

SPECIAL ISSUE: 2005 VIDEOGAME PREVIEW FEATURE

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SPECIAL FEATURE

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January 2005 issue 187
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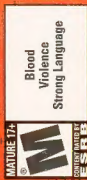
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PlayStation 2



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And, from the looks of things, not much future.

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PlayStation 2



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PlayStation 2



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2005 PREVIEWS

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Funny reviews and funny pages

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COVER STORY: AFTERGLOW

By now you've probably beaten *Halo 2*, *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, *Metrod Prime 2*, or *Metal Gear Solid 3*, but that doesn't mean you're done. We've got developer interviews, stuff to try, and things you may have missed to keep you playing long after the credits roll.

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editorial



your thinkin' caps and analyze this:

True or false? If Game A's review score > Game B's review score, then Game A > Game B.

Is Game A always better than Game B in this equation? Normally, we'd encourage you to figure out the answer

by yourself, but not this time. The answer is no. The reason I'm bringing this up is because we got this question all the time, especially from the game companies whose products we're reviewing: "Hey, if this game is better than that game last year, why didn't it score higher?"

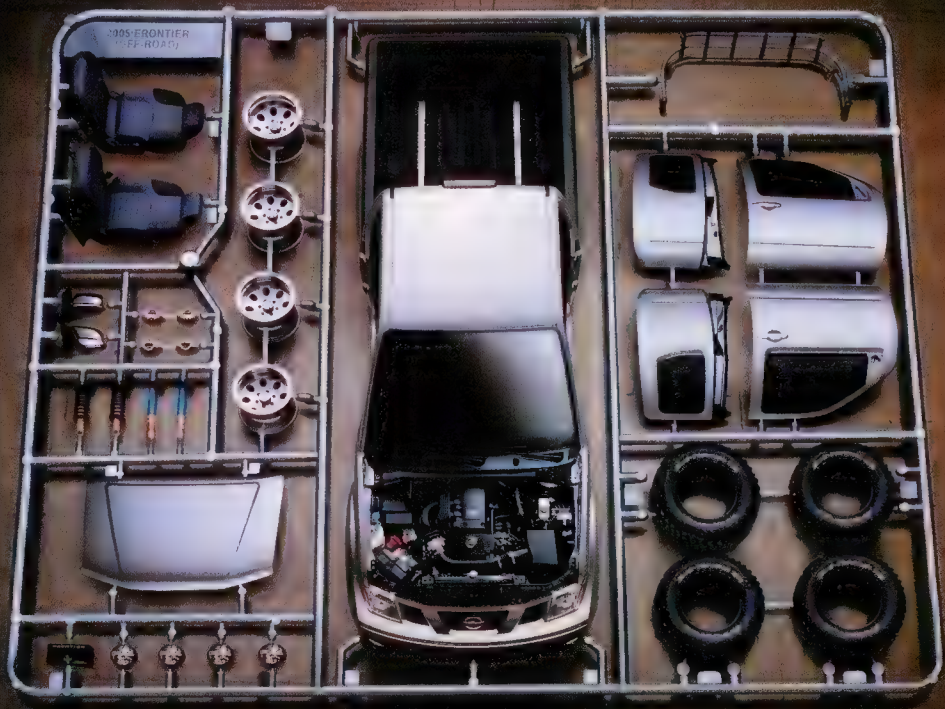
John Madden can help clear this up. Except for a brief time in the late '90s, almost every *Madden NFL* game has improved from year to year, right? So technically, each year's edition is better than the last, but if we were forced to score each improved version higher, then *Madden* would've capped out at 10 out of

10 a long time ago. Obviously, we can't review games like that.

As time goes on, bars are raised, so review standards change. An amazing, innovative game that reviewed really well a couple of years ago may see an improved sequel that's technically better, but scored lower because we've now seen those innovations and the sequel doesn't wow us like the last game did.

So when you're comparing anyone's (not just ours) review scores from game to game, especially when they're not from the same genre or platform, keep this stuff in mind!

—Dan "Shoe" Hsu, Editor-in-Chief



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>THE BEST GAME COVERAGE

The screenshot shows the 1UP.com website interface. At the top, there are navigation links for HOME, PLATFORMS, MAGAZINES, GAMES, SOCIALIZE, GAMES CHEATS, and INVITE. A search bar is located on the right. The main content area features an article for Halo 2, titled "Halo 2 EGM's Dan Hsu played the Xbox's biggest game ever, and he'd like to tell you all about it". The article includes a "User Hype" section with an "Average Member Rating" and a "Write Your Own Hype!" link. Below the article, there are several "User Hype" entries from other users, each with a profile picture and a "Full Hype" link. On the left side, there are sections for "LUP RANKINGS", "more 1UP videos?", "Screenshots", and "Slideshow". At the bottom, there are links for "User Hype" and "See All User Hype".

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- John Davison San Rafael 39235
- James Sun San Francisco 39260
- Sam Kennedy San Francisco 80885
- Mike Ng San Francisco 99620

You share 0 clubs

You share 0 interests

Check out that Splinter Cell collection!

Money plays... so not money?

Dan's Games

Collection	Tracked Games	Wish List	Favs
1UP Rank	Trade	Play Online	Expert Value
Ultima VIII: Pagan Lords	1	1	1
Ultima VII: The Black Gate	1	1	1
Ultima VII Part II: Serpent's Isle	1	1	1
Ultima VI: The False Prophet	1	1	1
Ultima V: Warriors of Destiny	1	1	1

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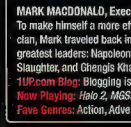
staff

not just a vague phallic reference anymore

the review crew



DAN "SHOE" HSU, Editor-in-Chief
Sho decided to go to bed by 1:00 a.m. After *Halo 2*'s release, that meant he's moved up to 4:00 a.m. But he still has to get up for work at 8:00 a.m. If you do the math, that means Sho should be dead by age 25. Can he sue Microsoft for this?
1UP.com Blog: egms shoe.1UP.com
Now Playing: *Halo 2, GTA: San Andreas, Super Mario 64 DS*
Fave Games: Just about everything



MARK MACDONALD, Executive Editor
To make himself a more effective overlord of EGM's new *Halo 2* clan, Mark traveled back in time to gather the DNA of history's greatest leaders: Napoleon, Ivan the Terrible, Montezuma, Sgt. Slaughter, and Genghis Khan, with just a hint of Bret Michaels.
1UP.com Blog: Blogging to agitate Mark's religion
Now Playing: *Halo 2, MSX3: Snake Eater, WarWare DS*
Fave Games: Action, Adventure, Shooters



Guest Reviewers

ROBERT ASHLEY
Robert got funky with an Eyefrog game, but it was certainly no *Antigrav*.



JOSHUA GINN
Josh decided to grow out his hair this month. Even the shikhus love it.



GREG FORD
Ford's to-do list: Watch. Sex with it all, check. Solve. *San Andreas*: not even close.



KEVIN GIFFORD
Hibernia: what you Kevin hibernates in their stacks of unemployed games.



DAN LEAHY
This month's basketball games had Dan seeing nothing but net.



NICH SPANGARO
Nich marries time pondering *Zion's* art style while riding the street bus to work.



PATRICK MAURO
No simply known as that guy with a beard who hosts a radio show.



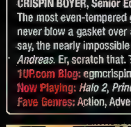
EVAN SHAMDON
Evan hunts wild vegetables. He also writes about both stuff and things.



JUSTIN SPEER
Justin isn't a huge internet fan, but he still digs making loots of himself.



JENNIFER TSAO, Managing Editor
On her recent vacation, Jennifer had the opportunity to visit Mexico City. There wasn't as many baguets and street urinals as she expected, but she did encounter Seantaboy and a bunch of Mexican pro wrestlers.
1UP.com Blog: egmjennifer.1up.com
Now Playing: *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within, GTA: San Andreas*
Fave Games: RPG, Adventure, Action Sports, Rhythm-Action



CRISPIN BOYER, Senior Editor
The most even-tempered guy you'd ever meet, Crispin would never blow a gasket over an incredibly frustrating game—like, say, the nearly impossible second Zero mission in *GTA: San Andreas*. Er, scratch that. Time to get a new Crispin.
1UP.com Blog: egmcrispin.1up.com
Now Playing: *Halo 2, Prince of Persia: Warrior Within*
Fave Games: Action, Adventure, RPG



SHANE BETTENHAUSEN, Previews Editor
After overdosing on the saccharine dating horror show *Spring and Dratz* in Purgatory version of *Pink Panther*, Shane had the urge to read up on the Lindsay Lohan-Hilary Duff feud. Luckily, *Feel the Magic* taught him that the Nintendo DS isn't pure evil.
1UP.com Blog: emshane.1UP.com
Now Playing: *Feel the Magic, Halo 2, Lumines, WarWare DS*
Fave Games: Action, Adventure, RPG, Fighting, Karaoke



DEMIAN LINN, Reviews Editor
Now that the holiday rush is almost over, Demian finally has some time for the important stuff—making the fatest CJ possible in *GTA: San Andreas*. Oh, and *Halo 2*. Lots of that.
1UP.com Blog: egmdamian.1UP.com
Now Playing: *Halo 2, GTA: San Andreas, City of Heroes (PC), electrocifer*
Fave Games: Action, Hockey, Racing, Fighting



BRYAN NITIHAR, News Editor
More than a few things shocked Bryan this month while trying out DS: He severely sore fingers from playing, that most of the games at launch are pretty awful, some of the messages Shane sent him via *Pink Panther*, and *Pink Panther* itself.
1UP.com Blog: egmbryan.1UP.com
Now Playing: *Halo 2, GTA: San Andreas, MSX3: Snake Eater*
Fave Games: Action, Adventure, Sports



The Contributors

- **JOHN H. GIBSON** went shopping and stargazing at Hollywood's Acme Game Store, America's hippest electronics boutique.
- Freelancer **JOSHUA FRUHLINGER** wants you to play games until you're 80, so he's put together our oldest-prescribed guide to preserving your hands, eyes, and mind.
- The always-quirky technology writer **JOHN BRANDON** got taken in by the recent flood of hoax sites so you don't have to be.

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A full-page advertisement featuring a basketball player, T-Mac, in a red Houston Rockets jersey with the number 1. He is holding a basketball in his right hand and has a wide, enthusiastic expression with his mouth open. The background is dark and textured. The text is arranged around him: 'Great for dunking.' on the left, a testimonial on the right, and the 'got milk?' logo at the bottom right.

Great for dunking.

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Letters

feedback, rants, and probably too much talk about halo 2



Candle within

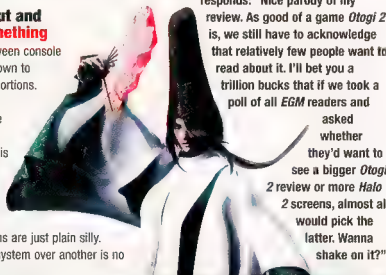
Every year for the last several, I've been carving videogame-themed pumpkins for Halloween. This year, since one of my most anticipated games is *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within*, I decided to make it the subject of my pumpkin carving. I hope that you all like it.

—Paul Gale

Masterful carving there, Paul. We're assuming you carved this pumpkin with a scimitar while doing a handstand?

Reach out and play something

Rivalry between console fans has grown to absurd proportions. Competition between the consoles themselves is to be expected, but conflicts amongst fans are just plain silly. Liking one system over another is no



reason to start rambling on the forums.

I admit, I am not pure. I was a Nintendo fan until the day I discovered *Final Fantasy*. Now I am willing to play both my consoles equally, and I plan to buy an Xbox once I stop being broke. You, too, can break the shackles of fanboyism! If you play only mature Xbox games, buy a Cube and play *Metroid Prime!* If you play only cute kiddie GameCube games, get a PS2 with *Katamari Damacy!* Reach out to a console in need!

—Lenore B.

Otogi 2 little?

Shoe, you say *Otogi 2* is good, but when it came time to review it, space in the magazine sure clamped up tight. I know you have a magazine to sell, but 15 pages of *Halo 2* screenshots? *Otogi 2* is graced with only a much space as the Shame of the Month. I'd say, "you'd better recognize or there won't be an *Otogi 3*."

—Wes Hinman

Editor-in-Chief Dan "Shoe" Hsu

responds: "Nice parody of my review. As good of a game *Otogi 2* is, we still have to acknowledge that relatively few people want to read about it. I'll bet you a trillion bucks that if we took a poll of all EGM readers and asked whether they'd want to see a bigger *Otogi 2* review or more *Halo 2* screens, almost all would pick the latter. Wanna shake on it?"

POST OFFICE

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



■ *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within*

Senseless Violence?

1UP.com board members discuss the new *Prince of Persia's* darker, more violent style.

Jinzouningen: "If *Warrior Within* can tell an engaging story and be as fun and addictive as [last game] *Sands of Time*,

care not if it is bloody. In fact, I think it is a welcome change."

BlueNite: "Not only are they catering to the blood-and-gore crowd, they're alienating all the people who bought the last game."

Illmyke: "The sales [of the first game] sucked, so I understand [why they made the change]."

IceWarm: "Violence sells...deal with it."

Halo and Good-bye

Overlapped? Maybe, but can gamers ignore the peer pressure and glowing reviews and—gasp—pass on *Halo 2*?

Letter of the month

Too close to home

I picked up *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* in my usual state of mind. "It's all about the parenting. If the kid can't separate fiction from reality, then they need some parenting."

When I put the game in, my view changed. The game just hits too close to home this time.

First, I live in Los Angeles. Secondly, the main character as a young black man, just like many of the people I know who play it. Lastly, it still seems more possible than the others. Granted, I'm still in Los Santos, but everything I've experienced (minus the random killing and running from the cops) is true to life. It's not about the Italian mafia in some city I don't live in; it's about someone who looks a bit like my neighbor, in a street gang, tagging, robbing houses.... I have to deal with that already. *San Andreas* is great, and it deserves its props as a game. It's just hittin' a bit close to home this time, that's all.



—Dean J.



Sounds like *San Andreas* really got you thinkin'. Congrats, Dean T., on writing the Letter of the Month. Maybe your free game can help you escape from L.A. (Your free game not necessarily pictured here.)

Sail away

In EGM #185, you had an article on Full Sail. Well, as great and cool as the college looked, you made it seem...too cool. Now my friend's dream is to go to Full Sail because he thinks it'll look cool to have a degree in Videogame Design.

He went to a preview of the school, then went through hell and back trying to find someone with good credit to cosign for his loan. Now he's definitely going to Full Sail, and I'm going to lose a friend. I hope you're happy!

—Mark Shiffer

What with instant messaging and online gaming, you should still be able to stay in touch all the time, nerd-style. And

remember, if you let something go and it comes back, it's yours forever.

Guy likes him some Halo

Lately, the only topic my friends and I even consider talking about is *Halo 2*. We have come to call 11/9/04 the "Holy Date" and declared that it is the one day of this year that makes the other 364 worth living. In remembrance of how we got here, I have compiled a timeline:

- November 14, 2001: *Halo* comes out. It's the sole reason I buy an Xbox.
- November-December 2001: I complete the game and strive to beat every level on Legendary difficulty.
- November 2001-early 2004: Countless >

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 or

EGM Letters

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> system-link parties result, with plenty of laughing, yelling, and smack talk. My friends and I learn the joy of multiplayer gaming together.

Late 2003: *Halo 2* is rumored to release next summer; indescribable anticipation.

Summer 2004: *Halo 2* is delayed until the fall; indescribable pain.

November 1, 2004: I read *EGM's* review of *Halo 2* and melt in the very chair I sit in.

November 9, 2004: I lose all human contact, and my grades begin to drop. For the first time in years, I am happy.

—Justin Leong

This, gentle readers, is the diary of a fulfilled man. Scary, isn't it?

Mr. Clean

I was in Wal-Mart the other day looking at games and CDs and got an idea. Music CDs have explicit and nonexplicit versions, so why not have T-rated versions of M-rated games? I often see a game in your mag and get excited—until I see the M rating (my parents don't let me play those). If a game has blood, gore, and bad language, it wouldn't hurt to cut some of it out.

—Chris Pillow

That's a million-dollar idea right there, Chris—too bad we just published it for the world to see. Hopefully, game makers will read this and take your idea to heart.

Block party

Last Halloween, I was dressed as a Listerine bottle, but after reading your Halloween-costume story, "Worn Identity," in *EGM* #185, the gamer inside me regained control. I called up a few buddies and explained the project in mind. \$45 later



Sorry, Nick Thien. Guess you won't be seeing this page (or your letter), either.

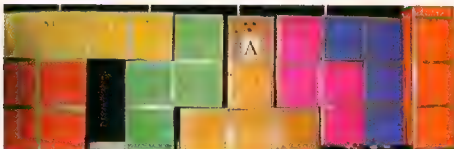
"I lose all human contact, and my grades begin to drop. For the first time in years, I am happy."

—Justin Leong, destined for greatness

(\$25 on duct tape alone), we had ourselves some homemade costumes. I'll let the picture do the talking.

—Rob Arnone

Looking solid, guys! Hope you were able to find someone's little brother to fill in that two-block gap.



Ripped out, ripped off

I live in Southeast Asia, and all media is censored to remove everything from female breasts to certain four-letter words. Now the worst has happened. A page is missing from my latest copy of *EGM* (page 153-4, Issue #185). I thought it was a mistake or something. Then I went back to my local bookstore and asked, "What the hell happened to my *EGM*?" All I got was, "Too sexy" (I live in a Malay-speaking country). I checked the index and determined the culprit: *Playboy: The Mansion*. I'd hate to miss out on anymore reviews, so please don't put that ad in future issues!

—Nick Thien

the ad side of things, but you want us not to run "too sexy" pictures? Fat chance!

The Review review

It seems that in any videogame publication, the reviewers typically agree with each other. This makes me suspicious. How much contact does a reviewer have with another person reviewing the same game? Prove to me that certain games aren't receiving good or bad scores because of what one reviewer establishes.

—Josh Loomis

We can't speak for other mags, but our reviewers don't share their opinions on a game until after they've independently assigned their own scores.

Well, we editors have nothing to do with

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slicing through evil tomato worms, leaf-eating beetles, and demonic garden gnomes bent on destroying the fruits of your labor. Gardening has never been so ninjal!

—Sean Strnad & Jordan Calamia



He knows where he came from

I recently got a tattoo. I've been playing games since I could pick up a controller, for over 10 years. I figured I'd be playing them 10 years from now as well and wanted something that shows off my gaming heritage.

—Jason Matus

Welcome to the ever-expanding *EGM* game-tattoo club, Jason. Promise you'll send an updated picture in 10 years if you gain 300 pounds and/or your back turns all hairy. 🐼

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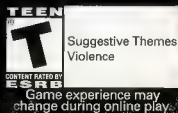
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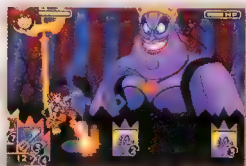
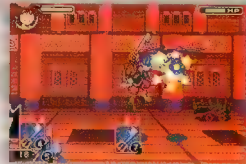
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PlayStation 2

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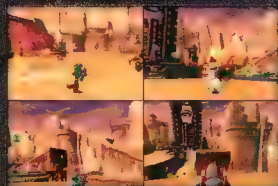
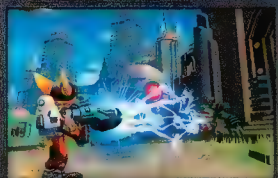
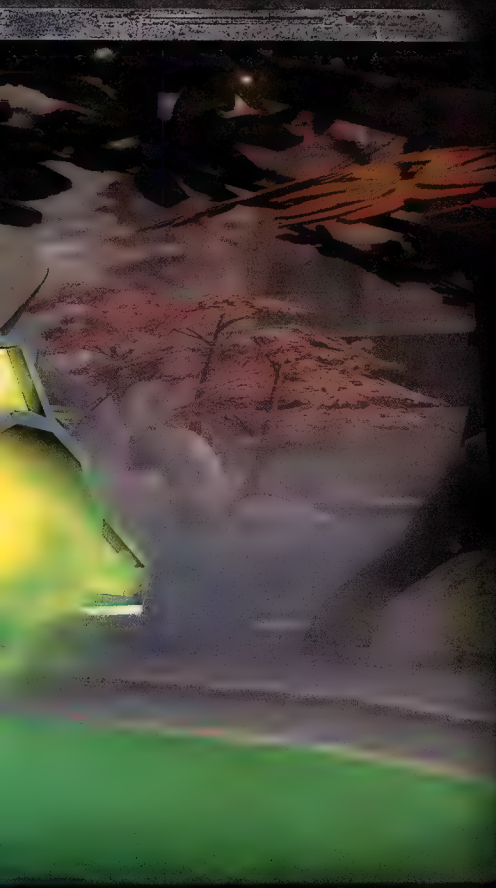
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press start

gaming news, previews, kids saying the darndest things, and other stuff

SONY DROPS A BOMB

The console leader—and now handheld contender—shocks everyone with a PlayStation Portable price tag of under \$200

With its beautiful screen, visuals on par with some of today's console games, and multimedia capabilities, Sony's PlayStation Portable is launching an all-out attack on the handheld market. And the company just dropped the big one: the machine's price.

Last month when Sony announced that its slick-looking handheld would launch in Japan on December 12, it also revealed that PSP would cost 19,800 yen, which is roughly \$185. The news was quite unexpected since most in the financial community had for months been predicting a price of \$300. "I was very surprised by the cost of PSP," admits analyst Michael Pachter of Wedbush Morgan Securities. "Sony surprised us all."

And if history has taught us anything, you can expect an even better bargain when PSP heads to the United

States. "If you look at any consumer electronics launch, the price of the product in Japan has always been the highest," says Pachter. "I'll retail for something lower than \$185 over here." A Sony spokesperson tells us that all details concerning the U.S. launch—including price and on-shelf date—will be revealed some time after PSP's Japanese debut (though she says that the handheld is still on track to release by the end of March 2005).

So what's the likelihood that the price could dip all the way down to \$150 and go head-to-head with the new Nintendo DS? "I don't think \$150 is very likely for PSP," says another analyst. "I just don't see how Sony could justify its business model at that price." Yeah, and not too long ago people also said that PSP couldn't possibly cost less than \$300....

—Bryan Litzlar



Is DS in Trouble?

Even with PlayStation Portable ringing up at under \$200, analyst Michael Pachter isn't worried about Nintendo's newly released dual-screen handheld and its chances for success. "Sure, [PSP] is now in a much better position to compete with DS, but I believe Sony and Nintendo are targeting different consumers with their products. PSP will attract the 17 and older crowd, while DS will skew younger."



■ Read our reviews of the DS launch titles, starting on page 138.

» ATTENTION ALL IMPORTERS: ACCORDING TO A SONY SPOKESPERSON, PLAYSTATION PORTABLE (LIKE GAME BOY ADVANCE) DOES NOT FEATURE A REGION LOCKOUT FOR GAMES.



■ Titles like *Ridge Racer PSP*, which require greater processing power, will drain the handheld's battery faster than, say, a less-taxing puzzle game.

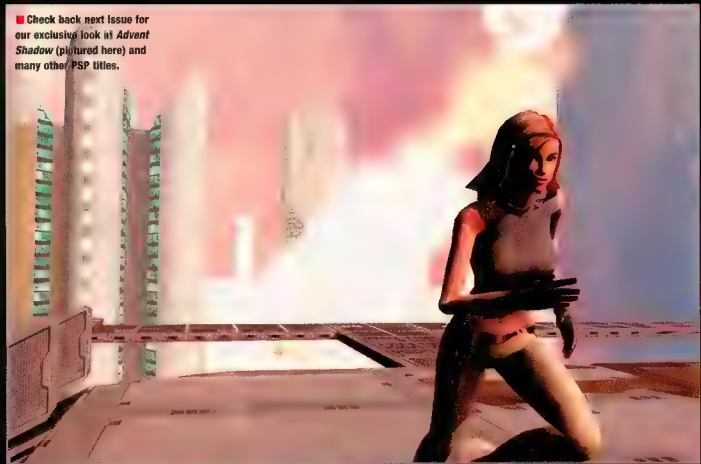
The Battery: It's a Matter of Life and Death

Aside from PlayStation Portable's price and launch date, the other big question surrounding the handheld has been its battery life. Sony Computer Entertainment President and CEO Ken Kutaragi confirmed that a fully charged battery will, on average, last four to six hours when

playing games and four to five hours when watching movies. But there's a catch: He later admitted that those stats will fluctuate depending on the type of game being played. "A puzzle game will last longer [than six hours]," said Kutaragi. "But [a game like] *Ridge Racer*

will probably be shorter than [four hours]." Eventually, Kutaragi hopes that Sony can produce a battery for the machine that will last the length of a flight from Japan to New York City (which usually clocks in at 13 to 14 hours).

■ Check back next issue for our exclusive look at *Advent Shadow* (pictured here) and many other PSP titles.



Jocks, Jedis, and Other PSP Developments

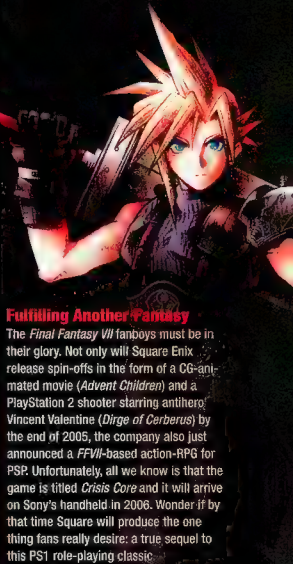
PSP—like its big brother, PlayStation 2—continues to attract a ton of third-party support. Electronic Arts CEO Larry Probst recently revealed that the publishing powerhouse has added two more games (making the grand total six) to its PSP launch lineup, *MVP Baseball* and

FIFA Soccer. LucasArts is teaming up with Ubisoft's Montreal development house (*Splinter Cell*, *Prince of Persia*) to create a PSP title based on next May's highly anticipated flick, *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* (the game is heading to Nintendo DS and

Game Boy Advance as well). *Dark Cloud* and *Dragon Warrior VIII* developer Level 5 plans to make an all-new role-playing game for the handheld, and finally, Majesco will bring author Orson Scott Card's sci-fi universe to PSP with the actioner *Advent Shadow*. ☛

Them's Fightin' Words

After hearing the news about PSP's surprisingly low price, Yasuhiro Minagawa, head of public relations for Nintendo, told Bloomberg Japan, "That's not a game machine. They showed [PSP] at the Tokyo Game Show without any fundamental game software, and you can tell that it's not complete." So what was Sony's reaction to those rather critical remarks? "People who want to play with Pikachu will need Nintendo's new-style DS machine," said Sony Computer Entertainment President and CEO Ken Kutaragi. "But those who want to play our racing game *Gran Turismo 4* will need a PSP, right?" We take it Kutaragi is one of those passive-aggressive types...



Fulfilling Another Fantasy

The *Final Fantasy VII* fanboys must be in their glory. Not only will Square Enix release spin-offs in the form of a CG-animated movie (*Advent Children*) and a PlayStation 2 shooter starring antihero Vincent Valentine (*Dive of Cerberus*) by the end of 2005, the company also just announced a *FFVII*-based action-RPG for PSP. Unfortunately, all we know is that the game is titled *Crisis Core* and it will arrive on Sony's handheld in 2006. Wonder if by that time Square will produce the one thing fans really desire: a true sequel to this PS1 role-playing classic.

Colored contacts are all the rage in *Resident Evil 4*.



SECOND HOME

Resident Evil 4 brings its brand of survival-horror to PlayStation 2

Amid a barrage of rumors over the last three years, Capcom has continued to vehemently deny that the visually jaw-dropping and GameCube-exclusive *Resident Evil 4* would find its way to other consoles. Even series creator Shinji Mikami was supremely confident that day would never come. "*Resident Evil 4* will definitely release only on GameCube," professed Mikami back in 2002. "If it [comes to

land on store shelves some time next winter. According to a company statement, the decision was made "to satisfy the demands of our fans and our desire to introduce the series to new gamers." We're sure it also had a little something to do with satisfying the demands of their piggy banks, as 72 million PS2 units have shipped worldwide (compared to only 14.5 million for GameCube). No specifics about the PS2 edition were revealed.

"If [*Resident Evil 4* comes to a console other than GameCube], I will cut my head off."

—Shinji Mikami, creator of the *Resident Evil* series

another console], I will cut my head off." Time to sharpen the axe.

Capcom has announced that in addition to the game's release on GameCube this January, a PlayStation 2 version is currently in the works and expected to

As for all of you with an Xbox, a Capcom spokesperson tells us that the possibility of this third-person survival-horrorfest (starring Leon Kennedy of *RE2* fame) arriving on Microsoft's system "has yet to be determined."

GOSH, BATMAN, YOU'RE FINALLY BACK

After an eight-year hiatus from the silver screen (which should be enough time for everyone to suppress all bad memories of *Batman & Robin*), the Dark Knight will return this coming summer in *Batman Begins*. Electronic Arts has announced that it will copublish with Warner Bros. Interactive an action game based on the

upcoming flick, which recounts the tale of billionaire Bruce Wayne and his eventual transformation into Gotham City's protector, Batman. Expect to see *Batman Begins* on store shelves for all major consoles, PlayStation Portable, and Game Boy Advance around the same time as the theatrical release.

GRUDGE MATCH

Coldhearted snakes



MGS3'S COBRAS

GI JOE'S COBRAS

Metal Gear Solid 3's stealthy Snake is a real American hero, but he ain't the first to defend human freedom against a bunch of baddies who are all part of an elite Cobra unit—G.I. Joe's done it time and time again. Let's see which serpentine sect packs the more vicious venom in this month's Grudge Match.

BIGGER FLAMER



The Fury: Cosmonaut with a jetpack, ejaculates flames from a hose
Advantage: MGS3

Torch: Fire-obsessed mercenary with classic biker looks and values



BEASTMASTER



The Pain: Commands a swarm of angry bees to both serve and protect...himself
Advantage: MGS3

Cobra Commander: Once commissioned a high-frequency weapon that brainwashed some locusts



BETTER WHACK-JOB



The Sorrow: Makes Robert Smith look cheerful, as he cries blood and makes it rain a lot

Dr. Mindbender: Self-experimentation left him a deranged but powerful freak
Advantage: G.I. Joe

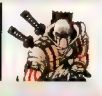


BETTER NINJA



The Fear: Stealthy dart chucker with ninjalike agility but not actually a ninja

Storm Shadow: Totally a ninja
Advantage: G.I. Joe



BETTER WHEELMAN



The End: Ancient, narcoleptic marksman who spends most of his time in a wheelchair

Copperhead: Chronic gambler who drives high-tech vehicles through the swamp
Advantage: G.I. Joe



WINNER: GI JOE

Maybe it's just that Snake is such a badass by comparison, but *MGS3's* Cobra unit turns out to be a mite less fearsome than the name implies. We'll unofficially downgrade them to garter snakes.

Need a sign that the new *Batman* movie won't suck? They've finally removed those rubber nipples from his suit. Hey, it's a start....



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THQ

The bodily fluids flow like wine in the *Fight Night* ring.

FIRST LOOK: FIGHT NIGHT 2005

Stand up and fight

Platforms: PS2/Xbox/GC
 Publisher: EA Sports
 Developer: EA Canada
 Release Date: March 2005

You know what the problem is with boxing right now?" wonders Kudo Tsunoda, producer of last year's *Fight Night 2004*. "The best fighters don't fight the best fighters anymore. You have these fights between the champion and some guy nobody's ever heard of, and where's the fun in that?" His team's product did far more than let you stage Ali/Marciano to your heart's content, though—it was a new chapter in boxing sims, a game that rewarded players for honest-to-God boxing instead of bashing the buttons until someone fell down.

As Tsunoda puts it, *Fight Night 2005* (due out for all three consoles this spring) is partly "about refining and polishing the game we came up with last year." Subtle analog-stick spinning lets you unleash "haymaker" blows that guarantee concussions aplenty but are telegraphed from Mars, and quick left-right combos make it easier for an analog player to deal with button-mashers online. The whole game's a step closer to boxing, in fact—you can clinch your opponent now, and that hip-hop announcer guy's been replaced with real commentary from ESPN's Joe Tessitore.

The most obvious difference, though, lies in the visuals, which Tsunoda modestly calls "next-gen on current consoles." Not only are the models twice as detailed as before (you can even see Roy Jones Jr.'s pecs bounce), but they can also become virtual Butterbeans if you wimp out on the training, similar to *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*. And once they get into the ring, the realism can be brutal—sensitive individuals may want to skip the between-round bits, when you play cutman and try to fix your fighter's swollen eyes and bloody nose. Eesh. **JK**

—Kevin Gifford

Powerful hits create a festive spray of blood and saliva.



EA SPORTS HAS TAKEN A PAGE FROM ESPN VIDEOGAMES' BUDGET-MINDED PLAYBOOK AND DROPPED THE PRICE OF MADDEN NFL 2005, NBA LIVE 2005, AND NHL 2005 TO \$29.96... >>>

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- 904983 - Yellowcard - Only One
- 904040 - The Killers - Somebody Told Me
- 905951 - Ja Rule (feat. Anthony Hamilton) - Why?
- 905241 - Lil' Flip (feat. Lea - Sunshine)
- 904180 - Avril Lavigne - Happy Ending
- 905249 - Mase - Breathe Stretch Shake

LATEST RINGTONES

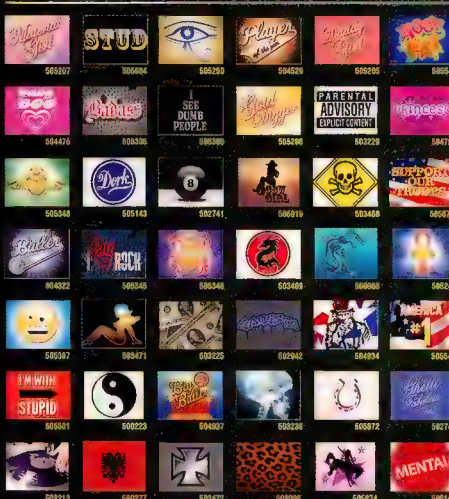
- 904239 - 2Pac - California Love
- 900355 - 50 Cent - In Da Club
- 907283 - 50 Cent - Wanksta
- 907433 - 50 Cent - P.M.M.
- 907910 - 50 Cent - Back Down
- 900546 - 50 Cent - If I Can't
- 904193 - Akon - Locked Up
- 903010 - Alicia Keys - Diary
- 901842 - Alicia Keys - If I Ain't Got You
- 905237 - Alicia Keys - Karma
- 905307 - Avril Lavigne - Don't Tell Me
- 905120 - Backstreet Boys - Oh-Oh-Oh (It's Back In Town)
- 902440 - Beanie Man - Sabotage
- 903010 - Beanie Man - Dude
- 907029 - Beanie Man - King Of The Dancehall
- 903131 - Beyonce - Naughty Girl
- 904930 - Beyonce - Sean Paul - Baby Boy
- 908043 - Beyonce feat Jay-Z - Crazy In Love
- 901236 - Big Punisher - 100%
- 901251 - Black Eye Peas - Hey Mama
- 904740 - Black Eyed Peas - Let's Get It Started
- 901023 - Black Eyed Peas - Where Is The Love?
- 903085 - Britney Spears - Outrageous
- 901641 - Britney Spears - Toxic (Chorus)
- 903120 - Cassidy (feat. R. Kelly) - Hotel
- 903576 - Chingy - Right Thurr
- 906677 - Chingy - Holiday Inn
- 900943 - Chingy - One Call Away
- 904740 - Christine Aguilera (feat. Lil' Kim) - Can't Hold Us...
- 903358 - Christina Aguilera - Dirty
- 900445 - Coldplay - Clocks
- 903127 - D12 - D12 World
- 908016 - DMX - Party Up
- 900230 - DMX - Ruff Ryders Anthem
- 900017 - Dr. Dre - Next Episode
- 904909 - Dr. Dre - Still D.R.E.
- 900459 - Eminem - Guilty Conscience
- 900240 - Eminem - Illmatic on You
- 901070 - Eminem - My Name Is
- 900018 - Eminem - The Real Slim Shady
- 900019 - Eminem - Stan
- 900220 - Eminem - Still Don't Give A F***
- 900020 - Eminem - The Way I Am
- 904974 - Eve feat. Gwen Stefani - Let Me Blow Ya Mind
- 900028 - Fabolous - Young'n (Hotta Back)
- 904930 - Frank Ocean - Bad Religion
- 907031 - Franz Ferdinand - This Fire
- 900082 - Game Theme - Super Mario Bros.
- 906840 - Green Day - American Idiot
- 900630 - GUnit - Sum 101
- 904752 - GUnit - Popin' Them Things
- 907031 - Hillary Duff - Clean Clean
- 900676 - Hillary Duff - So Yesterday
- 901674 - Hoobastank - The Reason
- 903440 - Incubus - Talk Shows On Mute
- 900423 - Incubus - Drive
- 904984 - Incubus - Magalomania
- 900461 - Inner Circle - Cogs
- 900202 - Jay-Z - Li (feat. Lil' Cool J.) All I Have
- 901189 - Jay-Z - Can't Knock The Hustle
- 900092 - Jay-Z - Change Clothes
- 901672 - Jay-Z - Dirt Off Your Shoulder
- 900092 - Jay-Z - Big Pimpin'
- 904635 - Jessica Simpson - Angels
- 905284 - Jessica Simpson - With You

- 904538 - Jet - Are You Gonna Be My Girl
- 904543 - Jet - Roller DJ
- 904544 - Jet - Cold Hard Facts
- 907030 - Jimmy Eat World - Pain
- 903130 - J-Kwon - Tipsy
- 904222 - J-Kwon - Hood Hop
- 907030 - Justin - Leave Get Out
- 900733 - Joss Stone - Super Duper Love
- 900756 - Justin Timberlake - Rock Your Body
- 904161 - Kanye West - All Falls Down
- 904570 - Kevin Lyttle - Turn Me On
- 905240 - Lil' Flip - Game Over
- 904743 - Lil' Jon & The Eastside Boyz - Get Low
- 903019 - Lil' Kim - Magic Stick
- 904164 - Linkin Park - Breaking The Habit
- 903098 - Linkin Park - Lying From You
- 907027 - LL Cool J - Headsprung
- 904182 - Ludacris - Diamond in the Back
- 901028 - Ludacris - Splash Waterfalls
- 901029 - Maroon 5 - The Love
- 905240 - Mase - Breathe Stretch Shake
- 900048 - Michael Jackson - Beat It
- 901743 - Michael Jackson - Billie Jean
- 903650 - Michael Jackson - Rock With You
- 900052 - Missy Elliott - Get Ur Freak On
- 900862 - Missy Elliott - Gossip Folks
- 904684 - Mis-Teeq - Scandalous
- 907009 - Motie Dray - Throatline Part II
- 904985 - Nelly - Flip Your Wings
- 900425 - Nelly - Air Force Ones
- 900069 - Nelly - Hot In Herre
- 900530 - Nelly - Shave It Up (feat. The Roots)
- 905122 - New Found Glory - Failure's Not Flattering
- 904183 - Nickelback - Feeding You Too Damn Good
- 900715 - Nickelback - Someday
- 903250 - No Doubt - Vanilla Coke
- 901165 - No Doubt - No Doubt
- 901112 - No Doubt - Underneath It All
- 903052 - OutKast - The Way You Move
- 903021 - OutKast - All Stars
- 900708 - OutKast - Hey Ya!
- 906651 - OutKast - Miss Jackson
- 900860 - OutKast - The Whole World
- 900530 - OutKast - Prototype
- 904240 - OutKast - Russ
- 904750 - Patey Pablo - Freak-A-Leak
- 900753 - Pharrell feat. Jay-Z - Frontin'
- 906504 - R. Kelly - Ignition
- 904884 - R. Kelly - Snake
- 900717 - R. Kelly - Step in the Name of Love
- 906830 - R. Kelly - Thela Thong
- 902523 - R. Kelly - I Saved Me
- 904984 - Rick James - Super Freak
- 900435 - Sean Paul - Get Bussy
- 900530 - Sean Paul - Like Glue
- 904995 - Simple Plan - Don't Wanna Think About You
- 901800 - Sir Mix-A-Lot - Baby Got Back
- 904567 - Slipknot - Duality
- 900317 - Snoop Dogg - Beautiful
- 905190 - Snoop Dogg - Nuthin But A G Thang
- 903130 - Story of the Year - Anthem of Our Dying Day
- 900880 - Switchfoot - Dare You to Move
- 905230 - Switchfoot - Meant To Live
- 905130 - T.I. - Let's Get Away
- 904927 - Terror Squad - Letm Back
- 904240 - The Calling - Our Lives
- 903124 - The Darkness - I Believe In A Thing Called Love
- 903813 - Three Days Grace - Just Like You
- 900805 - Three Days Grace - I Hate Everything About You
- 902674 - Trapt - Headstrong
- 902995 - Twista - Overnight Celebrity
- 905235 - Twista feat. Kanye West - Slow Jamz
- 902525 - Twista feat. R. Kelly - So Sexy
- 903107 - Usher - Burn
- 904755 - Usher - Yeah!
- 903104 - Usher - Confessions Part 2
- 905238 - Vanessa Carlton - White Houses
- 903697 - Yellowcard - Ocean Avenue
- 904755 - Ying Yang Twins - Salt Shaker
- 905422 - Young Buck - Let Me In

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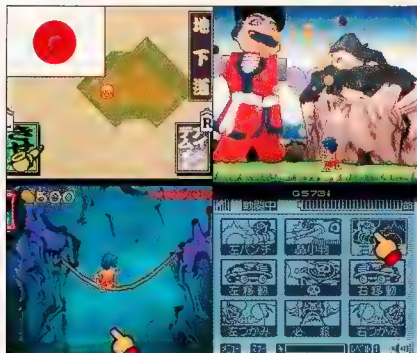
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EGM INTERNATIONAL

Ancient history made wacky



■ Nintendo DS

GANBARE GOEMON

Are there a lot of Japan-exclusive DS titles? Not really. Other than a couple of mahjong games and slot-machine simulators, the best DS title that we aren't getting is the latest in Konami's *Goemon* series. If you missed the two Nintendo 64 *Goemon* titles, here's the basic idea: a stinky ninja dude goes on wacky adventures across medieval Japan, bashing enemies *Zelda* style and exploring vast mazes. And what's a ninja game without giant samurai robots you control with the DS touch pad during boss battles?

Sounds superb. It's a shame *Ganbare Goemon* ain't coming here. Well, you should be able to play Japanese DS games on a U.S. system, so it should be safe to import this trippy, bouncy quest.



■ PS2

THE STORY OF HERO YOSHITSUNE

Hero who? As anyone who's had the misfortune to take history class at a Japanese high school knows, Minamoto no Yoshitsune was a 12th-century general and one of the chief characters in the Tale of the Heike. This game version of his exploits looks suspiciously like *Dynasty Warriors* from the screens, but it's more strategy than arcade action—as Yoshitsune, you run around the battlefield and issue commands in a series of encounters.

Why would gamers care about this? The Japanese audience can't get enough of "historical fiction" gaming—while Koei's *Warriors* games are sleeper hits over here, they routinely sell over a million copies each in Japan.

WHAT'S PLAYING IN THE

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

Oh, how I had hoped to have *Half-Life 2* by now. But alas, the game has not quite come out as I write this, and I am forced to fitter away my existence on other games. Luckily for me, I've got options, now and in the future.

The Political Machine



Elated/devastated by the recent presidential election? Want to relive/rewrite the glorious/horrific result? This unassuming little strategy game brings all the magic...er, heartbreak...uh, unremitting nausea of big-time politics to terrifying life. You can guide a real-life politician (or one you create) on a year-long campaign for president, raising money, debating, and getting endorsements. *The Political Machine* can be incredibly dispiriting in a way with its spot-on re-creation of the ugly nuts and bolts of campaigning, but it's still chocolate-covered coconut crack if you have any interest in both politics and strategy games.

Battlefield 2



EA's huge multiplayer shooter takes the franchise out of the past and into the present, with all the goodies of modern warfare set in a series of sprawling maps. This time the designers are adding a heavy dose of persistence, tracking every player's stats, medals, etc., all the better for you to secure international bragging rights. I'm happiest about the emphasis on team play that rewards squads with bonuses for working together—is an end to rampant jackassery finally in sight? We'll know soon enough.

—Robert Coffey,
Computer Gaming World

PREVIEW GALLERIES: NEW DIRECTIONS

COMMANDOS: STRIKE FORCE

PS2/XB • Eidos • Spring 2005 — *Strike Force* seeks to reinvent this ported-from-PC franchise. Gone are the old-school top-down visuals and overtly strategic gameplay, replaced by photorealistic *Splinter Cell*-style graphics and *Rainbow Six*-ish squad-based first-person shooter action. That sound you just heard was Tom Clancy doing a spit-take and pounding the table...



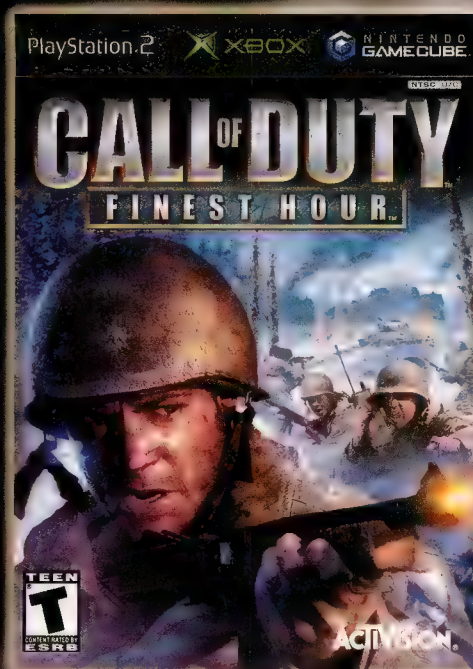
PHANTOM KINGDOM

PS2 • Nippon Ichi • Fall 2005 — Nippon Ichi's next PS2 strategy-RPG offering revives the theme of 2003's gothic cult classic *Digsaia*. Just as in that game, you're a deposed king of the underworld world, to regain his kingdom of darkness. Unlike that game, however, here your body has been transformed into a book, and bored datties keep writing new chapters of...uh...you to keep you fighting wacky strategic battles.



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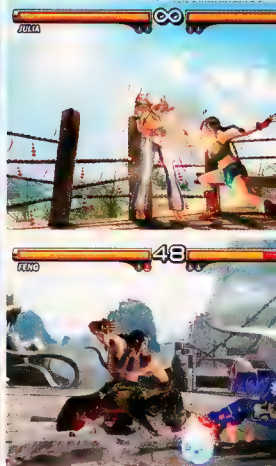
We take games seriously™



Kazuya and Asuka's moonlit dream date takes a turn for the worse.

TEKKEN 5

Platform: PlayStation 2
 Publisher: Namco
 Developer: Namco
 Release Date: February 2005



The once and future king of fighting

2 002's *Tekken 4* took a critical drubbing in the wake of Sega's excellent *Virtua Fighter 4*. Pretty visuals simply could not compensate for a serious lack of innovation. In fact, the few gameplay tweaks *Tekken 4* introduced—unbreakable combos, overpowered new moves, and the ability to move around before rounds begin—got the boot in the upcoming *Tekken 5*. Some might call it backpedaling, but series fans will welcome the return to the

classic *Tekken 3*-era feel. And the game isn't devoid of progress: Namco has wisely lifted a page from *VF4*'s character customization system. Now, you can outfit your pugilist with crazy costumes and accessories earned in both single-player and versus matches (think: sexpot Nina wearing a red leather ninja suit or grappler King sporting a goofy cartoon panther mask).

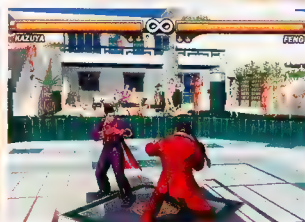
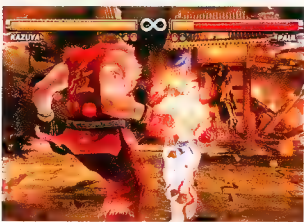
This PS2 port lands only a few months after the arcade version, yet it appears to be

a remarkably accurate translation. Bouts amid gorgeous backdrops like a burning building or penguin-covered iceberg look quite close to their coin-op counterparts. Plus, Namco's home *Tekken* conversions traditionally offer cool exclusives, like *Tekken Tag Tournament*'s bowling minigame or the side-scrolling force mode from *Tekken 3* and *Tekken 4*. Online play isn't going to happen, but hopefully some wacky new mode will fill its void. **A-**

—Stiane Belterhausen



New to *Tekken 5*: Walking hoodie physics. No, really.



New Faces

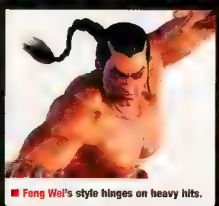
Namco's keeping the full roster of playable characters under wraps, but expect well in excess of 20 combatants, including at least three new ones—Asuka, Raven, and Feng Wei. Asuka busts out a flurry of speedy strikes (including several combos lifted from *Tekken 2*'s fan favorite Jun), Raven pulls some wacky ninja moves like teleportation, and Feng Wei overpowers with brutal kenpo tactics.



Switnoss offsets Asuka's low defense.



Raven pulls off some zany ninja moves.



Feng Wei's style hinges on heavy hits.

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OBSIDIAN



Enter the Terminator: \$40,000 liquid-metal-hottie sculptures watch over Acme's stock.



CHIC MAGNET

Hollywood's star-powered Acme Game Store is America's hippest electronics boutique

Gaming isn't geeky, dammit!" shouts Jason Jones, smashing his fist on the glass counter. Those four words are his mantra—they have been for years—inflating him so much that he decided to shrink the stereotype, opening Acme Game Store (www.acmegamestore.com) in Hollywood, CA, this past summer. But rather than clutter the shop with dust-encrusted bargain bins, kiosks of war-torn strategy guides, and shelves that are more crammed than granny's panty drawer, Jones—formerly a head visual director at Armani—went chic. "I wanted to give gamers a place where

they could hang out, stretch their fingers, meet others like them—and not be bumping into each other while doing it," he says, referring to the spacious 2,500-square-foot sales floor that's home to lots of cushy seating, brightly painted walls, and four 50-inch plasma displays hooked to the big three consoles. System-linked and broadband-jacked, they are revved for tournaments—or even just a casual play-before-you-buy demo. "I hate going into those 'other' stores and not being able to try out every game," says Jones. "It's usually just a few newer titles—and that's it. At Acme, if you see it on the shelf, you can take it for a

test drive."
While you're mashing buttons, you might even brush elbows with some of the store's celebrity clientele (this place is right off Melrose Ave., after all). On any given day, you might bump into David Arquette, *Ladder 49's* Balthazar Getty, or the Dogfather himself. "Snoop Dogg rolled up, used our bathroom, and then played *Madden*. That's pretty typical," Jones says. Even more common are the late-night gaming bashes, complete with live DJs and racy burlesque ladies like the Suicide Girls tending an open bar. Yep, only in L.A.

—Jon M. Gibson



Photographs by Jon M. Gibson

Acme sells peripherals, of course, but also offers game-related clothing—even a juice bar!



One Cool Customer
Silver-screen goofball—and gamer—David Arquette talks boobs, beating *Se7en*, Director David Fincher at *Madden*, and why Acme is his favorite destination.

EGM: What's so hip about Acme?
David Arquette: For one, it's not this conglomerate thing. Hell, they have *Suicide Girls*! It's just cool! It has a style about it—contemporary, modern. It captures the gamer's attitude. It's just a fun place to be at. Like with tournaments bringing people together. Plus, they have every game imaginable.

EGM: Suicide Girls fan, eh? So what's your most perverted gaming moment?
DA: Trying to get into [strip club] Scores in *BMX XXX*.

EGM: What about proudest?
DA: Trying to get into Scores in *BMX XXX*. Actually, it was beating David Fincher at *Madden*.

EGM: So he's a PlayStation pro?
DA: I beat him, like, once—but he's killed me so many times. You know, when you're playing against your friend and he always beats you, then the one time you win is the greatest moment you could ever ask for. Then they play you again immediately and shut you down. ☹

Photographs by Robert Beckwith/Getty Images



Beside copies of EGM, you'll find everything from *Vanity Fair* to *Out*.

X MARKS A SEQUEL—ACTIVISION HAS ANNOUNCED THAT A FOLLOW-UP TO THE MUTANT-FILLED ACTION ROLE-PLAYING GAME *X-MEN LEGENDS* IS NOW IN THE WORKS.

Platforms: PS2/XB
Publisher: LucasArts
Developer: The Collective
Release Date: May 2005

FIRST LOOK: STAR WARS EPISODE III: REVENGE OF THE SITH

End, these Star Wars will

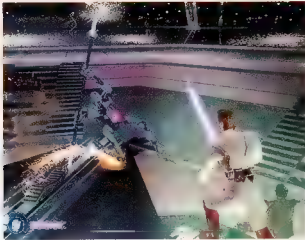
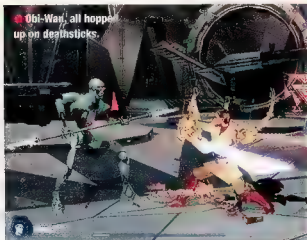
Packed with corny dialogue, a wholly unbelievable romance, and a character named Eian Sleafetzagano, *Star Wars: Episode II* is a film that only *Episode I* apologists could love. But hey, maybe the next one, May 2005's thank-God-it's-finally-over *Revenge of the Sith*, will actually be awesome, right? Hope springs eternal, and so do licensed games: LucasArts' first *Episode III* title casts you as either Obi-Wan Kenobi or Anakin Skywalker in lightsaber-swingin' action that follows the flick's plot.

You'll brandish your trusty lightsaber

[You'll] wield impressive dark-side powers like Force lightning...

and Jedi Force powers to plow through droids, giant robots, and—once a certain cocky Padawan joins the bad guys—one another. Anakin's fall to the dark side means he'll be able to wield impressive dark-side powers like Force lightning, while that goody two-shoes Kenobi will be able to persuade foes in classic "these are not the droids you're

looking for" fashion. Offering players a taste of both the dark and light sides worked wonders for Xbox RPG hit *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*, so maybe the same range of morality-based moves can set this apart from recent movie-derived flops like *Obi-Wan* and *Bounty Hunter*... **—Joshua Cain**



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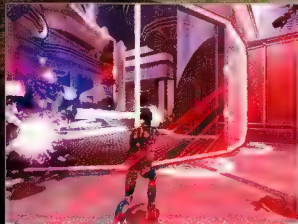
Grand Theft Robo

When asked what they'd like to see in *Grand Theft Auto*-inspired action games, over half of all respondents exclaimed, "Sassy robots." Well, OK, not really, but that didn't stop Spanish developer MercurySteam from melding the free-roaming carjacking gameplay of Rockstar's blockbuster series with a whimsical, futuristic setting to create *Scrapland*. Here, you play as D-Tritus,

a young drifter droid embroiled in a complex murder investigation. To solve the mystery, you'll have to jack into other robots (taking control of their bodies), hijack all sorts of high-tech spacecraft, and chuckle your way through tons of off-kilter dialogue. We recruited Lead Designer Enric Alvarez to give us a quick guided tour of the mayhem. —Shane Bettenhausen

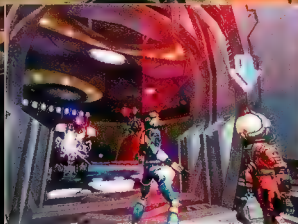


Platform: Xbox
 Publisher: Enlight
 Developer: MercurySteam
 Release Date: January 2005



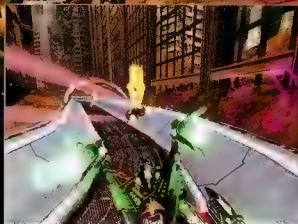
F*** the Police

Enric Alvarez: It's impossible for D-Tritus to take down a full squad of cops, so it's better to run like hell. You could try a braver solution, though: Jack into a more combat-effective bot, morph into it, then waste the fuzz.



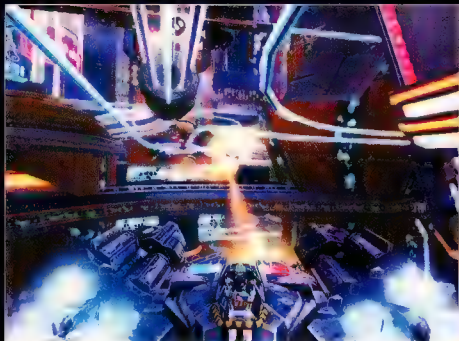
People Lack the Power

EA: The world of *Scrapland* is none too kind to humans—they'll generally be attacked on sight by the mechanized mob. Here, D-Tritus must protect a space-suited fleshling from the robotic horde.



Now This Is Podracing

EA: Racing around the city isn't always a low-stakes affair—here, D-Tritus has to destroy a gunship before it reaches its deadly destination. Different ships have unique engines, weapon arrays, and chassis weights.



Bright Lights, Big City

EA: Midair dogfights can break out anywhere, even in commercial districts like Copms, pictured here. Luckily, D-Tritus should be up to the task of fending off the cops, thanks to his newly acquired custom gunship.



You've Got the Touch

EA: As you progress through the game, D-Tritus amasses an array of cool powers. Here, he escapes from an awkward situation using an advanced technique that renders him more or less invincible. He can destroy enemies by simply touching them. ☹



WARNING

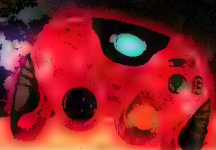
TREE SAP MAY HARM CONTROLLER.



AFTERGLOW PRO
for Xbox™



AFTERGLOW PRO
for PlayStation®2



AFTERGLOW PRO
for GameCube™



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ALL YOUR BEES ARE BELONG TO US. NEVER SEND A MAN TO DO A WOMAN'S JOB.

ONLINE THIS MONTH

Hoax sites: everybody plays the fool

TV and magazine ads? That's so last century. Game companies today are hyping their wares with underground campaigns and phony websites that get the wired crowd buzzing. We round up the latest from Microsoft and Nintendo, who are in no way adverse to some tomfoolery and wink-wink shenanigans. Did you take the bait? —John Brandon

I Love Bees

(www.ilovebees.com)

The game: *Halo 2*

The hoax: Kind of obvious (a site devoted to bee husbandry), but still weird. The URL appeared at the end of a *Halo 2* trailer and turned into an alternate-reality game in which people traveled across the country just to answer a call at a pay phone, salute each other, or play *Halo 2* multiplayer in four movie theaters around the country.

The payoff: "This kind of viral guerrilla marketing worked," says Billy Pidgeon, a game analyst at Zelus Group. "Everyone started instant messaging about it and checking out the site."

Orbis Labs

(www.orbislabs.com)

The game: *Metrod Prime 2: Echoes*

The hoax: Particularly realistic, with a subtle game tie-in. Orbis Labs is some kind of futuristic (and fake) weapons



The I Love Bees URL first appeared at the very end of the *Halo 2* theatrical trailer.

manufacturer that produces one piece that rolls up into a ball for wartime engagements. So, yup—it's Nintendo's way of pumping up sales for *Metrod Prime 2: Echoes*. No one has figured out how to get into the "government official" back door. At least, not yet.

The payoff: "A cheap but effective marketing strategy—it was fun and mysterious," Pidgeon says.

I Love Knees

(www.iloveknees.com)

The game: *Metrod Prime 2: Echoes*

The hoax: Think of any site that rhymes with "ilovebees" and you'll find another hoax site for *Metrod Prime 2: Echoes*, this time with a not-so-subtle reference to the "all your base" Flash flick from a few years back. This one also pokes some fun at Microsoft's *Halo 2* hero Master Chief (see image at top of page).

The payoff: "The site had a lot of people talking because it spoofed on another game's spoof site," Pidgeon says.

Channel 51

(www.channel51.org)

The game: *Metrod Prime 2: Echoes*

The hoax: Another amazingly well-crafted play site that even links to blogs and other content on the Internet, even though the whole point is to get people thinking about *Metrod Prime 2* again. It also links to another hoax site for Athena Astronautics (www.athenastronautics.com), which is equally odd.

The payoff: "Generated some good buzz since it linked to so many other places on the Internet," Pidgeon says.



Channel 51 links to other hoax sites.

WHAT'S UP AT



Fearsome Foursome



Sorry, but we just couldn't fit everything we wanted into this issue. Hold back those tears, please—check out [egmextras.1UP.com](http://egmextras.1up.com) for even more in-depth coverage on the four biggest games of 2004: *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*, *Halo 2*, *Metrod Prime 2: Echoes*, and the always controversial *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*.

1UP.com Club in the Spotlight: Halo @ Halo 2



Need some help finishing *Halo 2* on Legendary difficulty? Looking for some friendly (or not-so-friendly) multiplayer competition? Can't stop chanting like those monks? Then you should head to [officialhalonews-club.1UP.com](http://officialhalonews-club.1up.com) and meet up with other fans of this first-person shooter franchise.

Must-Hit Blog

At only 25 years old, 1UP.com Editor-in-Chief Sam Kennedy is already an industry vet. He's worked for several gaming mags (including ours) and is now responsible for running this ever-growing website. And any questions regarding 1UP.com can probably be answered by reading Sam's online journal ([capsnak.1UP.com](http://capsnak.1up.com)). He's good like that.

Ridge Racer DS



**Inches from opponents
in a hairpin turn, you appreciate that
breathing is an involuntary impulse.**

The classic racing game is now on Nintendo DS[™] featuring:

- Innovative touch-screen steering
- 20 challenging racetracks
- Wireless multiplayer support for up to 6*

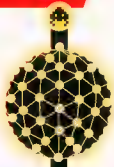


NINTENDO DS

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*Note: Wireless multiplayer gameplay requires each player to have their own Nintendo DS system and a copy of this game.

namco
www.namco.com

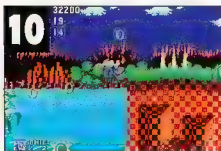


COUNTDOWN TO

200

THE 10 MOST IMPORTANT GAMES

1 To kick off *EGM's* run up to its 200th issue, we picked 10 games that helped redefine the industry since our premiere issue in 1989. We'll be compiling lists like this until No. 200 (up next: top 10 systems), so feel free to argue about our choices on the IUP.com *EGW* message board.



Sonic the Hedgehog

Genesis • 1991

The speedy blue guy did more than give the elderly headachés—his game changed the 16-bit landscape, propelled Sega's Genesis into stardom, and established the first real competition Nintendo ever had.

Without it: Sega would have given up on making hardware even sooner.

9 Street Fighter II

Arcade/Super NES • 1991/1992

No game did more to prop up arcades than *SF2's* deep fighting system and addictive multiplayer matches. The home version, despite its \$70 list price, was also the first buy-a-console-for-it game on the Super Nintendo, assuming you weren't already into *Super Mario World*.

Without it: Arcades would have dried up...yes, even sooner.

8 Pokémon Red/Blue Versions

Game Boy • 1997

The game's childlike sense of adventure and monster collecting/raising turned the world into Pokémaniacs and kept up Nintendo's dominance of the handheld market.

Without it: The phrase "Gotta catch 'em all" would be meaningless.

7 Tomb Raider

Multi • 1996

Lara Croft, the game's improbably proportioned heroine, was the first mainstream videogame icon since Pac-Man, making *Tomb Raider* the first step toward the Hollywood-like industry of today.

Without it: We would never know what a "nude code" was.



6 Final Fantasy VII

PlayStation • 1997

Before *FFVII*, PlayStation was actually in close competition with Sega's 32-bit Saturn console. And thanks to beautiful cut-scenes and a deep, introspective narrative, Square's game was also the first RPG to surpass, instead of copy, movie-like storytelling.

Without it: Aerith wouldn't have died, and gamers wouldn't have learned how to cry.

5 John Madden Football

Genesis • 1990

With its 11-man teams and copious playbook, *Madden* proved that sports sims could be realistic and still get your adrenaline pumping.

Without it: Tecmo would be known for sports (remember *Tecmo Bowl?*), not girls.



4 Halo

Xbox • 2001

Forget that *Halo* has been the best multiplayer console game for years now. Just concentrate on this: With one game, the world's largest software company has become a legitimate console contender.

Without it: Xbox would've tanked faster than the 3D0 system.

3 Tetris

Game Boy • 1989

From Russia with love (and a legal battle that lasted for years) came a game that virtually guaranteed the Game Boy's explosive success. More than that, though, it was one of those rare games that anyone—even Grandma!—could enjoy.

Without it: Programming students would have nothing to code for their final project.



2 Grand Theft Auto III

PlayStation 2 • 2001

In many ways, *GTA3* was the first title to introduce "adult themes" to gaming...not with its violence, mind you, but with its smart dialogue, its satire-laden plot, and yes, its strutting hookers.

Without it: Campaigning politicians would have far less to be angry about.



1 Super Mario 64

Nintendo 64 • 1996

There were lots of 3D games before *Super Mario 64*, but Nintendo's was the first to get the control scheme right. The N64's analog stick made guiding Mario seem perfectly natural—you weren't fighting him every step of the way.

Without it: You'd never want to collect another star again.

WHOSE GAME IS IT ANYWAY?

Match the title to its story line. C'mon, you can do it...

A Onimusha 3: Demon Siege (PS2)

B Blood Will Tell (PS2)

C Ninja Gaiden (XB)

D Otogi 2: Immortal Warriors (XB)

1 Sword-wielding badass slices his way through hordes of demons with help from a ridiculously hot blonde chick.

2 Sword-wielding badass slices his way through hordes of demons with help from a whip-toting French dude.

3 Sword-wielding badass slices his way through hordes of demons with help from assorted demon hunters.

4 Sword-wielding badass slices his way through hordes of demons with help from his hollowed-out rocket-launcher leg.



Illustration by Geoff Bunnell/AAA Pages

LIVE BY THE SWORD



Experience the fateful twists of a dynamic, evolving storyline.



Take the battle online with up to 4 players and USB headset support.



Prove your might as a Champion in head-to-head arena combat.

Pre-order Now
to receive a free 2005 calendar*



*While supplies last at participating retailers. Offer expires upon retail availability of the game.

Coming February 2005

Arm yourself for the must-have sequel to the fiercest action RPG of 2004, *Champions of Norrath™*. Champions: Return to Arms delivers the ultimate in action-packed, hack 'n' slash adventure!

CHAMPIONS

RETURN TO ARMS™

www.championsrta.com



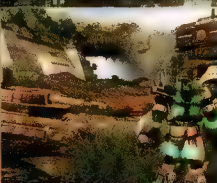
PlayStation 2



distributed by
snowblind
studios



The new human-piloted tanks and aircraft provide tricky targets for the large lumbering mechs.



Tanks but No Tanks
One addition to *MechAssault 2* sure to send old hands into fits is an all-new tank unit. Tanks? In a game about giant robots? What is this sacrilege? This isn't as heretical as you might think, though—pilot a tank, and your shots have a chance of knocking an enemy mech off its feet, incapacitating it for a short while and letting your teammates run in and bash away with abandon. Add a tank-exclusive cloaking device, and you've got a remarkably useful unit for long Xbox Live campaigns.

MECHASSAULT 2: LONE WOLF

Just in case you get tired of Halo 2

Platform: Xbox
Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Day 1 Studios
Release Date: December 2004

The only thing better than piloting a 40-ton robot with laser pincers and 40,000-degree heat rays is using it to destroy an 80-ton robot with dual infant beams and mysterious X-Radar doomsday cannons. That's the allure of the *MechAssault* series—it takes the old-timey *BattleTech* strategy games, revs them up to arcade-level intensity, and lets you concentrate on laying waste instead of poring over boring statistics.

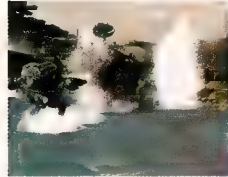
The philosophy hasn't changed immensely for *Lone Wolf*, sequel to one of Xbox Live's most successful games: "There are more fun things to do and new vehicles to master," says Danny Thorley, president of developer Day 1 Studios, "but that warm

gratification of successfully blowing up an enemy mech comes early and often." The main enhancements are chiefly reserved for online players—in addition to Xbox Live clans and tournaments, there's a new conquest mode that lets you join one of five "houses" and participate in a vast planetary war across multiple battlefields. Every planet in conquest is tied to a specific set of maps and gameplay modes, and if your house is victorious over a series of online matches, you'll take control of the world you're fighting on—something you'll be able to keep tabs on through Microsoft's official *Lone Wolf* website.

Even with the killer online support, the easy-as-pie controls are still *MechAssault*

2's best feature. Pretend you're playing *Halo* and you'll have no problem piloting any mechanical monster you run across...and we do mean "run across"—your hero's new battle armor lets him latch onto nearly any enemy mech, hacking into its neural network and taking it for his own. This *Grand*

Theft Auto-inspired gameplay adds some seat-of-your-pants urgency to the single-player game, but online it'll be key: "The real fun begins when you've hacked the enemy's only assault class mech and now your team has them all," says Thorley. "Time to dominate!" **A** —Kevin Gifford



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

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

LORD OF THE RINGS: THE THIRD AGE

AWESOME STRATEGIES

- Using Morwen's Steal Item skill against bosses like WORMTONGUE will earn you a series of golden axes. These axes are among Morwen's best weapons.
- Skills like Hedhob's Overwhelming Axes and Morwen's Overwhelming Blows guarantee you critical hits whenever your Momentum bar is full. Learn these early and use multi-hit attacks to dish out obscene amounts of damage!
- Combining Eilegios's Arrows of Sleep skill with the Sleep Volley Passive Skill is one of the game's strongest combos. Even enemies who are immune to Sleep effects will take damage from the arrows!

GAMECLUBE/PS2/XBOX

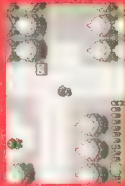


POKÉMON FIRE RED & LEAF GREEN

CATCH THEM ALL!

- The WTM and moon compass, since you'll find Pokémon in the tall grass, simply walk into the tall grass. Trends onto the east and north walls to battle them up.
- The first five battles are easy! Administer to you, the wall, beat attacks, and the game starts quickly. If things start to go wrong for you and you have Pokémon, you have a 90% chance to win.
- As you attempt to have Power City only go down to the left, Moon City of Professor Oak's associates needs you. He'll have a handy item for you. After you acquire the item, go off and get ready to take on the trainers along the way.

GAME/BOY ADVANCE



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NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND 2

PC/GAMECLUBE/PS2/XBOX

UNDERGROUND TIPS!

- Right after signing away contract, spend your time racing the sponsored events and the Underground Race. Races events to increase your bank. This way you save more to get your important your ride with performance parts and speed upgrades.
- Take advantage of Kaido's car in the beginning of career mode. You can use it for these races before being cut off from having to go to the garage.
- For the wash-out technique just before a jump, if you start another car racing track and look down the ramp and there is a place ahead for the car, throw in a wedge to the car. Wait until the last second to do this. When your opponent is about to jump into the air, hit them and seal them flying out of control of the game. This technique is devastating, and incredibly difficult, almost impossible to recover from when done effectively.



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

Visit our www.getinthegame.com to download a coupon for \$5 off any game in the next 48 hours. We'll have you get the money on all the latest games and accessories.

WWE SMACKDOWN! VS RAW



TAKE IT TO THE MAT

Finishing moves are the keys to victory. Build up your attentiveness meter by attacking and taunting your opponent. When you're in the right position, out one of your WWE slots is full, press [L] to execute your finishing move against a finishing opponent. If you have two finishing moves, [L]+D-pad will perform your secondary finisher.

You can also steal your opponent's finishing move if you have two full WWE slots. When you're in the proper position and your opponent is groggy, press [L] to use his own finishing move against him! This never fails to get the crowd on their feet!

Don't get greedy, though—your opponent can counter your special move by pressing [L+L]. If he counters your finishing move, you lose the WWE slot and wind up in a very vulnerable position!



PS2



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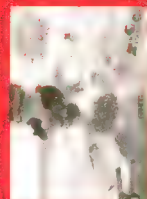
STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT



STAY ON THE MOVE

Stay on the move. You don't want to get stuck in a trench or behind a wall. The Jedi will not force you to stand in the open, so keep yourself in a safe position by using your Force powers.

Use your Force powers to avoid damage. Instead of getting shot, use your Force powers to deflect incoming fire. Use your Force powers to avoid damage. Instead of getting shot, use your Force powers to deflect incoming fire. Use your Force powers to avoid damage. Instead of getting shot, use your Force powers to deflect incoming fire.



PS2

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON 2



SURVIVAL SKILLS

In tight situations, watch out for muzzle flashes or grenade explosions. They can temporarily blind you, and that's not the time the enemy wants to slip you permanently!

This is not a racing game. Speed through Ghost Recon 2 and you'll alert every enemy unit and have no daylight on your hands that'll make Weinman look like the Word of 1872. On most missions, you need to move slowly, using your long-range scopes to note every enemy location and scout out the best spots to engage concealed.

Be careful when you're up to on a mission, a face-to-face take always becomes your top priority. The huge armored monsters can tip over your whole squad with their machine gun turret or high-powered cannons. Immediately switch to your M3A2—or call down an air strike, if you have your M32—and give them a taste of an anti-armor missile.



PC/BOX

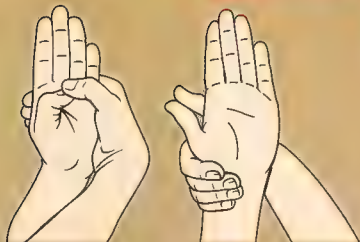
EXTRA LIFE

Play until you're old and gray with our doctor-prescribed guide...

Too much of a good thing can be bad: Just look at Taco Bell's carb-free menu. Gaming in excess, unfortunately, is no exception. So to keep you playing until *Final Fantasy XXX* comes home, we asked

doctors and physical therapists to put together a plan for healthy gaming. Follow along and you'll stay spry until medical science finally finds a cure for Nintendo Thumb.

—Joshua Fruhlinger

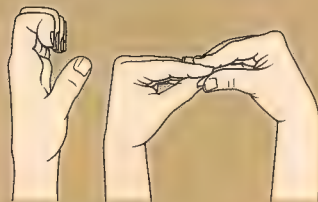


The Bionic Thumbando

- Use thumb of one hand to bend just the end joint of the thumb of other hand.
- Let go of thumb and hold this position.
- Next, straighten thumb and stretch using the thumb of your other hand.
- Let go of thumb and hold in this position.

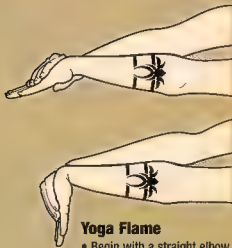
SAVE YOUR BOD*

General practitioner Dr. Greg Taylor says that sitting with bent legs for more than two hours ups your risk of forming blood clots. He recommends getting up every 45 minutes to prevent blood from pooling in the leg veins. We asked physical therapist Jennifer Monreal for a few stretches to try while you're up and about. These target the body parts that get the most abuse from long hours in front of the boob tube. Perform four of these stretches twice a day; hold each stretch for 20 seconds. You'll thank us when you hit 40 and are still playing GTA.



The Double Dragon

- Begin with fingers and thumb as shown.
- Place other hand over fingers and thumb.
- Gently stretch fingers and thumb together.



Yoga Flame

- Begin with a straight elbow.
- With your other hand, grasp at thumb side of hand and bend wrist downward.
- Return your hand to a straight position.
- Pull back hand gently, as shown.



Wave of the Warrior

- Place your thumb and index finger between two fingers of your other hand.
- Gently spread finger apart, as shown.
- Repeat with all pairs of fingers.



EASY ON THE EYES

Eye strain, headaches, blurry vision—all are problems associated with frequent gaming, says Dr. Stephen Miller, executive director of St. Louis' College of Optimetrists in Vision Development and author of *The Eye Care Book for Computer Users*. Follow his rules to preserve your peepers....



- Stretch your eyes—no, really. "Rotate them as if following a large circle," says Dr. Miller, "then roll them to the side, far down and back up, then reverse."

- Limit your gaming times. Play for more than three hours and you'll need a break. Take 10 minutes to focus on distant objects, or just close your eyes for a bit.

- Don't sit closer than three times the diagonal size of your screen. So if you have a 27-inch tube, stay 7 feet away.

- Unless you're playing a game that demands darkness (such as any *Silent Hill* title, below), switch on a light. Dim surroundings make pupils gape, which lets in too much eye-damaging TV-screen light.

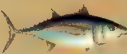


MIND POWER-UPS

Games—well, some anyway—require logic in addition to lloky-splif reflexes. To supercharge that gray lump you call a brain, nutritionists suggest you ingest these supplements, available at your local drugstore.



- **Omega-3s**—These fatty acids are an important brain food. Find them in fish such as tuna, flaxseed oil, or in a bottle.

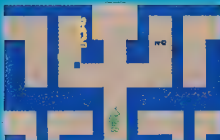


- **Ginkgo Biloba**—This ancient tree's leaves boost circulation to the brain and extremities. That means more oxygen up there—and slicker reflexes.

- **Kava Kava**—This Polynesian super shrub melts stress. A bit might chill you out for your next online firefight.

- **Caffeine**—Too relaxed? A cup of Joe or soda will get you wired for a big game. Find milder doses in green tea, which also packs antioxidants that improve brain-cell communication.





ADVENTURE

Atari 2600 + 1987

The first action role-playing game, *Adventure* sent its dot-size hero—armed with an arrow-shaped sword—into dungeons inhabited by dragons that even the game's creator admits look like water fowl.

Bobby: A duck ate me.

EGM: A what ate you?

Parker: A pink duck.

EGM: What do you think this character's name is?

Parker: Dot On Adventure? That's what this game is, isn't it? Go on, go up, hit up.

Bobby: Stupid duck. I hate the duck. The duck is evil.

Parker: Go left, go left. Grab the arrow. That's the only way you can kill the duck, you have to run that into the duck.

Garret: It's a spear or something.

Bobby: [Enters castle.] I'm just going to store all my keys and useless stuff in here. I'm going to store my duck in there.

EGM: Do you identify with this dot?

Garret: No. The dot is small. I am not.

Bobby: Yeah. My best friend, the ducks, just like this dot. Small, handsome, and adventurous.

EGM: How long would you put up with this game?

Garret: Five more minutes.

Bobby: Would you go with this game for hours, but I must easily amuse. How about we just pretend this is the new *Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater* game.

Garret: You go ahead and do that, Bobby.

EGM: What if we told you the ducks were supposed to be dragons?

Everyone: [Laughs.]

Bobby: This game is addictive.

Parker: Ah—You're trapped. You're eaten by the duck.

EGM: Addictive? Why?

Bobby: You want to beat the level and find out what this nonsense means.

Parker: But you can't do anything because you're stuck behind the duck, or the dragon.

EGM: What is this game missing?

Parker: Like action. But it's for the Atari, so it's boring.

Bobby: Like a new shoe. Not idea, but I should be a 3D dot with laser arms that can do *Matrix* moves. Pachoo! Pachoo! Pachoo! Pachoo!

EGM: How do you have a 3D dot?

Parker: Like a cube.

EGM: Would you want your parents to buy this for you?

Everyone: No.

Bobby: It'll be 25 cents and come with a pinball machine, yeah, I'll buy it.

Dillon: And do you think people actually want to do this and it was a big deal?

Parker: I probably was.

Bobby: This is like *Pong*. Everybody thought it was amazing and good, but now we're just thinking, "Oh, it's only a good loading screen for *Test Drive*."

Dillon: And it's still 20 years from now.

people are going to think, "Oh, you're playing [GameCube *Zelda* game] *Wind Waker*? That's boring."

EGM: What will you say when your kids say *Wind Waker* looks boring?

Parker: Get out of my house. You're out of my will.

better hero than the dot?

Bobby: Yeah, I think it's a lot better because he has his catchphrase. "Yeeaaaah!"

EGM: Wait, *Adventure*'s dot has a catchphrase. [Turns up TV volume. Game makes bleeping noise.]

Everyone: [Laughs.]

"It should be a 3D dot with laser arms that can do *Matrix* moves." —10-year-old Bobby Johnson

EGM: Can't you imagine you're a warrior running around?

Bobby: He gets eaten by evil ducks—or "dragons." How could you think he's a warrior?

Rachel: I want to make a comparison between a little dot and then jumping to *Zelda* and the new and improved games.

EGM: So you think *Zelda*'s Link is a

Rachel: ...sounds like my alarm clock.

Parker: Did this game, um, really well?

EGM: Would it surprise you if it did?

Parker: Not really because it was Atari and was slated to be an back then.

Bobby: And because people were stupid and liked addictive games. People were like, "Wow—such good graphics!" when they got a dot with a key. Woodoo!



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

NES + 1987

A classic action-RPG, *Zelda* introduced players to fan-fave elf boy Link and his lost princess, Zelda.

Garret: It's so retro.

EGM: What does retro mean to you?

Parker: Like, old and outdated.

Garret: Me and cool.

Parker: Played this when I was a little boy. Oh, I love this so much.

Rachel: This will be much easier than the little dot!

Dillon: Because I can throw my sword in an enemy's direction.

Bobby: ...and the explodes.

Dillon: ...and you can use it again.

Bobby: That's an awesome sword. I mean, like *Katana* and stuff, but this sword is just...wow?

Rachel: This game makes more sense than the other one.

Dillon: At least you can tell what the main character is.

EGM: What would you say if we saw we like this more than *Wind Waker*?

Parker: I agree.

Bobby: I agree. I love this game.

EGM: You would really rather play this than *Wind Waker*?

Parker: Yeah, it's older.

school. It's classic.

EGM: So if you're going to a desert island and could bring only one game, you'd take this over *Wind Waker*?

Parker: No, I'd take *Wind Waker* because this is boring.

EGM: Now you're changing your mind?

Parker: But that's a different scenario. You want to get the most fun in life. You want the longer game.

EGM: How do you like the graphics?

Bobby: Those bushes look like petroleum stains.

Parker: Better than the other game.

Garret: These graphics were actually cutting edge.

Bobby: If I could go back in time, I'd get a copy of *Pong* and this.

Garret: I would go back in time to get one of the best games of today and sell



"I like katanas and stuff, but this sword is just...wow!" —10-year-old Bobby Johnson

Bobby: Why do all the girls think that Link is a hunk?

Dillon: I think just you think that.

EGM: So girls don't think he's a hunk?

Rachel: No.

Dillon: I wish no.

Rachel: Like actual humans better than videogame characters.

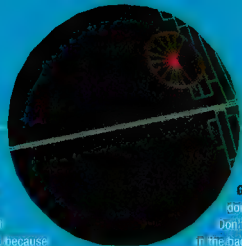
to get to the highest bidder.

EGM: Knowing this is a *Zelda* game, what do you think the goal is?

Parker: Save the fairy, or save *Zelda*. It was something to do with the Tri-Force.

Dillon: It always does.

Bobby: If you get the Tri-Force, you get the girl!



STAR WARS

Arcade • 1983

This blockbuster coin-op uses glowy-line vector graphics and movie voice samples to re-create the X-wing attack on the Death Star.

EGM: Do you feel like you're really flying an X-wing here?

Parker:

Rachel:

Anthony: *It's gonna crash.*

"It looks like midway through [making] the game, they just gave up."

—11-year-old Parker James

Dillon: Shoot the worm! '200! Shoot those towers!

EGM: Do you feel like you're in the middle of the *Star Wars* universe?

Everybody:

Parker: They're like we're in some barely 3D universe.

Bobby: Maybe it feels like we're in the *Star Wars* universe where you can't see that wall.

Dillon: Go up, go down, go up, go down, the X-wing blows up.

Rachel: And be dead.

EGM: What do these lasers look like?

Anthony: Stars.

Garret: *hey, hey.*

Bobby: *rebb.*

Parker: Psychedelic snowflakes.

Rachel: This looks like a game out of *Willy Wonka* or something.

Bobby: It's like, 'I'm Willy Wonka, I've created a new *Star Wars*'.

EGM: Are the TIE fighters scary?

Anthony: No, it feels like they're trying to give me flowers.

Dillon: Our flowers that you're allergic to.

so you're trying to blow them up.

Dillon: If they made a game like this now, someone would definitely get bored.

Parker: It looks like midway through the

game, they

just gave up.

[They're like]

whatever, and

just stopped.

Bobby: I'm not

alarmed because

I could just stick my hand

through one and chop it in half.

Garret: There's no depth perception in

this game.

EGM: Isn't that satisfying to destroy

the Death Star?

Bobby: Oh, wow—pittle explosion!

EGM: Now are you ready to do it all

over again?

Parker: You have to

do it again?

Garret: That's what I'm

doing right now, Parker.

Don't you see the Death Star

in the background?

Bobby: After you beat the Death Star

level, there should be a snow level, then

a small-speeder bike level. They should

make a *Matrix*-like game in the theme of *Star*

Wars. So then you take out your sword

and run up to a guy and go, "Ching!"

And after you saw through his head you

fly inside your X-wing.



Why the camera? CWK filmed the kids for a show to be aired in *EMG*'s 2005.



DEFENDER

Arcade • 1980

With its five buttons and save-the-humans mission, *Defender* was one of the most complex games in arcade history.

Bobby: I've played this on my cell phone.

EGM: [Pointing to the humans on the ground] What do they look like?

Parker: They look like those little characters in this game *Life* the little people you have to stick in your car.

EGM: before this came out in compilations, we used to put quarters in arcade machines.

Parker: You wasted quarters on this?

EGM: Yeah.

Parker: That's so sad!

Garret: I like it. If it's one of those games you can play and play and play, just like *Madden Football*.

Rachel: I don't know what any of these buttons meant, I might push them.

EGM: That's how we felt.

Garret: Smart bomb!

Bobby: I want to use all three of my

smart bombs at once, before I die.

Parker: You're supposed to pick the

3 people up.

Garret: Oh, those are people. No, I think

you're supposed to shoot them. Those

are aliens. I think.

Parker: you have to protect them from

the aliens, which are these things [points

to creatures in the sky].

Dillon: They look like jellyfish from

SpongeBob.

Garret: So the aliens pick them up.

and if they're carrying them, you have to

kill the aliens and catch the people. [The

player starts shooting people.]

Parker: Or not.

Dillon: If you shoot them, then the aliens

can't get them.

EGM: If you shoot all the people, the

planet gets destroyed. Then the aliens

take over.

Garret: Nice.

Bobby: It was in it, I'd be like, "Ok,

aliens, if you give me 100 dollars you can

destroy this planet."

Garret: [Whoa] What just happened?

Parker: The Earth blew up. Remember?

Anthony: It's like everything just shattered.

Oh, no, Run.

Parker: Oh, no, you don't have any

smart bombs.

EGM: Do you know that in these types

of games, people spend hours and

hours trying to break world records.

Parker: Like that guy who beat *Pac*

Mania with the long beard?

Garret: Billy Mitchell.

EGM: What do you think of him?

"If I knew what any of these buttons meant, I might push them."

—11-year-old Rachel Williams

Rachel: Only 500 dollars?

EGM: Do you feel bad about shooting the humans?

Parker: No, that's my only amusement in this game. They were like, more

detailed, maybe I'd feel something. But it

looks like I'm shooting a popscicle.

EGM: Would you ever play this game

again?

Garret: I would if I had a lot more time

and could figure out the controls.

Dillon: I would if that absolutely nothing

else I do. [The screen fades to a flash.]

Parker: ... a complete loser. Doesn't

he have a mullet?

Dillon: That's bad.

Garret: What are irons.

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720*

ARCADE • 1986

Before Tony Hawk showed us how to pull a Christ Air in a skateboarding game, we filled this coin-op with quarters. Skate or die? The kids would rather just grine.

Bobby: [Hiss] the skate-or-die game.

EGM: So how does this compare to the *Tony Hawk* games?

Parker: [No] no comparison at all. *Tony Hawk*'s the best.

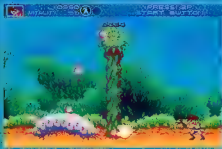
EGM: Would you pay a quarter to play this game in the arcade?

Everyone: No.

Anthony: Yes.
Garret: [No].
Parker: These controls are f---in' terrible.
Garret: [Reaches a closer course.] Closed? That's ghetto.
EGM: So why isn't this as good as *Tony Hawk*? It looks like it has the same moves....
Parker: The controls on *Tony Hawk* are about 200 times better.
EGM: Does the character look like a skateboarder?
Anthony: Like one from the '80s.
Parker: Yeah, from the '80s, like from that movie *Cleaning the Cube*.
Garret: [After a long] Aww...
EGM: Now imagine you just paid a quarter for that.
Garret: Oh, that's fine.
EGM: And you're going to pay another quarter to do this again.
Garret: Oh, that's weak.
EGM: How many quarters would you spend?
Anthony: One, and then I'd be ignored.
Rachel: Probably three.
EGM: [After someone dies again] You

just spent another quarter.
Parker: This is where I start hitting the machine.
Garret: No, I would've started hitting it a long time ago.
Rachel: I actually think the game is kinda cool.
Dillon: You die so many times and you spend so many quarters. Why don't you

just buy the whole arcade game?
EGM: What's your biggest combo in *Tony Hawk*?
Garret: Something like 956,000, I think.
EGM: What's your highest combo in 720*?
Parker: [No] three points.
Garret: Two hundred maybe?
EGM: Sweet.



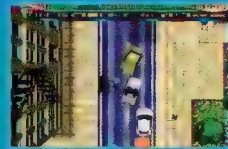
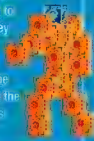
GUNSTAR HEROES

GENESIS • 1993

Out-school gamers gush over this hyperactive side-scroller.

EGM: Hardcore gamers love this.
Parker: Really? I've played this game a million times on different systems. Like these kinds of games. Oh, I just threw an enemy. This game's kinda awesome. It's

there an unlimited number of enemies?
Anthony: You're already at a boss? It looks like a giant asparagus.
Parker: [Hiss] why you don't do drugs you make screwed up videogames.
EGM: Why do you think this game is considered a hardcore favorite?
Parker: Because it's so intense and there's like a million things going on.
Anthony: And because football players are trying to kill you. [A boss made of cubes appears.] Whoa. It's so 3D!
Dillon: Maybe they wanted to impress everyone when they made this game.
Parker: This game makes me mad. The graphics of the characters are horrible, but the graphics of the boss battles are cool.



GRAND THEFT AUTO

PLAYSTATION • 1998

Wait, we thought kids weren't supposed to be playing the GTA games. Well, that never stopped us from making them try the very first one.

Dillon: [Play] this [censored] "M."
Parker: So?

Garret: [No] yeah, so?
Anthony: These graphics are horrible.
Parker: Oh, I love these graphics.
EGM: Are you serious?
Parker: No...yeah. Actually I hate this game. Well, it's not that. It's just like GTA3 better.
Rachel: [After some frustration with the controls] I don't think I will be very well on my driver's license next.
Anthony: Oh, there's the VIPer. Sweet.
EGM: No one told you what this game was; would you be able to tell what series it's from?
Parker: Maybe from the steering of cars.
Rachel: I like this game because I can do all these things that are so against what I'd ever do in reality.
Garret: [No] the whole point of videogames.



GALAGA

ARCADE • 1981

Our games used to be simple and fun, and damn it—we liked it that way. Kids these days? Not so much. Just look at how they treat this timeless shooter....

Anthony: What are we playing now?
EGM: It's called *Galaga*.
Anthony: Oh, is this that game where the spaceship moves left and right and shoots? Oh, good. I used to play this. It was a demo for *Tekken* on PlayStation. I



Anthony: [Upon seeing *Galaga* on-screen] Is this *Tekken*?
EGM: No, it's *Galaga*. We just told you.
Anthony: [Dejected.] Aww.
Parker: [No] this game's been done like a million times.
Garret: *Space Invaders*'s better than this.
Parker: *Space Invaders*'s all these games are exactly the same—there's no real difference.
EGM: What does this game need to make it as good as *Space Invaders*?
Parker: Worse graphics.
Anthony: All this game needs is better graphics, and I should thank you wherever you want.

Dillon: [With a tone of genuine disgust] And maybe they shouldn't make the enemies bug...
Rachel: And they shouldn't make them hit star buddies in the back all twinkly colors. It looks like confetti.
EGM: Now imagine you've reached the 10th stage, and you're on your last life. Once you die and you put another quarter in, you don't just continue from there—you start all over!
Parker: Are you serious?
EGM: Yep. When you lose all your lives, you have to start over. You don't keep going.
Parker: And you guys back then weren't OK with this?

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MORTAL KOMBAT: SHAOLIN MONKS

Increased spirituality through decapitation

Platforms: PS2/XB
 Publisher: Midway
 Developer: Paradox
 Release Date: Fall 2005

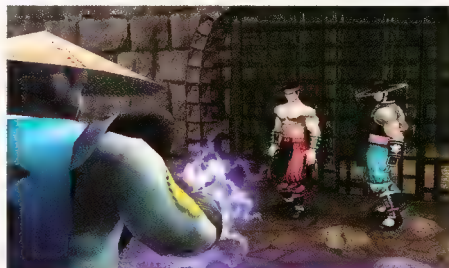
Midway's recent *Mortal Kombat: Deception* successfully augmented the series' established 1-on-1 fighting gameplay with a smattering of additional gameplay types, including a *Tetris*-inspired puzzler, a quick-and-bloody take on chess, and even a scaled-down role-playing game. These miniature genre experiments offered a glimpse of the franchise's future—starting in 2005, Midway plans to ship a new *MK* game every year...and not all of them fighters. First up on the blood-soaked conveyor belt: *Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks*, a 3D brawler that pits heroic pugilists Lui Kang and Kung Lao against the denizens of Outworld.

Gameplay unfolds in the traditional hack-n-slash mold (think EA's *Lord of the Rings* action titles), but with all the memorable characters and gory fatalities fans expect from *MK*. Look for appearances by codies of returning combatants (palette-swapped ninjas aplenty) and voluminous unlockable goodies (including secret playable characters). If you're a serious

MK fanatic (the kind who writes hot 'n' heavy Stryker/Millena fan fiction), you'll be pleased that *Monks* promises to fill in some of the lingering story-line gaps between *MK2* and *MK3*.

If this whole enterprise imparts a nauseous sense of déjà vu, you're not alone: Midway tried a similar thing with 1997's

fetid *Mortal Kombat Mythologies: Sub-Zero* (PS1/N64) and then again in 2000's equally awful *Mortal Kombat: Special Forces* (PS1). Hopefully, everyone has learned from past mistakes, as the over-the-top action and unique visual style of *MK* should theoretically translate well to a straight-on action title. Here's hoping...



■ Spice up this screen by Googling an mp3 of the *MK* song "Sub-Zero (Chinese Ninja Warrior)".

BY THE NUMBERS

The gory details

1992	Year of the original <i>Mortal Kombat</i> release
22	Number of games sold worldwide (combined release date)
13	Number of lookie-innaries in <i>Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks</i> (PS2/XB) release
2	Number of licensed films based on the <i>MK</i> franchise (and '97's number of sequels)



■ The *Mortal Kombat* logo: the tattoo of choice for gamers during the mid-'90s.

DESERT ISLAND GAMES: MICHAEL PHELPS



Every so often, we ship a celebrity off to a desert island and ask what three console games he'd want to wash up on the beach. This month, we strand gold-medal-grabbing Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, who should probably spend more time driving balls in *Tiger Woods PGA Tour* than drinkin' and drivin' in real life. —Marc Saltzman



Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell (Multi)
 "I would definitely have to choose *Splinter Cell* first because it gives you the ability to be really, really sneaky; like in swimming, you always have the chance to surprise your opponent."



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005 (Multi)
 "This game is great because, well, who doesn't like to play the best athlete in the game?"



Madden NFL 2005 (Multi)
 "It's like being in high school and learning about the sport from the guy who knows—John Madden! It's like taking an additional class to really learn all about football."



Better dress-up. The game's on. Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic II is here. Pick it up at Best Buy beginning December 8. You can get a jump on it and other new releases in our video game preorder section in store and at www.bestbuy.com/V/Gpreorder. At Best Buy, gamers rule.



THE RUMOR MILL

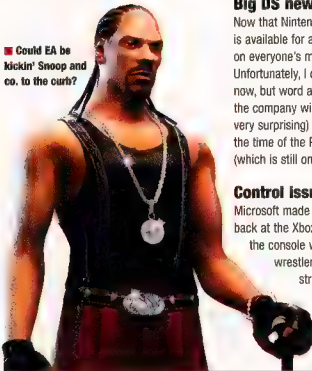
Gossip that's tastier than Grandma's eggnog

I don't know how the jolly ol' fella up in the North Pole does it. I, too, have been making my list, checking it twice, and trying to find out exactly who's been naughty and nice. But damn, there's just too many of you. So the heck with it—all of you will receive my wonderful, beautifully wrapped gifts of gaming gossip. And if you're also feeling in the giving mood, you can always send me some scuttlebutt at quatermann@ziffdavis.com. So until next time, please have a safe and happy holiday. —The Q

Def Jam artists get knocked the f*** out

Man, oh man, the hip-hop-studded brawler *Def Jam Fight for NY* packed one helluva punch when it came out this past

■ Could EA be kicking Snoop and co. to the curb?



September. And I was totally hyped for another go-around in Electronic Arts' underground fight club until I heard this little piece of gossip: The company is thinking about ditching the expensive Def Jam license and using all fictional pugilists in its next game. No Redman, no Method Man—hope that doesn't equal “no fun.”

The fable continues

OK, so *Fable* isn't the “greatest role-playing game ever” like its creator once boasted. Still, several Xbox owners (including this one) have picked it up and transformed a young lad into a legendary hero or the ultimate evildoer. Apparently, sales across the globe have been strong enough to warrant a sequel...and all signs point to *Fable 2* showing up on Microsoft's Xbox successor.

Big DS news ahead

Now that Nintendo's dual-screen handheld is available for all to enjoy, the big question on everyone's mind is, “What's next?” Unfortunately, I can't get into specifics right now, but word around Mario's pad is that the company will make some huge (and very surprising) DS announcements near the time of the PlayStation Portable launch (which is still on target for March '05).

Control issues

Microsoft made a rather large boo-boo back at the Xbox launch when it released the console with a controller made for wrestler Andre the Giant's monstrous mitts. Luckily, it ain't gonna make the same mistake twice. I have it on good authority that Xbox 2 (or Xenon or



■ Fable gets another chapter on Xbox 2.

whatever you like to call it) will sport a gamepad that's extremely similar to the trimmed-down model (dubbed Controller S) that the majority of people use today with their Xbox.

A triple-crown prince

Ubisoft's resurrection of the *Prince of Persia* franchise has landed the company not one, but two stellar hits the last two years (check out our review of *Warrior Within* on page 126). And if that isn't hearing is correct (which it usually is), Ubisoft will attempt to go three for three. Look for the Prince running along the walls of your console next holiday, featuring a similar gritty backdrop as the last one, but with a greater emphasis on puzzle solving.



■ Heads will roll when PDP returns in '05.

CHARTS

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES FOR SEPTEMBER 2004

1	Pokémon FireRed GBA • Nintendo
2	Fable XB • Microsoft
3	Pokémon LeafGreen GBA • Nintendo
4	Madden NFL 2005 PS2 • EA Sports
5	Star Wars Battlefront XB • LucasArts
6	Star Wars Battlefront PS2 • LucasArts
7	Star Ocean: Till the End of Time PS2 • Square Enix
8	NBA Live 2005 PS2 • EA Sports
9	ESPN NFL 2K5 PS2 • ESPN Videogames
10	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005 PS2 • EA Sports

TOP 10 GAME RENTALS FOR THE WEEK ENDING 10/31/04

1	Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas PS2 • Rockstar
2	Tony Hawk's Underground 2 PS2 • Activision
3	Star Wars Battlefront PS2 • LucasArts
4	Ace Combat 5 PS2 • Namco
5	Men of Valor XB • VU Games
6	Conflict: Vietnam PS2 • Global Star
7	Star Wars Battlefront Xbox • LucasArts
8	Mortal Kombat: Deception PS2 • Midway
9	Madden NFL 2005 PS2 • EA Sports
10	Fable XB • Microsoft

OVERHEARD

“Now us Christians must go into damage control and try to shield [sic] ourselves from this digitized form of Satan.”

—From *BigJesus'* review of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* on the website *Christ Confused Game Reviews*.

“I was just trying to kiss my girlfriend and I shot a cop.”

—EGM senior editor *Crispin Boyer* discovers the many uses of the G button in *GTA: SA*. Maybe *BigJesus* is right?

“PlayStation and PS2 are like sons. PSP is a daughter with a different mother.”

—Sony Computer Entertainment President and CEO *Ken Kutaragi*.



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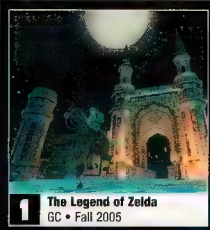
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THE HOT TEN

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Disagree with the list? You're the ones who created it. Choose and/or lose at egm.tup.com.

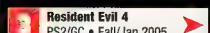
■ *RE4's* Luis doing his best Johnny Depp impersonation.



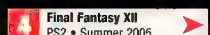
1 **The Legend of Zelda**
GC • Fall 2005



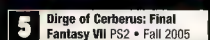
2 **Jade Empire**
XB • March 2005



3 **Resident Evil 4**
PS2/GC • Fall/Jan 2005



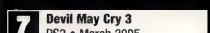
4 **Final Fantasy XII**
PS2 • Summer 2005



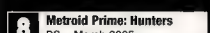
5 **Dirge of Cerberus: Final Fantasy VII** PS2 • Fall 2005



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



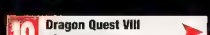
7 **Devil May Cry 3**
PS2 • March 2005



8 **Metroid Prime: Hunters**
DS • March 2005



9 **Splinter Cell Chaos Theory**
PS2/XB/GC • March 2005



10 **Dragon Quest VIII**
PS2 • November 2005



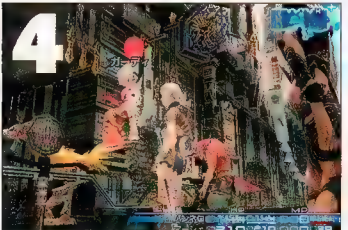
■ Leon and Luis, moments before their musical number.

RESIDENT EVIL 4

PS2 • Fall 2005 / GC • January 2005 — Fans who guided Leon S. Kennedy through *Resident Evil 2's* hellish scenario may be in for a non-zombie-related shock, judging from a recent teaser image. Scope that top-left screenshot: short black hair, a sleeve-

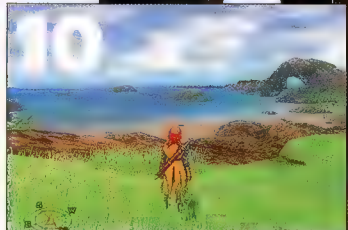


less red dress, and a gun pointed straight at you—either the infamous Ada Wong has returned or Capcom is seriously screwing with us. And what's with this mystery man at the bottom right? Our current best guess is nefarious series villain Wesker...



FINAL FANTASY XII

PS2 • Summer 2005 — Small news regarding a small species—moogles. Along with being talented machinists and capable mages, they're apparently more proficient in combat than one might expect. Two words: mog knights. Like they once did in *Final Fantasy VI* and *Tactics Advance*, the bat-winged bunnies will once again take up shield and sword and start hacking on some kneecaps. Be afraid...be moderately afraid.



DRAGON QUEST VIII

PS2 • November 2005 — Square Enix's newest entry in this legendary Japanese RPG series (previously known as *Dragon Warrior* on these shores) makes a surprise leap onto the charts. Although the game is currently devastating Japanese sales charts, we'll have to wait for a holiday 2005 release here. Luckily, it'll be worth the wait—series creator Yuji Horii plans on adding loads of exclusive content for the U.S. version.

"The alert level has
been raised to **RED!**"

"Scored 9.0, 9.5 And 10 Out Of 10, Awarded Editor's Choice: Gold"
-Electronic Gaming Monthly

"MGS3 Looks Astounding, From
Its Inspiration To Its Story To Its Gameplay."
-GameSpy.com

"5 Out Of 5"
-Official PlayStation Magazine

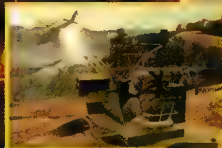
"10 Out Of 10"
-PlayStation Magazine

"The Finest Installment In Konami's
Acclaimed Stealth-Espionage Series."
-Electronic Gaming Monthly

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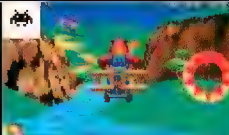
KONAMI



COMING SOON

New games for New Year's

■ *The Getaway's* Eddie slashes his copy of *Cockney Lovers as Men* walks in.

JANUARY
2005

Banjo Pilot
THQ • GBA — If you enjoy hillbilly bears, biplanes, or any combination thereof, you're in luck. Sorry, everyone else.



Chulip
Natsume • PS2 — You're tasked with cheering up a town of depressed loners by kissing them. Don't try that in real life.



Close Combat: First to Fight
Global Star • XB — This team-based shooter strives for supernaturalism. We assume you fight aliens with lasers.



Doom 3
Activision • XB — Cheap scares and a big @!\$#ing gun remind us all why "*Doom clone*" used to be a genre.



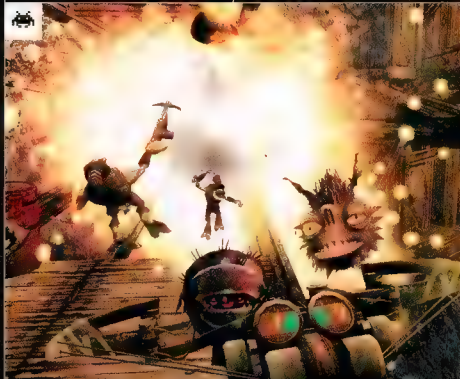
Mortal Kombat: Deception
Midway • GC — The spine-ripping fighter makes its tardy Cube appearance. Online play is out, but new characters are in....



Playboy: The Mansion
Arush • PS2/XB — In this game, you can control the editorial content of a gentleman's magazine...or just have lots of sex.



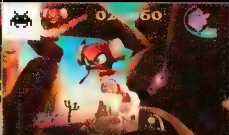
Resident Evil 4
Capcom • GC — PS2 players will get a piece of the zombie action later in the year, but for now, it's all Cube, baby.



Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath
EA Games • XB — This latest *Oddworld* introduces a new hero, the Clint Eastwood-ish (if Clint was half-bear, half-horse) gunslinger known as Stranger. Expect a blend of platforming, adventure, and first-person shooting, but with the trademark *Oddworld* charm.



Spy vs. Spy
Global Star • PS2/XB — Race relations explode (with hilarious consequences) when the spies from *Mad* magazine duel.



Tork: Prehistoric Punk
Ubisoft • XB — Another cute caveman kid who transforms into spirit animals? Tak (of *JuJu* fame) better defend his turf.



Virtua Quest
Sega • PS2/GC — *Virtua Fighter* fans will have to bide their time with this cutesy action-RPG while Sega works on V/F5.



X-Men Legends
Nokia • N-Gage — The hit console RPG goes mobile, allowing you to play your favorite mutie on the go. Ours? Jubilee.

Also in January

Antimatter: Great Hunt
Ignition • XB

The Getaway: Black Monday
Sony CEA • PS2

Mercenaries
LucasArts • PS2/XB

Sulkidori IV
Konami • PS2

Capcom Fighting Evolution
Capcom • XB

Harvest Moon for Girls
Natsume • GBA

Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition
Rockstar • PS2/XB

Tokyo Xtreme Racer Advance
Crave • GBA

Classified Sentinel Crisis
Global Star • PS2

The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap
Nintendo • GBA

The Punisher
THQ • PS2/XB

Top Gear RPM Tuning
Kemco • PS2

Ford Mustang 40th Anniversary
Global Star • XB

Mega Man Anniversary Collection
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Nokia • N-Gage

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Crave • GC





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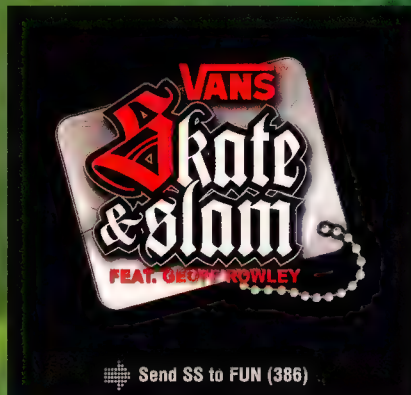


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HERE COME THE NEW CHALLENGERS

2005's upstart titles threaten to unseat 2004's heaviest hitters





We're still crawling from the wreckage of the explosive 2004 holiday gaming season—blockbuster titles like *Halo 2*, *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, *Metal Gear Solid 3*, and *Metroid Prime 2* conspired to obliterate any semblance of a social life...and we loved every second of it. But as crazy and competitive as fall was, it could have been a lot worse: A ton of good-looking titles slipped into the new year, clearing the way for the triple-A behemoths to rule the sales charts. This was a fortuitous accident, really, as we now start 2005 with an unusually robust lineup of promising new releases. Will these New Year treats be slick enough to make you put away those fantastic holiday hits? Let's find out....>

MERCENARIES

PS2/XB • LucasArts • January 2005

It's a paranoid, ripped-from-the-headlines setup: The shadowy General Song has taken over North Korea's communist government, turning the peninsula into a war zone and opening the possibility of real-life nuclear Armageddon across eastern Asia. The free world wants Song dead, and you—a freelance soldier working for a large private military firm—are only too happy to oblige, assuming there's money involved, of course.

This is *Mercenaries* in a nutshell, and from this description you may expect it's a stealthy action game in the *Splinter Cell* vein. But it's not: In the words of Producer Shara Miller, it's a "playground of destruction." In this virtual Pyongyang, metal files, explosions sound off everywhere, and soldiers from all sides of the conflict bounce off the Humvee you're racing at 70 mph through back alleys. If you want to play the good guy and help the "allies" capture Song, that's fine, but it's more fun to ally with the Russians and call air strikes on hapless office buildings. In fact,

Mercenaries is really a logical extension of the *Grand Theft Auto* series—if *GTA* took an everyday city and turned it into a war zone, then *Mercenaries* cuts out the middleman and lets you get your real war on.

Of course, your character (chosen from three hardbody candidates) doesn't have complete free reign here. Ostensibly, you're supposed to be helping people out—all four factions will offer you missions, and there are 52 war criminals running around just waiting to be caught and brought back alive for reward cash. Catching these guys helps you get closer to the despotic general, and going through the missions helps you learn about what each faction is really up to. "All the missions relate to Gen. Song," explains Miller, "but every side has their own motivations, and in the beginning they're all hiding something from you."

How does all of this play out? Like *GTA* mixed with a healthy dose of *Rambo*. As long as you've got the dough, you can call out an amazing variety of firepower, including laser-guided missiles, artillery, bombardments, and crateloads of portable weaponry airlifted to your position at a

moment's notice. If you're broke, you can always hijack a passing car, tank, helicopter, or personal carrier—if troops from a friendly faction are nearby, they'll even hop in and man the gun turrets for you. The world is your oyster, and it's just waiting to be pockmarked with impact craters.

Mercenaries' real charm lies in all the little details behind the game's war-torn world. Nearly everything is destructible, and blowing up things like North Korean listening posts and statues of General Song earn you extra money from the allies. You can also easily lose yourself in the city fighting. "One way to get back on good terms with a faction is to kill some of their enemies in their presence," Miller says. "If the Chinese aren't giving you new missions, you can join them in a firefight against some Korean forces, and they'll grudgingly start talking to you again."



Will it make you want to put *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* on the shelf?

Mercenaries may share some of *GTA*'s faults (i.e., occasionally choppy graphics on the PS2), but it holds the edge on pure destructive energy. Besides, how many other games let you hijack a helicopter from the ground while it's hovering 30 feet in the air? >

CONKER: LIVE & RELOADED

XB • Microsoft • March 2005

This long-delayed Xbox platformer, a remake of Nintendo 64 problem child *Conker's Bad Fur Day*, finally seems to be coming together. A tip when first shown in 2003 ("We shouldn't have shown it so early," admits designer Chris Seavor), the game now looks like a laugh and a half, thanks to an extensive multiplayer mode packed with down 'n' dirty humor.

Each side in *Conker's* conflict (which plus everyone's favorite pervo squirrel against an army of evil teddy bears) has

different weapons, vehicles, and abilities, turning the gamut from clanking devices and infrared sight to *Terminator*-style hoverplanes with half a dozen gun turrets. This makes for a surprisingly deep online experience—as well as some of the castiest massacres ever witnessed in a videogame.

"We've tried to make [*Conker*] appeal to the casual pick-up-and-play gamer," explains Seavor, "but also to the more hardcore player who likes to play every class and every level and every strategy to

death." It remains to be seen if developer Rare can balance all the characters and abilities, but this *Conker* may have more going for it than it seems at first glance.

Will it make you want to put *Halo 2* on the shelf? It's just as violent, in its own sort of cutesy way—and the single-player game has more scatological jokes—but *Conker* (and just about every other game) could have trouble competing with *Halo 2*'s instantly addictive online gameplay.

SUIKODEN IV

PS2 • Konami • January 2005

Wouldn't it be nice if *Final Fantasy* wasn't so... you know, uptight all the time? The *Suikoden* series' laid-back fairy-tale-like approach to roleplaying has gone virtually unduplicated for over eight years, and the fourth game continues the tradition with fast-paced fighting, strategic ship battles, and 100 party members to gather up and keep in your secret fortress. The presentation this time around has taken a cautious step toward FF-style cinematics—there's actually voiced dialogue this time, and the characters don't look like stocky Lego knights anymore—but the ocean-based plot and heavy characterization make this seem like a traditional-RPG version of *Zelda: The Wind Waker*.

Will it make you want to put *Shin Megami Tensei III: Nocturne* on the shelf? *Suikoden IV* loses in looks, but its simpler difficulty and deeper, brighter story line (i.e., it's not about Satan) make it a much safer choice.

UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2

XB • Midway • February 2005

Unreal Championship 2 may not have a sweeping story line or cool alien vehicles, but you can bet it's going to have death-matching depth. Rather than generic-but-equal soldiers, you'll select from a group of individualized combatants, including a fast and light neo-Egyptian chick (clothes would just slow her down) and a slow and powerful robo-tank bruiser. Classic *Unreal* weaponry like the flak cannon coexists nicely-peacefully with melee action in which a

third-person perspective lets you pounce, combo, air dash, and even deflect incoming rockets—if you have the skill. The fighting-game feel is pushed even further by a cadre of *Mortal Kombat* guest stars.

Will it make you want to put *Halo 2* on the shelf? We seriously doubt it could compete with *Halo 2*'s epic single-player game, but *Championship 2* has a good shot at dishing up killer deathmatches.

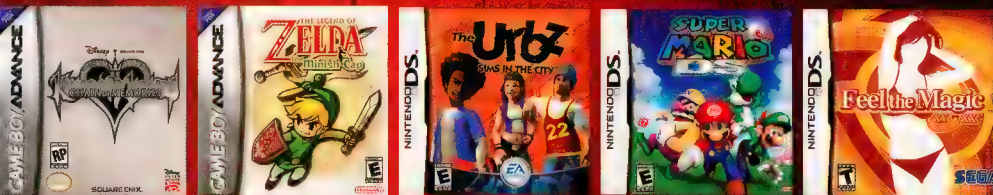
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MIDNIGHT CLUB 3: DUB EDITION

PS2/XB • Rockstar • January 2005

You'll have to wait a little longer for *Midnight Club 3*'s brand of open-city racing and spinner-rim Escalade-porn. We don't expect that there are any problems under the hood, though—word is publisher Rockstar opted (quite sensibly) for a late January release to avoid the nasty pileup of big-name holiday games.

In case you hadn't heard, *MC3*'s asso-

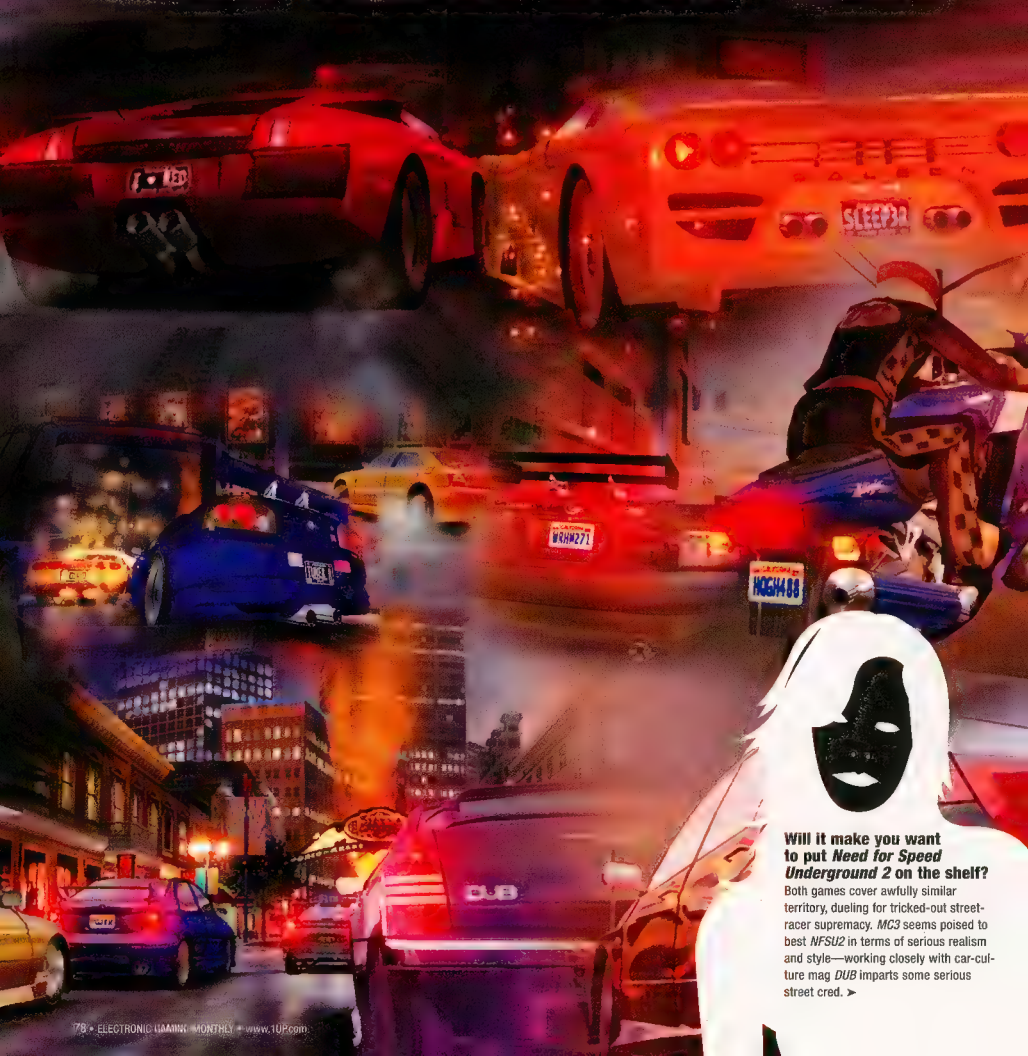
ciation with *DUB* magazine figures into the game's now-found focus on high-end vehicles and serious customization.

"There is a whole spectrum of car and bike culture out there, and we are capturing all of it," says Mark Garona, the game's producer. "We are going way beyond tuners... *Midnight Club 3* will have concept cars, muscle cars, SUVs, trucks,

high-end cars, street bikes, luxury rides, custom choppers, and more."

With everything from pick-ups to Lamborghinis in *MC3*, you shouldn't have any trouble finding a dream car—and then jacking it up and slapping ultra-high-profile drag-racing tires on the back, or chopping the top, or going the lowrider route and installing crazy

hydraulics, or... doing pretty much anything you can imagine. But then those cosmetic tweaks also have an effect on downforce and handling, so maybe that monster truckified Saleen Mustang isn't such a great idea. "*Midnight Club 3* has the deepest customization component of any racing game," says Garona. We'll see for ourselves in about a month.



Will it make you want to put *Need for Speed Underground 2* on the shelf?

Both games cover awfully similar territory, dueling for tricked-out street-racer supremacy. *MC3* seems poised to best *NFSU2* in terms of serious realism and style—working closely with car-culture mag *DUB* imparts some serious street cred. ▶

PROJECT: SNOWBLIND

PS2/XB • Eidos • February 2005

Nathan Frost, neurally-enhanced lieutenant in the international Liberty Coalition force, could be the most powerful hero in the history of first-person shooters. A cursory inspection of his arsenal reveals everything from standard-issue sniper rifles and machine guns to 007-like electrical proximity mines and flechette guns that fire swarms of flesh-eating organic particles. If that somehow doesn't manage the job, Nate's also got a brain full of cybernetic enhancements, including invincibility, X-ray vision, and a sort of bullet time that lets him actually dodge bullets as they whiz toward him.

You wouldn't like Nate when he's angry, but his repertoire of attacks opens up some surprisingly

original gameplay—indeed, most of *Snowblind*'s missions are set up to reward creative problem solving. Any idiot could try storming into an enemy outpost, guns a-blazing, but there are far more elegant options available if you've got the hardware—sticking a land mine on a drone robot and guiding it in by remote control, for example, or picking enemies off from behind a portable "riot wall" you can place anywhere you like.

Will it make you want to put *Halo 2* on the shelf? What *Snowblind* lacks in name value, it could make up for with its original weapon designs and varied missions. The only concern: Will players actually use all this stuff online?

DEAD TO RIGHTS II: HELL TO PAY

PS2/XB • Namco • February 2005

Namco's mission statement for the first *Dead to Rights* was simple—take a cop, give him a dog, and have them kick ass in as hard-boiled a way as possible. This led to some unmanly scenes (such as beating up jailbirds for cigarettes), but it succeeded more often than it missed the mark, and the sequel—originally an early fall release—will take the film noir atmosphere to an even deeper

level. Expect more environmental interaction (i.e., stuff will blow up real good), a more useful canine partner, and a fighting system that'll make it easier to deal with multiple thugs at once.

Will it make you want to put *Metal Gear Solid 3* on the shelf? It takes itself just as seriously, but the arcadey action could make *DTR2*'s story a little less powerful.

NANOBREAKER

PS2 • Konami • January 2005

The team behind Konami's ghoulish *Castlevania* games takes a futuristic detour with this postapocalyptic slashtathon starring a heroic cyborg on a mission to stop an army of vile nanomachines. Gameplay unfolds much like that of the previous PS2 *Castlevania* title, *Lament of Innocence*, but with the combat frequency and intensity turned up to 11. As you swing your shape-shifting plasma blade through the legions of foes, gallons of "oil" pour from your foes' corpses...and the game actually keeps track of just how much of the red stuff you spill. Classy.

Will it make you want to put *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within* on the shelf? The Prince's recent adventure offers up a lot of the same thrills, but you'll get more blood for your buck here. >



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THE GETAWAY: BLACK MONDAY

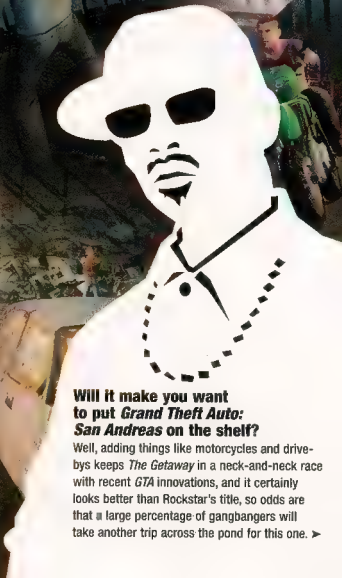
PS2 • Sony CEA • January 2006

Sony's cinematic action/driving hybrid *The Getaway* hit only a few months after Rockstar dropped *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* yet still managed to carve out a respectable place on the sales charts. History seems primed to repeat itself with *The Getaway: Black Monday*, another thoroughly British cops 'n' robbers romp. "I think the genre has gotten so much bigger," explains *Monday* producer Naresh Hirani. "The idea that you're just making another *GTA* clone has gone out the window: Everyone's doing different things, and it's not about competing but rather coexisting." It's true—although *Monday*, like *GTA*, offers plenty of car thievery, gunplay, underworld dealings, and wacky side missions. Its underlying narrative feels entirely different.

Black Monday's plot unfolds in a twisty, overlapping order as three differ-

ent playable characters' scenarios intersect to reveal what went down on a particularly depressing Monday. These three characters—Eddie, a surly boxer swept up in the criminal underworld; Mitch, a headstrong police officer; and Sam, a piss and vinegar female thief—each offer unique gameplay styles in the on-foot sections, lending the game a far more diverse feel than its predecessor has.

Careening around London's crooked streets hasn't changed terribly much, but returning drivers will spot a few key changes. "We've added motorcycles, drive-bys, revamped camera angles, mid-mission waypoints, and a lot more variety in terms of types of driving missions," explains Hirani. "For example, we now have missions where you shoot out the passenger-side window while another character drives."



Will it make you want
to put *Grand Theft Auto:
San Andreas* on the shelf?

Well, adding things like motorcycles and drive-bys keeps *The Getaway* in a neck-and-neck race with recent *GTA* innovations, and it certainly looks better than Rockstar's title, so odds are that a large percentage of gangbangers will take another trip across the pond for this one. >

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DEVIL MAY CRY 3: DANTE'S AWAKENING

PS2 • Capcom • March 2005

Even after a disappointing sequel, half-demon badass Dante still has reason to be cocky. For one, ladies love his rock-star good looks. But truth be told, the influential first PS2 *Devil May Cry* hit so hard with its self-described "stylish hard action" that it took years for anything else in the genre to even come close. Unlike *DMC2*, this one feels like another contender, and it's not just stylish—it's crazy.

We're talking hopping on an enemy and surfing down the pavement while spraying

bullets and shouting "Woo!" crazy. And that's actual gameplay. "Usually, you shoot an enemy and they just die. Not Dante," says Director Tsuyoshi Tanaka. Dante gets all creative with his killing, juggling hapless beasts with massive, triple-digit-hit combos. Expert players will learn to go with the flow, smacking foes up with dual swords, pummeling 'em with ice nunchaku, and finishing up with a guitar-smash to the skull. Plus, different selectable fighting styles let you focus on either gunplay, slashing,

defense, or evasion. Sometimes, though, the only style you need is "pure evil," courtesy of Dante's wildly powerful (not to mention dapper) new demonic transformation.

Will it make you want to put *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within* on the shelf?
We're willing to look past the sophomore slump of *DMC2* and say that, yes, this will be the action-packed sequel the first game always deserved. Clear your schedule for some rock-steady demon dueling.

DEATH BY DEGREES

PS2 • Namco • February 2005

It must have been a particularly raucous staff meeting where Namco's developers came up with the idea for *Death by Degrees*: Take the frigid blonde chick from *Tekken*, dress her in a wardrobe made entirely out of skintight synthetics, and plunk her on a cruise boat kicking the crap out of armed terrorists. Nina may be a secret agent in this game, but her methods—martial arts with a dash of sniper gunfire—aren't really the sort of thing Solid Snake would approve of. Of course, when you've got a bod like this lady, it'd be a sin not to show it, right, lads?

Will it make you want to put *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within* on the shelf? You can expect much of the same acrobatic fighting action here, although it seems unlikely that *Death by Degrees* has the same, erm, degree of variety in its gameplay.

AREA 51

PS2/XB • Midway • Spring 2005

If you like shooting aliens with high-powered weaponry, you're probably already knee-deep in *Halo 2*. However, should you like some tongue-in-cheek humor involving a secret desert Air Force base where Uncle Sam taked the moon landing, bred supersoldiers with parasitic mutant powers, and slashed away a tiny alien rebel voiced by shock rocker Marilyn Manson, you might want to check out *Area 51*. The shooter definitely eclipses its iffy source material—a fun but cheese-laden arcade

gun game from 1995. Unlike cheap plastic light blasters, armaments like the Desert Eagle pistol, sniper rifle, and the eternally popular shotgun feel like they pack a real wallop, which is one area this *Area* does justice.

Will it make you want to put *Halo 2* on the shelf? *Area 51*, like *Halo 2*, pits you against swarming aliens alongside valiant squadmates. It might be the closest facsimile PS2 players can get. >

You got high before shop class.
You thought you could handle the saw. You were wrong.
Weed can make you do stupid things like that.



JADE EMPIRE

XB • Microsoft • March 2005

When it comes to making role-playing games, BioWare's kung fu is strong indeed. Having honed its skills with *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*, the team abandoned that galaxy far, far away in favor of mystical ancient China. Their efforts seem to be paying off: *Jade Empire* looks so sweet, that it will surely grant enlightenment to anyone who plays it. Or at least absorb prodigious amounts of your free time in exchange for great happiness.

In *Jade Empire*, you embark on a journey of personal discovery and martial arts mastery, slamming your legendary fists into the unfortunate faces of foes both human and supernatural. Its real-time, combo-based combat means that you won't fall asleep during these RPG battles—you'll need timing and skill to succeed. But don't mistake *Empire* for a brawler: You'll also tackle tricky moral decisions, recruit followers, and explore lush locales.

Will it make you want to put *Fable* on the shelf? Wait, *Fable* isn't already on your shelf? The game's only like 12 hours long. Oh, and you'll also want to kick *Knights of the Old Republic II* to the curb to make way for BioWare's Oriental epic. Trust us,

KILLER 7

PS2/66 • Capcom • February 2005

Like your games a bit on the weird side? This one's for you: *Killer 7* blends schizophrenia, film noir visuals, and, uh...some sort of gameplay into a heady bloody cocktail. This high-concept title uses a uniquely stylized, high-contrast animation style to tell the story of an elderly assassin named Harman Smith. Confined to a wheelchair, Harman uses the ability to physically manifest himself in seven Killer personalities to solve a plague of indiscriminate violence called Heaven Smile—strange humanoid creatures whose sole means of attack is self-detonation. Gameplay isn't yet com-

pletely clear, as Capcom hasn't allowed anyone to actually get their hands on it. "If we gave people 10 minutes to play *Killer 7*, there's no way they'd be able to understand it," explains Producer Hironuki Kobayashi. We consider that a challenge.

Will it make you want to put *Metrod Prime 2: Echoes on the shelf?* Like *Metrod Prime 2*, *Killer 7* is aimed at a crowd that craves atmospheric, mentally stimulating adventure. It could stand completely apart if it delivers on its highbrow promises.

STAR FOX: ASSAULT

GC • Nintendo • March 2005

Cube owner's bored to tears by the endless item fetching in 2002's *Star Fox Adventures* should really give the world's meanest cartoon vulpine another shot—the emphasis on the heavily delayed *Star Fox* sequel is squarely on combat, not unlike the old Nintendo 64 cartridge. The single-player campaign will take Fox and crew through both outer-space and on-foot missions, climbing into both tanks and the trusty Arwing fighter ships to

defeat a new menace to the cosmos. All the vehicles and spaceships are also available in *Star Fox's* split-screen mode, pitting fuzzy against fuzzy in a series of four-player deathmatches.

Will it make you want to put *Ace Combat 5* on the shelf? The two are more alike than you think, since the same folks were involved with both titles. Expect a greater variety of action here, though. *

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SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY

PS2/XB/GC • Ubisoft • March 2005

Us: "Why was *Splinter Cell Chaos Theory* delayed to March 2005?" Them: "In order to have simultaneous release on all platforms," says Ubisoft Producer Mathieu Ferland. "In addition, this delay guarantees that we will deliver the superior quality that gamers have come to expect from the *Splinter Cell* franchise." Us: "Now tell us the real reason. It's because you don't want to release your game too close to *Halo 2*, right?" Them: "Actually, we're a little worried about competition from [portable dating game] *Spring*, one of our first Nintendo DS titles."

Ha ha. OK, so we've learned the developer's got a sense of humor, but we haven't learned what exactly we're getting for *Chaos Theory's* four-month delay other than a lot of fine-tuning of what's in place now (hopefully, the multiplayer mode for PS2 and Xbox will be a lot less bug ridden

this time around). And what's in place now sounds mighty sah-weet on paper: A full single-player campaign, a two-player cooperative mode, and a four-player versus mode in which mercenaries take on spies à la the last *Splinter Cell* game, *Pandora Tomorrow*. That's a lot of gaming for one package, and that's not counting all the new stuff being crammed into each style of play. Solo gamers will find new gadgets and moves for protagonist government agent Sam Fisher. Cooperative players will get a whole new set of actions available to them only when playing with a buddy. And when you get four players together for versus play, you may see the most improvements yet, from destructible environments (which change the level layouts as you play) to more choices in weaponry (mercenaries can now pick different primary guns) and more.

FOUR-PLAY

Versus Mode Lead Game Designer Arnaud Mamet explains the new multiplayer modes for *Chaos Theory*:

Story: "Story mixes the three *Pandora* multiplayer modes: neutralization, extraction, and sabotage. Each neutralized objective will activate an event on the map (turn lights off, open doors, shut down lasers, release gas, make a ceiling collapse, etc.). The varied objectives linked with the random gameplay situations create a genuine movie-like story, hence the name story mode."

Disc hunt: "In this mode, the spies need to gather a certain number of discs that are placed randomly around the map. If a spy is killed, however, the carried discs are lost. This requires a different strategy and creates a lot of tension because of the consequences of being killed."

Elimination: "Your goal here is to eliminate the other team. The capabilities of the two teams will be very different for this mode, but we're still keeping those features a secret for now."

Will it make you want to put *Metal Gear Solid 3* on the shelf?

Yes, because by March, you had better be finished with *MGS3's* single-player campaign, and that game doesn't have any multiplayer to add to its longevity. But *MGS* fans used to crazy personalities, boss fights, and more action may find *Splinter Cell's* more realistic approach to be a bit slow paced or difficult. >

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THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE MINISH CAP

GBA • Nintendo • January 2005

This latest handheld *Zelda* adventure strikes us as a bit weird. First, it's odd that *Minish Cap* is the first original *Zelda* game for Nintendo's omnipresent Game Boy Advance. Sure, 2002's *Link to the Past* remake dished up the fresh *Four Swords* minigame, but the quest proper wasn't new to Super Nintendo vets...Second, it's a little weird that Capcom, not Nintendo, handled the development duties here. (They collaborated on the two Game Boy Color *Zelda* *Oracles* titles...but hell, that was odd to begin with.) And finally, it's totally bizarre to

see series hero Link parading around with a sass-talkin' (not to mention unfashionable) magical hat.

On the surface, it's the same princess-rescuing, dungeon-spelunking stuff you've been doing for the last 17 years, but *Cap's* titular cap tosses in some nifty twists. He can shrink Link down to micromini size, allowing you to access hidden areas, talk to itsy-bitsy creatures, and solve puzzles invisible to the naked eye. He also acts as a parachute and offers snarky (but occasionally useful) advice with a simple button

press. A host of new items, like the vacuum-powered Gust Jar and double-jump-endowing Roc's Cape, deepen the traditional top-down action, and a cadre of returning fan-favorite enemies mix with some impressively huge new bosses to deliver surprisingly challenging gameplay.

Will it make you want to put *Boktai 2* on the shelf? With 100 percent certainty. This is the best handheld *Zelda* in years. Plus, you'll probably be tired of chasing down sunbeams in order to play *Boktai* anyway.

STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO

XB • LucasArts • March 2005

With the exception of neutered Wookiee butlers, nobody takes orders like a squad of well-disciplined clone troopers. They're yours to command in this impressive *Star Wars*-themed tactical shooter, a futuristic take on the *Rainbow Six* brand of strategic gunplay. You can quickly instruct your team to breach doors, set up sniper positions, take over gun emplacements, or secure an area with a simple button press. Most impressive, as you can reap

the benefits of leading your squad without sorting through any menus—your context-sensitive command array only offers tactics appropriate to the situation.

Without too much dark influence from Sith Lord George Lucas, *Republic Commando* isn't excessively dependent on the plot of the recent movies, though it will feature a few locations and characters from *Episodes II* and *III*, and it feels solid enough to even appeal to non-*Star*

Wars fans, thanks to its quick gameplay pacing and immersive, *Metroid Prime*-style helmet display.

Will it make you want to put *Halo 2* on the shelf? Maybe if you're a die-hard *Star Wars* nut, your pre-*Episode III* jitters will lure you over to this game's dark side. It's certainly looking sharp, but we're not fully convinced that it has what it takes to hang with *Halo 2*.

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THE PUNISHER

PS2/XB • THQ • January 2005

Frank Castle does not screw around when it comes to law enforcement. His ideal suspect takedown involves sneaking up behind a perp and burying a hunting knife in his head. An effective interrogation isn't truly effective if it doesn't involve a wood chipper, a deep fryer, or an aquarium full of piranhas to hold your subject's head over. *The Punisher* game, a shooter in the *Max Payne* vein, has all this and a heaping helping of dark, comic book-style visuals—Frank's even voiced by Tom Jane, who played the lead role in last spring's *Punisher* film.

Will it make you want to put *Halo 2* on the shelf? What *The Punisher* loses in visuals and cinematic grandeur, it'll try to make up for with its comic book story and semiconical violence level.

SHADOW OF ROME

PS2 • Capcom • February 2005

Shadow of Rome is a very Western game from a very Japanese developer, from its Roman Empire backdrop to the markedly brutal way it depicts violence. Forget finesse—you hold buttons to flex the mighty muscles of centurion-turned-gladiator Agrippa, and releasing those buttons delivers a painfully premeditated blow that can crack a man's skull like a piece of ripe fruit. Parallel to the deliberate and bloody combat, stealthy Octavianus (later to become Augustus Caesar) gathers information by way of subterfuge and a sturdy length of rope that fits quite nicely around a senator's neck.

Will it make you want to put *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within* on the shelf? You won't find the Prince's unique brand of platforming here, but you will snag a (and even go for) combat, plus the added bonus of puzzle-packed stealth missions.

PSYCHONAUTS

PS2/XB • Majesco • March 2005

Originally slated as an Xbox exclusive, *Psychonauts* now plans on unleashing its unique blend of platforming, humor, and insanity on the PS2 as well. Although its gameplay doesn't stray too far from that of other, hep-er boy romps, its concept (you enter the nightmarish minds of seriously troubled individuals), quirky characters (telekinetically gifted summer-camp kids), and surreal stages (step inside immaculately rendered black-velvet paintings, blueprints, and, uh...meat-circuses) set this squarely in a class of its own.

Will it make you want to put *Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal* on the shelf? It'll be tough to top the diversity and quality of *Ratchet's* last outing, but *Psychonauts'* sheer weirdness factor should be reason enough to give it a shot.

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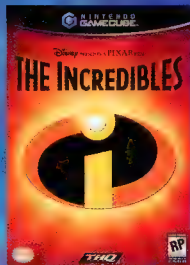
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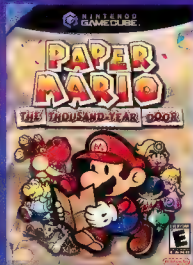
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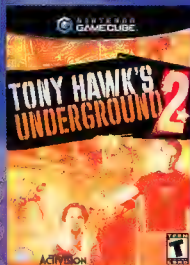
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AFTERGLOW

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doesn't mean you're ready to move on, so we're going to delve a little deeper into these killer titles. We have exclusive post-release interviews with the developers, things to try that you might've missed the first time around, and plenty more. After all, you're not a love-em-and-leave-em type of person, right? >

—Mark MacDonald, Crispin Boyer, Bryan Intihar, and Shane Bettenhausen



*Oh stop. We're not endorsing cigarettes here. We all know they kill more life-forms than Master Chief on a good day.



■ This fall on UPN: What happens when two soldiers from the future, an inner-city youth, and a special forces agent all have to share *one* apartment?

METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES

METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

10 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT HALO 2

Now that you've finished the game, what would you have your Arbiter do? We'd have him check out these cool secrets and fun experiments

1

Secret Weapons

Forget the missing explosives in Iraq; there are enough weapons hidden away all over New Mombasa and the rest of *Halo 2* to give Hans Blix a two-foot boner. For example: Get up to the rooftops in Outskirts—see our handy how-to pic for details—to find a sniper rifle and a bunch of ammo. (As for the two mysterious numbers up there, 1 and 7, any significance to them? “There is,” says Mission Designer Tyson Green. “It’s something that’s obvious once you know what it is, but I’m not going to say...it’s just a hint that tells you the nature of something.”)

True explorers can even find an energy sword early on in that same map (at right, with stones spelling out Green’s nickname “Rex”). “[There’s something hidden] on almost every mission,” he says.

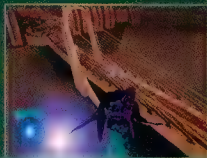


■ (Top) Jump on that purple thing, the roof to the left, the awning, and across.

2

License to Drive

Ever try driving the Warthog over the barriers and out of the tunnel in Metropolis? Or later in that same level, running down and moving the tank before it gets fried by the Covenant Scarab? How about getting out and jacking that Banshee that flies in when you cross the bridge into New Mombasa? “People think that multiplayer is where you can fool around and experiment,” says Bungie Content Manager Frank O’Connor, “but there’s plenty in try in single player, too. It’s a big playground.”



3

Unlock the Secret Multiplayer Level

If you can’t logon to Xbox Live to open Foundation (a remake of a level from the Bungie classic *Marathon*), there is another way. Beat *Halo 2* and start a co-op game on the last level with a new profile for the second player. Make sure that player does a barrel roll in a Banshee, then finish the game again. Now go to multiplayer and Foundation is unlocked!

4

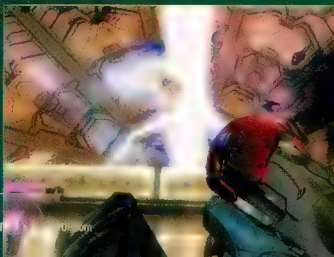
Legendary Differences

“There are all kinds of tweaks and differences in Legendary [difficulty],” says Bungie Studio Manager Pete Parsons. Give the game’s toughest setting a try; not only will you gain a new appreciation for *Halo 2*’s A.I. and level design, you’ll also find new encounters, altered bosses, and different cut-scenes. The key to surviving this super tough mode? Charged plasma pistol shots to take down Elite shields, followed by a bullet to the head.

5

Show Tartarus Who’s Boss

While the final battle boss battle is a joke on Normal difficulty, in Heroic or especially Legendary, it’s another story. Try this trick: Wait on the top platform, at the top of the gravity lift. Peek over until you can just barely see Tartarus (see pic below). For some reason he will often freeze at the base of the beam of light. Wait until Johnson lowers his shield and then blast him in the head with whatever weapons you got. If he comes upstairs, fall back down to the lower level and immediately take the gravity lift back up top to lose him. And don’t even try to take on the honor guard brutes that show up; stay on the top level and wait for your own reinforcements (they will come eventually) to handle them. Be patient and you’ll win the day!



6

Free the Hunters

Don’t dirty your paws with the blood of those savage brutes—let the hunters do it for you. When you come upon the prison section of the Great Journey, free your giant brothers first by grenades the shield generator in front of their cell. They’ll take care of those big apes, then free the rest of the prisoners.



7

What's with the Brutes' Red Plasma Rifle?

Yes, there is a difference beyond just the color. "It fires a bit faster," says Mission Designer Green, "makes it overheat faster—a bit more of a finesse weapon." So why have a different version of the gun in the first place? "We want the brutes to have [their own] distinct weapon," says Green. "We have the brute shot, but you can't give that to every brute because it's very potent. If every brute had a brute shot, you'd be in a lot of trouble."



8

Outfit Your Marines

The ability to exchange guns with your fellow marines can be much more than a selfish exercise in getting the best weapon. Especially after a supply drop, take a minute to walk around and give your backup troops the best weapons for the upcoming section. (Note: They won't trade you a weapon you already have, or accept the energy sword or brute shot.) "On the level Regret," says Studio Manager Parsons, "I'll go in and outfit them with the sniper rifles, the towers come in, they're actually tagging guys so I can run around and [do clean-up] with the shotgun, or use the battle rifle at more midrange." While you're swapping weapons, try grabbing the big guns from your comrades and sticking them with pea-shooters, like the human pistol for some hilarious one-liners.



9

Take the Road Less Traveled

Try climbing up on top of levels—it's kind of like hiking, only you don't have to go outside or exercise! Two good ways to get where you're not supposed to: Maneuver and/or pile up vehicles then jump up them, or play co-op and use your partner's head as a step up to wherever you want to go. You might even find a couple easter eggs (or maybe a giant soccer ball) for your efforts.



10

Skull and Bones

Scattered throughout *Halo 2* are mysterious skulls that can grant you special powers. The easiest to get is in Outskirts: Go through the flashing door at the very start and perform two crouch jumps (press crouch at the top of the jump) to get on top of the light and then the roof. It's down the hall to the left; pick it up as you would any weapon. Other skulls can be found in the Banshee section of Arbiter, and in Regret, Delta Halo, and others, sometimes only in Legendary difficulty. Happy hunting!





AFTERTHOUGHTS: HALO 2

Downloadable content, cut features, the Library, and that ending—Bungie talks about the past, present, and future of its supersequel

Do you know where we are?" Bungie HQ in Redmond, WA, the holy birthplace of *Halo 2*. "Quite so. Were it not for the efforts of the brave men and women here, the Xbox would have failed long ago." Even on our knees, we do not belong in their presence.

EGM: In the beginning, it seemed like *Halo 2* was going to be more focused on the Earth being under attack. How do you remember Zoltan Forsythe? [No.] New Mombasa was always going to be the one place [the Covenant] show up, and [the question is] why is that?

happened to the playable version of the level you demoed at the 2002 E3 trade show? It was completely different from the one in the final game.

EGM: We designed our own level. At the end, we looked at [the level we made for E3] and said this is probably too much...this [game] engine doesn't handle this specific sort of space very well. If you want to build a level using this geometry, you're only going to be able to use, say, two vehicles, five guys [on screen at once]—and that was just unacceptable. We thought, "It's really cool-looking level and we'll retain our art assets, but we need to rethink this mission."

it from the very beginning, since the moment *Halo 2* was announced: "Halo 2 is going to be like *Halo 1*, except at 130 miles per hour." That was the design principle: Tell this new great story, and do it in a way where you immediately pick up that controller and feel like—boom—I am the Chief, I'm back in the *Halo* universe. We wanted the story to do the heavy lifting.

EGM: Did you ever consider giving the Arbiter unique powers, besides the stealth camo-fo??

EGM: There was stuff like jumping higher, or commanding grunts in some interesting way. There was certainly the speed of the

floor for various reasons. Let's go over some of them—what happened to plans for the ability to lower your weapon, and run?

EGM: We didn't want to turn *Halo* into something that was really fast. A lot of PC first-person shooters right now are very fast, and a lot of that has to do with the player's movement speed. I think on our big multi-player maps, the speed at which you move on foot allows some zone control, allows our vehicles to be important, not just because they have guns on them, but because they move around quickly.

EGM: Good point. Melee combos? **EGM:** Melee combos were something I thought about for a really long time. We tried making these combos, and they looked pretty cool sometimes, but something like that requires a lot of resources, animation time, tweaking, making sure they all worked well in all situations, et cetera. And there just came this point in the project where we said, "You know, we can have dual-wield weapons and the animations that go with those, or we can have melee combos!"

EGM: In an early version of *Halo 2*, we saw something called "Saved Films" in a menu. Was the idea to let the player record movies of *Halo 2* game-play to the Xbox hard drive?

Bungie Studio Manager, Mike Parsons: O'Connors, yeah, I mean, people saw that and talked about it, and it would have been cool. We had a thing in [previous Bungie PC game] *Midnight Madness* where the terminology came from, where you could save gameplay as a movie and just watch it at your leisure. It would have been nice to have something like that in *Halo*, but it just wasn't to be.

"I think developers have made the mistake in the past of trying to reinvent their game [in a sequel]."

—Bungie Studio Manager, Mike Parsons

EGM: Really? Because in the original trailer, it looks like the Earth is just getting blown to hell....

EGM: Well, New Mombasa was always going to be the primary point of incursion. However dramatic you make that opening scene, and ultimately how dramatic we made it, that's just how the refinements of the story bear out, what works.

EGM: Speaking of New Mombasa, what

EGM: Playing as the Covenant was a great twist, but some were surprised *The Arbiter* plays just like the Chief.

EGM: We wanted to make two characters that are both cool but that are peers. You never have to play the pimp. **EGM:** I think developers have made the mistake in the past of trying to reinvent their game in some interesting and clever way that ultimately ends up frustrating the gamer. I think that's a mistake. We've said

attacks, all kinds of tweaking stuff. That was early on. Later everyone was saying [the two characters] should be the same configuration, play exactly the same way.

EGM: Let's talk about *Halo 2*'s A.I. Pete, I know you were on a crusade to tweak the friendly A.I. vehicle piloting; how do you think it turned out?

EGM: I think it turned out pretty well, and I think it can get a lot better. We've learned a lot about A.I., much in the same way we've learned about a lot of things.

EGM: Will the other marines ever drive the tank?

EGM: No. The main thing [with that] is, we want you to [be the guy] driving the tank.

EGM: As with any game this size, a lot of ideas end up on the cutting-room



Earth getting smoked (left) in the original trailer, and the tranquil scene from the final game.



MIDNIGHT MADNESS

It's the night of November 11, 2004, and fans are lined up in front of game stores across the country, eagerly awaiting the stroke of midnight when *Halo 2* officially goes on sale. We know why they're doing this, but we wanted to get their thoughts anyway. Special thanks to EB Games Berkeley, San Francisco-Powell, and Royal Oak.



Mohammed
20, U.S. Air Force combat controller, San Francisco, CA
"The ultimate military game. All the military guys play it—it kills a lot of time when we're out there in the desert."



Jason
23, Civil engineer, San Francisco, CA
"By god, it better live up to the hype. I know where they live."



Joel
18, Student, San Francisco, CA
"I'm going to go home and play it till the next morning, go to class, and then go home and play it some more, working on zero sleep."



Ismael
26, Macy's employee, Oakland, CA
"Where else would I be tonight? I offered someone in the store \$100 to let me get a copy earlier; she was like 'Nah, man, you gotta wait.'"



Tim
23, Technician, Royal Oak, MI
"This game is sorta like the future of warfare. It's how I think things will be in the future."



■ Bungie briefly considered giving the Arbiter different powers but ultimately decided to make him play very close to the Chief.

EGM: Was there ever any discussion about multiplayer bots?

■ Not really. I'm not going to name games, but I've found bots [are usually] either stupid or they're cheating. It's either head shot and you're dead or they're just retarded. You know how you have bots in *Bomberman*? It's totally s*** playing against the bots in *Bomberman*. You don't feel any satisfaction at all when you kill one, there's no tension. You die and you think, "That was bulls***."

EGM: The DVD that comes with the special edition shows a lot of the ATV.

■ We really wanted the ATV. We certainly had a good fit for how it would work in multiplayer—just a speedy counter to the Ghost, highly maneuverable. It went through different permutations where there's a weapon

on it, can the player fire while he's driving, all those different kinds of things, but ultimately there wasn't a great place for it in single player. Whenever we would place it in, we'd be like, "Well, yeah, but the Warthog would be so much cooler in this area, it gives you more of a sense of camaraderie, being with your posse."

EGM: Any chance that'll be a downloadable extra in the future?



■ Who knows? We're excited about taking a look at downloadable content and seeing what the future might hold, but the only two things that get in the way of [the ATV] is one, if we still can't make it work in any real interesting way, [and two], we

■ That's a possibility...but [sometimes], you're much better served sticking with stuff you know well. At the end of the day people get excited about the new little widget, but if it doesn't enhance gameplay it becomes like a sugar rush.

"The Flood were always intended to be fairly intelligent."

—Mission Designer, Tyson Green

have other things we want to do. It reminds me of the *Halo 1.5* rumor [that the original *Halo* would be rereleased with added online play]; do you want us working on *Halo 1.5* or do you want us working on *Halo 2*? It really comes down to that. While we have a lot of people here, we're still a small team, and we're a team that throws every bit of its heart and soul into the next project that we have. So who knows what'll happen on the downloadable content front.

EGM: What about downloading new weapons?



EGM: What about the graphical hiccups, like how stuff sometimes pops in during cut-scenes? Ever thought about fixing it with a patch over Xbox Live?

■ We won't be changing any of that over Xbox Live. We put together this huge ambitious game and also packed some of these scenes with a lot of stuff...ultimately that was a choice that we had to make to give people a lot of this visual fidelity, or to actually continue to cache the next level so there's no loading screen in the game.

EGM: How about online co-op? It was never promised, but I know you were hoping to include it....

■ You've played *Halo*.



Karl
19, Student,
Royal Oak, MI
"Halo is essentially Christmas with guns."



Ryan
22, Guitarist,
Oak Park, MI
"Ever since I beat the first one, I needed the second one."



Mike Davis
27, Student,
Alameda, CA
"I've been sleeping all day so I can play it all night tonight. My wife thinks I'm crazy."



Roscoe
38, Service
tech engineer,
Royal Oak, MI
"I'm quite loyal to Halo. I have three Xbox Live accounts, so all my boys will play."



Jimmy/Beau
27/31, Pastor/Art director,
Royal Oak, MI
Interview: "We're mostly here for the brotherhood, to connect with other dorks around the world." Beau: "We have a special bond, because we really don't have any other sort of life." Jimmy: "It's good to know if hell breaks loose in this world, who we can count on." Beau: "If aliens ever do attack, we know who we can call: these guys right here."

AFTERTHOUGHTS: HALO 2 (CONT.)

EGM: multiplayer now, and it's really frig'gin' awesome—we spent our time doing that right? [Something's not in there, it means we couldn't do it justice, and we're not gonna put it in there. We understand how it works in our engine and our technology, but we couldn't bring it up to a level of quality that people ultimately expect from us.

another Library after everyone complained how repetitive it was in the first game...I think one of the mission names even pokes fun at it?

EGM: Yeah, "That Old Familiar Feeling." The idea is that we're sort of paying homage and also being a little self-conscious. We recognize that [the Library in *Halo*] wasn't

completely. [But] we have a big story to tell, and [*Halo 2*] isn't big enough for that story. So we're going to try to bring it to the climax of a certain arc of the story, which I think we do, but we're going to leave it at that and wait for the next generation. Were we to do it all again, I don't think we'd do it any differently. Time is finite, resources are



■ Co-op play will have to remain a strictly split-screen affair. For now, anyway.

"I wouldn't expect to see [online co-op] anytime soon, but you never know about the future."

—Bungie Studio Manager Pete Parsons

EGM: Any chance online co-op could be downloadable extra down the line?

EGM: I wouldn't expect to see it anytime soon, but you never know about the future.

EGM: Pete, I read that you delete voicemails from Hollywood without listening to them—no chance of a *Halo* movie?

EGM: That was a misquote! [Laughs] I can't imagine that I ever said [something in such an] arrogant, asinine way. It's not something that anybody here is spending time on. Which is not to say there aren't people helping us out. For people in the movie industry, they should know that any mail they send me will not get deleted; it will be forwarded to the right person.

EGM: Tyson, you're the one guy here who was around for the original *Halo*. What levels did you do for it?

EGM: [Cringes and hides his face] The Library. [Laughs] But the thing that keeps me sane at night is that the Library was mostly designed when I got here, so I don't blame myself for that.

EGM: It was a gutsy move to have

the best level ever; we're conscious of the mistake that we made.

EGM: The Flood seem smarter in *Halo 2*. They're driving vehicles....

EGM: The Flood were always intended to be fairly intelligent. In *Halo 1*, there were a lot of story references dropped about how they were preparing to get off the ring. That's a story that we tried to get across, but we didn't really have a good vehicle for doing that. *Halo 2* had more opportunity for doing that...saying to everyone, "Hey, look, the Flood wasn't just this mindless race of zombies, there's actually some depth and complexity to them."

EGM: One thing a lot of people are talking about is the ending. I have to say, I thought the game was leading the final level, and all of a sudden the credits started rolling.

EGM: The ending was...I think if we have a regret about the game, and it's not a regret that came unexpectedly, it's [the ending]. It's something where we said, "We know people aren't going to like that." Nobody likes it when something doesn't end com-

pletely, and our story is a pretty grand one.

EGM: It is designed to be a cliffhanger. People will have to speculate as far as what we're going to do in the future.

EGM: OK, let's do that. What's next for *Halo*?

EGM: [Laughs] I can't do that!

EGM: Well, has *Halo 2* been announced for the Mac and PC?

EGM: Nope. It's just a possibility. There are no discussions going on as far as I know.

EGM: Pete, you've said the next thing Bungie will do is something different, but surely you're also working on the next *Halo*?

EGM: The thing I'll tell you is that we are bigger and

more capable than we've ever been, and so the ability to entertain more than one [project] is a possibility. But we are going to do something different.

EGM: Is that the *Phoenix* project we've heard rumors of in the past?

EGM: *Phoenix* (also known as *Breach*), was one of those things that we decided shouldn't be carried out, but there's a ton of learning and a ton of experience people gained from it.

EGM: Can you at least say if the next *Halo* will be *Halo 3*, or *Halo 2: Part Two*?

EGM: The only thing I'll say is that we really love the *Halo* universe, we're excited to tell new stories, continue to tell the tale of Master Chief, but I can't say any more.

For more of our huge *Halo 2* interview, head to egmextra.1UP.com.

1UP.COM READER POLL:

WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING ON NOV. 9, HALO 2'S RELEASE DAY?

I'll still be playing *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*

(15%)

Skipping work/school to play *Halo 2* multiplayer

(20%)

Skipping work/school to play *Halo 2* single player

(37%)

I'll get to *Halo 2* later, whenever I find time

(28%)

10 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

Take a time-out from the turf wars to hunt ghost cars, Easter eggs, and...Bigfoot?

2

Nothing to See up Here

The skyscraping top of the Gant Bridge's southern support strut () seems an obvious place for an Easter egg. Alas, the game is wise to us (below left). Speaking of the bridge, ever check out the fun facts on its information sign? ()



4

That Damn Supply Lines Mission: Worth the Grief?

Buy Zero's hobby shop in San Fierro () and you'll reach the most frustrating optional level in the game:

Supply Lines. Flying a remote-control plane, you're expected to blast five couriers scattered around town, then return home before running out of gas. Yeah, right. But you can actually beat the mission if you coast as much as possible and shoot each courier from close range (except the first guy—waste him from afar). Use the map to plot fuel-efficient intercepts and fly carefully. Hit a tree? Start over. But the payoff for all this hair-pulling frustration is actually worth it: The next mission—an all-out RC-vehicle war on a mini-battle-field—is one of the game's slickest.



■ You'll need luck, too: Couriers sometimes drive farther away, which makes the mission impossible.

5

Cattight!

Pick up one of your girlfriends and take her to meet another one. Then watch your date go so horribly right. Yet another *GTA* feat to never try in real life.

6

Carl Johnson: Ghostbusta

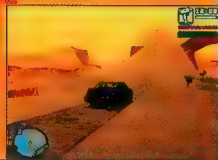
The Internet is awitther with tales of the paranormal in *San Andreas*. CJ's mom's ghost stalks his house at night (untrue, says Rockstar). A suicidal photographer near the Flint Intersection leaps into the ocean (true—we've seen her). A sea serpent frolics far out at sea (Rockstar: false). WWII planes crash for no reason (true). We even have photographic proof of one oft-repeated tale. Drive to the horseshoe-shaped hills in the appropriately named Back o' Beyond () when the sun sets (or added fear effect, wait until a foggy evening). At 2 a.m., you'll see beat-up cars roll down nearby hills. Go check the vehicles. Where are the drivers? Creepy!



1

The Launch Pad

Here it is: the biggest jump in *GTA* history. Trick out a fast car with nitrous, then head to the wooden ramp atop Arco del Oeste (). Kick on the turbo and you should clear the Sherman Reservoir easily, but pack a parachute in case you need to bail out.



3

Just a Gigolo

Complete all 10 pimping missions—which you activate by hitting the R3 button whenever you steal a Broadway—and *San Andreas'* prostitutes will start paying you for...services rendered. Yeah, it's a dirty job but...you know.

7

Doesn't Mean Anything

Message-board mavens claim they found the road to an Easter Egg motherlode after spying this map (below) in the back of Lil' Probe Inn (). After all, its southernmost marker falls on the ghost-car parking lot of Back o' Beyond. Surely the other markers point to equally mysterious locales? Nope, says Rockstar. So you can stop this wild-goose chase and start a new one....



8

Sasquatch Watch

Some say he roams Mt. Chiliad. Others have heard a beastly roar in the San Fierro airport. Hundreds of players insist that Bigfoot lives in *San Andreas*, and they're flooding the Net with grainy photos that'd make real-life Sasquatch stalkers proud. "There is no Bigfoot, just like in real life," says Rockstar CEO Terry Donovan—but we desperately want to believe. In fact, we'll give a free game to anyone with real evidence (a screen, polygonal pelt, etc.) that Bigfoot stalks the state. Send it to EGM@ziffdavis.com with the subject line "Bigfoot lives!"



■ A real (fake) *San Andreas* Bigfoot, phoned up by prankster James Clifton.

9

San Andreas Crash Course

New in town? You can actually try most of the game's fresh tricks in your first 10 minutes. Head to the bar () around the corner from CJ's to play arcade games or shoot some pool. Go to Idlewood () to try a two-player game. Then jack a car and head downtown to Los Santos' tallest building (). Run around it until you find the entrance, which will take you straight to the roof. Grab the waiting parachute and holler "Geronimo"—you're bass jumping! When the adrenaline wears off, drive to point at the Los Santos airport, where you'll find a stretch of wall low enough to scale if you stand on a car. Run around the airport until you find a private jet, swipe it, and fly due north. Now, the game doesn't like you exploring unauthorized territory—it sends out the Air Force and gives you a four-star rating. Shake off the enemy missiles and put the plane down at point . Be prepared to dodge cops' bullets and zip into the Four Dragons Casino on your left. You should be able to get in a few hands of blackjack before going down in a hail of gunfire.



10

"Tanner, you suck ass!"

And the dissing war between *GTA* developer Rockstar North and *Driver* series creator Reflections continues (the two developers have taken potshots at each other in their last few driving games). You'll find Rockstar's most recent retaliation early in *San Andreas*, when you're asked to steal a rhyme book from rapper Madd Dogg's mansion. You'll stumble on one of Dogg's goons playing a game from "Reflections," offering a colorful observation on *Driver* series wheelman Tanner. >



This sucks. I mean, how could Reflections mess up so bad?

AFTERTHOUGHTS: GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

Find out about the little things in Rockstar's larger-than-life masterpiece

If San Andreas—the faux-California setting for the latest *Grand Theft Auto*—had a state motto, it would be “Vincio tuus foris, stultus.”¹ But here’s a close second: “Land of opportunity.” And that’s not just because you take star thug Carl “CJ” Johnson from the ghetto to the good life. The state also packs a nearly limitless number of diversions, from high-stakes gambling to small-business ownership. One tour through the territory just isn’t enough to see everything, so we asked Rockstar Games CEO Terry Donovan, President Sam Houser, and Creative Director Dan Houser what you might have missed.

writer) DJ Pooh to draw on their knowledge and experience of the West Coast at that time helped to really put as much detail and feeling for the era into the game.

EGM: So if we looked in your development offices, would we see a lot of empty 40s and half-smoked joints?

Maybe, but that’s not research!

EGM: What’s the one thing you’re most proud of in a game this huge?

I think the stuff that we worked the hardest on was the stuff that you don’t necessarily notice. It’s not just the size of the world. It’s not just that it takes so long to get from one side to the

EGM: Some of those cross-country missions get pretty long. Were you worried that so much trekking from point A to B would turn gamers off?

Not really. The cross-country trips are there by design, and I think Rockstar North did an incredible job balancing the game. The trips are there to help players learn their way around the very large state of San Andreas. Any time they didn’t want a player to have to repeat a long trip, they implemented a Trip Skip [a feature that lets you skip long road trips in later attempts at failed missions].

EGM: Anything you discovered by accident you could do, a tester did, or that happened in the world that you didn’t plan for?

Let’s just say the versatility of the parachute never ceases to amaze us.

EGM: Why the jump to three cities instead of a larger version of the kind of thing you’d done before?

We love L.A., and the whole gangbanging vibe, and the street culture. That time [early ’90s] in L.A. is so important and we knew a long time ago that the franchise needed to end up there. We’d done the East Coast in *GTA3*, and then ’80s Miami with *Vice City*, so going to L.A. in the early ’90s just >

“The versatility of the parachute never ceases to amaze us.”

—Rockstar CEO Terry Donovan

EGM: So how did a bunch of guys from Scotland research all of San Andreas’ inner-city content?

Research is a really important part of development. It is vital to get the style and feel of the time and the place right. The team from Rockstar North went on a long research trip to the West Coast and traveled around photographing everything and absorbing everything. We also have a really meticulous team of researchers based in New York who obsess over every detail, and this combined with working closely with people like [tattoo artist] Mister Cartoon, [rap photographer] Estevan Oriol, and [screen-

other. It’s also that you can walk up to a soda machine and get a drink out of it, no matter where you see one. We worked really hard on things like the pedestrians speaking to one another. In the previous games, you could run around and there would be all these people around, but there wasn’t much going on. This time you can sit back and watch all the freaks interact with each other. Occasionally, you’ll see that they just don’t like each other and they’ll even start to fight. We’re still scratching the surface of every pedestrian having a life in a virtual world, rather than just having them cruise around a gameplay environment.



“All of us were inspired by things like *Pokémon* and *Tamagotchi*,” says Rockstar’s Sam Houser on the connection he wanted players to make with CJ.



¹Latin for “Lock thy doors, dumbass.”

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AFTERTHOUGHTS: GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS (CONT.)



■ What happens before the intro? Buy the *San Andreas* double-CD soundtrack (out now), and you'll get a packed-in DVD with a 23-minute cinematic prologue called "The Introduction."

seemed like an obvious place for us to go. We've explored lots of possibilities for the franchise, and we've looked at going back in time and playing with the '30s, '40s, and '50s, but it just doesn't feel like *GTA*, y'know? That's not to say that we won't explore something like that in future, but for now this is it.

EGM: So why the other two cities?

■ We were drawn to doing a city based on San Francisco because of the hills and all the beautiful scenery with the bridges

EGM: We've seen some crazy *San Andreas* rumors on the Net, like that it packs 30 specific Easter eggs.

This is another rumor started on the [message] boards that is not true.

EGM: You can tell from his show that Dave Chappelle is a huge *GTA* fan. Ever approach him to voice the main guy?

■ We felt that [up-and-coming rapper] Young Maylay was right for the role; he blew us away with his audition and his performance. He did a really great job of

"People criticizing [*GTA*] tend to have watched someone else play it..."

—Terry Donovan

and the Victorian architecture. Once we'd decided to do that, it became clear that if you're doing L.A. and San Francisco, you can't *not* do Vegas. Again there's a very different look and feel, and you have the whole Mafia vibe, and the gambling and the bright lights. Once we put together the three cities, things started to naturally evolve. We realized that we needed the wilderness with the farms and desert, etc.

EGM: Was there anything the team wanted to do with the game but couldn't?

■ Not really. If I had my way, we'd have 1,000 missions and 100 different story lines, but the team is already big, and if I'm honest, I don't really want to have to make it any bigger. We've achieved a sort of natural scale for a development team on a game like this because we had the luxury of sorting out a lot of our problems [in the prequels]. That's why we were able to do as much as we did for *San Andreas* in just two years.

being CJ, and to us that is the most important thing—much more important than attaching a big name to the role.

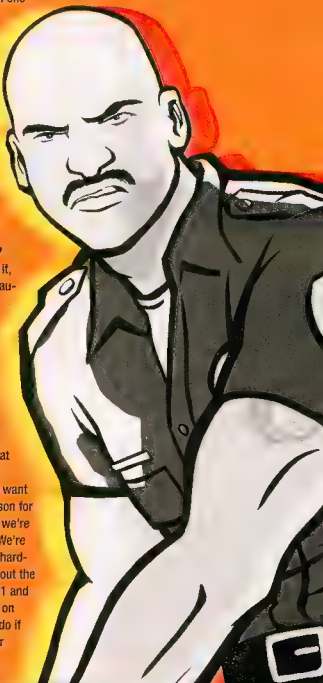
EGM: You guys didn't back down on the series' controversial aspects. Not only are prostitutes back, but you can be a pimp. Once again you have ethnic gangs. Did you back off anywhere?

■ We don't really think in those terms. We genuinely believe this is an incredible piece of entertainment that challenges the limits of what a game is and where gaming belongs in the spheres of media and art. Due to the enormity of the world and the story line, it has and will continue to be possible to extract content from *San Andreas* that misrepresents the game when taken out of context. We also strongly encourage anyone critical of the game to play through the entire game before making judgments about the con-

tent. Criticizing a game that can literally take over 100 hours to play when one hasn't actually experienced it is the equivalent of a person judging a piece of literature by reading a page of it or watching a scene of a movie and basing their opinion of the entire production off of a tiny portion of the entire work. It always seems that the people criticizing the game tend to have watched someone else play it rather than play it themselves.

EGM: So how can you top this?

■ Well, if we didn't have to top it, what would be the point? The beauty of working in games is that you're not held back by a fixed medium. If you look at TV, or movies, or music, it's completely static, but with games we get to see the medium evolve. Every five years the nice people at Sony give us new toys to play with, and we get to reinvent the wheel again. With that in mind though, we don't want to abuse the franchise, and we only want to make stuff when there's a reward for it. This is the trilogy for now, and we're not in a rush to do the next one. We're looking at the next generation of hardware for sure, and if you think about the enormous difference between PS1 and PS2 and then do the calculations on how much more we'll be able to do if the leap is to the same degree for PS3, well...it's very exciting. >



IUP.COM READER POLL:

**IN SAN ANDREAS,
YOUR MAIN MAN CJ IS...**

...flabby
(8%)

...fattened
to oblivion
(9%)

...totally fly
(37%)

(46%)



THESE ARE THE TIMES THAT TRY MEN'S SOULS. THERE IS NO MERCY IN JUSTICE.

SHADOW OF ROME

44 B.C. ROMAN EMPIRE

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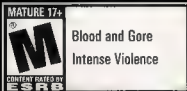
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5 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES

Multiple endings, hearing aids, and things that go boom



1

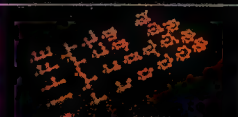
Percentage Points

Just as in the original *Metroid Prime*, *Echoes* includes three different endings depending on the percentage of in-game items (like missiles and energy tanks) you collect. Tally 74 percent or lower and you'll see the normal ending, 76 to 99 percent earns you a slightly better ending, and for reaching 100 percent, well, let's just say a familiar foe returns... Hmm... wonder who that could be...

2

Scanning in Progress

The scan visor does more than provide you with little snippets of story and necessary hints during boss battles. It also opens up image galleries, which include early concept art, storyboards, and even some Andy Warhol-inspired shots of Samus. Obviously, the more items you scan, the more galleries that open up. But if you want to check out the final set of images, you must finish *Echoes* on the Hard difficulty setting (which is unlocked only after completing the game on Normal).

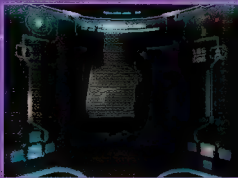


■ Don't bother using this key (from one of *Echoes'* unlockable galleries) to translate a secret Luminoth message. There ain't one.

3

Listen Up

If you're struggling to find extra missiles and energy tanks, you should try switching on the echo visor. "All the pickups make a distinct sound," says Game Director Mark Pacini. "If you use the echo visor, [the sound] is a lot louder, so it's a lot easier to hear them." You can also toggle the visor and turn down the in-game music to better hear a pickup's ambient sound.



4

Sonic Boom

Sorry, *Street Fighter* brawler Guile doesn't make an appearance in *Echoes*. Sonic boom is the name of the annihilator beam upgrade, located in the Phazon Site room at Dark Agon. Each beam has an upgrade, but according to Pacini, "Beating the last boss is much easier with this one. We designed [the boss] around the sonic boom, but it's still balanced."

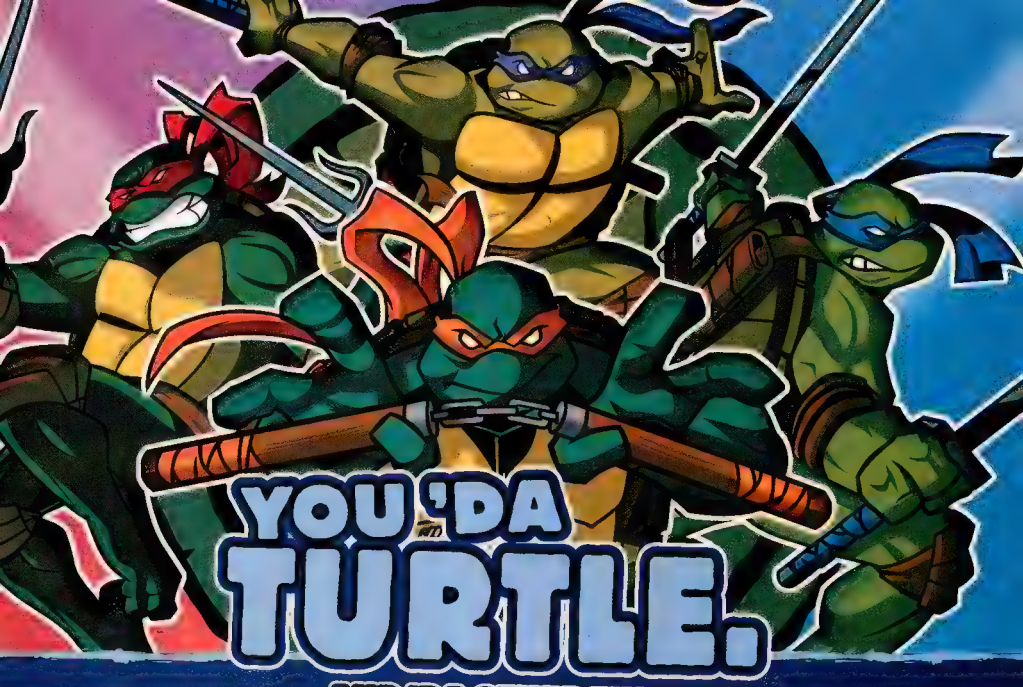


■ Pacini says the sonic boom upgrade "distorts time and space."

5

Multiplayer Mayhem

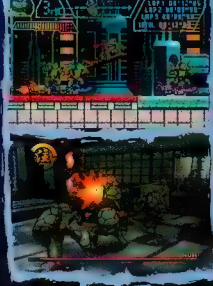
You'll notice that two of the six multiplayer maps are locked when you first turn on the game. So how do you access them? Surprisingly, it doesn't require collecting a certain percentage of items or scanning creatures. Simply progress through the single-player adventure and the Pipeline map will eventually become playable. Then finish the game to unlock Spires. >



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AND 'DA OTHER TURTLE.
AND 'DA OTHER TURTLE.

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TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES BATTLENEXXUS



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AFTERTHOUGHTS: METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES

Shedding some light on Nintendo's first-person adventure

A light and dark world. Head-scratching puzzles. Big, bad bosses that'll make even the hardcore whimper. *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes* is easily one of the most demanding GameCube titles to date. But it's also one of the finest. We recently sat down with some of the peeps responsible for female bounty hunter Samus Aran's second mission in 3D—Retro Studios Game Director Mark Pacini, President and CEO Michael

Abel, and Engineering Director Frank Lafuente—to chat about the game's challenging difficulty, slowing down the speed freaks, and the severe lack of metroids.

EGM: We heard you actually finished *Echoes* early.

Michael: Ha! Let's just say it was done on time.

EGM: All of our reviewers agreed that *Prime 2*—from the minor enemies to the major bosses—was considerably

more difficult than the last game. Was that done on purpose?

Michael: In the first *Prime*, we made a conscious effort to be a first-person genre game that was accessible to everyone. With *Echoes*, we felt we could throw players into the mix and give them a challenge. So yes, it was intentionally more difficult, but hopefully to the point of being challenging to players who have played the last game.

EGM: So would it be fair to say you made it for people who had experience with the first game? I can't imagine someone jumping into *Echoes* if he or she had never played the original.

Michael: That's an interesting point. We designed the first *Prime* around that philosophy of "these are new gamers, these may be gamers who really enjoy the *Metroid* franchise yet have never played a first-person game before, but cater to first-person fans as well." Since so many people played and enjoyed that one, we felt that with the second game we had the ability or freedom to start challenging them right away.

EGM: That also seems to hold true for the game's puzzle aspect.

Michael: Definitely. The main goal for creating a light and dark world in *Echoes* was to add that next tier, that next layer of complexity to puzzles that we had already established in the first game. So not only do you have to worry about puzzles that might have you traversing through several rooms to solve, but you now have to contend with another world.

EGM: Are you concerned that people will think the puzzle-solving is too complex?

Michael: Not really. You'll notice that [at the beginning of the game], you're exposed to a very limited section of the dark world. There's only a certain amount of memorization. It's fairly linear, too, so that players can start to be introduced to this sort of gameplay, and it's more or less how we introduced ourselves to and how we were going to design the game.

EGM: Speaking of design, did you

create the levels with the "speed freaks" in mind—these gamers who finished the original *Prime* in record time and found ways to skip areas?

Michael: We were obviously conscious of it. One of the things that astonished us [about the first game] was that we thought people were going to be so intent on finding all the pickups and finishing the game with 100 percent. But the big thing became who could get the smallest percentage. We definitely did address many of those issues [in *Echoes*], so it's far less possible [to skip areas] this time.

EGM: Well, we hope they discover how to bypass those 10 Sky Palace keys you need to find. All that collecting seemed a bit excessive.

Michael: That [part of the game] was a big point of contention amongst the development team. You're at the very end of the game and have just gotten this really cool light suit, so how can we let players feel empowered with this new suit and give them things to do when all that's left is fighting the final boss? That was the reasoning behind [finding the 10 keys].

EGM: Moving on, *Echoes* is easily one of the best-looking games we've seen for the console....

Michael: We broke the GameCube. We broke it.

EGM: It's definitely a beautiful game. But more of today's Nintendo titles, like *Pikmin 2*, are finally using CG cut-scenes. Why not *Echoes*?

Michael: Yeah, it's always difficult working on a new game because you're creating the development tools while trying to work out the gameplay. We didn't have that stumbling block this time.

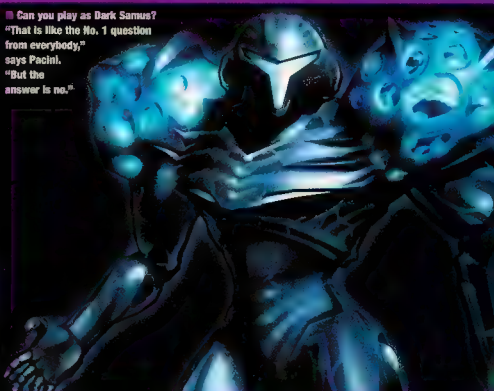
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19

On the cutting-room floor: Some new morph ball abilities were left out of *Echoes*, but Game Director Mark Pacini says that they "should surface in some other [Metroid] game."



Can you play as Dark Samus? "That is like the No. 1 question from everybody," says Pacini. "But the answer is no."

MP: There's nothing wrong with CG cut-scenes. They're great. They're beautiful, and they're getting better all the time. But our artists and engineers work so hard to make the game look as great as possible, so there may not be a need for CG. That's one part of it. The other part is, as a gamer, I don't want the character's hair that I'm watching in the cut-scene to be silky smooth in one frame and when I go to play, it's all chunky. I want to know that the weapon I have in my hand is the same weapon that I was just using, so it really gives continuity to the experience. Games are getting technologically advanced, but CG is becoming outdated.

EGM: Will we ever hear Samus speak?
MP: If there's a good enough reason for it, we'll do it. We try not to make decisions based on "well, just do it." Ideally, if Samus speaks, it'll be really cool, but who knows when that's going to happen.

"[Demi Moore] has always been my preference to play Samus."

—Retro Studios'Prasanna and CEU Michael Kelbaugh

EGM: On a related note, who do you think director John Woo should cast as Samus in the upcoming *Metroid* movie?
Michael Kelbaugh: We address this question a lot. The sex of Samus is irrelevant in

the videogames, and we've always liked that because it never played a role in the series. It's more of a surprise than anything else. Demi Moore kind of personifies that. It doesn't matter what's underneath the helmet. Way of thinking. She's always been my preference to play Samus.

EGM: *Mario* creator Shigeru Miyamoto was very involved with *Metroid Prime's* development. Was that the case with this game?
MP: For *Echoes*, Kensuke Tanabe was our main game director from Japan. There was an incredible wealth of game knowledge coming from him. To let you know just how old-school this guy is, Tanabe wrote the script and story for *The Legend*

EGM: Some of us felt that, as in the first *Prime*, the story took a backseat. Is that a fair assessment?
MP: It comes down to priorities on a project, and the main priority on this one was the gameplay, not the story.

Frank Lawrence: There actually is a lot of story in there. Most people are lazy and aren't going to scan. One of my concerns was that some games put so much story in your face that you don't get to play. My belief is that if I want to watch a movie, I'll spend eight bucks to go to a theater. If I want to play a game, I want to actually play. We do have a pretty in-depth story, and we have a mechanic that people who want the story can use.

EGM: Can someone explain why there are hardly any metroids in *Echoes*? It's still the name of the game, after all...

MP: That's a funny question because it's something we questioned ourselves as a design staff. With the experience we were trying to give and the story we were trying to



BEAT THAT

For all you speed demons out there, Game Director Mark Pacini tells us that the fastest anyone at Retro Studios has finished *Echoes* is roughly seven hours. And if you're really up for a challenge, pop in that old copy of *Metroid Prime* and try completing it with only one energy tank and five missiles—that's what one tester at the Austin-based development studio miraculously executed a few years back. Believe it.

AFTERTHOUGHTS: METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES (CONT.)

convey, metroids really didn't fit into that. Some people were like, "We need more metroids in there," while some were like, "Nah, we don't need as many metroids." It kept going back and forth, but in the type of game we were making, they weren't essential. Kind of like the space pirates.

EGM: Are you happy with how the spitscreen multiplayer battle mode turned out?

MP: Really happy. It's a fairly small component of the game, but it's tacked onto a long single-player experience. If you pick it up and just start playing, you might be like, "Well, maybe I don't know what it's all about." But after a couple times [trying out the multiplayer], I like to think it has its own little corner.

EGM: It just felt very limited, especially if you compare it to *Halo 2*, which has deep single- and multiplayer modes.

"We made multiplayer for the *Metroid* fan, not the *Halo* fan."

—Retro Studios Engineering Director Frank Salustiano

MP: But they've been in development for over three years. I don't want to say it's an unfair comparison, but they had goals and they met those goals. We had goals and we met them, too.

EGM: Another thing is that we made multiplayer for the *Metroid* fan, not the *Halo* fan. We worked really hard to incorporate all the fun *Metroid*-related items into a fun multiplayer situation.

EGM: Fair enough. Have you had a chance to play the Nintendo DS game *Metroid Prime: Hunters*?

MP: Yeah, I think it's a fun multiplayer experience and really takes advantage of the hardware. There's a single-player aspect to it, but it was never intended to be as in-depth as the GameCube titles.

EGM: Would you like to create a full-scale single-player *Metroid Prime*

adventure for Nintendo's new dual-screen handheld?

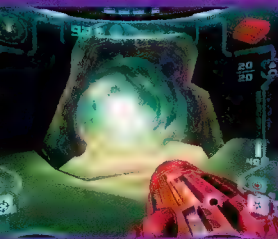
MP: Well, certainly. It's a very cool piece of hardware.

EGM: Any interest in working on a franchise other than *Metroid*?

MP: As the studio grows, of course. We'd obviously like to keep working on the [*Metroid*] franchise, as you're not going to find more hardcore *Metroid* fans than us. But I'd like to see us grow and head in different directions, as well.

EGM: Now that you're all finished with *Echoes*, what's next for Retro Studios?

MP: Vacation.
MS: This December, we're going to Nintendo's headquarters in Japan to answer that very question. ▶



■ According to Pacini, a short development cycle meant adding system-link multiplayer was simply "not practical."

TUP.COM READER POLL:

WHO SHOULD PLAY SAMUS ARAN IN THE UPCOMING METROID MOVIE?

Paris Hilton
(5%)

Gwen Stefani
(14%)

Angelina Jolie
(21%)

Kristanna Loken
(Terminatrix from
Terminator 3)
(60%)





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5 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

Things to make you go “!”

1

Premium Pack

Japanese gamers with deep pockets can spring for the *MGS3* premium pack, a massive box containing a copy of the game, two different books following its development, a DVD of trailers, and a 1/144 scale model of the Shagohad nuclear death tank. Neat stuff, but it'll set you back about \$120. (Jealous Americans should hit up online importers or check eBay.)



2

Healing Radio

Feelin' kinda glum while wandering through the dense Soviet jungles? Tune your Codec to 148.39, the secret frequency for "Healing Radio." Listening to these toe-tappin' rhythms refills Snake's stamina.

3

Player-designed Camouflage

Back in spring 2004, Konami challenged gamers all over the world to design camouflage patterns for *MGS3*. Series creator Hideo Kojima personally selected the four most creative ones, hid them away deep within in the game, and gave proper shout-outs to the artists in the credits. Hey, you never know when you'll need to blend in with a bunch of bananas or piles of poo....



4

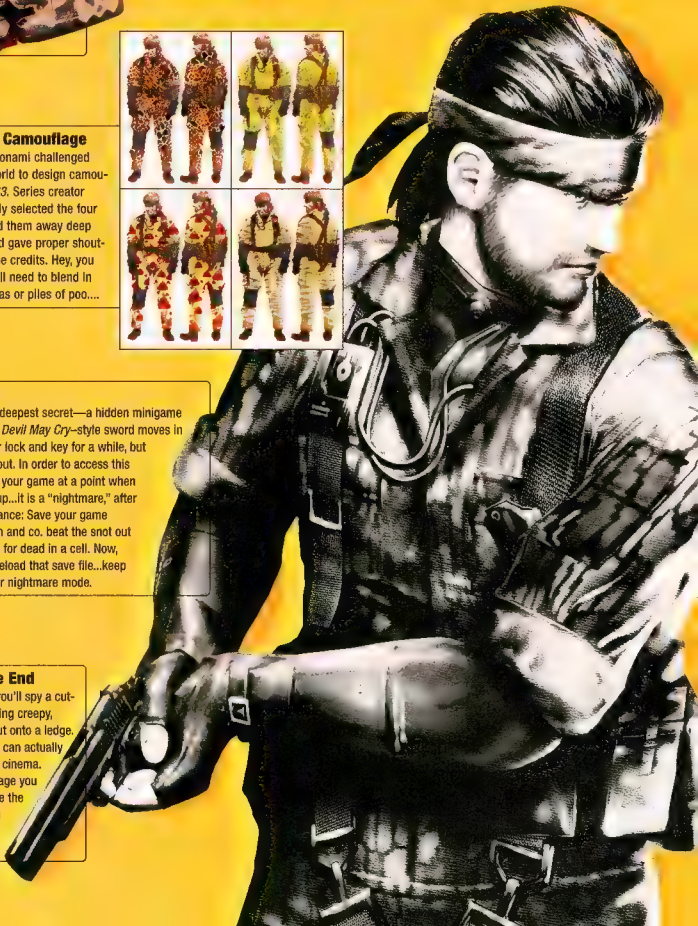
Nightmare Mode

Konami's kept *MGS3*'s deepest secret—a hidden minigame where Snake busts out *Devil May Cry*-style sword moves in a horror setting—under lock and key for a while, but we've finally sussed it out. In order to access this mode, you have to load your game at a point when Snake has just woken up...it is a "nightmare" after all. Here's your best chance: Save your game immediately after Volgin and co. beat the snot out of Snake and leave him for dead in a cell. Now, turn the game off and reload that save file...keep reloading until you enter nightmare mode.

5

The End is Not the End

A few hours into *MGS3*, you'll spy a cutscene of The Boss wheeling creepy, sleepy oldster The End out onto a ledge. If you're really crafty, you can actually kill him directly after this cinema. We don't actually encourage you to do this, simply because the epic sniper duel with him several hours later is so damned fun.... >



AFTERTHOUGHTS: METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

Hideo Kojima looks back on his latest safari

Konami's third *Metal Gear Solid* manages to stand strong against amazingly stiff competition this holiday season, thanks to a killer story line (that's a lot easier to follow than *MGS2*'s overly convoluted tale), spectacular visuals, and the deepest gameplay the stealth genre's ever offered. Series vets will see it as a return to form, and newcomers won't be lost, as Snake's latest sneaking mission is actually his first, taking place during the '60s at the height of the Cold War. *EGM* recently snuck up on *MGS*

prised. Even the development team says this is the best of the trilogy. Near the end of the game, there are some scenes where we feel like we're going to have a heart attack because it's so intense. [Laughs]

EGM: The *MGS* games were always labors of love...was *MGS3* as difficult to make?

HK: Well, I only slept at the office every other day, this time.

EGM: Have you been surprised by players' reactions to the game?

EGM: What are some of the inspirations for the bosses?

HK: A lot of the inspiration comes from the old *Kamen Rider* [Power Rangers-style action] kids series and various villains from old anime shows. That's why they explode dramatically when they die. [Laughs]

EGM: What's the process of going from a boss idea to getting it into the game?

HK: First, I come up with the background info for what country he's from, what ethnic group he belongs to, how old he is, how big he is, what kind of attack he'll do, and what kind of look he has, and then I give that to [MGS] character designer Yoji Shinkawa. Then, he either follows my instructions, adds his own unique touches, or totally ignores what I say and comes up with his own idea. We talk about our ideas back and forth and finalize it.

EGM: Snake gets tortured quite a bit in *MGS3*, but you didn't include a torture minigame like in *MGS1*...how come?

HK: This time we didn't include that button mashing—I guess many people didn't like it because it made their hands tired. [Laughs] We decided instead to increase the auditory component of fear: You'll hear a lot of sounds that will really add to the fear of being tortured. >

“Even the development team says this is the best of the trilogy.”

—MGS Director Hideo Kojima

Director Hideo Kojima to get the real story behind all the double-crossing, nuclear proliferation, and reptile consumption in his latest opus.

EGM: What aspect of *MGS3* are you most proud of?

Hideo Kojima: Everything, really. *MGS3* turned out great—it's really fun. We're sur-

HK: When we showed the final *MGS3* trailer at the Tokyo Game Show in September, fans were very surprised. During a particularly dramatic confrontation between Snake and The Boss, I looked over to see a young female fan with tears in her eyes, and there were people from our own team watching her, and then they had tears in their eyes. It was really very touching!

I've also watched players from different countries try the game, and they have very different styles. Most of the U.S. guys didn't seem to care about camo. They just wore nothing and were walking around naked. In Germany, fans were very careful about the camouflage, changing it whenever they moved into a new area. Whereas Japanese fans seemed to spend most of their time capturing animals.



■ Snake Eater's totally goofball Snake vs. Apo minigame—a little something for the kiddies.



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AFTERTHOUGHTS: METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER (CONT.)

EGM: What's the story behind the wacky Snake vs. Ape minigame?

HK: Normally, these things are included as unlockable rewards for finishing the game, but our intention is that dad plays *Metal Gear Solid 3* and then his little son or daughter can play Snake vs. Ape. It's a really fun mode, you know. The guys who worked on the main game were afraid that

still in the game, but we had to cut a lot of the tunes that we'd recorded for them. One of the few stations to survive in the final game is "Healing Radio," a frequency that plays pleasant tunes that replenish your stamina. We wanted to make a station that would be the reverse of this—tunes so bad that they lower your stamina. We planned to sing the songs ourselves, but that never

EGM: Have you given any thoughts to your next project?

HK: I'll leave *Metal Gear Solid 4* up to the younger guys on my team. In the meantime, I'd like to start working on something totally new on a new console, though I haven't made my mind up as to which new console. Plus, there's also the new *Boktai* for Nintendo DS for me to work on....

EGM: Do you have any update on the long-rumored *Metal Gear Online*?

HK: No. At least in Japan it's not feasible from a business perspective. After *MGS3*, things will start to evolve. I don't know exactly when or how, but it will get going someday. My staff members just love online games, and I cannot stop them or contain them anymore. They're like, "We want to work on it." 🍎

"I'll leave *Metal Gear Solid 4* up to the younger guys on my team"

—MGS Director Hideo Kojima

this mode would be more fun than the actual game. When we showed this to the Ape Escape team at Sony, it boggled their minds. They were like, "Oh my God!"

EGM: Were there ever any plans to use the EyeToy or the hard drive for *MGS3*?

HK: We really wanted to make use of EyeToy, but unfortunately, we just couldn't implement it this time. In fact, we over-flew the confines of a DVD and had to cut tons of stuff in order to squeeze it onto the disc. We had to get rid of a few cut-scenes simply because there wasn't room. We also had to get rid of several "radio stations," Codec frequencies dedicated to music. Some of these secret stations are

happened. We were just going to take turns butchering the "Snake Eater" opening theme karaoke-style, but we simply didn't have room....

EGM: We noticed that the father of Johnny Sasaki, the lovably tragic guard from *MGS1* and *MGS2*, shows up in *MGS3*...what's the story behind this joke character?

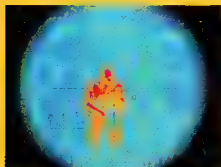
HK: There's actually a guy on our team called Johnny Sasaki. [Laughs]

EGM: Doesn't he mind being made into this ridiculous guard who vomits and craps his pants when he gets scared?

HK: No, not at all.

EGM: Did the current war in Iraq and the rise in global terrorism affect the creation of *MGS3*'s story line?

HK: No, I did not change the scenario because of what's happening. It's sort of pure coincidence that similar things are happening in both the game and in real life. I guess the state of the real world enhances a lot of the game's messages, imparting a greater sense of reality.



■ The best tip Kojima could ever give ya—use thermal goggles when fighting The End.

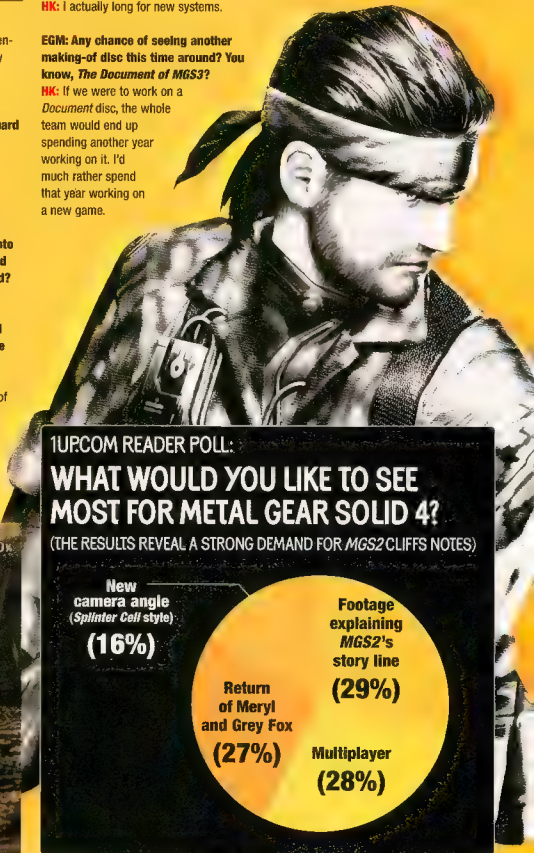


EGM: *MGS3* pushes the limits of the PlayStation 2, but do you feel that 2005 is too early for new consoles to appear? Do you think there is still life left in the PS2?

HK: I actually long for new systems.

EGM: Any chance of seeing another making-of-disc this time around? You know, *The Document of MGS3*?

HK: If we were to work on a Document disc, the whole team would end up spending another year working on it. I'd much rather spend that year working on a new game.



1UP.COM READER POLL:

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MOST FOR METAL GEAR SOLID 4?

(THE RESULTS REVEAL A STRONG DEMAND FOR *MGS2*'S CLIFFS NOTES)

New camera angle
(*Splinter Cell* style)
(16%)

Return of Meryl and Grey Fox
(27%)

Footage explaining *MGS2*'s story line
(29%)

Multiplayer
(28%)



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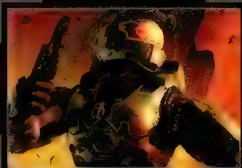
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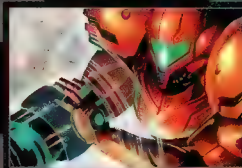
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Band of Campers
Multiplayer in *Finest Hour* like the single-player game, isn't very original—you've got the basic death-match and capture-the-flag modes. However, the stage design is top-notch, and the background, shouting and gunfire, re-creates 1942 in a way you'd rather not experience yourself.

KEYWORD: "Do not count days; do not count miles; count only the number of Germans you have killed!" So goes the opening speech of Commissar Viktor Durasov, who shouts over the crashing waves of the Volga River as you row towards a Stalingrad that looks straight out of a movie poster for *The Day After Tomorrow*. Like a lot of *Call of Duty's* scripted set pieces, it made me want to stand up and stake my life for my motherland—and I've never even been to Russia.

Finest Hour (a different game from the PC *Call of Duty*, but one that covers the same territory) does nothing particularly new for the World War II shooter genre if you've played any or all of the *Medal of Honor* series. *Finest Hour* just does it better. Where other games have enemy soldiers

"Finest Hour finely tunes the 'shooter-as-roller coaster' design motif..."

lining up to be shot, *Finest Hour* has opposition that's intelligent without being cheap. Where other games give you strings of boring filler missions, *Finest Hour* hands you massive firefights filled with infantry from both sides running around and shooting at each other.

I can't think of another console game that re-creates the visceral feel of war—the "that guy could've been me if I hadn't found cover first"

feeling—so eloquently. It's linear, yes, and the challenge can get aggravating later on, but the whole package goes above and beyond, both online and off.

JOSH: Any game that has "Tear down the Nazi flag" as an objective is OK in my book. *Finest Hour* plays on your patriotism but includes the Russian and British contribution to the war rather



■ **Oddjob and Xenia Onatopp** (complete with bullet-proof bra) are in the new *GoldenEye* (see page 130)—but Bond's AWOL.

THE RATING SYSTEM



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

AWARDS

Platinum — straight 10s. For games that are life-changing.	Gold — for games with an average score of 9.0 or higher.	Silver — for games with a mean score of 8.0 or higher.	The highest-scoring game each month gets a star.	The lowest-rated game with unambiguously bad scores.

DS

- 138 Super Mario 64 DS
- 140 Ridge Racer DS
- 140 Sprung
- 141 Madden NFL 2005
- 141 Mr. Driller: Drill Spirits
- 142 Feel the Magic: XY/XX

- 142 Spider-Man 2
- 143 Ping Pals

GBA

- 143 Kingdom Hearts: Chain of Memories

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

C-Strong game: Satisfying fun for the whole family: deuces, elves, rampant shames, and possibly Smurfs.	T-Teen : Like PG-13 movies, teen games often feature violence, mild tobacco, and madcap antics.	M-Mature : For the 18-and-over crowd: intense violence, gore, pillaged sex, drugs; parents no likely.
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■ **Who's gonna tell that one guy that he's wearing a dress? How embarrassing.**

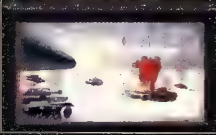


■ **After a long day of warcranking, the Axis and Allies enjoyed a nice game of capture the flag.**

ten killed Tom285.
Tom285 has Dropped the Allied Flag.

Tanks but No Tanks

You'll despise them by the end of the game, but tanks are both *Finest Hour's* preferred mode of transportation and its most fearsome weapon. Why the hatred? Well, you try maneuvering a huge, lumbering Sherman while simultaneously aiming its main gun turret—it's a lot to process at once, and the ropy controls aren't quite up to the task.



than the traditional America-centric perspective. The best parts actually happen in Russia, as the *Enemy at the Gates*-inspired Stalingrad missions are, to put it simply, awesome. The inclusion of AI allies also gives a great sense of being part of a larger fight, but the game loses realism points when pals sometimes exhibit shockingly poor military judgment. Clunky tank missions, the occasional irritating objective, and a steep increase in difficulty toward the end combined

with infrequent checkpoints, however, may cause some gamers to miss this call.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—SCOOTER: *Finest Hour* finely tunes the "shooter-as-roller coaster" design motif, which is both its best and worst asset. While games like *Halo 2* focus on pure, flexible, and unrelenting firefights driven entirely by AI, *Finest Hour* prefers to deliver scripted thrills. The developers also realized that if you're going to have

a lot of scripted moments that somewhat restrict the player's freedom, they should be damn good. So while I occasionally felt strapped into my seat, seeing the massive explosions, waves of patriots attacking each other, and the sky filling with ash and flame usually made up for it. Even though gameplay is pretty much the opposite of innovation (with the exception of the multiple characters, and more chances to drive a tank compared to the PC version), the presentation is second to none. **A-**

Good: Lovingly polished WWII atmosphere
Bad: Linear to the extreme
Beats the Pants Off: Medal of Honor: Rising Sun



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

8.5	7.5	8.0
KEVIN	JOSH	SCOOTER

Publisher: Activision
 Developer: Sunk Unlimited
 Players: 1 (PS2; XB 2-16 online)
 ESRB: Teen

www.callofduty.com

Nothing's more satisfying than launching enemies into traps. Unfortunately, such opportunities are rare.

PS2/XB/GC

PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN

ONLINE
XBOX ONLY



★
GAME OF THE MONTH

Goodnight, sweet prince

CRISPIN: Looks like someone's got a case of the Mondays. *Warrior Within's* scruffy, scowling titular hero just isn't the same happy-go-well-hopping guy you remember from *EGM's* 2003 Game of the Year,

Prince of Persia: Sands of Time.

And his gloomy mood is just one of several new directions for this solid sequel, which ramps up the combat, opens up the world, and introduces a mammoth single-minded pursuer who busts through walls like

Resident Evil's

Nemesis meets the Kool-Aid

Man, with a dash of *Lord of the Rings'* Balrog.

Called the Dahaka, this unstoppable force of fate is the best—and most terrifying—thing the sequel has going for it (see sidebar). But fans of the last game will be glad to know that the levels, traps, and puzzles are once again masterpieces of design. As before, the real thrill here comes from scoping out the environments, then reckoning how to get from A to B using the spy Prince's greatest-of-ease acrobatics. And the environments themselves are absolutely lush and atmospheric.

That's a good thing, because you'll be revisiting them a lot. *Warrior Within* features magic portals that zip you betwixt past and present (a time-tripping mechanic that fuels a head-spinning story packed with scenarios right out of *Back to the Future*). It makes for much backtracking through already visited levels. Even worse, the overworld

map is hard to read—it's like using an oil painting to navigate an alien city—so it's easy to wander in the wrong direction.

My other quibbles are more a matter of taste. If you were OK with the combat in the last game, you'll appreciate *Warrior Within's* finessed, free-form swordplay. Otherwise, the frequent encounters will turn you off. Oh, and about the Prince's dismal mood—it permeates every polygon of this sequel, to the point where I was like, "All right, I get it already." You'll battle slutty dominatrices who look like *Mortal Kombat* rejects while the soundtrack cycles cheesy garage-band guitar riffs at max distortion. It saps some of the series' elegance—but I'll still be first in line for the next sequel.

G. FORD: After gleefully running up walls like a certified madman in last year's *Sands*, I under-

When Dahaka Attacks

Think the *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill* creep-a-thons have desensitized you to fear in videogames? Wait! You face *Warrior Within's* Dahaka, a towering, tendrilned monstrosity who's out to squash the Prince for fulzing with the timeline in the last game. When the Dahaka bursts onto the screen, it's time to *move!* You must scamper along walls, past traps, and over chasms as fast as you can without the usual luxury of eyeballing the way ahead. Suddenly, you're relying on instinct and twitch reflexes—an intensely fun new way to play *Prince of Persia*.



When the graphics turn monochrome, you know the Dahaka's on your tail. Now run before he devours you!



Few women can wear skin-tight platemail, but on miniboss Shahdee here, it works. Rapid-tap attack to gain the advantage when you lock blades with her.

Good: Great puzzles, terrifying Dahaka!
Bad: Too much backtracking, weak bosses, cheesy music.
Prince of...Pittsburgh? Your accent often slips into American.

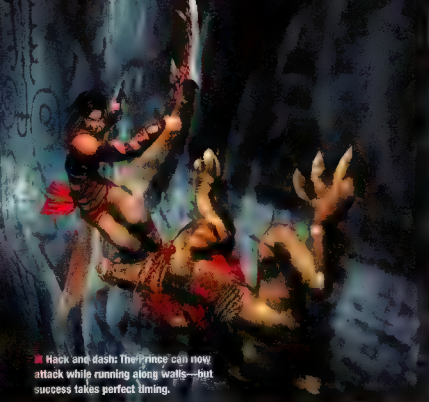


THE VERDICT
3.5 out of 5

8.5 8.5 8.5
CRISPIN G. FORD JENNIFER

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.princeofpersiagame.com



■ Hack and dash: The Prince can now attack while running along walls—but success takes perfect timing.



Delay of Game

Once again, the Prince can use his time powers to redo unsightly missteps, but he's also mastered several new clock-blocking moves. The most useful two:

Slowing Time

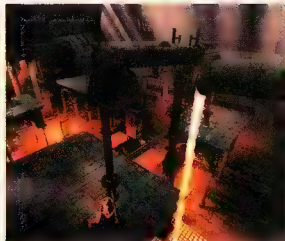


The enemies slow to a crawl—but unlike in the last game—the Prince moves at normal speed. The power's superhandy when you face traps too zippy to avoid in real time.

Going Hyper



The Prince launches into a frenetic dance of blurring blades that purees foes and turns the screen red. It's most useful at the end of the game, when you're tired of combat and have nearly limitless use of your time powers...



standably had high expectations for *Warrior Within*. And though it's a spectacular game, it's missing some of the magic and balance of last year's instant classic.

The first culprit is the beefed-up combat—the overabundance of combos and tough enemies makes fighting almost too involved and seems like an overreaction to minor complaints from last year. Whereas *Sands*' combat was like an elegant yet deadly dance that offered players an entertaining breather after they ran a gamut of environmental puzzles, now it feels like you're repeatedly being thrown into a brutal boot camp, which goes against the series' puzzle-based nature and often proves frustrating. Also, as interesting as the game's time-jumping aspect is, it's hurt by the convoluted story and the sometimes confusing progression and backtracking.

Make no mistake, though, *Warrior Within* is an

excellent game, and you should buy it with the expectation that you are getting one of the year's best action games. The level design is once again exemplary, and the environmental puzzles would make even of Indiana Jones blush. Those expecting something that tops *Sands*' perfectly balanced gameplay and solid story, however, may be underwhelmed.

JENNIFER: I didn't review last year's *Prince*, so lemme lay it out right now—I thought it was a bit overrated. The prohibitively frustrating and repetitive combat and poorly spaced save points really turned me off, but *Warrior Within* fixes both problems. Almost every time I swung, wall-ran, or shimmed past a difficult section, I found life-giving water and handy saves right where I wanted them. Plus, the much-needed addition of a combo list definitely helped me keep my combat skills

nice and sharp. These little design changes freed me up to soak in the gorgeous scenery and really enjoy just playing.

In my book, seamlessly controlling the gymnastic Prince through elaborate puzzles constitutes platforming at its best: The challenge is in *discovering* what the correct jump is, not in actually making the jump. For me, that's infinitely more satisfying. (And if you like exploring *Prince*'s environments and puzzles more than beating down the many bad guys, you'll probably have more fun on the Easy difficulty setting.) So why isn't my score higher, even though—unlike Crispin and G. Ford—I like this *Prince* better than the last? Sometimes that discovery process can be way too circuitous. Take the wrong turn and you'll wander and wander, completely unaware that you're totally barking up the wrong tree, ledge, or seemingly smooth wall. Still, this is one worth solving. ❏

Good Times:

Only on Xbox: The Xbox version of *Warrior Within* offers an exclusive online mode in the form of combat and obstacle course time trials. In Arena Combat, you wade on three waves of enemies, then see how your completion time ranks on the leaderboard. In the time trial, you zig through a section of the game's hardest level, trying for a record run (using your time-rewind powers to undo mistakes actually penalizes you). Both modes are fun, but you only get one level for each, with just two additional maps planned as a later download.



■ Some of the Prince's most powerful time attacks take too long to pull off.



■ Now how do I get up there? It's not as easy as it looks—and therein lies the fun.



■ **2K5's** visuals shine—It's the rest of the package that needs some touch-ups.

PS2/XB

ESPN COLLEGE HOOPS 2K5

On the bubble



Good: 2K5's graphics dominate the competition. **Bad:** Audio is all jacked. **Steeping Aid:** Listening to the commentary.

BRYAN: Last season's game had two big problems: It neither played nor felt like college basketball (big problems indeed). Now, after a year of practice, *ESPN College Hoops 2K5* displays flashes of greatness but still comes up short.

2K5 has its ups and downs in several areas. On the hardwood, squads finally apply pressure and double-team realistically, but cross half-court and players tend to stand around and watch the man with the rock (college basketball is all about fostering teamwork, not 1-on-1 play). The developers tried to inject a livelier campus atmosphere via the audio, yet the result is out-of-sync cheers that sound like a handful of coeds screaming in an empty gymnasium—not good. And forget about the commentary; these guys lack Dick Vitale-esque enthusiasm and keep yapping long after the play.

Thankfully, legacy mode has improved, as its innovative recruiting system returns with a streamlined interface, and now you're treated to video highlights through a virtual ESPN.com. Too bad much of *2K5's* on-court action isn't as appealing as this fleshed-out game mode...

PATRICK: Using the same game engine as its *NBA* counterpart, *2K5* plays better than it did a year ago, in part because the A.I. is way smarter. Computer-controlled coaches will substitute to ensure you have no matchup advantages; players dish to the open perimeter shooter on the break and switch between man and zone D. Impressive. The revamped legacy mode lasts 40 years (if you want it to) and focuses on daily and weekly tasks in preparation for games. That ought to keep you busy until the Final Four.

DAN L: *College Hoops 2K5* may not have the cool, polished menu icons and slick bonus areas that *March Madness* has, but there is definitely enough gameplay here to satisfy most basketball fans (with the possible exception of Bryant).

2K5 has too many recruiting, coaching, scheduling, and training options to mention, but if you like your plate full 'til it keeps you busy, *Gameplay-wise*, new control tweaks make special moves a bit more realistic, and teams play according to their style. Wisconsin's plodding and suffocating D? It's there.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

6.0	7.5	8.0
BRYAN	PATRICK	DAN L.

Publisher: ESPN Videogames
Developer: ESPN Videogames
Players: PS2 1-2 (3-10)
w/MultiTap, 2-10 (online), XB
1-4 (2-6 online)
ESRB: Everyone
www.espnvideogames.com

PS2/XB



NCAA MARCH MADNESS 2005

A bona fide blue-chipper

■ Utilize 4 team's playbook and you'll surely make it to the big dance—sorry, we tapped into sports talk again.



Good: Effective play-calling system **Bad:** Graphics still need work **Try:** Re-creating college basketball history

BRYAN: Few sporting events are more exciting (or spawn more office betting pools) than the three weeks in the spring when 65 universities battle for the college roundball crown. It's called *March Madness*, and *NCAA March Madness 2005* lives up to the name with its spot-on portrayal—from gameplay to atmosphere—of the intercollegiate hardwood. The quick-thinking A.I. forces you to contend with full-court presses and traps, plus you'll really feel in command of the court thanks to the all-new and surprisingly simple play-calling system.

The game's ambience is also scholarship worthy; players slap the floor Duke style to pump up the crowd, the student body chants so loud that the screen actually shakes when visiting squads step up to the free-throw line, and in his own words, Dick Vitale's commentary is "awe-some, baby." EA has also tossed in one very sweet extra: the ability to re-create some of the finest moments in college basketball, like Villanova's miracle win over G-town in the 1985 title game. Now next season, how 'bout taking the much-needed step of prebuiting up those visuals?

PATRICK: From arena ambience (think the Dean Dome or Phog Allen Fieldhouse) to deciphering whether or not the opposition has thrown a different defensive set your way, *March Madness* just feels like college ball. Play-calling on the fly is easy to pick up, and the overhauled recruiting system adds boosters and family members to deal with, so look out for violations. Time-outs are kind of funky now, as you only have 30

seconds to sub and call a play, making those stressful situations down the stretch even more nail-biting.

DAN L: The Cameron Crazies at Duke. The Pit. The Carrier Dome. All legendary venues in college basketball, and thanks to EA Sports, some of the more entertaining places to visit when playing *Madness*.

Grafting the Arena Pulse feature from *NCAA Football* was one solid move by the EA hoops team. Installing an all-new "floor general" feature that lets you direct plays with an intuitive HUD during gameplay was another. From the songs done by college marching bands to the robust recruiting system, the game bleeds college feel and delivers solid gameplay.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

8.0	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)
ESRB: Everyone
www.easports.com

VIDEO: YES. GAME: NO.



Phantom opponents are one thing, but being matched against a real adversary brings new meaning to the term "game over." And it takes a completely new set of skills to play for real. In the United States Air Force, you're not just a player, but a relevant, contributing part of the most highly advanced military on the planet. Which is why we seek those with the talent to win and the intelligence to win under pressure. Call 1-800-423-USAf or log on to AIRFORCE.COM and find out what we can do to help your game. And what you can do to help ours.

Instead of blood, guards gush a font of blue sparks when perforated by a hall of bullets. That's a Teen rating for ya.



PS2/XB/GC

ONLINE
(PS2/XB ONLY)

GOLDENEYE: ROGUE AGENT

This agent works alone

DEMIAN: I know why Electronic Arts decided to resurrect the *GoldenEye* name—that's easy: great stacks of cash, certainly more than enough to bathe in. But how can a new *GoldenEye*, not even starring James Bond, possibly live up to *GoldenEye 007*, the Rare-developed Nintendo 64 instant-classic that was one of the very best games of its time? Well, obviously it can't, but *Rogue Agent* does a good enough job re-creating the gameplay feel of the original that *GoldenEye* fanboys can now officially stop resenting its existence.

This time you are GoldenEye, a turn-coat MI6 agent who's joined up with the bad guys (Scaramanga, Goldfinger, etc.), who waste so much energy fighting amongst themselves it's wonder

they have a spare moment to build weather-control machines and laser torture devices. The sparse story isn't even worth recapping—the important thing is that there are eight increasingly long and difficult missions, and only a whole lot of bullets are going to make things right.

Forget about puzzles. *Rogue Agent* is all about taking on a room packed with enemies, ducking from cover to cover, and constantly picking up new weaponry (although the amount of ordnance you happen upon does get a bit ridiculous—people really shouldn't leave so many rocket launchers lying around). The constant running, gunning, and weapon juggling really does feel a lot like *GoldenEye 007*...but in trying so hard to capture the first game's aesthetic, *Rogue Agent* also ends up seeming a little dated. It's just lame when knee-high rubble blocks a possible path because you, a near-invincible secret agent, don't even

have the ability to jump—an even more glaring omission in multiplayer.

Rogue Agent's new GoldenEye powers (see sidebar) do add some much-needed depth and strategy, however, and your A.I. enemies are crafty enough to keep you on your toes; they'll wait for you to reload before breaking cover and trying to rush you. Even with off- and online multiplayer, though, *Rogue Agent* isn't quite the killer app that *GoldenEye 007* was.

SHOE: Driving a tank in a videogame is cool—except when that tank's a human character in a first-person shooter. *Rogue Agent* puts you in the shoes of the stiffest, least nimble spy in town. In single player, it's tolerable because you can't be Rambo-charging into hostile areas all the time anyway. But multiplayer is more frantic and not conducive to rigid, robotic movements. *Rogue*



Good: Surprisingly similar to the original *GoldenEye*.
Bad: That game came out seven years ago.
But Where the Heck Is James?



THE VGPC'S
CHOICE

7.5
DEMIAN

7.5
SHOE

7.5
MARK

Publisher: EA Games
Developer: EA Los Angeles
Players: PS2 1-2 (3-4 w/Multiplay, 2-8 online), XB 1-4 (2-8 online), GC 1-4
ESRB: Teen
www.ea.com



What's the Diff?

Aside from online multiplayer support (including voice chat) for the PS2 and Xbox *Rogue Agents*, there's little difference between the three versions. The graphics are only very slightly better on GameCube and Xbox, and though the Xbox's default control layout is awful, switch to the "Precision V2" setting and it's perfectly fine.



Agent will bring back some of the multiplayer glory that was *GoldenEye 007* for GameCubers, but if you're digging on *Halo 2* right now, this game won't feel right physicswise.

Online, multiplayer takes more hits. Only eight players? You can't pick which team you're on? The hosting server has to quit and dump everyone to start a new mode? Wha-? What is this, the 1990s? Zing!

Rogue Agent does do a lot of things extremely well, though. The enemies are realistic, ducking in and out of cover, constantly moving, even updating each other on what you're doing ("He's behind the bar!"—brilliant). The GoldenEye powers add a great twist, too, though in multiplayer, you'll probably just stick with the shield ability most of the time until you become an advanced ass kicker. I'd still recommend *Rogue Agent*—it has lots of flaws but offers plenty new.

MARK: With so many of the same enemies packing its long levels, not to mention a lackluster story and so-so graphics, this new *GoldenEye* could have easily ended up as forgettable as George Lazenby. (He played Bond in 1969's *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*...get my point?) But with single player, at least, *Rogue Agent* delivers: bad guys smart enough to duck for cover, charge, and retreat; traps worked into the levels that you can spring upon unsuspecting victims; satisfying weapons (with only a couple duds); and most of all, the interesting powers you eventually possess in your golden eye. Using them to activate switches remotely, see through walls, or toss guys around like Darth Vader on a bad day gives *Rogue Agent* a unique twist that stays interesting through the whole game.

Of course, the most memorable aspect of the N64's *GoldenEye* was its robust multiplayer

game, which is ironically the low point of *Rogue Agent*. An eight-player limit, bad maps mostly repurposed from the campaign mode, and an inexcusable lack of options (the inability to pick which team you're on is particularly baffling) ensures that this new game will not be looked back upon except as a disappointment. A pity too, since the tug of war mode, level traps, and rock-paper-scissors balance between the different eye powers definitely held some promise. **A-**

The Man With the Golden Eye

No, you didn't lose your eye in an unfortunate rubber-band shooting accident in superspy elementary school—Dr. No plucked it out, that so-and-so. But then your pal Scaramanga installed a golden mechanical eye, which turns out to be really quite handy.

Scaramanga upgrades your eye with special powers as you progress through the game. He's such a dear!



MRI Vision: Your first GoldenEye ability lets you see through walls and spot lurking enemies. Good for planning your next barrage of bullets, but even better when you get the mag-rail gun, which can blast through walls and one-shot the bad guys. Enemies with shields will be invisible, though—something to keep in mind for multiplayer battles.



EM Nukes: Use the hack to activate switches from afar and reprogram turrets to shoot everyone but you. Or get an enemy in your crosshairs and hack him—his weapons will malfunction temporarily. In multiplayer, use the hack when your foe has serious firepower, like a rocket launcher or Predator minigun. Won't work if he's shielded, though.



Magnetic Polarity Shield: The third power you get is a lifesaver. Activate the shield and you won't take damage, although it drains more quickly as you take hits. Melee-attack a foe with your shield up and you'll focus the rest of your GoldenEye energy into the blow for an easy kill. In multi, you can't trigger the shield unless your energy stores are full.



Magnetic Induction Field/EMP Pulse: In single player, this energy-hogging power will allow you to knock an enemy backward or throw him to the side with the control stick, usually killing him outright. In multi, you get the EMP pulse instead, which will briefly freeze your foe in place—and it's the only power that will still work against a shielded opponent.



Early in the game, you play as Mr. Incredible in his young, pre-Cialis days.

PS2/XB/GC

THE INCREDIBLES

Superheroes down on their luck



Good: Gets its looks and soundtrack from the movie.
Bad: Levels drag, fighting is repetitive—it just isn't fun.
This Is a Job For: Captain Generic and Elasti-Pup



JUSTIN: It must be demoralizing for superheroes fresh from starring in a blockbuster movie to be forced into a role like this. Most of the script is just running around boring levels and beating up dozens of brain-dead bad guys. Flipping switches, swinging from poles, running trial-and-error obstacle courses...couldn't they get some kind of furry mammal to do this crap?

The *Incredibles* game had some great material to work with, but the energy and humor that really made the movie great just isn't there—out-of-context voice clips and poorly connected cut-scenes certainly don't add anything. Each family member does get to do different things, but they're about as fun as they are super. Mr. Incredible's super strength and Mrs. Incredible's stretchy limbs work against bad guys, but they're powerless when sluggish controls team up with annoying, timed puzzles. Not that young Dash does OK with his racing missions, but tween sister's inviso-sneaking is more awkward than puberty. Forget incredible—even big fans of the movie will find this game underwhelming (well, except Dana).

JOSH: I was expecting a slapped-together cash-in, but *Incredibles* shines with surprising polish. The graphics and animation are smooth and closely replicate the style of the film. The game manages to be reasonably entertaining, and multiple characters provide welcome variety from the bad-guy punching and switch flipping that comprises the majority of the game. The steep difficulty and cheap deaths, however, mean that kids are going to be crying to mama when the unforgiving platforming and infuriating boss (who you have to fight twice!) jabs their hides.

OFFICIAL PS MAG—DANA: It's tough to compete with a film as good looking as *The Incredibles*, but this game puts up a valiant effort. The four playable characters provide a good range of gameplay, and their different styles lend themselves well to the varied missions. Game mechanics could be better (I died more often from a clumsy jump maneuver than I did from enemies), and some sections get tedious. However, the game still provides all-around fun for the whole family—never mind the haters.

THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	5.5	6.5	7.0
	JUSTIN	JOSH	DANA

Publisher: THQ
Developer: Heavy Iron
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.thq.com



As mud cakes on the gals' bodies in *Mad Mad Mode* (right), they start to look kinda...maked.

PlayStation 2

RUMBLE ROSES

Battle, my sluts!



Good: Damn, these girls look fine.
Bad: Limited options, low stages.
Ugly: Aigle's totally unsexy caveman voice

SHANE: If you're old enough to remember the Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling (aka GLOW), you understand the appeal of lovely females pulling one another's hair, wrapping their bodies into contorted pretzel shapes, and acting out amazingly campy scenarios. The modern-day WWE divas come off as dull in comparison. Sure, they're cute, but their tepid catfighting and plain Jane story lines just don't go far enough into the realm of the absurd. Enter *Rumble Roses*, an all-female wresstler with some of the sexiest, craziest grapplers the world has ever seen. From a stern school-marm hot on the trail of truant students to a diabolical, drug-dealing lesbian nurse harvesting body parts from opponents to complete her ultimate wrestling robot, these characters do not disappoint.

Roses' gameplay doesn't differ too much from that of the PS2 WWE titles, so expect a similar set of branching grapples, over-powered supermoves, and submission techniques. You won't find quite as many options, here, though—story mode, exhibition fights, and down 'n' dirty mud matches are all you have to choose from. Still,

Rumble Roses' visual assets and creativity make it endearing.

BRYAN: Playing *Rumble Roses* is a lot like going to a strip club (or, uh, so I've been told)—there are many pretty women to ogle and their moves dazzle, but you may leave wishing you had seen more. This grappler just doesn't offer enough match types or the robust story mode that wrestling fans have come to expect. And it's a shame because the action inside the ring is on par with *SmackDown!*, not to mention these gorgeous gals would wipe the mat with the WWE divas.

JOSH: Finally, a game that embraces the inherent homoeroticism of pro wrestling. Scantly clad women entwine in exotic submission holds while standard grappling moves come with some extra spice. The game looks good and the animation is as smooth as each wrestler's flawless skin, but once the novelty of chicks whaling on each other wears off, there's not much else to do. With so many erotic fantasies being fulfilled, why no triple-threat bouts?

THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	7.5	6.5	6.5
	SHANE	BRYAN	JOSH

Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami Tokyo/Yuke's
Players: 1-2
ESRB: Mature

www.konami.com

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PlayStation.2



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► P-Funk All-Star Bootsy Collins wrote an original song for *ATV3*: Hey, work it work.

PlayStation 2

ONLINE

ATV OFFROAD FURY 3

Playing in the dirt

Good: Fun online experience
Bad: Superfluous customizations

Thanks: Not as many instant deaths as in previous *ATV's*

PATRICK: Warning: *ATV Offroad Fury 3* may cause motion sickness...but I mean that in the best possible way. The series matures with *ATV3*, thanks in part to improved physics, and you can really feel a sense of speed as you whip around a corner and launch off a huge jump.

While the gameplay hasn't changed drastically, you can now hold *RT* in a sharp bend and your *ATV* will settle into a nice drift—I'm sure it's not terribly realistic, but hey, it *is* fun. And you'll find realism elsewhere, like in your garage, where you'll have a ton of customization options—almost too many. The game's tracks are much more diverse too, ranging from sprawling countryside areas and canyon tracks to more conventional courses. There's even a free ride mode in case you just want to mess around and explore. Online play expands to a max of six players (up from four in *ATV2*) and offers all six race types available in the single-player game, which is nice.

SHANE: Like its two predecessors, *ATV3* expertly captures the crucial body-weight physics of the sport, but this installment

breaks from tradition with arcade powersliding and more fanciful level design. Diethards may call foul, but the looser grip on reality really ups the fun quotient. Likewise, the online play receives some successful TLC, with more simultaneous racers, race modes, and goofball minigames (like hockey and basketball) than *ATV2*. More attention should have gone to the graphics, though: Muddy visuals and questionable rag-doll rider physics don't impress.

ROBERT: Red state or blue, jumping vehicles off dirt piles appeals universally. *ATV3* does it with four wheels, a little finesse, and a lot of patience. Winning isn't easy, and you'll be desperate for part upgrades before you can afford them. I'm not a fan of the trick system, which (besides featuring the goofiest moves ever) doesn't allow you to load a trick while another is being performed, making combos difficult. If you get frustrated, laugh at Bootsy Collins' *ATV3* theme song: "I come with my own independent rear suspension. My wheels in the back don't even relate to each other." Funky.



THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	8.5	7.5	6.5
	PATRICK	SHANE	ROBERT

Publisher: Sony CEA
Developer: Climax
Players: 1-2 (2-6 online)
ESRB: Everyone

www.us.playstation.com

PlayStation 2

MEGA MAN X8

Times they aren't a-changin'



Good: Classic *Mega Man X* gameplay
Bad: Any movement that involves more than two dimensions
Better: Boss Than *X7's* Tornado Tonion; Bamboo Pandemonium

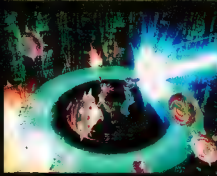
JOSH: It's official, there are now as many *Mega Man X* games as there are titles in the original *Mega Man* series. *X1* and *Zero* have joined the fight, and you can switch characters at will, but the same classic gameplay from 15 games ago remains intact.

Some may complain that *Mega Man* needs to evolve—these people are tired of the jumping and shooting, the Brady Bunch boss selection, and of course, the crushing difficulty. Well, I say screw them. I've always loved the *Mega Man* formula, and like my stuck-in-his-ways granpa guy always says—change is bad. I can stomach the new 3D graphics because most of the levels play exactly like they're 2D, but the game suffers when it tries to take advantage of the superfluous dimension, much like it did in *X7*. The 3D-shooter portions are boring, frustrating, and flat-out ugly. Thankfully, the remaining areas have degrees in kicking-your-ass from straight out of the old school, though some sections require more memorization than skill. *X8's* fun, but *X* needs to stick with straight 2D in the inevitable ninth iteration.

G. FORD: For some reason, Capcom decided we needed to see another *Mega Man X* game even after the mess that was *X7*. Fortunately, it's given us something a little more enjoyable this time. The last game's horrible 3D stages are now less frequent, and the bosses have graduated from embarrassing to forgettable. It's the solid side-scrolling stages that really give the game its legs, though, thanks to a few standout levels. *X8* may not be the series'

high point, but it's good to see it crawl back up to respectability.

EMP—CHRISTIAN: This is the first *Mega Man X* game worth buying in years. I'm happy to report that the developers have thrown out just about every rotten idea that made *X7* so awful. *X8* heeds much closer to the original formula, but still has a few new touches and clever ideas. The three characters are nice and different, too. Although it's quite short, *X8* encourages replay—I even got that old-time action game Zen going. Hell, *X8* is even good enough to appeal to people who don't write naughty *XZero* fan fiction.



► The double-team move results in flashy effects and massive damage.

THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	6.5	6.5	7.0
	JOSH	G. FORD	CHRISTIAN

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Players: 1
ESRB: Everyone

www.capcom.com



Tiffany punches a zombie...they hate that!

PlayStation 2

SEGA SUPERSTARS

Warning: This game forces you to move



Good: Easy to pick up, several fun games.
Bad: Incredibly shallow, many games unresponsive.
Stupidly Fun: Pimp-slapping *Virtua Fighter's* Akira to obtain



JOSH: No matter how I control it, I just can't get behind a collection of lame minigames. *Superstars* features 12 games based loosely on Sega classics like *Sonic* and *NIGHTS*. Some games accurately mimic the titles on which they're based, but others—like the Crazy Taxi minigame, in which you flail around and scream in order to hail a cab—don't even come close.

Regardless of its faithfulness to the source material, *Superstars* would be only moderately entertaining if it controlled perfectly. It doesn't. While minigame versions of *Puyo Puyo* and *Virtua Striker* were responsive and fun, others had me cursing a blue streak at my TV and making many an obscene gesture (although I did manage to nail five cabs as a result). *Superstars* is single player only, but it's obviously meant to be played with people not otherwise inclined to game. It's the kind of title you'd make your mom play to show her that not all videogames involve stabbing hookers.

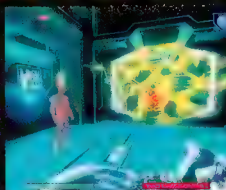
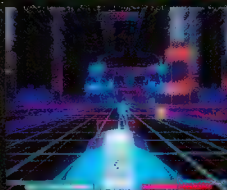
JENNIFER: If you hate silly games, physical activity, or...fun (as Josh and Robert seem to), just stop reading here. I, however,

enjoyed these Sega classics—they represent the continuing trend of EyeToy games from "harmlessly goofy" to "possibly legit." *Virtua Fighter*, for example, offers up enemies that hit you back and counterattack. Monkey Ball requires not just the typical (and ever-amusing) arm flailing, but also a definite understanding of the physics of things. You'll need a variety of skills to succeed, and some stuff is really hard. But you ain't gonna burn all those holiday calories playing *Metal Gear*...

ROBERT: If these games were played in a mix instead of divided into separate menus with separate options (and most annoyingly, separate camera positions), *Sega Superstars* would have been a lot more fun. Unfortunately, you'll play half the games once and never touch them again—assuming you manage to last through a single round of Crazy Taxi's yell-fest or Billy Hatcher's painful yoga torture. The Space Channel 5 game is ace, though, and I think a full version of EyeToy Monkey Ball could be really great if Sega worked out more precise control. Eh, maybe next time.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	5.0	7.5	6.5
	JOSH	JENNIFER	ROBERT

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Sonic Team
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen
www.segasuperstars.com



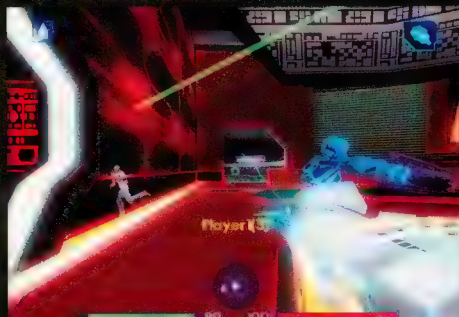
Fun Tron fact: The film's score was written by Moog maestro Wendy (formerly Walter) Carlos.

Xbox

ONLINE

TRON 2.0: KILLER APP

Information technology can be fun!



Good: Looks like no game before it.
Bad: Otherwise it's just another shooter.
It's Not a Door Key: It's a "permission"

KEVIN: Just like the original PC game, *Tron 2.0: Killer App* lives and dies by its ingenious world view. The visuals, which copy the 1982 film's black-light disco inferno look to a tee, are surreally compelling—everything's in glowworm primary colors, and the game never fails to throw some more visual dazzle at you just when you're getting bored.

The rest of *Killer App*, unfortunately, isn't quite up to the same standard. Get past all the computer jargon (your sniper rifle is amusingly called the "LOL" gun), and you have a pretty typical first-person shooter. It does have a good story (pretty rare for an FPS), but alas, it's still marred by choppy graphics and frequent breaks for loading. Things take a turn for the worse with multiplayer—the lightcycle combat gets boring quick, and the death-match levels are mostly wide open, transforming every Xbox Live match into a huge shootout in the center of the map. If you're into the subject matter, though (and who isn't into '80s sci-fi films, really?), the visuals and story elements still make *Killer App* worth a purchase.

ROBERT: A key is a key. No matter what kind of engineering textbook terms *Tron* throws at you, it's a game mostly about finding keys, finding keyholes, and killing bad guys. Along the way, you do some mostly annoying platforming, a little mostly fun (though maybe I'm the only one who thought so) lightcycle racing, and lots of mostly boring wandering around. I admire the bold art direction—all neon tubes on velvet walls—glow-stick hallucination effects, and sounds copped from *Space Invaders*, but why are the levels so short and the loads so long?

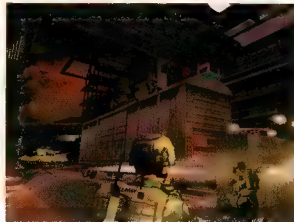
NICH: Despite losing a little bit of graphical detail, this Xbox reimaging of the PC *Tron 2.0* is pretty well done. It puts an interesting spin on typical first-person shooter combat: your primary disc weapon is essentially a single-shot gun that allows for very precise control once you get used to it. But the game isn't without its weaknesses—lightcycles, in particular, aren't much more tolerable here than they were in the PC version. Definitely worth a look if you never played the original.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	7.0	6.0	7.5
	KEVIN	ROBERT	NICH

Publisher: Buena Vista
Developer: Climax
Players: 1 (2-16 online or system link)
ESRB: Teen
www.tronkillerapp.com



Enemies usually pour out of the screen from all at once, like ants. Stupid ants.



One area where your teammates really come in handy is taking out enemy vehicles.

Xbox

ONLINE

GHOST RECON 2

Standard issue

MARK: With an entire battalion of military-themed shooters in stores these days, it's hard to find anything about *Ghost Recon 2* that really stands out.

Of course, as far as *Recon* fans are concerned, the sequel will seem radically different, especially the shift from first-person to an over-the-shoulder view. The new camera (you can still switch to first-person if you like) and de-emphasis on tactics are good moves for the series. They give *Recon 2* a look and feel more like the PS2's *SOCOM*—fast action, but with a slight strategic twist as you issue simple orders to your troops (take out enemy armor, flank left or right, man a gun placement, etc.) on the fly. And yet, despite a variety of mission objectives, the game begins to feel repetitive near the middle of the relatively short single-player campaign. The fact that enemies spring forth in packs doesn't help, and the inconsistent A.I. and save-anywhere system have you wasting far too much time saving and loading.

But the first *Recon* earned its stripes online, and

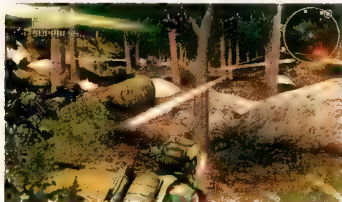
the sequel definitely holds its own there. Packed with game types and maps, it includes an array of co-op modes and territory-control variations. But again, there's nothing in particular that demands to be played or can't be found elsewhere.

SHOE: I might've had a better time with this game if my ghost squadmates were actually ghosts. These stupid soldiers love walking in front of my sights. Bang! Oops, sorry about that, buddy. Let me reload my last save. The bad guys aren't any brainier. They'll sit out in the wide open, or they'll just rush me head on, happy to be mowed down one by one. But they overcompensate for that air-headedness with unfair, uncanny perception—the kind of perception that can see me through things I'd normally consider opaque (like walls) or from a mile away, through thick foliage. Bang! I don't know how that shot got to me, but the damn cheatin' A.I. has gone and killed me again. At least multiplayer game is fun, the levels are well

designed, and you can save anytime, anywhere you want, which is a real lifesaver.

XBN—CHE: When the original *Recon* was released, Xbox Live was still a fledgling service with almost nothing you could consider a “killer app.” But it was *Recon* that showed us the potential by letting us sith(er) (and snipe) through the great outdoors with fellow gamers online.

Now, two years later, *Recon's* sequel is disappointingly more of the same—never mind the over-the-shoulder view. Gorgeous graphics and detailed character models do nothing to offset the fact that the game lacks decent A.I. for both friendlies and enemies. As it is, your tour of duty in North Korea is more like a stroll through a communist shooting gallery full of paper tigers. Unsurprisingly, it's the multiplayer that carries *Recon 2*. Unlike most of the online shooters on Xbox Live, this game is slower and more deliberately paced—a rhythm favored by snipers and campers alike. **A-**



Recon on Recon

We couldn't get copies of the PS2 or Cube versions of *Recon 2* in time for review, but don't assume that this review will apply to the other consoles. Ubisoft is making a second version of the game for Sony and Nintendo's systems, set four years before the Xbox game, with all new cut-scenes and levels. PS2 *Recon 2* should be out now, with the Cube version due in February.



Good: Mix of fast action and tight teamwork scenes.
Bad: Nothing terribly unique or great about it.
Except Maybe: Looking around corners with the periscope.



THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

6.0 6.0 7.0

MARK

SHOE

CHE

Publisher: Ubisoft
 Developer: Red Storm
 Players: 1-4 (2-16 online, 2-8 system link)
 ESRB: Teen

www.ghostrecon-2.com



Like a furry Neo, your hero can not only stop bullets, but dodge 'em in super slow-mo.

Xbox

BLINX 2: MASTERS OF TIME & SPACE

Household animals cooperate for the greater good

Good: Fun platforming gimmicks

Bad: Pretty boring in spots

False Advertising: Blinx himself only has a walk-on role

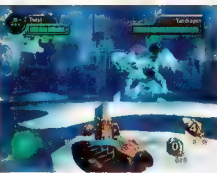
KEVIN: Ever since my torrid love affair with *Whiplash* (PS2/XB) in 2003, I've had a rep around the EGM offices as a sucker for cutesy platformers starring furry animals. Still, *Blinx 2* deserves some truly honest praise. The original was an infamous flop, but the sequel is unexpectedly well crafted, nicely executed, and fun.

Although the idea's the same—time-traveling cats meddle with the fabric of the universe to solve switch-and-lever puzzles—it's much less stressful on your mind. There's no arbitrary time limit, and you're free to mess around with your slow-motion and fast-forward powers virtually uninhibited. The stages themselves are much better designed, and the puzzles, while never tricky (you get tons of hints), are still surprisingly engaging.

Blinx 2 only falters when it wanders away from time control. Half the stages have you playing as the pigs of the evil Tom Tom Gang, whose missions (mostly involving poorly thought-out stealth) aren't nearly as interesting as the cats'. Still, even at its worst, *Blinx 2* is more than playable enough to satisfy the *Halo* squadron's secret fuzzy-wuzzy desires.

JOSH: After creating *Blinx*, it seems the developers decided it would just be better to let someone else design their lead protagonist. You create your own cat (and pig) character and tackle frequently generic challenges; although *Blinx 2* does occasionally have clever puzzles, they're repeated so frequently that you forget why you thought they were cool. The other half of the game has you playing as pigs, with their frustrating stealth missions instead of fun time-control powers. Maybe next time, *Blinx*. And Kevin, your lover reputation endures.

XBN—GREG: *Blinx* the time-sweeping cat narrowly escaped the pound after his first tedious go-round on Xbox. But he returns with some new tricks, and the feline's sophomore effort almost soars. Players unravel a grand plot one chunk at a time, with varied platforming, stealth, combat, and puzzles serving as fine distractions. Yet the game's gimmicks only hold up for so long; after the fifth or so collapsed structure that needs rebuilding by rewinding the clock, it's about time to consider starting a nice stamp collection.



THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	7.5	6.0	6.5
KEVIN	JOSH	GREG	

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Artoon
Players: 1-4
ESRB: Everyone

www.xbox.com

Xbox

DEAD OR ALIVE ULTIMATE

May the breast man Live



Good: Superb environments, online play is fun when it works

Bad: Lag rears its ugly head, where are the new online modes?

Bouncy: Those angular *DOA1* jugs still look as ridiculous as ever

EVAN: While fighting games seem perfect for online competition, they rely so heavily upon millisecond timing that any lag whatsoever can prove disastrous. *DOA* series creator Tomonobu Itagaki is clearly a gambling man, but no amount of audacity can overcome a random hiccup on the Internet just as you begin a combo. It's no deal-breaker, but *DOA* suffers from an intermittent case of the laggies.

Ultimate repackages a graphically enhanced version of *DOA2* with the (untouched) original *DOA*, launching them both onto Xbox Live. The revamped *DOA2* sports even crisper graphics than *DOA3* and a bevy of new stages. These provide what is arguably the most compelling part of the experience, offering up huge arenas and loads of environmental objects to smash your bikini-clad opponents into.

Sadly, combat itself hasn't changed significantly, meaning that *DOA's* gameplay still sits notches below the genre's heavyweights—*Soul Calibur*, *Virtua Fighter*, and *Street Fighter*. Battles lack the finesse of these counterparts, and online play cannot make up for the fact that button-mashing trumps skill more often than it should.

XBN—CHE: In a perfect world, all of our fighting games would feature hot chicks, deep yet accessible gameplay, plenty of unlockable items, and—most important of all—a comprehensive online mode that emulates the abusive ebb and flow of playing in an arcade. Luckily for Xbox owners, *Ultimate* delivers admirably on all of the above, save for one: the depth. The series excels in flashy, brutal melee that's

easy to pull off, but you never get the sense that the roster of characters is very balanced. Which is why, although it's spectacular to look at and fun to play for short bursts of time, I never felt the urge to devote much time to mastering a game that rewards spastic button-mashing. Fun and very polished, but just not hardcore enough (for me).

1UP.COM—DAVE: Developer Team Ninja's built the perfect system for playing fighting games online—a versatile matchmaking interface, great spectator features, a tougher reversal system, and network performance that doesn't get in the way of a competitive match.

As for the fighting games you play with it, though—it's been a long wait for something we first tried five years ago. At full price, this is a good buy for longtime fans who want online competition, but it's not as exciting as an all-new game would be.



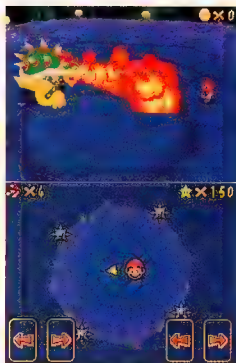
THE VERDICTS OUT OF 10	7.0	7.5	7.5
EVAN	CHE	DAVE	

Publisher: Tecmo
Developer: Team Ninja
Players: 1-2 (2 online)
ESRB: Mature

www.tecmogames.com



■ Yoshi: egg-throwing menace to society.



■ By the time you get to big Bowser here, you'll be used in the awkward controls. But then the game gets tougher, too. So you're still screwed.

Asking to Get Beat Up
You can play with the normal D-pad controls and look like any other gamer in the world. Or you can forgo them and wear the wrist strap that comes with the DS. It has a thumb pad that you fasten to your Fonzie finger for more precise movement on the touch screen. But then you look like a complete f'n knob.



DS

SUPER MARIO 64 DS

It's—a hard to control!

SHOE: While playing *Super Mario 64 DS*, I realized it's still one of the best 3D action/platform games around. It's been so long since I played it on the Nintendo 64, I'd forgotten about its simple design, creative worlds, and amazingly addictive game-play that has you hunting for a seemingly infinite number of stars. All right, so a Nintendo game that's stood the test of time...not a big revelation, I know, but it's still enough to warrant a great review score today, even though *Mario DS* disappoints on so many levels.

First off, why not make this a completely brand-new game? I would've sold Mark's firstborn for that. As *Mario DS* stands, it's 90 percent the same game we played in ancient times, with brief flashes of fresh content, like the occasional new level or the stuff mentioned in the sidebar below. It's hard to complain because we've seen *Super Mario* rereleases with even less added, but still, it's my party and I can complain if I want to. Second, the analog control (with which you have

many degrees of precise control versus the on-off-ness of digital pads) was literally made for this game. The DS doesn't have that stick, so you'll have little Marios, Yoshis, Luigis, and Warios falling off skinny platforms, jumping to their dooms, and missing crucial ledges all the time.

But man, the game underneath the frustrating controls is still so damn good. Respect.

MARK: The old guy's still got it. *Mario 64*'s mix of ingenious puzzles, wildly differing levels, and straight-out platforming action holds up, even if the graphics and nonexistent plot seem dated. Unlike Shoe, I see this glass as half full: The alterations and additions provide the perfect excuse to replay this classic.

However, I must agree that *Mario 64*'s biggest asset has become *Mario DS*' biggest liability: This game has control issues. None of the different control options on the DS come close to providing the effortless precision the analog stick delivers.

Also, outside of the occasionally entertaining *Wario Ware*-style micro minigames, *Mario DS* doesn't make good use of the hardware's unique features (the multiplayer mode is entirely forgettable, though it is cool you need only one cart to play). A must-have for any DS owner, but not the killer app you'd hope for from a *Mario* launch title.

GMR—CHRISTIAN: Over the years, every time I played *Mario 64*, it got better. In 1996 it was good. A year later it was better, and right after *Mario Sunshine* it was the perfect comeback.

But it's starting to show its age: The levels sometimes seem basic, and many tiny flaws remain. Sadly, Shoe and Mark are right about the control, which also hurts this version slightly.

Fortunately, the new characters and areas are very cool, the touch-screen minigames are addictive time killers, and the multiplayer is...bearable. It's also nice and long, making it a must-buy for travelers. Still a classic. 🍄

What's New in Mario's World

FRIENDS: You begin the game as so-cute-you-want-to-squish-him Yoshi, then open up friends Wario, Mario, and Luigi, pictured here. Each has different characteristics that help you get past different obstacles in the stages.

POWERS: The gang gets unique abilities when powered up, too. The same power-up block that lets Yoshi breathe fire will pump and plump up Mario so he floats through the air. This makes revisiting levels much more interesting.

MINIGAMES: You start off with eight simple minigames right off the bat, then find tons more by using the different characters to catch elusive rabbits running around the castle. These won't make you burn your copies of *Mario Party*, but they do show off the DS' touch screen rather well—except for one ridiculous "game" where you pluck petals off a flower in a "loves me/loves me not" fashion.

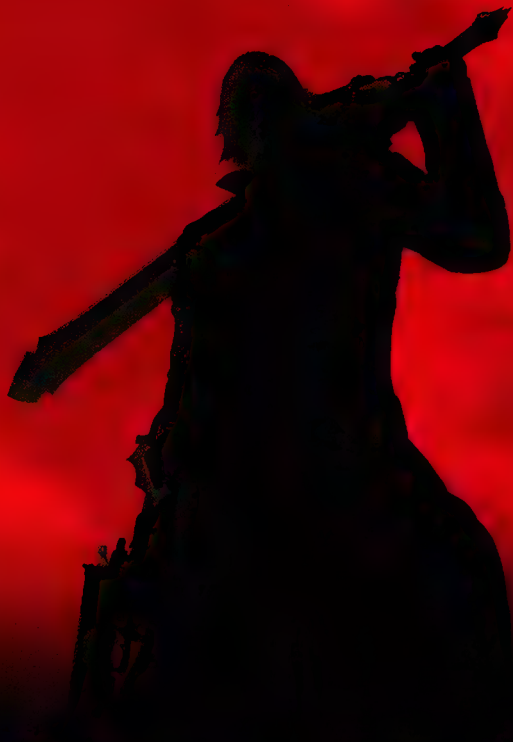
Good: This is still one of the best 3D games, a decade ago.
Bad: Any of your control options
150: New number of stars to find. Good luck!



THE VERDICT (OUT OF 10)
8.0 8.0 9.0
SHOE MARK CHRISTIAN

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo
Players: 1 (2-4 wireless LAN)
ESRB: Everyone

www.nintendo.com



Devil May Cry[®] 3

DANTE'S AWAKENING

March 2005

devilmaycry.com



Visit www.esrb.org
for updated rating
information.



PlayStation 2

CAPCOM[®]



▲ *Ridge Racer* hasn't looked this ugly in years.

DS

RIDGE RACER DS

Keep your finger on the wheel

Good: Six-way wireless multiplayer.

Bad: Blah graphics, typical *Ridge Racer* fantasyland handling. No *Reiko*? *RR*'s signature race babe replaced by random hussy



DEMIAN: *Ridge Racer DS* can do two very special things, one of which is awesome and the other of which isn't. The great bit is the six-player wireless races—only *one person* needs to have a *Ridge Racer* cart for everyone to play! That's so damn cool.

And then the other, not-so-good thing is the (thankfully optional) touch screen steering control, where you use the stylus to rotate your steering wheel. It's a perfectly good idea, but in practice it just doesn't work too well, especially considering the nature of *Ridge Racer*, with its physics- and logic-defying powerslides that demand quick and deft steering input. I'm sure you could get pretty good at it with hours and hours of practice, but the D-pad works just as well. Neither control option can best an analog stick, though, which is sorely missed.

Otherwise, there isn't much to get excited about. *Ridge Racer* doesn't look too hot in the graphics department (*Asphalt Urban GT* is much nicer from what I've seen so far), and its arcadey-but-dated handling only appeals to a certain few. You know who you are.

SHANE: Although soon to be eclipsed by its gorgeous PSP *Ridge Racer* cousin, *RR DS* impresses with plenty of tracks (culled from *Racers* past), unlockable rides, and smooth wireless multiplayer. It's basically the same solid, arcadey drifting and passing you've known for a decade, ported to a handheld with a modicum of finesse. Just don't expect it to make use of the DS' dual screens or

touch panel in any meaningful way—it's tough to drive with the stylus, and when you glance down to see multiplayer standings you'll crash half the time.

TUP.COM—DAVE: Just look at screenshots of *Ridge Racer* for the PSP to get an idea of Namco's priority as far as the next generation of handhelds—it ain't DS.

None of the control schemes here offer the snappy drifting required for a good *RR* game. The D-pad isn't responsive enough, while the touch-screen controls, bereft of tactile feedback, are so slippery that a quick drift frequently turns into a race-killing bootlegger 180. When the reward for mastering a busted control scheme is mainly cars and tracks recycled from *RR04*, it's hardly worth the bother.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	6.5	6.5	6.5
	DEMIAN	SHANE	DAVE

Publisher: Namco
Developer: NST
Players: 1 (2-6 wireless LAN)
ESRB: Everyone

www.namco.com



Stop it! As your friend, I demand you get out there and hook up with as many boys as possible.

▲ Apocalypse In 3, 2, 1....

DS

SPRUNG

Don't get too excited

Good: Smooth animation, some funny dialogue

Bad: Trial-and-error gameplay

Intended Audience: 13-year-old girls



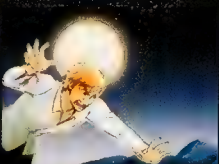
SHANE: Credit must be given to Ubisoft for wading into the untested waters of the "dating game" genre. Japanese players have been chasing potential sweethearts, flirting with waitresses, and wooing their friends' little sisters for years now, so it's high time for Western gamers to tap into the realm of virtual ass-lapping. *Sprung*'s premise is simple: As mild-mannered everyteens Brad or Becky, you spend a week at a ski resort hanging out with friends, hooking up, and causing social drama. Essentially, it's just a game of conversation—you choose from among three snappy retorts, making friends or breaking hearts as you see fit.

Some of the writing's actually quite funny, and scenarios like "Get back at your ex-boyfriend by hooking up with your boss in the hot tub" are certainly saucy, but the execution falls flat. In most levels, there's only one dialogue path that doesn't end in Game Over, so *Sprung* quickly turns into repetitive guesswork. It's an interesting experiment for the *Teen* Pop crowd, but one that begs for improvement.

JENNIFER: About an hour into *Sprung*, I started to get that drowsy feeling, like when you're in a boring lecture and desperately want to nod off for a few secs—not a good sign. The dating-sim-meets-text-adventure concept is fun at first, and the dialogue options are consistently amusing. But gameplay boils down to trial-and-error memorization of one really long dialogue tree. And the things they say! Lusty innuendo, manipulation, lying, cheating, using sex as a weapon...kids,

really, don't try this at home. Interesting effort, but something's missing.

CRISPIN: Let's hope future anthropologists never dig up *Sprung*, lest they deduce that 21st century dating involved put-down contests, rote memorization of conversations, and the exchanging of dead fish and lint brushes. Worse, they'll get the impression that we bought any awful game that launched alongside a new system. Seriously, who is this game made for? The dirty language and innuendo rules out kids. Grown-ups will despise its complete lack of gameplay (at least Japanese dating sims offer minigames). That just leaves inmates. But forcing them to play this crap would be cruel and unusual punishment.



THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	4.0	5.0	1.0
	SHANE	JENNIFER	CRISPIN

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Guillemot
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.ubisoft.com



Take me over to it—the game definitely looks better in motion...

PLAY CLOCK :21

DS

MADDEN NFL 2005

Rumblin', stumblin', and sometimes fumblin'

Good: Using the touch screen to call an audible.

Bad: A.I. likes to call fake punts...a lot.

On Next Season's Wish List: A save-at-any-time feature.



BRYAN: They say there are only two guarantees in life: death and taxes. Well, make that three: a new *Madden* title at the launch of a major game system. But unlike its last couple debuts, this edition of EA's gridiron phenomenon doesn't fully live up to our expectations.

On the field, *Madden* suffers from some uncharacteristic mishaps: A.I.-controlled teams call fake punts and fake field goals way too often, and at the end of the game when ahead, they don't try to run out the clock—that's not very simmy. As for special DS functions, you can pick plays and kick the ball via the touch screen, but unfortunately, the only one that really enhances gameplay is calling an audible with a quick tap on that screen. Oh, and for some strange reason, these features aren't available when you hook up with a buddy for some smooth-running wireless multiplayer.

Despite these flaws, *Madden* is the best handheld football game I've ever played, thanks in part to its 3D visuals. But when you look back at the sport's rocky history on handhelds, that ain't saying much.

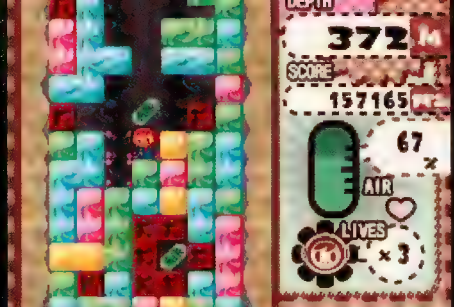
G. FORD: If publisher EA is intent on developing a stranglehold on the portable sports market as well as on consoles, it's got a good start. While a pee-wee-sized version of *Madden* can't hope to compete with its big brothers, I'm amazed at all it does pack in, including solid gameplay, a decent season mode, instant replays, and PS1-level graphics. Plus, picking plays with the stylus is handy. Some fine-tuning is needed for

the spotty A.I., sometimes hard-to-follow ball, iffy player switching, and other random weirdness, but otherwise, this one's ideal for the long trip to training camp.

PATRICK: What a paradox. I'm embracing technology with the brand-new Nintendo handheld, but then embarking on an old-school gaming experience that looks almost exactly like *Madden* on the N64. The game could stand a tad more time in development—I'd like to see player models with a bit more spit and polish, computer-controlled teams that don't try to fake punt half the time, and better ball physics, but to finally play *Madden* on the go rocks in true 3D.



It's a game of Xs and Os: Use the bottom screen to check out the other guy's formation.



DS

MR. DRILLER: DRILL SPIRITS

All the fun of mining without the pesky black lung



Good: Fast, fun, addictive

Bad: Iffy stylus control

Cooliest Character: Hor's dad, aka the dude from *Dig Dug*



CRANE: Namco's cuddly miner makes a comeback in this enjoyable action-puzzler. Once again, your goal lies hundreds of feet beneath the surface, as you frantically dig through candy-colored strata before your air runs out. Like any good puzzler, *Spirits* is simple to pick up, yet difficult to master—questing after air canisters while skirting falling blocks provides a nice rush of risk/reward thrills. Bright, clean visuals, catchy tunes, and tight control (provided you're not fiddling with the crappy stylus mode) make it a launch-lineup winner.

Jackhammering downward can lose its luster after a few hours, so *Spirits* wisely includes some new features to keep it fresh. The traditional one-player game benefits from unlockable characters (with unique abilities) and a shop stocked with helpful power-ups. Even better, the DS-exclusive Pressure Drill mode has you shooting at a giant drill (in the top screen) while burrowing ever deeper on the bottom one. And the multiplayer Drill Race erupts into pure chaos with five players screwing each other over with wacky special attacks...expect the losers to instantly demand rematches.

JENNIFER: Blocks. It's all about the beautiful simplicity of blocks. They were probably among your first toys: now, years later, you're still playing with blocks—and it's as fun and exciting as ever. Though the single player is fairly addictive, multi is where *Driller* really digs in. Wirelessly racing your friends in a drilling frenzy to the center of the earth will have you clutched to your DS long after other toys have gone

State. I'm just bummed that playing alone is so repetitive—too much running out of air or lives and starting over.

ROBERT: There are few things in a game I find more satisfying than making blocks disappear. Then again, I also enjoy alphabetizing (records, books, bathroom solvents). *Mr. Driller* makes you think you can reason your way down its rainbow mine shafts, but time limitations relegate the puzzle work to your intuition. It's more about tuning out than Zanning out. Dual screens don't really do much for the original game, but Pressure mode makes you constantly switch focus between screens, ratcheting up the intensity and confusion.



Pressure Drill mode pits poor Mr. Driller against a deadly (albeit cute) drill monster.

THE VERDICTS (out of 10)

6.5	7.5	7.5
BRYAN	G. FORD	PATRICK

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: Eminent
Players: 1 (2 wireless LAN)
ESRB: Everyone

www.essports.com

THE VERDICTS (out of 10)

7.5	7.5	7.0
SHANE	JENNIFER	ROBERT

Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco
Players: 1 (2-5 wireless LAN)
ESRB: Everyone

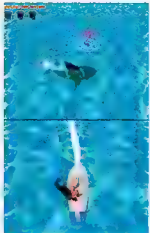
www.namco.com



DS

FEEL THE MAGIC:XY/XX

Rubs us the right way



■ Asthmatics beware: You'll need to do some heavy breathing onto your DS to succeed here.



■ Use the DS' touch screen to swap special powers or solve a handful of minigames (middle).

DS

SPIDER-MAN 2

Not so super



Good: Excellent use of the DS' unique hardware.
Bad: It's all over rather quickly.
Best Minigames: Unbuttoning your lady friend's shirt.



SHANE: What would you do for love? Would you ride a rickety unicycle across a narrow, twisty beam over a pool of bloodthirsty sharks? How about face off against 100 rampaging bulls? Or flick scorpions off your gal pal's back? Sega's obscenely weird *Feel the Magic* charges you with all of these wacky, creative tasks (and 26 more just as bizarre) in order to win the love of a mysterious young girl.

For what's ostensibly a collection of minigames, *Feel the Magic* seems amazingly cohesive. Chalk it up to the nifty, stylized visuals; cute, wordless cinematics that introduce each event; and a unique musical score: These elements elevate a random assortment of time-wasters into a hip, crazy adventure in which you actually want your faceless loser to live happily ever after with his equally faceless paramour.

Each level uses the DS' newfangled hardware options in cool, creative ways. You'll be rubbing feverishly, blowing gently, and screaming bloody murder at your DS in order to pass these tests. Problem is, you'll probably plow through the whole thing in a sitting or two.

JENNIFER: Even though it's "cop a feel" Maniac mode, in which you stroke your girlfriend in...special...places just for kicks, sorta creeped me out, I loved this game. The wide variety of minigames really thives the bizarre potential of the DS' touch screen. Meaning you'll be hot and bothered, literally, in the tragically too-short story mode—what with all the rubbing and huffing and puffing and probing with the stylus.... Add in stylish graphics and a soundtrack that rivals *Katanari Damacy's* smooth tunes, and I'm feelin' it, for real. Sequel, please.

DEMIAN: This is a toughie. On the one hand, *Feel the Magic* has a really distinctive art style and it's the first DS game that puts the touch pad to great and truly innovative use...I never expected I'd be performing virtual CPR by *blowing* on the DS. But on the other hand, too many minigames are based solely around frantic screen rubbing, and before you know it, it's over. GBA's *WarioWare* manages to feel much more varied, even though it uses the suddenly old-as-dirt D-pad and button combo. Definitely worth checking out, but mainly for the novelty.

THE VERDICTS out of 10	8.0 9.0 7.0		
	SHANE	JENNIFER	DEMIAN

Publisher: Sega
 Developer: Sonic Team
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Teen
 www.sega.com

Good: Webbing like an old pro
Bad: Looking for that last hard-to-find baddie
The Virtue: Isn't this guy dead yet?

G. FORD: With each new system comes the inevitable flood of licensed games; the first for the DS is *Spider-Man 2*. And while in many ways it's just another competent beat-em-up that generally follows the movie's story, it does do a couple things well. Most notably, stunning graphics: The side-scrolling gameplay takes place in front of impressive 3D backdrops, and there's even some decent full-motion video crammed in here. Just as important, the game really nails the *Spider-Man* feel. Webbing and walking on walls is a cinch and, in many cases, more fun than most of the generally average "Kill X enemies or save Y hostages" action. But it gets frustrating when you're trying to find the last 30 or so foes to destroy in the huge levels—damn you, tedious backtracking.

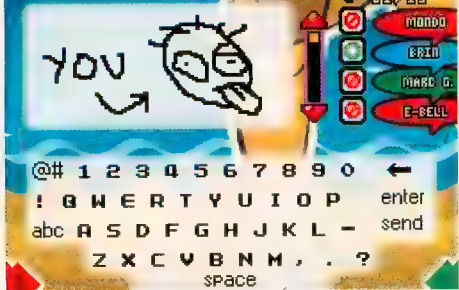
The touch-screen element mostly consists of a few minigames—such as tapping debris Doc Ock throws at you—which provide a nice break from the action but are nothing too revolutionary and certainly not necessary to the game. For a launch title, *Spider-Man 2* is decent, but we expect more from our heroes.

RYAN: I have to agree with my friendly neighborhood reviewer G. Ford—*Spider-Man 2* sure looks pretty and you can swing through the city like a champ, but man, does the action get old quick. After about the third level of beating up 20-plus baddies (and, mind you, struggling to locate these perps), I was more than ready to toss my red and blue leotard in the trash. Hopefully, the next Spidey DS adventure will spice up the gameplay and include more of those entertaining touch-screen minichallenges.

GAR—ANDREW: If there's one good thing that can be said about *Spider-Man* DS, it's that, once again, it's a lot of fun to swing around and stick to walls. If there are bad things to be said, well, there's not enough space on this page. Combat is sloppy, with poor hit detection and enemies that score cheap shots; all of the fun special moves have to be unlocked, which requires meeting unreasonably difficult time and health goals; and most of the levels devolve into tiresome thug/robot hunts. It's like wasting your life, 15 minutes at a time.

THE VERDICTS out of 10	6.0 5.5		
	G. FORD	RYAN	ANDREW

Publisher: Activision
 Developer: Vicarious Visions
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Everyone
 www.activision.com



■ Congrats, *Ping Pals*, you're tied with *Bedrock Bowling* (GBA) as *EGM*'s lowest-scoring game!

DS

PING PALS

How to lose friends and alienate people



Good: Well...the music's perky.
Bad: Extremely limited chat features.
Just Stick With: PictoChat



KEVIN: The DS just launched in November, and yet someone's already produced The Worst DS Game Ever Made. And it's not just a bad game, either—it's a "game" with so little purpose that I can't help but wonder how it managed to reach store shelves.

Basically, *Ping Pals* is a chat program with a cute exterior—you have a virtual avatar, and the money you earn messaging pals can buy you new clothes, background music, and other stuff. There are some throwaway minigames, including timeless classic Guess the Number, and you can upload the game to friends so they can chat without the cartridge. None of the extra content is particularly exciting, however (your character's just a tiny 2D portrait), and so what you essentially have here is a fancy version of PictoChat, the application stored in every DS.

Funny thing is, PictoChat is way, way better than *Ping Pals*—the text window's bigger, the keys are easier to press, and you can tap out messages with the control pad, a feature strangely missing in publisher THQ's game. End result: the most pointless DS title yet...and hopefully ever.

SHANE: What's next on THQ's DS agenda...*Clock*? Seriously, *Ping Pals* attempts to replace Nintendo's own packed-in-for-free PictoChat but fails to offer any incentive for users to choose it over what they already have. In fact, its core chat interface looks positively amateurish and offers fewer options (only one pencil width, no full-screen erase) than the DS's factory-standard setup. *Pals* does contain content beyond just chatting, but customizing the hideous, Bratz-style character avatars feels pointless, and the multiplayer "games" could easily be duplicated by creative PictoChatters. An abysmal failure.

BRYAN: Apparently, the developers never got the memo about PictoChat coming pre-installed on every DS. But even if Nintendo's chat program weren't a freebie, I wouldn't consider picking up a copy of *Ping Pals*. The interface is inferior, the minigames are worthless, and what's the fun in messaging A.I. friends? Do yourself a favor and put your cash toward any other DS game...or send it to the developers so they can get their fax machine fixed.

THE VERDICT'S SOURCE IS

KEVIN	SHANE	BRYAN
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Publisher: THQ
 Developer: WayForward
 Players: 1 (2-8 wireless LAN)
 ESRB: Everyone
www.thq.com



GBA

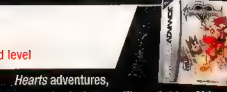
KINGDOM HEARTS: CHAIN OF MEMORIES

Play the right cards



■ Sora versus the tentacle and cleavage monster.

Good: Lightning-fast battle system
Bad: Not enough new worlds to explore
Instantly Forgettable: The 100 Acre Wood level



BRYAN: Who would think it—a Disney-meets-*Final Fantasy* action-RPG being such a global success. But that was the case when Square Enix released *Kingdom Hearts* (PS2) a few years back. And while *Chain of Memories* ain't exactly the follow-up fans have been waiting for (that arrives in '05), it's still worth a playthrough.

The biggest departure from the console original is combat—a card-based system is grafted to button-mashing battles, but surprisingly, the action never hits the brakes. It is very tactical, though, and requires some brainpower to customize decks and learn the most effective card combinations.

Problem is, fans of the first *Hearts* will feel a little *déjà vu*. Yeah, I know the premise is that Sora and friends are trying to regain their memories, but it's a little disappointing that for almost the entire game you're visiting the same Disney-themed worlds and fighting the same bosses as the last game, so there's almost no story development until the very end.

Hearts adventures, *Memories* feels more like a *Golden Girls* clips episode—lots of reminiscing and recapping in lieu of new hijinks. If you've played through the original game, don't expect much in the way of plot here. (In fact, *Hearts* newbies will likely dig it more than the vets.) At least the battle system is interesting, melding action with clever card tactics. At first, it's a bit baffling, but the game slowly eases you in, toughening the combat at a good pace.

GMR—CHRISTIAN: I'm a big fan of a good collectible-card game—did I just admit that out loud?—and there's plenty to like about this one. For once, there's more to the strategy than just using stronger cards. Despite this, fans of the original's endless button-mashing should have no fear: if you aren't an RPGGenius, you won't get bogged down. Grow-up gamers with honed role-playing game skills will absolutely destroy *Memories*, though. One battle after the next can get pretty repetitive—but addictive, too. More cards to collect would have made it killer.

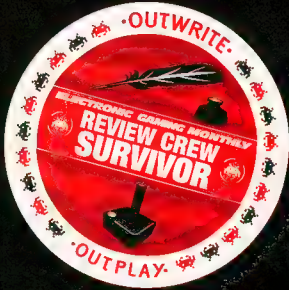
SHANE: Although billed as the bridge between the first and second PS2 *Kingdom*

THE VERDICT'S SOURCE IS

7.0	7.0	7.5
BRYAN	SHANE	CHRISTIAN

Publisher: Square Enix
 Developer: Square Enix/Jupiter
 Players: 1
 ESRB: Everyone
www.kingdomhearts.com

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST



The **Review Crew Survivor** contest is on!

We finally got through every single submission to the **EGM Review Crew Survivor** contest, culling out the lame writing and cheesy videos to bring you these 15 diamonds in the rough. They've made it this far,

but we're still pissed about having to slog through so much crap that we're going to take it out on them. That's why we're going to let them get torn to pieces by the most inhuman animals known to man—our readers. Just go to

egmsurvivor.1UP.com after December 2 and give the boot to whoever you think sucks the hardest. Make sure to keep checking in, because as contestants get eliminated, those who qualify for the next round will be forced to write

even more reviews. Dreams will be crushed and only one person will come away with the grand prize—a guest spot on our legendary Review Crew. After all the work they made us do, they owe us some free labor.

REVIEW CREW SURVIVOR FINALISTS



Aaron Johnson
Capitola, CA
Student



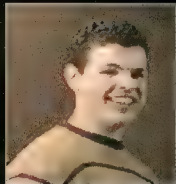
Aaron Koehn
Lincoln, NE
Park Mower



Ali Jamalzadeh
Santa Barbara, CA
Student



Beau Derque
Jefferson City, MO
Wall Ponderer



Benjamin Reeves
Denver, CO
Student/Game Advisor



Brandt R. A. Miles
Newark, OH
Olive Garden Busboy



Bryan Danek
Gillbert, IL
IT Help Desk Manager



Christopher Short
Montreal, CA
Console Operator



Iris A. Cahill
Kaneohe, HI
Artist & Graphic Designer



Jeremy Hawkins
Longmont, CO
Sales Associate at EB Games



Kris Pigna
Coconut Creek, FL
Secretary



Kris Randazzo
Smithville, NJ
Asst. Mgr. at Game Crazy



Matt Tuthill
Riverhead, NY
Caddy, Freelance Reporter



Nicholas Parker
Chapel Hill, NC
Student



William Dorado
Woodside, NY
Mortgage Sales

REVIEWS WRAP-UP

The after-dinner mint of the Reviews section

After last month's barrage of triple-A games, we thought things might slow down for this issue—so we could spend some quality time fragging each other in *Halo 2* and combing the backwoods of San Andreas for yeti spores (see page 105)—but then we got a big ol' pile of Nintendo DS games in to review. Not that we're complaining.

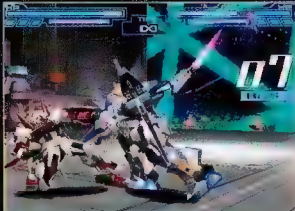
QUICK HITS

EA Sports wouldn't let us get our hands on *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005* (DS) before it's on sale—a bad sign. We also couldn't get *Rayman DS* before we went to print. Beware... *Urban Asphalt GT*—an N-Gage to DS port—showed up too late to make the issue.... The first *Ghost Recon*, *Splinter*

Cell, and *Rainbow Six* 3 have been bundled together in *Tam Clancy's Classic Trilogy* (XB) for \$39.99.... Delay of game: *Conker: Live & Reloaded* (XB) has been pushed to March, while ghostly GameCube shooter *Geist* is now due out in Q2 (or summer, in nonaccountant lingo).



Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 3 • PS2 • Atari • ESRB: T
This most cartoony of *Dragon Ball* fighters sports the series' best selection of trademark pointy-nosed fighters and flashy battle moves. And developing your character with RPG-ish stat tweaking lets you add a welcome twist of fighting flavor to the bratty-looking horde. But it's no *Soul Calibur 2*....



Battle Assault 3 Featuring Gundam Seed • PS2
Bandai • ESRB: T — Psyched about a game featuring giant robots from the popular *Gundam* anime series fighting each other? Don't be. *Gundam* is a shallow and repetitive brawler consisting of an endless stream of 2-on-1 battles. It's occasionally stupid fun, though, so series diehards may want to rent.



Shark Tale • PS2/XB/GC • Activision • ESRB: E
Like an *Incredible Mr. Limpet* for the 21st century, *Shark Tale* has you doing all manner of animated shenanigans underwater that'll make you wish to be a fish. From sleek high-speed swim chases to less-appealing dance numbers, *Shark Tale's* variety means the kids are bound to find something they like.



Grand Theft Auto • GBA • Rockstar • ESRB: M
To its maker's credit, this littlest gangster tries to make good with all the free-form gameplay of its top-down PlayStation 1 godfathers (you even get bonus taxi, ambulance, and vigilante missions). But the tricky controls, lame missions, and cluttered graphics make it the family black sheep.



Metal Slug Advance • GBA • SNK Playmore
ESRB: T — *Metal Slug* is all about gunning and knifing your way through countless enemies, hopping into hopping tanks, and hearing an offscreen voice yell "Heavy machine gun!" This small-caliber *Slug* delivers the rapid-fire arcade action SNK fans will expect, but it won't have much stopping power for normal gamers.



Tron 2.0: Killer App • GBA • Buena Vista • ESRB: E
As the legendary (among nerds, anyway) *Tron* or his nearly identical female counterpart, you'll battle computer programs in an isometric retro-future environment—and play a whole lot of minigames, too. It's not altogether bad, but the real value lies in nostalgic-triggering ports of the old *Tron* arcade games.

HALO 2: A MONTH (AND A BIT MORE) LATER



A few things we want to address now that *Halo 2* is being played by 200 billion people online.... **Log:** Not a problem in general, but lots of people will run into it from time to time, especially in custom games. Try joining a different match. Sometimes the gameplay runs fine but messages (like "You killed EGM Shoe") show up late—don't wait for

them. Just keep on killin'. Also, don't worry about who the party leader is in custom games; *Halo 2* will figure out who has the fastest connection and use that player as the server. **Screen cut-off:** Those of you running the game in progressive-scan mode (480p) may have noticed your view is cut off a bit on the sides—if you're connected to Xbox Live

(use the free two-month trial if you have to), you will get an auto-update that fixes this. **Error:** If you get a map loading error, it's mostly likely a problem with your DVD drive or a dirty/scratched game disc. Bungie is working on a solution where at least you won't have to turn your system off and on again every time this happens. 🍌

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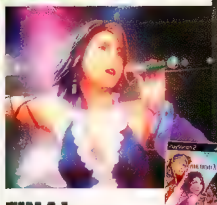
REVIEWS ARCHIVE

Half as long, but twice as powerful

■ This goblin failed to terrify the fellowship of the ring with his copious helmet

GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
Ace Combat 5	PS2	■ Soar in supersonic fighters so real, they could fool Uncle Sam. But why no online?	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Advance Guardian Heroes	GBA	■ Old-school bash-em-up proving from fan-favorite cult developer Treasure	6.0 7.0 7.5	
Alien Hominid	PS2/GC	■ The 2D sidescrolling cartoon action thriller; the cheap one-hit kills...not so much	8.0 8.5 7.0	
Age of Empires: Empires & Primed	PS2	■ This party game is only slightly less fun than hurting faces at friends	5.5 6.5 5.5	
The Bard's Tale	PS2/XB	■ This action-RPG's satirical humor and repetitive gameplay'll make you laugh and cry	6.5 6.0 9.0	
Baten Kaitos	GC	■ An RPG with totally innovative card-based fighting and a totally crazy story	8.0 7.5 6.5	
Blood Will Tell	PS2	■ Handi-capable hero quests for lymph nodes, an esophagus...and justice	8.0 6.5 6.0	
BloodRayne II	PS2/XB	■ Be a busy vampire beating on baddies in this hyperkinetic action game	7.5 7.5 4.0	
Boktai 2: Solar Boy Django	GBA	■ Stock up on SPF 45 before going outside with this solar-sensor equipped action-RPG	8.0 7.0 7.5	
Burnout 3: Takedown	PS2/XB	■ Insurance (and heard) rades skyrocket with each spectacular crash	9.0 9.5 9.0	
Capcom Fighting Evolution	PS2	■ Capcom Fighting Evolution? More like Crap-com Fighting Evolution! Zing!	4.0 5.5 5.0	
Conflict: Vietnam	PS2/XB	■ Conflict: Reviews. Some like this Nam-based squad shooter. Others...don't!	7.5 5.5 4.5	
Def Jam Fight for NY	PS2/XB/GC	■ There's only one rule in this top-studded fight club: Buy it, foo!	8.5 8.5 9.0	Silver
Donkey Konga	GC	■ (Mostly) great songs and a quality bongo controller make for a lively party game	8.0 7.0 7.5	
EyeToy: AntiGrav	PS2	■ Wave your hands like you care in this body-controlled hoverboarding game	8.5 6.0 7.0	
Fable	XB	■ Hack-n-slash action-RPG with Sims-style dollhouse elements	7.5 8.0 9.0	Silver
FIFA Soccer 2005	PS2/XB/GC	■ Controls better than last year's, but FIFA's still a close second behind Winning Eleven	6.5 7.5 9.0	Silver
Fight Club	PS2/XB	■ Browsing the IKEA catalog is more fun than this crappy cash-in fighter	2.5 3.0 2.0	
Final Fantasy I & II: Dawn of Souls	GBA	■ Spectacular remakes of the first two Final Fantasies shoved into one handy cartridge	9.0 8.5 8.0	Silver
Godzilla: Save the Earth	PS2/XB	■ Then save us from having to play another Godzilla brawler	6.0 4.5 5.5	
Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	PS2	■ Three massive cities and hundreds of diversions make this sequel larger than life	1.0 10 10	Platinum
Grognawlers: Generations	PS2	■ Sure, the visuals are cutey, but this RPG will test the hardest of the hardcore	7.0 7.0 8.0	
Gully Gear Isuka	PS2	■ Fighting-game insanity for four players, but it's still old news for PS2 PG players	7.0 7.0 4.0	
Gully Gear III: Reloaded	XB	■ We're not sure how to pronounce it, but this online fighting game rocks	8.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
The Guy Game	PS2/XB	■ The game part sucks, and the raved chicks, well, that's what the internet's for	1.5 1.0 0.0	
Halo 2	XB	■ The second coming of the Xbox's savior lives up to the hype, both online and off	1.0 10 10	Platinum
Jak 3	PS2	■ The 8.0-act-of-trades gameplay keeps this duo among the platforming elite	8.0 8.0 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
Kilzone	PS2	■ A good (if a bit choopy) attempt at a Halo-style shooter for Sony's system	7.5 8.0 7.0	
Kingdom Under Fire: The Crusaders	XB	■ Dynasty Warriors combat meets Full Spectrum Warrior's troop tactics	7.5 8.0 8.0	
Kuon	PS2	■ Two spooky sisters toss fireballs at ghostly ghouls with slightly mediocre results	6.5 4.0 5.5	
Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude	PS2/XB	■ You won't find penis jokes this unfunny outside of Spencer Gifts' naughty aisle	3.5 2.5 1.5	
The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age	PS2/XB/GC	■ High production values don't make this RPG the greatest show on Middle-Earth	7.0 7.0 5.0	
Mario Power Tennis	GC	■ Mario packs so much fan service, you won't want to return this ace of a game	9.0 7.5 8.0	Silver
Men of Valor	XB	■ Decent multiplayer saves the day in this otherwise blah Vietnam-era shooter	6.0 7.5 6.0	
Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater	PS2	■ Venture back to the idealistic '60s for Snake's most ambitious stealth-action epic yet	9.0 9.5 10	Gold
Metrod Prime 2: Echoes	GC	■ Sans Louis smokin' hot even in the dark...world, that is	9.0 9.0 10	Gold
Monster Hunter	PS2	■ The hunt for a <i>Phantasy Star Online</i> -like experience on PS2 is over	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Mortal Kombat: Deception	PS2/XB	■ Deception has online and adventure modes, but kombat's im messy as it is bloody	6.5 5.5 8.0	
Need for Speed Underground II	PS2/XB/GC	■ Brooke Burke as a street-racing' race queen? Eh, the game's good, as always	8.0 9.0 8.0	Silver
Neo Contra	PS2	■ Konami finally has a decent Contra sequel in this short but sweet blast-em-up	8.0 7.0 7.0	
Onigiri 2: Immortal Warriors	XB	■ Everybody was hung to fighting in a beautiful world steeped in Japanese mythology	9.0 8.0 9.0	
OutRun 2	PS2	■ The graphics say 2004, but the arcade handling still says 1986	6.5 6.0 8.0	
Paper Mario: The Thousand-Year Door	GC	■ Nintendo's much-needed GC role-playing game is flat-out fantastic	9.0 9.0 9.0	Gold
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 FireRed/LeafGreen	GBA	■ Catch 'em all again for the first time in this greedily great remake	7.0 8.0 8.0	
Rainbow Six: Black Arrow	XB	■ This squad-based shooter pseudo-sequel is worth it for its extra online features	7.5 8.0 8.0	
Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal	PS2	■ PS2's best mascot-platforming game...with guns. Lots of guns	9.0 9.0 10	Gold
Robotech: Invasion	PS2/XB	■ Boy armor that turns into a motorcycle. Convenient for road trips? Yes. Fun? Kinds	4.0 7.0 6.0	
Second Sight	PS2/XB/GC	■ Earn mind powers that'd make Hreskin jealous, then use 'em to...flip switches	5.5 7.5 6.5	
Shadow Hearts: Covenant	PS2/XB	■ Delightfully weird WWI-era RPG with oddball characters and action-packed battles	7.5 8.5 7.0	
ShellShock: Nam '67	PS2	■ Boom-boom with the ladies after boom-booming the enemy in this gun shooter	7.0 6.0 4.0	
Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne	PS2	■ A dark RPG that's as arcane as it is excellent	8.0 9.0 8.5	Silver
Sly 2: Band of Thieves	PS2	■ Sony's slick, cartoony fox returns for mascot helms with his two partners in crime	9.0 8.5 9.0	Silver
Shinichiro: SMX vs. Capcom	XB	■ SNK and Capcom go at it again, this time with soft-online and midgame gameplay	6.0 6.0 3.0	
Shogun: Legend of the Blood	PS2/XB/GC	■ Not a revolution, but <i>Rory Hawk</i> fans won't mind, and it's newbie friendly, to boot	9.0 9.0 8.5	Silver
Terminator 3: The Redemption	PS2/XB/GC	■ This little multiplayer game gets overdue more substance to stand on its own	5.5 4.0 4.0	
Test Drive: Eve of Destruction	PS2/XB	■ <i>The Sims'</i> suburban theme gets kicked upstairs and outside, but loses something	7.5 5.0 7.0	
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005	PS2/XB/GC	■ More of what you (hopefully) know and (should) love from Joe's first outing	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
Tony Hawk's Underground 2	PS2/XB/GC	■ Slow, floaty, down-home dirt-track racing with a side of grits	7.5 4.5 8.0	
The Urbz: Sims in the City	PS2	■ Par for the course just isn't a good enough for this excellent golf simulator	8.5 8.0 9.5	Silver
Viewtiful Joe 2	PS2/XB/GC	■ Not a revolution, but <i>Rory Hawk</i> fans won't mind, and it's newbie friendly, to boot	9.0 9.0 8.5	Silver
WWE Day of Reckoning	GC	■ This little multiplayer theme gets overdue more substance to stand on its own	5.5 4.0 4.0	
WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw X-Men Legends	PS2	■ More of what you (hopefully) know and (should) love from Joe's first outing	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
X-Men Legends	PS2/XB/GC	■ We reckon wrestling fans should skip that day	5.5 5.0 6.5	
X-Men Legends	PS2	■ SmackDown! goes online and adds voice acting. The rest is basically the same	7.5 8.5 7.0	
X-Men Legends	PS2/XB/GC	■ Four mutants take on a sea of baddies in this xcellent action-RPG	7.5 7.0 8.0	

Greatest hit or miss?



FINAL FANTASY X-2

- PlayStation 2
- Released: November 2003
- Original Scores: 8.5, 9.5, 9.5

The first *Final Fantasy* to continue the previous game's story was a resounding success. Great graphics, garment grids, and girls with guns were the hallmarks of this *Charlie's Angels*-esque take on the world of Spira. Those who missed out on all the girl power should pick it up for \$20.



OK TO PLAY?

CHECK THE RATINGS ON EVERY VIDEO GAME BOX

ON FRONT



ON BACK



ESRB
Entertainment Software
Rating Board
WWW.ESRB.ORG



tricks of the trade

refuse to lose! bust up your opponents in no time flat

trickster

The wait is over. Reviewers everywhere are dipping into their pun dictionaries and surfacing with phrases like "Halo-elujah!" and "Halo to the Chief." We'd never stoop so low. Wait...we would? In that case, "Halo, I love you, let me jump in your game." Thankfully, there's more than simple leaping to attempt as *EGM* top man Shoe reveals in his deluge of beginners' tips to help solve potential online slaughtering embarrassments. Also, we scare upstanding members of the virtual community with our *Need for Speed Underground 2* pimp-my-ride preamble.

—David S. J. Hodgson

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■ Xbox

HALO 2

Everybody's got skills—so why is nerdlinger2546 always kicking your ass in *Halo 2*'s Rumble Pit, even though your aim's as true as his? Any good player will tell you that besides having skillz, you need to know the levels inside and out, too. So we're here to get you up to speed on where to find the power weapons, overshields, and active camo pickups

on each stage on its default settings.

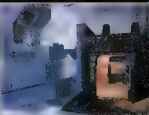
Yeah, we know you can find these things on your own, but trust us—it helps when you can visualize and "landmark" the locations like we're doing here. Use this guide and find these areas on empty maps (via one-player spitscreen), then later, you'll automatically be caught up with the better players and have a leg up on

any newbies.

You'll also want to learn the best places to snipe from. Hint: It's usually not the spot where you find the sniper rifle—that's too obvious. When you can, fly banshees to normally inaccessible areas for perfect sniping positions, like atop the giant "tuning fork" in Ascension. Now go kick that nerd's ass.

LOCKOUT

Energy sword: From the rooftop (with the glass floor), go through the doorway that's across from the gravity lift, then drop through the hole in the floor on your right side. The all-powerful sword is right there. You can reach it from the more-obvious lower walkways, too, but you're more open to attack that way.



Rocket launcher: N/A

Shotgun: Across from the base of the gravity lift is the "green room." Look for the shotgun at the long end. You can jump down a hole from above to get to it more quickly.

Overshield: N/A

Active camo: N/A

IVORY TOWER

Energy sword: Downstairs, below the atrium, under a waterfall.



Rocket launcher: In the large, open atrium area, look for the rocket launcher at the base of the small waterfall. Extra ammo is in that main atrium.

Shotgun: In the atrium, from the rocket launcher/waterfall, walk forward to the middle area, then take the path to the left, then turn left again when you can. You'll see two air lifts that'll boost you to a small platform with the shotgun.

Overshield: Directly across the atrium from the shotgun is a long ramp behind glass walls. Halfway up is the overshield.

Active camo: N/A

MIDSHIP

Energy sword: Look on the floating platform at the top.



Rocket launcher: N/A

Shotgun: On the ground in the very middle of the map, in between the lifts keeping the giant platform afloat.

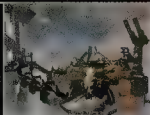
Overshield: N/A

Active camo: N/A

ASCENSION

Energy sword: N/A

Rocket launcher: This one's a bit tricky. From the large open area in the middle of the stage, look at the platform on which the banshee is parked. Head toward it, but then take the down ramp to your left. See the out-of-the-way circular platform down below? Get closer, then jump over the edge to fall on it to score the rocket launcher. Before you take that lift back up, though,



Shotgun: ...turn around and take the teleporter instead. Once you come out, take the up ramp to find a shotgun on the first landing. You can also remember this spot as the down walkway directly across from the banshee parking spot.

Overshield: Right next to the banshee is a down ramp to a long walkway. See that yellow cube? Grab it, quick. You can also jump to this from the main, middle area or enter the walkway from the other end.

Active camo: N/A

HEADLONG

Energy sword: Look for a pile of crates on the top floor of the building with the "evacuation alert" sign. A sword is resting in between a couple of boxes at the top of the stairs.



Rocket launcher: One rocket launcher (we call 'em "RL") is on the upper, outside walkway of building 27. The other is under the overpass near the oceanfront.

Shotgun: The building that houses the teleport pad and turrets holds two shotguns. One's near the downstairs turret, between the steps. The other is inside, on the main ramp.

Overshield: See that ringed statue pictured here? It's next to the beach. Look below it on the slide away from the water, and you'll see an overshield.

Active camo: Upstairs, in a plain, open-air hallway connecting the building with the pink entry lights and the "turret and teleport pad building" lies the invisibility power-up. You can also remember it by looking at the dangling teeter-totter beam hanging in the middle of the level outside. One end of that beam points to building 27, the other points to the invisibility hallway (you can jump to this hallway from the outside, too).

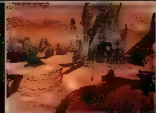
**TRICKS OF THE TRADE
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIMA GAMES**

Those wishing to pimp their virtual rides need travel no further than their local gaming emporium, where Prima's official *Need for Speed Underground 2* strategy guide is ready to offer upgrades, tweaking, and city maps aplenty.



BURIAL MOUNDS

Energy sword: There are two elongated caves on this rocky map. Look for the one that's right next to what looks like the leftover remains of a dead robotic whale's rib cage. The energy sword is inside that cave.



Rocket launcher: This RL is in plain sight. It's on an outdoor stone bridge in between the warthog jeep and the two purple mini-nuclear-reactor-looking things.

Shotgun: Between those purple mini-nuclear-reactor-looking things is a shotgun.

Overshield: N/A

Active camo: N/A

COLOSSUS

Energy sword: N/A

Rocket launcher: N/A

Shotgun: Run into the giant gravity lift in the same direction as the



conveyor belt leading straight into it. Keep pushing forward so the lift boosts you all the way up to the back wall and a platform with four grenades. Drop to the level right below that platform to find a shotgun leaning against the wall. There's another one outside the lower "red room" and another outside the lower "blue room" near the large-window end of the building (opposite the lift).

Overshield: On the very bottom level, below the giant window, between the conveyor belts.

Active camo: N/A

ZANZIBAR

Energy sword: Look at the giant wheel and look for the platform with the yellow warning stripes. Find your way up there and



look for the black, shimmering lever on the walkway in front of you. Blow it up, and it'll drop a path to the wheel's hub. Wait for the notch to come around then drop in. You can reach this from the rocket launcher walkway, too—with no need to blow up the lever.

Rocket launcher: On the high, center walkway between the wheel's hub and the fortress' top level.

Shotgun: One's on the upper story wall between the beach and the wheel, under a double archway (on the right side, if you're facing the wheel). The other is between the pillars right outside the fortress.

Overshield: N/A

Active camo: Run upstairs to the second floor of the building on the right side of the middle of the map (when looking from the beach to the fortress).

BEAVER CREEK

Energy sword: N/A

Rocket launcher:

Same place it was in the last game: on top of the rocky arch in the middle of the stage.



Shotgun: Go to the end of the creek that's splitting the level in half (the end without the overshield), walk into the tiny alcove, and you'll find a shotgun hidden in the shallow water.

Overshield: The overshield is in the alcove at the other end of the creek.

Active camo: N/A

COAGULATION

Energy sword: N/A

Rocket launcher: In a

dry creek bed right in the middle of the map, between the two bases and the two teleport exit points, is the rocket launcher. You can find extra rocket ammo in a group of rocks farther down that creek bed, toward the cave.

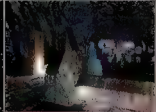


Shotgun: Right outside each of the bases is a group of three large rocks. They house a shotgun (as well as sniper rifle ammo).

Overshield/Active camo: These two appear randomly at two different spots. The first is inside the cave near the red base's teleport exit point. The other is across the map in the rocky area, near the blue base's teleport exit point.

WATERWORKS

Energy sword: The large water-pumping (or is it processing?) structure in the middle of the map has an energy sword



downstairs. Just go straight out to this building from either base, take the low bridge in the middle, then climb up the ladder in the hallway. If you're already inside the structure, just take the ramps all the way down to the basement.

Rocket launcher: The easiest way to get to either of the two rocket launchers is to teleport out of a base (the pad is at the very top, where the banshee is parked), then head in the direction away from the base you just came from. You'll see a RL a few feet away from you.

Shotgun: Look for a group of stalagmites in between each base and the center structure (before you get to the aforementioned low bridge) to find a shotgun in the middle.

Overshield: N/A

Active camo: N/A

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PS2/XB/GC

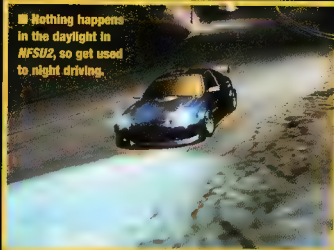
NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2

Special Events

Throughout your career, you get regular messages from Rachel indicating the opportunity for you to compete in a special event, usually for the cover of a magazine. These special events are indicated on your world map by a yellow star.

You may just have to show up, or you may have to race to a new location under a time limit. If you know the city well, there's more than enough time to get to the final destination. The following sidebar outlines how many wins you need to trigger these events.

Nothing happens in the daylight in NFSU2, so get used to night driving.



Magazine Covers

Stage	Wins Completed	Magazine Cover Awarded
Stage 2	4 wins	Turbo
Stage 2	8 wins	Sports Compact Car
Stage 3	2 wins	Street Car Magazine
Stage 3	6 wins	Car Audio and Electronics
Stage 3	11 wins	GTI Magazine
Stage 3	18 wins	Hot 4's
Stage 4	3 wins	Elaborare
Stage 4	7 wins	Maxi Tuning
Stage 4	11 wins	Spoiler
Stage 4	16 wins	AutoMaxx Magazine
Stage 4	20 wins	Stuff Magazine
Stage 4	27 wins	Chrome und Flamen
Stage 5	4 wins	Import Tuner
Stage 5	9 wins	Street Car Magazine
Stage 5	16 wins	GTI Magazine
Stage 5	20 wins	Auto Motor
Stage 5	25 wins	Swiss Tuner Magazine
Stage 5	28 wins	Super Street
Stage 5	32 wins	Power Magazine
Stage 5	34 wins	Street Tuner

NOTE

As you progress through career mode and start tricking out your car, you get a star for every milestone you reach. For each star, you unlock a DVD cover, that's why it is important to upgrade your car early and often. Each star is awarded for every 10,000 points up to a total of 10 stars and 10 covers.



Wrong way.
Go back.

TIP

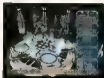
If you are around town doing a special event race in explore mode and you run out of nitrous, you can quickly stop at a shop for free refreshment. When you come back out after a few seconds (time doesn't pass in a shop), your nitrous will be completely full.

TOP 5 TRICKS

PS2/XB/GC

X-Men Legends Xtreme Costumes

At the Main menu, press Up, Up, Right, Left, Down, Down. During gameplay, make it to an Xtraction point and go into team selection, where you will see the option for Skins.



PS2

OutRun 2 Classic OutRun

Get back in the driver's seat of Sega's arcade classic and enjoy the drive back to 1986. Enter "NINETEEN86" in the Password menu and you'll be driving the classic in no time.



PS2/XB

Star Wars Battlefront Unlock All Planets

To enter this code for PS2, choose the historical campaign. Then, at the Planet Selection screen, enter Square, Circle, Square, Circle. For Xbox, choose the historical campaign mode and select either the Clone Wars or Galactic Civil War era, then enter X, Y, X, Y.



PS2/XB

ShellShock: Nam '67 Infinite Ammo

At the Title screen, press R2, R1, Triangle, L2, L1, Up, R2, R1, Triangle, L2, L1, Up on PS2 or Black, R, Y, White, L, Up, Black, R, Y, White, L, Up on Xbox.



PS2/XB/GC

Def Jam Fight For NY 100 Reward Points

Go to the Cheats menu and enter "GETSTUFF" as the password.



Wins in NFSU2 are likely the only way you'll ever get on a magazine cover.



VS.



■ Fiat is so in these days.

■ GC
**Paper Mario:
The Thousand-
Year Door**

(M) **Must Be On**
P135-V8PR-QJRJ8
Q30X-C1DQ-RG4R0

Mario: Max/Inf. Health
6C7F-80AG-7PJK6
WF7Z-ZCC1-AXV7R
YUDW-C183-SPC7R
H3U3-GEJV-RYEFF
4C55-64R9-WF6F8
CA3T-WZDN-HMMKQ

Goombella:
Max/Infinite Health
3Q8W-MB06-QAB57
N0XT-3P1P-69NJD
XNGG-62MP-7Q4AB
751H-FHZN-3UKGJ

**Hold L + A
for Superjump**
TM66-A87A-ZYZ4
1FXE-CN6D-SZ087
EZAR-0D1K-C0RC4

Quick Level Up
3DVU-JX70-RYEG7
RQRQ-ACHM-60593
2R7Q-RP8W-BGBN1

Infinite Star Pieces
9VC0-J1PU-J0TJ1
1KV5-KKTW-MZE9R

Infinite Shine Sprites
FKYX-071D-H6R3H
RZ93-MQDX-1EDM2

**Max/Infinite
Flower Points**
H540-TEZF-ND8Y4
1MM4-ASDH-UPY0C
R9FJ-Z7AD-U1KCM
HDCX-QV8Q-ZVC34
UN29-KP2G-63NBG

**Max/Infinite
Badge Points**
0N8D-2TT4-4JAF1
H47P-WPMU-YX468

Have All Badges
ZU0H-FB5E-5DVHE
V4JC-UB0K-ZKQW9
U4MJ-85B2-DPFGT

■ PS2
**Leisure Suit
Larry: Magna
Cum Laude**

(M) **Must Be On**
6D22-W32R-V6TRX
HGTC-GC65-Z63CD

Max Cash
5PH8-QA7H-WHMVA
5835-T1EA-4ER0N

Max Secret Tokens
VXGJ-K6K0-6W4VU
50T1-KG50-AYNKF

Always Confident
NV9Z-ZDR8-QBE7M
N019-CN2M-PUV9H

Bonus Option Codes
J37M-CJ8P-HWA8P

■ PS2
Katamar Damacy

(M) **Must Be On**
MEZF-MMV4-E07WY
7A2G-NYV8-A67VR

Massive Collection (A)
TH6U-P022-NCMHC
KH7J-Q0QK-P1BET
W6BA-PH28-SHMVQ

Massive Collection (B)
7Y8Q-71X4-DAUG6
UG24-Q96J-Z85U8
0X5C-BM31-9ADF1

**Infinite Run
(Midcombo)**
262B963A 0CA5A765



■ GameShark makes you nara of the world.

■ PS2
**Armored Core:
Nexus (Evolution)**

(M) **Must Be On**
983F6743 78A7CC54

Infinite AP
2833BAB1 0CA55DFE

Infinite Energy Gauge
28338AE6 0CA590D83

Infinite Inside Ammo
1833FEF9 0CA52D0E

Infinite L Arm Ammo
183B63A1 0CA5208E

Infinite Credits
28520E7C 846AC23E

■ PS2
BloodRayne 2

(M) **Must Be On**
985E06DE 78226954

Infinite Health
283DA86D D671040C

Unlock All Extras
284F4AD0 948C883E

■ PS2
**Tony Hawk's
Underground 2**

(M) **Must Be On**
980AA9F7 7838BE55
28160665 A148B26C
2836CBDE 7842696F

Infinite Special
28300868 F715C665
283008D6 84F17A3A
2830891E F715A56
283008D4 84F17A7C

**Infinite Run
(Midcombo)**
262B963A 0CA5A765

Infinite Time
DBAE72E8 0CA5B1D5
283185AF 0CA57A65
DBAE72E8 0CA59AD5
283185AF 0CA414F8
Press SELECT+L1 to
Stop, SELECT+R1 to
Restart

Have All Level Gaps
2816ED40 6F157A4F
2816EDD8 F8AA7AF1
2816EDED 6D1B7AAE
283719E9 A1426965

Exclusive
■ PS2
**Midway Arcade
Treasures 2**

Narc Codes:
(M) **Must Be On**
94911DA8 1F6619D6

Narc Codes:
Infinite Health
14503568 3C70470E

Narc Codes:
Infinite Lives
14D0356A 3470478E

Narc Codes:
Infinite Bullets
14403568 3C70470E

Narc Codes:
Infinite Rockets
14403568 3C70470E

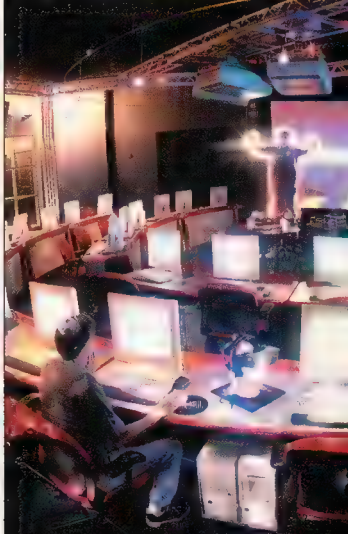
Narc Codes:
Max Drugs
14403568 3C70471E

Narc Codes:
Max Money
14403568 3C70471E

Narc Codes:
Max Busts
14403568 3C70473E

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SEANBABY'S REST OF THE CRAP



The crap that might have been

EGM en Español, our Spanish-language version, recently flew me down to Mexico City for EGS, the Mexican equivalent of our annual Electronics Entertainment Expo. Their staff told me that my writing style, which I'd like to think is a totally awesome mix of Jean Claude Van Damme from *Bloodsport* and Jean Claude Van Damme from *Timecop*, is a pain in the ass to translate. The basic message gets across since bad gaieties are universal, and no amount of culture gap is going to get two people to feel differently about a *That's So Raven* game.

Unfortunately, my Spanish teacher lied to me with that B she gave me, and I found that the end

of my discussions with the Mexican fans was invariably, "That chattering you're doing is Spanish, right?" I might as well have taken awkward pantomiming as my language requirement in school. Also, I apologize to all the Mexican EGM readers whose autograph says "Para Pignblip—Seanbaby." That's because I honestly couldn't even understand what you were saying when you were spelling your name. Anyway, to celebrate our countries' new videogame brotherhood, I'm looking at crappy games with a happy twist this month—they were never actually released.

—Seanbaby



■ You picked the wrong chemist to sh5N with, Seagal!

Steven Seagal Is the Final Option Super NES • TekMagik • 1994

Steven Seagal is the greatest martial artist in the history of anything. He stars in movies based on the toughest possible combos of words like *Half Past Dead*, *Hard to Kill*, *Point Blank Chainsaw Crush*, and *All the Way Crazy You're Dead*. He runs like a girl covered in insects, and he still has running scenes in every movie, because if you say something about it, he can kill you over the phone by looking at you. He just released an album in France called *Songs From the Crystal Caves*. It's about all the people he's killed in crystal caves, which is like a million. My favorite track is "I just tore your lips off; listen to your own screams! (Sha-Na-Na)." Man, I don't even care that this game is bad because it's so awesome. The lab technician enemies are very busy and don't even put down their clipboards—they just jab Steven Seagal with their free hand, then die, because digitized Steven Seagal has both hands free. And his block has such karate power that it detonates every head in the room, or at least I assume it would have in the final version when they made it more like Steven Seagal's real-life blocking.

Post Mortem: *Final Option* was moved to Nintendo 64 and PS1 and renamed *Deadly Honor*, which was set to receive a nomination for the Sweet-Ass Name Award by the Action Name Academy before it was finally cancelled due to Steven Seagal killing everyone.

■ With all the evil in the world, it seems strange this didn't make it to store shelves.



California Raisins: The Grape Escape NES • Capcom • 1990

This game, despite never being released, was *Game Players'* game of the month, and *Game Players' Encyclopedia of Nintendo Games* put together a six-page strategy guide for it. This may lead you to believe it's some lost Capcom classic, and if so, I hope you're having a nice time prancing through that meadow of blind optimism. I went in knowing full well that it was based on an ad campaign of singing dried fruit, and I was still surprised at its blatant disregard for my entertainment.

To *Game Players'* credit, maybe the only other game invented that month was *Standing in Front of Steven Seagal's Karate With a Light Bulb in Your Mouth*. Don't get the wrong, raisins are fine. They're nature's candy, and I like the idea of singing snacks. But it's NES; you can make games about star monsters, or...or, check this out: ninjas that are like half-motorcycle! Maybe they realized this at the last minute. Or maybe they simply forgot about it because they were so excited about their Sega Master System title, *Calgon Take Me Away: Tahitian Orchard Body Wash for \$4.99 The Game*.

The Plot: You're sent by three raisin judges in powder wigs to rescue your fellow raisins and their sheet music from evil record producers. Sorry, I know passing that on to you is like throwing up directly into your brain, but the burden of that knowledge was not something I could bear alone.



Thrill Kill PS • EA/Virgin Interactive • 1998

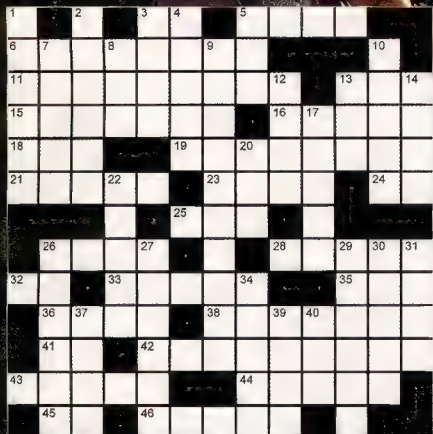
Thrill Kill was a fighting game built on the overarching concept of a man carrying 20 gallons of blood in a garbage bag getting hit by a train. The art direction was a combination of a 12-year-old metalhead's Trapper Keeper doodles and a crime scene, and when EA got the rights to *Kill*, it pulled the plug. Eventually, *Kill* was toned down to a level just below Senseless Murder, and its engine was used for *Wo-Tang: Shaolin Style*. So yes, the game went from exploiting consumer demand for spurting wounds to exploiting our love of nonkarate celebrities doing karate.

That's the kind of thinking you can't teach in schools. Well, you could, but you'd have to take a kid out of regular classes and force him into classes where clowns laugh as bunnies are made into juice. And that's a tough permission slip to get parents to sign.

Traffic Safety Rating: B- Whenever there's an accident on the highway, rubbernecking causes massive traffic jams. *Thrill Kill*, however, could change all that. You see, by attaching a screenshot to your steering wheel, you can speed by any accident. Because if you ever get the urge to see a mangled orgy of horror, you can keep your eyes forward and just take a quick glance down at *Thrill Kill's* stilled midget jamming a two-by-four through a monkey. America's highways thank you, *Thrill Kill!* 🍌

LEGENDS OF THE FALL

(Solution on page 157)



ACROSS

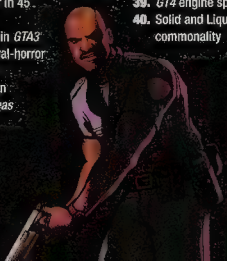
1. *Balazs* developer
3. *Street Fighter* Charlie's Japanese alias
6. *Need for Speed* bling'ing SUV
11. *MGS3*'s evil crybaby
13. Act like Mario in *Yoshi's Island*
2. *DOWN* wears one
16. *Double Dragon* brute
18. *GT4* Mitsubishi pocket rocket
19. Like Solid Snake and *Halo*'s Marines
21. *Metrod Prime 2* developer
23. Hwoarang's *Tekken* mentor
24. *Little Nicky* (GBC) real-life actor's initials
25. *Mario 2* earthshaker
26. San Andreas air pollution
28. *Ninja Turtles*' evil brain
32. A Namco katamari's girth divided by its height
33. Currency, to Jacques Blanc of *Onimusha 3?*
35. *Legends of Wrestling*'s Albano
36. *SlugFest* slugger
38. Early GBA shooter
41. *NEC*'s 16-bit, for short
42. Raiden's state, near the end of *MGS2*
43. *Jill*'s headgear, in 45

ACROSS

44. Like the Dodo in *GTAs?*
45. Seminal survival-horror title, for short
46. San Andreas, in *GTAs*: San Andreas

DOWN

1. *Metrod Prime 2* planet
2. AKA Shalashaska in *MGS*
3. Story line
4. Customers in *GTA* taxi missions
5. *Geo* or *Super Magnetic*
7. *Burnout 3* signature takedown Tunnel of
8. Like *Shrek*'s Donkey
9. Sonic's nemesis
10. 11 ACROSS in *MGS3*, for one
12. GBA boxer Hixton
13. Frenzied Rockstar brawler, for short
14. Snake's *MGS3* assassination objective
17. Like Mitch in *GTA*: *Vice City*
20. Most things in *GTA* are against it
22. *Spider-Man* hangs out?
24. *Clair*, to Chris Redfield
27. Badass *Phantasy Star Online* spell
28. *Halo 2* enemies
30. *Silent Hill 2* puzzle pullable
31. Tools of the trade for Solid Snake and Master Chief
34. Sneaked, as in *Splitter Cell?*
37. *Tekken 3* boss
38. *GT4* engine speed
40. Solid and Liquid Snake commonality



AMENDED

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FINAL WORD

Let's hear it for petty bickering



■ *Alien Hominid* offers 2D cartoon action that's fast, furious, and sure to be ignored this holiday season.

You'd never guess from his cheery in-magazine persona that *EGM* Reviews Editor Demian Linn is actually a rather quiet, unassuming guy behind the office. Managing Editor Jennifer Tsao, on the other hand, is just generally bossy and impatient—in the office and in the magazine. Sounds like the perfect matchup for this month's edition of Final Word...

Forget about the *Halos*, the *Grand Theft Autos*, the *Metroid Primes*...what are the top-notch games that don't have the hype but shouldn't be overlooked?

Demian: *Ace Combat 5* is a good one, and *Mario Power Tennis* probably won't get the recognition it deserves. But I have to say all the game companies putting out solid-to-excellent but low-profile games right now: Are you high on crack cocaine? Push your good stuff until early next year or spring! If you can't compete against *Halo 2*, *GTA*, etc., don't!

Jennifer: How weird is it that a high-profile, *EGM*-gold-medal-winnin' game like

Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal is the season's biggest underdog? Everyone loves it, but nobody's playing it—there just aren't enough hours in the day. And since that's so true (who are we kidding?), I'll recommend *Alien Hominid* and *Karaoke Revolution Vol. 3*—at least you can play those in quick, easy sittings between turf wars in *San Andreas*.

Demian: See, *Alien Hominid*, that's exactly what I'm talking about. It came out a week after *Halo 2*, and the day after *Metroid Prime 2* and *Half-Life 2* (PC). Smart move, smartly.

"Hey, game companies—if you can't compete against *Halo* or *GTA*, don't."

Jennifer: Hear that LucasArts? As in, what the heck are you thinking, moving up the *Knights of the Old Republic* sequel? I'm begging you—delay, for the love of Yoda!

You're dead broke, and all your crap was stolen. Santa can only bring you one console and one game. What's on your wish list?

Jennifer: Did we already establish that we can't pick *San Andreas*? That'd be my pick for sure, for its incredible variety and depth. Whoever thought you'd be playing RHYTHM-ACTION minigames in a *GTA* game? I love it.

Demian: New question: What if all my crap was stolen and I was on a desert island? I'd have to go with a Dreamcast and *Seaman*. Nothing like being psychoanalyzed by a talking man/fish hybrid to accelerate the going-insane process. Or *BMX XXX*, purely for the stripper quotient.

Jennifer: Does the desert island happen to be littered with dead batteries, pop tops, and rotting fruit? 'Cause then I definitely want a GameCube and *Pikmin 2*. My life just isn't complete without micro-management of minions—and these little guys recycle!

What reviews from the other guy/gal do you disagree with?

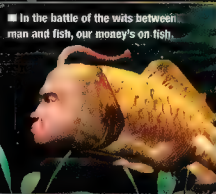
Demian: *Firefighter F.D. 18*, which I loved all over (6.0 out of 10) and Jen hate hate hated (4.0). It had evil, firefighter-fighting robots that were impervious to water—what more do you want from the firefighting genre? Also, I think Jen way overrated *Wallace & Gromit in Project Zoo* (4.5), though I haven't played it. Nor have I seen the box.

Jennifer: Hey, *Project Zoo* had mine carts, lava caves, and jungle jumping puzzles—most of which were at least partially functional. There's three points, easily, right there. Add a pernicious penguin villain and it should all start to make sense.

I don't even want to go there with *Firefighter*, but, naturally, I will anyway. The firestorms that held a grudge—literally? Your character'd say stuff like, "This fire...it spells so...angry!" I mean, come on, how could you love it, Demian? How?

Demian: Well, I loved it in the "technically above average" sense, not the "outta my way, I want to play this game right now!" sense. Plus, that fire totally was angry.

■ We're not sure whether Wallace here helped his game's score or hurt it.



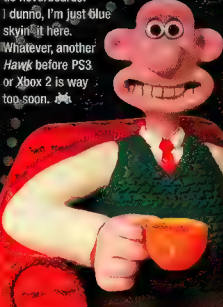
■ In the battle of the wits between man and fish, our money's on fish.

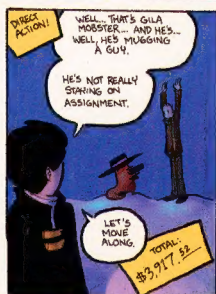
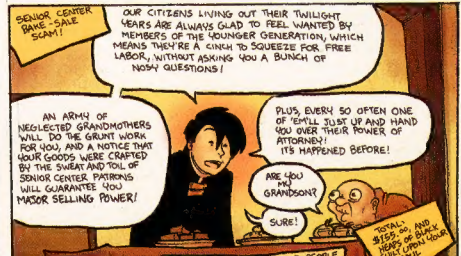
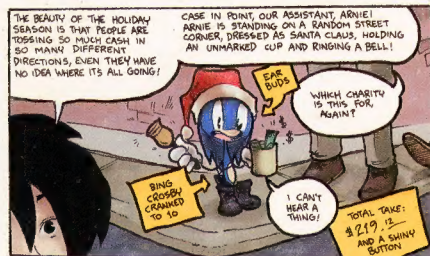
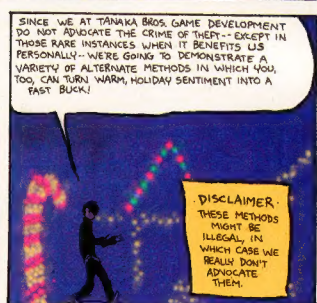
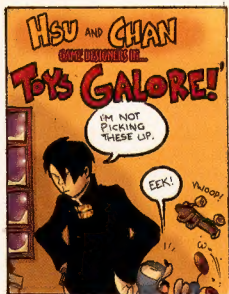
You're both *Tony Hawk* players. Are you sick of the series yet?

Jennifer: In a word, yes. That doesn't mean it's not still solid as a game, but the extreme sports chick that *Tony Hawk* pioneered is tired. Give me the same gameplay dressed up as *Tony Hawk in the Hood* or *Vice Skater*—with a new aesthetic look and soundtrack, I'll be glad to keep playing.

Demian: Kind of. I still love playing horse and trick-attack games with friends, but it's time for another radical change. Jen's *Grand Theft Auto*-fication of *Hawk* could work, but hold the thugs, eh? Or maybe it's time for *Tony Hawk 2075*, with futuristic hoverboards.

I dunno, I'm just blue skyin' it here. Whatever, another *Hawk* before PS3 or Xbox 2 is way too soon. ☹





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