THE No.1 VIDEOGAME MAGAZINE

EGM ™

ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY 1UP.COM

The
Future
of Videogames

> Control games with your mind

> One giant virtual world to play in

> Holograms and paper-thin screens

> New genres, hyper-smart A.I.

> How **YOU** will help design our videogames

PLUS:
Comedian David Cross on gaming in the year 2343

The future starts on page 46...

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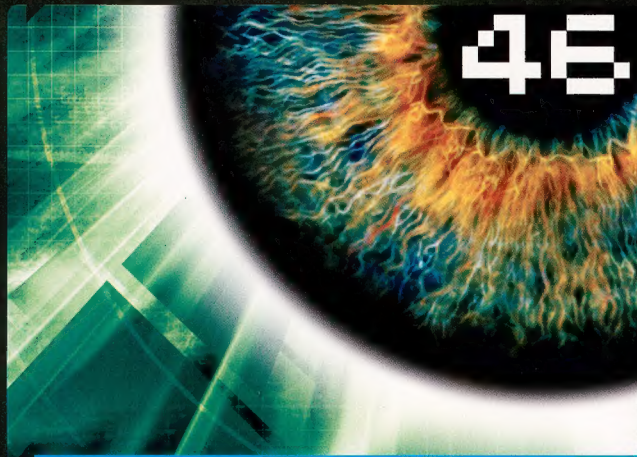
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> THIS MONTH'S EGM EXTRAS

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2007 Game Developers Conference
Normally, GDC is full of boring discussions and panels meant for brainy developers, not regular-joe gamers like you and me. But this year, the conference was full of awesomeness. Developers calling the Wii a "piece of s***"? "Home"—the

PS3's answer to Xbox 360 Achievements, celeb Miis, and then some? See what the buzz is about in our comprehensive online coverage of the show.

Extended Coverage
Also check out extra *Forza 2* coverage, our *Super Paper Mario* SuperGuide, and more exclusive content, only at EGM215.1UP.com.

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

Que Sera, Sera

I'M NOT A MAN OF MY WORD—but it's not my fault.

Last issue, I said this editorial would continue where I left off, recognizing individual staff members for what they bring to the magazine. Sorry—that's going to have to wait, because I need this space to talk about other things this month.

The other thing we promised but won't be able to deliver: an interview with Nintendo of America's big man, President and COO Reggie Fils-Aime. His was supposed to follow our previous two executive interviews (*EGM #213*: Sony Computer Entertainment America President and CEO Jack Tretton, *EGM #214*: Microsoft Corporate Vice President Peter Moore). You demanded that we ask Nintendo the tough questions, just like we did with Sony and Microsoft. It took us five months to finally get a "yes" out of the company, but they recently changed their minds because of some differences of opinion that I won't get into here. Let's just say it may be awhile before you see this Fils-Aime interview (if at all), and it wouldn't be from lack of trying on our part.... (We just wanted to let you know all this so you don't start thinking we would favor or take it easy on any of the companies that we interview or cover.)

Moving on, I have a little bit more space here to tell you about the magazine you're holding right now. We've never done a themed issue like this, and we hope you dig it. Our Senior Editor Crispin Boyer, his writers, and our art team of artists and photographers worked really hard on these stories, researching where gaming will be in the next 20 years or so. We also had a little fun and made a few other stories and sections "future" themed. So watch for the "Future of Videogames" logo, and start imagining how cool our hobby will be when you're old and wrinkly....

—Dan "Shoe" Hsu, Editor-in-Chief

Letter of the Month
Control freak

Games, graphics, price. These are the things we're pummeled with when it comes to videogame consoles. These things are not what keeps a fanboy loyal to a system, however. Loyalty is all in the controller. The controller makes or breaks your system because it's the only thing that remains constant. It's the handle of a gun, the hilt of a sword. If you compare the game selection, graphics, and cost of all the systems, the Xbox 360 is the most logical choice at this point. But don't tell that to the Sony *Madden*ophile who refuses to relearn where the button that passes to the fullback is. And Wii fans, could you see yourself swinging the Sixaxis around while playing *Zelda*? With fewer and fewer titles remaining exclusive to a system, the choice could come down to this simple issue. Remember the outrage everyone showed when we saw the boomerang-shaped controller for the PS3? Fans were weeping in the streets. Remember the MASSIVE original Xbox controller? Remember how it almost killed the system? Heck, even the perfectly reviewed *Zelda* is considered leaps and bounds better on the Wii for one reason only: control.
—*Alvin Jarvenpaa Jr.*

Let's not forget the controllers of all the failed systems: Dreamcast, 3DO, Jaguar—even the venerable Atari 5200—all had excruciatingly hand-cramping joysticks. And they all perished quickly. Coincidence?

Emulation nation

I just read about the removal of the backward-compatibility chip from the European PlayStation 3, and I'm concerned that this is going to happen in future U.S. PS3 hardware revisions. Until I read this news, I was 100 percent confident I would buy a PS3 at some point in the future. But now, I'm concerned that I won't be able to play my backlog of PS2 and PS1 games on it without some sort of emulation. Based on what I've seen and read regarding the emulation that Xbox 360 has, I'm not very enthused about purchasing a system that goes down that route. I understand that the removal of the backward-compatibility chip will

help drive down the cost—but honestly, I would prefer to save up for a couple of years and wait to get a PS3 where I can just toss in a PS1 or PS2 game and not have to worry about downloading any sort of software-emulation update. The loss of true backward compatibility for the U.S. PS3s would be the last straw to make me really reconsider my confidence in acquiring a PS3.

—*Juan Amezcua*

Let's make sure we've got this right. You're waiting to buy a PS3 until you find out if it will eventually lose a feature it currently has? Well, Juan, we've got bad news and good news. The bad news is, the U.S. will almost definitely get the Emotion Engine–free PS3s at some point in the future. The good news is that there's a really simple solution: *Just buy a friggin' PS3 before they take the chip out.* Sony's not going to come to your house and steal your Emotion Engine. Though come to think of it, they could probably release a firmware update that disables the chip...but not even Sony would be so cruel...would they?

Wolfie, you must eat!

I was playing *Zelda: Twilight Princess* for Wii, and I noticed that in Jovani's house, there's a picture on the wall that looks very familiar. At first I thought it was our first U.S. president, George Washington, but after taking a second look, I have a better idea: Wolfgang Mozart. After all, he did write an opera called *Don Giovanni*. What do you think?

—*Paul Gale*

Rock you like a boomerang.

For writing this month's winning letter, Alvin Jarvenpaa Jr. wins a free game.

Microsoft game studios

BUNGiE

Halo™ 2 for the PC is here. Two all-new exclusive maps, 23 in total. And a Map Editor to create even more. Only on Windows Vista™

Games for Windows LIVE

Japanese metal is more metal than you.

That's some fine detective work there, champ.

And now, let's pause for a metal moment

Guitar Hero II guitarist Marcus Henderson made a mistake in *EGM* #213. He said Marty Friedman succeeded Chris Poland in Megadeth. Actually, Marty Friedman followed guitarist Jeff Young. Jeff actually succeeded Chris Poland. Now I have a question for you: You asked Marcus what show Marty hosted in Japan. Do you know the answer to your own question? If you do, I would be happy if you could answer it.

—*Shane Starner*

Henderson has been duly chastised. And the answer to your question is twofold. First, Friedman spent six months on *Hebimetasan* (say it out loud and you'll get it). Now he hosts a show called *Rock Fujiyama*, and he also makes appearances on at least four other weekly programs. Yes, a former Megadeth guitarist is a prominent TV personality in Japan. Really. We couldn't make this stuff up.

$200 > $100 > $0

Your interview with [Sony CEA President and CEO] Jack Tretton ("BattleStation," *EGM #213*) was very irresponsible and not truthful.

You said: "Only Blu-ray and free online are your real advantages. You can do all those other things on the Xbox 360...for $200 less." Completely wrong! You cannot rip music from CDs on the $299 Xbox. You cannot save your game on the $299 Xbox. You cannot download demos and videos on a $299 Xbox. You cannot play Xbox 1 games on a $299 Xbox. You cannot game online on a $299 Xbox. You can if you buy a $40 memory card or $99 hard drive plus

$49 Xbox Live (per year). Oh, yeah... did you guys know there's a $499 PS3 out there? You only mention the PS3 being $600.

The way I see it, the Xbox 360 is $399, plus $49 per year. That's $644 for five years and does not include a next-gen DVD player. The PS3 is $499 and does include a next-gen DVD player. I find your article to be written by [Microsoft Corporate VP] Peter Moore himself. I will not be renewing my subscription to EGM: Microsoft Magazine.

—*Scott Krueger*

Well, you make a fair point. You can't do all those things on the lower-end 360. But just imagine: What if we had said, "You can do all these things on the 360 for *one* hundred dollars less"? Did we just blow your mind?

The long view

Sony's getting a lot of complaints about their decision-making. I agree they're arrogant, but apparently most gamers slept through Business 101. Sony (like every other company in history) is in business to make money. Will not having rumble or backward compatibility make Sony lose customers? Probably. Has forcing the Blu-ray drive into systems, thereby jacking up the price, cost Sony customers and kicked the company out of a dominating position? Probably. Has going the route of a free, but lacking, online network cost Sony customers? Probably.

Are these decisions stupid? Probably not. Not having rumble or backward compatibility saves Sony a lot of money. Forcing Blu-ray into the PS3 will gain a crapload of Blu-ray customers, earning Sony a lot of money (and most likely keeping Blu-ray from going the way of Betamax). Not paying for an Xbox Live–type service saves a lot of money. Sony did these things because they believe it maximizes profit. They plan to maximize profit over the PS3's life cycle, not the next 6 months, which is what most people can't see past.

It comes down to money, and that is the consumer's most powerful asset. You may bitch and moan all you want, but if you still buy it, they made the right decision. If you really want to make a statement, do what people have been doing since the creation of the consumer age: Speak with your wallet, not your words. You're more effective that way.

—*Benjamin Keularts*

Sony can try to cut its losses by retooling the PS3 hardware, but it's

clear that consumers are already speaking with their wallets—sales of Nintendo's comparatively cheap Wii have easily outpaced those for Sony's high-priced behemoth.

Telling stories

I think it's rather ironic that Roger Ebert was the one who said that "games are not art." Not that I don't agree—it's just that I think movies (and books) aren't art either. They are simply vessels for stories. However, with the videogame comes a unique opportunity for storytelling. Movies and books last only a couple of hours in the telling, while games can go on for 40-plus hours. This means that game stories can reach an unparalleled depth, where every character, no matter how minor, has a unique personality and background.

Sadly, only a few games have exploited this enormous potential, and these games are all RPGs (e.g., the *Zelda*s, *Knights of the Old Republic I* and *II*), so the aforementioned potential remains untapped. Furthermore, reading a book or watching a movie is a passive experience, while playing a game is an interactive one. Books and movies are supposed to immerse you in their stories, yet only games can truly do this. And yet, for the most part, they don't. Why? I'd like to know, too. We have the technology—let's use it to make great stories.

—*Harland Elleston*

The interesting thing about Roger Ebert's position is that he doesn't just say that games aren't art, but that they can *never* be art. In a Q&A on his blog, he wrote the following: "Videogames by their nature require player choices, which is the opposite of the strategy of serious film and literature, which requires authorial control...I believe the nature of the medium prevents it from moving beyond craftsmanship to the stature of art." We can think of games that prove him wrong (*Shadow of the Colossus* comes to mind), but you're right—we do have a ways to go in terms of storytelling. 🤖

Photograph by www.claudiapoetzelmann.com

> PSYCH WARD

Brain WATCH

A group of researchers is looking at how videogames affect your brain—and how this knowledge can help developers create deeper experiences By James Lee
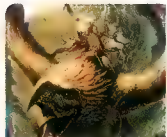
The **Future** of Videogames

Sensing a theme here? This article is the first in our issue-wide series, "The Future of Videogames." Look for this stamp on all future-related stories.

YOU PROBABLY ALREADY KNOW THE EFFECT VIDEOGAMES HAVE ON YOUR LIFE. But do you know what they're doing to your mind? A new Florida-based think tank aims to find out—and it's offering up its research to developers with the hopes of enabling them to make more psychologically enriching games.

Dr. Scott Rigby heads Immersyve, ■ group of researchers using traditional social-science methodology to study the psychological effects of videogames. Anyone who's nabbed a few orbs in *Crackdown* knows how satisfying it feels—and how you're often compelled to keep playing to find *just one more*. Rigby's work is to get beyond that simple carrot-and-stick experience and discover what deeper psychological needs games are fulfilling. "Clearly, there has to be more going on psychologically," he says.

And, indeed, he's found that to be true. According to Rigby's research, games have the potential to satisfy three basic psychological needs: autonomy (freedom of choice), mastery (feeling like you're competent at something), and social interaction.

Early games may have only satisfied one of these needs, but many complex modern games go further. A massively multiplayer online role-playing game such as *Final Fantasy XI*, for example, is multidimensional. "It offers a trifecta of need satisfaction," Rigby says. Players have lots of autonomy in the open world, and the job system gives them a sense of mastery. But what really opens it up is how *FFXI* gives gamers "the opportunity to have meaningful interactions and relationships with others.... There's a sense of genuine personal support."

But discovering the psychological impact of games is just the first step. Immersyve is also creating a set of tools that developers can use to test their games, with the goal of creating experiences that go deeper than blowing up zombies and carjacking vehicles. The group's methodology is designed to assess and predict how much players will enjoy games, going beyond the typical user testing and focus groups studios often rely on. Immersyve's system is still fairly new, but Rigby says that his team has already consulted for major publisher Vivendi Games. As more developers sign on, the group plans to equip its lab facilities with additional testing methods, such as eye tracking and biofeedback.

Even with this quantitative approach, however, Rigby acknowledges what most gamemakers already know: The Game That Makes Us Cry is still an elusive target. "Developing is ■ creative endeavor," says Rigby. "I don't think we're going to have a formula to make the perfect game." But, he says, the more psychological needs a videogame satisfies, the wider the audience it'll be able to reach. "We can tell [developers] whether they're hitting the mark." 🐾

> **We can tell [developers] whether they're hitting the mark.**
> —*Immersyve President Dr. Scott Rigby*

ANALYZE THESE
We asked psychologist Scott Rigby to tell us why we love these classic games

Halo (Xbox)
"*Halo* gives players a sense of user-interface mastery, and it provides ■ smooth progression of gameplay challenges—as you tackle the Covenant and then the Flood—that increases your pulse without making you feel frustrated and overwhelmed. *Halo* provides players ■ good deal of choice and creativity in their tactics and in movement around the playfield. That said, even great first-person shooters like *Halo* lag behind other game genres in satisfying our need for autonomy, and if shooters could do better at that, they might gain ■ wider audience."

Pac-Man (Arcade)
"Gobbling up the dots and trying to get the best of Blinky and his—or her?—pals probably isn't helping people feel very autonomous, as the game boards are pretty constricting in the choices they provide. But there's something pure about arcade and puzzle games such as this that draw the player into a very satisfying cycle of challenge and mastery, which Immersyve has found can—at least in the short term—increase the player's sense of well-being. Playing too long, however, can definitely decrease your mental energy—everything in moderation!"

Super Mario Bros. (NES)
"Another oldie but ■ goodie, *Super Mario Bros.* is one of the first mainstream games that began to expand on console games' ability to satisfy our intrinsic need for competence while also meeting our needs for autonomy—meaningful choice and personal freedom in gameplay. The game still forces the player down a linear path as the screen scrolls to the right, but now you have the freedom to use a variety of paths and power-ups to overcome the evil mushrooms and bouncing turtle shells. In addition, the game begins to provide secret levels and game areas that are off of the main path, which satisfy autonomy needs by providing even more freedom. The expansion of games' ability to meet these psychological needs may help explain what broadened their appeal to the mainstream, and *SMB* is an important step in this evolution."

Mushy mushrooms

Frustrating games usually result in an avalanche of expletives, broken controllers, and fist-induced holes in walls. To combat this, Nintendo product whore Banpresto is releasing squishy stress relievers in the shape of *Super Mario Bros.* mushrooms, as well as those ubiquitous question mark blocks. The squishy shrooms come in three anger-soaking varieties: super, 1up, and poison.

A lucky leaf

Last year wacky developer Clover Studio (*Okami*, *Viewtiful Joe*) sadly shut their doors even though prissy fanboys doused each of their releases with drool. Ironically, however, Clover still has a bit of luck—former CEO (and producer of its noteworthy titles) Atsushi Inaba is sprouting a new studio entitled Seed that he is filling with former Clover employees. Now let's predict how long it takes for these guys to wither away (kidding!).

1 'I like to store my junk in boxes—organization is not a crime.'

2 'I have a crush on a real fox. No, not a *real* fox, you idiot.'

3 'Yeah. National Public Radio is nerdy, but I love listening to talk shows.'

4 'People say I look like my father. Hey, that ain't bad—we both look *good*.'

5 'Want the dames to dig your hair? Feather it—makes 'em freak.'

Who am I?

Solid Snake from the *Metal Gear Solid* series.

+ FOREIGN OBJECT/JAPAN

Fist of the NORTH STAR

Now an action game...soon a chilling documentary

Platform: PS2

Likelihood it'll come here: Though we'd get a kick out of this flashy fighter, don't expect it to duke its way here.

So, what's the future like for Japan? Bleak, my friends. Earth destroyed in a nuclear maelstrom. Bare-chested kung-fu fighters with enormous pecs and neck muscles clawing at each other for domination of what's left of the world. Bucketfuls of blood. A whole lot of calling out the name of your special, final, ultimate, omega, killer move before delivering it. *Fist of the North Star*'s been rocking out precisely this way in comic/anime form for 24 years now. You'd think this series would have spawned a dozen 2D fighters by now. Nope—just a few crappy ones on the SNES and GameBoy.

OK, so is this particular game any good? Oh, yes. That's because *Fist of the North Star* was developed by Arc System Works, makers of the flashy 2D fighting series *Guilty Gear* and masters of the "light-speed chess match" approach to the genre. The game offers 10 playable characters (including hero Kenshiro and his ever-so-slightly overdressed nemesis Raoh), but the tools available to each are dizzying—boost moves, "aura" specials, and even the crazy death-blow attacks from the anime that can end a round in its tracks if executed correctly. Even better, this new PlayStation 2 game, out in Japan by the time you read this, comes free with ports of three older *Fist* games—two of which were released under different names in the U.S. (*Black Belt* and *Last Battle*).

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?®

GAME VIDEOS

Check out GameVideos.com for complete coverage of the Game Developers Conference, including a full demo of PS3's Home online plans and new footage of *Mario Galaxy*, *Zelda: Phantom Hourglass*, and more. You can also go straight to **GameVideos.com/EGM** to find the favorite clips listed below!

ZOMG: LittleBigPlanet Demo
See the full, amazing demo/debut of *LittleBigPlanet* from the Game Developers Conference. *Right now!*
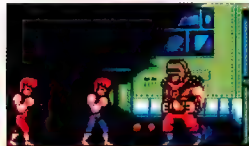
LOL: Double Dragon II punch-em-up parody
Billy and Jimmy of *Double Dragon* fame beat up a bunch of dudes in this fan-made video. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger even shows up to talk incomprehensibly.

PWN: Heavenly Sword Documentary
Minidoc about *Heavenly Sword*'s facial mo-cap tech (they're getting help from Weta of *Lord of the Rings* fame), with new, short gameplay clips.

1337: Stop-Motion Pole Position Video
Guillaume Reymond and friends re-created *Pole Position* using an empty theater and stop-motion animation. Plus all their free time.

+ ONLINE SCENE

Popular Opinion

Polls from the pros By Michael Donahoe

Yeah, the Wii's Everybody Votes Channel is kind of pointless; but the service is addicting. So we tapped a random group of gaming personalities to give us their questions. Then we had you guys answer 'em.

Lead Guitarist Marcus Henderson (*Guitar Hero II*) asks:

Q Best method of resolving an Irish family donnybrook?

42% A thunderous donkey punch to the kidney

58% A five-knuckle shillelagh to the breadbasket

Director David Jaffe (*Calling All Cars*) asks:

Q The Law of Attraction is...

64% Bulls***

36% Real

President of Silicon Knights Denis Dyack (*Too Human*) asks:

Q Which is more important?

14% Hardware

86% Software

CEO Ray Muzyka and President Greg Zeschuk of BioWare (*Mass Effect*) ask:

Q Which would you rather do?

80% Save the galaxy

20% Destroy the galaxy

President of Gearbox Software Randy Pitchford (*Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway*) asks:

Q Who's tougher?

34% Aliens

66% Predators
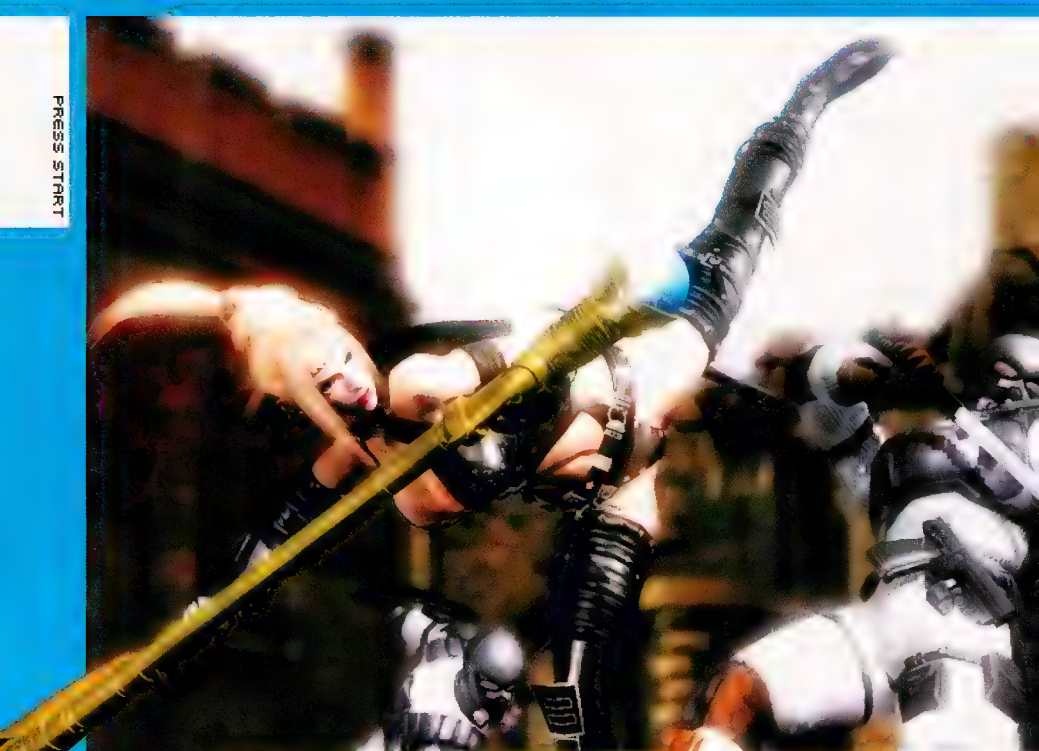
Ninja Gaiden SIGMA

With the move to the PlayStation 3, Tecmo's stunning action franchise gets a whole lot sexier By Bryan Intihar

THERE'S A MALE GAME DEVELOPER IN TOUCH WITH HIS FEMININE SIDE, it's designer Yosuke Hayashi. "When I read interesting media, I read accessory women's fashion and beauty books," says the Ninja Gaiden Sigma director. "Women have an amount of technique that can be simpler than beauty." Still, when a lot of our studios Hayashi has a comprehensive resolve for streamlining on the ladies. This PS3-exclusive title result is eventually Tecmo's newest man wrestling its slice T-shirt and leisure a new, gorgeous character, the famed hunter

Rachel. The most successful is one alongside eventually made-over action genre character is the town on this chapters," he says. "And now I'm challenging myself to make Rachel the most compelling female action game character."

"Let's get to know Sigma's newest beauty a little better..."

FAR FROM While this beautiful blonde isn't a completely fresh face sharing the original crowds, you get NG Sigma's players on her will easily expand the narrative. "Rachel's boyfriend will also anti-critical has

period in the Vigoor Empire follows the positive other PlayStation was embarking on his adventure," says Hayashi. "By presenting this country that happen to Rachel's portion of the story, you will be able to get a multiplication view of what took place in Ninja Gaiden."

For newcomers, Rachel's playtime portion will make up roughly 25 percent of higher Gaiden main-town newbies start in the most complete, with the vast run of bass incarnation. Yet, sadly, many of her backstage will be familiar to NG sets. "I am not

■ Will *Sigma* support the PS3 controller's tilt feature? Yes, but that's all Tecmo will say for now.

as concerned with portraying entirely new areas," says Hayashi.

Her fighting style: Strangely, Hayashi will only speak in generalizations when describing how *Sigma*'s female hero will beat down enemies. "Rachel's moves and her action style are defined by certain key concepts," he says. "This includes being more feminine, supplier, and more dynamic." Perhaps it takes some women's intuition to know what the hell that means.

Her weapons: As shown in these screenshots, the Warhammer will be Rachel's primary weapon. And, thankfully, the pow-

erful blade is being retooled here (it was ridiculously weak in previous *NG*s) to give the leather-clad gal more freedom and the chance to really display her athleticism. Expect Rachel to have other tools of destruction in her repertoire, as well.

Her appearance: "The player will be able to change Rachel's hair and the earrings that she wears," says Hayashi. "I want Rachel to utilize [these things] to become an even more attractive woman, so she steals the hearts of all the men playing this game." Steal their hearts? Possibly. Steal the attention of another body part? That seems more likely.
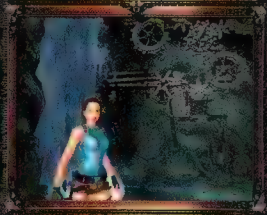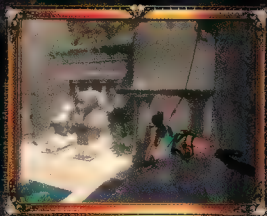
MotorStorm

The storm rages on and on... By Shane Bettenhausen

MotorStorm Producer Simon Benson frolicked in the muddy mosh pits of U.K. music festival Glastonbury to research his filthy rock 'n' roll racer.

ARRIVING FASHIONABLY LATE TO THE PS3'S "LAUNCH WINDOW," Evolution Studios' *MotorStorm* was met with rather hefty expectations. The racer was up to the task, delivering brilliant visuals, engaging control, and addictive online thrills...yet the game's bare-bones feature set left some gamers wanting more. Luckily, help is on the way—Producer Simon Benson spoke with us about our concerns with the game and where they plan on taking it from here....

EGM: Looking back, do you have any regrets regarding that infamous CG concept video from 2005?

Simon Benson: It's almost been a millstone around our neck to a certain degree. Obviously, everyone in the press likes to see someone fail rather than succeed, so it's been brought up in "Sony-bashing" attacks and whatnot, but to be honest that only pushed us to work harder.

But you can imagine early on in development we had to build the game's engine up from scratch for the PS3. Initially, we had managed to get a few gray triangles on the screen; meanwhile our office has images from that movie pasted everywhere. And we're looking at what's on the screen and what's on the wall and saying, "Yep, we've got a long way to go."

EGM: Some of our reviewers felt that the single-player game was too repetitive. How do you respond?

SB: You could say that yes, we could use some more tracks, but I'd also say that we have an awful lot of races. The commodity is different here; a race is truly a unique entity and we've been very careful to control how they're packaged. For example, if you're in a race on Rain God Mesa and you're on a bike but everyone else is in trucks, then you're in for a very different race than if it were reversed, and that goes for just about any class. And further afield, we're looking to offer additional downloadable tracks and races down the line. But as it stands, you don't really feel a repetitiveness of tracks, because the races keep them so varied and there's so much that you can do with them.

EGM: The load times feel a bit long to us...why didn't you allow for a hard disk install like *Ridge Racer 7*?

SB: Certainly it was always an option to utilize the hard drive, but time was a factor. We built a game and we've optimized the load times to a certain extent, but there's a long way we could still go in that area. As a developer working on an early title for PlayStation 3, we're still learning the platform. There's loads we know now that we can use to improve load times in the future. But as it stands, every single level is under 30 seconds in terms of loading, and some are much, much quicker than that. So we're happy with the load times.

EGM: Although the rock festival idea is cool, we feel the soundtrack is seriously lacking in quantity. Did you ever consider letting players use custom soundtracks?

SB: The sheer number of tracks we can get in there is important, but the quality and appropriateness of the tracks came first. Our "live-fi" concept gives players live versions of these songs that you simply can't get anywhere else. We could have gone with 10 times the number of songs at a lower quality, but to have the essence of a fantasy festival that would really inspire people and make them want to be there, we went with quality over quantity. But moving forward, as we expand *MotorStorm* beyond the box, music is definitely an area that we're looking at. Custom soundtracks certainly could be a possibility....

> **There's no such thing as a finished game, just a shipped game. We've still got loads and loads of ideas.**

—**MotorStorm** *Producer Simon Benson*

EGM: It seems like you have ambitious plans for downloadable content...how much stuff was left on the cutting room floor?

SB: With game development, a team is never happy. There's no such thing as a finished game, just a shipped game. We've still got loads and loads of ideas, and the great thing about PS3 is that it doesn't have to stop. It's going to be a great opportunity, and we're going to see a much higher-quality, player-tuned experience. And it's not just evolving and improving in the way that the developer thinks, but [in terms of] what the players truly want. We intend to do an awful lot in terms of downloadable content. There are very interesting plans afoot, and it won't be long before you see that come to fruition.

EGM: Might that downloadable content include the ability to fill out empty spots in online games with A.I.-controlled bots?

SB: It's certainly something we considered, and let's say we've been doing a few bits of experimentation at that, but there's nothing to confirm at present. But it could potentially be an interesting element....

EGM: In the past you've said that splitscreen play might be added as a downloadable feature, right?

SB: We made the decision not to put it in the box product, because we were focused on delivering the best single-screen experience we could, to put as much graphical power as we could onto that display. We didn't want to have to compromise and to have to cut all of our details in half. If, later down the line, splitscreen seems appropriate, we can add that, but we'll have to wait and see what level of demand exists for it.

EGM: What about a downloadable area that's more of a trick park or obstacle course?

SB: We absolutely considered that, and I think that will definitely be something that we'll investigate in the future. I'd love some sort of freestyle arena just to allow people to see the depth in the physics models and to hone their skills.

EGM: Do you feel that the inclusion of Sixaxis motion control made up for the lack of force feedback?

SB: Yeah, I feel that [force feedback],

■ Sick of racing to the same eight tracks over and over? Help is on the way....

while interesting, isn't crucial. When you go to a movie, you can get really immersed, and your feet don't have to shake. If things are done properly, you can immerse yourself without that sort of feedback. It focuses your attention more on other elements, like getting the camera to shake right so that you still feel that violence of your vehicle bouncing off the ground.

And the Sixaxis provides you with so many opportunities to think of other control mechanisms, it's effectively a new way to approach next-gen development. In the first-person view, the Sixaxis control becomes exceptionally intuitive. You almost forget that you're holding a controller. I performed an interesting experiment with my mom, who never plays games. I sat her down with *MotorStorm* and gave her a Sixaxis controller. Now, most people from that demographic don't know how to use typical controllers, but with the tilt control she could easily steer around the track. She liked it so much that she went out and bought a PS2 and some driving games.

EGM: We dig the fisticuffs that erupt when racing ATVs and bikes—were you trying to one-up EA's rumored *Road Rash* update?

SB: Well, although it wasn't a main focus, we really wanted to get punching in there. But while yes, *MotorStorm* is brutal, we didn't want it

to turn into a race to knock people off their bikes; that should be secondary. So we made it reasonably tricky to line up and time your punches, to judge your approach speed correctly. That makes it so much more satisfying if you can land them...it doesn't make it a staple, but it's an advanced, refined control that you can work up to.

EGM: Be honest: How many developers have asked to use your graphical engine?

SB: Obviously, people have been banging down the door. We've certainly had a lot of interest, and we're pleased with what we've achieved, but I'm afraid that I can't really comment on any specifics.

One of the key things that was interesting to us is, when you're developing an early title for a new platform, there's little value in looking around you at what everyone else is doing. There's no point in looking sideways at other PlayStation 3 games already out there, because they're really not of the same generation. We kept our heads down very much through development, just trying to deliver what we wanted, not to be a little bit better than some other game, but to be the best that we can possibly be. And I think that shows in *MotorStorm*. People say that we're quite a bit ahead of other engines out there, but we really didn't know what to expect. ✒

Team Fortress 2

Storming Valve's multiplayer stronghold

By Evan Shamoon

Platforms:
PS3/XB360

Publisher:
EA Games

Developer:
Valve

Release Date:
Fall 2007

HERE'S THE UNDERSTATEMENT OF THE YEAR: *Team Fortress 2* has been in development for a long time. "We first showed the military-themed incarnation way back when [at the Electronic Entertainment Expo]," says Valve Director of Marketing Doug Lombardi, recalling *TF2*'s initial screening back at the gaming industry's annual trade show in 1999. Since then, the game has been through huge changes, ranging from fully replacing the game's innards to the implementation of various, radically different art styles. Now, nearly nine years later, Valve has taken the best features from the various iterations

and is ready to release the game later this year for the PS3 and Xbox 360.

For those uninitiated with the franchise, here's a quick history lesson: Roughly a decade ago, three amateur game programmers—Robin Walker, John Cook, and Ian Caughley—put their heads together and made what would go down as one of the most important PC mods in history, *Team Fortress*. Built for the original *Quake*, *TF* brought class-based teamplay to the then deathmatch-dominated world of 3D shooters, letting players become snipers, medics, spies, and the like, each with a particularly specialized skill set. The game was

successful, and the group formed TeamFortress Software to begin work on *Team Fortress 2*—then intended to be a commercially available mod for *Quake II*. Valve quickly snatched up the young dev team and released their work as *Team Fortress Classic*, a free mod for its own *Half-Life*. The mod was once again hugely popular, and after its release, Valve announced that work on *Team Fortress 2: Brotherhood of Arms* was in progress.

Extra life

Of course, back in 1999, the possibility of simultaneously releasing *Team Fortress 2* on consoles prob-
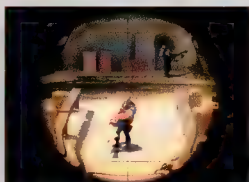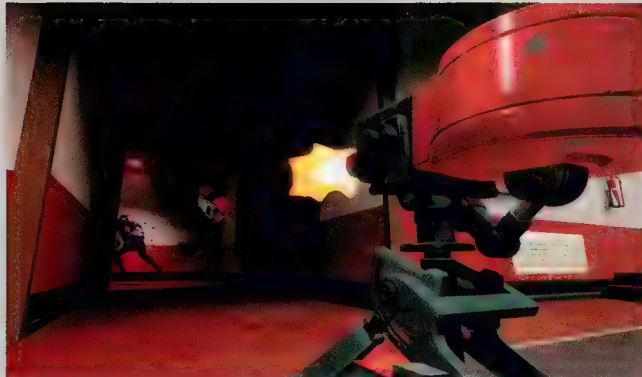
Very sneaky: The spy can get all *Predator*-like to surprise his enemies.

ably seemed a rather preposterous idea—remember, this was before the PlayStation 2 hit the market, and before the word "Xbox" had ever been publicly muttered. But now, with the increased horsepower of the next-gen systems, the game already looks absolutely stunning. Using brand-new development tricks, Valve has fused its powerful Source engine (which powers *Half-Life 2*) with some hyper-stylized, Pixar-inspired visuals. The result looks something like *The Incredibles*...but with more guns and less family bonding.

And while *TF2*'s new graphical approach is quite beautiful to look at,

Valve also has very practical reasons for going this route. Like the original, this one's a class-based affair: character choices will include Heavy, Spy, Scout, Demolition Man (not Sly Stallone), Engineer, Medic, Sniper, Soldier, and Pyro, each with its own distinct strengths, weaknesses, and weapons. "We wanted to create a visual hierarchy for the player classes," says Lombardi. "From our experi-

ence building *TF*, *Counter-Strike*, and *Day of Defeat*, we knew that giving the players the ability to identify other player classes from great distances would be important. For example, it's handy for [a weak] Scout to know whether a [stronger] Heavy is coming toward him or just another Scout."

The developer also wanted to create a style that lent itself to both the "battle" nature of the game, as well

› We wanted to create a visual hierarchy for the player classes.

—*Valve Director of Marketing Doug Lombardi*

as to the "over-the-top moments that naturally ensue when you give a bunch of players the abilities and arsenals we've made available here," as Lombardi puts it. "Everyone who's played a multiplayer action game— especially a *TF* game—has experienced the moment of tension followed by mad laughter." Yeah, just hope it's laughter by you, and not by someone who capped your sorry butt.

Team console

The PS3 and 360 versions are being developed independently of one another, but Lombardi says they've been seeing similar performance across the platforms. "Given the early stage of the two powerful consoles the product is heading toward, the game should play virtually the same across all systems. The only noticeable differences between any of the versions will be in the controller and features that may be available dependent upon each platform's online service." This includes the possibility of user-created content—which, at this point, is still under consideration. But it'd be quite a shame if the feature didn't come to fruition, since customizing your own battlefield proved to be so important to the PC original.

Building a better boat

Regarding the overriding sameness that has characterized the genre, Lombardi is blunt and to the point. "From the beginning of time,

> PANDORA'S (ORANGE) BOX

■ *Half-Life 2: Episode Two*
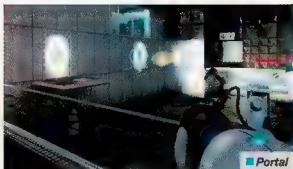
■ *Portal*

EA and Valve may be offering up the gaming deal of the year when *Half Life 2: The Orange Box* is released this fall. Included in the package are the following: the original *Half-Life 2*, the narrative expansions *Half-Life 2: Episode One* and *Episode*
Two, the hybrid puzzle-first-person-shooter *Portal*, and, of course, *Team Fortress 2*. All of the *Half-Life* titles will be graphically enhanced for the hardware they're running on, and together will sell for the, ahem, low, low price of $60.

"*Team Fortress Classic* was originally included with *Half-Life 1*, and *Counter-Strike: Source* was originally included with *Half-Life 2*," says Lombardi. "Both of those decisions worked out great for Valve." Hey, you won't find us complaining.

● Team Fortress 2's very distinctive style makes it supremely easy to recognize a player's character class. Well, that is unless he's behind you.

There's only one thing the game doesn't give you.

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FORZA 2
MOTORSPORT

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Microsoft game studios

XBOX LIVE.

Jump in.

XBOX 360

Engineers (and their movable turrets) make for a great line of defense.

every popular form of entertainment has been saddled with derivative works—if something's working, there'll be a number of schmucks looking to make a quick buck by rolling out quick knockoffs. So, I'd say the first-person-shooter genre has become wildly successful, and there are many good people trying to contribute to that success by making good FPS games, and one too many of those just trying to make a quick buck."

Lombardi also believes the genre has made plenty of contributions to one of the industry's biggest problems: titles shipping before they're ready for release. For obvious reasons, he believes his company's game will be different: "With *TF2*, we've iterated and playtested and overhauled the product several times to ensure we're creating a title with varying gameplay experiences and, most of all, a game that's fun to play. The primary goal for our titles isn't about pushing boundaries so much as attempting to build best-of-breed products." Lombardi continues, "Sometimes that means overhauls, and sometimes that means subtle touches of refinement." And sometimes, *just sometimes,* it means millions of gamers simultaneously gaining five to 10 pounds apiece as they struggle to escape their sofa for weeks on end. If all goes according to plan, we'll find out soon enough. 🎮

Not a shocker
Underwater first-person adventure
BioShock can't seem to catch a real
release date. Originally, it was going
to emerge this June, but publisher
2K Games confirmed it's pushing the
game back to an August 21 release
date. Don't be surprised if the release
date changes again, though.

News Channel

Wii Menu   Start

Ousting online
Both Microsoft and Sony are enjoying
online play, but apparently this idea
isn't connecting with Nintendo. This
isn't helping, either: SNK America
President Ben Herman stated in
an interview with Spong.com that
Nintendo (still) isn't letting publish-
ers include online capabilities in their
games. Hmm, not very friendly, guys.

Margot

Pool 'n' porn— say wha?

Sorry guys, this isn't the world's first
masturbation simulation—instead,
publisher Eidos is actually attempting
to sink a sucky idea: *Girls Gone Wild
Pocket Pool*, a billiards game for the
PSP, pits your pool prowess against
that of a cavalcade of cuties eager to
disrobe for cash. Hey, we guess it's
one way for Sony to differentiate itself
from the kid-friendly DS competition...
and to get Fox News to damn the
PSP (again) for pimping "porn."

Future
Videogames

+ TAKE THIS JOB

Director of Platform Strategy

Our monthly look at the (futuristic) jobs
you want By Evan Shamoon

■ Henson kindly asks that you shut down all the garbage mashers in the detention level.

5 Lives:
Kudo Tsunoda

The remixed *Def Jam: Icon* is getting a bit of a bad rap—we dug the boppy backgrounds, but weren't into the plodding, slow-paced fisticuffs. But we can all agree on one thing: The game looks *good*. Not surprising, considering Executive Producer Kudo Tsunoda (and his team) also worked on EA's jaw-dropping *Fight Night* boxing series. So let's see if Tsunoda can roll with our five random punches.

1. In the NES *Punch-Out!!*, what did Doc Louis tell players to join?

Kudo Tsunoda: Oh, for goodness sake! Join the gym?

EGM: Incorrect. It's the Nintendo Fun Club.

Lives remaining: 🙂🙂🙂❌

2. What was the first 3D boxing game EA made?

KT: Was it the Evander Holyfield game?

EGM: Incorrect. It's *Foes of Ali* for the 3DO.

KT: Oh, f***ing crap—that's terrible! I know the game—I used to work at 3DO and I made a boxing game.... What the hell?

Lives remaining: 🙂🙂🙂❌

3. Who is the better rap superstar: ToeJam or Earl?

KT: I'm going with Earl.

EGM: Incorrect. It's ToeJam.

ET: Man, I figured ToeJam was the obvious one and this one was a trick question!

Lives remaining: 🙂🙂❌

4. Name the four artists/bands who appeared in the *Make My Video* games on the Sega CD.

KT: Now I feel like I really have to think and answer correctly. C&C Music Factory, Marky Mark Wahlberg, Kriss Kross, and INXS.

EGM: Correct.

KT: It's a frickin' miracle.

Lives remaining: 🙂🙂

5. So tell us: Who is your icon?

KT: Kevin Liles. He's one of the guys who started up Def Jam—he started as an unpaid intern and worked his way up to the top of the company.

EGM: Correct.

Lives remaining: 🙂🙂

Game Over: Don't give up, Kudo. You just gotta get that eye of the tiger back—the edge!

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008

Training for a title defense By Michael Donahoe

Platforms:
PS3/XB360

Publisher:
THQ

Developer:
Yuke's

Release Date:
Fall 2007

IF THE SPANDEX FITS, DON'T STRETCH IT. That's the current philosophy ever since last year's *WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2007* got one thing right: the intuitive Ultimate Control grapple system. Thankfully, that feature is definitely going to stick around, but not everything in '07 worked as well as those simple analog-based mechanics—wrestlers still moved like robotic masses of man flesh. Since THQ obviously doesn't want *SmackDown* to lose its

main-event status (especially with Midway's TNA game on the horizon), the publisher is fixing this problem while adding a bunch of features for 2008. Impressive, since most next-gen sports titles skimp out on the

extra stuff (hello, *Madden*).

Here's an exclusive early look at the card for this year's game, which will inevitably determine whether or not this reigning king of the ring stays on top.

> **Now that wannabe wrestlers have complete control, the focus here is switching to submissions.**

CURTAIN-JERKER
Finally walking the walk

When the *SmackDown vs. Raw* series made the next-gen jump to Xbox 360 last year, it was easy to feel the changes, but it was even easier to see what *didn't* change—the wonky, move-like an-action-figure walking animations. That could potentially improve in this year's update, as one of the developer's major goals is to throw some extra grease on the grapplers' joints. This means, besides just updating the superstars' existing arsenals (they do that every year), they'll also be tweaking the small stuff, like the walking animations and movements in between grapples (i.e., the awkward sliding feet). That's good news for guys like us who like to bitch about this obvious (and annoying) flaw every damn year. The bad news? Not every single move is getting redone. But at least the series is finally moving (realistically) in the right direction. And it's about freakin' time!
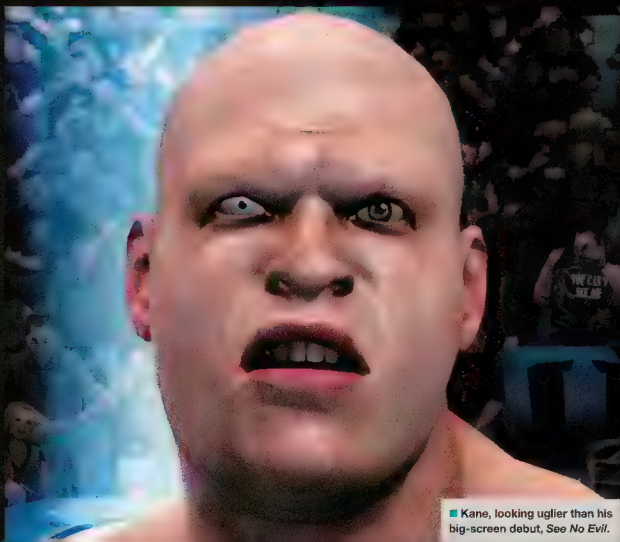
■ Kane, looking uglier than his big-screen debut, *See No Evil*.

MIDCARD
Stylin' and profilin'

Twisting your opponents into a tangled mess isn't going to matter if you ain't sporting the right superstar fighting style. In past games, wrestlers had two fight options: Clean or Dirty. Well, now you'll have a laundry list of choices: Powerhouse, Technical, High Flyer, Brawler, Submission Artist, Dirty, Showman, and Hardcore. We wonder how much these various styles will actually alter matchups—at the very least, though, they should change the pace of the pounding. "Each individual fighting style has its own exclusive special moves, abilities, damage bonuses, grapple moves, and attribute levels," says Creative Manager Cory Ledesma. Also, the new styles might actually bring a bit of strategy when picking wrestlers. Wait a minute, did we just say "strategy"? You'd really have to be a jabroni not to know that the "Hardcore" style is the correct choice if you're fighting in a...uh, hardcore match.

MAIN EVENT

Will you quit?

Last year's Ultimate Control grapples turned out to be the true champion of changes. And now that wannabe wrestlers have complete control when molding a man-sandwich, the focus here is switching to submissions. "The new Struggle Submission system is all about pressure," says Ledesma. "You will see your super-

star applying more pressure in the game, whether that's clinching harder, leaning back in moves like the Sharpshooter or Boston Crab, or squeezing the life out of your opponent in moves like bear hugs or the Master Lock." Yet just because you happen to be on the receiving end of a limb-twisting takedown doesn't

mean you're completely screwed; once an opponent starts stretching, you can also apply force to try to break the hold. The way it sounds, this new Struggle Submission system, coupled with the already awesome Ultimate Control grapples, could make for a terrific new twist to the gameplay. ▓

■ Better start practicing your waggle-plexes now—a Wii version (not pictured, obviously) is coming, too.

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JUNE 2007

TOP COW

STARBREEZE

2K

Playing Politics
By Hal Halpin

At state capitals across the country, elected officials are finalizing their legislative agendas and planning their summer vacations. When the votes are tallied in state houses, will we endure another year like 2006, which saw restrictive videogame laws passed in Louisiana, Minnesota, and Oklahoma? Thankfully, the federal courts thus far have not looked favorably on videogame legislation.

Despite that, well-intentioned people sometimes ask why gamer-advocacy groups like the Electronic Consumers Association oppose game legislation. "After all," they reason, "if no one wants M-rated games in the hands of underage gamers, what's the harm in passing legislation that simply gives the videogame industry's own Entertainment Software Rating Board system the force of law?" The answer is that restrictive videogame laws have so far been held to be violations of free-speech rights. Giving ground on those rights puts gamers and game-makers on a slippery slope. What constitutional right will be lost next?

And don't forget that no other form of media is subject to legal restrictions. Movies, for example, like games, use a voluntary-compliance rating model. Theater employees should not let a 12-year-old kid into an R-rated movie. If they do, they might get fired. They can't, however, be arrested. The ESRB system works well, and retailers are getting better and better in their enforcement of the ratings. Let's leave parents, not the government, in charge of what games their children play.

Hal Halpin is founder of the Electronic Consumers Association, a nonprofit organization dedicated to watchdog gaming legislation. Join its cause at www.theeca.com.

> KEEP THEM LOCKED

Underachievers
These Achievements are just pointless
By Jon M. Gibson

10 **3-Star Recruiting**

9 **Total Playtime 100 Hrs.**

Finish the frag

6 Millions of people who are currently Silver and Gold members of Xbox Live

500 Millions of *Halo 2* games played online

710 Millions of hours *Halo 2* players have logged into multiplayer

∞ People dying to play *Halo 3* online

> OVERHEARD

"We were in the middle of production of *Space Channel 5*, in 1998 or 1999. I got a call from the U.S. from my partner—the executive producer of *Space Channel 5*—and he said, 'Oh, Michael wants to act in *Space Channel 5*.' I said, 'Who's Michael?' 'Who is Michael Jackson?' he said. '*The* Michael Jackson—the *real* Michael Jackson!'

My partner had shown him the 60- to 70-percent complete version, when it was almost at the end of the game. We had one month to finalize. **But Michael wanted to do something, so we suggested that if he was OK with it, we could program the people in the game to do the Michael Jackson dance when taken over by the aliens.** He said 'yeah.' We initially had five aliens who danced. One of them became Michael Jackson."

—*Space Channel 5* (Dreamcast) creator Tetsuya Mizuguchi explains what it was like working with an alien...er...Michael Jackson.

PREVIEW: EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON

Forza Motorsport 2

Microsoft strives for the next generation of racing sims By John Davison

Platform:
XB360

Publisher:
Microsoft Game Studios

Developer:
Turn 10

Release Date:
May 2007

GUNNAR JEANNETTE IS A REAL-LIFE RACE CAR DRIVER. In 2000, at the age of 18, he was the youngest driver ever to compete in the 24 Hours of Daytona, and his most recent day job has been racing for the Panoz Motorsports LMP team, competing in the American Le Mans series. It's safe to say that he knows a thing or two about driving really, *really* fast. Today he's proving just how good he actually is, having dropped himself down in the snug-fitting red Alcantara of developer Turn 10 Studios' well-used racing seat. With three 40-inch

Dell flatscreens hooked up to three networked 360s (*Forza Motorsport 2* supports up to eight, for a fully insane, 360-degree experience) in front of him, and a Microsoft wheel and pedal set taped as well as clamped to the frame of the seat (just to be sure), he's showing how accurate a simulation *Forza 2* really is. "I've spent a lot

of time at Sebring in real life," he says nonchalantly as he selects an Audi R8 sports prototype from the game's 300 available cars. "It's a great track. I'm surprised it's never been used in a videogame before," he says as he floors the throttle and robotically snaps up through the gears. In the following minutes he nails an absolutely perfect

> **[The A.I.] actually "learns" the cars and the tracks by racing them.**

—*Forza 2 Game Director Dan Greenawalt*

line around the track time after time, while Game Director Dan Greenawalt stands over him and explains the significance of what's happening. "We met Gunnar when we did the *Popular Science* article on the original *Forza* just before the game was released back in 2004. He gave us some very useful input at the time, and I knew he could be invaluable to us, so we kept in touch. He's been working with us lately to help really refine how realistic the game is. We let him run laps, and he gives us feedback on the way the cars handle and how accurate our models are."

Forza 2 is very much a racing *simulation*, in an unsurprisingly similar vein of the *Gran Turismo* series. The team at Turn 10 is dedicated to making things feel as real as possible, while serving up ☰ selection of toys to ensure that things remain fun. Tracks are rendered down to the inch using enormous amounts of data sourced from satellite imagery, GPS data, and photography, while the cars are built to exacting standards based on telemetry and mountains of physical data. Infinite tuning possibilities and endless lists of modification packages are modeled so they affect the cars exactly as they would in real life. This stuff is serious, and these guys talk about physics models with the enthusiasm of college professors, and talk about skipping parties to work on algorithms for modeling tire stress like it's normal.

In fact, it's these exacting standards that are responsible for ☰ lot of the doubt that has been expressed by gamers as they've seen each batch of new screenshots. "We make the game inside out," Greenawalt says. "We don't make it look great, and then make it work great...we make it work great *first*, and add the polish later." Early images were criticized for looking like something was missing, and Greenawalt has a very simple explanation for that: There was. Now that the game is reaching the end of its development cycle, that all-important polish is finally being added—whether it's tweaks to the lighting or extra textures on the cars. What gamers can be confident of is that the experience is locked to a slick 60 frames per second (that's fast...and *smooth*), *Forza 2* supports upscaling to 1080p ("the scaling chip in the 360 is *incredibly* powerful," says Greenawalt), and the visuals are sharp and detail-packed.

"Our vision, essentially, is to make gamers out of car fans, and car fans out of gamers," says Greenawalt when asked to summarize his labor of love in ☰ single sentence. That's certainly

an ambitious and admirable goal, but how exactly do you go about that? "We want to get you excited about cars in as many ways as possible," he explains. "Whether it's through the physics, the A.I., the community, or just working on a paint job for your car, our goal is to draw you in and make you feel valued as part of the *Forza* community."

Of all the behind-the-veil magic of *Forza 2*, nothing is more fascinating than the A.I. "The A.I. drives the same car as the player," Greenawalt says. "The behavior is all built on ☰ neural network system that we've been working on since the original game. It's totally different to anything else because it actually 'learns' the cars and the tracks by racing them. It's really tough to train, but the result is a system that's really fast, and one that doesn't cheat. It knows the tracks, it knows some of the subtleties, and it knows the right lines to take." Does

that mean we'll see the same kinds of issues as those in games like Sony's *Formula One Championship Edition* (PS3) where the A.I. behaves intelligently, but is blissfully unaware of the player? "Let me tell you this," Greenawalt beams, "we didn't train the system to check brake when it gets in front of you to psych you out... but it does."

With this, Jeannette relinquishes the wheel and we sit down to try Sebring. We nail the throttle, point for the apex of the first right-hander...and then spin out and hit the wall spectacularly as the A.I. hurtles past, presumably sneering with everything its neurally-networked smarts can muster. Thankfully, if you're not a real racing driver, the game offers driver aids, difficulty setting, and line markers to ease you into the experience. Having that Richie Rich, multiple screen/Xbox 360 setup at home really wouldn't hurt, either. 🎮
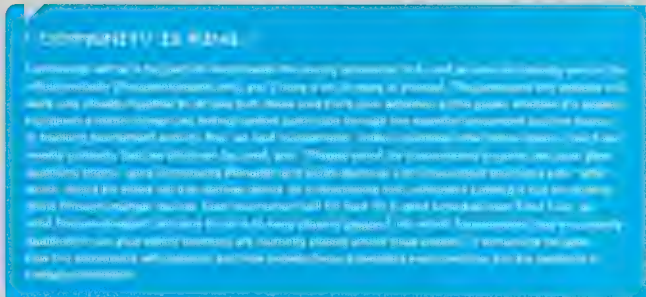
God of War II

Challenging the god By Michael Donahoe

Aside from having a last name that sounds like a famous *Street Fighter II* character, Cory Barlog worked on several wonky *X-Men* games and even a movie (*Mighty Joe Young*).

DEFYING GODS IS USUALLY BLASPHEMOUS, but for the deity-destroying Kratos, it's merely badass. *God of War II* never lets you forget it, either—start to finish, the epic PS2 sequel serves you a wild buffet of bosses. But apart from this glowing improvement, the rest of the game doesn't shine quite as brightly as the original. We chained down Director Cory Barlog to ask him why his sequel is so safe and what's it like battling with the former *God of War* creator David Jaffe.

EGM: The "surprise" threesome was ho-hum. Why didn't you spice it up a little? And did they really have breast implants back then?

Cory Barlog: No, they were just the Greek female...uh—Adonis I guess is a male.... It's the idealized version of the feminine species. So we had [the sex minigame] in early but it had never been the focus of the game; it wasn't anything we were going to go huge on. I think anything we're going to go bigger on, we'll probably wait until...*God of War III*.

EGM: Will the power of next-gen allow you make puzzles that don't involve crates?

CB: Well, I don't know—it [the PlayStation 3] has a little bit of power. But a crateless puzzle? Yeah, I think we are definitely going to see a lot more expansion on the puzzles; make them fit a little bit more in the environment to take away from the reliance on the pressure plates, levers, and such. But it's such a clear, clean, understandable mechanic for people. My main focus on the puzzles is to always make sure they are challenging, but not so challenging that you're like, "I am not going to play this anymore. This is dumb!"

EGM: OK, so we know Kratos is strong. So, how come he when he picks up a corpse he acts like he's lifting a bloated Titan?

CB: [*Laughs*] That was definitely a very deliberate design decision on our part. It does bend the character persona just a little bit, but I think it

adds a lot more than it takes away. Yeah, I agree—Kratos should totally be able to run a lot faster with the bodies, but there are cool [puzzles] that are added because he can use the bodies.

EGM: The Pegasus parts were a decent diversion...for the whole five minutes they lasted. How come you teased us with something different and then never brought it back?

CB: We made a very, again—I hate using this same term—deliberate decision on that one. We put a lot of time into the Pegasus, and we had that section a lot longer. But because it was not integral to the gameplay, it was really a furthering of the story. The initial pitch for it, when I had it, was to get Kratos from one location to another. And I really, really, really did not want to just do a cinematic where he gets the Pegasus, he flies

> I hate being the person to say, "Yes, I made the better one," because it makes me look like an arrogant prick.
>
> —*God of War II* Director Cory Barlog

in a cinematic, and then the game continues. I wanted to have a section that changed the gameplay a little bit but didn't detract from it. We did have plans later in the game at the phoenix section, where, while you're flying up, you'd be evading boulders and fighting creatures. But the time frame didn't really permit it.

CB: I wouldn't necessarily say we were playing it safe. I would say we worked like mad to create the foundation for the first one. So I think a lot of people expect the *Resident Evil 3* to the *Resident Evil 4* transition with every game. I don't think every game needs to make a transition—especially when you make the comparison to *Resident Evil 3* to *4*. I think that *1* through *3* were flawed until they got to *4* because they needed to fix that one thing [controls]. Overall they made that big transition and now I think everyone's expecting every game to make that transition. I don't agree, because I think the game we made in the original *God of War* was the game we wanted to make. There were a lot of things we wanted to fix, and we kinda addressed that.

I think the concept of playing safe was never in our minds. Look, there's things in here that are not broken. It's a fair assertion—everyone seems to make it—but I don't know if I totally agree with it.

EGM: Since series founder David Jaffe stayed on as creative director for the sequel, did you guys ever get into any heated arguments?

CB: If you know Jaffe, you know he's very adept at the arguments. There were a lot of sections that I think Dave and I went different ways on. The horses? He didn't think that was all that great. He was like, "That's like the most boring level." But in the end he gave me total freedom.

EGM: Did he ever tell you to change something to which you replied, "F* no! I'm not going to do that!"**

CB: There were many occasions where he told me to cut something, like the kraken [the sea monster boss]. Since he's in San Diego [Barlog is located in Santa Monica—

Ed.], we're very separated not only by distance, but also by level of communication we have, so he saw stuff in very early form. Really raw, early concepts. So if you're not there to hear how it's going to be done, and you just sort of see it without any context, it looks like *crap*. When he saw it, he couldn't really get it because I wasn't there to show him how to do it. So he was like, "Yeah, just get rid of it!" But I was like, "Trust me, it's gonna be good." And then when I pitched him verbally, he was like, "Well, if you can make what you just verbally told me happen, then I guess you can go with it. But I still think it's a bad idea."

EGM: Really? We thought he'd say the Pegasus section.

CB: No, the Pegasus parts were

definitely a concern—it was the bane of everyone's existence. I just kept going, "It's going to be good—trust me!" Half of me was going, "If this doesn't work out, you're going to look like a big a**hole."

EGM: So who made the better *God of War*? You or Jaffe?

CB: [*Laughs*] That's an awesome question! It's so hard to say, because honestly, he created the first one. So he basically created the blueprint. And I'm not being egotistical, but I had a huge part in how the first game felt. But in the comparison of the two? I do think this one is better. I hate being the person to say, "Yes, I made the better one," because it makes me look like an arrogant prick. But I do think we at least stayed at the same level. ✕

■ God of swing: Grappling was the one new feature that grabbed us the most.

■ Sixaxis motion control would be perfect for grisly decpitations.

RUMOR MILL

A republic of rumors By Quartermann

Last month was a good one for yours truly. My rumors about the PS3 flight-shooter *Warhawk* getting stripped down to a multiplayer-only title came true. And I was also right about a new *Every Extend Extra* game for the 360.

THANK GOD—WINTER IS OVER
Now that Mother Nature is bringing us spring, I can finally toss out my space heater, open the windows, and play some of the great games currently sprouting on store shelves without the fear of transforming into a human Popsicle. Fresh air always makes for some refreshing new rumors, too, so have at 'em...

Worldwide force
Yeah, we're all stoked for developer BioWare's epic-in-the-making role-playing game *Mass Effect*, but we'd rather they light up something else... you know, like a new *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* game. Well, they must have gotten my requests—I hear they're forming a new team to make a **KOTOR massively multiplayer online game**. But that's not all: My spies also discovered their current PC-only *Dragon Age* is coming to the PS3. Oh yeah, and the DS game their making? Looks to be a new *Baldur's Gate*.

Another heavenly ring
I know you kiddos love that *Halo* series, so get this: Word is *another Halo* game is in the works. No,

I'm not talking about *Halo Wars* (but I hear it might be coming out this year!) or the episodic project famed movie director Peter Jackson is working on. So what is it? Can I dish out all my dirt, now can I? But since I'm nice, chew on this instead—my sneaky mole told me Microsoft wanted to include a motion controller with *Halo 3*, but developer Bungie vehemently shot down that idea.

Handheld hiatus
Hmm...I'd say the role-playing game masterminds over at Square Enix are a little busy. Not counting the two *Final Fantasy XIII* games, the Japanese company is working on a whole pack of portable games. Time

must be slaying their schedules, because I'm hearing almost all of their future handheld games (*Dragon Quest IX*, *FF XII: Revenant Wings*, *FF VII: Crisis Core*, and the DS *FF Tactics*) are getting pushed back to next year.

Calling all cartoons
It's been a while since we've seen a *Simpsons* game, but EA is bringing the cartoon series back. According to my source, the game (based on the upcoming movie) will not be grounded in one genre. Instead, Bart and the rest of the Simpsons will riff on an eclectic mix of gameplay types (racing, first-person shooting, role playing, et cetera).

Q-TIPS

My little monkey moles told me Sega's looking to go ape over another *Samba De Amigo* game. What system? I'm guessing the Wii (what else?).

Lost Planet hasn't even lost all its steam and now I'm hearing about a new one. Not a sequel, though. Instead, it will be a real-time strategy spin-off.

Looks like Seeds, the new studio filled with former Clover (*Okami*) peeps, is already planting a new project. PS3? Nah, Wii? You wish. Try the 360.

Final Fantasy XIII
PS3 • Square Enix • 2008

After months of Square trickling out info on both *FFXIII* console projects, the publisher is finally talkin'. *FFXIII*'s encounters will feature a more pronounced action element. And those random battles? They're gone for good; *FFXIII* will build on the *FFXI/FFXII* style, where combat begins as you encounter foes naturally. Battle Director Toshiro Tsuchida hopes to push it to a new level, where enemies exist in "ecosystems" and act independently of the player according to the monsters' feelings, surroundings, and interactions with other critters.

Meanwhile, expect the action-RPG *Final Fantasy Versus XIII* to be even stranger, a cross between *Kingdom Hearts* and... well, we're not entirely sure. Every weapon has its own camera and control system, including one that resembles a third-person shooter. Please let that perspective play *nothing* like *FFVII: Dirge of Cerberus* (PS2).
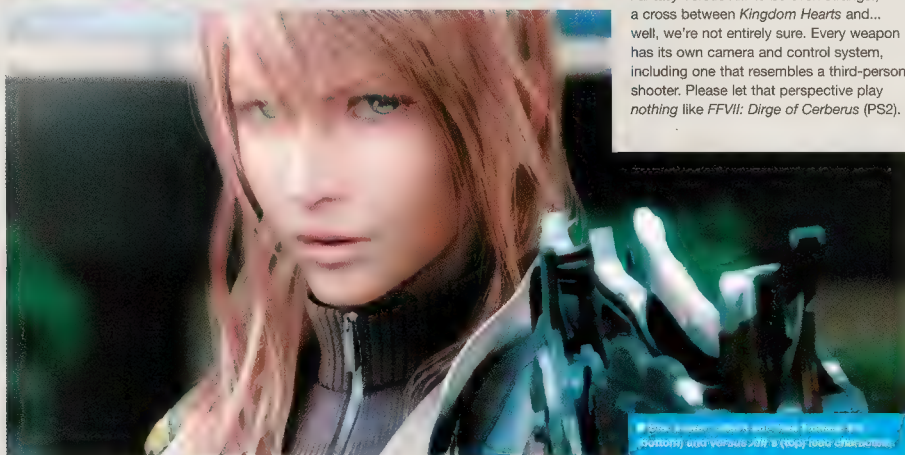
Halo 3
XB360 • Microsoft • Fall 2007

History says *Halo 3* will launch in November (that's when the last two games shipped, and the holiday's biggest titles tend to come out that month). But after chatting with Shane Kim, corporate VP of Microsoft Game Studios, we think times could be a-changin'. He suggested that if *Halo 3* were ready earlier, Microsoft wouldn't shy away from launching it as soon as September. Could it happen? Maybe, as development on this one is progressing faster than any previous *Halo*.

Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots
PS3 • Konami • Fall 2007

Sony's console may be trailing the 360 and Wii at this point in the console race, but Hideo Kojima—with his PS3-exclusive stealth game—isn't sweatin' the fate of the machine. "I'm not worried...it'll recover in time," said the *MGS* series creator to the British gaming mag *Edge*. "Perhaps *Final Fantasy [XIII]* will be the key to accelerating its growth." Uhh, someone should tell Kojima that Square's role-playing game ain't coming out till well after *MGS4*....

Resident Evil 5
PS3/XB360 • Capcom • 2008

Even though Capcom disbanded its talented Clover Studio (*Okami*), the publisher didn't give everyone the pink slip. "Some of the team that worked on Clover titles are now helping [Jun Takeuchi] on *Resident Evil 5*," said Charles Bellfield, Capcom's vice president of marketing, to Gamasutra.com. It's just too bad that the head of the group, Atsushi Inaba, didn't stick around to work on this anticipated iteration in the survival-horror franchise (he recently opened a new development house, Seeds).
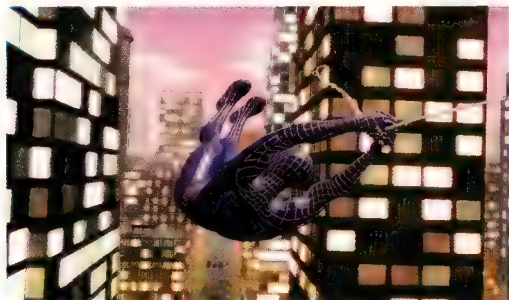
Spider-Man 3
Wii/PS3/XB360/PS2/PSP/DS • Activision

Peter Parker's latest movie-based videogame adaptation doesn't stray too far from the previous two: Once again you'll be swinging all over Manhattan to rid the city of villains from both the flick and the comics. But those encounters should now feel more cinematic, thanks to a bunch of *God of War*–esque quicktime events.

One more thing: The PS3 version will feature an exclusive playable character, the new Goblin. Just cross your fingers that whizzing around town as Harry Osborn is more exciting than James Franco's voice acting (if you thought Tobey sounded terrible in game No. 2, you've haven't heard anything yet).

Tenchu Z
XB360 • Microsoft Game Studios

Microsoft heads over to Japan to expand the Xbox 360 software library and brings back...uh, another *Tenchu* game? This bloody stealth-action series hasn't exactly aged well, but who knows—maybe a new machine will help the developers finally fix the franchise's god-awful camera.

The Darkness
PS3/XB360 • 2K Games

Top Cow's comic may not have the following of a certain webcrawler, but at least this game has some serious talent behind it. Developer Starbreeze (of *The Chronicles of Riddick* fame) is bringing mafioso Jackie Estacado to the next-gen consoles, and the duo of his powerful tentacles and creepy helper Darklings will surely make for some interesting gameplay.

Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars
XB360 • EA Games

Don't you dare tell EA that real-time strategy games belong only on PCs. The publisher is following up *The Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle-earth II* with another 360 RTS, which is also based on a popular franchise. And *Tiberium Wars* is keeping the commands simple...like, one-button simple.

Touch the Dead
DS • Eidos

Hey, Sega, remember your light-gun franchise where players shot up a ridiculous amount of zombies? No? Well, Eidos sure did—the publisher took the *House of the Dead* formula and has adapted it quite well for the DS (simply tap the screen to unload rounds).
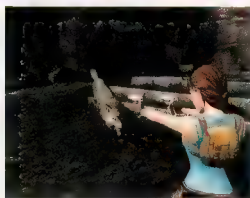
Tomb Raider: Anniversary
PS2/PSP • Eidos

Rather than making some stupid joke about Lara being quite developed at only 10 years old, here's what you can expect from the reworking of her original raid: prettier visuals, an expanded storyline, more complex puzzles, and some of the tricks she picked up during *Legend*, such as the grappling hook.

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End
Wii/PS3/XB360/PS2/PSP/DS • Disney Interactive

The "I heart Johnny Depp" fan club shouldn't be the only ones picking up *At World's End*, as this swordplay-heavy adventure will also have you assuming the roles of Elizabeth Swann and Will Turner. Still no word on a Liar's dice minigame—which probably wouldn't make any sense, anyway.

Dungeons & Dragons Tactics

Dawn of Mana
PS2 • Square Enix

Dubbed the first true *Mana* sequel in over a decade, this one looks (and plays) a lot like another Square Enix action-RPG, *Kingdom Hearts*. It's too bad, though, that *Dawn of Mana* decided to adopt a camera system like the first *KH* (which was total crap) rather than its superior sequel.

More May Releases

.hack//G.U. Vol. 2
PS2 • Namco Bandai

Diner Dash
DS • Eidos

Dragon Ball Z: Harukanaru
Densetsu
DS • Atari

Dungeons & Dragons
Tactics
PSP • Atari

GoPets: Vacation Island!
DS • Konami

Mario Party 8
Wii • Nintendo

Naruto: Ninja Council 3
DS • D3Publisher

Shrek the Third
Wii/PS3/XB360/PS2/PSP/
DS • Activision

The
Future
of Videogames

YouTube-inspired gameplay! Fold-up screens! Mind control! Take a 20-page trip into the next 20 years of games, guided by futurists, big-time game makers, and...David Cross?

THE GUY WHO DESIGNED ONE OF LAST YEAR'S BIGGEST BLOCKBUSTERS hits the hay each night dreaming about the ultimate game. He just can't make it happen yet. "It's a world that can flip upside down in a second and change from an empowering fantasy to a dreadful nightmare," Cliff Bleszinski, lead designer of Epic's *Gears of War*, says of his dream game. "It all hinges on thoughts and impulses—not on button presses. The biggest obstacle we're facing now is one of interface. We need a significant advance in this area for gaming to truly allow for an interactive landscape of dreams."

How long until Bleszinski's dream comes true? Answering that question is just one of the goals of this months-in-the-making cover story. We've asked experts across the industry to track the next 20 years of everything from game-design trends to the evolution of your living room. A two-decade forecast, we figure, is near-term enough to be tangible (we're staying away from silly sci-fi stuff) but far enough out to fire up your imagination. And maybe give you some kick-ass dreams, too.

Your trip to 2027 begins now....

The Future of Control

Today the body, tomorrow the...mind? The future of game control is out of your hands By Matt Peckham

IT'S THE KIND OF FROM-THE-FUTURE CONTRAPTION you'd expect to see in an article about tomorrow's tech. Bristling with electroencephalograph sensors cinched to a guinea-pig gamer's noggin, the Project Epoc brain-reading headgear, due next year from San Francisco–based Emotiv Systems, is supposed to detect its user's facial expression, discern emotional states—even distinguish between such similar mental commands as "push the block" and "rotate the block."

The scary thing: It works. "Think of a game where you can turn into the Hulk by getting excited, or turn back to normal before the police arrive by calming down," says Emotiv Chief Product Officer Randy Breen, describing one gaming application for the prototype device. "This isn't meant to replace a joystick—it's meant to augment it, to humanize your avatar or simulate telepathy."

And if Emotiv's headset (see it on page 50) had debuted a year ago, we would've guessed it was meant for the digital dustbin. How many

players, after all, would want to slip on a skeletal bike helmet and control characters via intense concentration when a regular ol' joypad works just fine? But with the initial success of Nintendo's motion-sensing Wii controller—and, before that, Sony's EyeToy camera peripheral—all bets are off. "Nintendo has sent a loud message to Sony and Microsoft that you have to innovate on the control and input," says Steven Chiang, studio general manager of EA Tiburon (makers of the *Madden* series). "Next time around, I don't think Microsoft or Sony will skip the innovation."

Joysticking with what works

But for every shoot-for-the-moon futurist and pop-sci gizmo, it's worth considering the wisdom of industry doyens who say that the more things change, the more they'll stay the same. "The traditional controller is so much a part of our lives," says veteran game designer Warren Spector (the *Deus Ex* series). "I'm not sure we need to mess with it much. I mean, sure, you could argue that nongamers are intimidated by all the buttons and such on a traditional controller, but the set of 'nongamers' is shrinking by the day."

Spector argues for the powers of convention—the conventional place-

ment of buttons, the conventional uses for shoulder bumpers, and so on. "Why replace a well-understood, arbitrary interface with an unfamiliar one?" he asks. "Until and unless we can interact with games the way we interact with the real world—and I'm not holding my breath, other than one-offs like the brilliant, brilliant *Guitar Hero*—I think controllers will remain controllers, by and large. And I'm fine with that."

Going through the motions

Not so fine with that: Hardware designers already committed to the next wave of control technology. California-based tech company InvenSense is pushing advanced motion-sensors for future game controllers. "This first generation of motion-sensing consoles lacks accuracy and intelligence," says InvenSense President Steve Nasiri. "It can really only handle large, sweeping motions by the user. In the case of the Wii, you can achieve the same motion-sensing effect of a broad gesture simply by tapping the controller on your knee." Nasiri is in talks now with all the major hardware companies to include InvenSense's more precise gyros in future iterations of controller hardware.

While many big-name developers

■ Rumble is so last century. Novint's droidlike Falcon controller, due on the PC in June for $189, takes force feedback further with servos that resist hand motions to simulate an in-game object's weight and texture. It looks awfully bulky for console gamers, but "should we license the technology for console use, the industrial design could be modified," says Novint's Antonia Chappell.

> **Imagine...a room [with] *Dance Dance Revolution* where the game already knows where your hands and feet are.**
> —EyeToy inventor Dr. Richard Marks

Q-BOT

EGM's robot from the future answers today's burning questions

Query: How long until we jack games directly into our brains, à la *The Matrix*?

Q-bot responds: The technology's already here—and not just in the form of the Emotiv headgear mentioned above (that thing goes on your head, rather than into it). In 2003, biotech company Cyberkinetics (in association with Brown University) developed "BrainGate," a brain-implant system in which a small sensor is placed on the area of the brain responsible for movement, which in turn transmits neural signals to a pedestal (it looks like a bolt attached to the skull and protruding through the skin). A cable runs from the pedestal to a computer, which can interpret the signals accurately enough to facilitate remarkably accurate cursor control by simply *thinking* about it. BrainGate was developed to help people with poor or no control of their limbs, but would you really want to "think" your way through *Halo 5*? "Your body is really important part of your person," argues Sony's Dr. Richard Marks. "Removing the body doesn't strike me as the end goal. You might be able to think your way through a game, but without the feedback from using your body in at least some capacity, would you really want to?"
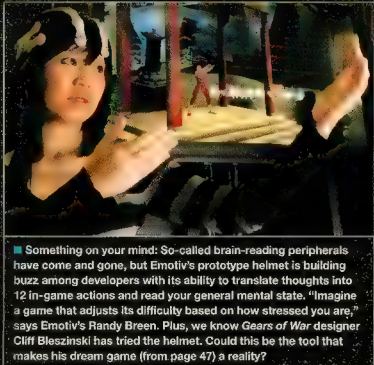
■ Something on your mind: So-called brain-reading peripherals have come and gone, but Emotiv's prototype helmet is building buzz among developers with its ability to translate thoughts into 12 in-game actions and read your general mental state. "Imagine a game that adjusts its difficulty based on how stressed you are," says Emotiv's Randy Breen. Plus, we know Gears of War designer Cliff Bleszinski has tried the helmet. Could this be the tool that makes his dream game (from page 47) a reality?

aren't sure that motion-sensing control is the answer to everything, they agree that change is good. "There's a large group of players who would love to play Halo or some other [first-person shooters], but they can't use two thumbsticks at the same time," says Bungie Design Lead Jaime Griesemer. "We have to come up with control schemes everyone can use. [Motion sensors] simplify aiming in an FPS to a degree, but they also separate aiming from looking around. So instead of doing two things at once, you're trying to do three."

> **Nintendo has sent a...message to Sony and Microsoft that you have to innovate.**
—EA Tiburon Studio General Manager Steven Chiang

Eye see you

EyeToy developer Dr. Richard Marks says the future looks bright, but you won't need shades—or any other doodads that weigh players down. "People don't want to encumber themselves to play," he says, referring to studies that gauge the likelihood players would wear accessories to enhance immersion. "If it's not natural, it's not desirable." Add stick-out wires, geeky fashion accessories, and sci-fi's much-overwrought full-body suits to his list of resounding no-thank-yous.

Marks, whose body-kinetic EyeToy stormed the market three years before Nintendo's Wii-mote, thinks the future of game control involves numerous "aware" devices working to harmonize your experience. "Look at iPods with Nikes, where the shoes talk to the player, then think discreet components all communicating with each other," he argues. "Imagine walking into a room to play Dance Dance Revolution where the game already knows precisely where your hands and feet are."

Better still, imagine cameras capable of telling whether you're angry or sad, smiling or frowning, how many fingers you're holding up, or exactly how angled each one is. "The trick is matching what you want to measure with what you want to accomplish," explains Marks. "Do you want to track distance? Location? Angle? Speed? They all have different functions, and things start to get really exciting when you can mix and match sampling tools to create feedback synergies. Say the Sixaxis controller—speed, angle—with a camera: location."

Getting emotional

Whether it's recorded via camera or mind-reading headgear, a player's mental state appears to be the final frontier of control input within the next two decades. Or, at the very least, it'll make for more story-driven games. "I think that most games today are designed for our reptile brain, the sort of fight-or-flight response of big, loud emotions," says Katherine Isbister, a professor at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, where she founded the campus' Games Research Laboratory. "I've talked to some of the designers who are now trying to craft a more powerful emotional experience, and a lot of them say the player input is the bottleneck. I think what's going to happen with these sensors and these different ways of getting emotional and social data is that we're going to see more moment-to-moment, powerful emotions that designers can generate, and they will get back to investing in story."

And then it'll be the developers turn to push our buttons.
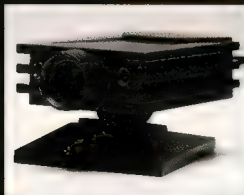
■ The PS2 EyeToy (above) put players into the game. The PS3 model, reportedly delayed until Sony sorts out the camera's resolution, will take that idea further.

> CONTROL: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

1910	1977	1996	2004	2008	2015
First written record of the word "joy-stick," written in a British pilot's diary.	The Atari 2600 comes with an eight-way digital joystick. It remains the standard spec for game controllers into the 1980s.	The Nintendo 64 comes with the first mainstream pressure-sensing analog joystick.	Nintendo releases its touch-screen Nintendo DS handheld.	Emotiv releases its brain-scanning helmet for a "mass-market" price.	Hybrid motion-capture/wireless devices translate the most subtle aspects of our physical/emotional behavior when gaming.

1962	1983	2003	2006	2012	2027
First handheld game controller—a wooden box with wires rigged to switches used to play Spacewar.	The Nintendo Famicom debuts in Japan and changes gaming forever with its simple rectangular joypad.	Sony's EyeToy camera tracks basic human motion without auxiliary devices.	The Nintendo Wii turns a deceptively simple one-handed remote into a motion-sensing phenomenon. Sony releases the similarly snazzy PS3 Sixaxis controller.	Miniature computers are embedded in every-day items, allowing game systems to interact with players before as well as during and after playing a game.	Blood-cell-sized nanobots perform therapeutic functions, heralding a paradigm shift leading to full-immersion virtual reality by 2030.

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The Future of Games

The best videogames of the next 20 years just might be the ones you make yourselves. By Robert Ashley

VIDEOGAMES HAVE CHANGED IN PROFOUND WAYS IN 20 YEARS, from 2D to 3D, lo-fi to high-def, *Super Mario* to *Grand Theft Auto*.. Yesterday's supercomputers are today's game consoles. Considering the pace of change over the last 20 years, what could the next two decades hold? Can we even imagine gaming in 2027?

Eye candy diabetes

Here's the easiest thing to imagine: Games of the future will be feasts for the eye orders of magnitude more impressive than today's best-looking games. Some games on the shelves today already approach the outer reaches of photographic realism. Can we assume that by 2027 the arms race to create a convincing digital reality will be over?

Eh, no (see the Q-bot sidebar on page 60 to read why). But how close to real is close enough? Perhaps we've lost perspective, sitting too near our HDTVs, scouring the Venus de Milo for flaws. Amy Hennig, game director at *Jak and Daxter* series developer Naughty Dog, sees the graphics war as an unhealthy fetish. "The hardware is almost at a point where we can create a convincing simulacrum of reality," she says. "But because that brass ring is still *just* beyond our grasp, it seems like everyone is inordinately obsessed with realism as a goal."

Hennig thinks games will eventually move beyond technical exercises in realism to creative new frontiers. "When graphics limitations are no longer an issue," she says, "I think

our medium will mature to where it's no longer about simulation, but expression." In other words, instead of using that futuristic horsepower to mimic reality, game developers may instead create new realities—surreal experiences unlike anything we've ever seen. "It seems inevitable that we'll go through the same sort of evolution that western art went through at the turn of the century," says Hennig. "Once realism was achieved, artists were liberated to develop more daring and abstract forms of expression."

Stories from the future!

Games, with a few special exceptions, have always had a difficult time telling a good story. As the audience for games grows older and more sophisticated, will storytelling matter more? Tim Schafer, a guy who's never had a hard time spinning a good yarn in games like *Psychonauts* and *Grim Fandango*, is optimistic. "It's a chicken-and-egg thing," he says. "If a lot of people who aren't playing videogames right now start playing, then I think those people will want more out of stories. But we're going to have to create better stories if we want to attract those people in the first place. Still, I'll say story will matter more. Because otherwise, I'm going to have to go back to database

programming." Schafer sees progress in game writing as more incremental and less obvious than the eye-catching advances of the graphics race. "It's a slow process," he says, "but it's improving. As more people who grew up with games in their lives get into creative writing, I think we'll see more and more game-savvy writing going on."

Unthinking killing machines

If games are ever going to tell great stories interactively—rather than just rely on cinematic interruptions—artificial intelligence will have to pick up the slack. You may think of A.I. as the "thing that makes bad guys hard to kill," but truly smart characters will be able to do much more. Warren Spector, the veteran game designer behind the *Deus Ex* series, thinks more effort should be focused on making nonplayer characters (NPCs)—gaming's nonhostile background buddies and bystanders—more believably human. "We clearly need to do a *lot* of work on the noncombat A.I. front," says Spector. "Our actors are still terrible. Graphically, big leaps will come sort of naturally. Equally big leaps in terms of behavior and acting, however, will require both hard work and the will to tackle the problems." Spector, however, isn't sure that this work will take place—now or in

> **People are hungry to...share their creations and achievements.**
> —*Naughty Dog Game Director Amy Hennig*

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- Forza
- Calculus Wars

My Friends
- MstrChf69
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Downloads

Watch Replays

Customize Your

Play

Exit

■ **Developers herald the coming of "transmedia," the concept of beginning your game at home, then tweaking different aspects of it—customizing a *Forza* auto, for instance—on your phone during the commute.**

game A.I. characters have no way of knowing whether you're excited or what you're thinking. Our technology gives them that input. It'll be exciting to see what developers do with it."

Games go YouTube

Players in the not-so-distant future will have an even more direct way to sculpt their games: by creating them themselves. Just as the technology for making movies and music has become cheaper and more accessible over time, the same will happen soon for tools of the game-development trade.

In fact, it's already happening. Microsoft hopes its XNA Game Studio Express software package and Creators Club will resurrect the days when one guy with a good idea could make a game. "I think there will be a sea change in the way games are created, distributed, and played," says Scott Henson, Microsoft's director of platform strategy. "And this 'yielding control' concept is something that will change not only games, but all media. It's happened with the Web—for instance, blogs—and it will happen with games."

That doesn't mean megabudget, big production games—your *Grand Theft Autos* and *Final Fantasys* and *Halos*—will suffocate under a landslide of 10,000 variations of homebrewed *Bejeweled*. "Players who want to create content face the same problems that professional developers do," says Jaime Griesemer, design lead for *Halo 3*. "As games become more complicated and sophisticated, the content gets very difficult to create. As a kid, I could create levels for *Lode Runner* or *Excitebike* in a few hours. Now it takes an entire team of artists, designers, and programmers months to make a single *Halo*

mission. It's just not feasible for an average player to tackle."

Players are already shaping games in a less direct way, says Ted Price, president of Insomniac, the studio behind *Resistance: Fall of Man*. "Developers are getting feedback faster and more frequently from players because so many people are sharing their opinions online," says Price. "Since developers can act on that feedback by releasing new content and patches online, players are having a real effect on the games they're playing." But forget ranting on a message board. In the future, gamers may affect the feel and content of games simply by playing them. "In 20 years, how you play your favorite game could help shape the experience for other players in real time," says Price.

But here and now in the age of YouTube, where the Internet has opened up avenues for homemade TV shows, movies, and Mentos experiments, gamers with a creative bug still don't have many outlets—yet. Sony's PlayStation 3 version of karaoke-sim *SingStar*, due this fall, will let players upload their performances (as captured by the EyeToy camera) to a world of armchair Simon Cowells. And the company's recently announced PS3 platformer *LittleBigPlanet* (see the sidebar at right) gives gamers powerful tools to make their own levels, then post them online for other players to critique next year.

"I think [this trend] is inevitable," says Naughty Dog's Hennig. "We as consumers have lots of passive media available to us in traditional forms of entertainment like TV and movies. The last thing the game industry should do is emulate passive media by providing a closed, prepackaged experience. People are

In 20 years, players will look back at Will Wright's *Spore* as the game that ushered in the era of user-generated content.

20 years. "It's unclear to me whether a lot of developers care about anything that doesn't involve making NPCs more effective killers," he says.

A.I. advances won't be limited to enhancing just principal characters. Peter Molyneux, creator of the Xbox RPG *Fable*, thinks that A.I. will become the arbiter of variety and challenge in games, changing to fit your skill level and playing style. "What I find fascinating is the possibility of a game that adapts itself around what you are like as a player," he says. "With the right A.I., we can have characters learn from you, react to what you do, and create segments of gameplay that the player essentially sculpts."

Player-adapting gameplay is one breakthrough that would come a lot faster if games sensed more than just joystick, voice, and motion input, says Randy Breen, chief product officer of the company making the thought-reading headset from page 50. "[Our technology] closes the feedback loop," he says. "Right now,

GAMES: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

The Ping-Pong-playing Magnavox Odyssey, the first home game console, is released.
1972

PlayStation launch marks the move away from cartridges to CDs. Games become richer and more cinematic.
1995

Gamers learn to break the rules in *Grand Theft Auto III*, the father of the open-world game.
2001

After two well-loved appearances on disc, adventure game *Alan Wake* jumps to a down-loadable episodic model.
2012

Game directors emphasize story in their products for an older, more sophisticated audience. No one doubts that games are "art."
2020

1987
The Legend of Zelda popularizes open-world exploration on consoles.

1996
Super Mario 64 reinvents a beloved genre and speeds the transition to 3D gaming.

2008
Players start creating and rating levels for Sony's *LittleBigPlanet*, creating a YouTube-style community.

2016
Players upload their custom-game creations to massive databases of free homebrew titles and mods.

2027
A game adaptation of Homer's *Odyssey* launches a new era in epic storytelling.

hungry to play a more active role in their media experience and to share their creations and achievements with others in the community."

And it's not just gamers who stand to benefit from having a hand in creating the games they play: Game makers could harness the creative energy of their audiences to do something they otherwise couldn't. "Collectively, we're way more creative, intelligent, and innovative than we are as individuals," Hennig says. "Games like *Spore* that actively engage the consumer as cocreator are going to be huge."

Spore, the zygote-to-civilization life sim due on PC this fall, is all about user-created content, a universe of creatures and civilizations designed by players. The game's creator, however, has other ideas about the future of games. Will Wright, architect of *Spore*'s collaborative universe and the ever-popular *Sims*, would like games to evolve beyond their current status as pure entertainment into something more relevant. If he has his way, games of the future might have less to say about our fantasies and more to say about reality. "Much like art, games have the power to inspire people and motivate them to act," says Wright. "And because of that, I'd like to see games that connect to the real world more. I would like to see games that explore political issues or social issues." Wright even has his topic picked out: "Africa is being ignored, and that's scandalous," he says. "A game about Africa, done in the right way, could really be popular and raise awareness of the issue."

Grand Theft Genre

And if poverty- and disease-eradication games don't turn out to be the next big thing, surely other new genres will spring up over the next 20 years to capture the imaginations of gamers, much as *Street Fighter* created a fervor for fighting and *Grand Theft Auto* tapped into our latent desire to run over old ladies. What will these new genres be like?

That's the question every developer on the planet would love to answer. "If I saw a whole new genre that needed to be created, I'd probably go create it myself," says Warren Spector. "The fact is, no one can predict a new genre's creation. I feel pretty safe in saying that someone, probably a 12-year-old staring at the ceiling avoiding doing her homework, *will* create something entirely new in the next 20 years, but

I wouldn't presume to say what that might be." Spector thinks it's more likely that future games will remix the ideas of well-established genres into new and exciting forms. "Putting a handful of old things together in a new way, resulting in something new and unexpected? That's a trend we're likely to see continue and accelerate," says Spector. "You'll see more developers blending genres in interesting ways."

The long and the short of it

No matter the genre or whether they're from big-time studios or Mom's basement, games in the future will be shorter. A combination of higher development costs and an older audience with less time to dedicate to a single game will drive developers to cut down their titles' play times. Believe it or not, this is actually a good thing. "I sure hope games get shorter, at least up to a point," says Spector. "I mean, who has time for 40-plus hours of any single game? And how many games justify that kind of time investment by players and development expense on the part of developers and publishers? Not many." The pressure to create shorter games will force developers to tighten up the pace of their games, ensure a constant stream of variety, and better take into account the tension and flow of their stories. "I think there's a sweet spot around eight to 10 hours where players can have a great time, achieve closure by completing a game, and move happily on to whatever comes next," Spector says.

The market's shrinking attention span could also lead to a boom in

a trend that's been building over the past few years on PC: episodic gaming. Instead of buying a 60-hour adventure game, slaved over for years by developers, we could be fed a steady stream of episodes on the cheap. "I think there's a huge future for episodic content," says Spector. "An episodic approach could meet player needs better than our current model, could meet developer and publisher needs better than our current model. Episodic is just a big win, and I hope to heck it's our future and not just a part of it."

Net worth

Episodic distribution is entirely dependent on something we've yet to mention, though it has perhaps the greatest power to transform the way we play games: the Internet. Today, we can purchase smaller casual games and content updates online, and we can play games with our friends across the world. The growth in popularity of games dedicated to online play—especially role-playing phenomena such as *World of WarCraft*—begs the question: In 20 years, surely all games will be "online" games, right?

"It seems inevitable that all games will, in some way, be online," says Spector. "However, 'online' could mean 'means of distribution,' or it could mean 'downloadable content,' or it could mean 'all of my media devices—from my phone to my television to my gaming console—will be linked.' What I *don't* want to see is people assuming that all games should be massively multiplayer or persistent. There's far too much of that thinking these days."

Crosstradamus!

Comedian, thespian, and...psychic gamer? David Cross crosses time and space to chart videogames' solar-powered, extra-wired future By Scott Jones

HE'S PORTRAYED EVERYTHING from never-nude unambiguously gay dude Tobias on TV's *Arrested Development* to hyperwedgied hobby-shop nerd Zero in *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*. But even his most hardcore fans don't suspect that David Cross is a psychic so powerful he can totally guess what number you're thinking of right now. Witness his might, for instance, in predicting the success of an *Arrested Development* game: "That would be the number-one worst-selling videogame in history," he says, "but if they did make it, I guess you'd try to get the denim shorts off of Tobias."

See? Uncanny! So we asked Cross to use his dark powers for good instead of evil: to reveal gaming's milestone moments up to the apocalypse...and beyond!

2029: Grand Theft Auto suits up
"The 'video' part of videogames will be gone by then, and you'll get into this sort of protective suit bubble thing—it'll be colorful; there'll be a Hawaiian shirt—and you'll get plopped down right into this virtual world where you're not just controlling the guy—you *are* the guy. And then I guess you can f*** and kill prostitutes to your heart's content."

2050: Mario switches from mushrooms to Metamucil
"He's just going to be a granddad. He's not going to have a whole lot of adventures. He'll do stuff like just making sure he's regular, moving his bowels, maybe getting hip replacement surgery, doing weekend work at his vacation house...stuff like that. He might wear a hat that says, 'This isn't a bald spot—it's a solar panel for a sex machine.'"

2063: Gamers get rewired
"I think there's going to be a throwback. I think people are going to miss the wires, and around the time of the PS7, not only will you have wires, [but] they'll be thick, clunky, chunky wires. There'll be tons and

tons of wires. 'This is just like the old days,' we'll say. 'This is great! Good stuff!'"

2151: Gaming goes deep
"You'll put these things into your eyes, almost like contact lenses. Then you insert—now this is where the technology gets a little sticky, because they won't have improved on this one thing—but you have to stick this tube into your ass, your anal canal, and then you suck on this lozenge, and when you do all that together not only will it give you diarrhea, you'll also have a really great videogame experience. It's uncomfortable in the beginning, but believe me, you'll get used to it."

2343: Planet PlayStation
"There won't be any human beings left on Earth to enjoy it at that point. I think at that point [there] will be like 19 super-rich people, and then everyone else will be lower-middle class, or poverty level, or just food for other people. And then they'll hire some people to make PS42, but we'll never get to see it. Because it won't be marketed to people, because they won't have any money.

"Earth will become the videogame itself. And the rich people get to 'play' it from a nearby planet while we look back on *Total Recall* with fondness. What an optimistic movie that was...."

> **You have to stick this tube into your ass...and then suck on this lozenge.**
> —*Comedian David Cross on the components of next-next-next-gen gaming*

The Future of Online

Players will find new roles to fill as virtual worlds collide to form one all-encompassing cyber reality By Joe Rybicki

THAT JOHN EDWARDS IS CAMPAIGNING FOR THE PRESIDENCY of the U.S. should come as no surprise. What *is* surprising is where he's doing it: In *Second Life*, the massively multiplayer PC nongame that you've been hearing so much about in your tech-savvy news blogs. *Second Life* has been the site of the openings of virtual embassies, virtual locations of real-world stores, and even a virtual bureau for news agency Reuters. (Not even mentioning the untold millions of virtual sex shops.)

Every day we're edging closer to the type of virtual-reality "metaverse" envisioned in sci-fi classics like Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash*. A world-spanning, genre-transcending alternate reality is no longer some far-future pipe dream. But although virtual worlds like *Second Life* (and to a lesser extent more traditional massively multiplayer online role-playing games like *World of WarCraft*) are steps toward that dream, plenty of steps remain—especially when it comes to console online gaming.

Bye-bye, A.I.?

One of the more fascinating trends we're seeing for the near future is the practice of "crossplay": the idea of having human players fill the roles of the normally computer-controlled enemy grunts who trade fire with the hero, stand too close to explosive barrels, et cetera. You'll see this idea of the "player-nonplayer character" at work in Arkane Studios' *The Crossing*, a shooter set for Xbox 360 release in 2008. In this game, the story mode will periodically pit a "campaign" player (or several work-

ing cooperatively) against human-controlled cannon fodder playing online just for kicks and stats. And Valve's upcoming Xbox 360 zombie game *Left 4 Dead* takes a similar approach, setting a group of human characters against vast swarms of the infected—but with key "boss" infected controlled by real players.

This rethinking of multiplayer roles—a departure from the norm of striving for perfect balance between players—is something we can expect a great deal more of in the future. "Games have matured over the past decades to a point where both storytelling and multiplayer have been explored quite a lot," says Arkane Studios Founder Raphaël Colantonio. "They're pretty much capped by their own limitations at this point. So using one to enhance the other is one way to go further in both domains."

Halo 3 Design Lead Jaime Griesemer agrees. "I think for a while publishers thought that 'online multiplayer' had to be a bullet point on the back of every box," he says. "They were shoehorning networked play into games where it wasn't really appropriate, and usually they were providing a rotten experience. I think we're coming out the other side of that now, and games are experimenting with other ways to be online. There's this really cool concept we've been talking about around the office. It's not really

appropriate for *Halo 3*, but you can take the matchmaking system and...I should probably stop talking now."

Tribal vibe

But all that's in the short term. What about further out? Downloadable distribution of more than just arcade-style games and retro titles seems inevitable (we get to that topic on page 66). Faster "superpipe" Internet jacks—10 times quicker than today's zippiest broadband connections—are expected by the end of the decade. At that point, enough Americans will be online to make network features mandatory in all games. "On PlayStation 2 and Xbox, less than 25 percent of the people playing our games were online," says Steven Chiang, studio general manager of EA Tiburon, "so it was hard to justify huge online features for only a fraction of the audience. As we start to see a higher [percentage of players] online, it'll be better integrated."

Naughty Dog's Game Director Amy Hennig thinks Net connectivity will become so pervasive, games will eventually lose the "online" distinction. "That word will probably seem quaint and dated," she says. "All of our devices will be networked all the time. And so I think all games will be 'connected' in some way and will have some aspect of community and evolving content through episodes and expansions, microtransactions,

> **[Games] will all evolve into one giant, shared dream world.**
> —Gears of War *Lead Designer Cliff Bleszinski*

Q-BOT

Query: Will future players spend more time in virtual worlds than the real world?
Q-bot responds:

and user-created content."

Griesemer thinks we're already there. "It's happened," he says. "All games *are* online. Maybe they don't have networked multiplayer or voice chat, but every game that comes out now is using the Internet in some way. Even games that came out years ago are getting online retroactively with the various retro game libraries and leaderboards. At the very least there are online communities and FAQs."

This idea of an online community surrounding a game—the "metagame"—is one we can expect to see exploited ever more enthusiastically in the near future. Expect sites like Bungie.net and MyResistance.net, which allow players to access in-game details from outside the game, to become the norm. Why is this? The answer is simple: community. "The community aspect is extremely important for the success of a game," says Arkane's Colantonio. "People play in tribes; they bring their friends with them, they meet some more, and then they all leave together for a new game."

Designers and publishers will need to foster that sense of community if they hope to give their games any kind of longevity. And console-game developers will need to figure out ways to embrace user-created content, nurturing the modding community that has provided an infusion of new ideas to the PC community for a decade or more.

One world, many games

As game designers think up new ways to exploit the connectivity of the current crop of consoles, we find ourselves once more on the path toward a single, cross-platform, cross-game, online world. This isn't a new idea: At a 2004 press conference, Sony Computer Entertainment Chief Technology Officer Masa Chatani referenced the power of the Cell processor as one that could eventually create a "cyber world" that all users (and, presumably, games) would "jack into." Of course, SCE President Ken Kutaragi made similar claims about the PS2 back in 2000: "You can communicate [with] a new cyber city. Did you see the movie *The Matrix*? Same interface. Same concept. Starting from next year, you can jack into the Matrix!"

Hyperbole aside, the idea isn't so far-fetched. Microsoft may be taking the first step with Live Anywhere, a system that allows cross-platform play between the 360 and Windows-based machines from PCs to cell phones. "I think you will see casual-gaming extensions of large games that feed back into the core experi-

ence," says Chris Satchell, general manager of Microsoft's Game Developers Group. It seems a small leap from this interface to a fully realized, game-transcending world.

Then the big question becomes: Is one virtual world enough for all gamers and all their games? "Potentially, yes," says Philip Rosedale, founder and CEO of *Second Life* developer Linden Lab, "especially if your aim is to harness technology in such a way that each virtual citizen is able to interact on the same platform, according to similar protocols." *Gears of War* Lead Designer Cliff Bleszinski adds that "games will [continue to] figure out ways to allow people to do things they would never do in real life. It will all evolve into one giant, shared dream world."

Hey, it may not be *The Matrix*, but it's a start.

ONLINE: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

1969
The first ARPANET link is created, the first strand in what will become the Internet.

2000
Sega releases *Phantasy Star Online* for the Dreamcast. It unites players around the world in four-player quests.

2004
Halo 2 hits the Xbox. Within two years, more than half a billion matches will be played online. Also this year: *World of WarCraft* launches on PC.

2009
100Gbps connections become more widely available. Net surfers download porn faster than ever.

2029
The Internet, now self-aware, sends a T-800 back in time to kill Sarah Connor.

1998
The Dreamcast is released in Japan, becoming the first game console to launch with a built-in modem.

2002
Xbox Live is launched on the original Xbox, laying the foundation for the most feature-rich console-online service.

2008
"Internet2" is completed, offering researchers and universities 100Gbps transfer speeds (10 times faster than today's quickest connections).

2010
Most metropolitan areas now offer free Wi-Fi within city limits.

> **HOMEWARD BOUND**
> Sony snazzes up the concepts of achievements and community
>
> Sony has finally addressed the PlayStation 3's hitherto underwhelming online service by announcing Home, a free 3D metagame that blends bits of Xbox Live, *The Sims*, and social-networking communities such as MySpace. Rather than using a menu-based interface, Home cribs from massively multiplayer online games like *EverQuest*. The design you must navigate and explore 3D spaces while chatting with (via text, voice, or video) others. You can launch traditional multiplayer online [3D] sessions directly from Home or walk up to various arcade games, pool tables, and bowling lanes for impromptu minigames.
>
> Home—which launches this fall after a closed trial run in April—isn't merely about online gaming, though: Sony also plans on delivering public theaters for viewing movie content (both Hollywood studio fare and YouTube-style user-created content). Also look for other game publishers and hongaming corporations to set up uniquely themed environments that offer interactivity while subtly shilling their wares.
>
> Home has a private side, too: Every user gets a hip apartment that can be customized with wallpaper, furniture, toys, and pets (for an actual monetary price, natch). You'll even be able to stream music and video from your PS3's hard drive directly into your crib, invite friends over, and have a virtual house party. One key aspect—the trophy-room—feels like a direct rip-off of Xbox Live. This room offers a new take on "Achievements" by turning them into animated objects that your friends can view and covet in the round.
>
> Sounds great, right? It's all very ambitious...and we can't help but wonder if Sony will be able to make this quantum leap in the online arena with ease.

The Future of Displays

Feast your eyes on this: Paper-thin screens and holographic graphics won't be science fiction for much longer
By John Brandon

YOU HAVE TWO OF THEM, they're round, and they're incredibly potent. No, not your 'nards—your eyeballs! They're miracle organs capable of seeing 10,000 pixels and shifting "lenses" from a near-field perspective to far away in a millisecond. Remember that early scene in *Gears of War* when you saw the city skyline from a bridge? High-resolution, widescreen displays make it all possible. You can see an amazing amount of detail today that was not possible on a 1996 bubble TV.

But what comes next? In 2015, will we live in isolation chambers with PS4s plugged into 200-inch 5,000-by-5,000-pixel TVs? Nope, most experts say. We won't have enough room, for one thing, and at some point the law of diminishing returns comes into play with bigger boob tubes. You just won't get enough bang for your truckload of television.

Thinking outside the tube
"The horizon is pretty flat moving forward,"

says Tamaryn Pratt of Quixel Research, a trend-spotting company that focuses on home-theater televisions. "So the question now is differentiation. LCD TVs will move to a refresh rate of 120 frames per second for smoother picture quality [current models refresh at 60 frames per second]. Mitsubishi has a rear-projection 'laser television' [which uses separate red, green, and blue lasers and a plastic screen instead of glass] that will come out by end of 2007."

But sharper pictures and zippier framerates are a given. Game developers are more excited about the next logical next step in display evolution. "For me, the future is in finally figuring out real 3D holographic displays," says Julian Eggebrecht, the president of tech-savvy developer Factor 5, which is working on the PS3 dragonslayer game *Lair*. "Combined with motion tracking, holographics will be the ultimate display technology for interactive media. It will happen, and without the 3D glasses. The question is just when and how much." With 3D displays, games will make a huge jump forward. A Boomshot rocket in *Gears of War* would make you jump for

cover. And this isn't loony sci-fi talk: Every expert we spoke with says 3D TV is the next big innovation, which means *Star Trek*'s holodeck gaming could become a reality in 20 years.

Little big screens
But while we're busy ogling 3D Lara Crofts, tiny displays will undergo their own revolution. Cell phones with organic light-emitting diode—or OLED—technology will arrive by 2017. OLED displays are bright and incredibly small. Chris Satchell, who heads up Microsoft's Game Developers Group, says that resolution on cell phones will increase to television quality and finally make it worth the time to port a console game to a mobile platform. Sci-fi author and futurist Bruce Sterling tells us that cell-phone projection—which lets phones display a high-resolution image on a wall—is coming within the next 20 years.

Beyond that time frame, Pratt mentions a far-future tech: woven displays. Although she says they're in the feasibility-study phase right now, such televisions will use a fabric material that conducts energy, folds up in a portable sheath, and looks more realistic than any LCD or

> **Holographics...will happen and without the 3D glasses.**
> —Factor 5 President Julian Eggebrecht

Q-BOT

Query: How long until videogame graphics are 100-percent photo-realistic?
Q-bot responds:

Watch Television

Browse the Web

More Television >>

Watch Movies

More Movies >>

Play Games

plasma. Gary Feather, lab director for electronics manufacturer Sharp, says another advancement will expand your field of view with multiple displays that engulf you, even covering the floor to give a hi-res god's-eye view of, say, the battlefield in a strategy game. "We'll also have the ability to project two or more images from the same display for multiplayer gaming," he says, explaining that one display could emit several images in an arc around the room.

Screen stealers

New display tech will change how games are developed. Tim Sweeney, CEO and technical director of *Gears of War* developer Epic Games, says games will need better antialiasing "to fix the constant shimmering of pixels and polygons—an area where we fall short of CGI movies," and much denser forms of geometry, such as vegetation and fur.

And developers such as Epic will need larger art staffs to generate all that pretty stuff. It's happening already—two-thirds of Epic's developers are artists. "It's all about art and content," says Microsoft's Satchell. And he's right: Whether it's woven displays or a holographic TV dome in your basement, if the art sucks, gamers won't give a damn.
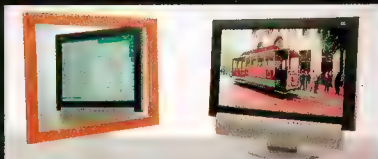
■ Just the beginning: Sharp's dual-view LCD, available in Japan, shows two different images depending on where you're standing. The mirror to the left of the monitor shows the second image.

REEL TO REAL

Movie gaming displays aren't science fiction anymore. We separate fact from the flicktion

The flick: *Star Trek* TV series, movies, et cetera
The flicktion: The holodeck virtual-reality environment
Reality check: Closer than you think, Scotty. Cave Automatic Virtual Environments—or CAVEs—were developed at the University of Illinois back in the early '90s. These rooms are made up of rear-projection TV screens. When coupled with special eyewear, CAVEs generate objects and landscapes you can interact with. Imagine scurrying around behind a virtual fighter in a *Virtua Fighter* game and giving him a virtual wedgie.

The flick: *Total Recall* (1990)
The flicktion: Ah-nold's blue-collar chump, Doug Quaid, experiences the most realistic display of all: his own imagination, implanted with vivid false memories of the ultimate Martian action-hero vacation. Or was it all real?
Reality check: A 2003 study at the University of California-Irvine implanted false memories into 36 percent of its participants. That means any gamer open to the power of suggestion can experience the vivid graphics of his or her mind's eye.

The flick: *Demolition Man* (1993)
The flicktion: In the future, people no longer kiss, touch, or watch *The Notebook* together. Instead, they have VR boom-chicka-boom-chicka. When Stallone asks Sandra Bullock to do it the "old fashioned" way, Bullock responds, "Ew! You mean...fluid transfer?"
Reality check: Kyle Machulis, a teledildonics researcher, invented the SeXbox in 2005. It goes beyond hi-def nudity to actually reach out and touch special someones in their special places with a homebrew dildo doohickey. More recently, Machulis wrote a programming script that lets denizens of the PC virtual world *Second Life* use a "trance vibrator" to, er, titillate one another. That's one peripheral we won't be sharing.

The flick: *Star Wars* (1977)
The flicktion: We know this movie was set "a long time ago" rather than in the year 3000, but Chewie's holographic-monster-chess game sure seems futuristic to us.
Reality check: The technology for 3D displays has been around for years. (Remember Sega's odd-ball holographic Wild West arcade game *Time Traveler*?) The Actuality Systems Perspecta (right), for example, emits a 360-degree image that measures about 10 inches around. The holograms are even interactive, sensing your movement and touch. So when will you have one of these contraptions in your living room? The main issues are mass production and cost—but all that's changing, experts say, and soon.

> DISPLAYS: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

1931 RCA creates the first black-and-white television.

1962 LCD is invented.

1999 Zenith ships the first high-definition television. The first HDTV broadcast: the Rose Bowl Parade.

2007 Sharp demos the 108-inch LCD television, the largest ever.

2010 3D displays start to take off with consumers.

2017 Holographic display technology takes 3D to a new level.

2027 The first woven screens hit the market.

1954 RCA unveils the CT-100, the first color TV set.

1964 Plasma television is invented.

2006 Pioneer ships the first 50-inch 1080p TV.

2008 Laser TVs hit stores.

2013 Sharp releases advanced surround displays.

2025 Cell phones make use of image-projection technology.

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.

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BODY SPRAY FOR MEN
ALL-NIGHTER

CONSIDER YOURSELF
WARNED

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

The Future of Genres

What's next for your favorite game type?
We go straight to the guys in charge...

First-person shooters

As envisioned by Halo 3 Design Lead Jaime Griesemer

"At some point in the next 20 years, people are going to get tired of fighting aliens, Nazis, zombies, and terrorists. It's a problem that is going to be difficult to solve not because game developers lack imagination or publishers are unwilling to take risks, but because there just aren't that many other settings you can use for a traditional [first-person shooter (FPS)]. You need guns...and lots of enemies to kill. So you can't do a good FPS about the mafia or a realistic crime thriller where each death is important and meaningful.... [This means] your options are limited to a couple historic wars, a present-day setting, and sci-fi.

"As a result, I think you are going to see a lot of FPS games drop the "S" and start making action games from the first-person perspective that don't have guns in them. Call them FPX games. If you get rid of the reliance on guns, you are free to explore a lot more settings and gameplay variety. At some point, somebody is going to do a really successful first-person climbing game or something and the genre is going to blow up."

Role-playing games

As envisioned by Fable 2 Designer Peter Molyneux

"Role-playing games have almost always exclusively focused on the role-playing template that was defined around 25 years ago! And that has really been based on the characters' fighting ability. What I find interesting is the term 'role playing'—if that is accurate you should be role playing a character, not role playing a weapon. This means that we need to think more about the character's structure, [whether players want to] play the role of a hero or the role of a villain or even the role of James Bond. As movies show us, there is far more to even a well-defined character like James Bond than pulling the trigger on a gun. So for me the evolution of RPGs is to give people the full range of what it is to be [whatever they want to be]."

Racing games

As envisioned by Hanno Lemke, general manager of EA Black Box (Need for Speed franchise)

"I'm most excited about...how we can marry the gaming and car communities through our games. Imagine an online racing hub where you can blog about the latest car news, download the newest prototype from the Tokyo Car Show into your Need for Speed Autosculpt editor, fabricate your own aerokit, share it with your buddy who is a hardcore performance tuner and your other buddy who creates a killer graphics package for it. Enter it into a car show and get rated by the community, or put down the fastest grip or drift times on Laguna Seca. Get a text message on your cell if someone knocks off your time or wants to bid on your car. An 'always connected' car experience, with broader access points into the car culture for players than just twitch-based racing experience, will drive the racing-game experience to a whole new level."

Puzzle games

As envisioned by Lumines creator Tetsuya Mizuguchi

"The essential changes will happen very slowly over time. However, the logic of what makes a puzzle game or genre interesting and entertaining will probably change according to the changes we'll see to the human brain and how it processes certain things such as multitasking. Of course, we will probably see more puzzle games with better audio and visual/graphics presentation rather than those that look dull or are obviously not putting enough effort into those areas."

Platform games

As envisioned by Insomniac (Resistance: Fall of Man) President Ted Price

"Platformers are one of the most enduring genres around, existing ever since the Atari 2600 days. And, of course, over the years platformers have evolved significantly. And if you agree with my definition of a platformer—action/adventure game with nonrealistic characters and backgrounds—then you may agree that predicting where they're going is the same as predicting where games in general are going....

"Gameplaywise, I think most genres are going to be transformed by online connectivity. Certainly in 20 years we should expect 90 percent of gamers to be online. And with such a huge online audience, I think we'll see designers doing some very clever things in games, especially in those that were traditionally single-player fare—like platformers. And I'm not talking about online deathmatch; I'm talking about games that support heavy online customization, user-generated content, and a seamless merger between single-player and multiplayer gameplay.

"Speaking of user-generated content, for example, what if you could choose to replace all of the background objects in your single-player story with art that someone else—or even you yourself—had created? What if you could collaborate with other online players to rerecord all of the dialogue in the single-player game? The possibilities here seem pretty limitless."

> **What if you could collaborate with other online players to rerecord all of the dialogue in the...story?**
> —Insomniac President Ted Price

Sports games

As envisioned by Steven Chiang, studio general manager of EA Tiburon (*Madden* series)

"One of the big things will be the display. 3D displays are coming. Whether it's projected 3D or the 3D where you can move side to side and actually feel like there's volume...I'd lean more toward the latter. Also, the line between what's on TV and what's in sports and what's in the videogame world will all be blurred. Say you're watching a game on TV and you see this amazing catch or play, so you'd fire up your game console and the play would be there and you could play that scenario. For online, not only will every position on your team be filled with a real player, you're going to have teams of people who actually practice in the game to get good, so everyone knows his or her assignments. That'll probably be the hardest of the hardcore, like the guys who train together in first-person shooters now."

Fighting games

As envisioned by *Virtua Fighter* series Producer Hiroshi Kataoka

"The basic concept of play in the fighting genre has not changed drastically in the last 10 years. Therefore, I assume the gameplay won't change much in the future. In terms of graphics, as we evolve and adopt new technology, I'm sure the genre will evolve with it. However, I can't predict what that will [entail]. Some people believe that there will be new input devices that will allow for 3D television and motion controls, but I believe this is a gimmick that some players will find attractive [rather] than have a major impact on the games. I also believe there is a large possibility that fighting games will have the player fight [and] train A.I. characters. However, I'm not sure if this type of game could still be considered a fighting game."

> WRIGHT'S LITTLE BROS

Will Wright's handpicked pupils share their vision of gaming's future

We've let lots of developers, analysts, and futurists ramble. But what about tomorrow's game-makers—the folks in game-design classes across the country? They are the future of this industry, after all. But to make sure we're hearing from the heads of the class, we asked *Sims*- and *Spore*-creator Will Wright (right)—a certified space genius himself—to handpick the programs where he finds his fresh talent. We asked the students this question: "What do you see as gaming's next great innovation, and how will you use it when you get into the business?" Let's hear it from the honor roll.

"Lots of small innovations will be built on one solid foundation: participation... *Spore*, *Second Life*, and student projects like *Line Rider* will usher in a new generation of games-as-tools. And many companies will follow Valve and BioWare, who've learned that modders, empowered by open code, can produce quality work that extends the life of their games. The official arrival of participatory gaming will challenge the industry [folks] to open their minds and adapt their business models to profit from the new extended gamer family (and from that family's limitless creativity."
— *Nathan Piazza, PhD student at Digital Media at Georgia Tech*

"Gaming's next great innovations will revolve around user-created content... Allowing users to feel like they own a piece of a game and share with others will...spark interest among all sorts of demographics. The intertwining of Web 2.0 and gaming 3.0 will...make it natural for users to exert control over content, have their content tie into multiple games, and experience a new connection to the games they play."
— *Magnolia Caswell-Mackey, grad student at Carnegie Mellon's Entertainment Technology Center*

"I think gaming's next great innovation is already here—in the form of the Xbox Live Arcade, the Wii Virtual Console, and the PlayStation Network. Though it seems like [they offer] mostly sports and retro titles right now, I think we'll soon be at the point where it's viable for a small studio of three or four people to make quality—and profitable—games for the downloadable content–delivery systems. I don't think this lessens the need for blockbuster games, but the development cycles for those games are getting so long that I often go a few months in between getting really excited about something—or, more likely, something's sequel..."
— *Will Hankinson, master's candidate in Digital Media at Georgia Institute of Technology*

"In every other medium, the last decade has seen a progressive move toward independent-content generation. From websites to podcasts to YouTube, we've seen a trend of individuals developing more and more difficult media on their own... Current-generation consoles...all have the ability to access downloadable games, which is just the kind of media that could be created by a small, independent team. If console manufacturers opt to open their tools and host player-created game channels, I think it will create a flood of creative content..." — *Jeremy Gibson, graduate student at Carnegie Mellon's Entertainment Technology Center*

"Some exciting features to look forward to in the next 20 years will be tangible interfaces, games for the nonhardcore audience, believable characters, drama management...and many other topics. But as it stands, faced with the demands of publishing, the games industry is not [suited] to exploring these. I think the most fascinating thing that will happen in the next 20 years will be a collaboration between the industry and the academy, which is exploring all of those possibilities in an experimental setting."
— *Calvin Ashmore, PhD student of Digital Media at Georgia Institute of Technology*

The Future of the Biz
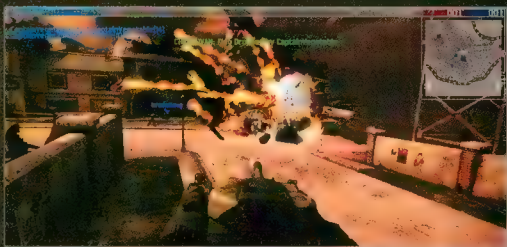
The DL on digital distribution, rising game prices, and the next big contender in the hardware wars By David Kushner

OVER THE NEXT TWO DECADES, THE GAME INDUSTRY will evolve in just about every way you can—and can't—imagine. The mission? To blast what's still viewed by outsiders as a bastard medium into something ubiquitous and mainstream. "There need to be games for everyone," says Microsoft Corporate VP Peter Moore. "Not everybody wants to play *Gears of War* until 2 a.m."

Download in progress

The biggest changes will come via the broadest portal: your Internet connection. According to tech market-research firm ABI, online content—microtransactions, downloadable games, and subscription services—is set to boom from $215 million last year to $7.2 billion in 2011. "The ability to deliver content into somebody's home through broadband is not just the future—it's the reality of now," says Phil Harrison, president of Sony Computer Entertainment's Worldwide Studios. "Look at the way people are consuming music and TV shows. Games, clearly, will be the next [part of] that trend."

It's already happened with the twitch titles and back-catalog hits you can buy from Xbox Live Arcade and the Wii's Virtual Console. But it's Sony that's taking the first step in offering a more substantial downloadable product in the form of *Warhawk* (see above). Microsoft seemed to be leaning this way when it increased maximum allowable game sizes on Xbox Live Arcade, but "[while] it will be technically possible

to offer full games for download on Xbox 360, whether that's something we and our partners want to do is another matter," says Chris Satchell, general manager of Microsoft's Game Developer Group. "I think the majority of gamers like shopping for and owning the physical media. They like to...have the box, manual, and disc. I do not see digital downloads of full games being a significant part of this console life cycle."

Price tagging

Developers will find it liberating to create a new range of experiences and distribute them via downloads.

Under the current economic model, after all, developers have to justify a high price. "Games have to become more and more gorgeous and have many hours of gameplay," says Nintendo President Satoru Iwata. Digital distribution frees developers from the pressure to, as he puts it, "create a masterpiece all the time."

Or they can create these epic masterpieces in cheaper episodic pieces. "The key to making shorter playtime work is finding a way to lower our retail price," says Game Designer Warren Specter. "We always talk about being a mainstream medium, but to be a mainstream medium,

Multiplayer shooter *Warhawk* for the PlayStation 3 will be the first big game available exclusively via download (for, we hear, $20) when it hits the PlayStation Network this fall.

> I do not see digital downloads of full games being a significant part of this console life cycle.
> —Microsoft Game Developer Group General Manager Chris Satchell

Q-BOT

EGM's robot from the future answers today's burning questions

Query: Will politicians ever stop targeting violent videogames?

Q-bot responds: You'd think that as younger legislators—men and women who grew up considering games the rock 'n' roll of their generation—come into power, they'd move on to new controversial issues (teledildonics spread venereal diseases, for instance). But "the... there'll be the advances in graphics, artificial intelligence, and interface design, all of which will naturally make games more realistic and immersive than any of us can imagine," says Hal Halpin, founder of the Entertainment Consumers Association, a gamer-advocacy group. Hyper-realistic violence is an issue that will always push buttons with some voters. Complicating things... digital distribution. "Today's retail clerks are the industry's frontline troops in the ratings-enforcement battle," says Halpin. "As the industry moves deeper into the digital-distribution model, games will be delivered to your console, your portable device, or maybe to a chip embedded in your head. Without clerks to serve as gatekeepers, stopping kids from accessing adult content will become ever more problematic, and the responsibility will rest where we have always stipulated: with parents." Ultimately, Halpin says, it'll take gamers working together to reverse negative stereotypes to keep names out of politics.

■ Whether you think they're annoying or add realism, in-game ads are here to stay.
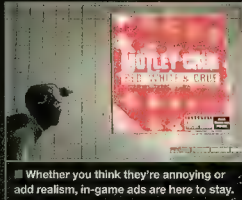
we have to compete on price point. Instead of charging a small audience $60 for a game, we have to charge a larger audience $20. That's about what a night for two at the movies costs, what a new CD costs. That's our price point."

Sony is rumored to be building its games in chunks to reach this magic price. Take *Warhawk*, for example. If the multiplayer-only downloadable game sells well this fall, its makers may add a single-player campaign for, say, $10, vehicle packs for $5 each, and so on—until eventually the game will have all the pieces of a $60 title that Sony can ship on a Blu-ray disc. This business model cuts down on a game's initial budget, helps players dictate a game's content (by what they buy and how they play it), and even makes brick-and-mortar stores happy because they'll have something to sell. Everyone wins.

Analysts predict that if traditional big-budget, full-length, full-price games stick with us, prices will soar as development costs rise. "Would hardcore gamers be willing to pay $100 for a *Doom* [game]?" asks Lazard Capital Markets Senior Research Analyst Colin Sebastian. "Almost certainly."

And we can't ignore the rise of in-game advertising, which—depending on how much of it gamers can stomach—could affect tomorrow's game

prices. "Ads help defray the significant rise in development costs," says Sebastian, "and they open up new business models, particularly in casual online games where ads can subsidize or replace user fees." In-game advertising revenues are expected to grow from $120 million in 2006 to $732 million by 2010.

As gamers get used to seeing product placement and billboards in their games, they'll also see something else go to wayside—the whole notion of "exclusive" content. Remember when you had to have a PlayStation 2 to play the latest *Grand Theft Auto*? When Peter Moore rolled up his sleeve at a Microsoft's press conference last year to reveal a *GTA4* tattoo, it was a sign of the future: More major third-party titles will come out cross-platform on day one. The days of exclusives are "over," says Michael Pachter, a Wedbush Morgan analyst. "If you want exclusive, you buy the studio."

Who's next?

As hardware and business models mature, the console makers will be less likely to churn out new systems every five years. "Life-spans are getting longer," says Hiroshi Kamide, analyst with KBC Securities Japan. The bigger question is whether this will translate into less of a need for three consoles on the market. Could we be looking at the dawn of a supermachine—one system that serves all our gaming needs? Don't bet on it. "Consumers are spending enough money on games to support multiple platforms," says Sebastian.

What's more likely is that a dark-horse company could enter the Thunderdome of game systems. It wasn't that long ago, after all, that Sony and Microsoft were seen as invading the space owned by

Nintendo. "There's always been thoughts that another major consumer electronics player may enter—Samsung, Matsushita—but [that's] unlikely, given their lack of first-party content," says Kamide. "A comeback by Sega or Bandai also looks unlikely. Once you leave, it's pretty impossible to get back in. The idea that PC manufacturers may offer more 'console'-like products looks more likely at the moment."

But the biggest evolution won't have anything to do with technology at all. It'll happen when gamers grow up and take over—making the long-chastised medium of videogames mainstream once and for all. It's not a matter of if—it's when. Before he left his post as president of the Entertainment Software Association, Doug Lowenstein had one hope for the future. "By 2010, demographics will shift to what I call the digital generation," he said. "This is their media. They're not afraid of it. They will be in the seats of power, and they will be making the decisions."

■ Considering that today we have devices that do quadruple duty (phone, music and movie player, Internet browser, etc.), does the road to convergence end in the palm of your hand, with one portable contraption that serves all our gaming needs? Not likely. "I look at it as more of a convergence of media but a divergence of devices," says Senior Research Analyst Colin Sebastian of Lazard Capital Markets. "Consumers will want to access their library of digital media at home, at work, on the road, et cetera, and the Internet as a media platform will allow this to happen."

And, seriously, would you want to play a 2027 installment of *Grand Theft Auto* on a contraption the size of the PSP? "It is hard to envision," says Wedbush Morgan Securities Analyst Michael Pachter, "a networked handheld that will serve as a controller for home, have a hi-def screen, tons of memory, unlimited battery life, and will be affordable."

GAME BIZ: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Playing-card maker Nintendo opens for business in Japan.
1889

After once flirting with the idea of joining forces with Nintendo, Sony enters the game business, releasing the PlayStation in Japan.
1994

Bethesda charges $2.50 for downloadable horse armor in *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*. Gamers worry it's the start of microtransaction nickel-and-diming.
2006

Electronics giant Samsung debuts its own console to compete with Sony, Nintendo, and Microsoft.
2018

A hardcore gamer becomes president after promising free health care for Americans with virtual-world addiction.
2027

Future *Pong* creator Nolan Bushnell forms Atari with fellow engineer Ted Dabney.
1972

Sega leaves the hardware market to become a multiplatform game publisher. Microsoft joins the hardware wars with its Xbox.
2001

Gamers cry that in-game advertising goes too far when Solid Snake snaps into a Slim Jim.
2012

After two decades of skyrocketing budgets for major titles, game prices hit the $90 to $120 range. Gamers pine for the days of price-cutting in-game ads.
2025

The Future of Players

Keep playing today and you could be faster, smarter, and more successful tomorrow. By Erin Biba

IN THE FUTURE NO ONE WILL BE A "GAMER." But how's this for a head trip: Everyone—from your grandma to your kid sister—will play games. As electronic devices merge, connectivity becomes pervasive, and everything goes mobile, gamers will find ways to integrate games into everyday life. "All throughout time people have played games," says John Welch, president and CEO of casual-games site PlayFirst.com. "It's only until they became electronic that we started to exclude a part of the population.... The first thing to realize is that we can throw out the word 'gamers.' It means nothing in a world where everyone plays."

All play and no work

Even now, boys and girls are starting to play games younger and younger,

■ **Years of war:** "I think that the average age [of gamers] will grow by a year every three or four years," says Wedbush Morgan Securities analyst Michael Pachter. So if the average age of a gamer is 29 now, it'll be around 35 in 2027. "The significance of this is that the age range will expand from today's 6 to 40 to around 6 to 60," Pachter continues. "What's more relevant is that the older demographic has more money and is less concerned about whether they actually play the games they buy, so game sales will probably grow even if average use goes down."

says Katherine Isbister, who founded Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's Games Research Lab. "Kids will be drawn to games even more so, and parents will see that as the better part of development," she says. "Growing up inside digital worlds will teach kids a new kind of social experience, and they will eventually carry these lessons on to their adult lives. They'll blend their game reality into everyday reality, and they'll see it as one social experience."

It has already happened to those of us who grew up playing *Super Mario Bros.* John Beck, who co-authored a book on the topic, sees grown-up gamers sharing certain traits, and he says tomorrow's employers will look for these skills when gamers enter the job market. "You already hear the occasional apocryphal story about somebody getting a senior management job because they were a level 60 wizard," Beck says. "I think as the number of managers who understand the skills you get by playing particular games increase, they are going to be looking for people [who have them]."

This might even lead to work environments that are one big game. "Putting something like those game qualities into a company can make it more like an extreme sport," Beck

says. "Every type of attention is being focused on the job at hand." That doesn't mean, however, that people will stop playing once they get home. They'll still need some down time with games that are just for fun, he says.

It's all coming together

Because interactivity and immersion will continue to grow as a desired form of entertainment, various diversionary industries are likely to merge. Social gaming of the future, PlayFirst's Welch says, could be as simple as: "I flip on my TV and I'm part of my community." Game developers are certainly ready for integrated entertainment. *Lumines* Designer Tetsuya Mizuguchi says the game he would love to design is "something positioned between a movie and a game [or] a game that can be positioned between music and a game. Something that is structurally different from what we're working on today."

All that said, truly dedicated gamers are not likely to go away completely. Although a future of cyborg players riddled with implants seems like unlikely science fiction, "if you're a hardcore gamer," Mizuguchi says, "you might turn into a cyborg. I'm sure we'll be 'carrying' or 'wearing'

> ### If you're a hardcore gamer, you might turn into a cyborg.
> —Lumines creator Tetsuya Mizuguchi

Q-BOT

EGM's robot from the future answers today's burning questions

Query: Will professional gaming ever become a mainstream career?
Q-bot responds: Might as well ask "Will the average Joe ever get a job playing quarterback for the Buffalo Bills?" Yeah, not so much. It's more likely that pro gaming will fall in line with the rest of American spectator sports. You'll always have a few standout gamers who hold a controller like it's part of them, and everyone else will, well, watch—and wish they could be that good. "Half of the people who play games today spend time watching other people play," says John Beck, coauthor of *The Kids Are Alright: How the Gamer Generation is Changing Business.* All it's going to take is a visionary TV producer to turn pro gaming into a pop-culture phenomenon. Hey, it happened to poker. "My hope," says Steven Chiang, general manager of Electronic Arts *Madden*-making Tiburon studio, "is we'll one day get 15 minutes of SportsCenter devoted to videogames."

■ Helgapro Alexis Heber dares you to take her job—now or in 2027.

other forms of media and technology in a way that we never imagined before. There's a good chance that it may even be tied into fashion or become a new trend.... Our ears may be implanted with a mobile phone and headset to listen to music!"

And it's not simply hardcore gamers that may start to see physical changes after a lifetime of play. Recent research has found that people who play games are physically different from those who don't. A 2003 University of Rochester study found that after just 10 hours of playing "action" games, participants experienced heightened visual acuity, faster response times, and increased hand-eye coordination. A study completed in February of this year found that surgeons-in-training who had played games more then three hours a week were able to complete surgical-skills tests faster and with fewer errors than those who abstained from gaming.

On the other hand, Julian Bleecker, assistant professor in the Interactive Media Division at the University of Southern California, says, "I can imagine that truly hardcore gamers have certain physical deficits that more casual gamers do not, mostly from repetitive-stress disorders and back problems from sitting on the sofa or in a bad chair all day. Maybe they're getting good visual acuity or hand-eye coordination, but there have always been ways to build up one's coordination, even before there were gamers playing videogames." In other words, it'll still be a good idea to unplug once in a while.

Up and away

Still, today's motion-sensing controllers have already accomplished a major feat: They've gotten gamers off the couch. Someday, they might

even get us outside. "We may see a world in which one is engaged in some game experience at any time," Bleecker says, "and one's activities, however mundane, shape and inform the game. That'll be an important evolution in mobile gaming—when you're a gamer, gaming, no matter what you do."

And when that happens, everyone will be able to game regardless of their skill level or experience. More

than ever, gamers will carry their desire to play into their old age and, just as seniors now shop on eBay and date online, so too will they play electronic games.

Who then will be left to exclude from the group we now call gamers? Asks Welch: "Is there a group of people we call TV watchers or music listeners? Everybody reads, watches TV, and listens to music. And everybody should play."

▶ LIVING ROOM 2027

The Chair Of The Fuuuuture

The Coffee Table Of The Fuuuuture

The Lamp Of The Fuuuuture

▶ PLAYERS: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

1985
NES unites boys and girls around the world at their most impressionable age.

1989
Game Boy lets gamers go mobile and be gamers wherever they please.

1998
Dance Dance Revolution gets gamers to—gasp!—exercise.

2002
Xbox Live creates a gamer community. Social interaction moves beyond passing a controller back and forth.

2005
Guitar Hero turns gamers into rock stars and makes them crave immersion.

2006
Brain Age turns casual gamers (and old folks) into legitimate gamers.

2010
Weight of average gamer plunges 20 pounds after years of playing more physically demanding games.

2015
Simulators at schools incorporate games in classes to teach students.

2020
Gaming achievements considered OK on résumés for some jobs.

2027
Nielsen estimates 90 percent of men and women aged 6 to 60 play videogames.

Time Out

We wrap up the last 20 pages with up-close to far-out forecasts for the next two decades

Near-term: in five years...

"I think [the Nintendo] DS is going to achieve PlayStation 2–status in Japan as the best-selling game machine ever," says Hiroshi Kamide, an analyst looking at the Japanese market. Casual gaming will drive DS to become "more than a game machine—more like an accepted educational tool," he says, adding that Sony's "PS2-like dominance will be a reminder of better days gone by [for the company]."

"Sony still has an opportunity to pull it together," says Lazard Capital Markets analyst Colin Sebastian. "I doubt that Sony will let the PS3's price stand in the way of achieving decent market share." And Microsoft, while nobody's favorite for the win, isn't the clear loser five years from now. "Xbox [360] games are looking very good, and Xbox Live and Marketplace are generating network effects that should benefit the platform for some time," Sebastian says.

Midterm: In 10 years...

Even if Sony's optimistic forecast for a decade-long PlayStation 3 lifespan holds true, we'll have entered the next round of system wars by 2017. It'll be a war waged not so much on the graphics front (except perhaps for Nintendo's system—if anyone's going to embrace emerging holographic technologies, it's the experimental Nintendo). Exclusive games won't play a large role, either—third-party developers will make their games for every system.

With free Wi-Fi offered in most cities and connection speeds 10 times faster than today's, most gamers will care about which system offers the best online features and the most open and mod-friendly community, as well as "transmedia" options so they can continue their games on the road via portable multimedia gizmos.

Games will be shorter, ad-heavy, and sold online in downloadable bits or by the experience they offer (if you're only interested in the multiplayer mode of a particular game, that's all you'll buy). With human players filling character roles in most games, A.I. will be freed up to adapt difficulty, pacing, and even story elements to fit each gamer's play style.

Long-term: In 20 years...

A new genre of Wiki-style console games—those created and added to by gamers—will fill free public databases after a class-action lawsuit punishes publishers for selling collections of the best user-made content. Gamers, now of every demographic, watch TV, listen to music, and socialize with their tribes in one central online holographic

■ The PS9: Will it arrive before 2078?

world, where they'll find their games in "lands" grafted to the world by the different consoles. Players will continue the experience on the road and at work with fold-up screens.

We won't rely on peripherals to play most games. Instead, sensors on each console will pick up movement, body position, voice commands—even thoughts. Finally, all the pieces will be in place for Epic's Cliff Bleszinski to make the game of he dreamed of at the start of this cover story. And at this pace, maybe the PlayStation 9 and its "adrenal scanning" and "telepathic personal music" that Sony promised years ago in an infamous PS2 commercial will arrive sooner than its 2078 release date. "We're on track for that," jokes Phil Harrison, president of Sony Computer Entertainment's Worldwide Studios. "Actually, I think based on recent estimates, it might arrive a couple of years early." ∎

The time train doesn't end here. Head to EGM215.1UP.com for an EGM Live+ podcast where we'll discuss this story's most exciting near-term trends and technology that we couldn't fit in

WHAT SAY YOU?

Readers predict the future at EGMboards 1UP.com

"In the year 2027, Nintendo will release the Wii4. It will have the power of a graphics calculator—but that won't matter because the latest Wii-mote incarnation will show that gameplay is more important than s***ty graphics."
—Old School Gamer

"In 2027, [the game] plays you."
—Drownedmocha

"The good news is Sony, Nintendo, and Microsoft will combine to one [console] producer of unlimited power. Sony-soft-tendo will create the best handheld/set-top/online/phone/trading card/ice cream dispensary ever. The

bad news is all we'll have to play is licensed games based on romantic comedies."
—Scott H

"The year 2027 will see a saturation of World War III shooters. Madden 2028 will feature such microtransactions as forward pass and speed burst."
—strayfoxx

"In the year 2027, graphics will look better than life, people will be rooting for Sony the underdog, Duke Nukem Forever might be ready for release sometime in the third quarter, and the Power Glove is going to make one helluva comeback."
—Aaron Rice

REVIEWS

> alien invasions, kitchen creations, lengthy vacations, edible crustaceans, and a flat princess

76 SUPER PAPER MARIO

> THIS MONTH IN REVIEWS

THIN IS IN
Heroes come in all shapes and sizes

85 GHOST RECON: ADVANCED WARFIGHTER 2

86 FINAL FANTASY FABLES: CHOCOBO TALES

GATHER 'ROUND AND LISTEN UP: It's time to lay down some laws. First off, the highest-scoring game of the month isn't our Game of the Month. Why? Well, the PS3's *Oblivion* is essentially the same game as the one that came out last year on 360. It's still great, but we don't want the same already-honored game to nab another GOTM award when new games like *Super Paper Mario* deserve the love.

Got that? OK, moving on: *Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter 2* fared worse than *GRAW1*, even though it does some things better. At *EGM*, part of what we consider in our reviews is a game's impact on its genre, especially with yearly sequels. *GRAW2* simply doesn't offer that same wow factor or raise the bar. With *Oblivion*, though, we are essentially reviewing the same game again, so we treat it more as a first-timer, although we acknowledge the other's existence.

—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; Gold: 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*.

THE VERDICT'S
OUT OF 10

GIANT ANT'S
9.0
EXCELLENT

GIANT DESI
6.5
AVERAGE

GIANT TOE-JAM
1.5
TERRIBLE
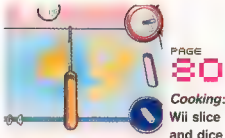
PAGE **80**
Cooking: Wii slice and dice

PAGE **82**
Oblivion: High-def rat slaying

PAGE **84**
Earth: It's all about the Raid

THIS MONTH'S REVIEW CREW

Assuming they survive the killer-robot war, what will the crew be up to in 2027?

Dan "Shoe" Hsu
Editor-in-Chief
Right now, Shane owes Shoe $825 (actual money) from losing bets during bouts of *Soul Calibur III* and classic puzzler *Tetris Attack*. In 20 years, Shoe hopes he will have won enough for an early retirement.
Will Be Playing: *Tetris Attack* (still), gin rummy, *Rascal Rally*
Blog: egmshoe.1UP.com

Jennifer Tsao
Managing Editor
Jen reviewed two food games this month (*Cooking Mama: Cook Off* and *Cake Mania*). She likes to see games heading in this direction, but she hopes in the future the genre will grow to suit all tastes.
Will Be Playing: *Halo: Master Chef Edition*, *Metal Gear Soufflé*
Blog: egmjennifer.1UP.com

Bryan Intihar
Previews Editor
In 20 years, Bryan hopes he's still not asking developers if videogames will ever make people cry. But if that's the case, he can always count on his heartbreaking Cleveland Browns to leave him teary-eyed.
Will Be Playing: *Midlife Crisis*, *Chris Berman Football 2027*
Blog: egmbryan.1UP.com

Michael Donahoe
News/Features Editor
Sick of the future and its newfangled games, Michael intends to build a time machine to go back to the past to remember all the fun geezer favorites. Man, solitaire really needs multiplayer.
Will Be Playing: *Solitaire*, *Clue*, *Hungry Hungry Hippos*
Blog: egmhoe.1UP.com

Jeremy Parish
1UP Features Editor
Jeremy will be, literally, a self-made millionaire, having cloned himself to create a lucrative MMO gold-farming sweatshop and write long, misty-eyed retrospectives on the best games from way back in 2017.
Will Be Playing: *FFXII*'s interminable Yiazmat fight (still)
Blog: jparish.1UP.com

Shane Bettenhausen
Executive Editor
Decades of squabbling with message-board fanboys will ultimately sour Shane on the game biz, inspiring him to head to the studio with Axl Rose to finally put the finishing touches on *Chinese Democracy*.
Will Be Playing: *Duke Nukem Forever*, *Kid Icarus Forever*
Blog: egmshane.1UP.com

Crispin Boyer
Senior Editor
Crispin's already got 30 years of gaming under his belt. Another two decades, he figures, will either transform him into pure energy or nuke his eyesight beyond the help of LASIK scientists. Mom's right: Don't sit too close to the holograms, kids!
Will Be Playing: With his food
Blog: egmcrispin.1UP.com

Greg Ford
Reviews Editor
Funny enough, seeing Jen's multiple food-game reviews planted a seed in Ford's mind that came to fruition after the videogame-industry crash of 2018 (thanks, *E.T. Retribution*). Too bad all food switched to pill form two months later.
Will Be Playing: With fate
Blog: egmford.1UP.com

Brooks Huber
Editorial Intern
In 2027—at the spry young age of 45—Brooks will still be gaming, despite losing a limb to a cybernetic battle monkey in the great robot war. By jacking up to the Web, he'll challenge the foolhardy at Nintonsoft's legendary *Arm Cannon* series.
Will Be Playing: *Arm Cannon 3*
Blog: egmbrooks.1UP.com

Demian Linn
Producer, GameVideos.com
Reflexes shot and eyes all rheumy, Demian was born too soon for the (maybe) upcoming golden age of professional videogamers. But he can certainly mentor the up-and-comers—think of the training montages! "Press A harder!"
Will Be Playing: *Sims: Retired*
Blog: egmdemian.1UP.com

Also on deck...

James "Milkman" Mielke
Executive Editor
1UP.com

Garnett Lee
Managing Editor
1UP.com

Andrew Pfister
Reviews Editor
1UP.com

Scott Sharkey
Staff Writer
1UP.com

Ray Barnholt
Staff Reviewer
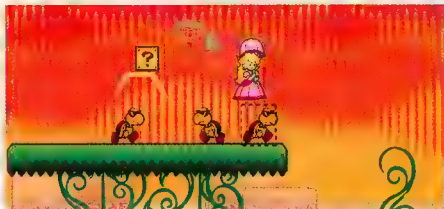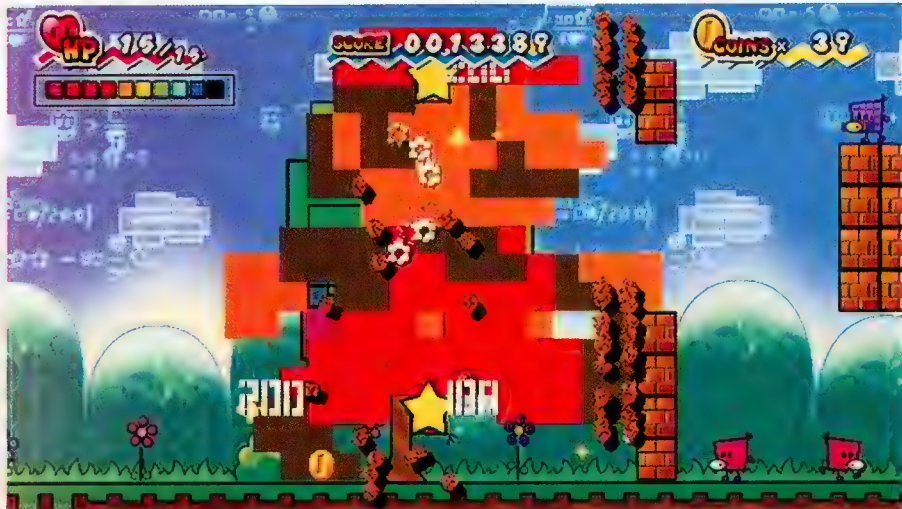MyCheats.com

Andrew Fitch
Staff Reviewer

Joe Rybicki
Staff Reviewer

Todd Zuniga
Staff Reviewer
Sports Game Guy

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* review. The second and third reviews, though—you'll find those here.

Wii

SUPER PAPER MARIO

Publisher: Nintendo ■ **Developer:** Intelligent Systems ■ **Players:** 1 ■ **ESRB:** Everyone

Mario's flat feat

THE VERDICT (OUT OF 10)

SHANE: 8.0 GOOD

ANDREW: 9.0 EXCELLENT

BRYAN: 9.0 EXCELLENT

The Good: Wildly creative and funny
The Bad: Inconsistent level design, last-gen visuals
Comedic Highlight: Peach's dating-sim boss encounter

➜ **SHANE:** The *Paper Mario* games (for N64 and GameCube) successfully married the plumber's Mushroom Kingdom trappings with classic role-playing game conventions, yet still blazed their own path with clever puzzles and offbeat humor. *Super Paper Mario* moves the franchise even further away from the established role-playing norms by replacing the turn-based battles with side-scrolling hop-n-bop action and tacking on some meager Wii-mote functionality. The result? The red-hot Wii gets an entertaining new *Mario* platformer that fills the crucial gap the delayed *Super Mario Galaxy* should have occupied.

But don't invest in *Super Paper Mario* expecting unadulterated run-and-jump thrills. Despite its linear progression (just like the old-school *Super Mario Bros.*, this game features 32 stages, running from 1-1 to 8-4), the RPG framework beneath the surface lends the game a unique vibe. The wacked-out town of Flipside serves as a hub for your exploits, and you'll get to know it well: Between action stages you'll talk to townsfolk, gather items, and uncover hidden areas. Frankly, though, these bits tend to drag—who wants backtracking and fetch quests in their side-scrollers?

All the truly impressive stuff happens in the actual numbered stages: Yes, you're still flattening Goombas and liberating Koopa Troopas from their shells, but creative level concepts (you'll find yourself trapped in a crazy game show, enslaved in a sweatshop, and damned to hell during the course of the ever-changing adventure) make it unlike any *Mario* game you've ever played. Boss encounters bristle with comedic ingenuity, too, such as one where a message-board troll engages Princess Peach in a hilarious dating-game tête-à-tête.

Unfortunately, despite these flashes of brilliance, the overall experience feels uneven. Although the control is responsive, it's not exactly as tight as you'd expect from a normal 2D *Super Mario Bros.*—the fact that you can't hold down a button to run faster or pick up turtle shells detracts from the all-important *Mario* "feel." You can approximate these abilities using "Pixls," weird pop-art familiars that grant your characters a wide range

Don't sweat it—quickly switching to the 3D view will save this plumber's ass.

It's-a-Wii, Mario

Super Paper Mario didn't begin its life as a Wii title. Nope, it was originally shown as a GameCube game but later moved over to Nintendo's waggle-wand console after the Cube nestled into its early grave (and unlike *Twilight Princess*, no GC version is planned). The developers grafted a few bits of Wiimote gameplay onto the game, but nothing too substantial... you control most of the action by holding your Wii controller horizontally and using the D-pad and buttons. Here's a look at the scant motion-control highlights....

Pointing with Tippi

Tippi is the first Pixl you find, and she's absolutely crucial to your progress—at any point during the game, you can point the Wii-mote at the screen to have her explain enemy weak points or reveal secret doors.

Shaken, stirred

You'll have to use items to cure certain status ailments such as poison and de-jump, but if you fall asleep or get swallowed by large enemies, you can recover by wildly jostling the Wii-mote.
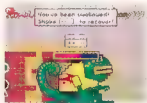
Bag full of tricks

While *Super Paper Mario* lacks the interactive magic spells of the past *Paper Mario* games, you can produce similar effects by using any number of one-use attack items. Each one requires you to manipulate the Wii Remote in a unique way to maximize your damage potential.
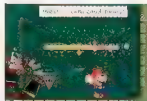
Stomp like you mean it

This one's kind of odd—if you jerk the right half of the Wii-mote up at the precise moment you stomp on a foe, you'll get a score bonus (and a round of applause from a group of random spectators who pop up around the perimeter of the screen). Consecutive successful stomps add up to even higher scores.

---

of special powers, but having to constantly bring up a menu to switch between them seems needlessly convoluted. And perhaps it's because the game's finest levels feel so fresh, but the more pedestrian ones feel lazy in comparison. Hope you're prepared for the least thrilling mine-cart ride ever!

At least some new gameplay concepts keep the slightly dumbed-down platforming from feeling too basic. The ability to switch between several characters adds variety, but you'll likely spend most of your time controlling Mario because only he can "flip" the 2D world into 3D to reveal hidden paths and enemies (see sidebar on pg. 78). It's a neat trick that paves the way for plenty of ingenious puzzles.

While *Super Paper Mario* exudes creativity, it doesn't actually capitalize on the Wii's paradigm-busting

technology. Like *Zelda: Twilight Princess*, this game began its life as a GameCube title...and it shows. Nearly all of the Wii Remote functionality here feels tacked-on (check sidebar above). Likewise, don't expect much from the visuals—the art looks crisp, but bouts of slowdown hamper the fun.

✦ **ANDREW P:** The slowdown was surprising, for sure, but the most shocking thing to me about *Super Paper Mario* is that despite how truly bizarre the game can get (storming the nerd castle of Fort Francis, writing down complex clues on actual paper), it still really *feels* a lot like the pure *Paper Mario* RPGs. The "platforming" levels aren't nearly as dependent on true platforming skills as I expected, and if you take away that cool dimension switching, you're
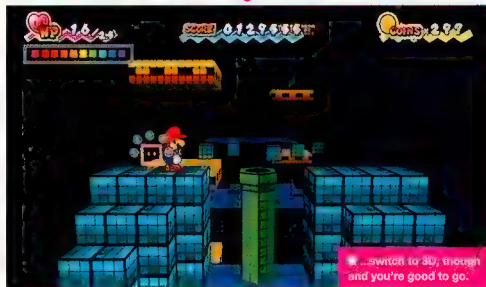
left with the basic world exploration of *The Thousand Year Door*, right down to the helper characters and the same "backtrack in the main town to find the way to proceed" concept.

Thankfully, that 2D-to-3D mindbend is completely awesome, because it forces you to apply your videogame problem-solving skills in a fresh way. By the time you get to the "Whoa Zone" that changes gravity *while* flipping between dimensions, you won't know your up, down, left, or right.

A few small disappointments: I never felt compelled to play as anyone but Mario, except for when a puzzle specifically required a longer jump or a fire attack. That speaks to Shane's beef with the character-switching menu—it doesn't take long, but it does take you out of the moment just enough (same thing goes for select-

Next Stop: The third dimension

Super Paper Mario's most significant gameplay innovation has to be the ability for Mario to "flip" the game from 2D to 3D. A simple press of the A button shifts the perspective, but once you've flipped, prepare to act fast—you only have a few seconds before the flip meter runs out and Mario takes damage. Transitioning back into 2D allows that gauge to refill, so you have to strategically plan your dimensional explorations. As you progress through the game, you'll quickly learn just how essential flipping can be. Here's a concrete example.

■ In 2D view, you can't see that pipe that's hiding directly behind the brick staircase...

■ ...switch to 3D, though and you're good to go.

This is a notorious Piranha Plant. It is a monstrous flower that lives in pipes...

■ Yeah...no crap.

GREAT

ing and using items). Oh, and I totally agree about the Wii-specific features—they're obviously there to be a bullet point on the back of the box.

Still, these are minor gripes. With its amusing script, the most bizarre twist on the *Mario* universe to date (love the giant invincible 8-bit sprites), and the solid-but-familiar RPG flavor, *Super Paper Mario* manages to mash up a bunch of different genres and still have the wherewithal to make you approach them in a new way.

✦**BRYAN:** Oh, Shane—it absolutely astonishes me how you can be so right, but at same time, so very wrong. Loose, shallow controls? Really? Thanks to the helper Pixls you discover along the way, *Super Paper Mario*'s move set feels deeper than those in most of the plumber's highly

regarded adventures. And that whole dimension-flipping mechanic—freakin' brilliant. This imaginative new ability forces you to use your head more than in any previous *Paper Mario*, and since this edition's levels are designed more like those of a platformer, it even adds some great new twists to jumpin' and brickbreakin'. I also think Shane's ragging a bit too hard on the level design here. Whether tearing through hell or floating through space, I rarely found any snoozer areas.

But at least my fellow reviewers got the rest of the game correct. The script is fantastic—from the obscure Nintendo references to poking fun at fanboys ("Do you go on message boards and complain about games you've never played?" asks one character), this one maintains the series' stellar rep as being both witty and

hilarious. And *Super Paper Mario*'s unique art style is arresting.

Still, the game isn't without fault. After complaining about the tedious chores in between levels while reviewing *Paper Mario 2*, I'm glad to see that the dev team *completely* ignored everything I said. And let's be honest: The Wii Remote functionality here is pathetic. Yeah, I enjoyed pointing at the screen to discover secret doors, but...well, that's about as exciting as it gets. Should these gripes stop you from getting this game? Heck no—I only wish that right now I could recommend more Wii titles that didn't have GameCube DNA. ✦

■ Shrimps give a +5 health bonus, and the squid power-up is fant---wait, wrong game.

Minestrone
Open the can!
Hold the Wii Remote vertically and move it toward and away from you. Press the A Button when the meter gets to the yellow part to open the lid.

Butter

+ to adjust height
Ⓐ to rotate

Serve · Finished

Wii
COOKING MAMA: COOK OFF

■ **Publisher:** Majesco ■ **Developer:** Office Create ■ **Players:** 1-2 ■ **ESRB:** Everyone

The joy of cooking

THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

JENNIFER
7.0
GOOD

MICHAEL
8.0
GOOD

JEREMY
7.5
GOOD

The Good: Intuitive controls, awesome multiplayer
The Bad: Can be as tedious as real cooking
These Carrots: Take strangely long to peel

✚ JENNIFER: Don't let its simple concept (and silly name) put you off this cooking game. Breaking up recipes into several steps, each its own minigame, is an enjoyably elegant gameplay mechanism; it works particularly well here on the Wii. Chopping onions, stirring soups, and cracking eggs (just a few of the dozens of minigames offered here) all feel startlingly realistic, and, as in real life, skill increases with practice and repetition.

But sometimes the game is a tad *too* much like real life. I know chopping is kind of fundamental in cooking, but it's tiresome when certain recipes require so damn much of it. And sure, separating egg whites from yolks requires finesse in real life. But this is a game, not *Top Chef*—the controls

shouldn't be prohibitively precise.

Where this Wii version really shines, though, is in multiplayer. Before I played it side by side with my sous-chef, Michael, I found the game overly repetitive. But the competitive mode (try to be faster and better than your opponent at each minigame) truly spices things up.

✚ MICHAEL: "Sous-chef," Jen? Unlike your fast-food flops, I actually take time to craft my culinary masterpieces. And *Cook Off*'s smorgasbord of tasty treats kept me in the kitchen longer than it'd take to chow down on your crap. I didn't become an Iron Chef right away, though—perfecting the game's meticulous minigames takes time, but once I got the hang of

'em, I found this fake food simulator rather sweet in its simplicity.

✚ JEREMY: The first *Cooking Mama* was a charming idea, but *Cook Off* is the entrée to its predecessor's tantalizing appetizer—a fully realized game rather than a series of half-baked ideas. The added variety of themes and gameplay helps immensely; you're whipping up more than just Japanese cuisine and can compete against both the computer and a friend, adding needed depth. More importantly, though, the Wii Remote (while occasionally clumsy) adds an element of involvement that the stylus-based DS controls lacked: *Cook Off* is much more like actual cooking, and thus far more engaging. 🐾

Good luck keeping aim and hitting the broad side of that...monstrosity.

Wii

MEDAL OF HONOR: VANGUARD

■ **Publisher:** EA ■ **Developer:** EALA
■ **Players:** 1-4 ■ **ESRB:** Teen

Sentenced to dishonorable discharge

✦ **GARNETT:** While it's bad enough that publishers insist on churning out WWII first-person shooters, *Medal of Honor: Vanguard* subjects us to a particularly rough campaign. It stitches together just enough retread material to get by in an obvious attempt to tap into the hungry Wii market. In a scant six hours, it covers everything from Sicily to the end of the war in what feel like postcards sent from a full-fledged *Medal of Honor* game.

Given standard controls, *Vanguard* might work as a serviceable romp for fans (and it is available on the PS2), but flailing around with the Wii-mote makes aiming accurately a chore. And even when I did draw a bead it felt like a wasted effort because of hit detection so poor that it even failed to register point-blank head shots. Gestures like shaking the Nunchuk to reload only made matters worse; I lost count of how many times I unintentionally did an about-face or stood up in the line of fire.

✦ **MICHAEL:** Screw fighting, I surrender—anything

to keep me from wading through this awkward war game. If you're even thinking about enlisting, don't: You won't find anything new here. You know, shoot the evil war bad guys (Germans, Italians...oh, who cares?). And I agree with Garnett that the missions are too short and unfulfilling.

I also had a horrible time aiming, reloading, and, well, doing just about anything else. Mapping a ton of moves to the Nunchuk (reloading, crouching, jumping, et cetera) was not a good idea. Isn't the Wii supposed to be simple? I guess not when you're in war....

✦ **TODD:** OK, you guys hate this game, but I don't. I'll be the first (or I guess the third) to admit this game is far from perfect—you can shoot through your own men, it looks like crap, and it's far from original—but even so, I had a blast aiming and firing with the Wii-mote. It's a refreshing change, even in the ugly splitscreen multiplayer. I agree that WWII games have run their course (why are developers afraid of Vietnam or Iraq?), but the Wii-mote energized my interest in this stale series since I found the motion controls to be way more natural than fiddling with dual analogs.

THE VERDICT
(OUT OF 10)

GARNETT
4.0
BAD

MICHAEL
4.0
BAD

TODD
6.0
AVERAGE

The Good: Solid orchestral score
The Bad: Lackluster effort everywhere else
Grenades: At least chucking them is fun

Sure the backgrounds may look better...but was that worth the wait?

PlayStation 3

THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

■ **Publisher:** 2K Games ■ **Developer:** Bethesda ■ **Players:** 1 ■ **ESRB:** Mature

One of the greatest RPGs ever...again

✚ **JOE:** If you're one of those all-Sony-all-the-time types who's never played *Oblivion*, you're in for an enormous treat. This is simply one of the finest, most beautiful, PC-style RPGs you can get. (I say "PC-style" because of the game's extreme nonlinearity and its focus on exploration and gameplay over story and melodrama.) It's one of my favorite games of *all time*, and even after playing 130 hours' worth on the 360, I was *still* psyched to dig into this one.

Trouble is, if you do own a 360, you'll be hard-pressed to find any good reason to buy this version. Sure, far-distant objects may look a shade better...load times may be a smidge faster...but the lack of downloadable content at this point makes this ver-

sion, at least in some ways, inferior. On its own merits, it's an easy 10. But there's a superior version out there....

✚ **JENNIFER:** I'm with Joe—the only reason you'd play this version is if you've never played *Oblivion* and you're desperate to play something on PS3. The Knights of the Nine quest is nice to have right out of the box, but seeing as I just said you shouldn't have played the game yet, an extra massive quest on top of an already 50-hour-minimum game is hardly essential. Still, playing *Oblivion* again reminded me why the game is so great. Yes, it has faults—namely, leveling is unbalanced unless you carefully pick your stats at the outset. The breathtaking exploration offered by its

vast and impeccably detailed world far outweighed these negatives, though.

✚ **DEMIAN:** I'm totally rehooked on *Oblivion*. What makes the game so compelling is that it has the open-world feeling of a multiplayer online RPG, but without the human-controlled idiots to yank you out of the illusion. Jen's right about the odd leveling system (don't specialize in key skills, or else your character will be relatively weak at higher levels), and *Oblivion* does have a few other annoying idiosyncrasies, but the sheer amount of good crushes the bad. Oh, and 360 owners, I hear your version is getting an online graphical update to put it on par with this version, so nothing to see here for you. 🎮

Xbox 360

EARTH DEFENSE FORCE 2017

Publisher: D3Publisher ■ **Developer:** Sandlot ■ **Players:** 1-2 ■ **ESRB:** Teen

On the offensive

✦ **SHARKEY:** Pick a pair of guns and run around shooting the hell out of waves of giant ants, giant spiders, giant robots, giant UFOs, and so on. Or do it with a friend (though you'll need a real, in-person one—no online multiplayer here). That's *Earth Defense Force 2017*—simple, arcade-style fun, and my idea of heaven.

The game has some B-level production values, but that makes perfect sense considering you're fighting a bunch of B-level Japanese movie monsters. When buildings crumble along prebroken lines and uprooted trees bounce around like punched toys, it may look cheap, but it also looks like an old *Ultraman* episode. And hell, at 40 bucks it *is* cheap.

My only lament besides the lack of online support is that they redid all the dialogue in English without including a Japanese language option. This sucks out a bit of the camp value, and the new voices are so annoying that I usually gun down my allies just to shut them the hell up. Noisy jerks.

✦ **JEREMY:** Sure, 7.0 is a good score, but it's hardly the sign of a masterpiece. Yet the whole point of *EDF* is that it *isn't* a masterpiece—it's cheesy, shallow, and cheap looking...intentionally. Born of the finest B-movie traditions, this is one man's fight against every poorly matted sci-fi stock-footage monster imaginable. The missions are repetitive, and the gameplay consists of blowing the crap out of everything. Is it a classic? No. But it's stupidly fun, and the crappy animation is *charmingly* awful—the videogame equivalent of Bela Lugosi wiggling an octopus prop's tentacles himself.

✦ **MILKMAN:** When you play a game like *EDF*, you've got to chuck pretense out the door and just know you're getting into something awesomely ridiculous. I mean, this is a game about a guy who runs like he's got swivel-hips while taking out *War of the Worlds*–meets–*Godzilla*–sized monsters. Sure, Japanese voices with bad subtitles would have been fun, but I can get past that thanks to the incredible amount of variety of weapons and vehicles. This is what gaming is all about: simple controls, nonstop action, and buckets of fun. ✦

GHOST RECON: ADVANCED WARFIGHTER 2

■ **Publisher:** Ubisoft ■ **Developer:** Ubisoft Paris/Red Storm
■ **Players:** 1-16 ■ **ESRB:** Teen

Sharp shooter

SHOE: 8.5 GOOD

FORD: 8.0 GOOD

DEMIAN: 7.5 GOOD

The Good: Graphics still amazing, robust multiplayer
The Bad: Not a whole lot different from *GRAW1*
Let's Wait a While: Before *GRAW3*, OK?

✛ SHOE: The jump in quality from *Ghost Recon 2* to *Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter* was mind-blowing. From *GRAW1* to *GRAW2*? Not as much. That's the problem with bringing out another military shooter only one year after the last one in the series—it doesn't leave developers much time to do anything in the mind-blowing department. And stuff that was impressive in *GRAW1* loses some oomph in the sequel because advanced warfighting vets know what to expect. For example, *GRAW2*'s stages don't feel so wide open now: I can sense the level boundaries without even having to look at the overhead map. I can usually figure out where the enemies will be coming from before they appear, too. That predictability makes this second tour of duty much easier and subsequently less intense.

Still, when I booted up *GRAW2*, a lot of that giddiness I felt when I played *GRAW1* came rushing back. "*Damn* these graphics look good," I thought to myself—they're still amongst the best in this post–*Gears of War* era. Some individual moments are more exciting, too, despite that aforementioned predictability. Enemies charge at you in greater numbers,

helicopters swarm from the skies, the constant *24*-style pressure-cooker deadline is thrilling (without penalizing slower players)...even the on-rails "mow everyone down with your turret" sections are more action-packed (though these Mexican rebels still need to learn how not to run out in the open and *toward* my chain gun).

And like last time, it's the multiplayer that really cinches it for me. Like single player, it's still ■ lot of the same, but more maps, customization options, and modes make this the most robust Xbox Live experience this side of *Halo 2*.

✛ G. FORD: I'm with Shoe on this. My excitement for this game was initially tempered...until I was creeping through a cemetery with night-vision goggles equipped, picking off enemies and diving behind headstones for cover. The *GRAW* gameplay still rocks, but the annoyances that I barely gave a second thought to last year stand out so much more now. How come switching from an automatic gun's primary fire to its mounted grenade launcher is so clumsy? And all you *Gears of War* fans, prepare to cringe: The cover system here feels archaic, especially if you fancy jump-

ing from one piece of cover to another with any sort of finesse, as you have to unstick before moving on.

The team play makes up for a lot of this, though. In *GRAW2*, you'll sometimes be controlling more compatriots than before (up to five), and you can now view the action from their point of view in full-screen form and issue commands—you could conceivably beat whole missions this way. *GRAW2* may not make the same splash as its predecessor, but it's still a no-doubt award winner.

✛ DEMIAN: Agreed on all counts, except for one—I don't think *GRAW2* is an award winner, because it's basically a $60 mission pack.

Yup, it's a totally solid, fun tactical shooter, no doubt. The new clan support for multiplayer is a nice addition, too, but aside from a new unit (the medic) and some other small tweaks, you won't find much else to differentiate *2* from *1*. Like Ford, I'm disappointed that the developers didn't update the cover mechanics to keep up with the Joneses (*Gears of War* certainly has its clunky moments, but the cover system feels better integrated than *GRAW*'s). $40 would have been just right.

DS

FINAL FANTASY FABLES: CHOCOBO TALES

■ **Publisher:** Square Enix ■ **Developer:** H.A.N.D. ■ **Players:** 1-4 ■ **ESRB:** Everyone

Not quite a page-turner

The Good: Filled with cutesy *Final Fantasy* fan service
The Bad: Too much card battling
Still No Excuse For: The crappy *Chocobo Racing* (PS1)

+ RAY: In what should come as a surprise to nobody, Square Enix's big, cute yellow wonders get another top billing in *Chocobo Tales*. This simple RPG-ish adventure features a chocobo hero traversing an island to rescue his chocobo friends from inside magical picture books. The books contain various minigames—some easy, some infuriating—that you must win to open up whatever roadblock is preventing advancement. Afterward, you fight bosses in comparatively slow card-based battles. *Tales* is essentially the *FF* version of last year's *Dragon Quest*–based *Rocket Slime*, featuring a similar story and unique boss fights. But here, the stop-and-go progression between books and battles presents an identity crisis: Is this an RPG or

another DS "minigame game"? Either way, it didn't keep my attention long.

+ MICHAEL: Judging this chocobo cash-in by its playful cover made me believe Square Enix had laid a golden egg. But after perusing this muddled tale of minigames, I discovered it's merely a decent adventure chock-full of filler. I agree with Ray: Some of the time-wasters are enjoyable, but most fail in the fun department—not good for a game that relies on the quick fix. Still, I really dug the storybook art style and presentation. It's just too bad the minigames themselves didn't receive the same creativity and craft.

+ SHANE: As a grab bag of *Final Fantasy*–themed minigames, *Chocobo*

Tales delivers all the cuddly cameos, remixed tunes, and nostalgic references that fans desire. But Ray's completely right about its lack of depth. Luckily, this bird stays aloft thanks to whimsical stylized visuals (seemingly lifted directly from the recent *FF3* DS port) and inventive, bite-sized contests that utilize the DS' touch panel and microphone. Unfortunately, the complete lack of game-sharing "download play" effectively cripples the potential for instant multiplayer fun. If Nintendo can include it in its titles, why can't Square Enix? 🐥
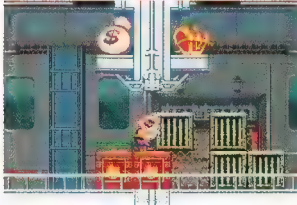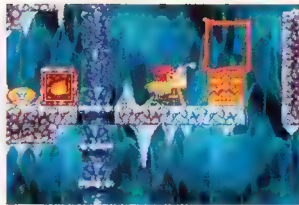
DS

WARIO: MASTER OF DISGUISE

■ **Publisher:** Nintendo ■ **Developer:** Suzak
■ **Players:** 1 ■ **ESRB:** Everyone

No disguise for mediocrity

✈ **JEREMY:** I love—*love*—Nintendo's *Wario Land* games, so just thinking about *Master of Disguise* is enough to make me sigh sadly. It's a decent enough action-platforming romp, sure, but it's clearly not the product of the real *Wario* crew. They're off buttering Nintendo's bread with *WarioWare*, and *WMD* looks every bit a B-team creation, with ugly graphics and boring sound design. Saddest of all are the constant minigames, which demonstrate the gap between this and *WarioWare* all too well; these would be embarrassing for a preschooler (connecting dots, tracing, coloring pictures, and more). The core game is OK, with big levels to explore and lots of powers for Wario to collect, but it never jells quite right. The stylus-heavy controls and largely useless powers need to be seriously streamlined. Just like with that *other* kind of WMD, anyone looking for megaton excitement here will only be disappointed by false intel.

✈ **A. FITCH:** Wow, who would've thought that

Dana Carvey would make a more competent *Master of Disguise* than Wario? Jeremy, I've put hundreds of hours into the *WarioWares*, so I feel your pain regarding the laughable microgames here. *WMD*'s platforming exploration can be fun at times, but it's marred by the craptastic costume-change stylus controls. I can't count the number of times I drew an astronaut helmet on Wario, only to see him don his "artiste" beret instead. And what's with the steaming pile of poop and fart jokes? C'mon, Nintendo—you're better than that.

✈ **G. FORD:** Man, these guys are harsh on poor Wario...but I really can't argue many of their points. At best, *WMD* is passable fun. When the stylus control works, it's a novel scheme for a platformer, especially with the disguises that make good use of it, such as the artiste's ability to draw hearts to regenerate health. But get to a boss fight and prepare for a mess when trying to quickly switch among two or three costumes. Likewise, pressing Up to jump seems to work...until you need to start making leaps with any sort of precision. Oh, and no platformer should ever have this much dialogue...at least that part is skippable.

THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10.0)

JEREMY
4.0
BAD

A. FITCH
5.0
AVERAGE

G. FORD
5.0
AVERAGE

The Good: Well...it's different
The Bad: Fussy touch-screen controls and assy graphics
We've located WMD: Wario's Mediocre Design

CUSTOM ROBO ARENA

■ **Publisher:** Nintendo ■ **Developer:** Noise (Marigul)
■ **Players:** 1-2 ■ **ESRB:** Everyone 10+

Rock Hound
STYLE: POWER
Defense
Endurance
Speed
Aerial
Chars
Attack

Can air-dash once. Tough and
sturdy with great defense.
Boosts power of parts equipped.

Gotta customize 'em all

✦ MILKMAN: Hopefully, the DS' runaway success means that more people will discover the charms of this actioncentric robot-battling RPG series (the GameCube iteration was criminally overlooked here).

With tons of unlockable, customizable parts, *Arena* is like a collection of Transformers without all the mess and clutter of real-life toys, a sort of *Armored Core* minus the micromanagement. Because each part has a unique ability, the real fun is in matching the right equipment against your opponent's weaknesses. Also, the action is spry, as the D-pad ably manages all the dashing, jumping, and attacking. It's too bad, then, that the RPG elements are so mundane, a connect-the-dots of "talk to this

character, trigger this event." Still, it's all about the combat, of which you'll find plenty, whether in story mode or wireless play. Even with dry-ass RPG elements, *Arena* is still a lot more fun than the *Mega Man Battle Network*s of the genre.

✦ A. FITCH: I'll go one step further: I had a great time with the game's single-player RPG. The action-packed story moves along briskly, so you're never sitting around waiting for something to happen. Don't just dismiss this as a kiddie "*Robokémon*," either—the script's got a touch of surprisingly grown-up wit and sass.

Oh, and leave your prejudice at the door, robophobes. I'm that rare mech-hating Japanophile (hell, I detested

Robotech as a kid), but these hunks of metal warmed even my icy heart.

✦ BROOKS: Popping my *Pokémon*-like genre cherry, *Arena*'s solid mix of robo-on-robo action and school-dazed adventure quickly put any first-time jitters to bed. I found myself turning into a business mogul, anxiously taking on tougher opponents for the monetary rewards—upgrading my robo prize fighter doesn't come cheap. The polished fighting engine steals the show, though, bringing an engrossing level of strategy to the table. Additionally, multiplayer's a blast, especially after you purchase the badass guns. Andrew, if you're taking on my three-way spreader, try actually using cover for a change.
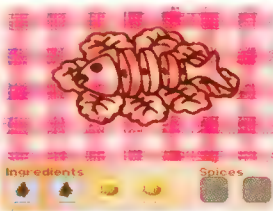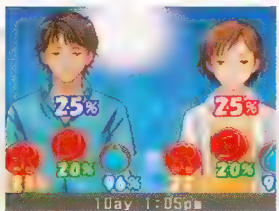
LOST IN BLUE 2

■ **Publisher:** Konami ■ **Developer:** Konami
■ **Players:** 1-2 ■ **ESRB:** Everyone 10+

Ingredients   Spices

1 Day 1:05pm

Survival borer

✦ JEREMY: *Lost in Blue 2* is basically an exercise in repetition—think of it as like the drudgery of going through the level grind in a massively multiplayer RPG. A typical day on the island involves venturing from your cave to collect fish and fruit and matériel so you can play a handful of shallow minigames. Your reward? You get to live to do it all over again. And again. Despite its monotony, the original *Lost in Blue* was creative and satisfying as you developed skills and explored the island. The sequel, unfortunately, is literally more of the same, right down to the island's layout. It was fun the first time around, but now it's just getting tedious.

Sure, you can play as either the boy or the girl now, but either way

you're saddled with a worthless A.I. companion who has the audacity to get annoyed when you ask him or her to pitch in to survive. There's no "lazy sack of crap" in "team," jerk.

✦ BROOKS: Jeremy's right. I can't help but feel cheated by this sequel that fails to improve on the original's gameplay, instead rehashing that game's frustration. I appreciate the improved graphics, as well as the continued inventive use of the stylus and microphone—building and using tools (such as fishing poles or spears) adds depth and really promotes the feeling of being a castaway. My biggest gripe, however, is that 90 percent of the action is still spent scrounging for food, thus compromising any fun I

should be having while exploring the island or punching a croc in the face.

✦ RAY: Think of this new *Blue* as a *Gilligan* version of *Harvest Moon*—while it offers some fun at first as you start to learn the game's unique mechanics, it can spiral into tedium fairly fast if you're not careful. Not that being careful is easy in the first place, what with the unending micromanagement of your characters' health stats. I know the importance of a good meal, but really, I shouldn't be spending several days trying to make up for *one* mistake in my eating habits. And when I'm fit enough to finally explore the island, I'm forced to use the sluggish, tanklike controls that feel like they're from an old 8-bit RPG.

XB360

GUITAR HERO II

■ **Publisher:** Activision ■ **ESRB:** Teen

If you don't know about this rockin' rhythm game by now, your lame meter must be cranked to 11. Don't worry—now is the best time to strap on the stringless gee-tar. The set list for the 360 version not only contains all the tracks from last year's PS2 rocker, but also provides a bunch of exclusive bonus tracks. Yeah, not all these newbies are crank-worthy ("Life Wasted" by Pearl Jam—yeck!), but at least one song is great: the metal classic "The Trooper" by Iron Maiden.

✦ **BOTTOM LINE:** Pricey ($90), but worth it... especially with downloadable songs coming.

Wii

PS3

DS/PSP

HEATSEEKER

■ **Publisher:** Codemasters ■ **ESRB:** Teen

You'd think the Wii Remote would be pretty great for a game about flying. Tilt left, bank left, everybody's happy (make sure you use "professional" controls). Or at least happy for the first two minutes, but it's all zero-G free fall after that, thanks to graphics reminiscent of the Nintendo 64 era, cheesy chatter from your C.O., and unlimited ammo to go with the (almost) unlimited waves of enemies that need shootin'. Multiplayer probably couldn't even save this one, but we wouldn't know since you won't find any here.

✦ **BOTTOM LINE:** Not the Wii flying game you're looking for.

ENCHANTED ARMS

■ **Publisher:** Ubisoft ■ **ESRB:** Teen

Enchanted Arms is yet another generic RPG—originally released on 360 last year—with misguided teens saving the world, complete with random battles and awkward dialogue scattered between boss fights and lots of exploring. The grid-based battle system and *Pokémon*-inspired golem collecting bring a little freshness—but not enough. The PS3 port adds more golems, some Sixaxis support, and extra cut-scenes. Graphically, the game just looks better on the 360, as jagged edges and some pop-up plague the action.

✦ **BOTTOM LINE:** It's a lazy port of an average game...skip it.

MARVEL TRADING CARD GAME

■ **Publisher:** Konami ■ **ESRB:** Teen

It's the real-life collectible card game, literally in videogame form. No extra RPG adventures, no animated fight scenes...this is just the actual card game on a portable screen.

✦ **BOTTOM LINE:** Without the above dressings that we've come to expect from our card-videogames (see GameCube's *Phantasy Star Online: Episode III*), we feel a little ripped off. Can't we just play the real card game for the same experience? At least you can take on other human players (the PSP game is even online compatible with the PC version), though good luck finding like-minded friends who can grasp the complex gameplay.

DS

PSP
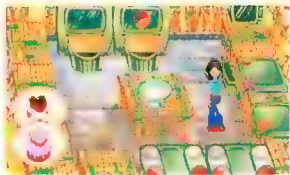
DS

CAKE MANIA
■ **Publisher:** Majesco ■ **ESRB:** Everyone

Cake Mania's roots as a Web-based casual game definitely show in this DS port. You run a bakery, prioritizing tasks such as baking, frosting, and serving cakes to a steady stream of customers, using profit to upgrade your equipment. It's simple and fun, except for one thing: The whole bakery doesn't show on the screen at once, requiring clumsy scrolling. Whether this was intentional or not, it's a stupid design flaw for an otherwise simple game.

✚ **BOTTOM LINE:** It has its limits, but at the totally reasonable $19.99 price point, *Cake Mania* is a nice portable time waster.

CALL OF DUTY: ROADS TO VICTORY
■ **Publisher:** Activision ■ **ESRB:** Teen

Call of Duty's PSP debut features great variety like its console counterparts, but it's too limited in terms of creativity or skill. The charitable autoaim takes the joy out of the kill, and the line to victory usually follows one obvious path. It does look sharp, and the voice acting and audio are great, but the inability to throw a grenade while moving (the default setting) will make you feel inept.

✚ **BOTTOM LINE:** The PSP is now officially under attack from World War II titles (*Medal of Honor* recently joined the handheld party), and *Call of Duty*'s effort is a fun, if unspectacular, time eater.

KONAMI CLASSICS SERIES: ARCADE HITS
■ **Publisher:** Konami ■ **ESRB:** Everyone 10+

Everyone who intends to release a classics compilation needs to take notice of *Konami Classics*, because it is the classiest anthology ever published. Every game is lavished with original art, a jukebox, even a zoomable photo of the original arcade board—with working dip switches! Unfortunately, with few exceptions, the games are clunky and primitive—hardly deserving of this level of care. And since most of them were vertically oriented, they're squashed to fit the screen.

✚ **BOTTOM LINE:** Fun for retro fans, but a little like putting the Mona Lisa's frame around a velvet painting of dogs playing poker.
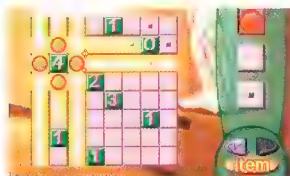
DS

BRAIN BUSTER: PUZZLE PAK
■ **Publisher:** Agetec ■ **ESRB:** Everyone

Brain Buster's name doesn't lie—*Brain Age*'s first-grade arithmetic feels like a mere warmup for these hardcore mental calisthenics. Sudoku's just the beginning—fans of that numerical logic puzzle will love the four additional types (Kakuro, Slitherlink, Light On, and Nurikabe, if you're keeping track) included. With 50 levels of each, your brain should be plenty busted before you're through here.

✚ **BOTTOM LINE:** OK, so it's a bit low-rent, with its own knock-off brain doctor, but the puzzles are plentiful and challenging, which is all a true brainiac needs.

On the DL
Some downloadable games worth your space bucks...or not

WORTHY WINNERS

CALLING ALL CARS (PS3)
■ **Pub:** Sony CEA
■ **Price:** Under $10
*God of War* creator David Jaffe's first small-time

game is a great catch—sending crooks to the slammer sounds simple (and it is), but the frantic cartoony combat is addicting.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES (XB360)
■ **Pub:** Ubisoft
■ **Price:** $5
This is Live Arcade at its best. A beloved classic,

four-player online multiplayer, and a low price point. Can you think of a good reason *not* to pick this up? Didn't think so.
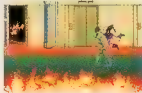
OTHER WINNERS:
> **ALIEN HOMINID HD (XB360)**
■ **Pub:** The Behemoth ■ **Price:** $10
> **ZELDA: THE OCARINA OF TIME (Wii)**
■ **Pub:** Nintendo ■ **Price:** $10
> **SPLATTERHOUSE (Wii)**
■ **Pub:** Namco Bandai ■ **Price:** $6

LOUSY LOSERS

BIO-HAZARD BATTLE (Wii)
■ **Pub:** Sega
■ **Price:** $8
With all the excellent shooters available for

the Genesis, Sega opts to dredge up this uninspired ecology-themed dud? Save your cash for *Thunder Force III* or *M.U.S.H.A.*

CHEW MAN FU (Wii)
■ **Pub:** Hudson
■ **Price:** $6
This quirky yet crappy puzzler tasks you with protecting the

world's supply of egg rolls and fried rice by clumsily pushing balls into like-colored holes. 550 stages of this? Hell to the no.

OTHER LOSERS:
> **THE LEGEND OF KAGE (Wii)**
■ **Pub:** Taito ■ **Price:** $5
> **SWORD OF VERMILION (Wii)**
■ **Pub:** Sega ■ **Price:** $8
> **DOUBLE DUNGEONS (Wii)**
■ **Pub:** NEC ■ **Price:** $6

THE SALES CHART
Amazon.com's Top 20 for Feb/Mar

#	Name	Platform	EGM Scores
1	**Crackdown** — Hopping around the city is cool...until your cop caps his criminal-busting skills. Well, the soon-to-come downloadable content should (hopefully) fix that.	XB360	9.0 8.5 7.5
2	**Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day!**	DS	8.5 9.0 9.5
3	**The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess**	Wii	10 10 10
4	**Diddy Kong Racing DS**	DS	5.0 6.0 5.5
5	**Final Fantasy VI Advance**	GBA	Not Reviewed
6	**New Super Mario Bros.**	DS	9.5 10 8.0
7	**Gears of War** — Last month, Q-Mann said that we'd see new maps and modes for *Gears'* multiplayer. So, uh, will you just announce them already, Microsoft?	XB360	10 9.5 9.0
8	**WarioWare: Smooth Moves**	Wii	8.0 8.5 7.5
9	**Sonic and the Secret Rings**	Wii	7.5 6.0 6.0
10	**Mario Kart DS**	DS	9.0 8.5 8.5
11	**Big Brain Academy**	DS	9.0 8.5 7.5
12	**Hotel Dusk: Room 215**	DS	8.0 8.0 10
13	**The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess**	GC	Not Reviewed
14	**Lost Planet: Extreme Condition**	XB360	6.5 8.0 7.5
15	**Rainbow Six: Vegas**	XB360	8.5 7.0 8.5
16	**God of War** — A *GOW* movie may be coming, but who will play Kratos? Creator David Jaffe told *Entertainment Weekly* he wants Djimon Hounsou (*Blood Diamond*).	PS2	10 9.5 10
17	**Kirby Squeak Squad**	DS	7.0 7.0 6.0
18	**Rayman: Raving Rabbids**	Wii	7.0 7.5 7.5
19	**Resistance: Fall of Man** — Still playing *Resistance*? If not, maybe this will make you raise this shooter again: Sony is planning to release new multiplayer maps in May.	PS3	8.5 8.0 9.0
20	**Animal Crossing: Wild World**	DS	7.5 7.0 9.0

The Future of Videogames

+ SEANBABY'S REST OF THE CRAP

Devices of Future Past

Before their time and still crap

Seanbaby is the result of a childhood trauma that must be avenged. He likes movies about Rambo and food about meat.

IN OUR STATE-OF-THE-ART VID-EOGAME INDUSTRY, our socks are in a constant state of exploded. Since the first days of electronic entertainment, impossible new devices have promised us impossible new futures. Unfortunately, when Jean-Claude Van Damme became a Timecop in the year 19Holy-Crap, he took an oath to protect the time stream from innovations it wasn't ready for. He alone is the reason that every videogame peripheral that seemed too fantastic to be true actually was. He Timecopped

through time illegally arresting futuristic inventors, sabotaging production, and whenever a sassy female reporter got too close to the story, he did the splits at her. Jean-Claude Van Damme is the reason one half of the Wii controller is a breast pump and

why Sega VR Helmets smell like turn-of-the-century hot dog juice. Also, why so much hot dog juice is missing from history. The following are eight more videogame technologies it was his duty to ruin in order to save us from ourselves.

> **Jean-Claude Van Damme is the reason one half of the Wii controller is a breast pump.**
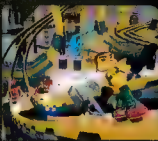
PAGE 94
Retro:
The history
of the future

PAGE 96
Grudge:
Box office
beatdown

PAGE 99
Hsu & Chan:
Our heroes
go all 3D

Mindlink

Console: Atari 2600 • **Year:** 1984

The Mindlink was a brain-operated controller that strapped to the user's head and translated brainwaves and facial movements into useless frustration. It worked especially well with *Custer's Revenge*, an adult game themed around General Custer sexually assaulting a captive Native American. Thanks to a little-known fail-safe called "Robo Directive One," once the Mindlink sensed a *Custer's Revenge* player's thoughts, it self-destructed, destroying the user's face and brain. This was one of many reasons it was never released for the consumer market, and the entire reason it received the Nobel Prize for Pervert Murder from the FBI.

R.O.B. (Robotic Operated Buddy)

Console: NES • **Year:** 1985

R.O.B. disappointed anyone unlucky enough to purchase an NES that included him. R.O.B. only followed orders given to him by flashing lights. R.O.B. was a crime against nature and technology. Somehow, R.O.B. knew this. R.O.B. was cheap plastic designed more for the clumsy hedonism of robot handjobbery than the subtle precision of videogaming. R.O.B. also knew this. Keep strokable appendages out of R.O.B.'s grip. R.O.B. was never programmed to deal with failure. If R.O.B. could, R.O.B. would cry. R.O.B. can't do anything right. R.O.B. isn't in any way anyone's buddy. If R.O.B. made toast, other toasters would still not consider R.O.B. their brother.

Roll & Rocker

Console: NES • **Year:** 1989

Imagine a controller where your entire body takes the place of your left thumb! Now pretend something's wrong with it! And you! You've just pictured the Roll & Rocker, a wobbly platform gamers stood on. For no reason. And I don't mean not any GOOD reason. I mean, literally, NO reason. It didn't control games, it just wobbled while you played with a normal controller. Luckily, the manufacturer never released its follow-up products, Scream Helmet, the helmet that screams, or Nintenduck, the box of live ducks for use with your NES.

> I CAN BE A NERD, TOO!

NES Hands-Free Controller
Console: NES • **Year:** 1989

This nonprofit device from Nintendo allowed the handicapped access to an NES through a chin-manipulated joystick and an air tube. This kid still can't walk, but hey, he can suck a Power Glove through a straw.

U-Force

Console: NES • **Year:** 1989

Through invisible sensors alone, players would be able to control all their favorite games! You know, when the crossbow was invented, someone near it proclaimed, "Surely a weapon so terrible as this will be the end of all wars." I'd like to think if historians hung around Nintendos more often, we'd have heard someone at the U-Force's debut saying, "Surely a peripheral so terrible as this will be the end of all fun." As a controller, the U-Force worked about as well as pounding on a lobster tank. You can sort of tell you're doing something, but good luck getting your intentions across.

Activator

Console: Genesis • **Year:** 1993

Stand in an octagon and control games by hitting lasers with punches and kicks! The geniuses picturing this as the future of gaming clearly didn't foresee the 60 percent obesity rate that went along with it. If a controller's smart enough to know the difference between a flapping arm and a flapping love handle, it's too crafty to trust with lasers. It's another example of how fat is nature's way of saying you don't deserve the awesome. Upon reflection, I'd like to apologize to the overweight community for butter's irresistibility, and the future would like to apologize to 1993 for the Sega Activator.

The Interactor

Consoles: SNES/Genesis • **Year:** 1994

In 1994, no one could've imagined a big, stupid, jittering vest controller was right around the corner. Back then, if you wanted a Tomb Raider, you had to wear a bra and watch *Indiana Jones*, and yet there we were, entering an era of vests that vibrated. Before the Interactor, the only way to get shaking in your games was to catch Parkinson's or play Sega on a motorcycle. The Interactor's only downside was that gamers are usually filled with Mountain Dew and candy, and when you put those into an intestine and shake it, that's more bioterrorism than entertainment.

Bio Sensor

Console: N64 • **Year:** 1998

The Bio Sensor was designed to read your biorhythms by attaching a wire with an alligator clip to your ear. Looking back, this is a baffling design decision, since a rectal thermometer would have been twice as accurate and three times as comfortable. The sensor was only compatible with the Japanese version of *Tetris 64*, and its only application was adjusting the game's difficulty based on how much your ear registered panic. Which wasn't exactly fair, as you'll realize if you ever find yourself clamped to a Nintendo 64 by your earlobe, trying not to freak out about the mess your life has become. 🎮

10 Years From Now...
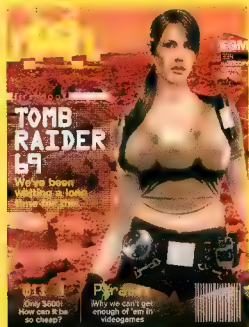
Where were we then?

Ever wish you could go back to the days of simple 3D gaming? *EGM* flashes back to reminiscence on the good ol' days...before *Halo* 'roids, holographic burn-in, and the 60 percent Universal Connectivity Tax bogged down the fun. Plus, we take a look back at the great Internet meltdown of 2008—could anyone have seen it coming? We talk to a few lucky survivors who toughed it out during the Intertube turmoil.

Living the dream

Sega shocked the industry in 2016 when it reentered the console market after sitting on the sidelines for 15 years. Now what? In our exclusive interview with Sega, we ask.

Lifestyles

We give five lucky guys the chance to try Xbox Date! for a month. Does it work? How did the SexBox controller perform? Thrill to the ups and downs of Microsoft-mitigated courtship in our sexy two-page spread.

**The Future of Videogames**

✦ RETRO

Utopia or Dystopia?

The bastards blew it up

By Jeremy Parish

We predict you will learn more about the crappy future of *Shadowrun* by watching the Retronauts Bonus Stage video podcast. Watch this and other past discussions at bonusstage.1UP .com

IS YOUR VISION OF THE FUTURE a shiny world of organic cities and fabulous flying cars? Or is it a dank hell of fallout and concrete? Videogames have their share of both, doled out in plentiful quantities. But which is more common—the happy, utopian vision or grim, dystopian death? We've selected a random sampling of classic games to examine their vision of the future and determine once and for all whether game developers think the glass is half-full, half-empty, or blackened beyond redemption by a global nuclear exchange.
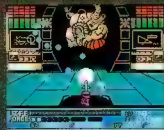
CRYSTALIS
(NES, 1990)
SNK's answer to *Zelda* took place far in the future—and not a happy one, thanks to October 1, 1997 and its so-called "End Day," a nuclear holocaust that knocked humanity from top of the food chain to huddled masses yearning to breathe free of the tigermen, slimes, and giant bugs.

Dystopia: A terrible place to live, even if the apocalyptic flying supercomputer fortress is an interesting conversation piece. And humanity's newfound telepathy mutation *seems* cool...until you remember that role-playing-game characters have one line of dialogue apiece.

RATCHET & CLANK
(PS2, 2002)

Gleaming and shiny, the future in which Ratchet and Clank live is all squeaky clean, but without the usual jackboot fascism that normally lurks beneath the happy surface. The only bumpy part is the occasional megalomaniac who wishes to mess with the galactic mellowness with schemes for total domination.

Utopia: Aside from the fact that humans seem to be almost completely absent from this future—leaving open the grim possibility that they all went furry—Ratchet's universe is bubbly. If not for those evil robotic Britney Spears clones who want to destroy all organic life, it would be downright perfect.
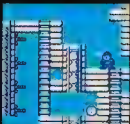
MEGA MAN
(NES, 1987)

Mega Man was born into a world of everlasting peace, an idyll shattered only once a year by the depressingly predictable Dr. Wily and his mad plan to rule Earth by building robots and hidden rooms to house them. Right. Of course, later *Mega Man* games eventually went and wiped out the whole human race, but back in the old days of 200X? It was pure happiness and (doctor) light.

Utopia: Colorful and full of cuddly (if sometimes evil) robots—what's not to like? But who the hell calls a major city "Monsteropolis"? That's just *asking* for trouble.

METAL GEAR SOLID 2
(PS2, 2001)

Metal Gear Solid 2 took place in a grim rendition of 2009, where the President is installed by a secret cabal and the world lives in fear of terrorism and rogue ex-Soviet factions. OK, so maybe it's not terribly far off from reality...but the idea that every country has access to portable nuclear weapons? Hmm, not exactly a peachy place to live.

Dystopia: Apart from the threat of nuclear annihilation, we have the small issue of an ex-President having the current Crotchgrabber-in-Chief killed before flattening lower Manhattan. That's not very constitutional, Mr. President.

CHRONO TRIGGER
(SNES, 1995)

Millions of years ago, an alien astronaut burrowed into the earth, spent a few epochs manipulating humanity, then wiped out the species in 1999. The few survivors cling to existence in filthy domes where machines keep their nutrients up, but their appetites unsatisfied. Worst of all, some jackoff named Johnny forces anyone who uses the highway to compete in horrible racing minigames.

Dystopia: Unless you really dig wearing tattered rags and living in fetid starvation, *Chrono Trigger's* future is probably not the reality you're looking for.

SNATCHER
(Sega CD, 1994)

Hideo Kojima doesn't have a very positive outlook on the future, it seems. Besides *Metal Gear's* "nukes for everyone" unhappiness, he also concocted the tale of *Snatcher* and its evil robots with a predilection for killing and replacing hapless citizens. It's a little *Blade Runner*, a little bit of the Japanese anime *Bubblegum Crisis*, and all very unhappy. Not even innocent dogs are safe from the ravages of the snatchers!

Dystopia: The only joy to be found in *Snatcher's* world is hanging out with a baby Metal Gear and visiting Konami-themed costume bars. That's pretty damn bleak.

SHADOWRUN
(Genesis, 1994)

Shadowrun takes place in a cyberpunk future. An important thing to know about cyberpunk futures is that *none of them are very nice, ever.* For instance, you have a human race that's started to mutate into goblins and orcs due to high magical background radiation. And the ones who aren't affected are just as likely to be turned into vampires by a mutagenic pandemic. So when your hero's brother is slaughtered one day, it's almost like a lucky break for him. And that, friends, is no way to live.

Dystopia: The future pretty much sucks, but at least its Internet is way awesome.

F-ZERO
(SNES, 1991)

Nintendo's slick SNES racer took place in a future where humanity had learned to stop worrying and start loving alien invaders. And to prove their love, they built lots of fancy racetracks for aliens to race their fancy hovercrafts on. A world in which intergalactic peace is preserved by neon NASCAR may not be everyone's idea of ideal, but at least it's friendly.

Utopia: *F-Zero's* story is pretty vague—so for all we really know, the world outside the racetrack is actually a bombed-out husk of radioactive death. But any society in which you rise to the top by racing awesomely can't be too terrible.

> THE FINAL RESULT

Three utopian futures versus five dystopian realities. That's not very encouraging! Especially since videogames are so good at brainwashing innocent children. We're teaching an entire generation to abandon hope. But at least they'll have fun learning to be nihilists.
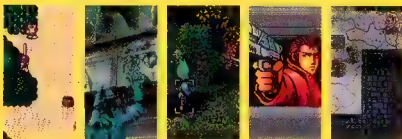
"Future" games
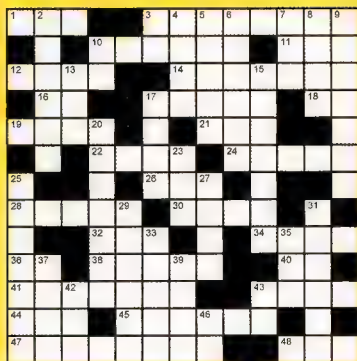
ACROSS

1. Xbox 360 *Phantasy Star*, for short
3. Future-themed cartoon-turned-game
10. *Halo* handheld firearm
11. *Virtual On* (Saturn) robot Bal-_-Bow
12. Defender of the future, according to PS2 title
14. Goes on the offensive
16. *Back _ the Future* (NES)
17. Possessed furniture in *Splatterhouse* (TG-16)
18. *Chrono Cross* Kid's favorite word
19. Giant winged insect of *Lost Planet*
21. *Le Mans 24 Hours* V12 BMW
22. *R-Type* developer
24. *Legends of the Diamond*'s (NES) Hank
26. Spidey's main tool
28. Red *Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3* ninja
30. *Crackdown* group
32. *MLB*'s Ripken
34. PS2's *Project* or 3DO's *Lost*
36. Nuon's *Freefall 3050 _*
38. *Fire Emblem: The Sacred Stones* shaman
40. PS2 *Unreal*, for short
41. Xbox Live communiqué
43. *Madden* route
44. "Friend" to *X-Men*'s Gambit
45. Plays *DDR*?
47. *Medal of Honor* D-Day locale
48. PS2 surround-sound type

DOWN

2. Future PS3/Xbox 360 title *Dark _*
3. TG-16 *Street Fighter*, for short
4. *Fugitive Hunter* venue state
5. Future-themed movie-turned-game _ *Recall*
6. Old-school role-playing-game series
7. *Taiko Drum Master* song
8. *Final Fantasy VII* energy liquid
9. Maps controller buttons?
10. PSP *Metal Gear* subtitle, for short
13. Barracks bed in *Metal Gear Solid*
15. Mode in Dreamcast space shooter *Mars Matrix*?
17. Represents life remaining in *Star Control*
20. Steals a car in *Crackdown*
23. *Family Guy* (PS2) girl
25. Futuristic robot-spattered series
27. Katamari, put simply
29. *SSX Blur*'s Elise resides here
31. Xbox's _ _ *Radio Future*
33. X-Man Wolverine's other name
35. TurboGrafx-CD–integrated system
37. Trial version of a game
39. Rent a game out to a friend?
42. *Gran Turismo 4* souped-up Civic
43. Sony's first console, for short

That's Entertainment

Playing out the silver screen

Games are already tearing chunks out of movie profits. But, in 10 years, will anyone even need movies? Let's all go to the lobby...and have ourselves a Grudge Match!

Games VS. Movies

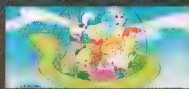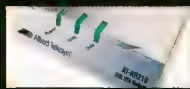|	Games	Movies
Subject Matter	War, football, *Final Fantasy* — **Advantage: Tie**	Any bad money-making concept — **Advantage: Tie (movie-based games level the playing field)**
Human Interaction	Let you create your own characters and storyline	The ol' popcorn surprise trick is pretty timeless.... **Advantage: Movies**
Cost	Games have been $50 since the '80s, so we're gonna say...$50 **Advantage: Games**	A small fortune for tickets and hovercar parking
Accessibility	Maybe digital distribution will actually become a reality **Advantage: Tie**	Ditto **Advantage: Tie**
Reusability	Alternate endings, hidden goodies **Advantage: Games**	One ending—take it or leave it

Winner: Games

So don't come to us in 10 years complaining you never got to see *House Party 2* before it was declared obsolete—we warned ya!
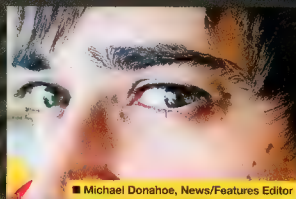
Future Proofing

Looking into *EGM*'s crystal ball

Old man of the office Senior Editor Crispin Boyer (who edited our future-shocked cover story) and News/Features Editor Michael Donahoe, *EGM*'s youngest buck, debate tomorrow's gaming landscape today

The **Future** of Videogames
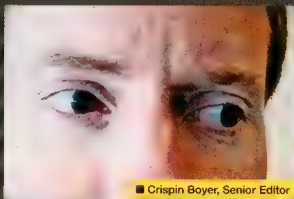
■ Crispin Boyer, Senior Editor

■ Michael Donahoe, News/Features Editor

Who's going to be the console champ 20 years from now?

Kraft Foods: It'll be, without a doubt, the new consumer electronics division of Kraft Foods. Seriously, who knows? If you had asked that same question in 1987—back when Nintendo and Sega were at each other's throats—would anyone have guessed Sony and Microsoft would be battling for market supremacy today? Anything can happen in 20 years. Maybe it'll be Halliburton.

Microsotendo: I figure two decades from now, Microsoft, Sony, and Nintendo will realize duking it out just doesn't work. So instead continuing to fight a futile war, the three companies will merge together. And like Voltron, the force of this monstrous monopoly will not be stopped. Unless Viacom, Disney, and Fox merge to form a robot, too—then they're f***ed.

How will we be controlling videogames then?

Thought Input: We're always going to have joypads—how else will we play PS2 titles on our backward-compatible PS9? But voice-recognition and motion-based tech will keep evolving to a point where we won't need to hold anything—we'll just spaz in front of our console's sensors. Thought input seems like the next frontier...so long as gamers don't mind wearing hair-mussing helmets.

Controllers (hopefully): Man, I really don't want controllers to get chucked in favor of wacky wonder helmets. Not that I'm against playing games with your mind or anything. In fact, I think bending your brain to shoot bad guys sounds kinda cool. So why do I hope controllers stick around? Well, when you're playing with your mind, it's hard to make up excuses about why you suck.

Franchise you hope will still be around in the far future?

Halo: Eventually it'll go from being this futuristic soldier-versus-alien shooter series to a contemporary look at our own raging intergalactic war to a gripping history-based battle saga, kind of like all those World War II shooters we play now. It'll seem so real that veterans of the space war will have flashbacks when punk kids hand them their asses and drop F-bombs on Xbox Live.

Street Fighter: I'd be stoked if Capcom kept the *Street Fighter* series alive and kicking. Merely in hopes that it will get to the point where we're actually physically throwing fireballs while hollering "Hadoken." We can even dress like the characters, too! And then we'll physically fight our friends to see who the real warrior is. Wait, what am I saying? I'd never do cosplay...even in the future.

Science-fiction videogame thing you'd most like to see come true?

Holodeck: That's easy—*Star Trek*'s holodeck! And not just for its obvious gaming and virtual-sexy-time applications. Holodecks just seem so practical. I'm gonna use mine to wash my dishes and make burritos. And I want to answer the question that's been nagging me for 20 years: If you take a dump in the holodeck, where's it go when you flush the toilet? Answer me, future!

Scan Visor: I'd have to go with the all-knowing scan visor from the *Metroid Prime* series. Having one of those glued to your noggin is like having a Wikipedia entry appear over everything you look at—great for people like me who forget people's names. "No, I'm not scanning you, Mr. Shoe Hsu, I totally remembered your name." Plus, I bet that thing has real X-ray vision—saucy!

World-Exclusive Intel

June Issue (#216) • On sale May 8

> PREVIEWS

- ■ **Manhunt 2 (Wii/PS2/PSP)**
- ■ Lair (PS3)
- ■ Too Human (XB360)
- ■ Blue Dragon (XB360)

A WAR UNLIKE ANYTHING YOU'VE EVER PLAYED

In our next issue, we'll have the world-exclusive first look at the next game in Ubisoft's renowned **Tom Clancy** military franchise. But this isn't just another *Ghost Recon* or *Rainbow Six*–style shooter. No, sir—we're talking a whole new battlefield, complete with all-new gameplay that's too exclusive to reveal at this point in time. All we can tell you is that Clancy's next project aims to take full advantage of the latest technology—and it'll change they way you'll play war games.

Next month, we also get some face time with the father of *Final Fantasy*, Hironobu Sakaguchi, who discusses some of his current and future role-playing projects, including 360 exclusives **Blue Dragon** and **Lost Odyssey**. But perhaps the most tantalizing tidbit: Sakaguchi tells us why he'll never, ever make a game for the PlayStation 3. Want something even more controversial? We'll lift the veil on Rockstar's gruesome **Manhunt 2**. Expect more stealth, horror, and cold-blooded murder on the PS2, PSP, and—gulp—the family-friendly Wii. We'll also be checking in on the progress of another scandalous project—**Too Human**, Silicon Knights' ambitious Xbox 360 action/adventure trilogy. From its promising debut on *EGM's* May 2006 cover to its disappointing playable state at last year's E3 trade show, this game's development has been...dramatic, to say the least.

And on the review side of things, the long-awaited **Pokémon Diamond/Pearl** finally makes its way to U.S. soil. With online play, Wi-Fi monster trading, and 107 new critters to enslave, it's no surprise that this cuddly juggernaut quickly became the best-selling DS game in Japan. Will our reviewers still feel compelled to catch 'em all after all these years? All this and more in 30....

(All planned editorial content is subject to change.)

> REVIEWS

- ■ **Pokémon Diamond/Pearl (DS)**
- ■ Forza Motorsport 2 (XB360)
- ■ Spider-Man 3 (Multi)
- ■ Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars (XB360)

> CROSSWORD SOLUTION

Answers to **"Future"** Games
on page 96