

THE No.1 VIDEOGAME MAGAZINE

EGM™

ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY 1UP.COM

NEW LOOK FOR
ELECTRONIC
GAMING
MAGAZINE
STARTING THIS MONTH

INSIDE:

GOD OF WAR II

RAINBOW SIX
VEGAS MAP PACK

DRAGON QUEST IX

CLIVE BARKER'S
SICK NEW GAME

CASTLEVANIA:
DRACULA X

BattleStation!

The PlayStation 3 is
under attack! What went
wrong (and what Sony
has to say about it)



How will PS3, Wii, and Xbox 360
fare in 2007? The future outlook
for all systems revealed inside

> OLD PEOPLE ON THE WII

We get a group of seniors to test-drive the Wii for a day

> OBLIVION EXPANSION

New worlds, new quests... new screens, inside!

> 2006 AWARDS

The best (and worst) of last year





PREPARE FOR A VEHICULAR BEAT-DOWN.

Welcome to the brutal off-road racing world of MotorStorm, where to win, you must first survive. Push yourself to the limits against some of the nastiest, dirtiest drivers ever to go off-roading as they taunt, goad and attack you until someone is lucky enough to reach the finish line. Or play head-to-head online and make the battle a little more personal. Tear it up in anything from a high-flying dirt bike to a powerful big rig, and with real-time deforming terrain, no two laps will ever be alike. So get ready. It's time to see if you can survive the ultimate off-road rumble.

MOTORSTORM

www.motorstorm-thegame.com



Language
Violence

PLAY BEYOND

MotorStorm is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe. ©2007 Sony Computer Entertainment Europe. Published by Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Developed by Evolution Studios Ltd. All rights reserved. "PlayStation," "PLAYSTATION," and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Play B3yond is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc.



PLAYSTATION 3



ARMED TO THE TEETH. WIRED TO THE EYES.
ADVANCED TO THE CORE.



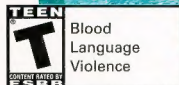
DOMINATE THE BATTLEFIELD OF 2014
WITH FUTURISTIC FIREPOWER.



EXPANDED AND ENHANCED MULTIPLAYER
-YOU'LL NEVER FIGHT THE SAME WAY TWICE.



OUTSMART AND OUTMANEUVER YOUR
ENEMY WITH FULL-SCREEN CROSS-COM 2.0.



© 2007 Ubisoft Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. Ghost Recon, Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter, the Soldier Icon, Ubisoft, Ubi.com and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. "PlayStation", "PS" Family logo, and "PSP" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Memory Stick Duo™ may be required (sold separately). Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox Live, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies. Mobile version © 2007 Gameloft. All Rights Reserved. Gameloft and the Gameloft logo are registered trademarks of Gameloft S.A.



Tom Clancy's
**GHOST
RECON**
ADVANCED WARFIGHTER

IN STORES MARCH 2007



UBISOFT®

CONTENTS

Issue 213 • March 2007



64

Cover Story: BattleStation!

The PS3 is under fire. What went wrong? Sony's prez responds...and tells us about his future plans for the platform



14 Old people and the Wii



22 Castlevania: Dracula X Chronicles

↑ LETTERS

08 Paper + pen + you = letters

↑ PRESS START

14 **Next-Generation Gap**
To grandmother's house Wii go to see if seniors really like it

20 **Foreign Object**

22 **Preview: Castlevania: Dracula X Chronicles**
Because the DS can't get all the handheld love

26 **Head Games**
How videogames haunt their own developers

34 **Preview: God of War II**
How do you top a threeway? Start with the Blade of Olympus

36 **Online Scene**
Viva Las Vegas...again

38 **Spies Like Us**
We investigate the shady practice of skill marketing

42 **Preview: Clive Barker's Jericho**
Next-gen frights from the king of gore

50 **Preview: The Elder Scrolls IV: Shivering Isles**
How *Oblivion* is expanding

52 **Pokémon...and on...and on**
Just like the common cockroach, Pokémon just can't be stopped

58 **Rumor Mill**
Wipeouts aren't only for surfers and skaters

↑ REVIEWS

82 **Reviews Intro**

84 **Virtua Fighter 5**

86 **NBA Street Homecourt**

88 **Battlestations: Midway**

88 **Fuzion Frenzy 2**

89 **Winning Eleven: Pro Evolution Soccer 2007**

90 **Crackdown**

92 **MVP 07 NCAA Baseball**

92 **Ar Tonelico**

93 **Diddy Kong Racing**

94 **Lunar Knights**

94 **Monster Kingdom**

95 **Valhalla Knights**

96 **Reviews Wrap-Up**

↑ GAME OVER

98 **Seanbaby's Rest of the Crap**
Tearing into the worst-selling games of 2006

100 **Retro: Dragon Quest**
And you thought *Final Fantasy* was a big deal

102 **Crossword/Grudge Match**

104 **Final Word**

106 **Hsu & Chan**

ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA

ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

EDITORIAL
Editor-in-Chief Dan "Shaq" Hsu
Executive Editor Shana Beckett-Houston
Managing Editor Jennifer Tapp
Senior Editor Craig Beyer
Preview Editor Ryan Lofner
Reviews Editor Greg Ford
Associate Editor Michael Donohue
International Editor John Riccardi
Intern Brooke Rubin

CONTRIBUTORS
Robert Adams, Rig Barwood, Alexander Chavez, Ryan Corvettini, Sean Dalziel, Alexander Demos, Randy Dodson, Chuck Emel, Claudio Gonzalez, Theron "Scudler" Nguyen, Evan Salmon, Luke Smith, Scott Stenberg

DESIGN
Art Director: Manique Converte
Assistant Art Director: Mike O'Neil
Founder: Steve Harris

ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA GAME GROUP

HEAD OFFICES
President Scott C. McCarthy
Senior Vice President and General Manager: VUP Network, Inc. Becker
Senior Vice President and Editorial Director: John Bardeen
Senior Vice President of Publishing: Scott McDaniel
Vice President, Sales: Mark Thompson
Vice President of Marketing, Research and Events: Ray Arata
Director of Finance: Vyahlova Jazm
Group Creative Director: Brian Cook

ADVERTISING
Copy Chief: Jason Wilson
Copy Editors: Kaitlyn Jay Egan, Andrew Fleck

PRODUCTION
Production Manager: Selsy Reimer

SALES
Vice President, Sales: Mark Thompson
Senior Director of Promotions: Tom Ryan
Production Coordinator: Tibbany Gill

PUBLISHING
Territory Managers & Execs. Areas:
Gaming Northwest Key Accounts: National Advertising Director: Amy Melina
Account Executive: Mac O'Rourke
Account Coordinator: Stephanie Bryant
Sales: Stephanie Ray Accounts Regional Sales Director: Leslie C. Goffard
Account Executive: Paige Finkelman
Gaming — West Coast II: Account Coordinator: Paige Finkelman
Gaming & Consumer — East Coast: Regional Sales Director: Andrew Reisman

Account Coordinator: Marie O'Hara
Consumer First & Advertising — West & Midwest
Advertising Sales
Senior Director of Consumer: Mac Callison
Account Executive: Missy Rothwell

Advertising Accounts — West: California Advertising Director: Richard Tye II
Online Sales
Senior Director, Consumer Online: Rick Kizza

Director, Gaming Online: Brent Hertz
Account Executive: Steve Cohen
Senior Advertising Coordinator: Tanya Shoenberger
Administrative Assistant: Lynn Fortinacci

1UP.com
Editor-in-Chief: Sam Younger
Senior Manager of Ad Operations: Adam Chen
Audience Development Manager: Roshawn Hinespoker
Advertising Campaign Coordinator: LaShawn Kim

Risk Taker



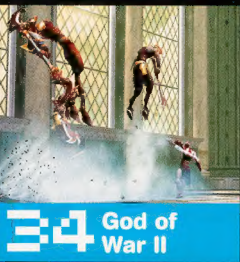
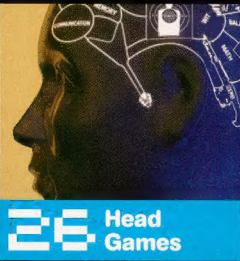
THIS WAS A HARD ISSUE TO WORK ON. Our cover story isn't about an individual game or "best of" this or that. It's about a vice that's been washing over the industry—that the PlayStation 3 is disappointing/damned/doomed. Now, it wasn't that the bulk of the story (an interview with Sony Computer Entertainment America president and CEO Jack Tretton) was difficult. We asked what was on our minds; he answered. But packaging this story on the front cover was a challenge.

I was quite proud of our art team when they came up with the idea of doing a messy twist on the infamous PlayStation 3 "white room" television ads. But is it clever? Or is it too sensationalized? Is it honest? Or is it painting an unfair picture? Will we sell a ton of issues because gamers are hungry for more serious topics? Or will we alienate the huge PlayStation fan base? And...am I ready for that phone call I'll be getting from Sony when they first see their new system dressed in tomato? (Hopefully, they won't pull out of the *Ratchet & Clank X* exclusive we have planned for next month...)

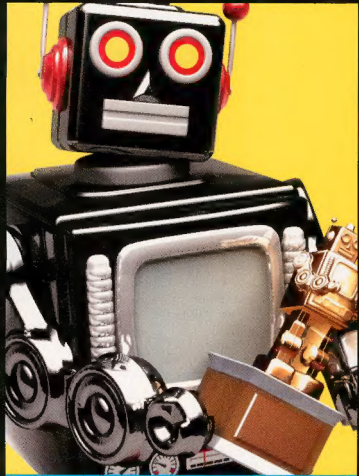
We'll be watching this issue closely—we're really curious to see how well it sells on newsstands (which is how we gauge our success). We know "BattleStation!" is no "OMG, *Halo 3* first screenshots!" cover story, but if enough people buy this month's EGM, then we know we can and should do more stories like these in the future. (You do see what I'm getting at, don't you?) We want you to tell everyone to buy more EGMs! Or just send us money... whichever is easier for you...)

—Dan "Shoe" Hsu, Editor-in-Chief

> electronic gaming monthly



34 God of War II



76 The Best and Worst of 2006

> THIS MONTH'S EGM EXTRAS

EGM213.1UP.COM



1UP Reader Awards: Best of 2006

Voting is only half the battle—the results are what matter. See who goes home in tears and who rocks the house.



EGM Live* Podcast: Hear what the EGM crew has to say about the PS3 interview with Sony bigwig Jack Tretton.

For Your Viewing Pleasure: Before Bingo and nap time, you can watch footage of old people attempting to play the Wii. And then check out *Clive Barker's Jericho* in motion.

Crackdown SuperGuide Aggressively take to the streets (and the air) with *MyCheats.com's* guide to controlling the supercop.



Please check out our podcast at **EGMLive.1UP.com** and our message boards at **EGMboards.1UP.com**.

EGMboards.1UP.com

ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA INC.

MANAGING
Vice President of Marketing, Research
and Events: **Way Lohde**
Research Director: **May Hong**
PS Manager: **Stefan Pfeifferfeld**

Marketing Coordinator:
Yasmina Akbarovic
Marketing Graphic Designer:
Drew Halberstadt
Marketing Graphic Designer:
Robby Olyson

By order of the board of directors
issued on 12/29/2006

Chairman & CEO:
Robert F. Cochran
Chief Financial Officer:
Mark G. Myers
**Executive Vice President,
Licensing and Legal Affairs,
General Counsel & Secretary:**
Gregory Berlin

Presidents:
Scott C. McCarthy (Game Group)
Shawn Samuels (Shopping Group)
Jason Young (Consumer/Small
Business Group)

Senior Vice Presidents:
Kenneth Soehn (Corporate Sales)
Ira Becker (Game Group)
John Davison (Editorial Director,
Game Group)
Jim Louwerich (Editorial Director,
Consumer/Small Business Group)
Angelo Macchiaro (Sales &
Marketing, Consumer/Small
Business Group)
Scott McDaniel (Publishing, Game
Group)
Martha Schwartz (Custom
Solutions Group)
Michael Vaziri (Editorial Director,
Enterprise Group)

Vice Presidents:
Aimee Gauding (Market Experts)
Barry Hungen (Internet)
Krista Karkhan (International
Licensing)
Michael Kruger (Market Experts)
Ray Leda (Marketing, Research
and Events, Game Group)
Rick Lohrborn (Sales)
Eric Lundquist (Editorial Director,
eMEX)
Chris Maguire (Internet)
Jim McCabe (PC Magazines)
Priscilla Ng (e-Events)
Paul D'Onofrio (Event Marketing
Group)

Beth Repetti (Human Resources)
Thomas Rowland (Corporate Sales)
Nell Young (Consumer/Small
Business Group)
Shelby Sutton (Audience
Development, Consumer/Small
Business)
Stephan Voth (Enterprise Group
Publishing Director)
Monica Via (Event Marketing Group)
Marcio Yamaguchi (Sales,
Game Group)
Nell Young (Consumer/Small
Business Group)

IT West Coast
Senior Technical Analyst:
Bill Schneider
Desktop Administrator:
Nick Kallala

Content appears on this website
unless we e-mail you our fortune,
business@ziffdavis.com

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE

Subscription Service: 800-778-1111
In California: 310-664-7145
Web: www.ziffdavis.com

All content copyright ©
2007 Ziff Davis Media Inc.
Reproduction, modification, or
transmission, in whole or in
part, by any means, without
written permission from Ziff
Davis Media Inc. is strictly
prohibited.

All rights reserved.



LETTERS

➤ nunchuk legality, geometry lessons, and—as always—Fabio

➤ TRIVIAL ISSUE

This month's EGM question:

How many total pocket monsters are there in the *Pokémon* franchise?

E-mail the answer to EGM@ziffdavis.com

(subject head:

Trivia: EGM #213) for a chance to win something potentially awesome.

.....

Guy's got game

I have conjured up a game concept with unholy potential. My most prominent contribution...is my motion-capture. I truly believe that my moc-cap acting skills will set a high new standard for game acting. I have a massive mythology of characters, weapons, moves, history, and much more. I just need a powerful development force to help flesh it all out. I'm in dire need of trustworthy partners to help create this unknown masterpiece. So if the offer sounds good, maybe someone on your staff might want to go into development. I'm here, armed with nuclear capabilities. Let me know!

—Terrance Davis

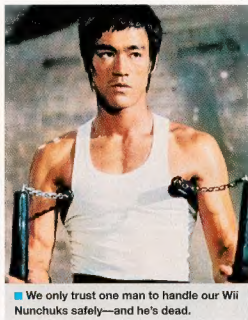
We're flattered that you're seeking our help, Terrance. But seeing as how we maxed out our development creativity just coming up with the names *Street Fighter II* and *Final Fart*, you're best off seeking professional help at www.gamedev.net.

Inmate's got a theory

While everybody is focusing on the underpowered Wii, I bet Nintendo is in some secret manhole busy at work on the real monster machine—a machine that will overpower the rest. And best of all: it will have a tried-and-proven Wii-mote. Can you imagine playing *Gears of War* with the Wii-mote? I don't know when this monster machine will be released, but I'm sure it will be before PlayStation 4.

—Phouvieng Keosoupha, Chuckawalla Valley State Prison

We hope you're right (we can't fathom playing Wii games with barely-better-than-GameCube-caliber visuals for the next five years). But with the initial success of the Wii, gamers have voted with their wallets that graphics aren't everything. Nintendo's less-power/more-innovation strategy has been validated...for now. In any case, don't drop your Wii-mote in the shower, dude.



■ We only trust one man to handle our Wii Nunchuks safely—and he's dead.

Lethal weapon

There are some countries where it is illegal to own nunchaku, and the Wii-mote has a Nunchuk attachment. Do any of you have any idea about how Nintendo will deal with this "problem"? If the Nunchuk attachment becomes contraband because it "resembles" a weapon, what will our fellow international gamers do?

—Dave Ko

Hmmm.... You sure know a lot about nunchaku regulations, Dave. Seeing as the Wii has debuted in several countries—not to mention U.S. states—where nunchaku are illegal, we figure you have nothing to worry about. Back to donning your ninja suit and spying on neighborhood girls, little stealth assassin.

Disturbance in the Force

Can you give me the 411 on what's going on at LucasArts? There's rumors going around on the Internet about a second *Republic Commando*, and what happened to *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic III*? People are saying it's canceled. I need some answers!

—Stephen P.

A LucasArts rep responds: "Well, we've never stated the existence of those games in the first place, so canceling one of them sounds a little out-there, doesn't it? However, there are some exciting announcements coming in the very near future, including new gaming franchises—one that's *Star Wars*-related

➤ LETTER OF THE MONTH

She said, he said...



■ The battle lines are drawn....

In response to Katie Bailey's letter in EGM #212, "The rosy view from a Nintendo fan's ivory tower" [in which she calls out the shootings and stabbings associated with the PS3 launch], I say, "Wow—you're wrong." She talks of isolated incidents as if they happened commonly that launch day. Also, about the folks buying the PlayStation 3 just to make a quick buck on eBay: I have many a friend who got the PS3 for Christmas, or on launch day, and all for the games and the service. And I'm almost 500 percent sure that I saw some Wii's on eBay at

last glance.

The PS3 sold for \$500-\$600, which is a lot of cash, as proved by the millions of gamers whining simultaneously when the price was announced. It costs more than the Wii, and therefore people were willing to risk more. It by no means makes those people's actions acceptable in any manner, but just because it was a videogame console it's suddenly shocking and on the news at every waking moment.

People need to wake up and stop overreacting. Each system has something different to offer,

and none of the systems should provoke violence. Perhaps the pwning I just gave you, Katie, will awaken your conscience, because you obviously don't have one if you can poke fun at people dying just because you think the Wii is better than the PS3. It's not about having the best system or having the highest Gamerscore. It's about fun, plain and simple. I should think a Wii gamer would know that.

—Erik Weidner

Oh, snap! Few things make for better reading than console fans sniping at each other in seething missives.

We've heard from a Wii lady. Now Erik here has the PS3 fans covered (except your free game in the mail, kid). If we could only get an Xbox gamer to bitch about Wii Friend Codes or the PS3's paltry online options—trifecta!



Vinsanity by Carter.
Body by milk.



Slam it. The protein in milk helps build muscle and drinking it regularly along with exercise will help keep your body toned. Staying active, eating right and drinking 3 glasses a day of lowfat or fat free milk helps you look great and stay in shape. So grab a glass and go crazy.

got milk?[™]

www.bodybymilk.com



News flash: LucasArts will make a Star Wars game again someday. Also: Candy tastes good.

and a new intellectual property that's literally 'groundbreaking'—that feature actual next-generation gameplay only possible thanks to the power of the new consoles.

Geometry warrior

In last issue's "Weirdest Science" feature, in the section talking about the PS3 grill, you mentioned that the shape of the PS3 was concave. That's not accurate. Concave is the shape that the 360 has on both sides, where it dents in. The PS3's shape is convex. I don't even know why I'm sending this—maybe I'm thinking I'll get mocked in your letters section and get my claim to fame. Oh well. If nothing else, I guess you guys got your geometry lesson of the day.

—Brian Graham

Fighting words

We, the Tekken community, do not hate it against you that you suck at

Tekken. We do, however, find your consistent jabs at *Tekken* profoundly annoying. Repeating infinitely that *Virtua Fighter* is a "deeper" game doesn't make it true. If you think you are good at *Tekken* and a button masher hands you your ass in a split-second, it is a deficiency in your play, not the *Tekken* system.

As we are rational human beings, we don't begrudge you your preference of *Virtua Fighter*. Someone has to play floaty, sluggish crap. (Zing!) However, we ask that you preface your comments about *Tekken* with the disclaimer that you are, in fact, terrible at it.

—The Tekken Community

Seriously, convex-PS3 guy and the Tekken collective: Do you really think a few lame insults will bait us into picking a fight with you? Did you not just see us taunt a guy with a nunchaku fetish? We're crazy like that, and you need to try harder. ❌

> LOW BATTERY

THE TRAGIC MEETING OF FREE LOVE AND MOTORSTORM:



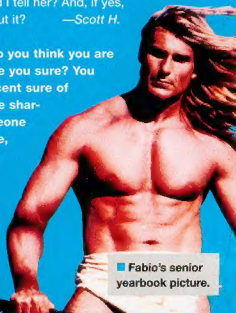
Jeremy 'Norm' Scott

> IT'S-A-ME, FABIO

Ask an EGM cover model

Dear Fabio: I think I'm falling in love with one of my friends. Should I tell her? And, if yes, how should I go about it? —Scott H.

Fabio responds: Do you think you are falling in love or are you sure? You should be 100-percent sure of your feelings before sharing them with someone else. If you are sure, most definitely tell her. Be direct. A real man isn't afraid to express his emotions. Good luck!



Fabio's senior yearbook picture.



Have a question about life, love, triceps exercises, or anything else for Fabio, who appeared on the cover of EGM Issue #3? E-mail it to EGM@ziffdavis.com, subject: "Dear Fabio." We're not kidding. Fabio really answers these!

> CONTACT EGM

E-mail: EGM@ziffdavis.com

Snail mail:

EGM Letters
101 2nd Street, 8th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105

Subscription help:

Web: www.zdmcirc.com; Phone: (800) 779-1174

Back issues: back_issues@ziffdavis.com

> OOPS!

In last month's letters section, we said *SpongeBob SquarePants* games are "probably not" the secret to eternal redemption. Turns out they probably are. Sorry for the confusion.





EVERYONE
E Cartoon Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

Wii

SONIC TEAM

SEGA
www.sega.com

© 2006 Sega. All Rights Reserved. Sega and the Sega logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of Sega Corporation in the United States and other countries. Sonic the Hedgehog is a registered trademark of Sega Corporation. Sonic, the Sonic character, and the Sonic character design are registered trademarks or trademarks of Sega Corporation in the United States and other countries. Sonic the Hedgehog is a registered trademark of Sega Corporation. Sonic, the Sonic character, and the Sonic character design are registered trademarks or trademarks of Sega Corporation in the United States and other countries.

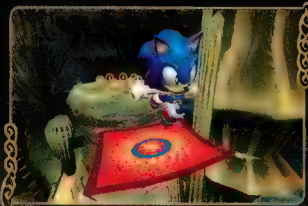
An unknown enemy. An uncharted land.
A Sonic adventure like no other.

SONIC™ and the Secret Rings

Sonic is racing into a mysterious new land. And you're at the controls. In this all-new adventure, Sonic has to save the world from an evil genie. It'll be one heck of a ride.



100 missions set in a scorching desert, a prehistoric jungle and more.



Fun interactive environments featuring catapults, magic carpets and flying pots.



40 party games including Sonic and his friends for up to four players.

February 2007



Exclusively for the Wii

Pre-order today for a special gift!

Check out www.sega.com/secretrings

PRESS START

> gaming news, previews, kombat basketball, and other stuff



Photographs by Alejandro Chavez

FOCUS GROUP

Next-generation **GAF**

We subject senior citizens to Nintendo's Wii to see if the system really is for everybody By Crispin Boyer



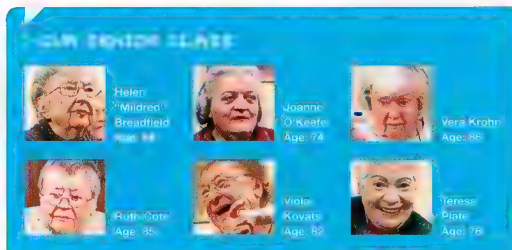
Nintendo President Satoru Iwata said turing seniors to the Wii (as seen above in the company's marketing materials) is as tricky as "trying to sell cosmetics to men."

"RESPECT YOUR ELDERS" has gone from something a nice young man would say to a bona fide business strategy. Just ask Nintendo, which from the get-go marketed its motion-sensing, megaselling Wii as an omni-demographic, granny-approved gaming machine. Company reps even infiltrated an event sponsored by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) to press the system's controllers into some age-spotted hands. It was a hit, the company says.

We had to see for ourselves. Hauling along a Wii, a TV, several Wii-motes, and a pile of games, we visited the Eskaton Hazel Shirley Manor senior apartments in El Cerrito, CA, on a rainy day to see if its wise

old residents would think Nintendo's newfangled contraption was the hottest thing since Andy Griffith from that *Matlock* program on the TV.

And we had a perfectly lovely time... at least until we got to *Red Steel*. Here's how things played out in the center's rec room....





Two-for-one Castlevanias on your PSP



The Internet is full of lying liars



Clive Barker and Satan: Chums?

WII SPORTS BOWLING

We figure our favorite Wii pack-in minigame could be an octogenarian's killer app. Not quite....

Joanne: [Starting her turn after we demonstrate a few ball tosses] Do you have to swing your whole arm? Or can you just hold it?

EGM: You don't have to stand in order to get into it. For the most part, you can just move your wrist. First thing, though—put on the safety straps. These things tend to fly off and break TVs and whatnot.

An onlooker in the crowd: Don't hit me in the head!

Joanne: I'm trying to line up the orange line [with the pins], is that it? [After realizing she has to let the button go to release the ball, she knocks down most of the pins and raises both arms in triumph]

EGM: How'd that feel? Was it like real bowling?

Joanne: That's fun. If I win, I get a trophy?

Mildred: [Starting her turn] I start it by pushing this? [Mildred has more trouble than Joanne figuring out the timing. Someone in the peanut

gallery suggests it might be easier if she stands up. After four tries, she has one successful throw and knocks down three pins.] It's spinning the wrong way.

Onlooker: Don't your arms get tired?

Joanne: [Taking her turn] Watch it go in the gutter there. [It doesn't. It's another good throw]

Mildred: You're good. I wanna bowl on your team.

Joanne: Beginner's luck?

EGM: No, you're a natural. How much do you think that game is worth right there?

Mildred: I don't have any idea. I haven't bought a game in 25 years.

EGM: How much were they then?

Mildred: Oh, I don't know. I think about 20, 25 dollars. They're probably about three times that now.

EGM: This thing sells for \$250, and it comes with bowling here and some other games that we'll play.

Ruth: That sounds reasonable.

Vera: How long have these games been in existence?

EGM: Since November. This whole idea of controlling the games with a remote control is pretty new.

Ruth: [Still struggling with the timing] I'm never going to get this.

EGM: Do you think that it's not intuitive enough?

Ruth: No, I'm just not getting it. I mean, I swung down this time and up and let the button off.... Maybe I let the button off too quick.

EGM: What do you think is easier? This or real bowling?

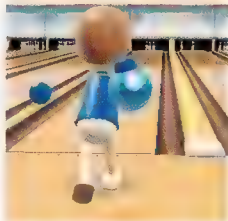
Ruth: [Laughs] Well, I was never a very good bowler to begin with.

Onlooker: It's a man's game.

Joanne: How much are the games?

EGM: About 50 bucks.

Vera: How about a seniors' discount?



WII SPORTS TENNIS

Since timing the bowling-ball toss proved tricky, we switched to this simpler Wii Sports game

Ruth: I played tennis a loooong time ago.

EGM: Oh—well, you should be very good at it, then.

Ruth: [Laughs] No. Believe me, I'm not good at anything anymore. So you just swing it and don't press anything else?

EGM: Yes. Unless you're serving—then you don't have to push a button. You just swing it when it comes at you.

Vera: Just like I'm holding a racket.

EGM: And, Ruth, when it comes over to your side, just swing the racket as the ball comes to you.

Ruth: Oh, I see. I just watch my right side here.

Vera: [Tries to serve but can't seem to swing the remote hard enough to register its movement] Hmmm.

EGM: Let me see how much wrist movement you really need. [We show the range of motion and demonstrate that you must swing the remote up or down rather than just push it forward]

Vera: Oh, you moved it down. [She tries again but still can't swing it hard enough to register]

Ruth: Maybe we should try another game? Perhaps diving? I mean, we both drove cars...so maybe we could....

Onlooker: Why doesn't Ruth try serving?

Ruth: Oh, me serve? I don't know that I can. [She tries but is having the same problem as Vera—she can't swing the remote hard enough to register its motion] I can't get it over even once, even.

Vera: I can't, either.

EGM: Do you think it's taking too much wrist motion?

Ruth: I think so.

EGM: What do you think about the game in general, though?

Ruth: Oh, I think it's a mighty good game. It's just that you need practice, you see. And my brain doesn't always work with the rest of me. [Laughs] You'd never know I played tennis.

EGM: Well, real-life tennis is a little different.

Ruth: Yeah, I was a little younger—like about 60 or 70 years younger.

EGM: What kind of games would you like to see on this thing?

Everybody: Casino!

Vera: What about skiing?

Ruth: And bridge.





EXCITE TRUCK

Enough with the slow stuff. We decide it's time for these seniors to put the pedal to the metal

EGM: So this is a truck-racing game. You two are going to race.

Teresa: Oh, I'm probably going to be a horrible driver.

Viola: Beware, you people—I'm driving! [She gets into it right away, holding the *Wii Remote* inches from her nose and peering over as if it were a steering wheel] Oh, I miss driving. Oh, no—I crashed already!

EGM: You have some nitro going on there. The number two button is gas and number one is brake, but you don't want the brake.

Viola: Oh, did you see what I just did? [Laughs] Now I'm going backward. [More laughter] You're a better driver than I am. Get out of my way!

EGM: You get points when you do crazy tricks, too.

Viola: Oh, this is fun. This is fun!

EGM: Is this the first videogame you've played?

Viola: Yes, it's the first one. Somebody called me up once and said something about playing games on your TV. What? They're coming out with that now? Instead of reruns. Electronics, games, and all that kind of jazz. You need an extra TV or anything like that?

EGM: No. Just hook it to your own TV. Thinking of getting a Wii now?

Viola: [Laughs] I might. I turn on the TV now, and everything's reruns. Is that all you put on TV is reruns? Once in a while, you might get a movie on Lifetime or some other station, but very seldom.

EGM: How about Vera and Ruth take a turn now?

Ruth: [Starting to drive] You don't have the Grand Prix? My son does the video and audio for [Intense]



Raceway]. If he were down here, he would be ashamed of me.

Vera: You crashed.

Ruth: I didn't know which one I was.

Vera: [Holding the *Wii-remote* one-handed] What speed are we going?

EGM: It doesn't have a speedometer, but you must be doing at least 70. You're doing some off-roading.

Vera: This is kind of fun. I crash a lot...and I probably don't even have insurance. I don't even see the road. I'm going through a bunch of fields.

Ruth: Excuses, excuses.

Vera: I went over a cliff. What are those yellow things? [Points to the holographic yellow walls that indicate track boundaries]

EGM: Those are like invisible walls. They keep you on the track.

Ruth: I can't tell where the track is.

Onlooker: Every time you crash, you lose points.

Ruth: Well, you don't lose your life, anyway. [Laughs] If you did, I'd be dead by now.

Vera: I tell you, I hurt all over.

Ruth: Ran into a tree that time.

EGM: You might want to hold the remote out more, like a steering wheel. How long has it been since you've both driven cars?

Ruth: I just sold mine last year.

Someone in the audience: [Pointing to Ruth's motorized Rascal scooter] She drives that thing just like she drives the car.

➤ **Beware, you people—I'm driving! Oh, I miss driving. Oh, no—I crashed already!**

—82-year-old Viola Kovats

TO GRANDMA'S HOUSE WITH US

Gaming's original golden girl weighs in on the Wii

Hertica-Z-Boy sent to half-racing when Cleveland-based gaming fair, 70-year-old Barbara St. Hilaire is having issues with *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess*. "I'm having a bit of a time," says the self-titled Old Grandma Hardcore, whose 10-hour-a-day gaming habit and salty language (hear it all on ohc.blogspot.com) landed her a gig as a guest reviewer on the MTV.com gaming show *The 3-Hole*. But her *Princess* predicament isn't *Wii-related*—she actually doesn't have the system yet and is stuck playing the game on the clunkier GameCube. St. Hilaire did do hands-on with the *Wii* last year's Electronic Entertainment Expo, while she says she didn't come up immediate grips with its motion-sensory magic, she's confident she'll master the controls if she could just get a system. "I'm hoping I'll get one for my birthday," February, she says. "Nintendo, are you listening?"



CRACKDOWN



Limited time offer—see www.Xbox.com for details. Xbox Live Gold required. Crackdown: Multiplayer requires Internet connection. Microsoft Corporation © 2007. All rights reserved. Microsoft, the Microsoft logo, and the Crackdown logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Microsoft, Xbox Live, and the Xbox Live logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries.

Carry the scales of justice in one hand, and a two-ton sedan in the other.

You're a genetically enhanced agent of justice authorized to do whatever it takes to sweep the criminal scum out of Pacific City. From the streets to the rooftops, use anything you can get your hands on to show the thugs that crime doesn't pay. And for the ultimate payback, combine forces in co-op play for twice the destruction and double the retribution.

All Justice. No Restraints.

INCLUDES INVITATION TO
HALO 3 MULTIPLAYER BETA

Limited time offer—look for specially marked boxes.*



WWW.CRACKDOWNONCRIME.COM

realtime
worlds

Microsoft
game studios

XBOX
LIVE

MATURE 17+
ESRB
CONTENT RATING

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

Jump in.

XBOX 360



RED STEEL

We bet Nintendo didn't bring this blah-and-bloody first-person shooter to that AARP event



EGM: This game is kind of like a shooting gallery. You point the controller at the screen to shoot. [The Wii Remote] is like a gun. It has a trigger under your index finger like a gun, see?

Joanne: Who else is going to do it with me?

EGM: We're going to play the one-player game. So in this game, you use both controllers. You use this one [waves the Nunchuk] to move around and the other one to aim. It's definitely taking it up a notch in terms of the complexity.

Joanne: You don't have an easier one?

EGM: See the dot on the screen? That's your crosshair. You point it to shoot. [We start off in a cinema sequence and fire a few shots at a friendly character] You can even shoot that guy for practice. He doesn't care.

Joanne: Isn't he the good guy? So he's like Superman.

EGM: So you look in the direction you want to go, then you push forward on this other controller to walk. If you want to start, I can move you around, and you can just shoot. [We take the Nunchuk and "drive" the game while Joanne shoots with the Wii-mote]

Joanne: [She fires a few shots] Oh, did I shoot the hole in the wall there? [Laughs] It got blasted.

EGM: It's OK. It's the bad guys' hotel. All right...we're going to go through this door and walk through this hall, and here are the bad guys. We have to defend this room until that timer on the screen goes down.

Joanne: I can't even see them.

EGM: They're wearing dark suits. They're kind of hard to see. Aim a little higher.

Joanne: Now, are you putting that red arrow there? Is that you?

EGM: No, that's where we're getting shot from. Oh, no—we died!

Joanne: [Exasperated] I killed me.

EGM: It's OK—we start right where we left off. [We hand her the Nunchuk so she can try moving and shooting] If you want to, why don't you stay in the corner and aim at the bad guys as they come at you? See? Those guys coming out the door there, if you can pull the trigger on them. So if you can aim higher... just a little higher. Awww—almost!

Joanne: I shot the gun.... Is that me? [Laughs]

EGM: [We take back the Nunchuk] All you need to worry about is pointing around and aiming. OK, here comes a guy. Pull the trigger! Pull the trigger! Oh, you're so close! You got him! You did some damage.

Joanne: No, I didn't. [Laughs] I can't play this.

EGM: This one is kind of complicated. So you don't think you'd play it?

Joanne: No. That one's more for the young.



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS

It's our favorite Wii game by far. What are the chances the seniors will think so, too?



EGM: You're trying to save the world from evil and rescue the princess, like you do in all fairy tales. [We walk out into the game's massive overworld and let some enemies approach us] All you need to do is shake the remote to attack those bad guys with his sword.

Joanne: So there's no button pressing this time?

EGM: Well, not in the combat. The game itself is long and pretty complicated, but the combat system isn't.

Joanne: I'm the little green guy? That's me?

EGM: Yeah, that's you. I'll move you around with the other controller like I

did in the last game, so you can just swing the controller to attack. Swing the controller. Now swing it! [Link wallops a monster onscreen] There we go. See how it hit him?

Joanne: Yeah, but I thought it was gonna hit me, too. [She hits the monster again] Oh, boy—I really made him fly, didn't I? [She loses interest] This seems to me like it would be better for the young, too.

EGM: Have you played other videogames?

Joanne: Not a lot of them.

EGM: What do you play?

Joanne: Mostly Solitaire. Every night, that's the last thing I do is try to beat Solitaire.

EGM: Solitaire is super-popular. Even President Bush plays it.

Joanne: Oh, that does it! I'm not going to play it anymore, then.

EGM: Would you be more willing to play this than you would Solitaire?

Joanne: It makes your brain work

Vera: It teaches coordination.

Ruth: It keeps you limber.

Joanne: I crochet to wind down, and a game machine like this would be even better.

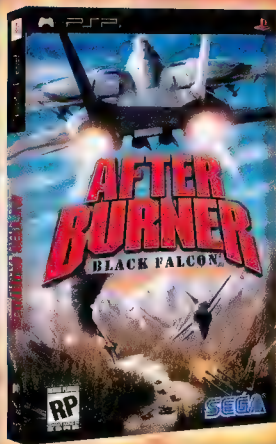


THE IMPACT AARP TIME

Despite all the gutterballs and bad aim, the seniors seemed stoked on justice 4 Wii next to their room's karaoke machine. A subscriber to EGM? Not even close. "You have any literature on the Wii?" Mildred asked. "Just copies of our magazine," we said. "Oh, besides your magazines...Any brochures?"



Watch videos of the seniors shaking and shimmying their way through all our Wii games—plus a bonus game not in this feature—at EGM213.IUP.com.



CLASSIC ARCADE FLIGHT COMBAT IN THE PALM OF YOUR HANDS!

FIGHT THROUGH A BARRAGE OF HOSTILE AIR, AND LAND-BASED ENEMIES.

BATTLE IN A VARIETY OF CO-OP AND COMPETITIVE MULTIPLAYER DOG FIGHTS.

CUSTOMIZE YOUR F-14 TOMCAT WITH OVER-THE-TOP SKINS, DESTRUCTIVE WEAPONS, AND ENGINE ENHANCEMENTS.



DESTROY & CONQUER

On Your PSP® (PlayStation®Portable) system



RULE THE STREETS IN ALL OUT DESTRUCTIVE COMBAT-RACING.

CHALLENGE FRIENDS IN A VARIETY OF CO-OP AND COMPETITIVE MULTIPLAYER MODES.

OBLITERATE DEATHMATCH ARENAS AND RACING ENVIRONMENTS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE.

BUILD YOUR CAR WITH MASSIVE WEAPONS AND VARIOUS SKINS.



MARCH 2007

GO TO WWW.SEGA.COM/SAVE-MONEY

FOR DOLLARS OFF THESE 2 GAMES!



PlayStation Portable



© SEGA. SEGA is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. SEGA, the SEGA logo, After Burner and After Burner Black Falcon are either registered trademarks or trademarks of SEGA Corporation. All rights reserved. Planet Moon Studios and the Planet Moon Logo are trademarks of Planet Moon Studios. Produced under license from Boeing Management Company. Lockheed Martin trademarks used under license to Sega Corporation. Produced under a license from Northrop Grumman Systems Corporation. FULL AUTO and FULL AUTO BATTLELINES are either registered trademarks or trademarks of SEGA Corporation. All rights reserved. Developed by Deep Fried Entertainment. The Deep Fried Entertainment logo and the Deep Fried logo are trademarks of Deep Fried Entertainment Inc. "PlayStation", "PS" Family logo and "PSP" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Memory Stick Duo™ may be required (sold separately). Certain limitations apply to Wi-Fi compatible connectivity. See manual for details. Player responsible for Wi-Fi compatible fees.

"THE BATTLES ARE SIMPLY MASSIVE.
AWESOMELY, SCARILY, OVERWHELMINGLY
MASSIVE"
IGN.COM

WAR ON A TOTALLY NEW SCALE



UNPRECEDENTED CONTROL

For the first time every station is a battlestation. Take direct and full control of every warship, plane and submarine while commanding the entire fleet.



AIR, SEA, AND UNDERSEA ACTION

Instantly switch between exhilarating dog fights, powerful artillery attacks, and stealth torpedo kills from the deep.



LARGE SCALE ONLINE COMBAT

Up to 100 warships, aircraft, and subs face off in dramatic online battles.

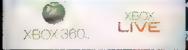


LEAD EVERY BATTLE

A breathtaking blend of action and strategic game play allows you to make the difference in the greatest sea battles of World War II.



Language
Mild Suggestive Themes
Use of Alcohol
Violence



BATTLESTATIONS MIDWAY

www.Battlestations.net

14,000FT ABOVE TO 400FT BELOW...
AND ALL THE ACTION IN BETWEEN

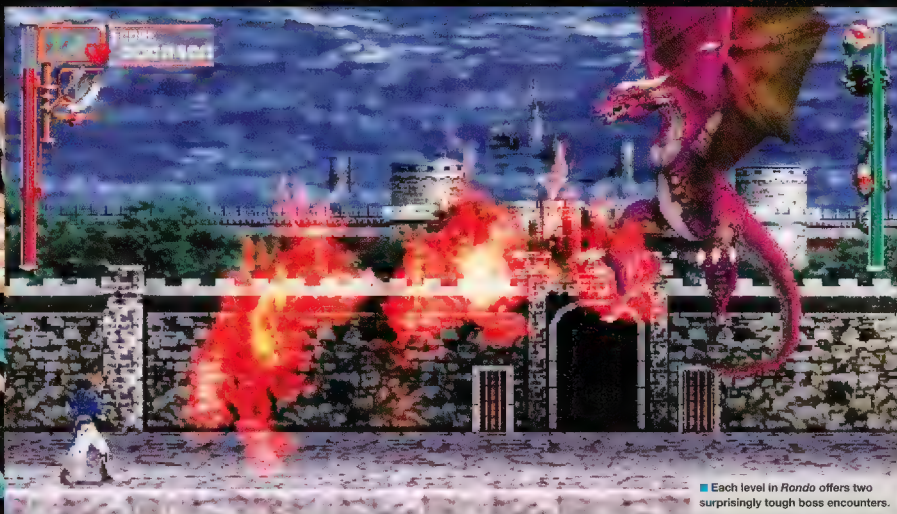
© 2004 Game Interactive Ltd. Battlestations: Midway is a trademark of Game Interactive Ltd. Xbox and the Xbox logo are trademarks of Game Ltd. All Rights Reserved. Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft. This product contains software technology licensed from GameSpy Software, Inc. © 1998-2004 GameSpy Software, Inc. All Rights Reserved. GameSpy, GameSpy.com, GameSpy Software, and GameSpy Software logo are trademarks of GameSpy Software, Inc. All rights reserved. Software platform logo™ and PC™ are trademarks of Microsoft Corporation. The online play icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.



▶ **PREVIEW: EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON**

Castlevania: Dracula X CHRONICLES

The Count's biggest comeback ever
By Shane Bettenhausen



Each level in *Rondo* offers two surprisingly tough boss encounters.

Platform:
PSP

Publisher:
Konami

Developer:
Konami-Tokyo

Release Date:
October 2007

IN MUCH THE SAME WAY THAT SQUARE ENIX RECENTLY REWARDED PATIENT QUESTERS

with a DS port of the long-overlooked *Final Fantasy III* (a Japanese exclusive for 16 years), Konami has a special treat in store for fans of the whip-wielding Belmont clan. This Halloween, prepare for some long overdue vampire beatdowns with *Castlevania: Dracula X Chronicles*, a compilation that combines a revamped version of the legendary Japan-only installment *Dracula X: Rondo of Blood* with its equally revered PS1 follow-up, *Symphony of the Night*.

Bloody Revenge

Over the years, *Rondo* has achieved almost mythic status among fans: Originally published in 1993 for the Japanese TurboDuo console, Konami was forced to shelve plans for a U.S. release due to Turbo's poor domestic sales. A Super NES version simply titled *Castlevania: Dracula X* found its way stateside in 1995, but this slapdash port paled in comparison to the original. Finally, U.S. gamers will be able to find out what all the

fuss was about...in a whole new way. "We were inspired by all the fans that have been asking for a title with 3D graphics and 2D gameplay for so long," explains Series Producer Koji Igarashi (aka Iga). "Since *Rondo of Blood* never received a proper release outside of Japan, we decided

it would be a perfect candidate for a remake."

So this *Rondo* reimagines the simple 2D characters and flat backdrops in swanky "2.5D," much like the art style in Capcom's *Ultimate Ghosts 'n Goblins* (PSP). "Even though we are remaking *Rondo* in 3D, our goal

LOVE AT SECOND BITE

How does the new 3D version of *Rondo of Blood* for the PSP compare to its antiquated 16-bit original? It looks pretty faithful—the PSP screens are on the right.



is to retain the look and feel of the original 2D game," Iga says. "The first stage is especially faithful so gamers can easily transition to our new look if they were familiar with the original game." Savvy gamers who've played the Turbo version will appreciate that the notoriously challenging gameplay remains dangerously intact.

Rondo represents a bridge of sorts between the classic *Castlevanias* of yore (known for linear stages, unforgiving control, and brutal bosses) and *Symphony of the Night* (which introduced sprawling interconnected levels, agile characters, and various RPG elements). As you guide blandly heroic vampire hunter Richter Belmont through labyrinthine stages in search of four young ladies kidnapped by Drac (including your beloved, Annette), the whole ordeal feels most like an ambitious upgrade of *Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse* (NES). Although the stages initially seem straightforward, you'll soon find that each level features two different exits (each with its own boss), and plenty of cleverly hidden secrets. And Iga hopes to expand *Dracula's* castle even further. "We've changed some of the original stages so that more experienced players could still enjoy the exploration and surprise of playing it for the first time," Iga says. "Plus, we're making drastic changes to one level and adding some light collection elements to the overall game, but the basic gameplay will still be pretty faithful."

The three stages that we lashed together felt spot-on to the '93 original—every enemy, power-up, and tantalizing pork chop appeared precisely where it should. Even the slightly rigid control felt true to 16-bit form. One element we would have loved to see—Maria, the game's other playable character—wasn't yet ready to be shown, but her redesigned character portrait offers a glimpse of her stylin' new look. (Here's hoping she still wields an arsenal of kittens and birdies.) A few other aspects of this port remain up in the air: Iga hasn't yet decided how to tackle the original's anime-style cut-scenes, whether or not to remix the soundtrack, or if he'll be able to implement any multiplayer functionality, but he does know that the original TurboDuo version of *Rondo* will be unlockable on the disc.

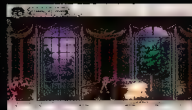
Symphonic Reprise

While most *Castlevania* fans have

LIVE ARCADE SYMPHONY

Downloadable Dracula

Can't wait for this killer collection? Get your *Castlevania* fix on Xbox Live Arcade this February when a direct port of *Symphony of the Night* becomes available for download. It won't sport any of the content tweaks seen in the PSP version, but will offer online leaderboards and achievements. One caveat, though: As the first XBLA title to break the 50-meg size limit, it won't fit on a Xbox 360 memory unit...meaning that Core system users won't be sharing private time with Ms. Succubus.



Aha—now you'll know where that Behemoth corpse in *SOTN* came from.



never sunk their fangs into *Rondo*, any would-be Belmont knows his or her way around *Symphony of the Night*, the 1997 PS1 adventure widely considered the series' finest moment. Since *Rondo* ties directly into *SOTN*, placing the two games back-to-back will finally give gamers the full, unedited saga of Richter, Maria, and *Dracula's* effete half-vampire son, Alucard.

Unlike *Rondo*, *Symphony* won't receive a stunning 3D face-lift, but fans can expect minor nip/tuck action as Konami reprograms the game to fit the PSP's widescreen format and tweaks some background details. You can expect some changes to the game's audio, however. "We'll be making changes to the parts I'm not satisfied with," says Iga, referring specifically to the abysmal voice acting that has long been an embarrassment for an otherwise top-notch

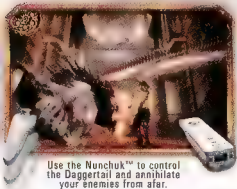
title. In the past, Iga has also alluded to aspects of *SOTN* that ended up on the cutting-room floor due to time constraints. Some of these elements—two additional areas, new music, and the ability to play as Richter and Maria from the outset—ended up in the import-only Sega Saturn version, but technical problems and poor execution kept that revision from besting its PS1 cousin (Iga's team did not do the port). Will we see these areas and features on the PSP? "Good question, but I'm afraid that's a secret for now," Iga offers. "All I can say is that we're planning to incorporate new content that is going to be really enjoyable for anyone who is a fan of the game." **MS**

Head to EGM213.1UP.com to check out gameplay videos of the revamped *Rondo of Blood* and a special all-*Castlevania* *Retronauts* podcast.



© 2007 Ubisoft Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. Prince of Persia, Rival Swords, and the Prince of Persia logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. Prince of Persia is a trademark of Jordan Mechner in the U.S. and/or other countries used under license by Ubisoft Entertainment. "Resistor"™, "S" Family logo, and "S" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment, Inc. Memory Stick Duo™ is a registered trademark of Sony. TM and the Wii logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2006 Nintendo. "Resistor"™, "S" Family logo, and "S" are registered trademarks of

TWO BRAND-NEW WAYS TO EXPERIENCE PRINCE OF PERSIA®



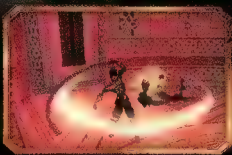
Use the Nunchuk™ to control the Daggertail and annihilate your enemies from afar.



Use the Wii Remote™ and Nunchuk™ to perform stealthy Speed Kills and dual weapon attacks.



Fend off your foes in pulse-quickening new chariot races.



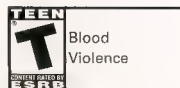
Head-to-head multiplayer races demand reflexes and ruthlessness.

PRINCE OF PERSIA

RIVAL SWORDS

AVAILABLE MARCH 2007

WWW.PRINCEOFFERSIA.COM



Wii



UBISOFT



▷ DRAGON BROTHERS

Head Games

Think making videogames isn't a hazardous job? Meet six developers whose games infiltrated their brains...

By Scott Steinberg

Some games get into designers' heads before they're made.

Back in college, *Advent Rising* (Xbox)

Creative Director Donald Mustard doodled hundreds of guys shooting energy from their hands. The sketches led to his game years later.



WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE. It's late. You're driving home from work. Suddenly, the guy ahead cuts you off. Without warning, you slam on the gas and rear-end him at 90 mph with visions of *Burnout* twirling in your head and now a rear bumper hanging off your front fender.

OK, extreme example. But you get the gist: Videogames have a strange—some would say insidious—way of surreptitiously invading our subconscious and affecting our behavior at the unlikeliest times. "It all comes down to conditioning," explains New

York psychologist Dr. Carl G. Arinoldo, scuttling any studies claiming games don't lead to violent behavior. "Habits are easily formed and difficult to break. Videogames offer constant reinforcement and reward players for repeating certain actions like shooting targets or nudging opponents' vehicles. This promotes learning. And when your mind wanders, it's all too easy to fall back into familiar patterns." In other words, focus and concentration are all that stand between us and accidentally acting out repressed urges—hidden desires

likelier to manifest when we're suffering from stress or extreme exhaustion.

Stress and exhaustion? Hey, that's all part of the job for game developers, who live in these games day in and day out. Surely the following true-life accounts will serve as testament to this singularly disturbing phenomenon—and comic relief. Says Alex Ward, creator of the tire-shredding *Burnout* franchise, "Almost our entire development team's been busted by the cops. With the hours we put in now, it's impossible to drive home normally." Yep. Been there....

Audio slave

"Never has a game I've worked on impacted my life like *Guitar Hero II* (XB360/PS2)," swears RedOctane quality-assurance lead Daniyel Garcia. Apparently, though, it still didn't do nearly as much as those "magic mushrooms" that nice bearded fellow offered at the last Phish show.... Garcia's most recent flashback, triggered at a concert in San Francisco: "None of the bands that were featured had music in the *Guitar Hero* games," he says, "yet as they played, I visualized note charts for their songs. Furthermore, before the beginning [of] each tune, I heard in my head the in-game sound effect of the note targets falling into place. I pictured green, red, yellow, blue, and orange gems coming towards me as the bands jammed." Whoa.... Trippy.

Shell shock

All gears of *War* (XB360) lead designer Cliff Bleszinski what you guy—self-centered, ostentatious, a guy who knows his way around an assault-rifle-mounted chain saw. According to him, he's just paranoid. "As a result of building and playing the game so long," he tells us, "I've often found myself looking for cover opportunities in the real world. Concrete freeway dividers and planters stick out like sore thumbs now whenever I'm walking down the street, and I have to fight the urge to slide across the pavement and dive into them."

Troubled? Meh. Perhaps it's just those 20-hour workdays. "I've also found myself cautiously peering into open manholes in the street, half expecting horrific creatures to climb out at any minute," he says, chuckling. "I think I need a vacation."

Blood code

Some (see: crusading attorney Jack Thompson) may be quick to label *Mortal Kombat Armageddon* (PS2/XB) team lead and franchise creator Ed Boon a deranged individual. He'd wholeheartedly agree. "Working on *Mortal Kombat* as many years as I have sometimes makes me look at real-world situations from a slightly twisted perspective," Boon admits. "I play a lot of basketball, and for some reason, I find myself mentally clearing the lane by throwing spears, freezing people around me, or teleporting somewhere else as a quick solution."

But hey, at least he's not developed the passion for sadomasochism you'd think—just an unhealthy interest. "*Mortal Kombat* has also changed my perception of what combat should look like," he says. "Watching fight

scenes in movies like *Indiana Jones* and *Batman Begins* just doesn't have the same impact. I mean, come on...aren't people supposed to get knocked 20 feet in the air when you punch them?"

Something smells Fisher

"*Splinter Cell Double Agent* (XB360/PS2/XB/GC) is one of those games that really gets under your skin," claims Ubisoft producer Julian Gerigthy. "After more than two and a half years of development, I rarely visit a new place or location without thinking about how it could be mapped out in the game. 'Just how would Sam Fisher infiltrate this?'"

Thankfully, Gerigthy realized he had a problem before his friends had to Taser him down for an intervention. "When you start to get real pleasure out of creeping up behind people, sneaking around the office or at home, and imitating [Fisher voice actor] Michael Ironside's growl," he tells us, "then you know that you have played the game way too much...."

Moving targets

LucasArts employees, be warned: *Thrillville* (PS2/XB) producer Shara Miller has you in her mental sights. It all started when Miller was testing the scoring system in her game's shooting-gallery challenges. "Each

time you hit a cluster of targets for a perfect combo," she says, "you get a score multiplier, which is pretty much the only way to get five stars on that game." After the marathon shooting session, Miller was passing a stairwell door when three people popped out in a row. "Each one of them said, 'Hi Shara, and I swear I saw a 'Perfect Combo' message pop up after the last one,'" she says. "I was hallucinating kudos...."

Road kill

Mind your turn signals—and pack extra hollow-points—when Benjamin Kaplan, QA test lead for Sony's *Resistance: Fall of Man* (PS3), is behind the wheel. "While driving home from a really early late nights working on *Doom II*, I started seeing weapon pickups in the middle of the road. I would be cruising and see a shotgun, a box of ammo, or a BFG until I started slapping myself silly to snap out of it." Thankfully, no desperate calls to OnStar ("Help! The rest areas are crawling with cacodaemons!") nor vehicular homicide charges have been filed...yet. "It's extremely difficult to spend several hours playing a game every day and not think about it when you leave," confesses Kaplan. "Although hallucinating about weapons is probably not the best thing to be doing...." 🚗

Hear the EGM editors analyze their own game visions in a special EGM Live! podcast at EGM213.1UP.com.

READING YOUR MINDS

Readers share their own head games at EGMboards.1UP.com



"I'd always be planning out *Tony Hawk 3* combos in my head while walking through town."

—Sprewell

"When *Grand Theft Auto III* first came out, whenever I would go out for a run and cross the street, I'd look left, right, then in my mind try to push down F3 to flip the camera."

—salFPS

"After playing *Katamari Damacy*, I kept sizing up objects and people by first trying to estimate how much mass I'd need in order to absorb them...."

—Cyanix



"I'd close my eyes and Sudoku puzzles would appear after I played *Brain Age* for awhile. The saddest part is I actually tried to solve the puzzles I saw with my eyes closed."

—EGMfan89

"I played *Mario 64* so much that I walked outside and tried to wall jump to the top of my house."

—Rezzle

"The *Street Fighter* series has had such an impact on me that it inspired me to take martial arts. I've now been a practitioner for over 16 years."

—Paul_Gale

SPACE IS INFINITE



ROGUE GALAXY

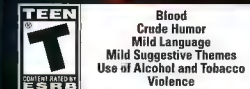
Man the laser cannons, batten down the hatches and prepare to set sail on the ultimate space pirate adventure. Scour the galaxy, explore new worlds and unlock clues to life's greatest treasure.

"One of the biggest and most vibrant games ever for the PS2"

HARDCORE GAMER MAGAZINE

"Rogue Galaxy is a deep, well-crafted adventure that will keep you playing until the end"

GAME INFORMER



WWW.ROGUEGALAXY.THEGAME.COM

Rogue Galaxy is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Created and developed by Leap. © 2005 Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. "PlayStation 2" is a registered trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

SPACE IS INFINITE.

ITS TREASURES AREN'T.

PlayStation 2



LIVE IN YOUR WORLD
PLAY IN OURS™



➤ PREVIEW: EXCLUSIVE SCREENS AND INFO

God of War II

The PS2's last remaining titan By Bryan Intihar

Platform:

PS2

Publisher:

Sony/EA

Developer:

Sony Santa Monica

Release Date:

March 2007

AROUND THESE PARTS:

KRATOS—THE NEWLY APPOINTED GOD OF WAR—ain't the only guy getting a promotion: GOW team member Cory Barlog will now act as the sequel's director, and he's staying true to the original game's roots. "We're not screwing with what works," Barlog says. "A lot of people have asked me how I was going to handle *God of War II* and make it my own. They said you need to start from scratch. But that's just stupid. There was so much we did that worked so well in the original, from the way the combat works to the way Kratos feels. That's going to

stay the same." Good decision—in his first outing, the tormented Greek warrior Kratos won over gamers with gruesome combat, a rich story, and colossal boss encounters (no, to mention his sexual prowess).

But just because Barlog is sticking to the formula that outspoken series creator David Jaffe, who's rumored to be currently working on GOW3 for the PS3, established, it doesn't mean

he's playing it safe, either. "There's a mountain of stuff we're adding here," he says. So let's find out more about that mountain, starting with Barlog's thoughts on...

...**Kratos' motivation in the sequel.** "He's still dealing with these visions of the horrible things that he's done, and the slight double-cross from the gods, but that double-cross has only

➤ **The entire first level is essentially a boss encounter. It's in-your-face.**

—Director Cory Barlog

just begun. He needs to go back to the beginning, which is why Kratos is seeking out the Sisters of Fate to change the outcome of those previous events in his life.

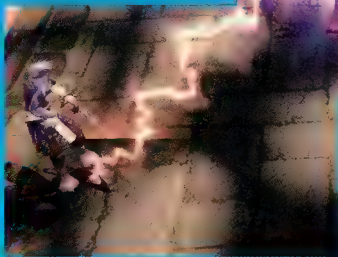
...**GOW2's similarities to Castlevania:** "Did you ever play *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* (PS1)? Where you have that awesome beginning where you're all overbuffed and then Death takes everything away from you? *God of War II* has that feeling, where you get to experience something that you may come back to later. Basically, Kratos has a fall from grace, he becomes mortal again."

...**Topping the original's fantastic opening sequence:** "We've put an incredible amount of energy into the beginning of the game. As in the last one, we're nice to you [for about two minutes so you can get adjusted to things], then it's right into the fray. You get to experience this massive boss instantly. The entire first level is essentially a boss encounter. It's in-your-face."

...**The added depth to combat:** "There are three weapons that you'll be able to pick up throughout the game, and you're going to be able to swap these weapons mid-combo. We've also added a lot of functionality to our Rage of the Titans power-up to give the advanced players a lot to work with. So now your combos can really sail up to the 1,000-2,000 range and higher."

...**The new weapons:** "One can talk about as the Blade of Olympus. That's kind of like our Uberweapon, and from a story perspective, it's like the atom bomb. The Blade of Olympus is essentially the gods' last-ditch effort to try to win the great war. And you can actually use this sword, which absorbs powers from enemies. It's a fairly powerful weapon. It's more useful than the Artemis Blade from the last game."

...**Increasing the quantity—and quality—of boss fights:** "There are at least three to four times as many bosses as we had in the first game. Some of the boss encounters are more personality-based encounters, meaning we're still using the concept of using the environment during the fight, but we're also bringing the mythology, so you're like, 'Oh, that's awesome. I get to fight this guy.' And that character's personality shines through in how the fight unfolds."



■ Stuck with a puzzle? Activate GOW2's new hint system for a helpful tip...cheater!



...**Moral dilemmas like GOW's cage push:** "There are many choices throughout this game that you'll have to make—situations that will really put the player in the mindset of, 'Wow, this is messed up!'"

...**Increasing the brutality factor:** "Kratos takes some of the lower minions of the Fates and rips their arms off and then actually spears their heads with them. He also will break a guy's leg, grab him by the neck, and then slice his throat. And we've got wild boars running around the island, and Kratos can cut them while he's on the ground or in the air."

...**Philosophy on puzzles:** "I want them to feel integrated into the overall experience. I don't like the idea of just locking the player in a room

and saying, 'Here, solve this now.' I want to present him with a problem and allow him to fun around the entire level in order to work out the problem, and then get routed back to the beginning and go, 'Look at that! Through that experience I found out the solution to the puzzle.'"

...**Bonus content:** "We're giving you a lot more playable stuff in *God of War II*. We have the Challenge of the Fates mode [similar to the original's Challenge of the Gods], which unlocks even more playable content. You'll be unlocking additional Kratos models. And again, we have a really uberhard, difficult mode."

...**The personality of Kratos "getting busy" again:** "That's entirely up to the player." ☞

Watch videos of GOW2's boss Spartan Kratos in action. Head to EGM213.TUP.com.

> NOW SHOWING AT
GAMEVIDEOS



Check GameVideos.com daily for the latest gameplay footage and trailers, but if you're looking for offbeat, weird, or just plain funny clips, we've collected the best of the best over at GameVideos.com/EGM.



LOL: Resident Evil player freaks out

Man screams like a little (Japanese) girl while playing *RE2* and *RE4*. The bad translation makes it even better.



PWN: Five-year-old boy kicks ass in DDR

Yep, that's what it is. A five-year-old boy tearing it up on the *Dance Dance Revolution* mat.



1337: Gran Turismo creator gets sideways

Polyphony Digital President and *Gran Turismo* mastermind Kazunori Yamauchi throws a Skyline around the track.



ZOMG: Wii Sex

Pioneering new ways to play *Wii Sports*. Not safe for work. Illegal in some states. 21+ please.



+ ONLINE SCENE

Rainbow Six Vegas: PLAYERS' PACK

Welcome to the players' club. Drinks free, maps extra



Remember the Presidio map? You should—it first appeared in *RS3*.

THE WAR ON TERROR IS AN ONGOING PROCESS, and the same goes for its virtual equivalent: *Rainbow Six Vegas*. Between diffusing timed plastic explosive detonators, sniping suicide bombers, and gambling away your mortgage at the craps table, there's really never a dull moment in the world of covert antiterrorism.

Developer Ubisoft Montreal is hoping to recharge its fans' dedication to said objectives with the **Players' Pack**—some shiny new downloadable content coming to Xbox Live in March. As was the case with the downloadable content pack for Ubisoft's other shooter, *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter*, the aim of this new content isn't to tweak the multiplayer experience but rather to enhance it—specifically, by offering two new game modes and 10 new maps.

The new game modes are called **Assassination** and **Total Conquest**. In the former, the goal of the Attackers is to eliminate a high-value asset of

the Defenders, who in turn will try to defend and escort the VIP to their extraction zone. The latter is a team-oriented, static control-point mode, where each map contains three "control points." To win, a team must activate and maintain control, for a certain period of time, of the map's three "Mobile Radar Installations."

In terms of the new maps, expect a variety of new (and old) locations. One of the maps, **Red Lotus**, is based on the Red Lotus Casino (familiar to those who played through the single-player portion of the game), while **Neon Graveyard** is a junkyard where old neon signs from Vegas have gone to die.

Now it's still not clear whether or not the **Players' Pack** will also be coming to the PlayStation 3 version (Ubisoft wouldn't give us a definitive answer when we asked). And while the price remains TBD, we're guessing it'll be somewhere in the ballpark of Ubisoft's "Chapter 2" pack for *GRAV*, which went for a cool 1200 points (about \$15).



LUCKY LUCKY BOY...

HAVEN'T YOU GUESSED?



Spies Like Us

With corporate skills infiltrating blogs and message boards, who can you trust? By Crispin Boyer and Robert Ashley



Dope sham: Exposed for what it was and promptly shut down, a recent phony Sony PSP blog lives on at allwantformaisapspblog.com. Be sure to watch "Cousin Pete's" PSP rap at EGM213.TUP.com.

SIX-FOOT-FOUR AND BARREL-CHESTED, Jeff Smith got paid to pick fights. But he didn't work in a bar or as a *Jerry Springer* bodyguard. He brawled on Internet message boards, and he was hired by Microsoft.

Smith (name changed to protect his identity) practiced a spread-the-word tactic that has many labels—seeding, stealth marketing, shilling—all falling under the blanket term "buzz marketing." Posting before the first Xbox's launch, he would troll PlayStation 2 forums and antagonize Sony fanboys with pro-Xbox propaganda, often getting banned from the boards in the process. His goal (or, rather, the goal of his Microsoft-contracted marketing agency) was less about bolstering Xbox brand awareness and more

about discovering which topics PS2 players were passionate about. "We wanted to see what gamers' reactions were to things," Smith says. "We were testing the water."

Despite the duplicity, Smith's bumbling attempts to provoke fanboy rage were harmless compared to how far the practice of shilling has evolved, growing shadier with the advent of ripe viral entry points such as blogs, YouTube, and MySpace. "As word-of-mouth marketing becomes more mainstream, I think marketers have a hard time resisting the temptation to co-opt the conversation," says Pete Blackshaw, chief marketing officer of Nielsen BuzzMetrics and cofounder of the Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA). "And by that,

I mean not simply leaving it to a consumer to spread the word—but to try to create it themselves."

It's led to the wired-age equivalent of the Red Scare, with online-forum junkies paranoid that every positive post is the product of guerilla marketers. "In certain online venues," says Blackshaw, "there's a crisis of trust."

Crazy beatz

And so the stage was set for the merciless Web-wide beatdown of allwantformaisapsp.com, a PSP-hyping "flog" (fake blog) launched in November by two "friends" to "help you wage a holiday assault on ur [sic] parents, girl, granny, boss—whoever—so they know what you really want." The site's straining-to-sound-street

You ARE...

THE DARKNESS

YOU HAVE THE POWER.

YOU CAN DO ANYTHING.

AND YOU'LL PAY THE PRICE.



www.TheDarknessGame.com

THE DARKNESS IS SPREADING MAY 2007



PLAYSTATION 3



The Darkness is © 2006 Top Cow Productions, Inc. "The Darkness," the Darkness logo, and the likeness of all featured characters are registered trademarks of Top Cow Productions, Inc. 2K Games, the 2K logo, and Take-Two Interactive Software are all trademarks of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. Developed by Starbreeze Studios. 2006 Starbreeze AB. Starbreeze logo, the Starbreeze logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Starbreeze AB in Sweden and/or other countries. © 2007 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox Live and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies. "PlayStation", "PLAYSTATION", and "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The ratings (RP) is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All rights reserved.

entries, absurd rap video, and oddly polished PSP-related paraphernalia (magazine inserts, iron-ons) had visitors smelling ■ rat.

When enterprising forum members at the comedy site somethingawful.com traced the blog's domain registration to a marketing company named Zipatoni, Net surfers sick of trusting no one were out for blood. Forums filled with outraged posts claiming Sony had insulted its audience and—even worse—just didn't "get it" anymore. Sony, which used to nab awards for its cutting-edge advertising, found itself winning "Best Flog of 2006" from watchdog site The Consumerist (www.consumerist.com).

Calls to St. Louis-based Zipatoni were not returned as of press time, but Sony Computer Entertainment America President and CEO Jack Tretton admits the flog "was a promotional attempt that was poorly handled by an agency. Would I have preferred that we didn't do it? Absolutely."

Boarding action

The PSP flog's forced funky-fresh approach came off as corporate BS from the beginning, but phonies aren't always so easy to spot. For every marketer who blunders into a forum asking about your "favorite gaming snacks," you'll find—or, rather, won't find—savvier shills who, just like you, grew up with the Net and know its rules. "Of course you use 133t speak and don't capitalize and have misspellings," says one marketer who was tasked to infiltrate Xbox forums and hype Microsoft's OurColony website (itself an elaborate viral game for doling out Xbox 360 info). "It's almost like being a spy—charming and persuasive, but you can't be memorable."

Speaking on condition of anonymity, he described an elaborate message-board campaign complete with progress reports, milestones, and teams of imposter posters backing each other up. "You have damage control," he says, "people waiting in the wings if things fall apart...or just to help keep a message thread at the top of the forums—keeping it visible. You want traction: 200 views and 50 replies." But that's just the payoff. Earning trust from the boards' increasingly skeptical regulars is most of the job. "The kids who frequent the forums know each other," he says. "You have to put in your time to build a presence, post in dumb off-topic forums. Then [forum members] are like, 'I've seen this guy around for the last three weeks. I'll see what he has to say.'"

WARNING SIGNS

How to spot phony-balooney blogs and message-board imposters

Beware of suits speaking the hippity-hop

Sony's PSP blog was underpinned by its lame Net-hipster vibe. "Don't just wear it—pwn it!!!1" read one entry, hyping downloadable iron-ons. "That doesn't even make sense!" noted one message-board poster.

See who's master of their domains

It's a long shot, but sometimes marketing companies will register their phony blogs under their own name. Hey, Zipatoni did it with its PSP blog. Investigate fishy sites' registrations at whois.domaintools.com.

Single out single-minded posters

"It's suspicious if a good portion of a user's posts are regarding one specific subject, brand, or publisher," says Chris Taylor, a moderator on the popular Gaming Age forums (www.neogaf.com), "especially if it's the same basic message ad nauseam." That's when moderators like Taylor break out the banning rod...

Research repeat offenders

If you see the same post repeated across several boards, it's a safe bet the person behind it is a hired gun. "Most companies are sloppy when they do this [kind of marketing]," says Word of Mouth Marketing Association cofounder Pete Blackshaw, "so you'll find almost absurd levels of repetition in commentary."

CONTAMINATED WASTE

Four infamous viral blunders that prove there really is such a thing as bad publicity



Say "cheesy"

In 2002, cell-phone maker Sony Ericsson tried to pull a fast one on tourists at sight-seeing hot spots like Seattle's Space Needle and New York City's Empire State Building. As part of a marketing operation called "Fake Tourist," the company hired 60 actors and actresses to bump around these picturesque locales and ask real tourists to take their picture with—you guessed it—a supersweet Sony Ericsson camera phone.



McStooges

Everybody loves the annual Monopoly sweepstakes at McDonald's. Where else can you win millions and high cholesterol? It seems that some people—shills paid to flog the contest on their blogs—loved it too much. Sample post: "Some nights, we skip cooking dinner...just to take a trip to McDonald's so we can play Monopoly. Thank goodness they have lots of variety on the menu to choose from." Ronald, is that you?



Low, low prices; lower credibility

What kind of person travels the country in an RV visiting every Wal-Mart and blogging about it? No one who's not paid to do it. If the art-directed slickness of www.walmartingacrossamerica.com doesn't tip you off to the site's buzz-marketing stench, then maybe consider an \$8-an-hour, no-health-care career in our nation's retail sector.



An unsurprising truth

When Al Gore's global-warming-awareness movie *An Inconvenient Truth* hit theaters last year, an amateurish video called *Al Gore's Penguin Army* popped up on YouTube in response. In its attempt to poke fun at the film, the video failed to be...you know, funny. The real punchline came days later, when the *Wall Street Journal* traced the video back to the DCI Group, a PR firm representing ExxonMobil. Surprise!

There oughta be a law

With marketers relying on such tricks to "co-opt the conversation," who's protecting you? The Federal Trade Commission only recently addressed the issue, saying that guerrilla marketing doesn't need its own regulations because it falls under the FTC's existing endorsement guidelines. "If there's a relationship [between a company and its endorser] that might...affect the credibility of the endorsement, then that relationship should be fully exposed," says FTC spokesperson Jacqueline Dizdul. But don't expect Internet police to start raiding forums. The FTC will investigate questionable

practices on a case-by-case basis. "No one will be going to jail," says Dizdul, adding that likely penalties include cease-and-desist orders and financial redress to duped customers.

The marketing industry has set out its own guidelines via WOMMA. In the end, though, it may take a few more publicly flogged flogs before marketers learn to be honest. "[Shilling] is the new frontier," says one marketer who didn't want his name revealed because his company once engaged in the tactic. "It's not cool. It's not good for business. It might get you short-term gain, but it always comes back to bite you on the butt." ❧

THE ONLY THINGS THAT QUELL
THE VOICES IN KRATOS' HEAD
ARE THE DYING SCREAMS OF HIS ENEMIES.

GOD OF WAR

THE END BEGINS™
MARCH 2007



Visit www.esrb.org
for updated rating
information.

GODOFWAR.COM

PlayStation 2



God of War is a registered trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. ©2006 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. The End Begins is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. "Live In Your World, Play In Ours" is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America, Inc.

LIVE IN YOUR WORLD,
PLAY IN OURS™



PREVIEW: EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK

Clive Barker's JERICHO

This game looks like hell. By Thierry "Scooter" Nguyen



■ Clive Barker got an A+ in Bats** *Insanity* 101.



Platforms:
PS3/XB360

Publisher:
Codemasters

Developers:
Alchemic
Productions/
Mercury Steam

Release Date:
Fall 2007

WHEN WE SEE A GAME WITH A BIG NONGAMER'S NAME IN THE TITLE, it's fair to say that the person in question didn't get his hands terribly dirty working on it (e.g., the Tom Clancy library). Even the previous "Clive Barker" game, *Undying* (PC), simply had him called in as a script doctor (as he describes it) during the final days of development. But, from sitting down with Barker to talk about his next project, we can say that *Jericho* certainly does have the Hollywood spookmaster—whose résumé includes *Hellraiser* and *Candyman*—written all over it.

One big demented family
Jericho is a child with three sets of parents, so to speak. The creative team of Barker and Brian Gomez (from Alchemic Productions, an intellectual property and story firm) are basically its birth parents; they collaborated on the mythology and con-

cepts of the *Jericho* universe (Barker focused on the fantastic and the grotesque, while Gomez tackled the realistic and militaristic details). Then you've got Codemasters Producer Joe Falke, who also doubles as the lead designer. He takes the lore and ideas from the story duo and figures out how to turn them into compelling gameplay (for example: Barker and Gomez outline the first level as, "Team arrives on scene, witnesses Dark Rapture cult event, then secures command center and lone survivor, and so on"). Unlike a lot of games where the writers send in the script and call it a day,

Falke tells us that Barker and Gomez continue to supply ideas and input. Developer Mercury Steam is the last part of *Jericho*'s family (their last title was *American McGee Presents: Scrapland* (XB)); man, they sure do like working on software with real people's names in the title). They're the guys who are, well, actually making the game.

Dancing with the devil
So how does *Jericho* actually play? It ain't a traditional, slow-paced survival-horror title (à la *Silent Hill*), but rather a squad-based first-person shooter with lots and lots of gore.

➤ **The game's band of disturbed brothers and sisters is basically *Rainbow Six* by way of the *Ghostbusters*.**

CLIVE BARKER'S JERICHO (cont.)

The game's band of disturbed brothers and sisters is basically Rainbow Six by way of the Ghostbusters—Special Forces members with paranormal abilities (check out pg. 46 for the full rundown). And one big paranormal twist is how you switch between crew members. Roughly 30 minutes into *Jericho*, the main character, Ross, gets clipped. Except, due to the weird properties of the setting and his own psychic abilities, Ross basically becomes a ghost.

This means when you switch party members (from what we saw, it's as easy as looking at someone and then hitting a button), you are actually possessing another squadmate as Ross. Falke comments that, at first, the transitions you make from character to character are predetermined for story purposes, but you'll then be given the option to jump bodies at will.

"Threading" is yet another intriguing gameplay element, where you combine the abilities of two characters. For instance, if you mix Jones' astral projection with Abigail's telekinesis, you can steer a single bullet—via handy first-person perspective—to kill five enemies.

Painting a sick picture

With a person like Barker and his twisted mind cookin' up *Jericho*, you just knew the setting was gonna be out-there. The game takes place in a cursed city called Al-Khali, which has repeatedly required the help

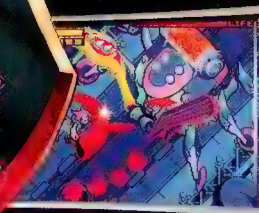
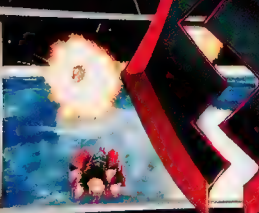


It's still up in the air whether *Jericho* will have a multiplayer component.



FROM THE CREATORS OF METAL GEAR SOLID

LUNAR KNIGHTS™



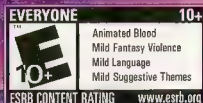
Action-packed anime style cutscenes!

Expansive 3D shooting stages!

Play as two different heroes with unique powers and weapons!

DESCEND INTO THE GOTHIC WORLD OF LUNAR KNIGHTS!

Take control of two characters in a gothic anime style world. Fight! Guided by the mysterious and sinister and fierce music, explore the land beyond the horizon.



NINTENDO DS

KONAMI

www.konami.com

Konami Entertainment Inc., Ltd. "LUNAR KNIGHTS" is a trademark of Konami Entertainment Inc. "Metal Gear Solid" is a registered trademark of KONAMI CORPORATION. "NINTENDO DS" is a registered trademark of Nintendo. DS is a registered trademark of Nintendo. "Metal Gear Solid" is a registered trademark of Konami Entertainment Inc. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners.

of holy warriors to contain the evil forces inside it. By the time you enter the scene, Al-Khali is locked in a dimension where it shifts between eras, meaning you'll explore it during the Sumerian period, the Roman era, the Crusades, World War II, and the modern day. Each time period also has an exclusive set of wicked creatures (all of which are Barker specials—he's an accomplished artist in addition to being a filmmaker and author). Enemies of a putrid nature include the likes of behemoths (giant beasts crafted out of human carcasses) and Dark Rapture cultists (insane religious cultists who sacrifice themselves to the dark forces of the city and come back as demonic suicide bombers or gross-flying dudes).

While we've merely provided *Jericho's* basic concept and framework (remember, the game's not due for another nine or so months), we'll leave you with this last tidbit: When we asked Barker what he wants gamers to walk away with after playing *Jericho*, he slyly answered, "I hope they won't be able to walk away, because there will be a puddle of urine around them and they'll slip on their asses, as bladders would have given up halfway through the game." Uh-hh...OK, Clive. **B**

Visit EGM213.TUP.COM for our full Clive Barker interview, which we filmed at his sweet pad. Plus, check out exclusive footage of the game.

MONSTER SQUAD

Meet the crazy and mystical members of the *Jericho* crew



Ross—The team leader, plucked from the U.S. Special Forces, who is telepathic. "Being able to link directly with the minds of your team is a good command," says Falke.

Jones—As the seer, he uses a combination of remote viewing and astral projection (which lets a spirit-y version of himself float around freely), to be the squad's scout.

Delgado—A heavy weapons fellow, with a nice chain gun as his standby. He also sports a fire spirit on his arm. "Imagine the X-ray view of a snake, and you then surround the bones with fire," says Falke.

Abigail—The team sniper, who has the extra bonus of telekinesis (useful for maneuvering her bullets around after firing).

Cole—The "reality hacker," so her abilities are really strange. For gameplay purposes, she can do stuff like find save points or roll back time. Additionally, Falke comments that she can temporarily "broadcast" someone else's power to the whole *Jericho* squad (for example, everyone can have a raging fire spirit attack for a few seconds).

Church—A blood mage and melee combat specialist. Church cuts herself and then uses the blood as a catalyst for defensive acts like pushing back enemies or triggering traps.

Rawlins—This grizzly old guy packin' two pistols is also the team priest. Not only can Rawlins heal team members, but he'll also be called upon to perform occasional exorcisms.





WARNING

AFTER APPLICATION OF NEW TAG ALL-NIGHTER, YOU'LL BE REQUIRED TO ENTERTAIN ALL MANNER OF BOUNCING BABE-A-LOIDS. FAILURE TO STAY UP MAY RESULT IN SERIOUS LOSS OF ACTION.



CONSIDER YOURSELF
WARNED

Introducing All-Nighter. Show us how it's done at
SleepLess-ScoreMore.com

GAMER BTS



Asus nForce 570 SLI Chipset Dual PCI Express Motherboard
Genuine Windows® Vista™ Home Premium
 Raidmax® Arc Gaming Case
 Corsair® 1024MB DDR2-800 Memory
 250 GB SATA II 7200RPM 3GB Hard Drive
 16x Double Layer DVD±RW Drive, 16x DVD-ROM Drive
 2x NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7600GS 256MB 16x PCI Express Video Cards SLI Enabled
 8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
 10/100/1000 Mbps Ethernet LAN
 Logitech Deluxe Keyboard & Optical Mouse
 Free Wireless 802.11g 54Mbps Network Adapter
 Add ViewSonic® Q19WB Wide-Screen 19 Inch LCD * \$219

\$1029

Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6300 \$1029
 Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6400 \$1069
 Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6600 \$1179
 Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6700 \$1419
 Intel® Core™2 Extreme Processor QX6700 \$1949

POWER BEST BUY



NVIDIA nForce 650 SLI Chipset Dual PCI Express Motherboard
Genuine Windows® XP Media Center Edition 2005 with SP 2
 Raidmax® Sirius Gaming Case
 Buypower® CPU Liquid Cooling Technology
 Corsair® 1024MB DDR2-800 Memory
 250GB SATA II 7200RPM 3GB Hard Drive
 2x NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7900GS 256MB 16x PCI Express Video Cards SLI Enabled
 16x Double Layer DVD±RW Drive, 16x DVD-ROM Drive
 8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
 10/100/1000 Mbps Ethernet LAN
 600 Watt Surround Sound Speaker
 Logitech Deluxe Keyboard & Optical Mouse
 Free Wireless 802.11g 54Mbps Network Adapter

\$1289

Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6300 \$1289
 Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6400 \$1339
 Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6600 \$1453
 Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6700 \$1699
 Intel® Core™2 Extreme Processor QX6700 \$2238

GAMERS MASTER



NVIDIA nForce 650 SLI Chipset Dual PCI Express Motherboard
Genuine Windows® XP Media Center Edition 2005 with SP 2
 Targem® A380 Gaming Case
 Buypower® CPU Liquid Cooling Technology
 Corsair® 2GB DDR2-800 Memory
 500GB SATA II 7200RPM 3GB Hard Drive
 NVIDIA® GeForce™ 8800GTs 640MB 16x PCI Express Video Cards
 16x Double Layer DVD±RW Drive, 16x DVD-ROM Drive
 8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
 10/100/1000 Mbps Ethernet LAN
 Creative Labs SB0550 5.1 Surround Speakers
 Logitech Deluxe Keyboard & Optical Mouse
 Free Wireless 802.11g 54Mbps Network Adapter

\$1639

Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6300 \$1639
 Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6400 \$1689
 Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6600 \$1789
 Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6700 \$2029
 Intel® Core™2 Extreme Processor QX6700 \$2589

CUSTOMIZE YOUR OWN LAPTOP
 WITH YOUR OWN IMAGE!



HEL-80 TURBO

\$1239



Intel® Core™ 2 Duo Processor T5600 \$1239
 2MB L2 Cache, 1.83GHz, 667 MHz FSB
 Intel® Core™ J Duo Processor T7200 \$1295
 4MB L2 Cache, 2.0GHz, 667 MHz FSB
 Intel® Core™ 2 Duo Processor T7400 \$1435
 4MB L2 Cache, 2.16GHz, 667 MHz FSB
 Intel® Core™ J Duo Processor T7000 \$1665
 4MB L2 Cache, 2.33GHz, 667 MHz FSB

15.4" Wide Screen WXGA TFT LED
 1280x800 Display
Genuine Windows® Vista™ Home Premium
 Intel® Core™ J Duo Processor
 Intel® PRO Wireless 802.11a/b/g
 Intel® 945 Chipset
 NVIDIA® GeForce™ Go 7600 256MB
 PCI Express 3x Video
 1GB DDR2-667 Memory
 Built-in fingerprint security device
 Serial-ATA 80GB Hard Drive
 Removable 8x DVD±RW Drive
 Built-in 1.3 Mega Pixels Digital Camera
 3x Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
 3x USB 2.0 Ports
 1x FireWire IEEE 1394 Ports
 3-1/2" Built-in Media Card Reader
 High Performance Hybrid Battery
 Free Deluxe Carrying Case

996J NOTEBOOK

\$1209



Intel® Core™ 2 Duo Processor T5600 \$1209
 2MB L2 Cache, 1.83GHz, 667 MHz FSB
 Intel® Core™ 2 Duo Processor T7200 \$1269
 4MB L2 Cache, 2.0GHz, 667 MHz FSB
 Intel® Core™ 2 Duo Processor T7400 \$1415
 4MB L2 Cache, 2.16GHz, 667 MHz FSB
 Intel® Core™ J Duo Processor T7000 \$1649
 4MB L2 Cache, 2.33GHz, 667 MHz FSB

15.4" Wide-Screen WXGA TFT LED
 2800x800 Display
Genuine Windows® Vista™ Home Premium
 Intel® Core™ J Duo Mobile Technology
 Intel® PRO Wireless 802.11a/b/g
 Intel® 945 Chipset
 Mobility 256MB ATI® Radeon™ X1600
 PCI Express 3D Video
 1GB DDR2-667 Memory
 120 GB SATA Hard Drive
 Intel® 945 Chipset
 Mobility 256MB ATI® Radeon™ X1600
 PCI Express 3D Video
 1GB DDR2-667 Memory
 120 GB SATA Hard Drive
 Removable 8x DVD±RW Drive
 Built-in 1.3 Mega Pixels Digital Camera
 3x Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
 3x USB 2.0 Ports
 1x FireWire IEEE 1394 Ports
 3-in-1 Built-in Media Card Reader
 High Performance Li-Ion Battery
 Free Deluxe Carrying Case

Order Toll Free 888.462.3899

**iBUYPOWER**

We Build It, You Play It
More fun while you get more done.

Get the power to do more at once with the Intel® Pentium® D processor's dual execution cores in the iBUYPOWER Dream 2007.



iBUYPOWER RECOMMENDS WINDOWS® XP MEDIA CENTER EDITION

DREAM 2007

Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6300/Windchill™
GENUINE Windows® XP Media Center Edition 2006 with SP 3
Raidmax® Katana Gaming Case
iBUYPOWER® CPU Liquid Cooling Technology
Corsair® 1024MB DDR2-800 Memory
250GB SATA II 7200RPM 3GB Hard Drive
1x Double Layer DVD±RW Drive, 1x DVD-ROM Drive
NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7600GS 512MB DDR3 16X PCI Express Video Card
8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
10/100/1000 Mbps Ethernet LAN
600 Watt Surround Sound Speaker
Logitech Deluxe Keyboard & Optical Mouse
802.11g Wireless 802.11g 54Mbps Network Adapter



Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6300	\$999
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6400	\$1049
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6600	\$1149
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6700	\$1389
Intel® Core™2 Extreme Processor QX6700	\$1959

GAMERS POWER

Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6300/Windchill™
GENUINE Windows® Vista™ Home Premium
Raidmax® Apollo Gaming Case
iBUYPOWER® CPU Liquid Cooling Technology
Corsair® 1024MB DDR2-800 Memory
320 GB SATA II 7200RPM 3GB Hard Drive
1x Double Layer DVD±RW Drive, 1x DVD-ROM Drive
NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7950GT 512MB 16X PCI Express Video Card
8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
10/100/1000 Mbps Ethernet LAN
Logitech X-530 5.1 Surround Sound Speakers
Logitech Deluxe Keyboard & Optical Mouse
802.11g Wireless 802.11g 54Mbps Network Adapter



Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6300	\$1199
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6400	\$1249
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6600	\$1369
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6700	\$1609
Intel® Core™2 Extreme Processor QX6700	\$2149

Color Options -

WWW.IBUYPOWER.COM

Intel, the Intel logo, Intel Core and Core Inside are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries.



STILL GOTTA CATCH 'EM ALL

Pokémon... AND ON...AND ON

How after a decade, Pikachu and friends aren't just surviving—they're thriving By Brian Iltihar



Poké-fact: Poliwhirl is actually the favorite Pokémon of series creator Satoshi Tajiri. He likes that the swirls on the creature's stomach are where its intestines should be. Weird.

"IT'S JUST A FAD."

Those were the exact words this *EGMer* uttered while working behind the cash register of the local game store at the beginning of the *Pokémon* craze. How couldn't I doubt the longevity of Nintendo's so-cute-you'll-wanna-puke pocket monsters? Remember Furbys, Beanie Babies, or Cabbage Patch Dolls? Yeah, all those once-in-demand products stayed hot for *real* long. Well, more than 10 years, 386 creatures, 155 million games sold, and \$26 billion in worldwide sales later, this franchise has

proven me dead wrong. And *Pokémon* isn't showing any signs of slowing down, either.

The secret to success

If you think *Pokémon* has lost some steam, then how do you explain this: In Japan, the DS role-playing adventures *Diamond* and *Pearl* (which are due out here on April 22—peep the preview on the next page) were the best-selling games last year, selling over 4 million copies combined since their September release. That's about 500,000 more than Nintendo's famous

plumber and his DS title (*New Super Mario Bros.*, which finished second) sold, and that had a four-month head start. So what keeps so many gamers catching 'em all after so many years? "Consistency," says Lawrence Neves, editorial director of *Pokémon.com*, the franchise's official website. "What I think we do better than anyone else is keep the games consistent. And with that consistency comes loyalty."

But continually putting out a high-quality product is only part of this success story, at least from the sales side. With *Grand Theft Auto* and other

mature-rated content flooding store shelves these days, Mom and Dad have come to learn that anything *Pokémon* is safe for their tykes. "The *Pokémon* games have always done well...because parents like to take a low risk when picking something out for their kids to play," says one GameStop store manager who wishes to remain anonymous. "When a parent asks us at the store about an upcoming *Pokémon* game, they usually just end up preordering it."

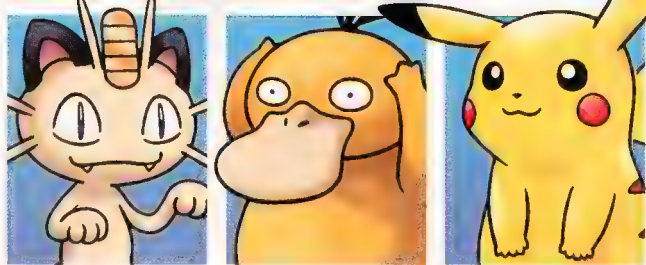


Photo: © Nintendo

More than just child's play

While the franchise continues to find a welcome home among the kiddies ("we have a skew from age 6 to 16," Neves says), the first-generation of Pokémaniacs haven't exactly ditched their trainer manuals. "We get about 1,000 e-mails a week, and within that fan mail, we see a consistent older audience that stays with *Pokémon*," Neves says. "These games offer so much intricacy and strategy that a lot of older gamers stick with it." The GameStop store manager agrees. "Nintendo started off the series strong with very memorable games that successfully combined raising creatures with traditional role-playing and adventure elements," he says, "so I find older gamers who played the first games when they were younger are always curious about the new ones." But as you might expect, these series vets have also gotten wiser in their *Pokémon* spending habits. "They usually wait until the reviews come out," says the GameStop store manager. "They want to make sure the new game isn't another *Pokémon Dash* or *Ranger*."

Pikachu, meet Mickey

With many more *Pokémon* titles on the way (not to mention the trading cards and cartoon series maintaining their popularity), this franchise will continue to bring in the bucks. Yet Neves has bigger hopes than thickening the company's already impressive bankroll. "Because *Pokémon* is such a great property for kids of all ages, it's not unlikely that it could become the videogame version of Disney," he says. "We want to make sure that we're spreading the message of communication and interaction with kids all over the world so that it becomes an instantaneous and global phenomenon. So one day, you could say 'Pikachu' anywhere in the world and you'd get ■ smile on someone's face." Pikachu, Charmander, and Squirtle on the same level as Mickey, Donald, and Goofy? Hey, I doubted them once before and look what happened... ❖

➤ We get about 1,000 e-mails a week, and within that fan mail, we see a consistent older audience that stays with *Pokémon*.

—*Pokémon.com* Editorial Director Lawrence Neves

MORE POCKET MONSTERS

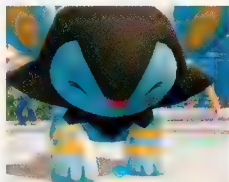
And no matter what we say about 'em, you'll buy 'em



Pokémon Diamond and Pearl

DS • Nintendo • April 22

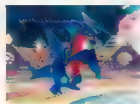
Enough of this *Mystery Dungeon* and *Ranger* side-story garbage—*Diamond* and *Pearl* will be the first true *Pokémon* games for Nintendo's dual-screen machine. While the role-playing elements receive minimal enhancements, multiplayer gets one helluva boost: online battles. In addition to heading to the Internet and challenging other trainers, you'll be able to buy, sell, and trade items or creatures with online pals. Another bonus: You can upload your evolved *Pokémon* from previous games into *Diamond* and *Pearl* by using the handheld's GBA slot.



Pokémon Battle Revolution

Wii • Nintendo • Spring/Summer 2007

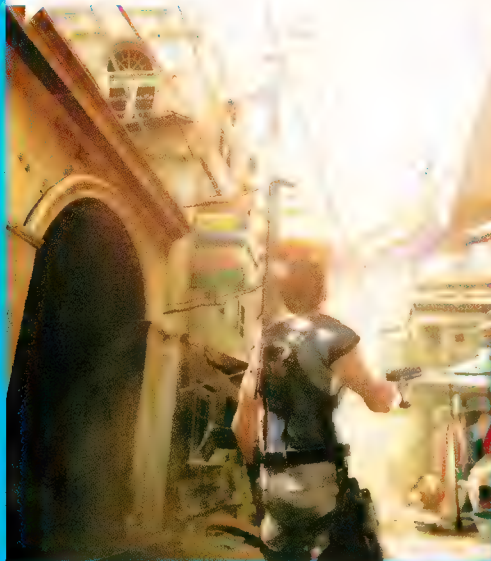
In Japan, Nintendo didn't waste much time whatsoever in bringing *Pokémon* to its new console. But don't get too jealous. Rather than being a full-scale adventure on the Wii (which everyone wants), *Battle Revolution* restricts you to the arena (similar to *Stadium* and *Colosseum*). Sure, you'll get a kick outta battling online, customizing your trainer's look, and using your DS as both a controller and a tool for transferring your monsters from *Diamond* and *Pearl* into this Wii installment. Yet you'll soon feel the sting of lost potential, especially when dealing with aggravating, game-specific friend codes.



■ How does *Battle Revolution* take advantage of the Wii-mote? Not too well: You'll basically use it only as a pointing device for navigating menus.

THE BIG ONES

The 411 on those from the most-wanted list



Resident Evil 5

PS3/XBOX360 • Collections • Fall 2009

Over the last 15 months or so, since 2007's arrival, we've become acutely less fixated about the survival horror game genre and more fixated on the quality. Resident Evil 5 is a follow-up to the previous installment in the franchise that has neither really sold itself freely nor just a major platform. And for you, we've got a new look from the franchise's previous installments to include that you'll have very interesting look at the world of that franchise. It's interesting.

Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots

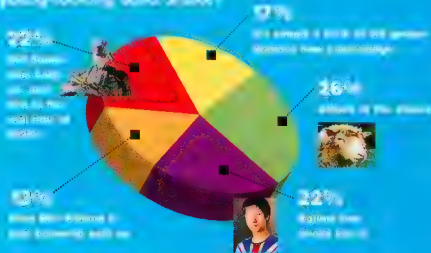
PS3 • Konami • Fall 2008



It's 1954 and you've got a new character in your hands. It's not the appearance of a fourth protagonist (Solid Snake is still the boss) but the fact that you're playing as a character who's been in the game since the beginning. It's a very interesting look at the world of that franchise.

► 2008 WINDING—BONIFID POLL

What's the most loved with MS4's young-looking Snake design?



Halo 3

XBOX360 • Microsoft • Fall 2007

Microsoft's Halo 3 is a game that's been in the making for a long time. It's not just a game, it's a franchise. It's a look at the world of that franchise.

It's a look at the world of that franchise. It's a look at the world of that franchise. It's a look at the world of that franchise.

It's a look at the world of that franchise. It's a look at the world of that franchise. It's a look at the world of that franchise.

Final Fantasy XIII

PS3 • Square Enix • Late 2009/Early 2010

That's not all. Square's "Final Fantasy XIII" is a game that's been in the making for a long time. It's not just a game, it's a franchise. It's a look at the world of that franchise.

It's a look at the world of that franchise. It's a look at the world of that franchise. It's a look at the world of that franchise.

Monster Kingdom Jewel Summoner

EXPERIENCE
THE MIGHT OF
THE SUMMONER!

It's a land wrought from the power of jewels. Here, only the Jewel Summoners can fend off evil using the fearsome beasts trapped within the land's mysterious gems.

From the makers of the **Shin Megami Tensei**® series, this is the first truly epic RPG for the PSP® (PlayStation®Portable) system!



Over 5 hours of audio in this fully voiced adventure!



Music by the maestros of gaming: Mitsuda, Sakimoto, Shimomura, and more!



Wireless vs mode lets you battle and trade over 100 monsters!



Language
Mild Fantasy Violence
Mild Suggestive Themes



PlayStation®Portable



ATLUS®
WWW.ATLUS.COM

© Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved. Monster Kingdom Jewel Summoner is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Licensed to and published by Atlus USA. Shin Megami Tensei is a registered trademark of Atlus USA. "PlayStation", "PS" Family logo, and "PSP" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Memory Stick Duo™ may be required (sold separately). The ratings icon is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.



RUMOR MILL

A fantasy land of dirt By Quartermann



Resurrected rumors

Don't always doubt my dirt—if you go back, you'll see I guessed Spidey's ultimate makeover would come soon after *Spider-Man 2*. I also discovered *Dragon Quest VIII* would hit here before *Final Fantasy XII*.

FORGET ABOUT A FLOOD—the great gaming drought is upon us. If y'all happened to score a shiny new PlayStation 3 or Wii recently, welcome to the suckiest season of them all: the lengthy winter wait. So while you guys are waiting to gobble up a worthy game, I'll continue to swim through the steady stream of scuttlebutt. And luckily for me, my rumor well is far from drying up. So without further ado, let me raise my bucket of dirt.

Truer fantasy online

You don't have to be a fan of *Final Fantasy* to know the series is pretty popular. Hell, the role-playing franchise is practically popping up on every console, handheld, and cell phone this year. So you'd think Square Enix would eventually take a breather and concentrate on other crap, right? Maybe you would, but not me—thanks to a hot tip from a moogler, I've discovered **a sequel to the online *Final Fantasy XI* is being made for the PS3, Xbox 360, and PC.** But expect the game to take place not in *FFXI*'s Vana'diel, but a world from a previous *Final Fantasy* game. Our fan-boy hopes say *FFVII*, but our practical mind says *FFXII*.

Tekken a long time

Thanks to *Virtua Fighter 5*, the PS3 finally has another good game that isn't also on the 360 (for now, at least). And since Sega's acclaimed 3D fighter looks so frickin' fantastic, it makes us wonder how *Tekken 6* will look. Too bad we won't know for a while—I recently caught wind that ***Tekken 6* won't hit until 2008 because it needs time to polish its polygons.** But to tide us over, I hear the currently Japan-only *Tekken 5 HD* will also come out here on PS3...and with some flashy new modes, to boot.

A dragon of a different color

The Xbox 360 is pretty successful here...but in Japan? Mmm, not so

much. But at least the colorful role-playing game *Blue Dragon* lit up some sales overseas. Because of this, my Microsoft mole told me developer **Mistwalker is already planning *Blue Dragon 2***...that is, if the game does well here, too. Oh, and get this—a spin-off may also appear on the DS, of all places.

Wild wipeout

MotorStorm isn't the only pretty PS3 racer Sony's revving up. According to my super secret source, the **next *Wipeout* game is slated to take to the tracks sometime later this year.** From what we've heard, the game looks fantastic, too. Why? Two words: *MotorStorm* engine. 🏎️

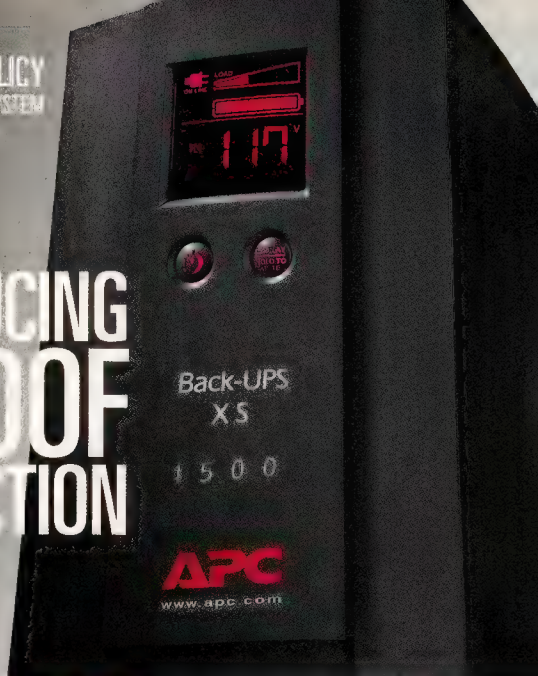
> Q-TIPS

- 🔍 I recently speculated that Tetsuya Mizuguchi (*Rez*, *Lumines*) is working on some sequels. Well, here's another—**expect a *Space Channel 5* follow-up.**
- 🔍 Seems like EA is trying milk *Madden* a little more—my sneaky sports source told me **EA is making a new *Madden* game for touchdown tykes.**
- 🔍 A new *Indiana Jones* title is coming, but when? Ask George Lucas—I discovered the **next *Indy* game will launch alongside the new flick in 2008.**

\$150,000 INSURANCE POLICY
AGAINST HARDWARE DAMAGE TO YOUR SYSTEM

SEE [WWW.APC.COM](http://www.apc.com) FOR PRODUCT PACKAGING FOR MORE DETAILS

INTRODUCING GANK-PROOF POWER PROTECTION



Whether you're gaming at home or on the road, the very last thing you need is an interruption. But all too often, bad power, or lack of power, comes between you and saving the world from destruction. If you're in an MMO, the stakes are even higher - when you go down, it affects everybody. And if there's cash at stake, the losses go far beyond just embarrassing yourself.

Powerful protection for your gear

With this in mind, APC presents the Back-UPS[®] XS, which provides battery backup and surge protection for your gear. With the nation's power grid being run into the ground, coupled with

power threats like brownouts, spikes and surges, the Back-UPS XS has arrived just in time to save your gear from imminent destruction.

Stay in the game

With the APC legacy of Legendary Reliability[®] and with over 30 million satisfied users, trust us to keep you in the game. We'll prevent interruption, protect your progress, points, cash bids, and extend your runtime - guaranteed.



Find out why 30 million people don't need to worry about losing their data to power problems

Protect and power your game gear 3 ways:

Battery Back-UPS XS BX1500LCD

- Liquid Crystal Display to show current status of power.
- Battery backup and surge protection.
- Up to 154 minutes runtime* while the power is out.
- 8 outlets - 6 battery backup, 2 surge-only - everything is protected.
- DataLine and Coax protection for hardware.
- AVR corrects undervoltages without draining battery.
- \$150K Equipment Protection Policy and 3 year warranty.



Mobile Power Pack UPB10

- Provides extended rechargeable runtime for Sony PSP, Nintendo DS Lite, Gameboy - any USB compatible game devices as well as cell phones, iPods, and cameras.
- Recharges in 3 hours and maintains 80% capacity after 300 cycles.
- 2x more playtime and up to 55 hours runtime* on iPod Nano.



Universal Notebook Battery UPB70

- Up to 6 hours additional runtime.
- Includes tips for most popular notebooks.
- Charges and powers USB compatible devices like cell phones and iPods.



APC power protection products are available at:



COMPUSA
WHERE EVERYONE TECHNOLOGIES

Office DEPOT

BEST BUY

STAPLES

that was easy.



First 100 responses receive a FREE "I Last Longer T-shirt!

Visit www.apc.com/promo Key Code r370x or Call 888.289.APC x4366 or Fax 401.788.2797

APC
Legendary Reliability[®]



COMING SOON

What's cookin' for March



Prince of Persia: Rival Swords

Wii • Ubisoft

Maneuvering the fleet-of-foot Prince on Nintendo's new machine may inadvertently lead to a lesson in self-defense. Not only will you swing the Wii-mote to slice-n-dice foes, but you must learn the ways of the Nunchuk for platforming purposes. It's just a shame that *Rival Swords*' guts come from the recycling bin; it's basically a Wii-fied version of *Two Thrones* (PS2/XB/GC).



Def Jam Icon

PS3/XB360 • EA Games

Your head won't be the only thing boppin' to *Icon*'s beats—every backdrop pulsates to the tunes, which then triggers environmental hazards like exploding gas pumps. Yet while the music's role has evolved, the core fighting system feels a bit too basic.



Major League Baseball 2K7

PS3/XB360/PS2/XB/PSP • 2K Sports

2K's big leaguer hasn't exactly torn it up the last few seasons, so the company pulled a Yankees and signed the competition. The lead designer of EA's *MVP* series is now running the show, and he's going back to the basics. *2K7* will sport all-new visuals on the PS3 and 360 (read: It'll actually look "next gen") and player-specific animations like Dontrelle Willis' high-kicking pitching motion and Barry Bonds' "No, I already have enough needles" toss into the stands.



Armored Core 4

PS3/XB360 • Sega

Armored Core's small-yet-loyal fan base will celebrate the franchise's 10th anniversary with its first next-gen entry. No.4 has you whipping through canyons and cities while battling multiple enemies. And since this one comes from the *Chromehounds* (XB360) gang, expect a lively (and heavily supported) online battlefield.



F.E.A.R.

PS3 • Vivendi Games

Unlike so many PlayStation 3 titles that started life elsewhere, this horror-driven first-person shooter arrives with some exclusive goodies: three brand-new multiplayer maps, a new weapon (the Streetsweeper shotgun), and one bonus level for the solo campaign.



Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2

PS3/XB360 • Ubisoft

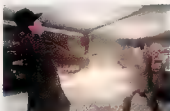
Minimal improvements abound in this quickie follow-up to last year's 360 squad-based hit. Aside from a new class (medic) and weaponry (calling in air-strikes, an ammo-carrying support bot called the Mule), you'll find smarter A.I. troops and enemy rebels.



After Burner: Black Falcon

PS2 • Sega

Stuck-in-reality flight sims ain't your thing? Then get ready to kick the tires and light the fires in Sega's exhilarating, arcade-heavy combat fighter. *Black Falcon's* blistering-fast shootouts and tight controls have us more than ready to book a flight.



The Godfather: Blackhand Edition

Wii • EA Games

While new missions are nice, it's the Wii-specific controls here that'll convince you whether or not to join the "family." Now when someone in the neighborhood doesn't wanna talk, you can rough 'em up with a few jabs of the Wii Remote and Nunchuk.



More March Releases

300: March to Glory
PS2 • Warner Bros. Int.

Mario Party 8
Wii • Nintendo

Burnout Dominator
PS2/PSP • EA Games

Medal of Honor Airborne
PS3/XB360 • EA Games

Cooking Mama: Cook Off
Wii • Majesco

MLB 07: The Show
PS3/PS2/PSP • Sony CEA

Custom Robo Arena
DS • Nintendo

Rainbow Six Vegas
PS3 • Ubisoft

Dawn of Mana
PS2 • Square Enix

Shining Force EXA
PS2 • Sega

DK: King of Swing
DS • Nintendo

SSX Blur
Wii • EA Sports Big

Dungeons & Dragons Tactics
PSP • Atari

The Godfather: The Don's Edition
PS3 • EA Games

Final Furlong
Wii • Namco Bandal

Virtua Tennis 3
PS3/XB360 • Sega

> COVER STORY

BattleStation!

It could do no wrong. Hundreds of millions of hardware units sold (enough so that you could find one in every three American households). A name that was near synonymous with “videogames”...similar to “Nintendo” during the late '80s. But last year, gamers turned on the PlayStation brand. ❏

By Dan “Shoe” Hsu & Shane Bettenhausen



Everyone from the hardcore gamers to the mainstream press was dogging on the newest console in the PS family. What happened?

How did an unstoppable juggernaut suddenly turn into an embattled victim? Is the PS3's reign over before it even began? We delve deep into the next-gen console war's unexpectedly bloody frontier to find out what went wrong...and where Sony intends to go from here.

Failure to launch?

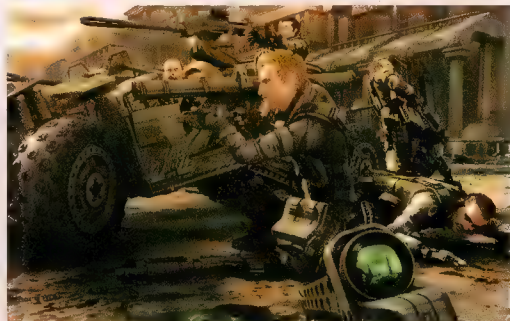
From a purely mathematical standpoint, the PS3 had a highly successful launch. Despite an asking price roughly twice that of the PS1 or PS2 when they debuted, Sony's next-gen behemoth quickly became the fastest-selling new console in Sony's history—over 2 million units made it to store shelves (in North America and Japan) within the first two months of release. And Sony's key launch title, well-received first-person shooter *Resistance: Fall of Man*, easily became the system's most popular game, selling through to nearly half of all PS3 buyers. Sounds like a rosy situation, right?

You'd be surprised...while the Xbox 360 and Wii enjoyed plenty of positive buzz throughout the 2006 holiday shopping season, the PS3 instantly became the industry's favorite whipping boy. Grumbling about the PS3's high price, lack of controller rumble, and spotty launch lineup became commonplace on Internet message boards, while the mainstream media focused on the greedy eBayers and random acts of violence that peppered PS3 queues. Sure, the hardware was selling, but nearly every news article regarding the PS3 seemed to have a negative slant (even here at *EGM*, our editors unanimously recommended the Wii

over Sony's console). Seriously, when *Time* magazine calls your console "a bust," something is clearly amiss.

But is the PS3 really a dud? Or is everyone simply hoping to see a spunky upstart (be it either the Xbox 360 or Wii) pull a David-and-Goliath upset against the industry's reigning champion? No easy answer exists, as a multitude of factors contributed to the PS3's prickly situation. For one, the PS1 and PS2 didn't face competition nearly this tough, as the 360 and Wii each pose much larger threats than Sega's Saturn or

Dreamcast ever did. Plus, the decision to make PS3 a Trojan horse for Sony's high-def Blu-ray disc technology could be backfiring—unless you convince consumers that this extra feature is something they truly want, they'll only view it as an added expense. And although the PlayStation Network offers an online solution far beyond what we saw on the PS2, the premium functionality of Xbox Live Gold still outclasses Sony's offering. Finally, an exodus of exclusives could be the most dangerous problem currently facing



■ *Resistance* didn't turn out to be the *Halo* killer that Sony had hoped for, but perhaps this fall's *Killzone 2* (above) can finally deliver on the Master Chief-slaying promises of its PS2 forerunner.



■ We hear that Capcom's *Devil May Cry 4* might not make it out until early 2008...

the PS3: although initially announced as PS3-only games, *Virtua Fighter 5*, *Assassin's Creed*, *Armored Core 4*, *Fatal Inertia*, and *Blade Storm* will find their way to 360 by year's end. With *Grand Theft Auto IV* already spreading its love around to multiple consoles, will we see even more triple-A titles jumping ship? If *Metal Gear Solid 4* or *Final Fantasy XIII* were to end up on 360, that would surely inflict some massive damage on Sony's new flagship....

So, where does that leave the PlayStation 3? With availability becoming less of an issue (PS3 sightings became commonplace after the new year) and that prohibitively steep price tag keeping it out of impulse-buy territory for most gamers, the burden now falls upon Sony and its publishing partners to deliver compelling games. Luckily, help appears to be on the way.

The Short Term

Upcoming exclusives *MotorStorm* and *F1* will certainly help attract interest, as will promising multiplatform fare such as *Virtua Tennis 3*, *Def Jam Icon*, and *Armored Core 4*. And despite its last-gen heritage, *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* looks positively sick on PS3. But it's tough to get excited for tardy, potentially inferior Xbox 360 ports of *Rainbow 6: Vegas*,

Oblivion, *The Godfather*, *F.E.A.R.*, and *Splinter Cell Double Agent*.

Later This Year

We expect good things from first-party offerings *Lair* and *Heavenly Sword* when they hit this summer, but the troubled *Warhawk* project may suffer further delays. At least a steady stream of downloadable games via PlayStation Network will help stave off the summer doldrums. Predicting the PS3's all-important holiday lineup proves to be a harder task. *Grand Theft Auto IV* will surely drive sales (and controversy) when in drops on October 17, but it also debuts simultaneously on the Xbox 360. Perhaps one of the big Japanese third-party exclusives—*Metal Gear Solid 4*, *Final Fantasy XIII*, or *Devil May Cry 4*—will be completed in time to face off against *Halo 3* and *Super Mario Galaxy*. Or maybe Sony will have to pick up the slack by finally delivering a *Killzone 2* that lives up to that ambitious teaser trailer. But we're guessing that the latest chapter in the dependable *Ratchet & Clank* franchise could quietly steal the PS3 show this fall....

Even though the PS3's future software outlook looks hopeful, Sony still has a long way to go before fully repairing the console's image. Turn the page to hear their plan.... >



■ Japanese-developed titles *Final Fantasy XIII* (above) and *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* (below) look tangibly better than existing third-party PS3 fare.



Jack Tretton isn't worried about the PS3's negative press. Sony Computer Entertainment America's new president and CEO has a clear message for everyone: Just wait and see. Armed with our own tough questions (and a few zingers from our intrepid readers), we ask him to defend the PS3's troubled debut, map out its path to future success, and comment on the overall state of the gaming industry

Jack Tretton joined Sony Computer Entertainment America's (SCEA) in 1995 as director of sales and was around for the launch of every PlayStation platform. He was promoted to president and CEO of SCEA in November of 2006. He is responsible for day-to-day management of operations, licensing, third-party relations, business development, first-party product development, marketing, sales, and cheering for the New England Patriots.

EGM: In all these years of covering this industry, we've only really seen one other system launch that had this much negativity surrounding it: the Sega Saturn. What happened?

Jack Tretton: The problem we have... it's society in general. We've been the undisputed winner for over a decade now, and people keep waiting for us to slip up, and we haven't, so people try to create stories that aren't there. The reality is, by every measurement—and I would challenge you to come up with some negative ones—the PlayStation 3 was the most successful launch we've ever had.

EGM: How are you measuring this success?

JT: We got a lot of press at [videogame trade show] E3 two years before PS3 launched. People said, "Wow, great presentation...really loved the press conference." That's the press' opinion. The press declares that our press event was positive.

As we moved toward launch, as consumers started to get their hands on the device and read about what it could do, they got very, very excited about it, and that culminated on November 17. When you can get people across North America at 20,000 retail locations camping out trying to get their hands on a PS3, then you obviously have something that's got a tremendous amount of consumer interest, and that happened.

EGM: Well, let's talk about that for a second, because, from our unscientific studies, it seemed like about 50 percent of the people in line were there to make a quick buck on eBay. And now we're seeing a lot more units on store shelves.

JT: Really?

EGM: Yeah.

JT: If you can find a PS3 anywhere in North America that's been on shelves for more than five minutes, I'll give

you 1,200 bucks for it. I can get any retail buyer on the phone with you and get them to verify that there's not a single retail location in America where there's a PlayStation 3 on the shelf for sale. They've all been sold in a matter of minutes. [Editor's note: This interview took place in early January 2007.]

EGM: But we called 18 random retailers, including Best Buy and EB Games, and half of them had PS3s in stock...some had as many as 20 in the store. So you can buy them now if you wanted.

JT: We've shipped more than 1 million PS3 units to North American customers in the first 43 days since launch. I am not sitting in the store to know when they got put on shelves or if a salesperson is giving you accurate information, but if only nine of the 18 stores you contacted had supplies, that seems to be a clear indication that sales continue to be outstanding.

And if people are [camping] out to buy our machines to sell them on eBay, and successfully sold them at an extremely large profit, I don't think you'd find a company in the world that'd say, "Yeah, that is pretty depressing. Not only did people [camp] out for them, they resold them at a \$2,500 profit overnight—yeah, >

> **People keep waiting for us to slip up, and we haven't, so people try to create stories that aren't there.**

—Sony Computer Entertainment America President and CEO Jack Tretton



WHAT THE PRESS SAYS

We asked experts from all walks of life what they thought of the PlayStation 3 launch and what Sony needs to do moving forward. Here's what they told us.

"The only people disappointed with the PS3 launch are those who couldn't get a system. As the supply ramps up, I think enthusiasm for the PS3 will grow. And there needs to be some games that are PS3-only experiences that drive consumers to want to pony up that \$500-\$600 for the system."

—Mike Snider, entertainment reporter, USA Today

"We're only three months into the launch. It's a little early to be talking disappointment, especially in the face of the Xbox 360, whose sales were disappointing for all of last year, except, perhaps, December. If Sony consistently sells less than 300K units a month during 2007 like the Xbox 360 did in 2006, then it will be disappointing."

—N'Gai Croal, general editor (technology), Newsweek

"If Sony wanted fans disappointed about not getting their hands on an overpriced system with flaws right out of the box, the launch was an unqualified success. Sony needs more good games. More exclusive good games. And they need to put them in a time machine to make them available November 11, 2006."

—Adam Sessler, host, G4's X-Play

"Were there disappointing elements to the PS3? Sure. But anyone who was expecting Sony to outdo Xbox Live on day one is dumber than a hedgehog grenade. We know online is Sony's weakness. They did a bit better than worst-case scenario for day one with online, but obviously they have a long way to go."

—Geoff Keightley, host, Spike TV's Game Head



Tretton says *Resistance: Fall of Man* "clearly demonstrated the power and potential of the PlayStation 3."

I'm pretty disappointed with our launch." It's hard for me to see the glass half-empty in that.

EGM: But why is the general vibe surrounding your launch so negative this time around? Regular gamers seem disappointed. Time magazine even called it one of the big busts of 2006.

JT: Time magazine...I did an interview with Time magazine—the guy did his first interview ever on the games industry, touched his first machine two days before that, so I would argue that Time magazine may not be as plugged-in to the consumer or the gamer as your magazine is. All I can talk to is the people that we've attempted to sell PlayStation 3s to, and we've attempted to sell PlayStation 3s to a million people, and they've all bought 'em as quickly as we can get them out to them.

But because we're in that leadership position, there are a lot of expectations thrust upon us, and some of them are a little unrealistic. If we failed and we were a distant third in the platform race, people would have a kind of a warm spot in their hearts for the good old days of PlayStation, and they'd actually root for us to get back on top. But I don't know if we want to pay the price to get that kind of [love].

I think in time we'll be able to migrate the vast majority of the audience we've established with PlayStation 2 to PlayStation 3. Until I see an indication from the consumers that it's not happened, I'll look at what gets written in the press for just what it is: an indication to try to create headlines and sell newspapers.

EGM: A lot of gamers feel the launch lineup, including Resistance: Fall of Man, is a bit lacking...either uninspiring or too similar to what's currently offered elsewhere.

JT: We're very proud of our launch lineup and feel it stacks up well against all other platform launches, including our own for PS2 and PS1. I would encourage you to take a look back at the debuts of all the past consoles to compare launch lineups. *Resistance: Fall of Man* was our best reviewed title and the number-one-selling game on the platform, so I am

not sure why you would say it was lacking.

We have published thousands of great games for all our PlayStation platforms over the years, selling billions of units. That won't suddenly change for the PS3. You can expect a steady flow of exceptional titles for the PS3 for years to come.

EGM: You told everyone, "We offer everything that Xbox Live does... the big differentiating factor is that we're not charging you." OK, where to begin.... There are several features that you don't offer right now that Xbox 360 does offer, such as cross-game messaging, background downloading, leaderboards, chat across all games....

JT: [The PlayStation Network] is in its first 60 days, and it's not ultimately where we'd like to get it. But it is free, and I think it's compelling, and it'll get better. We're very mindful of what consumers want. Now, if it's important enough for you to pay to get those features, then that's, I guess, a compelling argument for why you've signed up for the Xbox Live service. But I still think we have a very robust online experience for PlayStation 3, and we'll continue to add features. Our hope [is] that we'll be able to add those features and continue to do it for free.

EGM: So do you see a rough timeline for when you can legitimately and honestly say, "We are now literally doing everything that Xbox Live is doing, but for free"?

JT: I think we'll look to evolve our online efforts, but I don't know that we've necessarily held up the Xbox Live experience as the be-all end-all of where we want to be. We'll have features that they won't have; they may have features that we won't have. But I couldn't give you a timeline on a feature-by-feature basis.

EGM: That leads to what Sony CEO Howard Stringer once said... he admitted that the price of the PlayStation 3 is very high, but what we're really paying for is potential. Why can't we pay \$600 for something that's worth that price right off the bat?

➤ **If we...were a distant third in the platform race, people...would actually root for us to get back on top.**

JT: What have you historically paid or would look to pay? Let's say \$299 because that's what you paid for the PS2 when it came out or because that's what the low-end 360 costs. OK, if we're asking you to pay \$600 for the high-end PS3, I would point out a couple of things. Historically our platforms have staying power. Not three years, not five years, but 10 years. So are you making an investment for the next 45 days, the next year, the next five years, 10 years? Because that would have a little bit of determination as far as value.

I understand your point about, OK, the potential is there, but what's there day one? I would say that the PS3 has the best gaming experience of any platform that's ever shipped day one. [You're getting] the combination of great gaming, free online play, Blu-ray movie playback, being able to go online and surf the Internet, the ability to download your pictures, download your videos, rip your music to it...and that's all stuff that I as a consumer experienced firsthand. If you want the ultimate gaming experience and you see value in all those other experiences, all of a sudden 599 bucks doesn't sound like a whole lot of money.

EGM: Out of all the things you just listed, only Blu-ray and free online are your real advantages. You can do all those other things on the Xbox 360...for \$200 less.

JT: Good point, but let me give you one differentiating factor: the PlayStation brand. What does PlayStation mean? PlayStation means you could have bought a PlayStation back in 1995, and it had software support and was selling tremendously well until 2005, and it'd still be selling today, but we stopped manufacturing the hardware. And then PlayStation 2 came out, and that sold 110 million units, and it's still the best-selling [console] seven holiday seasons later in 2007, and that had backward compatibility with the original PlayStation.

Let's say I went out and bought [a competing] system. How many of those machines lasted five years? None of them. How many of those machines still have great software support? None of them. So I may be making an incremental investment if those other features I just talked about are not unique to PS3, but if I invest in the PS3, it's a brand that has staying power and has proved itself. Until we let the consumers down, that's going to be a strategic advantage for us. Hopefully we never will.



EGM: You boast about having a high-end machine, with 1080p high-definition output, and yet you don't include the video cables to take advantage of that. You include very low-end cables, in fact. What gives?

JT: The statistics I've read say that 38 percent of the TVs that were sold this year were high-def TVs. To me that says 62 percent were not high-def. There's a fairly high cost of goods to putting a component in the box that may or may not be used. We're providing the best value we can for consumers. The cables that we put in the box will get the PS3 up and running, but if you want to optimize it, you'll need additional cables—it depends on what kind of setup you have.

EGM: What happened to your previously announced plans of having games run on two side-by-side widescreen HDTVs? It seems kind of impractical, but you guys brought it up.

JT: To be honest with you, I don't know the answer to that one. I don't recall the statement, and I don't know what the status of it is. It probably just fell off the radar as a, "Do we really need to do this?" thing. But to all the consumers who have their two HDTVs lined up ready to roll, our apologies... to both of them. [Laughs]

EGM: Sony has said that the rumble feature was left out of the Sixaxis controller due to cost, not legal issues. The company who licenses the technology, Immersion, whom >

WHAT THE DEVELOPERS SAY

"I expected more from a company that had one more year than Microsoft to improve upon what the competition was doing. Why [Sony] couldn't have an online architecture half as good as [that of] Xbox Live is beyond me. I don't know the last time that horsepower alone won a console war, but that's what they seem to be banking on."

—Anonymous game designer

"[PlayStation Network] was a debacle from day one. Basically, the developers have to do all the heavy lifting. Microsoft required us to simply plug in to their code. Sony required us to build it or use an outside technology source. Unfortunately, I feel that the quality of the titles could be much improved if the development process wasn't so excruciatingly painful.

"As far as our relationship goes, Microsoft is far superior in terms of communication, support, and timeliness.... Even the initial technical certification requirement documentation [from Sony] was late and then only came in Japanese. We had to hire a translator. Do you think that sped things up or slowed them down? Who needs additional headaches when you're already trying to accomplish the impossible?"

"As a studio, we're excited about the possibilities on the PlayStation 3, and we'll jump through hoops to support it, but that doesn't mean we have to pretend to be happy about it."

—Anonymous game producer



WHAT THE ANALYSTS SAY

"Sony needs to make the 20GB [PS3] their main version to sell at retail. It has Blu-ray and HDMI, and that is all that gamers should really care about. By shifting the manufacturing mix to favor this [version], they can effectively cut the price to \$500 and will probably see a pickup in sales. I don't think that the difference between 20GB and 60GB is enough to justify the price, and based upon Microsoft's numbers, only around 40 percent of 360 owners actively use Xbox Live, so the built-in Wi-Fi won't likely appeal to the majority of PS3 buyers. Better to leave the adapter as a peripheral and offer a 200GB external drive for people who want to download a lot of content."

—Michael Pachter, analyst,
Wedbush Morgan Securities

"The launch was disappointing insofar as both hardware and software, particularly in Japan, were limited in availability—and [the selection of] software was very limited. The biggest issue that disappointed consumers was price. In terms of goodwill, I think Sony should have had a more complete offering from day one to justify the price premium."

—Hirosaki Kamide, analyst,
KBC Securities Japan

you've had legal problems with, told us that in a short period of time they've figured out three easy ways to include that technology with the Sixaxis controller, and it costs no more than the rumble in the PS2 DualShock 2 controller.

JT: We sold millions of units of hardware with a controller standard that did not have vibration features in it, and we've sold millions with it. I've played a lot of games that had a vibration feature, and it personally wasn't all that compelling to me. We feel that vibration is not part of our future. If there is interest in a vibration feature, I'm sure there will be a number of manufacturers that will come out with peripheral controllers for PS3 that have vibration in them.

EGM: *MotorStorm* looks great, but it doesn't really look anything like the original video that you showed a couple of years ago to represent the gameplay. What is the purpose of misleading the public like that? Aren't you setting consumers up for disappointment later?

JT: Well, I guess that's a matter of opinion. I feel it looks identical and actually personally commented that it delivers on the promise of what we showed two years earlier. Also, that was a prelook at a press conference. It wasn't shown to consumers; we didn't market that footage. We showed what the machine could do, and I think *MotorStorm* does and will deliver on that promise. The consumer will be the ultimate judge, and that's who we're beholden to.

EGM: Does that mean you expect *Killzone 2* to end up looking as good as what you showed two years ago, too?

JT: I think *Killzone* looks great, from what I've seen of it. It'll be impressive.

EGM: While we're not on the subject, what is *Afrika*, exactly?

JT: [Laughs] Well, to me, *Afrika* is a tribute to what we've done, and I say this with all seriousness because I had the same reaction when I saw it. We did some stuff [in the past] that was kinda out-there, and one of those games that was near and dear to my heart...where I [initially] said, "What the hell is that?"...that turned out to be pretty culturally relevant: *PaRappa the Rapper* [for the PS1].

So *Afrika* is something...I don't even know if it's a game. It's more of an interactive entertainment experience, and I don't necessarily know if it's for the North American consumer. But I applaud the effort to go far out there. And if *Afrika* isn't relevant to the North American or mainstream consumer, maybe the technology will yield something that is.

EGM: How do you view the Xbox 360 as a competitor?

JT: Well, I wish we had no competition, on one hand. On the other hand I think competition is good because, as we certainly saw in Japan, we had the whole market to ourselves, and that put a lot of pressure on the PlayStation brand. There's not only competition within the games industry, there's a lot of competition in entertainment in general that's going to take [consumers] away, so we

want to keep people in gaming. If our competitors get people in the aisle, looking at gaming, reading gaming magazines, we feel that's in our best interests—we've pulled them away from other forms of entertainment.

EGM: But how do you view the 360 specifically as a competitor?

JT: I think we've got a better machine, I think we've got a better business model, and I think we're going to win in the long term. I'm extremely pleased that we're selling more PS2 units than they are [360 units]. That's something that quite frankly surprised me. But while early indicators are not completely irrelevant, you can't completely ignore them, and I'd be a little concerned if I were them. On the other hand, what concerns me is if the Xbox 360 is being rejected, are the consumers on board with [next-generation] technology and is there enough [demand] there?

EGM: In the past, Sony didn't seem to acknowledge or recognize the competition too much, taking on this cocky leadership role. But at the last press conference, you took a couple of potshots at Xbox 360, making fun of its noisiness and large power brick. Is that a sign that you're treating Microsoft as a legitimate threat now?

JT: No, I think that was an attempt to be funny. You're talking about two different things. As a business model, we've gone out and executed our business model regardless of when our competition was shipping, what our competition was pricing at, and what our competition's strategy was. I think it's fairly common that people want to make comparisons and maybe we feed into that a little bit. I don't spend a lot of time research- >



> **How many of those [other] machines lasted five years? None of them. How many of those machines still have great software support? None of them.**



WHAT THE RETAILERS SAY

"No matter what media outlets said about *Resistance*, the game was considered average [by] many gamers who played it. I've heard the words 'boring' and 'OK' used to describe it by almost every gamer I've talked to—and they own the machine! The PS3 is being asked for mainly by Europeans who are visiting or studying in the city."

—Anonymous manager, GameStop

"Customers are disappointed, telling us that too many of the launch games are also available on the Xbox 360, and the first-party titles weren't innovative enough for them. We have 24 PS3s in stock right now. We're actually getting more returns than we are selling systems."

—Anonymous senior game advisor,
EB Games

the statistics of our competitors' machines. I spend a lot of time tracking how we're doing, and quite frankly, if our competition is successful and we're successful, all the better for the industry. But if a consumer's going to buy one machine, we want them to buy ours.

EGM: A while back we learned that Sony was looking into copying Xbox 360's achievements system, calling them "entitlements." Are you familiar with that?

JT: To be honest with you, I'm not familiar with the discussion.

EGM: How do you view the Wii?

JT: I think Nintendo is trying to find their place in the market. The early results from what I've seen have been fairly positive, but I don't know if that's the type of machine to take this industry in the quantum leaps that we've taken it over time. Again, are you reaching 100 million consumers worldwide, are you reaching upward

of 50 million consumers in North America, are you attracting new consumers, are you expanding the base? I think we've done a tremendous job of doing that over the last 11 years, and we've done it pretty much single-handedly. I don't know if [the Wii] ultimately has the horses to do that.

EGM: What are your short-term goals for the PS3 now?

JT: Short-term goal's to get as many units manufactured as we can as quickly as we can. We'd like to be able to bulk [ship] the goods in instead of emergency airlift them in—it's probably going to be the spring before that happens. That's goal number one. Goal number two is that, while I'm excited with what we accomplished at launch, and I think *Resistance: Fall of Man* is one of the greatest games I've ever been associated with on any platform, like the consumers, I'm anxious to get as many good games to market as quickly as possible—games that differentiate our platform and really

WHAT THE MARKETERS SAY

"Sony needs to be more human in its approach with media and consumers. Get off the throne and recognize that this is a real battle, that consumers have strong alternatives, and that Sony truly appreciates the loyalty, passion, and support that its millions of fans have shown over the years."

—Anonymous marketing director

"Do you want to talk about launch debacles? Has everyone forgotten the MTV reveal of Xbox 360?"

—Anonymous public relations manager

"[Sony needed] to develop a more innovative product with significant product differentiation. Yes, graphics and speed are important to gamers; these are what we call 'performance' needs. The better the graphics and the faster the speed, the greater the customer satisfaction. However, what really helps with creating a competitive advantage is trying to ascertain the 'excitement' needs of customers...those which the customer can't communicate to you, but if you can uncover and deliver on them, satisfaction is geometrically increased. It appears that Nintendo with its Wii has done that while Sony has not."

—Gloria Barczak, professor of marketing,
Northeastern University

show what our platform can do. I think *Resistance* did a great job of that, I think *MotorStorm* will take it a step further, and I think titles like *Killzone 2*, *Warhawk*, et cetera, some of those will really showcase the technology and take it from words to a visceral and visible experience.

EGM: How about long-term?

JT: Once you've launched a platform, it's exciting, but you very quickly move into, OK, now that we've launched this platform, let's make it a success. To us, a success means...40-50 million consumers in North America. Success means we're successful all around the world



■ On *Golden Panda*: not easy to see the hot old-on-old suck-face action on the PSP.

without exception. It's difficult to be successful in North America, but to do that in Japan and Europe at the same time is an extremely difficult task, because the consumers have different tastes. Three years into PS3 is when I'll be able to tell you with any degree of certainty how we're doing, how we've done, and how I think we'll do over the course of the life cycle. There's a ton of work to be done between now and then.

EGM: Do you believe the PS3 can push the Blu-ray format?

JT: I believe we can complement the Blu-ray format. I don't think we can single-handedly drive the Blu-ray format. It's up to the consumer electronics companies; one of the [misconceptions] is that it's Sony's effort. I don't know that we feel we can or should single-handedly carry Blu-ray on our back. I see it as an asset, though. Blu-ray is a great value for consumers as a movie format, but most importantly, [it's of value] to the gamers. Blu-ray does wonderful things for the development community, and what they can bring to consumers on Blu-ray...that's something that no other machine offers.

EGM: How come you weren't really able to push the UMD format with the PSP?

JT: The mistake we made in UMD as a movie format was assuming the movie studios understood our consumers and their tastes...that they knew what they were doing. They flooded the market with movies—I don't know that it was necessarily movies that appealed to our consumers. I know it wasn't at prices that appealed to our consumers. [I'd ask these questions] as a consumer: If you're charging me \$19.99 for a DVD, why are you charging me \$29.99 for a UMD? I'll pay 20 bucks for it—I'd certainly pay 15—but I'm not paying 29. And I'm not buying *On Golden Pond*.

What we're doing now is we're going out and trying to educate the studios as to who our consumer is, and what their price tolerances are. We feel that UMD could be a viable format for movies on the PlayStation Portable if it's handled right.

EGM: What is your vision for the future of downloadable content? Do you hope to have every PS1 game available for download eventually?

JT: I think downloadable content is very exciting. It's not physically pos-

sible to put every game that's ever been made for the PlayStation on the shelf, and there are thousands of games that were published in Europe and Japan that the U.S. consumer never saw. So the opportunity to bring that content to consumers via download is very exciting.

EGM: When will advertising-supported games actually change the economics for gamers? Will it be something where companies will pass along the savings to consumers, or will it allow them to invest in more ambitious projects that they couldn't previously afford?

JT: I don't think there's a definitive answer to that. I think there's going to be a game that's completely ad-driven that's available for free. They're out there on the PC; I don't see any reason why they can't be out there on consoles. There's the opportunity to use that revenue to offset development costs and continue to fund and try to go as far as possible with the technology, and then there's the opportunity to use that revenue to offset the amount of revenue you have to generate from retail, so we could bring retail [prices] down. All that being said, I don't think that in-game advertising is going to have a dramatic effect on game development or the way consumers play games any time in the near future.

EGM: We hear "games are for kids" just as often as "games are too adult and violent." What can be done about this?

JT: We have to educate people that "game" is not a one-size-fits-all term. People don't say, "Movies are for kids" or "Movies are for adults." There are kid movies, there are adult movies, and there are chick flicks. There are movies that have a certain demographic in mind, and people don't paint movies with one broad brush. I think we're an even more diverse form of entertainment. There is a consumer that is interested in an M-rated violent game with a deep plot, and relative to their age and their tastes, that's appropriate. Younger consumers may want a more casual, family-oriented experience—that's relevant, too.

Consumers need to understand that

WHAT THE GAMERS SAY

From our message boards at EGMboards.1UP.com:

"Why should I pay \$200 more for a PS3 when the Xbox 360 has the same multiplatform games—but they look better?"
—NihXaphon

"[Sony] needs to [ensure] that they don't lose any more third-party support. If they lose [Metal Gear Solid 4], then the Xbox 360 will win this generation."
—MaximumX

"[They] hyped 1080p [resolution], yet no launch games supported it, and they didn't even pack in the cable that lets you view 1080p content."
—Ninja_Gamer

"Sony needs to drop the 'PS3 has the best technology' attitude and find a way to reconnect with gamers...by ensuring the best games can be found on their console."
—Rooks

"There was no reason to buy it at launch. If the game you're looking forward to doesn't come out for five months, you're better off waiting to buy the system..."
—Mswakon

"Sony's carefree attitude about their competition, sheer arrogance toward consumers, and overconfidence in this industry combined to make one of the s***tiest launches in gaming history."
—UltramanJ

"We all know damn well most of the people bitching about [the PS3] would buy one if they could actually afford it."
—Nec_Pet

not every game is for every consumer, just like they make choices in their TV programming and their movie selections. I just think not enough people understand gaming, because it has a 25-year history, whereas people have dealt with other forms of entertainment for much longer.

EGM: How do you nurture innovation when the financial risks are greater than ever?

JT: You better be [Resistance developer] Insomniac and be a very proven entity if you want us to invest upward of \$30 million and give you three years to develop a game for our platform. I don't think that's a realistic >

➤ **The opportunity to bring [European and Japanese games] to consumers via download is very exciting.**



➤ The gaming industry is a cannibalistic industry. We eat our own.

opportunity for somebody right out of college, but, conversely, we definitely have development opportunities on PS2, PlayStation Portable, and online [downloadable] games, where we are absolutely interested in smaller houses or people that are in the early stages of their development careers.

If somebody asked me, "I wanna get into the games industry. What field is the most wide-open?" I'd tell you it's development. That is the biggest investment we've made in employees on a worldwide basis... because, at the end of the day, you need that compelling software to make your hardware relevant.

EGM: What are the immediate challenges for the game industry?

JT: I think the gaming industry is a cannibalistic industry. We eat our own. We allow the press and the analyst communities to segregate us and minimize us. This is an industry that is bigger than box office: It's north of \$10 billion in the U.S. alone, and there are still a lot of segments that consider it a toy or consider it to be a fad

and not mainstream entertainment. You put years and millions if not billions in development behind a new system and people ask, "When's the next system coming out?"

The risk we run is having a short-term mentality as an industry...and not looking at the long term. It's an industry right now that wants to rush, just keep rushing to whatever's hot and in the moment. *Grand Theft Auto* comes out and that's hot, so you get five *Grand Theft Auto* rip-offs. Then the industry shifts somewhere else and OK, it's all about that.

I think one of the reasons we've surpassed the box office is the movie companies can't afford to take risks anymore. Everything's a big, giant, shoot-em-up blockbuster movie, and you don't have enough genres out there to bring as many people to the movies. So we must continue to invest in the long term, not just winning the battle from one Christmas to the next or one title to the next.

EGM: You directly impact the way the game industry evolves—what's your vision for the business?

JT: To ultimately be successful, you have to believe that every consumer matters. Not just the consumers in this territory, but consumers worldwide. And not just the hardcore consumer, not just the casual consumer... everybody matters.

I think it's very difficult to take that broad view without limiting yourself in specific areas, so you have to devote resources to all segments of the market. I think a lot of companies get caught up in saying, "We can't be everything to everybody, so we're just going to be all about the core" or "We're just going to be all about the casual consumer." While I think that will allow you to carve out a niche, to ultimately be successful to the standard that we've enjoyed, you have to be relevant worldwide.

Regardless of whether or not Mr. Tretton assuaged your personal fears about the PS3, it's still going to face tremendous competition in a very crowded videogame marketplace. Since no console exists in a vacuum, it's only fair if we survey the current state and future outlook of every other system. It's not all good news—some of these boxes wish they had the PS3's problems...

2007: A Battle on Many Fronts

What's on tap for the other consoles?

WII

Can the momentum last?

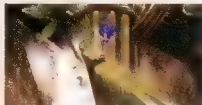
Nintendo's quirky little console with the weird name and waggle-wand really struck a nerve with consumers across the globe, instantly selling out and more or less staying that way throughout early 2007. Roughly 1.1 million Wii's made it into the hands of U.S. consumers by year's end, but incredible demand and tighter-than-expected supply left legions of would-be Wii-makers empty-handed. Will they still be clamoring for it now that the holiday zeitgeist has subsided? Probably, given the system's comparatively low price and all the positive word of mouth the console has received. Like the DS, the Wii successfully attracts non-traditional gamers curious to try its creative new gameplay concepts. *Wii Sports* has immensely broad appeal, and even the Wii-ified version of *Zelda: Twilight Princess* proved to be a colossal hit, selling through to an amazing 90 percent of

all Wii owners. But if Nintendo can't keep the top-quality games coming, can we depend on third parties to fill in the gaps? The situation could quickly devolve into GameCube, part 2.

The Short Term: *Sonic and the Secret Rings*, *Mario Party 8*, and *Cooking Mama* will keep you gesticulating for the next few months, but wishes for something more substantial...say, a *Metroid Prime 3: Corruption*, will probably go unanswered until summer. Nintendo has been extremely reticent about its lineup, refusing to divulge release dates for most of its announced titles. Oh, and don't expect to see any games that offer online gameplay for a while...*Pokémon Battle Revolution* will be the first.

Later This Year: A cadre of decent GameCube pseudosequels—*Fire Emblem*, *Battalion Wars 2*,

and *Mario Strikers Charged*—will create a mild summer this summer. But Nintendo will likely save heaven hitters *Super Mario Galaxy* and *Super Smash Bros. Brawl* for the holidays. Also, look for a big surprise release, either the rumored *Wii Fitness* or the long-awaited online *Animal Crossing* sequel before year's end. Sadly, don't expect a whole lot of strong support from third parties in '07—the cruddy PS2 ports will continue, and licensed kiddie crap will run rampant. Square Enix's *Dragon Quest Swords* and *Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles* rank among the only notable third-party exclusives expected out this year.



■ Familiar faces fill the Wii in 2007: *Sonic and the Secret Rings*, *Metroid Prime 3: Corruption*, *Super Mario Galaxy*, and *Super Smash Bros. Brawl*

XBOX 360

Who's on first?

While its next-gen competitors struggled with launchtime supply problems, Microsoft's Xbox 360 benefited from ample stock, the growing Xbox Live community, and a holiday lineup led by multimillion-selling megahit *Gears of War*. So far, Microsoft has shipped roughly 5 million systems in the U.S., giving the 360 a sizable lead in the next-gen war. But in many ways, Microsoft won just by showing up—as a first party, the company shipped only three titles during all of 2006, instead allowing games by third-party publishers to dominate the charts as loyal users move from release to release. In 2007, look for MS to step up its game to compete with the strong first-party lineups from Sony and Nintendo. With the Wii's massive momentum and the PlayStation's invaluable brand loyalty, Microsoft's head start could quickly vanish if it's too complacent.

Also, rumors persist that later this year Microsoft will introduce a souped-up 360 model boasting a larger hard drive, HDMI output, and a built-in HD-DVD drive. Sure, it would be a great way to match the PS3's high-end A/V functionality, but this new configuration would further segment the 360 audiences, leaving owners of the current 360 unable to use new services and features unless they upgrade their existing hardware.

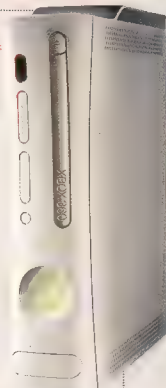
The Short Term: Although the 360's upcoming slate isn't exactly bursting with releases, the first half of the year shouldn't be a total drought. *Forza 2* and *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2* will keep spring interesting, and BioWare's ambitious spacefaring quest *Mass Effect* has the potential to make an even bigger splash than last year's biggest 360 RPG, *Oblivion*. Unfortunately, the buzz on online shooter *Shadowrun* and epic browser *Toop Human* isn't quite as encouraging—perhaps these troubled projects would benefit from further delays.... 2K's superbly creepy adventure/shooter *BioShock* could prove to be a left-field hit when it drops in June, and although it failed to reverse the 360's fortunes in Japan, Mistwalker's cuddly *Blue Dragon* will make a perfect mid-year role-playing treat.

Later This Year: Time to finally bring out the biggest gun—Bungie's ubiquitous *Halo 3* will undoubtedly own November, but don't expect to see real-time-strategy spin-off *Halo Wars* until well into 2008. *Halo 3* will also see Microsoft pushing the envelope of premium editions, with a four-disc, \$100 "Legendary Edition" housed in a replica of Master Chief's helmet. Outside of Halo, expect *GTA4* to be the biggest thing to hit the 360 (and the PS3) this

fall. We also expect good things from 360-exclusive *Splinter Cell: Conviction*, as it promises a radical reinvention for the slightly stagnant franchise. Assuming they're completed in time (and that's a BIG assumption), *Table 2* and *Banjo-Kazooie 3* could also be huge. And although it hasn't garnered much buzz yet, the atmospheric mystery *Alan Wake* (from the guys behind the *Max Payne* games) has serious sleeper-hit potential.



■ Move over, *Gears of War*—Bungie's *Halo 3* is coming this fall to reclaim its rightful throne.



SONY PSP

What's the matter here?

Although strong end-of-the-year hardware sales prove that Sony's sleek handheld isn't ready to capitulate to the more popular DS, sluggish software sales paint a bleak picture. When *Hannah Montana* on DS outsells every PSP game in the month of December, something is definitely wrong. One possible explanation: New PSP buyers are picking up value-priced Greatest Hits games instead of recent releases like *GTA: Vice City Stories*, which mysteriously failed to connect with gamers like the previous year's *Liberty City Stories*. A few big titles could help push the PSP in 2007, but a much-needed price cut may be the only solution to standing up to Nintendo's dominance.

The Short Term: PSP owners get another wave of downsized ports this spring as *Oblivion*, *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2*, *Virtua Tennis 3*, and *Call of Duty 3* attempt to squeeze their way onto the portable—something tells us that they'll be better on your home console. At least the new *Ratchet & Clank* adventure isn't a port!

Later This Year: Things might finally start turning around for the PSP as more original and exclusive content comes to Sony's handheld. The long-awaited *Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII* will finally flesh out Cloud and Aerith's backstory, and it's only the first of several FF games headed to the PSP this year. Also,

turn to page 22 for our exclusive first look at Konami's *Castlevania: Dracula X Chronicles*, a retro remake bound to pique hardcore gamers' interest.



NINTENDO DS

How far can it go?

The breakout success of Nintendo's quirky little console shows no signs of stopping—it was the best-selling console across the board last year, with more than 10 million units now in the hands of U.S. gamers. Nintendo's own games continue to hog the spotlight, as *New Super Mario Bros.*, *Mario Kart*, *Brain Age*, and *Nintendogs* can be seen hangin' tough atop the sales charts month after month. Third parties can still achieve success, though, as the broad DS user base eagerly snaps up licensed kiddie fare, classic franchises like *Mega Man* and *Castlevania*, and offbeat adult-oriented fare like *Sudoku* and *Poker*. With the DS's peak popularity still to be reached (we haven't even gotten *Pokémon* yet, folks), the industry watches this one with eager eyes...

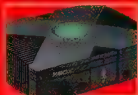
The Short Term: When *Pokémon Diamond/Pearl* launched in Japan last year, thousands of fans crammed the streets, quickly making it the best-selling DS game of all time. Look for a repeat when *Pikachu* and friends disembark here on April 22.

Later This Year: Prepare for a *Zelda*-filled fall: *Wind Waker* fans will greet the return of cuddly, pint-sized Link in *Zelda: Phantom Hourglass* later this summer, and nightmarish, leotard-clad Tingle will even get his own game by year's end. Square Enix has a similarly deadly one-two punch planned with *Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Rings of Fate* and *Dragon Quest IX*. And although tends to drag out the inevitable, to see more *Brain Age* and sooner rather than later.



NOT LONG FOR THIS WORLD

In 2007, you probably won't see much coming out for the Xbox, GameCube, or Game Boy Advance—all three consoles teeter on the brink of death. Microsoft basically euthanized its first console shortly after launching the 360, and hasn't released a single title for it since. Multiplatform releases kept the coals stoked for a while, but the bloated black box is quickly becoming a dumping ground for tractor-racing games and car-bou-hunting sims. The GameCube remained relevant a little longer thanks to *Zelda: Twilight Princess* making waves last holiday, but support has all but vanished since. And although the toddler set will continue to keep Game Boy Advance going for a few more years, the odds of a game coming out that you'll actually care about are becoming nearly infinitesimal.



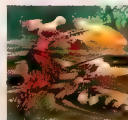
PLAYSTATION 2

Long live the king

Although the industry's collective focus has moved on to the war-torn next-gen frontier, consumers continue to flock to Sony's aging PS2. Unlike the left-to-die Xbox and GameCube, the PS2 has transitioned into a PS1-style autumnal splendor. Over the holidays, PS2 hardware outsold each of the three next-gen consoles, and the 37-million-strong installed base continued to snap up new games. *Madden NFL 07*, *Final Fantasy XII*, *Guitar Hero II*, and *Bully* ranked among the year's biggest sellers across the board. The console's continuing popularity bodes well for its extended longevity, especially considering Sony has yet to drop it to the "magic" \$99.99 price point.

The Short Term: Even next-gen pioneers will want to kick it old-school for *God of War II*, due out in March. And fresh-with-afterglow *FFXII* veterans will have plenty of RPGs to choose from: *Shining Force EXA*, *Dawn of Mana*, and *Persona 3* will all arrive by April. But wait, there's more...quality fare such as *Burnout Dominator*, *Medal of Honor: Airborne*, and *Spider-Man 3* should keep the masses happy until summer vacation.

Later This Year: The nip/tucked *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider Anniversary* will turn heads by late summer, and you can expect a full onslaught of sports and major franchise titles from EA this fall. Sony has so far kept its lineup under wraps, but new installments in established series (*SOCOM*, *Hot Shots*, one of Sony's platformers) seem like a given. At this rate, the PS2 may survive for a few more years... 🍷



Could the PS3 really be the hottest system by year's end? Or is Sony's Jack Trotton full of crap? Go to EGM213.1UP.com for an EGM Live! podcast where we'll discuss our interview with Sony's big man and the future outlook for every console covered here.

Also, remember last year, when we ran a controversial interview with Microsoft Corporate Vice President Peter Moore shortly after the Xbox 360 launch? (You can catch it again at EGM213.1UP.com.) Don't miss the next issue of EGM, where we'll be doing a one-year follow-up with Moore to see where things are today.

+ EGM PRESENTS

THE 2006 1UP NETWORK AWARDS

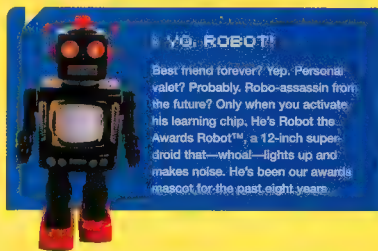


Awards robot by Chuck Ernst

Grown-ups like to say there are no true winners and losers, it's an honor just to be nominated, yada, yada, yada.... Screw that.

We're gamers, and we know that winning is everything. Read on for the best (and worst) of the year two-zero-zero-six....

IN A YEAR WHEN TWO NEW CONSOLES, several mega-anticipated sequels, and a few freshly minted hit franchises stormed our living rooms, choosing the best from the rest is, well, a bitch. But that doesn't mean our winners weren't elected with all the fairness of an Ohio voting machine by the collective reviewing staffs of *EGM* and 1UP.com. And this year, instead of dividing things up by system, we focused on what matters: the nitty-gritty. So you'll see award categories based on actual game content rather than platform. We've also chucked our long-standing rule that the overall Game of the Year can't clean up in other categories, so you might see one particular title over and over. Betcha can't guess what game that is. And no skipping ahead to find out!





> BEST NARRATIVE

Final Fantasy XII (PS2)

Even if you haven't played *FFXII*, we bet you could guess its setup: A whiny male protagonist struggles to find himself while an "I can do anything a boy can do" female lead wants to save everyone. Chaos ensues. But those elements here are vastly overshadowed by a surprisingly mature, politically based narrative that focuses more on the fate of its game world than its stars.

Runner-up: *Bully* (PS2)



> BEST LEVEL DESIGN

The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess (Wii/GC)

Way to make all other developers look lazy, Nintendo. *Twilight Princess*' labyrinths pack so many intricate puzzles (followed by "a-ha!" moments once you solve them), it's no wonder it took forever for this gem to come out.

Runner-up: *Tomb Raider: Legend* (multi)



> BEST ARTISTIC DIRECTION

Okami (PS2)

Next-gen power? Pfft, who needs it? Certainly not *Okami*, as Capcom's beautiful PS2 adventure modeled its look after the Japanese woodblock-print style—with stunningly unique results. And how could we not reward a title for artistic direction when its major gameplay mechanic, the Celestial Brush, brings out the Bob Ross in everyone?

Runner-up: *Gears of War* (XB360)



EGM'S FIFTH ANNUAL Tobias Bruckner Memorial Awards

For excellence in the field of crapulence

We hardly knew this racist dino-riding cavalry captain, struck down in the prime of his half-cyborg life in the final battle of 2002's amazingly terrible *Turok: Evolution*. But we knew him well enough to memorialize him as our annual representative for gaming's absolute worst. He didn't die—and we didn't play his horrendous game—in vain! And this year's Tobiases go to....



> BLOODSUCKER OF THE YEAR

EA with its Madden-ing microtransactions

Hey, Mr. Madden, you see that blood trickling down the leg of folks who bought the 360 version of your game? Well, that's from the ass-raping publisher EA just gave them, as fans were forced to pay extra for content (like historical stadiums) that has been included in the current-gen editions for years. Apparently, making 8.73 gazillion dollars annually just wasn't enough.



> BIGGEST CULTURAL MOVEMENT

DIY game shows and video blogs

For better or for worse (and usually it's the absolute worst), post-your-own-video sites like YouTube, Google Video, and our own GameVideos have given camera-carrying nobodies the chance at an audience rivalling a basic cable network's. From the raw but charming GameLife (www.gamelifeshow.com) to the catchy jingles of GameJew (www.gamejew.com) to the totally radical Awesome Video Games (www.ffstv.com), real reality TV has finally arrived.

Runner-up: Pro gaming



> BEST BATTLE SYSTEM

The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess (Wii)

Wielding the Wii-mote and Nunchuk as a sword and shield may not teach you any real-life defense skills (simple motions yield complex onscreen animations), but it sure immerses you in Link's latest adventure. We pity anyone who has to play it the old-fashioned way on GameCube.

Runner-up: Final Fantasy XII (PS2)



> BIGGEST WOW MOMENT

Fighting the Berserker from Gears of War

While Gears' sadistically sweet Xbox 360-powered graphics made us go gaga, our first encounter with the sightless Berserker made us run our buns off. Between its charging-bull wall-busting and impenetrably thick skin, the massive brute is an intimidating early boss. But the best part: frying the freak with the satellite-mounted Hammer of Dawn.

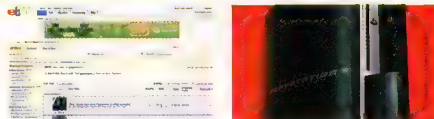
Runner-up: Driving through the Dead Rising garage



> R.I.P., PLEASE

Wii-tarded gamers

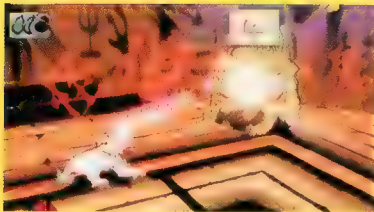
Neckbeard-groomers everywhere evacuated into their Depends when Nintendo officially named its new console. Sorry schmucks who give bad memes staying power months and months after they've built critical mass are still adding "wii-injuries" and "wii-tard" to "O RLY," Chuck Norris, "Show me the money!" and "Where's the beef?" Just stop.



> STINGY SCUMBAGS OF THE YEAR

eBay system scalpers

Did you wait in line for days, only to narrowly miss securing a PS3 or a Wii? Blame the greedy eBay resellers who snatched 'em up and sold 'em online. (We even met one scalper who hoped to hock his PS3 to buy a new HDTV—for his Xbox 360!) When they die, let's hope their version of hell is working in Wal-Mart on the perpetual launch day of Scream-for-Me Elmo.



> MOST SADLY IGNORED

Okami (PS2)

Not even the three-hit combo of stylish visuals, innovative gameplay, and *Zelda*-worthy puzzles could convince enough people to buy *Okami*. It didn't even tickle the fancy of many Japanese gamers, whose mythology provides the backdrop for this epic adventure. But the saddest part of this story: *Okami's* lackluster sales sealed the fate of its talented developer. Rest in peace, Clover.

Runner-up: Viva Piñata (XB360)



> DESIGNER OF THE YEAR

Twilight Princess Director Eiji Aonuma

Director of every *Zelda* game since *Majora's Mask* (N64), Aonuma wanted to move on after the cartoony *Wind Waker* received mixed reviews. Lucky for us, Aonuma's boss, Shigeru Miyamoto, convinced him to stick with the series.

Runner-up: Gears of War's Cliff Bleszinski



> BEST MULTIPLAYER EXPERIENCE

Wii Sports (Wii)

While the hardcore gamer in us wanted to say *Gears of War* (which lost by just one vote), playing *Wii Sports*—with its simple waggle controls and Duplo-style graphics—brought back that fuzzy feeling of playing nice with the nongamers (or not so nice with a few friends who know better than to toss the ball backward in *Wii Bowling*—which you can totally do!).

Runner-up: Gears of War (XB360)



> CRUD IN THE WATER

Jaws Unleashed (PS2)

You get to eat Shamu and dismember swimmers? Connoisseurs of good bad games had the blood craze for this one, but *Jaws Unleashed* turned out to be just a regular bad bad game. Later on you can grab exploding barrels in your shark mouth and hurl them at enemies or solve crappy puzzles, but like all people who actually played *Jaws*, we quit before we got that far.



> SHUT YOUR EYES UNTIL IT'S OVER

That creepy PS3 baby commercial

Sony, if your animatronic, crying-baby television ad is part of some plan to give *Harry Potter* villain Voldemort a new body forged from the nightmares of a nation's youth, then kudos. If it was meant to sell PlayStation 3s, mega anti-Kudos. And your ad agency sucks. We're sending you an electric bill for all the nights we've had to sleep with the lights on.

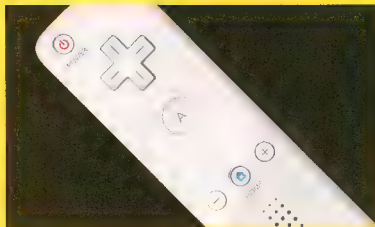


> QUIRKIEST GAME

Elite Beat Agents (DS)

Japanophiles had declared this one a winner before they even glimpsed the localized English version, but when it finally did arrive Stateside, *Agents* had even shooter and sports fans getting their groove on. The tap-and-draw-to-the-beat gameplay was only half the fun, though. Those wacky comics about Leonardo Da Vinci's womanizing and the secret life of babysitters were what really made people scratch their heads—at 230 beats per minute.

Runner-up: *Odama* (GC)



> BIGGEST INNOVATION

The Wii Remote

Never dismiss Nintendo's knack for whipping up crazy (but cool) ideas. We questioned the Wii's whack-happy ways at first, but after swinging our arms around, the answer is clear: The Wii Remote totally works. Sure, Wii games don't look next gen, but at least the controller's transforming nongamers into window-shattering warriors.

Runner-up: Brain training DS games

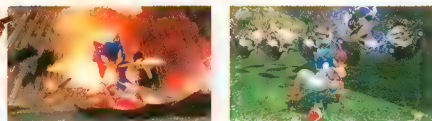


> BEST CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion (XB360)

You know you're playing an exceptional game when you log 50 hours without even touching the main quest. *Oblivion* offers so many ways to micromanage your character's traits and abilities, it's hard not to trade a follow-the-arrows story for wide exploration and open experimentation. One quest unexpectedly turns you into a vampire—and your character is chronically disabled until you find the cure. The amazing part is how much we care.

Runner-up: *Bully* (PS2)



> NOW LOADING, AND LOADING, AND LOADING

Sonic the Hedgehog (XB360)

Visualize Speedy Gonzales stalled in a Taco Bell drive-thru, the Flash dead last in line at the Department of Motor Vehicles, and videogaming's patron saint of speed playing "red light, green light" with loading screens. Interactive screensaver *Sonic the Hedgehog's* 1:4 activity-to-hibernation ratio is an insult to the platformer that famously asked us to "think fast."



> KNIGHT RIDER MEMORIAL AWARD FOR AUTO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The Gizmondo Ferrari

Was the exec who colalunched the failed Gizmondo handheld really dumb enough to drink drive his \$1 million Ferrari Enzo—one of only 399 in the world—into a California freeway light pole? Stefan Eriksson blamed the crash on a mystery driver named "Dietrich." But we think the Enzo wrecked itself just to avoid hauling around anyone responsible for the Gizmondo.

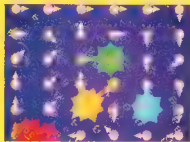
> L'il AWARDS

Best weapon
Dead Rising's mall

Chain saws, showerheads, food-court umbrellas—what *isn't* a weapon is more like it in Willamette Mall, *Dead Rising's* (XB360) sprawling zombie pit.

**Best sound design**
Electroplankton

This DS music game's plinks and plunks let gamers explore their creative side, turning them from passive players into amateur composers.

**Best downloadable content**
Gran Turismo HD

We thought it would be hard to get excited about a remixed *Gran Turismo*—until we saw *II* in glorious high definition, downloaded for free on PS3.

**Best new series**
Gears of War

Soldiers fighting alien invaders? You say "cliché"—we say, "Bring on the sequel!" Finally, something worth shooting in between Covenant sightings.

**Best sequel**
Kingdom Hearts II

This sweet and sassy combo of Mickey Mouse and *Final Fantasy* kept us in touch with the 12-year-old girl in us all.

**Best co-op play**
Guitar Hero II

Only dweebs like James Taylor and James Blunt jam alone. *Guitar Hero II* (PS2) let us rock the way we were born to.



> GAME OF THE YEAR

The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess (Wii/GC)

Whether it outclasses the legendary *Ocarina of Time* (N64) comes down to personal taste, but *Twilight Princess* packs all the great stuff you expect from a *Zelda* game—massive dungeons, imposing bosses, creative weaponry, and plenty of shrubbery to prune. Yet it still feels startlingly fresh, thanks to its darker narrative and innovative control (at least in the Wii version). Few games deliver such richly detailed, immaculately designed experiences.

Runner-up: *Gears of War* (XB360)



■ One of many Wii-related mishaps at wiihaveaproblem.com.

> MOST EMBARRASSING WAY TO DIE
Killed by your Wii

It was a recipe for a bloodletting: overzealous gamers, sweaty palms, and weak Wii-mote wrist straps. The nightly news jumped on stories of busted TVs and black eyes, prompting Nintendo to issue a recall for the straps. But we figure that if you die playing Wii, you're doing the gene pool a favor.

> FROM BUZZ TO BUST
Phantasy Star Universe (XB360)

Here we are, months after the release of *PSU*, and EGM's editors are well-rested, clean-shaven, and in good standing with their significant others. What the hell went wrong?! Where the original *Phantasy Star Online* had us "calling in sick" for years, its lackluster sequel didn't even make us "oversleep" once. ☹

Hold it right there, kiddos. Before you fire off that angry missive to our editors about our winners, see what games you picked as the reader favorites at EGM213.1UP.com.

REVIEWS

> portable knights, old-timey flights, dazzling fights, upholding rights, and soccer balls

84

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5



> CONTENTS

- 84 Virtua Fighter 5
- 86 NBA Street Homecourt
- 88 Battlestations: Midway
- 88 Fuzion Frenzy 2
- 89 Winning Eleven Pro Evolution Soccer 2007
- 90 Crackdown
- 92 Ar tonelico
- 92 MVP 07 NCAA Baseball
- 93 Diddy Kong Racing DS
- 94 Lunar Knights
- 94 Monster Kingdom
- 94 Jewel Summoner
- 96 Valhalla Knights
- 96 Reviews Wrap-Up

> THIS MONTH IN REVIEWS

A CRANE-KICKIN' GOOD TIME

It's the best, a-round...until the next one

WELL LOOKEE HERE. Do we finally have a game that makes your PS3 worthwhile? (And no, *Resistance* and *Fight Night*, while good, aren't system sellers.) Hmm...that's a tall order (how much did you give that eBay-er again?), but *Virtua Fighter 5* is sure clueing people in to the system's potential. Yeah, *VF5* will be hitting the 360 this summer, but for a few months, PS3 owners will have bragging rights with one of the most impressive games out there (and arguably the greatest 3D fighter of all time). That's not to say 360 owners are hurtin'—Microsoft's supercop title *Crackdown* delivers Dumpster-throwing fun. But exclusivity, limited or not, isn't always the answer. On either system, arcade-style hoopster *NBA Street Homecourt* impresses. Three arcade award winners...I just need some Skee-Ball, Whac-a-Mole, and a vomit-scented ball pit, and I'm set.

—Greg Ford, Reviews Editor

> HOW WE RATE

- 10 to 9 Excellent
- 8.5 to 7 Good
- 6.5 to 5 Average
- 4.5 to 3 Bad
- 2.5 to 0 Terrible

> SCORES AND AWARDS

We give awards to games based on their scores. Platinum: all 10s; Golds: 9.0 average and up; Silver: 8.0 average or higher. Game of the Month goes to the highest-scoring game with unanimously "Good" scores, and Shame of the Month is the reverse. Simple.

Keep in mind that a 10 does not mean a game is perfect, but rather it's the best score we can give. Also, 5.0 is average.



86

NBA STREET HOMECOURT



94

LUNAR KNIGHTS



PAGE
89

Winning:
Yes, but not
by much



PAGE
90

Crackdown:
Criminal
killer



PAGE
93

Diddy:
Leaving a
skid mark



THIS MONTH'S REVIEW CREW

Solving game tapes since before the Parkers were brothers



Dan "Shoe" Hsu

Editor-in-Chief

Despite all the craziness Shoe experienced this month—the Consumer Electronics Show, the cover story, and dealing with Michigan's loss in the Rose Bowl—he still brings a smile to the job. Eternally happy...or has he finally snapped?

Now Playing: *Bully*

Blog: egmshoe.1UP.com



Jennifer Tsao

Managing Editor

Jennifer's arms are really sore from box—wait, *Wii Sports* was last month's joke? But Jen only got her *Wii* this month (on the black market...thanks for nothing, Nintendo!). Now, where were we—aw, never mind.

Now Playing: *Wii Sports*, *Zelda: Twilight Princess*

Blog: egmjennifer.1UP.com



Bryan Intihar

Previews Editor

Bryan was a major Debbie Downer around the office after Ohio State's collapse in the National Championship game. Not even a signed treat from the Colonel could turn his frown upside-down.

Now Playing: *NBA Street Homecourt*, *Virtua Fighter 5*

Blog: egmbryan.1UP.com



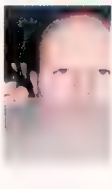
Michael Donahoe

News/Features Editor

After reviewing the lame *American Idol* game last month, Donahoe is stoked his favorite reality train wreck is back on track for another glorious season. Now if we can only get him to shut the f--- up—face it, kid, you don't got talent!

Now Playing: *Twilight Princess*

Blog: egmho.1UP.com



Greg Sewart

Staff Reviewer

Around this time each year Stevy always has a smile. Is it the onset of spring? The thought of doing income taxes? His upcoming birthday? Nope. NASCAR season has begun once again! Yee-haw! Bring on the next-gen games! (Finally.)

Now Playing: *Lost Planet*

Blog: stevy.1UP.com



Shane Bettenhausen

Executive Editor

Excessive amounts of *Virtua Fighter 5* ignited Shane's long-suppressed aggression, leading to a serious beatdown for mild-mannered intern Brooksie. The best part: Interns don't get health insurance. Hal

Now Playing: *MotorStorm*, *Virtua Fighter 5*, *Lunar Knights*

Blog: egmshane.1UP.com



Crispin Boyer

Senior Editor

Working on the awards feature convinced Cris to dust off 2006 titles he missed last year. And working on the shady-marketing story convinced him never to believe anything he reads.

Now Playing: *Resistance: Fall of Man*, *Gears of War*, *Okami*

Blog: egmcrispin.1UP.com



Greg Ford

Reviews Editor

Wii-mote strap injuries are so last month. Ford encountered a new problem after playing too much *Wii Sports*—arms-free gaming. Yeah, the whole no-limbs thing sucks...but at least his tennis elbow is better!

Now Playing: *Twilight Princess*, *Gears of War*, *Crackdown*

Blog: egmford.1UP.com



Thierry Nguyen

Freelance Hobo

The freelance life has found Scooter reviewing the very same "merely average" RPGs he would have assigned to other people if he had a job. He looks forward to finally having the time to get past the third dungeon in *Twilight Princess*.

Now Playing: *Lost Planet*

Blog: scooter.1UP.com



Todd Zuniga

Sports Guy

The Denver Broncos blew their NFL season, St. Louis Blues are in last place, and Chelsea's way behind Manchester United. In real life. Ahh, the sweet nectar of sports videogames: You, too, can change the past!

Now Playing: *Winning Eleven 2007*, *NBA Street Homecourt*

Blog: oplumtodd.1UP.com

Also on deck...

John Davison
Reviews Editor
1UP Network

James Mielke
Executive Editor
1UP.com

Andrew Pfister
Reviews Editor
1UP.com

Jeremy Parish
Features Editor
1UP.com

Scott Sharkey
Staff Writer
1UP.com

Domian Linn
Managing Producer
GameVideos.com

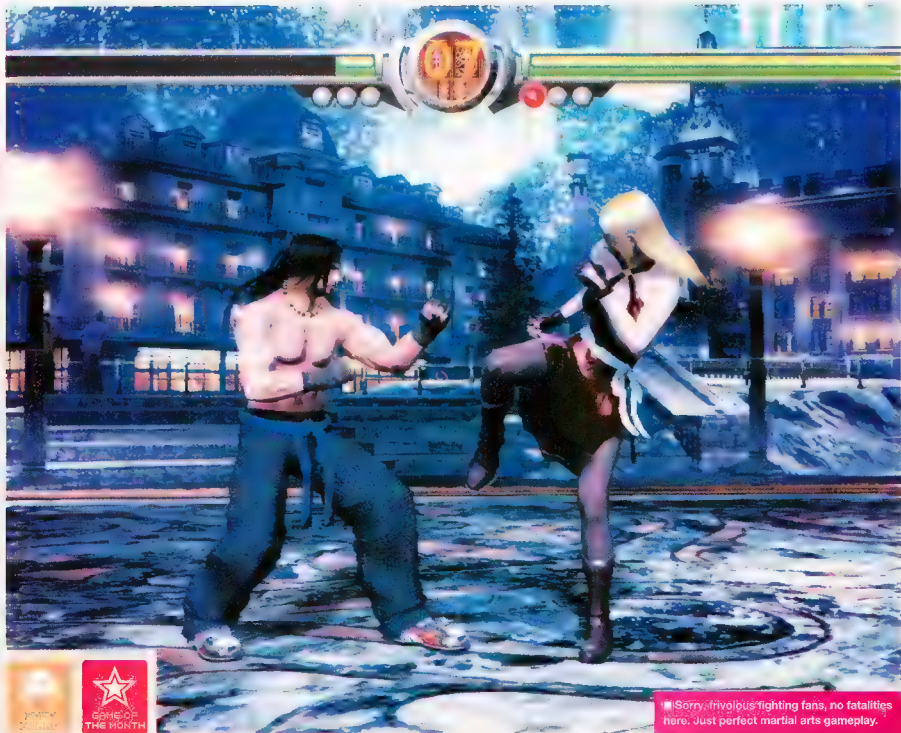
Ray Barnholt
Staff Reviewer
MyCheats.com

Andrew Fitch
Staff Reviewer



Want more?

Looking for a review of a game we didn't have enough time or room for? We've got you covered. Check 1UP.com for all your up-to-date review needs. It's where you can also find the lead EGM reviews. The second and third reviews, though—you'll find those here.



Sorry, frivolous fighting fans, no fatalities here. Just perfect martial arts gameplay.

PlayStation 3

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: AM2 ■ Players: 1-2 ■ ESRB: Teen

Virtually perfect

➔ **MILKMAN:** It's interesting that no matter how many top-tier fighters show up and try to steal *Virtua Fighter*'s lunch money, none of them do. That task is even more difficult now, because *Virtua Fighter 5* kicks everyone's ass up and down the block. Sure, some fighting series like *Soul Calibur* and *Tekken* distract you with all kinds of extra modes and, uh, bowling, but *VF5* rises above the pack thanks to the sheer depth of its gameplay. While the series used to have a steep learning curve, ever since *VF4* on PS2, Sega has managed to strike the right balance between depth and overall playability. *VF5* is faster and more beautiful than ever, and it's so much fun that we'll all be playing it until *VF6* comes along.

And though *VF5* feels somewhat sparse in terms of overall variety (it does have about the same number of modes as *VF4: Evolution*, however), it's eternally replayable in both single- and multiplayer flavors. Just when you think you're ready to put the game down, along comes another ranking match (your created character can achieve dozens of ranks) or item battle (where you can win trinkets to customize your character with) to drag you back for just *one more round*. (What keeps Shane coming back for one more round is his misguided belief that if I give him another shot he'll somehow scrape out a win. As Bryan will attest, it just ain't happening.) But whether you're a good *VF* player or whether you suck (like Shane),

you'll learn something new from your favorite character day in and day out. That's impressive. Be warned, though: The problem here is not that the game lacks any online functionality, but that the upper reach of the offline Quest mode—in which you face off against master computer A.I.—is so difficult that it borders on cheap. And what's with not being able to take your built-up character over to a friend's house? That just seems like a mandatory courtesy in this day and age.

➔ **SHANE:** Sure, my amazingly agile El Blaze wiped the floor with Milky's monkeylike Eileen time and time again, but this review shouldn't simply be a vehicle for three smack-talking douchebags to mock one another.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

MILKMAN
9.5
EXCELLENT

SHANE
10
EXCELLENT

BRYAN
9.5
EXCELLENT

The Good: Best 3D fighting engine ever
The Bad: Lack of modes and online play

Shut the F* Up:** The terrible announcers need to go



Monkey business



Eileen and El Blaze are much better additions to the series than Goh or Brad were when they debuted in *VF4: Evolution*. While both Goh and Brad have been improved for *VF5*, newcomers Eileen and El Blaze are great from the get-go, giving newbies and vets alike lots to learn and play around with. They are both small, agile, and deadly. Monkey-fist kung fu master Eileen is particularly good at staggering opponents and subjecting them to rapid, multihit combos that will leave you wondering where your life bar went. Luchador El Blaze, on the other hand, is not only fast but great at throwing players around, even those twice his size (see: Jeffrey, Wolf), using running throw moves to keep opponents on their toes at all times. Unfortunately, Takarashi fans will be disappointed to hear that the hefty sumo wrestler is back on a seemingly permanent vacation ever since his last appearance in *VF3: Team Battle* on Dreamcast.

Let's instead focus on the serious business at hand—*Virtua Fighter 5* takes the prize as the finest 3D fighting game ever created.

You can't question this game's pedigree: Ever since the franchise first birthed the 3D fighting game genre 14 years ago, *VF* has offered unparalleled realism, depth, and precision. Yeah, newbies can mash their way to a modicum of success, but no other fighter rewards expert play quite like a *Virtua Fighter*—a match between two high-level combatants captures the grace, athleticism, and brutality of real martial arts. *VF5* is no different.

VF4's excellent Quest mode makes a welcome return here, but for me, a fighting game lives or dies by its versus play. And, to be honest, I could spend the next few years happily fightin' fools in *VF5*. The lack of online

play initially disappoints, but since no online fighter has ever offered lag-free play, I respect Sega's decision to not ship an imperfect experience. All the bells and whistles in the world can't make *Mortal Kombat* a decent fighter, so *VF* shouldn't be criticized for not gliding the lily.

➔ **BRYAN:** C'mon, Shane—your absolute hard-on for this series has blinded you when it concerns *VF5*'s utter lack of online goodies. I don't want laggy Internet fights, either, but at least throw me a bone, like leaderboards or downloadable garb. Maybe some of those features will come to fruition in this summer's 360 edition?

But I'm right there with you on everything else. The fighting engine? It's as tuned and deep as ever. The graphics? Sublime (I didn't even mind

getting knocked on my ass so I could see the effect water would have on my character's outfit). The new cast members? Eileen and El Blaze (see sidebar) are fine additions to *VF*'s lineup of pugilists. The Quest mode? A definite upgrade from the last game, as you'll find crazy new ways to customize a character's appearance (some getups are so nuts, I had trouble even recognizing who was in the ring with me). And I don't agree with Milky's complaint about the supposed cheap AI.; I found that the competition in Quest mode ramps up at a pretty fair clip.

I know people are bitching about the price of the PS3, but think about this, fighting fans: Considering that this \$60 game essentially replaces a \$40K arcade cabinet, it sure seems worth it to me. ☹



■ **White:** Homecourt takes a slight performance hit at 1080 HD settings.

PS3/XB360

NBA STREET HOMECOURT

■ Publisher: EA Sports Big ■ Developer: EA Canada ■ Players: 1-4 ■ ESRB: Everyone

THE VERDICT
(OUT OF 10)

BRYAN
9.0
EXCELLENT

TODD
9.5
EXCELLENT

MILKMAN
9.0
EXCELLENT

The Good: New trick controls, spectacular dunks.
The Bad: Where are the crowds?
Touching: The Hoosier-inspired gym

Big homecourt advantage

➔ **BRYAN:** Being such a big NBA Street fan, I had superhigh expectations for this arcadey hoopster's move to the bigger and badder consoles. Aside from a lack of rowdy spectators (EA talked up boisterous crowds in our first preview), *Homecourt* definitely met them. It begins with the game-play. The new two-button trick system gives you much more control over your crazy dribbles and funky fakes, and things only get better when preparing for flight. I couldn't get enough of using my teammate as a launching pad, then learning the timing to dunk the ball not once, but twice (or three times, if you slam it home after activating your Gamebreaker) during a single trip above the rim. Also, while multiplayer remains *Street's* bread and

butter, I really enjoyed the story mode; to put your ZIP code on the b-ball map, you'll not only visit legendary streetball parks like Venice Beach, but also locales where select NBA studs learned James Naismith's sport.

➔ **TODD:** This game bursts with one brilliant design decision after another—including a Gamebreaker power-up system that is, finally, perfect. Beyond its game-play are visuals that are so fresh that they triggered a warm hum in my chest as I tricked up the picturesque courts. The audio is exquisite, and the incentive structure will have you playing "just one more" for hours. The game has some minor buzz kills, though, including a lack of crowds, overprevalance of blocks,

and a create-a-player with way too few choices for dorky white guys like myself. Everything else is a slam dunk.

➔ **MILKMAN:** I love me a good, solid, arcade basketball game, and the *Street* series has been my favorite ever since *NBA Jam's* decline. And while the other guys are right about the game's features and controls, I feel like I must be playing a different game—because what's up with the no-better-than-Xbox graphics? Cardboard-looking trees and low-res junky background images don't make me feel like I'm getting my PS3 money's worth. The sweet animations and kicky-fast pace won't stop me from saying "I told you so" when the truly next-gen sequel comes out. 🍌

Unleash Your Inner Rockstar.

GUITAR HERO II™



New for Xbox 360
X-Plorer Controller.
Additional songs and
downloadable content!



www.guitarherogame.com



Guitar Hero™ & © 2006-2007 RedOctane, Inc. RedOctane® is a registered trademark of RedOctane, Inc. and Activision is a registered trademark of Activision Publishing, Inc. Game code © 2006-2007 Harmonix Music Systems, Inc. Developed by Harmonix Music Systems. Covered by one or more of the following patents: U.S. Patent Nos. 5,739,457; 6,018,131; 6,255,247; 6,343,998; 6,368,313; 6,399,924; 6,425,822; 6,429,863; 6,645,907; and 6,835,807; patents pending: Gibson™, X-Plorer™, and the shapes and design elements of the SG Controller, X-Plorer Controller and the guitars are trademarks of Gibson Guitar Corp. under license by RedOctane, Inc. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox Live, the Xbox logo, and the Xbox Live logo are either registered trademarks or trademark of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners. All rights reserved.



Xbox 360

BATTLESTATIONS: MIDWAY

■ Publisher: Eidos ■ Developer: Eidos
 ■ Players: 1-8 ■ ESRB: Teen

Pearl Harbor minus all the Affleck

► **GREG S:** Don't let the less-than-spectacular visuals turn you off (this was originally slated for release on the first Xbox, after all)—this battle simulator set in the Pacific Theater packs a major punch. Well, if you can get past the sometimes clunky controls.

While this is mostly a real-time strategy game (with you creating units and then attacking like-minded human- or computer-controlled opponents), players can also take control of any unit at will. Launch fighters from the aircraft carrier, run silent and deep in your submarine, or rain hot death from above with one of your bombers—diversity keeps this plane soaring.

The problem is that, because each unit controls so uniquely, it almost feels like a different game with each new vehicle type, which is jarring. When you finally get used to the control schemes, though, playing *Battlestations* on one of the higher difficulty levels (you can beat the lowest difficulty setting without ever leaving the tactical map screen) can be very satisfying.

► **SHARKEY:** I agree with Greg that *Battlestations'* multiple-unit-juggling tactical gameplay comes across well, and I really enjoy taking control of an individual plane or ship as well. It keeps things from getting dull when you don't have much plotting to do on the tactical map. Multiplayer engagements, however, can go on a little overlong. This is particularly the case if most of the combatants are knocked out early, leaving two evenly matched players in an extended deadlock. At that point everyone else is effectively left watching the History Channel. Also, kamikaze-ing into ships should do some kind of damage. Especially when it's the only thing I'm any good at.

THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

GREG S:
7.0
GOOD

SHARKEY:
6.0
AVERAGE

DEMIAN:
6.5
AVERAGE

► **DEMIAN:** Ten minutes into the approximately hour-long tutorial and I thought this game probably should've stayed on PC. The controls vary widely from unit to unit and are a nightmare to learn, but once you do, you'll find a pretty good (if sometimes slow-paced) strategy game underneath. In multiplayer, micromanagement skills make the difference; one expert seaman can take on a quartet of poop deck-scrubbers.

The Good: Solid strategic element, gameplay diversity
The Bad: Somewhat confusing controls
Most Fun to Control: The submarine



Xbox 360

FUZION FRENZY 2

■ Publisher: Microsoft ■ Developer: Hudson
 ■ Players: 1-4 ■ ESRB: Everyone 10+

Not frenzied enough

► **JENNIFER:** I remember the first *Fuzion Frenzy*...vaguely. The bland party game collection that graced the original Xbox's launch was forgettable at best. A few years from now, I suspect I'll be saying the same thing about this sequel, with its passable minigames, boring tournament structure, and generic characters. (The self-consciously rockin' music actually got stuck in my head, though—not sure if that's a good thing.) This isn't to say some of the games aren't enjoyable when played in good company—I like the Simon-esque Judgment Tower, the King of the Hill-esque Surmo Clash, and the Snake-esque Tail Blazer. (Yes, most can be described as "something"-esque.) But I've had more fun playing Live Arcade games in good company, and those don't cost \$50. As someone who finds *Mario Party's* board cumbersome, I never thought I'd want more out of a party game's Tournament mode. Here, the new multiplier cards used each round are either vexingly random or just plain boring.

► **SHOE:** Who on earth bought enough copies of the first *Fuzion Frenzy* to warrant this sequel? Well, I hope you're all happy, because you're getting more of the same: lifeless, generic, and sluggish minigames devoid of any fun and personality. Someone who just recently watched *Running Man* and played *Smash TV* for the first time ever must be responsible for *FF2's* horribly lame game-show theme, and the new cards that radically change the scores after each event really throw any sense of balance or fairness out the door. 5.0? 4.5? My fellow reviewers are too generous.

► **RAY:** Any party game review will stress that the game is better with more people, but this is rock-hard fact with *FF2*. You absolutely need more than one (perhaps two) friends to get past the game's flaws: bland menus, a ridiculously annoying announcer, and less than 50 minigames that get old fast, with only each planet's environmental theme providing any variety. I would have thought Hudson, the master of *Mario Party*, would deliver on this sequel to a lackluster Xbox launch game, but it just didn't happen.

THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

JENNIFER:
5.0
AVERAGE

SHOE:
2.0
TERRIBLE

RAY:
4.5
BAD

The Good: Some fun minigames
The Bad: Many that are not
Wait: Why exactly did they bother?



Xbox 360

WINNING ELEVEN PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2007

■ Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: Konami Tokyo
 ■ Players: 1-4 ■ ESRB: Everyone

Flawed, but still top of the league

→ **TODD:** As one of America's top *Winning Eleven* advocates, it kills me that I'm disappointed by the series' 10th game. For years I've wanted to harm the reviewers who gave sub-9.5 scores to the PS2 entries (which I consider the *Grand Theft Auto* of sports gaming). Now that I'm posting a score, I can't even dream of double digits as the series has stumbled its way onto next gen. The players look brightly cartoony, they have no movement to their hair or jerseys, and the pitch looks dull. The gameplay is also a step behind what's found in the PS2 games, with clumsy players, careless goalies, and many unwarranted foul calls. But the lack of features is a killer: no minigames, only eight stadiums, no editing of team names, no International Cup Challenge, and no way to save your goals. It's still well above *FIFA*, but this 10th isn't the 10 out of 10 I was hoping for.

→ **JOHN:** Like Todd, it truly *pains* me to give this franchise a score this low (which really isn't all that

low). I was hoping that Konami would step things up for its 360 debut in ways EA Sports has previously neglected to bother with, but no. What we get here is an online-enabled, slightly dumbed-down PS2 game with savant-level single-player A.I. (regardless of what team you're playing) and weak sauce visuals. It's incredibly disappointing. Sure, it's as rewarding as this series ever is as a two-player game—but where's the innovation? Where's the *Winning Eleven* magic that we were waiting for? Do we have to wait another year before we get a good next-gen soccer game?

→ **ANDREW P:** Even though I saw the same clumsy ball handling, lack of features, and last-gen visuals, I'll take that "well above *FIFA*" thought and run with it some more. *Winning Eleven* is the only soccer series that really captures the feel of the sport for me: creating open spaces, knowing when to burst with speed or pull the ball back, containing the other team on defense and forcing them to make a mistake...the intelligence of the sport shines. I'm scoring it highly to make sure that *WE* gets as many fans as it deserves, but the next version had better bring 100 percent.

The Good: The Dutch are finally licensed, brilliant goal celebrations
The Bad: Too few features (compared to PS2), Chelsea isn't licensed, no editing of teams
Not as Good as: The same game on PS2



(geek)



(clustergeeking)



Please geek responsibly.

You may speak the language,
 but are you geeked?
 Here's a chance to prove it.

www.uat.edu > 800.658.5744

THE VERDICTS
 (OUT OF 10)

TODD
 8.0
 GOOD

JOHN
 7.5
 GOOD

ANDREW P
 8.0
 GOOD



■ Superheroes saving what matters—roads and booze.

Xbox 360

CRACKDOWN

Publisher: Microsoft ■ Developer: Realtime Worlds ■ Players: 1-2 ■ ESRB: Mature

THE VERDICTS

(OUT OF 10)

SHARKEY
9.0
EXCELLENT

JOHN
8.5
GOOD

G. FORD
7.5
GOOD

The Good: Jump-in anywhere co-op play
The Bad: Short compared to other open-world games
Don't Call It: A *Grand Theft Auto* clone

Super-duper troopers

➔ **SHARKEY:** Now this is what every superhero game in the history of ever should have included in the first damn place: a nice, big, semi-contemporary urban setting to leap around and blow up bad guys in, and a character who starts as an absolute ass-kick factory. Spot-on control, slick physics, and perfect animation combine to make your supercop feel like both an acrobat and juggernaut. Better yet, he's still somewhat vulnerable and has lots of room for self-improvement. Spend enough time doing something you enjoy—be it Tick-like rooftop leaping, reckless driving, or just exploding the hell out of stuff—and your agent quickly gets better at it.

Yeah, *Crackdown*'s a little like *Grand Theft Auto* and its ilk—at least

in that the world isn't busted up into levels and you'll find plenty of cars to jack if you're so inclined. So much of the bulls*** has been stripped out, however, that *Crackdown* is barely in the same genre. Missions consist of hits on specific bosses that you can execute in any order in any way you want. Picking off a boss' guards from a high vantage point, brawling your way through them, or just maxing agility and bypassing the lot with some back-route leaping are all perfectly viable options. You'll find none of *GTA*'s railroading here. Also, *Crackdown*'s distinctively supersaturated *Scanner Darkly*-esque art style is a nice break from the usual crap. Sometimes it's just better to let a game approach reality on its own aes-

thetic terms than to go hyperrealistic. It sidesteps the problem of being so close to life that it draws attention to the stuff that isn't quite right and provides the added bonus of looking different from everything else on the shelf. (Note that this is only a good idea if, like in *Crackdown*, your weird aesthetic approach is awesome.)

That the game's multiplayer co-op is integrated perfectly with the single-player campaign, allowing friends to jump right in and join at any point without any fuss, is just gravy. It's something I'd love to see other developers do more of.

➔ **JOHN:** I have to say I completely disagree with the *GTA* comparisons. Yes, it's an open-world game where



Making the most of your time in Pacific City

Jumping on heads is the least-effective combat tactic, but it's also the most humiliating way to take out an online friend.



Ramp trucks are pretty lousy get-away vehicles...until you hit the brakes and send any pursuers to the damn moon.



The observatory globe is good for more than your best Atlas impression. Shrug the sucker into some gangers to earn an Achievement.



you can jack cars, but the similarities end there. To be honest, it has more in common with games like *Spider-Man 2* or *The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction*, as you'll find not much of a narrative to speak of, and it's instead mostly about shooting stuff, blowing stuff up, or just clowning around with your superpowers.

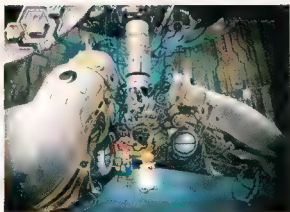
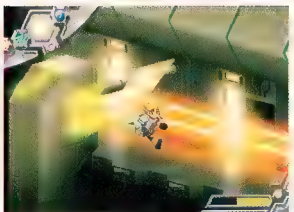
You need to approach *Crackdown* with an open mind. The sprawling metropolis of Pacific City provides some big thrills as you leap around, but I think the real pull here is that it's a bona fide example of that "emergent gameplay" nonsense we've been hearing about for years. Maxing out your character as soon as possible and then doing really dumb stuff in the environment is where the real fun is. Throw Dumpsters at thugs on balconies halfway up buildings, stack

trucks on top of each other, play catch with cars in co-op mode, or see how far you can leap around without ever dropping to the streets—the whole thing is just big, cartoony, dumb fun. Don't look for depth where there isn't any; just enjoy the silliness.

➔ **G. FORD:** These guys are right on about the rush *Crackdown* delivers: This is the first open-world game in which I found hopping into a vehicle to be my least desirable option for crisscrossing the city. Who wants to flip the odometer when you can leap buildings in a few bounds? But they sure let the weak mission structure off the hook. A man can take only so many assassination assignments—the biggest difference usually being the number of brain-dead enemies shooting at you—before he needs

something different. (It gets a partial pardon, though, since that simplicity makes the excellent "do I help or not" co-op that much more free-form.) Sure, it totally hits that arcadey-shooter itch, and I found myself diverted for hours just exploring the city, but given the upgradeable abilities, I wanted more to do and more obstacles geared toward them. Really, shouldn't a supercop be facing off against supervillains—with showdowns involving chucking cars at each other and knocking over buildings—instead of enemies who sport a few more layers of body armor? *Crackdown* offers some good fun but its lack of variety slaps cuffs on the full potential. **A-**

Head over to EGM213.1UP.com for our *Crackdown SuperGuide*, where you can learn how to max out your abilities.



PlayStation 2

AR TONELICO: MELODY OF ELEMIA

■ Publisher: Nippon Ichi Software
 ■ Developer: Gust ■ Players: 1 ■ ESRB: Teen

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

SCOOTER
6.5
AVERAGE

GREG S.
6.0
AVERAGE

A. FITCH
6.0
AVERAGE

The Good: Uh, cute anime girls that you lend an ear to?
The Bad: Boring minigames
Sillest Feature: Letting those anime girls name the items

Final Fantasy meets Blind Date

➔ **SCOOTER:** With all of the typical Japanese RPG trappings (goofy little characters, turn-based combat, item-crafting, Aaron Spelling-level melodrama), *Ar tonelico* doesn't do much to distinguish itself at first. But then you get the Reyvateils—robo-mages who look like anime fan-service girls—and things start getting interesting. These hotties provide invaluable support in battle; they sing powerful songs that can shoot fireballs or heal the party. "Harmonize" the Reyvateils with your party (by synchronizing two meters) and your whole crew gets neat bonuses. Fine so far, but then you have to converse with your Reyvateils when resting and literally dive into their minds to sort their issues and create new spells—suddenly you have

a bona fide dating sim mixed up with your RPG. The overall game is pretty damn average, but this bizarre aspect (imagine listening to Aeri's yammer on about her flowers before getting a new spell) puts a positive spin on this game for me.

➔ **GREG S:** Agreed. *Ar tonelico* is just on the good side of a standard RPG, with enough extracurricular activities—like a "lite" crafting system—to be interesting without being overwhelming. What I like most, though, is the game's brisk pace. Even within the first five hours, I felt like I had lived a virtual lifetime. It's too bad some groan-inducing anime-chick neurosis and dialogue bog down the experience. "But what if he doesn't like

me?" "Are my boobs big enough?" "I'm so helpless!" Like I need that in my games, too.

➔ **A. FITCH:** Scooter's right—the deep relationships with your anime-babe companions help separate *Ar tonelico* from the JRPG pack. I even liked the circa-1995 visuals, which add to the old-school atmosphere. Unfortunately, the game's "translation" is also straight out of the mid-'90s. Yeah, small-time publisher NIS America doesn't have the resources of companies like Nintendo or Konami, but don't give me that excuse—tiny Atlas (*Contact*) consistently churns out some of the best-written localizations in the industry. I see no reason other niche publishers can't do the same.



PlayStation 2

MVP 07 NCAA BASEBALL

■ Publisher: EA Sports ■ Developer: EA Canada
 ■ Players: 1-4 ■ ESRB: Everyone

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

TODD
6.5
AVERAGE

BRYAN
6.5
AVERAGE

G. FORD
7.0
GOOD

The Good: New pitching mechanic, fun minigames
The Bad: Slow pace, some screwy defense
Speak Up: MVP 07's seemingly mute color commentator

The kid can play

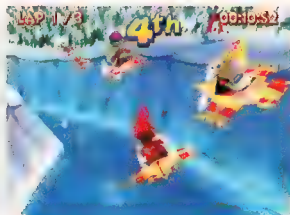
➔ **TODD:** *MVP 07* is the type of game you check your e-mail to, as extra seconds of your life disappear when catchers soft-toss the ball back to the pitcher while batters adjust their batting gloves. That time waste is made up for on the mound, however, as the innovative new analog-based pitching system (pull it back to wind up, then fling it forward) proves *MVP* has the best pitching mechanics in baseball (outside of Roger Clemens). But in the batter's box, the stunningly high learning curve will force you to junior-college skill levels if you want to "ping" the ball all over the park. But no skill level adjustment can save the sometimes farcical, often spastic outfield defense. The player momentum makes every catch an adventure, à la

Manny Ramirez, as you're unable to make small adjustments to catch the ball. I overran and player-switched way too many base hits into triples.

➔ **BRYAN:** Wow, Todd, I seriously doubt you could hit a beach ball—let alone a baseball—if you're struggling to make contact here. *MVP 07*'s hitting is remarkably improved; unlike last season, I consistently went yard and connected for doubles and triples. It's just too bad the fielding doesn't follow suit. Even for a college-branded game, you'll get a surplus of errors over nine innings, and throwing via the right analog stick still needs some fine-tuning (even routine tosses around the diamond end up being not-so-routine because of this finicky

mechanic). A better effort overall, but a few mishaps away from competing with the big leaguers.

➔ **G. FORD:** And now that you're done skewering Todd, Bry, it's your turn to roast with him. Fielding isn't nearly as bad as you whiners make it out to be. I had zero problems in the outfield—the players slow down when they hit the marker, as you'd expect—and while infield play can lead to the occasional miscue, it gets the job done most of the time. I've even grown to enjoy the analog throws (and it should be noted that you can swap these control methods in options). Low-impact license aside, *MVP 07*'s solid hitting and smooth pitching make for an all-around good baller.



DS

DIDDY KONG RACING DS

■ Publisher: Nintendo ■ Developer: Rare
■ Players: 1-8 ■ ESRB: Everyone

PREVIOUS

THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

DEMIAN:
5.0
AVERAGE

SHANE:
6.0
AVERAGE

JENNIFER:
5.5
AVERAGE

The Good: Online and single-kart multiplayer racing

The Bad: \$35 for a game you may already own

Abducted: Banjo and Conker not here

Diddy's gettin' old

➔ **DEMIAN:** Don't get too excited. This is no *Diddy Kong Racing* (N64) sequel. Instead, this kart (and plane, and hovercraft) racer has received the sort of imperceptible face-lift known as the "enhanced port" treatment.

But not enhanced enough, especially when you could be playing *Mario Kart DS* instead. This *Diddy* features single- and multikart multiplayer (expect horrifying load times with single-kart multi, though) and online racing, but the core gameplay is practically untouched. Which is kind of bad—I sorely miss *Mario Kart*'s powerslide boosting and creative arsenal. *Diddy* feels simplistic in comparison.

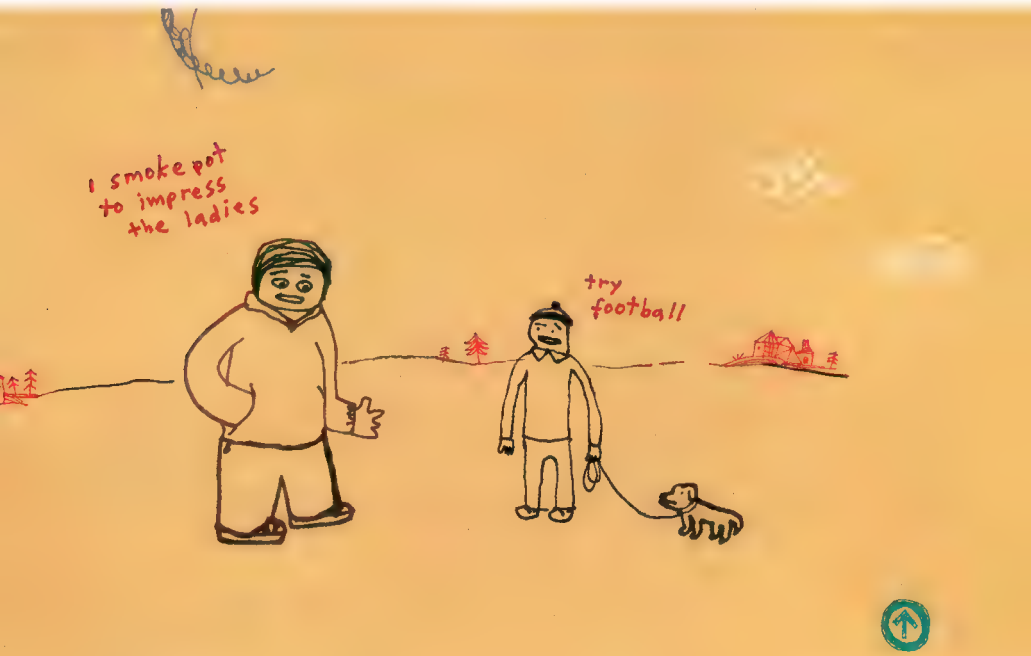
The DS *Diddy* does add an anemic quick-start mechanic: Rub the touch screen or blow on the mic for an initial

boost. On-rails balloon popping staves (via stylus) replace the original's silver coin challenges, too, and players can unlock a track creator. *Diddy* is an OK racer for a younger audience, but in the competitive kart field, it's a decade-old banger.

➔ **SHANE:** It's hard to fault Nintendo for reviving this decade-old *Mario Kart* clone, as DS-owning youngsters will likely eat up this candy-colored racing hodgepodge. The vehicular variety certainly impresses: The three modes of transport control quite differently. Trouble is, none of the racing modes offer gameplay on par with *Mario Kart DS*. Likewise, straightforward track designs, uninspired power-ups, and embarrassing characters (Tiptup the

Turtle isn't exactly a beloved mascot) can't compare to what the plumber's racer offers. At least solid online multiplayer action and copious unlockables make it a competent refresh.

➔ **JENNIFER:** I guess I'm just a little more in touch with the younger crowd than Demian—those who have no memories against which to compare this remake/port will be more easily impressed with its so-so racing on cutesy tracks. But I agree that it's hard to see the point here. The different vehicle types add variety, and they all control smoothly—something I never take for granted in kiddie racing games. It's too bad the fun-while-they-last tracks are so short. File this under "Why bother?"



abovetheinfluence.com



DS

LUNAR KNIGHTS

■ Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: Kojima Productions
 ■ Players: 1 ■ ESRB: Everyone 10+

Symphony of the knight

➔ **JEREMY:** You probably didn't play Konami's GBA adventure *Boktai*—but you should have. Creative and challenging, it was basically *Metal Gear* meets *Castlevania* (with a touch of Sergio Leone). But if you're like most people, you probably couldn't get past the built-in solar sensor that required you to sit in the sun during crucial moments. *Lunar Knights* ditches the sun sensor along with the *Boktai* name, leaving nothing but sweet, sweet action, huge dungeons, tight control, and a pair of heroes fighting in tandem. Did I mention that it lets you battle vampires in space, too? The production values are impressive; with partial voice acting, great music, in-game anime sequences, and a massive quest, *Lunar Knights* feels at times like a big-budget PlayStation RPG. But no: It's actually just one of the best DS games to date.

➔ **MICHAEL:** You're right Jeremy, I never did sunbathe with the solar-powered *Boktai*. Fine by me, too—I hate soaking in the sun... not unlike the bloodsucking baddies in *Knights*. But I do like a good portable adventure, and Konami does a pretty good job of blending simplistic action with kindergarten-level roleplaying. Sounds pretty sweet, and, for the most part, it is, but the repetitive combat and awkward, stylus-controlled spaceship battles slowly sucked away my interest. But not nearly enough to make me wanna chuck it in the coffin, though.

➔ **SHANE:** As a fellow *Boktai* vet, I'm immensely pleased to see the notoriously slept-on franchise getting a second shot at success. The same addictive *Zelda*-meets-*Metal Gear* gameplay returns here, and its satisfying mix of slashing, shooting, and roleplaying never disappoints. But it's far from a rehash, as inventive uses for the DS' proclivities (you're often blowing, tapping, and scribbling on your DS) keep the adventure fresh. And Michael couldn't be more wrong about the genre-busting shooting sequences—they're a breeze to control and start out simply, but they become wonderfully complex as you amass more ability-imbuing Terrenials.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

JEREMY

9.0
EXCELLENT

MICHAEL

7.0
GOOD

SHANE

8.0
GOOD

The Good: A polished, engaging adventure
The Bad: Isometric perspective is sometimes awkward
Moldy Meals: Health items rot if you let 'em sit



PSP

MONSTER KINGDOM JEWEL SUMMONER

■ Publisher: Atlus ■ Developer: Gaia
 ■ Players: 1-2 ■ ESRB: Teen

PSPokémon

SCOOTER: Oh look, another average role-playing game with decent features that bump it up slightly (see: *Ar tonelico*, page 92). This time, it's *Shin Megami Tensei* creator Kouji Okada's take on *Pokémon*. That is, you zip around and use jewels to trap monsters that you then use as party members in combat. Additionally, you can use things like "amalgamy" or monster evolution to alter stats or create new monsters. The basic collection-and-combat gameplay, combined with the generally amusing localization and voice acting, takes the sting away from things like the lack of an overworld (you just select a point on the map to go places), short dungeons, and the heavy favoring of dialogue over gameplay. I swear, for every 10 minutes of dungeons and monster-grabbing, I had to sit through 20 minutes of characters yammering at each other. Sure, I like the dialogue, but it was still too long to sit through.

A. FITCH: Scooter, I gotta disagree—I really dug *Monster Kingdom's* text-heavy elements. The strong characterizations and witty banter actually made me enjoy the gameplay sections even more; I wanted to keep playing to see how the story would unfold. The monster-battling system itself is also presented really well—like in *Pokémon*, the rules are convoluted as hell, but the game does an admirable job of explaining things in a clear, concise manner. I've got one complaint, though: What's up with no quicksave option? Um, how am I supposed to collect 'em all if my battery dies midbattle?

MICHAEL: Well, Andrew, I disagree with your disagreement—the nonstop blabber is pretty bad. Hell, I actually spent an entire 35-minute commute reading some characters' endless bitching instead of watching them do what's really fun—battle. Shame too, because the actual monster-based combat ain't too bad once you manage to get those chatty characters to shut their damn traps. And while I'm disagreeing, Scooter is silly to complain about the lack of an overworld. To me, the less clicking around I have to do, the better...especially in a portable game.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

SCOOTER

6.5
AVERAGE

A. FITCH

7.5
GOOD

MICHAEL

7.0
GOOD

The Good: The monster-collecting gameplay
The Bad: Way too many cut-scenes
Oddest Feature: The use of split-screen for combat



PSP

VALHALLA KNIGHTS

■ Publisher: XSEED ■ Developer: Marvelous/K2
■ Players: 1-2 ■ ESRB: Everyone 10+

REVIEWS

THE VERDICTS
out of 100

A. FITCH
3.5
BAD

GREG S
4.5
MAY

SCOOTER
5.0
AVERAGE

Fantasy faux pas

➔ **A. FITCH:** Japan-based *Valhalla Knights* developer Marvelous is best known for the cute-and-cuddly farm-sim series *Harvest Moon*. So it's a bit surprising that the company's first PSP release here isn't a lighthearted adventure but a moody, guild-based action-RPG in the vein of American dungeon-crawlers like *Diablo*.

VK nails the look and feel of a Western RPG. Unfortunately, it gets just about everything else wrong. To begin with, the job system is shockingly sparse, with only eight classes—hell, *Final Fantasy V*'s job system had more depth, and that game (recently released on GBA) is over 14 years old! The problems just build from there: frustrating quests with clues that confuse rather than clarify, monotonous

dungeon design that sees you endlessly tracking back and forth through the same few areas, unbalanced (and sometimes flat-out unfair) enemy battles, and a broken, antiquated inventory system.

My plea to Marvelous: Stick to the anime cows and horseys, OK?

➔ **GREG S:** Andrew speaks the truth. What strikes me about *Valhalla Knights* is the pseudo-massively multiplayer RPG combat it employs. It allows for large adventuring parties and all, but the actual fighting isn't much fun. After seeing how *Final Fantasy XII* managed to make this type of battle system enjoyable, going back to *Valhalla Knights*' barebones, simpler setup is pretty difficult.

Considering everything else about this lackluster RPG is mediocre at best—from the graphics to the story to the design—I can't recommend it.

➔ **SCOOTER:** Whoa, there, Andrew. If you're going to play the numbers game, might I remind you that *Diablo II*, quite possibly the greatest Western action-RPG in gaming, had "only" five character classes! Still, I generally agree with your points, though I don't hate as much—as an action-dungeon crawler, *VK* does a fair job. Also, while I think it's kind of neat to have a big party of six tearing through dungeons, controlling them all during real-time combat is a bit cumbersome, and I wish the loot was bit a more inspiring than the generic fare you find here.

The Good: Controls, load times (thankfully)
The Bad: Just about everything else!
Gimli They Ain't: *VK*'s Dwarves are beardless...and taller than humans. Huh?



abovetheinfluence.com

REVIEWS WRAP-UP

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

PSP

RATCHET & CLANK: SIZE MATTERS

■ Publisher: Sony CEA ■ ESRB: Everyone 10+

Fans of Sony's lovable Lombax/robo duo can rest easy—*Size Matters* isn't some slapdash PS2 port, but rather an all-new adventure built specifically for on-the-go action. Developer High Impact Games took care to reformulate the game with larger characters, wildly creative bite-sized levels, and smooth online multiplayer action.

➔ **BOTTOM LINE:** After an off-putting excursion into squad-based shooting with the last PS2 offering, *Deadlocked*, it's encouraging to see Ratchet return to his platforming roots. Look for a full, in-depth review next month.



XB360

BULLET WITCH

■ Publisher: Atari ■ ESRB: Mature

This supernatural shooter, which we played a near-final version of, is one part *Devil May Cry* mixed with four parts superviolent shoot-'em-up *Gungrave* (PS2), sans any trace of fun or challenge. Stiff-as-a-corpse animation combines with choppy graphics and one of the most cumbersome magic interfaces we've ever seen. The disappearing/reappearing graphics and linear levels only serve to affirm the game's reservation in bargain-bin hell.

➔ **BOTTOM LINE:** *Bullet Witch* looks like a PS2 game and is plagued with so many problems that it's not even worth playing for the easy Achievement points.



PS2

GURUMIN: A MONSTROUS ADVENTURE

■ Publisher: Masstiff ■ ESRB: Everyone 10+

This unfortunately titled hack-n-slash romp hails from Falcom, the legendary Japanese development house behind both the *Ys* and *Legend of Heroes* series. Of these franchises, *Gurumin* actually makes for the coziest fit on PSP—its combo-based combat, secret-laden labyrinths, and lovably corny (and surprisingly well-acted) translation make for a satisfying, low-impact dungeon hack.

➔ **BOTTOM LINE:** Although it's not the most attractive PSP action-RPG in town, *Gurumin*'s solid gameplay and likable characters make it the closest thing to a *Zelda* game you'll find on Sony's handheld.



DS

IZUNA: LEGEND OF THE UNEMPLOYED NINJA

■ Publisher: Atlus ■ ESRB: Everyone 10+

You'd expect a game with a subtitle like "Legend of the Unemployed Ninja" to be pretty wacky, and you'd be right—mostly. *Izuna*'s story and characters run the gamut from "goofy" to "ludicrous." But the gameplay is downright hardcore: a dungeon-crawler RPG (think *Pokémon Mystery Dungeon*, minus the collectible critters) with a frequently brutal difficulty level. Relief comes in the form of weapons and items strewn about the dungeons; clever combinations can turn little Izuna into a force to be reckoned with.

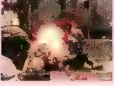



➔ **BOTTOM LINE:** Niche-y by nature, *Izuna* offers good times and a ridiculous story.

THE SALES CHART

Amazon.com's Top 20 for Dec/Jan

DESIGNS IN: COMPUTER ANIMATION > DIGITAL ARTS & DESIGN > ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS > FILM > GAME DEVELOPMENT > RECORDED ARTS > SHOW PRODUCTION & TOURING



#	Name	Platform	EGM Scores		
1	New Super Mario Bros.	DS	9.5	10	8.0
2	Gears of War	XB360	10	9.5	9.0
	 Hey, Epic Games—thanks for the two new maps, but where's the improved matchmaking? Wanna ask Discovery Channel to help ya with that? Thanks.				
3	Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day!	DS	8.5	9.0	9.5
4	Madden NFL 07	PS2	7.5	8.5	7.0
5	Final Fantasy XII	PS2	8.5	9.0	9.5
	 Publisher Square Enix is all about making sequels out of <i>Final Fantasy</i> sequels—look for <i>FFXII: Revenant Wings</i> on DS later this year.				
6	Final Fantasy III	DS	8.0	8.0	7.5
7	Big Brain Academy	DS	9.0	8.5	7.5
8	The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	GC	Not Reviewed		
	 Even though the GameCube version of <i>Twilight Princess</i> is waggle-free, it actually sold more copies than the Wii version in December.				
9	Guitar Hero II (Bundle with Guitar)	PS2	9.0	9.0	8.5
	 Wannabe rockers can now shred on PS3—the Play Adapter from peripheral-maker Nyko makes the Guitar Hero SG Controller compatible with the PS3.				
10	Nintendogs: Dalmatian & Friends	DS	Not Reviewed		
11	Call of Duty 3	XB360	6.5	7.0	7.0
12	Kirby Squeak Squad	DS	7.0	7.0	6.0
13	Yoshi's Island DS	DS	6.5	8.0	6.0
14	The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	Wii	10	10	10
15	Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Vegas	XB360	8.5	7.0	8.5
16	Animal Crossing: Wild World	DS	7.5	7.0	9.0
17	Mario Kart DS	DS	9.0	8.5	8.5
18	Lego Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy	PS2	6.5	7.5	8.0
19	Madden NFL 07	XB360	7.5	8.5	7.0
20	Bully	PS2	10	8.5	8.0

SCHOOL OF GAME DEVELOPMENT

800.226.7625 3300 University Boulevard • Winter Park, FL 32792

Financial aid available to those who qualify • Career development assistance • Accredited School, ACCSC

ONE OF THE
TOP FIVE
GAME-DEGREE
PROGRAMS
IN THE WORLD

FULLSAIL
Real World Education

Electronic Gaming Monthly

Request Form

GAME OVER

➤ Press continue for scientifically proven crap, Planet Hollywood sneaks, and more



➤ SEANBABY'S REST OF THE CRAP

Official Worst-Selling Games of 2006

Who buys this crap? Apparently, nobody



Pictured above: Seanbaby, the original rebel of rhythm and dance, busts a move to the peppy beats of "Barbie Girl."

JUDGING FROM MOST OF OUR MAIL, the main reason nerds love/best/worst lists is because they want to disagree with things. Well, I've found a way to take that one last joy from them. This list of bad games isn't based on opinions. These seven games were selected from sales figures of the least purchased games of 2006—cold, hard, indisputable measurements of suck. I'll look at why they didn't sell and offer helpful suggestions to help them turn it around in 2007.

It turns out that mocking sales figures is more work than you'd think. Apparently some of these statistics require level-10 security clearance,

and when I was given documents disclosing what I was legally able to print, I felt like I was a costumed actor near a Dennis Miller joke in a comedy about Dennis Miller traveling through time. The legalities are confusing enough that I have no idea whether or not I can tell you how many people were tricked into buying *Nickelodeon Party Blast* last year, but I know I can say this: You should feel very safe storing your valuables behind *Nickelodeon Party Blast* at your local game store. It sold so few copies that you could rig it to explode when it's touched, and the fire marshal would still let children play near it.

Unison: Rebels of Rhythm & Dance (PS2)

Release Date: March 2005

Which game was that again?

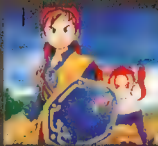
If *Space Channel 5* weren't good, it would be this, which already makes this sentence the greatest critical praise the game ever received.

Why did it fail?

At the top of the game's "Mega HOT soundtrack," *Unison: RORAD* proudly lists "Barbie Girl" by Aqua. That's not a song with longevity. Goldfish are sick of that song.

Any chance of success in 2007?

With advances in less lethal ordinance, there is a good possibility that law enforcement agencies will



PAGE
100
Retro:
Dragon
Quest IX



PAGE
102
Grudge:
Planetary
showdown



PAGE
106
Hsu & Chan:
Cupid,
Stupid

buy up this game as ammunition for sonic weaponry. Any crowd in the world will disperse when it's hit by high-powered "Barbie Girl." And if it doesn't hit that crowd with high-powered bullets:

Kakuto Chojin: Back Alley Brutal (XB)

Release Date: November 2002

Which game was that again?

Since the perfect review of this game was already written for *Flying Dragon* (NES) in *EGM* #2 by Donn Nauert, I'm going to quote it in its entirety: "Just another karate game."

Why did it fail?

It was a little too dull to be called generic, but I think its real downfall was that over here in God's great America, neither Kakuto nor Chojin are even damn words.

Any chance of success in 2007?

Last year, *Kakuto Chojin* was lower on the sales chart than *NFL GameDay*. And not *NFL GameDay 2004*. It lost to *NFL GameDay Two Thousand ONE*. That's right; consumers decided a fifth-rate football game beats a sixth-rate fighting game. To *Kakuto's* credit, maybe the people who bought *NFL GameDay 2007* were still on B.C. time. And I don't think that's too bad for my very first difference between A.D. and B.C. calendar joke.

Frogger Beyond (XB)

Release Date: December 2002

Which game was that again?

Too...disinterested...to...put it...back...in Xbox.

Why did it fail?

If, in 2002, you had told me that in less than three years the public would figure out that this game was a piece of trash with the word "Frogger" written on it, I would have been stunned. Yet here we are.

Any chance of success in 2007?

They should have a golden ticket sweepstakes! If Konami announced that every sixth box of *Frogger Beyond* didn't contain the game, sales would easily triple. And the triple of it sounds like a lot of *Frogger Beyond* to me.

Bomberman Act: Zero (XB360)

Release Date: August 2006

Which game was that again?

The *Bomberman* that sucks.

Why did it fail?

This game suffered mainly from the fact that most people hate things that suck.

Any chance of success in 2007?

We're appreciating irony more and more each year, and this game might fail hard enough for people to buy it comedically. For example, if you started a new Xbox Live gamertag and only earned achievement points in this and the Burger King games, that would be some pretty good Xbox Live comedy.

Freestyle Street Soccer (XB)

Release Date: May 2004

Which game was that again?

Soccer with the urban edge that no one imagined they'd hate so much.

Why did it fail?

It's easy to see how marketers would give this idea a try, but close your eyes and try to picture an actual child who wished for a game of soccer with outrageous hip-hop attitude. You have him pictured? Now, picture a child that isn't a total idiot.

Any chance of success in 2007?

Years ago, there was a music collection called, and I quote, "Monsta Jamz!" In the commercial for it, the squarest white man in the world enunciated, "Why you front-in? You know you really WANT it. Monsta Jamz!" When that man is given an NAACP award, we'll live in a world where this game has a shot at being successful.

Egg Mania: Eggstreme Madness (XB)

Release Date: September 2002

Which game was that again?

A puzzle game from people whose idea of funny includes changing a word so it now has the smaller word "egg" inside it. In other words,

people who are almost certainly "hilar! egg!"

Why did it fail?

Look again at the title, *Egg Mania: Eggstreme Madness* is the exact same title twice, with the second one translated into pun. That's so stupid it may have caused otherwise interested consumers to be too embarrassed to pick it up. No one wants to look a clerk in the eye when they're buying something named that. It's "why marketers didn't name Veggie! Yeast Infection Cream Because The Person Buying This Has a Yeast Infection."

Any chance of success in 2007?

Judging from the birthday cards given to me by my mother, the human brain hates puns less and less as its cells die. So I think 2007 will still be a rocky year for anyone living on *Egg Mania: Eggstreme Madness* royalties, but by the time we're living in 2067, we're going to think that title is SO CUTE. Unfortunately in 2067, slaves in the lazerpits of Tor are not afforded the luxury of puns.

Space Ace (XB)

Release Date: December 2001

Which game was that again?

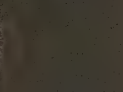
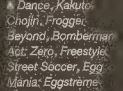
An interactive cartoon where you face off against a villain with a baby. The gun MAKES babies, not shoots them. That would be crazy.

Why did it fail?

I guess *Dragon's Lair*-type games aren't for everyone. Or anyone, according to modern consumer markets.

Any chance of success in 2007?

In 2006, *Space Ace* sold enough copies across the entire United States to make, and this IS the actual figure, \$15. To make 2007 an even-better-fiscal year, send one member of the *Space Ace* staff to get a job as a bus driver and quit after 40 minutes.



➤ **These games were selected from sales figures of the least purchased games of 2006—cold, hard, indisputable measurements of suck.**



On the cover:
Independence Day

Our cover for *Independence Day*, depicting an apocalyptic alien invasion, was almost as catastrophically terrible as the actual game. But inside the issue we hosted the best of '96 awards, naming *Super Mario 64* game of the year, "because of the exquisite, true three-dimensional graphics."



Game of the month:
Mario Kart 64

The first sequel to Nintendo's crazy kart racer ended up lapping the competition for the month of March. And while we did want a few more track options (sorry, reversing 'em don't count), the action was intense, the four player splitscreen elevated heart rates, and those blue shells were downright vicious (and cheap).



Tekken 3 Storyline

Devoting a two-page spread to the storyline of *Tekken 3* can be considered bold...EGM bold. But hey, at least we shed some light on Nina Williams and her sister. Without us, you wouldn't know who had amnesia.



Hero attacks!



+ RETRO

Dragon Quest

Japan's other never-ending fantasy

By Jeremy Parish



DRAGON QUEST IX, THE NEXT CHAPTER of Japan's longest-running (and most popular) RPG series, will be appearing on the Nintendo DS sometime this year. "But that's not retro!" you protest. True enough, but in order to understand why *DQIX* on DS might have been the biggest gaming announcement of 2006, you'll need a quick, a little primer. And for that, we'll need to take a journey into the history of this fantastic franchise.

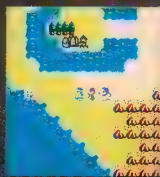
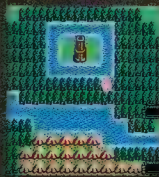
The Original Trilogy

Way back in 1986, a little game called *Dragon Quest* appeared for Nintendo's Japanese NES, the Famicom. Although it didn't garner much interest initially, some savvy marketing on publisher Enix's part helped the game catch the eye of those consumers who were in the process of catapulting the Famicom to stratospheric success. Within just a year of the game's release, it had become a certifiable hit, and the sequel was an instant best-seller.

By the time the third game arrived, *Dragon Quest* wasn't just a hit—it was a frickin' phenomenon. Although tales of its success have become hopelessly entangled with urban legends—Japan didn't really pass a national law banning *Quest* games from being released on school days, no matter what the Internet tells you—the simple truth is that the series was the *Halo* of its time. Or, maybe *Halo* combined with *Grand Theft Auto*. In short, a big, big deal. Decades before it became common practice to line up for three days for a chance to buy a new console, Japanese gamers happily queued up for the 1988 release of *DQIII*.

Growing Up with Dragon Quest

Even the fourth game, released in the Famicom's twilight—most gamers had switched over to 16-bit systems by then—was a multimillion-copy seller. Throughout the '90s, *Quest* continued to command a Japanese



Dragon Quest VII (pictured here) is the first game in the series to go by its original name in the US.

A DIFFERENT QUEST

Not only is *Dragon Quest IX* cutting the classic turn-based battles, but it's also ditching the next-gen for the DS.



following unmatched in other countries...which should hardly be a surprise, since the fifth and sixth games were never translated into English.

When both Square and Enix announced that they'd be severing ties with Nintendo and publishing the seventh chapters of both *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Quest* on Sony's PlayStation, Americans freaked about *Final Fantasy*. But over in Japan, it was *DQ* that served as the megaton explosion that prompted gamers to ignore the Nintendo 64.

Intriguingly, this was also where the differences between the two RPG megaseries really started to become obvious. *FFVII* was a technological revolution, using the most advanced programming and impressive CG visuals to offer gamers a mind-boggling experience. *DQVII*, on the other hand, looked kind of like an amateur's first PlayStation game, and it played almost exactly like its NES predecessors. And Japan loved it.

DQVIII, codveloped by RPG

genius Level-5, looked much better, but still played an awful lot like the 8-bit adventures that preceded it. In fact, much of the series' success hinges on its familiarity; older gamers recall their childhoods spent playing the Famicom games, and share the experience with their own kids.

Which is what makes the upcoming *Dragon Quest IX* so intriguing: It won't be exactly the same. Unusual for a series noted for its love of tradition, the next chapter will be abandoning the turn-based battle system of the previous eight chapters in favor of multiplayer action-oriented fighting. Japan is reportedly not entirely happy about this fact, but we're willing to wager that they'll buy *DQIX* anyway. A series that moves

about 3.5 million copies of each new entry, on a system that sells twice as many units each month as any competing system? Yeah, it's going to do just fine.

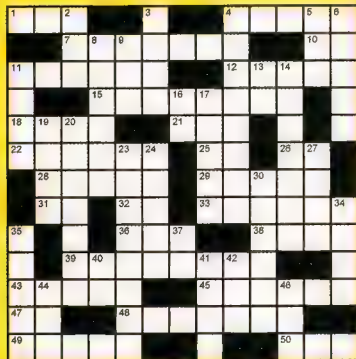
Much of what made *Dragon Quest* so popular in Japan to begin with was its emphasis on teamwork, a popular theme among Japanese gamers. *DQIX* promises to transform that collaborative spirit into a real co-op experience. Plus, with Akira Toriyama and Level-5 providing the visuals, it'll still have the "Dragon Quest" feel that so many gamers adore. And with RPGs and portable gaming becoming ever more popular in the U.S., maybe these changes will make *DQIX* the first game to enjoy equal success here. ■



Much of *Dragon Quest's* popularity in Japan can be ascribed to manga artist Akira Toriyama, creator of the terrifically successful *Dragon Ball* series. Toriyama's art has graced every chapter of the series to date, and his clever monster designs have become gaming icons.

➤ **By the time the third game arrived, *Dragon Quest* wasn't just a hit—it was a frickin' phenomenon.**

Developer props



ACROSS

1. Wii persona
4. *Final Fantasy IV* protagonist
7. *Twisted Metal* tournament master
10. Binary possibility?
11. Thieving title by short-lived studio Blue 52
12. Sniper position?
15. *Mercury* (PSP) developer
18. Works the DS stylus?
21. 8-bit groundbreaker (abbrv.)
22. Use a key
25. *Gran Turismo 4* model Isuzu Piazza _
26. Texas Instruments product prefix
28. Role-playing game series developed by Game Arts
29. Lights that surround characters, like Juste from *Castlevania: Harmony of Dissonance*
31. End-of-WWII day, as in *Call of Duty*
32. Midway's *Rush* titular city
33. *Dog's Life* characters respond to these
36. Like a *Zelda*: *Twilight Princess* lantern, if it has oil
38. *Spy Hunter* protagonist Sects
39. Like DS's *Big Brain* games?
43. *Ecco the Dolphin* wisdom crystal
45. Common game genre
47. *The Godfather* developer
48. It's where you keep all your games
49. Batman's sidekick
50. Latest *Phantasy Star*, for short

DOWN

2. *Shadow of the Colossus* predecessor
3. *Drakan* gal
4. *House of the Dead 2* stage
5. *Deus Ex* developer _ Storm
6. Get online
8. *X-Men Legends'* Magma's real name
9. *Oddworld's* Munch only has one
11. *Ape Escape* in Japan: _ Getchu
13. *J Noid* (NES)
14. Apply firmware update?
16. Gearbox-developed *Brothers _ Arms*
17. Home to defunct developer in 5 ACROSS
19. Nevada team of NCAA titles
20. Bird mascot for MLB's Toronto
23. Liberty City (*Grand Theft Auto*) bridge
24. Enemy to Samus Aran
27. *Baldur's Gate* developer Black _
30. Acts like a *Final Fantasy VII* Mako device?
34. PS2 capability progressive _
35. *Resistance: Fall of Man* penetrating weapon
37. *Madden* offensive position (abbrv.)
41. Dreamcast shooter _ *Matrix*
42. Slippery foe of platform protagonists everywhere
44. *Mortal Kombat II's* Kung _
46. Cable or DSL service company

(Solution on page 105)

When Worlds Collide

Aliens, tourists, stars, and burgers

A desolate, ice-ensconced planet sure can be hell, but so can watching a gaggle of bloated tourists wolfing down Texas Tostadas two tables over.

Lost Planet

VS.

Planet Hollywood



Giant insects, snow pirates, and, well, snow
Advantage: Tie

Environment



Jim Belushi's boxer shorts framed above your table
Advantage: Tie



Machine guns, lasers, and walking tanks
Advantage: Lost

Survival Tools



Wet-Nap too filmy to stifle nearby wailing child



Akrid insects pop up unexpectedly
Advantage: Lost

Scariest Surprises



Steven Seagal could pop in at any minute



Form a team of friends online
Advantage: Lost

Company

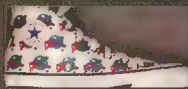


Aspiring actress will sing on your birthday



Saving humanity from friggin' aliens
Advantage: Lost

Reward



\$50 ass-fugly sneakers from the gift shop

Winner: Lost Planet

Yep, even the harsh conditions of *Lost Planet* are more palatable than the crap-laden walls of Planet Hollywood.



GameDevelopers
Conference

07

REGISTER
TODAY!

www.gdconf.com

TAKE CONTROL

March 5-9, 2007 in San Francisco

Join the world's leading developers to exchange ideas, be inspired, and advance the art of game creation. With the innovative features enabled through next-gen consoles and the growth of diversification in videogame play, the power is now with you to seize the market. GDC 2007 - TAKE CONTROL.

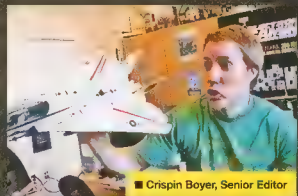
Launch Pad

The highs and lows of past console flights

Photo-realistic graphics! Innovative joypads! Super-duper microprocessors so powerful, they're considered a threat to national security! New consoles promise the world, but do they deliver the goods from the start? Two *EGM*ers say yes...and no.



■ Bryan Inthar, Previews Editor



■ Crispin Boyer, Senior Editor

Best day-one launch game in recent years (from Dreamcast on):

Halo (XB): The whole point of a launch title is to convince peeps to buy the freakin' system, and no game has done that better recently than Microsoft's fantastic first-person blaster (which has become arguably the most powerful brand in gaming). And personally, if it weren't for *Halo*, I don't think I would've ever gotten into playing this genre on a console.

Halo (XB): The most powerful brand in gaming? I think *Mario* and *Madden* might have a few things to say about that, Bryan. But I won't argue that *Halo* single-handedly made the Xbox a must-get console. (How many people bought the system for *Project Gotham Racing?* Or *Fuzion Frenzy?*) Shoot... *Halo* was still selling nearly 100,000 copies per month three years after Xbox's launch.

Most disappointing launch game in recent years?

Luigi's Mansion (GC): Ya gotta feel for Mario's bro-ham here: Finally, the guy takes center stage and he ends up disappointing Nintendo fans (including me) because he doesn't play like his brother. It's not that the ghostbustin' adventure was terrible; it just wasn't a *Mario* game, which at that point we'd come to expect with the launch of every new Nintendo console.

Pocket Ping Pong (Gizmondo): Maybe "disappointing" is the wrong word for this bikini-babe table-tennis game for the infamous Gizmondo (you know—the handheld launched by Euro-mobsters). No one expected it to revolutionize gaming, after all. But when it's your job to review crappy *Ping-Pong* while coworkers get to play, oh, *anything else*, yeah, it can be disappointing.

Best launch game ever?

Super Mario Bros. (NES): If you asked me this question before the holidays, I would've answered the plumber's 3D debut (*Super Mario 64*). But after recently watching my fiancée pick up *Super Mario Bros.* for the first time in almost 20 years and her refusal to put it down, I soon realized the impact of this NES launch title: It got everyone playing video games. How can you beat that?

Ping-Pong (Magnavox Odyssey): Meow. Whoop-psst! Sounds like someone's been whipped. Don't let your fiancée's affair with Mario blind you to the launch game that launched everything: *Ping-Pong* (as it was called when it debuted with 1972's *Odyssey*). The game is still fun today—seriously! And without it we'd both be unemployed. Or, more likely, you'd be writing for a bridal mag.

Most disappointing launch game ever?

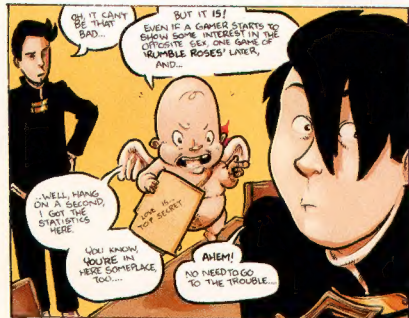
Perfect Dark Zero (XBOX360): Oh, Joanna Dark, how you ridiculously anticipated sequel let me down! Forget about being Microsoft's "*Halo*" for the 360 launch—*Zero* didn't come even close to being the best first-person shooter on Day One. It's bad when the most memorable aspects of a game are terribly wonky physics and Wall Guy (Google him).

Night Trap (Sega CD): Wait...wha? Wall Guy's game was disappointing, sure, but no way is it worse than this disc filled with grainy security-camera video of the late Dana Plato and a bunch of party-party-geeks stalked by boogeymen in black PJs! "Over-one-and-a-half hours of real video!" the game's box boasts in giant type. Thanks, game! And all that fun for just \$60! 🙄

+ HSU & CHAN IN:

Cupid, stupid

By Jeremy "Norm" Scott





**STANDING UP FOR YOURSELF IS STRONG.
STANDING UP FOR THOSE AROUND YOU
IS ARMY STRONG.**

There's strong. And then there's Army Strong. The strength that comes from not just changing your life but changing the lives of others. Find out more at goarmy.com/strong.



Staff Sergeant Jeremy Mutart
© 2007. Paid for by the United States Army. All rights reserved.

ARMY STRONG

2K
SPORTS

IT'S A WHOLE NEW BALLGAME

HUNDREDS OF NEW SIGNATURE STYLE ANIMATIONS, REDESIGNED MAJOR LEAGUE® A.I., AND THE PUREST FIELDING SYSTEM EVER!



SOUNDTRACK:
NIRVANA, SUBLIME, THE STODGES,
FIXIES, ST11, WOLFMOTHER, THE SPECIALS,
TAPES 'N' TAPES, OPA 1979, THERMALS
AND MORE!

2K SPORTS
MAJOR LEAGUE
BASEBALL  **2K7**



CHECK OUT MORE SIGNATURE STYLES AT 2KSports.com/MLB2K7



PLAYSTATION 3



GAME BOY ADVANCE

NINTENDO DS™

This title is intended for both the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system and the PSP® (PlayStation®Portable) system.
© 2007 Take-Two Interactive Software and its subsidiaries. All rights reserved. 2K Sports, the 2K Sports logo, and Take-Two Interactive Software are all trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. Major League Baseball and Hall of Fame trademarks and copyrights are used with permission of Major League Baseball Properties, Inc. and the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Inc., respectively. Visit the official website at MLB.com. ® MLBPA Official Licensee. Major League Baseball Players Association. Visit www.MLBPA.com, the Players' Choice on the web. If MLB® 2007 / MLBPA 2007, "PlayStation", "PLAYSTATION", the "PS" Family logo and "PSP" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. (Mercury Stock Data™ may be required (sold separately)). © 2007 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox Live and the Xbox logo are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies. © 2005 Nintendo. ® Game Boy Advance and Nintendo DS are trademarks of Nintendo. ® 2004 Nintendo. This ratings logo is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

Made with love by

RETROMAGS

Our goal is to preserve classic video game magazines so that they are not lost permanently.

People interested in helping out in any capacity, please visit us at retromags.com.

No profit is made from these scans, nor do we offer anything available from the publishers themselves.

If you come across anyone selling releases from this site, please do not support them and do let us know.

Thank you!