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a first look

# HALO 3

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game, the books...

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MEDAL OF HONOR:  
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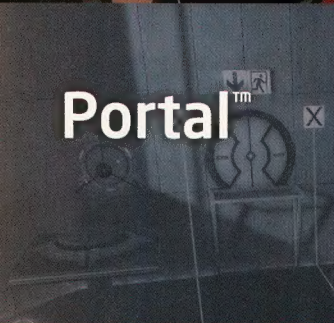
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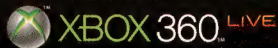


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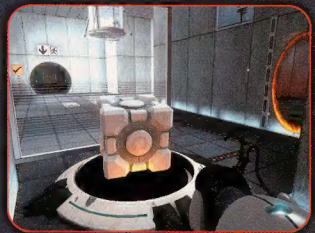
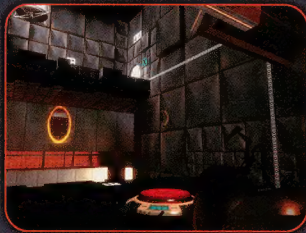
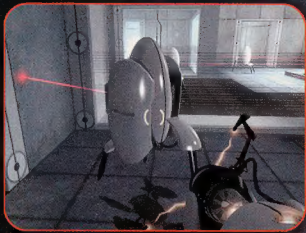




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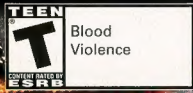
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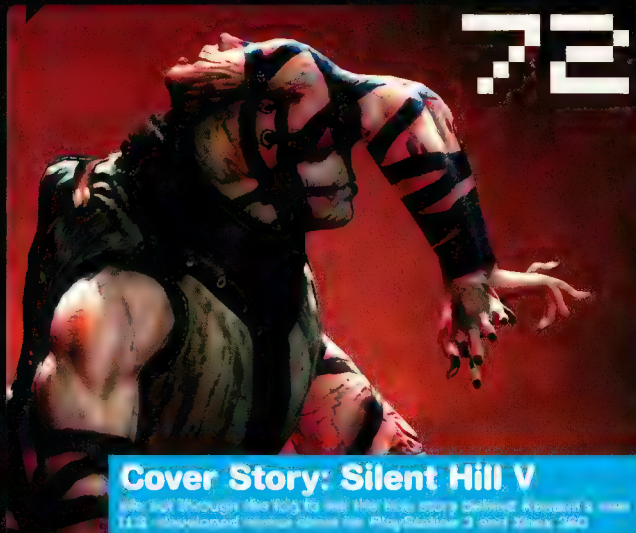
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# King Kong Lives



**THIS IS A SCIENTIFIC FACT:** No one has ever made a good videogame movie. Before you dispute this, think hard about whether you'll want to look your kids in the eye someday and admit you once said the *Mortal Kombat* and *Tomb Raider* movies were "eh, not bad." So imagine our surprise when, out of this fall's celluloid muck of another *Resident Evil* film and Uwe Boll projects beyond number, emerged *The King of Kong*, a now-in-theaters documentary about arcade high-score competitions. It is excellent.

*King of Kong* is, ostensibly, a videogame movie, starring people playing *Donkey Kong* (which, long before you could download it onto the Wii's Virtual Console, cost a quarter per game. And we older gamers were OK with this). But the movie's themes and story are timeless: a little Homer's *Odyssey* mixed with David and Goliath—we're talking B.C. stuff here (Before ColecoVision). You have your ordinary-guy hero, family man Steve Wiebe, who hopes that setting a new *Donkey Kong* high-score record will bring an end to a run of rotten luck. You have a villain, Billy Mitchell, a ruthless captain of the hot-sauce industry who will do everything to defend his own *Donkey Kong* record—everything except play Wiebe live. Flitting around them both is a cast of Wiebe supporters and Mitchell courtisans absurd in their social awkwardness yet endearing in their passion for coin-ops that predate the game on this month's cover by decades.

Or so the film's story goes. The truth behind the movie's events is more complicated than what you see onscreen. Mitchell—in real life a family man, a nice guy, and a veteran arcade champ who's helped promote the gaming industry for the past 25 years—takes an unfair beating (read his take on the film on pg. 42). But even if *The King of Kong* gets some of the story wrong, it's still the best videogame movie ever.

And if—like some of my coworkers here—you thought the *Silent Hill* flick was "eh, not bad," think about your kids!

—Crispin Boyer, Senior Editor

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THIS MONTH'S EGM EXTRAS

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Exclusive videos of *Silent Hill V* featuring interviews with the developers and more.

SuperGuides to the rescue: *BioShock*, *Warhawk*, and *Heavenly Sword*.

Walter Day interview: *The King of Kong*

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# LETTERS

> boring wars, gaming science, and remedial gun safety

## > TRIVIAL ISSUE

This month's EGM question:

Who sings "Hometown," *Silent Hill 3*'s ending theme?

E-mail the answer to [EGM@ziffdavis.com](mailto:EGM@ziffdavis.com)

(subject head:

Trivia: EGM #220) for a chance to win something potentially awesome.

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## Letter of the Month War is hell...ishly boring

I was reading *EGM* #217 and got to the segment "Lost in Battle" [about why developers don't base games on real-life conflicts]. There were a number of good questions in there, and I could see where some of your experts had good opinions. But, as I sit in a hot room on a base in Iraq, reading a magazine and surfing the Internet, I've come to a slightly different conclusion. Politics (and, of course, sensitivity issues) aside, there's one really good reason why you don't want an ultra-realistic modern war game: boredom.

There are rarely any bullets in the air, unless someone is juggling them. There are occasional explosions, but if you want to get realistic, have the game randomly generate one about once a week. Yee-haw. Now that we're rockin' with that, maybe you could have some kind of after-mission choices: "Clean weapon?" "Go eat?" "BS with friends?"

I think people should keep using videogames to escape reality, so by all means, keep them from becoming too realistic. Otherwise, you'll get to sit and stare at a screen for four hours while trying not to sleep, like some of us do. But to be more realistic with that, put on a 30-pound vest and crank up the heat to 130. If that doesn't work, find a really uncomfortable chair to sit in while you play. Is it realistic enough yet? I bet it is.

—Ross "Doc" Hall

**You mean that videogames and the media have been misrepresenting what war is actually like? No way!**

## Safety first

As both a gamer and someone experienced with firearms, I felt I needed to address "Off Target" in *EGM* #218, which featured twin gamers Amber Dalton and Amy Brady going head-to-head in a shooting competition involving real 9mm pistols. The story explained that they were only allowed to ask basic usage and safety questions. If someone was there to instruct them on safety, they should be fired for completely failing to do their job. Two of the most important safety rules of firearms are broken in the picture accompanying the story.



■ Kids, don't try this at home. Or at a shooting range. Or anywhere, really.

The girl holding the weapon has her finger on the trigger, and, at the same time, the gun is pointed at her twin! The rules are simple: Do not put your finger on the trigger unless you are going to shoot, and never point the gun at anything you do not intend to shoot. Clearly, no one wants people misunderstanding gun safety.

—Alex Charman

**Holy crap, Alex—you're absolutely right. Kids, let's make it simple: Never, ever point a real gun at anything you wouldn't want to see shot. Of course, we suppose it's possible that Dalton (or was it Brady? Damn twins and their damn similar features) was perfectly aware of the rules of safety. They are twin sisters, after all; you know how sibling rivalries can get...**

## Blinded by science

I felt inclined to respond to the article "Off Target" due to this line: "We can assume two things about you if you're reading this magazine: You don't think playing violent videogames can make you go aggro in real life, and you haven't authored any studies linking violent games to violent behavior."

Frankly, you assume wrong: I co-authored the paper "The Short-Term Effects of Violence in Video Games." Unlike the other studies mentioned, mine uses the Bass-Durkee Hostility Inventory, which measures five distinct types of aggression. But my results are similar to the other studies.

—John Ehlinger

## Got milked?

I've been gaming for over 15 years now, and I can't recall any time when



For writing this month's winning letter, Doc gets a copy of *America's Army*...unless we don't have one handy, in which case he gets something more boring.

**YOUR BIGGEST MISTAKE**

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"Another brave soul steps forward to admit his deepest gaming shame."

"So you know those papers with warnings on them that come with games? Well, my biggest mistake was to ignore the one that says to avoid playing when tired. I was pulling an all-nighter to make it to the bottom of the Pit of 100 Trials in Paper Mario: The Thousand-Year Door and after I made it to the 90th floor, I was very sleepy and absentmindedly used the pellet that took me back to the surface. All that time down the drain!" —Brady Johnson

Next month let's switch things up a bit. Instead of telling us how dumb you are, tell us how hard-trying-core you are. Describe the good-sch that makes you more into games than anyone else and send it to [EGM@ziffdavis.com](mailto:EGM@ziffdavis.com). Subject head: "Are hardcore. Remember a dash'll count as a cap for avert it, send photos, too."

■ "It's a me, Sleepy-o!"



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■ Morgan Webb will kick your ass at Halo, too.

a franchise has been so milked as *Final Fantasy*. I couldn't believe that the August issue (*EGM* #218) actually had a list of 13 more *Final Fantasy* games on the way (technically, one was a movie). I'm as much a fan of the series as most RPGers are, but I'm tired of seeing the title every year when there's so much more they could do. Every time I see a new *Final Fantasy* coming out, I cringe at the thought that *Chrono Break* [a name Square trademarked in 2001 but never used] never even got a chance. I loved both *Chrono* games and honestly feel that *Chrono Cross* didn't get the appreciation it should have. It

outdid *Final Fantasy VII* by a mile. So, Square Enix, if you're listening, give some of your older releases—such as *Parasite Eve*, *Chrono Trigger*, and *Vagrant Story*—another shot. I doubt you'd regret it.

—Mace Casas

Oh, yeah—*Vagrant Story*. There's another sequel we definitely wouldn't mind seeing.

We'll happily get behind your sentiment, Mace, but don't get your hopes up too much for a new *Chrono* game. In an interview early this year with France-based gaming site Jeux-France, *Chrono* Cross Producer Hiromichi Tanaka said, "It's very difficult to be able to reunite the original team.... If we don't try to reunite these people but take other people instead, we will find ourselves with...a game [that] will feel different...and we would possibly lose the *Chrono* spirit." Hey, at least they're not milking it.

### Chivalry is not dead

I was watching *X-Play's* "Top 10 Games of All Time" segment, and they cut to multiplayer action of a *Halo 2* deathmatch. We see a player sprint across the screen, only to be fragged mercilessly. Wait a moment—what was that gamertag on the poor victim? Yup, it's your editor-in-chief "EGM Shoe" getting wasted. Does [*X-Play* cohost] Morgan Webb always own Shoe in deathmatches? And how come we get no screenshots of her lifeless body flying through the air?

—Rich Levin

That's because Shoe is a gentleman who would never frag a lady...unless she really had it coming.

### Damn dirty hippies

Seanbaby's comments in the article "Lost on Purpose" (*EGM* #217) have crossed the line. *EGM* has always been my favorite read on games since I was a kid, but I'm looking for quality opinions on videogames, not lowbrow comments on the U.S. military. If Seanbaby would like these comments heard, I'm sure he would find a much more receptive and appropriate audience on the streets of Berkeley.

—via TUP

Seanbaby responds, as you knew he would: "This kind of makes sense. Most of these internet nerds are desperate to hate something no one else has thought to hate yet. And since Bush's approval rating is like 4 percent, there's nothing more cutting edge and hip than

supporting the war. That being said, speaking as someone who spends 80 percent of his time fighting or talking about fighting, being called a hippie really hurts." Seriously, this guy knows Muay Thai. The only thing he'd be doing on the streets of Berkeley is kicking faces' asses.

### We are wrong

I believe you misunderstood what Dallas Bowerman was trying to say in *EGM* #218's Letters section ("Look Maw," part deux"). There are older-model HDTVs that can only display 480i, 480p, and 1080i. On these TVs, if the game does not support 1080i, the PS3 downscapes the game to 480p. I believe what he was asking was this: If his TV only has 1080i and not 720p, will it downscale? And the answer is: Yes, it will. I am pretty sure Sony has heard all its fans asking for a fix to this problem, so I wouldn't worry about it; I'm sure a firmware update will fix this problem soon.

But I guess the misconception was on your part, guys.

—Lee Greene

That sound you just heard was the resounding *thwack* of us smacking ourselves in the foreheads. For some reason, we couldn't get past the idea that Dallas was referring to a different upscaling problem: The PS3 initially couldn't display Blu-Ray movies in 720p. This issue (resolved with the 1.8 firmware update) led to a popular misconception that the PS3 couldn't display Blu-Ray movies in anything but 1080p.

Let's straighten this out and answer Dallas' actual question: Some PS3 games output at a maximum of 720p, and if your TV cannot accept a 720p signal, the game will indeed be displayed in 480p. To be clear, this issue applies primarily to older HDTVs, and only those PS3 games that do not support 1080i (check the back of the box to be sure). Still, it is a legitimate issue, and a significant one, and we extend our heartfelt apologies to Dallas. Can you ever love us again? ♡

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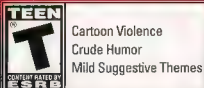


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FEATURE: HANDS-ON REPORT

## Living at HOME

A one-day stay with Sony's ambitious online service. By Joshua Fruhlinger





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Preview:  
We're still  
lost in *Lost*



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For sale:  
Tons of  
*Halo* gear



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Feature:  
Kong con-  
troversy

One of the best parts of Home, the Achievement-like Trophies, has yet to be shown in great detail. But judging by the popularity of 360 gamerscores, it's safe to say Trophies are going to be a huge feature in Home...

**THE PLAYSTATION 3 IS POWERFUL—WE GET IT.** But its mighty Blu-ray muscles certainly don't show when you look at its meager online capabilities. Sony knows it needs to bulk up its features, which is why it is currently beta testing Home—a free online community set to out-feature Microsoft's Xbox Live service. To see if Sony's new online world—set to launch this fall—is really worth making room for, we spent one day hanging out in the beta version of Home. Once inside, we fiddled with all the features to see if it's as stable as Sony hopes.

### Mild makeover

Customizing our own personal identity is the first thing we do in Home. While at first the appearance-tweaking options seem numerous, the sliders don't do a lot to really change our avatar's look. Sure, we can add wrinkles and change our skin tone, but an option to change hair length is curiously missing (sigh—no mullets for us!). What's even larmer, the clothing options look like something out of an Abercrombie & Fitch catalog (excluding the Sony-branded garb). And though we're content choosing a human avatar, we hope Sony gives players a few more options when Home launches—y'know, like some nonhuman avatars for those who ain't cool with conformity. When we asked Sony if we could someday turn ourselves into monsters, the option doesn't seem too scary to them. "The possibilities are quite infinite," says Susan Nourai, senior director of the PlayStation Network. "We will work to meet the interests and demands of the community." Hear that human haters? It might take a little bit of time, but you'll probably be able to parade around town as a pointy-eared Lombax eventually.

### Home depot

Once we make ourselves real inside the fake world, we set out to tweak our pad. Customization involves selecting furniture and accessories from a PSP-like assistant. With that, we pick some items, raising and lowering them until we find a perfect spot in our place. We also make sure to put up a picture frame since it allows players to display pictures sent from

cell phones or digital camera memory cards. While we're able to spruce up our apartment, we still want more options—hey, we're picky, OK? Luckily, Sony knows people like us want an awesome array of choices...even if we have to make content ourselves. "User-generated content is a major goal for Home and will be available shortly after Home launches," says Nourai. "Aside from UGC, there will be premium items available, but our goal will be to reward users for participation and accomplishments first, with rare items for purchase second." In the end, we're quite proud of our brand new apartment...in a feng shui kind of way.

### Stepping in

Clad in our tight-fitting T-shirt, we learn how to move. The controls are simple—like any other 3D game, the left stick controls movement while the right one moves the camera. X is an action button for things like starting a game. Circle cancels, Triangle brings up a keyboard (you can also use a USB keyboard), and R2 triggers voice chat. L2 centers the camera and R1 brings up an action menu for dancing, waving, and other animations.

### Make room for...

OK, now that we know how to walk, it's time to explore the rooms. The first room we come across is a social lounge that looks like something out of *Battlestar Galactica*, complete with mountain vistas and indoor trees. Beyond that is the game lounge and the home theater, along with an exit back to our home space. Rather than run from room to room, we can use our mini PSP to select destinations. This will be helpful once Sony adds more rooms since running is a slow affair. Speaking of travel, a monorail outside Home's windows hints that other "islands" will be available. At this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), for instance, Sony showed an outdoor hangout complete with grills and park benches. But back to the beta—the social lounge is dotted with seats for socializing while videos of upcoming games play on the walls. Past that, the game lounge hosts pool tables, bowling lanes, and basic arcade games. Finally, the home theater is a dark cavern in which high-definition game trailers play on walls as you walk by. Movie posters for flicks like *The Grudge 2* have us hoping we can watch a full feature movie,

## ➤ User-generated content is a major goal for Home.

—Senior Director of the PlayStation Network Susan Nourai





but that doesn't seem to be ready for prime time. Bummer.

### Game Lounge

The social lounge is alright, but the real fun is in the game lounge. The first thing we play is Pool, a basic 3D 8-Ball game. Controls are passable if a little touchy, and camera angles are severely limited when compared to stand-alone pool sims. While Pool doesn't quite sink in with us, the Bowling game fares better. Bowling allows four players to sit on benches, take turns at the pins, and chat. The controls are simple—just click the X button to aim, direct, spin, and release the ball. In addition to Pool and Bowling, we play various coin-op-style games. The best of the bunch is *Evac*, a *Chopliker* clone. Other games include *Rubber Bob* (a really basic Q-Bert knockoff), *Carriage Return* (a *Dr. Mario*-like puzzler with train cars), and *Race Day* (a top-down racer with surprisingly good drift physics).

### Party time

Since the games make us feel antisocial, we decide to do something you can't do in Xbox Live: throw bitchin' dance parties. Sony loaded the characters with numerous dance animations, including the robot, rock, casual (whatever that means), hip-hop, and even flamenco. We have a little too much fun creating impromptu raves (especially when we switch to a girl avatar—don't ask) despite that Home, at least in beta form, lacks music inside the world. And oddly enough, Home lacks any Sixaxis motion control—a little wrist shaking could have made for some hot booty shakin'.

### Private parties

Busting a move sure is tiring, but since we want to make the most of our day, we invite a few random people over to our pad for a party. Doing so is easy—all we have to do is use our in-game PSP. After a few invites, we have a small rager going. Our company walks around our place and comments on our pictures of cats and Sony characters (we'll be able to add our own personal pictures once Home releases to the public). Then the guests dance to no music once again and make fun of our brown decorative statue. Ingrates. Though our visitors are a little rude, we still want to entertain them. We try to show a sweet movie on the wall for everyone to watch together, but the option sadly isn't ready yet. Eventually, says Nourai: "Media sharing is a key com-

ponent to Home," she says. "We want users to have a place to come together and share their interests via their music, videos, photos, and, of course, their gaming experiences."

### Leaving Home

Yawn—spending an entire day in Sony's Home is an exhausting and, ironically, a bit of a lonely affair. It's kind of like partying in an unfinished hotel room or showing up at a hip night club before 10 p.m., when it's too early for the really cool people to show up. Still, we will admit there's

some serious potential, but obviously Sony will need to give us the proper tools to make Home the ambitious service it promises it will be. Of course, our one-day vacation in Home did take place in an unfinished beta, so we're pretty sure things will improve for the better once the complete version makes its way to the PlayStation Network later this fall. But judging from what we've seen (and explored) thus far, we can safely say we'll definitely consider staying again in Sony's online world once the doors open for real. **A+**

**HOME IMPROVEMENT?**  
Xbox Live is the current online champ, but is there room for Home? We compare the two to see.

- Personalization**  
 Sony Home: Xbox Live:   
 While both services let you customize your online experience with wallpapers and themes, Home has the edge since it lets you go all IKEA on your apartment with tons of swank furniture options.
- Game invites**  
 Sony Home: Xbox Live:   
 At this year's E3 Sony proved that game invites can be sent easily within Home, but the process still doesn't look as smooth and simple as Xbox Live. So right now, we're happier with Live.
- Social gaming**  
 Sony Home: Xbox Live:   
 Playing games on Live is a cliché, but creating intelligently made, almost futile, for Home wins here. Because you can meet people free and solo (and like them, yes) has their (barely) Hysteria game.
- Chatting**  
 Sony Home: Xbox Live:   
 Both services offer the basics for group, one-on-one, in-game chat, private chat, voice chat, and screen. But Home offers something you won't see: The capability to bustle with random people in any game.
- Managing friends**  
 Sony Home: Xbox Live:   
 Live's intricate friend management system makes adding and removing contacts a breeze. But PS3 also provides the same functionality in the form of easy-to-use lists of good friends.
- Media sharing**  
 Sony Home: Xbox Live:   
 With the proper permissions Home automatically can handle music, video, and text. But Live also provides the same functionality in the form of easy-to-use lists of good friends.

**Verdict**  
 Sony's Home could be overkill for people who are just looking to play some games online in a seamless manner. Because of that Live is unbeatable for sending and receiving invites, parties, etc. But we do admit we're stoked about socializing in Home for once. Still, Live barely wins... for now.



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Eric Nakamura/Giant Robot Magazine



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## Wimbledon Champion: Russ Yagoda



*Wii Sports* fanatics Lane Buschel and Steve Bryant served up a cool idea to the NYC drinking hole

Barcade: Hold the

first-ever Wimbledon tennis championships ([www.wimbledon.net](http://www.wimbledon.net)). The event was a smash hit with Russ Yagoda—the 23-year-old Brooklynite showed up on game day dressed as Luigi, and after duking it out through several rounds, he won the top prize: a Nintendo Wii. Afterward, we discovered the tricks to Yagoda's mad Wii tennis skills.

**EGM:** So what made you sign up?

**Russ Yagoda:** My brother Greg [who dressed as Mario] is the one who told me about it. I like the Wii a lot these days, and it was just some good, fun competition. And drinking.

**EGM:** What did you do to train for this competition?

**RY:** Well, I really only have *Wii Sports*. So I just started focusing a little more on tennis.

**EGM:** Do you play real tennis?

**RY:** [Laughs] No. Absolutely not. Now why would I do that when I'm a Wii champion?

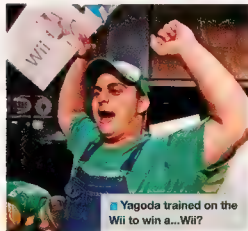
**EGM:** Do you think being the Wimbledon champion will help you with the ladies?

**RY:** [Laughs] My girlfriend actually hated the fact that I was coming to do this. We got into a huge fight over it!

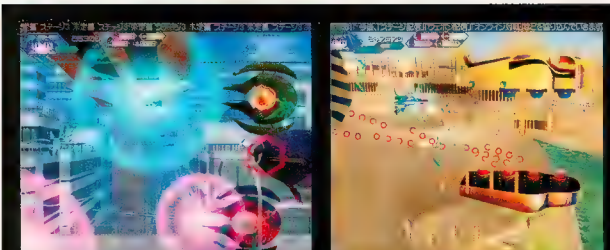
**EGM:** I bet she'll be sorry now!

**RY:** Yeah, she's going to have to really apologize to me now. And you know what? This Wii I won might go to her apartment so I'll have something to do when she's doing all her bulls\*\*\*!

—Tracey J. John



Yagoda trained on the Wii to win a...Wii?



> FOREIGN OBJECT/JAPAN



# Otomedius

Girls and shoot-em-up? Sign us up!

**Platform:**  
Arcade

**Likelihood  
it'll come  
here:**

The same chance that arcades have of making a comeback here: zero.

**Oh, great, another girl game.**

Well, not quite. Yes, these cutesy illustrations seems to suggest yet another gooball dating sim from our friends in Japan, one where you're no doubt defending Earth from aliens while getting into the skintight flight suits of all your female pilots. But no, this is a shooting game—a horizontal blast-em-up from Konami, a company whose very roots lie in this almost-forgotten genre. The title's a combination of *Gradius* and *otome* (Japanese for "young girl" or "maiden"), and that describes the game nicely, too—controlling one of these chick-ship hybrids, you shoot at aliens, pick up power

capsules, and maneuver around a million flying bullets without having a seizure.

**Who the heck thought up this wacky idea?** It's all on Takashi Hamano, game designer at Konami and producer of the *Beatmania* series. "I aimed to make a modern shooting game, but still have it be what you'd expect from Konami," he said to Japanese website Game Watch. And he may have hit the nail on the head—in addition to the crazy designs, *Otomedius* also runs on a giant germ-ridden touch screen, allowing you to lock on to enemies with your fingers. Or, uh, other pervert-approved parts...



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Jump in.

XBOX 360 LIVE



> PREVIEW: EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK

# LOST

We dive down the Hatch for an exclusive look at the game based on TV's most mysterious show... **By** *Crispin Boyer*

**Platforms:**  
PS3/XB360

**Publisher:**  
Ubisoft

**Developer:**  
Ubisoft Montreal

**Release Date:**  
Early 2008

**WE HAVE QUESTIONS, LOTS OF QUESTIONS—ABOUT FLASH-BACKS** becoming flash-forwards, a rocking-chair specter named Jacob, and magic numbers that still don't add up—but Nicolas Eypert doesn't have the answers we want today. "Nobody knows the big answers," says Eypert, creative director of the PS3/XB360 "survival adventure" *Lost*, which debuts with the new season of the hit show it's based on early next year.

*Lost*'s third season concluded back in May with an Everest-high cliffhanger that dizzied viewers with new mysteries. And Eypert's game will solve none of them—at least directly. "What it will

reveal is the answer for your character," he says. "It's not necessarily the answer for the show, but it's maybe part of the answer." *Lost*, the game, has you playing Elliott, an amnesiac photojournalist you've never seen in *Lost*, the TV series. Consider him one of the many extra Oceanic Flight 815 passengers who flit about the background yet you never get to meet via the show's trademark flashbacks or interaction with the star castaways.

And while playing as a new guy instead of a fan favorite such as Jack or Kate or Sawyer—or even a polar bear—may seem lame, blame it on the slippery nature of the show's increas-

ingly stymieing plot. "Making this game is very tricky," Eypert says. "The [show's] creators could do something that changes everything and invalidates it, so all we can do is something that fits the show but doesn't reveal too much—[something] that's interesting enough so that you get some of the parts of the wide universe and what could be one possible answer."

### Lost's translators

That's not to say the show's creators have left the game to the imaginations of the Ubisoft Montreal development team, which is made up of vets of the *Splinter Cell* and *Ghost Recon*:







■ Locke holds court while Hurley guards the food at the beach camp (above). Other locales include the Hydra station and the infamous Hatch (below), where you'll crunch numbers.



*Advanced Warfighter* series (it uses *GRAV 2*'s graphics engine). *Lost* show executive producers Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse created the Elliott character and plotted his story arc, which is divided into seven episodes—roughly an hour-and-a-half each—that unfold as in the TV series (complete with “previously on” recaps at each episode’s start and cliffhangers at the end). “The show’s creators censored us from knowing too much about the big picture,” says Eypert, “but they gave us hints for some things. At one time, we had an ending [for an episode] that we thought was stupid, but they were like, ‘No, no—

leave it in. It fits with the TV show.”

The game’s plot starts in season one before the opening of the Hatch, spans season two, and covers a little territory from season three. “We wanted to make sure players didn’t need to watch all three seasons to play the game,” says Eypert, adding that the game is targeted toward show fans but not fanatics. “It should be easy to play for anyone who’s watched at least a few episodes and knows several of the main characters.”

Most of those characters—including Jack, Sawyer, Kate, Sayid, Hurley, and Locke—pop up to help Elliott figure out who he is, why he’s on the island,

and how he’ll get off. Locke, for instance, will fix things and help lead you through the jungle. Hurley will trade with you for supplies. Sawyer will offer off-color nicknames for your character. (The game’s makers aren’t certain whether they’ll get the show’s cast to provide the voices or rely on soundalikes.) Less-central characters and their storylines will be more rare. “You will see people like Walt and Michael,” says Eypert, “but those are not really connected to your story in the game. Neither are story elements like females and babies and the pregnancy issues on the island.”

Each of the game’s “episodes” kicks

## ▶ The show and the videogame exist in slightly different parallel worlds.

—*Lost* TV show Executive Producer Carlton Cuse



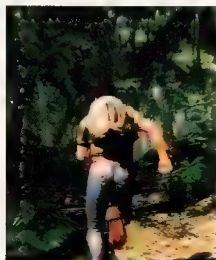
off with some type of crisis shared by Elliott and the other "Lostie" castaways. At the game's beginning, for instance, Elliott needs to fix a fuel leak at the plane-crash site before it blows everyone to hell (well, unless the island already is Hell as some show fans speculate). Another episode has Elliott trying to prove to everyone that he's not a terrorist. He'll often use his digital camera to snap pics and show photo evidence to other Losties—a gameplay nod to Ubisoft's critically acclaimed *Beyond Good & Evil*. The demo level we watched had him exploring a cave and finding a DHARMA Initiative hatch. After a series of fetch quests (trading items with Hurley for a new book to give to Sawyer in exchange for a fuse), Elliott convinced Locke to fix the hatch's on-the-fritz door. And throughout all the backtracking and jungle exploring and spelunking, Elliott kept experiencing that one mental exercise so common among the Losties: The flashback.

**Mind games**

"I know having an amnesiac character is supercliché in videogames," says Eypert, "but it fits here because in the TV show you don't know the characters and you discover them through the episodes, through their flashbacks." In the game, Elliott's flashbacks will help you sort out who he is, what he did in his past in Sydney that brought him to board Oceanic Flight 815, and what issues need resolving to escape the island. It's all part of the game's overall goal to keep you thinking between the episodes—a key element of the show that Eypert says drove every aspect of the design here. He admits it took the team a

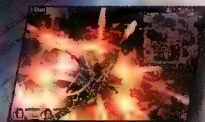


Some of *Lost*'s puzzles are of the find-the-widget-for-the-thingie *Resident Evil* variety.





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long time to figure out how to make the flashbacks playable. Some you trigger by talking to Losties or accomplishing certain tasks. Shorter flashes of memory are tied to objects, which you activate in the menu system. Many flashbacks—which start fuzzy but become more clear as you regain memories—provide the key to solving puzzles on the island.

Some puzzles are of the mechanical variety, requiring you to find missing machine parts or push pressure plates. More interesting: Elliott can access the island's computer network, so at times he'll have to enter numbers (yes, *those* numbers) in the Hatch with Kate or chat with online folks who may or may not be from the mysterious enemy tribe known as the Others. But *Lost* the game would be considerably more boring than *Lost* the TV show's slower episodes if all Elliott did was snap jungle photos, fetch items for Losties, and relive his past. That's why action sequences break up the puzzles. You'll need to outrun the smoke monster and, possibly, a polar bear or two. You'll dart from tree to tree in the jungle to evade the Others' snipers. And a trip to the Black Rock pirate ship will net some dynamite—which just like in the show is dangerously unstable and goes kablooeie if you take a wrong step.

Even if you do it all just right and manage to survive this "survival adventure," you still won't find any of the big answers we craved at the beginning of this preview. Regardless, Eypert promises a conclusion that still lives up to the finales of the show's first three seasons—and at the very least will keep you thinking. "It's a really special end," he says. "Just like in the TV show, you'll never guess what's going to happen." ❖

## MYSTERY MEN

The TV show's producers tell us why we wanna get *Lost*

When he said nobody knows the big answers to *Lost*'s mysteries at the beginning of our preview, Creative Director Nicholas Eypert was excluding Carlton Cuse and Damon Lindelof. The executive producers of the TV show, these guys have the master plan for the series' final three seasons locked away in their brains. Or so we hope. We caught up with them to see how the game fits with the "mothership" (aka the show).

**EGM: Why make a new character for the game instead of letting us play one of the more action-y guys like Sayid or Locke or Sawyer?**

**Carlton Cuse:** The real mystery of *Lost* is, who are these characters? We wanted that same mystery to apply to the videogame. The game, you know, has both a present-day island construct and a flashback construct, and part of the mystery and part of the appeal of the videogame is finding out who is this character Elliott that you're playing. That, to us, was more compelling than playing an existing character who the audience already knows all about. This guy Elliott is a mystery, and the gamers get to uncover the mystery of Elliott's past, and—like all the characters on the show—we're wondering, well, why is he on this island? What is he seeking redemption for? We think it's a really cool story.

**Damon Lindelof:** We also think that the people who are going to get the game want something new, and since much of the game plays parallel to events that have already played out in seasons one, two, and three of the show, you kind of already know what happened—you know what happened to Sayid, Jack and Kate, and Sawyer. You don't know what happened to Elliott, who we're basically saying was there all along and having his own parallel adventure to major discoveries on the island, like the Hatch, or the Others, or the polar bear. In the spirit of making the game experience something new and unique—as opposed to, oh, I'm just kinda replaying all of the things I've already seen on the show—it was important to make that decision.

**EGM: Sometimes when one of these background characters on the show will come to the forefront, fans get concerned because they'll get distracted from solving the overall mystery.**

**CC:** I think, though, in watching gameplay, it doesn't feel like that. The game takes place in, as Damon said, a somewhat parallel world to *Lost*. It's not literally the same canon, it expands upon certain things that are in the show, and it kind of follows its own path. I think that it makes sense that we're doing that with a new character, and it is a similar experience, but it's not the exact same

experience as the show—nor should it be, because that wouldn't be as rewarding, and it doesn't leave as much room for discovery. So having a new character I think actually opens up the world, whereas having an existing character would, I think, be much more of a confined experience.

**DL:** And he's obviously still interacting with all the characters on the show, you know.

**EGM: So will the game solve any mysteries from the show at all or just focus on Elliott?**

**DL:** In terms of solving mysteries, we leave that to the mothership. The game basically just deals with Elliott's mysteries. He's actually able to explore a couple of areas of the island that our characters either haven't found or have chosen not to explore, but other than that, I think if we revealed major mysteries in the game and not the show, the audience who watches the show would be pissed off.

**CC:** Yeah, they'd cry foul. What the game does, though, is the character explores things that you've seen on the show that you maybe wanted to know more about. What's behind the wall in the Hatch, where the mysterious electromagnetism is....

**DL:** Now that the Hatch is blown up, you would never get an opportunity to see that room on the real show, so....

**CC:** You can take this character places that you might want to see that you didn't get a chance to see on the show.

**DL:** We're planning a lot of Easter eggs in the game, too, just cool things for people who are real fans of the show to notice, down to small props in scenes, all the way up to references in Elliott's flashbacks to other major characters.

**EGM: We know you're not spilling any secrets about the upcoming season, but we figure you're fine with spoiling things about other shows. So, with that in mind, is Starbuck a Cylon?**

**DL:** We don't know, but we sure hope she is.

**EGM: And is Peter Petrelli really dead on *Heroes*?**

**DL:** That we know: He's not dead. We saw him [actor Milo Ventimiglia] down at Comic-Con this weekend. He looked very much alive.

**CC:** I don't think they would have brought him to Comic-Con if he were dead.

**EGM: Oh, and who killed Laura Palmer?**

**DL:** Uhhh...her dad, possessed by the spirit of Killer Bob.



❑ *Lost* cause: Exec producers Lindelof (left) and Cuse ain't saying s\*\*\* about next season.



SHONEN JUMP

# NARUTO

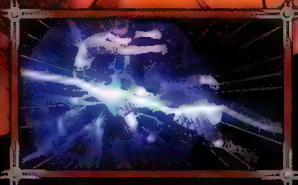
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PlayStation Portable



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HELLGATE  
LONDON







▶ PREVIEW: EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK

# NFL TOUR

EA makes more than a name change to its arcade-rich gridiron. By Bryan Intihar

## PLATFORMS: WHILE SPEAKING TO PRODUCER

PS3/XB360

**Publisher:** EA Sports

**Developer:** EA Tiburon

**Release Date:** January 2008

PHIL FRAZIER about his upcoming game *NFL Tour*, we got this eerie feeling that a greater presence governed our conversation. No, it didn't feel like Frazier's boss at developer EA Tiburon. And no, it wasn't the big man upstairs. Rather, it seemed like someone who works on New York City's swank Park Avenue was watching over us. His name: NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell.

With just over a year under his belt as the league's head honcho, Goodell has made quite a name for himself thanks to his strict policies in an effort to clean up the NFL. So when Frazier talks about the company's 7-on-7 arcadey football franchise ditching *NFL Street's* "dark, urban thug life" and evolving into *NFL Tour's* "accurate representation of what the NFL would do if they were to put on an exhibition-style event," it's difficult not to think the commish hardass (or, at

the very least, his cronies) had something to do with this new direction. Conspiracy theory? Perhaps, but *NFL Tour* is definitely more in line with how Goodell wants "his" league portrayed.

## Become Invincible

Vince Papale: A 30-year-old bartender who not only lived his dream of making the Philadelphia Eagles squad, but also had his story made into a Hollywood blockbuster (*Invincible*). Now, while you'll probably never have Mark Wahlberg play you on the big screen like Papale did, *NFL Tour* at least sets the stage for any Joe Schmo (that'd be you) to play on his favorite NFL team. So say buh-bye to the days of joining up with a bunch of nobodies. Here, you'll travel the country with the real players as part of a fictional, exhibition-style tour. "We're trying to present it almost like a documentary," says Frazier.

The guys you'll line up with and

against are just the beginning of EA's wholesale changes; the actual gridiron is also going through some major remodeling. "In the old *NFL Street*... you'd pick up and play anywhere: alleys, warehouses. It wasn't a clean sport," says Frazier. "Since *NFL Tour* is something being presented by the NFL, the environments look like a staged event." For example, the New York City stadium is nestled between Central Park and downtown, complete with fan-filled bleachers, lights, pyrotechnics, and a concert stage. "Yeah, we'd say this scene definitely beats tossin' the football around some dingy ol' warehouse.

And if you hope to see every spectacle of a stadium, you better be able to adapt your game. *NFL Tour* does a fine job mixing things up with a host of new challenges, including Sudden-Death and Make-It, Take-It scenarios. Some of the old minigame events will return, but with a slight twist. Crush





• Rather than going with *Street's* ironman football *NFL Tour* features the appropriate players on each side of the line of scrimmage.

the Carrier, for instance, now has you chasing after running backs in a big, UFC-like octagon (no tap-outs here).

### Control yourself

As EA sweeps up the dirt for this gridiron's premise, it's also making some necessary gameplay alterations. First off, *NFL Tour* should be a simpler game to pick up, as it only uses the controller's four face buttons. Plus, wall moves (an *NFL Street* hallmark) will now be much easier to execute. Yet don't equate ease of play with lack of depth. "The biggest difference between us and previous *Streets*, and even between us and *Madden*," says Frazier, "is that we're giving you control over elements that you haven't controlled before." He brings up tackling to illustrate this point, as other titles rely heavily on the A.I. to determine whether someone goes down. That won't be the case here. "We have this counter/reversal sys-

tem. So once contact is made, you hit a button to reverse, and then your opponent—whether he's on offense or defense—has a chance to counter. It's like a fighting game, with a lot of back and forth and some really cool animations."

The other big changeup comes in the removal of Gamebreakers. And that's fine by us: In the *NFL Streets*, this big-play mechanic (which was essentially a guaranteed TD or turnover) ended up hurting the flow of the ballgame. Instead, *NFL Tour* will adopt the Smash Meter, which Frazier says is "meant to give the defense more of an offensive counter. Once the meter is full, what happens is similar to the old *Tecmo Bowl* games where you choose the same play as the offense, and then the defense blows it up. But it won't lead to an interception or a fumble every time." That's good to hear—it'll save us from complaining to Goodell's office....



Games for Windows pingo

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

THE WAY IT WAS NVIDIA

EA GAMES

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RATING PENDING

RP  
ESRB

Visit [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org) for updated rating information.

EA



## Playing Politics

By Hal Halpin

The Entertainment Software Ratings Board is the gaming industry's self-regulating body in North America that reviews interactive-entertainment products and assigns ratings and content descriptors. It's not a perfect system, but it's ours—and we have a duty to embrace or enhance it.

When a movie studio wants to release a product that's more violent or sexual in nature than an "R" rating will allow, they release the title as an "NC-17" or "unrated" film. The movie industry doesn't ask retailers to only sell rated products. Not so with console games. In fact, here in North America, receiving an Adults Only rating—as was the case recently with *Manhunt 2*—is effectively a ban.

The problem: Sony, Microsoft, and Nintendo, the three major console manufacturers, won't allow AO-rated games to be published for their respective systems. These antiquated policies were originally enacted to ensure that gaming systems weren't seen as "porn machines"—manufacturers wanted to instill confidence in parents and watchdog groups that adult content could not be played on any home console. Here, the duality of the problem persists: Consoles are consumer-entertainment devices at their core, much closer to high-end DVD players or digital video recorders than toys—an image that the industry has worked diligently to maintain.

We, as a group—developers, publishers, manufacturers, retailers, distributors, and consumers—must stop treating games that do receive the AO rating as though they were X-rated films. If a parallel must be drawn, AO is akin to NC-17—and we should treat it similarly. Software creators face a significant conundrum; the business finds itself painted into a corner through its own volition. What's clear: We all lose as a result. What's unclear is how to extract ourselves collectively from the mess we've made. If you have any suggestions, e-mail us at [info@theECA.com](mailto:info@theECA.com).



Hal Halpin is founder of the Electronic Consumers Association, a nonprofit organization dedicated to watchdog gaming legislation. Join its cause at [www.theeca.com](http://www.theeca.com).

## SPARTAN SHOP

# Cash or Carbine

A helluva lot of Halo gear for sale

By Nick Suttner

Between the *Halo* trilogy, *Halo Wars*, and Peter Jackson's *Halo* project (phew!), you'd think *Halo* nuts would be getting their fix. Yeah, right—Microsoft knows fanboys will gobble up anything branded *Halo*. Yes, anything! Hell, just check out these whored-out goods.

### Halo 3 Mountain Dew Game Fuel

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

**How Much:** It's soda. Cheap.

This carbonated crap fails on two levels: 1) The completely unnatural "Citrus Cherry" flavor is nothing to save Earth about. 2) You know the product is poorly marketed when even hardcore *Halo* fans would probably be ashamed to drink it.

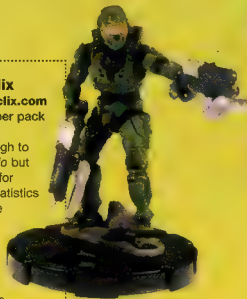


### Halo ActionClix

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

**How Much:** \$10 per pack

If you're cool enough to admit you play *Halo* but not nerdy enough for maps, dice, and statistics cards, keep an eye out for *Halo*'s expansion into collectible miniature games, with 80-plus figures to snatch up. Hell, the set's probably the least embarrassing way to break into the whole "Clix" phenomenon without admitting you have no life.



### Halo novels

[www.tor-forge.com](http://www.tor-forge.com)

**How Much:** \$8-\$10

If you're really into the *Halo* world, the novels can satisfy your cravings. Sure, they won't be mistaken for high literature, but as pulp sci-fi goes, they're not bad. Just avoid *The Flood*, a painfully boring novelization of the first game. It's every bit as dull as reading an FAQ, but not nearly as useful.



### Halo 3 Special Edition Console

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

**How Much:** \$399

An Xbox 360 console with a green-and-gold "Spartan" finish, complete with matching controller, headset, and Play & Charge kit. This semi-Elite model (minus the 120GB hard drive) will set you back \$399. At this point, though, any *Halo* fan should own a 360...making this set practically pointless.





### Halo scaled weapon replicas

www.masterreplicas.com  
How Much: \$19.99

Ever wanted a tiny, authentically detailed Battle Rifle or Covenant Carbine to adorn your desk, displayed on a stand in all its 6-inch glory? Yeah, us neither. But if you wanna blow 20 bones on a fake gun, shoot—go ahead!



**Halo: Uprising comic miniseries**  
www.marvel.com  
How Much: \$3.99 per issue

If the sample pages Marvel's shown are any indication, this four-part miniseries is looking like a ridiculously cool way to fill in fans on the events between Halo 2 and Halo 3.

### Bungie Store stuff

www.bungiestore.com  
How Much: \$1-\$60

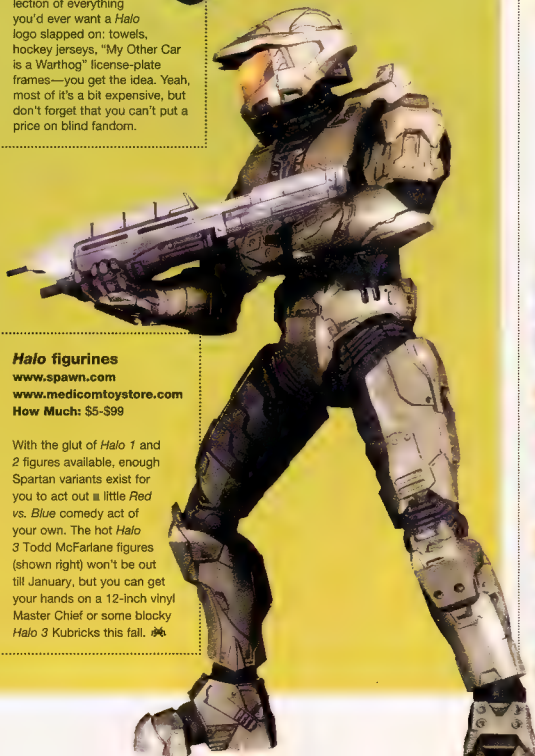
Head over to BungieStore.com to check out an impressively thorough collection of everything you'd ever want a Halo logo slapped on: towels, hockey jerseys, "My Other Car is a Warhog" license-plate frames—you get the idea. Yeah, most of it's a bit expensive, but don't forget that you can't put a price on blind fandom.



### Halo figurines

www.spawn.com  
www.medicomtoystore.com  
How Much: \$5-\$99

With the glut of Halo 1 and 2 figures available, enough Spartan variants exist for you to act out a little Red vs. Blue comedy act of your own. The hot Halo 3 Todd McFarlane figures (shown right) won't be out till January, but you can get your hands on a 12-inch vinyl Master Chief or some blocky Halo 3 Kubricks this fall. **46**



### > THAT SUCKS



**XBOX 360'S HEAD HONCHO NO MORE**—after four years as executive VP of Microsoft's console division, Peter Moore's now calling plays as the new president of EA Sports. While the 360 will continue to chug

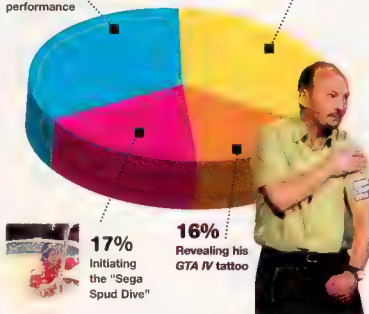
along, we'll definitely miss Moore's oddball behavior and inked-up arms. So we polled the 1UP message boards to find out everyone's favorite Moore moment.

**34%**

Terrible E3 2007 Rock Band performance

**33%**

Revealing his Halo 2 tattoo



### > LEGENDARY LOSERS

## All-Pro Felons

Madden's no longer the only pro on the field, thanks to All-Pro Football 2K8. But while Madden has the current players, All-Pro has a bunch of legends...some of whom aren't so legendary now. We've compiled a list of former pros in 2K8 who haven't scored well with the law.



**Not-so-nose guards:** Ex-San Diego Charger running back Chuck Muncie, and onetime Washington Redskins defensive end Dexter Manley were both convicted of cocaine-related crimes.



**Sexy fumble:** Then-Atlanta Falcon Eugene Robinson was arrested for trying to pick up a cop posing as a prostitute—an ironically, the same day he was awarded for his "high moral character." Ouch.



**Car blitz:** Though he wasn't convicted, former Washington Redskins wide receiver Ricky Sanders went to trial for reportedly running over a parking attendant outside a nightclub.

—with contributions by Todd Zuniga

&gt; EGM INVESTIGATES

# Killing BILL

Arcade king Billy Mitchell plays a good bad guy in a new documentary, but is he such a big ape? **By** *Crispin Boyer*



Spoiler alert! Don't read this story until you've seen *The King of Kong*, a slickly produced, highly entertaining David-and-Goliath story that's been so well received at film festivals, New Line Cinema plans to turn it into a feature film (with Johnny Depp being sought for the Billy Mitchell role).

## IT'S EASY TO HATE BILLY

**MITCHELL** in *The King of Kong*, a now-in-theaters documentary about the high-drama world of high-score competition. Clad in dark-tone duds and patriotic power ties, his mane blow-dried into the shape of Darth Vader's helmet, Mitchell comes across as a cocky king of coin-op who will stop at nothing to maintain his 25-year reign as *Donkey Kong*'s top player. His nemesis: Family man Steve Wiebe (say it "we-bee"), a regular Mr. Nice Guy whose layoff from an aerospace firm leads him to buy a *Kong* machine to topple Mitchell.

It makes for a fascinating flick, but is it true? "I don't have a problem doing a film and having things seem silly or funny or even being a bad guy," says Mitchell, who claims he has yet to see the full movie. "You just don't do that and slant that and call it real. You don't criminalize people and call it real. You don't do that for the sake of a dollar." Obviously, he has problems with the film, so we highlight Mitchell's issues and talk to people on both sides of the story to see if *King of Kong* gets it wrong.

## Issue 1: The "break-in"

Mitchell's biggest beef with the film is the way he says it "criminalizes" the actions of two pals—Brian Kuh and Perry Rodgers—who are shown dropping by Wiebe's home for a surprise inspection of the *Kong* coin-op on which Wiebe achieved his record. "The movie leaves the audience with the impression that those two 'broke in' to Steve's house and 'broke in' to his *Kong* machine," says longtime Mitchell friend Steve Sanders.

The parties involved admit to nothing so sinister, saying that Wiebe's mother-in-law invited them into the garage to wait by the *Kong* machine until Wiebe got home from work—and that she even gave them a quarter to play the game. When Wiebe arrived, they all posed for pictures and asked Wiebe to unlock the machine so they could photograph its circuitry. "I see photos that were taken with Steve next to his machine," says Mitchell. "He's not gratulated. I mean, if someone really breaks into my house, I don't take photos; I don't shake their hands. I usually file a police report."

**Steve Wiebe responds:** "It's not that they barged in. [My mother-in-law] was polite enough to let them in, and it's true she gave them a quarter, which is funny.... It was friendly, but it's not like I was happy to have someone drop by unannounced. I'm coming home from work. I want to take a shower and relax. I wasn't too happy, but I didn't express it. And the movie never says they broke in."

**Who to believe?** The film doesn't outright say Kuh and Rodgers stole into Wiebe's garage like Watergate



■ Mitchell says he's used to playing a silly character and a bad guy, but the movie takes him out of context.



# ERADICATE THE ROOT OF EVIL



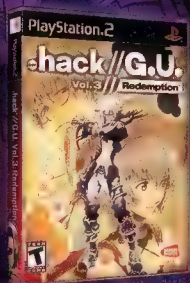
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THE THRILLING  
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burglars, but it does imply they took apart his machine and snapped pics without his consent. "The film edits out most of that narrative," Sanders says, "and only those who know the whole story can see the film and recognize the actual events."

## Issue 2: Billy's fuzzy tape

Seemingly in an effort to swipe the spotlight from Wiebe, who had just achieved a new *Donkey Kong* high score live at a tournament in a New Hampshire arcade, Mitchell sends in tape of a game in which he sets a new record. Walter Day, chief scorekeeper of the Guinness Book-approved Twin Galaxies record-tracking association, enters the score as the new world record—despite video anomalies that blur the onscreen point counter when it rolls over to exactly all zeroes at the million mark. "It's blurry and you can't see anything," says Mitchell, "and it gives the insinuation that the game was reset." Mitchell blames the tape's quality on it being a copy, and he says he timed his score bonuses just right so the game would roll over at precisely a million points, thus all the zeroes. "I've done that a couple of times successfully," he says. "It's kind of neat to watch. But it worked out to [the filmmaker's] advantage."

What the film doesn't show is that Mitchell's record was taken down the following day, and Wiebe was reinstated as the top scorer: "I realized it was a hasty, incorrect decision [to post Mitchell's score]," Day says. "But our senior referee, Robert Mruzczek, had already beat me to the task and had taken it down. That meant that Steve Wiebe's new high

score wasn't as hostile to Wiebe as the film would have you believe.

## Issue 3: Billy is no player

Despite Mitchell espousing the virtues of live versus taped play, he's never shown gripping a joystick in the film. Mitchell's wife is quoted saying she's never seen him play in public. Meanwhile, Mitchell seems keen on avoiding Wiebe, even going so far as to avoid entering a restaurant when he learns that Wiebe is snacking on chicken wings inside.

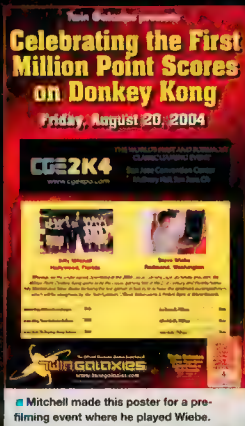
Mitchell, who achieved many of his record scores in live venues over the past 25 years, says it's ludicrous to imply that he doesn't play in public. He cites a 2004 Classic Gaming Expo event (prior to *King of Kong*'s filming), at which he played an emulated version of *Donkey Kong* against Wiebe just for fun. "We laughed," Mitchell says of the encounter. "We had fun." He says his wife's answer was truthful because, since she's not a gamer, she had never attended any of his live events up to that point. And he says he wasn't given enough time to prepare for a live record attempt against Wiebe. "I hadn't played any videogames for more than a year," Mitchell says, "and I was given a three-day notice, so I said, 'No, I won't be there.'"

As for the onscreen snub of Wiebe at the restaurant, Mitchell—and several of Mitchell's friends, who have photographic evidence to back him up—says the film is misleading: "Not only did I bring my wife and kids inside, I introduced them to Steve..." he says.

## Gordon and Cunningham respond

"The entire beginning of the film is dedicated to Billy's amazing gaming feats...[and] during the portion of the film dealing with the Guinness, Pompano Beach tournament, there are several quotes discussing how Billy was not prepared and therefore might not compete. As for the 2004 Classic Gaming Expo...the *Donkey Kong* machine was a Multicade, not an accepted version according to Twin Galaxies' rules...Billy did not play competitively, did not go for a record, and simply played a few boards for fun. To our knowledge, Billy has never gone head-to-head in a competitive game of *Donkey Kong* against Steve Wiebe.

[As for the restaurant], after a long deliberation outside, Billy came in and treated Steve very much like he did later that night at the tournament.



■ Mitchell made this poster for a pre-filming event where he played Wiebe.

There was no point in showing him do the same thing twice."

**Who to believe?** Mitchell erased doubts that he's willing to compete in public in mid-July when he scored the new *Donkey Kong* world record live before "media, loads of witnesses, a notary public, and most importantly, a senior Twin Galaxies ref who eyeballed the game," he says. Wiebe, meanwhile, is gearing up for a go at the new record "after I finish painting the house," he says. "I'll give it a shot before the summer ends. My wife's not too happy." Wiebe also recalls that, despite what the movie chose to show, Mitchell eventually entered the restaurant that night. "I don't remember what he said to me," says Wiebe, "but it was brief. It was awkward. We didn't hug or anything."

Ultimately, after showing many people involved in this story, we just went away with the impression that *King of Kong* is a somewhat sincere but flawed and flawed movie. But if there's one thing I won't give him credit for, it's that most of Mitchell's performance as Steve Wiebe had nothing to do with the Guinness World Record. The movie makes a look at Twin Galaxies generally, and Billy specifically—are trying to take Steve down? Sanders says,

"I think about Steve's motivation, and Roy Scheider's motivation, and how important it is to him that Billy that audiences tend to believe that the Billy Mitchell they see on the screen is him, and that he's a



**SHOOTING ON**  
 Mitchell and Wiebe were filmed in a restaurant in Pompano Beach, Fla., where Mitchell was eating chicken wings. The restaurant was closed for the night of the filming.







▶ PREVIEW: EXCLUSIVE SCREENS AND INFO

# The Last REMNANT

Attempting to make sense of Square Enix's new multiplatform fantasy By Shane Bettenhausen

**Multiplatform:** PS3, Xbox 360  
**Available:** March 2009  
**Developer:** Square Enix  
**Platform:** PS3, Xbox 360

**ALTHOUGH RENOWNED FOR PLAYING** publisher Square Enix seems prone to test fans' patience with its notoriously repetitive *Final Fantasy XIII* multigame project (seriously, guys, when's *FFXIII* really coming out...? *Broken* 2009?), it's not nearly as tight-fisted about *The Last Remnant*, an original RPG headed to both Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 in 2009.

*The Last Remnant* signals a major shift in the way the company approaches game development: rather than focusing solely on the Japanese market, the developers team hopes to craft a role-playing game with instant global appeal. It's also one of the only multiplatform releases they've ever attempted, and the first to be built mainly using America's middleware tools (Epic Games' Unreal Engine 3), so it's definitely going to be a trailblazing title for what's traditionally a very change-averse publisher.

The game remains at least a half year away from its planned simultaneous worldwide release (another Square Enix first), but we've already seen much of what this ambitious new fantasy has to offer, and it's not to absorb.

## ▶ HERO AND ANTIHERO

Since this game is meant to appeal equally to Japanese and Western audiences, Square Enix has created two very different protagonists, with one tailor-made for each demographic. Japanese gamers are meant to warm up to Rush Sykes, a wide-eyed 18-year-old swordsman who gets swept up in a colossal, world-spanning war. He seems like your average everyday Japanese RPG hero: headstrong, spunky, elaborately dressed, and surprisingly capable with a blade. We spied an in-game cinema that sets up Rush's impetus for joining the fray: He stumbles upon an enormous battle being waged between two opposing forces on an expansive plain. Rather than simply avoiding the chaos, he brazenly runs into the thick of combat with reckless abandon. Is this kid that damned brave, or... "Rush is pretty stupid," jokes *Remnant* Director Hiroshi Takai. "But he actually thinks that he sees his missing sister Irina in that battle, so he wades into the chaos."

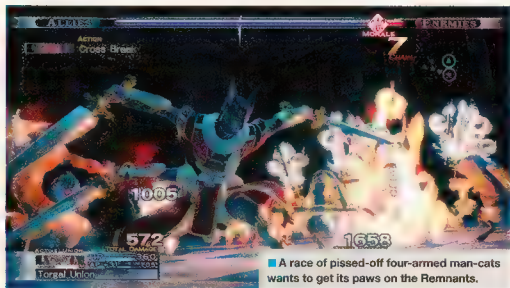
Details about the other main character—a brutal antihero created with us bloodthirsty American gamers in mind—remain almost entirely under wraps. He's currently known only as "the Conqueror," and Square Enix won't even confirm if he's actually playable in the game. He's much older and wiser than Rush, and his motivations for fighting seem mired in personal gain—he's determined to collect and control Remnants, the titular artifacts that inspire all of the game's conflict. "Even though the Conqueror is a key player in the game's story, I can't disclose much about him yet," Takai says. "But I can say that his clothes didn't start out red...that's from the blood of all the enemies he has killed." Yikes—what kind of maniacal American gamers were in Square Enix's focus groups?





## > A WORLD UNLIKE THOSE YOU KNOW

Even though this isn't a *Final Fantasy* title, it's not hard to see that series' aesthetic influence on *Remnant's* setting. Take one look at the vibrant, ornate city pictured here and you'll get a full-on *FFXII* flashback. Similarly, the expansive field maps and labyrinthine caverns bear a resemblance to the wide-open worlds of *Final Fantasy XI*. And much like the diversely populated realms of *FFX* and *FFXII*, *Remnant's* world plays host to a variety of different races: humanlike Mitras (like Rush), merman-esque Yamas warriors, diminutive Qstis lizardmen, and Sovannis, hardy catpeople with four arms. You'll command all of these disparate groups in the game's large-scale battles, and each race has its own specific areas of expertise.



■ A race of pissed-off four-armed man-cats wants to get its paws on the Remnants.



> "The secret of our success so far is that we didn't rush to develop the title."

—The Lead Remnant Developer (Who'd You Know)



■ Any self-respecting hero would wade willy-nilly into a giant war to rescue his sister, right?



## &gt; GET YOUR WAR ON

*The Last Remnant's* characters and setting might seem familiar to serious RPG fans, but its battle system aims to break a host of genre conventions. Here combat ranges from minor skirmishes with a few beasts to gargantuan conflicts between 70-man armies, yet the gameplay remains consistent regardless of scale. "Battles of all sizes progress the same way," says Takai. "You group your characters into units called Unions, then issue commands to your Unions as a whole." Don't expect to micromanage every aspect of these groups' actions, however. "Individual units within Unions will still act based on their feelings and personality," Takai adds. "And the actions of a single unit can have great influence on your army's morale."

Looking at these screens, you might think

that it's an action-based brawler à la *Dynasty Warriors* or an epic real-time strategy game. But even though these battles incorporate some tactical and action-oriented elements, the fundamental gameplay stays surprisingly close to *Final Fantasy's* turn-based roots. "From the beginning, we decided to go with a system where you control many characters with only a few simple commands," Takai says. "Thus, the player doesn't have to deal with commanding and positioning tons of characters." Perhaps it's not quite as simple as he makes it sound, though. Just like in the classic *Final Fantasy* Active-Time Battle system, *Remnant's* enemies won't wait for you to choose your actions before taking their turn...so don't dawdle. Also, the scale of battles can increase or decrease

dramatically as characters enter and leave the melee, forcing you to strategize on the fly.

*Final Fantasy* fans will spy another familiar combat element that *Remnant* borrows—sequences that require pinpoint button presses to maximize damage or perform last-minute blocks against powerful blows. You don't have to excel at these minigames in order to be victorious in battle, but acing the timing exercises will help build morale for your Unions. From the demo we witnessed, it appears that gamers with adept hand-eye coordination will reap some hefty rewards. "It is true that we are trying to [differentiate] this from other generic role-playing games," Takai says. "If it is similar in any way to an action game, it is probably because I'm a big fan of action games myself."



## &gt; ABOUT THOSE REMNANTS

Remember those magical artifacts that the Conqueror is so enamored with? Well, he's not the only one. These so-called Remnants are absolutely crucial to the game's civilization, even though the developers seem hard-pressed to actually reveal much about their nature. One would assume that they're leftover implements from an ancient warmongering society, but Square Enix isn't giving up the goods just yet. "The Remnants have mysterious and tremendous power so people are naturally drawn to them," says Takai. "They come in many sizes, but civilizations have built up around the massive ones." Those big ones are hard to miss—you'll see a colossal sword looming above one of the game's larger cities, for example—but you can still collect them despite their enormity. Certain characters can summon these all-powerful objects in the midst of combat. "Remnants actually have various roles in battle," Takai explains. "They can be soldiers, weapons, and even armor."



Peep the mysterious Gáe Bolg Remnant in action...hmm, looks like a giant gun to us.

## &gt; UNREAL LOVIN'

Considering the recent hullabaloo about Epic Games' allegedly unfinished Unreal Engine 3 (scope the story on pg. 54), we were curious to hear *The Last Remnant* team's impressions after working with it for nearly two years. "I could easily talk about the struggles that we've had," says Takai. "Yeah, it's been hard, but our skilled team has been up to the task." Since many Japanese-developed UE3 games have already been canceled, he's likely not just stroking their egos. "The secret to our success so far is that we didn't really rush to develop the title," Takai adds. "We took our time to study the engine, and we have a really good relationship with Epic, so we're very excited about maximizing the technology." 🎮



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**M** Blood and Gore  
Mild Language  
Violence  
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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game studios

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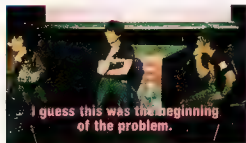
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XBOX 360 LIVE

> NOW SHOWING AT  
GAMEVIDEOS



Our favorite video picks of the month—shamefully, we made three of them ourselves! Go check 'em out at [www.GameVideos.com/EGM](http://www.GameVideos.com/EGM).



**LOL: Not The 1UP Show: Snake vs. Zombie**

Well-known developers Hideo Kojima (*Metal Gear* series), Shinji Mikami (*Resident Evil*), and Suda 51 (*Killer7*) talk to each other about game design, retirement, and...Lost?



**ORLY: Miyamoto Interview**

EGM Executive Editor Shane Bettenhausen gets some one-on-one time with *Mario* creator Shigeru Miyamoto. Features uncomfortably long soul hugging.



**1337: Fight for Video Games**

The ESA's "intentionally overdramatic" recruitment trailer for its grassroots Video Game Voters Network. Crazy enough to work?



**ZOMG: Metal Gear Solid 4/ Online Interview**

We dissect the latest gameplay demo and talk with Assistant Producer Ryan Payton about *MGS4* details and *MGS Online*'s new team features.



> ONLINE SCENE

# Team Loyalty

Showing your true colors on the 360

By Bryan Intihar



Every week, I return to the latest from the sports-gaming world on 1UP.com's Sports Anomaly podcast. It's a wicked yakka!

**THE CLEVELAND DAWG POUND, THE WASHINGTON HOGETTES, RAIDER NATION**—you don't have to look very hard to see how passionate (and downright crazy) fans can be about their favorite football squads. So it shouldn't surprise anyone that these people will gladly

plunk down Microsoft spacebucks to deck out their Xbox 360 dashboards with team-specific themes. Which fans display the most virtual loyalty? Here are the most downloaded themes across the pro and college (via EA's *Madden NFL 07* and *NCAA Football 07*) gridirons.

> TOP THEMES - MADDEN NFL 07

- |                         |                         |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Dallas Cowboys       | 11. Oakland Raiders     |
| 2. Pittsburgh Steelers  | 12. New York Giants     |
| 3. Chicago Bears        | 13. New Orleans Saints  |
| 4. Philadelphia Eagles  | 14. San Diego Chargers  |
| 5. Denver Broncos       | 15. San Francisco 49ers |
| 6. Indianapolis Colts   | 16. Cincinnati Bengals  |
| 7. Seattle Seahawks     | 17. Green Bay Packers   |
| 8. New England Patriots | 18. Washington Redskins |
| 9. Carolina Panthers    | 19. Miami Dolphins      |
| 10. Atlanta Falcons     | 20. Baltimore Ravens    |

> TOP THEMES - NCAA FOOTBALL 07

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Ohio State    | 11. USC           |
| 2. Notre Dame    | 12. Oklahoma      |
| 3. Texas         | 13. LSU           |
| 4. Michigan      | 14. Nebraska      |
| 5. Florida       | 15. Penn State    |
| 6. Miami         | 16. Auburn        |
| 7. Florida State | 17. West Virginia |
| 8. Tennessee     | 18. Virginia Tech |
| 9. Georgia       | 19. Iowa          |
| 10. Alabama      | 20. Arkansas      |





**Weapon upgrades.**



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MATURE 17+  
M

Jump in.

XBOX 360 LIVE

# Grand Theft Auto IV

It's all about the little things By Greg Ford

Rockstar's already proven to us that they can make a prettier-looking *Grand Theft Auto*, but what about a better-playing game? During a recent demo, we were able to pry a few choice bits concerning the latter.

**Platforms:**  
PS3/XB360

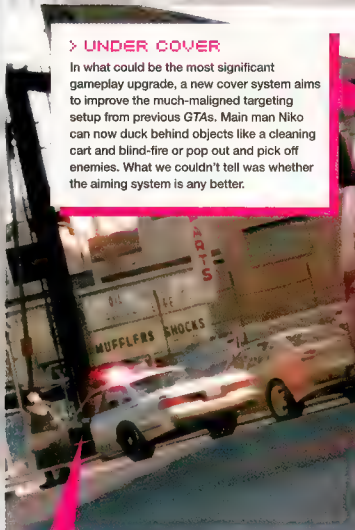
**Publisher:**  
Rockstar

**Developer:**  
Rockstar North

**Release Date:**  
Summer 2008

## > UNDER COVER

In what could be the most significant gameplay upgrade, a new cover system aims to improve the much-maligned targeting setup from previous GTAs. Main man Niko can now duck behind objects like a cleaning cart and blind-fire or pop out and pick off enemies. What we couldn't tell was whether the aiming system is any better.



## > FUZZY

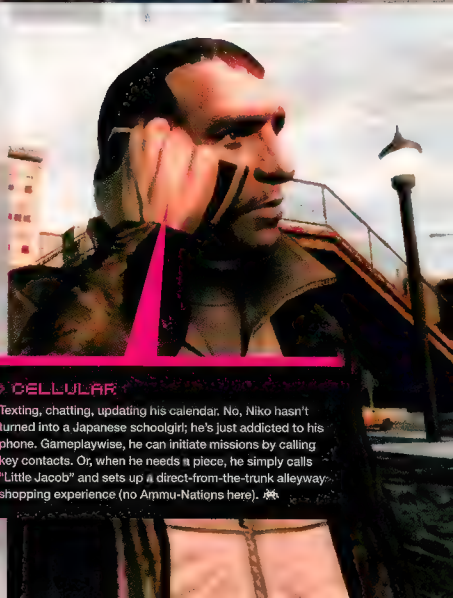
Another GTA series staple that's getting some grease: the wanted system. The basics remain the same—the more stars you have, the more those law enforcers want to use you as their practice dummy. What's changed is the way you ditch them. The cops now track you via a line-of-sight search radius. The more stars you have, the bigger the radius, and every time the law sees you, it re-centers on you. To get in the clear, you need to escape it by clearing the boundaries, either by jumping into a car unseen or just hoofing it.

Also, making it easier to avoid the titular crime, you can now take a cab to any location (all streets are named). Hell, you can even enjoy the ride...or just skip it and arrive at your destination posthaste.



## > CELLULAR

Texting, chatting, updating his calendar. No, Niko hasn't turned into a Japanese schoolgirl; he's just addicted to his phone. Gameplaywise, he can initiate missions by calling key contacts. Or, when he needs a piece, he simply calls "Little Jacob" and sets up a direct-from-the-trunk alleyway-shopping experience (no Ammu-Nations here).



**EGM Extras:**  
Listen to more impressions of the GTA4 demo via our podcast at [EGM.1UP.com](http://EGM.1UP.com)



**"THERE COMES A TIME WHEN  
EVEN GODS MUST DIE."** - Lex Luthor



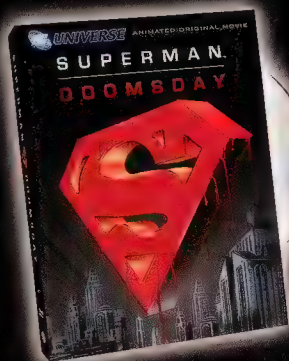
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Official Xbox Magazine

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 Games for Windows

 XBOX 360 LIVE

# Old vs. New SNAKE

How *Metal Gear*'s main man is lookin' a lot more solid in No. 4 By Bryan Intihar

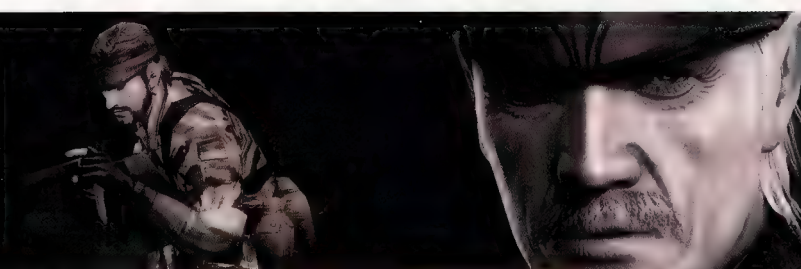
*Metal Gear Solid 4*'s sneakmaster may resemble a nursing-home resident, but a recent trailer clearly demonstrated that this old guy is getting deadlier with age.

Platform:  
PS3

Publisher:  
Konami

Developer:  
Kojima Productions

Release Date:  
Spring 2008

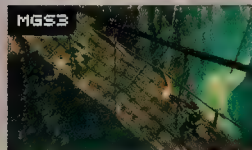


## > CAMOUFLAGE



Some disguises still require Snake to take a break at the camo index screen. But his new sneaking suit, which in seconds can mimic the look of any wall or floor he's touching, drastically reduces the number of those time outs.

## > SHOOTING



Awkward shootouts, begone! Snake should now have a much easier time picking off enemies, thanks to a new over-the-shoulder camera (plus the fact that his legs are no longer stuck in cement while aiming). He can also tackle this mission completely in first-person, plus tilt the PS3 controller to peek around walls.

## > FRISKING



It'll take Snake a li'l more effort to pry stuff out of the enemy. Instead of simply pointing his gun at foes (which caused them to crap out floating boxes of ammo, rations, and weapons), Snake's gotta pat 'em down to see what they're carrying. And how does our hero now thank enemies for giving up the realistic-looking goods? With a punch to the junk.

## > ONLINE



Snake's Internet war zone is lookin' much different than his daddy's from *MGS3: Subsistence*. First, *Metal Gear Online* is a stand-alone product for the PS3 (release date is TBD). And aside from the gameplay tweaks already mentioned, expect cool tricks such as tapping into an opponent's nanomachines to gain valuable intel about the other team. ☞



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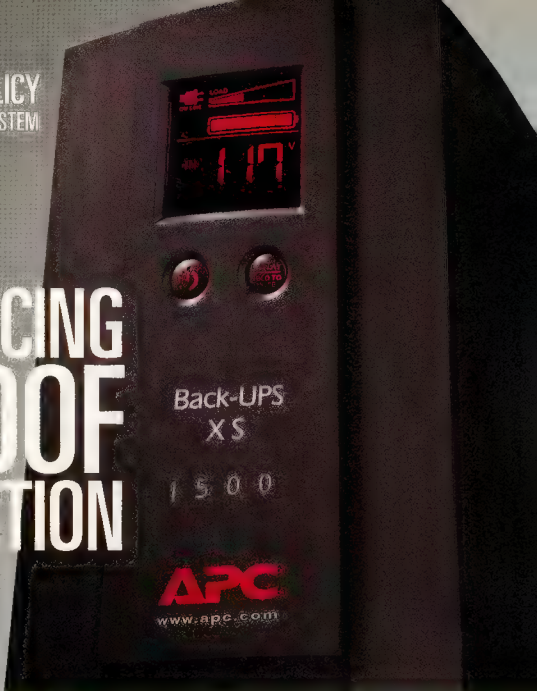




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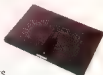
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> THE GAME OF LIVES



## 5 Lives: Tomonobu Itagaki

Notoriously cocky *Ninja Gaiden* and *Dead or Alive* director Tomonobu Itagaki is always up for a challenge.

In fact, when he quartered up for our game of questions, he was determined to not only get a perfect score, but also top David Jaffe, *God of War* creator and past 5 Lives player. Oh, it's on....

### 1. Which *DOA* girl has these measurements: bust 93 cm, waist 54 cm, and hips 84...

**Tomonobu Itagaki:** [Interrupts] That's Ayane. I should know—I'm the one with the measuring stick.

**EGM:** Correct.

**Lives remaining:**

### 2. All right, you know the dames of *DOA*... but what is Leon's favorite hobby?

**TI:** Gardening. That was too easy.

**EGM:** Correct.

**Lives remaining:**

### 3. In *DOA 2* (DC), Zack has a special costume based on a U.S. game—name it.

**TI:** Is there a time limit? Hold on, I'll get this. [Several minutes of intense thought] *Shadow Man!*

**EGM:** Correct.

**Lives remaining:**

### 4. What is the most dangerous part of a woman's body?

**TI:** As of late, I have changed my ways a bit. [Laughs] I'll give you what I feel is likely a wrong answer, but I have changed, so this is honest: A woman's mouth is the most dangerous part.

**EGM:** Correct.

**Lives remaining:**

### 5. Which is more difficult: beating *Ninja Gaiden* or enjoying a game of *Tekken*?

**TI:** [Laughs] Enjoying a game of *Tekken*—that's nearly impossible.

**EGM:** Correct.

**TI:** Did I beat the *God of War* guy? Yes!

**Lives remaining:**

**Game Over:** Damn, Itagaki is the first 5 Lives player to put up a flawless fight. Impressive? We sure think so. Surprising? He probably thinks not.

#### How will I get that gig?

While working as an artist (1984-86), Itagaki did the first anime-style fan art for Capcom's *Street Fighter*. He then worked as a character designer for the *Street Fighter* TV commercials.

Internationally, he worked as a game designer for Capcom. After working for Capcom, he joined the Japanese game developer, working on the *Street Fighter* TV commercials and the *Street Fighter* anime.

#### TOUCH OF ELECTRIC

**1. What's the most interesting thing you've ever done?**  
I've worked on a lot of different projects, but the most interesting was when I worked on the *Street Fighter* TV commercials.

**2. What's the most interesting thing you've ever done?**  
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**5. What's the most interesting thing you've ever done?**  
I've worked on a lot of different projects, but the most interesting was when I worked on the *Street Fighter* TV commercials.

**6. What's the most interesting thing you've ever done?**  
I've worked on a lot of different projects, but the most interesting was when I worked on the *Street Fighter* TV commercials.



# RUMOR MILL

Gothic gossip. By Quartermann



## Resurrected Rumors:

Score another win for Q-Man—last month I spilled the slimes about role-playing game developer Square Enix's plan to remake several of the *Dragon Quest* games for the DS.

**SUMMER IS SUCKING** all the scuttlebutt out of me. Yeah, I'm complaining, but I guess it's good for you, right? Well, I hope you're digging all the delectable tidbits I'm providing because I cannot wait for the winter to cool me down. Don't worry—I'll still go out of my way to dig up the best industry dirt every month (hey, even Quartermann needs to make bank). So enjoy these breezy morsels before I end up whining about the winter.

## Drac is back?

*Castlevania* seems content to stay on portable systems...for now, at least. But according to my sources, Konami is whipping up a console version of *Castlevania* for the 360 and PS3. Question is, where will it be developed: Japan or America? Hmm...

## Heart attack

The *Kingdom Hearts* series gets the chests of Disney and *Final Fantasy* nerds pumping. But the lack of news about the series is likely giving these superfans a stroke. No need to get a medic—my mousey mole has some info that may pump 'em up: Square Enix is apparently planning a compilation of *Kingdom Hearts* prequels

(similar to what it's doing with *Final Fantasy VII* and *Final Fantasy XIII*) on various systems and handhelds.

## Gotham city stories

If the Caped Crusader is such a damn good detective, he should really figure out why all his games suck. Seriously, when is a developer with balls going to take on a *Batman* game? I'll answer that—my superhero spy is telling me that a popular studio is looking to destroy all the hate associated with crappy *Batman* games. How so? Again, allow me—with an open-world version of Gotham City.

## Wee ware

Although the Wii currently has sweet games on the Virtual Console, Nintendo has yet to follow Sony and Microsoft's plan of bringing cool, original titles for download. Of course, that will change with the upcoming WiiWare channel, but I'm hearing the games might not be as beefy as you think. Seems like the Wii's skimpy storage options will force developers to make teeny games (we're talking the size of 16-bit oldies). So if you were expecting epic-sized offerings like Sony's recently released *Warhawk*, you're out of luck. ☹

## Q-TIPS

- Bummed developer Naughty Dog's first PS3 title isn't a *Jak and Daxter* game? Well, you shouldn't be—my spies say they're making it next.
- Role-playing nerds clamoring for the PSP version of *The Elder Scrolls* should consider other portable life-wasters because, well, I hear it got canned.
- Wishing that *Okami* (PS2) would come to the Wii? Someone must be listening—word is Capcom's drawing up an enhanced version with new features.
- My music mole is hearing a strange tune—seems the power of *Guitar Hero III*'s chords has convinced a popular broken-up band to reunite for the game.





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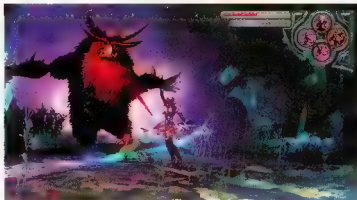
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XBOX 360. LIVE

October 2007

# COMING SOON

Here's to more treats than tricks in October



## Naruto: Rise of a Ninja

XB360 • Ubisoft

While previous anime-based games haven't earned much critical acclaim, *Rise of a Ninja* looks primed to change that trend. From the supremely stylish graphics to the remarkable amount of detail the developers put into making both fighting and exploration (like traversing the jungle's treetops with ninjalike grace) feel just like the actual cartoon, this game is even catching the eye of EGM's non-*Naruto* fans. So just imagine how the faithful will react.



## SOCOM U.S. Navy SEALs: Tactical Strike

PSP • Sony Computer Entertainment America

Instead of forcing SOCOM's console-made mechanics on the PSP yet again, *Tactical Strike* drastically simplifies the controls. You'll issue commands to your entire four-person squad *Full Spectrum Warrior*-style ("Go here," "Shoot there," and so on), allowing you to concentrate more on the mission at hand than what you're doing with your hands. The SEALs also won't be the only soldiers you're ordering around: You can now play as special forces from around the globe.



## Beowulf

PS3/XB360/PSP • Ubisoft

A hack-n-slashfest based on a big-budget fantasy flick, which is actually based on classic literature. Sounds a lot like EA's *Lord of the Rings* action titles, right? *Beowulf* sports the same MO, with the lone changeup being the ability to command your loyal followers to do such things as defend a post, move obstacles, and row ships. Yeah, we were hoping for more, too.

## Folklore

PS3 • Sony Computer Entertainment America

This awfully pretty action-role-playing game drops you into a colorful world where you battle all kinds of freaky creatures—some of which bear an odd resemblance to the Muppets cast (see above). And once these ugly goons are down for the count, you can wiggle the PS3 controller to yank out their souls, which in turn arms you with their unique abilities.

## More October Releases

### Ace Combat 6: Fires of Liberation

XB360 • Namco Bandai

### Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock

Wii/PS3/XB360/PS2 • Activision

### Half-Life 2: Orange Box

PS3/XB360 • EA Games

### The Legend of Zelda:

#### Phantom Hourglass

DS • Nintendo

### Ratchet & Clank Future:

#### Tools of Destruction

PS3 • Sony CEA

### Battalion Wars 2

Wii • Nintendo

### Clive Barker's Jericho

PS3/XB360 • Codemasters

### Final Fantasy Tactics:

#### War Lions

PSP • Square Enix

### The Eye of Judgment

PS3 • Sony CEA

### Grand Theft Auto IV

PS3/XB360 • Rockstar

### Hellboy: Science of Evil

PS3/XB360/PSP • Konami

### Beautiful Katamari

XB360 • Namco Bandai

### NBA 2K8

PS3/XB360/PS2 • 2K Sports

### NBA Live 08

Wii/PS3/XB360/PS2 • EA Sports

### SingStar

PS3 • Sony CEA

### Star Wars Battlefront:

Renegade Squadron  
PSP • LucasArts

### Tony Hawk's Proving Ground

Wii/PS3/XB360/PS2/PSP/DS • Activision

### Virtua Fighter 5

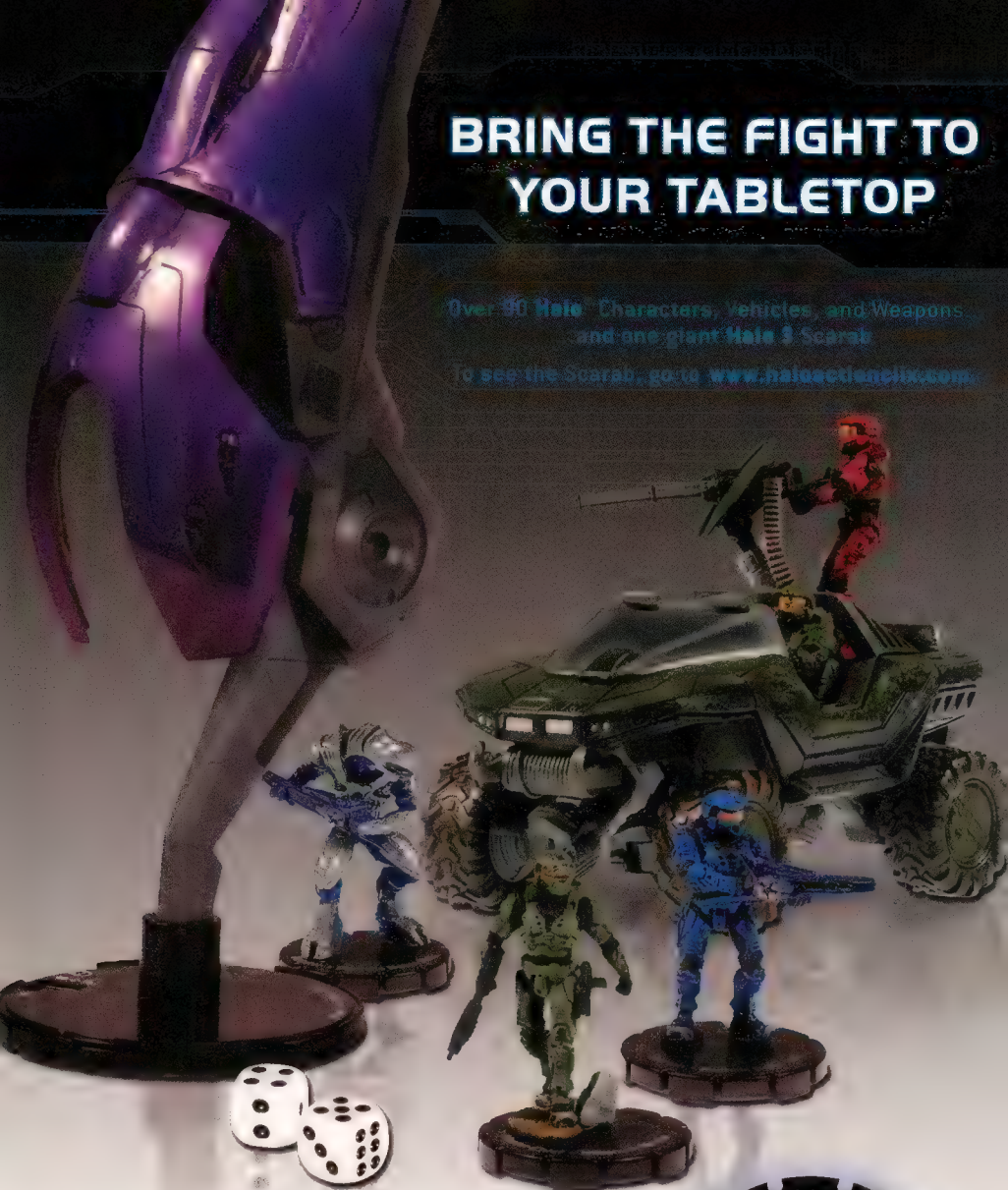
XB360 • Sega



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# BEST (AND WORST) IN SHOW

We came, we played...and we played some more. Check out which titles featured at this year's E3, the industry's annual gamingpalooza, provided the highest highs and the lowest lows

**SOMETHING STRANGE HAPPENED THIS SUMMER** in Los Angeles: Outside of the Valley, the unemployment offices became the hottest places in the city. Why the sudden rise in temperature? Unlike in past years, the booth babes of SoCal found themselves out of work. Way to go, E3.

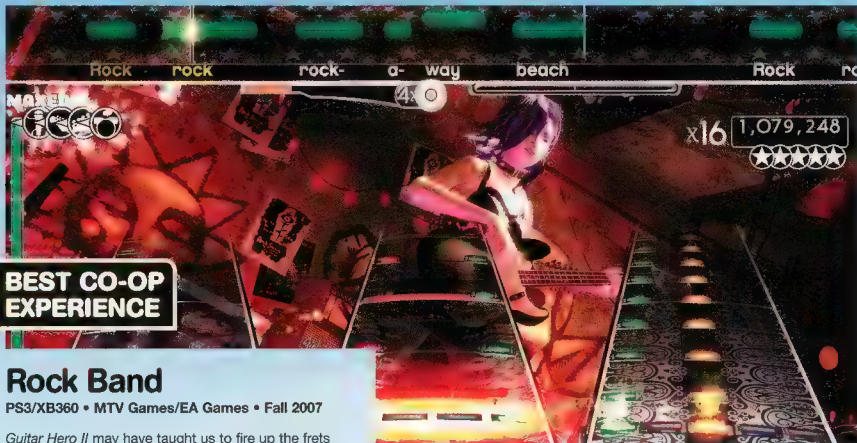
Yet even though the Electronic Entertainment Expo became a more intimate (and less silicone-filled) trade show in 2007, one thing remained the same: a plethora of new games were on display. Throughout this feature, you'll

read about the upcoming software that caught our eyes for all the right reasons, plus all the wrong ones. Oh, and if you're wondering what happened to our ever-controversial annual opinionated guide, don't worry—just turn to pg. 70 to find ratings for more than 70 games.



**EGM Extras:** Point your browser to [E3.1UP.com](http://E3.1UP.com) for in-depth previews and videos of several of the games shown at this year's E3.





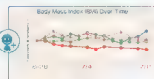
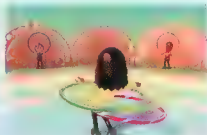
## BEST CO-OP EXPERIENCE

### Rock Band

PS3/XB360 • MTV Games/EA Games • Fall 2007

*Guitar Hero II* may have taught us to fire up the frets with a bassist buddy, but developer Harmonix's new game is going to sharpen our ax-shredding skills in a real band...with, uh, plastic instruments. Yes, every performance in *Rock Band* is a stadium-filler, thanks to the four playable instruments (guitar, bass, drums, and your own windpipes). No more waiting, no more selfish solo acts—the euphoric joy of playing music with others has never been mimicked so perfectly.

**Runner-up:** *LittleBigPlanet* (PS3)



## GAME OF THE SHOW (FOR YOUR MOM)

### Wii Fit

Wii • Nintendo • 2008

Sorry fanboys, but Nintendo once again failed to deliver that long-rumored *Kid Icarus* sequel that you so desire. Instead, the publisher set its sights on bringing even more nontraditional gamers into the Wii fold with this collection of 40-plus exercise-based minigames. But wait, it gets even weirder—you work out using the included Wii Balance Board, a big plastic slab that you stand on like a scale. Moms will likely dig it, but so far, we're a bit torn: Shifting your weight to bop soccer balls and perform ski jumps felt fun, but less game-like activities (like yoga and push-ups) just seem like a chore.

**Runner-up:** *My Life Coach* (DS)



## GAME WE'RE MOST WORRIED ABOUT

### Assassin's Creed

PS3/XB360 • Ubisoft • November 2007

*Assassin's Creed's* stealthy warrior has all the right moves: blending in with crowds, scaling the sides of buildings with the grace of a parkour master, taking 50-foot plunges into haystacks.... But the game's combat is looking a bit simplistic and the controls seem needlessly complicated—when we played, we looked more like a bumbling Beverly Hills Ninja than a smooth-moves Prince of Persia. We're also very curious as to what the story is behind the high-tech trappings in this (supposedly) 12th century setting. Is it all a *Matrix*-like simulation? That *could* be cool.

**Runner-up:** *NIGHTS: Journey of Dreams* (Wii)



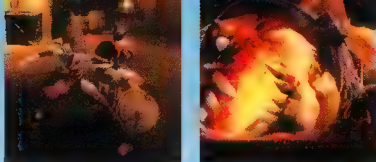
**MOST CREATIVE**

## LittleBigPlanet

PS3 • Sony Computer Entertainment America • Summer 2008

Unlike tacked-on, simplistic level editors or strict PC design programs, *LittleBigPlanet* has forged a beautiful middle ground where creating colorful side-scrolling levels with friends is the game. It's cognitively and creatively rewarding while still being riotously fun, and truly offers a new way for players to enjoy and interact with a videogame. And for those who become overwhelmed or confused without a gun, car, or football in sight: You can create them in the game if you so desire.

**Runner-up:** Looney Tunes: Duck Amuck (DS)



**THE "JUST AS GOOD AS BIG BROTHER" AWARD**

## God of War: Chains of Olympus

PSP • Sony Computer Entertainment America • Spring 2008

Even though the pasty Spartan's story is taking a step back here (*Chains of Olympus* will act as a prequel), Kratos' skills haven't diminished whatsoever with this move to the portable battlefield. From the superb graphics to stringing together combos and evading attacks with the greatest of ease, *God of War's* key facets remain wonderfully intact. To all other developers: *This* how you make the PS2-to-PSP transition.

**Runner-up:** *The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass* (DS)



**BEST FORM OF PWNAGE**

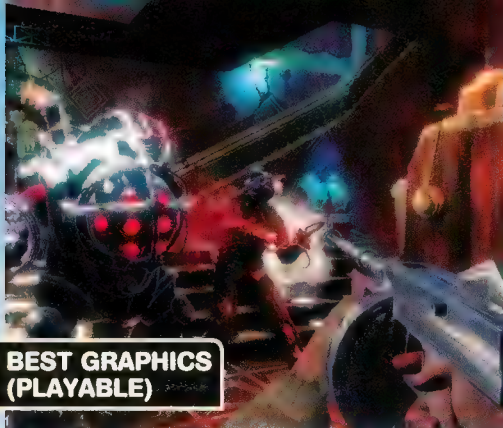
## Burnout Paradise

PS3/XB360 • EA Games • Spring 2008

In this open-city, open-format update to the crashtastic racing series, when you turn an opponent's ride into a twisted metal mess, his PlayStation Eye or Xbox Live Vision Camera will take a snapshot a second later and send the Kodak moment to your screen, giving your victim a chance to pose for an appropriate (or more likely, inappropriate) response. Having met the online-gaming community, we're guessing we'll see plenty of middle fingers and burning crosses in this *Paradise*.

**Runner-up:** *Halo 3's* saved films (XB360)





## BEST GRAPHICS (PLAYABLE)

### BioShock

XB360 • 2K Games • August 2007

Booth babes be gone—this year the hot bods were all on high-def screens. The bevy of visually impressive games had graphics whores in a tizzy, but with good looks and a killer personality, first-person adventure *BioShock* is our beauty queen. Immersing yourself in Rapture, the game's underwater art-deco world in decline, you can almost smell the midwest decay; its imagery will haunt you long after you blast your last Big Daddy. Head to pg. 96 for the full review.

Runners-up: *Mass Effect* (XB360), *Unreal Tournament 3* (PS3/XB360)



## THE "SUDDENLY SHRINKING SPOTLIGHT" AWARD

### Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock

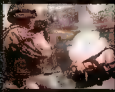
Wii/PS3/XB360/PS2 • Activision • October 2007

Developer Neversoft (*Tony Hawk*) inherited this ax-slinging franchise after original codeveloper Harmonix moved on to assemble *Rock Band*, which is wooing groupies with its multi-instrument format and entire-album downloads. That's not to say Neversoft isn't trying new things: *Hero*'s boss fights and online battle modes add a gamey feel to the old lick-the-licks formula. But after rocking the mic and the drums in *Rock Band*, we can't help wondering if we really need another *Hero* that sticks solely to the string family.

Runner-up: *Project Gotham Racing 4* (XB360)

## LIL' AWARDS

### MOST INTENSE WAR ZONE



#### Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare (PS3/XB360)

Deafening explosions surround you, thundering tanks pass you by, and laser-sight beams fill the night sky—it's like COD2...on crack.

### BEST UPGRADE



#### Virtua Fighter 5 (XB360)

Online play—they said it couldn't be done. Apparently, VF5's dev team was only referring to the already-released PS3 version, as the 360 edition (due out this fall) will include Internet-based bouts. Hallelujah!

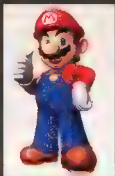
### WORST GAMER



#### Peter Moore

Microsoft's former bigwig is skilled at many things, but when it comes to the school of rock, Moore falls miserably. His *Rock Band* performance at E3 had the ladies screaming...for all the wrong reasons.

### COCKIEST COMPANY



#### Nintendo

The Wii's such a success that Nintendo felt compelled at its E3 media briefing to remind us over and over again with video montages of their press clippings. Guess being humble ain't Nintendo's thing.

### LICENSED GAME ACTUALLY WORTH PLAYING



#### The Simpsons Game (Wii/PS3/XB360/PS2/D8)

Videogame parodies abound in this game, which is shaping up to be just as clever as *The Simpsons* flick.

### "YOU'RE A YEAR TOO LATE" AWARD



#### The Bourne Conspiracy (PS3/XB360)

Bourne's amnesia strikes again! And this time he forgot to launch his game with his latest movie. See you in '08, Jason! (I've even forgotten...)

## LIL' AWARDS


**MOST DISAPPOINTING  
E3 NO-SHOW**
**Final Fantasy XIII (PS3)**

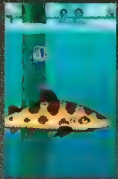
We know it'll be a while till this hotly anticipated role-playing game hits our shores, but it's just plain mean to show a new *XIII* trailer at a press event in Tokyo mere days after E3.


**LEAST DISAPPOINTING  
E3 NO-SHOW**
**Too Human (XB360)**

This action-RPG played terribly at last year's show. Developer Silicon Knights kept the game outta E3 '07, opting instead to release an online trailer. We're still not impressed.


**BEST DOWNLOADABLE  
GAME**
**Gran Turismo 5: Prologue (PS3)**

While Sony preps a full-fledged GT sequel, later this year it'll offer this beautiful tease that includes 12-player races across the Internet.


**WORST DOWNLOADABLE  
GAME**
**Feeding Frenzy 2 (XB360)**

The first *Frenzy* was severely mediocre even when there weren't more fish in the Xbox Live Arcade sea. A more-of-the-same sequel deserves to be swallowed up.


**SMARTEST A.I.**
**Halo 3 (XB360)**

The smart get smarter: *Halo 3*'s Brute Chieftains throw down bubble shields while Grunts and Jackals find cover, flush you out, or just run away when the tough (that's you) gets going.


**DUMBEST A.I.**
**Killzone 2 (PS3)**

The game's bigger, badder, and looking so, so good...but why are the enemies jumping over cover to stand on the wrong side? They must want to say hello to your not-so-little friend.


**THE "ON THE COMEBACK  
TRAIL" AWARD**
**Turok**

PS3/XB360 • Touchstone • February 2008

Over the past 10 years, *Turok* has gone from technological marvel to industry joke to...actually being kinda cool again. It's got all the modern first-person-shooter trademarks (online co-op included), but it's the stellar A.I. that's most exciting. Dinosaurs intermingling with your enemies, and you can mess with them as you choose: Sneak past them, attack head-on, or, for some real fun, pick a fight and hide, leaving the pissed-off dinos to trample the bystandant bad guys.

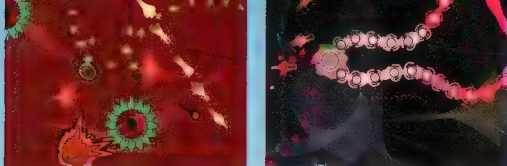
Runner-up: *Contra 4* (DS)


**THE "MAYBE IT'S TIME  
TO RETIRE" AWARD**
**Katamari series**

It's hard to believe *Katamari*'s ball-rolling action once bowled us over with innovation. From its cool dual-analog control scheme to its gameplay that had us addicted to picking up trash, this franchise was a hit with both hardcore gamers and their girlfriends. But as the fourth entry, *Beautiful Katamari*, hits the 360 this fall, the rehashes—with their dull graphics and recycled environments—are getting old. Series creator Keita Takahashi has even jumped off this ball of confusion (his next project: *Nobi Nobi Boy* for the PS3); we wanna go with him.

Runner-up: *Crash Bandicoot* series





## SLEEPER HIT

### Everyday Shooter

PS3 • Sony Computer Entertainment America • Fall 2007

If we told you *Everyday Shooter's* development team consisted of one person, you'd probably think it's total crap. If we told you that this one person, Jonathan Mak, got the game up and running on the "complex" PS3 in only three days, you'd probably think there wasn't much to the game. And you'd be wrong on both counts. This downloadable gem features *Geometry Wars*-like shooting (yet requires a bit more strategy when stringing together combos) with techno tunes that give us *Rez* (PS2) flashbacks.

Runner-up: *De Blob* (Wii)

## THE "ENOUGH ALREADY" AWARD



### Extra peripherals

This E3 seemed like everyone was shovin' some kind of new add-on down our throat. And frankly, gaming is an expensive enough hobby without having to dish out extra cash for a light-gun casing (Wii Zapper) and other odd peripherals (like *Wii Fit's* balance board). Also, as awesome as *Rock Band* is, having an empty wallet and a closet full of fake instruments just to experience the full game makes it more of a headache than it should be.

Runners-up: *God of War* rip-offs (*Conan*, *Darksiders*, *Hellboy*, and so on)

## LIL' AWARDS

### BEST GAME PLAYED WITH ONE BUTTON



#### Table 2 (XB360)

Using only a single button for combat may sound mindless, but in this action-role-playing game, the results are dramatic, fluid, and more satisfying than you'd think.

### MOST DRAMATIC DEVELOPER 180



#### Infamous (PS3)

*Sly Cooper 4* this is not. With its first game on the PS3, developer Sucker Punch goes from friendly raccoon stealth to dark, open-world, super-powered actiongasm.

### THE "ENVY" AWARD



#### Crisis (PC)

This first-person shooter's graphics have us crying for a console port (no word yet on that front). But it's also much more than a pretty face—the hero's interchangeable powers are quite the showstoppers.

### THE "WE CALL BULL\*\*\*\*" AWARD



#### Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games (Wii/DS)

In what virtual world could a blubber-butt like Mario ever outrun the speed-demon Sonic? None...and that's why this game is total BS.

### BEST MAKEOVER



#### Super Mario Galaxy's bee suit (Wii)

Yes, the plumber looks cute as hell buzzin' around. But it's too bad that new outfit offers nothing beyond a weak light power, maybe the announced Boo Suit will fare better.

### WORST MAKEOVER



#### Uncharted: Drake's Fortune's female lead (PS3)

It's a suit. Uncharted's heroine resembled an 11-year-old action boy. The new blonde locks and goopy hair help, but not that much.

E3 AWARDS


**BEST "DO IT YOURSELF" FEATURE**

## LittleBigPlanet's level creator

Cutesy characters dropped into adorable DIY situations may not seem like something that'll bring about the YouTubeing of gaming—thousands of gamers creating and rating each other's content—but *LittleBigPlanet* is more compelling than it seems. Its puppetry avatars, ready to animate with analog-stick twirls and Sixaxis waggles, will charm casual players, while the cinch-to-use level-tweaking interface is deep enough for hardcore types. Add in all the tools you need to craft crazy vehicles and Rube Goldberg-style puzzles and you have the new addiction for the creatively obsessive.

**Runners-up:** Video editors in both *Halo 3* (XB360) and *Tony Hawk's Proving Ground* (PS3 and Xbox 360 versions only)

## Microsoft's big-button controller

During its E3 media briefing, Microsoft seemed so proud to reveal its new TV remote-looking joypad for the Xbox 360 (which will be bundled with the *Scene It?* trivia game). While the U.S. press simply raised an eyebrow at the announcement, Europeans were gagging with disgust. These controllers are almost identical to those that came with their popular (not to mention almost 2-year-old) PS2 trivia game, *Buzz!*—right down to the big red button (inset).

**Runner-up:** PSP redesign

**THE "NEW BUT NOT REALLY" AWARD**


## THE OPINIONATED GUIDE

You've seen the award winners, but now it's time for even more impressions. Like in previous years, please keep a few things in mind when reading our opinionated guide to the games you'll be playing next. We're only rating software that was shown at E3 in playable form. Also, remember that these are unfinished products—when it's finally time for you to try 'em out, some games may end up being better...or worse.

**AWESOME**

**Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare** (PS3/XB360)

**God of War: Chains of Olympus** (PSP)

**Halo 3** (XB360)

**LittleBigPlanet** (PS3)

**Mass Effect** (XB360)

**Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction** (PS3)

**Rock Band** (PS3/XB360)

**Super Mario Galaxy** (Wii)

**Virtua Fighter 5** (XB360)

**GOOD**

**Ace Combat 6: Fires of Liberation** (XB360)

**Army of Two** (PS3/XB360)

**Burnout Paradise** (PS3/XB360)

**Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles** (PSP)

**Contra: 4** (DS)

**De Blob** (Wii)

**Fable 2** (XB360)

**Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings** (DS)

**Final Fantasy Tactics: The War of the Lions** (PSP)

**Folklore** (PS3)

**Frontlines: Fuel of War** (PS3/XB360)

**Enemy Territory: Quake Wars** (PS3/XB360)

**Everyday Shooter** (PS3)

**Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock** (Wii/PS3/XB360/PS2)

**Half-Life 2: Orange Box** (PS3/XB360)

**Haze** (PS3)

**John Woo Presents Stranglehold** (PS3/XB360)

**Killzone 2** (PS3)

**The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass** (DS)

**Legendary: The Box** (PS3/XB360)

**Looney Tunes: Duck Amuck** (DS)

**Metroid Prime 3: Corruption** (Wii)

**Naruto: Rise of a Ninja** (XB360)

**Need for Speed: ProStreet** (Wii/PS3/XB360/PS2)

**Project Gotham Racing 4** (XB360)

**Silent Hill: Origins** (PSP)

**The Simpsons Game** (Wii/PS3/XB360/PS2/DS)

**Tony Hawk's Proving Ground** (PS3/XB360)

**Turok** (PS3/XB360)

**Uncharted: Drake's Fortune** (PS3)

**Unreal Tournament 3** (PS3/XB360)

**Wii Fit** (Wii)

**WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw 2008** (Wii/PS3/XB360)

**Darkside's Wrath of War** (PS3/XB360)

**Destroy All Humans!: Path of the Furon** (PS3/XB360)

**EA Playground** (Wii)

**The Eye of Judgment** (PS3)

**Fracture** (PS3/XB360)

**Geometry Wars: Galaxies** (Wii/DS)

**Halo Wars** (XB360)

**Hellboy: The Science of Evil** (PS3/XB360/PSP)

**Lost Odyssey** (XB360)

**Mercenaries 2: World in Flames** (PS3/XB360/PS2)

**NIGHTS: Journey of Dreams** (Wii)

**Rayman: Raving Rabbids 2** (Wii)

**Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles** (Wii)

**Rise of the Argonauts** (PS3/XB360)

**Skate** (PS3/XB360)

**Soulcalibur: Legends** (Wii)

**TimeShift** (PS3/XB360)

**Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros Treasures** (Wii)

**SO-SO**

**Assassin's Creed** (PS3/XB360)

**BlackSite: Area 51** (PS3/XB360)

**The Club** (PS3/XB360)

**Conan** (PS3/XB360)

**Condemned 2: Bloodshot** (PS3/XB360)

**Dark Sector** (PS3/XB360)

**TERRIBLE**

**Beautiful Katamari** (XB360)

**Dragon Blade: Wrath of Fire** (Wii)

**Jenga** (Wii)

**Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games** (Wii/DS)

**Pain** (PS3)

**Spider-Man: Friend or Foe** (Wii/XB360/PS2)



**IF THE GOVERNMENT HAS ITS WAY, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO PLAY HALF THE GAMES IN THIS MAGAZINE.**

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# AMERICAN GOTHIC

The fog finally lifts on **Silent Hill V** By Shane Bettenhausen

**MOONLIGHTING IN SILENT HILL** doesn't seem fun—between the fog-soaked streets, twitching, faceless nurses, and the notoriously picky series fans, it's not a terribly inviting place for visitors. But the fearless folks at The Collective (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Marc Ecko's Getting Up*) willingly spent several sleepless nights slaving away on a playable demo showcasing their vision for *Silent Hill V*, the first next-gen installment in Konami's nearly decade-old survival-horror franchise. All that caffeine paid off: Several other well-known development houses were in the running for the project, but none were dedicated (crazy?) enough to craft a prototype, so The Collective landed the sought-after gig.

"I'm obviously very passionate about this," says *SH5* Lead Artist Brian Horton, himself a longtime fan of *Silent Hill*. "We're dealing with a franchise that a lot of people have very strong feelings about." That's putting it mildly. *Silent Hill* fans don't scare easily, but when news broke at the recent E3 Media & Business Summit that Konami was handing the previously Tokyo-bred series over to a U.S. team, many followers got plenty spooked. ("Those gun-crazy American swine have no possible chance of doing anything but \*\*\*\*ing this game up," read one typical forum response.) Perhaps their skepticism wasn't entirely unwarranted; the upcoming Western-made PSP prequel, *Silent Hill: Origins*, has endured a rocky development (turn to pg. 77 for an update on the game's progress). Also, considering the relatively weak PlayStation 3/Xbox 360 lineup Konami has fielded

to date (most notably *Rumble Roses XX* and...uh, *Bombberman Act: Zero*), should the company really gamble with a popular established franchise?

But our fears abated after seeing *SH5* in action; it appears to be in capable hands. The involvement of longtime *SH* Composer Akira Yamaoka should further assuage fans' trepidation. He's writing a new soundtrack for the game, as well as acting as a consultant for its overall look and feel. Yamaoka actually finds irony in the series' Stateside move: "It's funny, because the original *Silent Hill* was our attempt at making classic American horror through a Japanese filter," he says, "and now with *SH5*, it's an American take on a Japanese-filtered American horror."

## A Soldier's Tale

*Silent Hill V* probably won't hit PS3 and Xbox 360 until fall 2008, leaving a four-year gap between this and the previous title, *Silent Hill 4: The Room*. That's a long time, considering that the first four games all shipped within a five-year period, and the 2006 big-screen *Silent Hill* film adaptation undoubtedly broadened the series' appeal. So rather than forging a storyline that closely ties to the previous games, The Collective instead chose to create a stand-alone plot with all-new characters to help reboot the previously dense narrative. But don't

expect to see completely unrecognizable characters, settings, and situations. "It's important that the characters fit into the overall *Silent Hill* style," says Horton. "There's a certain stylized-yet-realistic believability—almost a heightened reality—that's expected for the canon, and our hero, Alex Shepherd, has that familiar *Silent Hill* angst behind him.... You can see it in his eyes."

Although he may look like past *SH* protagonists, Alex is a different kind of hero altogether—he's a 22-year-old veteran who's recuperating from a war wound in a military hospital when he has a premonition that his little brother, Joshua, is in trouble. He returns to his New England hometown of Shepherd's Glen to find his mother nearly catatonic, his brother and father missing, and a creepy pea-soup fog blanketing everything. Alex's background as a soldier influences both *SH5*'s gameplay and its narrative, yet the developers aren't trying to make an overt political statement. "There's relevance without being political," says Horton. "We're not making any comment on any one specific war or branch of the military." For a young guy, Alex has seen a lot...and that world-weary mentality gives his character the appropriate amount of gravitas. "Alex will be confronted with horrors that reflect his psychological state,

➤ **Now with *Silent Hill V*, it's an American take on a Japanese-filtered American horror.**

—*Silent Hill V* Composer Akira Yamaoka

and these manifestations come from within," explains Lead Designer Jason Allen. "All the trauma that he's been through, whether it's the war or his troubles at home, makes for some visceral, scary encounters."

Along the way, a spunky female friend named Elle will aid Alex on his quest. It's not clear whether she's a playable character or simply an A.I.-controlled ally, but she seems to combine the streetwise sexiness of *SH2*'s Maria with the relatable girl-next-door cuteness of *SH3* heroine Heather. Plus, she and Alex have a long history, so there's potential for a messy love reconnection in the midst of all this turmoil. "She definitely has a heart, and she's trying to warm him up to the town's plight," says Horton. "She's definitely an instrumental character in the overall scope of the

game." The Collective has no qualms admitting their desire to recapture the emotional impact that fans felt with *Silent Hill 2*'s troubled cast. "We want to keep our characters from being too one-dimensional," Allen says. "We want real depth and gray areas to make the characters relatable, as we all have flaws."

While *SH5* seems to play it safe with a simple "lost child" story line, the developers hint that a deeper narrative lurks beneath the surface. "Along the way, Alex learns the truth about his hometown, and what's been going on while he's been away," says Horton. "He also learns the true influence of Silent Hill, and it's much darker and more pervasive than you'd expect." Speaking of Silent Hill, we wanted to confirm that Alex physically travels there (in *SH4*, you only commuted to the accursed burg via a magic tunnel). "Yes, you will transition into Silent Hill at some point," says Allen. "The game isn't called *Shepherd's Glen*, after all."

#### A disgusting feast for the eyes and ears

Despite the fresh cast and new locale, the series' basic tenets remain fully intact. We witnessed the game's nightmarish opening scene—a waking dream that has Alex exploring a desolate hospital before warping through a mirror into the grimy, rust-covered "Otherworld" populated

with death-dealing nurses. It's classic *Silent Hill* aesthetic canon, from the tense ride on a creaky, blood-stained gurney to the trail of crayon drawings left behind by Joshua as he wanders deeper into the abyss.

The classic *SH* presentation hasn't changed much—a more user-friendly camera angle (controlled with the right analog stick) gives a clearer view of the horrors, but the basic look and feel of *Silent Hill V* stays true to the series' roots, albeit galvanized with HD-era detail and clarity. As in the previous games, the world you inhabit exists in two separate states: First, you explore dilapidated real-world locales cloaked in heavy shadows and billowing fog. As creepy and unsettling as these bits may be, they seem downright inviting compared to the "Otherworld" versions of the same maps. For the uninitiated, expect an *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* only Satan could love: Unspeakably grotesque creatures roam industrial structures decorated with bloody walls, rusty chains, and doors made of pulsating flesh. The transition between these two physical states shows off some impressive new tech inspired by Christophe Gans' *Silent Hill* flick—the floors and walls dramatically melt away, revealing the twisted, damaged world beneath. It all happens in real time around Alex as you play, and it's definitely an unsettling effect.

The series is renowned for its

➤ **We want real depth and gray areas to make the characters relatable, as we all have flaws.**

—*Silent Hill V* Lead Designer Jason Allen

## AS WEIRD AS IT GETS

Dare to track down the seven freakiest *Silent Hill* cut-scenes ever



This refreshingly jokey secret ending finds hero Harry Mason abducted by ill'gray aliens in retro flying saucers. Cliffhanger!



Those pesky aliens (with Harry in tow) return to snatch up *SH2* hero James...but only in the *Restless Dreams* version of *SH2* (XB/PS2).



*Restless Dreams* offers this even zanier finale, which reveals that a cuddly Shiba Inu dog is the evil mastermind behind James' plight.





■ In *SH3*'s combat, expect real-time wounds to appear on Alex and his foes.



## SH3'S UFO ENDING



*SH3* heroine Heather finds Harry and James having teatime with an alien. Karate, an insane sing-along, and the town's destruction follow.

## KI-NO-KO



This artsy promo music video for *SH2* features tons of disturbing imagery, most notably a patch of twitching phallic mushrooms. Yikes.

## FUKURO



This *SH2* promo invokes Nine Inch Nails' 'Closer' video, but with Pyramid Head sexing up a gang of ghastly nurses. Pure nightmare fuel.

## USAGI



While this *SH3* promo clip featuring myriad Robbie the Rabbit dolls looks kind of cute, it's pretty damned unsettling in motion.

effective use of light and shadow, and *SH5* takes those graphical touches to a new plateau. "My philosophy for horror is: The less you see, the scarier it is," says Horton. "So we create situations that really show off the mystery: Dramatically cast shadows and lighting tricks really make it tough to discern exactly what you're looking at.... As soon as you can identify something, it ceases to be as scary." Expect plenty of dramatic silhouettes, subtle freak-outs, and cheap scares...even though some will be purely accidental. The addition of a realistic physics system (utilizing the popular Havok middleware kit that powers games like *Saints Row* and *Halo 3*) means that every character and object interacts realistically with the environment. So now, when you accidentally bump into a chair, it might collide with a table, noisily knocking junk onto the floor...which may alert nearby enemies to your presence.

Although it's not apparent in these screenshots, the series' trademark grain filter—a veil of noise that overlays the action—will indeed return for *SH5*. "We're not just sticking with one filter; we're actually experimenting with different ones, with hairline scratches and bits of debris," says Horton. "We can change the look of the grain dynamically as you play, which gives us the power to handcraft the mood and atmosphere of each area." The

gameplay demo we witnessed featured three distinct grain filters, with various amounts of grit, flicker, and jitter, lending the action a uniquely terrifying vibe. "It's something we've fought about internally, as everyone expects HD gaming to be so clean and precise," admits Horton. "And really, in this gaming landscape—where everything is starting to look the same—these filters give *SH5* the opportunity to stand out."

*Silent Hill* fans also expect to see some truly impressive fog in this next-gen outing, but the creeping mist isn't quite ready for prime time. "We spied an early stab at the effect, and while the addition of chunks of ash that flutter by (a nod to both the first *Silent Hill* game and the recent film) is a nice touch, the overall fog effect isn't all that convincing yet. "The goal of the fog is to make it absolutely immersive, as if you're really walking through it," says Horton. "We want it to feel physical and alive, like you're carving the fog with the beam of your flashlight."

#### Tweaking the gameplay

So, *Silent Hill V* looks and sounds like the real deal, but does it play like the old games? Yes...and no. Sure, Alex is still clobbering monstrosities with a lead pipe in classic *SH* fashion, but The Collective wants those fights to be more challenging and engaging than in previous titles. "While in the past, the hero was an everyman, we're taking the action further this time," says Allen.

"Alex does have military training, and he's coming into the situation more equipped than previous heroes." To be honest, combat was never really the series' strong suit: despite minor tweaks to the battle systems in *SH3* and *SH4*, enemy encounters often degenerated into clumsy mashfests.

"Alex's maneuverability in combat will make him feel very different from previous *SH* heroes," explains Lead Scripter David Verfaillie. "The sheer variety of moves at his disposal goes far beyond previous titles: You can unleash a flurry of light attacks, charge up for a heavy attack, and even hit foes with a specific trajectory, knocking them into walls and objects." The two melee weapons we saw, a knife and a lead pipe, each offered unique combos and strategic uses depending on the type of foe Alex was facing. Other new twists on the combat formula include grapples that require button mashing (or possibly Sixaxis shaking shenanigans) to avoid a grisly fate (one failed struggle we witnessed ended with Alex lying on the floor in two bloody pieces), counter moves, and a much-needed evasive-roll maneuver.

Given Alex's military past, we have to wonder what changes are in-store for *SH5*'s gunplay. Previous *SH* titles offered projectile weapons, but the aiming mechanics felt haphazard. Unfortunately, the developers aren't ready to debut the new shooting mechanics. "Don't worry, though—we're not trying to make *SH5* into a shooter," says Verfaillie. "We will

My philosophy for horror is: The less you see, the scarier it is.

—*Silent Hill V* Lead Artist Brian Horton





# SILENT HILL ORIGINS

Konami's troubled PSP prequel back on track

*Silent Hill V* isn't the first installment to get outsourced to the U.S.: Konami's upcoming *Silent Hill: Origins* prequel for PSP (due in November) had its messy birth at the now-defunct Los Angeles office of U.K.-based developer Climax (*Sudeki*, *ATV Offroad Fury 3*). The original concept bore little resemblance to *Silent Hill's* of yore, instead adopting a *Resident Evil 4*-inspired look and feel. We got some hands-on time with that version last spring...and it was a total bloodbath (and not in a good way). Amazingly, Konami listened to all the negative feedback and rebooted the project by handing it over to one of Climax's England-based teams.

The newly revamped *SHO* wisely plays it safe, closely mimicking the presentation and gameplay styles of fan favorite *Silent Hill 2* while fleshing out the backstory of *SH1*. Our hands-on time revealed a game that looks, sounds, and plays almost identically to the older games. A few new touches, such as breakable weapons and interactive grapple minigames, appear to add a little depth to the classic combat system. We're still a bit worried about the game's reportedly short length (and its lack of selectable difficulty levels), but it's definitely headed in a better direction than it was a year back.



■ After playing the original version of *Silent Hill Origins* (left), we fully support Konami's decision to start fresh with a more traditional game by a different team.



■ What deep-seated fear does this foe symbolize? Hammerhead shark phobia?

take the control scheme to the next level with the ranged weapons, but you will feel very much in control."

To put it simply, the combat in *SH5* looks considerably deeper and more responsive to what fans know from the previous games. "The combat is evolving—and people are always concerned that we've made it more physical—but at the end of the day, it still feels like *Silent Hill*," says Oertel. "It's nothing for fans to get worried about—we want to make it scarier, but not because you can't see or can't control your character."

Giving players a more effective fighter constitutes only half of the equation, though. The enemies in *SH5* have received a serious A.I. upgrade. "Now, you can't just run past the monsters as you might have done in past *SH* games," says Allen. "Because Alex is more equipped, our enemies must be more difficult, too." Foes will now kick open doors to reach you, and they'll react realistically to both sound and visual cues. Monsters also have specific A.I. proclivities that you can exploit. We saw one concrete example in action: The diabolical nurses flock to light sources like moths, so Alex turned on a projector to draw their attention so he could slip by unnoticed.

In terms of creature design, *SH5* marries returning favorites like the nurses with a host of original abominations. Glimpses of Schism, a hideous humanoid with a massive, blade-shaped head spill by a zipper, and Smog, an emaciated, gas-

spewing corpse covered in pulsating boils, showed definite potential for emotional scarring. Another new creature, Siam (pictured on page 72), fuses a male and female body together into a ghastly morass of psychosexual depravity.

Expect all of these monsters to move with animations that blend the series' traditional *Jacob's Ladder*-inspired twitchfest with fully motion-captured performances by human actors (a series first). And although they won't discuss any specifics, The Collective promises that *SH5*'s boss encounters will handily outclass those in past installments, with a focus on delivering climactic, *Zelda*-style duels against massive foes.

Despite all the changes made to *SH5*'s combat engine, other aspects of the game design appear to stay fairly true to the series' established norms. The lone puzzle we spied—where Alex must track down various X-ray plates to piece together a numeric password—could have easily been in any previous *SH* title. The Collective hopes to make the puzzles a bit more cohesive and location-based, but it's familiar fare to series vets. Likewise, the game's overall flow mimics that of its predecessors, blending a directed, linear quest with a somewhat open-ended, free-to-explore world. "We're not going to hold the player's hand at this, but it's going to be sophisticated and creative," says Oertel. "You're going to go in and you're going to wander, explore, and you'll have to think about what to

do next—this is a thinking man's and woman's game."

The Collective also hints at one intriguing new gameplay factor that should tie nicely into the series' history of offering multiple endings—moral decisions that influence the narrative. "Every decision has consequences, and they will have cumulative effects on the overall outcome of the game," says Allen. "There is an interface for these decisions—some physical, others verbal—that will directly affect the game's progression." Hmm, hopefully some of these tough choices will lead to a return of the fan-favorite UFO-finale tradition.

## A dark future awaits

We got the feeling that the initially negative fan reaction to *SH5*'s announcement had the developers a little spooked when we met with them, but that skepticism should propel them to ace the project that they fought so hard to land. Even at this early point in development, the title appears poised to deliver on the promise of a next-gen *Silent Hill* that stays true to its roots while (finally) evolving the series' stagnant gameplay. Producer Oertel sums up the team's aim nicely: "We really wanted to take the player down into the deepest part of the rabbit hole, and to feel the insanity of what it's like to be in *Silent Hill*." ☞

**EGM Extras:** For a closer look at *SH5*, head over to [EGM.MP.COM](http://EGM.MP.COM) for an exclusive trailer, interviews with key *SH5* developers, and a special retrospective on the series with Composer Akira Yamagata.



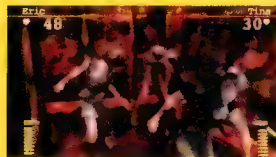


■ Bright lights and loud sounds attract *SH2*'s nurses, so avoidance isn't easy.



## THE FUTURE OF SILENT HILL

Will these upcoming spin-offs soil the series' good name?



### Silent Hill: The Arcade

**The Good News:** This fall, Japanese gamers can blast through a *Silent Hill*-themed *House of the Dead* rip-off. How can you say no to a two-player Pyramid Head boss fight?

**The Bad News:** Unfortunately, the lackluster visuals and corny scripting don't appear to do the series justice. Plus, they wasted the cool *Little Baroness* plot mentioned in *SH2* on this?



### Silent Hill interactive manga

**The Good News:** The head writer and designer from *SH2/SH3* have reunited for two Japan-only interactive cell-phone manga series (*Cage of Cradle* and *Double Under DusK*) featuring a mix of new and returning characters.

**The Bad News:** Unfortunately, importing the not-so-interactive book version of *Cradle* when it hits this fall is the closest U.S. fans will get....



### Silent Hill 2

**The Good News:** The first one was a hit, so TriStar's eager to get a sequel into production.

**The Bad News:** Unfortunately, the core creative team behind the first flick (Director Christophe Gans and Screenwriter Roger Avary, both avid fans of the games) presently have too many other commitments, so the studio is moving forward without them.

# SCARE SUPPLY

The fright nights are far from over



## Resident Evil 5

PS3/XB360 • Capcom • Late 2009/Early 2010

**Major scare tactic: Bloodthirsty tribe.** If you thought Leon Kennedy had it rough with *RE4*'s Spanish-speaking cult, wait till you see what Chris Redfield is up against in No. 5. The former S.T.A.R.S. member returns to the series—and not only is he dealing with the setting's extreme heat (which apparently can make him hallucinate), but also another non-zombie group (best bet: They're African) that looks more aggressive than *RE4*'s Los Ganados. The gameplay pretty much mimics *RE4*'s, but with more hand-to-hand combat from our main man. And you know that blonde-haired girl who appears at the end of the most recent trailer? Word around town is it's Sherry Birkin—fans will remember her as the little girl from *RE2* whose pops injected her with the G-Virus (we hear she's playable, too).



## Alan Wake

XB360 • Microsoft Game Studios • Fall 2009

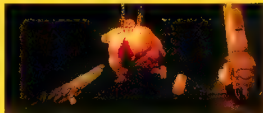
**Major scare tactic: Insomnia.** Finding that your journal is suddenly full of crazy talk, catching glimpses of your missing fiancée, hearing someone in the shadows screaming your name—the lack of shut-eye is getting to Alan Wake. Or is it? Discovering whether these events are real or the aftereffects of insomnia drive this psychological thriller.



## Alone in the Dark

PS3/XB360 • Atari • Winter 2007

**Major scare tactic: Central Park.** Tourist attraction by day, total freakfest by night—NYC's Central Park is quite the novel backdrop for such a cliché-ridden genre. And investigator Edward Camby has never faced supernatural beings like those that lie within its 843 acres; these ugly SOBs will hunt him down using their sense of smell.



## Clive Barker's Jericho

PS3/XB360 • Codemasters • Oct. 2007

**Major scare tactic: Clive Barker.** One look at *Jericho*'s hellish monsters and you know the Hollywood director (*Hellraiser*) was heavily involved in this squad-based shooter's development. This game also offers surprises within the good-guy ranks. Seriously, where else can you control a man of the cloth who specializes in both firearms and exorcisms?



## Condemned 2: Bloodshot

PS3/XB360 • Sega • Spring 2008

**Major scare tactic: Serial killers.** Shoving an enemy's head through a television set and stomping on their neck (think along the lines of *Gears of War*) are just a few of the new brutal moves you'll use while tracking down *Bloodshot*'s sickos.



## Resident Evil: Umbrella Chronicles

Wii • Capcom • Fall 2007

**Major scare tactic: Zombies (duh).** Blasting away at this game's endless supply of zombies just got better: Nintendo's new Wii Zapper peripheral (which acts as a docking bay for the Wii-mote and Nunchuk) helps give it that "hey, I'm back at the arcade" feel.



## Left4Dead

XB360 • EA Games/Valve • Spring 2008

**Major scare tactic: You.** This cooperative first-person shooter not only gives you the opportunity to kill the undead, but it also allows up to four folks to take on the role of *Left4Dead*'s "boss Infected" (the game's elite zombie types).



## Dementium: The Ward

DS • Gamecock • October 2007

**Major scare tactic: A hospital.** This medical facility is the last place you'd go to feel better. But in terms of a portable survival-horror game, we wouldn't mind stopping by, thanks to its impressive 3D visuals and being able to use the stylus to jot down important notes.

## OTHER FREAKY STUFF

EA may be the home of big licenses, but last year the company revealed that it would finally try to scare the pants off us with an original title. Rumor has this project dubbed *Dead Space*, which supposedly hits the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 sometime in 2008. Moving along, it's been six years since Eidos released a *Fear Effect* game—we now hear rumblings that the sexy mercenary Hana and the rest of her crew will soon make a comeback (cross your fingers for another round of risqué print ads). Lastly, newcomer Brash Entertainment, a publisher that specializes in producing movie-based titles, is bringing out a game late next year based on the popular *Saw* flicks. Let's hope it's not torture to play... ☠







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# REVIEWS

> aquatic daddies, nagging caddies, an army of baddies, and a white-hot redhead

86  
BIOSHOCK

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## THIS MONTH IN REVIEWS

# Commotion in the Ocean

Drowning is the least of your worries



EVER SINCE WE LEARNED ABOUT *BIOSHOCK*'S GRAND AMBITIONS, we knew it had potential to make waves. But wow, we're talkin' a Platinum-sized tsunami here (the first since the Wii's *Twilight Princess*). Check out our Game of the Month—and legitimate Game of the Year contender—on pg. 96. For me at least, the surfacing of this atmospheric first-person delight makes the *Grand Theft Auto IV* delay sting a little less.

On a different topic, we've got a review of the Xbox 360 *Madden NFL 08* in the main Reviews section; Wrap-Up tackles the Wii version. And that's the way we'll likely be handling these downports and second-stringers in the future (with a full review on 1UP.com, as always). The big-brother games are where the excitement's at until we're proven otherwise...and we just don't always have the manpower and space to cover them all.

—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.







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Short, but  
oh-so sweet**



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**Warhawk:  
Book a  
cheap flight**



## THIS MONTH'S REVIEW CREW

Now in individually wrapped packs of 10



### Dan "Shoe" Hsu

**Editor-in-Chief**  
College football season is about to start, which means we'll be hearing lots of trash talking between Shoe and Intihar—and lots of Shoe asking why we don't have more NCAA Football screens in the mag featuring his beloved Michigan Wolverines.

**Now Playing:** BioShock  
**Blog:** egmshoe.1UP.com



### Shane Bettenhausen

**Executive Editor**  
Shane salvaged this summer's otherwise disappointing E3 gaming summit with a visit to L.A.'s Kwik-E-Mart for Squishies and seemingly ornamental-use-only taquitos and hot dogs.

**Now Playing:** Heavenly Sword, Virtua Fighter 5 (online), Metroid Prime 3, Everyday Shooter  
**Blog:** egmshane.1UP.com



### Jennifer Tsao

**Managing Editor**  
**Focus Test:** MySims (Wii); **Target Audience:** Babies; **Research Notes:** Subject enjoys bright colors; clearly comprehends dialogue; seems bored by gameplay; finds it a bit "kiddish." (Try marketing to under-6-month crowd?)

**Now Playing:** BioShock  
**Blog:** egmjennifer.1UP.com



### Crispin Boyer

**Senior Editor**  
Cris logged enough flight hours in Warhawk this month to earn a private pilot's license, valid for everything from Ace Combat jets to Lair dragons. It even lets him fly real planes under absolutely no circumstance ever.

**Now Playing:** Warhawk, BioShock, The Darkness  
**Blog:** egmcrispin.1UP.com



### Bryan Intihar

**Previews Editor**  
Bryan and Shoe's Ohio State-Michigan rivalry got pretty heated last year. Just to remind everyone which team came out on top, please look left and enjoy this lovely pic. November 17 can't come soon enough.

**Now Playing:** Madden NFL 08, Everyday Shooter  
**Blog:** egmbryan.1UP.com



### Greg Ford

**Reviews Editor**  
To get properly prepped for Halo 3, Ford planned on playing through Halo and Halo 2. And then Heavenly Sword and BioShock had to hit and ruin his reasonable game-playing schedule. Good-bye, sleep.

**Now Playing:** BioShock, Halo, Halo 2, Heavenly Sword  
**Blog:** egmford.1UP.com



### Michael Donahoe

**News/Features Editor**  
Michael had it easy this month with only one review game. Too bad getting into the wonky Western/sci-fi world of Wild Arms 5 was a lot harder than he thought. But the game did remind Michael of his homes in both Texas and Galaxidus 234.

**Now Playing:** BioShock  
**Blog:** egmhoe.1UP.com



### Andrew Pfister

**Reviews Editor, 1UP.com**  
Andrew is a man with a vision: We can create a world in which all games are designed as exquisitely as BioShock. Join him in his utopian paradise/moon base, and together, we shall make that dream a reality. (Bring credit report. No cats.)

**Now Playing:** BioShock  
**Blog:** andrewpf.1UP.com



### Joe Rybicki

**Staff Reviewer**  
If you were to ask Joe how much time he's spent playing Puzzle Quest, you would probably have to ask again. And then you might have to leave him a message, because he'd be ignoring you in order to play more Puzzle Quest.

**Now Playing:** Puzzle Quest  
**Blog:** opmjoe.1UP.com



### Todd Zuniga

**Staff Reviewer/Sports Guy**  
Do you believe in miracles? Zuniga certainly does after topping Intihar-as-Canada with U.S.A! U.S.A! in NHL 08. It has him fired up for two playoff runs: his Broncos in Madden 08 and the Cubs in real life.

**Now Playing:** NHL 08, Madden NFL 08, The Bigs  
**Blog:** sportsguy.1UP.com

## Also on deck...

**Sam Kennedy**  
Editor-in-Chief  
1UP.com

**James "Milkman" Mielke**  
Executive Editor  
1UP.com

**Garnett Lee**  
Managing Editor  
1UP.com

**Matt Leone**  
Previews Editor  
1UP.com

**Jeremy Parish**  
Features Editor  
1UP.com

**Mark MacDonald**  
Director  
GameVideos.com

**Demian Linn**  
Managing Producer  
GameVideos.com

**Ray Barnholt**  
Staff Reviewer  
MyCheats.com

**Brooks Huber**  
Editorial Intern

**Andrew Fitch**  
Staff Reviewer

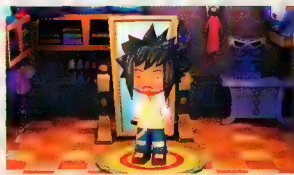
**Greg Sewart**  
Staff Reviewer

**Nick Suttner**  
Staff Reviewer



The Review Crew is the 1UP Network's ensemble cast of writers from all of our publications, both online and in print. We believe that games are more than the sum of their parts, so we tackle them subjectively, as experiences.

Head over to [ReviewCrew.1UP.com](http://ReviewCrew.1UP.com) to meet all of the 1UP Network's expert reviewers. And check out 1UP.com for reviews of games we didn't have enough time or room for.



■ Shortly after the events seen here, the Wii exploded in a fiery blaze of cuteness.



Wii

# MYSIMS

■ Publisher: EA ■ Developer: EA ■ Players: 1 ■ ESRB: Everyone



**The Good:** Charming art, mellow gameplay  
**The Bad:** Annoying construction interface  
**Where in the Hell:** Is the Wi-Fi multiplayer... *Animal Crossing* on DS even had it!

If I had a hammer, I'd build a better game

➔ **JEREMY:** On the surface, *MySims* is a great idea: a *Sims* experience that borrows liberally from *Animal Crossing* to be cuter, simpler, and more fun. And EA got the "cute" part right, but botched the "simple" to the detriment of the "fun." Barely recognizable as a *Sims* game, *MySims* also lacks the compelling variety and randomness of *Crossing*. Customization was supposed to be the big deal here, but somewhere along the way that boiled down to building furniture. Lots of furniture. I've spent so much time as a virtual carpenter that I'm thinking about naming my firstborn "Jesus." Not that I mind a chance to make bizarre and impractical shelving units, but the emphasis on creation would be less painful if the builder interface

weren't so fussy. Unfortunately, it's so streamlined that it's difficult to use with anything resembling precision. *MySims* is fine in small doses, but it's no threat to Tom Nook's forest empire.

➔ **JENNIFER:** I agree with Jeremy, but I have a few complaints to add. With baffling slowdown and frustrating load times, *MySims* actually scares me for the future of Wii. How can a game with no action and last-gen graphics tax the system so heavily? Was it programmed by babies? Because it's certainly designed for them. I'm all for cuteness and nontraditional, but it's frustrating that the usually brilliant *Sims* team couldn't come up with tighter gameplay. They've killed one of *The Sims*' best aspects—your *Sims*' free

will—and replaced it with pure digital dollhousing. If you like that sorta thing, it's a pleasant diversion. But the game part's not all there.

➔ **NICK:** So it's not as charming or casually engaging as *Animal Crossing*, and sloppy Wii controls spoil an otherwise relaxing experience. What's the point again? Unlike traditional *Sims* games, the focus here is on building objects and relationships based on "essences" that you find scattered around town. It's bizarrely addictive to build countertops imbued with essence of eyeball (that you find on a tree) and bacon (that you dig up from the ground), but the game fizzles pretty quickly since it doesn't have much more past that. ❄️



# DON'T JUST RIP UP THE TRACK. TEAR IT A NEW ONE.

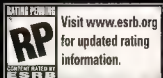


Actual in-game screenshot.

GeoDeformation™ is here—an earth-pulverizing technology that makes each lap more torn up than the last. Other games have promised it, but *Sega Rally Rev0* delivers. Combine that with a slew of erratic weather conditions and track surfaces, and you'll never know what's around the bend. Check out the groundbreaking off-road racing at [www.sega.com/segarally](http://www.sega.com/segarally).

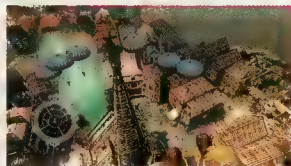
## SEGA RALLY REV0™

COMING OCTOBER 2007



Available on PLAYSTATION®3 computer entertainment system and the PSP® (PlayStation® Portable) system.





Xbox 360

# MEDAL OF HONOR: AIRBORNE

■ Publisher: Electronic Arts ■ Developer: EALA ■ Players: 1-12 ■ ESRB: Teen

**THE VERDICTS**  
OUT OF 10

**GARNETT**  
6.5  
AVERAGE

**JOE**  
8.0  
GOOD

**ANDREW P**  
5.5  
AVERAGE

**The Good:** Will tide you over on Live till Halo 3 hits

**The Bad:** Broken shooting in a shooter

**The PS3 Version:** Delayed until November

A hard landing just outside the drop zone

➔ **GARNETT:** Knowing that it takes a lot for a WWII shooter to even get noticed anymore, *Medal of Honor: Airborne* makes a solid first impression with nicely detailed visuals, a satisfying report to the gunfire, and its orchestral score. The good things continue with *Airborne*'s refreshing approach to level design. Instead of the game shoving you down a corridor, it drops you into a combat zone with objectives scattered about, which lends to the feeling that you're an authentic paratrooper.

And then the wheels fall off when the bullets start flying. "Realistic" weapon-accuracy modeling or not, something's wrong when I can line up the crosshair, unload tight bursts, and...nothing happens. Likewise with

the occasional perfectly lined-up head shot that goes unfulfilled. Meanwhile, I wind up dead, again, as the autoaiming A.I. mows me down at that same range with submachine-gun spam. Only tried-and-true multiplayer modes with smooth Net play save this from utter mediocrity.

➔ **JOE:** My experience was like Garnett's in reverse. At first I couldn't get into *Airborne* at all. Issues with weapon accuracy made the game feel cheap and absurdly difficult, and the oft-confusing, wide-open levels made things worse. But as I began upgrading my weapons and finding new ones, *Airborne* grew on me in a huge way. It is a slight departure from the WWII supersoldier formula,

and that takes some getting used to. But by the time I hit the gorgeous Market Garden map—around halfway through—I was well and truly hooked.

➔ **ANDREW P:** Garnett's biggest gripe is also mine: We've come a looonng way with our shooters, and it's time to dump the unresponsive gunplay that masquerades unrealistic enemy hit points as "challenge." If I shoot an enemy in the leg, he should stumble before finding his next piece of cover. If I shoot him in the head, he should immediately die—not stand there motionless as if nothing happened. It's a shame, because like Garnett and Joe say, *Airborne*'s story and stage are actually excellent...it's the actors that are hamming it up. 🐸





PS3/XB360

## NHL 08

■ Publisher: EA Sports ■ Developer: EA Canada  
 ■ Players: 1-8 ■ ESRB: Everyone 10+

### Making hockey matter again

**➔TODD:** Who cares about hockey in 2007? Probably the same number of people that cared about the sport in 1993 (hint: .006 percent of the population). As part of that puckheaded .006, I've not only fallen in love with *NHL 08*, but I'm going to make the bold claim that this game will do for real hockey what *NHL '94* (Genesis/Super NES) did for fake hockey: make it relevant again. This game moves as smooth as freshly Zamboni'd ice, and the all-new skating system cuts out broken, popping animations NHL gamers have had to put up with for ages. The newfangled ability to turn the puck past defenders is a great way to turn players inside out, and while the other guys think the hitting's too light, I'm glad bodies aren't flying unless you earn it. But the real coup: online leagues, which I love—this has the same joyful resonance as those mid-'90s *NHL* classics.

**➔DEMIAN:** Wow. *NHL 08* is incredible. The skating (I miss a turbo button only a little bit), the ana-

log-stick dekes, the more risky/spectacular "loose puck" dekes, the appropriately tough defense...*08* is a great sim, and yet the redone controls are actually simpler than last year's. You know it's good if my biggest whines are about the *slightly* weak/inconsistent hitting (which you can't tweak with a slider) and too many tripping and elbowing calls (which you can). *08* is the best hockey game in years.

**➔BRYAN:** Todd's right: I may fall in that 99.994 percent, but *NHL 08* totally got me caring about the frozen pond again. These guys already touched on so many of the game's strengths (online leagues, new deke mechanics, etc.), and you won't find any arguing from me. But here's another plus: I've never seen a hockey game with such great spacing on the offensive side of the ice. This helps especially during power-play situations—you can finally zip the puck around like the real NHLers, just waiting for the perfect moment to blast a slap shot or feed the man hangin' around the crease. Like Demian, I would've enjoyed a little more hitting, but I'd rather have it this way than WWE-on-skates (which EA's hockey games felt like in the past).

**The Good:** Silky-smooth skating  
**The Bad:** Could use just a tad more hitting  
**Finally:** Online leagues from EA

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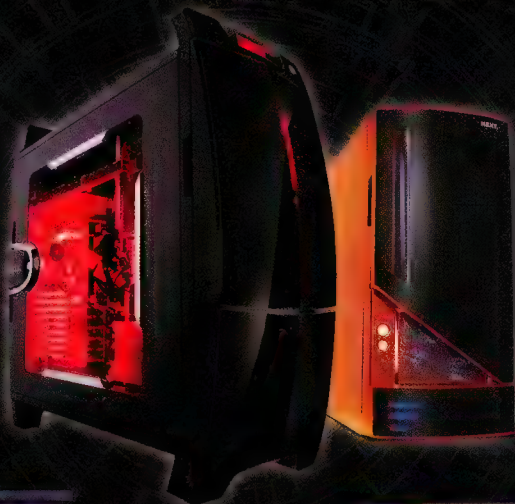
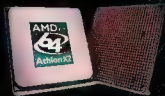
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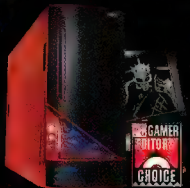
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XBOX360 (also on PS3)

# MADDEN NFL 08

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



**The Good:** New player classifications, brainier A.I.

**The Bad:** No online leagues again

**Check Wrap-Up:** For our impressions of the Wii version

## Back at the top of his game

➔ **BRYAN:** Getting suspended sucks—just ask Pacman Jones, Tank Johnson, and, by the time you read this, probably Michael Vick. It's even more painful this year, though, as these NFLers won't be part of the best *Madden* in a long while. *08*'s new "weapons" feature has a two-pronged effect. First, these onfield icons make it supereasy to identify a team's key players and how they excel. And, more importantly, these classifications bring some much-needed variety to each position. So running the pigskin with elusive Saint Reggie Bush feels way different than using the Chiefs' power back Larry Johnson. You'll also find a much smarter brand of football here: QBs now scramble when no one is open, wideouts continue to make

blocks 30 yards downfield, and defensive backs rarely fall for the deep ball. EA even righted several wrongs (with faster gameplay, a deeper Front Office mode, and so forth) from last season. Now, if only the online options weren't as pitiful as *Madden*'s observations....

➔ **GARNETT:** More than ever, this *Madden* demands that you learn how to play both the virtual game and the actual game of football. Make the jump to All-Pro difficulty (which I definitely recommend) and you must do your presnap reads, exploit matchups, follow your blocks when running, and lead receivers to put the ball where you want it when passing. Those realistic touches finally make this the game we knew next-gen *Madden*

could be, burying all memories of target-video snafus.

➔ **TODD:** You guys both have hardcore-itis, but for those of us who don't study playbooks in our spare time, no appropriate difficulty level exists. Pro's too easy, and All-Pro produces so many physics-defying interceptions by linebackers that my throat seized up whenever I dropped back to pass (what happened to just batting the ball down?). But even with those issues, the game's Devin Hester-esque pace, weapons, and refined hit stick add up to the best *Madden* in years. 🏈

**What's the Diff?** The PS3 version doesn't run anywhere as smooth as the crisp, 60 frames per second Xbox 360 edition.





PS3/XB360

## TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 08

■ Publisher: EA Sports ■ Developer: EA Tiburon  
■ Players: 1-2 ■ ESRB: Everyone

### Up and down in more ways than one

→ **JOE:** *Tiger Woods'* designers giveth...and they taketh away. The most significant addition to this annually acclaimed series is an optional, *Hot Shots Golf*-style shot meter, which nicely addresses the old system's trouble with hitting underpowered finesse shots—say, in the 60 percent to 80 percent range. As a result, putting and chipping are easier than they've been in years.

Trouble is, the timing of the shot meter varies wildly depending on the power of the shot, making the system seem frustratingly inconsistent. And the analog swing actually seems *more* sensitive than before. This means that neither option works as reliably as it should, and I found myself hooking and slicing my way to positively embarrassing scores on all but the most forgiving courses.

Do you have the patience to work through the frequent shot frustration? If so, you'll enjoy the almost ridiculous amount of content shoehorned in here. But patience is definitely a prerequisite.

→ **TODD:** Actually, Joe, I do love the three-button system, as the analog-stick method pushed my ball all over the course unless I played it supersafe or used a stud golfer like Tiger. But my gripes in this otherwise solid game are with the career mode. The bizarre setup has no road map! I was 112-over par after my first tourney when I figured out that I had to build my character through Tiger Challenge and Skills Training—totally different modes that have no connection to what you're doing! Why isn't all that blended into one logical, calendar-driven mode? Also, what's with the fans standing in the light rough and stalling my shots? Get the \$\*&% out of the way!

→ **BROOKS:** Really, Todd? You, the Sports Game Guy, use the archaic three-button system? I'll admit the analog swing is slightly more sensitive, but it's nothing that warrants a cuss-fest. My rookie golfer, though underpowered and lacking in skill, was able to keep up with the rest of the amateurs in the early rounds without much difficulty. And as I powered him up through the skill tests—putting, closest to the pin, and long-drive contests—slices and hooks became rare. I welcome the challenge *Tiger* delivers.

**THE VERDICTS**  
(OUT OF 10)

**JOE**  
**7.5**  
GOOD

**TODD**  
**7.5**  
GOOD

**BROOKS**  
**8.0**  
GOOD

**The Good:** More control over your short game

**The Bad:** Less control over your long game

**Disturbing:** Seeing your stretched virtual mug in action

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■ *Nariko's elinky outfit aurs titillates, but we wanna stick a paper bag over her bad hair day.*

PlayStation 3

# HEAVENLY SWORD

■ Publisher: Sony CEA ■ Developer: Ninja Theory ■ Players: 1 ■ ESRB: Teen



**The Good:** Gorgeous graphics, well-used tilt controls

**The Bad:** It's over pretty quickly  
**Jumping:** Some developers think it's a good idea

## Kratos wouldn't kick her out of bed

➔ **MATT:** Look at *Heavenly Sword* as the *God of War* clone everyone wants you to think it is, and you may end up disappointed. You'll notice a ton of similarities—the whole “you die at the beginning” story, flowy combat, and button-tapping minigames don't even come close to the full list—and in many ways it's a solid replica, but some of the details end up a bit rough. Like how the designers decided to turn on the enemy faucet and fill a bunch of rooms rather than worry about A.I. placement and tactics. And how you can't jump, making those crowds tedious to hack through without much freedom of movement. Relative to *God of War*, combat's not as elegant, puzzles basically don't exist, and it won't take you long to

complete (under 10 hours).

But look at *Heavenly Sword* for what it does well on its own, and you might be surprised to find some originality. Much of the game sees you tilting the Sixaxis to control arrows, explosive boulders...even human bodies if you choose to pick them up and go bowling. For all the crap the PS3 controller has taken, this works extremely well. Add in some of the best visuals to date, a decent counter system, very impressive cut-scene acting, and a great sense of ramping up in the final chapter, and you've got a nice little game. It's more of a traditional level-by-level action title than a story-driven adventure like *God of War*—but then, it never claimed to be anything else.

➔ **G. FORD:** Thanks, Matt, for taking care of the *God of War* comparisons. I also agree with you about the combat, which, though perhaps not overly elegant, has its positives. The varied styles—ranged, speed, and power—are simple enough to execute and add a subtle layer of depth to the proceedings. But while good, this action feels a little loose and disjointed, all the more so because you have to perform a finishing blow on most enemies after they fall to the ground, lest they rise again, interrupting any state of eviscerating euphoria you might have reached.

Fortunately, some welcome variety punctuates the too-quick quest. Going from main gal Nariko's hack-n-slash skimishes to alternate charac-





ter Kai's crossbow sniping (using the motion controls) to launching cannonballs at approaching catapults keeps things appreciably fresh. I'm torn on the boss fights, though. Most wade too deep into frustration territory (their life bars seem endless), but the thrill of ultimately conquering each—and the game as a whole—satisfies.

➔ **SHANE:** Forget about all those played-out *God of War* comparisons. Now that I've sliced my way through Nariko's ambitious adventure, I'd say it actually reminds me of *Gears of War*. Quit laughing and hear me out: Both games deliver stunningly gorgeous twists on established genres, showcase what their respective "next-



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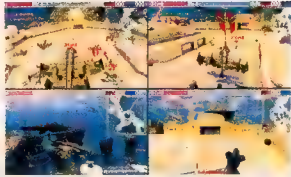
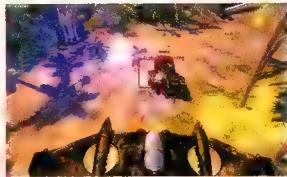
*Heavenly Sword* may appear to be developer Ninja Theory's first game...but we know better. Back in 2003, the team (then known as Just Add Monsters) created Microsoft's chop-socky Xbox brawler *Kung Fu Chaos* (above, which we scored an underwhelming 5.5, 4.0, 5.5). They then flirted with the idea of a sequel, *Kung Fu Story*, but instead moved on to *Sword*. It took years to find a publisher (Microsoft passed), but once they signed with Sony, the development team beefed up to more than three times its KFC size.



gen" platforms are capable of, and leave you clamoring for more. The game's slightly remedial enemy A.I. and overall brevity disappoint, but the well-paced level design (deftly juggling brutal arena combat, stealthy sniping bits, and short-yet-fun button-pressing "Hero Sequences") and impressively cinematic storytelling make for an immensely satisfying experience.

Yet for me, it's the ingenious Sixaxis "Aftertouch" gameplay that pushes *Heavenly Sword* into absolute must-play territory. The ability to steer every object, projectile, and hurled corpse with motion control adds an unprecedented layer of complexity and fun to otherwise familiar fare. **A-**

EGM Extras: Stuck on that tricky Tiwang level? Head to [EGM.1UP.com](http://EGM.1UP.com) for our *Heavenly Sword* SuperGuide.



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PlayStation 3

# WARHAWK

■ Publisher: Sony CEA ■ Developer: Incognito ■ Players: 1-32 ■ ESRB: Teen

## THE VERDICTS

OUT OF 10

JOE

8.5

GOOD

CRISPIN

7.0

GOOD

SAM

6.5

GOOD

**The Good:** Fluid, varied online play  
**The Bad:** Fairly shallow, too expensive for what you get  
**Don't Forget:** Eucadians are blue; Chernovans are red

## Equally awesome on foot, on wheels, and on wings

➔ **JOE:** On paper, *Warhawk* may not seem all that special. If you were paying 60 bucks solely for these five maps and four game types (Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, and Zones), you might wonder why. But the fast, addictive mix of third-person on-foot, vehicle, and airborne combat makes for so much variety that it feels like a much bigger game. Sure, it would be nice to have something with more substance; even the capture-and-hold-style Zones matches rarely get too complex, since the game doesn't offer much room (or need) for strategy when the penalty for dying is almost nonexistent.

Now, *Warhawk* is incredibly addictive in spite of—or perhaps because of—its relative shallowness. Incognito

designed those five maps with surprising thoughtfulness, and they look good. But as a \$40 download, the game is hard to recommend unreservedly; without any single player it feels like half a game (though the \$60 retail version is more reasonable with an included headset). It's addictive fun... just not quite \$40 worth.

➔ **CRISPIN:** Incognito messed up one thing between taking the game from beta testing to final PS3 product: They removed the option to drive ground vehicles with the analog stick if you switch on aircraft motion control. Steering tanks and jeeps via Sixaxis tilting never felt natural to me (Incognito is looking at a fix for the first patch). But put in the time needed

to master *Warhawk* motion-controlled flight. It gives you a tactical advantage (independent targeting using the left analog stick) and responsive control that turns dogfights into air shows for the grunts slugging it out below.

➔ **SAM:** Talk about unexpected. Like many, I was pretty bitter at the loss of the originally planned single-player mode, but what *Warhawk* ultimately evolved into is a fantastic, accessible take on *Battlefield*. With only five maps, the game does seem light on content, but like Joe says, the gameplay variety makes it addictive. The full-scale Zones battles are some of the most fun I've had gaming in a while. *Warhawk* isn't what I'd wanted, but I'm glad about that now. 🛩



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Xbox 360

# BIOSHOCK

■ Publisher: 2K Games ■ Developer: Irrational ■ Players: 1 ■ ESRB: Mature



It's better down where it's wetter

→ **ANDREW P.** It's easy to get lost in the underwater city of Rapture. Not physically, mind you—you follow a fairly straightforward path with multiple sources serving as guides. But that's the thing: Even with help, you can't help but explore every nook and cranny, take your time in every abandoned room and hallway. The world that Irrational has created is so cohesive that it demands full appreciation. So, to say it more accurately, it's easy to lose yourself in *BioShock*.

Like few other games before it, *BioShock* is a complete package. The visual design is stunning, from the abundant aquatic effects to the sinister shadowing and light. The themes are both dominant and subtle, with the familiar and lengthy "utopia gone

wrong" story that's twisted in uniquely disturbing ways, many of which require *honest-to-god* moral choices on your part. And the game mechanics are sublime: sufficiently complex that you are constantly engaged in progression, flexible enough to adapt to many different styles of play, and immediately comfortable to anyone who has played a first-person shooter. Sound, voice acting, interface design, utility of special powers, the hacking minigame...none of these parts is able to stand out on its own, because they all fit together effortlessly. That's why Rapture is so believable.

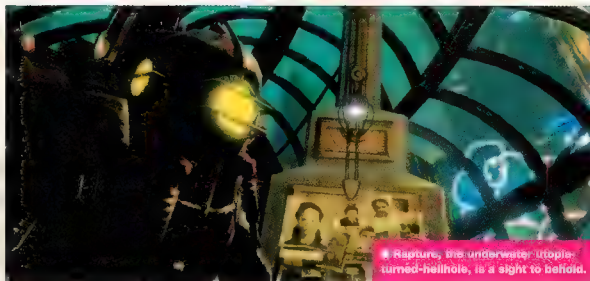
And the more believable the setting, the more the player can feel like an active participant. *BioShock* is primarily a game about choices: Do

you use the standard weaponry or the special plasmid powers that grant you control over the elements (among other things)? Do you hack unfriendly machines and turn them into allies or just dispatch them with some explosive shot? Do you "harvest" little girls or set them free?

Plenty of other games make you think. But for all of *BioShock*'s technical triumphs, the real reason to love it is that it's one of those rare games that make you *feel*. When you first arrive at the city, you feel confused, but also intrigued. When you upgrade your weapons and unlock new plasmids, you feel powerful. When you see a lumbering Big Daddy pause in front of you and ready his punishing rivet gun, you feel cautious. When you

**The Good:** Outstanding throughout  
**The Bad:** Repetitive voice samples  
**The Relevant Wikipedia Entry:** Ayn Rand's Objectivism





• Rapture, the underwater Utopia turned-hellhole, is a sight to behold.



encounter those little girls and decide that their innocence trumps your need for more power, you feel good about yourself. And when you get to that point in the game where the "how" and the "why" are finally revealed, you can't help but take it personally. But by the end of your visit to Rapture, you'll feel like it's been worth it, every step of the way.

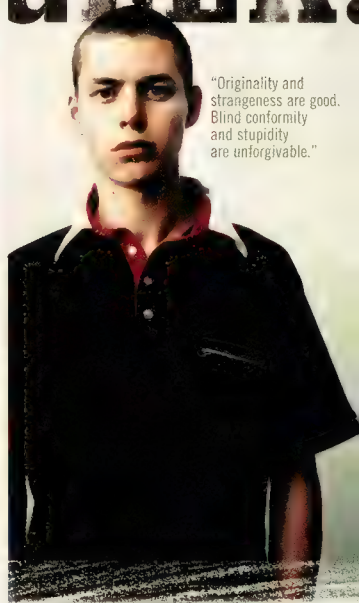
→ **SHOE:** The believability is there because the art direction is flawless. Every neon sign, machine, weapon—from their functionalities to their aesthetics to even the way they sound—come together so perfectly, so beautifully, you just can't help but become part of Rapture's lost-in-time world. Even the menus fit the art deco style to a tee. The immersion is so complete that, after a while, you wonder if it's all real...or at least a dream that has thoroughly tricked your mind into thinking it's real.

Or perhaps a nightmare. What *BioShock* doesn't get enough credit for is how frighten-

ing it is. It mixes up cheap, jump-out-of-your-seat scares that will make you want to turn down your TV's volume with true psychological mindf---s that show just how twisted humanity can become, given the perfect storm of circumstances gone wrong in this failed utopia. Walls painted with blood, corpse-lined hallways, unethical (by our standards, not Rapture's) scientific experiments in plastic surgery and mind control (the puppy thing still haunts me)...and the creatures! They're aggressive—rushing at you with a wicked scream or a screen-shaking roar. They're sneaky—attacking from the dark shadows on the ceilings or teleporting away so you're unsure of where they'll pop up next. And they're smart—jumping into water if they're on fire or running away and tossing Molotov cocktails behind them to keep you away. It all makes *BioShock* one of the scariest 20 hours in videogames.

Sure, you can find minor problems (voice

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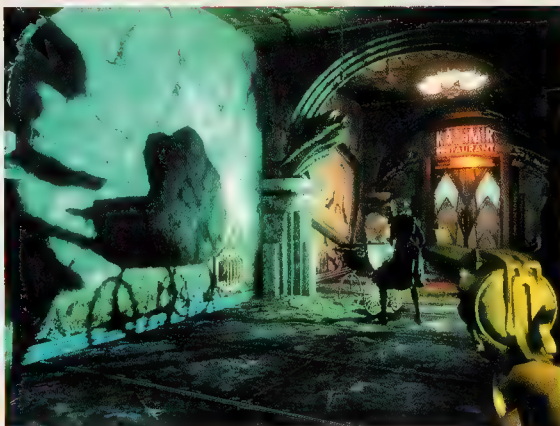
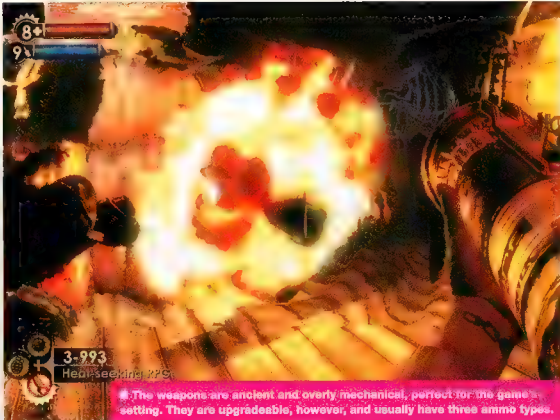
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tracks and subtitles that don't always sync up, radio messages that repeat, ■ way-too-easy final boss, and a rather short, though still strong and emotional, ending), but who cares? This is a beautiful-looking game. This is a beautiful-sounding game. And this is a beautifully designed game with a story and atmosphere that sticks with you long after you've emerged.

➔ **GARNETT:** *BioShock* could easily stand on the strength of any of its individual pieces. It stuns as a visual showpiece with detail both in the environments and everything in them. Rapture feels lived-in and flawlessly executes the artistic vision of exactly what you can imagine a '50s-era undersea utopia looking like. As a shooter, the variety presented by its system of upgradeable weap-

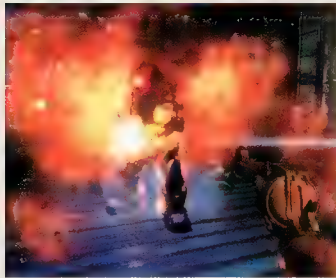
ons, magiclike attacks with plasmids, and genetic upgrades sets up ample amounts of satisfying combat. And as an adventure, it crafts a magnificent story of intrigue with inspiration ranging from Jules Verne to eccentric industrialist Howard Hughes.

No single part, as Andrew noted, defines the game, though, and that sets *BioShock* apart as truly special. It combines its elements with complementary balance into a superlative whole that generates synchronicity of character, place, and story. I became so completely wrapped up in it that I never got bogged down in all the freedom the game affords you; I just played it, making choices about what to do next or how to develop myself almost as second nature because I was that in tune with the experience. Rapture left me with a number

of memories I wouldn't trade, from staring through the glass in wonder at this sprawling city beneath the ocean to alternating between spewing lead from a machine gun and belching flame with my plasmid powers in surreal firefights against genetic grotesques wearing costume-ball masks while Perry Como plays in the background. But of them, none leaves so indelible a mark as the hunking presence of the iconic Big Daddy trudging through a room with thunderous steps. The instinctive response it triggers to sign yourself for a battle you won't soon forget embodies the emotional connection that makes *BioShock* such an amazing game. 🎮

🎮 **EGM Extras:** Need help finding all the secret powers and radio diaries? Go to [EGM.IUP.com](http://EGM.IUP.com) for our SuperGuide.





## Where's multiplayer?

The first thing people always seem to ask us about *BioShock*: "Does it have multiplayer?" The answer is no and that's OK—the single-player experience is great enough to stand on its own. But then we gave it some more thought and realized, hey, maybe *BioShock* would make an awesome multiplayer game....

### Why *BioShock* WOULD NOT make a good multiplayer game:

We'd just telekinetically throw stuff (like grenades) back and forth at each other. It'd be like a game of hot potato that never ended.

Players would look silly tiptoeing around pools of water or oil so they don't get electrocuted or barbecued by their powered-up opponents.

The Natural Camouflage power turns you invisible when you don't move. And when players don't move, players aren't shooting each other (or having fun). Sounds boring.

The retro weapons are slow to reload—intense in single player, probably frustrating in multiplayer. *BioShock* is a story-driven masterpiece, not a deathmatch shooter. So just enjoy it already.

### Why *BioShock* WOULD make a good multiplayer game:

You can hack and booby-trap health stations, set up electrified trip wires, turn security cameras or turrets against your enemies—*BioShock* has a lot of *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* multiplayer potential, and that's a good thing.

Natural Camouflage: On second thought, sitting still and turning invisible could lead to some fun ambushes.

*BioShock* has a ton of weapons, ammo types (think of them as secondary and tertiary fire), plasmids (active powers) and tonics (passive powers) that balance each other out. So the game does have a *Shadowrun*-like rock-paper-scissors aspect to it....



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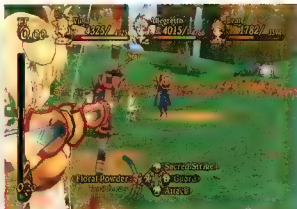
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Animation by Aaron Fr



Xbox 360

# ETERNAL SONATA

■ Publisher: Namco Bandai ■ Developer: tri-Crescendo ■ Players: 1-3 ■ ESRB: Teen

## A somewhat dissonant composition

➔ **A. FITCH:** Famed 19th-century classical pianist and composer Frédéric Chopin, on his deathbed at the tragically young age of 39, is transported to a dream world in which the terminally ill are imbued with healing powers. It sounds like the latest trendy European art-house flick, but this is the usually clichéd domain of Japanese role-playing games we're talking about here—which makes it all the more depressing that *Eternal Sonata* squanders its imaginative setting. Political intrigue that's just not intriguing pads a slow-moving, too-short story for an RPG (30 hours, if that!), and its cut-scenes drag with overlong monologues, full of sound and fury...and signifying boredom. Like in the similarly disappointing

360 roleplayer *Blue Dragon*, an excellent battle system is *Eternal Sonata's* saving grace—it's an addictive, effective mix of turn-based strategy and button-mashing action-RPG elements. 360 RPG developers have been surprisingly successful on the technical side of things—now, if only they could nail plot, pacing, and narrative....

➔ **RAY:** After one glance at *Eternal Sonata*, I wasn't sure if I could stomach its storybook style. But I stuck it out. While Fitch is right about the story progression (gee, another RPG with five-second pauses between voiced lines), it's still this year's best 360 JRPG so far thanks to the battle system. Think the slash-em-up fighting of PS2's *Tales of the Abyss*, minus

the need to manage MP, SP, or any other P—I loved that. If you're brave enough to look past the aesthetics, *Eternal Sonata* is worth hearing out.

➔ **GREG S:** I'll third the praise for *Eternal Sonata's* battle system. Personally, I love the extra element of light and darkness affecting my special attacks and being able to use my enemy's shadow as a strategic attack point. So it's a real shame that the pacing is so awful, and the story is a bit bizarre for my tastes (though I do like the pictorial Chopin history lessons). But the game is gorgeous thanks to its style (believe it, Ray), and the difficulty is just right. *Eternal Sonata* isn't exceptional, yet I found I couldn't put it down.

THE VERDICTS  
(OUT OF 10)

A. FITCH  
6.0  
AVERAGE

RAY  
8.0  
GOOD

GREG S.  
7.0  
GOOD

**The Good:** Cool battle system, Chopin's timeless music  
**The Bad:** No maps, lame cut-scenes  
**Count Waltz:** Wussiest RPG head-battle name ever?



PlayStation 2

# WILD ARMS 5

■ Publisher: XSEED ■ Developer: Media Vision ■ Players: 1 ■ ESRB: Teen

## How the West was fun

➔ **A. FITCH:** Longtime *Wild Arms* aficionados like myself felt like takin' No. 4's developers out back, Zell Miller-style, for a good ol'-fashioned six-shooter duel when they inexplicably put one of the series' biggest selling points—its routin'-tootin' gunslinger setting, unique among Japanese role-playing games—out to pasture in favor of a postapocalyptic wasteland. Thankfully, *WA5* won't inspire a similar call for frontier justice: It plays like one long apology to old-school fans of this decade-oldest franchise, recapturing the Wild West motif, energetic characters, and surprisingly compelling storytelling of the beloved first three titles. While the game does include random battles (a bane of RPG nerds everywhere), you can deactivate them

in each dungeon by besting particular foes. Combat's hardly a pain, though, thanks to quick yet strategic grid-based skirmishes and upbeat spaghetti Western-themed fanfares. This is how you do a mainstream RPG.

➔ **SHANE:** Just like Fitch, I've been aboard the creaky *Wild Arms* caravan for a decade...and, frankly, I'm both amazed and relieved that it's still chugging along. *WA5* continues down the same weird pseudo-platformer trail that *WA4* blazed, augmenting traditional turn-based RPG combat with action-based puzzles and jumping bits. It's a novel idea that, unfortunately, still feels mishandled here—a spazzy camera and crude dungeon designs fail to impress. Fortunately,

the well-told (albeit clichéd) narrative, fantastically diverse soundtrack, and addictive hex-based battle system deliver just enough *Wild Arms* magic to keep fans queuing.

➔ **MICHAEL:** I have to throw my arms up, guys—either 'y'all have been spending too much time in the saloon or nostalgia is making you two varmint overlook the obvious faults. Now I've never hopped on the *Wild Arms* wagon, so I'm not going to let fuzzy memories clog my critical six-shooter: *WA5* looks like a subpar PSP game, has a forced Western (and, uh, sci-fi) setting, and a truly terrible camera. Still, the cool battle system and character customization options keep it from reeking of cattle crap.

THE VERDICTS  
(OUT OF 10)

A. FITCH  
8.0  
GOOD

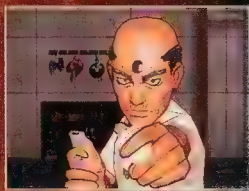
SHANE  
6.5  
AVERAGE

MICHAEL  
5.0  
AVERAGE

**The Good:** Great story pacing, music  
**The Bad:** Sparse save points, choppy overworld graphics  
**Sol Nigler:** Um...who OK'd this easily misread enemy name?



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**Wii**  
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025



DS

# SONIC RUSH ADVENTURE

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Sega  
 ■ Players: 1-2 ■ ESRB: Everyone

## THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

JEREMY

7.5

GOOD

SHANE

7.0

GOOD

G. FORD

7.0

GOOD

**The Good:** Classic Sonic speed  
**The Bad:** Weak adventure elements, kinda short  
**Need for Speed:** Never more obvious than here

## Needs more rush, less adventure

→ **JEREMY:** Talk about missing the point: *Sonic Rush Adventure's* break-neck speed is bogged down with plodding "adventure" portions where Sonic sails around the ocean looking for new levels to conquer. No good ever comes from forcing Sonic to put-ter about, and this is no exception. The Jet Ski challenges themselves are fun, but the exploration element feels tacked-on. Too bad; when *Adventure* lets you get down to the business of running through the game's sinuously intertwined paths, the action is excellent—the stages are creative, speedy, and challenging. Victory requires skill and intuition, and the best chapters of *Sonic* history are accounted for in both stages and boss encounters. Too bad Sega couldn't let the speedy

platforming stand on its own merits; when you're moving, *Adventure* is great. When you're not...well, what's one more misguided *Sonic* game these days?

→ **SHANE:** The speedy blue hedgehog's console career may have hit the skids, but at least fans can find comfort in Sonic's continued handheld successes. *Adventure* doesn't stray too far from *Rush*, with more of the same hyperfast run 'n' jump gameplay across massively vertical levels. I'd still like to see more effort put into the visuals (seriously, the lushly colored stages in 15-year-old *Sonic 2* on Genesis looked better), but the plentiful shortcuts, greater emphasis on trickery, and startlingly clever boss

fight nicely flesh out the traditionally shallow *Sonic* gameplay.

→ **G. FORD:** Uh, Shane... "*Adventure* doesn't stray too far from *Rush*"? You mean aside from the whole adventure element, overworld island hopping, and stylus-controlled sea-vessel segments? Granted, the more traditional platforming trumps all that, but the stylus action is a good addition. From the simple steer-by-touch parts to the *Elite Beat Agents* light undersea excursions, these diversions had me happily tapping the touch screen. But who am I kidding? Like these guys say, the standard *Sonic* action is easily the main draw, especially when it gets more challenging—and satisfying—toward the end.

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PSP

# MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM 2

■ Publisher: Capcom ■ Developer: Capcom  
■ Players: 1-4 ■ ESRB: Teen

REVIEW

### THE VERDICT'S LOOKING FOR

**MILKMAN**  
8.5  
GOOD

**MARK**  
5.0  
AVERAGE

**BRYAN**  
5.0  
AVERAGE

**The Good:** Value-packed with items, quests, and crafting.  
**The Bad:** Difficult to get very far alone.  
**Really Popular:** In Japan (it's the No. 1 PSP franchise there)

## Still on the hunt for online play

➔ **MILKMAN:** While the first *Monster Hunter Freedom* action-role-playing game on PSP impressed with improved controls and content compared to the PS2 version, this sequel is so overloaded with new features that it's easily one of the PSP's best multiplayer games. Among the additions are four distinct weapon classes (bows, gunlances, long swords, and hunting flutes), double the storage space, a fast-loading feature, day-and-night cycles and weather effects, thousands of weapon and armor pieces, downloadable content, and over 250 quests. That's a lot of stuff.

While the lack of true online multiplayer play is a minor loss, communication is key, which makes local games the ideal method for teaming

up with friends. But that's the main issue: finding three other players to hook up with to get the game's best loot. Without friends, it's much harder to harvest the game's finest materials and get the best armor and weapons. Still, this is a gorgeous game that offers a lot of replay value.

➔ **MARK:** Funny, 'cause I'd say nothing significant's changed in *MHF2*. It still has some of the best graphics and animation ever seen on the PSP, a dizzying array of unique weapons and items, and the same, somewhat awkward combat and addictive character-building aspects. But most important, it still has all this fantastic potential wasted by the inability to play online with others. What should be the heir

to *Phantasy Star Online*'s console-tailored multiplayer RPG experience becomes tedious playing solo. The lack of online in the first *MHF* was bad; in a sequel it's unforgivable.

➔ **BRYAN:** "The lack of true online multiplayer is a minor loss...." Really, Milky? I consider that a *huge* loss here. Just like in the last *MHF*, it's so damn hard to take down any of the larger creatures without a three- or four-person party. Hell, I found myself even wanting some back-up during the more routine hunts. And while I can appreciate the additions that Milky already mentioned, I would've traded them all for some enhancements to the series' aging combat (longer combos, perhaps?).



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# REVIEWS WRAP-UP

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

**XB360**

## HALO 3

■ Publisher: Microsoft ■ ESRB: Mature

We want to finish the fight, but the final review code isn't quite ready yet. But we got to see a ton of *Halo 3* so far, including campaign mode, co-op, the arcade-like metagame, the Forge game/map editor, and more multiplayer (see last month's cover story for the full details, or go to EGM219.1UP.com for bonus content).

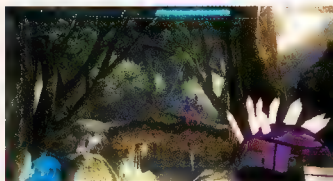
✦ **BOTTOM LINE:** This is one of the most ambitious titles you'll ever see. You can spend hours in Forge, or you can spend weeks just climbing up the leaderboards for the metagame (and the secret game-altering "skulls" that you can find will only add more diversity and variables there). It's almost an impossible amount of game to play—and this is all in addition to four-player co-op!



■ Usually guys who wield big guns have issues—but look at the size of that codpiece!



■ Share the road with more pals this time: The campaign will offer four-player co-op.





# FRAG AND CONQUER.

"9.1 OUT OF 10"

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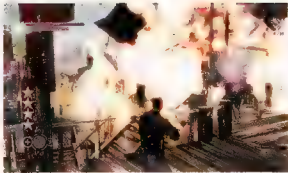
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Wii



PS3/XB360



Wii

## METROID PRIME 3: CORRUPTION

■ Publisher: Nintendo ■ ESRB: Teen

Apparently, blonde bombshell Samus Aran needed a few more training sessions before she would let us join up. But from what we've played so far, this final installment in the *Prime* trilogy already seems well worth the \$50 bounty. The new Wii-specific controls now make it much easier to target enemies anywhere onscreen (*Corruption* plays more like a first-person shooter than any other edition), and in terms of level design and boss fights, developer Retro hasn't lost a step during this console transition.

➔ **BOTTOM LINE:** Samus looks primed to go out with a bang.

## JOHN WOO PRESENTS STRANGLEHOLD

■ Publisher: Midway ■ ESRB: Mature

As a game sequel to action film classic *Hard Boiled*, *Stranglehold's* concept earned it high expectations, and we're happy to see those met with excellent style and best-in-class environment destruction. Blow up a drug lab and you feel the wood splinter apart as the explosion demolishes a shack. A few aspects seem dated (like having to pick up health packs and enemies appearing from out of nowhere), and the controls feel a bit loose in the near-final version we played (Midway promises tweaks), but the action is superb.

➔ **BOTTOM LINE:** Where else can you control Chow Yun-Fat in a gorgeous shooter?

## MADDEN NFL 08

■ Publisher: EA Sports ■ ESRB: Everyone

In keeping with EA's new "Family Play" sports mantra for the Wii, *Madden 08* features a much easier control scheme (all you need to do is wiggle and wave the Wii-remote). We don't expect many of the *Madden* faithful to choose this alternative play style (it's way too basic), but such streamlined mechanics should go a long way in attracting young Wii owners to this popular—yet notoriously complex—franchise. EA hasn't completely forgotten about the hardcore, either: This year's edition features online matchups.

➔ **BOTTOM LINE:** A solid start to EA finally making a football sim with the tykes in mind.



XB360



PS3/XB360



PS3/XB360

## PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 4

■ Publisher: Microsoft ■ ESRB: Everyone 10+

Killer weather effects, fresh locales, greatly improved racing lines, and a surplus of online modes (clan support, watching and recording other players' matches...) highlight *PGR's* return to the track. The ability to ride motorcycles is a series first, but be warned: The controls on these crotch rockets are way too simmy for our tastes. Oh, and one more thing: We hear developer Bizarre Creations has another Xbox Live Arcade project in store with this release. *Geometry Wars 2*, perhaps?

➔ **BOTTOM LINE:** A solid follow-up to No. 3, but with so many racers now on the market, will anyone notice?

## NHL 2K8

■ Publisher: 2K Sports ■ ESRB: Everyone 10+

After last season's subpar performance on the ice, 2K Sports definitely needed to bring on the Zamboni and smooth things out. Visually, *NHL 2K8* represents a major upgrade over *2K7*, as the player models are finally on par with Electronic Arts' toothless skaters. The changes to the gameplay aren't lookin' so hot, though. The new puck controls are a piss-poor rip-off of EA's right-analog-stick mechanic, and moving both pass and shoot control to the shoulder buttons feels quite cumbersome.

➔ **BOTTOM LINE:** For a second straight year, 2K's frozen pond has too many cracks.

## SKATE

■ Publisher: EA Sports ■ ESRB: Teen

While we didn't have a final version to judge, our hands-on time with *Skate* has us believing it's a hardcore skater's dream, what with its inventive dual-analog board controls and realistic bent. But it also had the casual types inside us thinking: *OK, we've mastered the 180 kickflip; now bring on the good stuff!* Problem is, the good stuff is mastering a 360 kickflip, not bounding tall buildings in a single ollie like in the *Tony Hawk* titles.

➔ **BOTTOM LINE:** It's an admirable simulation of the sport, but this eye-catching debut lacks the unfettered goofiness that makes its competition such a joy.



## THE SALES CHART

Amazon.com's Top 20 for July

DEGREES IN: COMPUTER ANIMATION &gt; DIGITAL ARTS &amp; DESIGN &gt; ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS &gt; FILM &gt; GAME DEVELOPMENT &gt; REGIONAL ARTS &gt; SHOW PRODUCTION &amp; TOURING



| #  | Name   | Platform | EGM Scores   |
|----|--|----------|--------------|
| 1  | Wii Play (with Wii Remote)   | Wii      | 4.5 6.0 5.0  |
| 2  | Guitar Hero Encore: Rocks the 80s  | PS2      | 7.5 6.0 6.0  |
| 3  | NCAA Football 08<br> Hope you enjoyed your time near the top of the charts, NCAA, because now that your big bro Madden is out, you're going down, down, down.               | XB360    | 8.5 9.0 8.5  |
| 4  | Pokémon Diamond<br> In case you thought this series was going the way of the Power Rangers, Diamond (combined with Pearl) has sold more than 10 million copies globally.    | DS       | 8.5 9.0 8.5  |
| 5  | Resident Evil 4  | Wii      | 8.0 9.0 9.0  |
| 6  | Lumines<br> Cementing his rep as the coolest man in gaming, Lumines creator Tetsuya Mizuguchi has been moonlighting as a music-video director in Japan.                     | PSP      | 7.5 8.5 9.5  |
| 7  | Mario Party 8  | Wii      | 5.5 7.5 6.0  |
| 8  | Ninja Gaiden Sigma   | PS3      | 9.0 9.0 8.0  |
| 9  | Guitar Hero II (Bundle with Guitar)  | PS2      | 9.0 9.0 8.5  |
| 10 | New Super Mario Bros.  | DS       | 9.5 10 8.0   |
| 11 | Resistance: Fall of Man  | PS3      | 8.5 8.0 9.0  |
| 12 | Pokémon Pearl  | DS       | 8.5 9.0 8.5  |
| 13 | Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day!  | DS       | 8.5 9.0 9.5  |
| 14 | The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess   | Wii      | 10 10 10     |
| 15 | Guitar Hero II (Bundle with Guitar)  | XB360    | Not Reviewed |
| 16 | Super Paper Mario  | Wii      | 8.0 9.0 9.0  |
| 17 | The Darkness   | XB360    | 9.0 6.5 8.5  |
| 18 | NCAA Football 08   | PS3      | Not Reviewed |
| 19 | Mario Kart DS<br> Get your fill of on-the-go go-karting now; Nintendo announced a grown-up version will hit the Wii next year—complete with a silly steering-wheel gizmo. | DS       | 9.0 8.5 8.5  |
| 20 | Big Brain Academy  | DS       | 9.0 8.5 7.5  |

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# GAME OVER

> press continue for space tans, gamerscopes, and pauly shore



> SEANBABY'S REST OF THE CRAP

## Bad Game-Show Games

The price is horribly, horribly wrong



Tired of the writer's life, Seanbaby prep[s] for his big audition to enter the glamorous world of game-show videogame hosting in the just-announced *Are You Smarter Than A Fruit Roll-Up?*

**WHEN WE WATCH GAME SHOWS,** we watch contestants get rewarded for skills and knowledge most of us haven't found a use for outside of third grade. They create an attainable fantasy in our minds that, one day, we too will be given a dinette set for knowing what a Yoda is. What no one may ever know, though, is why companies try to re-create game-show experiences on videogame consoles. This is something I already do on my own by standing near people and blindly guessing the names of two of the *Boyz II Men* in exchange for \$50,000 cash. Here's one try: Bingo and Toghopper. If you take a game show, then six

the studio audience, the competition, and the fabulous prizes, what are you left with? Wink Martindale hosting nothing but the empty void of space, cursing the unseen star gods whose eyebears bake his flesh. And while insanity is in the air, I want you to know that EGM paid someone \$295 for this page's photo of Howie Mandel. What kind of a world is this, where some dumbass going, and I quote, "DERHH!" is worth hundreds of dollars to anyone?

In the spirit of Howie Mandel's victory over reason, I'm reviewing the worst TV-game-show videogames. I'm not only looking at them from a gameplay perspective, but how well

they re-create the TV show—the Home Version Rating. To help your brain apply this system to your existing knowledge, if you bought the home version of *RoboCop*, a Home Version Rating of 10 would be an actual reanimated half-robot crime fighter, whereas a 1 would indicate a dead body—completely robotless—that actually added crime to your life. And that's why the preceding sentence is my entry into this year's International Explaining Awards.

### Hollywood Squares (NES)

Someone made a game where contestants decide whether or not Zsa Zsa Gabor's scripted answer to a





PAGE  
**110**  
Retro: The  
best year  
ever?



PAGE  
**112**  
Grudge:  
BioShock/  
Bio-Dome



PAGE  
**115**  
Comic: Hsu  
& Chan's  
freak show

trivia question, is correct. For some, one to know that this would actually work as a show would require, at the very least, a time machine—and, at the very spookiest, sorcery. It's impossible. Imagine if you lived in a world where *Hollywood Squares* didn't exist and you brought the idea to TV executives. They'd legally be allowed to saw your head off, and give it to researchers.

**Home Version Rating: 0**

At first, I was disappointed at the lack of Shadze Stevens (and even more disappointed that I knew he spells his name like that). But the worst was when I realized this game lacks any Hollywood stars whatsoever. Did ALF's people really ask for so much money that they had to make up a guy named Dean? And some old lady named Val? She doesn't even want to know where the beef is.

**Double Dare (NES)**

*Double Dare* started as a way to help reduce waste by disposing of compostable trash on teen game-show contestants. It also had trivia questions, such as the following swear-to-god one: "If a goat mates with a sheep, what is the offspring called? A: geep; B: goap; or C: woolly-bully." Step one of life: If a man is holding a gun that launches puding and is asking children about abomination-spawning animal sex, do not even accept the Physical Challenge.

**Home Version Rating: 1**

When I was a child, my family had the home version of *Tic Tac Dough*. It was a mousetrap and two sleeping pills. I consider that a much more faithful adaptation of a game show than this insanity. One *Double Dare* game had me controlling the physics of throwing a banana into a gorilla's hand. Was that the result of some kind of spelling error during production? It's nonsense.

**Family Feud (NES/3DO)**

One of the things that I always enjoyed about *Family Feud* was watching host Richard Dawson's meet-and-greets. He was often clearly drunk; yet he was so professional that you wouldn't see a moment's

hesitation when he had to kiss a woman hello and she just happened to be a swamp creature. He didn't care. His lips had the eye of the tiger.

**Home Version Rating: 5**

This does its best to keep the show's format the same, only I'm suspicious that the "surveys" in the game are not the result of any kind of actual survey. For example, when it asked me for a bird that doesn't fly, I didn't and probably never would have guessed that one of the answers was "parrot" and the other was "jailbirds," since one of those flies and the other is more a Lafly Taffy riddle than an actual flightless bird. I understand surveys represent information taken from people too stupid to avoid a guy holding a clipboard or too lonely to hang up on a telemarketer, but I refuse to believe that seven out of 100 people think parrots can't fly.

**American Gladiators (NES)**

Many modern sports like boxing and football try to equate themselves to ancient Roman gladiators—as if that helps us relate to them. What's football? Oh, it's like those savage death matches my family and I enjoy—I get it! I remember, in particular, the NFL's ad for the release of *Gladiator* that drew parallels between the offensive line and killing a man with a trident. Who knew they shared so much! What I appreciated about *American Gladiators* is that they didn't try to get warrior cred through complicated analogy or visual metaphor. They just called themselves gladiators and got to work playing games on monkey bars. "This gladiator no longer amuses the emperor—finish him! And by that, I mean pull him from that fitness rock-climbing wall and let him dangle dejectedly from his very safety harness! Ares!!!!"

**Home Version Rating: 1**

I don't think it was any coincidence that the dissolution of the Soviet Union occurred mere months after the invention of the *American Gladiators* TV show. Although, if Communism could have held on for another couple of years, it would have found an ally in the horrible, freedom-crushing Nintendo version.

**The Joker's Wild (CD-i)**

It's baffling how the Philips CD-i failed. For only \$400, you could play what any sane person would call the worst games on the market (most of them educational). Despite all that, going for it, *The Joker's Wild* still went largely unplayed because of the unfortunate fact that it came out the very same week in which the show's audience had already been dead. For many years.

**Home Version Rating: 6**

For 1994 technology, this came surprisingly close to the mild entertainment offered by *The Joker's Wild* on TV. *The Joker's Wild Jr.*—featuring Marc Summers—was also released, notable only for winning the safety award Toy Most Impossible To Use By Child Predators Trying To Lure Kids Into Their Van.

**Deal or No Deal (DS)**

It can be said, without exaggeration, that this is the worst thing that has ever been. Here are the game's rules: You pick a case. It's hosted by two frames of Howie Mandel animation, and several million hours of Howie-Mandel voice acting, read like someone pulled out of bed to fulfill forgotten contractual obligations to Satan. The animated Howie chomps his mouth open and closed constantly, but most notably during the several seconds of silence that follow every line. And every line is like a dying refugee from his throat's concentration camp. It's what Mr. Ed's lip-synching must have looked like before postproduction, only stupid. I spit on the entire world we live in that could never have prepared me to hate something this much. If only Bob Barker had spayed and neutered the parents of this game's makers.

**Home Version Rating: Bingo and Toghopper**

I'm not saying this to sound smart, but I've never seen *Deal or No Deal*. I have, however, been told by people who do watch the show because they're so much dumber than me that it's like guessing combined with nothing. So for its Home Version Rating, I used guessing. And I guessed Bingo and Toghopper. ❦

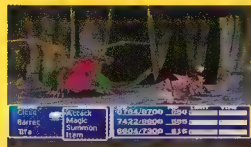


Pictured here: *Hollywood Squares*, *Double Dare*, *Family Feud*, *American Gladiators*, *The Joker's Wild*.



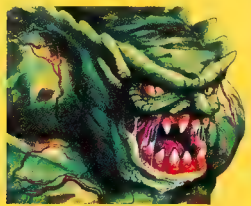
**On the cover: Mortal Kombat 4**

Our write-up starts, "It's the most 3-D 2-D game in fighting history!" Huh? OK, forget the fact that makes no sense. Now some might argue *Mortal Kombat II* is the best in the series. But everyone will likely agree that the "run" button in *Mortal Kombat III* was a bad move. Regardless, *Mortal Kombat 4* (at the time) had us thinking it might be—gasp—good. Boy, were we wrong....



**Game of the month: Final Fantasy VII**

Although it took six months (two years in fanboy time) to localize this favorite, we didn't complain. OK, we probably did, but at least it was as epic as we expected. And overrated. Just kidding! Or are we...?



**Creature Feature**

With Halloween looming, EGM decided to pit a bunch of messed-up monsters against each other to see who was uglier...and, more importantly, would win an all-out fright fight. If that's, uh, important to you....

# Best Year Ever?

Settling the eternal question once and for all: What was gaming's greatest year?

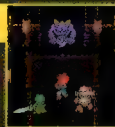
By Jeremy Parish



To check out more retro jibber-jabber, get your browser to [bonusstage.1UP.com](http://bonusstage.1UP.com) to watch 1UP's old-school gaming experts.

**EVERY FALL, GAMERS LOOK AT** upcoming release lists and wonder, "Could this be the best year ever for videogames?" Ever eager to put tiresome message board debates to rest, we've sorted out the answer for you—by the numbers! We've looked up scores for the seven biggest games of each year since the PlayStation's launch in 1995 and averaged out the EGM ratings from our 10-point scale to determine-once and for all which year really was the best. The answer might surprise you....

**1995**



**Aggregate Score: 8.6**

**Heavy Hitters:** *Chrono Trigger* (SNES, shown above): 9.5, *Ridge Racer* (PS1): 8.8, *Donkey Kong Country 2* (SNES): 8.6, *Jumping Flash!* (PS1): 8.5, *Panzer Dragoon* (SAT): 8.4, *Vectorman* (GEN): 8.2, *Battle Arena Toshinden* (PS1): 8.1

The dawn of the 3D era also marked the Super NES's swan song, with Square's *Chrono Trigger* earning the highest marks of 1995. This is also the last year a Genesis game would score high with us, RIP, buddy!

**1996**



**Aggregate Score: 8.9**

**Heavy Hitters:** *Super Mario 64* (N64): 9.5, *Wave Race 64* (N64): 9.3, *Tomb Raider* (PS1/SAT): 9.1, *Resident Evil* (PS1): 8.9, *Super Mario RPG* (SNES): 8.8, *Crash Bandicoot* (PS1): 8.4, *NIGHTS into Dreams* (SAT): 8.0

With the advent of *Super Mario 64*, *Resident Evil*, and *Tomb Raider*, the next generation had hit its stride—gaming's modern era gently washed away a decade of mediocre slidescrollers. Bout time, too!

**1997**



**Aggregate Score: 8.8**

**Heavy Hitters:** *Final Fantasy VII* (PS1): 9.5, *GoldenEye 007* (N64): 9.4, *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* (PS1): 9.3, *Mario Kart 64* (N64): 9.3, *Star Fox 64* (N64): 9.1, *PaRappa the Rapper* (PS1): 8.3, *Yoshi's Story* (N64): 6.9

Sony pulled no punches in 1997, proving it was no longer a new comer but a true contender. And classic series like *Final Fantasy* and *Castlevania* poppin' up on the PS1 only cemented its charge to the top.

**1998**



**Aggregate Score: 9.2**

**Heavy Hitters:** *Metal Gear Solid* (PS1): 10, *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* (N64): 10, *Resident Evil 2* (PS1): 9.4, *Gran Turismo* (PS1): 9.3, *Xenogears* (PS1): 8.9, *Pokémon Red & Blue* (GB): 8.5, *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron* (N64): 8.3

Yikes, 1998 was an insane year for games. Insanely expensive, too—both Nintendo and Sony flooded the market with a ton of huge moneymakers. We sure didn't complain, though.



1999

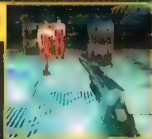


Aggregate  
Score: 9.0

**Heavy Hitters:** *Soul Calibur* (DC): 10; *Final Fantasy VIII* (PS1): 9.5; *Sonic Adventure* (DC): 9.1; *Star Wars: Episode I—Racer* (N64): 9.0; *Ape Escape* (PS1): 8.8; *Silent Hill* (PS1): 8.8; *Donkey Kong 64* (N64): 8.4.

While the PlayStation continued to chug along, Sega managed to blow hardcore gamers away with the release of the Dreamcast—the strongest console launch ever. Yes, ever. Too bad the system only caught on with the hardcore; everyone else had lost their trust in Sega after years of suffering corporate incompetence.

2000



Aggregate  
Score: 9.3

**Heavy Hitters:** *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask* (N64): 10; *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* (PS1, DC): 10; *Chrono Cross* (PS1): 9.8; *Perfect Dark* (N64): 9.8; *Crazy Taxi* (DC): 9.1; *Shenmue* (DC): 8.7; *Phantasy Star Online* (DC): 8.3.

The PS2 landed in fall of 2000 with a wet thud of total crap, its dismal launch library hardly hinting at the creative juggernaut Sony would eventually become. But gamers didn't mind so much, because the PS1 Dreamcast, and even the founding N64, were delivering a crazy amount of quality.

2001



Aggregate  
Score: 9.2

**Heavy Hitters:** *Halo* (XB): 10; *Metal Gear Solid 2* (PS2): 9.6; *Final Fantasy X* (PS2): 9.3; *Grand Theft Auto III* (PS2): 9.3; *Paper Mario* (N64): 9.3; *Devil May Cry* (PS2): 8.8; *Conker's Bad Fur Day* (N64): 8.3.

Sony (finally) delivered both long-awaited sequels and a few left-field surprises like *Devil May Cry* and *Grand Theft Auto III*. Meanwhile, Microsoft launched Xbox and a long-term strategy of bringing us awesome games like *Halo* at a horrible loss. Who knew that the company had such an altruistic streak?

2002



Aggregate  
Score: 9.2

**Heavy Hitters:** *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* (PS2): 10; *Metroid Prime* (GC): 10; *Super Mario Sunshine* (GC): 9.5; *Super Smash Bros. Melee* (GC): 9.5; *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs* (PS2): 9.3; *Kingdom Hearts* (PS2): 8.5; *The Mark of Kri* (PS2): 8.5.

Widely regarded as one of gaming's best years, 2002 had a little something for everyone, whether you were a flashy Disney fan, an aspiring drug lord, or just liked shooting things. Biggest surprise of the year: Some dudes from Texas made a *Metroid* game on par with their Japanese counterparts.

2003



Aggregate  
Score: 9.3

**Heavy Hitters:** *Mario Kart: Double Dash!!* (GC): 9.8; *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* (GC): 9.8; *Soul Calibur II* (PS2/XB): GC: 9.7; *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* (XB): 9.5; *Prince of Persia* (PS2/XB/GC): 9.3; *Splinter Cell* (PS2/XB/GC): 9.0; *Beyond Good & Evil* (PS2/XB/GC): 8.5.

Western games continued to gust in 2003, signaling a major sea change for the traditionally Japanese-dominated market. Not to say that the year's Japanese titles were bad. It just meant we Westerners could finally compete with our friends overseas.

2004



Aggregate  
Score: 9.3

**Heavy Hitters:** *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* (PS2): 10; *Halo 2* (XB): 10; *Metal Gear Solid 3* (PS2): 9.5; *Ninja Gaiden* (XB): 9.5; *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes* (GC): 9.3; *Pikmin 2* (GC): 8.8; *Chronicles of Riddick* (XB): 8.3.

If we covered PC games, 2004 might have taken the prize thanks to the likes of *Half-Life 2* and *The Sims 2*. Still, this year was no slouch, with two straight 10s (*GTA: SA* and *Halo 2*). Hell, every system had an exciting exclusive title. Just looking back reminds us why we get so little sleep in 2004.

2005



Aggregate  
Score: 9.2

**Heavy Hitters:** *God of War* (PS2): 9.8; *Resident Evil 4* (GC): 9.8; *Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories* (PSP): 9.2; *Guitar Hero* (PS2): 9.0; *Project Gotham Racing 3* (XB360): 9.0; *Call of Duty 2* (XB360): 8.8; *Mario Kart DS* (DS): 8.7.

For anyone who was paying attention, gaming's 2005 lineup was a preview of the current shape of the industry: strong Western influences and huge fall blockbusters from major publishers, while smaller companies began focusing on the inexpensive (and increasingly popular) Nintendo DS.

2006



Aggregate  
Score: 9.4

■ From left to right: *Gears of War*, *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess*, *Kingdom Hearts II*

**Heavy Hitters:** *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess* (Wii): 10; *Gears of War* (XB360): 9.5; *Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter* (XB360): 9.5; *Kingdom Hearts II* (PS2): 9.5; *New Super-Mario Bros.* (DS): 9.2; *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* (XB360): 9.2; *Final Fantasy XIII* (PS2): 9.0.

Gaming's best year ever was...2006? Yup, it's true. Not only did the biggest games of the year turn out to be uniformly excellent, they also appealed to all manner of gamers: role-playing nuts, fans of gritty realism, sci-fi maniacs...even retro-gaming enthusiasts.

So let this be a lesson to you: There's no need to pine for the good ol' days. They were good, alright, but gaming just keeps getting better. 🎮



## Playing Fate

By Mr. Death

Autumn is a busy time of year for me, as stuff starts dying off: plants, insects, old people.... But the stars and I had a meeting, so I still had time to whip up some predictions for your meatbags:



**Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18):** NASA will applaud your efforts, but it turns out repelling Earth's upcoming alien onslaught isn't as easy as *Space Invaders* makes it seem.

**Pisces (Feb. 19-Mar. 20):** It takes a big person to admit defeat. But you'll find it takes an even bigger person to fend off mall security while pummeling your opponent's groin.



**Aries (Mar. 21-Apr. 19):** It seems like just yesterday, you were doodling fan art on napkins. Well, it was, which explains why today was your last day at the napkin factory.



**Taurus (Apr. 20-May 20):** Sorry, the stars are currently busy finishing up their work on the set of *Super Mario Galaxy*. Please check back next month....



**Gemini (May 21-June 20):** Mistaking your girlfriend's makeup compact for your DS will make for a boring plane ride, but only until both engines go out at 32,000 feet.



**Cancer (June 21-July 22):** You're not a plumber and there's no princess to rescue, but the similarities between your gorilla attack and *Donkey Kong* will be striking.



**Leo (July 23-Aug. 22):** Yeah, you shouldn't have given out your contact info for a chance to win a PS3, but the automatic cheese grater you got instead totally makes up for it.



**Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22):** Office politics aside, there are more significant reasons your new *Pokémon* ideas, Sexasaurus and Cameltoad, won't make the final cut.



**Libra (Sep. 23-Oct. 22):** You'll think your clan is just giving you a hard time for losing a big match—until even the ESRB rates your offensive gaming skills an "F."



**Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 21):** Meeting your blind date at GameWorks seems like a good idea, but once you realize he's actually blind, it'll just be a waste of good credits.



**Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21):** You've never been one to mix business with pleasure. Which will make your new job as a game tester a little buggy.



**Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19):** Idle hands are the devil's playthings. But thanks to the Xbox 360 and your own penis, the devil won't be able to get at your hands edgewise.



Pixel art by @Gry

# Bio Warfare

## Boys in bubbles

Even closed societies are vulnerable, whether it's the underwater world of *BioShock* or the surprisingly permeable Bio-Dome, of, well, *Bio-Dome*. It's dome-or-die time!

BioShock

VS.

Bio-Dome



Pedigree

System Shock 2 (PC) is a tough act to follow.  
**Advantage: Tie**



For Pauly Shore, *Son in Law* is a tough act to follow.  
**Advantage: Tie**



Neo-utopian mutants and freaky, corpse-raiding kiddies  
**Advantage: BioShock**



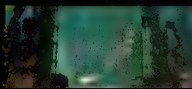
Shore and future live-action Barney Rubble



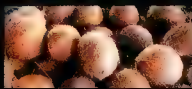
Escape plane crash and survive underwater nutjob society  
**Advantage: BioShock**



Impress girlfriends with eco-friendly horseplay



Industrialist Andrew Ryan builds an underwater utopia



Head honcho Dr. Nash Faulkner builds coconut bombs  
**Advantage: Bio-Dome**



A whole lot of praise from the gaming press  
**Advantage: BioShock**



One of the worst-reviewed movies of all time

Public Opinion

## Winner: BioShock

It's no shocker *BioShock* won. But if *Bio-Dome*'s Kylie Minogue and Joey Lauren Adams were in the dome, it'd be a different ballgame...



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# Freak Show

By Jeremy "Norm" Scott



AND THE OLD COUPLE SAID, "YES, THAT IS ITS FACEPLATE, BUT THAT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN OUR XBOX 360 YOU DROVE HOME --"

YOU SEE, IT WENT CRITICAL FIVE YEARS AGO THIS VERY NIGHT!"

BRAVO, ARNE GREENPEACE COULDN'T RECYCLE THAT ONE MORE THAN YOU HAVE

WAIT TILL YOU HEAR THE ONE ABOUT THE LADY WHO FINDS A PSP IN A BUCKET OF FRIED CHICKEN --  
-- TRIES TO DRY IT OFF IN THE MICROWAVE --  
THEN ACCIDENTALLY LOCKS IT IN HER OWN WEDDING CHEST!  
MOAH HA HA HA!

CAN'T WE HEAR SOMETHING WITHOUT CONSOLES?

WELL... SURE... HUH...  
HEY, GLA MOBSTER!  
DO YOU KNOW ANY TALES OF TERROR BEFALLING UNSUSPECTING PEOPLE?  
WHY? YOU A COP?  
YOU WANT SCARY? HAVE YOU EVER READ THE ELECTRONIC ARTS ONLINE PLAY END-USER LICENCE AGREEMENT?  
THEY DON'T USE THE WORD "SOUL" SPECIFICALLY, BUT YOU CAN TELL THEY WANT TO

ALL RIGHT, THAT'S THE END OF THE CANDY?  
WHEN YOU GUYS GET A MINUTE, I'M GONNA NEED SOME HELP BOARDING UP THESE WINDOWS

CANNN-DEEEEEE  
NOT LICORICE!

HOW ABOUT WE JUST WATCH SOMETHING TONIGHT?

WHAT'S SCARY, MOVIE-WISE?  
ONE BOLL?

OH, CRAP DID I MISS A WINDOW?

NAH, I'VE BEEN HERE

SPARE SOME BRAINS?

END

# AMERICA THE



**TEEN**  
**T**  
Blood  
Language  
Violence  
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**PC**  
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