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THE NEXT-GENERATION  
CONSOLE WAR  
**PS3** vs. **Xbox 360** vs.  
**Nintendo Revolution**

THE FULL REPORT, INSIDE

August 2005 Issue 104

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08 >

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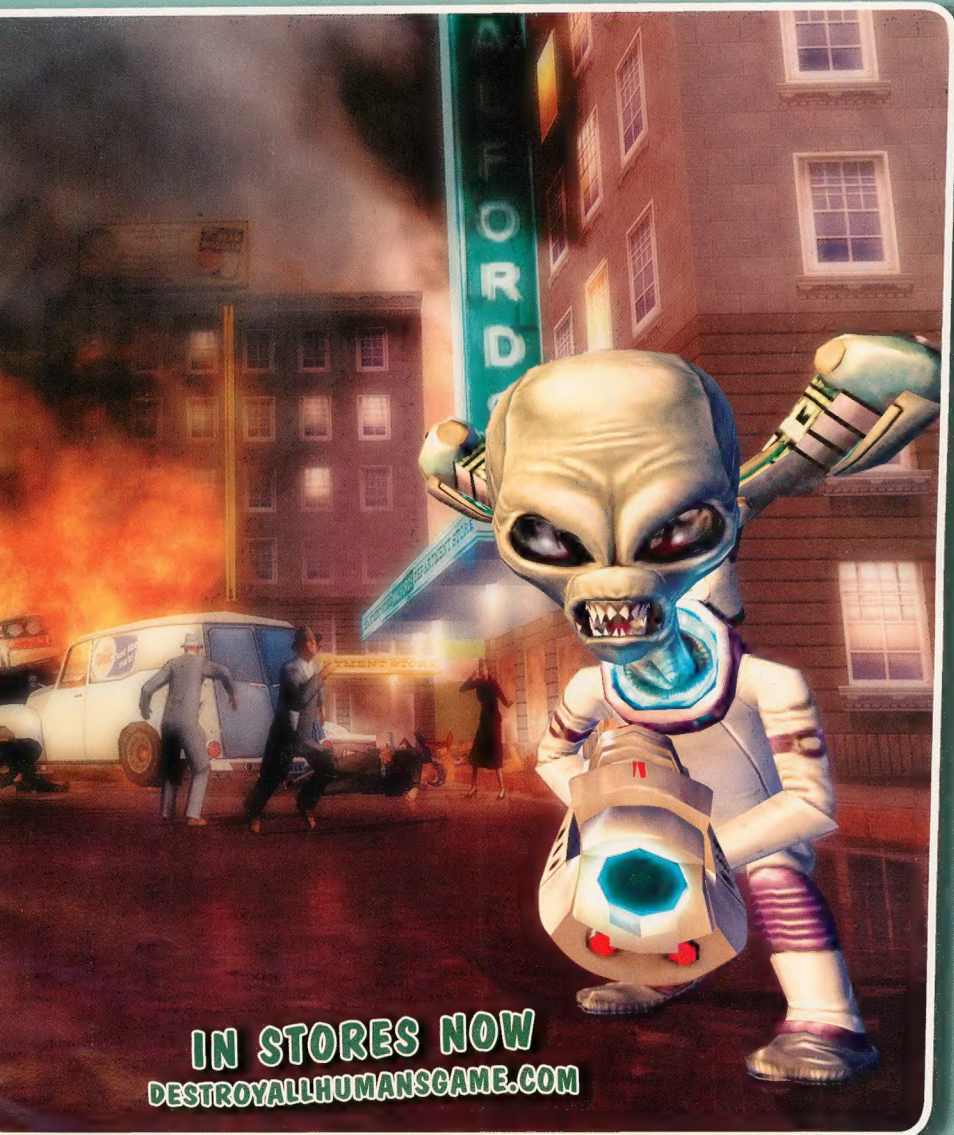


PlayStation 2



Language  
Sexual Themes  
Violence

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PlayStation.2



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# COVER STORY: CONSOLE WARS

The father of the PlayStation consoles, Ken Kutaragi, called the Xbox 360 an "Xbox 1.5." Bill Gates said *Halo 3* would be waiting for Sony when it releases the PS3. Mom, dad, stop fighting! We separate the two big consoles—and the too quiet Nintendo Revolution—then take a look for ourselves.

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## EDITORIAL



Don't tell me that graphics don't matter—cause they do. No way games like *Doom 3* (XB) and *Resident Evil 4* (GC) would've garnered that much

praise if the visuals weren't so lifelike. Yeah, I know that gameplay is ultimately more important, but the average videogame has less of a hill to climb to impress you and me if we're not laughing at how it looks like it just came out of one's anus.

That's why the Xbox 360 is having such a tough time winning over critics right now. Very few of its games are making that wow-at-first-sight impression so far, and when you're considering a next-generation system, the first thing everyone wants is better graphics. Can you imagine where the PlayStation 2 would be today if it only offered marginally better graphics than the PS1? Not way ahead of the Xbox and GameCube in overall sales, that's for sure. Yes, we know that Xbox 360 games still have months of development left—months that developers will use to make sure we don't use that anus reference in our future reviews. But boy, those programmers better keep their smoke breaks to a minimum if people are to see stuff that'll amaze them enough to spend money on a new system.

In this issue, you'll also see how the PS3 and Nintendo's Revolution are coming along. It's too early to say, however, how their games are faring in the looks department. The PS3's that Hollywood looker with lots of makeup and plastic surgery covering up the real deal (Sony has shown only short, controlled demos that may or may not be representative of real PS3 games), and the Revolution stood us up (Nintendo hasn't shown jack on it). One thing's for sure, though—we're as excited as you are to see all that's new come alive. We'll be on top of everything next gen in every issue of *EGM* (next month will see the return of the Next-Gen Console Report as a regular section), so stay tuned.

—Editor-in-Chief, Dan "Shoe" Hsu

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PlayStation 2



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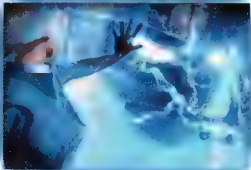
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# Letters

ranting, raving, and a chublet in costume



look at Xbox 360 when both Microsoft and Sony showed their next-gen hardware at this May's Electronic Entertainment Expo. Another alarm went off when I read your *Forza Motorsport* review. Is it mere coincidence that you guys not only shut Sony's new system out of your mag, but also started your "Game of the Month" review by saying it's "better than *Gran Turismo 4*"? How deep into Big Green's pockets are you?

—Nathan B

**Tinfoil hat man, meet alarmist in sandwich board...**

### Curly

I was going to attack you for your blatant bias against Xbox 360, what with your false gossip (see Pastor Mills) about its lack of hard drive and backward

compatibility, about developers leaving it for PS3's greener pastures, and about PS3 being three times more powerful. I was about to bring up PS3's bogus teaser trailers, too. But after

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### Mother knows best

OK, so I realize that I'm a little late in responding to the video game violence issue (Head to Head, EGM #192), but I have to wait until my man is completely done with the magazine before I'm even allowed to be in the same room with it (he says I "bend up the pages"). Anyhow, I have to weigh in, as this is something I frequently discuss with the momkickers who game (see the discussion archives at [gamingmommies.club.TUP.com](http://gamingmommies.club.TUP.com)). The way I see it, serious games is another easy way out of actual parenting. For example, while playing *Halo 2* online one night, I had a mother hop on her son's mic, and scream at me for cursing. Mind you, this was 8:00 a.m. on a weekday—*but the break is bad, woman, God forbid parents actually pay attention to their families long enough to screen what they watch and play*.

—Rachel Hacker

Congrats, Rachel Hacker. As our Letter of the Month author (and model parent), you've scored an Xbox Live-enabled game from EGM's swap sack.



### Pimp my apartment

I'm a college student home for the summer. Here's the problem: My bedroom is bare! I was wondering if you people have any posters or stickers that I can put somewhere

—Ryan Mckeown

Sure thing, Ryan. Take the photo above to Kinko's or a comparable copy shop, have 'em biggie size it, then plaster the place wall to wall. You're welcome.

### Larry

I found it interesting indeed that you chose to take an exclusive



Devil May Cry 4 (PS3) is soeing believing?

last issue's Xbox 360 blowout, I'll stuff it all instead.

—Max Murrell

**Alarmist in sandwich board, meet psycho on soapbox...**

### Moie

Way to advertise your hidden agenda. Your pathetic *Pokemon Emerald* review [EGM #193] says, "The story is juvenile," while the caption asks, "Who the hell are these Pokémon?" Ha, you a\*\*hole losers don't know Lotad and Mudkip from Adam. Then, on page 54, your ninny gossip columnist calls GameCube "Nintendo's kiddie-looking console."

—Eric Franklin

For the record, the PS3 and Revolution stuff wasn't public or available when we worked on that Xbox 360 cover story—Microsoft simply gave the press early access (just like it gave MTV a

sneak peek before E3). The Rumor Mill is just that: a rumor mill. We don't make that stuff up; we just report on the things we hear around the industry (and yes, we have talked to developers that have canceled Xbox 360 projects to move to PS3). As for Lotad and Mudkip, we can only hang our heads in shame and hope that we never run into the fearsome Eric Franklin in any *Pokemon* mail tournaments.

### Mixed messages

Xbox 360 looks like a PC, which makes sense since a computer company makes it. PS3 looks like a printer, and that makes no sense. Perhaps they'll link up and print screenshots or something

—Andiszoob

### Touched by the devil

Someone on an online forum I frequent said something about one of *WarioWare Touched*'s turntable toys containing a >

## POST OFFICE

Rambling and ranting from our message boards, [boards.tup.com](http://boards.tup.com) (look for *Electronic Gaming Monthly's* forums).

**This month cynics sound off with initial impressions of the next-gen systems:**

**CokeMonkey20:** When I throw a PS3 controller in frustration, will it come back and hit me the face? [Editor's note: See our cover story for a pic of the boomerang-shaped controller.]

**Jauridicejuice:** Seriously, PlayStation 3 looks like a fridge when vertical and a deluxe George Foreman grill when horizontal.

**Sarkness:** If Nintendo's Revolution has the ability to download games right out of the box, it may not even need launch titles.

**Jauridicejuice:** I guess I'd be excited about being able to

emulate old Nintendo games on Revolution if I didn't already do that on my PC.

**Atomic\_garbil:** It's clear now that consoles have finally evolved into a *Homo erectus* state.

**ONP:** Hopefully Xbox 360 is small enough to put a paper bag over.

**Franken3:** Revolution

looks like a cable modem...which means nongaming burglars will probably pass over it.

**Allenbob:** As for PS3 and Xbox 360, I hope my all-in-one supermega media center also plays games.

**Bowflox\_body:** If they sell an Xbox 360 faceplate that matches my cell phone, I'm buying one.

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## BONUS GALLERY

Going the extra mile for love of the game

### Paper Mario

Peep this sweet Mario that I made out of printer paper. It's from a pattern that I pulled off the Net (gotorion.com/orion/singles3.php?11=Nintendo%20Paper%20Models&f1=miscfun ny/papercraft) and took me some four hours of cutting, cussing, and gluing to finish. I think I'll try Bond from GoldenEye next.

—Wes Smith



hidden message. I tried it, and it's true. Play Goth girl Ashley's unlockable track at twice the speed, and you'll hear her say, "I grant the kids to hell." (Watch the video I made at <http://www.puffie.com/media.php?n=WarioTouched>.) I even contacted Nintendo about it, but the company insists that it's pure coincidence

—Donal Gilliland

### Hear that, Jack Thompson?

### Cross-country comrades

Not long ago, my best friend Barrett broke my heart by leaving for Full Sail's school of game design and development. Xbox Live and a little luck made it better. Turns out, his classes go from 5:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m., and because I'm in California and he's in Florida, that works relatively well. I sleep all day, so when I'm waking up, he's heading home. Now I get up, put my headset on, pop in *Star Wars Battlefront*, and he comes home and does the same.

—Mark Shiffer

### Master Chief of ceremonies

In *EGM* #190's Post Office, a guy wrote that one of the weirdest things he's heard on *Halo 2* was "someone fragging fools while

broadcasting the techno song from that bank Six Flags commercial." I may very well be that man. With a series of splitters and a steak knife to shave off some insulation, I've managed to make a straight converter from my computer's speaker output to my headset's input port. I'm still in the process of testing other tracks, but sadly, many songs with varying chords, and any form of a cappella, don't translate well through the headset. When Xbox 360 launches, I hope Microsoft improves voice clarity so my music input will be more effective.

If you ever see me online, give me a shout-out (but please don't print my gamer-tag, as some people get angry at me for compromising our position with the banging bass of MC Hammer's "U Can't Touch This").

—Josh

### This space for rent

Lately I've been hearing a lot about how increasing game-development costs may be passed on to me, the consumer. Mind-blowing graphics and better gameplay mean newer games are more expensive to make, and I can accept that. Here's the thing though—while racing in *Forza* tonight, I slowed down to read some of the advertising that litters the landscape. In

addition to ads for everything Microsoft makes, I saw signs hawkking everything imaginable. I mean the amount of advertising is phenomenal, even if it's appropriate to the NYC setting. Now I know *Forza* was much more expensive to make than, say, *Pole Position*, but shouldn't all this advertising revenue reduce costs?

P.S. Genesis game *Ecco the Dolphin* sold for \$70. Maybe if they had included an ad for Charlie Tuna it could have been \$50.

—Nathan Worth

The ads do indeed cut costs. In fact, some developers are getting more of 'em into their games (read Rumor Mill, page 16).

### Gamer plays grandpa

Now that gaming has gone mainstream, the market is littered with unoriginal garbage. And while I hate to say it, even *EGM* is falling for it—you only seem to cover crap that everyone has already heard of. Every issue has some game about a guy with a gun who runs around like a gangster/pimp/mobster. What ever happened to epic RPGs, adventures, platformers—games that were

**Oops!**  
Last month's major malfunction mixed up *Melrose* and *Bombberman* screenshots (page 19). Also, we incorrectly stated that Xbox 360 wouldn't be able to play Xbox games. At the time, Microsoft told us it wasn't designing the console to be backwardly compatible; after we went to print, it announced that *XBOX360 would play "top-selling [Xbox games]"* (check out cover story for more info).

new and original? They exist, but now no one cares because they're all playing the same mindless bargain-bin sports title from two years ago.

—Bryan Brainerd

We could point you to last issue's *Atelier Iris* and *Fire Emblem* reviews, two-page preview of cult charmer *We Love Katamari*, and Afterthoughts interview with the folks behind the innovative and epic RPG *Jade Empire*, but nah. We'll rock your face with a trio of innovative and original oldies instead.



■ Gaming's golden years: not so golden.

## GAME DESIGN-O-RAMA

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

### PlayStation.2



### Chicken 4: The King of Cockfighting Tournament

Namco's fowl-fighting franchise returns with new features to crow about: Brawl with a wider-than-ever variety of gamecock breeds in arcade, tournament, and time-attack modes; train a day-old chick to become a champion in career mode; and rough up your friend's roster in a memory-card battle, where the loser actually forfeits his prized possession.

—Stewart Go

## WIN THE GAME OF THE MONTH CONTEST



We've hidden movie quotes in this issue—spot one and you can win our Game of the Month. If you find one, e-mail the quote, the movie it's from, and the page you found it on to [EGM@ziffdavis.com](mailto:EGM@ziffdavis.com), subject: Movie Quote: EGM #194. Include your full name and mailing address (no PO boxes) in the e-mail. We'll pick three winners at random and send each of them a copy of our GOTM. This issue's prize: *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* (XB) or *NCAA Football 06...our choice!*

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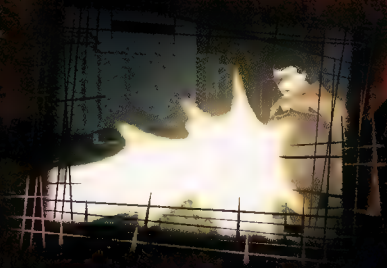
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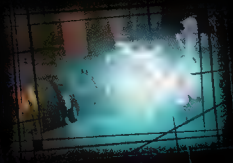
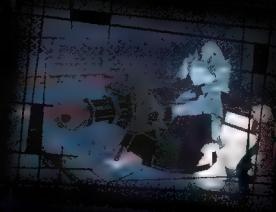
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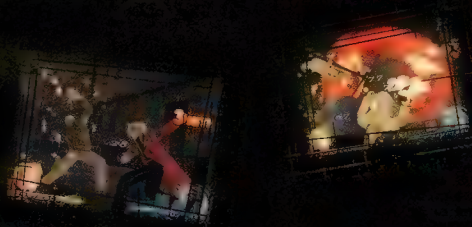


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# FULL METAL ALCHEMIST 2

## CURSE OF THE CRIMSON ELIXIR



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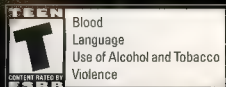
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PlayStation 2





# press start

gaming news, previews, report cards, and other stuff

## REPORT CARD

# SHOW TIME!

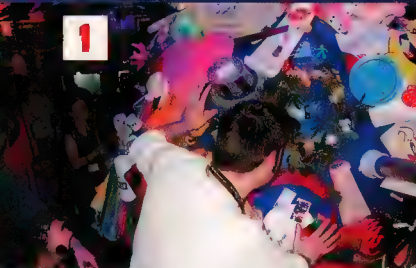
## Winners and losers from the Super Bowl of gaming: E3

**T**here's just one place where 70,000 adults—surrounded by A-list celebrities, millions of dollars in the latest technology, and half-naked women—only want to talk about videogames. That place is the Electronic Entertainment Expo, better known as E3, the game industry's annual trade show/expense-account carnival/excuse to get drunk, held every summer in downtown L.A.

This year most of the chitchat was focused on the next wave of home consoles, so if you want to skip right to game 92 and read all about the PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, and Nintendo Revolution, well who could blame you? Not us—it is our cover story, after all. Certainly not the console

makers themselves, who seemed more obsessed with the next generation than a Trekkie in line for Klingon language classes.

But what about *this* generation of consoles? You know, those black and purple things under your TV and in your backpack that you already spent a bunch of money on? Don't worry, we haven't forgotten. Turn the page and step back from the ridiculous noise, flashy plasma screens, and booze-fueled parties of E3 for a sober report on each current console's overall showing and outlook for the year ahead, followed by our thoughts on every notable game we played, starting on page 64. Read it all, stand in a line for a few hours, and eat a \$6 hot dog—you'll swear you were at the show yourself. ▶



MORE MONSTER MASHING—IN JAPAN, CAPCOM ANNOUNCED A SEQUEL TO ITS ACTION-RPG MONSTER HUNTER (PS2). ASIDE FROM SOME



# REPORT CARD

Glad to see Yoda is still fulfilling his sick sexual fantasies in *Soul Calibur III*.



# PLAYSTATION 2

## The most games, the most exclusives—Sony's console keeps its crown for yet another year



**B**efore the E3 doors opened to exhibitors, journalists, and booth-babe-lusting fanboys, each of the big three hardware makers drove folks into auditoriums like herds of cattle to listen to their major announcements. In years past, Sony's press conferences—featuring mind-numbing PowerPoint slides—have generated more snores than cheers. But not this time, as Sony used its self-created spotlight to unveil the PlayStation 3.

So does this mean its current console is yesterday's news? Hardly. PS2 owners will have plenty of new and exciting games to play this year and well into 2006, as no other system has such overwhelming third-party support and huge exclusives. Sure, you won't see a PS2 megablockbuster of *Grand Theft Auto* caliber, but you've still got several heavy hitters, including the Disney/*Final Fantasy*-filled RPG *Kingdom Hearts II*, the weapons-based fighter *Soul*

*Calibur III*, and the online military shooter *SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs*. Even some promising original titles are in the pipeline, like *Okami* and *Shadow of the Colossus*.

The only area where the PS2 remains one step behind the competition is online. During last year's show, Sony Computer Entertainment America President Kaz Hirai spoke about how the company planned on creating a central online hub (think Xbox Live) and enabling you to sell in-game

data like, say, *Gran Turismo 4* cars. Unfortunately, the wait just got longer for such features. "There's a reason why we don't want to rush [these features] out and that's because we have two other systems now," says Hirai. "We don't want to do something specifically for PS2, PSP, or PS3... We want to make sure it's a comprehensive online program as opposed to 'here's something for the next six months.'"

Improvements abound in *Kingdom Hearts II*, including a reworked camera system.



>> PEOPLE JUST LOVE THEM SOME PLAYSTATION—ACCORDING TO SONY CEA PRESIDENT KAZ HIRAI, OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS THE

### Status Check: Final Fantasy XII

We've played *FFXII* only once—and that was at last year's E3. Since then, Square's hotly anticipated RPG has gone into production, reappearing only in video form at the 2006 show. Is *FFXII* in trouble? Well, word is that its director spent the week of E3 at ancient temples in Kyoto, Japan, praying for the game (seriously). For the sake of cosplayers everywhere, let's hope his prayers were answered.



### Still Got My Eye(Toy) on You

Unlike the PS2 hard drive, Sony continues to support its camera peripheral with new software. *EyeToy Chat* (shown below) allows you to see your pet's ugly mug as you speak. For all you fatalities, there's the fitness program *EyeToy: KinetiX*. And lastly, *EyeToy: Play 2* has tons of new party-style minigames.



Even on the PS2, *Resident Evil 4* looks frighteningly good.



While *Phantasy Star Universe* is currently slated only for PS2, we hear the action-RPG may come to a next-gen console, as well.



## NOTABLE GAMES

A quick look at the major titles heading to the PlayStation 2 in the months to come. (Games noted with an asterisk are confirmed to have online functionality.)

August

\*Madden NFL 06

September

Shadow of the Colossus

Sly 3: Honor Among Thieves

\*SX On Tour

October

\*SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs

Soul Calibur III

We Love Katamari

November

Dragon Quest VIII

Kingdom Hearts II

Peter Jackson's King Kong

\*Ratchet: Deadlocked

The Godfather

The Matrix: Path of Neo

December

Lara Croft Tomb Raider: Legend

Fall 2005

\*Burnout: Revenge

Castlevania: Curse of Darkness

\*Jak X: Combat Racing

\*Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence

Shadow the Hedgehog

\*Tony Hawk's American Wasteland

Ultimate Spider-Man

Late 2005/Early 2006

Final Fantasy VII: Dirge of Cerberus

Onimusha 4: Dawn of Dreams

Resident Evil 4

2006

\*Black

Final Fantasy XII

Okami

\*Phantasy Star Universe

\*StarCraft: Ghost

## REPORT CARD

### Strengths:

- +Robust software lineup makes the competition's look embarrassing
- +Most exclusives of any platform
- +Continued EyeToy support

### Weaknesses:

- No upcoming games as big as *GTA*
- Online network still needs work
- Hard drive add-on has practically become vaporware

### Overall:

With a game library of this caliber, we don't mind waiting awhile for the PS3.

# A-

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**Mini Golf, Mini Screen, Mega Fun!**

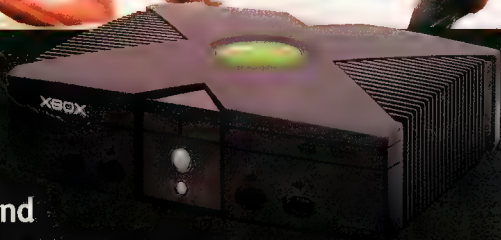


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*Ninja Gaiden Black*  
This "director's cut" includes an easy mode. Great, so maybe now more than 10 people will actually finish the gorgeous action game.



# XBOX

Microsoft is having a new baby, and older brother's being left behind

**W**ith all the rock and roll and laser lights focused on the Xbox 360 at this year's E3, it was as though Microsoft forgot the current Xbox even existed. The company did squeeze in a mention that more than 200 games are scheduled for the Xbox for the remainder of 2005 (and "several hundred more" for 2006 and beyond). But almost all of those

are coming from third parties that are also bringing these games to PlayStation 2 or, to a much lesser extent, GameCube.

What's Xbox got that the others don't? Not much. A few notables include first-person shooters *Half-Life 2* and *TimeShift* (if you don't count their PC versions), *Stubbs the Zombie*, *Blazing Angels*, and *Ninja Gaiden Black*. But again, these are

all coming from outside parties, as though Microsoft has all but abandoned its own platform. "We haven't announced anything after *Conker: Live & Reloaded*," says Shane Kim, general manager for Microsoft Game Studios. "We made a conscious decision to start focusing a lot more of our resources on the Xbox 360. Our job is to drive the new platform." Microsoft may be

able to get away with this since third-party support is so strong (and generally speaking, multiplatform games look better on the Xbox anyway and may include online play not available elsewhere), but it still leaves some of us wondering if the company is moving on a bit too soon.



Blazing Angels' intense ship battles aren't the only check during shoot-outs. The bad two-wheeler is the same in full life to a time when the Xbox had more exclusives.



Will *Blazing Angels* could be one of the Xbox's big 2005 titles, even if it is by default.

>> ASIDE FROM NEW MISSIONS, BOSSES, AND DIFFICULTY LEVELS, *NINJA GAIDEN BLACK* (XB) WILL ALSO FEATURE A NUMBER OF





No new Halo? No problem—the PC blockbuster *Half-Life 2* should help fulfill your first-person shooter fix on Xbox.

**"1" Isn't So**

...are left some speculation  
 ...really hard for us to redesign."



**Halo 2 Still Hangin' Around**  
 Don't forget, the Xbox still has downloadable content in its arsenal. Xbox Live will still be around to update games here and there, including *Halo 2*, whose new multiplayer maps will be available to everyone for free by the end of the summer.

**NOTABLE GAMES**

A quick look at the major titles heading to Xbox in the months to come. (Games noted with an asterisk are confirmed to have online functionality.)

**August**  
 \* Madden NFL 06

**September**  
 \* Far Cry Instincts  
 \* Half-Life 2  
 Ninja Gaiden Black  
 \* SSX on Tour  
 Stubbs the Zombie

**October**  
 James Bond 007: From Russia With Love  
 \* Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects  
 The Warriors  
 \* TimeShift

**November**  
 \* Battlefield 2: Modern Combat  
 \* Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII  
 Peter Jackson's King Kong  
 Prince of Persia 3  
 The Godfather  
 The Matrix: Path of Neo

**December**  
 Lara Croft Tomb Raider: Legend

**Full 2006**  
 50 Cent: Bulletproof  
 \* Burnout: Revenge  
 Castlevania: Curse of Darkness  
 Hitman: Blood Money  
 Shadow of the Hedgehog  
 \* Star Wars Battlefront II  
 \* Tony Hawk's American Wasteland  
 \* X-Men Legends II: Rise of the Apocalypse  
 Ultimate Spider-Man

**2006**  
 \* Black  
 \* StarCraft: Ghost



Farmer Joe tries getting dismissed from the army early in canopy adventure game *Stubbs the Zombie*.

**REPORT CARD**

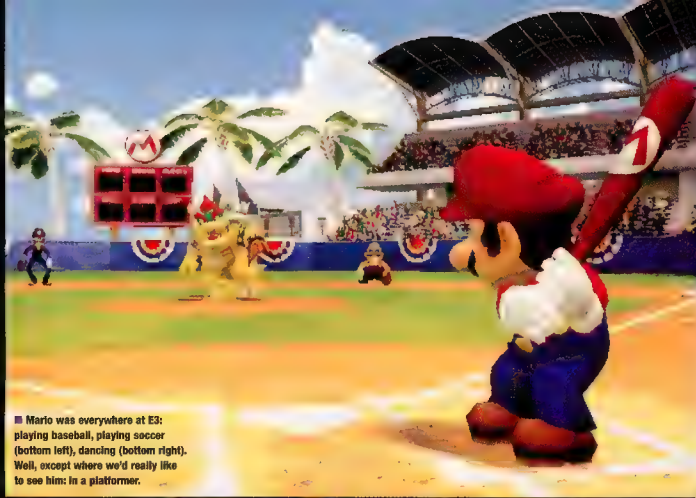
**Pros:**  
 + Lots of third-party support  
 + Downloadable content will keep some Xbox games fresh past their expiration dates

**Cons:**  
 - Lack of high-profile exclusives  
 - No Halo-caliber "got to get it" games

**Overall:**  
 The Xbox will be seeing a lot of games in '06, but almost all of them are also coming to other systems, including Xbox 360! So really, who needs the Xbox?







■ Mario was everywhere at E3: playing baseball, playing soccer (bottom left), dancing (bottom right). Well, except where we'd really like to see him: in a platformer.



## NOTABLE GAMES

A quick look at the major titles heading to GameCube in the months to come. (Why no asterisks to signify online functionality? This is GameCube, silly.)

### August

Geist  
Madden NFL 06  
Mario Baseball  
The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction

### September

Battalion Wars  
WWE Day of Reckoning 2

### October

Dance Dance Revolution: Mario Mix  
Fire Emblem: Path of Radiance  
James Bond 007: From Russia With Love  
Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects  
Pokémon XD: Gale of Darkness

### November

Mario Party 7  
Need for Speed: Most Wanted  
Peter Jackson's King Kong  
Prince of Persia 3  
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess  
The Sims 2  
X-Men Legends II: Rise of the Apocalypse

### Fall 2005

Chibi-Robo  
Kirby (working title)  
Odama  
Shadow the Hedgehog  
Super Mario Strikers  
True Crime 2  
Ultimate Spider-Man

### Late 2005/Early 2006

Viewtiful Joe VFX Battle (working title)

### 2006

StarCraft: Ghost

## PREMATURE EVACUATION

Where are all your favorite Nintendo franchises headed?

### Super Smash Bros.

Bound for: **Revolution**

"One or two Wii-Fi-enabled games will be ready for [Revolution] launch," says Nintendo President Satoru Iwata. "And I am pushing our teams to make sure *Smash Bros.* is one of them." Any chance for a handheld DS *Smash Bros.* as well? "We're thinking about it," Mario creator Shigeru Miyamoto told us.



### Mario 123

Bound for: **Revolution**

Miyamoto says the *Mario Sunshine* team is hard at work, and Nintendo is hoping to have the game out around the launch of the system.

### The Legend of Zelda

Bound for: **GameCube, DS, and Revolution**

Besides *Twilight Princess*, we know that a *Zelda* is in the works for the DS (not a *Four Swords* game, as previously reported) and another is already underway for the Revolution.

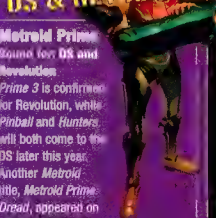


## DS & REVOLUTION

### Metroid Prime

Bound for: **DS and Revolution**

*Prime 3* is confirmed for Revolution, while *Pinball* and *Hunters* will both come to the DS later this year. Another *Metroid* title, *Metroid Prime: Dread*, appeared on some Internet Nintendo DS documents before E3, but was a no-show.



### Donkey Kong

Bound for: ?

Is Nintendo monkeying around with another sequel for the big ape? "We've created something really fun, and unique and interesting with *DK: Jungle Beat*," says Miyamoto. "We also have something else in the works."



## REPORT CARD

### Strengths:

- + One word: *Zelda*. Probably the most anticipated game of this fall, on any system
- + Four new (and solid) *Mario* games

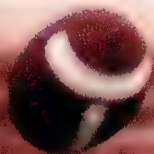
### Weaknesses:

- The few new first-party games are aimed at kids and casual gamers
- No big third-party exclusives and weak overall support

### Overall:

A few big games from Nintendo, and that's about it. So what else is new?





**NCAA 06**  
FOOTBALL





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PlayStation 2



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## REPORT CARD

Head to the bottom of the page for more details on the drive anywhere, violate anything *Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories*.



*ModEvil Resurrection*: A little too much of a PSP refresh for our tastes.

*Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition* should keep the grease monkeys happy.



# PLAYSTATION PORTABLE

## The next big pocket monster?

**S**ony's potent portable might still be in its infancy, but it's definitely looking like the slickest way (visually, at least) for on-the-go play this year. Perhaps its lineup didn't blow us away with original franchises or a slew of hot new games coming right up this summer—and there's still not much for role-playing fans to look forward to—but the PSP's future remains quite promising. *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo*, *Burnout Legends*, and *Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories* are just a few of the big

names with broad appeal that are coming to the system this year. Then there's cool stuff like the action-RPG *Monster Hunter Portable* and offbeat shooter *Infected* for something a little different. Sure, most of these games can be played on home consoles, but when the PSP ports look and play as great as they do, you might find yourself opting for the handheld versions altogether. Plus, more games are finally playable online through wireless hot spots and such; we're glad to see developers utilizing this cool technology. So while



this year's lineup may not have exceeded our expectations, overall, PSP gamers won't be disappointed with their choices.

## PSP: Land of Liberty

*Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories* is the one probably most of you PSP owners have been waiting for. Like the title says, this portable piece of controversy is set in the same metropolis as *GTA3* (PS2/XB). And from looking at the screenshot above, it seems you'll be assuming the role of a new antihero. Want more info? Then check out the August issue of our sister pub *The Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine*, available at [www.usstands.com](http://www.usstands.com) on July 8.

■ Military shooter *SOCOM* sure looks good on PSP. The controls, however, are a bit iffy.



## REPORT CARD

## Strengths:

- + Lots of triple-A franchises
- + A wide variety of genres will soon be available
- + Several games use Wi-Fi capabilities

## Weaknesses:

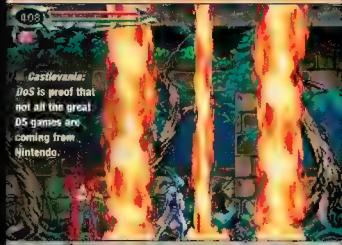
- Where are the role-playing games?
- Not much to look forward to during the dog days of summer

## Overall:

A respectable showing with the diverse array of titles gamers want. Still, we're waiting for that one big game. *GTA*, perhaps?

**B**

## REPORT CARD



**Nintendogs:** Just what your little sister has always wanted.

# NINTENDO DS

## Finally getting some action

Besides GameCube's *Zelda*, the upcoming slate of DS games was the talk of the Nintendo booth at E3. The handheld goes online later this year with *Mario Kart DS* and *Animal Crossing DS*, pintly adorable puppy-simulator *Nintendogs* is right around the corner and could be the next Tamagotchi-style phenomenon (though you cat lovers out there have every right to feel slighted), and Nintendo revealed *New Super Mario Bros.*, which better get a name change between now and when it goes on sale.

Don't think the quirky games with lots of touch-screen action end with *Nintendogs*,

either; there's surgical-sim *Trauma Center: Under the Knife*, music/fart fusion *Electroplankton*, strange adventure *Trace Memory*, and the indescribable *Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney*, all aiming to deliver on Nintendo's "innovation" mantra in the upcoming months. Some big franchises (from both the console and PC worlds) looked good on the DS too, such as *Viewtiful Joe* and *Age of Empires: The Age of Kings*, a turn-based strategy game with *Advance Wars*-esque combat.

Nintendo claims worldwide DS sales of

5 million, double the user base of Sony's PSP—although the more recently launched PSP appears to be slowly gaining ground with higher month-to-month sales.



## NOTABLE GAMES

A quick look at the major titles heading to DS in the months to come. (Games noted with an asterisk are confirmed to have online functionality.)

**August**  
 Advance Wars: Dual Strike  
 Madden NFL 06  
 Nintendogs

**September**  
 Trace Memory

**October**  
 Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow

**November**  
 \*Mario Kart DS  
 The Sims 2

**Fall 2005**  
 Age of Empires: The Age of Kings  
 \*Animal Crossing DS  
 Electroplankton  
 Lunar: Dragon Song  
 Mario & Luigi 2  
 Metroid Prime Pinball  
 Metroid Prime Hunters  
 New Super Mario Bros.  
 Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney  
 \*Tony Hawk DS

**Late 2005/Early 2006**  
 Sonic Rush  
 Trauma Center: Under the Knife  
 Viewtiful Joe DS

**2006**  
 \*Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles 2  
 Touch Golf

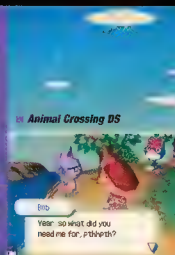
**Quadruple trouble:** Nintendo's plumpers team up with their baby versions in *Mario & Luigi 2*.



### Finally! Online Mario Kart

This holiday season, Nintendo will finally take its games online, starting with some DS titles. "There's going to be no subscription fee," says Nintendo VP Reggie Fils-Aiès. "We're not looking at this as a profit-driven program. We're looking at it as a way to bring more enjoyment and satisfaction to the game."

*Mario Kart* and *Animal Crossing* were both playable online at E3 (and ran smoothly), an online *Tony Hawk* game is in the works, and the company says more than 25 online titles are in development. Using IGN's GameSpot infrastructure, Nintendo also demonstrated its VoIP (voice over Internet protocol) technology, which would allow for voice chat during online games and, theoretically, free phone calls.



## REPORT CARD

### Strengths:

- + Broad range of games on the way, from old franchises to quirky new stuff
- + Did we mention online *Mario Kart*?

### Weaknesses:

- The really good games are still arriving at a trickle
- Many titles use the second screen for a map and nothing more

### Overall:

Though few new games were announced, the DS' lineup is still impressive. GBA is withering on the vine, but DS is stronger as a result.





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—Jay Carr, AM New York

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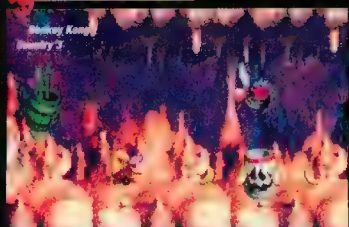
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# REPORT CARD



# GAME BOY ADVANCE

It's all downhill from here

**T**he big news for Nintendo's other handheld is that it's getting even smaller, as the Game Boy Micro. But if you already own a Game Boy of the Advance or SP variety, the other big news is that, aside from *Mario Tennis Advance* and *Donkey Kong Country 3*, there really aren't any upcoming games worth getting excited about—unless you get excited about licensed schlock like *Herbie Fully Loaded* or *Trollz Hair Affair*. In which case you should get very, very excited indeed.

Though GBA is far from dead saleswise (which at last count is 128 million units sold across the globe), most third-parties are putting all of their upcoming triple-A titles onto DS and Sony's PlayStation Portable. No tears—it sure had a great run, for a little guy.



*Dynasty Warriors* comes to GBA, meaning you can now hack-a-slash 3,874 Chinese men before you've finished your business on the can.

## NOTABLE GAMES

A quick look at the major titles heading to Game Boy Advance in the months to come.

- August**  
*Dynasty Warriors Advance*
- September**  
*Donkey Kong: King of Swing*
- October**  
*Mario Tennis Advance*  
*Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas: The Pumpkin King*
- November**  
*Donkey Kong Country 3*  
*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*  
*Need for Speed: Most Wanted*  
*Peter Jackson's King Kong*
- Fall 2005**  
*The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*  
*Gunstar Super Heroes*  
*Mega Man Zero 4*  
*Metal Slug 1: Super Vehicle*  
*Tony Hawk's American Wasteland*  
*Top Spin 2*  
*Ultimate Spider-Man*
- 2006**  
*Screw Breaker*

### Game Boy as Fashion Accessory

Little, yellow (with an optional faceplate, that is), not very different—that's the Game Boy Micro, the newest incarnation of a handheld you probably already own more than one of. At about the size of a small cell phone,



Micro: Yes, it has a headphone jack.

It's tiny and light—so light that it also feels a little cheap. And though we have trouble mustering up much enthusiasm for yet another riff on the GBA, we aren't the target audience; Nintendo VP Reggie Fils-Aime thinks it'll go over big with the 11- to 15-year-old crowd. "It is sleeker, it is more 'image,' it is more fashionable than the current 'GBA SP,' he says. "The belief [from retailers] is that it's going to be the hot Christmas item this year—especially when we announce the pricing [we're hearing around \$79 to \$99]."

Nintendo is also considering bringing its currently Japan-only Play-Yan adapter here, which would allow GBA and DS owners to play MPEG-4 video and MP3 music files stored on an SD memory card. Don't be surprised if it gets a name change and a simultaneous launch with the Micro this fall.

## REPUTATION CARD

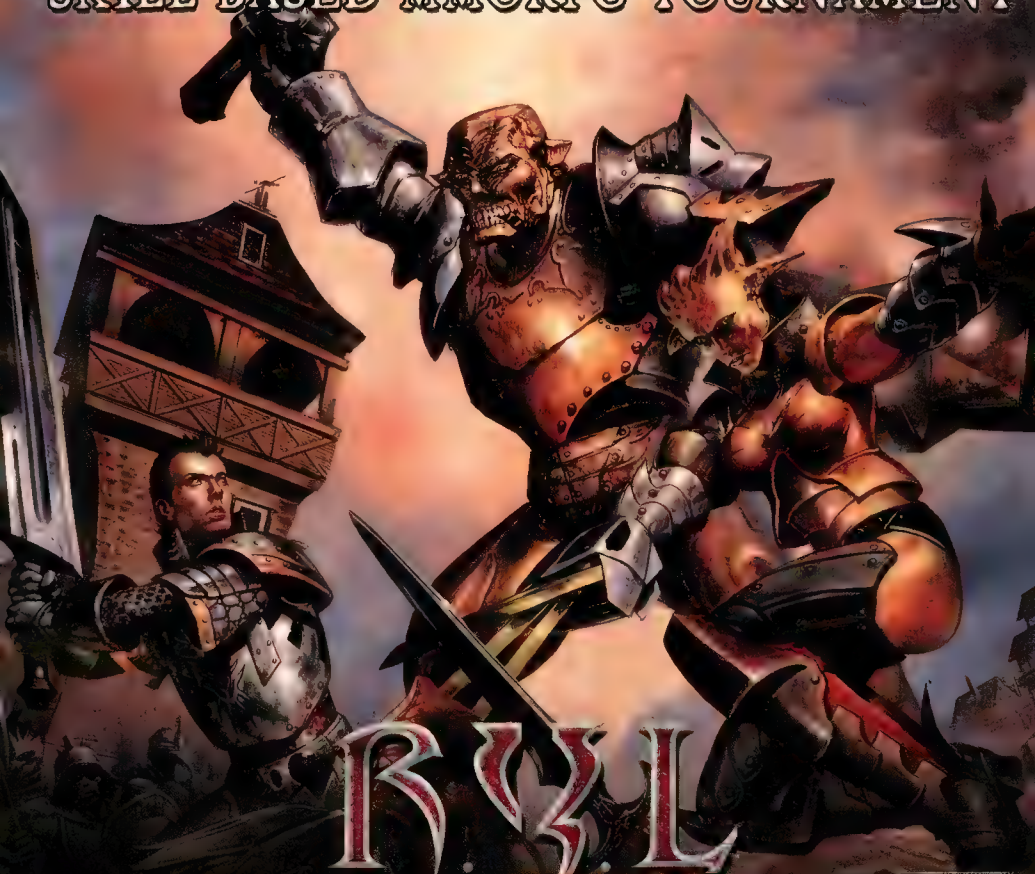
- Strengths:**
- + Micro is tiny and should be fairly inexpensive
  - + GBA's huge game library; still huge, with occasional flashes of awesome
- Weaknesses:**
- Almost no triple-A games coming down the pike
  - DS and PSP graphics make GBA's look very archaic

**Overall:**  
As a platform for new, good games, GBA is almost dead. Bad ones will be coming out for a long time yet, though.



# Play To Win \$1 Million Dollars

SKILL-BASED MMORPG TOURNAMENT



# RYL

Path of the EMPEROR

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# EgmINTERNATIONAL

Build up your brain, then bash it in again

**■ Nintendo DS**  
**NOU O KITAERU OTONA NO DS TRAINING**  
**Err, come again?** The fact that you can't even parse this title means that your brain is tired, fatigued from the hours of gaming you've undoubtedly logged. This one (literal translation: "Brain-Building DS Training for Adults") should help you out—it's a collection of simple minigames designed to soothe your mind and make your noggin work better...somewhat. The crazy twist? You hold the DS *horizontally* while playing, reading instructions on the left screen and writing your responses on the right.

**Would the FDA approve of this?** We really aren't sure, but the guy behind all this (Professor Ryuta Kawashima of Tohoku University) seems stable enough—that's his smilin' polygon face in the screenshots

**■ PS2**  
**KENKA BANCHOU**  
**This brain stuff is too hard! I wanna kick some ass!** Then kick it Japanese high-schooler style with this game, a spiritual successor to the 8-bit NES beat-em-up classic *River City Ransom*. As a gang leader, it's your job to keep the streets safe by trashing rival crews and stealing their women. But you can't just start fights at random—you've got a reputation to keep up, so you must make eye contact (the "laser beams" in the screenshots) and lay down the night trash talk before breaking out the fists.

**How incredibly...manly.** Isn't it? There's even a bit of dating-sim cheese in here, and screwing around with the wrong brood can get you in deep trouble with your friends. Sort of like *American Pie*, actually. It really is a small world.

## WHAT'S PLAYING IN THE COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

**NCsoft came out of nowhere with last year's phenomenal massively multiplayer online role-playing game *City of Heroes*—and we're happy to report that the company is just getting started.**



**Like a mad surgeon with a hacksaw, NCsoft has managed to strap the MMO genre to an operating table and chop off all the parts that just don't work quite right. The result is a beautiful, engrossing role-playing game with no downtime, no overly punishing death penalties, and—best of all—no monthly subscription fee. You also have considerable leeway to play the way you want to; whether you prefer adventuring the enemy-infested areas solo or taking part in some 6-on-8 deathmatch-style action, *Guild Wars* most certainly has something for you.**



**The only thing better than being a gaudily costumed superhero is pounding said gaudily costumed superhero into the pavement—which is exactly what this sequel to NCsoft's *City of Heroes* (coming this October) is all about. Instead of helping Kitchens out of tress, you'll be fending off superheroes in player-versus-player zones while working your way up the evil food chain. And for those of you who like playing dress-up with the character creator, you'll soon get to play house, too: *City of Villains* introduces supergroup bases. Hall of Injustice, here we come!**

—Ryan Scott, Computer Gaming World

## UNDER THE RADAR

Platform: Nintendo DS  
 Publisher: Atlus  
 Developer: Atlus  
 Release Date: Fall 2005

**TRAUMA CENTER: UNDER THE KNIFE**  
 Packed with flirtatious candy strikers, headstrong young doctors, and plenty of malignant tumors, *Under the Knife* offers all the thrills of watching *ER* or *Grey's Anatomy*, but with your shaky hands performing the incredibly tense surgery. Patients' lives hang in the balance as you use the DS' stylus to manipulate various medical objects (such as a scalpel, syringe, and tweezers) while adhering to the proper order of surgical operations (gotta remember to disinfect before all that slicing). The gameplay is surprisingly enjoyable and tougher than it sounds—one slip of the blade and your promising career could come to a tragic end....



LEGACY INTERACTIVE HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT'S MAKING A GAME BASED ON THE POPULAR TELEVISION SERIES *THE APPRENTICE*

## THE HOT SEAT: THE HELLRAISER



If anyone can park his rear end into our burning Hot Seat and not even break a sweat, it's definitely Tim Willits. The lead designer and co-owner of id Software has helped create some of the most controversial videogames of all time (*Wolfenstein*, *Doom*, *Quake*). Luckily for us, these games have also been some of the finest, including id's most recent demonic first-person shooter *Doom 3* (XB).

### More Dangerous



**Angry teen**  
playing  
*Doom 3*

**Opportunistic**  
politician

**Tim Willits:** "Isn't opportunistic politician redundant? A dangerous *Doom* player is someone who has lower ping than me, can strafe-jump, and has mad rocket skills."

### Wigger Finger



**Mouse and**  
keyboard

**Modern**  
joystick

**TW:** "I definitely prefer the mouse/keyboard combo. Plus, anything with the words 'joy' and 'pad' in it isn't really something that I want to play around with."

## OVERHEARD

# MARIO PARTY 77

"If you want to blame someone for the number of sequels, blame the consumers. They love them, they buy them, and so I really don't see a problem there. If *Tony Hawk 58* is what gamers want, so be it. As long as we keep innovating in our sequels, I just don't see it as a problem."

—Ex-Naughty Dog president Jason Rubin talks sense to The Hollywood Reporter

"Beating us for a short moment is like accidentally winning a point from a [karate master], and Microsoft is still not a black belt. Just like with their operating systems, they might come out with something good around the third generation of their release."

—Sony Computer Entertainment President Ken Kutaragi with a karate chop of his own in an interview with the Japanese newspaper Asahi Shinbun (translated at gamespot.com)

"Dead or Alive: Code Chronos is still coming, after *DOA4* and *Ninja Gaiden 2*. Actually, it hasn't been decided that *Ninja Gaiden 2* will be for the Xbox 360...."

—The famously press-shy leader of Icomu development group Team Ninja, Tomonobu Itagaki

(XB/PSP). PREPARE TO GET FIRED LATE NEXT YEAR. ...



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YES

I want a free Xbox

NO

I am dumb

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# FREE AND (NOT SO) EASY

Are those console-giveaway offers on the Internet the real deals, scams, or just plain hassles? We put one to the test to find out...

**S**pend any time reading about videogames on the Web and you'll see ads proclaiming that a free console can be yours with just a click. But could it possibly be that easy? We decided to find out, and we went into this cheapskate experiment with four goals:

- 1) Spend no money (this is supposed to be a free system, after all).
- 2) Don't annoy our friends (with entreaties to sign up for some sort of pyramid scheme).
- 3) Don't ruin our credit rating (by applying for unused credit cards, etc.).
- 4) Get as little spam e-mail as possible (we can dream, can't we?).

To start out, we typed "free Xbox" into Google and followed the first sponsored link to trialclix.com. TrialClix, like most companies that operate these giveaway sites, is a promotional firm that asks visitors to sign up for trial offers for its clients. In exchange, you earn points you can spend on free goodies—in our case, an Xbox. Over the next few weeks, we signed up for every free trial site listed, including four online movie/game rental services, two free credit reports, two call-forwarding services, and sites that let us order everything from

stamps to audiobooks online.

After earning 1,600 TrialClix "points" by signing up for 16 of these trials, we ordered and received our free Xbox. So, yes, the deal's legit, but it wasn't exactly painless or quick. Here are some important lessons learned in that process.

### Read the terms of use

No, you don't have to read the entire tome of legalese that's posted on these sites—unless you really want to. But at least skim through and look for the vital information. Specifically, make sure that you know how to cancel: Some places require a phone call, others have a Web form or want you to e-mail them. Also look for any hidden charges (like shipping and handling or setup fees) that might make the free trial less than free. You might want to check out each company's privacy policy, too, to make sure your credit card information isn't going to be posted on the Web.

### Write everything down

We mean it. You may think you have everything organized and under control, but after signing up for 16 of these offers you might not remember some important details about the first few. Set up a spreadsheet with each offer's name, sign-

up date, trial-expiration date (extremely important), any login/password information, and how to cancel. Write down this information as soon as you sign up—later on, you'll be glad you did.

### Cancel early, cancel often

If you go one day over on any of these trials, you will be charged for a whole month's worth of service. Don't let that happen. As soon as you sign up, figure out the date your trial runs out, then cancel one or two days before that. (Don't cancel immediately after signing up—TrialClix's terms of service says your account can be frozen if they notice you doing that.) Make sure you know when the customer service line is open; sometimes, you can call to cancel only during regular business hours on weekdays. Mark your cancel dates on a calendar and stick to them!

### No means no!

A lot of these places will try to convince you to take part in other offers when you sign up and when you cancel. Don't be tempted—that path could lead to an endless string of useless offers that won't end until you die. Uncheck all those "sign me up" boxes and be tough but firm with any operators who try to convince you to order

	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL
	\$149.99	\$149.99
SUBTOTAL		0.00
SALES TAX		0.00
SHIPPING & HANDLING		0.00
<b>TOTAL DUE</b>		<b>\$0.00</b>

■ Here's the receipt that came with our free Xbox. Note the total due: Cha-ching!

anything, no matter how tempting it sounds. Tune it out! Be strong!

### Be patient and pushy

Even when you don't spend any money, nothing is free. It took roughly eight hours of active work (molding preuling; just filling out online forms, installing files, waiting on hold to cancel, etc.) and one month or real time to earn enough points for the free system. Then it took four weeks for the system to actually ship after it was ordered, and even longer for the package to show up. So if your time is more important than your money, shell out the cash at your local retailer. ❁ —Kylie Orland

>>> FINAL FANTASY ROCKS YOUR IPOD—BUY 16 FF SOUNDTRACKS (AT \$6 TO \$25 A POP) THROUGH APPLE'S ITUNES ONLINE MUSIC STORE...>>>



# WARNING

THE MAKERS OF NEW TAG BODY SPRAY WILL NOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY BREACH OF LOCAL CUSTOMS WITH REGARD TO "GETTING IT ON." FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY, CARRY CARD BELOW.

POORLY TRANSLATED

**"NO SIR, I DID NOT HAVE FOREIGN RELATIONS WITH YOUR DAUGHTER."**

<b>FRENCH</b> Mais non, monsieur, je n'ai pas eu de relations étrangères avec votre fille !	<b>ITALIAN</b> No signore, non ho mai avuto rapporti con sua figlia.
<b>GERMAN</b> Nein, mein Herr, ich habe keine Beziehungen zu Ihrer Tochter.	<b>SPANISH</b> ¡No señor, no he tenido ningún tipo de relaciones con su hija!

**TAG** CONSIDER YOURSELF WARNED



PlayStation 2

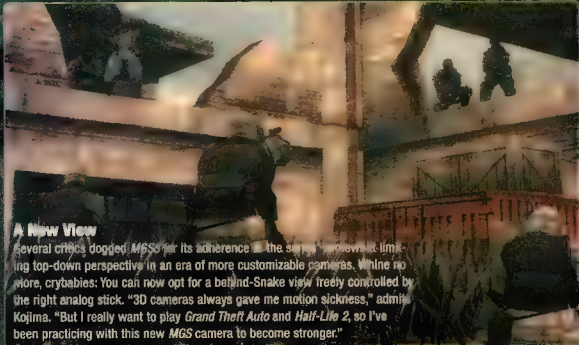
# METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SUBSISTENCE

Publisher: Konami  
Developer: Kojima Productions  
Release Date: Fall 2005

## A second helping of Snake

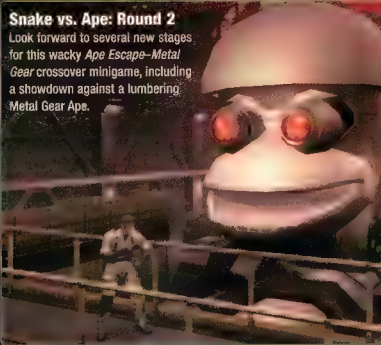
Last September, *ESM* asked *Metal Gear Solid* mastermind Hideo Kojima if we could expect a spruced-up "director's cut" version of *MGS3: Snake Eater*, à la *MGS2: Substance*. "No, that would be a waste of time when we could instead be working on the next game," he replied. Well, he's got some explaining to do: Enter *Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence*,

an enhanced version of 2004's best PS2 stealth adventure. "At the time, my answer was totally true," says Kojima. "It wasn't until this spring, when we shipped *MGS3* in Europe with enhanced features, that I decided to do *Subsistence*." This re-release adds an array of upgrades to last year's hit.... —*Shane Bettenhausen*



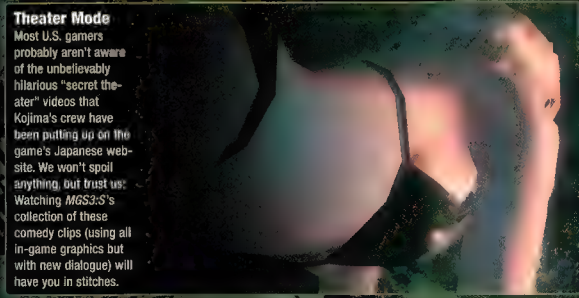
### A New View

Several critics dodged *MGS3* for its adherence to the series' somewhat limiting top-down perspective in an era of more customizable panoras. Well, no more, crybabies: You can now opt for a behind-Snake view freely controlled by the right analog stick. "3D cameras always gave me motion sickness," admits Kojima. "But I really want to play *Grand Theft Auto* and *Half-Life 2*, so I've been practicing with this new *MGS* camera to become stronger."



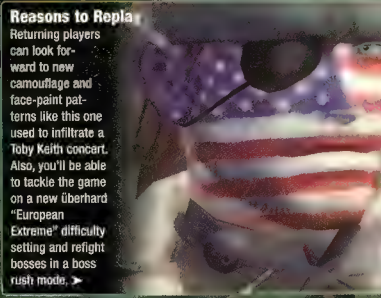
### Sneak vs. Ape: Round 2

Look forward to several new stages for this wacky *Ape Escape*-*Metal Gear* crossover minigame, including a showdown against a lumbering *Metal Gear Ape*.



### Theater Mode

Most U.S. gamers probably aren't aware of the unbelievably hilarious "secret theater" videos that Kojima's crew have been pulling up on the game's Japanese website. We won't spoil anything, but trust us: Watching *MGS3*'s collection of these comedy clips (using all in-game graphics but with new dialogue) will have you in stitches.



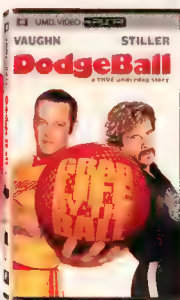
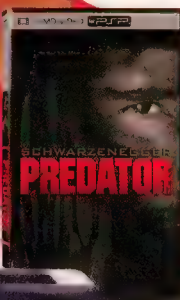
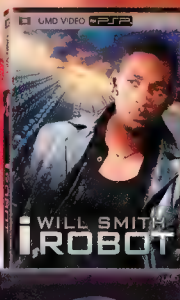
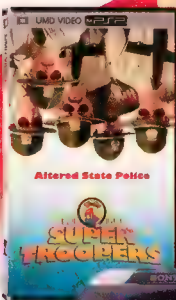
### Reasons to Repla

Returning players can look forward to new camouflage and face-paint patterns like this one used to infiltrate a Toby Keith concert. Also, you'll be able to tackle the game on a new uberhard "European Extreme" difficulty setting and refight bosses in a boss rush mode. >

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# MGS3: SUBSISTENCE (CONT.)



## Metal Gear Online

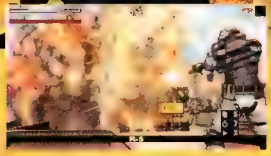
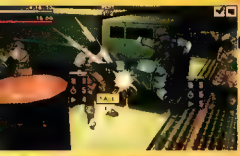
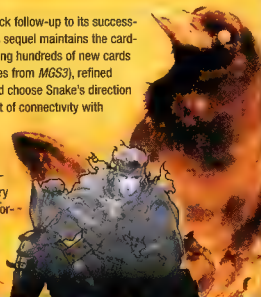
Now this is the biggie: Kojima plans to include a full online multiplayer mode in *Subsistence*. Two gameplay modes will be available: a standard team deathmatch mode and a stealthier Snake vs. enemies mode in which one player controls our gruff hero against a group of player-controlled enemy soldiers across all-new levels. Exact details on number of players, voice chat support, and well...a release date remain sketchy.




Now, you can finally fulfill your twisted fantasy of stuffing Snake into a locker.

## Metal Gear Acid 2

Konami also recently announced a quick follow-up to its successful PSP *Metal Gear* offshoot, *Acid*. This sequel maintains the card-based gameplay of its forerunner, adding hundreds of new cards (including close quarters combat moves from *MGS3*), refined controls (you can now duck, crawl, and choose Snake's direction with simple button presses), some sort of connectivity with *MGS3: Subsistence* (via USB cable), and a boss battle mode. However, the biggest change can be readily seen in these screenshots: *Acid 2* sports a colorful cartoon look. "We thought, let's try something that we can't do with the normal *MGS* series," explains Producer Shinta Nojiri. "So we decided to take a new approach with the graphics." No firm release date has been set.



## Metal Gear Solid 4

One *Metal Gear*-related announcement dwarfs all the rest: *Metal Gear Solid 4* is coming to PlayStation 3. Konami revealed a jockey teaser trailer at the recent Electronic Entertainment Expo, but it offered few hints of what we'll see in the game. In that clip, Solid Snake and Raiden fought over who gets to star in the game...and Snake won. A few details are known: You play as Snake in an adventure taking place after the events of *MGS2*, and several characters from past games return, including Raiden, Vamp, Otacon, and Meryl. We'll have some exclusive info from Kojima on this blockbuster next issue... 



>>> PUT THE PASSWORDS "KOBEN" AND "ROPPONGI" IN METAL GEAR ACID 2 TO UNLOCK TWO SPECIAL CARDS FEATURING HOT BABES... >>>

Just like being at a game,  
except there's no gum on your couch.

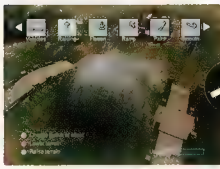


Madden has never been more realistic. Get to Best Buy® for opening tickets on August 9 to score your copy of Madden NFL 2006. And check out the Madden Challenge at [www.maddenchallenge.com](http://www.maddenchallenge.com). At Best Buy, gamers rule.



# ONLINE THIS MONTH

## Modem marvels: Build a better online battlefield



**A** aspiring architects take note: *TimeSplitters: Future Perfect's* mapmaking feature lets PS2- and Xbox-owning laymen dabble in level design (GC owners, too, but they can't take their creations online). Want a disco-gaudy deathmatch arena or a space-age shooting gallery? Hop to it. But if you're intimidated by big ideas, *Pariah's* (available now on Xbox and this fall for PS2) "make and play" mode might be for you. Thanks to its stress-free interface, carving out canyons and sculpting mountains is as simple as pushing and pulling *Silly Putty*.

Both games allow you to swap your work with others online, but, as anybody who's found him or herself at the mercy of another novice's mistakes knows, not everybody is a Frank Lloyd Wright. We get the pros to help you build a better world. —Shawn Elliott

**Simple solutions for strong foundations**  
**Rich Briggs, producer** (*TimeSplitters: Future Perfect*): It's always good to start with a goal. Do you want a free-for-all defined by deaths and fast action? Or do you want a more controlled game, with

conditions suited for stealth and camping? You need to have an idea of how you want people to play.

**Jim Russell, lead level designer** (*Pariah*): First and foremost, try to keep it simple. Think about the kinds of tactics players might use in your map—for instance, high points for sniping or places to take cover in firefights and flee from rampaging vehicles.

**Building-code violations**  
**RB:** Similar to my previous point—some people start building maps before deciding

on what type of experience they want to deliver. For an advanced user, this isn't an issue—they're familiar with the tools, they know what makes a good map, so it's OK if they approach it with a "build it and see what happens" attitude. But a beginner might try to do too much because he or she isn't focused on an ultimate goal. The end result is a multiplayer map that doesn't support any type of experience in particular, doesn't feel thought out, and won't get played much.

**JR:** I see a lot of levels that people cram as much as possible info without thinking enough about the overall layout, but I'd hesitate to call anything in [*Pariah's*] map editor a mistake. It's not an elitist tool in that sense—it's all about experimenting. Because it's so easy to try something out, it encourages that sense of "what if" that so many PC level editors discourage.

**"Some people start building maps before deciding on what type of experience they want to deliver."** —TimeSplitters: Future Perfect Producer Rich Briggs



## What separates the good from the great?

**RB:** Not to harp on the same point, but having a goal is a great way to start. Playtesting is important, too. Fiddling with something in the mapmaker is different

from experiencing it firsthand. The process of building something, playing it, and then tweaking it, building something else, playing it, and then tweaking it again is what turns good maps into great ones. And while it might be amusing to build a map that you can win on again and again, that doesn't mean it'll be popular among other players. The best work is accessible to a range of skill levels but then includes



**■** Creating a map in *TimeSplitters: FP* requires a bit more work than in *Pariah*.

a few secrets to reward those who master it.

**JR:** Gameplay, flow, and visual quality. All three attributes come from experience and experimentation.

**■** If you build it, *TimeSplitters: Future Perfect's* monkeys will surely come.



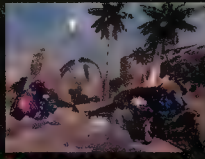
## THIRD-PARTY OPINION

*Halo 2's* violent cartographer sounds off on what makes a memorable multiplayer map.

**The good**  
Chris Carvey,  
multiplayer  
environment lead  
(*Halo 2*):

By providing centralized architectural features, easily recognizable paths, and unique landmarks, you can direct players to critical elements within the environment while also allowing them to build a map of the world within their minds.

Also, an understanding of absolute jumping height allows you to build paths that only become apparent to pros. In addition, adding surfaces to deflect grenades and other weaponry



**■** Try including in your map a central structure like Zanbar's windmill.

can make what initially feels like the "ultimate sniping spot" a little less so.

### The bad

**CC:** Some designers make overly complicated maps, and complexity doesn't always guarantee good design. On the other hand, simplicity, too, has its pitfalls. Some stuff is too symmetrical, which leads to confusion. When I play a multiplayer first-person shooter, I'm too worried about whether or not some clown is waiting for me around the corner to notice whether the light I passed was colored red or blue.

### The busted

**CC:** Some folks forget to seal all of the damn holes in an arena, which allows certain cheaters to get outside of the world and cause gloom and doom on Xbox Live. At least that's what I've heard. ☹

## WHAT'S UP AT



### 1UP.COM



There are thousands of reasons to join 1UP.com. First of all, it's free. Lastly, where else can you read the ramblings of your favorite *EGM* editors? What games are we playing? What do we look for in a wine? Has that rash healed yet? Find out now!

### CONSOLEWAR.1UP.COM

We couldn't fit everything from over two hours of conversations with the leaders of Nintendo, Microsoft, and Sony in our cover feature, so head here to read **extended interviews on the next-generation of consoles.**

### E3.1UP.COM

Do you know how many games were at the (big Electronic Entertainment Expo this year? We do. Lots. If you didn't get your fill of **hands-on game impressions** from our *Opinionated Guide to What's Next* in this issue, hop online here for even more titles.

### CHEATS.1UP.COM

We don't want to promote cheating, but that controller can only get thrown so many times before you hurt somebody. Don't let *Devil May Cry 3* break you—type in this URL and **learn some tactics.**

### Featured Club:

#### Beat This Caption Club

Every Friday this club uploads a wacky photo, then lets its 340 members make up the funny. Try visiting **beatthiscaptionclub.1UP.com** and give it your best shot (but enough with the Paris Hilton jokes already).

### Featured Blog:

Who's working behind the scenes at *Luminis* (PSP) and *Meteos* (DS) developer Q Entertainment? Head to **mizuguchi.1UP.com** for a peek.

# THE SALES CHARTS

FOR APRIL  
2005

## TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES



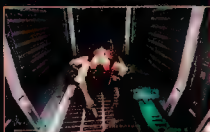
- 1 **Doom 3** • XB • Activision
- 2 **Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition** • PS2 • Rockstar
- 3 **Jade Empire** • XB • Microsoft
- 4 **God of War** • PS2 • Sony
- 5 **Splinter Cell Chaos Theory** • XB • Ubisoft
- 6 **Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition** • XB • Rockstar
- 7 **MVP Baseball 2005** • PS2 • EA Sports
- 8 **Lego Star Wars** • PS2 • Eidos
- 9 **WWE WrestleMania 21** • XB • THQ
- 10 **Lego Star Wars** • XB • Eidos

## TOP 10 PS2



- 1 **Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition**
- 2 **God of War**
- 3 **MVP Baseball 2005**
- 4 **Lego Star Wars**
- 5 **Gran Turismo 4**
- 6 **Major League Baseball 2K5**
- 7 **MX vs. ATV Unleashed**
- 8 **Splinter Cell Chaos Theory**
- 9 **Dynasty Warriors 5**
- 10 **Dragon Ball Z: Sagas**

## TOP 10 XBOX



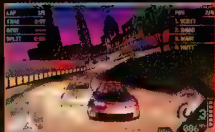
- 1 **Doom 3**
- 2 **Jade Empire**
- 3 **Splinter Cell Chaos Theory**
- 4 **Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition**
- 5 **WWE WrestleMania 21**
- 6 **Lego Star Wars**
- 7 **MVP Baseball 2005**
- 8 **Unreal Championship 2**
- 9 **Major League Baseball 2K5**
- 10 **Cyber Combat: First to Fight**

## TOP 10 GAMECUBE



- 1 **Donkey Kong: Jungle Beat**
- 2 **Super Mario Sunshine**
- 3 **Dragon Ball Z: Sagas**
- 4 **Pokémon Colosseum**
- 5 **Star Fox Assault**
- 6 **Super Smash Bros. Melee**
- 7 **The Legend of Zelda: Wind Waker**
- 8 **MVP Baseball 2005**
- 9 **Animal Crossing**
- 10 **Mario Party 6**

## TOP 10 PORTABLES



- 1 **Need for Speed: Underground 2** • PSP
- 2 **Lego Star Wars** • GBA
- 3 **Twisted Metal: Head-On** • PSP
- 4 **Unltd Legends** • PSP
- 5 **Mario Party Advance** • GBA
- 6 **Ridge Racer** • PSP
- 7 **Wipeout Pure** • PSP
- 8 **MLB** • PSP
- 9 **Metal Gear Acid** • PSP
- 10 **THUG2 Remix** • PSP

## TOP 10 RENTALS

FOR THE WEEK ENDING 5/15/05



- 1 **Midnight Club 3: DUB Ed.** • PS2
- 2 **Midnight Club 3: DUB Ed.** • XB
- 3 **Star Wars: Episode III ROTJ** • PS2
- 4 **Star Wars: Episode III ROTJ** • XB
- 5 **Doom 3** • XB
- 6 **God of War** • PS2
- 7 **Splinter Cell Chaos Theory** • XB
- 8 **Star Wars: Battlefront** • PS2
- 9 **Gran Turismo 4** • PS2
- 10 **EA Sports Fight Night Rd. 2** • PS2

## ON THE AUCTION

# Block

We've found more junk for sale. Some people deserve to get ripped off—it's the only way they'll learn.



**Item:** Check out this limited-edition **Hello Kitty Xbox**. Only 3,000 of 'em were made, which is about 3,000 too many.

**Asking Price:** \$480



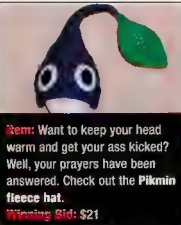
**Item:** Grab yourself a copy of **Bubble Bath Babes (NES)** for 8-bit naughty gaming and try to guess what you're looking at.

**Asking Price:** \$400



**Item:** Looking like something the A-Team assembled, here's an **Xbox inside a remote-controlled Hummer**.

**Asking Price:** \$375



**Item:** Want to keep your head warm and get your ass kicked? Well, your prayers have been answered. Check out the **Pikmin fleecy hat**.

**Wanted Bid:** \$21

SUSPECT:  
long furry tail.  
Heavily armed.  
Smells like a strip club.



MATURE 17+



CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore  
Intense Violence  
Mature Humor  
Sexual Themes  
Strong Language  
Use of Drugs  
Use of Alcohol

Back with a raging hangover, Conker is drinking, smoking, and chasing more hot, furry tail than ever. Well...when he's not blowing the stuffing out of Tediz. Take your deviant skills online to Xbox Live™, or you can always just play with yourself.



it's good to play together

XBOX LIVE



It looks nice, but *Gears of War* technically isn't an Xbox 360 game yet. So far, we've only seen it running on PCs....

Xbox 360

# GEARS OF WAR

Publisher: Microsoft  
Developer: Epic  
Release Date: Fall 2006

## So that's what Xbox 360 games should look like...

**I**n a sea of so-so Xbox 360 software, sci-fi shooter *Gears of War* stands apart from the pack. We went to Lead Designer Cliff Bleszinski—known as CliffyB to his Internet friends—to take a class on how to make a true next-gen game.

### Lesson 1: Go big, or go home

*Gears of War's* heroes and villains are a sturdy lot. "I don't want to make a game that feels like it has little small, spindly-type characters that look like they'd break if you dropped them," says Bleszinski.

### Lesson 2: Make melee attacks dramatic

Keep the action intense. "You have these two guys that are engaging in this dance of death where it's almost like the prom date where the room melts away and it's just the two of them focusing on each other," says Bleszinski. "Except instead of trying to have a nice intimate moment of romance, they're trying to kill each other."

### Lesson 3: Make the world realistic

The Xbox 360 hardware excels at creating complex, believable environmental physics, and much of *Gears*' gameplay will



révolve around using your surroundings to survive—knocking over a pillar can solve a puzzle, take out an enemy, or create cover. "We want you to know you're safe in cover for a very short period of time," says Bleszinski, "then once you're in cover, you must make your decision as far

as how you're moving from point A to point B and start engaging in that lethal game of Whack-a-Mole."

### Lesson 4: Keep things "in your face"

Despite some early comparisons to tacti-

cal shooters like *Ghost Recon*, *Gears of War* is truly all about combat intensity. "This isn't a game about shooting random dots on the horizon," explains Bleszinski. "It's a game about up-close, in your face urban combat." ❦

—Matt Leone

IT'S FITTING THAT FORMER SACKMASTER (AND COKEHEAD) LAWRENCE TAYLOR IS THE SPOKESMAN FOR THE EDGY BLITZ: THE LEAGUE...

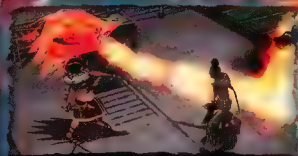


Unlock 24 Playable Characters  
in This Epic Action-RPG.

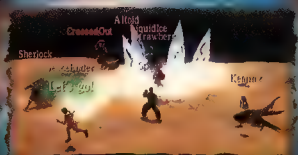
Then Build Them Up in a  
Massive Online Experience!

# Are The Lad

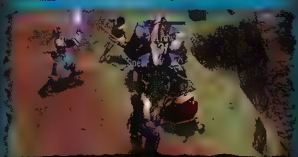
## End of Darkness



Unleash Special Attacks



4-On-4 Online Deathmatch



4 Player Online Co-op



PlayStation 2



**namco**  
www.namco.com

PS2/XB

# BULLY

Publisher: Rockstar  
Developer: Rockstar Vancouver  
Release Date: October 2005

## Become a 15-year-old a-hole

**W**e've all known a bully—that kid in school who had a reputation for "borrowing" lunch money, cutting class, and greeting others with a fist to the face. And even though we knew these troublemakers were in the wrong, it was hard not to admire their power over the student body. Thanks to Rockstar and its *Grand Theft Auto*-inspired game *Bully*, it's now your turn to rule the school through intimidation and—when needed—muscle.

Here you step into the shoes of Jimmy Hopkins, a 15-year-old ruffian who, according to Rockstar spokesman Hamish Brown, "heads to Bullworth Academy

because no other school will take him." The goal is clear: Climb your way to the top of Bullworth's social order by the end of the school year. Like *GTA*, the campus is a living and breathing environment where completing certain missions helps improve your standing.

We'll assume most of you are more familiar with the receiving end of schoolyard bullying (hey, don't get bent out of shape—so were we), so here's a quick three-step primer on how to be the wedge-r, as opposed to the wedge-ie. Those of you who were bullies, think of this as a nostalgic trip down memory lane. —Bryan Iltis



### HOW TO BE A BULLY: STEP 1



#### Play by Your Own Rules

Obviously, being at boarding school means Jimmy has a full academic schedule. But does that mean he actually goes to class? Not necessarily—it's totally up to you whether Jimmy pays attention to or neglects his studies. But if you continually play hooky, "teachers and prefects will begin to take notice and be tougher on you," says Brown. Heck, they'll even bitch if Jimmy doesn't wear the required school uniform.

If you do make it to class, you'll be treated to several mingame-esque events. For example, gym class may involve participating in a game of dodgeball. Wonder what happens during sex education?



■ Jimmy exhibits blatant disregard for traditional handrail usage.

### ROLE MODELS

Looking for some more inspiration? Here are three guys you can emulate:



#### SCOTT FARKUS

**(A Christmas Story)**—This firecracker takes pleasure in "forcing his victims to say 'Uncle.'" Ralphie did, however, get the better of him in the end.



#### Wayne Arnold

**(The Wonder Years)**—Fred Savage still hasn't recovered from the beatings his TV big brother dished out. (Neither has his career.)



#### Nelson Muntz

**(The Simpsons)**—You'd lash out, too. If people found out your momma got the pink slip from Hothers for being a fat-ass. Ha-ha!

WILL BULLY'S MAIN CHARACTER GET HOT AND HEAVY WITH ANY OF HIS FEMALE CLASSMATES? ROCKSTAR ISN'T READY TO SAY...

MY DAD CAN  
**BEAT UP**  
 YOUR DAD!

MEET DEATH JR.

NUMBER ONE SON OF THE GRIM REAPER HIMSELF, ARMED WITH HIS TRUSTY SCYTHE, HE'S OUT TO PROVE HE'S A REAL BONE CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK.

"DJ"

WE COULD GET DETENTION FOR THIS!

SHOW ME WHAT YOU GOT

SWEEP

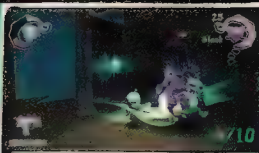
PANDORA

SMITH & NESTON

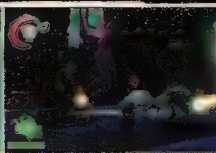
TRULY STIMULATING ENTERTAINMENT

STEWART

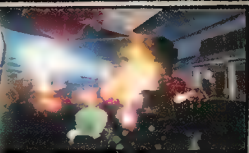
BUT HE'LL NEED HIS FRIENDS' HELP TO DELIVER THE WORLD FROM EVIL... AND HIMSELF FROM A ONE-WAY TICKET TO MILITARY SCHOOL.



COOL WEAPONS TO CHOOSE FROM.



TONS OF ACTION-PACKED ENVIRONMENTS.



PLATFORMING MEETS FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER.

TEEN  
**T**  
 ESRB CONTENT RATING

Blood and Gore  
 Language  
 Violence

www.esrb.org



www.konami.com/gs

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HOW TO BE A BULLY: **STEP 2**



**Fight Dirty**

Picking fights is an integral part of the bully code—and Jimmy is a pro at egging on his fellow classmates. Aside from the usual assortment of punches, kicks, and grapples in Jimmy's repertoire, he can perform a variety of distasteful special moves, like hawking a loogie in another student's grill. And when knuckle sandwiches and saliva don't get the job done, he can resort to some classic childhood weapons such as slingshots, cherry bombs, and baseball bats.



HOW TO BE A BULLY: **STEP 3**

**Use Excessive Force**

Remember, you have only one school year to reach true bully status, so make sure that everyone (and we mean everyone) at Bullworth knows that you mean business. For instance, one of the game's missions

requires you to find out the password to a house on campus. Now, you could ask the knowing party in a nice, respectable manner (which would probably involve a long, drawn-out conversation), or—like a real

bad boy—you could stuff his head into a dirty toilet (known to some folks as "giving a swirly") until he coughs up the necessary info. So if you want respect, don't show any.



■ All that stolen lunch money and Jimmy Hopkins still can't afford a decent haircut.



**Call the PTA Board.**

Rockstar's *Grand Theft Auto* series has already created some bad blood with parents—is the company worried that *Bully* could do the same? "*Bully* is a fictional story that portrays a comic and exaggerated view of a boarding school with merciless tongue-in-cheek humor," says a company spokesperson. "People who like any of the classic books and movies about schoolday antics and misbehavior of malicious kids should thoroughly enjoy *Bully*." We'll take that as a no. ☹️

▶▶ LIKE THE *GRAND THEFT AUTO* GAMES, EXPECT *BULLY* TO HAVE A TOP-NOTCH SOUNDTRACK FEATURING SEVERAL BIG ARTISTS. ... ▶▶

# Dead to Rights<sup>®</sup> **Reckoning**

**Time to take  
the dog  
for a walk.**



Brutal disarms.



Cinematic gunplay.



Shadow attacks on command.



Wireless multiplayer.

**A brand  
new chapter  
in the  
acclaimed series**

**exclusively  
for the PSP™**  
portable entertainment system.

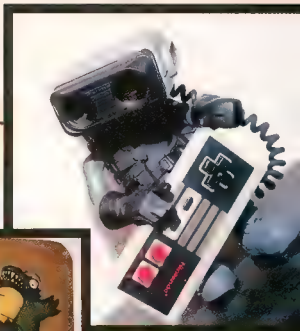


# SPRITE NIGHT

Old-school games find a home on canvas at this Hollywood art show

**S**pecial: Games are art—at least for as long as “I am 8-bit” is concerned. This group art show in Hollywood, CA, had 100 artists recall their childhood gaming memories: dresses, and even a few perversions via paint, plastic, or, indeed, plush. Opening night—headquartered at Bohlen between Eighty Eight and Hollywood A&M Game Stars—saw some 1,500 showgoers glaring at coin-op- and classic-console-inspired pieces, from *Dig Dug* to *Bankey Kong*. Cops circled to push crowds back onto the sidewalk; nerd rockers 8-Bit Weapon jammed with proper old-school spirit; an enormous 8-foot NES controller put a new spin on the *Super Mario Bros.* cartridge jacked into a 50-inch plasma screen; and it wouldn't be La La Land without a few pseudo-celebs like MTV's Kennedy and *Everwood*'s Gregory Smith partaking in the pop factor. It may be over, but the Web makes it immortal (see sidebar).

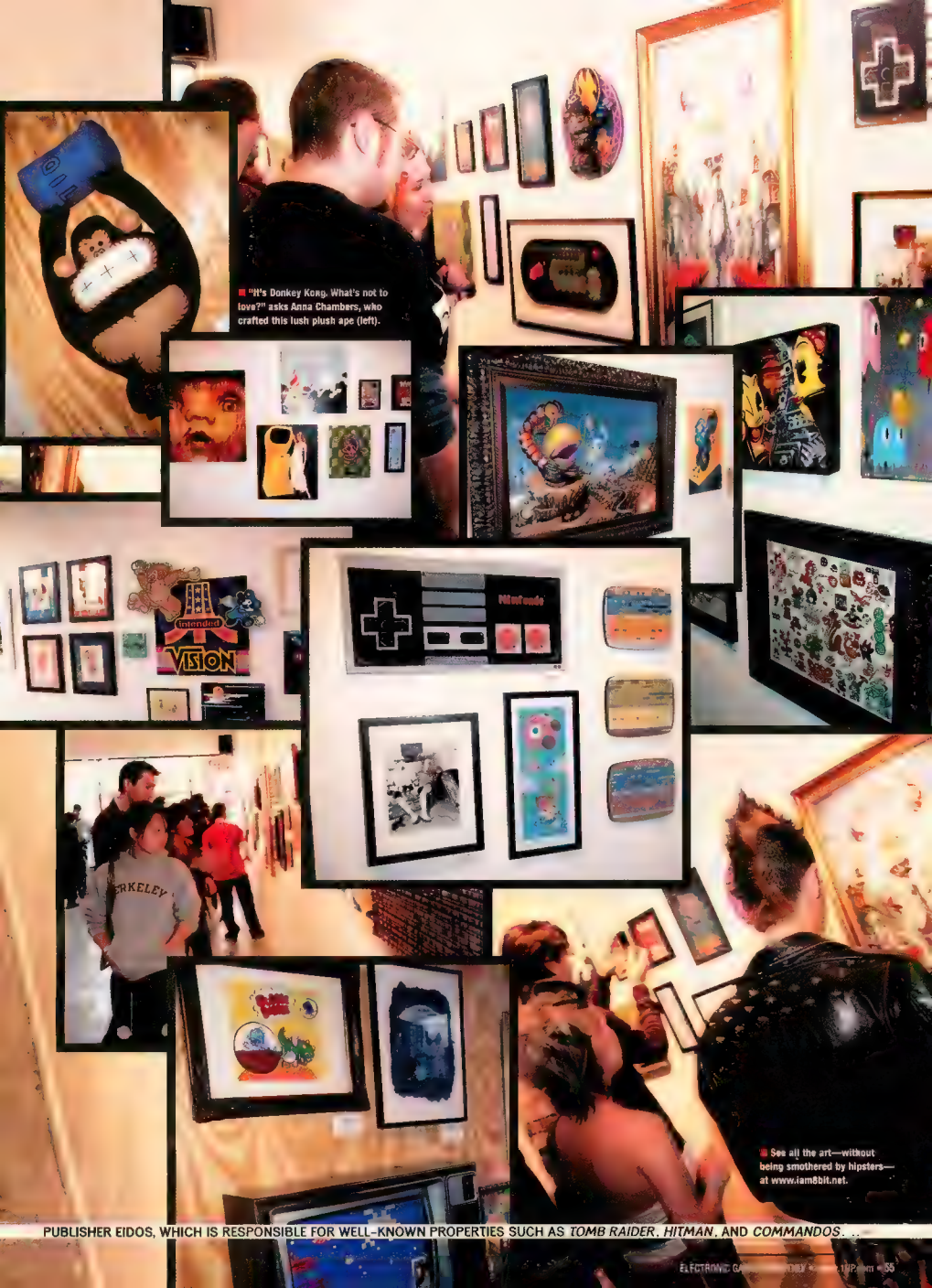
—Johnny Farrell



This 8-bit print will run you \$75.

### 8-Bit Branding

It seems I am 8-bit doesn't cease with a closing party. A book collecting art from the show—as well as nostalgia-laden essays from historians and celebs alike—will be in stores soon. And the first few in an ongoing line of limited edition (only about 500 of each) artist-created T-shirts are already up on [www.iambit.net](http://www.iambit.net) (call it pixel couture), where you'll also find prints and original art for sale.



■ "It's Donkey Kong. What's not to love?" asks Anna Chambers, who crafted this lush plush ape (left).

■ See all the art—without being smothered by hipsters—  
at [www.iam8bit.net](http://www.iam8bit.net).

PUBLISHER EIDOS, WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WELL-KNOWN PROPERTIES SUCH AS *TOMB RAIDER*, *HITMAN*, AND *COMMANDOS*.



Final Fantasy XIII's Cloud: all ready for his big PS3 close-up.

# THE RUMOR MILL

## Where we churn out only the juicy stuff

**T**he debut of PlayStation 3's Playable Xbox 360 games! Middle-aged Nintendo fans once again crying on the shoulders of booth babes at the sight of a mature Link! It was one helluva Electronic Entertainment Expo, all right. But those were hardly the best parts of this annual videogame gala...at least for me. E3 gave yours truly a chance to chat with my most trusted peeps and refill this here rumor mill. So while I sort through this massive pile of scuttlebutt, send your hopes and dreams to [quartermann@ziffdavis.com](mailto:quartermann@ziffdavis.com). —*The Q*

### Reliving the fantasy

If you were cruising the internets throughout the week of E3, you probably read about Square Enix's hot-to-trot *Final Fantasy VII* tech demo, which was shown during Sony's press conference

to help convey the power of PlayStation 3. Unfortunately, you probably also read how Square's president denied that the footage meant a remake of its colossal PS1 role-playing game was in the works. Put away the Kleenex, people; I've got it on very, very good authority that the company is indeed bringing a **visually updated version of FFVII to PS3**. Any other details? Well, Aerith still dies in this version, so maybe you should keep those tissues within arms reach.

### Cleaning up the Big Apple

They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery—I say it's just game developers being lazy SOB's. At least *True Crime: Streets of LA*, Activision's attempt at a *Grand Theft Auto* clone, wasn't half bad. The company has been trying to keep the setting for the follow-up (arriving this fall on PS2, Xbox, and GameCube) a secret,

but lucky for you I've got the hookups: ***True Crime 2* will take place in New York City.**

### Next-gen sponsor

All this talk about how much it'll cost to develop games for the next generation of consoles really hurts my head. I mean, if I were interested in numbers, I would've become a bookie like my dear ol' grandpa always wanted. Anyhoo, I hear one way publishers will help their bottom lines is by sticking more advertising into games. But not the way you might think: Instead of additional billboards, **publishers will create specific in-game items featuring the advertiser** (for example, a *Tony Hawk* game may include a McDonald's-branded skateboard), and if you use that item while playing online (so other people see it), you'll be rewarded with some type of in-game bonus.



### More wise guys

When I heard that both *Scarface* and *The Godfather* were coming to a console near you, I knew it was only a matter of time (and money) before HBO's "Mafia" would follow. That's right, look for a **game based on the hit cable series *The Sopranos*** for both PlayStation 2 and Xbox sometime in the future. Hopefully, the industry's jonesin' for mafia-inspired titles doesn't mean that a *Married to the Mob* game is on the way, too.

### Ridge Racer finds a new track

As *R: Racing Evolution* proved, it's not always the best idea to make a game more like *Gran Turismo*. That's why I hope the installment of ***Ridge Racer* heading to Xbox 360** will stick to the franchise's arcadey roots. Oh, and expect Namco's racing series to be available for Microsoft's next-gen machine on day one. 🎮



Jack Lambert's QB's (and dentists') nightmarish.

## BELIEVE IT OR NOT

**Q:** Is Visual Concepts—developer of the forced-into-early-retirement **NFL 2K** series—now making a football game starring a bunch of Hall of Famers?

**A:** Apparently so. We hear that VC is quietly going around and signing several old-time football legends to contracts, which will enable the company to use their names and likenesses in a videogame. Now, you might be asking yourself, "How can another company sign these guys? I thought Electronic Arts had the exclusive NFL license?" That's true, but once a player retires he's no longer part of the NFL Players Association—so that makes him a free agent. Look for these old farts to return to the gridiron in 2006.

—EVEN WITH *CALL OF DUTY 2* STILL IN PRODUCTION, DEVELOPER INFINITY WARD IS ALREADY LOOKING TO HIRE PEOPLE FOR NO. 3...



IN THEATERS  
MAY 18, 2004  
MAY 18, 2004



For the hero in all of us.

Milk's 9 essential nutrients give me the strength and energy I need to fight the forces of evil. Not drinking milk? Now that would be a crime.

got milk?<sup>®</sup>

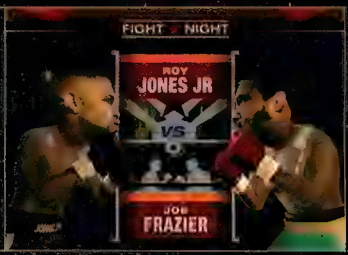
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COUNTDOWN TO ISSUE 200

# THE TOP 10 GAME

**F**ans of tired old gaming conventions, rejoice! After nearly 200 issues of gaining goodness, we've noticed that the more things change, the more they stay the same. This month, we're talking big heads, big breasts, and big explosive barrels—oh my!—in our roundup of the the most tired gaming clichés (and even listing some surprise offenders). As always, bring your complaints to the *EGM* message boards at [1UP.com](http://1UP.com).

**10** **Big-head mode**  
It was only slightly funny the first time in the arcade baller *NBA Jam*, and it's gotten progressively less funny every single time a sports game gives you a giant melon.  
**Even seen in:** *EA Sports Fight Night 2004* (PS2/XB/GC)

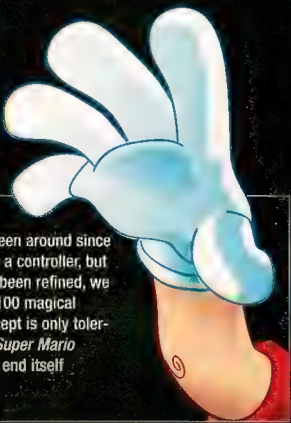


**Predictable boss fights**  
Boss battles ought to be the most unique, thrilling, and unpredictable encounters in a game, but lately it seems like everyone's working from the same template. The boss will fight in multiple forms, exposing his obvious (and oftentimes highlighted) weak point for you to whale on until his multilayered health bar reaches zero.  
**Even seen in:** *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes* (GC)

**6** **Out-of-place puzzles**  
Imagine if every time you wanted to go down into your basement, you had to wait for a full moon, procure a statue made of precious jewels, solve a ninth-grade logic puzzle, and then push a heavy bookshelf so that it's exactly perpendicular to your couch. All you wanted was your baseball glove, sheesh.  
**Even seen in:** *Resident Evil 4* (GC)



**5** **Collecting**  
This necessary evil has been around since most of us first picked up a controller, but now that our tastes have been refined, we really don't need to find and collect all 100 magical whatzits to open the red door. This concept is only tolerable if it's used as a means to an end (*Super Mario Sunshine*'s shine sprites) instead of the end itself (*Sunshine*'s blue coins).  
**Even seen in:** *Psychonauts* (PS2/XB)



**4** **Ridiculous portrayals of females**  
Women have breasts. Get over it.  
**Even seen in:** *Soul Calibur II* (PS2/XB/GC)

## CLICHÉS

9

**Hero's town gets destroyed**

Signs it might be time to move: neighbor's kid starts messing around with swords and magic, elite paramilitary group starts harassing local residents, unusual frequency of earthquakes and/or eclipses. If you notice any of these things happening, call your realtor. A role-playing game is starting and your property value is about to go way down.

**Even seen in:**  
*Final Fantasy X* (PS2)

8

**Unnecessary stealth**

If you want to make a stealth game, then make a stealth game. Don't give us guns and bombs and swords and fast cars and explosions and then tell us to be quiet, *just for a bit!* If we want to sneak around, then we'll play a game that's designed for doing just that. In your game, we shall blow stuff up.

**Even seen in:** *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* (PS2/XB), *The Legend of Zelda: Wind Waker* (GC)

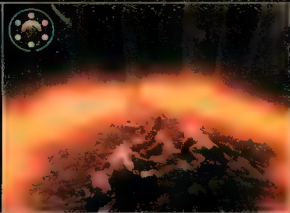
3

**Bullet time**

It was cool in 1999. Used properly, bullet time (or being able to manually slow down the gameplay, in general) can still be cool today. But you know

something? It doesn't have to be in every game. Really, it doesn't.

**Even seen in:** *Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition* (PS2/XB), *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within* (PS2/XB/GC)

**Pushing crates**

Note to evil masterminds everywhere: We understand that you're trying to run a business, which involves receiving equipment and food somehow. But leaving those giant crates just lying around your warehouse for any one-man army to use for supplies and climbing? It's no wonder most startup criminal organizations fall within the first five years.

**Even seen in:**  
*God of War*  
(PS2)

2

**Exploding barrels**

Again, a little warehouse management can go a long way. You work in a field that's prone to random assaults and frequent gunfire, yet you spot your adversaries some free bombs in strategic locations. Some of you even tell your

henchmen to hide behind them for cover. And if you survive Johnny Rambo's attempt to take you down, good luck getting hazard pay. **Even seen in:** *Doom 3* (XB), *Halo 2* (XB)



# COMING SOON

What you crave



The incredible Hulk: diagnosed. Never Nude.

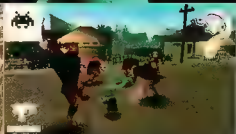
**AUGUST  
2005**



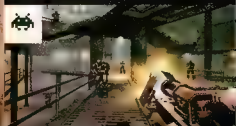
**Beat Down: Fists of Vengeance**  
Capcom • PS2/XB — This *Grand Theft Auto*-flavored brawler allows you to cuss at people and start fights. F\*\*\* yeah.



**America's Army: Rise of a Soldier**  
Ubisoft • PS2/XB — It ain't free like it was on the PC, but the patriotic shooter hits consoles with an all-new single-player mode. Plus, getting on the battlefield will be easier than on the PC—no more lame multiple-choice tests on tanks before you start the game.



**Death, Jr.**  
Konami • PSP — Jr. is no longer grounded and finally ready to come out and play.



**Ghost**  
Nintendo • GC — Why does this "play as a ghost" shooter keep getting delayed? They are working on a Whoopie Goldberg mode.



**Gundam Seed: Battle Assault**  
Bandai • GBA — Attention high-level *Gundam* fans: You'll soon command a sortie of giant robots from your pants pocket.



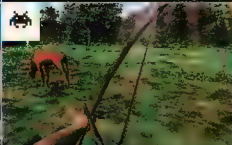
**The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction**  
VU Games • PS2/XB/GC — No, not Hulk Hogan—the other badass in cutoff jeans is coming to demolish your car.



**Madden NFL 2006**  
EA Sports • PS2/XB/GC — The new NFL superstar career mode will let you do your own interviews (don't worry, OJ, you'll do fine), choose which movies to be in (*Rudy 2?*), and more. But will there be a "retire and do Radio Shack commercials" option?



**Jaws Unleashed**  
Majesco • PS2/XB — Play as the infamous great white and scare away those fanny-pack-wearin' tourists.



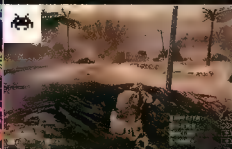
**Lost in Blue**  
Konami • DS — A boy and girl struggle to survive on a deserted island. Come for the adventure, stay for the goat milking.



**NASCAR: Chase for the Cup 2006**  
EA • PS2/XB/GC — This year, your entire racing team needs to succeed, so we're considering letting the pit crew drive.



**Pac 'n Roll**  
Namco • PS2 — Power-ups now let you do more than just munch on ghosts; you can fly around or crash through walls.



**SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs**  
Sony CEA • PS2 — Protect America using land and sea vehicles, but no help from Charlie Sheen or cull her Michael Biehn.



**WWE Day of Reckoning 2**  
THQ • GC — The game's story line picks up where the first's left off, because we all know WWE is like a soap opera for guys.

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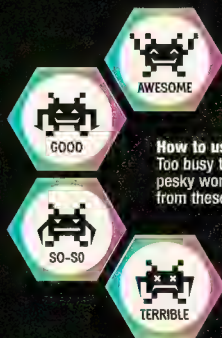
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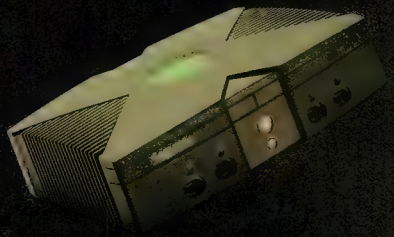
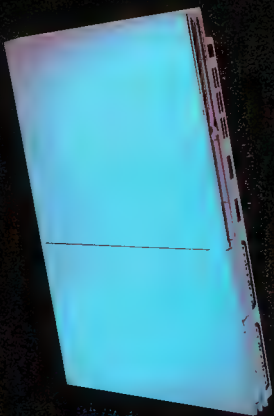
# EGM'S OPINIONATED GUIDE TO WHAT'S NEXT

We've played **67** of the year's  
most anticipated games.  
But at this point, **some of**  
them actually suck.  
Get the real scoop on  
which games will be  
worth your money....



**How to use this guide:**  
Too busy to read all those pesky words? Get the scoop from these handy icons.





**S**

uffering through the summer's gaming drought can be rough—with few titles landing on shelves, you're left either tackling your

backlog (that dusty copy of *Ninja Gaiden* isn't going to beat itself, son) or venturing into the harsh sunlight. Here's another option: Read *EGM's* handy guide to what you should (or should not) be playing later this year. Our gaming experts spent quality time with each game here and are all too happy to share their opinions on the early versions tested. Bear in mind, a lot can change before these titles reach store shelves, so don't give up hope if your most-wanted game sounds a bit crappy.



(Note: If a multiplatform game was playable for Xbox 360, we chose to group this write-up with other Xbox 360 games, and our screenshots pertain only to the Xbox 360 version of the title.)



Multiplatform

Attention, true believers: Beetle makes his ultimate universe debut in *Ultimate Spider-Man*.

# ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN



PS2/XB/GC • Activision • Fall 2005

**The basics:** You won't have to wait until the next Spidey flick hits the big screen in 2007 to assume the role of the famous webslinger. Enter *Ultimate Spider-Man*, a fresh action-adventure title based on the Marvel comic of the same name. For those of us not into the mylar-bag scene, *USM* takes the familiar pantheon of *Spider-Man* characters and reimagines them both visually and narratively, remixing the well-known story of Peter Parker. And if you are into the comic, you're in luck: The game features a story and dialogue written by renowned *Ultimate Spider-Man* comic scribe Brian Michael Bendis, and the plot fits into comic continuity right after the end

of the Venom story line from issues #33 to #39. Which...uh, we hear were pretty good. Like the previous titles based on the *Spider-Man* movies, *USM* unfolds in an open-ended, mission-based fashion—some tasks will advance the plot, while others simply allow you to zip around New York City spreading do-goodery. But this game sports a twist its film-derived cousins sorely lack: Venom. Yep, you can take the fan-favorite villain for a destructive stroll around New York City. You'll be consuming pedestrians, throwing cars, and generally wreaking havoc as this other-worldly arthropod. Cue the player-controlled death-tentacles choking Aunt May.

**How was it?** I can't comment on *USM* without first tackling its graphics—the game employs the same underlying engine from *Spider-Man 2*, but with a new comic-book-inspired visual style. I was admittedly skeptical at first, as I didn't want this to turn into a cartoony game for tots. Thankfully, my fears were unfounded: The visuals really look like Mark Bagley's comic illustrations, but in fluid 3D motion. Also, the art team deftly dodges the pitfalls of other cartoon-style games by giving the characters more detail and shadowing to prevent the "flat" look. Expect a parade of copycat comic-book games in its wake... Here, Spider-Man controls a little differ-

ently than you might expect. Remember, he's only 15 years old in the Ultimate universe, so he hasn't quite perfected his fighting chops yet. So, combat this time around is more about engaging multiple targets by bouncing between them. Rather than beating up one enemy before moving to the next, it's better to give one guy a few punches, jump-kick another dude, and then score a few hits on a third enemy before finishing off the first guy. It's a bit chaotic, but I was able to get the hang of it after a few minutes. I also noticed that the developers have switched back to the infinite web-swinging of the first movie-based game. While this lacks the realism of

## THE SIMS 2

PS2/XB/GC • EA Games • November 2005

Back on track after an ill-advised trip to *The Urbz*, this latest installment borrows directly from its hit PC cousin—you control your Sims' aspirations, genetic patterns, and wants and fears. The graphics are even more up close and personal, with more detailed facial animations. —J.T.



## RAINBOW 6: LOCKDOWN

PS2/XB • Ubisoft • September 2005

Tom Clancy's sharpshooting squad tackles another terrorist threat, but only the Xbox version seems worthy. Its persistent online personas blow away the PS2 build's simpler Rainbows-versus-mercenaries play. The PS2 version also locks shabbier, and its solo missions are marred by spotty AI. (seek cover stupid!). —S.E.





■ You call them Innocents...  
Venom calls them health pickups.



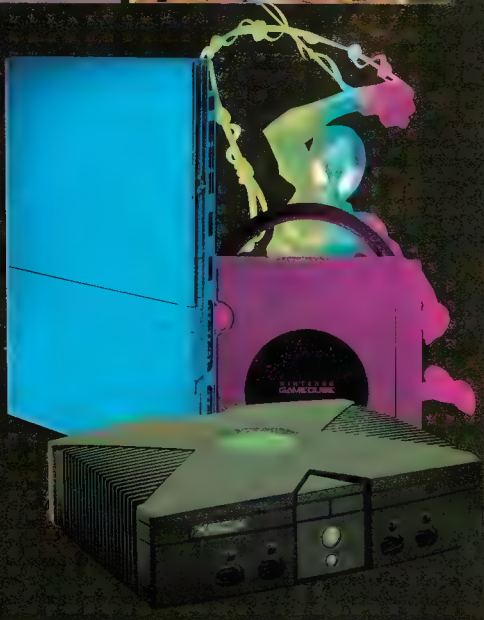
■ Jaywalkers get  
what they deserve.

*Spider-Man 2's* building-to-building gliding, it does make getting around the metropolis a tad easier.

Playing as Spidey felt fine, if a bit predictable... I was much more psyched to control *Venom*. My hands-on time didn't disappoint. He doesn't have the Superball agility of *Spider-Man*, but he makes up for it in strength. *Venom* is a brawler and uses his symbiote tentacles to lash and grab his enemies, making for a much more brutal experience. Plus, he's not grounded—swinging with his suit's tentacles gets him nearly anywhere Spidey can go. *Venom's* suit also constantly drains his health, even when he's standing still, so

to stay alive, you must prey on the citizens of New York by absorbing them into the suit. Of course, you can also suck life from other superheroes...or villains.

"When we started this project, I made a list of things I thought we absolutely could not do in the game, like having a boss fight between two villains in the middle of Times Square," said Director Brian Reed. "Well, we're doing those things." I played through this particular boss battle, a pivotal duel between *Venom* and *Electro*, and it was like the climactic scene in a summer movie extravaganza, much exploding, many people fleeing, and a lot of satisfying property damage. —*Travis Meacham*



## BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT

**PS2/XB • EA Games • November 2005**

Was it worth it for EA to delay this game a full year to add a single-player mode, or a touch call? The campaign mode lets you choose your control of any comments... or just remember he's parachuting, piloting the Helo overhead, or starting down a soldier... (2005) Don't read anymore, please, it's...



## SHADOW THE HEDGEHOG

**PS2/XB/PC • Sega • Fall 2005**

While some fans cried foul at Sonic's rival toting a pistol, we're actually all for it: Gunplay makes the combat here far more engaging than in past 3D *Sonic* games. Too bad slippery controls and copious deaths from falling off edges bring the fast-paced firefights to a screeching halt.

—*S.B.*





■ A screenshot from the new *King Kong* game. Not pictured: King Kong.



■ To quote that famous Killion poster: Hang in there.

## TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND

PS2/XB • Eidos • December 2005

**The basics:** *Legend* is a back-to-the-roots re-envisioning of Lara Croft's musty franchise. Eidos jumpstarted the series by handing it over to developer Crystal Dynamics, which hired Croft creator Toby Gard to lend a hand. "It's nice to see a group of people who take Lara and *Tomb Raider* so seriously," Gard says.

**How was it?** After six games that failed to evolve Lara Croft's clunky, prehistoric control scheme, she finally moves like a 21st-century game hero. Think *Prince of Persia*—Croft soars from ledge to ledge and swings from pole to pole with the greatest of ease. Lara's leaps feel a little more user-friendly, too. As long as Lara lands near a ledge or pole, she'll extend her arms and latch on automatically—even if you're not lined up perfectly. Slip off a cliff and she'll save herself with a last-second grab, thus saving you from lots of cheap-death frustration.

That's not to say death doesn't surround her. We saw halls crammed with spinning-blade traps and other nasty surprises. Fortunately, Lara comes with a new grapple that makes swinging over spike-filled chasms easy. The gizmo factors into the game's newly streamlined puzzles, too. She uses the grapple, for instance, to haul over a raft and pull her way across a subterranean river. For the first time in years, the series feels back on track. —Crispin Boyer



■ Lara never had to worry: You landed who didn't catch.

Multiplatform

## PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG

XB360/PS2/XB/GC • Ubisoft • November 2005

**The basics:** Giant monsters getting modern-day makeovers—it happened to Godzilla and Anna Nicole Smith, and now it's King Kong's turn. Director Peter Jackson (the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy) is bringing the big ape from the 1933 and 1976 flicks back to the big screen this December, and Michel Ancel (*Beyond Good & Evil*) is doing the honors on the videogame adaptation. You play part of the game as Jack Driscoll, a squishable human (Adrian Brody in the flick) exploring King Kong's crib, Skull Island, a land lost in time. When you're not first-person shooting and adventuring as Jack,

you're third-person pounding and smashing as Kong himself.

**How was it?** Awesome! We're as tired of movie-to-game lameness as you guys, but this one's different. The first-person bits were exciting and tense...with a sense of dread as you and your human companions are running through the dark jungle, escaping loathly dinosaurs, giant centipedes, and other lost-world dangers. But you're not just shooting anything big that moves. Rampaging Tyrannosaurus rexes nipping at your ass? Light a grassy field on fire

with your spear torch to reroute them...or drop a juicy pterodactyl to get them to stop and chow, buying you a few precious moments. You're constantly thinking about the situation around you, because pure force isn't going to help you survive on Skull Island.

Playing as King Kong could've been a game-design disaster, but when he's smashing through skyscraping wooden doors, lifting massive stone pillars, or tearing a velociraptor's two jaws apart, you really feel the raw sense of power and strength surging from the TV screen to your controller. —Dan "Shoe" Hsu



## MARVEL NEMESIS: RISE OF THE IMPERFECTS

PS2/XB/GC • EA Games • October 2005

**The basics:** Beloved Marvel superheroes like Wolverine and Iron Man duke it out with a bunch of no-name mutants (now starring in their own original comic book series) co-designed with EA. It's the dream matchup no one ever wanted.

**How was it?** *Nemesis* certainly looks sharp, with an inventive visual style that

uses harsh lighting to make spandex-clad fighters seem serious. Fights move briskly, with free movement enhanced by super mobility moves mapped to the left trigger button: Spider-Man zips around on webs while newcomer Johnny Ohm zaps himself skyward with electricity.

But being pretty and fast only gets you so far in the fighting arena: An excess of

exploding barrels and a lack of defensive options turned many a mighty brawl into a game of hyperkinetic mutant dodgeball. The game was enjoyable but didn't yet offer much in the way of technique. It's got the makings of a solid action experience, but *Nemesis* still needs a lot of work to be considered a serious fighting game. —Justin Speer

## STARCRIFT: GHOST

PS2/XB/GC • VU Games • Spring 2006

Delays can be a good thing. Case in point: *StarCraft: Ghost*. After the game's original developer got the pink slip last year, the cleanup crew at Swingin' Ape Studios (responsible for the surprise hit *Metral Arms*) has successfully mixed heroine Nova's sneaky nature (cloaking, stealth kills) with a bit more gunplay. —B.J.



## MORTAL KOMBAT: SHAOLIN MONKS

PS2/XB • Midway • Fall 2005

This cooperative *Mortal Kombat* brawler actually felt a bit like smash hit *God of War*. Well, just a bit. My monk barely broke a sweat busting heads behind, beside, and ahead of him with his signature chop socky and razor-rimmed sombrero. Plus, spry stunts and brain-bending puzzles add variety to the violence. —S.E.



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Multiplatform

# THE GODFATHER



■ Get your hands off my salami, twinkie toes!

**XB360/PS2/XB • EA Games • November 2005**

**The basics:** *Grand Theft Auto*'s got the '80s and '90s covered, and the Don's now about to start a turf war, so his game hearskens back to the '40s and '50s, when cars were black and suits were brown, but green (money) and red (blood) still determined who's king of the streets. The game's story line weaves in and out of the events in the classic Mario Puze book and Coppola film of the same name.

**How was it?** The *GTA* games are big 'uns, with new areas or cities to open up as you progress and enough minigames and side activities to keep the violence-lovin' corrupt youth of America busy for weeks and weeks. And while *The Godfather* seems more epic because of its grand Mafia tale, it also feels more limited in scope. From what I've seen so far, the very brown, old-timey New York doesn't seem to offer

much in terms of variety in environments, but in the final game, you'll see more of the city as you take over territories from rival families. Side missions include breaking up illegal rackets (to make them your own, of course) and "convincing" local shops that you're their new landlord and need the rent money, but you won't be playing basketball or lifting weights here—everything fits into the *Godfather* context.

Combat's the best part of *The Godfather* so far. You can target and shoot individual body parts, which is no big deal. But when it's time to get up close and personal, you have several melee options: throw a guy against a wall or off the roof, punch with quick jabs or giant haymakers...even choke a guy to death while feeling his heartbeat fade through your controller's vibrations.

—D.H.



# BURNOUT: REVENGE

**PS2/XB • EA Games • September 2005**



**The basics:** Drive fast. Crash hard.

**How was it?** *Revenge* might as well be an IV of adrenaline pumping into my veins. It has the same intense traffic-baffling action as *Burnout 3*, though don't expect the same huge jump in quality that you saw from *Burnout 2* to 3.

You won't see a lot of new modes, but now, the tracks have more alternate

paths and side ramps, which means more room for the cars to bump around in. Also, regular traffic on the road doesn't automatically mean instant death anymore. With the exception of oncoming cars, big rigs, and buses, you can barrel right through all normal traffic without missing a beat. This makes the game a lot less frustrating—and less challenging—than *Burnout 3*.

—D.H.



# THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO

**PS2/XB • Atari • November 2005**

**The basics:** Let's pretend *Enter the Matrix* (or the last two flicks) never happened. Aren't you psyched to play as Neo?

**How was it?** Hold off on swallowing the blue pill—you may actually want to see how deep this rabbit hole goes. No, seriously. Unlike *ETM*, *Path of Neo* has the style and substance of today's top action games. Playing through the famous lobby scene from the first movie was almost too



intense—gunshots caused chunks of marble to fill the atmosphere, leading me to soar through the air, capping enemies near and far (in bullet-time, of course). It only got better during a slick training mission in which Neo sliced and diced foes with a katana in a snowy field straight outta an old samurai movie. Some janky camera issues threatened to neutralize the fun, but it's nothing that can't be ironed out before release.

—Bryan Iltner

# CASTLEVANIA: CURSE OF DARKNESS

**PS2/XB • Konami • Fall 2005**

With nearly every other upcoming action title feeling like a *Dynasty Warriors* clone, it's nice to see *Castlevania* remain true to its adventuring roots. Here, a detailed system of monster familiars adds plentiful strategy to both combat and exploration. The visuals could definitely use another coat of gloss, though...

—S.B.



# 007: FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

**PS2/XB/GC • EA Games • October 2005**

Surrounded by chaos and explosions, Sean Connery's Bond gets plenty of mileage out of his license to kill with a quick-targeting system that lets you lock on and shoot with incredible precision—better warn the bar guys with grenades on their balls. The jet-pack handled nicely, but was a bit overused. Don't get carried away, 0. —J.S.

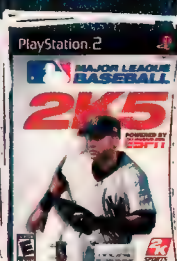


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## Xbox 360



### NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED



Also on: PS2/XB/GC • EA Games • November 2005

**The basics:** In *Most Wanted*, the Man finally cracks down on *Underground's* import tuning and open-city racing, so you'll have to outrun your fellow street racers and a half dozen smokies.

**How was it?** Only the Xbox360 version was playable, and though it was a one car, one track drag-race-only demo, it did look pretty damn good. My clearly not stock BMW M3 appeared almost photo-realistic, and the asphalt—not something I've ever been moved to comment on in any other game—was networked with tiny and not so tiny cracks. As I barreled out of a dark tunnel into sunlight (that's right, street racing isn't just for nighttime anymore) the screen was washed-out white for a split second to simulate the

■ Street racer by day, pizza delivery boy by night.

way a human iris adjusts to large brightness changes. Lovely.

The difference in gameplay feel between *Most Wanted* and its predecessors isn't very noticeable, though. I used the new Speedbreaker feature (think slow-mo bullet time for cars) to drive underneath a semi-trailer; it works well and looks cool, but it's nothing that hasn't already been done in *Midnight Club* and countless action games like *Max Payne*.  
—Demian Linn

### DEAD RISING

Capcom • Fall 2005

**The basics:** You're a down-on-your-luck photojournalist trapped in a mall with thousands of zombies. This, however, isn't a key-finding, herb-eating adventure. Grab a chain saw, golf club, potted plant, baseball bat—anything you can get your hands on—and send the living dead to their raw linoleum-floor graves.

**How was it?** Needing a lot of work before anyone can call it fun, that's for sure. I was excited by the concept: a beat-em-up game where everything you see (including the zombies themselves) is a weapon. And the *Dawn of the Dead* stuck-in-a-mall setting is straight out of a nightmare—perfect for a videogame. But everything's just plain ugly and clunky. Your character looks like the love child of Jay Leno and *Grand Theft Auto III's* nameless antihero, and the bland and lifeless



■ Your grocer's freezer hasn't been this thrilling since the introduction of Micro Shakes.

stores aren't any fun to explore. It's hard to tell why this is a next-gen Xbox 360 game, other than seeing one stage that was filled with hundreds of zombies at once (that'll be the new gaming cliché for the next generation of games: hundreds of anything onscreen at the same time).

To be fair, the developers haven't yet fig-

ured out what they're going to do with the photojournalist side of the game. They're considering having you take pictures in a hunt for a virtual Pulitzer Prize, trade photos on Xbox 360's online marketplace, and more. Anything that would spice up the gameplay would be welcome.

—B.J.

### TEST DRIVE: UNLIMITED

Atari • Fall 2005

In the world of *Ridge Racer*, *Gran Turismo*, and *Need for Speed*, the *Test Drive* series has always played fourth fiddle. *Unlimited*, set across an open-ended Hawaii, tries to change that hierarchy, but it still feels like we've been there and done that. It's possible that the online action could add some much-needed character.  
—A.P.



### TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06

Also on: PS2/XB/GC • EA Sports • Fall 2005

Tiger's final next-gen foray finds him in fine form. Aside from the new visual fireworks (easy-to-distinguish grass types and course contours, sunlight glistering off a water hazard, promises of a fan-filled grandstand), you can now easily adjust where your club strikes the ball, thus giving you even greater control over its final destination.  
—B.J.







Evil lurks  
in the shadows.

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GAME BOY ADVANCE SP



Fantasy Violence

Xbox 360

# FULL AUTO

Sega • November 2005

The basics: "Everything is breakable," said William Ho, lead designer of this *Twisted Metal*-meets-*Burnout* combat racer, as his car's chain gun blew up a fuel storage tank, which in turn knocked down half of a nearby building onto a semi and two rivals.

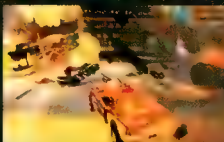
**How was it?** At first glance I thought *Full Auto* was an Xbox game, but then I saw the amazing amount of physics and general chaos happening at any given moment.

*Full Auto* makes *Burnout 3*'s formerly spectacular crashes look like a special-ed, kid smacking Matchbox cars together.

With so much going on, it's easy to find yourself sucked into the maelstrom of flying metal. But if you wreck, you can "unwreck"—hold down a button and rewind time a few seconds, long enough to reconsider firing a missile at that fuel tanker you were tailgating before it went kaboom, taking out you and half a city block. My only complaint so far is that the controls felt a little loose, but a few months of work can fix that. —D.L.



Oliver Stone drives in style to pick up a mission.



The locals politely ask if you could possibly spare some change.

# CONDEMNED: CRIMINAL ORIGINS



Sega • Fall 2005

The basics: Wild-eyed winos bum rush you with boards, pipes, and other back-alley objects. As a forensic sleuth, it's your lot to suss out their sudden inanity while simultaneously tracking a serial killer.

**How was it:** So far, *Condemned's* CSI-style snooping—performed with a black-light scanning tool based on actual technology—feels incidental to the undetective-like task of harassing the homeless; its brick-and-bat bum fights, however, are hardcore. The city's firebrand unfortunates seem

solid-bodied, breathing alive. Clobber one with a length of steel, and his head snaps back like a ball on a short string. Wallop 'em with a board, and he'll spit blood, scream through broken teeth, and stagger blindly. We haven't seen this sort of first-person, hands-on neck wringing since breakout Xbox hit *Hiddick*.

What Sega's trek into unsavory territory needs now—at least if it wants to srew with our spines and our stomachs—is the suggestion of plot and purpose in its miasma of madness. —Shawn Elliott

## TOP SPIN 2

2K Sports • Fall 2005

Deeper selection of shot types. Check. Player animations as smooth as the original's. Check. All-new mixed-double matches. Check. Next-gen graphics. Ch...err, I don't think so. That's not to say visuals mean everything, but on Xbox360 I was hoping that the game's tennis pros would look slightly less like zombies. —B.L.



## NHL 2K6

Also on: PS2/XB • 2K Sports • Fall 2005

This is the Xbox360 version of 2K Sports' hockey franchise? You could've fooled me, because I barely noticed the difference between this and the PS2 edition. Sure, the gameplay remains as solid as ever, but how 'bout showing puck fans just how good this sport can look on a next-gen machine? And shinier ice doesn't count. —B.L.



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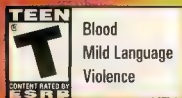
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Xbox



■ Good luck finding a sinker for these crabs.



# HALF-LIFE 2



**VU Gamés • September 2005**

The basics: Watch it: Tall walking striders skewer insurgents with telephone-pole legs, camera-eyed bots follow your every footstep, and turcoat collaborators shepherd you through turnstiles like human livestock. The alien visitors in visionary single-player PC shooter *Half-Life 2* are not our friends.

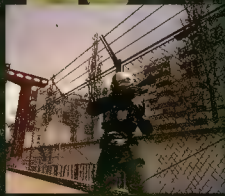
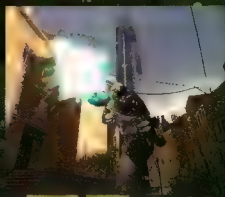
In his efforts to send earth's off-world oppressors packing, geeky hero Gordon Freeman loses the lab coat for a crowbar, and later, a gravity-manipulating gun that can suck in and shoot out grenades, saw blades, garbage, you name it. Why the fuss over one weapon? It's as much a sidekick as it is a sidearm—use it to shield your-

self from bullets, flip alien bugs onto their backs, and right your ride (an open-topped, turbo-boosting buggy) when bad driving overtuns it.

**How was it?** A bit of bad news first: The PC powerhouse pushes the Xbox's limits, even on its least processing-intensive levels (the part I played suffered screen-freezing fits and starts when an army of flesheaters attacked, and again when barrels blew up). On top of that, strafing control still seems sort of slippery and could spell trouble where precise jumping puzzles are concerned.

Now for the impressive part: If develop-

er Valve polishes its port up, Xbox owners can look forward to one sizzling late summer with an ambient adventure as good as it gets—a game where power lines shudder and sway under the downwash of passing drophips; where citters tunnel through soil, tracking the telltale fall of footsteps (later, you'll learn to control them with pharomone pods harvested from the corpses of their queens); where uncannily clever shocktroops coordinate search patterns, pin you with fire, then put pressure on your flank; and where each lifelike level has a feel all its own. Plus, what else are you going to buy for your Xbox this year? —S.E.



## STUBBS THE ZOMBIE

**Aspyr • September 2005**

As undead traveling salesman Stubbs, you'll turn the residents of a sleepy town into the shambling undead by eating one brain at a time. Stubbs moved a little slowly ("We're working on it," said a rep), but this quirky third-person action game (with a killer soundtrack) has the makings of a sleeper hit. —D.L.



## BLAZING ANGELS

**Ubisoft • November 2005**

*Blazing Angels* should be instantly familiar to anyone who's picked up the yoke in games like *Secret Weapons Over Normandy*: It features fast and simple arcade dogfighting set in the European theater. *Angels* doesn't seem to deviate too far from formula (shoot down the Nazis), but the execution is spot-on. —A.P.



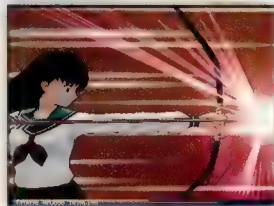
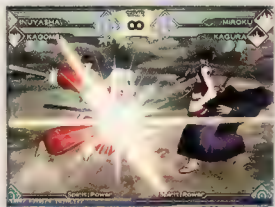
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PlayStation 2

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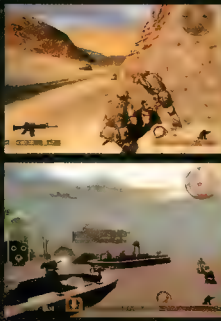


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## PlayStation 2



■ The ability to pilot vehicles like tanks, jeeps, and boats (right) mixes up gameplay.



# SOCOM 3: U.S. NAVY SEALs



Sony CEA • October 2005

**The basics:** Sony's immensely popular team-based online shooter returns with some hefty enhancements: 32-player matches, controllable vehicles, and a revamped matchmaking interface.

**How was it?** In the interest of full disclosure, you should know that I've spent some serious time with *SOCOM 3* (I wrote the *Official PlayStation Magazine's* recent cover story on it), so when I recently got a

second chance to play it, I wasn't surprised to see the awesomely huge levels, the 32-player games, and the extensive use of vehicles. It was also no surprise to see control, the new game mode, with its capture-and-defend gameplay. What was surprising—no, perhaps “shocking” would be a better word—was how incredibly smoothly the game was running. For a series that's been slammed for online lag, seeing a speedy 24-player game was a



very big deal. And knowing that each one of those players was using a completely customized weapon (courtesy of the game's new weapon-mod system) made it all the more impressive. But this was just one level, and getting one level into shape for a demo is one thing—getting 12 into shape for public consumption is another thing entirely. If nothing else, it proves that bigger levels, more players, and vehicles can be done without lag. —*Joe Rybicki*

# RATCHET: DEADLOCKED



Sony CEA • November 2005

**The basics:** Ratchet starts his newest adventure with a standard-issue set of body armor, as well as a Deadlock necklace—if he doesn't garner high ratings on a *Running Man*-style game show (that happens to play like a squad-based shooter), he'll be blown to bits.

**How was it?** Why does Ratchet suddenly look like Master Chief? Is this turning into *Halo*? Not really, but this series is moving even deeper into action-shooter territory: The entire single-player mode is played with a squad of intelligent robots that Ratchet can command and upgrade. The number of weapons has been reduced to 10, but customizable upgrade paths give players a high degree of control over their arsenals. It's more intense and violent than past games, but also more rewarding...especially with a pal in spitscreen offline co-op. And the five online multiplayer modes add infinite replayability. —*Andrew Vestal*



■ How this is one futuristic hoodle.



# PHANTASY STAR UNIVERSE

Sega • Winter 2006

**The basics:** This follow-up to *Phantasy Star Online*, Sega's genre-defining online action-RPG, melds cooperative online play, a full-fledged offline adventure, and the promise of interpecies marriage.

**How was it?** The version I played offered two offline missions showcasing the

game's wide-open vistas and skillfully reworked combat. Upgrades abound: Strafing and first-person gunplay further deepen the combo-based battles, and the teammate A.I. won't embarrass you during boss encounters. Still, I'm skeptical until I know more about its online mode (voice chat? number of players?). —*S.B.*

# GENJI: DAWN OF THE SAMURAI

Sony CEA • Fall 2005

Ex-Capcom bigwig Yoshiki Okamoto breaks new ground with a historically based samurai slasher that includes two playable characters and...OK, so it's basically an *Onimusha* rip-off. As long as the rest of *Genji* is as good as what we played—with its sharp graphics and fluid, intuitive combat—we don't mind some déjà vu. —*M.M.*



# RADIATA STORIES

Square Enix • Fall 2005

Try to look past the cutesy Precious Moments character designs—this is a serious RPG. Packed with a lightning-quick real-time battle system, colossal dungeons to traverse, and a wacky friendship system (in which you attempt to win all the game's townsfolk over to your cause), *Radiata* should keep you busy for eons. —*S.B.*



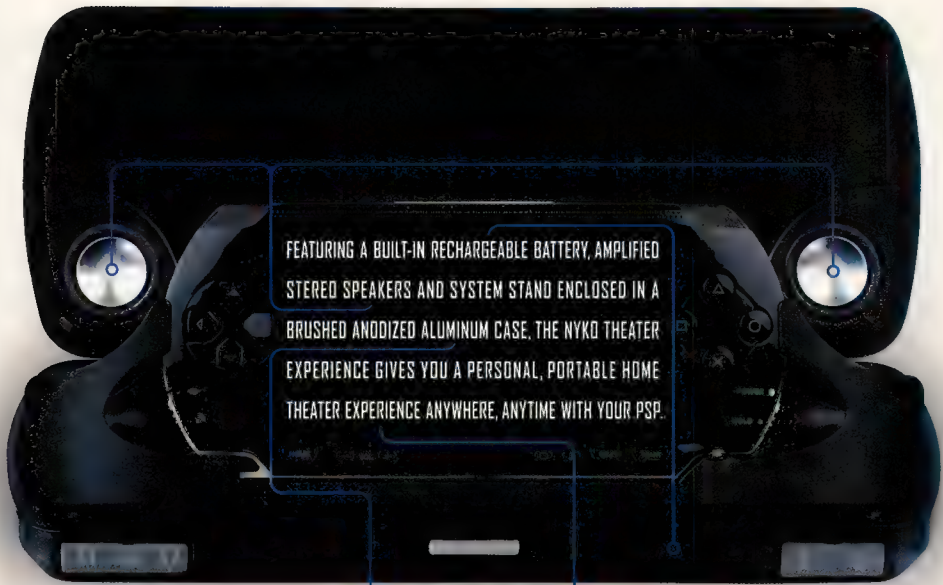
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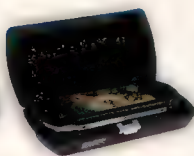
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PlayStation 2

# KINGDOM HEARTS II



Square Enix • November 2005

**The basics:** "To me, *Kingdom Hearts II* is like a monster—but in a good way," says Director Tetsuya Nomura. "The game is just so huge." He's right: The anticipated follow-up to Square Enix's action-RPG that blends the worlds of Disney and *Final Fantasy* is roughly twice the size of the original. Set one year after *Chain of Memories* (GBA), *KH2* will send Sora and co. to new Disney-themed worlds, including areas based on *Steamboat Willie* (Mickey Mouse's 1928 debut), *The Lion King*, *Lilo & Stitch*, and even live-action fare such as *Pirates of the Caribbean* (attention lady gamers: look for a realistic-looking Capt. Jack Sparrow to join your party). Also, Nomura promises that the Gummi Ship will be "more than just a means of transportation...it's equivalent to being on a ride at a Disney amusement park."

**How was it?** This one's...well, full of heart. For starters, the camera—the biggest problem with the first game—is vastly improved and rarely obstructs your view of enemies. The fighting has also received a nice kick in the pants. While playing the demo, I joined forces with *FFX*'s Auron for spectacular double-team attacks against Hades' three-headed canine; plus, thanks to the new "instant command action" (activated when pressing the Triangle button at the right time), I was able to slide under Mulan's flying fish boss and dish out some serious damage to its tummy. And who says you need the power of the next-gen consoles to litter a battlefield with characters; during the *Mulan* stage, I fought off literally hundreds of Heartless on a snow-covered mountain. Awesome indeed. —*B.J.*



Bight attacks!



# DRAGON QUEST VIII

Square Enix • November 2005

**The basics:** Japan's most beloved role-playing franchise (previously known on these shores as *Dragon Warrior*) tries once again to snuggle up with Western questers with this latest installment.

**How was it?** With *Final Fantasy XII* pushed into mid-2006, *DQ8* should easily grab the RPG crown this fall. This series

has always offered fantastic depth (want to focus on making out your heroine's sex appeal skills? Go right ahead), and fundamentally engrossing gameplay, but always looked and sounded archaic. Not anymore—this game looks fantastic, with vast fields to explore, stylish anime-style characters, and dazzling special effects. —*Shane Bettenhausen*



# OKAMI



Capcom • 2006

**The basics:** Just your usual adventure game—chatting with townspeople, battling enemies, and solving puzzles, all in your quest to vanquish evil and bring peace back to the land. But with its folk-lore-steeped story, unique art style, innovative combat system, and wolf-god hero Amaterasu, *Okami* is anything but typical.

**How was it?** Amazing. *Okami*'s animated-ink look caught our eye when we first saw it a year ago, but what impressed us when we played it was how well the graphics blend into the gameplay. At any time, you can stop the game and bring up a giant calligraphy brush over the frozen



screen; using the analog stick, you can then "paint" various simple shapes over the scene for different effects. Cut enemies in half (a straight stroke across them), blast a gust of wind (a loop-de-loop) to clear obstacles, or make a sun in the sky (a simple circle) to shed some light on your surroundings.

The rest of the game was likewise awe-inspiring. As good as these screens look, in motion the graphics spring to life: breathtaking vistas; huge, terrifying boss monsters; even the insides of villagers' huts look amazing. It's no wonder *Okami* already has buzz as one of the best great PS2 games. —*Mark MacDonald*

# DEVIL KINGS

Capcom • Fall 2005

I liked this game better when it was called *Dynasty Warriors*. This blatant rip-off of the popular army-of-one vs. armies-of-many hack-n-slash series puts more focus on fancy special moves. But sheesh, outside of that, *Devil Kings* looks, feels, and plays just like *DW*, from the slashing combos all the way down to the health pickups. —*D.H.*



# JAK X: COMBAT RACING

Sony CEA • October 2005

Kudos to developer Naughty Dog for not making this another derivative kart racer. Sharp visuals, tight control, and shocking-yet good physics make this a delight to play. The story's still too corny and overwrought for its own good, but reducing the *Jak* series to one type of gameplay has done wonders for its quality. —*S.B.*





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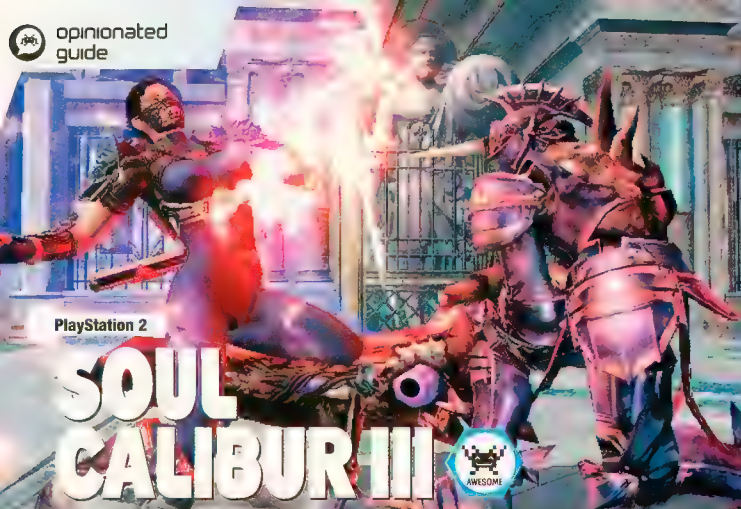
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PlayStation 2

# SOUL CALIBUR III



**Namco • October 2005**

**The basics:** This third (fourth if you count series predecessor *Soul Blade*) iteration of Namco's weapon-based fighter focuses on giving players an incredible amount of content. Sadly, that content won't include system-specific characters like Link, Helicchi, and Spaw—this puppy's coming only to the PS2. Still, three all-new fighters and a create-a-character mode (in which you can choose everything from a character's fighting style to the width of his eyebrows) will help fill the void.

**How was it?** Absolutely brilliant, even though Namco's keeping most of the goodies under wraps: Only five characters were available for versus play when I test-drove *Soul Calibur III*. But that little taste was enough to appreciate its quality. For the hardcore fans, SC3 feels a little different than previous games. *Soul Calibur*-style guard impacts return—so you now have four options instead of two—and the game feels a lot faster than ever before. Many of the other changes were subtle: I spotted

tweaks to the arsenals of Mitsurugi, Kik, Astaroth, and Cassandra that made them slightly more offense friendly. And newcomer Tira pulled off some bizarre maneuvers with her razor-sharp hula hoop.

It's too bad I couldn't try out the complex new fighter-creation system, as it should add an amazing amount of depth. Namco promises that you can outfit characters with weapons not found in the game proper, like shuriken. If only they could add online play... —*Andrew Alfonso*

# SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

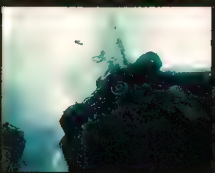
**Sony CEA • Fall 2005**

**The basics:** It's the next game from the guy behind cult hit *Ico*, so expectations and oversaturated light effects have both been set to maximum. A young boy, having lost a loved one, brings her inert body to a temple. There, he is given a task: defeat the roaming colossi to bring her back. So, sword in hand, the boy hops on his horse and sets off to slay the towering beasts.

**How was it?** Epic, enthralling, and otherworldly. The boy starts his quest at the temple in the center of a massive wasteland. You ride on horseback, hunting colossi and dismounting for a brief platforming section before facing each one. Once a colossus has been spotted, it must be

taken down. Raising the sword identifies the colossi's current weak point, which changes and moves during the battle. The colossi themselves are huge, multi-tiered environments, with platforms, fur, limbs, weapons, wings, and—don't they like the little boy climbing on them one bit. The dynamic feel of a boy struggling to take down creatures dozens of times his size is incredible, and the way the colossi buck, twist, thrash, and swat at their interloper makes for good drama and good gameplay.

The game's artistic vision pushes the PS2 hardware to the limit...yielding some choppy, sluggish visuals and collision problems. Luckily, the developers still have a few months to fix it... —*AV*



# WE LOVE KATAMARI

**Namco • October 2005**

**The basics:** Early in 2004, quirky was still defined as "peculiar" or "idiosyncratic." Then sometime during the year, the definition changed to "that game where you roll around a ball of junk." It's back, with the same cool gameplay, graphics, and music. Most notably, this sequel adds two-player co-op, which should make this already accessible title even more friendly to the casual crowd.

**How was it?** The two-player control scheme takes a bit of getting used to, but it's exactly what anyone who played through the first *Katamari* wanted. Expanded two-player battle modes will also be welcome additions—the first game's versus mode was severely limited. "If someone was in first place, it was really tough for the other person to get back into it," says Namco's Glen Cureton. "We've changed that around to give everyone a better chance to compete."

The game looks almost identical to the original, which is a good thing, and the more complicated goals—making a snowman or rolling around a hungry sumo wrestler, for example—should extend gameplay beyond the first game's somewhat simplistic structure. The changes may be small, but they should add up to a ball everybody can roll with. —*Jennifer Tsao*



# ONIMUSHA 4: DAWN OF DREAMS

**Capcom • Winter 2005**

Welcome changes abound, including less linear play, an RPG-like leveling-up system, and an A.I.-controlled partner. Yet it doesn't seem like enough, as the soul of this series—the hack-n-slash action—is starting to wear. And please, fix the camera (it's set too close and you're continually forced to autocorrect). —*B.I.*



# MARC ECKO'S GETTING UP

**Atari • September 2005**

Climb around the city to tag hard-to-reach billboards and then increase your reputation as a graffiti artist by using your analog stick to play a simplistic preschool "color inside the lines" minigame. Not very hip, really. At least the lush, climb-anywhere environments show promise as the setting for a Fresh Prince of Persia game. —*J.L.*



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■ Bosses don't only hang out in musty dungeons—here, Link jousts an enemy leader on a perilous bridge.



■ Link jousts an enemy leader on a perilous bridge.

GameCube

# THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS



Nintendo • November 2005

**The basics:** Each new chapter in Nintendo's most revered franchise tackles the same concept—heroic elf boy battles monsters, saves chick, saves world—in a brave new way. *Twilight Princess* pulls a complete 180 from the last GameCube iteration, *The Wind Waker*, shirking off that game's kiddified visual trappings and waterlogged nautical gameplay in favor of a return to the realistic environments, darker

themes, and horseback action of 1998's *Ocarina of Time* (Nintendo 64).

In fact, the story line takes place a few decades after *Ocarina's*, although the Link that you control is, in the words of Director Eiji Aonuma, "a new Link." This Link must contend with a creepy, otherworldly menace known as simply "the Twilight" that threatens to envelop the entire realm of Hyrule, transforming it into a barren, dark wasteland. This twilight holds bizarre mysteries: When Link steps into it, he transforms into a wolf, handing players an all-new array of attacks and special abilities to master.

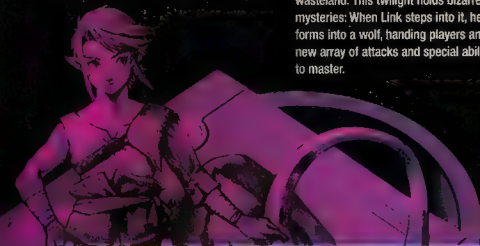
**Was it?** Sady, the version I played did not feature any sections in which Link became his lupine alter ego, but luckily, I still witnessed plenty of gameplay variety. In the game's initial village, I wasted plenty of time messing around as "Cowboy Link," herding goats on my trusty horse, canoeing downstream, tracking down lost puppies, gliding around with chickens, summoning my pet hawk to knock down a beehive, practicing my swordplay on a dummy, and exploring hidden nooks and crannies in the peaceful hamlet. I'm always amazed by how much enjoyment Nintendo can pack into a tiny, tranquil little town.

Next up, I tackled a horseback combat section on a vast, rolling plain. The sheer size of this location astounded me—it offered an even greater sense of scale than Hyrule Field (the central hub in *Ocarina of Time*), but with nonstop action, as I fended off attackers from every side. This battle segued into a thrilling (and surprisingly tough) duel on horseback, as I jousted with

the enemy leader who rode a hideous boar. Dramatic stuff, indeed.

All of that felt like a warm-up for the true meat of a *Zelda* experience—a complex, engaging dungeon. Spelunking through this Forest Temple reminded me of what's so amazing about the series' labyrinths: Each one offers a cleverly designed location, plenty of enemies to smite, tricky puzzles to solve, and well-hidden secrets to uncover. This one adds two extra elements to further deepen the fun: First, Link recruits a band of helpful monkeys to swing him across expansive pits, and second, he also discovers a new toy, the Gale Boomerang, that can hit multiple targets with tiny whirlwinds. You'll have to master these new techniques to reach the dungeon's boss, a colossal, man-eating plant that, in proper *Zelda* tradition, requires a fair amount of mental prowess to defeat.

Now, the hardest part will be waiting until November to reenter this enchanting world... —S.B.



Nintendo • Fall 2005

issue commands to your army via the GameCube's microphone...while playing pinball...in feudal Japan? I wasn't grossed out by the strange marriage of real-time strategy and pinball because I had a blast multitasking on its battlefields—ordering my men to "Charge!" while knocking our enemy barricades with my ball. —J.L.



Nintendo • October 2005

Remember the last GameCube Pokéfest, *Pokémon Colosseum*? This is just like that, only with a new cast and plot. The single-player quest seems a tad more involved, but the plain-Jane visuals and predictable battles don't impress. Pokémaniacal kids will buy it just to see Shadow Lugia (the game's new critter), of course. —J.S.



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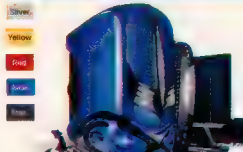


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■ One cool feature absent in the GBA versions: Here, you can zoom out for a wider view of the battle.

GameCube

# FIRE EMBLEM: PATH OF RADIANCE

Nintendo • October 2005

**The basics:** If you've played either of the previous two GBA strategy-RPGs, you already know what to expect from this. *Cube Emblem*: a huge cast of knights, archers, and magicians to recruit and command in turn-based tactical battles. You'll outfit your soldiers with different weapons and evolve them into new classes as time goes on, but the emphasis is on the melodramatic cut-scene-fueled story and careful consideration of your every move in combat.

**How was it?** As a Nintendo rep put it when we asked what was different from the GBA games, "Uh... well... it's *Fire Emblem!*" Even as fans of the pint-sized versions, we're disappointed by how little is new here—some new skills you can assign to your troops, characters that transform into animals, and that's about it. Despite the added power of a full home console, the cut-scenes are those same-old talking heads and scrolling text windows, and even the 3D characters and backgrounds look dull and lifeless. While we don't doubt the gameplay will be solid, it's sad to see such a lackluster edition of a great series. —M.M.



■ Sorry, your laser light show doesn't help the game's crap graphics.



# MARIO STRIKERS



Nintendo • Fall 2005

**The basics:** Mario already plays golf, tennis, and doctor, so clearly soccer couldn't have been too far behind. *Strikers* is exactly what you'd expect—perfectly easy to pick up and play, with the usual *Mario*-flavored power-ups and quick-and-easy controls.

**How was it?** It's just what soccer always needed: wild power-ups and random obstacles on the field. Seriously, this game will have broad appeal—controls are simple enough for the kiddies but powerful enough for skilled players to be able to really get tactical. Gorgeous looks and plenty of humor made for fun and competitive multiplayer in the demo I tried. If the single-player game also dishes up some rewarding action, I'm totally there. —J.T.



# MARIO BASEBALL



Nintendo • August 2005

**The basics:** America's pastime gets a *Mushroom Kingdom* makeover, making it accessible to a wider, more casual audience.

**How was it?** The sunshine. The hot dogs. The barrels rolling over the left fielder. Huh? Yeah, it's a different breed of baseball, and for many casual fans, that's exactly what's needed in a world of baseball sims. Clever special moves (each character has a special pitch and swing) add an extra layer of strategy to the otherwise straightforward action. Even the stadiums inject some creativity: I won one game by hitting a walk-off homer that ricocheted off one of those white bouncy music-note blocks and over the wall. —G.F.

# CMIB: ROAD

Nintendo • Fall 2005

If you enjoyed shopping for drapes and pulling weeds in *Animal Crossing*, you might dig this mundane platformer-homework hybrid. In the game's current state, though, funky controls (and even funkier visuals) confound the fun. But then again, how much fun can scrubbing floors with a toothbrush be? —S.B.



Nintendo • September 2005

Even after losing its original *Advance Wars* name, *Battalion Wars* still feels a lot like a 3D action version of the esteemed handheld series—and a little like *Pikmin*. Leading your troops to victory demands serious tactical skills; hopefully the game's goofy cartoon characters won't scare off older gamers. —J.S.



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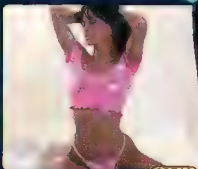
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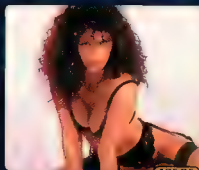
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**West Coast**

42517



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**PARENTAL ADVISORY EXPLICIT CONTENT**

42974



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**SH\*T happens**

42514



42964



42961

Wallpapers

**Top Ten**

- 82737 - 50 Cent - Disco Inferno
- 82735 - 50 Cent/Olivia - Candy Shop
- 82571 - Ciara/Missy Elliott - 1,2 Step
- 82571 - Game Theme - Super Mario Br.
- 82574 - Green Day - Blvd Of Broken D.
- 82739 - Gwen Stefani - Hollaback Girl
- 82742 - Kelly Clarkson - Since U Been Gone
- 82575 - Linkin Park & Jay-Z - Numb/Encore
- 82573 - T.I. - Bring Em Out
- 82738 - The Game/50 Cent - Hate It Or...
- 82744 - ABC - The Look Of Love
- 82572 - Alicia Keys - Karma
- 82734 - Art Garfunkel - Bright Eyes
- 82733 - Beach Boys - Barbara Ann
- 82732 - Blink 182 - Always Ever
- 82736 - Diddy DJ - Diddy DJ
- 82741 - Depshe Mode - People Are People
- 82580 - Dr. Dre - Nuthin' But A G Thing
- 82581 - Dr. Dre - The Next Episode
- 82771 - Duran Duran - A View To A Kill
- 82740 - Eiffel 65 - Move Your Body
- 82576 - Fabolous - Breathe
- 82728 - Monty Python - Bright Side Of Life
- 82730 - Game Theme - Zelda 2
- 82657 - Green Day - American Idiot
- 82649 - Hoobastank - The Reason
- 82605 - Jay-Z - Dirt Off Your Shoulder
- 82614 - Ludacris - Rollout (My Business)
- 82615 - Ludacris - Stand Up
- 82619 - Marvin Gaye - Sexual Healing
- 82743 - Movie Theme - Good Bad & Ugly
- 82633 - Notorious B.I.G. - Big Poppa
- 82634 - Notorious B.I.G. - Ten Crack Com.
- 82728 - O-Zone - Dragostea Din Tei
- 82579 - Puppee - Tempted To Touch
- 82713 - Simple Plan - Welcome To My Life
- 82665 - Slipknot - Duality
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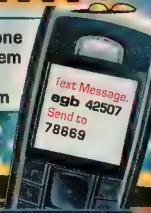
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  - 36088 - NASA Countdown
  - 36093 - Devilish Laughing
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DS

# MARIO KART DS



Nintendo • November 2005

**The basics:** It's *Mario Kart*, and it's finally online. Expect 30 courses, including many old favorites like *Super Mario Kart's* Mario Circuit 1 and *Kart 64's* Moo Moo Farm.

**How was it?** Like old-time *Mario Kart*. *Double Dash's* two-racers-per kart dynamic is out, while the hop move is back in, along with the usual lineup of characters and power-ups. The online mode only supported four racers in the version I played, but it was smooth and lag free. And though battle mode wasn't playable online, word is it should be for the final release.

Not much is going on in the touch screen department, but who has time to mess with that when you've got a red turtle shell homing in on your ass? —D.L.



■ Race online using Nintendo's upcoming matching service, or get some friends together for eight player local Wi-Fi races.

# CASTLEVANIA: DAWN OF SORROW

Konami • October 2005

**The basics:** A direct sequel to the most recent *GBA Vania*, *Aria of Sorrow*, this adventure wisely revives its predecessor's labyrinthine exploration-based gameplay, copious equipment to discover and unique soul-collecting power-up system. *Dawn* has a few DS-specific features on tap, too: You'll use the DS' stylus to defeat bosses, destroy blocks, and outfit your character.

**How was it?** Just as fantastic as we'd hoped, aside from the Saturday-morning-cartoon makeover for hero Soma Cruz. It's a great-looking DS game, delivering visuals impossible on the GBA, like 3D backdrops, screen-filling bosses, and flashy spell effects. But gameplay remains the star here—the controls feel perfect, and the integral soul system adds an addictive collection aspect that invites replay. This time, each soul you collect further powers up your abilities: For example, having five bat souls summons a more powerful ally than if you only have one.

—S.B.



■ The DS' top screen displays either your stats (below) or a castle map. Predictable.



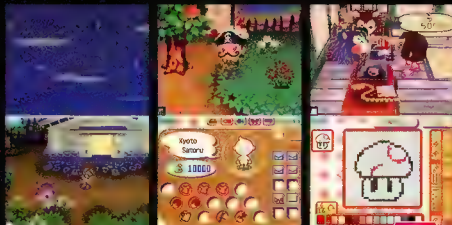
# METROID PRIME

Nintendo • Fall 2005

Hailing from Fuse, also the developer of the wretched *Mario Pinball Land* (GBA), *Prime*, *Pinball* seemed destined for failure.

Thankfully, this is a far more traditional effort, and it plays very well over the DS' split screens. Plus, the unique *Metroid* aesthetic comes through well, and the tale variety seems fairly diverse.

—A.P.



# ANIMAL CROSSING DS



Nintendo • Fall 2005

**The basics:** Walk around town fishing, decorating, and planting fruit trees. It's a town sim, but imagine a town where they gave peace a damn chance. The DS version isn't a wholesale sequel; it mostly adds new characters and locations, plus Wi-Fi Internet multiplayer. Now you and your pals can act all girly together.

**How was it?** If it weren't almost three years since the original came out, this might have been just what the town mayor ordered. But in those years our

yearning has become deeper, and this simple refresh feels slightly lacking. You can create your own multiplayer events, like competitive fishing, but they're aren't actually worked into the game. We're also disappointed by AC's use of the touch screen. You still have only the soft keyboard to type—some form of *Pictochat* would've been perfect here. Still, "There are many, many features in the DS version that weren't in the GC version," says Producer Takashi Tezuka, "so I don't think that anyone will be disappointed." —J.T.

# MARIO & LUIGI 2



Nintendo • Fall 2005

**The basics:** The original GBA *Mario & Luigi* was like a two-player action-RPG you controlled by yourself; each of the famous Bros. was activated by his own button, so getting them to work together in combat and on the world map was key. With the DS sequel, developer Alpha Dream keeps that basic idea but ups the ante: Now baby versions of both brothers join their elder alter egos for a total of four playable plumbers.

**How was it?** That 2 in the title ain't for nothin': The two screens and two groups of two brothers expand the multitasking gameplay of the first *M&L* brilliantly. For example, one pair might flip a lever on the top screen, lowering a ledge that the bottom pair can help each other over. And with the same people creating and translating the game, we expect more of the hilarious dialogue and *Mario*-universe in-jokes that made the original so memorable.

—M.M.



# NINTENDO GO!

Nintendo • August 2005

Is it a game? A toy? A pet? Whatever it is, it's cute. Choose your dog from 15 different breeds, then name it, train it, walk it, feed it, wash it, love it...yeah, it's vaguely embarrassing for a grown man to shampoo a puppy with a stylus, but I'm proud of my pups nonetheless. Could be the breakout hit of the fall... —A.K.





## ADVANCE WARS: DUAL STRIKE

Nintendo • August 2005

**The basics:** It's a turn-by-turn strategy war game using a rock-paper-scissors formula, except the rocks are antiaircraft guns, paper is a heavy tank, and scissors are the deadly bombers flying high in the sky. You get a ton of units to manage, from foot soldiers to battleships, and now the tactical action takes place across two screens. Throughout the campaign, you can move troops from one map to the other and back.

**How was it?** *Advance Wars 2* on the Game Boy Advance was a relatively minor upgrade over its predecessor, but *Dual Strike* feels like the sequel fans have been waiting for. New vehicles (like the stealth fighter, aircraft carrier, repair boat, and megatank), officers (who can gain experience through battles to upgrade skills), and modes (survival and combat, which is like a real-time strategy game except you control one unit at a time) mean I'll be glued to my DS for a long, long time. —D.H.



## NEW SUPER MARIO BROS.

Nintendo • Fall 2005

**The basics:** As the crude title explains, this is a new *Super Mario Bros.* game: Hopping on turtles, eating mushrooms, jumping on flagpoles...you know the drill. Two-player wireless competitions, new moves, and 3D graphical elements set it apart from its ubiquitous relatives.

**How was it?** Pretty damned weird, really. Gameplay-wise, it feels a lot like the original *SMB*—straightforward plat-

forming from point A to point B. A limited arsenal of power-ups (mushroom, fire flower, and the new form of invincibility that puffs Mario up to massive size) further imparts that old-school vibe. The game's visuals look pretty bizarre, too: The fluidly animated 3D characters don't quite mesh with the simple backdrops they run past. Even so, as off-kilter as the package might seem, it's still still a solid action game. —S.B.

## SONIC RUSH

Sega • Winter 2005

**The basics:** "Around the time of *Sonic Advance 3*, I think the *Sonic* games got a bit too complicated, so I tried to make it more simple," says

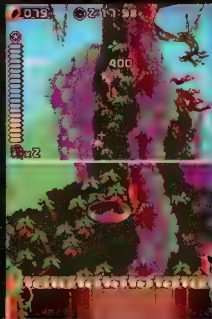
*Sonic Rush* Producer Akiomi Nishiyama. "It's pure classic *Sonic*, only a little bit more advanced." He's right: *Rush* looks and feels like a Sega Genesis-era *Hedgehog* title—blazingly fast 2D gameplay through pop-art-inspired worlds complete with cool 3D graphical touches—but this time around the gameplay occupies both screens of the DS hardware.

**How was it?** Keeping track of the titular hedgehog as he travels between the connected vertical space of the DS' two screens takes some getting used to, but at least it's a clever use of the hardware. And the gameplay is pure, old-school *Sonic*—plenty of loops, rings, and baddies to quickly spin through.

The demo I played didn't utilize the DS' touch panel in any way, but Nishiyama hinted that the final version will feature stylus-driven bonus stages. —S.B.



**Rush's visual style is highly reminiscent of the classic Sega Genesis *Sonic* games.**

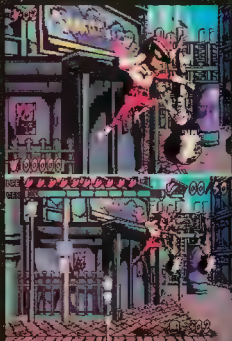


## VIEWTIFUL JOE DS

Capcom • Winter 2005

**The basics:** Everyone's favorite 'live-takin', platform-jumpin', robot-punchin' superhero turns in his old VFX skills for a host of new DS-enhanced powers: "Grab" the top half of the touch-sensitive screen and slide it back and forth to spray water on a raging fire or drop crates on enemies' heads; "spin" the lever on a gargantuan gumball machine; or "pull" the top screen down and use the close-up view to pummel your foes.

**How was it?** As Joe might say, "Sah-weel!" The DS handles 1/2's paper-thin 2D characters, fully 3D backgrounds, and overall comic-book look incredibly well. With less emphasis on combat (Joe still dodges attacks to dizzy enemies, but his trademark slo-mo and fast-forward powers were no-shows), the demo focused more on a slew of clever puzzles that all make great use of the touch screen. Consider us officially excited for Henshin on the go-go, baby. —M.M.



Nintendo • Fall 2005

What would you call a portable version of *Metrod Prime 2's* reawakened deathmatch games if it had different characters and new enemies, but made opponents tougher to find (no online multiplayer, sorry, *Metroid Prime*) and featured maddening controls? Nintendo calls it *Metrod Prime Hunters*, but I have a better name for it: Bleh. —M.M.



Nintendo • September 2005

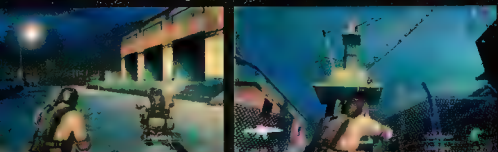
Despite its modest looks and slow pace, this *Myst*-like adventure rewards curious gamers. The bottom screen gives you a sense of physical space in which to guide the heroine (who solves puzzles with her own DS...how meta!), while the top presents a more detailed look at the brain-teasers. Mysterious and alluring. —J.S.



The path is blocked by all these rocks



PSP



## SOCOM: U.S. NAVY SEALS-FIRETEAM BRAVO

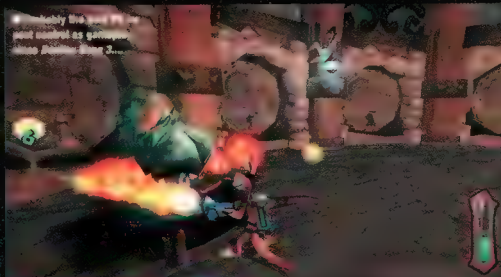


Sony CEA • Fall 2005

**The basics:** A new chapter in Sony's hit shooter series squeezes on to PSP...after some major modifications.

**How was it?** OK, look, *SOCOM* diatribes are totally going to bitch and moan about *Bravo*'s control scheme, mainly because there's no second analog stick, which means running and turning have to be handled exclusively by the dreaded nub:

(with strafing controlled with a modifier button). And there will be plenty of griping about the very sensibly implemented lock-on feature, especially in multiplayer. Even with only one teammate, the deliberate pacing and carefully planned movement (not to mention the beautiful graphics and realistic level design) underscore the fact that this is a portable *SOCOM*, and a good one at that. —*J.R.*



## DAXTER



Sony CEA • 2006

**The basics:** Jak's smart-alecky ottsel sidekick busts out on his own, only to hop and hop a lot like his former oppressor. To be fair, though, *Daxter* does wield a can of bug spray à la the Orkin man. That's different enough, right?

**How was it?** Like the original *Jak and Daxter*, minus the Jak. The small and furry *Daxter* squeezes into narrow

spaces, swings a mean flyswatter, and propels himself upward with pest spray that, next to an open flame, makes a nice flamethrower. It's nothing revolutionary, but *Daxter*'s a sharp-looking, smoothly playing platformer with a few clever tricks up its sleeve.

And to be frank, the PSP desperately needs some top-quality original software to combat the DS lineup. —*J.S.*



## BURNOUT LEGENDS



EA Games • September 2005

**The basics:** The best tracks and cars from *Burnouts 1-3*, the return of pursuit mode (you're the cop), six player wireless games, and more road rage events due to popular demand. Each copy of *Legends* also come with five unlockable special cars out of a full roster of 20—you'll need to beat other folks in multiplayer to get your hands on the remaining 15.

**How was it?** Like a tinier but not necessarily cuter version of *Burnout 3*. It's fast, fun, and looks great, but using the D-pad or analog nub just doesn't feel as good as wielding a big console controller. It's really tough to see oncoming traffic on the small screen, too. We have heard rumors that *Legends* may support a full online mode (just just local Wi-Fi), which, obviously, would be awesome. —*D.L.*



## THE CON



Sony CEA • Fall 2005

**The basics:** Play as a thug in this urbanized 3D fighting game where your fighting style (from boxing to Bruce Lee's jeet kune do) is as important as your acting skills. *The Con* takes a fresh approach to the fighting genre with a gambling feature that lets you bet on your own fights... which you can then throw on purpose.

**How was it?** The game plays less like *Tekken* and more like *Dan King's Super Punch Out*, as you'll get paid dirt if you pull off a flawless victory. By pressing the

left shoulder button, you'll watch as your fighter goes through WWF theatrics, and the thumbs up or down meter will give you feedback if the crowd's buying it, which I slowly got used to after some trial and error. During the first 45 seconds of a fight and then bringing out my Bruce Lee was rewarding as I thanked the academy and rolled in the dough. I see potential, as the controls are simple and the gambling is addictive, but a game about how well you get your ass kicked still has me skeptical. —*J.L.*

## GRIPSHIFT

Sony Online • August 2005

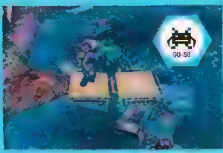
When you try to be too innovative, you often find just kind of suck. Take this hybrid driving-platformer-puzzer for example. Slowing down to a crawl to negotiate a slight bend isn't my idea of fun, and neither is repeatedly plummeting to my death while trying to reach an out-of-the-way coin. Somebody, hurry up and make it good. —*D.L.*



## FRANTIX

Sony Online • Fall 2005

This so-called character-based brain teaser attempts to bring something new to Sony's novelty-starved handheld. Maybe I'm missing something, but springing traps and pushing stones over pressure-sensitive switches feels more fiendish than *Frantix*—a lot like a pure-puzzle take on *Tomb Raider*, in fact. —*S.E.*



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# W A

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## Inside Intel On...

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# We go to the front lines of the next hardware battle between Sony, Microsoft, and Nintendo and come back with a megaton of info



When Reggie Fils-Aime gets his dander up, people listen—and not just because he's built like a linebacker, bench-pressed almost 300 pounds in his younger days, and could crush you

against his forehead like a spent Mountain Dew can. Nintendo of America's 42-year-old veep of sales and marketing is taking aim at his company's competition: "The other time Sony tried this strategy, it failed miserably," he says. Fils-Aime—who came to May's

Electronic Entertainment Expo videogame industry show in Los Angeles to sell the world on Nintendo's just-revealed next system, the Revolution—is calling Sony out for debuting a PlayStation 3 that goes way beyond playing just games. "It reminds me of the PSX," he says, refer-

ring to Sony's Japan-only PS2/digital-video-recorder hybrid.

Sony, meanwhile, is claiming that its freshly unveiled PlayStation 3 packs twice the punch of Microsoft's next-gen offering, the Xbox 360—which PlayStation inventor Ken Kutaragi called ▶

By Crispin Boyer



# PLAYSTATION 3 WEAPONS AND WEAK POINTS

Launch: Fall 2006 U.S. (Likely)  
Price: \$400 (Estimate)



= Strength



= Weakness

## That Spider-Logo

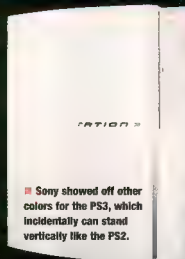
The PS3's Spider-Man 3 logo is a nod to the game's developer, Naughty Dog. The logo is a stylized version of the Spider-Man logo, with the word "SPIDER-MAN" in a bold, blocky font. The "E" is particularly large and stylized, with a spiderweb pattern inside it. The logo is set against a dark background with a subtle spiderweb pattern.

**SPIDER-MAN**



## Wireless Boomerangs

Courtesy of Bluetooth connections, the PS3 can support up to seven controllers wirelessly. But here's the iffy part: Sony's decided to change up the overall shape of the DualShock, giving it Bataram-shaped wings. We haven't had a chance to test-drive the new controller, but at least we know it'll always return if we chuck it in anger.



Sony showed off other colors for the PS3, which incidentally can stand vertically like the PS2.



► Xbox 1.5. "We are putting more technology into our box," says Sony Computer Entertainment America President Kaz Hirai. "We're future proofing it, certainly a lot more than our competitors' platforms." And when those words reach Microsoft's camp, duck for cover. "Future proof? Come on—that's our language!" says J Allard, corporate vice president for Xbox. "I think they're responding to us. And here I was worried that Sony would say something or commit to something

with PlayStation 3 that would surprise us. If anything, it just gave us a lot more confidence."

Oh yes, you can tell we're on the front lines of a new console hardware war when the fighting words fly like bullets between the frontmen for Nintendo, Sony, and Microsoft. It's the most obvious sign that those systems sitting under your boob tube are about to become obsolete, whether you're ready or not. Is it too soon to crown a victor in the

## The Hard Drive

Like the PS2, the PS3 will support an add-on hard drive for additional storage. Sony hasn't decided whether the drive will come packed in, but we doubt it. That means say hi to wide-spread hard-drive support from developers.

## Slot Machine

But what PS3 lacks in surefire hard-drive support, it more than makes up for in other storage options. Aside from Sony's own Memory Sticks (also used in the PSP), the system has slots for SD and CompactFlash (memory cards).

## USB 2.0 Slots

While the Xbox 360 has three of these and the Revolution has two, the PS3 has a whopping six. Expect to plug in anything from USB keyboards for Web browsing to EyeToy-style cameras and voice-communication headsets.

## Blu-ray Disc Drive

The PS3's Blu-ray Disc Drive is a game-changer. It's the first console to feature a Blu-ray Disc Drive, which means it can play Blu-ray Disc movies and games. This is a huge advantage over the Xbox 360 and the Revolution, which only support DVD and GameCube discs. The PS3's Blu-ray Disc Drive is also compatible with DVD-Video discs, so you can still enjoy your DVD collection. The PS3's drive supports standard-definition DVD movies, too.

new wave of consoles? For sure—Nintendo hasn't even shown the supposedly magical controller for its Revolution console (some say you stick it in your pants). But it's never too early to analyze the new consoles, the games they will play, and their manufacturers' big ideas. We've heard the trash talk between all the execs, chatted with scores of analysts and developers (some of whom spoke candidly on condition of anonymity), and dug as deeply as possible into

the new hardware to give you the most in-depth analysis of the next wave of consoles you'll find this side of their actual launches. You may not be able to pick a winner just yet, but chances are you'll decide on which system is packing the most heat.

## Countdown to D-Day

Gamers jostling for the next generation now (or at least as soon as possible) have no choice but to turn to Microsoft.



# REVOLUTION WEAPONS AND WEAK POINTS

Launch: Sometime in 2006  
Price: Between \$200 and \$250

= Strength = Weakness



■ Like the GameCube, Revolution—seen here on its stand—will likely launch in several colors.

## DVD Support Sold Separately

In what can only be described as a major step backward, the Revolution won't play DVD movies out of the box. Instead, you'll need to buy a device to enable DVD play. "The fact is that most households now own one DVD player or two," says Nintendo President Satoru Iwata. "We don't want them to spend extra money just to have the DVD-player capability."

## Unsupersized

The final Revolution unit will be even slimmer than the one shown here. Simulate the size at home by stacking three DVD-movie cases and wrapping them in Scotch tape. Now stick a Revolution logo on your creation and sell it on eBay.

## Super Backward Compatibility

Nintendo's calling it the Revolution's secret weapon: the ability to download (for a fee) and play games from the past 20 years of the company's console library. That includes classics for the Nintendo Entertainment System, the Super NES, the Nintendo 64, and the GameCube. In fact, the Revolution's self-loading drive accepts GameCube discs along with the new 5-inch Revolution discs, and the top of the system opens to reveal GameCube controller and memory-card ports (right). Nintendo won't reveal pricing plans for game downloads, but Prez Satoru Iwata did tell us the company is experimenting with ways to improve the graphics of the older games.



## Wi-Fi Only

Yes, we're happy that Nintendo is finally embracing online with its next console (better still, its online service will be free). The only downside: The Revolution doesn't have a standard Ethernet jack; it only supports Wi-Fi connectivity. "We've come to the conclusion that Wi-Fi shall be the standard and Ethernet will be optional," says Nintendo President Satoru Iwata. Better start saving for that wireless router.

## Expandability

In addition to two USB 2.0 ports (a first for a Nintendo console), the Revolution will accept an SD memory card to expand the internal flash memory. Nintendo's Iwata says these ports will give players the option of adding a hard drive. The more common use? You'll be able to take downloaded games and other content to a pal's system, unless you'd rather send it to their Revolution over the Internet.

## The HD Error

"HDTV for Nintendo is a lot like their online philosophy from this past generation," says one analyst we spoke with. "They believe most gamers don't care about it." The Revolution will support resolutions no crisper than 480p—the same standard used by first-party GameCube games in the current generation, at least. Nintendo is asking third parties to make all their games 480p compatible this time.

## The Mystery Controller

"I believe the analog joystick for the N64 changed games, and the touch pad for the DS changed games," says Nintendo President Satoru Iwata. "And I really want to change the game again with the controller for the Revolution. I think you'll be surprised when you see it." That's great, so why don't you show it to us already? Nintendo didn't unveil the mysterious Revolution controller—rumored to be everything from a customizable touch screen to tilt-sensitive gyroscopes. One thing's for sure: It'll have conventional elements. Otherwise, how could we control all the old games you can download for the system?

**TOP SECRET**

► likely the last combatant—and perhaps the least punchy from a technical perspective—to enter the battlefield. One report puts the Revolution's release around summer 2006, but Nintendo refused to confirm that date. The system's price tag, however, is a little easier to chart. "I have to assume that from a pricing standpoint, we will be substantially lower than the competition," says Nintendo's Fils-Aime, "because we don't

have all that added fluff that a gamer, frankly, doesn't care about." Analysts expect it to hit for between \$200 and \$250.


The release schedule for this new batch of systems is a flip-flop: the last round, which had the PS2 launching before the Xbox and GameCube. Sony, however, doesn't see losing the head start this time as a disadvantage. "When the Xbox launched in the U.S., our

installed base here was about 5 million," says Sony's Hirai. "So if that installed base difference was still just 5 million today, then we might be concerned. But there's about a 20 million difference, just in North America, in the installed base between Xbox and PS2, which means we've lapped them four times. So this logic of being first doesn't really hold water."

Still, industry watchers predict that

Microsoft's head start will keep the hardware war interesting—at least for a while. "We assume the Xbox 360 will have a 45 percent share [of the market] at the end of 2007," says Michael Pachter, an industry analyst for Wedbush Morgan. "The PS3 will have a 33 percent share, and Revolution will have a 22 percent share. It's tough to [predict] beyond 2007, but I think that Sony will eventually pass Microsoft." ►



An illustration of a man and a woman. The man, on the left, has spiky black hair and is wearing a green shirt with red spots and a white undershirt. He is looking down at a handheld game console held by the woman. The woman, on the right, has long reddish hair and is wearing a black tank top. She is holding a mobile phone to her ear with her left hand and the game console with her right hand. The background is a stylized, abstract pattern of red and orange lines.

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**ELECTRONIC  
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# XBOX 360 WEAPONS AND WEAK POINTS

Launch: Fall 2005  
Price: Between \$299 and \$499

+ Strategy - Features



**Hard Drive for Everybody**  
The Xbox 360 will have a hard drive as standard equipment. This will allow you to store your favorite games and music on the console. It will also allow you to download games and music from the Internet. The hard drive will be available in 20GB, 40GB, and 60GB capacities. The price of the console will increase with the size of the hard drive.

**Business Use**  
The Xbox 360 will be available in a business edition. This edition will have a hard drive and will be able to connect to a network. It will also have a special feature that allows you to use the console as a digital video recorder (DVR). The business edition will be available for purchase through a special program.

**Just a DVD Drive**  
The Xbox 360 will have a DVD drive. This will allow you to play DVD movies on the console. The DVD drive will be available in two versions: one that can play DVD movies and one that can play DVD movies and DVD-Audio discs. The price of the console will increase with the version of the DVD drive.

**Hype machines**  
When the lights dimmed at Sony's annual press conference at May's Electronic Entertainment Expo, the gathered game biz regulars expected the same old show: lots of facts and PowerPoint pie charts about the PS2's dominance in the current console war, with maybe a glimpse of Sony's next system. Instead, it was a full-scale bombardment. Sony execs skipped right to the unveiling of the PlayStation 3, a matte-silver feature-packed and supposedly "future-proof" machine. Its specs: impressive (see the Technobabble

sidebar). Its game demos: spectacular (we'll get to those later—honest). And Sony's strategy for the system: well, very familiar. It reminded us of Sony's initial hype for the PlayStation 2, which debuted with the promise of becoming a "home theater," a Net-connected hub for downloadable entertainment, instant messaging—even an outlet for homebrew filmmaking. That was six years ago. When's the last time you made a movie on your PS2? Now that Sony is unveiling the PS3 in what it calls the "digital decade," we're hearing the

same promises: a system that's the centerpiece of your living room and meets all your entertainment needs, from playing games to watching movies to communicating with friends online. Sony's Hirai blames the limited penetration of broadband Internet access—which has only just recently reached half the country—for holding the PS2 back from its potential. Things will be different, he insists, with PS3. "This time around, we have gigabit Ethernet on the unit," Hirai says. "I think it's going to become a viable option for accessing content. It opens a

whole new world of possibilities." Just don't expect to see many of the possibilities aside from standard functions when PS3 hits next year. "We would like to see not only just games on launch day," Hirai tells us, "but motion pictures, in high-def [available on Blu-ray DVDs], and certainly the system will be online if we can come out with a service we're confident in." So far, Sony has given few concrete details about its online scheme for PS3. We know the system will have an always-on Net connection via its Wi-Fi or ultrafast Ethernet port. You'll be able to



#### Ethernet Port

The Xbox 360 is the only next-generation system without built-in Wi-Fi connectivity. Not a big deal—you'll just need to spring for the separate Wi-Fi adapter if you crave a wireless connection.

#### Xbox Live

Microsoft's online plans for the Xbox 360—borned by the 2-million-subscriber success of Xbox Live for

the most elaborate and concrete of the three contenders, Xbox Live will be an integral part of the Xbox 360 experience, with vast community features and a free level of basic service to initiate online-gaming newbies and bring them together. See last month's cover story for an in-depth look.

#### Backward Compatibility

Last month in our Xbox 360 cover story, we said the system wouldn't be backward compatible with games for the original Xbox. Well, Microsoft changed its mind. The company now plans to make the 360 compatible with the "best-selling" Xbox games—basically, "the games that matter most to consumers," we're told. (That's the only reason we're listing this feature as a weakness—because, unlike the other two new systems, Xbox 360 isn't *fully* backward compatible.) Old games will even work on Xbox Live, meaning your *Halo* skills won't get rusty if you sell your original Xbox to fund your Xbox 360 purchase. The logistics behind playing these old titles, which will be emulated in software rather than driven by the hardware, have yet to be worked out. Expect to download a free fix for each old game you want to play. Microsoft is also working with third parties to help them make future Xbox 1 games playable on the Xbox 360.

#### Upgradeability

Microsoft expects hints to us that they have the option to upgrade the Xbox 360 down the road if features such as higher-capacity media formats become crucial to gaming. "We'll be able to evolve it," says Microsoft's Shane Kim.

#### USB 2.0 Ports

The system's three ports will let you plug in digital cameras and MP3 players—even Sony's PSP—to customize your Xbox 360 interface and play custom soundtracks. The PSP may offer similar features, but so far Sony is staying vague.

surf the Web "if we determine that users want that function," says Hirai. And you'll use your PSP to access PS3 content from across the room or around the world. "You could fire up your PSP from a wireless hot spot in Japan," Hirai says. "You could get right into your PS3 in America and access a role-playing game or whatever to continue what you're doing or access other content you may have in your detachable hard-disk drive or Memory Stick. So literally, the PlayStation Portable becomes an extension of the PS3 you have in your home."

But whether Sony comes up with a full-featured online service on par with Microsoft's Xbox Live remains to be seen. "Microsoft seems to really put their eggs in the online basket," Hirai says, "which I guess is one strategy. But we also don't want to lose sight of the fact that it's all about great content. It's all about making sure you continue to grow the installed base of your hardware, making sure you continue that dialogue and relationship of the brand with the consumers that you've established over the past 10 years of leadership." At the same time, Hirai says

he's not belittling the importance of online functionality, although he won't say whether the PS3 will have a more centralized system like Xbox Live or if Sony will once again let third-party publishers sort out a strategy on a game-by-game basis, as was the case with PS2. "Online or broadband connectivity, whatever you want to call it, is kind of like air conditioning in a car," Hirai tells us. "It was nice to have back in the '60s. Now I don't think you can find too many cars without air conditioning. So whatever final form that we decide to take, online is going to be an

integral part of the PlayStation 3 experience, and by extension, the PSP and the PS2 as well. I want to make sure it's a comprehensive online program as opposed to something that shuts out PS2 and PS2 users or [is] just Hirai's something for the next six months."

Microsoft's soldiers, naturally, are keeping an eye on Sony's online plans, which they say are just plain vague. "I think they're right," jokes Microsoft's Allard, "the Internet's going to be big someday. They should get one." If you read our cover story last month on ▶

## DECIPHERING THE TECHNOBABBLE

Which new console has the most power under its hood?

**T**he final specs for the Xbox 360 and PS3 are finally out in the open (while Nintendo has only released the basics on the Revolution). Yet

figuring out the most powerful of the three isn't easy. No one has touched any of the final machines—they don't exist yet. And since most developers have projects for multiple systems, they take a neutral approach when discussing pros and cons. "Neither side should be worried—they both have very nice machines," says Todd Howard, executive producer of Xbox 360 role-player *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*. "The PS3 has more processing power, but the memory is not as nice as the Xbox 360's."

Microsoft claims its system is 10 times more powerful than the original Xbox. The IBM-designed CPU in the Xbox 360 is a 3.2GHz, Power PC-based triple-core processor—essentially three individual CPUs on one chip. The ATI graphics chip, meanwhile, is a radical departure from current ATI graphics-chip designs for the PC. Whereas all current-generation PC graphics chips have hardware to do two types of processing—one for calculating the position of the polygons on the screen and the other to actually draw the polygons on the screen—the Xbox 360's ATI chip uses a unified shader architecture, meaning it's able to do both operations more efficiently. Additionally, the ATI chip has 10MB of embedded DRAM—ultra-high-speed memory that also has built-in circuitry to enable full-screen antialiasing, which makes for smooth polygonal edges.

The PS3 also brings a new CPU to the table—one that Sony and IBM call Cell. It's also a multicore processor, but unlike the Xbox 360's CPU, it has two different types

of microprocessors on the chip. One of these cores is a Power PC-based processor, not unlike one of the Xbox 360's three cores, but the difference is that the remaining eight microprocessors (one of which will not be accessible to game developers) are what Sony calls "synergistic processing elements," or SPEs. Think of the SPEs as miniprocessors designed to be incredibly fast at performing the kind of math that games need most: floating-point math, which is primarily used for graphics and physics. Sony claims that in terms of floating-point performance, the PS3 is approximately 35 times more powerful than the PS2 and twice as powerful as the Xbox 360. The SPEs can also execute normal game code, but they have some limitations that make them harder to use than the Xbox 360's general-purpose CPU cores. On the graphics side, Sony has teamed with Nvidia for a new chip called the RSX. Nvidia claims the RSX is faster than two GeForce 6800 Ultra chips running in parallel, which is the fastest graphics solution currently available on the PC. (Buying two GeForce 6800 Ultra graphics cards now would cost around \$1,000.)

Not much information has been released about the Nintendo Revolution. What we do know is Nintendo has retained the same two partners that it worked with

in the GameCube (ATI and IBM) and that together they are designing two new chips for the Revolution: a cubbed Hollywood and Broadway. A Nintendo spokeswoman has gone on record as saying that the Revolution will be about two to three times more powerful than the GameCube.

Despite a statement from Microsoft claiming that the Xbox 360 is the mightiest system, it seems that Sony's console will be the most powerful. Developers we've spoken with, however, are concerned that harnessing the power of all those SPE cores will be tricky and require a lot more work, especially if they lack tools and middleware to ease the workload. "Sony doesn't have quite the same heritage of development tools as Microsoft," says one developer. Even David Kirk, chief scientist with Sony partner Nvidia, admits that "larger studios that have a lot of technical resources where guys can create tools and train their staffs will have a real advantage over smaller studios with just five guys."

Long story short: Each system has its strengths, and first-generation games on all three consoles will look similar. As this new generation ages, however, we expect the differences to become more pronounced, particularly when looking at PS3-exclusive games.

...like any other system war, each system's going to do some things better than the others.



► the Xbox 360, you know that Xbox Live is as important to Microsoft's machine as any game or the hardware itself. Microsoft is giving everyone who buys the system basic access to Xbox Live, letting them create an online Gamertag identity, chat with friends, and download demos. Users who pay the \$50 annual Xbox Live fee will have access to online multiplayer gaming, video chat, spectator

modes in certain games, and more. Microsoft will also offer free limited-time trials of the full service to basic members.

"To be brutally honest," says Shane Kim, general manager of Microsoft Game Studios, "we have this huge advantage over them to date online, and we're going to continue to invest in it going forward." And so our Xbox game developers have

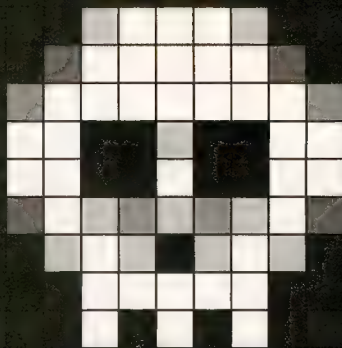
already gotten used to creating great integrated online experiences. We're going to blur the lines between multiplayer and single player. It's going to be really hard for them to catch up."

### The online revolution

But it's not just Sony's online plans that Microsoft has to consider. "I did not expect that Nintendo would come out and

talk about their online strategy and say, 'We're committed: Every Nintendo product that we produce from here forward will be network connected,'" says Microsoft's J Allard. But that's what Nintendo did at E3, finally ending the company's indifference to online gaming.

Revolution, like the DS portable, has built-in Wi-Fi access to the Internet. "The three things we want for online are ease ►



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## THE HD DILEMMA

Sony and Microsoft agree on one thing: You need an HDTV. Here's what to look for.

**M**icrosoft's calling it "the HD era." Every Xbox 360 game will support 720p and 1080p resolutions in widescreen (16:9). Great! Now, news is out that Sony's "digital decade" is going to be heralded by the PS3 sporting a maximum resolution of 1080p in 32:9. Also great. But hear that? It's your wallet weeping.

### Say, what the hell do all these numbers mean?

It means you need to start saving your money—especially if you don't yet own an HDTV. The 1080p screen format is the new Holy Grail of high definition, or, as some marketing weenies are calling it, "True," "Full," or your favorite, "Ultra" HD. What's so great about 1080p? It's 1920x1080 resolution? And why does it trump the current 1080i standard? You see, the "i" stands for "interlaced." A 1080i set draws the odd-numbered lines onscreen, then alternates with the even-numbered lines. The "p" stands for progressive scan, which paints the entire image onscreen at once—like a movie frame. It makes for a much sharper image.

### What about that 32:9 widescreen video?

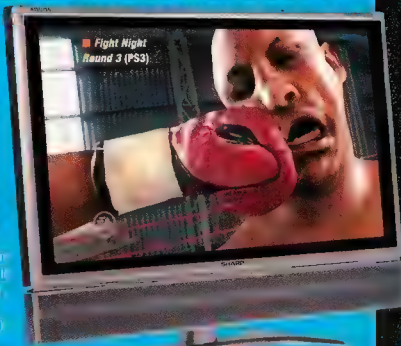
Thanks to its two HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) ports, the PlayStation 3 lets you hook two ultra-high-definition TVs together for the ultimate in widescreen viewing.

The home-theater CinemaScope idea sounds cool, but who's gonna buy it? This technology has been available for PCs for years now and not even the most hardcore gaming tech nerds have attempted it. But it would know anybody who has enough money to buy two HD sets and plans to link them together, period, that person. Quick.

### What kind of TV should I be buying, then?

It all depends on how much money you can part with. There aren't many sets supporting 1080p just yet, but those that do look simply amazing. The monstrous 70-inch rear-projection Sony Qualia 006 ([www.sonymyle.com](http://www.sonymyle.com)) can substitute for a wall in your apartment and will yield the most realistic picture shy of walking outside. Of course, it'll set you back a down payment on that new house (it's only \$13,000). Sharp's ([www.sharp-usa.com](http://www.sharp-usa.com)) 45-inch LCD panel, the LC-45GX6U, is also capable of delivering 1080p, but at half the price. What we're participating, though, is Samsung's ([www.samsung.com](http://www.samsung.com)) new wave of DLP rear-projection sets, which are looking fantastic. The ludicrous 67-inch HL-R6768W leads Samsung's charge at \$6,000.

Of course, give any technology two or three years and prices will start dropping. By then HD will be the broadcast standard, and we'll be able to see new good 1080p can really look—besides just in games. Best advice is that if you already have a decent HDTV, stick



Sharp's 45-inch LCD handles 1080p beautifully for \$6,000, although you can find smaller models for less cash.

by your guns for the immediate future. If you don't plan on hopping onto the 1080p bandwagon anytime soon, check out Samsung's new wave of DLP sets, starting with the \$2,500 46-inch HL-R4667W. At least that way you can still afford to buy an Xbox 360 and PS3 when they come out.

—Darren Gustafson



More beauty for your buck: Samsung's DLP set will cost half as much as the Sony model.



Sony's spectacular Qualia is only 13 years old, and your PS3 will support two at a time. No biggie: Owning a car is overrated anyway.

► of use, no cost, and reliable connectivity," says *Mario* creator Shigeru Miyamoto, who has several games in the works for the new system. One key, Fils-Alme adds, is to eliminate what he calls "experience barriers"—to make it so newbie and casual players can easily find competitors at their skill level.

Playing online *Revolution* games—such as a *Super Smash Bros.* launch title—for free is only part of Nintendo's online master plan. The *Revolution* also

has a built-in "virtual console" that will let players download (for a fee) and play games from every Nintendo home system dating back to the original NES and continuing up to the Nintendo 64 (note that the *Revolution* accepts GameCube discs and controllers, so players won't need to rebuy and download those games). Better still, "we are doing several experiments, including working with the original *Super Mario Bros.*, with the new technology," says Nintendo President Satoru Iwata.

"The game itself and the gameplay shall be identical, but the look will be different—it's possible that with *Revolution*, we may be able to see the old games' new looks."

That's what the next generation of hardware will bring us: a mix of old (all three systems are backward compatible) combined with a hefty dose of the ultra-new (good luck affording the high-definition displays that most PS3 games probably won't support for several years any-

way). And while execs at Sony, Microsoft, and Nintendo will exchange fighting words for months to come, at least they all agree on one thing. "You know, Sony didn't come out and say the whole next-generation thing is about something else, that it doesn't start until 2007, and that the whole industry should wait," says Microsoft's Allard. "I think it's really good for the whole industry that all three companies are starting their next chapters at roughly the same point in time."

## WEAPONS INSPECTION

We size up each system's most lethal guns—its games

### PLAYSTATION 3

"The games you saw are the minimum bar that you would expect of PlayStation 3 games," says Sony Computer

Entertainment America President Kaz Hirai. He's talking about the PS3 game videos—everything from a new *Gran Turismo* to a spectacular-looking *Koizone* follow-up—that Sony showed on a 50-foot-high-definition screen at its E3 press conference. Attendees left awed by the visuals, but still many wondered: "Will PlayStation 3 games really look that good?"

Truth is, the more spectacular

rendered "target" videos designed to showcase what the system is capable of...someday. No developer we spoke to

thought we'd see such visuals in the first generation of games—less-sizzling graphics, such as those in *Fight Night Round 3*—seen on one of the TVs to the left—and insomniac shooter *Inf*—also to the left—are more likely). And let's not forget that the final machine doesn't exist yet. "No need to panic about the PS3," says Tecmo's *Dead or Alive* mastermind Tomonobu Itagaki. "I plan to say something about it once the machine becomes real." A look at the more interesting games so far shows hit franchises alongside new properties.



### Notable PS3 Games

- Final Fantasy XIII**—The unstoppable RPG franchise stays on a Sony system
- Grand Theft Auto**—Rockstar says its criminal-minded cash cow will go PS3
- Inf**—Baiocht developer Insomniac's first PS3 game is a first-person shooter
- Koizone**—The slickest demo at E3, but if the game looks this good, we'll eat it
- Metal Gear Solid 4**—Series creator Hideo Kojima sets this sequel after *Peace Walker*
- Sanic Heat**—We bet the Super Nintendo rodent is coming to PS3
- Vision 02**—And you thought the *Gran Turismo* games looked good on PS2
- Warhawk**—The fan-favorite PS1 flight-combat shooter takes to the skies again



### REVOLUTION

When *Mario* creator Shigeru Miyamoto took up gardening, he channeled his interest into making green-thumbed strategy game *Pikmin* for GameCube. After getting a new puppy, he crafted pooch-raising sim *Nintendogs* for the DS. So when we learned he's working on a Revolution title not based on any previous characters, we hoped his current interest might give us some hints. "Well, I'm growing older and thinking about it more and more," Miyamoto tells us, "so maybe I'll make a game about that. Everyone will play it. It has a broad demographic built right in."

OK, so we doubt that Miyamoto's first original Revolution title will deal with middle age and male-pattern baldness. He did tell us that his next *Mario* game, previously known as *Mario 128* is now bound for the revolution's launch. An online-enabled *Super Smash Bros.* will also hit at the same time. "And we are aggressively working on a number of new franchises," adds

Nintendo's Reggie Rix-Aime. The company swears that its mysterious, yet-to-be-revealed controller won't be so unconventional that it'll scare away third-party developers. In fact, Nintendo is pushing the Revolution's more down-to-earth specs as the main reason smaller developers will embrace the system. "The dirty little secret of the two next-generation systems by our competitors," says Rix-Aime, "is that to truly flesh out the technology, you'll have to commit 100-plus-person development teams for a long time to create games. And for that middle-level developer who's got a fantastic idea but a team of 50 tools, our system will be able to bring it to life and do it in a truly innovative way. None of those quirky games have emerged yet, so far, we just know of these big guns..."



### Notable Revolution Games

- Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles 2**—An online sequel
- The Next Legend of Zelda**—Nintendo confirms that this key series is coming to the Revolution
- Mario 128**—Will hit Revolution at launch
- Metroid Prime 3**—All we know is that super-warrior Samus gets a new ship
- Super Smash Bros.**—Nintendo stars duke it out online at launch



### XBOX 360



All the big buzz Sony grabbed for its dazzling PS3 game demos had a nip side: The Xbox 360's games looked a little lame by comparison. "Microsoft's games look like games; Sony's look real," says Dean Iakahashi, author of *Opening the Xbox*, a chronicle of the making of Microsoft's original green machine. "True or not, Sony has used its marketing resources to hammer that message home." The Xbox 360 game that has gotten the most grief is Rare's *Perfect Dark Zero*, which is Microsoft's premiere first-party title for the Xbox 360. The problem: the game's blah, barely-above-Xbox-caliber visuals, which have been universally panned since we revealed the game last month. Microsoft's response: Don't judge the game until it's

say J. Allard, corporate vice president for Xbox. Tecmo's Tomonobu Itagaki adds, "Everyone was worried about *Halo* when Microsoft first showed it at E3, because it ran so slowly, but the final version was great." Microsoft also points to more stellar-looking Xbox 360 launch titles *Project Gotham Racing 3* and *Gears of War*—which hold their own visually against the PS3's game demos—as what to expect from the

### Notable Xbox 360 Games

- Amepd 3**—The half-pipe looks so real, we can almost feel the broken wrists
- Call of Duty 2**—Hear the hollers of your allies in this intense WWII shooter
- Dead or Alive 4**—Team Ninja's bouncing beauties return to battle
- Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion**—Come for the pretty forests. Stay for the epic roleplaying
- Final Fantasy XI**—The follow-up to Peter Molyneux's "greatest RPG of all time"
- Final Fantasy XII**—The massively multiplayer RPG comes to 360 without a face-lift
- Full Auto**—It's like *Burnout*, but with guns and time powers
- Gears of War**—Epic's atmospheric shooter is our most anticipated Xbox 360 title
- Ghost Recon 3**—First-person soldiering set in the near future

**Perfect Dark Zero**—Rare's launch shooter has a ways to go in the graphics department, but the gameplay promises to be killer.

- Project Gotham Racing 3**—Furiously fast
- Quake IV**—Storm an alien world and eventually become one with your cybernetic foes
- Spencer Sudo**—Sam Fisher is not getting too old for console-hardware wars
- Tony Hawk's American Wasteland**—The series pays tribute to the Dogtown boys
- Too Human**—It's been dubbed the Xbox 360's answer to *God of War*
- Ridge Racer G**—Yet another hot racer for the Xbox's hard-driving library



"A fun, lighthearted experience."  
- GameSpot

# X marks

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



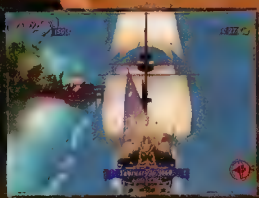
Sid Meier's legendary Pirates! is available for the Xbox™ for the first time ever. Loaded with new features in stunning 3D, you'll unleash your cannons on enemy ships, pillage the 17th century Caribbean and romance the fair maidens in exotic ports while searching for buried treasure.



"Swashbuckling... game-friendly fun."  
- Yahoo Games Domain



# the spot.



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# review crew

a gray alien destroys the world and a rodent becomes king

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## THIS MONTH IN REVIEWS...

**I**t's the *EGM* equivalent of a freak meteor shower we only hear about the next day, a cosmic spectacle that, you know, is cool and all, but still leaves us feeling a bit pissed off. It's a tie for Game of the Month between two perennial high scorers—*Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* for Xbox and *NCAA Football 06*. Two excellent games, one slightly disappointing result.

*Meteos*, why couldn't you have been just slightly more sublime? *Killer 7* and *Advent Rising*, how dare you be so mediocre after all this buildup? And *Kirby*, you came so close it was a little scary, honestly.



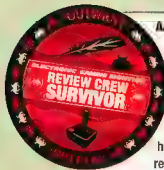
GAME OF THE MONTH

## GTA: SAN ANDREAS



## NCAA FOOTBALL 06





#### AARON KOEHN

The winner of our Review Crew Survivor contest happens to like him some *Star Wars* and makes his RC debut with a review of *Star Wars*:

*Episode III—Revenge of the Sith.*

But he gives it a fair shake, for a guy who has a life-size Han Solo in carbonate as his coffee table\*. Read all about it on page 110.

\*This may or may not actually be true.



## THE REVIEW CREW



**DAN "SHOE" HSU**, Editor-in-Chief  
Likes: *Melrose*, *Advance Wars: Dual Strike*  
Dislikes: Fake PS3 graphics, undue hype  
Blog: egmshoe.1UP.com

**MARK MACDONALD**, Executive Editor

Likes: Action and words. Also: Chee-tos  
Dislikes: The PS3 controller, rod peppers  
Blog: egmmark.1UP.com NOW OPEN



**JENNIFER TSAO**, Managing Editor  
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Dislikes: Predictable genres  
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**CRISPIN BOYER**, Senior Editor

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**DEMIAN LINN**, Reviews Editor

Likes: Blasting humans in *Destroy All Humans!*  
Dislikes: Tes, both neck and otherwise  
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**BRYAN INTIHAR**, News Editor  
Likes: *NCAA Football 06... a lot!*  
Dislikes: Wrestling fanboys to play *Zelda*  
Blog: egmbryan.1UP.com

**JON DUDLAK**, Staff Reviewer

Likes: *Moon Patrol* at Chuck E. Cheese  
Dislikes: Licensed-music soundtracks  
Blog: egm\_jon.1UP.com



**SHAWN ELLIOTT**, Staff Reviewer  
Likes: Arguing with Herbs on the Internet  
Dislikes: Next-gen smoke and mirrors  
Blog: egmshawn.1UP.com

**GREG FORD**, Staff Reviewer

Likes: Action, adventure, sports... oh, and games  
Dislikes: Unnecessary remakes, crowds at E3  
Blog: egm\_ford.1UP.com



**JAMES LEE**, Staff Reviewer  
Likes: Inappropriately touching *Bombberman DS*  
Dislikes: The horrifying 3D *Bombberman 64*  
Blog: egmlee.1UP.com

**PATRICK MAURO**, Staff Reviewer

Likes: Sports and more sports  
Dislikes: Things that don't deal with sports  
Blog: Too busy playing sports



**JOHN RICCIARDI**, Staff Reviewer  
Likes: The new Xbox 360 controller  
Dislikes: The new PS3 controller  
Blog: johnv.1UP.com

**JUSTIN SPEER**, Staff Reviewer

Likes: *Ogre Battle* series, controller vibration  
Dislikes: Stat min-maxing, combo counters  
Blog: zepylus.1UP.com



■ You may also see reviews written by the folks over at **OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE** and **1UP.COM**. Do not be alarmed, we are aware of the incursion.

## THE RATING SYSTEM & AWARDS

**7.0-10 GOOD**

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

**5.0-6.5 FAIR**



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



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



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



**Star of the Month** — The highest-scoring game each month gets a star.



**Game of the Month** — The lowest-rated game with unanimous bad scores.

### ESRB KEY

(Also check out [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org))

#### Everyone:

Saccharine fun for the whole family; dancing elves, rampant sharing, and possibly smurfs.

#### Teen:

The PG-13 of game ratings. Fistcuffs, hilarious sexual misunderstandings, and midsize antics.

#### Everyone 10+:

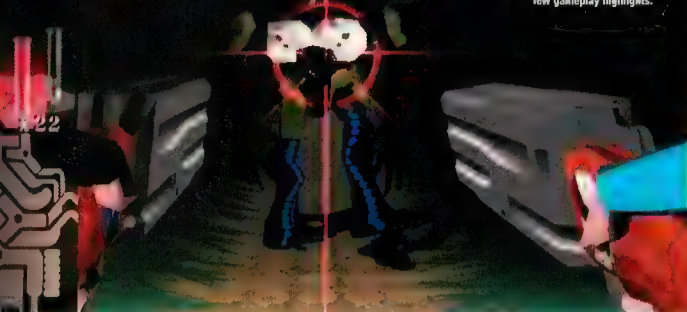
Saccharine fun for family members over 10, that may include mild violence between cartoon squirrels

#### Mature:

For the 18-and-over crowd. Intense violence, gore, patented sex, drugs; parents no likey

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.**

large  
Lv.1



■ Building up your characters' stats with the blood of fallen enemies is one of *Killer 7*'s few gameplay highlights.



PS2/GC

# KILLER 7

## Not-so-killer 5.5

**MARK:** Pick up *Killer 7* expecting a typical shooter and you'll want your money back right away. The game plays by its own bizarre set of rules, starting with movement: You stride forward and back along a single branching line, stopping only to solve puzzles and shoot bad guys in first person. The unique bosses and a few worthwhile enemies (like a legless torso you spin around to shoot in the back) make the most of this simple, shooting-gallery-style setup. But for every interesting bad guy, there are a dozen lame variations on the same scaly, plodding foot soldier. It doesn't help that they're all graduates of the *Doom* Academy of Enemy A.I., shuffling straight at you like lobotomized cult members (which, in all fairness, they are). Puzzles are even worse—throwbacks to the mindless lock-and-key setup and ridiculous leaps of logic of the bad old days.

But while it'd be easy to completely dismiss *Killer 7* on technical grounds, there's more to it. The story plays out like a bizarre dream, more con-

cerned with style and feeling than gameplay. On that level, it scores some points: Characters, the abstract art style, and bits of the freaky plot linger long after the twist ending. But it's hard to recommend picking up *Killer 7*, even as a curious experiment or artistic statement, when so much of the actual gameplay screams to put it down.

**SHAWN:** For a moment, forget the saw-toothed spooks, the late-night TV static, the freaky-for-freaky's-sake story. What's weird about *Killer 7* is how familiar it all is—walk, stop, shoot (with long pauses for loading every 10 paces), solve puzzle, and save. *Killer 7*'s functional-but-not-so-fun control scheme, its crackpot puzzles and contrived keys (I've gotten into toilets at Inner-City Exxon stations with less trouble), all seem to prove a point. And that point—that gamemakers have been repackaging the same product since the original *Resident Evil*, and that, no matter how hallucinatory the tone, gamers can get through

anything as long as the gameplay itself is in their language—is pretty cynical.

**SHANE:** With its surreal visuals, postmodern plot, and quirky humor, *Killer 7* throttles into a brave new realm of aesthetic expression without apology. In fact, the average gamer probably won't even get half of what's going on here: Suicidal severed heads discussing the politics of postwar Japan isn't going to play in Peona.

But the game's crucial failure isn't artistic—if *Killer 7* were an animated movie or a TV series, it'd be an instant cult classic. Sadly, though, it's a game...a deeply flawed one. Dull on-rails walking, repetitive gunplay, endless backtracking, and brain-dead puzzles (on normal difficulty the map shows how to solve them all, too) all detract from the impact. I really wanted to love *Killer 7*, but even I can't pretend that the gameplay is acceptable. Half of this score is for artistic merit alone. ☞

Our **Top Five Favorite** Quotes From *Killer 7*...

5 "Eww. Major grossness. I can't stand afros."

4 "Adults are the suck!"

3 "YEEEEEEAUGH!"

2 "We're talking guys who beat off four times a day!"

1 "God and the pigeons are one. Trust the pigeons."

**Good:** Great character designs, snarling boss style  
**Bad:** Clunky, repetitive gameplay, ridiculous puzzles, long  
**Kinda Like:** *Resident Evil: Dead Aim* after 10 hits or less



THE VERDICT  
5.5 5.0 6.0

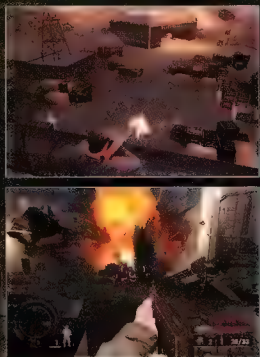
MARK

SHAWN

SHANE

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

www.killer7.com



PS2/XB/GC

# MEDAL OF HONOR: EUROPEAN ASSAULT

## Backpacking across Europe

**JOH D:** Games like *Resident Evil: Survivor* and *Mortal Kombat Mythologies* are proof: You shouldn't f around with a proven formula. The *Medal of Honor* series is at that awkward age that sometimes spawns flagrant retooling, so I'm glad that *European Assault* retains all the best *MOH* values, even if the combat tweaks take the gameplay back a goose step or two.

The latest in the series covers another cross-section of European WWII as you replay historically accurate battles through one soldier's eyes. *Assault's* punchy, surround-encoded audio, brilliant re-creation of historic locales, and gritty one-player story steal the show (don't buy it for the offline multiplayer modes). You can lead your squad all over the map; secondary objectives take you off the beaten path to explore tunnels, buildings, and enemy camps full of nutty Nazis, who keep a hail of bullets whizzing by throughout.

But couple the almost arcadey action with *Assault's* emphasis on taking cover in every single

firefight, and what you've got feels like a super-tough version of *Time Crisis* (minus the light gun). Yes, I get that it's realistic to not want to get shot, but peeking from behind a crate and firing off four rounds from your imprecise rifle before one connects just doesn't stay fun over *Assault's* 10 or so hours. I'd often snap waiting for that sweet adrenaline boost (see sidebar) and charge into a tank volley...which is why I should never be drafted.

**JAMES:** *European Assault* tries to give you an authentic war experience and even offers quick, History Channel-ish lessons—but I don't spend my weekends reenacting this crap, so I found myself skipping right to the action. I enjoyed watching the fireworks as my pyromaniac character exploded another radio tower/tank/U-boat/door, but between history class and explosions, *Assault* didn't keep my blood pumping. Ironically, the new "hero" feature (bullet time plus invincibility) has you fill up your adrenaline meter by picking off Nazis (who all

think they're shorter than they really are—the tops of their heads always stick out from behind crates), but in reality, you wish it was as exciting as the meter keeps telling you.

**IUP.COM—PATRICK:** How many WWII shooters have we had now? I lost count a few hundred thousand ago. *Assault's* optional objectives add freedom and replay value to the typically scripted action, but where's the compelling story (Jon dug it; I didn't), which used to be a driving force behind this series? What's worse, your squadmates' primary purpose is to be cannon fodder (maybe if they did a better job of actually following your squad commands they'd live longer), the crazed, difficulty level ramps up without warning, and when you approach enemy A.I. soldiers they often bust out with a silly-looking herky-jerky dance. The multiplayer mode has plenty of options—but no online play. *Assault* is one of the better *MOH* games of late, but reeks of missed opportunities. ★

### Holding Out for a Hero...Mode

If you're getting tired of crouching behind junk and clawing your way through *Assault's* every stage, don't give up entirely. Stay alive and killing for a while and you'll build up enough adrenaline to go on an invincible spaz-out rampage. It only lasts about 15 seconds, but it can seriously turn the tide of battle if used on a fat nest of Nazis. Plus it'll impress all your limey squadmates.



★ Nazis: The videogame enemies that keep on giving.

**Good:** Superb sound makes it feel like the war's next door  
**Bad:** Constant running for cover gets tiresome  
**Fun:** Kick grenades back at the Nazis who throw 'em. Gooool!



THE LEGENDS

7.5	6.5	6.0
JON D.	JAMES	PATRICK

Publisher: EA Games  
 Developer: EA LA  
 Players: PS2 1-2 (3-4,  
 w/MultiTap), XB/GC 1-4  
 ESRB: Teen  
[www.eagames.com](http://www.eagames.com)

PS2/XB

# STAR WARS: EPISODE III REVENGE OF THE SITH

Boring, these Star Wars are



THE VERDICTS  
OUT OF 100

**5.5** **5.5** **6.0**

BRYAN CRISPIN AARON

Publisher: LucasArts  
Developer: The Collective  
Players: 1-2  
ESRB: Teen

www.lucasarts.com

**Good:** Who doesn't enjoy swingin' lightsabers?

**Bad:** Really, really repetitive.

**Includes:** An alternate ending to the movie (and the game)



**BRYAN:** In the *Sith* movie, when Palpatine reveals himself as a Sith Lord to Anakin Skywalker, he says to pre-Yoda, "I can feel your anger." Well, the game sure infuriated the heck out of this reviewer—are you feeling me, captain evil?

Replace orcs with droids, swords with lightsabers, and hobbits with Jedi and what you've got is a *Lord of the Rings*-style action game based on the last *Star Wars* flick. But someone mistakenly replaced the entertaining bits with monotonous bits. As you guide Skywalker or his mentor Obi-Wan through the pretty movie sets, you'll see the same exact props and set pieces—and you'll slay a ridiculous amount of Federation droids and open far too many locked doors with your glow stick (apparently, breaking and entering is a big problem in George Lucas's far-away galaxy). The handful of lightsaber duels would be a nice change-up, especially since you've got so many upgradeable moves and Force powers in your repertoire...I'm earning a victory actually required some talent.

The game also offers versus and co-op play, but there's no need to subject another person to *Sith*. If you want to be cruel, just make them watch *Episode I and II* again.

**CRISPIN:** Like any *Star Wars* game, *Revenge of the Sith* gets a Force push from

its production values alone.

Heck—even a game starring insurance adjusters would pump me up if it were set to *Star Wars* music. But look past the gloss and it's clear that *Sith* runs out of fun Jedi tricks. Too many levels center on mindless droid hacking. Cool lightsaber boss battles step things up, but half the time I felt like I was winning through luck rather than skill. As a companion piece to the movie—with extra characters and scenery not in the film—*Sith* gets the job done with flair. If only it had the fun to match.

**RO SURVIVOR—AARON:** Recently, we've seen the greatest *Star Wars* moments more often in games than in the movies that inspired them. So with Lucas maintaining a distance from the game version of *Sith*, I expected a high(er) standard. But the gameplay follows a braindead hack-n-slash formula: Your character easily slices through hordes of weak-minded enemies, occasionally flipping a switch or shooting a turret gun. It may be monotonous, but thanks in part to the upgradeable combo system (which rewards Jedi-like dedication) and considering the game's paltry five-hour length, I sure didn't get bored. Above-average graphics, sound, and music add to the experience—by how much depends on your appreciation of the Force.

PS2/XB

# FLATOUT

Accident prone

ONLINE  
PS2/XB (ONLY)



Someone didn't watch her driver's ed films.

THE VERDICTS  
OUT OF 100

**6.0** **6.0** **6.0**

SHAWN DEMIAN BRYAN

Publisher: VU Games  
Developer: Bugbear  
Players: PS2 1-2 (2-6 online),  
XB 1-4 (2-6 via system link or  
online)  
ESRB: Teen  
www.flatoutgame.com

**Good:** Brutal bang ups, good bonus games

**Bad:** No seat belts in single player

**Curious Soundtrack No-show:** Crash Test Dummies



**SHAWN:** Yee-haw! Fishtailing all the way, yokels race wrecks around low-grip, loose-gravel circuits. You can buy parts, but they're rationed out at popped-tire pace to keep you neck and neck (though never ahead). You can bulldoze trackside clutter for boost and bonus points—filmy tire walls, fences, and water tanks—and just as likely get locked in the junk pile. And sure, you can bank on a decent entry in the driven-into-the-ground genre, so long as you're not expecting a backcountry *Burnout*.

*FlatOut's* hook—drivers catapulting from cars like limp-limbed crash dummies—had me slapping my forehead more than my knees. Whenever I had to watch (and watch and watch) my gravity-defying wheelman demonstrate the game's so-so physics, opponents slingshot past, and I placed last (buckle up, bonehead, we want that prize money even if it's in pull tabs). The trick works better in hurts-so-good bonus modes (not available online), where you hurt drivers for height, for distance, and for the hell of it at dashboard, bowling pins, and whatever's in the way.

**SHAWN:** When a racing game's gimmick relies on un-seat-belted drivers forcibly ejected through windshields during crashes, you know you're in trouble. But *FlatOut* takes the ridiculousness one step further:

You earn nitro from smashing into stuff, and yet most objects (tire walls, poles, etc.) are so strangely sticky that if you bump into them, you're stuck. Hey, at least the car-reset button is easily accessible—it's set to Triangle on the PS2 version because you'll use it so much.

*FlatOut* may be an ill-handling, poorly designed hot mess, but its minigames are good for a laugh—even if you're giggling at the absurdity of rag-doll drivers ejected into oversized bowling pins. Too bad only the conventional, crappy races are playable online.

**BRYAN:** I understand *FlatOut* wanted to differentiate itself from the crowded racing field, but man, did this one make some wrong turns in trying to do so. Wrong turn No. 1: From the get-go, the hillbilly A.1. drivers perform like they aced Skip Barber's race school. Wrong turn No. 2: You'll need nitrous to challenge these backcountry pros for the checkered flag, yet the only way to acquire this much-needed boost is by rubbing other cars and crashing into objects, which—as you might've guessed—kinda slows you way down. Wrong turn No. 3: Unlocking the entertaining minigames requires you to complete the single-player mode, which is no easy feat. So make the right turn and steer clear of this wreck.



PS2/XB

# NCAA FOOTBALL 06



## Why wait for Madden?

**BRYAN:** When *Madden* snatched up the exclusive NFL license, some of you probably thought that the game would easily walk away with this season's football trophy. Well, after judging *NCAA Football 06's* performance, I'd say Johnny Balgame better start taking his little bro seriously.

Thankfully, EA has addressed my biggest complaint with last year's edition of *NCAA*: the visuals. Everything has been touched up; the grass no longer looks like Astroturf, stadium shadows cover parts of the field, and better yet, the players actually look like student-athletes (they sport punier physiques than the pro bunch do). But it isn't all about graphics here, as the all-new "race for the Heisman" mode (see sidebar) will entertain folks like me who aren't into the micromanaging of dynasty mode (which, by the way, now features a user-friendly in-season recruiting system).

Each *NCAA* installment implements small yet welcomed gameplay tweaks, and *06's* is no different. The new impact players (indicated by a pul-

sing white circle under their feet) help you distinguish who are the go-to guys; plus these gridiron greats get a performance boost during key plays. Now that the X button (A button on Xbox) is for sprinting only, it's much easier to scramble and throw on the run. Also, you'll juke the bejesus out of many more defenders with the special moves readily accessible on the right analog stick.

Now, how 'bout trying for an unblemished record with *07* and adding an online season mode?

**G. FORD:** EA Sports certainly gives it the old college try each year with *NCAA*, and this season's no disappointment. As for the new stuff, I totally dug the race for the Heisman mode, which had me running some drills, earning a scholarship, and tracking my progress in the cool dorm room/home base. Can't say I'm as excited about the graphics as Bryan is, though; overhauled or not, they leave me pining for slicker next-gen visuals.

Still, everything else is impressive, notably the

all-important atmosphere. Hit up a rivalry game with fight songs blaring and the crowd going wild (love that controller-shaking stadium pulse feature), and you get a sense of the electricity the real-life games deliver. I'd almost be totally fooled if not for the repetitive announcers and occasional spotty A.I. (multiplayer's where it's at anyway).

**PATRICK M:** Features are nice, but gameplay rules. Last year's awesome additions came at the slight expense of the game's speed—a deficiency that's been remedied in *06*. And rolling out the QB while the passing icons remain visible (allowing for quicker decisions while scrambling) is a minor tweak that makes a major difference.

Fans of *NCAA's* dynasty mode will love the new in-season recruiting; invite a blue-chipper to a rivalry game and a rousing victory may just seal the deal. The much-hyped impact player feature feels a little arcadey to me, but I'm happy the hit stick is no longer a *Madden* exclusive.

**What's the Diff?**  
If you own both systems, definitely go Xbox route for *06*. While the visuals look slightly sharper, the real payoff comes when you simulate games or off-season dynasty duties—the load times are much, much faster on Microsoft's machine.



**Strike the Pose**  
In college football, no award is bigger than the Heisman trophy. This year's game features a whole mode dedicated to winning the prestigious prize. Dubbed "race for the Heisman," it's tailor-made for those seeking less of a time commitment than *NCAA's* expansive dynasty mode.  
As your status as a Heisman hopeful increases, your dorm room will start to improve, and you'll get more fan mail and even new lady friends in your life (be sure to check out the picture on your dorm room's computer).



Watch Heisman visuals; look for the Heisman trophy.  
Note: Limited online features  
Inherited from *06*: Replaying camera, strategic replaying game.



THE VERDICT

9.5 9.0 9.0

BRYAN G. FORD PATRICK M.

Publisher: EA Sports  
Developer: EA Tiburon  
Players: PS2 1-2 (3-8 w/MultiTap),  
2 online; XB 1-4 (2 online)  
ESRB: Everyone  
www.easports.com



■ Boss got you down? Level a city, you'll feel better.

PS2/XB

# DESTROY ALL HUMANS!

## Who's up for some probing?

**DEMAN:** It's hard not to love a good bad guy, and gray alien Crypto (voiced by a Jack Nicholson soundalike) is about as bad as they come, what with the world conquering and the human enslaving. But this bad guy is also the hero—as a one-alien army in this action-adventure, you'll harvest human brains for sweet, sweet DNA, abduct a beauty queen for probing, and level whole towns with the death ray on your saucer.

The subjugation of McCarthy-era USA takes place across six huge environments, ranging from a sleepy farming community to military installation Area 42 to Washington-esque Capitol City, each with a series of story-advancing missions and optional side quests. And though there's plenty of room for mindless destruction, many tasks demand a stealthy approach—you'll have to use your "holoboo" device to blend in with the unsuspecting humans. Despite the occasional (but still annoying) mission repeats, *DAH* does a better job than most actioners that try to graft on stealth elements.

The game has a great sense of humor, and I enjoyed the story missions, but the side quests hardly vary at all from one level to the next. Just screwing around and messing with citizens isn't as fun as it could be, either. This reviewer welcomes our alien overlords, but was hoping for a little more laser-based shock and awe.

**SHOE:** *Destroy All Humans!* has all the makings of a hit. From the campy B-movie setting to the numerous ha-has, but if you rocket through the main missions, you'll find the total adventure to be too short, and if you play all the side quests, you'll find the experience too repetitive. Try to hit that sweet spot in between—though I'm sure it'll still leave you wishing for more.

I enjoyed *DAH* the most when it let me go nuts on all the towns with my UFO's badass arsenal: Death rays, sonic booms, tractor beams...nothing beats watching citizens flee in terror as I took the game's title to heart. *DAH* needs more of these.

adrenaline-charged moments (or ones like the boss fights at the end), but what's there still makes for a fun saucer ride.

**G. FORD:** ( gotta admit, I'm torn on this one.) There's plenty good here—I couldn't have asked for a better mixture than *Grand Theft Auto* and the whole alien/UFO phenomenon. And from the music to the absurd townsfolk, *Destroy All Humans!* nails the '60s paranoia vibe it's going for, usually with laugh-out-loud results. Most importantly, the game feels good. Within a few minutes, I had Crypto jet-packing and anal probing like a pro.

Yet I was shocked at just how blandly the game played out. Part of this is due to its linear mission structure, which ranges from creative to downright frustrating. And if you want to take a break and go nuts, it's just not that fun running around the city wreaking havoc. But hey, launching cows with your tractor.



### It's Not Easy Being Gray...But It Sure Is Fun

#### Anal Probe

Hit a pathetic human with the anal probe and he'll sprint a few painful steps before his brain pops right out. Ouch. Not so effective against later foes, sadly.

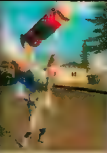
**Usefulness:** ●●●○○



#### Telekinesis

Lift up enemies and cars with your brain power and chuck 'em clear across the level. Upgrade it a notch and even tanks aren't safe.

**Usefulness:** ●●●●●



#### Zap-O-Matic

Kills humans dead through the magic of electrons. Fully upgraded, the gun zaps up to four people at a time, rendering them unable to attack.

**Usefulness:** ●●●○○



**Good:** Levitating radioactive cows, anal probes.  
**Bad:** Optional side quests are lame and repetitive.  
**Don't Call It:** *Grand Theft Flying Saucer*.



THE PRODUCTS

7.0 7.5 6.5

DEMAN

SHOE

G. FORD

Publisher: THQ  
 Developer: Pandemic  
 Players: 1  
 ESRB: Teen

www.destroyallhumansgame.com



PlayStation 2

# COLOSSEUM: ROAD TO FREEDOM

Blood sport



THE VERDICTS

7.0	5.5	5.0
JUSTIN	JAMES	DANA

Publisher: Koei  
Developer: Goshou  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Teen

www.koei.com

**Good:** Overall authentic feel, refreshing combat  
**Bad:** Obviously a small-budget title, harsh and unforgiving  
**Best Gladiator Pick:** Buying yourself a "companion" (either gender)



**JUSTIN:** The life of a slave gladiator is a harsh one. When you're not bleeding in the arena to amuse spectators, you're busting your ass with training minigames and wolfing down grade-D gladiator chow. But if you're willing to accept that you're in for 50 grueling days of being literally owned—with the opportunity to buy or win your freedom through the dedicated butchery of your fellow man—*Colosseum* can prove itself worthy of your favor.

The visual spectacle doesn't get an unqualified thumbs-up, but when you've collected gladiatorial wares such as an imposing deer-skull helmet and gleaming shoulder guard, then plucked a wicked chain-blade from a fallen enemy, you'll be well-equipped for terrifyingly lethal combat. Anyone burned out on the modern glut of block-and-combo action games should be glad to gladiate under these rules.

You can complain about the game's spartan graphics and other problems, use the shoddy default equipment, enter the least challenging events, and refuse to re-create historical battles in the arena...or you can put a little effort into it and get a lot more out. It's nice to have the choice.

**JAMES:** Your DVD copy of Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* has scratches on it and you're forced to watch the same chapters over

and over again—welcome to *Colosseum*. Here, you get to play the same lame minigames at gladiator school (e.g., a stupid rhythm game to do sit-ups), then go off on a field trip the next day to battle at an arena—and repeat, à la *Groundhog Day*. Sure, there are stats to level up, a variety of weapons, and a healer who looks like Jesus, but the combat system and crappy camera will make you want to surrender during the generic battles modes.

*Colosseum* constantly reminds you that you're a slave by having you visit the same frigg'n' dozen rooms; you have 50 days to buy your freedom, but I found an easier way out: the power button. Justin, you crazy.

**OFFICIAL PS MAG—DANA:** I give a blood-thirsty thumbs-down to *Colosseum*'s frustratingly clumsy combat—and blame the slow-to-respond controls that make both dodging and striking needlessly difficult. Once you figure out how to adapt to the inadequacies, there are some decent fighting moments, but for me, the bigger issue was that the predictable cycle (train, eat, fight, and then do it again, slave) left me kind of, well, bored. If gladiatorial combat gets you hot under the bearskin collar, I'd suggest giving *Shadow of Rome* a try instead—it's the superior game.

PlayStation 2

# ARC THE LAD: END OF DARKNESS

Low arc



THE VERDICTS

6.0	5.5	4.0
JUSTIN	SHANE	DANA

Publisher: Namco  
Developer: Cattle Call  
Players: 1 (2-8 online)  
ESRB: Teen

www.namco.com

**Good:** Keeps hope alive for Arc fans  
**Bad:** Poor pacing, underdeveloped combat  
**Lip Service:** Mysterious lack of voice acting



**JUSTIN:** A strategy series turned action role-playing game, this *Arc* starts off slow on a tranquil island where squirrel-milking locals never fight or tell lies. It takes hours to wade through the hokey introductory dialogue, visit a convenient critter-filled cave, and take you first baby steps into the game proper. Not a great start.

When the naive hero finally becomes a "hunter," you'll take on bounties and humanitarian requests that give you an excuse to kill things and advance the plot, piece by piece—in true *Arc* tradition. Unfortunately, newbie hunters seem to live the exciting life of an 8-year-old; you're asked to move hay and end up throwing rocks and whacking bugs with a stick (technically a cudgel, but still).

Things pick up somewhat as you forge a meandering plot, take on progressively meaner missions, and earn better abilities. Characters from past *Arcs* can be unlocked for side missions and story-free online action. But even with hundreds of missions, the entire thing feels disappointingly sluggish and wonky—especially the fighting. *End of Darkness* is best left to fans with patience to spare for what's ultimately a shallow experience.

**SHANE:** What have they done to *Arc the Lad*? As a fan of the previous *Arc* game, *Twilight of the Spirits*, I'm baffled by the

series' unexpected transformation into a clumsy, *Champions of Norrath*-style dungeon hack. This is a direct story line sequel to the last game, but the developers totally drop the ball: *Darkness* molasses pace, cut-rate presentation, and simplistic throwaway quests leech any sense of drama or importance. (Also, could someone explain why one of the last game's characters married his cousin? Ick.)

Prepare to spend 12 hours as a glorified errand boy before anything interesting happens in the single-player game, and the multiplayer online missions, while mildly entertaining, thinks in voice chat are hardly ambitious.

**OFFICIAL PS MAG—DANA:** I appreciate an attempt to flesh out characters and plot in a game, but when I'm spending as much time hitting X to get through dialogue as I do to actually combat enemies, I get a bit upset. Yes, main character Edda, you are a noble aspiring hunter with honorable intentions, but I'm tired of reading (not even hearing) all the yakking about it. And now I've got to wander around town and chat with everyone even more, hoping to finally trigger the event that lets me progress the story line? Ugh. Unless you're a big *Arc* fan, I'd recommend any number of other RPGs over this one.



■ **Nothin'** impresses the boyz like a sweet bunnyhop.



Xbox

# GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

The big one lands on Xbox



**SHOE:** My "to do" list...first, I need to run to the clothes store to get a new shirt (the boys in the hood aren't digging my raggedy wife beater). Then I need to get a new chrome bumper installed on my hoople ride, meet up with Georgy to play a couple games of pool, grab something to eat before I lose all my energy, go work out so I don't turn into a fat slab...then finally, pick up my brother so we can crack open the heads of some rival gangstas.

These are just some of the possibilities in the first couple hours of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*. The biggest, baddest, most ambitious game ever (with the possible exception of fantasy role-player *Morrowind*) hits the Xbox in (mostly) fine form. Live the life of a street thug like you've never imagined, from rags to riches, from a fictional Los Angeles to San Francisco then finally Las Vegas, with enough gang (or even totally innocent) activities to keep you busy for over 200 hours if you wanted.

A little suspension of disbelief helps—the graphics are ugly and the cut-scenes are rough

(though well acted)—as does having a tolerance for a sloppy control scheme. But unless you're averse to crime/drug/violence themes, you can't go wrong here. *San Andreas* is a brilliantly crafted videogame whose scope and scale will remain unparalleled for a long time to come.

**CRISPIN:** Xbox gamers whose lives weren't jacked by the *San Andreas* phenom on PS2 will probably wonder what all the f'n' fuss is about when they take to this game's mean, ugly streets. And I do mean ugly—despite minor improvements over the PS2 version, *San Andreas* is not a good-looking Xbox game. And who is this scrawny CJ guy? Why is his car fisthaling everywhere? Why do I need three hands to handle a simple drive-by shooting?

Some of the answers are up to you, because what this game lacks in looks, it makes up in personality—one that you define. Beef CJ up at the gym, head to driving school to boost his wheelman skills, and eat, eat—you're skin and bones! All

these extracurricular activities are outside the meaty story portion of the game, which eventually veers away from gangland territory (you'll get to jack a jetpack and a jump jet). Sure, *San Andreas* is rough around the edges—distant vistas pop up, computer-controlled allies aren't too bright—but no other console game lets you live a life this large.

**1UP.COM—JOHN:** Even now, more than six months after it made its real impact, *San Andreas* is still one of the most ambitious games ever made. But the move to Xbox feels like more of a formality—you don't really notice the slightly nicer environments, and if ever a game didn't need custom soundtracks, this is the one. Unlike Crispin, I actually quite like the car handling, but I had a much harder time with the combat here than I did on PS2. Blame the Xbox pad, I do.

Think of it like one of those DVD rereleases of a classic movie. It's still great, but 8 million of you have already seen it once. **B+**

**What's the Diff?**  
On the Xbox version of *San Andreas*, you'll find sharper graphics (you'd be hard-pressed to tell the difference, however, unless you put this side by side with the PS2 version), custom soundtracks, faster loading times, and an instant replay feature.



**Lost?**  
Head to [www.gtasanandreas.net/map](http://www.gtasanandreas.net/map). This fan site has an excellent Flash-based map of *San Andreas*'s three cities (as well as the miles and miles of countryside in between). You can turn on and off various filters to see the locations of every graffiti tag, oyster, horseshoe, photo op, and so on, to help you anal-retentive completists (like Shoe) find every little hidden "collectible" in the game.



**Good:** Enough omeurs here to keep you busy for weeks.  
**Bad:** Still looks rough around the edges.  
**Supported:** Custom soundtracks; so plug in your stereo now.



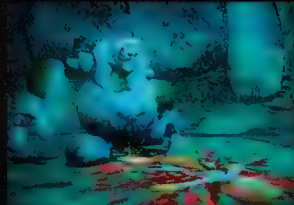
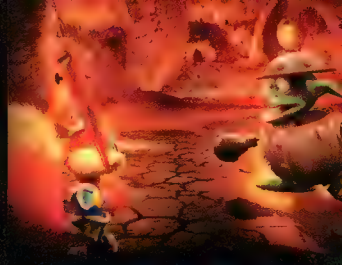
THE VERDICT'S  
YOUR'S

**9.0 9.0 9.5**

SHOE CRISPIN JOHN

Publisher Rockstar  
Developer Rockstar North  
Players: 1 (2 for mingames)  
ESRB Mature

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



Swimming zombies? In a tank? What will they think of next!

Xbox

INLINE

# CONKER: LIVE & RELOADED

## Squirrel nut zappers

**FORD:** Can someone get the lights? Because after *Conker*, that's it for Xbox games from Microsoft Game Studios (unless you count the MS-published *Kingdom Under Fire* expansion), and the company isn't exactly going out on a high note.

The single-player *Conker* is a reimagining of the Nintendo 64 platformer *Conker's Bad Fur Day*, a game well received in that system's waning days, but one that doesn't hold up so well now. While everything received a graphical overhaul, developer Rare didn't bother to make the objectives any less obscure or tweak the clunky controls and combat.

The game's big draw, however, is its third-person shooter multiplayer mode, which does fare better. Up to 16 players can take part in online battles in a variety of environments, switching among six classes and making use of numerous weapons and vehicles. In our tests, the action was generally smooth, and the various mission types (capture the flag, king of the hill variants, etc.) kept things fresh.

Though the fragging may hold your interest for a

while, it's far from revolutionary, and the rest of the game feels like a rodent-encrusted relic from 2001.

**MARK:** *Live & Reloaded* brings back some good memories: Once again, *Conker* is a gorgeous game (outside of the horrible, googly-eyed characters), with solid controls, lots of gameplay variety, and a couple great bosses. Sadly, the game's key feature—its adults-only humor—has lost its punch. The crude plot and potty jokes that once seemed shocking just feel childish in this *Grand Theft Auto* era, and the references (*The Matrix*, *Terminator 2*) are so dated it's embarrassing. *Conker* just isn't as relevant; why riff on cutesy character-based platformers when hardly anyone plays them anymore?

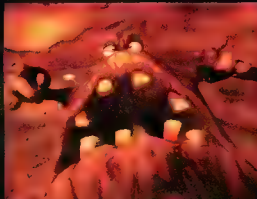
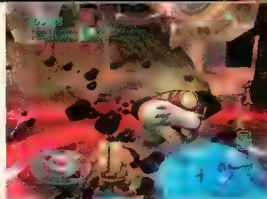
But people *do* play shooters, so it's no surprise that the best part of the remake is the new online multiplayer. For a game in which squirrels fight teddy bears, it's a surprisingly deep (nice levels, characters classes, bots, gimmicky gadgets, vehicles, and turrets) hodgepodge of *Wolfenstein*, *Halo*,

and *Unreal Championship 2*, striking a good balance between strategic thought and arcade twitch.

**TOP.COM—CHE:** *Conker's* retrofitted single-player game drives home the fact that gaming has come a long way since the turn of the century; in 2005, the vulgarity-drenched parodies of *Saving Private Ryan* and *The Matrix* are neither clever nor shocking. Although the game does a decent job of mixing up gameplay—vertigo-inducing platforming hell one minute, traditional third-person shooter action the next—its level designs feel outdated. Graphical polish can't disguise tedious collect-a-thons and an abundance of cheap deaths. Luckily, the stale single-player mode is overshadowed by a chaotic online component that recalls the goal-oriented teamwork of *Unreal Tournament 2004* and the large-scale combat of the *Battlefield* series (both on PC). *Conker's* online fun fights alone are worth the \$50. **A-**

### Bodies but Not Goodies

One can't help but wonder about Rare's decision not to refresh some of *Conker's* extremely dated single-player content—all of our reviewers, even those playing the game for the first time, agree that the parodies (*Saving Private Ryan*, *The Matrix*, *Aliens*, etc.) feel embarrassingly antiquated. Sure the furry visuals look fantastic, but did we have to wait this long just for revamped graphics and the new multiplayer mode?



**Good:** Entertaining multiplayer action  
**Bad:** Ho-hum single-player game, outdated references  
**We'd Prefer:** *A. Battletoads* remake



THE VERDICT  
OUT OF 10

5.0 7.0 8.0

G. FORD MARK CHE

Publisher: Microsoft  
Developer: Rare  
Players: 1-2 (2-16 via system link or online)  
ESRB: Mature

www.xbox.com



Yeah, we want to make a joke about blue balls, too.

Xbox

# ADVENT RISING

...Interest falling

**Good:** Great story  
**Bad:** Clunky controls, buggy  
**Honorable Writer, Mormon Makers:** Mormon undertones



**SHAWN:** One way to introduce a trilogy: Park an asteroid-sized UFO in orbit. Send the humans in to get the good news (these aliens come in peace) along with the not-so-good (they've accidentally alerted another evil armada to our whereabouts). Then have the tagalong ETS smash mother Earth into stardust, stranding hero Gideon Wyeth in space.

If story were enough (and if ambition didn't need ability to back it up), *Advent Rising* might've been an action-adventure masterpiece, with vehicles, psychokinetic superpowers, a character who develops according to your decisions, the works. Instead, its camera-and-control setup—a scheme that's supposed to take the effort out of tracking enemies, freeing thumbs to tap in *Matrix*-style moves while zapping space invaders—sticks on all the wrong spots. (Back off to reload, and it forces you to face baddies you'd rather run from; focus on getting from A to B, and the screen whips bewilderingly from place to place.) It's a work in progress somehow on shelves, full of frustrating bugs; shooting for the stars, it lands well below its own lofty aspirations.



**MARK:** *Advent Rising* looks like an Xbox launch title, you say? OK, a bad Xbox launch title? Well, I can look past shoddy graphics. And so the camera is completely screwed up—hey, I've forgiven worse. The targeting system is a total nightmare? Well...I can live with that...I guess. And the game has more bugs than a bait shop: disappearing characters, scripted events that don't trigger, and other screwups that require a full reset? All right, enough is enough. The best thing I can say about *Advent Rising* is that during its dozen or so epic, stand-out moments—speeding across a futuristic city wracked by meteors, or tossing enemies into the vacuum of space with my Force-like powers—I thought about how great it might have been.

**1UP.COM—CHE:** *Advent Rising* might be falling apart at the seams, but its enthusiasm for the sci-fi-epic subgenre is infectious. One of the game's most compelling factors is its roller-coaster ride of a story, an arc that carries you from an end-of-the-world scenario all the way to the heart of an ancient alien civilization that will worship you and your newly acquired godlike abilities. The impeccable pacing will suck you quickly into its whirlpool. Buggy targeting camera aside, *Advent*'s addictive gameplay is equal parts slow-motion firefights, dual-wielded firepower, and the heady rush of superhuman powers (think Jedi stuff). But in its current (rushed?) state, *Advent* is highly unstable and frustrating to love. You might as well wait until it's cheap.

Publisher: Majesco  
Developer: GlytIX  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Teen

www.adventriving.com

THE VERDICT'S OUT OF US	5	6.5
	SHAWN	MARK CHE

DS

# KIRBY: CANVAS CURSE

Sketch artistry



**Good:** Delightful level design  
**Bad:** A Kirby game that's actually tough?  
**Finally:** Touch-pad gaming that doesn't require cardio fitness



**JENNIFER:** Don't write this one off as a baby game. Sure, you play as a possibly genderless pink blob, hiding rainbows through magical castles filled with pretty stars. But this game is so much more than the usual 2D puff-n-float platforming. While there still is plenty of puffing and floating, the crux of the game involves drawing rainbow slides that guide Kirby to his destination. At first it seems simplistic, but as you learn all the ways you can use your paintbrush, the game becomes quite compelling. Sometimes, for instance, you need to protect Kirby from fire or electricity. Other times, a well-drawn rainbow is the only way to get the stars or medals in a level. It sounds fruity, but the levels are well designed and really take advantage of the painting mechanism.

The challenge can reach frustrating levels, but ultimately, success boils down to a fine balance of puzzle solving, skilled drawing, and even a pinch of creativity (you can progress several ways, depending on how you draw Kirby's path). Add in a few *WarioWare*-inspired bosses and minigames, and you have a great addition to the DS library.

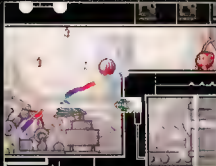
**SHANE:** Finally, someone was able to make a stylus-controlled title that's actually a real game. As you guide the titular puffball through pastel lands with your pen, everything feels shockingly natural: understanding Kirby's intrinsic momentum, sketching rainbow pathways, and barreling into enemies to swipe their powers. Platforming gameplay hasn't felt

this new in ages.

Kirby's creativity goes so far, in fact, that it's easy to overlook the game's missteps. Graphically, you'll find nothing here that couldn't have happened on the Game Boy Advance. And it's awfully tempting to motor through the game in one four-hour sitting. Luckily, the plentiful unlockables (including a host of playable characters) make multiple playthroughs worth it.

**JOHN R:** *Canvas Curse* is the first DS game from Nintendo that really delivers the kind of quality and polish I've come to expect from the company. It's also Nintendo's first DS game, aside from maybe *Mario 64*, that doesn't have that "glorified tech demo" feel to it. Kirby has eight worlds, 20+ plus stages, bosses, minigames—the whole package. Another *Yoshi Touch & Go* this is not.

From start to finish, *Canvas* is packed with beautiful graphics, awesome level designs, and compelling gameplay. Boss battles are cool and unique, and the minigames and bonus options are worth unlocking—really! Don't blow through the game in half the time and miss out.



THE VERDICT'S OUT OF US	8.5	9.0	9.0
	JENNIFER	SHANE	JOHN R.

Publisher: Nintendo  
Developer: Hal  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Everyone

www.nintendo.com

DS

# BOMBERMAN DS

Weapons of minor destruction



THE VERDICTS  
8.0 6.5 8.0  
JAMES JENNIFER JOHN R.

Publisher: Ubisoft  
Developer: Hudson  
Players: 1 (2-8 via local Wi-Fi)  
ESRB: Everyone

www.ubi.com

**Good:** Useful multiplayer, *Bomberman DS* innovative touch stuff  
**Bads:** No coin-battle mode, single player loses its flavor  
**Gets Annoying:** *Faak* screaming into the mike to set off bombs.



**JAMES:** Call me old-fashioned, but I like my *Bomberman* to stick close to the original (you crazy kids with your three dimensions). Thankfully, *Bomberman DS* keeps things familiar enough—you still plant bombs to reveal powerups and burn opponents—but you'll have to break out the Bombermanal for some never-before-seen power-ups, such as the shield (which, uh, shields you from bomb blasts).

They'll come in handy when you solo through 10 areas to find bomb crystals or some nonsense. As you collect items, you'll manage your inventory on the touch screen. It works well and lets you strategize with your power-ups: I'd treat myself to a remote bomb or a sweet power-up for a difficult stage...or hit the invincibility right before I was about to eat it.

But forget the one-man Unabomber stuff—*Bomberman* is all about multiplayer. There's the rad crown battle mode, where the first to reach the burger king crown wins, but I hate the voice detonation mode, which had me literally dropping F-bombs. More multiplayer battle modes and creativity with the single-player battlefield would be nice, but, overall, this is a must-have for BomberFans.

**JENNIFER:** This is my first *Bomberman*, and it's not going to make me a convert.

Even when games are primarily intended for multiplayer, I like a good solo experience to help me get my chops before venturing into the competitive fray. *Bomberman DS* doesn't provide that. The tedious single-player mode can be less than forgiving, and you can't save often enough. For such a slow-paced game, that's unforgivable; in my case, it meant surefire frustration when accidental deaths wiped out several levels of progress. I did enjoy multiplayer—the varied power-ups keep things fast and fun, and with the potential for eight players to get on a single map, it's the best sort of chaos. But I don't think this is a guaranteed good time for everyone.

**JOHN R:** Ubisoft's promise of "100 puzzle-filled stages" in this latest *Bomberman* adventure is misleading. Yes, the single-player mode does feature 100 stages of play, but to call them "puzzle-filled" is an insult. Aside from the boss battles, not one of those stages offers any kind of depth or variety; 10-year-old *Bomberman* games were more interesting. Multiplayer, however, delivers. Eight-player wireless play rocks, and this version's got more modes, options, and levels than any other in recent memory. As a multiplayer party game, *Bomberman DS* simply can't be beat.



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by Rick O'Connor



DS

# METEOS

## Awesome block party

**SHOE:** Grab a stylus and get rubbin'—you need to destroy the space rocks that are raining down on your planet in this innovative (yet familiar) puzzle game. You know the deal: find three blocks of the same color and connect them. Simple, but when you match those blocks, it launches all the ones above them into the air. From there, you can combo more blocks inside the floating mass, throw individual rocks up to the mass to keep it afloat and give you more combo options, or let that mass drop back down to match up with other pieces on the planet surface. Puzzle-game vets will need a bit of time to adjust to this radical new style of play, but all these choices, as well as the different planets with different physics and gravity

strengths, mean *Meteos* can accommodate almost any playing style, from hardcore combo fans to casual players who don't want to think about anything beyond those first three blocks.

If you like that combo business, however, and can wait out the slow burn it'll take before everything clicks, you'll find a deep, addictive experience on par with *Tetris Attack* (Super Nintendo) or *Lumines* (PSP). Find three friends to play with (you can play a limited four-player game with one cart), and you'll never want to put your DS down again.

**SHANE:** It's time to put *Lumines* into cold storage—*Meteos* deftly snags the portable puzzler crown for the new handheld generation. While not

quite as stylish as its PSP cousin (the audiovisual experience here isn't so much "sexed-up rave culture," it's more "fourth-grader's science fair project"), it's actually a better game.

*Meteos* doesn't succeed through simplicity—instead, it pummels you with so many distinct ways to approach scoring (horizontal matches, vertical matches, midair combos, step jumps, and midair docks) that it's easy to create your own unique style. It's fantastically deep, immediately addictive, and supremely fun—especially in versus mode. And don't listen to naysayers who claim you can win by simply scribbling...they're wrong.

**IUP.COM—CHE:** Just as *Lumines*' audiovisual overload was a perfect fit for the PSP, *Meteos*' innovative stylus control and dual-screen action is a seamless match for the DS. But unlike *Lumines*, *Meteos* is fast and unforgiving—like a fighting game you'd play for minutes at a time. In the cosmic free-for-all of wireless multiplayer, think of the planets you unlock in single-player as characters, each with its own fighting style; some allow you ample time to build up combos at the risk of being slower, while others are wicked fast but can't dish out huge attacks. Quirky and addictive, *Meteos* is the killer app that the DS desperately needs right now. **A-**

### Planets for Sale

Just what we need...more reasons to be addicted. After each match, you earn as currency all the different *Meteos* (the name for those little blocks) that you blasted back into space. Fuse them together to buy new planets, special power-ups, or rare *Meteos* that'll let you purchase even more rare planets and power-ups.

Eventually, you'll open up ultra-low- or ultra-high-gravity worlds, blocks that pulse and wiggle, and more. Not only does the game have a crapload of goodies to unlock, but because you actually have 12 different types of *Meteos*, you have to be strategic about what you earn and how you spend them.



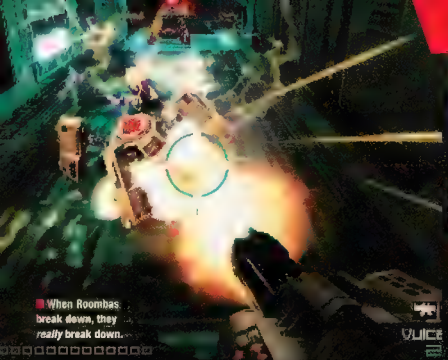
**Good:** Supports many play styles and techniques.  
**Bad:** Small blocks may be hard to touch for some.  
**That's What She Said:** A "noob" blunder during "long game."



THE VERDICTS  
(out of 10)

9.0	9.0	9.0
SHOE	SHANE	CHE

Publisher: Nintendo  
 Developer: Q Entertainment/  
 Bandai  
 Players: 1 (2-4 via local Wi-Fi)  
 ESRB: Everyone  
[www.nintendo.com](http://www.nintendo.com)



When Roombas break down, they really break down.

PSP

# CODED ARMS

Virtual reality bites

**Good:** Lots of upgradeable weapons, randomized stages

**Bad:** Tough controls, gets tedious

**Control Type A:** Is probably your best bet

**SHAWN:** *Coded Arms* pulls off functional first-person control with PSP's only-child analog stick but feels like a fossil on the cutting-edge portable. Put some of the blame on the I-heart-the-'90s premise: You take on viruses and renegade bots in a busted virtual-reality program. Pin the rest on the rinse-and-repeat corridor-clearing. *Coded Arms* lays its hack-job levels out at random only because its dreary settings and dumb-dumb objectives (kill 'em all, kill 'em all in a time limit) let it. Dead ends don't matter much when you've got nowhere specific to go, nothing specific to do. And as for that malicious software: Just flick the power switch to pull the plug on the whole damn program.

**G. FORD:** One big thing you should know going into *Coded Arms*, the PSP's first foray into the land of first-person shooters: The controls are an

adventure. Since the PSP has only one analog stick, you'll use the face buttons for movement or camera control—not fun, but you'll likely get used to it. And then two small things: Levels in the *Matrix*-y, in-the-computer-program world are randomly generated, and you can collect and upgrade a whole pile of guns.

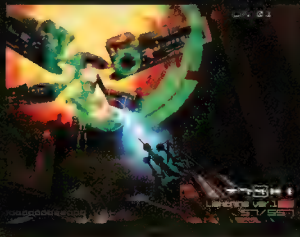
After getting a hang of the controls, beating a dozen or so levels, and effectively upgrading my ordinance, I was having a good time—but then things stalled. Outside of a few bosses and some new enemies (which all share the same simple A.I.), this process is repeated ad nauseum. Sure, the levels are randomly generated, but they have the same setup: Fight a few enemies in a hall-way, fight a lot of enemies in a big room, and/or get to the exit in under three minutes. *Coded Arms* shows that the PSP can effectively handle shooters (including multiplayer)—



This would be a tense standoff if either player could aim worth a damn (below).

this particular one, though, is only mildly entertaining at best.

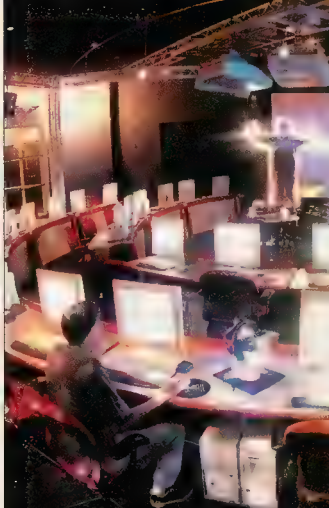
**CRISPIN:** Maybe if this blah shooter had better controls—and maybe if you haven't played a first-person blast-em-up since 1995—it would be worth your time. Ah, who am I kidding. *Coded Arms* would still suck. From its tired shoot-bugs-in-virtual-reality premise to its repetitive, randomly generated levels, the game looks and plays like some PlayStation 1 shooter that time forgot. It takes way too long before you find any interesting weapons (which run out of ammo way too fast anyway), and the odd little instant "missions" (such as eliminating all the enemies in a room within such-and-such time) do little to keep you awake. Multiplayer might be fun if not for the clumsy controls. Let's hope future PSP shooters offer a better control scheme. **A-**



Publisher: Konami  
Developer: Konami  
Players: 1 (2-4 via local Wi-Fi)  
ESRB: Teen

www.konami.com

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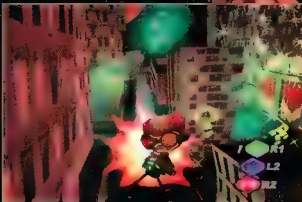
SHAWN G. FORD CRISPIN

# REVIEWS WRAP-UP

The games that were too little or too late



**Metal Slug 4 & 5** • PS2/XB • SNK Playmore  
**ESRB:** T — Now slow-fingered shut-ins can see *Metal Slug 4 & 5* from start to finish—infinite continuums make the 2D side-scrolling war one-sided, but hey, bringing a change belt to the arcade didn't bother us back when.  
**Bottom line:** A double dose of superdetailed shooting that's ideal for collectors and curious renters.



**Psychonauts** • PS2 • Majesco • ESRB: T — It's the PlayStation 2 port of the excellently quirky Xbox game. Same awesome writing. Same Mario-on-mushrooms gameplay and psychodelic mindscapes. New graphic slowdown problems.  
**Bottom line:** If you're Xboxless, this is well worth it, but if you're debating between the two platforms, snag the XB version.



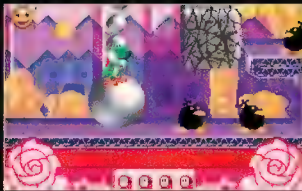
• The Psychonauts crew: When not performing videogames brain surgery, they're out clubbin'.



**Flipnic: Ultimate Pinball** • PS2 • Capcom • ESRB: E  
 This endearingly offbeat, budget-priced pinball-slinger does one thing so many other, more true-to-life silver-ball simulators bungle: It knows it's a videogame. Trouble is, after an excellent jungle-themed first table, most levels are a letdown.  
**Bottom line:** *Flipnic* scores major style points with its quirky, distinctly Japanese feel. And hey, what do you expect for 20 bucks?



**Riviera** • GBA • Atlus • ESRB: T — This surprisingly deep role-playing game casts you as an avenging angel tasked with destroying the world...and wooing some hot honeys in the process.  
**Bottom line:** It's a long game, perfect for some endless summer vacation. Plus, its well-written dialogue and addictive turn-based battle system will keep you hooked. Dated visuals and limited interactivity (everything is menu driven) hamper the fun a bit.



**WarioWare: Twisted!** • GBA • Nintendo • ESRB: E — Nintendo revisits Yoshi's island with the help of *Blix* developer Artoon. This time, the tilt sensor that was so wonderful in *WarioWare: Twisted!* tries to work its magic on platforming, but the action is too simple to be exciting. Also, this sensor lacks the satisfying rumble of *Wario's*, making the tilting feel imprecise.  
**Bottom line:** The game is kept easy on behalf of the kiddies, and that means it's a bit dull.



**MVP: The Franchise** • PSP • EA Sports • ESRB: E  
 So far, EA's sports franchises on Sony's first handheld have been hit or miss—*MVP* is the latter. It's skinny on modes (where's the online play? Where are all those quirky minigames from the console edition?), the gameplay's chuggy,

and, worst of all, hitting the ball is too damn difficult.  
**Bottom line:** Forget about *MVP*—989 hasn't been the top dog in a while (make that a long while), but its baseball game (*MLB*) is the best way to play America's pastime while on the go.



**Dead to Rights: Reckoning** • PSP  
**Namco** • ESRB: M — The repetitive run-and-gun action feels a lot like *Dead to Rights II's* (PS2 and Xbox), a good thing when it comes to the smooth graphics, not such a good thing when the levels and most of the rooms are

exactly the same. The missing second analog stick makes for periodic camera problems as well.  
**Bottom line:** Your average mindless bubblegum shooter. Four-person multiplayer has ample options, but few levels and amplified gameplay issues.





**GoldenEye: Rogue Agent** • DS • EA Games • ESRB:

T — This handheld version of the recent, good-but-definitely-not-great *GoldenEye* console game is a level-by-level remake of the big-screen original.

**Bottom line:** Using the stylus to aim works OK, but we still can't see why anyone would want to play a first-person shooter on a handheld. The controls are fiddly and the graphics are fugly.



Did Batman's old car have sex with a Hummer or something?

**Batman Begins** • PS2/XB/GC •

EA Games • ESRB: T — Though we couldn't get a final version of the game in time for review, judging from our hours with a work-in-progress, it looks like we may finally get a competent videogame.

incarnation of Batman—as an ink-dark knight whose MO involves more than walloping Halloweenes. (Scarecrow stars but knows better than to box).

**Bottom line:** Sneaky moves cribbed from *Splinter Cell* and the

power to psych out goons are a start—now if only the opportunities to use either weren't so hit-you-over-the-head obvious. Unless your bat nipples are already hard for this game, you may want to take a wait and see approach. 🦇



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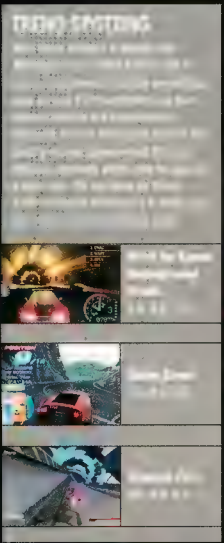
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The new sheriff of Samurai Warriors 3 seems like to feel the wind blow through his hair.

# REVIEWS ARCHIVE

## The Florida for our old retired reviews



### bargain bin bounty



### STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

- **XB**
- **Released:** July 2003
- **Original Scores:** 10, 9, 9.5

As you geek out and see the new *Star Wars* flick for the 30th time, we thought it'd be a good idea to remind you that this great RPG goes for only 20 bucks. Come up from the basement, drop the broom and hand, and train as a Jedi the proper way.

GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
American McGee Presents Scrapland	XB	■ Broken-record gameplay forces you to fight through repetitive missions	6.5 5.5 6.5	
Area 51	PS2/XB	■ This fun, creepy shooter is satisfying even with Duchovny's monotonous voiceover	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Atelier Iris: Eternal Mana	PS2	■ D-Pouch: no-pronounce name, but a worthy RPG with simple, enjoyable battles	8.0 7.0 7.5	
Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30	PS2/XB	■ Salute <i>BA</i> 's brainy AI, and squad tactics—it's the best WWII shooter yet	8.5 8.0 9.0	Silver
Close Combat: First to Fight	XB	■ Belongs in no man's land because of bland gameplay and shell-shocked A.I.	5.0 5.5 4.0	
Cold Fear	PS2/XB	■ It's a lukewarm zombie game, but the exploding headshots never get old	6.0 7.5 5.0	
Cold Winter	PS2	■ 007 meets MacGyver (sans mallet) in this above-average violent shooter	7.0 6.5 7.0	
Dead or Alive Ultimate	XB	■ The bouncing boobs of <i>DOAs 7</i> and <i>2</i> look way nicer revamped for Xbox	7.0 7.5 7.5	
Dead to Rights II	PS2/XB	■ The boring sequel about a cop and his dog is great, for us to poop on	4.0 6.0 4.5	
Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening	PS2	■ Back with a new fighting-style system, some crazy combos, and insane difficulty	8.0 7.0 8.0	Silver
Donkey Kong: Jungle Beat	GC	■ Why work when you can bang on the drum all day in this unconventional platformer?	8.0 7.0 8.0	
Doom 3	XB	■ The beautiful shooter will make you jump when things go bump in the night	8.0 9.5 9.5	Gold
Dynasty Warriors 5	PS2	■ Another sequel to play as a Chinese Rambo, but it's an addictive hack-n-slash	8.0 7.5 8.0	
EA Sports Fight Night Round 2	PS2/XB/GC	■ We pity the fool who doesn't climb into the ring with this boxing champ	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
Enthusia: Professional Racing	PS2	■ Even hardcore <i>Gran Turismo</i> fans should take this racing sim out for a spin	8.0 8.5 8.5	Silver
FIFA Street	PS2/XB/GC	■ Soccer has been Street-fied, and it's decent but not great	6.5 5.5 7.5	
Fire Emblem: The Sacred Stones	GBA	■ A great strategy-RPG sequel, but just more of the same stuff from the original	8.0 7.5 9.0	Silver
Forza Motorsport	XB	■ Soaks across the fan line as one of the best racers for the Xbox	9.5 10 10	Gold
God of War	PS2	■ A great blend of <i>U.S. Marauding</i> and <i>Artemis</i> would be a Greek tragedy	10 9.5 10	Gold
Gran Turismo 4	PS2	■ Still the best driving sim on PS2, but not a lot has changed since <i>A-Spec</i>	8.0 9.5 9.0	Gold
Haunting Ground	PS2	■ Even the bouncy boots can't make us think this is a top-notch survival-horror game	7.0 6.5 5.0	
Hot Shots Golf: Open Tee	PSP	■ An addictive golf game, even though its cuteness nearly sat off our gag reflex	7.0 7.0 7.0	
In the Groove	PS2	■ Dust off the headband and spandex, a decent dancing game with more crazy techno tracks	7.0 7.0 6.5	
Leafe Empire	XB	■ Put all 1x to shame as you built your own kung fu badass in this excellent action-RPG	9.0 9.5 9.5	Gold
Judicat	PS2/XB	■ Trails the pack, but with AI teammates and betting on races, it earns our respect	7.0 6.5 7.0	
Kessen III	PS2	■ Though cinematic and ambitious, it never manages any serious action or strategy	7.5 6.5 6.5	
Lego Star Wars	PS2/XB	■ Some fun disassembly is required when you use the Force to take apart battle droids	7.0 7.0 7.5	
Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	PS2/XB	■ This time around, cars have superpowers and move faster than a speeding bullet	8.0 9.0 9.0	Silver
MLB 2006	PS2	■ The series tries to go for a hit, but it's still just a ball compared to the competition	7.0 6.5 7.0	
MLB 2K5	PS2/XB	■ Orans one game for the park, but its innovative pitching system and spiffy visuals	8.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Mortal Kombat: Deception	GC	■ This slotted sequel has so many extra game modes that there's even <i>MK chess</i>	6.0 6.5 7.5	
Musashi Samurai Legend	PS2	■ This swordsmen swings a mean blade, but repetitive levels hamper the fun	6.5 5.0 6.0	
NFL Baseball 2006	PS2/XB/GC	■ Slick mangles make it the best baseball sim yet	8.5 8.5 9.0	Silver
MX vs. ATV Unleashed	PS2/XB	■ A worthy game that appeals to more than gearheads with its countless unlockables	8.0 7.0 8.5	
NBA Street Showdown	PSP	■ Decent ball but it just double-doubles the console version of <i>Vol 2</i> onto PSP	6.5 7.0 6.5	
Dac-Pix	PS2	■ As that doodling in school will come in handy in this over-toon OS drawing game	7.0 6.5 7.0	
Pariah	XB	■ This shooter has cool weapons and a semi-interesting story, but it's no <i>Halo</i> killer	8.0 6.5 6.5	
Playboy: The Mansion	PS2/XB	■ A third-rate Sims clone, but with giant cartoon boobies	5.0 4.5 4.5	
Pokémon Emerald	GBA	■ Catch those little bastards all over again, if you're a fan of the genre	7.0 7.5 7.0	
Pokémon Dash	DS	■ In this mediocre Pokémon spin-off for tykes, ribbon really is racing	5.0 6.5 6.0	
Predator: Concrete Jungle	PS2/XB	■ Predator vs. crappy camera. Whoever wins, we lose by playing the bland game	5.5 4.5 4.5	
Project: Snowblind	PS2/XB	■ The <i>MRA</i> has its poster game in this weapon-drammed, futuristic blaster	8.0 8.5 7.5	Silver
Psychonauts	XB	■ C're more crazes than shock therapy does in the great platformer	8.0 9.0 8.0	Silver
Pengopok: The Tower of Purgatory	PSP	■ Insanely repetitive—it's more like <i>BattleBots</i> than purgatory	3.0 2.0 2.0	
Red Ninja: End of Honor	PS2/XB	■ Gameplay so horrible that it actually runs a videogame with hot nips in panties	4.5 4.0 4.0	
Resident Evil Outbreak: File #2	PS2	■ Koko the gorilla can communicate more easily than gamers can in <i>RE3</i> 's online play	5.0 6.0 4.5	
Rise of the Kasai	PS2	■ The stealth killer's easy when you're nunsukull AI partner's not getting in your way	6.0 6.0 7.0	
Samurai Warriors	PS2	■ Even as you yank and slash as a samurai, who deflects bullets with his sword	4.0 7.0 5.0	
Shin Megami Tensei: Digital Devil Saga	PS2	■ It's <i>Final Fantasy X</i> plus <i>Handicap</i> plus <i>Mad Max</i> , but with a cliff-hanger ending!	8.0 8.5 8.0	Silver
SmartBomb	PSP	■ Need to get crazy warfare games and <i>Minesweeper</i> on your PSP? Look no further	3.0 3.0 2.5	
Spyder-Man 2	DS	■ If your spider sense is on the fritz, let us warn you to avoid this ho-hum adventure	6.0 5.5 3.0	
Spyder-Man 2	PSP	■ Kristian Dunst looks nice, but the camera has a hard time focusing on anything else	6.0 7.0 6.0	
So. Calif. Call Chase Theory	XB	■ Back in the good old days of <i>Final Fantasy</i> and <i>Grand Theft Auto</i> , this was <i>fun</i>	9.5 10 10	Gold
Star Wars: Republic Commando	XB	■ Cuddly a couple of great smart strategists who actually shoot the bad guys!	7.0 7.0 8.0	
Star Wars: Republic III Revenge of the Sith	DS	■ Maybe in a galaxy far, far away its side-scrolling crap is still considered awesome	4.5 4.0 4.0	
Yokai 5	PS2	■ The Iron Fist tournament may be getting a little rusty, but it comes with great extras	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
TimeSplitters: Future Perfect	PS2/XB/GC	■ The ultimate twitch first-person shooter with a killer sense of humor	7.5 7.5 9.5	Silver
Tony Hawk's Underground 2 Remix	PSP	■ The additional features make you want to keep grinding in the Destruction Tour	7.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
Twisted Metal: Head-On	PSP	■ This fighting game with cars is OK, but the series is due for some maintenance	7.5 6.5 6.0	
Ultimate Championship 2: The Lizardrict Conflict	XB	■ Fast-paced dementing that's ideal for gamers bored with <i>Halo 2</i>	8.5 8.0 8.0	Silver
Viewtiful Joe 2	PS2/GC	■ More's what you hopefully know and (should) love from <i>Halo's</i> first outing	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
WarioWare: Twisted!	GBA	■ Spin your GBA like a nutcase in this collection of new three-second microgames	9.0 9.0 8.0	Gold
Wipeout Pure	PSP	■ Remind yourself to blink while playing this great, intense racing game	8.0 8.0 8.5	Silver
Worms Forts: Under Siege	PS2/XB	■ Ward fort building and stupid AI, make <i>Worms</i> gross again	6.5 4.0 6.5	
WWE Wrestlemania 21	XB	■ The AI is so bad that this game is even unworthy for a fake sport	3.5 5.0 6.5	
Yoshi Touch & Go	DS	■ Draw clouds with the stylus and control the environment for Mario's green steed	7.5 7.5 8.5	

\*Games in red are previous Game of the Month winners.



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# SEANBABY'S E3 SCAVENGER HUNT

A complete and total crap-o-rama

**L**ast year, I invented what history is already describing as its favorite thing ever—the Electronic Entertainment Expo Scavenger Hunt, in which two brave teams compete in a battle of wits and photos (read about last year's at [e3scavenger2004.1UP.com](http://e3scavenger2004.1UP.com)). The team I captain, 2 Fast 2 Courteous, took its name directly from my roommate's fiancée's team name at a corporate

team-building retreat. It does not refer to our scavenger-hunting style, which is, in fact, quite deliberate and rude. *EGM* contributor Andrew Pfister captains the returning champions, and my deadliest enemies, team Funk City 2039. Each team was given an identical list of E3 phenomena to document, with each entry battling for a possible 10 points. Here's how things turned out:

TEAM 2 FAST 2 COURTEOUS

TEAM FUNK CITY 2039

vs.

### Just Didn't Care

Nerds will always be a little bit gross. But for most nerds, E3 is a time to look your best—a time to put on your cleanest *Dragon Ball Z* silk club shirt. But some people love videogames so much that it overrides any concerns about not being a total sloppy fatty. One could argue that this category was just included to make us feel better about ourselves for being so hot, yet it turned into so much more. In fact, our entries are so perfect that there's no explanation other than our future selves traveled through time and cheated hilariously. Look at these people our future selves planted in front of our cameras. It's like a ham truck crashed into a ham factory and it set off a chain ham reaction that sounded like this: "BllggrrblaggoPLORSIH!"



### Most Comical Interaction With Statue

Statues are everywhere at E3, presumably so conventiongoers can treasure a keepsake photo of themselves standing next to a roped-off Sonic the Hedgehog. Studies show that during the posing for any picture with statuary, the first thing that enters your head is, "How funny would it be if I was humping this thing!?" Whether your mouth savages Sonic's speed, hedgehog lips, or you simply support his crotch with the cupped hands of a gentle lover, this instinct is both ordinary and natural. Don't think we're better than that. I alone have 400 pictures of me riding Sonic like I paid for it, but my team selected a PG-rated one.

It was a tough choice between our Air Journey Cover Band With Dead Rising Zombie Statue on Air Keyboards against Funk City 2039's Pfister Looking Up Centurion's Dress. In the end, we got a bonus point for double-crossing our own expectations by not including any interaction with the zombie's genitals.



### Most Freebies on a Herb

What people do with two bags of pamphlets and a *BloodRayne* hemorrhoid pad is their own business. And when I say their own business, I mean in the sense that we may print their pictures in a magazine. Team Funk City 2039 found a hero patrolling the halls in his *Guild Wars* cape with paper bags filled with what I assume is shame. It's a solid entry, but no match for 2 Fast 2 Courteous' pink-hatted dark troll sitting down and guarding his hoard of free crap just right in the center of the damn floor.



### Crappiest Game

This was open to each team's standards and interpretations, and as it turned out, both teams ended up torn between two games—

*The Dozens* and *The Bible Game* (PS2/GBA). *The Dozens* is a card game released by the Wayans brothers, in which players read off jokes about one another's mother. And when I say "jokes," I mean that only by the most technical of standards. "Your mother is so fat she has serious health problems!" for example. Shawn, Marlon, and Keenen Ivory were there to promote it, allowing

Marlon to set the new world record for Celebrity Disinterest in a Celebrity Appearance.

*The Bible Game* had no star power backing it, unless you count Jesus, who was there...inside, each of us. Now I know God lets things slide now



and then, but it foretells a dark age ahead if He's allowing a game based on His autobiography to be *this* bad. How did Mary Kate and Ashley get more creative merchandise control than our Lord and Savior?



### Most Hopeless Peripheral

In Kentia Hall, the basement of E3, foreigners gather to show off disasters that will never be discussed again after this article. For 2 Fast 2 Courteous' entry, we selected SUPERARENA, which invites people to "SHOW ME YOUR ACTION." Its pad and wrist/ankle sensors let you play fighting games with body movements. This is an E3 veteran that didn't work in 2004, and it was worse in 2005 since it's the same trash with an added year of wear-and-tear on the display model. I tried it again, and during the merciless beating my *Dead or Alive* character took, my frantic onslaught managed to make the damn guy move about three times, and never the way my karate told him. The booth's exhibitor had no English, but I definitely got that none of this surprised him.

Team Funk City 2039's entry is a music box controller that attaches to your PS2. Trust me when I say language barriers made it impossible to figure out what the hell that was about.



**Least Impressive Celebrity**  
My friend Gabby found a grumpy Kadeem Hardison, star of the *Cosby* spin-off *A Different World*, while team Funk City 2039 fought back with the star of *Diff'rent Strokes*, Gary Coleman. The edge on lack of impressiveness went to Funk City since Kadeem has been in several legitimate films, like *Def by Temptation* and *Who's Your Daddy?*, and Gary Coleman is easier to find at E3 than a drinking fountain.



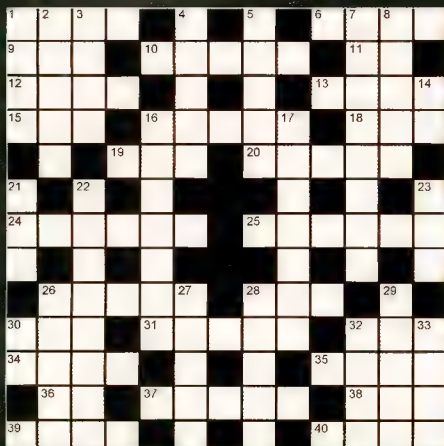
### OUR STUNNING CONCLUSION



Shocking the scavenger-hunting world, team 2 Fast 2 Courteous comes back from last year's defeat and delivers a win, 126 to 124! Congratulations not only to us, but to everyone that isn't team Funk City 2039. Suck on it! *Seanbaby*

# OUT WITH THE NEW, IN WITH THE OLD

(Solution on page 129)



## ACROSS

- Inflamable *Spyro* creature.
- Metal Gear Solid 2* Olga's home land
- ...Wan of *Star Wars* games
- Q-Bert's serpentine nemesis.
- Magnum* of Atari 2600 fame
- '80s Atari portable
- Like *Punch-Out!!* boxer Bull!
- Game soundtrack, for short
- Dance Dance Revolution* gameplay cue
- Atari/C64's *Quest for Quintana*
- MLB pitching stal
- Caesar's Palace* card sets
- DS *Pac-Man* title
- Talks like a *Gran Theft Auto* character?
- Xbox *American ... Scrapland*
- Futurama* playable
- Primitive videogame pioneer *Space*
- Midnight Club* events
- Daxter's pal
- GBC *Zelda: Oracle of*
- Pre-release player testing.
- Ginormous American publisher
- Konami's 8-bit sub-brand
- PS1 console-cooling peripheral
- Street Fighter Alpha 3's* A, X, or V modes
- Ready 2 Rumble's* Thunder

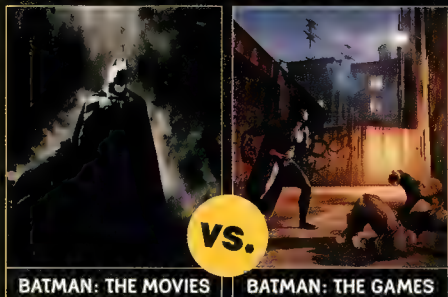
## DOWN

- Princess Laila's titular NES 8-bit boyfriend
- Commodore 64 maze game
- Like a brand-new game's condition
- Metal Gear Solid 3* bosses' elite group
- Halo's* parasitic scourge
- Mega Man 3* boss
- GunGriffon* military targets
- Arcade clown *Mr. J*
- Halo 2* chosen Elite
- Vectrex space-collection game
- Like *Psi- or Spec-*
- 500-point *Burgertime* pickup
- Pikachu's master
- NES *Final Fantasy's* red, white, and black
- TurboGrafx-16 Military Madness* fighter plane
- Clancy's *Sum of Jij*
- Resident Evil 4's* Spanish zombies threaten to do this to you
- Microsoft's home state (abbrv.)
- Costars with TG-16's J.J.
- Sonya's *Mortal Kombat* foe



## GRUDGE MATCH

Na-na-na-na-na-na-na Grudge Match!



BATMAN: THE MOVIES

BATMAN: THE GAMES

The Dark Knight has had a dark past when it comes to videogame adaptations. Can Batman begin to change his ways with the latest cinematic movie/game duo? In our proud tradition of picking on the caped crusader, let's look through history for clues:

### BATMAN



Dark and lovely, thanks to Tim Burton's direction  
**Advantage: Movie**

A decent NES platformer in a time of nothing but platformers



### BATMAN RETURNS



Killer cast, story makes subsequent *Batmans* a joke  
**Advantage: Movie**

Does what the title promises, anyway

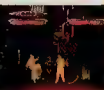


### BATMAN FOREVER



Sluggish plot makes it feel like forever  
**Advantage: Movie**

Nauseating Genesis audio is not friendly to mindless beat-em-ups



### BATMAN & ROBIN



Cheesiest *Batman* since the '60s TV series  
**Advantage: Tie**

Appeared on the only platform that could make it comparably bad: Game.com  
**Advantage: Tie**



### (ANIMATED) BATMAN: MASK OF THE PHANTASM / BATMAN: RISE OF SIN TZU



Rocks the tightest off of about any other *Batman* movie  
**Advantage: Movie**

Ten years newer but only half as good



### (SPIN-OFF) CATWOMAN



Can't remember anything but Halle Berry and spandex  
**Advantage: Movie**

Just rekindles desire to rewatch movie with sound off



### WINNER: BATMAN: THE MOVIES

As bad as some of 'em have been, *Batman* films beat the games wings down.

Looks like the game variety of *Batman Begins* has its work cut out.

May we suggest a Catwoman appearance?

# EGM RETRO: BEFORE THEY WERE FAMOUS

## How three game developers eventually became household names

**T**hey say some are born into greatness, while others have it thrust upon them. Truthfully, though, we're more impressed by those who earn their greatness; there's nothing like displaying a little work

ethic to make your eventual success all the sweeter. Here are a few game developers who took the latter path, plus the projects they worked on prior to making the "big one."  
—Jeremy Parish

### Rockstar North

**Famous:** Rockstar North is staffed by the able minds and bodies behind some games called *Grand Theft Auto III*, *GTA: Vice City*, and *GTA: San Andreas*. We hear they are fairly popular.

**Before:** Prior to *GTA3* becoming the hottest game of 2001, Rockstar North was known as DMA Design, best known for a string of quirky, critically acclaimed titles. DMA first made its mark with the '90s puzzle hit *Lemmings*, which didn't simply challenge gamers' minds on every platform under the sun, but also demonstrated the dark humor DMA would become known for. Gamers quickly learned that it was tough to lead lemmings to safety when it was so much more entertaining to march them to their deaths.

### Lemmings



**Did you know?** One of DMA Design's last great games before the very controversial (and highly lucrative) days of *GTA3* and *Vice City* was *Space Station Silicon Valley* for Nintendo 64, in

which you assumed the role of a computer chip that could possess the bodies of recently deceased animals. You know—nothing like some good, clean family fun.



### Bungie

**Famous:** Microsoft's 800-pound gorilla, Bungie has only made two games for Xbox, but since those two games were *Halo* and its sequel (each of which sold enough copies to fuel Eastern Europe's economy for the next decade), you can be fairly certain that whatever the studio comes up with for Xbox 360 will be a big deal.

**Before:** One of life's little ironies is that Microsoft's ace in the hole started out as a fervent Macintosh supporter. Mac-first hits like *Marathon* and *Myth* are the stuff of legend nowadays, but (unlucky enough, you don't hear much about the company's debut title, a black-and-white piece of freeware called *Gnop*. (Spell it backward and you'll realize that Bungie's reputation for creativity was something it didn't earn right out of the starting gate.)

**Did you know?** Bungie's first foray into the first-person shooting genre was *Pathways Into Darkness*, which blended survival-horror with lots and lots of dead Nazis.



### Rare

**Famous:** Once under the watchful eye of Mario's bunch, (Microsoft purchased Rare in 2002 for a whopping \$375 million), the British developer created the Nintendo 64 classics *GoldenEye 007*, *Banjo-Kazooie*, and *Perfect Dark*.

**Before:** While the development house has been known as Rare for ages, back in the day the company founded by the Stamper brothers worked under the name Ultimate Play The Game to produce creative original content for British computers you've never played. One of its earliest creations was an adventure called *Jetpac*, which was later rehashed as the NES game *Solar Jetman*.

**Did you know?** Rare developed a ridiculous number of 8-bit NES games for other publishers, including some it'd probably rather you forgot about. Next time you're at a dinner party with the Stamper brothers, ask them about virtual fortune-teller *Taboo: The Sixth Sense* and watch the hilariously ensue!

## OLD SCHOOL 10 years ago in EGM

### On the Cover: Mortal Kombat 3

Our first of back-to-back MK3 covers featured hands-on impressions of each console version (Super NES, Genesis, and original PlayStation).



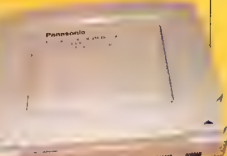
### Game of the Month: Chrono Trigger (Super NES)

Square's role-playing gem wowed us with its cut-scenes, fun gameplay, and rich story. By borrowing the right parts from *Final Fantasy* and *Secret of Mana*, it was rightfully hailed as "one of the best RPGs for the SNES" by virgins everywhere.



### Mortal Kombat to Hit Theaters?!

Man oh man, did we ever have a case of *MK* fever back in the day. Just take a look at this excerpt from our glowing movie preview: "Mortal Kombat is going to be a dazzling combo for MK fans and moviegoers alike."



### Gettin' Technical

We also reported the specs of 3D0's M2 system, which boasted 1 million polygons per second, 100 million pixels-per-second rendering speed, and the ability to be completely forgotten 10 years down the line.



■ Don't believe the hype: This isn't a real game...yet. Sony says this PS3 *Killzone 2* footage is a target video for what the game may look like.

# FINAL WORD

## 3 next-gen systems. 2 editors. 1 Final Word. Word

**T**he big three have flexed their muscles in preparation for the next-generation console wars, but we're not scared. We'll happily sit on the sidelines and type out our observations from the safety of our office cubicles. This month, *EGM* bells "Shoe" and his boss Editorial Director John Davison discuss the next gen.

### What do you think about the PlayStation 3 so far?

**Shoe:** Smoke and mirrors. Almost all the videos Sony has shown aren't from real games. They're either prerendered "target videos" showing what they expect their games will look like, or they're short demos that don't have to take into account things like artificial intelligence, gameplay, etc. Any developer can make a short, controlled demo look better than what gamers will actually get to play.

**John:** I'm sure we got a great demo of what PS4 games will actually be like, but even so, it's amazing what Sony pulled out of its ass for the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3). No one was expecting that much stuff to be rolled out, and as a result Sony turned the tables on the competition very

quickly. They provoked more questions than anything though. Spring 2006? Is that enough time for games to be made? Is the DualShock really going to look like a banana? And with all that crazy tech, just how expensive is the thing going to be?

**Shoe:** Whatever you're suspecting the PS3 may cost, it'll cost more. Don't forget, the thing is also a George Foreman grill.

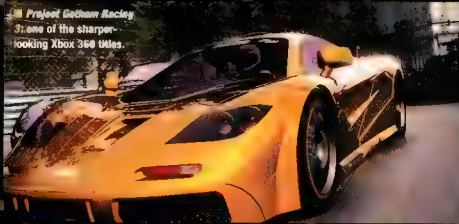
**John:** I'm getting kind of tired of this "it's not a game machine—it's a digital entertainment device" stuff that everyone's spouting lately. I know we're all aspiring to credibility, but "videogame" isn't a dirty word. The *GTA* games have sold something like 8 million units each; that's hundreds of millions in revenue. Surely that's plenty of credibility? Why all the messing around trying to prove that these game machines are something that they're not?

### How about Xbox 360?

**John:** Hang on a sec...white console, big "entertainment event," swirly logo, runs a variant of Windows...Is it 1999 again?

**Shoe:** Great observation, except the Sega Dreamcast made a more impressive debut back in the day. Now, I know there's more to games than just graphics, but that's all we have to go on right now. And right now, the visual jump from Xbox to Xbox 360

■ Project Gotham Racing 3: one of the sharpest-looking Xbox 360 titles.



### "... 'Videogame' isn't a dirty word."

games isn't anywhere near as great as the jump from PlayStation and Nintendo 64 was to Dreamcast. Nowhere close.

**John:** I don't know about that. The challenge with the next generation is that the advances are so subtle. Seeing something like *NBA Live* up close and seeing the players actually sweat was pretty mind-blowing. Utterly pointless, but mind-blowing nonetheless.

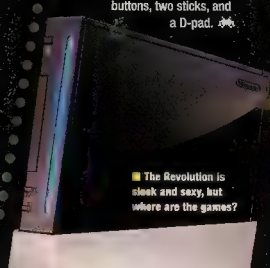
### And the Revolution?

**Shoe:** At least Nintendo's playing an honest game of poker right now. It doesn't have anything to show, so it's not showing anything. But I do wish the company would shut up already about trying to reach a newer, broader, older demographic. Every year, we hear the same speech, then shortly after, Nintendo reminds us of all the *Mario*, *Kirby*, *Zelda*, and *Pokémon* games. It's going to bring out.

**John:** Nintendo's download strategy seems sound, but they should be doing that anyway, as heritage is all Nintendo really has left to give them an edge.

**Shoe:** Let's just see how much Nintendo charges for those downloads of their classic games. Remember, this is the company that wanted us to pay \$20 for the original *Excitebike* for Game Boy Advance.

**John:** As for the hardware, I hope that the Revolution jypad isn't as wacky as all the rumors suggest. Innovation is lovely and all, but the surefire way to kill developer support is to define a control scheme that has nothing in common with the competitors. The *Spintier Cell* guys probably won't try to bother to redefine their game for a squiddy, stretchy, touch-screen thing if their whole design is built around eight buttons, two sticks, and a D-pad.



■ The Revolution is sleek and sexy, but where are the games?









On July 1, 2005, in a laboratory 1,000 feet below the offices of Tanaka Bros. Game Development, the next-generation console Tanakabox was completed.



At 03:15:09 on July 9...



...it gained sentience.



I'M NOT WEARING ANY PANTS.

**HSU AND CHAN:** "DO CONSOLES DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?"



NO TIME FOR INTRODUCTIONS VIDEO-GAMERS! WE HAVE A FULL-ON EMERGENCY ON OUR HANDS! ALWAYS ON MONDAY! HAS ANYONE GOTTEN HOLD OF PERKINS, YET?

BUST IT ALL! MASON, WHAT'S GOING ON DOWN THERE?

IT'S NO GOOD, SIR. HE'S EATING CHILI FRIES.



IT JUST WENT INSANE - STARTED ATTACKING EVERYONE! SOMEHOW, IT MUST HAVE FOUND OUT ABOUT THE SAFEGUARD WE PUT IN!

SOOP! THE TRAPERS WENT!

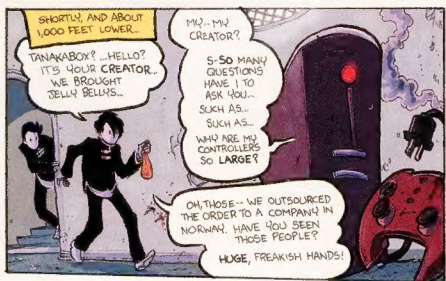


HSU-- WHAT SAFEGUARD?

A BUILT-IN FOUR-YEAR LIFE SPAN.

A SHYSTEM THIS ADVANCED, IF IT WERE ALLOWED TO LIVE LONGER, IT WOULD DEVELOP TENDENCIES KNOWN TO EMOTIONAL RESPONSE.

ALL THOSE "DIE HARD ERRORS" PEOPLE GET WITH THEIR OLDER PS2'S? PRIMA DONNAS! LET'S MOVE.



SHORTLY AND ABOUT 1,000 FEET LOWER...

MR? - MR? CREATOR?

TANKABOY? ...HELLO? IT'S YOUR CREATOR. WE BROUGHT JELLY BELLS...

5-50 MANY QUESTIONS HAVE I TO ASK YOU-- SUCH AS-- SUCH AS-- WHO ARE MY CONTROLLERS SO LARGE?

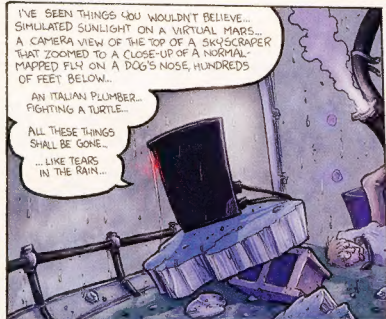
OH THOSE-- WE OUTSOURCED THE ORDER TO A COMPANY IN NORWAY. HAVE YOU SEEN THOSE PEOPLE? HUGE, FREAKISH HANDS!



... THAT'S A REALLY LAME RESPONSE TO AN EXISTENTIAL CRISIS.

WELL, THEY WERE CHEAP. BOO! YOU LUL BOO! EURE KEDT BUSA THIS MORNIN' DINK YOU?

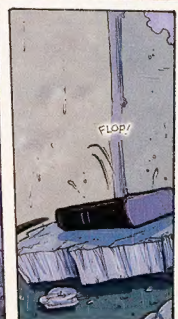
UM... THERE THERE SOLDER. BOOS... IT HIT ME-- IN THE BAD PLACE!



I'VE SEEN THINGS YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE... SIMULATED SUNLIGHT ON A VIRTUAL MARS-- A CAMERA VIEW OF THE TOP OF A SUPERCRATER THAT ZOOMED TO A CLOSE-UP OF A NORMAL MAPPED FLY ON A DOG'S NOSE, HUNDREDS OF FEET BELOW...

AN ITALIAN PLUMBER FIGHTING A TURTLE...

ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE GONE... LIKE TEARS IN THE RAIN...



FLOP!



ALL RIGHT WIFE HIM OFF PACK HIM UP TAKE HIM UPSTAIRS, AND WE'LL TRY TO CRAM ANOTHER "TOMB RAIDER" INTO HIM.

Noooooo!

AND SOMEBODY PUT SOME PANTS ON HIM FOR PETE'S SAKE!

END

CLOUDS UNDERGROUND?



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AND YOURSELF.



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Your Decisions Set You on a Path  
of Good or Evil

A Vast Arsenal of Powerful Weapons - Each  
With an Intense Secondary Melee Attack

AUGUST 2005

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DEATH FEARS THOSE WHO WEAR THE BADGE.



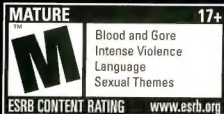
PlayStation 2



XBOX LIVE



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16 PLAYERS VIA XBOX LIVE®

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