

Special Edition Cover #2 of 5

# ELECTRONIC GAMING

The #1 Video Game Magazine MONTHLY

The #1 Video Game Magazine

Dec. 2004 ISSUE 185  
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# HALO 2



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PlayStation 2



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PlayStation 2



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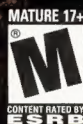
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This battle doesn't  
call for a hero.

It calls  
for a savior.



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Blood and Gore  
Violence  
Language

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 Intense Violence  
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PlayStation 2



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Use of Alcohol  
Violence

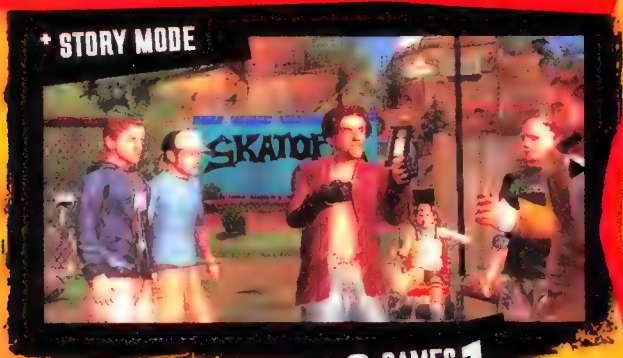
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Violence



PlayStation 2





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# 120 COVER STORY: HALO 2

Yeah, so we got a look at this new shooter the other day. We didn't have anything else to run, so we gave it some coverage. You probably won't care, but we threw in some exclusive screens and new details, too. Slow news month.

## REVIEW CREW

Where bad games go to die

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## editorial



then I went to visit the developers,

The *Halo 2* hype was getting way out of hand. Sure, this magazine contributed to that as much as anyone, but seriously...it got to the point where I didn't care about the game anymore. But

Bungie Studios, for this cover story. A minute into my first multiplayer match in months, I was back on the bandwagon. This game is seriously good, and I can tell you that no *Halo* fan will be disappointed with this sequel.\* Most of you bought an Xbox because of the first game; *Halo 2* will reaffirm that purchase ten times over.

I hope you like our cover story. We let

the new screenshots do most of the talking, so don't expect some 50,000-word monster of an article. I don't like overly wordy, boring, fluffy stories (notice how some websites take 5,000 words to write what can be said in 200? No thanks). The info (and lots of damn purdy screenshots) is all here, though. Enjoy.

—Dan "Shoe" Hsu, Editor-in-Chief

\*This is no guarantee, fools.



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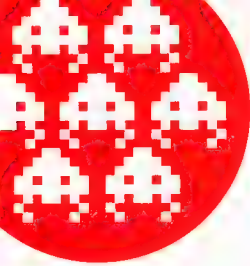
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actual game screen

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# staff

our backpacks have jets

## the review crew



**DAN "SHOE" HSU, Editor-in-Chief**  
Being the boss has its privileges. Like being able to hire clueless college kids for little to no pay to come in and take care of fun things like alphabetizing our game library and writing the table of contents. Read all about it on [egmshoe.1UP.com](#).  
**1UP.com Blog:** [egmshoe.1UP.com](#)  
**Now Playing:** *Halo 2, Halo, Burnout 3, Advance Wars 2, Otogi 2*  
**Fave Genres:** Just about everything

**MARK MACDONALD, Executive Editor**  
After Mark finished playing *Halo 2* for this month's cover story, he calmly handed back the controller, folded his hands neatly on his lap, and this happened.  
**1UP.com Blog:** [egmmark.1UP.com](#)  
**Now Playing:** *Paper Mario: The Thousand-Year Door, Monster Hunter, Burnout 3, Midway Arcade Treasures 2, Doom 3* (PC)  
**Fave Genres:** Action, Adventure, Shooters, Fell Meats



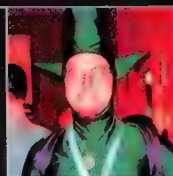
**JENNIFER TSAO, Managing Editor**  
Jennifer only had one game to review this month, so she decided to use all her spare time to finally fulfill a childhood dream: become a spokesmodel for the world's finest picnicware. It isn't as easy as she makes it look.  
**1UP.com Blog:** [egmjennifer.1UP.com](#)  
**Now Playing:** *Tony Hawk's Underground 2, Burnout 3*  
**Fave Genres:** RPG, Adventure, Action Sports, Rhythm-Action

**CRISPIN BOYER, Senior Editor**  
Crispin isn't really a *Space Invaders* alien—he just plays one in the magazine. No, he hasn't fallen in with a cosplay gang. He's just modeling one of the cheap and easy game-themed Halloween costumes we show you how to build on page 72.  
**1UP.com Blog:** [egmcrispin.1UP.com](#)  
**Now Playing:** *Burnout 3, Fable, Midway Arcade Treasures 2*  
**Fave Genres:** Action, Adventure, RPG



**SHANE BETTENHAUSEN, Previews Editor**  
Curious what virtual vixens look like when deprived of their garments, Shane investigated the "Gaming Grows Up" pictorial in the latest *Playboy*. He found it considerably easier, classier, and cheaper than playing *The Guy Game*. Had better control, too.  
**1UP.com Blog:** [egmshane.1UP.com](#)  
**Now Playing:** *Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne, Rumble Roses*  
**Fave Genres:** Action, Adventure, RPG, Fighting, Karaoke

**DEMIAN LINN, Reviews Editor**  
Don't believe Bryan—he wears that *Space Invader* outfit 24/7 these days, chafing be damned. "My rig," he calls it, as in "Where the hell's my rig?" and "Who stole my damn rig again?" Speaking of cosplay, look, it's reader Steven Dyke! (right)  
**1UP.com Blog:** [egmdemian.1UP.com](#)  
**Now Playing:** *Burnout 3, THUG2, City of Heroes* (PC), *FIFA 2005*  
**Fave Genres:** Action, Hockey, Racing, Fighting



**BRYAN INTIHAR, News Editor**  
Where's Bryan? Where did he go? Look closer, people. He simply took some advice from his ol' pal Mario and got a little flatter to avoid unwanted visitors. Or maybe Bryan just enjoys looking at himself while working. We suspect the latter.  
**1UP.com Blog:** [egmbryan.1UP.com](#)  
**Now Playing:** *Paper Mario: The Thousand-Year Door, THUG 2*  
**Fave Genres:** Action, Adventure, Sports

## The Contributors

- Veteran *EGMer* **SHAWN SMITH** is sick of being forced to sit six feet in front of the boob tube to play games, so he rated the best wireless joypads for each system on page 74.
- New York City-based writer **LAUREN GONZALEZ** challenged designer Kerri Mahoney to concoct four game-themed Halloween costumes for less than \$40 each.
- Freelancer **SCOTT STEINBERG** held five famous gamemakers at gunpoint and forced them to create a blockbuster title just for *EGM*. We preview it on page 52.

## Guest Reviewers

**JON DUDLAK**  
No longer an EGM staffer, Jon now bores barflies with stories of "the good ol' days."

**GREG FORD**  
The Classic Gaming Expo; \$20. Vintage Road Runner arcade game: priceless.

**KEVIN GIFFORD**  
At 6' 5", Kevin was too busy terrorizing villagers to write a bio this month.

**DAN LEAHY**  
The recent batch of hoops games has Dan reliving his days as the "white tornado."

**PATRICK MAURO**  
Ready for the onslaught of hate mail his b-ball reviews are sure to inspire.

**JOHN RICCIARDI**  
If you see John in Japan, yell "Hey whitey!" and pretend it wasn't you when he looks.

**JUSTIN SPEER**  
Regular contributor Justin adds a notch to his freelance belt as a guest reviewer.

**EVAN SHAMOON**  
Despite his obvious weight problem, we rarely refer to Evan as "Shamoo."

**ROBERT ASHLEY**  
2,000 miles into his move, Robert realized Summer of Love '04 had been canceled.

**JOSHUA CAIN**  
Our new intern made beating staffers at *Halo* look easier than his friend's mom.

**SHAWN ELLIOTT**  
There, there. Don't worry about ex-EGM staffer Shawn. He's in a better place now.

■ You know those other sources of gaming info **GMR, OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE, XBOX NATION**, and **1UP.COM**? Well, we oft gank their peeps to help us get our write on.

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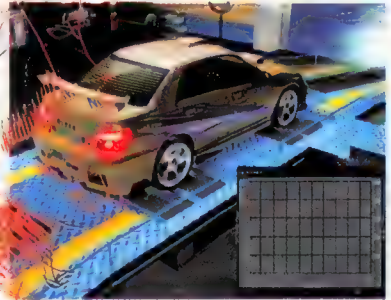
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PlayStation 2









# Letters

ranting, raving, and one helluva ride



Game Boy for the big boyz.

## Is that rice in your pocket?

Ever hear of a component called the DTEC that lets you tune your car with a Game Boy Advance? Is this thing real?

—Tony

It's real all right. A representative from TurboXS wasn't available for comment, but the manufacturer's website claims the product comes preloaded with software that lets you use your GBA as an exhaust or gas gauge, boost gauge, air temperature gauge, and tachometer. A release date and pricing are still pending.

## Money's not an issue

So *EGM* #184 shows up and everything seems normal until I turn to page 27 and see none other than TV's Wild Boyz.

Steve-O and Chris Pontius, posing in lame neon leotards to advertise the latest *Crash* game. Then on pg. 40 I find *Crash Bandicoot* among the few games Steve-O says he'd take to a desert island. Gee, I wonder why that is?

—Manny

At least there was nothing improbable about him picking *NFL 2K* and *Tony Hawk's Underground*, two series he also starred in.

## Exceed the bounds of typical friendship

In *EGM* International, Issue #181, you covered the gritty man-on-man game *Friendship Adventure*. I smelled a put-on (you didn't list a publisher or developer), but with some detective work, I finally found a site that sells it. Thing is, I still won't believe it until I see some screenshots. If this is down-and-dirty, no-holds-barred male bonding...well, I just need to see it to

believe it. If possible, can you prove me wrong by forwarding some footage?

—Gary Jones

A quick trip to Chippendales might answer some questions you didn't even know you had.

## Now there's an idea

Director George Lucas can't stop adding special effects and scenes



## Letter of the month

### She's got game

It's quite clear that this is a male-dominated medium, and I have no qualms about that. That said, why must guys assume that their gals are clueless about gaming? Boys, boys, boys! Breast size does not diminish brain capacity. I am so sick of seeing articles about getting girls into gaming, only to read that we need to be coddled with cute characters and tend to be "scared-off" by complicated controls. But guess what? Some of us aren't concerned about breaking a nail when we throw the controller at the TV.

Male or female, we're gamers. I'll spend 80 hours building up my party's stats. I'll redo levels because I didn't like the rating I got. I'll even alienate myself in social situations by talking about crap that the people around me are clueless about. In any case, I don't know how to end this blather, except to suggest that maybe we need an article about guys who won't play videogames with girlfriends who beat them silly at *Soul Calibur*.

—Alessia



Congrats, Alessia! As our Letter of the Month writer, you've won a free game from our stash! Maybe your dad or boyfriend can teach you how to play it, so you don't mess up your hair in frustration... Just kidding!

to his *Star Wars* movies, so when is he gonna tweak the Super Nintendo *Super Star Wars* trilogy? He could include more colors, add bass to the beeps and boops, and have Greedo shoot first.

—Jared Thorbahn

### Get connected

I'm an Xbox owner without Xbox Live, but I want the bonuses. Has Microsoft considered offering downloadable content on discs for those of us without broadband connections?

—Miguel Martinez

"We understand that not all gamers have broadband connections," answers a Microsoft spokesperson, "which is why we've included features that were

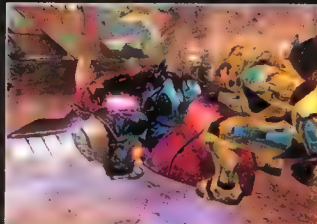
originally released via Xbox Live on exhibition discs sold at various retail outlets like Electronics Boutique and Best Buy. Such discs contain content for games, including *Unreal Championship*, *Ghost Recon: Island Thunder*, and *Star Wars: Clone Wars*. In addition, Xbox Live content has also been distributed through discs included with various videogame magazines."

### The customer is wrong

Ever since online gaming kicked into gear, I've been wondering why Nintendo is so reluctant to jump on an obviously profitable bandwagon. Well, I'd like to thank President Satoru Iwata for elucidating the issue with his insightful observation that "customers >

## POST OFFICE

Ranting and raving from our message boards, [boards.1UP.com](http://boards.1UP.com) (look for *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* forums)

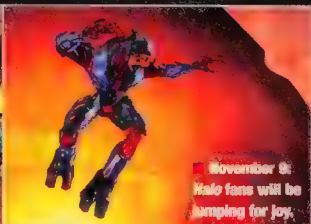


### All hail the Chief

How do you plan on making time to play *Halo 2*? Have any special plans for the day that it hits stores?

Solidsnake64: I'm installing a toilet in my recliner.

ThePIG: Since games are generally



released on Tuesday afternoons, I only schedule a.m. classes that day and none on Wednesday.

Xenonexus182: I'm holding a *Half-Life 2* pride parade at the local Electronics Boutique to show everyone where the real first-person-shooter action is at this holiday.

Skellington: I could use a clone.

Kurdel: I'll start stocking up on energy drinks in the coming weeks.

Breaker22: I've already warned my wife not to expect to watch TV that day...or any thereafter.

Mariofan420: The stench of the sewers will take a liking to me.

Erdricks\_Boxers: I had plans to visit a friend and fellow *Halo* fan in Orlando this October. I've now postponed the flight till November 8.

Firestar46: Stay overnight at my local game outfit with a George Foreman grill.

## CONTACT EGM

Carrier pigeons, smoke signals, string and styrofoam cups, messages in bottles, and the Pony Express won't cut it. Contact us at [EGM@ziffdavis.com](mailto:EGM@ziffdavis.com) or:

### EGM Letters

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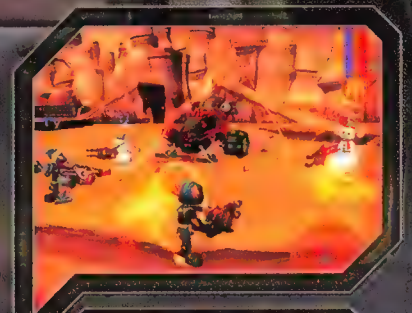


AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 2004

# RATCHET & CLANK

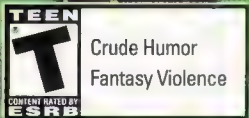
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PlayStation 2

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**Oops**

The Y2K bug has finally caught up to our Commodore computers. (We set the clocks ahead four years ago and didn't give it another thought until things started going screwy.) The damage: We forgot to mention that the screens in our Tony Montana, Meet Tommy Vercetti sidebar (*Scarface* cover story, EGM #183) came courtesy of [www.gamechronicles.com](http://www.gamechronicles.com). Also, all quotes in last month's *GTA: San Andreas* cover story were from Rockstar VP of Creative Development Dan Houser, not President Sam Houser. And finally, in our story "Best Offers" (EGM #183), which compared game-retailer trade-in deals, we incorrectly stated that both EB Games and GameStop offer only store credit for used games and not cash. Both chains do offer cash, although they pay 20 percent less than the store-credit amount.



**Sticker price**

My husband's a hardcore gamer: He spent hundreds of dollars on vinyl stickers for his truck. Challenge him to a game of *Burnout* next time he cuts you off (VIP Redeemer is his tag).

—Sarah Newman

do not want online games." Thanks for nothing, lwata: You are absolutely insane.  
—Matthew O'Leary

Just so you know, the online gaming isn't a huge moneymaker—yet. That's another reason Nintendo's been reluctant to enter that side of the business. But when the company finally is ready, will it be too late? Sony and Microsoft are already establishing a strong, loyal online-gaming base....

**Maddening**

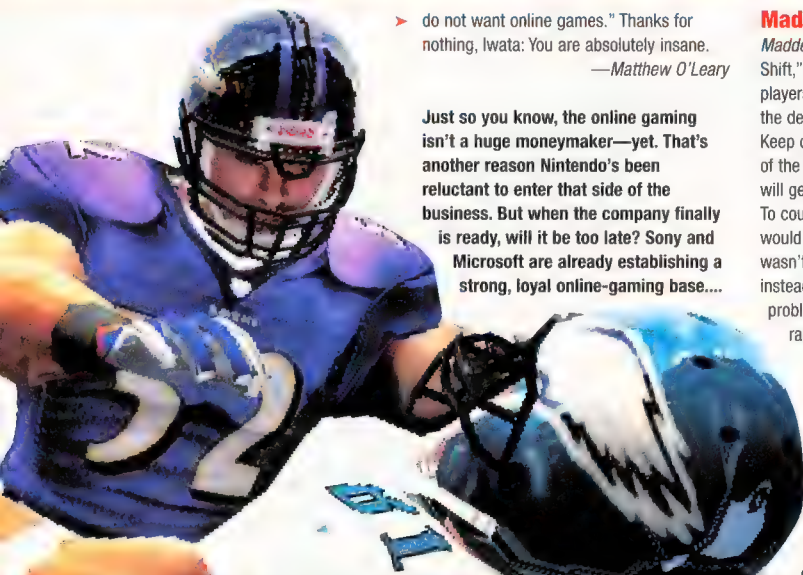
*Madden NFL 2005* is flawed. "Formation Shift," which allows you to move offensive players at the scrimmage line to confuse the defense, apparently works too well. Keep calling the command as you come out of the huddle, and the opposing defense will get so fatigued that it all but falls over. To counter the glitch, the player on defense would need to call an audible. This solution wasn't good enough for EA, however, so instead of offering a patch to rectify the problem, it's forcing us to play online ranked games with fatigue turned off, even though the fatigue option shows that it's turned on.

Many of us buy and play *Madden* for its true-to-life simulation of the NFL. While turning fatigue off prevents cheaters from exploiting the error, it also takes away some of the game's strategy and realism. Players are already calling more quarter and dime defenses because they know that, no matter how much you run the ball, their defense will still be fresh as daisies for the next play.

Want to see *Madden* play more like a sim again? Sign the petition at [www.petitiononline.com/madden05/petition.html](http://www.petitiononline.com/madden05/petition.html).

—E.M. Vazquez

EA Sports isn't offering much comfort. A rep responds: "To protect the game's integrity for the vast majority of online *Madden* players, we turned off fatigue so that the game could not be exploited. Gamers who monitor their own quality of play can play unranked games with whatever settings they prefer."



**GAME DESIGN-O-RAMA**

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



**HORSESHOEZ STREET**

Step out of the barnyard and into the boroughs to pitch toilet seats at parking meters and street signs. Handspring, somersault, have at it: The ballsier your handle, the more bling you take home. Make enough money and you'll be

chucking platinum-plated, iced-out crapper chairs—and don't forget to accessorize with fashions including camouflage cowboy hats. It's tack-tossing with rewritten rules, ya heard!

—Rory Manion and Shawn Elliott

**Feedback**  
**Readers sound off on EGM's special newsstand premium DVDs.**



To tell the truth, I wondered what, without demos, you'd include to make the disc worthwhile. So while I rightly figured that I'd already seen the gameplay footage online, the goofy Mega64 skits took me by surprise. Funny stuff.

—Scott Hausetter

Being stuck on a dial-up internet connection (shakes fist at remote countryside property), I don't have time to download videos, so watching them on the DVD is really convenient. The classic game demos (*Gauntlet* and *Smash TV*) are a great idea, too.

—Jon Sorensen

I loved watching the *Zelda* trailer on my 32-inch TV screen in all its glory rather than on some tiny QuickTime window. But I also learned that Seanbaby isn't nearly as funny in person as he is in print.

—Jacob

[Game-geek cover band] The Minibosses music videos rocked. Mega64's real-life re-creation of *Shenmue* had me rolling. I couldn't care less about some of the other stuff on the disc, but the bonus material is choice.

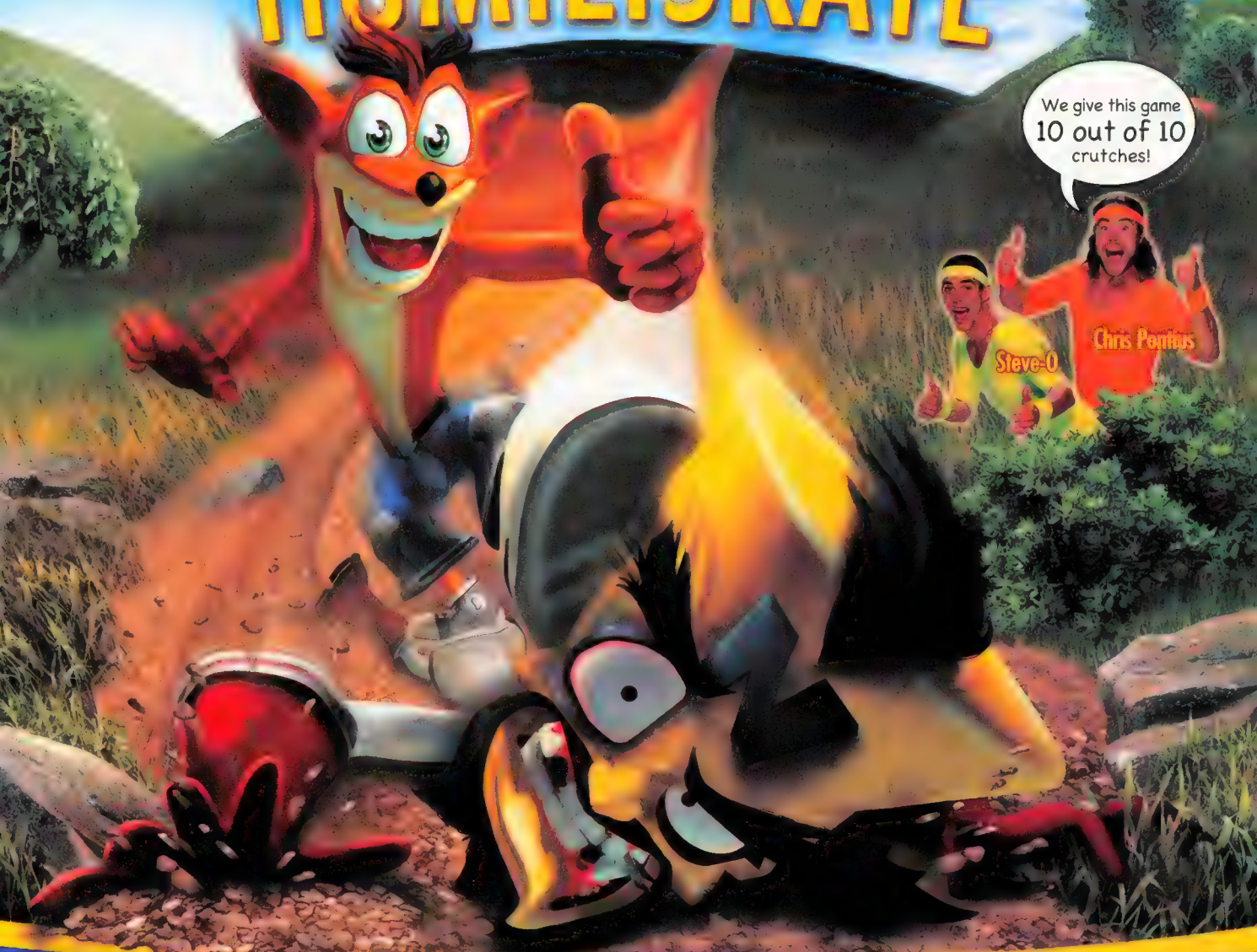
—Mike Cole



"Check out this wicked team move from Crash & Cortex!"

# HUMILISKATE

We give this game  
10 out of 10  
crutches!



**Hilarious  
Team Moves**



**Twisted  
Humor**



**Four Playable  
Characters**



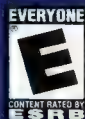
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PlayStation.2



Cartoon Violence

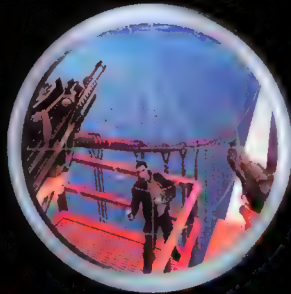












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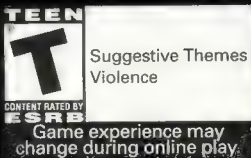
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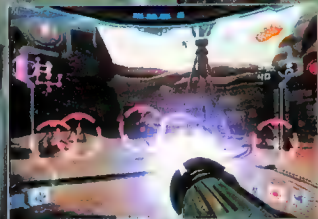
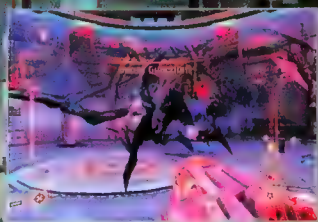
Online play may require a copy of Internet Explorer 6.0 or higher. Internet Explorer 6.0 or higher is required for online play. PlayStation 2 requires internet connection. Network Adaptor (for PlayStation 2) and Memory Card (GMS) for PlayStation 2 (each sold separately). EA GAMES™ is a trademark of Electronic Arts Inc. EA GAMES™ and the EA GAMES™ logo are trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. GoldenEye Rogue Agent™ is a trademark of GoldenEye Rogue Agent™, a trademark of UbiSoft Entertainment Ltd. UbiSoft Entertainment Ltd. is a registered trademark of UbiSoft Entertainment Ltd. in the U.S. and/or other countries. The EA logo and the EA GAMES™ logo are trademarks of EA GAMES™. EA GAMES™ is an Electronic Arts™ brand.





# press start

gaming news, previews, a really mature link, and other stuff



# ECHOES LOCATIONS

## The light and dark meat of **Metroid Prime 2's** dimension-jumping gameplay

**T**hink you have a good idea about what to expect from *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes* based on the recently released demo GameCube disc? Think again. "That version is primarily action," says Nintendo Manager of Public Relations Tom Harlin. "It set up a lot of things so you could go down this path running and gunning, but what it didn't have is a lot of the exploration elements. *Prime 2* is still a first-person adventure, as opposed to a first-person shooter." In other words, expect a lot more story, exploration, and puzzle elements than the bite-sized demo might have you believe.

Key to these more cerebral aspects of the game are the two different dimensions—dark and light—of the planet that you, as infamous bounty hunter Samus Aran, land

upon. "This world of Aether is in distress because space pirates have been mining [the mysterious energy-matter] phazon, causing a rift," says Harlin. A peaceful race native to the world, the giant moth-like people known as the luminoth find themselves under siege by the ing—nasty, spider-like creatures from the newly created dark side of the planet. Originally sent to answer a distress call from stranded federation troopers, Samus eventually agrees to help the luminoth in their fight to save Aether.

The two versions of the planet make for the biggest gameplay shift in *Prime 2*. "You need to traverse back and forth between the light and dark worlds to solve puzzles," says Nintendo rep Thom Leonard, "or you'll see parallels between the two worlds, and you'll have to figure out how to use that to your

advantage." Leonard shows us an example: A bridge in the light world leads to a black portal, not to a certain ledge we need to reach. A switch nearby might move the bridge, but it looks transparent and faded—

given a Tim Burton makeover with pitch black rocks and an ominous purple sky. Just existing in this bleak alternate dimension can hurt; outside the sphere of light energy "rest areas" (sometimes provided by shoot-

**"Prime 2 is a first-person adventure, not a shooter."**

—Tom Harlin, manager of public relations at Nintendo

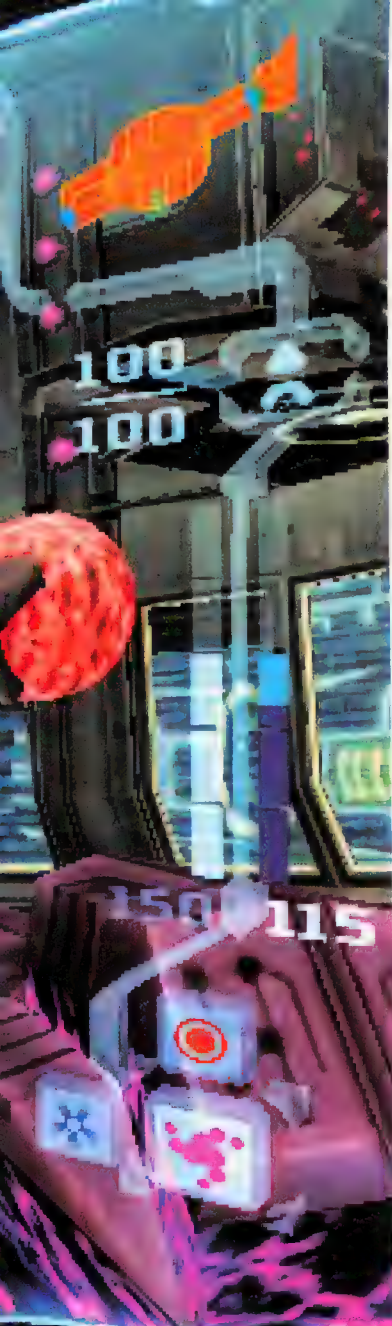
like a hologram. "It's in a dimensional flux," says Leonard, "so you can't activate it there. But this is where the light and dark world interaction comes in."

Remember that portal? We jump through it and arrive in the dark-world version of the room we just left: structurally similar, but

ing special crystals, other times provided by live animals you need to follow), Samus slowly loses health. Another difference is that switch—it's now solid and fully functional. Activating it causes what looks like a shadow of the bridge to move, signaling what's happened over in the light world.

» ATTENTION FANS OF MONKEYS AND BALLS: SEGA RECENTLY ANNOUNCED PLANS TO RELEASE A DELUXE VERSION OF THE HIT ROLL-AROUND ACTION/PUZZLER *SUPER MONKEY BALL*





### Hot Girl-on-Girl-on-Girl-on-Girl Action

Given *Prime*'s lock-on targeting, Samus' ability to roll into a ball, and the unique control scheme (the second analog stick is used to change weapons, not look around), it should come as no surprise that *Echoes*' multiplayer is different from your average first-person shooter's. Although most of the different game modes and maps have yet to be revealed, what we've played was simple and fast paced, but fun—more of a twitchy arcade experience. In deathmatch, two to four players (splitscreen) each try to rack up the most kills, using power-ups like super missile, extra damage, death ball (where you need only roll into another player to kill them), and controllable turrets. Another mode challenges everyone to collect the most coins from defeated enemies.



■ Samus' screw attack returns, allowing her to smash through blocks and bounce back and forth up passages.

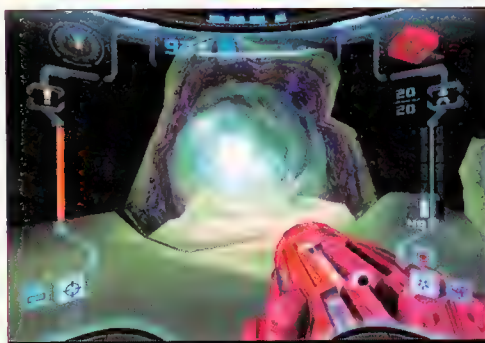


■ Once she equips the Dark Suit, Samus takes less damage while exploring the dark world.

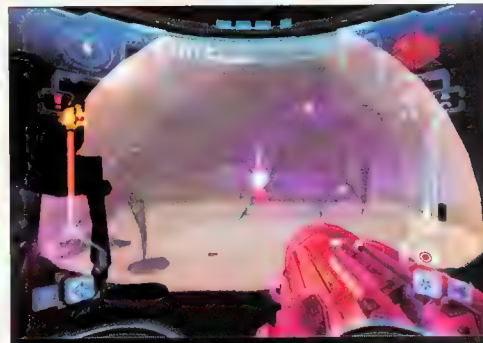
Jump back through the portal and sure enough, the path has shifted. Now we can reach our goal.

Similar puzzles are sprinkled throughout *Prime 2*, but they aren't the only implication of the focus on light and darkness. For one thing, ing occasionally make the dimensional jump themselves, possessing creatures in the light world and turning them into stronger, nastier versions of their former selves. Light and dark beams also become available eventually, each more effective against creatures from the opposite dimension. Even a mysterious black version of Samus (who bears a striking resemblance to the one in the best ending of the original *Metroid Prime*) is running about. Thought you destroyed her (it?) after the boss fight at the end of the *Prime 2* demo? Like we said, that was just a taste; the main course arrives November 15.

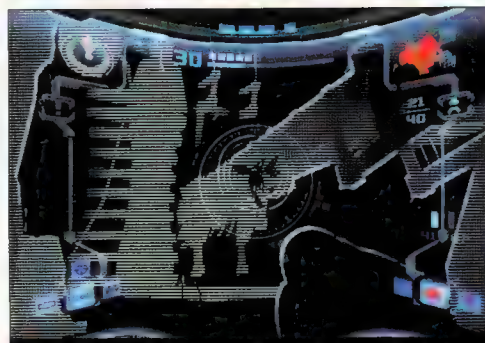
—Mark MacDonald



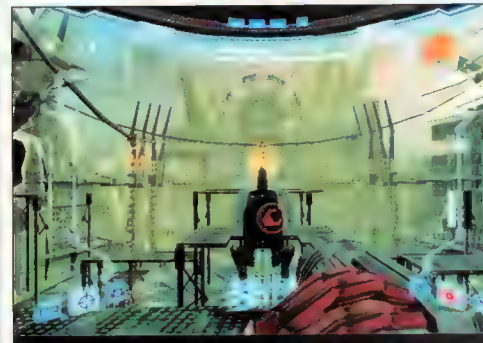
■ Activate portals to the two different dimensions by shooting them with light or dark beams.



■ Stay within the safe confines of these light zones to slowly regain health in the dark world.



■ The Echo visor sends out pulses of sound to detect objects you can't see with the naked eye (just like Ben Affleck in *Daredevil*).



■ The "rooms" in *Prime 2* are generally much larger and more wide open than those in the original game.



You stay in wonderland and I show  
you how deep the rabbit hole goes.



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# SIX FEET UNDER

## Microsoft buries Xbox's team-based sports titles

**I**t's time to pay your respects, sports fans—the gaming community recently lost four franchises to the ongoing jock war: *NFL Fever*, *NBA Inside Drive*, *Inside Pitch*, and *NHL Rivals*. Continuous attacks from respected combatants EA Sports and ESPN Videogames over the past three years proved to be too much, leading Microsoft to pull the plug on these internally developed sports series.

"[Third-party] developers are filling the title pipeline with an abundance of great

games across many genres," says a company spokesperson. "Now, we can focus on creating epic, platform-defining games like *Forza Motorsport* and *Halo 2*."

But this doesn't mean Microsoft is retiring from sports. *NFL Fever* and co. are survived by the *Top Spin* (tennis), *Links* (golf), and *Amped* (snowboarding) series. And while no official announcements were made, it's expected that the threesome will return to their respective playing fields once the company launches its next console.

### Still Kicking



**989 Sports** — After sitting out this season on the gridiron and hardwood, Sony's sports division says it will unveil a new game plan for these categories at next May's Electronic Entertainment Expo, the industry's annual trade show.



**Midway Sports** — Also on IR this fall are the *NFL Blitz* and *NHL Hitz* series. A company rep tells us that in the future, its football and hockey games will be "more lifestyle driven" à la *NBA Ballers*, Midway's surprise roundball hit.

Photograph by Kevin Conrardo

## GRUDGE MATCH

May the breast man win



### THE GUY GAME vs. GIRLS GONE WILD

With a whole Internetful of porn at your fingertips, you'd have to be a real boob to pay good money for soft-core smut. Yet here we are watching two fine examples of marketable masturbation material duke it out. Everyone wins in this Grudge Match, kids. And no, it won't make you go blind.

#### PREMISE



Chicks answer trivia questions wrong, flash camera



Chicks flash camera  
**Advantage:** *Girls Gone Wild*

#### FUN FOR



Up to four players (share controllers at your own risk)



As many as will fit in the frat-house rec room  
**Advantage:** *Girls Gone Wild*

#### FILE UNDER



Action, not getting any



Little room with saloon doors in back of video store  
**Advantage:** *Girls Gone Wild*

#### CLASSIER ACT



Girls ride big inflatable blue balls



Girls ride each other  
**Advantage:** *Girls Gone Wild*

#### SOMETHING FOR THE GALS



Satisfaction of not having appeared in this videogame  
**Advantage:** *The Guy Game*



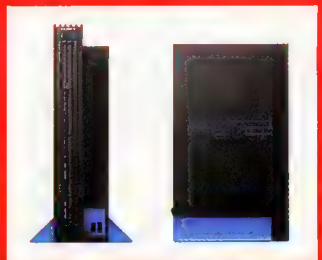
Um, swimsuit ideas?

## WINNER: GIRLS GONE WILD

There ain't nothing in *The Guy Game* you couldn't see just by watching Cinemax at the right time of night. *GGW* gets it—we like our girls stupid and sloppy drunk, thank you very much.

## SONY TRIMS THE PLAYSTATION 2 FAT

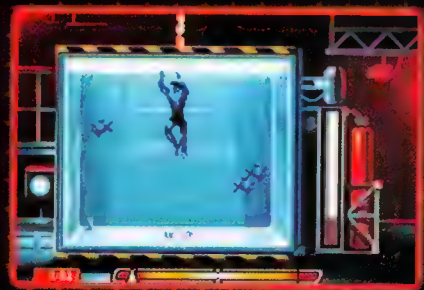
Apparently, Sony is all about saving you space in the living room, as the company recently unveiled a slimmer, redesigned PlayStation 2. The new unit (which will be released on November 1) with a price tag of \$149.99 is incredibly thin and roughly half the weight of the original model. And even at the much-reduced size, the system will include a built-in modem and Ethernet port so you can play games online. Unfortunately, purchasing the redesigned PS2 does have its drawbacks: it will not support Sony's HDD hard-drive peripheral (so no playing the massively multiplayer *Final Fantasy XI* or downloading new content like *SOCOM II* maps); and it doesn't work with the current PS2 Multitap or vertical stand (though compatible versions of both accessories are due out on November 1).



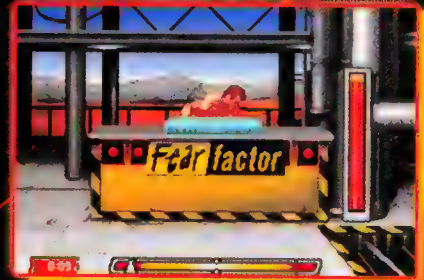
■ The sleeker PlayStation 2 (left) makes the original unit (right) look like a total fatty.



# DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO PLAY?



Defeat the Straitjacket Escape



Devour the Gross Out Buffet



Survive Helicopter Havoc

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- Random phobias impact your ability to complete stunts
- Head-to-head competition for up to six players at a time
- Live-action video clips from the show on your GBA screen
- Control the Fear Meter and become the FFU Champion!

## PLAY IT TODAY!

GAME BOY ADVANCE



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PlayStation 2

# METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

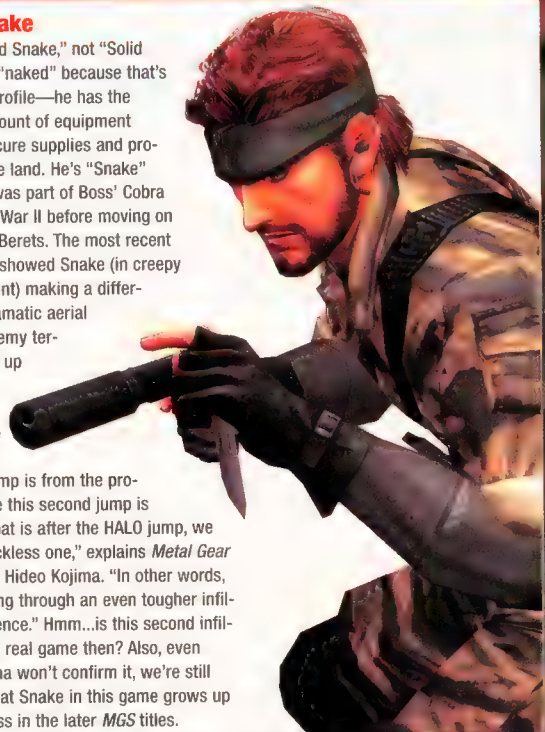
## Declassified information on this fall's subversive sequel

**S**ure, you've been briefed on all the sneaking, snake-eating, and general bad-assery of Konami's upcoming *Metal Gear* adventure, but there's one thing missing from most of the *Snake Eater* coverage so far—any clue as to what the hell is going on. Wildly imaginative characters, crazy situations, and

unexpected plot twists flow like wine in the *MGS* universe, so expect *MGS3* to be no different. Even though we know next to nothing about the story line, we have tracked down some limited intel on the game's principal players. Soak in what you can before accepting the mission this November.  
—Thierry "Scooter" Nguyen

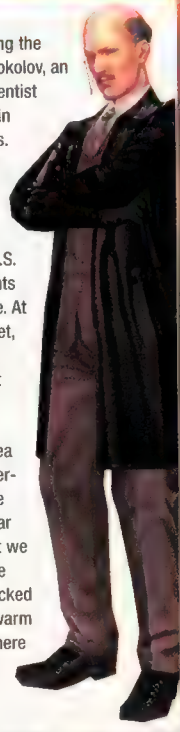
### Naked Snake

This is "Naked Snake," not "Solid Snake." He's "naked" because that's his mission profile—he has the minimum amount of equipment and is to procure supplies and provisions off the land. He's "Snake" because he was part of Boss' Cobra Unit in World War II before moving on to the Green Berets. The most recent *MGS3* trailer showed Snake (in creepy skull face paint) making a different, more dramatic aerial entry into enemy territory. What's up with that?  
"The HALO [high altitude low opening] parachute jump is from the prologue—since this second jump is something that is after the HALO jump, we made it a reckless one," explains *Metal Gear* head honcho Hideo Kojima. "In other words, Snake is going through an even tougher infiltration sequence." Hmm...is this second infiltration in the real game then? Also, even though Kojima won't confirm it, we're still convinced that Snake in this game grows up to be Big Boss in the later *MGS* titles.



### Sokolov

The wimp wearing the monocle is Dr. Sokolov, an exiled Soviet scientist seeking asylum in the United States. The good doctor has some involvement in the *Metal Gear* project, so the U.S. government wants him on their side. At the game's outset, Snake receives orders to extract him from Tselinoyarsk, a mountainous area deep in Soviet territory. Will Snake succeed? Unclear at this point, but we do know that the doctor gets attacked by a massive swarm of bees somewhere along the way. Hope he's not allergic.



### Revolver Ocelot

Hmm, a surly Spetsnaz officer from the Ocelot unit who likes using pistols? You've seen this guy before—albeit in much older form—in both *Metal Gear Solid* and *Sons of Liberty*. In this prequel, he's a cocky young officer whose skill with an automatic pistol is rivaled only by that of Snake. Will they become friends by the end of the game? Will Big Boss' relationship to Ocelot be fully explored here? It should prove interesting...



>> TAKE-TWO INTERACTIVE HAS FOUND A GOLDEN TICKET—THE PUBLISHER HAS SECURED THE RIGHTS TO CREATE GAMES BASED ON NEXT SUMMER'S MEGABUDGET FLICK CHARLIE AND





整備の状況から見て、  
一人では到底無理ね。

**Solid Strategy**  
Konami's stealth-espionage series has another card up its sleeve in *Metal Gear Act4* for Sony's upcoming PlayStation Portable. No really—this one's a card-based strategy game featuring characters and environments from *MGS1*, 2, and 3, plus a few fresh faces like the blonde shown here. Look for a hands-on report of *Act4* next issue.



**Eva**

Who's the hottie popping out of the jumpsuit? That's Eva. Not much is known about her, but at least we see that she's on Snake's team. Not only does she look like a saucy love interest for Snake, but in the latest trailer, she also drives a motorcycle while Snake sits in the side-car Miss Piggy style, capping fools along the way. Kojima confirmed that this isn't just a cut-scene: You'll actually control Snake while Eva drives.



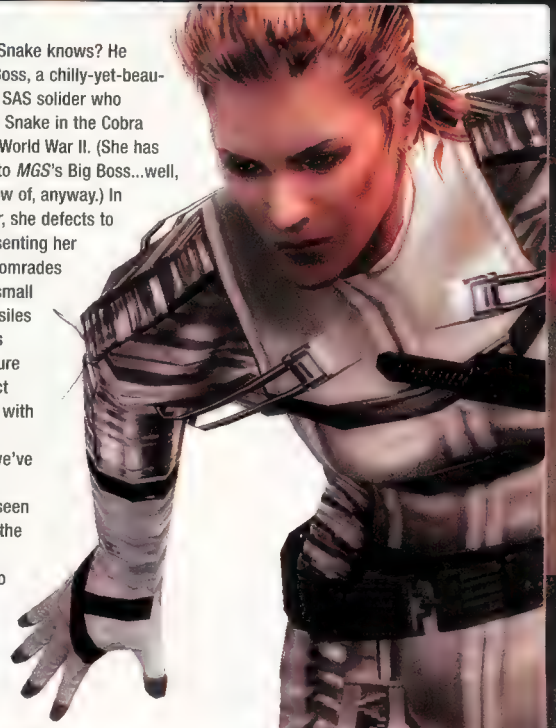
**Colonel Volgin**

Who's the strange-looking guy with the electric hands? Seems to be the main villain, one Colonel Volgin. We have no idea why his hands are electric, or why his face is so messed up. We can see that he's ex-Russian military and possibly stages some sort of coup by having Ocelot snatch Sokolov from some KGB guards. On top of that, he fires a miniature nuclear missile into a group Russian soldiers...not very nice. Oh, and Boss seemingly defects to his side, and as a test of her loyalty, Volgin orders her to cut out Snake's eyes. Sweet guy, isn't he?



**Boss**

Everything Snake knows? He owes it to Boss, a chilly-yet-beautiful female SAS soldier who served with Snake in the Cobra Unit during World War II. (She has no relation to *MGS*'s Big Boss...well, that we know of, anyway.) In *Snake Eater*, she defects to Russia, presenting her newfound comrades with some small nuclear missiles as a gift. It's tough to figure out her exact relationship with Snake from what little we've witnessed: We've also seen her beating the crap out of Snake, not to mention snapping his arm in half. Love hurts, don't it....





# Begin Your Journey



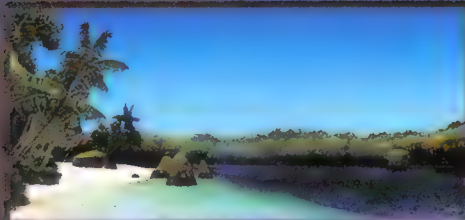
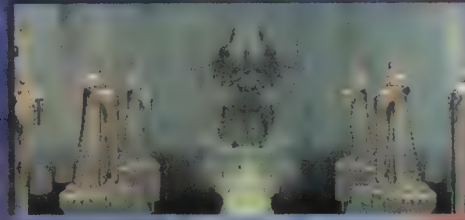
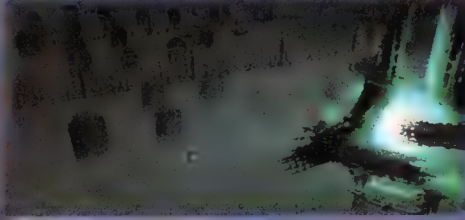
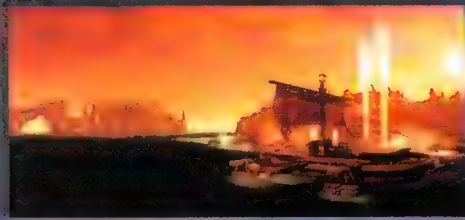
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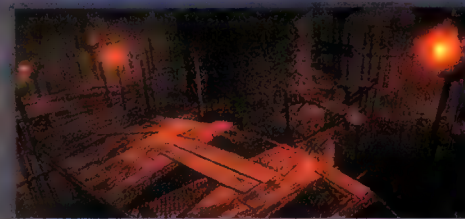
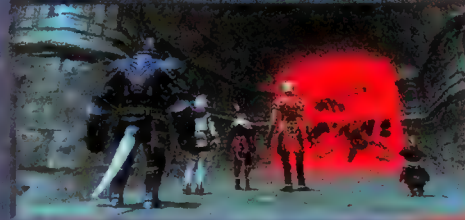
Or specially packaged with the Hard Disc Drive for your PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system



# Expand the Adventure



The world of Vana'diel gets even bigger with this FINAL FANTASY XI expansion pack, featuring massive new regions to explore, frightening new enemies to engage, and an unfolding mystery to confront.



PlayStation 2



for Windows









# DS ADVANCEMENTS

Launch date, price, and other info on Nintendo's new handheld

**M**ark your calendar and break open your piggy bank—Nintendo has finally announced the launch date (November 21) and price (\$149.99) of its portable DS. The dual-screen handheld will also come preinstalled with the DS messaging program *PictoChat* and packaged with a demo of the first-person shooter *Metroid Prime: Hunters*. And peep below for more Nintendo DS news, including a first glimpse at *Madden NFL 2005* and exclusive info on how Spider-Man is webslinging through a two-screened Manhattan.

—Bryan Intihar and Koichiro Hayashi



## Huddle Up

What a surprise—another system, another *Madden*. EA Sports brings its gridiron juggernaut to DS in full 3D (EA swears that the launch title will sport much prettier visuals than these early screens). Like its full-sized cousins, this smaller *Madden* will include a bevy of options, including season and practice modes, two-minute drill, full stat-tracking, and two-player wireless multiplayer. As for its unique DS functions, you'll be able to use the lower touch screen to call plays and audibles, check hot routes, shift defensive alignments, and even kick the ball.

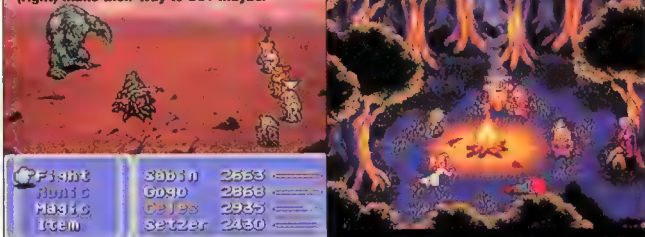
## A Tingling Sensation

Your friendly neighborhood superhero will swing onto Nintendo's new handheld at launch with another game based on the blockbuster movie sequel. But it ain't no port; *Spider-Man 2* will use the DS's second screen to provide players with hints, let them change special moves on the fly, and spice up boss battles and puzzle solving. "In one boss fight against Doc Ock, we switch to a first-person view on the bottom touch screen and the player has to web and deflect debris," says CEO Karthik Bala of Vicarious Visions, the game's developer. "In another touch-screen game mode, the player has to carefully defuse a bomb before time runs out."

## Can You Hear Me Now?

In a recent report, the financial firm TNI Securities stated that thanks to the DS's Wi-Fi abilities, the system is capable of voice chat and should have the ability to make free phone calls at wireless network hotspots like Internet cafes and airports (presumably using some kind of cell phone headset-like device). As with DS's release date and sticker price, Nintendo has yet to confirm these features.

## Will FFXI (left) and Chrono Trigger (right) make their way to DS? Maybe.



## DS Squared

When Square Enix released the Game Boy Advance version of *Final Fantasy I & II* in Japan this past summer, the company included a survey card asking gamers which of its 8- and 16-bit classics they'd want to see on DS. The list included the likes of *Final Fantasy III, IV, V, VI, Chrono Trigger, Romancing SaGa*, and *Front Mission*. But don't wet yourself yet, fanboys. "I can't promise that every game [on the survey card] that gets a lot of votes will be released," says Director Takashi Tokita, who heads up one of Square's DS development teams. "But I will give the survey special attention." Tokita adds that his group is thinking a lot about making a multiplayer game that'll take advantage of the machine's Wi-Fi capabilities. Head online to [egmextras.1UP.com](http://egmextras.1UP.com) for the full interview.

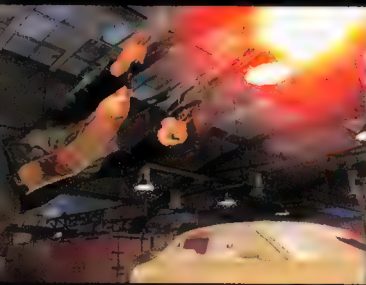


LOS ANGELES

A steal at **\$19.99\***

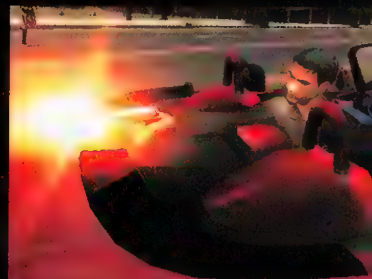
**"Best Action Game"**

—Spike TV Video Game Awards



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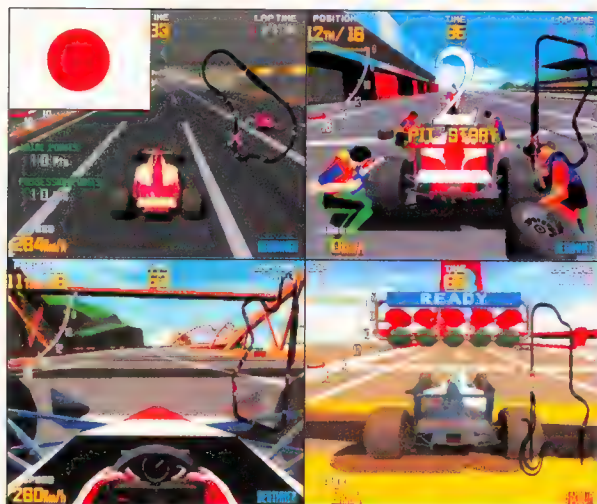
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# EGM INTERNATIONAL

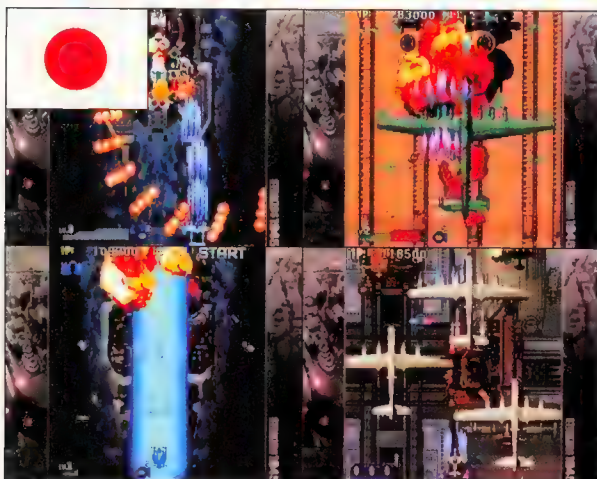
Two games that put the hard back in hardcore



■ PS2  
**VIRTUA RACING FLATOUT**

**What hole did these graphics crawl out of?** C'mon, don't be cruel. It may seem hard to believe for all the young'uns out there, but there was a time (1992, to be exact) when *Virtua Racing* was at the bleeding edge of videogaming. Nowadays, *FlatOut* is more of a trip down memory lane than anything else, complete with two-color race cars, questionable controls, and little triangular sparks whenever you hit something.

**What's the likelihood that we'll test-drive this remake?** Very little, but it sure would be nice—*Virtua Racing FlatOut* runs quite smoothly, which is far more than you can say for the original. Besides, who doesn't love F1 racing games with that classic Sega butt-rock blaring in the background?



■ PS2  
**STRIKERS 1945 I & II**

**Haven't we sat in these cockpits before?** Well, yes. The two *Strikers 1945* titles (which hit arcades in 1995 and 1997, respectively) on this disc are among the finest games in the almost-but-not-quite-dead 2D shooter genre. Just don't get too picky with historical accuracy—the games allegedly take place right after World War II, but we don't remember seeing any giant tanks firing pinwheels of glowing shots on the History Channel....

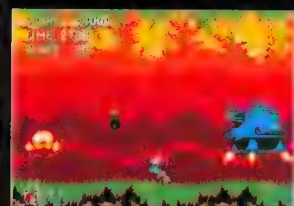
**Any chance of the *Strikers* flying over our turf?** Not really. This title is part of a three-volume set of shooters from Japanese developer Psikyo, makers of *Sol Divide*, *Dragon Blaze*, and a host of other punishing games. Shooting vets may wanna try the import route.

## OLD SCHOOL

10 years ago in EGM

■ **On the Cover:**  
**X-Men: Mutant Apocalypse**

This backbreaker of an issue (it tipped the scales at 400-plus pages) looked at Xavier's mutated crew beatin' up bubs on SNES.



■ **Game of the Month: Sonic & Knuckles (Genesis)**

The blue speed demon and his fire-red friend kicked the competition right in the *Ballz*. The platformer received props for its lock-on cart technology, which opened up all-new levels in previous *Sonic* games.



■ **Saturn and PlayStation Land in Japan**

This month's mag showcased the overseas launch of both Sega and Sony's 32-bit systems. Piggy banks squealed as gamers shelled out more than \$400 for each console.

## PREVIEW GALLERIES: AS SEEN ON TELEVISION

**GHOST IN THE SHELL: STAND ALONE COMPLEX**

PS2 • Bandai • November 2004 — Based on the *Stand Alone Complex* anime series currently rocking Cartoon Network's *Adult Swim* block, this PS2 shooter puts you in control of characters from the first landmark *Shell* flick, sultry cyborg

Makoto Kusanagi and her menacing partner Bateau. Gunplay, hacking, and skull-cracking abound.



**INUYASHA: THE SECRET OF THE CURSED MASK**

PS2 • Bandai • November 2004 — Meander around majestic ancient Japan in this lighthearted role-playing game based on the hit Cartoon Network animated show. You'll assemble a ragtag band of heroes, explore mysterious caverns, battle dire demons, and presumably uncover the secret of a cursed mask, all the while enjoying a heaping dose of goofball humor and wacky romantic subplots.



■ **Sega's Other Handheld**

We were all about the IR7000, a device with PDA-like features and the ability to send text messages to fellow users. And who needs Chuck Woolery for a love connection when you've got a matchmaker mode?



“We have SOLID  
proof of their  
weapons of mass  
destruction.”

- October 16, 1962



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■ Soldiers wage virtual war in Atlantis Cyberspace pods on the G4 network's show *Arena*, while a technician (above) keeps the troopers on their toes.

# AT EASE, SOLDIER



## The world's most realistic games go to boot camp to train our troops, but it's hardly an Army of fun

**T**oday's U.S. soldiers are the world's most lethal breed of combat troopers—able to disable a man 11 ways with a putty knife—but they were still raised on Nintendo. So it's no shocker that Army brass are now training them with Nintendo, too. More precisely, they're using ultrarealistic online games and virtual-reality systems to expose green recruits to simulated battlefield conditions. "There's no fatigue on the soldiers," says Chris Chambers,

deputy director of the Army Game Project. "You can make mistakes and then hit the reset button." It all began with *America's Army*, a shooter used to train soldiers—plus give gamers a virtual taste of combat in a free PC consumer version (get it at [www.americasarmy.com](http://www.americasarmy.com)). Since its 2002 launch, the game has enlisted more than 3.4 million players. Publisher Ubisoft is even working on a PS2 and XB version due spring 2005. But the game's success

attracted attention from more than just players: So many government and military divisions began seeking virtual training tools that the Army opened up a studio in North Carolina to handle the influx of orders. Already, the Secret Service has a classified system in the works that allows its agents to train in a virtual White House—something that's impossible in George Dubya's real digs.

The studio is at the forefront of artificial intelligence, allowing agencies to train troops in realistic, online-linked virtual battlegrounds populated with lifelike A.I. counterparts, indigenous peoples, and baddies, mingled in scary situations. "We can create real-world scenarios, like performing first aid in a village, and then all of a sudden you hear a loud bang," says *America's Army* Executive Producer Jerry Heneghan. "Is it just a wedding celebration, or is someone shooting at you?"

Atlantis Cyberspace has taken the training a step further with its virtual-reality pods that transform *America's Army* into a true 3D world—complete with real-life scoped rifles (sure beats a DualShock). "We can equip a soldier in full gear and rifle and send him into the game," says Chambers. "[The soldiers have become] very comfortable in this virtual environment."

—John Gaudiosi

### Send Reinforcements!

After finding that soldiers were playing games in their free time rather than reading tactical manuals (imagine that), the Army enlisted outside developers to make even more games to keep troops busy. Through its Institute for Creative Technologies at the University of Southern California, the Army signed Pandemic Studios to a three-game contract that resulted in the for-civies *Full Spectrum Warrior* (XB). "We created a world for the Army without any characters or story," says Pandemic's William Stahl. "There were just the U.S. and enemy soldiers and the ability to place both into scenarios that could occur in real combat."

ICT has four other teams working on new sims, including *Full Spectrum Command* (which puts you in charge of a company) and *Full Spectrum Leader* (which has you commanding three squads). Like *Full Spectrum Warrior*, these games will be used to train soldiers but will likely branch out to the public sector—and your console.

### ■ Full Spectrum Command



■ The Army's training program is updated constantly to integrate new tactics and military toys, such as the Talon remote-controlled reconnaissance robot (inset).



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Together, you are legends.**  
—Professor Charles Xavier



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PlayStation 2

# KINGDOM HEARTS II

## Return to the Magical Kingdoms

**S**quare Enix debuted this Disney-meets-*Final Fantasy* sequel last fall, but then promptly zipped its lip on the subject, offering no release date, story explanation, or gameplay info. It's enough to make Disney fans toss their *Pocahontas II* collector's edition DVDs and *FF* nuts

boycott the Sephiroth cosplay competition. Time heals all wounds, though, and now that we've finally gotten our hands on an early copy of the game, the interminable wait until *Kingdom Hearts II*'s Fall 2005 release feels that much longer. Here's a glimpse of what's new in *KH2*... —Shane Bettenhausen



### Camera Repair

The original *Kingdom Hearts* suffered from a spazzy, confusing camera system that often left your hero, Sora, obscured by a wall. *KH2* fixes this problem two ways: Now, the in-battle view shifts subtly as you kill foes, giving you a clearer view of the action. You can also re-center the camera directly behind Sora by pressing the right analog stick in—especially useful when locking on to enemies.



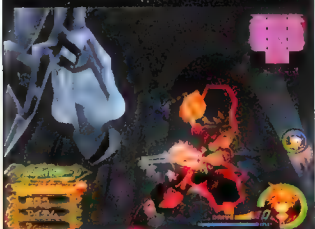
### License to Drive

The frantic, mash-happy combat of the first *Hearts* hasn't changed much in this sequel, but Sora does have one nifty new trick in his arsenal—Drive transformation. Once you've built up the Drive meter by felling foes, you can merge Sora with another party member (in the levels we played, only the Goofy Drive was available) to form an über-ass-kicking Sora who dishes out extreme combos for a limited time.



### Maps and Legends

*KH2* makes your life easier by providing a handy map in the upper right-hand corner of the screen (similar to the one in *Final Fantasy X*). It was sometimes easy to lose your bearings while traversing large dungeons in the first *KH*, so this simple addition should alleviate those "which way did I come from?" headaches.



### Worlds of Wonder

We traipsed through two Disney realms in our demo—Hades' underworld from *Hercules* and Beast's castle from *Beauty and the Beast*. Although both Beast and Hades appeared in *Kingdom Hearts*, you didn't actually explore these areas in that game. But in terms of all-new areas based on previously untapped flicks, Square Enix has only shown shots of a *Mulan*-themed area. Meh. Luckily, we've heard rumors of others even more surprising than last game's *Nightmare Before Christmas*. *Tron*, anyone? >>>



KARL URBAN, BEST KNOWN AS EOMER IN THE LORD OF THE RINGS FILMS, HAS SIGNED ON TO STAR IN THE 2006 MOTION PICTURE BASED ON THE LEGENDARY SHOOTER DOOM...>>>



"We're impressed... the game plays as good as it looks." - PSM

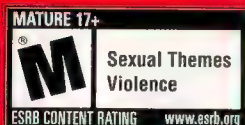
"Looks amazing... plays fantastic." - Play Magazine | "Face it. You've always wanted this." - 1up.com



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YOU WIN.**



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WHAT KIND OF PLAYER ARE YOU?

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VELVET ROPES  
FROM CENTRAL  
TO 125TH

**DARIUS**  
THE MAN WITH THE  
MASTER PLAN

**ANGEL  
OR DEVIL**  
WHAT'S YOUR REP?

CO  
TO W  
THE W

**STYLE**  
LOOK GOOD  
EVEN WHEN  
YOU'RE BAD

The **SIMS**  
GO URBAN



Challenge. Everything!



# ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT



We detain five gamemakers and make them build a blockbuster

**R**umor has it that producing a videogame these days takes countless hours and crippling multimillion-dollar budgets. Well screw

that. We're doing it quick and dirty, kidnapping five designers and forcing them to slave away on an exclusive game for *EGM*. We assigned each guy a

piece of the game's puzzle—intro, main character, play mechanics, enemies, and the ending. Their result is *Red Ice*, an imaginary action game set

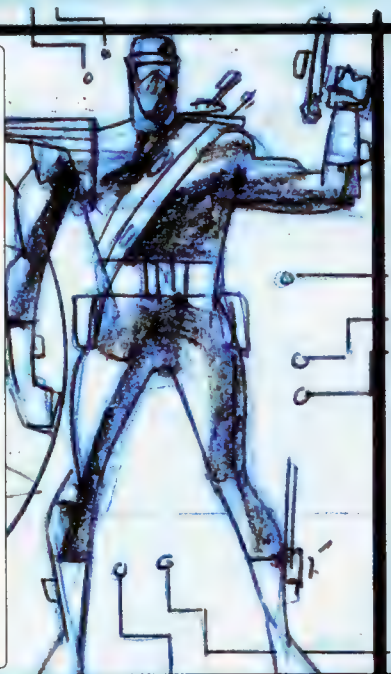
on shooter hot spot Mars. Here's the storyboarded breakdown in the creators' own words. And this game better be a hit...or else. —Scott Steinberg

## 2 YOUR CHARACTER...

By John Romero, cocreator of *Doom*

**Latest project:** *A new Gauntlet for unspecified systems*

"You are Pierce, a legend among shadowy mercenary groups and a killing machine. You secretly work for a higher organization than the SHN—if someone messes with the delicate political balance on Mars, it's your job to clean it up and dispose of witnesses. Unlike normal soldiers, being a mercenary for a distant shadow ops group has its perks: You're loaded with exotic, futuristic nanogear that replenishes its energy constantly. Of particular interest at the beginning of the game is your portable stealth shroud. It lasts for 30 minutes, after which you must squeeze out the photon debris to reuse it."



## 3 THE GAMEPLAY...

By Tom Hall, creative director at Midway

**Latest projects:** *Area 51 (PS2/XB)* and *Narc (PS2/XB)*

"Due to the presence of flammable gases in the atmosphere, most weapons are plastic/graphite projectiles, beams, and non-steel constructs. Still, flash fires in the atmosphere killed hundreds early on—and can kill Pierce's enemies as well. With his strength-augmenting nanogear, Pierce can hang from ceilings and knock enemies hundreds of feet skyward in the feeble gravity. He can hear distant conversations, see and leap great distances, and hurl objects at tremendous speed. Close combat takes place in slow motion with realistic collisions. Pierce can pilot NHN sandboats, aerial skiffs, and burrow-miners to evade enemies, too. He must also be protected when night hits—the surface temperature drops 200 degrees."

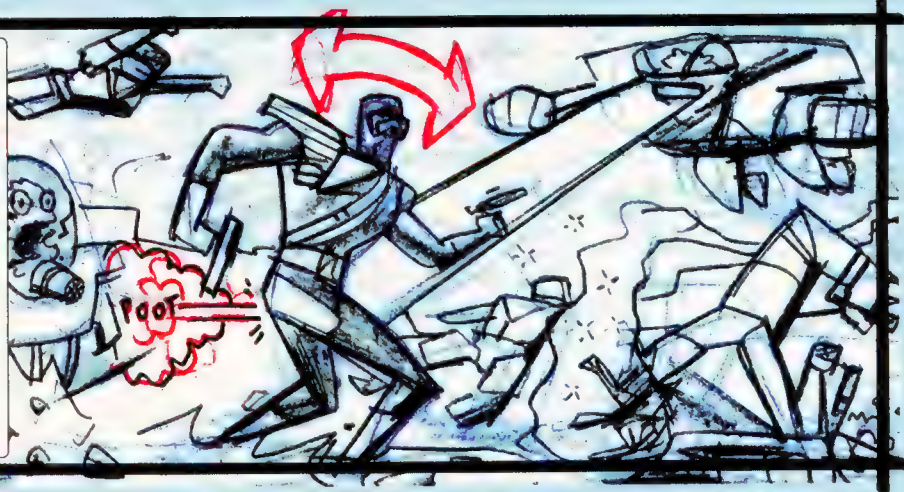


## 4 YOUR ENEMIES...

By Eugene Jarvis, creator of *Defender* and *Robotron*

**Latest project:** *Target: Terror (arcades)*

"Pierce is having a crappy day coping with the deadlies on his ass. First are Humaroid stormtroopers—hormonally amped meat-soldiers. Highly mobile and lightly armored with self-sealing circulatory systems and brain cases, they have a diet consisting largely of SHN organ donors. These 'roid-ragers can sustain attacks for up to one minute after decapitation. Next are Robonator drones, which attack with micronuke RPGs and bio-tracking masers, radiating their quarry into microwave popcorn. And then there's the Lifesukrs. These energy sinks can suck down any power or life source in seconds, and they're guided by methane. Bad news for Pierce: He had burritos for lunch."



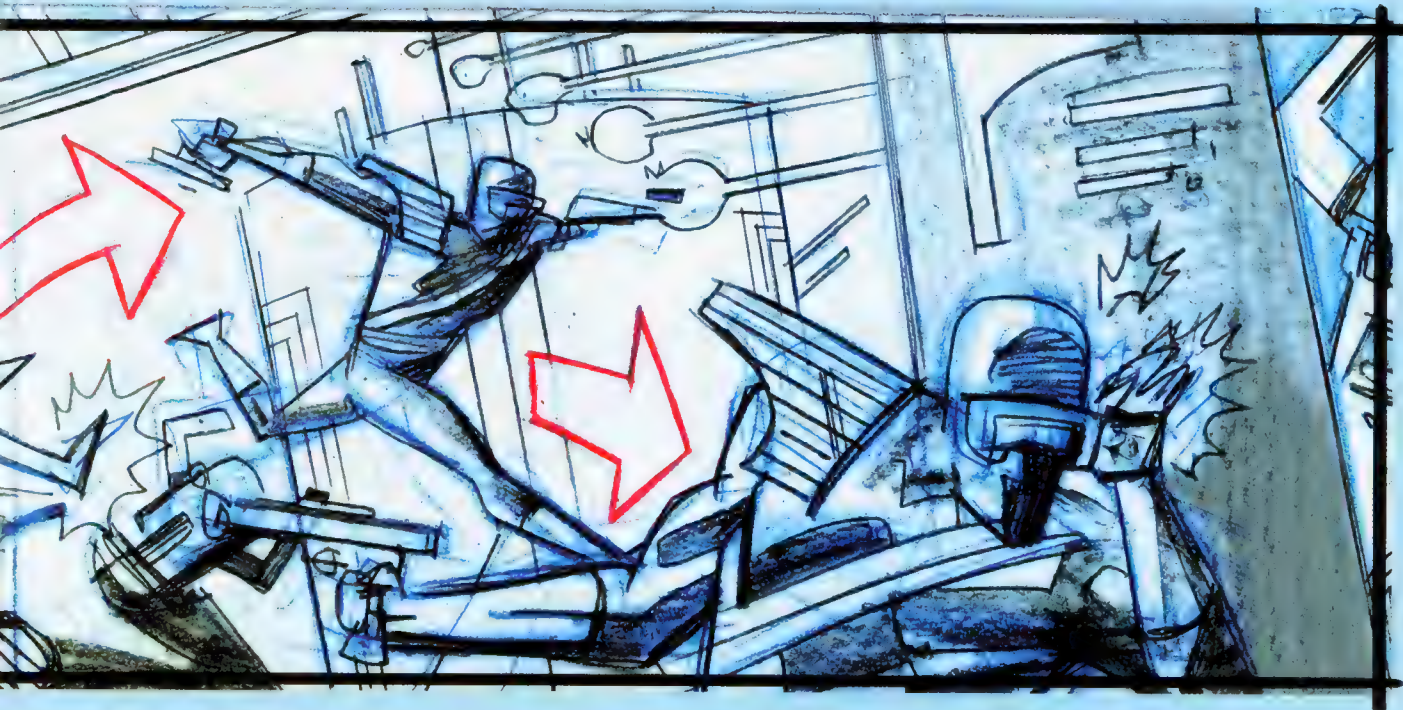
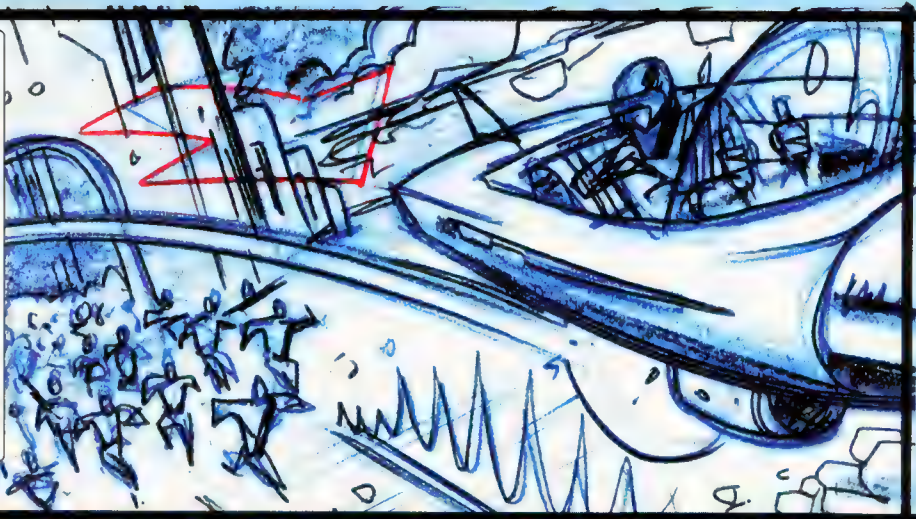


**1****HOW IT BEGINS...**By Mathieu Ferland,  
producer at Ubisoft

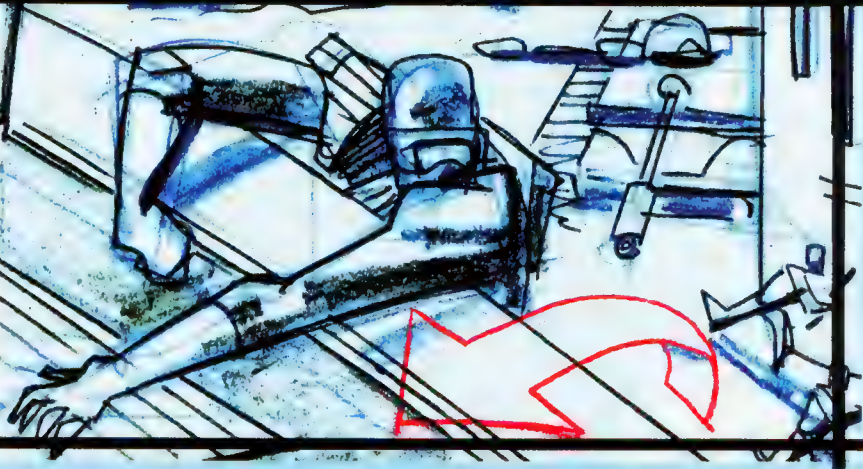
Latest project:

***Splinter Cell Chaos Theory (XB)***

"It's 2174. Mars is in turmoil due to the recent discovery of a new ice well by the North Human Nation (NHN). While the South Human Nation (SHN)'s president demands equity of resources, hundreds of NHN soldiers are amassing inside their war dome and preparing for a massive invasion. But one soldier in the group is unlike the others—you are a spy from SHN. While trying to subtly leave the dome, you get spotted stealing a vehicle. Within seconds, 50 soldiers give pursuit. You are now a hunted fugitive on a planet that has three-eighths Earth's gravity."

**5****HOW IT ENDS...**Brian Fargo, creator  
of the *Bard's Tale* seriesLatest Project: ***The Bard's Tale (PS2/XB)***

"Clearly the trauma's started getting to Pierce. A sense of paranoia sets in as he constantly avoids stormtroopers and robots with micronukes, and he realizes he's risked everything for a friggin' ice hole. Somehow, it just doesn't seem worth it. Fortunately, he's equipped with fancy gadgetry that affords him the ability to get the hell out of this place. After one last brush with death, Pierce manages to climb aboard a cargo ship and escape to the closest planet. While no one's seen him in some time, there've been numerous reports of some invisible force cruising through local college dorm rooms." ❦



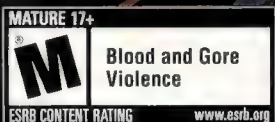
FIGHTER WILL ALLOW GAMERS TO PLUG A PS2-COMPATIBLE PAD IN TO THE ARCADE UNIT. ALSO, LOOK FOR *TEKKEN 5* PUNCHING ITS WAY TO PLAYSTATION 2 IN 2005... >>



If it seemed like they

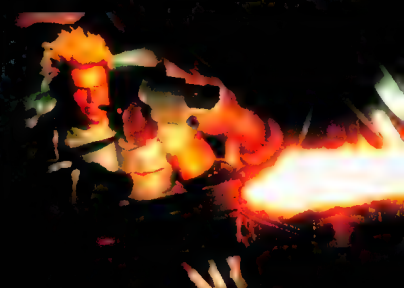
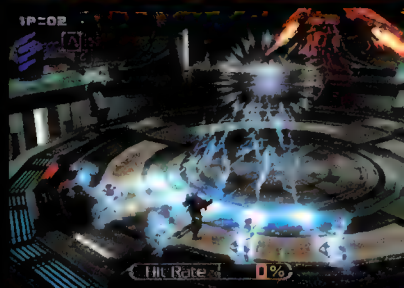
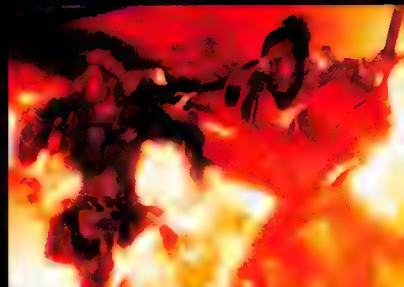
WERE COMING  
from all sides  
before,  
try it in 3D.

No matter how cool it looks, never stop shooting.  
Three dimensions. Two playable heroes. One classic  
franchise returns. Neo Contra. The more things  
change, the more they stay insane.



PlayStation 2





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# CELEBRITY GAMER: JONATHAN DAVIS

## Korn's front man is such a player

**T**here's no denying that Korn's Jonathan Davis is hardcore—and we're not just talking about his music. "When we're on the road, I play games at least six hours a day," the singer tells us. "I'm out of my mind about this stuff." He's so out of his mind, in fact, that in between putting together the new Korn compilation, *Greatest Hits Vol. 1*, and codirecting an adult movie with his wife, he's working on a game of his own. And it ain't his first. —Stan Widrow

**EGM:** What were your favorite games growing up?

**Jonathan Davis:** The first game I loved was *Combat* for Atari 2600. Oh my god,

that was great. I was also really into playing the home versions of arcade games like *Defender* and *Galaga*.

**EGM:** Nowadays, do you prefer playing solo or with friends?

**JD:** I like to play on my own. The other guys in the band aren't into them, so when we're on tour, I'll stay up all night, playing games while they are asleep. But I've been getting into Xbox's system link. We just toured with Linkin Park and got into some crazy *Halo* matches with them. I also love playing *Rainbow Six 3* on Xbox Live. I'm kornjonathan on there.

**EGM:** Give us your professional opinion. What game has the best soundtrack?

**JD:** Maybe the first *WipeOut* [for PlayStation], but just because it was one of the first to have real music and not f\*\*\*ing stupid 8-bit videogame music.

**EGM:** What's going on with your game, the star-studded fighter *Pop Scars*?

**JD:** Oh, we scrapped that. It was so f\*\*\*ing hard to get celebrities to sign up for it, and then *Def Jam Vendetta* and *Celebrity Deathmatch* came out—though this would've blown those away. It was going to be a real fighting game, like *Soul Calibur* and *Mortal Kombat*. But f\*\*\* it, on to the next thing.

**EGM:** Which is...?

**JD:** It's [a game] kind of like *Rayman* and

*Ratchet & Clank*, but it's going to be set in a sideshow carnival. It's going to be really, really dark. I enjoy games like that.

**EGM:** We also hear that you're doing an adult movie. Can we expect any videogame references?

**JD:** Ah, no. That's funny, though. Yeah, my wife and I are working together, but we're not f\*\*\*ing in it. We'll be directing other couples. It's going to be fun.

**EGM:** So if you could cast any game honey in your flick, who would it be?

**JD:** The chick from *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance*, the innkeeper. I can't remember her name right now, but that's a fine-ass cyberbabe. ☹



NEW DEADLY COMBO SYSTEM

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*(and a couple of other new features worth noting)*

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PlayStation 2



PC  
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Class act: Students at Full Sail talk games, play games, and—about halfway into the program—get to make them.

Photography by Clay Simons and Holly Eshart

# TRAINING DAY

Lunch breaks at 9 p.m.? Lectures in the middle of the night? Field trips to the local arcade? Class is in session at a new-school game academy. We chronicle a typical student's day in the life...

**O**ff a Winter Park, FL, highway crammed with Orlando traffic, gamers don't just hang at the strip mall—they own it. This former shopping center is now the digs of Full Sail, a school that offers bachelor of science degrees in videogame development. The 21-month program costs \$58,775, which includes a laptop during your course of

study, plus unlimited rounds of *Street Fighter II*, *Tempest*, and several other classic arcade games in the lobby. And it's a much easier school to get into than the more exclusive Nintendo-funded DigiPen game-design campus in Redmond, WA.

But don't come here thinking the study of games is all fun. Students must endure mind-numbing courses in math and pro-

gramming, as well as meet the standard core liberal-arts requirements. That means logging off *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow* at the door. "Playing games has to take second to actually making games," says Rob Catto, the program's director. And possibly the most demanding requirement of all is Full Sail's purposefully brutal 40-hour class week,

which emulates the late-night crunch time of real-life game development companies (plus cuts the time it takes to get a degree in half). Classes sometimes run until 1 a.m., with a morning class the next day at 9. Don't fret: There's a Red Bull machine in the snack room to get you through a typical day, which looks something like this....





• You call it goofing off. They call it homework.



**4:00 p.m. — Rise and Dew**

If you're lucky, your first class won't begin until 5 p.m., which means you've got plenty of time to sleep in...in theory. In reality, most Full Sail students stay up all night studying calculus or coding their student project games. By the time they pull into the crowded parking lot outside the school building—or, more likely, **cruise in on their skateboards**—the humidity is brutal

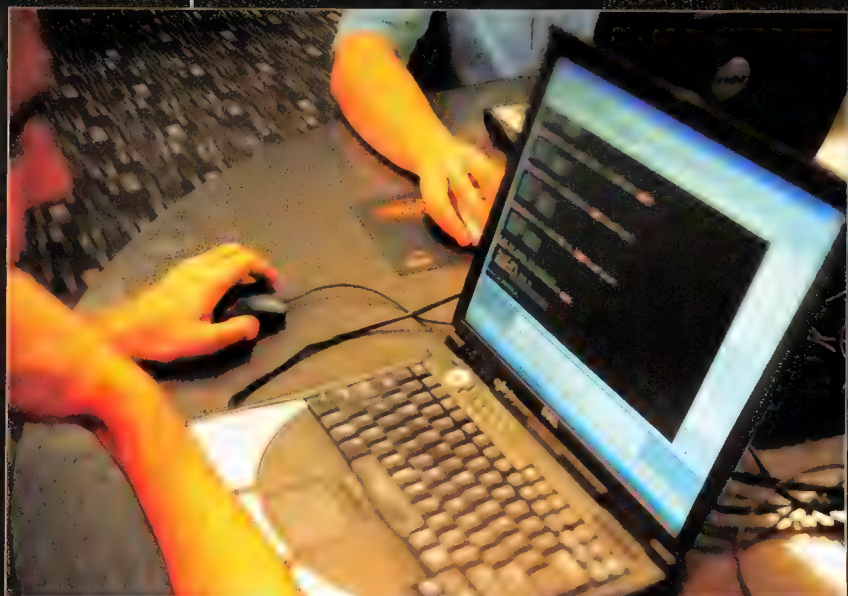
and so is the bed-head. Fortunately, the vending machines offer three flavors of caffeine: Red Bull, coffee, and the overwhelming favorite, Mountain Dew. "If you don't like Mountain Dew," says one student, "you might as well drop out."

**4:30–5:00 p.m. — Play Games**

Between classes, Full Sail students mill about the lobby and snack room, trying to

**bust each other's records** in *Mr. Do!* or *Joust*. The biggest time sucker is *Street Fighter II*, which boasts a top score on the record sheet by someone named "Beaten By a Girl." The fact that only six out of the 500 students in the game-design program are female makes this record all the more impressive. Students can also play on the school's **Wi-Fi laptops** (August's title of choice was *Doom 3*). And throughout the

year, some classes take field trips to Rocky's, a nearby arcade. But the students aren't just dropping tokens to blow off steam from a hectic class schedule: They're expected to review the coin-ops on the floor. *House of the Dead* didn't get high marks. "I figured out the artificial intelligence in about 10 seconds," says Tamir Nadau, a 24-year-old student with rainbow-streaked hair. >



70 PERCENT FEEL THE SERIES IMPROVES MEMORY SKILLS, AND 60 PERCENT THINK IT BOOSTS MENTAL AGILITY. SOUNDS LIKE 100 PERCENT POKÉMON PROPAGANDA TO US... >>





► **5:00-8:00 p.m. — Talk Games**

Set in four-hour chunks, Full Sail's game courses primarily focus on code, code, and, on occasion, code. That means tinkering around with particle editors and wrestling with parametric equations. (So, yeah, you're going to need some math skills.) While Full Sail does its best to prepare students for working on console games, there's a frustrating catch-22 at play. The holy trinity of console manufacturers—Sony, Nintendo, and Microsoft—have yet to allow educational institutions to make use of their respective development kits. But it's not for a lack of trying. "We'd love to have those tools," says instructor Rob Garfield.

Some classes, however, don't require any high-tech tools at all. The most popular class at Full Sail is *Rules of the Game*, a course taught by **Dave Arneson**, the legendary cocreator of *Dungeons & Dragons*. This is the one course where game playing is not only encouraged, it's required—but the games on display here aren't the ones you might expect. During the course, Arneson focuses on board games and strategy card games, including *Settlers of Catan* and the *D&D* parody game *Munchkins*. One week, the class even takes a field trip to a local game shop to check out the goods. "There's a lot you can learn from paper games," Arneson says, adding that he has one essential rule for his class: "No snoring!"

► **9 p.m. — Break for Lunch**



► **9:30 p.m.-1:00 a.m. — Make Games**

At two points during the 21-month program, students roll up their T-shirt sleeves and **make games**. It starts 10 months in, when students try their hand at making an old-school 2D game like *Tetris* or *Pong*. But there's plenty of room for creativity. Instructor Garfield fondly recalls the *Beer Pong* he made as a Full Sail student. "When you lost a point, your character had to take a drink," he said, "and slowly the balls would start to blur on the screen."

Seventeen months into the program, students commence work on their big project: a full-fledged PC game. Breaking up into small teams, the groups emulate a real development experience, from creating a detailed design document to "commissioning" artists and audio specialists to contribute assets to the game. After a few demo presentations in class, the students get to show their game in a nearby theater, where the public may drop in and see if a future (Mario creator) Shigeru Miyamoto is in their midst. And unlike some colleges, Full Sail doesn't seek to



own the rights to the games. That means students can take them on the road when they graduate. "I've already got my dream game in mind," says Nadau. "It's going to be the greatest thing since *Pac-Man*."

► **1:00-1:30 a.m. — Dinner**

► **2:00 a.m. — Crash**

After spending the last eight hours talking, playing, and making games, students find it hard—if not impossible—to sleep. And

when they do manage to nod off, the games don't fade away. "I dream about path-finding code," says Juan Padilla, a 34-year-old who came to the school from Puerto Rico. "You learn to get by on two to four hours of sleep," says Daniel Fitzgerald, a 24-year-old student from Huntsville, AL. "We're zombies most of the time." But, like any hardcore gamer, that's just the way they like it. As Padilla says, "We're having the time of our lives." 🎮

—David Kushner

► **Night school:** Some students spend more time at Full Sail after dark than during the daylight hours.



**Getting Here**

About 4,000 students attend Full Sail (which offers other entertainment-related degrees besides videogame studies), but getting in is pretty much guaranteed: All you need is a high-school diploma or GED and a "sincere passion for a career in the entertainment industry." And don't be deterred by the nearly \$60,000 tuition; students in the program are eligible for financial aid. Degree programs start every month rather than in set semesters, meaning you can start whenever you're ready. Head to [www.fullsail.com](http://www.fullsail.com) for more information, or see *EGM* issue 176, page 36, for a look at other schools.



# JAK 3™

## CONFLICT. REVENGE. RESOLUTION.

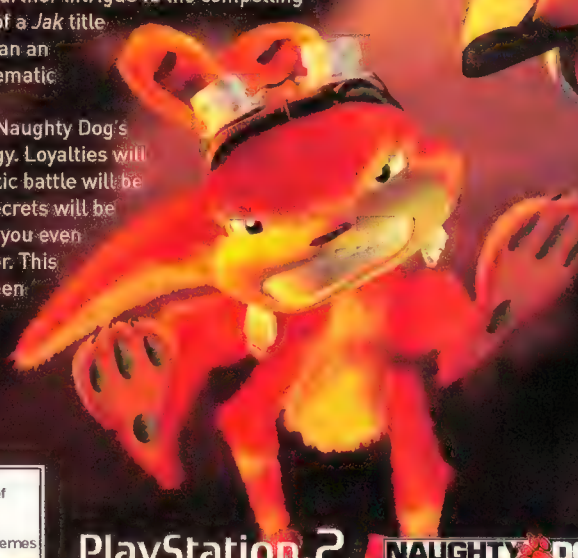
One year ago, Jak and Daxter put their butts on the line to save Haven City from Kor and his Metal Heads. But the chaos rages on. Warring factions continue to battle. The city—even its palace—lies in shambles. And everyone starts to turn on the one guy in town with Dark Eco power. How's that for gratitude?

Jak 3 faces our pointy-eared hero with his greatest adventure yet. Now banished to the Wasteland—an aptly named place of exile if there ever was one—Jak begins his quest for redemption joined by pals Daxter and Pecker. Their objective: escape from an area *five times* the size of Haven City.

Needless to say, it won't be easy. A cavernous mine, a vicious volcano, the hostile city of Spargus and other hazardous environments compose the Wasteland, where many inhabitants would sooner eat off Jak's hand than shake it. Luckily, several forms of off-road transportation—from lizardback riding to homemade rocket-assault vehicles—exist to help speed things along.

As Jak fights to return to civilization, he also wages every personal war—the one within himself. Now possessing Light Eco power in addition to the Dark Eco magic that led to his banishment, Jak's struggle to balance the two adds further intrigue to the compelling story you'd expect of a *Jak* title. (As seen in more than an hour's worth of cinematic cutscenes.)

*Jak 3* concludes Naughty Dog's acclaimed *Jak* trilogy. Loyalties will be tested. A climactic battle will be fought. Shocking secrets will be revealed. And hey...you even get to play as Daxter. This is the one you've been waiting for.



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The Morph-Gun returns with 8 new gun mods!

Light Eco does more than just light up a room. Now Jak can fly and self heat.

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PlayStation 2 NAUGHTY DOG



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PLAY IN OURS

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Xbox

# AFTERTHOUGHTS: FABLE

The true story behind the fabled role-playing game



**B**y now, if you're a *Fable* fan, you're probably on your second or third playthrough. You're done being good, you've stopped caring about your poor sister's issues with archvillain Jack of Blades, and you're basically slicing and dicing any and all unfortunate villagers who happen to cross your path at the wrong moment...or is that just us? We recently sat down with one of the makers of this Xbox free-form action-RPG—Lionhead Studios President Peter Molyneux—to chat about development challenges, design decisions, and a couple of unusually twisted things you can do in *Fable*.

—Jennifer Tsao

**EGM:** What sorts of things has the game allowed players to do that you didn't really expect?

**Peter Molyneux:** I didn't plan for people in *Fable* to massacre entire villages, acquire all the vacant property at knockdown prices, and then make a fortune renting out to newcomers. I didn't plan for one player to use his wife as a human shield, and when we first introduced children into the world, I didn't expect the testers to do unspeakable things to them—which is why players now don't have weapons when they're in a village or town.

**EGM:** What were the biggest problems in making a game like this?

**PM:** Our biggest challenge was that we were PC developers, and historically PC developers have struggled to make great console games. Creating a combat system



Secret weapon: Lionhead prez Peter Molyneux says there's a frying pan hidden in the game that does damage during battles.

that was easy to master and allowed for the mixing of combat styles seemed simple but was very difficult.

**EGM:** *Fable* seemed inspired by recent 3D *Zelda* adventures. Is that true?

**PM:** Quite a few features in *Fable* were in fact inspired by [Lionhead's PC game] *Black & White*—open-ended gameplay [and] characters that morphed to reflect what you're like. Another influence was *Zelda*, which always found ways to evoke player emotions. I really cared about Link, and that was something we wanted *Fable* to have.

**EGM:** Did you ever consider incorporating proper "dungeons" with puzzles and such?

**PM:** The really cerebral puzzles you see in other games...we felt [those] wouldn't sit well with the action part of the game.

**EGM:** Why not let players continue doing quests via the guild after they finish *Fable*?

**PM:** In story terms, I don't know that it would make much sense to still have quests at the guild.

**EGM:** Any secrets or in-jokes most gamers might have missed?

**PM:** It would be a shame to reveal all of them, but two of the secrets in the game are the Sandgoose and the frying pan that doubles as a weapon.

**EGM:** This game's original working title was "Project Ego." Are there any hidden references to that in the final version of the game?

**PM:** No—it would have been a nice idea.... Why couldn't you have asked that question six months ago?



Child abuse: You can blame *Fable*'s testers for why weapons aren't allowed in villages.

**High Scores**  
Those pub minigames don't play themselves. Here are top scores from the *Fable* dev team:

- ♦ Card Pairs (Bowerstone South): 9.9 seconds
- ♦ Shove Ha'penny (Hook Coast): 40
- ♦ Card Sorting (Knothole Glade): 16.1
- ♦ Spot the Addition (Bandit Camp): 8.2
- ♦ Coin Golf (Oakvale): 6



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| <i>If I Ain't Got You</i> | <i>When I'm Gone</i>          |
| <i>Leave (Get Out)</i>    | <i>Beat It</i>                |
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# ONLINE THIS MONTH

## A trio of new maps storm SOCOM II

**I**f you're one of the *SOCOM II*: U.S. Navy SEALs faithful who bought a PlayStation 2 HDD hard drive in anticipation of downloadable content, your prayers have finally been answered. Next month, our sister mag *Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine* will include the first of three new maps for Sony's online squad-based shooter on its December issue demo disc (which hits newsstands November 2). The remaining two will follow on *OPM*'s January and February demo discs.

The first map, dubbed *After Hours*, was actually included with the recent Korean release of *SOCOM II*. It's set in Seoul, Korea and acts as a suppression level, featuring city structures like a multistory parking garage, an extensive subway system, and even an Internet café.

The next available download, *Last Bastion*, is staged in Albania. This one is a breach map, with terrorists holed up inside a huge fortress on a hill that the SEALs must infiltrate through a staggering array of possible entry points. And *Last Bastion* is especially striking when played as the good guy: You start the level hidden by

dense fog, but as you work your way toward the fortress, the sun slowly breaks through, rendering you plainly visible to any sniping terrorists.

The final *SOCOM II* map coming your way is *Liberation*, an Algerian area of operation. It's an escort level based in a small port town with winding alleyways and a huge marketplace packed with loads of hiding spots. Terrorists will have the upper hand here, as they are able to close off possible avenues of escape with iron gates and have plenty of deadly ambush opportunities.

Series vets will also notice right away that all three maps (which require the PlayStation 2 hard drive) are bigger and more intricate than just about anything currently available. "We figure people have really been playing a lot, and most of them are pretty advanced," says Senior Producer Seth Luisi. "So we wanted to give them maps that were also advanced." And until February, *OPM*'s demo disc is the only place you'll be able to get these levels. (Sony is currently looking into additional distribution methods for the third and final map.) —Joe Rybicki



**Three maps for 100 bucks...for now**  
Presently, you must own a PS2 hard drive (\$100) to play these new maps. The dev team, however, says it's looking at ways to get around this pricey requirement.

### must-hit websites



**redvblue.com** — Who says war can't be a barrel of laughs? Through the wonders of technology, Burnie Burne and crew create comedy bits using the *Halo* game engine. The result: a cult-like following and about one million viewers per week. (And don't miss their exclusive episodes on our newsstand-only DVD.)

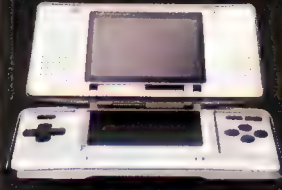


**majkel.mds.pl/html/rakl\_ama/indexUKG.htm** — Peep more than 1300 classic and contemporary videogame commercials from the United States and Japan. It even features TV spots for Nintendo cereal. Bonus!

### WHAT'S UP AT



### Squarely Seeing Double



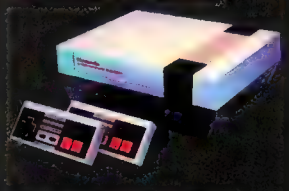
As always, remember to scope out **egmextras.1UP.com** for a gaggle of exclusive content, including Square Enix's (you know, the folks who make all those *Final Fantasy* titles) likes and dislikes on Nintendo's upcoming dual-screen DS handheld.

### Online Chaos

Also at the **egmextras.1UP.com** website is our complete interview with those sneaky developers behind *Splinter Cell Chaos Theory*, as they provide us with an extended mission briefing on the game's all-new online cooperative mode.



### 1UP.com Club Spotlight: Old Schoolers United



Enough PlayStation 3 and Xbox 2 chitchat—the 170-plus members of this club (**oldschool-club.1UP.com**) prefer their heroes pixelated and their gameplay 2D. And they are probably the only people who know the exact location of the *E.T.* (Atari 2600) landfill in the desert.

### Must-Hit Blog

So what makes Jeremy Parish's online journal (**toastfrog.1UP.com**) the hottest blog on the site? "Think of it as 1UP Features: The Director's Cut," professes the 1UP.com features editor. "My blog is jam-packed with all the inflammatory remarks, catty asides, and dirty politics they don't let us put on the main site."





**TREE SAP MAY HARM CONTROLLER.**



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-*Game Informer Online*

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# CALL OF DUTY

## FINEST HOUR

RATING PENDING  
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB  
Visit [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org) for updated rating information.



PlayStation 2



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PlayStation 2

# CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

## A final tune-up before you hit the road to GTA: San Andreas

**I**t's been three years since *Grand Theft Auto 3* car-jacked the gaming world, setting all sorts of sales records while creating more controversial headlines than Jacko. With the lat-

est installment, *GTA: San Andreas* for PS2, right around the corner (or already upon us, depending on how late you got this issue), we thought it was time for one last dry-run drive-by. —Greg Ford



■ The Triads: Your unwelcoming party to San Fierro's Chinatown.

### The Man

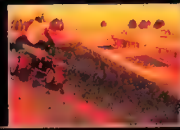
After playing a mute antihero in *GTA3* and a foul-mouthed goodfella in *Vice City*, you now step into the vengeful shoes of Carl "CJ" Johnson. He's spent the last five years back East in Liberty City (yes, the same city you violated in *GTA3*) but returns to the hood when he learns of his momma's death. So what's CJ's game plan? Find the people responsible for his loss while getting back some street cred for his gang, the Orange Grove Families.

### The Gameplay

No one had a problem with the previous games' car-based missions, which have always been a cornerstone of the *GTA* franchise, but stepping outta your wheels to do the dirty work was sometimes problematic. The crew at Rockstar hopes to remedy this in *San Andreas* with more-developed hand-to-hand combat (including stealth kills) and a revamped targeting system that takes a page from the setup of the company's own *Manhunt* (PS2/XB).

### The Sticks

The fact that *San Andreas* has three massive cities, each the size and scope of *Vice City*, should certainly grab your attention, but even more interesting are the acres of countryside in between them. You'll spend time in the great outdoors, mixing it up with local hillbillies, four-wheelin', and knocking over mom-and-pop stores.



### The Customization

Would you believe *San Andreas* has some similarities with *The Sims*? True dat. Much like EA's life simulator, you've got a stamina meter to maintain (make sure CJ's properly fed) and respect to keep up (dress sharp, stay fit, make the right friends, etc.). Who knew the gangsta lifestyle was so high maintenance?



### The Turf

The two previous *GTA* games were big—each had a city that could take upwards of 40 hours to fully explore if you completed all the side missions. *San Andreas* has three: Los Santos (based on Los Angeles), San Fierro (San Francisco), and Las Venturas (Las Vegas). And they all have the landmarks and distinctions you'd expect, including bay-spanning bridges, casinos galore, movie stars, and smog.



■ Can't afford a trip out West? No problem—Rockstar sends you to three cities for only \$50.

### The Decade

Any of you who tuned in to VH1's way-too-soon *I Love the '90s* series knows it's a decade ripe for reverence and raillery. (Just don't laugh too hard, lest your bud notice those parachute pants and the Troy Aikman jersey in the back of your closet.) And helping re-create that early '90s atmosphere is the game's music, which promises to feature more than just gangsta-rap tracks.

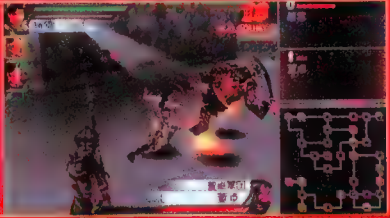


■ Who says drive-bys require a pimped-out ride?

## PREVIEW GALLERIES: SEQUELS, SORT OF

### DYNASTY WARRIORS PSP

PSP • Koei • Spring 2005  
The wildly popular ancient Chinese slashathon invades Sony's upcoming portable, losing a bit of its luster (but hopefully none of its addictive gameplay) along the way.



### WANDA AND THE COLOSSUS

PS2 • Sony CEA • Fall 2005  
Previously known under the code name *Nico*, *Wanda* hails from the team behind *Ico*, 2001's artsy PS2 sleeper. We're not sure if there will be any story connections between the two games, as here you control Wanda, a young archer on horseback tasked with destroying an army of giants. Weird...good weird.





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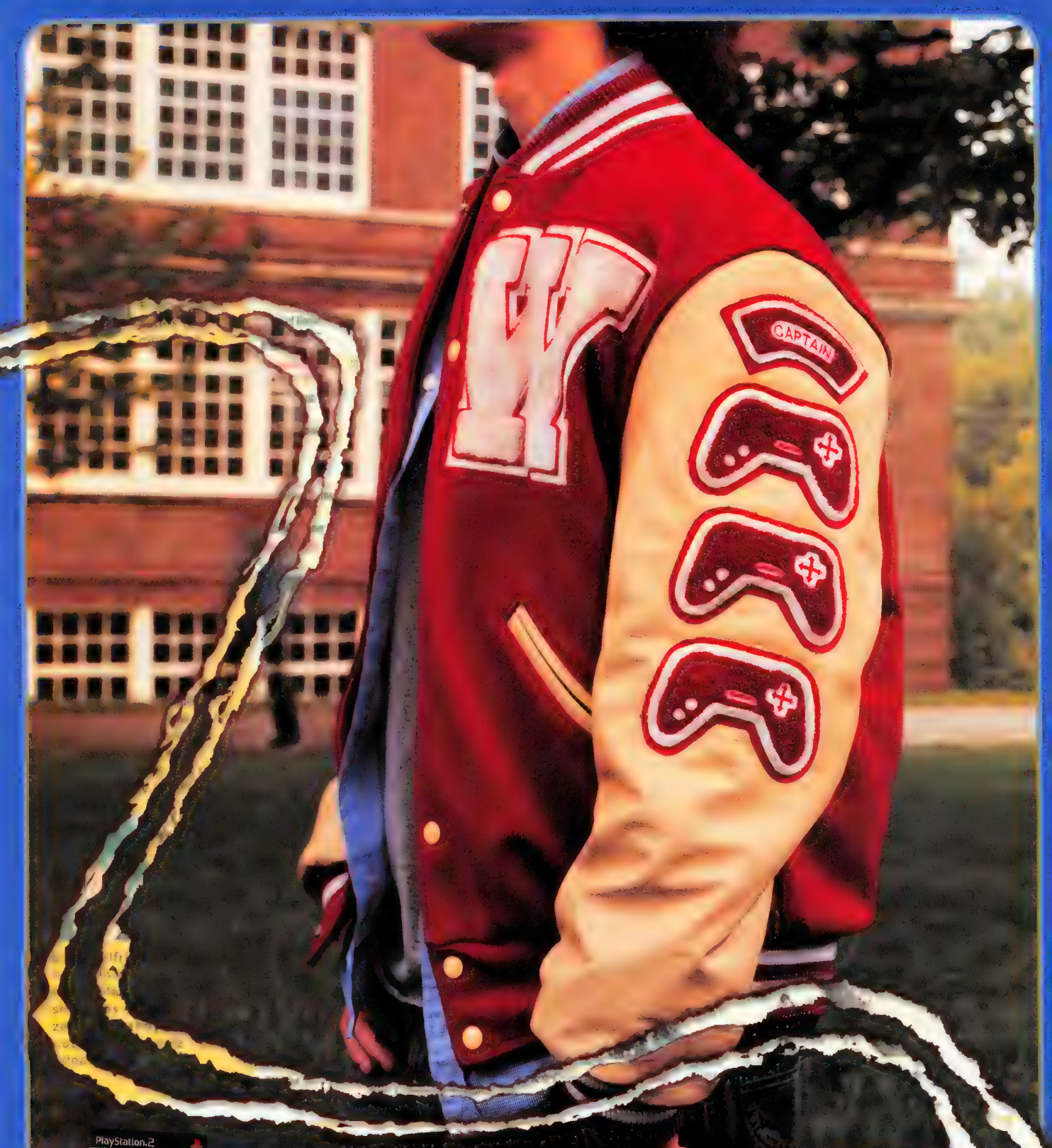
PlayStation 2

**KONAMI**

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PlayStation 2

# SHOW AND TELL: JAK 3

## Lovable fugitives

**S**ony's third *Jak* adventure finds our heroes on the wrong side of the law, exiled from Haven City to a remote desert wasteland. In order to clear their names, they'll have to go all *Road Warrior* in heavily armed dune buggies, master an arsenal of new dark and light magical abilities, and rediscover the secrets of buddy comedy (weaselly sidekick Daxter is in rare form here). Producer Evan Wells offers a peek at some of the game's cooler moments.

### Guns and Ammo

**EW:** "Dax's delighted: Jak gets access to a whole new range of enemy-thrashing gun mods in *Jak 3*. This shot shows him in the heart of the marauder stronghold as a deadly firefight unfolds around him."



### Speed Buggy

**Evan Wells:** "Here, Jak speeds through the dunes, deftly avoiding marauders—automotive predators that stalk the wasteland. They're a constant threat to Jak and Dax as they traverse the desert in their quest."



### Jak and Dax's Underground

**EW:** "Jak gets his jet board back—along with a whole grab bag of new tricks, including a jump boost and a repulse attack. This shot shows him in the heart of the Precursor Temple, pulling some mad air."



### Car Talk

**EW:** "Here comes the dune hopper, a whole mess of spring-loaded, double-hinged, turbo-boosted fun. Jak can use the hopper to reach parts of the world that he and Dax couldn't get to unaided."

## Before you go underground, you gotta cover your car.

Get your hands on the code that'll unlock one of the most electrifying car vinyls in *Need For Speed™ Underground 2*. For the secret code and a great offer, head to [www.bestbuy.com/nfsu2code](http://www.bestbuy.com/nfsu2code).



Thousands of Possibilities

GET YOURS



# WORN IDENTITY

Don't call it cosplay! We make four fast and funny Halloween costumes for less than \$40

**G**houls and ghosts? Booring! Halloween is the one night a year when you can dress in public as a videogame character and not face ridicule, so why not go for it? It won't cost you much, either. We wrangled New York City designer Kerri Mahoney and challenged her to create four game-character-based costumes for less than 40 bucks each. Just don't let us catch you wearing this stuff November 1.

—Lauren Gonzalez

## Naked Sim

Cost: \$39

### Stuff you need:

- "Natural" colored unitard or undergarments: top and briefs
- Two 30-inch-by-36-inch white poster boards
- Three 10-inch-by-15-inch pieces of cardboard
- Four tubes of cheap acrylic paint in flesh tones of choice (white, tan, pink, brown, etc.)
- 1 foot of Velcro
- Spray mount glue
- One 24-ounce Mountain Dew bottle
- One dowel
- A glow stick for inside the bottle

**Puttin' it together:** The only way you could do this costume better would land you in jail. Cut poster boards into six 10-inch-by-12-inch panels. Use the four paints to mix skin tones and then paint each panel a different color. Then cut the panels into 3-inch-by-3-inch squares. These will serve as pixels to cover your private parts. Spray mount these colored squares randomly onto each

10-inch-by-15-inch piece of cardboard. Affix Velcro strips onto cardboard, the front of upper-body garment and on front and back of the bottoms. For the gem that sits above your Sim's noggin in the game, paint stripes on the soda bottle to create a facet look. Drill a hole into the cap and insert dowel. Tape or strap the dowel to your back and you're ready to party naked. Let's hope you don't have any wardrobe malfunctions.



## Metal Gear Solid Sneaking Box

Cost: \$10

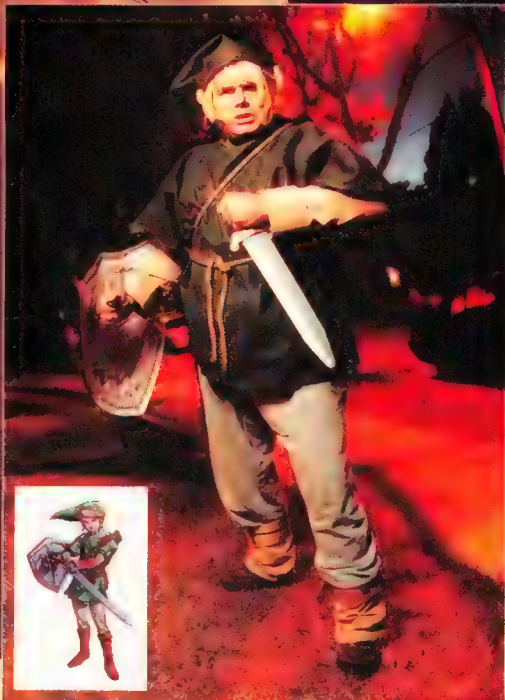
### Stuff you need:

- A big moving box
- 1 quart gray satin enamel
- Spray mount
- Clear packing tape

**Puttin' it together:** Hmm, it's just a box—the videogame-costume equivalent of cutting two holes in a sheet and going as a ghost. So this costume's perfect for you lazy gamers. Start by sealing the box with tape and painting it gray. Head to [halloween.1UP.com](http://halloween.1UP.com) to find the "The Orange" label, which you'll print in four pieces and tape to the box. Wear with fatigues and combat boots and you're good to sneak, slacker.







### Really Mature Link

**Cost:** \$40

**Stuff you need:**

- Costume elf ears
- Blond ponytail/used wig
- Costume sword and shield
- 1.5 yards dark green felt
- 3 yards of gold rope
- .5 yards of tan moleskin (fake suede)
- Gray sweatpants
- Hot glue gun

**Puttin' it together:** You wanted a grown-up Link? You can't handle this grown-up Link! Cut one-half yard of green felt into two triangles and glue along the two seams. Turn inside out for Link's hood. Fold remaining fabric in half and cut a square opening along the fold for your head (add holes at waist for rope belt). Create boot covers out of moleskin. Punch holes in moleskin boot cuff and thread in felt to make laces—tie to secure around calf. Use leftover moleskin for sleeves and cuffs, draped around lower arms and affixed with glue. Place blond ponytail on head backward for wisps. Add ears and hood and affix with bobby pins.

## WHAT'S PLAYING IN THE

# COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

What do you get when you put a dozen 400-pound gorillas in the same game store? Lots of gorilla juice from 10 dead gorillas and two living, bloodied master apes. So it is with the end of the year product releases. And here are two of them.

### The Sims 2



The sequel to the biggest-selling PC game of all time has just come out and it's monopolizing the lives of gamers the way breathing usually does. And deservedly so. *The Sims 2* does what's expected of a sequel: better graphics, new features, 3D engine, blah blah blah. But what developer Maxis has done goes above and beyond the usual expectations to deliver a game that's fuller, more satisfying, and more compelling than ever. Steal your mom's copy and prepare to be hooked.

### Lord of the Rings: Battle for Middle-earth



EA isn't letting up on the *LOTR* movie license teat just yet, as this real-time strategy title from the *Command & Conquer* crew is definitely going to attract some attention. But will it deserve that attention? I've been wowed by the scope of the combat and the stellar graphics and, yet, I still haven't seen anything showing that the artfully cinematic battling is built atop an engaging game foundation. *Battle for Middle-earth* is undeniably pretty, but is it going to be any fun? I hope so—and so should EA, or this licensed gorilla is going to be juiced by *World of Warcraft*, *Half-Life 2*, and the other big monkeys.

—Robert Coffey,  
Computer Gaming World



### Space Invaders: Alien

**Cost:** \$40

**Stuff you need:**

- Wardrobe/large box
- Two shelving boxes
- Two wine boxes (or similar)
- Four bolts and nuts
- 3-inch-wide masking tape
- 2 quarts florescent green tempera paint
- One 32-ounce can of black, glossy enamel
- Two rolls of painter's tape (to mask off grid)
- White primer or water-based latex paint

**Puttin' it together:** This blaster from the past is the most complex costume—and more than a little bulky—but it's worth the effort. Tape the seams of the large box and cut a hole in the top, just big enough for your head, and a hole in the bottom for your body. Paint with white primer. Let dry, then paint fluorescent green. Repeat the painting steps with the shelving and wine boxes, and then bolt the shelving boxes as "arms" onto each side and the wine boxes onto your shoulders as antennae. Mark out the grid patterns on the body, arms, and antennae with painter's tape, then paint over the tape with black paint. Peel off the tape when dry. (Novices: Take the easier way out and paint the main box black, then glue green 3-inch-by-3-inch paper cutouts into the invader pattern.) Wear dark pants and a black ski mask—that way all people will see is the glowing green invader. 🛸



# FREE AT LAST!

Real-world stress tests reveal each console's top wireless joypad

**I**t's tough being an adult gamer, what with annoying things like girlfriends, feeding the dog, and your career constantly

getting in the way of your playing time. Combining your favorite pastime with average, everyday tasks just might help. We took a look at 15 wireless

controllers on the market, testing each on the standard criteria (range, battery life, etc.) and how they performed in our unique time-efficiency challenges.

When the dust settled, two Logitech pads and a Nintendo-made shoo-in walked away with top honors. —Shawn Smith



**THE PLAYSTATION 2 CHALLENGE:**  
**GAMING WHILE SITTING ON THE THRONE**

**The Winner:** Cordless Action • Logitech • \$35  
[www.logitech.com](http://www.logitech.com)

Logitech has been making controllers for computers for years, and, thankfully, the same impeccable quality transfers over to its wireless gaming pads for today's consoles. The Cordless Action's battery life was above par, and the signal never faltered as we sat 15 feet from our gaming rig. Then nature called. So we hightailed it to the dumpitorium some 35 feet from the television (which we could still see thanks to a couple of strategically placed mirrors and magnifying lenses) and kept chugging along with a near-perfect signal while losing a couple of necessary pounds.

**Challenge Score:** 🌟🌟🌟🌟🌟



**THE XBOX CHALLENGE:**  
**GETTING TO WORK ON TIME**

**The Winner:** Cordless Precision • Logitech • \$45  
[www.logitech.com](http://www.logitech.com)

That alarm clock knocking you out of bed at 6 in the morning is getting old fast. So after a quick shower and a pot of coffee, it's time to play through another mission of *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow* to pick up your spirits. Too bad work starts in another hour. Solution? The Precision works as well from the couch as it does on the go as you rush around your pad, putting important memos and a flask full of scotch into your junior executive satchel. Now tackle the morning commute with thoughts of snapping necks dancing through your head and pull into work with time to spare.

**Challenge Score:** 🌟🌟🌟🌟🌟



**THE GAMECUBE CHALLENGE:**  
**FREAKING OUT YOUR NEIGHBORS**

**The Winner:** WaveBird • Nintendo • \$35  
[www.nintendo.com](http://www.nintendo.com)

No need to hunt for a wireless pad for GameCube—Nintendo makes the best of the bunch. The WaveBird is flawlessly designed and will let you game for hours on two batteries, even through solid walls. Which gives you an idea. You know those upstairs neighbors who crank Def Leppard to 11? Tired of telling them to turn it down? Next time they rock out, offer them your WaveBird receiver, convincing them it's a "game enhancer." Now go back downstairs and start fiddling with your pad. Rest easy knowing they'll be gone by morning, thinking their GameCube is possessed by Beelzebub himself.

**Challenge Score:** 🌟🌟🌟🌟🌟

## DIDN'T QUITE CUT THE CORD

While these wireless controllers work fine, we couldn't give them the top positions for a variety of reasons...



**Air Flo Wireless**  
**Nyko • PS2/XB • \$50 • [www.nyko.com](http://www.nyko.com)**

It's a fact: Your hands sweat when you play, especially if you like your games mature and your heroines sleazy. But do you need a fan built into your wireless controller? Nyko thinks so, but we think it makes the whole thing cluttered and oversized. Alternate use to note: The perfect air freshener for our PS2 real-world challenge above.



**RadioWave • Sylvania • PS2 • \$30**  
**[www.radiowavecontrol.com](http://www.radiowavecontrol.com)**

If you think Sylvania just makes lightbulbs, you're a bit dim. Thanks to a partnership with GoDirect, the company's consumer electronics division is now creating gaming accessories. Sylvania's technologically solid foray into the world of wireless pads would be an excellent choice if it weren't so huge. The small-handed need not apply.



**Wireless Controller and Headset**  
**Hip Gear • XB • \$100**  
**[www.hipgearproducts.com](http://www.hipgearproducts.com)**

This controller and headset combo—powered by state-of-the-wireless-art Bluetooth technology—is the only cordless Xbox pad that lets you chat with online pals on Xbox Live. But such freedom comes with a price—one crisp Benjamin. Cut the cost in half and we'd think about it. 🌟





# CHEAP TRICKS

Real scammers reveal their ploys for grabbing more games while paying less (or nothing at all)

**V**ideogame con-artistry has come a long way since arcade cheapskates figured out how to angle for free credits with a quarter,

some tape, and fishing line. Today's catch-me-if-you-can tricksters are a brainier, more daring bunch. All gumption and no greenbacks, they find ways

to get what they want for less by working the system within legal limits (well, usually). We got four of these shady characters to share their favorite

schemes. Note: We in no way endorse these dubious dealings, which we will now describe in step-by-step detail.

—Shawn Elliott

## TRADE-IN TRICKERY

When game stores offer a recently released gem in exchange for a few used games, most of us go ahead and lighten our libraries. Not schemer Rory Manion. "First, find a Target or someplace similar with a never-ending clearance cycle of crappy games," he says. For example, Manion found four copies of *Mace Griffin* for just \$4 each. Buy the cheapo titles, haul 'em to the spot with the special offer, and you can essentially get a new hit game for less than \$20. But brace yourself for smart-ass commentary: "The clerk asked me if Henry Rollins [the guy who lent his gruff pipes to *Griffin*] was my uncle," Manion says. **Possible legal pitfalls:** Perfectly safe, unless you take into account the mental anguish of owning multiple copies of crappy clearance games, if only for an hour.



## SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

Who says you have to be a loyal customer to reap the benefits of customer-loyalty promotions? Trickster Steve MacDougall swears he owned the three games that Nintendo required to take advantage of its free *Legend of Zelda: Collector's Edition* offer. He just "lost the boxes." Yeah, right. Fortunately, all Nintendo needed as proof was for customers to enter the required games' product identification numbers on its website. "So I took my cell-phone camera into an EB, found the boxes I needed, and clicked away," says MacDougall. He logged on to Nintendo's site and entered the product ID numbers from his photos. The *Collector's Edition* arrived a few weeks later. **Possible legal pitfalls:** This scheme's more of a white lie than a white-collar crime—so petty it'd be silly to prosecute.



## GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Some swindlers go to great lengths when they feel ripped off by a shoddy title. "I bought a crappy game at one store that won't let you return opened software," says jilted gamer Jose Quezada. "So I bought another copy from a store that does take back opened games, took that sealed copy back to the first store, then brought the opened one back to the second store." Twenty new miles on his odometer later, he had his money back. **Possible legal pitfalls:** None whatsoever, but unless you're the sort who washes his toilet paper for multiple wipings, taking four trips to two stores only to break even on one bad game isn't much to brag about. Sometimes it's better to live up to your mistakes. Or, better yet, just read *EGM's* reviews before you burn that cash on questionable games.



## THE FIXER

When one gamer, who wisely wishes to remain anonymous, saw his PlayStation 1 go kaput after its warranty expired, he crossed the line and became a criminal: "I rented one that worked and pulled a switcheroo with the insides," he says. "Unlike today's consoles, the PS1 came apart nice and clean. I doubt you could do it nowadays." He returned the busted system to the rental store and left them none the wiser. But our mystery man wasn't ready to go clean just yet. "I scratched up my *Madden*, so I bought a Game Doctor," he says, "then took 'em both back and said the device trashed my good disc." **Possible legal pitfalls:** Severe. Some rental outfits forward your late fees to loan collectors, so just imagine what they'd do if they caught you pulling a shenanigan like this.



## FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COUNTER...

Even if game-store employees haven't seen it all, they're sure to pick up on a fair share of the funny stuff. Here are three see-through scams, according to Andrew Shaw, a hard-to-con clerk at a major retailer:

- "Trying to trade in legit cases with AOL discs inside."
- "Buying a console then bringing the box back with a broken one in it."
- "Getting and beating a game, returning it for something else, then returning that for something else—this worked back when we'd give full credit for software people weren't satisfied with."



Disc-read error: The ol' AOL scam.



# THE RUMOR MILL

Gossip so sweet it'll make your teeth hurt

**T**rick or treat, smell my feet, give The Q something good to eat. If you don't, I don't care, I pull down my...ah, never mind. You're not here to see my Spider-Man Underoos—you want rumors. And luckily, the sugar high from all that Halloween candy has produced some really juicy ones this month; tell your moms and pops not to bother with the x-ray machine—this batch of gossip is razorblade-free. Promise. Until next time, you can reach me at [quatermann@ziffdavis.com](mailto:quatermann@ziffdavis.com), and maybe, just maybe I'll respond if candy is sent my way. (Here's a hint: I'm a sucker for Snickers.) —The Q

**PSP still coming in March**  
Everywhere I go, yours truly is barraged with questions about the possibility of a PlayStation Portable delay. Well, you can rest easy, my friends. I'm hearing that Sony



■ The Greek Mr. Clean eyes a sequel.

has recently sent out the final development kits for its slick-looking handheld, plus several of the original launch titles remain on track for a debut early next year in the good ol' U.S.A.—just as the company announced earlier this spring.

## Start your Xenon engine



■ Is this the next Ridge Racer? Maybe.

As we inch closer to the unveiling of Microsoft's Xbox successor (which some are telling me could happen as early as October, while others are talking next February), this rumormonger has gotten wind of another planned Xenon title—*Ridge Racer*. But wait, there's more: Supposedly, Namco is putting Pseudo Interactive, which created a fancy car-crash demo (pic above) using Xenon development software, in charge of the next-gen project.

## Going Greek again

Thanks to its killer *Devil May Cry*-inspired gameplay and Greek mythology backdrop, *God of War* is one of many reasons why I'm all jacked up for next year. Apparently, the folks at Sony are expecting big things from its PlayStation 2 actioner, too, as plans for a sequel are already well underway (so more than just cocktail napkin sketches). Guess they never heard the phrase "don't count your AAA titles before they hatch."

## Taking off their jockstraps

You probably best know EA Tiburon as the sportos who develop that *Madden* football series (I hear it's pretty popular). Yet that might be changing soon. The developer is currently staffing up for its first nonsports title, and while I have very few deets, early word is that the game will be of the third-person action variety...and John Madden isn't the final boss. Shucks.

## Lady Croft no longer single (console)

It ain't a secret that the lovely Ms. Croft will return to her tomb raiding in '05. But what you don't know is that PS2 owners won't be the only ones partaking in this adventure, as Eidos will bring the game to Xbox after the PS2 version lands on store shelves.



■ Read the body language: Lady Lara is going to Xbox.

## OVERHEARD

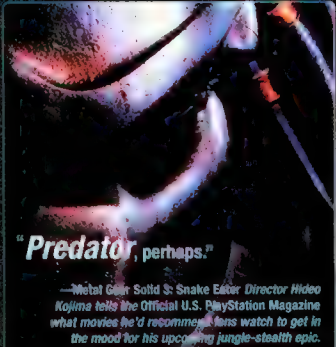
"We killed 'em on football. They could give that thing away for free, Scotch-taped to a ham sandwich and we're still going to beat them."



—Jeff Brown, EA's Vice President of Corporate Communications boasts to *GameDaily* about Madden NFL 2005 outselling rival ESPN NFL 2K5, despite ESPN's \$20 price tag.

"We appreciate Mr. Brown's interest in our business and find it notable that [EA] has dropped the price of its NBA game this year."

—Director of PR at ESPN Videogames Matt Atwood responds, referencing the \$40 price tag of EA's NBA Live 2005.



"Predator, perhaps."

—Webster Galt, *Solid Snake* Editor Director *Hideo Kojima* tells the Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine what movie he'd recommend fans watch to get in the mood for his upcoming jungle-stealth epic.

## CHARTS

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES FOR AUGUST 2004

- 1 Madden NFL 2005**  
PS2 • EA Sports
- 2 Madden NFL 2005**  
XB • EA Sports
- 3 ESPN NFL 2K5**  
PS2 • ESPN Videogames
- 4 Madden NFL 2005 (Coll. Ed.)**  
PS2 • EA Sports
- 5 ESPN NFL 2K5**  
XB • ESPN Videogames
- 6 Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow** • XB • Ubisoft
- 7 Spider-Man 2**  
PS2 • Activision
- 8 NCAA Football 2005**  
PS2 • EA Sports
- 9 Halo**  
XB • Microsoft
- 10 Madden NFL 2005**  
GC • EA Sports

TOP 10 GAME RENTALS FOR THE WEEK ENDING 09/05/04

- 1 Madden NFL 2005**  
PS2 • EA Sports
- 2 Street Racing Syndicate**  
PS2 • Namco
- 3 Street Racing Syndicate**  
XB • Namco
- 4 DRIV3R**  
PS2 • Atari
- 5 Madden NFL 2005**  
XB • EA Sports
- 6 Test Drive: Eve of Destruction**  
PS2 • Atari
- 7 NCAA Football 2005**  
PS2 • EA Sports
- 8 Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow** • XB • Ubisoft
- 9 Spider-Man 2**  
PS2 • Activision
- 10 Pikmin 2**  
GC • Nintendo

Source: NPD. NPD's Video Games Service. Call (516) 625-6100 for questions regarding this list. \*It's a mixed bag of good and not so good.

Source: Blockbuster Video



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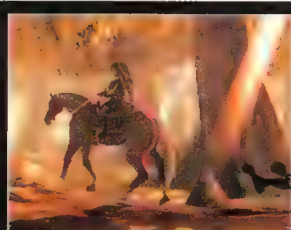
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# THE HOT TEN

You want these games—you really want them

Disagree with the list? You're the ones who created it. Rock your vote at [egmmag.1UP.com](http://egmmag.1UP.com).



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

**2** **Halo 2**  
XB • November 2004

**3** **Jade Empire**  
XB • March 2005

**4** **Metroid Prime 2: Echoes**  
GC • November 2004



**5** **Knights of the Old Rep. II**  
XB • December 2004

**6** **Final Fantasy XII**  
PS2 • Summer 2005

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



**8** **Resident Evil 4**  
GC • January 2005

**9** **Prince of Persia 2**  
PS2/XB/GC • Nov. 2004

**10** **Kingdom Hearts II**  
PS2 • Fall 2005



## JADE EMPIRE

**XB • March 2005** — Hungry for new details on this Asian adventure from the *Knights of the Old Republic* crew? We've seen a wiry new gal named Radiant Jen Zi beating down baddies with giant rings and then finishing the job by transforming into a mag-

ical flaming horse. Even better—check this glimpse of Wu the Lotus Blossom going all zoological on an aberrant elephant with fiery dragon magic. Better yet—scope the trailer of Wu wasting fools with honey-glazed hams on [www.bioware.com](http://www.bioware.com).



## FINAL FANTASY XII

**PS2 • Summer 2005** — Director Yasumi Matsuno hinted in earlier interviews that he'd like to address the issues of race and class in *Final Fantasy XII*, and it looks like he'll have plenty of material to work with. The svelte, rabbit-eared viera (pictured above) are made up of two different groups based on their color with a small segment of the population claiming to be of pure blood and isolating themselves from the rest of the world. Four other races populate the world of Ivalice, including diminutive moogle, the lizard-like bangaa, and the new-to-*Final Fantasy* seeg race. Can they all get along? We're guessing...no.



## PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN

**PS2/XB/GC • November 2004** — Get ready to break out the electric sitar. The scimitar-swinging Purple Rain wannabe is shucking and jiving in *Warrior Within*. Our swarthy hero leaps across enemies' faces, steals their weapons, and even slices down two enemies at once...while doing a handstand. The new focus on combat means that dueling bad guys won't get dull this time around, but expect an equal dose of totally nonviolent platforming and puzzle-solving to balance out all that carnage.



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PlayStation 2



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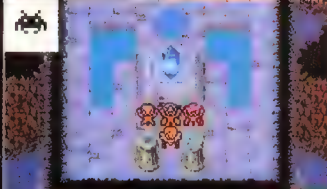


# COMING SOON

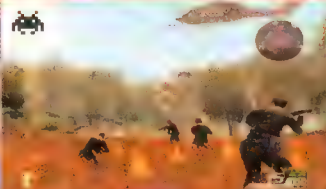
So many games, so little cash

OK, we're officially ready for some Rumble Roses cosplay.

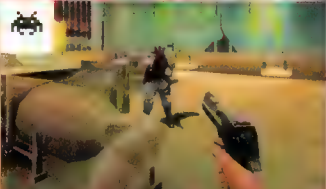
## NOVEMBER 2004



**Final Fantasy I & II: Dawn of Souls**  
Nintendo • GBA — Grace your GBA with this RPG double pack, revamped with new graphics, dungeons, and bosses.



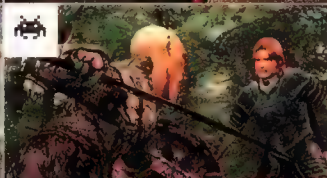
**Ghost Recon 2**  
Ubisoft • PS2/XB/GC — The latest Tom Clancy shooter is so big that one game can't contain it. Get the scoop on page 96.



**GoldenEye: Rogue Agent**  
EA Games • PS2/XB/GC — Turn the tables on that stuffy Bond bloke in this 007 shooter where you're the bad guy.



**King Arthur**  
Konami • PS2/XB/GC — The summer action flick fizzled, but this *Lord of the Rings*-style brawler shows promise.



**Lord of the Rings, The Third Age**  
EA Games • PS2/XB/GC — Ever wonder what would happen if Square Enix's *Final Fantasy X* and Frodo had sex? This.



**Mario Tennis**  
Nintendo • GC — Plumber and pals take to the courts for some wacky racket-high jinks, complete with zany minigames.



**Midnight Club 3: Dub Edition**  
Rockstar • PS2/XB — Pimp out your gas-guzzling Escalade and cruise the streets of Detroit, San Diego, and Atlanta.



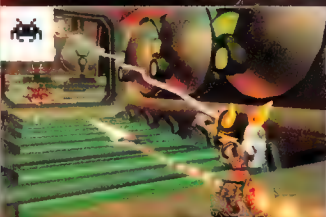
**Need for Speed Underground 2**  
EA Games • PS2/XB/GC — Careen around corners in this living, breathing, go-anywhere racer. Ground effects optional.



**Playboy: The Mansion**  
Arush • PS2/XB — Running the *Playboy* empire requires a lotta management skill, wild parties, and sex in the grotto.



**Prince of Persia: Warrior Within**  
Ubisoft • PS2/XB/GC — The ancient art of TiVo returns when the Prince works his temporal arts in an all-new adventure.



**Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal**  
Sony CEA • PS2 — Will Sony's lovable mascots be as cute when they're blowing your ass up online? Probably not.



**Rumble Roses**  
Konami • PS2 — Konami's first wrestler offers sloppy girl-on-girl action destined to inspire some action below the belt.



**The Urbz: Sims in the City**  
EA Games • PS2/XB/GC — Kind of like *Sex in the City*, but with freakazoid Sims characters and blurred-out nudity.



**Viewtiful Joe 2**  
Capcom • PS2/GC — Joe and his main squeeze bounce back to pummel more movie-themed monstrosities.



**Wild Arms: Alter Code F**  
Agetec • PS2 — Wild west meets high fantasy in this expanded remake of the original PS1 *Wild Arms* role-player.

### Also in November:

**ATV Off-Road Fury 3**  
Sony CEA • PS2

**Digital Devil Saga**  
Atlus • PS2

**Godzilla: Save the Earth**  
Atari • PS2/XB

**Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater**  
Konami • PS2

**Shadow of Rome**  
Capcom • PS2

**Baten Kaitos**  
Namco • GC

**Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 3**  
Atari • PS2

**Jak 3**  
Sony CEA • PS2

**Metroid Prime 2: Echoes**  
Nintendo • GC

**Sonic Mega Collection Plus**  
Sega • PS2/XB

**Blinx 2: Masters of Time and Space**  
Microsoft • XB

**EyeToy: Antigrav**  
Sony CEA • PS2

**Karaoke Revolution Vol. 3**  
Konami • PS2

**NCAA March Madness 2005**  
EA Sports • PS2/XB

**Spyro: A Hero's Tail**  
VU Games • PS2/XB/GC

**Capcom Fighting Evolution**  
Capcom • PS2/XB

**Fullmetal Alchemist**  
Square Enix • PS2

**Mega Man X8**  
Capcom • PS2

**Sega Superstars**  
Sega • PS2

**WWE Smackdown vs. Raw**  
THQ • PS2





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PlayStation 2



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“...Right Now, There Is No Other Game In The Genre That Looks Remotely As Good.”

- PSM

“...It Has Skyrocketed To The Top Of My Most-Wanted Games List.”

- Gamespy

“Turning RPG Clichés On Their Head.”

- Electronic Gaming Monthly

“...Intelligent Scriptwriting And A Well-Developed Sense Of Humor.”

- GamePro



Summon Eccentric Characters To Do Your Dirty Work, Like This Poor Old Bastard Who Finds Traps...the Hard Way



Less A, More I - Don't Underestimate Your Crafty Opponents.

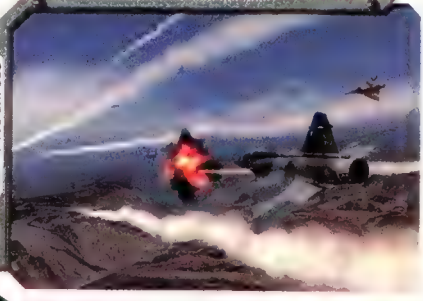


Advanced Attitude System - Your Snarky or Nice decisions change the course of the game for true replayability.



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MIG-2 OSE-GH: 658



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Violence  
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PlayStation 2







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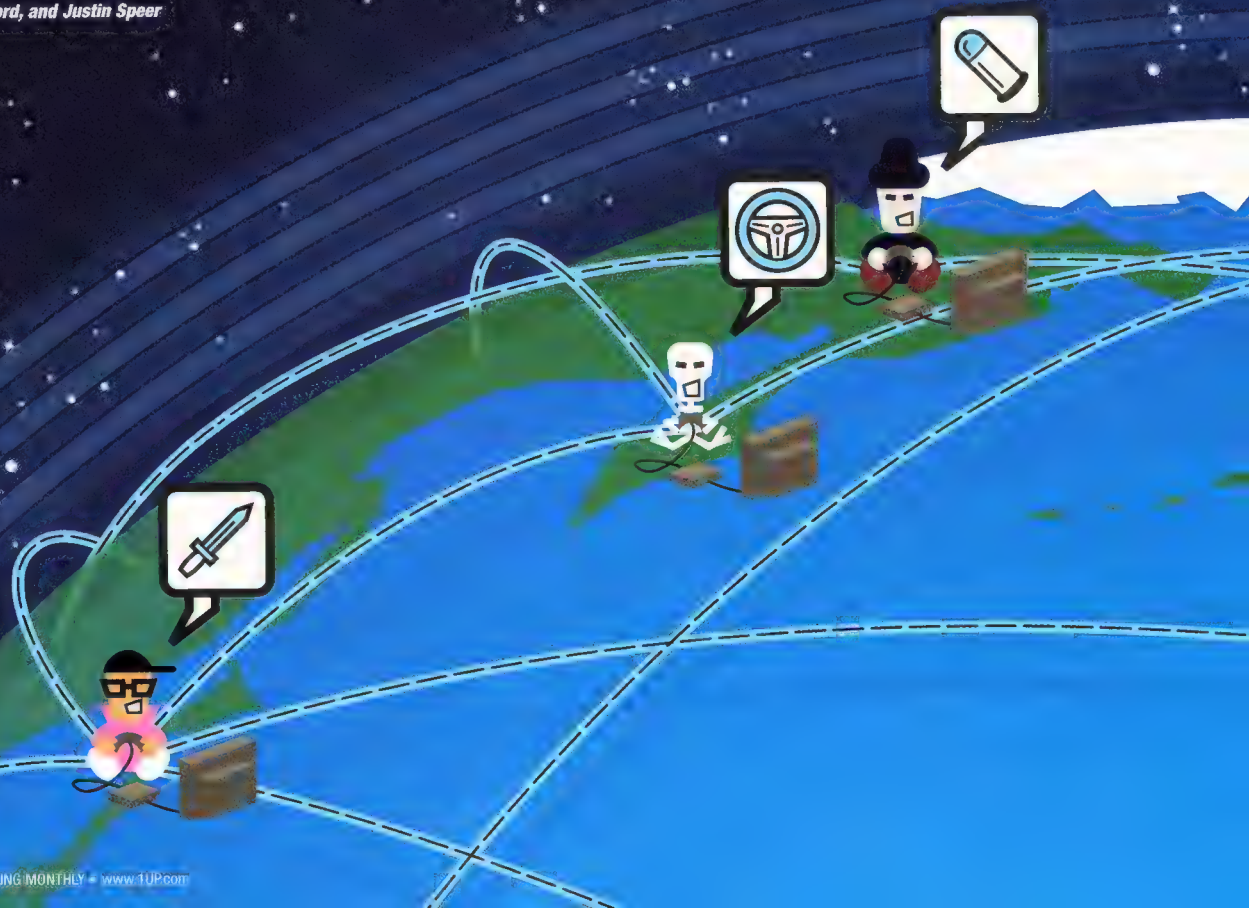


# NET GAINS

## Online gaming for everyone

**F**rom holy matrimony with elf princesses to massive simultaneous WWII assaults, online gaming delivers action with a uniquely human edge. Crave a satisfying shooter? Peg that bratty 12-year-old with a headshot. Sick of the brain-dead A.I. in driving games? Race the toughest players in the world. Hell, you can mobilize your friends to battle zombies, pilot massive robots, or pull bank heists. As new genres expand online, the days of simple deathmatch fragfests are quickly becoming as antiquated as playing chess via e-mail. This feature will give you a quick heads up on a bevy of upcoming online games, including a taste of each game's offline action and a snippet of likely headset banter. (Also of note: For multiplatform games, we've only listed the consoles that actually allow online play...sorry, Gamecube.)

—By Shane Bettenhausen,  
Kevin Gifford, and Justin Speer





## GET CONNECTED

Pick your online poison:

### Shooting — Page 90

- 25 to Life
- Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2
- First to Fight: Close Combat
- GoldenEye: Rogue Agent
- Call of Duty: Finest Hour
- Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal
- Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory
- Area 51
- Project: Snowblind



### Rockem Sockem Robots — Page 106

- Gungriffon
- S.L.A.I. Phantom Crash
- Mechassault 2



### Racing — Page 110

- Need for Speed Underground 2
- Midnight Club 3: Dub Edition
- Forza: Motorsports
- ATV Off-Road Fury 3



### Adventure — Page 112

- Rise of the Kasai
- Champions: Return to Arms
- Resident Evil Outbreak File #2



### Fighting — Page 114

- Fight Club
- Capcom Fighting Evolution
- Iron Phoenix





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# SPIDER-MAN 2

THE GAME



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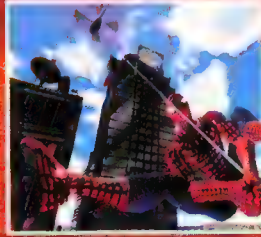
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Pick your own path: battle Doc Ock, bust street crimes, or clash with classic villains.



Swing through a living, highly detailed Manhattan.



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# SHOOTING



As if finding street parking in L.A. didn't already suck.



The Kris Kross reunion tour takes a tragic turn.



Headshots require a fair amount of skill.



25 to Life gives you all the thrills of large-scale gang warfare but without the mess of getting killed in real life.

# 25 TO LIFE

PS2/XB • Eidōs • Spring 2005



**Plugged in:** Designer Jake Neri describes *25 to Life* as "the first online version of cops and robbers," but to the seasoned gamer, it may look more like a hip-hop skin for *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs*, *SOCOM in the Hood*, in other words, or maybe *Bro-COM: U.S. Urban Gangbangers*. Like Sony's run-

away online hit, *25 to Life* takes two teams of players (up to eight per side), throws them into a large outdoor arena, and lets them work out their differences as violently as possible. The atmosphere here, though, is a bit different: Instead of special-ops hardbodies fighting terrorists in the jungle, you have police crews

fighting guys in wife-beaters and ski masks across the cityscapes of America. It's a classic portrait of modern urban life—as seen on *Cops*.

One look at *25 to Life*'s online game modes should give you an idea of what to expect here. The default mode is war, a simple deathmatch that pits 16 people against one another in an all-out street riot. If you're looking for something more involved, there are two variations on capture the flag: raid, where cops break into a safe house and gangsters try to hold them off for as long as possible; and

robbery, where gangsters knock off a series of stores and make a run for the escape point before the cops can catch them. The final mode is tag, where gangster crews compete for turf by spraying their clan's name on walls—tags can be customized offline before the game begins. (Just like most sports games these days, you'll get to keep track of your online stats and ranking via the game's official website at [www.25tolife.com](http://www.25tolife.com).)

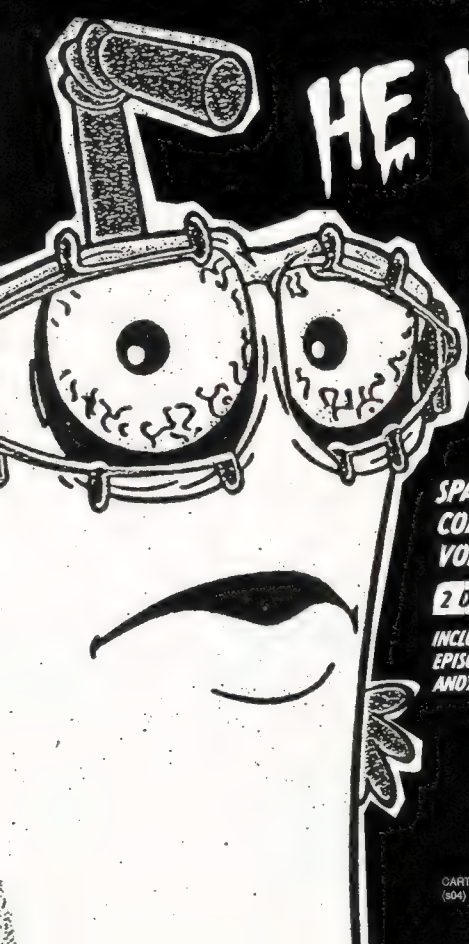
So why would anyone want to play a cop in *25 to Life*? Because unlike in





■ That's all the action available in Los Angeles. There are more to come with Anting, James in Taiwan.

■ As a general rule, don't bring a bat to a gunfight.



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## SHOOTING

### Takin' It to the Street

*25 to Life's* debut at the huge E3 gaming trade show this past May led to accusations that Eidos was trying to make a quick buck off America's current fixation with underground thug culture. "We're proud that [the game] embodies the feel of the street," responds Neri, "but we're not glamorizing the Bloods versus the Crips here. These are the streets, but it's not East L.A."

Not that the developers are shutting their eyes to the scene, of course. Eidos is planning an all-star soundtrack for its game with tunes from DMX, Ghostface Killa, and the still-dead Tupac Shakur. To further deepen the game's street cred, a "leading member of the hip-hop community" will write the single-player mode's story. 50 Cent, maybe? Nah—he's got a game of his own in the works right now.



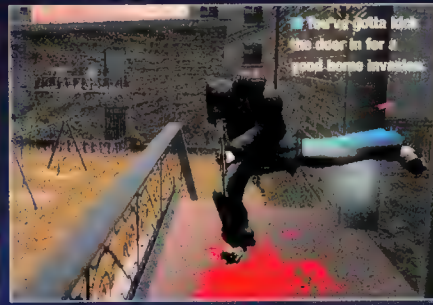
It's important to take cover in *25 to Life*, and that often involves using a context-sensitive action button to climb or jump over obstacles.



Deep character customization allows for streakers like these.



Online banging often yields a high body count.



You've gotta kick the door in for a good home invasion.

**SOCOM**, *25 to Life's* warring sides have decisively different weapons and abilities. Your average cop here has a standard-issue pistol and baton, as well as rifles, hand grenades, and even a Taser that can knock out anything smaller than a horse within 10 feet. Even worse, the police also possess the advantage in accuracy—since they've had real marksmanship training, they miss far less often at longer ranges. Gangsters, just like in the movies, have to make up the difference with pure firepower—*from* Ingram MAC-10s and TEC-9s all the way up to sawed-off shotguns and goofy *RoboCop*

style machinery.

With all of this weaponry, your typical online match in *25 to Life* tends to become a lurid, slightly unsettling bloodbath—like you're living out the climax of *Menace II Society* in the safety of your living room.

"Our focus here is on immersion and ambience," Neri explains. "A lot of games seem empty when you play them online, so we wanted to enhance our game's realism and the way its world feels." And ambience is what this game has: Helicopters whir above your head, the boom-boom-boom of a nearby club

echoes across the street, and brushing past the wrong car could set off its alarm and give away your position. For even more immersion, you can customize your character's looks, face, and clothing; rare accessories like bandannas and custom facial hair will be unlocked after completing certain feats online.



**Unplugged:** Although the solo mode in *25 to Life* is primarily meant as a warm-up for your online debut, it's still far deeper than the simple practice sections of online titles like Microsoft's *Counter-Strike*. The sin-

gle-player game's divided into four story vignettes, each told from a different perspective, which come together near the end as the focus shifts to the leader of the local crime syndicate you're fighting and/or abetting. Expect to see the same sorts of robberies and raids you'll pull off online—just with a real plot and without anyone talking about how stoned they are in your headset.



**What you might hear:** "Yo, this Glock ain't got s\*\*\* on what I got hidden in my closet upstairs. Crips for life!"

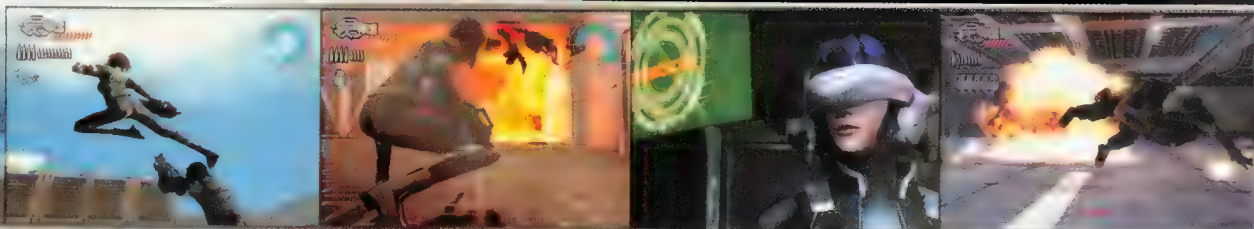


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## SHOOTING



ADV **GAZ's** new perspective humanizes the action.

### TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON 2

PS2/XB • Ubisoft • November 2004

**Plugged in:** When they talk about "the army of one" on TV, they're really referring to you in *Ghost Recon 2*—you're a squad leader with enough high-tech weaponry to win a war against North Korea. All 20 missions in this tactical-shooter sequel are also available for co-op play, and a good dozen online modes—pitting up to 16 players against one another in capture the flag and other games—are set to deploy. Also of note: The PS2 and Xbox games are actually unique, offering different maps, characters, and objectives.

**Unplugged:** The sequel to the top game of 2003 for the *Soldier of Fortune* crowd moves further away from its PC roots. A new behind-the-shoulder camera augments the old first-person view, and you can now take on the whole single-player campaign in lone wolf mode, eschewing your normal teammates for solitary action.

**What you might hear:** "Hey, did you hear that North Korea tried to ban this game because...[rain of gunfire]"

### FIRST TO FIGHT: CLOSE COMBAT

XB • Gathering • Early 2005

**Plugged in:** Real-life Marines helped design this serious team-based first-person shooter, and it shows: Teamwork is an absolute must. "Anybody who has ever played a team-based game online can immediately tell the difference between teams that operate together as a cohesive unit and those that are just a random collection of individuals," says Producer Peter Tamte. Skilled teams will find stiff competition against like-minded cliques in *Fight's* fire team arena mode, where the highest-ranked squads duel for supremacy.

**Unplugged:** Strategy is key in *First to Fight's* single-player mode, set in 2006 during a hypothetical Lebanese civil war. Blasting away like you're in *Doom* won't keep you alive too long—you need to outflank your opponents, putting the fear of God in them with your slow, calculated advances.

**What you might hear:** "I am SaiyanVegeta854! From now on the first and last word out of your filthy sewers will be 'sir!' Sound off!"



The few, the proud, the online.

## GOLDENEYE: ROGUE AGENT

PS2/XB • EA Games • November 2004

**Plugged in:** As anyone who's ever discovered the tops off salt shakers at restaurants knows, it's good to be back—and *Rogue Agent*, a game where the hero's out to get James Bond himself, is made to help you be very, very bad. The rips in this first-person shooter run the gamut of climactic Bond moments, from the pyramids of Giza (*The Spy Who Loved Me*) to the satellite uplink at the end of the movie *GoldenEye*. "We have twice as many multiplayer arenas as

the original *GoldenEye*," says Senior Producer Chris Plummer. "And players can unlock multiple maps through online play." The multiplayer modes, all of which support up to eight players online, range from simple duels to "war games," where villains fight to complete an objective before the good guys save the day.

**Unplugged:** Multiplayer is a huge part of the *GoldenEye* package (you can play four-player

splitscreen matches if you're tired of a Net connection), but the single-player story is nothing to spit-take your dry martini at. The game's eight missions chronicle the life of an MI6 turncoat helping assorted Bond villains take over the world and actually keep it this time.

**What you might hear:** "No, Mr. Bond! I don't expect you to camp out under that stairwell for the entire match... I expect you to die!"



**PLUG INTO THIS**

**out of the ordinary GAME**

**RATCHET AND CLANK: UP YOUR ARSENAL**

**PS2**

Introducing the first online action game for the PlayStation 2 game console.

In this, the third game in the Ratchet and Clank series, Secret Agent Clank, interstellar robot of mystery (along with his ever-present partner, Ratchet), has once again returned to save us from the latest evil scheme conjured by that robotic supervillain, Dr. Nefarious. Mean ol' Neffy plans to annihilate all life in the galaxy using the multi-eyed Tyhrranoid race as his ultimate weapon.

Luckily, Ratchet and Clank have 20 outrageous weapons of their own (with as many as four levels of upgrades for most), plus clever new high-tech gadgets and rip-roaring vehicles to help them through their journey. Online play lets players really "Up Their Arsenal" for an even bigger blast than before. Up to eight players can face off in chaotic broadband battles, including siege, capture the flag, and deathmatch games. When has saving the galaxy ever been this fun?!



**break out TRICKS**

**DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY**

ps2 / xbx / gcn

• **It's All About Momentum!**  
When your momentum meter is full, you can execute your big Blazin' move (your finishing move). In order to Blaze, simply push the right analog stick in any direction,

then grapple your opponent and hit the right analog stick again. You have 30 seconds from when you first hit the right analog stick to use the Blazin' move. Try pointing the analog stick in different directions to discover each character's own Blazin' moves!



**sweet TIPS**

**STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT**

ps2 / xbx

• **Man The Battlestations!**  
Designed for space combat, the weapons installed on starfighters are often the most powerful on the battlefield. Establish air superiority, then conduct strafing runs to eliminate enemy vehicles and troops. When necessary, land near repair droids to stock up on more missiles.



**BREAK OUT OF THE ORDINARY**





## SHOOTING

# CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR

PS2/XB • Activision • November 2004

**Plugged in:** Do you want some frilly, commie-pinko multiplayer modes like "daisy-chain node domination," soldier? Not in this WWII shooter. "It's really easy for a [development] team to spin its wheels on multiplayer to create new and different modes and game types and get caught up in 'new for new's sake' design," comments Thaine Lyman, *Hour's* executive producer. "So our approach, especially with all the revolutionary things we are already doing in terms of single player, was to focus in on the game modes that gamers

want and play most. We've really taken the approach of putting the fun first."

This means rugged, combat-issue multiplayer bouts of deathmatch, capture the flag, and search-and-destroy that neatly fill the WWII void left by *Medal of Honor's* 2004 absence. While you're fighting it out in tried-and-true matches with the series' famously authentic WWII weaponry, full voice communication lets you coordinate that breach-and-clear maneuver with your online war buddies—or just take a really bad German accent as "Baron Von Fraggermeister."

**Unplugged:** *Call of Duty* on PC has the meritorious distinction of cramming a helluva lot of soldiers on the screen at once to create that "you're right in the middle of a war zone and you're probably about to get hit in the face by a grenade" feeling.

*Finest Hour* isn't a port, but it has similar aspirations. "[Our aim is] cramming 200-plus allied and enemy soldiers onscreen at once in single player, packing the campaigns with the most harrowing and intense action experienced on the console, with all of the authentic

sights and sounds of war, and dropping the player into the center of it all," states Lyman. The game will also focus more on the valiant struggles of individual characters (two for each Allied force) and give you a good amount of time buttoned down in tanks or manning the mounted gun on a jeep.

**What you might hear:** "Is that an antique DPM 7.62mm Ruchnoy Pulemyot light machine gun in your pants or are you just extremely happy to see me?"



*Finest Hour* will also ship for the GameCube this fall but won't feature online play. D'oh.





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.GeintotheGame.com](http://www.GeintotheGame.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.geintotheGame.com](http://www.geintotheGame.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.

## WWE DAY OF RECKONING



GAMECUBE

### TIPS TO RECKON WITH

- Special moves are the keys to victory. Build up your adrenaline meter by attacking and taunting your opponent. When one of your special slots is full, press (1+2) to enter your special state, from which you can execute your special move by pressing (1+2) again when you're in the right position.
- If you're quick, you can hit two or more special moves before your special state expires. As long as the word "SPECIAL" appears over your adrenaline meter, you can keep performing special moves with (1+2).
- Don't get greedy, though—your opponent can counter your special move by pressing (6+7). Use the tutorial mode to learn how to counter every type of move, and much, much, much more!



## FIGHT



XBOX

### FABULOUS!

- It's impossible to pull the sword from the stone at the Temple of Ayn the first time you visit. The game remembers your physical stats the first time you try, and won't let the sword slide free until you've improved your Physique by 5, your Toughness by 3, and your Health by 2.
- If you're having trouble winning the Hero Balls from some of Fable's timed mini-games, first cast the Slow Time spell immediately before you sit down to play. This spell is fantastic in combat, and it's also a card cheat's dream.
- The Arctonox box is best bartered from long range with the Multi Arrow spell, until it lifts its tail and begins charging its upper attack. Then you should run between its ears and use an endless flurry of flourish combos. Since it can't hit you while it's charging, it can't break your flourish!

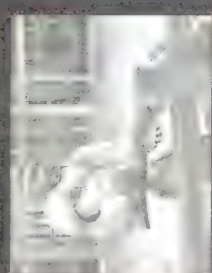
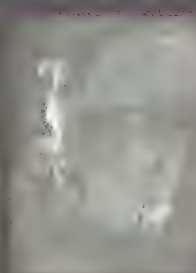
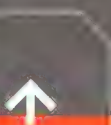


## DEF JAM: FIGHT FOR NY

PS2, XBOX

### STREET SKILLZ

- Toughness is like armor. The tougher you are, the faster you regenerate health and the less damage you take from attacks.
- Experiment with weapons, especially in venues that have an actual ring. In some places, you can jump off the top rope and nail your opponent with whatever you have in your hands.
- When fighting at The Dragon House, break the wooden fence and throw your opponent out the ring! Three well interactions will break the wooden fence.
- When fighting in Crow's office watch out for window attacks. Three strikes, and you're out!
- When fighting in Club Murder, use various fence interactions to wreck maximum damage on your opponent.







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](http://www.Getintothegame.com) to download a coupon for \$5 off any game shown here and check out more codes for the latest hot titles.

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## MADDEN NFL 2005



PS2, XBOX, GAMECUBE

### CHALKBOARD STRATEGIES

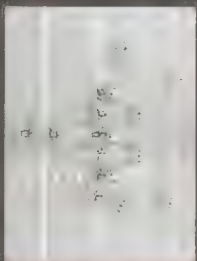
#### Hit Stick

• In last year's game, the deep pass was the weapon of choice for many of the country's top players. Players with high jump ratings could literally sky-over the opposition, turning many games into offensive shoot outs.

• One of the best ways to break up the deep ball is to take control of a safety and drop him deep into coverage. If you practice enough, you can get into position to deliver a crushing blow. Get back quickly, then use the strategy button to square up. Wait for the ball to get close and flick the Hit Stick.

#### Creating Turnovers

• You will see a lot more penetration by the defense this year, especially on running plays. This will give you many chances at using the Hit Stick to make a highlight reel play.



# GET INTO THE GAME.COM

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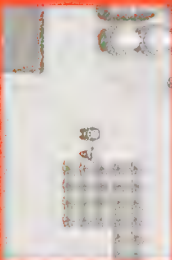
## POKEMON FIRE RED & LEAF GREEN



GAMECUBE

### CATCH THEM ALL!

• Taking flight can be a cutting edge strategy in the world of Pokémon. You'll want to have your best flier on hand for the most difficult to catch Pokémon. When it's your turn to catch a Pokémon, you'll want to use a Poké Ball. If you're using a Poké Ball, you'll want to use a Poké Ball. If you're using a Poké Ball, you'll want to use a Poké Ball. If you're using a Poké Ball, you'll want to use a Poké Ball.



## STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT



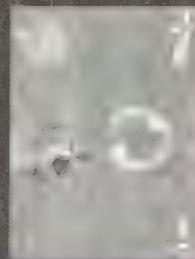
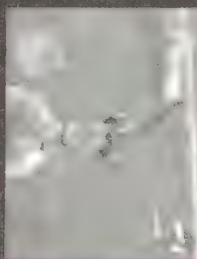
PS2, XBOX

### USE THE FORCE

• Jumping can save your life in certain combat situations. For instance, if you come face-to-face with a droid, instead of duking it out face-to-face, simply jump on top of it and drop down behind it. From there, you can attack, or simply retreat as the slow unit attempts to rotate and re-acquire you within its sights.

• All snipers are equipped with a recon droid. These spherically-shaped droids hover across the battlefield and can be used to spot distant units or call in an orbital strike on their own location. Orbital strikes are devastating against stationary positions or slow-moving vehicles like the AT-TE or AT-AT.

• Designed for space combat, the weapons installed on starfighters are often the most powerful on the battlefield. Establish or superiority then combat strategy runs to eliminate enemy vehicles and troops. When necessary, land near your droids to stock up on more missiles.





# RATCHET AND CLANK: UP YOUR ARSENAL

PS2 • Sony CEA • November 2004

**Plugged in:** "Ever wanted to turn your little brother into a sheep?" asks *Arsenal's* Online Designer Cory Stockton. "Now you can." When *Ratchet and Clank's* crazy weapons and insane action leap online this fall, tons of online newbies will get down with their inner farm animals.

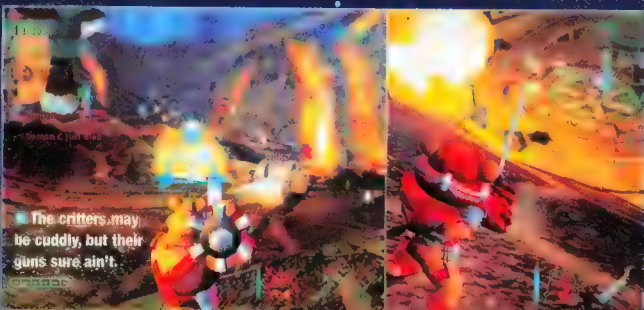
Prepare for an uncontrollable online orgy of destruction with more than 20

weapons (most of which can be upgraded four times); gadgets like magnet boots and grappling hooks, and multiplayer vehicles (you drive while your buds man the guns). "We really wanted to open up online gameplay to a new audience by making it easier to play and understand," says Stockton. Getting brutally transformed into a sheep or duck is pretty easy to wrap your head around.

**Unplugged:** Although online fragfests constitute the major focus here, developer Insomniac isn't neglecting a proper single-player adventure. *Ratchet and Clank* have to continue their misadventures, after all. In addition to a bevy of new weapons, you can also expect a revamped first-person view mode (available from the outset) and an entire subgame starring series

villain Qwark, in which he hops, bops, and shoots on Ratchet's handheld game system. *Arsenal* Director Ryan Schneider sums it up nicely: "If you get bored playing this game, you suck."

**What you might hear:** "Dude, don't hit me with that Quack."



The critters may be cuddly, but their guns sure ain't.

## CONKER: LIVE AND RELOADED

XB • Microsoft • Spring 2005

**Plugged in:** "I think there's definitely a market for blood, guts, profanity, big guns, and furry ninja babes," explains *Conker* Designer Chris Seavor. Odds are he's right. Outside its zany cartoonish trappings, *Conker* is a war-themed shooter where players choose a predefined military role (like sniper, oops...we mean "long ranger") and give the bad guys all the hell their little animal hearts can muster. This may involve riding armored four-wheelers and causing geysers of blood to erupt from a squirrel's head-

less neck. Cool, huh?

**Unplugged:** When you're all deathmatched out, *Conker* offers a port of the Nintendo 64 platformer *Bad Fur Day*, which is a surprisingly good game packed with crude humor and a whole lot of movie references. It could be worth a look, but we're not sure how well it's aged.

**What you might hear:** "Hey, does anyone else find these animals kinda...well...sexy?"

## BROTHERS IN ARMS

PS2/XB • Ubisoft • February 2005

**Plugged in:** Since everyone you meet online is just hopelessly insubordinate, *Brother In Arms* seeks to delete the need for teamwork. "We're giving players the opportunity to do something they've never done before," says Multiplayer Producer Marc Tardif. "Here, every human player commands a squad of A.I. soldiers in a multiplayer environment." These computer-controlled privates are completely loyal, know no fear, and will never shout "j00 sux0rz!" A maximum of four players (16 soldiers altogether) can participate in surprisingly

strategic online combat.

**Unplugged:** *Arms* is first and foremost an offline experience that solemnly and painstakingly re-creates the missions of real soldiers. You'll command a fireteam and an assault team, using a zoomed-out tactical view to plan suppress and flank maneuvers, which were the core of WWII battle tactics.

**What you might hear:** "Kill them, my servants of doom!"







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Game experience may change during online play. \*Look for systems with the Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology logo which your system vendor has verified utilize Hyper-Threading Technology.





Run for your life!  
Now using HyperThreading  
Technology.



the Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology.\* Otherwise,  
faster game play, visit [intel.com/go/gaming](http://intel.com/go/gaming).

Performance will vary depending on the specific hardware and software you use. See <http://www.intel.com/info/hyperthreading/> for information.







## SHOOTING

# SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY

XB • Ubisoft • March 2005

**Plugged in:** Cooperation is the name of the game in *Chaos Theory*, the third *Splinter Cell* adventure in two years. Online players join forces as Shadownets, spies who work in tandem to complete the missions series star Sam Fisher just doesn't have time for. "We wanted co-op to be more than just having two guys playing a duplicate of the single-player experience," explains *Theory* Producer Mathieu Ferland. To accomplish this, *Theory* boasts multiplayer-specific missions and moves, such as getting a boost onto a normally unreachable platform and pulling up your fellow-spy after you. "Big walls impossible to climb alone and pipes too high in the air to be reached by a single player are just some examples of a new types of gameplay where you think and play in terms of coopera-

tion," says Ferland.

While this new co-op action sounds promising, it's likely no substitute for *Pandora Tomorrow's* awesome spies vs. mercenaries mode. Ubisoft hints that *Theory* will offer similar thrills...and well, it had better. Or else.

**Unplugged:** It's *Splinter Cell*...again. While the single-player experience appears fundamentally unchanged, expect improved graphics, new moves, more realistic A.I., and an undoubtedly sneaky new story.

**What you might hear:** "OK, I'm gonna take his route, shoot out the lights, whistle to distract...damn!!! (gunfire) OK, so I just shot him in the face." ▶



In the new co-op mode, prepare to become a human stepladder.





LESSON 3:  
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## SHOOTING

# AREA 51

PS2 • Midway • Spring 2005



■ "Cover me, I think I just saw that creepy little thing from *Alien 3*!"



**Plugged in:** Once an arcade gun game with a cheese factor rivaled only by *Mad Dog McCree*, *Area 51* has gone a little bit *X-Files* (David Duchovny actually voices the lead) and a little bit *Half-Life*. Even better news: Your character does not have to wear a dorky blue STAAR uniform.

The deathmatch bloodshed seems fairly straightforward but thoroughly polished. "Our attention to detail will be very apparent to the players when they see the sheer number of multi-player maps we offer, as well as the amount of variation they have," explains Producer Zach Wood. "Not to mention having two industry legends, John Romero and Tom Hall [the creators of the original *Doom*], adding their creative input!"



**Unplugged:** Expect a behind-the-gun shooter experience on par with other modern games in the genre, but with aliens. Er...well, most of the good shooters these days have aliens, don't they?

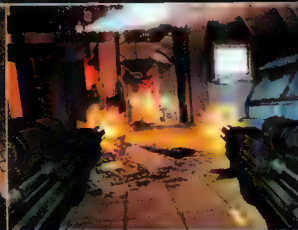
The one thing that might set this one apart (other than a renegade alien helper named Edgar, voiced by Marilyn Manson) is the mutant DNA pulsing through your contaminated body. You'll develop abilities far more fearsome than E.T.'s glowing finger of love or Alf's cat-fur hairballs, like the ability to spit out life-sucking parasitic insects. Ugh.



**What you might hear:** "LOL, you mutants are totally suck!"



■ Not a *Doom 3* paragon, we swear.



# PROJECT: SNOWBLIND

PS2/XB • Eidos • January 2005



**Plugged in:** "The initial focus of the game was to, first and foremost, deliver an awesome single-player experience," admits Multiplayer Designer Noah Hughes. "However, it didn't take us long to realize that we had the building blocks of an incredible multiplayer game."

*Snowblind*'s bio-enhanced soldiers fighting in a Chinese civil war in 2065 are key blocks in that design—thanks to about two dozen weapons, support devices, and customizable bio-mod abilities: "We're trying to make sure there's always some nuance or strategy left to discover...that our weapons, abilities, and gadgets interact in ways that will continually surprise the player," says Designer Zak McClendon. Shotguns will be able to fire clusters of sticky bombs, portable riot walls provide cover, and living bolts of bio-lighting will snake their way through enemy ranks.



**Unplugged:** What should you expect from *Snowblind*'s single-player campaign? Girth. "We've got encounters with a half dozen friendly soldiers and nearly triple that number of enemies," states McClendon. "This is the unique experience we're trying to provide, to put the player smack in the middle of a chaotic, frenzied futuristic war zone and give them the power and the tools to overcome the odds and lead their friends to victory."



**What you might hear:** "Dammit! Will somebody please throw down a riot wall?"



■ When your enemies get all up in your grill, unleash a pet blast to cook 'em.



Cut off behind enemy lines with no way to contact help, four young, barely trained soldiers realize their only hope for survival is to head into the heart of darkness. With few rations and dwindling ammunition, the only thing separating them from freedom is 100 miles of ruthless terrain, crawling with unseen enemies and filled with hidden booby traps. Welcome to Vietnam.

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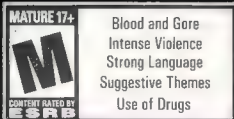
14 enormous missions in jungles, villages, temples, and underground tunnels.



Use experience points after missions to develop characters in 9 categories.



PlayStation 2

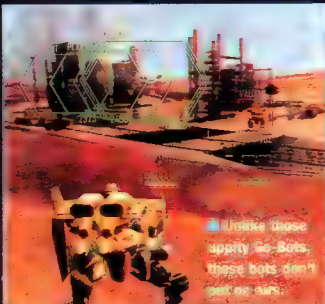


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## ROBOTS



### GUNGRIFFON

XB • Tecmo • December 2004

**Plugged in:** Remember *Gungriffon* for the Sega Saturn? Not so much, eh? Oh,

well...maybe you recall *Gungriffon: Blaze*, the PS2 launch title? Can't blame ya. Well, maybe you're better off coming to the series with a fresh start, with this, the first installment to offer online play. Here, up to 12 players can simultaneously get behind the wheels of massive High Mac mechs for wanton destruction in deathmatch, team battle, and co-op missions. Expect action that stresses speedy game play over intense strategy (so leave your

*Steel Battalion* portable cockpit packed away in storage for this one).

**Unplugged:** You'll get a full garrison of offline missions to blow through, but online play remains the focus here. Director Masato Dobashi tells it straight, "It's been our dream to include online multiplayer ever since the Sega Saturn days."

**What you might hear:** (If you'll be able to play with Japanese gamers) "*Baka gaijin!*"

### MECHASSAULT 2

XB • Microsoft • December 2004

**Plugged in:** "No matter how interesting we make the artificial intelligence in the game, many players are more intrigued with the challenge of matching wits with a human," explains Producer Denny Thorley. "Many people think it is more satisfying to kick their buddy's ass than it is to beat a well-crafted A.I."

He's right, ya know, and *MechAssault 2* should please all the fans who glommed on to the original Xbox Live smash. The machines feel bigger, the battles seem better, and the explosions look even more impressive. Placing players in the roles of tiny humans not only completely alters the game's scale, it also makes 31st century war more dynamic by letting pilots freely board vehicles or gun emplacements during fierce online battles.

Tanks, for instance, have stealth functions, and air transports can drop troops, supplies, and bombs. Strap on the highly maneuverable battle armor and you can attach yourself to the

back of the meanest war machine on the battlefield to forcibly eject its pilot via a button-tap hacking. To top it all off, it'll use all the Xbox Live features known to man and allow bitchin' custom paint jobs for your clan's mechs.

**Unplugged:** The single-player experience will use all the same elements as the online game, presenting unique situations where you'll need to switch vehicles and adopt new tactics within the framework of a self-contained story. "We are dedicated to making the single-player experience compelling, immersive, and a robust experience in itself," says Thorley. "The single-player campaign will prepare you for multiplayer, and the tricks you learn in multiplayer will make you want to replay the single-player game."

**What you might hear:** "Get off my back you #@%&%% hack-monkey!"

### S.L.A.I. PHANTOM CRASH

PS2 • Konami • Spring 2005

**Plugged in:** This sequel to the little-known (but really quite decent) *Phantom Crash* for Xbox does in two installments what the *Armored Core* series has been tryin' to do for nearly a decade—get robots dueling online. Here, four players hop into mechs for brutal, anything-goes deathmatch action. Customize your bot with gizmos like optical camouflage, superhigh jumping mods, and diamond-tipped chain saws, then impress your foes by stylishly tearing apart their own meager creations.

**Unplugged:** Single-player offers a full story mode in which you battle computer-controlled mechs, gain new parts, and...well...that's about it. Battling A.I. can't really compare to taking on real humans, but at least you can invite a bud into the fray via splitscreen robo-on-robo combat.

**What you might hear:** "Cool, where'd you get that nifty leaf-blower attachment? Oh, that's your gun...sorry."



Online, players can join perpetual planet-to-planet wars to control territories.





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PlayStation 2







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AND 'DA OTHER TURTLE.

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## RACING

### FORZA MOTORSPORT

XBOX • Microsoft • January 2005

**Plugged in:** Microsoft's buffed, waxed, and vacuumed answer to *Gran Turismo* has an intense amount of Xbox Live support. *Forza* allows the usual eight-player online races and tournaments, but what if real life prevents you from making a match? No problem—just train a Drivatar, an Xbox-controlled A.I. routine, to drive for you. It'll base its moves off your personal racing style and everything.

**Unplugged:** *Forza* is a *Gran Turismo* wannabe, yes, but it's the most promising one out there. Over 60 manufacturers are represented, the physics and control are both highly realistic, and you can go all-gear-head with superdetailed tweaking.

**What you might hear:** "Yo, anyone got an Enzo? I got a Buick Electra for trade!"



It's all pure racing. No spinning rims here.



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### MIDNIGHT CLUB 3: DUB EDITION

PS2/XB • Rockstar • January 2005

**Plugged in:** The "DUB Edition" bit refers to *DUB Magazine*, purveyors of high-class rides

**Unplugged:** Pick a ride (our suggestion: Cadillac Escalade—list price: \$52,635)

and drive it 120 mph down tight city streets, busting through insane shortcuts to finish in first. Playing against the A.I. will help prep you for the stiff online competition, plus you can earn cash and pimp out your ride before you go online.

for the hip-hop community, and the types of cars you'll see in this *Midnight Club* aren't what you would expect from a street racer. Up to eight players can race across Atlanta, Detroit, and San Diego online—but instead of Ferrari speed demons, they'll be using fancy SUVs and luxury sedans from Ducati and Mercedes-Benz.

**What you might hear:** "Aww man, nice whistle tip, dawg."

### NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2

PS2/XB • EA Games • November 2004

**Plugged in:** Out of all the games featured here, *NFSU2* probably offers the most seamless online experience. Everything you can do offline—drag races, mountain drifting, "outrun" matches—can happen online with up to four players. "Based on the popularity of online mode last year, we really ramped up our online team to deliver a robust online experience in *NFSU2*," explains Producer Justin Wiebe. "We've included brand-new four-player outrun tournaments, a progressive ranking board, and twice as many parts to customize your car with."

**Unplugged:** The mission for this year's *Underground* is to let you, the player, do whatever you want. You like drag races? Then set up the in-game map to display only drag races—the game will keep 'em coming until you're sick of 'em. (You still have to run other race types, but you aren't forced through every single one like you were last year.)

**What you might hear:** "Dude, where you at? This city's huge. Meet me at the Burger King."



And this is one of the more understated paint jobs.

### ATV OFFROAD FURY 3

PS2 • Sony CEA • November 2004

**Plugged in:** If all the other screamers on this page aren't your bag, then how about

**Unplugged:** The developer may have changed, but the pick-up-and-play simplicity of *ATV's*

something a little more hoppy? The third *ATV Offroad Fury* (this one developed by Climax, makers of the *MotoGP* series) lets six players race online at once on any of the game's 60 closed-circuit tracks and enduro courses. And if you tire of plowing through muddy ravines, relax with an assortment of wacky multiplayer online minigames—fancy a game of ATV basketball or soccer?

controls hasn't. There's a new linking system for tricks that works like it does in the *Tony Hawk* games, as well as dynamic obstacles like forest fires in the outdoor races, but the arcade jumping and alarming crashes remain intact.

**What you might hear:** "Noob! I was riding these back when they had only three wheels."



Oh, like you won't also pick No. 69.



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## ADVENTURE

# RISE OF THE KASAI

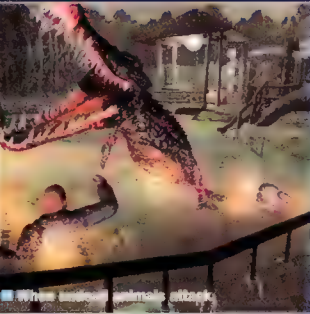
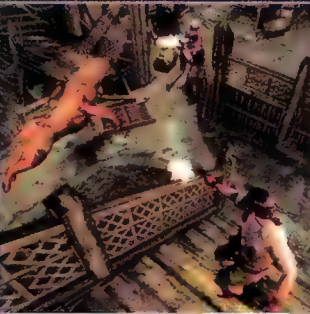
PS2 • Sony CEA • Spring 2005

**Plugged in:** *Rise of the Kasai* (follow-up to 2002's sleeper *The Mark of Kri*) requires you and an accomplice to snuff out foes with cunning and coordination, not to mention a healthy dose of simulated brutality—whether you're plugged in or not. "We didn't want to make a great game and then shoehorn online features into it," says Producer and Designer Jay Beard. "The cooperative experience is really the backbone of the game...we're trying to transcend the differences between the online and offline." A game-controlled partner should be competent, but the best battle plans are likely to come from two people whispering to each other in hushed tones. (Remember starting at the lovely "Capeona," because, as unobscure combat still attracts family localities to fun, a familiar friend might just follow you home.)

level and is waiting to ambush a nearby guard, but you blunder around the corner and draw his attention. Even though you botched her setup, Tall remains hidden. After waiting for the guard to leave, she leaps onto his enemy with a fatal attack from behind.

**What you might hear:** "That Tall chick is hot. I mean, in a Disney kinda way."

**Unplugged:** *Rise of the Kasai* is a sequel to a game that was never fully released. It's a shame, but the game is still a great experience. The online component was never fully completed, but it's still a great experience.



# RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK FILE #2

PS2 • Capcom • Spring 2005

**Plugged in:** You and three friends once again face a zombified B-movie hell in this not-quite sequel. New scenarios include a gruesome outing at the zombie zoo and a return trip to a location series fans are sure to recognize—the infamous Raccoon City police station. The eight original characters from *File #1* (and possibly more) face down new monsters such as a gigantic flea that grows larger as it sucks blood. Monsters rear their mutated heads at random, which should keep the experience interesting even after a few plays.

**Unplugged:** Offline you'll be surviving much the same horror, but with two computer-controlled comrades instead of unpredictable, cowardly humans. A collection mode will let you unlock characters, items, and extras as you play.

**What you might hear:** Probably the same three or four generic preset phrases over and over again. That's right—no voice or text chat...again. Capcom swears that it preserves the game's tension. Uh-huh.

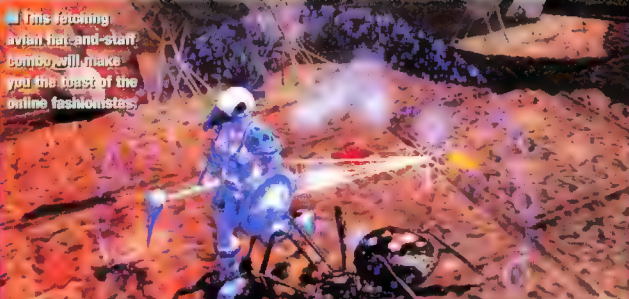
# CHAMPIONS: RETURN TO ARMS

PS2 • Sony Online • Spring 2005

**Plugged in:** Who wants to quest forever? This *EverQuest*-branded sequel to *Champions of Norrath* adds plenty of fuel to its fore-runner's fantasy fire. New tigerman vah shir and lizardly iksar characters, streamlined online matchmaking options, more skills, powerful new enchanted weapons, and a shiny selection of cleavage-enhancing armor should appease fans of the first. Plus, it's not just about cooperative questing now: Friends become foes in vicious death-matches and competitive minigames.

**Unplugged:** Verily, more character customization, good and evil paths to tread upon, and the ability to import old characters from *Champions of Norrath* (you can get 'em back on the power treadmill till they hit level 80) should be nearly as fun offline as it is on.

**What you might hear:** "Feh, your puny iksar is a disgrace to our proud reptilian heritage. Make your lizard throb with power using the enlarge spell!"



This fetching avian hat-and-staff combo will make you the toast of the online fashionistas.

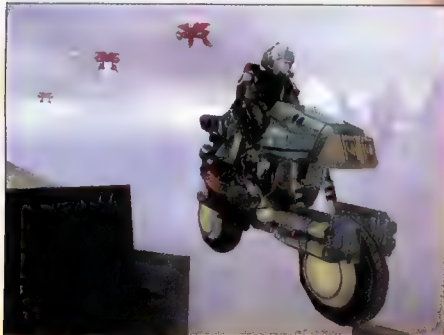


# ROBOTECH INVASION

PlayStation 2



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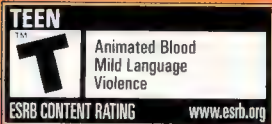
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## FIGHTING



### IRON PHOENIX

XB • Sammy • Spring 2005

**Plugged in:** Ruin vertically up a wall, make a graceful floating leap to a distant rooftop, and descend on your enemy with a deadly blow from the heavens. Just watch out for the other 15 wushu masters on your back. The arena fighting in *Iron Phoenix* allows for duels, chaotic free-for-alls, and team deathmatches. One of the more interesting modes, giant kill, has one superpowered player squaring off against everyone else. Also, expect full Xbox Live support for clans and custom tournaments.

**Unplugged:** Rather than coping out with a series of meaningless arena fights, *Iron Phoenix* seeks to incorporate every element of online fighting into a story-driven action-adventure playable offline. If you can improve your skills while taking in some backstory, it might be worth the downtime.

**What you might hear:** "The Eight Deadly Venoms laugh heartily at your pathetic challenge, mortal. Mwahahaha!"

### CAPCOM FIGHTING EVOLUTION

XB • Capcom • Winter 2004

**Plugged in:** Capcom rips characters straight from its respective 2D fighting series, rules and all, for a company-sponsored online throwdown.

A classic *Street Fighter* like Guile plays simple and hits hard, while highly technical *Darkstalkers* like Jedah make up for low damage with chain combos, pursuit attacks, and ES moves. Freaks like the screen-filling dragon Hauzer from the monumentally obscure arcade brawler *Red Earth* level up to gain

series break out the custom combos, and members of the *Street Fighter III* cast represent with deft parries.

**Unplugged:** The only differences between online and offline versus play will be how far away your opponent is sitting and how badly Net latency affects gameplay. Pray for no lag...

**What you might hear:** "SHIN-SHO-RYUUKEN!" At least you won't see the guy miming it.



### FIGHT CLUB

PS2/XB • VU Games • November 2004

**Plugged in:** We're well aware of the famous first rule of *Fight Club*: You don't talk about Fight Club. But at the risk of being beaten to death in a flooded basement, we're going to go ahead and let you know what the game's all about anyway. Forget fireballs and juggles. *Club* hands players three fighting styles (brawler, martial artist, and grappler) and the ability to break fellow members' bones with brutal match-ending blows—online. "The online piece plays an important roll in connecting with the *Fight Club* franchise; the ability for you to fight everyday guys anytime you feel like it is great," says Producer Chris Miller.

You'll also get the chance pound in Fred Durst's face, whether or not you enjoy Limp Bizkit's contributions to the soundtrack. Meatloaf reprises his movie role, so that's one more musician you can mess up. Intentional or not, beating the hell out of celebrities is surprisingly true to the movie's ideology. Oh, and you can also play as Abe Lincoln. No, really.

**Unplugged:** Offline you'll find that the club is much smaller, with standard one-on-one fights and a no-frills arcade mode, but story mode lets you create your own minor character and experience the movie's plot from a new angle between brutal brawls.

**What you might hear:** "Bend over noob! Time to pick up the *Fight Club* soap!"





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**NO SPOILERS ALERT!**

Worried about accidentally reading something that might ruin *Halo 2*'s top-secret plot? Don't be. We're not going to talk about any story bits—only pure, delicious gameplay. Besides, everyone already knows that Cortana is secretly the leader of the Flood and that Master Chief (who is actually a woman) teams up with the Covenant to stop her. What? Well, it's all over the Internet.

# WHEN ALIENS ATTACK

Master Chief welcomes the Covenant to Earth in our first peek at single-player **Halo 2**

By Mark MacDonald and Dan "Shoe" Hsu

**A**h, bad news. Can't talk about that guy.

"Sorry, not going to comment on those."

"We can't discuss that."

At times, talking to the developers at Bungie about the specifics of single-player *Halo 2* feels less like an interview and more like a prisoner interrogation. Every word having to do with the feverishly anticipated sequel to their Xbox sci-fi first-person shooter is carefully chosen. The language is ambiguous whenever possible. ("You can't mention that," we were told after witnessing an impressive...something...in a cut-scene early in the game.

"You can talk about an 'awesome giant thing,' though.") But the most common answer to any question is, well, no answer at all. "You could write a whole feature on what we aren't talking about," jokes Frank O'Connor, Bungie's content manager.

"We're not trying to hide one thing; we're trying to hide the whole thing."

Well, maybe not the *whole* thing. After months of negotiations, much hand-wringing, and yes, a little begging, Bungie finally granted us an exclusive hands-on glimpse at the solo campaign of *Halo 2* before its November 9 release date. How's it look? Flip through the next few pages and see for yourself. ▶









## NASTY LI'L BUGGERS

"These guys are called drones," says Bungie Content Manager Frank O'Connor as this new Covenant alien species swarms in on him during a demo of *Halo 2*'s single-player game. "They can fly, they can snipe—they're total jerks, and I'm actually about to die, so I'd better move it." Nicknamed "buggers" by Earth soldiers, these insectlike enemies don't have much in the way of armor, but their erratic movement and crafty nature make them difficult targets. "They're pretty flimsy, but they're so fast," says O'Connor, "and they're really smart, too. They'll hide, which is a real [bitch]. They'll hide almost anywhere."









## BROTHERS IN ARMS

With all the nasty new enemies about, it's only fair that the Marines who fight alongside you should get an IQ boost as well. "Your guys are just much smarter," says Bungie Studio Manager Pete Parsons. "They can do smarter things like use the rocket launcher at the right point, snipe appropriately, and drive vehicles." That's right—jump into the gunner or shotgun position in any vehicle and a friendly A.I. can get behind the wheel to chauffeur you around. Another bonus courtesy of your fellow Marines: You can now trade weapons with any soldier by simply approaching them and tapping A. (This saves you from all of that messy shooting-them-in-the-head business.) Also, though Bungie couldn't confirm it, at least one Marine sounded like he had a celebrity voice—comedian David Cross. >



# SINGLE PLAYER

**I**n case you got the wrong impression from all the talk about *Halo 2*'s new online multi-player game (more on that on pg. 130), Bungie Studio Manager Pete Parsons has a reminder: "Single player is by far the most important part to us," he says. "It is the most important thing."

But outside of a short demo in May of 2002, Bungie has hardly said a word about the solo campaign. All we know is that the Covenant alien alliance Master Chief battled in the first game is now invading Earth—specifically the city of Mombasa in Africa. Why stay so quiet about the most important aspect of the game? "We're trying to tell a good story here," says Parsons. "Giving away all the [secrets] or having people know what they'll play before they play it isn't that interesting. [It's like] the *Harry Potter* books—they keep the story sacrosanct, making sure everybody gets to have fun with that world at the same time."

We'll buy that, since even the original *Halo*'s minimal story raised tons of questions fans still debate to this day and featured one of the greatest surprise moments in gaming history: the pants-moistening introduction of the parasitic-alien race known as the Flood. But to hear Parsons talk, the sequel takes it much further. "[For *Halo*'s story] we had these mission points to carry you along through the game," he says, "and it was more of [your A.I. companion] Cortana saying a quick word here or [the dropship] *Foe Hammer* saying a quick word there. One of the bigger differences you'll see in *Halo 2* is that



we've had time to tell the story, to think about a more fleshed-out, well-thought-out story. [We] make you feel more like the ultimate badass than you did before, but also bring out some of the other characters and the insight on what's happening." Expanded cut-scenes, more in-game scripted events, and nearly 20,000 lines of

dialogue (four times that of the first game) all contribute to the cause.

Another strength of the original exaggerated for the sequel is the sense of freedom. Superb enemy A.I. and options like deciding which two weapons to carry, whether or not to drive a vehicle, or exactly how to make your way through the large outdoor

environments made *Halo* feel like a different game each time. For *Halo 2*, Bungie is expanding those options even further, with smarter enemies who better understand how to pilot vehicles and move around (or jump over) terrain, your ability to hold two weapons at once or trade guns with fellow Marines, and multiple paths built into the



■ This reminds us—*Halo 2*'s crazy viral marketing campaign continues online at [www.ilovebgs.com](http://www.ilovebgs.com).

## TWO LEVELS OF SINGLE PLAYER: HANDS-ON PLAY-BY-PLAY

### Troubled Bridge Over Water\*

You and a few Marines need to cross a ridiculously long bridge in a Scorpion tank. Starting at one end, you slowly make your way across, blasting through a steady stream of advancing Covenant forces on Ghost hovercraft, with the occasional enemy dropship flying overhead. Little touches—the Marines riding shotgun on your tank taking potshots and talking smack, the destructible lights and car wreckage sprinkled along the bridge—made this section memorable, even if Bungie yanked away the controller before we could reach the other side.

### Black Pelican Down\*

This level takes place in the streets of Old Mombasa, a dusty city under siege, lined with palm trees and tan buildings in various states of ruin. Part of the level is

spent in one place, as Master Chief and a group of Marines attempt to hold a courtyard from advancing Covenant so a human dropship can land with reinforcements. After fighting off dozens of grunts, elites, jackals, and the new flying drone enemies, a ship finally arrives—but it's not one of yours. It's a Covenant Phantom, a new mid-sized alien craft that dumps off soldiers and fires at you with its dual turrets. Blow up the turrets and you'll scare the ship away, only to face the next challenge: two giant hunters bursting through the doors at the opposite end of the courtyard. After a dance with these two brutes, their improved plasma cannons knocking burning cars and park benches about, you head through a sniper-filled alley and then out onto the beach to take down a giant Covenant gun placement.

\* No, these aren't the actual level names. Pretty good ones though, huh?





■ Enemy encounters can change or not happen at all depending on which difficulty setting you choose.

## SAY HALO 2 MY LI'L FRIENDS:

### HUMAN WEAPONS

#### M6C pistol

**Magazine: 12 rounds**

One of the very best weapons from the original *Halo* has been downgraded for the sequel. It's still fairly accurate, with an even higher rate of fire, but it'll take much more than a few head shots to take down an opponent.



#### M7/caseless submachine gun

**Magazine: 60 rounds**

A great gun for when you want to get up close and personal, this little baby sprays bullets like nobody's business. Grab two and dual-wield them for an instant party—just watch out for their tendency to “ride up” on you from the recoil.



#### BR55 rifle

**Magazine: 36 rounds**

The battle rifle is a nice midpoint between a submachine gun and sniper rifle, making it a good choice for both long-range and closer-quarters fights; it fires short three-round bursts and is fairly accurate with its 2X optical scope.



#### Other human guns

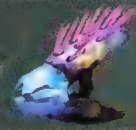
The shotgun and sniper rifle return nearly identical to their *Halo* counterparts, while a short delay after firing knocks the rocket launcher down a notch on the overpowered meter.

### COVENANT WEAPONS

#### Needler

**Magazine: 30 rounds**

Wait, don't throw it away! The needler was practically worthless in the first *Halo*, but it's back with a vengeance. Its projectiles' heat-seeking and double-damage capabilities (once when the needle hits, the second when it explodes) mean business.



#### Brute shot

**Magazine: 4 rounds**

A grenade launcher used by Covenant brute soldiers (big guys that look like a cross between a rhino and a gorilla), it fires explosive rounds that can be lobbed over cover or bounced around corners. Also note the wicked blade on the back end, which is used for devastating melee attacks.



#### Covenant energy sword

**Length: 3 feet**

Slice and dice with the B button and R trigger (for an uppercut) or lock onto an enemy (hold your crosshair over them until it turns red) to unleash a lethal charge attack. This bad mamba jamba is so much fun to wield that it's highly prized in multiplayer.



#### Other Covenant guns

Joining the plasma pistol and plasma rifle from the first game are the powerful Covenant carbine, single-shot rifle and the particle beam rifle, a sniping weapon with a dual-level scope.

levels. As Parsons says, “It gives you variety where you can say, ‘Hey, when I went down this way, it was an ambush, but this way was more of a frontal assault.’”

This concept should not only encourage replay, but also allow each gamer to play the way they want to play. “There’s millions of ways through the levels,” says

Content Manager Frank O’Connor. “You could punch your way through and not get spotted, try and snipe everything—some levels you can get through a lot of it without firing a shot if you want. Even when we’re running through these laborious test runs—where we’ll go through the same level over and over again—even then

there’s plenty of variety. You’re actually having fun even when you’re trying to do some dumb test over and over again.”

Speaking of over and over again, the most consistent complaint people have with the original *Halo* is its recycled levels and repeated structures, most noticeably in the second half of the game. Parsons has

obviously heard this one before. “The vast majority of people [who worked on *Halo*] wouldn’t change anything about it,” he says, “with one exception: [the repeating environments]. Which is why we’re making sure that, as you’re moving through these enormous levels [in *Halo 2*], you’re seeing and experiencing new things.”

■ Thanks to an armor upgrade, Chief’s shields recharge faster and his binocular vision can zoom in at any time.





# 2 MUCH INFORMATION: A HALO SERIES TIME LINE

Of course you beat *Halo* thrice on Legendary difficulty, studied the game's official novels, and penned vol-

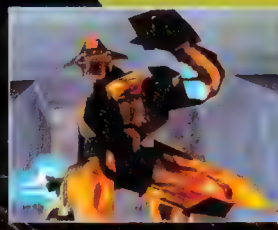
umes of fan fiction. Right? Right? It's just been a while, and you're a little rusty on the series' myths. To set you

straight, we asked Bungie.org's Claude Errera to assemble this time line based on the events of the first game,

plus the three *Halo* novels: *The Fall of Reach*, *The Flood*, and *First Strike*. He remembers it all so you don't have to.

**A.D. 2500: The Future Starts Here**  
Humans have spread to more than 800 "Outer Colony" worlds via a faster-than-light propulsion system that allows travel through "slipspace." The United Nations Space Command (UNSC), a military body with oversight over the entire human empire, maintains order. Planet Reach, a close-to-Earth fortress world orbiting Epsilon Eridani, has become the primary UNSC naval yard and training academy.

**2517: Master Chief Gets Schooled**  
The Spartan II project begins on Reach. Seventy-five children are taken from their parents and raised to become cybernetic supersoldiers. John 117—the boy who would grow to become *Halo* hero Master Chief—is among them. Half of the group survives body augmentation (skeletal and neural enhancements) and are pressed into service by the UNSC to do glorified police work.



**2525: First Contact With the Covenant**  
Harvest, an Outer Colony, makes contact with an alien object. The investigating ship disappears. The colony is then lost to an orbital plasma bombardment that turns the surface of the planet to glass. An alien coalition calling itself the Covenant is behind the "glassing" of Harvest. One month later, Project Mjolnir begins where the Spartan project left off. Spartans, outfitted in new battle armor, engage the Covenant. The Spartans lose one supersoldier. The Covenant lose an entire warship. Battles continue in the Outer Colonies for 20 years.



**August 2552: Master Chief Ships Out**  
On Reach, Master Chief is debriefed by ONI, the Office of Naval Intelligence. Dr. Halsey (the scientist behind the Spartan and Mjolnir projects and the A.I. construct Cortana) assigns Master Chief to UNSC warship *Pillar of Autumn* for a secret Mjolnir mission. The Mjolnir armor is now augmented by stolen Covenant personal-shield technology. The Covenant choose this time to attack Reach, which falls after a fierce battle. The *Pillar of Autumn* escapes through slipspace.

## KEY FACES, GOOEY ALIENS, AND THE ONE RING TO DESTROY THEM ALL...



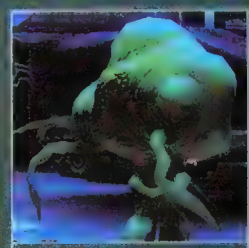
**Master Chief**  
Conscripted at age 8, he's a supersoldier with neural implants, reinforced bones, and lightning-fast reflexes. His buffed-out Mjolnir armor augments these traits.



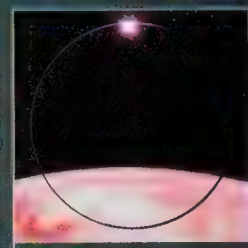
**Cortana**  
A one-of-a-kind artificial intelligence, she's based on Dr. Halsey, the genius behind most of Master Chief's technology. She spends most of *Halo* plugged into his helmet.



**The Covenant**  
An alliance of spacetraveling races organized in religious castes. With their superior weapons, they've vowed to wipe us from the galaxy. The "why" isn't clear yet.



**The Flood**  
Parasitic organisms, they can infect almost any sentient creature and take over its body. These critters would consume all life in the galaxy if not kept in check by...



**The Halo**  
...a 10,000-kilometer-wide space ring built by an ancient race to house and study the Flood. It's also designed to wipe out all life in range to stop the Flood's spread.



**Sept. 19, 2552: Halo Begins**

The *Pillar of Autumn* arrives in the Halo system, kicking off the events depicted in *Halo*. The *Autumn* is badly damaged in a battle with waiting Covenant forces. The crew and Master Chief abandon ship in lifeboats, while the *Autumn's* commander, Capt. Keyes, stays aboard to guide the ship down as best he can. Meanwhile, Orbital Shock Drop Troopers—the cream of the UNSC military crop (not counting the enhanced Spartans)—leave the ship in human-entry vehicles. These “Helljumpers” so far appear only in the *Halo* novels but will play a role in *Halo 2*.



**Sept. 21, 2552: Halo, hour 76**

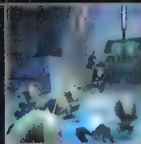
Cortana decides the only thing to do is to destroy the Halo station. She orders Master Chief to overload the fusion reactors on the *Pillar of Autumn*, which had crashed onto the Halo. The ship self-destructs, taking the Halo station with it. Master Chief and Cortana escape in a short-range fighter. In the wreckage of the Halo, Master Chief finds a small contingent of UNSC personnel and with them captures a Covenant cruiser ship. Then they all head back to Reach.

**Sept. 2552: Prelude to Halo 2**

Master Chief arrives on Reach and finds an underground group of surviving Spartans. The gang rejoins Cortana on the captured Covenant vessel. Using intel collected by Cortana, they head to the Eridanus system, where a Covenant battle station prepares to lead a huge fleet against Earth. Master Chief plants a bomb that obliterates most of the enemy ships, then heads for Earth to report on the (now-delayed) invasion. Three fellow Spartans—Will, Fred, and Linda (no, seriously...that's their names)—join him for the ride. The stage for *Halo 2* is set. >

**Sept. 20, 2552: Halo, hours 59-68**

Master Chief doesn't arrive in time to save the captain—he finds the Flood instead.



Chief battles back to the surface, where he encounters 343 Guilty Spark, Halo's chipper robo-caretaker. The hovering bot brings Chief to the station's library, where he's told he needs to recover the index to activate Halo's defenses against the Flood. Upon his return to the control room, Master Chief learns from Cortana that activating Halo will mean the destruction of all life within a 25,000-light-year radius (and will trigger the activation of other Halos scattered throughout the galaxy). Chief refuses to do it, leading 343 Guilty Spark to order him killed by robot drones called sentinels.

**Sept. 19, 2552: Halo, hours 3-20**

Master Chief finds and takes over the Halo's control center, where Cortana then enters the station's computer network. Meanwhile, Capt. Keyes, acting on information collected from a captured enemy trooper, leads a squad to recover a cache of Covenant weapons. Instead, they find the Flood. Cortana learns of Keyes' mission through the Halo network and sends Master Chief to stop him before he releases the Flood, unaware that it's already too late.









## UP YOURS

This ugly motherf\*\*\*er is looking to skewer some multiplayer Spartan meat with his energy sword, which does massive damage, or if locked on to a victim, a lunging one-hit kill. Your only choice here is to jump out of the way—and pray.

On top of returning modes like oddball (seen here on the new Burial Mounds stage), king of the hill, and several deathmatch and capture-the-flag variants, you'll get a few new ones, like assault (make the enemy base go boom by planting a bomb in it) and territories ("...multiple hills in king of the hill—it's really crazy," says Bungie's Frank O'Connor). All come with a multitude of customization options. ➤









## BOARDING ACTION

This mountaintop level's called Ascension. It's full of catwalks, narrow paths, sniping positions, and several spots for jumpy players to fall to their embarrassing dooms. If you find the Banshee aircraft seen here, you can cause a lot of havoc from above: with lasers and plasma mortars (you can barrel roll and loop-de-loop in it as well). But as with other vehicles in *Halo 2*, some green-with-envy (or just plain green) players are bound to hop on board, kick you off, and steal your ride.

Some boarding techniques may even vary. For example, with the Wraith (you can now ride those beefy Covenant tanks that launched huge blasts of energy in the first *Halo*), the boarding player can jump on and either melee-pound the pilot with pro-wrestler flair or toss a grenade into the cockpit. "The pilot's only option is to jump out and fight you," says O'Connor. "That balances out the Wraith's ridiculously powerful gun, because the mortar will destroy anything, including rocks." ➤





Health bars are so early 26th century; in *Halo 2*, it's shields only. (Game mode assault shown here.)

## MULTIPLAYER

**W**e have to test the graphics on bad televisions, too, you know," says a Bungie representative, noting our disappointed looks when we entered the room to check out a new multiplayer demo of *Halo 2*—on blurry 15-inch sets that must've come from some Service Merchandise clearance sale three decades ago. No matter. This is *Halo 2*—we're talking about, and within seconds of playing, we've forgotten all about our tiny boob tubes.

Working on a cover story and playing an intensely fun multiplayer match at the same time is like simultaneously patting your head, rubbing your stomach, reciting the alphabet backwards, and chewing gum, all while skydiving—it ain't easy. Who can concentrate on interviewing the developers when the red team's about to capture your flag? But during the skirmishes, we were able to learn more about the game that practically every Xbox gamer will be playing come November 9.

If you've been following *Halo 2*'s multiplayer coverage over the last year, you already know about dual-wielding guns, playing as Covenant aliens, boarding vehicles, etc. But before you can even get to all of that, you'll need people to play with. *Halo 2* supports system link and four-player splitscreen again, but of course, everyone's excited about online Xbox Live play, and there, you'll have a ton of options.

"You can have four players on one Xbox [playing online]," says Content Manager Frank O'Connor, "split however you want between individual gamertags [XBL accounts] or guest accounts." Once online, you can play in public or private unranked matches. If you're looking for a bit of prestige, however, you can enter ranked games, which are hosted and controlled by Bungie—who will only match up players of similar levels, so there's no chance of jackasses abusing the ranking system.

*Halo 2* will let you organize proper teams, too, with its clan system. "A single

3: *Black Arrow*. The overlord is the founder, and he can recruit staff, members, or peons (all tentative names). Different titles allow different privileges, like the ability to challenge other clans, send voice or text messages to the group, recruit new members, or boot out troublemakers and/or not-so-sharp-shooters who aren't contributing to the bottom line (that is, the team score). The best part is, you can keep track of clan activities on Bungie.net. "Every clan gets a private homepage, private forums, all sorts of fun stuff," says Hoberman. "All clan stats will

### "People here started drawing penises."

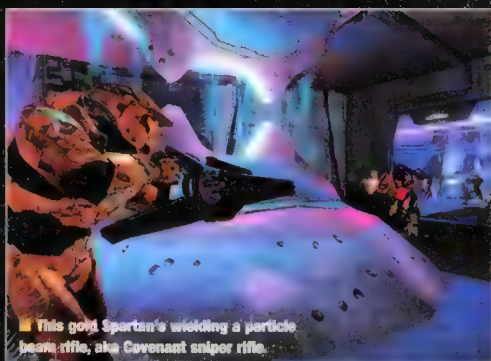
—Bungie Content Manager Frank O'Connor on why you won't be able to personalize emblems

clan can have up to 100 members," says Bungie Multiplayer Lead Max Hoberman. "But each player can only belong to one clan because we want it to be part of your identity." Your gang of space thugs can challenge other groups to small (three to four players per team) or large matches (up to eight) to increase your clan-ranking, which is independent of your personal one. Of course, you can play unranked clan matches, but you're not going to gain a lot of cyberspace street cred that way.

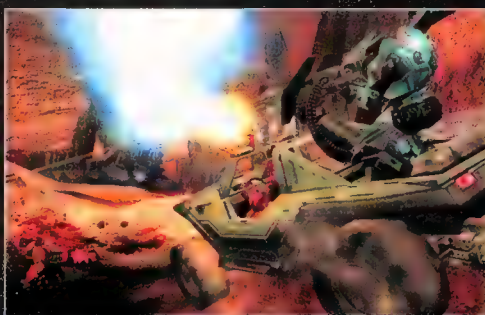
*Halo 2* clans have an internal hierarchy, similar to the system used in *Rainbow Six*

be listed right there." In-game, members can all wear the same emblem, but forget about designing your own. "We [tried letting users] create their own emblems," says O'Connor, "but even the people here started drawing penises. The user experience may turn porno online. [Laughs]"

Not that you'll need any more reasons (X-rated or not) to play multiplayer *Halo 2* this November. The new modes, features, maps, and massive number of options will keep you busy for months...possibly years. Even if you are playing on a 1970 SpectraVISION Picturebox. 🎮



■ This god, Spartan's wielding a particle beam rifle, aka Covenant sniper rifle.



■ Wraith tanks (that's the thing firing the big blue burst), gravity lifts, falling snow, new modes...*Halo 2* has plenty new to offer in multiplayer.

## MEDALS OF HONOR

It's not just the guy at the top of the kills list who gets to beat his chest after a multiplayer match. "You win medals for various antics now," says Bungie's Frank O'Connor. "Medals are awarded for sniping, vehicle kills... anything cool that you do. They'll affect your rankings in an invisible way, so if you get lots of sniper kills, you'll be rewarded."

Here are just a few of the medals you'll see on the postgame report:



### Running Riot

The guy with the most kills in a row gets this star.



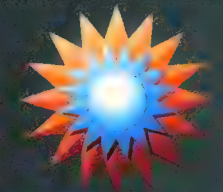
### Melee Kill

For those who like gun-butts-to-the-face over bullets.



### Stealth Kill

Or as we'd like to call it, p\*\*sy kills (behind the back).



### Grenade Stick

Sticking the most enemies with the sticky plasma grenade.







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I need weapons and

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# MOBILE RPGS TAKE OVER JAPAN

Thought these classic quests were addictive before? Now you'll never have to put them down.

Cell-phone games are incredibly popular in Japan, especially ports of '80s arcade classics and simple puzzlers. So when Square Enix announced it would be bringing the first games in its two largest franchises—hell, the two largest franchises in Japan, period—not to mention a new spin-off of one of the most popular RPGs of all time to cell phones, it helped validate the idea of “real games” on phones. Next year, it's likely the company will bring some, if not all, of these games to the States.

## Final Fantasy Mobile

The story of *Final Fantasy* hasn't changed in the past 15 years: Four light warriors set out to defeat four elemental fiends, relight their color-coordinated orb, and cleanse the world of evil. The gameplay is based on the older WonderSwan Color remake, not the new *Final Fantasy III: Dawn of Souls* for Game Boy Advance. Enemy graphics and battle screens are much improved, but the world map, towns, and dungeons resemble a high-color version of the original NES game.

The simple battle system lends itself extremely well to one-handed play, a must for Tokyo's crowded subways. The phone's “D-pad” moves the characters and cursor, while the center button controls speaking and confirms commands.

## Dragon Quest Mobile

*Dragon Quest* (known as *Dragon Warrior* in the States) tells the story of a noble hero who saves the princess, defeats the evil Dragonlord, and brings peace to the land...while killing tons of slimes along the way. The gameplay is the same as ever: 1-on-1 battles are based around basic menu commands. The graphics have been completely redrawn in a high-resolution, high-color style that blows away previous versions, including the Super Nintendo remake. The screen tears occasionally when scrolling the field map, but the battles are free of graphical blemishes.



Final Fantasy Mobile



Dragon Quest Mobile



Before Crisis: Final Fantasy VII

The spell effects are particularly impressive and as animated as anything found in *Dragon Quest VII*. Of Square Enix's two cell-phone games, *Dragon Quest* is far and away the more impressive.

## Before Crisis: Final Fantasy VIII

When Square announced it would make a prequel to *Final Fantasy VII* starring the antiheroic Turks, fans rejoiced. When, 10 seconds later, Square announced the game would be exclusive to cell phones, fans were confused. Now that the beta test has begun, it's time to take another look at *Before Crisis*.

Set six years before the events of *Final Fantasy VII*, *Before Crisis* promises to give gamers the “truth” behind the Turks and the shadowy Shinra company. Favorite characters Rude, Elena, Rufus, and Reno all show up, but there are two new Turks, too: Verd, a grizzled man with an unknown past, and Shion, the current “leader” of the group. Gamers, however, take the role of “new recruit,” speaking with and receiving missions from their more famous NPC superiors. A large advertisement in Tokyo's Shinjuku station suggests Sephiroth, Cloud, and Zack all make cameos—though how the story ties into *Final Fantasy VII*'s is still unclear. In the world of *Before Crisis*, the new rebel group Avalanche is starting to become a thorn in Shinra's side, and the Turks

have been assigned to stop those rabble-rousers.

After accepting a mission from the Turks, players move around the urban environments. Enemies are engaged directly on the field map, but sneaking past without being seen is possible, thanks to the pre-rendered graphics' overhead perspective. The battle system is action based; players have access to several different attack and magic techniques. Male characters attack with a melee rod up close, while female characters use a ranged weapon. The game also features a unique Materia magic system: Players “create”

Materia by taking pictures with their cell phone's built-in camera, and the dominant color of the photo determines the Materia type.

The most promising feature of *Before Crisis* is network connectivity. Players who are captured or overpowered can ask other players to spring them from jail or join forces against their foes—even in the middle of a battle. Players can also swap messages and Materia.

Square is already promising additional playable characters down the line. Combined with the easily expandable mission-based structure, it's clear that Square is treating *Before Crisis* as a long-term prospect.





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# RIFTS: PROMISE OF POWER

N-Gage plays host to a little old-school roleplaying

For fans of Kevin Siembieda and his pen-and-paper role-playing game *Rifts*, the dream of a videogame based on the popular franchise has long been unfulfilled. For 14 years, Siembieda refused all licensing requests for a videogame, but that has finally changed.

Nokia's announcement at this year's E3 came as a shock to fans; the first videogame to be based on the epic role-playing game *Rifts* was to launch on the N-Gage in the summer of 2005. Why did Siembieda say yes to a company like Nokia, and is it even possible to incorporate such a vast universe into a mobile game? At a press event in Vancouver, Nokia finally revealed the first details of the

upcoming *Rifts: Promise of Power*.

The pen-and-paper *Rifts* was published by Siembieda, who had been playing *D&D* and other RPGs since the 1970s but found the rule set frustrating. He wondered why there couldn't be one set of rules for all games. That was when *Palladium Fantasy* and the first "universal" RPG rule set were born. Over the next few years, megahits like *Robotech* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* came from this game system. Even with all these successes under his belt, Siembieda still felt something was missing: a world where anything was possible. This world would become *Rifts*, and in 1990, the project he had planned so carefully for years was finally

ready for print.

*Rifts* is an epic role-playing game with a story set on a future Earth. In it, billions of human lives were lost in a nuclear holocaust, and the sudden surge of unleashed psychic energy caused the ley lines to surge with insuppressible power. Floods, earthquakes, and natural disasters all ensured more human deaths, feeding energy into the already pulsing ley lines. This unstoppable chain of events caused rifts, or tears in the very fabric of space and time. Players struggled to survive in a world full of multidimensional travel, supernatural beings, gods, demons, a vampire kingdom, time travel and time travelers, robots, cyborgs, automatic weapons, and even Martians. The game was a huge success, selling out 10,000 copies in three months.

So how suitable is the N-Gage for a game of such epic proportions? Backbone Entertainment and Nokia have teamed up to bring *Rifts*



exclusively to the

N-Gage. When asked why Siembieda finally said yes to Nokia, *Rifts* producer Shane Neville replied, "There are a ton of fans who want to see the franchise carry through, and when your creative director and your producer are two of the biggest *Rifts* fans around, you know we are going to ensure that happens."

In a massive undertaking, the title will include over 80 hours of tactical gameplay, 11 playable classes, over 50 enemies and NPCs, and at least six locations, all pulled from the original title. *Rifts: Promise of Power* is a tactical-RPG featuring turn-based combat with a 3D camera that automatically zooms back, allowing the player to enact multiple attacks on a grid-based battleground. The combat itself is based on an attack-point system similar to the one in *Final Fantasy Tactics*.

Players will battle in familiar locations such as the New German Republic; the Coalition States, an antimagic coalition in North America; Lazlo, a modern-day Toronto; Scotland, full of spells and fairies; Old Bones, a black-market town in Quebec; and a futuristic China. The designers of the game are also bringing back the most popular character classes for this game: glitterboy, the juicer, head hunter, mind melter, ley line walker, burster, cyber knight, battle magi, crazy, and mystic.

While the game is still in the design stages, Neville announced that multiplayer cooperative play will be available via Bluetooth functionality. And while the details are still under wraps, N-Gage Arena will be incorporated into the game, allowing for global connectivity, though online multiplayer has not been officially announced.



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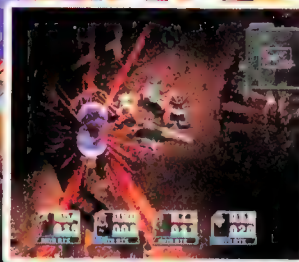
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**M** Blood and Gore  
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flamewars, commence



## DIRECTORY

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■ THUG2's levels have even more high wires, rooftop half-pipes, and vertigo-inducing rails than ever before.



FS 50-50 + 360 FS Shove-It

### Xbox Dissed

Sorry if we sound like a broken record, but once again Xbox Live isn't supported by this game, and once again we are baffled. With EA now on the Xbox online train, the Hawk series is notable in its absence. It's disappointing and definitely something to keep in mind when deciding which version to purchase.

### PS2/XB

# TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2: Must...keep...the combo going...to save mankind

**G. FORD:** Another year, another *Tony Hawk* game with higher-than-ever expectations. *Tony Hawk's Underground* made waves last year with its fully revamped story mode. *Tony Hawk's Underground 2*'s perfectly adequate and entertaining story mode—which focuses on the World Destruction Tour, where teams led by Tony Hawk and Bam Margera face off in different cities, each trying to cause the most havoc—however, just doesn't, and couldn't, carry the same novelty. And while *THUG* introduced the Caveman linking move that lets players get off the board while continuing their combo (it should be noted that running and jumping still feel a little floaty), *THUG2* adds the bullet-timed Focus mode and recycles last year's wall-pushing move, renaming it the Sticker Slap

and more fully incorporating it into certain challenges—not quite as monumental as *Hawk 2*'s Manual or *Hawk 3*'s Revert.

But as you get deeper into the game, you realize it does have a lot to offer. You enter every level with a teammate and a set of goals; when you switch to your teammate, you get a new set of goals either of you can tackle. Ditto for the two secret characters per level (see sidebar). Also, the levels are generally solid and certainly more memorable than those in *THUG*.

And that's not all. Perhaps the most exciting addition is the wholly separate classic mode, which plays out like *Tony Hawk* games of yore, when two-minute timers, secret tapes, and collecting the letters S-K-A-T-E were occupational

hazards. Developer Neversoft even mixed in some old-school levels, including Canada, Philadelphia, and the rail-tabulous Airport, as a tip o' the cap and a "rock on, dude!" to longtime series fans.

*THUG2* is a better game than *THUG*, and in turn is the most finely polished extreme-sports game ever released, hence the score. However, the degree to which it improved doesn't match the jump seen from *Tony 4* to *THUG*, something fans should know before taking the plunge. That said, although it took a little longer this year, the superb gameplay once again sucked me in, as it likely will for many of you.

**JENNIFER:** I can still give this game a 9.0 even though it's a complete rehash of previous





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**THE RATING SYSTEM**



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

**AWARDS**



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



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**Silver** — for games with a mean score of 8.0 or higher.



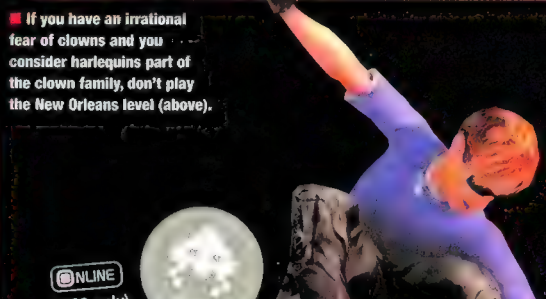
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**ESRB KEY (Also check out [www.esrb.com](http://www.esrb.com))**

**E-Everyone:** Saccharine fun for the whole family; dancing elves, rampant sharing, and possibly Smurfs.  
**T-Teen:** 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, pillfatted sex, drugs; parents no likey.



■ If you have an irrational fear of clowns and you consider harlequins part of the clown family, don't play the New Orleans level (above).

**WORLD DESTRUCTION TOUR**

versions and the overall concept is, in my opinion, growing fairly stale at this point. (There, I said it. You know you were thinking it, too.)

So how come I'm still smitten? Well, for those first three or four glorious levels—in *THUG2*, Barcelona is my favorite—every new version manages to renew my interest in the franchise. I always think I'm over *Hawk*, then I pick up the controller and get sucked right back in, jonesin' for specials; exploring alleys, roofs, and hidden areas; and simply grinding my little extreme-sports-wannabe heart out. Halfway through the game, I might become a tad jaded, but eventually my inner *Jackass* can't resist getting back into it to explore everything else it has to offer—the later levels, the wide variety and intense challenge of the goals,

the classic modes that let you get nostalgic all over again. The addition of an Easy difficulty setting will be good news for those who aren't shreddin' so hot in their old age (or for casual newcomers who just want to try out this *Tony Hawk* thing the kids are so wild on); If you ever had trouble with grind or manual balance before, your prayers are answered. One small gripe: I wish I could see in-game characters demo the goals so I know what the heck I'm supposed to be doing—I hate to read directions in my videogames.

**DEMIAN:** It's the most comprehensive and corpulent *Tony Hawk* ever, with classic (time-limited) goals for every level along with the regular story mode, plus all the best options

**Characters With Character**

Developer Neversoft shows off its creativity with the bevy of secret characters lurking in *THUG2*, including Steve-0, a shrimp vendor, and Bigfoot. You can find two in each story mode level, one of which has a unique ride (such as a souped-up scooter or go-kart) that handles a little differently but can still hit all the skate lines. You can also unlock additional characters when you beat the game. Our favorite? The Hand.





175 / 1000 GOAL PTS.



This angry little guy is on a mission to take out competing taggers. By chucking paint cans at them, of course.



from the previous games. And I love it, don't get me wrong, but I'm at the point in my relationship with *Tony* where we really need to try something new. And no, the Focus Control bullet-time move doesn't count—though it does allow for insanely high trick scores and sure, it's pretty fun. But I'm talking really new, like a persistent (online?), free-roaming city or something. Maybe next time.

The World Destruction Tour part of *THUG2*, kind of a "you got your *Jackass* show in my *Tony Hawk* game" sort of thing, is as good a reason as any to justify the increasingly eccentric mission objectives (barfing on German cops while grinding an overhead rail? Wheeling a sick kid on a gurney so that he can meet Tony...and be instantly cured?), and it's got some bizarrely funny moments. It's cool that the secret characters all have their own unique level goals, and the

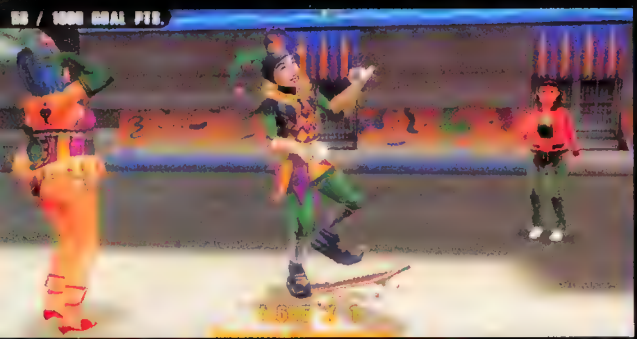
alternate vehicles—like the hot-rodged Segway-style scooter piloted by Jesse James—add variety, though they can be hard to control at first.

A couple new online modes have been added: Elimiskate and Scavenger Hunt. Of the two, Elimiskate is more fun—it's like a grander version of Trick Attack. At the end of each round, the lowest-scoring skater is kicked out until the winner remains, so if you suck it can mean a lot of sideline time, but if you do well it's all the sweeter. Sadly, voice chat is still a no-go, and if you don't have a keyboard, well, you won't be talkin' much.

Longtime *Hawk* fans who want new levels and just more of everything in general, you won't find a ton of surprises, but you'll still have a hell of a lot of fun. If you were hoping for that knock-you-off-the-chair feeling you got from playing your first *Hawk*, though, it ain't here.

**Keeping Things Fresh**

In addition to the Sticker Slap, notable new gameplay enhancements include the slow-motion Focus Control—a bullet-time-esque feature useful for nailing long combos—and the ability to "freak out" when you bail, which gives you some points to start off your next combo with. Also, while on foot you can spray-paint your customizable tag on any surface you can reach.



**Good:** The biggest and most refined *Hawk* game yet  
**Bad:** Not as revolutionary as *THUG*  
**Most Out-There Level:** The Triangle



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10):

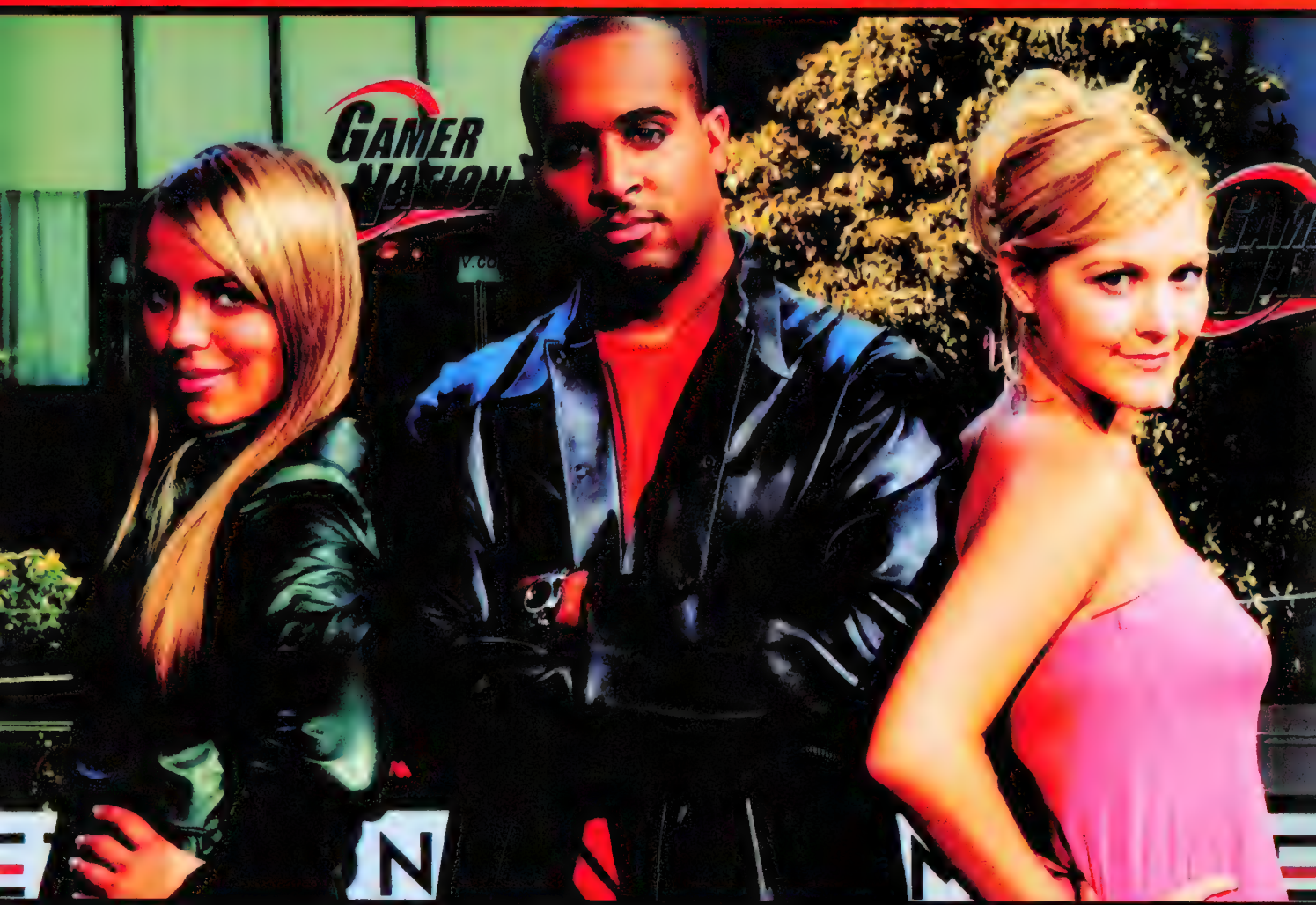
9.0	9.0	8.5
G. FORD	JENNIFER	DEMIAN

Publisher: Activision  
 Developer: Neversoft  
 Players: 1-2 (PS2, 2-8 online)  
 ESRB: Teen

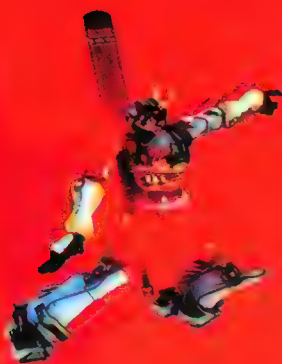
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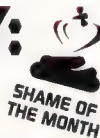




Larry's sperm keeps its eye on the prize, while Harriet recalls this one time, at band camp.

PS2/XB

# LEISURE SUIT LARRY: MAGNA CUM LAUDE



No happy ending

**Good:** If cartoon 'tilts' count as good, welcome to flavor country  
**Bad:** Playing Quarters for the 100th time  
**More Stimulating:** *Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball*



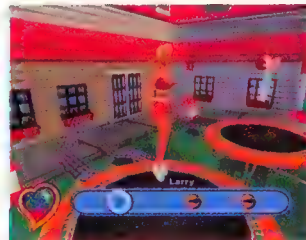
**DEMIAN:** Older, possibly hairy-palmed readers will remember the spurt of *Leisure Suit Larry* PC games in the late '80s and early '90s. Now, eight years since the last game, the eternal quest for cooter resumes with Larry's nephew (also named Larry), and though the world may now be 3D and free-roaming, the humor hasn't grown up—it's just aged.

Larry's flatulence problems and loose-cannon bladder make for some of the funniest moments, but that's relative to the not just unfunny but straight-up painful minigames, which are recycled endlessly and sandwiched between a slideshow of load screens. Though *Larry* does boldly go where no console game has gone before, there's a good chance you don't really want to trail-blaze that territory—like, say, the scene that kicks off with a little oral sex and ends a lot like that one part in *The Crying Game*. You know what I'm talking about. When it comes to *Larry*, abstinence sounds pretty good.

**CRISPIN:** I can appreciate throbbing innuendo and soft-core coitus just as much as the

next guy in Spencer Gifts' naughty aisle, but *Larry's* surreal brand of dong-and-fart humor lost me somewhere between the fifth date-rape joke and the gay-bar sing-along. I'm not even sure who this game is supposed to appeal to: You'll see more wangs here than in an '80s computer lab. Oh, you'll find some dumb laughs. But you'll also cry once you realize you're playing the 50th version of the same blah minigame—and you've just sat through three load screens to do it.

**JON D:** If you've never seen breasts before, you might end up at the video store choosing between this and the abhorrent *Guy Game*, but you're screwed on gameplay either way. *Larry's* just a string of mindless tasks based on simple button-tapping and aged arcade titles (*Pong*, *Tapper*) to further the plot of disrobing digital damsels to generally PG-13 ends. Since *Larry* takes so many swings at humor, it does connect with the odd bit of funny dialogue or college-themed parody. But the meat of the game—the cheesy, lowbrow funny business—goes limp in mere minutes.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	3.5	2.5	1.5
	DEMIAN	CRISPIN	JON D.

Publisher: VU Games  
 Developer: High Voltage  
 Players: 1  
 ESRB: Mature

www.leisuresuitlarry.com

PS2/XB

# FORGOTTEN REALMS: DEMON STONE

Bring your own halberd



**Good:** A visual tour de force  
**Bad:** Not much depth  
**Rainy-Day Fun:** Imitating narrator Patrick Stewart's voice



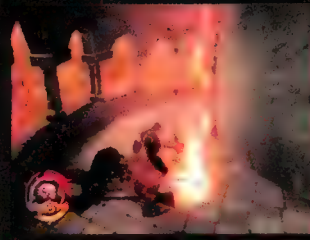
**KEVIN:** Epic. That's the first, last, and only word that comes to mind when describing *Demon Stone*, a game by the folks behind EA's *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*. Every chapter of the story is packed with action, action, and more action—villagers scramble for their lives, orcs flail at each other, and dragons fly about burninating the countryside. Graphical flourishes come at you like volleys of crossbow bolts, and the story (written by fantasy-novel stalwart R.A. Salvatore) is filled with twists, surprises, and Hollywood-like witty banter between the three heroes.

In terms of production values, then, *Demon Stone* is virtually unstoppable...but the actual game is exceedingly simple. From start to finish, it's bash, bash, bash them buttons, and you won't need much thought to reach the end until you plumb the harder skill levels. Still, the visual pyrotechnics make *Demon Stone* worth a rental at least—think of it as the game equivalent of a popcorn film, and you won't be disappointed.

**JON D:** BZZZT, wrong. *Demon Stone* actually lies closer to McFarlane's abysmal *Evil Prophecy*, with a touch of the tasteful fracasas in the *Lord of the Rings* games, but sans the great story. *Demon Stone* cribbs from the Big Book O' RPG Clichés—it's like the developers were aiming just a notch or two above mediocrity (but managed to bull's-eye Kevin's heart in the process). The biggest fantasy element is the devs believing anyone cares enough about the tired premise and their made-up language to enjoy the unskippable cut-

scenes. It's good-looking, generic hack-em-up monotony.

**G. FORD:** As much as *Demon Stone* tried to suck me in with its impressive graphics and presentation, it pushed me away with rote gameplay and imbecilic A.I. Leading a team of adventurers is cool, but your comrades are so dumb that they can't cover you while you try to complete a simple objective. And then there's the level progression—you'll clear a few screens, only to reach an arbitrary checkpoint where you fight wave after "I can't believe enemies are still warping in" wave of baddies. A pretty but shallow tease.



You can upgrade your spells and attacks, but the button-pounding gameplay remains.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.5	5.0	6.0
	KEVIN	JON D.	G. FORD

Publisher: Atari  
 Developer: Stormfront  
 Players: 1  
 ESRB: Teen

www.atari.com









PS2/XB/GC

# TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 2: BATTLE NEXUS

Heroes in a half-baked half-shell

**Good:** The unlockable original *TMNT* arcade game  
**Bad:** You have to play through most of *Battle Nexus* to get it  
**Instead:** Why don't you order a delicious pizza?



**G. FORD:** Konami's biggest mistake with *TMNT2: Battle Nexus* was including the beloved original arcade game as an unlockable—I had more fun in the 30 minutes it took to finish that classic yet shallow beat-em-up than I did in the entirety (six hours or so) of *Battle Nexus*. It's amazing that 15 years later, Konami has managed to make an inferior game.

Most of the key problems from last year's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* game have been fixed, at least, and four-player support is finally here, which makes *TMNT2* more enjoyable in a misery-loves-company kind of way. The near-constant stream of catchphrases has been toned down, too, but it's the general gameplay that's busted. Picking up an object is needlessly complex, tricky jumps seem to require more luck than skill, the camera is craptacular, boss battles are tedious, the vehicle-based levels are a joke, and the actual fighting action is bland. It's a shame because if this is the type of game kids are gonna suffer through, it'll be a wonder if they remain videogame fans for long, let alone turtle aficionados.

**SHAWN:** Space, as the heroes in half-shells find in their half-hearted, half-assed *TMNT2* cosmic journey, is infinitely generic and not even gnarly. All simple shapes and colors you'd hang over a crib, it's packed with spinning platforms to somersault, not-so-rockin' robots to sock (then run from when you tire of the two-button technique), and dialogue that tries to make the banal seem bodacious while sounding dipper than any Dell or Mountain Dew ad. "Dude, you can't do anything with 'em, but you collected coins!"

**OFFICIAL PS MAG—CHRIS:** Note to developers: If you're going to make a sequel to a bad game, please make it better. You'd think that goes without saying, but apparently someone should have yelled it through the hallways of Konami. To be fair, the three biggest factors that brought down last year's *TMNT* misadventure—lack of four-player support, repetitive phrases, and frustrating difficulty—have all been fixed. Unfortunately, a zoomed-out camera corrupts any real sense of control, and it's too easy, aside from some horrendous jumping puzzles.



■ The unlockable *TMNT* arcade game, from back when bad beat-em-ups were still good.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	3.0	4.0	2.0
	G. FORD	SHAWN	CHRIS

Publisher: Konami  
Developer: Konami CES  
Players: PS2 1-2 (3-4 w/MultiTap), XB and GC 1-4  
ESRB: Teen

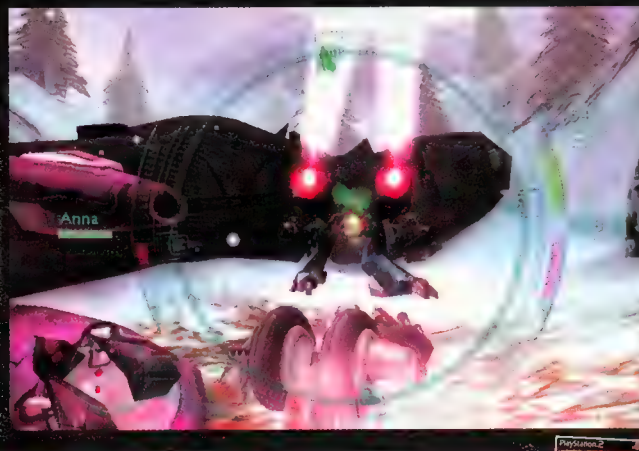
www.konami.com

ONLINE  
(PS2/XB)

PS2/XB

# ROBOTECH: INVASION

Don't join this protoculture club



**Good:** Long game with two-part story  
**Bad:** Repetitive combat, blah visuals  
**Geek Nitpick #57:** No rendition of "Lonely Soldier Boy," damn it!



**CRISPIN:** Two worlds collide in *Robotech: Invasion*—and I'm not talking about the lobster-armored space robots who pummel Earth's freedom fighters. This game tries to please fans of the late-'80s cult animated series and mainstream players who just wanna blow stuff up while wearing armor that turns into a motorcycle. It fails to please either.

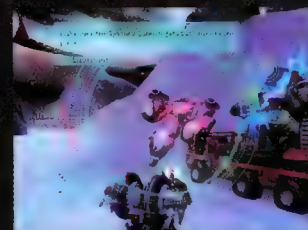
Hoping to give the game broader appeal, *Invasion's* developers nixed the "toony graphical style that made prequel *Robotech: Battlecry* look so much like the show. Without it, the game's mostly brown, sometimes purple environments look blocky. Series faithful will wonder why the game doesn't sound like the show, either—it packs few familiar tunes or effects. In fact, *Robotech* fans will gripe that *Invasion* is missing lots of stuff: dinosaurs for its Genesis Pits, missiles for your Cyclone armor, characters from the series (although most of the show's voice actors have roles here), and more.

And if all of that *Robo*-geek stuff is Greek to you, all you need to know is that *Invasion* is a repetitive shooter with a few nifty bits (namely, the online modes and a few chase sequences on your bike). Otherwise, let the space lobsters win.

**KEVIN:** It takes a certain spark of, shall we say, *creativity* to look at a show like *Robotech* and think, "Now this would make a smashing *Halo* clone." But that's exactly what we have here—a first-person shooter that cribbs from Bungie's classic in almost every way thinkable, down to the funky color-coordinated space armor,

and does the job well enough to hold my attention (if not Crispin's) with snappy graphics and most importantly, strategic, give-and-take shooting action. Hardly original, but still entertaining.

**OFFICIAL PS MAG—GIANCARLO:** *Invasion's* pretty dull, even for a first-person shooter. Sorry Kev, but battles mostly consist of circle-strafing for a few seconds with some occasional sniping thrown in. Still, as a *Robotech* fan, I liked the little twists in *Invasion's* story enough to keep from wanting to turn the game off after the first few levels. And multiplayer is fun, since your ability to transform into a motorcycle is actually useful.



■ One sure shot in the eye and intergalactic Lobsterfest is officially a go.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	4.0	7.0	6.0
	CRISPIN	KEVIN	GIANCARLO

Publisher: Global Star  
Developer: Vicious Cycle  
Players: 1 (2-8 online)  
ESRB: Teen

www.globalstarsoftware.com



VIDEO: YES. GAME: NO.

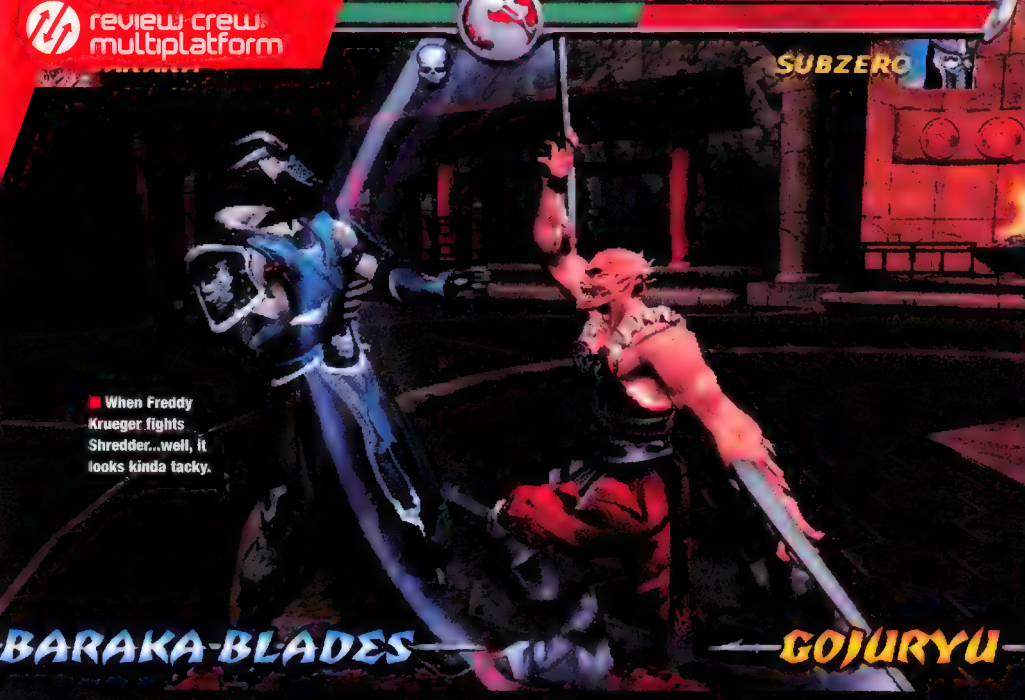


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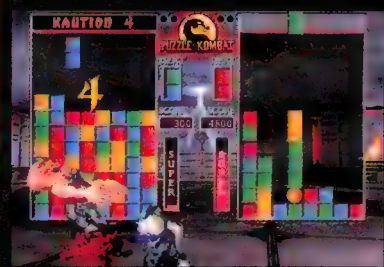
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■ When Freddy Krueger fights Shredder...well, it looks kinda tacky.



■ It's nearly impossible to pay attention to the creepy little characters beating the crap out of each other when you're playing Puzzle Kombat mode (above).



PS2/XB

# MORTAL KOMBAT: DECEPTION

Flawed victory



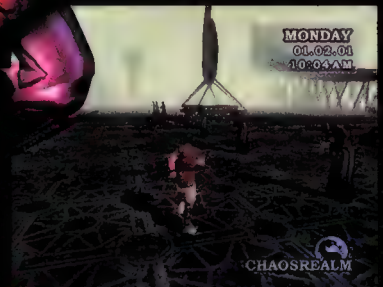
**SHANE:** *Deception* establishes a specific standard by which all other fighters must be judged—no other game comes close to offering such a substantial variety of game types, options, and extras. Take, for example, the massive Konquest mode: Here, Midway morphs the previous *MK*'s *Soul Calibur*-inspired single-player game into a full-fledged role-playing experience. Sure, its 1999-era visuals, dippy fetch quests, and amateur-hour voice acting can't hold a candle to, say, *Final Fantasy X*, but for a freebie it's fantastic—you'll spend countless hours wandering the countryside, looting huts, and unlocking hidden characters for your trouble. Don't be surprised if *Soul Calibur III* and *Virtua Fighter 5* "borrow" this idea lock, stock, and harpoon-spear. Likewise, the new Puzzle Kombat

mode delivers a *Tetris*-esque puzzle melee, complete with online play. This mode isn't terribly original (it's a thinly veiled rehash of Capcom's *Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo* for PS1), but it's an enjoyable diversion and a superb value-added bonus. Same deal with Chess Kombat, a fast, mildly strategic reworking of old-timey PC hits such as *Battle Chess* and *Archon*. Chess Kombat stumbles, however, when two pieces occupy the same square...since, well, then you have to play *Mortal Kombat*. And playing *Mortal Kombat* simply isn't that much fun.

It's unfortunate that the underlying *mano a mano* action can't match the rest of *Deception*'s ambitious package, but precious little has been done to improve upon the last *MK*'s (*Deadly Alliance*) leaden, mash-happy combat. Enhancements include Combo Breakers (easy automatic reversals) and a largely useless graphic

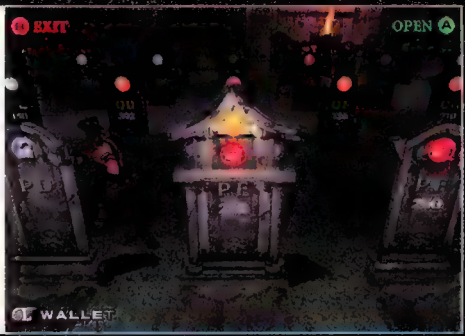
display clueing you in on the best blocking position. Bouts still transpire with unintuitive, dialed-in combos that require no real timing or skill; silly, overpowered special moves (I once beat the single-player Kombat mode by performing Nightwolf's Rhino Charge exclusively); and plentiful automatic stage fatalities. Yes, you can play it online, and yes...you can buy a hint book to learn countless ghastly fatalities, and yeah, you can even unlock a huge stable of different-colored ninjas to fight with, but when it comes down to it, this is a just mediocre fighting game. Midway has wisely packaged it with enough sizzle to lure in legions of casual players, but true fighting-game fans won't find much long-term interest here.

**XBN—CHE:** For more than a decade, the *Mortal Kombat* series has been shocking parents and pissing off hardcore fighting fans with great suc-



■ Konquest mode isn't much of a looker, but it offers the deepest single-player mode of any fighting game.

**The Krypt**  
*Deception* brings back *Deadly Alliance*'s inventive method of unlocking secrets—the Krypt. This time, you earn various types of Koins and Keys in the Konquest mode and then use them to open hundreds of mysterious tombs. Some of the rewards rule, such as secret characters and new stages, but the vast majority of the caskets hold total krap like production art or pictures of the development team.



- Good: Copious modes, online play
- Bad: Stilted gameplay; cheesy characters
- Ugly: Countless Baraka head-shot loading screens



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	6.5	5.5	8.0
	SHANE	CHE	MATT

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

www.mortalkombatdeception.com



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Midway isn't expecting *Kombat* kiddies to really know the rules of chess, so Chess Kombat uses a heavily streamlined rule set with fewer types of pieces.



**Coming to Kube**  
Sorry, Game-Cube pugilists: *Deception* won't be gracing your console this holiday season. You'll have to wait until early 2005 before initiating a bloody beatdown on your chums. Plus, the Cube revision will arrive sans any online play.

cess. But the *Kombat* franchise still hasn't evolved past its shock and awe gimmicks, giving us, instead, a game more concerned with secret-fatality moves rather than a balanced and refined fighting system. Which is perfectly fine for casual chop-socky initiates who want to down some brews and tear the spine out of their buddies' backs—heck, we've heard worse ways of the genre, *Deception* couldn't be more sloppy and ill-conceived.

The crux of the problem is its gameplay, which more or less mirrors that of its predecessor, *Deadly Alliance*; large strings of attacks must be memorized and executed like secret "kodes"—if you can enter them within a certain window of time, your fighter will throw out a canned combo that continues until it's finished. With *Deception's* gameplay, there's little sense of



**Oldskool**

If you're willing to shell out an extra 10 bones for the Collector's edition of *Deception*, you'll get (in addition to a cavalcade of trading cards and bonus DVD video features) an arcade-perfect rendition of the original *Mortal Kombat*. Has time been kind to this influential fighter? Will you toss your copy of *Street Fighter: Anniversary Collection* into the waste bin of obsolescence? No and no.



real-time immediacy or potential for mind-games; rather, it feels like you're waiting for your buddy to whiff an attack so that you get another little window to tap in another prearranged combo. What's more, the Combo Breaker reversal system, *Mortal Kombat's* best new gameplay feature in years, is arbitrarily limited to only three uses per match—even though it isn't something you can easily abuse. *Deception* isn't a terrible fighting game for part-time disciples, but *Soul Calibur 2* this is not.

**1UP.COM—MATT:** Like a videogame McGriddle, *Deception* is all about mixing weird ingredients together. Where else can you find a fighting mode, chess mode, puzzle mode, and adventure mode on one disc? And where else would the adventure mode be part fighting tutorial, part unlockable collect-a-thon, and part errand run-

ning ("Sir, do you need a ham? Let me walk 40 feet away and grab one for you.") Thing is, the *Mortal Kombat* series is one of the few that makes obscure ideas like these work—they all fit in superbly with the series' campy nature.

There are minor flaws littered around—the visuals in the puzzle and adventure modes aren't very detailed, and your character in adventure mode couldn't make a smart decision if it were tattooed on his arm (*Fable*-style good/evil choices would have been great)—but the excellent online play and variety make up for them. *Deception* is one of the few *Mortal Kombat* sequels to not drastically change the hand-to-hand combat from the version before it, but thanks to all of the new peripheral features, I barely even noticed. Never mind the haters; if you liked *Deadly Alliance* even a little, you'll like *Deception* a heck of a lot. 🐉



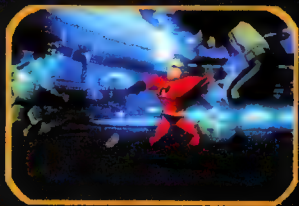
Want to see a gruesome stage fatality? Knock someone into that gaping maw protruding from the wall.



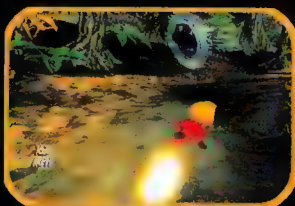
# EXPECT THE INCREDIBLE!



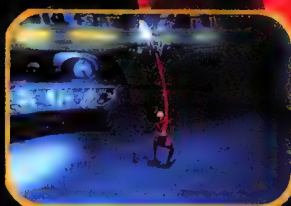
"SO EXCITING IT MAKES US JUMP OUT OF WINDOWS TRYING TO EKE OUT SOME LATENT SUPERPOWERS"  
 - PREVIEW, GMR JUNE 2004



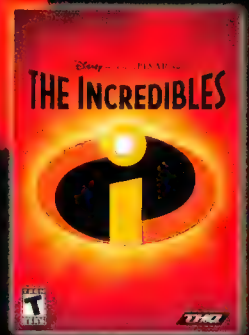
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PlayStation.2



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Cartoon Violence

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PS2/XB/GC

ONLINE  
(PS2/XB ONLY)

# FIFA SOCCER 2005

There's grass on the field...let's play ball



Set pieces, whether free kicks or corners, seem to have a very, very low success rate.

**Good:** New First Touch control makes for realistic soccer action  
**Bad:** Slide tackles are pretty ineffective  
**Fun:** Dominating with DC United's 15-year-old Freddy Adu



**PATRICK:** Football, soccer, whatever you call it, the *FIFA* franchise continues to gain ground and is close to challenging Konami's *Winning Eleven* series as the videogame footba—er, soccer—champion.

This year, *FIFA* looks much crisper, its star players are way more dominating, and the career mode is deeper, keeping you busy for up to 15 seasons. The overall presentation mirrors a British "footy" telecast with BBCers John Motson and often-incomprehensible Scotsman Ally McCoist providing commentary. Without a doubt, though, the chief improvement is the new First Touch control. Via the right analog stick, you can direct a receiving player's first touch of the ball. Whether beating a defender with a flick into open space, redirecting the ball on the run, or receiving a cross, you have control over moves that were previously automated. It's a simple addition that adds a whole lot of depth and subtlety. The gaping chasm between *FIFA* and *Eleven* may now be a photo finish.

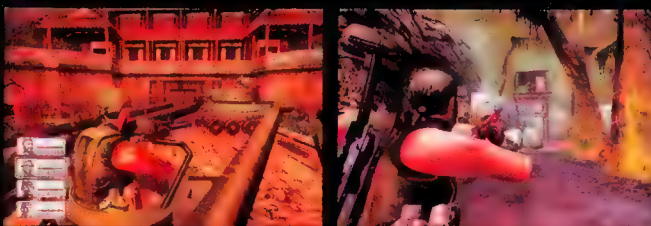
**DEMIAN:** *FIFA* does a very good job of re-creating the pace of real soccer—which

means casual fans might be put to sleep. Patrick's right about the First Touch controls adding a new element to gameplay, but I wish it were a little easier to protect the ball once you've got it. Forget trying for that miracle dribble—it's both more productive and more boring to just pass as soon as a defender gets near. *FIFA* is an excellent sim, but I still shout "did you see that?!" more often with *Winning Eleven*. Hot tip: Before you do anything, turn off auto-player switching. The game's practically unplayable with it on.

**EVAN:** *FIFA 2005* borders on the sublime: Last year's complete technical overhaul has been refined into one of the best sports games in recent memory. Though the Freestyle Control (which allows you to perform moves with the right stick when you have possession) needs a bit more refinement, the passing mechanics allow players to easily perform redirects and pass into space, and some of the best physics around put *FIFA* neck and neck with the superb *Winning Eleven 8*—except that *8* isn't coming to the States until spring 2005.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	<b>8.5</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>9.0</b>
	PATRICK	DEMIAN	EVAN

Publisher: EA Sports  
 Developer: EA Canada  
 Players: PS2 1-2 (3-8 w/  
 MultiTap, 2 online), XB 1-4  
 (2 online), GC 1-4  
 ESRB: Everyone  
[www.easports.com](http://www.easports.com)



PS2/XB

# CONFLICT: VIETNAM

We're somewhat conflicted, yes



You'll know the bad guys by their Birkenstocks.

**Good:** Character-building skill system  
**Bad:** No online mode, sometimes gimpy controls  
**Incoming:** Four-letter words up the ying yang



**DAN L:** Agent Orange. De Niro. *Deer Hunter*. Flashbacks. Vietnam's imagery, inspired by the real and the reel, serves as a perfect backdrop for video war games. But this particular war was never won so much as survived, a premise that serves as the underlying theme. In *Conflict: Vietnam* as you guide your squad behind enemy lines over the course of a 28-day tour.

*Conflict* plays like *SOCOM* in that it's a third-person shooter, but it adds a pseudo-RPG skill system. This customization, along with the sundry requisites for any war game (lots of weapons, good enemy A.I., vehicles), makes for a rewarding experience.

The other payoff here is the sound and story line. Tunes like "Paint It Black" and "White Rabbit," along with the chatter of the nonplayer characters, help bring *Conflict* to life. Character backgrounds also get some attention, which is a good thing if you're combat weary (or just like having an actual story).

Though my fellow reviewers might feel differently, *Conflict* is a mission worth taking—assuming you can live without online multiplayer action.

**SHAWN:** Booby traps and VC machine guns may be bloody murder, but they aren't the deadliest objects in this dark room. That'd be your suicidal squad-mates whose major malfunctions make *Conflict: Vietnam* a *Groundhog Day* in green hell. I played levels over and over because they insisted on standing in plain sight as Charlie took potshots from the game's lush and somewhat lifelike cover. Fight the war with friends instead: Co-op mode minimizes casualties and lets the otherwise captivating "oh s\*\*\*\*!" moments shine.

**OFFICIAL PS MAG—JOE:** Take *Conflict: Desert Storm*, replace all the sand with a messy-looking jungle, increase the frequency of enemy encounters, and refuse to fix the crappy controls—*kaboom!* You've got *Conflict: Vietnam*. To be fair, the simple-squad direction continues to distinguish the *Conflict* series from other military shooters, as do the vehicles and almost RPG-like stat-leveling system. It's just a shame about the shoddy controls and graphics. Someday *Conflict* may be a shooter to contend with...but not today.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	<b>7.5</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>4.5</b>
	DAN L.	SHAWN	JOE

Publisher: Global Star  
 Developer: Pivotal  
 Players: 1  
 ESRB: Mature

[www.conflict.com](http://www.conflict.com)





**I NEED THE SPEED!**


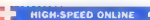

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PS2/XB/GC

ONLINE  
(PS2/XB ONLY)

PS2/XB

ONLINE  
(PS2/XB)

# NBA LIVE 2005 VS. ESPN NBA 2K5

Game 7, seconds on the clock...eh, screw it, everybody wins

**L**ike the gridiron, only EA Sports and ESPN are hitting the hardwood this season. The two have continually gone down to the wire for the b-ball crown, and this year is no different. Now that the fourth-quarter buzzer has sounded again, let's see who's really got game.

**PATRICK:** *2K5* is the perfect simulation of the NBA—the two-man game, the pacing. *Live*, however, is still too arcadey; I feel like I'm going coast to coast in a couple of seconds. Don't me get wrong, I'm all for runnin' and gunnin', but it ain't representative of the actual sport.

**DAN L:** I'm with Patrick...for the most part. *2K5* looks better, moves better, and controls more intuitively than EA's hoopster. But I disagree with Pat about *Live*'s "arcadey-

ness," as the series has definitely made some great strides toward a truer sim style of play, thanks to this edition's set of low-post freestyle moves and increased attention to offensive and defensive systems.

**BRYAN:** And don't forget about *Live*'s brainier A.I.; computer-controlled opponents now play suffocating defense and perform all those fancy dribble moves that, previously, were only in your own repertoire. *2K5*, on the other hand, commits some key fouls: jerky animations (especially when adjusting shots in midair), big men setting up more around the three-point line than on the blocks, and everyone standing around watching the person with the ball, thus turning it into a game of 1-on-1.

**PATRICK:** That's how *real* NBA basketball is played—ain't it fantastic?

**DAN L:** Yeah, these days, the pros rarely show much effort when not handling the rock, yet I still dig EA's emphasis on off-the-ball movement.

**PATRICK:** But I'm glad to see that one game finally gives you complete control over putbacks—in *Live*, you can either tip it in or send it home with authority.

**BRYAN:** I have to call out *Live* and *2K5*'s respective franchise modes, though; the majority of the options—which EA and ESPN can't stop talking up—are simply text-heavy menus that'll put you to sleep more quickly than a Clippers game. And sadly, this is becoming the norm in almost all sports titles.

**DAN L:** I'm a stat man myself, so I really got into managing a franchise in *Live*, particularly the new GM scouting abilities, where you're always on the hunt for new talent. If only the franchise interface weren't a multifunctional PDA that only George Jetson could love...

**PATRICK:** If stats are your bag, then ESPN's title will satisfy you, too. But while dealing with players' bad attitudes may be the reality of today's NBA, it's something I have zero interest in re-creating with generic dialogue exchanges in a videogame, à la *2K5*.

**BRYAN:** Nuff about franchise. *Live* gets the nod from me this season, partly 'cause of its extras, which include a three-point and surprisingly deep slam-dunk contest. There are so many different ways to rattle the rim (go all Air Jordan with a leap from the foul

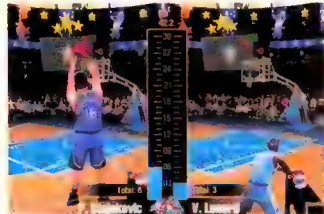
line, toss off the big screen, etc.) that it borders on *Tony Hawk*-like trick insanity.

**DAN L:** Dunk competition—awesome, love it. Now let me take it to the (Inter)net with online spectators doing the judging. Next season, maybe.

**BRYAN:** *2K5* puts up big numbers in the extras column, too, as ESPN brings back the deep 24/7 mode. Create a player and build him up through a series of training exercises and tournaments versus the league's past and present—it's solid.

**PATRICK:** Problem is, 24/7 hasn't changed all that much from last year.

**DAN L:** Bottom line: Either baller has enough bounce, and at \$60 (\$40 for *Live* and \$20 for *2K5*), I'll be getting both.



■ *Live* (above) looks better this year, but it's still like Steve Nash to ESPN's cuts-as-a-button Kobe.

■ *2K5*'s players (above) chill around the perimeter, while in *Live*, the lane's clogged like rush hour.

**NBA LIVE 2005**

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

**8.5** **8.5** **8.0**

BRYAN PATRICK DAN L.

Publisher: EA Sports  
Developer: EA Canada  
Players: PS2 1-2 (3-8 w/Multitap, 2-10 online), XB 1-4 (2 online), GC 1-4  
ESRB: Everyone

www.easports.com

**ESPN NBA 2K5**

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

**7.0** **8.5** **8.5**

BRYAN PATRICK DAN L.

Publisher: ESPN Videogames  
Developer: ESPN Videogames  
Players: PS2 1-2 (3-10 w/Multitap, 2-10 online), XB 1-4 (2-8 online)  
ESRB: Everyone

www.espnvideogames.com



# ATV 3 Offroad Fury

# BLAZE YOUR OWN TRAIL

### THE COMPETITION IS FIERCE.

The finish line lies just up the mountain, and all six competitors have a legitimate shot as they cross the wide-open environment. As you guide your all-terrain vehicle onward and upward, the fog builds up and begins to cloud your vision. You don't care, though—victory looms closer by the second, and you can taste it. There it is! The finish line. If you can just execute this last jump effectively—maybe even bust out a trick just for style—the win is yours. But then...

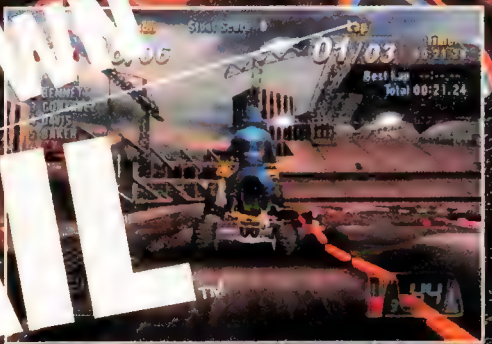
**WHAM!**

Out of nowhere, you feel the jolt of another rider from behind. The result: a spectacular crash. Unfortunately, *you're* part of it. As your position resets, you watch someone else cross the finish line. Tough luck. You're not totally bummed, though. Actually, "awed" is more like it. "That was one *awesome* crash," you tell the other five players via your USB headset. "Let's play again."

It's all par for the course in *ATV*

*Offroad Fury*® 3, the latest offering in Sony Computer Entertainment America's acclaimed racing series. Developer Climax has created more than 30 new free-roaming environments for this sequel, including terrain types as diverse as snow, dirt, mud, ice, water and grass. Impress your opponents by mastering all 34 freestyle tricks, or wow them with your customized vehicle and rider. If you're up for a break from hardcore racing, try one of the eight minigames, from King of the Hill and Tag to Soccer and Basketball.

*ATV* 3's offline play remains as strong as ever?but the game really shines online. Got a few buddies you play with regularly? Then join a clan. And don't forget to check the Scoreboard to see how it stacks up against all of the other ones. Of course, you can also view your own personal accomplishments there. After all, barring the few unforeseen collisions, you're bound to accomplish quite a bit.



PlayStation 2



LIVE IN YOUR WORLD.  
PLAY IN OURS.





**Good:** More-boss fights than you can shake a sword-for-an-arm at  
**Bad:** So-so graphics with some sparse or empty environments  
**MVP:** Most valuable body part? We're going with good ol' left leg



**JUSTIN:** When as an infant you're robbed of 48 vital body parts, is revenge even an option? It is for Hyakkimaru. Standing on principle and prosthetic legs, *Blood Will Tell's* hero is out for the blood of four-dozen demons who took his body.

Wickedly intriguing concept aside, you'll slash through foes with flourishes of your bladed forearms and bust bazooka shells from a hollow knee during battles with gruesome fiends—reclaiming your body piece by piece. Parts like the pancreas and pituitary gland will slowly make you faster and stronger, but major acquisitions produce immediate results. Sprout a real leg and beat a superswift dash while the balance imparted by your inner ear allows for snap recoveries from knockdown blows.

Further self-improvement in the form of expanding combos keeps combat interesting, and a surprisingly strong manga-style story helps push you forward. Certain areas look a bit sparse, and awkward camera angles and jumps are occasionally a problem—particularly during your waifish sidekick Dororo's solo acts—but it's not enough to cripple a great action game.

**JOSH:** Unlike its handi-capable hero, this game has heart. *Blood* sports deep characters, an awesome premise, and an engaging story line that kept me playing long after the novelty of having swords for arms wore off. Unfortunately, the fun but repetitive combat grows tiresome, the camera makes platforming a chore and boss battles unnecessarily difficult, and the graphics look about as pretty as Hyakki without his facial prosthetics. In the end, though, the great story and passable gameplay make this one a worthy rental.

**OFFICIAL PS MAG—GIANCARLO:** The execution is iffy, but there are great ideas here. Collecting Hyakki's organs as power-ups is the coolest lift from *Metroid* ever, and the monster designs twist Japanese legends into genuinely skin-crawling bosses. *Blood* has pacing problems after a promising start, though. It's no good as a platformer or a stealth challenge—the camera and controls aren't up to it—and between those killer bosses, the battles get boring. But an episodic plot lets you play in small doses; give it a shot if you dig the manga material.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	8.0	6.5	6.0
	JUSTIN	JOSH	GIANCARLO

Publisher: Sega  
 Developer: Sega Wow  
 Players: 1-2  
 ESRB: Mature

www.sega.com

PlayStation 2

# BLOOD WILL TELL

Pieces of me



Each boss (left) gives up a body part—our favorite has to be the coveted lymph nodes.



A 3D Mai? KOF fanboys may need some alone time.

PlayStation 2

# KING OF FIGHTERS: MAXIMUM IMPACT

If it ain't broke...



**Good:** Most moves and mechanics transfer favorably to 3D  
**Bad:** Smaller roster means diehards will lose some fave fighters  
**Feels Like:** *Rival Schools*, *Street Fighter EX Plus Alpha*



**JON D:** When *Street Fighter* went mock-3D with *EX*, it lost some of the trademark speed, style, and playability that made the 2D brawler tick. The same goes for *Maximum Impact*: Although it throttles back on the roster, slows the pacing, and alters the combo system, it's not necessarily a worse experience—just different.

If I didn't already know *KOF* and appreciate the bouncy novelty of a 3D Mai Shiranui, though, I don't think *Impact* would even make a ripple with me. Given that the recent meld with Capcom fighters (*Capcom vs. SNK*) has made *KOF* so amazing in two-dimensions already, there's really no reason for the stretch to 3D. But you might find *Impact* a capable and enjoyable departure from the 2D classic if you're willing to let go of tradition or have simply never played a *King of Fighters* game before. I highly recommend a joystick, though—one thing that hasn't changed is that super moves are tough on a controller, especially the PS2's fragmented D-pad.

**SNK—CHRISTIAN:** With Capcom spinning its wheels, I'm happy to see SNK step up

and bring its fighting series into the 21st century. *Maximum Impact* keeps *KOF's* stylish, varied characters while trimming the confusing fat. The result is a surprisingly solid fighter that pleasingly melds old school with new. It needs some work, however. *KOF* rookie Soiree wants to be *Tekken 3's* outdated Eddy Gordo—bad. The other new characters aren't much better, and the gameplay needs tweaks in general (the archaic side-step, for one). A nice first try; get crackin' on the sequel, boys.

**OFFICIAL PS MAG—GIANCARLO:** *Maximum Impact* is essentially SNK's version of the *Street Fighter EX* series, which isn't really a good thing. A lot of the precision and strategy in the 2D *KOF* games is almost completely lost here, since a complete novice can easily pull off a five- or six-hit combo within seconds of picking up the controller. Still, that speaks to *Impact's* accessibility. You won't have to spend hours trying to string three moves together, and fights are really fast paced, much like those in the *Dead or Alive* games.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	6.5	7.0	6.0
	JON D.	CHRISTIAN	GIANCARLO

Publisher: SNK  
 Developer: SNK Playmore  
 Players: 1-2  
 ESRB: Teen

www.snkneogeousaconsumer.com





PlayStation 2

# SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: NOCTURNE

Devil in the details

**Good:** Stylish visuals; deep customization  
**Bad:** Battles too frequent and difficult  
**Special Guest Star:** *Devil May Cry's* Dante

**SHANE:** If you've never played a role-playing game before, *Nocturne's* brutally difficult battles, tricky dungeons, and convoluted character customization will knock you straight into the fetal position. RPG vets, however, should definitely try to tame this beast: It's something special.

From the game's surreal outset (the world ends in the first 10 minutes) to each of its twisted, unhappy endings (of which there are six), *Nocturne* serves up a peculiar, beautiful, and challenging adventure. Intentionally stark visuals impart a keen otherworldliness that perfectly matches the game's postapocalyptic, bizarrely religious plot. The narrative arrives in small chunks, though: Most of your time is spent navigating massive dungeons and fighting terribly frequent random encounters. At least the combat is fast and serves a purpose—you'll recruit demons to join your party, then fuse them together to form more powerful mutations. This

*Pokémon*-on-crack premise is as addictive as it sounds, but not everything is devilishly great: The archaic overworld map looks laughably lame, no

cut-scenes feature spoken dialogue, and the lack of in-game tutorials will have you reaching for a hint book.

**OFFICIAL PS MAG—THIERRY:** *Nocturne* is a rarity: a mature RPG that doesn't merely cave in to using titillation and foul language for its M rating. With its heavy dose of theology and philosophy (done with much more gravitas than the pop philosophy of *Xenosaga*), *Nocturne* weaves an incredible story that is pretty much unlike any other RPG. Add to that its quirky-yet-solid gameplay mechanics and you have one of the best PS2 RPGs of the year, despite its *Ninja Gaiden*-esque tendency to kick your ass.

**GMR—CHRISTIAN:** *Nocturne* is flat-out stunning—to my mind, it's one of the most distinctive-looking games of the generation. And instead of feeding you a canned morality play, it actually lets you influence the highly original story. But the crazy long mazes, turn-based battle system, and slow, demanding pace are throwbacks to bygone days. It's a flawed but faceted gem.



PlayStation 2

# GUILTY GEAR ISUKA

Fatal four-way



**Good:** Frantic four-player fighting...  
**Bad:** ...is a bit too frantic at times  
**Shocker:** Yo-yo babe Bridget is really a boy. Oops!



**SHAWN:** *Guilty Gear X2: #Reload* (XB) required fast fingers. In this go-around, your reflexes have got to be robotic. With four players facing off in team battles or free-for-alls, keeping tabs on your brawler is tough enough. It takes true talent to consistently orchestrate the chaos (four times the flashy signature strikes amount to a psychedelic supernova).

Fighting takes place on a foreground and background, meaning you can side-step projectiles or cooperate to knock an opponent from one plane and into your partner's clutches on the other. That's easy enough; it's having to hit R1 to turn around that isn't (unlike typical fighters, crossing up in *Isuka* leaves you facing the wrong way). Whether the controls are clunky or not, I couldn't get used to 'em...at least not as well as I'd have liked.

And while clobbering different-colored clones in *Isuka's* side-scrolling, single-player modes (think *Final Fight* with fewer backgrounds and far more moves) is a decent diversion, it's also difficult, thanks to the same unwieldy setup made worse because you have to come to a complete stop before changing directions.

**SHOE:** *Guilty Gear* hearts fighting-game fans. *#Reload* on Xbox gave us a working online fighter, and *Isuka* here hooks up the four-player action while keeping the traditional, hardcore 2D fighting intact.

The series already goes overboard with the fancy onscreen effects, and it gets infinitely more confusing with four players, the aforementioned "turn around" button, and everyone fighting on nearly

indistinguishable background and foreground planes. It's still a blast to play—if you can handle the insanity.

**IUP.COM—DAVE:** *Isuka* isn't as bad an idea as it seems at first glance, but at first glance, it seems like a *really* bad idea. While you can adjust to some of its oddities, they don't ever make objective sense, and only the 2-on-2 tag battles are worth the time. Free-for-all matches are a near-total train wreck, and there's not enough new content to justify 1-on-1 fights with this irrational control scheme. Publisher Sammy should have saved the new backgrounds and soundtrack (which both totally rock) to feature in a better game.



■ New gal A.B.A. (above, with giant key) inflicts damage on herself—for GG vets only.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

SHAWN	SHOE	DAVE
7.0	7.0	6.0

Publisher: Sammy  
 Developer: Arc System Works  
 Players: 1-2 (3-4 w/Multitap)  
 ESRB: Teen  
[www.sammystudios.com](http://www.sammystudios.com)

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

SHANE	THIERRY	CHRISTIAN
8.0	9.0	8.5

[www.shinmegamitensei.com](http://www.shinmegamitensei.com)

Publisher: Atlus  
 Developer: Atlus R&D1  
 Players: 1  
 ESRB: Mature  
[www.shinmegamitensei.com](http://www.shinmegamitensei.com)





**Good:** Gorgeous graphics, amazing array of items  
**Bad:** Awkward combat, online difficulties  
**Major WTF Moment:** First time you use the "Provoke" command



**MARK:** In many ways, Capcom's new role-player is like *Phantasy Star Online* finally came to the PS2: One to four heroes set out on different missions, traversing the same few dungeons but with different goals each time (everything from killing dragons to cooking meat). You'll notice the graphics immediately; the animation and characters look fantastic, and the outdoor environments are lush and convincing. But the best part of *Hunter* is the number of items you can gather from the land—fish for food or profit, berries and mushrooms to mix into medicine; you can even mine ore and scavenge dead monster parts to fashion into armor or weapons.

**BRYAN:** As my hunting buddy Mark mentioned, this one comes oh-so close to completely filling the *PSO* void on PS2. From the *Jurassic Park*-like terrain to the hungry-for-your-meat dragons, it just looks stunning. And using pieces of your prey to outfit and arm your character makes the kill worth the exhausting effort. But *Hunter* occasionally swings and misses: online chat is keyboard only (that's so 2002), the camera's a bit finicky during combat, and slaying any significant-sized beast on your own is near impossible.

Unfortunately, *Hunter* shoots itself in the foot elsewhere. Single-player mode might as well not exist, as tedious and difficult as the missions are playing solo. Online, no one can leave or join games in progress, and the lack of voice chat makes communication a chore. Finally, you eventually adjust to the bizarre combat control scheme, but only those with the time and inclination to appreciate *Hunter's* addictive item collecting will play long enough to find out.

**GMR—MILKMAN:** If you're able to accept the unorthodox control scheme, the mediocre single-player game (at least it has one), a troublesome camera, and the lack of an effective lock-on mechanism, then you're tough enough to reap *Monster Hunter's* unique benefits. For those with an online group mentality, *Hunter's* grisly parts collecting offers quite a bit of strategic action. Whether you fancy yourself a melee type or a long-range gunner, almost any player can find his own niche and customize himself in ways *PSO* never offered.

PlayStation 2 ONLINE

# MONSTER HUNTER

Time to slay the dragon—again

**Editor's Note:** Technical difficulties limited our online experience: We played a version that included just the first set of missions, then played with a single high-level character supplied by Capcom—but no other publications joined us to play the later missions with these characters. If our opinions change after we hunt with more players, we'll tell you next ish.

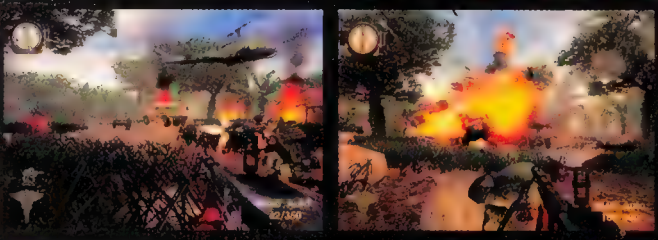


THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

8.0	8.0	8.0
MARK	BRYAN	MILKMAN

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

www.capcom.com



Xbox

# MEN OF VALOR

Smells like...decency



**Good:** Later levels convey the chaos of 'Nam  
**Bad:** Some clunky animation and A.I. problems  
**Best Moment:** Following a tank through the city of Hue



**MARK:** At its best, *Men of Valor* makes you feel like you're in a Vietnam war movie: The Mamas and the Papas blare on the radio, Marines smoke and make small talk when suddenly—THOOM!—one of your buddies is hamburger meat. The chaos and confusion unique to 'Nam is brought home via scripted events, tons of dialogue (including plenty of cursing), and convincing outdoor-landscapes. The thick and treacherous jungles are a long way from the green walls of the last *Medal of Honor* game and are definitely the high point of the otherwise decent graphics.

**SHAWN:** Multiplayer matches blow it all to hell in the best way. With an awesome arsenal of maps, modes, and character classes, I was high on war the whole time. Sadly, *Valor's* sort-of-solid-but-predictable single-player game is Vietnam as a theme-park thrill ride. Overdone dialogue and cynical caricatures (parasitic cameramen, promotion-hungry COs) don't capture the piss and corruption of the war any more than the embarrassingly bad A.I. and green corridors (sorry, Mark, but the big, bad bush is more like a lush alley).

If only the A.I. was as realistic; the Vietcong usually provide a fair challenge (using cover is key), but seeing Marines walk right past them or shoot at them from three feet away—without either of them dying—really spoils the illusion. Online, different soldier classes (medic, sniper, etc.) and a couple interesting game modes (both basically variants of capture the flag), in addition to the standard deathmatch games, elevate *Valor's* multiplayer above the rank and file, but not enough to recommend to anyone except war buffs.

**SHOE:** It was a time of turmoil, confusion, and frustration. Mind you, I'm talking about my time with *Men of Valor*, not the actual Vietnam War. I didn't know whether to laugh (at my idiot A.I. squadmates walking right up to then past enemies, just because the game's scripting said it was time to move forward) or cry (when I'd get mowed down by invisible gunfire from hidden enemies—yes, I know this may be more "realistic," but I'm playing a game for "fun," too, ya know). Only decent multiplayer saves this from a much lower score.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

6.0	7.5	6.0
MARK	SHAWN	SHOE

Publisher: VU Games  
 Developer: 2015  
 Players: 1 (2-12 online)  
 ESRB: Mature

www.menofvalorgame.com



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Interact with mortals and other vampires in a world that reacts to clan, gender and dialogue in this deep, immersive RPG.

"One of the most anticipated RPGs this year" — Gamespot



Visit [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org) for updated rating information.



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[activision.com](http://activision.com)

[vampirebloodlines.com](http://vampirebloodlines.com)





OTOGI 2 has a surreal beauty to it...much like kung fu flick Hero.

Xbox

# OTOGI 2: IMMORTAL WARRIORS

Breathtaking

- Good:** Gorgeous graphics; beautiful music
- Bad:** Hard to get/find every secret item
- Otogi:** Makes a good name for a Japanese pet dog.



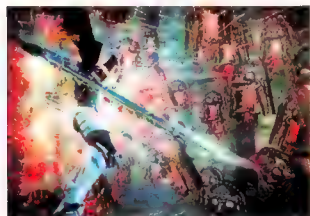
**SHOE:** You say you listen to our reviews, but when it came to the first *Otogi*, your wallets sure clamped up tight. One of our highest-reviewed games of 2003, the sleeper-hit action game barely made a squeak on the sales charts. Well, the sequel's here, and this time you better recognize or there won't be an *Otogi 3*.

Imagine a beautiful, dreamy, and sometimes scary hack-n-slash that takes place in a mythical, magical Japan with demons made of fire, ghouls made of paper, and 10-story-tall spiders. Picture defending a holy tree from skeleton armies, destroying a fleet of ghostly airships in mid flight, and fighting cave-dwelling wraiths in almost total darkness. Everything about *Warriors* is imaginative at its mind-blowing best. And it's all packaged with some amazing graphics, a haunting soundtrack, perfect controls, and enough gameplay (via six characters to level up and more than a dozen fun, extra stages in the minigame-ish Havoc mode) to last over 20 hours if you're the thorough type. Don't miss it.

**SHAWN:** The world's your china shop as you chop your way through caverns of pure crystal, sending shards pinballing

like prismatic particles in an accelerator. Believe it or not, *Otogi* is more breathtaking and faultlessly offbeat than before. A few of the six playable heroes are practically clones, the fighting's fancier in effect than it is in execution, and sometimes it's still fall-on-your-sword frustrating, but you won't find a better time making beautiful messes this side of *Burnout 3*.

**XBN—CHE:** Those of you who missed *Otogi* the first time around won't miss a beat when you pick up this deeper and more polished sequel. With the addition of new (and diverse, never mind Shawn's "clone" claims) demigods to its roster, as well as the refreshing emphasis on character development, *Warriors* moves like *Ninja Gaiden* with the depth of an action-RPG. Unlike other action-adventures, *Warriors* keeps me coming back for more with its delectably destructible environments. The game walks a fine balance, giving you ultimate power while simultaneously pushing your gaming skills by striking at each of your characters' weaknesses. This is the best Japanese-developed Xbox game to date.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

9.0	8.0	9.0
SHOE	SHAWN	CHE

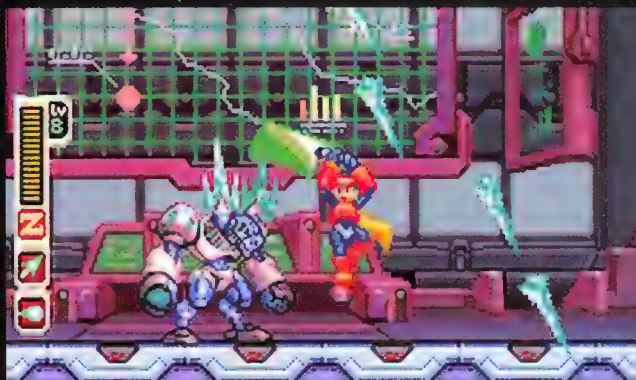
Publisher: Sega  
Developer: From Software  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Teen

www.sega.com

GBA

# MEGA MAN ZERO 3

Robot salvage for fun and profit



If you don't like this week's Mega Man game...there's always next week.

- Good:** The least frustrating *Zero* yet...
- Bad:** ...but it still hands you your ass on a platter
- Silliest Boss Name:** Blazin' Flizard/Glacher Le Cactank (tie)



**KEVIN:** There's no point in beating around the mechanical, self-propelled, missile-spitting bush here. *Mega Man Zero 3*, just like the two GBA games that preceded it, is a no-holds-barred shoot-a-thon that'll give its audience exactly what it wants—even more punishing robot chaos.

Capcom has relaxed the series' notoriously sky-high challenge level a bit for the third game. In addition, nearly every mission has passageways that lead to Cyber Space, an alternate version of the level where you're free to use all your cyber elf power-ups without losing them afterward—it's still useful for scouting each area before tackling it for real.

This tweak of the challenge level takes what was an utterly impossible game before and makes it into a merely near-impossible one. Sure, you'll still die countless times with each boss before figuring out its patterns, but the body count is much more tolerable. To me, that made the difference between contently playing *Zero 3* all afternoon and angrily heaving it into the trash compactor in disgust. Your mileage may vary.

**ROBERT:** Lots of stuff has been tacked on to *Zero 3* in the name of progress: long, RPG-ish laundry lists of useless items; Cyber Space portals (which turn everything a *Matrix* green and force enemies to drop more items—wow); superfluous weapons and moves; and a big, empty hub level where you can button-mash through pointless chatter to gain even more pointless items. But heaps of

cake icing can't ruin the original recipe. *MM* games have always been about tightly controlled action, exciting platforming, and brutally difficult boss fights. It's still fun...for the masochist in you.

**JOHN R.:** Another year, another *Zero*. You know what to expect here: superb 2D visuals, tight controls, punishing bosses with ridiculous names (Deathtanz Mantisk? *Wha?*), and extremely challenging gameplay—though it's not quite as harsh as before. I love a good old-fashioned side-scroller, but when the biggest enhancement you've got is Cyber Space—an easier, mostly identical path through each stage—you know the developers are running out of ideas.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

8.0	7.0	7.0
KEVIN	ROBERT	JOHN R.

Publisher: Capcom  
Developer: Capcom  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Everyone

www.capcom.com



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PlayStation 2



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\* See website for complete contest rules and regulations.

\*\* Participant must be 18 years or older to win the Grand Prize. Prizes subject to change without notice.

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Recognize these guys from Yoshi's Island? Old characters and other Nintendo references are everywhere in Paper Mario.



Chat with Luigi to find out about his own hilarious adventures, which go on at the same time as your quest.

GameCube

# PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND-YEAR DOOR

★  
GAME OF THE MONTH

Flat-out incredible



**MARK:** Like the original *Paper Mario* for the Nintendo 64 and its spiritual successor *Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga* on the GBA, *The Thousand-Year Door* succeeds as a role-playing game by nailing the most important aspects of the genre, but in a completely unique and refreshing way.

Take the plot. While the overarching story is the same ol' cliché—save the princess by finding seven crystal stars to unlock the magical door that blah blah blah—the dialogue is so witty and clever that you savor every cut-scene. Even without the benefit of voice acting (you're going to have to get with the times soon, Nintendo), every one of *Paper Mario's* huge cast of friends and foes has their own distinct, memorable, and usually hilarious personality. Seriously, random villagers in this game have more character than major players in other RPGs, and certain moments are literally laugh-out-loud funny.

Combat also breaks free of the old turn-based traditions. For those of us accustomed to mindlessly tapping a few buttons and daydreaming while battle ensues, *The Thousand-Year Door's* awesome fighting system is like a butt stomp to the groin. Er, in a good way. Uh, wait...well, you know what I mean. Attacks are executed via unique controller combos (hold the analog stick and release, alternate hitting the L and R triggers, draw circles around your enemies, etc.) that make you an active participant in every battle. Optional button presses take it one step further; time them just right to add damage, boost defense, or even ham it up for the audience watching you fight. All this, along with a nice selection of different side-kicks and power-up items, keeps fighting fun, even against foot soldiers and at the end of the game.

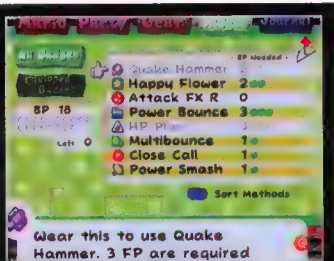
A huge quest full of exotic locales, cool ability-granting badges to improve your characters, devi-

ously hidden but worthwhile secrets to encourage exploration—inside *Paper Mario's* flat, simple outer wrapping is an incredibly deep and thoroughly enjoyable adventure. Only a few boring back-and-forth errands near the end and some enemies reused a bit too often slightly crumple this otherwise brilliant masterpiece.

**BRYAN:** While it may feel like we've waited 1,000 years, Nintendo has finally added another star to the paper-thin stack of GameCube role-playing games. And just like Mark says, this *Paper Mario's* a hit because it strays from the genre norm. Forget about realistic visuals and high-budget CG cut-scenes; here, you receive a brilliantly stylish 2D/3D world that, at times, can be as cutesy as Link's home island in *Wind Waker* or as trippy as a setting from some Dr. Seuss tale. And even though the battles remain turn based, they

## Badges? Yes, You Need Some Steenkin' Badges!

Part of the beauty of *Paper Mario's* gameplay is the badge system. You can buy, earn, or find badges hidden throughout the world and then equip them to enhance your abilities. They can do all sorts of things—change Mario's appearance or sound effects, add new attacks, grant more hit points, boost his defense, and more.



Combat stays fun since you are always active, trying to time button presses for added offense or defense.



The dialogue is incredibly sharp and often hilarious. Other RPG publishers take note. Please.

**Good:** Witty dialogue and awesome battle system  
**Bad:** Too much running back and forth late in the game  
**Fave Sidekick:** Bobbery, the salty old Bob-omb sailor



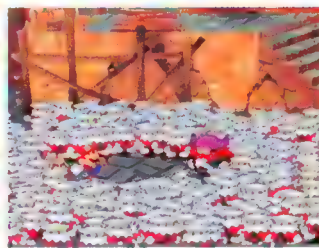
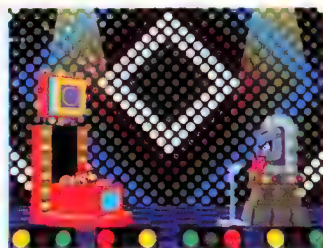
THE VERDICTS  
(OUT OF 10)

9.0 9.0 9.0  
MARK BRYAN ANDREW

Publisher: Nintendo  
Developer: Intelligent Systems  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Everyone

www.nintendo.com





are fast paced, require platformerlike skill (for timing multiple head stomps, blocking attacks, etc.), and feature the most original and welcome new combat wrinkle in years—spectators, who'll chuck power-ups...or rocks, if they don't like your style.

What also sets *The Thousand-Year Door* apart from the rest of the RPG pack is that it doesn't take itself too seriously. The game's stockpiled with quirky and joke-filled dialogue, and unlike most that go the humor route, I promise Mario and company will make you chuckle (just talk to the plumber's bro Luigi if you want a good laugh). The few bits of backtracking are the only real annoyances, but fortunately, they never stopped me from heading back into Nintendo's page-turner. They shouldn't stop you, either.

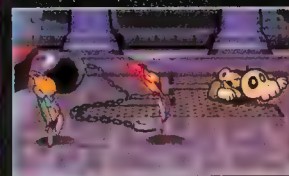
**GMR—ANDREW:** My few complaints are similar to Mark and Bryan's: There's a little too much back-and-forth in a world that feels too small (whoever came up with the completely pointless and time-consuming fetch quest at the beginning of Chapter 6 is no longer my friend). Also, for a storybook-come-to-life, the environments of *Paper Mario* are surprisingly static—like a pop-up book that's already been popped—and the instances in which the world changes in a paperlike fashion are few and far between. But these gripes are ultimately forgivable, because everything else in the game is done incredibly well.

For example, I firmly believe that despite their apparent simplicity, the timing-based combat systems of *Paper*

*Mario, Mario & Luigi*, and now *The Thousand-Year Door* are among the best in the genre. Instead of just choosing "Attack" from the menu, hitting the A button at exactly the right time to dole out more damage makes it feel like you actually are attacking instead of merely issuing an order. Throw in the sidekick switching and all the different enemy types, and *The Thousand-Year Door* guarantees that fights are always fresh. A battle system this satisfying, dressed with beautiful visuals and a charming story, makes *The Thousand-Year Door* worth opening. **A-**

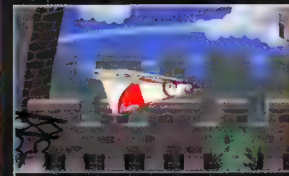


## Mario's Paper Powers



**FLATTEN:** Hold R for Mario to turn sideways. Now he can slide between bars, squeeze between buildings, and fall through grates.

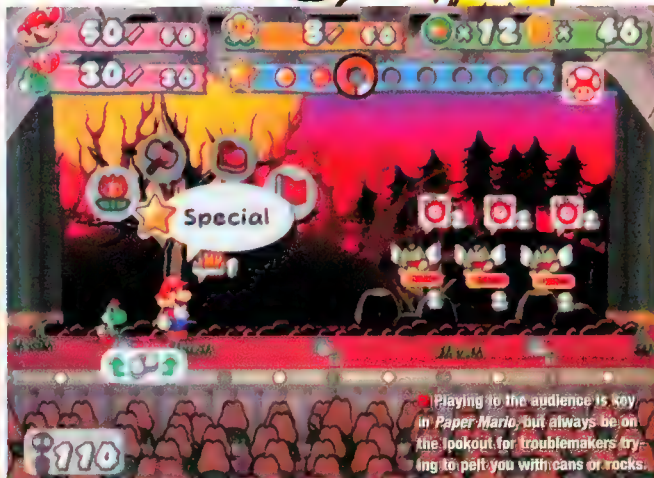
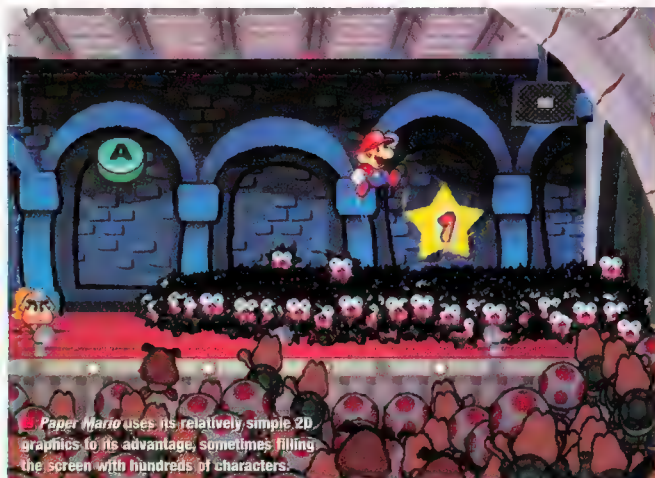
**ROLL:** Twirl the analog stick while pressing R to curl Mario up into a tube so that he can fit under fences and any other low-clearance areas.



**FLY:** Mario can fold himself into a paper airplane and float down from certain designated spots.

**SUPER JUMP:** Hold the jump button and rotate the stick, and Mario will scrunch up like an accordion; release, and he'll spring into the air, grabbing on to any hanging pipes above.

**SAIL:** Mario can't swim, but find any specially marked dock, and he can origami himself into a boat.



Playing to the audience is key in *Paper Mario*, but always be on the lookout for troublemakers trying to pelt you with cans or rocks.



# REVIEWS WRAP-UP

All the games that are fit to blurb.

**W**hat with heavyweights the likes of *Paper Mario*, *Tony Hawk's Underground 2*, and that new *Mortal Kombat* game, we didn't have space to give everything a full review, so here's what didn't make the cut. There's some good stuff down there, like *Midway Arcade Treasures 2*...and some not so good stuff, like *Wings of War*.

Speaking of the triple-A games, though, next month threatens to destabilize the time-space continuum, with *Halo 2*, *MGS3: Snake Eater*, *GTA: San Andreas*, *Metroid Prime 2*, *Killzone*, the *Ratchet* and *Jaks*...oh, and double-D titles like *Rumble Roses* and *Dead or Alive Ultimate*, which you may already be playing by the time you read this.



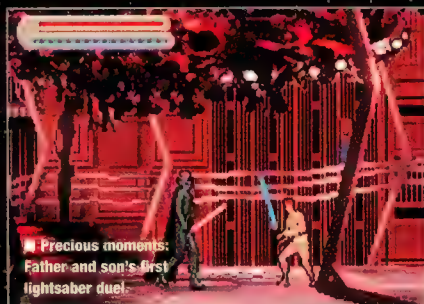
**Choro Q** • PS2 • Atlus • ESRB: E — By blending racing with roleplaying, this jalopy breaks down on two different levels. While the fanciful racetracks are cute, they don't redeem the atrocious racing and so bad-it's-good-oh-wait-it's-just-bad dialogue. Skip this and play *Burnout 3*, in which the cars smash to bits instead of talk to each other.



**Time Crisis: Crisis Zone** • PS2 • Namco • ESRB: T *Crisis Zone* has the most unique plot to date—terrorists have taken over something and only one man with a machine gun can liberate it. Pity the innocent drywall, computer gear, and light fixtures that get in your way. This Guncon 2-compatible arcade port is a good rental for a few hours of mindless full-auto fun.



**Ganggrave: Overdose** • PS2 • Mastiff • ESRB: M Brooding, masterfully coifed, and not afraid to smite enemies with his coffin, main character Grave has a lot going for him. Too bad his game doesn't. All quirky style with little substance, *Overdose* has you blasting through endless hordes of goons—although the real enemy is the camera and clunky controls.



**Star Wars Trilogy: Apprentice of the Force** • GBA • Ubisoft • ESRB: E — This action-platformer disses no memorable bits of the classic *Star Wars* trilogy—you get everything from the Vader saber duels to the Death Star trench. Too bad the side-scrolling gameplay is so generic. You're best off staying far, far away from this galaxy.



**Midway Arcade Treasures 2** • PS2/XB/GC • Midway • ESRB: M — Because hit coin-ops like *Wizard of War*, *Mortal Kombat II*, *NARC*, and *APB* never go out of style, and because so-bad-they're-hilarious travesties like *Pit Fighter* and *Primal Rage* should be preserved for future generations to ridicule, you must buy this rad \$20 collection of 20 good, bad, and butt-ugly games.



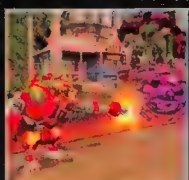
**Wings of War** • XB • Gathering • ESRB: T A not-so-great Great War biplane shooter, *Wings of War* is simpatico with the attention-deficit generation, rapid-firing objectives in jumbled missions filled with hundreds of Hun targets. This budget-priced shooting gallery would be more thrilling if your plane didn't control like a garbage truck sliding across ice.

## THIS MONTH IN BABY GAMES

Don't let the doe eyes and psychedelic colorsapes fool ya—some of these games aren't totally crappy



**Kirby & the Amazing Mirror** • GBA • Nintendo *Mirror* evolves the Kirby formula, providing a *Metroid*-style world to explore. Make your friends buy it for multiplayer.



**Ty 2: Dash Rascal** • PS2/XB/GC • EA — The lovable Tasmanian tiger returns in this shockingly decent hop-n-bopper with a dash of *Grand Theft Auto*-esque design. A steal at \$20.



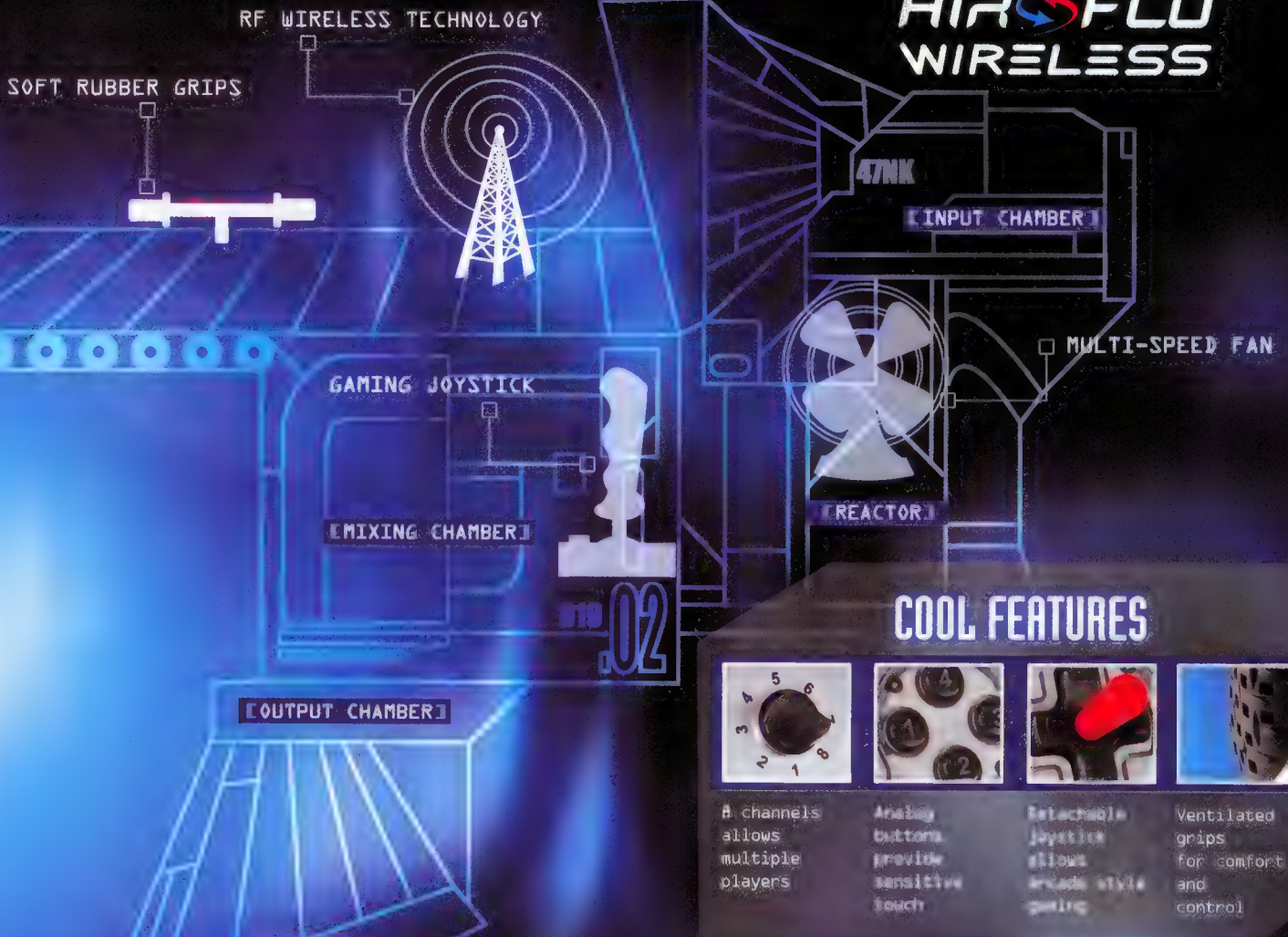
**Crash Twinsanity** • PS2/XB VU Games — Funny writing (courtesy of an ex-*Ben & Stimpy* scribe) can't save this uninspired rehash of antiquated *Crash* antics with lackluster visuals.



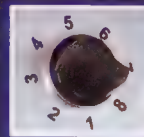
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# REVIEWS ARCHIVE

For the record

## bargain-bin bounty



### KATAMARI DAMACY

■ PS2  
 ■ Released: September 2004  
 ■ Original Scores: 8.5, 8.5, 8.5  
 It's a game about a rolling ball of garbage that eventually engulfs whole apartment blocks. What more do you need to know? What's the problem here? Open your wallet, pry out \$20, and get to work.

### XBOX RACERS THAT GOT NO RESPECT

Some think a rolling ball of garbage comes out every year. In my mind, I expect you moved some time to collect every last inch. It's a simple, beautiful game with a really simple mechanic, and for that, we're trying to place some... something.

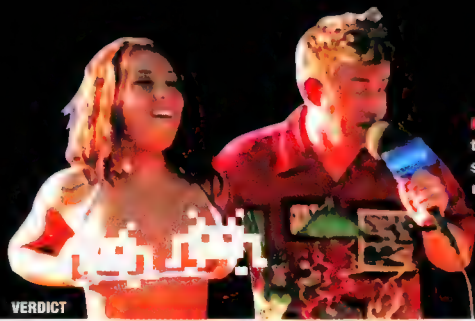


### THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS ADV.

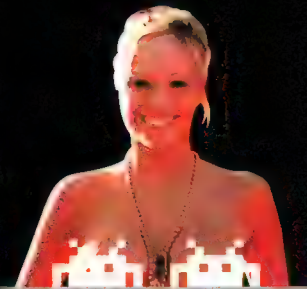


GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Advance Guardian Heroes	GBA	■ Old-school bash-em-up brawling from fan-favorite cult developer Treasure	6.0 7.0 7.5	
Alias	PS2/XB	■ Sexy disguises can't conceal shoddy gameplay	5.0 5.5 4.5	
All-Star Baseball 2005	PS2/XB	■ Take us out to the ball game...just not this one	5.5 4.5 6.0	
Amazing Island	GC	■ What's amazing is that this game made it to the States at all	5.5 3.0 5.5	
Armored Core: Nexus	PS2	■ Impress the ladies with your elaborately customized mechanical avatar. Or not	6.0 6.0 7.0	
Astro Boy	PS2	■ Tweens will take to this robo tyke, but his game's too short and totally not sweet	5.0 3.0 5.0	
Astro Boy: Omega Factor	GBA	■ 'Toon-lovers and jaded players alike will enjoy this intense platformer	8.5 9.0 8.5	Silver
Athens 2004	PS2	■ Sony's Summer Olympics aren't as special as we hoped	5.0 5.5 5.0	
Bujingai: The Forsaken City	PS2	■ Your average martial arts actioner, but with 100 percent more Japanese rock stars	4.5 6.0 7.5	
Burnout 3: Takedown	PS2/XB	■ Insurance (and heart) rates skyrocket with each spectacular crash	9.0 9.5 9.0	Gold
Catwoman	PS2/XB/GC	■ The feline femme looks purrfect, but she's flea-ridden under the fluff	4.5 5.5 2.0	
Champions of Norrath: Realms of EQ	PS2	■ More about slaying orcs than socializing with dorks	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
The Chronicles of Riddick	XB	■ With gameplay this good, a life sentence isn't long enough	9.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
Crash Nitro Kart	PS2/XB/GC	■ For roadside assistance, call 1-800-BUY-MARIO-KART	5.5 6.0 5.5	
Crimson Tears	PS2	■ Repetitive battles will bore you to tears	5.5 6.0 6.5	
Custom Robo	GC	■ Impress your schoolyard chums with your elaborately customized minirobot. Or not	6.5 6.0 8.0	
Dance Dance Revolution Extreme	PS2	■ EyeToy support elevates this DDR to a new level of aerobic insanity	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
Dance Dance Revolution Ultramix	XB	■ Lose pounds and prepare for the prom	8.5 8.0 7.0	
Dead Man's Hand	XB	■ Find out how the West was dumb in this oddball first-person shooting gallery	6.5 5.0 4.5	
Def Jam Fight for NY	PS2/XB/GC	■ There's only one rule in this hip-hop-studded fight club: Buy it, foo'	8.5 8.5 9.0	Silver
Destruction Derby Arenas	PS2	■ This clunker has major problems under the hood	4.5 3.5 6.0	
Donkey Konga	GC	■ (Mostly) great songs and a quality bongo controller make for a lively party game	8.0 7.0 7.5	
DRIV3R	PS2/XB	■ Driver meets Grand Theft Auto, and somehow an "e" becomes a "3"	8.5 7.5 6.5	
Dynasty Warriors 4: Empires	PS2	■ New name, same ol' beat-em-up game—with light "strategy" elements	6.0 5.5 6.5	
Echo Night: Beyond	PS2	■ Echo Night's creepy moonbase has everything you'd want...except for combat	6.0 5.5 5.0	
ESPN Major League Baseball	PS2/XB	■ If MVP is this season's Yankees, then sadly, ESPN is its BoSox	8.0 8.5 7.5	Silver
ESPN NFL 2K5	PS2/XB	■ The best 20 bucks a sports could ever spend	8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
ESPN NHL 2K5	PS2/XB	■ ESPN's puckster hoists the Cup yet again. Can you say dynasty?	8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
EverQuest Online Adventures: Frontiers	PS2	■ It's a lonely frontier for PS2 EverQuest fans	6.5 6.0 7.0	
EyeToy: Groove	PS2	■ Discover just how idiotic you look dancing on TV	8.0 8.0 7.0	
Fable	XB	■ Hack-n-slash action-RPG with Sims-style dollhouse elements	7.5 8.0 9.0	Silver
Fatal Frame II: Crimson Butterfly	PS2	■ Combating poltergeists with a Polaroid is scarier than it sounds	7.5 7.5 6.5	
Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles	GC	■ Charming RPG romp works best with three friends along for the GBA-linked-up ride	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Final Fantasy XI	PS2	■ They'll never know you're not really a feisty female feline. Well, until the honeymoon	8.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
Front Mission 4	PS2	■ You'll need to be smart to figure out this deep mech-strategy game	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Full Spectrum Warrior	XB	■ A war-winning coalition of gritty graphics and tactical gameplay	8.0 7.0 8.0	
Galactic Wrestling: Feat. Ultimate Muscle	PS2	■ A bare-bones feature set makes this Muscle worth flexing only as a rental	5.5 5.5 5.0	
Galleon	XB	■ A high-seas letdown six years in the making...that plays as clunky as it looks	4.0 5.0 4.5	
Ghosthunter	PS2	■ Light on the spookiness, with linear gameplay only an algebra teacher could love	6.5 6.0 6.0	
Guilty Gear X2 #Reload	XB	■ We're not sure how to pronounce it, but this online fighting game rocks	9.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
The Guy Game	PS2/XB	■ The game part sucks, and the naked chicks, well, that's what the Internet's for	1.5 1.0 0.0	
Gradius V	PS2	■ With more games like this, maybe side-scrolling shooters would still be popular	7.0 8.5 8.0	
Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life	GC	■ For those who think farming and videogames are a natural combo	6.5 6.5 7.0	
Headhunter: Redemption	PS2/XB	■ Iffy controls and a twitchy camera are this hunt's less redeeming qualities	5.0 6.5 5.5	
Hot Shots Golf Fore!	PS2	■ Aside from online play, you won't find many surprises on these links	7.0 8.5 6.5	
Karaoke Revolution Volume 2	PS2	■ Medleys, more songs to butcher, and a streamlined interface	8.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
Katamari Damacy	PS2	■ Be the ball—or, in this case, be the rolling sticky blob. Quirky and awesome	8.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
Kingdom Under Fire: Crusaders	XB	■ Dynasty Warriors combat meets Full Spectrum Warrior's troop tactics	7.5 8.0 8.0	
La Pucelle: Tactics	PS2	■ Deep strategy-RPG gameplay you'll love, with childish characters you'll despise	7.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adv.	GC	■ Zelda teaches Link a little somethin' about four-play in this old-school adventure	8.5 9.0 8.0	Silver
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	PS2/XB/GC	■ Get hackin' in this beautiful beat-em-up	8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	GBA	■ Legolas gets shrunk to Keebler size, and your girlfriend still thinks he's hot	7.0 6.0 7.5	
Madden NFL 2005	PS2/XB/GC	■ Visual touch-ups and superior play keep Johnny Ballgame on top	9.0 9.5 9.0	Gold
Mafia	PS2/XB	■ Jack japolies and overdrive thugs in this glitchy 1930s gangster game	6.0 5.0 7.5	
Malice	PS2/XB	■ You can beat this limp platformer in a single sitting...but why bother?	5.0 5.0 4.0	
Manhunt	PS2	■ Rockstar's latest effort to keep the ESRB around	7.0 6.5 7.0	
Mario Golf: Advance Tour	GBA	■ Play with your putter on the bus—without getting arrested for once	9.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
Mario Pinball Land	GBA	■ Built for pinball muggles, not wizards—until tricky bosses tilt your temper	5.5 3.5 3.0	
Mario vs. Donkey Kong	GBA	■ The plumber and big ape clash again in this good, but not great, platformer/puzler	7.0 7.5 7.5	
McFarlane's Evil Prophecy	PS2	■ This half-assed, brainless beat-em-up is evil indeed	2.0 3.5 2.5	
Mega Man Anniversary Collection	PS2	■ This quality compendium is well worth it, but only for old fans	8.0 8.0 7.0	
Mega Man X: Command Mission	PS2/GC	■ His Blueness' first console RPG is decent, but strictly by the numbers	6.5 8.5 6.0	
Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes	GC	■ A solid if uninspired update of the PlayStation stealth-action classic	8.0 9.0 8.5	Silver
Metal Slug 3	XB	■ Fantastic but frustrating 2D side-scroller for the nimble-fingered	7.5 8.5 8.0	
Metroid: Zero Mission	GBA	■ Surprise twists supercharge this remake of space chick Samus' original romp	9.5 9.0 9.0	Gold
MLB 2005	PS2	■ A quick trip to the minors has made MLB a title contender again	7.0 7.0 7.0	



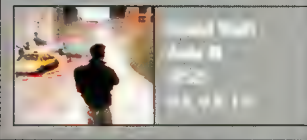
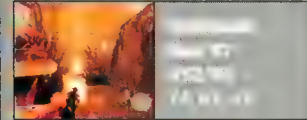


■ **The Guy Game:** Its tantalizingly low score (1.5, 1.0, 0.0) will arouse you!



GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
MLB SlugFest: Loaded	PS2/XB	■ Midway's slugger nearly clears the fences with its burning arcade play	8.0 7.0 8.0	
MVP Baseball 2004	PS2/XB/GC	■ EA's take on America's pastime clears the fences with an all-new batting system	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
NASCAR 2005: Chase for the Cup	PS2/XB/GC	■ A great game, even if your nickname isn't "Cooler"	9.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
NBA Ballers	PS2/XB	■ Midway's 1-on-1 baller has the skillz 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	9.0 9.5 9.0	Gold
NHL 2005	PS2/XB/GC	■ The Bob Probert of hockey games—all force, no finesse	6.0 6.0 7.0	
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	■ <i>Beverly Hills Ninja</i> on a scale of ninja-tude	6.0 5.5 5.0	
Ninja Gaiden	XB	■ Download more beautiful, brutal levels on Xbox Live	9.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Onimusha 3: Demon Siege	PS2	■ The soul-sucking series finale has us screaming "Vive la France!"	8.5 7.0 9.0	Silver
Onimusha Blade Warriors	PS2	■ Four-player <i>Smash Bros.</i> (GC)-style action cooked with an Oriental flavor packet	7.0 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
Phantom Brave	PS2	■ Only the mentally courageous will be able to handle this hardcore strategy-RPG	8.5 8.5 8.5	Silver
Pikmin 2	GC	■ Just when you think it's over, this flower-powered game grows a new adventure	8.5 9.0 9.0	Silver
Pokémon Colosseum	GC	■ Story mode injects some life into this otherwise mediocre Poké-battler	7.0 5.0 7.0	
Pokémon FireRed/LeafGreen	GC	■ Catch 'em all again for the first time in this greedy (yet great) remake	7.0 8.0 8.0	
Project Gotham Racing 2	XB	■ Where's the Batmobile? We want our money back	9.5 9.5 9.5	Gold
Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	PS2/XB	■ Better than bullet time, <i>Psi-Ops'</i> brain powers are mind blowing	8.0 7.5 7.5	
Puyo Pop Fever	GC	■ A classic puzzle game updated with new modes and short-bus-ready characters	7.0 7.0 7.0	
R: Racing Evolution	PS2/XB/GC	■ Not much of a racer, but the ladies look lovely	6.5 6.0 4.5	
RalliSport Challenge 2	XB	■ Who knew driving in Sweden could be so much fun?	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
Rainbow Six 3	XB	■ The shooting-gallery gameplay of single-player is redeemed online...	9.0 7.5 9.0	Silver
Rainbow Six 3	PS2	■ ...but not in this crippled, watered-down PS2 version	5.0 6.0 6.0	
Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow	XB	■ Mission pack for the squad-based FPS is worth it for its expanded online features	7.5 8.0 8.0	
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	■ A little help? Hello? If only this otherwise gripping online game had a gab function...	5.5 6.5 7.0	
R-Type Final	PS2	■ Remind your thumbs of yesterday with this fun throwback to '90s shooters	8.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
Samurai Jack: The Shadow of Aku	PS2/XB/GC	■ The TV show's axed, so this hack-n-slasher is all Jack fans have left	6.0 7.0 5.5	
Samurai Warriors	PS2	■ The series hasn't been there (Japan), but it's done that (skewer oodles of swordsmen)	7.0 6.5 7.5	
Second Sight	PS2/XB/GC	■ Earn mind powers that'd make Kreskin jealous, then use 'em to...flip switches	5.5 7.5 6.5	
Serious Sam: Next Encounter	PS2/GC	■ Never take your finger off the trigger in this dumb but fun first-person shooter	6.5 7.0 5.0	
Seven Samurai 20XX	PS2	■ So boring we wish it would slit its own wretched belly	3.5 3.5 4.0	
Shadow Hearts: Covenant	PS2	■ Delightfully weird WWI-era RPG with oddball characters and action-packed battles	7.5 8.5 7.0	
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	
ShellShock: Nam '67	PS2/XB	■ Boom-boom with the ladies after boom-booming the enemy in this grim shooter	7.0 6.0 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	
Showdown: Legends of Wrestling	PS2/XB	■ This glitchy grappler's retiree reek of Bengay	3.5 3.0 2.5	
Shrek 2	PS2/XB/GC	■ Made for the kiddies, but a fun four-player fairy tale all the same	7.5 6.0 5.0	
Silent Hill 4: The Room	PS2/XB	■ Claustrophobic chills upstage the now-familiar cadavers	7.5 7.5 7.5	
Siren	PS2	■ Battle hayseed zombies in this <i>Silent Hill</i> clone that's more convoluted than creepy	5.0 7.0 4.0	
Sly 2: Band of Thieves	PS2	■ Sony's slick, cartoony fox returns for madcap heists with his two partners in crime	9.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
Smash Court Tennis Pro Tournament 2	PS2	■ <i>Smash</i> may not look as good as Kourmiko, but hey, it plays better	7.0 8.0 8.0	
Spider-Man 2	PS2/XB/GC	■ Sticky-string commuting across New York City is a thrill, but combat's a tangled web	7.0 7.0 7.0	
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	XB	■ The ultimate stealth game with revolutionary 2-on-2 online multiplayer...	10 9.5 9.5	Gold
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	PS2	■ ...gets a little chopped up on PS2, but non-Xboxers won't even notice...	9.0 9.0 9.5	Gold
Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	GC	■ ...unlike GameCube owners, who'll wonder where the multiplayer modes went	7.0 8.0 7.5	
Spy Fiction	PS2	■ Spy fact: Creeping around like a third-rate Solid Snake kinda blows	5.5 3.0 5.0	
Star Ocean: Till the End of Time	PS2	■ Janky battles keep this epic RPG from attaining <i>Final Fantasy</i> -caliber status	7.0 7.0 7.5	
Star Wars Battlefront	PS2/XB	■ Shoot droids, stormtroopers, AT-ATs, X-wings, Ewoks, and Gungans online. 'Nuff said	8.0 8.0 9.0	Silver
Street Fighter Anniversary Collection	PS2	■ Celebrate a decade of street fighting with the champs of 2D combat	8.5 9.0 8.0	Silver
Street Racing Syndicate	PS2/XB/GC	■ <i>SRS</i> showed up fashionably late, but the race had already started	7.0 6.0 6.0	
Sudeki	XB	■ Microsoft's full-frontal action-RPG assault is kinda flat	4.5 6.0 5.5	
Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain	PS2	■ Low-fever shoot-em-up contaminated by foul controls	6.5 6.5 5.0	
Tales of Symphonia	GC	■ Solid adventure with a dippy plot, but RPG-starved Cubers won't mind	8.5 7.5 8.5	Silver
Terminator 3: The Redemption	PS2/XB/GC	■ Hasta la vista, quality gameplay. Hola, mondo explosion and so-so vehicle levels	4.0 2.5 5.0	
Test Drive: Eve of Destruction	PS2/XB	■ Slow, floaty, down-home dirt track racing with a side of grits	7.5 4.5 8.0	
Thief: Deadly Shadows	XB	■ Adjust your TV set in this too-dark game of grand theft bauble set in medieval times	7.0 7.0 8.5	
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005	PS2/XB/GC	■ The real-life Tiger may be struggling, but his virtual game remains well under par	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
Transformers	PS2	■ Carriers that change into mile-high robots? Doesn't get much cooler than that	8.0 7.5 7.5	
Under the Skin	PS2	■ This fun little multiplayer hors d'oeuvre needs more substance to stand on its own	5.5 4.0 4.0	
UFC: Sudden Impact	PS2	■ There comes a point in every fighter's career when it's time to hang it up	6.0 4.5 4.0	
Van Helsing	PS2/XB	■ Van doesn't mind biting <i>Devil May Cry</i> so long as he can stick it to the Count	7.0 6.5 6.0	
Viewtiful Joe	PS2	■ Stylish graphics and deep beat-em-up gameplay still rocks socks	8.5 8.5 9.0	Silver
Way of the Samurai 2	PS2	■ The way of the warrior presents plenty of branching paths, but they're all kinda boring	6.0 5.5 5.0	
WWE: Day of Reckoning	GC	■ We reckon wrestling fans should skip that day	5.5 5.0 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	

**BANNED IN AUSTRALIA**  
 (Censor board: "Violence, sexual content, and...")



**newly-minted platinum**



**KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC**

■ XB  
 ■ Released: July 2003  
 ■ Original Scores: 9.0, 10, 9.5  
 How close was *KOTOR* from wresting our 2003 Game of the Year award from the hands of that *Prince of Persia* guy? You'll have to wait for the History Channel documentary in 2018 to find out. Xbox owners who haven't already declared allegiance to the dark or light side, get it now for just \$19.99!



# tricks of the trade

cheaters may not prosper, but they get more out of their games

## trickster

Facial tattoos. It's all good fun until you realize they're permanent. Just ask Mike Tyson. So it's with no hesitation that we delve into this latest character accoutrement—learn how to scare small children with flowing ink designs all over your *Fable* character's cranium. And if you're a small child (or socially underdeveloped adult) yourself, there's always some Pokémon battles you should be perfecting. That, plus dead WWE superstars and their moves lists, plus *Madden*, too? Halloween or not, this is indeed the best month ever for tricks and tomfoolery.

—David S. J. Hodgson

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■ PS2

## SLY 2: BAND OF THIEVES

### Bonus Movies

Go to the Episode menu after defeating a boss. Wait eight to 10 seconds, and a graphic of Carmelita's badge will appear in the bottom left corner with a square-button icon. Push the square button, and you will receive a bonus movie. Defeat the five bosses to get all give extra flicks.



■ GC/PC/PS2/XB

## MADDEN NFL 2005

Madden Cards return in *Madden NFL 2005*, and it's up to you to complete the dizzying number of tasks to unlock them. Earn tokens to buy card packs by completing various Madden Challenge tasks during the game, working through the Mini-Camp and

successfully completing all the Football 101 plays. Note that some cards are unlocked only by getting a gold rating in the various standard and All-Madden events within Mini-Camp.

There are many card types to be collected. However, cards 188-281—

which include cheats and unlockable teams and stadiums—are the most sought after. With so many cards out there, we thought we'd give you a checklist that gives you the skinny on all the special cards and, when it applies, how to unlock them.

Card	Type	Name	Description
188	Cheat	1st and 15	This card requires your opponent to get 15 yards to reach a first down for one play (Bronze), the quarter (Silver), or the half (Gold).
189	Cheat	1 and 5	When this card is played, your first-down yards to go will be set to 5 for one play (Bronze), the quarter (Silver), or the half (Gold).
190	Cheat	Unforced	When this card is played, your opponent will fumble every time he tries to juke for one play (Bronze), the quarter (Silver), or the half (Gold).
191	Cheat	Extra Credit	This card awards 2 points for every interception and 1 point for every sack (Bronze), 3 points for every interception and 2 points for every sack (Silver), or 4 points for every interception and 3 points for every sack (Gold).
192	Cheat	Tight Fit	When this card is played, your opponent's uprights will be made very narrow for one play (Bronze), the quarter (Silver), or the half (Gold).
193	Cheat	5th Down	When this card is played, you will get 5 downs to make a first (one use) (Bronze), for the quarter (Silver), or for the half (Gold).
194	Cheat	3rd Down	When this card is played, your opponent will get only 3 downs to make a first (Bronze), for the quarter (Silver), or for the half (Gold).
195	Cheat	Human Plov	When this card is played, your Broken Tackles will increase by 25% (Bronze), 50% (Silver), or by 75% (Gold) for the game. Unlock by getting gold in the Ground Attack drill.
196	Cheat	Super Dive	When this card is played, your diving distance increases by 25% (Bronze), 50% (Silver), or 75% (Gold) for the game.
197	Cheat	Da Boot	When this card is played, you will receive unlimited field-goal range for one play (Bronze), for the quarter (Silver), or for the half (Gold). Unlock by getting gold in the Clutch Kicking drill.
198	Cheat	Da Bomb	When this card is played, you will receive unlimited pass range for one play (Bronze), for the quarter (Silver), or for the half (Gold).
199	Cheat	Lame Duck	When this card is played, your opponent will throw a lob pass for one play (Bronze), for the quarter (Silver), or for the half (Gold). Unlock by getting gold in the Swat Ball drill.
200	Cheat	Mistake Free	When this card is played, you can't fumble or throw an interception for one play (Bronze), for the quarter (Silver), or for the half (Gold).
201	Cheat	Fumbliitis	When this card is played, your opponent's fumbles will increase by 25% (Bronze), 50% (Silver), or 75% (Gold) for the game.
202	Cheat	BINGO!	When this card is played, your defensive interceptions will increase by 25% (Bronze), 50% (Silver), or 75% (Gold) for the game.
203	Cheat	Mr. Mobility	When this card is played, your QB can't be sacked for one play (Bronze), for the quarter (Silver), or for the half (Gold).
204	Cheat	Touchy	When this card is played, your opponent's penalties will increase by 50% for one play (Bronze), for the quarter (Silver), or for the half (Gold).
205	Cheat	Bad Spot	When this card is played, the ref will spot the ball 1 to 2 yards short for one play (Bronze), for the quarter (Silver), or for the half (Gold).
206	Cheat	Toast	When this card is played, your ability to burn a DB will increase by 25% (Bronze), by 50% (Silver), or by 75% (Gold) for the game.
207	Cheat	Jam	When this card is played, your ability to jam a WR will increase by 25% (Bronze), by 50% (Silver), or by 75% (Gold) for the game.
208	Cheat	Pocket Protect	When this card is played, your pass-blocking effectiveness will increase by 25% (Bronze), by 50% (Silver), or by 75% (Gold) for the game. Unlock by getting gold in the Pocket Presence drill.
209	Cheat	Penetration	When this card is played, your line penetration will increase by 25% (Bronze), by 50% (Silver), or by 75% (Gold) for the game. Unlock by getting gold in the Trench Fight drill.
210	Cheat	QB on Target	When this card is played, your QB accuracy will be 100% for one play (Bronze), for the quarter (Silver), or for the half (Gold). Unlock by getting gold in the Precision Passing drill.
211	Cheat	Coffin Corner	When this card is played, your punt will go out of bounds at the max distance for one play (Bronze), for the quarter (Silver), or for the half (Gold). Unlock by getting gold in the Coffin Corner drill.
212	Cheat	Wind Gust	When this card is played, field-goal kicks will receive a gust in your favor for one play (Bronze), for the quarter (Silver), or for the half (Gold).
213	Cheat	Hands of Glue	When this card is played, your catching ability will increase by 25% (Bronze), by 50% (Silver), or by 75% (Gold) for the game.
214	Cheat	Hands of Stone	When this card is played, your opponent's catching ability will decrease by 25% (Bronze), by 50% (Silver), or by 75% (Gold) for the game.
215	Cheat	Couch Potato	When this card is played, your opponent's fatigue will increase by 25% (Bronze), by 50% (Silver), or by 75% (Gold) for the game.
216	Cheat	Time Out	When this card is played, you will get unlimited time-outs for the current quarter (Bronze), half (Silver), or game (Gold).
217	Cheat	Ouch!	When this card is played, your opponent's injuries will increase by 25% (Bronze), by 50% (Silver), or by 75% (Gold) for the game.
218	Cheat	Worker's Comp	This card awards points (based on severity) whenever a player gets injured this quarter (Bronze), half (Silver), or game (Gold).
219	Cheat	Passerby	When this card is played, your QB can throw from beyond the line of scrimmage for one play (Bronze), for the quarter (Silver), or for the half (Gold).
220	Stdm	Super Bowl XXXIX	If you have this card, the Super Bowl XXXVIII stadium will be unlocked at Stadium Select (Gold).



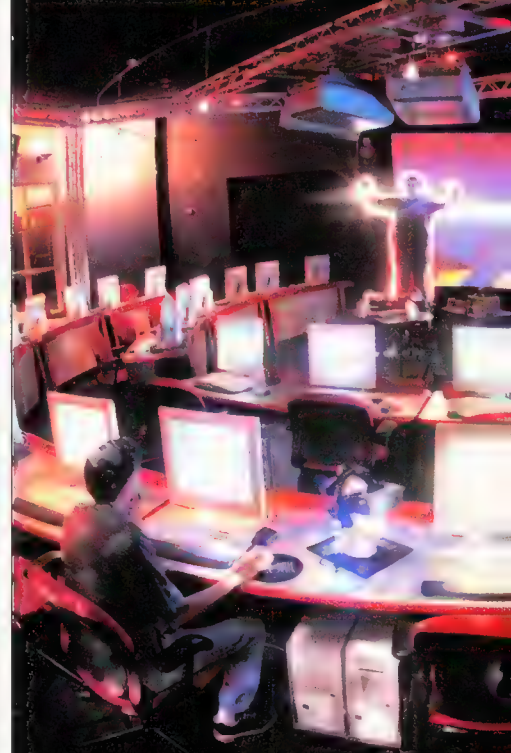
## TRICKS OF THE TRADE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIMA GAMES

You like collecting stuff. You really do. So if you're looking for all million and one *Madden NFL 2005* cards or every damn one of them Pokémons in *FireRed* and *LeafGreen*, then head to your local five-and-dime and pick up Prima Games' strategy guides for the full scoop. Also look for Prima guides on *Fable* and *WWE: Day of Reckoning!*



Card	Type	Name	Description
221	Stadium	Super Bowl XL	If you have this card, the Super Bowl XXXIX stadium will be unlocked at Stadium Select (Gold).
222	Stadium	Super Bowl XLI	If you have this card, the Super Bowl XL stadium will be unlocked at Stadium Select (Gold).
223	Stadium	Super Bowl XLII	If you have this card, the Super Bowl XLI stadium will be unlocked at Stadium Select (Gold).
224	Stadium	Aloha Stadium	If you have this card, Aloha Stadium (Pro Bowl) will be unlocked at Stadium Select (Gold).
225	Team	'58 Colts	If you have this card, the '58 Colts will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
226	Team	'66 Packers	If you have this card, the '66 Packers will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
227	Team	'68 Jets	If you have this card, the '68 Jets will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
228	Team	'70 Browns	If you have this card, the '70 Browns will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
229	Team	'72 Dolphins	If you have this card, the '72 Dolphins will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
230	Team	'74 Steelers	If you have this card, the '74 Steelers will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
231	Team	'76 Raiders	If you have this card, the '76 Raiders will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
232	Team	'77 Broncos	If you have this card, the '77 Broncos will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
233	Team	'78 Dolphins	If you have this card, you simply got one that is not needed to unlock (Gold).
234	Team	'80 Raiders	If you have this card, the '80 Raiders will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
235	Team	'81 Chargers	If you have this card, the '81 Chargers will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
236	Team	'82 Redskins	If you have this card, the '82 Redskins will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
237	Team	'83 Raiders	If you have this card, the '83 Raiders will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
238	Team	'84 Dolphins	If you have this card, the '84 Dolphins will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
239	Team	'85 Bears	If you have this card, the '85 Bears will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
240	Team	'86 Giants	If you have this card, the '86 Giants will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
241	Team	'88 49ers	If you have this card, the '88 49ers will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
242	Team	'90 Eagles	If you have this card, the '90 Eagles will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
243	Team	'91 Lions	If you have this card, the '91 Lions will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
244	Team	'92 Cowboys	If you have this card, the '92 Cowboys will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
245	Team	'93 Bills	If you have this card, the '93 Bills will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
246	Team	'94 49ers	If you have this card, the '94 49ers will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
247	Team	'96 Packers	If you have this card, the '96 Packers will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
248	Team	'98 Broncos	If you have this card, the '98 Broncos will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
249	Team	'99 Rams	If you have this card, the '99 Rams will be unlocked at Team Select (Gold).
250	Cheer	Bears Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Bears (Gold).
251	Cheer	Bengals Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Bengals (Gold).
252	Cheer	Bills Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Bills (Gold).
253	Cheer	Broncos Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Broncos (Gold).
254	Cheer	Browns Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Browns (Gold).
255	Cheer	Buccaneers Ch.	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Buccaneers (Gold).
256	Cheer	Cardinals Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Cardinals (Gold).
257	Cheer	Chargers Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Chargers (Gold).
258	Cheer	Chiefs Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Chiefs (Gold).
259	Cheer	Colts Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Colts (Gold).
260	Cheer	Cowboys Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Cowboys (Gold).
261	Cheer	Dolphins Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Dolphins (Gold).
262	Cheer	Eagles Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Eagles (Gold).
263	Cheer	Falcons Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Falcons (Gold).
264	Cheer	49ers Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the 49ers (Gold).
265	Cheer	Giants Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Giants (Gold).
266	Cheer	Jaguars Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Jaguars (Gold).
267	Cheer	Jets Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Jets (Gold).
268	Cheer	Lions Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Lions (Gold).
269	Cheer	Packers Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Packers (Gold).
270	Cheer	Panthers Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Panthers (Gold).
271	Cheer	Patriots Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Patriots (Gold).
272	Cheer	Raiders Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Raiders (Gold).
273	Cheer	Rams Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Rams (Gold).
274	Cheer	Ravens Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Ravens (Gold).
275	Cheer	Redskins Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Redskins (Gold).
276	Cheer	Saints Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Saints (Gold).
277	Cheer	Seahawks Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Seahawks (Gold).
278	Cheer	Steelers Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Steelers (Gold).
279	Cheer	Titans Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Titans (Gold).
280	Cheer	Texans Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Texans (Gold).
281	Cheer	Vikings Cheer	When this card is played, it will pump up the crowd for the Vikings (Gold).

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► Xbox  
**FABLE**

**Face Tattoos**

Unlike in the real world where it would break your mother's heart, *Fable* grants you the ability to smack a tattoo

across your face. Provided is a list of five face tattoos, their charisma stats, and how to acquire them. The choice is yours, but remember: Choose wisely.

*Note: if you unintentionally end up looking like Mike Tyson, you can always get tattoos removed by any tattooist at a cost of 200.*

Tattoo	Description	Cost	Attract.	Scariness	Align.	Where Acquired
 Arrowhead	Worn by the Old Kingdom archers, this symbol was supposed to focus their eyesight into total perfection.	46	+12	-12	+0	Stolen from a home in the north row of Hook Coast.
 Arrow Tongue	A distortion of an Old Kingdom tattoo used by archers, this is the symbol of Hook Coast demagogues.	46	+12	-12	+0	Sold by a Greatwood tattooist.
 Coron Visor	One of the many decorative images created by Hook Coast artist Ekken Coron.	32	+0	+0	+0	Fished from the pier at Orchard Farm and sold by wandering tattooists.
 Howl	Ancient Knothole Glade warriors.	46	+12	-12	+0	In Witchwood Stones and Heroes' Guild Demon Doors bookcases; shoplifted/sold in Knothole Glade tattoo shop; dug up in Lychfield Cemetery.
 Spiral Dementia	This pattern is used in parts of Albion to mark mental patients that are considered lost causes.	57	+0	+20	-20	Stolen from farthest-west home in Oakvale.

■ GBA

**POKÉMON FIRE RED AND LEAF GREEN**

**Vermilion City Gym Battle: Lt. Surge**

Gotta catch 'em all! But before you are going to be able to do so, you are going to have to get past the gym leader in Vermilion City, Lt.

Surge. Here are some Poké-tips to help you get through.

After you defeat the captain aboard the S.S. *Anne*, head to the gym for an encounter with Lt. Surge, the gym leader of Vermilion City. To ensure victory, your Pokémon should be at least levels 18 to 21 before taking him on.

Lt. Surge has a few trainers on hand that you must first clear before reaching the final battle. To better prepare you for these first trials, here is the breakdown of the Pokémon each trainer possesses:

- Trainer A:** Pikachu LV21; Pikachu LV21
- Trainer B:** Voltorb LV21; Magnemite LV21
- Trainer C:** Pikachu LV23



**Lt. Surge:** Voltorb LV21; Pikachu LV18; Raichu LV24

After taking out Trainers A, B, and C, you must solve a puzzle to progress to the final brawl with the lieutenant. You must check each of the pails found throughout the area, and when you find the first switch, check one of the nearby pails for the other switch to lower the energy field in front of Lt. Surge. The locations of the switches are random, so keep looking for them until the gate drops. Now it's time to take down Lt. Surge.

This gym leader won't prove difficult, though his level 24 Raichu is a pain because he uses Double Team to avoid your attacks. Matchup types: Because Lt. Surge heavily uses electric Pokémon, employ Diglett (or Dugtrio) or any other of the ground-type Pokémon (Geodude, for example). Also keep plenty of Paralyze Heal on hand because even hitting his Pokémon results in paralyzation.

After defeating Lt. Surge, you get the Thunder Badge, as well as TM34 Shock Wave to add to your collection.

■ GameCube

**WWE DAY OF RECKONING**

**Legendary Superstars**

There are five legendary superstars in *Day of Reckoning*, four of whom must be unlocked for exhibition mode play by completing story mode stages. All special moves are performed by pressing A + B while in your special state. You must have at least one special slot filled in order to enter your special state.

**Rowdy Roddy Piper**

Unlocked from the beginning.

**Andre the Giant**

Complete stage one of story mode.

**Greg the Hammer**

Complete stage two of story mode.

**Brutus the Barber**

Complete stage two of story mode.

**Bret the Hitman**

Complete stage three of story mode.

**TOP 5 TRICKS**

■ PS2/XB  
**DRIV3R**



**Immunity Code**

Enter this code at the Main menu for complete police immunity. For PS2, press Circle, Circle, L1, L2, R1, R2, Square. For Xbox, press X, Y, right trigger, right trigger, left trigger, left trigger, Y.

■ Xbox  
**Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow**



**Laser Code**

Enter this code during gameplay to make your enemies or your teammates fire lasers instead of bullets: Up, Down, Up, Down, click right thumbstick, click right thumbstick.

■ PS2/XB/GC  
**MVP Baseball 2004**



**Huge Hat Code**

Want to wear a hat so huge that you can be seen from space? Then create a player with the name John Prosen. No lady will be able to resist you with this hat.

■ PS2  
**Silent Hill 4: The Room**



**The Chain Saw**

Complete the game. Load that save. In the forest world, there is an area with an abandoned car. Look near the tree trunk to find the beloved chain saw.

■ PS2  
**Hot Shots Golf Fore!**



With so many characters to unlock, how does one decide which to use? Unlock these characters by beating them in the single-player vs. mode:

- |        |         |        |
|--------|---------|--------|
| Allan  | Brad    | Chaos  |
| Emma   | Falcon  | Hubert |
| Jak    | Kamala  | Lin    |
| Louise | Maya    | Misaki |
| Phoebe | Ratchet | Regis  |
| Renee  | Sam     | T-Bone |
| Toni   | Z       | Zeus   |

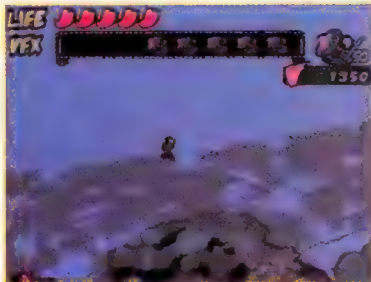




VS.



■ "Your airplane impression is remarkable."



■ Cheating can be viewtiful.

■ PS2  
**Viewtiful Joe**

(M) **Must Be On**  
VJF6-5QA5-8QPED  
T5TM-7PF5-13M62

**Exclusive**

**Perfect Scoring**  
66TB-XT6M-MJW6C  
J7WC-25VD-UN42C  
PYVM-550D-8G5NE  
Z1QH-UGK7-YGN1N

**Infinite Health**  
QWNA-CEFR-CJ5VP  
TTB6-GYAB-29DE3

**Infinite VFX Gauge**  
GX6Y-PY9Q-999B1  
DV8E-VYYB-VXH6Y

**Max V-Points**  
DBFC-M37M-ADPRG  
5ME3-4Q1R-37FX9

**Infinite Lives**  
152T-M7JU-UY4RW  
86JJ-2XYZ-3DUBM

**Mach Speed Level 3**  
4AG3-AYA4-JKG85  
41BR-21MV-TP0T3

**Infinite V-Boomerangs**  
JVAV-5JTU-6WTW1  
4W93-5E8R-RM22R

**Infinite Bombs**  
36QM-K9GU-1FG83  
2BZ6-4388-7XQNC

**All Upgrades**  
6QMF-NKEE-7FNVR  
G3D5-1B77-F131H

■ GC  
**Splinter Cell  
Pandora  
Tomorrow**

(M) **Must Be On**  
MZ9G-JWFC-JGA6J  
JRQQ-C42P-30J83

J0C8-K436-4E4X5  
3PA0-678R-VVTT4  
ZN25-P6PH-4KF8C

**Infinite Ammo**  
MWTW-YCNK-7Q34E  
TAT3-Y1YQ-N1WN1  
36BG-4V77-MVWQC  
A32J-HF0G-7V73H  
9BY9-T6G4-5K1A0  
HGZ9-CKFU-AVJXQ

**Enemies Cannot  
Sense You**  
VR9X-RWY2-08BD8  
FRYH-2BYU-1TJER

**Idiot A.I.**  
E4R0-JTFA-1ZX25  
2D4C-P0FZ-MWTMW

■ GC  
**Madden  
NFL 2005**

(M) **Must Be On**  
4509-X3AG-KUA5C  
6KBE-AH8J-XB4W4

**Press D-pad  
Left for First Down**  
6XKC-DMCC-6AJ7D  
5BRM-G3J6-NFQUC  
7M1H-CGP9-V3N7J

**Press R + B  
for More Time**  
W9HH-H6VP-8RUB1  
V4YQ-21FQ-GRN7Q  
M569-WKVD-HG4FW

**Press Z + B for More  
Play-Selection Time**  
D4CH-130A-W1PR0  
Y2JY-QHFD-CGWZP  
YR70-7922-FT0C7

■ PS2  
**Madden 2005:  
Collector's  
Edition**

(M) **Must Be On**  
9847A9AE 78FA17CF  
2816ED40 01A77A65  
2816EDD8 A1FE2CB0  
2816EDED 828F7A3F

**Profile 1 Codes:  
Max Tokens Earned**  
29F9B21E 0C517867

**Profile 1 Codes:  
Max Tokens Spent**  
29F9B2D4 0C517867

**Profile 1 Codes:  
Max Token Balance**  
29F9B262 0C517867

**Profile 1 Codes:  
No Tokens Earned**  
29F9B21E 0CA57A65

**Profile 1 Codes:  
No Tokens Spent**  
29F9B2D4 0CA57A65

**Profile 1 Codes:  
No Token Balance**  
29F9B262 0CA57A65

**Exclusive**  
■ PS2  
**Viewtiful Joe**

(M) **Must Be On**  
9831FC15 7848D293



■ Under the sea, SpongeBob moon-jumps.

2816ED40 F7D07A65  
2816EDD8 A1C9219E  
2816EDED 80D043D4

**Press R2 for  
Mega Jump**  
D5609B66 BFB88886  
24F25208 44B057B8

**1 V-Film Equals 50**  
249393EC 1E65450B  
(Don't use with any  
other V-Film code!)

**1 V-Film Equals 99**  
240393E8 1E65450B  
(Don't use with any  
other V-Film code!)

**Exclusive**  
■ GBA  
**SpongeBob  
SquarePants:  
The Movie**

(M) **Must Be On**  
92817CCA621  
BD3C5CD953A0  
94A86B887723

**Moon Jump**  
8EC724D977A3  
B13F5DC5301E

**Quick Charge**  
E47D15B2C14C

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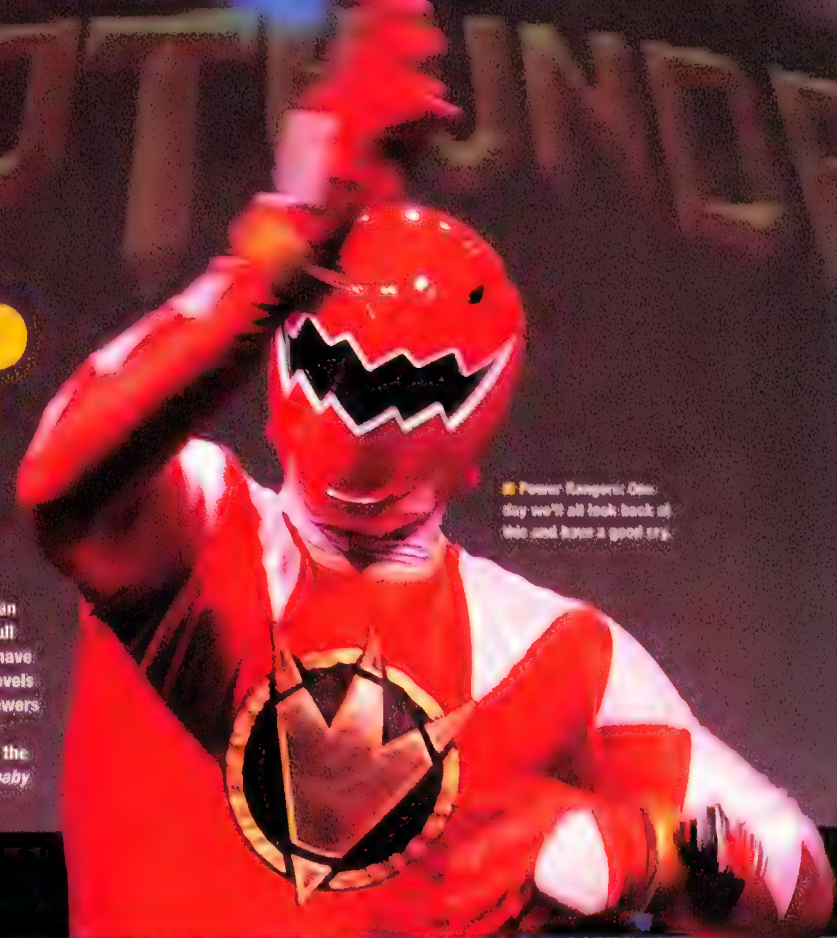


# REST OF THE CRAP

## Baby games for babies

**W**hen reviewing a game, it's ethical to play it all the way through, and to be honest, most of my *EGM* colleagues do that no matter what the cost. If you invite a gaming journalist to a party and he (or she!) says he can't make it, change all the words in the excuse to "I need to beat *Pelvic Scorpion Saga* by Monday morning." This level of professionalism is not expected from me when I'm

forced to evaluate *Puppet Hugs* for Game Boy. That's why I judged each of this month's games on less than an hour of gameplay, knowing full well that the designers may have intentionally made the first levels crappy just to trick lazy reviewers like me into panning them. If that's the case, nice work on the trick, idiots! —Seanbaby



■ *Power Rangers: Dino* day we'll all look back at this and have a good cry.



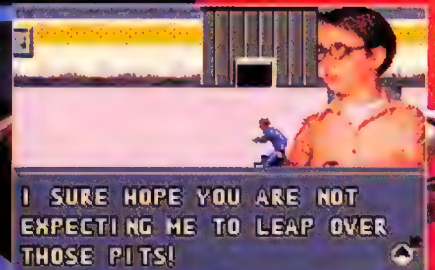
■ A duck on a skateboard? Now I've seen everything!

### Sitting Ducks • PS2

Sadly, with all the sharks and lawn mowers in the world, a lot of people are missing their arms and legs and have to control their PlayStation games through prayer and watermelon seed spitting. *Sitting Ducks* requires a skill level somewhere below that.

It plays like *Grand Theft Auto*, in that you can waddle anywhere you like in the city and accept different missions. Only in this game, every single mission involves steering your goddamn duck across one city block. The only way to lose health is to bump into walls or duck pedestrians, and grabbing the feathers that pop out of you will give it right back. This, combined with a top speed of just above stationary, makes it impossible to kill your duck, even on purpose. Believe me, I tried.

**True story of duck invincibility:** This isn't the first time I've tangled with unkillable ducks. On a recent camping trip, my friend Bill and I built a catapult by nailing his saucepan to a tree by the river, and then we launched rocks at the local ducks with all the murderous intent Bill's cooking gear would allow. Well, I discovered something that day: You can't kill a duck with a catapult. The little bastards have some kind of death-rocks-from-the-sky catapult sense. I tell you this story as a cautionary tale, and because I couldn't bring myself to type one more sentence about that boring-ass *Sitting Ducks* game.



### Thunderbirds • GBA

The Thunderbirds are so specialized, they all have to collaborate just to walk down a hallway. A tiny pit becomes a treacherous obstacle since the youngest Thunderbird can't be bothered to hop. You'll soon learn to hate him, as every puzzle is based around his refusal to step over a damn two-foot gap, and the fact that he's the only one blessed with the ability of somersault won't make up for it.

*Thunderbirds'* puzzles take seconds to solve and a lifetime to finish. At a glance, you'll see what to do. Leave the useless somersaulter on a switch to hold a door open and think about what he's done, then send the one who knows how to shove crates to clear a path through the fire-breathing walls. What really makes me mad is that none of the designers thought to include a button that says, "Hey, *Thunderbirds*. I see how to do it. Let's just assume we went through the hours of backtracking and character switching and skip to the next level."

**Two games in one!** There's also a flight combat mode. As you can imagine, when you tell an uninspired development team rushing out a bad licensed game to go ahead and make a second one, the fun doesn't exactly double. It's not the worst shooter I've ever seen, but I have this messed-up job. For a normal person, hell yes it's the worst shooter you've ever seen.



■ *DinoSAUR!!!* Flying through ia-ZERS!!! Pchu! Pchuuu!

### Power Rangers Dino Thunder • GBA

If the entire population of your city changed their names to "Monotonous Monotonous" and you were tied to a robot reading the phone book, it would barely begin to describe this game. You fight a ninja. He sometimes turns from dark green to black, but make no mistake, it's him again, and he dies with one hit. To beat a level, you kill a certain number of him, and then, with no boss fight whatsoever, you move on. That's right, there's not even a half-assed boss of the ninja stacked on top of himself to form Double Ninja. You're just done.

Some levels switch it up by forcing you to explore and find all the whatever's, which is when you'll notice that the areas are as identical as your enemy. Good luck remembering which areas you've been to when your only landmark is the slightly different placement of garbage cans in the background. This game is less fun than playing with a Lego. One Lego.

**Fun and games:** After you beat a level, you'll unlock different types of bonus dinosaurs! Take this multiple choice *Power Rangers Dino Thunder* Super Quiz to see if you can guess what that does for you!

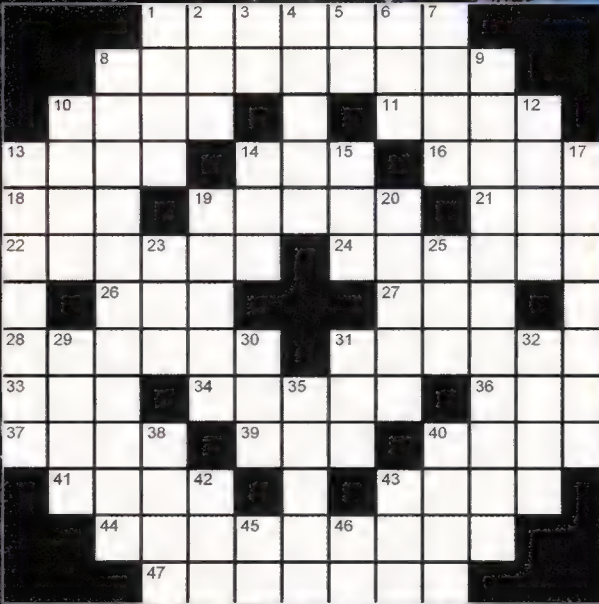
- A. Next level, your ninja becomes a different color.
- B. Who cares?
- C. The color of your ninja's costume changes during the next level.
- D. All of the above. 🐉

Photograph by Vince Buccaferrri Images



# YOU SAY GOOD-BYE, I SAY HALO

(Solution on page 181)



## ACROSS

1. PS1 two-part RPG series
8. Dreamcast's *Neo* relies on it
10. Professional portable garnering gaming popularity
11. Saturn-era *Virtua* fighter
13. *MLB 2004* bag
14. *Golden*-or *Medal of Honor: Rising*
16. "Aladdin of *Aladdin* (Genesis), for one
18. Super Nintendo *Raiser*
19. Part of *Mr. Bones* (Saturn)
21. Club for gun-game fans?
22. Prickly *Halo* ammo
24. These restore health in *Final Fantasy*
26. Dreamcast's *Kao's* species, for short
27. Bond's martini mix-in
28. Excellent edible while gaming?
31. Created *Halo*
33. *Pokémon's* Ketchum
34. *Superball* of NES fame
36. *GT3's* Mustang Cobra epithet
37. *Burnout* slide
39. Pick up a weapon
40. Short for *Ace Combat* air-to-air attacks?
41. *SPCOM* subject
43. NES side-scroller *Low*
44. *Star Wars* *Starfighter* enemy ship target, for one
47. *Halo 2* ads?
5. Extra innings?
6. Scoreless score?
7. Home to *Dynasty Warriors*
8. *Halo* hexo
9. *Castlevania* whip upgrade
10. *NASCAR Heat* speed-setting cat
12. Fight Mr. Big in this arcade/NES side-scroller
13. *Super Monkey Ball* objectives
14. You can't do this to cloaked *Halo* Elites
15. *Ratchet & Clank* collection item
17. Also known as field goals in *NBA Live*
19. *Halo* inhabitants
20. Like latest *Bond* offering's *Agent*
23. *The Simpsons: Road Rage* Homerism
25. Band that spawned *Quake* sound-track artist, for short
29. What *The Guy Game* host Matt Sadler does to girls
30. *Baldur's Gate 2* subtitle, for short
31. Background music, for short
32. Koloff of *Legends of Wrestling*
35. 12-down subject matter
38. *Second Sight* nonlethal ammo
40. Snake uses a mic to find him in *Metal Gear Solid 2*
42. Bruce of Xbox *Quest of the Dragon*
43. *GT3* Skyline epithet
45. *NCAA Football's* Hawkeye state, for short
46. *Man* of upcoming cartoon turned game

## DOWN

1. Like Green Ioun Stone of 30 down
2. You're readin' it!
3. Rachel's occupational title in *Silent Hill 2*?
4. Given to Richard in *Resident Evil* (GC)

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PS Form 3526, October 1999 (Reverse)





# FINAL WORD

## Two geeks > one



The catwalk lights up as *Halo 2*'s Master Chief shows off his lavender Mjolnir armor ensemble, complete with coordinating purple banshees.

**W**e don't do boring ol' editorials or op-ed pieces 'round these parts. Instead, we let two gaming editors verbally duke it out. Sometimes they see eye to eye—sometimes they argue and insult each other. Aww...just like married people. At the altar this month: *EGM* Executive Editor Mark "Loves Halo" MacDonald and (sister mag) *GMR* Associate Editor Christian "Loves Hamsters" Nutt.

### Can *Halo 2* live up to its hype?

**Mark:** Absolutely. Ask anyone who's played even the early, stripped-down multiplayer version of *Halo 2* and you'll get the same answer. And seeing as how no

one knows hardly anything about single player, there'll be plenty of surprises.

**Christian:** You were hoping I'd come out against it, right? But actually, I think there's a really good chance it will live up to the hype. Developer Bungie is taking its time to make sure this game is spectacular. They seem to be aware of the problems with the original, and more importantly, they're really putting it through the paces internally. But will it be the best game ever? I doubt it.

### Was the first *Halo* overhyped?

**Christian:** When *Halo* was going to be a PC game, I remember people acting like

**"Yes, you enjoy tickling Pokémon with the touch screen while I play *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes*."**

idiots over the handful of screenshots that they saw. I instantly got sick of it and stopped paying attention. When it switched to the Xbox, I had almost forgotten it existed, and it took me by surprise.

**Mark:** I don't think you were alone; pre-release, most gamers had little idea what to expect from *Halo*—no surprise since practically the entire game came together in just the last few months of development. Postrelease, the game got the near-perfect scores it deserved. I've seen every type of player—hardcore, casual and even nongamers—pick it up once and get immediately addicted.

**Christian:** Well, I wasn't addicted. I still only play *Halo* multiplayer occasionally, due to peer pressure. Damn peers.

**If you can only play one of these, which would you pick and why? *Halo 2* (XB), *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* (PS2), *Metal Gear Solid 3* (PS2), and *Metroid Prime 2* (GC).**

**Mark:** Not to sound like a total *Halo* whore, but yeah, *Halo 2*. Between the single- and multiplayer online modes, there's just more game there than the others. And it's been my most-wanted for years now...

**Christian:** The truth is, I'm probably not going to play any of them—at least not right away. I'd probably pick *Metroid Prime 2*, though, because nothing has quite the atmosphere of *Metroid*. Actually, screw that. I want my head messed with, even if I don't like stealth. Give me *Metal Gear Solid 3*.

**Mark:** Wait, are you implying you actually enjoyed the story in *MGS2*?

**Christian:** Actually, I haven't played it yet. Like I said, I don't like stealth. But your esteemed previews editor, Mr. Bettenhausen, has assured me that I would love the story. Remember, you're talking to someone who understands *Evangelion* and *Xenosaga*.

**What if we said you can have either ALL these games OR upcoming portables Nintendo DS and Sony PSP and every game that will ever come out for those two, even though you don't know what those games are. But if you pick**

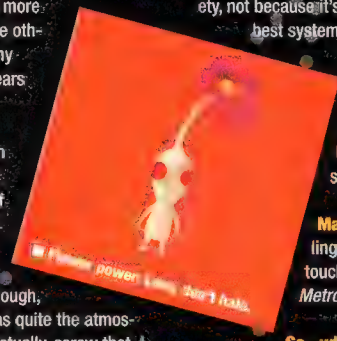


**one package, you can never, ever have the other.**

**Mark:** Man, these questions are getting complicated—maybe I should have my lawyer read this over before I answer? I'd choose the above console games; all four are practically guaranteed to kick ass. Bird in the hand and all.

**Christian:** Mark, Mark, Mark. Don't be so afraid of new horizons. I didn't even have to think about it! Bold frontiers, tons of games. I love the PS2 because of its variety, not because it's technologically the best system...because it's not.

How else could I answer? Give me a DS and a lifetime supply of Japanese hamster-petting simulations.



**Mark:** Yes, you enjoy tickling Pokémon with the touch screen while I play *Metroid Prime 2*.

**So...what's up with *Pikmin 2* (GC)? Heard you two were arguing over it.**

**Christian:** I try, and I try, and I can't understand how you can give this game an 8.5 or a 9.0. Nobody calls out the dungeons—the incredibly lame, lazily designed dungeons, which make up *more than half of the game!* Mark sort of hinted that they sucked in his review...but come on. Asleep at the wheel!

**Mark:** Hey, I called out the dungeons! I totally agree they are flawed, though I don't think they got too bad until later in the game. Crispin and Shawn actually enjoyed them—go figure. Anyway I think the new pikmin colors, second leader character, and overall polish still make it one of the best Cube games out there.









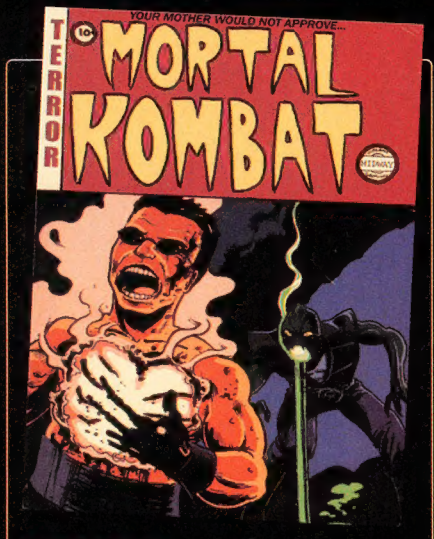


Hello, kiddies! It's your old fiend the gravedigger here with more hoary haunts from the videogame vault, just in time for Halloween!  
 Videogames always have such scary-tale endings, don't they? The kingdom gets saved, our hero

gets the ghoul—sounds like everything turns out picture perfect! But not all the time...screams don't always come true...but sometimes nightmares do!  
 Follow me on a tour of the moldy videogame mausoleum, in a creature feature I like to call...

# BAD WAYS TO GO

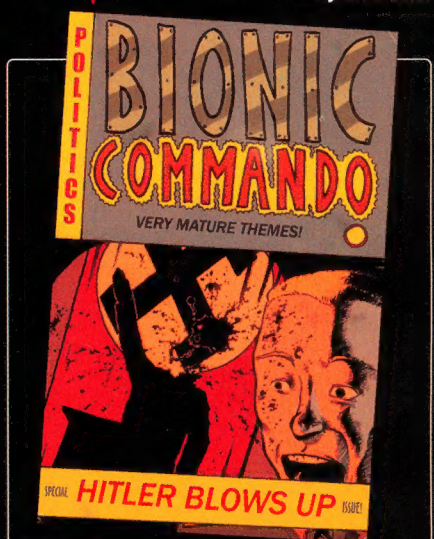
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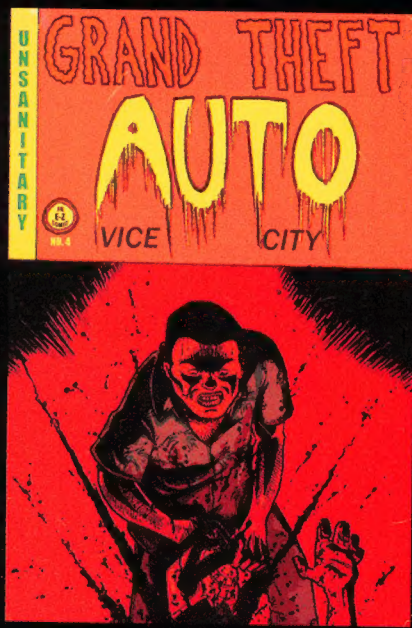
**Mortal Kombat**  
 "Remember *Mortal Kombat*, kiddies? This gruesome game scared up a lot of business back in the '90s! You could perform a fatality horrifying mothers and delighting onlookers the world over!  
 "The *Mortal Kombat* series lurches on, adding new Komatants to its rosters with each new resurrection! But don't fret, kiddies, you can still count on seeing all of your old fiends in bit parts! I just wonder which bits they'll use...."



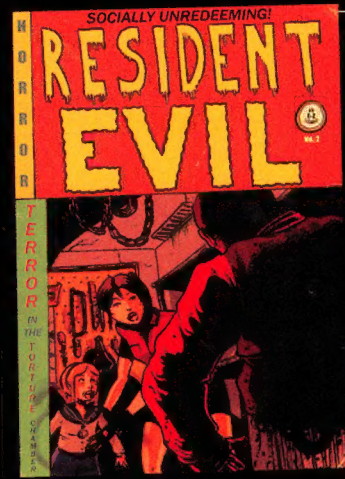
**Clock Tower**  
 "The original, Japanese *Clock Tower* told the sinister story of innocent young Jennifer and her three friends—a quivering quartet of orphans who were adopted, en masse, by a reclusive gentleman who lived inside a large old house far from human civilization. That this did not set off warning bells is a testament to how young and innocent they were....  
 "Will Jennifer ever return to that moldy mansion? Only grime will tell!"



**Bionic Commando**  
 "The plot of this moldy oldie originally revolved around a plan that for some reason required digging up Hitler. Publisher Capcom changed it for the U.S. release, yet the final boss remained Hitler himself!  
 "When you finally meet, you are given a single shot to dispose of him: a shot that results in a close-up animation of Hitler's head exploding! Can you imagine the looks of the Nazi guard when der Führer's face hailed on them? Ha ha ha ha! Whew!"



**Grand Theft Auto: Vice City**  
 "Poor Gonzalez! All he did was skim a little off the top, and his boss decided to skim the top off of him!  
 "GTA: *Vice City* featured 99 ways to die, give or take. Our hero Tommy Vercetti tended to give! Whether stabbing a pedestrian with a screwdriver or spinning donuts on rescue personnel, Mr. Vercetti knew how to murder his free time.  
 "Of all the weapons, the chain saw seems to stick out most clearly in my mind—and in Gonzalez's, of course! When Cortez presented this diabolical device, you could sense gamers the world over just dying to give someone a splitting headache!  
 "Though many gamers are still stalking the streets of Vice City, you can bet your bones that there will be gory gobs of new ways to kill some time when *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* is released!"



**Resident Evil**  
 "Chief Brian Irons of the Raccoon City Police Department was an odd buzzard, to say the least. His horrific hobbies included fine art, taxidermy, rape, torture, mutilation, and speaking in such a flat-out creepy tone of voice that one wonders how he could so much as order a putrid pizza, much less make chief of police, without strong suspicions that he was a dangerous psychopath.  
 "What set the excruciating exit of Police Chief Irons apart is that he actually had two deaths! When it came to sheer variety, Police Chief Irons delivered the goods...  
 "...all over the place!"

Well, it looks like that's about all we have time for tonight, boys and ghouls! Until next Halloween, this is your old pal the gravedigger wishing you all a good fright! 'Bye now!





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