES DESIGNER, HENCE YOURSELVES, MY PREVIOUS LIVES. THE ONCE, WE WHO THE LORD OF THE RINGS LICENSE, BUT WASTY, FILTHY FA STOLE IT FROM US! NOW THERE HAS A LICENSE TO PRINTS MONEY MY PREVIOUS! AND WE NEEDS, WE DID, TO GO TO BIRME! NOW WE GO TO MOUNT OMINOUS, TO THRON OURSELVES. IN!



WE WANTS IT! WE WILL NOT GETS UNTIL WE HAVES THE LICENSE BACK!
NEW HANCON, FRIEND!
MAYBE IT'S NOT SO BAD THAT IT'S GONE! LOOK WHAT YOUR POWER HAS TURNED YOU INTO A FULL, SHREBBLE BUG-EYED FRACK!



WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THIS IS JUST FROM STANNING INSIDE AND PLANNIN' VIDEOGAMES.



WE HAVE TO GO RIGHT NOW!



WE ALSO SMOKES 'SIO PROCKES A DAY.



WE WAS ALIVES WITH PLEASURE!
END!

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 | a | m

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PlayStation 2



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