

# ELECTRONIC GAMING

The #1 Videogame Magazine MONTHLY

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**ARMY OF TWO:**  
EA'S BADASS VISION  
OF NEXT-GEN WARFARE

THE **TOP 50**  
COOLEST NEW GAMES

FORGET THE SEQUELS AND LICENSED CRAP. WE COUNT  
DOWN THE BEST ORIGINAL GAMES COMING YOUR WAY

**PREVIEWED:**  
• LEGO STAR WARS 2  
• FINAL FANTASY III  
(OK, DON'T FORGET ALL SEQUELS...)

**KID DEVELOPER**  
HOW A 10-YEAR-OLD  
MADE AND SOLD HIS  
OWN VIDEOGAME





3  
REALMS

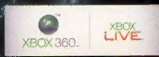


Multiple gameplay innovations from the  
developer that brought you Bullet Time,  
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Sprinkles (leave your body  
blowing and solve mind  
puzzles!

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# PREY

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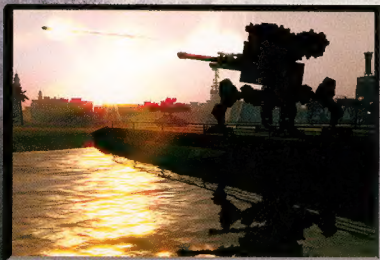
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- OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

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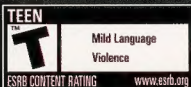
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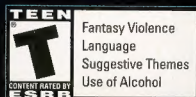
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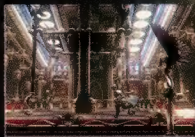
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PlayStation 2



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information.

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# 52 COVER STORY: THE TOP 50 COOLEST NEW GAMES

EA's gritty, co-op-crazy *Army of Two* (check out exclusive details and screens on page 74) is just one of 50 upcoming games we rank that aren't based on the same old licensed crap or from the sequel factory

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# Letters

macho role-playing, creepy kids, founding fathers, and videogaming

## Ben Franklin: gamer

"God made videogames because he loves us and wants us to be happy!" Ben Franklin said that. Well, he was actually talking about beer, but he would have said "games" if he were alive now. What kind of games do you think Old Ben would play if he were alive today? Probably *Mario Kite* or something like that. Yeah, electricity is cool!

—DarkMandorian

From the portly portraits we've seen, a magically reanimated Ben should probably develop a good *Dance*

*Dance Revolution* habit and lose a bit of that beer storage. But, knowing his taste for the ladies, he'd probably lie around eating Wal-Mart-sized bags of Cheetos while playing *Dead or Alive*.

## Thin-skinned and humorless

I'm a longtime reader who generally respects the content of *EGM*, but I must take issue with a rather distressing trend I've noticed in the pages of your publication: It seems to me that the editor of the



## House of 1,000 corpses

I was just thinking: Now that the next-gen systems are coming out, what's a cool idea (of mine, of course) that's too big for current systems? Well, I had this idea for a game with, like, 1,000 houses. Your mission: breaking and entering. It's a stealth game where you sneak into houses and attack. But the people might be home, so you have to kill them before they can call 911. Just think about breaking into 1,000 completely different houses on a 50-inch plasma! Please ask someone to make this game, even though I probably won't be able to play. It would only be good if it were M-rated, and I'm still 11.

—Ryan Dunlavy

**Man, kids are really starting to creep us out. Games are great and all, but there's a limit. Go ride your bike or something. It's summertime.**

## Fake, stupid war

A war is brewing, and we have to be prepared. There has always been a war. At

first it was Sega versus Nintendo. As more systems came along, a bigger war began to develop. But I don't see it as being bad. All three systems have their honors. I'm hoping my opinion helped those out there stressed about the gaming war. A battle may be won, but the war will never end.

—Chris Roberts

**Oh, no! There are various videogaming products for sale! Run for the hills!**

## Real, scary war

Holy, flaming crap balls! In response to the letter from Justin who is "chillin' in Iraq" [*EGM* #204]: It's not boring over here for everyone. My guys are constantly out doing foot patrols through hostile zones in a small city near the Syrian border, oftentimes all day and all night. The typical amount of "downtime" we get ranges from four to eight hours per day. Yet, I have to agree with him—were it not for the escape from reality that videogames, literature, and bootleg DVDs provide, there would be a lot of psycho soldiers on the loose with loaded >

Letters section has recently become quite rude and hateful in his responses, antagonizing letter-writers who do not deserve it.

—Ephraim Freed

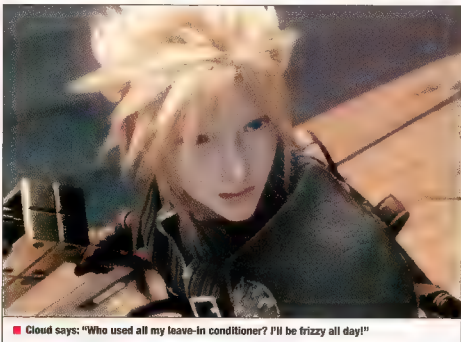
**Eat it, you fat virgin! No, wait... We're sorry, baby—sometimes, we just get so crazy 'cause we love you, and we want to be with you forever, and when you write us stupid letters, baby, we just want to make fun of you till you cry. But please, baby, don't go...**

## Macho, macho man

"The Crying Game" [*EGM* #205] was a really interesting article. I think that, despite what many designers in the story said, some videogames have achieved the goal of making gamers let their guard down. I mean, who didn't cry when Sephiroth gutted Aerith in *Final Fantasy VII*? Even Cloud did, and he is basically the pinnacle of macho-ness.

—Christina Squitleri

**What about Cloud makes him so macho? Is it his androgynous facial structure, his baby blue eyes, or that carefully gelled and manicured hairdo?**



## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### Empathy simulator

I recently read *All Quiet on the Western Front* in my English class. The author, Erich Remarque, describes the horrors of war in a way that would send a chill down any *Silent Hill* veteran's spine. Scavenging for food and ammunition, fighting soldiers during the day, and waging war against the "corpse rats" at night—it sounds like the premise for a great survival-horror game. If a game like that came out, it might influence the youth of our country never to start another war without a purpose. It might allow us to look through the eyes of our enemies and see that they are just like us. I'd like to play that game.

—Phillip Strader

Thanks for the prizes, Phillip. For your Letter of the Month, you'll be receiving a (probably less interesting) game in the mail.



## POST OFFICE

Rambling and ranting from our message boards, boards.IUP.com (look for *EGM*'s forums)

### "How do videogames make you feel?"

**BizarroSephiroth:** They make me feel like I should be doing something more with my life.

**CAMO FROG:** They make me feel poor.

**Druz3:** Gaming makes me feel like I'm naughty and I need to be spanked.

**DaFro:** They make me feel like taking the day off work.

**UndergroundBob:** Like I can press the "unwreck" button when I hit bicycle riders with my car.

**Disappeared:** Like I could save the world if only I had spiky hair.

**PizzaBaget:** Guilty, for murdering so many Spanish villagers.

**Gringo Suaver:** ...like I'm back in 'Nam. Did you hear something?

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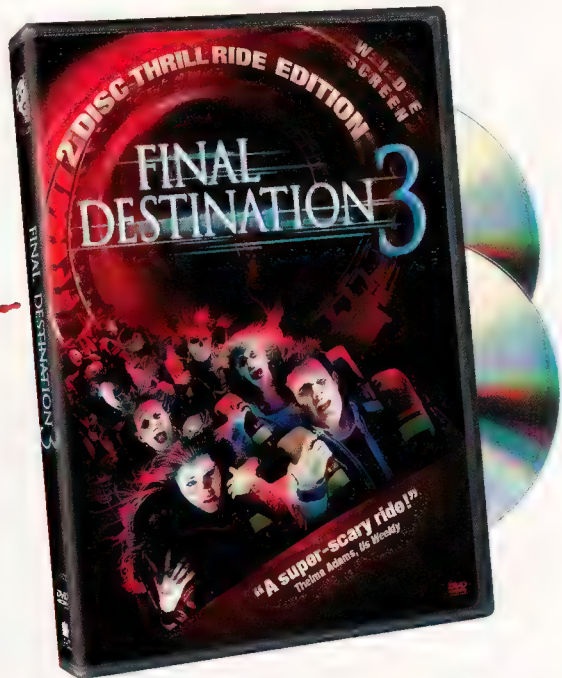
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■ Scientific fact: Only red barrels explode when shot.

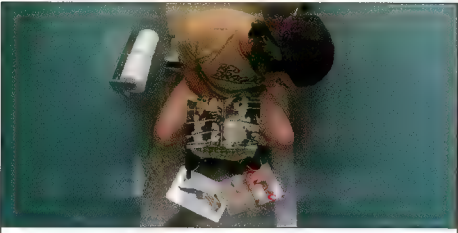
► weapons, grenades, rocket launchers, and machine guns. —Sgt. J.

**Whoa. Screw chocolate chip cookies and body armor—send these folks some games....**

**Barrel of lies**

I have to take issue with what Melody Warbigton wrote [EGM #202] when she complained about enemies seeking cover behind barrels clearly marked as "highly flammable." If videogame developers were really concerned with realism, then they would realize that lead bullets do not spark. There are steel-core bullets that could ignite gasoline or jet fuel, but it's extremely unlikely that this would happen. Outside of using tracer rounds, the likelihood of making a barrel explode by shooting it is low. It's more likely the fuel would run all over the ground and be ignited from the muzzle flash of the enemy standing in it. I just wanted to point out something that has annoyed me for quite some time. —Adam Ratmoko

**What's that? We were holding our fingers in our ears and humming "In the Air Tonight" by Phil Collins the whole time. We want to believe. Besides, we've placed barrels of kerosene at strategic antiterrorist points throughout the office as part of our security strategy. If the terrorists hear you, we're screwed.**



■ Wanking gamer says: "EGM turned me into a sexual deviant!"

**Wank Hater**

I was not very happy with your response to my previous letter ["Bathroom Break," EGM #204]. If you're going to make "wanking jokes" in the future, I don't need to see a full two-page visual of them. I don't think any of your other readers do, either. I was talking to a friend of mine about this, and he told me that he had been using issue #201 as a visual aid to show people in his parent-education seminars what kind of crap the media was marketing to their kids. In case you forgot, the cover of issue #201 had a bunch of Disney characters on it as part of your *Kingdom Hearts II* preview. This is something that would appeal to small children. What a surprise their parents would have when they pick up this apparently kid-friendly magazine and find such a vulgar picture inside. —Jennifer Orr

**Sweet, sweet Jenny. Don't complain when the media doesn't make a good baby-sitter. Raise your own children. Meanwhile, just for reference, here's that awesome pic again at the bottom of the page.**

**Censoring and to the point**

A warning for lazy, self-absorbed, and/or just plain inattentive parents: All the censorship in the world can't make up for bad parenting. If your child is more influenced by games than Mommy and Daddy, you and your offspring have much bigger

problems than *Grand Theft Auto*. That is all. —Mimethan85

**Casualty of intergalactic war**

Why are gamers ridiculed and laughed at? Just last week I was walking to school when I saw a junior making fun of one of my fellow freshmen about being a "Halo nerd" because of his *Halo* shirt. He kept saying crap about the kid and pushing him around. I got mad and told the guy to f\*\*\* off. Well, then the junior grabbed me and gave me a very painful dead leg. But this would have been OK, if not for my iPod Video. Once I took out my iPod, I noticed that the screen was cracked and wouldn't work. —Michael Haidar

**If only you'd been wearing your home-made MJOLNIR power armor. The junior would have run in terror; his cheerleader girlfriend would have fallen in love with you, and one student in the crowd would have begun clapping slowly until the rest of the auditorium joined in raucous applause.**

**One dollar, one point**

When I look around online Xbox forums, I often see threads dedicated to bashing gamers with high gamerscores. I don't understand how having a high gamerscore affects other gamers. It doesn't take away any privileges or ruin anything for people without all those points, so why are people hating on these few? We should

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We've hidden prizes in this issue—spot one and enter to win! Go to **EGM-QOTM.1UP.com** (note the new URL!) where you can send us a message (subject head: **Movie Quotes: EGM #206**) with the quote, the movie it's from, and the page number you found it on. Include your mailing address (no PO boxes) and your full name, and you could be one of three lucky winners this month to receive an exciting arrangement of game prizes picked out just for you by us!

just let them have their high scores and throw around all their money. Heck, these gamers are creating business for game developers, even ones that aren't as well known. People will spend \$60 on a half-decent game just to get 1,000 points. —Simon Schmidt

**Why should we hate the overprivileged brats who purchase horrible games just to up their scores? Your *Geometry Wars* score is all that matters.**

**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

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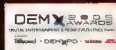
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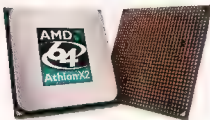
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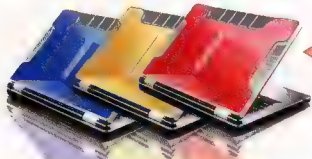
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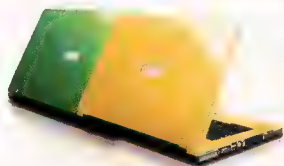
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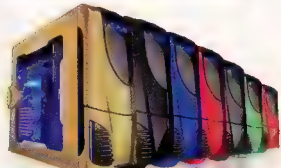
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# HIT THE ROAD, JACK

Moral crusader Jack Thompson was the big gun in the crusade against violent videogames and a menace to the industry—until a gang of gamers fired back

**E**very good game needs a bad guy. *Donkey Kong* has the big ape. *Resident Evil* has the Tyrant. Solid Snake has the severed hand of his evil clone grafted onto a gunslinger, or whatever. In the real-life battle over what you play, there's no enemy gamers love to hate more than Jack Thompson.

This gray-haired 54-year-old Miami attorney is the Darth Vader of gaming and America's most notorious crusader against violent and sexually explicit media. Since suing rap group 2 Live Crew for obscenity in 1989, he deftly positioned himself against every new perceived scourge of pop culture. He got ice-T's "Cop Killer" yanked from shelves. He battled Howard Stern. Following the school shootings in Paducah, KY, in 1997, which some tied to the effects of violent media, Thompson has had a new favorite target: videogames.

From *Columbine* to the Beltway Sniper *Doom* to *Grand Theft Auto*, he's the go-to alarmist tapped by CNN, the *Today Show*, and *60 Minutes*. When college campuses want a debate on the effects of violent videogames, Thompson assumes his role (on several occasions against this author). But Thompson's rants are not just idle chatter. He has spearheaded lawsuits against gamemakers, including *GTA* publisher Take Two Interactive and Sony for hundreds of millions of dollars. He informs politicians on Capitol Hill. After a secret sex scene was found in *GTA: San Andreas* last year,

Senator Hillary Clinton's camp allegedly consulted with Thompson before hopping on the bandwagon. For Thompson, it's more than a public service: It's a personal crusade. "I'm a Christian," he tells us, "and I believe my ministry of sorts is to fight battles with these people."

#### Jack attacked

"These people" have a field day fighting back, crafting anti-Jack blogs and selling "Hate Jack Thompson" T-shirts. *Grand Theft Auto* fans made a free downloadable modification for the PC version called "Defamation of Character: A Jack Thompson Murder Simulator," in which gamers play as the attorney, nicknamed "Banman" on a killing spree. Jinx.com's pawns toilet paper emblazoned with his name. "The amount of energy put into trying to destroy me tells me they know this is about something worthwhile," Thompson says. But now, following his biggest battle with players yet, his enemies hope Banman's game may finally be over.

The smackdown started last October when Thompson penned an open letter to the videogame industry called "A Modest Video Game Proposal." In the spirit of Swiftian satire, he says, he challenged someone to release a game for 2006 in which a 14-year-old player murders the family of a fictional game developer. In return for the game, he promised to donate \$10,000 to a charity of Take Two



Banman at his own game: Thompson as "Banman" in a *Grand Theft Auto* mod on PC.

Interactive's chief executive officer Paul Eibeler's choice. "How about it, videogame industry?" Thompson challenged. "I've got the check and you've got the tech. It's all a fantasy, right? No harm can come from such a game, right? Go ahead, videogame moguls. Target yourselves as you target others. I dare you."

The "moguls" didn't pick up the gauntlet, but the gamers did. In January, a scrappy team of coders calling itself

ThompsonSitt and consisting of three alcoholics and a foreign-exchange student designed and released a free game called *I'm OK* based on Jack's masterful design. Just as Thompson outlined, the game lets players, in a campy and brightly colored virtual world, bludgeon through offices and arcades in a bloody rampage.

But Thompson, after seeing the game, wasn't buying it. "They made a semifake game," he says. "Because it wasn't made ▶

# HIT THE ROAD, JACK (CONT.)



by a major developer for commercial release, he refused to pay. Meanwhile, over in their self-described "fortified bunker" in Seattle, webcomic *Penny Arcade* cocreators Mike Krahulik and Jerry Holkins had had enough. The duo had been skewering Thompson in their game-themed comics for years, but Holkins says, "this was the straw that broke the camel's back. We were aware of his increasingly frenzied public statements. As soon as he did this moralist shell game, we decided to lash out."

Calling Thompson's bluff, the two donated \$10,000 of their own money on his behalf to the Entertainment Software Association Foundation, which supports organizations including the Boys and Girls Clubs of America and the Juvenile

Diabetes Research Foundation. Thompson wasn't amused. He faxed a letter to Seattle Police Chief Gil Kerlikowske urging him to "shut this little extortion factory down and/or arrest some of its employees." Krahulik and Holkins say they have yet to hear from the local officers.

### Jack of all trades

But the metagame was far from over: Thompson's Modest Proposal worked against him in a big way. In an open letter distributed widely online, Dr. David Walsh, founder of the National Institute on Media and the Family—a Minneapolis, MN-based group that researches the effects of videogames on kids—cut off frequent ally Thompson for good. "Your commentary has included extreme hyperbole and you

practices have included personally attacking individuals for whom I have a great deal of respect," Walsh wrote. He sent copies of the letter to Clinton and Bill Gates, among others, and asked that Thompson refrain from associating himself with his cause. An Alabama judge struck another blow against Thompson last November, criticizing his conduct and revoking his ability to practice law in the state.

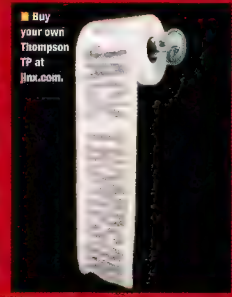
Thompson now dismisses Walsh as "an idiot," but gamers have been milking the dis for all it was worth. In February, a contingent sent a bouquet of flowers to Thompson in mock condolence. They called the online campaign "Flowers for Jack." Thompson says he forwarded the bouquet to Take Two Interactive with a note that read, "In memory of all of the people who now lie in the ground because of your [games]." A Take Two representative says they never received the flowers.

If Thompson can't be deterred, his opponents say, then at least he can be ignored. Doug Lowenstein, president of the Entertainment Software Association, refuses to engage Thompson anymore. "My comment for the record is we have no comment on the work of Jack Thompson," Lowenstein says. "This is generational. If you look at most people who introduce bills they're in their 40s and 50s and 60s, and they're not of the videogame generation.... By 2010, the digital generation will be in the seats of power, they'll be in editorial meetings, and they will be making news decisions, and what people in government and the cultural elite regard now as dangerous will be seen merely as rock and roll."

Thompson, however, has no intention of retiring quietly to the shuffleboard courts. These days, he's busy drumming up legislation to curtail what he says is the deliberate marketing of violent games to kids. He co-authored a bill that just passed in the Louisiana legislature. And he's looking forward to the impending battle over Take Two Interactive's upcoming schoolyard-fighting game, *Bully*. "Winston Churchill said nothing is more exhilarating than getting shot at, then having the bullet miss," he says. "God help me, but I enjoy this."

And, in one sense, his detractors are happy he's around. It could be worse, they say, if someone other than Thompson were playing the industry's foe. "We should thank our stars that we have someone as visible as he is in his role," Holkins says. "Our fear is that someone intelligent and charismatic should take over." ❧

—David Kushner



## FAMOUS BLAST WORDS: NOTABLE QUOTES FROM THE HEIGHT OF THOMPSON'S ANTIGAME FAME

"The videogame industry gave him a cranial menu that popped up in the blink of an eye in that police station, and that menu offered him the split-second decision to kill the officers, shoot them in the head, fire in a police car, just as the game itself trained them to do."  
—Thompson on Davis Moore, an 18-year-old convicted of shooting three Alabama police officers after playing a GTA game

"If I did, I want to apologize  
—When asked about the time he compared Entertainment Software Association President Doug Lowenstein to the former tax collector

"I worry about someone who would play *Grand Theft Auto* for ten hours a day. It's a masturbatory activity, and it would be better if people put down the controller and went outside."  
—From an interview with www.netjak.com

"...Much to the delight, one can be sure, of pedophiles around the globe who can rehearse, in virtual reality, for their abuse."  
—On a PC mod for Sims 2 that lets players remove the prohibition from nude adult and child characters

"I suppose Federal judges by and large don't have a problem with the mental masturbation of children with murder simulations."  
—On how federal judges tend to rule in favor of games' First Amendment protection

"Nobody shoots anybody in the Pace unless you're a his man on a videogamer."  
—As quoted in a Louisiana newspaper article about M-rated games that were confiscated from the home of a teenager charged with murder

"Eventually there is going to be a Columbine to the Faction of 10, a slaughter in a school by a crazed gamer. When that happens, Congress may ban the games altogether."

>> SONY SAYS *GOD OF WAR II* DOESN'T HAVE THE "DIVINE RETRIBUTION" SUBTITLE—OR ANY SUBTITLE. WAIT, HOW ABOUT "GOD HARDER"?



KEVIN ROBINSON

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Steal, kill, it's all in the mind

PS2  
**KAMIWAZA**

No more ninjas, samurai, or other sword slashers, please. Thankfully, in the latest from Acquire (whose output of action romps set in ye olde Japan rivals the *Tom Clancy* series in pure quantity), you're none of the above. Instead, you're a washed-up old thief named Ebizo, who comes out of retirement to steal baubles from no-good magistrates to pay for his sick daughter's medicine.

**So, it's Thief with a bunch of bathrobes?**

Well, yes, actually, right down to the way you can throw stones around to distract guardsmen's attention. But a few stealthy features set it apart from other hide-and-seekers—townspeople give you cover if Ebizo returns the riches à la Robin Hood, and his wanted posters start to look more accurate every time he flubs his cover in front of a group of witnesses.



Xbox 360  
**BULLET WITCH**

Are they even making 360 games in Japan anymore? We were wondering this ourselves, especially after Japanese exclusive *Ninety-Nine Nights* didn't exactly keep gamers up all night. Though *Bullet Witch* (from new publisher AQ Interactive) has been far less hyped, it actually looks worthy of a shot—it's a *Devil May Cry*-ish action mash-up where you play as a wily witch named Alicia who casts down demons in the year 2013.

**AQ? Should I care about them?** Perhaps. The company's the new Japanese publisher for developers like Cavia and Artoon, which have had their share of hits (*Drakengard*) and misses (*Blinx*). The twist former *Final Fantasy* bigwig Hironobu Sakaguchi's an AQ shareholder, and he's working on yet another new 360 game for the publisher, an action RPG titled *Cry On*.



## WHAT'S PLAYING IN THE



**Guild Wars Factions**

Just over a year after its release, developer ArenaNet's free-to-play massively multiplayer online role-playing game *Guild Wars* sits pretty at well over 1 million players—and the game's first stand-alone expansion, *Guild Wars Factions*, does plenty to expand the game's appeal.

The new *Factions* campaign unfolds in the medieval Asian-themed land of Cantha, where—stop us if you've heard this one—an ancient enemy returns and heroes must rally to defeat him. Yes, the plot gets predictable quickly...but it's an easily disregarded backdrop to an otherwise excellent game. The original *Guild Wars* steered away from the same-old-grind mentality of other online RPGs; shutting you to the game's 20-level cap relatively quickly and emphasizing aptitude over hours played. *Factions* fully realizes this philosophy: You can easily reach (or come close to) the level cap before even leaving the tutorial island, which means more time spent pursuing skill acquisition and story missions (think *Diablo* meets *Magic: The Gathering*), and waging war against other players in a handful of contested zones. If you didn't play *Guild Wars*, you lose nothing by jumping aboard here...and if you did play it, *Factions* provides a vastly improved experience.

The biggest point of contention: *Factions*' two new professions, which join the original six. The trail-but-deadly assassin gets a

lot of flak for being the "new fad," particularly since—despite the assassin's viability—most players don't employ the class very successfully (they're not tanks, people). The ritualist, *Factions*' shamanic spellcaster, embraces mediocrity with its muddled jack-of-all-trades approach. A yepdown, yes—but hopefully nothing a few name balance patches can't fix.

—Ryan Scott

Ryan Scott is the reviews editor for our sister publication Computer Gaming World.

## BY THE NUMBERS

Please Be Patiently

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- 100 Total Reviews
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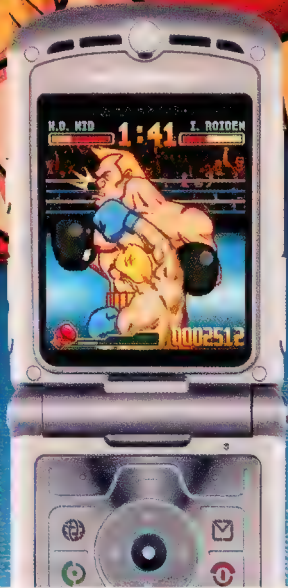


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# LEGO STAR WARS II: THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY

Producer: LucasArts  
Developer: Traveller's Tales  
Release Date: September 12, 2006

Mmm... blocky, these Star Wars are

**A** long time ago (actually, about a year ago), the blockheads at developer Traveller's Tales teamed up with *Star Wars* to piece together an unlikely game. If Legos and lightsabers. Well, the unusual combination worked—roughly. The Lion Younglings forked over the dough for the first *Lego Star Wars*. But now that the prequel trilogy is complete, we'll finally get our hands on the only movies that matter: *Episodes IV, V, and VI*. Let's take a little star tour through the game via some key scenes.

—Michael Donahoe



## EPISODE IV

### Mos Eisley

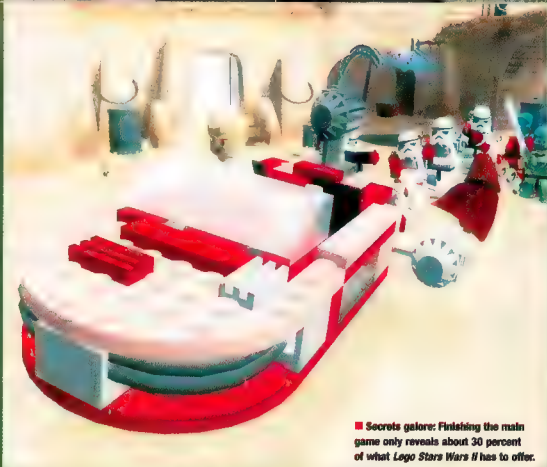
Before Luke masters the lightsaber, Han Solo's blaster will be your weapon of choice—and expect gun-toting characters to do more now than just stand and shoot. "In the first game, the Jedi were able to block shots," says Production Assistant Jeffrey Gullett. "You'll now see a similar mechanic with the blaster characters—hit the attack button while a bullet is coming in and you'll dodge it." Evading enemies isn't the only new feature, either—Han now has a signature dive-and-shoot mechanic, perfect for picking off stormtroopers while escaping the cantina.

### Prison Break

Saving the Princess is a big point in the game, mainly because it's one of the few times when you'll sport a party larger than three—during the Death Star rescue, you'll be toting along up to six different characters at a time. Playing as the Princess really packs a punch, too. "A lot of the main characters have distinctive melee attacks," says Gullett. So if you're tired of the typical blaster/saber combination, play as Leia and bitch-slap your way back to the Millennium Falcon.

### Attack of the Death Star

The climactic finale of *Episode IV* showcases the new free-roaming vehicle levels, so now they won't feel like some cheesy *Star Wars*-themed Disney ride. "You have total freedom to go everywhere. You're not on rails anymore," says Gullett. Making the ship sections feel like a tacked-on feature is definitely a good thing. And like whacking Jar Jar, blowing up the Death Star never gets old.



■ Secrets galore: Finishing the main game only reveals about 30 percent of what *Lego Star Wars II* has to offer.

>> UWE BOLL WANTS A REMATCH: THE DIRECTOR OF *BLOODRAYNE*, *HOUSE OF THE DEAD*, AND OTHER VIDEOGAME-BASED MOVIE BOMBS HAS





## EPISODE V

### Hoth Battle

Lassoing the legs of AT-ATs isn't the only thing you can do in this level (though it's got plenty of that, of course). The real fun comes when you replay this and other vehicle-based levels in the Free Play mode. "In the original, the vehicles [you collect in the game] just sat in the parking lot, but now you can take all those [collected ships back] into the level," says Gullett. Finally, you can bring AT-ATs to their knees any way you please.

### Dagobah

Yoda schools Luke on the ways of the Force here, but don't expect a lot of combat in this section—puzzles are one thing, Traveller's Tales' beeping up, so prepare yourself for a bunch of thoughtful mind-scratchers. Also, Jedi characters won't be the only brains during this go-around. "Last time, only the Jedi could build [and reposition blocks], but now all the non-droid characters have this ability," says Gullett. This means you don't have to swap to a Jedi every time you need to move a bunch of blocks.

### Cloud City Battle

Yes, Luke still gets his hand hacked off, but it may be harder for some to reach that pivotal scene. "There's an adaptive difficulty option we're putting in that will monitor you as you play the game," says Gullett. "So the better you are at the game, the more difficult the game's going to be." If you manage to survive the fight with Vader, get ready for a funny cut-scene—If a certain Lego-centric problem is resolved, that is. "The Lego characters don't talk, so how does Darth Vader tell Luke he's his father? We're trying to figure out how we're going to make that happen." ▶



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## LEGO STAR WARS II (CONT.)

## EPISODE VI

**Jabba's Palace**

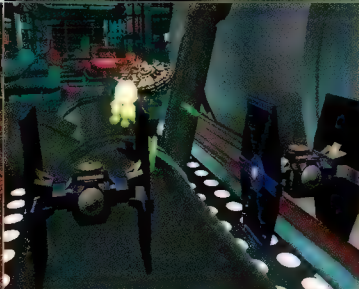
Since Han is chillin' in carbonite, Princess Leia springs in his rescue decked out in her bounty-hunter garb. But the disguise ain't all for looks—when Leia (and other bounty hunters) are in full getup, they can toss thermal detonators. And because only certain areas in the game can be destroyed with these devices, this character type plays a large role in unlocking all of the game's many secrets.

**Endor**

Whether you adore or abhor the ewoks, the cutesy little furballs help turn the tide during the battle of Endor. But if you still can't stand their sight, you can create your own monstrosities by swap-swapping Lego pieces in the alternate character customization mode. Also, certain combos give you unexpected abilities. For example, if you put a lightsaber in Han's hands, he's suddenly going to have Force powers. Sadly, though, it's not possible to make a bitch-slapping Vader. (Are we...uh...asked.)

**Final Battle**

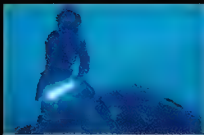
The Emperor puts up a good fight, but not even Mr. Pruneface can stand up to the power of a father/son Jedi duo. One thing you'll notice during this battle is the Emperor's use of Force lightning; now all the Jedi characters have distinct Force abilities. "Before, there was only Force push, but now all the Jedi are going to have different Force powers... Obi-Wan has his Jedi mind trick, Darth Vader has Force choke, and the Emperor has Force lightning," says Guilt.



## CHOPPING BLOCKS

Not every *Star Wars* moment will make the cut. Here are some scenes too hot for tots:

**Probe-Bot**—Out of the 100-plus playable characters here, one is sadly missing: the needle-sticking droid used to interrogate Princess Leia in *Episode IV*. Apparently, probing wasn't a feature worth pursuing.



**Tauntaun Meat Blanket**—Riding tauntauns is cool for kids, but slicing their flesh to warm others is not. Now that's cold!



**Fatal Attraction**—If you sickos out there are hoping to see a little brother-sister make-out, you're definitely playing the wrong game...and reading the wrong mag. **EW**

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# online this month

## Top teams on Xbox Live

**W**here dreams do come true. Where the impossible occurs. Where even the K.C. Royals can dominate. Sports video games rule because you can harness the adrenaline rush of doing the real thing without ever leaving that indentation in your sofa. And now that the Xbox 360 gives sports freaks a chance to plaster their dashboard menus with their favorite team themes, there's a new competition: Who will dominate the 'box? Check out these Xbox Live download rankings (as of June 1st) to give you an idea of which teams people are sporting.

—Patrick Mauro

MADDEN NFL 06	MLB 2K6	NBA 2K6	NHL 2K6
<b>1. Pittsburgh Steelers</b>	<b>1. New York Yankees</b>	<b>1. Miami Heat</b>	<b>1. Edmonton Oilers</b>
2. Dallas Cowboys	2. Boston Red Sox	2. Los Angeles Lakers	2. Detroit Red Wings
3. New England Patriots	3. Chicago Cubs	3. Detroit Pistons	3. Toronto Maple Leafs
4. Oakland Raiders	4. New York Mets	4. Cleveland Cavaliers	4. Carolina Hurricanes
5. Chicago Bears	5. Chicago White Sox	5. Dallas Mavericks	5. Philadelphia Flyers
6. Philadelphia Eagles	6. St. Louis Cardinals	6. Phoenix Suns	6. New Jersey Devils
7. Denver Broncos	7. Atlanta Braves	7. Chicago Bulls	7. St. Louis Blues
8. Atlanta Falcons	8. Los Angeles Dodgers	8. San Antonio Spurs	8. Montreal Canadiens
9. Seattle Seahawks	9. Houston Astros	9. New York Knicks	9. Philadelphia Flyers
10. New York Giants	10. Cincinnati Reds	10. Golden State Warriors	10. New York Islanders
11. Tampa Bay Buccaneers	11. San Francisco Giants	11. Sacramento Kings	11. Vancouver Canucks
12. Denver Broncos	12. Detroit Tigers	12. New Jersey Nets	12. Minnesota Wild
13. Tampa Bay Buccaneers	13. Cleveland Indians	13. Houston Rockets	13. New York Islanders
14. Philadelphia Eagles	14. Philadelphia Phillies	14. Indiana Pacers	14. Calgary Flames
15. Washington Redskins	15. Toronto Blue Jays	15. New Orleans Hornets	15. Dallas Stars
16. San Francisco 49ers	16. Los Angeles Angels	16. Minnesota Timberwolves	16. Dallas Stars
17. Cincinnati Bengals	17. Oakland Athletics	17. Memphis Grizzlies	17. Boston Bruins
18. Carolina Panthers	18. Seattle Mariners	18. Toronto Maple Leafs	18. Los Angeles Kings
19. Arizona Cardinals	19. Baltimore Orioles	19. Los Angeles Clippers	19. New York Islanders
20. Minnesota Vikings	20. Minnesota Twins	20. San Jose Sharks	20. New York Islanders
21. San Diego Chargers	21. Milwaukee Brewers	21. Toronto Maple Leafs	21. Pittsburgh Penguins
22. New York Jets	22. San Diego Padres	22. Washington Wizards	22. New York Islanders
23. New York Giants	23. Texas Rangers	23. Toronto Maple Leafs	23. Pittsburgh Penguins
24. Cleveland Browns	24. Pittsburgh Pirates	24. Toronto Maple Leafs	24. Pittsburgh Penguins
25. Detroit Lions	25. Kansas City Royals	25. Toronto Maple Leafs	25. Pittsburgh Penguins
26. Tennessee Titans	26. Florida Marlins	26. Portland Trail Blazers	26. Pittsburgh Penguins
27. Baltimore Ravens	27. Arizona Diamondbacks	27. Utah Jazz	27. Pittsburgh Penguins
28. Baltimore Ravens	28. Washington Nationals	28. Memphis Grizzlies	28. Atlanta Thrashers
29. New England Patriots	29. Colorado Rockies	29. Atlanta Hawks	29. Atlanta Thrashers
30. Tampa Bay Devil Rays	30. Tampa Bay Devil Rays		30. Atlanta Thrashers

Super Bowl Champs, No. 1 in merchandising, it's no surprise the Steelers are the top pick. Raiders (4) equal pathetic for real, but chucking the ball up to Randy Moss spells huge video-game success. The Panthers (18) may be the best team in the NFL.

Why a cursed franchise like the Cubs (3) remains so popular makes absolutely no sense, although pitcher Mark Prior personifies nasty in this game. Surprising so many of you picked the Giants (11). Joe Young is no substitute for "the chemically enhanced one."

The Heat possess that perfect inside/out game with video-game cover boys Shaq and Dwyane Wade that translates to both real and videogame wins. The award for Best Videogame Team That Totally Sucks in Real Life goes to the Knicks (9).

The Oilers may be No. 1, but things could change now that the Hurricanes (15) are the champs. These rankings really lead us to believe more folks in Edmonton play *NHL 2K6* than those in both Carolinas combined. What the hell is a Blue Jacket, anyway? ❄️



**EGM.1UP.COM**  
Before you cuddle up to your mailbox, eagerly awaiting the next issue, head over to [egm.1up.com](http://egm.1up.com) for extended previews, afterthoughts, and features. Also, visit our blog section to read our editors' ramblings about everything from old game reviews to the magic of DVR.

**EGMLIVE.1UP.COM**  
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**CHEATS.1UP.COM**  
Broken controllers, swearing, frustration, divorce—if you are showing any of these symptoms, immediately consult our cheats specialist at [cheats.1up.com](http://cheats.1up.com). This month we have guides for the two best (i.e., only) Xbox 360 role-playing games out there: *Oblivion* and *Final Fantasy XI*.

**Featured Club: The Nintendo Wii Game Ideas**  
Aspiring game designers now have a forum to spout all their wacky ideas for Nintendo's new console. Check it out at <http://wii-ideas.club.1up.com>.

**Featured Blog: WicketTheEwok.1UP.com**  
For those of you looking forward to this fall's release of *Lego Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy*, we have a special club for you. Each week, Wicket's page reveals one of the 50 playable characters from the game, but the real question remains: Will Wicket himself be a character in the game? Why don't you check his blog to find out?

# SUPER MONKEY BALL ADVENTURE

In a Monkey Ball, NO One Can HEAR you SCREAM.

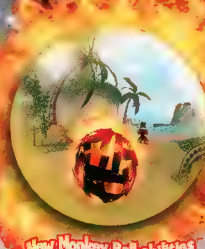
Join AiAi and the  
Super-Monkey Ball gang in an  
adventure across 5 kingdoms  
with over 50 characters to meet  
and numerous quests to complete!



50 original  
puzzle games



Three brand new  
party games and three  
classic favorites



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including sticky, wood,  
hovering, boxing and invisibility



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system and PSP™ (PlayStation®Portable) system



# PLAYING IT LOUD

Nintendo ballads? A Mega Man rock opera? We tune in to six bands inspired by our favorite pastime

**S** eems like any power trio with a Marshall stack and a garage to keep it in is cranking out game-music cover tunes these days. But videogaming musicianship goes way beyond the *Castlevania* theme reworked in hard rock. More and more bands are kicking out original jams that take inspiration from their favorite games. Tonight only, EGM presents a lineup of six talented acts blurring the line between music and gaming.

—Mike Spitaleri



## TOTALLY RADD!

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

**Sounds like:** Keytar-powered rock pumped through a supersonic NES.

On debut album *Shark Attack: Day Calip*, these from-the-heartland wailers chronicle everything from beating *Mega Man* without using Game Genie to the thrill of dominating in *Street Fighter*. And there's little we can say to prepare you for the most spirited cover of the *Mike Tyson's Punch Out!* theme: you'll hear outside of an arena-rock nuthouse. (Imagine someone screaming "Mike Tyson's Punch Out!" over and over in tune with the music). Raw and catchy, Totally Radd! live up to their name.

## FINAL FANTASY

[finalfantasyeternal.com](http://finalfantasyeternal.com)

**Sounds like:** Urgent space-faring classical.

Arcade Fire violinist Owen Pallett brings his love of *Final Fantasy VI*—"because it's the only one with strong female leads," he says—to a project appropriately named Final Fantasy. It took flight when, on a whim, Owen plugged his violin into a looping pedal and started "farting around." The result is a stirring, hysterical form of string classical that perfectly complements any role-playing lifestyle. "Videogames are about creating an alternate universe and immersing the player within," says Pallett. "I like that and try to write about things that don't exist but deserve songs." Final Fantasy is currently on tour in Europe and working on a follow-up to this year's album, *He Pops Clouds*.



Photo credit: Owen Pallett

## 14 YEAR OLD GIRLS

[www.14yearoldgirls.net](http://www.14yearoldgirls.net)

**Sounds like:** The retro-arcade's house band.

After getting their asses beat in a *Street Fighter 2* tournament, this poppy Los Angeles-based quintet (formerly known as Link and the Zeldas) were henceforth stuck with the embarrassingly hilarious moniker 14 Year Old Girls. Since then the band has gone on to pioneer 8-bit, ADD pink rock. These unabashed Nintendo-philes

met as high schoolers in 2000, mourned the loss of third-party support for the N64 with "Whoa Nintendo," and plan on recording a song with lyrics made up entirely of ones and zeros for their upcoming album. We don't get the binary thing either, but we're sure the song will rock.





Hey, groups: The battle of the bands rages on at [egm.tup.com](http://egm.tup.com), where you'll find tunes and videos from these supergroups, plus a few similar acts. Rawk.

## THE PROTOMEN

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

**Sounds like:** A full-tilt, crash-and-burn *Mega Man* rock opera.

"You know that feeling you get when you hear the opening theme to *Mega Man 2*," asks Heath-Who Hath No Name, lead guitarist of Nashville's The Protomen. "Like you can take on the world and the forces of justice are behind your rage and fury against oppression? We decided that that could be amplified, deepened, and distorted." Enter The Protomen—seven men (or robots, they insist) dramatizing the Shakespearean tragedy of Doctor Light, his two sons (Mega Man and Protoman), the despotic Wily, and his legion of evil cyborgs. In their stage act—complete with war-scarred helmets and crowd-surfing dead robots—The Protomen orchestrate a full-on sonic battle between synths, guitars, blaring drums, and soaring vocals. When queried for tour dates, the "bots—who never break character—only respond that, "There is hope for the future," as well as plans for a fully functional Protobus.



## FUTURISTIC SEX ROBOTZ

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

**Sounds like:** 1337 gangster/rap.

Seattle-based

Futuristic Sex Robotz find that game music, much like games themselves, needs to have plenty of replay value. "When you're playing a game, for hours the music has to be something you can listen to over and over again without shooting yourself in the head," says rapper/producer Coaxix. "That's what I go for with my beats, something that's catchy with a lot of substance." FSR has plenty of style and substance, pushing hilarious and high production value, the backbeat in "WOW," is composed entirely of ironforge sound drops. It's hip-hop that ridicules everyone from gold farmers to the Frag Dolls. Definitely not all about the bling. FSR offers all its music completely free for download off its website.



## CINEMECHANICA (MEGABAND/CONTRABAND)

[www.cinemechanica.com](http://www.cinemechanica.com);  
[www.myspace.com/nintendorevok](http://www.myspace.com/nintendorevok)

**Sounds like:** Armed NES synth.

These prog-rockers spend days dissecting game tunes for compositional cues in their own music. "We love *Mega Man* because there were no straight rhythm and lead sections—just two dynamic, distinct melodies woven together," says drummer Mike Albanese. The band has two live-show side projects, Megaband and Contraband. While a gamer speeds flawlessly through *Contra IV*, *Mega Man 2* projected on a screen above the stage, the boys crank out a live soundtrack. See all three variants of this Seattle-based group touring the West Coast this fall.



NOW SHOWING @

**GAME VIDEOS**  
watch now, play later

Sure, they got lots of regular old game trailers over at [GameVideos.com](http://GameVideos.com), but they've also got fan-made movies created by misunderstood auteurs. (Ever think about filming a full-length live-action version of *Resident Evil 4*? Too late!) Oh, and a documentary about *Halo 3*. See these clips and more at [www.gamevideos.com/egm](http://www.gamevideos.com/egm).

### LOL

**Street Fighter porno redux:**

Police detective Chun Li—badge pinned to her panties, naturally—battles a lascivious Sagat, E. Honda, and her own "massive turkey-thighs" in this redubbed clip from a fan-made *Street-Fighter* blue movie. Ends right before the sexxxy part.



### OMG

**Resident Evil 4 super fan movie:**

In this 42-minute long (!) clip, costumed fans painstakingly re-enact the first half of Capcom's classic, including on-screen button commands, Hüniggin's radio scenes, and the Krauser knife-fight, with just a few liberties (Ada and Ashley are both played by dudes, for example) taken along the way.



### WTF!

**Zelda "Gotta Dance, Damn!" ad:**

In this Japanese Super NES *Zelda* commercial, ladyboy Link and her backup dancers completely murderize a Thriller-meets-MC Hammer mash-up routine. If you only see one transgender *Zelda* dance clip this summer...well, you know the rest.



### L33T

**Halo 3 behind the scenes:**

Fans shouldn't miss this in-depth look at the creation of the *Halo 3* teaser trailer—not just for the tender morsels of new info and footage, but 'cause it's probably all we'll hear from the notoriously tight-lipped boys at Bungie for awhile...



# sales charts

FOR APRIL  
**2006**



## TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES

**1 Kingdom Hearts II** continues its Hercules reign—chart here!



**1 Kingdom Hearts II** • PS2 • Square Enix

**2 Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter** • Xbox360 • Ubisoft

**3 The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion** • Xbox360 • Take 2

**4 The Godfather** • PS2 • EA

**5 Call of War** • PS2 • Sony CEA

**6 MLB 06: The Show** • PS2 • Sony CEA

**7 Major League Baseball 2K6** • Xbox360 • Take 2

**8 Major League Baseball 2K6** • PS2 • Take 2

**9 Tourist Trophy** • PS2 • Sony CEA

**10 Battlefield 2: Modern Combat** • Xbox360 • EA



■ God of War



■ Tourist Trophy

## TOP 10 XBOX 360



**1 Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter**

**2 The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion**

**3 Major League Baseball 2K6**

**4 Battlefield 2: Modern Combat**

**5 Tomb Raider: Legend**

**6 Fight Night Round 3**

**7 Call of Duty 2**

**8 Final Fantasy XII Online**

**9 Top Spin 2**

**10 Far Cry Instincts Predator**

## TOP 10 PS2



**1 Kingdom Hearts II**

**2 The Godfather**

**3 God of War**

**4 MLB 06: The Show**

**5 Major League Baseball 2K6**

**6 Tourist Trophy**

**7 Tomb Raider: Legend**

**8 Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas**

**9 NBA Ballers: Phenom**

**10 Kingdom Hearts**

## TOP 10 XBOX



**1 Major League Baseball 2K6**

**2 The Godfather**

**3 Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas**

**4 Fable**

**5 Tomb Raider: Legend**

**6 Halo 2**

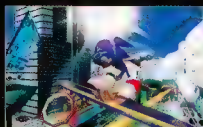
**7 NBA Ballers: Phenom**

**8 Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter**

**9 Black**

**10 Ice Age 2: The Meltdown**

## TOP 10 GAMECUBE



**1 Sonic Riders**

**2 Ice Age 2: The Meltdown**

**3 Harvest Moon: Magical Melody**

**4 Mario Kart: Double Dash!!**

**5 Naruto: Clash of Ninja**

**6 Super Mario Sunshine**

**7 Madagascar**

**8 Super Smash Bros. Melee**

**9 Super Mario Strikers**

**10 Lego Star Wars**

## TOP 10 PORTABLES



**1 Brain Age** • DS

**2 Metroid Prime Hunters** • DS

**3 Ice Age 2: The Meltdown** • GBA

**4 Super Mario Advance** • GBA

**5 Disney's Chicken Little** • GBA

**6 Chronicles of Narnia** • GBA

**7 MLB 06: The Show** • PSP

**8 Animal Crossing: Wild World** • DS

**9 Dexter** • PSP

**10 Tetris DS** • DS

## TOP 10 RENTALS

FOR THE WEEK ENDING 05/25/06



**1 X-Men: The Official Game** • PS2

**2 Over the Hedge** • PS2

**3 X-Men: The Official Game** • XB

**4 Kingdom Hearts II** • PS2

**5 Over the Hedge** • GC

**6 Major League Baseball 2K6** • PS2

**7 The Godfather** • PS2

**8 Fight Night Round 3** • PS2

**9 Black** • PS2

**10 X-Men: The Official Game** • GC

>> EIDOS IS GAMBLING WITH A RISKY NEW BUSINESS VENTURE—IT'S TURNING BOTH *TOMB RAIDER* AND *HITMAN* INTO CASINO SLOTS....>>>



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Unlock over 100 controllable creatures.



Experience an epic story with over 50 hours of gameplay.



Log on to Xbox Live® for head-to-head Versus battles.



Master the Speed Tactics battle system.

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## BOOTH BABE

The only gaming career that requires regular waxing.

**Lisa Gleave's details**

**Experience:** Six years as a Tecmo booth babe at annual game-biz trade show E3. Also a full-time model—currently one of the women on NBC game show *Deal or No Deal*, hosted by Howie Mandel.

**What's a booth babe?**

A booth babe is (generally) an attractive woman hired to help increase awareness about a product or service—or, in the case of E3, a videogame. Experience with the game on display isn't necessary, but a working knowledge of games can certainly be helpful. "I don't get a chance to play as much as much as I'd like to, to be honest, but I've gotten into the UFC fighting games and stuff like that," says the Australian-born Gleave.

**Booth babe job data**

**Recommended education:** Though it may seem like a lot of a shock, being a booth babe requires more than enrollment in *Holology 101*. "Education...hmmm. Well, it's not easy being a booth babe!" Gleave says. "It requires you to be on top of your game. It's not all about looking good and showing skin—you have to be smart, witty, and quick." And there's a social/psychological element involved, as well. "There are a lot of great

guy there who are nervous when they're around you, so you have to make them feel comfortable and at ease," she says. **Current level of demand:** High. **Location of most jobs:** Las Angeles, LA.

**Gleave's typical day**

Unsurprisingly, getting up and getting ready requires a lot of energy. "It's not just about putting on your face and hair and your clothing—it's about getting mentally prepared as well," says Gleave. And being on the job isn't any easier. "You're having to deal with thousands and thousands of technology nerds and geeks—it's a mentally, emotionally, physically challenging day. You get here and you're gotta be at 10 percent—regardless of how you're feeling or looking. Even when you're actually on *Deal or No Deal*, right now!"

**How'd she get the gig?**

A good audition is the name of the game. "I got this gig exactly six years ago when I went in for a casting," says Gleave. "I guess I was the perfect look for the [DoA] character of Tina. I've grown with them and they've grown with me... It's a family thing now. But if I make it to next year I'll be shocked!" Considering that Gleave wins Babe of Show nearly every year, she won't be.

THIS MONTH:

LISA GLEAVE

MODEL  
ACTRESS  
BOOTH BABE

## TOOLS OF HER TRADE

**Nerds**

The grumpy, misad of E3 (nearly) is Gleave's bread and butter. She wears gamers to Tecmo's booth, where they pose for photos they'll be using at home in ways she dare not think about.

**Comfortable shoes**

"Obviously for three days, you don't want to be in heels getting fatigued," says this professional hot girl. "That would suck."

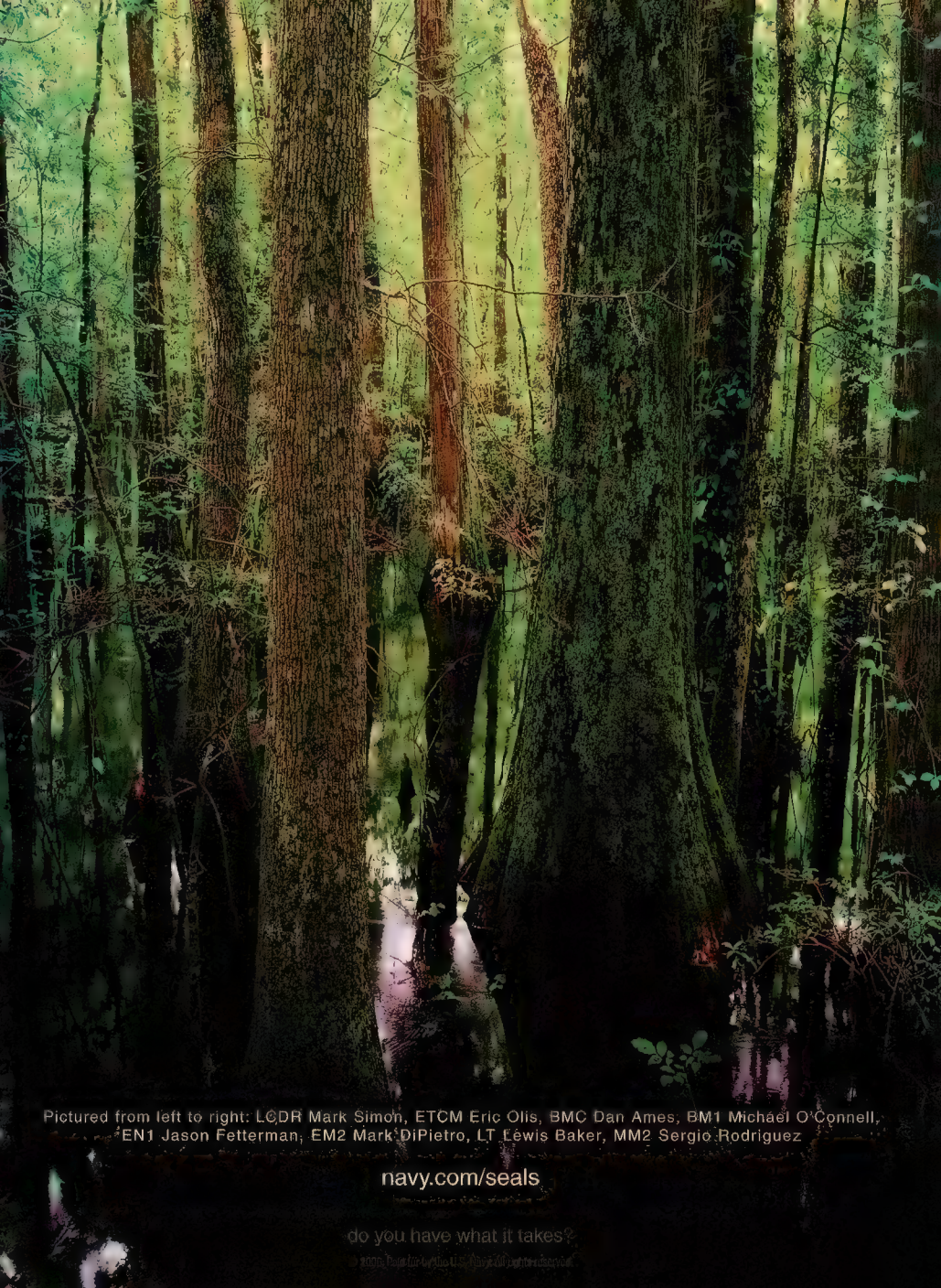
**A blanket**

"So when I'm on my break, not that I have one and stay at the booth during the season," she says. We're not sure what she means, considering that we're usually dropping with you great about 10 minutes into the show.

**Lots of personality**

"Because without it," she says, "I'd be a total monotone bitch." ☹

NEXT UP:  
GAME  
EVALUATOR



Pictured from left to right: LCDR Mark Simon, ETCM Eric Ollis, BMC Dan Ames, BM1 Michael O'Connell,  
EN1 Jason Fetterman, EM2 Mark DiPietro, LT Lewis Baker, MM2 Sergio Rodriguez

[navy.com/seals](http://navy.com/seals)

do you have what it takes?

[www.navy.com/seals](http://www.navy.com/seals)



■ This may be a concept drawing, but we still have first dibs on the 180 name, Microsoft!

# MICROSOFT PACKING ANOTHER BOX

Analysts think a **portable Xbox** will be playing soon on a toilet near you

**E**ver since Sony plunged onto the portable scene, people began guessing when Microsoft would counter with a handheld of its own. All the talk seemed like hopeful hogwash, too, until the analysts at The Diffusion Group released a report in which they predicted that Microsoft would release a portable system by 2008.

Or will it? Microsoft sure won't say—when contacted they gave us the usual “we don't comment on rumors or speculation” line. So it's easy to jump on the buzz bandwagon, but it's difficult to decipher how much truth is buried beneath these rumors. “I don't put much value in this report,” says Randy Pitchford, president of Gearbox Software. “It is an independent analysis that is not based on any specific intelligence from Microsoft, but from outside guesses and unknown industry ‘experts’ who are paid by the hour by these analysts for consultation influence.”

Fact or fiction, if Microsoft does indeed have plans for a portable, the question

remains what market it'll go for: the purebred gaming group owned by Nintendo or the multimedia crowd secured by Sony. “The product is more likely to target the PSP market than the Nintendo market,” explains Hiroshi Kamide, analyst with KBC Securities Japan. While we all anticipate that Microsoft will manufacture some sort of handheld—gaming-based or not—Pitchford has a radical idea of how the company can infiltrate the portable space: “The best thing for Microsoft wouldn't be to compete with Sony and Nintendo, but to provide the software that Sony, Nintendo, and other would-be handheld manufacturers would use to power their portable videogame devices.”

So if Microsoft really is pondering a portable (and we know they probably are), they have a lot of work to do. After getting our hands hot with both the DS Lite and the PSP, we figured we'd do a little for-fun analyzing of our own. Here's a list of things we'd want from a Microsoft handheld—and what we'll probably end up with. —Michael Donahoe

## WHAT WE WANT

Sleek-n-sexy marriage between the DS Lite and the PSP



New Halo masterpiece made exclusively for the handheld



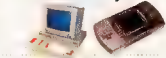
Backward compatible with all Xbox 1 games

Multifunctional device that offers more than just games

Marketing messages based in reality

## WHAT WE'LL GET

Fat-n-rumpy divorce between a PC and the Atari Lynx



New Blinx disaster developed exclusively for the handheld



Backward compatible with Xbox 1 Barbie games

The X-Gage

More of their bizarre “lucid dreams” business



It's all in the game.  
The whole. Or, and all the bits.  
The whole. The whole. The whole.  
The whole. The whole. The whole.  
The whole. The whole. The whole.  
The whole. The whole. The whole.  
The whole. The whole. The whole.  
The whole. The whole. The whole.

got milk?

# VIDEOGAMEZ \$10



■ Taking care of business: Julian Finnegan and his sister, Lauren, whom he once tried to fire.

**PUZZLE  
GAMES!**

**RPGs!**

>> JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR PRE-ORDERED: A RECENT STUDY SHOWS THAT SURGEONS WHO PLAY TWITCHY VIDEOGAMES BEFORE OPERATING

# KID, INC.

He made his own game. He hired his own staff. He's 10. Meet the new breed of juvie entrepreneurs straight from game-design camp

**J**ulian Finnegan is a lot smaller than Donald Trump. And he has much better hair. And his bedtime is earlier. Other than that, they're pretty much the exact same person.

At 10 years old, the San Francisco resident has created a videogame called *Sharp Shooter*, is working on two sequels, and is president of Sharp Shooter Games. Finnegan has a sales staff, recently had a corporate restructuring, and even has a motivational story about his company's humble beginnings: "My mom said, 'If you want to start your own company, I can buy you business cards,'" Finnegan says. "They look really good. Want one? You can have a few."

Finnegan learned to design videogames last year at iD Tech Camps, one of a growing number of summer camps offering make-your-own-game classes in the United States. If the trend continues, lemonade stands may be gone forever in favor of little Bill Gates clones setting up card tables and selling stacks of homemade software.

*Sharp Shooter*, a PC actioner that pits you against a reptilian alien, plays like *Pong* crossed with *Space Invaders*. On the down side, the game takes less than 10 minutes to play, it's two dimensional, and the box's cover art is a photo of Finnegan's computer monitor. On the plus side, it's still more fun than *50 Cent: Bulletproof*. (See our exclusive review in the sidebar to the right.)

Finnegan charges \$10 for the game and pays his staff \$2.50 commission for each sale,

although he's no workplace tyrant. "I made this deal with them," Finnegan explains. "If you sell six games, the sixth game you sell I pay \$5. But when they sell the seventh game, it goes back to \$2.50 again. It makes them want to keep doing it. It's like motivation."

He recently let some salesmen go, leaving only his sister Lauren and her friend Paloma. He tried to lay off his sister, although the board of directors overruled the move. "My mom's not letting me fire her," Finnegan says. Fortunately, 9-year-old Lauren continues to be a loyal and generous employee. "He's a great boss," she says. "(Paloma) sent him a birthday card and it said 'You're a good boss,' or something like that. It was really cute."

Finnegan took a basic videogame creation course at the camp, where instructors helped him learn how to use the game-building software Multimedia Fusion Pro. He hopes to attend a new class called Video Game Creation Xtreme. In the meantime, he's experimenting with more advanced software that'll put his next game in three dimensions. (Suggested title: *Sharp Shooter 3D*.) *EGM* got an exclusive early look at the game, and we can tell you it has a lot of zombies with shotguns. You read it here first.

Whether it's the industry-wide slump or the fact that *Sharp Shooter* takes less than 10 minutes to play, sales have not been especially brisk. Including the copy Finnegan sold to *EGM*, *Sharp Shooter* is still 399,985 copies shy of qualifying as a Greatest Hit by Sony's standards. Finnegan also worries about his friends crowding the marketplace. "They all want to make games now," he says.

—Peter Hartlaub

## HE SHOOTS, WE SCORE

*EGM* gives Julian's shoestring *Sharp Shooter* the Review Crew treatment

**Good:** Simple gameplay, it's only 10 minutes.

**Bad:** Only five levels, repetitive music.

**Two professors didn't know a kid made this.**



**CRISPIN OWEN:** The flying-spaceman-versus-laser-crocodile genre has never been done like this before. It took a kid with vision to add random game-over screens and frying-bacon sound effects.

**ROBERT ASHLEY:** There are games and there are interactive experiences. *Sharp Shooter's* cinematic depiction of gritty urban crocodile hunting haunts my dreams. A "10" doesn't do it justice.



**GREG FORD:** Are we even sure it's a crocodile? Is the hero Superman? Providing more questions than answers while remaining enjoyable ain't easy. Hideo Kojima—gaming's current brain-bending developer—should watch out.

**THE VOICES**  
**8.0 10 9.0**  
CRISPIN ROBERT GREG

Publisher: Sharp  
Shooter Games  
Developer: Julian  
Finnegan  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Everyone

## CAMP COUNSELING

Forget the great outdoors—game-design camps are becoming an increasingly popular summer experience for kids Finnegan's age and older. He attended one of the weeklong sessions hosted by iD Tech Camps, which organizes summer programs in everything from game creation to modding to 3D character design at 40 universities in 19 states. Sessions run June through August. Check [www.intermediadive.com](http://www.intermediadive.com) or call 888-709-TECH for more info.

Some of the other larger camps in the U.S. that offer game-creation classes include Cyber Camps ([www.cybercamps.com](http://www.cybercamps.com)), Digital Media Academy ([www.digitalmediaacademy.org](http://www.digitalmediaacademy.org)), and the East Coast-based New Media Tour ([www.newmediatour.com](http://www.newmediatour.com)). Be sure to check for smaller camps at local college campuses. Send your kids to any of these programs and maybe they'll buy your sweet retirement pad someday. ☹



**Camped out:** Make-your-own-game summer programs are more popular than ever.

PERFORM FASTER AND MAKE FEWER MISTAKES DURING LAPAROSCOPIC PROCEDURES, WHICH USE CAMERAS AND TINY INSTRUMENTS. >>>

PS3/XB360 EXCLUSIVE SCREENS

# NEED FOR SPEED CARBON

Publisher: EA Games  
Developer: EA Canada  
Release Date: Fall 2006

Way cooler than Need for Speed Boron

**A**pparently, in the real world—much like in video games—inner-city street racing has become as played out as Vin Diesel's career. (Sorry kids, *The Pacifier's* poop jokes are simply not cool.) People continue to drive quickly and furiously, though. Thrill-seeking speed freaks have traded neon-lit city streets for treacherous mountain roads, making for a far more dangerous racing experience. EA is following their fearless lead with *Need for Speed Carbon*, where the real competition will be out on them hills.

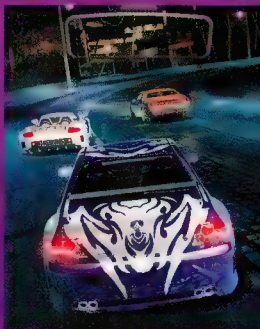
But wasn't the downhill racing bit done to death before the more recent trend of urban street racing? "Other downhill games failed to deliver a true sense of speed and danger on the can-

yon/mountain courses," says Executive Producer Larry LaPierre. "I think you'll find that *Need For Speed Carbon* has been able to truly capture the emotional experience of racing on the edge." Expect to get a little emotional during the all-new Canyon Duets—tense one-on-one races along craggy cliffs that promise to bring a fresh feel to this slightly stagnant series.

Still, this rockier setting doesn't mean *Carbon* will completely abandon the free-roaming, urban racing backdrop of the last couple editions. But now you need to be more aware of your activities and notoriety than ever before. "The more you race in one particular area of the city, the greater the heat will become in that area," explains LaPierre, "forcing the

players to look for other places to race. And that's the reason why you and your crew will take the really important races to the canyons and mountains on the outskirts of town.

Crew? What crew? Well, that's the other notable addition to *Carbon*. During your travels through the illegal racing underworld, you'll meet and recruit crew members who'll help you both on and off the track. Join forces with the right gear heads and they'll block or charge other drivers during a race, while others will hook you up with discounts on new car parts. This inventive crew concept will also carry over to *Carbon's* online arena, where you'll be able to draft other players to join your squad. **—Greg Swartz**



*Carbon* will also burn rubber on the Wii, plus all the current-gen consoles and handhelds (even the GBA).



Where's the hot spot to start the race?



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# rumor mill

## Squeezing the facts out of fiction

**S**weating out the slow summer months is bit of a hummer for us gamers. Between the tiny trickle of good games and the ho-hum news updates, it's almost enough to get us to go—dare I say it?—outside. But while you guys contemplate escaping your gaming sanctuaries to get some much-needed fresh air, the Q never forgets what's important 'round here—providing you with good ol' gaming gossip. It's been a tough month, but I managed to dig up some dirt to keep you pacified during the long summer drought. Until next month—keep it cool, kiddos!

—The Q

### Another mission to Mars

Now that the PlayStation 3 is mere months away, it's easy to forget about all the PlayStation 2 games you played eons ago, especially back when revolutionary

features like "destructible environments" were enough to propel a game from "meh" to "alright." But if you happened to dig the futuristic first-person shooter *Red Faction*, then you might like this little tidbit: ***Red Faction 3* will be blowing the bloated case off of the PlayStation 3 sometime next year.**

### Mother Earth

Ever since Nintendo surprised fanboys at the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) by including *Pit* from the cult classic *Kid Icarus* in *Super Smash Bros. Brawl* (Wii), other beloved old-school classics are now showing up on the resurrection radar. One series in particular has been seeing recent releases in Japan—but next to nothing over here. Well, that may change, because I was told **Nintendo will release an *EarthBound* compilation for the DS, complete with touch-screen functionality.** Not bad.

Nintendo, but how about something *really* obscure—like, say, *New Balloon Fight*?

### Eye on the Toy

Sony may have a bad rep for stealing innovative ideas, but if you have to give the company credit for coming up with some wacky stuff, like the arm-slinging EyeToy. And now that Sony's having self-conscious gamers loosen up their limbs with the new motion-sensing PS3 controller, I'm hearing

a **next-gen EyeToy for the PlayStation 3 will be available at launch.** The new EyeToy titles won't all be kitschy minigames, either. In fact, if you think about Sony's push for online connectivity, shouldn't have to tell you what things the company has in mind. OK, maybe I should but I'll save that for another time!

### Stepping up to bat

Most superhero games these days are tied to a blockbuster movie to ensure those extra dollars publishers love. But since the next *Batman* flick isn't hitting the silver screen for a good while, my dirt detecting skills have uncovered that **EA is working on a next-gen *Batman* game that isn't based on a movie.** And I wouldn't be surprised (not that I ever am) if the game has you donning the cowl of the aging crime fighter from Frank Miller's epic graphic novel *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*.



Red Faction 2

## Q-TIPS: SQUARE ENIX EDITION

• Japan's getting both the robo-strategy game *Front Mission Online* and a new version of obscure shooter *Silphard* for the Xbox 360, but I hear **Square Enix has no plans to bring these games over to our shores.**

• Yet another *Mana* game is in the works, only this one's a little more social—it **appears Square Enix is working on a massively multiplayer online *Mana* game.** Think it's coming out for the PlayStation 3? Wrong—it's for the Wii.

• Speaking of the Nintendo's new console, if the upcoming *Dragon Quest* games sell well on the DS and the Wii, **I hear the 9th adventure will be a Wii exclusive.** ☹

Dragon Quest 9



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# WARNING

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**WARNED.**

PREVIEW

## FINAL FA

## Patience is a virtue

It's been 16 years since *Final Fantasy III* first came out for the Famicom [the Japanese NES]," says *FFIII* executive producer Hiromichi Tanaka. "So this will be a new *Final Fantasy* to a whole new generation of gamers." Considering that the original version (scope the sidebar for a glimpse at its 8-bit glory) remains the only *FF* title to never have made it stateside, this DS revision will fulfill the dreams of many American gamers yearning to fill the gaps in their *FF* collections.

Actually, this sought-after remake almost didn't happen on Nintendo's so-hot-right-now portable. "We had started work on a PlayStation 2 version of *FFIII*," admits Tanaka. "But we changed gears and shifted development to the DS." Doing so allowed the team to take advantage of the DS' unique functionality. "You can actually play the entire game through using just the stylus and touch screen," Tanaka explains. "You can use it to navigate through the menus, to choose items and spells in battle, or to select which group of enemies to attack in a battle." The dual-screen usage isn't quite as creative—the standard map-screen paradigm persists here, and the top display isn't even used during battles. "We limited the game to one screen in battles in order to max out the DS' graphical capabilities on the bottom display," explains Tanaka.

Modernizing *FFIII* required some major changes. The game's visuals now sport a whimsical, storybook-inspired style similar to that of the *Final Fantasy Tactics* titles. Plus, nearly all the dungeons and bosses received redesigns to better

balance the game's previously erratic difficulty level. The game's job system (see sidebar) also got much-needed tweaks that make all the character classes viable through the endgame. Most importantly, though, the script has been totally rewritten to give the characters more distinctive personalities.

Some things haven't changed, though, like the game's totally old-school magic system. Here (as in the original NES *Final Fantasy I*), your characters memorize a set number of spells rather than draw upon a pool of Magic Points. "We kept this system because it's one of the things that makes *FFIII* feel like *FFIII*," says Tanaka. "Plus, it seems very fresh to gamers who never played the old titles." And although Tanaka also promises some manner of support for the DS Wi-Fi connection, he rules out the ability to play through the single-player adventure with a buddy.

But hey, let's not complain. We're pretty lucky to finally get this long-forgotten gem. It's at once an all-new *Final Fantasy* and an unearthed relic from an earlier time. "My main goal was to create something that veteran players would still recognize as being *FFIII*, but to also modernize the game and make it viable among its contemporaries," explains Tanaka. "I feel that we have succeeded with *FFIII* for DS."

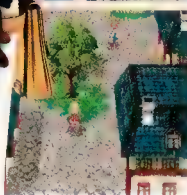
—Shane Bettenhausen

"So this will be the new *Final Fantasy* to a whole new generation of gamers."

—Hiromichi Tanaka, *FFIII* executive producer



Loneth never enters any dungeon without his fetching European carryall.

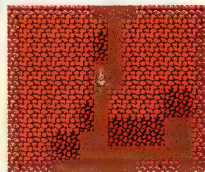


# FINAL FANTASY III

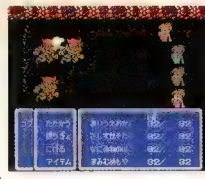


## THE WAY WE WERE

*FFIII* first came out for the Famicom (the Japanese NES) in 1990. At the time, it featured some of the slickest visuals and deepest gameplay ever witnessed on a home console. Now, not so much.



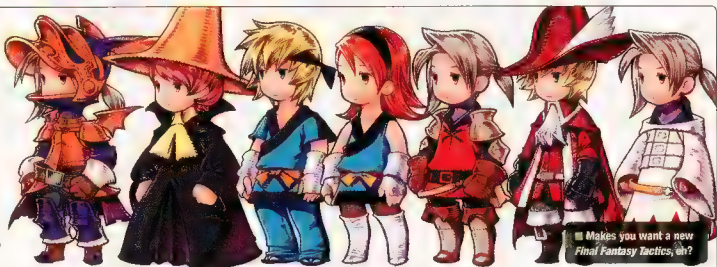
■ If you simply must play the original *FFIII*, check eBay for fan-translated copies.



■ Despite the new-fangled cutesy visuals, *FFIII*'s battles feel exactly like old-school *FF* fare, right down to the classic sound effects and hummable victory fanfare.

## GET A JOB

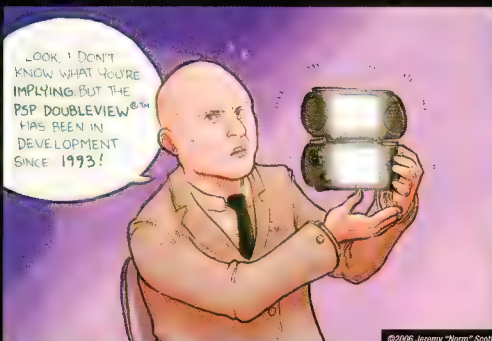
Anyone who's ventured through *Final Fantasy V* knows just how much its job system added to an otherwise standard role-playing game. *FFIII* offers a similar setup that lets you choose your party members' professions from a large pool of classes (including Iron Knight, one that's new to this DS version). New skills, spells, and outfits await the adventurous. Of course, this is potentially dangerous for players who want to do everything in an RPG...you're going to be here for a while. ♣



■ Makes you want a new *Final Fantasy Tactics*, uh?

## overheard

## Potent quotables



"And we had that motion technology inside a [PC] Freestyle Pro controller about eight years ago and we found that as a general purpose controller it wasn't that great. It worked in one or two games, *Motocross Madness* for example, **but it wasn't great as a general purpose controller.**"

—Shane Kim, general manager of Microsoft Game Studios, on why Microsoft won't be ripping off Sony's motion-sensing PS3 controller

"Carjacking—the thing you do in *Grand Theft Auto*—is down 50 percent since the game came out!"

—Steven Johnson, author of *Everything Bad Is Good for You*, debunks video games on The Colbert Report

"Yeah, and in *GTA* when you get to do it with someone doggy style, that's actually going to bring down teen pregnancy, right?"

—Stephen Colbert

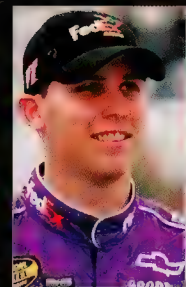
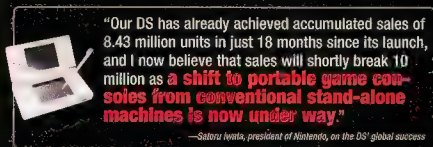
"Actually, teen pregnancy rates have dropped!"

—Steven Johnson



"Speaking about the PlayStation 3, we never said that we would release a game console. **It is radically different from the previous PlayStation—it is clearly a computer.**"

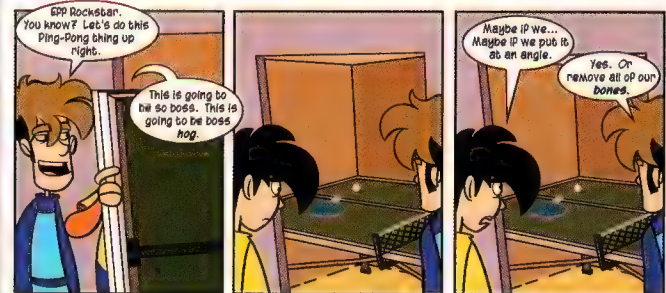
—Ken Kutaragi, president and CEO of Sony Computer Entertainment, rationalizes the comparatively high price of the PS3



"**You just can't beat the game's on-track experience**—they've got every tree, everything's mapped out perfect."

—Rookie driver Danny Hamlin explains how he uses EA's NASCAR games to learn unfamiliar tracks

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QUOTATION SOURCES: (COUNTERCLOCKWISE, STARTING WITH DENNY HAMLIN): ASSOCIATED PRESS, ASSOCIATED PRESS, NEXT GENERATION, THE COLBERT REPORT, GAMEDAILY.BIZ

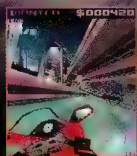
>>> MAJESCO IS READING A *NACHO LIBRE* WRESTLING GAME FOR THE NINTENDO DS, BUT IT WON'T HIT SHELVES UNTIL THIS OCTOBER... >>>

# ASPHALT 2

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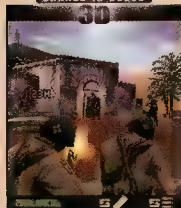
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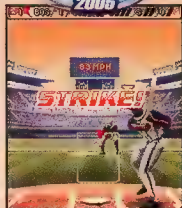
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**Midnight  
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KEYWORD: BOWL3D

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# the hot 10

Hip and happening in 10 easy steps



## 1 BLACK DS LITE

Everyone who's anyone will take Nintendo's spiffy new DS Lite to the beach for some relaxing summertime gaming...but only the hippest of the hip will have this high-class European-exclusive black model.



## 2

## HALO GRAPHIC NOVEL

With *Halo 3* over a year away, Xbox kids need a Master Chief fix...and fast. Help is only a bookstore away—Marvel Comics has enlisted big-name funnybook talent (including Moebius, Phil Hale, and Simon Bisley) to create original stories set in the *Halo* universe.



## 4 JPOD

Looking for a great poolside read? Postmodern novelist Douglas Coupland tackles the world of videogame development in this hilarious pseudosequel to his 1998 classic *Microserfs*.



## 3 NINTEN-DOPOLY

Move over, Sony and Microsoft—Nintendo has the game sewn up with *Monopoly: Nintendo Collector's Edition*, an official nod to Hasbro's ubiquitous real estate game. Link's shield beats a tumble any day.



## 5 NINTENDO'S BIT GENERATIONS SERIES

In Japan, Nintendo hopes to revitalize the GBA with *Boundish*, *Dialhex*, *Dolstream*, *Colors*, *Digital Drive*, *Orbital*, and *Soundvayger*, seven value-priced games offering simple, quirky gameplay. How DS?

## 7 BATTLE STADIUM D.O.N.

Strict anime licensing deals mean that this four-player *Smash Bros.*-inspired PS2 game starring *Dragon Ball Z*, *One Piece*, and *Naruto* characters will probably never make it stateside. Import get!



## 6 THE WIZARD FINALLY COMES TO DVD THIS AUGUST

In this heartwarming family film, preteen heartthrob Fred Savage learns the true value of family, friendship, and

the Nintendo gameplay counseling hotline as he helps his sweetly retarded little brother win Videogame Armageddon. Power Glove optional!



## 8 JACK SPARROW

Check out Johnny Depp's lovable hero in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* film sequel *Dead Man's Chest*, but steer clear of the mediocre cash-in games.



## 9 PERPLEX CITY

This highbrow collectible card game achieves nerdy *Magic: The Gathering* traditions with arty design, brain-bending puzzles (some even videogame related), and actual cash prizes.



## 10 DISGAEA 2

With its evil penguins, demure antiheroes, and wonderfully complex gameplay, *Disgaea* returns this fall with a true PS2 sequel, *Disgaea 2*.



Part  
notebook.

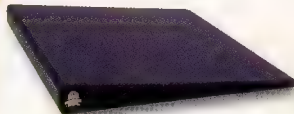
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## coming soon

Better days ahead (but not many this month)



### STAR FOX COMMAND

Nintendo • DS

Fox McCloud returns to form in this touchy sequel, meaning no more of those pesky ground missions like in the GameCube installments. *Command* also delivers both wireless and online dogfights for up to eight players.



### MADDEN NFL 07

EA Sports • XB360/PS2/XB/GC/PSP/DS/GBA

After months of saying, "Sorry, but not this year," the makers of *Madden* finally wised up and added the current-gen's robust Superstar mode (which now features position-specific camera angles) to the 360 version.



### SUPER MONKEY BALL ADVENTURE

Sega • PS2/GC/PSP

The quirky platformer returns with a story mode (a series first) and over 60 playable characters. That's a lot of damn monkeys.



### 50 CENT: BULLETPROOF G-UNIT EDITION

VU Games • PSP

Fiddy's console debut sported more holes than the man himself. The rapper attempts to redeem himself with *G-Unit Edition*, which follows the same story as *Bulletproof*, except now it looks and plays like a top-down beat/shoot-em-up à la *Hunter: The Reckoning*.

>>> THE XBOX 360 SOFTWARE LIBRARY KEEPS GROWING... KIND OF—MICROSOFT HAS RECENTLY MADE 20 MORE XBOX 1 GAMES BACKWARD



## ENCHANTED ARMS

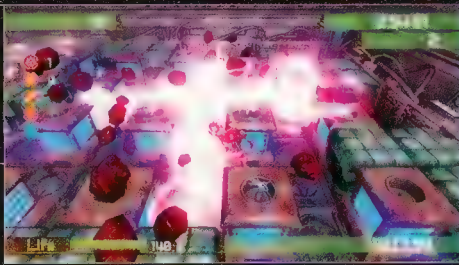
Ubisoft • XB360

Here's a new one for roleplayers: Embark on a 50-hour-plus fantasy epic traveling to exotic locations in an attempt to save the world. Sarcasm aside, you can also unlock more than 75 creatures and battle with them online.

## BOMBERMAN ACT: ZERO

Konami • XB360

The bomber joins the dark side in this next-gen makeover that has him looking like a really angry cyborg (or some bad Master Chief rip-off). Gameplay remains largely intact, despite some changes to the camera (it's set much closer now).



## MORE AUGUST RELEASES

### DANCE FACTORY

Codemasters • PS2

### DEAD RISING

Capcom • XB360

### DEEP LABYRINTH

Atari • DS

### DISGAEA 2: CURSED MEMORIES

NIS America • PS2

### GUILTY GEAR JUDGEMENT

Majesco • PSP

### HARVEST MOON DS

Natsume • DS

### THE KING OF FIGHTERS 2006

SNK Playmore • PS2

### NINETY-NINE NIGHTS

Microsoft • XB360

### SAINTS ROW

THQ • XB360

### TIMESHIFT

VU Games • XB360

### WORLD TOUR GOLF

SouthPeak Interactive • PS2/XB

## DIRGE OF CERBERUS: FINAL FANTASY VII

Square Enix • PS2

Take control of *Final Fantasy VII*'s melodramatic vampire, Vincent, in this third-person action spin-off and defend Midgar from a corrupt government organization. The game's gotten beaten up in the press lately, but that's what happens when slick CG cut-scenes are your biggest (and, really, only) attribute.

COMPATIBLE WITH 360, INCLUDING THE DEMONIC FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER *DOOM 3* AND THE JEDI-FILLED ACTION GAME *LEGO STAR WARS*....

# THE TOP COOLEST N

Enough of the sequels and licensed crap, already! We count down the most exciting original titles headed your way

**Z**elda who? *Final Fantasy* what? Believe it or not, even the videogame industry's biggest names had a stint—albeit a brief one—as nobodies. Of course, that was back when they were still original IPs (intellectual properties). So we've gone ahead and scrutinized gaming's near future for the next group of unknowns. Do they all have the blockbuster potential of a *Halo*? C'mon, that's kooky talk. But each game does have at least one thing (which we're calling the "cool factor") that has us excited to play 'em.

*Alan Wake* who? *Gears* of what? Quick, get to know these "nobodies," before they make it big... >

50

NEW GAMES





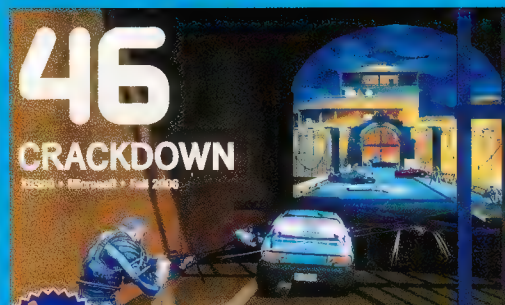


# 47 ELEBITS

PS2 • Microsoft • Fall 2006

**cool factor**  
EXPLORATION

This game's initial design wasn't even set in stone. And as most developers taking chances with casual gaming, you use the Wii Remote to guide a team of cute, colorful critters through a series of environments, interacting with objects to solve puzzles, acquire the power of energy in unlock new areas. It's simple, and perhaps surprisingly, quite amusingly interesting.



# 46 CRACKDOWN

PS2 • Microsoft • Fall 2006

**cool factor**  
EVOLVING COMBAT

The Rock (the rapper) returns to his home island of Boston, but this time it's not to save the world. Instead, he's here to take on the city's corrupt police force. The game's combat is a mix of brute force and tactical precision, with a focus on taking out enemies in a variety of ways. It's a fun, action-packed experience that's sure to appeal to fans of the genre.



# 45 CONTACT

PS2 • Microsoft • September 2006

**cool factor**  
ONLINE HANGOUT

Microsoft's online game 2006 August's most interesting addition to the Xbox Live network is a game that's not even out yet. Contact is a free-to-play, online-only game that's designed to be a social hangout. It's a fun, casual game that's sure to appeal to fans of the genre.



# 44 FATAL INERTIA

PS2 • EA • November 2006

**cool factor**  
FUN WITH PHYSICS

Microsoft's latest game is a fun, action-packed experience that's sure to appeal to fans of the genre. It's a free-to-play, online-only game that's designed to be a social hangout. It's a fun, casual game that's sure to appeal to fans of the genre.



# 43 RULE OF ROSE

PS2 • Atlus • Sept. 2006

**cool factor**  
IT'S TWISTED

This woefully disturbing adventure game is a fun, action-packed experience that's sure to appeal to fans of the genre. It's a free-to-play, online-only game that's designed to be a social hangout. It's a fun, casual game that's sure to appeal to fans of the genre.



# 42 ROGUE GALAXY

PS2 • Sega • Oct. 2006

**cool factor**  
SPACE TRAVEL

This game is a fun, action-packed experience that's sure to appeal to fans of the genre. It's a free-to-play, online-only game that's designed to be a social hangout. It's a fun, casual game that's sure to appeal to fans of the genre.



cool factor  
EVERYTHING  
IS A WEAPON

# 41 DEAD RISING

Xbox 360 • Capcom • August 2008

Gamers today have become real know-it-alls at dealing with the undead: always aim for the head, burning them works like a charm, etc. Yep, we've gotten quite good at killing these things, which is why *Dead Rising* might just be a welcome change-up for survival-horror junkies. For starters, instead of a haunted mansion or derelict fortress, this game drops you smack-dab in the middle of a zombie-infested mall. Hopefully, gamers will start playing it, and when they start to see what this—*a more lighthearted sort of zany gorefest*—they'll get a few chuckles out of it and walk away with a smile on their face. *—Ray*  
Producer Keiji Inafune (who's also the brains behind another game on our Top 50 list, *Lost Planet*)

Yet while the game trades screams for laughs, *Dead Rising*'s main draw is that it allows you to use practically anything in this shopping complex—cash register, bench, umbrella, even a freakin' ficus plant—on these flesh-eaters. And that's where this one changes the whole zombie-combat paradigm: You spot a shotgun on the floor, but instead you grab the "Blue Light Special" sign in front of a music store and bash a group of ugly S&Bs to the ground. You'll find yourself running around, passing up effective weapons like a rioter because you know it's so much more satisfying making out a zombie with, say, a shopping cart. As so many titles today try to scare the bejeezus out of us, it's a refreshing change of pace to see a game like *Dead Rising* that isn't afraid to poke fun at itself and offer countless (and often humorous) ways to slaughter the undead. Now, cross your blood-drenched fingers that the gameplay here can match the variety in its weapons' choice.



Now try topping that, Mr. Haver.



Ah, so that's what happened to Paperboy.



40

# BLADESTORM: THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR

PS2 • Xbox • November 2004



cool factor  
NOT SET  
IN ASIA

BladeStorm: The Hundred Years' War is a medieval action-adventure game that was developed by the French studio, Cyanide. The game is set in the Hundred Years' War, a conflict between England and France that lasted from 1329 to 1453. The game is set in the year 1429, during the Siege of Orléans. The game is a first-person shooter with a focus on historical accuracy and a strong emphasis on the game's story and characters.

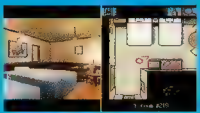
39



cool factor  
MEANS OF  
INTERROGATION

# HOTEL DUSK: ROOM 215

PS • Nintendo • October 2005



#1 on the list of the best games of 2005



Hotel Dusk: Room 215 is a psychological thriller game that was developed by the Japanese studio, Sumo Digital. The game is set in a hotel in the 1940s, during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines. The game is a first-person narrative game that focuses on the player's interactions with the game's characters and the game's atmosphere. The game is a critical success, with many praising its story and characters.



cool factor  
SATAN'S  
LITTLE  
HELPERS

38

# OVERLORD

Xbox • PlayStation 2 • Summer 2004

Overlord is a strategy game that was developed by the British studio, Trip Tilt Ape. The game is set in a medieval fantasy world, where the player controls a demon lord who is trying to conquer the land. The game is a top-down strategy game that focuses on the player's ability to control and manage their army of demons. The game is a critical success, with many praising its humor and strategy.

# Critical Hits, Commercial Flops

Great review scores don't always translate into big money at retail. We asked the makers of these *EGM* award-winners to explain why their original games quickly became dust-collectors in stores.

## Beyond Good & Evil (PS2/XB/GC)

**What We Said:** "Unlike other ambitious games that try to be too many things to too many players, *BG&E* pulls its components together beautifully... It's packed with personality and girl power!" —*EGM* #173

**What Went Wrong:** "*BG&E* was a critically acclaimed game that may have been a bit too far ahead of its time to be recognized by the mass market. Although its retail sales did not match the quality of its gameplay experience, *BG&E* was a huge success for Ubisoft in other ways."

—Tony Key, Ubisoft's vice president of marketing



## Oddworld Stranger's Wrath (XB)

**What We Said:** "With more imagination in its weapons alone than other titles manage in their entirety, *Stranger's* is a reminder of the importance of refinement and innovation in gaming." —*EGM* #188

**What Went Wrong:** "We'll never know how well the title might have performed had it been given adequate marketing and advertising support. Without such support, you're dead at retail. Every publisher and retailer knows that having a great game is only half the battle."

—Lorne Lanning, creator, *Oddworld Stranger's Wrath*

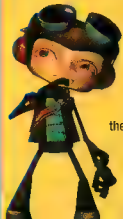


## Psychonauts (PS2/XB)

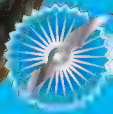
**What We Said:** "Anyone who doesn't fall for the unique characters, hilarious dialogue, and brilliantly conceived environments of *Psychonauts* has no soul!" —*EGM* # 191

**What Went Wrong:** "Doing platformers with stylized art was not stuff when we started *Psychonauts* in 2000, but by the time we finished in 2005, the entire genre kind of evaporated on us. Don't ask me why—I still love to play them myself. Still, we managed to connect with a lot of passionate gamers who really loved the game..."

—Tim Schafer, president of developer Double Fine



37



cool factor  
CLEVER  
WEAPONS

# DARK SECTOR

PS2 • Xbox • Fall 2004

Dark Sector is a first-person action game that was developed by the British studio, Rebellion. The game is set in a dark, industrial world, where the player controls a character who is trying to survive. The game is a first-person action game that focuses on the player's ability to use their environment and their weapons to survive. The game is a critical success, with many praising its atmosphere and gameplay.



# 36



**COOL FACTOR**  
GRITTY  
STORY

## YAKUZA

PS2 • Sega • September 2006

Brawlers steeped in the criminal underworld aren't exactly new. But *Yakuza's* stunning dedication to recreating Japan's notorious gangster syndicate takes the genre to new heights of realism. The dense, woven tale of backstabbing intrigue (penetrated by Japanese novelist/legendary comic *yakuza* tales) is filled with immaculate, rendered Tokyo backstreets.



*Yakuza's* streetwise will routinely run red.

## 34 HOT PXL

PSP • Atari • Fall 2006



**COOL FACTOR**  
XTREME  
MICRO-  
GAMES

The PSP may still be riding the DS crazy-game-coat-tails, but the introduction of weird and wacky newcomers like *CocoHoco* are spoiling Sony's handheld into the soon-to-be *MMI*. *PXL* is joining the crazy fray with its urban take on the genre's Nintendo-popularized (imagine it: *WarioWare* went to street and you'll get it just). Instead of an endless stream of unrelated minigames (though *Hot PXL* actually sticks to a central theme involving skateboarder-turned-developer Dion, "central" theme or not, these tasks will still have you scratching your head with disbelief). Unlike street feet, coupled with the twitchy gameplay, finally over the PSP what it needs a little personality.



Compare it to *WarioWare's* collection of challenges: *HOT PXL* goes to the next logical aesthetic.

## 35 NINETY-NINE NIGHTS

XB360 • Microsoft • August 2006



**COOL FACTOR**  
COUNTLESS  
ENEMIES

You know the grind: Pick a character and smash, cut, and comb your way through hordes of soldiers, demons, or some other ungodly creature. The difference here—thanks to the power of the 360—is that *Ninety-Nine Nights* throws literally hundreds of these abominations at you at a once with relative ease. With body counts, each too many to count, don't forget the ice packs for those button-mashing sore thumbs.



## 33 GOD HAND

PS2 • Capcom • October 2006



Other studios are known for sticking to the videogame norm (see *Viewtiful Joe*, *Damned*). So expect lots of the same (meaning something really different) with the developer's next project, *God Hand*, a kookyrawler that doesn't take itself seriously—especially in the combat. The game's main character, equipped with the right hand of God, gets his jollies from knocking enemies more than 100 times to the face, knocking them straight outta the atmosphere. He'll pop 'em and kicking them in the family jewels (which he does—a sitcom-like laugh track).



**COOL FACTOR**  
COMEDIC  
COMBAT

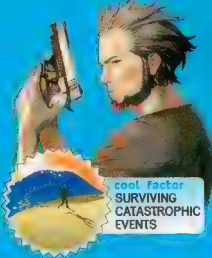


32

## DISASTER DAY OF CRISIS

Wii • Nintendo • TRD

Zombies, aliens, Nazis—these videogame regulars all joining in *Disaster: Day of Crisis*’s bitchy enemy Mother Nature. In between shootouts with a rogue special-forces unit, you’ll be racing down a mountain with running lava in your rearview mirror. (Remember, objects are closer than they appear.) Avoiding skyscrapers as they rumble from an earthquake, and surviving in a day that brings a horrendous flood. Anyone got some water wings?



cool factor  
SURVIVING  
CATASTROPHIC  
EVENTS



## 30 LUNAR KNIGHTS

DS • Konami • Sept. 2006

Konami’s undervalued *Boktai* franchise (previous incarnation: SBAI morris) brings *Knights* to the DS, losing its gimmicky sunlight sensor as the way to exchange items, a zero-in-one playable character, deeper gameplay, and some shockingly cool 3D space-shooter levels that exclusively use the touch screen for control.



cool factor  
SHOOTING  
LEVELS

29

■ The bulky-armor look is really in these days.

## PROJECT H.A.M.M.E.R.

Wii • Nintendo • TRD

In this gritty urban crawler, from Nintendo’s Ward, pits a hammer-wielding hero against a deadly robotic army. It’s all fairly standard, apart from the unique control scheme—your hand motions (swinging the Wii Remote side to side, up and down, or in circles) directly correspond to your onscreen flows. It’s impressive to see how the Wii’s controller can make something mundane seem fresh.



cool factor  
HAMMER  
CONTROL



## EVERY EXTEND EXTRA

PSP • Buena Vista • Fall 2006

This puzzle shooter is all about finding combos in the chaos. As you manipulate your shapes and use geometric shapes to try combos that will create chain reactions, explosions. *Extra* is inspired by Japanese freeware PC game *Every Extend*, but adds slick music and graphics—while nailing sense, considering it’s made by *Lumines*’ creator, Tetsuya Mizuguchi.



cool factor  
CONTROLLABLE  
CHAOS

## 28 JUST CAUSE

X360/PS2/XB • Eidos • Fall 2006

Think of *Just Cause*’s setting—a 640-square-mile island—as a stuntman’s paradise. And the biggest thrills will come with your legs dangling above it, parachuting and free-falling play key roles in your incursions. You’ll use the chute to BASE jump from buildings, bail out from vehicles, and even shoot enemies while in mid-air.



cool factor  
PARACHUTING



27

## THE EYE OF JUDGEMENT

PS3 • Sony GEM • 2007

Kids these days: For a while, collectible card games that required a little reading, expensive and dandy. Now, *The Eye of Judgement* ups the ante with dazzling technology—the PS3 uses the eye-tracker camera to sense what cards are being played and simulate each card’s powers on screen. It might battle the likes of which previously existed only in players’ minds, imagination—to wit, what’s used for? ▶

cool factor  
CARDS  
COME ALIVE



cool factor  
A REAL-LIFE  
ADVENTURE

# 26 (UNNAMED NAUGHTY DOG PROJECT)

PS3 • Sony CEA • TBD

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<p><b>FUZION ZR1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Performance Handling</li> <li>• W, V &amp; H Speed Rated</li> <li>• UTQG 320 A A</li> <li>• 38 sizes from 15" to 20"</li> <li>• 30 to 60 series</li> <li>• UNI-T® Technology</li> </ul>	<p><b>FUZION HR1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance Handling</li> <li>• H Speed Rated</li> <li>• UTQG 400 A A</li> <li>• 24 sizes from 14" to 17"</li> <li>• 45 to 65 series</li> <li>• UNI-T® Technology</li> </ul>	<p><b>FUZION XT1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Terrain</li> <li>• S &amp; T Speed Rated</li> <li>• UTQG 400 A B</li> <li>• 9 sizes from 16" to 18"</li> <li>• 60 to 75 series</li> <li>• UNI-T® Technology</li> </ul>
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■ The shift to a real-life backdrop doesn't mean Naughty Dog will abandon its platforming roots.

Cuddly mascots and wise-cracking sidekicks are so last generation—developer Naughty Dog (*Crash Bandicoot*, *Jak and Daxter*) gives the spin attacks a rest and embraces reality for its upcoming (and currently limited) PS3 adventure. If he picks here, seems to be *Pitt*! meets *Indiana Jones*, or as Lead Designer Evan Wells eloquently puts it, “It’s a third-person action-adventure game that captures the mood and emotions from classic pulp adventure, but with a modern-day twist.” As the PlayStation generation grows up, so do its platformers.

The game’s hero finds himself marooned on a lush, danger-packed jungle isle, and it’s your job to guide him through a story-driven action-adventure in the vein of *Tomb Raider*. You’ll divide your time among tense platforming, combat (both mano-a-mano and weapons-based), and puzzle solving, yet everything stays firmly rooted in reality. “The PlayStation 3 has given us the opportunity to choose a more realistic and believable art style,” Wells explains. “But we can’t shove away all of the fast-action-on-fun control of our previous games.” This makes for a specialized if training hybrid—an adult-oriented, real-life adventure with the precise controls and addictive simplicity only platformers can offer.

In motion, the game looks eerily real, thanks to its clean, lifelike art style and some truly impressive character animation. “The coolest aspect of the game is our animation system, which allows realistic human characters to move in a believable manner, and it offers complete controllability,” says Wells. “Next-generation animation systems will definitely make last-gen games obsolete.”

Unfortunately, this steamy jungle romp remains a long ways off. (It doesn’t even have a title, remember? Don’t be surprised if we don’t see this one till well over a year.)



## 25 TIMESHIFT

XBOX360 • WJ Games • Aug. 2008

In this futuristic first-person shooter, you don't mess with time as a whole—you mess with time *around* you. That means shifting the rewind button doesn't reverse what you just did (like in *Prince of Persia*); instead, you just flip the live rocket back into your enemy's rocket-launcher barrel, and then shoot it with your super rifle, so it explodes in his face. It's all about finding clever ways to manipulate time to your advantage...

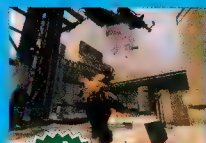


**cool factor**  
**TIME**  
**MANIPULATION**

## 24 HUXLEY

XBOX360 • Webrun • 2007

While *Quake* became an advanced warrior, and *Call of Duty 2* gave whetted gamers appetites for next-gen online warfare, they only skim the surface compared to what *Huxley* hopes to accomplish: massively multiplayer online first-person-shooting action. Think *Final Fantasy* *online*, but with out-of-control characters that pack heat for 100-on-100 battles.



**cool factor**  
**HUGE**  
**SHOOTOUTS**

## 23 HEAVY RAIN

PS3/XBOX360 • Quantic Dream • Fall 2008

In the style of Quantic's surprise hit *Indigo Prophecy* (PS2/XB), the story—not some slick lighting, mechanics, or online multiplayer mode—receives top billing here. But you won't get some weird *Matrix* plot twist like in the developer's last adventure game, *Heavy Rain* promises to be completely grounded in reality with a very emotional cast. But can the game get us grabbing for a Kleenex, too?



**cool factor**  
**THE**  
**NARRATIVE**



**■ Why are you crying?**  
You're the one with the freakin' gun.

## 22 EIGHT DAYS

PS3 • Sony • Jan. 2008



This game's gorgeous trailer inspoos like a Drury Hollywood blockbuster. Here it's the center of a desolate desert truck stop plays host to intense gunfights and fistcuffs. Then it gets blown up. Well, with killer pyrotechnics straight outta Jerry Bruckheimer flick. With the gameplay can match the visuals, expect box office gold.



**cool factor**  
**HOLLYWOOD**  
**ACTION**

## 21 THE CLUB

PS3/XBOX360 • Sega • 2007

Slow-footed shooter fans will need to train their trigger fingers for *The Club*'s fast-paced gameplay. You won't find any head-on cover either—each level is a gauntlet of link-the-most kills to create a chain of combos. The longer the link, the bigger your score, so it's up to you to make good use of your killing time.



**cool factor**  
**COMBO**  
**KILLIN'**

## 20 FRONTLINES: FUEL OF WAR

PS3/XBOX360 • THQ • Fall 2007

While *Frontlines* near-future war might bring a more evolutionary troop to the battlefield, they'll learn new tactics along the way, like calling in nuclear strikes! The game also taps into a more carnal instinct: the thrill of the thump-thump you get when running over friends with tanks... and jeeps... and Humvees. The big vehicle presence also does a small with remote-controlled cars and mechs.



**cool factor**  
**VEHICLE-**  
**FILLED**  
**BATTLEFIELD**

## 19 BULLY

PS2 • Rockstar • Fall 2006

The makers of grand theft *Auto* swap substitutes and car-jacking for wedgies and cutting class at this teenage school. Also, as it's controlled by your always-hungry multiple-venues-for-reaching-the-top-of-the-class. Need the secret pass word to a house on campus? Choice No. 1. Politely ask your fellow schoolmate. Choice No. 2: Give him a Swirly until he spills the beans. Yeah, we'd choose the latter 'ho.



**cool factor**  
**RULING THE**  
**SCHOOL**



# 15 LOST PLANET: EXTREME CONDITION

PS3 • EA GAMES • Spring 2008

Bygone eras may be long ago, but the world has become a more hostile place, enduring sub-zero temperatures. While you can't see them, a cold front has brought with it alien insects. But also the weather—your foe—filled with the bugs. In addition, you'll find out about the creature's natural history from a diary, an in-game diary page.



cool factor  
COLD PLAY



Besides bugs, you'll get into shoot-outs with the occasional mech. You can even hop in 'em yourself for some heavy duty firepower.

# 14 BROOKTOWN HIGH: SENIOR YEAR

PS2 • Electronic Arts • Spring 2008

do you like me?  yes  no

cool factor  
THE SCRIPT



Learning to get along is just one of the things you'll learn in this game. You'll also learn how to get along with your friends, and how to get along with your enemies. You'll also learn how to get along with your teachers, and how to get along with your parents. You'll also learn how to get along with your... well, everyone.

# 13 SINGSTAR

PS2 • Sony • Fall 2007

Whether you're a fan of the classic rock and roll, or you're a fan of the modern pop, Singstar has you covered. You can sing along to over 100 songs, and you can even record your own. You can also play with up to four friends, and you can even play with your dog. You can also play with your cat. You can also play with your... well, everyone.



cool factor  
SING TODAY'S HOTTEST SONGS

# 12 ELITE BEAT AGENTS

PS2 • Microsoft • Fall 2006

It's a new day in the world of Elite Beat Agents. The world is a better place, and the Elite Beat Agents are back. They're back to help you get through the day, and they're back to help you get through the night. They're back to help you get through the... well, everyone.

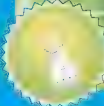


cool factor  
THE LAUGHS

# 11 Wii Sports

Wii • Microsoft • Fall 2006

Whether you're a fan of the classic sports, or you're a fan of the modern sports, Wii Sports has you covered. You can play over 20 different sports, and you can even play with your friends. You can also play with your dog. You can also play with your cat. You can also play with your... well, everyone.



cool factor  
NATURAL CONTROLS





# 10 SAINTS ROW

XB360 • THQ • August 2006



Looks like someone needs a little aloe vera.



cool factor  
ONLINE  
GANG FIGHTS





Heavenly Sword... or what some like to call Goddess of War.

# 9 HEAVENLY SWORD

PS3 | Xbox 360 | Fall 2009

Heavenly Sword isn't just another action game. It's a game that's designed to be a cinematic experience. The game's story is a masterpiece of storytelling, and the game's combat is a masterpiece of cinematic combat. The game's graphics are a masterpiece of graphics, and the game's sound is a masterpiece of sound. The game's overall experience is a masterpiece of gaming.



# 8 LOCOROCO

Wii | Xbox 360 | September 2009

Locoroco is a game that's designed to be a fun and relaxing experience. The game's story is a masterpiece of storytelling, and the game's combat is a masterpiece of cinematic combat. The game's graphics are a masterpiece of graphics, and the game's sound is a masterpiece of sound. The game's overall experience is a masterpiece of gaming.

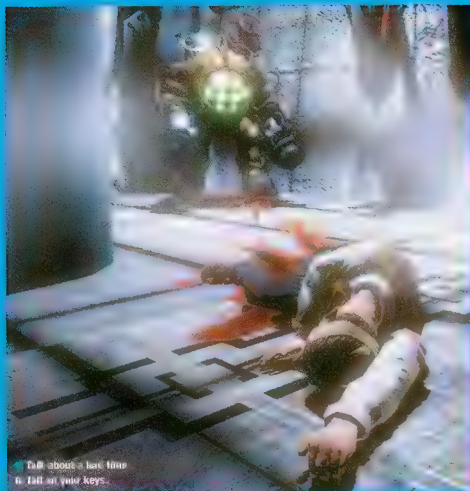


# 7 ASSASSIN'S CREED

PS3 | Xbox 360 | Spring 2007

Assassin's Creed is a game that's designed to be a fun and relaxing experience. The game's story is a masterpiece of storytelling, and the game's combat is a masterpiece of cinematic combat. The game's graphics are a masterpiece of graphics, and the game's sound is a masterpiece of sound. The game's overall experience is a masterpiece of gaming.





# 6



cool factor  
EERIE  
ATMOSPHERE

# BIOSHOCK

2008 • EA Games • Game 2007

When you're surrounded by enemies, you're in trouble. But in Bioshock, you're in a whole new world. The game is set in a dystopian future where the player is a genetically altered human who has been raised in a secret underground city. The game is a first-person shooter with a strong emphasis on environmental storytelling and player choice. The game is a masterpiece of game design and storytelling. The game is a must-play for anyone who loves a good story and a challenge. The game is a true work of art. The game is a masterpiece of game design and storytelling. The game is a must-play for anyone who loves a good story and a challenge. The game is a true work of art.

## Rebooting in Three...Two...One...

Tomb Raider did it—now can these franchises reinvent themselves?

### Shadowrun

**Last Seen:** In *Shadowrun* for the Super NES and Genesis. These were actually two different role-playing games, each with its own loyal fan base.

**Next Up:** Those who played the 16-bit games will hardly recognize this *Shadowrun*, a squad-based first-person shooter that's very online heavy. It hits the Xbox 360 in January.

**Progress Report:** This one sports some cool weapons and gadgets (like its glider wings), but the art style here is...well, U-G-L-Y.

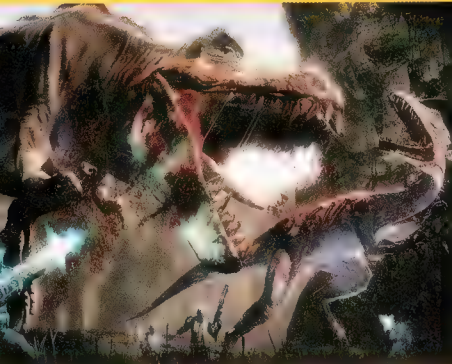


### Turok

**Last Seen:** In *Turok Evolution* (PS2/XB/GC), a laughable first-person shooter that gave us the Civil War general (and racist cyborg) Tobias Bruckner. EGM's adopted worst-games-of-the-year awards mascot.

**Next Up:** A more cinematic FPS (think *Half-Life 2*) for the PS3 and Xbox 360, due out during the fall of 2007.

**Progress Report:** Visually, next-gen *Turok* looks tight. But where's our main man Tobias? We're kidding...sort of.



### Golden Axe

**Last Seen:** In *Sega Classics Collection* (PS2), which included a full-on (albeit crappy) remake of the original beat-em-up.

**Next Up:** This *Golden Axe* (coming to the PS3 and Xbox 360 next year) changes gears and becomes an action-RPG.

**Progress Report:** Details are slim, but an early trailer did show sweet combat segments of characters riding on the backs of some beasts. >

# 5 RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

PS3 • Sony CE4 • November 2006

Dreaming up new and interesting topics for mowing down enemies has always been a specialty of developer Insomniac. Remember, these are the guys who, with their four *Ratchet & Clank* games (PS2), provided countless ways to blast foes into smithereens, not to mention the ability to transform them into chickens. *Resistance: Fall of Man*, the studio's sci-fi-rich first-person shooter for the PS3, follows the lumbax's lead in arming you with several unique, means-of-destruction...minus the whole turning-enemies-into-livestock part. "Our overall philosophy for weapons design and implementation remains essentially the same for both *Ratchet & Clank* and *Resistance*," says Insomniac President Ted Price. "Our goal is to make weapons that are at least to use and reuse by blending originality, strategy and ingenuity. There are a couple differences, though. In how we're approaching weapon design here. First, we're designing weapons that will accentuate some of the game's survival-horror elements—basically, the weapons are pretty brutal. Also, we're using our proprietary physics system to do some things we couldn't do in the *Ratchet & Clank* series. Take the game's Hedgehog grenade: Thanks to some fancy schmancy physics and collision tricks, the grenade's explosive spikes will pierce the environment's surrounding objects, which then react accordingly and correctly (explode, splinter, etc.).

While next-gen horsepower helps *Resistance* feel like a more reactive war zone, it also enables Insomniac's weapons manufacturers to get really creative when designing the multiple functions of these firearms. Price drives that point home as he describes the Bullseye, which definitely ain't your standard-issue assault rifle. "You can mark your target by pressing L1 on your controller," he says, "and then press R1 when you're ready to unleash a volley of bullets—no matter where your target tries to move in the battlefield. This is called tagging. In addition, you can create a swarm of bullets that essentially acts like a grenade and direct around a battlefield. You can detonate the trap by holding down L1, and when detonated, the swarm has a pretty big blast radius. It's a lot of fun to hide behind cover and set a swarm trap on a group of advancing badgles—then BLAM! This is appropriately called 'trapping,' and it's a very effective way to dispatch Chimera, the game's alien race." The Auger's another multifunctional toy in *Resistance*'s arsenal, which features normal rounds that will go right through any type of cover, while its alternative fire shoots out a shield that blocks incoming Chimera blasts yet allows yours to pass through.

And just imagine all the wrinkles these tricked-out bullet-sprayers will add to the game's 32-player online deathmatches. "We have fun-time multiplayer tests twice a week, and there's nothing more satisfying than managing to do one of our game testers and then bring them down with the Bullseye," says Price. "It's simply awesome in multiplayer." ▶



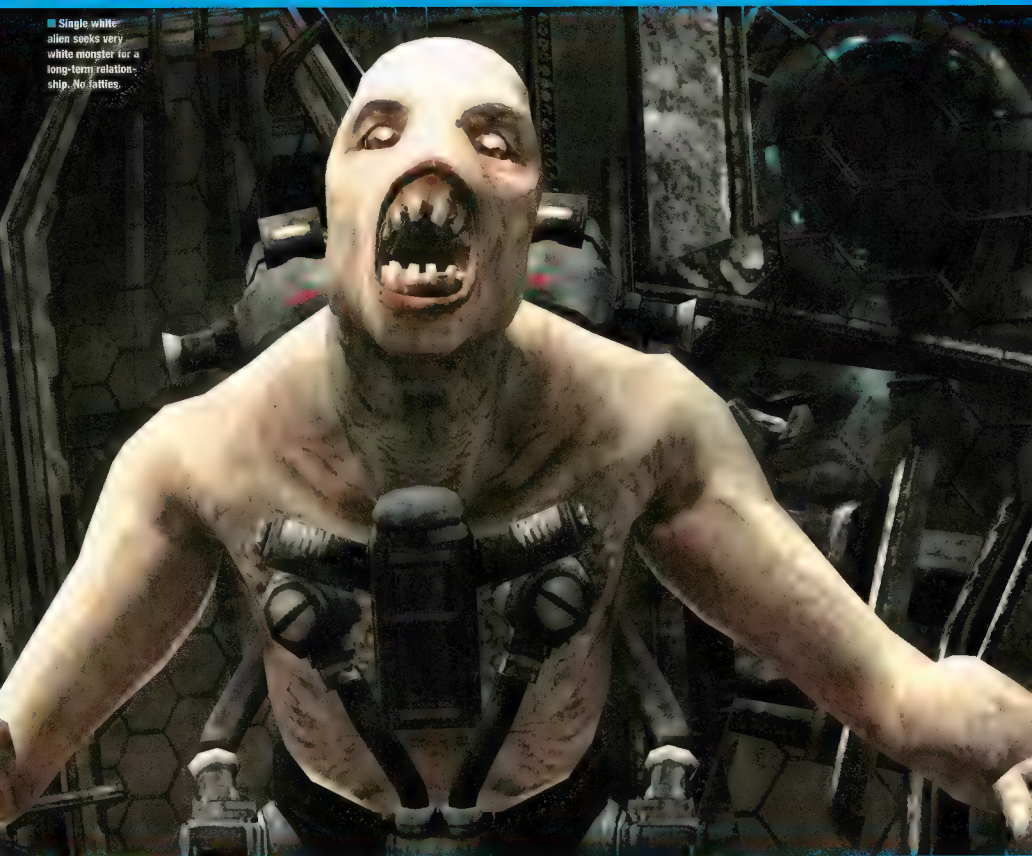
COOL FACTOR  
MULTIFUNCTIONAL  
WEAPONS



## Rewriting History

*Resistance*'s alternate take on the 1950s (according to this game's lore, the invasion of the Chimera alien race meant World War II never happened) also allows Insomniac to take liberties with their weapons tech. "You'll start the game with what resembles a Korean War-era assault rifle, but it also features a grenade launcher based on the real-life M203 as an alternative fire," says Price. "M203s weren't used in combat until the 1970s, but, through our version of history, certain tech advancements made these breakthroughs possible. As you progress through the game, you'll get a good sense of how the events and scientific progress leading up to July 11, 1951 changed the world as we know it."

■ Single white alien seeks very white monster for a long-term relationship. No fatties.





# Saints Row

Sinners Welcome

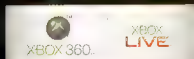
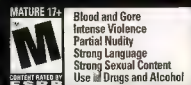
"If the Grand Theft Auto series lit a fire under the ass of the action genre, then Saint's Row burns down the whole damned house." -GamePro



Make it to the top and you'll have it all.  
Money, cars, women,  
and a bunch of people who want to kill you.



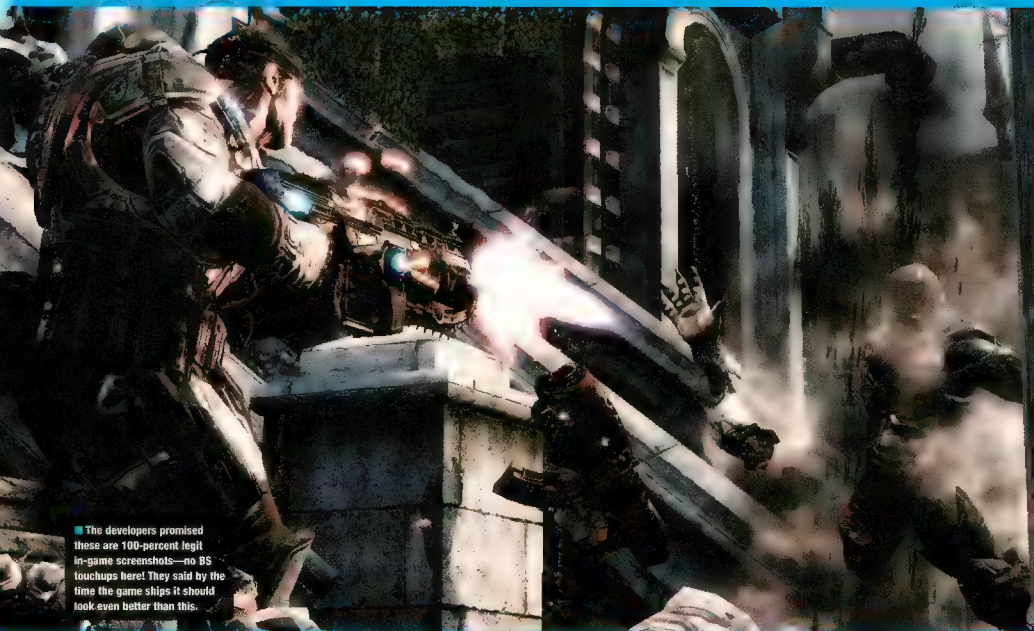
In stores August 29th



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



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■ The developers promised these are 100-percent legit in-game screenshots—no BS touchups here! They said by the time the game ships it should look even better than this.



■ *GOW's* graphics are extremely detailed. The incredible thing is that the game runs fairly smoothly, too.





# 2 GEARS OF WAR

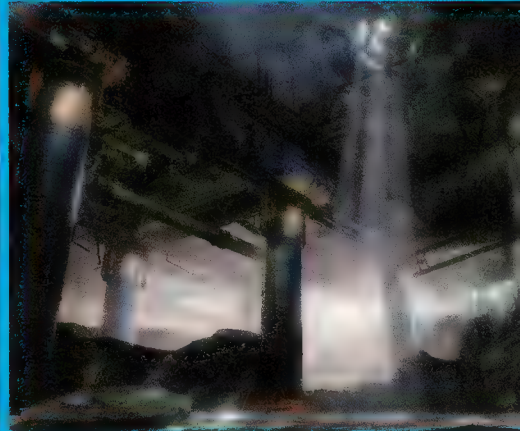


cool factor  
KICK-ASS  
GRAPHICS

XBOX360 ■ Microsoft ■ Fall 2006

Microsoft and Bungie had just released the Halo 3 trailer, yet everyone was gazing *Gears of War's* graphics at the past May's E3 videogame trade show. That's how you know you've got a hell of a nice sucker for a game. "From the start, the visuals in *Gears of War* have been incredibly important to the story and atmosphere we wanted to immerse the player in," says Jerry D'Flaherty, art director at developer Epic Games. "Charred landscapes, dusty, ruined cars, rubble-strewn streets, and all-overlaid things are really finished postapocalyptic. We fill *Gears*' world with a pure Earth scorched by its own inhabitants to deprive the invading Locust Horde aliens of its natural resources. Pretty grim, huh?" The "destroyed beauty" look of the environments came from a desire for two parts: to not just make levels that the player moved through, says D'Flaherty, "but to actually give the world and fiction a history and a sense that things have happened here long before you, the player, arrived on the scene, and more things will happen when you are gone. And in case you're distracted by all this 'destroyed beauty' eye candy, when prompted, you can hold down the F button to automatically track any scripted events happening in real time around you so you don't miss anything exciting—like those Locusts slowly chomping through the only door keeping them out of the room and you safe."

The game's beauty carries over to the living things, too. "Ruined human soldiers slant into walls to cover a duck and the stuff in motion and momentum that you don't see in most videogames. It's as if these moving images on your screen actually weigh 200 pounds each (maybe 100 with all that heavy-duty body armor). The aliens look equally terrific: wild, snarling muds and snake-like skin—Ariold Schwarzenegger doesn't know body-mother\*\*\*\*er until his peeples see these creeps. ▶





cool factor  
CO-OP  
COMBAT

# ARMY OF TWO

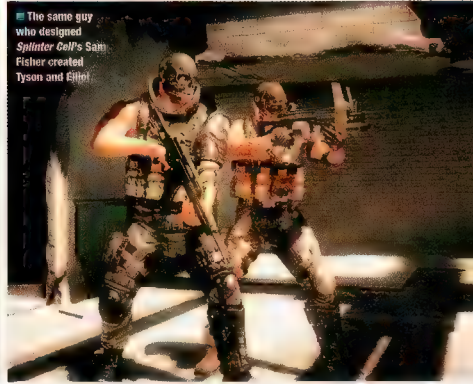
PS3/XB360 • EA Games • 2007



A game this gung-ho could only come from...French Canada? Tag along as we visit *Army of Two*'s makers at a Montreal mall (really). See developer interviews, game sequences, and more.



■ Need a lift? The game will pack lots of fun-for-two-players vehicles.



■ The same guy who designed *Splinter Cell's* Sam Fisher created *Tyson and Elliot*.

or a guy who could fit in as a cousin at a Terminator family reunion, the metal-masked mercenary sidekick in EA's ambitious *Army of Two* sure tries hard to be a real boy. He high-fives you when things go right. He flips you the bird when things go wrong. And when he's gotta go...well, he's gotta go. "In many games you see a character drink water, but then that guy never goes to pee," says Designer Vander Caballero. "In our game, you'll see him pee."

No, this isn't some untapped reservoir of the infamous "liquid A.I." hyped in EA's late-'90s sports games—it's just human nature calling in a unique co-op third-person shooter not due to hit the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 until sometime in 2007. *Army of Two*, which stars guns-for-hire chums Tyson Rios and Elliot Salem, revives a genre lain low since the heyday of *Contra* and *Double Dragon* and *Bad Dudes*: the two-buddy action game. You pick one character at the start of each mission; the computer or a second human player controls the other guy. This cooperative game-

play isn't tacked-on or a special mode. "In *Army of Two*, co-op *is* the game," says Senior Producer Reid Schneider.

It's a rare thing from EA: a try at a new franchise. And if the strictly cooperative play and partners with working bladders seem like new ground for a publisher that's taken fire for its lack of innovation, wait till you find out how you stanch your buddy's terminal bleeding (hint: a feminine-hygiene product is involved). Yes, the spirit of experimentation is in the air at EA's Montreal offices, established as a boutique studio charged with building new intellectual properties. Here, a team run by ex-Ubisoft *Splinter Cell* developers is building *Army of Two* with a staff of fresh-from-school artists and engineers. "Our average age is 25," says Schneider. "We didn't want people here who are jaded or are like, 'In my day, we did things such-and-such way.' We want people who are passionate about new ideas. Imagine what games like *Gran Turismo* did for racing and *Grand Theft Auto* did for open-world games. We want to rethink how people play co-op shooters."

## Dynamic duo

Everyone thought Caballero was crazy when he first pitched his conceit for reviving shot-to-hell heroes. "I was walking in the neighborhood [with another designer] thinking about it when, suddenly, it hit me: When people are dying, what do they do? They run from the light," says the imaginative Caballero (if you ever meet the guy, ask him about his game on suicide). A minigame was born: When characters get too shot up, they fall down, and it's up to the injured player to rapid-lap buttons to haul ass from a heavenly glow, while the other player moves the analog stick rhythmically to apply CPR. Both characters, whether one is controlled by a real player or not, need to cooperate to survive.

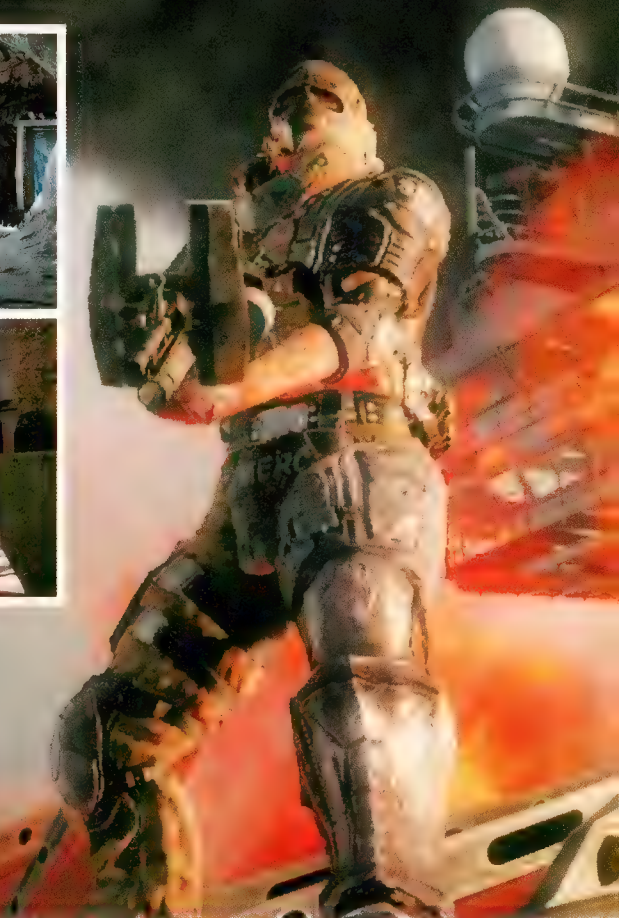
No one on the team was sold on this near-death gameplay experience at first. But Caballero has the advantage of working with an experimentation-friendly development tool called the white box, which lets him whip up working game scenarios—complete with primitive graphics and control schemes—in about a day and show them to the rest of the team

for approval. "We get ideas by failing a lot," Caballero says, adding that only about 20 percent of his white-box concepts make it to the game. "You should see the boiler room of what was cut."

We can only imagine, considering that one minigame that survived white-box scrutiny has you stuffing a tampon into your shot-up buddy's gushing wound. Plenty of other imaginative concepts survived, too. The characters can chuck ammo to each other when they're low, stand back to back to protect their vulnerable keisters while covering enemies in a 360-degree arc, help each other rappel down buildings, work together to knock over heavy tables and shove them along as portable cover, and carry each other if one is shot (the injured man can still shoot while hanging off the other guy's shoulder). Even standard co-op stuff like sniping as a team or using one player to boost another to a second floor has been lived over. While lifting your partner over a wall, for example, you can use the analog stick to boost him high enough to shoot enemies, thus clearing the way, or ➤



■ The scary masks are based on real military tech. You won't be able to customize the armor, but you will see Tyson and Elliot's faces between ops.



► lower him a bit to give him cover from their returning fire.

These actions aren't optional. Everything in *Army of Two*, from the environments and their shoals of physics-based obstacles to its small army of enemies (up to 50 on screen at once) has been designed to force you to work with your partner—or else. "You should not be able to complete this game just doing your own thing," says Schneider. "If you can, then we haven't done our job."

### Oh, the humanity

Getting your partner to do what you want is the simplest enough—just ask him. All the game's actions are contextual, displaying on a pop-up menu when conditions are right. If you see the option, just say it into

the microphone and your A.I. partner will respond accordingly, kicking the game into the appropriate mode. "The idea is that it'll be hard to tell the difference between playing with a human player or with A.I.," says Schneider, adding that the game's extensive dialogue system borrows from the color-commentary subprograms in EA's sports games. In other words, these guys are chatty—and it's up to you to hold up your end of the conversation. We watched the player carry on conversations with his partner, sparking dialogue straight out of a buddy-cop flick. "What do you think this is, an action movie?" the other character barked when ordered to go into defensive back-to-back mode.

Let's hope the Montreal team resists the urge to insert any "I'm getting too old

for this s\*\*\*\*" quips. Just as worrying is whether the single-player game will get repetitive, with your A.I. partner spitting out the same lines like a talking G.I. Joe doll with his string pulled. The team, fortunately, is aware of this potential snafu. "When you play a game and hear the same line twice," says Caballero, "you lose the sense of reality. But [with] behaviors and action, you can see the same action 300 times and not get bored of it. So we're trying to use more animation instead of voiceovers to avoid repetition."

It's something that becomes more clear when you realize your A.I. compadre has a memory—he tracks the successes and failures of your actions. He'll out-and-out refuse orders to commands that didn't lead to success in the past. "Maybe you'll

tell the A.I. to take point in clearing a room," says Designer Yan P  pin, "but the last time he went in first, he got gunned down while you ran away. This time, he'll be like, 'No, no, no—I'll go in behind you.'"

The more you piss off your partner, the less likely he'll follow your orders in the future. And the team is filling the game with lots of opportunities to get on your partner's bad side. Peppering him with friendly fire is the obvious way to do it (and earn a little retaliation in the process). You can bring the roof down on the guy if he happens to stand beneath a crumbling ceiling. And if you really want to push his buttons, you can go beyond these pranks and engage in atrocities that would needle even the most bloodthirsty soldier's conscience. In *Army of Two*, your partner ►




## Two Guys Walk into a War

Call *Army of Two*'s two heroes "mercenaries" at your peril. Tyson and Elliot are actually "contractors" in a private military corporation (PMC), a company hired as security or to supplement government military forces. And if you've watched the news lately (or seen the trailer for *Metal Gear Solid 4* for PS3), you'll know that PMCs are so hot right now. "They're not standard military like everyone else," says Designer Chris Ferriera. "They don't have to salute the general. Sometimes they show up on the battlefield with a baseball cap, sports jersey, camo pants, and their guns all taped together."

The *Army of Two* team consulted their own PMC contractor, a baby-faced former Navy SEAL who never sits with his back to a door and is full of stories from the world of private warcraft. He talks about custom-armored Humvees with their ignitions ripped out and replaced with big red "START" buttons. ("In a firefight," he told the team, "you never want to hunt for your keys.") Many of his stories have made it into the game. The tampon idea—that's his.

But as much as the *Army of Two* team is excited about incorporating such stranger-than-fiction scenarios, they're even more into the idea of the cut-throat corporate philosophy behind the PMC—that these increasingly ubiquitous companies work for the highest bidder. "You may have one mission where you're supposed to save a hostage," says Ferriera. "But in the next [mission], your client changes—and now it's your job to assassinate that guy." If it all sounds like the kind of combat that could spark political debate, the team—which is setting part of the game in Afghanistan—says "bring it on." "When people talk about Halliburton, which was Dick Cheney's former company, this is not a company that just provides toilet supplies and food for troops," says Senior Producer Reid Schneider. "This is a company where one of their biggest businesses is private military services. I mean, we're not in the business of edutainment; [*Army of Two*] is strictly an entertainment product. But if we make people get online and do some research, then the team thinks that's pretty cool."

And if you ever meet a real PMC trooper, don't call him a mercenary. "They refer to themselves as contractors," says Schneider. Trust us—you don't want to make these guys angry.



PMC soldiers do the dirty jobs the regular military won't—or can't—do.



■ **Pleasure cruise:** To survive these heaving seas (the best water effects we've ever seen), all you have to do is sink that carrier. Simple.



■ **A little help:** After your buddy gives you a boost, it's your job to haul him up.

▶ has a heart. "If I'm playing the human player and I shoot this dog," Caballero explains, showing us another white-box scenario featuring a bulldog, "[my partner] will go over to the dog, bend over it, show compassion, and he won't want to cooperate anymore. You're a dog-killer. He'll call you an a\*\*hole. He'll punch you in the face and punish you for your actions."

Earning your buddy's trust again, fortunately, doesn't take much effort. Saving his bacon helps. He'll even offer *Punk'd*-style payback to settle old scores. At one point in the demo, we saw our PC'ed partner fall in battle. Once we leaned over his prone body to revive him, he kicked us and started cracking up, the faker. And once you're both on good terms again, it's back to lots of manly high-fiving, chest-bumping, and rump-pating. Your partner will even act as a guide in the largely nonlinear levels: "If a player doesn't know what to do, the A.I. will take the lead," says Designer Chris Ferreira. "If the player is running and gunning and making things happen, the A.I. will be more submissive and let the player take the lead."

**It takes two to kill a tango**

A second player can join *Army of Two* at any time—even right in the middle of a ▶

■ **Save yourselves:** It's game over if either guy dies—so run from that damn tight, soldier!



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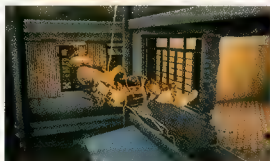


■ The forklift lost its innocence forever when the duo found the heavy machine gun.

## Tickets to the Gun Show

*Army of Two's* two bad dudes aren't in it for the glory or the honor or the thrill of combat. They're here for the bling. "It's like an episode of *Saddam Hussein's Pimpin'*," Senior Producer Reid Schneider says of the game's weapon-customization mode, a soldier of fortune's wet dream.

Once players earn cash from successful missions (rewards they can boost by completing submissions), they can go on a spree at various arms suppliers across the globe. Here they "Frankenstein" together weapons you'd never see issued in the regular military. Want to snipe while keeping the ability to do up-close damage and breach doors? Add a shotgun to your sniper rifle. Why not bolt on a grenade launcher and a bulletproof shield while you're at it? And when you're really ready to show off to other online players, it's time to chrome that monster out. "The nice thing is you can exchange weapons with the other player in the game so you can show off your custom guns," says Designer Chris Ferriera. "But don't worry—you always get your weapons back at the end of the mission."



■ Falling for each other: The hyperreal physics mean two-man rappelling (one guy lowers, the other busts through windows) takes coordination.


► mission—and from anywhere, whether it's across the Internet or across the couch. Entering players immediately assume the role of your partner, with the game jumping into spitscreen if you're both on the same system. But even if both players are connected via the Net, with their own TVs and chatting via headsets, *Army of Two* will keep a spitscreen perspective to help them keep track of each other. Take the sniper mode, which players can enter together if they both have the right rifles. It splits the screen into three boxes: two for each shooter's sniper scopes, and a third showing the whole scene. "What's cool about that is you'll be on your couch

and I'll be on my couch in different homes," says Ferriera, "and I can actually see what you're aiming at. And if I have a headset, I can be like, 'No, no, no, dude—don't shoot that guy. I got him.'"

Again, this game is all about teamwork, with missions that demand precise coordination to pull off successfully (for instance, you might have to snipe two guards simultaneously, or else one of them will alert more goons). But as we watch Tyson and Elliot buckled together groin-to-buttocks in a tandem parachute, slapping each other's butts in moments of glory, and rubbing suntan lotion on each other's backs (OK, we made that last one up), we

can't help but pick up a certain vibe from these manly men.

If we ask, will the game's makers tell? "These are tough military guys—and for us, there's nothing homoerotic about it," says Schneider, who adds that Tyson and Elliot have families and love interests in the game. "You need two people to cooperate. If you think of movies like *Lethal Weapon* or *Tango & Cash*, there are no overtones at all. For us, we need to make people think about how to play games differently. It's the core for what *Army of Two* is all about."

OK, but now we really want to see that blooper reel. 

■ Heat of battle: Are these guys more than friends? No, the game's makers say. Please stop asking.





# 1UP RADIO



**Want to hear what our editors are excited about before your next issue arrives?**

Tune in to 1UP Radio where the editors of 1UP, Electronic Gaming Monthly, Computer Gaming World, and the Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine sound off on various topics each week. Each episode is filled with juicy tidbits and behind-the-scenes info that we couldn't fit in the pages of this magazine.

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# review crew

sadly, this cave troll is the most attractive thing about reviews this month

## THIS MONTH IN REVIEWS...

**A**s you check out the Reviews section this month, you may notice something a little funny...and no, I'm not talking about what is arguably the greatest single page in Reviews history, the once-in-a-lifetime combo of *Ruff Trigger* and *Crusty Demons* on page 90. I'm referring to the Game of the Month. As you can see, Xbox 360 real-time strategy game *The Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle-earth II* nabbed GOTM honors. But flipping through the rest of the section, all you math geeks out there might realize that PSP RPG *Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth* has the same average score as *BFME2*. Here's the thing, *Pointdexer*: While *BFME2* earned its honors with all "good" scores of 7 or above, *Lenneth* had a "fair" 6.5 among its verdicts, and we don't like the idea of a game that isn't strongly recommended by all three reviewers being honored thusly (and we've changed the GOTM definition to say as such). Now, let's hope for no more months with this even being an issue.

OK, I'm off the soapbox. Resume laughing at the *Crusty Trigger* thing.  
—Greg Ford, Reviews Editor



### GAME OF THE MONTH

# LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH II

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# THE REVIEW CREW

The best in the business

## DAN "SHOE" NSU • Editor-in-Chief

Now that Shoe's done beating DS strategy games *Age of Empires* and *Advance Wars*, he's feeling a big void in his life. Oh, wait... *Field Commander* (PSP), here he comes!

**Now Playing:** *Gun, Field Commander, LOTR: The Battle for Middle-earth II*  
**Blog:** [egmshoe.TUP.com](#)



## SHANE BETTENHAUSEN • Exec. Editor

This summer totally sucks for new games, so Shane's spending the warm months beating Greg Ford at classic fighting games and yelling at misguided fools on EGM podcasts.

**Now Playing:** *Street Fighter Alpha 2, Soul Calibur III, Guitar Hero II*  
**Blog:** [egmshane.TUP.com](#)



## JENNIFER TSAO • Managing Editor

This time of year is more about previews than reviews, so Jen took advantage of the lull to get in some good practice time on *Guitar Hero*—the preview demo of GH2 should show up any day now....

**Now playing:** *New Super Mario Bros., Guitar Hero*  
**Blog:** [egmjennifer.TUP.com](#)



## CRISPIN BOYER • Senior Editor

Cris is digging into his collection to survive the summer drought. Because as fun as new releases *Crusty Demons* and *Freedom Wings* might sound...wait, who are we kidding?

**Now Playing:** *Shadow of the Colossus, Mega Man Anniversary Collection*  
**Blog:** [egmcrispin.TUP.com](#)



## BRYAN INTARH • Previews Editor

Bryan is an Ohio State fan. Shoe bleeds Michigan maize and blue. When Bryan matched the two schools in NCAA Football 07, the Buckeyes came out victorious, 43-3. Yeah, that sounds about right.

**Now Playing:** *NCAA Football 07, Okami*  
**Blog:** [egmbryan.TUP.com](#)



## GREG FORD • Reviews Editor

Wait, it's summer the season for weddings or the season for kicking Shane's ass all *Street Fighter II*? One look at Ford's face should answer that question.

**Now Playing:** *New Super Mario Bros., Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter, Perfect Dark Zero*  
**Blog:** [egmford.TUP.com](#)



## MICHAEL DONAHUE • News/Features Ed.

Reviewing *Point Blank DS* this month reminded Michael how much he misses living in Texas. California is cool, but not when it comes to guns. Is there no justice?

**Now Playing:** *Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow, Point Blank 2*  
**Blog:** [egmikid.TUP.com](#)



## JAY FRECHETTE • Editorial Intern

All the summer coxyct inspired games Jay had to play this month inspired him to research cloning. His mission: to make a cheaper, mediocre version of himself.

**Now Playing:** *Geometry Wars, LOTR: Battle for Middle-earth II*  
**Blog:** [egmjay.TUP.com](#)



## MARK MACDONALD • Editor-at-Large

With the drought this month of exciting electronic games, Mark was reduced to "unplugged" diversions—like that old standby, Master Chief vs. Van Helsing's Dracula.

**Now Playing:** *New Super Mario Bros., Geometry Wars (yes, still)*  
**Blog:** [egmmark.TUP.com](#)



## DEMIAN LINN • Staff Reviewer

Reviews Editor Greg Ford played a dastardly trick, assigning Demian two flying games—both with painful PPG trappings! Must...level up...G-Resist stat...aaargh

**Now Playing:** *New Super Mario Bros., World of Warcraft (still)*  
**Blog:** [egmdemian.TUP.com](#)



## ROBERT ASHLEY • Staff Reviewer

Robert, also from Texas, had a coming-of-age moment with Michael this month in an intense, "dang varmint"-filled *Point Blank* match. Robert won and was last seen riding a cable car into the sunset.

**Now Playing:** *New Super Mario Bros., Point Blank 2*  
**Blog:** [robertashley.TUP.com](#)



## PATRICK MAURO • Staff Reviewer

This syndicated satellite-radio guy brought the Xbox 360 into the bedroom at the minor expense of marital harmony, but damn, *NCAA Football 07* looks sweet on the system.

**Now Playing:** *NCAA Football 07, MVP Baseball 2005, Gun*  
**Blog:** Never



## GREG SEWART • Staff Reviewer

With the high price of the upcoming PlayStation 3 (\$600!), Sewart had to inform his wife-to-be that they wouldn't be able to buy a house after all. Seriously, he has his priorities, people!

**Now Playing:** *Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake, Uno*  
**Blog:** [stewy.TUP.com](#)



## THE RATING SYSTEM & AWARDS

**10-7**  
**GOOD**

**6.5-5**  
**FAIR**

**4.5-0**  
**BAD**



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



**Gold**  
For games with an average score of 9.0 or higher.



**Silver**  
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**STAR OF THE MONTH**  
The highest-scoring game with unanimously "good" scores.



**SHAME OF THE MONTH**  
The lowest-rated game with unanimously "bad" scores.

**ESRB Ratings** The ESRB's game ratings range from "Everyone" to "Adults Only." Visit [www.esrb.org](#) for the full lowdown.



• **TUP.COM** are our partners in crime when the just-regular Review Crew won't do. Make sure to check out their extended reviews at [www.TUP.com](#)

Xbox 360

# NCAA FOOTBALL 07

## No BCS bowl this year

**BRYAN:** Some say that football season starts with the release of a new *Madden*, but that's changed in recent years—the tremendous performance of EA's *NCAA Football* franchise has gotten people now thinking pigskin a month earlier. So does this next-gen debut maintain the series' stellar winning tradition? *Not so fast, my friend.*

*NCAA 07* still plays really solid (you can actually block kicks now) and is the best-looking *NCAA* game yet—from the players to the picture-perfect stadiums, *NCAA Football* is starting to outshine Johnny Ballgame's creation. And for those who require depth, you'll definitely dig the robust 60-year dynasty mode (complete with in-season recruiting) and the minigames (Option Dash—now with multipliers for moves like fake pitches—being my fave).

Yet what boggles my sports-mind is that the 360 version—which, remember, costs \$10 extra—doesn't include all of the new gameplay features of the uglier *NCAAs* (see sidebar). Can't institute the current-gen's off-field stuff in your first year on a new machine? I K,

but when you start cutting corners between the goalposts, that's when I have a problem... Especially when your biggest gameplay change-up in *07*, a momentum-meter that's supposed to give you more opportunities for making big plays, might as well not even exist—it's not like you can ever tell if it's working or not.

**PATRICK M:** The crisp October afternoon in Morgantown, WV, turns from dusk to night with beautiful next-gen accuracy over the course of four quarters as my killer quarterback/running back combo options its way to over 600 total yards—another easy Mountaineer win for me. Every game of *NCAA 07* looks great on the 360, but every game also feels skewed toward offense.

That's OK, because it delivers an extremely fun grid-iron experience, especially head-to-head. However, it's hard not to look at all those features on the current-gen version—monster playbooks, Campus Legend mode, trick plays, special-teams tweaks—and wonder why a foot-

ball game coming one generation later, *Madden* on 360 doesn't have what you'll find on the PS2 or Xbox. Still, *07* is my favorite 360 sports game so far.

**TUP.COM—GARNETT:** I appreciate college football's storied past of miraculous, game-changing plays, but when they happen every game, as they did during my playtesting, they don't feel so legendary—they feel staged and annoying. If the ebb and flow of momentum actually mattered, it would've made more sense, but it doesn't. Like Bryan, I saw no perceivable relationship between a team's mo' (regardless of what the new meter read) and being able to pull off a big play.

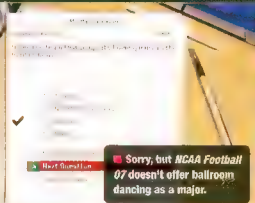
Other loose ends, like iffy collision detection that turns inside runs into a mash-up of bodies and brings down ball carriers without wrap-up animations, left me considering benching this in favor of the current-gen version. It plays a good game of ball, though, thanks to the solid controls and return to a more traditional default camera angle.

### The Returning Letterman

Just because next-gen *NCAA* is in the spotlight doesn't mean EA neglected its current-gen diehards. Actually, the PS2 and Xbox versions offer way more both on and off the field. On special teams, the camera now shifts to the back of your selected defensive player, giving you a much better perspective for blocking field goals and punts. And on kickoff returns, the camera

zooms in (a bit too much), making the run to daylight more intense.

Campus Legend replaces Race for the Heisman as the main single-player mode, where you'll also be tasked with selecting a major and taking real exams. If you perform well on these tests, your created player will actually receive a slight stat boost. See, studying can pay off.



**Good:** Sweet-looking players and stadiums

**Bad:** Lacks some of the current-gen's on-field features

**Announcer Lee Corso:** Sounding a bit crazier every year



THE VERDICTS  
(OUT OF 10)

7.0

BRYAN

7.5

PATRICK M.

7.0

GARNETT

Publisher: EA Sports  
Developer: EA Tiburon  
Platform: PS2, Xbox, Xbox 360  
ESRB: Everyone

www.easports.com



## Road Game

*NCAA Football* takes to its first season on the PSP, and it's a winning one. Aside from the expected visual downgrade (though it still looks quite pretty for a handheld game), *07* plays much like the console games and includes a surprisingly deep dynasty mode. This one even has all the new on-field tricks of the PS2 and Xbox editions. Take that, next gen!



PS2/XB

## NFL HEAD COACH

One season in—and already on the hot seat

It's no secret that EA forked over a ton of dough for the exclusive National Football League license. And now the publisher hopes to maximize that huge investment with yet another gridiron sim, *NFL Head Coach*. *EGM* Previews Editor Bryan Iltihar and *1UP.com* News Editor Luke Smith discuss how, even after one year, this *Coach* should be fired.

**BRYAN:** Now I know why Pittsburgh Steelers headman Bill Cowher (the game's cover art coach) always has such a pissed-off look on his face—being a pro football coach seems like absolute hell.

**LUKE:** You don't think it's because he actually tried to play *NFL Head Coach*? Admittedly, I was the one in the office who wanted to like this game. I'm a stat whore, so I thought it'd be fun to customize my team from the ground up, deal with the coaching staff, re-sign players, recruit players, and so on. Well, guess what? I was wrong.

**BRYAN:** Dead wrong. Even after just a few tries at negotiating contracts through the game's mind-numbing dialogue trees (I haven't seen a user interface this clunky and awkward in a long time), I was more than ready to hang up my whistle and clipboard.

**LUKE:** It gets to the point where you're interviewing coaches (like my offensive-line coach who had a rating equivalent to a backup kicker from Alcorn State entering the draft), and you just start hitting, "Yes, I'll pay you that. Whatever you want. Fine. Is this over?" Oh,

and how can I forget all of the loading screens...?

**BRYAN:** Seriously, how can a conversation sim have so many freakin' loading sequences? And another thing: The off-season lasts way too long; I'm not sure many players will have the patience (or time) to make it to training camp, let alone the start of the season.

**LUKE:** That might just be the game's biggest problem.

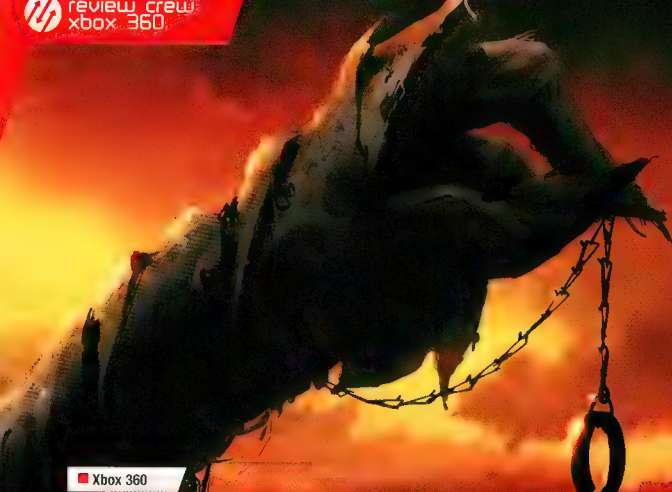
**BRYAN:** How do you think *NFL Head Coach* performs on game day?

**LUKE:** Coaching on the field (remember, you're not actually controlling the guys on the field like you do in *Madden*) is frustrating, because instead of coaching, it turns into a battle of playing politics so you don't hurt your coordinators' feelings. Someday, I don't think that former Dallas Cowboys coach Jimmy Johnson was concerned with how his offensive guru, Norv Turner, felt after the game.

**BRYAN:** I did, though, like now the playbooks were organized. It was nice to see what the best plays were for certain situations like short-yardage and third-and-long.

**LUKE:** So we both agree that *NFL Head Coach* isn't too appealing as a stand-alone product. But would you like to see this as a mode in *Madden*?

**BRYAN:** No way! *Madden's* dynasty and Superstar modes are already deep enough. Let's keep the dialogue trees in role-playing fantasyland and away from the gridiron. ☹



Xbox 360

# THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH II

## One joypad to control them all

**SHOE:** In the war to find/get rid of that shiny preciousss thing, you can pick up a sword/bow/ax in your typical *Lord of the Rings* videogame—or you can pick up entire armies. *Battle for Middle-earth II* lets you create throngs of elven archers, dwarven axmen, rock-throwing cave trolls, human cavalry, Uruk warriors, and more to clash on ancient battlefields. It's a tad more epic than the whole scooping-water-out-of-the-ocean-with-a-spoon thing when you're sticking your blade in one goblin at a time....

But, as in any real-time strategy game, before you get your troops, you first have to collect resources and construct production buildings. It's not a complicated process, although *BFME2* seems to assume its players have seen some RTS action in the past. Within the first few missions, you're already managing multiple menus, heroes, units, buildings, and powers, and you can't slow down the game to think or breathe. The tutorials, as helpful as they are, don't really prepare newbies properly for army-commander duties in Middle-earth. Veterans, however, won't have any problems with the campaign.

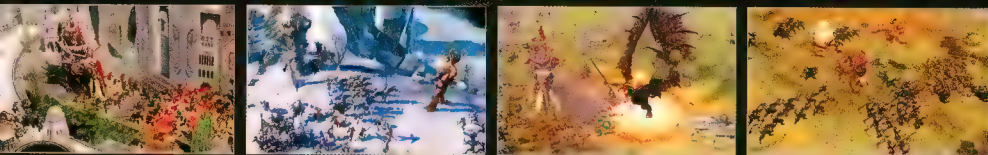
When everything starts kicking in—the controller shortcuts, unit abilities and weaknesses, what buildings produce what, etc.—you can start appreciating all that's gone into this game. The battles don't take place on generic tiled

landscapes. Rather, each campaign mission plays out in wonderfully designed stages created specifically to capture your imagination: Cities shine with waterfalls and statues, docks burn from naval bombardment, and the fortress of Dol Guldur intimidates with its skyscraping towers and obsidian walls. The different factions (Sengard, elves, goblins, etc.) offer variety in units, buildings, and heroes, but not so much that it overcomplicates gameplay. And the corpses should be piling up plenty on Xbox Live: Multiplayer offers lots of maps, a couple of first-person shooter-influenced modes (see sidebar), and generally smooth play (it only crashed on us once during our playtesting), though the four-player cap and inability to team up against CPU opponents kinda stinks of dwarf breath.

**JAY:** Though Patrick may feel otherwise, I gotta say I think EA did a commendable job adapting the complicated controls of this keyboard-first game to the tight quarters of the 360 controller. In mere minutes I was managing resources and calling out orders with ease. So it wasn't the controls that made this game hard to play—it was the resolution, icons, percentage numbers, and other onscreen displays are tiny, which leads to big frustration when you're trying to set up your base. This also has an effect on your ability

to distinguish who's who among your units—expect a lot of zooming in to make sure you've selected the archers, not the swordsmen, and zooming out to issue the attack or new position command. But I do love that, instead of pushing you through the narrative of the books and movies (again), the campaign parallels those events by focusing on the obscure War to the North, explaining why the elves and dwarves were missing in action—a treat for any Tolkien nerd.

**TURBOW—PATRICK J:** For years it's been said that console controllers can't handle PC-friendly RTS games all that well. With *BFME2*, EA makes a noble effort to buck this trend with the 360 controller, but the game has way too much to do and not enough buttons to work with (sorry, Jay). *BFME2*'s Xbox-level graphics also hurt, and the entertaining, *Risk*-esque War of the Ring mode from the PC version is gone, so single-player just isn't as fulfilling (though I can't say I miss that mode's dull multiplayer variant). But while the solo campaigns offer familiar RTS missions, the game presents them with a very solid eye for the Tolkien feel—what can I say, it's fun to crush Rivendell. Also, multiplayer features a nice stew of achievement-friendly Live modes, which play into the best reason to get this version: to have an achievement list that reads like Gandalf's résumé.



**Good:** Console-friendly controls, epic *LOTR* atmosphere  
**Bad:** No multiplayer versus CPU, no speed settings  
**Fun:** Squishing hobbits

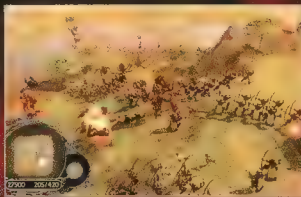


THE VERDICTS  
OUT OF 10

8.0	7.5	7.0
SHOE	JAY	PATRICK J.

Publisher: Electronic Arts  
Developer: EALA  
Players: 1 (2-4 online)  
ESRB: Teen

www.lfm2.ea.com



A huge cast of empowered heroes and villains fight alongside your troops from all-day Legolas to the always-on-line Nazgûl.

## Tolkien Nerd Service: Characters and places you won't find in the movies



**Thranduil:** The king of the Mirkwood elves, Thranduil is one of the major heroes that you take control of in the campaign for the side of good. He's also the father of Middle-earth's biggest heart-breaker, Legolas.



**Tom Bombadil:** The mythology's enigmatic, superpowerful, carefree, highly popular character can be summoned to cause massive damage to buildings—or anything else in his path—all while dancing and singing a merry song.



**Gimli:** This dwarf—a stocky powerhouse of a fighter—plays a major role in the defense against the first wave of goblin attacks. He also happens to be the papa of the Fellowship's lone dwarven representative, Gimli.



**City of Dale:** Located in the shadows of Lonely Mountain, Dale is a key location in the prequel to the *Lord of the Rings* series, *The Hobbit*. It looks awesome—and is one of the best levels in the campaign.



**Mirkwood:** Fans will remember reading in *The Hobbit* about Bilbo and the dwarves traversing this spider-infested forest on their way to defeat the dragon Smaug. It sets the stage for the final battle in the game.

### Battle for Online Supremacy

Besides participating in your status-quo team battles or free-for-alls, you can try out these modes on Xbox Live, some of which were inspired by first-person shooters:

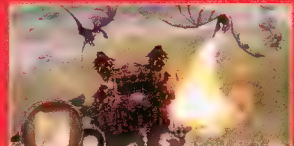
**King of the Hill:** Find, hold on to, and defend the designated building at the center of the map the longest.

**Capture and Hold:** Like King of the Hill, except with multiple buildings. Sorter like Halo 2's "Grab."

**Resource Race:** Be the first to reach the target amount of gold. Do you go conservative and save, or do you buy armies to take out your foes while they're sitting there being conservative and saving money?

**Hero vs. Hero:** Instead of building structures and armies, just take four heroes around the map to fight your oppo-

nents, four heroes, it sounds lame, but check if you can't fight random map creatures by level 10 or to collect gold that you can use to revive fallen heroes. Whoever has the highest level heroes at the end of the time limit wins.



Folks who proddered *BFME2* got three exclusive skirmish/multiplayer maps, which will eventually be available for everyone else in purchase on Xbox Live Marketplace.

# ONE OF THE TOP FIVE GAME-DEGREE PROGRAMS

Electronic Gaming Monthly



Student Artwork  
Francisco Cruz

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■ These hulking hounds are torture approved.

■ Xbox 360

@ONLINE

# OVER G FIGHTERS

Jet-fragged



■ The game's online multiplayer modes mostly have players shooting each other down from 20 miles apart.

**Good:** Realistic dogfighting for once  
**Bad:** Goes from easy to hard at Mach 3  
**Not Much Help:** The game's crappy manual

**CRISPIN:** It's a type of console game so rare, I'd almost classify it as an unidentified flying object: the realistic jet-combat sim. In *Over G Fighters*, your supersonic aircraft doesn't carry hundreds of missiles, and squeezing your gun trigger depletes ammo in five seconds flat. You'll need to cycle to the right weapons mode in the accurately rendered cockpits (with working gauges, even). And once a missile smells your afterburners, chances are you're going down.

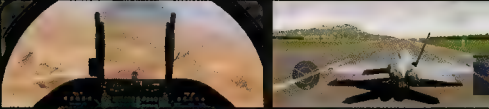
Now, you won't actually learn enough during the game's 20 missions to earn your wings in real life (you don't have to fiddle with flap settings or navigation vectors as in more true-to-life PC sims). But the realism here is refreshing—many console jet games may look snazzier (I'd swear this thing is an Xbox 1 title), but they deliver the same light-flight thrills over and over. Unfortunately, the *Over G* experience turns turbulent about halfway into the game, with a sortie that throws so many fighters at you that it's more like a suicide mission. Only players with a *Top Gun* level of dedication will persevere. Everyone else will start looking for the eject button.

**SHARKEY:** Pacing, people! *Over G* totally doesn't have it. One stage will be over after you drop just a couple bogeys. Another—a dreaded escort mission—may take 15 to

20 minutes before you fall and wonder, "Who decided not to implement reasonable save points?" Because I would like that person's contact information.

Crispin says *Over G* is pretty simmy for a console flyer, and I'll take his flight-stick-and-rudder-fig-owning word for it. I can't complain about the flight dynamics (the "arcade" setting is unplayable, though; rather, un straight to "real"), but the way enemies suddenly spawn one mile out and how I sometimes had to swap from missiles to guns to missiles again to force a target lock? Didn't like those parts so much.

**UPCOM—SHARKEY:** It's hard to tell who this game is for. Serious airplane nuts—and I mean the guys with fetishistic posters of F-14s in flight on the wall above their bed—won't find it hardcore enough. *Over G* just doesn't have the insane attention to details, physics, and controls found in serious flight sims. For everyone else, it's just realistic enough to be no damn fun. Dogfights, like the real ones, are usually over in seconds, long before the enemy even reaches visual range. Also, you'll spend more time in many missions taxiing (which is skippable) and taking off than fighting bad guys. It's just a final nail in the coffin that, graphically, you won't find much here that couldn't have been pulled off on a current-gen console.



THE VERDICTS  
ROBERT 6.0  
MARK 5.0  
PATRICK J. 8.0

CRISPIN 5.0  
DEMIAN 5.0  
SHARKEY 8.0

Publisher: Ubisoft  
Developer: Talto  
Players: 1 (2-8 online)  
ESRB: Teen  
www.ubisoft.com

■ Xbox 360

@ONLINE

# CHROMEHOUNDS

Feels a little rusty

**Good:** Flattening entire neighborhoods with pyrotechnic might  
**Bad:** Trekking over miles of empty countryside at a snail's pace  
**Too Real:** Having trouble distinguishing between friends and foes



**ROBERT:** Attention, citizens of the present: In the event of a dystopian future, please don't invent walking robot tanks. I've driven them, fired their weapons, and tested their Big Gulp cupholders, and I can say, with authority, that current methods of killing your fellow man are way more fun. Jets, machine guns, grenades—hell, even trench warfare with rusty bayonets is more entertaining. How can I speak so authoritatively about "mechs," as the *otaku* among us call them? *ChromeHounds*—a mech-building/shooter/strategy affair—treats the subject with a ridiculous amount of realism. For example, the mechs in this game—whether you pick one with legs, wheels, or treads—move ill reality-appropriate speeds, which is a nice way of saying "slow as hell." Worse, if your locomotive parts get banged up in battle, you slow to a crawl. And like in real war, you'll have a tough time telling the difference between allies and enemies in both online and offline modes. When you finally run into other machines in the game's vast, sterile battlefields, that is, *ChromeHounds* is a well-made, technically solid shooter, but its dedication to realism kills the fun.

**MARK:** I realize the glacial pace of *ChromeHounds'* 20-story-tall mechs is sup-



posed to reinforce their gigantic size, but this is ridiculous—even the "quick" mechs move like senior citizens at a packed Shoney's buffet. And speaking of old, the graphics ain't exactly next gen; gorgeous explosions aside, the landscapes are dull, and even the populated areas look like model-railroad towns. Some tossed-together single-player missions feel like little more than training for online play, where the strategy and communication required to coordinate a team of various classes (sniper, scout, etc.) of custom-built mechs offers the only real value in *ChromeHounds*, but even that's tempered by problems, including—yep—the lumbering pace.

**1UP.COM—PATRICK J.:** I've gotta wonder if I'm playing the same game as these other guys...cause I really found myself slipping into addiction mode with *ChromeHounds*. I like how even though the game rewards customization gearheads, you don't need a dedicated spreadsheet to make a good mech, like in some walking-tank sims (I'm looking your way, *Armored Core*). Also, the Hounds look fantastic, and the interface is a work of fine-tuned, though sparse, beauty.

Like Mark says, offline play essentially serves as a training mode, so I can forgive its goofy tale of intrigue—the game's real beauty is in its brutal, team-focused, rewarding 6-on-6 Live play. (It's kinda like a tense *Battlefield 2* match... just slower.) Success online earns you weapons, money, and login announcements proclaiming your victories—a much-needed stroke for my ego. Blowing up robots is fun, people.

THE VERDICTS  
ROBERT 6.0  
MARK 5.0  
PATRICK J. 8.0

Publisher: Sega  
Developer: From Software  
Players: 1 (2-12 online)  
ESRB: Teen

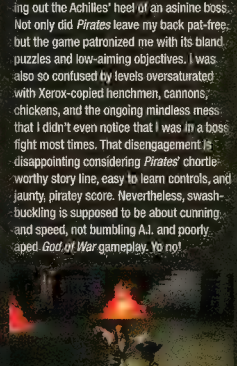
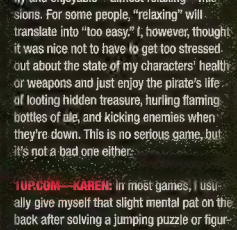
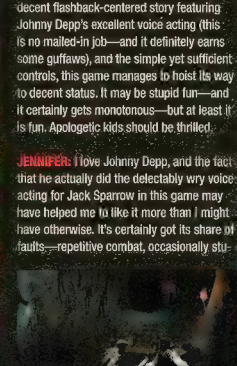
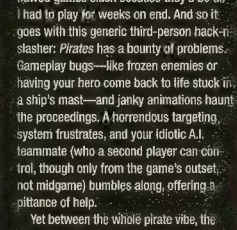
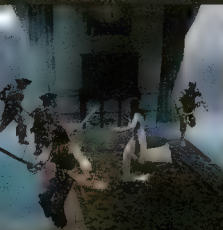
www.sega.com



PlayStation 2

# PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: THE LEGEND OF JACK SPARROW

Raising the not-so-Jolly Roger



**Good:** Johnny Depp's voice acting, swashbuckling setting  
**Bad:** Embarrassing bugs, rushed feel  
**Should be Given the Ol' Heave-ho:** The lame cannon minigames

**S:** **FORD:** Playing *Pirates*, I can't help but think of my days spent with licensed games as a kid. Back then, I'd do obviously flawed games slack because they'd be all I had to play for weeks on end. And so it goes with this generic third-person hack-n-slasher: *Pirates* has a bounty of problems. Gameplay bugs—like frozen enemies or having your hero come back to life stuck in a ship's mast—and janky animations haunt the proceedings. A horrendous targeting system frustrates, and your idiotic AI teammate (who a second player can control, though only from the game's outset, not midgame) bumbles along, offering a pittance of help.

Yet between the whole pirate vibe, the decent flashback-centered story featuring Johnny Depp's excellent voice acting (this is no milled-in job—and it definitely earns some guffaws), and the simple yet sufficient controls, this game manages to hoist its way to decent status. It may be stupid fun—and it certainly gets monotonous—but at least it is fun. Apologetic kids should be thrilled.

**JENNIFER:** I love Johnny Depp, and the fact that he actually did the delectably wry voice acting for Jack Sparrow in this game may have helped me to like it more than I might have otherwise. It's certainly got its share of faults—repetitive combat, occasionally stu-

pid enemies, and halfhearted boss battles, to name the major ones. But it compensates for these with a decent amount of personality and enjoyable—almost relaxing—missions. For some people, "relaxing" will translate into "too easy," I, however, thought it was nice not to have to get too stressed out about the state of my characters' health or weapons and just enjoy the pirate's life of looting hidden treasure, hurling flaming bottles of ale, and kicking enemies when they're down. This is no serious game, but it's not a bad one either.

**TURCOM—KAREN:** In most games, I usually give myself that slight mental pat on the back after solving a jumping puzzle or figuring out the Achilles' heel of an asinine boss. Not only did *Pirates* leave my back pat-free, but the game patronized me with its bland, puzzles and low-aiming objectives. I was also so confused by levels oversaturated with Xerox-copied henchmen, cannon, chickens, and the ongoing mindless mess that I didn't even notice that I was in a boss fight most times. That disengagement is disappointing considering *Pirates'* chortle-worthy story line, easy to learn controls, and jaunty, piratey score. Nevertheless, swashbuckling is supposed to be about cunning and speed, not bumbling AI, and poorly paced *God of War* gameplay. Yo no!

**Johnny Depp:** always drawing the wrong crowd.

**Videogame sword fighting always sounds better in theory than it is in practice—no exception here.**

THE VERDICTS  
OUT OF 10

**5.5 6.5 5.0**

G. FORD    JENNIFER    KAREN

Publisher: Bethesda  
Developer: T. Studios  
Players: 1-2  
ESRB: Teen  
[www.bethsoft.com](http://www.bethsoft.com)

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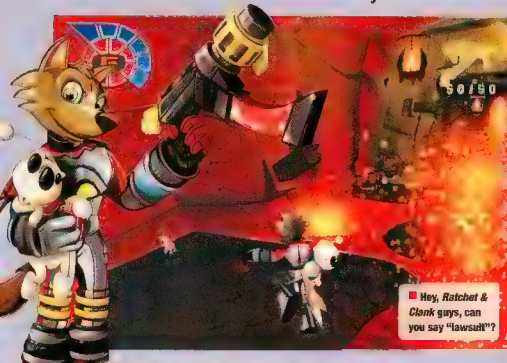
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PlayStation 2

# RUFF TRIGGER: THE VANOCORE CONSPIRACY

Is this the sincerest form of flattery?



Hey, *Ratchet & Clank* guys, can you say "lawsuit!"?

THE VERDICTS  
OUT OF 10

SHANE 5.0 JAY 5.0 SHARKEY 5.0

Publisher: Natsume  
Developer: Playatos  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Everyone 10+

www.rufftrigger.com

**Good:** Value; price; some fun minigames.  
**Bad:** Wonky camera and imprecise controls.  
**Straight From Ruff's Blo:** "After a few pints, he's a real show!"



**SHANE:** At first I entertained the idea of reviewing *Ruff Trigger* without ever mentioning Sony's popular *Ratchet & Clank* franchise. It would have gone something like this: "A cuddly yet cocksure hero jumping and shooting his way through futuristic worlds? How original!" But my penchant for humorous irony subsided after I actually played through this unfathomably derivative platformer.

Now, if you're going to make a bargain-basement *Ratchet & Clank* rip-off, you should at least piller all the good parts. *Ruff* successfully apes the basic *R&C* framework but omits all of the crucial details that make it such a great game. While *Clank* sports sharp writing and lovable heroes, *Trigger* offers ugly characters, unfunny writing, and hideous cut-scenes (which look eerily like those crappy Academy of Art commercials MTV runs at 3 a.m.). Plain-Jane visuals and haphazard controls (rff collision detection causes plenty of cheap deaths) make it look and feel worse than even the first *Ratchet*, and the inability to purchase ammo or upgrade your weapons is simply inexcusable.

Sure, it's only \$20, and kids will probably dig the suite of simple unlockable minigames, but all four of the *Ratchet* titles blow away this wannabe.

**JAY:** This game is the poster child for budget titles. As Shane ably points out, *Ruff Trigger* blatantly copies characters, ideas, and motifs from other games. The levels are solid, but

besides the racing portions, nothing stands out. You can get lots of guns, sure, but you'll rarely use any but the first two. The transformation feature—which should have been cool—is so unbalanced that you never really need to go back to your original, nonpowered-up-beast form. Amidst the rest of the monotony, you'll collect lots of glowing icons by smashing an endless number of crates, unless a few minigames that you'll never play, and watch lame cut-scenes—complete with spelling errors in the subtitles. *Ruff Trigger* isn't a bad game—it's just obviously average.

**TUP.COM—SHARKEY:** Have you ever wondered if maybe an alternate universe exists where everything is the same, except that *Ratchet & Clank* is actually a mostly mediocre game with unlikable characters (including a hypersexualized Siamese cat with absolutely pendulous marmarries) and annoying racing segments (I have no idea what Jay's thinking with a vehicle prone to popping like a soap bubble? I woke up in that universe today, apparently, and I want to go home. Jay is right on in saying that *Ruff Trigger* isn't offensively bad, and sure, it's a \$20 budget game, but do some legwork and you'll find plenty of things for \$20. For instance: most of the *Ratchet & Clank* games, of which there are already too damn many.

Xbox

# CRUSTY DEMONS: FREESTYLE MOTO-X

Splatter your free time against the pavement



Peer into the dark heart of human stupidity.

THE VERDICTS  
OUT OF 10

ROBERT 5.0 JAY 6.0 RAY 5.0

Publisher: Evolved  
Developer: Climax  
Players: 1-2  
ESRB: Mature

www.evolvedgames.com

**Good:** Launching bikers into brick walls in slow-mo  
**Bad:** Simplified trick system and repetitive, unfun tasks  
**Huh??:** Mowing down pimps in a miniaturized Caprice Classic



**ROSEBY:** *Crusty Demons* is the most ridiculous game I've ever played. Even aside from the title (which is also the name of a series of dirt-bling videos), *Demons* is bats\*\*\* crazy. Your first clue comes in the form of an incredibly amateur (and hilarious) story sequence in which we discover that the game's characters (real-life motocross riders) have sold their souls to the devil so that they can do big, super-Xtreme (gnarly, dude) stunts without getting killed. So, logically, you compete in a series of silly tasks chosen by Satan himself in order to get your soul back.

Your immortality doesn't mean you can't get hurt, which is great, because as soon as you get tired of the crappy *Tony Hawk*-with-motorcycles main course, you can move on to dessert: slamming your rider into various objects at high speeds. That's right. You can fling your rider off the bike with the touch of a button and then (à la *Burnout*) guide them into a neck-snapping accident in slow motion for (black) comedic effect. It ain't how I want to spend a Friday night, but it sure beats *Demons'* repetitive tasks, frustrating races, and stupid-simple trick system.

**JAY:** Despite having what could be the worst name for a game ever, *Crusty Demons* turned out pretty well. This game is essentially *Tony Hawk* with dirt bikes.

which isn't a bad thing. Colorful characters fill skate-park versions of major cities, and they need you to collect lost blow-up dolls, mow down pimps, and complete tons of other objectives filled with too much potty humor. The bikes control well, with lots of tricks, wheelsies, and ball moves to master. What I didn't like: the times when you need to turn into a cliché on wheels—think ice-cream truck or pimp car—to complete races and timed fetch-quest missions that feel out of place in the platformy, trick-friendly levels.

**TUP.COM—RAY:** Just glancing at *Demons* was enough to give me nightmarish flashbacks of *BMX XXX*, but it's not quite the disaster that "classic" was. Its rowdy-humor quotient isn't any lower, but the ball technique is practically enough to set it apart from other extreme-sports games. And, with its huge levels, you have great opportunities to waste a weekend mindlessly thrashing around. Then again, you also get all of the crude, superfrustrating missions that go with it. (Crash into the bedrooms of negligent hookers? Do I have to?) The outside races aren't much better, either; the overly sensitive dirt bikes simply don't have the physics for the rigors of competitive driving, leading to spill after spill. Perhaps doing the devil's work doesn't pay.



DS

## POINT BLANK DS

Just hitting the outside ring

**Good:** Frantic, fast, simple

**Bad:** Not the deepest game you'll pick up

**Gives New Meaning to the Word:** Multitap

**WELCOME** To a fast-paced, frantic that shows you can't rely on your accuracy to be playing. In addition to the fast firing, the game has a limited amount of lives, which can be lost by shooting the wrong target. The game has a simple, intuitive interface that allows you to quickly get into the game. The game has a simple, intuitive interface that allows you to quickly get into the game. The game has a simple, intuitive interface that allows you to quickly get into the game.

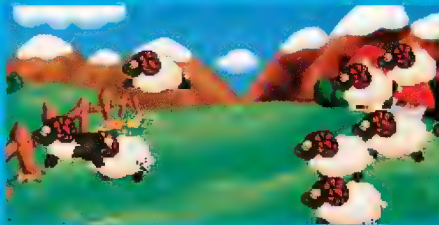
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THE VERDICTS  
7.0 6.0 7.0  
JENNIFER MICHAEL JEREMY

WELCOME TO A FAST-PACED, FRANTIC THAT SHOWS YOU CAN'T RELY ON YOUR ACCURACY TO BE PLAYING.



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ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY



DS

# FREEDOM WINGS

Not love at first flight



Taito's in over its head this month—it also developed Ubisoft's *Over G Fighters*.

THE HEROIC (OUT OF 10)

5.5

CRISPIN DEMIAN RAY

Publisher: Natsume  
Developer: Taito  
Players: 1 (2-4 via local Wi-Fi)  
ESRB: Everyone 10+

www.natsume.com

**Good:** A unique mix of air combat and roleplaying  
**Bad:** Lots of long flights between islands  
**To Make Life Easier:** Upgrade your guns first.



**CRISPIN:** Genres collide at 30,000 feet in this slow-to-take-off hybrid of propeller-powered dogfighting and airborne roleplaying. You're a young ace trying to make your way in a massive archipelago swarming with sky pirates. Downing bogeys or bombing ground and sea targets earns you experience and cash that can be poured back into your plane to improve its handling and weaponry (or save up for new aircraft). And for a while, *Freedom Wings* lives up to its name. You can fly wherever you want, liberating scattered airfields, earning access to new plane parts and bonus missions.

But the manual flight controls are overly sensitive and take serious getting used to, forcing you to rely on autopilot. It's a slick enough substitute; just set throttle, altitude, and heading on the DS touch screen and off you go. Your plane even autodogfights enemies that appear for random battles. But pretty soon, all that frequent flying between bases becomes as exciting as a real cross-country flight. The game could use more direction, too—I spent the early parts wandering into areas that were too advanced, often learning that lesson the hard way.

**DEMIAN:** On behalf of game developers everywhere, I have to ask, what does it take to get a good score from Crispin Boyer? The man loves both airplanes and pirates, and

yet he doesn't love *Freedom Wings*.

Well, I'm not nuts for this RPG-meets-flight-sim, either. Overcomplicated controls in the cockpit mode mean you'll spend lots of time on autopilot, only nudging the yaw now and then to correct the computer's often-cockeyed aim during random dogfights. Otherwise, *Freedom Wings* is a typical RPG treadmill of leveling up, buying new parts for your planes (which, annoyingly, aren't brains ferable), and watching chats with big-eyed anime characters. It's the kind of game you can play while watching TV and picking your nose, and though I mean that in the best way, it's still not actively a compliment.

**TUP.COM—RAY:** *Freedom Wings'* concept is pretty ingenious—I actually didn't mind the passive dogfighting, and I'm an *Ace Combat* fan. Like the other guys said, doing everything yourself is a hassle as you try to aim and fire correctly while managing your speed, especially on a small, pixelated screen. But even though autopilot streamlines the process, you quickly realize that nothing actually happens: Your planes hardly move fast enough, and you're generally stuck with the stop-and-go feeling of waiting for the next enemy wave to magically appear. By extension, this makes the game's sorta-RPG approach (level building, earning gold) unbearable.

PSP

# ASTONISHIA STORY

Astonishingly antiquated



In 1994 these graphics would've been rad—now they're just a jolt.

THE HEROIC (OUT OF 10)

5.0

GREG S. MICHAEL JEREMY

Publisher: Ubisoft  
Developer: Sionon  
Players: 1  
ESRB: Everyone 10+

www.ubi.com

**Good:** Pretty 2D graphics  
**Bad:** Stale game play  
**1994 Called:** It wants its game back



**GREG S:** Let's go back in time. Back in 1994—when we were all awaiting the release of the Sega Saturn, when *EGM* older Shoe was still able to eat solid food, and when *Astonishia Story* first made an appearance on the PC in Korea.

Had I reviewed this role-playing game back then, I'd go on and on about how stale the battle system is. About how *Shining Force* had done the whole thing so much better two years earlier on the Genesis. About how the party system in *Final Fantasy IV* on the Super Nintendo, while a bit irritating in itself, was 10 times better than the one found in *Astonishia Story*. And the translation! Have mercy. The awkward phrases and atrocious grammar rival such cringe-worthy gaming classics as "I feel asleep!" and "Congratulations!" The somewhat clever jokes and any semblance of plot development get completely lost in the garbled dialogue. Half the time you don't even know what you're supposed to do next thanks to the confusing text.

The sad thing is, all these problems plague this port, even worse, 12 years' worth of RPG evolution aren't reflected here at all. It's painfully obvious that *Astonishia* does nothing toebb the flow of downright disappointing roleplayers on the portable PlayStation.

**MICHAEL:** After I lacked the tediously awful *Blade Dancer*, this game felt like a gift from the role-playing gods. But shortly after the

warm feelings wore off, realized *Astonishia Story* was not quite the golly game I thought. Instead, it's merely an average role-playing affair that is neither outright offensive nor particularly pleasing. As Greg says, this PC port certainly shows its age—the game plays and feels like a washed-up world-saver. But I guess that's what we get when companies resurrect rusty old relics instead of focusing on new stories. Thankfully, the tone-down *Final Fantasy Tactics* battle system holds us up to today's standards, but apart from that, don't expect much more than a crusty RPG.

**TUP.COM—JEREMY:** I went into *Astonishia Story* determined to enjoy it. How could I not? Here's an old-school RPG with an interesting history and charming hand-drawn graphics—the perfect thing for the PSP, whose role-playing library in date has been hopelessly mundane. Yet I found *Astonishia* disappointing despite my best intentions; it's one of the least-polished games I've ever played. It's a shoddy PC port plagued by constant load times; a badly balanced adventure with poorly conceived character building, and a wretched translation in desperate need of an edit. With a fast-paced, "tactics lite" battle system and a hero who mercifully isn't a spiky-haired bad boy, *Astonishia* should have been great. I guess "good," like God, is in the details.

Online play suffers from a case of the killer Bs: blandness and boredom.



PSP

# BLADE DANCER: LINEAGE OF LIGHT

## So you think you can play a crappy RPG?

**Good:** Group attacks and crafting stuff is cool  
**Bad:** Slow battles, breakable weapons, boring  
**Number of Blitchin' Dance-offs:** 0

**MICHAEL:** Some game titles just sound cool—*God of War*, *Grand Theft Auto*, and *Resident Evil* all allude to something special—while other names, like *Blade Dancer*, make you question your manhood. Fortunately, *Blade Dancer* is devoid of dudes dancing, but sadly, it's also chock-full of boring roleplaying.

Don't be deceived by this flashy Japanese RPG; the game may play like a *Final Fantasy* with its turn-based battles and 3D environments, but originallywise, it's right up there with the abominable *Quest 64* (Nintendo 64). Everything about this game is utterly generic, from the typical slay-the-evil-demon plot to the cookie-cutter characters. Why your party members even have names beyond me—it's almost as if the developers took RPG clichés (cocky heroes, hot healers, etc) and molded characters to these archetypes.

The crafting system, the one inno-

vative feature the game musters up, is a complete chore. Making new gear is definitely cool, but since you're limited in the amount of materials you can hold, it's difficult to make stuff if you can't carry the crap. The only positive about this game also comes with a negative. Good? It's short. Bad? The ending sets up a sequel!

**SHANE:** With its forgettable characters, interminable load times, and mind-numbingly dull battles, *Blade Dancer* assaults players with such profound mediocrity that only the most tenacious questers will make it beyond the first few hours. Classy visuals mask just how uninspired this game truly feels. Dippy fetch quests, straightforward dungeons, and breakable weapons (that seem to shatter mere moments after you blow all your loot on them) make the single-player game feel like a lame massively multiplayer online RPG, yet this sucker's

limited co-op play (only a handful of dungeons, with no experience points) seems like an unfinished afterthought. Overall, *Blade* feels rather dull, but it's still fairly average for a PSP RPG.

**TUPCOM—GREG S:** Think about every cardinal sin that could be committed in an RPG, and *Blade Dancer*'s got it covered. I can't add much to what's been said—*Blade Dancer* is pretty much maintaining the status quo when it comes to rolelayers on the PSP. It looks and feels like a low-budget PS1 game circa 1995, complete with lengthy load times, boring combat, a lame story, and an archaic save-point system that is an absolute no-no on a portable console.

Oh, and the breakable-weapons play mechanic gets old instantly. Talk about the worst possible way to add artificial length to your games—repeatedly buying weapons that break far too easily.



THE VERDICTS  
by Greg S.

MICHAEL SHANE GREG S.

Publisher:NIS America  
Developer:Hit Maker  
Players:1 (2+ via local Wi-Fi)  
ESRB: Everyone 10+

www.nisamerica.com



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Lucian clears sinuses with the palm of his hand.



PSP

# VALKYRIE PROFILE: LENNETH

## New system, same profile

**SHANE:** Square Enix's decision to revive this cult classic on the PSP means that rabid role-playing fans won't have to shell out big bucks for the hard-to-find PS1 original. Take that, eBay sellers! But then again, with the promise of cheap downloadable PS1 games on the PSP later this year, charging \$40 for a bare-bones port of an antiquated game...seems kinda weak. Companies won't be able to get away with this kind of port for long, but we'll let them slide for now.

Although it's considerably older than most of its PSP RPG brethren, *Lenneth* remains an enjoyable quest brimming with deep gameplay and secrets aplenty. Don't expect standard-issue roleplaying, though—*Valkyrie* blends side-scrolling platforming, clever puzzles, and wildly fun battles (deftly mixing real-time and turn-based elements) to create an engaging, action-packed adventure. Plus, a steep difficulty curve (even on normal) and some tricky resource management make it less of a cakewalk than most genre offerings.

It's a shame developer Tose didn't take more care

with this port, though. With its overwrought, cinema-laden first hour, finicky controls, and notorious dearth of save points, this game wasn't designed for handhelds. Factor in some sloppy graphical issues (stretched backgrounds, blurry text, PSP-exclusive slowdown) and obnoxious load times (three seconds every time you go to your menu), and this version of *Profile* can't quite replace that pricey eBay find.

**JAY:** Don't let this game fool you: Underneath its fantasy façade, *Lenneth* is a numbers game. If you want to survive the battle at the end of the world, you must carefully maintain your characters' traits, hero levels, skills, and abilities. It's deep, but awfully complex—I spent the better half of my first few hours having almost no idea what to do. Other than a battle tutorial, the game offers little help in managing recruits, which determines your success in the game. Once I learned (mostly the hard way), though, my frustration turned into pure addiction. If you can get past the learning curve, you'll find a rich, deep RPG—by PSP

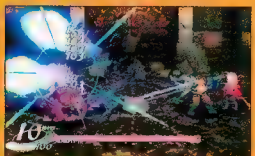
standards. Yeah, it's a few years old and a tad rough around the edges...but anyone who missed it on the PS1 should consider this a must-play.

**TUP.COM—MILKMAN:** With *Lenneth*, Square replaces the standard RPG formula of spiky-haired heroes saving the world with one of spiky-haired heroes of Norse legend saving the world. This conceit works, though, because salvaging the souls of worthy heroes (i.e., recruiting them) to stem the tide of Ragnarok (aka the end of the world) makes for a compelling setting. And while the PSP allows modern gamers to rediscover this "lost" classic (since Enix did a crap job of making enough copies and advertising it originally), irritating load times, treasure chests that require an inordinate amount of fussing to open, and some ill-conceived platform elements hamper the buzz. But *Lenneth*'s beautiful art and animation, stellar soundtrack, and unique combat system bring this title to the forefront in a field of imitators while setting the stage for the upcoming *Silmeria*. **A-**



**What's New?**

VP vets will notice a smattering of new CG cut-scenes peppered throughout the game. These cinemas look quite snazzy, as they were created alongside the clips for the upcoming PS2 VP game, *Silmeria*.



**Port Authority?**

Who's truly to blame for this slightly janky version of *Valkyrie Profile*? The answer may surprise you. A little-known Japanese developer named Tose oversaw this PS1-to-PSP transplant. In fact, Tose was also secretly behind other slowdown-plagued Square Enix fare such as *Final Fantasy IV Advance* (GBA) and *Final Fantasy Origins* (PS1). Just how prolific are these behind-the-scenes gamemakers? They've already programmed 19 PSP games by date, and over the years, this clandestine development house has worked on an astonishing 1,100 (!) games for myriad developers.

**Good:** Exciting battles, unique and engrossing world  
**Bad:** Not as smooth as PS1 original  
**Hardcore:** Must beat on hardest setting to get real ending

THE VERDICTS  
 (out of 10)

6.5	8.0	8.0
SHANE	JAY	MILKMAN

Publisher: Square Enix  
 Developer: Tri-Ace/Tose  
 Players: 1  
 ESRB: Teen

www.square-enix.com

# REVIEWS WRAP-UP

The games that were too late...or too little

## GRAND THEFT AUTO: LIBERTY CITY STORIES

PS2 • Rockstar • ESRB: M

When we first encountered *Liberty City Stories* on the PSP late last year, it felt familiar, with good reason: The game takes place in *GTA3*'s Liberty City but features a different story and characters. And here we go again with this PSP-to-PS2 port. Wait—PSP to PS2? Rockstar sees no reason for fans of the criminally successful series to be shut out of this side story just because they don't have a PSP. Oddly enough, the PS2 version loses something in the translation: multiplayer. Where the PSP *LCS* features a suite of six-player Wi-Fi matches, PS2 players miss out on their first chance for more-than-a-minigame multiplayer *GTA* action. And since nothing else changes (though the switch to the DualShock 2 pad is welcome), it sounds like a rip-off...until you consider the budget price.

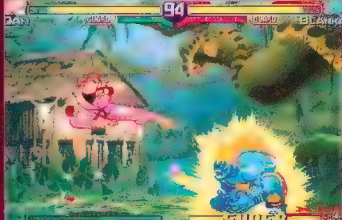
**Bottom line:** If you have the PSP game, you'll find nothing new here. But for the millions of *GTA* fans that don't, you get a lot of game for your \$20.



### MotoGP 06

Xbox 360 • THQ • ESRB: E — *MotoGP 06* hits the 360 with very few upgrades over last year's Xbox version, and none involve evolving the core gameplay. Basically, you get a handful of new tracks and riders, as well as redone audio and visuals upgraded to the 360's delicious HD standards.

**Bottom line:** Even the graphical upgrade isn't that impressive, though, considering how good *MotoGP* already looked.



### Street Fighter Alpha Anthology

PS2 • Capcom • ESRB: T — This collection shoehorns the oft-overlooked *Street Fighter Alpha* games onto a disc with the universally overrated *Pocket Fighter* (mysteriously renamed *Super Gem Fighter Mini Mix* here) to create another value-priced dose of 2D fighting nostalgia. Hardcore fans will dig the unlockables.

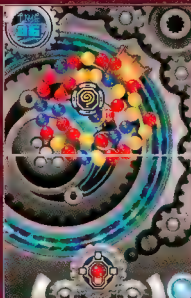
**Bottom line:** While these games aren't quite as pretty or deep as *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*, they're still worth your money.

# WRAP-UP (CONT.)



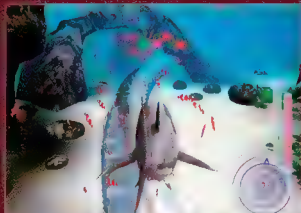
**The King of Fighters 2006**  
PS2 • SNK Playmore USA • ESRB: T  
Known as *Maximum Impact 2* in Japan, this 3D fighter sequel features largely the same cast and herky-fjerky mechanics as the previous entry. The U.S. version loses online play, yet Terry Bogard's English remains intact. The unlocking of wacky and largely unpleasant costumes ensues.

**Bottom line:** If you've ever said to yourself, "I wish *King of Fighters* could be more mediocre," then run, don't walk, to your local retailer.



**Magnetica**  
DS • Nintendo • ESRB: E — This generic puzzler, in which you shoot marbles to match like-colored marbles and make them disappear before the string of marbles reaches the center, might not feel so totally generic if it hadn't already been done by countless knockoffs before it, like Xbox Live Arcade's *Zuma*. At least the formula works relatively well on the DS—plus, *Magnetica* offers variety with several modes and multiplayer. Unfortunately, you'll only want to play in short bursts.

**Bottom line:** *Zuma* doesn't exist on the DS, so *Magnetica* does.



### Jaws Unleashed

PS2 • Majesco • ESRB: M — We usually spaz out in the thought of movie-licensed games—but, *Wii*, how we anticipated the idea of taking control of this killer fish and rending everything that swims into chummy bits. But things go belly-up quickly here, thanks to an awful camera, awkward storytelling, and stupid missions.

**Bottom line:** To quote the famous review of Spinal Tap album *Shark Sandwich*: S\*\*\* sandwich.



### Super Robot Taisen: Original Generation

GBA • Atlus • ESRB: T — Turn/grid-based strategy still lives on the GBA, though this one's more *Fire Emblem* than *Advance Wars*: Lots of dialogue, stats, and upgrades keep you busy in between bouts of big-robot and tank fights.

**Bottom line:** *Taisen* is so busy keeping you busy that the actual strategy-battle portions seem like quick fillers in between pages of setup menus and dialogue. A bit boring, but deep.

## PSP GETS RACY



■ Juiced: Eliminator

### Race Driver 2006 / Juiced: Eliminator

Codemasters • ESRB: T / TIIO • ESRB: T — This month, a couple of PSP racers will take you on a familiar ride...considering they're basically ports of old PS2 titles. Of the two, *Race Driver* does just about everything better, with silky-smooth controls, sharp graphics, and a huge number of events. *Juiced*, on the other hand, gets stuck in a rut early when it comes to event variety, and the supersensitive analog-nub control contrasts with the incredibly sluggish D-pad.

**Bottom line:** *Race Driver 2006* is the better choice to satiate your need for portable speed this month.



■ Race Driver 2006



### Micro Machines V4

PS2 • Codemasters • ESRB: E — With over 50 tracks and tons of cars to unlock, this racer packs in a lot of extras. The circuits are broken up into different modes—racing, battle, checkpoint, and time attack. None of these end up being fun, though, because of the janky camera—which zooms in and out at the most inconvenient times—and fluctuating difficulty.

**Bottom line:** The game's definitely for kids, but it shouldn't have a problem frustrating gamers of any age.



SORRY, BUT I DON'T DIE THAT EASY!

### Metal Gear Solid Digital Graphic Novel

PSP • Konami • ESRB: M — Pfft, nobody reads comic books anymore—Konami's *MGS* digital comic brings Ashley Wood's expressive art style to life with stunning animation.

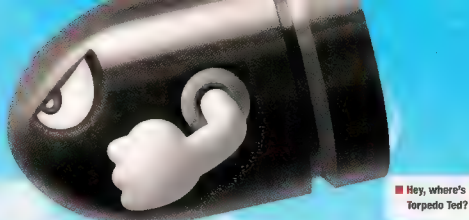
**Bottom line:** The story and artwork impress, but the lack of voice acting stings. Fans will still dig it, even if the "gameplay" (think: hunting for clues by zooming in on pics) feels tacked on.



BUT I'M JUST GETTING WARMED UP!



# reviews archive



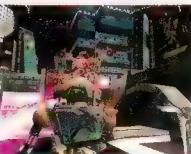
Hey, where's Torpedo Ted?

## A trip down memory lane

### THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED BY

In the gaming industry, it's tempting to go for the easy buck—shelling out sequels and licensed titles. We wanted to give the titles that go against the grain some love this month. Take a look at some of our favorite original games (all scores out of 10).

"Metal Arms is easily a contender for sleeper hit of the year."



Metal Arms (PS2/XB/GC)

8.0 • 9.0 • 8.0

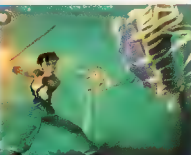
"You've jumped over bottomless pits and punched bad guys before, but Psychonauts presses these conventions into the service of its story."



Psychonauts (PS2/XB)

8.0 • 9.0 • 8.0

"Unlike other ambitious titles that try to do many things in too many players, BG&E pulls its components together beautifully."



Beyond Good & Evil (PS2/XB/GC)

8.0 • 9.0 • 8.5

GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)	AWARD
24: The Game	PS2	■ Faithful to the hit show but lacking the same freshness and wicked gurgley	7.5 6.5 7.0	
Ace Combat Zero: The Balkan War	PS2	■ Great graphics can't make up for boring missions and a forgettable story	5.5 4.5 6.0	
AND 1 Streetball	PS2/XB	■ All the moves and personalities of the sport but with none of the excitement	5.0 4.5 5.0	
Age of Empires: The Age of Kings	DS	■ This deep, historically savvy turn-based strategy game is fun—and good for your brain	9.0 7.5 8.5	Silver
Alester Iris 2: The Azoth of Destiny	PS2	■ A niche RPG that, despite new features, still ends up feeling dated	5.5 6.0 7.0	
Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	XB360	■ Over-the-top shooter with lots to do—and lots to ride—that's best played online	7.5 8.0 7.0	
Big Brain Academy	DS	■ Brain-buster with tons of minigames and multiplayer	8.5 9.0 7.5	Silver
Black	PS2/XB	■ Kg-BOOM! A first-person shooter full of sound and fury, signifying nothing	6.5 6.0 8.0	
Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII	XB360	■ A pick-up-and-fly WWII flight-combat title full of planes, but its missions get tedious	7.0 6.5 6.5	
Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day! DS	DS	■ A smart "game" filled with tons of brainlesses that graphs how smart you are (aren't)	8.5 7.5 8.0	Silver
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	PSP	■ Bright graphics and classy, classic games fill this portable powerhouse	8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
Daxter	PSP	■ This bright, beautiful action-platformer feels cramped by the PSP's limitations	7.0 7.5 7.5	
Dead or Alive 4	XB360	■ Boobs and button mashing are the core components of this pretty fighter	7.0 6.5 6.5	
Def Jam Fight for NY: The Takeover	PS2	■ A console port with hardly any new content and cheap A.I.—it looks good, though	5.0 7.0 5.0	
Dreamfall: The Longest Journey	XB	■ This adventure title offers an immersive narrative but no game to go with it	4.0 6.5 4.0	
Drill Dozer	GBA	■ Sweet, classic 2D platforming returns in a great little portable form	8.5 8.0 8.5	Silver
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	XB360	■ Flawed, but ultimately a fun RPG with a great story and a huge world to explore	9.0 9.0 9.5	Gold
Field Commander	PSP	■ Sure, it's a rip-off of Advance Wars, but it's so good that you won't care	7.0 7.5 9.0	
Fight Night Round 3	XB360	■ Perfectly pretty pugilist pummel and punch with precision and panache	9.0 8.0 8.0	Silver
Final Fantasy XI Online	XB360	■ This online-only sequel has all the things you love—and hate—about the game	6.5 7.0 7.0	
Final Fight: Streetwise	PS2/XB	■ Decent brawl with nice minigames stumbles on repetition and a bad save system	6.5 7.0 7.0	
Full Auto	XB360	■ Like Burnout with guns and a do-over button—so nice, we would like more of it	8.0 8.5 8.0	Silver
Full Spectrum Warrior: Ten Hammers	PS2/XB	■ A squad-based shooter with broken rules of engagement	5.0 5.0 5.0	
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter	XB360	■ Amazing, war-is-hell-fun shooter with great multiplayer. Next gen is finally here!	10 9.0 9.5	Silver
The Godfather	PS2/XB	■ Grand Theft Auto: Gangster. Atmospheric, faithful to the films, but a bit cheesy	8.0 8.5 7.5	Gold
Hilman: Blood Money	PS2	■ The bald assassin returns with some great level design but a hurtin' save system	8.0 8.0 7.5	
Kingdom Hearts II	PS2/XB	■ Everything an RPG sequel should be, starring all your Squaxin' and Disney favorites	10 9.0 9.5	Gold
The Legend of Heroes II	PSP	■ A role-playing adventure that plays solid but still feels like more of the same	5.5 6.0 6.0	
Leninings	PSP	■ The addictive puzzler returns with new levels and updated graphics	5.5 6.0 6.0	
Lost Logic	DS	■ This innovative strategy-RPG unfortunately lacks the magic touch	8.0 6.0 6.0	
Major League Baseball 2K6	PS2/XB/GC	■ Rewinded the swinging and hitting but forgot to help fielding and baserunning	7.0 6.5 7.5	
Marc Eckst's Getting Up	PS2/XB	■ This party broken, gritty graff-action game isn't half as cool as it thinks it is	4.5 4.0 6.5	
Me & My Katamari	PSP	■ The PSP's cutest, card-boss the Prince's ball-rolling, garage-grabbing game	7.0 5.5 7.0	
Metal Gear Acid 2	PSP	■ A solid, streamlined, hard-boiled tactical roleplayer that stars Mr. Snake	8.0 9.0 8.5	Silver
Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence	PS2	■ A great story and worthwhile additional content raise the bar for re-releases	10 10 9.5	Gold
Metroid Prime Hunters	DS	■ Samus looks great on the DS, but she can be awkward to control in first-person	7.5 8.0 7.5	
MLB 06: The Show	PS2	■ Innovation isn't defined as finally adding a decade-old feature to your baseball game	6.5 6.0 6.0	
Monster Hunter Freedom	PS2	■ A solid action game that is best played with friends...too bad it ain't online!	7.0 6.0 8.0	
NBA Ballers: Phenom	PS2/XB	■ Shows good off-court ambition, but the gameplay shoots too many air balls	6.0 6.5 7.5	
New Super Mario Bros.	DS	■ A refreshing mix of classic gameplay with tons of multiplayer	10 8.5 8.0	Gold
Odama	GC	■ This mash-up of pinball and strategy (with voice commands) is more strange than fun	7.5 5.5 4.5	
Onimusha: Dawn of Dreams	PS2	■ We agree this samurai game is beautiful but aren't sure about its RPG aspects	4.5 7.5 6.5	
The Outfit	XB360	■ Linear single player, but this WWII shooter's dash of strategy is fun in multiplayer	7.0 6.0 7.0	
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	PS2/XB	■ A solid arcade racer that's easy to pick up but lacks the variety of a Burnout	7.0 6.5 7.0	
Resident Evil: Deadly Silence	DS	■ Outdated graphics and gameplay stunt this portable, multiplayer Resident Evil	6.5 7.0 7.5	
Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis	XB360	■ Ping-Pong done right—but the lack of extras will leave you wanting more	7.5 7.0 8.5	
Rogue Trooper	PS2/XB	■ This action-shooter shows it's easy being blue, thanks to engaging combat and co-op	6.5 7.5 8.0	
Rumble Roses XX	XB360	■ Wrestling with sluts has never been more next-gen or more pandering to perverts	7.0 6.5 3.5	
Sonic Riders	PS2/XB/GC	■ Sonic's hoverkart racer isn't fun or fast enough to catch up to Mario's standard	5.0 5.5 5.0	
Splinter Cell Essentials	PSP	■ The controls might be difficult for some—Sam Fisher just doesn't feel right on PSP	2.0 7.0 6.0	
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	PS2	■ The same Street Fighter you loved—without enough new features to make it shine	6.0 8.5 7.5	
Suikoden V	PS2	■ Slow to start and a bit dated, yet a compelling RPG with collect-all-fun	6.5 6.5 6.5	
Super Monkey Ball: Touch & Roll	DS	■ A maze game that blends intriguing ball-rattling and adorable ape themes	6.5 5.5 6.5	
Super Princess Peach	DS	■ A shiny new Mario-style adventure that needs to take the difficulty up a notch	7.5 7.0 8.0	
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	PSP	■ Lots of guns and interesting gameplay aren't as much fun with awkward controls	7.0 7.0 6.0	
Tales of Phantasia	GAA	■ This dusty, classic RPG ported from the Super NES hasn't aged very gracefully	6.0 7.5 7.5	
Tap's Adventure: Curse of the Demon Seal	DS	■ An ambitious RPG that's started with a totally broken interface and battle system	4.0 5.0 4.0	
Tekis DS	DS	■ Classic puzzler brought to the DS, but with only one new mode for the touch screen	7.5 7.0 9.0	
Tomb Raider: Legend	PS2/XB	■ The thilar rider is back, swinging and clinging in this solid tomb-robbing game	8.5 8.5 8.0	Silver
Top Spin 2	XB360	■ Deep career mode, graphics update, and new shots make this a grand slam	8.0 7.5 8.5	Silver
Tourist Trophy	PS2	■ Gran Turismo on two wheels, this racer offers realism with a steep learning curve	6.5 7.0 8.0	
Urban Chaos: Riot Response	PS2/XB	■ With dated graphics and boring levels, this shooter never passes mediocrity	5.0 5.5 3.5	
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	PS2	■ A hackneyed, hack-n-slash dungeon crawler with a sam-fun multiplayer mode	6.5 5.0 5.0	
Warpath	XB	■ Bargain-priced action-shooter's online action is smooth but limited and clichéd	4.0 6.5 6.0	
Webzack 2: Project Poseidon	PS2	■ A boring, low-budget stealth-action title that's more frustrating than fun	4.0 3.5 4.0	
X-Men: The Official Game	PS2/XB/XB360	■ Not even the X-Men can save this crappy mess of a game	4.0 3.5 4.0	



# game over

for more info on any of these fine items, consult your skymall catalog

## SEANBABY'S

# PERIPHERALS FROM THE

## Technology so advanced, mankind's entire future is obsolete



A couple months ago, the world's biggest videogame convention showcased all the games we'll be playing for the next year. At least that's what I heard. I was given a stack of insane press releases and told to go to E3's dark abandoned corners and see HOW we'll be playing games for the next year.

While everyone else got assigned a *Gears of War* preview or a "We Get Our Hands on the PS3!" feature, I got an appointment to read forward in time to see the brain-mounted controller and the game that squirts smells. Sweet. Well, after returning to the present, I decided to showcase these eight products of tomorrow. And for people who love ratings but hate to read numbers, each product's futurestiveness will be given a Future Award for excellence (see right) in specific areas of innovation. —Seanbaby

### FUTURE AWARD EXPLANATION GO



**The Dr. Who Award** is given to technologies proving that even things coming from the far reaches of fantastical imagination can be lame as hell.



**The Power Glove Award** is a special achievement given to heartbreaking inventions that would be SO BAD ASS if they worked, but, as you probably guessed, totally don't.



**The Star Trek Award** represents technology making a sad, failed attempt at emulating the future, but screw it—something rad about it makes you love it anyway.



**The Sharper Image Award**, represented by a fork that measures a burger's temperature(!), means the device earned the term "futuristic" through desperate technicalities alone.



**The Terminator 2 Award**, like the NES game of the same name, is given to devices advanced enough to want us dead even in their dark alternate futures where we already are.

**THE SHARPER IMAGE AWARD**

THE SHARPER IMAGE AWARD is given to products that are so futuristic that they are completely unusable. In this case, the award goes to the Sharper Image Award, which is a device that is so advanced that it is completely unusable.

Chairs with speakers ergonomic design...ATTITUDE!

**DANCE PRAISE**

Let me tell you where I run into problems if my job. First, I look like a frat boy whose haircut lost a bet and if I'm not holding a beer, I've probably recently spilled one on myself. So even in an industry where the main qualification is playing videogames, I come off as unprofessional. Public relations people either think I was hired to fill a special needs quota or I'm messing with them. Often, they have been specifically warned to hate me by their company's marketing team. So I knew getting into on *Dance Praise (Dance Revolution modified for sensitive Christian sensibilities)* would be like applying to be a camp counselor without any pants on—they know I'm up to something. Now this guy, he knows his product is Jesus *DDR*. That's something that maybe like three people on the premises wouldn't make fun of. So when I asked him about his interesting God game, I figured he'd call me a smartass or cry. Also, I should mention that since I got bored filling out forms, my press badge said I was a "Timecop" representing "Hank's Timecopery Warehouse." I swear to Christ and His exciting rhythm action games that it took 30 minutes to talk this guy into giving me a press kit. In the end, all I learned was that Christian anything sucks more than Regular anything. Which is knowledge I think we all had before this ordeal of mine began.

**eMAGIN VISOR**

Like most cute little TV things that aren't really TVs, eMAGIN didn't exactly get my hopes up. The booth was right next to a booth with farting, dancing robots and the visor sort of looks like a View-Master jury-rigged to call E.T.'s home. Forget I said all that, though, because holy crap, the eMAGIN Z800 3D Visor is amazing. It's like having two motion-sensing HDTVs attached directly to your eyeballs. Never before in my life have I wanted to give a team of headband scientists a high five as much as I do now. If you have \$549, go buy one—www.3dvisor.com.

Believe it or not, I have no actual model training.

Pixel art by Seanbaby. Photography by whoever was standing closest to Seanbaby. Mechanical business by Natalie White.

# YEAR ONE MILLION



## TRIMERSION VR HELMET

Over at the Trimerision booth, my girlfriend and I risked head lice by trying out the same cholera-soaked VR helmet hundreds of sweaty nerds had had on their heads that day. And like most of you, we were thinking, "Virtual reality helmet? Did we decide to do 1993 again?" In theory, this amazing combat hat featured a gun attachment for total immersion into any first-person shooter. In reality, the screens inside the helmet were only visible when perfectly aligned, so it felt like playing a game in the rearview mirror of someone else's car. The only use I found for it was that it completely blocked out the outside world, so when Natalie posed for a picture in it, she had no idea I was comically looking down her shirt the whole time. Which, now that I think about it, is probably the best PR campaign Trimerision could ask for.



■ Believe it or not, I have no actual sexton training.



## MY MY BOX

Blueprint for a hit take all the fun out of DDR; add nothing, then have Korean people change the name to something that makes no sense. My My Box? That means so much nothing it makes me wonder if all these years, Asian people have been purposely choosing names that mean genitals over here. I can show you chopsticks from restaurants named "Hung Far Low," "Rad Prik," and "Young Dong Gardens." It seems impossible to do that for so long by accident. If I release a game in Siberia, you can be damn sure I'll call a Siberian guy and check that none of the words I randomly selected for the title are Siberian for vaginas.

■ Natalie says, "Two cheers for My My Box."



## S.M.A.R.T. BRAIN GAMES

Controlling games with your brain...is it possible? They've been trying to do it since Atari 2600, and telepathic mind beams are the same technology Aquaman uses to suck, so I went in with serious skepticism. I was right to do so. First, the S.M.A.R.T. Brain Games Velcro sun visor was applied to my head. Apparently, in order for your brain to control games, the skull around it has to first be properly humiliated. Next, electrodes were scooped out of a cup of water and slapped to my head, still wet. I was given a PS2 controller and put in front of a racing game. Let the future begin! The rep told me to press the X button to accelerate and, depending on how well I concentrated, my car would go faster. (By the way, X is the only button attached to my mind waves. All other controls were still performed by thumb waves.) When I couldn't get my F-1 racer over 56mph, I asked what I should concentrate on. The rep's answer: "Whatever you want!" This is stupid, this is stupid, wasn't working, so the guy gave me the tip that he visualizes a car going very fast. Then, in the same breath, he told me that this technology will change the way parents view videogames. It will make them more intellectually stimulating. Intellectually stimulating? If anything will convince parents games are THAT, it's not driving in a circle while you trick your brain into thinking it's autistic. By this point I'm hungover, dripping electrode juice down my head, and all I can think about is how someone could get so self-righteous when all he did was glue a damn EEG to a PS2. My brain car was practically parked. I felt a little stupid, but it's hard to feel that stupid when the guy next to you's career plan is to convince consumers to pay actual money for the nonsense I just sat through.



■ This is the first time telepathic power sound effects have been caught on film.



## NOVINT FALCON 3D MOUSE

Novint Falcon wasn't on my original list of probably-terrible peripherals to check out. Here's the story of how it happened: I really enjoyed this booth featuring nothing but a man in a chair. He accepted the award for My Favorite E3 Booth. Chair declined to be a part of the ceremony. As it turned out, he was only taking a break from his booth next door, Novint Falcon, and showed me their 3D mouse. It's like a normal mouse suspended by three bars that can create resistance. So when you clicked to pick up different objects, the mouse actually got heavier. Different tech demos had surfaces like sandpaper



■ More fun than it looks like.

or molasses, and you could actually feel the texture. While Pyramat is busy figuring out ways to jam a speaker in your ear, these guys you'll never hear from again invented a way to incorporate a whole other human sense into videogames. Novint Falcon makes the vibrating controller look like the PC speaker. For those not nerdy enough to get that, PC speakers are from back when computers had two sound settings: off and fire alarm.



# UP-AND-COMERS

(Solutions on page 105)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11			12	13			
14		15	16			17		18
	19	20					21	
22						23		
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37			38					39
	40			41		42		43
44		45				46		
47		48			49	50		
	51					52		

## ACROSS

- Female star of the Xbox's ultimately cancelled *The Unseen*.
- NBA series' Celtic state, for short.
- NHL penalty.
- Nintendo's now *Pikmin*.
- Duos Ex* developer... Storm.
- Ms. Croft, Tomb Raider.
- Basic Xbox 360 package.
- Roly-poly PSP up-and-comer.
- Conker: Live and Reloaded* boss Duga the
- Castellani* genre survivor.
- Katamari constellation... Major.
- Last your champion title to a challenger?
- Faldemar Sapphir* quality.
- D&D TG16 title... of the *Griffon*.
- Blocky Star Wars with upcoming sequel.
- Jumping *Metrod* baddie.
- Like Bob of the square pants.
- E3's Wii demo'd this type of course.
- Anarchy Rule* (PS1) wrestling league.
- Weekend comedy show with episodes on PSP video (abbrv).
- 360 up-and-comer *BioShock's* body-enhancing substance.
- Marker or cursor.
- GTA: *Vice City* neighborhood Little.
- Like *Metal Gear Solid's* Menlis.
- The Dreamcast and 360 hardware make a lot of it.
- 7-Up character-inspired game *Coon*.

## DOWN

- New name for the Nintendo Revolution.
- They can't buy M-rated games.
- Powered up, to a PS2 or Xbox.
- Mario 64* ice-world feature.
- GBA *Aarbal*.
- The PSP's... and *My Katamari*.
- Talko: Drum Master* song.
- The *Bouncer's* main bouncer.
- Play the *Guitar Hero* controller.
- Unpopular handheld NeoGeo Pocket.
- NFL football features.
- Psychonauts* unit of currency.
- '80s Atari landfill flop.
- Raptor Mario* looks like it was drawn with these.
- Pirates of the Caribbean*.
- Roberto's *Street Fighter Alpha II* headgear.
- They actually made a 360 version of this card game.
- Knami demo genre originator.
- Nintendo Bible game *Noah's*.
- Link's ride in *Ocarina of Time*.
- Sewer-dwelling enemy of the NES's *Trojan*.
- Super Mario Sunshine's* scenic trees.
- Last PS1 *Grand Theft Auto*.
- What you do in *Raptor-Freestyle Scooter*.
- Lets Mario fly in *Super Mario World*.
- Third-person Xbox shooter *After*.
- Two directions on a world-map compass.
- Super Mario 2's*... guy.
- Musical endorses of *Backyard Wrestling*.
- You can use one three times per-half in *Madden* (abbrv).



# GRUDGE MATCH

Survival of the fittest


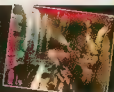


Follow the lackluster path *Predator* games have carved in the annals of gaming and this might seem like an unfair fight. But *Prey* (Xbox 360) had gotten so much prerelease hype we figure it's bound to disappoint at least some folks...

**STARRING ROLE**

 <p><i>Commando</i> star-turned-governor Arnold Schwarzenegger</p>	 <p>Native American garage mechanic/alien abductee Tommy <b>Advantage:</b> Prey</p>
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**SPECIAL MOVES**

 <p>Takin' your damn skin off <b>Advantage:</b> Predator</p>	 <p>Wall- and ceiling-walking</p>
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**ENEMIES**

 <p><i>Aliens' Advantage:</i> Predator</p>	 <p>Aliens</p>
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**NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH**

 <p>Made-for-TV knock-off <i>Skeleton Man</i></p>	 <p><i>Doom 3 Advantage:</i> Prey</p>
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**GAMEPLAY HIGHLIGHTS**

 <p><i>Alien vs. Predator</i> kept the Atari Jaguar briefly afloat</p>	 <p>Space-shifting portal system lets you plug aliens from afar <b>Advantage:</b> Prey</p>
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**WEAKER MOMENTS**

 <p>Latest PS2 offering, <i>Concrete Jungle</i></p>	 <p>All that Native American story line drivel <b>Advantage:</b> Prey</p>
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# WINNER: PREY

Nope, we were wrong—Prey's cornered the market on the crazy-ass-looking-alien-versus-humanity genre.

# THE 1UP SHOW!

The Summer Season

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all summer long at 1UP.com.

<http://the1upshow.1up.com/>



# egm retro afterthoughts

# CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT

Still music to our ears

**W**e celebrate 20 years of vampire slaying by grilling the series' dark lord and master, Koji Igarashi, on his first foray into Dracula's domain: 1997's PlayStation classic *Symphony of the Night*.  
—Jeremy Parish

**EGM: *Symphony of the Night* was the first game you directed. How did you end up in charge, despite having no real experience with the series? Koji Igarashi:** Ever since I joined Konami, I wanted to work on the *Castlevania* series. My desire only grew stronger as two different *Castlevania* games were being developed right next to our team, which was focused on *Tokimeki*

*Memorial* [a dating simulator]. After our game was finished, I was fortunate enough to join a new *Castlevania* project, but the game was cancelled soon thereafter. My boss needed to assign me to a new project, so I tried my hardest to move on to another *Castlevania* game. I joined the *Symphony of the Night* team as a programmer in the early stages of development and was able to take over as director when the original person in charge was promoted to another project. I was indeed very lucky.

**EGM: Is it true that *SOTN* is connected to the doomed Sega 32X game *Castlevania: The Bloodletting*? K:** Well, there was another

*Castlevania* title being developed on the 32X, but I don't believe the title was *The Bloodletting*. The game was cancelled before the name was confirmed. This is actually the game I worked on after *Tokimeki Memorial*. The team for this game was disbanded, but several members, including myself, went on to work on *SOTN*.

**EGM: Around 1997, developers began chucking 2D graphics in the coffin. Was there any internal resistance to such a "dated" game? K:** There was no internal resistance from the team members. We never considered making the game in 3D. Everyone on the team loved 2D games.

**EGM: The game's massive, especially with the optional second castle. Was that something you had intended from the start? K:** We had always planned on including this aspect of the game. This was a way for us to add more content to the game without creating new backgrounds or artwork—which is good because we ended up behind schedule anyway. Our goal was always to get as much as possible out of the art assets that were made for the game.

**EGM: *SOTN*'s free-roaming gameplay was unusual for *Castlevania*. What inspired you to take the series in that direction? K:** There are two major reasons [we took] this approach. First, many members of our team loved action-role-playing games, so we wanted to have an action-oriented game with new elements that added more depth. We also realized that a straightforward action game probably wouldn't take long to finish, and I wanted to give this new game more longevity than previous *Castlevania* titles. However, most action-RPGs did not include as many enemy

variations as we wanted, so we actually went beyond our template in that area. Since *SOTN* was considered a side entry in the *Castlevania* series, we were able to do whatever we liked.

**EGM: Many fans were surprised that the Belmonts took a backseat for *SOTN*. So, why Alucard? K:** Our development team was fed up with whips—just kidding. In actuality, we wanted to redesign the series with more exploration elements, so I wanted to give the main character special abilities that would not be possible with a human. I looked through all the past *Castlevania* characters and Alucard met our requirements perfectly.

**EGM: Ayami Kojima's [*SOTN* character designer] art and Michiru Yamane's [*SOTN* composer] music are still considered some of the best. What role did they play in setting the tone of the game? K:** I had worked on the PC Engine game *Detana TwinBee* [cutesy arcade shooter] previously, and I loved the game's music, but I never knew who created it. When we were working on *SOTN*, I found out that it was Michiru—the same composer who had been assigned to work on my game. I was very lucky from that standpoint.

We selected Ayami as illustrator with the hope of giving a new breadth to the series. Until that point, the *Castlevania* series was all about macho characters, but we wanted to give it a more corrupted or vulnerable image while retaining a lot of the same visual cues. She became a key member of the team and really helped to establish the game's atmosphere.

**EGM: The game's packed with a ton of secrets; are there any fans have yet to discover? K:** At this point, I don't think there are any more secrets to be found. If you do find something, let's just say it's a bug. [laughs]



■ *SOTN* proved metresuical pretty boys can survive in a world of buffed-up beefcakes.

**Wrap Your Whip Around This**  
 How many more Castlevania covers  
 age, including the full interview, ahead  
 of 1UP's 20th anniversary page at  
**CASTLEVANIA20TH.1UP.COM**



■ Think these *SOTN* shots look familiar? Well, they should—the last three handheld *Castlevanias* were also directed by Igarashi.



**EGM:** Well, some fans claim to have stumbled across hidden audio files for an ending in which Maria apparently becomes possessed.

**Ki:** This is something that was considered in our initial planning sessions. We even recorded the Japanese voiceover for the sequence, but we were not able to complete it in time.

**EGM:** *SOTN*'s Japan-only Saturn version offered extra content, including new areas and the ability to play as Maria. But many fans feel its technical issues make it inferior to the PS1 version. Were you involved in its creation? How do you feel about it?

**Ki:** I was not involved with the Saturn version of the game—it was actually handled by a different studio, but I did request that they include the Maria mode. There are differences in the video output of both systems, so I am surprised that they were able to pull it off. There were other technical issues that held it back. For example, the PlayStation version relied heavily on transparent effects, but the Saturn was very poor with this detail, so compromises had to be made. I will concede that they did fairly good job given the drawbacks of the Saturn hardware and the deadline they were given. If they had [had] more time and experience, they could have done a better job.

**EGM:** What about the U.S. version? American fans feel the English localization hurt the game, with its lame box art and questionable voice acting....

**Ki:** I don't speak or write English, so I was not heavily involved with localization and instead relied on Konami's localization team. Our plan had originally been to use only the Japanese voices, but we were told that English voices were [also] required. So we quickly recorded the

English sessions in Japan. This was my first experience in localization—I honestly didn't know what I was doing. I have since been told many times that the translation and English voice acting for *SOTN* [were] very poor, so now I try to be more involved with the localization and am in regular contact with our very reliable marketing staff in the U.S.

**EGM:** Nine years later, what is *SOTN*'s legacy—its place in gaming and the *Castlevania* series specifically?

**Ki:** *SOTN*'s legacy isn't just the game system, but is rather a basic philosophy of how to keep players entertained for an extended period of time. We really learned a lot working on the

game, and its headline has been passed along to our more recent *Castlevania* games. It's hard for me to position *SOTN*, but I will say it was a transitional title rather than an end point for the series. I always like to learn from my past work [so as] to keep improving, and *SOTN* allowed us to pave the way for the future of *Castlevania* with a great game that our fans still look back on fondly to this day.

■ Not only does Maria look like a girl, but she actually is one. Score!

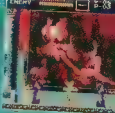


**Symphony of the Elderly**

While many consider *Symphony of the Night* the pinnacle *Castlevania* game, series has 25 years of history behind it. That makes it practically ahead by videogame standards.

**Time After Time**

The original *Castlevania* hit the Famicom (Japanese NES) in 1986 as *Demonic Castle Dracula*, and then the MSX home computer a few months later as *Vampire Killer*. And then the arcades in 1988 as *Haunted Castle*. And then...well, anyway, the game that started it all has been completely remade four times—and that doesn't include simple ports (like 2004's NES Classics reissue for GBA). That just might make it the most remade game ever. Fair enough. What we want to know is: what jerk came up with a dopey name like *Castlevania* to begin with?



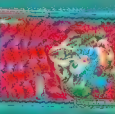
**Shoulders of Giants**

*Castlevania*'s unique among games in that it's based on classic work in literature—specifically Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*. Argues the novel is considered canonical—in fact, the upcoming *Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin* stars the grandson of the Quincy Morris, the Texan who struck the novel's killing blow. Yeah, nah! Happily, Marvel's *Tomb of Dracula* comics are not considered part of the *Castlevania* canon. So don't expect any *Blade* or *Men* crossovers.



**Do Not Disturb**

According to the *Castlevania* time line, Dracula comes back to life (well, unite!) every hundred years, which he did a total of five times since Trevor Belmont roared his fancy face in 1497 (ultimately being defeated once and for all in 1999). But random evil people have revived him, only for him to be defeated a short order by a do-gooding vampire hunter. You must feel sorry for the guy. Heroes are such jerks sometimes. ☹



Screens courtesy of ignmuseum.com.

# FINAL WORD

## This or That

**W**e're trying something new this month...a little something we're gonna call **This or That**. Let's see what *EGM's* two newest newbies, Jay and Michael, think about the following topics. OK boys, have at it!

**Jay Frechette**  
Editorial Intern



**Michael Donahoe**  
News/Features Editor

**Is this summer OK for new game releases? Or really sh\*\*ty?**

**OK!** "I still have yet to touch *Kingdom Hearts II*, *Oblivion*, or a dozen other games from even two Christmases ago. And what about recent releases like *Table Tennis* or *New Super Mario Bros.*? I mean how many games do you need to play? Don't be such a baby—there are plenty of great choices to get us through the summer. Besides, Michael, you need to get outside more anyway."

**SH\*\*TY:** "Jay, my boy, you play *Blade Dance* and then tell me if the summer's still hot. But you know why you haven't finished all your holiday games? Because all the big-name publishers take their big-game dumps at the same time. Now if these publishers would think with their minds and not with their wallets, they'd realize it's more pragmatic to sprinkle AAA titles throughout the year so we can find time to play them."

**I should be outdoors doing outdoorsy things, anyway, and not inside playing videogames.**

**OUTSIDE:** "Outside! The graphics are awesome. I absolutely hate the stigma that gamers are antisocial hermits who spend all their time in basements playing games with the lights off. Don't be that guy. I'll throw down 30 hours into a game, but there's no substitute for some outdoor hoops or hiking under some good old-fashioned sunshine."

**INSIDE:** "I'm confused—what do you do outside? Whatever it is, it sounds booring. I'm sorry, but if I don't have a piece of electronics in front of my face, I'm definitely not down. Now if you were to hook up some TVs outside, then maybe I'd consider leaving my apartment. But only for a couple hours—I don't want to be getting no skin cancer, ya heart!"

**Will the Wii be a mainstream hit or something only the hardcore will dig?**

**MAINSTREAM:** "Two letters: DS. Nintendo's little 'experiment' came out of nowhere and it's more popular than Brangelina. The Wii will do the same thing. The price and potential for some great living room shenanigans make it perfect for the mainstream, and it's much more accessible than the PS3 and Xbox 360. And if the Virtual Console feature (download all the old Nintendo and TurboGrafx games) doesn't get you excited, then you suck."

**MAINSTREAM:** "Gee Jay, I'm afraid to disagree for fear that you might sacrifice me on your King Bowser altar. But I think it'll succeed more because Nintendo is really going to hit the group of gamers who never knew they'd enjoy waving their arms around like they actually do care. And yeah, the Virtual Console is a plus, but only hardcore geeks are going to salivate over the oldies (mmm, *Kid Icarus*...)"

**The Wii is a perfectly fine name for a videogame console... not crappy at all....**

**CRAPPY:** "Oh sure, it's a great name...if I'm potty training a two-year-old and need to teach him a name for his 'special place.' I really feel bad for all the poor kids working at game stores that have to answer the phone, 'Hi, thanks for calling GameStop where you can reserve the Wii!' The only thing worse than the name is all the penis jokes we are going have to listen to for the next four to six years."

**FINE:** "Jay, you sure do have a dirty mind! Take your mind out of the gutter, boy! You know, it's hoologans like you who tarnish the brilliant name Nintendo came up with. No other console name is bringing people together like this one—Granted, it's mostly bringing backlash, but that's because people don't see the importance of what Nintendo is trying to accomplish: a console name that celebrates everyone, including their peed!"

**Xbox 360 or PlayStation 3: Which one will be more successful in this next generation?**

**XBOX 360:** "I don't think Sony even cares about leading the gaming market anymore. They're more interested in making you buy a Blu-ray DVD player, and you'll have to sell a kidney to pay for it. By the time the PS3 has games that warrant the \$600 price tag, most people will have already bought a 360 and Wii—follo! the same price!"

**PLAYSTATION 3:** "The PS3 will win because consumers will buy anything they think is the coolest thing out there. Hardcore gamers may have differing opinions on this, but Billy-Bob Gamer will likely buy a PS3, even if he knows nothing about it. Me? I couldn't care less, because the more systems out there, the more games I get to play. So my advice: Buy them all! You'll play more games, and you'll help me keep my job!"

**"I'm confused—what do you do outside? Whatever it is, it sounds booring."**

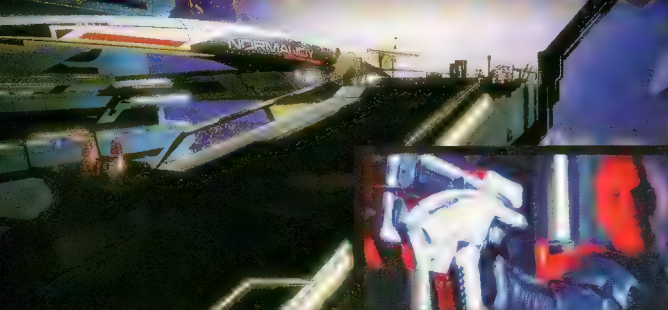


# NEXT MONTH: SEPTEMBER • ISSUE #207

## ON SALE AUGUST 15

A MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION:

# MASS EFFECT



**N**ext month, we're getting an intimate look at *Mass Effect*, an epic sci-fi role-playing game for the Xbox 360, from the makers of the hugely popular *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*. And by "epic," we mean this game is going to have everything *including* the kitchen sink. Imagine traveling through space, jumping from planet to planet, meeting exotic characters and aliens that will actually respond emotionally to your actions, and participating in intense squad-based combat. *Mass Effect* is looking as ambitious as it is beautiful, and next month we'll have exclusive details and screens just for you.

What's up with videogame ads on TV using fake graphics that look nothing like the real game? We call out the guilty parties and get some explanations. Also, we check out a competition that asks designers to *create a game—in 24 hours*. All this and more, next month in *EGM*.

### PREVIEWS

- Sonic Wild Ride (WB)
- NBA Street 4 (PS3/XB360)
- Dirty Harry (PS3/XB360)
- Marvel: Ultimate Alliance (Multi)
- Forza Motorsport 2 (XB360)



### REVIEWS

- Okami (PS2)
- Madden NFL 07 (Multi)
- Valkyrie Profile 2: Silmeria (PS2)
- Dead Rising (XB360)
- Harvest Moon DS (DS)



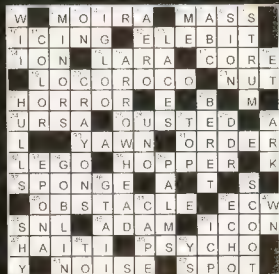
(All planned editorial content is subject to change.)

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# HSU AND CHAN: EXPANSION



FACE IT, VIDEOGAMERS, THE GAMING HORIZON ISN'T ALL SUNNY SKIES AND CLOWNS AND BOBBINS, WHATEVER THOSE ARE...

WE'RE LIMPING ALONG, NOW, BUT SAYING THAT WE CAN CONTINUE THIS WAY FOREVER IS LIKE SAYING THAT THE EARTH WILL NOT BE DESTROYED, ONE DAY RENDERING EVERY HUMAN ACHIEVEMENT VOID AND MEANINGLESS.

... DRAT, I JUST DEPRESSED MYSELF. GIVE ME A MINUTE.

THE FUTURE OF GAMING DEPENDS ON OUR ABILITY TO TAP INTO AND FOR ALL THE WILLY NON-TRADITIONAL GAMER MARKET, THOSE DEMOGRAPHICS WHO REMAIN WHOLLY UNSWAYED BY CUTTING-EDGE GRAPHICS, BUSTLING FAST GAMESLY VIOLENT ACTION, PARTIAL NUDITY, AND PRETTY MUCH ANY OTHER OBVIOUSLY COOL THING OUT THERE!



KNOW THESE FACES!



## THE CHILD

THANKS TO THEIR PRIMITIVE LITTLE BRAINS, TRADITIONAL GAMES ARE OFTEN UNSUITABLE FOR THE CHILDREN'S DEMOGRAPHIC. THEY DEMAND BRIGHT COLORS, SIMPLE CHALLENGES, AND NON-OFFENSIVE CONTENT—ALTHOUGH, IF WE HAD JUDGE FROM CURRENT CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING, THIS CAN CONSIST OF ONE THOUSAND INDIVIDUAL PART SOCKS STRUNG TOGETHER WITH FROSTED CEREAL COMMERCIALS.



## THE SENIOR CITIZEN

THE SENIOR MARKET IS A TRICKY ONE, AS MANY OF ITS NUMBERS ARE INFECTED WITH SEVERE, EVEN TERMINAL DOSES OF ODDNESS. GAMES FOR THIS DEMOGRAPHIC MUST BE WHOLLY DEVOID OF NEW, FANCY, HIGH-TECH TRICKS, SUCH AS COMPLICATED CONTROL SCHEMES OR HAVING TO ACTUALLY LOOK UP A CONSOLE. SENIOR GAMES MUST BE SIMPLE, SLOW-TO-MODERATELY PACED, ENGAGING, AND IN CERTAIN EXTREME CASES, ABLE TO FINISH VERY, VERY QUICKLY.

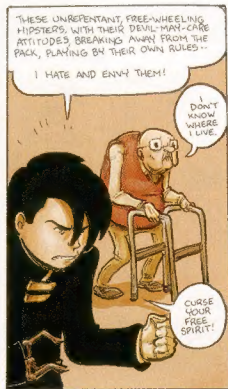


## THE WOMAN

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, MANY GREAT SCHOLARS, POETS, AND PHILOSOPHERS HAVE TRIED TO ANALYZE THIS CREATURE, "WOMAN."

THEY ARE ALL DEAD NOW.

THE ONLY THING WE HONESTLY KNOW ABOUT WOMEN, LO THESE MILLIONS OF HOURS, IS THAT THEY LIKE "TETRIS" AND NEW SHOES.



THESE UNREPENANT, FREE-WHEELING HIPSTERS, WITH THEIR DEVIL-MAY-CARE ATTITUDES BREAKING AWAY FROM THE PACK, PLAYING BY THEIR OWN RULES--

I HATE AND ENVY THEM!

I DON'T KNOW WHERE I LIVE.

CURSE YOUR FREE SPIRIT!



ALL RIGHT, NO TIME TO LOSE! TAKE THIS DOWN: NEW GAME, FEMALE PROTAGONIST, ATHLETIC, BUT DEMURE, STYLISH FOOTWEAR, GAME WORLD RENDERED IN PRIMARILY COLORS, ISOLATED BY NON-INTERFERING CLOUTURES, STRONG PUZZLE ELEMENTS WITH ADJUSTABLE DIFFICULTY, SIMPLE CONTROLS.

ANYBODY ELSE GOT ANYTHING?

MAN, YOU GIVE 'ER BOOMS AND A GUY, AND I'M IN!



YOU KNOW, IN THE END, THOSE NON-TODD TROPICAL GAMERS HAVE PRETTY GOOD TASTE.

I NEVER KNEW YOU WERE A PLAY-TESTER GUY!

YEAH, KEEP IT ON THE DOWNLOW, MAN.

GLASS CEILING AND ALLA THAT.

END

ALL THAT PRESSURE—  
THE PRESSURE TO FIT IN, LOOK PERFECT, GET HIGH,  
TO BE ACCEPTED—IF YOU LET IT PUSH ON YOU TOO  
MUCH, HOW WILL YOU CHANGE?



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[abovetheinfluence.com](http://abovetheinfluence.com)





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**M** Blood and Gore  
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Language  
Use of Alcohol

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