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INSIDE:

PS3 AND 360...
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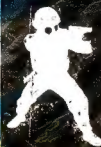
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3-PAGE WORLD EXCLUSIVE

Tom Clancy's **ENDWAR**



It's World War III, and
Tom Clancy's hitting up
a whole new genre on
the **Xbox 360** and **PS3**

THE NEXT GOD OF WAR

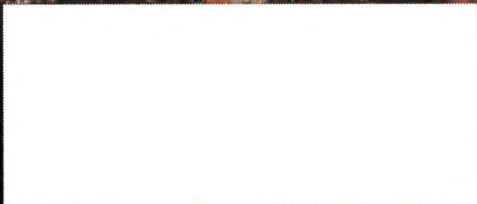
Chains of Olympus for PSP revealed!

"I DON'T LIKE KUTARAGI"

Interview: The creator of Final Fantasy disses Sony

FRACTURE PREVIEW

A groundbreaking new shooter from the makers of MechAssault



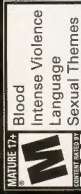
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PlayStation 2

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CONTENTS

issue 216 • june 2007



74

Cover Story: Tom Clancy's EndWar

Directing your troops with a controller is so 2006—in this futuristic tactical war game, you can command your legions with voice alone



15 God of War: Chains of Olympus

22 360/PS3: Buy or wait?

> LETTERS

12 In Soviet Russia, letter writes you

> PRESS START

16 **Exclusive: God of War: Chains of Olympus**
The portable world just got a whole lot bloodier...

22 **Works in Progress**
Keep an eye on the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3—they're changing

> FOREIGN OBJECT

32 **Preview: Fracture**
This shooter from the Mech-Assault guys breaks new ground

38 **Online Scene**
Check out what developers are praising—or whining about

> PREVIEWS

42 **Preview: Manhunt 2**
The Wii steps into Mature-rated territory—take that, politicians!

46 **The Big Ones**
Grand Theft Auto IV goes under the EGM microscope

48 **Interview: Hironobu Sakaguchi**
Why does the creator of *Final Fantasy* hate the PS3?

54 **Rumor Mill**
The Q-Man reveals where *Dead or Alive* will bounce to next

56 **Take This Job**
Learn what it takes to break into the world of public relations

58 **Coming Soon**
Games that defy the so-called "summer drought"

> REVIEWS

82 **Reviews Intro**

84 **F.E.A.R.**

86 **Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars**

89 **Monster Madness: Battle for Suburbia**

90 **Dawn of Mana**

91 **Atelier Iris 3: Grand Fantasm**

92 **.hack//G.U. Vol. 2: Reminiscence**

92 **Etrian Odyssey**

93 **Time Ace**

94 **Brook-Talk High**

95 **Coded Arms: Contagion**

96 **Reviews Wrap-Up**

> GAME OVER

98 **Seanbaby's Rest of the Crap**
Why is Seanbaby interested in playing with dolls? Isn't that sort of, uh, creepy?

100 **Retro: Grappling With Greatness**
Games that feature the infamous "grapple" are destined to be remembered

102 **Crossword/Gruge Match**
EGM's final crossword puzzle? Say it ain't so!

105 **Next Month**

106 **Hsu & Chan**

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Go Team! (Part 2)



TWO ISSUES AGO, I STARTED an editorial recognizing the members of Team EGM, but I didn't get a chance to finish because I ran out of time. Here's part two of my attempt to butter up my staff...

Mike (assistant art director) is a real find. He does layout, he illustrates, he conceals art ideas, and he nerds with the best of 'em (he's my personal Wikipedia for all things superheroes). **Monique** (art director) is our cheerful boss of all things design and art related. She conceals ideas, creates our covers, picks our fonts, and does layout as well. If it weren't for her creativity, enthusiasm, and attention to detail, our pages would look like random, pasted-together ransom notes (which actually might be kinda cool, now that I think about it). **Joy** (our new art intern) rounds out the art team. She just started, but she's so competent and dependable (so far—we're keeping an eye on her) that she'll have a legit gig in no time.

Jennifer (managing editor) is critical to EGM—no exaggeration. She makes sure we all meet our deadlines (yes, me included). She ensures the magazine is finished on time, plans out where everything goes in each issue, and is an eagle-eye editor, to boot! We'd be a mess—and probably on fire—without her. Finally, we have **Crispin** (senior editor). I saved him for last, not just out of respect for my elders, but because he's been at EGM longer than anyone in our 18-year history. Over his 10 years with the mag, he's reviewed countless games, edited countless articles, and contributed countless stories that really set us apart from the competition. Anything cool or culturally relevant that you read here that's not a preview or review, Crispin's probably responsible for it. And you gotta give props to any dude who can work here for over a decade—'cause you never know when he'll snap and go postal on you.

Thanks, all you EGMers (including the last group: Bryan, Shane, Michael, Greg, and Brooks). You make the mag what it is today. —Dan "Shoe" Hsu, Editor-in-Chief

electronic gaming monthly



60 Feature: PS3's difference makers



52 Fracture



48 Interview: Sakaguchi

THIS MONTH'S EGM EXTRAS

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EndWar Videos
Catch an exclusive glimpse of Ubisoft's upcoming Tom Clancy-approved tactical-warfare sim.



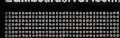
BattleStation! Redux
Go online for a special extra-long director's cut of our controversial interview with Sony CEA CEO Jack Tretton.

Gettin' a 1UP! Misty
Head to 1UP for sexy new videos of Mistwalker's Xbox 360 Japanese RPGs: *Blue Dragon* and *Lost Odyssey*.

PS3 Pontification
Snag video clips of all the PS3 exclusives featured in this issue, along with a special *EGM Live!* podcast in which we yap about 'em.



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



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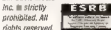
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LETTERS

▷ april's fools, dissing dyack, and home for the holidays

▷ TRIVIAL ISSUE

This month's EGM question:

What unlikely series served as the inspiration for Tom Clancy's *EndWar*?

E-mail the answer to EGM@ziffdavis.com

(subject head:

Trivia: EGM #216) for a chance to win something potentially enjoyable.

Link to the answer to EGM #216: <http://www.ign.com/articles/2008/04/16/egm-trivia-answers>

Letter of the Month

A leek to the past

I'm a student at Red River College in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. My subject is the culinary arts. Just recently, we were creating some aspic (a clear edible gelatin) plates. You make a layer of aspic, place cut vegetables in artistic ways on said aspic, and then pour and cover more of the gelatin on top, thus freezing your image in time. I wasn't feeling much inspiration for the typical designs and decided to make something that no one else would: Link from the *Zelda* series, 8-bit style. It's made up of 185 small squares of leeks (green), carrots (orange), turnips (white), and yellow bell peppers (yellow). It was painstaking, and the final piece suffered from some drifting, but I'm pretty proud of it and thought you guys might like to take a look.

—Donovan MacLure

You know, nothing goes down better after an all-night gaming session than a nice dish of turnip-infused meat jelly. Nice work, Donovan. You know, if you actually eat it, you'll steal all of Link's powers. It's true.

The 4/1 one

I've been a loyal subscriber to your magazine for over 10 years. You've pulled off some convincing April Fools' jokes in the past, but this year's (*EGM* #214) was way too obvious. C'mon, *Mushroom Kingdom Hearts*? Who did you expect to fool with that one?

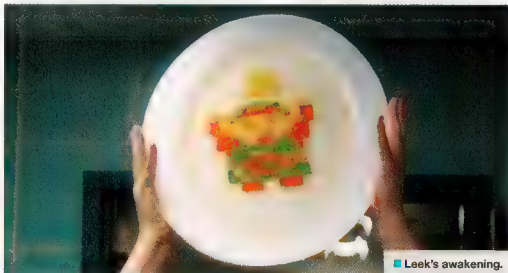
—Mike Whiston

This guy:

Honestly, I was a little bit on the fence about the Wii. That is, until I saw your preview of *Mushroom Kingdom Hearts*! At that very moment, I knew that I had to pick one of those bad boys up. The only problem was that, well, I bounced my rent check for the second month in a row. Now I'm rocking out on some *Wii Play* in my parents' basement until 2008 (when I can play the single greatest game ever). And although I'll miss my girlfriend and our cat Sora (no relation to the *Kingdom Hearts* hero), neither of them can pull a Trinity Attack with *Samus Effing Aran* (who, you know, has to be in there). So thanks for the



For writing this month's winning letter, Donovan receives a scintillating prize.



Leek's awakening.

breaking news, and I can't wait to see more coverage and to witness how Ganondorf and Bowser measure up to the power of the keyblade.

—Name withheld

But not this guy:

Mushroom Kingdom Hearts looks good. Hopefully, it will come out for my Sega Neptune or iGame. That is, if I can tear myself away from *Astro* long enough to play it.

—JC Foster

Well played, sir. Well played indeed.

Brazilian whacks

I was quoted in your gaming-around-the-world story (*EGM* #214) as saying that Brazilians don't like games that "use the brain," and I fear that my joke

was lost in translation (remember, I learned English from game manuals). What I meant to say is that Brazilians like games with "more intensity."

—Pietro Marafija Monteiro

No harm done, Pietro. We're sure no one really thought Brazilians were lacking in the brain department. After all, you have to be a friggin' genius to come up with the idea of a restaurant where all the meat is served off of swords. Hooray, swordmeat!

More Dyack flack

After listening to March 12's *EGM Live** podcast, I found myself so infuriated that I had to voice my opinion. I can't believe [Silicon Knights president] Denis Dyack is so clueless as to how criticism is supposed to work; he

FABIO TO THE-OR

Ask an EGM cover model

Dear Fabio: I've suffered from asthma my entire life, and it's taken a toll on my body. I need to start losing weight, but it's hard for me to commit to an exercise routine. Do you have any advice that can help me stick to a plan?

—Felix

Fabio responds: Any trained professional can design a routine for you, but none of them will work until you change your mindset. Only when you are ready to commit to a workout routine will you begin to see results. Set small goals for yourself. Positive results will create a positive mindset. Good luck.

Have a question about games, developer interviews, or anything else for Fabio? (He's real!) Who's appeared in the cover of EGM? Please send to EGM@ziffdavis.com subject: Fabio, [name], [email]

Fabio: a paradise unto himself.

Show





■ Hell hath no fury like a Silicon Knight scorned.

repeatedly said that he wanted EGM to be more critical in its previews, yet he somehow took offense to previous critical reaction to [an early version] of *Too Human* that he admitted probably should not have been shown in public. While I have occasional problems with some of the preview and review crews' opinions, this is to be expected. After all, it is extremely arrogant to think that everyone else's opinions would match my own. Why is it that Dyack can't admit that a reviewer for *Too Human* had an opinion that he did not expect? He kept trying to veil his insults, saying (I'm paraphrasing), "I'm afraid for the negative reaction EGM will receive when the game is released." Why is he afraid of the effect the preview would have on the readers? I am insulted that Dyack thinks I am a mere "sheep" who cannot think for himself and will slavishly follow someone else's opinion.

—Jeffrey Hanson

Wait, are you saying we don't control your buying decisions with our cranium-melting power of our sturdy, fearsome writing? Aw, man. We really need to have a talk with the bastards who are supposed to be putting the subliminal messages into the magazine. It's not working.

Meanwhile, for a somewhat more blunt perspective, check out how this guy put it:

That *Too Human* developer guy was a dick on EGM Live? Why couldn't he get what Mark was saying? If I showed you one of my turds on Monday, I wouldn't expect you to say it was great, even if I promise you it's going to be a flower by Friday.

—William Clifton

Thank you, William, for an image that we will never be able to scrub from our subconscious.



Gift horses...and the dental records thread

Before now, I didn't think the PlayStation 3 was worth as much as a core Xbox 360, let alone \$600. However, recently, Sony debuted its plans for Home. This, coupled up with the future releases the PS3 has on track (*Metal Gear Solid 4*, *LittleBigPlanet*, etc.) and what's out now (*Virtua Fighter 5* and, um...yeah) has got me thinking about getting one. However, when I look into what the community thinks, I see a lot of negativity. I see a lot of "I don't need that," or "That'll never work," or hundreds of theories on how this thing is going to fall apart. What I have to say to them is this: Shut up. Why are you complaining? You ask for Sony to deliver, and when it appears that they finally are, you continue to naysay. And you know what? It's free. If you walked into a store and saw a "free, take one" rack, would you walk up to the clerk and say "I don't know.... I don't really need this. Why are you offering it to me?" He would look at you like you were crazy. If you don't like it, don't take it, and don't complain.

—David Thurman

You're right—Home will be free, so anyone who's at all curious about it should be able to just download it and check it out for themselves this fall. And there's nothing wrong with having a li'l healthy skepticism about the wildly ambitious service. But we've also witnessed that same baseless message-board negativity that you speak of, and we're pretty sure that it stems from loyal Xbox Live subscribers who view Sony's expansive, avatar-based community as a major threat to their \$50-a-year premium service. Just be glad that you weren't ambushed by Nintendo faithfuls who've convinced themselves that having a different 16-digit friend code for each online game is pure genius.

Potty mouths: not just for the prepubescent anymore!

I was reading EGM #214, and I came across an interview with [Microsoft corporate VP] Peter Moore where you asked, "Isn't there a way to kick the foul-mouthed, 12-year-old, racist homophobes off of Xbox Live a little bit more quickly?" Well, I'm 14 years old, and I have no problem whatsoever with wanting to kick those who use foul language and racial slurs off of Xbox Live permanently. But I've noticed foul-mouthed, racist homophobes of all ages. There is a large percentage of kids who are

misinformed, but there are also many who are older. Many of the kids I meet may think they're too cool for school, but many of the kids my age are good people and don't deserve to be called out like this. It makes our generation seem like scum who cannot control what we say or how we think of others. So, please—next time, leave out the age.

—Ben Prociouso

Oh, Ben—someday you'll be older, and you'll understand.

No, just kidding; you make a very good point. We didn't mean to imply that only the 12-year-olds are out of line. It's just that there's something particularly nauseating about hearing that kind of inexcusable filth delivered in a voice that hasn't dropped yet. It makes us weep for the future.

Braaaaiinnnn

In EGM #214's preview of *Left 4 Dead*, under the heading "Meth Zombies," the second paragraph begins with a quote from [Turtle Rock Studios head] Michael Booth that reads, "My favorite zombie movie is *28 Days Later*." Wow, if that's his favorite "zombie movie," he certainly didn't pay attention very well, because *28 Days Later* is not a zombie movie at all. In the film, living people become infected with a fictional virus called "Rage." The pathogen enters their body through... [Excruciating detail removed. —Ed.] Anyway, I'm still very excited for the game. I just thought some one should let Michael know he needs to pick a new favorite in that category.

—Justin Dakin

Dude. Does the movie have swarms of mindless creatures, driven by an unquenchable bloodlust, attacking a handful of terrified survivors who have to make do with just their wits and whatever's lying around? Then it's a zombie movie. The enemies could be the undead, or infected humans, or Canada geese in heat, for all we care. If it fits the formula, it's a zombie movie. ☹

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PRESS START

> features, previews, testicle torture, and other stuff



> EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK

God of War: CHAINS OF OLYMPUS

Can the PSP handle this Spartan? By Matt Leone



PAGE
32

Preview:
Breaking
new ground



PAGE
42

Preview:
Back on the
hunt



PAGE
48

Interview:
Fantasy
man



Platform:
PSP

Publisher:
Sony Computer
Entertainment
America

Developer:
Ready At Dawn

Release Date:
Late 2007



■ The game begins with a battle against the Persian army. And like some other Spartans, Kratos doesn't mind fighting them in the shade.

THE GOD OF WAR SERIES HAS ALWAYS HAD A TOUCHY RELATIONSHIP with the concept of time, using it to both save Kratos and kill those around him, create memorable flashback cut-scenes, and even help finish off *God of War II* in a glorious *Back to the Future*-style moment (we'll spare you the spoilers if you haven't seen it yet). So for *God of War: Chains of Olympus*—an original game headed to the PlayStation Portable—it's only natural that the developers mine Kratos' timeline once again. Here they're jumping back to



the early days before the first game took place, during the 10-year period when Mr. Clean was in service to the gods of Olympus and visiting places like Hades and even Tartarus.

"He didn't just start off all pissed off and taken advantage of," says Sony Santa Monica's Cory Barlog, who now acts as the director of the entire *God of War* franchise. "There was a time... when he did have maybe a little bit of faith, but that faith started to crumble a little bit—when he started to see some cracks in the stories [the gods] were telling him." That aspect also interests Ru Weerasuriya, cofounder of developer Ready At Dawn. "The Santa Monica team and I are really closely attached to the human side of Kratos," he says. "From Kratos being the son of Zeus, his servitude to the gods, the murder of his family, to his years spent in exile—there were so many questions raised in the first game that we all wanted to explore."

In capable hands

While Barlog serves as the director and some of the Santa Monica staff are involved as consultants, the majority of development on this PSP game takes place an hour across town in Ready At Dawn's Santa Ana studio. The group there currently has one game under its belt—*Daxter*, a portable spin-off of the *Jak & Daxter* series—but its track record is close to ideal for a game of this sort. And Ready At Dawn has the same goal with *Chains of Olympus* as it did with its first project: Make a console-style game that just happens to be on the PSP.

Of course, to achieve that goal the game has to look pretty. While *Daxter's* visuals were good enough to earn award nominations, Weerasuriya estimates that the game used about 50 to 60 percent of the PSP's capabilities. *Chains of Olympus* will bump that percentage quite a bit higher. "I think that graphically, people will be stunned," he says. "It'll be like holding a PS2 in your hands...if all goes well." From the look of these screens, it seems like Ready At Dawn's off to a fine start.

Keeping the core

While the developer has the graphics pretty much down, it'll lean on Barlog and the *God of War* fundamentals for the gameplay. "I really, really, really hesitate to use the word 'formula' because I don't want to make it sound like it's just rubber-stamping it, but there is kind of a guideline I think

HOW MANY IS TOO MANY?

Time for the developers to revisit the classics

After seeing Barlog and co. cram an almost uncountable number of bosses into *God of War II*, we started wondering: At what point will the developers simply run out of characters to pull from Greek mythology? "Yeah, that's definitely a challenge," says Barlog. "The good thing is, when you really look at mythology, we're going to run out of characters that are pop-culture mythology characters...but there are a lot of characters from mythology that we can pull from. They're just either the harder-to-pronounce characters or from really, really unknown mythology." So watch out, Hecatoncheires—your 50 heads, 100 arms, and "say wha-?" moniker may be next on Kratos' chopping block.



■ Ah, so that explains why *Soul Calibur's* Voldo wears a mask.



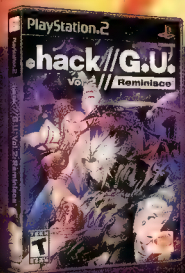
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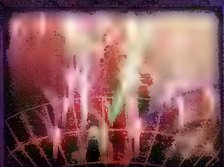
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that we stick with," he says. That'll translate into a big opener, lots of bosses, the same default weapon, a roster of magic powers, and the same balance of action/exploration/puzzles/story that players have come to expect from the franchise. Some of the mechanics introduced later in the series may not fit naturally given the timeline (Pegasus is out, for example), but those who played *God of War II* know the developers aren't above taking some liberties with the game-play mechanics by renaming them if necessary. "We're bringing almost everything back," says Barlog.

They're likely introducing new elements as well, but the developers aren't ready to talk specifics just yet. But given the popular vehicular segments in *Daxter*, we wouldn't be surprised to see Kratos riding something other than Pegasus. Barlog says, though, that there won't be anything too extreme like a multiplayer mode that would change the franchise's core gameplay.

Play it right

Obviously, moving Kratos to Sony's handheld isn't simply a cut-and-paste process, as the PSP is a few buttons and an analog stick short of a PS2 controller. Armchair developers know that *God of War*'s fixed camera works well here (No right analog stick? No problem!), which means that evading and certain aspects like magic/weapon switching will likely shift around in the transition. Barlog assures us that all of those features will be in the game, with a toggle option being considered for the roll maneuver. "We've got a lot of options right now," he says. "The big thing with us is that we playtest everything like crazy. We make sure that what we're doing is kind of beaten up by a large cross section of gamers.... We didn't really even have the control scheme for *God of War I* until about two or three months before launch. And since it is kind of moving onto a new piece of hardware, we're going to be very, very cautious to ensure that the decision we make is the right one."

With any luck, that level of care will produce a portable game as impressive as the PS2 titles before it. The ambition's certainly there (you seldom hear PSP developers use the word "epic" as often as these guys), and *God of War III* doesn't look to tear through the PS3 for quite some time. So here's to the series ending the year as strong as it started. **EW**



Graphically, *God of War*'s transition to the PSP is already lookin' quite good.



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Jump in.





CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

Works in PROGRESS

With Microsoft's and Sony's systems still evolving, should you buy one now or bide your time?

By Crispin Boyer and Shane Bettenhausen

THE CONSOLE WAR HAS A NEW CASUALTY: The early adopter. Now that Microsoft is releasing a deluxe, Elite model of the Xbox 360 (see details on page 24) more than a year after the Core and Pro versions of the system debuted, tech-obsessed gamers can no longer buy new consoles on day one without wondering if an enhanced version will hit later. Microsoft isn't apologizing. "I work with a guy who loves Corvettes,"

says John Rodman, group product manager of the Xbox platform and Xbox Live, "and every time he reads about a new [one] coming out with 50 more horsepower, he knows he can't go to a Chevy dealer and trade up for a new engine. Sometimes, you have to draw lines. It's just a reality of consumer electronics."

But this reality of consoles seeing a feature-enhancing do-over later in their life span is one that gamers

haven't had to deal with until now. Even the PlayStation 3, still giving off that fresh-from-the-box scent in the U.S., received under-the-hood downgrades for its late-March European launch. How much more could these systems evolve—both in hardware specs and the experiences they offer? We track their potential progress over the next 12 months to help you non-early-adopter types decide when to take the plunge....

One guy did for a week. See Marc's story at NissanUSA.com



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SHIFT_2.0

Xbox 360: The Next Year...

Now: Back in black

Offering high-end features that tech-savvy gamers will want but certainly don't need—namely, a hard drive six times larger than the standard model and an HDMI port and cable for easier 1080p connectivity to TVs that support this super-hi-res video mode—the just-launched matte-black \$480 Xbox 360 Elite package is Microsoft's permanent high-end member of its now three-tier Xbox 360 family (joining the \$300 Core and \$400 Pro versions).

Yet just as interesting is what the Elite pack doesn't offer: It's missing the cooler-running, more efficient 65-nanometer chipset that Microsoft will eventually build into the 360 as a cost-cutting measure. The Elite has the same noisy innards as the previous models, which have taken fire for their defect rate (fortunately, Microsoft recently beefed up its warranty program). The Elite also lacks an HD-DVD drive and wireless Internet adapter—tech that would've put it on par with the \$600 PlayStation 3 (which offers built-in Wi-Fi and plays HD-DVD competitor Blu-ray discs). "Apparently, [Microsoft] perceives there is a gap in the market for a higher-end box between the existing Xbox 360 and PS3 price points," says Lazard Capital Markets Senior Research Analyst Colin Sebastian, "and they will probably make the case that gamers don't need a Blu-ray player for a high-end experience."

Bingo. Microsoft insists that if gamers really want a high-definition disc player or Wi-Fi adapter, they can buy those components separately and add them on (for \$200 and \$100 respectively). "We didn't want to burden people with the cost of scenarios that they otherwise might not be interested in," says Microsoft's John Rodman. "I think, quite frankly, they would rather have that extra money to buy games." Still, it's easy to interpret the Elite unit's lack of a built-in HD-DVD drive in another way: that Microsoft is losing confidence in the format, especially amid reports of flagging interest in HD-DVD from major studios such as Fox. "We are absolutely 100 percent behind HD-DVD as a format," Rodman insists, adding that Microsoft doesn't have any designs on a stand-alone Blu-ray player should that format prevail.

Owners of the older Core- and

Pro-model 360s can buy the 120-gig hard drive separately for a pricey \$180 and use an included cable to transfer old saves. The larger drives will likely be popular among gamers who make heavy use of Xbox Live Marketplace's movie- and TV-show-download service, which has recently snagged more programming and participating networks. With the larger hard drive available separately, the only Elite feature that owners of previous-model 360s can't access without buying the new console is its HDMI port—a techie perk that might piss off people who recently bought a 360 just prior to the Elite's launch, hence just missing out on the enhanced model. "I can't really see how any current owners are ticked off," says Wedbush Morgan Securities Analyst Michael Pachter, "any more than owners of 720p TVs were ticked off when the 1080p TV was introduced."

In six months: Live free?

When Sony's Home online service rolls out this fall, PS3 gamers will get for free many of the community features they'd have to pay 50 bucks a year for on Xbox Live. So surely Microsoft will drop its Gold-level membership costs to compete, right (and perhaps recoup costs via more in-network advertising)?

For now, Microsoft insists that its Xbox Live membership fees won't go away just because Sony's offering a comparable free service. In fact, company reps reckon it'll take Sony much longer than expected to even offer comparable features. "Sony's 'free' multiplayer game offering has been around for four years," says Rodman, "while Xbox Live has grown to 6 million worldwide. In that time, we learned that 'free' does not mean 'better' when it comes to multiplayer gaming. Free can be code for a disjointed and unpredictable experience where cheaters, griefers, viruses, and hackers can run rampant."

A year from now: The 360's answer to wobble control?

Despite the Wii's success, Microsoft reps say they don't see a demand among gamers for motion-sensing control. "The Xbox 360 wireless controller is one of the most popular controllers of all time," says Rodman. "Until we hear otherwise from our customers, we will continue to inte-

grate the same...controllers."

But that's what he's saying now. Microsoft has hinted at control innovations down the road—even, rumor has it, toying with the idea of packing a special joypad with *Halo 3*. We reckon that Microsoft will show its hand within a year... >

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Why you don't

The Elite forces you to install a variety of external components: an HDMI input, a power regulator. Plus, those hoping for Dolby, TruBass, and DTS-HD audio from your HD-DVDs (regimes are equal) tuck. The Elite's 120GB hard drive is not supported in most modes.



With new TVs offering 1080p via component input, the Elite's HDMI port isn't quite crucial.

360 MESSAGE BOARD POLL

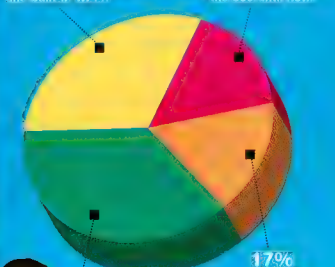
Seeing the Xbox 360 \$480 Elite package on store shelves makes you...

30%

Sad. Why didn't they include an HD-DVD player and built-in Wi-Fi?

16%

Mad. You've been holding out on buying the 360 until now.



Indifferent. At that price, you might as well buy a PlayStation 3!

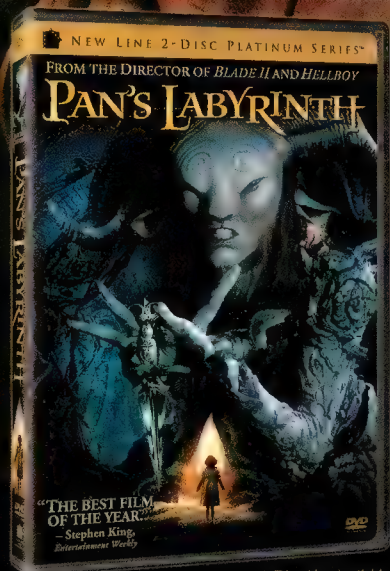
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PlayStation 3: The Next Year...

Now: Shocking the system

Arriving four months behind schedule and bearing a ridiculously lofty price tag (roughly \$800 U.S.), the PlayStation 3 staggered into the European marketplace on March 23. But this PS3 isn't precisely the same beast that U.S. and Japanese gamers have been going into debt for. To cut production costs, Sony removed the Emotion Engine and Graphics Synthesizer components, two chunks of legacy hardware that allowed for nearly universal backward compatibility with PS1 and PS2 software.

Now, the PS3 plays older games via software-based emulation. The upside? Besides from saving Sony some cash, this trade-off allows some games to be upscaled to a crisp 720p HD resolution with full-scene antialiasing, a technique that smooths out jaggy edges. The downside? Not all games currently work—at the time of launch, 1,782 games (some 72 percent of the full PS2 library) function, but many imperfectly. With key titles such as *Guitar Hero* and *Metal Gear Solid 2* left off the compatibility list, Sony (like Microsoft) will have to continue to append the support through downloadable system updates. And this isn't just Europe's problem. Although Sony's U.S. branch has not confirmed any concrete plans, this reworked PS3 hardware is expected to spread globally as the standard hardware in the coming months.

It's also of note that the European PS3 comes in only one configuration—the deluxe model with a 60-gig hard drive and built-in Wi-Fi support. Sony didn't even bother shipping the basic 20-gig version there, and its absence likely didn't make much of an impact. So far, the \$500 20-gig unit has accounted for less than 20 percent of total U.S. PS3 shipments. Best Buy recently announced that it would cease to carry the vaguely mythical 20-gigger—yet, so far, Sony denies reports that the unpopular bundle is going away.

In six months: Home invasion

Starting this fall, Sony's ambitious new Home service will connect all PS3 users to a free online community where gamers can socialize, compete in multiplayer games, and consume goods and services (both real and virtual). It's a glitzy departure from what console gam-



Could the PS3's European backward-compatibility problems come here?

ers have known of online gaming up until now—those weaned on the no-nonsense menus of Xbox Live or impersonal Nintendo DS friend codes might find Home's lifelike avatars and ornate public spaces to be an indulgent waste of time. But for millions of Americans hooked on social-networking sites like MySpace and virtual worlds like *Second Life*, Home could be a big selling point.

Sony also hopes to make Home an effective marketing tool to directly reach its consumers. Users traversing the public spaces will not only be inundated with ads for new games, movies, TV shows, and music, but they'll also be able to visit separate interactive worlds created to hype individual products. "We're creating a platform and populating that platform with a few content ideas ourselves," explains Phil Harrison, head of Sony Worldwide Studios, "but ultimately, we want to democratize it and allow anybody to build spaces in Home. There might be a *SpongeBob* space in Home, and there might be a *Killzone* space, and you know, everything in between."

A year from now: PS3's price will take a dive

Considering its premium price tag, the PS3 has performed well during its first five months on the market. Sales 'of the system, thanks in part to its successful launch in Europe, have outpaced the PS2's during the same time frame. But Nintendo's value-priced Wii has embarrassed them all, amassing stunning sales figures across the globe. Could price be a bigger deterrent than Sony-

predicted? Many industry analysts have gone on the record as saying that the PS3 price must come down sooner rather than later if Sony is to keep Nintendo from dominating this generation while still holding off the strong competition from Microsoft's Xbox 360.

A price cut of at least \$100 by mid-2008 seems like a given, but some predict that we might see such a move worldwide this fall. Yuji Fujimori, analyst for securities firm Goldman Sachs, recently stated that a \$100 price drop this October won't undermine the PS3's long-term profitability, thanks to cost-cutting measures similar to those implemented in the European model. "The PS3 price has long been cited as high," Fujimori wrote, going on to explain that slashing prices historically triggers huge sales gains. Considering the crowded gaming battlefield this holiday season, Sony may have no other alternative. ☛



Home promises Xbox Live-style features with metrosexual avatars.



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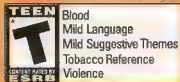
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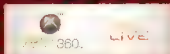
5 OUT OF 5
GAMESPY

9.3 OUT OF 10
IGN

5 OUT OF 5
YAHOO! GAMES

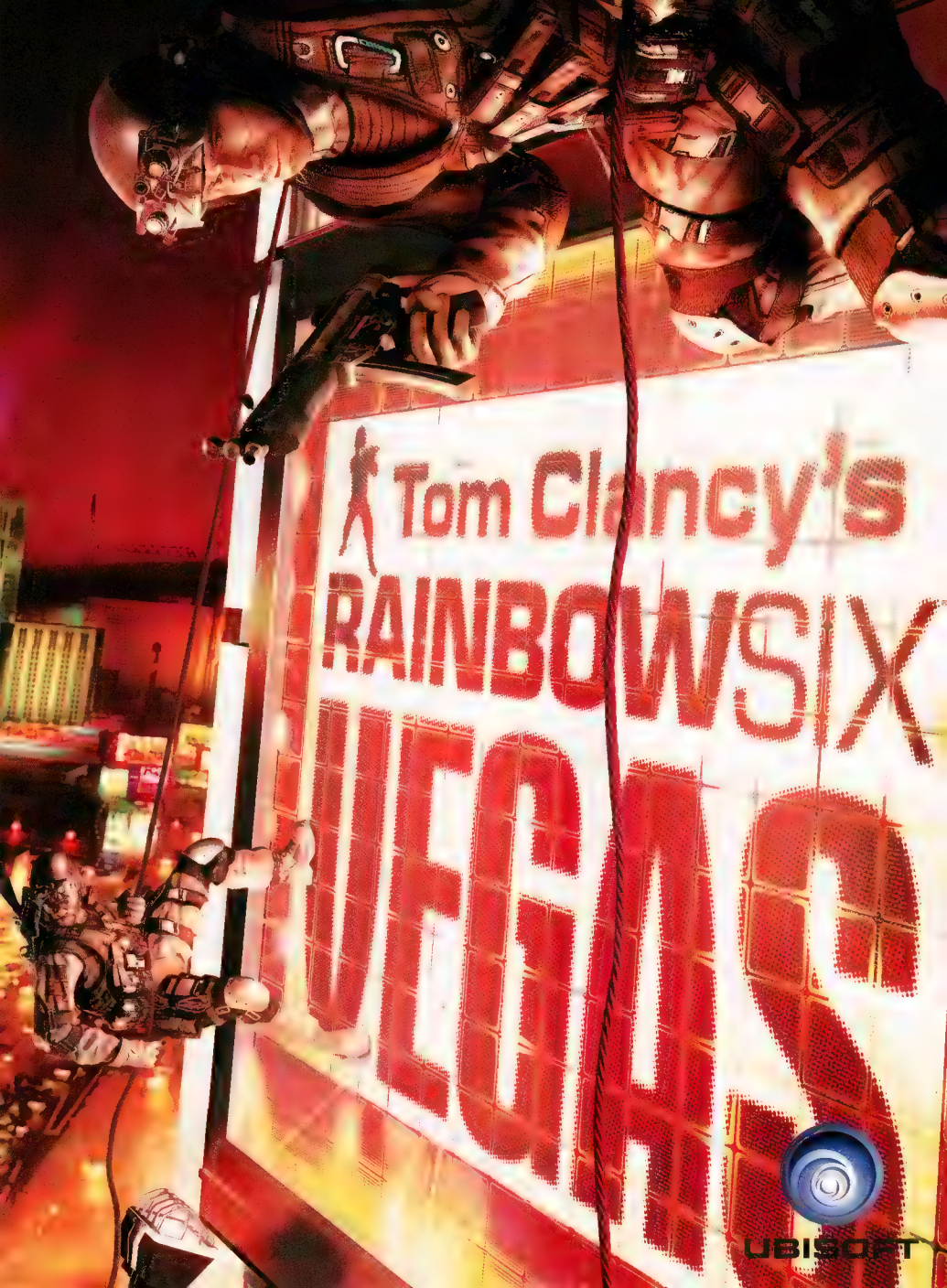
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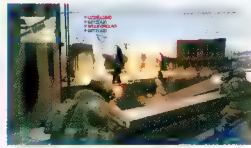


Tom Clancy's
RAINBOW SIX
SIEGE



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> ADVANCED WAR OPTIONS



OK, so *Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter 2* is mostly a moderate upgrade from the original, but we're still gung-ho for the multiplayer. So we asked *GRAW 2*'s multiplayer developers, Red Storm, to give us some of their favorite online game types.

Team Mission Redux

Settings: Start with the Team Mission game mode and customize it so that respawns are set to five individuals, enemy A.I. support is off, and demo locations are set to five zones. Play on a medium- to large-sized map.

Number of players: 10-16

Comments from the developers:

"The additional respawns result in longer firefights in and around the demo locations, forcing the attacking team to truly coordinate and cover each other to successfully plant a charge."

Co-op Front Line

Settings: Create a custom Co-op Territory mode with the following settings: respawns off, enemy density infinite, one base zone, and enemy difficulty to hard. This is most fun on larger maps that are more open around the A Zone.

Number of players: 4-8

Comments: "With no respawns, players have to really stick together and learn to cover each other as teammates get wounded and need medical attention."

Team Elimination

Settings: No launchers, drones optional.

Number of players: 8-10

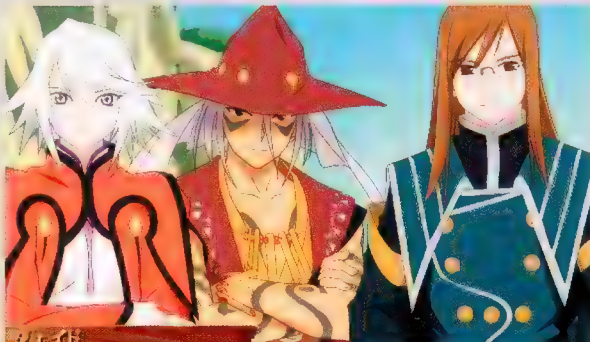
Comments: "You can't beat the classics sometimes—a small- to medium-sized map with teams of four to five makes for an excellent match."

Team Territory Blind Siege

Settings: Start a Team Territory game and select Blind Siege.

Number of players: 10-16

Comments: "Call us old-fashioned, but we love straightforward Blind Siege while alternating sides between rounds. Blind Siege offers a lot of replay, since you're not always assaulting/defending the same zone. That's another reason for switching sides between matches."



失礼。ご歓談中ですが、
少々割り込みしてもよろしいですか？

> FOREIGN OBJECT/JAPAN



Tales of Fandom VOL. 2

For anime-role-playing-
game nerds like you

Platform:
PlayStation 2

**Likelihood
it'll come
here:** The first
game didn't
grace our
lands, so don't
expect this
one to, either.



Tales games seem to come out more often than *Madden* these days. Namco Bandai's reignited interest in releasing role-playing games with titles that start with "Tales of" in the U.S. just makes it seem like a recent phenomenon. The series is mighty enormous in Japan, with 17 total games since 1995 and at least two new titles or spin-offs per year for the past half-decade. In Japan, a lot of the popularity stems from the characters—and since each game's set in its own separate universe, the idea of crossovers between games is the stuff of dreams for thousands of *Tales* fans.

Is this where *Fandom* comes in?

Yep—*Tales of Fandom Vol. 2* (sequel to a similar 2002 PlayStation 1 title) is a wordy, text-based adventure game (not a traditional RPG, weirdly enough) starring characters from *Tales of Phantasia* (GBA), *Tales of Symphonia* (GC), and *Tales of the Abyss* (PS2), all mixed up and questing about together. The story expands on some of the older plots from these past games, but largely, it's all an excuse for more character art, more voice acting, and more stuff to make hardcore *Tales* fans swoon...or, uh, perhaps do something else entirely....

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> PREVIEW: EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK

Fracture

A game with genuine faults By Michael Donahoe



■ *Fracture* will also have a multiplayer mode, which hopefully has some groundbreaking moments just like this.

With its unique and ambitious design, it can be called a new kind of different experience," says Producer David Greenstein. "You can use the same game engine to develop a wide variety of experiences, and we've used it to create a new kind of game."

It's not just the game's design that's unique. The game's multiplayer mode is also a first. "We're going to have a new kind of multiplayer mode that's not just a new kind of game, but a new kind of experience," says Greenstein. "We're going to have a new kind of game that's not just a new kind of game, but a new kind of experience."

It's a small, intimate, and very different experience. "It's a new kind of game," says Greenstein. "It's a new kind of game, but it's also a new kind of experience. It's a new kind of game, but it's also a new kind of experience."

But when it comes to multiplayer, Greenstein says, "It's a new kind of game, but it's also a new kind of experience. It's a new kind of game, but it's also a new kind of experience."

It's a new kind of game, but it's also a new kind of experience. "It's a new kind of game, but it's also a new kind of experience. It's a new kind of game, but it's also a new kind of experience."

Alternative console

It's a new kind of game, but it's also a new kind of experience. "It's a new kind of game, but it's also a new kind of experience. It's a new kind of game, but it's also a new kind of experience."

➤ We give the player the ability to shape the battlefield on the fly.

—David Greenstein, Producer



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PLAYSTATION 3





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LOL: Gears of War A-Team

Not quite shot-by-shot remake of the A-Team intro, except using Marcus Fenix and company from *Gears of War*, by JayFross.



ZOMG: GTA4 Trailer + Impressions

See the first footage of *Grand Theft Auto IV* for PS3/XB360. And then watch as *EGM* and *1UP* editors dissect it in minute detail.



FTW: The Minibosses Live in San Francisco

Kick-ass concert footage of such Minibosses hits as "Castlevania III Theme," "Ninja Gaiden Theme," "Goonies II Theme," and other awesome themes. Devil horns.



WTF: Clive Barker's Jericho Interview

See *EGM*'s interview with *Hellraiser* director and the titular Clive Barker of *Clive Barker's Jericho*. If you only see one interviewee talking about a "corrupted onion," make it this one.

Word Up

Diving into developer blogs: By John Brandon

Derek Daniels

<http://lowfierce.blogspot.com/>

God of War developer Derek Daniels posts YouTube vids of games he likes, only to analyze them with his critical eye. On *Ghost Rider*, he remarks: "I beat the whole game, and I still don't understand the story." Daniels also jokes about the "sequel tax" added to the review scores of *God of War II*.



Ben Mattes

<http://toomuchimagination.blogspot.com/>

Think game companies find their developers with job postings? Well, according to *Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones* Producer Ben Mattes, some hire peeps via mysterious packages—one of his posts explains the cool (albeit borderline stalkerish) approach one developer used to recruit new blood.



Patrick Curry

<http://www.patrickcurry.com/thoughts/>

Stranglehold developer Patrick Curry posts about how to get a foot in the door in the industry, suggesting that—if you're serious—it helps to read (gasp) textbooks on design and development; he goes on to list the books he likes. Curry's a great read for anyone actually considering the jump.



Jane McGonigal

<http://avantgame.blogspot.com/>

Yeah, Jane McGonigal hasn't worked on a huge game, but this indie designer helped create the infamous *Halo 2* | Love Bees campaign. Her blog is full of witty commentaries about alternative-reality gaming. She also shows up on CNN and other news channels (in case reading is too hard for you).



Capcom Unity

<http://www.capcom-unity.com/blogs.php>

Capcom nuts jonesing for online journals about some of the publisher's popular franchises like *Lost Planet* and *Phoenix Wright* will dig all the interesting info spread throughout the site. Sure, the blogs have a bit of a corporate feel to them, but at least Capcom is giving fans an insider look at its games.





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▶ PREVIEW: EXCLUSIVE SCREENS AND INFO



Manhunt 2

A sick trip down memory lane By Bryan Intihar

Platforms:
Wii/PS2/PSP

Publisher:
Rockstar

Developer:
Rockstar London

Release Date:
June 2007



WHEN YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE RISES IN THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE but nowhere else, that's called white-coat syndrome. Yet we have an alternative definition: White-coat syndrome should also refer to scientists who, once they toss on that work attire, feel it's "wise" to experiment on themselves. Dr. Jekyll took the plunge, so did Norman Osborn, and now you can add one more mad doc to the list: Daniel Lamb. And this four-eyed, self-inflicted amnesiac just happens to be the star of *Manhunt 2*, the next installment in Rockstar's superviolent (and supercontroversial) sneak-n-kill series.

Bringing in new blood

Manhunt is taking a similar approach to another Rockstar franchise, *Grand Theft Auto*, in that the lead role will change with every new edition. And the publisher has a good reason for the casting changeup. "In order for the game to feel fresh and challenging, we wanted the narrative to explore fresh themes," says Rockstar London Studio Head Mark Washbrook. "We

wanted to...create a new storyline that is even more dark and disturbing. We've done that through a twisted plot featuring themes of institutionalization, medical experimentation, secrecy, and the cost of personal ambition." So that means death-row inmate James Earl Cash (the original's main man) and his *Running Man*-esque backdrop are out, and the disturbed Lamb and his journey to remember the past are in. It's a smart move if you ask us, as a brand-new story, setting, and cast helped sequels like *GTA Vice City* and *San Andreas* feel so fresh.

But this brainiac wasn't always a psychological mess. After funding gets pulled from the Pickman Project

(which creates biological weapons), its employee Lamb volunteers to be one of the test subjects. The result? The scientist becomes a certifiable kook and gets thrown into an insane asylum to rot with the other Pickman Project rejects. Six year later and with almost no recollection of his former life, Lamb escapes the loony bin after a freak electrical storm.

Execute with style

Gouging an enemy's eyeballs with a glass shard, gutting him with a sickle, sucking the life outta him with a plastic bag—*Manhunt*'s sadistic executions sure did get people's attention. Unfortunately, those gruesome acts also helped get the original game ▶

▶ **We wanted to expand upon *Manhunt*'s gameplay and aesthetic to create a new storyline that is even more dark and disturbing.**

—Rockstar London Studio Head Mark Washbrook



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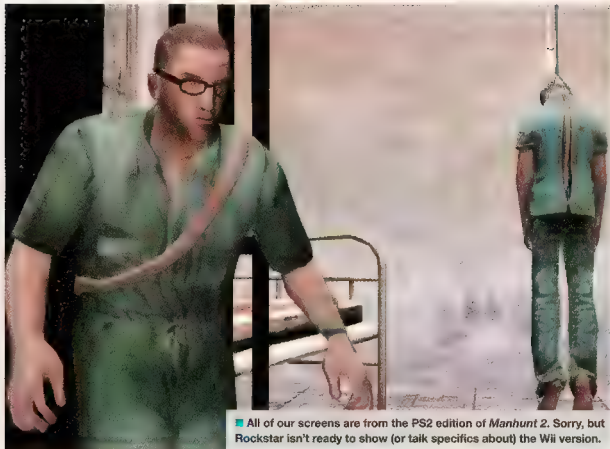
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HUNGER GETS
WHAT HUNGER WANTS



■ All of our screens are from the PS2 edition of *Manhunt 2*. Sorry, but Rockstar isn't ready to show (or talk specifics about) the Wii version.

banned in some countries. Lesson learned, right? Pfft—Rockstar has only cranked up the violence dial for the sequel. And as much as we'd like to say that the gore doesn't impress us (ya know, that'd be the politically correct thing), we couldn't help but want to see more. Some of the new tricks in this game include plunging a syringe into an enemy's heart, or chopping off his head with an ax and then tossing it to distract others in the area. Yet it's the wire cutters that win the prize here: If you perform a level-three execution (just like in the last *Manhunt*, the longer you wait before attacking, the more grotesque the death blow) with this weapon, you'll reach underneath the enemy to grab on to his family jewels, rip 'em off, and then stick the wire cutters into his back and tear out the spinal cord.

The game's stylish killings don't stop there; *Manhunt 2* will also introduce both gun and environmental executions to the fray. "Environmental executions increase the interactivity within the game and allow you to take advantage of objects found throughout

the area," says Washbrook. We especially enjoyed the scene where you strangle a foe with a telephone wire. Oh, and that other one where he lit up like a tiki torch after a face full of fuse box.

Atypical fodder

From the oddly placed men-in-black at the Honey Pot warehouse to the leather-clad workers in the S&M level, *Manhunt 2*'s enemy set will be just as colorful as the original's crew. They should be even smarter, too. "The hunters in the first game were relentless and brutal," says Washbrook. "In *Manhunt 2*, players can now crawl, and the hunters will grab you right out of the cramped space if they see you enter. And since the player can now climb and vault obstacles, hunters can do the same." Washbrook even promises more enemy tricks that have yet to be revealed, and that "the changes to the A.I. have significantly ratcheted up the tension and suspense."

Perhaps the bad guys will turn the tables and perform executions, too? 🐾

GRANNY APPROVED

Manhunt 2 on the Wii? Gaming's most recognizable senior citizen says, "Bring it!"

Back in *EGM* #213, we had six seniors try out Nintendo's "we made it for everyone" console. But none of the Wii titles played that day were as graphic in content as *Manhunt 2*. Would such a game have the elderly dropping their Wii-motes and returning to the shuffleboard courts? Barbara St. Hilaire, known to most as Old Grandma Hardcore, sure doesn't think so. "Older folks starting on videogames with the Wii have been waiting for something like *Manhunt 2*," says the 70-year-old guest reviewer for MTV.com's gaming show, *The G-Home*. "We have to take out our anger on something, just like everyone else. You can't do that s*** playing *Cooking Mama*. What else is there? *Far Cry?* *Red Steel?* Give us some credit; we do have taste." You sure do, Granny.



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THE BIG ONES

They don't get much bigger than Grand Theft Auto

Grand Theft Auto IV

PS3/XB360 • Rockstar • October 2007

Was it just us, or did the Internet stand still on March 29? Actually, this was the case on any game-video-playing website when the Big One hit, that being the *Grand Theft Auto IV* teaser video. And while many of you watched this video (eventually) before hitting the message boards or chat rooms with your rampant speculation, we watched it again. And again. And again a few dozen more times to extract every bit of info we could. Here are five interesting pieces of dirt you may have missed.

THE PEOPLE

Man, check out the details on *Grand Theft Auto IV*'s pedestrians: You'll see them carrying groceries and briefcases, reading the paper.... Hell, even little kids roam the streets now. Does this mean computer-controlled characters have set schedules now and are no longer randomly thrown in there? That's a tall order, but here's hoping.



THE REFERENCES

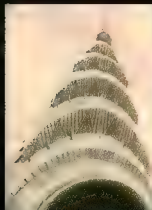
Once again, it looks like cross-game references won't be hard to find. In this minute-long video, keen eyes will pick up a "Visit Vice City" ad and a Cluckin' Bell branch, whose greasy, fast-food menu choices you may remember from *San Andreas*.



■ Yeah, \$300 to Vice City is good, but does that include a Members Only jacket?

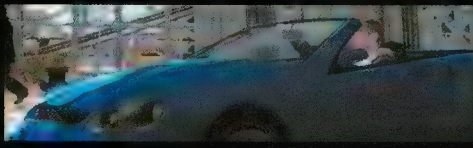
THE LOCATION

On first viewing, everyone thought the trailer took place in the Big Apple, given tourist-happy sites like the Empire State Building, Chrysler Building, and Statue of Liberty. Slow down the video a bit, though, and you'll spot plenty of references to the series' ever-present twisted version of NYC, Liberty City, including a reference to *GTA3*'s *Liberty Tree* newspaper and an "[heart] Liberty City" sign. It just takes more from its real-city inspiration than ever before.



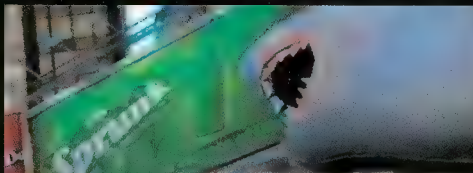
THE DETAILS

This is the stuff we love, since it makes the game's world seem that much more alive. The driver in the blue convertible adjusts his rear-view mirror. The AC units in the opening scene billow out air. A few people sit on a stoop outside a housing project as a car click-clacks over a metal plate in the street. And how can we forget that billboard for *America's Next Top Hooker*.



THE WTF

At the top right-hand corner of the first "Times Square" scene, you'll notice the front end of a shark facing the intersection. Seriously...huh? But you know what? Minus *Jaws Unleashed*, the more sharks in our open-world games, the better.



■ This breakdown ain't anal enough for ya? Head to EGM216.1UP.com for even more of our impressions.



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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Fantasy MAN

Hironobu Sakaguchi, the father of Final Fantasy, chats about the past, present, and why the future doesn't include the PlayStation 3. By Bryan Intihar

In 1989, Hironobu Sakaguchi was responsible for Square's eventful merger with Enix. After the film *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*, which Sakaguchi helmed, bombed at the box office, Square's stock price plummeted, the publisher had to raise \$100 million to stay afloat, and another bomb

HIRONOBU SAKAGUCHI IS A LITTLE HUNG OVER. So you might think that the guy who gave birth to the celebrated *Final Fantasy* franchise, after a night out "socializing" with Microsoft's top brass, wouldn't be in the talking mood. Well, that's definitely not the case on this particular day. Sakaguchi, who moved on from Square Enix in 2003 to start the independent studio Mistwalker (which is currently working on the role-playing games *Blue Dragon* and *Lost Odyssey* for the Xbox 360, plus a host of other projects), is quite the candid chatterbox. Check out the famed developer's thoughts on...

...How his approach to making role-playing games has changed over the years: "In the early days, I really had to worry about technical issues, such as how many people would fit onscreen. Your imagination was limited. But now the sky's the

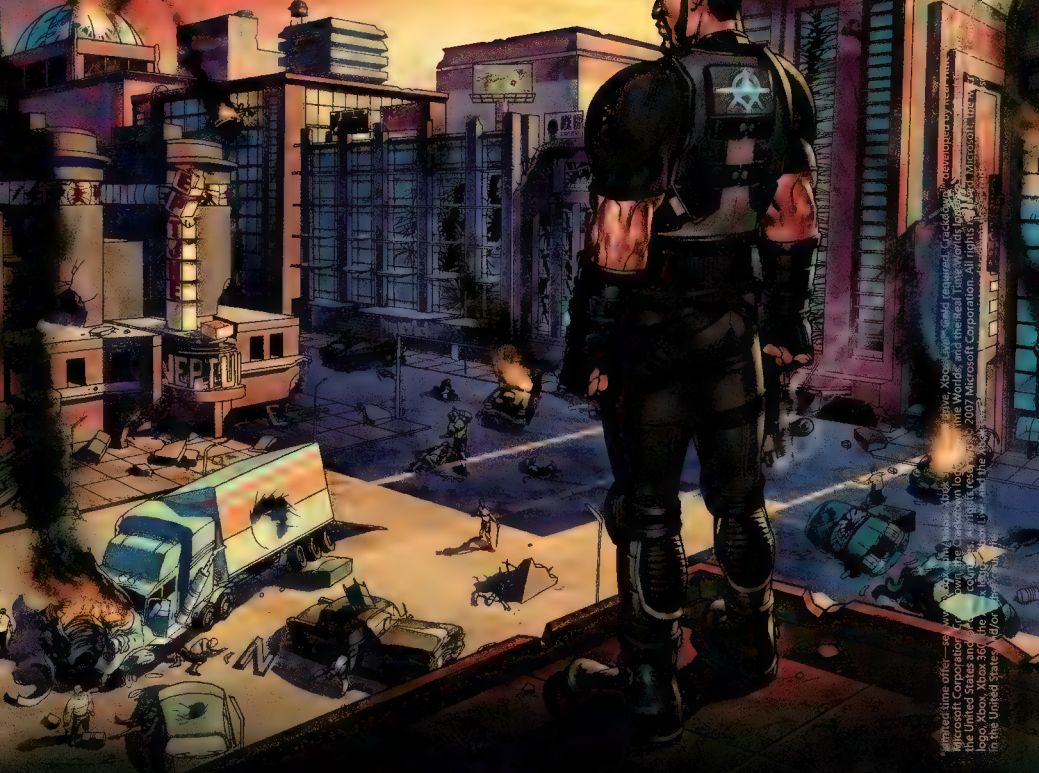
limit. For instance, you don't have to worry about how many people are onscreen—you can have 1,000 if you really wanted."

...The next big RPG evolution: "I'd say direction technique is a huge..."

> I'm not interested in the PlayStation 3. The machine's architecture is tricky, and I don't like [Sony Computer Entertainment Chairman and CEO Ken] Kutaragi.

—Mistwalker President Hironobu Sakaguchi

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FANTASY MAN (cont.)

factor) and I can really change the way that role-playing games are played. For example, I enjoy playing *Gears of War*, especially the way the camera bounces when your character starts running.

...What can Japanese developers learn from Western developers, and vice versa? "Western developers are the ones who came up with the idea of the massively multiplayer online role-playing game, which is an example that these developers are very good at bringing new ideas and features to the role-playing genre. Japanese developers, though, are very meticulous and do a great job at paying attention to detail."

...How is a member of organized crime influenced his plans for a massively multiplayer role-playing game? "Back when I played *EverQuest*, I interacted with a military guard from Indonesia and a mafia member from Hong Kong. You could never imagine meeting people like this in real life, so meeting them there was great. But when you converse, it's all text-based and in English, so you really have to be able to comprehend that language. I'm interested in creating a game that translates all languages and national boundaries. There has to be a common language that all gamers can understand, such as gestures and icons."

...His former gig. "Sometimes I dream about being at Square, but it's all about heartbreaking instances. Tough days..."

...The ambitious goal for Mistwalker's yet-to-be-revealed Xbox 360 project. *Cry On!* "What I want to do with this game is make you cry every 15 minutes."

...How he plans on completing such a feat. "It's still an objective, I haven't reached that goal yet. I've been watching a lot of TV dramas, film movies and actually been writing down every detail of when viewers get emotional, and I want to incorporate that into the game."

...The Xbox 360's Japanese struggles. "Microsoft has to change its marketing strategy in Japan. There are a lot of excellent games on the 360, far better games than what's on the Wii or PS3. But not a lot of people in Japan have a clear idea

what games like *Gears of War* are all about. Just look at the Windows Vista commercial—it's terrible."

...The PlayStation 3. "I'm not interested in the PlayStation 3. The machine's architecture is tricky, and I don't like [Sony Computer Entertainment Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Ken] Kutaragi."

...The Wii. "The system is intriguing, but right now, I have no plans on making a game for the Wii."

...Final Fantasy XIII. "I just played the beginning. You really can't expect much from the game when Yasumi Matsuno, a crucial member of the team, leaves in the middle of development."

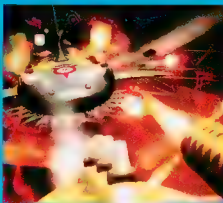
...The Final Fantasy/Dragon Quest crunch. "Square Enix pays too much attention to those two franchises. Why aren't they creating new ones instead of just focusing on *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Quest*?"

...His dream project. "I want to make a surfing game that's truly a simulation—a game that actually calculates the swell and the waves. I also want the gamer to feel the threat of global warming. These days, I live in Hawaii and there are a lot of weird climate changes happening, and I want the gaming community to feel that." ■

visit EGM216.TUP.COM to see both of Mistwalker's anticipated Xbox 360 role-playing games in motion.

CHOOSE YOUR ROLE

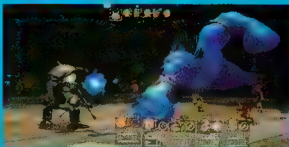
Mistwalker offers up a double-dose of Xbox 360 RPGs in '07



Blue Dragon

Microsoft Game Studios | August 2007

One look at this game's cute-yet-gritty style and relatively playful (state) gameplay and it's hard not to draw comparisons to *Dragon Quest*. Yet it wasn't Hiroshi Sakauchi's intention to mimic Japan's most successful RPG license. When creating *Blue Dragon*, "Dragon Quest" wasn't on his mind. He says, "I was actually thinking about *Chrono Trigger* (SNES), and *Blue Dragon*'s an extension of that game." Inspiration aside, it's nice to hear that—unlike a lot of RPGs—*Blue Dragon* will have some legs. Downloadable content will include a new difficulty setting, items, and dungeons.



Lost Odyssey

Microsoft Game Studios | October 2007

Microsoft's Xbox 360 finally gets an RPG in the vein of *Final Fantasy* and it mainly characterizes a complete mess. "I wanted to portray a normal man with real emotions," Sakauchi says. "Kainu has lived for 1000 years, so you'd think that he's seen so much that he'd be indifferent to things around him. But when he cries, he cries over the most mundane of things, just like we do." Well, at least *Lost Odyssey* should look damn good when it's reading man sheds a tear. In the game, it's the same tech that powers *Gears of War*. Cross your fingers. It plays that well, too. Mistwalker still hasn't revealed much about *Lost Odyssey*'s battle system.





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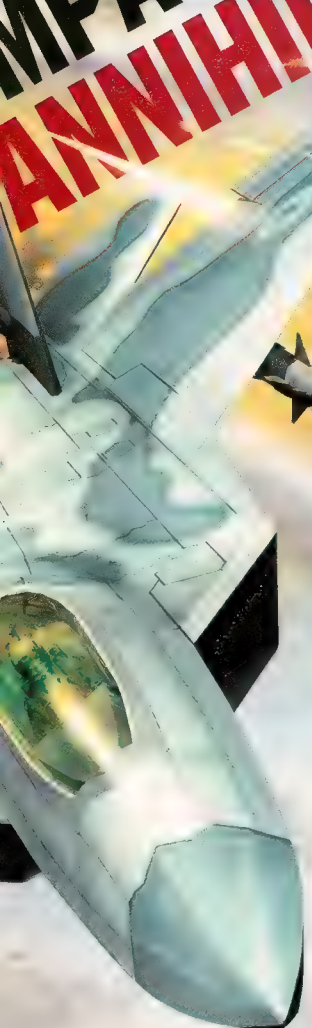
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STREET FIGHTER II

A few months ago I said publisher Capcom was remaking the original arcade hit *Street Fighter II* for the PlayStation Network. Capcom recently confirmed the game is real. So when y'all download it, remember you heard it here first, 'kay?



HEY, ALL YOU SONY HATERS—give the PS3 some props. Sure, the costly console had a bad—OK, terrible—launch, but that doesn't mean it can't bounce back from its blunders. Just try taking a peek at our PS3 preview feature on page 60 without getting stoked. Not possible, my friends—jaded or not, you'd be a jackass not to agree that the PS3 is prepping some great games. Still don't believe me? Maybe these rumors will sway your silly little mind....

Bouncy brawler

Developer Team Ninja currently has their hands full milking the *Ninja Gaiden* series on the PS3, 360, and DS, but it seems like they're still finding time to get dirty with a new *Dead or Alive*—my spies informed me the busy Japanese team is also using their talented melons to whip up an exclusive *Dead or Alive* game for the PS3. Hopefully this game will deflate the beach balls and just stick with what's actually fun: kicking ass with hot chicks.

Prehistoric head case

Mario and Sonic aren't the only two old-school mascots continuing to

muck it up on next-gen consoles. According to my Stone Age source, publisher **Hudson is digging up its classic caveman Bonk** for another shot at today's newfangled systems. Or at least the ones made by Nintendo—the bald-headed head-banger looks like he'll show up on both the Wii and the DS.

Mega remake

Most (sane) gamers will probably agree Xbox Live offers a better online service than the PlayStation Network. That may be true, but the PSN trumps Xbox Live in one area: downloadable titles. Sure, we love to cash in on all the old arcade classics on Xbox Live, but the PSN offers flashy new games

like *Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection* and *Gran Turismo HD*. Well, chock another cool game to the list—I hear **Capcom is remaking the original *Mega Man* (with new graphics to boot) for the PSN**. Oh, and don't be surprised if you hear about this very soon.

Heart attack

Seems Disney and publisher Square Enix want to keep the *Kingdom Hearts* series beating—hell, no surprise there. But this may be one: **My mousy mole tipped me off that the next *KH* game won't be the third game in the series**, but instead, it will be a spin-off that will appear on a hearty console. Don't worry, though—*KH3* will still happen...eventually. ♣

> Q-TIPS

- Think the DS adventure game *Professor Layton* is too sweet for our shores? Don't—I hear the game, developed by Level-5 (*Rogue Galaxy*), is U.S. bound.
- So the strategy role-playing game *Disgaea* is coming to the PSP, but now it appears developer Nippon Ichi is preparing the series for the PS3, too.
- Sure, *Rock Band* is going to, uh, ya know, but what songs will it have? I hear developer Harmonix is working like noncaucasian canines to get a big band.



Turn it up

The Wii may be hot right now, but the current software selection ain't exactly smokin'. Ironically, publisher EA—usually known for licensed fare—is looking to light up sales later this year with its music game *Boogie*. But *Boogie*'s not the only rhythm game it's readying to rock—EA also announced former *Guitar Hero* developers Harmonix are tuning up *Rock Band* for the 360 and PS3. The four player game lets you jam with a guitar, bass, drums, and even your own personal windpipes.

Heavenly beta

Hankerin' for the *Halo 3* multiplayer beta? Stupid question—who isn't, right? Well, the wait is almost over: Microsoft confirmed the beta will go live on May 16th and end on June 4th. The almost-month-long sneak peak will feature three maps (Snowbound, High Ground, and Valhalla) and will also lets gamers get a grip on all the fancy new weapons (Brute Spiker, Spartan Laser, and Spike Grenades).

▶ OVERHEARD

"Wii is a wonderful device, but has a different target audience. **If we fail, it is because we positioned PS3 as the Mercedes of the video-game field.** PS3 is after a different audience, and it can be whatever it wants—a home server, game device, even a computer."

—Sony Chairman/CEO Howard Stringer admits the PS3 is a wee bit pricey. But, uh, at least it's a fancy piece of machinery, right?



Quote source: SmartHouse



TAKE THIS JOB

Public-Relations Manager

Our monthly look at the jobs you want

By Evan Shamoon

This month's feature is a public-relations manager. The job is to help a company or organization get the most out of its public-relations efforts. The job is to help a company or organization get the most out of its public-relations efforts. The job is to help a company or organization get the most out of its public-relations efforts.

What's a PR manager?

Essentially, you're managing a company's public-relations efforts. You're responsible for creating and maintaining a positive public image for the company. You're also responsible for handling any crises that may arise. The job is to help a company or organization get the most out of its public-relations efforts.

Job data

Salary: \$45,000-\$75,000 per year. Education: Bachelor's degree in public relations or communications. Experience: 1-3 years in public relations or communications.

Commonplace in business?

Public-relations managers are found in a wide variety of industries, from advertising to technology. They are responsible for creating and maintaining a positive public image for the company. The job is to help a company or organization get the most out of its public-relations efforts.

Commonplace in education?

Public-relations managers are not typically found in educational settings. However, they may be responsible for creating and maintaining a positive public image for a school or university.

Master's typical day

A public-relations manager's typical day involves creating and maintaining a positive public image for the company. They may be responsible for writing press releases, managing social media, and handling any crises that may arise.

JUNE 2007

COMING SOON

What's on tap for June



Two Worlds

XB360 • SouthPeak

A vast game world with tons to explore? Hmm, sounds a lot like *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*. And you'd be right to think so, except *Two Worlds* offers multiplayer with its adventure (up to eight players can tackle this land together). Also, any items or weapons that you collect in the single-player campaign will follow you online. See, *Phantasy Star Universe*—that's how it's done.



Call of Juarez

XB360 • Ubisoft

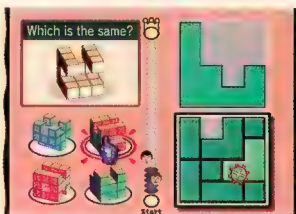
Since the 2005 release of the short-but-sweet *Gun*, wannabe cowboys haven't had any reason to scream "yee-haw." But this first-person shooter will change all that. *Call of Juarez* has you playing either the hunter or the hunted, where you'll test your trigger finger at high noon and your fists during barroom fights. Outlaws can also take the action online.



Pokémon Battle Revolution

Wii • Nintendo

Man, what a tease: As Nintendo brings its popular pocket monsters to the Wii quite early in the console's life, *Revolution's* gameplay will be limited to fighting in the arena. That means no adventure elements whatsoever. But at least you'll have the option to import your evolved creatures from *Diamond* and *Pearl* (DS) and battle them online.



Big Brain Academy

Wii • Nintendo

Nintendo should spark a few more synapses with its latest brainbuster, which lets you test your wit against others. And for the "Joey" of any particular friend group, that person can now team up with a smarty-pants pal in the all-new co-op mode.

More June Releases

Crazy Taxi: Fare Wars
PSP • Sega

Ninja Gaiden Sigma
PS3 • Tecmo

Crush
PSP • Sega

Final Fantasy I
PSP • Square Enix

Dead Head Fred
PSP • D3

Shadowrun
XB360 • Microsoft

Hour of Victory
PS3/XB360 • Midway

The Darkness
PS3/XB360 • 2K Games

"...a heretofore unseen level of detail and animation...the action and systems are masterfully executed..."

- Play Magazine



ODIN SPHERE

オディンスフィア

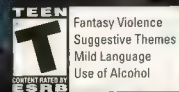
Five unique playable characters, each with their own attacks and spells.



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PlayStation.2



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THE DIFFERENCE MAKERS

With the next-gen console war in full swing, exclusive content will go a long way in declaring a victor. Does Sony's system have enough firepower? Let's see what ammo the PS3 will be bringin' to the fight

Assassin's Creed, *Devil May Cry 4*, *Virtua Fighter 5*, *Unreal Tournament 3*, *Mercenaries 2: World in Flames*—quite the impressive lineup, right? Sony sure thought so...especially when all those third-party titles were only coming to the PlayStation 3. Since last spring, though, each aforementioned game decided that it could really use a second home: the Xbox 360.

But losing outside exclusives isn't just a Sony problem. The skyrocketing cost

of next-gen development is causing most publishers to eventually bring software to multiple systems, no matter what console the game was originally announced for (hence the reason why several 360 titles ended up making a comeback for the PS3 launch). This trend also doesn't exactly spell doom for Sony's box, either. The PS3 still has a strong supply of difference-makers—exclusives that'll go a long way in determining whether someone buys

the machine. A flood of first-party games will arrive over the next six months, and although fewer in number than previous generations, some key third-party exclusives (*Ninja Gaiden Sigma*, *Metal Gear Solid 4*, *Final Fantasy XIII*) are still on the release schedule.

So let's check out this year's crop of homegrown PS3 offerings—and we'll also take a look at how each title will utilize the console's exclusive tech.



PLAYSTATION 3



Uncharted: Drake's Fortune

Sony CEA • Fall 2007

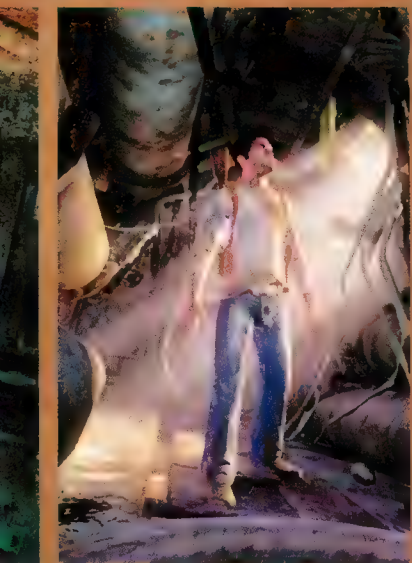
When developer Naughty Dog (*Crash Bandicoot*, *Jak*) describes *Uncharted's* leading man, treasure-hunter-for-hire Nathan Drake, he sure sounds more like a zero than a hero. "Nathan's capable of making mistakes, stumbling, being afraid, getting out of breath, and getting dirty," says Game Director Amy Hennig. "When he punches, he'll throw himself off balance. He'll be scrambling for cover and firing blind. I think all that gives our game a whole different flavor." But that doesn't mean this descendent of Sir Francis Drake (or so he believes) will feel like an annoying, uncoordinated buffoon throughout this jungle-clad journey—it's all for the sake of realism. "It's not a case of 'Oh, I fell on my face and I'm a clumsy guy,'" says Hennig. "No, it's the fact that when I'm being fired upon, my face should reflect it. When I dive into cover and throw myself behind it, I'm not as cool as a cucumber. Instead, I'm giving an 'Oh, s***!' reaction, which I think makes the character way more relatable." So while the idea of a "just like us" protagonist didn't exactly sound thrilling at first, Hennig's explanation quickly changed all that.

Even if you couldn't care less about Nathan's true-to-life attributes, the game will have more than enough of the usual stuff. "For me, it's about getting the totality of the experience," says Hennig. "There are a lot of adventure games out there that focus on one aspect, whether it's just shootouts or brawling or platforming. But the idea is that this genre—which you see in movies, books, and comics—encompasses all that stuff." The developer touts that *Uncharted* will feature elements of *Prince of Persia*, *Tomb Raider*, and *Gears of War*—obviously with their own twists. "I think we've struck a really good balance," says Naughty Dog Co-President Evan Wells. "We're not just *Gears of War*, where you're shooting all the time. We're making it so you can climb up on buildings and get higher angles on people and jump across gaps, pull your gun out immediately, and then shoot the guy on the other side." Scaling buildings? Leaping over neck-breaking gaps? Wait a sec—we thought this guy was supposed to be normal?

THE PS3 DIFFERENCE

Since *Uncharted* is scheduled to hit after the launch of Sony's Home online service, Naughty Dog is planning a slew of goodies for your personal trophy room. The game is also using the controller's built-in motion sensor for steering vehicles and balancing acts (like when crossing a gorge on the back of a fallen tree trunk).





■ Prepare to get your jeans wet while exploring a sunken U-boat.

The Eye of Judgment

Sony CEA • Fall 2007

Let's get the big question out of the way right at the top: Is *The Eye of Judgment* basically a collectible card game (à la *Magic: The Gathering*) with a videogame multimedia component? "In its true roots, from a gameplay standpoint, yes," says Mark Valledor, the game's product manager. Fundamentally, this is a card game that you could play without using the PS3 at all. It has card-game rules, and the expansions will come not in the traditional videogame form of new environments and levels but as decks of cards. The game ships with a board and a starter deck, plus one booster pack, and Sony currently plans to release several expansion decks each year.

You play on a 3-by-3 square board, placing a card from your deck in any vacant square. Each time you physically play a card, a USB camera reads it and animates the battle onscreen in a style that's not too far removed from that snazzy *Star Wars* chess variant favored by Chewbacca (remember, "Let the Wookiee win!"). Victory demands that you occupy five of the nine squares, but winning has less to do with individual battles than with smart overall strategy and a well-built deck. This may feel odd to the average console gamer who hasn't cut his chops on a traditional CCG. "It was really tough when I showed the game internally," says Valledor. "The whole mentality of grabbing the controller and working on reflexes and timing...[*The Eye of Judgment*] is just totally different." This intimidation factor is mitigated by the game's deck builder, which helps you create your stack. You can also hone your strategies by playing against smart A.I. opponents or online against other gamers. But the videogame component ultimately feels limited—while trading-card enthusiasts will likely go gaga for *Eye*, the rest of us might just see a gimmick.

THE PS3 DIFFERENCE

Sony hasn't confirmed that the USB camera used in the game will, in fact, be the new-gen EyeToy, but it's a safe bet. Each card is encoded with visual marks that the camera reads, then animates onscreen. You can also learn more about your cards—getting spell and character info, for example—using the game's card profiles. *The Eye of Judgment*, in essence, uses the PlayStation 3 to bring a collectible card game to life through animations and computer assistance.



■ Yes, you could put other body parts in front of the camera, too.

10

15
PLAYER 2

21

5

0

CHECK

PS3 PREVIEWS



■ The battle animations look great, but luckily, they're skippable if you're in a rush.

Heavenly Sword

Sony CEA • Fall 2007

If you have something derogatory to say about *Heavenly Sword*, just stop right there—Sony CEA Producer Kyle Shubel has heard it all. “We’ve already got the two most humorous monikers: ‘Goddess of War’ and ‘the best demo ever made,’” he says. “I’ve heard both a billion times.” It also hasn’t helped that since *Heavenly Sword*’s first playable (and extremely short) demo in May 2006, the only new footage of this PS3 action game has come from an episode of *Heroes*. Why the lengthy blackout? So our jokes don’t become a reality. “We wanted to make sure that it won’t just be ‘the best demo ever made,’” says Shubel. “We’re a full, real game.”

And that end product keeps sounding better and better. You’ll take on the role of Nariko, an acrobatic redheaded warrior who can definitely handle herself around the battlefield. “We’ve got a level of grace and fluidity in our combat,” says Shubel. “You move in like a dance-like state where you’re doing a lot of complex maneuvers, and the more crazy stuff you execute, the more style points you accumulate.” After you gain enough style points, that’s when Nariko brings out her inner bitch, with pulverizing special moves like spreading an enemy’s legs apart and whacking him in the junk, or as Shubel explains, “taking your blades and stabbing one through one lung, one through the other, and then slinging the guy over your head.” Some wonderfully nasty stuff, for sure.

Heavenly Sword isn’t just about the bloodshed, though. Developer Ninja Theory (unfortunately known for the horrific Xbox 1 party game *Kung Fu Chaos*) is teaming up with some serious talent—actor Andy Serkis (that dude who played Gollum) and Peter Jackson’s Weta studio—to deliver one *precious* narrative. “We’re trying to tell a compelling story and really carry you through an experience,” says Shubel. “Andy actually took on a very significant creative role in our experience at Weta and eventually started directing all the actors...he brings a ton of experience not only with cinematics, but also theater.”

THE PS3 DIFFERENCE

Several actions will be mapped to the PS3 controller’s motion sensor, such as dodging attacks and guiding objects. “If you pick up a shield,” says Shubel, “you can throw it, and if you hold down the button, you’ll go into this flying camera with the shield and maneuver it while it’s in midair. Same goes when shooting the crossbow.”





■ Who decided that bare midriffs constitute proper wartime style?

Warhawk

Sony CEA • Summer 2007

Sometimes, things just don't work out as planned. That was the case with *Warhawk*, Sony's follow-up to one of its original PS1 hits. And as our resident rumormonger Q-mann predicted two issues ago, developer Incog (*Twisted Metal* series) made the tough decision to scrap the single-player mode and focus entirely on multiplayer. "We wanted to have the best of both worlds," says Director Dylan Jobe. "But honestly, if we were to continue down our single-player/multiplayer approach, it would have resulted in not as good single-player and not as good multiplayer."

Having recently taken part in several multiplayer sessions, we feel that focusing on this aspect may have been a wise choice, especially with the developers expanding the gameplay—while the PS1 launch hit limited you to flyin' high, this *Warhawk* brings the fight to firm soil as well. This dynamic of in-the-air/on-the-ground warfare (cribbed from EA's *Battlefield* franchise) fosters complex strategy and rewards teamwork. For instance, say an enemy tank rests outside its base. You could send in foot soldiers, but c'mon—even a half-dozen rocket launchers wouldn't put a pimple on the ass of this war machine. But what about using your grunts as a decoy? That's right; after a "hey, over here" gesture, the tank suddenly leaves its friendly confines to check out the scene. The troops then radio in (via a USB headset, naturally) to their *Warhawks* for a full-out air attack, which means lights-out for the guys in the tank and, more importantly, gives a clear path to the enemy's stronghold for your groundmates.

With the direction of the gameplay lookin' good, the big question now is how *Warhawk* will be released. We hear it'll first be available as a download on the PlayStation Network and will hit retail stores later. But don't let the fact that it's downloadable reflect on its quality. "Just because iTunes is available now doesn't mean that music producers say, 'Oh, now we can do crummy music,'" says Jobe. "Convenience is great, but quality always wins out."

THE PS3 DIFFERENCE

When the PS3's motion-sensing controller was first revealed to the world, *Warhawk* was the game Sony used to demonstrate it. And with good reason—the ability to fly your *Warhawk* simply by moving the controller around not only feels great, but also frees up the left analog stick for precise aiming on bombing runs.



■ Rumor has it that the downloadable *Warhawk* will run \$30.

For a game intended to be Sony's biggest summertime PS3 release, *Lair* has remained distressingly shrouded in mystery. Developer Factor 5 (*Star Wars: Rogue Squadron* series) demoed only one playable area—you know, the one where our dragon-riding hero swoops down onto a bridge to wreak fiery havoc on hordes of enemy troops—during the last six months, leaving gamers to ponder what else the title has to offer. Plenty, as it turns out. "That bridge is just a teeny-tiny section of *Lair*," Factor 5 President Julian Eggebrecht emphatically explains. "We've got all kinds of other areas, including huge cities, desert levels, icy regions, massive bosses...pretty much everything you can imagine."

After piloting our scaly mounts through five different stages, we're pleasantly surprised by the variety. Sure, you spend most of the time steering your majestic beast through the sky using instinctive, fluid Sixaxis motion control, but you're dividing your time between strafing targets with fireballs, engaging enemy dragons in brutal midair melees, tackling tense escort missions, and even solving low-impact environmental puzzles. And many missions (like that well-known bridge defensive) also require that you land your lizard and dish out destruction on ground-based forces. Thanks to a major control overhaul, these sections now feel considerably less haphazard than when we first test-drove *Lair* in 2006. "We've learned that Sixaxis control isn't great for everything," admits Eggebrecht. In that early demo, maneuvering your earthbound dragon by tilting the Sixaxis felt imprecise; now, the left analog stick offers simple, effective control over your dragon's movement.

This fire-breathing action tackles some weighty themes, too. Freed from the rigid, Ewok-stained confines of the *Star Wars* license, Factor 5 finally gets the chance to craft its own narrative, and they're not pulling punches. With its bloody war between two ideologically opposed nations and polluted, global-warming stricken skies, *Lair*'s world draws some obvious inspirations from our planet's current events.

THE PS3 DIFFERENCE

The silky Sixaxis flight controls, eerily photo-realistic water effects, and real-time online leaderboards make obvious use of the PS3's assets, but *Lair*'s audio setup might actually be the game's most cutting-edge feature. Gamers with high-end home theaters will enjoy uncompressed THX 7.1 surround, sonically putting them in the thick of the action.



■ *Lair*'s most satisfying combat goes down on the ground.

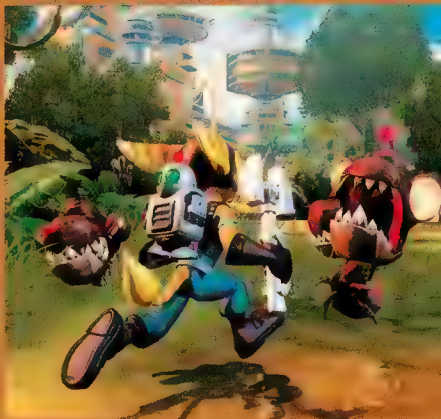
Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction

Sony CEA • Fall 2007

It's back to the basics (meaning more platforming and less combat) for the furry lombax and his tin-can sidekick. That's a good thing, as the last few *Ratchet* console titles (especially the PS2's *Up Your Arsenal*) started to become way too trigger-happy. But when it's time to pick a fight here, watch out: *Future* will sport some colossal boss battles in the middle of its beautiful, Pixar-quality backdrops. And yes, people—Clank returns as a playable character.

THE PS3 DIFFERENCE

Future will have all kinds of crazy weapons, from wild-hot flamethrowers to deadly disco balls. Some will even take advantage of the PS3 controller's motion sensor. The Tornado Launcher, for example, sends out a twister that you actually guide by tilting the Sixaxis controller.



Ninja Gaiden Sigma

Tecmo • June 2007

It's take No. 3 for developer Team Ninja's stellar action game—only this time it's coming to a whole new platform. And strangely, it isn't until you see the original Xbox 1 game again that you realize just how much prettier this edition looks. (Don't believe us? Check out the comparison footage on EGM216.1UP.com.) Still, as much as we enjoy the flashier graphics, the sexy new playable character Rachel, and the extended scenes like Hayabusa's aquatic battles, we'd rather see the dev team focus on a true sequel than another refinement.

THE PS3 DIFFERENCE

Unfortunately, *Sigma* is coming out too soon for any Home trophies. It'll also have limited motion-control features like shaking the controller to strengthen your magic attack. And...that's it.



Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots

Konami • Fall 2007

Solid Snake's gray locks and wrinkles may catch your eye, but his look is hardly the most attractive feature of this anticipated stealth-action game. *MGS4* actually lets players choose which side of the fight to support—you can even be a real jerk and take down both forces. Yet while Snake's new camo gear is definitely next-gen (simply touch any object and like a chameleon you'll instantly blend in), the game's animations need to follow suit (in the last trailer, characters moved way too robotically).

THE PS3 DIFFERENCE

MGS creator Hideo Kojima remains tight-lipped about how exactly *MGS4* will use the PS3's motion controls (yet he did recently reconfirm the game's PS3 exclusivity). Our money's on tilting the joy pad to lean around corners and using it to maneuver the tiny Metal Gear MK robot in battle.



This karaoke game ships with 30 songs, but on launch day, 350 additional ditties will be available for purchase. And these are no dollar-store knockoffs; you'll be purchasing the original tunes, accompanied by the videos for the songs. Pricing has not been announced, but Sony says it's using the iTunes music store as a model.

THE PS3 DIFFERENCE

Using a USB camera, you can take videos of yourself performing and upload them for all the world to see. As thousands of homebrew YouTube karaoke performances have so far proved, this is not necessarily a good thing.



SUPERIOR DIFFERENCE MAKERS

Check out what exclusive bits the PS3's competition has cooked up for the rest of the year.

Wii

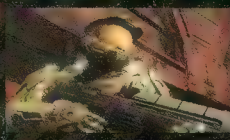
- Mario Party 8 (Nintendo • May 2007)
- Metroid Prime 3: Corruption (Nintendo • Fall 2007)
- My Sims (EA Games • Fall 2007)
- NIGHTS: Journey of Dreams (Sega • Fall 2007)
- Pokémon Battle Revolution (Nintendo • June 2007)
- No More Heroes (TBD • Fall 2007)
- Resident Evil: Umbrella Chronicles (Capcom • Fall 2007)
- Super Mario Galaxy (Nintendo • Fall 2007)
- Super Smash Bros. Brawl (Nintendo • Fall 2007)



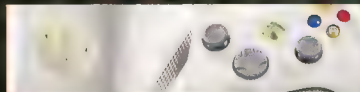
■ Clockwise from the top: Mario Party 8, NIGHTS, Pokémon Battle Revolution, My Sims

Xbox 360

- BioShock (2K Games • August 2007)
- Blue Dragon (Microsoft • August 2007)
- Forza Motorsport 2 (Microsoft • May 2007)
- Halo 3 (Microsoft • Fall 2007)
- Lost Odyssey (Microsoft • October 2007)
- Mass Effect (Microsoft • Summer 2007)
- Project Gotham Racing 4 (Microsoft • Fall 2007)
- Splinter Cell: Conviction (Ubisoft • Fall 2007)
- Too Human (Microsoft • Fall 2007)



■ Clockwise from the top left: BioShock, Too Human, Halo 3, Mass Effect, Blue Dragon



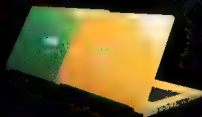
So which console has the best exclusive lineup? Well, we'll tell you...in an EGM Live! podcast where the editors will debate this heated issue. Set your browser to EGM216.1UP.com for the link to the podcast, as well as for videos of the PS3 titles mentioned throughout this feature.



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\$ 1619

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6000+ (Socket AM2)	\$1769
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\$ 859

AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 dual-core Processor	
6000+ (Socket AM2)	\$999
5600+ (Socket AM2)	\$949
5200+ (Socket AM2)	\$939
4400+ (Socket AM2)	\$879
4000+ (Socket AM2)	\$859
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 10/100/1000 Mbps Ethernet LAN
 600 Watt Surround Sound Speakers
 Logitech Deluxe Keyboard & Optical Mouse
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Color Options

NIGHT GAMER FX

\$ 1189

AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 dual-core Processor	
6000+ (Socket AM2)	\$1329
5600+ (Socket AM2)	\$1279
5200+ (Socket AM2)	\$1269
4400+ (Socket AM2)	\$1209
4000+ (Socket AM2)	\$1189
AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-62 (Socket AM2)	\$1859

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 2X NVIDIA® GeForce™ 8600GT 256MB Video Card - SLI Enabled
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 Logitech X-540 SLI Surround Sound Speakers
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 Free Wireless 802.11g 54Mbps Network Adapter



CALL TO ARMS

Armchair generals shout to kill in voice-activated strategy game **EndWar**, which recons unlikely places (Madden?) to reinvent warfare on Xbox 360 and PS3
By Robert Ashley

ON THE WAY TO SHANGHAI'S BEST BOOTLEG-DVD SHOP,

something in our cab driver's mind comes unglued. Drag-racing through the permanent gridlock of the city's French Concession neighborhood, his foot digs for untapped rpms somewhere below the floorboard. He clearly has no regard for human life. We cut through mobs of Shanghaiese commuters on bicycles and mopeds as I say my prayers to Jesus, Krishna, Allah, and Yahweh—just to cover all my bases—and spend the final moments of life regretting my request for a Chinese bootleg copy of *Idiocracy*.

But such high-speed recklessness

doesn't faze Michael de Plater. Amid the free jazz of car horns and rattling engines, the creative director of *Tom Clancy's EndWar*, an Xbox 360 and PS3 game hitting sometime in 2008, is pleasantly oblivious, casually explaining his decision to leave a cozy life in PC game development—and the West—for the wild, wild East of Shanghai. "I wanted to work on something that had the resources and production values, something high-quality and polished," says de Plater, a slightly nerdier version of Coldplay lead singer Chris Martin—though de Plater's speech is distinctly Australian. "I wanted to work on a bigger game." >







REAL WORLD WAR

The global battle for online supremacy

"We're trying to make the online and offline game as seamless as possible," says *EndWar* Creative Director Michael de Plater. To that end, there are no explicit "multiplayer" or "single-player" modes, just one global map on which both game types play out. It works like this: The solo missions introduce the game, narrating the run-up to war. But when the global fight finally breaks out, you pick one of the three factions (U.S. Joint Strike Force, European Enforcers, and Russian Spetsnaz) and battle it out against other real-world commanders. "We've got this persistent world, where North America, Europe, and Russia are divided up into territories, much like a *Risk* board," says de Plater. "All the players are participating

in this single, global campaign. Does that mean that one side can eventually win? Yes. "A campaign ends when one faction conquers the majority of territories," says de Plater. "The course of the war is totally up to the players." But that doesn't mean the game's over—when one campaign ends, the *EndWar* developers initiate a new one, tweaking a few variables to help push the story along. "We can edit the start and victory conditions," says de Plater. "For example, if America's been conquered, we could choose to start the next campaign to liberate U.S. soil with a massive new 'D-Day' landing on the East Coast." Sounds mighty ambitious...to which de Plater shrugs. "The buzzword [here] is 'big'



RUSSIAN TROOPS NOW CONTROL PARIS

AMERICAN TROOPS NOW CONTROL THE SOUTH OF FRANCE



■ Soldiers act in surprisingly lifelike ways, taking cover naturally behind cars and walls, breaking down doors, and helping the wounded back to safety.

Bigger is what he got: bigger budget, bigger concept, and bigger expectations. Coming from the U.K.'s Creative Assembly, where he worked on the much-praised *Total War* series (*Medieval: Total War*, *Rome: Total War*), de Plater is well versed in a genre that has never made the jump from PC to console completely unscathed. Real-time strategy (RTS) games are known for their mix of tactical beard-stroking and impulsive action, something akin to playing chess with a gun to your head. And while the likes of *StarCraft* and *Command & Conquer* became PC-gaming touchstones, their console versions always lost something in translation, and the genre has thus far failed to produce a couch-potato hit. Now all de Plater has to do is be the first person to get it right.

Reinventing the wheel

"We knew the big challenge would be the control scheme," says de Plater. No kidding. PC strategy games tend to stretch out across the 101-plus keys of a standard keyboard. Couple this with a heavy use of precision mouse-pointing and you've got an interface that's impossible to recreate with a traditional gamepad. "RTS on consoles has never really worked," says de Plater. But what about last year's *The Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle-earth II*, which received warm reviews from many critics, *EGM* included? "[That game] was a test case for exactly what we didn't want to do," says de Plater. "They took a PC, top-down RTS and just re-mapped the controls.... It's really painful." To give the genre a fresh start on console, de Plater decided to start from scratch. "The first thing we did was ban any reference to the PC. We were determined to design it from the ground up for console."

And so this seedling war game turned to an unlikely inspiration: the American pastime that is *Madden NFL Football*. "In a lot of ways, it's a strategy game," says de Plater of the venerable sports-game institution. "You pick your teams and the composition of your units. You call your plays, and then you execute them down on the field—breaking enemy lines, running, passing, whatever. We really wanted the same kind of feel. We thought, 'What would

a *Madden* battlefield look like? How can we make *Madden War*?"

While traditional PC RTS games give players a mile-high bird's-eye view of the action, *Madden* plays on the turf, smack in the middle of the game. Videogame football wasn't always played in 3D, of course, but de Plater sees in the evolution of *Madden* a path for his game to follow. "All the old [*Madden*] games were top-down and 2D, but then they had this idea: the virtual stadium," says de Plater. "Suddenly, there was a camera coming down onto the field, immersing you in this world."

In short, console gamers want to believe that they're in the game, and the RTS genre has yet to make that really happen.

In the s***

Imagine a field—less turf, more scorched earth—a wasteland dotted here and there with bombed-out buildings and the charred remains of cars. Instead of the Colts versus the Bears in the Super Bowl, it's the U.S. versus the European Union versus the Russians in *World War III*. Instead of a team of million-dollar athletes, you're in control of several billion dollars' worth of bleeding-edge military hardware: tanks, helicopters, artillery vehicles, and platoons of trained killers. You are on the ground. You are in the s***. Much like a sports game, you "pass" control (and your point of view) from one unit to the next at the press of a button. The camera is always attached to somebody or something, never floating disembodied above the action. This, of course, limits what you can see on the battlefield, a critical strategic element of *EndWar*. "[One] advantage of having real 3D instead of top-down is that the line of sight is real," says de Plater. "So, if there are guys in the valley, you can't see them. If guys are farther away, they're hard to see. If they're behind something, you can't see them at all." With your view no longer godlike, cover becomes a bigger focus. Not only are your soldiers and equipment more protected from fire, but they can also be hidden from sight. This creates the basic feel and tempo of *EndWar*, bouncing around from hot spot to hot spot like a soccer ball as the war rages around you.

But as the commander of an entire

How can we make *Madden War*?

—Creative Director Michael de Plater on the influence sports games have on *EndWar*

battalion of troops, you sometimes need to see the bigger picture.

Another button press brings up a full battlefield map—your *Madden* playbook, if you will. “We’ve got this strategic map where you call your plays,” says de Plater. “You give your high-level orders, like: ‘Green team, take that hill!’ Then you go to the battlefield and control [the action].” When he says that you can “give” the order, he means it. *EndWar* employs an optional voice-command system that can control every aspect of the game, from deploying your troops to changing your view from one unit to another. De Plater explains: “We were thinking, ‘How do you feel when you’re commanding troops? How do you create that feeling?’ The answer is: You call orders to them.”

Hunched over an Xbox 360 joystick in Ubisoft’s Shanghai studio, de Plater calls out a series of commands into his McDonald’s drive-thru headset: “Unit one, capture delta.” A platoon of troops marches off toward a distant office building. “Unit four, camera.” The camera swings around to a pack of menacing tanks parked around a battered high-rise. “Reinforce tanks.” More tanks join the crowd. “Unit four, attack tango one.” The tanks head out for another target. This voice system, unlike other recent attempts that had trouble recognizing commands, seems to work remarkably well. Though de Plater says that it “still needs some work,” he thinks, once polished, *EndWar*’s voice-command system will be better than what we’ve seen before. “I think [voice] worked pretty great in *SOCOM*,” he says. “But that’s PS2 and a few years ago now. The technology has improved, and we’ve got more processor that we can throw at it.”

If so, it could dramatically change the feel of the game. “Voice command is to a strategy game what a steering wheel is to a driving game,” says de Plater. “It’s an immersive thing to be able to order your guys around and watch them do what you tell them to do. And it’s something I think we would have trouble [with in] a more traditional RTS. By simplifying the range of actions available, we’ve designed the whole game around voice control. It

really keeps the game more simple and straightforward.”

Military minimalism

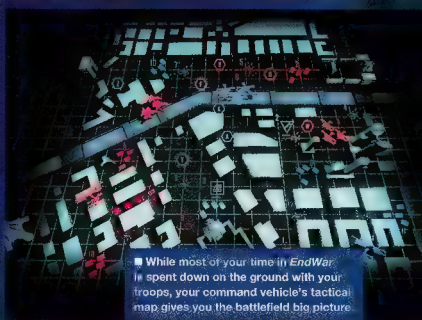
“Simple” and “straightforward” are two commandments the game’s designers seem to be following religiously, a concession to the streamlined nature of console gaming. *EndWar* is real-time strategy on a diet. “I really enjoy the discipline of designing for console,” says de Plater. “On PC, the trend for RTS games is to think, ‘OK, we’re up to version seven of this game; let’s add stuff.’ And because you’re on the PC, you think, ‘That’s fine—we can put another button on the keyboard.’ On console, you’re just so constrained. And every time we cut features out, it just made the game better.”

On a basic level, the number of units (the various types of troops or vehicles) available in *EndWar* is held to a modest seven: Riflemen (dudes with guns), Engineers (dudes with bigger guns), Tanks (surely you know these), Transports (carry dudes with guns and anti-aircraft weapons), Helos (because helicopter just doesn’t sound cool enough), Artillery (long-range destruction), and Command Vehicles (your mobile war room, pimped out with an array of missiles). Each unit type has its own strengths and weaknesses against the other unit types, a rock-paper-scissors-like structure that stays uniform across the game’s three opposing factions. Here’s another number: 12, the maximum amount of units/squads you can have in battle at any given time. Again, this keeps things simple, and notice, it’s close to the 11 players on a football team, something de Plater aimed for in creating the feel of “*Madden* at war.”

Resource management (nerd talk for getting money and spending it) is getting streamlined, too. “Our resource model is really simple,” says de Plater. “It’s not like, ‘I’ve got \$312 dollars, and this costs \$250.’ All the units cost the same, so we’re balancing the units to be the same. Now my only decision is, ‘What kind of unit do I want?’” Since dollar amounts aren’t needed, money in the game is represented graphically (as of now, by stars). These purchasing coupons are gained just as simply: >

Voice command is to a strategy game what a steering wheel is to a driving game.

—Michael de Plater



■ While most of your time in *EndWar* is spent down on the ground with your troops, your command vehicle’s tactical map gives you the battlefield big picture.

■ You can control your battalion entirely by voice chat, though your neighbors might wonder why you keep screaming. "Unit four...capture tango!"

COUNTDOWN TO WORLD WAR III

Time to stock up on bottled water, canned food, and roach motels

"It's the Apocalypse, Clancy style. If you were to take the Book of Revelation and try to do it as a techno-thriller," says *EndWar* story director John Gonzalez. One thing's for sure: The War on Terror is off the table in this game's fiction, so just imagine all that stuff in the Middle East never happened as you take a tour through the events that lead *EndWar* to World War III.

2011

Russia Left out of the Missile Shield Club

The U.S. and European Union (EU) sign the historic SLAMS (Space-Land-Air Missile Shield) Treaty, agreeing to codevelop technologies for a comprehensive, interlocking anti-ballistic missile system. Left out in the cold, Russia accelerates development of its own system.



2014

The End of Nuclear War

SLAMS goes live. The world watches as the U.S. and EU launch test salvos against each other. The results are extraordinary: Each nation's missile shield destroys 100 percent of the dummy missiles fired against it. The U.S. and EU governments pronounce "the end of strategic nuclear war," and the world celebrates a new age of peace and security.

2015

Energy Crisis

Like toppling dominos, several major oil companies own up to having "overstated" recoverable oil reserves. For weeks, the price of oil spikes to \$200 dollars per barrel, shocking stock markets in New York, London, and Tokyo into a massive downturn. With worldwide energy production slumping, "energy security" becomes the explicit priority of governments around the world. Only Russia, already the world's No. 1 supplier of oil and natural gas, benefits from the energy crisis, spending its petrodollars on a revitalized, technologically sophisticated military. Tensions between the world's three superpowers mount.



2018

The Militarization of Space

The United States reveals plans to launch the "Freedom Star" space station into high orbit by 2020. While partly designed for civilian research purposes, the station will also house three companies of Marines, who can deploy anywhere on earth within 90 minutes. International reactions are extremely negative, to say the least.

2020

Now

With the final module of the Freedom Star set to launch from Kennedy Space Center amid international outcry, it comes as little surprise when a group of terrorists attack the launch site. In investigating the source of the attack, the U.S., Europe, and Russian Federation find themselves at odds, rolling with unstoppable momentum toward full-scale global war.







■ Your troops are persistent from battle to battle, so if you keep them alive long enough, they might recall situations from previous battles. If you let them die, that's no more forever, replaced by new recruits.



When you capture a strategic point on the map (say, an enemy base), you're awarded one. Easy—almost too easy, in fact. There's a thin line between "elegant simplicity" and "dumbed down for the masses." But de Plater says that what *EndWar* loses in number-crunching, it will gain in deep combat. Apparently, it's a matter of semantics:

de Plater: "The emphasis is much more on the tactical side than on the strategic."

Me: "Oh, right.... Wait, what's the difference?"

de Plater: "The strategy in Iraq might be to get the oil, but the tactics are how you maneuver your troops in order to execute that. Strategy is your high-level goals and managing your resources. Tactics are maneuvering your troops around to beat the other guy. We want to make it more like a battlefield war game...."

Rule No. 1: no magic

In that spirit, the *EndWar* team is out to make battle on a large scale feel less like an interactive board game, and more like real war. "One of our rules is: There's no magic," says de Plater. "There are no buildings popping up magically just because there's an engineer standing nearby. If a new unit arrives on the battlefield, it has to arrive by helicopter and get dropped off. Everything has to happen in the real world." This being war, the real world suffers collateral damage. "Everything is destructible," de Plater says. The smoldering ruins of Paris, Moscow, and Washington, D.C., in the game are a testament to the simple truth of that statement.

But nothing in *EndWar* seems more detailed and obsessed over than the surprisingly varied way soldiers act (and react) on the battlefield. Squadrons of heavily armed soldiers, when ordered to a cluster of firebombed cars, will automatically take cover in different ways, periodically taking potshots at the enemy through windows and overhoods. If a soldier gets shot, one of his squadmates will drag him back to safety. When the player orders reinforcements, the additional troops deploy from helicopters, rappelling down the ropes like old pros. When ordered to take control of a building, the troops will gather around the entrance and break in *Rainbow*

Six-style—boot through the door and guns blazing. Then they'll take sniper positions in the windows. These moments play out like minidramas, almost as if they are cut-scenes in and of themselves.

These scenes are a clever way to encourage players to empathize and identify with their characters, a difficult task in a genre that prefers many and anonymous to few and personal. To further the cause, *EndWar* emphasizes an almost *Pokémon*-like ownership over a player's units. "It's a battalion that you own," says de Plater. "You can personalize it. You can customize it. You can choose its motto and its heraldry. You can change its composition and abilities." And if you let your soldiers die, there's no retry. They're gone for good, along with all their upgrades. But keep them alive, and your troops will emerge as grizzled vets, even chattering about old conquests. "Their history as they fight with you is saved, and they'll refer to that," says de Plater. "So, if you've got experienced troops, they'll remember battles that they fought six months before. There's persistence. Their experience goes up. They build up medals. It's a nerdy thing, but this goes back to toy soldiers like *Warhammer*, where you collect, paint, and customize your army. It's your own collection of soldiers."

Boys and their toys

It's a rare occasion that a game reveals something personal about its creators, the always anonymous team hunched over their computers late into the night. But there's something about *EndWar* that, despite aspiring to serious, gritty realism, suggests a nostalgia for little green army men lined up in the grass. "Most of the people here are probably doing the same thing for fun that they were doing when they were six or seven," says de Plater. "When I was little, that's what I did. I lined up my little toy soldiers and invented combat systems. Whenever anyone plays with toy soldiers, what they're really doing is imagining this battlefield coming to life."

More than anything, that's what *EndWar* is all about. ☐

Check GMA16.1UP.com in late May for video footage of *EndWar*.

Every time we cut features out,
it just made the game better.

—Michael de Plater

REVIEWS

➤ late prom nights, monstrous frights, eerie sights, turbulent flights, and mammoth tanks

86

COMMAND & CONQUER 3: TIBERIUM WARS

CONTENTS

- 84 F.E.A.R.
- 86 Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars
- 89 Monster Madness: Battle for Suburbia
- 90 Dawn of Mana
- 91 Atelier Iris 3: Grand Phantasm
- 92 .hack//G.U. Vol. 2: Reminisce
- 92 Etrian Odyssey
- 93 Time Ace
- 94 Brooktown High
- 95 Coded Arms: Contagion
- 96 Reviews Wrap-Up

THIS MONTH IN REVIEWS

SEND IN THE TROOPS

Micromanagement for the win

WHAT A MONTH. Normally, this would be the space where I bitch about this season's yearly drought of games. But while that's the case again, who even cares when the games that do come out are of such menial quality? Let's look at the list: No Wii games. One uninspired port for the PS3. Three PS2 games, all average-at-best RPGs. If it weren't for C&C3, it'd be a complete bust. Sure, plenty of movies are coming out, but I'd rather be playing new games. Ah, well—I suppose I'll just watch the *GTA4* trailer again.

—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

Reviews: You can also find the lead *EGM* review on 1UP.com. The second and third reviews—you'll find those here.

Awards: We dole out 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.

THE VERDICT
FOR US

TIBERIA HELPER

9.0
EXCELLENT

ALL SCORES
6.5
AVERAGE

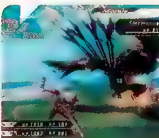
EXTRA
1.5
TERRIBLE





PAGE
89

**Madness:
Nightmare
on Lame St.**



PAGE
92

**Reminiscence:
Or maybe
not...**



PAGE
94

**Brooktown:
Dazed and
Confused**



THIS MONTH'S REVIEW CREW

We apologize in advance for any hurt feelings you might encounter while reading this



Dan "Shoe" Hsu

Editor-in-Chief

He prefers *Lord of the Rings: Battle for Middle-earth II* (orcs and elves) over *Command & Conquer 3* (tanks and guns)... It's official: Shoe is now a level-50 dork, which makes out his invisibility to Hot Chicks power.

Now Playing: *Lord of the Rings: Battle for Middle-earth II*, *Worms*
Blog: egmshoe.1UP.com



Jennifer Tsao

Managing Editor

Jennifer doesn't mind this month's gaming drought. It's nice to be able to catch up on classics she never played, oddities she overlooked, and weirdly addictive puzzlers.

Now Playing: *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*, *Kirby Squeak Squad*, *Brain Buster*
Blog: egmjennifer.1UP.com



Bryan Intihar

Reviews Editor

Why is *Man* so happy? Well, he was lucky enough to review only one of the many terrible games this month. Man, the holiday season really can't come soon enough.

Now Playing: *Lost Planet: Extreme Condition*, *Resistance: Fall of Man* (online multiplayer)
Blog: egmbryan.1UP.com



Michael Donahoe

News/Features Editor

Michael fueled up the rocket ships for a *WrestleMania* visit, where he was ridiculed by wrestlers for *The 1UP Show*. Watching his interviews is like lying on the lawn and getting run over by a lawn mower....

Now Playing: *Metroid: Zero Mission*
Blog: egmho.1UP.com



Joe Rybicki

Staff Reviewer

Since moving to Ohio, Joe's repeated attempts to invite his Amish neighbors over for a game of *Guitar Hero II* seem to have fallen on deaf beards. Er, ears. He can't figure out why no one's returning his calls.

Now Playing: *New Super Mario Bros.*, *Wii Sports*, *MotorStorm*
Blog: opmjoer.1UP.com



Shane Bettenhausen

Executive Editor

This month's lineup of lame review games inspired Shane to revisit the classically horrible games lurking for his 3DO, Sega CD, and Jaguar. Full-motion-video sing-alongs put everything in perspective....

Now Playing: *Virtua Fighter 5*, *Lair*, *Blue Dragon*, *Night Trap*
Blog: egmshane.1UP.com



Crispin Boyer

Senior Editor

An April Fools' joke gone bad landed Crispin out of a job for a bit. But he's been welcomed back with a ground-floor opportunity: door-to-door EGM salesman. He'll be in your town interrupting your dinner soon.

Now Playing: *God of War II*, *Guitar Hero II*, *Crackdown*
Blog: egmcrispin.1UP.com



Greg Ford

Reviews Editor

Every spring, we worry Greg will join his softball league full time. And every year, we have to convince him to stay. This time, the trick was *Guitar Hero II* on the 360. Who knew such a music-impaired gamer would enjoy rocking out so much?

Now Playing: *Guitar Hero II*
Blog: egmford.1UP.com



Andrew Fitch

Staff Reviewer

Good news: Andrew's finally succeeded in his quest to land a gaming girlfriend. Bad news: The *Animal Crossing* critics are now watching his every move.

Now Playing: Watching the girlfriend play *Animal Crossing* on her GameCube, DS...and other DS.
Blog: copydesk-fitch.1UP.com



Greg Sewart

Staff Reviewer

Sewart just found out he's going to be the daddy of a bouncing baby girl. Expectations are high. Not only will she be on the Canadian women's Olympic hockey team in 2022, but the first female NASCAR champ.

Now Playing: *Castlevania: SOTN*, *Oblivion*, *Guitar Hero II*
Blog: stewy.1UP.com



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. Bravo.



Some sequences start in F.E.A.R., but bad clever levels didn't join them.



PlayStation 3

F.E.A.R.

■ Publisher: VU Games ■ Developer: Monolith/Day 1 ■ Players: 1-16 ■ ESRB: Mature



The Good: Great design, genuine frights, brilliant A.I.
The Bad: Almost embarrassing technical issues
Buy It: On Xbox 360 (or PC) instead

Frighteningly flawed

→ **JOE:** What a tragedy. Here we have a game so well designed—a scary first-person shooter where you have powers to slow down time—that it's earned accolades on PC and 360. But on PS3, inexcusable technical issues cripple it. Witness the choppy graphics—doesn't the PS3 have the power to make this stuff run smoothly? Witness the perceptible lag between hitting the fire button and, you know, firing. Hear the sound glitches that often make it impossible to discern where shots are coming from. You've basically got one of the most reprehensible ports in recent memory.

What's worse is that you can see what a good game it *should* be. The atmosphere is spectacular, delivering genuinely frightening moments at

just the right times. And the enemies are brilliant, taking cover and working together in a remarkably believable fashion. So the fundamental design makes it worth checking out if you have neither a PC nor 360...barely.

→ **SHOE:** Yes, *F.E.A.R.* has great A.I.—enemies will circle around the level, flush you out with a grenade, or call out your presence if they catch your flashlight beam...all shooters need to be this brainy. But spectacular atmosphere? Only if Joe's talking about the intense music. Otherwise, the cheap scares do nothing for me because of a general lack of context behind them. Worse, the impossibly endless office/warehouse stages (which make up the bulk of the game) are amongst the

most generic I've seen in any shooter. Things pick up around chapter 8, but by then you may be in deep sleep.

→ **MARK:** I guess it's only fitting no one's talked about multiplayer yet—the developers obviously didn't give a crap about it; why should we? Suffice to say the lame environments and dull game types waste the slow-mo mechanic's unique potential, and the lack of basic features (can't switch levels or modes without starting a new game, no voice chat) is the slapdash icing on this half-baked cake. Single-player fares better—thanks to smart enemies and the twisted story—but technical snafus and (worth repeating) horribly boring levels will keep you from getting deep into *F.E.A.R.* ❌

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SHOOT TO THRILL



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DUCK TO 46966

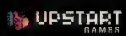
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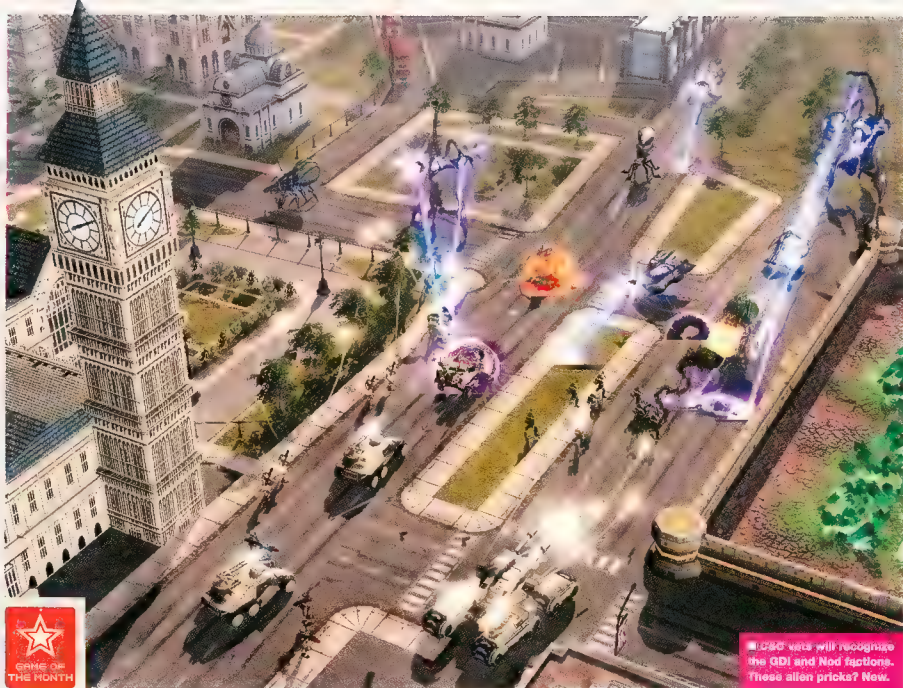


G-mode



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■ GDI units will recognize the GDI and Nod factions. These alien pricks? New.

Xbox 360

COMMAND & CONQUER 3: TIBERIUM WARS

■ Publisher: Electronic Arts ■ Developer: EALA ■ Players: 1-4 ■ ESRB: Teen

Commanding your cranium



The Good: Very streamlined, console-friendly interface...

The Bad: ...but too fast-paced a game for that interface

Drunk: The ever-circling A.I. pilots

➔ **SHOE:** It seems real-time strategy is becoming a big-time genre on consoles (see last year's *The Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle-earth II* on 360 or our cover story in this issue), with well-thought-out control schemes, top-notch production values, and full online support (rankings, downloadable content, and so on) becoming the norm. *Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars* does all that rather well, and even streamlines the fine *BFME2* controls, letting you construct units and buildings without having to scroll back to click on the proper source structure.

While creating your futuristic armies in this GDI (good guys) vs. Nod (bad guys) vs. Scrin (really bad, alien guys who show up late in the game and

have their own shortened campaign that you can play) three-way war is a breeze, commanding them to conquer can get tricky, despite all the console-friendly controls. Some units and turrets are tiny compared to *BFME2*'s, making them difficult to select individually (the optional magnetic cursor overcompensates even on the "low" setting, so no thanks). You need to babysit aircraft because the brainless pilots will lazily circle over anti-lazy-pilot guns when they have no other orders to follow (similarly, ground units don't know how to avoid health-draining Tiberium fields). And during the campaign, the computer won't let up even though you can't manage everything as quickly as you can on the PC—a few of the missions get very

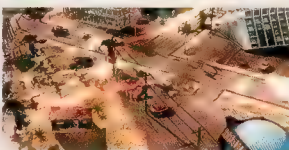
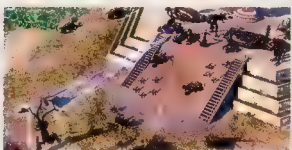
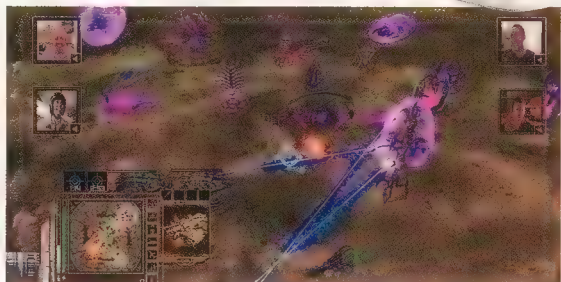
frustrating to handle.

But on a level playing field (multiplayer), these problems seem to be less significant, so you can more enjoy the variety and strategies this latest C&C brings to the battlefield.

➔ **JOHN:** As a vocal detractor of the wacky control scheme in *BFME2*, I approached C&C3 with huge, huge doubts. I've played every game in the series, and the idea of squeezing out everything that's needed with a couple of analog sticks and eight buttons still seems utterly ridiculous. You know what, though? It works, and in my mind it's better than EA's previous effort. Shoe and Darren may whine about the lack of a mouse-and-keyboard option, but once you nail

Face time

Plug in your Xbox Live Vision cam to get your mug onscreen in the multiplayer setup room, during the game (shown here), and in the postgame lobby. The video comes in really smooth, but it serves no gameplay purpose whatsoever, unless you count in-your-face celebrations as part of the "gameplay" (the winner has his pic large, front and center, on the victory screen—perfect for gloating and flashing obscene gestures at the rest of the players). You have the option to turn these videos off, of course.



■ Pop open a tall boy of Colt 45, sit back, and enjoy the relatively well-acted (though still unavoidably cheesy) live-video cut-scenes starring the likes of Michael Ironside (*Spinal Tap*), Tricia Helfer (*Battlestar Galactica*), and Billy Dee Williams (oh, you know).

assigning frequently used features to the D-pad and setting up time-saving default actions, it's remarkably quick.

As Shoe mentions, the pathfinding can be a bit lousy (as in all RTS games, it seems) and the single-player campaign can be tough, but where C&C3 really shines is in multiplayer. It's an absolute blast thanks to well-designed, dense maps and a set of modes that focus on quick, fun skirmishes. Just don't try and play on a standard-def television, as the user interface is rendered so tiny that you can't see objective points or read most of the instruction text.

➔ **DARREN:** Yeah, yeah. This is the part where the crusty game geezer yammers about the "good ol' days" of PC gaming. Stow it. I gave the gamepad a fair shake for C&C3, and y'know

what? It works...at first.

Taking command of small battles at the onset makes sense (and thank Jeebus for the analog stick's tweakable sensitivity, which makes or breaks your experience!). Still, all the shortcuts on all the gamepads in all the world won't save your ass in those larger, climactic skirmishes you encounter during the campaigns. Instead of quickly selecting the correct battle group or build order, you're jumping through too many hoops to get tactical. It's that much more annoying since the game shines in the smaller-scale battles.

I'm not saying you can't enjoy an epic RTS on consoles, but as the battlefield grew here, I'd have killed for a keyboard and mouse. At least that's my excuse for losing to Shoe in multiplayer—and I'm sticking to it. 🎮

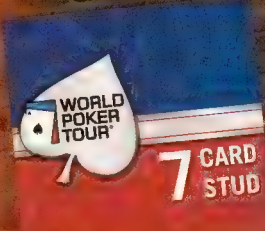
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Xbox 360

MONSTER MADNESS: BATTLE FOR SUBURBIA

■ Publisher: SouthPeak ■ Developer: Artificial Studios
 ■ Players: 1-4 ■ ESRB: Teen

Zombies Ate My Online Co-op

➔ **SHARKEY:** *Zombies Ate My Neighbors* (SNES/Genesis) was a pretty goddamn great game—an overhead action-shooter in which you take on classic (albeit generic) movie monsters. I sure would like to play that again as a modernized 360 title. Except without an absolutely lousy checkpoint system, non-remappable controls that require way too much use of the L3 and R3 thumbstick buttons, hard-to-control vehicles, instant-death environmental hazards, and, well, so many problems that listing them all would far outstrip my word count.

The game's saving grace is its multiplayer co-op, which makes all of the game's shortcomings easier to bear. Hell, it becomes really fun. Which is why it's so baffling that online

play consists entirely of arena modes. With three friends on a couch with you, this is a solid 7. Considering that friends and a couch don't come in the box, meaning more solo play, it's more of a 3. I'm going to compromise and call it a 4.5.

➔ **BROOKS:** No objection here. *Monster Madness* is a train wreck if you happen to be an only child or lack nearby friends. From the arthritis-inducing control scheme to the relentless hordes of ghouls that have an affinity for gangbanging you, gameplay flaws abound. Also teeth-grinding: attempting to scavenge the weapon-upgrading nuts and bolts via awkward platforming, made all the more painful by the broken jumping system. But, as if by magic, said flaws become less noticeable when sitting next to a buddy—who doesn't enjoy tag-teaming a cat-tossing zombie granny or gunning down Bigfoot with a bud?

➔ **GREG S:** As a single-player game, *Monster Madness'* uninspired mix of collect-a-thon quests and *Smash T.V.*-style action doesn't impress. Had it been almost entirely about blowing away zombies, it would've fared better. Sure, co-op play helps the cause, but the online? Yikes. It's a boring, arena-based deathmatch. The developers squandered a great opportunity to get some multiplayer campaign action happening. Plus, I can't shake the feeling this should have been a \$10 download on Xbox Live Arcade.

THE VERDICTS
 OUT OF 10

SHARKEY
4.5
 (BAD)

BROOKS
4.0
 (BAD)

GREG S.
4.0
 (BAD)

The Good: Pretty good co-op with a few friends
The Bad: No fun otherwise
Really? \$60 for what should be an Xbox Live Arcade game

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PlayStation 2

DAWN OF MANA

Publisher: Square Enix ■ Developer: Square Enix ■ Players: 1 ■ ESRB: Teen

THE VERDICTS

(OUT OF 10)

A. FITCH
4.5
BAD

SHANE
5.0
AVERAGE

GREG S.
4.0
BAD

The Good: Looks and sounds like a classic *Mana* game
The Bad: Doesn't play anything like a classic *Mana* game
Mana's Last Hope: *Heroes of Mana* (DS)

Looks great...but it's six years too late

➔ **A. FITCH:** *Dawn of Mana*, the latest entry in Square Enix's ailing action-RPG franchise, gets the superficial things right—the candy-coated graphics and beautiful soundtrack capture the classic charm of *Secret of Mana* (SNES). But *Dawn's* developers seem to have forgotten why we all loved *Secret* more than a decade ago: Its combat system is a plodding, physics-based mess that bears little resemblance to the fast-paced *Mana* games of old, and its chaotic, confusing levels—compounded by “helpful” guide arrows that lead you straight into brick walls—are the antithesis of *Secret's* simple, elegant design.

Six years ago, as a first-generation PS2 title, *Dawn* might've been acceptable as *Mana's* transition into the 3D

world. But after years of far better action-RPGs—and coming on the heels of last year's mediocre *Children of Mana* (DS)—it's unacceptable.

➔ **SHANE:** I hate to say it, but yeah, *Dawn's* just another misguided wrong turn. By axing most of the series' normal role-playing elements, the developers have effectively devolved *Dawn of Mana* into a linear adventure-platformer. Those willing to stomach the troublesome camera will find a surprisingly robust physics system that fuels both the puzzles and combat with plenty of emergent gameplay. Yet the thrill of tossing stuff around the environments does wear thin, as you'll find little to do of consequence other than kill enemies. And since

all acquired spells and stat bonuses obnoxiously reset to zero at the start of each stage, you won't feel too inspired to venture on.

➔ **GREG S:** Shane's nuts—the thrill of the “surprisingly robust” physics system wore off about two seconds into the first level. If you're going to center puzzles—and some combat—on physics-based object interaction, you should make sure pushing something where you want it to go isn't a maddening bout of trial and error. But the sickness-inducing camera makes manipulating objects such a chore that I often found it difficult to progress. The game has gorgeous graphics and a decent story, but the infuriating play mechanics kill it. ☹

PlayStation 2

ATELIER IRIS 3: GRAND PHANTASM

■ Publisher:NIS America ■ Developer: Gust
■ Players: 1 ■ ESRB: Teen



The Good: Optional Japanese voice track for the discerning game nerd

The Bad: About as fulfilling as a Twinkle sampler

Questionable Dialogues: "The grocery store is a woman's battlefield!"

Grand phantasy phailure

➔ **RAY:** I've played my fair share of emasculating games, but nothing has made me feel more insecure than the *Atelier Iris* games. Sure, it's a role-playing game series, so you always get a male hero with an inventory of shiny swords and other pointy weapons, but characters are nothing without a story—and unfortunately you'll be reading the same juvenile crap you've seen in the other *Iris* games here. The series' trademark alchemy feature, merging ingredients to make items, returns, but it's practically the only unique thing about the game in the first place—most of the quests consist of making some number of some random item that some nonplayable character needs, and the quests in general are so menial that you'll wonder where to even fit in the time to level up. The look of *Phantasm* is also way past its prime, all rendered in an anime-meets-Bavarian-storybook style, which will only strengthen the headache you'll get from this ridiculously frilly adventure.

➔ **JENN F:** Emasculating? Whatever, Ray. Main man Edge's salient ability is kicking ass; Iris is just here to magically cook and sew. And while I'm glad Iris isn't a stay-at-home alchemist

like Viese was in *Ai2*, I'm really tired of walking her back and forth between battles, quests, and the alchemy kitchen. I still enjoy the alchemy and battle system, but the myriad fetch quests are simply a riveting game of map orientation. An epic adventure is hiding in here somewhere, but *Ai3* doesn't bother getting around to it till it's done boring you.

➔ **MICHAEL:** Yikes, what's with the hate hailstorm? Yeah, *Ai3* doesn't try to tinker too much with its cutesy formula (no, eliminating random battles does not count as "innovation"), but

that doesn't mean you can't find some fun here. Since I haven't played the previous games in the series, I found the primitive pixelated characters to be rather charming. I'm just bummed the bulk of the game consists of boring quests that fall under the find-the-useless-crap variety. And putting a time limit on the dungeons is just dumb—revisiting areas is never fun in an RPG...especially when you have to go back to the same place multiple frickin' times in a row! But at least the two main things you do in the game—battling and alchemy—kept me playing longer than these two.



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Animation by Aaron F.



PlayStation 2

.hack//G.U. VOL. 2: REMINISCE

■ Publisher: Namco Bandai ■ Developer: CyberConnect2
 ■ Players: 1 ■ ESRB: Teen

Thin in the middle

➔ **RAY:** If you enjoyed the first *.hack//G.U.* enough to anticipate the next volume, then that's swell. But if it didn't hook you, then you'll find no reason to continue this serialized RPG franchise. The mind-melting story of a gang of players in a massively multiplayer online RPG trying to expose the evil developers is about as much fun to watch as *Lost* is these days; I can't bother figuring it out anymore.

Basically, *Reminisce* can't rely on the novelty of the first volume. It simply pulls the story through the same rapidly repetitious gameplay. The battle system is still OK on its own, but when you're hacking through the same dungeon types as before, your optimism starts its downward spiral. *.hack* is presented as a fake MMO, but it's just not as addictive as the real thing, becoming like all the other by-the-numbers RPGs out there. Can't say I didn't see it coming, though—the first *.hack* series petered out halfway through, too.

➔ **A. FITCH:** I'm with you, Ray—except I'm even more disappointed. The first *G.U.* started off with a bang, putting you in the role of a bitter, hardened MMO veteran exacting vengeance in the online world. *Reminisce* devolves into clichéd "If you die in the game, you might die for real!" nonsense, complete with characters spouting inane technobabble that makes *The Matrix* look profound by comparison. Plus, the interactive forums and e-mails (my favorite part of the *.hack* concept) aren't available until a few hours in. Since the combat's exactly the same as *Rebirth's*—and as repetitive as ever—the story's the selling point. And it sure as hell ain't worth another \$40.

➔ **GREG S:** I'll third that. *Reminisce* feels like a long-winded anime with mediocre RPG battle mechanics grafted on just so they could sell the thing for more money. And it takes so long for anything to happen throughout the game, and this buildup is way too slow for any of the ultimate payoffs. The whole serial-RPG thing is cool, I can give them that, but even fans who slogged through the last game will find *Reminisce* hard to sit through once they get past the plot's few interesting bits.

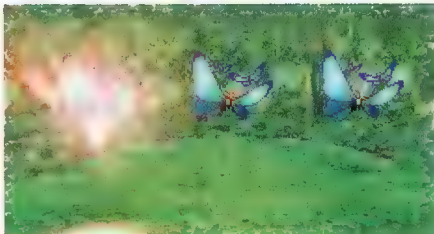
THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

RAY
6.0
AVERAGE

A. FITCH
4.0
BAD

GREG S
5.0
AVERAGE

The Good: Still a decent RPG on a technical level
The Bad: But it's 30 more hours of the exact same stuff
Or You Could Watch: *hack//Roots*, the anime version



DS

ETRIAN ODYSSEY

■ Publisher: Atlus ■ Developer: Atlus
 ■ Players: 1 ■ ESRB: Teen

Patience, young nerd

➔ **A. FITCH:** *Donkey Kong*, the first videogame I ever played, hooked me with a simple challenge from the big ape: "How high can you get?" I rarely got much higher than the second girder (I was 5!), but I kept at it—the point was improving each time.

I got that nostalgic feeling playing *Etrian Odyssey*, a dungeon-crawling roleplayer with *Dungeons & Dragons* trappings. Like real D&D, it requires you to actually *think* like an adventurer. From the start, enemies show no quarter, so you've got to set your plan of attack before you dare set foot in the dungeon. You even have to make your own maps with the stylus—it's actually pretty fun, thanks to *EO's* simple grid-based layout. Yes, the very deliberate pace may turn off some, but I got addicted to getting just a little farther inside the labyrinth each time around. It's a sense of accomplishment that's missing from most modern games.

➔ **MICHAEL:** Sense of accomplishment? Wha—? No matter how long I play this painfully plodding game, I seem to earn nothing. Actually, scratch that—I did acquire something: one hardcore hand cramp. Seriously, this game doesn't just require patience, it requires a time machine (how else are you going to make up those wasted hours?). And I'm sorry, I don't want to be cartographer—making maps just seems like lazy game design to me. Yeah, it's cool to see a new-school approach to the classic *Wizardry* games, but, uh, where are the improvements? Anyone?

➔ **SHANE:** First-person dungeon hacks might be roleplaying's least sexy subgenre, but as Fitch says, oldsters will find satisfying depth in these plentiful lo-fi labyrinths. An easy-to-use character creation system smacks of classic pen-and-paper RPGs, and the DIY map-making hearkens back to the good old days of *Wizardry* and *Dungeon Master* (when we actually drew on graph paper). Kids weaned on *Final Fantasy VII* likely won't have the patience for it, but questers of the appropriate age (and/or nerdy enough to dig the Yuzo Koshiro soundtrack) should dive in.

THE VERDICTS
(OUT OF 10)

A. FITCH
8.0
GOOD

MICHAEL
4.0
BAD

SHANE
6.0
AVERAGE

The Good: Addicting "how far can you get?" premise
The Bad: Takes patience...lots of patience
The Whip-Wielding Warrior: A little too into S&M



DS

TIME ACE

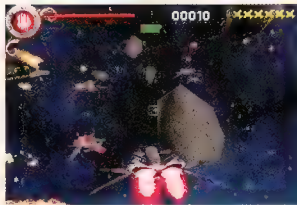
■ Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: Trainwreck Studios
 ■ Players: 1-4 ■ ESRB: Everyone 10+

Time for a nap

➔ **CRISPIN:** Please, someone invent a real time machine so I can zap back to early April and warn myself not to play this dog-tired dogfighting-through-the-decades air-combat crashshoot. Oh, the takeoff is smooth enough, with your time-tripping pilot (named—yikes!—Dr. Clock) racing in a rocket-powered biplane to blast apart a speeding locomotive. But then the game devolves into mindless period-piece missions—set everywhere from ancient Atlantis to the surface of the moon—that, at best, play like a generic *Star Fox* and, at worst, fall to earth under a myriad of faults.

Chief among *Time Ace*'s tripping points: an autoengaging autopilot with a knack for tossing you into buildings if you wander too far from the preset flight path. Add in spotty hit detection and you end up dying more from crashing into obstacles than from taking enemy fire. Spend your time watching *Dogfights* on the History Channel instead.

➔ **G. FORD:** Sure, that first level is all right, but



Time Ace's best mission takes place in 2015 B.C. Atlantis. Here, you're strafing some old-timey galleons before directing your plane *underwater*, collecting air bubbles to stay alive (think *Sonic* games, of all things). Yeah, it's bizarre, but it's fun and actually shows a hint of creativity. Thing is, it takes place after the game proper. Huh? Why bury the best level? Well, I suppose that's right in line for a game with some of the worst 3D graphics in recent memory (check out those pixelated, paper-flat explosions) and tacked-on scratch-the-screen and connect-the-dots touch-screen support.

➔ **DEMIAN:** Oh, please don't make me keep pl—. Wait, it's over? Cool! I finished *Time Ace* in one sad Sunday afternoon, and these guys are right on all counts, including G. Ford's part about the best levels being at the end. I'd also like to add, for the benefit of the two people who might want to try the multiplayer mode, please reconsider. You'll each need to have your own copy of the game, for starters, and then you'll find that clumsy, oh-look-we-died-simultaneously-again deathmatches in one of three maps aren't much fun. What flight game doesn't let you do a loop-the-loop anyway?

The Good: First and last missions are kinda cool
The Bad: The rest of the game
Unrelated To: Konami coin-op classic *Time Pilot*

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■ Tongue Twister: This is the "good" minigame.



Elektra
Well, you're not much of a poet. But you're cute. Wanna make out?



■ Nothing in the game is nearly this exciting...of fun.

PSP

BROOKTOWN HIGH

Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: Backbone ■ Players: 1 ■ ESRB: Teen

See me after class

THE VERDICT'S
(OUT OF 10)

JENNIFER
4.0
BAD

JOE
5.5
AVERAGE

JENNIFER
5.0
AVERAGE

The Good: A lot of original ideas
The Bad: All of which are half-assedly implemented
Why: Does kissing trigger random stock-footage cut-scenes?

➔ **JENNIFER:** Like so many high school dropouts, *Brooktown High* had potential. The dating sim casts you as a senior with raging hormones trying to get good grades, make friends, earn spending money, and go to college—novel subject matter, right? Oh, how wonderful it could've been.... Trying to get popular through chats with classmates should've been a fun launching point, but not the majority of the game. Conversations feel pointless and repetitive. *Brooktown* does offer three minigames (yup, just three), but only one, Tongue Twister, is marginally original. It's not terrible, but that's only relative to the other derivative duds, blackjack and rhythm-action. The real problem, though, is how scripted your progress

feels. I studied, got a job, befriended everyone in school, danced, shopped, and heavily petted at the beach. But apparently, I was just going through the motions. My GPA could plummet; still my parents cheered. I'd ace the kissing game, but my date would brush me off. With loads of charm and ambition, *Brooktown* has Ivy League aspirations; too bad it flunked out.

➔ **JOE:** So I'm "going steady" with Jody, and she gets grounded for a few weeks. Like, ankle-bracelet grounded. The game's response? "Time to play the field!" I was pleasantly surprised by *Brooktown*'s sharp dialogue, but given all the meaningless relationships, clique warfare, and two-faced backstabbing, I can't decide if the

game is a brilliant indictment of superficial American teen culture...or just a lazy attempt at an RPG-style life-sim that tries for individuality but ends up as just another shallow poseur. Either way, it just isn't very good.

➔ **JENNIFER:** *Brooktown* is like *Mad-Libs: Dating* crossed with *Mean Girls: The RPG*. Despite glimmers of fascinating social politics—as well as the allure of vicarious, chilling what-if scenarios—senior year isn't long enough, apparently, to explore anything in-depth. While intriguing, the game is never captivating. Prom was anticlimactic, school was dull, and I could keep my Popularity Meter level simply by avoiding people. At least the simulation was accurate. ☹



PSP

CODED ARMS: CONTAGION

■ Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: Great
 ■ Players: 1-8 ■ ESRB: Teen

On the path to redemption

➔ **JOE:** Now that the stench of the first *Coded Arms* has faded, it's nice to see *Contagion* taking a few steps in the right direction. Yes, it's still a first-person shooter on PSP—far from an optimal combination—but it overcomes its breeding to provide a pretty, stylish, and reasonably satisfying experience.

Contagion exploits its virtual-reality setting with plenty of deft touches, including a surprisingly tense hacking minigame, impressive VR-style effects, and visuals that mix realistic elements with *Tron*-like areas. With such a sharp look, it's surprising that the gameplay actually holds its own, delivering some solid weapon variety, a veneer of strategy courtesy of the equipment-upgrade system, some clever level design, and, perhaps most shockingly, an utterly inoffensive control scheme.

In fact, aside from the almost indescribably bad online play, *Contagion* is surprisingly solid all around. It's not going to win any awards, no, but it's a pleasant enough FPS diversion.

The Good: The slick, stylish look

The Bad: The comically awful online play

Seriously: Online play may be the worst ever. Tell your friends

➔ **BRYAN:** I think Joe needs to get his nose examined, because I'm picking up of a pretty strong whiff of the original *Coded Arms* here, and it ain't smelling so great. *Contagion*'s enemies are about as brain-dead as the first game's lot (even shots into their backsides don't grab their attention), plus the controls are far from passable (jack up the X-axis sensitivity and your character still turns with the speed of an arthritic geriatric). But at least Joe didn't miss the multiplayer's stink; who knew virtual reality had such laggy online play and uninspired modes?

➔ **ANDREW P:** And I'm somewhere in the middle, because even though *Contagion* does have an interesting techno facade and a completely tolerable control scheme, it still feels like every shooter I've ever played. The combination of linear levels, easy look-on ability, and the vast amounts of ammo and health replenishers makes for a fairly brainless ride. The weapon variety is nice, but you don't get to upgrade your gear quickly enough, and some weapons (like the pistol and grenade launcher) are throwaways. *Contagion* isn't bad, but it's totally unremarkable.

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REVIEWS WRAP-UP

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

XB360

FORZA
MOTORSPORT 2

■ Publisher: Microsoft ■ ESRB: E

Microsoft hadn't yet shown a final version of *Forza 2* to anyone as of this writing, which means we have yet to see the final graphics or that clever/scary neural network A.I. that so intrigues us in action—but what we have seen up to now has certainly impressed us.

➔ **BOTTOM LINE:** This is clearly a game where everything seems to be coming together right at the end of the project, and all we really know for certain is that the intentions of developer Turn 10 are noble. (And, hey, the original wasn't too shabby.) Look for our review next issue.



DS

POKÉMON
DIAMOND/PEARL

■ Publisher: Game Freak/Nintendo ■ ESRB: E

Pokémon came a little too late for a full review (check for that next month), but based on a few hours of playtime, we can say with certainty that aspiring pocket-monster trainers everywhere will love it. It's an awful lot like every previous *Pokémon*—collecting critters to battle in rock-paper-scissors RPGish battles—but it features enough DS-specific features to make it feel fresh.

➔ **BOTTOM LINE:** Wireless battling, online swapping, a supereffective interface, and kinda-3D graphics accompany the 100 (or so) new beasts destined to fuel your obsessive tendencies for the next year or two.



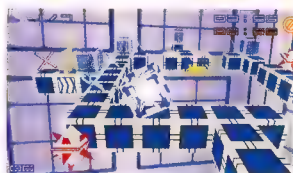
PSP

AEDIS ECLIPSE:
GENERATION OF
CHAOS

■ Publisher: NIS America ■ ESRB: E10+

Aedis Eclipse fixes a lot of the problems found in the previous *Generation of Chaos*. The real-time-strategy-esque combat is still here, but the troop options and control setup are much more interesting, well thought-out, and fun. And the ability to modify the element-based battlegrounds adds a whole new level of strategy to the game.

➔ **BOTTOM LINE:** The story is still a bit too wordy and convoluted, but the detailed tutorial and the choice of three different starting points make this one of the most user-friendly NIS RPGs (traditionally very complex) in a long time.



PSP

CUBE

■ Publisher: D3Publisher ■ ESRB: E

Cube's gravity-free world forces you to constantly adjust your perception of up and down as you roll a sticky cube across floating platforms while collecting keys, dodging enemies, and flipping switches to deflect rolling bombs. The game has the potential to be a satisfyingly brain-bending puzzler, except that it contains some of the genre's deadly sins: unreliable controls, unnecessary complexity, and long load times. But hey, if you don't like what's here, you can make and trade your own levels.

➔ **BOTTOM LINE:** Look past *Cube's* flaws and you'll find an innovative puzzler.



DS

TOUCH THE DEAD

■ Publisher: Eidos ■ ESRB: M

Light-gun games are a dying genre nowadays, but the DS is randomly resurrecting them...badly. *Touch the Dead*—not related at all to the classic *House of the Dead*—is one of the most literal game titles you'll find: You, well, touch the dead. But groping ghouls with the stylus just isn't as much fun as poking holes in 'em with a pistol. And reloading (you know, the essential action in any light...er...touch-gun game) is just way too hard—sliding the extra rounds into your gun just isn't responsive enough.

➔ **BOTTOM LINE:** You're better off not touching this one.



DS

DEATH, JR. AND THE SCIENCE FAIR OF DOOM

■ Publisher: Konami ■ ESRB: E10+

While *Death, Jr.*'s first DS foray looks sharp, the platforming elements and combat don't succeed as well. Why? Combining 2D and 3D elements makes for disorienting angles. Call it a faulty camera or poor level design, but simply jumping can be obnoxious when you can't even see your destination.

➔ **BOTTOM LINE:** The touch-screen controls—tapping the screen to attack enemies or flinging souls with the stylus—don't cut it; using the face buttons works better. Couple the ho-hum gameplay with inconsistent platforming, and we can't help but think the little Reaper should have stayed on the PSP.

THE SALES CHART

Amazon.com's Top 20 for Mar/Apr

Name	Platform	EGM Scores
1 God of War II 	PS2	9.5 9.0 9.0
2 Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter 2	XB360	8.5 8.0 7.5
3 Guitar Hero II 	XB360	Not Reviewed
4 God of War	PS2	10 9.5 10
5 MotorStorm 	PS3	7.5 7.5 9.0
6 The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess	Wii	10 10 10
7 Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day!	DS	8.5 9.0 9.5
8 New Super Mario Bros.	DS	9.5 10 8.0
9 WarioWare: Smooth Moves	Wii	8.0 8.5 7.5
10 The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	PS3	9.5 8.5 9.0
11 Splinter Cell: Double Agent	XB360	8.0 8.0 9.0
12 Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin	DS	8.0 9.0 9.0
13 Mario Kart DS	DS	9.0 8.5 8.5
14 Diddy Kong Racing DS	DS	5.0 6.0 5.5
15 Gears of War 	XB360	10 9.5 9.0
16 MLB 07: The Show	PS2	Not Reviewed
17 Major League Baseball 2K7	XB360	7.5 7.0 7.0
18 Guitar Hero II (bundle with guitar)	PS2	9.0 9.0 8.5
19 Big Brain Academy	DS	9.0 8.5 7.5
20 Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow	DS	9.5 9.0 8.5

REVIEWS

GAME OVER

press continue for solid quaker values, grapple puns, and furies in space



> SEANBABY'S REST OF THE CRAP

Crap's Triumphant Return

They still make games like these?



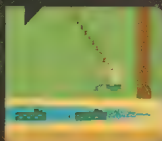
Seanbaby was confused this month when he encountered Strawberry Shortcake's half-cupcake dog. He didn't know whether to eat him or eat him.

WHEN THIS COLUMN STARTED, it was my job to review games no one else would bother with. If a game contained a Barbie or was in any way Go Raven, it ended up here. It wasn't long before videogame companies caught on and our review copy of *Care Bears* would get lost in the mail. For a few months I was happy. My suffering was on pause and I got to write about things like Pac-Man joke books and the Hillbilliest Games of All Time. Do you think I, in any way, hated playing the hillbilliest games of all time? Hell no! I mud-bogged to Spencer's, bought a

No Fat Chicks ash tray, and impregnated a fat chick on it, knowing the whole time I could write it off on my taxes. I was living life like I'd always dreamed: playing stuff that only kind of sucked while the slippery pile of my nearby lover screamed for me to kick a bag of pudding closer to its mouth hole. Well, if there's one thing

I learned during my time as a big-shot hillbilly, it's that you shouldn't call your editors and burp, "Shut up and fish, I'm mud-boggin' with Ham! The Woman, because that's what I call her!" EGM put me in my place by handing me these four Rest of the Crap wake-up calls. Let my suffering begin again.

Do you think I, in any way, hated playing the hillbilliest games of all time? Hell no!



PAGE
100

Retros:
Hooked on
swing



PAGE
102

Crossword:
Last one
ever



PAGE
106

How & Char:
Comic
Armageddon

Strawberry Shortcake: Summertime Adventure—Special Edition (GBA)

Gameplay: 4/10

Every game needs a great conflict. In SSSA, that conflict is a baking contest. To add insult to that premise, Strawberry doesn't even try to win it. She gathers food for everyone else through obstacles so inconsequential you barely notice them. Why should I care if next to the bundle of 30 berries there's a potato hole that will make me drop three berries, when all the berries are for someone else's frosting? Kiss my ass trying to get me to join Strawberry Shortcake on this journey of irrelevance.

Fun Rating: 0/10

Helping other people bake? That's like buying a football game and finding out you control the guy who sells tents at a sporting goods store. Have these people even seen a videogame? *Double Dragon* came out in about a million B.C. and even then they knew they should make Green Abobo a shirtless monster instead of unimportant pancakes near a mousetrap.

Fun for Intended Audience Rating: Still 0/10

If your daughter is finding enjoyment in this game, your OBGYN shouldn't have delivered the poor thing with a shovel.

Nightmare Rating: 7/10

Strawberry Shortcake is a half-snack beast, and nothing in this world can kill her. Also, her dog is named Pupcake. He's a mix of puppy and a cupcake!



Bratz Babyz (GBA)

Gameplay: 2/10

Apparently, a mother dropped her slut babies off at the mall on her way to fourth grade, and you play their role! Your main objective is to make money by taking odd jobs like singing karaoke and washing dogs, flashing open your diaper, anonymous sex, and asking strangers if they're your father. Washing dogs is done by throwing buckets of water at dogs from one story up, and everything else is done by being raised incorrectly. In conclusion: infant slut madness.

Fun Rating: 0/10

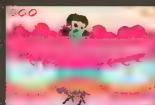
The minigames have all been done better in titles with less questionable morals. I don't want to sound like a Quaker, but I think you should at least wait until you're four before experimenting with group sex and cocaine.

Fun for Intended Audience Rating: 10/10

Don't take my word for it! Let's hear what *Bratz Babyz* owners are saying: "Good day, ma'am, through cooperation with the ESRB and FBI, it's my duty to inform everyone in the neighborhood that I'm a convicted purchaser of *Bratz Babyz*."

Debbie Does the Daycare: 8/10

Good luck explaining this to God when you're dead, every person involved with making *Bratz Babyz*!



Drake & Josh (GBA/DS)

Gameplay: 0/10

Look at this game's box. I'm not playing it. But since I still have to review it, the gameplay feels like an old person throwing up into my mouth after they ate insects, and if I had looked at the graphics, I'd say they were adequate for an artist to use to illustrate how terribly they've failed as a person.

Fun Rating: 0/10

When I imagine all the ways this game isn't fun, I'm amazed at how right I must be.

Fun for Intended Audience Rating: 6/10

I think *Drake & Josh* fans will really relate to the game's final boss, Explaining to Your Parents That You're Gay.

ESRB Rating: 0/10

The game's rated E for comic mischief. What kind of rating is that? Maybe "comic mischief" is Paranoid Parent Code for "Drake and Josh kissing." If it isn't, then some lazy jerk at the ESRB is due for a performance review. I can't talk since I

didn't play the game either, but at least I fact-checked with my brain to make sure it wouldn't matter in a million years if a kid saw "comic mischief." And that's not even my job. The guy who rated this game, and the guy who designed the box ruled it for everyone. Apologies to Drake, but not to Josh. Not ever to Josh.



Zoey 101 (GBA)

Gameplay: 0/10

Zoey has to earn Friendship Points by performing tasks! But there's a twist: Every single one of them sucks. The graphics look like police sketches done by police dogs. The tasks are so clumsy and the visuals so dated that if this game had come out 40 years ago, exactly as it is, Timecop wouldn't care.

Fun: 0/10

I used to date a girl who worked in a dungeon where men paid her to whip and humiliate them. Please note that this wasn't how I met her, but I bring her up because she's the only person who might know someone who could take pleasure from this game.

Fun for Intended Audience Rating: 0/10

I'm betting that whatever a *Zoey 101* fan might be, it's not something they wouldn't like. Bad Frisbee, golf simulations.

Classic Moments in Bad Gaming: 10/10

In Prank Week, Zoey runs down a hall filled with trash cans and plants. Hiding inside each is a student who pops out going, "RAHHH! I'm in a plant!" No matter how many times this happens, Zoey freezes in utter terror. Ideas that sound lame on paper can be fun in games. Not this one. So I salute whatever combo of learning disability and giant balls led to such a fantastically stupid thing. Keep an eye on Prank Week when they hand out awards for Worst Anything Ever.



10 Years Ago...

SPECIAL COVER



On the cover: Crash Bandicoot 2

Posing in the highly provocative "starfish" position, everyone's favorite marsupial lavishly embraced our cover as if to say, "love me." And love him we did—until, of course, Sony eventually gave this bandicoot the boot. Pity this mascot currently resides in bargain-bin hell—we hardly knew thee, Crash.



Game of the month: Star Fox 64

Yeah, it sucked to pony up \$80 (at the time) for the sequel to Nintendo's space-furry spectacular, but it was worth it—the included Rumble Pak gave the dogfights some bite. We're happy to see a Virtual Console release on the Wii—the GameCube iterations didn't take off with us.



Tokyo Game Show: 1997

The spring show stirred quite a buzz with such blockbuster titles as *Sonic Jam* and *Metal Gear Solid*. But perhaps most compelling were the novelty cosplay mascots walking around the floor, bumping into things.



This month on Bonus Stage: Umhara what? For more info on fish-snagging, schoolgirl shenanigans, check out the RetroNauts video podcast at bonusstage.tup.com

> RETRONAUTS PRESENTS

Swingers Club

A grapple a day keeps the boring games away By Jeremy Parish

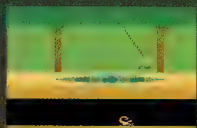
RECENT SPACE-BUG-SHOOTING extravaganza *Lost Planet* hearkens back to an older Capcom classic, *Bionic Commando*, in a satisfyingly nostalgic way. And that, in turn, got

us thinking back to all the other classics that have used grappling hooks to great effect. You may not need a bionic wire to make a great game... but it sure does help.

PITFALL!

Atari 2600 • Activision • 1982

The one that started it all. Sure, Pitfall! Harry didn't have his own built-in grappling hook, but that didn't make the art of swinging across a pit of hungry alligators any less thrilling. The goofy digitized Tarzan cry just made it all the better.



Super sequel: Activision produced a much better version of *Pitfall!* for 2600 called, yes, *Pitfall II*. But avoid *Super Pitfall* for NES—it's a horrible lie, and it exists only to make you sad.

BIONIC COMMANDO

NES • Capcom • 1988

Bionic Commando turned the platforming genre on its ear by making you play as a hero who couldn't jump; instead, you had to master Captain Spencer's bionic wire, which allowed players to grab, climb, and swing around the world. The spot-on grappling mechanics, brilliantly constructed levels, and grisly narrative (Hitler's head blows up, *real good*) make this an enduring classic.



Also available in green: NES had the definitive version, though it was shockingly good on Game Boy. Skip the arcade original and slightly unsatisfying GBC versions, though.

MEGA MAN ZERO 2

GBA • Capcom • 2003

Mega Man X's friend/rival/sequel hog Zero won accolades and curses alike for his hardcore solo outing on GBA, but he cranked up the coolness for the sequel with the Chain Rod, a vicious weapon that let him grapple to new heights. But mostly it let him spear bad guys in the chest. Which we support on principle.



Mega Kombat: Can't put your finger on where Zero picked up his enemy-spearing technique? Try *Mortal Kombat's* Scorpion, who pioneered the art of literally tugging at an enemy's heartstrings.

ROCKIN' KATS

NES • Atlus • 1991

Atlus' *Rockin' Kats* took a different approach to the "bionic arm" concept—instead of putting a grappling hook at the end, they slapped a comical punching glove on there instead. Not only did this make the game super wacky, it also added a different twist to the gameplay since you were propelling yourself away from things.



Kitty litter: *Rockin' Kats* never saw a sequel, and we can blame its cheesy Japanese title for that: *N.Y. Nyankies*. "Nya" being the Japanese equivalent of "meow," see, and...well, anyway, consider it fair pun-ishment.

NINJA FIVE-O

GBA • Hudson • 2003

A beautifully old-school action game starring a cop who also happened to be a ninja capable of using magic and swords and swinging on a wire hook as he battled terrorists and giant frogs (who were probably also terrorists), *Ninja Five-O* brought 8-bit style into the modern world. No word on whether he was two weeks from retirement or too old for this s***. Regardless, the game's brilliant.

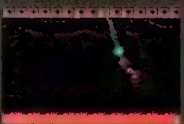


Son of a Shinobi: Grappling hook aside, *Ninja Five-O* is clearly, uh, "inspired" by *Shinobi*, from the radical ninja hero to the constant hostage-saving.

SUPER METROID

SNES • Nintendo • 1994

Metroid is about nothing if not jumping, but until lobster-armored heroine Samus Aran gets ahold of the Space Jump, she's still a little limited in terms of hang time. Enter the Grappling Beam, which lets her reach distant areas at select points. Limited, sure, but bonus points for being the only tool on this list that can kill a boss by means of suicidal electrocution.



See also: Don't tell Samus, but *Castlevania IV* hero Simon Belmont totally did the same grapple thing with his whip a few years earlier.

CHAIN DIVE

PS2 • Sony CEJ • 2003

The problem with most games is that they're so damn...terrestrial. Not *Chain Dive*, though. It starts out like a 3D *Bionic Commando*, but in no time at all you're navigating stages made entirely of tiny grapple points floating high in the sky. It's cool, but definitely not for the acrophobic or easily motion sick.



Sincere flattery: Nintendo totally, totally swiped the feel of *Chain Dive* for *Twilight Princess's* Argorok battle, which sees Link swinging through the air on a series of tiny points as he battles a dragon. For shame!

UMIHARA KAWASE

SNES • TNN • 1994

We realize you can't pronounce the name; but since you can't play the game either, it all works out. *Umi-hara Kawase* is a quirky import-only title for the Japanese Super Nintendo that gave players control of a schoolgirl trapped in a bizarre world of floating platforms and angry fish-men. Armed only with a fishing rod and some insanely complex line physics, she had to grab, swing, and fling her way through stages that quickly became impossible.



Surreal life: The game showed up on PlayStation in two semisequels that played the same—except tougher!

LOST PLANET

XB360 • Capcom • 2007

Grappling isn't at the heart of *Lost Planet*, but it's probably the best part of the game—zipping rapidly from area to area by snagging onto the walls is pretty darn snazzy. Sadly, the co-op mode lacks the ability to grab a friend and toss him into a bottomless chasm for spite. But hey, no one's perfect.



Extreme ninjutsu condition: If *Lost Planet's* grappling features seem familiar, that's because you've probably seen them before in the *Tenchu* games. Or maybe not, since the series has gone steadily downhill since its 1998 debut.

Cool and crappy

Some of these games shine, but most suck hard

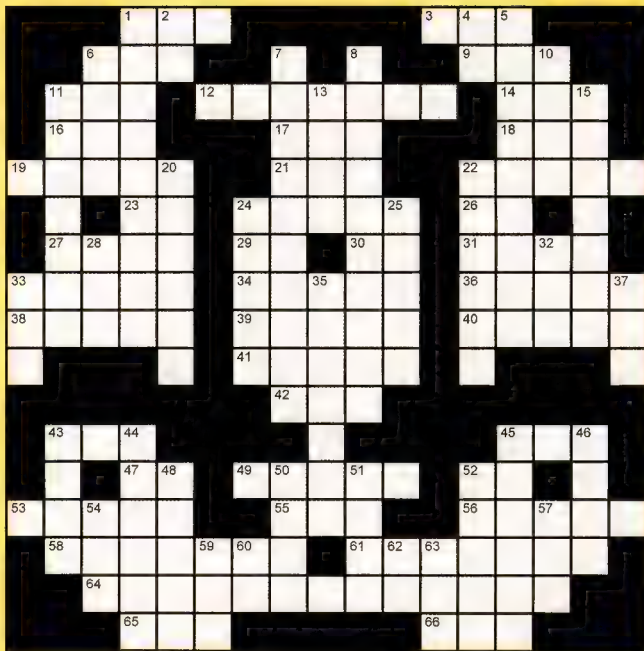
Focus groups tell us *EGM* Crossword is no longer in, so it's saying goodbye this month! Apparently, they also like huge pictures of wieners. Don't say we don't listen to our readers.

ACROSS

- Goofy sitcom-turned-Sega Master System title
- Restrict from online play
- PS2's Cooper
- 14, in *Shadow of Rome*
- Role-playing game tavern drink
- Abysmal Jaguar game
- World Championship Cards* game _ rummy
- Early arcade puzzle game
- Magneto _ McKellen, absent from *X-Men* games
- Partner in making PS2 *Sopranos*
- Namco arcade title _ *Athletics*
- Pirates!* developer Meier
- Friend to Claire in *Resident Evil Code: Veronica*
- Overworld map direction (abbrv.)
- Obscure Saturn 2D platformer
- God-awful Atari 2600 bomb
- Recent PS2 Mafia title _ *Man*
- Nintendo monkey game, for short
- Midway racer _ *Rush*
- Jak II* race champion
- Snake's *Metal Gear Solid 3* code name
- UFC* poster boy Tito
- Street Fighter Alpha 3* fighter gal
- Transformers* dinobot
- Bender's health power-up in *Futurama* game
- Legend of Zelda* horse
- Final Fantasy VI* magical being
- Nonmechanical hard-drive type, for short
- Ace Combat 5*'s 29A or 31M
- "Strength," as seen in RPGs
- Halo* rocket gun, for short
- TG-16 pinball game _ *Crush*
- Suffix given to "special" re-releases (abbrv.)
- Quarterback headlining NES gridiron letdown
- Deadly MGS3 oldest The _
- Fighter in SNES *ClayFighter*
- Like Sonic's pal Knuckles
- Resident Evil 3* bad dude
- CD-i *Zelda* affront to good taste
- Hideo Kojima's famous series, for short
- Street Fighter Alpha 2* geezer

DOWN

- Lunar Knights* (DS) wind Terrenial
- Rayman 2* helpful fairy
- Ancient arcade tank game _ *Command*
- Bruce Wayne is _ Batman (abbrv.)



- Arcade version of *F-Zero*
- Horrible Sega CD "thriller" starring Dana Plato
- Like the latest PS2 design
- Hip-hop stars of worthless effort *Make My Video*
- Like tagged walls in *Jet Grind Radio*
- Gran Turismo 4* Pontiac
- Bad GameCube superhero game
- Final Fantasy VII* character _ Sith
- SNES diabetic hero *Captain _*
- Unusual ammo for one *Halo* gun
- Military Madness* anti-air tank
- Company that makes Flash player for online game videos
- On Ecco the Dolphin's back
- Demonic Atlus RPG (abbrv.)
- Unit of memory space, for short
- Street Fighter III* combatant
- Need for Speed Acura*
- 2K Sports tennis series
- NeoGeo arcade war title _1975
- Offbeat NES strategy game
- Aria of Sorrow*'s Jones
- Can be changed at will in one Game Boy Color *Zelda* title
- Madden* zebras
- M'Aiq's strength in *Morrowind*
- Helps you fly in *Super Mario 3*
- Simpsons: Road Rage* fare Krabappel
- Where 2 DOWN can be found
- Wrestling organization behind N64's *Nitro*
- On Ecco the Dolphin's back
- Demonic Atlus RPG (abbrv.)
- Unit of memory space, for short

(Solution on page 105)

Now the lamest reason ever for losing...



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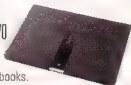
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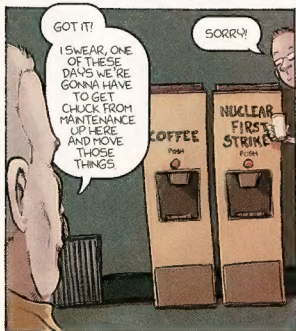


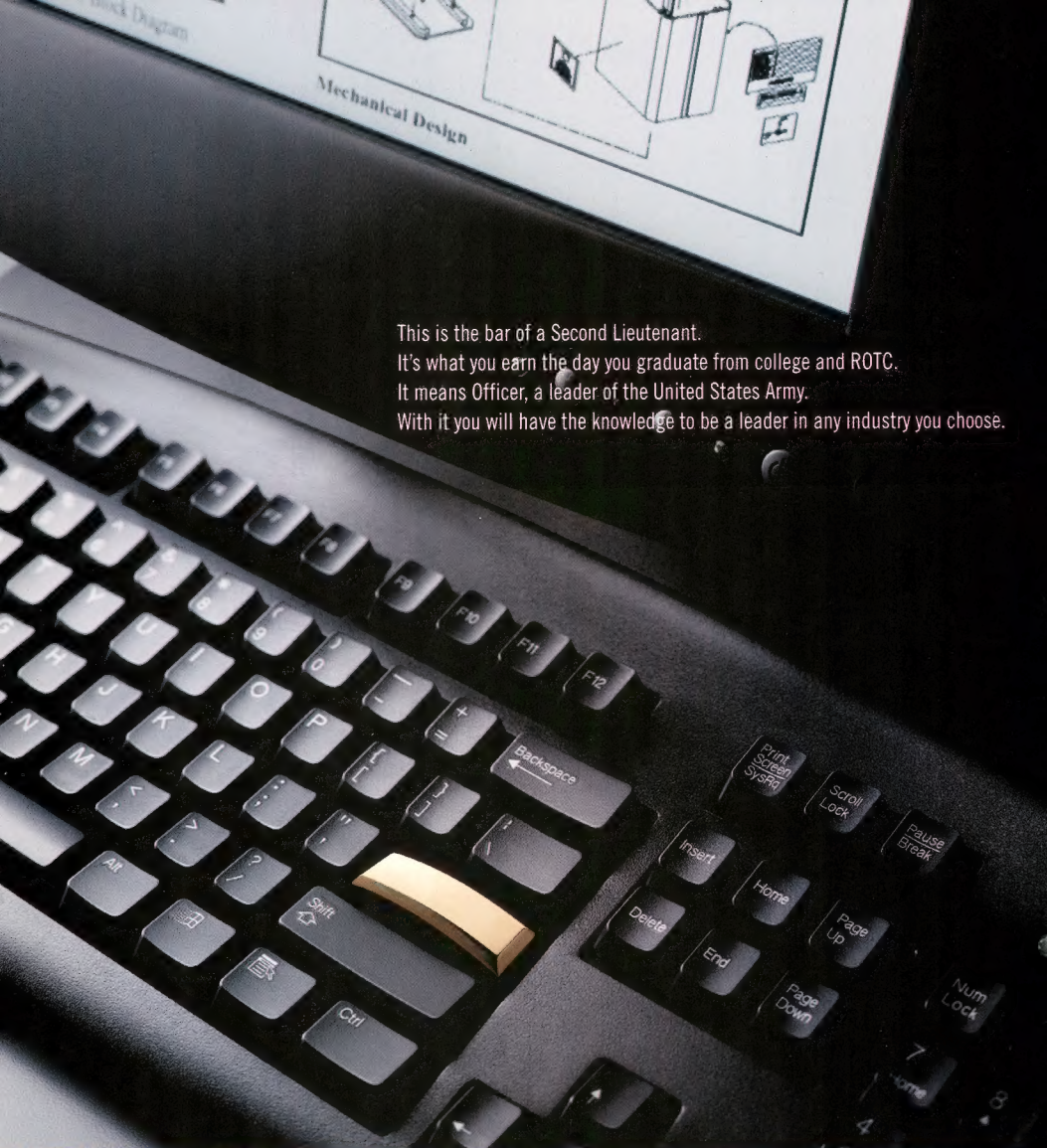
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Armageddon Outta Here

By Jeremy "Norm" Scott





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RAIDER**
ANNIVERSARY

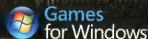
Ten Years
One
Lara



WWW.TOMBRAIDER.COM



Available for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system and PSP™ (PlayStation®Portable) system.



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