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# EA GAMES

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Devil May Cry's creator returns with an all-new action heroine

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38 pages of exclusive coverage

THE **16** MOST INFLUENTIAL JAPANESE GAMES EVER

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Ninja Gaiden's Itagaki in his first interview since leaving Team Ninja

**SKATE 2**  
EA's Tony Hawk killer ready to shred again!

**FINAL FANTASY REUNION**  
Sakaguchi, Amano, Uematsu: Together again for the first time

REVIEWED AND RATED!

# SOULCALIBUR IV

Yoda! Vader! 32 characters! The best Soulcalibur yet?

**EXCLUSIVE!**  
**KENJI ENO**  
Maverick developer returns to gaming after 8 years

**Diablo III revealed!**

**Xbox 360 RPG Blowout!**



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MATURE 17+



Blood and Gore  
Intense Violence

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An aerial view of a city skyline, likely New York City, with the Chrysler Building prominent in the upper right. A large plume of smoke and fire rises from a building in the lower right, suggesting a disaster or conflict. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

MYTHS

ARE  
PASSED DOWN  
THROUGH THE GENERATIONS.

THEY APPEAR  
IN STORYBOOKS.

THEY ARE  
THE  
STONE  
GUARDIANS  
OF BUILDINGS.

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FEARS  
MADE MANIFEST.

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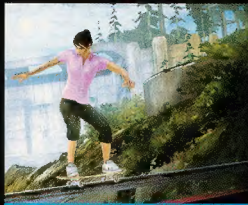
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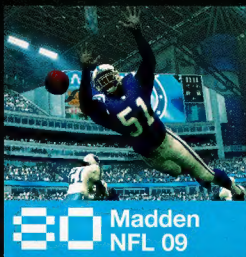


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> EDITORIAL

## Japanapalooza



**HEY, GUYS AND GALS.** I've forshadowed this on my blog ([milkman.1UP.com](http://milkman.1UP.com)), but this particular issue represents just about everything I've ever wanted to achieve in the printed format in my 10 years in the industry. The issue's overall theme is the state of Japanese game development and how it has declined over the years. John Davison says it best in his editorial (pg. 40) about how most Japanese games feel like they're stuck in 1998, so to get to the bottom of this dilemma, I went to Japan to quiz the industry heavyweights—developers who've had international success but have also seen it slip away. In what I feel is an incredible roster of guest speakers, we've not only roped in Kenji Inafune (*Mega Man*), Hiroyuki Kotani (*Patapon*), Yoshiaki Okamoto (*Street Fighter*, *Folklore*), and Yusuke Naora (*Final Fantasy VII*) to discuss the state of the industry, but we've also got exclusive interviews with Hironobu Sakaguchi, Nobuo Uematsu, and Yoshitaka Amano, the three principal creators behind the *Final Fantasy* franchise. And if that isn't enough, we cracked down Tomonobu Itagaki (*Ninja Gaiden*, *Dead or Alive*) for his first exclusive interview since leaving Team Ninja, we talk with Hideki Kamiya about his latest action hit in the making (*Bayonetta*), and in the biggest surprise of the month, we celebrate the return of Kenji Eno, onetime mastermind at Warp (*D*, *D2*, *Enemy Zero*), in his first interview in years and discuss what made him leave gaming, and what's sucking him back.

—James "Milkman" Mielke, Editor-in-Chief

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### > WHAT'S THIS?

If the cover didn't get the message across, we went a bit Japan crazy this month. Anytime you peep the symbol to the right throughout the magazine, that's a dead giveaway that the story is about either Japan or Japanese game development.



### > THIS MONTH'S EGM EXTRAS

## EGM.1UP.COM

#### SuperGuides

If you're stuck in a game, you obviously suck. Don't feel bad, though, because our friends at **MyCheats.com** are here to give you the best tips, cheats, and strategies for *Soulcalibur IV* and *Alone in the Dark*.

#### Interviews

Get the full blabber for our interviews in this issue.



Hear our podcasts at [podcasts.1UP.com](http://podcasts.1UP.com) and read our message boards at [boards.1UP.com](http://boards.1UP.com).

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# LETTERS

> naughty gestures, firearm fanboys, and the finer points of chain saw sodomy

## > TRIVIAL ISSUE

This month's EGM question:

Programming for *Final Fantasy II* and *III* was completed in which American city?

E-mail the answer to [EGM@1UP.com](mailto:EGM@1UP.com)

(subject head: Trivia: EGM #232) for a chance to win something potentially awesome.

## Letter of the Month

### The family that games together, stays together

I've been gaming a long time, and the thing I hear most from kids I meet online is, "I wish my parents played games with me." I see this gap between parents and children where most parents view games as a waste of time. The thing is, games can be a great family experience if they're approached in the right way.

Here are some suggestions for creating a safe, fun gaming environment that the whole family can enjoy:

1) Set your kids up with Xbox Live Silver accounts. They're free, and they have all of the same benefits of Gold accounts sans the ability to play online. If your kids are over 15, a Gold account might be more appropriate, though. Use those parental controls, too! My oldest son's account is set up so that he can't download anything without putting in my password—which, of course, he'll never know.

2) Check out Xbox Live Arcade. Anyone over 30 is going to find something that they have fond memories of playing. My son loves to play *Gauntlet* with me and my husband. It has four-player co-op—it's a perfect family game. Also check out *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* and any of the *Lego* games for great co-op play with your kids.

3) If you are an older kid, and you want to get your parents involved in gaming with you, speak to their interests. There are so many games out there that something will interest them. You just have to find it.

Game time and family time don't have to be two separate things!

—Rachel

Will somebody please cue the "The More You Know" music? We're dying for a rainbow star over here.

### Where should we send the check?

As an aspiring journalist, it's been surreal to watch videogame journalism shed its respectability. But EGM has always been able to stay above the shenanigans, sacrificing potential sales in favor of doing the right thing. From the infamous interview with Peter Moore to Shoe's "Banned" editorial in EGM #225, *Electronic*



*Gaming Monthly* has consistently earned my respect. I'd just like to say thank you for delaying your *Metal Gear Solid 4* review. You could have complied with Konami's limitations on discussing install times and cut-scene lengths and gotten a profit-boosting early review of the game. Instead, you chose to forfeit potential sales so you could give your readers the most objective review possible.

—Jake Shapiro

We tend not to blow our own horn, but we got so many letters like this that we wanted to use this spot to say, "Damn right we're awesome." ...Er, that is, "You're welcome."

### A bird in the hand

I was looking at your ad for *EGM Live*\* in a recent issue, and I noticed that

the two people on the left, and possibly the guy on the right, are giving us the finger. The guy on the lower left is blatant about it, and the others I mentioned are a little tougher to see due to the way the picture was printed. I was just wondering why you guys feel the need to say "f\*\*\* you" to your loyal readers. Seems a bit counterproductive to me. Do you hate your readers?

—Darren W.

Oh, crap, guys—they're on to us!

### We're all about the important issues

In your cover article in EGM #230, you expressed uncertainty as to whether or not "chainsodomy" should be spelled "chainsawdomy." Well, clearly, "chainsodomy" invokes an image of sodomy with a chain, whereas >



For writing this month's LOTM, Rachel gets a copy of *Manhunt*...or something else from our dusty old collection.

## > HOW HARDCORE ARE YOU?

### Your proudest gaming moments

The next contestant in our monthly harder-core-than-thou competition arrives!

I'm as hardcore a *Street Fighter* fan as they get. *Street Fighter* (Ryu and Ken in particular) has played a big role in my life, and my decision to pursue a two-decade career in various martial arts. Ryu and I both practice Shotokan karate, we're both the same height and weight, have the same hair color and eye color, have big eyebrows, and we were both born in July. Here's a picture of me with an oil painting I made of Ryu.

—Paul Gale



Want to see your own story in this space? Well, you're out of luck, since this is our last hardcore moment. Send complaints to [EGM@1UP.com](mailto:EGM@1UP.com). We do, however, have many community-minded changes planned, so hit up [boards.1UP.com](http://boards.1UP.com) to skewer or celebrate our reviews or redesign, or to just talk about anything else that's on your mind.



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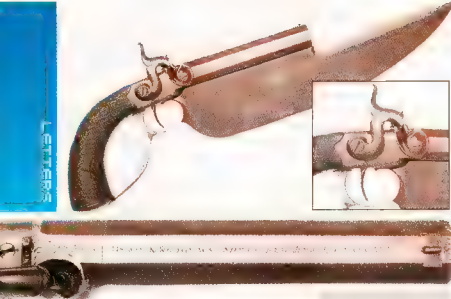
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■ "Hey, you got your pistol in my cutlass!"

"chainsawdormy" gives a much more accurate description of the event in question. So I would think that "chainsawdormy" would be the preferable word choice.

—Chance Huskey

**You make a disturbingly thorough argument. Also, you have one of the greatest porn names known to man. Well done on both counts.**

### Not that there's anything wrong with that

After reading the Foreign Object column in *EGM* #230, which opined that Japan had "made a DS game for flamboyantly gay people" with the release of *Duel Love*, I'm offended.

I'm not offended because I hate the opportunity to ogle unrealistically pretty boys; that's about as honest a sentiment as straight guys saying they hate *Dead or Alive*'s physics engine. I'm offended because for a second, one of your writers suggested I might be tempted to play such a laughably ill-conceived concept for a game. Who's gonna believe kickboxers with scrawny biceps like that? After five minutes in a real match, the faces on those porcelain pansies would look like processed pork. Gimme a real man like Marcus Fenix or Kratos (*Hello, he's Greek!*) any day.

—Dan Davis

**Now there's a letter you don't see every day.**

### Speaking of swinging the other way...

I'm a bit of a *Guitar Hero* junkie, but I find myself in a relatively unique position: I play holding the guitar left-handed, but I learned to read the on-screen notes in their default right-handed position. And while it's been absolutely no problem with the prior games in the series, I'm worried about

the upcoming DS iteration, *Guitar Hero: On Tour*. If I tried to play left-handed, I would be playing the game upside-down. Is there any hope for this freak of nature other than relearning how to play the game?

—Matt Murray

Well, the game does feature support for lefties, but it sounds like you're looking for the ability to flip the screen upside-down but keep the notes in the normal, green-to-blue orientation onscreen. In which case, we'd have to say you're out of luck. Didn't you ever think to try "lefty flip" in the options menu when you first picked up the game?

### Rated "R" for pirates

I just got around to reading Hal Halpin's article about a universal ratings system ["Universal Ratings," *EGM* #227], and I can absolutely agree that it will likely not come into existence for many years. However, I believe that the ESRB can do something very good for the industry in the meantime by using a ratings system that is far more widely known: the MPA rating system. It would be as simple as a *Mortal Kombat* ninja palette swap, and it would provide instant recognition.

I asked around at work, and only two of my 13 employees knew what the "M" meant, and none knew what "E10+" was even referring to. These are people who have kids and buy games for them on a regular basis! If these parents were to see "R" or "PG" on the box, they would have a basic understanding of what they were getting for their children immediately. Bumping off of an established system would be the safest way to have the public understand videogame content.

—Al Huerta

**But then we wouldn't be able to make jokes about "maturity" in M-rated games. Honestly, people, think before you write!**

### Have gun, will travel

In the July issue [*EGM* #230, "Gun Show"], military adviser Hank Keirsey said of the *Final Fantasy* Gunblade's historical precedents: "None that I know of, but I'm sure some fool tried this in the past, and I hope he got his butt kicked." Well, some fools did try this and they were successful.

I'd recommend he read R.L. Wilson's *Steel Canvas* to see some examples of "cutlass pistols." These were basically pistols with blades attached under the barrel. They were mainly used by naval boarding parties to be lighter and easier to carry than

full size cutlasses. Of course, nobody could ever use one as well as the brothers in *Advent Children*.

—Tom Fort

**Boy howdy, did we ever get a lot of letters about this. We had people citing the cutlass pistols mentioned here, pinfire swords, and modern pistol bayonets. You people sure do like your guns. And your swords.**

### Voice of reason?

Every time I read an article in *EGM* about the Wii and its online capabilities, it's almost like a drinking game, because I know you guys are going to mention the lack of voice chat at some point. You do realize that the subset of people who wish to yak with strangers online is actually really small, right? I know that voice chat can help in some games when teamwork is involved, but come on—normal people don't care to have voice chat on things like *Mario Kart* or *Super Smash Bros*.

Listening to strangers groan in my living room about getting hit with an item isn't fun, and my ego isn't so big that I think anyone cares what I have to say, either.

—Adam Wade

**Hey, if you love silence so much... no, too easy. Next!**

### Stuart Hamm says hi

In a response to a letter entitled "Behind the Music" in your July issue, you say bass is not a real instrument. Have you ever heard of Les Claypool? Flea? Bootsy Collins? How dare you say that bass is not a real instrument when you probably have no musical experience whatsoever. Your ignorance is astonishing. By making this remark, you are not a real magazine, and I am canceling my subscription.

—Henri de Guzman

**Wow, you bassists sure are a prickly bunch. But we'll see your Flea and raise you Jaco Pastorius, Charlie Mingus, and Ray Brown. That's right; we roll old school, bitches.**

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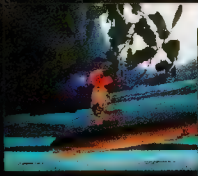
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# PRESS START

› news, previews, thoughts on snakes, aging chocobos, and other stuff

ON THE AFTERNOON OF JUNE 8, 2008, 25-year-old factory worker Tomohiro Kato allegedly went on a horrific killing spree in Tokyo's Akihabara shopping district, the cradle of Japan's videogame and anime culture. Authorities say the rampage began after 12:30 p.m., as Kato drove a massive two-ton truck into a crowd of midday shoppers, fatally wounding three people on impact. Then he emerged on foot and began stabbing and slashing at passersby with a 5-inch, double-edged dagger, killing four and injuring six others before being apprehended by police.

This gruesome act of unprovoked violence left the populace in a state of shock, disbelief, and unimaginable grief. Tokyo is renowned as one of the world's safest metropolises thanks to strict laws forbidding gun ownership. Despite having one of the largest urban populations in the world, Tokyo has a comparatively minuscule murder rate, and acts of random street violence are still exceptionally rare.

The public immediately demanded an explanation behind Kato's unspeakable acts. The media quickly sought to label the attack as part of the growing epidemic of "kieru," acts of explosive rage committed by Tokyo's legion of alienated, disillusioned youth. Many looked to Japan's complex geek culture for answers: The killer's status as an "otaku" (a fanatic of games, manga, or anime) served to reinforce negative stereotypes of compulsive, antisocial behavior.

While Kato was an avid gamer, few dared to suggest a direct correlation between what he played and the atrocities he is accused of committing. But perhaps that stems from the fact that Kato fancied role-playing games (he sketched Leon from *Tales of Destiny* in a yearbook) and sexy fan-made PC fare such



## MURDER IN AKIHABARA

Tokyo's gaming mecca still reeling from tragedy

By Shane Bettenhausen





## Pong Poet: Richard Moore



Piecing together Legos and *Star Wars* may have sounded weird years ago, but we've found an even more peculiar

pairing: *Pong* and the *Choose Your Own Adventure* books. It sounds stupid (because it is), but silly project creator Richard Moore's *Paper Pong* successfully combines the classic Atari game with the memorable *Choose Your Own Adventure* novels. Not nutty enough for ya? Well, his previous work was a text-based version of *Pac-Man* called *Pac-Text*. Since both are so silly, we tracked down Moore to learn more about his crazy creations.

**EGM:** What inspired you to document a ball-and-paddle battle?

**Richard Moore:** Hmm, I think after *Pac-Text* [Moore's *Zork*-inspired version of *Pac-Man*], I was trying to figure out what else I could mash together that would seem incredibly stupid.

**EGM:** Is there a strategy guide for your *Pac-Text* game?

**RM:** There isn't a strategy guide yet—that's actually a really good idea. There might be a direct-to-Amazon Kindle e-book, maybe.

**EGM:** OK—just tell us what happens. Does *Pac-Man* ever escape?

**RM:** You never actually escape; it just congratulates you on wasting a significant amount of time playing the game. An interesting point: I've actually never played the game to completion. I don't think I've been able to survive eating more than 20 dots before I got bored.

**EGM:** Wow, you've never actually completed your own game?

**RM:** Dude, have you tried it? It's painful! There's no way I'm going to eat all those dots.



■ Hard choices: up or, uh, down.






JAPAN ISSUE

Domestic

FOREIGN OBJECT/JAPAN

# CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

Lets go kill our great-granddads!

Systems: PS3/XB360

Chances of it coming out in Japan? Medal of Honor: Rising Sun was a critical success in Japan five years ago, but it was also heavily censored, putting Activision between a rock and a hard place—release *World at War* as its and attract controversy, or tone it down and piss off the hardcore that like buying Western fare. In the first

**Don't Japanese gamers hate first-person shooters?** Historically, that's been true. But *Call of Duty 4* was a decent success in Japan; selling a quarter-million copies in a marketplace where Western games are lucky to break the six-figure barrier. Activision may have a bit of an uphill battle in Japan with its upcoming *Call of Duty: World at War*, though, considering how the game kicks off: Your American GI gets tortured at a Japanese POW camp while a Japanese officer shoves a lit cigarette into the eye of one of your friends before slashing his throat wide open. Eesh. (The game moves over to the European theater later on, but much of it covers the U.S.-Japan fight leading up to Iwo Jima, meaning that Japanese players would, in fact, be shooting at their virtual ancestors.)

**So what do they think?** Early response on Japanese gaming boards has mostly been negative, chiefly thanks to the Western media's historical lack of accuracy when it comes to portraying WWII Japan. ("The Japanese soldiers are

gonna be throwing shuriken and wearing bamboo helmets, aren't they?" asked one member of forum 2ch.net.) As for the game itself, most Japanese gamers seem put off by being the "bad guys" in *World at War*—"If the Japanese were replaced with black soldiers, people would be crying racial prejudice," said another member. "You all defended *Resident Evil 5* from the black people who spoke out against it, and now you're going to forgive this blatant bigotry?"




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PREVIEW: EXCLUSIVE  
FIRST LOOK AND HANDS-ON

# SKATE 2

Evolution of a revolution By Nick Suttner



## CERTAINLY ONE OF THE MORE SURREAL EXPERIENCES I've had

is playing *Skate 2* while Associate Producer Chris "Cuz" Parry—the memorable disembodied announcer from the first *Skate*—sits behind me, saying, "No way! How'd you do that?" and chuckling after I take a particularly nasty spill. He's a bit of a kook (his words), but he's exactly the kind of person that *should* be working on this franchise—a grizzled skater hippie who's as passionate about his game as he is about the sport, as proven by a gnarly gash on his leg earned the day before my visit. In fact, besides the hippie part, this holds true for everyone at Vancouver-based EA Black Box: They're unflinchingly dedicated to producing a game that, mechanically and culturally, represents skateboarding as faithfully as possible—something that is absolutely evident in the first *Skate*.

"It's the first thing on our mind whenever we think of anything new for the game," says Producer Jason DeLong. "To be frank, skate culture is one that's used to being appropriated. Our goal, originally, was to not appropriate it but to kind of become part of it, and I think we've succeeded."

And they've done so in a big way. *Skate* surprised everyone last September by besting the competition not only critically but also on the sales charts—a wake-up slap that's prompted that other franchise to take its first yearly break in nearly a decade. "You know, it's interesting," says DeLong. "We didn't get into this to say 'Let's bury another game.' For us, it was, 'There's a skateboarding game out there, it does well, and people like playing it.' But we had a different thing we wanted to do, and we did."

Though Black Box is very coy about much of the new content in this sequel—no word on the mission structure, multiplayer, or video-editor changes—they were quick to point out all of the "fixes" from the first game and the setup for *Skate 2*'s narrative. Five years have passed in *Skate*'s San Francisco/Vancouver/Barcelona hybrid known as San Vanelona (now called New San Vanelona), which has suffered an unknown disaster, been partially rebuilt, and become "a less friendly place for skaters." Though Black Box wouldn't explain exactly what that means, it seemingly gives a narrative reason to put metal caps on rails that can be removed as a reward for good behavior—like not fighting security guards. These new

dramatic motivations may be exciting once they're unveiled, but the story isn't the reason most fans enjoyed the first game.

The brilliance of *Skate* lies in its inspired control schema, where the left analog stick shifts the skater's body weight and direction while the right stick is responsible for all of the tricks. From that basis, the entire move palette just makes sense: Tilting the stick backward or forward to a perfect center of balance allows you to manual or nose manual, turning your body allows you to spin while the triggers let you grab, and you can grind simply by landing on rails and flat edges at the right speed and angle. Convincing physics work hand in hand with the control scheme as well, dictating your skater's relationship with the environment and ensuring that the entire experience clicks and produces a satisfying, never-ending learning curve.

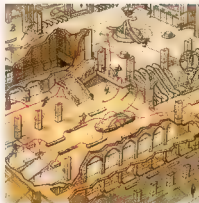
Those basic mechanics are widely unchanged in *Skate 2*, though the development team has expanded the move set with a couple of choice additions. You can now perform foot plants and hippie jumps (letting the board go underneath a rail while you jump over it to land back on) by taking one or both of your feet off of the board while in the air, and you can now pull off handplants by grabbing the top edges of skate-able bowled surfaces. While hippie jumps are tons of fun (and allow for some of the most painful bails yet), lifting your skater's feet with the A and X buttons on the 360 controller presents a new problem. In the first *Skate*, I would press A before landing to start pushing off as early as possible, but doing so in *Skate 2* just makes me bail with one foot off the board as soon as I hit the ground. These new moves, the combinations they allow (like grab grinds), and their variations double *Skate*'s bag of tricks to over >

**Platforms:**  
PS3/XB360

**Publisher:**  
Electronic Arts

**Developer:**  
EA Black Box

**Release Date:**  
Holiday 2008



■ You can pull off hippie jumps in the first *Skate* with some luck and crazy timing, but now they're in proper.

200. Skaters and fans of the original will certainly appreciate the specific additions, but they seem more tailored toward refining and adding layers to the first game's formula than to tangibly expanding it.

The biggest change in navigation and environment interaction, though, is the ability to get off of your board with the tap of a button. Stepping up onto a curb is no longer a trying ordeal when you lack momentum, and being able to easily ascend a flight of stairs makes a big difference in the way you relate to the geometry around you. To further take advantage of being away from your board, you can also use the new Grab the World button (it's on the right bumper, and it's also used for handplants) to drag around movable objects—benches, mailboxes, or anything else that isn't too heavy or otherwise bolted to the ground. This introduces a puzzle element to the career mode—a character could beckon to you from a rooftop, and you'll have to find or create a path to reach them. The dragging controls and animations were still rough in the build we saw, but that didn't stop us from spending 10 minutes trying to line up a couple of benches just right—and then another 10 trying to hit the line we'd just created (and passing around the controller so that others could try). Because the *Skate* experience is based *purely* around skill and the player's learning curve (since you can't level up, your skater is as good as they'll be from the get-go), creating your own challenges on the spot feels like a natural extension of what makes the game so compelling to begin with.

"[For *Skate*], we were making a skating game first and foremost; we wanted to make sure that was right. In the time that we had to get the game out, we wanted to make sure that the skating was perfect—and as a result, we decided not to focus on off-board stuff at the time," DeLong says. "Obviously, [that freedom] is a big part of *Skate 2*. You can take it and create your own lines and customize your environment to create your perfect, ideal skating experience. [We're] creating a great toy that allows people to express themselves."

Hopefully, that creative element will be a big part of multiplayer—after all, player-created content is all the rage these days, and who doesn't want to snap their spine trying to nail a trick in their buddy's impossible



■ The lighting in San Vanelona has been upgraded from "holy crap awesome" to "I think I prefer *Skate* to real life."

## ▶ SKATE IT, SKATE IT GOOD



■ DS



■ Wii

While *Skate 2* will have full system parity on PS3 and Xbox360 this time around (the first *Skate* looked worse on PS3 and couldn't be played with as many players online), *Skate It* on Wii and DS are completely different animals. The Wii version uses the Wii Remote to mimic the motions of a skateboard, which works surprisingly well once you get used to it. Alternately, you can use *Wii Fit*'s Balance Board to control movement and tricks (in tandem with the controller for momentum and selecting trick sets). It still needs quite a bit of work, but it should be fun for gamers looking to get some extra mileage out of their pricey exercise equipment. The most responsive way to play is with the Nunchuk and Wii-mote combo, but it doesn't feel nearly as novel or fresh as going the purely motion-control route. The DS *Skate It* is progressing nicely as well, with surprisingly savvy visuals and more forgiving touch-screen controls.

obstacle course? During our meeting with the team, there was also some talk that *Skate 2*'s multiplayer could follow the excellent drop-in-and-play model employed by EA's *Burnout: Paradise*—and while Black Box was tight-lipped about any such confirmation, the team did say that those were "some very good ideas."

A few other curious items sprang up later in the demonstration, including something called Slappy's Blog (Slappy ran a skate shop in *Skate*) and a "Use Phone" option in the

session marker menu—a session marker allows you to easily retry a run by transporting you straight to your chosen location. The idea of being able to set multiple session markers around the city came up during our presentation, and a phone would seem like a pretty good way to go about it. Lastly, Black Box says that *Skate 2* will take full advantage of the various horrific injuries you can inflict upon unwitting skaters—some of whom I watched tucked into a cannonball of sorts as they flew >

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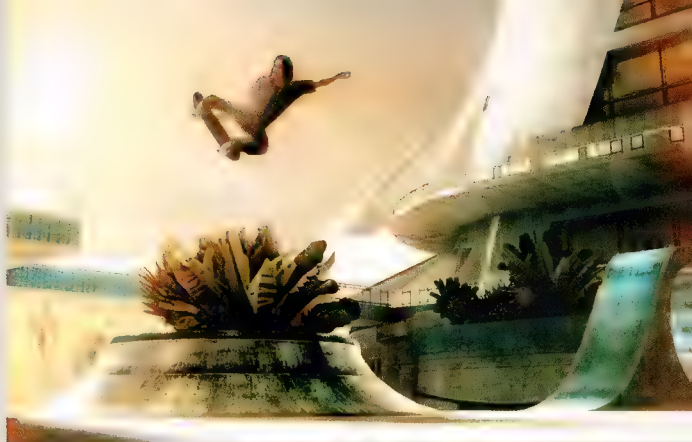
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## SKATE 2 (cont.)

through the air. In short, you should fully expect some body-mangling minigames to be woven into the experience.

But *Skate 2* has its fair share of expected—and some pleasantly surprising—sequel-y additions. The first game is gorgeous, but *Skate 2* looks even better. It has more detailed character models, more vivid colors, and stunning lighting and shadows. Better still, the new waterfront and woody hills areas are welcome aesthetic departures from the more traditional city and suburban settings of the first *Skate* (those locations are still there, but they've been rebuilt and rethought for better use of their square footage). The game's been upgraded to a supersmooth 60 frames per second, which—as in other sports games—*does* affect the feel and visual motion. It's a subtle change, but it's an impressive one considering how good everything already looks. Another change that Black Box will implement is to tilt the camera up slightly when you're near stairs to better lead you to possible routes through the environment.

*Skate* had an excellent debut last year with its innovative, completely fresh action-sports experience. So as far as first impressions go, *Skate 2* may come off as a too-soon, not-different-enough sequel simply by virtue of being a sequel to something so fundamentally new and exciting. It's really much too early to call, but things are coming together for a dynamite follow-up—even if that only means fixing *Skate*'s handful of problems and building on what was already there. The seeds of potentially bigger changes are also in place, especially in the Grab The World functionality and its theoretical multiplayer applications. If Black Box can deliver on these initial ideas and top it off with a little something extra, they may have something *truly* gnarly on their hands. ☼



### ▶ HALFPIPE CLOSED FOR REPAIRS

Community feedback can be priceless for a developer. *Skate*'s a great game, but it's not without a handful of design quirks and annoyances. Thankfully, Black Box paid close attention to the critical feedback and its dedicated community, and *Skate 2* is doing its best to remedy as many of those problems as possible.

#### PROBLEM

Can't get off of the skateboard.



Stupid pedestrians don't get out of your damn way. >

The load times when teleporting to a session marker more than a few paces away from the challenge area.

Can't play as a girl.

Player creator is far too limited.



Low-following skate camera isn't for everyone. >

Uploading saved and edited skate-reel videos to EA's website isn't the most accessible system, and watching them is a hassle.

The mission structure is too linear, making progression tough if you simultaneously reached difficult challenges on either career path.

#### SOLUTION

Yes, and then some! It's easier to hop off your board as well as push and pull all sorts of objects around the environment to alter potential skate routes.

They do now, as long as you're not a complete jerk—though that certainly has its appeal, mind you.

We're told that *Skate 2* will be loading-free in this regard. We didn't actually see it in action, but as long as they make good on this promise, hopping between session markers in *Skate 2* should be blissfully interruption-free.

Don't worry—you can this time, as you can plainly see in this screenshot. >



We're told that *Skate 2* will employ an in-depth, *Tiger Woods*-like character editor to sculpt more unique skaters...and hideous monster men.

The default camera's been tweaked slightly, but a more traditional third-person camera will also be available for those who still can't handle it.

While we were pulling for straight-to-YouTube uploads, Black Box is unfortunately going with EA's site again. Let's hope the functionality has at least improved.

To be determined. We were told that *Skate 2* is "epic" in its structure and content, but the proof will be in the pudding—the concrete pudding.



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# > AFTERTHOUGHTS METAL GEAR SOLID 4

Contemplating the end of a solid saga *By Jeremy Parish*



After spending some time as a freelance writer, Ryan Payton got the rare opportunity to work with the team behind one of his favorite series of all time. Living the

**FOR MORE THAN A DECADE**, *Metal Gear Solid* has been infiltrating our hearts and G4-ing our minds, and while the series will continue sneaking in some form or another, its protagonist, Solid Snake, will not. Ryan Payton, assistant producer at Kojima Productions, gave us the lowdown on what it was like to oversee the localization of Snake's final mission, *MGS4: Guns of the Patriots*.

**EGM:** We can't believe you actually managed to tie up all of the series' dangling plot threads. What was the hardest plot element to resolve? Did you have to cut any corners or fudge facts to make things work?

**Ryan Payton:** The stories of *MGS2* and *MGS3* were truly written without any backup measures [in case] the series continued, leaving dozens of confusing and unexplained plot elements in their wake. The fact that we were able to tie up all the loose ends with *MGS4* was nothing short of a miracle. Writer Shuyou Murata didn't have to fudge as many facts as did [in the English version] because the Japanese language is inherently vague. For example, at the end of *MGS2*, Snake and Raiden talk of rescuing Olga's baby, but don't specify the baby's gender, or the Japanese side. Perhaps the translator of *MGS2* just assumed Olga's child would be a boy, so in the English version they refer to it as a "him." Well, as you know, we introduce Sunny in *MGS4* as the daughter of Olga. I remember another problem of gender with the

now-female) *PlayStation 3* version referred to as the male "Dr. Clark" in *MGS3*. Those technicalities aside, I'm proud of how consistent the *MGS* world now stands.

**EGM:** The in-game economy gives the game a dramatically different dynamic, since on-site weapons procurement has always been a standard mechanic in *Metal Gear*. Was it difficult to balance Drebin's shop to prevent making the game too much of a cakewalk?

**RP:** Drebin's shop was one of the things I was most worried about. We tweaked the prices of each weapon up until the very end of production out of fear that players would discover some sort of exploit to grant them seemingly infinite firepower. I haven't read about any extreme abuses of the Drebin system, which has been a relief. But one change we made late in development was decreasing the Wednesday and Sunday discount from 50 percent to 20 percent.

**EGM:** On the bonus-disc documentary, we see how Director Hideo Kojima throws the team for a loop by asking to redo Sunny's dialogue very late in the development process. What was your reaction?

**RP:** He felt that he could get a better performance for that scene in Japanese, but we'd already nailed it on the English-language side. I'd go back and rerecord dozens of lines during the final weeks of production,

though. Anytime I'd find something I wanted to improve, my Japanese coworkers would try to talk me out of it—obviously not knowing the difference in quality. Thankfully, everybody on the English-language side was just as crazy about making the voiceovers in *MGS4* perfect.

**EGM:** Ultimately, how satisfied are you with the final product?

**RP:** I'm incredibly proud of what we accomplished. I think we successfully adopted a progressive control scheme and open gameplay that truly rewards multi-playthroughs. And I believe we were able to accomplish the most natural Japanese-to-English localization of any game to date.

I'm proud of all the content we were able to create these past three years. Looking back on it all, I simply feel a deep sense of gratitude for our team.

**EGM:** Kojima's dropped plenty of hints that the *MGS* franchise will continue on without him as a director—and likely without Snake as a playable character. Is it possible that you may go back and tell the story of Raiden rescuing Sunny from the Patriots?

**RP:** Hideo wants a younger staff member to take over the director role on the next *MGS* title, with him overseeing the project as producer. But I think I speak for all my coworkers that every time Hideo talks about "MGS5" for the press, we're just as curious about what he would be as you are. ☼



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# HIRONOBU SAKAGUCHI

The creator of Final Fantasy revisits his early days at Square and how one of the biggest franchises came to be *By James Mielke*

**WHILE JAPAN'S ERA AS THE** predominant force in the videogame industry may be over, it's not for lack of trying. Gaming's still a relatively young industry, barely 35 or so years old, and many of the veteran mavericks who pioneered this form of entertainment are still giving it their best shot. Take, for example, *Final Fantasy* creator Hironobu Sakaguchi. While role-playing games existed well before the first iteration of the far-from-final fantasy he would invoke, none galvanized the genre quite as powerfully as his original NES classic.

Having departed Square Enix some years ago to form his own independent development studio, Mistwalker, Sakaguchi isn't resting on his considerable laurels. With *Blue Dragon*, *Lost Odyssey*, and *ASH: Archaic Sealed Heat* under his belt, he's set his sights on the horizon, expanding the *Blue Dragon* series on DS and working on a number of top-secret works-in-progress. We caught up with the man responsible for over two decades' worth of role-playing hits to talk about his past—and, naturally, his future.

**EGM:** When you were a kid, could you even have imagined what you're doing now? Did your career happen because of some pivotal moment?

**Hironobu Sakaguchi:** Like when I was really small, or when I was a student? As was growing up?

**EGM:** Well, computer games didn't really exist when you were a kid, so what were your initial interests? Maybe you were really into tennis, for example, and then you eventually started at Square?

**HS:** Tennis was a very important subject to me in elementary and was actually writing my own books and music, so I thought

going to go in that direction. At that time, there weren't any PCs. When I got into college, that's when I saw the first computers that I could actually do something with, but back then, I couldn't afford any official products. I still remember the NEC models PC-8001 [in 1979] and PC-6001 [in 1981], and Apple had machines in Japan back then, though they were pricey. Still, I couldn't afford any of those brands. But there were also imitation models at that time, and they were about one-tenth of the price, so that's what I could afford. That's when I first realized that computers were something that would change my future.

**EGM:** When did this happen?

**HS:** Around 25 years ago. I completely dropped everything on the music side once I got my Apple II and started buying my own software—even sacrificing lunch or any snacks. Computers were becoming my big thing. Do you know Nasir Gebelli? He's an Iranian-American who made *Horizon V* and *Zenith*, 3D games on the Apple II. Long story short, he eventually became the main programmer on *Final Fantasy*. I considered Nasir to be my god, because he made the first 3D games I played on the Apple II. At one point, the then-president of Square came to the States, where Nasir was, and the president wanted to introduce me to Nasir. I met him, and I couldn't even believe that I was standing in front of this guy that I considered king. From there, things started happening. *Final Fantasy*—the game, the concept, and everything—came to be, and he became the main programmer.

**EGM:** What's happened to him since?

**HS:** He's about five years older than me, and I don't have any contact with him. I have a private relationship with him.

Sacramento, probably retired. There's actually an interesting post-*Final Fantasy* story regarding him. Nasir was in Japan on a working visa, but it expired, so he had to return the States and Sacramento, where he's from. So for *Final Fantasy II* and *III*, our staff actually brought all the equipment, everything that was necessary to finish those games, to Sacramento, because he couldn't come back to Japan.

**EGM:** They took everything to Sacramento?

**HS:** Yeah. We finished *Final Fantasy II* and *III* in Sacramento, California. [Laughs]

**EGM:** How did you first become involved with Square?

**HS:** Well, my friends and I were working on creating software for the Apple II. As a part-time gig—it was like the equivalent of an internship in the States—we applied to Square during spring break [in 1983]. That was the first step into Square.

**EGM:** How big was Square at the time you joined?

**HS:** Just five people before I joined.

**EGM:** What was Square doing then?

**HS:** Well, Square wasn't the Square that we all know today at the time I joined. They weren't making any software. The office was located near [the Yokohama campus of] Keio University. And back then, not every student—unlike us nowadays—could afford a PC or any sort of computer equipment. So, students would buy one to use in the PC room, and then they would use the PC room all day, but any time they

**EGM:** What next, then? >

**HS:** Yeah, just like that, but 25 years ago. [Laughs] So there were about 20 PCs lined up, and students would come in to study, and then they would leave. It was an hourly PC café.

**EGM:** So, how'd you go from joining them as an intern-level type to making games? Did you say, "Hey, check out this game that I made," and somebody there saw its potential?

**HS:** Just around the time I got hired, Square started looking into making games, so they were looking for amateur programmers and people interested in computers. So, including myself, eight of us joined the company as contract employees. And that's where the game-making process started with the company.

**EGM:** *Final Fantasy* is interesting because it brought together three critical creative elements: you, composer Nobuo Uematsu, and character designer Yoshitaka Amano. How did all of that come together?

**HS:** Well, it's a very simple story of how Uematsu and I came together. Square was right by [the Yokohama campus of] Keio University in the city's Hiyoshi district. He was working part-time at a music-rental shop, and one of our employees—a female employee who was working on the art side of things—knew him. We needed someone to compose music for our next game, so we asked him if he was interested in doing it. That's how we got to know each other. It was just on the street, basically: "Hey, what's up? I heard you can write music. Why don't you write music for us?"

**EGM:** Did you guys feel like a bunch of electro-hippies on the street? "Hey, dude! Make some music for our game!"

**HS:** Yeah, it was a totally casual, "Hey, what's up?"

**EGM:** So you had the music, but you knew you needed art. This preceded what we know now as "character design." How did you go about drafting

Yoshitaka Amano into the project?

**HS:** Well, back then we were able to create pixelated art with our in-house staff. Koichi Ishii [who later went on to direct the *Mana* series] was able to handle that, and his quality was really high. So if we were to just make a game based off what he provided, we were able to do that. But since *Final Fantasy* was the first title in what would become a huge series—being a role-playing game and having a huge story and world and everything else behind it—we thought we were limiting ourselves if we didn't pursue some other image or illustration that would open up the world of the game beyond just the pixelated art. I was able to provide Amano with the scenario for *Final Fantasy*, but beyond that, I left it up to him to fulfill the areas that weren't necessarily written scenarios or components of the actual game. I wanted him to make it a broader world and widen what could possibly be the world of *Final Fantasy*. So that was the approach that we had for him.

**EGM:** And what he provided wasn't even like what he'd really done before, at least when he was at anime production company Tatsunoko. What was your initial reaction to what Amano gave you?

**HS:** I was amazed. Amazed. Just amazed. It was completely beyond my expectations, and the way it was beyond my expectations was that it was so strong and bold, and I could tell a lot of energy and thought went into it. And I still remember exactly what it looked like: It was a giant with four small characters standing below it. When I saw it, I was just amazed at what I was seeing before my eyes. I'll never forget the moment I first saw that. At the time, I thought, "Well, maybe one day, we can translate this image into an actual game." That's how strong—that's how meaningful—it was. Finally, now, more than 20 years later, games are getting very close to what I actually saw.

**EGM:** How do you feel about the fact that nobody's actually made an RPG that's done Amano's art justice? There aren't any games out there just yet that look like his paintings in 3D.

**HS:** It would be so amazing if Amano's artwork came to life—the exact thing I saw back then—in a game. Yeah, we have a little bit more to go, but I think we're getting close. And even if his artwork in a video-game form, it's still alive. It's always alive. So to see that, to realize that in game-form and let it come alive, would be the best thing ever.

**EGM:** Did you have any other ideas for

eventually caught up and passed them as far as the number of games, but *Dragon Quest* always had Yuji Horii at the helm, and *Final Fantasy* always had you. So, was there any kind of intense rivalry, or was it more casual than that?

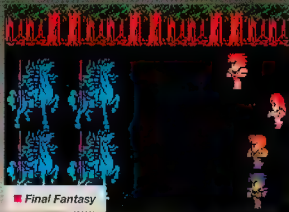
**HS:** There was definitely a rivalry; even though you may not have seen it in our expressions, it was definitely there. We were the late bloomers, but we knew—by the numbers, as you said—that we were going to beat them at some point, so when we did, we were really happy! [Laughs] But at the same time, we eventually worked with Horii on *Chrono Trigger*, and he's a genius. The way he writes scripts and the meanings that come out of his stories are one-of-a-kind. He's got his own special touch, and I've got a lot of respect for him. I think the touch is in his script and how he writes his storylines. Being Japanese and reading it in Japanese, it's the perfect scenario. But I'm not quite sure that when it's translated—

**EGM:** That the English-language script still captures all of the nuances?

**HS:** Yeah, exactly. I don't know if it's being translated properly, or if it has his special touch. That's up to the users to make that determination. But that's probably the main attraction of Horii.

**EGM:** The arrival of 32-bit systems and *Final Fantasy VII* were real turning points for Square. Not only did Amano's artwork not take center stage—everything moved over to Tetsuya Nomura—but it was also a really exciting time; you guys left Nintendo behind. Can you recall what that era was like around 1996 and '97?

**HS:** Yeah, that was a major turning point. We all remember when *Final Fantasy* made the move to the PlayStation platform. At that time, we knew the next wave in gaming was 3D, so there was a lot of research going on. We spent an enormous amount of time researching our next big goal and how to achieve it. We purchased a lot of Silicon Graphics machines and did a mock-up of *Final Fantasy* using those machines—so there was actually a completed version of the first *Final Fantasy* using the Silicon Graphics machines where you would control the characters with a mouse; we were convinced that it would be the basis for the next *Final Fantasy*. So when we looked at the Nintendo 64 and the limitations with the cartridge format, we saw the disc-based PlayStation 1 was the way to go. We were convinced that was the way to go. We were pretty much the only



Final Fantasy

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■ Aki from  
*Final Fantasy:  
The Spirits  
Within*

choice we had. So I said, "I'm sorry, Nintendo!" [Laughs]

**EGM:** You started with Square when they were very embryonic, and now you've started over with Mistwalker. How is it different creating a game studio now versus 25 years ago?

**HS:** Talking simply about the product, every game that we're going to come out with is the biggest challenge; every time we approach a new idea, a new concept, that's a challenge that we want to overcome. At Mistwalker, though, we can't just play around and create games; there's always a business side to it. So from a business standpoint, it's having a good balance between the business-operation side and being able to put out something that's going to be widely accepted by consumers.

But in the end, it really comes down to the product that we put out in front of every single consumer, and how proud we can be about that product. We can call it a trial-and-error process, but we still have a lot of challenges; we have limitations and boundaries with each new console that comes out. But being able to maximize our strengths and taking advantage of each console and being able to formulate something that I imagine or envision when I decide to make my next game—executing that is always going to be my goal. It continues to be my goal.



■ Blue Dragon

■ Amano, Uematsu, and Sakaguchi  
Uematsu: IUP.com  
Amano: UUP.com  
Sakaguchi: UUP.com for more info.



**EGM:** If you could work on any kind of dream project, what would it be?

**Nobuo Uematsu:** Last December was *Final Fantasy*'s 20th anniversary, so we had a 20th-anniversary gathering, and all the creators went out to drink. So there was me, Sakaguchi, [FFXII Producer Hiromichi] Tanaka, and all the old-school Square members. If I could do something again with those guys, that'd be my dream project. My dream project would be to work on a game with all of them again because our skills have grown a lot over the past 20 years, but our motivations toward making games haven't changed—

in fact, they might be stronger now. So I think it'd be pretty awesome to work with them again.

**EGM:** How often—and this is an important question—do you use your theremin?

**NU:** I haven't played it at any performances—like my concerts—at all. I've been trying to use it, but it's difficult to manage. So I'm waiting to use it, but I want to use it at one of my Black Mages [Uematsu's personal instrumental band—Ed.] concerts.

**EGM:** Have you gotten out lately? Are there any movies that you want to see?

**NU:** I'd love to see *The Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. Back in the day, when I was making *Final Fantasy* with Sakaguchi, we were always talking about the *Indy Jones* films. Like, in the first five minutes, it's always "boom action." The first five minutes were able to grab the viewer's heart—just grab them right... there. So I was always saying to Sakaguchi that I want to make a game like that. I'm not sure if we ever succeeded or not. But I wanted the first five minutes to give the impact, where you just want to play this game and get hooked in the first five minutes. That's what we've always been trying to do—be like *Indy Jones*.

## ...YOSHITAKA AMANO

The pioneer who provided the visual DNA for Final Fantasy's two-decade run ponders future dream projects

**EGM:** We just came from Uematsu's house, and we were asking him what his dream project would be. And he said that if he could have anything in the world, he'd want to work on a new project with you, Tanaka, and Sakaguchi together. What do you think about that?

**Yoshitaka Amano:** Me, too! That's a great idea—very fun, very interesting. I'd want to do that, too!

**EGM:** When you first started working on the original *Final Fantasy*, I guess you were working on designs based on

what Sakaguchi was asking you to provide for the game. Now, if you were to work on this dream project that Uematsu was talking about, and you were able to do whatever you wanted in terms of its world or its characters, what would you provide if you were given a blank slate? Would you create a world based on your Acorn characters? Would you do something completely different?

**YA:** I wouldn't know until that time comes, but I'd probably make something totally new. Because that's what a creator is always trying to do—produce

something. But whatever I did in the past is already in me, so there's no reason to go back to my old productions. That's why I'm always producing new stuff. So if this were to happen, I'd probably think of something totally new. Creativity is like a swinging bar; when you create something new, it swings more. But it's still tracing the tracks that you've made in the past.





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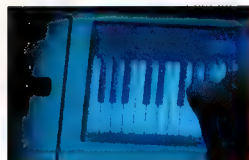


Just when you think life can't get any sweeter, along comes GameVideos. To see the clips below and more, check out [GameVideos.com/EGM](http://GameVideos.com/EGM).



**ZOMG: Gears of War 2 exclusive videos**

Get a taste of multiplayer with footage and a Q&A between 1UP members and Lead Designer Cliff Bleszinski.



**KEWL: 1UP Show: Korg DS-10 preview**

The musical-instrument manufacturer creates a synthesizer program for aspiring techno stars on the DS.



**MMORPG: Cutesy Concerto Gate gameplay**

Square Enix teams up with OnNet to make a free online role-playing game. Expect lots of avatars named Cloud.



**HAWT: Tons (and tons) of E3 2008 event coverage**

In addition to our E3 coverage at [E3.1UP.com](http://E3.1UP.com), we gather the best trailers this year's show had to offer...which unfortunately are booth-babe free.



JAPAN  
ISSUE

ONLINE SCENE

# THE ONLINE WORLD ENDS WITH SQUARE ENIX

We speak with the man keeping *Final Fantasy XI* alive  
By James Mielke



While deciding whether or not Fafnir drops a +8 sword of Awesome, Hironomichi Tanaka found

time to work on the DS remake of *FFIX* as well.

**IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT**—except for the still-populated realm of *Final Fantasy XI*. This massively multiplayer online role-playing game is still thriving thanks to a dedicated legion of fans who simply won't accept the reality that their fantasy world may eventually end—or not. We recently spoke with Square Enix Producer Hironomichi Tanaka to find out the fate of *FFXI* and what his talented team is working on next.

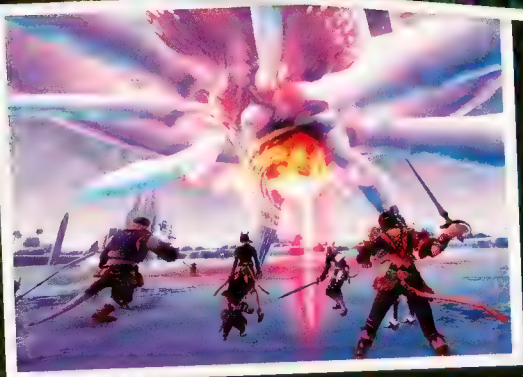
**EGM:** Since *Final Fantasy XI* is the only successful MMORPG to ever hit a videogame console—surviving for seven years and counting—can you tell us what you think has attributed to *FFXI*'s long-lasting success?

**Hironomichi Tanaka:** Actually, that's a mystery to us as well. But the fact that the users have stuck with the game for so long gives us something

to build off of. And the opinions that we get from the players—we take that, and we try to give something back. And it's that constant back-and-forth with the players, and the success that we've had communicating with our fans, that's helped us continue for so long.

**EGM:** How do you feel about the state of Japanese game development? Nowadays, it seems like only the top-tier Japanese game developers are able to survive and create cutting-edge stuff, while most of the lower-tier developers seem to be going the way of downloadable games only.

**HT:** Yes, this is something that our president, Yoichi Wada, seems to be touching on a lot lately. The Japanese market really hasn't changed that much. It hasn't gone up or down. Whereas, especially over time, switching to more pow-



erful machines means more and more users in the European and U.S. markets. And because there are more users over there, that's why that market seems to be getting bigger. And while the Japanese market's not getting smaller, it's just not moving like the other two markets are.

**EGM:** What have you learned from making *FFXI* that you'll specifically take into your next MMO? Will there be any more expansions for *FFXI*?

**HT:** First of all, the [upcoming] MMO that we'll be working on is going to be different than *Final Fantasy XI*. And even though we have the same staff working on the project, and we've seen the good things from *FFXI*...we've also seen the things that the players maybe didn't like as much—including the bad things. We're going to be

using that info while we're making the next MMO. We're not going to make something that'll be exactly like *FFXI*. We're aiming for something different from the beginning.

**EGM:** So it won't necessarily replace it, then?

**HT:** Yes, and that's exactly it. We want [both games] to exist in the same world, to continue on, side-by-side, without one replacing the other. As long as gamers keep playing *FFXI*, we're going to continue making the content for it. And that has to do with the expansions as well. If gamers keep saying that they want to keep playing and that they want to keep exploring our worlds, then we'll keep providing content for them. For the time being, it'll be handled with patches like we've been doing. As for any announcements on our next MMO, I can't say anything.



## 5 Lives: Hideki Kamiya

When it comes to designing videogame women, most developers aim to enhance a certain central area (boobs, naturally). But not *Devil May Cry* creator Hideki Kamiya—this talented PlatinumGames designer (*Bayonetta*) chose to cosmetically upgrade the petite feet of his titular PS3/XB360 (shooting) star with fancy firearms. Smart thinking, sure, but can Kamiya blast through our five random questions without a miss? Let's see just how cocky he really is....

**1. You're not the first person to put weapons on a woman's feet. In what recent zombie flick did actress Rose McGowan sport an assault rifle for a leg?**

**Hideki Kamiya:** *Planet Terror*.

**EGM:** Correct.

**Lives remaining:**

**2. One of your game titles is the name of a Japanese Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) fighter—name it.**

**HK:** *Viewtiful Joe*?

**EGM:** Incorrect. *Okami* is the correct answer—the fighter's name is Yushin Okami.

**Kamiya's translator:** There was a pro wrestler in Japan that was called Viewtiful Joe.

**EGM:** Sorry, professional wrestling doesn't count.

**Lives remaining:**

**3. Ready at Dawn ported *Okami* to the Wii. They also developed an acclaimed PSP prequel for a series many say mimics *Devil May Cry*'s style. What's the series?**

**HK:** *God of War*.

**EGM:** Correct.

**Lives remaining:**

**4. You really have worked on platinum games—tell us the name of the best-selling game you've made.**

**HK:** *Resident Evil 2*.

**EGM:** Correct. *Resident Evil 2* is currently the second-best-selling Capcom game with 4,960,000 copies sold.

**Lives remaining:**

**5. OK, last question: Really, now—when is the devil finally going to cry?**

**HK:** Devils never cry.

**EGM:** That's correct! They never do.

**Lives remaining:**

**Game Over:** You're a real crackshot, Kamiya. Now we're going to go cry for failing to win our game. Because we're not devils, but we are sore losers.

FINAL FANTASY XI





■ FIFA's Footii mode (bottom) and Madden's custom passing system (left) are Wii exclusives.



WII KNOWS SPORTS

# NO WORK AND ALL-PLAY

EA Sports performs a balancing act for its hardcore fans and the expanding Wii audience *By Giancarlo Varanini*

**MORE FUN, FASTER**—that's the new motto for EA Sports and its new All-Play label, which will be used exclusively for its 2008 lineup of Wii sports games, including *Madden NFL 09*. And while that motto may immediately conjure up visions of horrible *Wii Sports* clones, All-Play is more of an attempt to ease the *Wii Sports* crowd—as well as the Wii's broader audience—into the typical EA Sports experience by introducing features and modes of play that are generally less intimidating.

The birth of All-Play stems from last year's lineup of sports games for the Wii. Games like *Tiger Woods* were successful from a game-play standpoint due to their intuitive nature. But others failed to make the same impact on the Wii's casual audience. "We shipped our *08* games, and we watched a lot of people play them," says EA's Steve Chiang, head of development for the All-Play label. "*Tiger* did really well because the mechanics lined up really well with the game. We saw...a lot of dads buying the game or getting it as a gift for Father's Day. [Meanwhile], a lot of those same guys were getting *Madden*, and what we found was that the complexity was just getting in the way [of their enjoyment]. We ended up looking at our titles and thinking the simulation thing is great for a certain audience."

The implication is that this certain audience exists mostly on the PS3 and the Xbox 360, potentially leaving Wii owners out in

the cold when it comes to the simulation elements of games like *Madden NFL 09*. As such, fans have been quick to criticize EA for its apparent dumbing down of its sports franchises on the Wii in order to implement these new All-Play features. But Chiang points out that this isn't necessarily the case. "EA Sports is definitely about the full simulation experience, and we didn't want to lose that. But we want to make [the games] more fun to play. A lot of these games still have the same depth, but what we try to do is make it so it's easy to get into them. For *Madden*, it's more fun from the get-go," he says. "You still have the depth of the franchise and all these big playbooks, but we allow you to simplify the play-calling so it's as easy as one button press. It's pick up and play, but it's not a dumbed-down version of the game. It's the full experience."

Still, other changes and additions under the All-Play banner amount to more than just streamlined play-calling—another reason why EA Sports' hardcore fans are up in arms. But aside from some presentation elements, many of these features are in separate modes for each game. "We did try

to make the presentation more fun. We use the Miis in the presentation," Chiang says. "The Footii mode in *FIFA* allows you to play 8-on-8 as Miis. You can bring in Ronaldinho and other top stars, and you can also bring in your own Miis, so that's tailored around the [Wii], and it's a simplified experience. You can use the Wii Remote in what we call Point and Play, so you actually point to where you want to pass it, press the button, and the ball gets passed."

Online play is another big feature in the All-Play games, and while you can introduce new, friendlier modes to attract a more casual audience, getting those players online is an entirely different story. "We're seeing a lot of adults play games [on the Wii]," he says. "If they have a regular golf foursome, we want to see them play [*Tiger*] the Thursday before they go out and play on the weekend. But it's a different audience, so the question is: Can we get these guys to hook up their Wiis online and then match up or find each other and play? Online play is something we want to make easier to do."

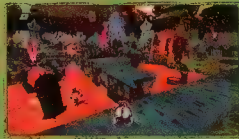
Making things easier to do on a platform that prides itself on accessibility? That doesn't sound like such a bad idea. 🐅

➤ **"It's pick up and play, but it's not a dumbed-down version of the game. It's the full experience."**

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## Computer Gaming World

By Shawn Elliott

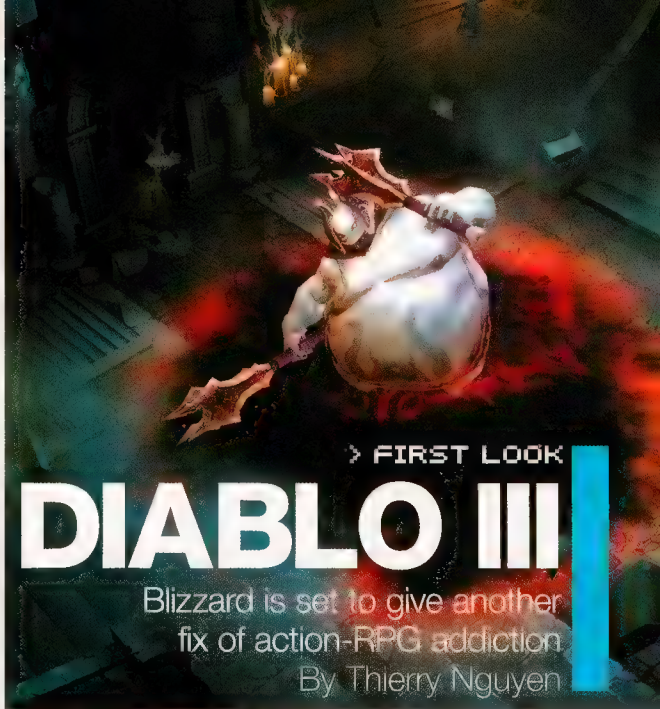
A wiggly alien unlike any videogame *E.T.* I've seen wobbles toward the screen. Squidlike and soft-bodied, it chases the camera, oozing over obstacles and squeezing through openings smaller than its bulky, convulsing body. Give it time, and it will get to you. Watch an octopus intelligence test on YouTube, in which smart cephalopods stop at nothing to snatch ocean crabs from inside screw-top bottles and small-mouthed containers, and you'll understand this creature's player-terrorizing potential. Too bad it's only a tech demo.

Graphics-card giant Nvidia is parading its next-gen physics solution (the company acquired physics specialist Ageia this year) and citing performance figures with a Discovery Channel narrator's nonchalance. More impressive are the wonders that its powerhouse processors perform on the monitor: water less like Vaseline than a million droplets that splash, puddle, and spill over—and that horrifying space squid contorting its mobile and spineless mass.

We hear a whole lot about graphics that are as gorgeous as they are pointless; however, this is the kind of technology that invents fresh forms of interaction. The problem: Few publishers can afford to fund the development of costly system-showcase PC software. Instead, they're starting to shoot for the comparative safety of multiplatform release plans, which means that any perks specific to the computer version will pertain only to appearance and performance. In other words, developers aren't able to design gameplay that takes these differences into account, at least not until a new generation of Xboxes and PlayStations debuts in the next decade. Nonetheless, PC demonstrations such as Nvidia's will continue to offer even console gamers a glimpse at tomorrow's triple-A experiences.



**1UP PC Senior Executive Editor Shawn Elliott suggests that EGM readers search YouTube for "Indonesian Mimic Octopus" and then imagine the same monster stalking them through a space station.**



> FIRST LOOK

# DIABLO III

Blizzard is set to give another fix of action-RPG addiction

By Thierry Nguyen

**Platform:** PC  
**Publisher:** Blizzard  
**Developer:** Blizzard  
**Release Date:** TBA

**FOR YOU NEOPHYTES** wondering what all the fuss is about, the *Diablo* series took the randomized dungeon-crawling formula of old-school PC role-playing games (like *Rogue*) and completely redefined it for the modern era. *Diablo*—and its sequel—had that perfect mix of randomized dungeons, crazy critters, awesome loot, and addicting action. Naturally, both titles rocked the sales charts, so it's no wonder they beget knockoffs like *Titan Quest* for PC and *Champions of Norrath* for PS2.

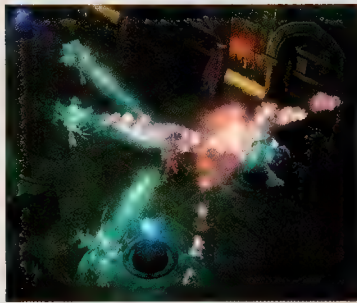
But *Diablo* is a venerable franchise at this point—the first game came out in 1997, and its sequel debuted the same year as the PS2 (2000). While *Diablo III* developer Blizzard doesn't look to mess with the formula too much, they are adding some modern touches. One of the most significant additions is a tweak to the randomized-dungeon formula; not only are dungeons, monsters, and the loot within randomized, but the game will also feature randomized scripted events. Yep, that's right—"randomized" and "scripted" in the same

phrase. It's difficult to fully explain how that works, but the developers claim that dungeons will sometimes spawn out-of-nowhere moments, such as a boss monster smashing through the wall like the Kool-Aid Man or the player running into a virgin sacrifice that conjures a demon—adding even more replayability to the game.

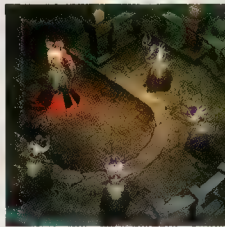
And though *Diablo III* is a decidedly PC-only product, the developers cite two of the best console action-adventure games as significant influences. You can trace the overall visceral tone of *Diablo III* to the raw brutality of *God of War* (along with the piñata-like explosion of red orbs that pop out of every enemy death).

"We're thinking, 'This is an action-RPG, with a capital A on the action,' so we really wanted to make the game a lot more visceral," says Rob Pardo, Blizzard's executive vice president of game design. "We kind of took some cues from *God of War* and games like that. [We're] really trying to ratchet up the visceral feel of the game to an 11 on a 10-point scale."

Furthermore, the developers aim



■ A Barbarian rages away at some cult fools before he hooks up with his buddy.



to combine *God of War*'s epic, wide-screen-scale bosses with the intelligent design that requires skillful abilities over brute force—like the bosses found in *Zelda* games—to create *Diablo III*'s boss monsters. The first example shown was the Thousand Pounder—a demonic fatty conjured via virgin sacrifice. But this demonic roly-poly also winds two giant maces and chases you around the dungeon while using his gluttonous bulk to wantonly smash. An even bigger boss is the humongous Siegebreaker Assault Beast. When you encounter this screen-filling monstrosity, he rambles around, brushing off most player characters like gnats while laying waste to the surrounding environment by gleefully knocking down columns hither and thither. At one point, this deadly beast kills a player by snacking on him—just like when that Rancor crunches up a Gamorrean guard in *Return of the Jedi*.

In addition to new dungeon features and enemies, Blizzard has revealed two character classes: the Barbarian and the Witch Doctor. The Barbarian

is the kind of character you'll play if you want to drop someone extremely vicious—like, say, *God of War* protagonist Kratos—into the *Diablo* universe. This burly brute can perform giant leaps that shake the ground upon landing, or he can spin like a whirlwind with weapons out, filleting surrounding enemies. He can even smack the ground and cause a minor earthquake that shatters enemies and terrain—or just hit a wall hard enough to make it collapse onto targets.

If you prefer trickiness to brute force, though, you'll want to go for the Witch Doctor. The designers consider him the "fire, disease, zombies, and mind-control" class. Sure, he (or she—all classes can be either gender) doesn't make his fist connect with the baddies' faces like the Barbarian,

but he can toss firebombs from afar or conjure a locust swarm to deliver a face full of plague to enemies. The Witch Doctor can also summon weird creatures (the example shown were "mongrels") to do all of the dirty work. Additionally, he can conjure up an image that scares the bejesus out of any nearby enemy and can even cast confusion spells to make all of the baddies fight each other.

Since we've only seen two classes and two environments, we know *Diablo III* won't be out for a while. Until then, we'll just be replaying *Diablo II*. Don't bother scouring the bargain bins for knockoffs—go get *Diablo II* and its expansion on the cheap, and then click your night away. You'll learn why the *Diablo III* hype train is already going full speed ahead. 🚂

➤ “[We’re] really trying to ratchet up the visceral feel to an 11 on a 10-point scale.”



## A Japanese Renaissance? Please



By John Davison

As *EGM* goes Japan-crazy this month, I figured somebody needed to step forward and raise the doubts that surely so many of us have been harboring.

Why? Because I'm starting to wonder why no one is looking at some of this stuff and asking some obvious questions, like: "Why are we still stuck in 1998?" I've been a gamer a long time, and I'm almost certainly getting cynical and out of touch, but when I look at a lot of the stuff from Japan that's being developed with a more "global" view, I wonder what the hell is going on. Global gaming tastes have changed dramatically, yet so many of the Japanese games that make it here seem to be stuck in an early-'90s time warp.

A decade ago, the situation was completely different. We were all obsessed with Japanese games because they were so much better than everything else. They were more imaginative, more elegantly designed, and more appealing. I don't know about you, but these days, I find myself rolling my eyes at the absurdity of the titles that get green-lit for the U.S. Aren't you all tired of the ridiculous bee-puking, leather-clad, gunsword-wielding, androgynous ninja demon soldiers that seem to infest every thing lately? Why has *Devil May Cry* become the template for "Japanese-style action games"? Three of the four *DMCs* sucked. Why haven't Japanese role-playing games changed dramatically since Square stumbled upon a global formula that worked in *Final Fantasy VII*? Why are so many titles plagued with ludicrously challenging difficulty levels, absurdly overcomplicated control schemes, or cameras that need constant nannying?

Let's hope that this month's exposé of Japanese game design marks the beginning of a renaissance—not of creativity, which is clearly alive and well, but of a willingness to embrace the changing global gaming audience.



*John Davison, former editorial director of the 1UP Network, is the cofounder of family gaming website What They Play (www.whattheyplay.com) and a regular guest on the 1UP Yours podcast.*

# THE BIG ONES

We dig for deets so you don't have to



## Call of Duty: World at War

PS3/XB360 • Activision • Fall 2008

The megaselling franchise returns to the traditional World War II setting, and the focus isn't just on the end of the war in the Pacific theater—expect to don a Russian uniform as you return to the conflict in Europe. New to the series is co-op play, which will be available both offline (two-player) and online (four-player). Finally, variety highlighted our early look at the game. One level charges you with manning the gun positions of a flying boat on a rescue mission in hostile waters; another features a tense escape through a burning building.

## Resident Evil 5

PS3/XB360 • Capcom • 2009

In a recent demonstration, Producer Jun Takeuchi showed off the first gameplay footage, set in an African shantytown that's approximately four times the size of *Resident Evil 4*'s village. We watched protagonist Chris Redfield face off against a hammer-toting dude who was less than happy to see him, and while Redfield sustained a few blows in the demo, he was still standing thanks to an invincibility mode—in the actual game, one hit from the hammer guy can finish you off. In other news, *RE5* will spill the secrets behind the mother of all viruses: the Progenitor Virus.



## Resistance 2

PS3 • Sony CEA • Fall 2008

Come face-to-face with the 300-foot-tall Leviathan boss, shown off in the latest game footage set in Chicago, and you'll likely believe resistance is futile. But remember, guns kill things...including aliens. In a recent episode of its *Full Moon Show* podcast, Insomniac employees explained the thinking behind limiting players to two weapons at a time: It lets the developer focus on making the levels and enemy encounters more intense rather than spending time balancing each for a variety of weapons. Also, they assure us they'll be introducing the more exotic weapons, like rocket launchers and other thumpers, earlier on than in the first game.







BE CAREFUL WHEN YOU FIGHT THE MONSTERS. LEST YOU BECOME ONE.

-FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE

# TOO HUMAN



Microsoft  
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Jump in.

XBOX 360 LIVE

# EAST MEETS REST

Western developers weigh in on the world's ever-changing gaming landscape

By Evan Shamoon



**LOOKING AT THE HISTORY OF VIDEOGAMES,** it's tough to dispute that the Japanese have embraced the medium more than any other culture. Generally speaking, games have enjoyed greater cultural attention in Japan than in the West (just hop on any subway train or watch television for 10 minutes in Tokyo for examples of this), and the industry's relative market share of total entertainment in Japan is higher as well.

But things have changed—and continue to. The Japanese gamer has become more fickle, and the audience is now more enigmatic; North America has long since overtaken Japan as the world's top gaming market in terms of both production and consumption. And with some exceptions (Nintendo being the most obvious), the Japanese industry is still trying to figure out how to cater to Western tastes without abandoning its local audience.

We spoke with a handful of native Western developers about the past, present, and future of the Japanese game industry. On the panel are Canada-based Dr. Ray Muzyka and Dr. Greg Zeschuk, coexecutive producers at BioWare (*Mass Effect*, *Jade Empire*); Ryan Payton, assistant producer at Kojima Productions in Japan (*Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots*); and Jake Kazdal, concept artist at EA Los Angeles and former designer for Tetsuya Mizuguchi's United Game Artists in Japan (*Space Channel 5, Rez*).

**EGM:** Generally speaking, how have Japanese games influenced you as developers? What do these games

do better than their Western counterparts?

**Dr. Ray Muzyka:** Our passion for Japanese games goes all the way back to the '80s with those arcade classics by Sega, Capcom, and Taito—to name just a few—and, of course, the original Nintendo console games like *Mega Man* and *Super Mario Bros*. You find some very interesting characters in Japanese games, and that's something that we try to incorporate into all our story-driven games from BioWare.

**Dr. Greg Zeschuk:** There's a long history of console gaming in Japan—much more prevalent than PC gaming—so it's pretty logical to conclude that the level of sophistication of console gaming is very high. Franchises like *Resident Evil* have continued to progress in sophistication and have redefined themselves during the last few years, while other games have tended to get stuck in their historical configuration. You sometimes feel like you're playing an updated version of a 15-year-old game. It might be the challenge of having such a rich gaming history filled with such tradition. One thing that's always been very strong in games from Japan is very compelling art influenced by Asian history, literature, manga, and anime. Many games are just plain beautiful to look at, which goes to show what we've always believed—that videogames are indeed a true art form.

**Ryan Payton:** To me, Japanese games are all about the orchestrated

experience. The designers behind most popular Japanese titles have a specific goal of how they want you to play their game. When this linear path is handled carefully—like in all good Japanese games—the result can be a truly epic experience.

I've been influenced by the acute attention to detail of Japanese games—the *Monster Hunter Freedom 2* Japanese strategy guide is bigger than a phone book, listing hundreds of alchemy mixtures and in-game cooking recipes. *Final Fantasy XII's* fictional world has been given a Tolkien-esque level of attention, right down to centuries of fictional history and even its own language.

This urgency to become so engrossed in the game world you're creating has been infectious. For *Metal Gear Solid 4*, we researched botanical texts to decide just the right kind of flower that would appear during a pivotal scene.

**Jake Kazdal:** I grew up in the NES generation, and in the '80s, the Japanese were absolute kings of play control, responsive and intuitive interfaces, and ingenuity in game design. All those years of playing *Mario* and *Zelda* really burned those impressions into my head—and still, to this day, I'm an absolute snob when it comes to responsiveness and play control in games.

**EGM:** Flip side: Where do Japanese developers go wrong? Or is it simply a case of a different focus in the East versus the West in terms of general philosophy?



**GZ:** Both styles of game design certainly have a lot to admire in each other—but ultimately, it's all about personal preference. For example, if you like deep character customization, morally challenging decisions, and nonlinear plots, you'll find those elements more prevalent in Western role-playing games like *Mass Effect*. If you prefer more tightly scripted, intricate stories that unfold in a linear fashion, more like a book or movie, there are some cool Eastern RPGs like *Final Fantasy* that are awesome to play. Both approaches can be successful.

**RP:** If Japanese game studios want to stay competitive, they'd better get serious about playtesting their games. Just as games become more complex, there are more pitfalls that can potentially confuse the player. The tightly orchestrated gameplay experiences that Japanese game designers excel at should stay preserved, but it's arrogant for these designers to think that their development team in Tokyo can predict all the potential hiccups the consumer could encounter simply through internal playtesting—especially considering how many Americans and Europeans will be potentially buying the game.

**JK:** In my opinion, things have flipped, and we now live in Bizarro World, where Western games are all about play control and smooth interfaces, and Japanese games are now living in some alternate, Dark Age dimension, where they seem to have forgotten what's important in play control. Cameras and interfaces

in Japanese games now regularly drive me up the wall. It's absolutely uncanny how far things have switched between Western and Eastern game creation. Well, Nintendo's the exception—almost every major first-party game they put out is still genius. For nearly everyone else, though, it's like the move to 3D just didn't work out. When I played the original *Jak and Daxter*, I realized the torch had truly been passed, and unbelievably, certain Western studios were now kings of play control in a 3D world.

**EGM:** Technological advances aside, do you see a shift in what kinds of Japanese games are made today, as opposed to those we grew up on?

**RP:** I grew up loving Japanese games for their epic sense of scale and their earnest, emotionally charged narratives. But since I moved to Japan in 2003, I've witnessed the total transformation of the industry toward simple, family-friendly games and half-baked sequels, remakes, and reshapes of classic franchises. Five years ago, I would've never guessed that the Japanese public would turn its nose to the current-generation consoles—PS3, Xbox 360—as it has.

But the future isn't entirely bleak. The *Monster Hunter* PSP games have proven millions of Japanese are still looking for a hardcore gaming experience—they'd just rather do it on portable devices, not home consoles. I'm confident that Suda 51 and his team at Grasshopper will continue making original games that remind us why we loved Japanese games to begin with. And there's no question that Nintendo will continue challenging the definition of what games are—and sell millions of units in the process.

**EGM:** Kazdal, how was your experience working for Sega Japan different from your current role at EALA?

**JK:** Well, the big difference is that I now work fewer hours for more money. It's unfortunate that Japanese developer salaries are so small compared to companies in the States. Crunch time is *all the time* in Japan, and that's just part of the equation. A lot of Western developers are really trying to keep lifestyles more manageable and healthier. While I'm speaking generally here, I have many Western friends working at most of the major studios in Tokyo, and these observations are consistent across the board. ☹️

■ From left to right: Ryan Payton, Dr. Greg Muzyka, Dr. Greg Zeschuk, and Jake Kazdal.

❖ **“Japanese games are now living in some alternate dimension, where they seem to have forgotten what's important in play control.”**

—Jake Kazdal, concept artist at EA Los Angeles

# RETURN OF THE GAME

Apple raises the stakes in the handheld-game market By Joe Rybicki

YOU KNOW, WHEN WE DID THAT "IGAME" APRIL FOOLS' JOKE a couple of years back, we thought we were kidding. But at Apple's Worldwide Developers Conference in June, the company showed off a product that might go head-to-head against the PSP and DS: the iPhone.

Up to this point, iPhone games have been strictly Web-based, with *Bejeweled* and *Sudoku* representing the height of technology. But with the launch of Apple's new "App Store" and third-party developer support, the limitations of browser-based gaming are becoming a thing of the past.

Now, let's be honest: If you had a PSP or DS handy, you wouldn't give most mobile games a second glance. But the iPhone is vastly more powerful than other phones. Demos at WWDC showed games with graphics comparable to the DS or even the PSP, including a note-perfect rendition of *Super Monkey Ball* controlled solely by tilting the iPhone.

"From a technology standpoint, the iPhone is absolutely competitive with dedicated handheld game systems," says Sega's Ethan Einhorn, lead producer of *Super Monkey Ball*. And the iPhone has one significant edge over current handhelds: Since it lacks physical buttons, developers are free to create unique, intuitive control schemes for their games. "One of the biggest obstacles our industry has faced is that input devices have gotten too complex," Einhorn says. "For the uninitiated, that can be like learning how to type. The iPhone's inputs instantly make sense to people."

A source inside Apple expressed similar sentiments: "Like the Wii, it becomes an interface that's more intuitive than a whole series of buttons." The idea of a handheld Wii has industry pundits in a tizzy; *Forbes* even ran a column entitled "Why Apple Could Kill the Nintendo DS." And our Apple insider is similarly bullish on the idea. "I think it's pretty clear that this will be a better user experience than either the Nintendo DS or the PSP," he says. "If I were them, I'd be very worried."

Hyperbole? Perhaps. After all, Apple has shipped only 6 million iPhones to date, and while some analysts project iPhone sales to reach 18 million within a year, that's still only half of the PSP's current penetration and a quarter of the DS'. But with the instant gratification of the App Store and the bargain prices allowed by digital distribution (*Super Monkey Ball* retails for \$9.99, for example), the iPhone certainly stands a chance of taking a bite out of the handheld-game market.



■ In addition to Sega and its popular *Super Monkey Ball* series, Square Enix, former EA Los Angeles Studio Head Neil Young, and others have said they'll be making games for the iPhone.

# ASPHALT 4

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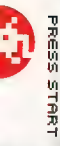
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# TRIFECTA

Space marines and aliens got ya down? These three XB360 JRPGs are for you. By Kat Bailey



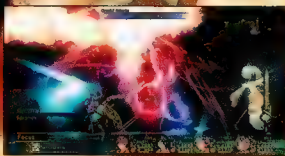
**CONVENTIONAL WISDOM** over the last few console generations says that the PlayStation is the place to go for Japanese role-playing games. But the Xbox 360 has been quietly stealing away Sony's cred among JRPG fans for some time now, thanks to titles like *Blue Dragon* and *Lost Odyssey*. Microsoft hopes to put to rest the question of which console has the better spiky-haired lineup with a triumvirate of Square Enix-published games: *Infinite Undiscovery*, *The Last Remnant*, and *Star Ocean: The Last Hope*.



## **Infinite Undiscovery** XB360 • Square Enix • September 2008

No one seems to be entirely sure what being "undiscovered" entails, and developer tri-Ace isn't telling. What they are talking about, however, is the game's graphics engine, which they built from the ground up to ensure theirs would be among the better-looking RPGs on 360. "Our basic belief," says Director Hiroshi Ogawa, "is that in order to create something that's up to our standards, it's better to create something on our own rather than borrowing something somebody else created."

In terms of gameplay, *Infinite Undiscovery* features real-time lock-on combat and encounters that force the player to make creative use of the environment to slow down enemies. One example we saw had the player using a dragon's own attacks to clear surrounding obstacles. The game world will also change in real time—a possible source of the promised infinite undiscoveries this one may hold for RPG fans.





## The Last Remnant

XB360 (and eventually PS3) • Square Enix • TBA

Square Enix hasn't exactly been making waves with new and original properties lately—for the last couple of years, the house of *Final Fantasy* has seemed quite content to release an endless parade of sequels and remakes. But with *The Last Remnant*, the RPG powerhouse appears once again to be breaking new ground.

The publisher has gone out of its way to find young and ambitious internal developers for the project—an unusual move in the seniority-oriented Japanese corporate culture. This plucky crew is developing *The Last Remnant* with an eye toward the Western market, using titles like BioWare's *Mass Effect* as a major source of inspiration. "What's interesting about *Mass Effect* is that I didn't really recognize it as a role-playing game," says Director Hiroshi Takai. "So if *Mass Effect* is called an RPG, then maybe we can do something outside the box. I consider *Last Remnant* the starting point for something new."

The team has licensed the Unreal Engine 3 to help build what they term a "massive battle system" that could potentially allow for clashes involving whole armies. The game will initially be released as an exclusive to 360.



PREVIOUS START

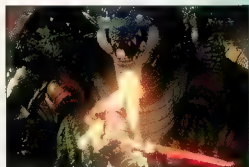
## Star Ocean: The Last Hope

XB360 • Square Enix • 2009 in Japan, TBA in North America

While it may not have the cachet of franchises like *Final Fantasy* or *Dragon Quest*, *Star Ocean* has still managed to build up a nice following. Producer Yoshinori Yamagishi now aims to take the successful mix of sci-fi and fantasy back to the era before space travel in what he says is a more realistic take on the near future following World War III.

*Star Ocean: The Last Hope* is receiving a fresh coat of shiny high-def paint for the Xbox 360. But it retains most of the elements inherent to the series, such as item creation and real-time battles, with a few new stealth elements thrown in.

Yamagishi would like to see *Star Ocean* rise to the level of *FF*'s visual excellence. "In *Final Fantasy*, the artistic imagery and visuals are brought to life, and that's their own realism," he says. "But in [*The Last Hope*], we're trying to create something more realistic." ❖



## RUMOR MILL

Your monthly dose of gaming gossip By Quartermann

**Resurrected Rumors:**

Generally, you've gotta let a rumor percolate for a few months before it's proven to be true, but sometimes the truth slips out early. A recent public-relations leak confirmed last month's Q-intel about the special skateboard controller Activision is designing for the upcoming Tony Hawk series reboot.

**SUMMER'S A ROUGH SEASON FOR RUMORMONGERS.**

Game publishers valiantly protect their big secrets until the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo trade show, where everything gets laid bare at glitzy, million-dollar press conferences. Since we didn't want to tell you a bunch of crap that you might already know, the Q was forced to skirt the shadowy fringes of the biz, picking up morsels of obscure knowledge in sleazy speakeasies. You wouldn't believe the stuff you'll overhear while sipping a Bartles & Jaymes next to the *Warlords* cabinet....

**REVIVING THE OLD BEAR 'N' BIRD SHOW**

If you're a fan of Rare's *Banjo-Kazooie* Nintendo 64 platformers who feels a bit iffy about the vehicle-building focus of upcoming sequel *Nuts & Bolts*, help is on the way. Both *Banjo-Kazooie* and its sequel, *Banjo-Tooie*, are headed to Xbox Live Arcade this fall, and these versions will even incorporate the previously announced (yet never realized) "Stop 'N' Swop" feature that allows you to travel between the two games' worlds to unlock secret areas and items.

**KONAMI DIGS INTO THE VAULT**

Konami must've noticed all the good buzz that Capcom's *Mega Man 9* and *Bionic Commando: Rearmed* are garnering, because one of its most beloved (yet overlooked) action-adventure franchises of yore will soon get a surprise retro-revival sequel. We'd be tarred and feathered if we named mascot names, but rest assured that it's neither *Bucky O'Hare* nor the *Biker Mice from Mars*. Oh, and we hear this all-new version will even stay true to the series' 2D roots.

**BEGUN THE CLONE WAR HAS**

By now, we've all warmed up to the seemingly

incongruous inclusion of lightsaber-swinging guest characters in *Soulcalibur IV* (hell, Darth Vader's a huge improvement over Todd McFarlane's circus freak Necrid from *SC2*). So we're stoked to hear murmurs that additional *Star Wars* characters could be coming to *SC4* as downloadable content. Since Lucasfilm is planning a serious marketing blitz to celebrate the theatrical release of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, it makes sense that ass-kickers from that flick such as Obi-Wan, Mace Windu, or General Grievous would make the cut...but then again, we could end up with Jabba the Hutt's son.

**JAPAN'S NEXT BATCH OF QUIRK**

You can depend on Japanese developers to deliver offbeat, palate-cleansing fare. We hear that Sony's hard at work on PSP follow-ups for both *LocoRoco* and *Patapon*, while *Lumines* developer Q Entertainment is busy crafting a new fantasy-themed adventure that's definitely not a sequel to *Ninety-Nine Nights*. 🍵

**Q-TIPS**

- Some of 2008's hottest titles appear to already be slipping into 2009. Don't expect *Halo Wars*, *Fable 2*, or *Call of Duty: World at War* to make this holiday.
- Namco Bandai allegedly plans to revisit the defunct *Dead to Rights* franchise, last seen in the mercifully cancelled *Extreme Force: Grant City Anti-Crime*.
- Rumors persist that *Halo* developer Bungie will soon announce development of multiplatform titles, including projects for the PlayStation 3.



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# COMING SOON

Games to remember in September



## Silent Hill: Homecoming

PS3/XB360 • Konami

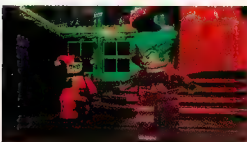
Shhh—be silent. Not only will the first U.S.-developed console entry in this moody survival-horror series feature the requisite erratically moving faceless nurses and other familiar favorites (Pyramid Head, anyone?), but it'll also introduce brand-new depraved monstrosities eager to snap at your every misstep. Luckily, war-vet protagonist Alex Shepherd brings plenty of combat training to the table, giving you more ways to dispatch pale-bodied bogeymen than ever before. Now, as long as the story delivers....



## FaceBreaker

PS3/XB360 • EA Sports

This is a game where you break faces—seriously. EA's 14 stylized cartoon characters aren't the usual "realistic" sports-title stars, and they've got the humorously exaggerated in-game animations to match—Voodoo, the rather large Mozambican witch doctor, likes to sit on his foes, for instance. After landing enough heavy or light blows (or defending properly) to sufficiently work up the punch meter, you can let loose a devastating finisher and become exactly what the title describes.



## Lego Batman

Wii/PS3/XB360/PS2/PSP/  
DS • Warner Bros.

Holy Lego, Batm—sorry, we couldn't resist. But when it comes to developer Traveller's Tales co-op game, where you smash the bejesus out of anything and everything Lego-constructed, do we really need to hold back the geekery? And if running through Gotham's slick streets as the Dynamic Duo—armed with gadget-packed utility belts—isn't exciting enough, you can always take evildoers like the Joker for a romp around town.

## MORE SEPTEMBER RELEASES

**Destroy All Humans!**  
**Path of the Furor**  
PS3/XB360 • THQ

**Borderlands**  
PS3/XB360 • 2K Games

**NHL 09**  
PS3/XB360 • EA Sports

**Spo: Creatures**  
DS • EA Games

**Legendary**  
PS3/XB360 • Gamecock

**Dragon Quest IV: Chapters of the Chosen**  
DS • Square Enix

**Viva Piñata: Pocket Paradise**  
DS • THQ

**Star Wars: The Force Unleashed**  
Wii/PS3/XB360/PS2/DS/PSP  
• LucasArts

**TNA Impact!**  
Wii/PS3/XB360/PS2 • Midway

(All dates on this page are subject to change.)



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SPECIAL FEATURE

# BAYONETTA

PlatinumGames continues our Japanese game coverage with bullets, beehives, and babes. By James Mielke

*Devil May Cry* creator Hideki Kamiya hopes to redefine the action genre (again) with an epic showdown between witches and angels like you've never seen before.

**EGM** shows you how he'll do it with...



# ...25 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BAYONETTA

**1** The names of Bayonetta's guns are Parsley, Sage, Rosemary, and Thyme. Together, they're known as Scarborough Fair. Director Hideki Kamiya is a fan of '60s folk rockers Simon & Garfunkel, who made the traditional English ballad famous.

**2** Bayonetta wields four guns in total: two guns in her hands and another two on her feet.



**KAMIYA SAYS:** "With *Okami*, I tried to create an adventure game that a lot of people could enjoy. But for this one, I'm really concentrating on the action. And we're a team that's really good at action games, so we wanna create an extreme action game. So when we call a climax scene a "climax scene," it's not just a climax scene—it's like the extreme climax scene. It's not just something that you can sit back and press the button and get through. You have to be really into the game and sweating and drying your contact lenses while you're playing. That kind of serious gameplay."

**3** Enemies drop weapons, which Bayonetta can pick up and use for a limited time. One of these is a tuba, which functions as a bazooka.

**4** When Bayonetta jumps or double-jumps, gossamer butterfly wings temporarily sprout from her back. When she lands, dozens of tiny butterflies appear at her feet.



**KAMIYA SAYS:** "When she does the two-step jumps, she's using the power that only women have, the beautiful power, the beauty in women. Beauty power."

Bayonetta's outfit isn't actually leather despite the stitching you see in the CG art—it's magical hair that covers her entire body, and it's used in her attacks. So in a game, she'll become more and more unclad as she uses these hair attacks. The most powerful ones render her almost completely nude. Uh-oh!



**KAMIYA SAYS:** "When she uses an attack, you can see her skin is revealed because she needs her hair to make the magic happen; you can see a lot of skin there."

**5** Similar to how *DmC: The Devil May Cry* used red orbs, Bayonetta feeds on angel halos as currency, which you use to power up

your weapons, unlock skills, or buy items.

**7** When Bayonetta fires her guns, the bullets ricochet off walls, causing additional damage to nearby enemies.

**8** Bayonetta's most powerful attacks summon a giant, smoky dragon or a giant, smoky stiletto heel out of the sky to stomp on her enemies. But again, it's not smoke that surrounds these summons—it's hair. So, yes, that dragon is a giant, slithering hair dragon, and that stiletto heel is a giant, sexy hair boot. You have to enter specific button commands in order to summon the hair monster, though, adding an element of skill. Hair monster? Salon summons? Beast boutique? You decide.

**9** When one of these powerful summons exits the area, it's punctuated by the appearance of purple sparkles.

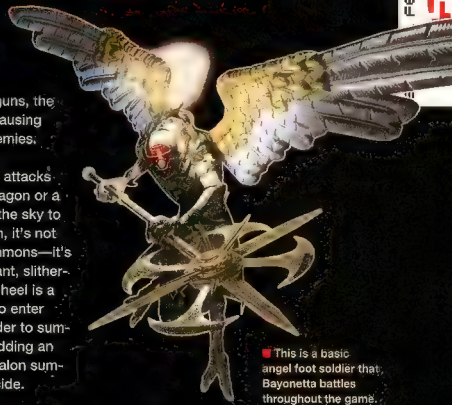
**10** The area we saw in the demo is known as Big Little City, but the level itself is called "The Entrance to the City." You see glowing, translucent pedestrians walking around, but these are all people in a parallel reality. Bayonetta can see them, but they can't see her. What they can see, however, is the collateral damage Bayonetta and her enemies cause during battle, causing the civilians to flee.

**11** Controls come in the form of a shoot button, a punch button, and a kick button. But you can purchase other, stronger combinations.

**12** Bayonetta uses "Witch Time"—like bullet time but for hot, sexy witches. In Witch Time, Bayonetta's senses become especially acute, and the environment (and enemies) around her slows down.

**13** Sometimes, an onscreen button prompt appears during combat (like the quick-time events in *Shenmue* or *Heavenly Sword*), which means it's time to mash buttons in order to inflict extra damage on an enemy. Tapping the button fast enough results in over-the-top super-moves—such as a guillotine dropping from the sky on your enemy (with predictable results)—called Torture Attacks. Another of these techniques causes an iron maiden to erupt from the ground, clamping your enemy shut inside of it.

**14** When Bayonetta starts out in Big Little City, you see a cut-scene where



**15** This is a basic angel foot soldier that Bayonetta battles throughout the game.

she walks into a field of flowers (sparkles rise from the ground, signifying angel power) with pillars and fountains in the background. A number of angels land on the ground in front of her, which means that a battle is about to ensue.

**16** Bayonetta has a spinning jump attack that fires her guns in 360 degrees. She can also perform a handstand and aim the guns on her feet at enemies.

**17** Bayonetta also wields a katana, but PlatinumGames won't reveal the name yet—expect more '60s folk-rock references. You can charge this blade for a more powerful attack, which causes a heart to appear on the pommel (a small detail, for sure). The heart beats as you charge it up, and dark fumes billow from the sword.

**18** More weapons will be added and revealed closer to the game's release. Each weapon has a monster spirit, which makes it stronger, and the context of the combat situation dictates which hairy summon appears.

**19** Angels are Bayonetta's main adversaries throughout most of the game, and we got a peek at a formidable, angelic foe at the end of the Big Little City zone. Kamiya says it's not a boss, but it's got some huge attacks courtesy of its giant two-handed ax—and this baddle pauses for a dramatic split second with every swing. Luckily, Bayonetta can jump over these attacks with or without Witch Time. Humorously, this giant miniboss has pathetically tiny angel wings, gold piercings, and the requisite angel's halo.

**1** A fine mist covers the ground during the miniboss battle, designed to create a "holy atmosphere"—and we've gotta admit that it looks pretty damn cool. The battle ends with an onscreen button prompt, which summons a giant hair dragon—who bites the angel miniboss in half. Chomp!

**2** The reward for besting this miniboss is a gold record (the kind a rock band gets when their album sells half a million copies) with the descriptor "Angel Singing Voice." But we're not sure whether it unlocks a music track or some other feature.

**3** Bayonetta has a huge chain and sickle that she uses for both ground-based and airborne attacks.

**4** The right trigger button on the Xbox 360 (presumably the R1 button on the PS3's DualShock 3) shoots. You can equip all four guns at once, or you can opt to swap out the pistols in her hands with the sword and use the guns on her feet as well. Certain weapons are specifically designed to be equipped on her hands, feet, or both.



**5** Bayonetta has been in the development stages for a year and a half—work started a little after *Okami* shipped.

**6** As Bayonetta attacks the enemy angel forces, she breaks off layers of their outer armor.

**7** What we saw of Bayonetta resembles *Devil May Cry* in a lot of ways—which Kamiya certainly acknowledges: "The part that showed you, the part that I can talk about," he says, "is the most boring part of the game." He promises that future stages will blow the doors open on the action. The final stage (which we saw but can't talk about) is truly epic, and it goes a long way toward supporting Kamiya's claims.



# STRAIGHT SHOOTER

We talk with Bayonetta's big poppa about how his latest action opus came to be

By James Mielke

**WHILE HE DOESN'T DO MANY INTERVIEWS,** PlatinumGames' Hideki Kamiya isn't a man of few words. Actually, he has quite a lot of things to say, especially regarding the competition (or lack thereof, as he sees it). He's also—despite his résumé of peerless action hits—a rather serene person. So how does this all make for a near flawless track record? *EGM* investigates.

**EGM:** *Bayonetta* is your latest action game. *Okami* had more of an action-adventure focus, but *Bayonetta* is pure action. What made you want to switch back to doing pure action?

**Hideki Kamiya:** After establishing PlatinumGames we had to come up with a game concept. But before doing that, we started to study games, study technology, experiment with technology. That's what the dev people and programmers were doing. So the planners like me were like, "What should we do? Maybe we should focus on making game plans." So we went and did that, and we were thinking up two or three game concepts every week. These days when I look at the market, I see games that are not direct games but kind of...abnormal? Not abnormal, but not straightforward either. More like...uh...basically, I think the idea is that these developers are not confident enough to make straightforward games. That's why they add a twist, because that way they don't have to compete with the people who make straightforward games.

**EGM:** Yeah, they avoid having to compete on the same level.

**HK:** In the beginning, I was trying to think of concepts for using a touch pad or the motion sensors...not thinking about a straightforward game but games that use these kinds of aspects. But back when [Bayonetta Producer Yusuke] Hashimoto-san started at PlatinumGames, he was still a designer; he designed the effects for *Devil May Cry*. So we've worked together in the past, too, but he came up to me and said, "I want to see another 3D action game created by you."

**EGM:** Good job, Hashimoto!

**HK:** So I said, "Hmmm, let me think." I enjoyed this challenge. I had a lot of time to spend on planning since the rest of the team was studying the

technology, so I was like, "OK, let me think of something." And that was really fun for me because it felt like something that had built up inside me was just pouring out. I enjoyed preparing the concept, which is how we came to this game: *Bayonetta*.

**EGM:** So how did somebody who no hair come up with a game based around hair attacks? Did a hair stylist attack you?

**HK:** Nice question. That's true. The attacks she uses is something that I cannot use. Even if I tried.... [Laughs]

**EGM:** Even if you try really hard—nothing.

**HK:** Right from the beginning, the thing I felt very strongly was that I wanted the main character to be a woman. A "hair attack" is something that only a woman can do—it's a woman's beauty. So that's why I came up with the hair idea. The action games that I've created in the past were *Devil May Cry* and *Viewtiful Joe*, so I've already created the male heroes that I wanted to create. I wanted to make a cool-ass woman doing cool-ass actions. That was my motivation.

**EGM:** It's interesting that you say that because—I'm not gonna bring up Capcom too much—but when I was interviewing Kelji Inafune over at Capcom, I asked, "How come you don't have any female lead action heroines?" And Inafune said that the Capcom execs don't think that a female lead character is gonna sell. Obviously, they've never heard of *Tomb Raider*.

**HK:** I totally agree with you. You're already used to cool male characters doing cool actions, and what I wanted to deliver through this game was excitement. So when I thought about that, the thing that I came up with was using a cool female character with cool actions. People have [said to me], "Wow, you're trying to sell a game with a female character. It has been very difficult to do in the past."

**EGM:** Surprising, isn't it?

**HK:** But I don't really care about that because that's not what I think about. The reason I came up with this is because I think that's exciting, very interesting to see, and because I've never seen anything like this before. When I was creating *Okami*,

too, people at Capcom told me that maybe people will have a hard time feeling sympathy with the character since it's an animal. But that wasn't what I was thinking. I was just thinking, "If the main character is a wolf, that would be cool." And that's how we came up with the idea.

**EGM:** Well, you're the first guy to create a character whose hair uncovers her body every time she uses an attack, so you still have an edge.

**HK:** I feel strongly that women [in real life] should dress like her. Like, when she does the hair attacks, you see her skin. So I want women to wear fashion like that.

**EGM:** Since you're so good at creating action games, I have a hard time imagining a day in the life of Hideki Kamiya being anything but an actionfest. When you get out of bed, it's with two guns drawn, right? When you brush your teeth, you brush your teeth with the most action possible, and when you have breakfast, it's an "action breakfast!" Am I right?

**HK:** [Laughs] I basically don't move at all. I agree—in my brain there are all these climaxes. But on the outside, I don't move. My favorite time is when I'm staying in my room, playing with my toys.

**EGM:** So what you're saying is that you're living the life of a Zen Buddhist. Whereas in my imagination, you come to work by parachute, and you land on the bridge outside, running around like James Bond, and you run down the side of this skyscraper, and they have to replace the glass in your office window everyday because you jump through it.

## KAMIYA'S HIT LIST



**RESIDENT EVIL 2**  
PS1 • 1997  
While RE2 didn't forecast just how good Kamiya would be at crafting true action games, this sequel to *Resident Evil* represented such an improvement that it made him a legend.

**DEVIL MAY CRY**  
PS2 • 2001



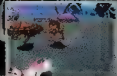
Originally designed to be the sequel to RE2, *Devil May Cry* was such a departure from the RE franchise (i.e., characters who don't control like a tank) that it was spun off as its own series. They got Capcom.

**VIEWTIFUL JOE**  
GC • 2003



Kamiya brought "cool" back to side-scrolling beat-em-ups with innovation and charm. One early title, *Viewtiful Joe*, the dude ultimately known as Viewtiful Joe shared some of your DNA with *Devil May Cry's* Dante.

**OKAMI**  
PS2 • 2006



All of Kamiya's past efforts were a masterpiece, including this stylish master piece, *Okami*, which married 2000-like gameplay with a new mythology to great effect. A must-have for any game collection.



■ The "Big Little City" area in *Bayonetta*



**HK:** If I was able to do all of those action moves that you just described, I would be totally satisfied with myself, and I wouldn't feel the need to create a game like this.

**EGM:** Why do you have to bust up my fantasy?

**HK:** Well, you know, because I'm quiet. I was able to come up with an action game like this. Because I have no hair, I was able to come up with this fabulous concept of the chick with the fabulous hair. So you should be happy about that. [Laughs]

**EGM:** I'm very happy. At the PlatinumGames unveiling in May, you said, "This is going to be the best action game ever," which you clarified by saying, "Because I'm making it." You mentioned that all action games since the original *Devil May Cry* haven't expanded the genre like you were hoping they would. Can you explain how you're going to reinvent the action genre, and how other games have failed to do what you hoped they would do?

**HK:** It is very true that I don't feel that anybody responded like, "Oh my god, this guy created a game like *Devil May Cry*. We have to create something better." I never got that feeling from others. But out of all those action titles, there's one game that I am paying really close attention to that I think is a rival series—a good game—which is called *God of*

*War*. I guess they're working on a sequel? I want to make a game that exceeds *God of War*'s sequel. That's one title that I'm paying attention to.

**EGM:** OK, since I'm sure that you have opinions on the action games that have come into existence since the original *Devil May Cry* came out, I'm just going to name the games, and I want your gut reaction to each series. So, let's start: *Devil May Cry*.

**HK:** I wanted to do the sequel. I used to want to do a sequel, but now it's like some other guy's chick. It's not my chick anymore. And that chick got fooled and played all around from all over, so I don't want her anymore. I'm only concentrating on my current chick.

**EGM:** *Shinobi*

**HK:** I only played the original, the Mark 3 version, and I was playing it throughout one summer vacation when I was in school because I wanted to see the ending. And when I was able to beat the final boss, and it just said "Game Over" and went back to the opening...I was like, "Give me back my summer vacation!"

**EGM:** *Ninja Gaiden*

**HK:** I've never played *Ninja Gaiden*, and to be honest, I'm not that interested. You know when you're watching a TV commercial or a movie trailer or listening to a song or whatever, how you just feel something and you get pulled into it? It just didn't have that power, so that's why I wasn't interested in it.

**EGM:** *God of War*.

**HK:** My impression is that it's very carefully made, the details are all carefully made. So, *Devil May Cry* was a bit rough, but there's no roughness in *God of War*. I think that it's very well made. I feel a bit bad about talking like somebody who is evaluating the game, but I felt like they created the game very well for attracting new users. They give you a huge impact right in the beginning and just draw you into the game. I'm very impressed that they made the game like that.

**EGM:** So Bayonetta's a witch who is fighting angels, and she's in a world where she can see humans, but they can't see her. Is she in purgatory, then?

**HK:** Hmm...that's a sharp question. And that's the only thing that I can say. [Laughs]

**EGM:** That's fine. I'm starting to get some ideas about where the story might be going. "Deadly Kiss" is one of Bayonetta's attacks. How many more sexy attacks does she have?

**HK:** The whole theme of her attacks is "sexiness." When I was working on Dante's theme, it was "coolness," and Joe's theme was "beauty." When you punch somebody, you could just do a straightforward punch. But to make it cool, you have to add this one little move that makes it cool, and it's the same with Bayonetta. So what do I want Bayonetta to do was the question. What I want her to do is to use that little space to make herself look sexy. So that's why the whole theme of her attacks is "sexiness." I'm having fun with the team thinking, "So what should we do with Bayonetta to make her look sexy?"

**EGM:** So if somebody on the dev team has an idea for a sexy move—suppose she does a little hip check or something like that—does he stand in front of you and go, "Hey, check this out!" Swish!

**HK:** [Laughing] Sometimes I do it!

**EGM:** How many times do you have to perform a sexy move before your team finally understands it?

**HK:** [Laughing] Seven or eight times.

**EGM:** What will we learn about the PlatinumGames staff from how Bayonetta finally turns out?

**HK:** Creating Bayonetta's moves and animations is actually the most fun part of this game. So you will be able to see what everybody in the team likes in a girl based on the finished product.

For example, Bayonetta has strong magical powers; she's using her strength to keep her hair on her body, to make it form an outfit. So when she gets weak or something, she might just lose her magical power, and if that happens, you know what that means.

**EGM Extras:** Kamiya had plenty more to say, and even additional things to reveal about Bayonetta, which means you should check out [EGM.1UP.com](http://EGM.1UP.com) for more.



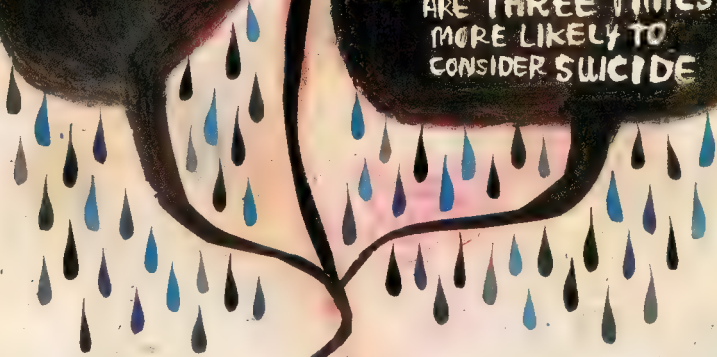


# TRUE OR FALSE

1.

WEED CAN MESS WITH  
YOUR MIND, AND CAN  
MESS WITH YOUR  
FRIENDSHIPS

2. TEENS WHO SMOKE  
WEED REGULARLY  
ARE THREE TIMES  
MORE LIKELY TO  
CONSIDER SUICIDE



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ANSWERS: TRUE, NOW, GET ALL THE FACTS AT



abovetheinfluence

**WHEN EGM LAUNCHED NEARLY 20 YEARS AGO**, the only console games worth mentioning were almost exclusively Japanese imports—*Mario*, *Zelda*, *Mega Man*, *Sonic*—while the best of the West was to be found on PC. But somewhere along the way, something changed. Today, it's American and European creations that rule the console charts, and Japan's developers are almost universally struggling. Sure, Nintendo's tag team of DS and Wii seems in no danger of giving up its lead, but in many ways, the Kyoto publishing giant's recent resurgence offers the most damning evidence of how rocky the Japanese videogame market really is.

Katsuki Kato, editor-in-chief of Japan's popular *Weekly Famitsu* magazine, notes that Nintendo has only found success by completely reinventing itself. "They're not trying to compete," he says. "They've stated that the Wii is not a competitor to PS3 and Xbox 360, and the DS is not a competitor to PSP. Rather than increasing hardware power and complexity in games, they've said, 'We're going to try to appeal to the incredible number of people who've never played a videogame.'"

Where developers a decade ago were rushing to imitate intricate, cutting-edge games like *Resident Evil* and *Final Fantasy VII*, today the shelves of Japanese retailers are lined with nongaming applications or lightweight software designed to lure

casual players looking for something to supplement their copies of *Brain Age* and *Wii Sports*. Meanwhile, titles targeting hardcore gamers tend to miss more often than hit, with enduring successes like the PSP's *Monster Hunter* series a rare exception to the norm. "Sales in Japan all come in the first three weeks," notes Nintendo EAD's General Manager Shigeru Miyamoto. "The drop-off after that is dramatic... The key is trying to make games that will attract the attention of people who don't game. You're only going to sell in Japan if you sell to a broader kind of audience."

### The setting sun

Still, make no mistake: Japanese game development is far from dead, as the recent global success of *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots* demonstrates. But while the biggest Western-developed franchises are fresh, new brands like *God* (or *Gears*) of *War* and *Skate*, Japan's blockbuster are from familiar series like *Resident Evil* and *Final Fantasy*—the same brands that were on top during the PlayStation era. This fact isn't lost on Capcom Producer Ryozyo Tsujimoto, whose *Monster*




*Hunter* series is one of the few new Japanese properties to have become a major hit this decade.

"Many new [intellectual properties] lately have not made huge breakthroughs," Tsujimoto says. "Though the trend has been described as users moving away from videogames, I think it may be an indication of players becoming wiser consumers. They're more selective about buying games." Indeed, *Monster Hunter* has only succeeded through word-of-mouth after a slow start, much like *Pokémon* in the '90s.

Unfortunately, *Monster Hunter's* story is all too rare in the current Japanese market; it's one of the few hardcore-oriented titles with any kind of retail endurance. Meanwhile, the likes of *Brain Age* and *Animal Crossing* (which are marketed to the elderly and young girls, respectively) still sell thousands of copies each week, years after their debut. Unique concepts are often rejected by Japanese gamers; Square Enix's inventive DS role-playing game *The World Ends with You* flopped in Japan, to the point where company president Yoichi Wada all but called it out by name when he recently promised shareholders a diminished focus on titles designed for hardcore gamers. Yet the game has been both a critical and commercial success in the United States, exceeding Square's expectations despite clearly having been designed with little regard for American tastes.

■ Sony's *Shadow of the Colossus* is an example of a game that could have only come from Japan. Its aesthetic, style, and game design are uniquely Japanese.





# THE RISE AND FALL (AND RISE?) OF JAPAN

As Western console development comes into its own, Japanese creators are struggling to regain their voice

By Jeremy Parish

**LANDMARK:** Not a console, an "Entertainment System"Date: 1985 • **The Players:** Nintendo and Atari

The American console market went down the crapper in 1983 along with Atari, leaving a gaping void into which upstart Nintendo was able to launch its own Entertainment System. Foolishly, Atari elected to pass on distributing the NES in favor of its own 7800.

**LANDMARK:** The CD-ROM revolution arrives

Date: 1994 •

**The Players:** Sony and a cast of thousands

Failed CD-ROM systems were all too common by the time Sony rolled out its PlayStation. Ultimately, though, Sony's singular focus on powerful hardware married to great game-play helped it succeed where Western CD-based efforts like 3DO and CD-i had bombed.

**SETBACK:** Ferrari F355 fails to challenge Gran Turismo

Date: 2000 •

**The Players:** Sony and Sega

*Gran Turismo* was perfect: detailed driving physics and countless cars to drive and customize on multiple tracks. Sega's *Ferrari* game focused entirely around a single car on a boring oval track—producer Yu Suzuki's hobby was a boring dud for everyone else.



**YOSHIKI OKAMOTO:** *Street Fighter*: The leader of developer Game Republic, reshiki Okamoto has recently made waves with games like *Gothic* and *PS3* cult favorite *Folklore*, but he's best remembered for unleashing the *Street Fighter* craze in the late '80s/early '90s. As a developer with a huge amount of international gaming hits under his belt, Okamoto can let his resume speak for itself.

**SETBACK:** The Dreamcast retires earlyDate: 2001 • **The Players:** Sega and Microsoft

Sega's Dreamcast offered gamers the cutting edge—brilliant software and built-in online capabilities. Alas, Sega's spotty past and Sony's surgical marketing killed the Dreamcast in a little over two years. Microsoft, which had provided the Dreamcast's OS, was only too happy to fill the resulting void.

**WHO'S WHO****TSUTOMU KOUNO:** So very focused

He's got the best of resumes of anyone in our feature, but Sony's Tsutomu Kouno is already responsible for one of the company's most distinctive international hits: *LocoRoco*. An alumnus of the much-revered Tec Team, Kouno's approach to game design and visuals transcends international taste barriers, with *LocoRoco*'s colorful blobs appealing to nearly any type of gamer, young and old alike.



"Japanese game development overall hasn't transformed radically in the past few years," says Peter Mui, who's run online import retailer National Console Support for the past decade. "I'd attribute the lack of change to an audience that's generally satisfied with the offerings that are being made available. When publishers encounter sales and profits that are satisfactory, they generally don't fix what isn't broken."

*Street Fighter* and *Resident Evil* creator Yoshiki Okamoto, who left Capcom several years ago to found Game Republic, has firsthand experience of this creative stagnation. "When a company approaches us to do work, they'll always say something like, 'Let's make a game where you shoot zombies' or 'Let's make a fighting game,'" he admits. "In essence, something related to what I've done in the past. I've actively avoided those, which is why I had a tough time at the beginning."

Capcom Head of R&D Keiji Inafune, whose résumé includes both classics like *Mega Man* and modern blockbusters like *Dead Rising*, sees in his former collaborator's struggles a symbol of Japan's difficulties. "Western development has definitely surpassed Japan," he says. "A single, major difference has played a huge role in this: In Japan, a game developer only coexists with publishers as a single company, while many U.S. game software groups are independent. In the U.S., there's free competition between developers, which results in better products."

Another big factor in the growing gap between East and West game design is the recent influx of Western developers into the console market. After Atari wiped out in the early '80s, most American and European developers retreated to the safety of the PC market, where they adopted a different approach to development

than their Japanese counterparts (see: "What Goes Around..."). Meanwhile, Japan was slow to adopt home computers throughout the '80s and '90s for a number of reasons, including the challenge of making the complex Japanese-written language work on low-powered machines. As the gap between computers and consoles has narrowed, PC-centric developers have found a new haven for their skills on familiar hardware like the Xbox 360. "Japanese developers are slightly behind the curve," says Matsui Munetatsu, editor-in-chief at monthly publication *Famitsu*. "Xbox 360. 'With the Xbox joining the playing field, we had a lot of PC developers on the Western end who came in and started making games. These were companies that were used to constantly reworking their 3D technology to match the newest graphics cards; a tradition we don't have here in Japan.'"

"The current Japanese market, such that sales cannot recoup high costs incurred because of inefficient development practices," *Resident Evil 5* Producer Jun Takeuchi admits. "The end of the serious mobile-game boom will force Japanese development to face next-gen platforms, and Japanese developers will be forced to invest heavily in development without having a definite measure to recover costs."

Takeuchi's observation touches on a critical difference between Eastern and Western game design: namely, Japan's reluctance to reuse technology. Whereas licensing engines and middleware is common practice in America, Japanese publishers have long been loath to repurpose their own tech, let alone adopt someone else's. The result is that as consoles become ever more advanced, Japanese developers have spent longer reinventing the wheel while their Western counterparts have focused more on using existing technology for creative ends; some of the most

**HIROYUKI KOTANI:** Funky drummer

Lesser known than some of his peers, but an energetic and charismatic presence, Hiroyuki Kotani works on

the *Apex* Escape games, as well as *Magi/Maestro*, *Devil Dice*, and *Patapon*, puts his square in the "innovator" category of game designers. *Patapon 2* should be something special.

**WHO'S WHO**

➤ "Development in Japan has not changed much, while it's evolved in the West. We can't be satisfied with this—we need to change it."

—We Ski Producer Maya Ito

## SHIGERU MIYAMOTO: The OMGlather



You'd think that someone who'd created franchises like *Mario*, *Zelda*, *Donkey Kong*, and *Star Fox* might have run out of gas by now, but Nintendo's ageless game creator, Shigeru Miyamoto, keeps defying our expectations with a lot of the-box-thinking on modern hits like *Pikmin*, *Nintendogs*, and *Wii Fit*.

➤ When you're a pioneer, you're bound to be a bit of a maverick. Miyamoto's approach to game design, it's a hard sell, but it's paying off in the millions. (Sony's PSP)

## WHAT GOES AROUND... Western development retakes the pole position

"Videogames were born in the U.S. of A., and like many other great 20th-century American inventions, such as rock 'n' roll and nuclear weapons, America's output was eventually surpassed by foreign efforts. Atari ruled the roost for gaming's first decade, but its VCS console (aka the 2600) was dethroned when the American gaming market collapsed in 1983. Western developers who managed to survive this implosion scrambled for the relative safety of the budding home-computer market.

Yet as America's videogaming industry collapsed, arcade manufacturer Nintendo found success in Japan with its Famicom game system. Though barely more powerful than the American systems that preceded it, the Famicom was supported by a growing number of up-and-coming Japanese developers like Capcom and Konami, and soon Nintendo set its sights overseas. "Mario Madness" became the new *Beatlemania* as American kids screamed and swooned for an imported reinvention of a homegrown medium.

U.S. retailers scorched by Atari's flameout were reluctant to buy into gaming again, but

Nintendo's limited NYC test run of the redesigned Famicom, called NES, demonstrated that kids didn't hate videogames—just the lousy ones that had crapped up the 2600. To prevent another collapse caused by a glut of bad games, Nintendo imposed strict licensing rules on NES third-party developers.

While these limitations were tough on licensees, they kept the system profitable and spared the consumer some truly dire games.

Few Western developers got the hang of developing for 8- and 16-bit consoles; their best games appeared on the PC, ranging from incredible graphical adventures to deep role-playing games to intense first-person shooters. Yet their PC focus actually gave Western creators the advantage a decade later: when the Xbox arrived, built largely around off-the-shelf computer components, PC-savvy creators easily streamlined their control interfaces and went to consoles. *Halo*, *Prince of Persia*, *Grand Theft Auto III*, *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind*, *Ratchet & Clank*—for the first time in ages, most of the hottest console games began coming from America and Europe.



### KATSUKI KATO, MUTSU MUNETATSU, KOUJI AIZAWA, EIICHIRO ARITA

The interesting thing about these three names is that, among them, their total number of games they've directed equals zero. But as the editors-in-chief of three of Japan's biggest gaming publications—*Famitsu Weekly*, *Famitsu PS*, and *Famitsu Xbox*—they're more qualified than nearly anyone to provide insights as to what Japanese game developers are doing right and wrong.

## KEIJI INAFUNE: Boss of them all



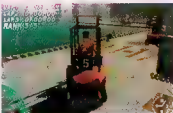
This industry veteran oversees all of Capcom's development these days (he's the head of R&D), but he's best known as the fellow who brought Mega Man to the world, as well as the person at Capcom who identified a need for Western-focused games, resulting in titles like *Devil May Cry* and *Lost Planet*.

**SETBACK:** Grand Theft Auto III schools Shenmue

Date: 2001

The Players: DMA Designs and Sega

Sega's *Shenmue* was an epic, free-form adventure set in a world modeled in startling detail... and boring as hell. So DMA rejiggered its *Grand Theft Auto* series to mimic *Shenmue*'s openness, but actually gave players things to do.



influential games of the past decade have made use of licensed engines, including *Half-Life*, *Grand Theft Auto III*, and *BioShock*. When Square Enix unveiled its cross-platform Crystal Tools development system at this year's Game Developers Conference, they did so with the breathless enthusiasm reserved for a radical revolution. Meanwhile, their foreign peers shrugged and wondered what the big deal was.

**Scrambling to catch up**

While systems like Crystal Tools may be late in coming, they indicate that Japanese developers are determined to shore up their weaknesses. In fact, Square Enix isn't strictly hung up on the internal solution represented by Crystal Tools; it's building its impressive-looking PS3/XB360

role-playing game *The Last Remnant* with Unreal Engine 3. *Remnant* is a new breed of game, a Western-focused entry in a genre that's long been developed exclusively for Japanese tastes. Its licensed engine is indicative of the creators' larger mindset—every aspect of the game, from its story to its heroes to its marketing, is consciously catering as much to American tastes as Japanese preferences. "For this title, we really started working with the marketing and sales team overseas," says Yusuke Naora, art director on *Remnant*, "learning what's in and what's out in terms of game trends. We studied gamers in North America and Europe—how they play RPGs differently, and which parts they particularly enjoy in our games." *Remnant*'s global focus is an

"For people in America, [games] are like a Hollywood tradition. So you see a lot of games that have large scale production.... With next-gen hardware, we're seeing an even bigger gap between those experiences and what we do here."

—Yusuke Naora, Game Designer, *Remnant*, Square

**SETBACK:** Bungie puts its money where Nintendo's mouth is

Date: 2001-2003

The Players: Microsoft, Bungie, Nintendo, and Rare

Nintendo's N64 was built on multiplayer gaming, and Rare's *GoldenEye 007* was the first console game to offer gamers a PC-like multiplayer shooter experience. Inexplicably, Nintendo never capitalized on this success, leaving the door open for Microsoft's Xbox to steal away fans with *Halo*.

**YUSUKE NAORA** Not so square

illustrator, graphic designer, art director. Whatever you want to call Square Enix's Yusuke Naora, he's been instrumental in the development of international megahits like *Final Fantasy VII*, *VIII*, and *X*, as well as the upcoming *Final Fantasy XIII* and *The Last Remnant* (featured in this issue on pg. 43).

**LANDMARK:** The blue ocean

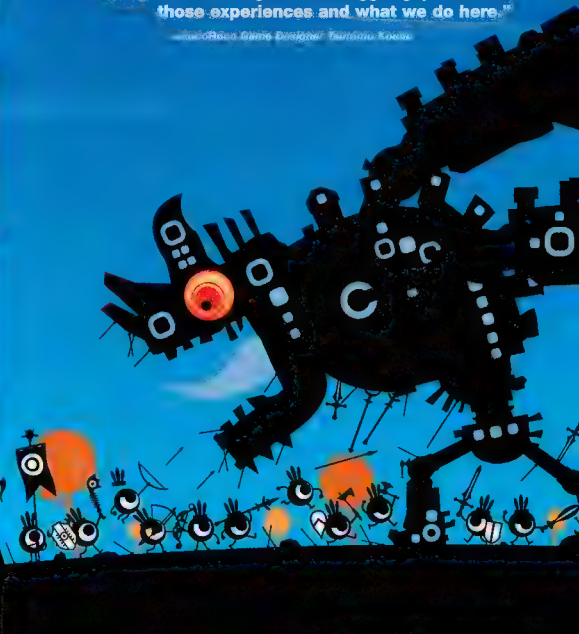
Date: 2004 • The Players: Nintendo

Nintendo seemed on the brink of going the way of Sega when it announced the low-powered DS in the shadow of Sony's PSP. But no one expected its strategy: enticing nongamers with accessible, practical software. DS put Nintendo back on top, and Wii has cemented the lead.

**LANDMARK:** The dead shall rise

Date: 2006 • The Players: Capcom

The first console-exclusive hit of the current generation came from Japan's Capcom; *Dead Rising* was the first title to demonstrate the true potential of the Xbox 360. More recently, the PS3's first international blockbuster, *Metal Gear Solid 4*, has proven that Western devs are still playing catch-up when it comes to presentation.



Patapon, a bizarre combination of strategy gameplay and music rhythms, was an unexpected hit for Sony in both Japan and North America. The simple, iconic graphics mean that anyone can enjoy it.

encouraging sign that even the behemoths are starting to react to the new realities of the Japanese market. Kouji Aizawa, editor-in-chief at *Famitsu PS*, believes that Western developers' greatest strength is "the fact that they never waver. I think it's uniquely Japanese to waver a bit, and really think about things—maybe too much, in some cases," he says. "I think we're in a period like that right now, where the Japanese industry is trying to figure out where it wants to go. Once they get through and decide: 'This is how we're going to move forward,' that's when we're going to see more big hits coming out of Japan."

Still, Mui doesn't believe Japanese developers are entirely prepared to reinvent themselves just yet. "I don't think much will change in Japanese game development in the next five to 10 years," he says. "However, maybe some young turks from an upstart Japanese studio will shake the world up in the next few years with a game that blows everyone away."

In a sense, that's already happen-

ing: The burgeoning Western indie game scene owes a tremendous debt to Japanese pioneers like Studio Pixel, whose freeware hit *Cave Story* proved that with sufficient vision, skill, and passion, a single designer can still craft a deep, compelling action game. Pixel's retro-inspired audiovisuals have been echoed in acclaimed games like *Fez* and arguably paved the way for major publishers to go retro as well. Capcom's recently announced *Mega Man 9* looks like a long-lost NES game-bijou is being developed for Wii; *Yuusha No Kuse Ni Namaikida*, Sony's oddball-crash-through *Dungeon Keeper* and *Tower of Draga*; has become a sleeper-hit with a sequel in the works. Some publishers are going directly to the source and repackaging amateur Japanese hits as major releases: Omega's *Every Extend* was picked up and reworked by D Entertainment into the stylish *Every Extend Extra* for PSP, and Kenta Cho's *Tumiki Fighters* was renamed *Blast Works: Build, Trade, Destroy* and published in the U.S. as a full-fledged Wii release.



**JAMES MIELKE:** The real issue about releasing ports is how they're being marketed. Realistically, the "Western" market is being addressed almost entirely by the Japanese market. The *Street Fighter* and *Breast Buster* titles are the only ones that have been marketed in the West.



**JEREMY PARISH:** One of the biggest problems with Japanese titles is that they're often made for a very specific audience. The *Street Fighter* and *Breast Buster* titles are the only ones that have been marketed in the West.

"Right now, we're at the threshold of a new era where we are going to have to adapt ourselves," says Producer Hiroyuki Kotani, creator of unexpected tactical-rhythm hit *Patapon*, which offers a spark of hope for Japan's future. It's an off-beat creation that received full backing by none other than Sony—a proof that even the giants can recognize a great game when they see it. ☐

## CHRONO TRIGGER RETURNS:

Is Japanese giant Square Enix serving its fans or merely stuck in the past? EGM boss James Mielke and 1UP's Jeremy Parish hash it out.

**JEREMY:** Square Enix has announced it will remake—or maybe "rerelease" is more appropriate—its classic SNES role-playing game *Chrono Trigger* for DS. Honestly, I'm torn about this. On the one hand, *CT* is one of my favorite games ever, and I'd love to play it on the go. On the other hand, it's pretty much a straight-up repackaging of a 13-year-old game. So where do you stand, Milky? Does timelessness trump laziness?

**MILKY:** Well, the initial excitement should be tempered by the fact that 1) it's not a sequel, just a tinkered port, and 2) it also came out on PS1—two far less fanfare—only a few years back.

**JEREMY:** True, but that PS1 port was crap. I don't mind that they're sticking to the original graphics, either—3D visuals slow things down, and part of *CT*'s charm is that its pace was so much faster than other RPGs. My big complaint is: Why not just give us the game for \$10 on Virtual Console? Greed's an ugly thing.

**MILKY:** Well, we've yet to see any Square RPG on Virtual Console to begin with. They know they can charge full price both here and in Japan—where they have something like 43 ports of *Final Fantasy IV*—and get away with it.

**JEREMY:** I'm ashamed to say I'll be a part of

the problem this time.... The promise of new content is too enticing. But maybe strong sales for *CT* will encourage them to make a sequel! Or, more likely, to produce more lazy ports.



**MILKY:** The main problem with the prospect of a sequel is that they'd have to get a lot of the original team back together to make it a true sequel: Akira Toriyama, Yuji Horii, Hironobu Sakaguchi, Nobuo Uematsu, Yasunori Mitsuda, and Yoshinori Kitase, to name a few. I mean, *Chrono Cross* was technically a sequel, but it didn't feel like it to me. *Cross* just didn't have enough of the right elements in place, and if they're ever really going to follow *CT*, Square needs to build a bridge to Sakaguchi to make it happen.

**JEREMY:** Yeah, maybe it's best if the *Chrono* games remain a fond memory.

**MILKY:** As for now, I'll be part of the problem, too. Especially when they release the limited-edition *Chrono DS*. You know they will!



# JAPAN'S WAYWARD SON

Reclusive creator **Kenji Eno**  
waxes nostalgic about his past  
and plots his return to gaming  
By Shane Bettenhausen  
and James Mielke



## KENJI ENO SHOCKED JAPAN

with his unpredictable behavior and avant-garde creations as the founder of '90s-era developer Warp. But shortly after establishing himself as a true industry iconoclast, he abdicated his role as Japan's gaming bad boy in 2000. Now, nearly a decade later, he's finally ready to reflect on his controversial career...and return to the industry he abandoned.

### EGM: How long has it been since your last interview?

**Kenji Eno:** It was around 2000.... The Japanese media kind of gave up after asking me a few times, because I always turned them down. But now I'm finally ready to talk.

### EGM: What's your earliest memory of playing a videogame, and was it love at first sight?

**KE:** So, the very first game I played was maybe *Block Buster*. But I didn't think it was anything special at that time because I was very young. My next experience was *Space Invaders*, and I liked how it made you feel kind of different. And the first time I experienced it, it's like the first time you meet a woman...you feel something there; you feel some kind of chemistry. So I felt something like that for *Space Invaders*. That was probably love at first sight.

### EGM: What was your first job in the game industry?

**KE:** I joined a very tiny game company in 1988, and my first project was as planner for *Ultraman Club 2* [for the Japanese NES]. I peeked at the game concept, and it was crap, and I thought, "OK, this is not fun at all, so let's change it," and that was how I became involved in the project. But when I first joined the company, there were only around 10 people there, but after a year, there were 30 people working there. And because it got too big, I wasn't interested in that company anymore, so that's why I quit and formed my first game development studio, EIM.

**EGM:** While at EIM, you developed several 8-bit games, including *Panic Restaurant* for Taito and Sunsoft's *Sun Man*, an unreleased title that seems awfully close to being a Superman game. What's the story behind that?

**KE:** Originally, I was working on a Superman game. But the licensors were really like, "Superman can't die. Superman can't be damaged," therefore it didn't work out as a game because he was just too strong. Then Sunsoft asked me to make a game with a superhero called "Sun Man." So I was working on that, but we didn't finish the game. They canceled it before it was finished.

### EGM: Actually, that ROM has leaked online, and you talk through the whole game.

**KE:** I hadn't heard about this until now, but I would like to know where it is and who leaked it on the internet. [Laughs]

### EGM: When you first started Warp, how big was the company? And how much of the work did you do yourself?

**KE:** First, when we started out, I had a team of six to seven people when I was creating *D*. My involvement was basically planning, producing, directing, and handling the sound. So I was basically doing like half of the job. And the only other people that I counted on to help me were the programmers and the designers. It was like this throughout the whole time that I was creating games with Warp. I was the person who decided what the game was going to be; I planned the game. And after the game was programmed, I would go into the game and decide, "Oh, let's put an item here."

### EGM: Why did you choose the 3DO for Warp's first few games?

**KE:** So when I first established Warp, I went to 3DO, and that was right around the time that 3DO opened

their Japanese branch. And 3DO Japan was very nice to me. And they were telling me that "you can become a publisher whenever you want." So, back in the day, to make a game for Nintendo, it was very difficult because the cartridges were expensive. It cost something like 1,000 yen [50] up front for each unit to make, so it was too difficult for me to do. And 3DO's licensing fee was very reasonable. Very cheap.

### EGM: Even though many think that *D* was Warp's first game, it was actually preceded by *Totsugeki Karakuri Megadashi*, a weird vehicular fighting game, and *Trip'd*, an even weirder dropping puzzle game. What was your inspiration for those?

**KE:** What I was always trying to do was keep the balance of the company. I actually really enjoy smaller, simpler action games. And I was trying to keep the balance of the company by creating a hardcore game like *D* and then a casual puzzle game. And *D* sold a lot, so the next thing we made was a mahjong game. So that was how I was balancing the company out, because if I was only creating horror games, we'd gain a reputation for those and be stuck doing games like that.

### EGM: *D* was the game that made Warp famous. Were you trying to push the boundaries and preconceptions of game storylines with its cannibalism theme?

**KE:** There's a crazy story behind this. When I was first making *D*, it had no story...the game was already almost completed, so to put a story in the game, I had to insert it as flashbacks. While I was doing that, I wanted to do some kind of a trick. Back in those days, you weren't allowed to make any violent games—like stabbing people inside the game was a taboo—so you weren't allowed to do that. *D* has cannibalism, which was a total taboo back in the day! But I wanted to put this in the game, so what I did was I didn't show

## LET'S DO THE TIME WARP AGAIN

Revisit Kenji Eno's quirky Warp gameography:

Totsugeki Karakuri Megadashi • 3DO • 1994



Warp's first game was an in-print-only 3D combat sim starring goopy-eyed, pastel-colored robots.

Trip'd • 3DO • 1995



The falling-block puzzle genre got a massive weirdness injection in this. Warp's first U.S. release, imagine Popo after a mesaline bender and you're half-way there.

Gyaji Hunter Mahjong, 3DO • 1995



Warp takes a stab at the traditional Chinese board game. But as expected, Eno had a crazy twist in store for the staid formula: Here, you're playing mahjong in order to rescue innocent young girls from the clutches of a perky old man. Hilarious anime sequences by Macross director Ichiro Itano complete the package.

D • 3DO • 1995



Although its point-and-click puzzle-solving gameplay seems shallow by modern standards, *D*'s evocative graphics, haunting sound, and gruesome story found plenty of fans once the game was ported to the Saturn and PS1.



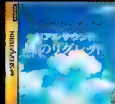
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KODAK E100VS

KODAK

**WARPU QUIRKY  
GEOGRAPHY  
CONTINUES...**
**Short Warp  
3DO • 1996**


Undeniably Warp's strangest release, *Short Warp* collects eight surreal minigames. Only 10,000 hand-numbered copies were made, and each one came with a Warp condom.

**Real Sound: The Wind's  
Regret • Saturn • 1997**


This importantly "sound novel" lacks graphics, so it treads the fine line between game and interactive fiction. "A subsequent Dreamcast port added photography by Eno, and a bag of seeds for you to plant."

**Enemy Zero  
Saturn • 1997**


Laura from *D* returns here, but now she's a "digital actress" in an AI-enhanced adventure blending first-person shooting (against invisible enemies that you track via sound) and traditional adventure gameplay.

**D2 • Dreamcast • 2000**


Warp's underrated final game brazenly combines John Carpenter's *The Thing*, catbox hunting, tentacle rape, snowmobile racing, and some heavy misogynist nuptial jumbo into an absurd cocktail.

**EGM Extras:**  
Need more  
Eno? Head to  
[EGM1UP.com](http://EGM1UP.com)  
for the rest of the  
interview, including  
fisticuffs with Sony!

anyone else in the company those scenes, and I was hiding that until the very end. You submit the master, and they check the master and approve the master and put a sticker on it, and this gets sent to the U.S. to get printed. There was a penalty you had to pay if you're late in submitting the master, but you'd also have to deliver it by hand. So, knowing this, I submitted it late on purpose. I submitted a clean one and got it approved. Then I had to bring it to America. So on the plane, I switched the discs and submitted it to 3DO, and it got manufactured like that.

**EGM:** After *D*, you surprised Warp's fans by creating a Sega Saturn adventure game without graphics: *Real Sound*.

**KE:** Oh, that's a funky game.

**EGM:** What inspired it, and how did you get Sega to publish it?

**KE:** After releasing *D*, people were always expecting more CG graphics from me, and I got tired of that. Also, I had a chance to visit people who are visually disabled, and I learned that there are blind people who play action games. Of course, they are not able to have the full experience, and they are kind of trying to force themselves to be able to play, but they are making the effort. So I thought that if you turn off the monitor, both of you are just hearing the game. So after you finish the game, you can have an equal conversation with a blind person. So Sega was asking for exclusive rights to the game, and I said, "OK, if you'll donate a thousand Saturns to blind people, then I'll donate a thousand games along with the Saturns."

**EGM:** What can you tell us about *Short Warp*, the wild minigame collection you made for 3DO?

**KE:** This was the funkiest game!

**EGM:** And it even came packaged

with a free condom. Were you trying to get gamers to have more sex? Because when we see used copies in stores, the condom is always unused and unopened.

**KE:** That's sad. [Laughs] This game was made when I was almost on the edge. My mental status was getting very unbalanced, so I wanted to balance myself back by creating a game like this. I was thinking that if I'm going to create a game like this, should do something really crazy. And that's how I came up with the idea of this game, and that's why I included a condom.

**EGM:** With its invisible enemies and unforgiving save system, *Enemy Zero* for Saturn was Warp's hardest game. Do you regret making it so tough?

**KE:** I do think that it's a difficult game, but that's the good part of *Enemy Zero*. You know, when you eat curry, it's spicy. That's why it's curry. That's why it's good. So it's the same with *Enemy Zero*. The whole experience that you gain from playing a difficult game is valuable. If I had a chance to make it all over again, I would probably make it the same way because that's the feeling I wanted to deliver; that's what I wanted to create. But the reception to the game wasn't that good. In Japan, games are pretty easy, so people here didn't like it because it was too difficult.

**EGM:** Warp's final game, *D2* for Sega Dreamcast, was quite ambitious, controversial, and divisive. The U.S. release was even censored due to its violent sexual content. How do you view *D2*?

**KE:** During this time I was getting unstable again, and I was thinking that if they're going to censor it, then it's going to be like that. I can't be mad because the only people responsible for this are at Sega, since Sega was publishing it.

But I think the game signaled the time for me to leave games. I wasn't thinking that this would be the last game I was going to make while I was creating it. But subconsciously, I was probably thinking that something. So that probably affected how *D2* turned out. You know, when a music band splits up, the last album of their music just before the split has this thick atmosphere. I felt something similar to that in *D2*. You know, like in a marriage or relationship, when it ends, there's not just one reason but several reasons why it happens. So that was the same, with me and Sega.

After *D2*, Sega and I were planning on working on another title, but things just didn't work out. And I was feeling that I wanted to get away from games a little bit because, since I was 18, I had been creating games full-time, and I wanted to see what's out there in the world outside-of-the-game industry. So I thought this was a good chance. That's why I stopped making games.

**EGM:** We heard that you're actually working on a new secret game...what made you want to get back into gaming now?

**KE:** The biggest reason that I want to come back to gaming is something that I can't tell right now, because if I did, it's going to reveal which platform I'm working on. So I probably reveal it in the next issue or the next, next issue of *EGM*.

But there were a few times in the past that I wanted to come back. I even started making a game with a famous creator; there were some concepts like that in the past. But I always thought that I wanted to come back to games after making everything else sorted out. I wanted to know that I would succeed outside of games before I came back to the industry. I was trying to make that happen and waiting for the perfect time to come back. Now, I'm almost 100 percent giving my time to game creation.



Behold Eno's rarest works: (from left to right) *Sun Man* prototype, the Warp condom, and *Short Warp*

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SPECIAL FEATURES



# WANTED: DEAD OR ALIVE

Notorious developer **Tomonobu Itagaki**, in his first interview since exiting Tecmo, gives us a peek into his future *By James Mielke*

**TOMONOBU ITAGAKI ROCKED THE GAME INDUSTRY** in early June when the onetime leader of developer Team Ninja (of *Dead or Alive* and *Ninja Gaiden* fame) not only walked out on parent company Tecmo, but took them to court as well. In his first interview since breaking out on his own, Itagaki sat down with *EGM* (at one of his favorite watering holes in downtown Tokyo) to discuss the state of Japanese game development, his favorite World War II fighter planes, rival developer Hideki Kamiya of PlatinumGames, and some of his future prospects.

**Tomonobu Itagaki:** So, what are you doing here?

**EGM:** I happened to be in the area. I know you like to hang around here because your alma mater, Waseda University, is nearby, so I thought I'd check in and see if you were around. What a coincidence!

**TI:** Yeah, I don't know if that means you're lucky or unlucky.

**EGM:** So, I wanted to ask you a few questions. Japanese game development hasn't been in such good shape recently. Only the top-tier teams seem able to produce cutting-edge projects. What do you think about the state of Japanese development?

**TI:** I'm glad I caught up with you, but you're asking me some pretty deep stuff all of a sudden. I'm kind of drunk right now, so I'll speak my mind, but I think that the overall

theme is just the passage of time, right?

As time passes, things change. I think I'll be speaking in metaphors a lot; I hope you don't mind.

For example, look back to World War II. You had aerial dogfight battles with hundreds of planes on each side. And then, as we got into, say, the Korean War, it was maybe 50 or 60 per side. And in modern times, with modern jet planes, you only need one or two to fight a battle. So you certainly see a progression like that in the game industry.

One thing I will say is that, definitely, you have to have at least some fighter planes. Any country that doesn't have fighter planes is destined to become extinct. In that metaphor, I think game companies that aren't able to do high-end development or don't have developers who can work with high-end hardware are destined to ultimately become obsolete in the market. Make sense?

**EGM:** Do you think this relates to arcades dwindling? Japanese hardware manufacturers—like Sega with its Model 2 and Model 3 boards—used to set the precedent for visual quality in games. But once the Xbox came out, things started to tilt in favor of many Western developers, especially when PC developers moved over to console development.

**TI:** Well, first of all, I think you're a little bit confused with the differences in some of the markets. Because, for instance, the arcade market in Japan and the arcade market in the U.S. are two different animals. Just like

# ITAGAKI (cont.)



Expect better-than-Ninja Gaiden II results in Itagaki's upcoming project.

the arcade market in the U.S. and the PC market—which kind of originated gaming to begin with in the U.S.—are two different things. So I think we have to make that clear to start with. So, I would offer that the difference in the technical strength and ability of America and Japan to make good games, respectively, isn't directly connected with the differences in those markets. It's important to note that the Japanese arcade setup, at least back during the time when they were at their peak, was a unique situation where the companies that made the games also owned the arcades.

Some companies back in the heyday of the arcades had three responsibilities: One was to make compelling arcades; two was to make sure that they built arcades near train stations or near universities, where they would be profitable; and three was making sure that they kept customers coming back and got the funds they needed to make new games. So this was a very closed-loop system that existed in Japan. The downfall of the arcades in Japan was precipitated by the fact that one of the key elements of this closed loop—getting customers into the arcades—basically disappeared. People stopped coming to arcades—they stopped leaving their trains during the evening commute and going to spend their money there.

So, I mean, obviously, I'm not just a drunk. I know how these things work. Even look at my career and you'll see that I responded to this change by changing my focus from arcades to home consoles.

**EGM:** At one point, you mentioned that you were proud of Hideo Kojima and the work he was doing on *Metal Gear Solid 4*. You said that it was important that there were other strong Japanese leaders and developers in this industry.

**It:** Yeah, that statement really has two major meanings. One is, as a fighter pilot, I recognize that there are fewer and fewer fighter pilots here right now, and that certainly has a lot to do with it. The other is, as far as I realized when the time was right to move away from working in arcade games to working on console games, I think, in order to be a successful fighter pilot, you

have to realize when it's time to change course and try a different strategy. If you keep flying straight, you're going to get shot down. I think Kojima has that same sensibility, and that's why I consider him a fellow fighter pilot.

**EGM:** Do you think it's ironic that the PS3 and its complicated hardware has widened the gap between top-tier development teams and the smaller development teams with fewer resources—making it harder for most Japanese development teams to keep pace with, say, what Western developers are doing on the Xbox 360?

**It:** First of all, I think that the PS3 was an attempt by former Sony chairman and CEO Ken Kutaragi to create a uniquely Japanese computer to take on the Intel standard; in that sense, I have a lot of respect for him. But to me, having a fighter that's powerful and easy to pilot makes it easy to win. That's my main goal, and that's why I choose to pilot a 360.

**EGM:** How do you feel about the fact that innovation seems to get rewarded less than, you know, "sequel-itis"? Of course, there are exceptions, like *Wii-Fit* and *Brain Age*. But a lot of times, it seems a game like *Okami* will sell 4,000 copies in Japan while everybody else buys *Final Fantasy*, *Dragon Quest*, and *Monster Hunter*.

**It:** Yeah, I don't think things are quite as simple as you portray them. My daughter tried playing *Okami*, and she got sick of it pretty quickly—and I got pretty sick of it, too. And I'm not out to make this an *Okami*-bashing session or anything—I'm just saying that it didn't feel like it had much of a spirit. It's unique, but it's not a powerful fighter plane.

**EGM:** Ironically, regarding a certain action series that you've been involved in, *Okami* Director Hideki Kamiya said that he never played it because it didn't interest him in the least. He described it by saying, "You know how when you see a movie trailer, and you decide whether or not it interests you then and there? Well, the *Ninja Gaiden* games never caught my interest, so I never played them."

**It:** Yeah, I don't really think that's a fair stance to be coming from. I mean, I make it a point of commenting after I've played a game. I've played *Tekken 1* through *5*. I don't remember which was which, but I know I've played them all. So I heard Kamiya said something about the action genre not moving forward

years. Can you tell me more about that?

**EGM:** He said that since he laid the groundwork for the modern 3D action game with the original *Devil May Cry*, nobody's done anything to push the genre forward, which he's very disappointed about. And that includes the follow-ups to the original *Devil May Cry* and pretty much every other action game since then, including yours.

**It:** Was he asleep for eight years?

**EGM:** Probably not.

**It:** There are two types of people out there who like to make controversial, splashy comments. There are those who are truly outspoken, and there are those who are just trying to cover up for their weaknesses. We have a saying here in Japan—"the weaker dog barks more"—and I sincerely hope that he's not one of the latter. I would also like to remind him to make sure to stay awake for the next eight years.

**EGM:** So, what are you doing to keep yourself busy these days? Any game plans?

**It:** I've been taking pictures, working on my model trains, drinking, of course, and gambling. And that's what things have been like lately. But you know me—I'm not just going to sit back. No, I'm definitely going to make something very soon. The great, wide expanse of the skies awaits...

**EGM:** Do you think there's plenty more juice to squeeze out of the current generation that you haven't already used?

**It:** Even if there were, it's not to the extent that it would affect the outcome of the battle. I think that's what's the most important thing right now. It's not just the power of the machine, per se—it's the ability to make things that are witty and compelling, and I think that's what's going to determine success. You may have heard in previous interviews that I was going to announce something in July, but there have been a lot of people that have forced me to keep my back to them, and for that, I appreciate it. For now, I'll just keep my back to the wide-open sky is waiting for me to jump to it, and I hope everyone is looking forward to that. I want to thank you all, because I'm never gonna let you down. I'm sure I'm going

Itagaki's love for metaphors involving these arcades, and making sure to check out the full, 110-page issue at [EGM.TUP.com](http://EGM.TUP.com).

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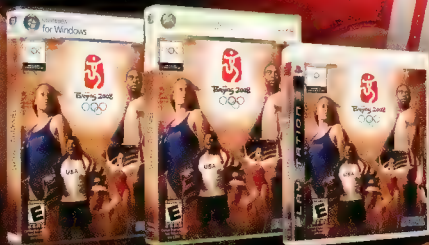
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# REVIEWS

> human feats, rockin' beats, ample landscapes, and a whole lot of fire



76  
**SOULCALIBUR IV**

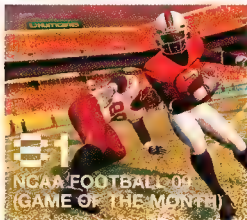
> THIS MONTH IN REVIEWS

# EVERYONE FAKES IT

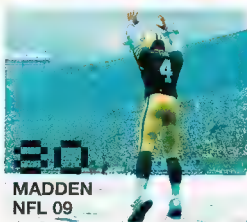
Confessions of a fighting-game poseur

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81  
**NCAA FOOTBALL 09  
(GAME OF THE MONTH)**



80  
**MADDEN  
NFL 09**

## DON'T LET ANYONE CLAIM

**OTHERWISE:** When it comes to fighting games, 90 percent of reviewers are poseurs. When tackling a fighter like, say, *Soulcalibur IV*, it's easy to make knee-jerk comments about game balance—especially when you've spent many hours across multiple days with the latest game in a series you love. And perhaps, in our relatively small microcosm, those comments hold water. But as someone who has played and loved fighting games since *Street Fighter II: Champion Edition*, I freely admit to my lowly status as a "hardcore casual" fighting game fan. I'm no tourney pro, whatever paltry critique I make probably pales in comparison to any *serious* player's analysis, and I'm the last guy who should comment on lofty concepts like character balance. All I (and the rest of that 90 percent) honestly know is whether SC4's fun—and *hell yeah*, it is.

—Ryan Scott, Exec. Editor, *Reviews*

## > HOW WE RATE

- |           |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>A+</b> | <b>A-</b> | Excellent |
| <b>B+</b> | <b>B-</b> | Good      |
| <b>C+</b> | <b>C-</b> | Average   |
| <b>D+</b> | <b>D-</b> | Bad       |
|           | <b>F</b>  | Terrible  |

## > GRADES 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 grades. Platinum: all A+; Gold: All A-s and better; Silver: Nothing lower than a B. Game of the Month goes to the highest-rated game with unanimously "Good" grades, and Shame of the Month is the reverse. Simple.

KILIK  
**A+**  
EXCELLENT

---

ASTAROTH  
**C-**  
AVERAGE

---

DARTH VADER  
**F**  
TERRIBLE



PS3/XB360

# SOULCALIBUR IV

The last fighting game you'll ever need

■ Publisher: Namco Bandai ■ Developer: Project Soul ■ Players: 1-2 ■ ESRB: Teen

## MILKMAN

**A**  
EXCELLENT

**RYAN**  
**B+**  
GOOD

**SHAWN**  
**B+**  
GOOD

**The Good:** Extreme fun and value  
**The Bad:** Darth Vader is pretty lame  
**The 44D:** What's up with Namco's big-booby obsession?

➔ **MILKMAN:** As someone who's—across the years march on—become less interested in how utterly hardcore a fighting game can be and more concerned with how a game can move the genre forward, I'm glad to say that *Soulcalibur IV* achieves both. Balanced and feature-rich, *SC4* improves on the groundwork of core fighting mechanics laid in previous games while giving players a virtual fighting sandbox. Returning characters are tweaked so that they still feel familiar yet fresh, with new moves and chains to which you'll find yourself saying, "Wow, [character name] is a badass this time around." Where *SC4* really shines, however, is in its character-creation mode. Got problems counterattacking or escaping throws?

By tailoring your customized avatar with attributes designed to compensate for weaknesses or enhance your play tendencies (or both), you can create the warrior of your dreams. That you can use this character in any mode (even story mode—cut-scenes and all) is icing on the cake.

I may be alone in this, but I also really enjoyed the new characters contributed by various Japanese manga artists. As someone with lots of games to play these days, I need something more to keep me coming back. So if I ever get tired of playing as Taki or Kilik, I can always fire up one of my custom characters...or, for example, Shura, designed by *Gantz* creator Hiroya Oku. What I'm saying is, beyond the niceties of an updated

*Soulcalibur*, I'm looking for variety—and, of course, an overall high-quality experience. In those respects, *SC4* delivers in spades.

➔ **RYAN:** I can't say whether *SC4*'s balanced—as with any fighting game, it'll take seasoned pros months to accurately make that call—but I can say this: It's a step up from the grossly overrated *Soulcalibur III*. Like that game, *SC4*'s an incremental upgrade, more in line with the myriad *Street Fighter II* revisions than bona fide sequels. Kilik's still Kilik, Nightmare's still Nightmare, and casual *Soulcalibur* addicts won't notice many obvious mechanical changes beyond the spate of new characters, half of whom are clones of the existing brawlers (and sure, the new finishing moves are



PERSONALITY



cool...though matches rarely last long enough to make them a factor).

But unlike SC3, this game is a graphical *improvement* over its predecessor, it isn't subject to glaring slowdown problems or untenable load times...and it seems the folks at Namco Bandai finally wised up about placing excessive conditions on key unlockables (see sidebar). It's *Soulcalibur* in high-def—if you loved it then, you'll love it now, and you won't get quite so annoyed with it.

➔ **SHAWN:** If this is the same old *Soulcalibur*, it's supposed to be; truly significant tweaks reduce the self-confidence of players who have something to prove. And so Namco maintains the strength of our invest-

ment—the memorized timing and most of the inputs that competitive types apply to particular situations in order to interrupt an aggressive offense or catch a sidestepping opponent. SC4 introduces a few new faces for a fresh season and subtly revises the rules, sort of like the NBA. You can create the 3-point line or raise the rim, but both changes are too much at one time. For the gamer who takes *Soulcalibur* seriously (if you let out an audible “Ooh” when you notice that a favorite move now forces an opponent into a crouch when it used to just do damage, I'm talking to you), minuscule adjustments are major discoveries. As for total newcomers, welcome to what is, in my opinion, the most fun, fully 3D fighter on the market. ✨



## The Master of Unlocking

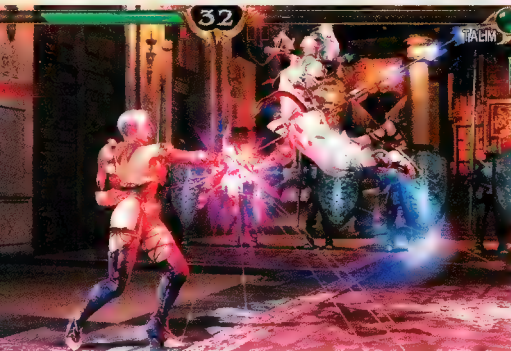
Do you miss the days of slogging through story mission after ridiculous story mission to unlock half the *Soulcalibur* roster? Neither do we—and thankfully, a full SC4 character-select screen is something you can attain in a mere hour of play (at worst). A single stroll through arcade mode as Star Wars bonus characters Darth Vader (PS3) or Yoda (XB360) nets you the supercool Apprentice, while a full clear of the five-round story mode with Kiki, Astaroth, Mitsurugi, Nightmare, and Ivy summons a quintet of special guest characters as well as final boss Algol. This also affords you more than enough gold to buy the 12 grayed-out characters on the select screen. Voilà!





## Finish Him!

*Soulcalibur IV's* new Critical Finish feature might at first seem like a cheap addition, resting somewhere between *Mortal Kombat's* fatalities and *Guilty Gear's* overpowered Overdrive moves—but in actual practice, it's primarily used to punish players who turtle too much (overzealous blocking makes the Soul Gauge meter deplete, eventually rendering offenders susceptible to the newfangled fatalities). In all of our versus playtime, we rarely saw Critical Finishes, as the very notion of the Soul Gauge turning red enough to invite these supermoves kept our minds on offense—and blocking to a minimum.



## Souled Out



With *Soulcalibur IV* hype in full gear, we approached game director Katsutoshi Sasaki to get his thoughts on new characters, game balance, and the prospect of downloadable SC4 content.

**EGM:** What was your criteria in getting various manga artists to contribute character designs? Are you fans of their work?

**Katsutoshi Sasaki:** We asked artists that we admire to create characters that they'd like to see in the *Soulcalibur* universe. We're definitely happy with the unique character designs they created.

**EGM:** Considering all of the new faces, just how balanced is SC4?

**KS:** It's true that the sheer number of characters can make it seem difficult to balance the game. But the team's worked very hard on addressing balancing issues.

**EGM:** Will you be adding further customizable parts, stages, or modes via downloadable content in the following months?

**KS:** We have plans for customizable parts, but stages and modes aren't likely.

**EGM:** Beyond simply just "completing the game," what was the most satisfying part of the development process? Or, what was your greatest achievement?

**KS:** Well, it's more like what was the most impressive moment for me, and it was when we first announced the *Star Wars* guest characters. It definitely got the biggest reaction from our fans.

### EGM Extras:

Need pro advice? Hit up [EGM.1UP.com](http://EGM.1UP.com) for our *Soulcalibur IV SuperGuide*, authored by some of the *Soulcalibur* community's most respected tournament vets.

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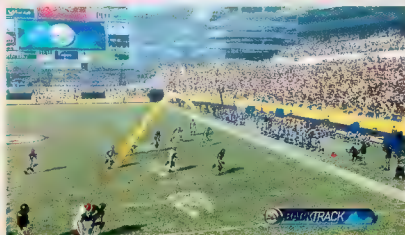
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Xbox 360 (also on PS3)

# MADDEN NFL 09

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

## A revolution in resolution

TODD

**A**

EXCELLENT

GIANCARLO

**B**

GOOD

DAVID

**A-**

EXCELLENT

**The Good:**

Shockingly pretty  
**The Bad:** The play-by-play guy needs some coaching  
**Lives Up To:** 2005's "next-gen" video

➔**TODD:** *Madden 09's* mud-caked Slop Bowls, bustling sidelines, and significantly varied player physiques unquestionably make this the best-looking *Madden* to date. And the beauty isn't only graphics deep—the gridiron action is eons better than last year for two specific reasons: 1) Tackles aren't immediate, since ball carriers can spin out of (and struggle through) what would've been surefire takedowns in 08, and 2) I no longer have to hold my breath when I throw over the middle—the linebacker circus picks that made my hair turn gray last year are gone. As for the problems, A.I. QBs are still way too accurate, and sometimes, players inexplicably stroll out of bounds with daylight ahead. I do, however, love

the new Rewind feature—not only did it teach me how to beat a man press, but it also undoes those "WTF?!" seemingly impossible moments that happen only in football videogames.

➔**GIANCARLO:** Todd's right about the improvements—*Madden 09's* got plenty, particularly in the passing game, which comes closer to replicating the actual sport than previous versions. But for every step forward, the game takes a small step back. A.I. opponents constantly make questionable calls, like not going for an onside kick when they're down by three with 30 seconds left or calling time-outs when they should just let the clock run. But the biggest offender is the running game—short third-down con-

versions are cakewalks thanks to the supernatural power of the QB sneak.

➔**DAVID:** I agree that *Madden 09* is gorgeous; my jaw dropped the first time I played a cold-weather game and saw the players' breath blowing in the wind. However, I had some problems with the new My Skill feature, a custom difficulty level based on how well you perform in the Madden Test minigames. Unfortunately, these "tests" are anything but, so I got stuck at a higher difficulty than I'd normally play. Parity's finally come to *Madden* multiplayer, though—the new difficulty-balancing feature works great, and it allows me to finally play competitive games against better players. 🏈





Xbox 360 (also on PS3/PS2/PSP)

# NCAA FOOTBALL 09

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

PLAYERS

## A clear case for No. 1

**TODD**  
**A-**  
**EXCELLENT**

**The Good:** Online dynasty!

**The Bad:** Where are the weapons?

**EA Locker:** Downloadable edited rosters are finally available online.

↑**TODD:** The 2007 NCAA football season was downright thrilling, even for a softcore viewer/Mizzou fan like me. The top ranking was a scorching hot potato, cavalierly tossed from school to school (top-five teams got bounced by unranked teams a record 12 times). But as gripping as last fall was, I can sum up why this fall will trump it in two words: online dynasty.

After years of online fumbles by developer EA Tiburon, not only is *NCAA Football 09's* most impressive innovation brilliantly seamless, it's also fully featured (recruiting and all). The lone limitation—12 humans max—means you'll play plenty of games versus the computer over the course of a season. But I forgive it, especially since the full Bowl Championship

Series is in play. Maintaining 12 members isn't breezy, and who wants to get saddled with Florida International?

EA Tiburon's made *09* more wide open on the field—a clever move if you never have a fly defense (hello, SuperSim!). On offense, I dig the stellar new tackling and shake-loose animations, how you really pay for knucklehead mistakes (like throwing into double coverage), and how you're rewarded for throwing an in-stride strike to your wideout. Also, last year's turnover issue is resolved. But the game has its goofy bits. What's with the tackling angles? Instead of getting pressed to the sidelines on All-American difficulty, I'd sometimes score an extra 20 yards—strange. To balance it, computer-controlled play-

ers sometimes wander out of bounds even with 10 yards of daylight.

With the offensive changes, defense—something I tolerate but don't enjoy—is now tougher than ever. So why isn't *Madden's* "weapons" system in here to aid the defense? Due to licensing restrictions, *NCAA* is literally filled with a bunch of no-names, and I'm usually burned once or twice before I can focus my defensive schemes on HB No. 1, QB No. 10, or WR No. 9. I'm no hardcore *NCAA* buff, so I'd like to know who's a star without checking online.

But those are minor quibbles. Even if this is the only *NCAA* football game in town (and it is), it's so high quality that it'd easily make the BCS National Championship Game.



PS3/XB360

# BEIJING 2008

■ Publisher: Sega ■ Developer: Eurocom  
■ Players: 1-8 ■ ESRB: Everyone

**JOE**  
**B**  
**GOOD**

**The Good:** Gorgeous character models, lots of variety

**The Bad:** The kayak—oh, dear god, the kayak

**The Inexplicable Absent:** Why isn't there a fencing event, dammit?

## Button mashing is totally not a human rights offense

↑**JOE:** Have you been keeping up with your controller calisthenics? Working on your crossover overhead grip? Hope so—you're gonna need some serious manual proficiency for this one, since *Beijing 2008* continues the proud *Track & Field* tradition of requiring absurd feats of button-tapping speed. What's surprising is that it also manages to inject some genuine freshness into the mix.

With the huge number of events (more than 30 in all), you'd expect some real kuds. And you'd be right—kayaking, for example, sports some truly obnoxious controls, and judo is a moronic, drawn-out test of basic reflexes. But the majority of the events are both tough and varied. Even similar events offer subtly differ-

ent challenges; for example, hammer throw, shot put, and discus are all handled differently. Even better, the controls make sense for the events in most cases.

I'm also impressed by the look of the game—especially the shockingly detailed character models (these are less gorgeous on the PS3 because of jaggies, but the quicker load times help make up for it). Unfortunately, it seems that the designers were equally impressed by their own work; how else do you explain the multiple, unnecessary staging shots before every event and attempt?

Tapping through these screens is a small annoyance in single-player, but it's more obnoxious when playing online since only the current

competitor can skip them. But the real online irritation comes in tournament-structure events like archery or judo, where—for some unfathomable reason—the game only allows one bracket to run at a time. Prepare for a lot of waiting, or a lot of dropouts. And that's assuming the lag-driven visual stutter—bad enough to make table tennis almost unplayable—doesn't drive you offline first.

Group events like hurdles and short events like discus are easier to handle online. But most players will stick to solo play, working up the leaderboards in training mode or building a well-rounded team in Olympic mode. Both are satisfying. So, sure—*Beijing* may not be gold-quality, but it's the best Olympics game since, well...ever.



Xbox 360 (also on Wii, PS2)

# ALONE IN THE DARK

Fire solves everything

■ Publisher: Atari ■ Developer: Eden ■ Players: 1 ■ ESRB: Mature

**NICK**  
**B-**  
**GOOD**

**ANDREW P.**  
**D+**  
**BAD**

**PHILIP**  
**C-**  
**AVERAGE**

**The Good:** Neat episodic DVD structure  
**The Bad:** Both endings are unsatisfying  
**Not So Alone:** Plenty of light—and all sorts of characters

➔ **NICK:** It's hard to feel *truly* alone with such deliberate design decisions ripping at your heels every step of the way. Set in present-day New York City, this new *Alone in the Dark* casts players as series mainstay Edward Carnby, riddled with amnesia and somehow still kicking, far from his usual 1920s stomping grounds. The heart of the game lies in its stalwart adventure level design; enemies and obstacles take turns acting as seemingly insoluble barriers to your progress, and besting them requires some (relatively) creative thinking and a bit of memorization. If only the solutions were as organic as the methods—for all its cleverness and ambition, *AITD* is downright clunky. A shift to more sandboxy design later in the game

and plenty of variety keep things moving, though, and a neat episodic DVD structure (which lets you jump among different acts) assures that you're never stuck for too long.

➔ **ANDREW P:** *AITD* wants to emulate the presentation of serial television, but neither the writing nor the "performances" compare to even TV's least-essential shows. Certain events benefit from a dramatic camera view, but the unlikable cast of needlessly angry antiheroes punctuates dialogue with romantic clichés and superfluous cursing in such a way that you're not hearing unique characters—you're hearing one writer who ran out of ideas. The concept of item creation and lack of hand-holding encourages

creative thought, but the disorienting mishmash of first- and third-person perspectives makes exploration annoying—and combat awful.

➔ **PHILIP:** Every good idea here is brought down by bad basic design, including a shoddy third-person camera, a too-slow first-person mode, and bizarre forced switching between the two. I'd love to see a team with a bigger budget and more stable technology attempt this game's summer-blockbuster, genre-mixing presentation, but this experiment frustrates far more often than it inspires. 🦋

 **EGM Extras:** *Zombies getting to ya?*  
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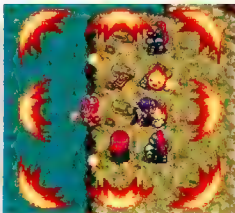
Mild Blood  
Mild Language  
Suggestive Themes  
Use of Alcohol



XBOX 360 LIVE

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DS

## IZUNA 2: THE UNEMPLOYED NINJA RETURNS

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

### Back to the dole queue

**JEREMY B-**  
GOOD

**The Good:** Devious gameplay, witty script  
**The Bad:** Dated visuals, unforgiving difficulty level  
**Milkshake:** Sex sells, Atlus...but maybe not in this game?

➔ **JEREMY:** Last year's *Izuna: Legend of the Unemployed Ninja* was a charmingly written but thoroughly average role-playing game. It had all of the ingredients of a roguelike—random dungeons, total inventory loss upon death, and a merciless difficulty level—but outside its amusingly slapstick storyline, it never managed to rise above its mystery-dungeon-clawing peers. Surprisingly, the sequel is a considerable improvement.

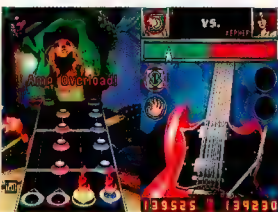
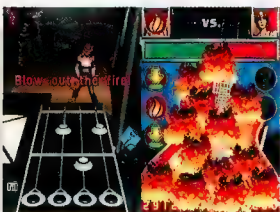
Of course, as with all of the *Rogue* derivatives that have been showing up lately, *Izuna 2* is an acquired taste. It's less about story (which, in this case, is a simple quest with an uncomfortably high ratio of breast jokes) than it is about dungeon-diving...and dying... and trying again...and again. But like

the best roguelikes, it manages to balance these setbacks and frustrations with interesting challenges and opportunities for clever lateral thinking. Enemies aren't simply tough—they're tricky, demonstrating increasingly complex behavior as you advance further into the game.

As a guy named Kenny once said, you gotta know when to walk away and know when to run; some enemies are nearly impossible to beat with a straightforward attack and are best avoided unless you can improvise an alternative approach. Since weapons, armor, and skill scrolls litter the dungeons, making do with what the game randomly doles out to you is the essence of survival.

*Izuna 2* also plays around with a

few genre conventions, including companion characters. Rather than making heroine Izuna's allies brain-dead A.I. tagalongs, the game instead adds a tag-team system that lets two characters swap places or launch a powerful dual attack at the press of a button, providing a safety net when you find yourself in over your head. And the hunger aspect of other roguelikes is combined with mana points for a sort of all-purpose stamina meter that allows you to cast powerful spells at the cost of sapping your physical attacks. In short, *Izuna 2* is a game of trade-offs and cautious play—a challenge meant mostly for hardcore RPG fanatics but amusing enough that newcomers might find it worth their while, too.



DS

## GUITAR HERO: ON TOUR

■ Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: Vicarious Visions  
 ■ Players: 1 ■ ESRB: Everyone 10+

**ANTHONY B-**  
GOOD

**The Good:** Small-scale *Guitar Hero* mechanics work well  
**The Bad:** Hit-and-miss track list  
**Request:** *On Tour 2: Drums* (with stylus controls), please.

### Warning: Impromptu Rick Springfield concerts now possible

➔ **ANTHONY:** *Guitar Hero: On Tour* successfully brings the wildly popular rhythm-action series to the DS, albeit with a few substantial sacrifices. The most notable difference is that the full-scale guitar peripheral is gone; it's replaced by a small set of four buttons on an electronic handpick that fits into the DS' dust-gathering GBA slot. The strumming feels great; guitar players will feel right at home rocking out on the touch screen with the included guitar-pick stylus. Things get a bit shaky, though, as you blaze your way through the higher difficulties' note torrents—you'll need to brace the DS on a solid surface, seriously impeding your ability to play comfortably.

*On Tour* does an impressive job of executing other essential *Guitar Hero*

mechanics on the DS. To use the whammy bar, players simply "scratch" the screen during sustained notes. Star Power score multipliers are voice-activated (no tilting required—just blow or yell into the mic).

In multiplayer battles or offline guitar duels against the computer, players use the touch screen to assail opponents with special attacks—some of which are DS-specific, such as forcing your opponent to sign autographs midsong or blow out a fire using the microphone. These details certainly help *On Tour* feel like its own game and not just a poorly conceived port.

Unfortunately, that's also my biggest problem with *On Tour*: It doesn't feel like *Guitar Hero*. Sure, you get to press buttons in rhythm and watch an

avatar bounce around the screen, but squeezing the game onto a handheld console has diminished its ability to make you feel like a heroic guitarist. The DS certainly doesn't look or remotely feel like a real guitar, and the songs—though they sound great through headphones—just don't cut it on the system's tiny speakers.

The social aspect (at least in single-player mode) is also crippled, as it's a bit silly to take turns staring over a friend's shoulder while you work together to unlock all of the songs. Even multiplayer requires both players to have their own copy of the game, and at that point, you might as well drop the tour, become a studio band, and just play one of *On Tour*'s console cousins instead.



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PSN

## PIXELJUNK EDEN

■ Publisher: Sony CEA ■ ESRB: Everyone

*Eden's* lush presentation betrays its clever simplicity. The concept of gathering seeds and exploring colorful gardens might seem like a tougher sell than stock-car racing and tower defense—the basis of the last two *PixelJunk* titles—but the execution is aces. Swinging around the massive levels with a couple of pals helps to disguise an otherwise irksome unlocking structure.

**Bottom Line:** *Eden* is weird—but the elegant pairing of psychedelic audiovisuals and accessible mechanics is more than welcome.



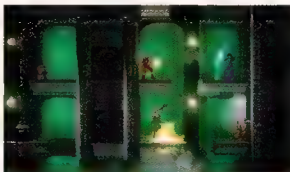
Xbox 360

## TOO HUMAN

■ Publisher: Microsoft Game Studios ■ ESRB: Teen

*Too Human* wraps all of the trimmings of classic action-RPGs around a techno-Viking storyline. It mixes combat, loot collecting, and character upgrading, and favors intense action sequences punctuated by long slogs through text-heavy menus. The combat is more RPG than action, but after leveling up a bit, you can spring some crazy combos.

**Bottom Line:** If you've got a loot-whoring, troll-vanquishing itch to scratch, expect to get sucked into this world for hours and hours—we sure did in our previewable copy.



PSN/XBLA

## BIONIC COMMANDO: REARMED

■ Publisher: Capcom/Grin ■ ESRB: Mature

No lie, *Bionic Commando* for NES is an all-time great—an innovative platformer that replaced jumping with grappling. Grin, the guys behind the series' upcoming console revival, captures the feel of the original—*Rearmed* is faithful to its source material, yet it's full of new twists to keep *BC* experts from breezing through it. Plus, it's packed with fantastic bonus material, and it looks and sounds excellent. At 10 bucks, it's a steal.

**Bottom Line:** Whether you love the original or don't even know what it is, you'll love this.



PSN/XBLA

## 1942: JOINT STRIKE

■ Publisher: Capcom ■ ESRB: Everyone

We pine for the glory days of the arcade, when a handful of quarters allowed us to pilot a plane that could single-handedly rain destruction on an entire nation's army. Thankfully, PSN and XBLA bring the arcade home with 1942 sequel *Joint Strike*. This sleek visual redesign brings new life to what might have otherwise been a dated shooter.

**Bottom Line:** It's a great revamp of an arcade classic, complete with online multiplayer. We just wish you could continue after losing all your lives.

# THE SALES CHART

Amazon.com's Top 20 for June

Name	Platform	EGM Scores
1 Super Smash Bros. <b>Brawl</b>	Wii	A A- A-
2 Metal Gear Solid 4: <b>Guns of the Patriots</b>	PS3	A- A- A
 MGS4 features some pretty risqué moments. Appropriately enough, some characters' motion-capping was done by naked people.		
3 Mario Kart Wii with <b>Wii Wheel</b>	Wii	B+ C+ C
4 <b>Wii Fit</b>	Wii	B+ B- B
5 <b>Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures</b>	Wii	B (on 1UP.com)
 Fans of the most recent <i>Indy</i> movie should just remember this: You won't find any crystal skulls in this romp.		
6 <b>Rock Band: Special Edition</b>	Wii	B- (on 1UP.com)
 Even without downloadable content, people still love to be in fake bands. At least they can practice for the newly announced sequel to EA's group rhythm hit.		
7 <b>Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock Bundle</b>	Wii	A A- B+
8 <b>Ninja Gaiden II</b>	XB360	B- B B+
9 <b>Guitar Hero: On Tour</b>	DS	B-
10 <b>Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures</b>	XB360	B B B
11 <b>Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures</b>	DS	Not Reviewed
12 <b>Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures</b>	PS2	Not Reviewed
13 <b>Rock Band: Special Edition</b>	PS2	A (on 1UP.com)
14 <b>Super Mario Galaxy</b>	Wii	A A+ A+
15 <b>New Super Mario Bros.</b>	DS	A+ A B+
16 <b>Grand Theft Auto IV</b>	XB360	A+ A+ A
17 <b>Uncharted: Drake's Fortune</b>	PS3	A- A- A-
 Like a long-lost treasure unearthed, <i>Uncharted</i> has resurfaced on the charts. Perhaps it's because of the excitement about the forthcoming sequel?		
18 <b>Grand Theft Auto IV</b>	PS3	A+ A+ A
19 <b>Gran Turismo 5: Prologue</b>	PS3	B+ C+ B+
20 <b>Brain Age 2: More Training in Minutes a Day!</b>	DS	B+ B- C+



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# GAME OVER

> press continue for lonely nerd dating, classic japanese games, and far east sightseeing



SEANBRYE'S REST OF THE CRAP

## ROMANTIC SIMULATION INVESTIGATION

Why don't American gamers simulate dating?



In addition to writing about crappy games, Seanbrye fancies international sports that involve blood, splits, and ball-busting groin punches.

**DATING SIMS NEVER CAUGHT ON IN AMERICA.** Maybe it's because the idea of fussing your way through statistics and trial-and-error puzzles to convince an imaginary girl to like you is fundamentally stupid. These games are like doing your taxes while poking at your girlfriend with a stick and hoping for the best. American market research must've shown that a genre that only makes you cry yourself to sleep wouldn't sell well. Or maybe it goes deeper than consumer interest. This month, I'll take a look at some of the differences between our two cultures and why such a popular game type hasn't made it in America.

Before I start, I'd like to get serious for a moment—any stereotypes or sociological statements made in this article should be taken as literally and universally as possible. I treat race and gender with no irony or humor, so if I were to say that midgets get

banished if you trick them into eating chocolate, that's because it's a scientific fact, not because it's a new way to laugh at short people. In that same spirit, every fifth person living in Oregon is the product of Bigfoot sex.

### Reason No. 1: Gulp! G-Girls!

Everyone knows that not all gamers are hopeless nerds anymore, but those who would play these kinds of games sure as hell are. You can't expect them to pay money to simulate interaction with a woman—that's their greatest fear in life. You turn it on and see "Dating Mission 01: Meet a Pretty Girl!" but all they see is their father's face on a scorpion's body chasing them down a tunnel. It'd be like trying to sell them a novelty can of spiders that launches snakes. And they already didn't buy that game when Todd McFarlane made it about 17 different times.

### Can it be overcome?

One could argue that dating simulators might act as a kind of social-training device for the terminally shy, but that's crazy. It's both their darkest fear and an educational device. You might as well include an XFL shirt and a *Max Headroom* DVD.



■ In Japan, it's quite normal to find girls embarrassingly aroused in libraries.



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Japanese  
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Tokyo's  
monuments  
to gaming

### Reason No. 2: World War II

After the war, we did more than shut down Japan's military. We imposed our Quaker values on their media, making obscenity illegal. Over the years, this law has been stretched and worked around to allow pornography to reach Japan's people without technically breaking any laws. It's very complicated. But you can see how it manifested itself in the differences between our two countries' adult material. In America, two people will meet, find a secluded area, and make sweet love on a multiangle DVD. In Japan, a love scene is a tentacle hatching from an egg and slamming into a patch of censored pixels between the legs of an unwilling minotaur. And it comes with fish-flavored bubble gum and a pair of soiled underwear.

This analysis tells us two things: Our adult industry has a lot to learn from the Japanese, and we totally don't make sense to each other. If dating simulators are ever to catch on here, we have to know, without a shadow of a doubt, that there is zero possibility of a tentacle getting involved. I don't care if the main character chooses every possible wrong path during his love adventure—his orifices must be safe from off-camera demon squids. All of them. To make me and other consumers more comfortable, maybe Nintendo could include orifice-safety information on some kind of seal. Like the Official Nintendo Seal, only it would mean something.

#### Can it be overcome?

I kid Japan for its outer-space views on fictional intercourse, but if my spam folder is any indication, America has no shortage of impossibly freaky things, either. I get more e-mail about grandma incest in there than I do about nonabsurd pornography. So I think there's hope that, one day, our nations will come together under a cheerleader-on-goat rainbow of understanding.

➤ **And it comes with fish-flavored bubble gum and a pair of soiled underwear.**

### Reason No. 3: Dating rituals

Americans do a lot of their dating in noisy bars, where we're accustomed to a certain type of interaction—short screaming matches until one or both people are drunk enough for tacos and sex. Conversational skills, decision making, and wit are virtually useless. For example, here's a real conversation I had with a girl next to me at a San Francisco bar:

**Girl:** "You're invincible!"

**Me:** "Hi! What an awesome thing to say to someone!"

**Girl:** "What?!"

**Me:** "Let's start a whole new topic! It's not going to be cute by the time I repeat it!"

**Girl:** "What?!"

#### Can it be overcome?

I found out later that I was bamboozled. She actually called me "invisible," not "invincible," while we were at the bar because she noticed I couldn't get the bartender's attention. I slept with a girl for calling me "invisible"? Ridiculous. However, she apparently got laid under false pretenses, too, because when we saw each other in the daylight, she told me she wouldn't have gone home with me if she'd known that my hair was blue. I guess my point is: This is how Americans date, and it would be the weirdest damn videogame you've ever played.

### Reason No. 4: Feminism

In America, there are many contexts where it's OK to objectify women—while casting a beer commercial, taking a break from your construction job, or picking out a prison pen pal. Still, there are even more situations where objectifying women is wrong. Like during childbirth, cake decorating, or at the workplace. Then, of course, there are times when the rules are unclear—like at a breast-grabbing factory.

The basic concept of a dating simulator is to coerce an uninterested



■ Here's a fun fact: Tila Tequila (left) is related to extraterrestrial creature Uatu.

girl into submission, which is frowned upon in our American culture. We're taught, often through sensitivity training or face slaps, that women are individuals, not prizes you get from a screaming-about-your-penis contest. Sure, some guys out there see women simply as things you win, but they don't need a videogame to simulate that. They can just go on TV and win Tila Tequila. And speaking of Tila Tequila: genital warts. Also speaking of Tila Tequila: It was nice of her to give Reed Richards the Ultimate Nullifier so he could keep Galactus from eating Earth.

#### Can it be overcome?

The Japanese aren't as sophisticated as Americans when it comes to feminism. There are Japanese people alive today who can remember when their government owned actual sex slaves, and right now you can see signs on many Japanese subways telling you not to put cameras up girls' skirts and take pictures. Do you have any idea how many people in a society have to think it's OK to do that before you post a sign about it?

The only way dating simulators work is with this level of total female objectification. Look at the complications that arise in America: It's easy to picture women in an office openly discussing the UPS man's buns, which is woman for "ass." Now, if you reverse the gender of everyone involved—holy crap, you have an HR emergency. It sounds hypocritical, but it's the kind of free pass I think women deserve since they can't do things like dunk or succeed. Can you imagine trying to program this type of double standard into an artificial intelligence? Its robot brain would explode, and then Terminator happens. ☹



# 10 Years Ago...

GAME OVER



**On the cover: Metal Gear Solid**

To think that it was 10 years ago that we had our first look at Kojima's PS1 masterpiece. In addition to offering a detailed run-through of Snake's initial infiltration of Shadow Moses to save the world from a nuclear threat, Kojima also introduced the now familiar and downright strange characters that would show up in the game.



**Game of the Month: Banjo-Kazooie**

Rare's colorful platformer introduced an unlikely duo and sprawling levels that not only matched the revered *Super Mario 64*'s level design but in some ways surpassed it. Former *EGM* editor Shawn Smith (now of the *Shawnimals* empire) claimed, "I haven't played a game in a long time that offers this much gameplay."



**The one that got away: Thrill Kill**

Before it was unceremoniously canceled, we previewed this ultraviolent PS1 fighter. While we scratched our heads at the S&M character designs and gory decapitations, the four-player support sounded awesome.

# A HISTORY OF JAPANESE GAMES



Sixteen hits that defined Eastern game design By Jeremy Parish

**IS JAPAN'S GAMING MARKET FAILING?** Flagging? Resurging? You can find plenty of debate on the subject in this issue of *EGM*. Whatever the case, though, no one can deny that Japan has been a key player in gaming's history—as these 16 landmark classics attest.

**1978 Space Invaders**  
Taito • Shooter • Arcade

No, *Space Invaders* wasn't the first game to be invented in Japan, but it was the first to become an international superhit—the biggest success since the original *Pong*, in fact. Legend has it that its immense popularity actually caused a shortage of the 100 yen coins used to play the game. More significantly, it paved the way for Japan's gaming biz to become a global powerhouse.

**1980 Pac-Man**  
Namco • Maze • Arcade

If *Space Invaders* was a hit, *Pac-Man* redefined the word. Toru Iwatani's unassuming hero—essentially a hungry yellow circle—became gaming's first mascot, launched a cottage industry of merchandising and cloned maze games, and earned millions of dollars in quarters.

**1981 Donkey Kong**  
Nintendo • Platformer • Arcade  
*Pac-Man*'s unprecedented success was soon matched by another Japanese export, *Donkey Kong*. Its simple-but-challenging barrel-jumping action made Nintendo a publishing juggernaut, launched creator Shigeru Miyamoto's career, and introduced the concept of narrative to videogames.

**1983 The Black Onyx**  
Henk Rogers • RPG • PC-8801  
Oddly enough, Japan's first hit role-playing game was designed by a Westerner, a Dutch-American programmer-in-residence named Henk Rogers. As *The Black Onyx* was published for the Japan-only NEC PC-8801 computer, few Americans have played this quietly influential game that helped define the genre synonymous with Japanese design.



## 1984

### Dragon Slayer

Falcom • RPG • PC-8801

A year after *The Black Onyx* gave Japanese players an RPG designed for them, Nihon Falcom published its own spin on the genre. Falling somewhere between a roguelike and an action-RPG, *Dragon Slayer* eventually became a series of a dozen or more loosely related games (including *Legacy of the Wizard* and *Faxanadu*).

## 1985

### Super Mario Bros.

Nintendo • Platformer • NES

More than a mere *Donkey Kong* spin-off, *Super Mario Bros.* defined the staple genre of the 8- and 16-bit eras: the platformer. Its 32 scrolling stages, collectible bonuses, perfect controls, and deviously hidden secrets would be imitated by hundreds of wannabes in the years to come.

## 1986

### Dragon Quest

Enix • RPG • NES

*The Black Onyx* and *Dragon Slayer* introduced RPGs to the Japanese masses, but *Dragon Quest* propelled them to the top. Clever marketing, personality-packed artwork from manga artist Akira Toriyama, and a thoughtfully simplified interface helped transplant the genre from the domain of fussy PC nerds to something anyone could enjoy.

## 1991

### Street Fighter II

Capcom • Fighting • Arcade

*Street Fighter II* wasn't a particularly original game—brawlers and 1-on-1 fighters had been around for years. But in this classic, Capcom combined the two genres, added mind-blowing visuals, and embellished the whole thing with incredible controls and shocking hidden depth, including its

reversed combo system. In the process, *SF2* revitalized arcades.

## 1994

### Tokimeki Memorial

Konami • Simulation • PC Engine Duo

This unique spin on the graphical-adventure genre took away the typical world-saving plots and added a personal touch to create a game about building relationships and finding love. Today, the only PC games still coming out of Japan are derived from "Tokimeki's" design.

## 1994

### Ridge Racer

Namco • Racing • PlayStation

*Ridge Racer* started life in the arcades, but its PlayStation incarnation is the one that changed the balance of power in the console race: By showing Sony's new system was capable of an arcade-quality experience, *Ridge Racer* helped propel PS1 into a lead that was never overcome.

## 1996

### Super Mario 64

Nintendo • Platform • Nintendo 64

*Super Mario 64* did for 3D games what *Super Mario Bros.* did for the second dimension. Featuring a user-controllable camera, contextual commands, and analog controls, it was the first action game to demonstrate how traditional mechanics could work as smoothly with polygons as they had with 2D sprites.

## 1997

### Final Fantasy VII

Square • RPG • PlayStation

OK, so *FFVII* is a bit of a mess in retrospect, but its (usually) seamless integration of gameplay and cinematic, massive world and story, and futuristic setting didn't just popularize Japanese RPGs in the West—they inspired games in every genre.

## 1998

### Metal Gear Solid

Konami • Action • PlayStation

In bringing *Metal Gear*'s stealth-oriented gameplay into 3D, Konami changed the way developers thought about action. But perhaps more significantly, *Metal Gear Solid* eschewed prerendered video for its extensive and beautifully directed story sequences, creating the first visually consistent fusion of interactivity and narrative in a game.

## 1999

### Shenmue

Sega • Adventure • Dreamcast

While widely regarded as the \$70 million boondoggle that bankrupted Sega out of the hardware business, *Shenmue* was unprecedented in its free-form detail and cinematic action sequences. Both the *God of War* series and 3D *Grand Theft Auto* games owe a tremendous debt to Yu Suzuki's failed opus.

## 2005

### Nintendogs

Nintendo • Simulation • DS

Nintendo's take on pet-simulation games like *Dogz* offered us curiously compelling experience thanks in large part to the unique features of the DS: Rather than simply watching your pet-enee pet, now you could talk to it and even pet it with the stylus. Millions of tween girls cooed, and the "underpowered" DS forever leapfrogged Sony's sure-thing PSP.

## 2005

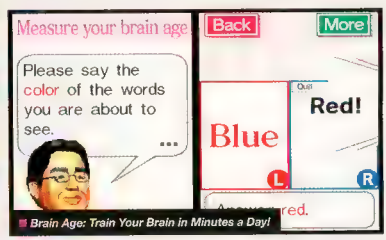
### Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day!

Nintendo • Simulation • DS

Appealing to the exact opposite audience of *Nintendogs*, *Brain Age* addressed the changing face of Japanese gaming by giving senior citizens a series of brief, daily activities—and in the process demonstrated that the best way to make money in a saturated gaming market is to create a totally new audience. 𠄎



■ From top to bottom: *Space Invaders*, *Pac-Man*, *Donkey Kong*, *Nintendogs*, and *Final Fantasy VII*.

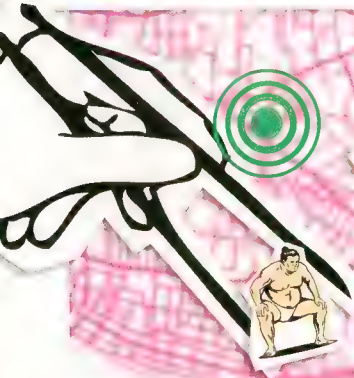


Screens courtesy of ign.us/m.com

# TOKYO GAMERS' GUIDE

Going to Japan to grab some games? Our handy guide shows you the way By James Mielke

GAME OVER



## > SHINJUKU

**YOU'VE SEEN IT** in games like Sega's *Yakuza* (PS2) and probably once or twice in the movies, but Tokyo's notorious Shinjuku district—famous as a hotbed of sinful pleasures—offers so much for the videogame hunter that it renders better-known options, like Akihabara, completely redundant.

With shops like Sofmap, Bic Camera, Sakuraya, and Yodobashi Camera carrying extensive collections of new videogames, hardware, strategy guides, and accessories, it's an underrated gaming metropolis for import enthusiasts.

Most of these places have multiple floors, too, and shops carry everything from *gashapon* (capsule toys) and manga (comic books) to character models (get your *Ikkī Tosen* fix), toys, and apparel, making Shinjuku a one-size-fits-all gaming epicenter. The one thing Shinjuku lacks, however, is a worthwhile retro-gaming shop, which gives Akihabara the edge. Sure, you can find used games, but they're not usually older than Sega Saturn-era stuff—so for the true classics, you'll wanna head to Akihabara.



**MUST VISIT:** Trader (used games, new quality), Sofmap (new games, great bargains), Sakuraya, Yodobashi Camera (best all around), Kinokuniya Bookstore (best selection of strategy guides)

**GET THERE BY:** Yamanote Line, Odakyu Odawara Line, Keio Line, Marunouchi Line, Toei Shinjuku Line

## > SHIBUYA

### HAKINGU MOVES

**YOU!** Yes, the classic meeting spot made famous in America as "that dog statue in *The World Ends With You*" signifies that you are, indeed, in Shibuya, whose famous crosswalk appears prominently in Square Enix's handheld action-RPG.



While Shibuya makes the list simply because this crosswalk must be seen at least once in your life, it's not the greatest place to go shopping for games. However, the giant Shibuya Tsutaya bookstore is an eight-floor technopolis of DVDs, CDs, books, and new and used games, while the surrounding area is a shopping paradise adjacent to Tokyo's trendy Harajuku and Aoyama areas. Perhaps not the greatest gaming center, but it's still worth seeing.

**MUST VISIT:** Shibuya Tsutaya (games, music, movies—look for the Starbucks on the ground floor), Tower Records (no games, but a comprehensive selection of music and movies)

**GET THERE BY:** Tokyu Toyoko Line, Yamanote Line, Tokyo Metro Ginza Line



## > AKIHABARA



IMAGINE HAVING 10 EBs, GameStops, and Wal-Marts in your neighborhood—on one street, no less. That's kinda what Tokyo's somewhat overrated Akihabara district is like. Yeah, it's the Times Square of games, but all the shops—which are too numerous to name here—have different specials and prices on different games, so you've gotta go exploring to find the best deals. As a gaming mecca, Akihabara's dwindled in relevance over the years, but its real ace in the hole is Super Potato (not shown), a five-story shrine that carries every classic system and Japanese game you've ever dreamed of seeing, all under one roof. It may seriously be the best store you've ever seen, but bring lots of cash. You'll need it.

**MUST VISIT:** Yodobashi Camera's flagship superstore (over a half-dozen floors of games, CDs, DVDs, electronics, gadgets, and more), Super Potato (best vintage game collection in the universe)

**GET THERE BY:** Keihin-Tohoku Line, Yamanote Line, Chuo-Sobu Line, Tokyo Metro, Hibiya Line

## > GETTING AROUND

UNLIKE NEW YORK CITY, LONDON, OR PARIS, all of Tokyo's regional train and subway lines are owned by different corporations, which can be very confusing to the first-time traveler. Each company has separate, incompatible tickets and prices, many of which aren't labeled in English. You'll need your ticket to both enter and exit any train station, so we recommend purchasing a rechargeable Suica (Super Urban Intelligent Card) or Pasmo card, which work with all train and subway lines and automatically deduct money at stations. If you've got enough money on your Suica card, you can even use it for purchases at local convenience stores and electronics shops.

Suica



## > POKÉMON CENTER

PERHAPS MORE LIMITED IN ITS APPEAL,

Nintendo's Pokémon Center still stands one of those "when in Rome" places. Whether you love or loathe the critters, it's definitely worth the effort to visit, even if only to experience the sensation of having throngs of kids swarming around your feet as they flock to the walls of stuffed Pikachu or racks of Bulbasaur T-shirts lining the aisles. Why else would you subject yourself to such punishment?

**MUST VISIT:** The Pokémon Center. That's it. It's in the middle of nowhere, so this is your only stop.

**GET THERE BY:** Go to Tokyo Station via the Chuo Main Line, Keiyo Line, Sobu Main Line, Yamanote Line, Yokosuka Line, or Marunouchi Line.



# LOLZ IN TRANSLATION

Ten misguided attempts to save us from the offensiveness of Japan

By Scott Sharkey

**10 Pac-Man (Arcade): Puck Man**

In this, the earliest example of Japan saving us from ourselves, someone was actually sharp enough to realize that "Puck Man" only requires a minimal amount of alteration to the first letter to make it look like it's an entirely different kind of game.



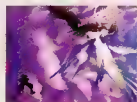
**9 Street Fighter II (Arcade): M. Bison**

If "M. Bison" seems like an odd kind of name for a world-conquering tyrant, it's because it wasn't. Originally, the sobriquet belonged to the gap-toothed, overly brutal boxer Balrog as a probably too-obvious play on former heavyweight boxing champion Mike Tyson. Capcom decided to play musical chairs with the boss names when the game came Stateside.



**8 Final Fantasy series: Holy, Pearl, White**

It's hard to imagine how anyone could've been chided off by the implication that holy power might destroy evil, but Square consistently renamed the "Holy" spell to "Pearl" or "White" in the earliest U.S. installments of the series. Funny, given that half of their RPGs in the PS1 era were about assassinating God.



**7 J.J. & Jeff (TG-16): Scat**

You'll find a lot missing from the U.S. incarnation of *Kato-chan & Ken-chan*. Like the characters farting to attack, squatting to take a red-faced crap in the bushes, peeing on lampposts, and dodging ever-present swirly little piles of poo. It wasn't exactly sophisticated comedy, but it was pretty much all the game had going for it.



**6 Final Fight (SNES): Transsexuals**

If you take one lesson from the SNES port of *Final Fight*, it's this: Beating up women isn't kosher. However, if you replace those women with shockingly effeminate men or declare them to be pre-op transsexuals, you can pound the crap out of them without pangs of conscience. Ugh.



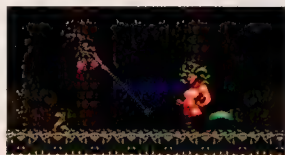
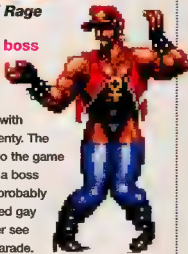
**5 Whomp 'Em (NES): One little Indian**

One of those rare examples of a game that was actually made more politically incorrect, *Whomp 'Em* was originally a fairly innocent take on the classic Chinese tale *Journey to the West*. The U.S. port got a graphical hack, however, that the apparently incomprehensible *Monkey King* stuff for every Native American cliché in the book.



**5 Streets of Rage (Genesis): World's gayest boss**

*Streets of Rage*, meanwhile, delivered exactly the opposite message, with female enemies aplenty. The only major change to the game was the excision of a boss that, honestly, was probably the most exaggerated gay caricature you'll ever see outside of a pride parade.



**4 Super Castlevania IV (SNES): Covering up...or not**

For some reason, it was deemed necessary to put togas on the really tiny naked statues in the background of one of the game's stages. Strangely, the much more noticeable bare-breasted Medusa boss didn't get the same treatment. Not that we mind, but it betrayed a slightly weird sense of priorities.



**2 Bionic Commando (NES): Badd' mans**

Killing the hell out of Nazis is pretty much a videogame staple at this point, but in the days of *Bionic Commando*, it was apparently safer to call them "Badds." Additionally, Hitler makes a surprise appearance, except he's about 15 feet tall, gets to swear, and wants to be called "Master-D." Strangely, his head bloody exploding at the game's conclusion was left unchanged.

**1 Mega Man: Powered Up (PSP): Oil Man**

With the black skin, beady eyes, and enormous red lips, this boss might as well have been named Tarbaby Man. Capcom changed his lips to yellow when they localized *Powered Up*. Which pretty much completely and utterly failed to accomplish anything but confirm that, yeah, Oil Man is f\*\*ed up. ♣

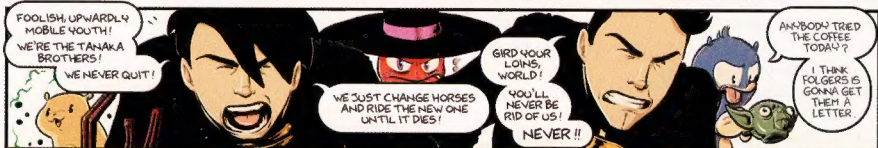
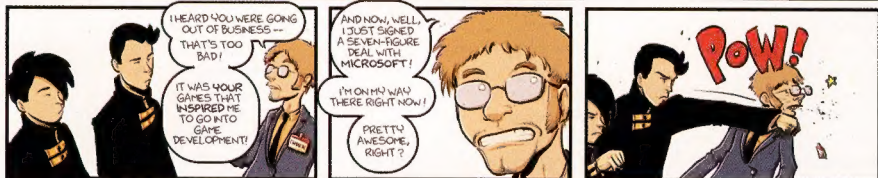
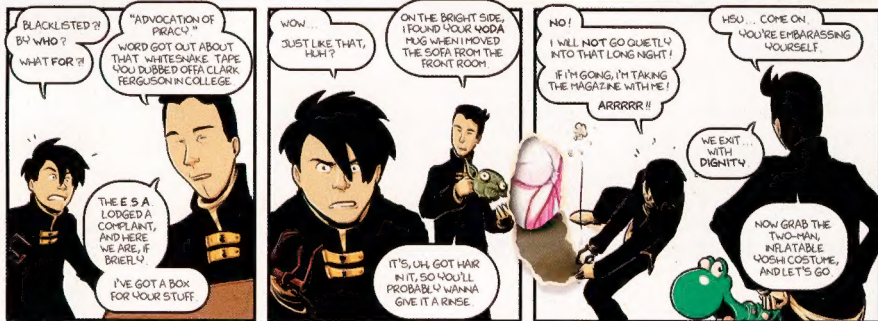






# THE GREAT GIANT

By Jeremy "Norm" Scott



HSU AND CHAN CONTINUE AT 1UP.COM AND IN THEIR COMIC BOOK FROM SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS—ISSUE 8 ON SALE SOON!  
THANKS FOR READING, EVERYBODY! KEEP IT UP!

END



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